

**SARCOPHAGUS FROM COLLECTION DEL NERO IN CRACOW
(CSIR POLOGNE II.2 ADDENDA)
(PL. 20-21)**

It is necessary to return on the pages of “Światowit”, this time more broadly, to the object most interesting and provoking much discussion. Raising the subject that had already been touched upon is caused by the fact that objects of this class in Polish collections are very rare and by the unique character of the iconography of the monument, mentioned in the previous yearly,¹ not merely by the debatable question of its authenticity.

The object that I would like to refer to is a marble slab covered with a relief (**Fig. 1**),² housed in Czartoryski Museum. The considerably damaged slab consists of two parts. Until recently it has not been determined whether they were parts of the same, broken relief or two independent objects joined into one.³ On the slab there is a scene in which nine figures of Eroti are engaged in activities typical for craftsmen; as we may guess on the basis of the iconographical tradition – Eroti are hammering out weapon for Mars. Judging by the form of the slab, it could have been the front side of the typical child’s sarcophagus, to which several rather far analogies can be found in publications or in the recent work by Konrad Schauenburg⁴ and Margherita Bonanno Aravantinos.⁵ All these objects will most certainly be gathered in the volume of the corpus of sarcophagi (*Corpus der Antiken Sarkophagreliefs – ASR*).

I. Story of research

The object from Cracow by no means remains

unknown to the experts on representations of Eroti on sarcophagi. However, it is not known directly but owing to the drawings. The relief was not available to the scholars and researchers for almost two hundred years. Later, after it had found its way to the museum, it was regarded by Polish scholars as modern or of an uncertain authenticity. Because of that the slab was not published in the series *Corpus Signorum Imperii Romani*.⁶ In fact the monument is not absolutely typical. Some of its scenes are far from iconographic standards. Soon, after, it will certainly be exhibited among other ancient reliefs from the Cracow collection.

As mentioned above, the monument is not known in literature. It appeared already in the first half of 18th century in the form of the drawings, almost without any commentary. It was presented in a plate or several identical plates (**Fig. 2**), which were used as vignettes in all the three volumes of an epigraphic dissertation *Inscriptiones Antiquae Graecae et Romanae in Etruriae Urbibus...*, published in Florence and written by A. F. Gori.⁷ According to the author of the dissertation (who in his epigraphic work did not include any plates of sarcophagi); this drawing appeared there as a kind of allegory rather than an illustration of an archaeological object) the monument was then a part of Del Nero collection. Maybe he meant the palace of Mario del Nero (1662-1750), a member of the eminent family from Florence, which became affluent in 16th century, when it also acquired a large estate.

¹ Cf. T. MIKOCCI, *Dawne rysunki i ryciny według rzeźb antycznych znajdujących się w dzisiejszych polskich zbiorach II*, Światowit 1 [n.s.], 1999, fasc. A, p. 88-89, pl. 37.2-37.3

² Inw. DMNKCz 1955 + 1991: frequently mentioned in literature (cf. below).

³ Owing to conservatory works carried out in Cracow Academy of Fine Arts we can now be certain that we deal here with the homogeneous, broken piece of marble. This information, many indications concerning the object and its history by courtesy of Mrs Krystyna Moczulska, the head of the collection of antiquities in Czartoryski Museum. The photographs illustrating the text made by Michał Dąbski.

⁴ K. SCHAUBURG, *Eroten mit Waffen*, in: Beiträge zur prähistorischen Archäologie zwischen Nord- und Südosteuropa. Festschrift für B.Hänsel, Espelkamp 1997, p. 671 sq.; idem,

Eroten mit der Panhoplie des Mars, in: Akten des Symposiums „125 Jahre Sarcophag-Corpus”, Marburg, 4.-7. Oktober 1995, Mainz am Rhein 1998, p. 65 sq.

⁵ M. BONANNO ARAVANTINOS, *Sarcophagi romani raffiguranti eroti con armi*, in: Akten, ibidem, p. 73 sq.

