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### EARLY EAST ROMAN PERIOD STONE WORKS FROM KONYA - SARAYÖNÜ

#### *KONYA – SARAYÖNÜ’NDEN ERKEN DOĞU ROMA DÖNEMİ TAŞ ESERLER*

**Nizam ABAY\***

#### **Abstract**

Sarayönü District, one of the important settlements of the Mountainous Phrygia region, is located within the borders of Konya Province. The district, which hosted many civilizations from the Prehistoric Period, was the scene of important settlements, especially in the Early Eastern Roman Period. For example, this is understood from the archaeo-architectural and liturgical remains in Beşgöz of Sarayönü district, where there are rich settlements belonging to the Early Eastern Roman Period. This study carried out to identify the area revealed a fragment of a cross architectural block, a column capital, a column body and a parapet slab and two column bases. These archaeological stone remains were first catalogued. Afterwards, they were grouped according to their functions, and historical suggestions were made because these existing architectural remains we evaluated throughout the study revealed that the Beşgöz neighbourhood had a church structure belonging to the 5.<sup>th</sup>-6.<sup>th</sup> centuries AD.

**Keywords:** Konya, Sarayönü, Early East Roman Period, Liturgical, Column Capital.

#### **Öz**

Dağlık Phrygia Bölgesi'nin önemli yerleşimlerinden birisi olan Sarayönü ilçesi Konya ili sınırları içerisinde yer almaktadır. Prehistorik Dönemden birçok uygarlığa ev sahipliği yapan ilçe özellikle Erken Doğu Roma Döneminde önemli yerleşmelere sahne olmuştur. Örneğin bu durum Erken Doğu Roma Dönemine ait zengin yerleşmelerin olduğu Sarayönü İlçesine bağlı Beşgöz Mahallesindeki

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arkeolojik olan mimari ve liturjik işlevli kalıntılardan anlaşılmaktadır. Alanda tespitine yönelik yaptığımız bu çalışmada bir adet haçlı mimari blok parçası, sütun başlığı, sütun ve korkuluk levhası, iki adet sütun altlığı görülmüştür. Tespit ettiğimiz bu arkeolojik taş kalıntılarının ilk aşamada katalogları çıkartılmıştır. Sonrasında ise işlevlerine göre gruplandırılarak tarihsel önerileri yapılmıştır. Zira çalışma boyunca değerlendirdiğimiz bu mevcut mimari kalıntılardan da Beşgöz Mahallesi'nin MS V-VI. yüzyıllara ait kilise yapısının olduğu sonucuna ulaşılmaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Konya, Sarayönü, Erken Doğu Roma Dönemi, Liturjik, Sütun Başlığı.

## 1. Introduction

Sarayönü district centre is located 52 km north of the Konya Province. The district is surrounded by Yunak and Cihanbeyli in the north, Cihanbeyli and Altınekin in the east, Selçuklu in the south and southeast, and Kadınhanı in the west<sup>1</sup>. Since the administrative position of the city has changed frequently during the historical process, it is difficult to determine its boundaries accurately. Pliny mentions settlements belonging to Phrygia Paroreios, such as Philomelienses, Tymbriani, Leucolithi, Pelteni and Tyrienses<sup>2</sup> within the borders of "Lykaonia Conventus". Strabo defines the borders of Phrygia Paroreios and Lykaonia as Tyriaion (İlgın) between Philomelion (Akşehir) and Laodikeia (Ladik)<sup>3</sup>. Ptolemy included the settlements west of Lake Tatta (Salt Lake) in the Proseilemmene<sup>4</sup> region. Ramsay includes Sarayönü and its neighbourhood in this region<sup>5</sup>.

To reflect this rich accumulation in the historical process, Sarayönü District has a rich collection that has been evaluated over a wide period of time, ranging from the Prehistoric Ages to Antiquity. It had an uninterrupted settlement, especially during the Late Roman and Byzantine Periods. Therefore, many archaeological stone artefacts from the Roman and Byzantine Periods were found in Sarayönü and its surroundings during this period.

