

# FRAGMENT OF A SARCOPHAGUS

ROMAN, CIRCA AD 180  
MARBLE  
RESTAURATIONS

HEIGHT: 86,5 CM.

WIDTH: 37 CM.

DEPTH: 15,5 CM.

*PROVENANCE:*

*FORMER COLLECTION OF GIULIO  
MONTEVERDE (1837-1917), ROME,  
BEFORE 1882.*

*THEN IN THE PRIVATE COLLECTION OF  
NILS EBBESSON ASTRUP (1901-1972),  
OSLO, ACQUIRED IN THE 1950S OR 1960S  
ON THE ADVICE OF HANS PETER  
L'ORANGE (1903-1983), FOUNDER AND  
DIRECTOR OF THE  
NORWEGIAN INSTITUTE IN ROME.  
THEN NORWEGIAN PRIVATE  
COLLECTION, OSLO, BY DESCENT FROM  
THE FORMER.  
BY DESCENT FROM THE FORMER UNTIL  
2024.*



This marble fragment of a sarcophagus presents a lively, finely sculpted scene. The relief shows a young man, standing, carrying a krater (a large vase used to mix wine) on his left shoulder and an oenochoe (a wine jug used to serve the wine from the krater) in his right hand. Turned towards his left – the right of the relief – his body is presented in a three-quarter view, while his head is practically in profile. His left arm is raised as though to keep the large vase balanced, while his right arm is lowered, his closed right hand firmly gripping the handle of the smaller vase, and his right leg is represented over his left. That advanced leg indicates that the young man is likely moving. His face has delicate features and indicates the apparent youth of our figure: his eyes are rather deeply carved and surmounted by thin, arched brow lines, while his full-lipped mouth seems to form a pout. His small, round chin and full cheeks, further characteristics of a youthful appearance in Roman statuary, are accompanied by a small ear that sticks out from the Phrygian cap crowning his head. Thick, wavy hair spills out from his cap, covering his forehead, framing his ears and spilling elegantly onto the nape of his neck. His wide, smooth neck is partly covered by his pleated garment. The young man is wearing a *chiton* cinched at his waist and a *chlamys* fastened over his right shoulder with



a pin. His body is clothed in carefully depicted draperies, rendered by a meticulous carving of the folds of the garments. These folds are of varying depths, sometimes round, sometimes V-shaped. The play of folds also makes it possible to understand the different layers of fabric and thus better understand the garments themselves. In front of our young man, we see a fragment of drapery, most likely from another figure placed in front of him, also moving and going in the same direction. His lively attitude, in combination with the drapery fragment from the missing figure on the right of our relief and the transport of the vases containing liquids, especially wine, indicates that this was probably a Bacchanal scene.

The Bacchanalia were religious festivals dedicated to Bacchus, the god of wine, vines and excess. Originally celebrated in Greece and known as Dionysia, from the name of the god Dionysus, these rites, which lasted between three and five days, were rhythmized with theatrical performances serving as religious ceremonies, fast-paced dances, songs and an excessive consumption of wine. When they were imported to Rome, they took on an even larger dimension, giving rise to nocturnal orgiastic festivities combining alcohol, music and carnal practices. However, these festivals caused concern in Rome, particularly in 186 BC, when, following a scandal, the Senate banned these practices, which were seen as dangerous for the political and religious life of Rome. The artistic representations of these festivals are varied, but they frequently portray dances and shows of ecstatic devotion in which wine flows freely, as well as mythological figures such as satyrs and exhilarated maenads. In Roman art, these scenes could be viewed in

frescoes, mosaics and reliefs, as is the case for our fragment of a sarcophagus.



The marble is sculpted with great precision and the high relief accentuates the liveliness of the scene. The folds of clothing, in artful disarray, are rendered fluidly and realistically, creating a striking contrast with the light and shaded areas of the relief, which accentuates the texture of the fabric and the figure's anatomy. The krater on his shoulder and the smaller vase in his right hand demonstrate great attention to detail, in a way typical of Roman funerary art. A bronze-coloured patina has settled over the surface of the marble over the centuries, complete with brown marks, now integral parts of the work's history.

