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SPECIFIC FORM OF TWO-HANDLED ASKOI WITH A BASE FROM EARLY HELLENISTIC THRACE

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses a peculiar group of ceramic askoi from ancient Thrace, dated to the Early Hellenistic period (end of 4th – mid-3rd century BC). They are characterized by a cylindrical neck with a profiled mouth, a large elliptical, spherical, or biconical body, paired elliptical handles, and a low base. This study synthesizes previous historiographical analyses and presents new unpublished findings. It identifies two principal distribution zones within Thrace: south of the Balkan Mountains, with the highest concentration in the modern-day Kazanlak Valley, and north of the mountains, in the areas around Gabrovo and Pleven. The high concentration of askoi in the Kazanlak Valley points to the existence of production centres in the region, supported by evidence of pottery workshops active between ca. 350 BC and ca. 260 BC. These workshops likely adapted southern Aegean Thrace prototypes, creating a distinct local variant. Thracian askoi are consistently associated with three main archaeological contexts: burials, ritual fireplaces, and ceramic deposits. Their inclusion in both elite and common funerary and ritual practices underscores their importance in libations and commemorative ceremonies, reflecting their integral role in the spiritual and cultural life of Thracian society during the Early Hellenistic period.

KEYWORDS: Two handled askoi, monochrome pottery, ancient Thrace, Hellenistic period

1. INTRODUCTION

Known for their complex and intricate forms, askoi were vessels used over a wide historical period, from prehistory to the Middle Ages. The term „askos“ is a modern one (Beazley, 1921:325), derived from the resemblance of these vessels to the leather wineskins used in antiquity (Kanowski, 1984:31). The most precise definition of their shape was proposed by M. Mayer in 1907, who described askoi as vessels with a side spout and a body oriented along a horizontal or diagonally inclined axis (Mayer, 1907:212).

This distinctive shape was widespread not only in time but also geographically, as evidenced by their prominence in ancient Thrace between the mid-5th and mid-3rd century BC (Ivanov, 1963:133). In this region, askoi showed considerable variation in shape, size, and decoration. The size of these vessels, as well as the treatment of the clay surface, played a crucial role in determining their function. Smaller, black-glazed, black-figure and red-figure askoi were typically used as unguent vessels. Larger askoi were probably used to store other liquids, such as wine (cf. Kanowski, 1984:32).

The goal of the present study is to synthesise previous research and introduce new unpublished findings, providing a comprehensive analysis of Thracian askoi from the Early Hellenistic period. It examines their contexts of discovery, shapes, decoration, and employs an innovative method – DStretch analysis – which revealed previously unnoticed horizontal slip bands, indicating precise banding techniques and a higher level of craftsmanship of some specimens. By identifying the main distribution zones, this research aims to locate local production centres and trace their prototypes.

2. CHARACTERISTICS

The askoi examined in this study belong to the group of wheel-made pottery produced in the local monochrome clay fabrics (cf. Sideris, 2022:97). These vessels are defined by a cylindrical neck with a profiled mouth, positioned at an angle, an elliptical, spherical, or biconical body, two elliptical band handles attached to either side of the neck and the widest part of the body, and a low ring base (Fig. 1). Decoration often includes two or three incised concentric lines on the upper body, with some examples having a small bud or cylindrical knob. In some cases, the surface is covered with slip. These vessels are notable for their considerable volume. The body diameter is proportional to the height of the vessel: smaller askoi have a maximum body diameter of 11 to 15.5 cm with a height of 12.5 to 13 cm, while larger askoi range from 22.5 to 29 cm in diameter with a height of 20 to 29 cm. Despite the variation in body size, the diameter

of the base is standardised, ranging from 8.2 to 12.9 cm. The diameter of the mouth is consistent, measuring between 4.2 and 9 cm.

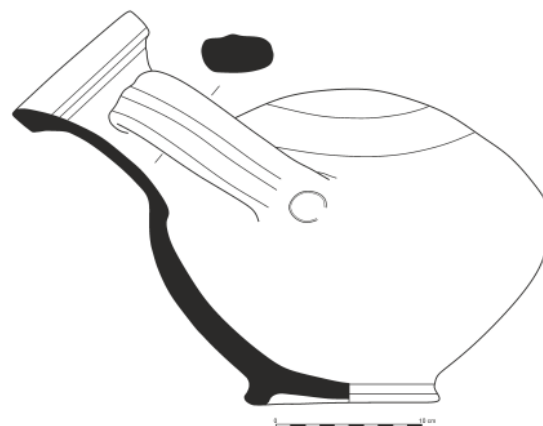


Figure 1. Two handled askos from Tsareva Livada, Cat. 1 (drawing M. Stamberova)

These features distinguish this group apart from the so-called lentoid askoi, which also have two handles on either side of the neck (Fig. 2). However, lentoid askoi are smaller, with a flattened, squat body, a rounded bottom without a base, and painted decoration of concentric circles or rosettes on the upper body (Ivanov, 1963:141; Chichikova, 2015:56, Nos. 24-26; 58; Bozhkova, 2017:85). T. Ivanov suggests that the Greek form of the lentoid askoi was adopted by local potters, who adapted it by adding a ring base (Ivanov, 1963:142, note 1).



