

GRECIAN GLORIES

According to Greek myth, the goddess of wisdom, Athena, sprang fully-grown from the head of her father, the king of the gods, Zeus. For Athens, the city of Athena, however, historical reality was considerably more complex. The Greek city-states were relative latecomers to political and artistic prominence in their Mediterranean region, preceded by a series of dynasties in Egypt that extend as far back as 3100 BC and by successive empires in Mesopotamia, the Fertile Crescent between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. By 2000 BC Minoan civilization flourished on the island of Crete and extended its dominions to the Greek mainland before falling prey to invaders, the first people eventually known as the Greeks, around the year 1450 BC.

Economic and military consolidation on the mainland led to the eventual formation of the Greek city-state, or *polis*, in which citizenship, usually implying some degree of land ownership, substituted for kinship as the basis of the political unit.

Each *polis* commanded the loyalty of its residents in judicial, religious, economic, and military matters. However, only a small percentage of residents were citizens of a *polis*; strangers and slaves made up a large laboring class of non-citizens. By the end of the eighth century BC (and up to about 550 BC) Greek cities were already establishing colonial settlements in such areas as Sicily and Asia Minor as extensions to their flourishing commerce. Some Greek cities formed political and military alliances, led by the Peloponnesian League, a federation headed by Sparta. And the oral literature of Homer was written down in the Greek letters that have given the name to our modern alphabet. The use of writing led to the development of a rich tradition of poetry and drama.

Greek religion, though diverse, included a number of rituals and celebrations that were taken part in by all the Greeks (and hence known as "Panhellenic"). Events such as these encompassed the entire peninsula and promoted the



The Greek Temple

Well before the turn of the sixth century, BC, Ancient Greece had developed its two principal forms of architecture: the mainland Doric, exemplified at Olympia and Athens, and the Asia Minor Ionic. The principal construction of Greek architects remained the cult temple, housing the statue of the venerated deity and hence designed along the lines of a simple house structure, while public worship took place at a detached, open-air altar, usually to the east of the temple. Greek temples are dominated by a surrounding row of columns, or *colonnade*, supporting a roof space, or *portico*; the entire ensemble is called a *peristyle*. Such porticos could also be adapted for independent use as public buildings, or *stoas*. Columns, composed of tapering segments, or drums, were typically fluted, that is decorated with continuous running grooves. Inside the peristyle, the cult statue resided within its own room space, the *cella* or *naos*, entered through a forecourt, or *pronaos*.

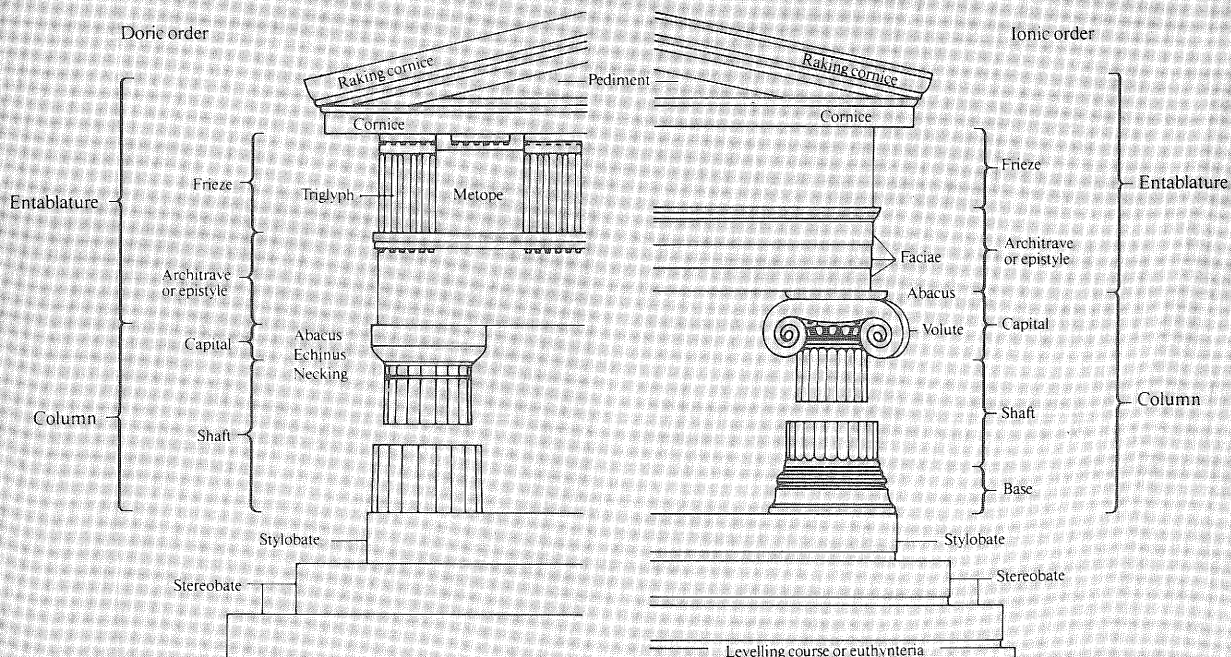
On its exterior, the temple columns supported a roof slab, or *entablature*, culminating in a triangular gable, or *pediment*, the very image of stability atop the sturdy physicality of the colonnade. Sculpted decoration of lifesized figures ornamented the pediment, while relief carvings also filled the frieze level below the pediment, although the use of carvings in space varied between the Doric and Ionic models. Originally painted, these sculp-

ted upper zones offered a bright figural climax to the temple façade.

Typically the chief difference between Doric and Ionic architecture types, or orders, consists of different column types and different decoration above the column at the frieze level. Doric columns typically had no base (added later by the Romans), tapered sharply, and their capital consisted of a flat slab (*abacus*) atop a cushion shape (*echinus*). Doric friezes consist of two parts. The first element presents a vertical grooved block, or *triglyph*, which echoes the vertical strength of the columnar shafts below and derives from the original beam ends of wooden buildings, such as the Temple of Hera at Olympia; alternating with triglyphs are *metopes*, the slabs between beams, suitable for sculpted relief ornament. Ancient writers contrasted the starker "masculine" Doric with the "feminine" ornateness of Ionic.

Ionic temples, such as the celebrated Temple of Artemis at Ephesus, one of the wonders of the ancient world, featured a full, running frieze of carved figures, uninterrupted by triglyphs. Ionic columns atop a molded base showed taller, more slender, nearly cylindrical shafts with narrower flutes, culminating in a more ornate capital composed of curving scroll forms (*volute*s). Occasionally Ionic temples use carved support figures, *atlantes* (male) or *caryatids* (female) in place of columns.

Doric and Ionic orders.





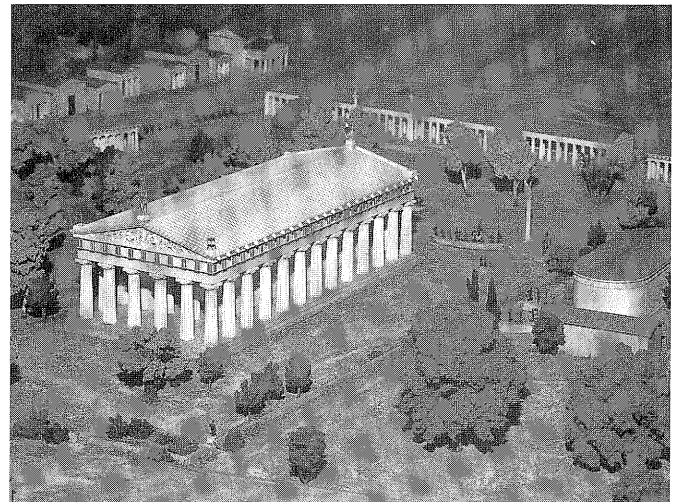
settlement of conflicts between city-states. One sacred site was Delphi, site of the oracle of Apollo (god of light and reason), whose priests were believed to be able to answer questions put to the god. Celebrations every four years at the oracle of Zeus, king of the gods, at Olympia featured gymnastic competitions and horse races besides religious ceremonies.

