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Author(s): Rhys F. Townsend

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CLASSICAL SIGNS AND ANTI-CLASSICAL SIGNIFICATION IN 4TH-CENTURY ATHENIAN ARCHITECTURE

by Rhys F. Townsend

The nature of Greek art of the 4th century B.C., chronologically sandwiched between the Classical period of the 5th century and the extensive Hellenistic era beginning in the late 4th century, has been long and widely discussed.¹ Among studies of the last thirty years, Blanche Brown brought particular attention to this question in *Anticlassicism in Greek Sculpture of the Fourth Century B.C.*² With a keen eye for both the formal and historical aspects of the problem, she pointed out distinct elements in the sculpture of this century that veered away from Classical norms and related these to the breakup of the Classical polis. But her monograph did little to settle the issue, and scholarship since has remained as divided on the subject as it had been before her book appeared. The art of the 4th century is commonly characterized along one of three lines: (1) that the 4th century represents no serious break with the 5th but rather constitutes a continuation of the Classical style, even if with certain discernible stylistic changes; (2) that the 4th century represents a distinct division from the 5th century and should be considered on its own terms as a separate period; and (3), what might be called a “compromise” position, that the 4th century, transitional between the Classical and Hellenistic periods, includes elements of both.³

1. It is nearly three decades since Sara Immerwahr first served as my graduate advisor and professor. With lasting gratitude for those early lessons, I dedicate this contribution to her.

In this paper, as throughout this book, the term “Classical” with uppercase “C” refers specifically to the time from the mid- to late 5th century, ca. 450–430 B.C., to what is often called the High Classical period, as opposed to “classical” with a lowercase “c,” in reference to Greek art or even Graeco-Roman art more generally.

2. Brown 1973.

3. Brown (1973, pp. 1–4) provides a useful summary of the subject and the literature on it up to the time of publication of her book. Ridgway (1997,

pp. 9–19) reviews the literature of the last twenty-five years as it applies to Greek sculpture, explicitly asking if the 4th century should be considered a logical continuation of the 5th, if it should be called Classical, High Classical, or post-Classical. Such recent views reflect a continued variety of opinion. For example, Borbein (1973) speaks of the 4th century as the *Nachklassik*; Robertson (1975, p. 372) sees a “culmination,” “climax,” “end” in the work of Pheidias and Polykleitos, after which sculpture moves in new directions; Marcadé (1983) considers the period as a development of tendencies of the previous century; Stewart (1990, pp. 173–175) describes a “classicism” and “neo-Pheidian revival” in Athenian

sculpture of the 4th century; Boardman (1995, pp. 15–16) asserts that there was not a great deal that was new in sculpture of the 4th century; Ridgway herself believes that many diverse stylistic trends coexisted during the 4th century (1997, pp. 19, 365).

Specifically architectural studies tend to emphasize a shift away from an Athenocentric universe to one that is focused on the Peloponnese and that in general looks more to the Hellenistic period than to the Classical. This development is seen in a positive light on the whole, in contrast to the earlier view of Dinsmoor (1950, p. 216), who titled his chapter on the 4th century “The Beginning of the Decadence.” See, e.g., Roux 1961, p. 9;

Although they come to different conclusions, all such appraisals restrict themselves methodologically to formal analysis. This paper represents an initial attempt to study the nature of 4th-century art not solely by comparative formal examination of the artistic products of each period, but by investigation into both the causes and processes of artistic change from the 5th century to the 4th. It accepts first that every period is in some manner transitional, and second that the 4th century both continues Classical elements and introduces new ones. Nor is it concerned with arguing nuances and degrees of emphasis within these categories: For example, is the 4th century more transition than culmination, does the art of the period display more of a break from the style of the 5th century, or are there more shared points than differences? The present analysis concentrates instead on intention and effect in style, with a view to understanding how Classical tenets were treated and in some instances transformed. It recognizes, in other words, a potential distinction between aim and achievement, and argues that the difference between art of the 5th and 4th centuries, in some cases at least, lies in the disparity between intended and received meaning. Finally, it proposes certain cultural forces as causal in effecting this change.

The methodology relies generally on structuralist analysis, which recognizes that the creation of meaning in a “text” (or artifact) lies in a sometimes complex relationship between the “author” of the text, the text itself, and those who “read” or receive it. Fundamental to this approach is the notion of “encoding,” “decoding,” and “aberrant decoding,” whereby signs or codes (in this case, elements of architectural form) are assembled or “encoded” with a specific intention or meaning by those who create the “text.” Whatever the intended meaning, a structuralist approach allows for the possibility that a “text” may be decoded or read (or interpreted or reacted to, to use less jargonistic terminology) in a number of ways, depending on the social background or context of the individual engaged in decoding. “Aberrant decoding” refers specifically to the process whereby meaning received by the decoder is at odds with that intended by the encoder.⁴ The context of the “text” itself may also play a role in the way in which it is read; thus function and setting are as important in creating meaning as the form itself.

The particular material under review deals with 4th-century Athenian architecture, and more precisely with formal features directly inspired by 5th-century models. These will be examined to understand, first, if they

Coulton 1976, p. 38, for the more optimistic outlook. Lawrence (1996, p. 125), on the other hand, while less polemical than Dinsmoor, does uphold the idea that “Greek architecture began to decline towards the end of the fifth century.”

4. This is not the place for a primer in structuralist analysis, which for some time has been adapted from its early application in literary studies to other fields. Jencks (1987, p. 42), however,

provides a simple but clear example from the context of modern architecture that helps to illustrate the basic principle. In this case, what the modern architect creates (i.e., the forms he “encodes,”) is often not at all what the public sees or “reads.” In other words, the public “aberrantly decodes” the work, thus creating a “disconnect” between the architect’s intention in using the modernist style and the public’s reaction to it. Jencks writes:

“What is seen as harmonious well-proportioned pure volume by the subculture of modern architects and their adherents is seen as a ‘shoe-box’ or ‘filing cabinet’ by the general public.” Structuralism does not identify a necessarily “right” or “wrong” interpretation of a visual form; rather it recognizes that one’s interpretation or understanding of form is related to one’s social or cultural context.

were used with the same purpose in mind as they had been in the 5th century, and second, regardless of their intended purpose, whether they carried the same effect. The elements analyzed are plan, colored stone, and architectural detail, specifically moldings and proportions. These particular components are chosen because they provide examples whereby the 5th-century source for the 4th-century application is readily recognized and accepted, thereby making the connection between paradigm and parallel as explicit as possible. Taking a feature and changing its context significantly alters its effect, and whether that effect be aesthetic or cultural or both, it marks an irreversible change in the artistic mindset of the 4th century from that of the preceding 5th century.⁵

PLAN

One of the most well-known architectural types in 4th-century Athens is the choregic monument. A victorious *choregos*, the triumphant sponsor of a chorus in the dithyrambic contests of the Dionysia, was awarded a bronze tripod for his victory and received permission from the state to erect, at his own expense, a base on which to place the tripod. In the 4th century many of these bases came more to resemble buildings, and it has long been noted that the victors in two such contests, during the year 320/19 B.C.,⁶ erected dedications whose plans directly derive from elements of Mnesikles' Propylaia on the Akropolis.⁷ Specifically, the plan of the choregic monument of Nikias imitates the hexastyle prostyle form of the east porch, and that of Thrasyllus follows closely the arrangement of the west facade of the southwest wing. The Thrasyllus Monument (Fig. 16.1) virtually copies the facade of the southwest wing: In each structure two wide corner pilasters and a single narrow middle pilaster support an entablature of unusual but nearly identical design.⁸ Further, the architect of the Thrasyllus Monument imitated the profile of the anta capitals of the Propylaia.⁹ Even though there is no question about these similarities between copy and original, the differences between the two, which have to do with the motivating factors behind each design, tend to be overlooked. Mnesikles' arrangement of the southwest wing is hardly standard Doric, representing as it does a compromise necessitated by a lack of space for the southwest corner of the building. It is generally assumed that in his original design Mnesikles desired the two west wings of his building to be symmetrical in length, but that he was prevented from making that of the southwest wing the same

5. Very little architecture was built in Athens during the first half of the 4th century, which in general is a period of economic recovery following the city's defeat in the Peloponnesian War. The monuments under review here therefore all lie chronologically in the second half of the century, some as late as ca. 300. In strict chronological terms, these later works are Hellenistic, if the standard date of 323 B.C. for the

beginning of the Hellenistic era is adhered to unwaveringly. But the imposition of periods, each with a defined start and finish, while useful in some respects, is artificial in others. The purpose of this paper is not to delineate the limits of a period but more to explore the underlying forces that make up change in a place over time.

