

A Fourth-Century BCE Attic Marble *Totenmahlrelief* at Apollonia-Arsuf

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THE site of Apollonia-Arsuf lies on the Mediterranean coast of Israel, on a *kurkar* (fossilised dune sandstone) cliff overlooking a natural anchorage, 17 km. north of Joppa (Jaffa) and 34 km. south of Straton's Tower (Caesarea) (fig. 1). The site has been investigated for more than a century and excavated for more than 25 years. A modest coastal settlement in proto-historical (Chalcolithic) and biblical (Iron Age II) times, it became the main settlement and haven of the southern Sharon Plain as early as the Persian period, with an estimated 'jurisdictional belt' extending from

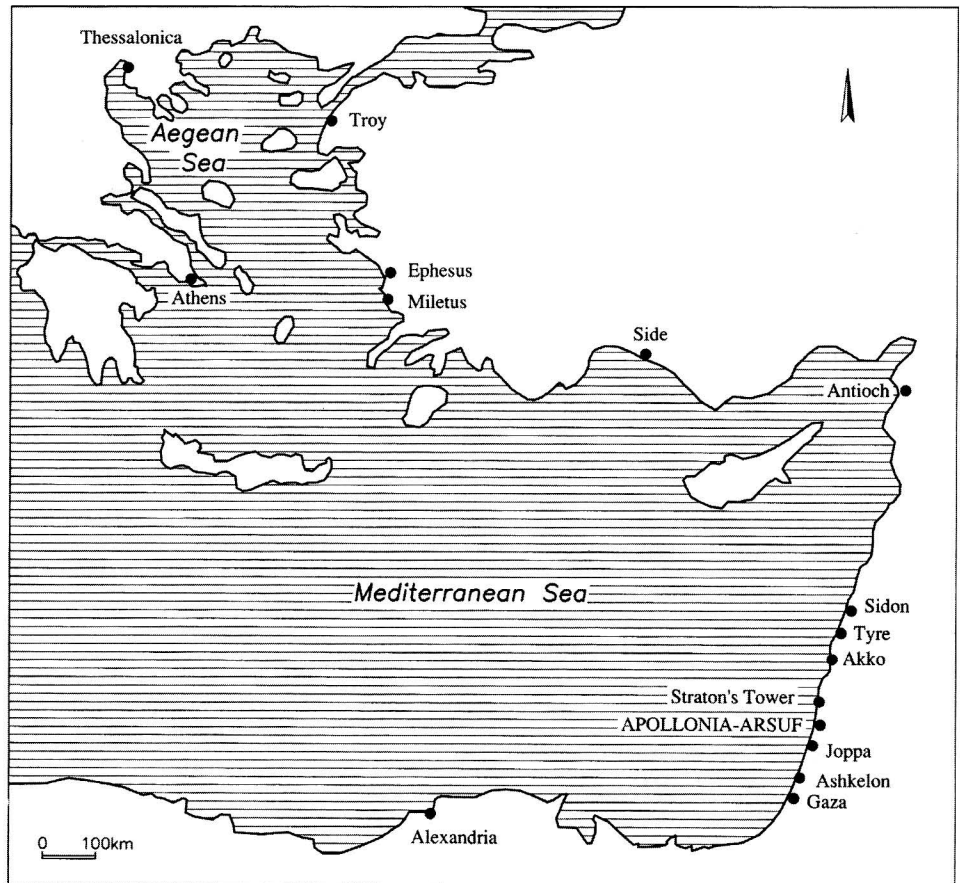


Fig. 1. Map showing Apollonia-Arsuf and other eastern Mediterranean sites

Naḥal Poleg in the north and Yarkon River in the south, and with an almost successive history of approximately 18 centuries, from the late sixth century BCE through the mid-thirteenth century CE. Apollonia is first mentioned in the written sources by Josephus (*Ant.* XIII.15.4 [395]), who refers to it among the Hasmonaean cities that belonged to the Jews under Alexander Jannaeus; here it is located between Straton's Tower and Joppa. This list mentions the names of Hellenistic cities that previously belonged to Syria, Idumaea and Phoenicia, and became an integral part of the Hasmonaean kingdom. Inclusion in this source implies that Apollonia-Arsuf was already considered an urban settlement in the Persian and Hellenistic periods.