DORIC TEMPLES: OLYMPIA AND DELPHI

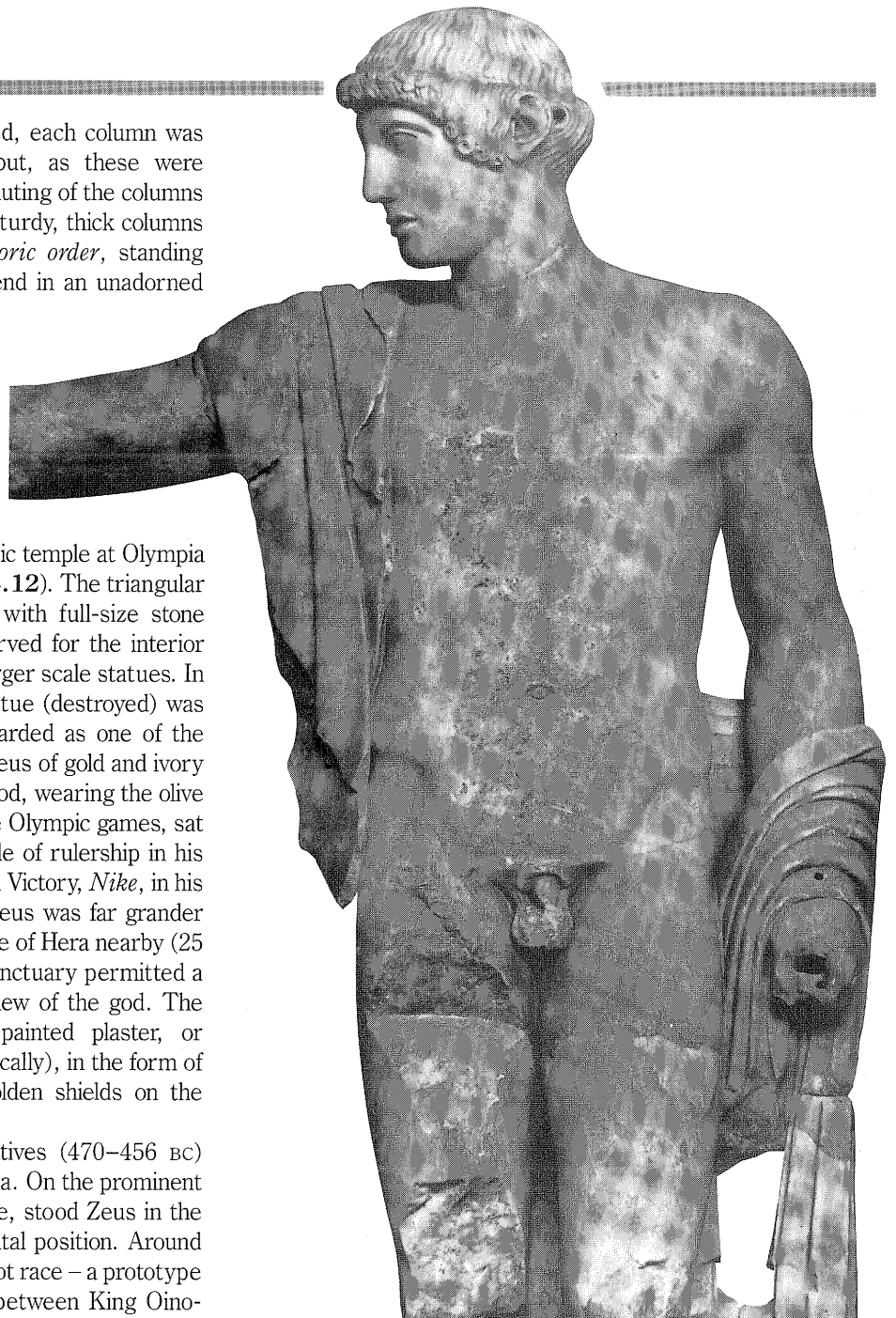
OLYMPIA features some of the earliest important remains of a Greek temple precinct. Early temples, housing the cult of a god or goddess, presumably were constructed in wood, giving rise to the trunklike columns supporting a flat *entablature* (between the columns and the eaves) in the building system known as post-and-lintel. The Temple of Hera (Roman: Juno), goddess of the hearth and wife of Zeus (Roman: Jupiter), was built at Olympia about 600 BC on a stepped terrace with wooden columns on the foundations of two earlier temples; the roof area was faced in fired clay, or

2.11 Temple of Hera, Olympia, ca. 600 BC.

2.12 Temple of Zeus, Olympia, 470–456 BC.
Reconstruction.



terracotta (Fig. 2.11). As the wood rotted, each column was replaced with a limestone substitute, but, as these were erected at different times, the shape and fluting of the columns and their *capitals* vary considerably. The sturdy, thick columns of the Temple of Hera exemplify the *Doric order*, standing without a base and tapering upward to end in an unadorned capital.

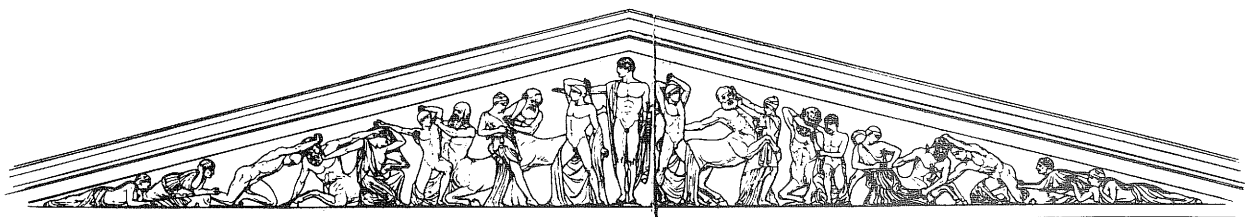


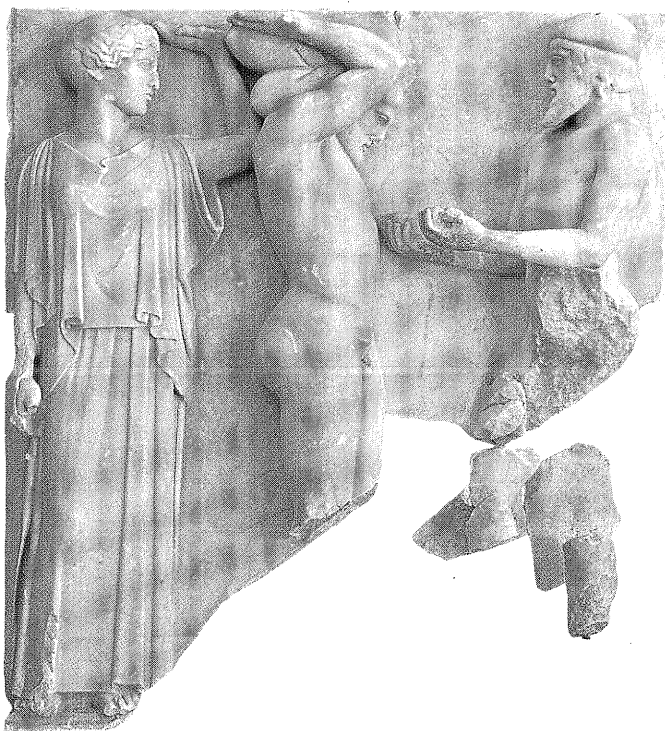
An example of the later form of a Doric temple at Olympia is the Temple of Zeus (470–456 BC; Fig. 2.12). The triangular roofline of the façade was ornamented with full-size stone figures; here carved metopes were reserved for the interior *porticoes* so as not to compete with the larger scale statues. In the inner sanctuary, or *naos*, the cult statue (destroyed) was the most famous in ancient Greece, regarded as one of the wonders of the ancient world: a colossal Zeus of gold and ivory by the renowned sculptor, Pheidias. The god, wearing the olive wreath also bestowed on the victors in the Olympic games, sat enthroned with a golden scepter and eagle of rulership in his left hand and a golden image of personified Victory, *Nike*, in his right hand. The scale of the Temple of Zeus was far grander (65 feet/20 meters) than that of the Temple of Hera nearby (25 feet/7.8 metres). A second level for the sanctuary permitted a gallery above ground level for a closer view of the god. The outside of the temple was faced in painted plaster, or *stucco*, rather than marble (not available locally), in the form of blue *triglyphs* punctuated by donated golden shields on the external *metopes*.

The subjects of its pediment narratives (470–456 BC) relate to the activities at the site of Olympia. On the prominent east front, beneath a gilded statue of Nike, stood Zeus in the central, highest, and most prominent frontal position. Around him can be seen preparations for the chariot race – a prototype of the contests in the Olympic games – between King Oino-maos and Pelops, suitor for the king's daughter and devotee of Zeus. (The story has additional local significance, for Pelops gave his name to the Peloponnesus region that includes Olympia.) The matching west pediment (Figs 2.13 and 2.14) features Apollo presiding over the conflict of the Lapith people against the bestial centaurs (half-man, half-horse) – a symbol of the victory of rationality over passion (as well as of the civilizing effects of the Olympic games, which occasioned a

2.13 *Apollo, west pediment, Temple of Zeus, Olympia, ca. 470–456 BC. Marble, 122 ins (310 cm) high. Archaeological Museum, Olympia.*

2.14 *Battle of Lapiths and Centaurs, west pediment, Temple of Zeus, Olympia, ca. 470–456 BC. Reconstruction (after G. Treu).*





2.15 *Herakles and Atlas*, metope, Temple of Zeus, Olympia, ca. 470–456 BC. Marble relief, 63 ins (160 cm) high. Archaeological Museum, Olympia.

