

THE PEDESTAL OF THE ATHENA PROMACHOS

THE FOUNDATIONS of the base of the Athena Promachos statue which once stood on the Acropolis of Athens lie about forty meters to the east of the Propylaea and almost on the axis of that great building (Figure 1).¹



Fig. 1. The Athena Promachos

As the Promachos statue was erected to commemorate the battle of Marathon, or possibly the Persian Wars in general, it is likely that the dedicatory inscription referred to this fact and that trophies won in the battles against the Persians were

¹ When E. Beulé wrote his great book *L'Acropole d'Athènes*, he reported (II¹, p. 307) as an already established fact the assignment of certain foundations and rock cuttings to the pedestal of the Promachos monument; compare also W. Judeich, *Topographie von Athen*², pp. 234-235; G. Lippold, *R.E.*, s.v. Pheidias, cols. 1924-1925; C. Picard, *Manuel d'Archéologie Grecque*, II, pp. 338-342. W. B. Dinsmoor assigned (*A.J.A.*, XXV, 1921, p. 128, fig. 1) a fragment of an ovolo moulding to the capping course of the pedestal; compare also L. Shoe, *Profiles of Greek Mouldings*, p. 19 and plates C, 2, and IX, 6; G. P. Stevens, *Hesperia*, V, 1936, pp. 495, note 3, and 496, fig. 46. G. P. Stevens examined in detail the architectural remains (*Hesperia*, V, 1936, pp. 491-499, and figs. 42-49), and the present report is a continuation of his study based on the attribution by A. E. Raubitschek of two inscribed blocks to the lowest marble course of the pedestal (*A.J.A.*, XLIV, 1940, p. 109); compare also *B.S.A.*, XL, 1943, p. 32; M. N. Tod, *J.H.S.*, LXII, 1942, p. 59, note 154.

arranged around the statue. The purpose of this joint report is to present the evidence for this statement.

Figure 2 shows the actual condition of the foundations of the base today. The following information can be deduced from the poros blocks and from the rock

