

THE SCULPTURES OF THE HEPHAISTEION

I

(PLATES 71-76)

PREFACE

THE modest Doric temple long known as the "Theseum" but more recently identified as the Temple of Hephaistos still stands much as Pausanias saw it eighteen hundred years ago on the brow of the sharp low ridge of Kolonos Agoraios just above the Athenian Agora (Pl. 71). The most perfectly preserved of all Greek temples, it has long provoked comments by scholars among whom there still exist differences of opinion concerning its chronology. Though most would now agree that it was begun about the middle of the fifth century and finished before its close, the stages of its development are disputed, as is the terminal date of its construction and of its architectural sculptures.

The sculptures of the Hephaisteion form a remarkable dichotomy quite in keeping with the variety of dates ascribed to the structure itself. It is the purpose of this series of articles to attempt to resolve through them the chronological problem of the whole. The material is divided into four parts: I. The Metopes (presented here), to be followed by: II. The Friezes; III. The Pedimental Sculptures, Akroteria and Cult Images; and IV. The Chronology of the Building.

At the outset it should be noted that both metopes and friezes offer one unique problem in the study of Greek architectural sculpture, for all the carved slabs still occupy the places on the building allocated to them in antiquity. It is fair to presume that if every ancient structure still held its sculptured ornament in place many archaeological analysts would lose a fertile topic of discussion. Since, however, our lot is the reverse of that of Pausanias, and our sources of reference are in a similar inverse ratio to his, we must do the best we can with what we have.

The treatment of the sculptures that follows is at first that normally applied to architectural carvings found out of their original position, dealing with them all as though they had been found lying about the site buried in earth or interred in later walls. The first problem concerned in every case is when were they cut? The analysis is further limited to comparison with only Greek originals, a single exception being the Tyrannicides. This restriction becomes the more difficult when one realizes how many assumed copies of famous Greek originals have been accepted in evidence over the last hundred years. Still, our purpose is made the simpler for we shall not attempt to show that Agorakritos or Kallikrates did this section or that under, perhaps, the shadowy influence of Myron or Pheidias himself. We are not interested in the aura

of great names, but in the reliefs as they stand in relation to the scanty datable originals surviving from Greek sculpture of the period. Having dealt with this question first the discussion continues with their relationship with the building.

Every effort has been made to limit footnotes to those page references without which even the most proficient scholar cannot be happy and to place all peripheral comments that would break the continuity of the text in Appendices. Both these devices seem justified since the deposition itself calls for frequent references to illustrations which, for obvious budgetary reasons, are not included in the article. These appear with the plate numbers in parentheses in the text. Readers for practical purposes will want to have as few supplementary volumes at hand as possible. Consequently, at the expense of exhibiting erudition, these have been concentrated so far as possible to Miss Richter's indispensable and ubiquitous *The Sculpture and Sculptors of the Greeks*, and to A. H. Smith's venerable but generally available *The Sculptures of the Parthenon*. In both cases references are given by the author's last name only followed by the number of the illustration.

Similarly the major text references have been limited to two documents, both easily accessible and both of which contain full bibliographies. These are William B. Dinsmoor, *Hesperia* Supplement V, 1941, *Observations on the Hephaisteion*, and Homer A. Thompson, "The Pedimental Sculpture of the Hephaisteion," *Hesperia*, XVIII, 1949, pp. 230-268. These are cited in parentheses in the text by the author's last name and page or plate references. Other works by these authors are treated in the usual footnote manner.

In the presentation of these manuscripts I am indebted to many persons, especially to William B. Dinsmoor whose sagacious hand was largely responsible for their sectioning; to Miss Lucy T. Shoe for timely comment and judicious suggestion; and to Homer A. Thompson for frank criticism and every facility to study the sculptures at first hand. Since many of the conclusions reached herein will not coincide with theirs, their cooperation deserves especial appreciation.

The photographs by Miss Frantz of the Hephaisteion and its sculptures are of a quality that speaks for itself.*

I. THE METOPES

BASIC DATA

The eighteen decorated metopes of the Hephaisteion are carved in high relief on blocks of Parian marble measuring 0.828 m. in height and 0.82-0.84 m. in width (Appendix). The maximum variation in their widths is only 0.02 m., no apparent allowance being made to compensate for the slightly greater breadth between the end

* The Committee on Publications expresses its gratitude to the author for a contribution to make possible the half tone plates.

triglyphs of the Doric frieze. Ten of these metopes, representing nine of the Labors of Herakles, are placed between the triglyphs on the east façade (Pls. 71, 76, a). The other eight, which record the Deeds of Theseus (Pls. 72-75), are uniquely sited on the north and south sides, grouped in fours at the eastern end of these flanks.

The eastern sequence, with the exception of the metope at the northern end, has suffered terribly from weather and vandalism. Details of modelling, often whole figures, have been worn or battered away. A lucky accident of long ago preserved the head of Eurystheus from the scene of the Erymanthean Boar (Pl. 76, b). In contrast to the rest, the episode of the Apples of the Hesperides has survived in relatively good condition (Pl. 76, a). The Theseus metopes have fared far better on the whole and it is with these that we shall be largely concerned in considering matters of style.

