

NIHAL ERHAN – SÜLEYMAN ESKALEN

THE STELAI FROM MARMARAY EXCAVATION SİRKECİ STATION

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In the process of the upgrading of the commuter rail system connecting Halkalı-Sirkeci and Gebze-Haydarpaşa and the Bosphorus immersed tube tunnel construction, both tunnel and station construction (Contract BC1) tendered by the Republic of Turkey's Ministry of Transportation, four funerary stelai, which are the object of this paper, came to light at the Sirkeci Station Eastern Shaft Küçük Halka (Emergency Exit Shaft) during the removal of the pavements which were found at a level of 0.75–0.83 m. At the excavation site, the paved floor including funerary stelai is composed of different architectural and tray ceiling elements with their ornamented surfaces facing down (Map 1; Plan 2; Image 1).

Hellenistic and Roman funerary stelai form an important findings group in the research work and excavations which take place in İstanbul. The Stone Artifacts Collection of the İstanbul Archaeology Museums includes numerous funerary stelai with iconographic characteristics and which date to the Classical periods of Byzantium.¹

The earliest funerary remains and a lutrophoros from the 5th century BC came to light at the courthouse excavations in the northern area of the Hippodrome. The oldest necropolis extends alongside Trakya Avenue and starts from Ayasofya, in the direction of west to east. The remains become more numerous between Çemberlitaş-Süleymaniye-Laleli Mosques and Beyazıt Mosque areas.

The Byzantine Necropolis starts from the west side of the ancient city wall² around Ayasofya and more or less follows Trakya Avenue towards the west, along the ancient city walls towards Marmara Sea and Haliç, spreading to such places as Çatladıkapı and Sirkeci and expanding at the high and raised places like Çemberlitaş and Beyazıt.³

Almost all of the Byzantine stelai are marble, mostly Prokonnesos (Marmara Island) marble. Throughout its history, the city of Byzantium always prioritized the usage of this island's marble. Stelai generally become narrower from bottom to top. The shapes of the stelai mostly show architectonic characteristics. The fronts of the stelai show that their prototypes were Attic, and are ornamented by diminishing the architectural elements to a smaller size. The subjects of the reliefs are not related to the shapes of the stelai.⁴

The stelai which are the subject of this article are the remains of the Byzantine Necropolis and they show Byzantine funerary stelai characteristics. They belong to the same group of stelai which are permanently exhibited in the İstanbul Archaeological Museums, with one exception. Because of their general shape and iconographic characteristics, the four stelai are to be considered funerary.

* We are thankful to the İstanbul Archaeology Museums for granting us the right to publish these stelai. We are also grateful to Prof. Dr. Mustafa H. Sayar for his advice and support of our publication and to Thomas Ford (Cambridge/Cologne) for correcting the English version.

¹ Karagöz 1995, p. 106.

² Fabricius 1999, p. 264.

³ Fıratlı 1965, p. 267; Fabricius 1999, p. 264.

⁴ Karagöz 1994, p. 2699.

1) Funerary Stele with Symposium Scene (Image 2)

Excavation inventory number: 131. Sizes: height: 125 cm, width of the top block: 77 cm, width of the bottom block: 79 cm. Depth of the niche: 12 cm. Bottom diameter: 17 cm. Top diameter: 10 cm. Height of the main figure: 85 cm. Height of the auxiliary figure: 19 cm. Type of rock: marble.

We know from numerous sources that the Byzantine stelai and sarcophagi are made from marble from the mines of Marmara Island (Prokonnesos). Marmara Island is both close to the city and has high-quality marble.

The stele is rectangular, close in shape to that of a square. Although its top right corner and its side are broken and missing pieces, the detailed and high relief engraving is of especial quality.

