

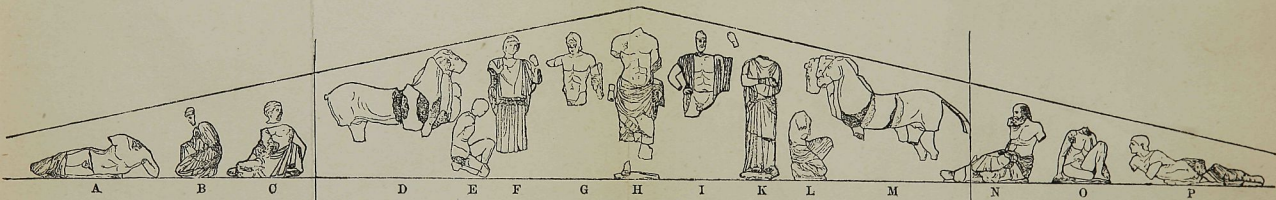
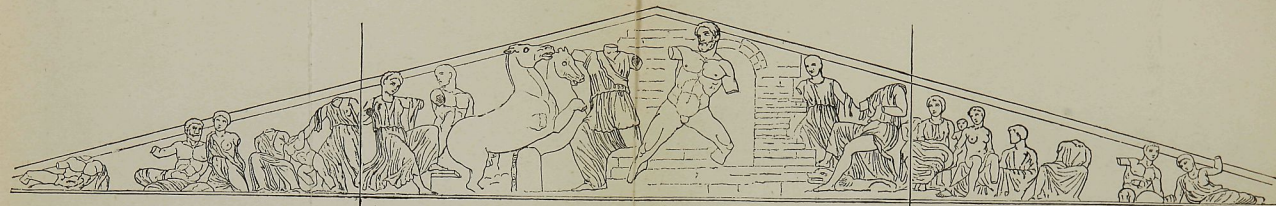
THE
EASTERN PEDIMENT OF THE TEMPLE OF
ZEUS AT OLYMPIA

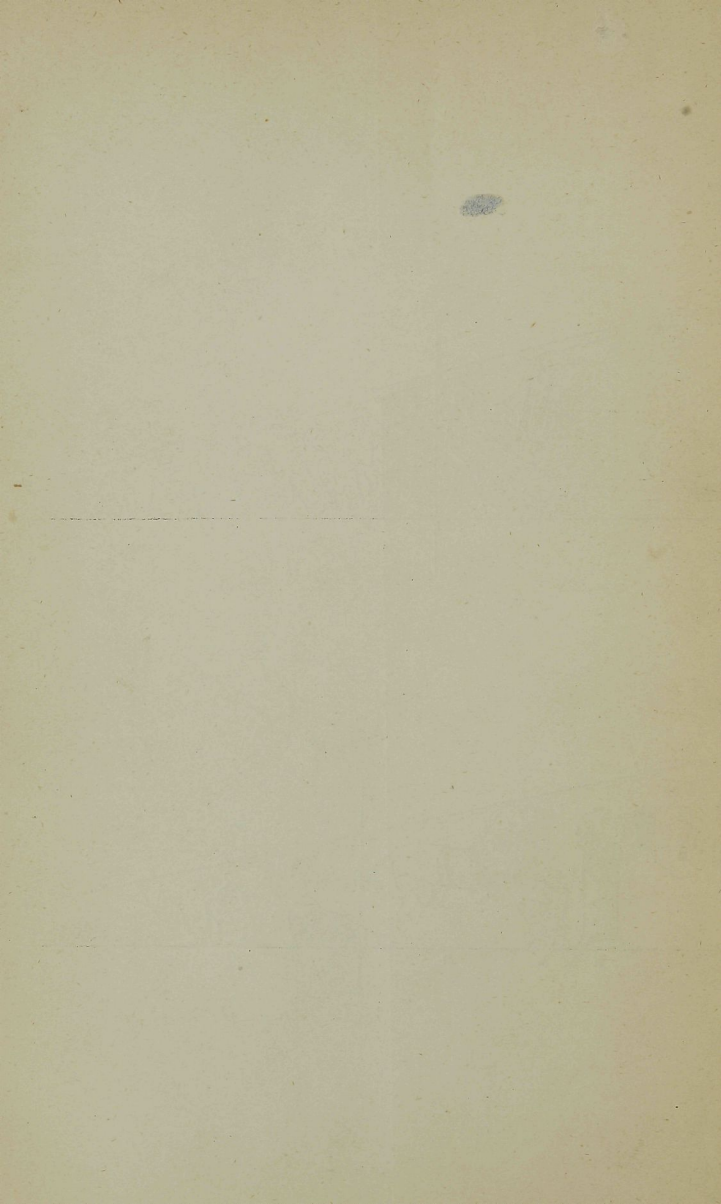
AND THE
WESTERN PEDIMENT OF THE PARTHENON

