New Approaches
to the Temple of Zeus
at Olympia
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at Olympia

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Edited by
András Patay-Horváth

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface ................................................................................................................................. x

List of Illustrations and Tables ................................................................................... xii

Abbreviations ................................................................................................................... xx

Introduction ..................................................................................................................... 1

Adopting a New Approach to the Temple and its Sculptural Decoration
András Patay-Horváth

**Part I: Architecture**

Chapter One ..................................................................................................................... 16

The Temple Architecture and its Modifications during the 5th Century BCE
Arnd Hennemeyer

Chapter Two .................................................................................................................. 39

Versatzmarken auf Baugliedern des Zeustempels von Olympia
Ulf Weber

Chapter Three ................................................................................................................ 56

Metrologisches in Olympia
Wolfgang Sonntagbauer

**Part II: Sculpture**

Chapter Four .................................................................................................................... 74

Dating the Corner Figures of the West Pediment and Questions Arising from the Use of Parian and Pentelic Marbles in the Sanctuary
Olga Palagia

Chapter Five .................................................................................................................... 90

Noch einmal rechts und links am Zeus-Tempel von Olympia
Tonio Hölscher
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Six</td>
<td>An der linken Seite des großen Tempels (Paus. 5.26.2)</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three</td>
<td>The Great Hecatomb to Zeus Olympios: Some Observations on IvO No. 14</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five</td>
<td>The Justice of Zeus at Olympia</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Six</td>
<td>Charles Seltman, le temple de Zeus et le monnayage d’argent des Éléens</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four</td>
<td>Lucian on Herodotus: A Possible Second Century AD View on the West Pediment</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Six</td>
<td>The East Pediment and the Temple of Zeus Reconstructed in Virtual Reality</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four</td>
<td>Polykleitos’ Works “From One Model”: New Evidence Obtained from 3D Digital Shape Comparisons</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Fourteen</td>
<td>223</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virtual Environments and Technological Solutions for an Enriched</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viewing of Historical and Archaeological Contexts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Francesco Gabellone</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Fifteen</td>
<td>233</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cloud-based Collaborative Framework for Remote Real-time Interaction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with Large-scale 3D Data</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yasuhide Okamoto, Gregorij Kurillo, Takeshi Oishi, Katsushi Ikeuchi, Ruzena Bajcsy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>251</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Authors of this Volume</td>
<td>276</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Index of Ancient Personal and Place Names</td>
<td>280</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This volume contains the proceedings of an international symposium held at Budapest between 8th and 10th May 2014. The idea and the title of this conference emerged from a series of projects and studies related to the temple and its sculptures which represent my unconventional approach to this monument. The results concerning the east pediment and the construction of the temple were published during the last decade and because many specialists seemed to be unconvinced, I originally expected that the conference would focus exactly on these controversial topics. Moreover, in order to facilitate the discussion, I invited first of all those colleagues, whom I knew or suspected to be in disagreement with me. Unfortunately, they have all declined or simply did not answer. Their conspicuous absence from the conference and from the proceedings is therefore not due to some predisposition or selectivity on my part. There is one single contribution in this volume (by Prof. Tonio Hölscher), which was not presented as a paper at the symposium, but it is a most welcome addition, because it clearly shows that it was not my intention to exclude any approach, even if it is fundamentally different from my own one.

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

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

Last but not least, it is a pleasure to acknowledge the financial help of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, which enabled the symposium to be held. During the preparatory phase, I benefited from the advice and help of H. J. Kienast (München), O. Palagia (Athens), P. Siewert (Wien) and R.
Scopigno (Pisa). They all agreed to chair some of the sessions and took part in the discussions. Colleagues, friends and students from Budapest also contributed substantially to the organization and the success of the conference and helped to enrich the program in various ways. I would like to thank particularly Á. M. Nagy, M. Dági, Á. Bencze (Department of Greek and Roman Antiquities of the Museum of Fine Arts), Zs. Mráv (Hungarian National Museum) and last but not least Gy. Németh (Institute for Ancient History, University Eötvös Loránd). I am greatly indebted to all of them.

Cambridge Scholars Publishing has already made a significant contribution to the study of the temple of Zeus at Olympia by publishing a collective volume dedicated to the chryselephantine statue of Pheidias (The Statue of Zeus at Olympia: New Approaches, ed. by J. McWilliam, S. Puttock, T. Stevenson and R. Taraporewalla, 2011) and I am most grateful for the offer to include these proceedings in the programme as well.
Chapter One (pages 33-38)

Fig. 1. Temple of Zeus, metrological scheme of ground plan, drawing by Wilhelm Dörpfeld 1880, with measurements in ‘Olympic feet’ (later erroneously rejected by Dörpfeld himself). Copyright DAI.

