A GREEK GODDESS

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In our collection of Greek and Roman sculpture there are many small, exquisite pieces but few large, monumental ones. An over-life-size marble statue is therefore very welcome. It has come from overseas in a battered condition and must have passed through many vicissitudes. Merely the upper part has survived, and of this a good part of the front, the entire right arm, most of the left forearm, and the top of the skull are missing. Enough remains, however, to show that the figure was a woman, was represented standing, and wore a sleeved chiton with a belted peplos over it.

Though it is a mere fragment, the statue has retained an astonishing degree its monumental quality. The dignified posture, the simple folds of the drapery, the graceful locks, the quiet countenance, all contribute to the regal character of the whole. Its style recalls that of the pedimental figures of the temple of Zeus at Olympia. It has similar heavy-lidded eyes and well-shaped lips, similar undulating strands of hair and rhythmical folds of drapery. About 460-450 B.C. then, twenty years or so before the Parthenon, should be the date for the style of our new sculpture.

The statue is said to have been found in South Italy. It was published in 1935 by G. Lippold and P. Arndt in Brunn-Bruckmann's Denkmäler antiker Skulptur, numbers 763-765, being then in the collection of an antiquary in Switzerland. It was subsequently taken to Paris and arrived in this country in June 1940.

It is not necessary to repeat in detail the able description and discussions by the authors of the article in the Denkmäler; besides, the statue speaks for itself. Several important points, however, call for correction and amplification. And they may interest the readers of the Bulletin as instances of archaeological detective work.

To the question which immediately arises, whether the statue is a Greek original of the great period of the Olympia sculptures or an excellent Roman copy, Dr. Lippold and Dr. Arndt gave an indefinite answer, veering, however, to the opinion that the workmanship was Greek. Perhaps we can come nearer to a definite conclusion.

Certain parts—the back, for instance, with its stately folds and finely composed wavy hair, or the left arm with its sensitively carved sleeve—give the impression of original Greek work. And even though we take into consideration that the surface is much corroded and that weathering often softens the rather hard Roman renderings, it is difficult to find parallels among the many extant Roman copies for the delicate workmanship in our statue. Moreover, the fact that at the outer corner of the eye the upper lid does not cut into the lower one suggests Greek execution; for this rendering is characteristic of Greek sculptures before the middle of the fifth century but rarely occurs even in faithful Roman copies. Furthermore, the carving of the hair at the back with an unfinished, roughly tooled surface at the ends, points to Greek rather than Roman workmanship; for it was a common Greek rather than Roman practice to leave unfinished the parts of a statue (or of a vase) that did not show.

On the other hand, when we look at the face of our statue, more particularly at the hair over the forehead, we are aware of a difference. It is not only that the surface is better preserved, but the strands of the hair are more sharply and less deeply incised, as well as more stilted in design. In other words, the face, or at least certain parts of it, suggests Roman workmanship.

Before we can attempt an explanation of this remarkable phenomenon we must examine the face more closely. As is obvious from figure 2, it is separate from the back of the
Fig. 1. A fragmentary marble statue recently acquired by the Metropolitan Museum. In the Greek V century style
Figs. 2-6. The head of the statue; the fractured surfaces of the head and face, with modern dowel removed; and a detail of the hair on the left side.
Figs. 7-9. Three views of the Museum’s new statue
head, which is in one piece with the rest of the figure. Evidently by some accident the face was broken off. But that it belonged originally to the statue and is not a later substitution is shown by the similarity of the marble in the two pieces—fine-grained, not Carrara—and by the condition of the fractured surfaces (figs. 4, 5). Both are evidently ancient. In spite of being somewhat dulled by corrosion, they fit exactly, depression on protuberance and pro-
tubrance on depression—except in the central areas of both, which were hollowed out and roughly tooled. Into the facial piece a channel was bored (fig. 5).

At some time in antiquity, therefore, the face must have been broken off, and to re-
attach it the hollowed areas and channel were cut, perhaps a dowel inserted (the present
substantial one is modern, but we are told that originally there were remains of an ancient iron one), and cement or, more probably, lead poured in.

