

A FUNERARY SCULPTURAL GROUP FROM THE NECROPOLIS OF YAKUBIYE IN ROMAN EDESSA (SOUTH-EASTERN TURKEY) Un grupo escultórico funerario procedente de la necrópolis de Yakubiye en la Edesa romana (sureste de Turquía)

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ABSTRACT

In this brief paper 15 high-relief blocks with recurring figure types will be presented which were found in a necropolis area of Edessa in south-eastern Turkey, and emphasize the conservative nature of funerary relief sculpture in the Roman East. These reliefs consist of seven limestone blocks with Psychai leaning against a stone pillar, three blocks with tritons holding a dolphin, two blocks with Erotes embracing Psychai, a block with a sphinx, a horizontal slab with Atlas and a lion-footed slab. So far, no previous researchers seem to have considered these sculptures as a whole which should in fact belong to a large tomb enclosure somewhere in Roman Edessa. A reconstruction for all of these monuments will, therefore, be proposed here.

KEY WORDS

Yakubiye, Edessa, Şanlıurfa, south-eastern Turkey, Roman East, funerary sculpture, Roman sculpture.

RESUMEN

En este breve artículo se presentarán 15 bloques en alto relieve con tipos de figuras recurrentes que se encontraron en una zona de necrópolis de Edesa, en el sureste de Turquía, y enfatizarán la naturaleza conservadora de la escultura en relieve funeraria en el Oriente romano. Estos relieves constan de siete bloques de piedra caliza con Psychai apoyado sobre un pilar de piedra, tres bloques con tritones sosteniendo un delfín, dos bloques con Erotes abrazando a Psychai, un bloque con una esfinge, una losa horizontal con Atlas y una losa con patas de león. Hasta el momento, ningún investigador anterior parece haber considerado estas esculturas en su conjunto, que en realidad deberían pertenecer a un gran recinto funerario en algún lugar de la Edesa romana. Por lo tanto, aquí se propondrá una reconstrucción de todos estos monumentos.

PALABRAS CLAVE

Yakubiye, Edesa, Şanlıurfa, sureste de Turquía, Oriente romano, escultura funeraria, escultura romana

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*Dedicated to the 60th birthday
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INTRODUCTION

In 1970, in the volume written by Judah Ben-zion “Ben” Segal on Edessa (**map 1**), images of two high reliefs, almost in the round and preserved in the Archaeological Museum of Şanlıurfa were published, which respectively show a triton holding a dolphin in his left hand and a “couple embracing” (Segal, 1970, 124, pls. 15a, e and b). No contextual analysis of these images is, however, attempted in this publication. Ten years later Han I. W. Drijvers reinterpreted the triton reproduced by Segal as a tritoness (female triton) and the image referred, albeit doubtfully, to the cult of Atargatis (Drijvers, 1980, 27).

In the supplement to the *Enciclopedia dell’Arte Antica* published in Italy in 1994, Han Drijvers notes, literally “Furthermore, the funerary caves in the valleys around the Edessa (used today as homes) have been better investigated and show the remains of tomb sculptures: winged figures of Psyche, a triton, a winged Victory leaning against a column, an embraced couple and a griffin. The execution is somewhat crude and the work was done locally on Graeco-Roman examples. There are also stelae with figures of the deceased in traditional local costumes” (Drijvers, 1994, 211). The sentence is elliptical, also due to incorrect punctuation. It seems to understand that the figures of Psychai and tritons were originally placed in funerary caves,

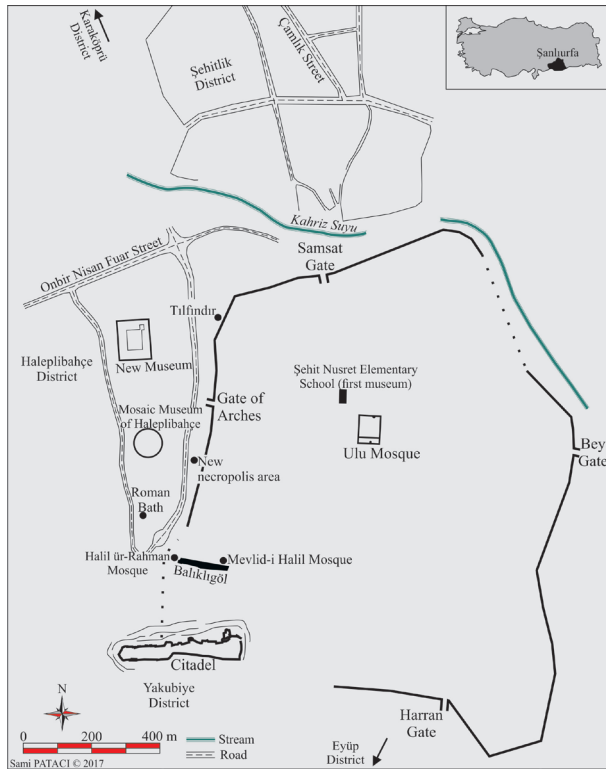
while they are preserved in the local museum later. Here, too, there is no mention of their relation to a single funerary monument. Eventually in 2017 in the catalogue of the Archaeological Museum of Şanlıurfa, Necmi Karul, Gülriz Kozbe and Ahmet Yavuzkır published images and short catalogue entries of 11 monuments from this group without any iconographic interpretation and chronological contextualization (cf. catalogue below).

