

THE HEAD OF HERAKLES IN THE PEDIMENT OF THE OLD ATHENA TEMPLE

In the excavations on the North Slope of the Acropolis in 1938¹ a few pieces of sculpture were brought to light, one of which is of exceptional interest. It is an archaic poros head (color-plate on opposite page and Figs. 1-6), discovered in a well (E) at a depth of 6.60 m. together with sherds of pottery dating from the end of the sixth and the beginning of the fifth century B.C.

The head² was found in several fragments, some of which, especially those from the lower part of the face, were in a very crumbly condition. The soft poros, because of the long immersion in the mud of the well, had swelled and warped, and was so disintegrated that it was difficult to fit the fragments together. Several rough stones of large size were lying around and below the head, and it is obvious that the smaller fragments broke away when the head was thrown down among the stones. The upper part of the face is in a comparatively good state of preservation, but the surface is damaged in a few places. On the top of the head is a deep gash, which seems to have been cut with an axe or broad chisel. The fillet is broken away at the back, and very little of the mass of hair hanging from the neck remains. Part of the nose, the lower lip, and the end of the beard are missing. In the forehead the surface has flaked off at the thin edge of a large fragment which included the nose, part of the right eye, and the middle of the brow. Both eyeballs are slightly damaged in the centre.

The crumbly condition of the stone in the lower part of the face may be partly due to the action of fire or weathering, and it is not impossible that the brown color, applied freely on the beard for sizing, had a detrimental effect on the stone. Above the left eye the surface of the stone is blackened, but whether this is due to fire or to some other agency is not certain. Some black specks, visible at various points on the face, seem to have come from the black pigment used for rendering details of the eyes and for the hair on top of the head above the fillet. It is not unlikely that the discoloration over the left eye was caused by this black color, which comes off easily. The largest of the fragments was found, face down, in the well, and in this position the black on the hair could easily have washed off and run down over the forehead.

The material is a cream-colored limestone, of uneven hardness and density. It contains several natural faults, the largest of which is an open crack, over 3 cm. wide,

¹ A brief report on the excavations has appeared in the *A.J.A.*, XLII, 1938, pp. 445-450. An article, dealing with the Mycenaean water supply of the Acropolis and with the pottery from the fill of the underground passage will appear in an early number of *Hesperia*.

² Measurements: Preserved height, 0.26 m.; breadth at cheeks, *ca.* 0.17 m.; greatest preserved breadth, 0.26 m.





Fig. 1. Head of Herakles, Front View

below the right ear and extending horizontally across the whole face (Figs. 2, 3, 5). Originally these cracks were probably filled with plaster, traces of which are preserved at the right temple, on the left side of the nose, and on the fillet above the forehead. Where the surface was in good condition the colors were applied directly on the stone.

The colors have largely disappeared, but enough is preserved to restore the color scheme with fair accuracy. The top of the head was painted black, whereas the curls below the fillet were probably dark green. The color preserved on hair and beard is partly blue and partly green, but it seems likely that the green was the original color. This was applied very heavily, but only in a few depressions is it preserved at all. Beneath the green, both on hair and beard, are clear traces of a brown sizing. The fillet round the head is divided into sections, every other one of which is painted bright red, with the alternating sections now in the natural color of the stone but possibly black originally. This gives the effect of a twisted band, consisting of two strands, one red and one white. Between the strands is a narrow raised band which may also have been set off by a different color.

The color of the flesh was indicated by a dilute wash of red, so thinly applied that the gray color of the stone probably shone through to some extent, giving a pinkish effect. Black was used for eyebrows and eyelashes and probably for the irises. Whether the pupils were rendered differently cannot be determined, since the surface of the stone has been slightly damaged in the centre of both eyes. It must also remain uncertain whether the white of the eyes was painted or left in the natural color of the stone. The mustache preserves only faint traces of the brown sizing, but it is likely that it was painted in the same color as beard and hair. All traces of color have disappeared from the lips, which may have been colored pink like the rest of the face, or possibly they were tinted with a darker shade of red.

The face is modeled in the early archaic manner with prominent features sharply set off from the broad, plain forehead and rounded cheeks. All the details of the face were clearly perceived by the artist, and slightly exaggerated in the execution. The face is very broad and short, but this effect would be less noticeable if the beard were preserved.