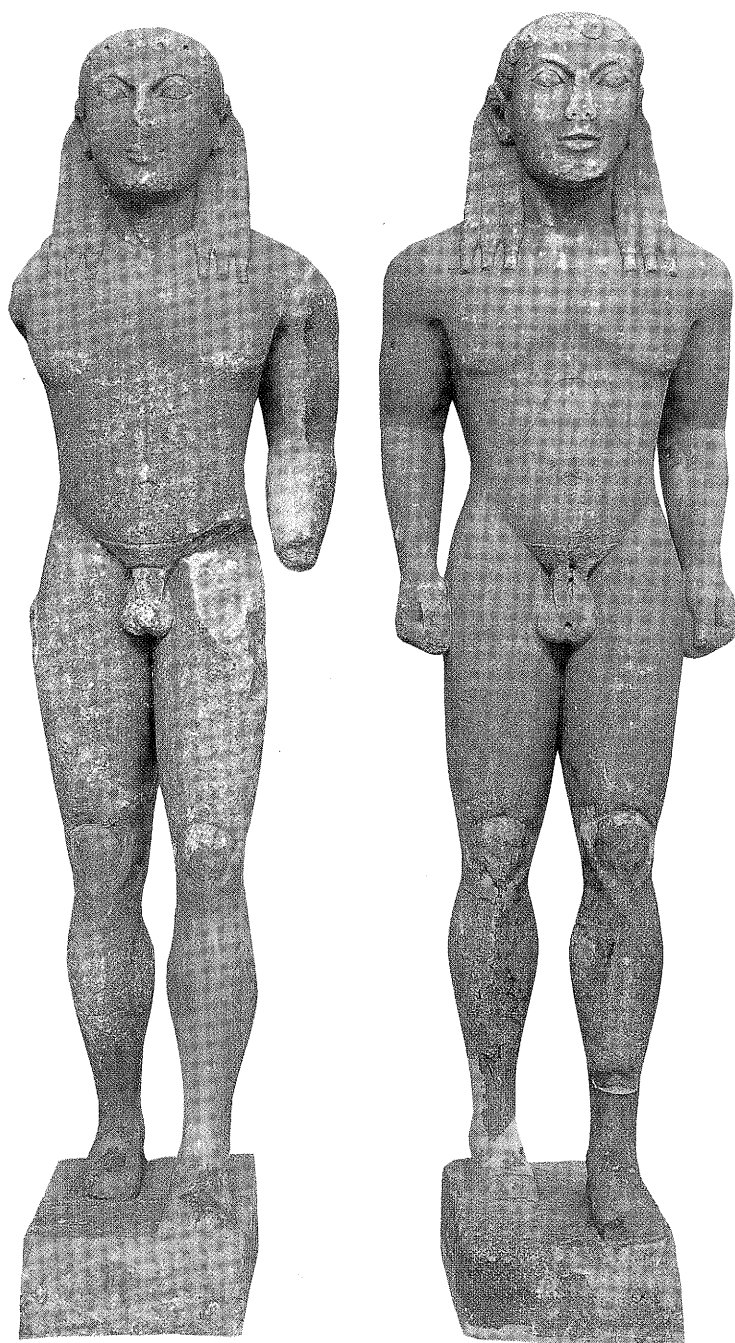
truce among warring city-states). Like Zeus on the opposite pediment, the god stands at the peak of the triangular pediment, arm outstretched as he presides over the outcome of a violent struggle of interacting figures. The figure itself is a consummate early instance of the Greek capacity to render volumes and muscles of the human body with perfect proportions and smooth outlines to mark it as the image of divinity. This athletic ideal, in turn, was transferred to the statues commemorating victors in the Olympic games in a “hall of fame” at the sacred grove of Olympia.

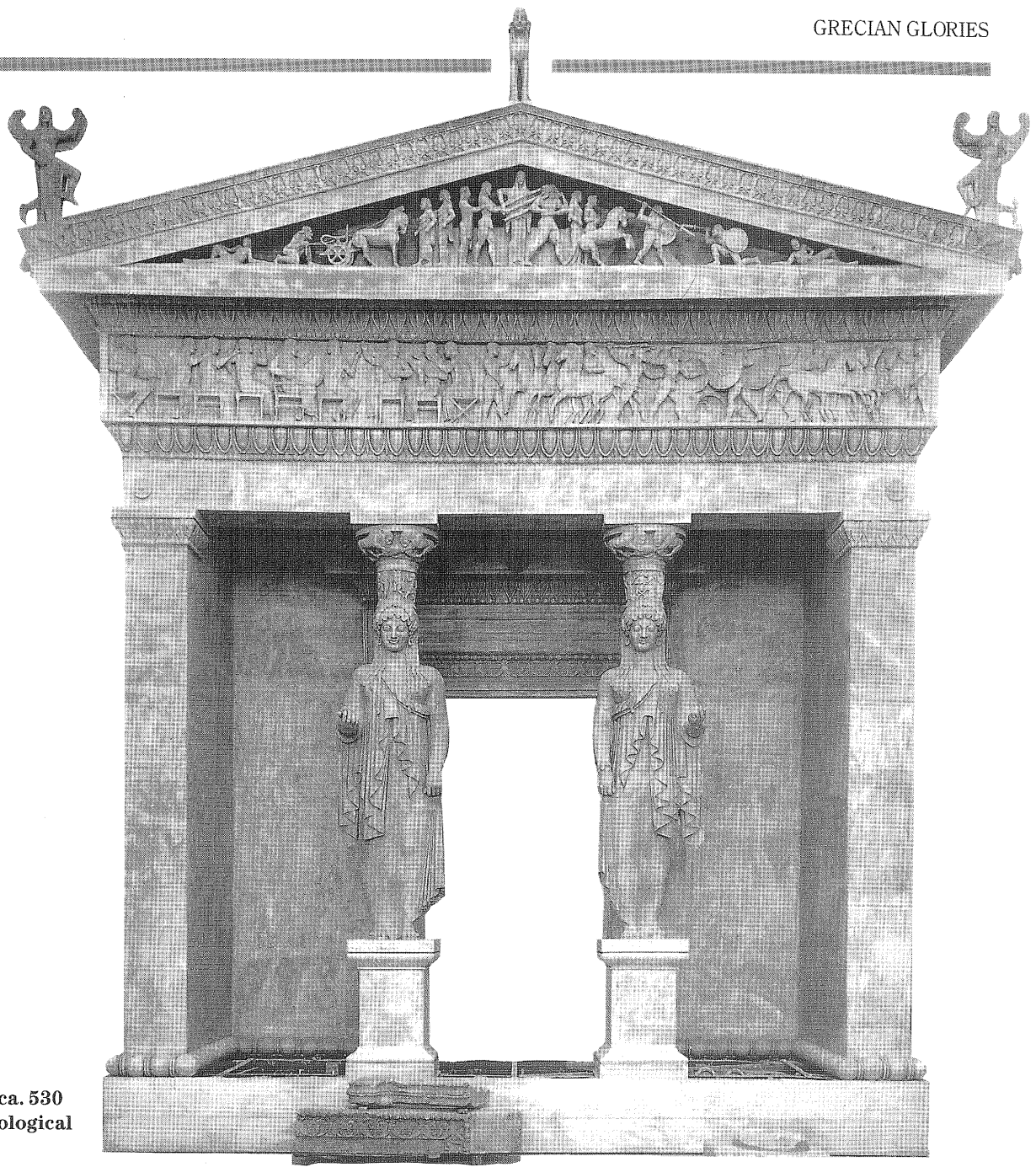
The metope decorations for the porches of the sanctuary feature the labors of Herakles (Roman: Hercules), the son of Zeus by a mortal woman. As a hero and a mortal, Herakles intervenes between divinity and humanity, much in the manner of a Christian saint. As the strongest of men, he serves as the model for the striving athletes of Olympia. The Labors of Herakles illustrate the cycle of the hero’s struggles against monstrous enemies, personifying the brute forces of untamed nature. However, the most beautiful and well-preserved of the Olympia Herakles metopes shows another moment of repose and physical beauty. The Atlas metope records the moment where the giant Atlas procured for Herakles the golden apples of the Hesperides but asked the hero to take over his own burden of supporting the world on his shoulders (Fig. 2.15). Here the sculptor has symbolically used the supporting role of the metope in his image, as if Herakles, here assisted by the goddess Athena (Roman: Minerva), supports the very roof of

the temple. The goddess, relaxed in her efforts, turns to face the viewer as she aids the struggling yet impassive hero. The metopes attest to the limits of even the strongest human achievements without the assistance of the gods and the central role of temple sites in Greek life.

Though almost all traces of their bright pigments have been lost through weathering, Greek sculptures like these were painted, not the unadorned stone we usually see today. Moreover, many Greek sculptures were made of polished

2.16 *Kleobis and Biton*, Sanctuary of Apollo, Delphi, ca. 615–600 BC. Marble 77½ ins (197 cm) high. Archaeological Museum, Delphi.





