

New Approaches to the Temple of Zeus at Olympia

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*Proceedings of the First
Olympia-Seminar
8th-10th May 2014*

Edited by

András Patay-Horváth

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FOR J. GY. SZILÁGYI

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PREFACE

This volume contains the proceedings of an international symposium held at Budapest between 8th and 10th May 2014. The idea and the title of this conference emerged from a series of projects and studies related to the temple and its sculptures which represent my unconventional approach to this monument. The results concerning the east pediment and the construction of the temple were published during the last decade and because many specialists seemed to be unconvinced, I originally expected that the conference would focus exactly on these controversial topics. Moreover, in order to facilitate the discussion, I invited first of all those colleagues, whom I knew or suspected to be in disagreement with me. Unfortunately, they have all declined or simply did not answer. Their conspicuous absence from the conference and from the proceedings is therefore not due to some predisposition or selectivity on my part. There is one single contribution in this volume (by Prof. Tonio Hölscher), which was not presented as a paper at the symposium, but it is a most welcome addition, because it clearly shows that it was not my intention to exclude any approach, even if it is fundamentally different from my own one.

The conference made an attempt to bridge the gap between classical studies and the latest digital technologies applied to archaeology and cultural heritage and included therefore some talks by specialists on computer graphics and remote sensing. These papers have either offered case studies unrelated to the temple of Zeus at Olympia or presented an overview of recent projects in this domain. In spite of this, some of them are included in this volume not only because they demonstrate the interdisciplinary character of the symposium, but also because they may be of interest for readers specialized in classical studies, informing them about new possibilities and applications which might be useful for them in the future.

During the conference, there were lively and fruitful discussions after each paper, which are not recorded separately in this volume, because the speakers decided to incorporate these observations and remarks into their contributions.

Last but not least, it is a pleasure to acknowledge the financial help of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, which enabled the symposium to be held. During the preparatory phase, I benefited from the advice and help of H. J. Kienast (München), O. Palagia (Athens), P. Siewert (Wien) and R.

Scopigno (Pisa). They all agreed to chair some of the sessions and took part in the discussions. Colleagues, friends and students from Budapest also contributed substantially to the organization and the success of the conference and helped to enrich the program in various ways. I would like to thank particularly Á. M. Nagy, M. Dági, Á. Bencze (Department of Greek and Roman Antiquities of the Museum of Fine Arts), Zs. Mráv (Hungarian National Museum) and last but not least Gy. Németh (Institute for Ancient History, University Eötvös Loránd). I am greatly indebted to all of them.

Cambridge Scholars Publishing has already made a significant contribution to the study of the temple of Zeus at Olympia by publishing a collective volume dedicated to the chryselephantine statue of Pheidias (The Statue of Zeus at Olympia: New Approaches, ed. by J. McWilliam, S. Puttock, T. Stevenson and R. Taraporewalla, 2011) and I am most grateful for the offer to include these proceedings in the programme as well.

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ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviations generally follow the current usage of the German Archaeological Institute (www.dainst.org). In addition, the following ones are used:

<i>Asyilia</i>	K. J. Rigsby, <i>Asyilia. Territorial Inviolability in the Hellenistic World</i> , Berkeley 1996.
<i>Choix Delphes</i>	A. Jacquemin – D. Mulliez – G. Rougemont (ed.), <i>Choix d'inscriptions de Delphes, traduits et commentées</i> , Paris 2012.
<i>CID</i>	J. Bousquet, <i>Corpus des inscriptions de Delphes. 2. Les comptes du quatrième et du troisième siècle</i> , Paris 1989.
Curtius – Adler 1892	E. Curtius – F. Adler (Hg.), <i>Olympia. Die Ergebnisse der von dem Deutschen Reich veranstalteten Ausgrabung. II.1. Die Baudenkmäler</i> , Berlin 1892.
<i>DNO</i>	<i>Der Neue Overbeck. Die antiken Schriftquellen zu den Bildenden Künsten der Griechen</i> , 5 vols. Berlin/Boston 2014.
<i>FD</i>	É. Bourguet, <i>Fouilles de Delphes. III, 1. Inscriptions de l'entrée du sanctuaire au trésor des Athéniens</i> , Paris 1929.
Furtwängler 1897	A. Furtwängler, <i>Olympia. Die Ergebnisse der von dem Deutschen Reich veranstalteten Ausgrabung. IV. Die Bronzen und die übrigen kleineren Funde von Olympia</i> , Berlin 1897.
<i>IED</i> / Minon 2007	Minon, S. 2007. <i>Les inscriptions éléennes dialectales (VI^e-II^e siècle avant J.-C.). I. Textes. II. Grammaire et vocabulaire institutionnel</i> , Genève 2007.
<i>IK Ilion</i>	P. Frisch (Hg.), <i>Die Inschriften von Ilion</i> , Bonn 1975.
<i>IvM</i>	O. Kern (Hg.), <i>Die Inschriften von Magnesia am Maeander</i> , Berlin 1900.

- IvO* / Dittenberger 1896 W. Dittenberger – K. Purgold (Hg.), *Olympia. Die Ergebnisse der von dem Deutschen Reich veranstalteten Ausgrabung. V. Die Inschriften von Olympia*, Berlin 1896.
- Mythos Olympia* 2012 W.-D. Heilmeyer – N. Kaltsas – H.-J. Gehrke – G. E. Hatzi – S. Bocher (Hg.), *Mythos Olympia. Kult und Spiele*, Berlin 2012.
- NIO* P. Siewert – H. Taeuber (Hg.), *Neue Inschriften von Olympia. Die ab 1896 veröffentlichten Texte* (Tyche, Sonderband 7), Wien 2013.
- Olympia 1875 – 2000* H. Kyrieleis (Hg.), *Olympia 1875 – 2000. 125 Jahre Deutsche Ausgrabungen. Internationales Symposion, Berlin 9.-11. November 2000, Mainz 2002*.
- PMG* D. L. Page – M. Davies (eds.), *Poetarum Melicorum Graecorum Fragmenta. I. Alcman. Stesichorus. Ibycus*, Oxford 1991.
- Treu 1897 G. Treu, *Olympia. Die Ergebnisse der von dem Deutschen Reich veranstalteten Ausgrabung. III. Die Bildwerke von Olympia in Stein und Ton*, Berlin 1897.
- XIII. Olympia-Bericht* H. Kyrieleis (Hg.), *XIII. Bericht über die Ausgrabungen in Olympia. 2000 bis 2005*, Berlin 2013.

INTRODUCTION

ADOPTING A NEW APPROACH TO THE TEMPLE AND ITS SCULPTURAL DECORATION

ANDRÁS PATAY-HORVÁTH

Abstract

Earlier and recent studies by the author concerning the east pediment and the historical circumstances of the temple construction are summarized and updated in the light of recent publications. Iconographical, literary and numismatic evidence is combined to suggest an intimate connection between the Greek victory over the Persians and the genesis of the entire monument.

Introduction

For more than a decade, I was investigating the reconstruction and interpretation of the east pediment of the temple of Zeus at Olympia. The resulting view is highly unconventional and is still much debated, but has inevitably led to the conclusion that the sculptural decoration cannot be treated in isolation and any study of the temple has to begin with the analysis of the historical setting of its construction. This principle required an interdisciplinary approach, which emerged gradually during the last years, but I hope that it has yielded some new results which can further the discussion.

In this paper, I summarize the results of my studies concerning the east pediment and the historical and economic background of the temple construction; I hope to demonstrate that the two topics are intimately connected to each other. At the same time, I also take the opportunity to reflect on those remarks which have appeared in the meantime.

