AN EAST GREEK MASTER COROPLAST AT LATE ARCHAIC MORGANTINA

(PLATES 43–46)

IN ORIGINALLY DEFINING THE TOPIC for this paper, the material to which I might claim some small level of expertise seemed, in and of itself, too far removed from the major foci of this conference to be of other than peripheral interest. I therefore intended to limit my observations to instances in which Sicilian architectural terracottas, especially those of the communities in the mesogeia, are related to revetments found on Mainland Greece. Upon reflection, such an approach seemed unfruitful, for these relationships, while formative for Sicilian architectural terracottas, are few and would be generally well known. My research on the Archaic architectural terracottas of Morgantina, however, has led to some exciting discoveries which draw extensively for comparanda on East Greek revetments, certainly a focus of this conference.\(^1\) Indeed, through both their iconography and their arrangement, the revetments of one of the many Late Archaic naïskoi at Morgantina seem to reveal in some detail specifics of the life of an otherwise anonymous master coroplast. His training was in East Greece, and he probably arrived in Sicily at Zankle in the mid-490’s among the Milesian, Samian, and other Ionian refugees whom both Herodotos (vi.1–24) and Thucydides (vi.4.5–6) tell us were invited by the Zankleans to join in founding a new colony at Kale Akte on the north coast.

Morgantina lies in central eastern Sicily at the head of the Plain of Catania and astride the pass through the mountains to the Plain of Gela in the south (Fig. 1). In its Archaic phase the intramural city was situated on the conical hill that served as an akropolis and is still known to the locals as La Cittadella (Fig. 2). The building in question, the “Farmhouse Hill naïskos”, lies on the western side of the summit of this akropolis (Pl. 43:a). Excavations in 1967 and 1968 under the supervision of Professor Malcolm Bell revealed a long, narrow building of a type well known at other sites in the interior of Sicily. Although the downhill corners and west wall of the building have suffered somewhat from erosion, the original exterior dimensions can be established as ca. 34.70 × 6.90 m. The heavy rubble socle,

\(^1\) Thanks are due to the following individuals and institutions: Shari Taylor Kenfield, Curator of Research Photographs in the Department of Art and Archaeology at Princeton University, for invaluable research assistance; Professor Malcolm Bell of the University of Virginia and Director of the Morgantina Excavations for helpful discussions as always; Stephen Falatko for his painstaking and insightful reconstructions; Nancy A. Winter of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens for arranging this conference; David Connelly, photographer for the Department of Art and Archaeology at Princeton University, for the production of the slides for the talk and the illustrations in this article; the Rutgers University Council on Research and Sponsored Programs for making possible my attendance at this conference; the American School of Classical Studies at Athens for its generous hospitality.

In addition to the abbreviations listed on pp. 5–6 above, the following is used:

Tempio greco = Il tempio greco in Sicilia: Architettura e culti (CronCatania 16, 1977), Palermo 1985
Fig. 1. Map of Sicily (M. I. Finley, Ancient Sicily: To the Arab Conquest, London 1968, p. 2)

Fig. 2. Plan of Archaic Morgantina (Cittadella)
ca. 0.75 m. wide, supported mud-brick walls reinforced with timber and covered with hydraulic plaster.2

Although this naikos had been stripped of its contents prior to the collapse of its roof in the early 4th century, that it was probably religious in function is suggested by its splendid roof revetments (Pl. 43:b). The eaves of this otherwise simple building are truly ornate (Pl. 43:c). The eaves tiles are each painted with a swastika and box maeander on the vertical face of the drip; the boxes enclose rosettes in reserve against the black background, the tip of each petal containing a black dot (Pl. 43:e). The horizontal face on the bottom of the drip is painted with a leaf pattern in red, black, and reserve (Pl. 43:d).3

