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Parthenon and *Parthenoi*: A Mythological Interpretation of the Parthenon Frieze

JOAN B. CONNELLY

Abstract

Since the late 18th century, the Parthenon frieze has generally been viewed as a representation of the fifth-century Athenian citizenry participating in their annual (or quadrennial) Panathenaic procession. Viewed without a mythological reference, the frieze stands outside the conventions of Greek temple decoration, which regularly derived its subject matter from the mythical past. The story of King Erechtheus, his wife Praxithea, and their three maiden daughters who gave their lives to save Athens is proposed here as the mythological reference behind the images.

The east frieze shows the royal family preparing for the sacrifice of the youngest daughter, required by an oracle for victory over Eumolpos. The assembly of gods looks out to the approaching sacrificial procession of the first commemorative festival, ordained by Athena, in memory of Erechtheus and the *parthenoi*. Erechtheus's triumphant cavalry and chariots follow behind those who bring animals to sacrifice, and those who carry water and honey offerings, all following behind the holy choruses of maidens who lead the procession. Thus, Athenians from the mythical past commemorate the dead hero and heroines and celebrate their first victory over outside aggressors in what may be viewed as a central *aition* of the Panathenaia itself.*

The traveler Pausanias, visiting the Acropolis in the second century A.D., described the sculptures that he saw decorating the pediments of the Parthe-

non as well as Pheidias's monumental statue of Athena housed within (Paus. 1.24.5). He made no mention, however, of the 160-m-long frieze, set high and in the shadows of the exterior colonnade. Without an ancient source to confirm what the ancient viewers *saw* in this frieze, modern interpreters have been free to reconstruct a meaning on their own. James Stuart and Nicholas Revett, travelers who documented their visit to the Acropolis with drawings and descriptions published in 1787,¹ were the first to identify the frieze as the Panathenaic procession, an integral part of Athena's birthday festival. The cavalcade moving from west to east along the flanks of the temple is seen as the fifth-century Athenian army following behind those who bring animals to sacrifice, offering bearers, musicians, maidens, and elders, indeed, the Athenian citizenry as a whole approaching the scene at the east end, where a piece of cloth is held by a man and a child (fig. 1). This interpretation rests firmly on the assumption that the fabric shown here represents the sacred peplos of Athena, presented to her as the culminating ritual of the Panathenaic festival. Interestingly, Stuart and Revett first advanced this idea tentatively, as a query: "May we not suppose this folded cloth to represent the peplos?"²

* I offer this paper in honor of Dorothy and Homer Thompson with my deepest thanks for their support and encouragement and for all that they have taught me over 20 years of friendship. I warmly thank Colin Austin, Mabel Lang, and Martin Robertson, who have generously shared their expertise and insights with me during the course of this work, which has benefited greatly from their critical readings and encouragement.

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¹ J. Stuart and N. Revett, *The Antiquities of Athens* 2 (London 1787) 12.

² Stuart and Revett (*supra* n. 1) 12. Whether the frieze shows the Greater Panathenaia, celebrated every four years, or the Lesser Panathenaia of the intervening three years has been debated. So, too, has been the question of whether we have the new peplos on its way to the statue or the old peplos being folded and put away. Debate summarized and full bibliography given in J.M. Mansfield, *The Robe of Athena and the Panathenaic Peplos* (Diss. Univ. of California, Berkeley 1985) 346–47. For the traditional view that the east frieze shows the climax of the Panathenaic procession in which the new peplos is handed over to Athena, see A. Michaelis,

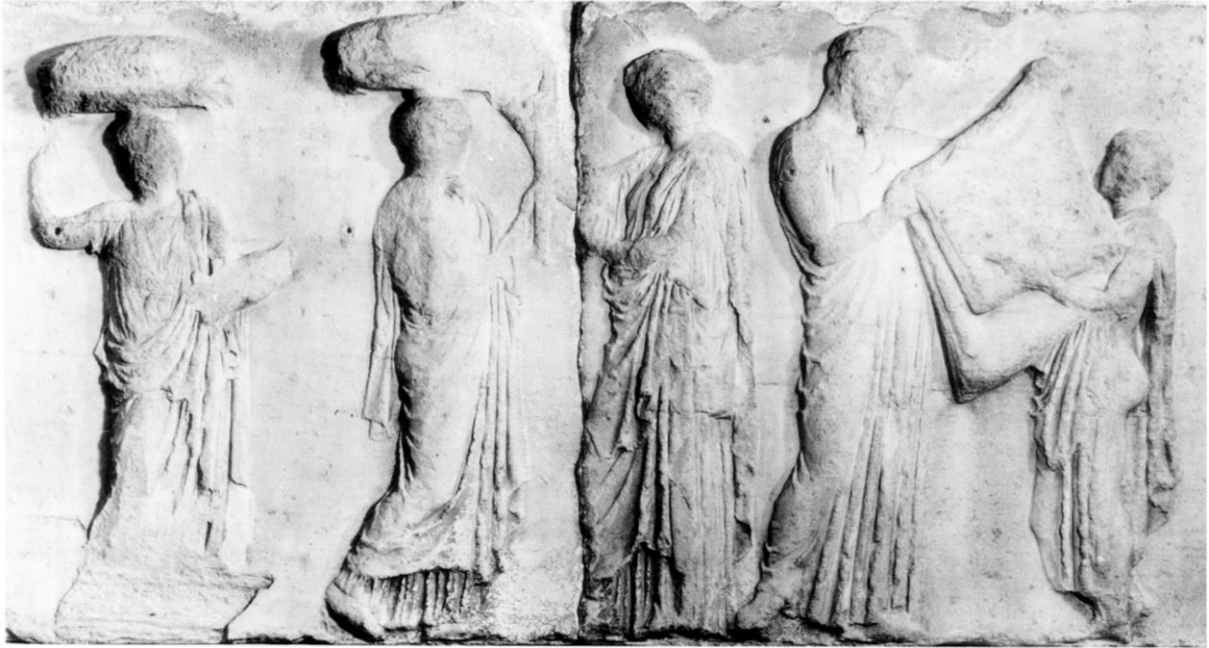


Fig. 1. Parthenon, east frieze, slab V. (Alison Frantz Collection, courtesy American School of Classical Studies at Athens)

Seldom has this view been challenged over the past 200 years, though the images have been a source of great frustration for philologists, historians, and iconographers alike. Scholars have assembled lists of all the elements we should expect to find in a Panathenaic procession, gathered from disparate sources mostly of Hellenistic through Byzantine date, only to find that the list of items does not match what we see on the frieze.³ They miss the maiden basket bearers, the *kanephoroi*,⁴ who played such a prominent role in the procession; they miss the allied tribute bearers,⁵ the *skiaphoroi*, the resident alien women water carriers,⁶ and the famous Athenian hoplites (Thuc. 6.58).⁷ Central to the procession was

the wheeled ship that transported the new peplos along the sacred way to the Acropolis. Yet it is nowhere to be found on the Parthenon frieze. Scholars are equally dismayed when certain elements appear on the frieze that should not: male water carriers and the chariots, entirely inappropriate for a Classical army.

A further and very significant difficulty has been the reading of the frieze as a contemporary event, that is, as part of a fifth-century Panathenaic festival.⁸ This is wholly out of keeping with the conventions for Greek temple decoration, which consistently derives its subject matter from myth.⁹ Indeed, recent work on the function of images in Greek art

Der Parthenon (Leipzig 1871) 255; A. Mommsen, *Feste der Stadt Athen* (Leipzig 1898) 114; L. Deubner, *Attische Feste* (Berlin 1932) 30; and *RE* 18.3 (1949) 457–89, s.v. Panathenaia (L. Ziehen). An alternative reading in which the fabric is viewed as the old peplos being folded and put away was first advanced by G.F. Hill, "The East Frieze of the Parthenon," *CR* 8 (1894) 225–26 and revived by M. Robertson in Robertson and A. Frantz, *The Parthenon Frieze* (London 1975) 11 and M. Robertson, *A History of Greek Art* (Cambridge 1975) 309.

³ Compiled by R.R. Holloway, "The Archaic Akropolis and the Parthenon Frieze," *ArtB* 48 (1966) 223–26; J.J. Pollitt, *Art and Experience in Classical Greece* (Cambridge 1972) 88; H.W. Parke, *Festivals of the Athenians* (Ithaca 1977) 38–45; J. Boardman, "The Parthenon Frieze," in E. Berger ed., *Parthenon-Kongress Basel 1* (Mainz 1984) 214. S.I. Rotroff, "The Parthenon Frieze and the Sacrifice to Athena," *AJA* 81 (1977) 379–80 points out that the differences between the frieze and the testimonia were first noted by Peterson, cited by Michaelis (supra n. 2) 209.

⁴ J. Boardman, "The Parthenon Frieze—Another View," in U. Hockmann and A. Krug eds., *Festschrift für Frank Brommer* (Mainz 1977) 45.

⁵ Boardman (supra n. 3) 215 and (supra n. 4) 44.

⁶ Boardman (supra n. 4) 42, 45.

⁷ Boardman (supra n. 3) 211; (supra n. 4) 43–44.

⁸ Interestingly, the viewing of the frieze as a contemporary event goes back to Cyriacus of Ancona. Following a visit to Athens in 1444, he expressed in a letter his belief that the Parthenon frieze represented an Athenian victory from the time of Pericles: G. Targioni-Tozzetti, *Relazioni d'alcuni viaggi fatti in diverse parti della Toscana* 5 (1773) 439, made from former *Codex Palatinus Florentinus* 49, now *Codex Magliabecchianus Palat.* 49; E. Bodnar, *Cyriacus of Ancona and Athens* (*CollLatomus* 43, Brussels 1960) 53. See also F. Brommer, *Der Parthenonfries* (Mainz 1977) 147–50. For a survey of the various views see B.S. Ridgway, *Fifth Century Styles in Greek Sculpture* (Princeton 1981) 77–78.

⁹ This question is raised by M. Robertson, "The Sculptures of the Parthenon," in G.T.W. Hooker ed., *Parthenon and*

has stressed their central role as vehicles that enable us to see what is *no longer visible*, as *mnemata*, or memorials for what once was.¹⁰ The Parthenon's pediments show the birth of Athena and the contest of Poseidon and Athena, while its metopes show the Gigantomachy, Amazonomachy, Centauromachy, and Iliou Persis. Why should the frieze stand outside of this mythologically inspired program? A.W. Lawrence, long troubled by this anomaly, expressed his concern succinctly: "This must have verged on profanation; at every other Greek temple the sculpture illustrates mythological scenes,"¹¹ and later, "Never before had 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."¹²

Some scholars have, in fact, tried to find a mythological motivation for the frieze, but no known myth could be found to fit the images. Kardara is one of the few who have offered a mythological interpretation, yet she still sees it as a representation of the Panathenaia, indeed, the inauguration or first Panathenaia. She identifies the figures in the central scene as King Kekrops and the child Erechtheus/Erichthonios turning over the new peplos to Athena, while Ge and two of the Kekropides participate in the ritual.¹³ Jeppesen similarly looks for a mytholog-

ical motivation, and sees Butes with the child Erichthonios, while Pandrosos stands by.¹⁴ Other scholars, unwilling to see the frieze as a snapshot of reality but unable to find a myth to fit, have been left to view it as a vague reference to a timeless, generic Panathenaia.¹⁵ Still others have circumvented the apparent inconsistencies of the frieze by rejecting any primary iconographic meaning in preference to multiple meanings.¹⁶

The present state of our understanding of the frieze, then, is one of uncertainty and speculation: we cling to the traditional interpretation but are unhappy with the problems that it raises. Using testimonia, some Hellenistic but most of Roman and Byzantine date, we struggle to connect details of the Panathenaic procession with the images carved in marble as much as 1,200 years before.

In the absence of a myth immediately recognizable to us, it is understandable why interpretations have been based largely on what we know best: the historical and political milieu of Periclean Athens. This, combined with the larger-than-life, icon-like status of the Parthenon, has had a profound impact on the ways in which the images have been scrutinized, what questions have been asked of them, and, more interestingly, what questions have been left unasked. As a central monument of Western culture¹⁷ and a much-celebrated emblem of Greek Democ-

Parthenon (GaR suppl. 10, 1963) 56 as well as by Boardman (supra n. 3) 211 and Holloway (supra n. 3) 223. For general discussion of the difficulties in reading the Parthenon frieze as a contemporary event, see J. Kroll, "The Parthenon Frieze as a Votive Relief," *AJA* 83 (1979) 349–52.

¹⁰ F. Lissarrague, Nilsson lectures, delivered at the Swedish Institute at Athens, 1995, forthcoming; and Lissarrague, "La Grèce antique. Civilisation 1: Fonctions de l'image," *Encyclopaedia Universalis-France*² (Paris 1991) 874–77.

¹¹ A.W. Lawrence, "The Akropolis and Persepolis," *JHS* 71 (1951) 118.

¹² A.W. Lawrence, *Greek and Roman Sculpture* (London 1972) 144. It is now generally agreed that the Erechtheion frieze shows a mythological, rather than a historical, event. The south frieze of the Nike temple has, however, been interpreted as a depiction of the Battle of Marathon; see E.B. Harrison, "The South Frieze of the Nike Temple and the Marathon Painting in the Painted Stoa," *AJA* 76 (1972) 353–78. T. Hölscher, *Griechische Historienbilder des 5. und 4. Jahrhunderts vor Chr.* (Würzburg 1973) 92–94, on the other hand, sees the Nike temple's south frieze as a generalized unspecific battle between Greeks and Persians, and sees scenes from the Peloponnesian War in the north and west friezes. See also E.G. Pemberton, "The East and West Friezes of the Temple of Athena Nike," *AJA* 76 (1972) 303–10; and A.F. Stewart, "History, Myth, and Allegory in the Program of the Temple of Athena Nike, Athens," in H.L. Kessler and M.S. Simpson eds., *Pictorial Narrative in Antiquity and the*

Middle Ages (Washington, D.C. 1985) 53–74.

¹³ C. Kardara, "Glaukopis, the Archaic Naos and the Theme of the Parthenon Frieze," *ArchEph* 1961, 61–158, esp. 115–29.

¹⁴ C. Jeppesen, "Bild und Mythos an dem Parthenon," *ActaArch* 34 (1963) 23–33.

¹⁵ Ridgway (supra n. 8) 77–78 sees the frieze as depicting "no specific ceremony" but a "general display of religiosity by Athenians toward all the gods."

¹⁶ E.g., I. Jenkins, *The Parthenon Frieze* (London 1994) 31–42, esp. 32, where the images of the frieze appear ambiguous to all but the "sensitive reader" who "does not try to iron out the inconsistencies" but accepts them "as the self-contradictory world of tragedy." This seems out of step with the Greek iconographic system, in which images had primary meanings, immediately recognizable to the viewer, even though they could be read and interpreted on multiple levels. Thus, the Parthenon's sculptural program presented images with unambiguous, primary meanings (Gigantomachy, Amazonomachy, Centauromachy, Birth of Athena, Contest of Poseidon and Athena), which could also be read on multiple, metaphorical levels (triumph of civilized order over barbaric chaos, birth of Athens and autochthonous nature of the Athenians, victories of Athenians over exotic outsiders).

¹⁷ For comprehensive discussion of the Parthenon in this role, see S. Kondaratos, "The Parthenon as Cultural Ideal," in P. Tournikiotis ed., *The Parthenon and Its Impact on Modern Times* (Athens 1994), esp. 20–23 and 45–49.

racy,¹⁸ the Parthenon as *Masterpiece* has discouraged questions that might be asked of temples built in places and at times that we know less well than those of fifth-century Athens. There has been an emphasis on certain lines of inquiry influenced by modern interests, such as politics over religion, art as propaganda tool over art as *agalma*, “pleasing gift for the gods.” This is not to say that the Parthenon and its sculptures cannot be read on emblematic levels that evoke a celebration of the Athenian state and its unique sense of polis. It is rather to say that a central element of that sense of polis was the mythological reference, an aspect that has received relatively little attention in respect to the Parthenon frieze.¹⁹ The present study examines a potential mythological reference behind the images and asks of the monument certain questions that have previously been left unasked.

