

Meetings with the East: Athens and Pergamum

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The ancient city of Athens had been at its height during the mid-fifth century B.C., and showed the power and wealth it had obtained through the Delian League and notable defeat of the Persians in the construction of the Acropolis, especially the Parthenon. Pergamum, another ancient city of antiquity, was at its height in the third century B.C., and similarly embarked on a building project to showcase the power and wealth gained from the treasury and a historic victory against the Gauls achieved by Attalus I, by constructing monuments atop their Acropolis, such as the Great Altar and the Dying Gauls. Though both cities were of a different time period, they shared a similar motivation for constructing grand monuments: The desire to demonstrate their power and wealth to citizens, visitors, and the world and to commemorate the defeat of a notable enemy. However, because of the conquests of Alexander and a new awareness of the Eastern world, the sculptures and monuments, while they shared a common theme, also showed the changes and differences in Hellenic and Hellenistic Art: The Athenians depicted the 'other' in general concepts and through mythology, whereas the architects at Pergamum included the 'other' in actual depictions and characterizations of them, thereby showing the humanizing change in sculpture between the two periods.

Between the years of 499 and 449 B.C., the Greeks and Persians were at war. During these years, the Acropolis in Athens and the temple that was under construction there had been destroyed by the Persians. In 480 B.C., the Greeks defeated the Persians at Salamis, with "a combined fleet under Athenian command."¹⁵ The Greco-Persian wars were a main factor in the emergence of the Delian League, which in turn would allow Athens to grow to the Empire that it would soon become. The wars were also a main factor in the creation of Panhellenism, "a vital concept embodying the notion of political freedom, from the rule of a tyrant either within the city or imposed from the outside, and the insistence on the rule

15. B.F. Cook, *The Elgin Marbles* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 8.

of law."¹⁶ The wars would also set in stone the idea of the 'other', an "opposition between Greek and barbarian, west and east."¹⁷

Though the Delian League began as a voluntary league whose purpose was to defend Greece from the Persian threat, the Athenians, having grown stronger after the Battle of Salamis, soon gained control over the Aegean. They began to require tribute from other members of the League, and from this moment on the Delian League began to turn into the Athenian Empire.¹⁸ This is evidenced by the movement of the League's treasury from Delos to Athens in 454 B.C. Becoming part of the Delian League was now less voluntary and more mandatory, and if members tried to leave, they "experienced the use of force."¹⁹ Athens began to interfere in the politics of the allied cities, usually by "installing garrisons and resident Athenian officials to supervise" the payment of tribute amongst other things.²⁰

Peace was made between the Greeks and Persians in 449/8 B.C., signaling a natural end to the Delian League. The other members of the League had increased Athens' power "because they preferred to pay money and stay at home rather than fight", and their resulting lack of experience with war "rendered them defenceless and at the mercy of Athens."²¹ The Athenians began to use the tribute they collected to fund the rebuilding of the Athenian Acropolis, as well as other buildings throughout Athens. Physical and visual representations of power were very important to the Greeks. Temples became meaningful in polis culture in both religious and non-religious contexts. Temples "were built to house the cult statue and were a focus of cultic practice," while containing most of the city's wealth inside as well.²² Religion, unlike the politics of ancient times, was open to everyone: men, women, children and slaves alike, were allowed to participate "in acknowledging and celebrating the gods of the community."²³ These constructions provided a visualization of the wealth and power in Athens

16. Jenifer Neils, *The Parthenon: From Antiquity to the Present* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 37.

17. *ibid.*

18. Cook, *Elgin Marbles*, 8.

19. Michael Grant, *The Ancient Mediterranean* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969), 199.

20. Cook, *Elgin Marbles*, 9.

21. Neils, *The Parthenon*, 40.

22. *ibid.*, 59.

23. *ibid.*

had gained through the defeat of the Persians, the east, and the evolution from the Delian League to the Athenian Empire.

