CHAPTER I

SOURCES AND MODELS

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Monumental Greek sculpture appeared somewhat suddenly in the second half of the seventh century B.C. For the purposes of this book its genesis may be defined as the first creation of life-sized and larger works in hard stone, marble. But there had of course been sculpture before and this needs some consideration, especially if it can shed light on what follows. The first of merit was of hammered bronze, an orientalizing technique and as yet meagrely represented. Most other stone sculpture from the years until after the mid-seventh century had been executed in softer material, "poros" and the softer limestones which only harden after exposure to the atmosphere. The general style of these has been called Daedalic, after the mythical artist Daidalos; and rather misleadingly, to judge from what was imputed to his skills, which were either magic or better related to later, monumental sculpture. We return to "him" at the end of this chapter.

For this pre-monumental period we have to consider the early technique for larger works in bronze – the hammered *sphyrelata*; then the role of Crete in stone sculpture, its uses and techniques; and the probable but indefinable role of wooden sculpture.[1]

Sculptural work of the Greek Geometric period is small in scale, in bronze and clay, and not obviously indicative of any work of greater pretensions, though in itself of great merit. From the late ninth century on the influence of Syrian art began to work an Orientalizing Revolution in Greece. The earliest sculptural effect of any significance let alone

monumentality, is to be sought in figures of hammered bronze, *sphyrelata*. Until recently it has been believed by most scholars that these had been hammered over a wooden core, or at least fastened onto a wooden core, and so were simply metallic versions of essentially wooden figures. Careful study of the examples from Olympia and Dreros in Crete shows that this is not true.[2] The sheets were riveted together, not nailed to any core, so the figures were hollow, though we might think that they were filled with something like sand to add stability when installed. The suggestion that the *sphyrelata* were themselves the inspiration of the Daedalic style is probably only partially true. The Daedalic stone and clay works and the early *sphyrelata* are both very closely linked to the minor arts of Syria and the east, and it is easier to find eastern models in stone and clay than in metal. This would not have been the first time that Greek artists came to monumentalize eastern arts of smaller scale; the same was to occur in the genesis of Ionic architecture.

The same hammering technique had been used for orientalizing bronze vessels and in Crete for high figurative reliefs (the Idaean Cave shields). The earliest protomes of lions and griffins were made in this way for fixing to cauldrons, inspired again by Syrian work of the eighth century; later they are cast. The hammered protomes did have a filling.[3] One very Syrian head, but made in Crete as part of a jug, was found in the Idaean Cave.[4] While the orientalizing character of all this work, and more to be mentioned, is unquestionable, and the origin of the style is readily traced, no major works in the same technique have been found in the east, where even quite large figures are cast, whole or in parts, and no truly comparable *sphyrelaton* figures have yet been found. This might be a result of the accidents of survival. The technique is, of course, more economical in materials, and the east may have found need for it only for furniture and vessels. In Greece it was adopted (or taught) for larger work in the round, and we deal with substantial, free-standing statues.

Our earliest evidence is the trio of figures from a small temple at Dreros in Crete, in the early orientalizing style of the late eighth century (Fig. 1). These are most like Cretan jewellery figures of oriental style, which are earlier.[5] They are not very large (the man 80 cm, the two women 40 cm) and barely intimate anything truly monumental. The women's bodies and dress roughly foreshadow the Daedalic, but are virtually

1. Bronze *sphyrelata* from Dreros, Crete. Heraklion Museum 2445–7; H. 80 and 40 cm. Photo Museum.

geometric, the man's pectorals are lightly marked.[6] This early intimation of anatomical detail is interesting and is matched in the treatment of Greek bronze corselets, which are as early. It does not much develop through the seventh century but there is probably some connection and the techniques are the same.[7]