Figure 2. Lentoid askoi from Apollonia Pontica (modern-day Sozopol). National institute of archaeology with museum (NIAM-BAS), inv. No. 7809 (photo K. Georgiev)

3. HISTORIOGRAPHY

The historiography of this ceramic group can be divided into two phases. The first phase documents the finds as they were discovered, while the second, developed after sufficient knowledge had accumulated, concerns their analysis.

The first description of such a vessel in Bulgarian literature was provided by B. Filow in 1910, based on finds from the region of Gabrovo (Cat. 1) (Figs. 1;6).

He defined its shape as similar to the Greek askos, while explicitly stating that it was a locally made object (Filow, 1910:158). In 1954, V. Mikov used the term "askos" to describe two similar vessels found in the eastern fireplace of the mound of the Kazanlak tomb (Cat. 2-3) (Figs. 7-8) (Mikov, 1954:25, fig. 29). A few years later, in his comprehensive study of local pottery, D. Tsonchev referred to the two askoi from the Kazanlak tomb as "Thracian askos-like vessels" (Tsonchev, 1959:102, figs. 20-21) and classified them as "vessels with modified Greek forms", produced by local Thracian craftsmen (Tsonchev, 1959:98). The term "askos" was also adopted by G. Tabakova-Tsanova, who published in 1961 three vessels from the Kazanlak museum¹ (Cat. 10, Fig. 14 and Cat. 12-13) (Tabakova-Tsanova, 1961), and by T. Kovacheva and S. Lazarova, who published in 1994 a specimen accidentally discovered close to the village of Radomirski, Pleven region (Cat. 5) (Kovacheva, Lazarova, 1994:33, t. IV).

In 1994, G. Kitov published details about an askos found in the tomb inventory of the Malkata Mogila mound near Sheynovo (Cat. 4; Fig. 9) (Kitov, 1994:71), while M. Madzharov et al. reported on an askos discovered in 2002 in a tumulus in Tranovitsa locality, near the village of Chernichevo, Hissarya region (Cat. 6; Fig. 10) (Madzharov et al., 2003:100; Madzharov, 2023:19-20). In 2019, D. Dimitrova published a mouth and wall of an askos excavated in the fill of a pit in the embankment of the Malkata Kosmatka mound near the town of Shipka (Dimitrova, 2019:98, fig. 18), which may potentially belong to the studied group, although this remains uncertain.

The analytical studies of these vessels include the work of E. Teleaga (2018) and A. Sideris (2022). Teleaga classifies this form as a subgroup of the "pilgrim bottle askoi" due to its similarity to the so-called pilgrim flasks. He emphasizes their larger size, distinctive ring base, and the absence of painted decoration, replaced by incised circles. These askoi are regarded as local imitations of vessels produced in other workshops and were probably manufactured in the central Balkan region (Teleaga, 2018:224). Teleaga identifies eight vessels in this group: one originating from Asenovtsi², Pleven region (Teleaga, 2018:226, Kat. 1), two from Buzovgrad (Teleaga, 2018:226, Kat.

2), one from Sucidava³ (Teleaga, 2018:226, Kat. 3), two from the Kazanlak tomb (Teleaga, 2018:226, Kat. 4), one from Malkata Mogila mound (Teleaga, 2018:226, Kat. 5), and one from Tsareva Livada (former Varbanovo)⁴ (Teleaga, 2018:226, Kat. 6).

The most recent research, conducted by A. Sideris, examines a silver askos from the collection of V. Bozhkov, exploring its ceramic parallels in Thrace (Sideris 2022). The author identifies three distinct ceramic types of askoi: banded ware, those with painted floral and geometric motifs, and monochrome ware, and examines their context, production, and dating.

4. SHAPES

The present study examines 13 askoi, nine published and four unpublished. While these vessels share common features in overall shape and specific body elements, they exhibit notable diversity in several aspects: the shape of the mouth (profiled with one or two rings), the base (ring-shaped or solid), the clay color (ranging from brownish-red, ochre, and beige to grey and grey-beige), the presence or absence of a slip, and decorative elements such as incised concentric circles, a small bud, or a knob at the top of the body. The limited number of examples available at this stage makes it challenging to establish strictly defined types and variants.

5. TERRITORIAL SPAN

The distribution of local askoi of this type can be divided into two distinct regions: the area south of the Balkan Mountains, with the greatest concentration in the Kazanlak Valley, and the area north of the mountains, around Gabrovo and Pleven (Fig. 3). The Kazanlak Valley represents the primary distribution zone, with ten specimens documented to date. These include two askoi from the mound of the Kazanlak Tomb, one from the Shipka-Sheynovo region (Malkata Mogila mound), one from Buzovgrad, and six others of unknown provenance from the region of Kazanlak. Beyond this core region, only one example has been identified in southern Thrace, from the village of Chernichevo near Hissarya.

