

## SOME NOTES ON „THE MASTER OF SIPHNIAN HORSES“

To the visitor, looking through the collection of precious stone and bronze monuments in the Museum of Delphi, the sculptures of the Siphnian Treasury give the most impressive and complete picture of Delphic art. It may occur to him to wonder if his impressions might have been different and stronger if by chance the sculptures of some other monument in Delphi and not the Siphnian Treasury remained the best preserved to our days. However, according to Herodotos „the Treasury was amongst the wealthiest at Delphi“ — the delicacy and richness of its architectural and sculptural decoration give evidence of an unstinted expenditure of money<sup>1</sup> — so that it is probably one of the most remarkable and interesting monuments in Delphi, which, preserved in some strange way, we can still study and admire. Books and papers concerning the Siphnian Treasury are numerous and, as has been said recently<sup>2</sup>, one should feel hesitant in adding one more contribution to its rich bibliography. However, to quote the same author again, „the Treasury appears fundamental for the study of Greek artistic development in the sixth century B. C. and new contributions to its understanding might find justification“<sup>3</sup>. Furthermore one would say that the great artistic monuments, like the Parthenon or the Mausoleum of Halicarnassus, among which one can count also the Siphnian Treasury in Delphi, are universal creations of mankind and can serve as eternal themes — as everlasting motifs. Without doubt many an artist has been inspired by the Siphnian horses, many a poet by their force and expressiveness, scholars by the importance of the Siphnian decoration for the research of Archaic Greek art. It is impossible to thwart its charm and universal influence, impossible, not to think on this subject even momentarily, not to try to perceive the personalities of its authors. For all these reasons I venture to write a few notes on one of the two main masters of the Siphnian Treasury, hoping at the same time that these lines will contain more than a repetition of what was said before.

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<sup>1</sup> J. G. Frazer, *Pausanias's Description of Greece*, V, London 1913, 272.

<sup>2</sup> B. S. Ridgway, *The West Frieze of the Siphnian Treasury at Delphi: a Rearrangement*, BCH LXXXVI, 1962, 24.

<sup>3</sup> Idem.

There is a special pleasure in the fact that this theme, which interested and attracted me for many years, will appear in a volume dedicated to our eminent teacher, professor Milan Budimir, who, more than once, pointed out to us the light and beauty of the antique world.

# 1.

The French excavations in Delphi uncovered, among many monuments of sculpture, parts of two caryatids in antis, the most important pieces of the east pediment and the greater part of the frieze around the building, which belonged to the rich decoration of the Siphnian Treasury<sup>4</sup>. This Treasury, mentioned by Herodotos (III, 57) and Pausanias (X, 11, 2) and dated between 530 and 525 B. C.<sup>5</sup>, became in this way one of those precious monuments of Greek art, which were recorded in literature and later unearthed by archeologists.

Unfortunately, the sources did not give any detailed description of the monument but from the preserved fragments, the scenes on the east pediment („The Struggle for the Delphic Tripod“) and on the almost entirely preserved east and north friezes („The Synthesis of the Iliad“, „The Gigantomachy“) can be identified with certainty. However, the seriously damaged friezes on the west („The Judgment of Paris“) and especially on the south side („The Rape of the Daughters of Leukippos“) provide less material for conclusive interpretation.

The ancient sources did not mention the authors of the Treasury but on the basis of the stylistic differences it was possible to recognize the two main masters, working on the frieze<sup>6</sup>. One, whose work was

<sup>4</sup> G. Daux—P. de la Coste-Messelière, *La frise du trésor de Siphnos*, BCH LI, 1927, 1 sqq.; Ch. Picard—P. de la Coste-Messelière, *Fouilles de Delphes*, IV, 2, Monuments figurés, sculpture. Art archaïque: Les trésors „ioniques“. Paris 1928, 57 sqq.; P. de la Coste-Messelière, *Au Musée de Delphes*, Paris 1936, 237 sqq.; P. de La Coste-Messelière, *Nouvelles remarques sur les frises siphniennes*, BCH LXVIII—LXIX, 1944/45, 5 sqq.; P. de La Coste-Messelière — G. de Miré, *Delphes*, Paris 1957, Fig. 63—91; also, G. Lippold, *Die Griechische Plastik*, München 1950, 69—71; J. Charbonneau — R. Martin — F. Villard, *Grèce archaïque*, L'Univers des formes, Paris 1968, 161 sqq., Fig. 199—207.

<sup>5</sup> See ref. 4. Also, E. Langlotz, *Zur Zeitbestimmung der strengtrotfigurigen Vasenmalerei und der gleichzeitigen Plastik*, Leipzig 1920, 17 sqq.

<sup>6</sup> Also, part of an inscription, preserved on the shield of a giant on the north frieze (block B) speaks of one artist, author of the north and east frieze, but his name, unfortunately, is no longer legible (*Fouilles de Delphes* IV, 2, 82—83, Fig. 35; *Au Musée*, 16, n. 1). It was proposed that the caryatids were done by the author of the east and north frieze and the decoration on their calathos by the other one (*Fouilles de Delphes* IV, 2, 167 sqq.; *Delphes*, notes on Pl. 63—64, 90—91). It has been also considered that the sculptor of the east and north frieze designed the composition of the East pediment and the sculptor of the west and south frieze finished it (*Fouilles de Delphes* IV, 2, 161). However, the unskillfulness noticed in the composition of the East pediment is contrary to the group Hera—Athena on the north frieze, composed in the form of a pediment (*Au Musée*, 321 sqq.), in which the sculptor expressed his advanced compositional knowledge and qualities. In general, I prefer to agree with B. S. Ridgway (BCH 1962, 25) that a larger number of artists worked on the Treasury and that one could not ascribe the caryatids and pediments with certainty to the same main masters. In any case the author of the west and south frieze could have been in the same time the architect of the Treasury (see ref. 8).

characterized by oblique forms and the intertwining of figures in composition, was the author of the north and east friezes and belonged probably to a Cycladic sculptural atelier; the west and south friezes were done by an other — an artist from North Ionia<sup>7</sup>, who has been considered to have been the architect of the Treasury and „le maître d'oeuvre“, on account of the decorative and linear conception of the composition and its relation to the architectural structure of the building<sup>8</sup>.

