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A Mythological Sarcophagus from Tripolis, Asia Minor, and Its Implications for Practices of Sarcophagus Workshops

Istanbuler Mitteilungen 70, 2020, 123–155 (Sonderdruck)

<https://doi.org/10.34780/j9021z16>

Herausgebende Institution / Publisher:
Deutsches Archäologisches Institut

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Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Zentrale, Podbielskiallee 69–71, 14195 Berlin, Tel: +49 30 187711-0
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DEUTSCHES ARCHÄOLOGISCHES INSTITUT
ABTEILUNG ISTANBUL

ISTANBULER MITTEILUNGEN

BAND 70, 2020

PDF Dokument des gedruckten Beitrags
PDF document of the printed version of

BAHADIR DUMAN – ESEN OGUS

A Mythological Sarcophagus from Tripolis,
Asia Minor, and Its Implications for Practices
of Sarcophagus Workshops

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Sigel der Istanbuler Mitteilungen
IstMitt

Herausgeber / *Editors*

Prof. Dr. Felix Pirson, Dr.-Ing. Moritz Kinzel
Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Abteilung Istanbul
İnönü Cad. 10, TR-34437 İSTANBUL – Gümüşsuyu

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Redaktion und Layout / *Editing and Typesetting*

Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Redaktion an der Abteilung Istanbul
Kontakt und Manuskripteinreichung / *Contact and Article Submissions*: redaktion.istanbul@dainst.de
Satz / *Typesetting*: wisa-print, Frankfurt am Main

PeerReview

Alle für die Istanbuler Mitteilungen eingereichten Beiträge werden einem doppelblinden Peer-Review-
Verfahren durch internationale Fachgutachterinnen und -gutachter unterzogen / *All articles submitted to
the Istanbuler Mitteilungen are reviewed by international experts in a double-blind peer review process.*

Indices

Istanbuler Mitteilungen sind indiziert im / *Istanbuler Mitteilungen are indexed in the*
European Reference Index for the Humanities and Social Sciences ERIHPLUS und in der / *and in the*
Expertly Curated Abstract and Citation Database Scopus.

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Druck und Einband: Beltz Grafische Betriebe GmbH, Bad Langensalza.

Printed in Germany
ISSN 0341-9142

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BAHADIR DUMAN – ESEN OGUS

A Mythological Sarcophagus from Tripolis, Asia Minor, and Its Implications for Practices of Sarcophagus Workshops

Keywords: Tripolis, sarcophagus, mythological, Roman, Aphrodisias

Schlagwörter: Tripolis ad Maeandrum, Sarkophag, mythologisch, römisch, Aphrodisias

Anahtar sözcükler: Tripolis, lahit, mitolojik, Roma Dönemi, Aphrodisias

INTRODUCTION¹

A relief-decorated marble Roman sarcophagus was discovered on June 9, 2015 at the Hellenistic and Roman site of Tripolis ad Maeandrum in Lydia, the modern town of Yenicekent in the Buldan district, 40 km north of the city of Denizli, Turkey (*fig. 1*)². The chance find was made at an altitude of 182 m from sea level by an excavator operator extracting salt in the Çaykaşı area, about 600 m southwest of the ancient city center (*fig. 2*). During its discovery, the sarcophagus lid was accidentally separated from its chest, and both the chest and the lid suffered modern damage. Once the archaeological team at Tripolis was alerted to the find, the sarcophagus was unearthed by a rescue excavation, and submitted to the local Hierapolis Denizli Archaeological Museum. The sarcophagus was found to have originally stood on four small pieces of rock, each placed at one corner of the chest, that were used to raise the chest from the ground. No other architectural feature could be associated with the sarcophagus, except that a plain marble column accompanied it.

The sarcophagus was discovered intact with three bodies and various burial offerings inside. The offering items are: one copper alloy *oinochoe*, one iron strigil, one copper alloy mirror, one glass *unguentarium*, a deer horn, and two golden rings, one of which is inscribed (see descriptions below). The offerings could not necessarily be associated with one of the bodies as opposed

Sources of illustrations: *figs. 1–18:* Archive of Tripolis Excavations (B. Duman). – *figs. 19–22:* Ogus 2018, pls. 17. 44. 52C. 3 (I. Cartwright) Courtesy of the New York University Excavations at Aphrodisias.

¹ We would like to extend our gratitude to the following individuals: Tamer Koralay of Pamukkale University (Denizli, Turkey) for the marble analysis; Ahmet İhsan Aytekin of Mehmet Akif Ersoy University (Burdur, Turkey) for osteological analysis; Alister Filippini, Università degli Studi G.D'Annunzio Chieti Pescara, for translating and interpreting relevant inscriptions; and R.R. R. Smith, Director of Aphrodisias Excavations, for permission to publish the photos of the sarcophagi from Aphrodisias. This study was financially supported by Scientific Research Projects Unit of Pamukkale University under grant number 2020KRM002.

² Duman – Baysal 2017, 548. 560, fig. 12.



Fig. 1.
Map of western
Turkey showing
the location of
Tripolis

to another, except that the inscribed ring was on the fourth finger of the left hand of the female body.

This sarcophagus is worthy of scrutiny for a number of reasons. First, this is the first marble sarcophagus ever discovered in Tripolis. Its presence at this site shows that even in remote small to medium-sized cities of Asia Minor such as Tripolis, where there is no nearby marble quarry, wealthy patrons participated in the broader imperial trend of employing relief-decorated marble sarcophagi for inhumation. The popularity of this trend in Asia Minor is demonstrated by the exquisitely carved Dokimeion sarcophagi of Phrygian marble, which were commissioned from

Fig. 2.
Plan of Tripolis showing
the findspot of the new
sarcophagus (●)



traveling sculptors and affiliate workshops by customers all around Asia Minor³. Other smaller sarcophagus workshops such as Ephesus and Aphrodisias followed suit with their own decorative schemes, although these sarcophagi were mostly, if not exclusively, carved for local demand.

A second peculiar aspect of the new sarcophagus is its unprecedented and eclectic use of mythological figures in relief on the chest. Some of these figures directly allude to the afterlife, while others are metaphorical in their suggestion of a life cut short. The employment of mythological figures on Asiatic sarcophagus chests is rare, and the specific selection of figures on this chest is entirely unprecedented, both on Asiatic and imperial sarcophagi.

³ Wiegartz 1965; Waelkens 1982; Koch 2010; Strocka 2017; Ogus 2018, 93–102.

Finally, the new discovery in Tripolis is significant for its unquestionably close visual and stylistic affinity to Aphrodisian sarcophagi, which have so far been thought to be produced mainly for local demand. The nature of this affinity raises questions about sarcophagus trade and workshop practices in Asia Minor: is this sarcophagus a genuine Aphrodisian product or a local imitation? If it is actually an Aphrodisian sarcophagus, was it carved at Aphrodisias and exported to Tripolis, or was it made in Tripolis by traveling Aphrodisian sculptors? Moreover, did the Aphrodisian sarcophagus workshop(s) have a wider area of influence in Asia Minor than previously assumed?

This article aims to scrutinize the new sarcophagus and the peculiarities of its design, and argues that this find deserves a unique place among the corpus of imperial sarcophagi on account of its unique decoration, and its role in illuminating the operations of sarcophagus workshops in Asia Minor. Below, a brief historical overview of Tripolis is followed by a detailed description of the new sarcophagus and a discussion of its significance.

TRIPOLIS AD MAEANDRUM

Ancient Tripolis was located in the Lycos Valley of the Maeander (Maiandros) River, which formed the border between the ancient regions of Lydia and Phrygia. Tripolis, also referred to as Antoniopolis, was mentioned by many ancient authors, most importantly by Pliny the Elder and Ptolemy⁴. Although the archaeological material found during the surveys in the surrounding area suggests that the settlement around the site can be traced back to 6000 B. C., the history of the classical city of Tripolis goes back to the Hellenistic period⁵. The city, like many other cities in the Meander Valley, enjoyed its time of splendor under Roman rule, to which it was fully transferred after the death of King Attalos III of Pergamon in 133 B. C.⁶. As attested by stratigraphic excavations, in particular the pottery and architectural finds, the earliest date of settlement identified in the city center is around the 1st century B. C. and the 1st century A. D. This is when the city began its social and political development with the construction of important public buildings, including the agora and public baths, which reveals the thriving economic and social potential of the city. After the 2nd century A. D., a new building boom began in the city, which led to the construction of public buildings such as the city gates, streets, baths, stadium, theater and council hall. The final blow in the city's history came by way of the Sassanid raids in the late 6th, early 7th centuries A. D., when the people of Tripolis temporarily moved to Direbol, 5 km north of Tripolis, and their better-protected hill slopes⁷.

There were likely Roman and Byzantine *necropoleis* outside the settlement area of Tripolis in several different directions, although they remain only partially explored⁸. In the west and

⁴ Plin. nat. 5, 111 (»*Tripolitani, iidem et Antoniopolitae ...*«); Ptol. geogr. 5, 2, 18; Habicht 1975, 66. 84; Duman 2013, 179.