The young man is depicted in a walking posture, reminiscent of representations of processions, which echoes the Roman practice of using narrative scenes to illustrate

the relation between imperial power and subjugated peoples. The Phrygian cap, often associated with barbarians and foreign peoples, lends credence to this interpretation. The iconography of the figure bearing offerings and wearing that same cap refers to a common motif in Roman art. In this case, it is possible that this young man represents a servant or a subjugated barbarian offering presents to the deceased, which could refer to an act of devotion or, in the imperial context, the notion of submission. An interesting parallel can be drawn with a similar figure on a sarcophagus preserved at the Louvre (Ill. 1). In a panel representing Patroclus' funeral, there is a servant wearing a Phrygian cap and carrying a krater, illustrating a scene of war and peace or, more precisely, a homage to heroes and those in power. The motif of offerings, and particularly those made at funerals, was a recurring theme in Roman funerary art, as it symbolised the respect owed to the deceased and the continuity of their influence after death. The scene on this sarcophagus could thus be interpreted as a symbolic ritual meaning homage or obedience to a superior, possibly the emperor or another person of great importance. Other fragments of sarcophagi depict figures wearing Phrygian caps, but it is rare to see them with the detail of the krater. On another fragment preserved at the Louvre, there is a young man similar to ours, but his hands are free and he seems to be fleeing (Ill. 2). Another example, this time decorating an urn, depicts a servant wearing a draped tunic and a Phrygian cap and carrying a large amphora (Ill. 3).

Our fragment of a sarcophagus was once part of the collection of the famous Italian sculptor Giulio Monteverde (1837-1917 -

Ill. 4), housed in his residence in Rome and acquired before 1882. It was mentioned as being in his collection in an inventory that Friedrich Matz and Friedrich von Duhn published that year (Ill. 5). Originally from Piemonte, he moved to Rome in 1865 after winning a competition and established his studio and residence in Piazza Indipendenza. Upon Monteverde's death, the work was probably purchased by the Norwegian Institute in Rome, as a photograph acquired by the German Archaeological Institute in 1970 shows our fragment and places it at that location (Ill. 6). The work then passed into the collection of Nils Ebbessøn Astrup (1901-1972 - Ill. 7), a Norwegian shipowner. The latter acquired it for his home in Oslo in the 1950s or 1960s on the advice of Hans Peter L'Orange (1903-1983 - Ill. 8), the founder and director of the Norwegian Institute in Rome. The fragment was then passed down by descent in a private collection in Oslo, was again passed down by descent and, finally, found its way to our collections.



## Comparatives:



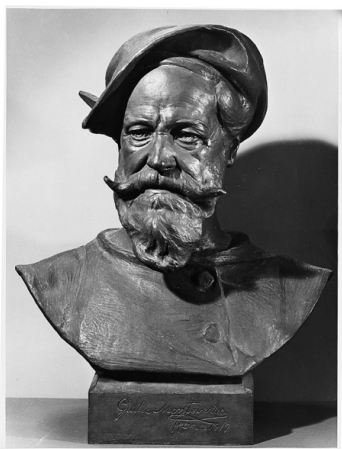
Ill. 1. Sarcophagus, Roman, ca AD 190-200, marble, H.: 51 cm. Musée du Louvre, Paris, inv. no. Ma 353.

Ill. 2. Fragment of a sarcophagus, Roman, ca AD 250, Attic workshop, marble, H.: 80.5 cm. Musée du Louvre, Paris, inv. no. Ma 4119.



Ill. 3. Sculpted urn, Greek, Hellenistic, 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD, marble, H.: 40 cm. Musée du Louvre, Paris, inv. no. Ma 2355.1.

## Provenance:



Ill. 4. Self-portrait of Giulio Monteverde (1837-1917).

