

Dr Sandra Wilson

The Mystery of Dutch raising

A few English language books (Thomas, 1960; Untracht, 1968; Seppä, 1978) on silversmithing refer to *Dutch raising*. However, very little is known about this technique. The majority of historical reviews of silversmithing tend to address cultural influences and discuss form, surface treatment or decoration but rarely talk about technique (eg., Van Berkum, 2016). As Gans (1961: 49) laments, "There is regrettably little published about the history of the techniques and methods employed in the silversmith's craft". Many contemporary silversmiths prefer to allow their work to speak for them and consequently do not talk or write about their techniques. Traditionally silversmithing knowledge was passed from master to apprentice and this was protected by the guild system. Since silversmithing is now a subject taught within Universities, we have seen a growth in the number of instructional books on the subject, particularly since the 1960s.

The raising process has ancient roots. The most common technique today is to start raising from the outside at the centre/baseline of a vessel and work towards the edge. This is often referred to as *Angle raising*. Untracht (1968) defines *Angle raising* as deriving its name from the series of angles created to arrive at the desired final angle. However, there is another approach. Oppi Untracht, an American metalsmith, informs us that *Dutch raising* "...is a process for shaping open pieces such as bowls. The work progresses from the outer edge of the disc on the convex side in spiralling blows toward the centre of the piece. A heavy cross-peen hammer is used followed by a rawhide mallet to help form the piece and even out irregularities. Instead of a series of angles being pursued, as is done in *Angle raising*, the piece is annealed, bouged, and shaped directly in several stages" (Untracht, 1968: 249).

In trying to unravel the mystery of *Dutch raising*, books on silversmithing have been considered as well as the practice of contemporary silversmiths. From books we can see that some ascribe the term *Dutch raising* and others do not, although it is clear that, regardless of how they describe it there is a specific technique here that appears to share many common features. A defining characteristic of *Dutch raising* in books is starting to raise from the outside edge, adding further courses behind this until the centre is reached. Hammer blows are all the time directed towards the outside edge. In this way an entire vessel form can be raised. This approach is distinct from 'back raising', in which the hammer blows are directed towards the centre and aimed at thickening the base or reducing the height of a vessel.

This presentation will outline Dutch raising, where the term originated and what the advantages are of this technique.