These stone artifacts, which constitute the subject of the study, were identified as a piece of an architectural block with a cross, a column capital, a column body and a parapet slab, and two column bases. Some of these artifacts, which have been determined to be more functional in terms of architecture, have also been found to have liturgical<sup>6</sup> uses based on their depictions (such as the parapet slab and crusader architectural block).

The stone artifact groups belonging to the Early East Roman period have been neglected. However, such findings constitute the most important data explaining the social and economic status of ancient societies and their daily living standards and patterns. Considering that the majority of the artefacts in the district were obtained from Konya and its immediate surroundings, the examination of this group will reveal the cultural and socio-economic relations of the district, which was an important settlement area in the early Early East Roman period, with the surrounding cities, and will also provide important information about the daily life of the people living here.

<sup>1</sup> Bahar - Koçak 2004, 12.

<sup>2</sup> Sevin 2001, 208.

<sup>3</sup> Strab., XIV 2. 29. *Geographika*.

<sup>4</sup> Ptolemy V. 4.10.

<sup>5</sup> Ramsay 1960, 63.

<sup>6</sup> The word liturgy is derived from the Greek Leitourgia, meaning liturgy and worship. These architectural elements, which do not have a static function in the church, are used for religious functions. For detailed information see Doğan 2005, 31-41.

### 1.1. Evaluation of stone works with architectural and liturgical functions

Among the architectural artifacts found in Beşgöz Neighborhood is a grooved<sup>7</sup> and acanthus-leaved corinthian column capital<sup>8</sup> made of limestone (Cat. No. 1, Fig. 1). The concave grooves in the upper row on the caulis bowl of the capital are in the form of grooves and surround the capital. Inside these groove-shaped grooves, small, round-shaped arrowheads are visible. Below the cauliculus basin, eight finely wrought acanthus leaves with slender veins are observed. The composition of the acanthus leaves in the lower row and the grooved upper row of the Corinthian column capital was a design commonly used in Early East Roman Anatolia. Similar compositions are seen in the capitals of the Istanbul<sup>9</sup> and Kocaeli<sup>10</sup> Archeology Museums, dating back to the 5th and 6th centuries. Additionally, the Izmir Archeology Museum features many column capitals from Odemiş and Izmir with this type of design<sup>11</sup>. The closest example in terms of style and typology to the Corinthian column capital studied here is found in the Roman Agoras of the ancient city of Xanthos<sup>12</sup>. The Xanthos column capital's upper row is adorned with thin, striped grooves, while the lower row is embellished with acanthus leaves, making it similar in decoration and style to the Sarayönü column capital. The slender, veined appearance of the acanthus leaves on the column capital is another stylistic characteristic that resembles catalog no. 1. Therefore, considering similar examples, style, motif characteristics, and stylistic status, the capital can be dated to the period between the 5th and 6th centuries.

The rectangular-shaped parapet slab made of limestone<sup>13</sup> identified in the Beşgöz neighborhood (Cat. No. 2, Fig. 2) has broken corners on the right and left bottom. On its front side, two Latin crosses are carved in low relief and placed in the center of the plate between two frames decorated with moldings. The arms of the cross widen towards the edges, creating a convex curve. The plate's large and elongated form and the Latin cross image on its front suggest that it may have been a part of a church parapet element with a liturgical function. In fact, this composition of the Latin cross image is commonly found on parapets and sarcophagi<sup>14</sup>.

Similar parapets with this composition can be seen in the galleries of the Constantinople churches, particularly the parapets of the Hagia Irene church<sup>15</sup> in Istanbul. They can also be seen in the Topkapı Palace Museum<sup>16</sup> in Istanbul and the Edirne Museum<sup>17</sup>. When compared to all these examples and considering the style of the Latin cross motif, the plate in catalog no. 6 can be dated to the Early East Roman period (5<sup>th</sup>–6<sup>th</sup> centuries AD)<sup>18</sup>. The Latin cross, placed in the center of the plate within frames decorated with moldings, is a symbolic image commonly used during the early Byzantine period<sup>19</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> They can also be defined as bowl-type capitals due to their groove or groove form or godron motif.