Fig. 2. Temple of Zeus, alteration during construction process (marking in light grey: hypothetical original layout; in dark grey: execution). ‘Steinplan’, detail of the north eastern corner.

Fig. 3. Modification of the double-storey lines of columns and their stylobate. Marked in dark grey: remains in situ; in light grey: reconstruction of phase II; line drawing: reconstruction of phase I.

Fig. 4. Temple of Zeus, cross section, after Dörpfeld 1892 (architecture) and Adler (statue), with essential modifications according to the current state of research.

Fig. 5. The floor in the area behind the statue, section drawing. a) remains in situ in the 19th c. (Forbat 1935); Copyright DAI, Grabung Olympia. b) reconstruction, lime floor covering the gap between the base and the paving block; c) when the base settled, the joint couldn't open but was compressed.

Fig. 6. White marble rim, block at the south-western corner of the Zeus' base (drawing by Dörpfeld 1880; anathyrosis and legend added) Copyright DAI.

Fig. 7. Reconstruction of the base and the shallow basin, both paved with dark grey Eleusinian limestone, and the white marble rim (on the drawing marked in light grey).

Fig. 8. Cella, view about from the threshold. Based on a drawing of Friedrich Krischen (in: Schrader 1941, 51, fig. 70), but fundamentally
altered according to the reconstruction proposed in the text and with translucent roof tiles and high parapet.

Fig. 9. The cella after its modification and the erection of Phidias' statue of Zeus.

Chapter Two (pages 50-55)

Fig. 1. Zeustempel, Metopen-Triglyphenfries über dem Pronaos. After Curtius – Adler 1892, 138 Fig. 170.

Fig. 2. Pronaos des Zeustempels, linke obere Ecke der Augiasmetope und Oberteil der Atlasmetope mit den Versatzmarken. After Curtius – Adler 1892, 174 Fig. 205; 177 Fig. 207.

Fig. 3. Zeustempel, Atlasmetope in Aufriss und Schnitt, Ausklinkungen zum Heben markiert. After Curtius – Adler 1892, 151 Fig. 173.

Fig. 4. Zeustempel, Versatzmarken auf drei Löwenkopfsimen, Ξ ΙΣ und ΝΑ auf der Oberseite sowie Ε auf der Rückseite. After Willemsen 1959, Pl. 123.

Fig. 5. Zeustempel, Versatzmarken auf Dachziegeln aus parischem Marmor. After Dittenberger – Purgold 1896, 695.

Fig. 6. Zeustempel, Versatzmarken auf Dachziegeln aus pentelischem Marmor (die Nr. 18 und 75–88 sind Unternehmermarken) After Dittenberger – Purgold 1896, 706–708.

Fig. 7. Zeustempel, Rekonstruktionszeichnung einer Giebellecke mit Marmordach After Curtius – Adler 1892, Pl. 16.

Fig. 8. Zeustempel, Kalypterfragment aus parischem Marmor mit Versatzmarken auf der Oberseite

Chapter Three (page 71)

Fig. 1. Proportionale Zusammenhänge zwischen den Laufbahnen der Olympien, der Heräen, dem olympischen Zeustempel, dem Poseidontempel in Isthmia und der Cheopspyramide
Chapter Four (pages 83-89)

Fig. 1. West pediment A. Pentelic marble. Olympia Museum. Photo: Olga Palagia.

Fig. 2. West pediment V. Parian marble. Olympia Museum. Photo: Olga Palagia.

Fig. 3. West pediment B. Pentelic marble. Olympia Museum. Photo: American School of Classical Studies at Athens: Alison Frantz Photographic Collection PE 124.

Fig. 4. West pediment U. Pentelic marble. Olympia Museum. Photo: American School of Classical Studies at Athens: Alison Frantz Photographic Collection PE 126.

Fig. 5. West pediment B. Olympia Museum. Photo: American School of Classical Studies at Athens: Alison Frantz Photographic Collection PE 128.

Fig. 6. East pediment O. Parian marble. Olympia Museum. Photo: American School of Classical Studies at Athens: Alison Frantz Photographic Collection PE 85.

