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# A Syro-Palestinian Bowl Type

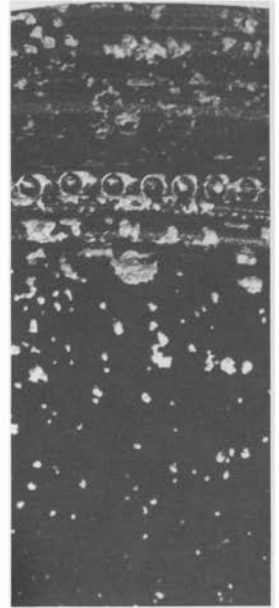
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A single type of artifact surviving from the ancient world can often give us a broad insight into many aspects of the culture from which it derives. Such a piece is a pottery bowl recently acquired by the Museum of Art and Archaeology at the University of Missouri–Columbia.<sup>1</sup> The bowl is said to have come from the Syro-Palestinian coastal area, which in the Hellenistic period was under the strong Hellenizing influence that moved eastward in the wake of the conquests of Alexander the Great and took hold in the kingdoms ruled by his successors. Greek pottery, especially the so-called black-glazed wares (really covered with a sintered slip, often with stamped and rouletted decoration) and the molded relief bowls, were assiduously imported and then imitated in the Hellenized east. What is particularly interesting about the bowl published here is that it seems clearly to be a product of the Syro-Palestinian coastal area, imitating a shape that was imported from Greek lands. Its decoration, however, is unknown in Greece proper and is dependent, as we shall see, on east Mediterranean craft production.

The Missouri bowl (fig. 1 a-c) is, I believe, the only intact example of the type extant.<sup>2</sup> The fabric is a fine, light-buff clay, grainy but with no inclusions. The vessel is covered both inside and out with a black slip, applied by dipping from two sides, causing a darker vertical stripe where the slip overlapped. On the exterior, the slip is a dark reddish-brown in a circle at the bottom. The shape is approximately conical, with gently curving walls and a very slightly pointed bottom, without a foot. The walls are 3-5 mm. thick, but the vessel is thickened at the lip, which is decorated on the interior with a heavy molding formed with a template; one of the lower grooves is further adorned with beading, made with a stamp or roulette. The far larger group of similar bowls with a molded interior rim, but without beading, will not be considered here. The shape, the *mastos* (breast-shaped), had a long development in Greek lands, but not in this ware.

There are several almost complete examples, as well as numerous fragments from such bowls, found particularly at sites on the east Mediterranean coast from Tarsus in the north to Ashdod in the south, but also known from much farther inland at Tell Halaf and Dura Europos in eastern Syria.



1 a-c. Black-glazed conical bowl, Syria, Hellenistic, Museum of Art and Archaeology, Weinberg Fund purchase (80.249).

A brief catalogue of these finds is informative; we begin with Tarsus, the northernmost of the coastal sites, and move eastward (inland) after citing those in the coastal plain:

*Tarsus*<sup>3</sup>: only one fragment of a beaded-rim bowl is published, found in a context of the late first century B.C. to the early second century A.D.; the presence of more is implied. The clay is described as orange-red, very fine, with mica; the glaze is black, gleaming, of good quality.

*Antioch*<sup>4</sup> has produced a number of fragments, with both black and red glaze on fabrics that vary from yellowish pale buff to light brown.

*Gezer*<sup>5</sup> was the source of two fragments of beaded-rim bowls, which are of great importance since they come from the most closely dated context of any of the known fragments.<sup>6</sup> These are discussed in more detail by S. Gitin in his dissertation,<sup>7</sup> where they are said to appear only in the mid-second century B.C. horizon. Of this type, and of the same type without the beaded molding, Gitin writes, "All examples of types 209-A,B have a black or dark grey glaze decoration and appear in the non-local reddish-yellow, well levigated, metallic fabrics. . . . These examples . . . have a fabric indistinguishable from those forms designated as Eastern Sigillata A."

*Ashdod*<sup>8</sup> flourished in the Late Hellenistic period, yet the beaded-rim bowls are few. However, two complete profiles for such bowls were preserved and there is one other rim fragment. The two more complete bowls, similar in size to the Missouri example, are described as having yellowish clay and core; one is covered with dark red glaze, the other with black glaze. The rim fragment is of fine, pinkish-buff ware, with thin orange-red glaze.