BY
CHARLES WALDSTEIN

REPRINTED FROM THE
JOURNAL OF HELLENIC STUDIES

1884





THE EASTERN PEDIMENT OF THE TEMPLE OF ZEUS AT OLYMPIA

AND THE

WESTERN PEDIMENT OF THE PARTHENON.

IN proffering this attempt at providing a new principle for the interpretation of the Eastern Pediment of the Temple of Zeus at Olympia, founded upon the recognition of the general principles of pedimental compositions as they manifest themselves after a careful study of the extant monuments of this class, and, more especially, upon a comparison between this Olympian pediment and the western pediment of the Parthenon, the writer fears that he may meet with prejudice on the part of those who have already fixed in their minds an essentially different mode of approaching the subject. He fears this the more as it is entirely beyond his power on this occasion to give a full account of these general principles, or rather of the traditional forms of rendering mythological scenes in compositions of this class, as they have manifested themselves to him in studying a considerable number of ancient representations of mythological scenes for the purpose of elucidating the composition of the pediments of the Parthenon. He is obliged, therefore, to refer the reader to the treatment of this subject in his forthcoming volume of *Essays on the Art of Pheidias*, more especially to the *Essay on the Eastern Pediment of the Parthenon*. Another cause of initial opposition will no doubt lie in the fact that his proposed interpretation will, in some of the details, run counter to the direct statements of Pausanias. But though it is a dangerous proceeding in archaeology to discredit the direct statement of an ancient authority, there is one authority more

conclusive than the statement of any ancient eye-witness, that is, the direct evidence of the remains themselves. When in addition to this we have reason to know that this particular writer was apt to be misled in the recognition of subjects of the very nature of those in question, and that his sources of information were often of the most illiterate and untrustworthy kind, we are then more than ever justified in turning, nay, called upon to turn to the unbiased study of the monuments themselves and their relation to all works of that class, with a view to the solution of the problem.

Every reader of Pausanias will soon notice that there was a certain bias in the mind of the traveller, a certain *tendenz* pervading the whole of his writings, modifying the character of his book, and sometimes the correctness of his statements. It might be called a religious, or rather mythographical, bias which arose in him in great part out of the spirit of his age (an age marked by the death-struggle of Greek paganism against rising Christianity), and which drove him to look for illustrations of myths and mythical personalities in every monument. He will never lose an opportunity of recounting some out-of-the-way myth with a definite mention of names, and will often introduce them where no apparent opportunity was offered. The first thing he seems to look for upon entering a new town or sanctuary is some local mythical story which he recounts at great length with all the *on dits* of ignorant people, while he gives but short space to the description of facts which it would often be valuable to know. It is moreover most unfortunate that this credulous myth-seeker was most uncritical and indiscriminate with regard to the sources of his information. There is no doubt that a large number of the myths and traditions he recounts and of the interpretations he gives of the monuments with which he met in his travels, were gathered from the ignorant people he chanced to meet, more especially from the *ciceroni* who flocked about Delphi and Olympia, and obtruded their services upon the tourist with a persistency only equalled by their ignorance, and a corresponding readiness to invent facts and names where their knowledge was at fault. Luckily Pausanias often alludes to his source of information and to the fact that 'the ἐξηγητής said so,' and thus gives us fair warning to receive with some reservation the statement thus backed.

This is so in the very tenth chapter of the fifth book in which he describes the Eastern Pediment of the Temple of Zeus, and ends up with the announcement that the Troizenians call the groom of Pelops who is represented in the pediment Sphairos, while the exegetes who is showing him about said he was called Killas.