Fig. 7. West pediment B. Olympia Museum. Photo: American School of Classical Studies at Athens: Alison Frantz Photographic Collection PE 18.

Fig. 8. West pediment Q. Parian marble. Olympia Museum. Photo: American School of Classical Studies at Athens: Alison Frantz Photographic Collection PE 147.

Fig. 9. Portrait statue from the Heraion. Parian marble. Olympia Museum A 144. Photo: Olga Palagia.

Fig. 10. Head of Agrippina the Elder. From the west slope of the Acropolis of Athens. Athens National Museum 3554. Photo: Olga Palagia.

Chapter Seven (pages 107-109)

Fig. 1: Olympia, Zeus Temple, Atlas metope. Photo: © Hirmer Photoarchiv.
Fig. 2: Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum 3695, Attic red-figure Kylix by Douris. Photo: © Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.

Fig. 3a, b: Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, Attic red-figure Amphora attributed to the Polygnotos-group, Lewis Collection. © Fitzwilliam Museum, University of Cambridge. By permission of the Master and Fellows of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge.

Fig. 4: Basel, Skulpturhalle, model of north metopes 24 and 25, Parthenon. Photo: © Dieter Widmer (E. Berger, Der Parthenon in Basel. Dokumentation zu den Metopen, Basel 1986, pl. 3,3).

Fig. 5: London, the British Museum E73, Attic red-figure Kylix by the Kleophrades-painter. Photo: © Trustees of the British Museum.

Chapter Ten (page 159)

Fig. 1: Les rythmes de la production monétaire éléenne, d’après Ch. Seltman

Chapter Eleven (pages 184-185)

Fig. 1: Scheme of Proceeding for the use of written sources in Classical Archaeology (by the author)

Fig. 2: Portion of the Plan (to the north) of the sanctuary of Zeus. The space marked by the letter “H” gives an idea of the possible place of the Bomos of the Heralds mentioned by Pausanias.

Chapter Twelve (pages 196-200)

Fig. 1. Traditional and virtual 3D reconstruction model of the temple.

Fig. 2. Illumination of the chryselephantine statue through the door: (a) reconstruction drawing after Hennemeyer 2011, Fig. 1; (b) virtual 3D model

Fig. 3. Illumination of the chryselephantine statue through a hypothetical window in the roof: (a) reconstruction drawing after Hennemeyer 2011, Fig. 2; (b) virtual 3D model
Fig. 4. Illumination of the chryselephantine statue through the translucent marble tiles

Fig. 5. Conceivable reconstructions of the central group of the east pediment

Fig. 6 Open arrangement Type „A”: reconstruction drawing after Herrmann 1972.

Fig. 7. Figure G: original fragments (left), virtual 3D model of the fragments (centre), complete virtual 3D reconstruction of the figure (right)

Fig. 8. Virtual 3D models according to the closed arrangement Type „A”

Fig. 9. Figures G and K according to the open arrangement Type „A”.

**Chapter Thirteen (pages 215-222)**

Fig. 1. Polykleitos’ Doryphoros found in the Palaestra of Pompei (here called “Pompeii Statue”) Naples, National Archaeological Museum, inv. 6011

Fig. 2. Polykleitos’ Diadoumenos found in the House of Diadoumenos on Delos. Athens, National Museum, inv. 1826

Fig. 3. Bronze group of the so-called “Dancers” found in the Villa dei Papiri, Herculaneum. Naples, National Archaeological Museum, inv. 5604-05, 5619-21

Fig. 4. 3D scan in the National Archaeological Museum in Naples in 2007

Fig. 5. Alignment of two 3D foot models

Fig. 6. Visualization of the distances with color-mapping. Here the threshold is 2mm.

Fig. 7. “Mechanical copy” in marble (Pfanner 1989)

Fig. 8. Polykleitos’ Doryphoros copied by Apollonios as a herm, found in the Villa dei Papiri in Herculaneum (here called “Bronze Head”) Naples, National Archaeological Museum, inv. 4885
Fig. 9. 3D shape comparison of the Doryphoros (Bronze Head, left) and the Diadoumenos (right). The distances to the latter are plotted on the former. The scale of the Doryphoros and the Diadoumenos is 1 : 0.978. Threshold 4mm.

Fig. 10. A comparison of the right feet of the Doryphoros (left) and the Diadoumenos (right). The scale of the Doryphoros and the Diadoumenos is 1 : 0.978. Threshold 4mm.