THE MYTH

“Erechtheus is the big spider at the heart of Attic myth.”²⁰ He is known as early as the *Iliad* (2.546–51) from which we learn that Athena settled him in her own rich temple on the Acropolis, where he received annual sacrifice of bulls and rams.²¹ We

also learn that no man yet born on earth was his equal in the marshaling of chariots and fighting men. Herodotos (5.82) gives evidence that Erechtheus and Athena Polias were worshipped in close connection.²² Erechtheus is not always easy to distinguish from Erichthonios; the two share autochthonous birth-myths and wives of the same name, both are specifically associated with the yoking of chariots, and it is said for both that, during their time, the people of Athens were first known as Athenians. Importantly, an “Erichtheus” is credited with instituting the Panathenaic games.²³

The story of Erechtheus’s victory over Eumolpos, the first outside aggressor to launch an attack on Athens, is known from Thucydides (2.15.1). He tells us that in days of old the towns of Attica were independent of the king and even made war upon him, as Eumolpos and the Eleusinians did against Erechtheus. We learn that Eumolpos was motivated by a desire to settle his father Poseidon’s claim upon Attica as his own land (Isoc. 12.193; Hyg. *Fab.* 46). While the story of Erechtheus and Eumolpos is known from many sources,²⁴ it is the orator Lycurgus who informs us of the centrality of the myth within the consciousness of the Athenians. “On these verses, gen-

¹⁸ The association of the Parthenon, indeed of Classical Greek art in general, with the flowering of Democracy has a long history in modern scholarship, well summarized by N. Spivey, *Understanding Greek Sculpture* (London 1995) ch. 1.2, “Style and Democracy.” J.J. Winckelmann, *Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums* (1764) 26, 316 maintained that the perfection of Classical Greek art was indebted to the circumstances of individual liberty. Lawrence (supra n. 11) 118 linked the Parthenon frieze with Pericles’ view of Democracy as expressed later in the Funeral Speech (Thuc. 2.35–46); and E. Gombrich associated the great awakening in Greek art with the dawn of Democracy, *The Story of Art*¹⁵ (London 1989) 52, a view celebrated in recent years by the exhibition and its catalogue, D. Buitron-Oliver ed., *The Greek Miracle: Classical Sculpture from the Dawn of Democracy* (Washington, D.C. 1993). Much lies in the eye of the beholder when it comes to associating artistic masterpieces with political ideologies. Cecil Rhodes saw the Parthenon as an expression of empire: “Through art, Pericles taught the lazy Athenians to believe in Empire,” quoted in H. Baker, *Cecil Rhodes by His Architect* (Oxford 1934) 10. Karl Marx, equally taken by Classical monuments, preferred to appreciate them as the products of a society in its infancy, “the historic childhood of humanity.” The charm of Greek art, he maintained, was inextricably bound up with the “unripe social conditions” under which it arose. See K. Marx, *Grundrisse*, English trans. M. Nicolaus (Hammondsworth 1979) 110–11 and discussion in Kondaratos (supra n. 17) 45.

¹⁹ C. Sourvinou-Inwood, “What Is Polis Religion?” in O. Murray and S. Price eds., *The Greek City: From Homer to Alexander* (Oxford 1990) 295–322, esp. 296: “The role of the polis in the articulation of Greek religion was matched by the role of religion in the articulation of the polis,” and p. 322: “religion provided the framework and the symbolic focus of the polis.” Furthermore, cities like Athens, whose

origins were perceived to be in the mythical past, “expressed their divine guarantee through myth” (p. 306). Therefore, polis and politeia and religion and myth cannot be separated but all function together in the articulation of the polis. I thank Dr. Sourvinou-Inwood for many fruitful discussions of these issues.

²⁰ M.L. West, *The Hesiodic Catalogue of Women* (Oxford 1985) 106.

²¹ For actual sacrifice of bulls and rams, see *IG II²*, 1357, ca. 400–350 B.C.

²² The Athenians granted the Epidaurians permission to fell olive trees for sacred statues on the condition that they offered an annual sacrifice to Erechtheus and Athena Polias.

²³ E. Kearns, *The Heroes of Attica* (*BICS* suppl. 57, London 1989) 160–61; West (supra n. 20) 104. West points out that on the Parian Marble and constantly in Hyginus, Erechtheus is called Erichtheus. For Erichtheus, the yoking of chariots, naming of Athenians, and institution of the Panathenaic games, see *Marm. Par.* A 10. For Erichthonios as the first to celebrate the Panathenaic festival, see Harp. II 14 Keaney; scholiast to Plato, *Prm.* 127a. While Erichthonios generally appears as a child, Erechtheus more often appears as an adult; in Homer (*Il.* 2.546–51) Erechtheus is said to be born of the Earth, while Pindar (fr. 253 S.-M.) identifies Erichthonios as the son of the Earth. While Euripides (quoted in Lycurg. *Leoc.* 98) has Erechtheus married to Praxithea, Apollodoros (3.14.6) has Erichthonios married to a wife of the same name.

²⁴ Collected by C. Austin, *Nova fragmenta Euripidea in papyris reperta* (*Kleine Texte* 187, Berlin 1968) 22–23; Ps. Demaratus (*FGrHist* 42, F 4); Aristides I 87 pp. 37–38 L.–B.; Ps. Plut. *Mor.* 310D; Apollod. 3.15.4; Photius, s.v. *parthenoi*; Hyg. *Fab.* 46.

tlemen, your fathers were brought up," he reminds his audience as he launches into a 55-line quotation from Euripides' lost tragedy, the *Erechtheus*, while arguing his case *Against Leocrates* (101). He introduces the story within the context of his discussion of the importance of remaining faithful to oaths taken: "The power that keeps our democracy together is the oath" (79). In disobeying a decree prohibiting citizens from leaving Athens after the disaster at Chaeronia, Leocrates betrayed his city and broke the ephebic oath, maintains Lycurgus (77–79). But, as he reminds the jury, "your ancestors faced death to save the city from shame" (82). He then turns to the Euripidean tragedy and quotes at length the speech of Erechtheus's wife, Praxithea, who recounts how her daughter will be sacrificed to save Athens. She will soon see that her other two daughters remain loyal to their oath and die as well.

Until the 1960s, Lycurgus's speech preserved the largest surviving text of Euripides' dramatization of the story of the Athenian victory over Eumolpos. But in 1962, fragments of a papyrus recovered from the cartonnage of a Ptolemaic mummy in Paris doubled the number of lines known for the play.²⁵ This find presents an opportunity to question our previous understanding in light of new material and to test new evidence against our old assumptions. Of course, we can no more expect a text to explain the images than we could expect the images to illustrate a text. We must, however, look to the writings of the fifth century to help us reconstruct the contemporary climate, the attitudes and assumptions in which the images were created and received. In this effort, we can appeal to the Euripidean text, which so enriches our understanding of the myth of Erechtheus and

his family's role in the defeat of Eumolpos.²⁶ The play has been dated ca. 423–421 B.C.,²⁷ just 10 years after the completion of the Parthenon. Before the discovery of the papyrus, approximately 125 lines of the play were known, including the 55 lines quoted by Lycurgus (*Leoc.* 100 = fr. 360 N.²) and the 34 lines given by Stobaeus (3.3.18 = fr. 362 N.²). Sorbonne 2328 has added a further 120 lines. The total number of just under 250 lines represents about one-fifth or one-sixth of the whole play.²⁸

Let us take a fresh look at the frieze within the context of the story preserved in the *Erechtheus*, and thereby allow for a very different reading of the images, one that may find greater harmony with the sculptural program of the Parthenon as a whole.²⁹ Euripides' play is set in the heroic past when the city was threatened by Eumolpos, who claimed possession of Attica and rallied a large force of Thracians to help him take it for his own.³⁰ Eumolpos was the son of Poseidon, still bitter at having lost the patronage of Athens to Athena, whose gift of an olive tree bested his offering of a sea spring (Hdt. 8.55). The younger generation of mortal issues, Erechtheus and Eumolpos, find themselves continuing the rivalries of the divine older generation of Athena and Poseidon.

King Erechtheus consults the oracle at Delphi to learn how he might protect Athens from the impending siege, and is told that he must sacrifice his daughter to save the city. Now Erechtheus had three daughters and they had made an oath that if one should die the others would die as well. Erechtheus shares the bad news with his wife, Praxithea, who makes the stirring and civic-minded speech (fr. 360 N.² = fr. 50 Aust.) quoted by Lycurgus (*Leoc.* 100):

²⁵ The text was found at the same time as Menander's *Sikyonioides*: see "Secrets Cooked from a Mummy," *Life* (international edition, 3 December 1963) 89–90. The mummy from which the papyrus was removed was found at Medinet Ghoran (no. 24) and kept at the Institut de papyrologie of the Sorbonne; it has been dated to the third century B.C.

²⁶ C. Austin, "De nouveaux fragments de l'*Erechthée* d'Euripide," *Recherches de Papyrologie* 4 (Paris 1967) 11–67, pls. I–II; Austin (supra n. 24) 22–40; P. Carrara, *Euripide: Eretteo* (Florence 1977). See also the important discussion by R. Parker, "Myths of Early Athens," in J. Bremmer ed., *Interpretations of Greek Mythology* (London 1987) esp. 202–207 and now the new edition by M. Cropp in C. Collard et al. eds., *Euripides. Selected Fragmentary Plays I* (Warminster 1995) 148–94.

²⁷ 421 B.C. or before: Austin (supra n. 26) 17. 422 B.C.: W.M. Calder III, "The Date of Euripides' *Erechtheus*," *GRBS* 10 (1969) 147–56; C. Clairmont, "Euripides' *Erechtheus* and the Erechtheum," *GRBS* 12 (1971) 485–93; Calder, "Prof. Calder's Reply," *GRBS* 12 (1971) 493–95. 423 B.C.: Austin (supra n. 24) 22; M. Treu, "Der euripideische Erechtheus

als Zeugnis seiner Zeit," *Chiron* 1 (1971) 115–31; Carrara (supra n. 26) 13–17; R. Simms, "Eumolpos and the Wars of Athens," *GRBS* 24 (1983) 197–203. M. Cropp and G. Fick, *Resolutions and Chronology in Euripides: The Fragmentary Tragedies* (*BICS* suppl. 43, 1985) 78–80. For the dating of the play to ca. 412 B.C., see M.J. Vickers, "Persepolis, Vitruvius and the Erechtheum Caryatids: The Iconography of Medism and Servitude," *RA* 1985, 18. It must be stressed that the dating of this text is somewhat circular, based largely on the date of the Erechtheion. See now Cropp (supra n. 26) 155.

²⁸ As estimated by Colin Austin, to whom I am deeply indebted for generously sharing his insights on the play with me.

²⁹ J.B. Connolly, "The Parthenon Frieze and the Sacrifice of the Erechtheids: Reinterpreting the Peplos Scene," *AJA* 97 (1993) 309–10 (abstract).

³⁰ Euripides is the earliest extant source for the role of Thracians in this battle, Apollodoros (3.15.4) and others speak of Eleusinians alone; see *LIMC* IV, 923–51, s.v. Erechtheus (U. Kron).

(14) We have children on account of this, so that we may save the altars of the gods and the fatherland; the city has one name but many dwell in it. Is it right for me to destroy all these when it is possible for me to give one child to die on behalf of all? . . . (20) The ruin of one person's house is of less consequence and brings less grief than that of the whole city. If there were a harvest of sons in our house rather than daughters and a hostile flame were engulfing the city, would I not have sent my sons into battle, fearing for their death? . . . (30) I hate women who in preference to the common good, choose for their own children to live.

Erechtheus sacrifices his daughter, the battle ensues, and, as promised by the oracle, the Athenians are victorious. Erechtheus himself is swallowed up in the earth by a chasm caused by Poseidon.³¹ The precise means by which the other two daughters die is not preserved in the surviving fragments of the *Erechtheus*, but it is clear that they kept their oath and died as well (*Pap. Sorb.* 70–71). From the *Ion* (277–78), we can gather that Euripides envisioned all three sisters as being sacrificed by their father. When Ion asks Kreusa, “Is it true, or merely a tale, that your father killed your sisters in sacrifice?” she replies, “He dared to kill his maiden daughters as sacrifices (*sphagia*) for this land.”³² At the end of the *Erechtheus*, Athena appears to Praxithea, who has lost her daughters as well as her husband in the saving of the city. Athena's speech, preserved in *Pap. Sorbonne* 2328, contains critical information for the topography of the Acropolis and the rituals of Acropolis cults:

(65) And first I shall tell you about the girl whom your husband sacrificed for this land: bury her where she breathed out her pitiful life, and these sisters in the same tomb of the land, on account of their nobility, who dared not abandon their oaths to their dear sister. . . . (77) To my fellow townsmen I say not to forget them in time but with annual sacrifices and bull-slaying slaughters to honor them celebrating them with holy maiden-dances. . . . (83) make to these, before all others, a preliminary sacrifice before taking up the spear of war, not touching the wine-making grape nor pouring on the pyre anything other than the fruit of the hardworking bee together with river

water. . . . (90) And I bid you make a precinct for your husband in mid-city with stone peribolos. On account of his killer, Erechtheus will be called holy Poseidon and worshipped eponymously by the townsmen in cattle sacrifices. And for you, who reerected the foundations of this city, I grant, being called priestess to make burnt sacrifice at my altar on behalf of the city.

THE INTERPRETATION

What happens when we view the Parthenon frieze against the backdrop of this Euripidean story? The so-called “peplos scene” shows five individuals, a woman, a man, and three girls (fig. 1). The maiden shown second from left is slightly taller than the girl beside her, a point that has not been stressed previously but which holds importance for our reading.³³ The child at far right is considerably smaller than the two girls at left. Can the differentiation in size suggest differentiation in age? Three girls at three ages? Can we imagine this as a family group, including mother, father and three daughters?

The woman at center, who turns to the left to face the two adolescent girls, is generally identified as the priestess of Athena;³⁴ could she be the first priestess of Athena, Queen Praxithea herself? The bearded man behind her is sometimes identified as a priest, the priest of Poseidon Erechtheus,³⁵ and sometimes as the Archon Basileus.³⁶ Yet there is no literary or epigraphical evidence for the participation of either of these men in the culminating ritual of the Panathenaia. What is distinctive about this figure is that he wears a long ungirt tunic, the typical costume worn by priests, indeed by sacrificers, often shown with the knife of sacrifice in one hand.³⁷ Several fifth-century Attic funerary reliefs commemorating priests show figures that may well have been inspired by this Parthenonian image. These include a priest identified as Simos on an Attic grave relief (fig. 2) of late fifth/early fourth-century date³⁸ as well as the priest shown on a late fifth-century marble base (fig. 3), both in the Athens National Museum.³⁹ These priests share the same ungirt tunic and stand with contrapposto similar to that of the man on the

³¹ *Pap. Sorb.* 60, *Eur. Ion* 281–82.

³² Apollodoros (3.15.4), on the other hand, says that the two remaining sisters killed themselves.

³³ Noted by Boardman (*supra* n. 4) 41 and, again, J. Boardman, *Kanon: Festschrift Ernst Berger (AntK-BH 15, Basel 1988)* 10–11: “one is marginally shorter than the other” because, Boardman explains, she is carrying the priestess's stool and footstool rather than those of the priest. But only the shorter girl carries a footstool. Are we then to imagine that the priestess receives a stool with footstool while the priest gets only a stool?

³⁴ E. Simon, *Festivals of Attica* (Madison 1983) 67; Parke (*supra* n. 3) 40; Mansfield (*supra* n. 2) 291.

³⁵ Mansfield (*supra* n. 2) 291, 346.

³⁶ Simon (*supra* n. 34) 66; Boardman (*supra* n. 4) 41.

³⁷ Images listed by Brommer (*supra* n. 8) 268; compiled and illustrated by A. Mantis, *Προβλήματα της εικονογραφίας των Ιερείων και των Ιερέων στην αρχαία ελληνική τέχνη* (Athens 1990) 82–96; Athens NM 4502 base (pl. 37g), Athens NM 4495 (pl. 40a), Berlin 949 (pl. 36a), Athens NM 772, grave relief of Simos (pl. 38a).

³⁸ Athens NM 772; A. Conze, *Attische Grabreliefs* (Berlin 1893) 197, no. 920, pl. 181; Mantis (*supra* n. 37) pl. 38a.

³⁹ Athens NM 4502; S. Karouzou, *National Archaeological Museum: A Catalogue of Sculpture* (Athens 1968) 48. Mantis (*supra* n. 37) pl. 37g.

