

A NEW FRAGMENT OF THE ERECHTHEION FRIEZE

(PLATES 65–66)

THE SURVIVING BUILDING ACCOUNTS of the Erechtheion (*IG I*³ 474–479), or the “temple on the Akropolis in which is the ancient image”, record many details of the final years of construction (409–405 B.C.), including the payments for the sculpture of the continuous Ionic frieze.¹ From these accounts it is known that the work was divided among a number of sculptors on a per-piece basis with a standard payment of sixty drachmai for each figure. The figures of the frieze were carved individually out of Pentelic marble and attached with dowels to a background of dark Eleusinian limestone. This distinctive and unusual technique, which had been used earlier for statue bases and subsequently for architectural sculpture as well, but only rarely, has led to the identification of many fragments of the frieze, although the subject represented is still uncertain.²

The excavations on the North Slope of the Akropolis conducted by Oscar Broneer and the American School of Classical Studies at Athens from 1931 to 1939 brought to light several fragments of sculpture which have been convincingly attributed to the Erechtheion frieze on the basis of technique, material, style, and scale. Ten of these pieces, including draped figures, a female head, two human feet, a figure in a chariot, and a horse’s leg, were published by Broneer in 1933 and 1935.³ Six more fragments, all from draped figures, were published by Patricia Boulter in 1970 as part of her detailed study of the frieze and its sculptors.⁴ During a recent examination of the unpublished remains from Broneer’s North Slope excavations, however, I came across at least one more piece which also seems to belong to the frieze. Although the association of the fragment with the Erechtheion frieze was first suggested by the excavators at the time of discovery in 1939, it is formally presented here for the first time.⁵ This small fragment, representing a single Corinthian helmet, provides

¹ This article derives from my ongoing examination of the sculpture and other remains from the North Slope of the Akropolis. I wish to record my thanks to the late Professor Oscar Broneer for his generous permission to study the material from his excavations on the North Slope (1931–1939) and to W. D. E. Coulson, Director of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens, for his support and encouragement. I am grateful to the staff of the Agora Excavations at Athens, especially Jan Jordan, for help in locating notebooks and other records and to Craig Mauzy for the photographs on Plate 65. I am also grateful to the Greek Archaeological Service, in particular Olga-Tzakou Alexandri and Petros G. Kalligas, for permission to publish the reliefs on Plate 66. Thanks go also to Patricia N. Boulter, Nancy L. Klein, Brunilde S. Ridgway, and the two anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments and observations.

² For example, the metopes of the Temple of Athena Alea at Tegea also employ separately carved figures attached to the background with dowels. Unlike the Erechtheion sculptures, however, the Tegea figures were identified by inscriptions: Stewart 1977, pp. 30–32, 57–58, 62–66.

³ Broneer 1933, pp. 349–350, figs. 20, 21; Broneer 1935, pp. 138–140, figs. 24–29.

⁴ Boulter 1970, pp. 18, 23–24, figs. 15, 16, 21–27. See also Ridgway 1981, pp. 93–94, figs. 61–64; Stewart 1990, p. 168, figs. 433–435.

⁵ Most of the material from the North Slope excavations, as well as the original excavation notebooks, are currently housed in the storerooms of the Agora Museum. For the fragment discussed here see North Slope Excavation Notebook 13: JRC-I, 1939 (John Richard Craft), p. 150.

new evidence for one possible appearance of the goddess Athena among the many preserved female figures of the frieze.

Since one of the difficulties encountered in the study of the Erechtheion frieze is the lack of recorded provenience for the sculpture, it also seemed desirable to include a catalogue of all fragments from Broneer's excavations on the North Slope that have been assigned to this important monument (see Appendix A). For each, I have included the North Slope inventory number (designated as Akropolis Sculpture), a brief description, the date of discovery and context, the present location of the fragment, and at least one published reference. It is interesting to note that of the seventeen fragments brought to light during Broneer's excavations on the North Slope, at least nine appear to be at a larger scale and have been attributed, with greater or lesser degree of probability, to the frieze of the North Porch.

