

# THE LONG-PETAL BOWL FROM THE PITHOS SETTLING BASIN

IN A RECENT ISSUE of *Hesperia*, Virginia Grace has argued for a date in the second decade of the 2nd century for the introduction of “early” long-petal bowls.<sup>1</sup> The evidence cited for this early date is P 23095,<sup>2</sup> a long-petal bowl of unusual design which was found to the south of the Middle Stoa and has been associated, both by the excavator, Eugene Vanderpool, and, on his authority, by Miss Grace, with the construction of the Middle Stoa (ca. 180 B.C.). In view of the considerable re-adjustment of the dating of long-petal bowls that Miss Grace’s suggestion entails, it seems worthwhile to examine the bowl and its context in more detail.

Fragments of the bowl were found in a pithos that served as a settling basin considerably to the south of the Middle Stoa, along the north side of the “Heliiaia” and just short of its west end. This feature clearly functioned in concert with the “Heliiaia”, for a channel for a water downpipe was cut into the face of the two surviving blocks of the “Heliiaia” wall just above the pithos. It is also clear, as the excavator states, that in order to bring the level of the square south of the Middle Stoa up to the level of the steps of the Stoa itself at its west end, a large amount of fill was brought in, and this fill ultimately covered the pithos and put it out of use.<sup>3</sup> A careful investigation of the stratigraphy of this area, however, and of the pottery found here, suggests that the situation is more complicated than has previously been realized.

The strata associated with the construction of the Middle Stoa consist of 1) the fill within the foundations of the building, preserved and excavated primarily within the nine westernmost bays of the structure,<sup>4</sup> and 2) the fill brought in concurrently with the laying of the Stoa foundation to raise the level of the south square, excavated in a continuous stretch south of the westernmost six bays of the building and in patches further east.<sup>5</sup> This southern section of the building fill is considered to extend no further west than a line running south from the first Stoa pier from the west. No clear stratigraphic division was noted here during excavation, and it may have been obscured by the fact that the area east of this line was dug in 1953, the area west of it in 1954. In Vanderpool’s final analysis of the area, however, the

<sup>1</sup> V. R. Grace, “The Middle Stoa Dated by Amphora Stamps,” *Hesperia* 54, 1985 (pp. 1–54 [= Grace]), p. 24.

<sup>2</sup> S. Rotroff, *The Athenian Agora*, XXII, *Hellenistic Pottery: Athenian and Imported Moldmade Bowls*, Princeton 1982, no. 344, pls. 62, 87.

<sup>3</sup> See E. Vanderpool’s comment quoted in Grace, p. 22.

<sup>4</sup> Coins from this fill were published as Deposit I by F. Kleiner, “The Earliest Athenian New Style Bronze Coins. Some Evidence from the Athenian Agora,” *Hesperia* 44, 1975 (pp. 302–330), pp. 303–309, but note that coins Λ-410–Λ-414 and Λ-417 in fact come from south of the building; this has no bearing, however, on Kleiner’s conclusions.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, Deposit II, pp. 309–311. Amphora handles from both inside the building and from the fill to the south form the basis of Grace’s analysis.

