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SYRIAN GLASS BOTTLE
BEFORE 1321

AN IMPORTANT GLASS BOTTLE OF THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY

The Mohammedan collection of the Institute has been enriched by the acquisition of an exceedingly important glass bottle, which is not merely an outstanding work of Islamic art in glass of the first half of the fourteenth century, but also, because of its inscription, an important document in the history of art.

From the beginning of the twelfth century there developed in northern Syria a technique of gilding and enameling glass ware, which probably was based on pre-Islamic traditions and no doubt originated under Seljuk influence, reaching its highest artistic development in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Two great culture centers, Aleppo and Damascus, came into the foreground of artistic activity with their precious products. From the workshops of these two cities came the richly gilded and enameled glass vessels, which, as Dr. E. Kühnel, the highest authority on Islamic art, rightly says, "mark the climax of decorative development in glass art in the Christian era."¹

Already in the beginning of the thirteenth century the fame of Syrian glass artists had spread into all Islamic countries. They received orders for table ware from the rulers of Egypt, Mesopotamia, Persia, Asia Minor, and even from the Mongolian rulers of far away China. The glass ware was often decorated with the title, name and coat of arms of the owner. The bottle recently acquired by the Institute is a specimen of this magnificent ware, and was made by an artist in the city of Aleppo.

It is 14½ inches in height, made of brownish-white glass, quite free from bubbles, and is decorated in colored enamels. The curved body of the bottle rests on a high base which flares at the bottom. The high, straight neck tapers toward a ring at the top, then slightly

flares again above the ring. The upper part of the body is decorated with a broad inscription frieze which is intercepted by four circular rosettes with palmette flowers. The letters of the inscription, which is a repetition of the Arabic word *al-alim* (the wise), are in Tumar script in blue enamel, surrounded by red and white scroll arabesques. In addition to these colors the flowers in the rosettes are enameled in green and yellow.

On the shoulder of the bottle are four shields, each containing a white flower of five petals outlined in red and encircled by an animal frieze. Between the shields is the long historical inscription, giving the title and name of the owner. Translated literally it reads as follows: "Among what was made by order of Sultan al-Malik al-Mu'ayyad Hazbar ad-dunya wad-din Dawud ibn Yusif ibn (this word repeated by mistake) Omar, be his triumph magnified and also his rule." Above and below the inscription, which is separated into four parts by the shields, are delicate arabesque motifs, the lower ones flanked by two small walking animals.

The broad inscription frieze on the neck of the bottle is similar to that on the body, both in wording and in ornamental execution; the rosettes with palmette flowers have been omitted, however, and animal and ribbon friezes added. All of this ornamentation was originally richly gilded, though now only faint traces of it are visible. Fine red lines outline both the enameled and gilded ornaments and friezes.

The al Malik al-Mu'ayyad Hazbar ed-din Dawud—named in the inscription frieze with his full title—is a well known historical person. He was the fourth ruler of the little dynasty of Beni Rasul in Yemen in southwestern

¹Fr. Kühnel, *Islamische Kleinkunst*, Berlin, 1928, p. 181.

Arabia, and ruled between 1297 and 1321. Contemporary historians praise him as the most prominent patron of the arts of his house, a fact which is confirmed by several magnificent vessels bearing his name. In the collection of the Marquis de Vogüé in Paris there is a glass basin richly decorated with scroll arabesques, with shields containing five-petaled flowers, and with enameled inscription friezes, which is supposed to have been made at the same time as our bottle². We also find Dawud's name on a bronze writing case with gold and silver inlay (dated 1302), now in the Victoria and Albert Museum (370-1897), and on the large bronze candlestick now in the possession of Hugues Kraft.³ Several other costly glass and metal vessels bearing the coat of arms of the Beni Rasul dynasty may also have belonged to him.

