A New Dionysos at the Parthenon

Decoration Program and Message

Around 450 BC it was decided to erect a large new temple for the city goddess Athena and to provide it with sumptuous sculptural decorations.¹ Dionysos appears thrice, like the other important deities of the Greek pantheon in each instance on the east, i.e. front, side of the building where the entrance was situated: in one of the metopes of the peripheral colonnade, in the pediment, and in the frieze around the upper edge of the outer wall of the cella.² There can, therefore, be no doubt as to the significance of Dionysos at the time. As the polytheistic systems of Antiquity and the societies that supported them were subject to the constant shifts and changes resulting from historical developments, what image of the god the polis sought to present in a prominent representative building of this kind is a question of considerable importance. Even more so because it was at the Parthenon that Dionysos was first represented as a young god, a new form which, as we will see, would be of permanent influence for other artistic media, especially vase painting.³

In order to properly understand this alteration of the Dionysiac image, we should try to grasp the meaning of the sculptural decoration of the Parthenon as a whole. Before we embark on the analysis of each of the Dionysos images, we will therefore briefly explore the decoration program and its possible relationship with the political context of the time.⁴

The 92 metopes were the oldest of the building's decorations and the ones that were closest to the viewer. They showed the great battles of primeval times: on the east side the gods versus the giants, in the south the heroes versus the centaurs, in the west the Attic hero, Theseus, versus the amazons, and in the north the Greeks versus the Trojans. These battles mark subsequent stages in the development of the world order as seen by the Greeks at the time: the

1 Grütter 1958, 121; Welwei 1999, 120 f.; Schneider/Höcker 2001, 113; Hurwit 2004, 94 (towards the end of the year 449); Jenkins 2006, 76. Compare Isler-Kerényi 2010a, largely unmodified.

2 That Dionysos (and the other gods) appeared in all three of the sculpted fields of the east side, was probably meant as a stimulus for the viewer to make comparisons, see Osborne 1994, 148 f.

3 Carpenter 1997, 85; See below Chapters 8 and 9.

4 Rolley 1999, 69–86; Schneider/Höcker 2001, 142–152 (and the relevant literature pp. 229–231).

order of Zeus. The rebellion of the giants against the Olympian gods had been the biggest threat to that order; the Trojan War was nearest in time to the present. The battles with the centaurs and the amazons had presented opportunities for the heroes to distinguish themselves—the heroes, who, as children of gods and founders of prominent families of humans, were the protagonists of the transition from the age of the gods to present time.⁵ The two pediments reminded the viewers of two mythical events, which formed the basis of Athens' pre-eminent position in the world: in the east the birth of the city's patron goddess Athena from the head of her father Zeus, in the west Zeus' final decision in the dispute between Athena and Poseidon about the domination of Attica.⁶ The frieze shows an idealized representation of the procession which was the culmination of the Panathenaic festival, the main festival dedicated to Athena; the imagery of the frieze was very likely inspired by it. This festival, commemorating the birth of the goddess, was celebrated every year and every fourth year with special pomp and circumstance.⁷ Recurrent themes of the sculptural decoration of the Parthenon are, therefore: battle, the pre-eminence of Athens, the end of the struggle, the celebration of harmony.

A look at the position of Athens at the time of the conception and planning of the decoration is instructive. As we know, work on the Parthenon started in the year 447; it must have been preceded by a period of design and organization. We should therefore ask ourselves what motivated Phidias and his patrons to come up with the image program described above and simultaneously revolutionize the traditional image of Dionysos. The building of the Parthenon followed the transfer of the treasury of the Delian League from Delos to Athens in 454 BC. Athens was its most important member and the new building on the Acropolis was meant for the treasury's safekeeping; the transfer allegedly protected the funds from the Persian arch-enemy. Shortly afterwards Athens organized military campaigns against the Persians in Egypt and Cyprus.⁸ The Egyptian fiasco seems to have brought about a change of mind within Athenian politics, because, in whatever way one dates the individual events,

5 Brelich 1958, 386–389 (= 2010, 306–309). Compare Rudhardt 1978, 1: “Cet ‘illud tempus’ (= le temps mythique) comprend plusieurs moments successifs, parfaitement distincts, et les événements mythiques ne se situent pas tous au même moment dans cette série.”

6 Knell 1990, 119; Grütter 1997, 122 f.; Rolley 1999, 78; Palagia 2005, 252. That the west pediment does not show the rivalry between Athena and Poseidon, but the end of the conflict, is evident from a superb Attic hydria found in Pella, see below note 88.

7 Hurwit 2004, 236: “... a distillation of the many processions [...] that characterized Athenian life in the age of Pericles...” For Wesenberg's new interpretation of the scene in the center of the east pediment, see below note 79.

8 Welwei 1999, 101–107.

it is clear that around 450 BC. Athens launched a series of initiatives the aim of which was to obtain a permanent peace.⁹ A truce with Sparta was arranged in 452/1, followed by the Thirty Years' Peace in 446/5.¹⁰ The so-called Peace of Kallias between the Delian League and Persia is generally dated in 450/449. This was followed by an invitation to "the Greeks of Europe and Asia" to attend a peace conference in Athens.¹¹ The decision to build the Parthenon belongs to this political context.¹² It is plausible that the idea of a *pax atheniensis* as the outcome of the many battles of gods and heroes was the common denominator of the decoration program of the Parthenon.