Centered above the drip is a revetment which I call an eaves-tile palmette (Pl. 43:e). Its decoration combines painting with relief of the greatest subtlety. These eaves-tile palmettes are provided with a tripartite, broadly spreading base behind the vertical face and were attached with a slip to the eaves tiles below (Pl. 43:f). At some time, probably soon after their installation, some of these palmettes were damaged slightly and became detached from their eaves tiles; they were reattached with lead clamps (Pl. 44:a). To the best of my knowledge, the eaves-tile palmette revetment is thus far unique to Morgantina (Fig. 3), but since eleven variants of this revetment have been found at Archaic and Classical Morgantina (Fig. 4), it is hardly unique to the Farmhouse Hill naikos.4


3 Eaves tiles that are almost identical and were certainly painted by the same hand were found by Paolo Orsi on the northern side of the agora at Megara Hyblaea. These eaves tiles were associated with two types of gorgoneion antefixes, as is the case with the Morgantina roof under consideration; see below, pp. 268–269 and 270. Both the Megarian eaves tiles and antefixes are now in the Museo Nazionale Archeologico in Syracuse, unpublished and uncatalogued. It might also be pointed out, however, that none of the revetments of the Morgantina roof which I will argue are particularly East Greek in inspiration were found at Megara Hyblaea.

4 The eaves-tile palmette shown in Figure 3 was found with other revetments beneath the floor of the Farmhouse Hill naikos, indicating the presence of an earlier decorated building on the summit of the Cittadella. Since no walls of another building appeared in the excavations conducted on the western side of the summit, it is assumed that this earlier building lies on the unexcavated eastern side. The eaves-tile palmette shown in Figure 4, along with many other ornate revetments, decorated the eaves of a large, four-roomed building that bordered the southern side of the Archaic agora on the Upper Plateau of the eastern slope of the Cittadella (Fig. 2). The finds associated with this building suggest, among other functions, its use for symposia, and it may well have served as the prytaneion of Archaic Morgantina.

A revetment called an antefix by its excavator and generally similar in the appearance of its decorated frontal surface to the eaves-tile palmettes from Archaic Morgantina was discovered at Knossos in a well
Four sets of gorgoneion antefixes were found in the ruins of this naïskos. In the first set, the wavy hair of the Gorgon is held in place by a stephane and surrounded by a corona of eight snakes (Pl. 44:b). Variety within this "Corona of Snakes" type is achieved through painted detail such as the pattern on the stephane (Pl. 44:c). Associated with the first type on the basis of identical fabric is a second set of gorgoneion antefixes, the "Flanking Snakes" type in which the hair is arranged in a triple row of spit curls surmounted by a flange at the point where the end of the cover tile joined the back of the antefix (Pl. 44:d). The vertical deposit dated securely to 500–480 B.C.: see J. N. Coldstream, "Knossos 1951–1961: Orientalizing and Archaic Pottery," _BSA_ 68, 1973 (pp. 33–63), p. 60, no. 117, pl. 25. I would like to thank Dr. Nancy A. Winter for bringing this comparison to my attention.
face of this flange is painted with a pattern of alternating large and small leaves in black and reserve (Pl. 44:e). It seems certain that these two sets of gorgoneion antefixes alternated along the eaves; when combined with the revetments previously discussed, they yield the reconstructed elevation of the eaves seen in Plate 43:c.

The other revetment seen in this reconstruction is an element which might, in other circumstances, be called the geison. Although this example is typical of Sikeliote geisa, it is an especially fine example (Pl. 44:f), guidelines for the guilloche having been incised with the aid of a compass in the slip before being fired and painted. I might add that the date of the construction of this building suggested by the style of the antefixes is considerably later than the cutoff date proposed by Charlotte Wikander for geisa decorated with a single guilloche.\(^5\)