6. The date of each monument is firmly established by its dedicatory

inscription: that of Thrasyllus is *IG II² 3056*; that of Nikias, *IG II² 3055*.

7. Dörpfeld (1885) was the first to comment on the relationship of the monuments of Nikias and Thrasyllus to the Propylaia. Plans of all three structures may be found conveniently in Travlos 1971.

8. See p. 317 for discussion of the entablature.

9. See Townsend 1985.

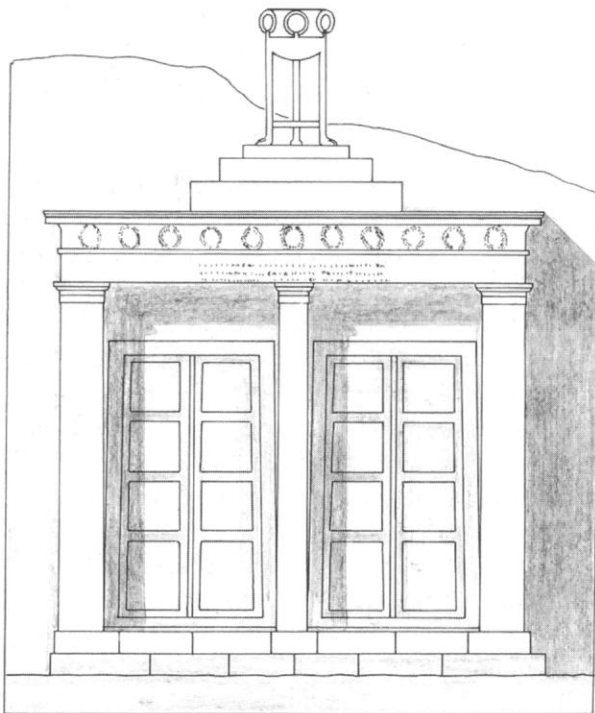
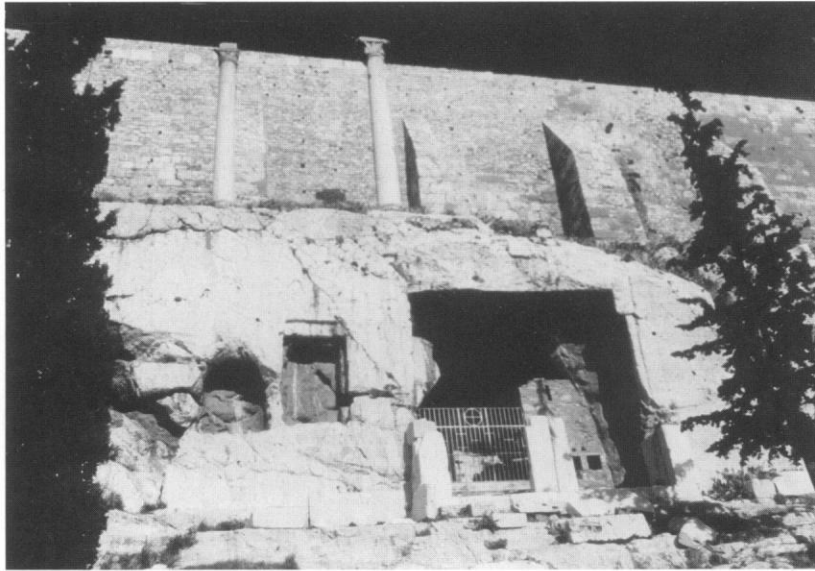


Figure 16.1. Thrasyllos Monument:
(above) from orchestra of Theater of Dionysos; *(lower left)* reconstructed elevation; *(lower right)* isometric detail of entablature. Photo R. F. Townsend; elevation R. F. Townsend, after Welter 1938, p. 66, fig. 39; detail R. F. Townsend

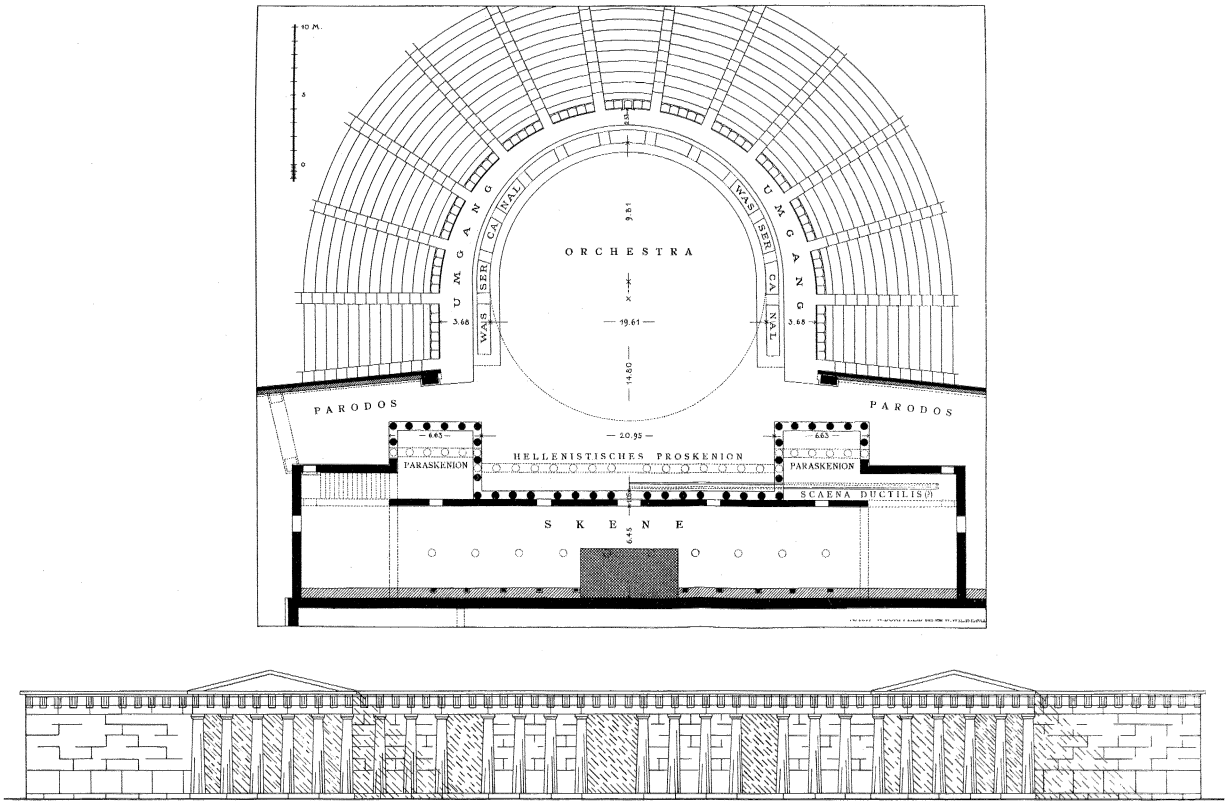


Figure 16.2. Theater of Dionysos:
 plan (north at top) and reconstructed
 elevation of *skene*. Plan after Dörpfeld
 and Reisch 1896, pl. 4; elevation R. F.
 Townsend

as that of the northwest owing to restricted space on this part of the Akropolis.¹⁰ His response was to build a structure similar at first glance to the corresponding northwest wing, but in reality not much more than a facade. The architect of the Thrasyllos Monument may have appreciated this solution because he too was dealing with a facade; behind the three pilasters of the choregic monument lies no actual structure but simply a natural opening in the bedrock.¹¹

The forces driving the two architects were fundamentally different, however. The southwest wing of the Propylaea represents a practical solution to a structural problem; the lack of space prevented Mnesikles from building a complete wing. It may be safely assumed that the intent, could it have been realized, was to duplicate the plan that appeared on the north, a room with a porch, essentially a naos distyle in antis. By contrast, it never could have been in the mind of the architect of the Thrasyllos Monument to build a freestanding structure; he was dealing with an ornamental facade from the start. The Doric order, and more specifically this variant of it, was for him a purely aesthetic choice unrelated to structural concerns. The form therefore is not the result of an application of an architectural system modified to meet specific circumstances. The Doric order is reduced to a visual motif, largely divorced from function. In this aspect, of course, it is antithetical to the Classical expression of the order.