I have also attempted to indicate the general findspots of the fragments on a plan of the North Slope excavations (Fig. 1). The Erechtheion fragments were distributed throughout the entire area of Broneer's excavations, with the majority found higher up the slope and therefore closer to the Erechtheion itself. Since the excavated area of the North Slope had suffered greatly from erosion and modern building activity, the contexts in which the fragments came to light were generally all late or disturbed. Some pieces were found on or near the surface (nos. 5, 15) or built into a modern house wall (no. 7). The majority were recovered from what were described as "late" or "modern" or "mixed" fills (nos. 1, 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 13, 14, 17), which were sometimes specifically identified as containing soil dumped from the early excavations on the Akropolis (nos. 11, 12). One was found in a "late" pit, possibly of the Turkish period (no. 3). None of the fragments came from undisturbed ancient Greek, Roman, or Byzantine contexts.

AS 196 (Pl. 65). Corinthian helmet from a relief. Late 5th century B.C. Found May 4, 1939, in mixed fill on the lower North Slope, near the area of the so-called "Skyphos Sanctuary". For a brief mention of the general area see Broneer 1940, pp. 252–256. Fine-grained white marble with tan patina (Pentelic). Broken on top; chipped in places. Bottom and back surfaces finished flat.

P.H. 0.106 m., p.W. 0.089 m., p.Th. 0.056 m.

The fragment depicts a Corinthian helmet set upon a thick, finished mass, which was modeled to create a slightly undulating surface apparently intended to represent stone. The helmet points to the right in nearly three-quarter view, with both eyeholes fully indicated. An oblong scar at left shows where something in high relief has broken off from the helmet, possibly part of another figure. The upper right portion of the helmet is missing and, although no trace of a cutting survives at the back, may indicate where the fragment was fastened to the background with a dowel, thereby causing the break to occur at this point. The bottom surface is finished completely smooth, while the rear surface is flat and bears traces of a fine-pointed chisel.

The marble, scale, and distinctive treatment of the back surface of the fragment suggest its attribution to the Erechtheion frieze. The finished bottom surface, indicating that the piece rested on the top surface of the epistyle, furthermore reveals that it does not represent a trophy helmet set on a pole but rather a helmet placed on the ground. The modeling of the thick mass upon which the helmet rests is similar to that of the rocky seats of several extant

