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# The Parthenon Frieze – Another View

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Not the least of Frank Brommer's contributions to classical studies has been his rigorous reappraisal of what is probably the most famous monument of classical antiquity, the Parthenon and its sculptures. I offer for his consideration a new interpretation of the most familiar part of that monument, the frieze.

The frieze and its composition are too well known to require detailed description here. Martin Robertson's recent book<sup>1</sup> presents it pictorially with a most sympathetic commentary and our jubilant promises a full account of its structure and composition. There are, however, a few points, both general and specific, which I would like to rehearse before reaching the main argument, since they may prove relevant to it.

In 490 B.C. the Athenians repulsed the Persians at Marathon, saved Athens and Greece for a while. Shortly afterwards they laid the foundations for a new temple of Athena on the Acropolis, just south of the archaic temple which housed the sacred olive-wood statue, to which they brought a new peplos robe every four years at the Great Panathenaia. In 480 and 479 the Persians came to Attica again, sacked Athens and the Acropolis, overthrowing what had been prepared of the new temple, and when after Salamis and Plataea, the Athenians returned, they packed some of the unused blocks and column drums into the new Acropolis fortifications, leaving the new temple foundations bare beside the ruins of the archaic temple. They had taken the sacred statue away with them and brought it back to house it somewhere on the Acropolis, in a temporary but lockable<sup>2</sup> structure, probably on the site of the old temple. Nearly thirty years later they returned to the foundations laid after Marathon, free to devote their attentions and a fair proportion of the tribute from the league states to the rebuilding of their city in a manner befitting the people who had freed Greece from the threat of the easterners' empire. The old temple foundations were enlarged and the Parthenon rose upon them.<sup>3</sup> It seems very probable that the old temple had been planned as in some respect a thank-offering for deliverance at Marathon, and the sculptural decoration of the Parthenon can easily be read as, first, a statement of the city goddess' commanding status, with scenes of her birth and the struggle with Poseidon for Attica in the pediments; secondly, as a series of simple symbolic statements of what the city had achieved in the defeat of the Persians, at Marathon and afterwards, with the metope scenes of Greeks fighting Amazons, Greeks fighting centaurs, the sack of Troy, gods fighting giants, recalling the defeat of easterners, of the uncivilised and barbarian, the punishment of hubris. And these are subjects repeated on many another monument of Periclean Athens and Attica, part of the same programme in demonstration of civic pride.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Parthenon Frieze (1975). And cf. B. Ashmole, *Architect and Sculptor in Classical Greece* (1972) chapter 5 'The Parthenon Frieze: Questions still Unanswered'.

<sup>2</sup> D. M. Lewis, *BSA* 49, 1954, 20.

<sup>3</sup> R. Carpenter, *The Architects of the Parthenon* (1970) for an account of the successive buildings. I am

not convinced by his arguments for a Kimonian temple (see W. B. Dinsmoor Jr., *AJA* 75, 1971, 339f.).

<sup>4</sup> Cf. W. Gauer, *Weihgeschenke aus den Perserkriegen* (1968) 16-20; C. J. Herington, *Athena Parthenos and Athena Polias* (1955) 59ff.

In the frieze we see on three sides horsemen and chariots led by elders and the attendants of the procession and sacrifice to the fourth side, at the east front, where there are attendants, dignitaries, women and the Olympian gods. There are a few features on the way which I would like to discuss. At the west there is a fine and free composition of horsemen in preparation and mounted. On the north and south the riders proceed at a steady pace, the composition and figures on the north being more imaginative than those on the south. But in both I think we can detect a deliberate grouping of the horsemen into ten ranks or clusters<sup>5</sup>, which can only reflect the tribal organisation of democratic Athens, as important in war as it was in the celebration of festivals. This is particularly clear in the south where the groups are further differentiated by dress. The distinctions are not absolute in each group or rank, and the differences are sometimes slight – a different type of corselet or soft cap, the presence of a petasos, sandals rather than boots, presence or absence of a cloak or tunic, but they are real differences which help to define the groups, all in terms of contemporary Athenian dress, military or otherwise.

In the chariots before the horsemen we recognise the apobatai, performing a well-known exercise, particularly associated with the Panathenaia. The horse-riding and racing were appropriate too, so we can see that the great cavalcade of horses and chariots which occupied two thirds of the whole frieze presents appropriate activities for the procession, but by no means all the appropriate activities. Before the chariots are the thallophoroi, musicians, youths with hydriae (north only), skaphophoroi (metics) and the sacrificial animals, cows and sheep. There are differences in the composition of the north and south friezes, outweighed by the similarities, and I see no reason to suppose that two separate processional occasions are involved.<sup>6</sup>