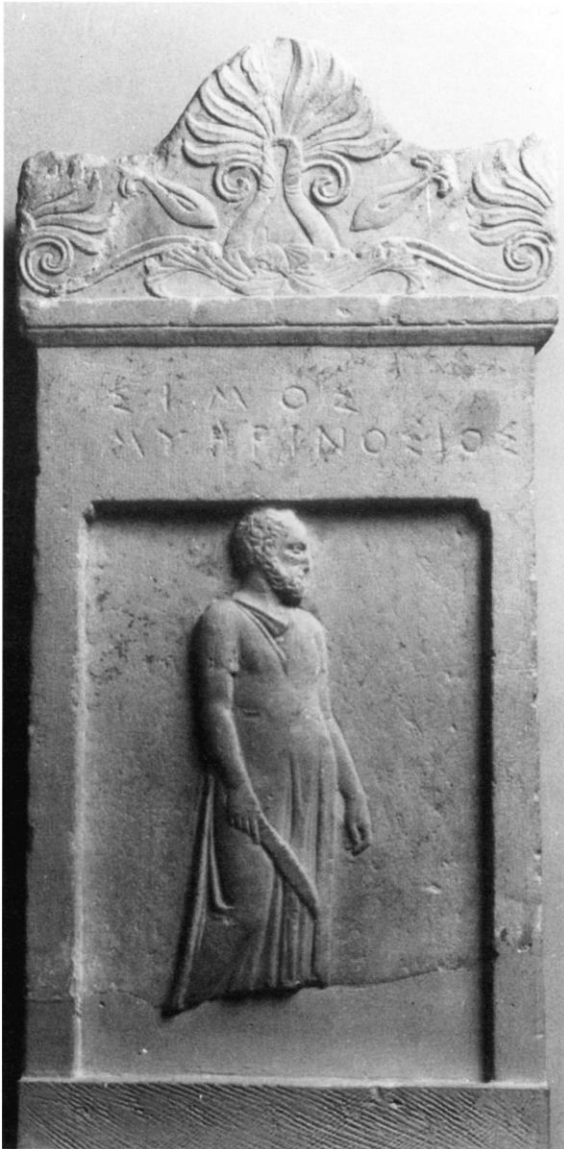


Fig. 2. Marble grave relief of priest named Simos, late fifth/early fourth century. Athens, National Museum 772. (Photo courtesy Museum)

east frieze, yet they are shown further along in their sacrifice, holding the knife at the ready.

The identity and sex of the child at right (fig. 4) are much debated. Stuart and Revett, the first com-



Fig. 3. Marble base showing priest, late fifth century. Athens, National Museum 4502. (Photo courtesy Museum)

mentators on the frieze, identified the figure as a girl.⁴⁰ Thereafter, the figure has generally been viewed as a boy, but Robertson has suggested that we have a girl here, citing the presence of Venus rings on the neck as a distinctly feminine trait.⁴¹ Boardman has followed Robertson in seeing a girl,⁴² based on comparative anatomy of masculine and feminine posteriors.⁴³ The field now stands rather evenly divided between scholars who see a boy and those who see a girl in this figure.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Stuart and Revett (*supra* n. 1) 12.

⁴¹ Robertson and Frantz (*supra* n. 2), discussion under fig. 4, East slab V 31–35; and Robertson (*supra* n. 2) 308.

⁴² Boardman (*supra* n. 3) 214 and (*supra* n. 4) 41.

⁴³ Boardman (*supra* n. 33) 9–11; and Boardman, "The Naked Truth," *OJA* 10 (1991) 119–21.

⁴⁴ Just a small sampling includes those who see a boy: Brommer (*supra* n. 8) 269–70, n. 137, table p. 264; Simon

(*supra* n. 34); Parke (*supra* n. 3) 41; E. Harrison, "Time in the Parthenon Frieze," in Berger (*supra* n. 3) 234; C. Clairmont, "Girl or Boy? Parthenon East Frieze 35," *AA* 1989, 495–96; Kardara (*supra* n. 13); and those who see a girl: Robertson (*supra* n. 2); Boardman (*supra* n. 3); J.G. Pedley, *Greek Art and Archaeology* (London 1992) 246; A. Stewart, *Greek Sculpture* (New Haven 1990) 155, 157; and Mansfield (*supra* n. 2) 293–94.



Fig. 4. Parthenon, east frieze, detail of child, slab V. (Courtesy British Museum)

⁴⁵ I thank Gloria Ferrari Pinney for this insight. Cf. red-figure krater in Bari, Museo Civico 4979, ARV² 236.4, illustrated in C. Bérard et al., *La cité des images* (Paris 1984) fig. 127.

⁴⁶ Brommer (supra n. 8) 269–70 sees the child as the temple boy responsible for the holy snake. Simon (supra n. 34) 66 sees the child as the *παῖς ἀμφιθαλής*. Jenkins (supra n. 16) 35, thinking the child is a boy, points to the example of Ion who acts as temple servant to Apollo in Euripides' tragedy. Of course, as a male deity, Apollo was served by boy temple servants. The notion that Athena would be similarly served by a little boy in the ritual of the Panathenaia is completely out of keeping with Greek cult practice, which would demand that she be served by girls and women.

⁴⁷ A point made by M. Robertson, *A Shorter History of Greek Art* (Cambridge 1981) 100: "a girl seems more in keeping with the make-up of the front of the procession: the

I would emphasize that it matters little whether this figure *looks* to the modern eye like a girl or a boy. Archaic and Classical Greek artists were so unused to depicting the female nude that when confronted with this challenge they relied on what they knew best: the male nude. This accounts for why so many nude women in Archaic vase painting are endowed with athletic, masculine-looking bodies.⁴⁵

We will not find the answer to the problem of the child's sex through anatomical analysis. Only context will provide the necessary clues. Those who see a boy must construct an unattested situation in which a temple boy participated in the culminating ritual of the Panathenaia.⁴⁶ Indeed, within the context of Greek ritual, which generally has female sacerdotal servants ministering to the cults of female divinities, *especially* in the case of virgin goddesses, it would be surprising to find males involved so prominently in the most sacred rite.⁴⁷ After all, wool for the peplos has been washed and carded by virgin hands, and women and young girls have been responsible for the warping and weaving of the peplos.⁴⁸ Within the context of what we know of Greek ritual, male hands might even be perceived as contaminating, hardly appropriate for touching the dress of the virgin goddess.⁴⁹

Those who see the child as a girl usually identify her as one of the *arrephoroi*, the 7–11-year-old girls who participated in the warping and weaving of the peplos.⁵⁰ Yet the *arrephoroi* are always mentioned as acting in pairs, two or four together,⁵¹ and this child is alone, shown without a partner.

When viewed in relationship to the story of the Erechtheides, this child may be seen as the youngest daughter of King Erechtheus, about to be sacrificed at the hand of her father, who is dressed as a priest for the event. Apollodoros (3.15.4) tells us that Erech-

peplos was essentially girls' business." See also Mansfield (supra n. 2) 243; J.A. Turner, *Hieria: The Acquisition of Feminine Priesthoods* (Diss. Univ. of California, Santa Barbara 1983); H. McClees, *A Study of Women in Attic Inscriptions* (Diss. Columbia Univ. 1920); J.B. Connelly, *Women and Ritual: Priestesses in Greek Art and Society* (Cambridge, forthcoming) ch. 1.

⁴⁸ Members of the Praxiergidai clan alone were allowed to decorate the statue of Athena Polias. *IG I³, 7*, dated ca. 460–450 B.C.; Mansfield (supra n. 2) 398–404. The inscription is not specific about whether these are male or female members of the clan.

⁴⁹ Boardman (supra n. 3) 214.

⁵⁰ Mansfield (supra n. 2) 294.

⁵¹ Harpocration speaks of four *arrephoroi*, Harp. A 239, Keaney (quoting Dinarchus fr. VI 4 Conomis). Pausanias (1.27.3) speaks of two *arrephoroi*.

theus sacrificed his youngest daughter first.⁵² Is the girl's garment open, revealing her nude body, because she is in the process of changing her clothes; about to strip out of her daily clothes and put on her funerary dress? Clairmont is surely right in arguing that a girl would never be shown with her backside casually exposed at the culminating sacred moment of the Panathenaic procession.⁵³ Our reading shows that this partial nudity is not accidental but *intentional*; its motivation lies in anticipating the impending act of changing the clothes for sacrifice. Thus, simultaneous narrative condenses present and future action into a single image.

Greek tragedy gives us a number of examples in which virgins of noble birth are sacrificed.⁵⁴ Often they are daughters of the king, usually they are sacrificed to ensure victory in war,⁵⁵ and with remarkable frequency, their death scenes include details concerning their dresses. Agamemnon's sacrifice of his daughter Iphigeneia enabled the Greek fleet to set sail from Aulis to Troy. The lines in Aeschylus's *Agamemnon* (228–43) describing Iphigeneia with πέπλοισι περιπετή (“wrapped round in her robes”) have been the source of endless discussion in critical commentaries.⁵⁶ So, too, have been the lines that follow, discussing Iphigeneia's *krokotos*, the saffron robe, “falling to the ground,” or “hanging down toward the ground.”⁵⁷ Regardless of the various arguments over readings and translations, it is of importance that Iphigeneia's costume receives such focused attention in this scene.

In Euripides' version of the story, presented in his

Iphigeneia at Aulis, the princess, thinking she was on her way to her wedding, was dressed as a bride. She first begs for her life, but later goes willingly to sacrifice, reminding her distraught mother that in doing so she will save Hellas: “You bore me for all the Greeks, not yourself alone” (line 1,386) she tells Clytemnestra, reiterating the sentiment of Praxithea that, just as boys go to war, girls go to sacrifice, both for the good of the polis.

Euripides first takes up the theme of human sacrifice in his *Herakleidae*; here, a virgin must be sacrificed to save Athens from the attacking forces of Argos. Makaria, daughter of Herakles, valiantly volunteers, maintaining that if the Athenian soldiers are willing to die on her behalf she should be ready to die on theirs. The death of Polyxena, daughter of King Priam, was treated in Euripides' *Hecuba* as well as in Sophocles' lost *Polyxena*. Both plays deal with the costuming of the princess at the moment of her sacrifice at the hands of the Greeks. In the *Hecuba* (lines 563–65), Polyxena grasps her peplos at the shoulder and strips it down to her waist, offering Neoptolemos the choice of cutting her chest, as he would kill a man, or slitting her throat, as he would sacrifice an animal. The Sophoclean fragment (526 R.) refers to a χιτῶν ἄπειρος, which may be Polyxena's “endless” or “all-enveloping” chiton.⁵⁸ Interestingly, similar wording is used to describe Agamemnon's costume when Clytemnestra kills him in sacrificial ritual fashion in the Aeschylean tragedy named for him (*Ag.* 1,382). A scholiast says that this fatal garment gave no exit to head and arms.⁵⁹

⁵² The sources give conflicting accounts. Phanodemos (*FGrHist* 325 F 4 = Photius, *Suda*, s.v. *Parthenoi*) names Pandora and Protogeneia as those who died. Hyginus (*Fab.* 46.238) says that Chthonia was sacrificed to Poseidon and the other sisters killed themselves, yet Apollodoros (3.15) has Chthonia as a survivor who went on to marry Boutes. Ps.-Demaratus (*FGrHist* 42 F 4) says that the *eldest* daughter was sacrificed to Persephone.

⁵³ Clairmont (supra n. 44) 495.

⁵⁴ The bibliography on human sacrifice, and specifically virgin sacrifice, continues to grow. A selection of central works on the subject includes F. Schwenn, *Die Menschenopfer bei den Griechen und Römern* (Giessen 1915) 130–33; A. Henrichs, “Human Sacrifice in Greek Religion: Three Case Studies,” in J. Rudhardt and O. Reverdin eds., *Le sacrifice dans l'antiquité* (*EntrHardt* 27, Geneva 1980) 195–235; H. Foley, *Ritual Irony: Poetry and Sacrifice in Euripides* (Ithaca 1985) 21; J. Wilkins, “The State and the Individual: Euripides' Plays of Voluntary Self-Sacrifice,” in A. Powell ed., *Euripides, Women and Sexuality* (London 1990) 177–94; D.D. Hughes, *Human Sacrifice in Ancient Greece* (New York 1991) 73–94; P. Bonnechère, *Le sacrifice humain en Grèce ancienne* (*Kernos* suppl. 3, Liège 1994).

⁵⁵ E. Kearns, “Saving the City,” in Murray and Price

(supra n. 19) 323–44.

⁵⁶ H. Lloyd-Jones, “The Robes of Iphigeneia,” *CR* 2 (1952) 132–35 = *Greek Epic, Lyric and Tragedy: Collected Papers* (Oxford 1990) 300–304 argues for the reading “with her arms flung about his robes.” P. Maas, “Aeschylus, *Agam.* 231ff., Illustrated,” *CQ* 1 (1951) 94 = *Kleine Schriften* (Munich 1973) 42 looks to the Tyrrhenian amphora discussed below (fig. 5), which shows the robes “wrapped around” the victim Iphigeneia. See also E. Fraenkel, *Agamemnon* II (Oxford 1950) 134.

⁵⁷ Lloyd-Jones (supra n. 56); T.J. Hooker, “The Sacrifice of Iphigeneia in the *Agamemnon*,” *Agon* 1/2 (1968) 59–65; C. Sourvinou-Inwood, “*Lysistrata* 641–47,” *CQ* 21 (1971) 339 and Sourvinou-Inwood, *Studies in Girls' Transitions* (Athens 1988) 136–48.

⁵⁸ Alternatively, it might be the chiton in which Clytemnestra wrapped Agamemnon. A.C. Pearson, *The Fragments of Sophocles* II (Cambridge 1917) 167–68.

⁵⁹ E. Fraenkel, *Aeschylus, Agamemnon, Commentary* III (Oxford 1950) 649 note on *Ag.* 1,386. I thank Edward Hussey for drawing my attention to the use of the term ἄπειρος by Aristotle (*Ph.* 3.4, 204.4–6), who explicitly recognized it to mean “difficult or impossible to get out of.”



Fig. 5. Tyrrhenian amphora by the Timiades Painter, ca. 570–560. London, British Museum 1897.7-27.2. (Photo courtesy Museum)

A sixth-century B.C. Tyrrhenian amphora (fig. 5) shows Polyxena in the course of being sacrificed; she is wrapped with her arms inside an all-enveloping and elaborately woven peplos.⁶⁰ Here, the iconography of virgin sacrifice seems to borrow from the iconography of animal sacrifice as shown on a black-figure amphora in Viterbo (fig. 6).⁶¹ Just as the bull is carried horizontally by a group of men and slit at the throat, so Polyxena is hoisted horizontally and cut across the neck. We are reminded of the action described in the *Agamemnon* (lines 231–33) for the sacrifice of Iphigeneia in which the maiden is raised “as a kid, above the altar.” Just as one decorates an animal victim for sacrifice, complete with the wrapping of ribbons or fillets around the horns, so too one dresses up a virgin for sacrifice in beautifully woven garments, similar to bridal costume.

Seaford has elucidated the centrality of the dressing ritual within the funerary rite and the significance of this imagery in Greek tragedy.⁶² In the funeral ritual, the bathed corpse is adorned with its *kosmos*: a crown and a long garment (previously unworn?).⁶³ Characters going to their deaths are portrayed as changing (either willingly or unknowingly) into their funerary costume. Before going to her

death, Alcestis washes her white body and adorns herself in garments and ornaments taken from her cedar chest (Eur. *Alc.* 160). Dionysos (Eur. *Bacch.* 857–58)⁶⁴ dresses Pentheus in the robe that he will wear to Hades. Inverting the funeral ritual in which the loving wife cares for the corpse of her husband, Clytemnestra bathes and dresses Agamemnon *before* he dies at her own hand in sacrificial ritual fashion.⁶⁵ Melanippe (Eur. *Mel. S.* 665a Mette 14–15) is instructed to dress her infants in funeral clothes before they are sacrificed, just as is Ino (Hyg. *Fab.* 4).