Directly below the Thrasyllos Monument lies the scene building, or *skene*, of the Theater of Dionysos (Fig. 16.2). Constructed in stone during the period of Lykourgos at the end of the third quarter of the 4th century,

10. See Dinsmoor 1982 and Mark 1993, pp. 79–82, for discussion and reference to earlier bibliography concerning the original and revised plans of the Propylaea.

11. This opening, forming the interior of the monument, is divided into two sections, an outer shallow chamber (ca. 1.70 m deep) and an inner grottolike area (ca. 8.70 m deep). Pausanias (1.21.3) reports that it was furnished with a representation of Apollo and Artemis slaying the children of Niobe.

the *skene* consisted of a colonnaded front that was closed in the central section, by a wall backing the columns, and open on the projecting *paraskenia*.¹² At either end of the building are two lateral extensions. These continue the entablature of the colonnade but not the columns themselves, as the extensions are faced with blank walls. The origin of the pi-shaped plan of the scene building lies in the design of the Stoa of Zeus Eleutherios in the Agora, the first stoa to incorporate projecting colonnaded wings,¹³ and as Homer Thompson described it, “probably the best result which an architect could achieve if he wished to make of a stoa a complete and self-contained unit.”¹⁴ Unlike its prototype, on the other hand, the *skene* is essentially a colonnaded facade that was related to both the orchestra in front, to the north, and to the stoa of the Sanctuary of Dionysos behind it, to the south. The scene building shares a common back wall with the stoa in the Sanctuary of Dionysos, thus physically linking it with this area, and an imaginary line extending between the steps of the *paraskenia* defines a tangent to the orchestra circle, thereby tying *skene*, orchestra, and *theatron* together in an intentionally integrated design. Rather than forming a free-standing structure, the *skene* becomes a facade constituting one part of a multivalent complex.

The quality of facade architecture is emphasized by the continuous wall behind the colonnade in the central section of the *skene*, where the columns appear to be decorative rather than structural. Classical architecture of the 5th century considered column and wall to be mutually independent from each other; both were structurally supporting elements, so combining them would be redundant. It is only in the 4th century, primarily in the Peloponnese, that columns began to display a purely decorative purpose. They are attached to walls without performing any structural role, and this combination becomes commonplace in the following, Hellenistic, period.¹⁵ In a variation of this motif, perhaps intentional, perhaps reflecting some misunderstanding of the concept, the relationship of column and wall in the *skene* is reversed: the columns are actually the supporting members, while the wall against which they are placed is not load-bearing; it is but a screen.¹⁶

Nevertheless, the same redundancy of wall and column results. The architect of the *skene* began planning his structure by looking at a model of Classical architecture: a freestanding, independent building in which the appearance of an architectural member was indissolubly joined with its tectonic role. What he produced is an example of facade architecture, in which structure and appearance are no longer necessarily one and the same. Whether the architect consciously recognized the effect of this change, he followed his Classical predecessor only superficially and instead introduced new ideas that resulted in the very opposite of Classical form.

COLORED STONE

In 1949 Lucy Shoe (Meritt) published her article “Dark Stone in Greek Architecture,”¹⁷ an important study that drew attention to the purposeful use of Eleusinian limestone in 5th-century structures on the Akropolis. Mnesikles in particular seized on the potential of color contrast in the

12. For discussion of the *skene*, its association with Lykourgos and the specifics of its reconstruction, see Townsend 1986, with earlier bibliography.

13. Thompson 1937, pp. 5–77. For the association of the stoa and the *skene*, see Townsend 1986, pp. 433–434.

14. *Agora* XIV, p. 100.

15. Roux 1961, pp. 393–394, 397.

16. Townsend 1986, pp. 436–437.

17. Shoe 1949.

Propylaia, where he utilized it to highlight various tectonic aspects of the building: to indicate transitions in level, to harmonize proportions, and to emphasize structural features within the overall design.¹⁸

Specifically, Shoe pointed to Mnesikles' use of the stone between foundation and superstructure in the west wings, as a string course in the front wall of the northwest wing, for the orthostate course in the central building, and for the sill of the gate wall. In the first instance, Eleusinian stone helped to delineate between foundation and superstructure as well as to maintain a sense of equal proportions between the krepis of each west wing and that of the central building. In the second instance, the dark color of the string course delineated its function as sill for the windows of the porch wall. Even more emphatically, the dark orthostates of the central building, set in striking contrast to the brilliant white marble all around, stressed their role as support for the wall above. And finally, Eleusinian stone used in the gate wall marked the transition from the lower level of the western portion of the Propylaia to the higher eastern facade. In this manner Shoe demonstrated how Mnesikles, by purposefully drawing attention to structural elements and the roles they played, made them an integral part of the building's design.

Shoe recognized that, in the 4th century, Hymettian marble came to replace Eleusinian limestone where dark stone was desired, and noted in general the increased frequency with which the new material was used in comparison to Eleusinian limestone. Along with this frequency of use, she believed that color contrast became more and more arbitrary, until by the end of the 4th century it was used without any moderation and with little or no thought to either position or purpose, other than for an essentially arbitrary decorative effect.¹⁹ Hymettian marble had first been introduced into the repertory of Athenian building materials in the late 5th century, its use attested at that time in the Stoa of Zeus Eleutherios in the Agora,²⁰ in the West Stoa of the Asklepieion, and in the Pompeion in the Kerameikos.²¹ It was also commonly used for inscriptions beginning in the late 5th century.²²

The bluish-gray color of Hymettian marble proved a good substitute for Eleusinian limestone where a dark stone was desired to provide color contrast. Not only were its quarries on the slopes of Mount Hymettos considerably closer to the city than those of Eleusinian limestone,²³ the material was also easier to work, and its appearance was not marred by the oxidization that coats the surface of Eleusinian limestone with a white film after long periods of exposure to the air.²⁴ While Hymettian marble grew in popularity until it was used far more than Eleusinian limestone had ever been, this frequency of use did not result in merely capricious application. Rather the material won for itself a distinctive role that prescribed its employment in certain defined positions.

In buildings whose primary material is marble, it is almost always used for part of the krepis, for orthostate course, and for threshold; it also occurs as material for door jambs. As building material of the krepis, Hymettian marble appears in the Doric Stoa of the Asklepieion (stylobate),²⁵ the stoa in the Sanctuary of Dionysos (bottom step, upper two steps not preserved),²⁶ the scene building of the Theater of Dionysos (stylobate),²⁷ the Thrasyllos Monument (lower step),²⁸ the Temple of Apollo

18. For a preliminary presentation of the subject of colored stone, see Townsend 1981.

19. Shoe 1949, pp. 350, 352.

20. Thompson 1937.

21. *Kerameikos* X.

22. Thompson (1937, p. 46)

provides a partial list of inscriptions of late-5th-century date inscribed on Hymettian marble. Lawton (1995, p. 12) notes that for inscribed documents with sculpted reliefs, Hymettian marble is used frequently only at the end of the 4th century.

23. The quarries of Mount Hymettos are identified by Curtius and Kaupert (1883, pp. 25–28). For the Eleusinian quarries, see Travlos 1949, p. 139, fig. 1, and p. 144, note 18.

24. Thompson 1937, p. 47.

25. The most complete attempt at reconstruction remains that of Allen and Caskey (1911).

26. The stoa has been variously examined in the course of the many studies of the Theater of Dionysos. Important publications include Dörpfeld and Reisch 1896, Bulle 1928, Fiechter et al. 1935–1936, and Dinsmoor 1951. Blocks of the first step of the stoa are preserved in situ at the west end of the building.