The Problems of the East Pediment

My first encounter with the temple of Zeus was in 2001, when, in preparing my PhD thesis, I was allowed by the German Archaeological Institute to measure the tiny holes on the pedimental sculptures, which served to fasten the lost metal attachments. Eventually, the discussion of the many holes on figure G of the east pediment (conventionally called Pelops), i.e. the reconstruction and the dating of its metal attachments, became the central part of my work and inevitably led to a detailed investigation of the iconography of the east pediment. The comparison of the fragments with the description and interpretation given by Pausanias resulted in the thesis that the information provided by the text is not to be taken at face value.¹

It is generally accepted that the identification of the crouching maid (figure O) or that of the sitting elderly man (figure N) in the east pediment are evidently mistaken, but scholars have usually assumed that the overall interpretation given by Pausanias is – some minor details apart – fundamentally correct and can serve as a secure basis both for the identification of the individual figures and for the reconstruction and interpretation of the whole composition as well.² However, this is not a matter of fact, but only a hypothesis, which is not absolutely sure, since Pausanias could not rely on authentic written documents concerning the original interpretation and might have been mistaken. Moreover, there are fundamental problems concerning the central figures K, G and I as well.

To start with the so-called Pelops, it was already noted by Carl Robert at the beginning of the 20th century, that his armour would be most unusual or even inappropriate, since Pelops is actually never represented in Greek art with shield, helmet and cuirass, and that figure G clearly appears here with all this equipment is therefore a strong argument against identifying him as Pelops. Robert did not suggest any other identification for the figure and interpreted the scene as a general depiction of a warrior's departure.³ This was of course unconvincing for several reasons: in general, such a pedimental composition was rightly expected to represent a specific and well-known mythological scene and the cuirass in particular might have been a later addition and not part of the original composition. So it is not surprising that Robert's idea was not favoured by

¹ Patay-Horváth 2004.

² Most recently e.g. Barringer 2008; Kyrieleis 2011, 2013.

³ Robert 1919, 291-296.

anybody.⁴ But actually the basic iconographical problem concerning the armour of Pelops remained unsolved and the date of the lost metal cuirass was not discussed in detail either. It was exactly this problem which I intended to investigate by collecting and studying the reconstruction and dating of lost metal attachments.

After examining ca. 400 pieces of sculpture showing traces of lost metal attachments, I arrived at a reconstruction of the so-called Pelops which is slightly different from the current one and is of considerable importance regarding the date of the attachments and therefore also for the interpretation of the figure. The argument is based on the fastening holes on the temples of the figure: they are not identical in their diameter and some are drilled not in the usual way horizontally into the stone, but sloping downwards. All these features are paralleled on a well-known head from the west pediment of the Aphaia temple and show that the holes were used to fasten both some locks of hair and cheekpieces turned upwards. Fastening metal locks of hair was particularly fashionable during the late archaic and early classical period and is attested only sporadically afterwards, and the same applies to cheekpieces turned upwards. So the reconstructed parts belong most probably to the original rendering of the figure and cannot be attributed to some late restoration or alteration. Since the fastening holes of the cuirass are exactly identical in their diameter with those on the temple of the figure, this attachment is also likely to have been added already in the first half of the 5th century. One can therefore conclude, that the figure was fully equipped with hoplite armour and consequently it is unlikely to have represented Pelops.⁵ Of course, if this were the only and most serious problem concerning the interpretation, one could accept it as an exceptional rendering of the local hero.

But there is another rather more compelling reason against the traditional view, the hairstyle of figure K, which is usually identified either as Hippodameia or Sterope, according to the arrangement adopted for the central group. Trying to find parallels for this hairstyle, I realized that this is a very special one and is typically employed for a rather limited group of female figures: mourners, servants, slaves, courtesans, i.e. for those on the lowest ranks of society. At least this is the general rule during the classical period and does not seem to have been restricted to any geographical area. It is quite inappropriate therefore either for the princess

⁴ Buschor 1932, 158-160 was the only one to follow Robert in rejecting the Pelops-Oinomaos interpretation, but he immediately suggested another mythological explanation.