Maidens who die before marriage are buried in their wedding kosmos,⁶⁶ and girls who go to their deaths dress in advance in their bridal/funeral robes. Iphigeneia was adorned in her marriage costume (Eur. *IA* 1,087), including *stephane* (line 1,080), when she was sacrificed at Aulis. As Makaria goes off to be killed, she asks Iolaos to veil her with peploi (Eur. *Herakl.* 561–62). Antigone is very much the bride as she heads for that ambiguous place that is either her “grave or marriage chamber” (Soph. *Ant.* 891) and Cassandra (Eur. *Tro.* 308–461), leaving Troy dressed as a bride for Agamemnon, is, in fact, dressing for death. Underscoring the ambiguity of bridal and funeral costume, Medea (Eur. *Med.* 980–84) sends Jason’s

⁶⁰ London, British Museum 1897.7-27.2, by the Timiades Painter; H.B. Walters, “On Some Black-Figured Vases Recently Acquired by the British Museum,” *JHS* 18 (1898) 285, pl. 15; A.J.N.W. Prag, *The Oresteia: Iconography and Narrative* (Warminster 1985) 62, pl. 41.

⁶¹ Viterbo Museum; Bérard et al. (supra n. 45) fig. 83; G. Barbieri and J.-L. Durand, “Con il bue a spalla,” *BdA* 29 (1985) 1–16.

⁶² R. Seaford, “The Last Bath of Agamemnon,” *CQ* 34

(1984) 247–54.

⁶³ Seaford (supra n. 62) 249–50 cites M. Alexiou, *The Ritual Lament in Greek Tradition* (Cambridge 1974) 27, 39.

⁶⁴ R. Seaford, “Dionysiac Drama and the Dionysiac Mysteries,” *CQ* 31 (1981) 260–61.

⁶⁵ Seaford (supra n. 62) 250–54.

⁶⁶ Ensuring that they will be in perpetuity the brides of Hades? See Alexiou (supra n. 63) 5, 27, 39, 120.

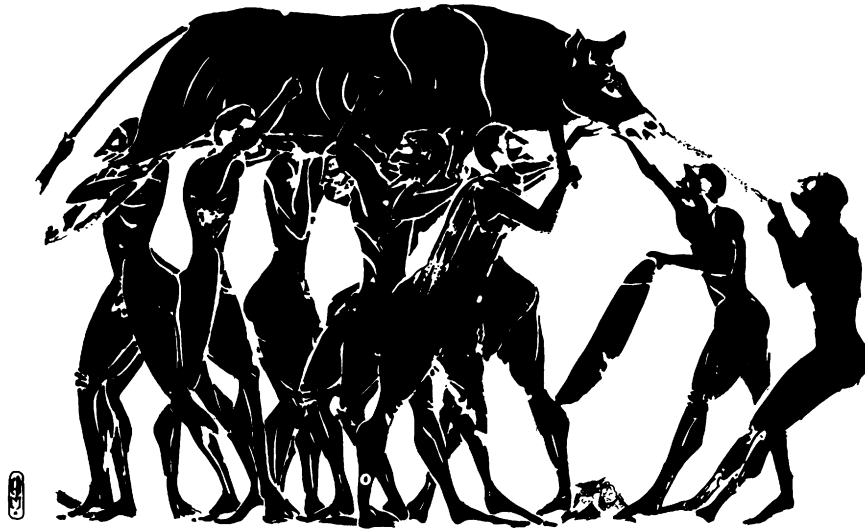


Fig. 6. Black-figure amphora. Group E, ca. 540. Viterbo, Viterbo Museum. (Drawing G.M. Peters, after C. Bérard et al., *La cité des images* [Paris 1984] 55, fig. 83)

bride a stephane. It is within this context that we should view the dressing scene shown on the Parthenon's east frieze as a kosmos before sacrifice. Just as Antigone, Iphigeneia, and Cassandra go to their death as brides, so too the little Erechtheid is adorned for sacrifice in her bridal/funerary robes.

The two older girls at the left of the scene have never fitted well into the Panathenaic interpretation; while some have identified them as the arrephoroi, others see the figures as too mature to represent the 7–11-year-olds who held the post.⁶⁷ Traditional interpretations regard the girls as sacerdotal servants carrying stools with cushions. It is imagined that these two stools are meant for the Priestess and the Archon Basileus to sit down, perhaps to join the assembly of the gods at either side of the central scene.⁶⁸ But how and why? Can mortals join a group of invisible

immortals?⁶⁹ Why should the mortals have seat cushions on their stools when all but two of the gods (Dionysos and Artemis) do not? And are these really seat cushions?

Examples from vase painting show that clothes are often stored or transported on low stools. An Apulian pelike in the Ashmolean Museum shows a mantle resting on a stool.⁷⁰ A red-figure oinochoe by the Meidias Painter (fig. 7) shows women perfuming their elaborately woven clothes suspended above the burning scents on a swinging stool.⁷¹ An amphora by Exekias (fig. 8) shows a serving boy bringing a fresh mantle for Polydeukes, who is returning home after an exploit.⁷² In its original state, the Parthenon frieze would have been painted and the objects resting on the stools may have been more clearly read as folded fabric⁷³ with creases and irregularities

⁶⁷ For the view that they are arrephoroi, see Deubner (supra n. 2) 12–13; Simon (supra n. 34) 67; and E. Simon, "Die Mittelszene im Ostfries des Parthenon," *AM* 97 (1982) 128. Boardman (supra n. 33) 10–11 believes the girls are too old to be arrephoroi, pointing out that it is doubtful that an 11-year-old would wear peplos and himation. But see Sourvinou-Inwood 1988 (supra n. 57) 58–59 who believes the images do fit the representation of this age group.

⁶⁸ Simon (supra n. 34) 68 and (supra n. 67) 142–43 sees the stools as meant for Pandrosos and Ge Kourotropfos. A. Furtwängler, *Meisterwerke der griechischen Plastik* (Berlin 1893) 427–30, maintained that the stools were for Athena's meal, suggesting a sort of Theoxenia, a symbolic invitation for the gods to be present. B. Ashmole, *Architect and Sculptor in Classical Greece* (New York 1972) 143 questioned this explanation, allowing that "though possible," it "is not entirely satisfactory and a little strange."

⁶⁹ Holloway (supra n. 3) 224 discusses "the difficult problem of a divine audience in the midst of a human festival."

⁷⁰ Ashmolean Museum, Oxford G 269; G.M.A. Richter, *The Furniture of the Greeks, Etruscans and Romans* (London 1966) 221.

⁷¹ Metropolitan Museum of Art 75.2.11, gift of S.G. Ward, 1875; *ARV* 1313.11; *Paralipomena* 477; *Beazley Addenda* 180; L. Burn, *The Meidias Painter* (Oxford 1987) 98, M 12, pl. 52b.

⁷² Vatican Museum 344; *ABV* 145.13; J.D. Beazley, *The Development of Attic Black-Figure*² (Berkeley 1986) 61. We see the folded fabric in the profile view here, thus one end is rounded and the other is straight, showing the two ends. Were we to view the serving boy and his burden from the front, as is the case with the girls on the Parthenon frieze, the bundle of fabric would, indeed, appear rounded and cushion-like, as is the case with the folded fabric carried upon the girls' stools.

⁷³ Ashmole (supra n. 68) 143; Robertson (supra n. 9) 56; and H. von Heintze, "Athena Polias am Parthenon," *Gymnasium* 100 (1993) 385–418 have all suggested that what is shown here is folded fabric rather than cushions.



Fig. 7. Red-figure oinochoe by the Meidias Painter, ca. 420–410. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art 75.2.11, gift of Samuel G. Ward, 1875. (Photo courtesy Museum)

painted on – indeed, folded funerary cloths. It is not clear whether we are to understand these dresses as belonging individually to the two girls who carry them, or whether they are all intended as part of the elaborate funerary kosmos of the youngest sister, at far right.

With this new reading we have three girls preparing for death. The youngest girl goes first, so her funerary dress is being unfolded; the oldest daughter, second from left, is in the process of handing down a stool to her mother. The daughter at far left stands frontally, with a garment still folded and resting on the stool on her head. In her left arm she carries an object, now very badly damaged and difficult to read. At its lower right, traces of what may be a lion's-paw foot⁷⁴ have led to the object's identification as a footstool.⁷⁵

Erika Simon has argued that the object is not a footstool but instead an incense box or small chest,⁷⁶ objects that are known to show lion's-paw feet,⁷⁷ as on a pyxis in the British Museum (fig. 9).⁷⁸ These objects are generally shown held or cradled in one arm with the hand supporting the box from beneath, just like the object held by the girl in the Parthenon frieze. Consistent with this reading of the



Fig. 8. Black-figure amphora by Exekias, ca. 540. Vatican City, Vatican Museum 344. (Photo courtesy Museum)

episode as a dressing scene just prior to sacrifice is the identification of this object as a chest for holding the jewelry with which the victim will be adorned. A pyxis in Paris⁷⁹ (fig. 10) shows iconographic schemata for the dressing scene that may be recognized in the central image of the Parthenon frieze: the displaying of the dress about to be put on and the accompanying jewelry box, complete with lion's-paw feet. In recounting the story of the death of the little

⁷⁴ Seen by D.B. Thompson, in S.S. Weinberg ed., *The Aegean and the Near East. Studies Presented to Hetty Goldman* (Locust Valley, N.Y. 1956) 290 supported by Jeppesen (supra n. 14) 27, 31, fig. 7; and Boardman (supra n. 4) 41, pl. 16.4.

⁷⁵ As already seen in Furtwängler (supra n. 68) 186.

⁷⁶ Simon (supra n. 34) 67 and Simon (supra n. 67) 141.

⁷⁷ Richter (supra n. 70) 72–74 has shown that lion's-paw

feet are introduced as an innovation on chests and boxes of fifth-century date. For discussion and many illustrations of boxes showing lion's-paw feet, see E. Brümmer, "Griechische Truhenbehalter," *JdI* 100 (1985) 1–162.

⁷⁸ London, British Museum E 774; ARV² 1250.32[25].

⁷⁹ Paris, Louvre CA 587; ARV² 1094.104[79].



Fig. 9. Red-figure pyxis, Eretria Painter, ca. 440–430. London, British Museum E 774. (Photo courtesy Museum)

Erechtheid, Aristides (I 87, pp. 37–38, L.B.) tells us: “and her mother, dressing her up, led her just as if she were sending her to a spectacle.”

Similarly, scenes from vase paintings depicting Andromeda, tied up for sacrifice to a sea-dragon, regularly include small chests or boxes as indicators of the dressing ritual that preceded the central action.⁸⁰ A red-figure pelike of mid-fifth century date shows a black attendant approaching Andromeda; upon his head and shoulders he supports a folding stool on which is carried a small chest (fig. 11).⁸¹ The chest rests atop what may be a cushion or, alternatively, a clean and carefully folded fabric, the very elements depicted on the Parthenon frieze. Hoffman has suggested that the box represents Andromeda’s wedding trousseau. On the opposite side, another black attendant carries in more preparatory paraphernalia, including a second chest and an alabastron or perfume jar. Here, Andromeda’s



Fig. 10. Red-figure pyxis, Painter of the Louvre Centauromachy, ca. 430. Paris, Musée du Louvre CA 587. (Photo M. Chuzeville, courtesy Musée du Louvre)

⁸⁰ See, e.g., London, British Museum E 169; *ARV*² 1062.1681; *LIMC* I, 776 no. 3, s.v. Andromeda (K. Schauenberg); and Taranto, Museo Nazionale 8925, *LIMC* I, 777 no. 17, s.v. Andromeda (K. Schauenberg).

⁸¹ Boston, Museum of Fine Arts 63.2663; *Paralipomena* 448; *LIMC* I, 776 no. 2, s.v. Andromeda (K. Schauenberg); H. Hoffman, *BMFA* 61 (1963) 109; J.R. Green, “Depicting the Theatre in Classical Athens,” *GRBS* 32 (1991) 42–44.



Fig. 11. Red-figure pelike, Workshop of the Niobid Painter, ca. 460. Boston, Museum of Fine Arts 63.2663, Arthur Tracy Cabot Fund. (Photo courtesy Museum)

saddened father, King Cepheus, can be seen gravely supervising the preparations for the sacrifice of his daughter, just as does King Erechtheus on the Parthenon frieze. The ambiguity of the tragic property is evidenced here as on the frieze, where the preparatory ritual is equally appropriate for a bride as for the dead.⁸²

Both on the frieze and on the Boston pelike, we are shown the anticipatory moment just prior to the

climax. This is in keeping with the conventions of High Classical art, just as in Greek tragedy the actual sacrifice takes place offstage. It is instructive to consider the decorative program of the Parthenon sculptures in relationship to the program of the Temple of Zeus at Olympia, the most comparable monument in size and ambitions to immediately precede it. Here, too, the foundation myth for the local cult and games is featured on the most prominent end, that is, the *east* end just above the door.⁸³ At Olympia, the story is told in the pediment rather than the frieze but here, too, we have the royal family standing in a solemn line, at the anticipatory moment prior to the high action. Without Pausanias's description (5.10.6–7) of the scene as the preparation for the chariot race of Pelops and Oenomaos, we might never guess who was who among the dignified and somber figures, or catch the subtle reference to the impending action, only hinted at in the crouching figure beside the chariot wheel. This preference for depicting the anticipatory moment is contrary to the conventions of sixth-century art, for which we saw the climactic, bloody moment of Polyxena's death (fig. 5). The fact that the Parthenon frieze does not show the knife of sacrifice or the altar upon which the sacrifice will take place is not disturbing but perhaps to be expected.⁸⁴

As with the composition of the east pediment at Olympia, the family group shown on the Parthenon's east frieze seems to have been created for a specific sculptural context; neither group has direct iconographic predecessors or parallels. The Athenian viewer would, however, have been familiar with the depiction of cohesive family groups, both divine and heroic, from vase painting and sculpture, particularly from votive reliefs.⁸⁵ The Parthenon's family group is distinctive for its large number of female members; parents shown with *three* daughters would have

⁸² I thank Richard Seaford for drawing my attention to these images as well as for many stimulating discussions.

⁸³ M.-L. Säflund, *The East Pediment of the Temple of Zeus at Olympia* (SIMA 27, Göteborg 1970); J. Hurwit, "Narrative Resonance in the East Pediment of the Temple of Zeus at Olympia," *ArtB* 69 (1987) 6–15.

⁸⁴ We have very few examples of the depiction of human sacrifice in Greek art. It is an extraordinary subject, appropriate only in extraordinary contexts. Perhaps one of the reasons that the so-called "peplos scene" has remained such a puzzle is that it shows an extraordinary event for which no standard iconography exists. Examples can be cited from fourth-century South Italian vase painting, but these are highly influenced by the stagecraft of Greek theater. For the pre-Parthenon period, we are hard pressed to find parallels. The Boston pelike discussed above gives the very few Greek versions of the tying of Andromeda:

Hoffman (supra n. 81) 109. Douris's white-ground lekythos, Palermo Museo Nazionale N1 1886, ARV² 446.226; *Beazley Addenda*² 401 (ca. 470 B.C.), with the sacrifice of Iphigeneia, does show a knife and an altar, as the moment depicted is later than that shown for the girl on the Parthenon frieze; here the action occurs following Iphigeneia's bridal kosmos. A few isolated examples, however, do not make for standardized iconographic schemata for the subject. Indeed, the images hardly seem to represent human sacrifice as a "subject" but, rather, they tell the individual stories of specific maidens in their unique tragic circumstances.

⁸⁵ See, e.g., the divine family group from Brauron: L. Kahil, "Le relief des dieux du Sanctuaire d'Artemis à Brauron: Essai d'interprétation," in J.-P. Descoedres ed., *Eumousia: Ceramic and Iconographic Studies in Honour of Alexander Cambitoglou* (*MeditArch* suppl. 1, Sydney 1990) 113–17.