Not so long ago Pierre de La Coste Messelière gave him the title „Master of Siphnian horses“<sup>9</sup>. Undoubtedly in this he was justified. In fact, on the preserved parts of the west and south friezes, one sees only horses. They are parading before the eye in great numbers, in full force and beauty. Indeed, by the beauty and expression of lines resulting from the stressing of the geometric shapes in the composition of the frieze, by the strength and monumentality of form, combined with an appreciable elegance, by harmony in proportions in spite of short canon and by the unity of movement they are the full accomplishment of artistic aims, and” one could not find any other, more beautiful in Greek art“<sup>10</sup>.

A few human figures preserved on two friezes I refer to are scarcely noticeable amid the neighing of Siphnian horses and the clatter of their hooves, and all the reconstructions of the missing parts of the two friezes, attempted up to now, proved also the same predominance of horses and their great number<sup>10a</sup>. It shows that this motif was popular with the author to such an extent that it could be called an obsession. On account of these characteristics he should not be ranged only among the other „animalists“ of Greek sculpture, but considered completely devoted to the theme and impelled to express it by some interior force. This brings to mind a more recent admirer of these noble animals, „the discoverer of the horse“ in the art of the XIX century, Théodore Géricault.<sup>11</sup> But if in the case of the famous French painter we possess sufficient information, in spite of his premature death, to find out the reason for his artistic inclination, we know nothing of the master of the Siphnian horses. Two fragmentary friezes are all that could be with certainty ascribed to him<sup>12</sup> and we can not even guess if the impressions these fragments give are of value in judging the artist in general.

<sup>7</sup> On account of similarities to the Clazomenian sarcophagi, first mentioned by Th. Homolle (BCH 1896, 597 sqq.). Cf. *Au Musée*, 421 sqq. His possible connection with the sculptor Bion and the existence of a sculptural atelier in Clazomene (Kjellberg, *Jahr. deutsch. arch. Inst.* 47, 1932, 9 sqq.; W. Deonna, *Dédale* II, 52—53).

<sup>8</sup> *Au Musée*, 395.

<sup>9</sup> „Le maître des chevaux siphniens“ (BCH 1944/45, 31). Also, „ionian“, and „drawtman“ or „architect“, for the author of the south and west side, as well as „islander“ or „modeller“ for the other one (*Au Musée*, 414, ref. 1). Recently, Master A for the first, and Master B for the second artist (Ridgway, BCH 1962, 25), which sounds too practical.

<sup>10</sup> J. Charbonneaux, *La sculpture grecque archaïque*, Genève 1964, 46.

<sup>10a</sup> Restorations of the south frieze, *Fouilles de Delphes* IV, 2, 126 sqq., Fig. 43.

<sup>11</sup> Géricault, *raconté par lui-même et par ses amis*, Genève 1947, 289.

<sup>12</sup> See ref. 6.

However, the presentation of themes on the south and west frieze characterized by a high originality<sup>13</sup>, speaks clearly of the artist's favour towards the horse. Leaving aside for a moment the ambiguous scene on the south side, I would like to turn to „The Judgment of Paris” on the west side, which gives sufficient evidence for one to believe in its exact identification<sup>14</sup>.

The west frieze contained three long blocks from which one, to the right (at the south-west corner of the Treasury) is missing. The first block (marked P in official publication) shows Hermes, Athena and her chariot, and an unidentified male figure. Hermes, turned to the right, holds Athena's winged horses, while Athena is mounting her chariot and arming at the same time. The male figure, considered as an attendant of Athena, has legs in profile turned to the left and frontal presentation of his torso. The head is missing but it is possible that it was turned backwards to the right<sup>15</sup>. The second block (marked Q) represents Aphrodite, descending from her chariot and putting on a necklace, as well as her quadriga, while a third, Hera's chariot, turned to the left, like Athena's, was very probably represented on the third block, which is missing.

Direct analogies known up to now, do not exist<sup>16</sup>, in spite of many representations of this motif, which was usually represented differently: three goddesses on foot, following Hermes, and Paris, standing or sitting on a rock. The composition of „The Judgment of Paris” on the west frieze of the Siphnian Treasury was new and remained unique in the iconography and particularly distinguishes the extreme originality of the sculptor. Contemplating before two preserved blocks of the west frieze and discerning at the same time the outlines of the third chariot, one could ask of what this originality mainly consists, what is new in the composition of the motif? New is the addition of chariots for each goddess, without which the theme would never leave the usual frames of mythological iconography. However, the artist needed chariots when representing horses: they were the new element in the composition of „The Judgment of Paris” and by their introduction into a theme, in which they never had a place, either before or later, their author mainly escaped the typological scheme of the motif and proved its originality.

It is true that the artist found the best way to solve the problem of the inadequacy of space, when filling the entire length of the west frieze with „The Judgment of Paris”. His composition corresponded well also to the necessity to divide the west frieze into a triptych, because

<sup>13</sup> BCH 1944/45, 31.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>15</sup> BCH 1927, 55, ref. 1; *Fouilles de Delphes* IV, 2, 135.

<sup>16</sup> La Coste-Messelière (BCH 1944/45, 30) mentioned two later representations of „The Judgment of Paris”, in which chariots are present. The goddesses on chariots appear only on the lid of a pyxis in Copenhagen (CVA, Danemark, Copenhagen, Fasc. IV, Pl. 163, 1), in which Hera's chariot is drawn by horses, but Athena's by snakes and Aphrodite's by Erores. The compositional scheme is also different.

of the vertical tripartite division of the Treasury façade, achieving in this way unity between the sculptural decoration and the Treasury architecture<sup>17</sup>. However, in keeping generally with the tripartite division of the west frieze, it was not necessary to take chariots and horses when representing this motif. Another, less talented or less inspired master would probably represent other persons, even some accessory scenes, like those we meet on the east pediment of the Treasury<sup>18</sup>. I am not going so far as to propose any possible variation of the theme. More important was, that there were other ways to choose, which the master of the Siphnian horses did not choose: he preferred horses, in keeping with his particular approach.