In the course of gathering the Roman finds retrieved from Apollonia-Arsuf for final publication, we discovered among the finds of Area E a unique marble relief of an earlier date.¹ It was discovered just below surface level, during the first season of excavations in 1977, while opening a network of squares for future excavations in the area, which is located in the southern part of the site.² Excavations in this area have reached bedrock level and have revealed occupational remains of the Roman, Byzantine, Early Islamic and medieval periods (Roll 1999: 47–50).

THE RELIEF AND THE INTERPRETATION OF ITS SCENE

The relief (figs. 2–3) is made of white marble with yellowish erosion marks, characteristic of Pentelic marble.³ It is square (c. 11 cm. high; c. 15 cm. wide; c. 2.5

1 For permission to publish this object we are grateful to I. Roll, who has been conducting excavations at the site since 1977, at first on behalf of the Israel Department of Antiquities and later on behalf of the Institute of Archaeology of Tel Aviv University (Roll 1999). I. Roll and O. Tal are currently preparing the second final report for publication, which is mainly concerned with the architecture, stratigraphy and discovery of a peristyle building in Area E, dated to the Roman period.

2 Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA) inv. no. I-6443 1992-1384; the object is currently kept at the storage facilities of the Apollonia-Arsuf Excavations Project at Tel Aviv University. It is one of the many marble artefacts discovered at Apollonia-Arsuf, which will be published in a separate study by M. Fischer, as part of a larger research project entitled *Marble in Roman and Byzantine Palestine*. While studying this object we have consulted J. Bergemann (University of Bochum) and G.B. Waywell (Institute of Classical Studies, University of London), whom we wish to thank for their invaluable help in supplying comparative material unavailable in Israel. We are indebted to J.-M. Dentzer and J. Dentzer-Feydy (CNRS) for their comments on the manuscript. Thanks are also given to R. Pinchas and P. Shrago, of the Institute of Archaeology of Tel Aviv University, for drawing and photographing this object respectively. During its drawing R. Pinchas was assisted by several 1:1 scale photographs of the artefact taken before and after it was cleaned. The cleaning, although resulting in the clarification of some of its details, caused the blurring of others. Therefore, a few details shown in the drawing may be nearly completely eroded in the photograph.

3 Stable isotope analysis carried out at the Weizmann Institute of Science at Rehovot, under

cm. thick), framed by a border (c. 1.2 cm. on the sides; c. 1.4 cm. on top; c. 0.5 cm. at bottom), and has a square *tenon* in the centre of its lower side (c. 4×3.5 cm.; c. 2.5 cm. thick). The rear of the relief is roughly worked (fig. 3), suggesting that it was probably embedded in a wall. The relief was not completely preserved. It is extremely eroded on its lower right side and about one-fifteenth of its lower left corner is missing. Moreover, most of its details (especially those in high relief) have suffered some erosion and its preservation is fairly bad.

Our relief depicts no clear architectural framing, but for the square border around it. The left side of the frame has certain remains of what may have been a Doric pilaster capital, which is more eroded on the right side of the frame. A shallow incision at the top implies the existence of a cornice (as suggested in our drawing, fig. 2). The scene depicts a bearded man in front view, dressed in a mantle and reclining on a couch (*kline*). In his right hand is an elongated object, probably a *rhyton*, while his left hand holds another object which may be a *phiale*. Opposite the man, seated at the left end of the couch, is a woman in profile with her hair bound in a *sakkos*, wearing a *chiton* and resting her feet on a footstool. In her left hand is a cup-like object, while her right hand apparently rests on her thigh. Behind the woman, two smaller figures stand in profile, facing the reclining man, their arms raised as if in worship: a bearded male and a veiled female, both dressed in a *chiton*. At the top left corner is a bust of a horse within a frame. At the lower right corner, the lower body of a krater is visible, next to an offering table with turned legs. Underneath the table, a coiled serpent stretches towards the reclining man. To the left of the table there is a pedestal-like altar.

The composition and iconography of the relief presented here enable us to attribute it to the group of the so-called *Totenmahl* (funerary banquet) reliefs (cf. Larson 1995: 43–50, with earlier literature), that are well represented in Attica towards the end of the fourth century BCE (Thönges-Stringaris 1965: 44–68; Kurtz and Boardman 1971: 139; and especially Vikela 1997). The scene depicted in the relief represents the ‘freezing’ composition of the typical *Totenmahlrelief* reminiscent of votive reliefs of heroes and heroised mortal dead (Dentzer 1982: 301–363, esp. fig. 453; Fabricius 1999: 21–27, fig. 2 [= Athens National Museum inv. no. 3873]).

