

**A GROUP OF ROMAN PERFUME BOTTLES FROM ASIA MINOR**  
(Pl. XXIII-XXIV)

Perfume bottles or *unguentaria* form one of the most common types of glass vessel used in the Roman world. The reason for this is obvious. These bottles represent the basic, small container used for storing a wide variety of liquids and viscous substances<sup>1</sup>. As such they were in everyday use throughout the Empire over a prolonged period of time. The earliest free-blown glass examples appear soon after 70 BC, and they continued to be produced in large quantities until the end of the third century AD. The bottles have applications not only in daily life but also in funerary contexts<sup>2</sup>. Their use in burial rites and as grave goods is well attested, and this is the principal reason for their survival in such numbers, although they must constitute only a small fraction of the total production.

Perfume bottles come in a bewildering array of different sizes and shapes a further indication of the quantity and extent of their production. Attempts at classification have been made, but generally, these lack conviction. Not only was production widely dispersed, and probably fragmented in small, local workshops, but speed and quantity were demanded in their production rather than uniformity and attention to detail. It has, however, been possible to identify sub-groups within the broad family of perfume bottles according to form and distribution. "Candlestick *unguentaria*", for example, are usually characterised as Cypriot, while another type in deep green glass with thick walls is described as Egyptian<sup>3</sup>. Until now it has not been possible to attribute a particular form to Asia Minor, although perfume bottles are very well represented amongst the glass vessels found in Turkey.

Presented here is a small number of bottles of such similar shape and size that they are easily identifiable as a group. They all originate from Turkey and, with the exception of no.6, have provenances in the western half of the country. This, combined with the fact that such bottles are not found amongst Syrian or Cypriot types of *unguentaria*, strongly suggests that they form a

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1. For preserved contents, see Takaz (1975: 110)-water; Alcock (1980: 62)- resinated wine, frankincense; Carington Smith (1982: 293)- red ochre cosmetic; Greenwalt (1985: 84-5)-oily substance (olive oil?).
  2. Anderson-Stojanovic (1987: 120-22) argues that the function of (pottery) *unguentaria* was closely connected to the funeral rite and was not necessarily related to the commercial trade in perfumed oils and unguents.
  3. For Cypriot "candlestick *unguentaria*", see Hayes (1975:123-4); for Egyptian "utility ware", Hayes (1975:133-4).

distinctive group from Asia Minor <sup>1</sup>. The only evidence for dating the group is provided by the last example from the Saraylar necropolis. The sarcophagi, however, were evidently family tombs, containing several skeletons, and continued in use for some considerable time <sup>2</sup>. It is, therefore, impossible at this stage to date the present group of bottles with any precision, although they clearly belong to the mid-imperial period.

### Catalogue

#### 1. Perfume Bottle:

Bergama Museum Inv.no. 981. Plate 1. H. 26.3 cm; D.4.25 cm; D.rim 3.7 cm. Colourless, with greenish tinge. Free-blown. Rim turned out, over, flattened and pushed into mouth; tall, slender, slightly concave neck, with tooled constriction at base; conical body, with concave sides; deep, pushed-in and rounded bottom. Broken and repaired; some cracks in rim, neck and body. Weathering and iridescence inside bottle. Many pin-prick bubbles.

#### 2. Perfume Bottle:

British Museum Inv no.GR 1933.11-17.1. Plate 2. Found at Cyzicus. H.25.4 cm; D.rim 3.2 cm; D.bottom 4.3 cm. Colourless, with pale green tinge. Free-blown, with pontil mark. Rim folded out, over and in, flattened at top forming irregular oval-shaped mouth; tall, slightly concave neck, with constriction at base; almost cylindrical body, but flaring outwards at base; deep, pushed-in bottom. Intact. Dulling and faint iridescence. Extremely bubbles; most bubbles on body and neck elongated; blowing striations. Some black, gritty inclusions.

