

A POROS KOUROS FROM ISTHMIA

(PLATE 91)

THE fragmentary statue which forms the subject of this note was found at Isthmia on October 24, 1959 by members of the University of Chicago digging at the site under the auspices of the American School of Classical Studies and the direction of Professor Oscar Broneer. The piece was found at a depth of 18.70 m. in the Large Circular Pit which lies to the west of the Palaimonion and south of the Temple precinct. This large shaft, probably an unfinished well, contained fill from the first half of the fifth century B.C. and earlier, including a few blocks and roof-tile fragments from the earliest Temple of Poseidon. The kouros has not yet been published and I am greatly indebted to Professor Broneer who has given me permission to describe and illustrate it here.

The piece preserves the lower part of a male figure from below the waist to the right knee. The left leg is broken at a much higher level across the thigh, probably at the point where the sculptor had begun to separate the two limbs. In addition, the entire front part of the statue is missing, having split clean with one of those flaking breaks typical of soft limestone, which appear almost like intentional cutting. Only the rear part of the kouros can therefore be studied for chronological and stylistic clues. Its dimensions make it slightly smaller than life size.¹

The material of the piece is a soft, whitish poros apparently free of impurities, which here takes an almost satiny finish. It chips and scratches easily, so that several superficial dents and scars mar the finished surface of the statue as preserved. I could detect no traces of stucco or paint over it, probably because the fragment may have been exposed to the action of ground water when in the Pit. In general, however, its surface is remarkably well preserved.

At first glance the piece appears angular and undetailed, but closer examination reveals a certain amount of modeling at the base of the spine, and in outline one

¹ Kouros: C 101; preserved H. 0.68 m.; preserved W. (at waist) 0.22 m.

For the Large Circular Pit see *Isthmia II, Topography and Architecture*, by Oscar Broneer, Princeton (N. J.), 1973, pp. 22-24 and plans pls. I-IV, photos pls. 10, c-d, 11, a. There also previous bibliography. For a stratigraphic analysis of the material from the Pit see Appendix I, *ibid.*, pp. 135-136. Since the kouros fragment was found approximately 1 m. from the bottom of the Pit, it belongs to Stratum VII: 15.80-19.75 m., containing fill dumped in at one time, not much later than the middle of the fifth century, when the Pit went out of use. The material from this fill is mostly Archaic, but comes down almost to the filling period. It therefore provides no definite clue for the dating of the kouros. I want to record my gratitude to Dr. Nancy Bookidis, for unstinting giving of her time, and for many helpful critical comments which have been incorporated throughout my text.

can still notice the swelling of the hip muscles over the Iliac crest. There is no obvious rendering of the trochanteric depression in the cubic buttocks, but a long groove in the preserved right leg marks the course of the *vastus externus*. The entire front surface of the right thigh is missing, but a small portion of the knee cap remains, suggesting a simplified but accurate rendering of the articulation. A stepped break in the rear portion has completely obliterated the treatment of the knee bend. No traces of arms and hands remain on the fragment as preserved; presumably the arms were carved relatively free of the body and the hands adhered to the thighs at a point forward of the present break. Nothing in the extant parts suggests a pose other than the typical kouros stance with left leg advanced, weight evenly distributed over both feet and arms hanging along the sides with fistled hands.

Despite its sadly mutilated state, this Isthmian kouros is important in several respects. Perhaps its most obvious contribution is to confirm that soft limestone requires a simplified, massive carving which can easily be misdated and placed too high on the accepted scale of Archaic relative chronology. In our fragment the almost flat treatment of the inner right thigh and the undetailed glutei would suggest a higher date than that appropriate for the bulging hips, the sensitive modeling of the lower back, and general proportions. Most likely, the sculptor was hampered in his carving of the inner surface of the leg by the fact that he could not make his figure stride widely, since his medium could not have withstood the stress of this pose. I would conclude that the kouros is no earlier than the mid-sixth century B.C., and perhaps somewhat later.²

