

## TABLE TOP (MENSA)

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Roman, 3rd - 6th century A.D.

Marble

D: 118.1 cm (46.5 in) – W: 2 cm (0.7 in)

Reference: 2758



This table top belongs to the important category of the Early Christian furnishings developed in the 4th – 6th century A.D. for diverse functional settings and found not only in the Eastern Mediterranean, but also on Cyprus, in Asia Minor, Egypt, and Italy. Marble table tops are testified as secondary altars in the Christian churches; as tables for the objects of worship or offerings which the faithful brought into the church and deposited on them and which were served for different liturgical purposes. In rare cases, the finds show their specific and not common employment as the place where neophytes received baptism. They were also used in the funerary context to serve for liturgical banquets commemorating the dead.

The marble slabs are classified by types depending on the individual form and decoration; most distinguished are the table tops with relief or multilobed boards, circular, rectangular (oblong or square), or sigma shape. Their diameter varies from ca. 60 to 100 cm, and the width of the board is usually about 1,5-2 cm. This piece is of circular type (type E, according to the classification by E. Chalkia), also called as a platter (it is obvious that such shape originated in metalwork).

On its own, the circular form is subdivided into three groups according to the profile of the board: simple, molded, and of “corbin’s beak”. The simple board is rectilinear; the short transition to the interior and bottom is curvilinear making a distinctive ridge. Though simple, the composition demonstrates a perfect design derived from the function of the table top; the smooth polishing contributes to the fine look.

### CONDITION

Complete; reassembled from fragments; surface weathered; scratches; a few chips.

### PROVENANCE

Ex- US private collection, New York, acquired in 1980’s.

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