THE PARTHENON AND ITS SCULPTURES

EDITED BY

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THE METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK OF PARTHENON STUDIES

MICHAEL B. COSMOPOULOS

ew monuments have excited and fascinated both scholars and the public as much as the Parthenon. Two and a half millennia after its construction, this magnificent building still enjoys enormous popularity and continues to generate important research across a wide range of fields, from classics and art history to archaeology and the physical sciences. Even so, as we delve deeper and deeper into its mysteries, new sets of questions and new problems arise, which require us to keep reassessing and redefining our methodological framework.

The main purpose of the international conference "The Parthenon and Its Sculptures in the Twenty-First Century", organized by the present writer at the University of Missouri-St. Louis in April 2002, was to create an opportunity for Parthenon specialists to meet and assess the current state and future direction of Parthenon studies. Because awareness of how our own mindframes affect our study of the monument is a *sine qua non* of the research process, the conference focused not only on the presentation of the results of new research but also on the methodological framework currently used in Parthenon studies. The papers included in this volume, all of which were presented at the conference, make it clear that at the dawn of the twenty-first century Parthenon researchers employ a broad framework of analysis that allows us to address new and complex issues about the monument and its creators and to offer original interpretations of already existing problems.

The methodological framework employed in this volume has four main parameters. The first is that it still relies heavily on the traditional, formal analysis of the monument. Inherent in most papers published here is the principle that interpretation can only be based on accurate reading of the evidence; as a consequence, thorough visual analysis of the physical components of the monument remains at the core of any viable attempt to assign meaning to them. That the results of such efforts may be different and can even contradict each other is a natural outcome of both the gaps in our data and the diverse ways in which each researcher's eyes are trained to view art. For instance, Symeonoglou and Younger, although both rely on meticulous analyses of style, reach different conclusions about the number of artists involved in the creation of the frieze – conclusions which have different implications about the social standing and even the mindframes of those artists. Similarly, Mostratos' reconstruction of the east pediment is solidly rooted in the traditional methodological scheme of earlier research and demonstrates how difficult a consensus on the reconstruction of the missing parts of the monument can be. Some of the conclusions presented in this volume are certainly controversial, but they are nonetheless useful in that they stimulate different ways of approaching the Parthenon.

The second parameter of the methodological framework of the papers published here relates to the introduction of new technologies in Parthenon studies. In an era of rapid technological progress, scholars and scientists must work side by side in order to find new ways of extracting information about the monument. Two papers in this volume illustrate very well how new technologies can open up exciting prospects for the study of the Parthenon and how they can be used to reconstruct some of the missing pieces of the puzzle. Schwab's combined use of digital photography, graphics computer programs, and traditional analysis of related iconography from the visual arts of the period is able to make visible details of the worn surfaces of the metopes that are not immediately apparent, thus improving our understanding of the imagery and its meaning. Pike's use of stable isotope analysis to help identify the quarries out of which the marble of the Parthenon came is an exciting example of the tremendous potential of high technology to enhance our understanding of the monument.

The third parameter is the study of the cultural and sociopolitical fabric out of which the building emerged. This is a thread that is picked up by several authors. Neils' analysis of the organizational structure of the frieze illuminates an important dimension of the political symbolism of the monument for the Athenians of the fifth century, one which relates to the historical development of the unification of the Athenian state. Robertson's examination of the visual evidence in conjunction with the historical sources provides a fresh look into the political realities that may have shaped the iconography of the base of the statue of Athena Parthenos, and it offers an intriguing explanation of the peplos ceremony at the Panathenaia, namely, that it was an expression of Athenian plans for Boeotia. Younger's study, which he characterizes as an effort to "democratize the sculpting process," is an attempt not only to explicate the process of creating the Parthenon's frieze but also to reconstruct the social standing of the artists who carved it.

The fourth parameter is the diachronic study of the monument. The postclassical history of the Parthenon is currently not only an integral part of research but a potentially valuable source of information about the problems relating to the imagery of the ancient temple. With the publication of a previously unknown manuscript, St. Clair and Picken paint a vivid picture of the Parthenon at the end of the seventeenth century and reconstruct the alterations in spatial organization that the monument underwent through time within the context of its changing functions. The extent to which the early travelers impacted the spread of philhellenism in Europe is well known, and this manuscript adds yet another dimension to the processes by which the European predilection for classical art emerged.

Which brings us to Lord Elgin. In the last few years, the debate around Greece's petition for the restitution of the architectural and sculptural pieces removed by Elgin has been at the forefront of public interest in the Parthenon. Although this often passionate debate has not left Parthenon research unaffected, all scholars agree that above and beyond the controversy lies our need to continue studying and understanding this extraordinary monument. Within this framework, another objective of the St. Louis conference was to promote the spirit of collegiality, scholarship, and international cooperation among Parthenon scholars. Although papers on the "Parthenon" or "Elgin" Marbles and the issue of their return to Greece were included in the conference, they will be published in a separate volume, as in recent years this subject has developed into a subfield of its own. Consequently, the present book includes only the "non-Elginian" papers, if such a term be allowed.

The conference took place in the Millennium Student Center of the University of Missouri-St. Louis and was funded by the Hellenic Government–Karakas Foundation Professorship of Greek Studies at the University of Missouri-St. Louis and the Ministry of Culture of Greece. I would like to express my most sincere thanks to the Minister of Culture, Professor Eleftherios Venizelos, for approving the grant that made the conference possible, and to the Department of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the Ministry of Culture, especially Dr. Alkestis Soulogianni, for administering it so efficiently. In St. Louis, it is a pleasure to acknowledge the inspired and unfailing support

given to the Greek Studies Program in general and this conference in particular by Professor Joel Glassman, Associate Vice-Chancellor for International Studies and Director of the Center for International Studies, and by Mr. Nicholas Karakas, Chair of the Board for the Greek Professorship, and also to acknowledge the valuable assistance of Mr. Terry Williams in dealing with the numerous practical arrangements involved in putting on the conference and with any problems that arose. Many thanks are due to Professor Jenifer Neils for agreeing to write the succinct synthesis of the current state of Parthenon research, presented in the concluding chapter of the volume. I am also thankful to Cambridge University Press, especially the Editor for Classics and Archaeology, Ms. Beatrice Rehl, as well as Mr. Zachary Dorsey and the copyeditor of TechBooks, for their help in preparing the volume for the press. Last but not least, my deepest gratitude goes to the speakers, who came to St. Louis and succeeded in enlivening our intellectual lives with their stimulating and exciting papers.