<sup>8</sup> For comparative examples see Riefstahl 1931, 9, Fig. 16; Kautzsch 1936, Pl. 44, Fig. 738, 748, 753; Katipoğlu 1992, 47-67, Cat. No. 15,39, 63, 66.

<sup>9</sup> Mendel 1914, 440-441, Cat. No. 1200, Env. No: 2733; Zollt 1994, Taf. 47.

<sup>10</sup> Günay 2009, 40, Cat. No. 23.

<sup>11</sup> Andıç 2012, Cat. No. 30-33.

<sup>12</sup> Yılmaz 2022, 170, Fig. 183.

<sup>13</sup> The reason why local limestone is preferred in the architectural and liturgical works we identified in the neighborhood is that the neighborhood is located far from the main roads.

<sup>14</sup> Aydın 2013, 288.

<sup>15</sup> Peschlow 1977, 21, Fig. 3, 17-18; Tezcan 1989, 150, R.174.

<sup>16</sup> Tezcan 1989, 357, R. 515.

<sup>17</sup> Tezcan 1989, R. 515.

<sup>18</sup> For similar examples see Epstein 1981, 1-28; Koch 2007, 371, Lev. 15, Fig. 1; Buchwald 2015, Fig. 301-305; Parman 2002, Lev. 95.

<sup>19</sup> For similar examples, see Jakobs 1987, Taf. 4a. 9b. 11b; Ötügen 1996, Taf. 16, 2-3.17, 1; Niewohner 2007, Taf. 36.

Another structure element found in the area is a broken column body made of gray-white marble (Cat. No. 3, Fig. 3). Considering the lower and upper diameter features of the body rising on a ring-shaped plinth base on a ring with a second torus function that curves inward, it suggests that this column was used in a building element such as a templon or ciborium. Although it is difficult to date the column body since the location of the in-column is unknown and there is no stylistic evidence, we can date it to the Early East Roman Period (5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> century AD) with similar examples<sup>20</sup> in the Silifke Museum.

In Pir Hüseyin Mosque, we identified a column base used as a decorative element consisting of a flat profiled plinth on a torus that curves outward and a neck that narrows upwards (Cat No. 4, Fig. 4). On the body, there is a mortise cavity and a lead pouring channel. Ötüken<sup>21</sup> has divided attic-type column bases into three main typologies, A, B, and C, and further into four subgroups<sup>22</sup> such as A1, A2, C1, and C2. The column base seen in Pir Hüseyin Mosque also belongs to the type "C" typology, and parallel examples of this base can be seen in Konya Ince Minaret Madrasa<sup>23</sup>, Kahramanmaraş<sup>24</sup>, Çavdarhisar<sup>25</sup>, and Marmara Island<sup>26</sup>. These compared examples are dated between the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries AD. Therefore, we can suggest the same date for the work subject to the study due to its typological similarity with comparative examples. Another column base is seen in the Beşgöz neighborhood. The plinth base has a torus and trochilus (Cat. No. 5, Figs. 5a-b). There are two slim-necked parts above the trochilus that are narrow in diameter. In the center of the flat-profiled neck, there is a hollow. Catalog no. 5 column base is classified as Attic "A" 1 type<sup>27</sup> according to Ötüken's typology group with its form structure. We see a close analogue in the column base found in the village of Flowers in Beyşehir<sup>28</sup>. The black plinth, the two bands, and the slots on the plinth are common features. It is possible to see similar examples of this widespread typology in Anadolu, such as in the Studio's Basilica, Sergios Bakhos Church<sup>29</sup>, and St. Aziz Nicholas Church<sup>30</sup> in Demre, on the column bases dating back to the 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> centuries AD. Additionally, a column base dated to the 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> century AD can be found in Afyonkarahisar. In addition, a column<sup>31</sup> base from Afyonkarahisar dating to the V-V5Ith century is parallel to Catalogue 5 in terms of the deterioration in proportions, the coarsening of the transitions between the elements, the profiles, and the undeveloped stonemason's comb. Therefore, based on the form structures and similar examples<sup>32</sup> of both Early East Roman Attic typology and catalog no. 5 column base, we can date the work to the 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> century AD.