The man reclining on the *kline* has a hero’s attributes. He wears nothing but a mantle, is frontally depicted, and pours wine from the *rhyton* in his right hand into the *phiale* in his left. The woman faces the hero, probably holding in one hand a box

the supervision of A. Nissenbaum, has shown that $\delta^{13}\text{C}$ (‰ vs. PDB) = 3.26 and $\delta^{18}\text{O}$ (‰ vs. PDB) = -6.19, which hints at a Mount Pentelikon origin (for the methodology of this analysis, see Fischer 1998: 247–252; on the characteristics of Pentelic marble, see Pike 1999). We are grateful to A. Nissenbaum for supplying results of the isotope analysis and to the Kress Foundation for supporting the Marble of Ancient Palestine Research Project headed by M. Fischer.

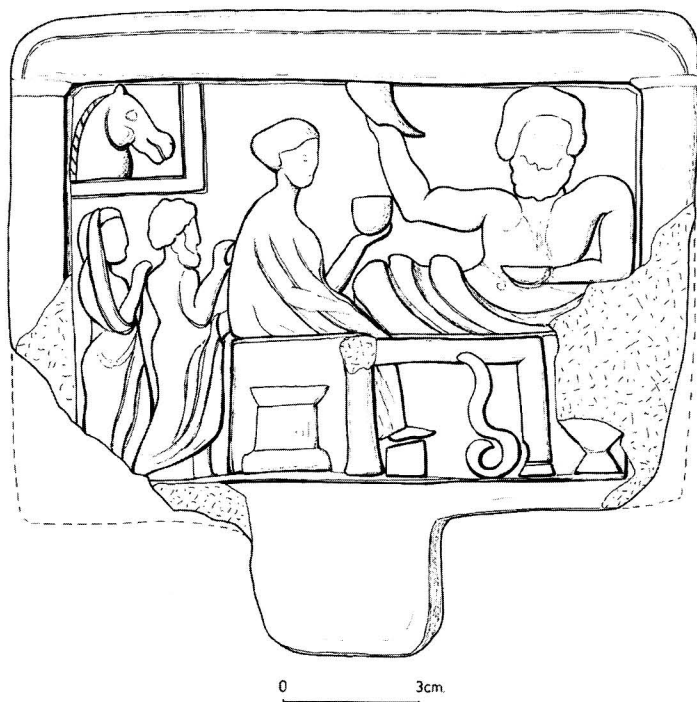


Fig. 2. Attic Totenmahlrelief from Apollonia-Arsuf, front view

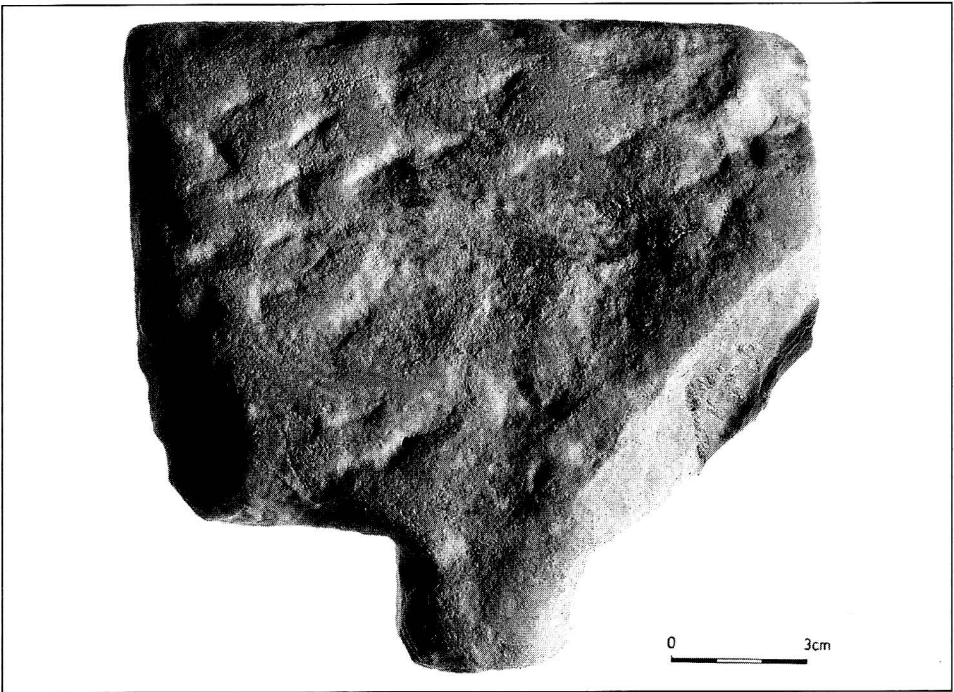


Fig. 3. Attic Totenmahlrelief from Apollonia-Arsuf, rear view

with incense seeds to be spread over the *thymiaterion* on the table nearby.⁴ The two draped worshippers come from the left, as is usual in Attic votive reliefs of the beginning of the fourth century BCE (Fabricius 1999: 23). The strongly emphasised heavy folds of their garments between the legs can be noted in many simple Attic gravestones of the fourth century BCE (Scholl 1996).

The horse bust in a window-like frame in the upper left corner, above the two worshippers, is typical of mid-fourth-century BCE Attic reliefs, as is the serpent coiled underneath the table.⁵ The krater at the lower right corner is also well known in Attic reliefs as part of the banquet furniture and utensils (Dentzer 1982: 334–335, e.g., figs. 352, 484 and 492).

Since our specimen is extremely eroded at its lower right side and a small part of its lower left corner is missing, it is impossible to distinguish any of the details

4 Larson (1995: 46–50) has argued that such females are heroines who often receive offerings, as they are always depicted equal in size to the hero (the reclining male); where inscriptions are present, the female figures are sometimes named and included in the dedication.

5 Cf. Fabricius 1999: 24; Dentzer 1982: 490–493; Mitropoulou 1976, with important remarks on the interpretation of the horse in these scenes. For interpretations of the coiled serpent, see Fabricius 1999: 24; Dentzer 1982: 495–501; Mitropoulou 1977.