27. Townsend 1986.

28. Welter 1938.

Patroos (second step and stylobate, bottom step not preserved),²⁹ the Dipylon Fountain House (stylobate),³⁰ and the porch of the New Bouleuterion (bottom step, no other steps preserved).³¹ As the material used for orthostates, Hymettian marble is found in the scene building of the Theater of Dionysos, in the stoa in the Sanctuary of Dionysos south of the theater, and in the Doric Stoa in the Asklepieion. Thresholds of Hymettian marble occur in the Temple of Apollo Patroos, in Philon's Arsenal, and in the Temple of Artemis Aristoboule. It occurs in a related fashion as a toichobate in the Doric Stoa in the Asklepieion.³² As material for door jambs, the Thrasylos Monument and Philon's Arsenal provide examples, although in the latter case, the specifications indicate that either Hymettian or Pentelic marble would have been satisfactory.³³

In general, these applications of Hymettian marble cast it in the roles played by Eleusinian limestone in the 5th century, particularly to articulate transition in level and to emphasize certain structural features. There can be little question therefore that the intention was to carry on the Classical style and to maintain the integration of design and structure. A closer look at one example from the 4th century will serve to underline this point. In the Lysikrates Monument³⁴ (Fig. 16.3), the podium is built of light-colored poros from Piraeus while the tholos itself is constructed entirely of white Pentelic marble, except for the intercolumnar panels. It is important to recognize that these panels were an afterthought, not a part of the original design of the monument, and even as used they are carved from a particularly pale shade of Hymettian marble, almost closer to white than to blue.³⁵ Between the podium and the monument proper is an Ionic geison. The course serves a dual purpose, both as crown to the base and as projecting plinth to the tholos. Yet in contrast to the podium below and the tholos steps above, it is made from characteristically steel-blue Hymettian marble. With this color contrast the effect of the course becomes twofold. In its function as both crown and plinth, it unites the two parts of the monument, while at the same time its contrasting color acts to keep them distinct and separate. In so doing, it marks the tectonic division of the monument into its two constituent elements, rectangular base and round tholos, and further accentuates the proportional relationship between the two, the respective heights of which are divided in the ratio 2:3.

29. Thompson 1937, pp. 92–94.

30. Gruben 1969.

31. Thompson 1937, p. 162. Only in Philon's Porch at Eleusis, among the major building projects of the 4th century, is Eleusinian limestone used instead of Hymettian marble in the krepis. This exception is readily explained by the wish to maintain the same material that appears in the Telesterion proper, as well as by the

stone's ready availability close to this site.

32. The propylon to the City Eleusinion also uses Hymettian marble as a base for its walls. Originally dated to the third quarter of the 4th century on epigraphic evidence, recently it has been redated to the 2nd century B.C. (*Agora XXXI*, pp. 61–62, 74–75).

33. *IG II²* 1668, lines 33, 60. Foundations (only) of Philon's Arsenal have

been found recently: see Petrakos 1995 and Touchais 1996.

34. Firmly dated by its dedicatory inscription (*IG II²* 3042) to 335/4 B.C. The monument is fully published by Bauer (1977).

35. Only one original panel remains in place today; the other panels, all much darker, belong to the restoration of the monument in the 19th century.



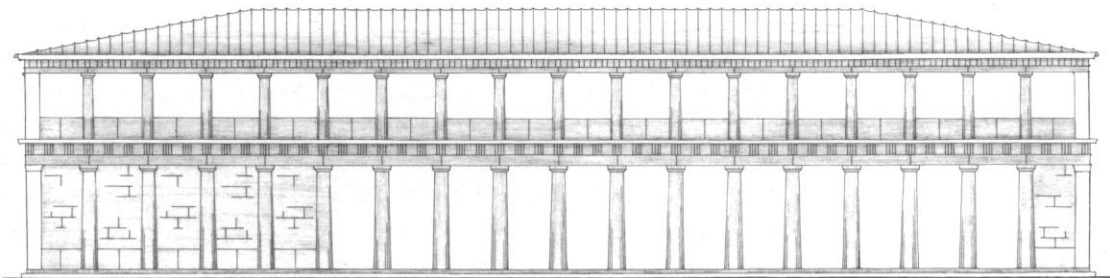
Figure 16.3. Lysikrates Monument, from southeast. R. F. Townsend

The idea at work represents an application of the concept first introduced in the two west wings of the Propylaia. In each of the two wings, the bottom step is of dark Eleusinian stone, while the three above are of white Pentelic marble. As noted above, the darker stone sets off the foundations below the steps from the superstructure above. It also serves to maintain a sense of common proportions between the krepis of each wing and that of the central building, where the larger scale of the Doric order benefited from a four-stepped krepis of white marble. Employment of Eleusinian stone for the bottom step of each wing visually separated it from the three steps of white marble above, resulting in the appearance of a three-step krepis, which is more appropriate for the smaller scale of the two wings, especially when compared with the steps of the west porch of the central building.³⁶

36. Shoe 1949, pp. 344–345.



Figure 16.4. Doric Stoa, Asklepieion: (*left*) from west and (*below*) reconstructed elevation. Photo R. F. Townsend; drawing R. F. Townsend, after Allen and Caskey 1911, pl. 4



Two other monuments of the 4th century exhibit 5th-century principles of color contrast, but the resulting effect goes well beyond that of Classical architecture. In the two-storied Doric Stoa of the Asklepieion³⁷ (Fig. 16.4), all the main elements of the facade, with four exceptions, are of blue Hymettian marble. The two-stepped krepidoma consists of a stylobate of Hymettian marble above a creamy white poros step. The first five intercolumniations at the west end, as well as the first at the east, were closed off with courses of Hymettian marble.³⁸ The Doric columns of both stories are also of blue Hymettian marble. So too are the architrave and the frieze of the first story, where both triglyphs and metopes are blue. The same is true of the second story, where lengths of architrave and frieze were combined in single blocks. Only the gison of both stories is of white Pentelic marble. Thus, the first step and the gison of the lower and upper stories were of white stone. In this manner they emphasized the three horizontal levels of the stoa: ground level, division between first and second story, and division between second story and roof. Finally, the antae at either end of the building were also of white poros, two verticals providing framing elements at each side. While the notion of accenting different levels within the structure clearly recalls 5th-century precedent, the use of dark stone as the primary color, with white providing contrast, establishes a strikingly new result, nothing less than a blue building with white trim. The color impresses at least as much in its own right as it highlights structural parts of the building.

37. Once dated to the Lykourgan period, the Doric Stoa may have been built as late as ca. 300 B.C.; see Aleshire 1989, pp. 26–27.

38. As reconstructed by Allen and Caskey (1911). Martin and Metzger (1949) disagree, reconstructing only a knee-wall in this position. The thickness of the extant orthostates, however, suggests a wall extending the full height of the colonnade.

A second monument applies color contrast to even more radical effect. In the Thrasyllus Monument³⁹ (Fig. 16.1), above the Theater of Dionysos and immediately east of the “blue stoa” in the Asklepieion, the architect exploited the natural color of the surrounding stone, employing it in an overall color scheme designed to draw as much attention to the choregic dedication as possible. The bedrock of the Akropolis directly below the monument, worked into a series of rock-cut seats, is distinctly blue in color. In striking contrast, the vertical face flanking the monument has a definite rose tint. In coordination with the blue rock below, the first step of the monument is made from blue Hymettian marble. The second, or top, step, however, is of white Pentelic marble. So too are the three pilasters and the entablature above, starkly set off from the darker rose color to either side. The recessed marble door jambs between piers also are of blue Hymettian marble in order to maintain this contrast between light and dark. The overall scheme is of a white outline or frame against a darker two-toned background that draws dramatic attention to the monument, set high above the orchestra of the theater.

Not only is the Classical formula of dark against light reversed, as in the Doric Stoa of the Asklepieion adjacent, but an additional contrast is added in which three, not two, colors are involved. Given the close imitation of the Propylaia in both the plan and elevation of the Thrasyllus Monument,⁴⁰ there is little doubt that the inspiration for the use of color in the monument also derives from this Classical precedent. But a balance of structure and design along the lines of 5th-century canon is no longer achieved, if indeed it was ever intended; color itself dominates the design of the facade.