There are two reasons, I suspect, for this discrepancy. The first is visual and is to be found in the types of revetments used above the geison or, in this case, pseudo-geison; the more lofty sima invites elaborate decoration without being visually overwhelmed, while the arrangement of lower eaves tile and antefix invites the opposite. The second reason is that this revetment seems not to have served as a true cassetta covering the geison beam; it is not reconstructed as such in the axonometric view (Pl. 43:b). Evidence for the eaves of another, similar naikos at Archaic Morgantina suggests that they overhung the walls by about 2.0 m., almost one-third the width of the building, confirmation of Vitruvius' advice to the builders of Italic temples for the span of the eaves overhang, and an apt formula for any building with mud-brick walls regardless of location.\(^6\) With such a broad overhang, there would be no need for a protective revetment on the geison beam. Moreover, the shadows thrown by eaves would obscure any decoration on the geison beam, and, even if it could be seen, its distance from the eaves would break its visual relationship to those revetments. It seems more likely, then, that this revetment was used on naikoi with mud-brick walls and broadly spreading eaves in order to protect the ends of the rafters, in a position in which it would be readily seen and visually related to the other revetments of the eaves.\(^7\)

A single corner fragment (Pl. 45:a) provides the information that this revetment functioned like a raking geison in the tympana, turning the corners and rising at an angle of 16°. The pitch of the roof has been reconstructed accordingly (Pl. 43:b).

\(^5\) C. Wikander, 1986, pp. 28–30. Even the single example of a “Geloan” lateral sima at Archaic Morgantina was accompanied by a geison revetment painted with lotus buds in the crotches of a running horizontal zigzag, a motif highly divergent from Wikander’s paradigm.


\(^7\) For similar examples of this pseudo-geison, perhaps executed by the same workshop, see C. Ciurcina, “Nuovi rivestimenti fittili da Naxos e da altri centri della Sicilia Orientale,” in *Tempio greco*, pp. 66–67, pl. III, fig. 1 and pl. IV, fig. 3. Unpublished examples, perhaps by the same workshop as well, have been found in the continuing excavations in the courtyard of the cloister of the Benedictine monastery of San Nicolò in Catania. These excavations are under the auspices of the Istituto di Archeologia of the University of Catania and the direction of Professor Giovanni Rizza and Dr. Massimo Frasca.
With the exception of the two other sets of antefixes found associated with this building, the remaining revetments are not particularly germane to our discussion. The ridgepole tiles, however, are as spectacular and as carefully executed as the other revetments (Pl. 45:b). Perhaps in order to guide the eye, parts of the backs of the imbrices were painted black, creating a pleasing visual rhythm between the eaves and the ridgepole (Pl. 43:b).

Except for the corner fragment from the rafter end, almost nothing is known of the revetments that defined the tympana. Fragments were found, however, of large gorgoneia, the most typical of Archaic Western Greek pedimental decorations, as were fragments of lion akroteria.8

The gorgoneion antefixes of the first phase of the roof (Pl. 43:c), with their combination of naturalistic features and Archaic monster format, seem typical of the Severe Style and probably date to the early years of the 5th century; any time in the late 490’s suits my argument.9 The date of construction of the naiskos should be the same.

The excellent preservation of the painted colors on the fragments indicates that they suffered damage, probably contemporary with that suffered by the eaves-tile palmettes, within a few years of installation. The damage to the building was repaired, apparently immediately, with two other sets of antefixes (Pl. 45:c) which are grouped together because of their identical fabric. For the sake of argument, let us say that this damage and repair occurred in the 480’s. The first set (Pl. 45:e) consists of gorgoneion antefixes which are the second generation of the Corona of Snakes type that decorated the roof in its first phase. While this antefix is obviously like its predecessor in most ways, it suffers defects typical of second-generation terracottas. It is, for example, 16% smaller than the original from which its matrix was formed, resulting in some loss of the finer plastic details of the original, and the painted decoration, while still effective, is cruder. The only major design change is that the corona of snakes from which the background had been partially cut away in the originals of the first phase (Pl. 43:c) is now incorporated into a border that surrounds the entire face. This change was no doubt intended to inhibit the breakage that must have plagued the visually more effective but delicate extremities of the first generation. The thickness of the fabric of the second generation was increased, too, surely for the same reason.10