Paralleling the line of coastal sites is a row of sites farther inland, which are considered here from north to south:

*Tell Rifa'at*,<sup>9</sup> twenty kilometers north of Aleppo, has thus far yielded to survey activities a single fragment of a beaded-rim mastos. It is made of fine cream clay with smooth, semi-lustrous black slip.

*Hama*,<sup>10</sup> with a rich Hellenistic level, has only a single fragment of a beaded-rim bowl, with light yellowish clay and glaze which is brownish on the interior and the upper part of the exterior, but turns to a reddish-brown on the lower part of the exterior. The molded rim on the interior is said possibly to have been black.

*Tel Anafa*,<sup>11</sup> which has produced much the largest amount of Late Hellenistic red-slipped pottery known from any ancient site, has from the first five campaigns but one fragment of a beaded-rim bowl, which is in the usual light buff clay with a red-slipped surface. One beaded fragment from the excavations of 1978-1981 is not yet reported.

*Samaria*, another rich Hellenistic site, has furnished three fragments of beaded-rim bowls from the excavations of 1930,<sup>12</sup> and one from the supplementary excavations of 1968.<sup>13</sup> All of these have a fine fabric in shades of buff, from pale yellowish to pinkish, and all have red glaze on both interior and exterior.

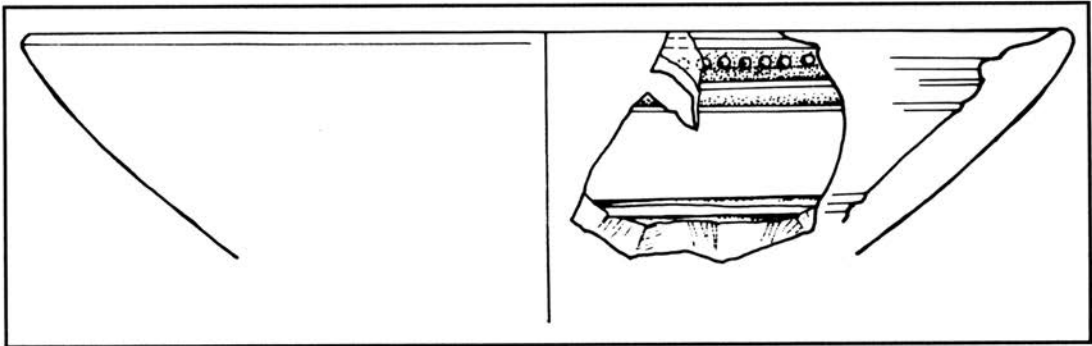
The other two sites which have yielded beaded-rim bowls are much farther to the east: Tell Halaf in northeastern Syria and Dura-Europos on the Euphrates River in eastern Syria:

*Tell Halaf*, despite its remoteness from most of the other sites yielding beaded-rim bowls, has the largest number of them—two almost complete examples, which give a full profile, and four other fragments.<sup>14</sup> They are described as having fine, yellowish clay and reddish or brownish glaze. The almost complete examples are very similar in size to the Missouri bowl.

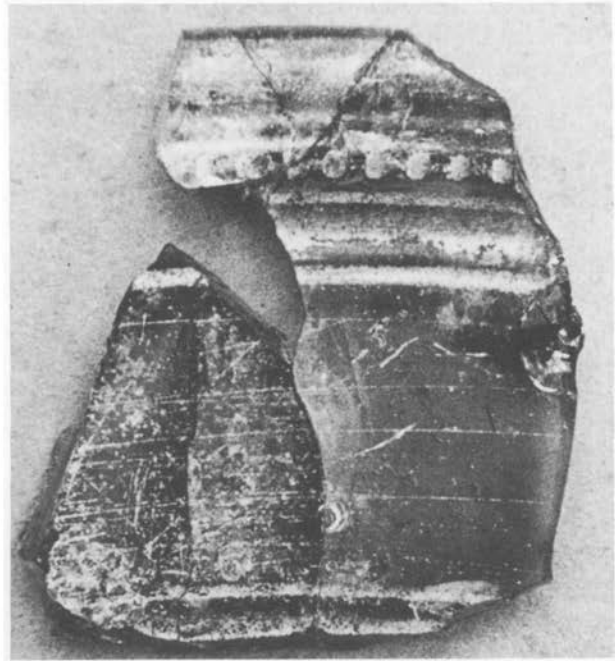
*Dura-Europos*<sup>15</sup> offers but a single fragment of a beaded-rim bowl, its clay “bright buff,” the glaze brownish.

