

A POROS SPHINX FROM CORINTH

(PLATES 57-60)

IN 1936 an Archaic sphinx of poros limestone was recovered from a Byzantine drain in the area of the Roman Forum of Corinth. It was noted by Charles H. Morgan in the report for that year and was subsequently published by G. M. A. Richter in her book on the Archaic grave stelai of Attica.¹

Even though she acknowledged the Corinthian provenance of the sphinx, Richter included it in her series of Attic grave stelai surmounted by a sphinx because of its similarity to a sphinx in the Metropolitan Museum of Art said to come from Attica.² Nonetheless, the sphinx from Corinth bears little relation to any other Attic sphinx published by Miss Richter; it is, in fact, unique in its style while the sphinxes of Attic origin are strikingly uniform. Furthermore, the Corinthian piece is worked from poros limestone, while all but one of the Attic sphinxes are of marble.³ In light of these differences—provenance, style and material—it is apparent that the sphinx from Corinth deserves a more detailed examination.

SPHINX S 2230

Pls. 57, 58

Forum, South Stoa, Area M, from a Byzantine drain. Joining hair fragment from a nearby Byzantine well and possible leg fragment (S 2150) from same levels. Corinth notebook 151, p. 119.

Pres. H. of sphinx 0.765 m., max. L. between chest and rear 0.503 m., max. W. at torso 0.22 m., at haunches 0.235 m. Pres. H. of hair fragment 0.148 m., pres. W. 0.137 m. Mended from seven fragments. Missing face, legs and tail.

¹ C. H. Morgan, "Excavations at Corinth, 1935-1936," *AJA* 40, 1936, pp. 476-489, figs. 16-18; G. M. A. Richter, *The Archaic Gravestones of Attica*, London 1961 (= *AGA* with the relevant catalogue number), no. 15, p. 17, figs. 50-53. Athens National Museum = N.M.; Acropolis Museum = A.M.; Metropolitan Museum of Art = M.M.A. The sphinx is in Corinth Museum.

This paper was begun in 1973 for submission to the American School of Classical Studies at Athens in accordance with the requirements of Regular Membership. I wish to thank Charles K. Williams, II for offering the piece for study and Dr. Nancy Bookidis for permission to publish it. To both I am indebted for reading the paper and offering many helpful comments. I also wish to thank Kathleen Slane Wright and Professor C. W. J. Eliot; both of them helped me to clarify my observations and the presentation of the argument that follows.

² *AGA*, no. 14, a headless sphinx "said to have been found in Attica," p. 16. Their similarities are seen mainly in the grooves on each side of the lower hind leg, which define the tibia from the flesh of the haunch. Also worth remarking on are the similarities of the quick rise of the wings from the back, the oblique position of the head to the body, and the material—fine-grained poros limestone. The sphinxes differ in size (Metropolitan, H. 0.147 m. to Corinth, H. 0.765 m.) and in decoration. The Metropolitan sphinx remains, to my mind, a separate problem, and will not be considered in the discussion in this paper.

³ A sphinx from Vari (*AGA*, no. 4, N.M. 4476). I wish to thank Dr. Nicholas Yalouris, Director of the National Museum, Athens, for allowing me to inspect the Vari sphinx and its associated fragments (*AGA*, fig. 18) in the storerooms of the museum.



Preserves fragments of hair at back of head and small end of tress on sphinx's left shoulder. Neck broken straight across at base. Wings on each side are chipped all along the outer edges. Traces of red, blue, and white paint turned yellow preserved on sphinx's left wing.

Soft, fine-grained poros limestone.

A sphinx with large wings that curl up behind the shoulders and return towards the head is seated on its haunches. The coiffure consists of rolls of hair which incline down towards the back and left shoulder. The edge of the face is preserved as a broken line on the forward edge of the hair. The neck is almost circular in cross section and, though the head was turned, shows no sign of torsion. The chest projects beyond the shoulders which are broad, compact and subtly differentiated.

The tripartite wings describe an "S" shape. They consist of a covert, which develops from the shoulders, a mid-wing area, and an outer zone of flight feathers which rise to the wingtip and are defined by scalloped edges and incised lines. Each successive area is recessed from its neighbor, the flight feathers being the fur-

thest inset. Each feather is painted with a group of stripes of white, blue, red, blue, and white (visible on the proper left wing on Pl. 57). The mid-wing on each side is decorated with a series of drilled dots (thirty-two on the sphinx's right wing) set directly behind the plane of the covert. They are regularly spaced from top to bottom and have a diameter of between 0.004 and 0.005 m. The area between the wings is cut as a shallow trough between the scalloped tips. At the apex of this trough is a squared cutting, approximately 0.03 by 0.04 m. and 0.03 m. deep.

The raised plane of the rib cage marks the lower edge of the wing. The abdomen is shown as a slightly depressed area which curves down to the groin. A circular hole, reported by Morgan,⁴ is visible behind the forelegs and preserves traces of iron rust. It no doubt received an iron rod or dowel. The groin is marked by a "Y" intersection of the belly and the outward splayed thighs. The sloping ridge of the spine terminated at the preserved tail stub. Traces of the tail show that it curled under the rear and up along the sphinx's right haunch.

Previous work on the sphinx as a subject of stone sculpture during the Archaic period is basically limited to Richter's discussion in *The Archaic Gravestones of Attica*, where she treats the sphinx more as a crowning element of a grave monument than as a sculptural entity in its own right. Her consideration of the sculptural style of the sphinxes is, therefore, cursory. On the other hand, it is clear that Richter thought of them as a unified group of Archaic Attic sculpture. This uniformity is primarily seen in the posture and approach to anatomical detail and serves as a basis for comparison with sphinxes, such as ours, of different provenance or place of manufacture.⁵

⁴ Morgan, *op. cit.* (footnote 1 above), p. 476.