The relief on the stele depicts a farewell scene. It does not have any inscriptions on it. It is organised as a rectangular block and a niche inside with figures in high-relief technique. The main figures are largely engraved and they fill in the frame. In the composition, there is a man lying on a kline. He does not, however, have a head as the stele is broken above the statue. The body of the man wearing a tunic and a cloak is depicted $\frac{3}{4}$ frontal. He is holding a wreath in his hand which he is holding up and out. Across from him, at the foot of the bed, there is woman of the Pudicitia type⁵ wearing a khiton and himation, sitting on a high-backed chair. Her face is depicted in a very detailed manner and there is a fracture at her nose. The chair on which the woman is sitting has a high back and its feet are ornamented as furniture. She appears to be frowning. Her left hand holds the left collar of her himation which descends from both sides of her head. Her right hand, holding a pomegranate⁶, is on her right knee. There are two maids next to the chair on which she is sitting, depicted as smaller figures. The one with long robes who is depicted at the corner and from her profile, holds a kalathos in her hand. The other is depicted front-on and stands in thoughtful pose, since she holds one of her hands to her chin. In front of the bed, there is a tripod table (*mensa tripes*) with a pomegranate, some bread and an apple on it. Since the upper right part of the stele is broken, we do not have any idea about the beginning of the kline on which the man is lying. He may, perhaps, have had his own male servants close by.

This kind of funerary depiction with a man lying and holding a wreath is a characteristic of the Byzantine periphery, northwest of Marmara and the Western Black Sea, around the Odessos area.⁷ This stele⁸, which is redolent of the importance and character of Byzantium, is probably from a Byzantine Necropolis. We have already stated that the stele (the side with the reliefs placed downwards) had been used in later times as pavement stone in another building. The noses of the relief figures and of some other members may have been broken as a result of re-use.

Byzantine funerary stelai are mostly single plates and depict a funerary symposium scene. However, the fact that there is always a man lying on the kline on the right side, holding out a wreath in his right hand to a woman sitting across from him, is a characteristic of workshops

⁵ The Pudicitia type is generally seen on Hellenistic funerary stelai. The origin of this woman comes from the 4th century BC funerary stelai with sitting women. Although the first examples are not very common, they are from the 4th century BC. The women of this type are generally depicted on the left side of the frame, looking towards the right. When they are depicted on a funerary stele, they are mostly seated next to a man lying on the kline. Saraçoğlu 2004, p. 155; Polat 1995, p. 111.

⁶ The pomegranate symbolizes death in mythology.

⁷ Firatlı 1965, p. 279.

⁸ Firatlı 1965, p. 268.

which made Byzantine funerary stelai. The table in the middle and figures of young servants or children would complete the scene.

Among Assyrian and Late Hittite reliefs there are some examples which might be considered as pioneers of the funerary symposium motif. Especially, the relief displaying Assurbanipal at a symposium particularly encompasses all the characteristics of later funerary symposium scenes.⁹

Funerary stele scenes were displayed on architectural reliefs made both of terracotta and Corinthian ceramics from the Archaic Period onwards, and after the end of the 5th century BC, the motif began to appear on funerary stelai. Thenceforth this moved to all places to which Greek culture expanded, and can be detected in such places as Western Anatolia, the Marmara Periphery, Thrace, Macedonia, the Black Sea Coasts, Crimea, Egypt and Cyprus. During the Roman Period, it expanded all over the Ancient World.¹⁰

The first of the four stelai which were discovered during the excavations, has a characteristic typical of the Byzantium Periphery since the stelai depicting "Funerary Symposia" constitute the largest group of Byzantine funerary stelai.¹¹

The most characteristic motif seen on the reliefs produced by nameless stonemasons was used widely in the Byzantine masons' shops and the mass-produced reliefs display the original work and characteristics of iconography for 600 years between the 3rd century BC and the 3rd century AD.¹²

Stelai depicting a symposium and a wreath-holding man are also seen outside Byzantium, in the area starting from Marmara Ereğlisi and leading up to Varna. This type of funerary stele might have been imported from Byzantium or the local shops might have been influenced by its shops.¹³

Most of the Byzantine stelai date to between the 2nd century BC and the 1st century AD, according to their development in the Hellenistic Period.¹⁴

It is possible to compare this stele to the stelai in the İstanbul Archaeology Museums, which share similar motifs. One of these stelai in the museum is dated to the 2nd century BC.¹⁵ It resembles our example because of the woman sitting next to the frame, the presence of the maid next to her and also the folds of the clothing. There is only one servant on this stele and detailed information cannot be given because the woman's face is worn. Also, the clothing folds of the man (who is depicted in a similar manner) are exactly the same. In our example, however, the hand and fingers of the man holding the wreath are depicted in a very detailed way, whereas no fingers are displayed on the example of the museum. The stele which has a very close characteristic has been dated to the 2nd century BC by Mendel.