The beaded-rim bowl thus was widespread in the Near East, but nowhere in any large quantity, possibly because of the time-consuming, and probably somewhat difficult, job of adding the beading to the molding on the inside of the rim. The type without the beading, but with similar molded rims, usually occurs at the same sites, as well as at many others, and in greater quantities. In his study of the material from Gezer, Gitin notes that while the beaded examples occur only in contexts of the mid-second century B.C., those without the beading are attested in contexts of the late second century and the early first century.<sup>16</sup>

The Missouri bowl thus represents a type of decorated vessel that was made, largely along the Syro-Palestinian coastal region, in the mid-second century B.C. and was widely distributed in the Near East. The beaded-rim bowl seems not to have been made in large numbers. The fabric of this bowl, and seemingly of the other fragments reported here, is the light buff, finely levigated clay which we know to have been used for the very large quantities of red-slipped pottery found at Tel Anafa, where it appeared first in the third quarter of the second century B.C.<sup>17</sup> This ware is known not only from the Near East, but from all of the eastern Mediterranean area. But at Tel Anafa it is also known in many examples of fine black-glazed ware, as well as in a number of vases which are partly black and partly red or brown,<sup>18</sup> as is the Missouri bowl. So, it epitomizes, as well, the change-over from the black-glazed to red-glazed, or red-slipped, wares, a process which took place, it now seems, within the third quarter of the second century B.C. The method of application of the slip, black or red, by dipping from two sides, is already in evidence on the Missouri bowl, as on other black-slipped wares in the local light-buff fabric.<sup>19</sup>



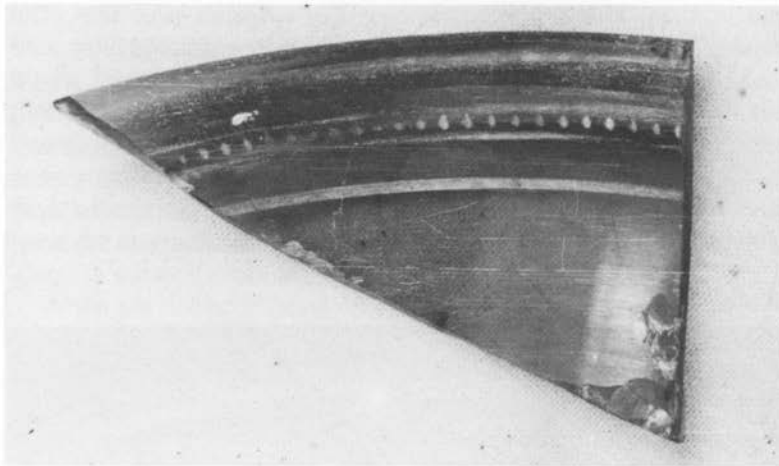
2 a, b. Fragment of a beaded-rim glass bowl from Ashdod. Courtesy of D. Barag.



It has often been observed that along with the appearance of the red-slipped ware at Tel Anafa, there appeared for the first time great quantities of molded glass bowls, either in conical shapes, like our pottery bowl, or in hemispherical forms.<sup>20</sup> Such glass vessels were used widely in the Syro-Palestinian area, but nowhere have they been found in anywhere near the quantity that has been uncovered by nine seasons of excavations at Tel Anafa. In addition, another considerable amount of such glass fragments, not so large as that found at Tel Anafa, was found on the surface in the area of Kibbutz Hagoshrim, some five miles north of Tel Anafa.<sup>21</sup> This suggests that the molded glass vessels, like the red-slipped wares, may have been made in this area.<sup>22</sup>



2 c. Fragment of a beaded-rim glass bowl from Samaria, Harvard Semitic Museum.



2 d. Fragment of a beaded-rim glass bowl, Herakleion Museum, Crete.

