A86-Eur-Roman-Glass-Balsamarium Doublet-2nd-3rd cent. CE

 SHAPE \\* MERGEFORMAT 

Case no.: 4

Accession Number: A86

Formal Label: Roman-Glass-Balsamarium Doublet-2nd-3rd cent. CE

**Display Description:**  
 This Balsamarium in aubergine shape consists of two separate tubular compartments with cylindrical necks and everted inward-folded lips. The body was formed by pinching one blown glass bubble at the center, and then folding it together.  The body is wound with green spiral threads. An applied glass trail, grooved down the middle, forms the two thick looped handles on either side and extends to form a high arched basket handle. These vessels are presumed to have contained cosmetics and were most likely suspended at their side loops or handles (see Kunina and Gosudarstvennyi 1997: no. 413 and color plate no. 199 for a cosmetic flask with this type of handle).

**LC Classification:** NK.5107.3

Date or Time Horizon: Late 6th to early 7th century CE

Geographical Area: Rome

**GPS coordinates:** 31º46'5.95" N 35º12'49.36" E



**Map,** East Roman Empire, 533-600. Red markers indicate diffusion of Sidonian glassblowers. From http://users.clas.ufl.edu/ufhatch/pages/03-Sci-Rev/SCI-REV-Home/Historical-Research/maps/shepherd-c-052.jpg

Cultural Affiliation: Roman

Medium: Blown glass

Dimensions:

Height: 15 cm, 5.9 in

Maximum Diameter: 7 cm, 2.75 in

Weight: 69 gm, 2 3/8 oz

Condition: original, good condition with patina and some encrustations and small crack

Provenance: Ex-Touma Dabbah Collection

**Discussion:**

On the eastern borders of the Roman Empire, according to Pliny ca 79 CE (*Historia Naturalis* 36), glassblowing (*flatu figurare*, "shaping by breath") was developed by the Sidonians of the Phoenician Pentapolis.

Glassblowing diffused because of factors political, legal and economic (see Fleming 1999). Politically, Augustus ended a century of civil strife in Italy and created a network of pacified provinces. Legally, Augustus ushered in an era of speedy and safe travel under *Pax Romana* that protected citizens of Rome from Syria to Spain. Economically, Italy experienced a boom that attracted and invigorated entrepreneurialism among artisans and merchants.

Consequently, manySidonian glassblowers immigrated down the coast to Judea where they established ateliers at Jerusalem and possibly at Beth Shean (*Scythopolis*). But others ventured further afield to Italy and established a *vicus vetrarius* or “glassworkers’ quarter” in the vicinity of the Roman Porta Capena in the heart of the Empire (M. Bacchelli et al. 1995) and thereby introduced glassblowing to Romans (Stern 1995, 68-69). Other Italian ateliers were established in Ticino (Biaggio 1991), Naples (Campania; Stern 1976) and Aquileia (Calvi 1991; Scatozza Höricht; Calvi 1968).

Glass-blowing trade expanded to Switzerland (Avenches), to Gaul (*Lugdunum*, i.e., Lyon and Saintes; Nenna 1997; Hochuli-Gysel 1992; B. Velde and A. Hochuli-Gysel 1996), Corsica (Cagliari; Canivet, 1969: fig 15) to the south of the Iberian Peninsula (Price 1987), Libya (Tripoli; Aurigemma 1958, pl.15, fig. 19), and Roman-Berber North Africa (*Caesarea Mauretaniae*, i.e., Tipaza; Lance 1967).

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**AP:**

A ROMAN GREEN GLASS BALSAMARIUM

5TH CENTURY A.D.

Images

 

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Lot Description

A ROMAN GREEN GLASS BALSAMARIUM   
5TH CENTURY A.D.   
The body wound with blue spiral threads, an applied blue trail forming a high arched handle, 5¼ in. (13.4 cm.) high; a Roman translucent aubergine glass flask, the ovoid body with cylindrical neck and everted inward-folded lip; five other glass vessels, some with iridescence, all 1st-3rd Century A.D., 4 7/8 in. (12.5 cm.) high max.; and a heavy green glass unguentarium, 2 7/8 in. (7.3 cm.) high (8)

Special Notice

No VAT will be charged on the hammer price, but VAT at 17.5% will be added to the buyer's premium, which is invoiced on a VAT inclusive basis.

Provenance

Item one: Baurat Schiller collection; Wilhelm Horn (1870-1959).  
Items two-seven: sold Christie's London, 8 June 1988, lot 49 and acquired by the family of Wilhelm Horn.

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