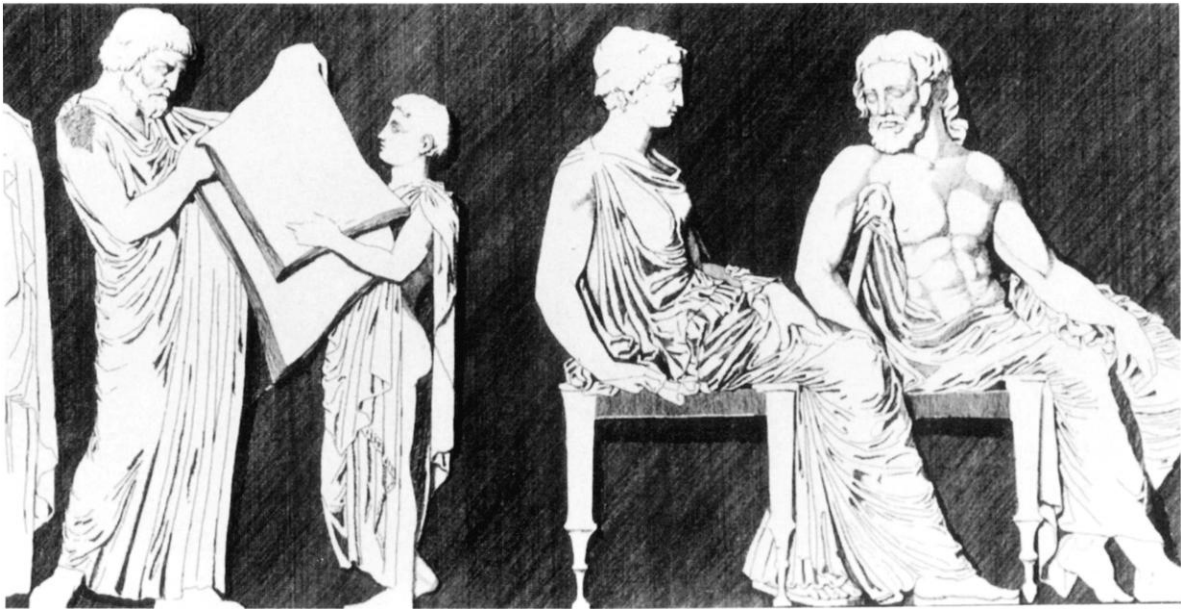


Fig. 12. Parthenon, east frieze, slab VI. (After J. Stuart and N. Revett, *The Antiquities of Athens* 2 [London 1787] pl. 24)

immediately signaled to the viewer that it is the Athenian royal family shown here.⁸⁶

Moving out from the central scene there are further problems with the traditional Panathenaic interpretation. Why do the gods take no notice of what is understood to be the culminating event of the Panathenaic procession (fig. 12)?⁸⁷ Indeed, if the central scene shows the presentation of the peplos to Athena, why does the goddess appear to be so indifferent to the action taking place behind her back? In light of the new interpretation, the gods may face away from the sacrifice intentionally, as it is unseemly for gods to watch mortals die. In Euripides' *Alcestis* (line 22), Apollo must leave while Alcestis dies, "lest pollution taint me in this house."⁸⁸ So, too, in his *Hippolytos*, Artemis makes it clear that she must not watch the death of Theseus's son: "Farewell: it is not lawful for me to gaze upon the dead, nor to stain my eye at the dying gasps of mortals, and now I see that you are near the end" (lines 1,437–39).⁸⁹ Similarly, in the comic poet's dream described in Aelian fr. 11 H. (= Philemo, test. 6 K.A.), the nine Muses

must leave the poet's house before he dies, as it is not θεμιτόν for them to remain.⁹⁰

The assembly of gods may also serve to frame the central scene, to separate it in time and space from the great procession approaching from the other three sides of the temple. The central scene may thus be read as a sort of flashback to the original foundation sacrifice of the royal family, now deified, and taking their rightful places among the gods. The great procession can then be viewed as that of the first commemorative sacrifice in honor of Erechtheus and his daughters, as ordained by Athena herself. Thus, the mythical human sacrifice is separated by the gods from the thanksgiving sacrifice as performed by the Athenians following their victory over Eumolpos.

Situated on either side of the assembly of gods are groups of men followed by groups of maidens. The identity of the male figures has been the subject of much debate; so too has been the number of men counted as part of the main group, rather than as marshals directing the procession.⁹¹ When counted as 10, the men are generally taken to be the Epony-

⁸⁶ Viewed as a royal family group, the central figures of the Parthenon frieze may provide a further parallel to the program of Apadana at Persepolis, which shows the king and crown prince at the center of the relief program; see M.C. Root, "The Parthenon Frieze and the Apadana Reliefs at Persepolis: Reassessing a Programmatic Relationship," *AJA* 89 (1985) 103–20. I thank Homer Thompson for his insights on these points.

⁸⁷ J.E. Harrison, "Some Points in Dr. Furtwängler's Theories on the Parthenon and Its Marbles," *CR* 9 (1895) 91.

⁸⁸ I thank Mabel Lang for this reference.

⁸⁹ I thank Emily Vermeule for drawing my attention to this passage.

⁹⁰ I am indebted to Colin Austin for this example.

⁹¹ Generally identified as the Eponymous Heroes and counted as six men on the south side of the gods (18–23) and four men on the north (43–46) with additional men seen as marshals. For summary of discussion and bibliography, see Brommer (supra n. 8) 255–56, ns. 14 and 19. See also S. Woodford, "Eponymoi or anonymoi," *Notes on the History of Art* 6:4 (1987) 1–5.

mous Heroes;⁹² when counted as nine they have been identified as the archons of Athens.⁹³ One scholar who counts nine sees the men as the *athlothetai* with the 10th, identified as Pericles himself, positioned in the so-called “peplos scene” of the central slab.⁹⁴ The men have also been identified as lesser Athenian deities⁹⁵ and as generic citizens.⁹⁶ If their identification as the Eponymous Heroes were correct, we could see nine heroes positioned either side of the gods with the 10th, Erechtheus, shown in the central “peplos scene.”⁹⁷

It seems just as plausible, however, that these men represent generic elders, the male citizenry of Athens, shown assembled beside the groups of maidens who may well include their daughters and sisters. The juxtaposition of fathers and daughters could evoke a reference to the special relationship of King Erechtheus and his daughters, who participated so fully in the saving of the city and who are featured in the central slabs of this same side. Viewed in relationship to the newly enacted Periclean Citizenship Law of 451/0 (Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 26.4; Plut. *Vit. Per.* 37.3), the juxtaposition of men and maidens may lay emphasis on the importance of purity in the Athenian bloodline, now required on the matrilineal as well as on the patrilineal side.⁹⁸

The maidens have, surprisingly, received little attention, though they dominate the east frieze in numbers, 13 at the north and 16 at the south.⁹⁹ It should be stressed that these female figures are featured in a place of great prominence, on the *east* end of the temple, over the door and roughly opposite the great altar. They seem to march in pairs and carry ritual implements including libation bowls, jugs, and incense burners. Could they represent the “holy groups of parthenoi” that Athena (*Pap. Sorb.* 80) instructs Praxithea to establish in memory of her daughters? The establishment of these maiden groups is no small matter and should be viewed as a highly significant and dominant feature within the ritual that Athena is ordaining. These could be the original young women who participated in the mystic vigil of the Panathenaia, the Pannychis, in which they sang the shrill prayers, the *ololugmata*, on the “windy mountain ridge” (Eur. *Heracl.* 781) of the Acropolis itself.¹⁰⁰ We can see in them the legendary girls who joined the young men in song and dance on the eve of the Panathenaia, as “the moon waned.”¹⁰¹

Moving out to the north and south friezes at their eastern ends, we come to the participants in the sacrificial procession. The traditional interpretation as a fifth-century Panathenaia has been somewhat frus-

⁹² Brommer (supra n. 8) 255–56. Attempts to name individual heroes have been undertaken by E.B. Harrison, “The Iconography of the Eponymous Heroes on the Parthenon and in the Agora,” *Greek Numismatics and Archaeology: Essays in Honor of Margaret Thompson* (Wetteren 1979) 71–85; U. Kron, *Die zehn attischen Phylenheroen: Geschichte, Mythos, Kult und Darstellungen* (AM-BH 5, Berlin 1976) 202–14; and Kron, “Die Phylenheroen am Parthenonfries,” in Berger (supra n. 3) 235–44. See also E. Pemberton, “The Gods of the East Frieze of the Parthenon,” *AJA* 80 (1976) 114.

⁹³ I.D. Jenkins, “The Composition of the So-Called Eponymous Heroes on the East Frieze of the Parthenon,” *AJA* 89 (1985) 121–27.

⁹⁴ B. Nagy, “Athenian Officials on the Parthenon Frieze,” *AJA* 96 (1992) 67–69.

⁹⁵ A.E. Raubitschek, *Opus Nobile* (Wiesbaden 1969) 129.

⁹⁶ Ridgway (supra n. 8) 78–79.

⁹⁷ The counting and naming of these men is a very subjective enterprise, as the so-called marshals can be counted or eliminated to produce the number of heroes desired. Since the Eponymous Heroes date back only to 508 B.C., we might expect this group to show an older assembly, perhaps even kings. We could just as well try to support our argument by seeing a group of 11 men (18–23 and 43–47) with Erechtheus (34) making the 12 kings: Kekrops (43), Kranaos (44), Amphictyon (45), Erichthonios (46), Pandion (47), [Erechtheus (34)], Kekrops II (18), Pandion II (19), Aegeus (20), Theseus (21), Menesthenes (22), and Demaphon (23). As this does not seem to strengthen any overall interpretation, we will not participate in the counting and naming. I thank Mabel Lang for discussing this problem with me and for offering the list of kings.

⁹⁸ C. Patterson, *Pericles' Citizenship Law of 451–50 BC.* (New York 1981); A. Boegehold, “Perikles' Citizenship Law of 451/50 B.C.” in A.L. Boegehold and A.C. Scafuro eds., *Athenian Identity and Civic Ideology* (Baltimore 1994) 57–66.

⁹⁹ As reconstructed by Jenkins (supra n. 16) 76–82, using slabs now in the British Museum, Louvre, and National Museum in Athens, as well as antiquarian drawings by Jacques Carrey and James Stuart.

¹⁰⁰ The *ololugmata* to Athena are mentioned as early as Homer (*Il.* 6.301) and in Euripides' *Erechtheus* (fr. 351 N.² = 41 Aust.) as well as in his *Herakleidae* (lines 777–83). Deubner (supra n. 2) suggests that these songs were preliminaries to the festival of the Paian sung by the ephebes and sees the women's song followed by the men's chorus. See J. Wilkins, *Euripides: Herakleidae* (Oxford 1990) 151–52 for commentary on the choral ode (lines 77–83) and whom I thank for drawing my attention to the importance of this ode. For the *pannychis*, see *IG* II², 344, 31; N. Robertson, *Festivals and Legends* (Toronto 1992) 108–14.

¹⁰¹ Eur. *Heracl.* 779; as Wilkins (supra n. 100) 151 points out, the day of the waning moon is probably Hekatombaion 28, the day of the great sacrifice at the Panathenaia. Can we detect some play in the question posed by the chorus of old men (*Pap. Sorb.* 9–10): “the young girl, will she dance with the old man?” Of course, the young girls were meant to dance with the young men on the eve of the festival; yet on the Parthenon frieze, the choruses of maidens are shown positioned beside the groups of older men (East slabs, figures 18–23 and 43–46). Perhaps the poetic imagination was inspired by the images of the frieze itself.



Fig. 13. Parthenon, north frieze, figure 15. (From F. Brommer, *Der Parthenonfries* [Mainz 1977] pl. 57)

trated here, as the procession not only lacks certain critical elements, but includes other features that seem entirely out of place. Why are the water carriers men, when we know that resident alien women carried the water for the Panathenaia? Simon has offered the explanation that these *hydrophoroi* are not participants in the ritual but rather victors from the torch races carrying their prize hydriae.¹⁰² But why the sudden change to victors in what otherwise looks like a sacrificial procession? Just in front of the water bearers are the trough or tray bearers, the *skaphephoroi*; late lexicographers tell us that they carried honeycombs and cakes.¹⁰³ Indeed, cross-hatching visible in the tray of one *skaphephoros* may suggest the texture of a honeycomb (fig. 13).¹⁰⁴ But honey is generally associated with chthonic deities¹⁰⁵ and inappropriate for Athena. Simon has suggested that the honey is meant for the chthonic deity Ge, who might somehow have been worshipped in the Panathenaia.¹⁰⁶ Yet in the *Erechtheus*, Athena ordains that the sacrifices in honor of the parthenoi include no wine libation, but only honey and water. Does the juxtaposition of the hydrophoroi and the honey bearers

on the north frieze allude to this libation ordained by Athena?

Finally, we come to the chariots and cavalcade, which have presented insurmountable obstacles for the traditional interpretation. If the figures represent the fifth-century Athenian army, *where* are the hoplites and *why* are there chariots? If, however, we read this as a scene from the days of early Athens, perhaps showing the army of Erechtheus, these difficulties are resolved. We have already noted the association of Erechtheus/Erichthonios with the introduction of the chariot to Athens. The two-horse chariots and riders with helmets and shields shown on the frieze look very much like the *apobatai*, the armed chariot riders who competed in a special class of event that required them to mount and dismount while the chariot moved at full speed. This *apobatai* race was the oldest and most characteristic event of the Panathenaic games; indeed, Erichthonios himself is said to have appeared at the first Panathenaia as a charioteer driving an armed rider.¹⁰⁷ Inscriptions of second-century B.C. date localize the race in the vicinity of the Eleusinion in the Athenian

¹⁰² Simon (supra n. 34) 64.

¹⁰³ Phot. s.v. σκάφας; Ziehen (supra n. 2) 466–67; discussed in Simon (supra n. 34) 65.

¹⁰⁴ North frieze figure 15, now in Rome; see photograph in Jenkins (supra n. 16) 86, fig. 15.

¹⁰⁵ F. Graf, "Milch, Honig und Wein: Zum Verständnis der Lebatation im griechischen Ritual," in *Perennitas: Studi*

in onore di Angelo Brelich (Rome 1981) 209–21.

¹⁰⁶ Simon (supra n. 34) 70.

¹⁰⁷ *Marm. Par.* 17–18. H.A. Thompson, "The Panathenaic Festival," *AA* 76 (1961) 227 suggests that the *apobatai* event dates back as early as the eighth or seventh century B.C. on the basis of Late Geometric vases showing armed chariot riders.

Agora; a fourth-century B.C. marble base found just below the Eleusinion bears a dedication by a Panathenaic victor above a sculptured relief showing the race.¹⁰⁸ Could the apobatai event in fact commemorate Erechtheus's introduction of the chariot and the particular prowess of the early Athenian army in this mode of warfare? Could the localization of the race in the vicinity of the Eleusinion be dictated by a reference to Erechtheus's victory over Eumolpos, a victory that may well have been achieved by this Athenian expertise? The fact that Athenian citizens alone were eligible to compete in this prestigious event may further link it to the foundation story of Erechtheus and the original Athenian army.¹⁰⁹

Horses and riders dominate the composition in terms of sheer numbers of figures, occupying all of the west and most of the north and south sides of the frieze. Brommer and others have traced a long tradition in which processing horse riders were used as an ideal formal solution for the longitudinal spatial requirements of continuous friezes.¹¹⁰ The use of the cavalcade on the Parthenon frieze is fully consistent with this tradition, but how is it to be read in terms of a local Athenian reference? Interpreters have undertaken the counting of horsemen and groups of horsemen in order to identify certain historical and political references that are built into its composition. Boardman has counted 192 horsemen and sees in this number a reference to those who died fighting against the Persians at Marathon in 490 B.C.¹¹¹ Harrison, followed by Beschi, counts 10 ranks of six riders on the south frieze and sees in this a reflection of the Cleisthenic tribal system in which the Athenians were divided into 10 groups. She sees the groupings of four on the north frieze as references to the pre-Cleisthenic system and, perhaps, meant to represent the Phratries.¹¹² These multiple levels of historical and political allusions are viewed in conjunction with a more primary read-

ing of the horsemen as participants in a Panathenaic *pompe*.

Pollitt, however, has recently stressed the point that there is no surviving evidence for the participation of the cavalry in the Panathenaic procession.¹¹³ Indeed, Aristotle (*Pol.* 1297b, 16–24) tells us that it was in days of *old* that the cavalry dominated the army.¹¹⁴ Boardman has seen the ranks of horse riders as heroicized dead;¹¹⁵ Harrison has admitted to seeing a certain heroic quality in the figures of the west frieze, and even identifies one of them as Theseus.¹¹⁶ We know that throughout the historical period, the mastery of horses was viewed as a noble effort, harkening back to the glorious past; Xenophon (*On Horsemanship* 11.8) speaks of the heroic associations of the equestrian tradition, which kept its aristocratic cachet over the centuries. Could the horse riders represent the heroic cavalry of Erechtheus's day, the noble forebearers of this venerable tradition of the Athenian knights?

