

STEFAN R. HAUSER, **Spätantike und frühbyzantinische Silberlöffel**. Bemerkungen zur Produktion von Luxusgütern im 5. bis 7. Jahrhundert. Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum, Ergänzungsband 19. Aschendorffsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, Münster i. Westfalen 1992. 147 Seiten, 52 Tafeln, 4 Karten.

The study of Roman and Byzantine silver spoons has a long history. More than a century ago, in 1889, Wilhelm Fröhner published a list of the thirty inscribed spoons known to him (W. FRÖHNER, *Kritische Analecten: Philologus Suppl.* 5, 1884/89, 58f.). Fifty years were to pass, however, before Ernst Kitzinger, in the first study of the silver from the Anglo-Saxon grave at Sutton Hoo, proposed a typology as a basis for his publication of the spoons from that find (E. KITZINGER, *The Sutton Hoo Ship-Burial. The silver*. *Antiquity* 14, 1940, 40–63, especially 58). Important papers were published by Harald von Petrikovits in 1966 and Vladimir Milojević in 1968 (H. VON PETRIKOVITS, *Frühchristliche Silberlöffel*. In: *Corolla memoriae Erich Swoboda dedicata*. *Röm. Forsch. Niederösterreich* 5, 1966, 173–82; V. MILOJEVIĆ, *Zu den spätkaiserzeitlichen und merowingischen Silberlöffeln*. *Ber. RGK* 49, 1968, 111–48). Only in 1984, however, almost a century after Fröhner's paper, did Max Martin publish, as a substantial section in the volumes on the Kaiseraugst treasure, the most detailed and important study of spoons ever undertaken. In this exemplary work he traced the development of Roman silver spoons from the first to the seventh century (M. MARTIN, *Eßlöffel*. In: H. A. CAHN / A. KAUFMANN-HEINIMANN [eds.], *Der spätrömische Silberschatz von Kaiseraugst* [1984] 55–96). For the period of the fifth to seventh century Martin relied largely on the work of Volker Bierbrauer, who divided his material into three types: „Desana“, „Sutton Hoo“ and „Krefeld-Gellep Grave 1782“ (V. BIERBRAUER, *Die ostgotischen Grab- und Schatzfunde in Italien* [1975]); but Martin felt that this was not entirely satisfactory and he suggested (p. 79) that „eine nochmalige, detaillierte Bearbeitung der Löffel vom Typ Desana und Typ Sutton Hoo ... zu weiteren, differenzierten Einteilungen und Resultaten kommen wird“.

This book takes up that challenge and fills the gap admirably. The author considers 228 silver spoons which are of the mid-fifth to the mid-seventh centuries, and which come from sites as far apart as Britain and Syria. These spoons, through their decoration and the complication of their shapes, offer the opportunity of adding to our knowledge of luxury table services of the period, and this book is the first study of them as a group. He groups them by place of origin and date (pp. 23–59), and then he discusses their decoration (pp. 60–77) and their use (pp. 78–87). He concludes with studies of sets of spoons and their weights, and of their manufacture and of the way in which they were sold. To this are added a thorough catalogue (pp. 99–135), which will be useful to all those who are interested in finds of silver plate, and all the necessary indices.

This is not the place for a discussion of all the technical details of this work; but the author's main results are as follows. He groups the spoons by shape, period and area of distribution (pp. 20–59). This results in two western groups (named after Isola Rizza [Italy], and Desana [Italy]), and nine eastern groups (named after Barbing-Irlmuth [Germany], Lampsakos [Turkey], the ‚Antioch treasure‘ [north-west Syria], Kaper Koraon [Syria], Lambousa [Cyprus] and Mytilene [Greece]). The most important varieties of shape are the pear-shaped bowls, which do not occur before the seventh century and are found only in the east, the handles with mouldings, which predominate in the east and may be contrasted with the less stylized western handles, and the ends of the eastern handles, which are decorated, unlike the pointed ends of western spoons. Decoration varies similarly (pp. 60–77): the eastern groups have decorated bowls and handles with Greek monograms and inscriptions, while the western spoons have Latin monograms, owner inscriptions and Christograms. Use and the context of the finds come next