We now come to the east frieze. The movement of the procession slows and, apart from marshals, the figures are women. More than half of them, those nearest the corners, are carrying either jugs or phialai, the paraphernalia of libation. This is not surprising in the circumstances but the number of them perhaps is. They are preceded by women carrying various objects and furniture of cult including an incense burner, and some empty-handed whom scholars have thought to be those who had been carrying the peplos. Two pairs (12 + 13, 14 + 15) carry between them two splaying stands which have been variously interpreted as incense burners (but we have a portable one carried by 57 and would expect the cup to be fastened to the top, as on the very similar stand on the Ludovisi Throne), stands for spits (hopelessly high and with inappropriate carriers), candelabra (but still lacking their tops) or something to do with the peplos (so the British Museum Guide). Over each of their tops a hole is cut obliquely down into the stone, that between 12 and 13 being one of the most substantial attachment holes in the frieze. It should be noted that neither of the carriers actually touches the stand but they appear to be lifting it by something, not indicated, attached to the double-torus top. I cannot satisfactorily explain what went in the holes, but clearly the stands are a pair, for upper works which have been removed. I suggest that they are the legs of the loom on which the peplos was woven. In vase scenes permanent looms are shown with wooden poles which taper to a point at the base to be fitted into the ground.<sup>7</sup> I know no portable looms, but any such would need heavy legs of this sort, they would be the only obvious heavy equipment in this situation appropriately in the hands of women, and their upperworks would inevitably be omitted, though there might be some cordage or loops at the point of attachment of

Taf. 16, 1

Taf. 16, 2-3

<sup>5</sup> This is clearest in the otherwise unreliable plan of the frieze in M. Collignon, *Le Parthénon* (1912), whence G. Fougères, *L'Acropole d'Athènes* (1926-30) pl.75.

<sup>6</sup> As, e.g., L. Deubner, *Attische Feste* (1932) 25f.; A. von Premerstein, *ÖJh* 15, 1912, 1-35; Herington,

op.cit. 31f. A good survey of testimonia for the Panathenaia by L. Ziehen in *RE*. XVIII, 3 (1949) 457, 36ff. s.v. Panathenaia.

<sup>7</sup> E.g., Penelope's loom, FR pl.142 (ARV<sup>2</sup> 1300, 2).

the upright and horizontal bars by which they could be carried. It seems quite plausible that a special, even sacred loom would be provided for the peplos, since it was to be used only every fourth year in the nine months in which the robe was woven.<sup>8</sup>

In the right hand half of the frieze a man, 49, is holding a shallow flat object, before him a pair of women. I find it hard to believe that this is one of the kana and these the kanephoroi, known to have formed part of the procession. We would expect two kana to be shown, and them to be in the girls' hands. The girls show no signs of having just surrendered a single kanoun and this seems hardly the moment for the handover of ritual implements of sacrifice.<sup>9</sup>

Taf. 16, 4

Before the women are two static groups of men. They are more massive than the other standing figures and scholars seem well agreed to take them for the Eponymous Heroes of the ten Attic tribes. The identification is made easier by the next figures on the frieze, the Olympian gods seated in two groups of six, plus Eros and Iris, and facing out towards the corners of the frieze and the approaching procession. The Heroes can thus be seen to make a transition between the human and the divine. The Olympians are the only seated figures on the frieze, appropriately greater, therefore, in stature. The problems of identification are minor and of no concern here. At the back of the group to the left is Zeus, and in the corresponding place on the right Athena, both in properly prominent positions. They are seated back to back and between them is the central scene with the peplos to which we now turn.

Here the two main figures can only be the priestess of Athena and the Archon Basileus, who was responsible for seeing that the robe was made, and the object that the latter is handling with the small person on the right can only be the peplos. In a situation like this the obvious explanations must be the right ones. The two girls at the left carry stools, and one of them a footstool on her left arm. Petersen, followed by Furtwängler<sup>10</sup>, had argued this identification of the object, largely broken away; Dorothy Thompson observed that the traces on the background take the form of the lion's paw leg of such a stool<sup>11</sup>; and I think part of the lion's paw of the left near leg is in fact preserved before the girl's body. The stools are for sitting on and they carry cushions, not folded clothes; this is clear from close inspection of them. They are not for the gods, already accommodated (though only two with cushions – Dionysos and Artemis) and must therefore be for the priestess and archon. The left hand girl and her stool are somewhat reduced in size. This might mean that her stool and footstool are for the priestess but might as well be an artistic device for further marking off this group from the adjacent gods, and it is answered by the small person with the peplos at the right. Martin Robertson seems to have been the first to observe<sup>12</sup> that this is a girl, not a boy, to judge from the Venus rings on her neck, a hallmark of the feminine both in life and elsewhere on the frieze. She must then be one of the arrhephoroi who, we are told, were between seven and eleven years old<sup>13</sup>, charged with the making of the peplos, though the hard work was done by others, and here we have one of them handing it over. This identification perhaps weakens another theory which Martin Robertson has also championed<sup>14</sup>, that the scene shows the folding up of the old peplos, not the delivery of the new. The arrhephoroi (and archon) have everything to do with the new peplos, nothing that we know of to do with the old. In fact we do not know what was done with the old peplos.