The second set of antefixes for the second phase of the roof (Pl. 45:f) shares both composition and thickness of fabric with the second generation Corona of Snakes gorgoneion antefixes, with which they must have alternated along the eaves.11 Unlike the gorgoneia with which they shared the eaves, these lion’s head antefixes are for the most part unrelated to


11 Allen (footnote 2 above), pp. 375–378, pl. 95, fig. 26.
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Lion-headed antefixes are rare in the Greek world, being unknown, to my knowledge,
on Mainland Greece, and appearing sporadically in East Greece and West Greece and in
Etruscan contexts. Besides these examples from Morgantina, other Western Greek lion’s
head antefixes have been found at Croton, Vibo Valentia (Hipponion), Naxos, Adriano
(Aetna-Inessa), and Messina. With the exception of the example from Messina, other
Italiote and Sikeliote lion-headed antefixes are rendered in higher relief than the examples
from Morgantina. Moreover, there is, as far as I know, no other example from Western
Greece which is suspected of having alternated with gorgoneion antefixes on the eaves of a
building. The Etruscan examples share the low relief of the Morgantina antefixes but are
otherwise not similar and, as far as I know, are not known to have alternated with gorgo-
neion antefixes.

The combination of lion-headed antefixes in low relief alternating with gorgoneia along
the eaves of a building does, in contrast, occur with some regularity in East Greece. They
are found as alternating appliqués in combination with lion-headed water spouts on a sima
from Larisa. It might also be pointed out that although the position of the snakes is different
on the gorgoneion appliqués from Larisa, the forms of the face are the closest parallels so far
to those of the gorgoneion antefixes of the first phase of the Morgantina roof. From Temnos,
too, come fragments of a sima which appears to have been decorated with alternating lion’s
head and gorgoneion appliqués. In this case, it should be pointed out that the lion’s heads
are dappled with leopardlike spots, and the snaky locks of the gorgoneia are enclosed within
a flange in relief. Equally cogent parallels can be found among the revetments from Miletos

12 A lively discussion with Professor Evelyn Harrison and others arose after the delivery of this paper as to
whether the Morgantina antefix represents a lion skin or a lion thought of as an active, living being. Professor
Harrison pointed out the similarity of forms, especially the apparently dangling paws, with the lion protomes
that appear on the Early Orientalizing shields from Crete that are located on that island and at the Panhe-
lician sanctuaries. See, for example, R. Hampe and E. Simon, The Birth of Greek Art, London 1981, p. 113,
fig. 168. Two of these shields were in the Museum at Delphi when the Conference visited that site to see its
architectural terracottas at the kind invitation of Professor Christian Le Roy.

13 For the best surveys of this material, see K. M. Phillips, Jr., “Terrecotte architettoniche con protomi di
leonardo da Poggio Civitate (Murlo, Siena),” Bda 18, 1983, pp. 1–24; P. Müller, Löwen und Mischwesen in
der archaischen griechischen Kunst: Eine Untersuchungen über ihre Bedeutung, diss. University of Zurich,
1978; review by M. Mertens-Horn, ArchCl 31, 1979, pp. 423–429. See also M. Mertens-Horn, Die Löwen-
For the example from Messina, see P. Pelagatti, “Sacelli e nuovi materiali architettonici a Naxos, Monte San
Mauro e Camarina,” in Tempio greco, p. 49, note 26. For Naxos, ibid., fig. 5. Of course, both lions and Gor-
gons often appear in the decoration of Archaic temples on Mainland Greece but never, as far as I know, in
the form of alternating antefixes. They also appear on the obverses and reverses of Archaic coinage; see, for
example, Archaic issues from Athens and Eretria: C. M. Kraay, Greek Coins, London 1966, pl. 115, no. 349;
A. Baldwin Brett, Catalogue of Greek Coins: Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Boston 1955, no. 1023a, pl. 54.
(Pl. 46:a, b) and Didyma, where lion’s head and gorgoneion antefixes of the same type were found together, a circumstance suggesting that they decorated the same building, alternating along the eaves.  