⁵ A substantial number of sphinxes are of Attic or Athenian origin (for convenience, Attic will refer to Attica and Athens, except when specified): *AGA*, no. 4 (N.M. 4476); *AGA*, no. 11 (Kerameikos Museum, Pl. 60:a); *AGA*, no. 12 (N.M. 28, from Spata, Pl. 59:a); *AGA*, no. 19 (N.M. 76, from Piraeus, Pl. 59:b); *AGA*, no. 16 (N.M. 2891, from the Themistoklean Wall, Pl. 60:b); *AGA*, no. 39 (N.M. 78); and an unpublished fragmentary example in the Brauron Museum, inv. no. BE 14. All of these are from funereal contexts. From the Acropolis come A.M. 630, 632, 4164, 4132 and 2636 (published in H. Schrader, E. Langholtz, and W.-H. Schuchhardt, *Die archaischen Marmorbildwerke der Akropolis*, Frankfurt am Main 1924).

It would require a separate study to show the development of the Attic sphinx; here it is sufficient to mention that the Attic sphinx is defined by the manner of working the wings, the

Head. The preserved section of hair and exposed areas of the broken neck on our sphinx indicate that the head was not set perpendicularly to one flank as is the rule with Attic sphinxes;⁶ rather, it was set obliquely, looking out over its right shoulder. This is demonstrable from the manner in which the right side of the coiffure falls to the creature's right shoulder, while the hair of the left side trails behind on the shoulder and exposes the side of the neck (Pl. 58: a). Any attempt to restore a face set perpendicularly to the flank is thwarted by two difficulties: first, the face would have to be extremely narrow (*ca.* 0.06 m.) in relation to its height (*ca.* 0.12 m. on the basis of the pres. H. of the hair fragment, 0.148 m.) and second, the entire left side of the head including the ear would be exposed with the hair pulled behind it. The one would be an unparalleled proportion for an Archaic head, the other a strange rendering of the hair.

Hair (Pls. 57, 58). The layered coiffure of the sphinx from Corinth is a 6th century development of the earlier *Etagenperücke* (layer-peruke).⁷ It is not often

relation of the head to the shoulders and the placement of the tail; these elements are traceable in the earliest through the latest examples. As for Richter's chronological arrangement in *AGA*, the placement of several of the sphinxes is disputable. The Piraeus example seems to me contemporary with one in Copenhagen (*AGA*, no. 13), and both are related to the Spata sphinx (note especially the hind quarters, Pl. 59: a), which is earlier than the Kerameikos sphinx. See also: B. S. Ridgway, *AJA* 66, 1962, p. 421, and E. Harrison, *The Athenian Agora*, XI, *Archaic and Archaistic Sculpture*, Princeton 1965 (= *Agora XI*), p. 12.

Various factors, however, could confuse the identification of the style of the Attic sphinx. There could be a difference between Athenian, strictly speaking, such as the Kerameikos sphinx, and Attic, such as the Spata or Vari sphinxes. Such an eventuality would confuse trends and technical features used for identification on the basis of style, but *contra*, see: *Agora XI*, p. 5, note 22. Outside influences could also come into play: see J. Ducat, *Les kouroi de Ptoion*, Bibliothèque des Écoles Français d'Athènes et de Rome, fasc. 219, Paris 1971, pp. 263, 267 on the sphinx A.M. 630, as well as the sphinx N.M. 2891 (Pl. 60: b), both of which display strong island influence. Cf. D. White, "The Cyrene Sphinx, its Capital and its Column," *AJA* 75, 1971, pp. 47-53. A final word: Since the sphinx was a considerable addition to an already expensive grave-stone, its quality may have been affected by the amount of money the patron would pay.

⁶ With the possible exception of the sphinx in New York (footnote 2 above), there are no Attic sphinxes used on grave stelai that do not have the head set perpendicularly to the body, although that from the Themistoklean wall (N.M. 2891, Pl. 60: b) has a head slightly turned towards the chest. "Furtwängler's sphinx" from Aigina of the early 5th century B.C. also has an obliquely placed head. See B. S. Ridgway, *The Severe Style*, Princeton 1970 (= *Severe Style*), pp. 35-36, figs. 51, 52. Dedicatory sphinxes usually stare straight ahead: the Cyrene sphinx (footnote 5 above); A.M. 630; the Naxian sphinx (P. Amandry, *Fouilles de Delphes*, II, *Topographie et architecture. La colone des Naxiens et la portique des Athéniens*, Paris 1953, pp. 3-32, pls. I-XVII); the Delian sphinx (J. Durm, *Die Baukunst der Griechen*, Leipzig 1910, p. 302, fig. 279: 3, 4; and Amandry, *op. cit.*, p. 19, note 1); and Aigina (G. Gruben, "Die Sphinx-Säule von Aegina," *AthMitt* 80, 1965, pp. 170-208, Beil. 65-75, pls. 1-4). The exception, if it is dedicatory, is A.M. 632 which has a perpendicularly set face.

⁷ F. Poulsen in *Der Orient in der frühgriechischen Kunst*, Leipzig 1912, pp. 337-360, first defined this hairstyle. See also R. H. Jenkins, *Dedolica*, Cambridge 1936, pp. 19-20, 36, 59; K. Levin, "The Male Figure in Egyptian and Greek Sculpture," *AJA* 68, 1964, p. 26. The traditional *Etagenperücke* fell evenly down onto the shoulders, whereas on our sphinx the left side of its hair is worked as a trailing tress.

found among Attic sphinxes or *korai*; when it is, it is usually accompanied by frontal tresses.⁸ Furthermore, it is a favorite Corinthian hairstyle.⁹

Chest and shoulders. On Attic sphinxes the shoulders usually project beyond the chest, and the head and neck are set back from the shoulders.¹⁰ Thus the chest is not anatomically developed and the head appears to be dislocated, as if it were mounted on the back (Pls. 59, 60).¹¹ By contrast the chest of the Corinthian sphinx projects slightly beyond the smoothly worked shoulders and continues without interruption into the neck (Pl. 58: b).

Wings. The wings of our sphinx are fully integrated with the body, with the breast and shoulders worked as one unit. The shoulder is carved without differentiation as part of the wing. The combination of these elements results in an "S" form, which flows from the shoulder up to the wing tip, and is reiterated in each of the wing divisions (Pl. 57).