What is of particular interest here is that a few examples of the contemporaneous molded, conical glass bowls have beading as part of the interior decoration. Their rarity is understandable, since cutting the beaded molding on the glass bowl would have been even more time consuming than stamping or rouletting it in the pottery bowls. They are, indeed, much scarcer and we know of only three fragments of such glass bowls; two are from Palestinian sites—Ashdod and Samaria—while the third is from Herakleion on Crete. The first two are sites where much red-slipped ware has been found, including (as was mentioned above) pieces of beaded-rim clay bowls. The single fragment from Ashdod (fig. 2b) was published by D. Barag in Dothan, "Ashdod II-III" (see footnote 8), p.

203, fig. 105.8 and Pl. XCVIII:6.<sup>23</sup> It is dated by its context "not later than the second century B.C.E. and perhaps earlier."<sup>24</sup> The Samaria fragment is now in the Harvard Semitic Museum (fig. 2c).<sup>25</sup> The third beaded glass fragment (fig. 2d), in the Herakleion Museum in Crete, was examined, recorded, and photographed by Dr. Gladys D. Weinberg, who brought it to my attention.

It is now clear that both clay and glass were used to make conical bowls in the second century B.C. In each case, bowls with beaded rims are very few as compared with the unbeaded ones in the same material. It would be difficult to determine which may have had precedence, clay or glass, for both appeared in the same quarter century. In publishing the Ashdod glass fragment, Barag says: "Since the pottery bowls were cheaper than such glass vessels, it is plausible to assume that the potter imitated a current glass type."<sup>26</sup> But Barag also writes: "Both the glass and the pottery type imitate in a general way a metal prototype, but they are so much alike that there must be a direct link between them."<sup>27</sup>

It is, then, to the metal prototype that we must now turn. The mastos bowl in silver is well known and is described and illustrated by D. E. Strong in *Greek and Roman Gold and Silver Plate*,<sup>28</sup> where a number of examples, most of the late Hellenistic period, are cited, one of them with a beaded molding on the interior, as well as two on the outside, of the rim. One of these last (fig. 3) is from a treasure found at Santisteban del Puerto in Spain.<sup>29</sup> The identical shape, with beading on the interior of the rim, occurs in bronze as the bowl

3. Beaded-rim conical silver bowl found at Santisteban del Puerto, Spain.







of a simpulum in the Brooklyn Museum (fig. 4).<sup>30</sup> Similarities in form and decoration, as well as their contemporaneity, can leave little doubt that the craftsmen in one medium knew and imitated bowls in other media. As Barag suggested,<sup>31</sup> the more precious material, in this case metal, probably had precedence over the baser ones; within the metals, silver most likely had precedence over bronze. Such an assumption is strongly supported by the fact that the beaded band is rather easy to create in metal, by punching from the interior. Making a beaded band in clay, or even more in glass, is a much more arduous task.

When the Missouri bowl was acquired by the museum in 1980, its interest lay particularly in its fabric, identical with that of the pottery we had been finding, in both black and red wares, during nine seasons of the museum's excavations at Tel Anafa,<sup>32</sup> as well as its shape and decoration, including the double-dipping technique ubiquitous on the Anafa pottery. The bowl grew much in interest and importance as its glass and metal cognates came to our attention. It was not until quite recently, however, that we realized that our study was in concurrence with a much wider one, culminating in an exhibition at the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford in 1985,<sup>33</sup> which illuminated clearly and precisely the influence of metalwork on pottery in several places in the ancient and medieval world. The Missouri bowl takes that study one step farther in that it relates pottery to luxury products in both metal and glass.

4. *Simpulum*, Egypt, 3rd–1st c. B.C., bronze, Brooklyn Museum, Charles Edwin Wilbour Fund (58.127).

<sup>1</sup>Muse 15 (1981) 12.

<sup>2</sup>Acc. no. 80.249. H., 0.116 m.; D. Rim, 0.159 m.

<sup>3</sup>Hetty Goldman, ed., *Excavations at Gözlü Küle, Tarsus I, The Hellenistic and Roman Periods* (Princeton 1950), Chapter VI, Frances Follin Jones, "The Pottery," 219, no. 114, figs. 125 and 181.

<sup>4</sup>F. O. Waage, ed., *Antioch-on-the-Orontes IV, Part 1, Ceramics and Islamic Coins* (Princeton 1948), 12, no. 55, fig. 3, no. 7-11; pl. II, no. 55, b-f.