Another comparison might be made with a stele which is also currently at the Archaeology Museum and which was found during the construction of İstanbul University at Zeynep Hanım Konağı (today's Faculty of Literature Building).¹⁶ This stele has a similar funerary symposium

⁹ Fıratlı 1965, p. 282.

¹⁰ Fıratlı 1965, p. 284.

¹¹ Fıratlı 1965, p. 279.

¹² Karagöz 1994, p. 2700.

¹³ Karagöz 1994, p. 2700.

¹⁴ Fıratlı 1965, p. 268.

¹⁵ Fıratlı 1964, fig. 48, p. 61.

¹⁶ Taşlıkloğlu 1971, p. 59; Taşlıkloğlu 1958, p. 241–249.

scene, but because of the woman's sitting position, the folds of her khiton are spread out to the side. The richness of the clothing folds displays similar characteristics. The posture of the maid and the folds of clothing resemble our example. Except for some differences in composition, there is no explicit change in the scene. The man holding a wreath and the folds of his clothing are also one of the similarities. The cloak of the sitting woman and especially the folds of her khiton, which come down to her feet, display characteristics of the same era. Its difference in relation to our stele is that it has a pediment and an inscription on it. By taking into consideration the inscription style and form, the stele may be dated to the 2nd century BC.

Our stele carries very similar characteristics to the examples given above, both in terms of general form and in iconographic characteristics. Therefore, we think that our stele belongs to the 2nd–1st century BC.

2) Funerary Stele with Dexiosis Scene (Image 3)

Excavation inventory number: 133. Sizes: height: 106 cm, width of the top block: 101 cm, width of the bottom block: 106 cm, depth of the niche: 6 cm, bottom diameter: 22 cm, top diameter: 24 cm, height of the main figure: 66 cm, height of the auxiliary figure: 21.5 cm. Type of rock: marble.

Apart from a superficial fracture at the upper right corner, the stele is very well preserved. It was made from a rectangular block in naiskos style with a profiled architrave and framed with two columns with moulded capitals on each side. Above the right moulding there are two lines of inscription.

The stele forms part of the group of stelai framed on both sides with columns and displaying a profile.¹⁷ Although there are no great differences in size between the upper and the lower parts of the stele, there are small differences in the way the profile is depicted.

There are figures, which are treated as high reliefs inside the naiskos. On the left side, there is a woman wearing a khiton and a himation, sitting on a chair without a backrest and with a blanket on her left side. This woman, of the Pudicitia type, holds her veil with her left hand and with her right hand she clutches the hand of the man lying on the kline.

The man lying on the kline is wearing a large cloak and tunic. His left elbow is placed on a higher pillow and he holds his left hand to his head. He appears to be in a worried mood and his right hand holds that of a woman who could be his wife.¹⁸

There are two maids waiting behind the woman's chair and there are two male servants right next to the bed. All the servants are depicted as looking concerned and sad, holding their hands under their chins. In front of the bed, there is the mensa tripes with food on it.

A man placing his arms on two pillows is one of the characteristics of the Hellenistic Period.¹⁹ Moreover, there is a shelf at the background of the stele.

From the Hellenistic Period, Byzantine steles had a shelf or an object positioned freely or at the border of the wall. These kinds of shelves and objects are not seen in later periods.²⁰

¹⁷ Firatlı 1965, p. 273.

¹⁸ The hand extended by a family member symbolizes the link between the dead and the living. Arifzade 1996, p. 32.

¹⁹ Firatlı 1965, p. 313.

²⁰ Firatlı 1965, p. 317.

Objects belonging to the man and a woman are depicted on the shelf. On the shelf next to the man's head, there is a book roll "volume".²¹ The portrayal of the book roll on the shelf symbolizes the man's intellectual personality. The objects next to the woman's head are a jewellery box and perfume bottles belonging to her.

The farewell depicted by the figures' handshake is a common theme of by Byzantine stone masons. The sitting woman (on the left) holds the hand of the man (on the right) in front of her.²²

Apart from the most common stelai with symposium scenes, in Byzantium there are stelai with inscriptions.²³ The inscription on the moulding of our example reads:

Πόπλιε Φάβιε Μάρκο[υ] Φιλόδαμε χαίρει

"Farewell to Publius Fabius Philodamus Marci f."