(pp. 78–87). In the west individual spoons were used as grave-goods, particularly in the Alamannic-Frankish area, up to the end of the first third of the sixth century, and up to the same date spoons occur in treasures in Italy, the territory of the East Goths. In the east, on the other hand, most silver spoons are first found in hoards of plate in the seventh century (most importantly the treasures of Kaper Koraon, Lampsakos and Lambousa), presumably deposited, and not recovered by their owners, because of the threat of Sassanian or Islamic raids. Almost all spoons are to be considered as private table plate, which became increasingly important socially as the centuries went by, marked by increasing weight, more complicated shapes and increased decoration. In both west and east, the ever more elaborate silver spoons were part of the table luxury representative of the period, and the reader, while engrossed in this chapter, should turn also to the discussion, in the chapter on decoration, of the inscriptions on the Lampsakos spoons (pp. 70–4). This draws attention to the fact that spoons were not simply status symbols, but that their decoration (like that of many pieces of table plate) was also a means of providing an elegant point of literary discussion at the dinner table, a subject elaborated in a paper by François Baratte but published too late to be discussed in this book (F. BARATTE, *Vaisselle d'argent, souvenirs littéraires et manières de table. L'exemple des cuillers de Lampsaque*. Cahiers Arch. 40, 1992, 5–20). The chapter on sets and weights (pp. 88–93) begins with some sensible remarks on the problem of the weight of the Roman pound. The author then reinforces the conclusions of Max Martin that sets of four or twelve spoons were normally made to a fixed weight – as indeed were other objects in precious metal at this period, particularly jewellery. These conclusions, about the relationship of sets and weights, have a direct bearing on the production and sale of spoons and most luxury goods in the seventh century in the area of the Mediterranean (pp. 94–7). The author elaborates this with an analysis of the inscriptions on the Lampsakos spoons, the details of which imply that a set was bought by the customer but that the inscriptions were added at various times after that, and he uses his results to develop ideas put forward by Marlia Mundell Mango in a discussion of the spoons in the Kaper Koraon treasure (M. M. MANGO, *The Origins of the Ecclesiastical Silver Treasures of the sixth–seventh Centuries*. In: F. BARATTE [ed.], *Argenterie romaine et byzantine. Actes de la table ronde, Paris 11–13 octobre 1983* [1988] 163–84, especially 171).

Many of the topics in this book, like the technicalities of any subject, though important, will be of interest only to specialists. A question of very wide interest, however, is how far, or indeed whether, spoons were used in the Eucharist. This topic has attracted heated debate, which the author analyses with care in his chapter on the function and context of silver spoons (pp. 78–87). The case has been set out before, for example by Max Martin (*loc. cit.* 92–3); but it may be worth drawing attention to the outlines of the author's argument here, in the hope that readers will take advantage of his analysis of the problem and realise that a past problem may for the moment be regarded as settled.

It was G. B. De Rossi who first proposed the thesis that spoons are generally private in character, but that they can have a secondary use in church (G. B. DE ROSSI, *Bull. Arch. Cristiana*, Ser. 3, 3, 1868, 79 ff.). He maintained that they not only showed the beneficence of the donor families, whose names were on the spoons in the form of monograms or ownership inscriptions, but that they also served the purpose of dipping the wafer in the chalice and of giving it to the communicants. The theory has been maintained in this form down to recent times, and Miložičić is one of its most enthusiastic proponents, relying particularly on the fact that, in modern times, spoons are used for communion in various eastern rites. The arguments against the theory are that representations of communion in the sixth and seventh centuries (e.g. the Stuma and Riha patens; a mosaic in Sant'Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna; the Rossano Codex, fols. 3b, 4a; and the Rabula Codex, fol. 11b) do not show spoons, that spoons are not used in the Latin rite, and that there is no reference to the use of spoons in the eastern rite before the eighth century (J. BRAUN, *Das christliche Altargerät in seinem Sein und in seiner Entwicklung* [1932] 265).