From this particular instance we can perhaps derive more general considerations on the use of soft limestone in the Northeast Peloponnese and on its regional Archaic style. The material is locally available and seems to have been preferred for stone sculpture to the virtual exclusion of marble, which did not become popular until the end of the sixth century B.C. at the earliest. Yet this poverty of marble sculpture cannot be attributed to difficulties of supply, since Corinth and the Peloponnese in general were commercial centers *par excellence* and both Naxian and Parian marbles were easily shipped to other ports on the Corinthian gulf, such as Itea, the harbor of Delphi. We must assume that North Peloponnesian artists, accustomed to the plasticity of clay and the relative softness of wood, did not feel at ease with the crystalline structure of marble and confined themselves to working in the other two media or, when necessary, in the non-crystalline local poros. Since that stone lent itself to superficial engraving rather than to subtle modulation of surface, they developed a carving style based on simplified forms, strong outlines and decorative surface cutting—a style, in other words, somewhat reminiscent of terracotta sculp-

² Compare for instance the rear view of the kouros from Keos, G. M. A. Richter, *Kourosi*³, New York, 1970, no. 144, fig. 422, which the author includes within her Anavysos-Ptoon 12 Group dated *ca.* 540-520 B.C.

ture in which Corinth must have excelled. This approach can best be seen in such "unnatural" creations as the sphinx and the siren, but seems confirmed by whatever examples of anthropomorphic sculpture we possess from the area.³

This consideration brings up another important point: the relative paucity of kouros in the entire Peloponnese. To my knowledge, only nine fragmentary specimens of this popular Archaic type have been found in the area, and this grand total includes the Isthmia piece which forms the subject of this note. In approximate chronological order, the other eight are: the Argive twins Kleobis and Biton which, though found in Delphi, were made by an Argive sculptor; the kouros from Phigalia now in Olympia; the lower part of a kouros from Pheia, the harbor of Olympia; the kouros from Tenea now in Munich; a head from Epidauros to which a fragmentary torso has now been attributed; a head from Corinth; and two fragments of legs from an over-sized poros kouros, also from that site.⁴ This list can be further reduced by noting that Kleobis and Biton do not conform exactly to the standard kouros type, in that they wear boots. Similarly, the Phigalia statue must represent

³ For a Corinthian sphinx see, for instance, G. M. A. Richter, *The Archaic Gravestones of Attica*, New York, 1961, no. 15, figs. 50-53. I am indebted to James Wright, Bryn Mawr College Ph.D. candidate, who let me read his paper on the Corinth sphinx, where he has made some important distinctions between Attic and Corinthian sphinxes. His conclusions on style have helped me reach and strengthen my own ideas on Corinthian sculpture. An interesting poros siren is on display in the Corinth Museum, inv. no. 1473, *Corinth*, XV, i, *The Potters' Quarter*, by A. N. Stillwell, Princeton (N. J.), 1948, pls. 26, 27. For other poros sculpture, including human figures, see N. Bookidis, "Archaic Sculptures from Corinth," *Hesperia*, XXXIX, 1970, pp. 313-315.

For an example of Corinthian sculptural style in clay see, e. g., the Archaic kouros from the Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore on Acrocorinth, *Hesperia*, XXXVII, 1968, pl. 95.

Two marble works which may have been carved by an early Corinthian master are the Tenea Kouros (below, note 4) and a recently found sphinx (*A.A.A.*, VI, 1973, pp. 181-187, figs. 1-7), both approximately dating around 550 B.C. Both share such Corinthian traits as the decorative contours, the "modeled" hair, the strong chin and the shallow eyes, but the kouros shows more than a touch of island style in his sloping shoulders, lack of abdominal partitions and dorsal striations. Conceivably we have here two products of a Corinthian master who might have trained in a Cycladic (Parian?) workshop, or, conversely, of an Ionian who lived and worked in the Peloponnese.

The marble head from Corinth (below, note 4) is Late Archaic, and therefore partakes of that "International Style" which spread throughout Greece toward the end of the sixth century and paved the way to the aesthetic unity of the Severe Period.