Although the image of the true lion’s head at Miletos and Didyma is not the same as the lion skin at Morgantina, the use of low relief is similar. Frontal images of a lion’s face similar to that on the antefixes from Morgantina do occur, however, on the Archaic coinage of both Miletos and Samos. At Samos, moreover, as on the Morgantina antefixes, the head is shown as removed with the skin. Even more significant is the fact that the same image appears on the obverse of coins issued by the Samians, Milesians, and other Ionians after their arrival in Zankle. Indeed, the lion’s face continues to appear on the coinage of Zankle/Messina (Pl. 46:c) even after the arrival of new refugees from Messene and the change of the city’s name. These issues of the 480’s provide by far the closest parallel for the form of the lion’s face as it appears on the Morgantina antefix. It is for this reason that I date the second phase of the roof to the 480’s B.C. The use of images on the obverse of a coin for comparison may raise some objections, but in spite of the greatly different dimensions, the influence of coin types on antefix types seems reasonable since both sculptors, each in his own medium, were faced with similar problems of filling a circular or semicircular field with a bold image in low relief.

In any event, the presence in Messina of the master coroplast responsible for the Morgantina roof is certain, since the only other known fragment of a lion-skin antefix in the same series was found in the excavations of block 224 of that city preceding the construction of the Hotel Reale.

It might be difficult to understand why, in the second phase of the roof, a decision was made to alter so radically the second set of antefixes (Pl. 45:c). The answer, I believe, is to be found in the identity of the god to whom the building belonged. Evidence is provided by a graffito inscribed on a sherd found beneath the floor. Given its context, the sherd must antedate the construction of the naikos, but it can be assumed that the sanctuary belonged

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14 Lion-headed antefixes have also been found at Neandria but are not associated with gorgoneion antefixes. See ATK, p. 9, pl. 3 for Neandria; pp. 37–41a, pls. 13, 14 for Temnos; pp. 60–61, pls. 30 and 32 for Larisa; pp. 103 and 107, fig. 32, pl. 53 for Miletos; pp. 109 and 113, pl. 57 for Didyma. For Larisa see also L. Kjellberg, *Larisa am Hermos, II, Die architektonischen Terrakotten*, Stockholm 1940, pp. 91–95, figs. 27, 28, pls. 44, 45; see also G. Andreassi, “Sime fittili tarantine,” *RM* 79, 1972, pp. 188–189, pl. 96. Dr. P. Schneider addresses the Didyma examples in his paper on the temenos located at the midway point on the Sacred Way between Miletos and Didyma (pp. 211–222 above). The Didyma antefixes, though of the same series as the Miletos examples, were produced in different matrices and show differences in the treatment of forms; most notably, the snakes at the top of the head face in a different direction.


16 Such influence is implied if not actually stated by Phillips ([footnote 13 above] p. 18) with regard to fig. 54.

to the same deity throughout its history.\textsuperscript{18} The first letter in the graffito is theta in the form of a rectangle on end with a horizontal bar. This letter is followed by E. In both the Chalcidian and Dorian colonies of the West during the 6th century, these forms would signify the spiritus asper followed by E or H. Taken in conjunction with the lion-skin antefixes, the inscription might be restored as 'Ἡρακλής, suggesting that the very pinnacle of Archaic Morgantina was occupied by the deity most closely associated with the divine right of Hellenic colonization.\textsuperscript{19}