IDENTIFICATION

There has never been any quarrel over the subject matter of the individual metopes in the Herakles series. The only controversial figure is that of the female deity in the northeast slab whose identification as a Hesperid was first made nearly seventy years ago.¹ The impressive bulk, majestic presence and formal costume, however, are well suited to Athena, that constant protectress of Herakles in Attic legend, but quite out of keeping with the grace and informality shown by the Hesperids in plates 61 and 62 of the Thompson article. It is also hard to imagine why Herakles, having inferentially just received the apples from a Hesperid, should immediately return them to her. His gesture is clearly one of profferment which, if the lady be Athena, is perfectly appropriate.

Specific evidence supports the above inference, for five centimeters in front of the female figure's foot is a dowel hole measuring 0.008 m. in diameter and of equal depth which is surely intended to hold the end of Athena's spear, her only attribute in the Olympia metope that illustrates the scene. A metal dowel still protrudes from her broken left wrist recording an ancient repair. Between her wrist and the background is another dowel hole evidently intended to receive a brace for the upper part of the spear, steadying it as it entered the damaged hand.

The case of the Theseus metopes is somewhat different. Until the end of the nineteenth century the standard interpretation was as follows:

North frieze, from east to west:

1. Periphytes
2. Kerkyon
3. Skiron
4. The Krommyon Sow

South frieze, from west to east:

1. Prokrustes
2. Sinis
3. The Marathonian Bull
4. The Minotaur

¹ Bruno Sauer, *Das Sogenannte Theseion und sein plastischer Schmuck*, 1899, pp. 178-179; see also Thompson, p. 245, note 38.

Then a group of German scholars, shocked by a sequence of events that was quite out of keeping with that recorded by Plutarch, attempted to bring some order out of chaos by reversing the identities of the northeast and southwest metopes (numbers 1 in each table above), thereby turning the ogre Prokrustes into the bandit Periphytes. In order to justify this transformation they relied on iconography.

The single attribute used by vase painters to identify the Periphytes episode is the club. Even this is an uncertain clue, for Plutarch says: "And first in Epidauros he slew Periphytes who used a club as his weapon—and on this account was called the club-bearer—because he laid hands upon him and forbade him to proceed farther on his way. The club took his fancy, and he adopted it as his weapon and always used it, just as Herakles used his lion's skin; for the skin was a proof of how huge a beast the wearer had overcome, while the club, invincible in the hands of Theseus, *had yet been worsted when used against him.*" Thus it would seem that Theseus may well have dispatched Periphytes with his famous sword before adopting his adversary's club as a trophy. A short-handled mallet is a more consistent feature of the Prokrustes story than the infamous bed. The pose of the hero in either metope will accommodate either weapon. Bruno Sauer² unconsciously fixed this change of subject by restoring to the Theseus of the northeast metope a long-handled mallet such as is shown by Aison (*ARV*, p. 800) late in the fifth century, a type that does not appear earlier. There is no room for such an unwieldy weapon in the southwest scene. It is also impossible to place it where Sauer proposed. The left hand of Theseus in the northeast metope is well preserved. It shows a dowel hole for an attribute between the thumb and index finger. The little finger and the palm which are carefully modelled show that they closed on nothing at all below.

Vase painters from Chachrylion and Skythes through the Altamura Painter, though they sometimes replaced the bed of Prokrustes with a pointed rock to which he clings, invariably represent the scene with Theseus reaching out to grasp his adversary who, in turn, tries to break his grip. In the southwest metope the direction of the hero's right arm and of his adversary's right plainly indicate that this detail was represented. The fingers of Theseus' hand still remain on Prokrustes' head. No pointed rock appears, nor is there any hint that one ever did; but the photograph shows behind the ogre's left knee (now broken away) a diagonal drill hole nearly 0.01 m. in diameter, obviously intended to anchor a cot under his raised and extended right thigh. The bed determined its pose.

It would have been impossible for Theseus in the northeast metope to have touched his adversary with either hand. Nor does the position of the fallen figure permit the addition of a pointed rock beside, or the insertion of a bed beneath, him. The apparent space below his buttocks is precisely the 0.025 m. of the standard bedding

² *Op. cit.*, pp. 158 ff. for identification and pl. V for reconstruction.

strip of all the metopes, in this instance as in the adjacent Kerkyon scene cut away in antiquity as was the case of so many of the metopes of the Parthenon. Sauer's reconstruction, which brings Theseus' feet down to the bottom of the slab, is unintentionally misleading.

Thus either metope *might* represent Periphytes. Only the southwestern *can* represent Prokrustes; and this identification has been followed in the ensuing analysis of style and disposition.

STYLE

Of the original seventeen heads of Herakles and Theseus, only one has survived (Pl. 72, a), and this has been eroded so severely as to tell us very little. The exaggerated size of the ogre heads of Periphytes, Kerkyon, Skiron and Prokrustes (Pls. 72, a, b; 73, a; 74, a) contributed to their better preservation which, in the three last-named examples, is sufficient to show that the artist's delight in caricaturing monsters equalled that of the designer of the centaurs in the west pediment of the Temple of Zeus at Olympia. The hair is treated in the plastic mass or flowing flat locks of so many of the Olympia figures, though formal snail shell curls seem to have been abandoned. The recently recovered head of Eurystheus from the Herakles series, best preserved of all, is evidently a direct parody on the head of the Old Seer in the East Pediment at Olympia (Pl. 76, b, c), the baldness, features and gesture being very similar. Apparently the sculptors of the Hephaisteion metopes, though developing steadily away from the severity of the older style, knew its forms well and did not hesitate to recall them at will.