It was around this time that democracy was developing in Athens. While Cimon, the aristocratic leader, was in Sparta, Ephialtes and Pericles arranged a coup in 461 B.C. They “stripped the Areopagus of its powers, leaving it with little more than the right to sit as a court for murder cases and sacrilege” and distributed original powers amongst the Council, Assembly and law courts.²⁴ After Ephialtes was assassinated in 461 B.C., Pericles became the leader of the democratic party, beginning the shift from oligarchy to democracy in Athens. As the power of Athens increased in the Aegean, so did the power of the Assembly in Athens: It “could make laws on all subjects, raise taxes, supervise their spending, and conduct all aspects of foreign policy.”²⁵ Though the positions were rotated annually and filled by lot, the election of the generals, who ran the army and navy, was the supreme prize in Athenian politics.²⁶ Pericles held this role after 462 and continuously from 443 until 430.²⁷ His influence pervaded Athenian politics until his death during the plague in 429 B.C.

Proud of its newly formed democracy and its great military power, Athens wanted to show off its wealth and power through the buildings of the city, and by rebuilding the Acropolis that had been destroyed by the Persians. With the accumulated tribute wealth from the Delian League, the city had “the means and the security to embark on a costly domestic project.”²⁸ Pericles is often associated with the building program, however it is “the assembly that had to decide whether and what to rebuild, who would be in charge, and how to fund the projects.”²⁹ It is obvious that after the rise of democracy and Athenian power, “there was a determination to create a city worthy [of these honours].”³⁰ It was not until after the Athenian and Persian peace that work on the Acropolis was started. Many of the new buildings constructed “were thank-

24. Charles Freeman, *Egypt, Greece and Rome: Civilizations of the Ancient Mediterranean* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 201.

25. *ibid.*, 202.

26. Andrew Steward, *Classical Greece and the Birth of Western Art* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 118.

27. *ibid.*

28. Neils, *The Parthenon*, 52.

29. *ibid.*, 53.

30. Freeman, *Egypt, Greece and Rome*, 206.

offerings to the gods, especially Athena, for the victories over this barbarian foe."³¹ The ruins of the destroyed buildings were used in the rebuilding, evoking "the victories of the Persian Wars."³² The greatness of the Parthenon and the other buildings on the newly redone Acropolis demonstrated not only the great power, wealth, and cultural of Athens, but also showed that the buildings "[were] a brainchild of democracy, not a monarchy, tyranny, or aristocracy," and in totality, proudly expressed their newly found role as the leaders of the Athenian Empire as well as vanquishers of the other.³³

The reconstruction of the Parthenon began in 447 B.C. and was completed by 432 B.C. The Parthenon was the centerpiece of the Building Program of Athens, and along with the other four buildings that made up the Acropolis, marked "the high point of the glorifications of Athens, in the period when the city stimulated all kinds of creative genius."³⁴ The temple was built using the 9:4 ratio that was popular at this time, on top of the ruins of the original limestone podium which had been destroyed in the war, some of the remains were even reused in the rebuilding process.³⁵ The temple itself was mostly created in the Doric style, which had longer columns, thinner shafts and metopes than previous styles.³⁶ However, there were some Ionic features incorporated into the temple, such as the ionic columns found in the back room and the frieze that ran along "the exterior of the cella, the back room, and porches."³⁷ The Parthenon, built completely out of marble, contained "more sculpture than any temple before or after."³⁸ The architect of the Parthenon, Iktinos, designed the building using *entasis*, an architectural style characterized by "columns lean[ing] inward slightly from bottom to top" creating "no true verticals or horizontals in the building, and hence no right angles."³⁹ This idea was motivated by the "desire to satisfy the viewer's subjective perceptions of what looks right"

31. Steward, *Classical Greece*, 131.

32. *ibid.*, 132.

33. *ibid.*, 125.

34. John Griffiths Pedley, *Greek Art and Archaeology*, 5th ed. (Boston: Prentice Hall, 2012), 251.

35. Neils, *The Parthenon*, 68.

36. Pedley, *Greek Art*, 252.

37. *ibid.*, 252-3.

