

ARCHAIC MARBLE SEATED FIGURE WITH DEDICATORY INSCRIPTION

Greek-Archaic, last decades of the 6th century B.C.

Marble

H: 41 cm

Reference: 12184



Reference [12184](#)

The woman wears a long chiton of a mid-weight fine fabric, which falls to her elbows and to just above her feet. This is a relatively fine garment, suggested by the diaphanous nature of the dress. Although only slightly perceivable through the chiton that covers her legs, one is able to discern the outline of both ankles, a delicate and sensitive artistic touch. Over her chiton, she wears a short, diagonal Ionic himation or epiblema. The himation falls diagonally from her right shoulder to under her left breast in vertical and regular pleats, as a heavier, linen or wool garment would lie. The folded upper edge of the himation forms a regular band, while the rest cascades in a series of sensuous, zigzag pleats. Apparently barefoot, the details of her feet, including the knuckles on each toe, are realistically rendered. Her toes gradually taper with the second toe projecting a bit past her big toe, a feature typically found on statues of the end of the Archaic period. The woman is seated in a high-backed throne, or a chair whose back is wide and high and terminates at the height of her shoulders. The sides of the throne are closed and the arms end in round finials. The back of the chair and the posterior are left smooth and relatively unfinished, suggesting that the statue was meant to be positioned against a wall or backdrop.

There are only a few marble statues of seated women dated to the Archaic period, that G. M. A. Richter considers as variants in her definition of the Archaic kore type.

The closest parallels for this statue are the over twenty seated male and female statues from the Ionian city of Miletus, which were placed along the Sacred Way and which A. Stewart dates between ca. 600 and ca. 530 B.C. They are commonly referred to as Branchidae or priests of Apollo. Several bear inscriptions, mentioning the names of their

dedicators and based on these, Stewart suggests that some of these statues may actually represent the dedicator.

A similar life-size seated figure was found at the Ionian city of Didyma, in the sanctuary of Apollo Miletus. Dated to ca. 570-560 B.C. and now in the British Museum, this monumental image is also thought to represent a priest of Apollo. At Samos, a reconstructed base which supported six life-size figures was found. Dated to the middle of the 6th century, the inscription tells us that it was carved by Geneleos and that the figures, one of whom is seated, represent Phileia, Philippe and -rches (or possibly -rche), the dedicator. A separate figure from Ornithe is also known. Another close parallel is the large-scale archaistic statue of an enthroned goddess that was found at Tarantum and dates to ca. 470 B.C.: her divine nature is transmitted to the viewer through her regal position and elaborate throne. She too wears the typical dress and hairstyle of all Archaic korai, namely the short Ionic himation, long chiton and her locks in long, stylized hair braids. The right side of the chair bears a complete inscription in Greek, which runs in five horizontal bands and appears to be a dedicatory inscription either to the Nymphs or in honor of a marriage or a wedding.

Such inscriptions are rare on Archaic female statues, since Richter only lists about fifteen of them: on one of the korai of the Geneleos Group, the inscription also mentions the Nymphs.

Most Archaic inscriptions associated with korai are found at either the base of the statues or along one side. In turn, the placement of this inscription is in keeping with the Archaic dedicatory tradition. Stewart notes that several of the seated Miletian statues are inscribed, naming the dedicator.

Although our seated figure mirrors the position of the life-size seated statues from Miletus and Samos nearly identically, the treatment of her

clothing and rendering of her hands and feet suggest a slightly later date, closer to the end of the 6th century. The inclusion of such an impressive throne, what Stewart considers a status symbol, suggests that this is a representation of a priestess or a goddess. In turn, the unusual position of her hands, not found used on Archaic korai statues, appears to be one of a figure receiving a dedication, not offering one. Finally, the inscription does not give us the name of a dedicator, but appears to reiterate the sacred nature of the figure. The level of craftsmanship is exceptional and combined with a complete inscription as well as the unusual size of the figure, all contribute to make this piece an exciting and important contribution to the repertoire of Archaic sculpture.

CONDITION

This statue, which was originally carved from a single block of marble, is in a remarkable state of preservation, although the head and neck are lost probably in Antiquity. Poised regally on a high-backed throne, the figure represented is a fully clothed young woman. She is seated with her arms resting on her thighs, allowing both hands with their long slender fingers to lie gracefully atop her knees. Her physique is robust and her breasts are full, indicating that this is a woman in mature adulthood. Two long hair braids delicately fall across the front of both shoulders and alongside both breasts.

PROVENANCE

Ex-Elie Boustros collection, Beyrouth, mid-1950s; ex-European private collection, 1970s.

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