In the lower frame, there is written "Iason (son of Iason)".²⁴

The right legs of the letter Π in the inscription are shorter than the left ones. In terms of both this letter-style and the stele's general characteristics, our example resembles the Polla Poconia Glykea stele in Firatlı's catalogue.²⁵ This stele, in naiskos form, depicts a farewell scene. The scene is framed by Doric columns and mouldings. As in our stele, the pillow on which the man leans his arm has two layers just like our stele. The woman wears a khiton and a himation and is sitting on a chair. With one hand she arranges her veil, and she extends the other towards her husband. There are two servants in this example, whereas ours has four. There is also a shelf in the background and a table with food in front of the kline. According to the inscription on the moulding, Firatlı dated this stele to the 2nd-1st century BC.

Another stele (Inv. no. 222), also from the İstanbul Archaeological Museums, shows further similarities to ours. However, the female figure and the servants are missing from the composition on that stele. The man lying on the kline and the objects on the shelf behind correspond to our stele. The man lying on the kline depicted in a farewell scene has similarities in terms of both clothing and typical position. Richter²⁶ interprets that the stele is placed horizontally to the wall as in Roman monuments and she dated the stele with the objects on the shelf to the 1st century BC.

Another stele, İstanbul Aya Sofya inv. no. 388, conceptually signals philosophy, education, culture and literature due to the presence of book shelves, books, pens, and ink pots. Fabricius²⁷ dated this stele to the 2nd-1st century BC.

Our stele carries very similar characteristics to the examples given above, in terms of general form and iconographic characteristics. Therefore, we believe that our stele most probably dates to the 2nd-1st century BC.

3) Incomplete Funerary Stele (Image 4)

Excavation inventory number: 125. Sizes: width of the top block: 60 cm, width of the bottom block: 70 cm, bottom diameter: 21 cm, top diameter: 12 cm. Type of rock: marble.

²¹ Firatlı 1965, p. 301.

²² Karagöz 1994, p. 2699-2706.

²³ Karagöz 1984.

²⁴ This stele has been read and analyzed by Mustafa H. Sayar to whom we are most grateful.

²⁵ Firatlı-Robert 1964, fig. 37.

²⁶ Richter, G. M. A, *The Furniture of the Greeks, Etruscans and Romans*, London 1966, fig. 584 p. 115.

²⁷ Fabricius 1999, Tafel 28, p. 248-264.

This stele was also found at the pavement area as our previous stelai, with its front side facing upwards.

Its type of rock is again marble, roughly sculptured and with a voluted rock placed in the middle. There is probably an incomplete funerary symposium depiction on it. The lower part of the voluted section has been flattened and faint figures have been placed on it. Although this situation makes the dating problematic, it is quite important in terms of proving the existence of a stelai workshop in Byzantium.

We can evaluate this stele as belonging to the group of Byzantium funerary stelai. However, it is not possible to give a date since the stele has been left undecorated.

4) Funerary Stele (Image 5)

Excavation Inventory Number: 132. Sizes: height: 168 cm, width of the top block: 53.5 cm, width of the bottom block: 55.5 cm, depth of the niche: 8.5 cm, bottom diameter: 20 cm, top diameter: 17.5 cm. Type of rock: marble.

This stele – long, narrow, and rectangular in form – has survived quite well, except for a fracture at its upper right part. At the bottom block, on the front of the stele, a surface of 44 cm. has been left empty and in the middle there is a mortice to join at the base. There are columns on both sides and a niche in the middle treated with high relief technique. On both columns, there is “a snake wrapped around a torch” motif on both columns.

The piece of furniture depicted in the niche has two legs and it is covered in the middle with a cloth. A pair of feet show out from underneath the cloth. On this piece of furniture, there is pile of pillows, a circular pot and another four legged, coil shaped pot. Atop the last pot, there is the frontal depiction of a person’s head above their shoulders, framed by wheatears, poppies and, in the middle, a circled rose.

The general iconographic characteristics of the stele display a completely different typology than that of the Byzantine funerary steles. A similar stele has so far not been detected in our bibliographical research. This situation causes problems in the iconographical evaluation and dating of the stele. Although the general form of the stele is linked to funerary steles, the depiction on the stele is in the form of a votive scene. Some descriptions on the stele signal the mother goddess Kybele (Magna Mater in Rome). Since our excavation is currently in progress, we may still very well come across a similar stele or other enlightening findings.