ARCHITECTURAL DETAILS AND PROPORTIONS

In 1966 Lucy Shoe Meritt wrote a second article in which she compared elements of 5th- and 4th-century Athenian architecture.⁴¹ In it she discussed a particular form of molding, a *cyma reversa* with projecting fillet, added either above the *cyma* (if a crowning molding) or below it (if a base molding). The fillet, used in conjunction with the *cyma reversa*, had appeared in a number of examples of architecture largely restricted to Athens during the Periklean period: the Parthenon, Hephaisteion, Temple of Poseidon at Sounion, and the Stoa of Zeus Eleutherios, among others. For this reason, in 1936 Meritt originally had dubbed the unusual combination the “*cyma reversa* with Periklean fillet.”⁴² Only later, in her article of 1966, did she recognize more examples. Still restricted to Athens, however, these dated to the second half of the 4th century, and Meritt rightly cited them as examples of the classicizing tendencies of

39. See Welter 1938 for full publication.

40. See pp. 307–309 for discussion of the derivation of the plan of the Thrasyllus Monument from that of the

Propylaia, and p. 317 for similar discussion of the architectural detail of its elevation.

41. Meritt 1966.

42. Shoe 1936, p. 57.

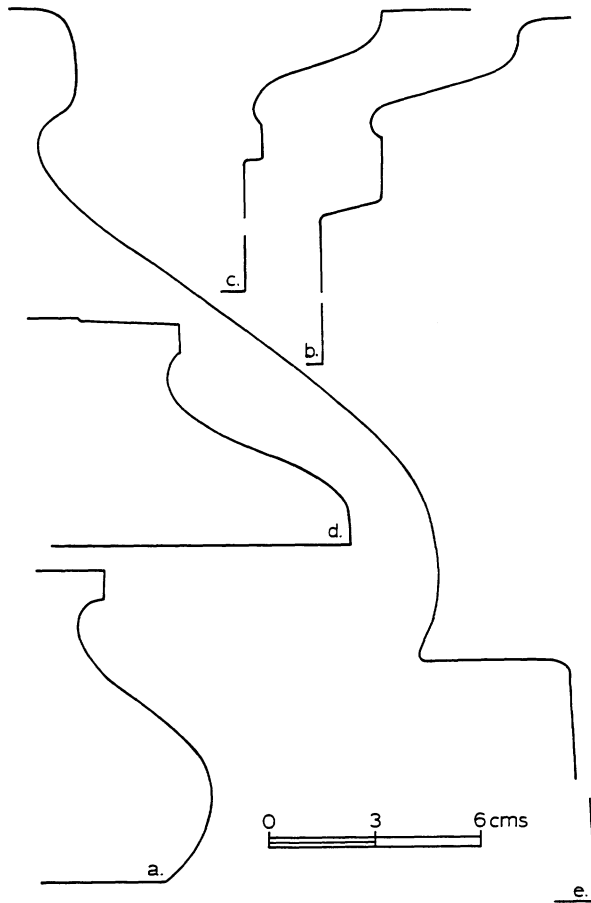


Figure 16.5. Profiles of late-4th to early-3rd-century B.C. moldings, the “cyma reversa with Periklean fillet”:
 (a) Thrasyllos Monument, threshold;
 (b) Thrasyllos’ tripod base, geison crown;
 (c) unidentified choregic base, geison soffit;
 (d, e) unidentified bases.
 R. F. Townsend

4th-century Athenian architecture. In fact, several more examples may now be added to confirm the continued popularity of this distinctly Athenian motif (Fig. 16.5). They include the threshold base of the Thrasyllos Monument,⁴³ the position and profile of which is closely paralleled by the molded toichobate of the Hephaisteion,⁴⁴ the soffit of the geison crowning Thrasyllos’ tripod base,⁴⁵ the crowning molding of the statue base of Menander (died 292/1 B.C.),⁴⁶ the crowning molding of the relief from the grave monument dedicated to those who died in the battles of Corinth and Coroneia (394 B.C.),⁴⁷ the soffit of an Ionic geison from an unidentified choregic monument, the base molding of an unpublished monument base, and another base molding, perhaps from a funerary monument.⁴⁸

Such instances of imitation in Athenian architectural detail are not restricted to profiles of moldings,⁴⁹ and some are interesting for the

43. The actual molding is not preserved, but its profile (Fig. 16.5:a) remained discernible in 1980 as a weather mark on the face of the pilaster against which the molding abutted.

44. For the profile from the Hephaisteion, see Shoe 1936, p. 181, pl. XXXVII:2.

45. *IG II²* 3083.

46. *IG II²* 3777. The base is illustrated in Studniczka 1918, p. 4, fig. 1.

47. *IG II²* 5221; Travlos 1971, p. 321, fig. 422.

48. Only the Ionic geison is published; see Bulle 1928, pl. 9, where the whole block is illustrated. The other

pieces are to be found among the scattered blocks in the vicinity of the later Temple of Dionysos in the Sanctuary of Dionysos south of the Theater.

49. For an example of another imitation in profile moldings, see Townsend 1985.

manner in which they demonstrate once more how the very process of copying may also transform. One of the most conspicuous ways in which the Thrasyllus Monument imitates the southwest wing of the Propylaia is in the design of the entablature. In this portion of his famous structure Mnesikles eschewed the use of both the normal Doric frieze and the Doric geison. That he did so out of compulsion rather than choice is indicated by the number of returns required in the entablature, no less than three exterior and two reentrant angles. Provision of consistent alternation of triglyph and metope in the frieze, and of mutule and *via* in the geison, over such a meandering course strained even Mnesikles' genius, and he characteristically made necessity the mother of invention.⁵⁰ He did away with triglyphs, metopes, mutules, and *viae* entirely, introducing a plain Ionic frieze and geison. To distinguish between the architrave and frieze, however, which were otherwise almost identical, Mnesikles carved a continuous row of guttae depended from a taenia at the top of the architrave course.

The architect of the Thrasyllus Monument, already enamored of the southwest wing, copied these details just as he had the arrangement of the rest of the facade (Fig. 16.1). On the architrave he inscribed the choregic dedication, and the frieze he ornamented with five carved olive wreaths flanking a single laurel wreath in the center. Above, he placed an Ionic geison. But nothing other than decorative interest compelled him to do so. Unlike the mathematical conundrum facing Mnesikles, there was nothing to prevent the designer of the Thrasyllus Monument from utilizing a standard Doric entablature. His choice once again was based on aesthetic grounds; it did not derive from a technical problem, as it had in the Propylaia. The architect did not consider elements of the Doric order so much as parts of an integrated whole but rather as decorative details to be included or not, at will. An indication of this attitude may be observed in the row of continuous guttae articulating the division between architrave and frieze. As unconventional as they had been in the southwest wing of the Propylaia, Mnesikles still recognized them for what they were supposed to be, an architectural member that crowns the architrave, and in the Propylaia they are carved together with the blocks of this course, as is usual. Not so in the Thrasyllus Monument: here they are carved as part of the frieze course; moreover, both the taenia and guttae are made unusually high, in order to accent them.

In another Athenian building, dating to ca. 300 B.C., misunderstanding the integration of structure and design on which the Doric order depended led a 4th-century imitator to violate the 5th-century model that he looked to for inspiration. When planning his colonnade, the architect of the Square Peristyle in the Agora (Fig. 16.6) closely studied the Stoa of Zeus Eleutherios, which was situated directly opposite on the west side of the ancient city center.⁵¹ The earlier building had been an example of pioneering stoa construction through its use of wide axial spacings requiring two full triglyphs per intercolumniation.⁵²

The architect of the Square Peristyle, also committed to wide axial spacings, was clearly concerned about their structural integrity, to the extent that he designed an elaborate cantilevering system to transfer weight of the entablature and roof away from the portions of the architrave over

50. The problem of the placement of the triglyph at the exterior angle of the Doric frieze is well known. For a concise statement of the problem, see Robertson 1943, pp. 106–112. The similar problem at the reentrant angle is most fully discussed by Coulton (1961). The subject is also covered in Coulton 1976, pp. 131–137; 1977, pp. 129–137. For the specific problem that Mnesikles faced, see references in note 10.