The second area of distribution is north of the Balkan Mountains, where two specimens have been found, one in the Gabrovo region (Tsareva Livada

¹ Two of the vessels were reported missing from the museum's collection in 1971 (see below Cat. 12-13).

² There is some confusion in Teleaga's publication as the askos from the region of Pleven, published by T. Kovacheva, S. Lazarova, is registered under this inventory number (see Cat. 5).

³ Most probably the askos from Sucidava belongs to the lentoid-shaped askoi (cf. Toropu et al., 1992:245, fig. 5:1).

⁴ The askos was found in a tumulus grave „on the Tsareva Livada - Gabrovo railway line, about 6 km northeast of

Gabrovo, between the villages of Ivankovsti and Bransetsite" (Filow, 1910:156). The site is referred to by various names in the literature: "close to Tsareva Livada" (Mikov, 1954:173, fig. 149:23; 176), "Gabrovo" (Tabakova-Tsanova, 1961:55, note 2), simply "Tsareva Livada" (Domaradzki, 2000:203; 220, cat. 116) or "Ivankovtsi" (Tomanova, 2021:132) etc. In the present text the name Tsareva Livada is preferred.

and the other near Plevan (Radomirtsi). This pattern suggests that the askoi may have spread from south to north, possibly via the Shipka Pass towards Tsareva Livada or via the village of Tuzha and Rusali

Passes into the Plevan region. It is also possible that the specimen found at Radomirtsi came from Kazanlak, passing through Shipka and then across the plain.

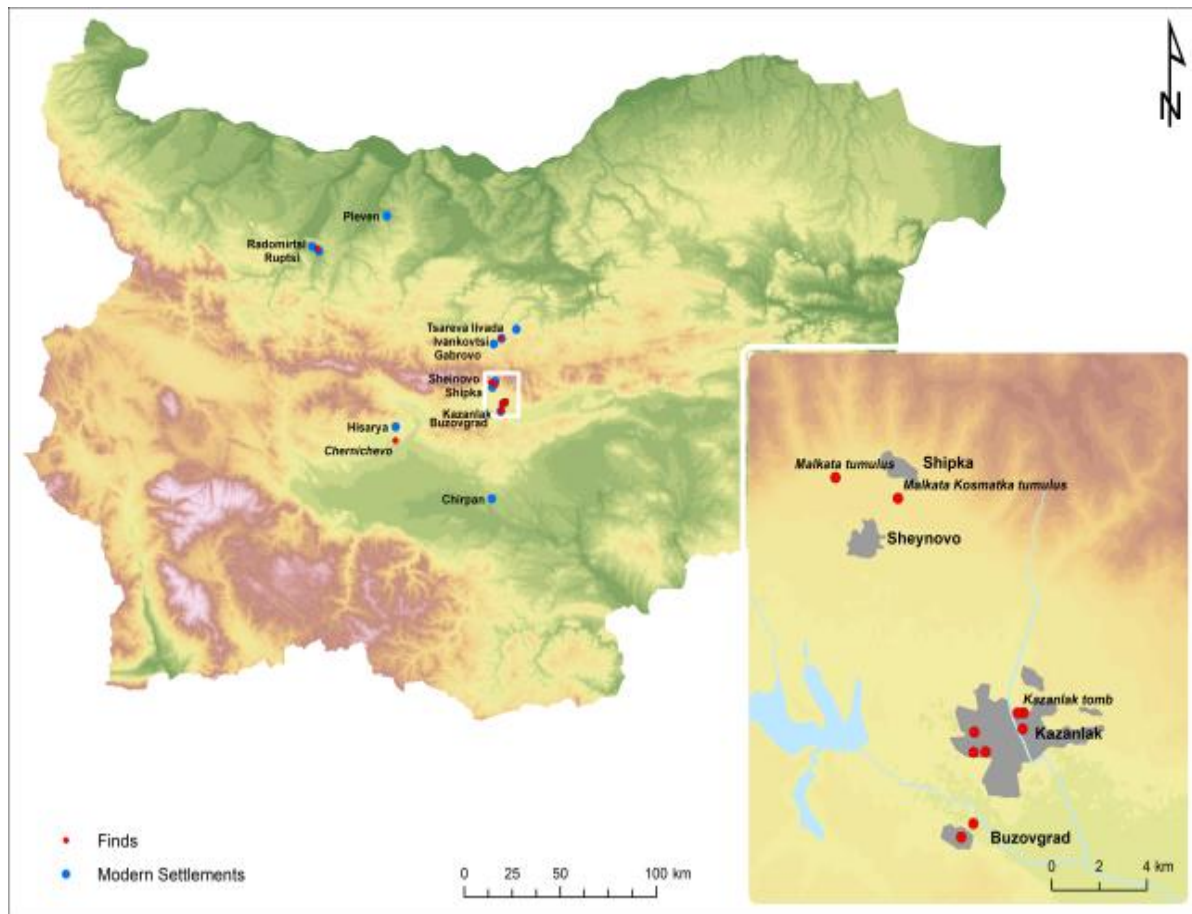


Figure 3. Distribution of the two handled askoi discussed in the text on the territory of present-day Bulgaria (map design A. Grigorov)