The bodies of the heroes and their antagonists are generally less massive and more agile than their Olympia counterparts, and in some instances their style brings them very close to the south metopes of the Parthenon. Complete uniformity has by no means been achieved. Herakles presenting the apples and Theseus subduing Skiron (Pls. 76, a; 73, a) display a broad trunk supported on sturdy legs, while Theseus dispatching Periphytes and Kerkyon (Pl. 72, a, b) shows a rounder body and more supple limbs. Yet the slimmer, flat-muscle Theseus grappling with the Minotaur (Pl. 75, b) might well be by the same hand that carved one of the metopes of the Parthenon (XXXI, Smith, pl. 24, 1). Throughout the Hephaisteion metopes, the sharper distinction between planes relates to the later monument rather than to Olympia.

Only three of the metopes preserve the drapery forms. Theseus' cloak in both the Sow and the Bull adventures (Pls. 73, b; 75, a) is fashioned after formulae common to the Parthenon sculptures, the one in broad, rounded ridges with straight or triangular hollows between, the second in wide, flat folds almost resembling the old swallow-tail pattern of archaic times, into which have been cut that virtual trade-mark

of Parthenon fabrics, the pie-crust edge (cf. Smith, pls. 19, 1; 20, 2). To these the third example contrasts, for in the Apples metope (Pl. 76, a) the broad, square folds of the upper part of Athena's chiton and the heaviness of the lower recall the stately women of the Olympia sculptures (Richter, fig. 393), while the variegated widths of the long ridges and the lively little pleats just under the girdle are even freer than the formal sweeps and surfaces of the lower garments of the Parthenon (Smith, pl. 38).

Thus we find assembled in the Hephaisteion metopes the last stages of the transition between the heroic and golden ages, the grotesque heads and elemental violence of spirit retained from Olympia, the lighter bodies and more elegant draperies anticipating, sometimes even approximating, the Parthenon.

PLACEMENT

The order of the metopes presents a problem less easy of solution.³ That the Labors of Herakles should occupy the more conspicuous position is reasonable. His cult was pan-Hellenic, and he achieved official immortality. Hence he is to be preferred for this place over his localized disciple Theseus. The concentration of the Theseus metopes on either side of the eastern series, however, arouses speculation, since it was apparently unique in antiquity. It has generally been assumed that this was due to a desire to stress the eastern end, and in support of this inference the extra length of the eastern frieze has been enlisted. Dinsmoor⁴ believes that their location was intended to emphasize the special front compartment of the pteroma, and this seems surely to have been their ultimate function. But certain considerations indicate that they were not originally so intended: normal Greek practice and the sequence of events portrayed.

In the Peloponnesos, as evidenced at Olympia and, later, at Bassae and Tegea, it was customary to carve the metopes over the pronaos and opisthodomos only. The Athenians seem to have preferred, when funds permitted, to fill the whole external frieze with them as in their Treasury at Delphi and in the Parthenon. The first of these buildings antedates the Hephaisteion by decades, the latter was its immediate successor. The Hephaisteion was designed to dominate the commercial heart of the city. It used the finest available materials, Pentelic marble for the building itself, imported Parian for the architectural sculptures, and was surely intended from the outset to impress not only the citizenry from town and country but also the visiting merchants and diplomats in the Agora with the wealth and magnificence of the Athenian state. A full complement of carved metopes, in these circumstances, would

³ For a discussion of the relationships of metopes see H. Kahler, *Das Griechische Metopenbild*, 1949, pp. 75 ff.

⁴ *The Architecture of Ancient Greece*, pp. 180-181.

have been quite as appropriate as in the Treasury at Delphi or, soon after, in the Parthenon. To this probability the existing order of the metopes seems to lend credence.

We know very little about Greek custom in determining the sequence of the carved metopes on a temple.⁵ Most of the surviving examples have been recovered so scattered among the ruins of the buildings which they once adorned that it is usually impossible to assign them to their precise original positions. Only the Hephaisteion retains all of them in their ancient places. Those on the Parthenon may be located with assurance by the Carrey drawings, but they did not include any certain episodic sequences. The order of the Herakles series on the Athenian Treasury at Delphi is not known, and only two of its Theseus stories may be assigned to specific places.

Fortunately Pausanias⁶ listed the metopes of the Temple of Zeus at Olympia, omitting only to mention the Labor of Kerberos. From the place of its finding this was logically restored by Curtius⁷ in the position between the Atlas and Stables episodes. With these, antedating those of the Hephaisteion by only a decade, it is possible to determine how the mid-fifth century designer approached his problem.

The Twelve Labors of Herakles, known as the Dodekathlon, are recognized as comprising two groups of six each, the first concerning itself with his Peloponnesian exploits, the second with his adventures elsewhere in the world.⁸ The sequence of events as recounted by Diodoros⁹ and Apollodoros¹⁰ is remarkably consistent. They may be tabulated with the order of the Temple of Zeus and the Hephaisteion as follows:¹¹

<i>Diodoros</i>	<i>Apollodoros</i>	<i>Olympia West</i>	<i>Hephaisteion</i>
1. Lion	Lion	Lion	Lion
2. Hydra	Hydra	Hydra	Hydra
3. <i>Boar</i>	Hind	Birds	Hind
4. Hind	<i>Boar</i>	<i>Bull</i>	Boar
5. Birds	<i>Stables</i>	Hind	
6. <i>Stables</i>	Birds	<i>Amazon</i>	

⁵ Kahler, *loc. cit.*

⁶ V, x, 9, 10.