⁵ For various views about the Hellenistic founders and names of the city see, Ramsay 1895, 10–38; Robert – Robert 1954, 241 no. 2; Jones 1971, 42; Moretti 1979, 295. 296; Robert 1983, 498–501; Thonemann 2003, 97–106.

⁶ Scardozzi 2013, 33; Filippini 2017, 50.

⁷ Duman 2013, 184.

⁸ As is the case in other Roman cities, for instance, Hierapolis: D'Andria 2003, 48–62. 205–206; and Aphrodisias: Ogus 2018, 6–10. Since the *necropoleis* of Tripolis have not been systematically excavated yet, and are in the form of sporadic finds, they were not marked on the plan.

southeast, vaulted tombs dating to the Early Byzantine period have been located, and in the northeast, two plain (undecorated) travertine sarcophagi, probably of Roman date, have been discovered. In addition, in the north, two rock-cut tombs with multiple chambers have been excavated⁹. These dated to between the 2nd and 4th centuries A.D. No tombs or sarcophagi had been found in the Southwest area prior to the discovery of the Tripolis sarcophagus.

GENERAL CONDITION AND MARBLE

The chest and lid are fully preserved (*figs. 3–6*). The chest was intact with burials inside. Dimensions of the chest: H 82; W 198.5; D 90 cm. Dimensions of the lid: H 40; W 200; D 90 cm. Height of the figures: 60 cm. The upper edge of the chest and all spandrel figures on the front side have suffered modern damage. The bottom edge of the chest is damaged horizontally from the left corner up to the third figure. The figures on the front side are more finely finished compared to the right and left short sides. All breaks and chips are modern unless otherwise indicated.

The sarcophagus chest was hollowed out by a chisel, and the interior walls of the chest were left rough (*figs. 7, 8*). There are projections in the corners and in the center of the long sides, half the height of the walls. These projections are for the placement of a slab, presumably of perishable material such as wood, uniquely named as *abakeion* in an inscription from Aphrodisias¹⁰. This slab was used to divide the interior space horizontally into two stories so that bodies could be inhumed inside the chest in an organized manner¹¹. No such slab remains inside the Tripolis sarcophagus, nor inside any of the Aphrodisian sarcophagi, but it is quite likely that the bodies in this sarcophagus were also >stacked<.

Both the lid and chest are made of medium-grained white marble with grey bands. The block is not of the highest quality, since there are multiple veins of flaws in evidence. According to preliminary and limited mineralogical and petrographic tests conducted on the marble sample from the sarcophagus, the marble comes from the Thiounta quarries¹². These quarries are attested in Strabo and in funerary inscriptions from Hierapolis, a city roughly 30 km away from Tripolis¹³. The location of the Thiounta quarries is not exactly known, but they have been tentatively located near Güzelpınarköy, about 45 km away from Tripolis, or near Gözler, about 40 km away from Tripolis. The flaws on the block suggest that the sculptors did not have the luxury to replace this precious item, which must have been imported to Tripolis at great cost.

⁹ Duman 2018, 270–272.

¹⁰ Inscription: Reynolds et al. 2007, 13. 203. Sarcophagus: Smith – Ratté 1996, 27; Öğüş 2017, 122; Oğus 2018, 6. 22.

¹¹ Various arrangements of the interiors of Roman metropolitan sarcophagi: Meinecke 2014, 49–53.

¹² Preliminary tests done: maximum grain size and sample color measurement, confocal Raman spectroscopy, cathodoluminescence, EPR (electron paramagnetic resonance) spectroscopy, XRD, XRF, C and O isotopic analysis. The results are based on preliminary testing done by Tamer Koray of Pamukkale University (Denizli, Turkey), Department of Geological Engineering. The most recent research about Thiounta marbles, was presented by T. Koray – M. Özkul at the International Association of Sedimentologists, 33rd Meeting of Sedimentology, 10–12 October 2017 in Toulouse (not published).

¹³ Thiounta marble: Strabo 9, 437; Ramsay 1895, 125; Schneider Equini 1972, 99; Monna – Pensabene 1977, 81–84; Attanasio 2003, 203–206; Attanasio et al. 2006, 179–183; Brill et al. 2015, 127, tab. 2. Inscriptions at Hierapolis: Judeich 1898, nos. 113. 178. 312. 339; Ritti 2006, 56–59 = Judeich 1898, no. 339: the tomb of P(ublius) Aelius Apollinarios Makedōn (Tomb 114) in the North Necropolis.



Fig. 3. Front long side of sarcophagus



Fig. 4. Right short side of sarcophagus



Fig. 5. Left short side of sarcophagus

Fig. 6.
Back side of the chest



CONTENTS OF THE SARCOPHAGUS AND ASSOCIATED OBJECTS

Bodies

Skeletons belonging to three individuals were discovered inside the chest¹⁴. Preliminary analysis of the human remains suggest that one skeleton belongs to a male of 34–40 years of age, determined from the spongy texture of his humerus (long bone of the arm extending from the shoulder to the elbow), clavicle (collarbone), tooth abrasion, and pubic symphysis (cartilaginous joint between the right and left pubic bones). The second individual is a female of 27–32 years of age, as determined from her costa (rib) and clavicle. The remains of the third individual were identified from the scapula (shoulder blade) and humerus, but no further information regarding its sex and age could be derived. The male and female individuals seem to have had poor dental health, suffering from tooth decay, gingivitis, abscess, and pre-mortem tooth loss. In addition, the female skeleton has deviation in two vertebrae that suggests scoliosis.

Burial Offerings

Oinochoe (*fig. 7a*): Copper alloy. H 16; Dm 13 cm. Crushed and broken into three main pieces, and is heavily corroded and deformed on the surface. There are cracks and breaks on the body and at the bottom. The jug is squat, round-formed, trefoil mouthed and has a single handle, lid, and a slightly concave disc-shaped bottom. It has no decoration on the surface.

Strigil (*fig. 7b*): Iron, heavily corroded. H 34 cm. It has a rounded tip and a groove in the center.

Mirror (*fig. 7c*): Copper alloy. Dm 12 cm. Round, without decoration. The handle does not survive, and could have been made of wood. There is extensive corrosion, cracks and deformation on the surface.

¹⁴ Osteological analyses were conducted by Ahmet İhsan Aytek of Mehmet Akif Ersoy University (Burdur, Turkey), Department of Anthropology.

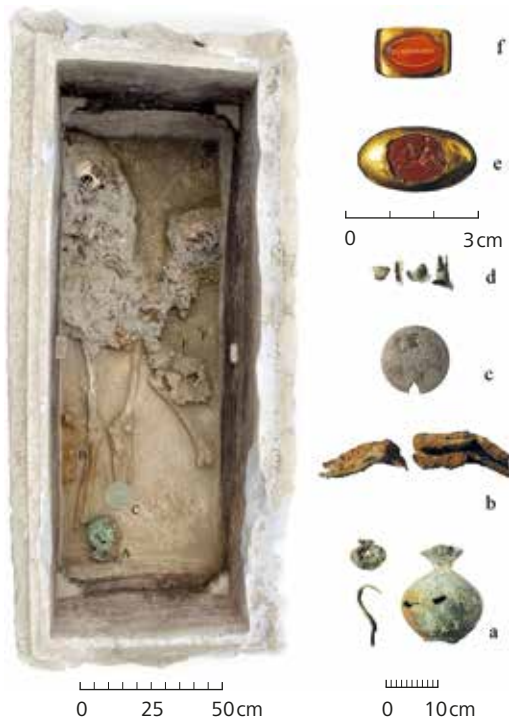
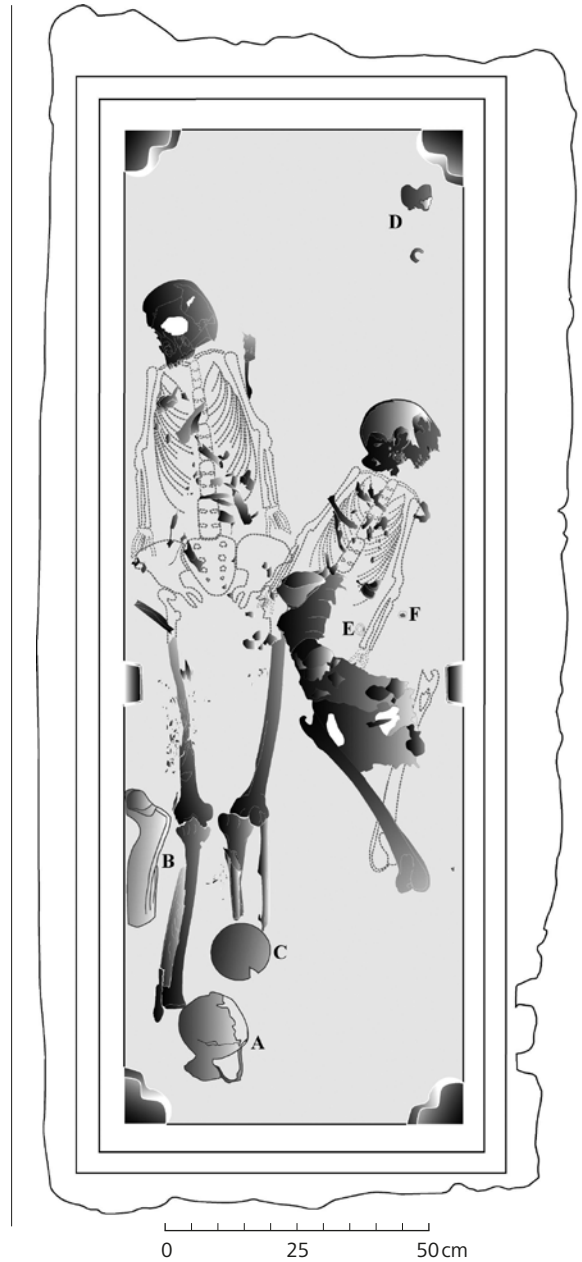


Fig. 7. Interior of chest and burial offerings. a) *oinochoe* b) strigil c) mirror d) *unguentarium* e) ring 1 f) ring 2



Fig. 9. Deer horn

Fig. 8. Drawing of the interior of chest



Unguentarium (*fig. 7d*): Glass. H 10; Dm of rim: 2.5 cm. Broken into several pieces. It has a long neck and bulbous body. The rim is curved to the outside and the bottom is concave.