<sup>5</sup>W. G. Dever, H. D. Lance, and G. E. Wright, *Gezer I: Preliminary Report of the 1964-66 Seasons* (Jerusalem 1970), pl. 33, nos. 7-8.

<sup>6</sup>Dever, Lance, Wright, *Gezer I* 67, Locus 3022P.

<sup>7</sup>*Ceramic Typology of the Late Iron II, Persian and Hellenistic Periods at Tell Gezer III: The Analysis*, diss., Hebrew Union College, Jewish Institute of Religion (Cincinnati), 301-2, type 209A.

<sup>8</sup>M. Dothan, "Ashdod II-III. The Second and Third Seasons of Excavation 1963, 1965. Soundings in 1967," *'Atiqot*, English Series IX-X (Jerusalem 1971) 46, fig. 16, no. 14; 208, fig. 99, nos. 1-2.

<sup>9</sup>J. Matthers and others, "Tell Rifa'at 1977: Preliminary Report of an Archaeological Survey," *Iraq* 40 (1978) 149, fig. 41:19.

<sup>10</sup>A. P. Christensen and C. F. Johansen, *Hama: Fouilles et recherches de la Fondation Carlsberg, 1931-1938. Les poteries hellénistiques et les terres sigillées orientales. (National-museets Skrifter VIII)* (Copenhagen 1971), 118, no. 1, fig. 46, 18.1.

<sup>11</sup>L. A. Cornell, *Late Hellenistic and Early Roman Red-Slipped Pottery from Tel Anafa, 1968-1973* (diss., University of Missouri-Columbia 1980), 179, no. P205TA73, pl. 23. Dr. Kathleen Slane has kindly informed me that there is but one beaded fragment from the last four seasons of excavation.

<sup>12</sup>*Samaria-Sebaste. Reports of the Work of the Joint Expedition in 1931-1933 and of the British Expedition in 1935 III*, J. W. Crowfoot, K. M. Kenyon, and G. M. Crowfoot: *The Objects* (London 1957), 335, nos. 15-17, fig. 80.

<sup>13</sup>J. B. Hennessy, "Excavations at Samaria-Sebaste, 1968," *Levant II* (1970) 12, fig. 9.6.

<sup>14</sup>Max Freiherr von Oppenheim, *Tell Halaf. Vierter Band: Die Kleinfunde aus historischer Zeit*, Barthel Krouda (Berlin 1962), 90, 107, nos. 116-21; pls. 73, 116; 81, 117.

<sup>15</sup>D. H. Cox, *The Excavations at Dura-Europos, Final Report IV, Part I, Fascicule 2: The Greek and Roman Pottery* (New Haven 1941), 25, no. 25.

<sup>16</sup>Op. cit., pp. 301-2.

<sup>17</sup>S. Weinberg, "Tel Anafa, The Third Season," *Muse* 5 (1971) 13.

<sup>18</sup>S. Herbert, "Tel Anafa 1978: Preliminary Report," *BASOR* 234 (1979) 82, note 3.

<sup>19</sup>The use of this method on black-glaze wares goes back to the fourth century B.C.: G. R. Edwards, *Corinthian Hellenistic Pottery, Corinth VII*, no. 3 (Princeton 1975), 66. In this early double-dipping process, the vessel was dipped top and bottom, causing a darker strip horizontally. In

the late Hellenistic period, as seen on our bowl and in the great quantity of examples from Tel Anafa, dipping was done from two opposite sides, leaving a darker strip running from rim to rim across the bottom. Dr. Kathleen Slane has suggested that the bowl presented here may be the earliest example of the later type of double dipping.

<sup>20</sup>D. F. Grose, "The Syro-Palestinian Glass Industry in the Later Hellenistic Period," *Muse* 13 (1979) 54.

<sup>21</sup>G. D. Weinberg, "Notes on Glass from Upper Galilee," *Journal of Glass Studies* 15 (1973) 35-51.