⁶ *Les sarcophages et les fragments de sarcophages dans les collections polonaises*, par A. SADURSKA et Z. KISS, T. MIKOCCI, J. A. OSTROWSKI, H. STEFAŃSKA [CSIR, Pologne, vol. II.2], Warszawa 1992

⁷ Vol. I, II, III, Florentiae 1727, 1734, 1743; vol. I, p. XIII vignette at the top of the page; vol. II, p. XI vignette at the top of the page, caption below the plate: “Sarc. In Aed. D.Cerb. Del Nero. Long. P. IV.V.III. alt. et lat. P. I”, vol. III, p. 1 (after p. CLVI) vignette at the top of the page.

If we compare the drawing with the monument, the similarity of the objects can be easily observed – the drawing not only depicts the figural scenes but it also accurately renders the missing upper part of the relief. The drawing also shows a few little differences – apart from numerous details minimally changed, the position of the head of Eros number 7 has been changed as well as the form of the mirror supported by Eros mentioned above and another one. The draughtsman probably did not recognise the form of the object. He thought perhaps that this is a piece of animal skin or a big vessel (?), maybe a metal cattle.

This object is shown in the same form – that of a metal cattle – in another drawing, which is less accurate than the Gori's and does not include the missing part of the relief. The drawing was printed in 1837 in Eduard Gerhard's *Antike Bildwerke* (Fig. 3).⁸ Earlier, at the beginning of 19th century, the sarcophagus was mentioned in literature and illustrated by Grivaud de la Vincelle.⁹ The right part of the relief had been copied from Gori without any comment. It was described more fully in the first archaeological commentary only half a century later. Otto Jahn, at that time interested in representations of the scenes connected with craft, published and described the relief¹⁰. Certain details of the drawing (particularly the greave being made by Eroti and shaped in the form of "a fish", and "a sweet water crab" at the end of the relief) show the peculiarity of the object and therefore make the scholar doubt the authenticity of the relief. Although Jahn knew only the imperfect sketch of the sarcophagus published by Gori, he expressed his doubts, which are shared by

contemporary scholars and because of which the object was excluded from the register of ancient sculptures.

The relief was published in the Salomon Reinach's repertoire (following the Jahn's reproduction)¹¹ and later mentioned and illustrated in the Daramberg and Salio dictionary (following Gori's drawing, the right part according to Grivaud de la Vincelle's reproduction).¹² Lately, it was also mentioned by the expert on sarcophagi from Cracow Janusz A. Ostrowski,¹³ and included in the list of objects not published in *CSIR Pologne* by the author of this article.¹⁴ In consequence, the object was published in the catalogue of Margerita Bonanno Aravantinos¹⁵ and inserted in the list completed by Konrad Schauenburg.¹⁶ It must be emphasised that all of the old literature is based not on the analysis of the object, which is not known to the majority of scholars, but on the inaccurate drawing.

II. History of the object

Apart from the reference to the oldest plate, which links the relief with the Del Nero collection in Florence, there is no information concerning the earliest history of the monument. Its style speaks for its urban – roman origin and the fact that the object was kept in Florence may indicate both ancient or modern import from Toscana.

The next information about the monument (apart from its publication in Paris, in 1819¹⁷) is connected with the history of Artur Potocki's (1787–1830) collection of antiquities, for which the object was acquired.¹⁸ Potocki bought ancient sculptures in Italy during his two

⁸ E. GERHARD, *Antike Bildwerke zum ersten Male bekannt gemacht*, München–Stuttgart–Tübingen, part II (zweite Centurie) 1837, pl. 107. The sketch made from nature by H. Maier. Differences in the details of the drawing: the lack in the upper part – marked, the mirror turned into a kettle, the lack over Eros 3 – ignored. The drawing depicts the original more accurately than the one published by Gori.

⁹ C. M. GRIVAUD DE LA VINCELLE, *Arts et métiers des anciens représentés par les monuments ou recherches archéologiques*, Paris 1819, pl. LVIII, fig. 9 – the right side of the relief according to Gori, pl. LXIII (without number) – the same drawing.

