Furniture with type A decoration from Thrace

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ABSTRACT

The paper is aimed at presenting the main features, stylistic characteristics, possible influences and chronological framework of furniture with type A decoration from burial complexes in Thrace.

The main feature of the furniture with type A decoration as per the typology of Helmut Kyrieleis is the way the legs are rendered – they are cone-shaped, with a profile narrowing from top to bottom and a swelling around mid-height. Furniture with such type of decoration is spread throughout whole Thrace and is dated in a relatively wide chronological diapason – from the last decades of the first half of 5th c. BC to the last quarter of 3rd c. BC. The analysis of the available examples and their comparison with similar furniture from the neighbouring areas show that the trends typical for the architecture and the architectural decoration of the Mediterranean world during that period are well-attested in Thrace as well. The presence of such furniture in funerary context also implies that the trend to place furniture in tombs is well-known in Thrace and is connected to the idea of heroizating the deceased.

KEYWORDS

furniture, kline, diphros, decoration Type A, tombs

The monumental graves and tombs in Thrace from the Classic and Hellenistic period are very important for the study on the relations between the Thracian territories and Greece, Asia Minor and Macedonia. The main trends in the architecture of the Mediterranean world during these periods find reflection in the plans, building materials, construction and architectural decoration of the Thracian tombs. An important aspect of the study of the Thracian tomb architecture is the examination of the furniture used in their interior. The material collected so far is sufficient enough to allow us to draw a relatively clear picture of the furniture types used in the Thracian tombs and show the influence which Asia Minor, Greece and Macedonia had over the tomb furnishing in Thrace. The actuality of the problem is further emphasized by the recently published comprehensive studies on the furniture (mainly funerary couches) from tombs in the neighbouring areas. The most important are the monographs of Caroline Hugenot, Dimitria Andrianou and Elizabeth Baughan (Hugenot 2008, Andrianou 2009, Baughan 2013).

The main focus point in these studies are the klinai as they are the most common type of furniture used in the interior of the tombs. The diphroi should be examined as well as they are also found in the tomb interior either installed separately or in a combination with a kline. The typology of Helmut Kyrieleis, which divides the funerary beds in three main types – A, B and C, based on the decoration of their front side (Kyrieleis 1969), is well-accepted and used in the academic literature. All of the three types are presented in Thrace as well. The current paper discusses the furniture – klinai and diphroi, which belong to the first main type A and examines their main features, stylistic similarities and chronology. Examples for furniture with such decoration made of wood, stone and metal, are the wooden kline from
the Lozarska mogila\(^1\) near Duvanli, the funerary bed from the tomb at Ivanski, the silver *diphros* from Stavroupolis, one of the *diphroi* in the tomb at Naip, the wooden *diphroi* from the tomb in Ginina mogila near Sveshtari and the tumulus Belishka Chuka near Belitsa. The furniture depicted on the frieze in the main chamber of the Kazanluk tomb – the throne of the female figure and the *diphros* on which the man is sitting, should also be included in this group. The profile of the legs of the type A furniture is characterized by a broader upper and a narrower lower cone-shaped parts, separated by a swelling. The legs made of wood are lathe-turned and those in stone and metal imitate the wooden ones.

### Origin and development of the furniture with type A decoration

Before we go through the concrete examples of furniture with type A decoration from Thrace, we will briefly discuss the question about the origin and the development of this type of decoration. Similar to the other types, type A is also differentiated based on examples from the vase painting – according to the researchers depictions of furniture with type A decoration can be found in the vase painting from the late 7th c. BC to the 4th c. BC (Baughan 2013, 44). The emergence of such depictions in the Greek art is directly related to the idea of the heroic banquet and the *symposion*, which is most likely influenced by the Middle East. The latest publications on the topic prove that the type A decoration is formed in the Eastern Aegean region at the end of 7thc. BC (Baughan 2013, 74-78), where the Greek traditions are strongly influenced by the Eastern ones. A couple of key moments need to be pointed out when discussing the development of this type of decoration over time. The available material shows that the earlier examples are closer in their style to the Eastern models. Such early example for a *kline* with type A decoration is the one depicted on a Corinthian krater representing Heracles in the house of Eurytios, dated to ca. 600 BC (Kyrieleis 1969, 119; Baughan 2013, 40). The legs of the *kline* are composed by three main parts: 1. a broader base; 2. a thinner, narrowing to the bottom middle part with a disc-like swelling

