THE ARTEMISION SIMA
AND ITS POSSIBLE ANTECEDENTS
(PLATES 47, 48)

AS EARLY AS 1944 Herrmann Süsserott, in his article on early Sicilian roofs, had emphasized the essential difference between two terracotta members, the sima and the geison revetment: the one belongs to the roof proper, the other to the building under the roof.1 He also noted that while this functional difference was fully appreciated in Sicily, as indeed it was, appreciation of it had disappeared from Greece by the early 6th century. Only thus could the Corfiote sima of the Artemision temple and the similar sima from Delphi be explained. Now, after more than forty years, there may be reasons to look at this feature again.2

It is quite true that the Artemision sima (Pl. 47) and the Corfiote sima of Delphi (Pl. 48) are unique in Greece.3 A terracotta cover for the geison, a wall-plate, or a comparable beam is a consistent feature on Sicilian and South Italian roofs from the early 6th century; it is a major feature in the repertoire of architectural terracottas in Central Italy and Asia Minor, but it does not occur in Greece.4 In the terracotta revetment of the Artemision, not only is such a member used but it is also fashioned in one piece with the sima so that a technically new member is created, a combination piece with one raised and one overhanging part. In this respect, Süsserott’s analysis was perfectly accurate: this combination piece eliminates the distinction between the roof itself and the beam that carries it. What I would like to question is Süsserott’s assumption that this blurring of the tectonic parts of the building is, properly speaking, a feature of Greek roofs, as opposed to the Greek or Greek-influenced roofs located on Italian soil.


2 I have touched upon this theme before, in C. Wikander, 1986, pp. 26–27.


4 Unless, of course, we refer to a place like Olympia, with treasury terracottas which are not of mainland manufacture.
It is perfectly true that the Sicilian roof systems in the 6th century generally retain a sharp functional difference between the hanging geison revetment and the standing sima, whether lateral or raking. They are distinct, separate pieces, each with its different formal characteristics. This distinction is also clearly made in the painted decoration, where, as far as we know, the geison revetment plaques are restricted from the very beginning to one decorative feature only, the single or double guilloche.5 For the simas a much wider scope of decoration is permitted. While the cavetto always has some kind of tongue pattern or derivativer thereof, there rapidly develops a great profusion of variation, and the lower fascia shows many different patterns: checkers, lozenges, rosettes, etc.6

It should not be forgotten, however, that to a great extent the edge of such a roof would present a unified aspect to the viewer looking up from below. The technical and functional separations are, so to speak, internal. Owing to the close proximity of the members, the eye is still led to see a unified edge to the roof, extending upwards in one sweep. This effect is enhanced by the fact that the underside of Sicilian simas, unlike, for example, that of Etruscan ones, does not normally project beyond the edge of the roof.7 The same tendency is well illustrated by that particularly Sicilian phenomenon, the insertion of a horizontal sima in the gable.8 In this position, the sima serves no practical purpose whatsoever, and it is distinctly not, as it should be, a member of the roof cover. What seems to be essential here is the unity of the sima-geison revetment, which prevents a separation of the two elements and produces a filling for a tympanum field which would otherwise be at least partly empty.

In Etruria, in the late 7th and early 6th centuries, the distinction between the roof cover and what is placed below the edge of the roof is much stricter. Here we seem to have a true separation of the two parts, illustrated, for example, by the fact that at Acquarossa there is a general tendency to use revetment plaques, both painted and in relief but without simas. This is a fundamentally different attitude from that seen in Greece, where the sima is the dominant feature. When relief revetment plaques are used with simas, the separation is made additionally clear by the strigil course of the revetment plaque, which separates it

7 On Etruscan simas it is normal to find a decorated border on the underside of the horizontal plaque. This border is usually from 7 to 15 cm. wide.
emphatically from the sima.\textsuperscript{9} The simas themselves tend to sit with their horizontal plaques projecting beyond the edge of the roof. In a similar way the decoration generally enhances the effect of separation.