¹⁰ O. JAHN, *Darstellungen antiker Reliefs welche sich auf Handwerk und Handelsverkehr beziehen*, Berichte über die Verhandlungen der Königlich Sächsischen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Leipzig. Philologische–historische Classe 13, 1861, pl. VIII.3, p. 318–319.

¹¹ S. REINACH, *Répertoire de reliefs...* vol. III, Paris 1912, p. 28.

¹² DA, vol. I,2, Paris 1918, p. 793, fig. 954, s.v. Caelatura

¹³ J. OSTROWSKI, *The Cracow collection of the fragments of*

Roman sarcophagi, in: *Studies in Ancient Art and Civilisation I*, J. Śliwa ed., Kraków 1991, p. 37, 39, No. 2; idem, *Putti on a fragment of a sarcophagus lid in the collection of the National Museum in Cracow*, *Recherches Archéologiques* 1984, p. 67–70, fig.1.

¹⁴ T. MIKOCKI, *Sarkophage in Polen. Originale und Nachahmungen – ihre Rolle in den Kunstsammlungen Mittel- und Osteuropas*, in: *Akten des Symposiums „125 Jahre Sarcophag-Corpus“*, op. cit., p. 113, pl. 58,1. Earlier idem, *Les anciennes collections des antiquités en Pologne, 1750–1830*, *Archeologia Warsz* 37, 1986, p. 82, No. 55 mentioned the object as a modern.

¹⁵ BONANNO ARAVANTINOS, op.cit., p. 86, No. 2, fig. 1 (reproduction from Gerhard, *Antike Bildwerke*) and p. 74, 75, 76.

¹⁶ SCHAUBURG, *Eroten mit Waffen*, op. cit., p. 682, No. 35; idem, *Eroten mit der Panhoplie*, op.cit., p. 65, 67,

¹⁷ Cf. footnotes 8 and 9, above.

¹⁸ Cf. T. MIKOCKI, *Najstarsze kolekcje starożytności w Polsce (lata 1750–1830)* [Archiwum Filologiczne KNoKA PAN XLVI], Wrocław 1990, p. 98 sq.

visits to this country, in 1825 and 1829–1830. His first acquisitions in Venice and Rome consist mainly of modern artefacts. During the second trip he bought a large group of ancient sculptures from an antiquary and sculptor Ignazio Vescovoli. Today there is still in existence a hand-written register of the acquired objects¹⁹. One of the position on that list, containing very modest and simple descriptions: *bassorilievo putti*²⁰ could concern the relief in question. As it seems, the relief with Eroti was acquired in Vescovoli's atelier in Rome, in 1830. Stored most probably together with other marbles from the collection in the palace in Krzeszowice, during the second World War it was taken to Cracow and then turned over to Czartoryski Museum, where it was not included in the opened a few years ago permanent exhibition of ancient sculptures.²¹

In the future the relief will be exhibited, after the conservatory works are completed.

III. Description

(numeration of the figures from 1 to 9, starting from the right side of the scene)

The object is a consisting of two fragments relatively thin slab of white fine-grained marble, regularly cut on shorter sides. It is cut off regularly but not very carefully (inconsistent thickness) from the background (?) (dimensions: 1.25 x 0.27). It seems that the edges of the longer sides of the relief are original. The figurative scene is boarded at the bottom by a narrow profile; in the upper part the profile consists of *trochillus*, followed by *taenia*.

The relief is preserved in fragments: the crack along the line of the body and the head of Eros number 6 divides the whole into two large parts. Along the crack there are a few missing fragments. At the bottom – a triangular lack with the right foot of Eros number 6, at the top – a missing part of the profile with a fragment of the mirror and the left hand of Eros number six. In both horizontal profiles and in the decoration there are some lesser missing fragments: cracks in the figure of Eros number 1 and the lack of his right palm; small lacks in the figurine of a putto on the shield, small lacks in the palm and in the hammer of Eros number 3, a small lack

in the hammer of Eros number 4; the lack of the right palm of Eros number 7; missing parts of the wings and the right palm of Eros number 8; lacks in the left palm and the right foot of Eros number 9.