Attic sphinxes do not present this integrated appearance, partly because the chest does not protrude beyond the shoulders, and partly because the head is placed further back on the body. The wings appear more as an article of clothing, rather like a mantle wrapped around the shoulders and flung over the back—more decorative than dynamic (Pl. 59).

A further difference is in the carving of the wings of the sphinx from Corinth. The wing divisions are emphasized by slightly set-back flat planes, whereas the surfaces of the wings of Attic sphinxes are concave and the divisions are usually created by the use of paint and incision. Also the wings of Attic sphinxes are separated by a deeply cut V-shaped trough, whereas those of our sphinx are worked as a single unit.¹²

⁸ See G. M. A. Richter, *Korai*, London 1968, no. 75, figs. 236-239; and *AGA*, nos 13, 17, 19.

⁹ The *Etagenperücke* in its pure and evolved form can be found on numerous Corinthian and Corinthian-influenced works; see K. Wallenstein, *Korinthische Plastik des 7. und 6. Jahrhunderts vor Christus*, Bonn 1971, pp. 22, 24, 33, 37 with note 118, 44, 71, and for later (mid-6th century) examples, pls. 17 and 20.

¹⁰ The protruding shoulders of the Attic sphinx are a peculiarly Attic phenomenon and can be compared with the development of the shoulder on sculptured Attic horses. See H. Payne, *Archaic Marble Sculptures of the Acropolis*, London [1936], no. 575, pl. 16: 4; no. 606, pl. 134: 2, 3; no. 700, pls. 137-139; N. Bookidis, "Archaic Sculptures from Corinth (From the Notes of Edward Capps, Jr.)," *Hesperia* 39, 1970, p. 321.

¹¹ It appears that the Attic artists found it difficult to grant the sphinx its own physical reality. As a result they emphasized rather than blended the three beings from which it was made, namely bird, lion and woman. For this reason we find the covert and wings of the bird are not integrated with the shoulder and chest of the lion, and the female head is decorated with a necklace at the throat (on the Spata sphinx, Pl. 59: a) and detailed (on the Kerameikos piece, Pl. 60: a) with human clavicles. Cf. *Severe Style*, p. 36.

¹² Concave wing surfaces are found on sphinxes of all periods (*AGA*, nos. 1, 2, 4, 12, 11, 19, 16, and A.M. 630, 632), though with a distinct flattening on the latest four (*AGA*, nos. 37-40).

The V-shaped cutting is also found on sphinxes of all periods, although the above-listed latest four do not have this feature, probably as a result of a change in the position of the wings and less reliance on the strength of the stone.

Posture. Attic sphinxes have a strongly horizontal posture. This is in part due to the crouched position of many of these sphinxes, but also to some undefinable element of style. The posture is open: the wings rise abruptly from the back; the haunches splay out from the torso and fully expose it, while the tail often curls up and around from the rear to attach higher up on the back (Pls. 59, 60: a).¹³

The sphinx from Corinth is seated. This is demonstrated by the manner in which the haunches are drawn into the torso and the resulting continuous curve of the back (compare Pls. 57 and 59). The curve of the back in combination with the vertical rise of the wings imparts an upward thrust to the sphinx. The general impression is of compactness: the haunches closely hug the body; the legs are attached along their whole length to the haunches; and the tail is tightly curled under the rump and along the inside of the sphinx's right haunch.

Anatomical detail. As we can see from the approach to the legs, haunches, wings, and tail, the Attic artists concerned themselves with freeing the extremities from the body. They also concentrated on anatomical detail as witnessed by pronounced rib cages, sunken abdominal cavities, rippling muscles and occasional minutiae such as clavicles, anus and vulva (Pl. 60: a).¹⁴

The anatomical renderings of the sphinx from Corinth are limited. Details are subordinated to larger, more expansive body parts, but though the later predominate, some details stand out, as for example the raised bump on the haunch indicating the pelvis-femur joint, the groove between the rib cage and the abdomen, the deep groove separating the pelvis from the rear forelegs, and the projection of the chest in relation to the combined shoulder-wing unit. All of these examples, however, are only general anatomical indications and bear little comparison to the detailed carving of the Attic sphinxes.

The differences between these sphinxes are ones of style. The sculptor of the sphinx from Corinth chose to represent his subject compactly. He kept detail to a minimum, preferring to create broad surfaces and integrated body units. By contrast the sculptors of Attic sphinxes broke up body surfaces with anatomical detail and freed the extremities from the confines of the body.

Some of the differences, however, can be attributed to the different material from which the Corinthian sphinx was cut. Poros limestone is weak and cannot support body elements carved free from the torso. Thus the wings of our sphinx are

¹³ On the Attic sphinxes the tail originally lay flat along the back and curled around to the primary (facial) side of the sphinx (*AGA*, no. 1, the Porto Raphti sphinx) or under and around the haunch as on the Vari example (*AGA*, no. 4). With the Spata sphinx (Pl. 59: a), which also shows the change from the seated to the crouching posture, the rump becomes pointed and the tail curls up and away from it and returns to a point higher on the back. This manner of executing the tail became a formal characteristic of the Attic sphinxes and lasted until the very end of their use in Attica.

¹⁴ On this see the Kerameikos sphinx (*AGA*, no. 11), but this detail is not visible on any of the published photographs. See also the Boston sphinx (*AGA*, no. 38, fig. 113).

cut as a single unit; had they been cut separately, they would have been easily broken. The sculptor registered his concern for the weakness of his material in other ways: he kept the buttocks and rear legs closely bound with the torso and the fragile tail attached at all points to the body. In fact, the only elements freed from the rest of the body were the forelegs, as can be seen from the preserved stubs of the legs. It is most likely, however, that the forelegs did not bear the weight of the sphinx. The traces of iron rust in the circular cutting behind them indicate that an iron rod had been placed there. Such a device would admirably serve to transfer the weight of the torso and wings from the forelegs directly onto the plinth of the statue.