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1 Mogila means in Bulgarian tumulus.
in the middle; 3. a broader cylindrical upper part which further widens towards its lower end. The examples of furniture with type A decoration from the late 6th c. BC and the 5th c. BC show a significant change in the way their legs are rendered – the transitions between the different components of the leg are smoother, the separation between the elements is less dramatic and the overall appearance of the leg is more harmonious. Good examples for this development of the decoration in Greece are two of the reliefs on the East frieze of the Siphnian Treasury in Delphi – the stool of Aphrodite and the throne of Zeus (Kyrieleis 1969, 123). Depictions of furniture with legs rendered in the way described above continue to appear in the art of Etruria and South Italy, Greece and Anatolia during the whole 5th and 4th c. BC (Baughan 2013, 48) which proves that this type of furniture is widespread throughout the whole Mediterranean. Thrace is no exception – a series of examples of furniture with type A decoration is known from the Thracian lands which is a clear evidence for the contacts between Thrace and the neighbouring regions.

*Klinai* with type A decoration from Thrace

One of the earliest examples for an actual funerary bed with type A decoration is the wooden *kline* found in the Lozarska mogila near Duvanli (fig. 1) (Филов 1934, 122-126, 229-230; Richter 1966, 56; Kyrieleis 1969, 126-129, fig. 23, pl. 17.3-4; Archibald 1998, 160, 162; Baughan 2013, 45-46). The remains of an ash wood *kline*, composed of four turned legs, four rectangular rails for the bed frame and a netting of hemp cords forming the bed surface are found within a stone sarcophagus. The elements of the *kline* are well-preserved which allows the complete reconstruction of its dimensions – length 1.37 m and width 0.5 m (Филов 1934, 123). The four legs of the funerary bed are lathe-turned, each of them consists of four separate parts socketed together. There is a torus-like swelling in the middle of each leg, which separates the shaft in two main parts – upper and lower. The lower part is narrower and additionally tapers towards the concave foot. The upper part above the torus is broader and gently concave. Each leg has a disc-shaped swelling on the top of the shaft. The legs found on the head of the bed next to the western side of the sarcophagus have taller capitals consisting of the mentioned disc-shaped swelling and a funnel-shaped abacus above it. This determines the greater height of these two legs –0.325 m, while the other two are 0.29 m high. A curved plank of wood with height of 0.5 m and a maximal width of 0.104 m
which served as a headrest was placed on the capitals of the higher legs (Филов 1934, 124). The rails of the bed frame were attached to the legs via mortise-and-tenon joinery in the upper part of the shaft. Small holes were made on the inner faces of the rails, where the hemp cords of the bed slab were attached. The explorer dates the kline \(^a\) 490-480 BC based on an imported Greek black-figured palmette lekythos (Филов 1934, 228-230). The latest analysis on the lekythos connects it with the Haimon and Beldam workshop, which suggests a later date around 470-460 BC (Archibald 1998, 164, n. 33). The kline at Duvanli is one of the earliest preserved examples for klinai with type A decoration turning it into an important link in the development of this type of decoration. The kline from Duvanli finds good parallels in a bronze funerary bed from Lydia (fig. 2) currently in the Paul Getty Museum, dated ca. 500 BC (Baughan 2013, 36, fig. 23). Similar in their form are also the legs of two thrones from the reliefs on the west and south side of the Kybernis’ tomb (so called Harpy tomb) in Lycia, dated ca. 500-480 BC (Jenkins 2006, 168). Based on the workmanship of the reliefs the researchers suggest that they were carved by Ionian workmen (Jenkins 2006, 168).