Another question arises here which partly influences the solution of the problem. Who chose the themes for the frieze, and especially the one on the west side? Was it the sculptor himself, as it was proposed<sup>19</sup>, or the Siphnians? It was said that Siphnos did not have a past, except, maybe, local traditions and that its inhabitants embarrassed in the choice of themes left it to the „maître d'oeuvre“<sup>20</sup>. However, we would prefer to think that the main master was limited in this choice. There is a lack of knowledge about the past of Siphnos, because it did not have the fame and reputation of some other islands<sup>21</sup>. But, it is probable that on Siphnos some deities were preferred<sup>22</sup> and one could expect that these should have had an important place in the decoration of the Siphnian Treasury. When one considers that „The Judgment of Paris“ on the entrance to the Treasury, was in fact symbolizing the triumph of Aphrodite and that it certainly was not by chance that she occupied the central place in the composition of the entire frieze, it is more than a guess that Aphrodite could have been one of these favored deities on Siphnos and, that she had to be celebrated on the sculptural decoration of the Treasury. The dedication of the destroyed west pediment of the Siphnian Treasury to an Aphrodite was also recently proposed<sup>23</sup>. Also, it is difficult to imagine that the „nouveaux riches“ Siphnians, full of their momentary richness and importance<sup>24</sup>, and proud of the possibility to compete with the most fascinating monuments in Delphi, did not want to put their personal mark on the choice of motifs of their own treasury. I agree that the oracle could advise them and suggest some themes<sup>25</sup>, for example „The Gigantomachy“ on the north frieze, and that the sculptors were free to represent themes in whatever way they wished, even to modify

<sup>17</sup> Cf. *Au Musée*, 391 sqq.

<sup>18</sup> B. S. Ridgway, *The East Pediment of the Siphnian Treasury: a Reinterpretation*, *AJA* 69, 1965, 1 sqq.

<sup>19</sup> *Au Musée*, 396.

<sup>20</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>21</sup> On Siphnos, Büchner, *PWRE* III A, 1, 263 sqq.

<sup>22</sup> Traces of the cult of a few deities are discovered on Siphnos, among which Aphrodite was not mentioned (*ibid.*, 267).

<sup>23</sup> Charbonneaux — Martin, — Villard, 164.

<sup>24</sup> On this richness of the Siphnians cf. *Her.* III, 57, and *Paus.* X, 11, 2.

<sup>25</sup> *Au Musée*, 396 sq.

them partly. However, the definite decision depended on the Siphnians themselves, and although it was highly influenced by the other factors, already mentioned, this choice fulfilled also their own desires and demands. Having all that in mind, one could suppose that it was a Siphnian request to represent the triumph of Aphrodite on the frieze above the entrance, — an essential condition which the artist had to follow in his work.

Now the question is, was it the sculptor who choose „The Judgment of Paris“ from among the various motifs celebrating Aphrodite? If so, he probably conceived the composition with chariots and horses at the same time, on account of the tripartite division of the frieze. But, it is probable, that without his preference for horse representation, he would have, with the choice in his hands, found another more simple way to fulfill the necessary conditions, in which horses need not appear at all. On the other hand, if „The Judgment of Paris“ was imposed upon the sculptor and if he himself introduced only new elements which gave the most satisfactory result in solving the problem of the elongated surface of the frieze, it can be also concluded that his choice of chariots and horses depended mostly on his personal artistic expression and his own inclination in art.

Certainly it would be wrong to insist too much on the above statement, especially because we know very little about the master of the Siphnian horses. Perhaps there are other ways to explain this introduction of horses into a motif in which they did not usually appear. If one agrees with the proposition that the author of the west and south friezes might have been an architect as well as a sculptor, wishing deeply to express his specific views in sculpture by using curvilinear geometric patterns on the friezes, the curves of horses' necks, rumps and tails<sup>26</sup>, slightly emphasized, could give him the best opportunity. It is possible in fact that the horses in great numbers on the frieze are due only to the special conditions of composition, — to the inadequacy of the elongated space, without being a favorite motif of the sculptor. They could appear almost spontaneously in the second half of the sixth century, when the popularity of horse representations increased among Greek artists. However, I prefer to believe for different reasons, especially because of the masterly and exceptional finish of the horses and their thematically superfluous presence on the frieze, that the horse motif enjoyed a special favour with the artist. It is enough to look at these noble animals, to understand that they are not purely a pattern, but that their author had, apart from talent, knowledge and creative abilities, an enormous desire, urge and necessity to make them as they are now, before our eyes in the Museum of Delphi.

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<sup>26</sup> Cf. Ridgway, BCH 1962, 28.

## 2.

The last observations on the subject of the west frieze of the Siphnian Treasury could also refer partly to its composition and the disposition of its figures.

This disposition has been recently questioned by Brunilde Sismondo Ridgway<sup>27</sup>, who proposed a rearrangement of the remaining fragments. Taking into consideration the sculptor's style and sculptural approach, she pointed out the artist's great feeling for symmetry and tried to show that the extremely harmonized coordination between the movements of Athena and Aphrodite has been destroyed by the presence of the male figure between them. Thus, she proposed the introduction of a new standing figure between the unidentified nude man, usually called Athena's „attendant“, and Aphrodite. This new figure, turned to the right symmetrically to the nude man, may have been carved on a small slab, placed between the existing blocks P and Q<sup>28</sup>.

This rearrangement is difficult to accept for various reasons.

It is true that the battered figures of Athena, her „attendant“, and Aphrodite do not seem to be completely correlated and compositionally balanced. However, it is not possible today to restore all the missing parts to their exact former positions. If such restoration were made, it might change our impressions of the discordance of the alternating parts. A proper restoration could certainly decrease the present feeling of the imbalance in the disposition of the figures and relate the male figure to both goddesses in a satisfactory way. For example, it has been already suggested that the „attendant's“ missing head might have been originally turned backwards, towards Aphrodite<sup>29</sup>, like those of Zeus and Heracles on the east pediment of the Treasury<sup>30</sup>. In this case, the male figure could not be considered to belong entirely to Athena's side, but would provide a transitional pose between the movements of the two goddesses. His legs and hands, turned to the left in the direction of Athena, would connect him to the left part of the frieze and at the same time they would contribute to the artist's symmetrical conception of the composition, maintaining the balance with Hermes on the left. On the other hand, the „attendant's“ head, turned to the right, and legs to the left, would be parallel with Aphrodite's head and legs, binding him as well as the entire left side to the central part of the frieze. In this way, the unidentified male figure would play a role of a link between the left and the central part of the triptych, connecting and separating at the same time the two compositional entities and satisfying the need of the frieze's continuity.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 24 sqq.