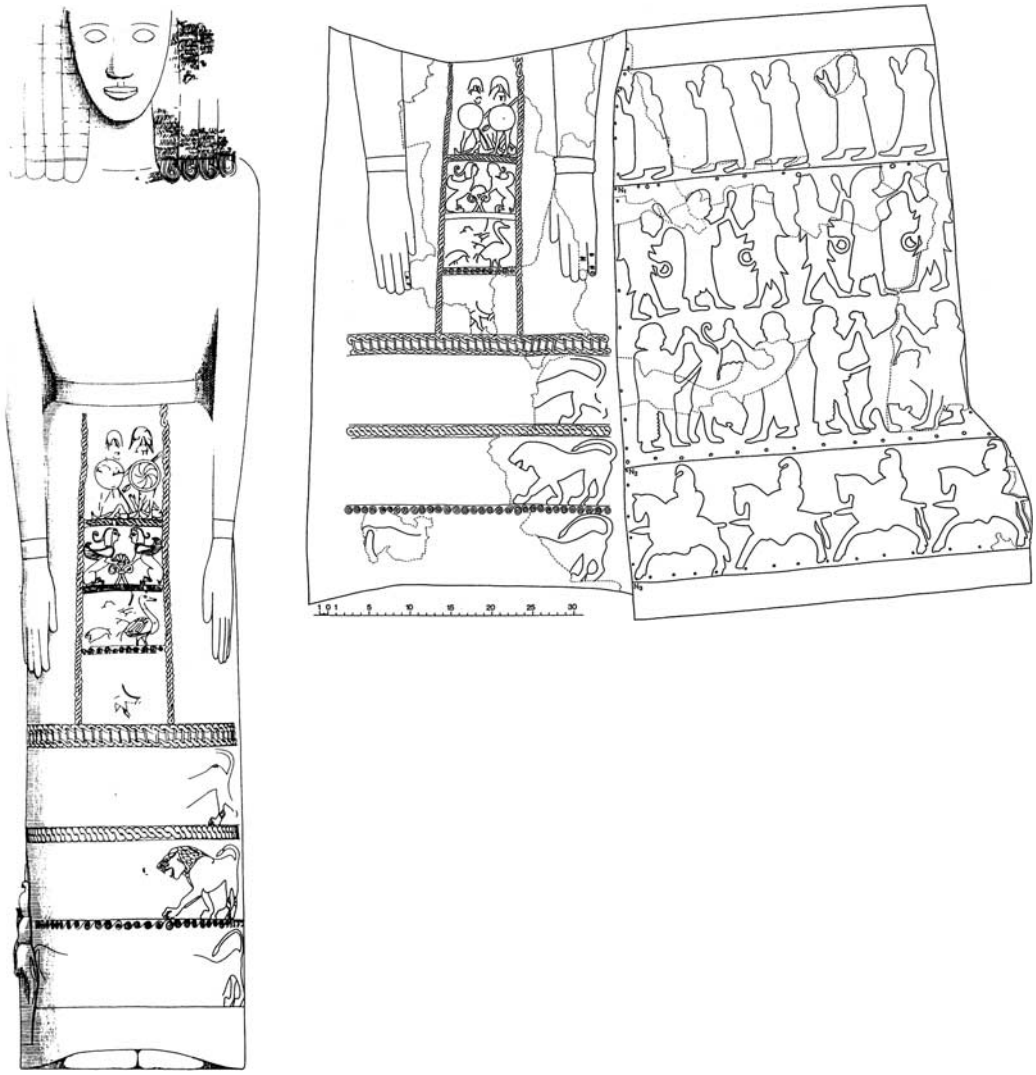
Olympia has yielded three truly Daedalic *sphyrelata*, very probably of Cretan origin.[8] These seem to be of the end of the seventh century, and their skirts (all are surely women) are decorated with relief friezes and panels. The tallest may have been about 120 cm high. The reconstructions show, I think convincingly, that the Greek figure decoration appears only

at the skirt fronts, while the backs are composed of hammered sheets with oriental subjects in a different style and in higher relief (Fig. 2). The latter might pass even as oriental works which had been reused, or specially made by other artists for the purpose. I find it impossible to believe that the same artists were involved in working fronts and backs, but there is enough orientalizing bronze work in Crete which is almost purely oriental also in subject (the shields), for it to be most likely that these too were produced in Crete. Their very different style suggests to me that the figures were composed in Crete, not by Cretan artists visiting Olympia – the figures are not too heavy to move about easily and could have been assembled and, if need be, filled on the spot.