MIDDLE STOA

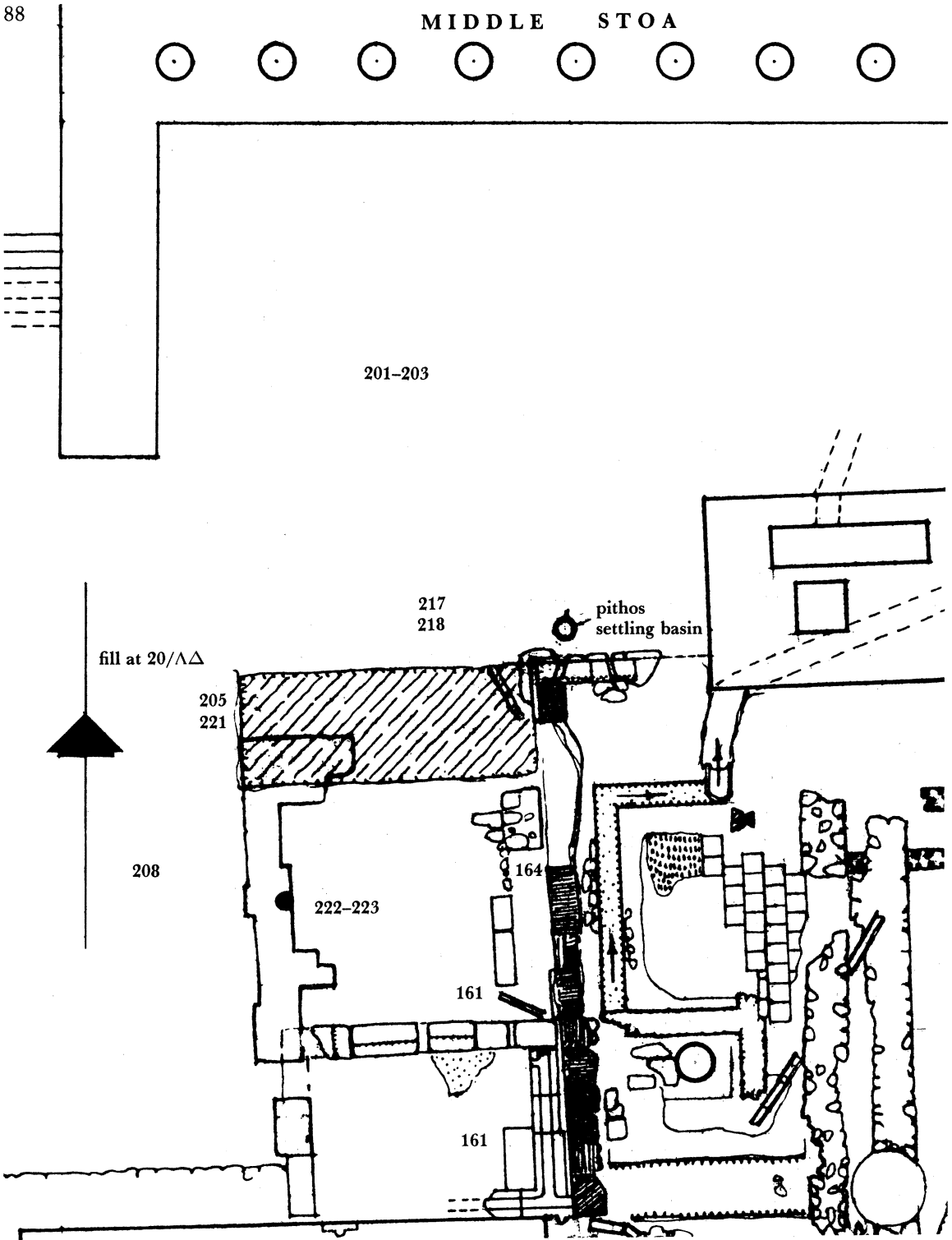


FIG. 1. Area south of the west end of the Middle Stoa

fills west of this line were not considered part of the same leveling operation but related instead to the creation of a ramp leading up to the south square from the north–south street beyond the west end of the Stoa.<sup>6</sup>

This western fill was noted by Kleiner in his discussion of coins from the Middle Stoa building fill, and a selection of coins from it was published as his Deposit III.<sup>7</sup> He included coins from some, but not all, strata excavated south of the western end of the building, but his list of contexts was compiled with the assistance of the excavator and provides a good starting point for the investigation of the western fills as a whole. The coins come from the following contexts:

Lots K 201, 202: originally equated with building fill dug further to the east, but in the excavator’s final analysis excluded from Stoa building fill proper. It was dug in an area from about four to seven or eight meters south of the Middle Stoa, south of the first bay; the associated amphora handles are SS 13398–13429, the latest dating in the period 188–167 B.C.<sup>8</sup>

Lot K 203: the lowest part of the fill described above, with amphora handles SS 13430–13433, 13450, and 13451, contemporary with handles in the building fill proper.