But that he or his guide or both are not to be implicitly followed in the interpretation they give of the figures in the pediment, has become completely demonstrated by the results of the excavation. Pausanias enumerates and interprets the figures as follows: *Τὰ δὲ ἐν τοῖς αἰτοῖς, ἔστιν ἔμπροσθεν Πέλοπος ἢ πρὸς Οἰνόμαον τῶν ἵππων ἄμιλλα ἔτι μέλλουσα καὶ τὸ ἔργον τοῦ δρόμου παρὰ ἀμφοτέρων ἐν παρασκευῇ. Διὸς δὲ ἀγάλματος κατὰ μέσον πεποιημένου μάλιστα τὸν αἰτόν, ἔστιν Οἰνόμαος ἐν δεξιᾷ τοῦ Διὸς ἐπικειμένος κράνος τῇ κεφαλῇ, παρὰ δὲ αὐτὸν γυνὴ Στερόπη, θυγατέρων καὶ αὕτη τῶν Ἄτλαντος. Μυρτίλος δέ, ὃς ἤλαυνε τῷ Οἰνομάῳ τὸ ἄρμα, κάθηται πρὸ τῶν ἵππων· οἱ δὲ εἰσὶν ἀριθμὸν οἱ ἵπποι τέσσαρες. μετὰ δὲ αὐτὸν εἰσὶν ἄνδρες δύο· ὀνόματα μὲν σφισιν οὐκ ἔστι, θεραπεύειν δὲ ἄρα τοὺς ἵππους καὶ τούτοις προσετέτακτο ὑπὸ τοῦ Οἰνομάου, πρὸς αὐτῷ δὲ κατάκειται τῷ πέρατι Κλάδεος· ἔχει δὲ καὶ ἐς τὰ ἄλλα παρ' Ἡλείων τιμὰς ποταμῶν μάλιστα μετὰ γε Ἀλφειόν. τὰ δὲ ἐς ἀριστερὰ ἀπὸ τοῦ Διὸς ὁ Πέλοψ καὶ Ἰπποδάμεια καὶ ὃ τε ἡνίοχός ἐστι τοῦ Πέλοπος καὶ ἵπποι, δύο τε ἄνδρες, ἵπποκόμοι δὴ καὶ οὗτοι τῷ Πέλοπι. καὶ αὐθις ὁ αἰτὸς κάτεισιν ἐς στενόν, καὶ κατὰ τοῦτο Ἀλφειὸς ἐπ' αὐτοῦ πεποιήται. τῷ δὲ ἀνδρὶ ὃς ἡνιοχεῖ τῷ Πέλοπι λόγῳ μὲν τῷ Τροιζηνίων ἔστιν ὄνομα Σφαῖρος, ὃ δὲ ἐξηγητῆς ὁ ἐν Ὀλυμπίᾳ ἔφασγε Κίλλαν εἶναι.*

There are thus twenty-one figures (including the horses) in the pediment. Zeus is in the centre, on his one side Pelops with Hippodameia, on the other Oinomaos with Sterope. Then follow on either side the charioteers (Myrtilos and Sphairos) crouching before the horses, then the four horses, then follow on either side two men, and then at the left corner the river Alpheios, at the corresponding right corner the river Kladeos.

The real uncertainty of interpretation for us attaches itself to the 'two men' between the river-gods and the horses, and this uncertainty was evidently also felt by Pausanias himself. In dealing with the first set of two he merely calls them two men;

he then goes on to say that they have no names, and that their function was to take care of the horses of Oinomaos; the other two he simply calls grooms (*ἵπποκόμοι*) of Pelops. Considerable fragments, making the nature of each one of the figures enumerated by Pausanias intelligible, have been unearthed in the recent German excavations, and have made it possible to reconstruct the whole pedimental composition seen by Pausanias. The three principal restorations are those made by Treu,¹ Curtius,² and quite recently, by Kekulé.³

These restorations differ only with regard to the distribution of the crouching figures. The one here reproduced (Fig. 2) is that of Curtius, chosen by the present writer because it conforms more to the laws of composition which, from analogous cases, appear to have prevailed in such works.