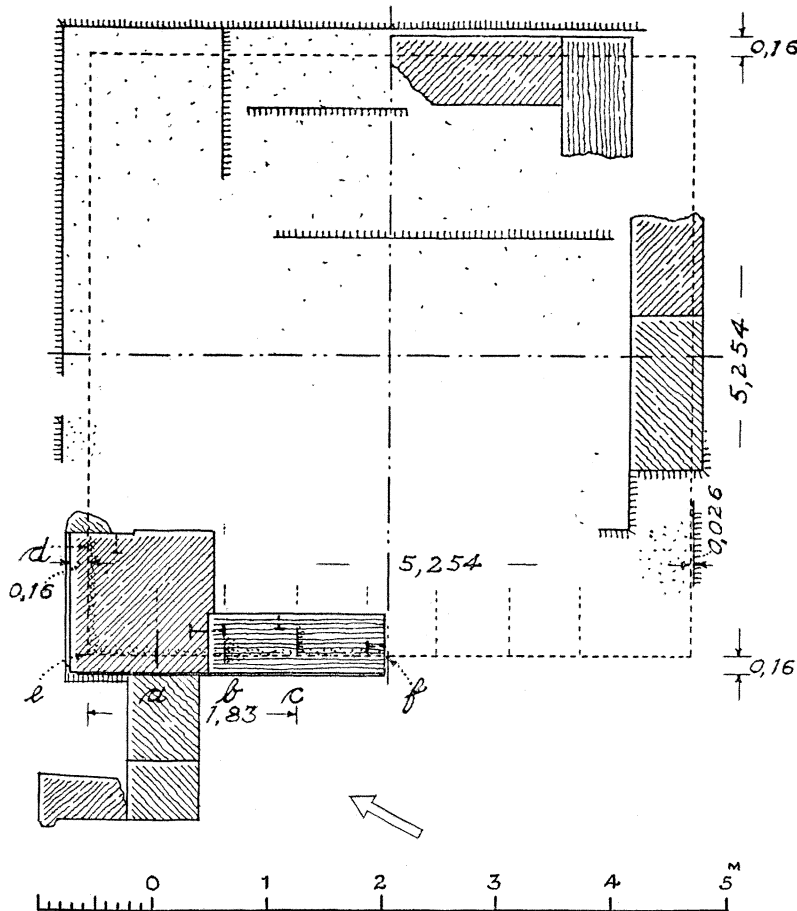


Fig. 2. Detailed Plan of the Base of the Promachos: Actual State

cuttings. At *a*, *b*, and *c* are traces of the positions of three joints of the course above the poros foundations. The blocks of this upper course were *ca.* 0.61 m. wide. At *d*, *e*, and *f* are traces of a weather line which indicates that the course above was set back *ca.* 0.16 m. from the edges of the poros foundations. From this set-back and from the rock cuttings near the southwest corner and on the east side of the base, the plan of the upper course can be shown to have been a square with a side of *ca.* 5.26 m. (almost exactly 16 Attic feet). There is no evidence preserved on the poros blocks indicating that the course above was doweled to the foundation. The clamps

of the foundations are of the double-T type common in the fifth century; they are 0.30 m. long and sealed with lead.

A reconstruction of the upper course would therefore require blocks of *ca.* 0.61 m. width which have no dowel cuttings on the under sides; they should, moreover, fill

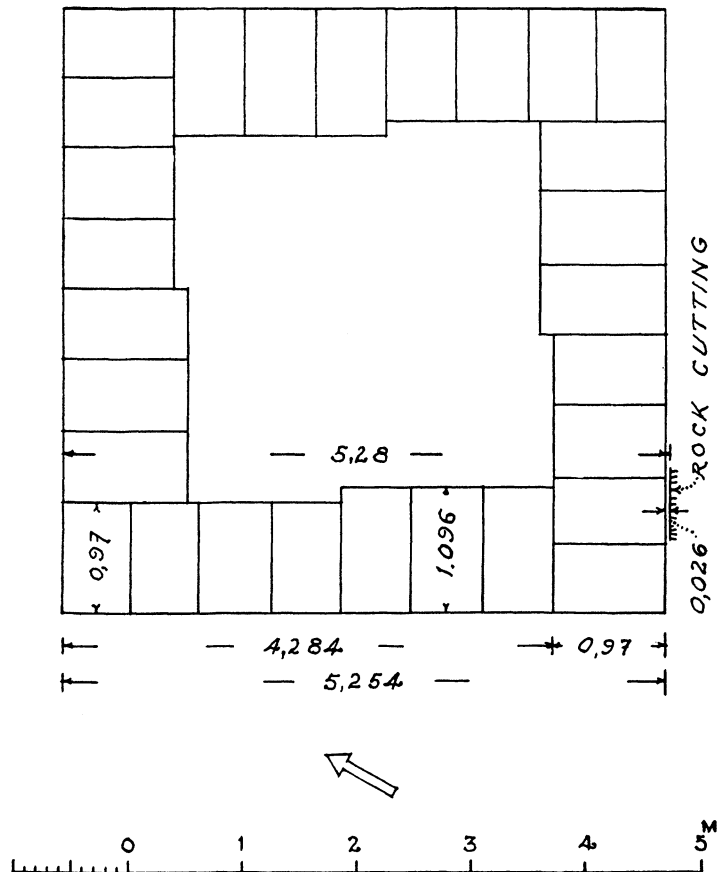


Fig. 3. Plan of the Platform of the Base of the Promachos: Restoration

the space of *ca.* 5.26 m., a distance which cannot easily be divided by 0.61 m., the width of the individual blocks (Figure 3).

Stevens assumed (see note 1) the existence of a platform surrounding the Promachos statue, because the poros foundations seemed too big for the statue. The attribution to the pedestal of three marble blocks strongly supports this assumption; moreover, we shall be tempted to suggest that this platform was used as a podium upon which trophies, and perhaps inscribed stelai, were exhibited.

Two of the three blocks in question were noticed by Beulé who reported (*op. cit.*, I¹, p. 321, note 3):

Au sud de ce vaste piédestal [west of the Parthenon] . . . il y en avait un autre qui devait occuper aussi une place considérable. Il n'en reste que deux assises en marbre pentélique, d'une grande dimension et qui cependant ne contiennent que trois lettres sur leur face. Il faut dire que ces lettres, d'une forme archaïque, ont plus d'un décimètre de hauteur.