So far no scholar, however, seems to have considered these sculptures that are currently preserved in the Archaeological Museum of Şanlıurfa in south-eastern Turkey as a whole which should in fact belong to a large tomb enclosure constructed somewhere in Roman Edessa. The fact that this group of 15 figural high-reliefs by local limestone-travertine appears to belong to the same monument is indicated by the same material, by their similar dimensions, by their shapes, by their placement on the front face of blocks of the same construction, by their iconography, and their sculptural rendering, i.e., workmanship. The exact information concerning original find-spot in the necropolis area of Yakubiye and find context are, however, lacking for all of these stones.

In the following part these blocks with recurring figure types that emphasize the conservative nature of funerary relief sculpture in the Roman East, will be presented in detail, and a reconstruction for these monuments will be proposed. The main aim is to develop the iconographic meaning of these funerary reliefs in depth, although we have



Map 1. Sites around Edessa to which reference is made in the text (drawn by F. H. Kaya, 2024).



Map 2. Plan of Roman and Early Byzantine Edessa, based mainly on Segal 1970 (drawn by S. Patacı, 2017).

to accept the limitations of our evidence: while scientifically these sculptures may not have much to offer more than their iconography and the quality of their carving, they are notable because of their relative rarity in the Roman Near East, but, as stated, not enough evidence remains to reconstruct the original monument.

In this paper two photographic reproductions are offered for each monument because of the generally poor state of preservation of the sculptures, which obscures important details in our descriptions.

FIND-SPOT AND RECONSTRUCTION

As can also be seen from the museum's labels, all the blocks were found in Yakubiye in an unknown period, which was a necropolis area of ancient Edessa located on the south-eastern enclosing part of the citadel of Şanlıurfa, and was rich with rock-cut graves between the second and fourth century AD¹ (map 2 and fig. 1). Not only Yakubiye,

1 An introduction on the necropoleis and typologies of tombs in Roman Edessa will be an asset to enlight the dynamics of the funerary related issues in this part of the Roman

but the whole area surrounding the ancient citadel of Edessa, notably Kızılkoyun on the Tıfındır Hill, is full of hundreds of tombs carved into the rock (fig. 2). As the urban development of the city of Şanlıurfa was advanced to this direction in the 1970s, Yakubiye was the first necropolis site of Edessa which was heavily damaged by some slums built in the area. As already indicated by Drijvers in 1994, some of its tombs are configured as real homes, even though many have floors decorated with mosaics (cf. Rumscheid, 2013), and some also have figures in relief on the walls.

The tombs in Yakubiye remained in use for several centuries. The grave typologies and customs of Roman Edessa were not studied in great extend yet, and also exact original location of our reliefs in the cemetery of Yakubiye was not recorded. We believe that the remaining blocks, if there was any, belonged to a certain funerary monument, but it would be too speculative to estimate the number of figures in the original iconography. As some of these monumental tombs have a vaulted ceiling and the arrangement of the reliefs from Yakubiye makes a concave curve, we believe that these reliefs belong to a large monumental rock-cut tomb covered with an arch. The arrangement of the figures suggests also that they were aligned in a heraldic position.

Even though the original appearance of this funerary monument cannot entirely be reconstructed from these 15 surviving pieces, we still attempted to create a possible reconstruction on fig. 3. We

Empire: from the earlier period on, the inhabitants of ancient Edessa buried their dead in cemeteries mostly located various areas around the city's citadel close or just outside the city gates. During the Hellenistic and Roman periods the city's cemeteries lay along the routes leading into the citadel from all directions (map 2). Beside Yakubiye, other main necropoleis of Edessa were as follows: Kızılkoyun on the Tıfındır Hill, an extensive necropolis area on the slopes of the citadel, another intramural necropolis within the ancient city of Edessa, burials at Tektek Mountain as well as Karaköprü which is located ca. 10 km north of the citadel of Edessa. The necropolis of Kızılkoyun happens to be the best documented cemetery of ancient Edessa, since it has been systematically unearthed and studied by archaeologists since the mid-2010s under the auspices of the Museum of Şanlıurfa, which continues excavations to the present day. Hundreds of tombs have already been uncovered, ranging in date from the Hellenistic period to ca. AD 500, in this largest and most important cemetery of ancient Edessa. For the epigraphic results of these excavations, cf., e.g., Çetin, Demir, Desreumaux, Healey and Liddel, 2020.