The holes that were drilled later between the legs of the figure number 3, between figures 5 and 6, 7 and 8 are now sealed. Some missing parts of the profiles have also been added (in 1999, during the process of conservation).

The relief is decorated with nine figures of naked and half-naked Eroti, gathered in four groups either working or engaging themselves in other activities.

A. (Eros 1 and 2, **Fig. 4**) On the right, two figures are hammering an ornament on the round shield, decorated with a high relief portraying a figure of Eros. The shield is situated on the base divided into two – an anvil, standing on a tree-stem or a rock. The naked figure, standing on the right, is holding the shield with the stretched out hands. The edge of the relief is preserved in such a way that it is not certain whether the figure is winged or not. The figure's right foot and right calf are also behind the line of the relief. The face and the head are poorly preserved. On the other side there is another Eros, winged, sitting on a tree-stem or a rock. With his left hand he is holding the shield from behind (the fingers of the Eros's left hand can be seen on the uppermost edge of the shield) and in his right hand he is holding a hammer with which he is beating out the shape of the decoration of the shield. It is a figurine of running, winged little Eros. His position is horizontal because of the positioning of the shield.

The body of sitting Eros's is thickset. His right leg is put forward, his left foot is resting on toes and the bent knee is supporting the shield. On Eros's back there are two little feathered wings. His face is expressive, oval with a snub nose and outlined lips and eyes. His hair is long, straight, combed back with graphically accented individual strands.

B. (Eros 3, 4 and 5, **Fig. 5**) The group consists of three Erotes hammering a greave (whose fish-like form and scale-like decoration made the authors of both drawings incorrectly interpret it in this way). On a tree-stem (with a visible knar) there is a double ended anvil, on

¹⁹ Archiwum Akt Dawnych na Wawelu, syg. Pot. D. 131; the list used by the first researcher of the collection of Krzeszowice, OLGA HIRSCH, *O pochodzeniu kolekcji antyków z Krzeszowic*, *Meander* 20, 1965, No. 78, p. 309 sq., eadem, *Rzeźby antyczne z Krzeszowic w Muzeum Narodowym w Krakowie*, *Rozprawy i Sprawozdania Muzeum Narodowego w Krakowie* 10, 1970, p. 111 sq., eadem, *Kolekcja rzeźb antycznych Artura Potockiego*, *Studia Archeologiczne* 1, 1981, p. 49 sq., included as appendix VII

B to the work by T. MIKOCKI, *Najstarsze*, *op. cit.*, p. 158 sq.

²⁰ Vescovoli's list, *ibidem*, item 61.

²¹ A few years ago I showed the object to dr Dagmar Grassinger, the researcher at Corpus Antiken Sarkophagreliefs, who fully agrees with assumption of its authenticity; during discussion at the symposium „125 Jahre Sarkophag-Corpus” in Marburg in 1995, where I presented the monument, nobody questioned its authenticity.

which there is a greave lying flatly and held with two hands by the sitting on the left winged putto. Other figures are standing figures with their hammers in the air (the figures “outgrow” the scene – their hands and tools reach the ledge bordering the upper part of the scene), ready to hammer the greave. The naked figure on the right is standing, with the legs spread. The arms of the figure standing vertically on the left are bent. The noses, eyes and lips of Eroti are clear-cut. Short hair is combed to the forehead. The sitting figure – as it seems – has a flat head-band across the forehead. Only this figure is partly dressed. A narrow strip of the long gown hangs down the figure’s back, covers the right thigh, probably goes over the left forearm and then vertically goes down between the figure’s legs. Eros is sitting on a decorated stool, the form of which reminds of a little altar or a decorated base.