Deer horn (*fig. 9*): A fragment of a deer horn, broken vertically in half. H 15; W c. 3 cm. It is quite likely that the horn was used as the handle of the strigil, since its vertical section seems to be cut out to accommodate the strigil.



Fig. 10. Ring 1 from sarcophagus depicting a rider



Fig. 11. Ring 2 from sarcophagus with inscription

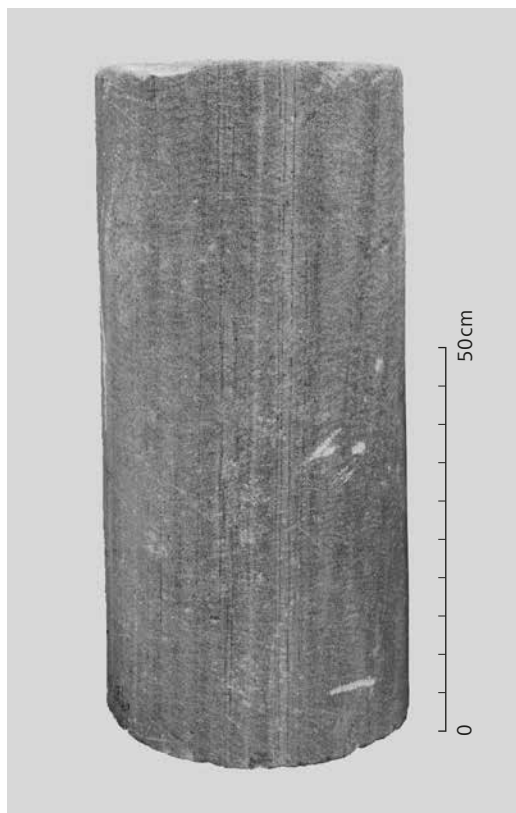


Fig. 12. Column found next to sarcophagus

Ring 1 (*figs. 7e, 10*): Gold, 17.9 carats. H 1.7, W 2.4; Dm 1.2–1.6 cm. Fully preserved. Carnelian gemstone in the ring setting depicts in relief a male rider on a galloping horse. The rider probably wears a *chlamys* and a headdress (*petasus*?), and is bearded. The ring band has capillary scratches and deformations on the surface. The stone is placed inside the setting without projecting out. The ring band is in round form, wide in the shoulder, narrowing down towards the shank.

Ring 2 (*figs. 7f, 11*): Gold, 29.35 carats. H 1.7; W 1.7; Dm 1.2–1.5 cm. Fully preserved and inscribed. An oval carnelian gemstone was placed in the setting. Ring band is slightly bent, has capillary scratches and deformations on the surface. The stone slightly projects out of an incised oval frame. The inscription was further framed by an oval incision. The shoulder of the ring makes a rectangular framework around the stone, and then comes down in a round form towards the shank. There is an inscription in relief, which reads: TEIMOΔAMA. The form is the dative form of Teimodamas (>of Teimodamas<), which is an uncommon male name. There might be a number of reasons why the ring was worn by the female: it could simply belong to her husband, perhaps the same person inhumed in the chest, or could have been a family heirloom inherited from her father.

Column

A plain column (*fig. 12*) of 84 cm in height accompanied the sarcophagus chest. It is made of white marble with grey bands, and has a smooth, worked-out surface. The top and bottom of the column have a smooth outer circle around a rough circular indentation in the center. It is a widespread Hellenistic tradition to use columns as funerary markers (*kioniskoi*). Column or phallos-shaped grave markers have been attested in Laodicea and Hierapolis on tumulus graves¹⁵. Although the column in Tripolis does not mark a tumulus tomb, it was likely also used as a grave marker. No trace of carving or painting could be seen on the column; however, it could once have been painted with a funerary inscription.

ARCHITECTURAL DECORATION OF THE SARCOPHAGUS

The chest is decorated on three sides (*figs. 3–5*); the back side is plain (*fig. 6*). The arcaded chest has five bays on the front side of the chest, and two on each short side. A single standing figure is fitted in each of the bays (i. e. five on the front and two on either short side). The front side has five paratactical arches, each supported by columns on either side. The arches are plain-molded. The entablature above the arches, also the upper edge of the chest, is decorated with a band of egg-and-dart molding. The spandrels in between the two arches are decorated with small mythological figures: Tritons with serpent legs in the corners, and winged Erotes with musical instruments in all the other spandrels. One exception is the half sphinx figure in the central spandrel of the left short side.

The column shafts supporting the arches are spirally fluted in alternating directions. The column bases, which stand on rectangular plinths, are in Asiatic-Ionic form with a *torus* at the top and double *scotiae* at the bottom. The columns in the corners of the short sides and back side are rectangular pillars, smooth at the bottom half and fluted in the upper half. The column capitals are in composite order with two volutes on either side of the capital, and leaves emerging from the bottom parting into three. The central leaf is wide and reaches up to the abacus of the capital, which is decorated in the center with a small rosette. The two leaves on the right and left reach up to the volutes. The leaves have drilled edges, and the volutes also have drill holes in the center.

The lid is in gabled form and perfectly fits the chest. It is horizontally broken in half at the center of the front side. There is modern damage in the form of chips and minor breaks on the front slant of the lid. The lower edge has a chipped surface on the left and around the center. There are two plain lifting bosses on the front side, and one on each of the short sides. There is a molded band of bead-and-reel underneath the gable that only runs on the front side of the chest. Apex roof tiles divide the front slant into five sections. Each section is terminated with lion-spout antefixes. The two acroteria on the right and left are decorated with statuary. The left acroterion is decorated with a relief representing a semi-nude Psyche. Her head is broken off and there are small chips off her body. She reclines towards left in a sleeping posture. The right acroterion represents the nude sleeping Eros with wings, reclining towards right.

The right short side of the lid has a triangular pediment with a roundel inside, representing a patera or a shield. The corner and apex acroteria are plain. There are two rectangular clamp holes on the lid, one on each side of the lifting boss. The hole on the left matches the hole on the chest, and was used to seal the lid, as evident from the remaining bit of lead clamp on the matching hole

¹⁵ Schneider Equini 1972, 35–39; Şimşek 2011, 9 pl. 11 no. 22.

on the chest. The clamp hole on the right of the lifting boss, however, seems not to have been utilized. The left short side of the lid is similar to the right one. On this side, there is a clamp hole on either side of the lifting boss. Both clamp holes match the ones on the chest, and probably were used to seal the lid. On the back slant of the lid, the acroteria on either corner were left plain. The antefixes were roughly shaped to represent lion heads and manes, but the faces of the lions were left unfinished.

Spandrels

Front side (*fig. 3*)

a (*fig. 13a*): Winged Triton in the corner. He is nude and has serpent legs extending to either side of the chest. The upper part of the head and left forearm are broken off. He leans slightly backwards and stretches his left arm towards the right. A mantle of boar skin is wrapped around his left arm. The face is turned towards the right, blowing into a horn, which is now lost. His right arm extends to the left short side of the chest holding an unidentified object.

b (*fig. 13b*): Nude Eros with wings. Damaged heavily; upper part of the body is broken off. The tip of the left wing survives. He stands on the right leg, probably dancing. The left leg is bent at the knee and invisible behind the body.

c (*fig. 13c*): Nude Eros with stretched wings. Head is broken. He stands on the left leg and strides forward. His right leg is bent at the knee and is invisible behind the body. He plays the cymbals with his right hand above the left.

d (*fig. 13d*): Nude Eros with stretched wings. Head and right arm are broken. His right leg is crossed over the left. He holds an instrument, probably a drum, in his left hand and probably hits it with his right hand.

e (*fig. 13e*): Nude Eros with stretched wings. Head, right arm and the top section of the wings are broken. His left leg crosses over the right leg. He holds an elongated object in the left hand, possibly a *lagobolon*, a hunting stick.

f (*fig. 13f*): Winged Triton, nude and has serpent legs extending to either side of the chest. His head, upper part of the wings and left arm are broken. He is the mirror image of Triton A. He leans slightly backwards, and stretches his right arm towards left, probably holding a horn that he blows into. There is a rudder in his left arm.