On our bottle this coat of arms is repeated four times. It consists, as described above, of a round shield having in the center a five-petaled flower of white enamel on a dark red background. It is interesting to determine whether this color arrangement has any particular significance or was merely the caprice of the artist, for we also find shields having the reverse arrangement, a red flower on a white background.⁴

According to its shape our specimen belongs to a group of enameled glass bottles of which but few are known. Three of these have historical inscriptions which make it possible to give their exact dates. The oldest of the three is the bottle in the Institute, which was made before 1321; the next oldest is in

the collection of Baron Gustave de Rothschild⁵, and bears the name of the son and successor of Dawud, al-Malik al-Mudjahid Ali, who ruled from 1321 to 1363, and the third in the Louvre⁶, which having been ordered for an official of the Mameluke sultan al-Malik Kamil Shaban, must have been made in the year 1346. Other similar bottles but without historical inscriptions, doubtlessly dating after 1300, are in the British Museum, in the Victoria and Albert Museum⁷, in the possession of Mr. Barduc in Paris⁸, and in the Austrian Industrial Art Museum in Vienna.

Our bottle has long been known in the history of art, and was first described in the large specialized work of G. Schmoranz, *Altorientalische Glasgefäße*, Vienna, 1898, p. 16. Later the inscription was discussed by Max van Berchem in his "Notes d'Archéologie musulmane" (*Journal Asiatique*, 1904, pp. 50-51), a fundamental work for the study of the Islamic minor arts. It is also mentioned by G. Migeon in his "Manuel d'Art Musulman" (*Arts plastiques et industriels*, Paris, 1927, Vol. II pp. 137-138) as among the glass vessels of the Beni Rasul rulers and also as a valuable document in the study of the history of art.

It was formerly in the famous Spitzer Collection, then in the Strauss Collection in Vienna, whence it was brought to Detroit for the Loan Exhibition of Mohammedan Decorative Arts, and it will now remain here as an important specimen in the permanent collection of the Institute.

MEHMET AGA-OGLU.

²G. Migeon, *Exposition des arts musulmans*, 1903, Plate LXVIII.

³Max van Berchem, "Notes d'Archéologie musulmane," *Journal Asiatique*, 1904, III, p. 48.

⁴*Meisterwerke muhammedanischen Kunst*, Munchen, 1912, Vol. II, Plate 172, Cat. No. 2107.

⁵G. Migeon, "Manuel d'art musulman," *Art plastiques et industriels*, Paris, 1927, Vol. II, p. 138.

⁶G. Migeon, *Musée du Louvre*, "L'Orient musulman," Paris, 1922, Vol. I, p. 11, Plate 6.

⁷Ed. Dillon, *Glass*, London, 1907, p. 165, Plate XXIII.

⁸*Meisterwerke*, op. cit.



THE VILLAGE PIPER
ANTOINE LE NAIN
FRENCH, 1588—1648

THE VILLAGE PIPER BY ANTOINE LE NAIN

In the early painting of France, the land of classic and court-ruled art, genre painting is a rarity. In the seventeenth century, during the time of The Thirty Years' War, this branch of painting found almost its only representatives in the three brothers Le Nain, whose pictures were so justly admired in the eighteenth century, especially by the English collectors, though during the nineteenth century they were almost forgotten, and have celebrated a brilliant revival only in the last decade. Although as early as 1883 an exhibition of their work was arranged in Laon, the home of the painters, it was only at the meritorious exhibition at the Burlington Fine Arts Club in London in 1910 that the attention of scholars and the general public was directed to the excellent art of these masters, whose work, when placed beside that of the

Dutch and Flemish genre painters, exhibits a peculiarly French character with which, in the eighteenth century, the art of Chardin is linked.