C. (Eros 6 and 7, Fig. 6, 7) The next group consists of two Eroti leaning toward one another (the one on the right is turning his head to the previous group, the one on the left is bearing a much bigger weight), who are holding over their shoulders a large metal mirror. The right leg of Eros number 6 and the left one of Eros number 7 are put forward toward the centre of the composition. With their arms stretched forward the figures are holding the mirror; at the bottom – by the characteristic handle and at the top by the rim (supposedly, because the scene is not preserved completely). The mirror is presented in an unusual perspective: one can see its wide, protruding bottom profile, showing perhaps the thickness of the object. This bottom profile is decorated by a series of cuttings, followed by other flat profiles. They encircle the round, central part of the mirror (depicted in an awkward way, incorrect perspective, showing inaccurately the shape that should have been oval). On this central part there can be seen some decoration consisting of two elements: that on the left reminds of a fish tailfin (perhaps it is the bottom part of the figure of Nereid?). Narrow strips of the gown are thrown across the backs of the two Eroti and from their forearms they fall in decorative curls under the mirror; other ends fall behind the backs: in a long, more vertical fold on the right side and short, broad, flying horizontally on the left side.

D. (Eros 8 and 9, Fig. 8) The last group consists of two figures of the Eroti turned to each other. One of them is passing to the other a large sphere or a ball, kept in both hands. The Eros on the left – similar in the

proportions of the less muscular and more static body to the first figure on the relief (Eros number 1) – is leaning to the front with his hands in the air, as if he was frightened by the large figure of a crab, portrayed by the sculptor at the bottom of the scene. The figure on the right is naked, the one on the left has a narrow strip of fabric thrown across the back, going over the forearms and then falling down. The details of both faces are depicted rather carefully; short hair with fringes falling on the foreheads are marked.

IV. Analysis of iconography

Iconography of Eroti in ancient art has been a subject of many researches and descriptions, which are mentioned in the articles by Konrad Schauenburg and Margherita Bonanno Aravantinos. I will refer to the work of both scholars, especially the first of them, who devoted many publications to the representations of Eroti in art.

This subject is so popular in the decorations of Roman sarcophagi that it even outnumbers the seemingly most numerous group of Dionysian sarcophagi.

Our subject are Eroti with military equipment. In ancient art the images of armed Eros appeared as early as in 5th century B.C. but the iconography of sarcophagi does not seem to reach that far back. Armed Eroti appear on sarcophagi only in two kinds of scenes: Eroti playing with arms or carrying Mars’s arms and Eroti portrayed as craftsmen hammering out weapon. The second group was a particularly popular subject in ancient art, where infant Eroti perform activities characteristic for adults. Roman sarcophagi art is only one aspect of this broad subject.

Genesis of the scenes representing Eroti with elements of Mars/Ares’s armour is debatable. Perhaps their origins ought to be looked for in the Hellenistic period but the earliest examples of preserved iconography are augustan reliefs of neoattic candelabra.²² The popularity of the scenes in which Eroti deal with Mars’s panoplies could have been evoked by the same iconography present in a frieze of Roman temple of Venus Genetrix.²³

Eros with Mars’s panoplies appear very often in ancient iconography but Eroti-blacksmiths hammering out the panoplies, as in our object, apart from the art of sarcophagi are very rare,²⁴ and even among these are not a numerous group. Both Schauenburg and Bonanno

²² Cf. H.-U. CAIN, *Römische Marmorkandelaber*, Mainz am Rhein 1985, p. 47 sq., 108 sq.

²³ Fries from the Temple of Venus: cf. E. SIMON, in: W. Helbig, *Führer durch die öffentlichen Sammlungen klassischer Altertümer in Rom*, vierte Auflage, herausgegeben von H. Speier, vol. I-IV, Tübingen 1963-1972, No. 1672; H. v. HESBERG, in: ANRW II, 17,2, 1981, p. 1074 sq.,

pl. 13. On the early representations of Eroti, cf. BONANNO ARAVANTINOS, op. cit., p. 73-74.

²⁴ K. SCHAUENBURG (*Eroten mit der Panhoplie*, op. cit., p. 68; idem, *Eroten mit Waffen*, op. cit., p. 677 and note 41) gives some other examples present in glyptics, paintings, mosaics and terracotas.