Fig. 11. A comparison of the left feet of the Doryphoros (left) and the Diadoumenos (right). The scale of the Doryphoros and the Diadoumenos is 1 : 0.978. Threshold 4mm.

Fig. 12. Amazon types. From left to right: Sciarra, Sosikles, Mattei. (after Boardman 1985 fig. 195)

Fig. 13. Bronze herm of the Mattei type Amazon found in the Villa dei Papiri in Herculaneum. Naples, National Archaeological Museum, inv. 4889

Fig. 14. Amazon head of the Sosikles type. Rome, Musei Capitolini, Palazzo dei Conservatori, inv. 1091

Table 1. A comparison of the left feet of the three Amazon types with the Doryphoros and the Diadoumenos. Threshold 4mm.

Table 2. A comparison of the right feet of the three Amazon types with the Doryphoros and the Diadoumenos. Threshold 4mm.

Table 3. Face comparison of the three Amazon types with the Doryphoros and the Diadoumenos. Threshold 4mm.

Chapter Fourteen (pages 229-232)

Fig. 1. Sites of the World Heritage List

Fig. 2. A mobile device showing the actual state and original state of an inaccessible house in Pompeii (Casa dei Ceii).

Fig. 3. Reconstruction of a residential area of ancient Syracuse, in Greek period
Fig. 4. The reconstruction of ancient Metapontum sanctuary

Fig. 5. The reconstruction of Temple of Apollo in Syracuse

Fig. 6. An inaccessible monument: The Hypogeum of Festoons in Taranto.

Fig. 7. Virtual 3D reconstruction of the same monument.

Fig. 8. The objects found in the Hypogeum and used in the virtual reconstruction in the current exhibition of the Nat. Arch. Mus. of Taranto.

Chapter Fifteen (pages 246-250)

Fig. 1. The overview of the collaborative framework for real-time large 3D model interaction. Each client is connected to all three servers.

Fig. 2. The client application window. On this system users can share, manipulate 3D objects, and communicate with other users.

Fig. 3. Collaborative manipulation. Each user can manipulate 3D objects in the shared 3D space with the following operations: translation, rotation, change of scale, and change of color/material properties.

Fig. 4. The annotation tool. Users can add annotation markers on the surface of the 3D object and create information pages formatted in HTML that can be shared among remote users.

Fig. 5. Pointer tool. User A is using the pointer tool (in the first person perspective) as a host user while remote users, such as User B, can see the avatar of User A pointing at the specific feature with an arrow.

Fig. 6. Network protocol for collaboration. Each client sends their viewpoint, the states of active objects, the usage of collaborative tools, and chat messages in each display frame. The server sends all connected users’ states, the changed states of manipulated objects, the usage of tools by other users, and messages.

Fig. 7. Hierarchical 3D mesh. The left image represents the process of recursive decomposition of meshes based on the voxel space. The input model is decomposed as a tree structure, simplified by each tree node, and
converted to small mesh-patch based LOD representation such as shown on the right.

Fig. 8. Hybrid rendering using geometry and image. We pre-render the appearance of the 3D object from grid points around that object. In the online display process, the images rendered at the closest points to the user’s active viewpoint can be used to improve the rendering quality by projecting it onto the sparse geometric data as a texture.

Fig. 9. Sharing process of user’s 3D images. We clip, quantize, and compress the depth and color images from Kinect capture data. That data is transferred via the cloud and shared with other users.

Fig. 10. The case studies of the collaboration work in the Roman sculptures’ research project. Top left: the comparison of ancient Roman sculptures to determine whether they originate from the same original statue. Top right, Bottom left and right: the scenes of demonstration and presentation of collaborative discussion between remote locations.
ABBREVIATIONS

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

**Asylia**

**Choix Delphes**

**CID**

**Curtius – Adler 1892**

**DNO**

**FD**

**Furtwängler 1897**

**IED / Minon 2007**

**IK Ilion**
P. Frisch (Hg.), *Die Inschriften von Ilion*, Bonn 1975.

**IvM**
O. Kern (Hg.), *Die Inschriften von Magnesia am Maeander*, Berlin 1900.


INTRODUCTION

ADOPTING A NEW APPROACH TO THE TEMPLE AND ITS SCULPTURAL DECORATION

ANDRÁS PATAY-HORVÁTH

Abstract

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

Introduction

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

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

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

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

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

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² Most recently e.g. Barringer 2008; Kyrieleis 2011, 2013.
³ Robert 1919, 291-296.
Adopting a New Approach to the Temple and its Sculptural Decoration

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

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

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

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

5 For details see Patay-Horváth 2006 and 2008, 55-64.
Hippodameia or for the queen Sterope. It is completely incompatible with
the traditional interpretation and strongly suggests that another should be
looked for.