Since the time of this exhibition in London—thanks to the excellent research work of Paul Jamot—it is possible to separate the style of the three brothers, who lived together in so brotherly a spirit that when they signed their pictures they purposely left out their given names. Antoine, the oldest, was born in 1588; Louis, the second, in 1593; and Mathieu in 1607. The first two brothers died in the year 1648, shortly after one another; the youngest in 1677. Last year¹ the Museum acquired a hitherto unpublished work by Mathieu, who, as would be only logical, painted the greater number of the known works. We have recently succeeded in securing for our collection a charming painting by

¹Bulletin of the Detroit Institute of Arts, January, 1929, Vol. X, p. 47.

the oldest of the three brothers, Antoine. The little picture has been mentioned several times in the literature, and was shown in 1910 at the Burlington Fine Arts Club. It comes from the collection of the Duke of Sutherland, and in 1825 was described in the catalog of the collection of "the most noble, the Marquess of Strafford" under the title, *The Village Piper*. There is further an engraving by Saint-Maurice under the title *Le Vieillard Complaisant*, and another in Charles Blanc's *Histoire des peintres*. A. Valabrègue, who in 1904 published the first comprehensive presentation of the Le Nains (*Les frères Le Nain*, Paris, 1904) cites it as "une oeuvre remarquable," explaining, "les figures ont un merveilleux relief."

Paul Jamot² attributed the picture with complete conviction to the oldest of the Le Nains, whose characteristics he designates as the small proportions of the pictures which are done on wood or copper, the lively color, the Flemish influences, and certain peculiarities such as the red lips, the strong white of the eyes, and the crimped, bushy hair. Our little picture coincides in all these peculiarities. Since the picture was painted on copper, the rich enamel-like colors, have been well preserved, and after

cleaning are of astonishing freshness. Whereas the old piper with his dark green mantle brings a sober note into the color composition, the children's costumes, in keeping with their merry faces and their astonished eyes, are of brighter appearance, in light blues, cinnabars and lemon yellows.

Although we know that Antoine Le Nain received instructions from a "foreign" painter in Laon,—in this connection we think first of Flemish painters like David Ryckaert and Joos van Craesbeek—still the manner of composition is individual, and the arrangement of the figures, who stand next to each other, with their uniform height and same-sized heads, is typically French, almost classic in construction.

Stylistically, the picture stands particularly near to the *Réunion de famille*, the well known masterpiece of Antoine Le Nain in the Louvre, which is dated 1642. In fact, upon removal of the varnish, the signature (Le Nain ft. 1644) appeared in the lower left hand corner, showing that it was executed only two years later than that picture.

With its certain date, it must take its place in the small—Jamot gives but ten—list of dated works by the Le Nains.

W. R. VALENTINER.

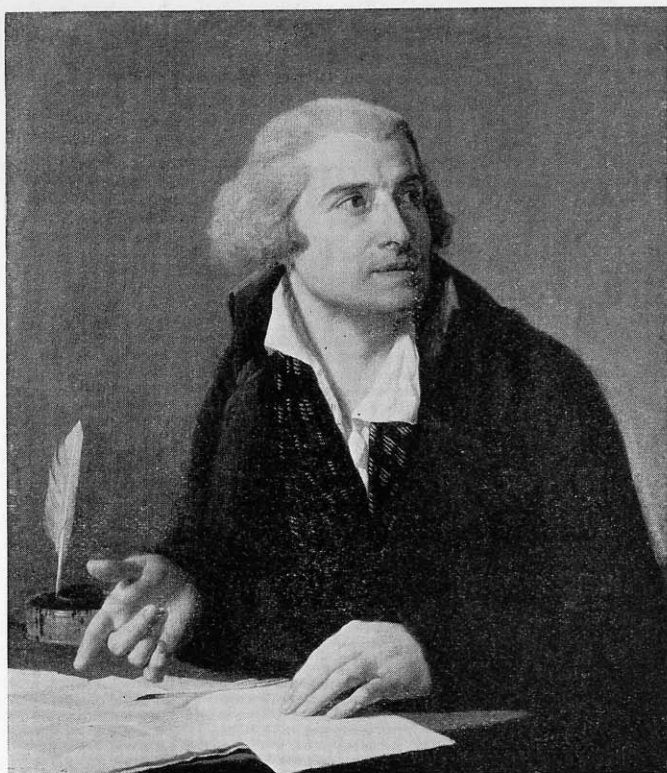
A PORTRAIT BY JEAN FRANCOIS HUE

To the group of paintings of French classicism, comprising works by David, Ingres and the lesser known Louis Bouchet, has recently been added a new piece which well illustrates the early phase of the movement. It is a portrait of the poet Marie Joseph Chenier by Jean François Hue. The canvas, measuring 26¾ inches by 23½ inches, bears in the lower center the signature of the artist in full, with the date 1793.

