

# A Table Ronde on a treasure of late Roman silver

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The Sevso or Seuso treasure of late-Roman silver plate, which appeared on the antiquities market in 1990, but disappeared later in the same year into the vaults of a New York court, has aroused great interest and curiosity among students of late Roman silver. As two of us were responsible for the publication of the Kaiseraugst silver treasure,<sup>1</sup> now housed in the Römermuseum at Augst, we thought it worthwhile to invite a number of specialists for a seminar. This took place at the Römerstiftung Dr. René Clavel, Augst, on October 15-16, 1990, and was attended by the majority of those invited.<sup>2</sup>

The basis for the discussion was provided by articles on the treasure that have been published recently in various periodicals,<sup>3</sup> a booklet distributed by Sotheby's of London,<sup>4</sup> a series of slides, and a working catalogue by K. S. Painter written after a preliminary examination of some of the original objects.<sup>5</sup> The various topics were dealt with in a free discussion over the two days, with no agenda or prepared papers. The following remarks do not pretend to be a fully documented article, and aim simply to make available conveniently and to a wider audience observations made in the course of the discussion held at the Table Ronde. For photographs of many of the objects, and for further evidence and interpretations of the various pieces by various scholars, the interested reader is referred to the several publications cited in note 3.

## Content

The treasure has been described in articles by Dr. Marlia Mango, and we refer readers to her publications for further details. For the convenience of readers of this journal, we list the objects briefly, retaining the order as in Dr. Mango's article in *Antike Welt*:

### 1. Geometric dish

Diameter 64.2 cm. Nielloed. The border has a bead-and-reel pattern. The central medallion is surrounded by a gilt band and a wave-pattern, and it contains a niello-inlaid pattern of linked hexagons and squares, which are filled respectively with stars and crosses.

### 2. Seuso dish

Diameter 70.5 cm. Nielloed and gilded. Within the beaded border the horizontal rim has two decorated bands, one showing 12 hunting scenes, the other elaborate geometrical patterns. Round the central medallion is a nielloed elegiac couplet, beginning and ending at a small wreathed Chi-Rho: H(A)EC SEVSO TIBI DVRENT PER SAECVLA MVLTA / POSTERIS VT PROSINT VASCVLA DIGNA TVIS. The central medallion shows a picnic and hunting scene, and it incorporates the two small names INOCENTIVS, next to a horse, and PELSO, next to a stretch of water.

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- 1 H. A. Cahn, A. Kaufmann-Heinimann, *et al.*, *Der spätrömische Silberschatz von Kaiseraugst*, 2 vols (Basler Beiträge zur Ur- und Frühgeschichte, Bd.9, Derendingen 1984). Since references on late Roman silver treasures can be found there, we refrain from providing full bibliographies (prior to 1984) in the footnotes which follow.
  - 2 The participants were P. E. Arias, F. Baratte, P. Blome, B. Brenk, H. A. Cahn, V. Clairmont-von Gonzenbach, B. Deppert-Lippitz, A. Effenberger, H. Hellenkemper, C. Johns, A. Kaufmann-Heinimann, A. Kossatz, M. Martin, St. Martin, C. Metzger, M. Nagy, A. Oliver, K. Painter, L. Schneider, E. Simon, R. A. Stucky, E. Tóth.
  - 3 J. Greenfield, "The Sevso treasure, the legal case," *Apollo* July 1990, 14-16  
M. M. Mango, "The Sevso treasure hunting plate," *Apollo* July 1990, 2-13  
M. M. Mango, "Der Seuso-Schatzfund. Ein Ensemble westlichen und östlichen Kunstschaffens," *Antike Welt* 21 (1990) 70-88  
M. Nagy and E. Tóth, "The Seuso treasure. The Pannonian connection?" *Minerva* 1.7 (September 1990) 5-11 (see also n.33 below)  
K. S. Painter, "The Seuso treasure," *Minerva* 1.4 (April 1990) 4-11.  
Dr. Marlia Mango kindly sent copies of her articles in *Apollo* and *Antike Welt* to each member of the group.
  - 4 *The Sevso treasure, a collection from late antiquity* (Sotheby's, London 1990).
  - 5 K. S. Painter examined in 1981 and 1982 the following ten pieces: nos. 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 12, 14.