Fig. 1. Necropolis area in Yakubiye (photo. E. Laflı, 2005).



Fig. 2. Façades of some rock-cut graves in the Kızılkoyun necropolis of Roman Edessa (after <https://tr.wikipedia.org/wiki/K%C4%B1z%C4%B1lkoyun_Nekropol%C3%BC>; accessed on 1 January 2024).

imagine that they were arranged in at least two rows or perhaps three. At the top we have placed the block with a triton (cat. no. 8, **figs 11a–b**), since this appears on an oblique wall, which suggests that there was a sort of apse or an apse with an oblique roof, sloping towards the bottom. Another triton figure, the one with the dolphin (cat. no. 9, **figs 12a–b**), a continuation with the part carved into the side so it is assumed that it was placed at the end of the row, was inserted by us in the right corner facing the viewer.

Some reliefs [cat. no. 4 (**figs 7a–b**), cat. no. 5 (**figs 8a–b**), cat. no. 6 (**figs 9a–b**), cat. 11 (**figs 14a–b**) and cat. no. 12 (**figs 15a–b**)] have reduced dimensions in width, which suggests that they were composed between some blocks without images. This seems confirmed by the position of the Psychai on some blocks: the female figures are moved towards the edge, to the left of the viewer [cat. no. 1 (**figs 4a–b**) and cat. no. 2 (**figs 5a–b**)], suggesting that the block or blocks placed on the right were completely smooth.

MATERIAL

All of the pieces are most probably of local limestone which has distinctive characteristics: a white to beige, characteristically soft, chalky, brittle, fine grained, fossiliferous and calcareous stone containing chert nodules. This light, relatively non-porous, fine and ubiquitous genre of this limestone is very possibly quarried from nearby sources around Edessa. The carving activity of rock-cut graves was most probably a spontaneous source of this local limestone, too. The same stone is commonly found among the other Roman monuments curated in the Archaeological Museum of Şanlıurfa, and is consistent with various types used for other monuments found in Edessa in the Roman and Early Byzantine periods. For the identification of the exact quarry of this limestone, a project should be conducted in Şanlıurfa with the creation of a stable isotope database for all of the ancient stone finds.

OTHER CHARACTERISTICS

all of the monuments of Yakubiye group are elaborate and carved in high relief, but were modest in scale and carving technique. As mentioned above, they belong to the edge of a façade of most probably a grave monument. It is already recognized that funerary sculpture in the Roman East was mostly embellished with coloured pigment; the reliefs from

Yakubiye were presumably painted, too, as some of them preserve traces of pigment or the ghost of a painted decoration on their surface.

All of these 15 figural reliefs with a slightly concave appearance are constructed in about equal heights and curve outward slightly toward their ends. Mostly the edges of the stones are sharp, their back and sides are rough-picked or have a claw-chisel finish. In section, the form of the figures curves out from the flat surface of the stones with a more facetlike offset from the background which has mostly coarse and extensive rasping on its surface. None of the monuments have any dowel holes on their top edge which is left plain and flat; so there is no indication that a finial once surmounted the monuments. Therefore, we do not know how these reliefs were once fixed to each other or composed with their architecture.

The reliefs are heavily weathered with a brown patina, because they were placed in the garden of the former museum building of Şanlıurfa in the district of Bahçelievler, and, therefore, had a prolonged exposure to bad air conditions over an extended period of time.

Among the Yakubiye material, seven monuments depict Psychai leaning against a stone pillar (cat. nos. 1–7, **figs 4–10**), three blocks show tritons holding a dolphin (cat. nos. 8–10, **figs 11–13**), two blocks are decorated with Erotes embracing Psychai (cat. nos. 11–12, **figs 14–15**), a block is figuring a sphinx (cat. no. 13, **figs 16a–b**), a horizontal slab is adorned with Atlas (cat. no. 14, **fig 17**) and, finally, there is a lion-footed slab (cat. no. 15, **figs 18a–b**). All of these depictions are modeled in a standard iconography with almost the same, conservative and formulaic appearance. The full-length figures rendered naturalistically remain the central feature of the iconography of the Yakubiye group. Iconographically the heads of the figures are carved in high relief with more plasticity and quite three-dimensionally, with small eyes in proportion to the size of the face. Although most of the time their facial features are worn away, eyes have narrow openings with deep-set inner corners and thick lids, crisply defined. None of the figures is surrounded by an architectural frame and most of the reliefs have a background which is completely flat.