Taf. 16, 5

<sup>8</sup> Deubner, *op.cit.* 11. 31; work started at the Chalkeia, nine months before the Great Panathenaia; von Premerstein, *op.cit.* 20.

<sup>9</sup> J. Schelp, *Das Kanoun, der griechische Opferkorb* (1975) 55ff., sees the kanoun here and gives full references.

<sup>10</sup> *Masterpieces of Greek Sculpture* (1895) 428 (=

*Meisterwerke* 186).

<sup>11</sup> In: *The Aegean and the Near East. Studies Presented to Hetty Goldman* (1956) 290.

<sup>12</sup> *Op.cit.* (n. 1), comment on the East Frieze.

<sup>13</sup> *Etym.Magn.* 149, 19; *Ar. Lys.* 642.

<sup>14</sup> *Op.cit.* 11f. Proposed by G. F. Hill. *Classical Review* 1894, 225f.

The peplos scene presents other problems too. Its presence is justified by the Panathenaic character of the whole procession but the Panathenaic procession was not directed to the Parthenon but to the temple which housed the sacred wooden image, a temporary structure after 479 and eventually the Erechtheum where it was installed by 409/8. But the 'temporary structure' served a very long time, for some thirty years of which the Parthenon was standing complete. Furtwängler suggested that the Parthenon had been intended for the wooden statue too.<sup>15</sup> The Argive Heraeum offers an analogy, a temple rebuilt after fire, given a new chryselephantine statue, but housing also two older cult statues, including a primitive wooden one (Paus. II 17). This is not an important point for my later argument and the Panathenaic procession on the Parthenon will be explained in other terms. What might still seem odd is that we are not shown the dedication of the peplos, but the preparation for it. It is as though the culminating act is being deliberately avoided, as though there is deliberate understatement of the religious aim of the procession. To this we shall return. It may be noted, however, that the scene is isolated not only by the turned backs of the gods but also by the position of the frieze. Throughout the frieze there is no steady progression in time and action; the southern chariots in particular are seen to be stationary at the front, racing at the back. This may trouble us viewing the frieze in the British Museum or in books. In life the only possible view of the frieze was intermittent between the outer columns of the temple. This destroys any unease about unity of time and action and introduces the possibility of variety in composition, speed, or preparedness without offending expectations of unity. It means that the peplos scene too can be viewed, from before the entrance to the temple, in virtual isolation, and the inattention of the gods is not disturbing.

Another, but minor, compositional factor has been drawn attention to in recent years; it is the presence of small outcrops of rock which serve to raise or incline the foot of man or beast. Dr. Fehl, who studied them<sup>16</sup>, concluded that they had some significance in indicating the location of the procession and suggested that with the cavalcade and its attendants they indicate a setting in the agora or approaches to the Acropolis: with the gods they indicate Olympus, from which they viewed the scene. This is the sort of detail which might well be used by a Greek artist in this way but I find it difficult to believe that he would use the same device in the same scene to mean two different things, so it ought to mean that the procession and gods are thought of together and only the peplos scene, where there are no rocks, apart. And it is always possible that they are simply an effective artistic device to lend variety in an composition which, from its very nature, was likely to look rather flat-footed.

In this summary of features in the frieze I have assumed the generally received explanation for it, that it shows Athenians in the Panathenaic procession, the crowning ceremony of which is honoured by the presence of the Olympian gods. But it cannot be as simple as this and several scholars have indicated the problems involved. They concern things missing from the frieze; things present in the frieze but unexpected; and the choice of the subject itself for the Parthenon. The problems can be summarised:

We miss the girls who carry the hydriae and baskets (*hydriaphoroi*, *kanephoroi*), instead the hydriae are carried by men.

We miss in the procession the peplos, which was its *raison d'être*, though this is less serious since the peplos appears elsewhere.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>15</sup> *Op.cit.* 426-8.

<sup>16</sup> *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institute* 24, 1961, 1ff.

<sup>17</sup> Raised like a sail on a wheeled ship it would have

looked ungainly in the frieze. But it may not have been so carried in the mid-fifth century (cf. Ziehen, *op.cit.* 461f.) and my subsequent argument will account for its absence in another way.

We miss the representatives of the allied cities and colonies, though the sheep offered by the latter may be among the sacrificial animals.

We miss the hoplites who were the core and pride of Athens' citizen army, and we have only horsemen and chariots.

We find, on the other hand, a large number of girls to serve libations in the east frieze. And we find the Olympian deities. There are many representations of festival or sacrifice in classical Greek art but it is unparalleled to find them attended by a number of guest deities, let alone the complete pantheon. And here we see Athena herself in their number; and they seem to be ignoring the handling of the peplos, which is the nearest we get to the culminating act of the procession. Finally, there is the choice of subject. In Lawrence's words "Never before has a contemporary subject been treated on a religious building and no subsequent Greek instance is known, with the doubtful exception of the Erechtheum. The flagrant breach with tradition requires explanation"<sup>18</sup>.