Another example that we encountered in the study area is a square-shaped architectural block (Cat. No 6, Fig. 6). Judging by its size and decorative features, it appears to be a work of art that was used as an altar. It is understood from the traces of the broken architectural block that it had a square shape. A double-contoured Latin cross-relief is located on the front of the block. Altars made from a single block in this form appeared in the Early East Roman Period in Anatolia<sup>33</sup>. Some examples of these altars found in basilicas feature oyster motifs and cross

<sup>20</sup> Aydın 2013, 256, Cat. No. 296-297.

<sup>21</sup> Ötüken 1996, 153.

<sup>22</sup> Ötüken 1996, 161-163.

<sup>23</sup> Temple 2013, 83, Fig. 77.

<sup>24</sup> Dumankaya - Ekmekçi 2018, 385, Cat. No. 7.

<sup>25</sup> Niewöhner 2007, 203, Pl. 2. 18-20.

<sup>26</sup> Asgari 1990, 75, Fig. 14.

<sup>27</sup> Ötüken 1996, 152.

<sup>28</sup> Arslan 2014a, 112, Kat. No. 3. Res. 3.

<sup>29</sup> Mathews 1976, Fig. 24- 29.

<sup>30</sup> Ötüken 1994, 361-375.

<sup>31</sup> Işık 2022, 121, Cat. No. 06.

<sup>32</sup> Ötüken 1996, 152 - Niewöhner 2007, 171.

<sup>33</sup> Gough 1985, 155.

reliefs, while others contain inscriptions or decorations<sup>34</sup>. Compared in terms of size and decoration, the altar example<sup>35</sup> seen in Doğanhisar shows similar form and decorative features to catalog no. 5. This plain composition altar is dated to the Early East Roman period (5<sup>th</sup>–6<sup>th</sup> century AD).

## 2. Conclusion

The architectural and liturgical stone artifacts identified in the Sarayönü district, when compared with similar examples in terms of form, style, and decoration, reflect the characteristics of the Early East Roman Period (5<sup>th</sup>–6<sup>th</sup> century AD).

It shows that these works, which are not in situ in the Sarayönü district centre and used as spolia, are different from the stone works in Istanbul, Iznik, Bursa, and Kocaeli provinces in terms of material, although there is a unity of style and motifs. Therefore, the close similarity of the column base from the Konya Fine Minareli Madrasa, Beyşehir Çiçekler Köyü and the altar sample from Doğanhisar district with the artefacts in the present study suggest that the artefacts were mostly produced in local workshops in the surrounding areas. In addition, it was determined that grey marble was used in most architectural and liturgical works in Sarayönü district, regardless of function and type. The use of grey marble is also seen in the architectural and liturgical elements of Akşehir, Beyşehir, Doğanhisar, Ilgın, Kadınhanı<sup>36</sup>, Hüyük, Derbent, Altınekin and Karatay districts, in short, throughout the region called Lykaonia in the Ancient Period. This shows that the material needed for the construction activities is thought to have been supplied from the local quarries in the surrounding region, the exact locations of which are unknown today. The stylistic features of the artifacts, such as the schematic styles of the 5<sup>th</sup>–6<sup>th</sup> century AD and the flattening of their profiles, also support the idea of local production.

Column bases and bodies with static functions are observed among the identified stone artifacts. Two artefacts with liturgical function were also identified. These artefacts, which we have dated to the Early East Roman period, are very important in terms of showing the construction activities of the region in this period. The density of the architectural material found in Sarayönü region shows that the district had a church architecture. The parapet slab, which stands out especially with its Latin cross ornamental composition, provides a clue about the church's architecture and shows the purpose of the wall located at the column and nave separation.