Another example of a type A kline is found in the tomb near the village of Ivanski, Shumen (Атанасов, Стоичев 2003). The funerary bed (fig. 3) consists of four monolithic stone blocks with rectangular shape which are fastened together. The two outer ends raise in height and are plasticly rendered in the form of headrests with a slightly turned s-shaped profile. The so formed kline has the following dimensions – 2.14 m length, 0.403 m height to the upper surface and 0.195 m (0.207 m) height of the headrests. A footstool is carved in relief on the front side of the bed. It is represented by two horizontal rails resting on two small in size legs with rectangular shape. The sunken panel between the two rails is painted in red. Similar in shaping and colouring is the footstool from the tomb in the Griffins Tumulus with the difference that the legs of the latter are molded as lion pawns (Kitov 2003, 310, fig. 9-10). Steps of the same type are also found on the klinai in the tombs at Mal-tepe near Mezek (Филов 1937, 25) and at Naip (Delemen 2004, 258). On the front

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2 I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Stanimir Stoychev for the provided unpublished drawings and photographs.
side of the kline in the tomb at Ivanski, two legs are carved in relief and the way they are rendered is typical for the type A decoration. The base of each leg consists of two truncated cone-shaped parts. Two torus moldings separate the base from the shaft of the leg. A ring-like element which divides the shaft in two parts is carved slightly above the middle of the shaft. The shaping of these two parts is in the typical for the type A klinai way – the lower part is narrower and additionally tapers toward the base, the upper part is broader and slightly widens at top and bottom. The shaft is crowned by a discoid element on which the plastically rendered headrests rest. The horizontal rail which represents the mattress of the kline and connects the two legs is carved right under the discoid swelling mentioned above. A similar way of shaping the legs can be seen on the funerary couches at Amarinthos A2 and Nisa (Huguenot 2008, 104-105). Their legs, however, are made of more concave parts, connected to each other by a different number of rings. The tomb at Ivanski, as well as the funerary bed, is dated back to the end of the 4th – the beginning of the 3rd c. BC based on its architectural features and the grave goods found in it. The shape of the legs at Ivanski finds good parallels in one of the diphroi from the tomb at Naip (Delemen 2004, 2006), which is dated at the same time (see below).

Diphroi with type A decoration from Thrace

The diffusion of this type of furniture in Thrace is also proved by the recently discovered remains of a wooden diphros in the Belishka chuka tumulus near the city of Belitsa (Тонкова 2008, 248-249; Tonkova 2016, 343-344; 350). Fragments of a wooden diphros – parts of its legs along with the cross strips that held them together (fig. 4), are found in a wooden sarcophagus with remains of cremation. The legs are lathe-turned. The preserved upper part which has a height of 0.173 m, is in the shape of a truncated cone with a diameter of the upper surface – 0.065 m, and of the lower – 0.06 m (Tonkova 2016, 343,Pl. 150, fig. 17). The broader upper part is followed by a thinner rounded section with a diameter of 0.04 m. The leg is cone-shaped in its lower part and steps on a lower base with a diameter of 0.055 m. The height of the legs can be restored at about 0.40 m (Tonkova 2016, 343). The joinery can be restored based on the quadrangular 0.02x0.02 m mortises in the upper part of the legs. The legs were connected with stretchers with length of 0.40-0.42 m which implies an almost