The west frieze, generally viewed as representing preparations for the *pompe*, is not strictly speaking part of the cavalcade; indeed, there are as many unmounted individuals as mounted, and something under half of the horses are riderless. Herbert Cahn has shown the close iconographic parallels between these figures and those shown on a series of red-figure cups.¹¹⁷ The same frisking horses that are held, mounted, and put through their paces by both younger and older men, and attended to by little nude grooms, can be seen on both. So, too, can be seen the variety of costumes worn by the riders on the north and south sides of the frieze, including the *petasos*, the coonskin cap, and Thracian hats with flaps. Cahn identified the cup scenes as representations of the *dokimasia*, the annual examination of men and inspection of horses for the Athenian cavalry, as described by Aristotle (*Ath. Pol.* 49). A central element of the *dokimasia* was the testing of Athenian

¹⁰⁸ Inscriptions, *IG* II², 2316, 16 and *IG* II², 2317, 48. Marble base, Agora 5399, T.L. Shear, "The Sculpture Found in 1933: Relief of an Apobates," *Hesperia* 4 (1935) 379–81.

¹⁰⁹ Dem. *Erotikos* 61.24–25.

¹¹⁰ Brommer (supra n. 8) 151–53. For a comprehensive overview, see D. Castriota, *Myth, Ethos and Actuality: Official Art in Fifth Century B.C. Athens* (Madison 1992) 202–26. It should be noted that, though the cavalry dominates the frieze in terms of amount of space occupied, its location on the north, south, and west sides of the temple is secondary to the privileged position of the groups that occupy the east frieze.

¹¹¹ Boardman (supra n. 3) 210.

¹¹² Harrison (supra n. 44) 230–34; she sees the west frieze as representing *gene*. L. Beschi, "Il fregio del Parthenone: Una proposta di lettura," *RendLinc* 8.39 (Rome 1985) esp. 176, 183, and 185. The significance of the number four

in groupings of figures on the south frieze, and the association of this number with the Ionian, or pre-Cleisthenic, tribes has also been noted earlier by Deubner (supra n. 2) 27 and Brommer (supra n. 8) 215.

¹¹³ J.J. Pollitt, "The Meaning of the Parthenon Frieze," Proceedings of the Symposium on "The Interpretation of Architectural Sculpture in Greece and Rome," National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., 22–23 January 1993, forthcoming as *Studies in the History of Art* 49 (Washington, D.C. 1996).

¹¹⁴ I thank J. Marr for this reference.

¹¹⁵ Boardman (supra n. 4).

¹¹⁶ Harrison (supra n. 44) 234: "In the west frieze and here alone, we feel some justice in Chrysoula Kardara's contention that the Parthenon frieze depicts events and persons of the heroic age of Greece."

¹¹⁷ H. Cahn, "Dokimasia," *RA* 1973, 3–22.

youths in their 18th year, after which their names were entered upon the deme register as ephebes (Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 42). It was on the eve of the Panathenaia that the new ephebes swore an oath to their arms in the sanctuary of Aglauros on the Acropolis (Hdt. 8.53; Dem. 19.303);¹¹⁸ this oath was regarded as a relic of older times. It was here, at the vigil of the festival that the youths joined with the maidens in song and dance. Could the Athenians have seen in these images of young riders the origins of their own ephebate?¹¹⁹ Thus, the elevated status of the Athenian knights might find its roots in the original cavalry of King Erechtheus, made up of brave, young noblemen who joined in the battle against Eumolpos.¹²⁰

We know from Philostratos (*VS* 550) that the ephebes wore black chlamydes to commemorate their murder of Kopreus in defense of the Herakleidai.¹²¹ The chlamys is seen on many of the young riders on the Parthenon frieze; indeed, five of the 10 ranks on the south frieze wear them. Is it possible that another item of clothing, specifically depicted on the frieze, could have a special significance as well? The Thracian caps worn by a number of Parthenon riders can also be seen on knights represented in Attic vase painting, including the dokimasia scenes studied by Cahn. Could the *aition* for the Thracian costume worn by the Athenian cavalry be found in Erechtheus's victory over Eumolpos and his Thracian army? The caps might then be read as booty taken from Eumolpos's defeated army, worn by Athenian cavalry as trophies of this victory. Indeed, in the *Erechtheus* the chorus wants to dedicate a Thracian shield to Athena (fr. 369 N.² = fr. 60 Aust.).¹²² Thus, it is possible that fifth-century viewers found the Parthenon frieze full of mythological references for practices familiar to

them from their *own* day and their *own* commemorative festival: the choruses of maidens, the annual procession, the sacrifices, the apobatai, the dokimasia, and, as we shall soon see, perhaps even the peplos.

This new reading allows the full sculptural program of the Parthenon to be understood as a coherent whole: the west pediment shows the original contest between Athena and Poseidon for patronage of the city; the frieze commemorates the first military threat to Athens launched by Poseidon's son Eumolpos and the virgin sacrifice that ensured victory for the Athenians; the metopes in turn serve as paradigms for the triumph of civilized order over barbaric chaos as symbolized by gods defeating giants and Greeks defeating Amazons, centaurs, and Trojans. Thus, the full sculptural program serves as a greater metaphor for the Athenian triumph over the Persians in 480 B.C.,¹²³ in short, the nexus of "saving the city" from exotic outsiders and the preservation of Athens by and for the autochthonous Athenians. The fact that the royal family participates fully in the self-sacrifice required to save the city is highly significant. This stands in contrast to the behavior of the Persian royal family that survived the Persian defeat (Aesch. *Pers.*). The example of the Athenian royal family must be seen as antithetical to barbarian ideology and in keeping with the "democratic" social values of the Athenians, which allowed no one family, not even the royals, to put itself above the common good.¹²⁴

The discovery of the Euripidean fragments has brought the story of Erechtheus and Eumolpos to our closer attention. In Classical Athens, this central local myth would have been well known and immediately recognizable to the populace.¹²⁵ Pausanias

¹¹⁸ P. Stewart, "The Ephebic Oath in Fifth Century Athens," *JHS* 97 (1977) 102.

¹¹⁹ For the sacrifice of the ephebes, see *IG* II², 1039.

¹²⁰ The 10 groups of riders recognized by Harrison (supra n. 44) on the south frieze may, indeed, allude to the tribal ranks and evoke the integration of the newly elected ephebes into these groupings. Athens was tribally articulated in several aspects that had certain important associations with the Panathenaic festival, including the ephebeia as well as choral competitions; see Sourvinou-Inwood (supra n. 19) 312.

¹²¹ J. Wilkins, "The Young of Athens: Religion and Society in *Herakleidai* of Euripides," *CQ* 40 (1990) 329–35, who cites *IG* II², 2029 = Dittenberger, *Sylloge*³ 870. Another *aition* for the black cloaks, discussed by Wilkins 334, is provided by Theseus, who presided over the ephebes at his Theseia.

¹²² Cahn (supra n. 117) traces the introduction of Thracian costume into Athens to the middle of the sixth century B.C. Could the reorganization of the Panathenaic fes-

tival in 556 B.C. have had some impact on this? I thank James Diggle for the observation on the chorus's desire to dedicate a Thracian shield.

¹²³ Summarized by Castriota (supra n. 110) 134–38.

¹²⁴ I thank Richard Seaford for this insight.

¹²⁵ The question of the antiquity of the myth remains open. Euripides' *Erechtheus* preserves the earliest surviving version of the story. Though we know of no earlier tragedies with the same title, it is possible that Sophocles' lost *Kreusa* or *Prokris* may have dealt with the tale. While Euripides may be tidying up various genealogical threads (in the *Ion*, the Kekropides are the aunts of the Erechtheides), it is unlikely that he has invented this story, which seems to have been very much in the air as he wrote his *Ion* and *Erechtheus*. The names of certain daughters of Erechtheus can be found early on (Prokris is mentioned in the *Nekyia*), though the mere appearance of these names does not necessarily mean that they are the same or that a consistent and fully integrated story line existed.

(1.27.4) tells us that a bronze statue group showing Eumolpos and Erechtheus in battle stood right in front of the Temple of Athena on the Acropolis. Spaeth has elucidated the importance of this story for the reading of the west pediment, its relationship to the contest of Athena and Poseidon, and connections with the historical associations of Athens and Eleusis, as Poseidon and his son Eumolpos play such important roles in the Eleusinian saga.¹²⁶ Athenian resolve to protect the polis from outsiders resounds in Praxitheia's speech, which seems to allude also to the sculptures of the west pediment: "Eumolpos and his slavish Thracian army shall set no trident in our midst or deck it round with garlands where the olive tree and Gorgon's golden head have been revered" (fr. 360 N.², 46–49 = fr. 50 Aust.).

Indeed, Clairmont has identified what may be a representation of Poseidon and Eumolpos juxtaposed with Athena and a girl who may be the daughter of Erechtheus on a Lucanian pelike from Heraklea.¹²⁷ If his interpretation is correct, we may have yet another piece of evidence for the significance of the Eumolpos/Erechtheus conflict in Greek iconography. Very importantly, we may also have evidence for the intimate relationship existing between the goddess Athena and the parthenos who gave her life to save Athens.

¹²⁶ B.S. Spaeth, "Athenians and Eleusinians in the West Pediment of the Parthenon," *Hesperia* 60 (1991) 331–62, esp. 341–44. For the important ritual links of Athens and Eleusis, their mythological correlatives, and the incorporation of Eleusis in the Athenian polis at a very early stage, see C. Sourvinou-Inwood, "Reconstructing Change: Ideology and Ritual at Eleusis," forthcoming in M. Golden and P. Toohey eds., *Inventing Ancient Culture? Historicism, Periodization and the "New Classics."*

¹²⁷ Policoro, Museo della Sivitide 35304; *LIMC* IV, 58 no. 19, s.v. Eumolpos (L. Weidauer); A.D. Trendall, *The Red-figured Vases of Lucania, Campania and Sicily* (Oxford 1967) 55 no. 283, pl. 25.5–6. Clairmont (supra n. 27) 492 pls. 4–5. Cropp (supra n. 26) 154 is doubtful of Clairmont's identification. See also L. Weidauer, "Poseidon und Eumolpos auf einer Pelike aus Policoro," *AntK* 12 (1963) 91–93, pl. 41.

¹²⁸ L.R. Farnell, *The Cults of the Greek States* 1 (Oxford 1896) maintained that Pliny's text is corrupt and that he probably never saw the statue.

¹²⁹ N. Loraux, *The Children of Athena* (Princeton 1993) 114–15; J.M. Hurwit, "Beautiful Evil: Pandora and the Athena Parthenos," *AJA* 99 (1995) 173, 175. As Loraux points out, scholars have justified the presence of Pandora on the statue base by stressing Pheidias's desire to show solidarity between the Artisan and the Parthenos; see E.B.

PANDORA

It is possible that the base of the chryselephantine statue of Athena, housed within the Parthenon, functioned as part of this integrated program as well, underscoring the special relationship between Athena and the parthenos. Pliny (*HN* 36.18)¹²⁸ and Pausanias (1.24.5–7) tell us that the base of the statue showed the birth of Pandora. Pausanias immediately thinks of the Hesiodic Pandora, the first woman and great troublemaker—a curious choice for Athena's statue base.¹²⁹ But perhaps there is some confusion, existing even in antiquity, between Pandora, as she is understood locally by Athenians, and the first woman described in Hesiod. There is a tradition in Attica for a beneficent, gift-giving Pandora with earth-goddess associations that is distinct from the tradition of the evil Pandora described by Hesiod.¹³⁰ We know of at least one other, clearly Attic, Pandora who is listed in the *Hesiodic Catalogue of Women* (F 2/4, F 5), dated by M.L. West to the sixth century B.C.¹³¹ She is "lovely Pandora" daughter of Deukalion and Pyrrha, granddaughter of Epimetheus and better-known Pandora I,¹³² and sister of Thyia and Protogeneia (F 2/4).

Now Erechtheus, like Deukalion, had three daughters named Pandora, Protogeneia, and Oreithyia or Thyia, suggesting some contamination between the two family stories. The names of the daughters of

Harrison, "Athena and Athens in the East Pediment of the Parthenon," *AJA* 71 (1967) 34. A self-referential impulse on the part of the artist might, however, be seen as more typical of post-antiquity; see A. Schnapp, "Why the Greeks Needed Images," in J. Christiansen and T. Melander eds., *International Vase Symposium: Proceedings of the 3rd Symposium on Ancient Greek and Related Pottery* (Copenhagen 1988) 568–74. Schnapp elucidates the ancient view that statues were living entities rather than "works of art," or the products of self-conscious craftsmen.

¹³⁰ There is no reason that we should expect Attic myth to correspond directly to what we find in Hesiod; significant differences also can be found between the Attic version of the Prometheus story and Hesiod's account. For the two distinct aspects of Pandora, see J. Harrison, "Pandora's Box," *JHS* 20 (1900) 99–144; and Harrison, *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion* (Cambridge 1903) 281–85: "Pandora is a form or title of the Earth-Goddess in the kore form, entirely humanized and vividly personified by mythology"; more recently, see Hurwit (supra n. 129) 177. One can only wonder what light Sophocles' lost *Pandora* might have shed on this problem.

¹³¹ West (supra n. 20), for date of catalogue see 130–37; for Pandora, see 50–56.

¹³² (F 5) West (supra n. 20) 50–56.

Erechtheus are greatly confused in the sources, with conflicting lists given by various authors over several hundreds of years.¹³³ Phanodemos (*FGrHist* 325, F 4 = Photius, *Suda*, s.v. Παρθένοι¹³⁴) names Protageneia and Pandora as the two who died (to save Athens from an attack by Boeotians), while giving the names Prokris, Kreusa, Oreithyia, and Chthonia for Erechtheus's surviving daughters. Apollodoros (3.15.1) names Prokris, Kreusa, Oreithyia, and Chthonia as the daughters and, interestingly, lists a son named Pandoros along with other sons Kekrops and Metion II. Hyginus (*Fab.* 46.238) says Chthonia is the one who was sacrificed. Yet he also names Aglauros as a *son* of Erechtheus by another of his daughters, Prokris (*Fab.* 253), though Aglauros is generally taken to be the *daughter* of Kekrops (Philochoros *FGrHist* 328, F 105). In that great tangled web of Attic myth, the formula of three daughters keeps emerging: the Kekropides, the Erechtheides, the daughters of Deukalion, and, we may add here, the Hyakinthides.¹³⁵ Both Deukalion and Erechtheus seem to have had one daughter who was named Pandora; it is likely that there is further confusion with the Kekropides, resulting in some Pandora/Pandrosos substitution just as we have seen for Erechtheus/Erichthonios.¹³⁶

The composition of the base of the Athena Parthenos statue has been reconstructed by several scholars (fig. 14) relying on surviving Roman copies and on the testimony of Pliny, who tells us that some 20 divinities were present in the scene.¹³⁷ Pandora is shown as a small girl wearing a peplos, standing frontally, with arms hanging at her sides. At her left stands Athena holding something in her hands that re-



Fig. 14. Model by N. Leipen of the interior of the Parthenon with statue of Athena Parthenos, Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto. (Photo courtesy Museum)

sembles a crown (fig. 15).¹³⁸ Two vases of pre-Parthenon date, ca. 460 B.C., show similar imagery. A red-figure calyx krater by the Niobid Painter

¹³³ For collected sources, see Austin (supra n. 26) 54–55 and Kearns (supra n. 23) 201–202.

¹³⁴ At the end of his entry, Photios cites Phanodemos, though it is not clear whether Phanodemos is responsible for all of the information given or just the final bit. Phanodemos may be regarded as a fairly reliable source; he is thought to have been a collaborator of Lycurgus, who was not only a good Eteoboutad but also a priest of Poseidon Erechtheus (Plut. *Vit. Lyc.*; *Mor.* 841A–844A). This would put Lycurgus in a good position to have a sound understanding of Athenian foundation myths, and may give added insight into his masterful use of the *Erechtheus* in his case against Leocrates.

¹³⁵ There are several versions of the story of the Hyakinthides, see Kearns (supra n. 23) 201. According to the *Erechtheus*, the Hyakinthides are the three daughters of Erechtheus, who after their deaths are carried into the *aither* where they become goddesses (as Hyads, line 107, Schol. Arat. *Phaen.* 172). According to another version, they

were the daughters of the Lakonian Hyakinthos who lived in Athens (Harp., *Suda*, s.v. Ὑακινθίδες). Their names were Antheis, Aigle, Lytaia, and Orthaia (Apollod. 3.15.8) and they were sacrificed to save the city when Minos was attacking it. According to another version, Hyakinthos sacrificed Antheis alone in response to an oracle (Hyg. *Fab.* 238.2).