<sup>28</sup> The architectural evidence neither confirmed nor disproved this rearrangement, so that elements of style remain the only source in the study of the artist's scheme of composition (cf. *ibid.*, 34 sq.).

<sup>29</sup> *Fouilles de Delphes* IV, 2, 135; BCH 1927, 55, ref. 4.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Ridgway, *AJA* 69, 1965, 1—5, Pl. I—II.

It could be argued that Aphrodite's twisted attitude, especially her legs turned to the left, is sufficient to produce the impression of the transition from the left to the central part of the frieze. However, it is hard to believe that the sculptor gave any transitional role to Aphrodite, who was the central figure of the motif and of the entire frieze composition. On the contrary, one should expect the existence of different supporting forms, which would compositionally fix Aphrodite's central place and emphasise the importance of her role in the theme. A newly introduced figure could certainly give a necessary support on her right, but he would trouble the rhythmical movement and continuous course of the frieze in many ways<sup>31</sup>. On the other hand, Athena's „attendant“, with the head turned to the right, would provide, by the movement parallel to Aphrodite's, a required support, which would satisfy different needs of the composition<sup>32</sup>.

There is another aspect of this question. While we agree about the sculptor's great inclination towards the correspondance of details in composition, we would expect also a thematical balance on the west frieze in the disposition of the figures. For this reason, the proposed rearrangement would require two male figures, divine or human, to surround each goddess (scheme: god, quadriga, goddess, god). It would give six male figures on the west frieze, apart from Paris, who may have been a seventh one, and from a palm-tree, whose existence on the frieze has been suggested with sufficient certainty by the „denticules“ beside the head of Aphrodite's horse<sup>33</sup>. All this points to a large number of elements, essential for the requirements, and to an insufficient space for their satisfactory disposition. Propositions, that Paris might have been sitting on a rock, as he has been sometimes represented, and that two or even three supplementary figures might have been represented in overlapping positions on the missing part of the frieze, disagree completely with the compositional scheme which is known from the two

<sup>31</sup> For example, all three above mentioned figures have legs turned to the left and produce a united movement, which would lose rhythm and equilibrium by introducing a new pair of legs turned to the right.

<sup>32</sup> If the «attendant's» head was turned to the left, the left part of the triptych would represent, in spite of Aphrodite's attitude, a closed entity, separated completely from the rest of the composition. Bearing in mind that the rules of a continuous frieze have to dominate in composition in spite of the frieze division in triptych, such a rough disconnection could not be expected.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. *Au Musée*, 402. The probable existence of a palm tree on the frieze has been supported by the representations of similar trees on the Clazomenian sarcophagi, which are in direct contact with the west and south friezes (e. g. Kjellberg, *Jahr. deutsch. Arch. Inst.* 47, 1932, 1 sqq., Abb. 1—2). B. S. Ridgway (BCH 1962, 31, n. 1) proposed that the parallel lines («denticules») above the head of Aphrodite's horse could represent the border of Hera's flying drapery. In this case third chariot on the missing block should have been turned to the right, like Aphrodite's. This supposition, though not excluded definitely, is less probable for many reasons (cf. *Au Musée*, 390 sqq.; BCH 1944-45, 30). I stress here the necessary alternation of corresponding parts. Athena's and Aphrodite's chariots are represented symmetrically to balance the left and the central part of the composition. For the same reason Aphrodite's and Hera's chariots had to be also symmetrically represented: Aphrodite's to the right, Hera's to the left.



preserved blocks<sup>34</sup>. The composition was conceived linear and clear, without intercrossing and intertwining of figures, so that the coreation of rhythmically represented surfaces has been placed together with the expressive force of lines. A look at the attempted restoration of the west frieze in the official publication of the Siphnian Treasury<sup>35</sup>, in which Paris is sitting under the tree, shows immediately from the disposition and the number of the figures an interruption of the artist's harmonious conception of the composition and the disappearance of the continuous linear rhythm and balance. It shows clearly that the number of figures on the missing block was also limited. A more satisfactory reconstruction, corresponding better with the already mentioned characteristics of the sculptor's style, is that proposed a few years later by P. de La Coste-Messelière<sup>36</sup>. Here, apart from Athena's „attendant“, only three male figures including Hermes are represented holding the horses, which corresponds well with the necessary balance in the disposition of figures. The entire space of the frieze has been rhythmically and harmoniously filled with men and horses, while the author's tendency towards the alternation of different parts of the composition has been underlined by the symmetrical disposition of elements between the left and the central as well as between the central and the right part of the frieze.

Finally, the rearrangement by B. S. Ridgway does not correspond also to the sculptor's desire to decrease the number of human figures in the composition on account of his preference for equine representation. Of that I have already spoken earlier.

Here, I would like to mention a possible interpretation of the unidentified male figure between Athena and Aphrodite, which seems to be in agreement with the compositional scheme of the frieze, especially bearing in mind his head, originally probably turned to the right. It has been supposed that the master of the west and south friezes had been the architect of the Treasury on account of the relation of his friezes to the architectural elements of the building. This connection between the architecture and sculpture can be particularly well seen, as has been mentioned above, in the division of the west frieze into triptych, which was conditioned by the tripartite vertical division of the façade by the two caryatids<sup>37</sup>. It was planned in advance by the artist, who succeeded in this way in developing his inclination towards symmetry and the alternation of different elements and in organizing the entire façade as a big decorative pattern. This tripartite division of the façade required the introduction of the vertical prolongations above the two caryatids, which were dividing the west frieze into three parts.

<sup>34</sup> The overlapping of the horses of the quadrigas was the result of a necessity to show four horses in the same row, which the artist could not escape. For the same reason, the interlacing of figures appears in the rape scene on the south frieze (Block N). However, in both cases, the forms are essentially linear.

<sup>35</sup> *Fouilles de Delphes* IV, 2, 142, Fig. 48.

<sup>36</sup> *Au Musée*, 399, Fig. 18.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 391 sqq.