#### 3. Perfume Bottle:

British Museum Inv. no. GR 1878. 3-11.34. Plate 3. Found at Cyzicus. From Calverts Sale. Presented by A.W. Franks. H. 25.25 cm; D.rim 3.0 cm; D.bottom 4.4 cm. Colourless, with pale green tinge. Free-blown, with large, jagged pontil scar. Rim folded out, over and in, flattened at top forming irregular oval-shaped mouth; tall, slightly concave

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1. Notes made by Donald Harden in 1953 suggest that at least one more example of this type is to be found in the Istanbul Archaeological Museums.

2. See Asgari (1978:470) and (1989: 235 and illus. 10).

neck, with constriction at base; slightly conical body, flaring towards the bottom; deep, pushed-in bottom. Broken at constriction and repaired. Dulling and faint iridescence. Some very large elongated bubbles; glass inclusions and bumps, especially on neck.

#### 4. Perfume Bottle:

British Museum Inv. no.GR 1908 . 7-24.6. Plate 4. H.26.3 cm; D.rim 3.6 cm; D.4.8 cm. Acquired in Symrna (Izmir). Colourless, with pale yellow-green tinge. Free-blown, with pontil mark. Rim folded out, over and in, flattened at top but appears bevelled on upper surface; tall, slanting, concave neck,with constriction at base; conical and slightly concave body; deep, pushed-in bottom. Intact. Milky weathering and iridescence. A few large and pin-prick bubbles.

#### 5. Perfume Bottle

British Museum Inv. no.GR 1878. 3-11.33. Plate 5. Found at Cyzicus. H. 26.3 cm; D.rim 3.1 cm; D. 4.5 cm. Colourless, with pale green tinge. Free-blown, with large pontil scar. Rim folded out, over and in, flattened at top forming irregular oval-shaped mouth; tall, slightly concave neck, with constriction at base; conical body; deep, pushed-in bottom. Intact. Dulled surface. Large, elongated bubbles.

#### 6. Perfume Bottle:

Gaziantep Museum Inv. no. 126. 104.74. Plate 6. Find-place unknown. From the Killis area. Purchased. H.22.1 cm; D. rim 2.8 cm; D.base 4.7 cm. Pale green rim; greenish colourless body. Free-blown, with pontil mark. Outplayed rim, folded over and in, with bevelled appearance on top surface; tall funnel-shaped neck with tooled constriction at bottom; conical body; pushed-in bottom. Intact to top of neck; rim (not integral?) stuck on. Dulling and slight iridescence. Bubbles and blowing striations. Some irregular indents in side below constriction at base of neck.

#### 7. Perfume Bottle:

Afyon Museum Inv.no.2301. Plate 7. Find-place unknown. H.26.5 cm; Max. D.4.9 cm; D.rim 3.4 cm. Greenish colourless. Free-blown. Outplayed, tubular rim, folded over and in, and then flattened; long, slender tapering neck, with tooled constriction at lower end; squat,conical body; deep, pushed-in bottom. Intact. Internal weathering

and iridescence on one side. Large, elongated bubbles and glassy inclusions, forming bumps in exterior surface. Lightfoot 1989, 35 no.31, fig.3/2 and pl.4/4.

#### 8. Perfume Bottle:

From one of the sarcophagi in the Roman necropolis at Saraylar, Marmara-Proconnesus (dated to the 2nd-3rd centuries AD). Asgari 1981, 29 and illus. 22 (third bottle from the left).

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**Captions**

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|--------|---|
| Fig. 1 | Bergama Museum, Inv.no.981 (H.26.3 cm)                                      |
| Fig. 2 | GR 1933.11-17.1 (H.25.4 cm) Courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum  |
| Fig. 3 | GR 1878.3-11.34 (H.25.25 cm) Courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum |
| Fig. 4 | GR 1908. 7-24.6 (H.26.3 cm) Courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum  |
| Fig. 5 | GR 1878.3-11.34 (H. 26.3 cm) Courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum |

- Fig. 6 Gaziantep Museum, Inv. no.126.104.74 (H. 22.1 cm)  
Fig. 7 Afyon Museum, Inv. no.2301 (H.26.5 cm)

(Figures 1, 6 and 7 by T.Çakar; figures 2 and 5 by the author).

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