Jean François Hue was born in 1751 in St. Arnoult-en-Yvelines, near Paris. A pupil of G. F. Doyen and Claude

Joseph Vernet, he first gained a reputation as a landscapist, becoming "*peintre du roi*" and a member of the Academie Royale. Later on, as one of the official glorifiers of Napoleon and his victories, he devoted his art more and more to depicting the military and naval events of his time. Some of these large pictures can be seen in the museum at Versailles. In 1793, the year of our portrait, he was among those artists whom the Republic honored by giving them lodgings and ateliers in the Louvre. In 1800 the ministry of the navy entrusted

²Gazette des beaux arts, 1922, p. 228.



MARIE JOSEPH CHENIER
 JEAN FRANCOIS HUE
 FRENCH, 1751—1823

him with the organization of the "Grande Galerie du Garde-Meuble," now known as the Musée de Marine. Hue died in 1823 in Paris.

The identification of the sitter is based only on an old tradition but is quite convincing inasmuch as this man, whom the artist has characterized as a man of letters, has the bearing of one capable of leadership in political and other affairs. Marie Joseph Blaise de Chenier was born in Constantinople in 1764, the son of a French father and a Greek mother. Like his more famous and ill-fated brother, André Marie,¹ he was a poet and translator. He also wrote several dramas which, because of their

political allusions, aroused great enthusiasm during the feverish days of the early Revolution. As a member of the Jacobin Club, he became prominent by writing political poems and through his activity in various conventions and committees. Under Napoleon, too, he held important offices in the educational service. He died in 1811 in Paris.

The picture itself, in its clear and faithful rendering, well exemplifies the tendencies of the early classicism and is, moreover, in its dramatic, though somewhat theatrical conception, a striking monument of the tempestuous and passion-filled years of the great French Revolution.

WALTER HEIL.

¹André Chenier was beheaded in 1794 because of his denunciation of the Terrorists.



POLYCHROME RHAGES BOWL
XII-XIII CENTURY

A RHAGES BOWL WITH A REPRESENTATION OF AN HISTORICAL LEGEND

Amid the diverse wealth of motifs used in the decoration of Rhages pottery in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the historical-legendary scenes appear most rarely, and up to the present time only a small group of ceramics representing these scenes, a type belonging to the most interesting monuments of Persian decorative art, has become known.

Though the conquest of the Sassanid kingdom by the Arabs in the middle of the seventh century and its subjugation to the Califate of Medina dissolved the political importance of Persia, it could not put an end to the national intellectual life of the country. The high Iranian culture and tradition of the Sas-

sanid epoch could not be suppressed. It was too deeply rooted and for several centuries remained powerful enough to produce in the second half of the tenth century a man who was to immortalize in epic poetry the glorious past of his country. This was Firdawsi, the greatest poet of Persia, whose *Shah-Name*, *The Book of Kings* (completed 1011), not only gave a determining trend to the literature of succeeding ages, but also, in an even greater measure, influenced the decorative arts of Persia. His epic themes, above all, were of fundamental importance in the development of Persian miniature painting. The artists working in metal and pottery also used these themes, confining themselves

however to the reproduction of scenes created by the painters, with their stereotyped formulation and set composition.

The popular hunting scene of the Sassanid king, Bahram Gur, was most frequently represented on Rhages pottery. The king with the beautiful Azadeh sits on a camel and shoots at gazelles, while the lady plays on a harp¹. In addition to this legendary motif, another scene appears on pottery works, of which, so far as I know, but one specimen was known up to the present time.² But in the bowl recently acquired by the Institute we find a second valuable specimen showing this motif.