38. Neils, *The Parthenon*, 67.

39. Pedley, *Greek Art*, 253.

and contributes enormously to the beauty of the Parthenon.⁴⁰

At the time that the Parthenon was constructed, Greece was in the period we consider the High Classical, and it is in fact the Acropolis in Athens for which this period is most well-known. The High Classical period is characterized by a focus on drapery and the movement of the sculptures rather than emotion, and the change that drapery undergoes during this time “result[s] in a much greater sense of shade” as it flows against the body, “allowing the observer to sense the limbs underneath.”⁴¹ The glorification of youth and beauty is greatly incorporated into the sculptures in the Parthenon and other pieces of art made during the High Classical period. However, though “human anatomy is accurately shown and movement is naturalistic...expressions are distant and the mood is otherworldly.”⁴² The atmosphere is clear in the Parthenon, as many of the “youths have the same head type, with small mouth, big eyes, unbroken profile-line of nose and brow, inattentive expression, and uncombed hair.”⁴³ The uniting of “the real and the ideal” is a main characteristic of the High Classical period.⁴⁴

Athena was incredibly important in Athenian culture, and her importance is reflected in the designs on the temple itself. Both the East and West pediments represent scenes that are “crucial to the myth-history of the city” depicting the birth of Athena and the contest between Athena and Poseidon respectively.⁴⁵ It should be noted that both of the pediments present scenes of Athena, the deity of Athens, emphasizing her importance in the city’s history as well as in “completing the Olympian family and enabling it to fulfill its cosmic potential.”⁴⁶ The polis was greatly important to the Greeks, and so it can be concluded from the pediments that in order “for society to survive...family and city must coexist in justice and harmony.”⁴⁷

The great ivory and gold statue of Athena that was housed inside the Parthenon was yet illustrates another sign of Athens’ wealth and power. The shield of Athena depicts the Athenians fighting the Amazons, continuing the theme of the battle between civilization and

40. Steward, *Classical Greece*, 137.

41. Pedley, *Greek Art*, 229.

42. *ibid.*

43. *ibid.*

44. *ibid.*

45. *ibid.*, 255.

46. Steward, *Classical Greece*, 140.

47. *ibid.*, 138.

barbarianism, which was common in the artwork of the Parthenon. This in turn represents the Athenians as the “selfless protectors [of Greece] they have now become,” thanks to the increasing influence of the Delian League – in reality, the Athenian Empire.⁴⁸

Illustrated in the metopes that run along the outside of the Parthenon are the myths that give voice to the constant battle of the civilized versus the barbaric: “at the east, gods and giants in combat; at the west, Greeks and Amazons; at the north, Greeks and Trojans and at the south, Lapiths and centaurs.”⁴⁹ These depictions of the Greeks fighting the ‘other’ echo their victory over the Persians. Along the inside of the Parthenon is the Ionic frieze, which is believed to depict the Panathenaic procession that took place every four years and in which the whole city would take part. It is remarkable how Phidias and his partners dared to decorate the frieze with Athenian figures.⁵⁰ The frieze contains sculptures of horsemen, chariots, the people of Athens, the Olympian gods, and at the center of the frieze, “two young women are on one side of a woman who is often identified as the priestess of Athena.”⁵¹ While hoplites are not included at all in the frieze, there is the use of cavalry in the procession. Pericles created a reform to the Athenian cavalry that greatly increased the numbers and partly democratized it. Before, the cavalry had played a subordinate role to hoplites in both the army and the Panathenaic procession.⁵² Pericles made it possible for the state to loan such things as a horse and food allowance if need be, no longer limiting the cavalry to be only for the rich.⁵³

All in all, the Parthenon and its sculptures not only show off the skill, wealth, and power of the Athenians at the time of its creation, but also are a great testimony to the political circumstances of the time of construction. In fact, they can even be seen as part of political propaganda, employing the consistent theme of victory over the ‘other’ and celebrating Athenian culture. The inclusion of Ionic aspects in its architecture, a visual reminder of Athens’ Ionian heritage, had new significance as the “Spartan-Athenian rivalry was increasing.”⁵⁴ Throughout the sculptures,

48. *ibid.*, 142.

49. Pedley, *Greek Art*, 253.

50. *ibid.*, 261.

51. *ibid.*, 259.

52. Steward, *Classical Greece*, 116.

53. *ibid.*, 118.

