

IRANIAN CAULDRONS OF "OPEN TYPE"

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The term — cauldrons of "open type" was introduced by J. Orbeli in 1938 in his short article about Albanian stone reliefs and cauldrons. Orbeli gave this name to the cauldrons with half-spherical body and four equal flanges. He named the cauldrons with nearly spherical body as "cauldrons of closed type". Both types were connected, as proposed Orbeli, with Daghestan (and more specifically with the village of Kubachi). The question about the names of craftsmen of "open type" cauldrons and their *nisbas* was avoided by this author.

In 1962 Dr. L. Guizalian published the synopsis of his paper in the Hermitage Museum, where he questioned the Daghestanian origin of the "open type" cauldrons, which were made by craftsmen with *nisba* "Marwazī". In 1964-65 Prof. U. Scerrato printed two articles, where he came to a conclusion that the "open type" cauldrons were made in Khorasan on the reasons of *nisbas* and the places of purchasing of these objects.

Some cauldrons of this type were published in the articles by Prof. J. David-Weil (1964), A. Khodjageldiev (1972-79), Dr. Y. Yakubov (1987). Dr. A. S. Melikian-Chirvani wrote an article for A. U. Pope Memorial volume in the 1970s, but this book was not edited and the article was not published.

Turning back to the history of production of these cauldrons, I do not know, how many Iranian (or Khorasanian) cauldrons were known to Dr. L. Guizalian. Prof. U. Scerrato listed 33 items. I got information about 127 cauldrons of "open type". They have the signatures of 42 craftsmen: three of them have the *nisba* "Marwazī", two "Qazwīnī", two "Hamaḍānī", two "Tūsī", two "Iṣfahānī" and one "Šamaha'ī" (or Sāmarrā'ī", but this *nisba* is doubtful to me). Some are not readable and many signatures are without *nisbas*. Only two cauldrons have the dates of making: 737/1336-37 and 739/1338.

The production of these cauldrons appeared in Eastern Iran (in Khorasan province) in the end of 10th century. We may judge about it on the ground of findings of little cauldrons (toys?) in the levels of 10th century during archaeological excavations. This date give us the epigraphy of inscriptions (signatures of craftsmen) also.

The earlier group may be dated from the end of 10th and first half of 11th centuries. It includes 12 big and 4 little objects. We know five names of craftsmen — Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad, Bū Bakr, 'Alī ..., Muḥammad Tū[sī] and Ḥasan. All these cauldrons have one peculiarity — the form of the flange to pour is rectangular (the other three flanges are acute-angled) and there is no decoration near the handles (Pl. 1).

The second group is the largest one and must be dated from the second part of the 11th to the first part (or quarter?) of the 13th century. It consists of 85 big and 12 little items. We must remember, that in 1987 a big hoard of bronze objects (nearly 300 intact vessels and their fragments) was found on the site of Budrach in the Republic of Uzbekistan. This finding was mentioned in short articles only: there were about 100 fragments of cauldrons (one fragment has the name of craftsman — Ahmad).

The flanges of the cauldrons of this group are equal (acute-angled). The names of craftsmen were written in floriated *kūfī*, *kūfī* and *nashī* scripts. Many ornaments on these items have the good analogies in bronze wares of the 12th century, which we understand as Khorasanian metalwork of 12th century. The ornaments and inscriptions on the objects of this group are cast. The *nisbas* of craftsmen are “Marwazī”, “Tūsī”, “Qazwīnī”, “Iṣfahānī”, “Hamaḍānī”, making it possible to suppose that the making of the cauldrons of that period was spread on a vast territory in Iran, and not only in Khorasan (Pl. 2).

The fate of these objects was not clear after the devastation of Khorasanian towns by the Mongols in the twenties of the 13th century. One time I thought, that this production ceased. But a cauldron of this type was presented at an exhibition in the USA in 1976. It was made by a certain Fahr ad-Dīn al-Iṣfahānī in the town of Astarābād in 737 AH/1336–37. The second cauldron with exact date was sold at an auction in Paris in 1992. It was made by a certain Fahr ad-Dīn Ahmad ibn Asʿad ad-Dīn Šamahaʿī (or Sāmarrāʿī?) in *safar* 739 AH/August-September 1328 (the reading of this *nisba* is very doubtful to me, I know it from the Sale Catalogue only).

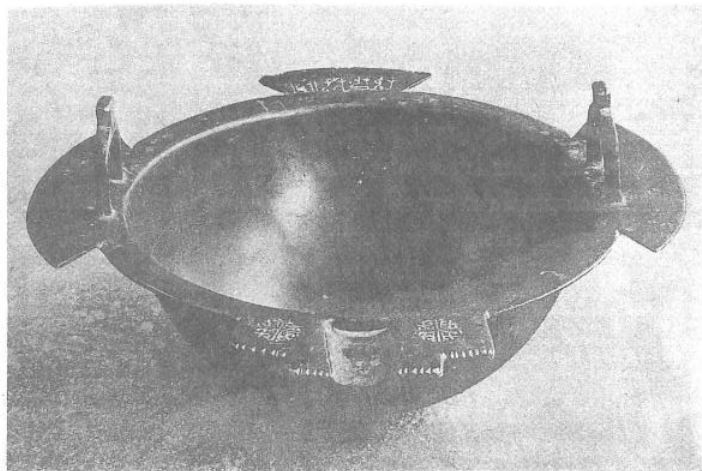
Now it became clear, that the making of the cauldrons of this type existed in 14th and even in Khorasan. These late objects belong to the third group which includes ten items (two of them are dated exactly). The ornaments and inscriptions on the cauldron made in 737 AH are cast (old tradition), but they are carved on the cauldron of 739 AH. The carved ornaments and inscriptions (or their imitations) are characteristic of this late group (Pls. 3–4). One cauldron in Tareq Rajab Museum (Kuwait) has silver encrustation — a unique case for all three groups.