which might have been shown there. Comparable examples show young cupbearers at the lower right, a servant bringing a sacrifice below the woman, and further persons bringing various objects to the ceremony at the left (Dentzer 1982: e.g., pls. 66–70, *passim*).

The use of the motif of the symposium as funerary banquet, which is of Near Eastern origin (Boardman 1990: 128–129), in gravestones of the fourth century BCE, is seen by Dentzer (1982: 501–503) as a kind of revival of the cult of heroes and the aristocratic way of life. This point of view, however, has been rejected by some scholars but accepted by others in a modified manner (see Scholl 1996: 156–159, for a summary of the opinions raised by different scholars).

The oblong wide shape of our relief attests to its votive character. The use of the *tenon* seems to have become quite common in votive reliefs of the *Totenmahl* type in the Greek classical period (Dentzer 1982: e.g., figs. 479, 495, 509, 511, 549 and 577). Such a *tenon* would suggest the placement of the relief on a stand, indicating that it may have been free standing (Dentzer 1982: 358), although its roughly worked rear may suggest instead that it was embedded in a wall, perhaps of a shrine. The reconstructed framing in the Doric order is one of the commonest motifs in Attic reliefs (Dentzer 1982: e.g., pls. 70–71).

THE RELIEF IN THE CONTEXT OF LATE PERSIAN PERIOD APOLLONIA-ARSUF AND PALESTINE

Both the typology of the relief and the Pentelic origin of its marble, as suggested by the stable isotope analysis,⁶ are in favour of the Attic provenance of the item and its fourth-century date, since the Pentelikon quarries were the main marble suppliers of Attica during that period (Dworakowska 1975; Abraldes 1996: esp. 12–27). Attic votive reliefs and funerary stelae of the Classical period are very common in the Greek cultural zones, but are rare in the central Levant.⁷ It should also be emphasised that the presence of the *Totenmahlrelief* found at the site occurred long before the import of marble became common in Palestine.⁸

6 See above, n. 3.

7 There is extensive literature on the subject based on collections in Greece, the Aegean, the eastern Mediterranean islands and Asia Minor, as well as those in Europe and North America. The bibliography on the subject cited above was chosen to serve this article's observations.

