

AN ARCHITECTURAL FUNCTION FOR THE LYONS KORE

(PLATE 56)

THE LYONS KORE is universally regarded as one of the cornerstones in our understanding of Archaic Athenian sculpture. Its proper place in scholarship was made clear by Humfry Payne's perceptive conclusion that the well-known torso and head, preserved in the Musée de Lyon, actually join several fragments excavated on the Athenian Akropolis.¹ Before Payne announced the join with the Akropolis fragments, the upper part of the statue had been called the Aphrodite of Marseilles, because it had first been recorded in a Marseilles private collection and was generally believed to have been found in that city.² The supposed discovery of the statue there was believable because the city had been founded in 600 B.C. as Massalia, a colony of the Ionian trading city of Phokaia. The supposed provenance, together with the attributes (the polos and dove) and with the diagonal himation, had led to the conclusion that the statue represented Aphrodite and that it was a good example of the Ionian style. The powerful build of the figure and the dry execution had been contrasted with the more skilfully carved, more delicately proportioned Athenian korai. Specific contrast had even been drawn with the lower torso, Akr. 269, that Payne then showed to be part of the same statue.³

Payne's observation disproved the earlier stylistic assessment of the kore, as well as her supposed provenance. The broad shoulders and facial features find their best parallels on other Athenian sculpture. Only the diagonal himation, which carefully curves over the buttocks, outlining their form, relates this statue more closely with East Greek styles. Payne

¹ Payne announced the join of the fragments at an open meeting of the British School at Athens, 29 March 1935, which is first recorded by E. Blegen, *AJA* 39, 1935, pp. 267–268. Payne published his discovery first in *ILN*, 3 August 1935, pp. 216–217 and treated the statue more fully in *Archaic Marble Sculpture from the Acropolis*, London 1936, pp. 14–18, pls. 22–26.

The Lyons Kore: Lyons Museum, without number, head and torso; and Acropolis Museum, nos. 269, 247, 163, 164, abdomen, thighs, left calf, and left shoulder. See also, G. M. A. Richter, *Korai: Archaic Greek Maidens*, New York 1968, no. 89, pp. 57–58, figs. 275–281.

² Bernard de Montfaucon (*L'antiquité expliquée* II, ii, Paris 1719, p. 341, pl. 139:2) mentioned simply the presence of the statue in the collection of Laurent Gravier of Marseilles. J. Grosson (*Recueil des antiquités et monuments marseillois*, Marseilles 1773, p. 171) produced the additional information, from what source is uncertain, that the statue was found in the Temple of Minerva along the Rue des Consuls.

E. Michon ("L'Aphrodite du Musée de Lyon complétée par un fragment de coré du Musée de l'Acropole d'Athènes," *CRAI*, 1935 [pp. 367–378], pp. 370–376) provides a careful history of the statue until 1935, including former owners, interpretations and stylistic assessments, possible circumstances of museum acquisition, and publication. He puts forth the tantalizing idea that the statue was brought to France by Étienne Gravier d'Ortières, who had been sent by Louis XIV to assist Morosini at the siege of Athens in 1687. Gravier's journal includes drawings of the Parthenon, proving that he had been in Athens. Gravier d'Ortières was a relative of the first recorded owner.

³ H. Schrader, *Archaische Marmor-Skulpturen im Akropolis Museum zu Athen*, Vienna 1909, pp. 31–33; H. Lechat, *Aphrodite archaïque*, Lyons 1919, pp. 17–18.

cited this particular feature and the generally early style as indications that this statue was among the earliest of Athenian korai to wear the eastern himation. He dated the statue 540–530, and this date is still generally maintained.⁴

Concerning the interpretation, Payne showed that the polos and dove do not prove the figure to be a divinity. He concluded that it was another of the freestanding dedications of the Akropolis, but he had never seen the top of the head, the cutting of which could have led him to a different conclusion.⁵