The hair below the fillet is parted and arranged in heavy curls, five on either side of the forehead. Between the two curls in the centre is a space, 0.023 m. wide. One curl is preserved behind the right ear, but in the back the hair seems to have been arranged in large rounded locks. The hair on top of the flat head is perfectly plain. The fillet turns down in the back at the edge of the break, but the exact arrangement at this point is not clear. The beard is rendered with small elongated curls, like question marks turned upside down. In front of the ears on either side the beard consists of a single row of curls and lower down it broadens into several rows. But the two sides are not alike. On the right there are only three curls in the single row before

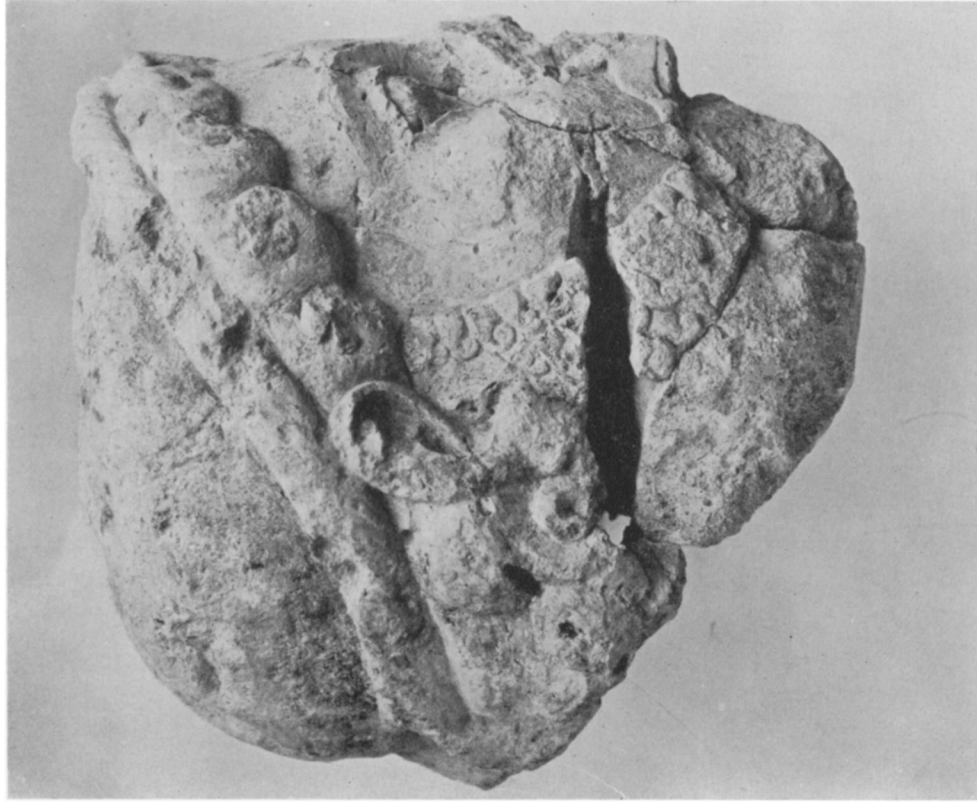


Fig. 2. Head of Herakles, Right Profile



Fig. 3. Head of Herakles, Left Profile

the second row begins, whereas on the left side there were at least five curls in the single row. The reason for this difference will appear in the discussion about the pose of the figure. At one point on the right cheek are preserved four rows of curls, but toward the front it must have narrowed again. The mustache is perfectly flat and only slightly raised.

The eyes are large and deeply set. The upper eyelid describes a sharp curve, whereas the lower lid is more nearly straight. The irises are set off from the white by a well marked circular groove. The eyebrows consist of slightly raised ridges, through which runs a shallow groove painted black. The nose is mostly missing, and of the mouth only a portion of the upper lip and the left corner are preserved.

The head belongs to the pediment group of sculpture in the Acropolis Museum, representing the struggle of Herakles with the Triton. Even before an attempt had been made to fit the head to the torso of one of the two figures it was quite obvious that it belonged to one or the other.¹ The size of the head—it is too large for any of the other pedimental groups of poros from the Acropolis—and the nature of the stone, which differs from that of the other poros sculpture, show that it cannot belong to any other group. The two figures of Herakles and the Triton are cut from a single block of poros with well marked horizontal veins which in some places form wide open cracks. The largest of these (Figs. 4 and 5), extending from the shoulders of Herakles clear across the necks of both figures, has caused the stone to split at that point. This crack, as we have seen, is particularly prominent at the break of the newly discovered head. Fortunately the head makes contact with the body both above and below the crack so as to leave no room for doubt about the correct position (Fig. 5).