More than twenty years later, the two blocks were said to be in the north wing of the Propylaea. There they were examined by U. Koehler and subsequently published by A. Kirchhoff who stated (*I.G.*, I, 361): *Utramque ad idem monumentum pertinere e pluribus tabulis iuxta collocatis compositum manifestum est.* It may be doubted, however, whether the blocks were ever brought into the Pinakothek because another twenty years later H. G. Lolling reported (*Κατάλογος*, no. 307): *Κεῖνται νῦν δυτικῶς τοῦ Παρθενῶνος.* In contrast to Beulé and Koehler, Lolling erroneously claimed that the blocks were of Parian marble. He also assumed that the two slabs were part of a large pedestal, and he observed that the lateral faces and the backs show anathyrosis, and that there are two deep dowel holes on top of each block, one behind the other. He suggested a restoration for the inscription on block A [*ἀν*]έθε[*κεν*]; this block, incidentally, was also mentioned by B. Tamaro (*Annuario*, IV/V, 1921/22, no. 74). The two blocks, here called A and B, are now lying about half way between the west façade of the Parthenon and the sanctuary of Artemis; it therefore does not seem likely that they have been moved much since Beulé first noticed them.

The two cuttings on top of A (Figure 4) seem suitable for the ends of posts or for some kind of big dowels. There are no dowel holes on the bottom. The inscribed face as well as all the other vertical faces is carefully picked within a frame of narrow smooth margins. This dressing, erroneously called anathyrosis by Lolling, is employed on several monuments dating from the first quarter of the fifth century,² but it undoubtedly was never employed on surfaces which were to be in contact with others. The same kind of dressing, however, can be observed on unfinished building material of the period preceding the Persian Wars, and especially on the protective surface of the blocks and column drums of the older Parthenon.³ It hardly seems mere chance that the northern and western euthynterias of the older Parthenon were made of marble blocks which have the same height and show the same surface dressing as those of A and B.⁴

Block B (Figure 5) is in all respects similar to A. It is, however, somewhat longer and slightly higher than A. The slight variation in height may be significant because the two blocks increase in thickness towards the right, and B which, according to its inscription, is to be placed further to the right than A, is the thicker of the two

² See J. H. Oliver, *Hesperia*, II, 1933, p. 484; B. D. Meritt, *Hesperia*, V, 1936, p. 359, no. 2; A. E. Raubitschek, *Hesperia*, VIII, 1939, p. 163, note 7; *A.J.A.*, XLIV, 1940, p. 57, fig. 3.

³ See B. H. Hill, *A.J.A.*, XVI, 1912, p. 544, fig. 11; A. Tschira, *Jahrbuch*, LV, 1940, pp. 250 and 253, fig. 4.

⁴ As a matter of fact, the heights of these euthynteria blocks vary between 0.269 m. and 0.30 m.; they were obviously intended to be one foot in height.

blocks; a similar increase, incidentally, is also found on C, the third block attributed to the monument. It may be suggested that this increase in height is not accidental but that a slight slope was discovered on the foundation after the marble blocks were set into place. In order to obtain a perfectly horizontal surface for the podium, the marble slabs were dressed slightly wedge shaped.⁵

Stevens attributes a third block, C, to the same monument (Figure 6); this block

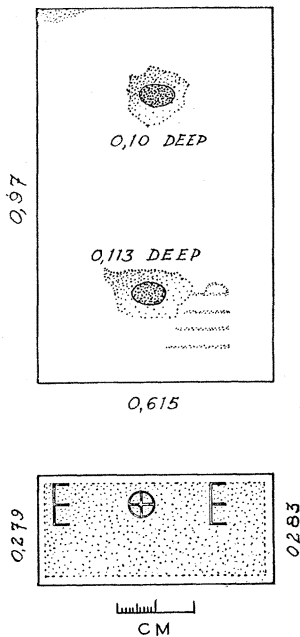


Fig. 4. Block A

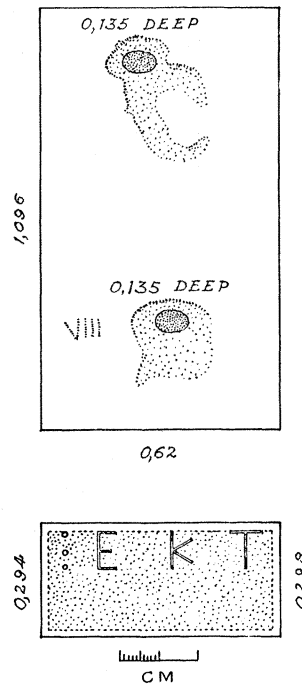


Fig. 5. Block B

now lies north of the Propylaea near the base with the inscription *I.G.*, I², 606. Instead of inscription, the narrower face of the block shows traces of a boss; it cannot belong to the back of one of the inscribed blocks because in that case its thickness would increase in the wrong direction. The presence of two relatively small dowel holes, rather than the large ones on A and B, may indicate that C is part of a statue base of which only the right part is preserved; the two dowel holes would in that case belong to the left foot of the statue.