6. CONTEXT OF DISCOVERY

The askoi under discussion appear in three main contexts: burials, ritual fireplaces, and ceramic deposits. The most common context is funeral, with three confirmed examples so far.

The askos from Malkata Mogila mound (Cat. 4, Fig. 9) was revealed in a stone tomb housing the remains of a male individual. The burial included an extensive array of artefacts, such as gold jewellery, a breast-plate, silver fibulae, gold buttons, various metal and ceramic vessels, and a bronze mirror (Kitov, 1994:50-54; 65-72; Kitov, 2005:9-12; Kitov, Tonkova, 1996).

The askos from Tsareva Livada (Cat. 1, Figs. 1; 6) was found within a rectangular stone structure containing a human skeleton. The vessel was positioned near the upper limb, alongside a Thracian type silver fibula with a conical foot (Filow, 1910:157-158, fig. 3; 5).

The third askos associated with a burial complex was discovered near Radomirtsi in the Plevan region (Cat. 5), alongside cremated human remains deposited in an amphora-shaped vessel. Additional grave goods included wheel-made grey jug and bowl with a high conical stool, both housed in the Regional Historical Museum in Plevan (Kovacheva, Lazarova, 1994:32-33, t. IV-4; V-1).

Seven more specimens from the region of Kazanlak and Buzovgrad remain of uncertain provenance (Cat. 7-13: three published in Tabakova-Tsanova, 1961:52-54, fig. 2g; 2d; 3c⁵ and the rest is unpublished). However, their relatively good state of preservation suggests that they likely originate from destroyed burial complexes.

Another significant context for these vessels is their association with commemorative practices within tumular necropolises, including ritual fireplaces⁶ and

⁵ See note 1.

⁶ According to the description of the “ritual fireplaces” of the necropolis of Apollonia Pontica, these are the remains

ceramic deposits. The first example of this type comes from the eastern ritual fireplace near the *dromos* of the Kazanlak tomb, where two askoi (Cat. 2-3; Figs. 7-8) were discovered alongside a silver jug, fragments of both local and imported vessels, and evidence of sacrificial offerings, including numerous animal bones (Mikov, 1954:25-27, figs. 28-29; Parvin, 2015:33; 35, figs. 38-39).

The second example comes from a ceramic deposit within the mound embankment at Chernichevo, where a highly fragmented askos (Cat. 6, Fig. 10) was recovered along with two jugs, a krater and a bowl (Madzharov et al., 2003:100).

Another possible context for this form of askoi is settlement. M. Chichikova noted that fragments of askoi imitating Greek specimens were found during excavations at Seuthopolis (Chichikova, 1984:51), and numerous fragments have been registered in the depository of the Kazanlak Museum. A fragment of an askos of uncertain type was discovered in a domestic context of the settlement at Halka Bunar, Stara Zagora region⁷. However, no definitive conclusion can be drawn at present.

7. DATING

The chronological range of these askoi is strongly aligned with the Early Hellenistic period, specifically between the late 4th and mid-3rd century BC. Although this is a broad date range, it is relatively narrow for the local monochrome pottery.

One of the best-dated examples is the askos from Malkata Mogila mound. The items from the tomb's rich inventory are dated between the late 4th and early 3rd century BC (Kitov, 1994:65; Stoyanov, 2007:565-566; Stoyanov, Tonkova, 2015:941; Stamberova, 2023:113, 121, cat. Tr 200; cat. Tr 161, 283; cat. Tr 325).

The two askoi from the embankment of the Kazanlak tomb were discovered together with a fragment of a kantharos with "West Slope" decoration of ivy leaves, dated to the late 4th - first quarter of the 3rd century BC (Tonkova, 2021:94, no. 121). The tomb itself has been dated to the second quarter of the 3rd century BC on the basis of the wall paintings (Dimitrov, 1966; Parvin, 2015:34 with cit. lit.) and the local transport amphora, which points to the 260s BC (Tzochchev, 2018:551, 564, pl. 8b). At this stage it is not clear if the tomb was built first.

Therefore, the askoi can be placed within the context of the late 4th to mid-3rd century BC, although it remains unclear whether the tomb was built first and

the fireplaces in the embankment were added later, or if the order was reversed.

The askos from Tsareva Livada, found alongside a Thracian type silver fibula with a massive conical foot and thickened bow, can also be dated to the late 4th - mid-3rd century BC (Stamberova, 2023: 122-123, cat. 203).