⁷ *Die Tempelgiebel von Olympia in Abhandlungen des könig. preuss. Akad. d. Wissen. zu Berlin*, 1891, p. 5.

⁸ See C. Robert, *Die Griechische Heldensage*, II, pp. 431 ff.

⁹ IV, ii, 1 f.

¹⁰ II, v.

¹¹ Italics stress the Olympia variation from the norm; small capitals indicate the Kerberos variation in the Hephaisteion.

<i>Diodoros</i>	<i>Apollodoros</i>	<i>Olympia East</i>	<i>Hephaisteion</i>
7. <i>Bull</i>	<i>Bull</i>	<i>Boar</i>	
8. <i>Mares</i>	<i>Mares</i>	<i>Mares</i>	<i>Mares</i>
9. <i>Amazon</i>	<i>Amazon</i>	<i>Geryon</i>	<i>KERBEROS</i>
10. <i>Geryon</i>	<i>Geryon</i>	<i>Apples</i>	<i>Amazon</i>
11. <i>Kerberos</i>	<i>Apples</i>	<i>Kerberos</i>	<i>Geryon I, II</i>
12. <i>Apples</i>	<i>Kerberos</i>	<i>Stables</i>	<i>Apples</i>

The literary sources are in virtual agreement, though after the Hydra there appears a certain flexibility in the Peloponnesian events, and it would seem as though Kerberos and the Apples were alternates for the climactic position depending on whether the reality of Hell or the approach to Heaven should come at the end. The Olympia series shows two major divergencies from this norm. The Erymanthean Boar and the Augean Stables have intruded into the second section, and the Cretan Bull and the Amazon have taken their places in the first. From this we may deduce that the corners of the east frieze were regarded as points of especial prominence for they are here occupied by the two Labors which were associated with the land of Elis. The Boar might be claimed as well by the Eleans as by the Arkadians; but the Cleansing of the Augean Stables had been enacted in Elis itself.

Forced by local tradition and pride to include these two changes the designer simply inserted the uprooted Bull into the vacancy created by the Boar. But it is noteworthy that he did not repeat this type of substitution with the Kerberos. Apparently he considered it important to keep the sequence Geryon-Apples-Kerberos together, and cast out the Amazon so that the three might be moved back together one slot each to make room for the Stables.

The east metopes of the Hephaisteion number only ten, and so could obviously not be expected to tell the whole story of the Dodekathlon. The designer further limited his scope by spreading the story of Geryon out over two spaces, thus cutting the total number of episodes represented to nine. Of the first six possibilities he eliminated the Birds and the Stables; and, of the second, the Bull, perhaps because of its repetition in the Theseus series. He began in orthodox fashion with the Lion and the Hydra, went on to the Hind and the Boar. The Bull being omitted he started the second series with the Mares of Diomed, then presented Kerberos out of context, and resumed with the Amazon, Geryon and the Apples.

No violence was needed to give the Apples of the Hesperides, containing the patron goddess of Athens, the choice position enjoyed by the Stables at Olympia; but there seems to be no reason at all for the striking demotion of Kerberos.

The standard sequence of the Deeds of Theseus is recounted by Plutarch¹² as follows:

<i>Area</i>	<i>Plutarch</i>	<i>Hephaisteion (here)</i>	<i>Hephaisteion (Sauer)</i>
<i>West of Megara</i>		N. series, E. to W.	N. series, E. to W.
Argolid	Periphytes	Periphytes	Prokrustes
Isthmus	Sinis	Kerkyon	Kerkyon
E. of Isthmus	Sow	Skiron	Skiron
Megara	Skiron	Sow	Sow
<i>East of Megara</i>		S. series, W. to E.	S. series, W. to E.
Eleusis	Kerkyon	Prokrustes	Periphytes
Edge of Attica	Prokrustes	Sinis	Sinis
Marathon	Bull	Bull	Bull
Crete	Minotaur	Minotaur	Minotaur

Both interpretations of the Hephaisteion metopes bring the stories of the Bull and the Minotaur at the southeast corner where one would expect the final events to come. But even the currently standard identification of the western metope of the south series as Periphytes, shown above to be erroneous, succeeds in bringing only a partial and unconvincing order to the rest. The correct interpretation of the north-eastern metope as Periphytes gives the north series an orthodox beginning which does not agree with the three events that follow.

The odd position of the Kerberos metope in the east frieze added to the peculiar scrambling of the Theseus series strongly suggests that the metopes as we see them now are not in the order originally planned for them. The extravagance of spreading the Geryon episode over two metopes where one had sufficed at Olympia may indicate that a much more inclusive representation of Herakles' achievements was intended at first. The omission of any reference in the Theseus series to his arrival in Athens and the capture of his kingdom perhaps explains the jumble of exploits between Periphytes on the one hand and the Bull and the Minotaur on the other. If indeed a full set of carved metopes was originally planned for the Hephaisteion and only partly executed, this phenomenon would find an easy explanation.