54. *ibid.*, 135.

the familiar theme West versus East can be interpreted as a form of political propaganda against the Persians and the 'other'. The lack of an altar suggests that "the Parthenon...was as much a treasury as it was a temple."⁵⁵ Towering over Athens from its location on the Acropolis, the Parthenon demanded the view of everyone in the city, and was the visual needed to properly announce Athens' power and wealth to the rest of Greece.

Pergamum, also referred to as Pergamon, is a large fortress that overlooks a fertile valley, east of the Aegean.⁵⁶ It was one of the Hellenistic kingdoms that were formed after the death of Alexander the Great. Philetaerus, a soldier in Lysimachus' army, resided here with one of Lysimachus' treasuries and guarded it until he switched allegiances (possibly linked to conflicts in court) to Seleucus around 283 B.C..⁵⁷ Using his newly-acquired wealth, Philetaerus hired mercenaries to keep himself well-defended, and also used the wealth "as an instrument of foreign policy."⁵⁸ Under his rule Pergamum became a Hellenistic city, and continued as such during the rule of his successor Eumenes and the Attalid dynasty that followed. Pergamum was "radically altered" and established "as a capital of a Hellenistic kingdom of great power and wealth."⁵⁹ This was done by increasing the wealth of the city through "exploiting and developing silver mines, grain production, stock-breeding and a woolen textile industry."⁶⁰

After his father's death, Attalus I was adopted by Eumenes and began his reign in 241 B.C..⁶¹ It was at the beginning of his reign that he achieved a victory over the Gauls, who had been terrorizing Asia Minor for years, imposing tribute on each city they took control of. The group had been a problem for Pergamum as early as Philetaerus's reign. Attalus I was the first ruler of Pergamum to refuse to give tribute to the Gauls, while "Eumenes I seems to have used his treasure rather than his military forces

55. Pedley, *Greek Art*, 253.

56. Grant, *Mediterranean*, 221.

57. Welles C. Bradford, *Alexander and the Hellenistic World* (Toronto: A.M. Hakert, 1970), 89.

58. *ibid.*, 90.

59. Pedley, *Greek Art*, 341.

60. Grant, *Mediterranean*, 222.

61. Esther V. Hansen, *The Attalids of Pergamon*, 2nd ed. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1971), 28.

to gain immunity from the Gauls."⁶² The Gauls, in particular the Tolistoagii, suddenly had a lack of tribute resources. They headed towards Pergamum to attack in hopes of regaining their tribute. However Attalus I set out to attack before they arrived at the city, and "at the sources of [the Caicus], gained a decisive victory and drove [the Gauls] back from the coastal region."⁶³

After his victory Attalus I took the title of Saviour and King, a title that had not been used in fifth century Athens, but which became acceptable after Philip and Alexander of Macedon. The victory over the Gauls was not important just for the creation of the Attalid dynasty in Pergamum, but it also "furnished the initial impulse for the development of a new school of sculpture" and the creation of monuments atop the Acropolis at Pergamum.⁶⁴ The Attalid dynasty made it one of their objectives to make Pergamum "into a city that would rival the golden age of Athens in science, culture, art, and above all, architecture."⁶⁵ Just as with the Parthenon at Athens, it was through monumental construction in Pergamum that the city commemorated their great victory over the 'other' and their identity as a strong and wealthy power.

In contrast to the High Classical period, the Hellenistic period of art is incredibly diverse "in form and psychological presentation, [which is] executed in a realistic manner."⁶⁶ The diversity is the main characteristic of Hellenistic sculpture. A heightened interest in emotions and personification grew as "the influence of the new worlds opened up to Greek artists by the conquests of Alexander."⁶⁷ The baroque style of the High Hellenistic period in which the Great Altar in Pergamum was built "is characterized by dramatic effects, [which were] achieved by complex postures, gestures, and groupings" as well as emotions.⁶⁸ There was still an urge to showcase myths of the past, as in the High Classical period. However, the change in facial expression and the humanizing effect separates the Hellenistic period from the High Classical,

62. *ibid.*, 31.

