

NEW FRAGMENTS OF THE PARTHENON ACROTERIA

(PLATE 56)

I WOULD like to call attention to two new fragments of the floral acroteria of the Parthenon found recently in the storerooms of the Athens Acropolis Museum.¹ They are both palmette petals and join break-on-break to Acropolis Museum inv. no. 3442, a fragment from the right crowning half-palmette of Acroterion *A* (Pl. 56: a, b, with new fragments in place).²

The new fragments are from the outermost petals of the crowning palmette and represent parts of these petals not preserved in the fragment of the corresponding left half-palmette of *A*, Acropolis Museum inv. no. 3446.³ The position of the outer petals is now known for the greater part of their length and their tips can be restored with increased surety. The larger of the new fragments shows clearly that the petal of which it is a part lies in a double curve, the lower part of the petal bending away from, the upper part toward the median line. This double curve, a characteristic of the so-called flame palmette, has been assumed in reconstructions of the Parthenon acroteria on the basis of later parallels; it is attested by the new fragments for the first time.

¹ I am grateful to Dr. George Dontas, Ephor of the Acropolis, for permission to publish these fragments, and to Mrs. Maria Brouskari for generously facilitating my work in the museum. I am grateful also to Eugene Vanderpool, Jr. for the accompanying photographs, and to William B. Dinsmoor, Jr. for the new reconstruction of the crowning palmette. Professors Evelyn B. Harrison and Homer A. Thompson have offered valuable advice. This work was completed while I was a Fulbright Fellow to Greece, 1974-1976, and I owe a particular debt of thanks to the Fulbright Commission for their generous encouragement and support.

For the Parthenon acroteria see: C. Praschniker, "Die Akroterien des Parthenon," *Jahresh.* 13, 1910, pp. 5-40 (= Praschniker [1910]); *idem*, *Zur Geschichte des Akroters*, Schriften der philosophischen Fakultät der deutschen Universität in Prag V, Prague 1929; I. Kleemann, *Istanbuler Forschungen XX, Der Satrapen-Sarkophag aus Sidon*, Berlin 1948, pp. 81-82; H. Gropengiesser, *Die pflanzlichen Akrotere klassischer Tempel*, Mainz 1961 (= Gropengiesser); P. W. Lehmann, *Samothrace*, 3, *The Hieron*, Princeton 1969, I, pp. 356-357; H. Protzmann, "Zum pflanzlichen Tempelakroter der Klassik," *Helikon* 11-12, 1971-72, pp. 567-581; J. Binder, "Acropolis Acroterion Fragment," *Festschriften für Frank Brommer*, Mainz 1977, pp. 29-31. Mrs. Binder was very kind in showing me her article in typescript.

I would also like to call attention to the rediscovery in the storeroom of the fragment of a petal, Acropolis Museum inv. no. 4875, attributed to Parthenon Acroterion *A* by Praschniker (1910), p. 9, fig. 5, and afterwards lost. Cf. Gropengiesser, pp. 3, 16, note 16 (= Fragment VII).

² The following is a description of A.M. 3442 with the new fragments attached: pres. H. 0.24 m., pres. W. 0.29 m., pres. Depth 0.135 m. Preserves a section of tendril, part of an acanthus leaf, parts of the two outermost primary and intermediary petals of the front half-palmette. Broken along the entire left side, the tendril broken at the right. Broken at the back where the rear half-palmette joins the front half-palmette. All palmette petals broken above. Some chipping of edges. Brownish patina. Slight weathering.

Acropolis Museum inv. no. 3442 = Gropengiesser Fragment VI.

³ Praschniker (1910), figs. 2, 3; Gropengiesser, pls. IV, V, Fragment V.

Particularly important for the reconstruction of Acroterion *A* is the fact that the newly joined fragments are worked fully in the round. The intermediary petals of A.M. 3442, one lying between the two primary petals and one partly preserved along the left edge of the fragment, begin to be carved free from the primary petals at the point where the new fragments join. The tips of these intermediary petals would have extended only a few centimeters beyond their preserved length. In the past, reconstructions of the crowning palmette of *A* have shown it with long intermediary petals contiguous to the primary petals and rising nearly to the full height of the palmette;⁴ this possibility is now ruled out. That the intermediary petals are not nearly so long as hitherto restored is confirmed by an examination of the fragment of the left half-palmette, A.M. 3446. The front primary petal nearest the median line of the palmette is worked fully in the round for the last few centimeters of its preserved length. The intermediary petal immediately to its left is at this point just beginning to separate from the primary. Here too it will have ended just a few centimeters beyond its preserved length. The indications are similar for the remaining intermediary petals of A.M. 3446. One must imagine the primary petals worked fully in the round for the greater part of their length, supporting one another at their tips.