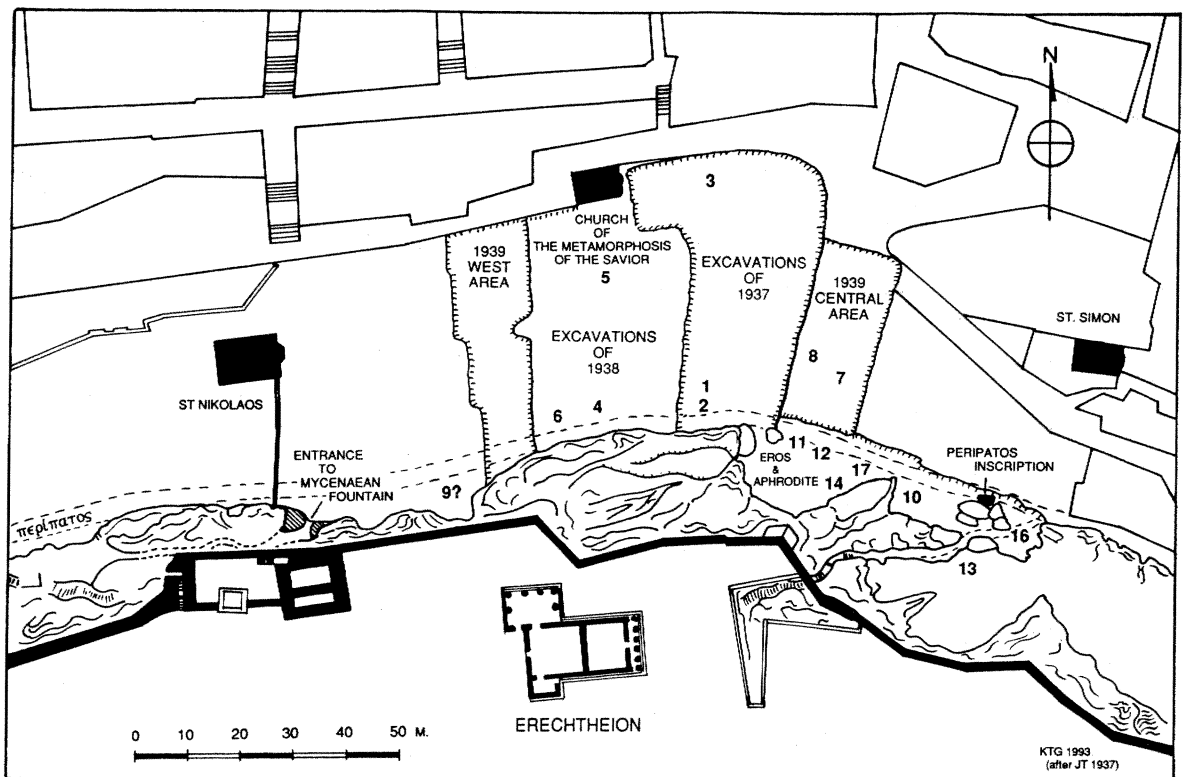


FIG. 1. Plan of Broneer's North Slope excavations, 1931–1939, showing the distribution of fragments attributed to the Erechtheion frieze. Numbers refer to Appendix A, pp. 4–5 below. Drawing by Kevin Glowacki (1993) after J. Travlos (1937). Cf. *Hesperia* 4, 1935, pl. 1 and *Hesperia* 8, 1939, fig. 1.

figures of the frieze.⁶ To judge from the relatively large scale of the helmet, the fragment may have been part of the frieze of the North Porch, which is greater in height than that encircling the cella proper.⁷

Despite several attempts to reconstruct the subject (or, more likely, subjects) of the friezes, no conclusive interpretation has yet been offered. The building inscriptions apparently refer to only one section of the frieze and describe the work in general terms (e.g., the man holding the spear; the youth beside the breastplate; the woman with the little girl leaning against her, etc.); this was probably a scene depicting the departure of a warrior.⁸ The extant pieces of the frieze are likewise of little help in determining the subject. There is a high percentage

⁶ E.g., Akr. Mus. 1078: Brouskari 1974, p. 154, fig. 322; Boulter 1970, no. 87, p. 17, pl. 28:a; Paton 1927, no. 87, p. 263. Also, cf. Akr. Mus. 1072: Brouskari 1974, p. 154, fig. 323; Boulter 1970, no. 13, p. 11, pls. 6, 7; Paton 1927, no. 13, p. 249.

⁷ The frieze blocks of the North Porch measure 0.683 m. in height, while those of the cella are 0.617 m. high. The sculptured figures for each section of the frieze are estimated at 0.65 m. and 0.58 m. in height, respectively: Paton 1927, pp. 239, 241; Boulter 1970, pp. 7–8.

⁸ *IG I³* 476, lines 144–180; Paton 1927, pp. 387–389, 415.

of female figures, but males are also preserved. The figures are in a variety of poses (seated, standing, embracing, and running), but the lack of preserved attributes prevents specific identification. By analogy with the friezes of the Parthenon, the Hephaisteion, and the Temple of Athena Nike, seated and quietly standing figures probably represent divine or heroic spectators watching some type of action, perhaps a procession.⁹ So far, only one such figure can be identified by attribute, a Roman replacement piece belonging to a seated figure, on whose lap is an omphalos, usually considered to be a representation of Apollo.¹⁰

Since the helmet on the North Slope fragment must be located on a rocky mass at the bottom of the frieze, it could represent the helmet of a warrior in the process of arming (or disarming) or a helmet placed upright on the ground beside one of the seated figures. This latter possibility in particular deserves closer attention, since numerous seated figures from the frieze have been preserved, most of them female. An obvious choice for the reconstruction of the scene is the goddess Athena, for whom a helmet would be a characteristic and easily recognizable attribute. The relatively large size of the helmet also supports this interpretation, since the seated goddess would be at a larger scale than the standing mortal figures, thus indicating her divine status.

Athena is frequently depicted seated in the late 5th century, sometimes with a helmet on her head and sometimes with it in her hand, on her lap, or by her side. Examples include the east frieze of the Hephaisteion, where Athena is represented as seated on a rocky mass along with other divinities observing a fight between mortals. Although she would have been clearly identified by her separately attached aegis, some scholars have suggested that she also held a helmet in her now missing left hand.¹¹ Later in date and closer in time to the Erechtheion sculptures, the two preserved depictions of the goddess on the parapet of the Nike temple show her seated on a rocky throne, once with a helmet on her head and once with a helmet on her lap.¹² A seated Athena with a helmet on her lap is also represented on a late-5th-century votive relief from the Akropolis, a work which recalls the depictions of the goddess in both the Hephaisteion frieze and the Nike Parapet.¹³ Another late-5th-century Attic relief in the National Museum depicts Athena seated on a triglyph block with a Corinthian helmet resting on the ground beside her (Pl. 66:a).¹⁴ Likewise, an early-4th-century proxeny decree from the Akropolis shows Athena on a rocky seat with a Corinthian helmet nearby (Pl. 66:b).¹⁵ As these preserved works make clear, there are several good parallels and precedents for the reconstruction of AS 196 as a helmet resting on the ground beside a seated (and peaceful?) Athena. The closest comparanda also suggest

⁹ Paton 1927, p. 244; Pallat 1912, p. 182.