Dionysos' Gigantomachy

When the Parthenon was converted into a Christian church, the metopes on the east side were (deliberately) so heavily damaged as to be unrecognizable. As they remained in situ, however, we can be certain of the situation of the Dionysos metope: the second on the left, near the south edge of the row, in one field of vision with the Dionysos in the east pediment.¹³ Praschniker's suggestions for the metope's reconstruction (including the elucidative drawing) of 1928 largely retain their value, all the more so because they are in accordance with the corresponding, somewhat older, vase paintings.¹⁴ Dionysos, wearing a short chiton and coming from the left, menaces his adversary. He is assisted by a panther and a snake and probably uses his thyrsos as a weapon (Figure 90).¹⁵ A bearded Dionysos in a short chiton already appeared a hundred years earlier in the Gigantomachy of the Siphnian treasury in Delphi.¹⁶ In addition, he is represented in this way in most of the vase paintings of the 5th century.¹⁷ It is uncertain whether the Dionysos of the Parthenon metope is already a beardless

9 Raubitschek 1979.

10 Welwei 1999, 105 and 125; Will 1995, 59.

11 Plutarch, Perikles 17; Welwei 1999, 120; Musti 2008, 354 f.

12 Welwei 1999, 120–121; Will 1995, 58; Castriota 1992, 137.

13 Berger 1986, 55 f.; Schwab 2005, 165.

14 Praschniker 1928, 192, fig. 119. See for Dionysos' Gigantomachy in vase painting: LIMC III, Dionysos 609–650, 655, 656; Carpenter 1997, 15–34.

15 Carpenter 1997, 87. For more information on Dionysos' Gigantomachy, see Paul-Zinserling 1994, 35–37.

16 LIMC III, Dionysos 651.

17 Very exceptionally, Dionysos Gigantomachos is completely naked on the kyathos, Berlin F 2321: ARV 333.3; Schlesier/Schwarzmaier 2008, 75 fig. 5; 187 Cat. 37. He wears a long chiton in the Paris cup Cab. Méd. 573: Addenda 234 (417.1); BA 204546; LIMC III, Dionysos 648.

a

b

FIGURE 90 *Parthenon, metope east 2: Dionysos' Gigantomachy.*

a. plaster cast, Basel, Skulpturhalle (Berger 1986, pl. 40e).

b. reconstruction by Praschniker (Praschniker 1928, 192, fig. 119).

youth, as in the east pediment, or still bearded, as in the vase paintings. It would not be surprising if the latter were the case: the metopes, as I have already mentioned, stylistically belong to the older parts of the Parthenon decoration.¹⁸ What distinguishes Dionysos from the other gods in the Gigantomachy is the fact that the enemy seems overcome by the animals that accompany him, rather than by the strength of the god himself.

Dionysos in the East Pediment

Apart from a few fragments, the figures from the center of the pediment have been lost. In what way the great event of the birth of Athena was represented at the Parthenon is, therefore, likely to remain an open question.¹⁹ From what is left we can only conclude that a dramatic sweeping movement emanated from the central event to both sides, which slows to a halt in the three reclining figures nearest the ends of the pediment and is finally 'absorbed' in the corners by the teams of the ascending Helios and the descending Selene. That the young man reclining just in front of the heads of the horses of Helios' team must be Dionysos can be maintained on the basis of the history of the imagery of the birth of Athena as well as his hairstyle, as we will see. There can, therefore, be no doubt as to his position within the whole.²⁰ A Dionysos reposing after a successful hunt eminently suits the political climate of the time and the *pax atheniensis* initiated by Perikles. At the same time, his line of vision includes the theater of Dionysos on the south side of the Acropolis and in this way the relationship between the god and 'his' theater is confirmed and secured.²¹ The theater was only erected in stone more than a hundred years after the completion of the Parthenon, more or less as it remains now.²² We may, however, presume that, during the 5th century, the performances which were part of the Dionysian festival took place at the same site, near the venerable temenos of Dionysos.²³

18 Rolley 1999, 68; Schwab 2005, 160.

19 Rolley 1999, 74–76; Schneider/Höcker 2001, 142; Palagia 2005, 242 and note 78; Jenkins 2006, 87–91. See above 8 note 34.