When was this repair made? The different workmanship of the face to which we have called attention perhaps gives a clue. We may surmise that the accident happened in the Roman epoch and that because parts of the hair and face were chipped, they had to be re-
worked. The difference between the surface of the face, which is relatively smooth, and that of the rest of the statue, which is much corro-
ded, may be explained by the supposition that, when the statue finally collapsed and was buried, the face became detached again and the two pieces were exposed to different con-
ditions in the ground.
So much for the period or periods of our statue. For its interpretation we perhaps also have a clue. As we have said, the top of the skull is missing. The extant upper surface is not a fracture but has been leveled off with a punch and smoothed round the edge (fig. 3). The natural conjecture that the figure was a karyatid and supported an architectural member is not possible; for the tooled area is not horizontal but oblique and in two registers. A more plausible theory is that the tooled area is due to a repair. At the time of the accident that detached the face, the top of the head perhaps broke off also and the rough fracture was tooled for the attachment of another piece. The new piece was perhaps of stucco rather than heavy marble, which would have been apt to slide off the oblique surface unless fastened with a dowel, of which there is no trace.

Now it is noteworthy that on the left side of the head, toward the back and above the fillet, the strands of hair suddenly stop and the surface is left unfinished. In spite of the corrosion several punch holes are visible (fig. 6). This part of the head, then, must have been covered by something that descended obliquely downward, leaving the front portion of the hair visible but hiding the back. What was it? We suggest a helmet. And if our statue wore a helmet she must have been Athena. In her left hand she probably held a spear, for there is an ancient hole on the upper left arm just at the place where a spear would rest and where it needed to be attached in some manner (fig. 1). Spear and helmet, therefore,—at least during the later history of the statue—were presumably of bronze.

Figures 12 and 14 show our statue with a helmet, for which the bulging hair and the fillet act as convenient props. It will be noted that in both the unfinished part of the head is completely covered. One of the helmets is of the so-called Attic type, which is worn, for instance, by the Athena depicted on the krater in the Louvre shown in figure 10. The other is of the so-called Corinthian type, like that worn by the Myronic Athena in Frankfurt (fig. 13) and Lord Elgin’s bronze statuette (fig. 11). A bronze helmet would, besides, have more or less covered the stucco part of the skull. Possibly the leather lining which we see in the Myronic Athena through the apertures of eyes, ears, and nose was rendered in stucco in our head. Before the accident the top of the skull

Figs. 12-14. Drawings of the Museum’s statue wearing a “Corinthian” helmet (left) and an “Attic” helmet (right). CENTER: head of a statue of Athena in Frankfurt. Roman copy of a Greek statue of about 450 B.C. From a cast.
was presumably of marble, in one piece with the rest of the head, and supported a bronze helmet.

Marble statues with bronze accessories are well known in Greek and Roman sculpture. We may recall the bronze corselet on a pedimental figure from the temple of Zeus at Olympia and the bronze reins and other appurtenances on the figures of the Parthenon frieze.

Representations of Athena in the general pose and style of our statue, dressed in a peplos, or a chiton and peplos, occur in the second quarter of the fifth century B.C., the period of our statue—for instance, the bronze statuette in the Elgin collection and the figure on the krater by the Niobid Painter in the Louvre, already mentioned. And there evidently was once a famous statue of this general type in fifth-century Athens, to judge by the reproductions on Athenian coins of the Roman period.

The large size of our statue suggests that it served as a cult figure in a sanctuary, presumably of Athena, if our reconstruction is correct, and perhaps in South Italy, if we may trust the report of its provenance. This would explain why, even after several centuries, the statue was so highly prized that when broken it was repaired instead of discarded. Athena was of course worshiped in many Greek cities of South Italy.

But these are all mere surmises. Whatever the original appearance, purpose, location, and vicissitudes of our statue, it is an important acquisition. Better than any other work in our collection it makes us realize the power and grandeur of Greek sculpture during the exalted period that followed the successful termination of the Persian and Carthaginian wars.

The statue, acc. no. 42.11.43, was purchased with income from the Rogers Fund. Its height as preserved is 51 3/16 in. (1.30 m.). The only restorations, in plaster, are slivers round the fracture where the face joins the head, and two small pieces of the hair. I have been much helped in the many problems presented by this statue by stimulating discussions with my colleagues both inside and outside the Museum—particularly William B. Dinsmoor and Karl Lehmann-Hartleben, Christine Alexander and Margarete Bieber. Figure 10 was reproduced from Furtwängler and Reichhold, Griechische Vasenmalerei, plate 108, figure 11 from the British Museum Quarterly, volume VIII (1933-1934), plate 36, and figures 12 and 14 from drawings by Lindsley F. Hall.