¹⁰ Akr. Mus. 1293: Boulter 1970, no. 83, pp. 18–19 and note 54, figs. 17, 18, pl. 30; Brouskari 1974, p. 156, fig. 330; Paton 1927, no. 83, p. 263. Other suggestions have been Ge or Themis: Pallat 1912, p. 186.

¹¹ Cf. Dörig 1985, pp. 13–14, figs. 17, 18; Von Bockelberg 1979, p. 25, pl. 19:a; *LIMC* II, 1984, p. 980, no. 242.

¹² Akr. Mus. 989: Brouskari 1974, pp. 157–158, fig. 332; Carpenter 1929, no. 1, pp. 56–57, pl. XXIV.

Akr. Mus. 991: Brouskari 1974, p. 159, fig. 335; Carpenter 1929, no. 28, pp. 46–47, pl. XIX.

¹³ Akr. Mus. 2460 + 2664: Brouskari 1974, p. 168, fig. 358; Walter 1923, no. 75, p. 46.

¹⁴ N.M. 2983: Meyer 1989, pl. 13:1, A32; Svoronos 1903–1937, no. 420, p. 661, pl. 196.

¹⁵ Akr. Mus. 1330: Brouskari 1974, pp. 168–169, fig. 361; *IG* II² 49.

that the goddess may have been facing right, that is, in the same direction as her helmet. If this hypothetical restoration is accepted, the new fragment from the North Slope allows us to recognize at least one appearance of the chief divinity of the temple among the many seated female figures of the frieze.

APPENDIX A
CATALOGUE OF FRAGMENTS FOUND ON THE NORTH SLOPE
ATTRIBUTED TO THE ERECHTHEION FRIEZE

1. AS 61. Fragment of draped figure: overfold above legs. Found March 18, 1937, in loose fill northwest of the Sanctuary of Eros and Aphrodite. Athens, Agora Museum storeroom. Boulter 1970, p. 24, fig. 21. Possibly from the North Porch.
2. AS 63. Fragment of draped figure: either the lower hem of a figure moving to the left or the edge of the kolpos from the proper left side of a peplophoros. Found March 13, 1937, in modern fill northwest of the Sanctuary of Eros and Aphrodite. Athens, Agora Museum storeroom. Boulter 1970, p. 24, fig. 25.
3. AS 123. Fragment of right shoulder and arm of draped figure. Found May 25, 1937, in a late pit east of the Church of the Metamorphosis of the Savior. Athens, Agora Museum storeroom. Boulter 1970, p. 24, figs. 22, 23. Probably from the cella.
4. AS 158. Fragment of right upper half of draped torso. Found March 23, 1938, in loose fill in the area between Wells A and C. Athens, Agora Museum storeroom. Boulter 1970, p. 18, figs. 15, 16.
5. AS 164. Fragment of hanging drapery. Found April 5, 1938, among marble fragments collected from the area of Well B. Athens, Agora Museum storeroom. Boulter 1970, p. 24, fig. 27. Attribution to the frieze is not certain.
6. AS 175. Fragment of neck and shoulder of draped female figure. Found May 7, 1938, in late fill west of Well A. Athens, Agora Museum storeroom. Boulter 1970, p. 24, fig. 26.
7. AS 187. Foot and drapery of standing female figure, possibly a child(?). Found April 14, 1939, built into the wall of a modern house north of the Sanctuary of Eros and Aphrodite. Athens, Agora Museum storeroom. Boulter 1970, p. 24, fig. 24. Probably from the cella.
8. AS 196. Corinthian helmet. Found May 4, 1939, in mixed fill near the area of the so-called "Skyphos Sanctuary". Athens, Agora Museum storeroom. See pp. 326–327 above. Possibly from the North Porch.
9. (No Inventory Number.) Lower part of female figure seated on rock. Found March 16, 1932, in a test trench between the Sanctuary of Eros and Aphrodite and the entrance to the Mycenaean Fountain. Exact location not recorded. Athens, Akropolis Museum. Broneer 1933, pp. 349–350, fig. 20; Pallat 1935, pp. 79, 83, 125. Probably from the North Porch.
10. (No Inventory Number.) Left breast and arm of female figure, Akr. Inv. 1285. Found September 30, 1932, in mixed fill east of the Sanctuary of Eros and Aphrodite. Athens, Akropolis Museum. Broneer 1933, p. 350, fig. 21; cf. Broneer 1935, pp. 137–138, fig. 24; Pallat 1935, p. 79. Probably from the North Porch.
11. (No Inventory Number.) Upper part of female head. Found October 7, 1933, in late fill at the northwest corner of the Sanctuary of Eros and Aphrodite, probably in earth dumped from the Akropolis excavations. Athens, Akropolis Museum storeroom. Broneer 1935, no. 12 a, p. 138, fig. 25; Pallat 1935, pp. 81–82. Possibly from the North Porch.
12. (No Inventory Number.) Left foot. Found October 11, 1933, in same place as No. 11. Athens, Akropolis Museum storeroom. Broneer 1933, no. 12 b, p. 138, fig. 26; Pallat 1935, p. 82. Possibly from the North Porch.