Aravantinos produce lists of sarcophagi with Eroti—blacksmiths. Schauenburg mentions as many as 17 objects (some of which are not available or have not been published). In the work of the Italian scholar smaller number of objects can be found, but they are richly illustrated and commented on. According to her there are 13 analogous objects, including the one in Cracow. All of them originate – both scholars agree in this question – in Rome (or Ostia) and can be placed in a narrow span of time; from the pre-antonine period to the severian period. As it can be seen, the group of objects is by no means numerous and all of them were produced in a very short period of time – from ca. 130 to 215 A.D. These objects, almost all of them being children's sarcophagi,²⁵ differ from one another from the point of view of iconography. Although particular scenes of the relieves are analogous, there are no two identical objects. Most frequently appear in various combinations the scenes of smelting, hammering out shields, greaves, helmets, armours and/or scenes with Eroti carrying the arms.

The relief on the object in Cracow is not typical, although the scene B (three Eroses hammering a greave) can be associated with the scene from the sarcophagus in Geneva.²⁶ Other representations of the three at work are loosely associated. There are some analogies to the scene A both in the scene on the sarcophagus in Museo Nazionale Romano²⁷ and in the relief of the sarcophagus in Villa Doria Pamphilj.²⁸

The iconography presented on the left side of our relief is different from the majority of scenes preserved on the sarcophagi mentioned above. Fortunately, the question about its authenticity can be positively answered, owing to the existence of a perfect analogy to the iconography of the Cracow sarcophagus as a whole; stylistically, the object is similar and chronologically almost identical. This analogous sarcophagus, sold on the market of antiquities in New York, was once situated in the church of Santa Saba in Rome (Fig. 9).²⁹ It is decorated with the same four scenes as the object in Cracow. Moreover, the composition of the scenes is similar. Obviously, the icono-graphical details vary and the style is not identical;

differences between the Santa Saba sarcophagus with our object are not bigger than those between other objects from the group of sarcophagi with Eroti – blacksmiths. This analogy proves the unity and authenticity of our object and at the same time makes one look for the sense of the arrangement of particular scenes; the arrangement which is not typical and to which there are no more analogies in the art of sarcophagi.

In the context of the work of Eroti, scenes C (Eros 6 and 7) and D (Eros 8 and 9) are surprising and not easy to explain. However, owing to the analogy of our object to the Santa Saba sarcophagus, it is clear that our interpretation of the poorly preserved fragments of the relief was by all means correct. The poorly preserved and rather awkwardly carved object held by Eroses 6 and 7 is a mirror, large and oval with a big handle.

There is a link between this object and Venus, the partner of Mars, with whom the representations of Eroti with military elements are connected. The connection between the mirror and the symbolism of Venus, in whose iconography this object appears very often and has a clearly defined meaning, is obvious. The meaning of the next scene, however, is not that clear.

The sea crab appearing between Eroses has been interpreted by O. Jahn as a sweet water crab (ein grosser Krebs). The scholar even makes a very cautious assumption that the whole scene is somehow connected with the signs of the zodiac. Konrad Schauenburg, who also describes the crustacean as a sweet water crab, is surprised by the above idea. According to him there could be no explanation for the scene with Eros and the zodiacal crab as the ancient sources do not provide us with any information on this subject. Margherite Bonanno Aravantinos associates the whole group D with the scenes of Eroti's plays and games. The scholar compares the visible fear of the figure number 9 with the behaviour of Eroti in a well known sarcophagus scene with Eros hiding behind the theatrical mask. According to her, on the left side of our relief we would be dealing with the symbols of Venus and the scene with plays and games of Eroti. Our interpretation, however, is different (cf. next passage).

²⁵ The size of some object indicate that they were meant for adult people.

²⁶ Musée d'Art et d'Histoire, inv. no. MF 1361: J. CHAMAY, J.-L. MAIER, *L'art romain. Sculptures en pierre du Musée de Genève*, Genève 1989, p. 67, No. 83, pl. 84; BONANNO ARAVANTINOS, *op. cit.*, p. 87, No. 4, pl. 32,2.

²⁷ MNR, nr inw. 900: *Museo Nazionale Romano. Le sculpture*, a cura di Antonio Giuliano, I, 2, Roma 1981, p. 59 sq., No. 46; BONANNO ARAVANTINOS, *op. cit.*, p. 90, No. 12, pl. 36,3.

