

## Roman bronze vessels on three tear-shaped feet

D. Božič

In *Instrumentum* 12, 2000, 32 Michel Feugère wrote a short article, devoted to small enigmatic tear-shaped bronze objects. Two such pieces, belonging to the Comarmond Collection in the British Museum, London, were found in glass urns, being part of the inventories of two Roman graves from Le Pouzin and Orange in southern France. They were interpreted by Comarmond as votive tears, given in grave as a sign of the pain of the relatives.

Feugère emphasised the rarity of this type of Roman small bronze object. Other than the above-mentioned examples from southern France he cited others from three sites in Spain and several found in the Roman colony of Aquileia in the Friuli region in north-eastern Italy. To this small collection we can add only one piece, found in Köln (Liesen 1999, 396, "Nicht bestimmtes Objekt", fig. 33: B/368 – fig. 1 : 1). Two similar objects, in the form of a lunula, were found in Baden (Holliger, Holliger 1989, 66, "Gefäßuntersatz", pl. 2: 24 – fig. 1 : 2) and in the Augustan camp of Augsburg-Oberhausen (Hübener 1973, 42, "Mondsichelanhänger", no 48, pl. 25 : 40 – fig. 1 : 3) and may perhaps have possessed the same function.

Fig. 1 — Roman bronze vessel feet from Köln (1), Baden (2) and Augsburg-Oberhausen (3). Scale 1:1.

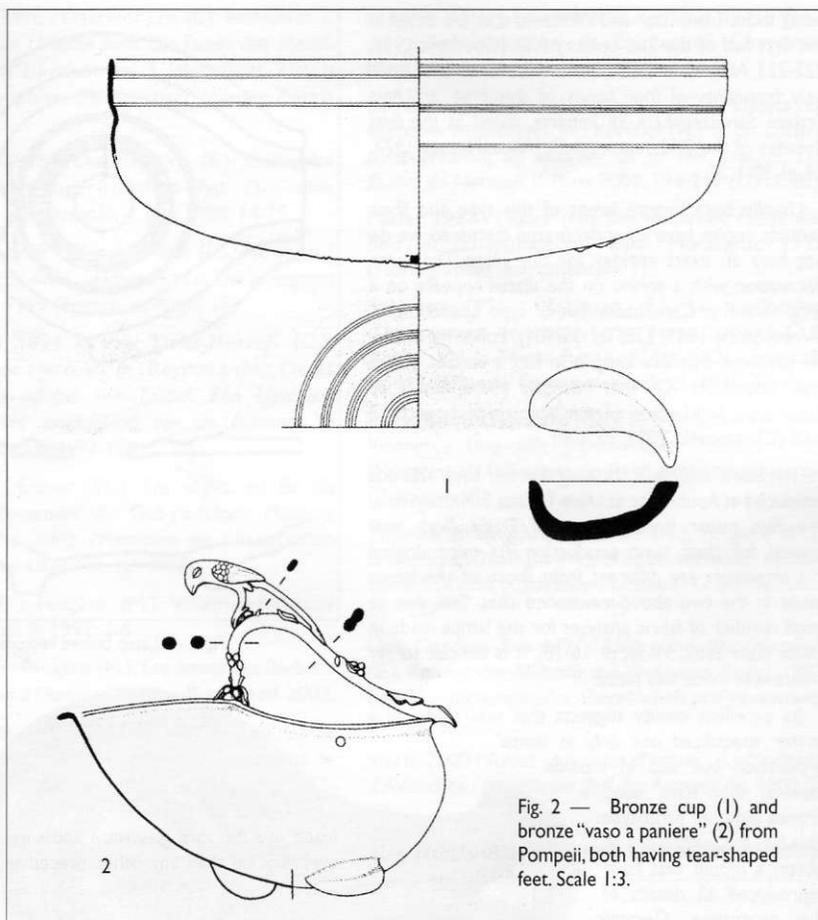
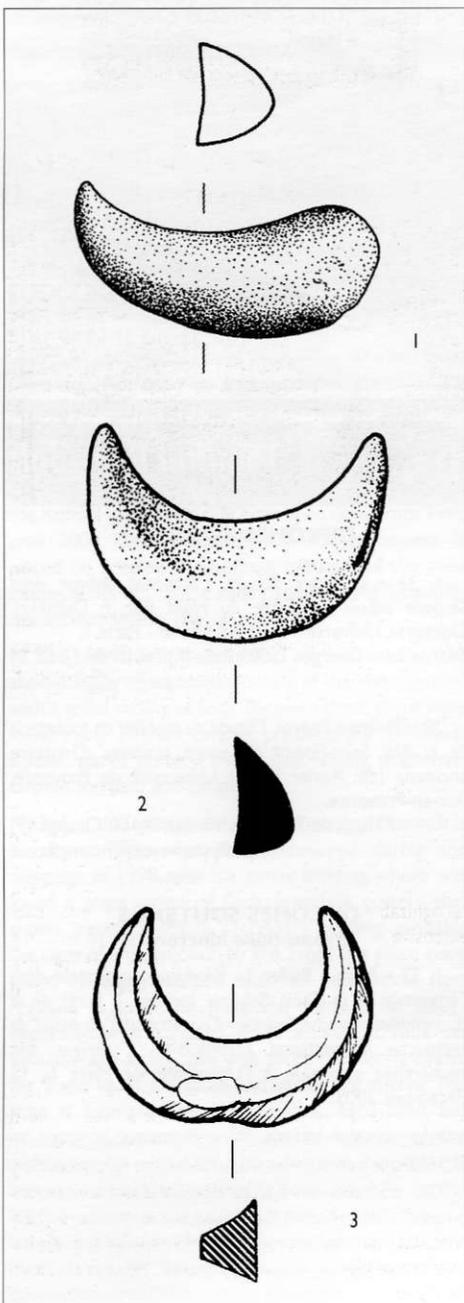