8. ORIGIN OF THE FORM AND PRODUCTION

The origin of this form of askoi can be traced to the southern regions, along the coast of Aegean Thrace. Similar askoi, though lacking a base, have been discovered in Zone (formerly Mesembria) and are dated to the second half of the 4th century BC. These vessels are characterized by wide painted concentric circles in darker tones adorning their upper surfaces (Fig. 4) (Sideris, 2022:95, fig. 2-3 with cit. lit). A comparable example, originating from central southern Thrace, is part of V. Bozhkov's collection (Sideris, 2022:95, fig. 4). These southern askoi likely served as an inspiration for those produced in inner Thrace. The painted concentric circles on the coastal examples appear to have influenced the incised concentric circles that define the decorative style of the Thracian askoi. Thracian artisans skillfully adapted these external decorative motifs, merging them with local techniques to create a distinct regional style.



Figure 4. Askos with wide concentric painted circles from Zone (formerly Mesembria) (after Sideris 2022, 95, fig. 2)

A potential link between the Aegean painted askoi and the local variants is an example discovered in a ritual pit near the town of Chirpan⁸. This askos features a high biconical body with a small knob on top, a profiled ring mouth, and two elliptical handles. Its fine clay and slipped surface suggest a high level of craftsmanship. However, unlike the inner Thracian

of rituals carried out in the necropolis and related to food consumption or offerings and libations for the dead. The entire inventory was then symbolically destroyed by burning and left *in situ* (Damyanov, 2023:9).

⁷ Unpublished.

⁸ Unpublished askos revealed in 2022 during the rescue survey of Site 4 in the Bash Koliba locality near the town of Chirpan, led by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Metodi Daskalov (Daskalov et al. in press).

group, this example lacks a base, likely designed to be placed on a separate ring-stand, as seen with the clay banded ware askos from Bozhkov's collection (Sideris, 2022:95, fig. 4).

The high concentration of askoi in the Valley of Kazanlak supports the hypothesis that one or more pottery workshops operated in the region between ca. 350 BC and ca. 260 BC, producing local transport amphorae and various domestic vessels (Tzochev, 2018: 552-553). It is likely that these workshops introduced the new form of askoi into their ceramic repertoire around 330/325 BC. Thracian potters did not strictly replicate imported amphora prototypes but instead incorporated their own modifications (cf. Tzochev, 2018). A distinctive feature of Thracian askoi is the presence of small impressions beneath each handle, which are absent in lentoid askoi and those decorated with painted wide bands. In some cases, such as the askos from Tsareva Livada (Cat. 1), only one impression is present instead of the typical two seen in southern Thrace examples (cf. Cat. 2, 8, 9, 11). This variation may reflect local adaptations or efforts to replicate specific prototypes from the south.

9. DSTRETCH IMAGE ANALYSIS

To investigate the most remarkable examples and determine if any additional decoration was present, the askos from Malkata Mogila mound (Cat. 4) was analyzed using the DStretch image enhancement application⁹. This askos stands out for its thick slip, intricately profiled mouth, and deeply incised lines adorning the upper part of the body. Believed to be one of the earliest examples in Thrace, it likely served as a prototype for later regional production, influencing local craftsmanship.

The DStretch analysis revealed horizontal slip bands at the level of the handles and on the lower part of the body, uncovering a previously unnoticed layer of design complexity (Fig. 5). This finding strongly suggests that the slip was applied using precise banding techniques, further emphasizing the sophistication of its craftsmanship.

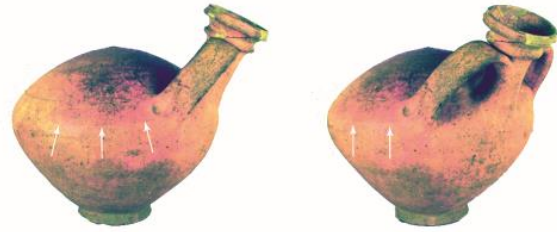


Figure 5. Horizontal slip covering on the askos of Malkata Mogila mound revealed by DStretch technique (author M. Raykovska)

10. USE AND REPERTOIRE

The unusual and complex shape of askoi seems to have been influenced more by aesthetic or symbolic considerations than by practical needs (Meyer, 1907:208). Our understanding of the purpose and use of these vessels, particularly those found in funerary contexts, remains limited. This raises a compelling question: were these askoi exclusively intended for funerary rituals, or did they also serve utilitarian purposes in everyday life – or perhaps both?