A palm-tree, whose existence has been already mentioned, served to prolong the vertical line of the south-west caryatid between Aphrodite and Hera, while the corresponding element in the prolongation of the north-west caryatid was the unidentified male figure<sup>38</sup>. I tried to show earlier that this figure, compositionally should not be considered as especially connected to Athena, but represented a transitional pose between the two goddesses. His role of a vertical, dividing two parts of the triptych, had been even emphasised by his attitude, which is more immobile than that of Hermes on the left<sup>39</sup>.

Now, who was he supposed to represent? He is naked, undistinguishable by any specific attribute. The earlier attempts to identify him with Hephaistos or Poseidon found no more than a vague support<sup>40</sup>. However, this figure by its function to prolong the vertical of the caryatid was the corresponding element to the tree. When we bear in mind the sculptor's preference for the alternation of elements, it would be logical to suppose that he chose Paris, the only earthly creature in the composition, to correlate with the tree, also a product of the earth. The sculptor might have used the tree and Paris — the two elements which were present on the scene before the arrival of the goddesses — as the frame of the triptych in which the west frieze had been divided to get the indispensable scenery marking precisely the place of the represented action<sup>41</sup>. By such a disposition of Paris and the tree in the composition, he would increase the decorative and symmetrical conception of the composition, he would organise the logical construction of the development of the theme in relation to the architectural structure of the Treasury, and he would achieve the fulfillment of the plastic postulates by obtaining pictorially and thematically the unity of the motif.

Other elements in the composition correspond well to such a placing of Paris. If we take the last restoration by P. de la Coste-Messelière as the most probable, two other male deities, apart from Hermes who holds Athena's chariot, held the reins of Aphrodite's and Hera's horses, and formed all together — god, quadriga, goddess — three divine entities. They were placed between the two fixed verticals, Paris and the tree, which prolonging the verticals of the caryatids were bound to the structure of the Treasury, emphasising in this way their earthly origin. On the other hand, inside this frame we have three divine groups, unconnected compositionally to the architecture of the building and so symbo-

<sup>38</sup> Cf. the restoration of the west frieze, ret. 36.

<sup>39</sup> *Fouilles de Delphes* IV, 2, 135.

<sup>40</sup> Idem. C. Clairmont (Das Parisurteil in der antiken Kunst, Zürich 1951, 46) proposed the identification of this personage with Ares, on account of some parallels with „The Judgment of Paris” on the Roman relief in Villa Medici. It is of interest to note that Mars on the Medici relief had been identified by some authors as Paris (C. Robert, *Die antiken Sarkophagreliefs* II, 1890, 13 sqq.; C. Schefold, *Orient, Hellas und Rom*, Bern 1949, 169).

<sup>41</sup> The sculptor's originality explains sufficiently why he did not have to keep Paris beside the tree, as was usual. On the other hand, the placing of Paris between Athena and Aphrodite thematically is possible, especially if Paris looks to the right, at Aphrodite.

lising their unearthly nature. This disposition of figures would correspond fully to the decorative tendency of the sculptor by increasing the symmetry of the compositional scheme:

god quadriga god goddess quadriga god god quadriga goddess  
Paris tree

Such a disposition can certainly be discussed. However, the identification of the male figure with a god and of one of the charioteers with Paris would produce a lack of balance in the disposition of the male figures as well as in the entire scheme of the composition.

Although the nude male figure itself does not bear any attribute supporting such an interpretation, there is also no visible detail which would contradict definitely his identification as Paris<sup>42</sup>. The nudity of Paris, depicted here as a young athlete, could be expected, especially to contrast with the deities, who seem to be provided with various garments. It is suggested that the nude figure might have held in the left hand some kind of staff<sup>43</sup>, which would correspond to the archaic representations of Paris in „The Judgment of Paris”. However, in the official publication of the Delphic sculpture, this diagonal line has been interpreted as a belt running across the breast<sup>43a</sup>. If this is correct, the lyre, which in many representations of this motif is shown in the hand of Paris, might have been here represented as hanging on his back over his left shoulder.

Anyway, considering the battered surface of the relief and the artist's ambiguity in the characterisation of different personages on the frieze, any attempt to discover who is depicted, or to restore the fragmentary male figure completely would probably be in vain. However, bearing in mind the artist's inclination towards balanced composition and also the structural relation between the architecture and the frieze on the façade of the Treasury, there is perhaps a case for approaching the solution by contemplating the frieze as a whole and trying to reconstruct its decorative scheme of composition. In this way, it might be possible to guess the sculptor's basic idea and to come nearer to his manner of composing and thinking.

### 3.

A few fragments are preserved from the south frieze of the Siphnian Treasury, of which only two can be ascribed with sufficient certainty to their original place.<sup>44</sup> Both belong to the right side of the frieze (one is part of the south-west corner) and together they represent part of a procession of chariots, horses and horsemen, marching to the right (blocks marked K and L). The two next blocks, whose position is uncertain, show another quadriga, turned also to the right,

<sup>42</sup> On the archaic representations of Paris in „The Judgment of Paris”, cf. Türk, in Roscher's *Lexicon d. Griech. u. Röm. Myth.* III, 1, 1608; C. Robert, *Heldensage* III, 1076; Clairmont, op. cit. 104, etc.

<sup>43</sup> Ridgway, BCH 1962, 29, ref. 2.

<sup>43a</sup> *Fouilles de Delphes* IV, 2, 135 sq.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 117 sqq.; BCH 1927, 45 sqq.

behind an altar (block M) and a rape scene with the rear of a quadriga (block N). The last fragment (O) represents the upper part of a woman running to the left with head turned to the right.

On account of these fragments two themes were proposed, as the most probable interpretation of the south frieze: „The Rape of the Daughters of Leukippos“ and „The Marriage of Pelops and Hippodamia“. The first interpretation<sup>45</sup>, usually accepted, matched well with the large number of horses represented and a possibility of explaining the preserved fragment with a running woman, as a second rape scene. The second<sup>46</sup>, proposed by La Coste Messelière, combines a marriage ceremony with chariots, horses and the ritual rape, with horse racing (Oenomaos sacrificing a ram on the altar of Zeus and preparing himself for the pursuit).