2.17 Treasury of Siphnians, Delphi, ca. 530 BC. Marble. Archaeological Museum, Delphi.

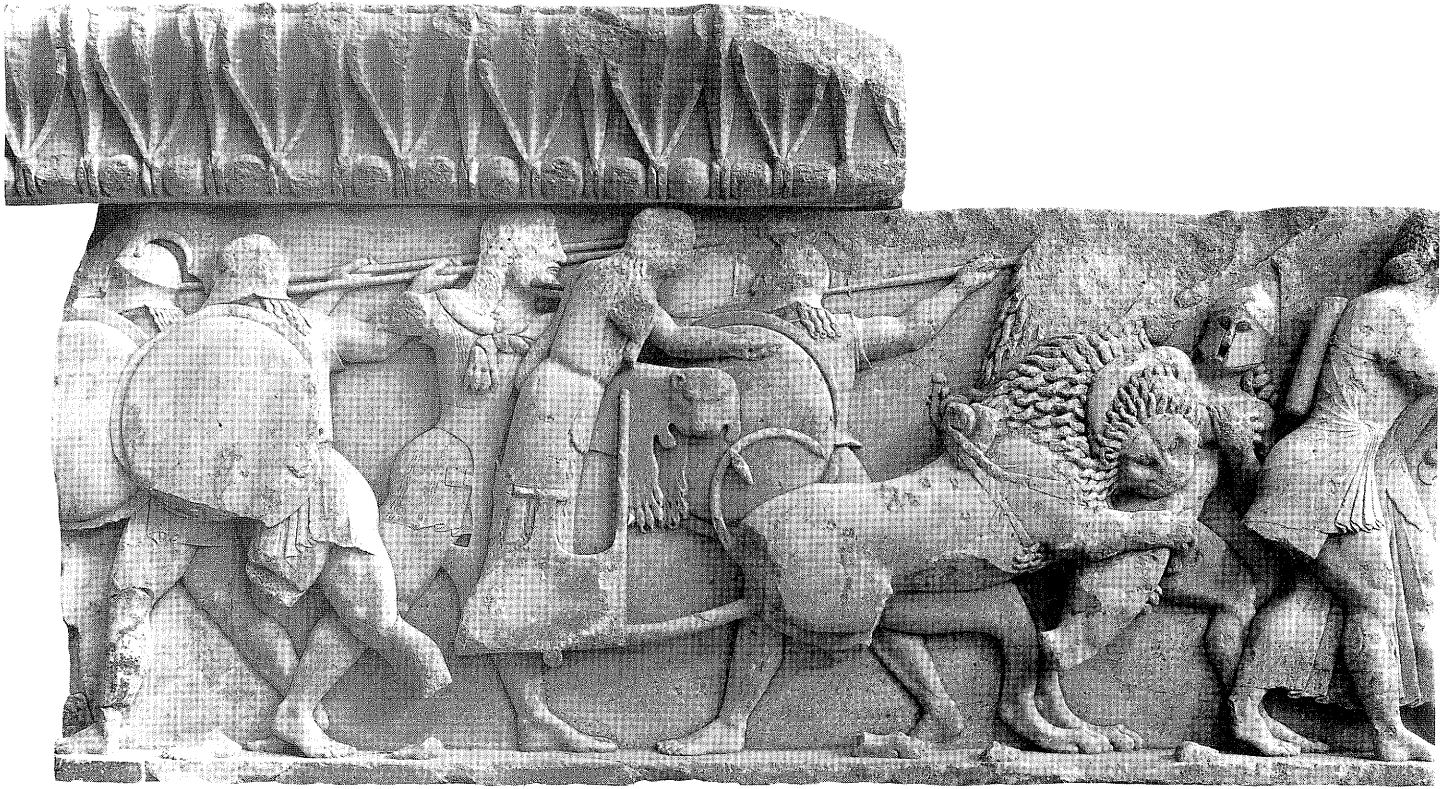
bronze, later melted down for their metal. Many of the marble statues that survive today are Roman copies after Greek originals, testifying to their abiding inspiration (to be echoed in Western art during various important revival periods of what would come to be called the “Classical” period of Greek art).

THE ORACLE OF APOLLO AT DELPHI was the other chief religious center of Panhellenic Greece. The sanctuary received donations and gifts from the leading city-states, and its surviving monuments document some of the earliest important surviving Greek sculptures, such as the twin statues of Kleobis and Biton (ca. 600 BC; Fig. 2.16) from the city of Argos. Their heroic story is recounted by the Greek historian, Herodotus.

These frontal standing male nudes, or *kouroi*, have been

compared, in their symmetry and blocklike shape, to Egyptian statues, such as Mycerinus (Fig. 2.2); their role as enduring monuments doubtless depends upon earlier Egyptian carving of stone memorial images. Uncertainty often remains about whether such *kouroi* donations depicted the standing god Apollo himself or specific youthful individuals, like grave memorials or idealized commemorative images made during the bloom of life. These carvings are also among the first to be signed by a named sculptor (a fragment survives: “... medes”).

Delphi was the site of building dedications as well, such as the lavish small treasury established ca. 525 BC by the islanders of Siphnos (Fig. 2.17). Such treasuries are small, single-room structures, usually with columnar porches. At Delphi they housed offerings from each city-state and flanked



2.18 *Battle of Gods and Giants, Treasury of Siphnians, Delphi, ca. 530 bc.* Marble relief, 26 ins (66 cm) high. Archaeological Museum, Delphi.

2.19 *Charioteer of Delphi, ca. 470 bc.* Bronze, 71 ins (180.3 cm). Archaeological Museum, Delphi.



the sacred way to the oracle. The Siphnian Treasury porch was supported by two female figures, or *caryatids*, in the place of columns. A sculpted frieze band ornamented the perimeter of the building, presenting the dual themes of the gods of Olympus and the Trojan War (Fig. 2.18). High-relief carving animates the figures of armed warriors and horses, which resemble the multiple-profile poses and overlaps of painted figures on surviving contemporary late sixth-century Athenian *red-figure* vase paintings. Again, we must remember that the figures and the surfaces would have been brightly painted (including additional images, such as the chariot behind the carved horses), and that the figures often held weapons or jewelry. Nearby, an Athenian treasury (ca. 500 bc) featured the metope carvings of heroic actions of both Herakles and Theseus.

Among the rare early surviving Greek bronzes, Fig. 2.19 celebrates the victory in a chariot race of the tyrant Polyzealos (of Gela in Sicily) at the Pythian games (ca. 475 bc). Greek sculptors learned to cast bronze around a hollow clay core about the mid-sixth century, where molten bronze substitutes for wax of equal thickness in a mold, the "*lost-wax process*." The *Charioteer* was cast in sections; its attached left arm is lost. Originally, it formed part of a much larger ensemble: a team of four horses, the image of the tyrant behind the charioteer, and probably a groom as well. The refined, minute details of hair curls, hands, and drapery folds are modeled with a precision rare in stone carvings, and the vivid presence of this otherwise columnar, if slightly asymmetrical, figure is enhanced by the addition of silver on the headband of victory, copper on the lips, and inset eyes of colored glass.

GREEK PAINTING

Paintings from ancient Greece have almost all been lost, though the names of celebrated painters have survived in ancient texts. Aside from text descriptions, much of our awareness of the conventions and accomplishments of Greek painters comes from the wealth of surviving painted vases, particularly from Athens (preserved in part because they were exported and utilized in burials by non-Greeks). Before the end of the seventh century BC, Athenian painters developed a convention of painting black figures on the natural earth-toned grounds of their vases. One of the most celebrated – and assertive – of these painters (and the proud potter as well), Exekias, signed several of his works, including a double-sided wine *amphora* (Fig. 2.20). The image derives from Homer's

2.20 Exekias, *Ajax and Achilles Playing Draughts*, ca. 540 BC. Painted terracotta amphora, 24 ins (60.7 cm) high. Vatican Museums, Rome.



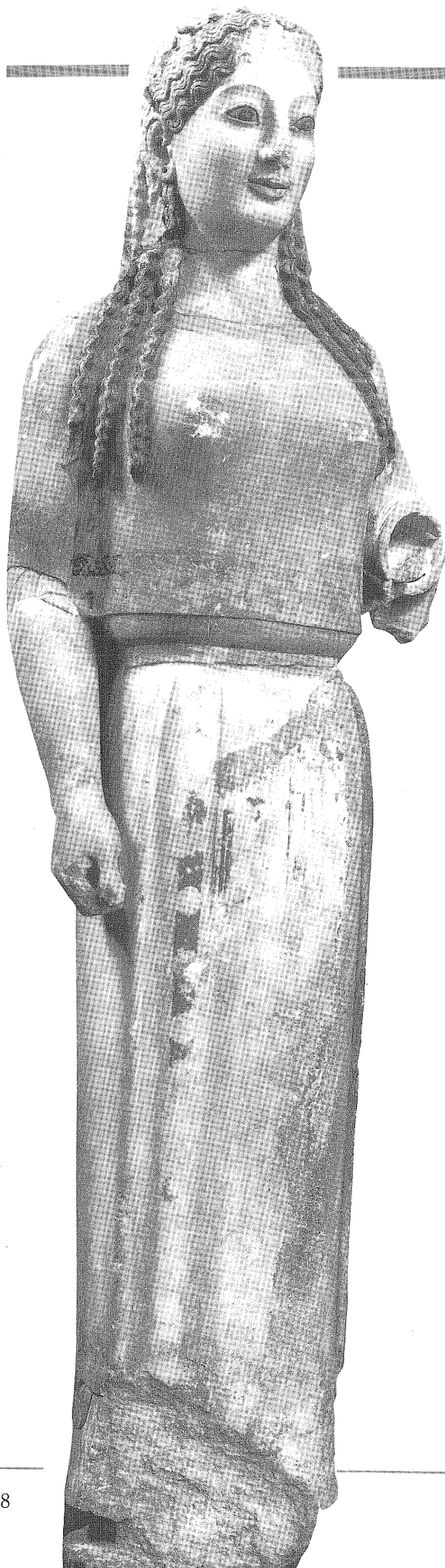
heroic tales of the Trojan War and shows the Greek interest in figural interaction across space, with the concentration on body poses and gestures already encountered in relief sculpture, such as the near-contemporary Treasury of the Siphnians.