²⁸ *Antichità di Villa Doria Pamphilj*, a cura di R. Calza et al., Roma 1977, p. 205, sq., No. 236, pl. 140; BONANNO ARAVANTINOS, *op. cit.*, p. 90, No. 13, pl. 37,1.

²⁹ Sarcophagus, once in the church of Santa Saba in Rome, in 1986 appeared on the market of antiquities in New York. (Sotheby's, Monday, 8th Dec. 1986, p. 132, No. 338 + fig.); published for the first time by K. SCHAUENBURG, *Erotenspiele*, *Antike Welt* 7, 1976, fasc. 3, p. 42, fig. 5; cf. BONANNO ARAVANTINOS, *op. cit.*, p. 89, No. 9, pl. 34,3, 5,1-4; SCHAUENBURG, *Eroten mit Waffen*, *op. cit.*, p. 681, No. 19.

V. Symbolism

The sarcophagus from Cracow, different in its iconography from the majority of the similar monuments, calls for a different interpretation of its symbolical meaning than the typical one, connected with the scenes of hammering out panoplies by Eroti for Mars. This symbolical meaning is not obvious and provoked much discussion in literature, which are summarized, commented on and argued with by K. Schauenburg.³⁰ In his opinion (expressed several times in literature³¹) the subject of this scene, as well as all other scenes with Eroti, is the representation of a happy life in the great beyond, in which we can see a reference to the symbolism of burial vessels from southern Italy.

I think, that our object – like the analogous sarcophagus from Santa Saba – contains the universal, but double meaning. Naturally it is necessary to divide the whole into two domains: the right side of the relief, related to Mars and the left one, related to his godly partner – Venus. The mirror, connected with the goddess's toilette, is undoubtedly her attribute, a very typical and frequently represented. The mirror from the Cracow sarcophagus is most probably decorated with a marine element (Nereid?). It is not surprising for the sea is the Aphrodite/ Venus's natural environment. To this world and this range of symbols also belongs the representation of a "sea crab" – a creature, which some scholars interpreted as a fresh water crab. Its "marine" nature is emphasized by the shell, in which the crab is depicted (!) on the sarcophagus from Santa Saba. Scene D (Eros 8 and 9) from the Cracow sarcophagus, similar to the scenes with Eroti playing from other relieves, introduces the world of the "sea goddess" to the symbolism of the sarcophagus. This symbolism is in accordance with earlier iconographic patterns: the already mentioned frieze from the temple of Venus Genetrix in the Caesar's Forum, or the relief from the Domitian's palace in Castelgandolfo, where Eroti ap-

peared in the scene of Venus's toilette and among the panoplies.³²

Thus the symbolic meaning of these two relieves, different from other eleven on the list of sarcophagi with Eroti engaged in blacksmith's activities, is more complex. On the one hand – it is still the domain of Mars. To his world, through the world of infant Eroti, deceased children are introduced. It is a kind of their apotheosis. On the other hand – it is already a domain of Mars's godly partner, Venus. Such iconography makes the symbolism more universal; valid for the deceased boys or girls. The scenes are allegories of any activity of a child in the afterlife, but an activity connected with the undying god. Apart from this basic message – that the dead person becomes Mars and Venus's companion – there are other symbolic elements: freight and surprise (scene D), the superhuman effort of a child and theatrical effect of imitation (scene B, in which the children imitate activities of grownups and are able to do this only because of their "godly" nature), certain comicality and children's playfulness (both scene D and A), an effect of theatricality, the dualism of life, or its many layers and aspects (scene A, in which Eroses hammer out a shield with Eros portrayed on it).

VI. Dating

The dating of the whole group of analogous sarcophagi in a rather narrow span of time gives us the first chronological approximation. It further narrowing is possible after applying the stylistic criteria. Stocky figures of Eroti carved in a low relief and put against a seemingly neutral background, their hair treated in the same manner as in bronze sculpture; it all makes the object similar to the sculptures from the times of Hadrian. Thus, we suggest that the relief in Cracow dates from that period or from the early antonine period at the latest.