Right short side (*fig. 4*)

g (*fig. 14a*): Central spandrel. Completely broken off by modern equipment and unidentifiable.

h (*fig. 14b*): Nude winged Triton with serpent legs. He stretches his right arm forward, probably holding a blowing horn. His body and face are carved by a different hand and with less mastery than the Tritons on the front side.



Fig. 13. a Winged Triton in the corner



Fig. 13. d Nude Eros with stretched wings



Fig. 13. b Nude Eros with wings



Fig. 13. e Nude Eros with stretched wings



Fig. 13. c Nude Eros with stretched wings playing the cymbals



Fig. 13. f Winged Triton, nude with serpent legs



Fig. 14. a. b Spandrel figures, right short side

Fig. 15. a. b Spandrel figures, left short side

Left short side (*fig. 5*)

i (*fig. 15a*): Central spandrel that represents the upper part of a sphinx. His right arm is in front of the body and his left arm is up at the level of the chin, but it is unclear what he is holding. It seems to have been carved by a less skillful sculptor compared to the one that carved the Eroses on the front side.

j (*fig. 15b*): Nude Triton with wings. His head and left forearm are broken off. He stretches his left arm forward, and the right arm is behind his body. The figure is carved with less skill compared to the spandrel figures a and f on the front side.

Figural decoration

Standing figures in bays occupy almost all of the available space reserved for them, their heads reaching the arch above. The hairstyles and attributes set the figures on the front side apart from the others; otherwise they are all similarly shaped nude and muscular bodies, and are in a variation of contrapposto, with the weight on one of the legs. The faces are either represented in profile or in three-quarter view. The hair of the figures is not drilled, even when it is curly. Rather, individual locks were finely incised. The figures on the short sides are in more varied poses and body types; the chubby proportions of the sleeping Eros and the youthful appearance of Ganymede are examples.

Front side (*fig. 3*)

A: Eros (*fig. 16a*). Ideal nude male with wings. Most of the right side of the head, left side of the face, and the tip of the left wing are chipped off. Genitalia are weathered. Body is frontally represented. Weight is on the left leg, and the right leg is bent at the knee. A mantle passes behind him, is wrapped loosely around both forearms and drapes down. Both arms are stretched out. The right hand is turned down while the left hand is raised up to the right. He holds an upturned burning torch in his right hand, and possibly a fillet or a garland in his left hand. Face is clean-shaven and is in three-quarter view, turned towards lower right. The front of head, nose and chin are broken. Upper and lower eyelids are evident. Hair is wavy and falls long on the neck. No drilling technique was used; instead the waves were indicated by thin running incisions. A wreath is visible on the left back part of the head.



Fig. 16. a Eros. Bay 1 on front side of chest.

An upturned torch in Roman art could be interpreted in a number of ways. Torches in general carry a religious charge, and nocturnal or chthonic associations, for instance evoking Hecate, Nemesis or Persephone¹⁶. In a funerary context, the representation of an upturned torch should perhaps be understood as a symbol of death, ruin and ›extinguished‹ youth, as alluded to in Narcissus' words in Ovid: »I am extinguished in the prime of youth«¹⁷. Numerous naked boys with upturned torches in Roman art have been identified as Eros or Thanatos. Thanatos is usually represented on Greek vases as a mature bearded man, and the youthful depiction with wings here does not conform with this convention¹⁸. Although a childlike Eros is represented on the right short side with Psyche, it is possible to identify this more ›grown-up‹ Figure A as Eros as well, or perhaps more safely as an allegorical figure alluding to premature death.

B: Herakles (*fig. 16b*). Ideal nude male figure with frontal body. Fully preserved. Genitalia are not fully finished. There is a diagonal vein of marble flaw on the right calf. Weight is on the right leg and left knee is bent. He leans on the club that stands on a piece of rock under his left arm. The lion skin is draped over the club. He raises a drinking horn to his mouth with his right hand. His face is clean-shaven and is represented in profile, turned towards left. His upper and lower eyelids are indicated. His hair is short and curly. The curls are in the form of incised wavy lines instead of drill holes. He wears a thin wreath of ivy leaves.

¹⁶ Taylor 2008, 65–66.

¹⁷ Taylor 2008, 65 (Ov. met. 3, 470).

¹⁸ LIMC VII (1994) 905. 906 nos. 14–30 pls. 617. 618 s. v. Thanatos (J. Bažant).

Herakles appears frequently on sarcophagi of Asia Minor, especially on Dokimeion columnar sarcophagi, where he is usually represented accomplishing his Labors¹⁹. On Aphrodisian sarcophagi, too, the figure is represented either in relation to one of his Labors or as the infant Herakles²⁰. Being a notorious drinker, it is not surprising that he is depicted on the Tripolis sarcophagus drinking from a horn, although in more common iconography, he drinks from a *kantharos* or a *skypos*²¹. Herakles might have chthonic associations because of his confrontation with Hades in his *katabasis*, to capture Kerberos, to free Theseus and to recover Laodameia, and therefore is a frequent figure on the sarcophagi from Asia Minor (see above)²². Herakles may also be interpreted in the funerary context as symbolic of the manliness of the deceased. Moreover, his painful but glorious death may be a symbolic promise of an afterlife to the deceased.

C: Nude hero (*fig. 16c*). Ideal nude male figure with spear. Nose, right side of the face and the bottom section of his spear were broken off in antiquity. A small piece is chipped off from the upper left thigh. He wears a *chlamys* around the neck, which falls down from the back to the left side and is draped over the left wrist. The body is frontal, and the weight is on the right leg. Left leg is bent at the knee. He slightly leans on a spear that he holds in his left hand. Right arm is bent at the elbow and the right hand is invisibly placed behind the body. Face is in three-quarter view, turned left. He is clean-shaven with short wavy hair and small sideburns. Upper and lower eyelids were incised and eye pupils were indicated by dots. The nose is mostly broken off, and the lips are full.

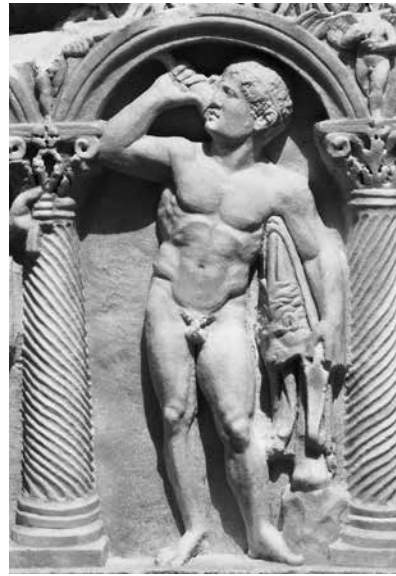


Fig. 16. b Herakles. Bay 2 on front side of chest



Fig. 16. c Nude hero. Bay 3 on front side of chest

¹⁹ Wiegartz 1965, pl. 29a; Koch – Sichtermann 1982, pl. 487; Jongste 1992 (general representation of Herakles on sarcophagi); Koch 1993, fig. 68; Özgan 2003, cat. 4 pls. 18–20.

²⁰ Oğus 2018.

²¹ Herakles with drinking horn (or *rhyton*): LIMC IV (1988) 766. 767 nos. 770. 772. 774 pl. 497 s. v. Herakles (O. Palagia).

²² LIMC V (1990) 160 s. v. Herakles (J. Boardman).

Since the other figures on the front side are mythological, it is possible to assume a mythological identity, such as Meleager, Adonis, or Hippolytus, for this hero as well. These heroes are frequently represented on Roman metropolitan sarcophagi²³. There is, however, no attribute accompanying this particular one, such as a boar's carcass in the case of Meleager and Adonis, or a horse cart for Hippolytus, that would confirm such an identity. In that case, the broader identification of ›hero‹ remains more secure. It is quite likely that this figure is representative of the heroic and manly qualities of the owner of the chest. Such nude heroes are common on the sarcophagi from Asia Minor, including on an example of a columnar sarcophagus from Aphrodisias²⁴.

D: Narcissus (*fig. 16d*). Ideal nude male with frontal body. Nose was chipped off in antiquity. The face and right lower arm of the Eros figure are broken. There is a vertical vein of marble flaw on the left side of the torso. Weight is on the left leg, and the right leg is bent at the knee. Both arms are raised up and joined above the head in a gesture of admiration of his own reflection in the water, suggesting a puddle of water in front of him. His face is in three-quarter view and turned towards the bottom right. His nose is broken and both eyelids are indicated. His hair is wavy and falls long on the shoulders. He wears a wreath of flowers (two four-petal flowers are visible on the right side of the head). His *chlamys* is bundled up on the right on some kind of support, presumably a piece of rock, at the level of the left hip. A small winged Eros is represented underneath the *chlamys*. His face is broken off. He is striding towards the right, but looks



Fig. 16. d Narcissus. Bay 4 on front side of chest

upper left, towards the hero. The Eros wears a belt and holds a bow in his left hand. His right arm is broken, but he could have raised his arm in surprise at the sight of Narcissus' face in the water, or was either holding an arrow or an upturned torch²⁵.