When the joints marked *a*, *b*, and *c* (Figure 2) are spaced across the west side of the foundations, it appears that the jointing of the course was not symmetrical about the axis of the base (Figure 3); this fact also supports the assumption that the marble

⁵ It seems that the smooth margin on the upper front edge of A is narrower than on B which is thicker. This process was called *ἀπεργασία*; see L. D. Caskey, *The Erechtheum*, p. 334, note 1.

blocks were re-used building material. Figure 7 shows how blocks similar to A, B, and C might have been used in the platform construction.⁶

A few final remarks may be devoted to the inscription (Figure 7) and to the date of the whole monument. The three letters preserved on B (Figure 5) seem to belong to the preposition $\epsilon\kappa$ which was followed by the genitive of the article $\tau[-$. Among public dedications (the size of both the letters and the blocks indicates the official character of the monument) this preposition is regularly used with reference to

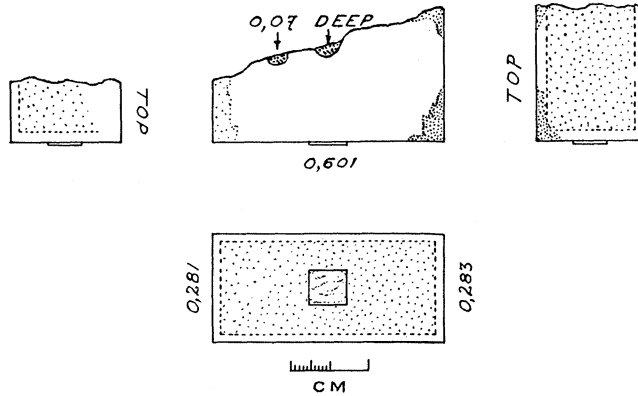


Fig. 6. Block C

victories.⁷ The restoration $\epsilon\kappa \tau[\acute{\omega}\nu \text{Μηδικῶν}]$ is based on the use of the phrase $\tau\acute{\alpha} \text{Μηδικά}$ by Herodotos (IX, 64, 2) and Thucydides (I, 14, 1) and on the occurrence of exactly the same phrase in Aristophanes (*Lysistrata*, line 653). According to this restoration, the Promachos statue, if indeed the inscribed blocks belong to this monument, was an Athenian thank-offering not only for the victory of Marathon but also for other victories won against the Persians prior to the erection of the statue.

The date of the erection of the Athena Promachos statue had to be deduced from various literary sources⁸ until W. B. Dinsmoor identified the building accounts of this monument.⁹ The nine (or more) annual building accounts were all engraved

⁶ The total distance across the base, 5.254 m., is obtained by adding to the width of seven average blocks (7×0.612 m.) the length of A (0.97 m.).

⁷ See T. L. Shear, *Ἀρχ. Ἐφ.*, 1937, pp. 140 ff.; G. M. A. Richter, *A.J.A.*, XLIII, 1939, p. 200, note 10.

⁸ Demosthenes, XIX, 272; Pausanias, I, 28, 2; VII, 27, 2; IX, 4, 1. Compare E. Curtius, *Stadtgeschichte*, pp. 133 f.; G. Busolt, *Griech. Geschichte*, III, 1, pp. 449 f.; C. Picard, *L'Acropole, Le plateau supérieur*, pp. 12 f.

⁹ *A.J.A.*, XXV, 1921, pp. 126 ff. Subsequent contributions were made by B. D. Meritt, *A.J.A.*, XXXVI, 1932, pp. 473 ff.; *Hesperia*, V, 1936, pp. 362 ff.; E. Schweigert, *Hesperia*, VII, 1938, pp. 264 ff.; B. D. Meritt, *Hesperia*, VIII, 1939, p. 76; A. E. Raubitschek, *Hesperia*, XII, 1943, pp. 12 ff.

at the same time, that is, when the statue was finished. They can be dated, according to the letter forms, *ca.* 455 B.C., possibly as early as 458 B.C. Thus the work on the statue may have begun about 465 B.C., that is just after Kimon's decisive victory over the Persians at the river Eurymedon.