Interestingly, clay askoi from Thrace were often discovered alongside a variety of other vessels, suggesting their inclusion in distinct drinking sets. For instance, the askos from Malkata Mogila mound was part of a rich assemblage that included both metal and clay vessels: a bronze situla and krater, two silver calyx cups, two clay unguentaria, an oinochoe, and an amphora. In the eastern fireplace of the mound of the Kazanlak tomb, two askoi were discovered along with a silver jug and fragments of local and imported vessels, such as kantharos with "West Slope" decoration (Mikov, 1954:25-27, figs. 29; Parvin, 2015:33; 35, figs. 38-39). The askos from Chernichevo, Hissarya region was found together with two jugs, a crater and a bowl with a high conical foot. Similarly, the Pleven specimen was accompanied by a jug and a bowl with a similar conical foot.

This recurring pattern suggests that askoi were components of ceramic sets designed for specific functions, typically comprising vessels for pouring (such as jugs) and drinking (such as cups or bowls). Their consistent association with these other forms highlights their role in funeral feasts, serving as integral components in rituals of commemoration and libation ceremonies.

⁹ Since the 1980s, computer image enhancement techniques have been recognised as a significant tool for documenting rock art (Brady, Gunn, 2012). In the field of ceramic art, these methods are employed to digitally restore worn, fading, or damaged imagery and colorations (Miller *et al.*, 2015; González *et al.*, 2019; Dorado Alejos, 2018). DStretch, created by Jon Harman in 2005, has been successfully used to improve colours in fading components (Brady, Gunn,

2012; Harman, 2014; Defrasne, 2014). The algorithms expand the colour space and generate artificial colours, significantly increasing the contrast of faded pigments (Harman, 2008). It should be emphasised that DStretch cannot be used to restore original colours (this requires comprehensive chemical study of pigments), but it can be used to identify shapes that would otherwise be impossible to trace with the naked eye.

Most of the askoi show signs of intensive use, particularly reflected in the worn edges of the base. Some vessels, such as those from Malkata Mogila mound, also show wear to the slip in the area of the handles and neck. This suggests that these vessels had a long life of practical use before they were finally placed in ritual contexts.

11. CONCLUSION

This present study is a modest attempt of the authors to explore key aspects of a unique group of askoi from ancient Thrace, emphasizing their significance in understanding regional pottery production, ritual practices, and cross-cultural interactions. These vessels played a central role in funerary rituals and reflected the symbolic beliefs of both Thracian elites and common communities. Their distribution and features also offer a tangible link between the pottery traditions of inland Thrace and the artistic influences of the Greek apoikia along the northern Aegean coast during the Late Classical and Early Hellenistic period. Despite remaining questions about their precise functions and production processes, these vessels open new ways for understanding the cultural and ritual dynamics of ancient Thrace.

CATALOGUE

Cat. 1. Askos from Tsareva Livada, Gabrovo region. National institute of archaeology with museum at the Bulgarian academy of sciences, inv. No 665, Figs. 1; 6

Description: fine paste with an orange surface. Elliptical body, cylindrical, widening neck with a moulded rim. Ring base with a slightly concave profile, showing significant wear on the edges. Two handles with an oval cross-section and a central longitudinal ridge are attached to the neck and shoulders of the body. Under one of the handles, there is an impression. Part of the body was restored.

Measurements: H 27 cm, max D body 28.6 cm, D rim 8.9 cm, D base 12.6 cm, H base 1.2 cm, handles cross-section 3.7 x 1.8 cm

Context: burial within a rectangular stone structure with inhumation. Alongside the clay askos, a silver fibula of the Thracian type was discovered.

Date: late 4th – first half of the 3rd century BC

Bibliography: Filow 1910, 158, fig. 4



Figure 6. Askos from Tsareva Livada, Gabrovo region, Cat. 1 (photos M. Raykovska)

Cat. 2. Askos from the eastern fireplace of the mound of the Kazanlak tomb. Museum of History Iskra, Kazanlak, inv. No MIKA II 116, Fig. 7

Description: fine paste with a smooth grey-beige surface. Biconical body, cylindrical neck with a profiled mouth, and a biconical rim. Ring base with a slightly concave profile, showing significant wear on the edges. Two handles with an oval cross-section and a central longitudinal ridge are attached to the neck and shoulders of the body. Each handle has an impression underneath. Restored.

Measurements: H 18.5 cm, max D body 22 cm, D rim 6.9 cm, D base 11.4 cm, H base 0.7 cm, handles cross-section 3.6 x 1.5 cm

Context: ritual fireplace, discovered together with a silver jug, fragments of local and imported vessels, including a fragment of a kantharos with "West Slope" decoration

Date: late 4th – mid-3rd century BC

Bibliography: Mikov 1954, 25, fig. 29; Parvin 2015, 35, fig. 38



Figure 7. Askos from the Kazanlak tomb, Cat. 2 (photos M. Raykovska and M. Parvin)

Cat. 3. Askos from the eastern fireplace of the mound of the Kazanlak tomb. Museum of History Iskra, Kazanlak, inv. No MIKA II 117, Fig. 8

Description: fine paste with a smooth grey surface. Spherical body with a distinct edge between the two halves, cylindrical neck with a funnel-shaped rim and an embossed ring. There is a cylindrical knob on top of the body, and three incised concentric circles around it. Ring solid base. Two handles with an oval cross-section and a central longitudinal ridge are attached to the neck and shoulders of the body. One of the handles has an impression underneath. The other handle and part of the rim are restored.