SUMMARY

1. The metopes retain specific elements and the motivating spirit of the sculptures of the Temple of Zeus at Olympia; and
2. They anticipate closely many mannerisms of the metopes of the Parthenon.

¹² *Life of Theseus*, VIII ff.

3. These observations, combined, agree perfectly with a date of about 450 B.C. for the beginning of the building.
4. The concentration of the metopes on the east and on the eastern ends of the flank colonnades has no known parallel in the first half of the fifth century.
5. The disorderly sequence of events in both series suggests a possible deviation from the original design, a likelihood strengthened by the much later date of the frieze to be commented on in an article soon to follow.

APPENDIX

MEASUREMENTS OF THE METOPES

Koch, in his *Studien zur Theseustempel in Athen*, measures the exposed spaces between the triglyphs as follows:

	2 metopes at each corner	others
façade	0.783	0.772
flanks	0.787	0.775

Attempting to determine the length of each metope slab itself in the hope of learning which, if any, had originally been intended for the corners I arrived at the following:

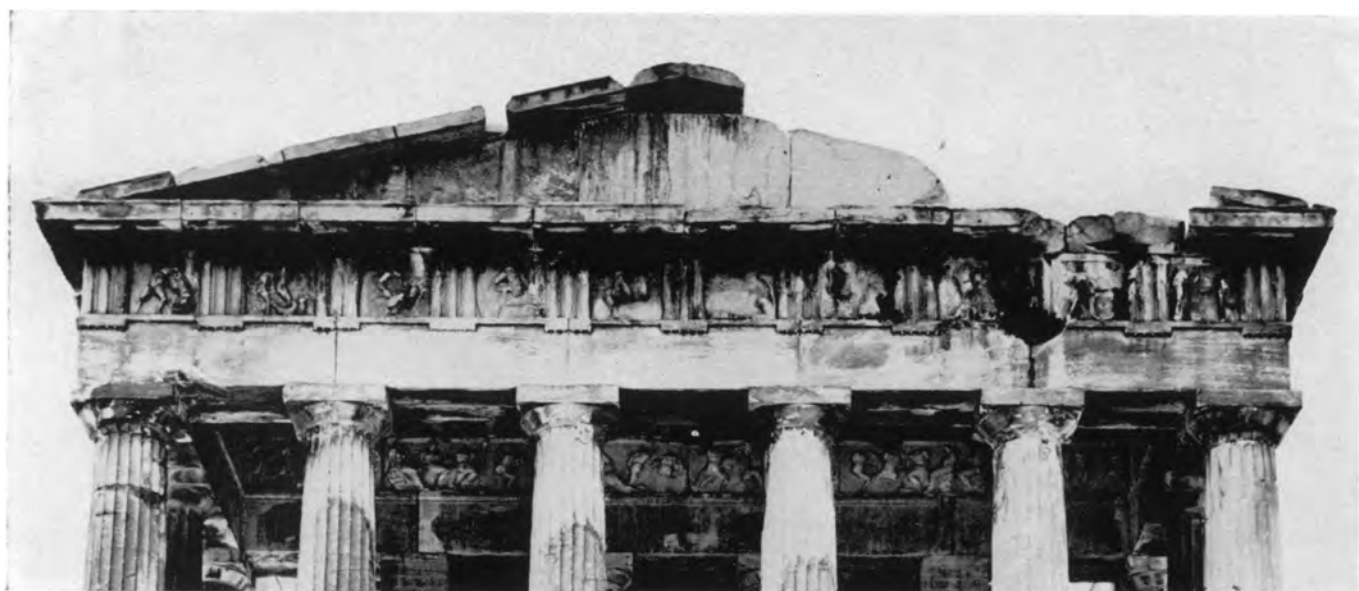
		Full width exposed	One edge covered	Both edges covered	Summary ¹³
East (S. to N.)	Lion		0.805		(0.835)
	Hydra	0.830			0.830
	Hind		0.810		(0.840)
	Boar			0.78	0.840
	Mares	0.840			0.840
	Kerberos	0.840			0.840
	Amazon	0.835			0.835
	Geryon I	0.835			0.835
South (W. to E.)	Geryon II	0.840			0.840
	Apples		0.810		(0.840)
	Prokrustes			0.775	(0.835)
	Sinis		0.800		(0.830)
	Bull		0.795		(0.825)
	Minotaur	0.830			0.830
	Periphytes	0.830			0.830
	Kerkyon	0.825			0.825
North (E. to W.)	Skiron	0.835			0.835
	Sow	0.820			0.820

From these figures it would seem that the slightly smaller prevailing widths of the flank metopes were intended from the beginning to occupy places on the long sides, while those on the façade were intended for broader apertures. In neither series is there sufficient difference to determine corner metopes; and, indeed, all of them are potentially interchangeable.