³⁰ SCHAUENBURG, *Eroten mit Panhoplie*, *op. cit.*, p. 68-69.

³¹ Ibidem, p. 70, literature cited by SCHAUENBURG, notes 52 and 53, cf. also p. 71 and note 56.

³² Cf. footnote 23, above; the architrave from Castelgandolfo published by P. LIVERANI, *L'Antiquarium di Villa Barberini a Castel Gandolfo*, Città del Vaticano 1989, p. 48 sq., No. 19, cf. BONANNO ARAVANTINOS, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

PLANSZA 20

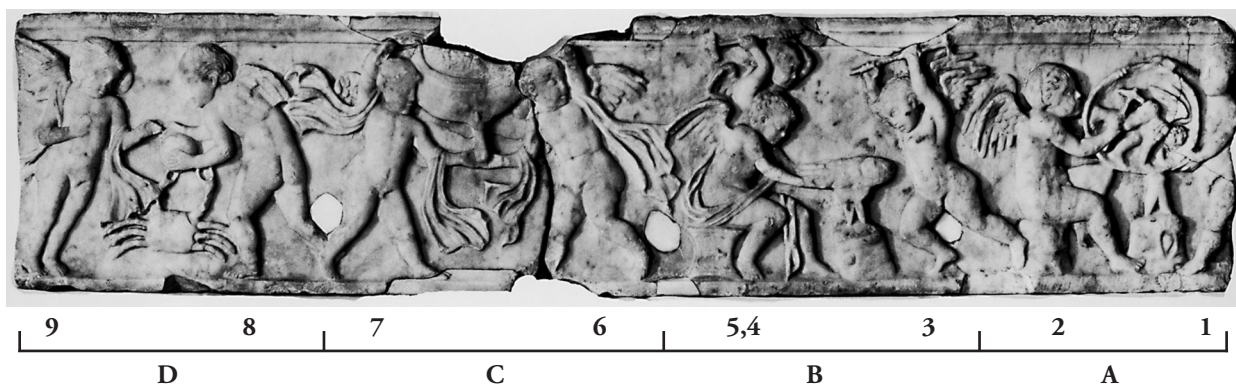


Fig. 1. Sarcophagus relief, Czartoryski Museum, Cracow.



Fig. 2. Sarcophagus relief in the A. F. Govi drawing of 1727.

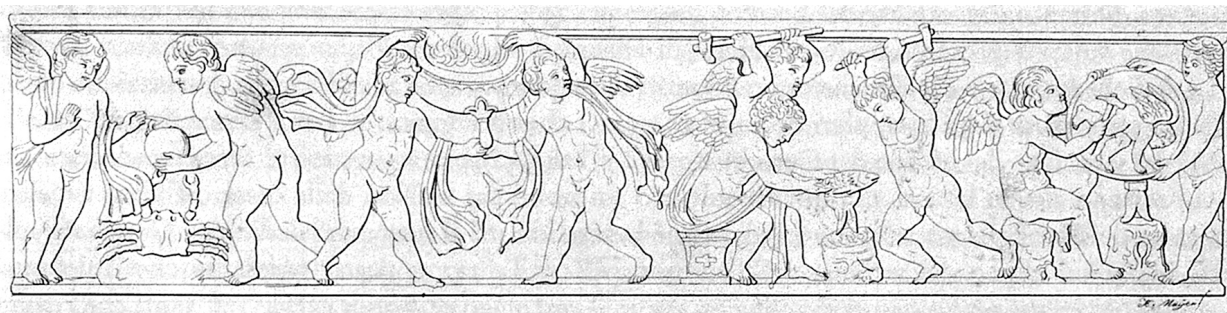


Fig. 3. Sarcophagus relief in the E. Gerhard drawing of 1837.



Fig. 9. Childs sarcophagus, once in the church of Santa Saba, Rome.



Fig. 5



Fig. 4



Fig. 7



Fig. 6



Fig. 8