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Özet

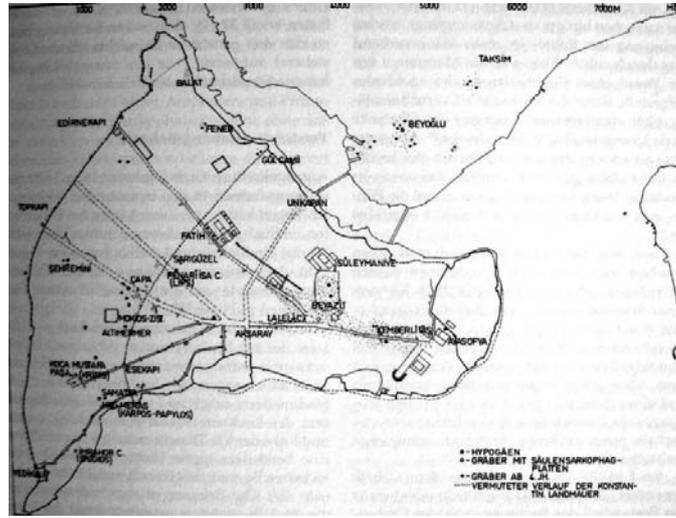
Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Hükümeti Ulaştırma Bakanlığı tarafından ihale edilen, “Gebze-Haydarpaşa, Sirkeci-Halkalı Banliyö Hatlarının İyileştirilmesi ve Demiryolu Boğaz Tüp Geçışı İnşaatı (Marmaray) Projesi”, “Tüneller ve İstasyonlar İnşaatı” (Sözleşme BC1) kapsamında 2007-2008 yıllarında Sirkeci İstasyonu Doğu Şaftı Küçük Halka'da (Acil Çıkış Şaftı) sürdürülen arkeolojik kazılarda, -0.75m/-0.83m kotlarında ortaya çıkartılan döşemelerin kaldırılmasıyla, bu makalenin konusunu oluşturan Byzantion tipi mezar stelleri ortaya çıkartılmıştır.

İstanbul'da yapılan kazı ve araştırmalarda, Hellenistik ve Roma devri mezar stelleri önemli bir buluntu topluluğunu oluşturmaktadır. İstanbul Arkeoloji Müzeleri'nin Taş Eserler Koleksiyonları arasında, ikonografik karakter gösteren, Byzantion'a ait birçok mezar steli yer almaktadır. Marmaray kazıları ile birlikte gün yüzüne çıkartılan stellerin de karakteristik Byzantion stellerinin devamı niteliğinde olup Hellenistik ve Roma dönemi özellikleri göstermektedir. Bu steller antik dönemin nekropolis kalıntılarıdır. Bizans döneminde Sirkeci bölgesinin denize yakın kısımları doldurularak yerleşim alanı olarak kullanılmıştır. Söz konusu steller de (arka yüzeyi üstte olacak şekilde) bir istinat duvarının ön cephesinde, zemin döşemesi olarak, diğer mimari öğelerle (tavan kaseti, konsol parçaları, vb...) birlikte kullanılmıştır.

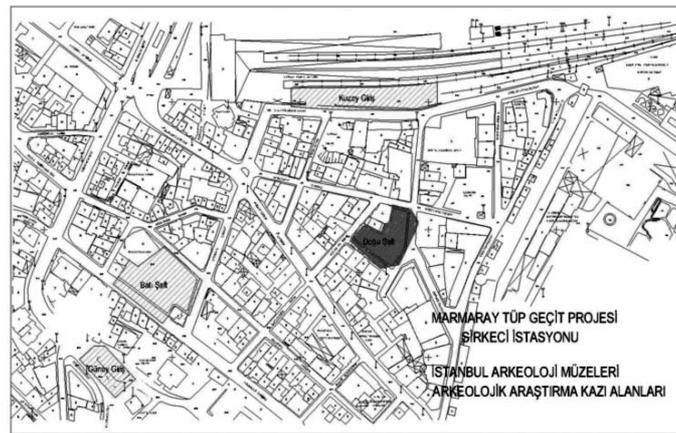
Makalede yer alan dört adet stel örneğinin üçünde cenaze şöleni (Symposion) sahnesi betimlenmiştir. Bu tip cenaze ziyafeti sahneli stel grupları Byzantion ve çevresi için karakteristik özellik göstermektedir. Diğer stel ise ikonografik olarak farklı özellikler taşımaktadır. Bugüne kadar yapılan arkeolojik kazı ve araştırmalarda bulunmuş bir başka örneği veya benzeri tespit edilememiştir.