The question now is how we are to view the phenomenon of the two-part member, the Artemision sima. Is it a completely local variant, tried once and produced again, in a slightly less ambitious manner, for a Corfiote treasury at Delphi?\textsuperscript{10} To begin with, there is no suggestion here that the Artemision decoration is a part of the repertoire of the so-called Northwest Greek circle, as are many other known terracotta remains from the island. Neither at Thermon nor at Kalydon, the best-known exponents of this style, is there any general tendency to cover the geison beam,\textsuperscript{11} much less to combine the two functions. There is also no connection at all with the Corinthian praxis of the early decades of the 6th century: the developing cavetto sima combined with palmette antefixes on the long sides represents an entirely different tradition.

But if we are not to see the Artemision sima as a completely isolated specimen, what about the West? There are two immediate pointers toward that direction: first, of course, the fact that a revetment is provided for the geison at all, and secondly, the fact that the lateral sima pieces carry tubular waterspouts, the normal practice in Sicily. In fact, some finds of recent decades suggest that in the colonial environment there exists the same tendency to combine the two functions.

For a long time, the position of the geison revetment as such in the development of the Sicilian systems has been somewhat obscure.\textsuperscript{12} The two single occurrences of very simple simas with a cavetto alone which were long generally agreed to be the earliest representatives of terracotta production on Sicily, the simas of Grammichele and Syracuse, have no known geison revetments to accompany them.\textsuperscript{13} This fact is, of course, very likely to result from chance, and these two single examples, only three fragments altogether, are hard pressed to represent an entire 7th-century tradition in the island. Nevertheless, most scholars who have treated the question at all tend to conclude that in fact there were no early geison revetments. They are considered to be a feature of the period shortly after 600 B.C.,

\textsuperscript{9} A course of concave or convex strigils, low and squat in the early 6th century but gradually growing in height, is a standard feature of Etruscan relief-decorated revetment plaques, with very few exceptions. For these, see C. Wikander, 1988, pp. 19–21, figs. 2, 3. One may compare this practice with the upper terminating rolls on Sicilian geison revetments, which create a transition rather than a separation, since the roll is then echoed on the sima itself, between the cavetto and the lower fascia, and is even sometimes also present as termination of the sima at the bottom edge.

\textsuperscript{10} As suggested by Le Roy (1967, p. 69); there is no sure indication of the findspot of the fragments from Delphi.

\textsuperscript{11} With one possible exception, however: the fragments from Thermon, possibly from “Dach A”, which were briefly mentioned by Koch and Van Buren: Koch, pp. 69–71; GFR, p. 83, no. 42, fig. 141. These terracottas, made up of two plaques at right angles to each other, may be considered to be either simas with a completely straight profile or revetment plaques. They are decorated with rather primitive double guilloches; see C. Wikander, 1988, pp. 103–104.


\textsuperscript{13} C. Wikander, 1986, p. 36, no. 18, fig. 8 and p. 47, no. 61, fig. 13, with references.
Fig. 1. Sima from Himera (after Himera I, pl. XIII)

when the typically Sicilian, so-called Geloan, sima was finding its form, and they are thought to belong completely with this sima.\textsuperscript{14}

The isolation of the Grammichele and Syracuse fragments as the sole representatives of an early production in the island has, however, now been ended by the discovery of several fragments of an early lateral sima at Himera (Fig. 1). This piece decorated and protected a small naïskos, “Tempio A”, the construction of which is placed by the excavators late in the third quarter of the 7th century, around 630.\textsuperscript{15}

This exceedingly unassuming sima, no more than 15 cm. high, is a true combination member: a low edge with a flat roll on top, from which protrudes a tubular spout and, below this, a low, overhanging part. It is thus again a combination piece covering both the function of a standing member collecting rain water and that of a hanging one protecting a wooden beam and keeping dripping water away from walls of a friable material. No painted decoration is preserved, but some traces of red, white, and black paint remain, enough to show that the piece was originally decorated.