These interpretations of the rape scene and the altar were attempting also to find a satisfactory explanation for the large number of horses, which can be seen on the preserved fragments as well as on the proposed restorations of the entire south frieze.<sup>47</sup> However, having in mind the original composition of the west frieze for which there is no direct analogy in Greek art, and thematically superfluous presence of horses there, we do not have any right to insist expressly on the literal explanation of all elements on the south frieze especially of a long row of horses which, as a decorative pattern, repeat continuously in the same line. Both friezes were the work of the same artist — the result of his own ideas and feelings — he conceived them together and they have to be considered together when trying to understand his artistic wishes and aims. Certainly, one should not look for the same compositional principles on both sides — west and south — especially if the architecture demanded different solutions, but one can not divide the two friezes and contemplate them as two different and separate realisations created under different conditions. If the west frieze was extremely original, one should expect a similar originality on the south frieze, on which the same strength and skill in execution were noticed and underlined. Indeed, apart from some single elements<sup>48</sup>, direct analogies for the entire scene on the south frieze do not appear in Archaic Greek art and it also reveals the artist's great originality. Now, if we agree that the dominating horses on the west frieze were in fact superfluous for the theme itself and resulted only from compositional problems and the personal inclinations of the master of Siphnian horses, we could conclude similarly for the south side, and consider the horse parade on the south frieze mainly as an accessory part which is not decisive in the identification of the subject. It would be an exaggeration to deny the horse any access to the theme but it is certain that their main role on the south frieze, giving a continuous rhythm and an interrupted impression of movement, was mainly decorative. They took

<sup>45</sup> *Au Musée*, 370 sqq.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 384 sqq.

<sup>47</sup> See ref. 10a.

<sup>48</sup> *Au Musée*, 380.

part more in the conception of the compositional scheme, and less in the theme itself. When considering all we know about the artist, it is understandable that the sculptor chose just the horse as a mean to achieve the impression of continuity in composition, as a pattern of the decorative scheme, as a verse to compose the refrain of his „lyric poem”.<sup>49</sup>

For these reasons I am inclined to believe that one should look for the proper identification of the south frieze, more in a close approach and understanding of the author's aims and intentions when conceiving his compositions, and less in attempts to find the exact interpretation of the numerous horses. Such a point of view, though it gives a larger scale of possibilities for interpretation than the two proposed themes, remains, it seems to me, in proper correlation with the master's individual characteristics.

I would like to mention here, in connection with such a conclusion, a theme, scarcely referred to as a solution of the subject and usually a priori rejected: „The Abduction of Helen by Paris”. It is true that almost all the known elements of the south frieze do not speak in favour of such an interpretation: chariots and horses rarely appear and usually at a later date in this motif<sup>50</sup>; the altar, running woman and horse harness decoration do not give a satisfactory explanation; the represented rape does not correspond well to the descriptions of Helen's departure from Sparta in the literary and figural sources<sup>51</sup>. However, if agreeing with La Coste Messelière,<sup>52</sup> that it is not a rape represented on the preserved block but a conscious abandon on the part of the woman, there is a certain possibility of seeing in the rape scene Paris and Helen instead of Pelops and Hippodamia. Horses appeared in this theme and their increased number on the south frieze, corresponding to the particular inclination of the sculptor mentioned before, could be explained in several ways<sup>53</sup>. In fact if „The Abduction

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 434.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. L. B. Ghali—Kahil, *Les enlèvements et le retour d'Hélène*, Paris 1955, Nr. 23, Pl. V; Nr. 159, Pl. VI, 1 (Paris and Helen leaving on a quadriga); Nr. 140, Pl. XXVI (Paris and Aeneas with horses).

<sup>51</sup> However, it is supposed that, in earlier times, when the legend did not have a definitive shape, a rape of Helen by Paris was represented and not a willing departure (ibid., 20; also, 30, ref. 2).

<sup>52</sup> *Au Musée*, 371 sqq.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. ref. 50. Following the sixth century sources, one could suppose here, a combination of the rape scene with the marriage of Paris and Helen in Troy, an unusual motif, represented on a Corinthian crater in the Metropolitan Museum (Ghali—Kahil, Nr. 112, Pl. XL, 1) and mentioned also in literature (ibid., 30). On the other hand, I point out as a possible connecting link with the new interpretation Helen's marriage with Menelaus (?), on a dinos from Smyrna (ibid., Nr. 106, Pl. LXXXVII, 1) in the presence of Dioscouroi, on which all the personages are represented on chariots with horses. Numerous horses can be in fact connected with Dioscouroi, who seemed to be inclined towards Paris (ibid., 29). In any case, the introduction of unusual compositional elements was characteristic for the Siphnian Treasury. Apart from the west frieze, of which we spoke above, cf. on the East pediment the unusual presence of Zeus in „The Struggle for the Delphic Tripod” (Ridgway, *AJA* 1965, 4 sq.).

of Helen“ had to be represented on the south frieze, a horse rhythm, achieving a constant movement and symbolizing the flight, was the best solution to satisfy the special conditions, imposed by the elongated frieze.

On the other hand, if we accept that the master of Siphnian horses was responsible for the organization of the entire work on the Treasury and if we attribute to him a partial choice of the themes, one could expect, knowing his attested mastery and feeling for balance, to find a certain logical development of the scenes, thematically and pictorially, on the frieze. This would speak to a certain degree in favour of the above interpretation of the south frieze. Having on the west side „The Judgment of Paris“, which preceded and caused the Trojan War, and on the east, „The Synthesis of Iliad“, a scene which develops between the two events should be represented on the south to relate and explain them: „The Departure of Helen from Sparta“. <sup>54</sup> If so, taking into consideration the frieze, as a whole, the scene on the south side represented in the usual way: Helen's quiet departure between Paris and Aeneas <sup>55</sup>, would give the same rhythm of movement as the subject on the west side and would seem as its monotonous repetition. The sculptor was in fact obliged to represent Helen's departure as a pretended rape. This permitted him to differ this scene from the quiet tempo on the west side and to introduce horses and chariots, giving to the frieze the necessary continuous movement and solving the problem of the spacial inadequacy.