The Lyons Kore wears a slightly flaring polos which was once decorated with a painted lotos-and-palmette frieze. The top of the polos has been described simply as a rough surface containing a spike for a *meniskos*.⁶ But the top of the polos does not present a uniform surface, and the so-called spike is unlike those that probably held *meniskoi*.⁷ The edge of the upper surface is a carefully finished band, *ca.* 0.01 m. wide, while the center portion is picked and slightly hollowed (Pl. 56:a). The piece of iron is rectangular in section. It is set with its greater dimension perpendicular to the major axis of the head and is located near the center of the polos. Behind the iron piece and overlapping the smooth band of the edge are two rectangular projections; these measure approximately 0.01 × 0.03 m. and are symmetrically placed to either side of the major axis. They rise *ca.* 0.004 m. above the horizontal surface, but toward the center of the headdress they are worn or were imprecisely cut and are lower. The outer band and central depression present a surface that was clearly intended to receive another member. They appear like the upper resting surface and anathyrosis of an architectural member and find parallels in the upper resting surfaces over the heads of the Erechtheion korai (Pl. 56:b).⁸ This unusual finish of the top of the polos indicates that the Lyons Kore was a *karyatid* rather than a freestanding figure. The iron piece is probably a dowel, and the two projections could have served to help align an overlying piece.

Ridgway has already suggested that the Lyons Kore is a *karyatid*, although the idea has not been readily accepted.⁹ In addition to the polos, the figure has other features that would recommend her architectural use. The powerful build of the kore would emphasize her role as an architectural support. More important, she wears the diagonal himation covering her

⁴ Payne (footnote 1 above), p. 18. More recent references to the date include B. S. Ridgway, *The Archaic Style in Greek Sculpture*, Princeton 1977, p. 109 (in the early 530's) and J. Boardman, *Greek Sculpture: The Archaic Period*, London 1978, p. 107, caption to fig. 110 (about 540).

⁵ It is probable that Payne never saw the top of the polos, for he worked from plaster casts that had been sent to him in Athens. The casts presently in the Akropolis Museum do not accurately reproduce the upper surface. The idea of looking at the top of the kore was discussed in a seminar on the Archaic Akropolis with Professor Ridgway at Bryn Mawr College in spring of 1986.

⁶ Lechat (footnote 3 above), p. 15; and E. Langlotz in *Die archaischen Marmorbildwerke der Akropolis*, H. Schrader, ed., Frankfurt 1939, no. 25, p. 66.

⁷ A spike for a *meniskos* is usually thinner and square (with slightly rounded corners) in section. Other korai with *meniskoi*, e.g.: Akr. 681, 679, 682, see Richter (footnote 1 above), no. 110, pp. 69–70, figs. 336–340; no. 113, p. 72, figs. 349–354; no. 116, pp. 73–74, figs. 362–367, respectively.

⁸ For permission to publish this photograph, I thank Alekos Papanikolaou, architect in charge of the restoration of the Erechtheion, and the Archive of the Committee for the Restoration of the Akropolis Monuments.

⁹ Ridgway (footnote 4 above), pp. 108–109. But E. Schmidt, *Geschichte der Karyatide (Beiträge zur Archäologie 13)*, Würzburg 1982 and A. Schmidt-Collinet, *Antike Stützfiguren*, Frankfurt 1977, the two recent studies of the motif of the *karyatid*, do not mention the kore.

left, not her right arm, contrary to the usual fashion. Other examples of reversed draping appear on korai from architectural pairs in mirror image, such as the karyatids of the Delphic treasuries and the figures flanking the central akroterion on the Temple of Aphaia at Aigina.¹⁰

Potential difficulties for the architectural function of the kore lie in the slope of the top of the head (falling from front to back) and in the relatively small size of the figure. The slope was possibly negated by placing an additional member between the head and the architrave.¹¹ Comparison with other karyatids indicates that an additional piece, a capital, should be present. The slope of the upper surface and the resulting necessity for a proper placement of the capital would explain the two projections of the upper surface; they were probably guides that fit into notches on the lower face of the capital to guarantee correct alignment.

The small size of the kore (1.13 m. as preserved; restored with feet to *ca.* 1.25 m.) argues against the possibility that the figure was used in a large architectural setting similar to other Archaic karyatids. She is less than half the size of the karyatids of the Siphnian Treasury.¹² Some compensation could be made for the height of the figure by raising her upon a high base. But even so raised, the figure is too small and slender to be associated with any substantial architectural setting.¹³ Rather, more delicate members for a smaller context need to be found. The kore could be placed in front of a small naïskos or could stand beside an elaborate but diminutive entrance. The korai of the Erechtheion, which marked the entrance to the tomb of Kekrops, provide one example, admittedly much later, of such use.