**Çıkar Çatışması / Conflicts of Interest:** Yazar, herhangi bir çıkar çatışması olmadığını beyan eder. / The author declare no conflict of interest.

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<sup>34</sup> Arslan 2014b, 41.

<sup>35</sup> Arslan 2014b, Fig. 1.

<sup>36</sup> Arslan 2014a, 112-182.

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## Catalog

**Catalog No:** 1

**Figure / Drawing No:** 1

**Name:** Column Capital

**Discovery Location:** Sarayönü / Beşgöz

**Measurement:** Height: 55 cm, Diameter: 36.5 cm

**Date:** 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> century AD.

**Material:** Limestone

**Description:** The surface of the capital is heavily abraded and broken. The abacus section of the capital is heavily chipped and broken. The upper row of the capital has 18 groove-shaped grooves on the caulis body, encircling the cap. These grooves expand from bottom to top in the form of a tongue, providing support under the abacus and turning outwards. Under these groove motifs seen in the upper row of the column capital, acanthus surrounds the surface in a narrow-leaved form. Almost all of the second row of acanthus leaves are in poor form due to abrasion. Therefore, the leaves can hardly be observed hanging from above. However, as far as can be traced, the acanthus has deep grooves, and the leaf tips are carved as long drops.

**Catalog No:** 2

**Figure / Drawing No:** 2

**Name:** Papapet Slabs

**Discovery Location:** Sarayönü / Beşgöz

**Measurements:** Height: 2.44 cm; Width: 99 cm; Depth: 22 cm.

**Date/Period:** 5<sup>th</sup>–6<sup>th</sup> century AD

**Material:** Limestone

**Description:** It is a parapet slab made of yellow-coloured local limestone. There are fractures and abrasions on the railing plate, called low type. In the centre of this rectangular plate is a vertically carved soffit motif. The short edges of the motif are concave. This motif separates the sections depicted as a panel (iconostasis) on the right and left. The panels are square with a large Latin cross in the relief technique in the centre of the panels. There are also horizontal bands at the top and bottom of the plates.

**Catalog No:** 3

**Figure / Drawing No:** 3

**Name:** Column Body

**Discovery Location:** Sarayönü / Beşgöz

**Measurement:** Height: 1.24 cm; upper diameter: 43 cm; lower diameter: 52 cm.

**Date/Period:** 5<sup>th</sup>–6<sup>th</sup> century AD

**Material:** Gray-white marble

**Description:** There are fractures and abrasions on the column fragment. The column is monoblock and pedestalised. The lower part of the column has a torus projecting outwards at right angles and curving inwards on a plinthe without profile.

**Catalog No:** 4

**Figure / Drawing No:** 4

**Name:** Column Base

**Place of Discovery:** Sarayönü / Pir Hüseyin Mosque

**Measurement:** Height: 39 cm; Diameter: 52 cm; Plinth Height: 10 cm; Plinth Width: 56 cm.

**Date:** 5<sup>th</sup>–6<sup>th</sup> century AD

**Material:** Gray-white marble

**Description:** This column base, classified as attic type, is made of limestone. There are fractures under the plinthe and at the corners of the column base, as well as abrasions on the surface. This base is classified as Attic type: it terminates with a torus with a convex profile on a square prism-shaped plinthe without a flat profile. On top of the torus, a right-angled neck section is joined as a single piece. Above the column base's neck is a zivana groove and a lead drainage channel.