It seems more than unlikely that the four figures between river-gods and horses should be grooms. Despite Welcker's⁴ ingenious explanation 'that the artist was wise in throwing the chief figures into prominent relief by placing these unimportant personages instead of inferior deities at either side,' we cannot help feeling that this would be a very clumsy contrivance on the part of the artist for the purpose of filling up space, and that the introduction of such figures into such compositions is contrary to the custom of Greek art. Furthermore, it is evident that Pausanias and his guide did not examine the figures in the pediment very carefully, for one of the 'men' or 'grooms' turns out to be a woman. Another one of them, the bearded old man seated on the right side, can hardly be held to represent the type of the groom, nor have the modern writers on the

¹ *Archaeol. Zeitung*, 1876, pp. 174 seq. Taf. 13; and 1882, pp. 217 seq. taf. 12. See also Boetticher, *Olympia, Das Fest und seine Stätte*, p. 285 seq.; and Overbeck, *Gesch. der Griech. Plastik* (3rd edit.) i. pp. 420 seq.

² *Die Funde von Olympia* (Berlin, 1882) pp. 71 seq., taf. vi. vii.; see also Furtwängler, *Arch. Zeit.* 1882, p. 365; Mrs. Mitchell, *A History of Ancient Sculpture*, pp. 262 seq., Fig. 127.

³ *Rheinisches Museum f. Philolog.* N. F. xxxix. pp. 481 seq. taf. iii. This has just come to my hand. Taf. iii.

contains outlines of the three restorations mentioned above. For earlier remarks on this pediment by other authors, see: Ulrichs, *Bemerkungen über den Olympischen Tempel*, &c. (Würzburg, 1877) pp. 20 seq.; G. Hirschfeld, *Deutsche Rundschau*, 1877, pp. 309 seq.; Adler, *Ausgrabungen in Olympia*, ii. p. 16, taf. xxxv.; Milchoefer, *Im Neuen Reich*, 1877, pp. 206 seq.; Robert, *Arch. Zeit.* 1878, p. 31.

⁴ *Alte Denkmäler*, i. pp. 178 seq.

subject, despite the statement of Pausanias, ventured to call him by that name. He generally goes by the name of 'The Pensive Old Man' (*Sinnender Greis*). But if we examine a large number of ancient monuments, especially later reliefs, we shall repeatedly come upon this type of an old man reclining in a contemplative attitude, watching the scene which he, sometimes in company with similar figures, serves to frame, and by their presence such figures fix the locality in which the scene takes place. The crouching male figure between him and the Kladeos again corresponds exactly in his attitude to the type of a youthful river-god, more especially to the fragment of the Ilissos crouching at the right side of the western pediment of the Parthenon. The same applies to the two figures on the other side. All the three figures at either angle are evidently not immediately concerned in the action which is preparing in the centre of the pediment. They are in the background, or, as I should like to say, they are the background, and belong to a different sphere of beings from the figures in the centre. The figures in the centre are of one class; and the figures at the angles, separated from them by the horses, are of another. What the nature of the latter group of figures is, is clearly indicated by the river-gods Kladeos and Alpheios at the end of either side; they are personifications of the localities in which the scene takes place.

But to feel thoroughly convinced of the correctness of this interpretation one must needs have examined from this point of view a large number of later monuments, especially reliefs, bearing the evident traces of the earlier pedimental compositions, and the eastern and western pediments of the Parthenon, and must compare these pediments with them. One then comes to recognise a whole system of mythological composition; and of this recognition our interpretation of the figures of the angle of the Olympia pediment is but a necessary consequence.

As I have said at the beginning of this paper, I cannot on this occasion enter upon the discussion of this principle of pedimental composition as borne out by the careful examination of a large number of ancient monuments. I have done this at considerable length in the *Essays on the Pediments of the Parthenon* in the forthcoming book. But the due recognition of any individual pediment depends to such a degree upon the recognition of the traditional forms as we see them pervading

the chief works of this kind, that I feel how comparatively weak will be the convincing power of these observations to those who have not gone through, or have not had presented to them, all the facts upon which these statements are based. Still I shall venture to point out some of these general traditional forms and shall refer the reader to the book for their more complete verification.