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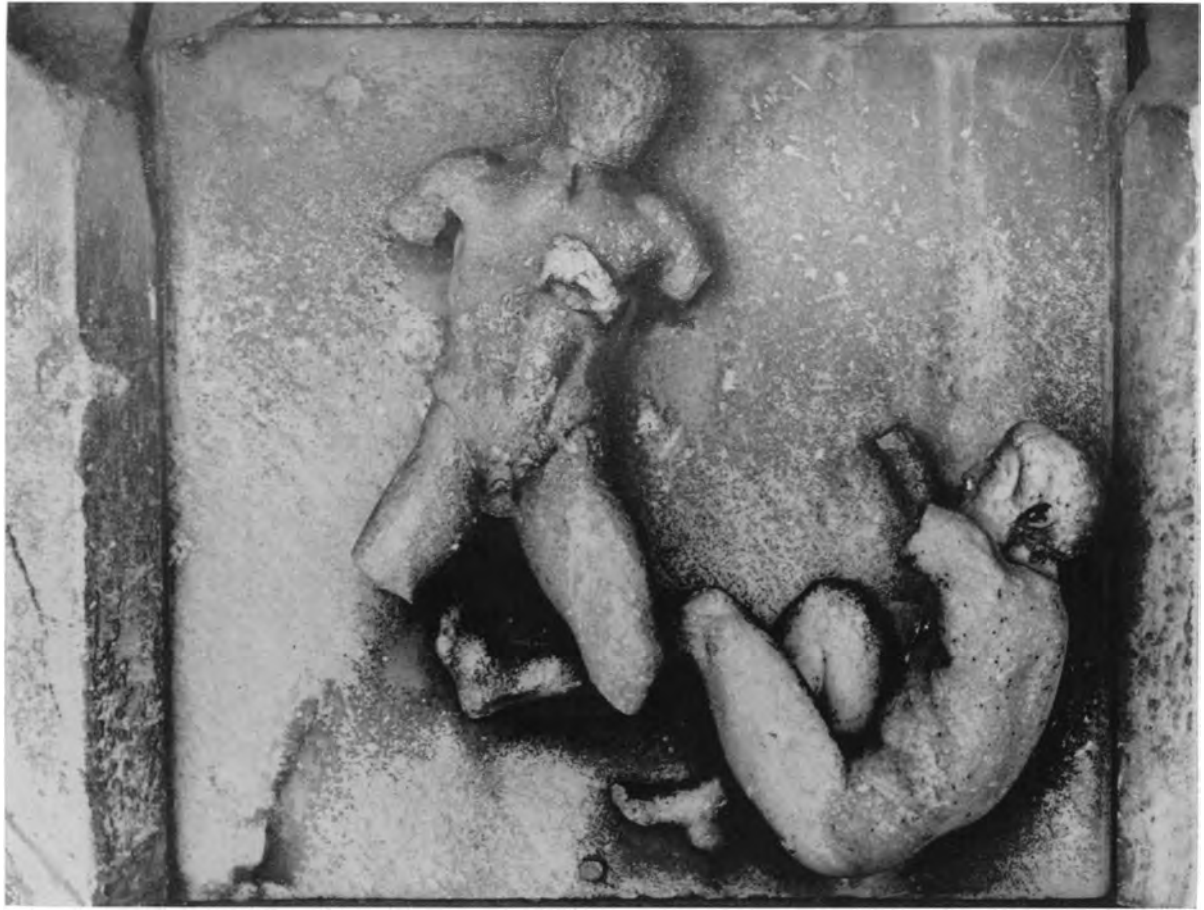
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¹³ The figures in parentheses represent the maximum possible width of each metope one or both of whose edges is covered by the triglyphs. The slot in each of the triglyphs, whenever it could be measured, was 0.030 m. deep.



The Hephaisteion, east façade.