Certainly, many facts, of which I have mentioned a few, could be brought against this interpretation. It can also sound too speculative from different points of view. <sup>56</sup> It could in particular be an exaggeration to attribute to this sculptor and architect from the second half of the sixth century, in spite of his value and attested skillfulness, certain artistic thoughts and qualities which one meets much later, in the decoration scheme of the Parthenon. I do not insist on this here. In mentioning „The Abduction of Helen“ as one of the possible interpretations of the south frieze, I wanted in fact to point out that the sculptor's underlined originality remains contrary to the literal explanation of the represented elements and, on account of that, the proposed solution can be considered as less admissible but not definitely rejected. This originality of the author, which appeared as the inevitable result of an unusual and difficult task when solving the compositional problems under special conditions — to accomodate the imposed subject

<sup>54</sup> In this explanation, a certain difficulty is represented by the choice of „Gigantomachy“ for the north side of the frieze. This could be explained only as a direct recommendation of the Delphic oracle to the Siphnians and the main architect (cf. *Au Musée*, 397).

<sup>55</sup> Ghali-Kahil, Nr. 1—12, Pl. I—IV.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. *Fouilles de Delphes* IV, 2, 129, ref. 3. Certainly, the logical development of the action on the frieze should be taken with reserve, as we see from Poulsen's first interpretation of the west frieze (BCH 1908, 184 sqq.). Proposing that the east frieze represents Patrocle's death, it was very logical to suppose that the west frieze depicted Achilleus' vengeance.

in the inadequate space of the frieze, produced unexpected and unusual artistic solutions. It explains to a certain degree the lack of imitations of these compositions later, when artists met rarely with the same compositional problems and the necessity for similar solutions did not appear. The master of Siphnian horses succeeded in his task extremely well, which speaks not only for his artistic abilities, experience and talent, but also for an interior inspiration to use a horse as a leitmotif on both friezes and to give to the horse an express decorative role in the construction of the composition. For these reasons one should not only keep closely to the specific cavalry themes in the interpretation of the south frieze but by contemplating the whole from a distance, try to approach the basic idea of the artist, his wishes and aims. It could give some unexpected results and lead in directions entirely different from those which one followed when interpreting the horses of the south frieze of the Siphnian Treasury.

## 4.

It was mentioned a few times that the frieze of the Siphnian Treasury, and especially the south side, could have influenced in some way Panathenaic procession on the Parthenon frieze, though at the same time the great differences between the two friezes, in theme and idea, were underlined<sup>57</sup>. Similarities were ascribed to the possibility that Phidias, during his sojourn in Delphi, where he came to make the so-called Marathon base with Miltiades, Athena, Apollo and ten Athenian heroes<sup>58</sup>, was inspired by the Siphnian friezes. This supposition corresponds well chronologically to the recent dating of the Marathon base between 450 and 448 B. C.<sup>59</sup>. However, when speaking of a connection between these two artistic creations, one might ask of what in fact this influence consisted?

I tried to explain above, as far as it was possible from the preserved fragments, the inclinations and aims of the master of Siphnian horses. Staying in Delphi for some time, Phidias was able without doubt to understand them better than we do now and to grasp the importance of the horse as a medium to represent the continuity of movement along the length of the frieze. Phidias, as far as we know, may have been faced for the first time with a similar problem: to represent a long procession of men and animals on a continuous frieze, and he could in these years have been looking for a satisfactory solution which would be worthy of his talent and artistic force. He could have found this solution here, on the south frieze of the Siphnian Treasury, where another master, solving a similar problem, arrived at the satisfactory conclusion: to use the horse as a rhythmical refrain and dominant element in the

<sup>57</sup> M. Collignon, *Le Parthénon*, Paris 1914, 188; R. Demangel, *La frise ionique*, Paris 1933, 478; La Coste-Messelière, BCH 1944/45, 31, ref. 2.

<sup>58</sup> Paus. X, 10, 1.

<sup>59</sup> *Au Musée*, 447, ref. 2; E. Berger, *Das Urbild des Kriegers aus der Villa Hadriana und die marathonische Gruppe des Phidias in Delphi*, Röm. Mitt. 65, 1958, 24 sq.

composition. Phidias could have got here the first idea of using equestrian cadence on the Parthenon frieze, the first approachment to „une pensée maîtresse“<sup>60</sup>. However, he developed the horse theme much further in significance and composition than was the case on the south frieze of the Siphnian Treasury, where seems to be a certain exaggeration of the motif and abuse of the horse theme compared with the Parthenon. The Parthenon horses, in spite of their dominant role, have been kept within measured limits. These horses were celebrated many times and on many occasions and I repeat here only Ernst Buschor's words<sup>61</sup> that „Das Pferd ist durch den Parthenon geadelt, ja geheiligt. Die neue Gestalt, die es hier empfangt, ist nicht nur Befreiung von lästig gewordenem Formengust, Überführung in ein wohlklingendes Kurvensystem, Aufbrechen einer schwellenden Körperlichkeit, Eintauchen in Raum und Licht, Verstärkung des Seelenlebens, Aufspürung bestimmter Rassen und Züchtungsarten, Angleichung an einzelne Modelle. Die neue Gestalt geht vielmehr weit über all dieses hinaus, wendet sich durchaus nicht vor allem der Erscheinung, sondern dem Wesen zu“.

This does not contradict the supposition that a certain connection existed between the Parthenon frieze and the frieze of the Siphnian Treasury and I would mention here a few other aspects which support to some degree this view. The period of the great animalists in Greek sculpture was over at the time when work on the Parthenon was carried out, and the animals certainly did not represent the main interest of Phidias' artistic ambitions. If he succeeded in creating the most noble and divine animal that has ever been seen, it proves only his universal talent and genius. However, the reasons for creating a horse and introducing him into his artistic opus were probably circumstances similar to those, which faced the master of Siphnian horses: specific conditions of composition, which required such a solution. Phidias knew how to exploit the motif in a masterly fashion without overdoing and exaggerating it. But once, the Parthenon was finished, the horse motif did not become an obsession in his later work. We do not know many of his sculptures after the Parthenon, but Pausanias' detailed description of the great chyselephantine statue in Olympia<sup>62</sup> gives some clue, if one accepts the dating of Zeus after Athena Parthenos to be correct<sup>63</sup>. Horses appear very seldom on the decorative figural complex of this statue<sup>64</sup>, which shows that the motif played a role in the artist's

<sup>60</sup> J. Charbonneaux, *La sculpture grecque classique*, Genève 1964, 119.