8 There is no evidence for massive import of marble in pre-Hellenistic Palestine, cf. Fischer 1998: 35–39. Furthermore, there are only a few sculptured marbles dated to the Hellenistic period on the basis of their style, cf. Vermeule and Anderson 1981: 8–9; Wenning 1983: 105–118, although some of them, found in insecure archaeological contexts, could be explained as Roman copies of Hellenistic types, cf. Fischer and Tal, in press: Appendix. To these we may also add the marble headless male and the kourtophros female torso from Samaria, cf. Reisner *et al.* 1924: I: 383; II: pls. 76aa, 79g;

The presence of such an object at Apollonia-Arsuf should be attributed to the connections of the town with the Greek world, as is demonstrated by other archaeological finds retrieved from the site. These mostly include imported pottery, i.e. amphorae and Attic (and related) vessels, and to a lesser extent figurines in Greek style and Greek inscriptions (incised after firing) on Attic vessels (Tal 1999). However, the import of pottery and especially Attic ware is usually connected with the Phoenicians, who probably inhabited the site, as they are considered by modern scholarship to have been carriers of Greek pottery as well as Greek raw material.⁹

The relief's connection with a cult of a hero or the heroised mortal dead strongly suggests the presence of Greek individuals who practiced such a cult at the site. Both the scene and its use reflect sociological and psychological implications that can hardly be explained in terms of trade or the adoption of Greek cult by other local populations, such as the Phoenicians.¹⁰ Unlike the marble projects of the

and the recently discovered marble male figure (a priest?) from Akko, cf. Stern 1991: 104. Worthy of mention is the marble Phoenician anthropoid sarcophagus discovered at Gaza, cf. Vincent 1910: 575–576, who has dated the sarcophagus to the Hellenistic period, a date which was questioned in later publications, cf. Lembke 2001: 150, n. 11, with earlier literature. Another domain in which marble is documented in Israel in the Hellenistic period is in royal inscriptions carved on marble slabs that may have been imported, such as the ones documented at Akko, Landau 1961 (= SEG 19, no. 904); and Joppa, Lifshitz 1962: 82–84 (= SEG 20, no. 467). In contrast to other Phoenician territories in Persian period Syro-Palestine, Sidon became a focus of intensive marble import from Greece as far back as the fifth century BCE onwards. It should be sufficient to mention two major examples: the 'nécropole royale' of Sidon containing many sarcophagi dated to the fifth and fourth centuries BCE, see Hamdy Bey and Reinach 1892; for a notable earlier marble piece, the 'satrap sarcophagus', see Kleemann 1958. The other example is the so-called 'tribune d'Echmoun' uncovered by Mireille and Maurice Dunand in 1972, probably a marble altar (or temple) belonging to the sanctuary of Eshmun, erected by the mid-fourth century BCE on top of a destroyed earlier podium, see Stucky 1984; 1993. The production of some of these artistic works has been justifiably attributed to Greek artists financed by members of the elite, who probably understood their iconography and knew how to appreciate their high artistic value.

9 Cf., e.g., Gill 1994: 105–106. There is little (if any) connection between the presence of Attic vases and the presence of Greek residents in the region discussed. The scarcity, almost absence, in Persian period sites in Palestine of Attic shapes linked to Greek cult usage, which would infer special needs or preferences of a Greek community, lends support to such an approach, cf. Shefton 2000: 80–81.

10 Suffice it to mention some theoretical approaches to mortuary behavior, see, e.g., O'Shea 1984: 1–13 for major studies until the early 1980s, all of which share the commonly accepted assumption 'that an individual's treatment in death bears some predictable relationship to the individual's state in life and to the organization of the society to which the individual belonged' (O'Shea 1984: 3). Thus the social *persona* of such a deceased would have been in possession of a distinct belief in the afterlife and behavioural customs.

Persian period found in Sidon,¹¹ our relief served apparently domestic cult. Reliefs such as ours are usually not discovered in the Greek cultural zones in necropoleis or tombs, but rather in sanctuaries. Dentzer lists many from known sanctuaries, and the absence on fourth-century BCE votive reliefs of recurrent attributes, such as the horse and serpent, which appear on funerary stelae of the same date, led him to conclude that they were not used in the cult of the ordinary dead, as occurred during the third century BCE (Dentzer 1982: 360–363). Whether this dead hero was buried at the site or in his homeland is impossible to determine, although one cannot exclude the presence of a Greek family who settled at the site and buried one of its commemorated members.¹² Such a deceased was believed to exude from his grave powers of good and evil, and as such deserved proper honour; as with the Olympian gods, his cult involved sacrifices of animals, offerings of food and libation.¹³ Furthermore, the relief discussed should also be seen against the background of the close Phoenician (especially Sidonian and Tyrian) commercial ties with the Greek cultural zones and Athens in particular. Such commercial connections would surely have resulted in the interest of Greek individuals to settle in Palestine in order to ensure their profits.¹⁴

The relief from Apollonia-Arsuf is not the only one of the *Totenmahl* type found in the country. In fact, as early as 1903, H. Thiersch documented a votive relief at

11 See above, n. 8.

12 Such an argument does not contradict the minimalist attitude stated in some recent publications that have dealt with the hypothetical issue of Greek residents in Palestine and the Levant during the Persian period, through varied issues of material culture. Suffice it to mention recent publications such as Wenning 1991; Elayi 1992; and Waldbaum 1997, which cite different scholarly attitudes to the subject.