The precise position of this sima in the developmental sequence of Sicilian terracottas is a matter of debate. At present it is unique, but does this mean that it should be seen as lying completely outside the development of terracotta roofing systems?\textsuperscript{16} Its unusual nature may be due merely to the fact that the building to which it belonged was small and unassuming. Although the sima itself is very low, however, it is by no means unsophisticated: the combination of two functions is in itself an ingenious feature, and there are easier ways of

\textsuperscript{14} One of the earliest known examples of this association is probably the “Rivestimento A” of Selinus: C. Wikander, 1986, pp. 42–43, no. 48, fig. 10, with references. For the early date, see Scichilone, pp. 188–189.
\textsuperscript{15} Himera I, pp. 84–87, pl. XIII:3 (N. Bonacasa); C. Wikander, 1986, pp. 36–37, no. 19, fig. 7.
diverting rain water than by fabricating a tubular spout. The remains of paint show that the piece also provided a way to adorn the building that carried it. The very fact that this was a sacred building which was rebuilt in the 6th century and furnished with highly elaborate terracotta decoration should also be a warning against assuming that the revetment is unusual because of the small size of the building rather than because it is an early feature.\(^\text{17}\)

The dates of the Sicilian sequence are admittedly something of a problem. If this sima was produced around 630 B.C., we are left with a period of ca. 30 to 40 years with no finds other than the two simas mentioned previously.\(^\text{18}\) Yet, the Himera finds are unusual for Sicily in that they were discovered in situ and excavated under modern conditions; if we, for once in this area, are given an archaeological date based on votive deposits, it deserves to be taken seriously. The votive deposits contain a concentration of material from the Transitional, Early, and Middle Corinthian periods, and this, of course, is a long span of time. In addition, the general difficulties often alluded to in the dating of roofs by finds in and around a building still obtain.\(^\text{19}\)

Even if one were to doubt the high date, maintaining that the unusual appearance of the piece is due to the type of building rather than to its age, the chronological gap remains the same: there is nothing from Sicily, except for the two fragments of sima, for the whole period from ca. 640 B.C. onwards, the very time when we see intense activity in the spread of the terracotta roof not only over Greek territory but also in the fringe areas of the Greek world, mainly Central Italy. Since this diffusion also seems heavily directed towards the West, it seems inconceivable that Sicily could stand completely apart from this development. Yet, in the present state of our knowledge, this seems to be precisely the case: intense activity after 600 B.C., but not before. To meet this case, some possible explanations may be offered. The first, of course, is that there are indeed terracottas from this period, but we simply have not found them yet. One may compare the situation in Etruria 25 years ago: nothing was known of any material before 600, but two new excavation sites, Acquarossa and Poggio Civitate, changed that picture completely, and once this had happened, new material kept appearing. The Himera fragments may well be considered the first pointers in such a direction.

Another way of attacking this problem is to accept the fact that we do indeed have no particularly flourishing terracotta industry in the island before 600 and try to explain it. In that case, I believe we have one important factor to take into consideration: the fact that in the Greek world, the terracotta roof does not seem to be used early on private houses, as it does in Central Italy. It is, for example, a curious fact that the extensive excavations at Megara Hyblaea have not, to my knowledge, yielded any early terracottas. It is possible that at least part of the explanation for this lack lies in the early date of many of the colonial foundations on the island, such as Megara (728 B.C.).


\(^{18}\) For the currently accepted chronology of Sicilian terracottas (which was, however, worked out before the discovery of the finds at Himera), cf. Scichilone, pp. 185–193; see also C. Wikander, 1986, pp. 10–12.