⁴ Kleobis and Biton: *Kouros*³, no. 12 A-B, figs. 78-83.

Phigalia kouros: *Kouros*³, no. 41, figs. 144-146.

Kouros from Pheia: *Ἀρχ. Ἐφ.*, 1957, pp. 39-40, pl. 11.

Tenea Kouros: *Kouros*³, no. 73, figs. 245-250.

Kouros fragments from Epidauros: *Kouros*³, no. 91, figs. 293-296.

Head from Corinth: *Kouros*³, no. 163a, fig. 640.

Poros legs from Corinth: *Hesperia*, XXXIX, 1970, pp. 319-320, nos. 6-7, pl. 78.

One more limestone kouros is perhaps represented by the under-life-sized thighs from the Argive Heraion, *Jahresh.*, XIX-XX, 1919, p. 144, no. 1, fig. 82.

an Apollo, rather than an anonymous youth, since the position of its bent arms suggests that its hands once held attributes; in addition its hairstyle, with long locks reaching to the chest on either side of the throat, seems more appropriate for a divinity than for a standard kouros. Finally, the Epidauros statue has been considered an island work by at least one author. Only five items on the list, therefore, would seem to represent genuine Peloponnesian (perhaps even Corinthian) kouroi. This list could be made longer by including kouroi found in areas under alleged Corinthian influence, such as Actium, Corcyra or Syracuse, or pieces of unknown provenience in foreign museums, but such procedure is open to question and, in any event, would only approximately double our previous meager total.⁵

How small such numbers really are is made obvious by even cursory comparison with other kouroi-producing sites: Attica alone has yielded some thirty examples, roughly the same amount has been found on Samos, and a recent publication of the Archaic sculpture from the Ptoan sanctuary in Boeotia has revealed the surprising possibility that upwards of 120 kouroi may have been dedicated there.⁶ Of the extant sculptures from the Ptoion, only a very small percentage are in poros, and none at all, according to Ducat, are in Peloponnesian style despite the sanctuary's relative proximity to Corinth and Sikyon. The choice of material seems to have depended

⁵ That the Phigalia kouros may be an Apollo has also been noticed by Dr. Nicholas Yalouris, as he mentioned to me orally in December, 1974. Miss Richter, on *Kouroi*, mentioned the bent arms, but without further comments. The Epidauros kouros is considered Cycladic work by J. Ducat, *Les Kouroi du Ptoion*, Paris, 1971, p. 263.

In his book, *Korinthische Plastik des 7. und 6. Jahrhunderts vor Christus*, Bonn, 1971, K. Wallenstein lists several pieces of sculpture, including some kouroi, which he attributes to Corinthian masters. While I do not subscribe to this procedure, I find it interesting to note that Wallenstein's total attributions amount to twelve items, of which only the kouroi (four) are in marble, while the remaining pieces are in limestone. Wallenstein's listing is not complete. For some additions see N. Bookidis, *op. cit.*, above, note 3. The female head in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, from Sikyon (G. M. A. Richter, *Korai*, New York, 1968, no. 99, figs. 301-303), is also in limestone.

In December 1974 Dr. Yalouris kindly showed me a small fragment of Archaic hair: to my knowledge, that is the only piece of Archaic marble sculpture from Olympia, and its small size makes it difficult to determine whether it belonged to a kouros, a kore or even a sphinx. The strong part in the center, in any case, suggests Ionian workmanship. I find it remarkable that no kouroi have been found at Olympia, even accounting for the fact that such an important sanctuary may have rated expensive bronze statues which may now have entirely disappeared. See the comments by A. Mallwitz, *Olympia und seine Bauten*, Munich, 1972, pp. 56-57.

One more Corinthian "kouros" may be the bronze Piraeus Apollo (*Kouroi*³, no. 159bis, figs. 478-480) which I still consider Archaic and perhaps Corinthian because of its hair treatment, its massive but simplified body and its strong squarish chin. However, this statue too cannot qualify as a kouros, since its stance and attributes clearly mark it as a divinity.