That the sculptor would have taken such precautions to ensure the structural integrity of the sphinx seems to indicate that he was well acquainted with the limitations of poros limestone. What other evidence is there for a tradition of working poros at Corinth?

High quality, finely grained poros is abundantly found throughout the Corinthia, whereas high quality marble is not. Accessible deposits of poros are found along the southern coast of the Gulf of Corinth from as far west as Sikyon extending eastwards across the Isthmus to Kenchreai.¹⁵ A few ancient poros quarries are known, one east of Hexamilia and another, containing very fine-grained poros, on the north side of the east end of the canal.¹⁶ The nearest marble, on the other hand, is found on Mount Geraneia above modern-day Loutraki. This marble, however, is given to fracturing owing to the heavy veins of mica that run through it and is not of a uniform color but is streaked blue gray by the mica. Examples of the use of this marble for sculpture are not positively attributable, and quarries have not been located. Archaic sculpture in marble from Corinth and its surroundings is limited to the perirrhanterion from Isthmia, the Tenea kouros of island marble and the recently discovered sphinx from Corinth, said to be made from Geraneian marble.¹⁷ In fact, it appears that the widespread importation of marble for sculpturing at Corinth did not begin until the 5th century B.C., the earliest piece being the youth's head in the Severe Style.¹⁸ Except for the above-noted pieces, all of the 6th century sculpture from the Corinthia is of poros limestone. To the list published by N. Bookidis can be added the recently published torso fragment from Isthmia and a

¹⁵ B. von Freyberg, *Geologie des Isthmus von Korinth*, *Erlanger geologischer Abhandlungen*, Heft 95, Erlangen 1973, pp. 21-22, pl. 31.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, and pls. 23, 28.

¹⁷ Perirrhanterion: O. Broneer, *Isthmia*, I, *The Temple of Poseidon*, Princeton 1971, pp. 11-12, pl. 7; and *idem*, "Excavations at Isthmia," *Hesperia* 27, 1958, pp. 24-27, pls. 10, 11: a, where the piece is dated to the mid-7th century B.C., and the marble is said to be Lakonian.

Tenea kouros: G. M. A. Richter, *Kouroi*, 3rd ed., London 1968, no. 73, pp. 84-85, figs. 245-250; G. de Luca, *ArchClas* 11, 1959, pp. 1-30, has proposed a lower date, ca. 540 B.C. I wish to thank Professor B. S. Ridgway for this last reference.

New sphinx from Corinth: E. Protonariou-Deilaki, «*Ἡ Σφίγξ τῆς Κορίνθου*,» *AAA*, 1973, pp. 181-187.

¹⁸ *Severe Style*, p. 59, *passim*, fig. 75.

number of pieces noted by Payne:¹⁹ two early 6th century lions from Loutraki, now in Copenhagen, and another Archaic lion from Perachora, now in Boston.

A number of these poros sculptures offer further evidence of their Corinthian origin when compared with Corinthian works in other media. The two lions in Copenhagen closely resemble panthers on Corinthian painted pottery. Their muzzles are indicated by painted and dotted incised areas, and they have painted and dotted sockets under the eyes and below the mane against the ear. This decoration finds a good parallel on an Early Corinthian vase in Leipzig and is comparable to that on a later vase.²⁰ Incision and dotting are also found on the faces of the panthers in the Corfu pediment.²¹

Another example of this interconnection is the "layer-peruke" hairstyle, already suggested as a typical Corinthian hairstyle (above, p. 248). Bookidis noted that this hairstyle was used on one of the fragments she examined.²² She showed that it bore a close resemblance to hairstyles on Protocorinthian pottery as well as to contemporary work in other media.

Our own sphinx also demonstrates this relationship among Corinthian works. The manner in which the wings are carved with three receding planes is also seen on a terracotta sphinx from Corinth dated in the mid-6th century.²³ A more striking comparison between stone and terracotta sculpture and painted pottery can be made on the basis of the row of drilled dots behind the covert on the mid-wing section of our sphinx (Pls. 57, 58: b). This detail is found on a number of terracotta sphinxes and other fantastic creatures from Corinth, Kalydon, Delphi, and Aigina.²⁴ On all

¹⁹ Bookidis, *op. cit.* (footnote 10 above), pp. 313-325; H. Payne, *Necrocorinthia*, Oxford 1931 (= NC), pp. 243-244.

Isthmia torso: B. S. Ridgway, "A Poros Kouros from Isthmia," *Hesperia* 44, 1975, pp. 426-430.

Copenhagen lions: G. Lippold, *Antiken Skulpturen der Glyptothek Ny Carlsberg*, Leipzig 1924, p. 9, figs. 1, 2; E. Poulsen, *Catalogue of Ancient Sculpture of the Ny Carlsberg Glyptothek*, Copenhagen 1951, nos. 5, 6; and excellent photographs in H. Brunn and F. Bruckmann, *Denkmäler griechischer und römischer Sculptur*, Munich 1912, text to nos. 640-645, pp. 8-9, figs. 4-11.

Boston lion: L. D. Caskey, *Catalogue of Greek and Roman Sculpture*, Boston 1925, no. 10, pp. 15-18; C. C. Vermeule, *Greek, Etruscan and Roman Art*, rev. ed., Boston 1972, pp. 49, 57; and excellent plate in Brunn-Bruckmann, *op. cit.*, no. 641.

These three felines must be related: note the similarly sculptured ruff, the three tufts of fur sticking out behind the forelegs and the tail laid flat along the base. Cf. Bookidis's comments, *op. cit.* (footnote 10), p. 325.

²⁰ On the pot in Leipzig, NC, no. 60, pls. 18:5, 19:2, the three areas are incised, that under the eye is painted red and that below the ear is dotted; the later pot is a less vigorous Late Corinthian piece, NC, no. 1449, pl. 33:3.

²¹ G. Rodenwaldt, *Korkyra*, II, *Die Bildwerke des Artemistempels von Korkyra*, Berlin 1939, pls. 20, 22. Payne, NC, p. 243, remarked on the similarity of the Corfu "leopards" to the Isthmus lions; I would stress the differences.