Such signatures by Greek painters and sculptors remained unique in the ancient world and a rarity in Western art until the Renaissance era, despite the fact that, as craftsmen, artists were not accorded high status by the ruling aristocratic leisure class. In addition to expressions of pride, signatures might also have been a visible form of advertising.

Greek history was irrevocably altered at the turn of the fifth century BC by the invasion from Asia Minor of the dominant empire of the Fertile Crescent, Persia. Led by Darius the Great, the Persians first attacked the colonies of Athens, the most powerful city-state in Greece, and then advanced to the Greek mainland, where Athens won a great battle at Marathon in 490 BC. Ten years later, Darius's son, Xerxes, mounted a full-force invasion, resisted by both Athens and Sparta. A decisive Athenian sea victory at Salamis sealed the eventual victory of the Greek allies over their foes and propelled Athens into political leadership, military power, and eventual empire (the Delian League) over her fellow Greeks. The confident if turbulent fifth century that followed, dominated artistically by Athens, has been called by subsequent eras the Classical period of Greek art.

Internally, Athens underwent tremendous political change prior to the Persian invasions, beginning with legal reforms and the constitution introduced by Solon (594 BC). This was followed by a military tyranny and the establishment by Peisistratus (560–510 BC) of a thriving economy based on imports from the colonies. Beginning in the mid-sixth century, Athens became a center for art in the form of her painted pottery (used in the exports of wine and oil), and the monuments of architecture and sculpture erected on the Acropolis, site of Panathenaic civic festivals. Popular revolts against the tyrants established a definitively democratic constitution with assembly votes for citizens of the Athenian *polis*. Successes after the Persian Wars permitted vast expansion of the city's ceremonial precincts and buildings – the sacred shrines, government buildings, and shops of the public square, the Agora, as well as the fortress rock and sanctuary that towered above the Agora, the Acropolis.

Athenian art prior to the Classical period does not survive in great quantities apart from the painted pottery because of the destructions of the Persian Wars. Excavations on the Acropolis have unearthed a few statues of beautiful young women, *korai*, whose gentle smiles are framed by curving ringlets, jeweled ornaments, and pleated drapery. One *kore* (ca. 520–510 BC) still bears traces of color on her blue dress with red patterning; the carver seems to have come from Chios, a colony of Athens in Asia Minor (Fig. 2.21, p.48). As in the case of the *kouroi* (male nudes), ambiguity concerning their identity surrounds such *korai* – whether they represent the image of the goddess Athena, patron of Athens, or the ideal visage of her female devotee, whether priestess or worshiper.



2.21 *Kore*, Acropolis, Athens, ca. 530 BC. Marble, 21½ ins (54.6 cm) high. Acropolis Museum, Athens.

POLYGNOTOS Ancient writers described the wall paintings, long lost, of Polygnotos, who worked in Athens after the victory over the Persians. His painted image of the Battle of Marathon decorated wooden panels in the Poikile Stoa in Athens (ca. 460 BC, along with the related subjects of the Sack of Troy and Battle against the Amazons) and commemorated the great victory visually at the same time as the prose history of Herodotus. According to descriptions, the figures of Polygnotos appear at varying elevations in the field of the picture, suggesting recession in space with minimal settings, as the battle unfolded from left to right. Quiet contemplation or gestures reveal character and suffering in each figure. Such qualities have been discerned in an anonymous red-figure vase painting that situates Athena and Herakles amid several warriors, presumably in the underworld (Fig. 2.22). The fine nuances of these figures, turning in space, recall the dignity and gracefulness of the Olympia statues and metope reliefs, carved at about the same time. Even if we can only guess at the degree to which they are representative of the achievements of lost Greek wall paintings, these heroic figures in the natural red color of the fired terracotta vases achieve a volumetric effect of physical movement in space through their internal linear modeling and their newfound freedom from the restrictions of the silhouetted profiles of earlier black-figure vases.

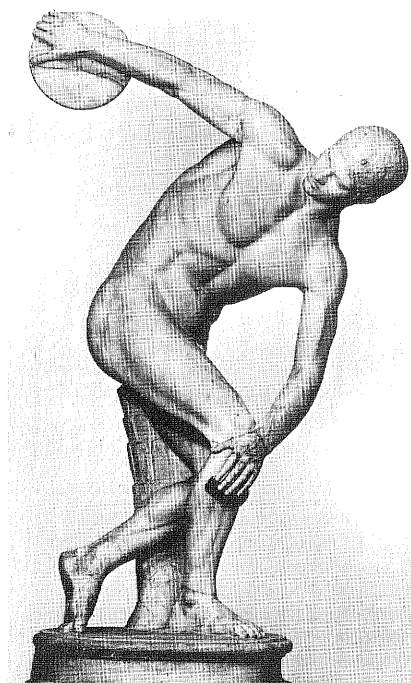
2.22 *Niobid Painter, Athena, Herakles, and Heroes*, ca. 455–450 BC. Painted terracotta calyx-krater, 21¼ ins (54 cm) high. Louvre, Paris.



GREEK SCULPTURE AND ARCHITECTURE

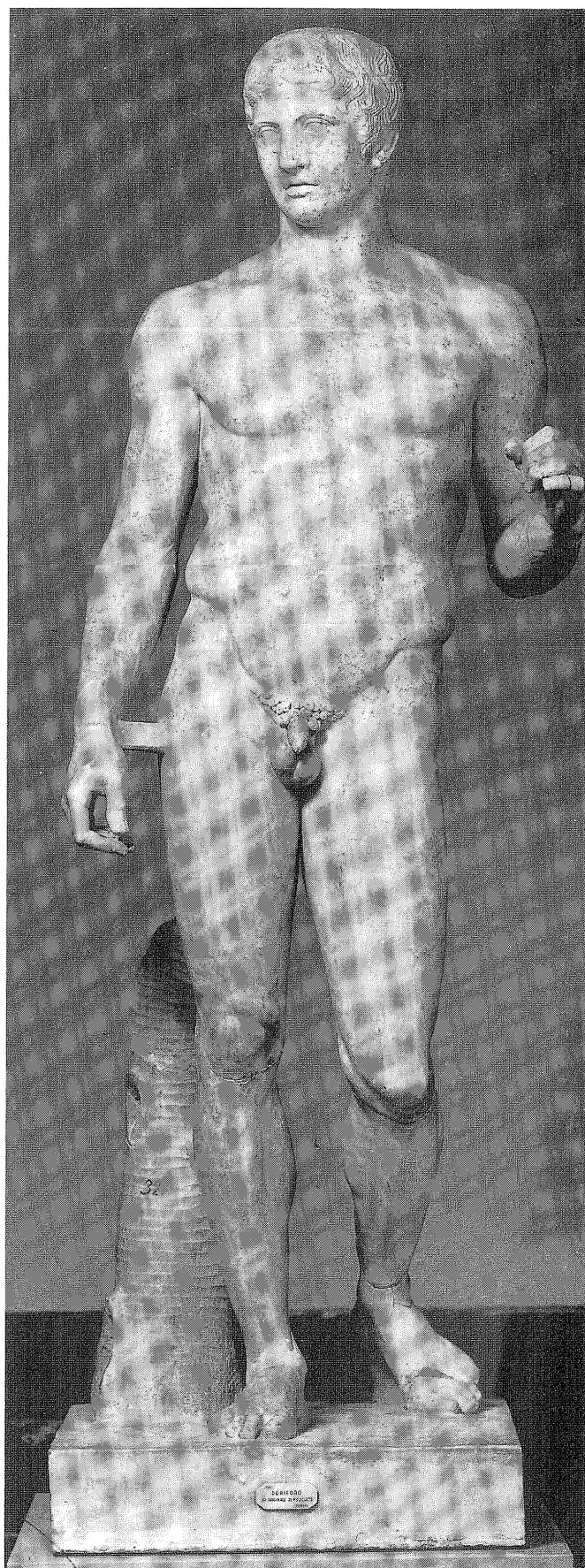
Sculpture picked up the pictorial interest in human motions and gestures pioneered by Polygnotos. After the relative calm, sometimes referred to as the Severe Style, of Olympia, the Athenian sculptor Myron imparted a new patterned movement to his figures, exemplified by the famous *Diskobolos* or "Discus-Thrower" of ca. 460 BC (Fig. 2.23). The bronze original is lost. Here, stillness in the midst of intense activity implies the remainder of the action to follow, a principle also employed in Greek tragedy, where most of the violent action occurs offstage. The subject remains tied to the ethos of athletic competition so basic at Olympia as well as at Delphi. Another famous sculpted group by Myron at the Acropolis of Athens portrayed the encounter of Athena with the half-human, half-goat satyr Marsyas, pointing a contrast between the beauty of reason and the grotesqueness of animal passion, in the tradition of the Battle between Lapiths and Centaurs.