This is not the first Roman sarcophagus that depicts Narcissus, although this figure has previously been unattested on sarcophagi from Asia Minor²⁶. A marble statuette, which has similarly

²³ Meleager: Koch – Sichtermann 1982, 161–167, pls. 184. 185; Adonis: Koch – Sichtermann 1982, 131–133, pls. 141. 142; Hippolytus: Koch – Sichtermann 1982, 150–153, pls. 170. 171.

²⁴ Wiegartz 1965, pl. 7; Özgan 2000; also see note 47 below.

²⁵ Raising arms: LIMC VI (1992) 705 no. 27 s. v. Narkissos (B. Rafn); a Fourth-style painting in the House of M. Lucretius, Pompeii (9.3.5–6), Naples, Museo Nazionale 9381 (Taylor 2008, fig. 35). Upturned torch: a Fourth-style painting in the Villa of Diomedes, Pompeii, Naples, Museo Nazionale 9383 (Taylor 2008, fig. 33); another painting from House 6.1.6, Pompeii, Naples Museo Nazionale 9701 (Taylor 2008, fig. 36).

²⁶ Examples of similar representation on Roman sarcophagi: LIMC VI (1992) 704. 706 nos. 16. 17. 37. 39 pls. 417. 418 s. v. Narkissos (B. Rafn).

raised hands but crossed legs, previously has been attributed to the Aphrodisian school²⁷. The representation of the enchanting but sad story of Narcissus might show that the sarcophagus patron and/or the sculptors were somehow familiar with Ovid's *Metamorphoses* – not necessarily the text itself, but perhaps orally spread versions of it – given that this visual representation of Narcissus depends on Ovid's version of the story²⁸. The theme of Narcissus fits the funerary realm and is likely a metaphor of inescapable fate or a young life cut short.

E: Hermes Psychopompos (*fig. 16e*). Ideal nude male striding towards right. Nose is broken off and there are minor chips on the left cheek, all of which resulted from ancient damage. The right forearm and the object he was holding in the right hand were broken off in antiquity. He wears a *chlamys* around his neck that falls behind his body on the left. He brandishes his *caduceus* in his left hand and some other object (perhaps a money bag) in his now broken right hand. He faces towards left in three-quarter view. He has short curly hair and wings coming out of the front of his head. A curly sideburn extends on the left cheek. The curls were not drilled, but incised. Hermes, as the ›leader of the souls‹, is widely represented in funerary art from the Classical period onwards²⁹. On a sarcophagus from Aphrodisias, this figure carries a torch in addition to a *caduceus*³⁰.

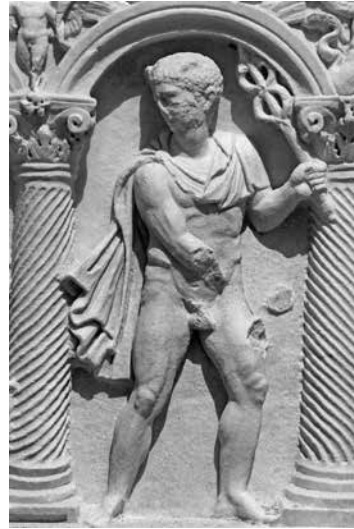


Fig. 16. e Hermes Psychopompos. Bay 5 on front side of chest

Right short side (*fig. 4*)³¹

F: Sleeping nude Eros with wings (*fig. 17a*). Figure is fully preserved. There are a few small chips in the hair. His legs are frontal and his body is slightly turned right. He leans on a downturned torch whose end is placed in his left armpit. His left leg is crossed over the right leg. He holds two poppy buds in his left hand. His right hand crosses the body and rests on the left shoulder. His eyes are closed. His hair is long, wavy and in the classical style. A sleeping Eros, especially one with an upturned torch, is common on sarcophagi and stelai, and is most likely a reference to death³². The aforementioned frieze-type Hades sarcophagus from Aphrodisias represents a sleeping Eros with an upturned torch in addition to a Hermes figure³³.

²⁷ LIMC VI (1992) 704 no. 2 s. v. Narkissos (B. Rafn).

²⁸ Ov. met. 3, 339–512.

²⁹ LIMC V (1990) 336. 337 nos. 608. 614. 615 pls. 248. 249 s. v. Hermes (G. Siebert).

³⁰ Smith et al. 2006, sarcophagus 6 pl. 158.

³¹ ›Right‹ and ›left‹ designates the point of view of the beholder standing in front of the sarcophagus.

³² LIMC III (1986) 931 nos. 981. 982 pl. 666 s. v. Eros (A. Hermary, H. Cassimatis, R. Vollkommer).

³³ Smith et al. 2006, sarcophagus 6, pl. 158.



Fig. 17. a Eros. Bay 1 on right short side of chest



Fig. 17. b Psyche. Bay 2 on right short side of chest

G: Psyche with butterfly wings (*fig. 17b*). Fully preserved, except that the nose, forehead and the upper part of the hair are chipped off. Left hand is roughly carved. She wears a hip mantle; but is otherwise nude. She is facing towards left, her right leg crossed over the left. Her left hand is stretched to the left and rests on a console-like projection. Her right arm is bent at the elbow which also rests on the console and supports her head, pensively bent forward. Her hair is corn-row style with a bun at the back. Her face is depicted in profile. Her pose almost forms a mirror-image of the Eros in the next bay. Psyche is usually represented as the intimate companion of Eros on sarcophagi, and is most likely a symbol of the ›soul‹³⁴.

Left short side (*fig. 5*)

There are modern cracks and breaks on the left part of the upper edge of the chest and the left arch. A marble flaw starts from the bottom part of the rear pillar shaft, and extends diagonally towards the arch above.

H: Charon (*fig. 18a*). Mature male figure with broad shoulders. Left side of the head has a vein of marble flaw. Figure not fully finished and projects out roughly. He wears an *exomis* leaving his right chest free. He steps out of a boat and his left leg is still inside. He holds an oar (or rudder) in his left hand, and probably stretches out his (unfinished) right hand to embark passengers on the boat or point towards the shore. He has a long curly beard and unruly hair, and he stares towards right. The surface is roughly finished.

³⁴ LIMC VII (1994) 579 nos. 127–131 pl. 456 s. v. Psyche (N. Icard-Gianolio).



Fig. 18. a Charon. Bay 1 on left short side of chest.



Fig. 18. b Ganymede. Bay 2 on left short side of chest.

Charon has widely been represented on sarcophagi and grave-reliefs as a literal reference to death and the afterlife³⁵. The so-called ›Underworld Sarcophagus‹ from Ephesus also represents a figure on a boat, pointing towards the shore, as Charon often does. However, this figure is naked and clean-shaven, and therefore its identity remains uncertain³⁶.

I: Ganymede (*fig. 18b*). Marble flaw on the left thigh. Sheep and eagle are roughly finished. He is represented as a young, nude shepherd attacked by the eagle – representing Zeus. The weight of his body is on the right leg. He wears a *chlamys* wrapped around his neck and a Phrygian cap with a folded tip. He has curly hair that extends to his neck. He holds a *lagobolon* (throwing stick) in his right hand for herding, and the sheep under his right leg alludes to his profession. He looks up towards the eagle that flies in from the right upper corner of the bay. He makes a gesture of resistance to it by opening the palm of his left hand; however, the eagle grabs him by his left shoulder. The motif of Ganymede snatched by the eagle is very common in various media and contexts³⁷. In funerary contexts, it is probably a symbol of being prematurely snatched from life, and appears on a handful of Aphrodisian garland sarcophagi, where the motif decorates the lunettes of garlands³⁸.

³⁵ Examples: LIMC III (1986) 216, 217 nos. 51–55 pl. 179 s.v. Charon I (C. Sourvinou-Inwood).

³⁶ Istanbul Archaeological Museum 2768. LIMC III (1986) 217 no. 59 pl. 179 s.v. Charon I (C. Sourvinou-Inwood).

³⁷ LIMC IV (1988) 162–166 nos. 170–256 pls. 88–95 s.v. Ganymedes (H. Sichtermann).

³⁸ For instance Işık 2007, cat. 127 pl. 71; Oğus 2018, cat. 211 pl. 44. A general discussion of Ganymede on Aphrodisian sarcophagi: Sichtermann 1981–1983.

DISCUSSION

The architectural framework, arcaded format and other stylistic elements of the new sarcophagus immediately evoke the columnar sarcophagi from Aphrodisias in Caria. The columnar background of the chest, with five paratactical arches on the front side and two on either short side, is typical for the ›main group‹ of Aphrodisian columnar sarcophagi³⁹. Main group chests feature standing portraits or allegorical figures such as Muses in an arcaded background (*fig. 19*)⁴⁰.