It is unthinkable that a classical Athenian, looking up at the frieze, could have said to himself "there I go", or even more vaguely "there we go". The subject must be, in some respect, more than mortal and the explanation must lie in the frieze itself and in knowledge of the background to its carving and the building on which it was placed. Moreover the explanation must have been apparent to the classical Athenian who knew this background. We cannot exempt the frieze from the conventions of classical art. In many respects it is the acme of classical art and must be interpreted like any other classical monument. The conventions observed by sculptors and painters to identify figures and scenes should help us here too and the answer should not be either obscure or irrelevant, though we may still find difficulty in understanding properly what was readily acceptable and understood in classical Athens.

We must rule out, then, the explanation that it is a contemporary or generic statement of the Panathenaic procession conducted by the citizens of Periclean Athens. Ross Holloway has suggested<sup>19</sup> that the riders, animals, maidens, precious vessels, represent a replacement of the treasures of the archaic Acropolis which the Persians had plundered or destroyed. I find this difficult to believe since the main elements of the frieze and what we know of the archaic Acropolis do not correspond at all closely, and it simply does not seem to be the sort of thing the Athenians would have wished to do or to demonstrate in this way. It also discounts the obviously Panathenaic character of the whole. Chrysoula Kardara has argued skilfully<sup>20</sup> that the frieze might show the very first Panathenaic procession, the inauguration, but it would have been one thing to put the myth-action for a festival on a temple (and in a way the birth of Athena in the east pediment does this), quite another to show the first festival itself. It also involves identification of a variety of heroic figures, from the well-known to the obscure, sometimes recurring more than once, with no positive means of identification by attribute, such as are offered us for the Olympian gods, where the difficulties of recognition are minimal. The explanation is too obscure and the details of recognition would have eluded even the most skilled observer.

There is no other myth-heroic or myth-historical Panathenaia to suit the occasion so we are forced back to a mortal one or to a version of a mortal one. In classical Athens of these years there was one group of mortal Athenian citizens who, by their actions, had acquired the right to depiction on public buildings and in the company of the gods: these are the men who fought at Marathon.

It was, says Pausanias (VIII 10), proverbial at Athens that the gods fought beside them at Marathon and Salamis. Already by the time of the Parthenon there was, down in the agora, the

<sup>18</sup> Greek and Roman Sculpture (1972) 144.

<sup>20</sup> AE 1961 (1964) 61-158.

<sup>19</sup> Art Bulletin 48, 1966, 223-6.

Stoa Poikile with a painting of the battle of Marathon showing the Athenians on the battlefield beside gods and heroes (Paus. I 15). While the Parthenon was being built it was decided that the temple of Athena Nike should be built, or rebuilt<sup>21</sup>, and when it was completed later in the century one of its friezes showed the battle at Marathon, in a manner possibly dependent on the famous painting, and with the gods on an adjacent frieze.<sup>22</sup> Indeed, it has been argued strongly by Professor Brommer that the subject of the west metopes on the Parthenon itself is a fight of Greeks and Persians, not Amazons.<sup>23</sup> As for the Athenian dead at Marathon, Pausanias (I 32) tells us that the people of Marathon worshipped them still as heroes, and a Hellenistic inscription records that Athenian ephebes lay wreaths at their tomb.<sup>24</sup> In Phidias' monument for Marathon at Delphi the general Miltiades stood with the gods Apollo and Athena (Paus. X 10). The heroising of the dead at Marathon is a fact which cannot be called into dispute, and it was appropriate that they should have been celebrated on the Parthenon, in a position secondary to that of the purely divine and heroic subjects, since the building was part of a programme made possible by the contributions of that league of states led by Athens to drive the Persians finally from Greek soil. It stood on foundations laid soon after Marathon for a temple which scholars have regarded as in some way a memorial or thanksgiving for Marathon. And in the new temple Athena held Victory in the palm of her hand. The first major monument of the Periclean Acropolis was the great bronze Athena Promachos by Phidias which was dedicated as a tithe from the spoils of Marathon (Paus. I 28). In Meiggs' words Athens was "reminding herself and other Greeks that she had defeated Persia, alone with the Plataeans, before the Sparta-led alliance, which she had now left, drove back Xerxes' invasion."<sup>25</sup> This too is the spirit of Pericles' funeral oration in Thucydides, evoking the courage and piety of those who had fallen in defence of their city as a glorious example to their sons and to the world; and it is even more specific in the oration composed for Aspasia by Plato in the *Menexenus* (240), where the Marathon fighters are hailed as the fathers of Greek liberty and the Greeks who continued the struggle against Persia are described as disciples of the men of Marathon.

The associations between Marathon and the Parthenon, and the relevance of the procession can be demonstrated in other ways, but we must return to the frieze. My suggestion is that it shows the fighters of Marathon celebrating the prime festival of their goddess, on the temple dedicated to her as a thanksgiving for her aid at Marathon and afterwards, and in a manner which indicates the heroic status of those who fell there. We must see how this suits the frieze and the problems already defined.