¹³⁶ A scholiast to Aristides I 85–87 L.–B. (III p. 110, 9 and p. 112, 10–15 Dind.) identifies Aglauros, Herse, and Pandrosos as the daughters of Erechtheus, rather than as the daughters of Kekrops. For Erechtheus/Erichthonios see n. 23.

¹³⁷ N. Leipen, *Athena Parthenos: A Reconstruction* (Toronto 1971) 24–27, pl. 86c; see also W.-H. Schuchhardt, “Zur Basis der Athena Parthenos,” in *Wandlungen, Festschrift E. Homann-Wedeking* (Waldsassen 1975) 120–30, pls. 26–27; C. Praschniker, “Das Basisrelief der Parthenos,” *Wiener Jahreshefte* 39 (1952) 7–12; G. Becatti, *Problemi fidiaci* (Milan 1951) 53–70; Hurwit (supra n. 129).

¹³⁸ Leipen (supra n. 137) pl. 86c.



Fig. 15. Reconstruction by N. Leipen of frieze on base of Athena Parthenos statue. (Drawing G.M. Peters, after S. Hahn, from N. Leipen, *Athena Parthenos: A Reconstruction* [Toronto 1971] pl. 86c)

(fig. 16)¹³⁹ presents a small girl standing frontally between Ares and Athena, while Iris, Zeus, Poseidon, Hermes, and a female goddess, either Aphrodite or Hera, stand by. The girl holds olive or laurel branches in each hand; her transfixed frontal face may reflect the intensity of her altered state as Athena crowns her with a wreath.¹⁴⁰ The traditional interpretation of the scene as the creation of the first woman, Pandora, is frustrated by the fact that Hephaistos, a key

figure in the creation story, is missing. Instead, we have the god of war, Ares, rushing in beside the girl while the warrior goddess, Athena, crowns her from the other side; there is a sense of victory in the air. We are reminded of Praxithea's proclamation in the *Erechtheus* (fr. 360 N.², 34–35): "My child, by dying for this city, will attain a crown destined solely for herself."

A white-ground cup by the Tarquinia Painter



Fig. 16. Red-figure calyx krater by the Niobid Painter, ca. 460. London, British Museum E 467. (Photo courtesy Museum)

¹³⁹ London, British Museum E 467; ARV² 601.23.

¹⁴⁰ Y. Korshak, *Frontal Faces in Attic Vase Painting of the*

Archaic Period (Chicago 1987); F. Frontisi-Ducroux, *Du masque au visage* (Paris 1995).



Fig. 17. White-ground cup by the Tarquinia Painter, ca. 460. London, British Museum D 4. (Photo courtesy Museum)

(fig. 17) shows a similar female figure, dressed in a peplos, this time crowned by Athena and Hephaistos.¹⁴¹ The girl's name is inscribed above: Anesidora, "she who sends up gifts," a name that is related to the name Pandora, "all-giver."¹⁴² The name Anesidora, however, has a distinctly chthonic character, as the gifts are sent up from below.¹⁴³ Though this image is generally interpreted as the creation of Pandora, we may again have the kosmos of the little Erechtheid who gave the ultimate gift, her life, to save the city of Athena and Hephaistos, her own ancestral "grandparents."¹⁴⁴

Could an Anesidora of the fifth century come to be known as Pandora by the time of the late sources recording the names of Erechtheus's daughters? The appearance of the name Chthonia in the list of daughters, singled out by Hyginus as the one who was sacrificed, again underscores an earth-born quality for the sacrificial victim and reinforces the sense

of a gift being given up from the earth. Euripides does not name the girl who was sacrificed, at least in what survives of the *Erechtheus*, but simply calls her "Parthenos," just as in the *Herakleidae*, the sacrificial victim remains unnamed. There is a certain ambiguity in the naming of the Parthenos who died for Athens, a maiden who may have been so intimately associated with the goddess that her own identity has been obscured. Still, it seems likely that she was in time and at times known as Pandora, or some related name. The base of the Athena Parthenos, a statue that shows Athena in full military regalia and holding a figure of Victory, might be seen to show the birth, or what we may even call an apotheosis, of this little Erechtheid who gave her life to ensure Athenian victory.

Were this idea correct it would provide an extra link with the story of the Erechtheides and demonstrate, once again, the effectiveness of Athena's cult statue as a unifying vehicle for the Parthenon's sculptural program as a whole. The shield of the Parthenos is known to have been decorated with the Gigantomachy on the interior and the Amazonomachy on the exterior, direct references to the subject matter of the east and west metopes. Athena's sandals are decorated with the Centauromachy, quoting the theme of the south metopes. If the base can be seen to reflect the subject matter of the frieze, then the Parthenos can be seen to integrate the decorative program as a whole even more coherently than was previously recognized.¹⁴⁵ The overwhelmingly martial character of the Parthenos statue can be more fully understood, as the triumphant warrior goddess celebrates a long history of victory over outside aggressors.

Viewed in this way, other problems, including those of cult and ritual, may be resolved. Philochoros (*FGrHist* 328, F 10), who served as *mantis-hieroskopos* in Athens at the end of the fourth century, tells us

¹⁴¹ London, British Museum D 4; *ARV*² 869.55; *LIMC* I, 790–91, s.v. Anesidora (E. Simon). A fragment of a rhyton by the Sotades Painter (British Museum E 789, *ARV*² 764.9), dating to the third quarter of the fifth century, shows the lower portion of what seems to be a similar scene, with a girl standing frontally at center, flanked by Athena and a male figure.

¹⁴² The Anesidora/Pandora relationship, first discussed by Jane Harrison, is problematic. See Harrison 1903 (supra n. 130) 281, 284–85; and J. Harrison, *Themis: A Study of the Social Origins of Greek Religion* (Cambridge 1912) 295, 298–99. See also M.L. West, *Hesiod, Works and Days* (Oxford 1978) 164–65; J. Boardman, *The Parthenon and Its Sculptures* (Austin 1985) 249–50.

¹⁴³ C. Bérard, *Anodoi: Essai sur l'imagerie des passages chthoniens* (Rome 1974) 161–64. A chthonic nature is attested

for Pandora in Hipponax 104.48 W., where she receives an offering of a potted plant at the Thargelia in Ephesos.

¹⁴⁴ The autochthonous birth myth of Erichthonios is recounted in many sources: Apollod. 3.14.6; Hyg. *Fab.* 166; Eratosth. [*Cat.*] 13; and Paus. 1.14.6. Hephaistos, desirous of Athena, pursues her only to spill his seed upon the earth, whence sprung the baby king of Athens from Ge herself. Though this tale is told for Erichthonios, rather than for Erechtheus, we have noted the confusion between the two (supra n. 23).

¹⁴⁵ J.P. Stevens suggested a height of ca. 0.90 m for the Parthenos base, *Hesperia* 24 (1955) 260. As the frieze measures roughly a meter in height, we may have yet another visual link between the relief sculptures that may have had roughly the same height.

that whoever sacrificed a cow to Athena was obliged to sacrifice a ewe to Pandora or Pandrosos; the two readings Pandora/Pandrosos are alternative variants given by the various manuscripts.¹⁴⁶ Indeed, the north frieze of the Parthenon shows cows and sheep being led to sacrifice, very plausibly cows for Athena and sheep for the princess who saved Athens. Though this connection between text and image has been discussed in the past,¹⁴⁷ never has there been recognized such a clear motivation for the joint worship of Athena and Pandora. Viewed in this light, we may no longer have to discount the oracle of Bakis in Aristophanes' *Birds* (971): "First sacrifice to Pandora a white fleeced ram." The south frieze shows cows alone, perhaps in accordance with Athena's direction that Erechtheus should be honored with cattle sacrifices. We have seen that the combination of ram and bull sacrifice on the Acropolis is attested as early as the *Iliad* (2.550); this suggests the antiquity of the ritual, and possibly, but not necessarily, of the myth that served as its aition. Thus, the original virgin sacrifice depicted in a flashback on the east frieze is accompanied on the north and south by animal, water, and honey offerings, familiar to the fifth-century Athenians as the vehicles through which they themselves commemorated the mythical event and honored Athena, Erechtheus, and the Parthenoi.

IMPLICATIONS

This new view of the Parthenon frieze has broad ramifications for our understanding of larger issues

¹⁴⁶ Keaney (supra n. 51) 101 on E 85: Πανδρόσω KM, Πανδώρα ep QNP (var. lect. KM). See F. Jacoby, *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker* III B I (Leiden 1954) 276–77, who argues strongly for Pandrosos, yet this is based on 1) "the fact that Kekrops' daughter is so clearly connected to Athena," and 2) the fact that there is "no evidence for a cult of Pandora at Athens." This picture may change in light of the *Erechtheus*, which attests that the daughters of Erechtheus were also very closely connected with Athena and that they were worshipped at Athens. As one of them, possibly understood as the daughter singled out for sacrifice, could have been called Pandora or some related name, a cult of Pandora may have existed that was intimately connected with the cult of Athena at Athens. Can we detect again some Pandora/Pandrosos substitution in terms of the shared altar, κοινοβωμία, of Athena and Pandrosos? For sacrifices to Pandora, see Farnell (supra n. 128) 290; *RF* 18.3 (1949) 531, s.v. Pandora (W. Oldfather).

¹⁴⁷ Simon (supra n. 34) 61.

¹⁴⁸ *IG* I³, 343, 4 (a. 434/3); *IG* I³, 376, 14 (a. 409/8?).

¹⁴⁹ The first certain datable reference to the use of the word Parthenon for the entire temple is Dem. 22.76 (*Andr.*). Prior to this the temple is referred to as ὁ νεώς; see C.J. Herington, *Athena Parthenos and Athena Polias* (Manchester 1955) 13.

¹⁵⁰ Euripides tells us that the girl who was sacrificed was

within Attic myth, cult, and topography. At the end of the *Erechtheus*, Athena instructs Praxithea to establish a temenos at the place where her daughters were buried and to build a stone peribolos around her husband's precinct (*sēkos*) in the middle of the Acropolis. Can Euripides be etymologizing the foundation myths of the two temples of Athena on the Acropolis, known from at least the fourth century B.C. as the Parthenon and the Erechtheion? Inscribed accounts and inventories of the fifth century use the term Parthenon to describe only the western room of the largest building on the Acropolis.¹⁴⁸ In time, the term Parthenon comes to be used for the entire building.¹⁴⁹ Could it be that the west room was considered to rest atop the tomb of the virgins, the parthenoi,¹⁵⁰ just as the tomb of Erechtheus may have been believed to rest under part of the Erechtheion? This introduces the larger question of the relationship between mythical tombs and historical temples. It may well provide important insight for our comprehension of the naming and nicknaming of ancient structures, a practice through which temples, like the two dedicated to Athena Polias on the Acropolis, may have been called by more than one name.

A strong case can be made for the reading of the word παρθενών as a locality destined for a plurality of parthenoi, that is to say, "the maidens' quarters," or "place of the maidens," which is, in fact, its normal sense in tragedy.¹⁵¹ Most -εών and -ών nouns with local value are demonstrative and may have a value

buried at the place of sacrifice and that her sisters were buried in the same tomb (*Pap. Sorb.* 67–68). Admittedly, this location varies according to the source: on a hill called Hyakinthos at (?) Sphendonai (Phanodemos *FGrHist* 325 F 4) or at the tomb of the Cyclops Geraistos (Apollod. 3.158). We should not expect the later sources, which conflict in so many ways, to give a consistent picture. Tombs of heroic maidens can be found in close proximity to the temples of the goddesses with whom they were closely associated. Iphigeneia's tomb at the Sanctuary of Artemis at Brauron (*Eur. IT* 1452–53) provides a close parallel. Pausanias (9.17.1) visits the tomb of the daughters of Antipoinos, located within the Sanctuary of Artemis of Glory at Thebes. These noble maidens willingly committed suicide according to an oracle's requirement in order to save Thebes from the attacking Orchomenos. I thank Steve Coates for this reference.

¹⁵¹ Aesch. *Pers.* 646; *Eur. Phoen.* 89; *IT* 826. Over the years, many scholars have argued for such a reading: Furtwängler (supra n. 68) 172; T. Reinach, "Παρθενών," *BCH* 32 (1908) 499–513; P. Graindor, "Parthenon et cores," *RA* 1938, 193–211; N. Robertson, "The Riddle of the Arrephoria at Athens," *HSCP* 87 (1983) 273–74; Robertson, in Robertson and Frantz (supra n. 2) 6; and J. Tréheux, "Pourquoi le Parthénon?" *REG* 98 (1985) 233–42.

that refers to the basic noun in the plural.¹⁵² Hence, these constructions have a collective sense: ἀμπελεῶν, a place for vines; ἐλαιῶν, a place full of olive trees; ἵππων, a place for horses; ἀνδρῶν or ἀνδρεῶν, men's quarters; γυναικῶν, women's apartments. Whatever its primary meaning, the Parthenon could have been interpreted as referring to the place of the Maiden, i.e., Athena, but it is unlikely that the word was formed with this meaning in mind or that it was always interpreted in this way. The parthenon at Brauron is generally taken to mean the "maidens' quarters," set aside for the girls who lived at the sanctuary for a period before puberty.¹⁵³ Furthermore, it would be surprising for a place name to be formed from an epithet (if this is what "Parthenos" is) rather than from the goddess's proper name, giving us Athenaion, just as we have Heraion.

Thus, the Euripidean text may help us to understand the curious historical and cultic reality in which the Erechtheion and the Parthenon shared a single priestess and a single altar. Normally, each temple had its own altar and its own presiding priest or priestess. The special character of the Acropolis cult practices can now be viewed against the aetiological myth, which has Praxithea serving both her children's temenos, the Parthenon, as well as that of her husband, the Erechtheion, both within temples of Athena Polias.

The name Athena Parthenos is not a cult title, nor is it attested at any site outside of Athens. Perhaps, originally, the name Parthenos referred not to the

goddess but to the virgin of local myth, so intimately associated with Athena that in time the lines of identity became obscured. The local foundation story would thus give rise to a double-barreled title, incorporating the name of the divinity with that of the local hero, rather like Zeus-Agamemnon at Sparta, Apollo-Hyakinthos¹⁵⁴ at Amyklai, or indeed Poseidon-Erechtheus at Athens.¹⁵⁵

This reading encourages us to reevaluate our current understanding of the Panathenaic festival itself, an event that may have been more than just the celebration of Athena's birthday;¹⁵⁶ perhaps it was also a commemoration of the Athenian foundation myth of Erechtheus and his daughters, whose deaths might well be celebrated by funeral games and competitions. There has been strikingly little inquiry into the origin of the contests at Athens in reference to their function as funerary games.¹⁵⁷ As early as Homer's account of the funeral games of Patroklos (*Il.* 23.257–897), athletic competitions were closely associated with games established in memory of deceased heroes. The Panhellenic game sites each have local characters from the mythical past whose deaths served as the occasions for the inauguration of these competitions. Precincts dedicated to various heroes, often incorporating their legendary tombs, are located in close proximity to the temples of the reigning Olympians: Pelops at Olympia, Opheltes at Nemea, Palaimon at Isthmia, and Neoptolemos at Delphi.¹⁵⁸

Why have the Acropolis monuments not been

¹⁵² I am indebted to Anna M. Davies for the analysis presented here and thank her warmly for sharing her expertise and insights with me. For a list of the demonstrative nouns with a "collective" sense, see P. Chantraine, *Formation des noms en grec ancien* (Paris 1933) 164–65.

¹⁵³ J. Papadimitriou, "The Sanctuary of Artemis at Brauron," *Scientific American* 208 (1963) 120; L. Kahil, "L'Artemis de Brauron: Rites et mystère," *AntK* 20 (1977) 96–97; T. Linders, *Studies in the Treasure Records of Artemis Brauronia Found in Athens* (*SkrAth* 19, 1972) 71; P. Brulé, *La fille d'Athènes. La religion des filles à Athènes à l'époque classique* (Paris 1988) 245–48. The cella of the Temple of Artemis at Magnesia was known as the parthenon during the second century B.C., *SIG* 695.23. Of course, Artemis is a virgin, but presumably the Great Mother is not, yet her temple at Cyzicus included a parthenon as well, *Michel*. 538.6; see Liddell-Scott, s.v. parthenon.

¹⁵⁴ Zeus Agamemnon: *RE* 10A (1972) 254, 40–50, s.v. Zeus (H. Schwabl); Apollo Hyakinthos: *Arist. Pol.* 8.28. The case of Hyakinthos is more complex: on one level he can be read as a local divinized hero, yet on another, his divinity may be seen to date to prehistoric, pre-Olympian times.