The regions of Zeugma and Edessa developed their own and very distinctive iconographic styles which remained unchanged over the centuries, and



Fig. 3. Reconstruction for the arrangement of 13 funerary high-reliefs in the necropolis area of Yakubiye (created by M. Buora in 2024 from the photo. of E. Lath, 2005).

are similar to Hatra, Palmyra and Dura-Europos in Syria (**map 2**). Especially the funerary sculpture of Edessa is not known to any great extent², but art-historically sculptures are quite distinctive. It will not be too speculative to attempt to group these 15 sculptures from Yakubiye as a local Edessan group on the basis of their workmanship. The drapery style, manner of carving and other characteristics are so similar to each other that they may have been produced in the same workshop and even by the same sculptor, most probably based locally in Roman Edessa.

ICONOGRAPHIC ELEMENTS

Psychai leaning against a pillar (figs 4–10)

In ancient literary sources such as Platonic, Neopythagorean and Hermetic writings, Psyche is known as “immaterial and immortal part of being”, “light like a butterfly”, “life and connection of the soul with the body”, and her image refers, as the name suggests, to the soul. In ancient Roman literature Psyche appears forcefully in the *Metamorphoses* by Lucius Apuleius in the late second century AD. The personification of this concept was the young woman Psyche, who is depicted with large butterfly wings outstretched on either shoulder³. Her depiction on a funerary monument makes a direct connection with the life force that leaves a living being upon death. The Greek word for both this elusive life force and for the insect butterfly is the same, ψυχή, so that its use on a funerary monument emphasizes the death of the individual for whom this monument was erected⁴.

2 A sculptural survey of the pieces in Turkish local museums in south-eastern Anatolia was undertaken by a team from the Dicle University in Diyarbakır: Akın, Şahin and İnal, 2007. For other published sculptures or similar material from Edessa and Osroene, cf., among others, Segal, 1970; Jacobs and Schütte-Maischatz, 1999; Filges, 2001; Gerber, 2001; Jacobs and Schütte-Maischatz, 2006; Bruns-Özgan, 2008; Rumscheid, 2013; Blömer, 2014, 82–84; Çobanoğlu, 2023; and Bobou, Healey and Raja, 2023 (with an overview of past research). For our previous works on Romanized or Roman Edessa, cf. Laflı and Buora, 2025; Laflı and Christof, 2014; Laflı, 2018 and 2016.

3 See LIMC 7, 1994, 569–585, s.v. Psyche (N. Icard-Gianolio). See also LIMC 3, 1986, 969–971, nos. 88–106, s.v. Eros/Amor, Cupido (N. Blanc and F. Gury).

4 On the etymology of ψυχή, see Chantraine, 1999, 1294–1295, s.v. ψυχή. For a discussion of ψυχή, depicted as a small winged creature, see Onians, 1951, 93–95.



Fig. 4a–b. Psyche leaning against a pillar no. 1, acc. no. 3139 (photo. E. Laflı, 2005).

The figure of Psyche in funerary contexts of Asia Minor has been known since the second century AD. In a stele from Phocaea in Aeolis from the end of the second–beginning of the third century AD, Psyche appears kneeling and touching the body of the deceased (*LIMC* VII, 2, no. 78). Previously Psyche is found sporadically represented, e.g., in a relief from Benevento in Campania where she rests her right elbow on a small pillar in fully



Fig. 5a–b. Psyche leaning against a pillar no. 2, acc. no. 3140 (photo. E. Laflı, 2005).

Fig. 6a–b: Psyche leaning against a pillar no. 3, acc. no. 3141 (photo. E. Laflı, 2005).

dressed position on which also rests her left hand that seems to support an object (or folds?). In this depiction her right hand is near the face, the legs are crossed and the wings are shaped like butterfly wings. Among the Psychai depictions in the Yakubiye group the position of the arms in three cases reversed (cat. nos. 3, 5 and 7, **figs 6, 8 and 10**), with the right leaning upon a stone pillar and

the left holding to the cheek or to the side of the head in a gesture of contemplation or mourning. Her head is bent, as the whole body is inclined. The main difference of the Psychai at Yakubiye is type and style of their dress: these Psychai are naked in the upper part of the body, according to an iconography attested from the Hellenistic period. The dress falls with a curve at the pubis, and be-



Fig. 7a–b. Psyche leaning against a pillar no. 4, acc. no. 3743 (photo. E. Lafli, 2005).

Fig. 8a–b. Psyche leaning against a pillar no. 5, acc. no. 3744 or 3762 (photo. E. Lafli, 2005).



Fig. 9a–b. Psyche leaning against a pillar no. 6, acc. no. 7734 (photo. E. Laffi, 2005).

comes the shape of the bent legs. This trend, which is common in some of the depictions of Artemis in the Hellenistic period (*LIMC* II, 2, nos.), but also of other female figures (e.g., Aphrodite), is well present in the coroplastic productions of Asia Minor (see Laffi and Buora, 2024, nos. 40–41).