Measurements: H 13 cm, max D body 16 cm, D rim 5 cm, D base 7 cm, H base 0.5 cm, H button 0.8 cm, D button 1.4 cm

Context: ritual fireplace, discovered together with a silver jug, fragments of local and imported vessels, including a fragment of a kantharos with "West Slope" decoration

Date: late 4th – mid-3rd century BC

Bibliography: Mikov 1954, 25, fig. 29



Figure 8. Askos from Kazanlak tomb. Cat. 3 (photos M. Raykovska and M. Parvin)

Cat. 4. Askos from Malkata Mogila mound, the village of Sheynovo, Kazanlak region. Museum of History Iskra, Kazanlak, inv. No MIKA 1551, Fig. 9

Description: fine paste with a smooth, polished reddish-brown surface, covered with dense slip, partly erased. High oval body, cylindrical neck with a profiled rim and an embossed ring below it. Low concave ring base, part of the periphery is broken and erased. Two handles with an oval cross-section, attached to the neck and shoulders of the body. There is an impression under one of the handles, and there was probably an impression under the second, but it is not preserved as it has been restored. There is a decoration of two deeply incised concentric circles on the top of the body and a third one on the part above the handles. Restored.

Measurements: H 29 cm, max D body 29 cm, D rim 9 cm, D base 11 cm, H base 1.3 cm, handles cross-section 4 x 1.7 cm

Context: stone tomb 1. The inventory includes two clay unguentaria, a clay oinochoe and amphora, two silver calyx cups, a bronze situla and krater, a gold ring, a gold pectoral, gold beads for a necklace, a gold chain, four gold and five silver-gilt appliquéés, gold buttons, seven Thracian type silver fibulae: six of them connected with three silver chains, a silver pin, a bronze mirror, a bone scepter (?).

Date: late 4th – early 3rd century BC

Bibliography: Kitov 1994, 71; Zarev, Denev 2001, 92, fig. 12



Figure 9. Askos from Malkata Mogila mound. Cat. 4 (photos M. Raykovska)

Cat. 5. Askos discovered between the villages of Radomirtsi and Ruptsi, approx. 2 km from the village of Radomirtsi, Pleven region. Regional museum of history (RMH) Pleven, Inv. No 1069/2

Description: fine paste with a smooth grey surface. Spherical body with pointed upper part, cylindrical neck with a thickened rim and an embossed ring below it. Low concave ring base. Two handles with an oval cross-section and a central longitudinal ridge, attached to the neck and shoulders of the body. There is a decoration of two deeply incised concentric circles on the top of the body.

Measurements: H 18.5 cm, max D body 24 cm, D rim 6.2 cm, D base 14 cm

Context: the askos was discovered during excavation work, together with a jug and a bowl put in an amphora with bones.

Date: late 4th – mid-3rd century BC

Bibliography: Kovacheva, Lazarova 1994, 33, t. IV

Cat. 6. Askos from the Tranovitsa locality, near the village of Chernichevo, Hissarya region, Archaeological museum (AM) Hissarya, Fig. 10

Description: semi-fine paste with sand grains and gravels, reddish-brown surface. Oval body with a conical upper part and a cylindrical neck with a profiled mouth. There is a conical knob on top of the body, and six deep incised concentric circles on the upper part of the body. Two handles with an oval

cross-section and a central longitudinal ridge are attached to the neck and shoulders of the body. Low concave ring base, part of the periphery is broken and erased. Restored.

Measurements: H 18 cm, max D body 22 cm, D rim 6.9 cm, D base 10.8 cm, H base 1.4 cm, handles cross-section 3.3 x 1.4 cm

Context: in a ceramic deposit in a burial mound, together with two jugs, a bowl, and a crater

Date: late 4th – first half of the 3rd century BC

Bibliography: Madzharov et al. 2003, 100; Madzharov 2023, 19-20



Figure 10. Askos from Chernichevo, Hissarya region, Cat. 6 (photos M. Madzharov)

Cat. 7 Askos from the region of Kazanlak. Museum of History Iskra, Kazanlak, inv. No MIKA II 1592, Fig. 11

Description: fine paste with a smooth ochre surface, covered with reddish-brown slip that is erased in places. Biconical body, cylindrical neck with a biconical rim and an embossed ring below it. There is a cylindrical knob on top of the body, and two incised concentric circles around it. Two handles with an oval cross-section and a convex longitudinal edge are attached to the neck and shoulders of the body. Low ring base, part of the periphery is broken and erased.