13 Cf. Burkert 1985: 203–208, esp. p. 205. Since we are dealing with a different geographical reality and are unable to reconstruct from the archaeological finds a Greek sanctuary at the site, such a cult might have been concentrated at the hero's tomb, which was most probably (unlike the *heroon* in the Greek cultural zones) outside the defined boundaries of the settlement; it may have been marked by this votive relief. Comparative material may suggest that such a tomb comprised the inhumed or cremated ashes of the deceased stored within an urn or cauldron. We can also postulate the existence of such a cult in a domestic environment, such as the hero's dwelling, as the depicted hero and female companion are shown in a domestic setting, as attested by the *kline*, offering table and pedestal-like altar, as well as the footstool and krater; the female plays the role of a respectable matron in her own house.

14 For this we have the historical accounts of Isaeus (IV.7) and Demosthenes (*Contra Callippum* LII.20) that mention strong commercial ties between Akko ('Akko) and Athens in the fourth century BCE. Moreover, Greek inscribed tombstones of the third and second centuries BCE of former mercenaries from Crete who settled in Palestine, discovered in Gaza (see Glucker 1987: 116–119 [= *SEG* 8, no. 269]) and Akko (see Landau's note in Dothan 1976: 39–40 [= *SEG* 26, no. 1679]), may also suggest another possibility, since Greek mercenaries are documented in the region as early as the late Iron Age, see, e.g., Aharoni 1981: inscriptions nos. 1–2, 4–5, 7–8, 10–11 and 14.

Ashkelon, dating it to the Early Hellenistic period.¹⁵ Both the Apollonia-Arsuf and Ashkelon reliefs can be seen against the background of Greek individuals residing in Palestine under variable circumstances and practicing the cult of the hero as they would have done in their homeland. Both are, to the best of our knowledge, isolated 'eastern' examples found in Israel. Since neither was found in a secure archaeological context, however, their presence can easily be explained as anachronistic, since their arrival at these sites may have occurred in later times, and their use not necessarily related to a cult of a hero.¹⁶

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15 Thiersch 1914: 72, pl. 16:1. This relief was discovered broken and only about half was preserved. Thiersch defined it 'Typus der Totenmahle', referring to it as a 'frühhellenistisches Grabrelief' and gives a short description (Thiersch 1914: n. 4). This object's oblong wide shape and *tenon*, however, attest to its votive character, as in our example. Its preservation is fairly good, its estimated dimensions are c. 32 cm. high and c. 27 cm. wide, with a *tenon* of c. 5×12 cm. Unlike our example, it was apparently carved on a limestone or fossilised dune sandstone, as may be deduced from its texture, as seen in its photograph (despite a thorough search, we were unable to detect its present location). It has an architectural framing consisting of a pilaster with a capital supporting an epistyle and a cornice with antefixes on top in a rectangular frame. The preserved scene, as photographed, mainly consists of a seated woman in profile wearing a *chiton*, a smaller male figure wearing a *chiton* (in front view), standing beside a large volute crater, and a window-like frame in the upper left corner with a horse's head within it. It is of the *naiskos* type of *Totenmahlrelief*, recalling the Sidonian 'satrap sarcophagus' style, cf. Dentzer 1982: 385, fig. 183, which could also be regarded as an impact of Graeco-Sidonian artistic development, following Stucky 1984: 33, as it was continued into the Hellenistic period; for such a development, see Fabricius 1999. Its composition and high relief, however, suggest a fourth-century BCE date.

16 We do know about two fourth-century BCE Attic reliefs which were found on the Mahdia shipwreck, whose *terminus ante quem* is c. 100 BCE (see Bauchhenss 1994). The theory of their use as ballast has been rejected because of their insufficient weight; moreover, they can be seen against the background of the purchase of such anachronistic *objets d'art* by Roman dealers and 'high society' (see Kuntz 1994).

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