The Psychai in the Yakubiye group are holding a small wreath, evidently made of flowers, in one of their hands which were to honour the deceased. The history of this detail is very long and practically continuous throughout antiquity, even if it presents a maximum concentration in the last decades of the second and in the first half of the third century AD. We see, for example, the garland in the hands of the Silvanae in a stele housed in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna, dated between AD 200 and 230 (*CIL* III, 4534; Perinić, 2016, 120, no. 30). It appears in some female figures on the lids of some sarcophagi, both Attic production (e.g., the marble sarcophagus of a married couple with scenes of Amazonomachy, housed in the Louvre, acc. no. Ma 2119, ca. AD 180; for which see Baratte and Metzger, 1985, 256–261, no. 166) and Anatolian production, such as a Roman columnar sarcophagus in the former Museo Torlonia in Rome, depicting the Labours of Hercules and dated to the second century AD (Settis and Gasparri, 2020, 181–



Fig. 10a–b. Psyche leaning against a pillar no. 7, acc. no. 3143 (photo. E. Laffi, 2005).



183, no. 28). In our case we find the position of the weeping Eros resumed, as it is found, for example, on the reliefs of the Magazzino ex Ponteggi at the Museo Gregoriano Profano ex Lateranense in the Musei Vaticani, both facing to the right⁵ and facing to the left⁶ where the torch turned downwards, can suggest, in some way, the image of a small column.

⁵ Arachne Id 1080732 = Amelung, 1903, cat. no. 29, pl. 91.

⁶ Arachne Id 1108472 = Amelung, 1903, no. 23, pl. 90.

Also noteworthy in most of the Psychai of Edessa the plasticity of the wings is reduced to just three feathers, and individual feathers are not carved in detail at all. In only one relief of the Yakubiye group, Psyche is fully dressed, has butterfly wings and her body is completely adhering to the pillar (cat. no. 6, **figs 9a–b**). Her dress then goes around the ankle, as if she wears a kind of trousers. In addition to being inspired by another iconography, it could also have been executed by a different hand. Furthermore, in the upper part there is a smooth horizontal strip which is completely missing in the other pieces which makes us to think that it presumably comes from another monument, or belongs to another part of the same tomb.

In conclusion, this funerary monument could unfortunately not admit the thematic repetition of seven high reliefs figuring Psyche.

TRITONS HOLDING A DOLPHIN (FIGS 11–13)

The figure of triton has evolved since its first appearance in Greek vase painting of the seventh century BC.⁷ An amphora by the Berlin painter from Nola in southern Italy, curated now at the Harvard Arts Museum in Cambridge, MA (ARV², 200, 49), offers us a triton holding a scepter in his right hand and a dolphin by its tail in his left hand (*LIMC* 8/1, 69). Since the third century BC the triton is depicted with a rudder in his right hand⁸. Starting from the fourth century BC he loses his beard and becomes a young man with thick hair (e.g., on a mosaic from Rhodes, for which *LIMC* 8/1, 74). The association between triton and dolphin is quite common, for example in a mosaic from Barcelona from the mid-third century AD (*LIMC* 8/1, 79–80, no. 78). The assumption, therefore, that the dolphin could foreshadow a connection with Atargatis, i.e., the “Syrian Goddess” (after Lucian, *De Syria Dea*) who was responsible for the fertility of the land, and perhaps the sea as well with the attribute of a dolphin, hypothesized by Drijvers, as already mentioned above, is not at all convincing.

In Yakutiye group there are three monuments depicting tritons who are holding a dolphin (cat. nos. 8–10, **figs 11–13**). The heads of these tritons are in high relief of a youth in a three-quarter left profile pose; iconographically, however, none of these

tritons from Edessa are exactly comparable to the examples presented at *LIMC* vol. 8.

In these three tritons we see diversified large leaves that separate the human parts from their animalistic parts. At the same time, their muscles on their torsos are rendered differently. Nothing au-



Fig. 11a–b. Triton holding a dolphin no. 1, acc. no. 3738 (formerly 15-2-72) (photo. E. Laflı, 2005).

⁷ Alabastron at the University of Washington, acc. no. WU 3265, dated to 635–625 BC, cf. *LIMC* VIII, 1, 73, no. 1.

⁸ Sardonix in Berlin, for which *LIMC* 8/1, 74, no. 18.



Fig. 12a–b. Triton holding a dolphin no. 2, acc. no. 3739 (photo. E. Laflı, 2005).

Fig. 13a–b. Triton no. 3, acc. no. 3740 (photo. E. Laflı, 2005).

thorizes us, however, to consider these figures feminine. Apart from the fact that depiction of female tritons or newts are quite rare, the only woman-kind feature, the breast, does not appear evidently feminine in these reliefs.

