Case 4-A79-Eur-Roman Glass-Pitcher-Single Handle-1st to 4th century CE

 

**Case no.: 4**

**Accession Number:** A79

**Formal Label:** Roman Glass-Pitcher-Single Handle-1st to 4th century CE

**Display Description:**

Pitcher with single handle and possible single bird’s eye. Tan-gold translucent. Plain out splayed rim with trefoil mouth, cylindrical neck, base with slight dome and pontil mark. Heavy encrustations give appearance of not being translucent but original would have been translucent. Handle dropped unto upper part of body, then drawn up and out, then down to rim

If one imagines the pitcher spout as a bird beak, one can see a single eye on left side of the beak (or it is an encrustation?)

**LC Classification:** NK.5107.3

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

**Geographical Area:** possibly Rome area

**GPS coordinates:** 41º54'9.72" N 12º29'46.45" E



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

**Cultural Affiliation:**

**Medium:** Blown glass

**Dimensions:**

Height: 12 cm

Inner Diameter (rim): 2.4 cm

Outer Diameter (rim): 4.5 cm

Maximum Diameter: 5.5 cm

**Weight:** 71 g

**Condition: original**

**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 to Italy, 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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