Fig. 19. Columnar sarcophagus from Aphrodisias (S-432)

All other design elements related to the architectural background, including the plain-molded arches, spirally fluted columns, and deeply drilled leaves of the column capitals are features of the Aphrodisian columnar sarcophagi. The egg-and-dart molding on the upper edge of the chest is rarely found at Aphrodisias, although it is present on a few high-quality fragments⁴¹. The style of the eggs and darts on the Tripolis and the extant Aphrodisias chests are almost exactly the same. Moreover, the pose and style of the spandrel figures on the Tripolis sarcophagus, representing Erotes and Tritons, are standard for a typical Aphrodisian columnar chest⁴². One exception is the sphinx figure in the central spandrel of the left short side, which has so far not been attested on the sarcophagi from Aphrodisias. However, a sarcophagus now in Camposanto Monumentale in Pisa, which has been attributed to the Aphrodisian sculptors, has a similar sphinx figure in the central spandrel of its left short side⁴³. Finally, the gabled lid of the Tripolis sarcophagus, its lion-spout antefixes and apex roof tiles imitating an actual roof, are stylistically similar to the gabled sarcophagus lids from Aphrodisias. The figures of the sleeping Eros and Psyche that decorate the acroteria of the lid of the Tripolis sarcophagus also decorate the frontal acroteria of the lids of a number of Aphrodisian sarcophagi⁴⁴. There, they each occupy an acroterion, and lie down and sleep on their sides in opposite directions.

The poses, execution and style of human figures on the Tripolis sarcophagus also have parallels on Aphrodisian columnar sarcophagi. As mentioned above, certain figures on the chest are commonly used in relief on Aphrodisian sarcophagi. One of these is the group of Ganymede abducted by the eagle, which is depicted in the form of a small round relief inside the lunettes of the garlands on garland sarcophagi of Aphrodisias (*fig. 20 a. b*)⁴⁵. In addition, this figure group is sometimes represented as an acroterion on the gabled lids of Aphrodisian sarcophagi⁴⁶.

³⁹ Ögüş 2014a; Oğus 2018, 23–64.

⁴⁰ Oğus 2018, cat. 39 pls. 17. 18.

⁴¹ Oğus 2018, cat. 29–31 pls. 15. 29–31.

⁴² See for example, Tulay 1991, 26. 27, figs. 1–3; Smith – Ratté 1996, 32. 33, fig. 28; Smith et al. 2006, sarcophagus 4, pl. 157; Smith 2008, cat. 16, figs. 46. 47; Ögüş 2008, fig. 2; Ögüş 2014a, 129 fig. 14; Oğus 2018, cat. 1 pls. 1. 2.

⁴³ Rodenwaldt 1923/1924, 2. 6 no. 5; Rodenwaldt 1933; Arias et al. 1977, 152–154 cat. 22; Koch – Sichtermann 1982, 529; Işık 1984, 248 fig. 10; Wrede 2001, 121; Thomas 2010, 423.

⁴⁴ For instance Işık 2007, cat. 82 pl. 46; cat. 118 pl. 68.

⁴⁵ For instance Işık 2007, cat. 127 pl. 71; and Oğus 2018, cat. 211 pl. 44. Sichtermann 1981–1983 presents a general view of the Ganymede motif on Aphrodisian sarcophagi.

⁴⁶ Oğus 2018, cat. 19 pls. 9. 10.

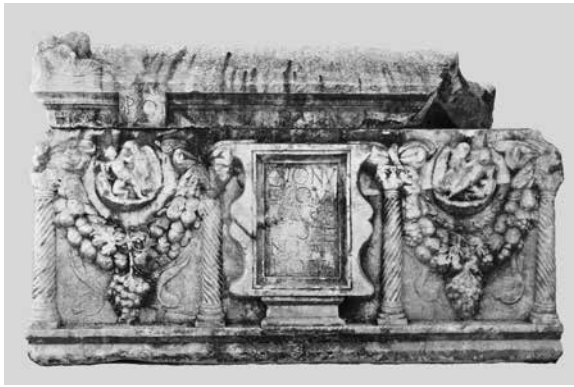


Fig. 20. a Garland sarcophagus from Aphrodisias (S-1): chest with hanging garlands and relief decoration in lunettes of garlands



Fig. 20. b Detail showing Gany-mede and the eagle



Fig. 21. Frieze-type sarcophagus from Aphrodisias (S-2)

Another figure familiar from Aphrodisias is that of Hermes Psychopompos, which appears on the fifth bay on the Tripolis sarcophagus. This figure is represented on the frieze-type ›Hades‹ sarcophagus at Aphrodisias, where Hermes holds a *caduceus* and an overturned torch (fig. 21)⁴⁷. The body of the Aphrodisias Hermes exhibits a contrapposto and moves slightly towards right, whereas the Tripolis one looks back but significantly strides towards the right with legs apart. Despite the difference in their pose, the ideal muscular body, especially the abdominal musculature in both figures, is shaped similarly. The same frieze sarcophagus from Aphrodisias also represents a sleeping Eros (the figure on the left), whose pose is the mirror image of that of the Eros on the right short side of the Tripolis sarcophagus.

Similarly, the nude hero figure in the central bay of the Tripolis sarcophagus is a commonly employed figure on Aphrodisian columnar sarcophagi. For instance, one hero carrying a spear is

⁴⁷ Smith et al. 2006, sarcophagus 6, pl. 158.



Fig. 22. a Columnar sarcophagus from Aphrodisias (S-40) after restoration



Fig. 22. b Detail showing heroic nude youth

in a similar posture to the Tripolis hero with the weight on his right leg, and his right hip projecting out in a contrapposto (fig. 22 a. b)⁴⁸. Although the Aphrodisian figure was not as finely finished and polished, the form of its musculature, especially around the abdomen, is similar to that of the Tripolis hero. The only difference is that the Tripolis hero carries the spear in his left hand.

Aside from these major affinities in architectural format and shared figure types, other details link the new Tripolis sarcophagus with the Aphrodisias workshops. The small projections inside the corners of the chest were for the *abakeion* (slab), uniquely named and commonly used at Aphrodisias⁴⁹. Even though this feature is present inside some other local groups in Asia Minor, for instance at Termessos, its presence in the Tripolis sarcophagus interpreted together with the stylistic closeness of this new sarcophagus to Aphrodisias chests perhaps suggests similar burial practices in both cities⁵⁰.

Despite all these links with the Aphrodisian workshop, there are differences between the Tripolis sarcophagus and the extant Aphrodisian sarcophagi. One is the awkward rendition of faces. For instance, the face of Narcissus is too small for his body, and his mouth is incorrectly positioned for the three-quarter view by which his face is meant to be viewed. The same is true for the face of Herakles, who clumsily raises the drinking horn to the right side of his face, rather than to his mouth. The incongruity of direction and scale between bodies and faces probably suggests that the sculptors that carved the bodies were different from those that carved the heads; moreover, the latter were quite likely less skilled or possibly even apprentices. It might have

⁴⁸ Rodenwaldt 1933, fig. 4; Wiegartz 1965, 148. 149 («Aphrodisias B»); Smith 2008, cat. 18 figs. 50. 51; Öğüş 2014a, 130. 131 fig. 15; Oğus 2018, no. 2 pls. 4. 2. Inscription: Calder – Cormack 1962, no. 608 pl. 38.

⁴⁹ Reynolds et al. 2007, 13. 203 (S-419). Sarcophagi at Aphrodisias with the *abakeion* brackets: Işık 1984, 254 pl. 25; Smith – Ratté 2000, fig. 22 (S-457); Işık 2007, cat. 99 pl. 54; cat. 139 pl. 79; Oğus 2018, cat. 2 pl. 19; S-264 (unpublished).

⁵⁰ *Abakeion* (slab) projections inside the chests of Termessos sarcophagi remain unpublished. This is the personal observation of the authors.

been common practice that faces and bodies on sarcophagi, including Aphrodisian ones, were carved by separate teams of sculptors. This is suggested by the unfinished portrait faces on some Aphrodisian chests, left blank by the ›body-sculptors‹ to be finished later, but for some reason were not⁵¹. The inexpert execution of faces on the Tripolis sarcophagus, however, is unlike those on Aphrodisian sarcophagi, which generally tend to match the bodies and heads in proportion and skill. This difference might suggest that the ›portrait-sculptors‹ tried to match them to the bodies later, and they were either less skilled than the ›body-sculptors‹, or there was no initial communication between the teams of body and portrait sculptors.

The second difference between the Tripolis sarcophagus and Aphrodisian sarcophagi is the particular eclectic selection and combination of mythological figures, which has so far not been attested on Aphrodisian or any other Asiatic sarcophagi. However, as mentioned, mythological subject matter featuring Herakles, Hermes, Ganymede, Eros and Psyche, Amazons, and Dionysiac figures was represented on a handful of Aphrodisian sarcophagi, and a brand-new discovery from the east necropolis in this city uniquely represents Dionysus in the company of Maenads⁵². Since no two imperial sarcophagi are ever the same, it stands to reason that this special commission is different from all other chests.

Despite minor peculiarities in its execution, the stylistic, technical and decorative features of the new chest no doubt relate this sarcophagus to Aphrodisias. These relationships could be scrutinized through several options. One option is that the sarcophagus could have been fully or partially finished at Aphrodisias and transported in this state to Tripolis. The source of its marble plays a role in determining the likelihood of this option. As mentioned, the marble of the sarcophagus is from the Thiounta quarries, not Aphrodisias. In that case, the sarcophagus is most likely not an export from Aphrodisias in a finished or semi-finished state, and this option could be eliminated. This is because *all* the extant sarcophagi at Aphrodisias are made of the local marble, and it would not make economic or practical sense to transport a block of marble from Thiounta to Aphrodisias when there was a fully functional and efficient quarry nearby.