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

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

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7 Kyrieleis 2013, 67, n. 37.
8 Holloway 1958, 403: “Thus the parallel with the Sterope is superficial and exists
only in the regularity of the Demeter’s waving hair.”
9 Bol 1988, 76: „Bei Frauendarstellungen gerät das halblange Haar in archaischer
Zeit um die Mitte des 7. Jahrhunderts ausser Mode.”
10 The following summary is based on Patay-Horváth 2007.
First the notion of a chariot race or the preparations for such a contest is to be discarded, even if it may seem at first plausible because of the two chariot teams flanking the central group. Actually, these antithetic chariots and horses are not characteristic elements for the depiction of a chariot race, but can be seen in a variety of cases and are a convenient device filling the middle part of any pediment, and characterize at the same time the protagonists as belonging to the wealthiest and noblest heroes.\textsuperscript{11}

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

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

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

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

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

\textsuperscript{12} See chapter twelve below in this volume.
There are not, I think, many scenes of Greek mythology meeting all or most of these requirements and the preparations for the chariot race between Pelops and Oinomaos can practically be ruled out. An important, but seldomly represented scene from the Iliad, the reconciliation of Agamemnon and Achilles is far more probable in my view.

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

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

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

The Economic Background and the Historical Setting

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

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

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

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

14 Paus. 1. 15. 2-3; 10. 25-27; 5. 25. 8-10.
15 The guides are attested already for the early imperial period (RxO No. 64, 77, 83, 110, 120 and Varro Men. Frg. 34 apud Nonius 676, 8) and are frequently referred to by Pausanias as well (cf. Jones 2001, 33-39).
charioteer of Pelops\footnote{Paus. 5. 10. 7.}) but in the case of „Baugeschichte” he could only report what he was told. And his local guides at Olympia provided demonstrably wrong pieces of information in several cases.

Pausanias (5. 16. 1) says e.g. that the Heraion was built in the 8th year of Oxylos by the people of Skillous. The latter statement is simply unreasonable given the size of the building, which finds contemporary parallels only at Argos and Tegea, but the date is definitely and markedly wrong, since the temple was built not in the dark ages implied by Oxylos, but only around 600 B.C.ootnote{For a summary see Mallwitz 1972, 137-143, for details concerning the chronology Mallwitz 1966.}

Pausanias (5. 15. 1) also says that the Leonidaion was built by a local, i.e. Elean man Leonidas, although it is attested epigraphically that he was a Naxian. The error is however not to be attributed to the periegetes, because the inscription was at the time of his visit already covered under a thick layer of mortar, so must have derived from his local guides.\footnote{IvO No. 651. Cf. Mallwitz 1972, 246-247.} They were obviously distorting the evidence in order to glorify Elis.

The mentioning of an otherwise unknown local architect for the temple of Zeus (Paus. 5. 10. 4) can thus be seen as yet another example of these local-patriotic tales, but certainty in this matter is of course beyond our reach. The financing of the temple construction from the Pisatan booty is, on the contrary, demonstrably a local myth and has nothing to do with real history. If we accept the ancient testimonia, including Pausanias (6. 22. 2-4), on the date of this war between Pisa and Elis as historically correct, the war must antedate the temple construction by ca. 100 years and thus cannot be connected with it. But actually, not only the war but even the early existence of a political entity named Pisa has been convincingly questioned recently and so the booty from such a war is ruled out entirely.\footnote{Luraghi 2008, 79: „The suspicion becomes certainty at least in the case of Pisatis, which everyone now agrees never existed as an independent political entity before being created by the Arcadians in 365 BC.” Köv 2013 can be regarded as the last and most probably unsuccessful attempt to restore the historicity of archaic Pisa. Cf. Roy, forthcoming, note 14.} It has also been suggested, that the war mentioned here by Pausanias was identical with the so-called Triphylian war, which is mentioned in passing by Herodotus (4.148). Actually, the phrasing does not conclusive suggest one single war, but even if this had been the case, the temple construction could not have resulted from the hypothetical booty taken from these cities, simply because it was surely insufficient for