CHARLES H. MORGAN: THE SCULPTURES OF THE HEPHAISTEION I



a. Periphytes



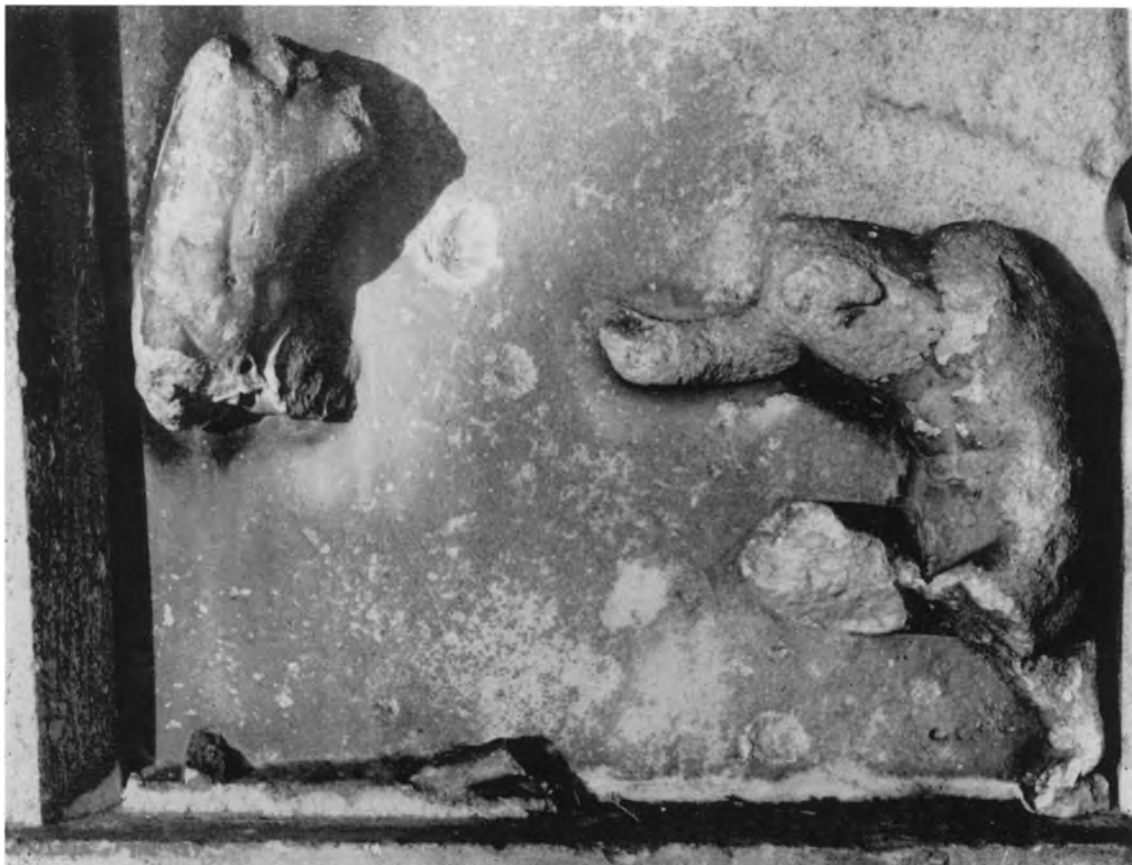
b. Kerkyon



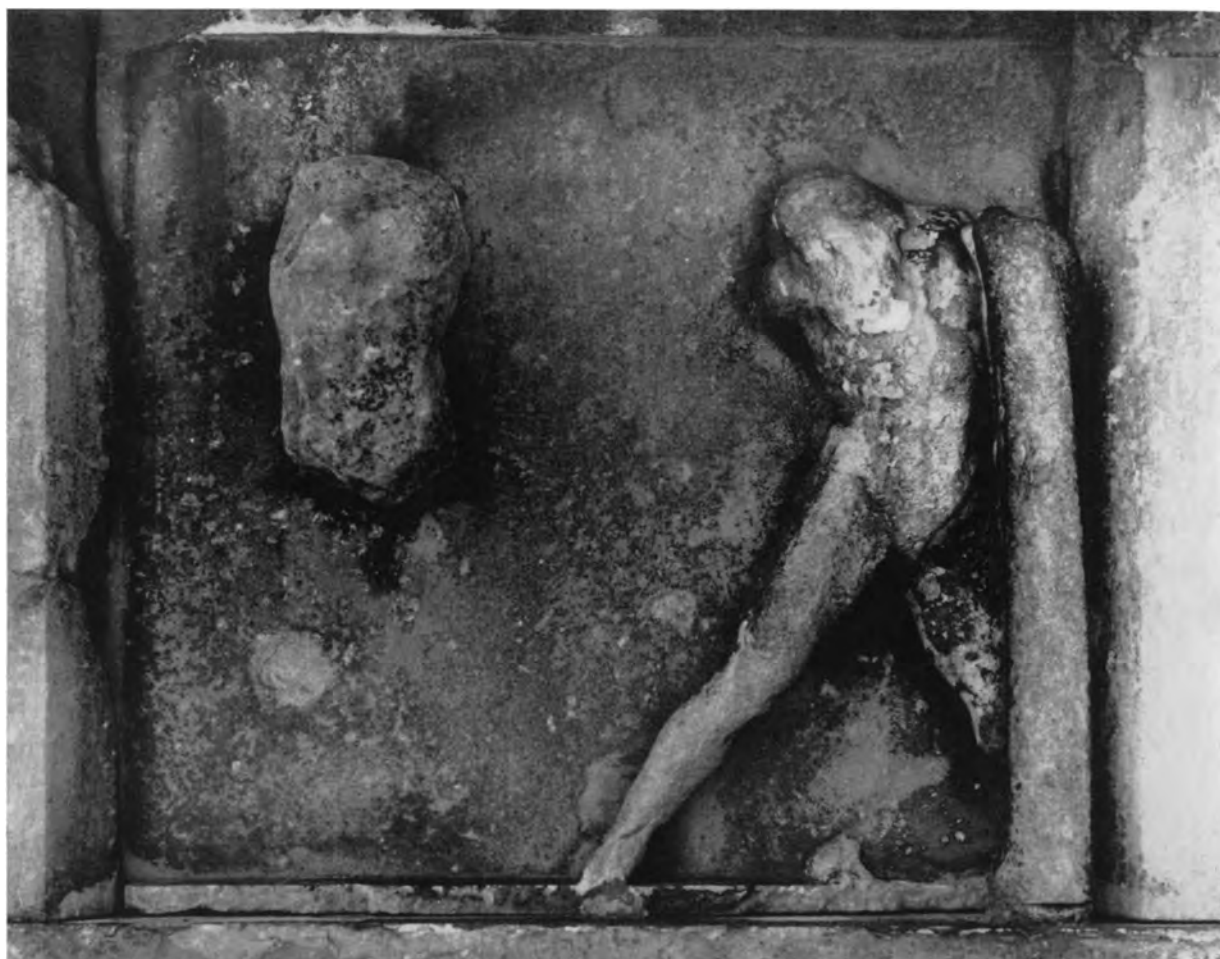
a. Skiron



b. Krommyon Sow



a. Prokrustes