This bowl is of the usual shape, on a circular base, $3\frac{3}{8}$ inches high and $8\frac{1}{2}$ inches in diameter, and well preserved. The inside of the bowl, bordered with a frieze of stylized Kufic script and palmettes, shows a landscape with trees, flying birds, and a stream in the foreground with a fish and a swimming sea nymph. The historical scene represented is the coronation procession of the Sassanid king, Feridun. In the center is

the young king, Feridun, who was crowned after a revolution. He sits on a bull and holds a sceptre of Chinese form in his hand. Behind him is the dethroned king, Zoh-hak Maran, with hands bound, led as a prisoner in the procession, and in front the blacksmith, Khavah, the man who started the revolution, carrying his leather apron as a standard of the kingdom.

This scene, as well as the above mentioned hunting scene of Bahram Gur, is one of the favorite historical legends in the *Shah-Name* poems, and was no doubt copied from a book illustration. It is interesting to note that with the exception of certain important deviations, the landscape on our bowl is exactly the same as that on a bowl depicting Bahram Gur hunting, which is in the Mortimer Schiff Collection in New York.³

Through this polychrome Rhages bowl the Mohammedan collection of the Institute comes into possession of a work which must be counted among the most valuable products of Persian pottery of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

MEHMET AGA-UGLU.

¹R. M. Riefstahl, *The Parish-Watson Collection of Mohammedan Potteries*, New York, 1922, pp. 38-44, fig. 7.

²Ph. W. Schulz, *Die persisch-islamische Miniaturenmalerei*, Leipzig, 1914, p. 61.

³R. M. Riefstahl, *op. cit.*

DETROIT INSTITUTE OF ARTS

CALENDAR OF LECTURES AND EXHIBITIONS

EXHIBITIONS

November 25-December 21. Exhibit of Contemporary Japanese Painting of the Araki School.

November 25-December 21. Tenth International Water Color Exhibition.

December 2-December 21. Exhibit of Drawings and Water Colors by Foujita.

December 2-December 21. Exhibit of Paintings by John Carroll.

SUNDAY AFTERNOONS

Concerts by the Chamber Music Society of Detroit at 3:30 p. m., followed by lectures by members of the staff.

December 7. "Flowers and Birds," by Benjamin March, Curator of Asiatic Art.

December 14. Michigan State Normal College Choir. Concert under the auspices of the Institute in the Auditorium, in place of the regular concert and lecture.

December 21. "Christmas in Art," by Adele C. Weibel, Curator of Textiles.

GALLERY TALKS

(Every Tuesday afternoon at 4:00 and Friday evening at 7:30)

December 2 and 5. The Early American galleries.

December 9 and 12. The development of XIXth century art.

December 16 and 19. Holland in the XVIIth century.

GALLERY TALKS DURING SPECIAL EXHIBITS

Mr. Tetsuzan Hori, an exhibitor in the Exhibit of Contemporary Japanese Painting, will give a demonstration of Japanese methods of painting every Wednesday afternoon at 2:00 o'clock during this exhibit.

LECTURES

December 2. Lecture by Adolph Goldschmidt, "The German Poet-Painters of the XVth and XVIth Centuries." 8:30 p. m.

December 5. Lecture by W. M. E. Kopplin, "Indians of the South-West." 8:30 p. m.

December 12. Lecture by Hellen C. Gunsaulus, Keeper of Japanese Prints, Art Institute of Chicago, "Japanese Prints, Their Subjects and Their Makers." 8:30 p. m.

December 16. Lecture by P. C. Chang, Professor of Philosophy, Nankai University, recently Producing Director for Mei Lan Fang in America, "Patternism in Chinese Painting and Drama." 8:30 p. m.

MUSICAL PROGRAMS

December 5. Central High School Chorus, under the auspices of the Chamber Music Society of Detroit. 8:30 p. m.

December 9. Lecture and concert by Frank Bishop, Curator of Music, "Beethoven." 8:30 p. m.

December 19. Detroit Public School Teachers' Chorus, under the auspices of the Chamber Music Society of Detroit. 8:30 p. m.

December 26. International Folk Art Society, under auspices of the Chamber Music Society of Detroit. 8:30 p. m.