3 I would like to thank Assist. Prof. Daniela Stoyanova for the consultation in regards to the dating of the tomb.
square form of the stool (Михайлов, Костов 2008, 255-256). Thinner stretchers connected the legs slightly above the base (Tonkova 2016, 343; Pl. 150, fig. 17). Good parallels can be seen in the silver *diphros* from Stavroupolis (see below). The way the legs of the *diphros* from Belishka chuka are rendered is very similar to the workmanship of the legs of the *kline* from Duvanli. The main difference is the fact, that the legs of the Duvanli *kline* are made of four separate parts joint together, while the legs of the *diphros* from Belishka chuka are turned from a single piece of wood. Differences can be also seen in the shaping of the base – the base of the *kline* from the Lozarska mogila have more components, most probably determined by the fact that the base itself was turned as a separate element. Based on the grave goods the Belishka chuka tumulus is dated back to the second half of the 5th c. BC (Tonkova 2016, 352), which puts the finding very close to the *kline* from the Lozarska mogila and can be considered as a proof for the contacts between the two Thracian areas. The comparison between the *kline* from Lozarska mogila and the leg fragments from Belishka chuka also raises the question about the definition of the elements from Belishka chuka as belonging to a *diphros*. The dimensions of the legs and the similarities between them and the legs of the wooden funerary bed from the Lozarska mogila suggest a possible interpretation of the fragments from Belishka chuka as elements of a *kline*. It is also possible that additional capitals were mounted on top of the legs as seen on the *kline* from the Lozarska mogila.

The legs of the already mentioned silver *diphros* (with silver coating) found in a cist grave at Stavroupolis are shaped in a similar way (fig. 5) (Andrianou 2009, 28-29, fig. 6a-b). Parts of two legs with dimensions 0.55×0.55×0.45 m and four transverse beams with a length of 0.34 m are preserved (Andrianou 2009, 28). There is a torus molding in the middle of the leg which separates the shaft in two parts. The lower part of the shaft is higher and tapers towards the base, the upper part is shorter and widens towards the capital above it. Each capital ends with a convex rounded ornament protruding above the seat. The transverse beams forming the seat are attached to the capitals of the leg via mortise-and-tenon joinery. The torus moldings of the legs are also connected with one another by thin meal stretchers with an oval section. The grave is dated to the 4th c. BC (Andrianou 2009, 28), and for the
moment its date cannot be refined based on the available information. The discovery of the *diphros* in a funerary context and the similarities with the *kline* from the Lozarska mogila and the *diphros* from Belishka chuka in the way the legs are treated clearly shows that this type of decoration continues to be used in the funerary furnishing in 4th c. BC.

Another example for a *diphros* with type A decoration presents one of the two *diphroi* from the tomb at Naip. It is built from a monolithic block with round embossed corners which appear to be lathe-turned and protrude above the seat (fig. 6) (Delemen 2004, 2006). Each leg consists of two parts of about the same height which widen in their upper and lower ends. A thin ring is shaped in the middle of the leg where the two parts connect. The lower part of each leg is shaped as a bovine’s hoof resting on a base with a scotia and plinth and the upper part of the leg ends with a round ornament protruding above the seat of the *diphros*. The finds in the tomb at Naip and its architectural features suggest a date in the late 4th – early 3rd c. BC. According to the explorer of the tomb the single interment at Naip can be dated in the last two decades of the 4th c. BC. This date is proposed based on two finds in the tomb – an Attic unguentarium dated to 325-300 BC and a Thasian amphora dated to 325-310 BC based on its stamp. The latest studies on the Thasian amphora stamps show, however, that the eponym ΠΟΛΥΝΕΙΚΗΣ can be re-dated in the period 308-298 BC (Tzochev 2009, 65, Tab. 3) which means that the tomb can be convincingly dated back to the last decade of the 4th – the very beginning of the 3rd c. BC. This date should be also accepted in regards to the tomb furniture, including the *diphros*.

The wooden *diphros* from the tomb in Ginina mogila near Sveshtari (fig. 7) should also be included in the group of furniture with type A decoration. The form of the *diphros* can be fully recovered based on the four fragments from a wooden plank and the three fragments from wooden lathe-turned legs (Чичикова et al. 2012, 55-56). The *diphros* consists of a rectangular seat with preserved length of 0.41 m and preserved width of 0.248 m which has an almost round in form depression on its upper surface, and four lathe-turned legs.