51. For the Stoa of Zeus, see Thompson 1937. For the Square Peristyle, see *Agora* XXVII.

52. Coulton 1976, p. 42.

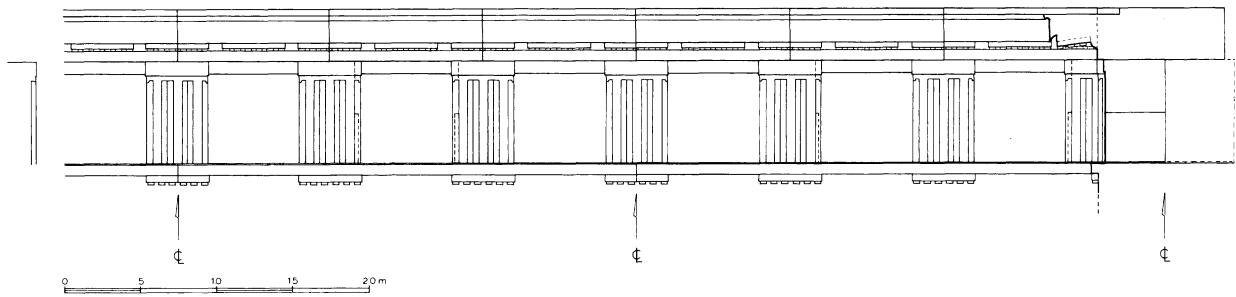


Figure 16.6. Entablature of Square Peristyle, Agora. R. F. Townsend

the intercolumnar spaces and to channel it onto the areas directly above the columns.⁵³ Not satisfied with this precaution, however, he decided also to copy both the axial spacings and the widths of the frieze elements of the Stoa of Zeus; it is as if he thought that since the earlier building had stood for over a century with these measurements, then surely his would, too. But he did not copy all the dimensions of the order of the Stoa; in general the scale of his building was greater, with both the lower column diameter and the frieze height exceeding those of the Stoa of Zeus.⁵⁴ The lower column diameter of the Square Peristyle is fully 14.5 percent greater than that of the Stoa of Zeus; but because the axial spacing was not increased accordingly, the space between columns actually appeared smaller and less open. In the case of the frieze, the greater height but equal widths of the frieze elements in the Square Peristyle resulted in a triglyph that was very high and narrow; comparable examples occur no later than the mid-5th century.⁵⁵ The Square Peristyle also had an unusually high geison that exceeded not only those of the 4th century but many from the 5th as well.⁵⁶

Throughout the 6th and 5th centuries the proportions of the Doric order had developed along relatively dependable lines, to the extent that proportional relationships have been used fairly confidently to estimate date as well as to determine dimensions of missing elements in architecture.⁵⁷ Such predictability was derived from the strict integration of parts inherent in the conception and execution of Classical Doric architecture.⁵⁸ To a degree such typological classification can be extended into the

53. *Agora XXVII*, pp. 60, 86–87.

54. The following tabulation provides comparison of the relevant dimensions (m):

	<i>Stoa of Zeus</i>	<i>Square Peristyle</i>
lower col. Diam.	0.786	0.90
normal axial sp.	3.00	3.00
l.c.D. : axial sp.	1:3.839	1:3.333
frieze H.	0.612	0.66
geison H.	0.209	0.289

55. Square Peristyle (triglyph W. : triglyph H.): 1:1.65. Cf., in the 5th century: Temple of Zeus at Olympia (1:1.64); Propylaia, central building (1:1.66); Propylaia, west wings (1:1.64);

Temple of Poseidon, Sounion (1:1.62); Parthenon (1:1.59); Hephaisteion (1:1.59); Temple of Ares, Agora (1:1.56); Temple of Nemesis, Rhamnous (1:1.55); Stoa of Zeus, Agora (1:1.52). In the 4th century, cf. the Temple of Asklepios, Epidauros (1:1.56); Temple of Athena Alea, Tegea (1:1.53); stoa at the Amphiareion, Oropos (1:1.53); Temple of Zeus, Stratos (1:1.51).

56. Square Peristyle (geison H. : frieze H.) 1:2.27. Cf., in the 5th century: Propylaia, central building (1:2.69); Propylaia, west wings (1:2.83);

Parthenon (1:2.25); Hephaisteion (1:2.36); Temple of Nemesis, Rhamnous (1:2.61); Stoa of Zeus, Agora (1:3.38). In the 4th century, cf. the Temple of Athena Alea, Tegea (1:3.68); stoa at the Amphiareion, Oropos (1:2.57); Temple of Zeus at Stratos (1:3.94).

57. See, e.g., the “Chronological List of Greek Temples” in Dinsmoor 1950, facing p. 340.

58. Coulton (1977, pp. 51–73, esp. pp. 64–67) provides a full discussion of this relationship.

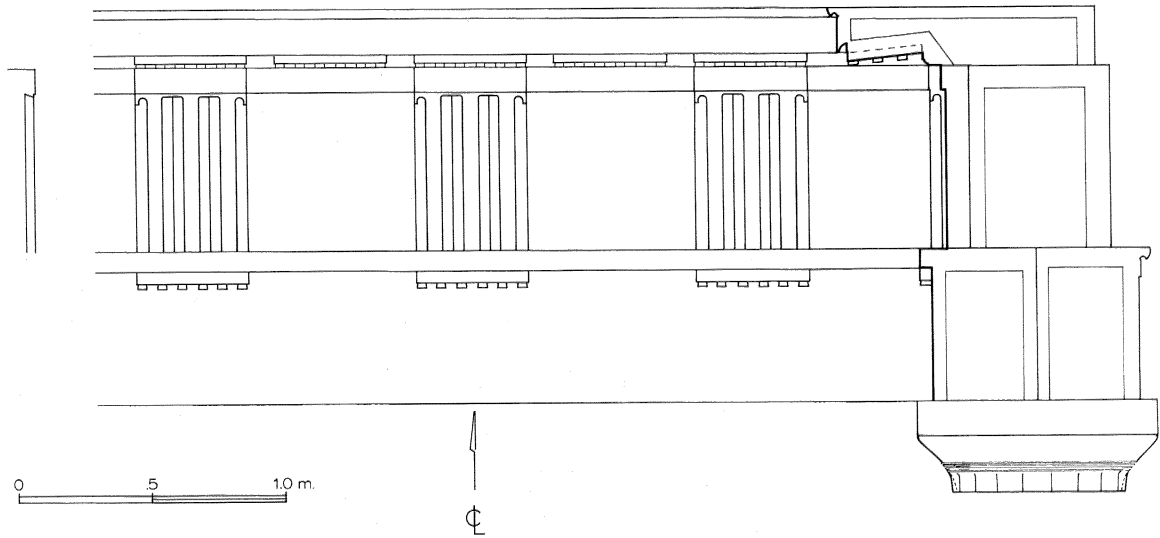


Figure 16.7. Entablature of Nikias Monument. R. F. Townsend

4th century, but the example of the Square Peristyle demonstrates that by the date of its construction such taxonomy is increasingly problematic. The ratios governing dimensions across the entire order can no longer be regarded as dependable, because a component may no longer exist purely systemically but may assume an extraordinary role outside the strict requirements the Doric order imposes. The Square Peristyle is not the only such example. The overall height of the entablature of the Nikias Monument (Fig. 16.7) in relation to the lower column diameter is almost precisely the same as that of its model, the Propylaia, contrasting with the relatively low proportions that come to predominate in the 4th century.⁵⁹ And individual proportions within the entablature also vary: the triglyph is high in relation to its width, following 5th-century examples,⁶⁰ but both the geison and architrave, on the other hand, are low in relation to the frieze, more in accordance with 4th-century norm, and are made to appear even lower by the exceptional height of the latter course.⁶¹ No technical considerations immediately arise to explain such combinations; rather, they seem due to an eclectic taste on the part of the architect.

59. Nikias Monument (lower col. Diam. : entablature H.): 1:1.73. Cf. Propylaia, central building (1:1.74); Propylaia, west wings (1:1.78). In the 4th century, cf. the Temple of Asklepios at Epidauros (1:1.63); Temple of Athena Alea at Tegea (1:1.56 fronts, 1:1.52 flanks); Temple of Zeus at Nemea (1:1.57 fronts, 1:1.52 flanks).