²² Bookidis, *op. cit.* (footnote 10), p. 315.

²³ S. Weinberg, "Terracotta Sculpture at Corinth," *Hesperia* 26, 1957, p. 314, no. 33, pl. 71. Only the wing on the facial side is molded; the other is flat and was not meant to be seen.

²⁴ Corinth: *Ibid.*, no. 34a, p. 300, pl. 72: a.

Kalydon: E. Dyggve and F. Poulsen, *Das Laphrion*, Copenhagen 1948, pp. 176-177, figs. 182-

of these creatures the dots separate the covert from the feathers of the wing in positions at which they are found on our sphinx.²⁵

This device is commonly employed on Corinthian painted pottery of the Early, Middle and Late periods, and Payne called it the "White Dot Style."²⁶ He defined it as having white dots placed between two incised lines. In sculptured media such as terracotta, this decoration would be rendered in relief. We see, therefore, on the terracotta creatures a row of depressed dots set between two raised bands or, as on the Aigina example, a row of dots placed on a single, wide, raised band. On the painted creatures as on the sculptured ones, these dotted bands are placed to differentiate one anatomical area from another, notably the divisions of wings. These relations between our sphinx and other works of known Corinthian origin leave little doubt concerning the provenance of our sphinx. Furthermore, they afford unique and abundant evidence of the close relationships among pottery, stone and terracotta sculpture at Corinth during the 6th century B.C.²⁷

The date of the sphinx cannot be closely determined on the basis of its relation to Attic sculpture. The stylistic dissimilarity as well as the differences in material may invalidate any attempt to tie the Corinthian sphinx closely to the Attic series through anatomical features, especially as the head is missing. Similar renderings of note, however, are the raised surfaces of the pelvis-femur joint also found on the Vari, Spata and Kerameikos examples (Pls. 59:a, 60:a), and the use of a smooth indented plane to denote the rib cage, as seen clearly on the sphinx from Vari.²⁸

185, pl. XXII: D; the excavators believed that the depressed dots originally held metal attachments.

Delphi: J. Ducat, *Fouilles de Delphes*, II, *Topographie et architecture. La sculpture decorative en terracuite*, Paris 1967, no. 37, p. 256, pl. 73; no. 39, p. 267, pl. 94; no. 44, pp. 259-280, fig. 4, pl. 94.

Aigina: an unpublished wing fragment in the Aigina Museum.

²⁵ An analogous example of this differentiation by the use of dotted bands appears in Phrygian art: E. Kohler, "Phrygian Animal Style in Nomadic Art," *Dark Ages and Nomads*, ed. M. J. Mellink, Istanbul 1964, pp. 59-60. Dr. N. Winter informs me that there is a similar relationship in decoration between molded terracotta heads from Archaic buildings and vase painting, especially Corinthian; see N. Winter, *Terracotta Representations of Human Heads used as Architectural Decoration in the Archaic Period*, Diss. Bryn Mawr College, 1974.

²⁶ NC, pp. 284-285 with note 4. Payne limited the style to the Early Corinthian period, but many examples can be found in Middle and Late Corinthian pottery. See D. A. Amyx, *Corinthian Vases in the Hearst Collection at San Simeon (University of California Publications in Classical Archaeology I, 9)*, Berkeley and Los Angeles 1943, p. 217 and note 71.

²⁷ Further parallels are observed on a bronze sphinx in Boston (M. Comstock and C. Vermeule, *Greek, Etruscan and Roman Bronzes*, Greenwich 1971, no. 35, pl. 37) dating to the third quarter of the 6th century B.C.; a row of depressed dots between the two incised lines separated the covert from the feathers. The workshop of the piece is not clear. Comstock and Vermeule compare it to an earlier sphinx from Perachora, and, in general, bronze sphinxes such as this one bear close affinity to the series of late 6th and early 5th century molded terracotta sphinxes from Corinth and elsewhere; see A. N. Stillwell, *Corinth, XI, The Potter's Quarter. The Terracottas*, Princeton 1952, pp. 159-160.

²⁸ Richter (*AGA*, p. 11) dated this piece to the first quarter of the 6th century B.C. My own examination of the sphinxes would place this one directly after the "—linos" sphinx (*AGA*, no. 1),

On the basis of these criteria, the general chronological limits of our piece relative to Attic sculpture would be between *ca.* 570 B.C., the date of the Vari sphinx, and *ca.* 550 B.C., the date of the Kerameikos sphinx.²⁹

Yet we can not do much better when considering the material from the Corinthia. Certainly, the sphinx is not as anatomically developed as the lion in Boston, which is dated towards the end of the second quarter of the 6th century B.C.³⁰ On the other hand, it is more refined than the Copenhagen lions, which were placed in the second quarter of the 6th century by Payne.³¹ Lastly, even if one does not accept the Corinthian attribution of the Tenea kouros and the new marble sphinx from Corinth, it is apparent that our sphinx precedes them, for it appears archaic alongside the marble sphinx, which reflects the spirit of the mid-century with its scalloped locks, slightly bulging eyes, incised features and well-modeled legs.³² Thus our sphinx seems firmly placed in the second quarter of the 6th century and, if greater precision is permissible, in the decade 570-560 B.C.

It is not known whether this sphinx served as an acroterion or as the crowning member of a grave stele or dedicatory monument. Most of the acroterial sculpture of this period, however, was of terracotta, and sphinxes were a popular form.³³ Furthermore, the preserved dimensions of our piece (H. from rear to tip of wing 0.765 m.) show that it would be too small to be placed on the Temple of Apollo, if that should have been erected so early in the 6th century.³⁴ As for the grave stelai,

and before the Spata sphinx (Pl. 59: a, *AGA*, no. 12), i. e. between 575 and 570 B.C. (For the date of the "—linos" sphinx, see *Agora* XI, p. 4.)

²⁹ Richter (*AGA*, p. 16) was cautious in assigning a date to the Kerameikos sphinx. Because of the date of the capital from Foce del Sele, which closely resembles the capital to which this sphinx belongs, she was reluctant to find a date lower than 560 B.C. Harrison (*Agora* XI, p. 12), however, has placed the piece at *ca.* 550 B.C.