It answers one requirement, in that it is directly related to what the classical Athenian knew to be the background to the whole new sculptural and architectural embellishment of the Acropolis. It also meets the requirement that the frieze should not depict ordinary mortals in a contemporary event, since those on the frieze who could not be Marathon-fighters, the women and attendants of the procession, are there simply to demonstrate the immediate role of the great cavalcade, as worshippers of their city goddess. We come then, to the omissions from the frieze:

We missed the representatives of the allied cities of the league, but at the time of Marathon there were no allied cities or league.

We missed the hoplites. In fact we do not miss them and it is just that they do not parade as foot-soldiers. Several of the horsemen wear corselets and helmets, the apobatai carry hoplite shields

<sup>21</sup> R. Meiggs, *The Athenian Empire* (1972) 154, 496-503.

<sup>22</sup> E. Harrison, *AJA* 76, 1972, 353-78.

<sup>23</sup> *Die Metopen des Parthenon* (1967) 191-5.

<sup>24</sup> *IG II<sup>2</sup>* 1006. 26, 69. For a recent account of the batt-

le and tumulus see N. G. L. Hammond, *JHS* 88, 1968, 13ff.

<sup>25</sup> *Op.cit.* 94f. 416f. And cf. H. Loraux, *Marathon ou l'Histoire idéologique* in *REA* 75, 1973, 13-42.

and no one went to battle in chariots in those days. When it was a matter of war rather than cult, these were Athens' hoplites, but we should still attempt to explain why none are represented as such on the frieze, especially if there is an association with Marathon, which was a purely hoplite victory. The explanation lies in the reasons which can now be offered for the way in which all these warlike or potentially warlike males have their horses and chariots.

The association of horses and heroes was commonplace in Greece and there could have been no more obvious way of indicating that a hero or heroes were depicted than the presence of a horse. The Panathenaic procession naturally gave a prime opportunity for stressing this heroic connection, since the Panathenaia involved both horse races and the competitive exercises of the apobatai, which between them account for the whole of the cavalier procession on the frieze. The relevance is in fact even closer. Homer Thompson has observed<sup>26</sup> that in the agora, which had once been a cemetery area, there were a number of classical hero cults associated with the earlier graves, and that these cults had the usual Greek cavalier and horse connotations. This is made clear by the votives found. But it was in the agora, in the stretch of the Panathenaic Way known as the dromos, that the horse-riding and chariot jumping displays took place, and Thompson goes on to suggest that it was the presence of these cavalier hero cults which had suggested the horse events and their inclusion in the Panathenaic Games and procession. In other words, to our classical Athenian these cavalier events in a Panathenaic context, in the agora and on the Panathenaic Way, were already associated with hero cult. He would have had no difficulty in recognising the heroic implications in the choice of only horsemen and chariots for the main part of the procession in the frieze, and this would have overridden the expectation that the men should have been shown in their purely mortal hoplite role.

In later years we find adulation of hoplites per se and of Marathon as a purely hoplite battle, but we have no reason to believe this true of the years in which the Parthenon frieze was being planned, or that it need have overruled other important heroic associations in choice of subject. For expression of attitudes to the relative needs and merits of land- and sea-fighting in these years<sup>27</sup> we do better to recall Plutarch's anecdote (Kimon 5) in which, to encourage the Athenians to take to the sea before Salamis and renounce the land, it is his horse harness that Kimon dedicates on the Acropolis. And if the designer of the frieze wished in any way to further discredit the already largely discredited Kimon and his sea-faring, his choice of horsemen would have been obvious: one thing you cannot do on horseback is fight at sea!

We come to other omissions in the frieze. We missed the girl hydriaphoroi and kanephoroi, and the peplos in the procession. These may be explained by the common factor: they all involved women. The peplos would have been accompanied by the women who made it, and in the frieze the hydriae are being carried by men. It looks very much as though women were deliberately excluded from the three sides of the temple where the main procession was shown despite the prominent female role in ritual concerned with the goddess. I suspect that it seemed inappropriate to juxtapose any groups of women to the heroic procession.

The women on the frieze are confined to the east, and there they are occupied with some affairs which our sources do not specify as peculiar to the procession. Several are carrying cult impedimenta but most have jugs or phialai for libation. This was a normal part of any sacrifice and the proximity of the sacrificial animals, round the corners of the frieze, might seem enough to justify them, and even their numbers. But libations have another function, to which we shall return.

<sup>26</sup> AA 1961, 224-31 and *Epist.Epet.Phil.Schol. Panepist.Athenon* 14, 1963/4, 276-84, and *Athenian Agora* 14 (1972) 119-21. A parallel situation in the

agora at Corinth is even more clearly attested (references *ibid.* 121, n. 12).

<sup>27</sup> Loraux, *op.cit.* 25f.