⁵ For details see Patay-Horváth 2006 and 2008, 55-64.

Hippodameia or for the queen Sterope.⁶ It is completely incompatible with the traditional interpretation and strongly suggests that another should be looked for.

Before presenting this, however, a recent objection should be discussed briefly. In the latest paper dealing with the iconography of the pediment, H. Kyrieleis thought to refute my argument concerning the hairstyle by referring to some archaic and early classical pieces.⁷ It is symptomatic, I think, that he questioned the general validity of the observation by referring to a very limited number of exceptions, which would be in any case statistically irrelevant against the bulk of the evidence. Actually all the parallels adduced by Kyrieleis are geographically and chronologically isolated and cannot be regarded as inconvertible proof against the general meaning of the „Pagenfrisur“. In fact, there is only one of them, the Demeter of the large Eleusinian relief, where the interpretation of the figure is beyond doubt and shows a goddess. But in this case, the length of the hair and the hairstyle are both markedly different, and the parallel itself is therefore misleading.⁸ Kyrieleis also disregards the general observation, made already earlier and independently from me, that this hairstyle is rather rare in classical sculpture,⁹ and does not offer any explanation for its occurrence on figure K of the pediment; moreover he also completely ignores the testimony of vasepainting, which is of course relevant for interpreting any iconographic element occurring in monumental sculpture. So I see still no reason to disregard the implication of this hairstyle and consider the traditional interpretation of the pediment as fundamentally erroneous. It was most probably borrowed by Pausanias from his local guides, and does not reflect the original intentions of the 5th century, but a deliberate attempt of the Eleans to connect this most important sculptural group of the temple with their own mythical history.

From a purely theoretical point of view, it would be desirable to base the interpretation of the pediment exclusively or at least mainly on the fragments themselves and I think it is possible to approach the question in this way and not by accepting or assuming the correctness of the interpretation given by Pausanias. What the east pediment actually depicted will thus emerge from the monument itself.¹⁰

⁶ Patay-Horváth 2005.

⁷ Kyrieleis 2013, 67, n. 37.

⁸ Holloway 1958, 403: „Thus the parallel with the Sterope is superficial and exists only in the regularity of the Demeter's waving hair.“

⁹ Bol 1988, 76: „Bei Frauendarstellungen gerät das halblange Haar in archaischer Zeit um die Mitte des 7. Jahrhunderts ausser Mode.“

¹⁰ The following summary is based on Patay-Horváth 2007.

First the notion of a chariot race or the preparations for such a contest is to be discarded, even if it may seem at first plausible because of the two chariot teams flanking the central group. Actually, these antithetic chariots and horses are not characteristic elements for the depiction of a chariot race, but can be seen in a variety of cases and are a convenient device filling the middle part of any pediment, and characterize at the same time the protagonists as belonging to the wealthiest and noblest heroes.¹¹

The central figure of Zeus is also of fundamental importance. He turns his head to his right and holds a thunderbolt in his left. This feature is exceptional and is therefore most likely significant as well. It has been supposed that Zeus would punish Oinomaos with this weapon after the chariot race, but in all cases where Zeus holds this attribute in his left hand, it is clearly not his intention to use it against any of the persons represented around him. If he wants to use the thunderbolt, he brandishes it in his right hand. So the peculiar position of his weapon cannot be interpreted in this way, but rather the contrary is to be supposed, that he is happy with and benevolent towards the figures surrounding him.

The exact arrangement of these figures has been the subject of long scholarly debates, but is not discussed here in detail, because it will be treated separately.¹² Now, I proceed with the iconographical analysis.