In the two remaining faces of the tritons, the hair also has curls towards the forehead, but their hair style differs to each other (cat. nos. 8–9, **figs 11–12**).

What two faces have in common is an enlarged nose and thick lips whereas in the first case they turned upwards (**fig. 11**), in the other downwards (**fig. 12**). A triton has incised pupils which first appear in Asia Minor and northern Syria late in the Hadrianic period, after the death of Antinous in AD 130. But incised irises and pupils are generally rare on any grave reliefs, usually not appearing until the early Anto-

nine period, i.e., around AD 140–150s (Walters, 1988, 76). The rendering of the muscles on the chest is also diversified, as is that of the hair.

In conclusion, we can assume that each triton is iconographically diversified.

Two Erotes embracing Psychai (figs 14–15)

In Roman funerary sculpture the union of soul and body seems to be represented by the embrace between Psyche and Eros, that is, between soul and



Fig. 14a–b. Eros embracing Psyche no. 1, acc. no. 3741 (photo. E. Laflı, 2005).



Fig. 15a–b. Eros embracing Psyche no. 2, acc. no. 3742 (photo. E. Laflı, 2005).

body. This image is quite frequent in the so-called “strigilated” sarcophagi, which were in use in the Roman world from the mid-second century AD to the fourth⁹. This subject is also known among the funerary sculpture of the Hellenized or Romanized

9 For the iconographic comparanda of Psychai leaning against a pillar, cf. LIMC 7 (1994) s.v. Psyche, cat. nos. 565–589 (N. Icard-Gianolio), i.e., no. 4* (cippus from Tuff-Benevento in southern Italy), no. 6* (glass plate from Munich) on pl. 436. See also Baratta, 2007.

Near East¹⁰. On the relief in our cat. no. 12 (figs 15a–b), Eros presents his left leg advanced, with a chiastic movement with respect to his right arm, also stretched forward. Psyche, fully dressed, bends her head backwards, in an almost ecstatic attitude. A similar image is found on the right corner, on the main face of a sarcophagus in the Museo Gregoriano Profano ex Lateranense (acc. no. 10397). But perhaps the most accurate comparison is the central group of the sarcophagus of the Erotes in the Archaeological Museums of Istanbul which is dated to the second century AD (acc. no. 511, cf. Mendel, 1912, 105–107, cat. no. 23).

A sphinx (fig. 16)

In one of the blocks there is a frontal depiction of the mythical winged monster with a woman's head and chest, and a lion's body, i.e., the sphinx, which was widely used in funerary monuments in various parts of the Roman Empire (cat. no. 13, figs 16a–b). We know of several all-round specimens with the same function. For example, a funerary sculpture in the *Museo Civico Archeologico di Bologna* (acc. no. 19041), dated to the second half of the first century AD, shows a sphinx, from the front, resting a paw on a warrior¹¹. Another sphinx with the same function is preserved in the Teatro Romano di Verona (Bolla, 2010, 43–45). On the block from Yakubiye the sphinx has vertical wings, as if they were willing to support something, perhaps a horizontal beam of a kline. Iconographically, there is no exact parallel to this sphinx from Edessa in the entry for sphinx in *LIMC* vol. 8¹². The question, if this funerary monument exhibits a special character in the choice of a sphinx relief as an ornament, remains a vexing problem that cannot be answered satisfactorily by the aforementioned legislative restriction.

10 For the comparanda of embracing lovers of Eros and Psyche, cf. *LIMC* 7 (1994), 578–581 s.v. Psyche with several examples on sarcophagi, cameos and lamps at cat. nos. 119–139, pls. 455–457; round sculpture groups at cat. nos. 141–142, pl. 458. As very well known, there are also depictions of this pair in terracotta.

11 Cf. <<https://www.museibologna.it/archeologico/catalogo/percorso/&id=25&oggetto=184&set=0>> (accessed on 1 January 2024).

12 Cf. *LIMC* 8 (1997), s.v. Sphinx, 1149–1174 (N. Kourou).



Fig. 16a–b. Sphinx, acc. no. 3138 (photo. E. Laflı, 2005).

A horizontal slab with Atlas and a lion-footed slab (figs 17–18)

It is uncertain, if the horizontal slab ornamented with Atlas preserved in the Archaeological Museum in Şanlıurfa, presumably supporting the upper slab of a possible kline, should be attributed to this series of reliefs from Yakubiye, or at least it was incorporated at the same monument in a different function (cat. no. 14, fig. 17). In fact, unlike the others, the figure of Atlas rests on a broad base, and the block itself has side walls converging obliquely as befits a keystone; in this case, how-



Fig. 17. Slab with Atlas, acc. no. 3142 (photo. E. Laflı, 2005).



Fig. 18a–b. Lion-footed slab (photo. E. Laflı, 2005).

ever, the image should be reconstructed between the converging walls, and not in the upper face of the funerary monument. We, therefore, were unable to make any reconstruction of this relief in the Yakubiye group with certainty.