Without the finds at Dreros and Olympia this whole phenomenon of early bronze statuary would have been lost to us, and it is perhaps still too early to evaluate its significance for the further development of statuary in Crete or elsewhere, for which we have to return to the traditional evidence of stone and clay.[9]

Crete seems to have been a major centre for stone sculpture from the beginning, and in the eighth century there are even small stone narrative reliefs of very oriental style and closely related to the *sphyrelata* and jewellery, where the eastern influence is even more apparent. One might easily imagine that they closely resemble other minor decorative works in wood, and if any had an architectural setting it must have been very insignificant; more likely they adorned altars or furniture.[10]

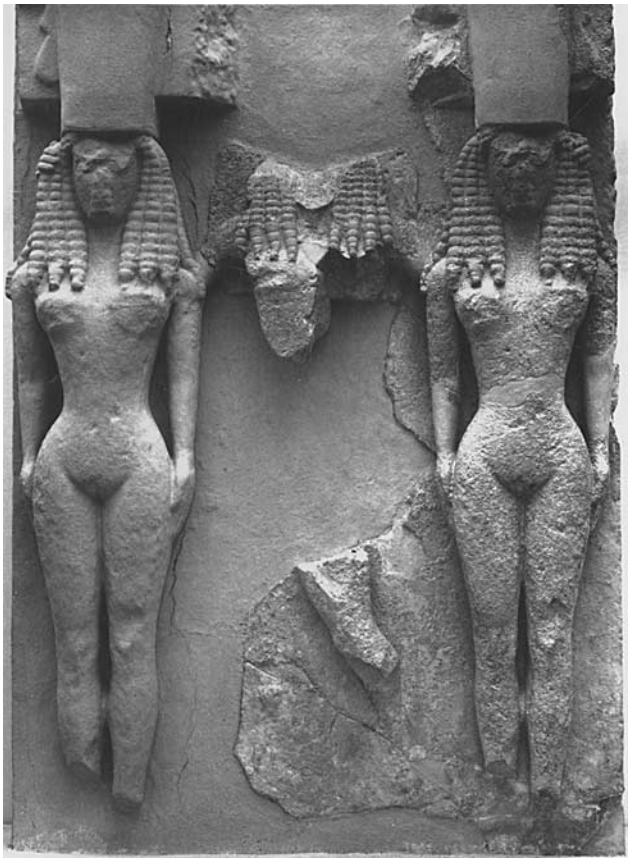
The earliest Cretan expression of the full "Daedalic" style is best documented in clay figures and plaques, some of which closely resemble the Syrian, which, in original or even in moulds, were to be found in Greece.[11] These sources determined its rather uncompromisingly frontal style and general angularity of features and body, often with considerable surface patterning and probably painting. Faces are boldly defined, breasts modelled but the bodies are shapeless below the waist. There are characteristic broad belts and short cloaks worn symmetrically over the shoulders. The hair, vertically or/and horizontally divided, is sometimes described as an Egyptian wig, but it relates more to Syrian treatment, and represents real long hair, elaborately dressed. Males are exceptional, then only in relief (from Gortyn, with two naked goddesses: Fig. 3). The Daedalic works in stone are typically of less than life size, although towards the mid-seventh century there are some life-sized seated figures. But it should be remarked



2. Reconstruction of bronze *sphyrelaton* figure at Olympia. Olympia Museum; H. restored about 1.2 m. After Borell and Rittig, *OlForsch* 26 (Berlin 1998) pls. 57, 54.