The addition of the new head now makes it possible to determine with accuracy the exact pose of the Herakles figure, which differs from all the proposed restorations. However divergent their views in other respects, scholars are unanimous in restoring the head of Herakles in full profile and looking down.² Apparently they have been misled by representations of the same scene on vase paintings, where the heads of both figures are, as a rule, in profile, though not always looking in the same direction. Likewise the smaller Herakles-Triton group from the Acropolis shows the head

¹ Because of the incorrect restorations of the group, in which Herakles' head is in full profile, I was first of the opinion that the head belonged to the Triton figure, and this tentative view was expressed in the fortnightly report of the excavation for May, 1938.

² Brückner, *Ath. Mitt.*, XV, 1890, p. 115 and pl. II, restores both heads in full profile, but admits that this pose is conjectural. Heberdey states categorically that the head of Herakles must be restored as looking down and bent forward to the right: "Der verlorene Kopf kann - - dem Halsstumpfe nach nur so ergänzt werden, dass er abwärts blickend sich nach rechts vorneigte und so den Tritonkopf teilweise verdeckte," *Altattische Porosskulptur*, p. 49, but the author does not illustrate the restored pose. Buschor, *Größenverhältnisse attischer Porosgiebel*, pl. 9, 6, and Schuchhardt, *Ath. Mitt.*, LX-LXI, 1935-36, figs. 14, 16, follow Heberdey in the restorations of the two heads.

of Triton in profile, and apparently the missing head of Herakles was similarly turned. But on the larger group there are clear indications to show how the heads ought to be turned. There is obviously no room for the head of Herakles to be shown in full profile looking down, and it could not possibly have been turned so far to his right as to leave room for the head of Triton behind. The collar-bone of Herakles, clearly indicated and well preserved (Figs. 4 and 5), shows that his face was approximately in three-quarter view. The head of Triton on the same evidence must have been turned very slightly toward the spectator's left.¹



Fig. 4. Figure of Herakles with Head Attached

These indications of the torsos, sufficiently clear to determine the positions of the two heads, are in full accord with the slight asymmetry of the new head. A photograph taken straight from the front shows a slight contraction on the right side (see above, pp. 93-95). A corresponding asymmetry can be observed in the so-called Blue-beard from the other side of the pediment. More important still is the fact

¹ Dickens, *Catalogue of the Acropolis Museum*, p. 83, makes the statement that the head "of Herakles must have been in profile, that of the Triton probably, to judge from the collar-bone, in three-quarter view."

that the Herakles head is not looking down but almost straight ahead as if aware of his spectators. The abrupt bending back of the head which this pose necessitates leaves



Fig. 5. Head of Herakles, Showing Contact with Torso

sufficient room for the head of Triton, but gives a somewhat unsatisfactory view of the Herakles figure as seen directly from the front. When viewed from below, as intended, the pose seems perfectly normal.



Fig. 6. Poros Pediment, New Arrangement

The old problems concerning the restoration of the pediment and the identity and chronology¹ of the building to which it belonged are not seriously affected by the discovery of the new head. That the Herakles-Triton group is part of the same pediment as the Triple-Bodied Monster is by now universally accepted, and the addition of the new head strengthens this view. Stylistically the Herakles head is very close to the heads from the other side of the pediment, but it differs considerably in details. Hair and beard are different in the two figures, but in the shape of the face, and in the rendering of eyes and mouth the similarity is too strong to be explained merely on the basis of contemporaneity.

The two groups, the Herakles-Triton and the Triple-Bodied Monster, can hardly have formed the whole pediment without a central motif separating the two. From the point of composition such an arrangement is wholly unsatisfactory, and would probably never have been considered possible were it not for the mistaken idea that the early Athena Temple was built without a peristyle. W. H. Schuchhardt has now convincingly shown that the peristyle belongs to the original construction of the temple,² and has regrouped the poros sculpture in the Acropolis Museum so as to obtain two pediments of the proper size to fit the gables of the temple. For the west pediment he has proposed to place the large bull and lions, Acropolis, No. 3, in the centre with the Herakles-Triton group on the left and the Triple-Bodied Monster on the right. This arrangement is borne out by the style of the three groups and by details of carving and coloring of the figures. In Figure 6 is shown a photographic view of the three groups without any restorations.³

Well E, in which the head was discovered, contained comparatively few other objects, but these are sufficiently characteristic to show the approximate date of the fill. Another well, A, which lies higher up the slope and was filled at the same time, contained large quantities of pottery most of which belongs to the late sixth and early fifth centuries B.C.⁴ Two fragments of a black-figured plate,

¹ See Schuchhardt, *Ath. Mitt.*, LX-LXI, 1935-36, p. 95; Weickert, *Typen der archaischen Architektur*, p. 148.