⁶ Attic kouroi: Richter, *Kouroi*³, passim.

Samian kouroi: *Samos XI, Bildwerke der archaischen Zeit und des strengen Stils*, by Brigitte Freyer-Schauenburg, Bonn, 1974, nos. 29-57.

Ptoan kouroi: J. Ducat, *Les Kouroi du Ptoion*, Paris, 1971; see in particular p. 451.

on economic rather than chronological considerations, poros being used throughout the life of the sanctuary. But another factor, as already suggested, may have been the relative brittleness of soft limestone, which is less suited than marble for the rendering of large-scale figures standing with divaricated legs.⁷ If, as I hope to argue elsewhere, the introduction of the kouros type virtually required the use of marble, it is understandable that areas which preferred other media should not have excelled in the production of kouroi.⁸

One final point may be that the youthful male type is more strictly connected with the cult of Apollo than presently believed; this theory might explain the relative scarcity of kouroi in the Peloponnese, which was not predominantly devoted to that god, and seems to have known him mostly in his aniconic form. The Isthmia kouros, coming from the vicinity of a Poseidonion, would imply that the offering was appropriate also for other male divinities, a fact confirmed by the Sounion kouroi which were also given to Poseidon. But the possibility remains that the Isthmia youth was once set up in honor of Palaimon.⁹ It is, however, important to note that free-standing statuary in poros existed, since our experience with Attica makes us inclined to attribute to architectural contexts all extant fragments of limestone sculpture.