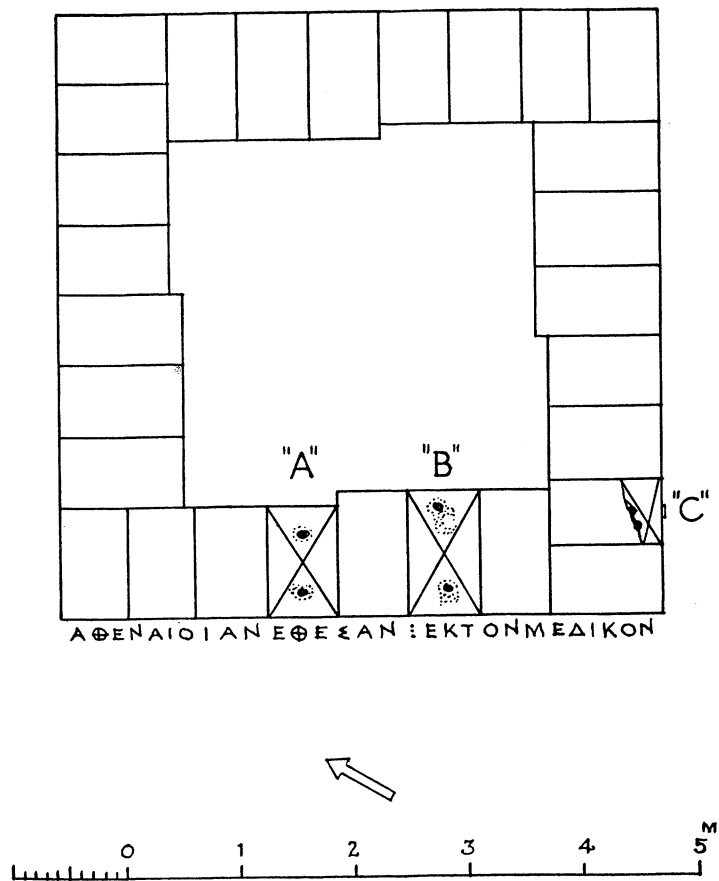


Fig. 7. Inscription on the Base of the Promachos:
Restoration by A. E. Raubitschek

The letter forms of the inscription on A and B (see Figures 4 and 5) support a date at the beginning of the second quarter of the fifth century. The only two characteristic letters preserved are epsilon and theta. The theta with upright cross is customary in archaic times but it occurs also after 480 B.C.¹⁰ The epsilon, however, with its short horizontal strokes belongs undoubtedly to the two decades following 480 B.C.¹¹ Both letter forms are found on another Athenian War Memorial, the in-

¹⁰ See A. E. Raubitschek, *B.S.A.*, XL, 1943, p. 32.

¹¹ See R. P. Austin, *Stoichedon*, p. 6, note *; E. Loewy, *Sitzungsber. Ak. Wien*, 216, Abh. 4, 1937, p. 14.

scription on the stylobate of the Athenian portico at Delphi.¹² Pheidias is said to have made the statue, and this artist was already active shortly after the battle of Salamis.

The top surfaces of A, B, and C clearly indicate that no other blocks rested upon them, and that certain metal or wooden objects, preferably poles, were fastened in the dowel cuttings. Stevens suggests that the poles may have supported trophies. It is reasonable to assume that the Promachos statue was surrounded by the spoils of the victories which the monument commemorated.

A restoration of the memorial may now be attempted (see Figure 1). Whatever rested upon the platform undoubtedly gave interest to the monument as a whole. This interest, added to the key position of the statue in the entrance court of the Acropolis, to its colossal size, and to the artistic skill of its artist, made the monument the dominating feature in the court.

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¹² A good photograph of the inscription is published by Hoyningen-Huene, *Hellas*, p. 38; see also *Fouilles de Delphes*, III, 3, fig. 7, facing p. 82. For the inscription, see M. N. Tod, *Greek Hist. Inscr.*, pp. 21 f., no. 18; W. B. Dinsmoor, *Studies in the History of Culture*, pp. 194 f.