13. (No Inventory Number.) Left foot. Found September 9, 1932, in late fill southeast of the Sanctuary of Eros and Aphrodite. Athens, Akropolis Museum storeroom. Broneer 1935, no. 12 c, p. 138, fig. 26; Pallat 1935, p. 82. Possibly from the North Porch.

14. (No Inventory Number.) Upper part of right arm with drapery. Found October 4, 1933, in late fill above the ramp leading into the Sanctuary of Eros and Aphrodite, immediately below soil dumped from the Akropolis excavations. Athens, Akropolis Museum storeroom. Broneer 1935, no. 12 d, p. 127, fig. 27; Pallat 1935, pp. 81, 83. Probably from the North Porch.

15. (No Inventory Number.) Small fragment of drapery. Found among marble chips collected from different parts of the excavations (i.e., in the vicinity of the Sanctuary of Eros and Aphrodite and the area to the east). Exact location not recorded. Athens, Akropolis Museum storeroom. Broneer 1935, no. 12 e, p. 139, fig. 27. Attribution to the frieze is not certain.

16. (No Inventory Number.) Fragment of draped figure in chariot. Found October 2, 1933, southeast of the Peripatos inscription and just below cave Q. Athens, Akropolis Museum storeroom. Broneer 1935, no. 12 f, p. 139, fig. 28, pl. I.

17. (No Inventory Number.) Hind leg of horse on base. Found October 17, 1933, in late fill directly above ramp leading into Sanctuary of Eros and Aphrodite. Athens, Akropolis Museum storeroom. Broneer 1935, no. 12 g, p. 139, fig. 28; Pallat 1935, pp. 80, 83, 127–128. Probably from the North Porch.

NOTE: Since Broneer's excavations, at least three other fragments of the Erechtheion frieze have been found on the North Slope by the Greek Archaeological Service. See Koukouli 1967, pp. 133–148, pls. 89–98, a kourotrophos figure (Akr. Mus. Inv. 8589), probably from the North Porch, found in the summer of 1965 built into the south wall of the Byzantine Church of the Metamorphosis of the Savior. See also Brouskari 1988, no. 1 (Akr. Mus. Inv. 10265), pp. 60–62, pl. 15:1, 2, a kourotrophos figure found November 20, 1969, in the courtyard of the Canellopoulos Museum, and no. 2 (Akr. Mus. Inv. 10266), pl. 15:3, 4, a male torso found August 16, 1969, in an old house south of the Church of St. Nikolaos. Both are probably from the cella.

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a. AS 196. Corinthian helmet from relief, found on the North Slope of the Akropolis. Front. Late 5th century B.C. Photo: Agora Excavations



b. AS 196. Right side. Photo: Agora Excavations



a. Athens, N.M. 2983: Attic relief. Late 5th century B.C. Photo: Greek Ministry of Culture, Archaeological Receipts Fund



b. Athens, Akropolis Museum 1330: relief from proxeny decree (*IG* II² 49), Early 4th century B.C. Photo: Greek Ministry of Culture, Archaeological Receipts Fund