

Selected Roman and Italian acquisitions in the Department of Greek and Roman Antiquities, British Museum, 1980-1992

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British Museum Occasional Papers 22 (1981) comprised articles on some of the more interesting acquisitions of the Department of Greek and Roman Antiquities in the period from 1976 to 1979, together with a summary list for that period compiled by D. M. Bailey. This was intended as the first of a series of such reports to appear every 3-4 years. In the event, no further list was issued. The present account runs from 1980 to the beginning of 1993, that is until the retirement of the author as Keeper of Greek and Roman Antiquities, and provides a list of Roman and Italian (including Etruscan) material acquired by gift or purchase, together with an indication, sometimes rather summary in form, of a large number of objects transferred to the British Museum from the Victoria and Albert Museum and of the objects presented by the Trustees of the Wellcome Trust in 1982. A similar account of Greek and related antiquities acquired in the same period has appeared as the "Museum Supplement" in *JHS* 114 (1994) 243-47.

The acquisitions policy of the Trustees of the British Museum is to avoid acquiring objects that have obviously been recently smuggled from their countries of origin, so as not to encourage or contribute to the spoliation of archaeological sites. In this way the Trustees have upheld the spirit of the 1970 UNESCO Convention on the transfer of cultural property, even though Her Majesty's Government has not formally signed it. In consequence, many otherwise desirable objects that have been offered by dealers or have appeared in auction catalogues have not been acquired. In a number of cases, however, where the date or circumstances of export have been in doubt, it has been possible to obtain an assurance from the authorities of the country of origin that there was no objection on their part to acquisition by the British Museum, and it is a pleasure to acknowledge the collaboration of the Italian authorities (other countries were similarly generous in regard to Greek objects) and to set on record our gratitude. It will be obvious that these concessions could not even have been requested if the British Museum's Trustees had not been known to have a strict acquisitions policy. Thanks are also due to the Bulgarian authorities for their generous policy in allowing *partage* of the finds of jointly financed excavations, in accordance with the interchange of cultural property recommended in the preamble of the UNESCO Convention. It is to be regretted that many signatories of the Convention are reluctant to implement this recommendation.

ROMAN

Bronzes, figured (The conventional and familiar term is retained in preference to "copper alloy").

1989.1-30.1 Handle-attachment of a large *situla* in the form of a mask of Dionysos (or Silenos?), bearded and wearing a taenia and an ivy-crown. Details inlaid in copper, silver and iron. Ht. 0.214. c.50 B.C. to A.D. 100. Formerly in the collections of Dr Richard Mead (1673-1754) and Sir Paul Methuen (1672-1757). *Sale Cat. Langford, 20-22 March 1755* (Mead collection), no. 35. *Sale Cat. Sotheby's, 12-13 December 1983*, no. 306. *Export of Works of Art 1983-84 (Thirtieth Report of the Reviewing Committee)* (1984) 45-46, no. xxxviii. *Sale Cat. Sotheby's, 8-9 December 1986*, no. 294. *Export of Works of Art 1988-89 (Thirty-fifth*

Report of the Reviewing Committee) (1989) 22-23, pl. VIII. *JHS* 114 (1994) 243, pl. VII (b). Ian Jenkins, "The masks of Dionysos/Pan-Osiris-Apis," *JdI* 109 (1994) 273-99, figs. 1-4. This splendid object, which remained in the Methuen family until 1983, was twice refused an export licence under the Waverley system. It was eventually purchased with the aid of the National Heritage Memorial Fund. Handles of this type are usually reckoned as Roman, but Jenkins (284-86) has argued that this example falls early in the series and should be dated in the Hellenistic period. Fig. 1.

1989.1-30.2 Comic mask. Ht. 0.037. 1st or 2nd c. A.D. Mounted on the modern base of the last and acquired with it. *JHS* 114 (1994) pl. VII (b).

1983.12-29.1 A lictor wearing a tunic, a toga, boots and a wreath, and holding the *fascēs* in his left