**Catalog No:** 5

**Figure / Drawing No:** 5

**Name:** Column Base

**Discovery Location:** Sarayönü / Beşgöz Neighborhood

**Measurement:** Diameter: 83 cm, Height: 45 cm

**Date:** 4<sup>th</sup>–6<sup>th</sup> century AD

**Material:** Gray-white marble

**Description:** There are fractures under the plinth and at the corners and abrasions on the surface. Classified as Attic type, it consists of a square prism-shaped plinthe without a straight profile, with a torus with a right-angled profile projecting from the exterior, with an oblique profile towards the neck from the interior, and a two-stage neck section. There are plate holes and clamp marks in the centre and sides.



**Catalog No:** 6

**Figure / Drawing No:** 6

**Discovery Location:** Sarayönü / Beşgöz Mahallesi

**Name:** Crusader Architecture Block

**Measurement:** length: 78 cm, width: 51 cm, depth: 67 cm

**Date:** 6<sup>th</sup> century AD

**Material:** Grey-white marble

**Description:** A single monolithic architectural block fragment is broken and incomplete with abrasions on the surface. The lower part of the block was left as rough carving. The block is carved in relief with a double-contoured Latin cross motif with flaring arms. In the centre where the arms of the cross intersect, there is a quadrilateral motif.

### Figures



Fig. 1 (Cat. No. 1)



Fig. 2. (Cat. No. 2)



Fig. 3 (Cat. No. 3)



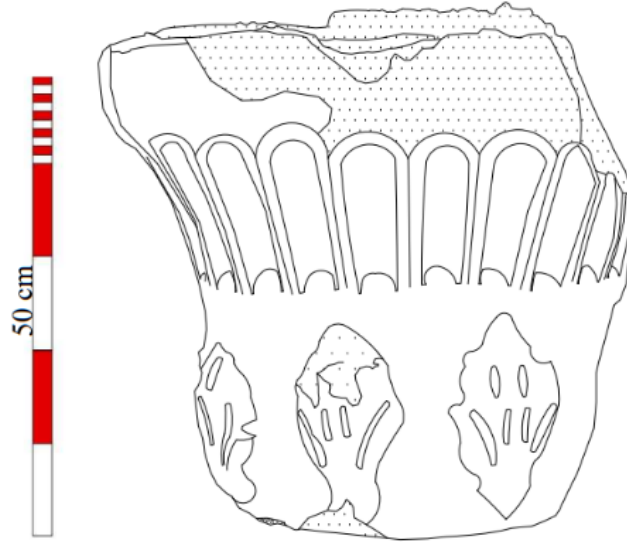
Fig. 4a-b (Cat. No. 4)



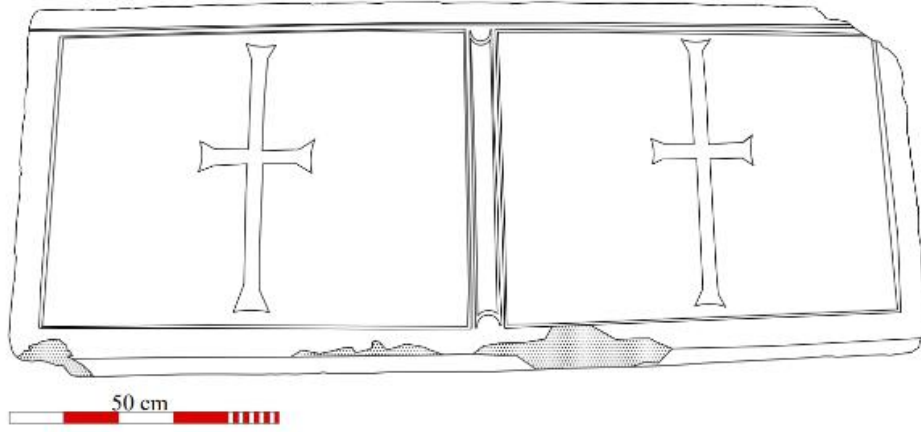
Fig. 5a-b (Cat. No. 5)



