

GILDED SILVER JUG

Sassanid, 6th - 7th century A.D.

Gilded Silver

H: 18 cm (7.09)

Reference: 18234



This jug was entirely made by cold hammering: the artist worked with a silver disc which he progressively modeled into a bottle using an anvil. The neck and bottom were probably made separately and soldered to the body.

The shape of the vessel is very simple: a small circular, flat foot supports the ovoid body surmounted by a cylindrical, flared neck. The lip is vertical and would have been covered with a lid, as attested by a related example whose disk-shaped lid is adorned with a globular handle representing a pomegranate.

The decoration is limited to two gold bands placed under the shoulder and on the lower neck.

The large quantity of richly decorated gold and silver tableware in the Sassanid court was proverbial: the most widespread forms are the plates, the jugs and the bottles, like the present piece which constitutes a beautiful example of the Iranian silversmith's trade in that period. It is nowadays common to attribute to them a secular rather than a religious meaning, especially in connection with the banquets that took place in the Sassanian court, when precious metal tableware was used for the service.

The Sassanids ruled Iran from 224 A.D. (end of the domination of the Parthian kings) until the Arab invasion of 651 A.D. This period was a golden age in the history of Iran: the Sasanian Empire extended throughout the Near East, as it is still considered today (Iran, Iraq, Armenia, southern Caucasus, southern central Asia, western Afghanistan, part of Pakistan, eastern regions of Turkey, Syrian territories, part of the Arabian Peninsula). In many respects, this period represents the highest achievement of the ancient Persian civilization, just before the Muslim conquest and the subsequent adoption of the doctrine of Muhammad. The cultural influence of the Sassanids spread far beyond the Near East, reaching Western Europe, Africa, the Middle

East and the Far East, and played a role both in the emerging Islamic civilization and culture, and in Byzantine, Asian and European art of the Middle Ages.

CONDITION

Complete and in excellent condition; minor restorations and cracks on the body. Lip slightly deformed. Surface carefully cleaned, traces of green oxidation.

PROVENANCE

Formerly Japanese collection; private collection, London, 1998; private collection, acquired on the London art market, in 2005.

EXHIBITED

PAD, Geneva, 2018

BIENNALE, Paris, 2010

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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VON BOTHMER D. (ed.), *Glories of the Past, Ancient Art from the S. White and L. Lévy Collection*, New York, 1990, pp. 60-62, nos. 44-45.