I have included a revised reconstruction of the crowning palmette of *A* prepared by W. B. Dinsmoor, Jr. (Pl. 56:c). It has as its basis the reconstruction of Gropengiesser,⁵ incorporating the changes indicated by the new fragments. The intermediary petals have been shortened, and the outermost petals raised slightly off the crowning spiral. There are two further corrections. The two small acanthus leaves which lie directly above the crowning spirals have been shortened with respect to Gropengiesser's reconstruction. The termination of the acanthus leaf is completely preserved on fragment A.M. 3442 save for slight abrasions and chipping. In this respect Praschniker's reconstruction is accurate.⁶ Further, the space between the left and right half-palmettes has been decreased slightly and in compensation the curvature of the upper petals has been increased. This change is indicated by the surface of the break at the tip of the calyx of A.M. 3446; only a small bridge of marble is to be restored between the left and right calyces.⁷ In this respect also the new reconstruction is more consistent with that of Praschniker.

In certain respects the restoration of the crowning palmette of *A* remains arbitrary. No fragment from the extremities of the petals of the front palmette has yet been identified;⁸ the curve of the upper parts of the petals and the outer contour of the palmette can only be estimated.

⁴ Praschniker (1910), fig. 12, whence Gropengiesser, pl. XXXIV: 1; Gropengiesser, pl. VI.

⁵ Gropengiesser, pl. VI.

⁶ Praschniker (1910), fig. 12, whence Gropengiesser, pl. XXXIV: 1.

⁷ I owe the suggestion for this change to Mr. Dinsmoor.

⁸ The small fragment from the tip of a palmette petal, Acropolis Museum inv. no. 4875 (see footnote 1, above) is not apparently from one of the front petals of the crowning palmette of *A*;

Notwithstanding the uncertainties, the crowning palmette of Acroterion *A* is the best preserved of the Parthenon acroterial palmettes and provides the most secure basis for reconstruction. In contrast, Praschniker could place no fragments in his reconstruction of the crowning palmette of Acroterion *B*.⁹ It is based substantially on the reconstruction of *A* with the intermediary petals omitted. Gropengiesser's reconstruction of the crowning palmette of *B* depends entirely on the attribution of fragment A.M. 3443.¹⁰

The crowning palmette of *A* in the form one sees it in the new reconstruction differs in significant respects from its older form. The short intermediary petals in particular help set up a contrast between the denser lower palmette and the lighter extremities. Related in effect are a number of stele finials of the first half of the 5th century.¹¹ These do not have intermediary petals as such, but show a second smaller palmette in front of the main palmette.¹² This variant on the more usual palmette form may have served as a point of departure for the design of the palmette of Acroterion *A*. That intermediary petals have been included in the design is probably due as much to structural considerations as to aesthetics. They serve as support for the primary petals, decreasing their vulnerability to breakage. As it is, the primary petals were undoubtedly one of the most fragile elements of the design.

Finally, the condition of the preserved fragments of the crowning palmette deserves mention. Their surfaces are extremely fresh with only the slightest weathering. They are thus unlikely to have stood exposed to the elements for more than a few centuries.¹³ Given the fragility of the design of the Parthenon floral acroteria,

the groove down the center of its back suggests that it may be from one of this palmette's outer rear petals.

⁹ Praschniker (1910), fig. 19, whence Gropengiesser, pl. XXXIV: 2.

¹⁰ Gropengiesser, pls. IX, X. Fragment A.M. 3433 (Gropengiesser Fragment XII) was known to Praschniker, but attributed by him to one of the lateral acroteria. See Praschniker (1910), pp. 19 f.

¹¹ For example, finial in Paros: E. Buschor, "Altsamische Grabstelen," *AthMitt* 58, 1933, Beil. XVI: 1, in Thera: F. Hiller von Gaertingen, *Thera* III, Berlin, 1904, fig. 67, Buschor, *op. cit.*, Beil. XVI: 2; finial of the Stele Giustiniani: C. Blümel, *Die klassisch griechischen Skulpturen der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin*, Berlin 1966, fig. 6, Buschor, *op. cit.*, Beil. XVII: 1. See also an architectural terracotta from Olympia: E. Curtius and F. Adler, *Olympia* II, Berlin 1892, pl. CXX: 3, and an archaizing finial in Salamis: A. Conze, *Die attische Grabreliefs* IV, Berlin 1911-1922, no. 1832, p. 30, H. Möbius, *Die Ornamente der griechischen Grabstelen*, Berlin 1929, pl. 35 a.

¹² One finds a related form, the so-called *kernpalmette*, on numerous painted terracotta simas, antefixes and ridge tiles from the Athenian Acropolis: E. Buschor, *Die Tondächer der Akropolis*, I, *Simen*, Berlin 1929, pls. 2-8; II, *Stirnziegel*, Berlin 1933, pls. 7-10. A precedent for the use of intermediary petals is provided by a number of Archaic palmette finials: from the Troad, L. D. Caskey, *Catalogue of Greek and Roman Sculpture in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*, Cambridge, Mass. 1925, no. 13, pp. 25-26; in Samos, Buschor, *op. cit.* (footnote 11 above), figs. 6, 7, Beil. XIII: 2, XIV: 1, 2, XV: 1.