Here it may be worth noting that in the real Panathenaic procession the marchers were indeed greeted by libation bearers on their approach, not to the altar of sacrifice, but to the temple in which the sacred image was housed. They are the maidens of the Erechtheum Caryatid porch who, as we can tell from copies of them in Rome<sup>28</sup>, were holding phialai. The association of the figures with the frieze had been made by Martin Robertson<sup>29</sup> and we might add the relevance of their architectural position, providing what to the Greeks was a very important physical link with the sacred area occupied by the former temple which housed the image, and overlapping its foundations.

Next come the Eponymous Heroes. They make a neat transition between the mortal and divine, and the tribes had importance in both state ritual and war.

Finally, the gods. They are ignoring the only event which resembles a cult act and are not to be expected as witnesses of a cult act or sacrifice for one of their number, especially when she is sitting with them. Our classical Athenian would know well the circumstances in which the gods might be shown together. One would be to witness an Olympian event, which is what they are doing for the birth of Athena in the pediment above. Another, best known to us from vase scenes of the late archaic period, would be to welcome someone to their company – the return of Hephaistos to Olympus is the obvious example but more relevant is the arrival of a hero newly promoted to divinity, like Herakles, or the arrival of the comparative newcomer, Dionysos.<sup>30</sup> The gods on the frieze are interested in only one thing, the approaching procession, and it is easy to see how the accepted convention has been adapted to show the heroic cavalcade in a Panathenaic context escorted by fellow Athenians bearing the instruments of cult and leading the animals of sacrifice, not merely to an act of worship but into the presence of the gods themselves: as near to apotheosis as any Athenian dared have hope for his brave forefathers. Moreover, in the vase scenes and others of apotheosis the act of welcome is marked by libation and although on the frieze the gods do not themselves hold phialai<sup>31</sup> (they are insulated from the mortal libation-bearers by the Eponymous Heroes) still the very strong, almost exaggerated, libation theme intensifies this atmosphere not just of sacrifice but of reception. I think our Athenian would have recognised the formula – procession, libation, gods.

One result of this interpretation is that another of the composition problems of the frieze is solved. Scholars have failed to explain the gods' apparent indifference to the central act with the peplos. The solution, to imagine them sitting in a semicircle<sup>32</sup>, makes some who are facing left or right, really facing front; and others facing the exact opposite direction to that in which they are shown. This cannot be correct. If they were interested in the peplos they could easily have faced the centre, as they do on the Hephaisteion frieze for the principal event there. The mere fact that they face away is our clue to their main interest and the reason for their presence. The act with the peplos expresses the religious aim of the procession and it is rather deliberately understated, as I have remarked. But the civic aim of the procession, of such importance in this whole commemorative-religious scheme for the Acropolis, lies in the composition of the procession itself, towards which the attention of the gods is directed.

<sup>28</sup> E. E. Schmidt in *Antike Plastik* 13 (1973).

<sup>29</sup> *Op.cit.* 12.

<sup>30</sup> E. g., the introduction of Herakles on the Sosias Painter's cup (ARV<sup>2</sup> 21, 1) and the arrival of Dionysos on Oltos' cup (ARV<sup>2</sup> 60, 66). See also H. Knell, *Die Darstellung der Götterversammlung in der attischen Kunst des VI. und V. Jhs.* (1965) 70ff. and on gods' libations E. Simon, *Opfernde Götter* (1953); B.

Eckstein-Wolf, *MdI* 5, 1952, 39ff.; W. Fuchs, *RM* 68, 1961, 176ff.

<sup>31</sup> By this date the gods are generally no longer shown making libations themselves.

<sup>32</sup> E. g., in British Museum, *Short Guide* (1956) 19; A. H. Smith, *The Sculptures of the Parthenon* (1910) 50.

At this point we may consider briefly where it is all happening. It is not absolutely necessary, of course, that the designer had one place only in mind. The chariots and horsemen belong on the lower ground, notably the agora where the equestrian events took place. If we see the handing over of the new peplos this could have taken place in the agora, where, it has been argued, it was made.<sup>33</sup> The presence of the loom, displayed as it is handed over, would be highly appropriate. In the agora the Olympian gods are already accommodated at an altar by the Panathenaic Way, and it is likely that the Eponymous Heroes were celebrated in the administrative centre of Athens also, although it is only later in the fifth century that their peribolos was constructed.<sup>34</sup> The equestrian events took place in the agora and the carrying of the stools indicates that, after the parade before the gods and Heroes, the procession is to move on up to Athena's temple with her peplos. It is, perhaps, in this spirit that we should read Xenophon's recommendation (Hippiarchikos 3, 2) that cavalier processions "would be pleasing to the gods and spectators if they made a circuit of those with shrines and statues in the agora, starting from the herms, honouring the gods", ending with a cavalry charge, by phylai, across the agora to the Eleusinion (which is the natural end of the Panathenaic dromos and where the apobatai dismounted).<sup>35</sup> Moreover, the libation theme of the frieze would be made the more significant by such an exchange of respects between the divine and the heroised. But this is merely a suggestion and does not affect my argument. Of course, if it is not the culminating act of the procession that is shown in the frieze it seems less strange that it should appear on the temple to which, it is generally thought, the procession was not directed.