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4 For a full bibliography on the tomb at Ginina Mogila see Чичикова et al. 2012.
attached to the lower base via wooden pegs. The legs consist of two parts – the upper one is cylindrical and the lower one is cone-shaped and narrows towards the base. This rendering resembles the shaping of the legs typical for the furniture with type A decoration, which is why the *diphos* from Ginina mogila should be also included on this group. The tomb, including the furniture in it, can be convincingly dated at the end of the first – the beginning of the second quarter of 3rd c. BC (Чичикова et al. 2012, 76).

**Painted representations of type A furniture from Thrace**

The depictions of furniture on the frieze in the Kazanluk tomb (Миков 1954) – the throne of the female figure (fig. 8) and the *diphos* (fig. 9), on which the man is sitting, should also be considered when discussing the furniture with type A decoration from Thrace. The female figure is depicted seated on a throne with a high backrest, which consists of four vertical and three horizontal beams attached to each other with nails. Metal cross ornaments painted in blue are depicted in the open sections formed by the crossing of the horizontal and the vertical beams. The ends of the top horizontal and the vertical beams are protruding outside the frame of the backrest and end with pointed elements painted in black. The armrests are represented by two laths – a thick one and a thinner one laying on it. They end with metal griffins (Миков 1954, 11). Of particular interest for this study is the way the legs of the throne are depicted. They are round in section and have a swelling in the middle of the shaft which is interpreted as a metal ring because of its colouring. Two parallel rings painted in dark red are depicted above and below the swelling; the same decoration is represented in the upper part of the leg. The swelling in the middle of the leg divides it into two parts – a cylindrical upper part and a lower part which narrows towards the bottom. Each leg has a metal ring-like ornament and a pointed element at the end.

Even though the legs of the *diphos* on which the man is sitting, differ in their shaping from the examples discussed above, it still needs to be included in the group of furniture with type A decoration. The legs of the *diphos* have broader lower part forming a
leaf-wreath element which steps on a wide truncated cone-shaped base. It is followed by a concave section of the shaft with two torus moldings placed at a certain distance from each other. The upper part of the legs, where the seat is attached, is broader, with almost cylindrical form and is separated from the lower part by a thin discoid ornament. The legs of the *diphros* are painted in blue which implies that they are made of metal. The silver *diphros* from Stavroupolis from the 4th c. BC which was discussed above suggests that the representations in the Kazanluk tomb repeat actually existing types of furniture made of precious metal. The description of the *diphros* on the frieze in the Kazanluk tomb shows that in terms of style it is closer to the examples of furniture with type A decoration influenced by the East. Examples of furniture with a similar shaping of the legs are also known from Macedonia – the remains of three legs of a *kline*, found in a cist grave in Pella and dated back to the end of the 4th – the beginning of the 3rd c. BC (Paspalas 2000, 534), as well as two funerary couches from a tomb in Vathia (Eretria) from the first half of the 3rd c. BC (Vollmoeller 1901, 366-376), which are convincingly attributed to a Persian type of furniture (Paspalas 2000). The shaft of the legs of these *klinai* consists of a number of torus-scotia sections which rest on a base shaped as a leaf wreath. Furniture legs on which the leaf wreath changed into a bell-shaped element become very popular in the Hellenistic period and later in the whole Mediterranean (Paspalas 2000, 543, n.77), and is not surprising that such image appears on the frieze in the Kazanluk tomb. The analysis of the painted decoration in Kazanluk speaks for a date in the second quarter of the 3rd c. BC (Димитров 1966, 11).

A representation of a furniture piece, most probably a throne can be also seen on the figural scene depicted on the wall to the left of the bed in the burial chamber in the tomb at

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Fig. 9. Depiction of a male figure sitting on a diphros from the Kazanluk tomb (photo G. Luglio)

Обр. 9. Изображение на мъжка фигура, седяща върху дифрос, от Казанлъшката гробница
(снимка Дж. Лульо)
Conclusion