Lot K 205: fill *over* the ramp leading up from the west road at a point about 11 meters south of the west end of the building, with amphora handles SS 13501 and 13509, dating *ca.* 167–146.

Lot K 221: fill *under* the ramp at the same point, with amphora handles SS 13952–13958, contemporary with handles in the building fill proper.

A fill some 10 meters south of the west end of the building (“fill at 20/Δ”), with amphora handles SS 13503–13508 and SS 13538–13540; SS 13503 dates to the early *duoviri* period (107–98 B.C.).

The later date of fill in this western area is attested by the amphora handles; although many are contemporary with handles found in the fill within the foundation of the Middle Stoa and with handles from fill south of the building further east, there are enough later pieces to suggest that the deposition of this material took place somewhat later, at least in

<sup>6</sup> E. Vanderpool, Final Excavation Report, Section K, 1954 (on file at the Stoa of Attalos).

<sup>7</sup> Kleiner (footnote 4 above), pp. 311–312.

<sup>8</sup> The dates given for amphora handles here and throughout the article are based on V. R. Grace’s analysis of the material, made shortly after its excavation in the 1950’s. At that time Grace made lists of the amphora handles, grouped by lot, giving a range of date for the latest pieces in each lot. These date ranges are based on the periods Grace has worked out for Knidian amphoras (see Grace, p. 31); she informs me (1986) that her chronological criteria for the handles of the period have not changed in essentials, and the broad dates given here are still considered valid. I am extremely grateful to her for sharing her notes and lists with me and for many stimulating discussions of the chronology of the Middle Stoa; I take full responsibility, of course, for any errors in the transmission of this information.

the second quarter of the 2nd century; the *duoviri* handle (SS 13503) points to disturbance also later in the century.<sup>9</sup>

The lots collected in Kleiner's Deposit III, however, do not seem to form a logical stratigraphic unit. No east–west section of this area was drawn at the time of excavation, and it is extremely difficult to reconstruct the stratigraphy in detail. One stratigraphic feature, however, which is mentioned repeatedly in the notebooks, is the ramp referred to above, which led up to the south square from the lower level west of the Stoa. Its sloping surface was identified at several points and the material under it excavated and stored as separate lots. The following list gives these lots, with the amphora handles they contained and Miss Grace's estimated dates:

Lot K 161, with SS 12924–12939 (latest handles in the period 167–146).

Lots K 217, 218, with SS 13767–13796 (latest handles perhaps slightly later than Middle Stoa building fill).

Lot K 221, included in Kleiner's Deposit III (see above).

Lots K 222, 223, with SS 13637–13649, 13703–13715 (latest handles in the period 146–125).

Lot K 208, with SS 13457–13467 (latest handles in the period 167–146).

Lot K 164, with SS 13005–13031 (includes a handle of the 1st century B.C.).

Fill at 22/KZ, with SS 13728–13747 (latest handles in the period 188–167).

Here again we find, along with handles contemporary with the building fill, a number of pieces dating in the second and even the third quarter of the 2nd century. This would suggest that, as one might have expected, the ramp was finished considerably after the building fill was deposited, at the earliest somewhat after the middle of the 2nd century. And again a single 1st-century handle indicates even later activity in the area.

Let us turn now to the relationship of these strata to the pithos settling basin and to the long-petal bowl under consideration (P 23095). The notebook indicates that the settling basin was overlaid by a layer described as “Hellenistic fill west of the water basin [= the water clock] and north of the stepped retaining wall [= the north wall of the ‘Heliaia’]” (lots K 144–146). This was considered part of the building fill, and handles from it are included in Virginia Grace's analysis of amphora handles from the fill. The bulk of these are contemporary with those in the building fill proper, but there is also a Knidian handle of the *duoviri* period (SS 12918);<sup>10</sup> either the area has been disturbed or the fill was deposited much later than the building fill proper. In any event, if the earth over the settling basin contains later material, material within the settling basin itself cannot be considered a sealed deposit; it too may have been subject to later disturbance, and the stratigraphical

<sup>9</sup> It seems likely that the late 2nd- and 1st-century material noted in this fill as well as in the building fill proper (Grace, p. 22, note 57) represents disturbance, rather than the date of leveling operations in this area.