The case for the use of spoons was elaborated by P. Zenetti in 1941, who interpreted the spoons found deposited in Alamannic graves as evidence for the Arian beliefs of those who had died (P. ZENETTI, *Kultlöffel als Zeugnisse christlich-arianischer Bestattungen*. *Mannus* 33, 1941, 148–54). Miložičić adopted this idea in support of his basic argument, maintaining that the Arians will have gained the use of spoons from the many Greek bishops and priests who were in the west in the fifth century (*loc. cit.* 112). The difficulties, in addition to the fact that there is no evidence for the use of spoons in the east earlier than the eighth century, are that there is no evidence that Arians used spoons for communion, and that there is no reason to suppose that spoons in graves are more than prestigious grave-goods, like other expensive objects, placed there to enhance the status of the dead (see H. M. BÖHME, *Löffelbeigabe in spätrömischen Gräbern nördlich der Alpen*. *Jahrb. RGZM* 17, 1970, 172–200; R. CHRISTLEIN, *Besitzabstufungen zur Merowingerzeit im Spiegel reicher Grabfunde aus West- und Süddeutschland*. *Jahrb. RGZM* 20, 1973, 147–80).

Miložičić's final recourse was to use the inscriptions DEO GRATIAS on two spoons from fourth-century graves at Köln-Müngersdorf (*loc. cit.* 133). For Miložičić it seemed „die äußerste Grenze der Wahrscheinlichkeit zu der Gewißheit erreicht zu werden, daß mindestens die beiden Silberlöffel aus

Köln-Müngersdorf bei der Kommunion benutzt wurden“. In this they might be paralleled by spoons which might be pilgrimage souvenirs or possibly used in baptism. Spoons bearing Christian symbols or inscriptions have been claimed to be souvenirs of pilgrimages, brought back like pilgrim bottles. In particular, those spoons with the names of the Apostles have been thought to have come from the Church of the Apostles in Constantinople (CH. DIEHL, *Argenteries syriennes*. Syria 11, 1930, 212f.; E. KITZINGER, *The Sutton-Hoo Ship-Burial. The spoons*. Antiquity 14, 1940, 58–61). As for spoons supposed to have been used in baptisms, the prime example always seemed to be the pair of spoons from Sutton Hoo, the one inscribed ΠΑΥΛΟΣ and the other ΣΑΥΛΟΣ; but it now seems quite clear that the supposed letter sigma at the beginning of ΣΑΥΛΟΣ is in fact a letter Π, illiterately turned on its side – in effect destroying the most convincing evidence that any surviving spoons can be recognised from their decoration as having been used in or having commemorated a baptism. As Josef Engemann showed in 1972, there is in fact no reason why these decorations or inscriptions should be more significant than similar pagan wishes for good luck on other spoons (e.g. VIVAS, or VIVAS IN DEO), just as both pagan and Christian scenes on vessels are little more than interesting decoration (J. ENGEMANN, *Anmerkungen zu spätantiken Geräten des Alltagslebens mit christlichen Bildern, Symbolen und Inschriften*. Jahrb. Ant. u. Christentum 15, 1972, 154–73).

Why, then, do spoons occur in church treasures of this period, from Hama, Antioch, Ma'aret en-Noman, Ghiné and Gallunianu (M. M. MANGO, *Silver from Early Byzantium. The Kaper Koraon and related treasures* [1986])? Marlia Mango has demonstrated that many spoons of this period which were found in church treasures, for example those from Antioch and the fifth spoon from Hama, were there as financial assets of the church. Only in the case of six spoons, from Hama, Ma'aret en-Noman and Ghiné, does she feel that they might have been used in the communion. This is because they are each decorated with a 'vertical' cross (meant to be read while the spoon stands on the tip of the bowl), and not with a 'horizontal' motif (meant to be read when the spoon is held in the right hand, parallel to the ground). It may be, she suggests, that the spoons were decorated in this way because the spoons were to be lowered vertically into the consecrated wine of the chalice (either to stir or distribute). In support of this theory she notes that two of the Hama spoons were presented by individuals who also gave chalices to their church. This imaginative idea is very attractive; but it does not overcome the difficulty which also stands in the way of Milošević's theory, that there is no explicit evidence of the use of spoons for communion earlier than the eighth century. The question should of course remain open. To quote the cliché: Absence of evidence is not evidence of absence. Nevertheless, the balance of the argument, on present knowledge, is clearly tipped against the case for spoons having been used in communion.

I have quoted the author's argument at length, though with distorting brevity, to demonstrate how his perspicacious and thorough analysis of the development of arguments and theories leads again and again to new views of the problems of his subject. The book is a masterly piece of work, and it should stand, with Max Martin's study of spoons, as the basis of all future work on Roman and Byzantine spoons.