### [3497. Stud. Monteverde.

R.-Fr. Oben durch vorspringendes Gesims, l. r. und unten durch gerade Flächen (jetzt wenigstens) abgeschlossen. H. 0,86; Br. 0,36. Gr. M.

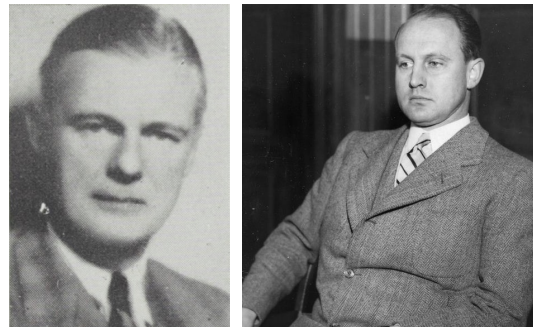
Barbarischer Jüngling in gegürtetem Ärmelchiton und auf der r. Schulter geknüpfter, über die l. zurückfallender Chlamys, in Bewegung n. r., auf dem Kopfe eine phrygische Mütze; er trägt auf dem Nacken eine große Amphora, wohl aus Metall zu denken, die er am unteren Henkelansatz mit der hoch erhobenen L. unterstützt; die niedergehende R. fasst einen Krug am Henkel. Vor ihm Gewandreste, wie es scheint, von einem zurückflatternden, wohl zu einer weiblichen Figur gehörenden Gewande.

Gebrochen etwas über der Mitte der Oberschenkel. Vgl. z. B. das athenische Reliefbruchstück: *Arch. Zeit.* 1877, 165, 84.]

Ill. 5. Friedrich Matz and Friedrich von Duhn, *Antike Bildwerke in Rom* ("Ancient sculptures in Rome"), Vol. 3, Leipzig, 1882, p. 18, no. 3497.



Ill. 6. Photograph acquired by the German Archaeological Institute in Rome in 1970.



Ill. 7. Nils Ebbesson Astrup (1901-1972).

Ill. 8. Hans Peter L'Orange (1903-1983).



## Publications:

- Friedrich Matz and Friedrich v. Duhn, *Antike Bildwerke in Rom* ("Ancient sculptures in Rome"), Vol. 3, Leipzig, 1882, p. 18, no. 3497.
- Kazimierz Bula, *Les illustrations anciennes de l'Iliade* ("The ancient illustrations of the Iliad"), Lviv, 1929, p. 99, note 1.
- Guntram Koch and Hellmut Sichtermann, *Römische Sarkophage (Handbuch der Archäologie)* ("Roman sarcophagi (Archaeology Handbook)"), Munich, 1982, p. 130f.
- Rolf M. Schneider, *Bunte Barbaren. Orientalenstatuen aus farbigem Marmor in der römischen Repräsentationskunst* ("Colourful barbarians. Oriental statues made from coloured marble in Roman representative art"), Worms, 1986, p. 18, note 13.
- Dagmar Grassinger, *Die mythologischen Sarkophage. Achill bis Amazonen* ("Mythological sarcophagi. From Achilles to the Amazons") (Die antiken Sarkophagreliefs, Vol. XII.1 – "Ancient sarcophagus reliefs"), Berlin, 1999, p. 208, no. 38, pl. 36.3.
- Rolf M. Schneider, "Barbar" ("Barbarian"), in *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* ("A specialised dictionary for antiquity and Christianity"). Supplement, Vol. 1, Stuttgart, 2001, col. 927.
- Andreas Grüner, "Gabe und Geschenk in der römischen Staatskunst" ("Gift and present in Roman statesmanship", in Hilmar et al., Ed., *Geschenke und Steuern, Zölle und Tribute. Antike Abgabenformen* ("Presents and taxes, tolls and tributes. Ancient tax systems") in Anspruch und Wirklichkeit ("Aspiration and reality"), Leiden, 2007, p. 447.