<sup>10</sup> The handle (KT 2112) names Laches and Eupolemos, associated with the eponym Euphragoras, of Grace's period VIB (97–88 B.C.); see Grace, p. 22, note 57, pp. 31, 35.

account does not provide reliable evidence for its contemporaneity with the bulk of the Middle Stoa building fill.

The long-petal bowl P 23095 had been shattered and dispersed before its deposition, as the excavation account attests. Vanderpool describes the situation: “most of the pieces were on top of the sand in the basin, one piece was on the strosis just outside.”<sup>11</sup> This one piece (actually two small rim fragments) comes, in fact, from a fill specifically disassociated from the building fill by Vanderpool; it is the fill noted above as lots K 201 and K 202, included by Kleiner in his Deposit III, and containing amphora handles of the second quarter of the century. Investigation of the context pottery has turned up more fragments of P 23095: another from lots K 201, 202; one from fill *over* the ramp beyond the west end of the “Heli-*aia*”, no further than about one meter west of the settling basin, again in fill not considered by the excavator to be building fill (lot K 142<sup>12</sup>); and another from slightly further west, under the surface of the ramp (lot K 218: see above), associated with amphoras dating slightly later than the bulk of the material in the building fill proper. A further chronological hint may be extracted from other strata associated with the ramp. Some of the amphora handles excavated from *under* the surface of the ramp date as late as the third quarter of the 2nd century, and there is one handle of 1st-century date. Strata lying over the ramp contained amphora handles dating in the second quarter of the 2nd century and later<sup>13</sup> as well as fragments of a “normal” long-petal bowl (P 31719).

Although the stratigraphic picture of this area is far from clear, it seems certain that grading operations continued well into the second quarter of the 2nd century if not beyond, and that the settling basin, located about 10 meters distant from the south stylobate of the Stoa, remained open during those operations. The context of P 23095 does not, therefore, offer evidence for an early date for the inception of long-petal bowls.<sup>14</sup>

What bearing does this piece have, then, on the dating of long-petal bowls? P 23095 is quite unlike the “normal” long-petal bowls which turn up in deposits of the second half of the 2nd century and in Sullan destruction debris of 86 B.C.<sup>15</sup> In these products of the well-

<sup>11</sup> Grace, p. 22.

<sup>12</sup> See footnote 13 below.

<sup>13</sup> Lots K 142, 160, 204–207, 216. Lots K 205, 206, and 216 contain handles of the second quarter of the century; lot K 207 contains a *duoviri* handle indicative, probably, of a late 2nd—early 1st-century disturbance.

<sup>14</sup> Grace also cites the contents of Cistern E 15:4 as evidence of an earlier dating for long-petal bowls (Grace, p. 23). Although amphora handles in that cistern are contemporary with those from the Middle Stoa building fill, other objects are later. There is also a fragment of a moldmade bowl decorated with *Nymphaea nelumbo* petals (P 31140), closely paralleled by a bowl in Thompson’s Group E, and thus likely to date in the second half of the 2nd century (H. A. Thompson, “Two Centuries of Hellenistic Pottery,” *Hesperia* 3, 1934 [pp. 311–480], E 79, pp. 406–409, figs. 96a, 96b). It is suggestive, though not conclusive, that this fragment physically joins another from a cistern filled with debris from Sulla’s destruction of Athens in 86 B.C. (Deposit F 13:3). Further support for a late date comes from the fusiform unguentaria, which find their closest parallels in deposits of the second half of the century. For fuller discussion see comments on E 15:4 in my preface to the reprint of D. B. Thompson, “Three Centuries of Hellenistic Terracottas,” in *Hellenistic Pottery and Terracottas*, Princeton 1987 (in which the H. A. Thompson article cited above is also reprinted), pp. 190, 191.