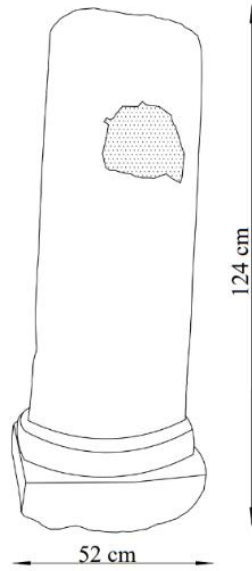
Fig. 6. (Cat. No. 6)



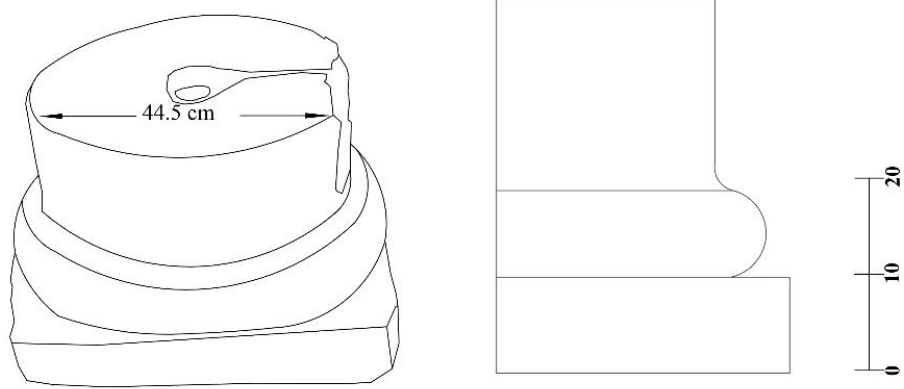
Draw. 1. (Cat. No.1)



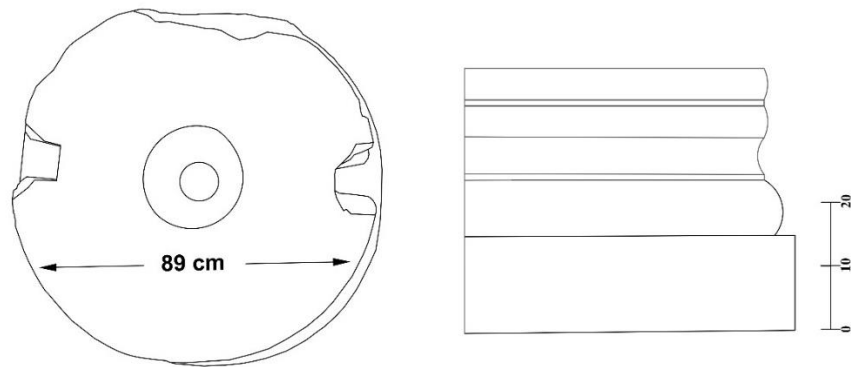
Draw. 2. (Cat. No. 2)



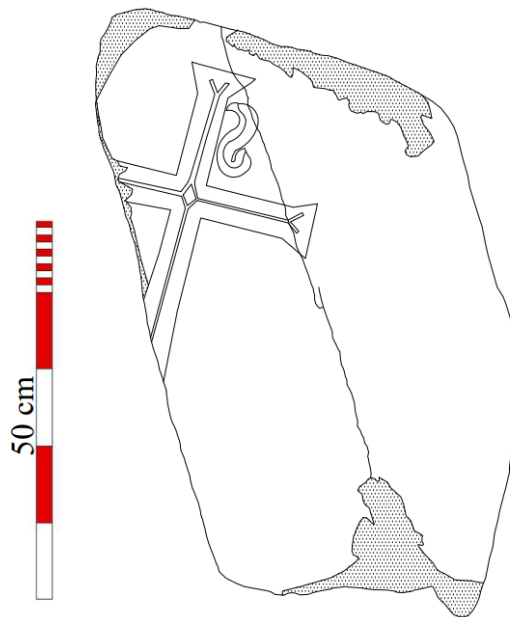
Draw. 3. (Cat. No. 3)



Draw. 4.(Cat. No. 4)



Draw. 5. (Cat. No. 5)



Draw. 6. (Cat. No. 6)