63. *ibid.*

64. *ibid.*

65. Renee Dreyfus and Ellen Schraudolph, *Pergamon: The Telephos Frieze from the Great Altar*, vol. I (San Francisco: Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, 1996), 11.

66. Pedley, *Greek Art*, 354.

67. *ibid.*

68. *ibid.*, 357.

which was more focused on sharing ideal beauty than reality.

On the Acropolis at Pergamum, much like the Acropolis in Athens, great buildings were constructed to show off the power and wealth of the city. Pergamum's Acropolis had a few similarities with earlier Greek acropoleis, such as the inclusion of temples, but there were some different structures as well, including a barracks and other buildings for defence of the monarch, a library, and a royal palace. On the third terrace stood the Sanctuary of Athena, the city's patron goddess, complete with a temple, stoas, and a propylon. The temple of Athena was built in the Doric style, but with new features. For example, the "columns of the peristyle... are further apart than before and slimmer" than previous Doric styled temples.⁶⁹ There were two stoas that were two-storied high located "to the east and north of the temple forming a courtyard [onto] which a massive propylon at the east gave access."⁷⁰ The propylon itself had an incredible façade that contained both Doric and Ionic columns "underscoring ... the military prowess of Pergamon" depicting the victories over the Gauls.⁷¹

Two other sculptures which give testimony to the power and victories of Pergamum are the sculptures of the Dying Gaul and the Ludovisi Gaul, which remain for us in Roman copies. Created to commemorate the victory of Attalus I over the Gauls, the two works were sculpted with realism and while they included "the distinguishing marks of their [the Gauls'] race, they do not appear hideous or repulsive; instead they evoke our sympathy and admiration."⁷² This concept is characteristic of art of the Hellenistic period. These monuments of the Gauls were "later repeated in a second one in Athens."⁷³ These sculptures connect to the common Greek theme of civilization defeating barbarianism,

Perhaps one of the most well-known buildings on the Pergamum's Acropolis is the Great Altar which contains illustrations in Hellenistic Baroque style of the battle between the gods and the giants along its outer walls and wings, and hosts the Ionic frieze of Telephos, the legendary founder of Pergamum, on its interior wall. The battle between the gods and giants, often depicted

69. *ibid.*, 341.

70. *ibid.*, 344.

71. *ibid.*

72. Hanson, *The Attalids*, 305.

73. Bradford, *Alexander*, 91.

in antiquity, was also included on the Parthenon in Athens. In the context of the Great Altar at Pergamum, the battle scene hearkens to “the glory of the ruling house for its great service to Hellenism, the defeat of the Gauls.”⁷⁴ However, the Great Altar also depicts several new kinds of giants, including lion, bull, and bird giants, as well as winged divinities and strange sea monsters, reflecting the influence of hybrid creatures in Hittite and Assyrian art.⁷⁵ The similarities to Hittite and Assyrian art are important, as they emphasize the influence that Alexander’s conquests had brought to collective the Greek mind. The inclusion of untraditional art along together with the traditional battle between the gods and giants of the Greek world gives the idea that the Attalids, while wanting to strengthen their heritage ties with Greece, did not completely reject other influences from the Other and their art and instead used it to further strengthen their artistic mastery with Hellenistic art and created a monument that reflected “the champions of old and new Hellenism.”⁷⁶

Along the inside of the Altar is the Ionic frieze illustrating Telephos’s story, showing his “life from cradle to grave.”⁷⁷ Like many sculptures created during this time, the narrative of the story unfolds to reveal “a greater truth: the reasons for the current political, military and cultural ascendancy of Pergamon over the cities of western Asia.”⁷⁸ The Attalids emphasized their connection with Greece by including concepts of Attic art in their own sculpture and architecture. Pergamum was not itself a fully Greek city, and stressing its ties with Greece was an attempt to validate the city’s supremacy in western Asia. This linking of Pergamum to Athens can be seen in the depiction of Athena acting as Telephos’ guardian on the frieze, as well as “her repeated image on the north and south walls.”⁷⁹ These examples, the Telephos frieze and the sculpture on the Great Altar, are evidence of a clear push by Pergamum to connect itself with Athens, the city known for its greatness in architecture, sculpture, and art in the fifth century.