The second option is that itinerant sculptors connected to Aphrodisias visited Tripolis on commission and completed the sarcophagus on site. If this is true, these sculptors were not only skillful in executing the style of their workshop ›on the road‹, but were also competent and flexible in working with the available type of marble, in this case from Thiounta. If the sarcophagus was carved by itinerant sculptors from Aphrodisias, it is quite possible that they were only responsible for the architectural form and the human figures on the chest, but left the faces rough to be finished by the local sculptors. This might explain the incongruity between faces and bodies. Alternatively, it may not have been the most skilled sculptors from Aphrodisias that traveled, but a substitute ›cast‹, much like the traveling musical or opera companies today, or a mixed group of masters and apprentices that executed commissions as members of a ›field school‹. This latter possibility also explains the relatively modest skill with which the spandrel figures on the right and left short sides were carved; the masters may have been working on the dominant front side, and the apprentices may have been learning the trade on the less prominent short sides.

⁵¹ Ogus 2018, 16–18.

⁵² Mythology on Aphrodisian sarcophagi: Sichtermann 1981–1983; Ogus 2018, 41–43. Dionysiac figures and Dionysus on Aphrodisian sarcophagi: Madole 2018; Ogus 2018, cat. 62 pl. 24; cat. 225 pl. 50. The new sarcophagus was discovered in 2018 is from Turkey, province of Aydın, Karacasu township and Imame Mevkii, and is unpublished.

Connections between Aphrodisian sculptors and Tripolis have been attested on other occasions. A fragmentary statue of a goddess, presumably dating to the 2nd century A.D., was re-used in the wall of a tavern at Tripolis dating to the 3rd to the 5th centuries A.D. The statue fragment has an inscribed plinth that documents its Aphrodisian maker⁵³:

[- - -]ΟΣΚΩΒΛΑ

[- - -]ΔΕΙΣΙΕΥΣ

[- - -]ος Κωβλα=

[γὸς Ἀφρο]δαισιεύς.

Alternative reading: [- - -]ος Κωβλα|[γού Ἀφρο]δαισιεύς.

Translation⁵⁴: »[- - -]os Koblanos, citizen of Aphrodisias, (made the statue)«, or (alternative reading): »[- - -]os (son) of Koblanos, citizen of Aphrodisias, (made the statue)«.

There is indeed an Aphrodisian sculptor called Koblanos in the 1st century A.D., as attested by the signature on the plinth of a statue of a youthful boxer (the ›Pugilist of Sorrento‹) in Pentelic marble from Surrentum (Bay of Naples)⁵⁵. The same name Koblanos is attested on the plinth of a statue base at Aphrodisias, and he or his near-contemporary namesake could also be the maker of a male bust from the north of the Sebasteion at Aphrodisias⁵⁶. The sculptor of the statue found at Tripolis is possibly another Koblanos, perhaps the son or grandson of the former one. The new sarcophagus could also have been executed by Aphrodisian sculptors and be another link between the two cities.

A third, and related, option is that independent sculptors or those from Tripolis were trained at Aphrodisias, and executed their new skills in Tripolis. If this is true, one may call the sarcophagus a ›local imitation‹, albeit one that is still indebted to Aphrodisian style and training. Without proper training at Aphrodisias, it does not seem likely that the sculptors could have imitated Aphrodisian sarcophagi with such accuracy.

Recent evidence suggests that sculptors connected to various workshops indeed traveled around Asia Minor to carve sarcophagi out of available marble in the city from which demand emanated⁵⁷. For instance, at Aphrodisias, a fragmentary garland sarcophagus in the style of Dokimeion (Phrygia) sarcophagi was carved, not from the small-grained white marble of Dokimeion, but from the local medium-grained Aphrodisian marble⁵⁸. This sarcophagus is too

⁵³ Tripolis excavation access number: TR.13.MA.MR.01.

⁵⁴ The transcription and translation are provided by Francesco Guizzi (Sapienza Università di Roma) and Alister Filippini (Università di Chieti). The alternative reading is less likely because it is not customary in Aphrodisias for sculptors to indicate patronymics.

⁵⁵ Now in the Naples National Archaeological Museum, inv. 119917. See, Squarciapino 1943, 16. 24 pl. 1; Zanker 1974, 79; Claridge 2015, 118.

⁵⁶ Plinth: Erim – Reynolds 1989, no. 4; Smith et al. 2006, no. 54; Reynolds et. al. 2007, 4. 3030. Bust: Erim – Reynolds 1989, no. 12; Smith et al. 2006, no. 110 pls. 87. 88.

⁵⁷ The range of options available for sarcophagus buyers was recently discussed in Russell 2013, 257–258.

⁵⁸ Ögüş 2016.

close to Dokimeion style to be a local imitation. In the same city, a unique Amazonomachy sarcophagus bearing evidence of Attic workmanship was also carved from Aphrodisian marble⁵⁹. This fragmentary sarcophagus depicts battling Greeks and Amazons very similar in style and pose to Piraeus reliefs, which were in turn modeled after the shield of Athena Parthenos by Pheidias. Similarly, at Hierapolis, a fragment of a garland sarcophagus of Dokimeion style is not of Dokimeion marble, but of either Thiounta or Marmar Tepe marble⁶⁰. All these cases attest to some kind of network between the city of demand and the particular sarcophagus workshop, either involving traveling sculptors connected to the workshop of origin, or independent traveling sculptors that were trained in a particular tradition. Whichever is true, these artists must have been skillful and flexible in order to execute their craft on alternative marble types.

Overall, the new find attests to either traveling Aphrodisian sculptors, or to training offered to sculptors of other cities at the ›school‹ of Aphrodisias. In either case, it is clear that the production scope of sarcophagus workshops was neither fully local, nor as straightforward as one would assume. Besides providing new pieces of evidence for the operating principles of Aphrodisias workshops, the new discovery at Tripolis demonstrates the artistic influence and visual appeal of Aphrodisian sarcophagi, which were apparently coveted in neighboring cities. This kind of widespread renown and empire-wide impact had previously been attested for the sculpture of Aphrodisias, but not for its sarcophagi – with the exception of the sarcophagus in Camposanto Monumentale, which has been linked by many to Aphrodisias⁶¹.

Mythological Subject Matter

It is difficult to offer a connecting theme for the particular selection of mythological figures on the Tripolis sarcophagus, or the meaning of the reliefs that the ancient viewer would have perceived⁶². These questions, however, are the main concern of the current scholarship on sarcophagi, especially those on Roman metropolitan sarcophagi. The dominant interpretation of mythological reliefs is that myths provided analogues for negative situations that were difficult to face for the bereaved⁶³. They also presented ideals of love, heroism and joy that gave the bereaved consolation.

As mentioned, even though some figure types have been attested on Aphrodisian sarcophagi, the particular selection on the Tripolis sarcophagus is unparalleled. Some Roman metropolitan sarcophagi depict similar myths, although not this particular selection. For instance, a late 3rd century strigillated sarcophagus from the catacomb of S. Sebastiano represents in each of its three panels, Ganymede and the eagle in the center, Narcissus on the right, and a poorly

⁵⁹ The sarcophagus fragments were first examined in Harrison 1981, but without any attention to their marble. Ögüş 2016 explains that the marble was indeed local.

⁶⁰ Ahrens et al. 2018, 271 fig. 14 c–d.

⁶¹ On the traveling sculptors from Aphrodisias: Squarciapino 1943; Bergmann 1999, 61–63; Moltesen 2000; Claridge 2015, 118–120. Camposanto Monumentale: Rodenwaldt 1923/24, 2. 6 no. 5; Rodenwaldt 1933; Arias et al. 1977, 152–154 cat. 22; Koch – Sichtermann 1982, 529; Işık 1984, 248 fig. 10; Thomas 2010, 423; Wrede 2001, 121.

⁶² There is vast literature on the use and meaning of mythological sarcophagi. For instance, Cumont 1942; Nock – Beazley 1946; Turcan 1978; Koch – Sichtermann 1982, 127–195; Koortbojian 1995; Zanker – Ewald 2004; Junker 2005/2006; Turcan 2005; Zanker – Ewald 2012.

⁶³ Zanker – Ewald 2012, 34–36; Huskinson 2015, 153.

preserved Eros torturing Psyche with a burning torch on the left⁶⁴. A number of possible suggestions for the meaning of these reliefs were offered. One possibility is the different states of existence expressed by the three myths. While Ganymede's abduction by the eagle to Olympus links human and immortal states, Cupid and Psyche represent body and soul in conflict⁶⁵. Narcissus and his reflection, on the other hand, pose the dichotomy of real and unreal. Many other interpretations are possible, for instance how the myths expressed the consequences of three different types of love (sadistic, homoerotic, and narcissistic)⁶⁶. Similar interpretive options may be applicable for the Tripolis sarcophagus.