To return to the more general question of the choice of subject we might enquire why the Panathenaic procession was chosen to celebrate the Marathon-fighters. The question may seem superfluous. The Parthenon was a very proper building for it, whether or not it ever held the olive-wood statue, since the chryselephantine Athena was dedicated at the Great Panathenaia of 438 and the festival was supposed to fall on her birthday, which was shown in the front pediment. In the Panathenaia the herald, ever since Marathon, had linked the names of Athens and Plataea in the prayer for good fortune, for the part the Plataeans played at Marathon (Hdt. VI 111). In Aristophanes' *Equites*, which was staged a few years after the Parthenon was completed, occur two lines (565–6) which are often quoted in connection with the Panathenaic procession and peplos, and the new view of the Parthenon frieze gives them, I think, added meaning. The poet is writing of the warlike spirit of the old days and mourns its passing: εὐλογῆσαι βουλόμεσθα τοὺς πατέρας ἡμῶν, ὅτι ἄνδρες ἦσαν τῆσδε τῆς γῆς ἄξιοι καὶ τοῦ πέπλου.

"We wish to give praise for our fathers, that they were men worthy of this land, and of the peplos", and it is this praise precisely that is expressed in the Parthenon frieze. The reasons for the choice of subject were, then, very strong indeed, yet we can add one which makes them overwhelming.

The Great Panathenaia were celebrated every four years. By divine coincidence the year of Marathon was the year of a Great Panathenaia. The main day of the festival was 28 Hekatombai-on. Eretria fell to the Persians on about 6 Boedromion and the battle of Marathon was fought on 17 Boedromion, some six weeks after the festival, if not earlier.<sup>36</sup> It is clear that while the Athenians were preparing for the festival news of the Persian fleet in the Aegean must have already arrived, since the Persians took a leisurely course through the islands before besieging and sacking

<sup>33</sup> von Premerstein, *op.cit.* (n.6) 19-21. He also sets the action of the frieze in the agora.

<sup>34</sup> Athenian Agora 14 (1972) 129-36 (Altar of the Twelve Gods). 38-41 (Eponymous Heroes).

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.* 121.

<sup>36</sup> See Hammond, *op.cit.* (n.24) 44-7; W. B. Dinsmoor, *AJA* 38, 1934, 443-6; W. K. Pritchett, *Ancient Greek Military Practices I* (1971) 119f.

Eretria and turning to Attica. Barely a month after the Panathenaic procession, with the celebration of their goddess and city fresh upon them, the men of Athens were preparing their armour again, for a different purpose, to take the dusty road to Marathon, to save Athens, to save Greece for a while; and, some of them, who were not to return, to win an immortality which their fellow citizens were not slow to acknowledge, and which Phidias was to have recorded imperishably in stone on the Parthenon frieze.

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This is the case. It is a purely circumstantial one, but this is inevitable. I think it meets most of the problems which scholars have defined in attempting to explain the subject of the frieze and I think that the iconographic conventions would not unduly have bothered an Athenian who knew the purpose of the Parthenon and of the whole scheme of rebuilding on the Acropolis. Where it may seem deficient the lack may be in our understanding of what would have been acceptable in Periclean Athens. It is not, of course, to be regarded as the depiction of an historic event, but an expression of the Athenians' view of their Marathonomachoi in terms of the close historical and symbolic associations of Marathon, the Great Panathenaia, its procession and the Parthenon. The argument is not capable of proof. One might add that it is not capable of disproof except by an explanation which better answers the problems posed. It is difficult to see what could amount to proof unless a new text or inscription offers positive evidence. But, as epilogue, I wish to report an observation made while working on this subject. The details of it may need correction, notably in the light of our jubilant's own work on the frieze. I am bound to take the observations of others at this stage, but if they, and my premises, are correct, they are highly suggestive.

It is again a matter of coincidence, created this time by men, not the gods. If our Athenian viewing the frieze identified there the citizens who fought at Marathon honouring their goddess, we might fairly go on to ask which figures are those singled out for heroisation. Not the women, obviously; this was perhaps one reason for removing them from the three sides where the main procession was shown. Not the musicians, animal drivers, carriers of equipment. Not the old men, the thalophoroi. But certainly all those who follow them in the procession, the men, young to mature in the great cavalcade, whose horses and chariots we have seen already to mark them out as candidates for heroisation. We should certainly not count the charioteers, who are hardly more important than the horses, but I see no reason to exclude the young marshals or teenage grooms who stand beside the horses and chariots, and even the boy at the back of the north frieze (134) – remember the ten-year-old found in the tomb of the Plataeans who fell at Marathon.<sup>37</sup> This seems the simplest way to distinguish our heroes – every male in the cavalcade except the charioteers, and ignoring all those farther up the procession and merely serving it.