¹⁵⁵ For Poseidon-Erechtheus, see Austin (supra n. 26) 59–60.

¹⁵⁶ Kallisthenes, *FGrHist* 124, F 52.

¹⁵⁷ See N. Robertson, "The Origin of the Panathenaia,"

RhM 128 (1985) 231–95 for a comprehensive overview. Robertson (p. 232) sums up the state of our understanding of the Panathenaia: "Although so many details are so well illuminated the centre is dark. There is no understanding of the origin and significance of the festival, of its social or seasonal purpose, and there has been almost no inquiry."

¹⁵⁸ See W. Raschke, *The Archaeology of the Olympic Games: The Olympics and Other Festivals* (Madison 1988). For Olympia, Pausanias (5.13.1) tells that the funeral games were founded in memory of Oenomaos. A precinct sacred to the founder, Pelops, has been found adjacent to the Temple of Zeus; for general discussion see H.V. Hermann, *Olympia: Heiligtum und Wettkampfstätte* (Munich 1972) 53–56, figs. 23–25. The games at Nemea were founded in honor of the dead prince Opheltes; Pausanias (2.15.2–3) speaks of a temenos of Opheltes, with the tumulus of his father, King Lycurgus, nearby. Though the tomb of Opheltes has not been found, a heroion of significant size has been unearthed not far from the Temple of Zeus, see S.G. Miller, *Nemea: A Guide to the Site and Museum* (Berkeley 1990) 24–29 and 104–10, figs. 34–36. The games at Isthmia were founded by King Sisyphos at the funeral of Melikertes-Palaimon, a boy who drowned in the Saronic Gulf (Paus. 2.1); adjacent to the southeast corner of the Temple of Poseidon a Palaimonion has been identified, O. Broneer, *Isthmia II: Topography and Architecture* (Princeton 1973) 99–112, plans

scrutinized within the framework of this model known for the other Panhellenic game sites? Thompson is one of the few who has looked for the dead heroes, focusing on the hero shrines of the Agora, in close proximity to tombs of earlier periods.¹⁵⁹ But why have we not looked for the heroized dead on the Acropolis rock itself? Surely the Erechtheion provides an attractive possibility, well within the structure of the model of local founding heroes, their legendary tombs, and later historical temples. But unlike the other Panhellenic game sites, the Athenian Acropolis is sacred to a female divinity; should it be so surprising that the local heroes might include heroines? The joint worship of Erechtheus and Athena is attested as early as the *Iliad* (2.546–51); could it be that, in time, the daughters of Erechtheus were incorporated into this worship? Could, in fact, the story of the royal house of Erechtheus provide a powerful aition central to the Panathenaia itself? Indeed, it would be odd if a ritual of such a centrally social character as that of the Panathenaia could have developed without the benefit of a strong mythological reference.¹⁶⁰

Clearly, a central component of the Panathenaic ritual was the weaving and the presentation of the peplos to Athena. The fact that a piece of cloth is depicted in the central slab of the east frieze cannot be coincidental, nor is it in any way to be fully dissociated from the cloth that played such a central role in the historical rites. Perhaps it is time to ask about the *meaning* of the peplos of Athena: Why is it woven for the goddess, and does it have a precedent in myth?¹⁶¹

Mansfield has demonstrated how little we under-

stand the function of Athena's peplos by showing that the testimonia actually indicate *two* distinct peploi: a small one offered to Athena's statue annually and made by *arrephoroi* and *ergastinai*, and a large one, a tapestry with woven scenes, transported to the Acropolis by ship cart every four years in the Greater Panathenaia.¹⁶² Citing Barber's work on the role of ornately woven figure cloths in funerary rituals,¹⁶³ Ridgway has suggested that the peplos tapestry was used as a shroud to veil the xoanon of Athena during the festival of the Plynteria.¹⁶⁴ This ritual, which called for the stripping, washing, and wrapping of the statue in cloth, mimics the treatment of a corpse in funerary rites. It may allude to a period of mourning for Aglauros, the first plyntria in honor of whom the festival was founded. These interpretations illustrate the ambiguity and flexibility of the various ancient Greek terms used to describe cloth. They caution us not to be too rigid in our readings of words and images, but to look through ancient eyes when interpreting individual words that carry a full range of meanings, from piece of fabric, to dress, shroud, blanket, tapestry, sail, or swaddling clothes, depending on the context in which they are used.¹⁶⁵

Could the elaborately woven peplos of Athena's ritual serve as a reference to the elaborately woven funerary cloth, the emblem of death and self-sacrifice for the saving of the city in the myth? Late as it may be, and drawn from the genre of fiction, the description of the priestess Charikleia's dress in Heliodoros's *Ethiopica* (5.31) may be instructive here. We learn that the girl wore a crown of laurel on her head and dressed herself in a sacred garment from Delphi, woven with gold. This is said to be either her

3–4, 7–10. The Pythian games at Delphi are generally believed to honor the dead Python, slain by Apollo. Achilles' son Neoptolemos, however, was also slain in the Sanctuary of Apollo; he was first buried under the threshold of the temple (Schol. Pind. *Nem.* 7.62) and later, his tomb was moved nearby. Strabo (9.421) speaks of Neoptolemos's grave and Pausanias (10.24.6) saw it just to the left as one leaves the temple. A complex found on just this spot has been identified as the heroon of Neoptolemos, whose festival is said to have occurred at the same time as the Pythian games (Heliodoros *Ethiopica* 2.34.3); see J. Pouilloux and G. Roux, *Enigmes à Delphes* (Paris 1963) 106–22, figs. 33–34.

¹⁵⁹ Thompson (supra n. 107) 227.

¹⁶⁰ This would make Athena's final speech in the *Erechtheus* (*Pap. Sorb.* 55–100) and the choral ode of the *Heraikleidai* (lines 771–83) two of our earliest sources for the rituals of the Panathenaic festival, as they were known, understood, and experienced during the fifth century B.C.

¹⁶¹ While the practice of presenting clothing to cult statues is relatively common in Greek cult practice, the ritual weaving of garments for statues is actually quite rare,

see Mansfield (supra n. 2) 443. The rite is firmly attested only for Athena Polias at Athens, Hera at Argos, Hera at Olympia, and Apollo at Amyklai. For Hera, the sacred robe is said to represent her marriage dress, an appropriate cult item for the archetypal wife and bride of Zeus. But what is the significance behind the virgin goddess's peplos?

¹⁶² Mansfield (supra n. 2) 2–134.

¹⁶³ E.J.W. Barber, *Prehistoric Textiles: The Development of Cloth in the Neolithic and Bronze Ages* (Princeton 1991).

¹⁶⁴ B.S. Ridgway, "Images of Athena on the Akropolis," in J. Neils ed., *Goddess and Polis* (Princeton 1992) 124.

¹⁶⁵ See J. Scheid and J. Svenbro, *Le métier de Zeus: Mythe du tissage et du tissu dans le monde gréco-romain* (Paris 1994); and Mansfield (supra n. 2). While a πέπλος is basically an uncut unit of heavy woolen cloth, the word can be used to mean robe, tapestry, awning, swaddling clothes, or shroud; σπέριον can mean piece of cloth, sail, shroud, or garment; φάρος can mean piece of cloth, shroud, dress, or blanket; χλαῖνις can mean an upper garment of wool worn by men and women while χλαῖνα can mean wedding mantle or blanket.

“mantle of victory, or else a funerary shroud,” her *νικητήριον* or else her *ἐντάφιον*.¹⁶⁶ A strong case can be made for the reading of Athena’s peplos as a victory mantle; after all, its woven images told the stories of those who saved Athens from its very beginnings into the historical period, from Zeus and Athena in the Gigantomachy to Demetrios Soter in the late fourth century.¹⁶⁷ If the victory mantle of cult can be seen to have its mythological origins in the funeral dress of the foundation story, then we may be one step closer to understanding the very essence of the Panathenaic ritual. Against the backdrop of this aition, we may understand the ritual weaving of the peplos by the *arrephoroi* as a symbolic re-enactment of the role of the two sisters in weaving the funeral cloth for the one to be sacrificed. Thus, the Athenians may have recognized the origins of their own *arrephoroi* in the pair of girls shown carrying the fabric on stools at the left side of the “peplos scene” on the Parthenon frieze.¹⁶⁸

There is a burst of interest in stories of virgin sacrifice after the completion of the Parthenon, but it should be remembered that the theme is already in the air in the years that preceded it, as evidenced by Sophocles’ *Andromeda*. Sophocles also dealt with the subject in his *Iphigeneia* and *Polyxena* and no doubt touched upon it in his *Kreusa*. Euripides takes up the theme in the *Herakleidae*, the *Hecuba*, the *Ion*, and the *Iphigeneia at Aulis*, as well as in the *Erechtheus*.¹⁶⁹ The *Herakleidae* and the *Erechtheus* are particularly close in presenting the city’s ideology within the framework of the same combination of city goddess, festival, and virgin sacrifice. Surely, the Peloponnesian War and the plague at Athens contributed to the retelling of stories about times of social crisis

and the means by which these crises were averted in the legendary past. It is in the decade after the completion of the Parthenon and during the plague that a shrine that may be identified with the Leokoreion was formalized and received quantities of offerings in memory of the legendary girls who gave their lives to save Athens from a similar plague.¹⁷⁰ In the aftermath of the Persian Wars, the story of Erechtheus and his family’s example may have had particular relevance, giving rise to a sort of renaissance for the worship of the founding hero and his family, in the same manner that the Asklepios cult rose from local to Panhellenic proportions during the years of the plague. Cicero (*Nat. D.* 3.50) remarks that Erechtheus and his daughters were worshipped as divinities at Athens. And indeed, in the *Erechtheus* (*Pap. Sorb.* lines 71–74) Athena proclaims: “Their souls have not gone to Hades, but I have caused their spirit to dwell in the upper reaches of the sky and I shall make a famous name throughout Hellas for men to call them the Hyakinthian goddesses.”¹⁷¹

This reading has far-reaching implications for our understanding of the role of women in Greek myth and culture. Lycurgus (*Leoc.* 100) tells us that Euripides chose this story about women because he wanted to foster a love of country in the souls of the citizens. “You will find in them a greatness of spirit and a nobility worthy of Athens,” he maintains (*Leoc.* 101). The role of women in sustaining and preserving the life and culture of the community is paramount in this, and in other stories presenting themes as grisly and, at first glance, as misogynistic as that of virgin sacrifice. Yet, valiant and heroic women go willingly to death, and are proud of their vital roles in saving the populace. They are the equals of men

¹⁶⁶ I thank Jane Lightfoot for her help with this passage and for sharing with me her insights on Heliodoros’s vocabulary.

¹⁶⁷ Plut. *Vit. Dem.* 10.5 and 12.3 tells how Demetrios Soter’s image was woven into Athena’s robe and how this act of hubris was punished when a high wind ripped the peplos sail in two, as it was transported by the ship cart in the Panathenaic procession.

¹⁶⁸ Interestingly, the Erechtheides and the Kekropides both comprise three sisters, one of whom does something extraordinary and is singled out (Parthenos/Pandora? and Pandrosos) and two of whom are grouped as a pair (the two Erechtheides who kept their oath and died and the Kekropides Aglauros and Herse who opened the box). It is possible that the two *arrephoroi* of Athenian cult represent the two sisters of myth who somehow stand apart from the sister singled out and that there is some contamination between the stories of the Erechtheides and the Kekropides.

¹⁶⁹ See Foley (supra n. 54) 65.

¹⁷⁰ Established in the third quarter of the fifth century and identified as the Leokoreion by H.A. Thompson and R.E. Wycherley, *Agora XIV: The Agora of Athens* (Princeton 1972) 123; Thompson, “Athens Faces Adversity,” *Hesperia* 50 (1981) 347–48; Thompson, “Some Hero Shrines in Ancient Athens,” in W.A.P. Childs ed., *Athens Comes of Age. From Solon to Salamis* (Princeton 1978); see also J.M. Camp, *The Athenian Agora* (London 1986) 79. Among the offerings found in the enclosure were a dozen white-ground lekythoi, suggesting funereal character for the cult. I thank Homer Thompson for sharing his insights on the shrine with me. It should be noted that the identification of the Leokoreion is not accepted by all, see Robertson (supra n. 100) 98–105.

¹⁷¹ Interestingly, an inscription of Roman date found on the Acropolis refers to a Hyakinthion, *IG* II², 1035, 52; C. Tsountas, *ArchEph* 1884, 1170; M.J. Mellink, *Hyakinthos* (Utrecht 1943) 59. The inscription dates to the first century B.C. Admittedly, the inscription does not claim that the Hyakinthion was located on the Acropolis.

who die in battle for their cities.¹⁷² Praxithea herself says: "May I have children who will do battle and be conspicuous among men" (fr. 360 N.², 25–26). In his funeral oration for those who died at Chaeroneia in 338 B.C., Demosthenes (60.27–29) praises the courageous behavior of Erechtheus and his daughters, who set an example for the young men of the Athenian tribe Erechtheidai, just as the daughters of Pandion inspired the Pandionidai, and the daughters of Leos served as inspiration for the tribe Leontidai. The story of the *Erechtheus* helps us to understand why there are so many maidens, over 30 of them, on the east side of the Parthenon frieze, why a single woman receives the place of prominence, and why there are three girls with her. The sole survivor of the royal family, Praxithea, takes her place at center above the door of the precinct for which she served as first priestess, by proclamation of Athena.

Sorbonne 2328 provides us with new and contemporary evidence that challenges us to consider new possibilities for our understanding of the Parthenon frieze. Euripides, whose topographical and aetiological interests are so well attested in his other plays,¹⁷³ is looking up at the Acropolis as he

writes.¹⁷⁴ He encourages us to look at these monuments through the eyes of the fifth-century B.C. Athenians—first and foremost as *religious* monuments, deeply connected to local foundation myths. None of us can know with certainty what the ancient images meant to the ancient viewers. But we can take up the challenge presented by new evidence and the questions that it generates. By removing old assumptions and changing our perspective by a few degrees, the pieces of the picture may fit together coherently in an entirely different way than was previously recognized. Thus, a central monument of Western culture may be seen, in part, as a monument to the heroism of three maidens who, as willing victims and with the encouragement of their mother, gave their lives to save Athens, the city that celebrated them so brilliantly at the temple we call Parthenon.

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¹⁷² Kearns (supra n. 55) 341 discusses the paradox in which the women's role in saving the city is passive while the men's role is active. "All the same," she allows, "the sacrificed princesses are given a far more definitive role in saving their country than any of the young soldiers is likely to have." Wilkins (supra n. 121) 333 sees a special link between the various princesses who die for the city (Kekropides, Hyakinthides, Erechtheides, and Leokorides) and the youth of Athens, whom they protect; the sacrifice of Makaria in the *Herakleidai* presents a similar model: "in dying for her brothers and sisters and for Athens, the daughter of Herakles is both a paradigm for communal patriotic action, doing what women can, and a young person sacrificing herself for the young."

¹⁷³ E.g., in the *Ion* (lines 1–223), which opens in the forecourt of the Temple of Apollo at Delphi and includes the chorus's description of the architectural sculpture. Also, the *Iphigeneia at Tauris*, which deals with the shrines of Artemis at Halae and Brauron as well as the Areopagus

in Athens. See Athena's instructions to Orestes: when he reaches Athens he will find a place called Halae where he is to build a temple (line 1,449); at Brauron there will be the tomb for Iphigeneia (1,452–53); and later, "on the Areopagus I saved Orestes." For Euripides' topographical interest, see M.B. Hollinshead, *Legend, Cult and Architecture at Three Sanctuaries of Artemis* (Diss. Bryn Mawr College 1980); and Hollinshead, "Against Iphigeneia's Adyton in Three Mainland Temples," *AJA* 89 (1985) 419–40. For his aetiological interests see Kearns (supra n. 23) 7.

¹⁷⁴ This will be examined more fully in a monograph that I am currently preparing. For the moment let us simply consider the possibility that Euripides was poetically inspired by the monument itself. Compare, e.g., *Pap. Sorb.* 7–8 with slab VII of the north frieze (pipes and lyres), fr. 362 N.² = fr. 60 Aust., 6–7 with slab XXXVII of the south frieze (old men and tablets). Euripides may be making a reference to Pheidias's chryselephantine statue of Athena, fr. 351 N.² = fr. 41 Aust.