<sup>15</sup> E.g., H. A. Thompson (footnote 14 above), D 39–40, E 74–77; Rotroff (footnote 2 above), nos. 321–324, 326–343.

established tradition, the petals are either contiguous or divided by jeweled lines, their surfaces often (though not always) flat. In P 23095 long petals overlie and alternate with pointed lotus petals, in a scheme which finds parallels in fragments from an undated context in the Kerameikos<sup>16</sup> and in a moldmade jug from the upper fill of a cistern on the Kolonos Agoraios, probably deposited in the second quarter of the 2nd century.<sup>17</sup> As I have pointed out elsewhere,<sup>18</sup> the medallion of P 23095 is closely similar to that of a series of bowls manufactured by Workshop A, an atelier which was functioning in the first quarter of the 2nd century. Numerous pieces from that shop were found in the Middle Stoa building fill and roughly contemporary deposits, but we do not know how long the shop continued to function. Its products, however, are rare in deposits dating after the middle of the century, and we must assume that the shop closed, or that its products were altered beyond recognition, some time during the second quarter of the century.

It seems reasonable, as Grace suggests, to see P 23095 as an early version of the long-petal bowl. G. Roger Edwards has postulated a logical course of stylistic development for long-petal bowls, from more elaborate examples with convex petals to simple bowls with contiguous flat petals,<sup>19</sup> but it has not, thus far, been possible to document this development with the evidence of archaeological context. But here we have P 23095, with links to a workshop of the first and probably also second quarter of the 2nd century, with a close parallel in a deposit of the second quarter of the 2nd century, and itself associated with a fill apparently of that date or only slightly later. It thus seems reasonable to view this as an early version of the type, although not so early as Grace maintains.

The final analysis of the building fills of the Middle Stoa, the Stoa of Attalos, and South Stoa II will do much to clarify the early development of the long-petal bowl. Even now it is clear that there was considerable variation in the early years of production. To the one previously recognized example from under the Stoa of Attalos<sup>20</sup> can now be added another,<sup>21</sup> recovered from the pottery tins. Both are fairly delicate, with convex petals outlined by thin ridges; they are quite unlike P 23095, but on the basis of context about contemporary. Miss Grace now suggests a date of *ca.* 157 B.C. for the latest amphora handles

<sup>16</sup> W. Schwabacher, "Hellenistische Reliefkeramik im Kerameikos," *AJA* 45, 1941 (pp. 182–228), pl. VII:7, 8.

<sup>17</sup> S. Rotroff, "Three Cistern Systems on the Kolonos Agoraios," *Hesperia* 52, 1983 (pp. 257–297), p. 293, no. 79, pl. 59. Dating is based on amphora handles; the fill contained a Knidian amphora handle dating between 166 and 146 B.C. (*ibid.*, p. 274).

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 274, pl. 62.

<sup>19</sup> G. R. Edwards, *Corinth*, VII, iii, *Corinthian Hellenistic Pottery*, Princeton 1975, pp. 177–178.

<sup>20</sup> Rotroff (footnote 2 above), no. 325. Grace (p. 23) stresses that this fragment comes from "a deposit under the filling of the Stoa of Attalos" (her emphasis). While this is certainly the case, Rhys Townsend, who is at work on the publication of the Square Peristyle and its predecessors, tells me that it comes from an area where there was some mixing between the lower fill and the building fill of the Stoa of Attalos above it. I am grateful to Professor Townsend for several discussions of this stratigraphy in the summer of 1986 and for the opportunity to examine much of the pottery with him.

<sup>21</sup> P 31470, from lot ΣA 76, also, according to Townsend, from an area of the fill over the Square Peristyle where there was possibly some mixing with the fill of the Stoa of Attalos above.

found in the building fill of the Stoa of Attalos,<sup>22</sup> with which we now see that early versions of the long-petal bowl may be associated. This adds further confirmation to a date in the second quarter of the 2nd century for early experimentation with the long-petal bowl at Athens.

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