<sup>61</sup> *Pferde des Phidias*, München 1948, 7.

<sup>62</sup> Paus. V, 11.

<sup>63</sup> G. Richter, *The sculpture and sculptors of the Greeks*, New Haven 1930, 221 sqq.; J. Liegle, *Der Zeus des Phidias*, Berlin 1952, 466 sqq.; A. Mallwitz — W. Schiering, *Die Werkstatt des Phidias in Olympia*, Berlin 1964, 272., etc. Cf. Vasić, *Živa Antika* XVIII, 129 sqq.

<sup>64</sup> „On the pedestal which supports the throne and the whole gorgeous image of Zeus, there are figures of gold, the Sun mounted in a car, and Zeus and Hera, . . . and the Moon riding what seems to me a horse.“ (Paus. V, 11, 8 — translation by Frazer, *Pausanias' Description of Greece* I, 252).



earlier works and he did not feel any inclination or necessity to continue it later. He could have been weary of horses as an artist at this moment and the nonexistence of horses around Zeus can be taken as a reaction to the Parthenon frieze, but this only confirms the required appearance of animals in his work and their temporary role.

For these reasons I am inclined to believe that the connection, if any, between the Siphnian frieze and the Panathenaic procession rests with the horse motif, the horse himself, and that Phidias might have found in Delphi the famous horse cadence, when solving the compositional problem of the Parthenon frieze. However, Phidias knew how to govern the horse, when using this theme on the Parthenon, but while contemplating the horses on the south frieze of the Siphnian Treasury — their number and excessively dominant role — one gets the impression that the horses here have governed the master.

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I did not say anything about the other artist of the Siphnian Treasury, the author of the east and north frieze. He might have been „young, enthusiastic and in love with art for art's sake“<sup>65</sup>, but, certainly, also talented and skilled. By explaining his gods and heroes in detail and telling loudly and enthusiastically the story of their exploits he became less mysterious than his companion. By modelling in the round and disposing the figures densely, he approached new tendencies in sculpture which were partly leaving behind the archaic principles in art and indicating a way towards the classical epoch. In many qualities he was equal to his rival; however, if we prefer the master of Siphnian horses to this master of the clash of arms<sup>66</sup>, it is in a certain way only the echo of modern time, of the new artistic trends which are aiming in an entirely opposite direction to the finished and perfected shapes of Greek classical sculpture. The damaged remains of the south and west friezes of the Siphnian Treasury in Delphi, in spite of the preserved details unveiling horses full of beauty, force and life, leave on the whole the impression of something unsaid, unclear and unfinished, in which geometric lines, resulting from the artist's decorative conception of composition triumph completely over the action and theme. Here, maybe, lie the real reasons why these friezes are so close to us still in the present days, and their master, the master of Siphnian horses, remains attractive and actual.

*Belgrade.*

*R. Vasić*

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<sup>65</sup> Ridgway, BCH 1962, 25.

<sup>66</sup> Indeed, comparing the two artists, one could notice that weapons are not at all represented on the south and west frieze while on the other two sides one can hear only rattling of arms. This fact, though partly due to the choice of themes, explains also the characters of the two artists, who pictured the events in a way which suited them best.

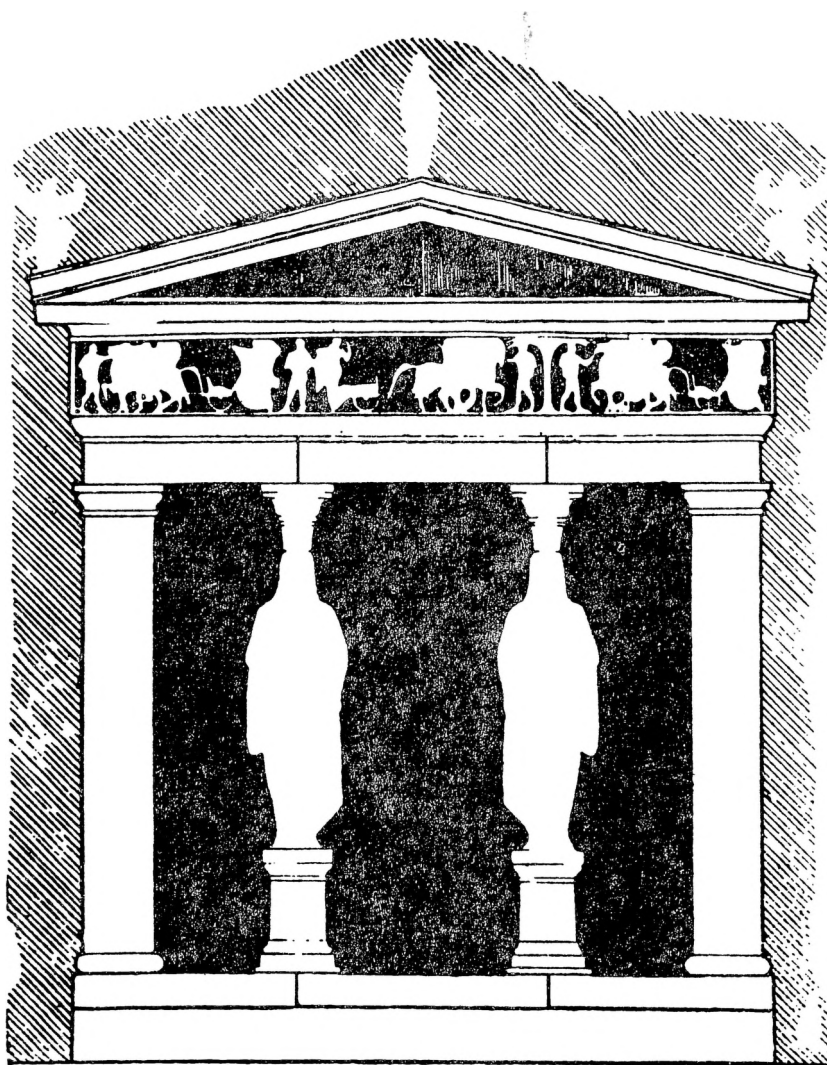


Fig. 2. Reconstruction of the Treasury façade. After *Au Musée de Delphes*, Fig. 18.