Even without a known architectural context, the recognition of the Lyons Kore as a karyatid is significant for at least two reasons. First, the mere presence of a karyatid on the Akropolis at such an early date alerts us to the scope of the architectural development on the citadel in even the early part of the tyranny.¹⁴ The kore takes her place among the earlier

¹⁰ Ridgway ([footnote 4 above], pp. 108–109) cited the two reasons given here (the hefty build and the reversed drapery) in her discussion. I attempted to find fragments that could belong to a mirror-image matching statue in the Akropolis storerooms. Although the search proved fruitless, I thank the director and staff of the Akropolis Museum, especially Mr. Alexandros Mantis, for permission and their gracious assistance.

Karyatids from Delphi: C. Picard and P. de la Coste-Messelière, *FdD*, IV, ii, *Art archaïque (suite)*, *Les trésors "ionique"*, Paris 1928; P. de la Coste-Messelière, "Corés delphiques," *BCH* 77, 1953, pp. 346–376; Richter (footnote 1 above), nos. 86, 87, p. 57, figs. 280–283, no. 104, pp. 66–67, figs. 317–320.

Akroterial figures from Aigina: A. Furtwängler, *Aigina, Das Heiligtum der Aphaia*, Munich 1906, nos. 149, 150, p. 276.

¹¹ The projections resemble somewhat the tenons of construction in wood and could be influenced by carpentry techniques, which were certainly more advanced than those of stonework. The borrowing from wood-working could have arisen if the motif of the karyatid was derived from furniture decoration, which in the Near East commonly had human support elements. See Schmidt (footnote 9 above), pp. 78–79, for comments and references about the throne of Apollo at Amyklai conceived as a greatly oversized piece of furniture.

¹² Siphnian Treasury karyatid: preserved height with polos is *ca.* 1.65 m., and the restored height without polos is *ca.* 2.59 m.; cf. W. B. Dinsmoor, "Studies of the Delphic Treasuries, II. The Four Ionic Treasuries," *BCH* 37, 1913 (pp. 5–83), p. 22.

¹³ All the published architectural remains of the Akropolis seem too large for the figure, both the small "treasuries" and the unassociated fragments; cf. T. Wiegand, *Die archaische Poros-Architektur der Akropolis zu Athen*, Cassel 1904, pp. 148–171, 176–177.

¹⁴ For summaries on the question of the attribution of various buildings to the early part of the tyranny, cf. J. Kleine, *Untersuchungen zur Chronologie der attischen Kunst von Peisistratos bis Themistokles (IstMitt,*

surviving monuments of the Akropolis, and the implication of the existence of a structure so elaborated should be noted.

Second, because of the early date of the statue relative to other Greek karyatids, the kore should be of importance to studies of karyatids in general. For example, the question of the origin of karyatids in Greek art has long been a topic of interest.¹⁵ Discussion has always focused on the karyatids of the Delphic treasuries, generally considered to be the earliest preserved representations of the phenomenon. The Lyons Kore and the Delphic karyatids offer points of comparison for a relative dating, although they represent different schools of sculpture. The karyatids of the Knidian Treasury are probably the earliest of those at Delphi.¹⁶ The Knidian karyatid and the Lyons Kore display a similar stylization of the hair, which is rendered by means of rows of beads, an earlier style, in contrast to the overlapping ridges found on the Siphnian and ex-Knidian karyatids. Regarding the drapery, the Knidian figure shows a more developed style than the kore and is probably the later work.¹⁷

Two recent studies of karyatids have offered lengthy reviews of the debate concerning their origin,¹⁸ and it is unnecessary to reopen the discussion fully, since the recognition of the Lyons Kore will only slightly alter the expressed opinions. Karyatids in Greece were in some fashion influenced from Near Eastern sources, and the peculiar manner in which our kore wears the diagonal himation points again to the east. In this case the inspiration was drawn specifically from East Greece, which repeatedly served as an intermediary for Near Eastern ideas. Athens under the rule of Peisistratos had strong contacts with several East Greek states, and the receptiveness of the city to eastern artistic ideas should be no surprise. Still, it is noteworthy that this early karyatid was erected in Athens, rather than at the big international center of Delphi. It also seems important that the kore is in this case a local product, rather than a work commissioned and executed by a Greek from the islands or from Asia Minor.