² *Ath. Mitt.*, LX-LXI, 1935-36, pp. 1-111.

³ The three photographs were made to the same scale and placed together as seen in the figure. The proportions of the figures are shown in Schuchhardt's drawing, *loc. cit.*, fig. 14.

⁴ A detailed study of the pottery from the excavations of 1937-1938 will appear in an early number of *Hesperia*.

signed by Sotes as maker and Paideros as painter, were found in Well A, and a small fragment of the same plate came from the fill of Well E. Some fragments of black-figured skyphoi, related to the style of the Theseus painter, are dated about the turn of the century, or slightly later, and the red-figured sherds from the two wells can be dated with fair accuracy. One small piece of a red-figured cup, found in Well E at a depth of 2-3 m., belongs to a class of vases from about 500-480; and another fragment, from a depth slightly below that at which the head was found, is dated in the last quarter of the sixth century. The uniformity of the contents shows that Well E was filled up at one time, and the filling of Well A and of two other wells, C and D, in the same vicinity took place about the same time. Whatever was the reason for filling up the wells, it can hardly have been lack of water, for all of them still have a sufficient water supply which lasts throughout the dry season.¹ It is likely that the whole upper slope underwent extensive changes at this time, and these operations are probably connected with the leveling that took place on the Acropolis after the departure of the Persians. Some of the potsherds from the wells belong to vases found in the Acropolis excavations, which seems to indicate that the superfluous earth on the Acropolis was thrown over the walls and used for filling on the slopes below. The quantity of earth must have been considerable, enough to cover the sharp rocks on the upper slope, otherwise the poros head could hardly have come down without being completely shattered.

The other fragments of the pediment were found to the south and east of the Parthenon, in the so-called "Tyrannenschutt."² If this area was filled up as early as the last decade of the sixth century, we must assume that part of this fill was later removed and thrown over the wall. This is hardly the place to discuss this intricate problem, the more so as several scholars are at present engaged in revising the earlier views.³ If the discovery of the Herakles head can be said to throw any new light on the question, it would seem to favor the view that the "Tyrannenschutt" is really the same as the "Perserschutt." It would simplify the situation considerably, if we could show for certain that the filling up of the wells on the North Slope took place at the same time as the leveling for the terrace south of the Parthenon. This would offer the most natural explanation for the separation of the head from the rest of the poros fragments. On the other hand it is conceivable that the whole pedi-

¹ Two of the wells, D and E, were filled up again at the close of the excavation; the other two, A and B, were left open to supply water for the trees that will be planted in the excavated area when the work has been finished.

² See Guy Dickens, *op. cit.*, pp. 9, 67, 79, 82.

³ See the article by W. Kolbe in *Jahrbuch*, LI, 1936, pp. 1-64, in which he has endeavored to show that the first plan of the Parthenon belongs to the period immediately after the destruction by the Persians. "Von Tyrannenschutt kann keine Rede mehr sein," *loc. cit.*, p. 62. Dinsmoor, *A.J.A.*, XXXVIII, 1934, pp. 408-448, fixes the date on Aug. 31, 488 B.C. The earlier theories are summarized by him on pp. 408-416.

ment group was thrown away and used as fill when the old temple was rebuilt in the time of the tyrants ¹ and that part of this fill was later removed and thrown down the slope.

The date of the fill on the Acropolis is not likely to be determined by excavations outside the walls, but might be accomplished by a thorough re-examination of the whole area between the Parthenon and the south wall of the citadel and of all the existing walls of this section. This is one of the tasks which the archaeologists of the future will have to shoulder in order to complete and rectify the picture of the Acropolis in the all-important sixth century before Christ.

OSCAR BRONEER

¹ The question may be raised whether we have any further reason to speak of a restoration of the temple at this time. Is it not possible that there were two temples of approximately the same size, one on the site of the later Parthenon, the other the so-called Dörpfeld temple, and that both existed until the time of the Persians and were then destroyed?