POLYKLEITOS OF ARGOS was one of the most famous fifth-century Greek sculptors along with Pheidias and Myron. Working in bronze, his specialty was images of athletic victors, many of them imitated in surviving Roman marble copies. His most famous image, preserved in numerous copies, was the *Doryphoros*, "Youth Bearing Lance" (Fig. 2.24). Polykleitos was celebrated for his intellectual approach to sculpture, and this image expressed his system of ideal proportions for the human body, upon which he wrote a treatise (lost), entitled *Canon* (from the Greek word for "rule"), a name also given to the *Doryphoros*. Numerical



2.23 Myron, *Diskobolos* ("Discus-Thrower"), ca. 450 BC. Roman marble copy of bronze original, lifesize. Museo Nazionale Romano, Rome.

2.24 Polykleitos, *Doryphoros* ("Youth Bearing Lance"), ca. 450–440 BC. Roman marble copy of bronze original, lifesize. Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Naples.



harmonies of ratios between the parts of the body defined this muscular figure, yet its relaxed stance, known by its later Italian name of *contrapposto*, balances oppositions of tension against slackness to overcome the stiffness or stillness of perfect symmetry. The overall effect remains one of animation, as if the figure was interrupted in the process of walking rather than standing still, employing a subtler version of the same pregnant pause as Myron's discus-thrower. However, within this figural specificity, Polykleitos strove to express through his relation of the parts to the whole (*symmetria*) an image of perfection and beauty.

The concept of numerical rule through ratios also governed Greek architecture, whose measure was considered to be proportional to that of the human body. Greek veneration for number harmonies in art as well as music stems from the philosophical contemplation of mathematics by Pythagoras (late sixth century BC). Greek geometers, led by Euclid (ca. 300 BC), eventually codified the principles of plane surface designs. Such principles survived in a form that was later systematized for architecture by the Roman writer Vitruvius. Within this building system, regular ratios govern the relation between the diameter and the height of Greek columns or between the width and length of Greek temples, just as similar numerical ratios pertain between the head and the height of the human body.

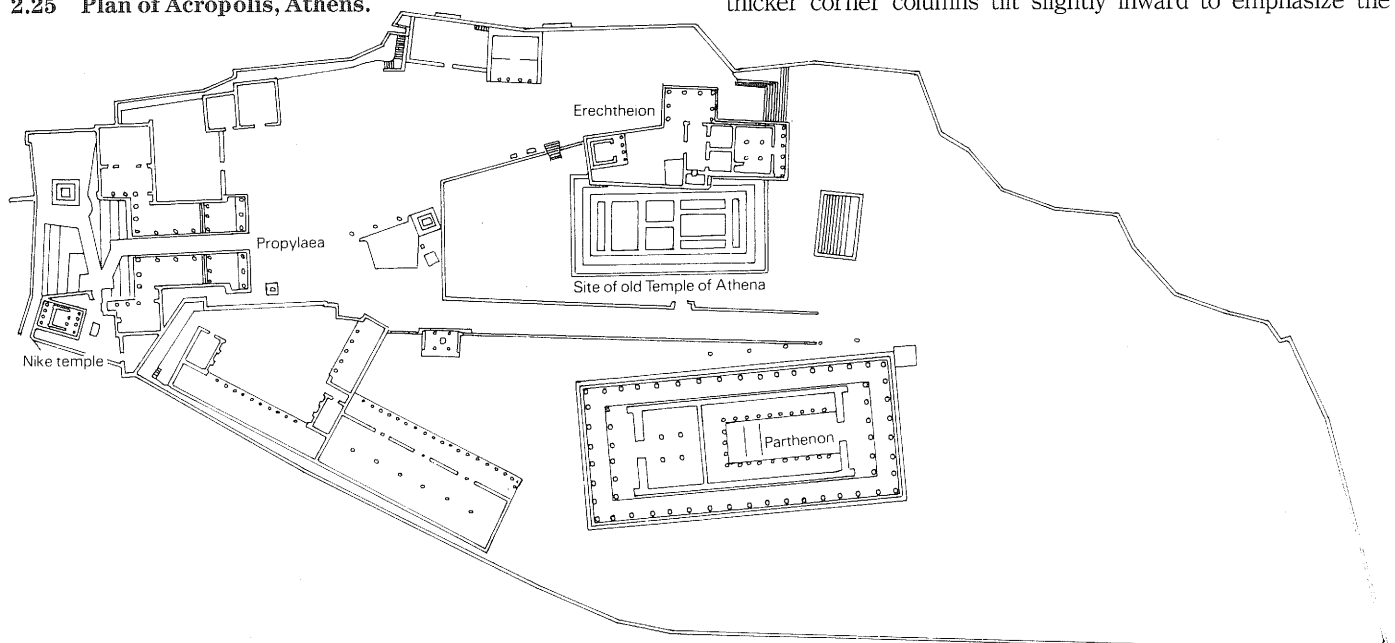
THE ACROPOLIS The consummate achievement in Athens in the Classical period was the cluster of buildings erected on the Acropolis during the second half of the fifth century. The funding of such lavish monuments of civic pride and identity was made possible by Athens's aggressive imperial policy, led by Pericles from 461 to 429 BC with the support of the democratic assembly. Eventually Athens and other

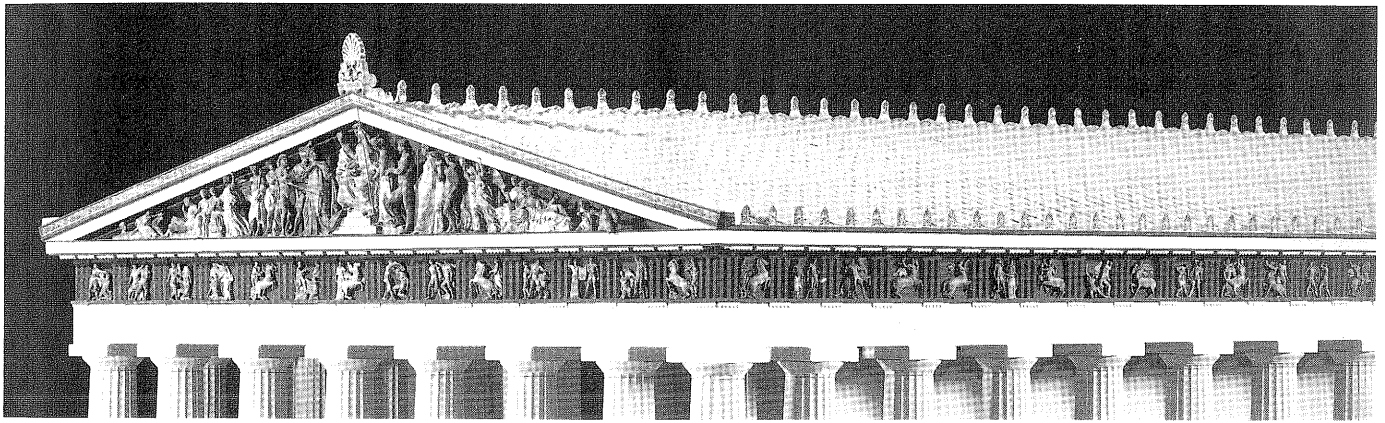
democracies quarreled with Sparta and the Peloponnesian League, which were governed by oligarchies, where power was held by a very small group. The resulting Peloponnesian War (431–404 BC; chronicled by Thucydides) exhausted both parties and resulted in the eventual surrender of Athens.

During the halcyon moment when Periclean Athens was prosperous and peaceful between the Persian Wars and the ruinous Peloponnesian War, the city basked in self-confidence and in a belief in the human capacity to create an ideal society on earth. Initially, Athenians vowed to leave their temples in ruins as a memorial to the destructions of the Persians, called barbarians, or uncivilized, by the Greeks; therefore, there was no new building during the period of Olympia, 479–450 BC. It was Pericles who set about rebuilding the Acropolis and other public buildings as a symbol of the Greek triumph as well as a signal of Athens's new cultural supremacy (appropriating the treasury of the Delian League). The rationale and idealistic declaration of Athens's democratic principles can be found in the celebrated Funeral Oration of Pericles to the fallen soldiers made during the first year of the Peloponnesian War (Thucydides II. 34–6).

THE PARTHENON Crowning the Acropolis was the Parthenon, temple of Athena Parthenos, warrior-maiden as well as goddess of wisdom and patron of the city (Figs 2.25 and 2.26). Designed by the architects Kallikrates and Iktinos (447–438 BC), in plan the building conforms fully to the Doric temple pattern: raised platform, colonnade, architrave, and pediment. More generous in scale, the dimensions of the building are carefully calibrated to the numerical proportions mentioned above, with a ratio of 8 columns by 17 (Olympia is 6 by 13) and a basic 4:9 ratio in its dimensions. At the same time subtle practical modifications have been made. A slight bowing curve raises the central section of each horizontal curve as an optional refinement (as well as a design for runoff), while thicker corner columns tilt slightly inward to emphasize the

2.25 Plan of Acropolis, Athens.





2.26 Iktinos and Kallikrates, Parthenon, Athens, ca. 447–438 BC.

2.27 Parthenon, reconstruction model. Metropolitan Museum, New York.

compactness of the building. Such adjustments, including a slight bulging (*entasis*) in the taper of the column shafts, were employed elsewhere in Greek temples but rarely with the refinement of detail and craftsmanship seen at the Parthenon. Unfortunately, the building was gravely damaged in 1687, so the overall effects of its rich marble (in contrast to the stucco of Olympia) and its original coloring have been lost.