Measurements: H 12.5 cm, max D body 15.5 cm, D rim 4.2 cm, D base 8.2 cm, H knob 0.5 cm, D knob 1.9 cm, handles cross-section 2.8 x 1.3 cm

Context: unknown. Discovered during archaeological field survey

Date: late 4th – first half of the 3rd century BC

Bibliography: unpublished



Figure 11. Askos from the region of Kazanlak. Cat. 7 (photos M. Raykowska and M. Parvin)

Cat. 8. Askos from Kazanlak, Museum of History Iskra, Kazanlak, inv. No MIKA II 955, Fig. 12

Description: fine paste with an ochre surface. Oval body, cylindrical neck with a funnel rim. Flat and low solid base. Two handles with an oval cross-section are attached to the neck and shoulders of the body. Each handle has an impression underneath. Big part of the body and part of the rim are restored.

Measurements: H 15 cm, max D body 22.5 cm, D rim 6.2 cm, D base 9.6 cm, H base 0.3 cm, handles cross-section 1.2 x 2.6 cm

Context: unknown

Date: late 4th – first half of the 3rd century BC

Bibliography: unpublished



Fig. 12. Askos from the region of Kazanlak. Cat. 8 (photos M. Raykowska and M. Parvin)

Cat. 9. Askos from Kazanlak, Museum of History Iskra, Kazanlak, inv. No MIKA II 1994, Fig. 13

Description: semi-fine paste with sand grains and gravels, brown surface. Biconical high body with a pointed upper part and a cylindrical neck with profiled rim. Two handles with an oval cross-section and a central longitudinal ridge are attached to the neck and shoulders of the body. Flat and low solid base. Part of the rim is missing.

Measurements: H 20.5 cm, max D body 24 cm, D base 11.8 cm, H base 0.6 cm, handles cross-section 1.6 x 3.1 cm

Context: unknown

Date: late 4th – first half of the 3rd century BC

Bibliography: unpublished



Fig. 13. Askos from the region of Kazanlak. Cat. 9 (photos M. Raykowska and M. Parvin)

Cat. No 10. Askos from Buzovgrad, Museum of History Iskra, Kazanlak, inv. No MIKA II 145, Fig. 14

Description: fine paste with a polished grey surface. Biconical high body with a distinct edge between the two halves. Low concave ring base, part of the periphery is broken and erased. The upper part of the body is decorated with two barely visible shallow incised concentric lines. The handles and the neck are not preserved.

Measurements: H 17 cm, max D body 24 cm, D neck 3 cm, D base 11.5 cm, H base 0.5 cm, handles cross-section 3.4 x 1.4 cm

Context: unknown. Discovered 50 m northeast of Buzovgrad

Date: late 4th – first half of the 3rd century BC

Bibliography: Tabakova-Tsanova 1961, 53, fig. 2d



Fig. 14. Askos from the region of Buzovgrad. Cat. No 10 (photos M. Parvin)

Cat. No 11. Askos from Kazanlak, Museum of History Iskra, Kazanlak, inv. No MIKA II 1534, Fig. 15

Description: semi-fine paste with sand grains and mica inclusions, polished grey-beige surface. Biconical high body with a pointed upper part and a cylindrical neck. Low concave ring base, part of the periphery is broken and heavily erased. The upper part of the body is decorated with three small incised concentric circles. The upper part of the neck, the rim and part of handles are not preserved. Each handle has an impression underneath.

Measurements: H 18 cm, max D body 25.5 cm, D neck 3.6 cm, D base 10.8 cm, H base 0.5 cm, handles cross-section 3 x 1.5 cm

Context: unknown. Discovered south of the railway near the cemetery park

Date: late 4th – first half of the 3rd century BC

Bibliography: unpublished



Fig. 15. Askos with unknown provenience. Cat. 11 (photos M. Parvin)

Cat. 12. Askos from Kazanlak, Museum of History Iskra, Kazanlak, inv. No MIKA II 144. Listed as missing in the museum's inventory since 1971

Description: grey paste. There is a cylindrical knob on top of the body, and three concentric incised lines around it. The bottom is not preserved.

Measurements: H 11.5 cm, max D body 17 cm, D neck 4.5 cm

Context: unknown

Date: late 4th – first half of the 3rd century BC

Bibliography: Tabakova-Tsanova 1961, 54, fig. 2d; 55, no 5

Cat. 13. Askos from Kazanlak, Museum of History Iskra, Kazanlak, inv. No MIKA II 148. Listed as missing in the museum's inventory since 1971

Description: red paste. Parts of the body are not preserved.

Measurements: H 13 cm, max D body 21 cm, D neck 6.5 cm, D base 9 cm

Bibliography: Tabakova-Tsanova 1961, 54, fig. 3c; 55, no 8

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION

Conceptualization, M.S., M.P. and M.R.; methodology, M.S., M.P. and M.R.; resources, M.P. and M.S; writing – original draft preparation, M.S.; writing – review and editing, M.S., M.P. and M.R.; visualization, M.R, M.P. and M.S.; supervision, M.S. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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