that dating is vague and largely dependent on comparison with miniature sculptural forms that appear on vases whose other painted decoration is more easily analysed and approximately dated.[12]

The figures are carved in Cretan limestone, most of which has been characterized as "soft, fine, even-grained . . . which has weathered a yellowish grey, but produces a pure white chalk in a fresh break, where it may easily be worked with a fingernail."[13] The surface hardens with exposure. Suitable sources for the limestone are available over much of the island



3. Limestone relief from Gortyn. Heraklion Museum 379; H. 1.5 m. Photo J. Boardman.

and especially in the Knossos area. The blocks were probably acquired as boulders from quarries and hillsides and could easily then be sawn, a treatment for which evidence is visible still on some figures.[14] The sawing, and subsequent carving, required the same tools and techniques as for wood, without the same problems over grain or cleavage lines. Handwork with a knife is apparent, and on later pieces with a straight-edged chisel; these tools were also used for smoothing the final surface, rather than abrasion. By this date Greek artisans had at their disposal iron tools of considerable strength so that their techniques and execution of detail were in no way inhibited. Red paint has been preserved on some figures, mainly to pick out dress patterns, which may also be outlined with incision, as on the Auxerre goddess.[15] There was no doubt more and in other colours, if only black, for features. This is best visualized from examples in fired clay where the colour is preserved, especially if the figure is part

of a vessel. The clay works include mainly small figures and reliefs, but also some larger, on big relief vases (pithoi).

A high proportion of the Daedalic stone figures and reliefs was dedicated to architectural decoration, preserved in its most complete state in the sculptures for one of the last manifestations of the style, at the end of the seventh century, for Temple A at Prinias (Fig. 4).[16] Here the series of relief slabs showing horsemen, possibly a dado at the front of the building, can only refer to a cavalier aristocracy, while the friezes of lions and stags are orientalizing decoration, denoting power, and there are seated figures over the door. But the Prinias figures are very late, virtually post-Daedalic in terms of work elsewhere in Greece, though clearly in the same tradition. Virtually all other Daedalic statuary is of women, standing or seated, and it may be legitimate to regard them all as representing deities, even where they appear as pairs, or at best as attendants on the goddess. However, the relief from Gortyn has a man between two naked women (Fig. 3), and there are comparable groups in other Cretan arts, while a clay relief from Gortyn has three naked frontal women. The nakedness is enough to denote divinity, and although such figures may have come to be assimilated to Olympians it is far more probable that in the seventh century they had other identities.[17] At any rate, there

4. Lintel and superposed figures from the Temple at Prinias, Crete. Heraklion Museum 231–2; H. of women 82 and 84 cm. Photo J. Boardman.

is nothing Daedalic to demonstrate any narrative use of the idiom in relief.

The Prinias stelai, of which many more have been found since the days when they were generally taken for gravestones, carry hardly more than incised figures, with a woman, a warrior or seated figure, and relate more to vase painting than sculpture. Their purpose is not clear; they are all roughly the same size, but not exactly. It would not be impossible to allot them to the walls of some sort of sacred enclosure, perhaps for heroic rather than divine cult to judge from the figures upon them.[18] They are mainly of the second half of the seventh century.

The Daedalic style was not altogether confined to Crete and it appears elsewhere in Greece and in the Greek colonial west by the mid-seventh century.[19] Nor did it disappear upon the appearance of monumental marbles since the formula was well established, especially for female figures, for which the new monumental had no alternative idiom to offer derived from its apparent source.