60. Nikias Monument (triglyph W. : triglyph H.): 1:1.61. Cf., in the 5th century, Parthenon (1:1.59); Hephaisteion (1:1.59); Temple of Poseidon at Sounion (1:1.62); Tem-

ple of Ares in the Agora (1:1.56); Temple of Nemesis at Rhamnous (1:1.55). In the 4th century, cf. the Temple of Asklepios at Epidauros (1:1.56); Temple of Athena Alea at Tegea (1:1.53); Temple of Zeus at Stratos (1:1.51); Temple of Zeus at Nemea (1:1.51).

61. Nikias Monument (geison H. : frieze H.): 1:3.18. Cf., in the 5th century, Parthenon (1:2.25); Hephaisteion (1:2.36); Temple of Nemesis at Rhamnous (1:2.61). In the 4th century, cf. the Temple of Asklepios

at Epidauros (1:3.27); Temple of Athena Alea at Tegea (1:3.68); Temple of Zeus at Stratos (1:3.94); Temple of Zeus at Nemea (1:3.64).

Nikias Monument (architrave H. : frieze H.): 1:1.21. Cf., in the 5th century, Parthenon (1:1); Hephaisteion (1:1); Temple of Nemesis at Rhamnous (1:0.98). In the 4th century, cf. the Temple of Asklepios at Epidauros (1:1.2); Temple of Athena Alea at Tegea (1:1.12); Temple of Zeus at Stratos (1:1.14).

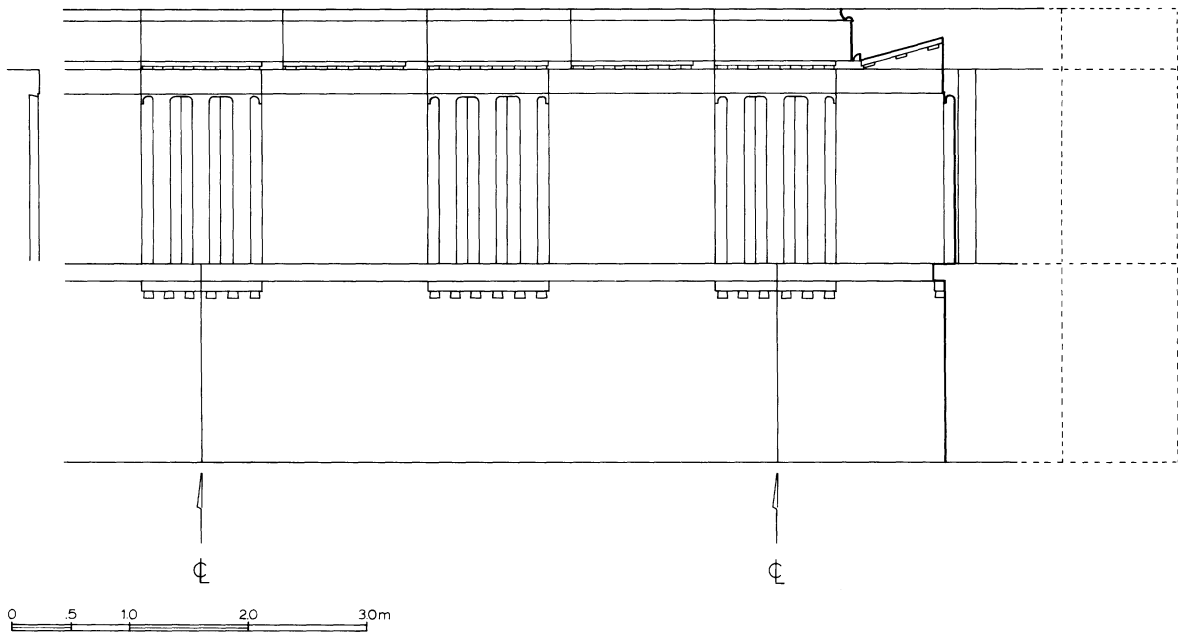


Figure 16.8. Entablature of Philon's Porch, Telesterion, Eleusis.

R. F. Townsend

Philon's Porch at Eleusis also drew upon a 5th-century source, the Telesterion proper, upon which it was constructed in the second half of the 4th century. Like the Nikias Monument, the proportions of its entablature (Fig. 16.8) are varied.⁶² The overall height of the entablature relative to the lower column diameter is fairly low and more in line therefore with 4th-century proportions than with those of the 5th. In contrast, individual members within the entablature have high proportions agreeing with 5th-century canon. The height of the architrave, slightly greater than the frieze height, clearly follows 5th-century guidelines. The same guidelines served the proportions of the triglyph, the latter being rather high compared with the width and producing an overall taller and thinner appearance than is common in the 4th century. Only the geison is low in relation to the height of the frieze, in harmony with 4th-century taste.⁶³ Thus Philon's Porch displays high proportions within an overall low entablature, in contrast to the Nikias Monument, with its low proportions within an overall high entablature.

Whatever the element concerned, whether plan, color, molding, or proportion, and no matter how faithful the copy may be to the original in certain respects, the process of reproduction often involves change, even when none may be intended. In an act of otherwise earnest imitation, the architects of both the Thrasyllus Monument and the *skene* of the Theater of Dionysos introduce facade architecture when they copy the look (the "sign") but not the sense (the "signification") of the original. The architect of the Lysikrates Monument did successfully apply a Classical principle of color contrast to a new situation, but his fellow designer or designers of the Doric Stoa of the Asklepion and the Thrasyllus Monument effectively altered that principle when they magnified it to the point of overstatement. Equally, many instances of the "cyma reversa with Periklean

62. The basic architectural study of the Telesterion and its porch remains that of Noack (1927). Of the entablature, only blocks of the Roman rebuilding are extant today (see Townsend 1987 for distinction between original and rebuilt material). These have been used for the computation of proportions rather than those specified in the building specifications of *IG II² 1666*, as the inscription does not include all the necessary measurements. In general, the specifications and actual measurements correspond relatively closely; see Caskey 1905, table II, for comparison of measurements given in the inscription and those of the actual remaining blocks.

63. Philon's Porch, Telesterion at Eleusis:

l.c.D : entablature H.	1:1.62
architrave H. : frieze H.	1:0.97
triglyph W. : triglyph H.	1:1.58
geison H. : frieze H.	1:3.28

fillet” simply extend the use of this popular molding. In other cases, however, such as the taenia and guttae of the Thrasyllus Monument, the copying process results in a loss of the relation between the molding and the greater system of which it was part. The same result occurs when individual proportions of the Doric Order are separated from the system as a whole and inserted into a different, even if similar, context. The strict integration of part to part that defines the Doric Order no longer applies, and thus the Order itself has been changed fundamentally.

STYLE AND SOCIAL CONTEXT

Such a fundamental change in style as the dissolution of the Classical Doric Order will not have occurred in a vacuum, but rather should be seen as an actor in a larger shift of social and cultural conditions. In his speech *Against Androtion* of around 355 B.C., Demosthenes (22.76–78) unfavorably compares the accomplishments of present-day Athenians to those of the previous century:

The Athenian democracy, never eager to acquire riches, coveted glory more than any other possession in the world. Here is the proof: once they possessed greater wealth than any other Hellenic people, but they spent it all for love of honour; they laid their private fortunes under contribution, and recoiled from no peril for glory’s sake. Hence the People inherit possessions that will never die; on the one hand the memory of their achievements, on the other, the beauty of the memorials set up in their honor,—yonder Propylaea, the Parthenon, the porticoes, the docks. . . . But you, men of Athens, have grown so extremely good-natured and pliable, that, with those examples ever before you, you do not imitate them.⁶⁴

The architectural evidence reveals that over the course of the half century following Demosthenes’ criticism, the Athenians apparently took his words to heart; they clearly did admire the structures of their city from the previous century and intended nothing less than to emulate them. Did they succeed? Certainly, the vocabulary of 5th-century Athenian architecture is present in the 4th century, ranging from selection of plan to choice of material to use of architectural proportion, and even to preference for molding profile. But the many differences between original and copy are more significant. First, imitation in itself implies the reproduction of appearances rather than content, and it may be argued therefore that the act of copying alone sets the 4th century apart from the 5th and draws into question whether true Classical form is achievable solely through looking back. Importantly, the integration of structure and design, representing a principal value governing the forms of Classical 5th-century architecture, frequently is no longer present, and one may question whether it is still understood.