The Parthenon was adorned with sculptures (Fig. 2.27), completed in 432 BC by Pheidias and his workshop, general planners of the Periclean building program. In the central *naos* of the temple Pheidias produced his other most famous cult statue after the Olympian Zeus: a colossal standing frontal gold

and ivory Athena, now lost (Fig. 2.28, p.52). The size of this figure (around 33 feet/10 meters) necessitated the greater scale of the Parthenon, and Pheidias surely dictated some aspects of the design of Iktinos (by contrast, Zeus must have appeared cramped in his earlier temple home at Olympia). The entire body was built on a wooden framework, or *armature*, dimly lit yet glowing from the precious materials of her gilded costume and ivory skin. In her right hand the goddess held a Victory figure; her left hand held a shield with relief carving of the battle of the Greeks *vs* the Amazons (a female warrior tribe), enhanced by reliefs on her sandals of the battle against the centaurs. Once more the theme of the struggle of order and reason against passion and chaos informs Greek thought, but Pheidias's choice of the myth of Pandora for the base of his great statue disturbingly associates discord with cultural gifts.

More sculpture adorned the Parthenon than any other Greek temple. Figures in the pediment and 92 carved metopes filled the entire exterior, rare for larger Doric buildings, while the inner porch, unique in Doric buildings, bore a continuous



2.28 Pheidias, *Athena*, 447–432 BC, reconstruction model. Wood covered with gold and ivory. Courtesy of the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto.

frieze. Surviving works show some variation in execution (especially in the metopes, presumably begun first) but a surprising consistency of quality in the Pheidian workshop. The Parthenon metopes repeat the subject of Olympia, Lapiths against centaurs, as well as other subjects akin to the decorations of the cult statue inside: the battle against the Amazons, Greeks against Trojans, gods against giants – all essentially symbolic of the recent glorious victory over the Persians. Many of the metopes were defaced by later possessors of the Parthenon, but the surviving images of the killing of the centaurs reveal a figural grace and poise that animates the sturdy, muscular forms already seen at Olympia, like the contemporary isolated figure by Polykleitos.

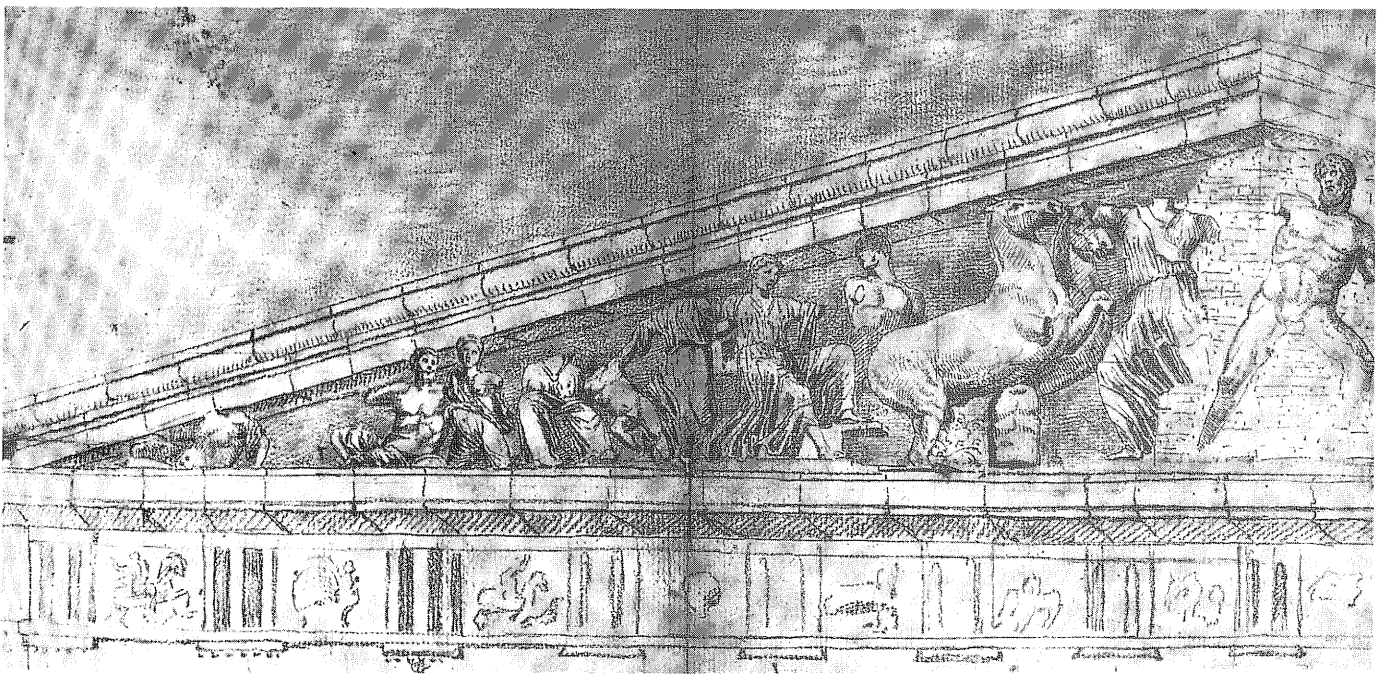
THE PARTHENON FRIEZE, three feet (one meter) high but running the entire perimeter of the inner porch (525 feet/160 meters long), was designed as a procession, moving along both sides of the temple before converging at the eastern front. Taking into account the actual approach of a visitor, the frieze begins with horsemen preparing to ride and continues around the corner to the north flank of the building (Fig. 2.29). At the climax of the procession, the eastern frieze features central deities as well as maidens presenting

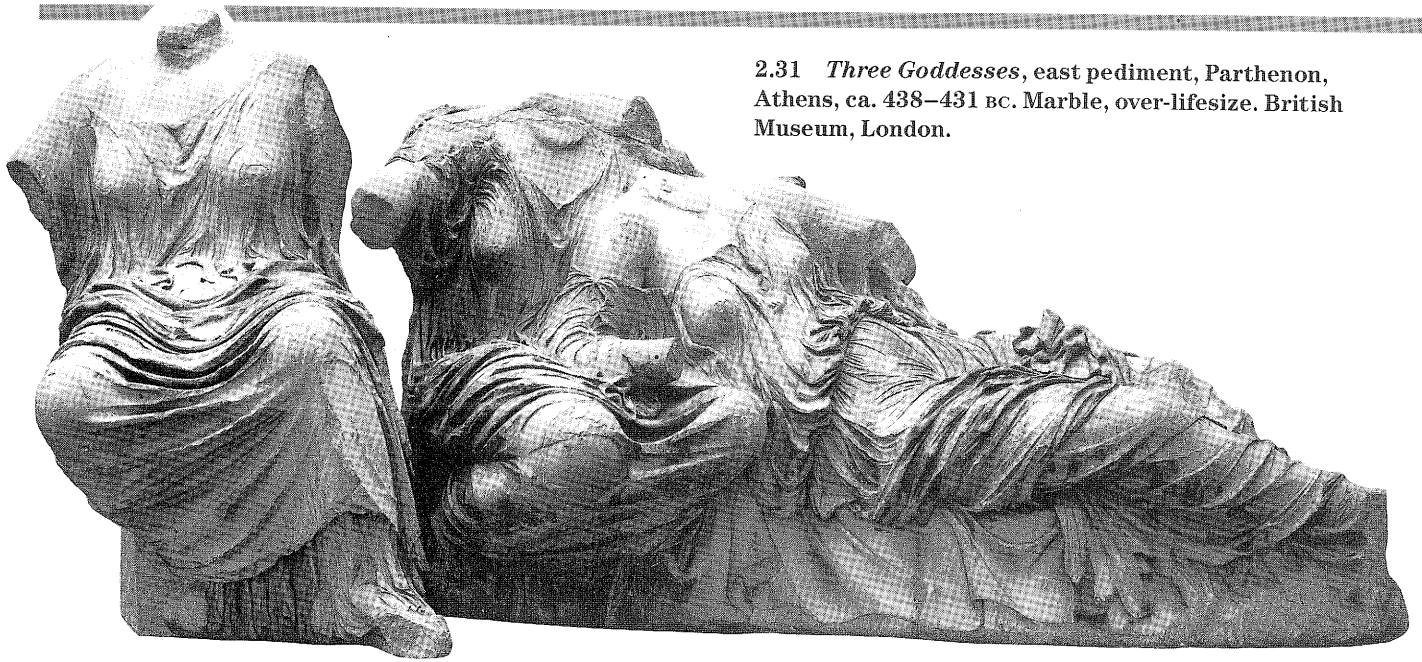
offering bowls. The entire frieze represents the Panathenaea, the annual Athenian festival in honor of Athena, which every fourth year featured the dedication of a luxurious woven cloak, or *peplos*, to a venerable cult statue (not the Pheidian image) of the goddess. This very festival unfolded alongside the Parthenon friezes representing it, just as the frieze progresses in time from the back of the building to its front with the passage of every visitor. In a striking display of confidence and pride, the Athenians have substituted themselves for the gods, the traditional subject of their most important temple precinct decoration. Of course, the modern viewer must make an imaginative attempt to restore the effects of painted settings and colored figures in place of the unadorned white of the surviving marble. The procession might well be commemorative or even symbolic; for example, the youthful equestrians of the carved frieze total 192, the number of martyrs slain at the Battle of Marathon. Whatever the specifics of the meaning, the Parthenon frieze underscores the close connection between Athenian glory, exemplified by the Parthenon itself, and the city's pious links with its protecting gods. The youths and maidens from the frieze display a remarkable, lifelike grace and figural interaction that enhance their beauty. Such figures were first seen in the isolated standing *koros* and *kore* figures of the previous century. Like those figures, these eternally young participants in the procession transcend earthly shortcomings, despite their lifelike rendering, as they offer their votive gifts to the divine protectors of the city and Greek civilization.