<sup>22</sup>Note: The theory that the Late Hellenistic Red Slipped ware, called Eastern Terra Sigillata-I, or ETS-1, which is a misnomer, was made in Cyprus (J. Gunneweg, I. Perlman, J. Yellin, *The Provenience, Typology and Chronology of Eastern Terra Sigillata Qedem*, 17, Jerusalem, 1983, 11-12) seems to me to be totally without merit. It is based on a similarity of the chemical profile of ETS-1 wares "to that of large numbers of Cypriote pottery," which "represent diverse categories (mostly of the Bronze Age), all of which follow Cypriote tradition of pottery making. They include Cypriote Plain White, Black-Red Slip, among others" (p. 11). The thousand-year difference in date between the Cypriote wares that were the majority of the sample and the ETS-1 wares does not seem to bother the scientists. They mention that clays from eastern Cyprus analyze like the Bronze Age pottery, and by extension the ETS-1, but there is no indication that they have looked for, or in any way investigated, clay beds in the area which has offered by far the largest amount of ETS-1 pottery, Upper Galilee in Israel. They can only conclude (p. 13): "Unfortunately there is no way to assign a statistical probability to the thesis that there is no other clay source in the eastern Mediterranean which analyzes exactly like the ETS-1 wares." The fact that ETS-1 pottery is virtually unknown on Cyprus would, in itself, suggest that it was not made there. While the storerooms of the Nicosia Museum are filled by thousands of vases of wares which are known to have been made on the island, they hold but one small plate of ETS-1 ware, and I could find no sherd material there; this is exclusive of Hayes's "Cypriote Sigillata," which is of a different fabric (*RDAC*, 1967, 65-77).

I believe the problem of the source of manufacture of ETS-1 ware is anything but solved, and it will not be until kiln sites and/or clay beds are found and investigated in the area in which ETS-1 pottery has been found in by far the greatest abundance, Upper Galilee. The authors' statement, "Therefore, it is not outlandish to think of Cyprus as the source of the abundant ETS-1 ware" (p. 12), does not show great confidence in their conclusions; I have much less.

I am not alone in my incredulity. While the book cited above was based largely on the dissertation of J. Gunneweg, the advisor for that dissertation, Professor Avraham Negev, calls the conclusions "most astonishing," and adds: "The whole notion of transporting the multitude of ordinary vessels found in every household in the Mediterranean across great distances seems so unlikely that I believe some other explanation has to be sought" (A. Negev, *The Late Hellenistic and Early Roman Pottery of Nabatean*

Oboda. *Final Report. Qedem*, 22, Jerusalem, 1986, pp. XVIII-XIX). What he does suggest is that clay would have been brought from Cyprus and distributed to various pottery manufacturing centers in Palestine. This is certainly more credible. Manufacture closer to the area in which the greatest amount of ETS-1 ware has been found would be even more credible.

<sup>23</sup>I am indebted to Professor Barag for furnishing both the photograph and the drawing of the Ashdod fragment.

<sup>24</sup>Barag in Dothan, "Ashdod II-III," 203.

<sup>25</sup>The illustration is from a color photo taken by Professor D. Barag and I am grateful to him for it. Permission to publish it has come from the Harvard Semitic Museum.

<sup>26</sup>Barag in Dothan, "Ashdod II-III," 203.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

<sup>28</sup>Cornell University Press, Ithaca, N.Y., 1966, 108-9.

<sup>29</sup>F. Alvarez-Ossorio, *Tesoros Espanoles Antiguos en el Museo Arqueologico Nacional* (Madrid 1954), 53, pl. XXXVI.1, from which our figure is taken.

<sup>30</sup>No. 58.127. It is described and illustrated in *Greek and Roman Metalware, Loan Exhibition, Feb. 14–Apr. 14, 1976*, The Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore, 1976, where it is no. 49, and from which our illustration is taken.

<sup>31</sup>Barag in Dothan, "Ashdod II-III," 203.

<sup>32</sup>S. Weinberg, *Muse* 3: 16-23, 4: 15-29, 5: 8-16, 6: 8-18, 8: 8-14; S. C. Herbert, *Muse* 12: 21-29, 13:16-21, 14: 24-30, 15:23-29. The last four seasons were undertaken by a joint expedition of the museum and the Kelsey Museum of the University of Michigan, under the direction of Professor Sharon C. Herbert of Michigan.

<sup>33</sup>M. Vickers, O. Impey, J. Allen, *From Silver to Ceramics: The Potter's Debt to Metalwork in the Graeco-Roman, Oriental and Islamic Worlds*, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, 1986. The previous year, Mr. Vickers had published an article titled "Artful Crafts: The Influence of Metalwork on Athenian Painted Pottery," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 105 (1985) 108-28.

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