³⁰ Vermeule, *loc. cit.* (footnote 19), puts the lion at *ca.* 550 B.C. This seems too low: the lion's close stylistic similarity to the lions in Copenhagen and its awkwardness next to the new sphinx from Corinth call for an earlier date.

³¹ *NC*, p. 243.

³² Deilaki, *loc. cit.* (footnote 17 above), places the sphinx in Richter's Group Ib (*AGA*, p. 15) and sees the head as related to Groups III and IV of Richter's *Korai*. A contemporary series can be made from the marble Corinthian sphinx, the Tenea kouros, the Gorgon stele (N.M. 2687) and the Diskophoros stele (N.M. 38), all dating between 560 and 550 B.C.

³³ See footnote 24 above, and E. Douglas Van Buren, *Greek Fictile Revetments in the Archaic Period*, London 1926, pp. 166-177.

³⁴ Even on a plinth the total height of the sphinx would not be 1.00 m. This, on a building with a width of 21.58 m., would be too small; for dimensions of the Temple of Apollo, see H. N. Fowler and R. Stillwell, *Corinth*, I, [i], *Introduction: Topography, Architecture*, Cambridge, Mass., 1932, p. 120. The restored height of the pediment could vary between *ca.* 2.10 m. and *ca.* 2.50 m.

The later temple of Aphaia at Aigina, with enough preserved sphinx fragments to reconstruct the lateral acroteria, has sphinxes with a restored height of about 0.80 m. against a temple width of 13 m. See A. Furtwängler, *Aegina*, Munich 1906, pp. 277-278, pls. 91, 92, 98. Professor E. Harrison has pointed out to me that a sphinx head originally thought to be part of the central acroterion (*Aegina*, p. 276, pl. 98) is now assigned to the northeast-corner sphinx acroterion; see D. Ohly, *Glyptothek München*, Munich 1972, p. 55.

there is no evidence to indicate that sphinxes were used on them outside of Attica. There are, also, no Attic examples with a partly averted head: the Attic sphinxes' heads are fully frontal, i. e. at right angles to the body, and this appears to have been the canonic funeral posture of Attic sphinxes, probably apotropaic in origin. The remaining possibility is that the Corinth sphinx was the crowning member of a dedicatory monument. Such monuments were common throughout Greece at this time, examples coming from Aigina, Delos, Delphi and even such faraway places as Cyrene.³⁵ This use of the sphinx might account for the non-perpendicular view that these examples all have. It seems most likely by the process of elimination that the sphinx from Corinth came from such a monument, but more evidence is required to truly answer this question.

This examination of the sphinx from Corinth has centered upon three considerations: style, medium and region. The degree to which it is similar to Attic sphinxes bears further investigation for its value in interpreting common elements in sculpture during the Archaic period. The consideration of medium as an influence upon style will remain open until more evidence is gathered, but it appears that the body of evidence available points towards its importance. The question of provenance is most rewarding. Although we may not draw conclusions from this evidence for a comprehensive Corinthian style, in the poros sphinx we may see how at least one Corinthian sculptor took inspiration from his fellow artists and was able, working within his own local material, to create a unique and unified work of art.

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³⁵ See footnote 6 above.