Pergamum not only built grand monuments in their city, but also contributed to building projects in “cities in Asia Minor,

74. Hansen, *The Attalids*, 319.

75. *ibid.*, 320.

76. *ibid.*, 312.

77. Dreyfus; Schraudolph, *Pergamon*, 39.

78. *ibid.*, 42.

79. *ibid.*, 45.

the Aegean Islands, and Greece itself.”⁸⁰ Delphi has two such sites. During Attalus I’s reign, a portico was constructed. Recent excavations show that “the stoa was only part of an extensive ensemble located between two sanctuaries that were connected with the early legends of Pergamon” and included an inscription from King Attalus to Apollo.⁸¹ There were multiple statues of Attalus I and II in Delphi, and because of these large amount of dedications on the part of the Attalids, it is not surprising to note that “Eumenes sent workmen for the repair of the theatre.”⁸² Delphi was not the only notable Greek city marked by the influence of Pergamum. Attalus I’s sons gave Athens much larger stoas than those which had been given to Delphi. Attalus I had also dedicated a monument of groups of statues, representing “the legendary war of the Giants, the battle of the Athenians against the Amazons, the struggle of the Medes at Marathon, and the destruction of the Gauls in Mysia” on the south wall of the Athenian Acropolis.⁸³ By constructing monuments in cities outside of Pergamum, mainly in Delphi and Athens in Greece, Pergamum showed its interest in creating the tie between their city and Greece at this time.

Athena was the patron goddess of both cities, and both Pergamum and Athens built up their acropoleis to commemorate their great wealth and power, as well as to build monuments to the gods. In Athens, the reconstruction of the Parthenon and the other buildings of the Acropolis that had been laid to waste in the Persian sack of Athens commemorated the fact that the Greeks had won against the Persians ‘other’, and demonstrated their great wealth, gained through the Delian League (turned Athenian Empire). Similarly, Pergamum built up their own acropolis, commemorating Attalus I’s victory against the Gauls that had been sacking and terrorizing both Greece and Asia Minor. The Gauls, another group viewed as the other by the Greeks, were defeated and so, like Athens before them, Pergamum and its ruler built up the acropolis to signify the power and wealth of the city. Both cities had the same idea of visually displaying their strength and the wealth they had acquired.

Even though decades had passed since the Parthenon had been built and new Hellenistic cities were beginning to push their way

80. Hansen, *The Attalids*, 284.

81. *ibid.*, 292.

82. *ibid.*, 295.

83. *ibid.*, 306.

to becoming the new cultural centres of the Mediterranean world, the Parthenon was still used as a reference for architectural projects. It is evident that the sculpture of the Great Altar in Pergamum drew upon the Parthenon: “the X-composition arrangement of Athena overpowering a giant on the altar is adapted from the Athena and Poseidon on the west pediment, while the Athena itself is thought to be an adaption from the Athena on the east pediment, and Zeus...from Poseidon of the west.”⁸⁴ Further, the inclusion of the battle between the gods and the giants “deliberately link[ed] philhellene Pergamum with Greece, and Athens especially.”⁸⁵ This theme is reinforced by the dedication of the stoas in Delphi and Athens by the Pergamum dynasty.

In conclusion, though they thrived in different centuries and were created under different circumstances, Athens and Pergamum and their reasons for the construction of their monuments, to which tourists still flock to this day, are similar. The sculptures and monuments themselves reflect the difference between Hellenic and Hellenistic art and the arrival of new ideas after the conquests of Alexander, but the strong sense of Pergamum wanting to connect itself to Greece is still obviously present despite this. The desire to display their wealth and power, and to show off how “the Pergamene kings had defeated the Gauls, just as the Greeks of Greece had warded off the Persians centuries before,” is the main example of their similarities despite the years difference.⁸⁶ Though the political circumstances were different in the fact of whether rulers employed democracy or monarchy, the reasons to show off their wealth and power stayed the same.

84. Pedley, *Greek Art*, 358.

85. *ibid.*

86. *ibid.*