The particular selection of myths on this sarcophagus clearly evoked death (Charon, sleeping Eros, and Hermes), and the change of ontological status (Ganymede, Herakles, Narcissus, Eros and Psyche). They are a synoptic representation of a life cut short, or transition from one state of being to another. It is much harder to assess the extent to which religious aspects and belief in the afterlife were implicit in the choice of these myths. While the presence of Hermes Psychopompos, Ganymede and Charon are hints of a belief in the afterlife, the dancing Erotes in the spandrels, the love story of Eros and Psyche, and the heroic young figure in the center of the chest seem to have more of a purpose to console the bereaved than to allude to religious beliefs. Just like most other Roman sarcophagi of mythological content, the imagery is a mix of various elements, of religious beliefs, heroism, love, and in general of effective personal and public commemoration of the deceased.

Dating

The main criterion for dating would have to be stylistic, given that there are no diagnostic finds associated with the Tripolis sarcophagus, and the stylistic criteria need to rely on sarcophagi of Aphrodisias. First, Aphrodisian columnar sarcophagi were most abundantly produced from the second half of the 2nd century up to the end of the 3rd century A.D., which narrows down the chronology of the Tripolis sarcophagus⁶⁷. Second, the extensive use of drill on the Tripolis sarcophagus, especially on the leaves of the column capitals, is an indication of the late 2nd and early 3rd century A.D. date. Finally, the proportions of the figures on the Tripolis sarcophagus, which fill up the entire bay with their height, even barely fitting into the reserved space, suggest a 3rd century, rather than a 2nd century date. On the 2nd century Aphrodisian columnar sarcophagi, the figures are quite small compared to the bay that they are standing in, whereas on the 3rd century examples, they are larger, filling the entire bay reserved for them⁶⁸.

While the 3rd century dating is most likely, based on stylistic criteria, there is scant evidence to narrow it down any further. Very few Aphrodisian columnar sarcophagi were produced after A.D. 250, and chronologically most chests accumulate in the first half of the century, most particularly the Severan period (A.D. 193–220)⁶⁹. Moreover, Aphrodisian columnar sarcophagi produced in the second half of the 3rd century have roughly finished architectural and figural fea-

⁶⁴ Huskinson 2015, 170 figs. 1. 5.

⁶⁵ Ganymede: Engemann 1973; Sichtermann 1992, 60–69.

⁶⁶ Sichtermann 1992, 167.

⁶⁷ Ögüş 2014b.

⁶⁸ Oğus 2018, 11.

⁶⁹ Ögüş 2014a.

tures, and none have the same care and detail-oriented finish as the Tripolis sarcophagus⁷⁰. Based on these observations, it is most probable that the Tripolis sarcophagus was a product of broadly the first half of the 3rd century A. D., most likely the Severan period.

CONCLUSIONS

The selection and assemblage of mythological characters depicted on the Tripolis sarcophagus is unparalleled in the ancient world, and is unprecedented in the funerary visual vocabulary of Asia Minor, where mythological figures are rarely rendered in the first place. The figures have not been attested in a similar assemblage in the west, either. By depicting these peculiar figures on a sarcophagus chest, the sculptors seem to have accommodated the unconventional wishes of the patron, who was apparently wealthy – as attested by the golden rings inside the chest – and may well have been familiar with metaphorical allusions of mythological figures in the broader funerary culture of the Roman Empire.

The new sarcophagus is without doubt attributable to the Aphrodisian workshop, given its stylistic affinity to extant Aphrodisian chests. Two scenarios in its execution are the most likely. This special sarcophagus was commissioned either from sculptors from Aphrodisias, who traveled to Tripolis and executed the order there, or from traveling sculptors trained in the Aphrodisias ›school‹. In the latter case, the sculptors could well have been from Tripolis, or more likely affiliated with a traveling company that executed orders on commission.

In either case, the new find provides evidence that the Aphrodisias sarcophagus workshop, previously thought to have served only local demand, and perhaps, though rarely, Italian customers – as demonstrated by a sarcophagus from Aphrodisias at the Camposanto Monumentale in Pisa – was linked to a commission from a wealthy patron in Tripolis. Since this is the first piece of evidence that attests to the original style of Aphrodisian sarcophagi outside of the city in Asia Minor, it is premature to suggest that traveling sculptors fulfilled commissions elsewhere. The new sarcophagus, however, together with the aforementioned fragments from Aphrodisias and Hierapolis, indicates one of two possibilities: there were actually traveling sculptors who worked in other cities in their own style, but with the marble available at that particular city; or major workshops trained sculptors in the broader region that implemented their newly-learned skill upon commissions they received. Either way, it seems that Aphrodisias sarcophagus workshops and sculptors, just like those connected to Dokimeion, may have been regionally influential enough to surpass the local demand, and offer products to a wider clientele. The new find from Tripolis confirms that marble trade, sarcophagus production, and workshop training/execution practices in Asia Minor were much more complicated than previously assumed.

⁷⁰ For instance, Ratté – Smith 2004, 178; Ogus 2018 cat. 7 pl. 6.

Abstract: A new arcaded columnar sarcophagus was discovered in 2015 at the ancient site of Tripolis ad Maeandrum in Lydia, modern Turkey. The sarcophagus represents mythological and heroic figures in the intercolumniations on the front, left, and right short sides of the chest. Both the context and style of the sarcophagus suggest that it is dated to the late 2nd – early 3rd century A.D. The new sarcophagus is worthy of close scrutiny because its specific selection and employment of mythological figures is unparalleled among imperial Roman sarcophagi. Moreover, the arcaded architectural format of the sarcophagus is very similar to the columnar sarcophagi produced at Aphrodisias, which, previous to this find, had been thought to produce mainly for local demand in Asia Minor. These peculiarities suggest that the sarcophagus was specially commissioned by a wealthy local person, probably from sculptors linked with the Aphrodisias workshop. Therefore, this unique discovery illuminates previously unknown practices of sarcophagus workshops and posits the existence of traveling sculptors in Asia Minor.

EIN MYTHOLOGISCHER SARKOPHAG AUS TRIPOLIS IN LYDIEN (KLEINASIEN)
UND SEINE BEDEUTUNG FÜR DIE HERSTELLUNGSTRADITION VON SARKOPHAGSWERKSTÄTTEN

Zusammenfassung: In der antiken Stadt Tripolis ad Maeandrum (Lydien, Türkei) wurde 2015 ein neuer mit Arkaden und Säulen dekoriertes Sarkophag entdeckt. Auf den Friesen der vorderen, der linken sowie der rechten Sarkophagseite sind zwischen den Säulen einige mythologische und heroische Figuren dargestellt. Sowohl der Kontext als auch der Stil des Sarkophags erlauben es, eine ungefähre Datierung in das späte 2. Jh./frühe 3. Jh. n. Chr. vorzuschlagen. Aufgrund der erwiesenen spezifischen Themenauswahl und der Verwendung mythologischer Figuren ist dieser neue Sarkophag unter den römischen kaiserzeitlichen Sarkophagen bislang ohne Parallele und verdient daher besondere Beachtung. Zudem ähnelt die Arkadenstruktur des Sarkophagfrieses denen mit Säulen dekorierten, in Aphrodisias hergestellten Sarkophagen: Bislang ging man davon aus, dass die Werkstätten in Aphrodisias hauptsächlich Sarkophage für den lokalen kleinasiatischen Bedarf produzierten. Die Besonderheiten des neuen Tripolis-Sarkophags weisen aber darauf hin, dass möglicherweise in Tripolis ansässige, wohlhabende Personen Bildhauer beauftragten, die mit den Werkstätten von Aphrodisias in Verbindung standen. Daher beleuchtet diese neue Entdeckung bislang unbekannte Herstellungstraditionen von Sarkophagwerkstätten und bekräftigt die Existenz wandernder Bildhauer in Kleinasien.

KÜÇÜK ASYA TRİPOLİSİ ‘NDEN MİTOLOJİK BETİMLİ BİR LAHİT
VE LAHİT ATÖLYELERİNİN ÇALIŞMALARI HAKKINDA DÜŞÜNDÜRDÜKLERİ

Özet: Modern Türkiye sınırları içerisindeki Lydia Bölgesi’nde yer alan Tripolis Antik Yerleşiminde 2015 yılında yeni bir sütunlu lahit bulundu. Lahitin ön ve kısa yan cephelerinde sütunlar arasında mitolojik ve kahraman figürleri yer alır. Lahit konteksti ve stiliyle M.S. ikinci yüzyılın sonları, üçüncü yüzyılın başlarına tarihlendirilebileceğini göstermektedir. Yeni lahit, mitolojik figürlerin spesifik seçimi ve kullanımıyla Roma İmparatorluk lahitleri arasında benzersiz olması nedeniyle yakından incelenmeye değerdir. Dahası, lahitin kemerli mimari biçimi, bu bulgudan önce Küçük Asya’daki yerel talep için üretildiği düşünülen Afrodiasis sütunlu lahitlerine oldukça benzemektedir. Bu özellikler, lahitin varlıklı yerel bir kişi tarafından, muhtemelen Afrodiasis atölyesi ile bağlantılı özel bir komisyondan oluşan heykeltıraşlara yaptırıldığı izlenimini uyandırmaktadır. Bu nedenle, bu eşsiz keşif, daha önce bilinmeyen; Küçük Asya’da seyahat eden heykeltıraşların varlığı ve lahit atölyelerinin uygulamalarını aydınlatır ve ortaya koyar.

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