¹³ The condition of the fragments of the Parthenon acroteria in general and of Acroterion *A* in particular has received too little attention in the past. The fragment identified as a leaf of the calyx-base of *A*, Acropolis Museum inv. no. 3444 (Praschniker [1901], figs. 10, 11, Gropengiesser, pl. I,

a mild earthquake may have been enough to bring down the crowning palmette without otherwise causing significant damage to the building.

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Fragment I), like the fragments of the crowning palmette, shows little sign of weathering. The three fragments of the acanthus stalks of *A*, however, Acropolis Museum inv. nos. 3439 (Praschniker [1910], fig. 6, Gropengiesser, pl. III, Fragment IV), 3440 (Praschniker [1910], fig. 8, Gropengiesser, pl. II:4, Fragment II), 4874 (Praschniker [1910], fig. 9, Gropengiesser, pl. II:3, Fragment III), show weathering indicating much longer exposure. The superimposition of weathered fragments above an unweathered fragment in the reconstruction of the lower part of the acroterion requires explanation. For other problems relevant to the reconstruction of the lower parts of Acroterion *A*, see Protzmann, *op. cit.* (footnote 1 above), pp. 569-572.

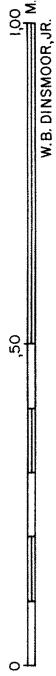
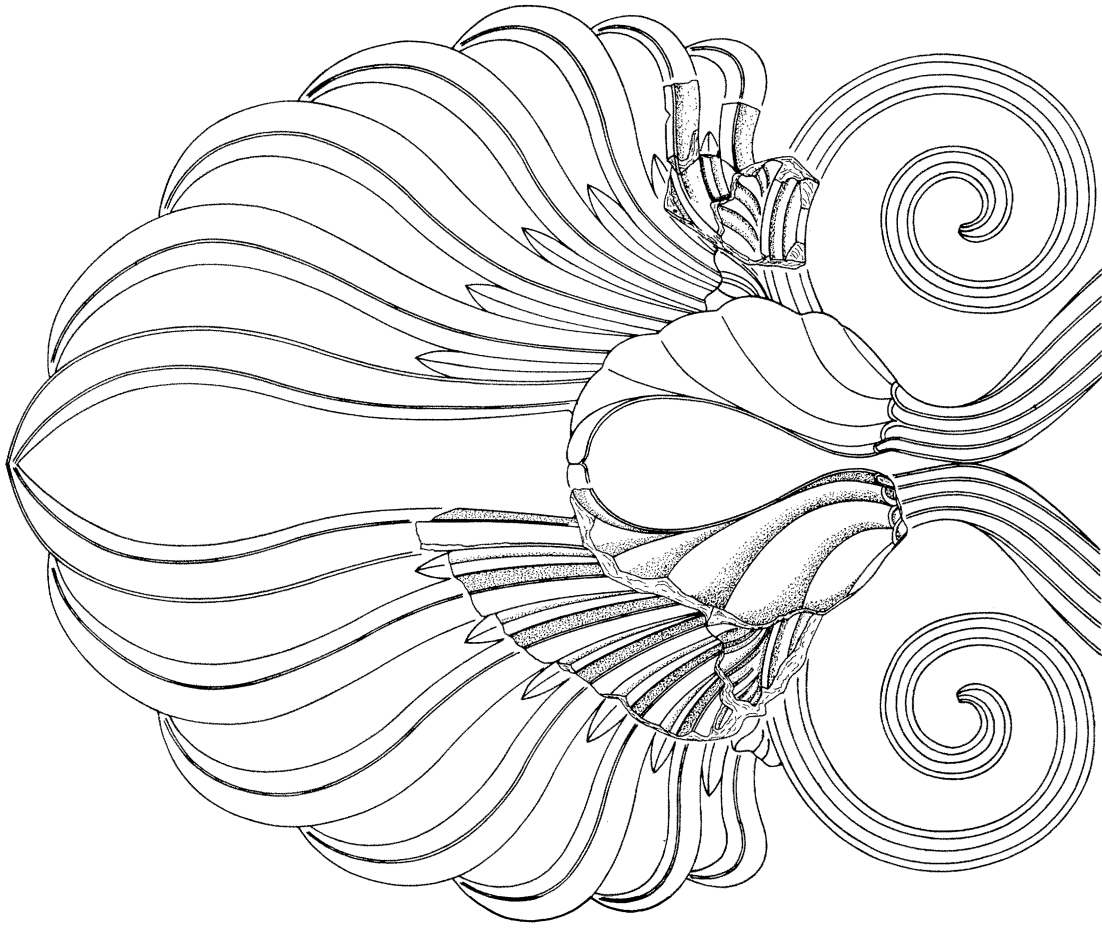


a



b

a, b. Acropolis Museum inv. no. 3442, front and back views



c. Reconstruction of the crowning palmette of Parthenon Acroterion A.