According to the reconstruction which is in my view most probably the correct one, the two male figures are turned towards each other and both are clearly characterized as warriors. The older one, figure I, is depicted with open mouth and can be most probably interpreted as speaking. What he is saying is directed towards the younger one, figure G, but as Zeus stands between them he is probably also concerned with the speech. It is therefore reasonable to assume that he is invoking the supreme god and uttering an oath for the younger warrior.

Last but not least, the female figures should also fit in the evidently military context and figure K must be a servant or slave and at the same time she has to play an obviously important or decisive role for the entire scene. The other one is characterized by her pose as anxious and it is a reasonable suggestion that she is worried about the fate of the young hero standing next to her.

¹¹ A similar composition of antithetic chariots was depicted on the pediment of the Athenian treasury at Delphoi and on the west pediment of the Parthenon. The scheme often occurs in vase-painting as well, and has obviously nothing to do with any kind of chariot race. Examples are collected and discussed in Patay-Horváth 2007, 187-190.

¹² See chapter twelve below in this volume.

There are not, I think, many scenes of Greek mythology meeting all or most of these requirements and the preparations for the chariot race between Pelops and Oinomaos can practically be ruled out. An important, but seldomly represented scene from the *Iliad*, the reconciliation of Agamemnon and Achilles is far more probable in my view.

”And the son of Atreus made prayer to Zeus; and all the Argives sat thereby in silence, hearkening as was meet unto the king. And he spake in prayer, with a look up to the wide heaven: “Be Zeus my witness first, highest and best of gods, and Earth and Sun, and the Erinyes, that under earth take vengeance on men, whosoever hath sworn a false oath, that never laid I hand upon the girl Briseis either by way of a lover’s embrace or anywise else, but she ever abode untouched in my huts. And if aught of this oath be false, may the gods give me woes full many, even all that they are wont to give to him who so sinneth against them in his swearing.”¹³

The older warrior can thus be identified with Agamemnon, the younger one with Achilles. Agamemnon is swearing an oath addressing Zeus and other deities that he has not touched Briseis and returns the girl to Achilles. She is a captive and therefore, her hairstyle is appropriate, but at the same time, she clearly plays a central role in the scene. It is perhaps also interesting to note, that her real name was according to tradition Hippodameia. Achilles has just declared that he will return to the battlefield, so it is not surprising that his armour is rendered so elaborately. He has just received these new pieces from his mother Thetis, who can be seen in the worried female figure F standing next to him; mothers are often accompany their warrior sons in Greek art, and there is an especially close parallel, showing the worried Penelope standing next to Telemachos in a similar way. It might be objected that Thetis is not mentioned by Homeros as attendant of the reconciliation scene, but, as the presence of Telemachos in this relief clearly shows, this is not a decisive point.

From the remaining figures, the seer N might be Kalchas, the maid O an attendant Nereid and the reclining figures in the corners, if they were really intended to represent river gods, can be the two rivers of Troy, the Skamandros and Simoeis. The exact identification of the other figures is impossible, but they cannot be identified accepting the traditional interpretation either.

¹³ Hom. *Il.* 19. 255-265, English translation by A.T. Murray

The Economic Background and the Historical Setting

Now, even though the iconography clearly favours this interpretation, it might seem to be iconologically weaker, since Pelops was according to Pausanias (5.13.1) the most important local hero of the Eleans and the temple was also said by Pausanias (5.10.2) to have been built by the Eleans, from the booty taken from the rebellious Pisatans. But actually the case is not so simple.

A few general points deserve to be mentioned first: 1) the reconciliation between Achilles and Agamemnon is practically never depicted in Greek art. This would seem to argue against the new interpretation of the pediment, but actually is rather confirming it. During the early classical period, there were many important works of art created showing scenes of the Trojan cycle which were never chosen before or afterwards. And precisely in Olympia there was the famous sculptural group of Onatas dedicated by the Achaeans, depicting another assembly of the Greeks at Troy.¹⁴ Scenes of the Trojan war became obviously especially popular in this period and so the choice of subject seems less strange and certainly more appropriate than the chariot race of Pelops and Oinomaos.