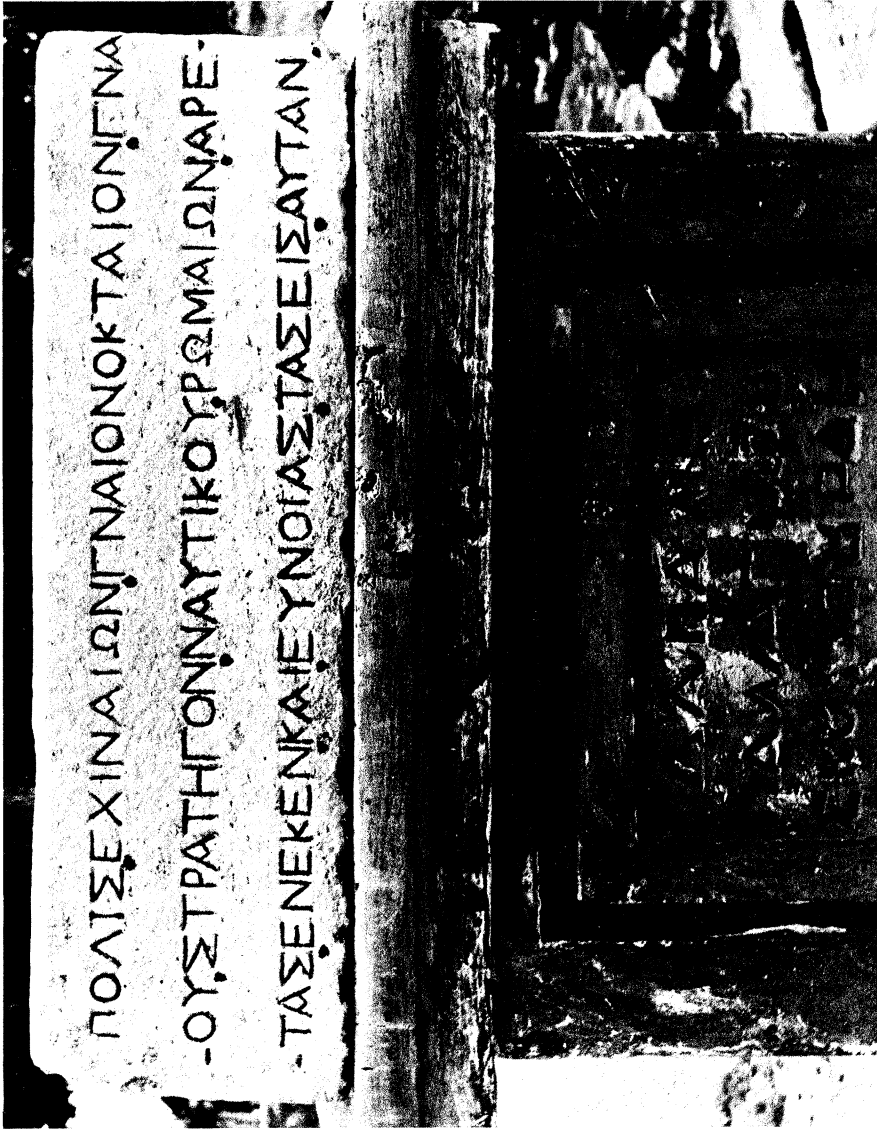
BRUNILDE SISMONDO RIDGWAY

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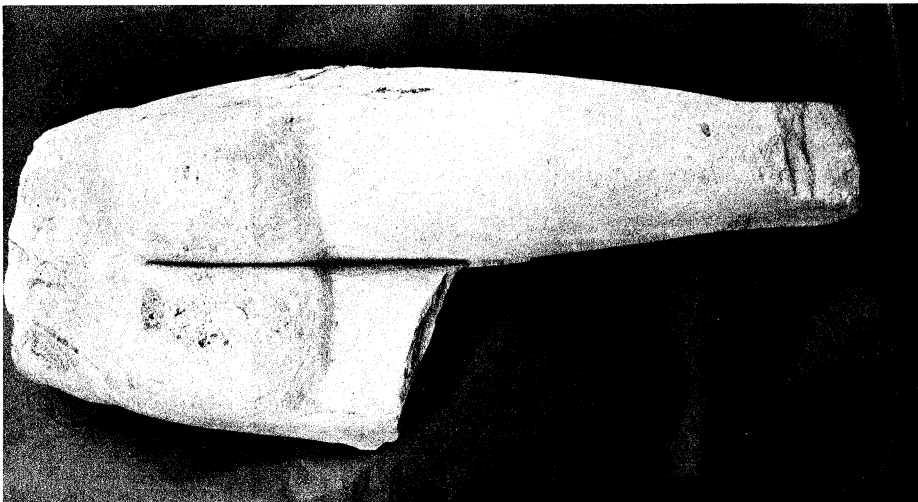
⁷ Poros kouroi from the Ptoion: Ducat, pp. 451 and 452-53: a possible maximum of 9 kouroi, with a possible minimum of 7. For the statement that none of the Ptoan dedications are in Peloponnesian style, see p. 460. Economical, but specifically technical considerations, see p. 453. See also R. E. Wycherley, "Poros, Notes on Greek Building-Stones," *Φόρος, Tribute to Benjamin D. Meritt*, Locust Valley (N. Y.), 1974, pp. 179-187, for a philological and geological discussion of the term.

⁸ This statement, of course, does not imply that the Archaic style was limited to kouroi. Nor do I suggest that areas which did not produce kouroi could not otherwise excel in other manifestations of Archaic art; to be sure, Corinth was a most prominent center during the seventh and sixth centuries B.C.

⁹ According to O. Broneer (*op. cit.*, above, note 1, p. 99) the material recovered from the Palaimonion is all of Roman date, but the cult itself must have been quite early, since mythology ascribes the origin of the worship to Sisypheos. Presumably a few monuments marking the traditional burial place of the boy hero may have stood somewhere in the area of the Earlier Stadium, and were completely destroyed in 168 B.C. On the aniconic cult of Apollo see N. Yalouris, "Ὁ ἐν Βάσσαις Φιγαλείας ναὸς τοῦ Ἐπικουρείου Ἀπόλλωνος," *Ὀλυμπιακὰ Χρονικά*, I, 1970, pp. 7-17, especially pp. 11-17.



LAWRENCE J. BLIQUEZ: GNAEUS OCTAVIUS AND THE ECHINAIOI



BRUNILDE SISMONDO RIDGWAY: A POROS
KOUROS FROM ISTHMA