The customary method in which the sculptor represented a mythological scene, especially in pediments, was for him to follow in the broader mode of arranging his composition the general constructive indications of the space assigned to him for his composition. In the case of a pediment this space is a triangle with the highest and most important point in the centre. The height and importance of this space are not, as in the case of a frieze, the same throughout, but grow gradually towards the centre as the sides rise from either angle at the base, and diminish gradually as the sides descend from the centre to either angle. The effective narration of any story by means of a plastic composition demands that there should be a visible unity in the composition with a culminating point of interest, otherwise we shall have monotony and diffusion. The sculptor thus follows the simple suggestion of the construction of the pediment in placing the most important and central part of the scene depicted in the highest central point of the pediment, the parts most essential to the central action on either side nearest the centre, and the figures lose in their importance in the central action the more they approach either angle. Or, beginning at either angle, the figures by their nature and action will manifest less interest and participation in the central scene at the beginning of the composition, and these will grow as the pediment rises until we approach the central climax. In the best of these compositions a further element of variety is introduced in that the whole scene as represented is subdivided into different phases or groups, without robbing the whole of its unity. This subdivision would correspond to the foreground or the background. It is generally indicated by the line between the reclining and the erect figures, and by a corresponding distinction in the nature and meaning of the figures and their relation to the central action. The figures forming the central scene, generally in erect attitudes of action, form the one group

of beings belonging to a definite sphere, and are distinctly separated from the other figures seated or reclining in contemplative attitudes, generally manifesting the greater interest in the scene the nearer the place assigned to them is to the centre. The proportion of space assigned to each one of these classes is about the same in the pediments of the Parthenon and this eastern pediment of Olympia. In the western pediment of the Temple of Zeus at Olympia was represented the Centauro-machia; and this subject led the sculptor to give greater space to the scene of actual conflict, while but a small space is assigned to the local nymphs.

The class of figures on either side of the centre, distinct from the immediate participators in the action, I maintain to be traditionally personifications of nature and localities in which the scene is supposed to have taken place. To Brunn belongs the great merit of having first ventured to maintain that the figures filling the sides of the western pediment of the Parthenon up to the Nike and Amphitrite driving the chariots (where the lines are drawn in Fig. 1), are personifications of Attic localities; and though I cannot subscribe to the definite interpretation of the individual figures, the principle as evinced in the interpretation as a whole I have found confirmed by the examination of all similar monuments. In the eastern pediment of the Parthenon (representing the birth of Athene) where, I maintain, the centre was occupied by Athene and Zeus and the admiring gods, and the seated and reclining figures now extant were personifications of nature like Helios and Selene at the extreme angles, an intermediary figure (the messengers Iris and, probably, Hermes) was introduced between the two larger classes on either side. These erect figures show by their action towards the figures in the angles that, though erect and of the nature of the gods in the centre, they also hold some relation to the figures of the other sphere; they form a transition from one group to the other, and by the fact that they convey the news of the central scene to the seated figures at the angles they clearly indicate that the two classes of figures belong to different spheres.

In the western pediment of the Parthenon the transition is more abrupt. The lines drawn in our illustration show this marked division. Beginning from these lines the figures are all turned towards the centre; both by action and composition

it is made manifest that they are immediately concerned in the central event (the strife between Athene and Poseidon for the Attic land). The figures on the other side of the line, however, all belong to the same sphere, which differs from that of the central figures; and their nature is made clear by the character of the two figures nearest either angle, which is beyond dispute. It is admitted by all that in the left angle there is Kephissos with a nymph (now missing) as in the right angle there is a nymph with Ilissos. The other figures up to the lines are personifications of the same nature.

If we compare the eastern pediment of the Temple of Zeus at Olympia with this western pediment of the Parthenon, we realise a thorough correspondence in the general composition and arrangement of the groups which calls for a similar interpretation of the figures at the sides.