The motifs of Classical 5th-century architecture, taken out of their original framework and applied to new contexts, take on new meanings.

64. J. H. Vince trans., Cambridge, Mass., 1935.

In the *skene* of the Theater of Dionysos, the freestanding, independent unit of the Stoa of Zeus in the Agora is converted into a facade, an artificial or false front in which form and appearance are no longer united. In the Square Peristyle the copying of dimensions from the Stoa of Zeus reveals an imitator who knows the technical detail but seemingly ignores the proportional relationships created by his model. In the Thrasylos Monument, a design originally invented in response to structural necessity in the southwest wing of the Propylaia becomes an aesthetic choice made according to accepted notions of proper taste and convention. In this monument, as well as in the Doric Stoa in the Asklepieion, colored stone that was once used by Mnesikles to highlight tectonic elements in an integration of structure and design begins to exist for the attention and special effects it creates unto itself.

Two social factors in particular are involved in these and similar differences between 5th- and 4th-century architecture in Athens. First, 4th-century buildings represent an increasing complexity of purpose, much of it secular, and second, there is a wider variety of architectural patronage in the 4th century, as much of it private as public. A choregic monument is not a public building but rather a private building in the public sphere. Considered as metaphor, the Propylaia to the Athenian Akropolis represents the aspirations and achievements of an entire polis.

The choregic monuments of Nikias and Thrasylos signify the ambition and triumphs of individuals. This triumph is couched in architectural language redolent with Classical symbols that seek to tie it to values of the state, but one may ask: To what degree were the monuments viewed more as exhibitions of private vanity than as expressions of civic virtue? Certainly, their symbolic aim far outstrips their functional purpose, even when compared to the Propylaia. Mnesikles' gateway to the Akropolis is a grand entrance to a monumental architectural complex, displaying a harmony of scale between its form, function, and setting. The choregic monuments of Thrasylos and Nikias, by contrast, are one large part communication of the social status of their patrons and one very small part tripod base. How that image of social status, however it was intended to be projected, was actually received is no small matter. Was it seen, as has been suggested, as a record of the individual's generosity to the state,⁶⁵ or did it instead engender envy of the wealth and power that created it?⁶⁶ Thrasylos and Nikias may have intended to send the former message, only to find that the majority of the populace came to the latter sentiment instead.

That some Athenians did flaunt their wealth through architectural display is recognized in another speech by Demosthenes, *On Organization* of 353/2 B.C. (13.26–30), in which he again unfavorably compares his contemporaries with their predecessors:

Reflect on what might be named as the outstanding achievements of your ancestors and of yourselves, if haply the comparison may yet enable you to become your own masters. . . . The buildings which they [your ancestors] left behind them to adorn our city—temples, harbours, and their accessories—were so great and so fair that we who came after must despair of ever surpassing them; the Propylaia

65. Ober 1989, pp. 243–244, where he states that choregic monuments stood for “the ideal relationship among honor, wealth, and the state.”

66. As Ober (1989, pp. 205–208) elsewhere recognizes in the general context of mass and elite interaction (though not in reference to choregic dedications).

yonder, the docks, the porticoes and the rest, with which they beautified the city that they have bequeathed to us. . . . But today, men of Athens, while our public works are confined to the provision of roads and fountains, whitewash and balderdash . . . private individuals, who control any of the State-funds, have some of them reared private houses, not merely finer than the majority, but more stately than our public edifices.⁶⁷

That this situation may have spiraled out of control is suggested by the passing of the sumptuary laws of Demetrios of Phaleron in 317 B.C., just five years following the erection of the monuments of Thrasyllus and Nikias. In addition to outlawing the construction of elaborate grave monuments by private citizens, this legislation also curtailed the choregic liturgy, thereby canceling the opportunity for triumphant *choregoi* to erect self-congratulatory dedications.⁶⁸

The language of the works themselves perhaps speaks most eloquently to their effect. The scale of the choregic monuments has already been noted.⁶⁹ Indeed, it made an impression even on Pausanias (1.20.1), who refers to them as *ναοὶ μεγάλοι* and marvels at the remarkable works of art they contain. A fundamental concern with a balanced relationship of architectural form and human scale is widely recognized as a central principle of Classical architecture, but the choregic monuments upset this relationship by magnifying a tripod base, a form that is not inherently architectural in either purpose or scale, to a size that qualifies it as architecture, while its function remains that of a support for a bronze vessel. The confusion is only increased when, as in the case of the Nikias and Thrasyllus monuments, actual buildings are referenced. With no relation to its function, the scale of the choregic monument, and the impression such scale makes, attaches to its symbolic purpose, the endorsement of its maker, the *choregos* whose name is inscribed on the facade. Reference to civic high-mindedness through the quoted vocabulary of revered architectural form is bestowed on the individual, not the state, and civic pride and its inherent idealism thus becomes a symbol of the wealth and power not of the people of the state but of the elite of the state.

Choregic monuments rest on the border between the public and private realms. The Stoa of the Asklepeion, the *skene* of the Theater of Dionysos, and the Square Peristyle, are wholly communal in purpose,

67. J. H. Vince trans., Cambridge, Mass., 1935.

68. Demetrios undoubtedly had multiple grounds for instituting his reforms, but there is little reason to doubt Cic. *Leg.* 2.60, that the sumptuary legislation at least in part was intended to curb the *magnificentia* of aristocratic funerals and sepulchers and the subsequent resentment by the majority of the populace that they engendered. While it is true that the choregic monuments, unlike grave

markers, make reference to civic philanthropy on the part of their patrons, their lavish form emphasizes more their role as symbols of social status (see below). On the motives behind Greek funerary legislation, see Garland 1989; for the reign of Demetrios of Phaleron more generally, see Mossé 1973, pp. 102–108; Habicht 1995, pp. 62–75.

69. Although only three choregic monuments—those of Lysikrates, Thrasyllus, and Nikias—are well

preserved, they once numbered so many as to give their name to the road they lined, the Street of the Tripods. Attesting the number (and size) of the choregic monuments are the many foundations for them that have been discovered along the modern Street of the Tripods, which follows virtually the same course it did in antiquity. Documentation of many of these foundations are collected in Miller 1970; see also Korres 1988, Choremis-Spetsieri 1994.

dedicated to sacred ritual, theatrical performance, and judicial debate.⁷⁰ Although their functions still relate to those of Classical Athens, their architectural language no longer stands as a visual metaphor for the ideals of the democratic state. The Stoa of the Asklepieion, that “blue building with white trim,” rises as a novelty, and something strikingly new, unusual, or different had little place in the democratic culture of 5th-century Athens.⁷¹ It may make sense that the *skene* in the Theater of Dionysos serves primarily as a facade, but the principle on which facade architecture depends, a divorce between form and appearance, or “what you see is *not* what you get,” similarly is at odds with the transparent nature of social interaction in Athens of the 5th century. And the confused proportions of the Square Peristyle, where parts are not always integrally related to each other or to the whole, is not the kind of model 5th-century Athenians would want to have for their judicial system, which relied on individual citizens coming together to represent the state as a whole.⁷²

Thus it is that the Classical ideals of the 5th-century polis of Athens, as manifested in the architectural expression of that age and which helped to create it, come to be undermined by the very same language of built form when that language is placed in new contexts and used for new purposes.

70. For the interpretation of the Square Peristyle as a lawcourt, see *Agora XXVII*.

71. It is not surprising in this regard that the stoa served the “new” deity, Asklepios, who came to Athens only at the end of the 5th century. It may also be noted in this context that this stoa in the Asklepieion is either the first, or one of the first, two-storied stoas in Greek architecture; for discussion of stoas with superimposed colonnades, see Coulton 1976, pp. 89–91, 102–108.

72. It is worth noting that the Square Peristyle, never finished, probably served its purpose as a lawcourt for only a brief time, if at all; see *Agora XXVII*, pp. 50–51, 76–80.

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