The addition of this one kore to the corpus of karyatids seems rather to pose questions than to offer solutions. The discovery of an architectural context on the Akropolis would greatly benefit our understanding of this example, and perhaps of the type overall. Although the function of the statue seems clear, we have yet to look forward to its association with a suitable setting or to the discovery of more examples to help us explain the phenomenon.

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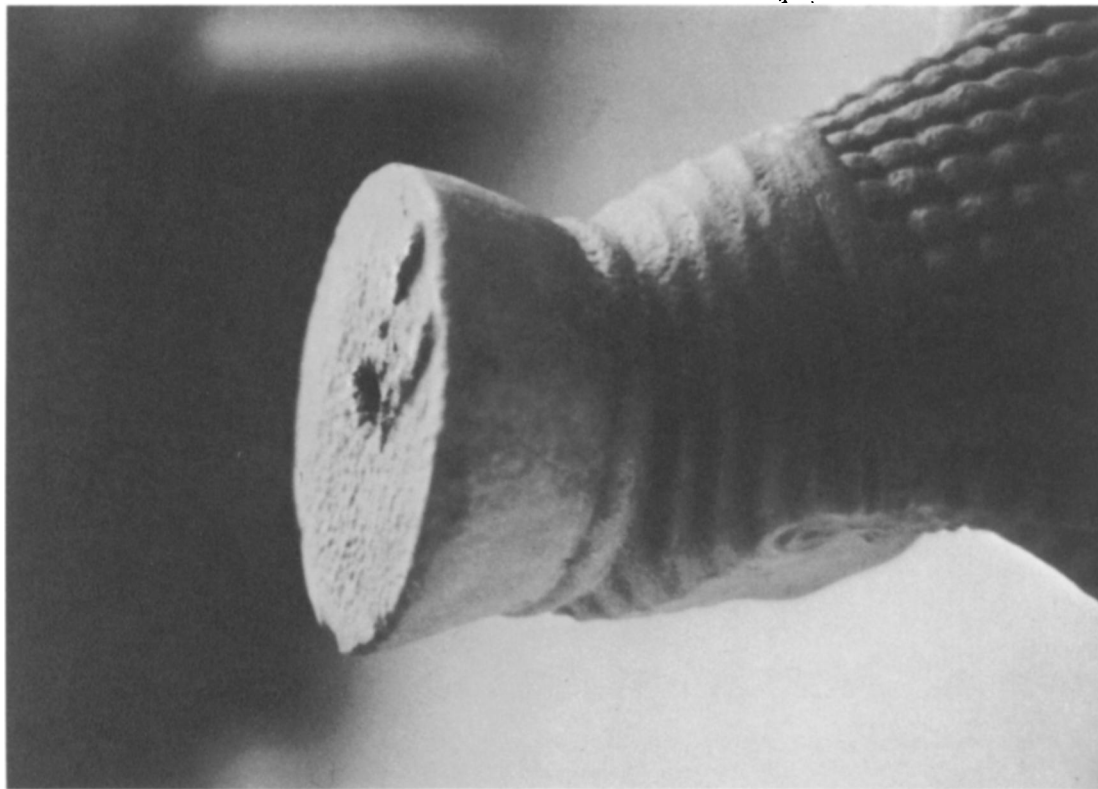
Beiheft 8), Tübingen 1973 and S. Bancroft, *Problems Concerning the Archaic Acropolis at Athens*, diss. Princeton University, 1979.

¹⁵ Schmidt ([footnote 9 above], pp. 27–33) provides the best summary of the opinions.

¹⁶ Richter ([footnote 1 above], nos. 87–88, p. 57) places the Knidian karyatid in her Lyons Kore-Ephesos group and supports a date near midcentury, well before the Siphnian figures, dated close to 525.

¹⁷ E. Langlotz (*Studien zur nordostgriechischen Kunst*, Mainz 1975, pp. 59–61) offers a good analysis of the respective styles.

¹⁸ Schmidt (footnote 9 above), pp. 25–77, with her conclusions, pp. 76–77, and Schmidt-Collinet (footnote 9 above), pp. 4–18.



a. Top of head of Lyons Kore



b. Top of head of Erechtheion karyatid (Courtesy Archive of the Committee for the Restoration of the Akropolis Monuments)