Let us return to the gorgoneion antefixes of the Corona of Snakes type (Pl. 43:c). The example from Miletos (Pl. 46:b) is also closely connected with both phases of the Morgantina roof. With the exception of a single fragment in Syracuse said to be from that city,\textsuperscript{20} gorgoneion antefixes in this series are unknown in Sicily outside Morgantina. They are, in contrast, well represented in Magna Graecia, in the extensive series from Taras and elsewhere.\textsuperscript{21} The examples from Magna Graecia, however, are different in that the Gorgon's entire face is often surrounded by snakes, thus greatly increasing their numbers. On the antefixes from Miletos, Didyma, and Morgantina large snakes flank the Gorgon's cheeks, two on each side at Miletos and Didyma, a single snake at Morgantina. In both cases, the top of the Gorgon's head carries six coiled snakes which are of equal size but smaller than those that flank the face; on the Milesian antefix the crowning snakes face out, away from the center, while at Morgantina the two center snakes on each side face each other across the top of the head. To the best of my knowledge, the Corona of Snakes gorgoneion on the Milesian antefix is the closest parallel to the antefixes of that type at Archaic Morgantina. Once again, the roof of this temple of Herakles contains a type that is specifically East Greek and can be associated most closely with Miletos.\textsuperscript{22}

Since both phases of the naissos roof show such specific connections with East Greek types of antefixes and, indeed, combinations of those types, and since the second phase appears to follow the first in quick succession, I believe that the revetments of both phases are products of the same workshop. These precise East Greek references indicate that the

\textsuperscript{18} The sherd and its graffito should probably be associated with the hitherto unexcavated building of which some architectural terracottas were found beneath the floor of the naissos. See footnote 4 above.


\textsuperscript{20} Inv. no. 51003. The forms of this antefix have more in common with South Italian antefixes of this type than with the East Greek or Morgantina examples.


\textsuperscript{22} Floren (footnote 9 above), pp. 62–73, pl. 5. The snakes at the top of the head in the gorgoneion antefixes from Didyma face each other across the top of the head although they are of the same series as those from Miletos. See P. Schneider, pp. 211–222 above.
master in charge of this workshop had direct experience of the relevant East Greek roofs. As this group includes those roofs with a sima from Larisa and Temnos, one should not argue too strongly for the master's being Milesian. Since his presence is indicated in Zankle/Messina in the early 5th century, however, I suggest that he was an Ionian refugee from the Persians who, traveling to Miletos in preparation for the general exodus to Zankle, studied the decorated roofs of the buildings in that great and soon-to-be destroyed city, as might be expected of a man of his profession. Once in Sicily, this master set his genius immediately to work, adapting East Greek decorative schemes to typical Sikeliote revetments, and, in the second phase of the Morgantina roof, when a decision was made to have the revetments refer iconographically to Herakles, he chose a form symbolic both of his East Greek heritage and of his new mother city Zankle/Messina.

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Morgantina: Farmhouse Hill Naiskos

c. Reconstruction with first-phase antefixes

d. Bottom of drip of eaves-tile fragment

e, f. Eaves tile and eaves-tile palmette fragment from roof

JOHN F. KENFIELD: AN EAST GREEK MASTER COROPLAST AT LATE ARCHAIC MORGANTINA
a. Central part of tripartite base of eaves-tile palmette with lead clamp

b. First phase: fragment of Corona of Snakes type of gorgoneion antefix

c. First phase: fragment of Corona of Snakes type of gorgoneion antefix

d. First phase: Flanking Snakes type of gorgoneion antefix

Morgantina: Farmhouse Hill Naïskos

e. First phase: Flanking Snakes type of gorgoneion antefix showing painted tongue pattern on flange above hair

JOHN F. KENFIELD: AN EAST GREEK MASTER COROPLAST AT LATE ARCHAIC MORGANTINA

f. Geison fragments
a. Corner geison fragment

b. Ridge-pole fragments

Morgantina: Farmhouse Hill Naiskos

c. Second phase: reconstruction of eaves

d. Second phase: fragments of lion antefix showing different color combinations

e. Second phase: second generation of Corona of Snakes type of antefix

f. Second phase: lion antefix
a. Miletos: lion antefix
(=*K*, pl. 53, fig. 1)

b. Miletos: gorgoneion antefix (*ATK*, pl. 53, fig. 2)

c. Obverse and reverse of coin issued at Messina in 480's during the reign of Anaxilas of Rhegion (G. Vallet, *Rhégion et Zancle*, Paris 1958, pl. XIX, fig. 5)