2) Pausanias took his information concerning the monuments of Olympia in most cases from his local guides,¹⁵ and these were certainly eager to connect every significant monument to the history of Elis. Their bias is apparent not only for us, but was already felt by Pausanias, who himself detected and refuted such a local-patriotic interpretation concerning a scene on the chest of Kypselos (5. 18. 6-7). That he was misled in the case of the temple and did not realize the problems does not necessarily mean that the pieces of information he was provided with, were correct.

In this way, the testimony of Pausanias concerning the construction of the temple can be doubted as well, and the case is even more serious than the problems concerning the interpretation of the east pediment. The probability that Pausanias was misguided is much higher indeed, because he did not even have the possibility to check the information of his local guides. Regarding iconography, he could at least see the monuments and thus check what he was told (and indeed, in the case of the east pediment, he reported an alternative tradition concerning the name of one figure, the

¹⁴ Paus. 1. 15. 2-3; 10. 25-27; 5. 25. 8-10.

¹⁵ The guides are attested already for the early imperial period (*IvO* No. 64, 77, 83, 110, 120 and Varro Men. Frg. 34 apud Nonius 676, 8) and are frequently referred to by Pausanias as well (cf. Jones 2001, 33-39).

charioteer of Pelops¹⁶) but in the case of „Baugeschichte” he could only report what he was told. And his local guides at Olympia provided demonstrably wrong pieces of information in several cases.

Pausanias (5. 16. 1) says e.g. that the Heraion was built in the 8th year of Oxylos by the people of Skillous. The latter statement is simply unreasonable given the size of the building, which finds contemporary parallels only at Argos and Tegea, but the date is definitely and markedly wrong, since the temple was built not in the dark ages implied by Oxylos, but only around 600 B.C.¹⁷

Pausanias (5. 15. 1) also says that the Leonidaion was built by a local, i.e. Elean man Leonidas, although it is attested epigraphically that he was a Naxian. The error is however not to be attributed to the periegetes, because the inscription was at the time of his visit already covered under a thick layer of mortar, so must have derived from his local guides.¹⁸ They were obviously distorting the evidence in order to glorify Elis.

The mentioning of an otherwise unknown local architect for the temple of Zeus (Paus. 5. 10. 4) can thus be seen as yet another example of these local-patriotic tales, but certainty in this matter is of course beyond our reach. The financing of the temple construction from the Pisatan booty is, on the contrary, demonstrably a local myth and has nothing to do with real history. If we accept the ancient testimonia, including Pausanias (6. 22. 2-4), on the date of this war between Pisa and Elis as historically correct, the war must antedate the temple construction by ca. 100 years and thus cannot be connected with it. But actually, not only the war but even the early existence of a political entity named Pisa has been convincingly questioned recently and so the booty from such a war is ruled out entirely.¹⁹ It has also been suggested, that the war mentioned here by Pausanias was identical with the so-called Triphylian war, which is mentioned in passing by Herodotus (4.148). Actually, the phrasing does not conclusive suggest one single war, but even if this had been the case, the temple construction could not have resulted from the hypothetical booty taken from these cities, simply because it was surely insufficient for

¹⁶ Paus. 5. 10. 7.

¹⁷ For a summary see Mallwitz 1972, 137-143, for details concerning the chronology Mallwitz 1966.

¹⁸ *IvO* No. 651. Cf. Mallwitz 1972, 246-247.

¹⁹ Luraghi 2008, 79: „The suspicion becomes certainty at least in the case of Pisatis, which everyone now agrees never existed as an independent political entity before being created by the Arcadians in 365 BC.” Köiv 2013 can be regarded as the last and most probably unsuccessful attempt to restore the historicity of archaic Pisa. Cf. Roy, forthcoming, note 14.