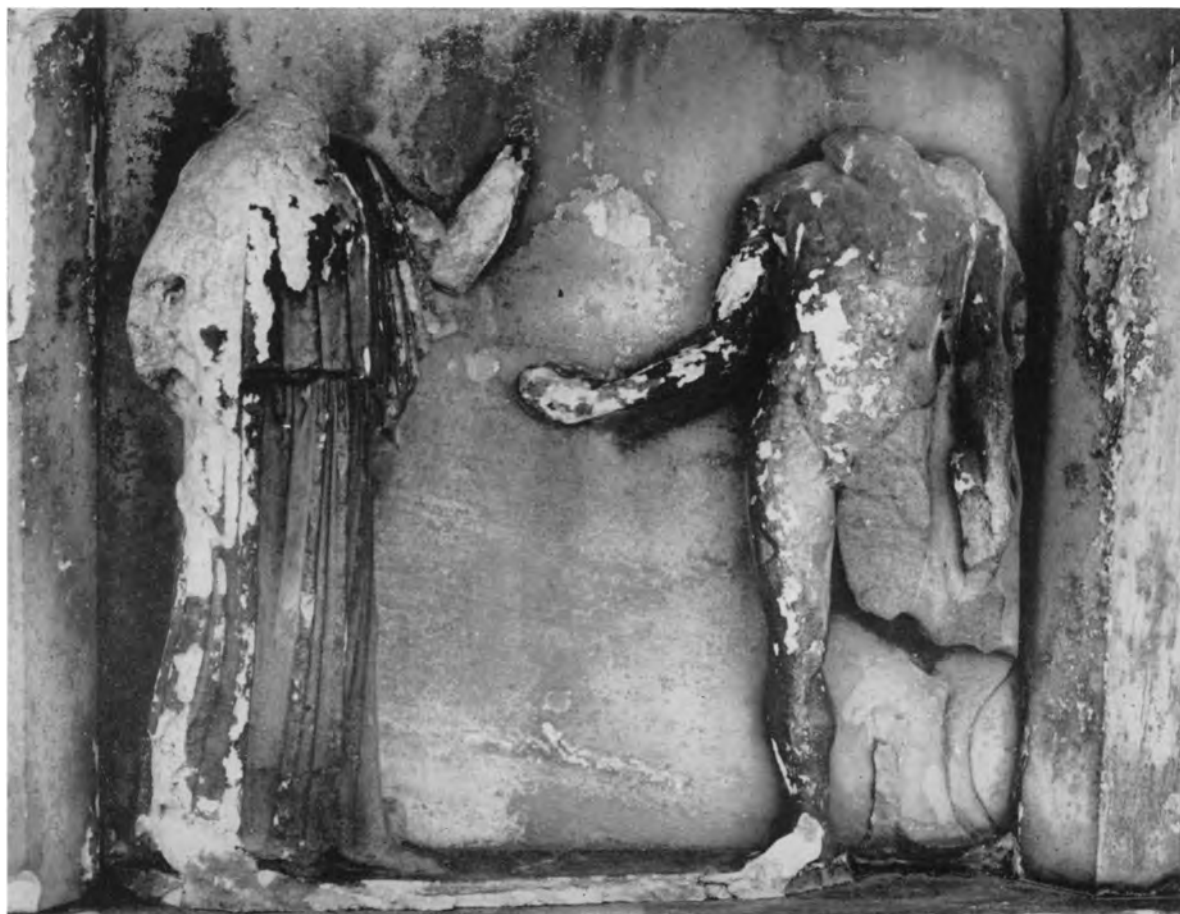
b. Sinis



a. Marathonian Bull



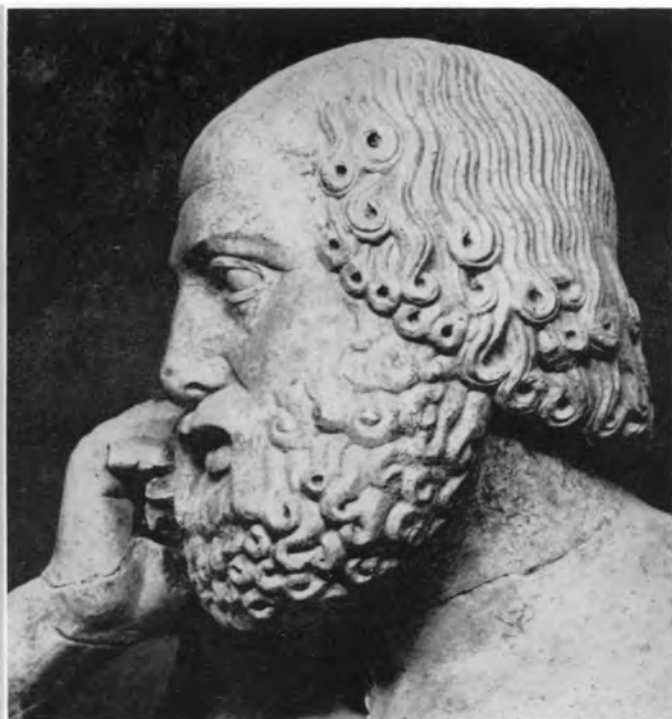
b. Minotaur



a. Apples of the Hesperides



b. Head of Eurystheus, Hephaisteion



c. Head of Old Seer, Temple of Zeus at Olympia