İstanbul Arkeoloji Müzeleri
İstanbul Arkeoloji Müzeleri

Nihal Erhan
Süleyman Eskalen



Map 1: Fabricius, Johanna, Die hellenistischen Totenmahreliefs Abb. 37



Plan 1



Image 1



Image 2



Image 3



Image 4

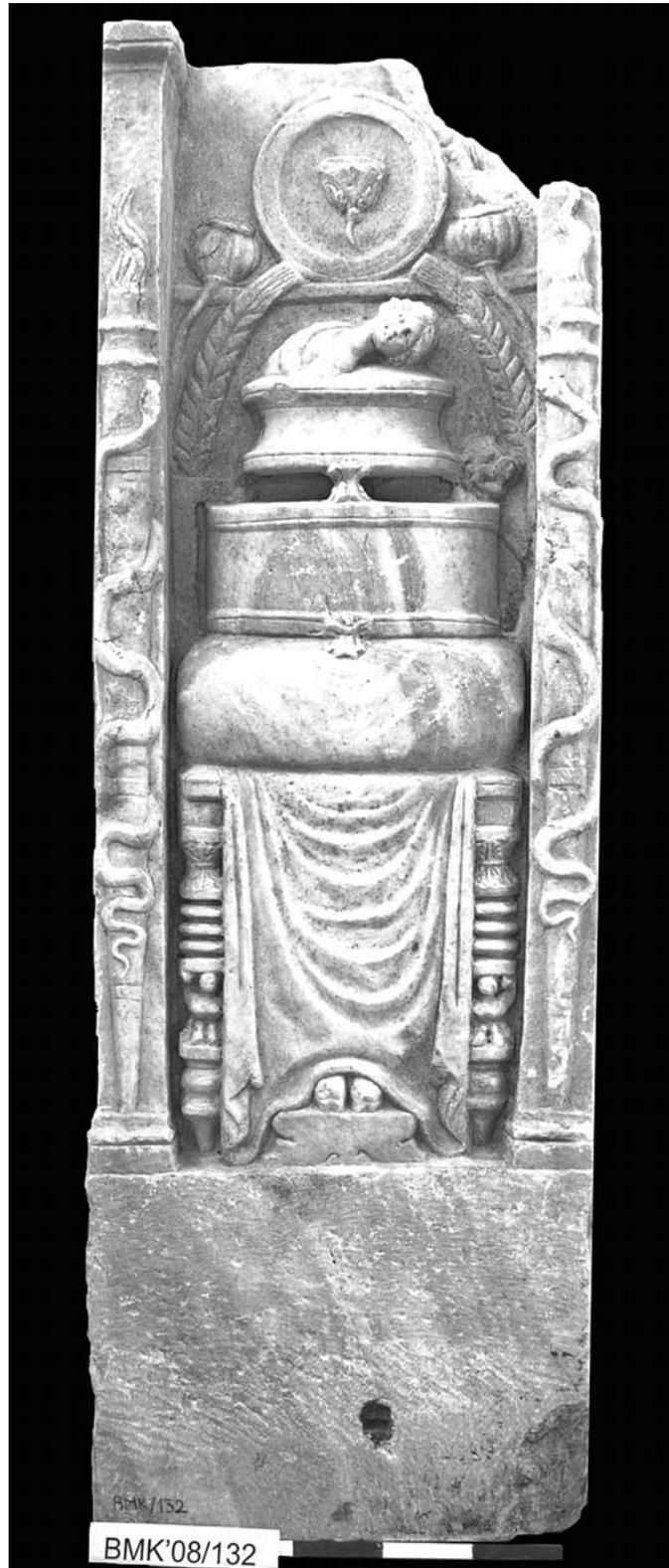


Image 5