Legs, either lions or panthers, terminated into a paw foot were very popular among the Graeco-Roman architectural elements in entire Asia Minor, as in ancient Egypt and the Near East where their basic designs as fixed stools, side chairs, and armchairs were customary. In the ancient Near Eastern

iconography animals represented spiritual beings, or were believed to possess supernatural powers, and Egyptians hypothesized that these virtues were conveyed from the god or animal to the sitter. Also in Graeco-Roman spirituality lions symbolize strength and courage, and were believed to have protective powers. Therefore, architectural designers from the Greek and Roman areas continued to use the animal legs and feet as a symbol of power. This type of designs with lion or panther legs and feet terminating into a paw foot were especially common in theatres

and monumental graves in Asia Minor. In the funerary group of Yakubiye there is such a lion-footed slab with a lion head and paw (cat. no. 15, **figs 18a–b**) which has been taken from a Graeco-Roman model, and was perhaps used as an horizontal slab of a klinē where possibly a corpse was lying, together with the slab adorned with Atlas.

In case of the lion-footed slab, the lion's head above is looking directly at the viewer. Since it is heavily damaged, all details of the face have weathered away; but the beast has a round, bulging left eye. His paw is large, even oversized, with the claws slightly extended. The toe-nails of his paw are not indicated. Although this type of naturalistic lion-footed slabs are known since the Lydians or earlier in Anatolia, the limestone example from Edessa is unique in terms of its material. Perhaps the choice of the lion in the case of Yakubiye group is a biographical reference to a family with eastern connections.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

It is probable that all these 15 pieces presented above belong to the same funerary monument, although our evidence is rather limited to their similar characteristics in dimension and workmanship, which could also be an indication of them being from the same workshop. The fact should also be mentioned that such proposals of decontextualized material in an area that has been occupied as a modern residential neighbourhood could be risky, especially considering that there are no reference to the actual find-spots of the pieces or their possible archaeological context. Iconography of the reliefs do not support their erection for an individual or a group of people either. Lacking provenances of the objects, iconographical ambiguity, and, of course, the limits of our current knowledge, all hinder the attainment of certainty.

The naturalistically rendered figures remain the central feature of the iconography of this monument where classical iconography were combined with typological features of the Roman Imperial funerary monuments. While these reliefs may not have much to recommend them in terms of their iconography and the quality of their carving, they are notable because of their relative rarity in this part of the Roman East. Our brief study confirms the almost infinite variation in the iconography of a basic set of figure types, costume features, and at-

tributes in a funerary monument of Roman Edessa. A variety of factors could account for their iconography; but in general it seems that these funerary reliefs synchronize to each other iconographically. Perhaps the heroic detachment of the deceased or deceaseds is purportedly evident in the iconography, most often revealed, in our opinion, by the direction of the figures' gazes, which are not fixed on the survivors¹³.

Given the fragmentary nature of the material, it proved to be too speculative to estimate the number of reliefs in the original iconography. Beside creating **fig. 3**, no typological proposal could be made regarding the position of the relief blocks. To do this, a thorough survey of necropoleis and funerary monuments in this part of the Roman Near East should be carried out and addressed in depth to propose models and make comparisons with other Near Eastern centers, such as Antioch-on-the-Orontes, Zeugma, Hatra, Palmyra and Dura-Europos.

So far dating these Roman monuments in Edessa is done primarily by comparison of certain details – such as drapery folds and the level of finish of the carving – to other known Roman monuments in the East or elsewhere. The iconographic details of Yakubiye group fully correspond to Roman art, in particular that of the late second century AD. In other words, by analyzing the iconography and comparison, this funerary group can be assigned to the late second century AD on the basis of subject and workmanship. Especially drilling the pupil of the eyes at one of the tritons (cat. no. 8, **figs 11a–b**) was used for dating them as a group. But this assigned date should be considered as a rough approximation, since in any part of the Roman Empire we have almost no exact parallel neither for as a whole group, nor for individual depictions of the Yakubiye reliefs.

Nevertheless, the uniqueness of this funerary group makes us unable to assign them to the late second century AD with complete certainty. In Baetica in just the opposite side of the Empire, for example, there are sets of reliefs associated with funerary monuments with representations of tritons, lions and sphinxes that date back to the first century AD¹⁴.

13 On the pitfalls of interpreting the iconography of funerary art as expressions of afterlife hopes or beliefs, see Davies, 2003, particularly 222–223.

14 Cf. Baena del Alcázar, 1991–1992; and León (ed.), 2009.

It is possible that the figures were covered in stucco which could attenuate certain irregularities, and covered with a colour which could instead highlight certain parts. Therefore, our image is partial and distorted also by the fact that we see them at close range, while originally they could have been positioned at a certain height. Nonetheless, they reveal to us a hitherto unknown monument of the funerary art of ancient Edessa, which has created notable attestations both as regards the figures carved in the rock and as regards the styles and images in the round.