The examples presented above show that the furniture with type A decoration was spread on the territory of whole Trace and it is not possible to differentiate an area where it was more frequently attested. What strikes the most is the fact, that all examples are from a funerary context which is related to the idea of heroizating the deceased. The funerary bed from the Lozarska mogila and the wooden *diphros* from the tumulus Belishka chuka are two of the earliest examples for furniture with this type of decoration from the Mediterranean region at all and are a clear proof for the contacts of Thrace with the neighbouring territories in the 5th c. BC. The parallels which can be found in examples from Asia Minor also suggest that this type of decoration finds a good ground for further development in the Aegean region and spreads throughout the whole Mediterranean, including Thrace. The picture showing the distribution of furniture with type A decoration in Thrace is further expanded by the *diphros* with silver legs found in Stavroupolis. The latter is an evidence for the usage of such type furniture in the tombs during the 4th c. BC. Very important in this regard is the fact that the *diphros* has silver legs as this is a clear evidence for the usage of furniture made of metal in funerary context – as suggested also by the representation of the *diphros* in the Kazanluk tomb. This depiction is of high importance because its legs are rendered in a way typical for the eastern prototypes. Furniture with a similar workmanship is well-attested on the territory of the whole Mediterranean region during the Hellenistic period which reaffirms the inseparability of Thrace from the development of the region during that period. The remaining examples for furniture with type A decoration from
Thrace – the *kline* from the tomb at Ivanski, the *diphroi* from Naip and Ginina mogila and the throne of the female figure on the frieze in the Kazanluk tomb, are dated in a relatively narrow chronological frames covering the last decades of the 4th – the second quarter of the 3rd c. BC. They prove again that the trends, typical for the architecture and the architectural decoration of the Mediterranean world, were also well-known and used in Thrace and that the tendency to install furniture in funerary contexts developed in the Thracian territories simultaneously with the other neighbouring areas.

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Мебели с декорация тип А от Тракия  

(резюме)

Монументалните гробове и гробници в Тракия от класическата и елинистическата епоха са от изключителна важност за изучаването на взаимоотношенията и връзките ѝ с Гърция, Мала Азия и Македония. В техните планове, строителни материали, конструкции и архитектурна декорация са отразени основни тенденции в архитектурата на Средиземноморието през разглежданите епохи. Важен аспект при проучването на гробничната архитектура в Тракия е изследването на мебелите, включени в интериора им. Наличните примери са достатъчно, за да може да се очертая една сравнително ясна картина на типовете мебели, използвани в тракийска среда, както и да се покаже влиянието на Мала Азия, Гърция и Македония върху гробната мебелировка в Тракия. В публикациите по темата, засягащи съседните на Тракия райони, най-голямо внимание се обръща на клинетата, тъй като те са най-често срещанит тип мебел в интериора на гробниците. Възприетата в научната литература типология на мебелите ги разделя на три основни типа – А, В и С, въз основа на декорацията върху лицевата им страна, като всеки от трите типа е представлен и в Тракия. Обект на изследване в настоящата статия са примерите за мебели от Тракия, които попадат в първия основен тип А. Те се характеризират с конични по форма крака, профилът на които се стеснява от горната към долната част, а в средата им е оформена издютина. Примери за мебели с декорация тип А от Тракия са дървеното клинче от Лозарската могила при Дуванлий, гробното легло от гробницата при с. Ивански,
дървеният дифрос от могилата Белишка чука край Белица, дървеният дифрос от Гиннина могила, с. Свещари, сребърният дифрос от Ставруполис, както и единият от дифросите от гробницата в Наип. Към групата следва да се причислят и изобразените мебели върху фриза в Казанлъшката гробница – тронът с женската фигура и дифросът, върху който седи мъжът. От примерите се вижда, че мебели с декорация тип А са разпространени на територията на цяла Тракия, което е доказателство както за връзките между отделните области на Тракия, така и за контактите на тракийските земи със съседните райони. Наличието на мебели тип А в тракийските гробни комплекси също така показва, че през разглеждания период в тракийските земи са се развивали същите тенденции в архитектурата и архитектурната декорация, които са характерни и за целия Средиземноморски регион, както и че модата за поставяне на мебели в гробниците от Тракия се развива паралелно със съседните области.