Nevertheless, we are entitled to look for cult statues, since the temples to house them were being built already in the eighth century, and there are earlier intimations of divine images, at least in Crete, such as the early wheel-made clay figurines, and the painted goddess on wheels of around 800 B.C. (Fig. 5).[20] We have to speculate about anthropoid figures which might serve as the focus for worship and offerings, and require the dignity of a home, *oikos*, temple. The temples for them derive from earlier Greek palatial or at least regal architecture, but apart from the possible Cretan there was no precedent for divine figures – indeed they are hard to identify in any medium, and in this area the Bronze Age legacy is unlikely to have been at all suggestive. The probability is that they were orientalizing in appearance, given the date at which they appear. Our earliest surviving examples are possibly the bronze *sphyrelata* from Dreros in Crete (Fig. 1). But they are relatively small and installed on a table in a small room-temple of Cretan type, not the *cella* of a megaron temple.

The setting might be significant. Cult statues were placed at the far end of the sometimes quite elongated main hall or *cella*, facing the eastern entrance of the temple and altar outside. The length and overall size of the buildings were statements of status, of the deity and the city. It has been suggested that their distance from the door, not welcoming at the porch, introduced a processional air to the setting.[21] This might well

5. Drawing of the decoration on a vase from Knossos. Heraklion Museum. After Coldstream, *BICS* 31 (1984) fig. 1.

be true, though not necessarily the main reason for the plan. If it were true we might expect the height of a statue and the height of the ceiling of its *cella* to be in some way related, as they seem to be in the classical period: a matter of right proportions. We know little enough about what happened within Greek temples even in later periods, but we do know that the cult statues were attended, could be dressed and regularly taken out for a wash.[22] Samos has produced most evidence for the plans of early temples, going back to the eighth century. The base for a cult statue in the early temple there might imply a life-sized figure.[23]

In a sanctuary there might be more than one cult statue, and subsidiary figures, of the same or another identity, could have their own rites. These are exceptional, and the term "cult statue" is useful if only to relegate to less or non-ritual functions the many other images of the relevant deity, and even of other deities, that might stand in a sanctuary area, even on occasion within the temple. These were generally votives, personal

or marking special occasions, rather than the image dedicated for the temple, or for any reworking of the temple. They might even be casually revered, like figures of saints or icons in churches. The cult statues have a special status, and may be moved from an old building to a new one, so sacred were they, while votives could be discarded.[24] There will always be borderline cases for identity.

We return to the appearance of the earliest cult statues. The Daedalic idiom might meet expectations, for date if no other reason. It has commonly been assumed that the early statues were wooden, which we cannot prove, but also crude – unlikely if the orient was a source of inspiration for them. At any rate there is nothing whatever "crude" about any Greek Geometric art. The word *xoanon* may imply working in wood (*xeein* can mean to plane or shape a wooden surface), and in Greek literature it was often applied to specifically wooden statues; in this, for instance, Pausanias is consistent, and he is a major source.[25] But other sources are less helpful, and it is not in texts that we shall discover the appearance of the early statues. *Xoanon* could be applied to any apparently venerable figure, and on occasion is demonstrably used of a stone figure. So texts do not help us much with information about early wooden figures, which at best we could only hope to visualize from copies in other media, either contemporary (vase painting or reduced copies in clay or bronze), or later (coins); but for all early wooden sculpture we can only guess at appearances, and plausibly assume that it was not so unlike that of the figures in other media. Thus, on Samos, a fine wooden statuette of a goddess (Fig. 6) could well resemble a larger cult figure, broadly Daedalic, but we cannot judge whether this might have been wooden, stone or *sphyrelaton*.[26]

In this tradition, rather than that of the bronze *sphyrelata*, are the mid-sixth-century (Lydian?) silver bull from Delphi, nailed to a wooden core, and the figures with ivory faces, feet and hands, and with gold plates nailed onto what must have been a wooden torso and legs.[27] They call to mind aniconic Jeremiah's verses (about 600 B.C.):

> A tree from the forest is cut down and worked with an axe by the hands of a craftsman,
> Men deck it with silver and gold, they fasten it with hammer and nails so that it cannot move.
> Their idols are like scarecrows in a cucumber field, and they cannot speak; they have to be carried, for they cannot walk.