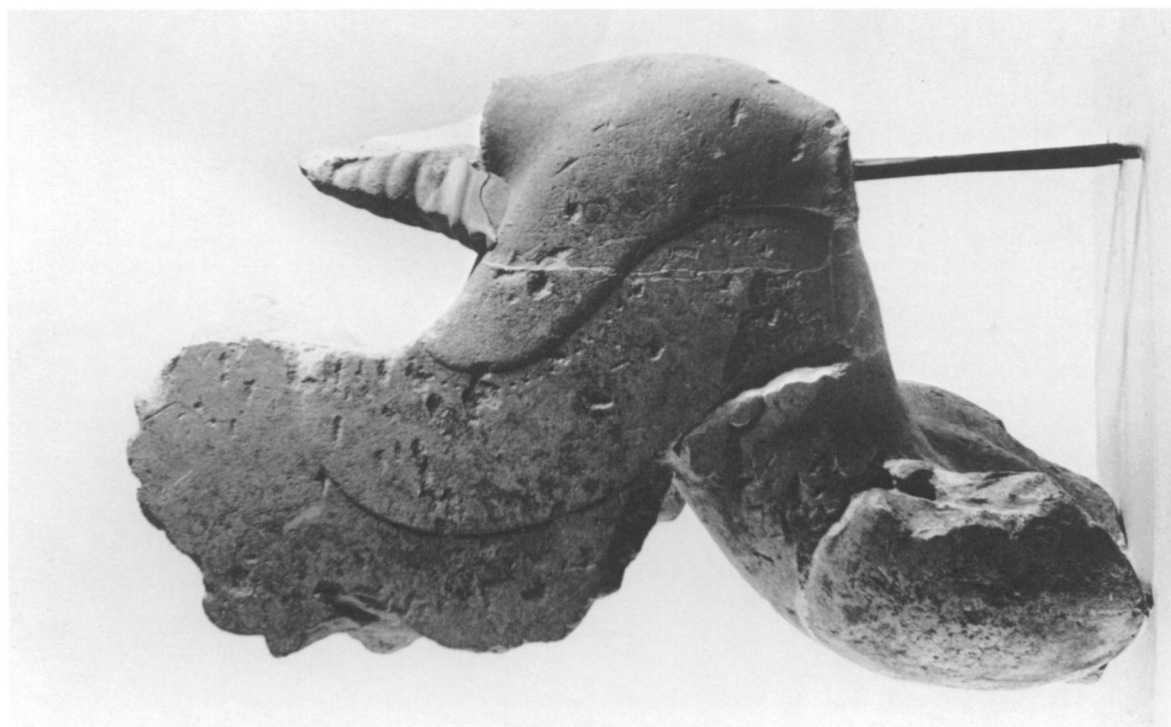


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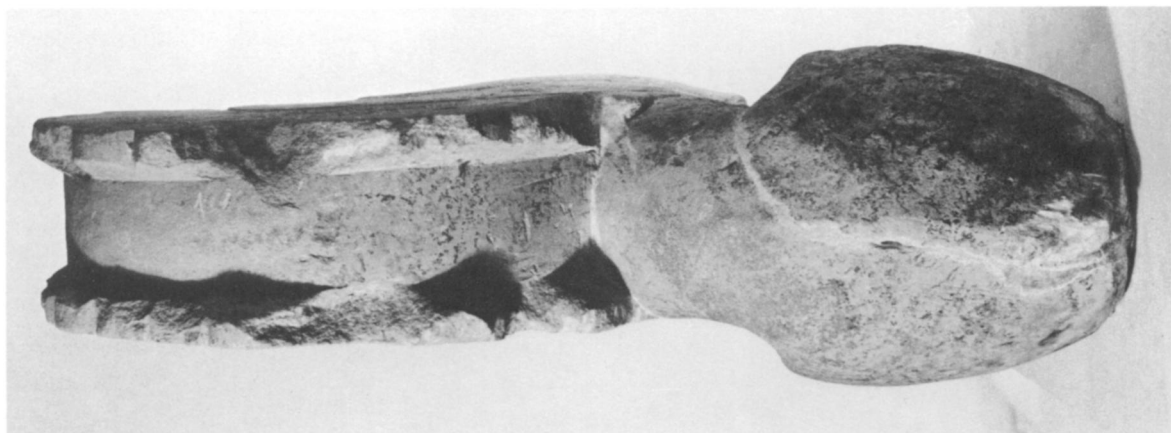
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a



