

## **Bronze funerary hydria from Nesebar (Abstract)**

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The paper presents a newly-discovered product of the ancient toreutics—a bronze hydria with an appliqué depicting Eros and Psyche. It was discovered in a cist grave, during the archaeological investigations of the necropolis of Mesambria, present-day Nesebar, in 2010. On the shoulders of the bronze vase, there was a wreath, made of wood with applied lead band, on which bronze wires and clay berries were fastened. The hydria was found closed with a disk-shaped, slightly convex lid. In the vase, along with the remains of the cremated body, there was a highly corroded iron strigil. A fragmentary red clay jug was discovered in immediate proximity to the cist.

In the paper, the authors provide a detailed deappliqué. On the grounds of numerous parallels, known from various sites of the ancient world, the scene with the two characters could be identified as Eros and Psyche.

The newly-discovered hydria is the fourth of the series, discovered in the necropolis of Mesambria. All of them belong to a well-known and studied group of products of the ancient toreutics. The article offers an overview of the publications concerning these hydriae. It is

established that it was a homogenous, well-defined group of bronze items that have uniform morphological features and close iconography.

The authors have provided as parallels hydriae of similar iconography (e.g. the hydriae in Condé Museum in Chantilly, France, and from Samsun in the National Museum in Berlin). It is noted that there are examples with identical scenes, but different iconographic schemes (the hydriae from Apollonia near Bursa, Turkey, in Istanbul Archaeology Museum). The stylistic diversity of the adduced parallels, including the newly-discovered hydria from Nesebar, could be interpreted as indicating the work of various craftsmen and workshops.

The number of the bronze hydriae, discovered in the necropolis of Mesambria and used as cinerary urns (a total of six, of which two do not have figural appliqués), unequivocally testify to their special role in the burial customs in the ancient Mediterranean. Based on the dates of the Mesambrian hydriae, all discovered in stone cists, it is suggested that the time of most active use of “funerary” hydriae with appliqués was the Early Hellenistic Period.