The count is not particularly easy, given the fragmentary state of the frieze, but Professor W.-H. Schuchhardt has done the work for us and made what allowance he could for the incomplete parts.<sup>38</sup> His main observation is an important one. It is the way in which the north and south friezes so very closely correspond in numbers of personnel despite the fact that they are by no means replicas and in many details are quite differently composed. Thus, there seems to have

<sup>37</sup> AAA 3, 1970, 360.

<sup>38</sup> JdI 45, 1930, 218-80, especially 274-8. Note that in 277 n. 1 north and south are interchanged. The numbers given in F.-J. Peris, *Die Disposition des Parthenon-*

*frieses* (1974) are very close to Schuchhardt's. His arguments are based on measuring rather than re-study of the figures themselves and Professor Brommer's publication will bring us closer to certainty on this matter.

been just 138 men in both north and south friezes. Moreover, although the length of the frieze devoted to riders on the south is greater than on the north, still exactly the same number of men is involved. There is a difference in the chariots because there seem to be ten on the north, twelve on the south, yet the combined lengths of riders and chariots, that is the whole cavalcade on north and south, are the same. There was obviously very careful planning here and the numbers were carefully calculated and observed.

If our Athenian recognised the men in the cavalcade as his pious heroised forefathers he would clearly have to regard them as those who gave their lives at Marathon, not those who survived although, like Aeschylus, they might wish that nothing more be recorded of their lives than that they fought at Marathon. The Athenian dead at Marathon were cremated on the battlefield and buried beneath a tumulus where offerings were brought. Beside it there were stelai which listed the dead by their ten tribes, so their names and number could be verified.<sup>39</sup>

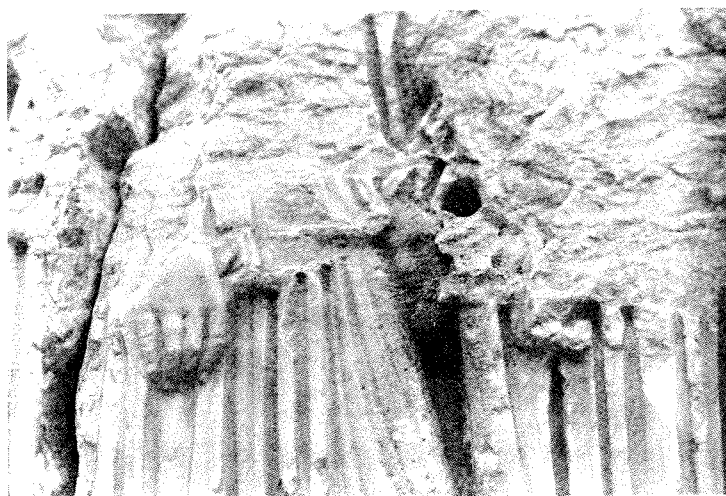
On the frieze Professor Schuchhardt counts for us 83 in the cavalcade of the north frieze, 79 on the south, and we can add the 30 from the west where all are preserved. This makes a total of 192. And 192, Herodotus tells us (VI 117) was the number of the Athenians killed at the battle of Marathon. I find this a very strange coincidence.

<sup>39</sup> Some have argued that a duplicate list was displayed in Athens (where the war dead were usually buried and commemorated) and associated the lists with the

'Marathon epigrams'; cf. K. W. Welwei, *Historia* 19, 1970, 295ff.; R. Meiggs and D. M. Lewis, *Selection of Greek Historical Inscriptions* (1969) no.26.



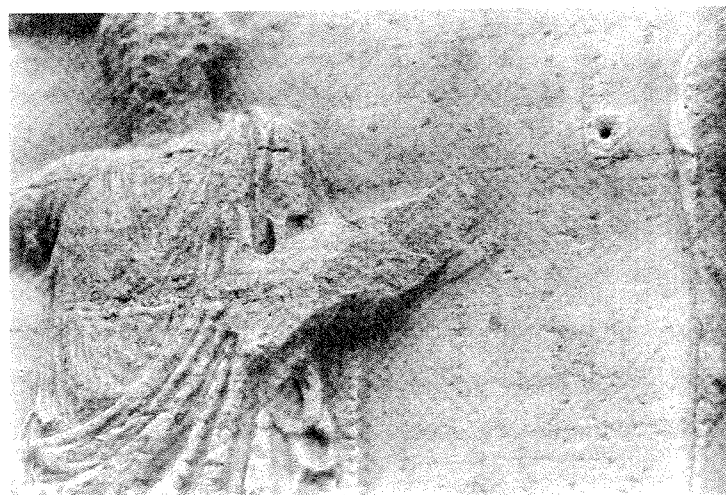
1 East frieze figures 12-15.



2 East frieze figures 12+13.



3 East frieze figures 14+15.



4 East frieze figure 31.



5 East frieze figure 35. Photographs by the author.