In both pediments the horses with their drivers complete the central group containing the action. In the Olympia pediment the horses form a more intrinsic part of the central scene, inasmuch as the moment represented is that of preparation for a mythical chariot race, while in the Parthenon pediment they are mere accessories to the acting figures, Athene and Poseidon; and they here serve to indicate the fact that the judgment confirming the supremacy of Athene has been passed and that the gods will in the next moment retire from the Attic locality where they have performed their miraculous deed. Thus in the Olympia pediment the horses stand at rest awaiting the beginning of the race, and those who will mount the chariots (the most important element of the scene), Pelops and Oinomaos and their charioteers, are placed together near the centre and in front of the horses; while in the Parthenon pediment it is clearly indicated that the horses have just arrived in that they are vigorously advancing, Athene and Poseidon form the really prominent centre, and Nike and Amphitrite are separated from them and are behind the horses. In the Parthenon pediment the centre ends with the figures driving the horses, in the Olympia pediment with the horses themselves. The figures after the horses in the Olympia pediment hold no further immediate relation to them. Even though in Treu's restoration the crouching figure placed by Curtius in front of the horses on the right is placed behind the horses on the left, and might thus be restored as

holding the reins, the corresponding old man on the right in a contemplative attitude with his hand to his chin can in no way be considered to fulfil any definite function with regard to the horses, and the symmetry pervading the whole of this composition would demand that there should be no essential difference between the corresponding figures on either side. I cannot refrain from remarking that, as far as symmetrical composition is concerned, the restoration of Curtius has far more in its favour than either of the two other restorations; for the seated and draped old man on the right, occupying a comparatively wide space, is well balanced on the other side by the seated and draped figure which of all the remaining figures possesses to the highest degree these characteristics; and the monotony of line in the direction of their feet is counterbalanced to a certain degree by the fact that the one is looking forward, the other turning backwards, and still both are turned towards the centre. In Curtius's restoration the next two crouching figures towards the angle are turned away from the centre, until at either end the river-gods have a decided movement towards them and towards the centre.

In the Parthenon pediment there are seven figures in the angles at either side, in the Olympia pediment there are only three; yet even here there is the most striking resemblance of composition. Beginning at the right angle the reclining Kladeos with the crouching youth correspond in composition to the reclining nymph with the Ilissos in the Parthenon pediment; the larger profile lines of the seated old man correspond to the lines of the only figure seated in profile in the Parthenon pediment, namely, the seated female figure with the nude girl in her lap on the same side of the pediment. At the other angle of the pediment we have the reclining Alpheios whose similarity to the Kephissos has been universally remarked; the figure corresponding to the crouching girl is wanting in the Parthenon pediment, yet the seated half-draped figure next to her and turned towards the centre is in composition most strikingly like the next figure in the Parthenon pediment, namely, the seated and draped male figure looking towards the centre.

Both in the general arrangement of composition, the chief acting figures in the centre, bounded on either side by the horses and their drivers, with the personifications of the locality

in either angle, as well as in the details of the seated figures, the correspondence of these two pediments is so great that we are driven to acknowledge an immediate relation between these two pediments. Whether the older artist Paionios on his way from the north to Olympia saw and studied the Parthenon pediments without for all that being able to produce in any way the superiority of their modelling; or whether, as is now maintained by Loeschcke,¹ Pheidias was at Olympia before the completion of the Parthenon, and was there influenced by the composition of the North-Grecian artist, I do not venture to decide. I am only concerned with establishing this strong inter-relation.

I must not omit to remark that Treu, in his first paper,² pointed to the resemblance between the crouching figure on the right of the Olympian pediment and the Ilissos, as well as between the seated figures on the left in both pediments and the general arrangement of the composition. Furthermore, Curtius has gone so far as to consider the figure beside each one of the river-gods to be personifications of localities. But the interpretation here proffered for all the figures not forming the centre of the scene is the result of a comparative study of pedimental compositions in general, more especially in connexion with the Parthenon pediments, and the question must thus be viewed as a whole in order to discover its true bearing. To Brunn will ever remain the great merit of having broken ground in the right direction with the general spirit of his interpretation of the western pediment of the Parthenon.

CHARLES WALDSTEIN.

¹ *Phidias Tod, und Chronologie des Olympischen Zeus; Historische Untersuchung.*

² *Arch. Zeit.* 1876, p. 179.