b

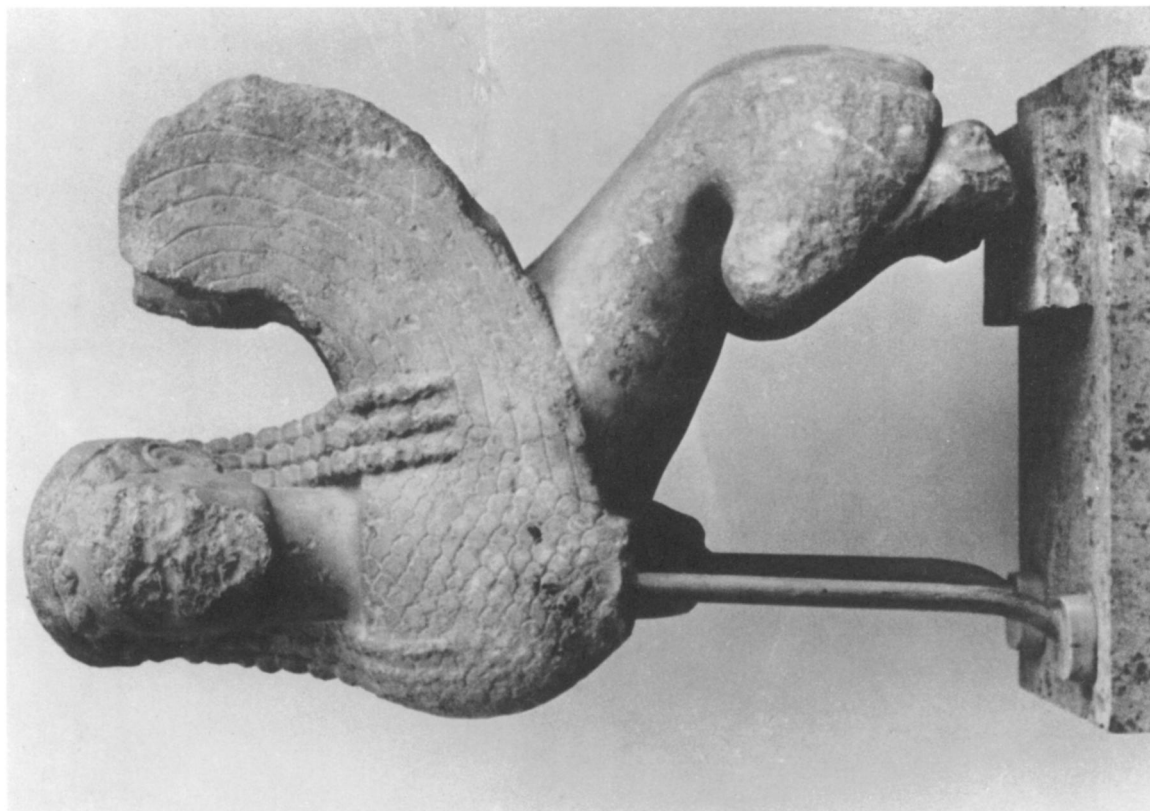


c

JAMES C. WRIGHT: A POROS SPHINX FROM CORINTH

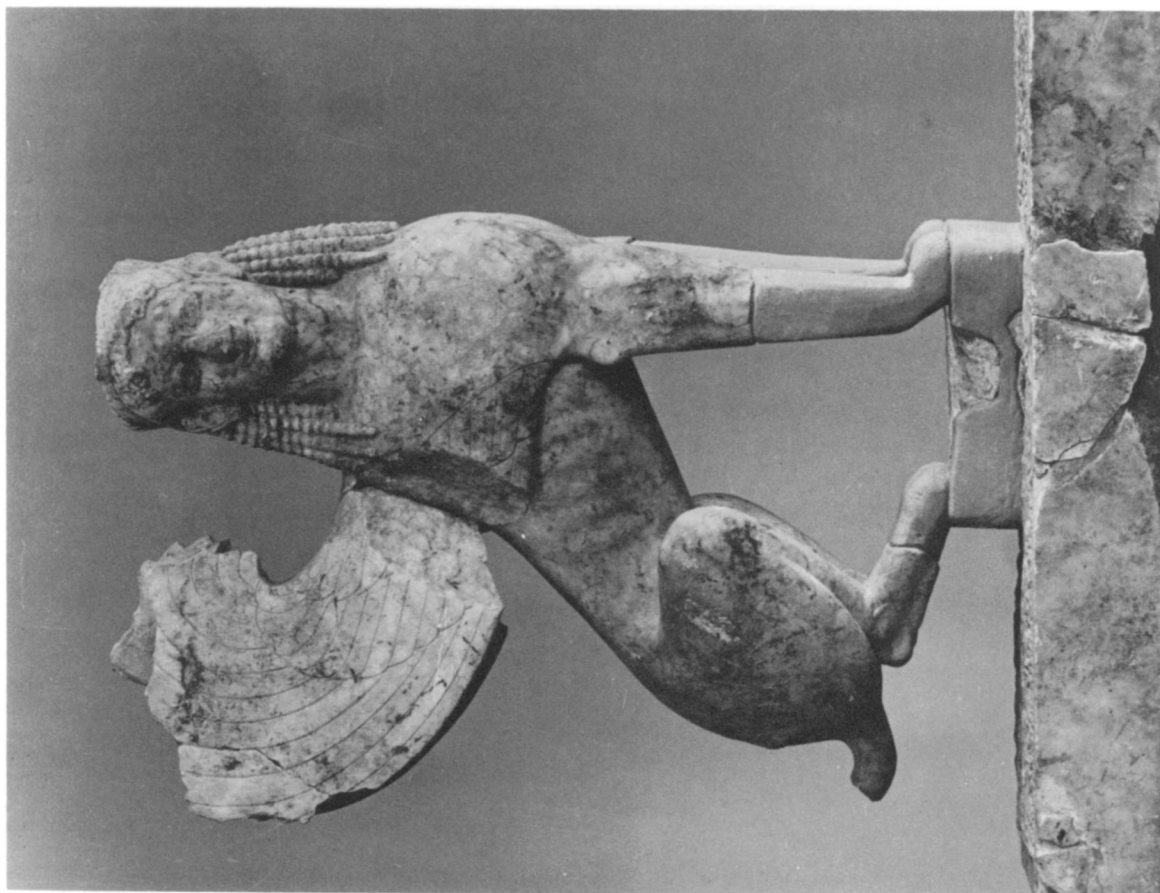


a. N.M. 28 from Spata (Photograph courtesy National Archaeological Museum)

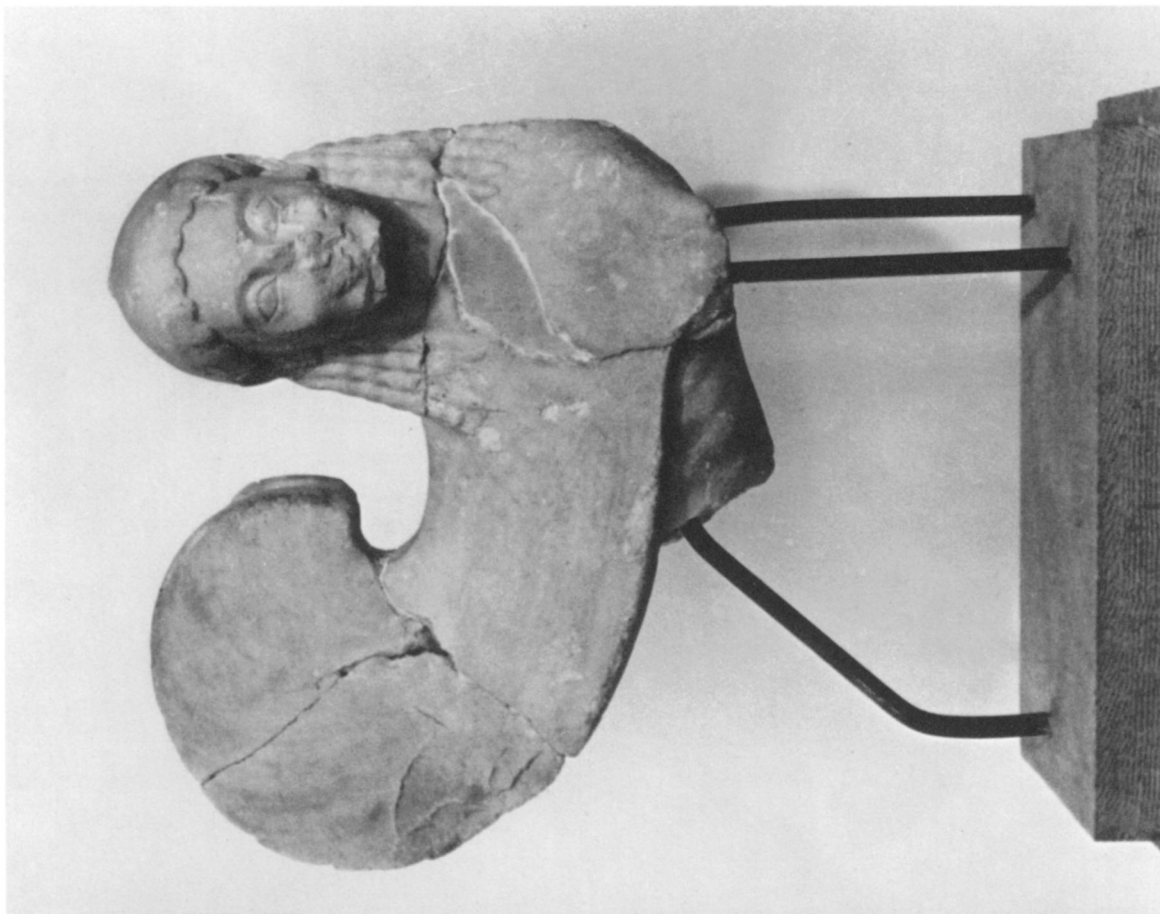


b. N.M. 76 from the Piraeus (Photograph courtesy National Archaeological Museum)

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a. Kerameikos Museum (Photograph courtesy Deutsche archäologische Institut, b. N.M. 2891 from the Themistoklean Wall (Photograph courtesy National Archaeological Museum)



b. N.M. 2891 from the Themistoklean Wall (Photograph courtesy National Archaeological Museum)

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