Silver Phialai from the Prokhorovka
Burial-mound No. 1

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Abstract
The completed analysis of the shape and decoration of silver phialai from Burial-mound 1 near the village of Prokhorovka in the southern foothills of the Urals makes it possible to assume that they could have been manufactured in different workshops and at different times: Phiale No. 2 possibly as early as the second half of the 5th century BC and Phiale No. 1 probably in the second half of the 4th century BC: the latter is thought to have been manufactured in a workshop in Alexandria. The inscriptions on the phialai were evidently executed before the phialai fell into the hands of the Sarmatians and began to be used as phalerae. The formula for the inscription regarding weight and observations regarding the genesis of early Sarmatian phalerae provide grounds for assuming that the phalerae found their way into the burial no later than the end of the 3rd century BC.

Keywords
Prokhorovka, phialai, phalerae, Hamadan, Asia Minor, Oxus Treasure, Mariinskaya, Uspenskaya, Coppa Tarentina, Achaemenid, belted garlands, Western Cave Treasure, Isakovka, Akhalgori, weight standards, Sarmatians, Dachoi, Massagetae

1. Historiography

A short report by P.K. Kokovtsev devoted to an analysis of inscriptions on the phialai was published in a monograph by M.I. Rostovtsev. Meanwhile, Rostovtsev himself did not undertake any study of the phialai as such, confining himself to references to the opinion of Kokovtsev giving dates for the phialai provided in his various articles, ranging from the 4th century to the 2nd or 1st century BC. H. Luschey was the first to analyse the phialai from Prokhorovka in his monograph “devoted to ancient phialai and dated phialae No. 2 to the

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1 Kokovtsev 1918, 82-83.
2 Rostovtsev 1922, 124; cf. Rostowzew 1931, 434.
period around 300 BC. M. Pfrommer dated it to the Hellenistic period. According to the classification proposed by Abka 'I-Khavari, both phialai belong to the F3c group (Flache Schale + ausladende Wandung + ausladender Rand), and this scholar regarded them as Late Achaemenid. Abka 'I-Khavari points to the fact that the phialai from Prokhorovka could be dated to the 3rd-2nd centuries BC not merely on the basis of their Aramaic inscriptions, but also in view of their flatter shapes, similar to plate shapes, and of their decorative features. Moreover it is evident, firstly that the profile of the phialai from Prokhorovka is not at all similar to a plate shape, while the ideas put forward concerning their decoration are too general and superficial for any serious analysis. In the opinion of L.T. Yablonskii and his co-authors, the phialai “do not have close typological parallels”.

V.I. Mordvintseva drew attention to groups of double holes in the phialai and established with every justification that the phialai had been re-used as phalerae. The dimensions of the phialai and the presence (in antiquity) of three loops provide, in her opinion, grounds for assigning the said artefacts to an early group of Sarmatian phalerae. In the opinion of V.A. Livshits and V.Yu. Zuev, who have analysed the inscriptions on the phalerae, “the phialai from Prokhorovka could have been manufactured in the 3rd or even the 4th century BC, but they are unlikely to have been placed in the burial inside the tumulus, where they were found re-fashioned as phalerae for horses, earlier than the 1st century BC”. Yablonskii and his co-authors voiced the opinion that “the indications of date provided by the inscriptions on the phalerae were probably of limited significance and can, at any rate, not serve as an indisputable reference point for chronology”. Also Grave No. 1 in Burial-mound 1, where they were found, “on the basis of the whole range of finds in that burial-mound (taking into account the relatively later burials let into the burial-mound as well) has to be assigned a date definitely no earlier than the end of the 4th century and no later than the 3rd century BC”.

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3 Luschey 1939, 61, EB7; 72 f.
4 Pfrommer 1987, 98, notes 582-583; 158.
8 Meshcheryakov et alii 2006, 112.
9 Mordvintseva 1996.
10 Livshits and Zuev 2004, 11.
11 Meshcheryakov et alii 2006, 113, see also the article by Balakhvantsiev and Yablonskii in this journal.