Pediments at the Parthenon had an unusually broad expanse to fill owing to the ample dimensions of the building, and the figures were carved almost in the round. Unfortunately, the pediments were the most severely damaged images in the explosion that destroyed the roof of the building. Drawings suggest more of the original composition than can surviving sculptures (Fig. 2.30). The birth of the fully-grown Athena on the east pediment is complemented on the west by Athena's contest for the land of Athens with Poseidon, god of the sea (her gift, the olive tree, won her the city's undying gratitude for the chief item in its export trade). In a marked departure from the upright axial standing pediment figures of Zeus and Apollo at Olympia, Athena and Poseidon at the Parthenon form a V-shaped dynamic of movement and reaction, generated by the miraculous appearance of the olive tree of the narrative. Surviving, over-lifesize figures of goddesses from the east pediment reveal the sculptors' inventive solution to site problems of the steep slope of the gable (Fig. 2.31, p.54). The gradual turn of the group from the corners to the center of the pediment composition underscores the central

2.29 Panathenaic frieze riders, Parthenon, 442–438 BC. Marble relief, 43 ins (109.2 cm) high. British Museum, London.

2.30 Contest between Athena and Poseidon, west pediment, Parthenon, Athens. Drawing by Jacques Carrey, 1673. Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.



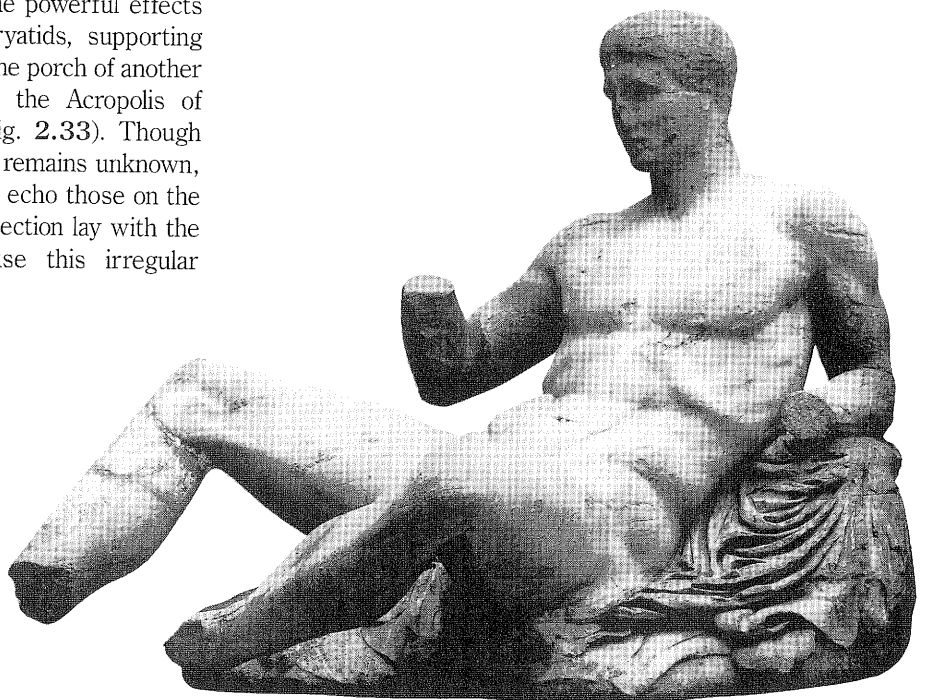


2.31 *Three Goddesses, east pediment, Parthenon, Athens, ca. 438–431 bc. Marble, over-lifesize. British Museum, London.*

importance of the birth of the goddess at the apex. In the meantime the organic solidity of these ample bodies, visible beneath rich cascades of clinging drapery, suggests the powerful presence of the missing central figures, easily visible even at a great distance from the pediment. Light and shade emphasize these deep-cut folds, which now serve as animating elements in their own right as they show volume and torsion for their figures. Balancing this triad of goddesses on the opposite end of the pediment sits a reclining and relaxed male nude, possibly Herakles, the bridge between humanity and divinity, and a perfect metaphor for the divine potential for strength and beauty in the ideal human figure (Fig. 2.32).

THE ERECHTHEION Some of the powerful effects of carved folds reappear on the caryatids, supporting columnar sculpted female figures, on the porch of another building erected after the Parthenon on the Acropolis of Athens: the Erechtheion (421–409 bc; Fig. 2.33). Though the specific religious function of this porch remains unknown, the sculptor surely intended his maidens to echo those on the nearby Parthenon frieze. Possibly the connection lay with the four-yearly (quadrennial) festivity, because this irregular

temple on a steep slope housed the wooden cult statue of Athena that received the *peplos* at the climax of that Panathenaic procession. Once more, the *kore* tradition of maidens clad in *peploi* reasserts itself after centuries on the Acropolis. The Erechtheion also housed the cult of Athena's olive tree as well as ancient cults of additional gods and local heroes, including the legendary king, Erechtheus, after whom it is named. In form this small temple is *Ionic*, derived from Asia Minor, the new focus of Athens replacing the Doric Peloponnese, wartime enemies of the city. Scrolled capitals, or *volutes*, rest on more slender columns with rich bases, which support an entablature with frieze, instead of the Doric triglyphs and metopes.

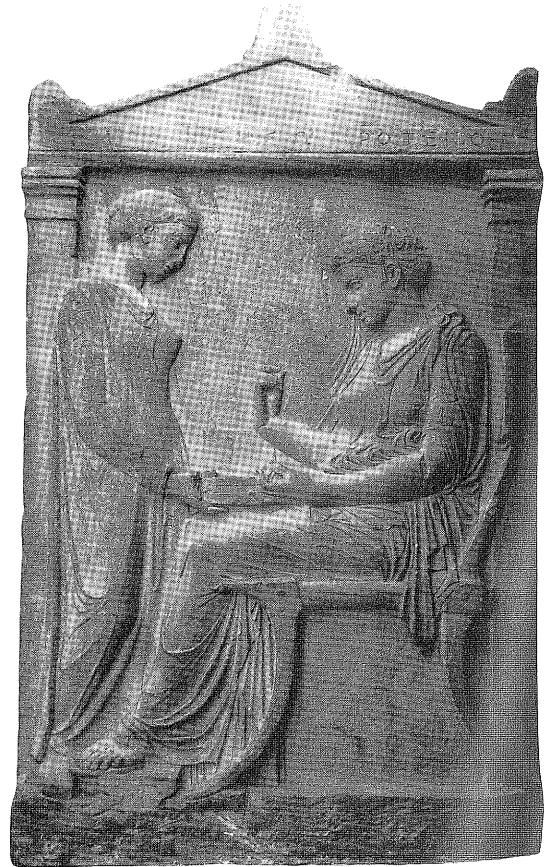


2.32 *Reclining Nude (Herakles?), east pediment, Parthenon, Athens. 438–432 bc. Marble, over-lifesize. British Museum, London.*



2.33 Erechtheion, Athens, ca. 421–405 BC.

Work on the Acropolis ensemble continued until the definitive defeat of Athens by Sparta and her allies in 404 BC. The ceremonial entrance gate, the Propylaea (designed by the architect Mnesicles), interrupted by the outbreak of war, was never completed. Thereafter Athens lost its dominance over other city-states, though its cultural influence remained high in subsequent years, especially through copies of famous artworks of the city and in the form of language and literature for both learning and international trade. The deaths at the end of the century of the historian Thucydides (ca. 400 BC) and of the philosopher Socrates (399 BC), condemned to death for his “corrupting” influence in asserting a new, antidemocratic, ethical autonomy, mark a cultural watershed in Athenian history. It seems appropriate that one of the chief activities of sculptors, alongside the great monuments of the Acropolis in Athens, consisted of the production of figured tombstones, *stelai*, now a question of expense rather than of noble origins. One of the late fifth-century examples of this tombstone carving, showing the influence of Pheidias in its graceful poses and drapery, is the Stele of Hegeso (ca. 400 BC; Fig. 2.34). This modest yet elegant monument exudes a dignified air of gentle melancholy between an older and younger woman, whether a daughter or a servant. Their activity, looking into a small casket, remains serious yet subdued. Its epitaph function can serve here to mark the contemporary end of the democratic ideal of the *polis*, which reached its climax in Periclean Athens.



2.34 Stele of Hegeso, ca. 410–400 BC. Marble relief, 59 ins (150 cm) high. National Archaeological Museum, Athens.