Fig. 2 — Bronze cup (1) and bronze "vaso a paniere" (2) from Pompeii, both having tear-shaped feet. Scale 1:3.

Feugère, who studied several such pieces in the original, noticed that their flat side often had traces of solder while the rounded external side was often worn (Feugère 2000). Because of these characteristics he was convinced that they had been attached, in threes, to the bottoms of quite large bronze vessels used as liquid containers; that is, that they served as feet for the vessels with rounded or flat bases. But Feugère could not support his supposition by citing any Roman vessel having such tear-shaped feet still in situ: "Pourtant, on ignore à ce jour la forme des vases, probablement d'assez grande taille, dont le fond était pourvu de ces supports en forme de goutte." He could only suggest that a vessel having such feet might perhaps be a big bronze situla.

On 11th March 2004 I was looking for early Imperial "strainer" handles in the compendium of Suzanne Tassinari on the Roman bronze vessels from Pompeii. I did not find any "strainer" handles, but I unexpectedly came across a large bronze cup, with a rim diameter of 24 cm and a rounded base fitted originally with three tear-shaped feet, one of which was still attached (Tassinari 1993, part 1, 78, type M1210, 149, Casa imperiale, no 32; part 2, 166, no 12866 – fig. 2 : 1): "Mancano due dei tre piedi; il piede restante ha forma di virgola." Quite similar feet seem to appear also on one example of the so called "vaso a paniere" (basket vessel), differing from all other vessels of this type by its rounded bottom (Tassinari 1993, part 1, 85, type P1100, 164, Casa del Moralista, no 1, pl. 88: 2 and 166: 1; part 2, 181, no 2551 – fig. 2 : 2): "Il recipiente poggia su tre piedi spessi a forma di mandorla."

Conclusion: the supposition of Michel Feugère was right. The tear-shaped objects really are the feet of Roman bronze vessels, obviously quite rare. As it is often the case with the feet of Roman vessels of the Late Republican period, their use was not restricted to one bronze vessel type, but they occurred on several of them. To give only two examples: the kidney-shaped feet with two holes or two cavities, characteristic of the Kelheim type bronze jugs of the Late Republican period, are also found on two jugs of other types (Božič 2003, 262, fig. 5 : 1); similarly, the feet with four protuberances, the internal two of which are strongly curved, appear on the jugs of the Ornavasso-Montefiascone, Gallarate and Kjaerumgaard type

(Dohme 2002, 90, pl. 61 : 245c; Potočnik 1987, 171, fig. 4; Šimek 1953, 464, fig. 179 : 1). As to the dating of the tear-shaped bronze feet, Pompeii gives us as the terminus ante quem the fatal year of 79 AD.

Dragan Božič  
Inštitut za arheologijo ZRC SAZU  
Novi trg 2  
SI-1000 Ljubljana, Slovenija  
dragan.bozic@zrc-sazu.si

### Bibliography :

- Božič 2003 : Božič (D.), L'aiguïère en bronze de la tombe à char de Verna (Isère) : une composition tripartite, *Arheološki vestnik* 54, 2003, 259-269.
- Dohme 2002 : Dohme (I.), *Bronzegefäße*. In : Wyss (R.), Rey (T.), Müller (F.), *Gewässerfunde aus Port und Umgebung*. Bern, 2002 (Schr. d. Bern. Hist. Mus. 4), 86-87.
- Feugère 2000 : Feugère (M.), Supports de vase en forme de goutte, *Instrumentum* 12, déc. 2000, 32.
- Holliger, Holliger 1989 : Holliger (Ch.), Holliger (C.), *Bronzegefäße aus Baden-Aquae Helveticae, Jahresbericht der Gesellschaft Pro Vindonissa*. 1988/1989, 58-77.
- Hübener 1973 : Hübener (W.), *Die römischen Metallfunde von Augsburg-Oberhausen*. Kallmünz, 1973 (Materialh. zur Bayer. Vorgesch. 28).
- Liesen 1999 : Liesen (B.), Die Grabungen südlich und westlich des Kölner Doms I. Die Funde aus Metall, *Kölner Jahrbuch* 32, 1999, 343-431.
- Potočnik 1987 : Potočnik (M.), Ljubljana, *Arheološki pregled* 27, 1986 (1987), 170-172.
- Šimek 1953 : Šimek (E.), *Velká Germanie Klaudivia Ptolemaia* 4. Brno, 1953 (Spisy Masar. univ. v Brně, Filos. fak. 49).
- Tassinari 1993 : Tassinari (S.), *Il vasellame bronzeo di Pompei*. Roma, 1993 (Cataloghi 5).