Colonial cities which were acquiring an urbanized character in the period between the late 8th century and ca. 650 could not use tiled roofs, since at that time these had not yet been invented. When they were, in their early years they were probably restricted to highly prestigious buildings and to a limited geographical area, the Corinthis. It seems an inescapable conclusion that the establishment of colonies in the West prompted urbanization at a very early stage but that this development did not include tile roofs. Once you had laid out your city with private houses, public buildings, and sanctuaries with some other type of roof cover, your immediate needs were satisfied. You also certainly had buildings whose walls were not strong enough to carry the extremely heavy weight of a tiled roof without extensive rebuilding. Thus we find the appearance of terracotta roofs primarily in the period that inaugurates ambitious building programs of stone temples, that is, definitely after 600. What may be significant, as far as Himera is concerned, is its late foundation date, 648 B.C. Since it was founded precisely in the period when the initial diffusion of the terracotta roof took place, its sanctuary was roofed in this material from the beginning. We may compare the situation in Etruria; here the process of urbanization seems to be a phenomenon beginning for the most part shortly before the middle of the century in the larger Etruscan metropoleis (although it must be admitted that we know very little of the urban environment of the large centers in this period) but reaching its height in the second half of the century, when terracotta roofs, with tiles and, in at least some cases, decorative terracottas would unquestionably have been part of the repertory of urban construction.  

I would like to suggest that the apparent tardiness of Sicily in the field of architectural terracottas is one result of its comparatively early urbanization.

Returning to the sima from Himera, I would still maintain a date not later than ca. 600 B.C., mainly because of its originality. Within the early group of low revetments from Selinus, Leontini, and Megara, the distinct profiles of the sima and geison revetments are already present, and the pieces separated. If we want to push the Himera sima more than only slightly down into the 6th century, we are also forced to produce an explanation of why Himera stood apart from the development in the island that otherwise seems both rapid and remarkably coherent.

Turning to mainland Italy, the soundings made in the 1970’s in the temenos of the Ionian temple at Marasà in Locri Epizephyrii revealed a sequence of building activity preceding the Ionian temple, namely a small naisskos of oikos-type and the subsequent rebuilding of this oikos and its extension by means of a peripteros, presumably with wooden columns. The


22 This group is presented by Scichilone (pp. 185–190).

architectural remains included several groups of architectural terracottas, which their publisher, De Franciscis, divided into different phases and in some cases attributed to the successive building phases of the naikos.

The first roof of this building already presents an extremely interesting picture. It is a distinctly Laconian roof, with painted decoration only. The preserved parts include fragments of the tiles and cover tiles; one well-preserved disk akroterion, 54 cm. in diameter, with a large, scalelike pattern, and smaller fragments of another akroterion; a semicircular antefix with the canonical crescent pattern; a raking sima; and the one local deviation: a revetment covering for a wooden beam. The profiles of the sima and revetment plaques are the simplest imaginable: for the sima, merely a straight raised edge, ca. 20 cm. high, without any cavetto curve or molding whatsoever. The revetment plaques are equally simple, again 20 cm. high but with a length of almost 60 cm., with two parts at right angles to each other, one vertical, presumably overhanging a beam, and one horizontal. The revetment plaques are considered to have run along all sides of the building.

We have here then what is, in its fundamentals, a fairly orthodox Laconian roof, but one which has one functional part that does not belong: the "cassetta", the revetment plaque. It seems an inescapable conclusion that this addition to the roof was prompted by local preference, reflecting a striking flexibility in the use of mainland models. The painted decoration shows a similar mixture of orthodoxy and flexibility. While the decoration of the antefix is perfectly in accord with mainland Laconian practice, the motifs used for the sima and geison revetment deserve notice: the sima carries only a single guilloche, the cassetta a maeander. Thus the decoration conforms completely neither to an early Greek sima (one would expect a Doric tongue) nor to what became the established decorative praxis for geison revetments in the West, the guilloche.

A very high chronology was proposed for this roof by its excavator, shortly after the middle of the 7th century. This high date has subsequently been modified by other scholars, and the roof is now generally placed in the last quarter of the century.

The second phase of this structure consists primarily of the addition of an adyton, and it is uncertain whether any major changes were made to the terracottas of the roof. The excavator suggests the possibility that the raking sima was renewed.