One of the more surprising revelations that emerged during our study of these sculpted reliefs from Edessa that none of them were imported, but were produced in Edessa or in its close environs during the second and third centuries AD. Thus, these reliefs are researched here both as new additions to the corpus of relief sculpture and as funerary monuments of Edessa. Our work contributes to the corpus of extant works from the local Edessan sculptural workshop, as we bring to us 15 examples found in Şanlıurfa. In the future a corpus of this local workshop of Edessa should be created and characteristics of the workshop should be identified in detail.

As a conclusion, these figures show us how deep the roots of Graeco-Roman culture or Romanized culture were placed in Edessa, not only for the symbols used, but especially for the intimate adherence to the ways of the Roman art.

CATALOGUE

In this brief catalogue the entry for each stone is given as completely as possible with at least the following information included: catalogue number in boldface, the museum accession number, reference to illustrations in boldface and within parentheses and measurements of the stone. A bibliography is given for those monuments that have been recently published. Detailed physical descriptions are, however, not offered here, as most of them were already published, and they were also presented above.

Psychai leaning against a pillar

No. 1. Acc. no. 3139 (**figs 3/6 and 4a-b**)

H., 36 cm, W., 40 cm, Th., 41 cm.

Recent reference. Karul, Kozbe and Yavuzkır 2017, 433, bottom fig.

No. 2. Acc. no. 3140 (**figs 3/2 and 5a-b**)

H., 44 cm, W., 28 cm, Th., 27 cm, Th. upper part, 23.5 cm.

Recent reference. Karul, Kozbe and Yavuzkır 2017, 433, top fig.

No. 3. Acc. no. 3141 (**figs 3/4 and 6a-b**)

H., 40 cm, W., 37 cm, Th., 46 cm.

Recent reference. Karul, Kozbe and Yavuzkır 2017, 432, bottom fig.

No. 4. Acc. no. 3743 (**figs 3/9 and 7a-b**)

H., 54 cm, W., Psyche 10 cm, Th., 64 cm, Th. upper part, 23.5 cm.

Recent reference. Karul, Kozbe and Yavuzkır 2017, 432, top fig.

No. 5. Acc. no. 3744 or 3762 (**figs 3/5 and 8a-b**)

H., 49 cm, W., 26 cm, Th., 64 cm.

Recent reference. Karul, Kozbe and Yavuzkır 2017, 434, bottom fig.

No. 6. Acc. no. 7734 (**figs 3/10 and 9a-b**)

H., 61 cm, W., 26.5 cm, Th., 23.5 cm.

Recent reference. Karul, Kozbe and Yavuzkır 2017, 434, top fig.

No. 7. Acc. no. 3143 (**figs 3/8 and 10a-b**)

H., 32 cm, W., 29 cm, Th., 37 cm.

Unpublished.

Tritons holding a dolphin

No. 8. Acc. no. 3738 (formerly 15-2-72) (**figs 3/1 and 11a-b**)

H., 44 cm, W., 36 cm, Th., 31 cm.

Recent reference. Karul, Kozbe and Yavuzkır 2017, 435, bottom fig.

No. 9. Acc. no. 3739 (**figs 3/13a-b and 12a-b**)

H., 44 cm, W., 34 cm, Th., 24 cm.

Recent reference. Karul, Kozbe and Yavuzkır 2017, 436, fig.

No. 10. Acc. no. 3740 (**figs 3/12 and 13a-b**)

H., 46 cm, W., 39 cm, Th., 32 cm.

Unpublished.

Erotes embracing Psychai

No. 11. Acc. no. 3741 (**figs 3/7 and 14a-b**)

H., 54 cm, W., 23 cm, Th., 79 cm.

Recent reference. Karul, Kozbe and Yavuzkır 2017, 431, fig.

No. 12. Acc. no. 3742 (**figs 3/3 and 15a-b**)

H., 53 cm, W., 24 cm, Th., 67 cm.

Recent reference. Karul, Kozbe and Yavuzkır 2017, 430, bottom fig.

Sphinx

No. 13. Acc. no. 3138 (**figs 3/11 and 16a-b**)

H., 40 cm, W., 48 cm, Th., 50 cm.

Recent reference. Karul, Kozbe and Yavuzkır 2017, 437, fig.

Two horizontal slabs

No. 14. Acc. no. 3142 (fig. 17)

Slab with Atlas.

H., 55 cm, W., 19 cm, Th., 31 cm.

Unpublished.

No. 15. (figs 18a–b)

Lion-footed slab.

H., 56 cm, W., 21 cm, Th., 69 cm.

Unpublished.

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