The provisional date for this group may be given as between the second half (or end) of the 13th and the end of the 14th century, because one cauldron from the Hermitage collection has carved inscriptions on three flanges and carved floral ornamentation, which give us possibility to suppose the very late date of its making — end of 14th or beginning of the 15th century. I do not know later Iranian cauldrons of “one type”.

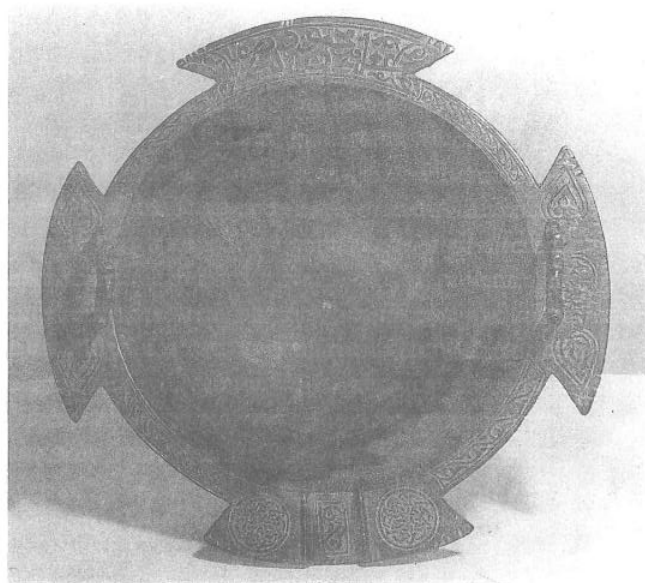
The middle of the second part of the 14th century was the turning-point in the history of Iranian metalwork. It was a period of search for new forms of objects, new ornaments and making use of a new metal, the copper.

The study of these cauldrons makes it possible to trace the stable existence of the form during 400 years at least. But the decor changed much more quickly: we can

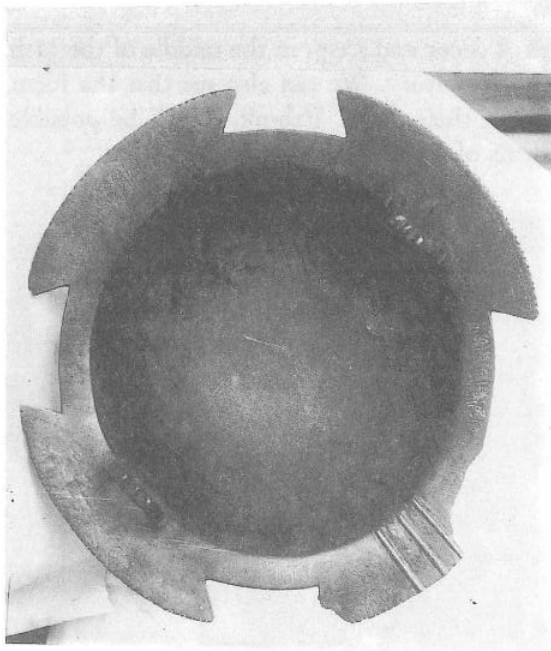
speaking about changes of decor and script in the middle of the 11th century and in the second part of the 13th century. We can also see that the form of the objects was more conservative than their decor. I think, it will be possible to trace the same process on other forms of Iranian metalwork.



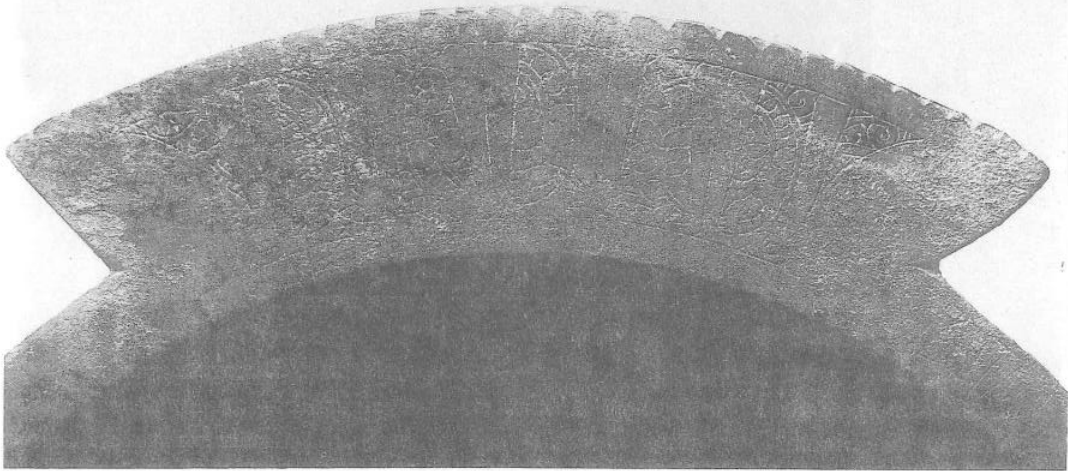
1. Cauldron. End of 10th — beginning of 11th century. Kabul Museum (after A. S. Melikian-Chirvani, *Le Bronze iranien*. 1979, Paris. p. 42).



2. Bū Bak[r] Maḥmūd ṣaffār. Cauldron. 12th century. The State Hermitage Museum (inv. N TP-173).



3. Cauldron. End of 13th century. The State Hermitage Museum (inv. N TP-177).



4. Flange of the cauldron. End of 13th century. The State Hermitage Museum (inv. N TP-201).