What is of primary interest for our discussion is the third phase of the temple, a major rebuilding in which a peristasis was added. This addition entailed a major change in the roof. The terracotta members of the new roof, as grouped by the excavator, show five slightly different versions of simas varying mainly in the decoration; four of them, however, consist of lateral simas and geison revetments in one piece (Fig. 2). The painted decoration consists of two kinds of Doric tongues on the cavetto (one straight, the other slightly tear-shaped) and double guilloches on the overhanging part. As seen in Figure 2, these guilloches

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25 De Franciscis, 1979, p. 71.
27 De Franciscis, 1979, p. 76.
28 De Franciscis, 1979, pp. 94–98.
lack the central palmette which ties the two strands together and which is typical of architectural double guilloches. There are no raking simas; to explain their absence, the hypothesis has been offered that the roof may have been hipped.

The pieces are ca. 38 cm. high and 55 cm. long. The profile is of great simplicity, a trait further enhanced by the provision of simple, crescent-shaped openings for draining rain water. The closest parallels for the simple cavetto of the sima are the two Sicilian examples mentioned above and an Etruscan painted raking sima from Acquarossa dated at the latest ca. 575 B.C. I would suggest that the painted decoration presupposes the low sima edges with Doric tongues known from Thermon, Kalydon, and Delphi. But does the whole piece, with its integration of sima and revetment plaque, presuppose the sima of the Artemision of Corfu? The answer, of course, hinges very much on chronology. Professor De Franciscis, who published the terracottas, dated them somewhere between the later years of the 7th century and the early part of the 6th. There is, however, some controversy here, since Professor Gullini, who has studied the other, non-terracotta architectural remains, wants to place the addition of the peristasis around the middle of the 6th century. Frankly, if the attribution of these terracottas to that particular rebuilt roof is correct, I would hesitate very much to see such types in the extremely rapid development of South Italy placed as late as the middle of the century.

If we keep to the date proposed by the excavator in the initial publication, and from a formal point of view this seems very reasonable, that date of around 600 B.C. or shortly

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29 See footnote 13 above.
thereafter would make these combination simas slightly older than, or roughly contemporary with, the Artemision sima. Here lies the heart of my hypothesis: given the interest in the West in an overhanging member and the lack of such interest in Greece itself, and given the example of the Himera sima, would it not be possible that the contacts between Corfu and the West were not one-way only? This is not to deny completely the originality of the Corfiote craftsmen; simply their wanting to cover the geison is proof enough of that in the Greek environment.

Finally, there are also some instances of the survival in Western architecture of this system of joining the sima and the geison revetment. These include two more fragments from Himera, dated to the middle of the 6th century. Another, later, example is a sima from Naxos with a very low, overhanging part. Finally, an unpublished sima of the same type is reported from Ischia, demonstrating yet again the continuing interest in the West in this particular kind of sima.

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32 Epifanio (footnote 16 above), pp. 171–173, pls. LI:2–3, LII:1–2. Influence from Asia Minor in the formation of this type is proposed by Epifanio (p. 172) on the basis of a sima from Sardis of the same construction: ATK, pp. 78, 80–81, fig. 24:1, pl. 51:1. From the same area also comes the frieze from Düver, ATK, pp. 218–222, figs. 70, 75. These share the same idea, the combination of functions, but have a very rudimentary sima part, a simple raised edge. For these two examples from Asia Minor I would, at least until further evidence appears, prefer to propose an independent development, unconnected to either the Italian or the Corfiote examples of the same trait. It must be remembered in discussing Ionian influences on terracottas that sites such as Sardis and Düver are not Ionian Greek cities but inland sites which in many cases develop their own types under Greek influence; cf. ATK, pp. 230–239.

33 C. Wikander, 1986, p. 40, no. 43, fig. 11, with references.

a. Corfu, Artemision: lateral sima (*Korkyra* I, fig. 75)

b. Corfu, Artemision: raking sima (*Korkyra* I, fig. 85)
a. Delphi: sima (Le Roy, 1967, pl. 20)

b. Delphi: sima (after Le Roy, 1967, pl. 100)