20 Arguments for and against identification as Dionysos or Herakles are summarized in Traficante 2007, 77–89.

21 Most recently Queyrel 2006, 221 f.

22 Isler 2002, 535.

23 Kolb 1981, 92.

In what way is Dionysos represented? He presents himself here as a young athletic adult, in a relaxed half-reclining position: the image type of the symposiast. The object that supports his back is covered by an animal skin, probably that of a panther, which strengthens the idea that he is conceived as a successful hunter. He is the only figure in the east pediment whose head remains, even though it is now so worn away as to seem too small. It has been assumed he wore his hair cropped as was usual for athletes, and is appropriate for his body type.²⁴ His exact hairstyle has been lost, however, and so have the attributes he probably carried. The body in itself, however, also presents iconographical problems, because in vase painting the symposiast Dionysos was, neither before nor after, represented fully naked.²⁵ One gets the impression the sculptor wanted to draw the attention to the manly beauty of his body. However, Dionysos' fine body can only have been seen and admired during the time preceding the placement of the figure in the pediment. After that, his most striking feature must have been his legs which rather protruded from the pediment.²⁶ We will come back to the beauty of Dionysos below.

Moreover, at the time of the planning and execution of the east pediment, Dionysos as a young man was even rarer than Dionysos as a nude symposiast. As the work of, for instance, the Kleophon Painter demonstrated, even around 440 BC, the god was usually represented as a dignified bearded father and/or spouse.²⁷ Every scholar involved in the history of Dionysiac imagery has been struck by the abrupt change in his appearance after 430 BC. Naturally, the change was attributed to the influence of the Parthenon sculptures, which, as we all know, were completed in 432 BC and were since there for all to admire.²⁸ What did the Dionysos of the east pediment of the Parthenon look like at that time? The photographs of the badly eroded throat and neck areas published by E. Pochmarski in 1984 have already shown that Dionysos' hairstyle was not the cropped head of the athlete.²⁹ In addition, more recent photographs of the old cast in the archeological collection of the University of Zurich clearly show the original center parting over the forehead and, when the head is seen in

24 According to Brommer 1963, 9, Furtwängler already did so.

25 LIMC III, Dionysos No. 362–381. This also holds true for other symposiasts, see Dentzer 1982, pl. 19–22; 25–29; 44–117. For an example of a naked symposiast (Herakles): pl. 118, fig. 729.

26 Brommer 1963, 8.

27 Compare for instance the Dionysos figures by the Kodros and the Kleophon Painter: cup London E 82 (Addenda 356 [1269.3]; BA 217212); pelike Munich 2361 (Addenda 335 [1145.36]; BA 215176).

28 For instance Carpenter 1997, 85; Traficante 2007, 77.

29 Pochmarski 1984, 278–280, pl. 26, 2 and 3.

profile, the contour of the plaits horizontally attached to the back of the head (Figure 91).³⁰ It is probably for this reason that J. Neils assumes Dionysos also wore the old-fashioned plaits fastened around the head that can be seen in the figures of the handsome elderly men in the north frieze of the Parthenon.³¹ It seems to me, however, that Pochmarski's documentation rather suggests a hairstyle comparable to that of the Acropolis Apollo Parnopios, attributed to Phidias.³² This hairstyle would not only reconcile the proportions of the head with to those of the body; it would also be in accordance with the usual representation of Dionysos in vase painting after 430 BC: the oeuvre of the Dinos Painter presents some good examples, which belong to the earliest representatives of the new iconography.³³ A miniature version of the Dionysos of the east pediment may be found on a bronze mirror from Southern Italy datable to the 4th century, now in Copenhagen. He wears the 'Apollo hairstyle' and has boots on his legs (Figure 92).³⁴ This figure of a young Dionysos, nude and with 'Apollo hairstyle', but standing, was then taken over by late Classical and Imperial-period sculptors.³⁵

The fact that the young man wears his hair long rules out the identification with Herakles, which on the basis of the iconographical tradition of the birth of Athena was improbable anyway.³⁶ In addition there are the suggestions made as to the way the attributes—cup or kantharos, and thyrsos—may have been held: from the position of the lower right arm we can conclude that the vessel belonged on this side and that the left arm therefore held the staff. This is supported by examples from vase painting.³⁷

This reconstruction of the Dionysos in the east pediment of the Parthenon marks him out as a son figure instead of the traditional father or spouse and, first of all, defines Dionysos as the son of Zeus. For the Greeks Zeus was representative of the current cosmic order. Mythology abounds in love affairs

30 See also Jenkins 2007, 49 and 51.

31 Neils 2005, 238.

32 Hurwit 2005, 140 also describes figure D as a "longhaired nude youth". For the hairstyle of Phidias' Apollo see Pfeiff 1943, pls. 31–33; Rolley 1994, 13, fig. 9.

33 See the calyx krater Vienna 1024: ARV 1152.8; BA 215261. Also the dinos Berlin F 2402: Addenda 336 (1152.3); BA 215255. About the Dinos Painter, see below chapter 8.

34 Copenhagen 4833: LIMC III, Dionysos 137. These boots would explain the holes in the lower legs of the Parthenon Dionysos observed by D. Williams (probably the ones described by Brommer 1963, 3). Compare in addition the statue (unfortunately without head and attributes) from the 3rd century BC in Olympia: LIMC III, Dionysos 142.

35 LIMC III, Dionysos 119–125 and 128.

36 See above note 20.

37 For the cup by the Kodros Painter, see above Chapter 5, note 42; for the bell krater in Budapest 50.568: ARV 1439.1; BA 218088; Kathariou 2002, 413 fig. 54.

a *b* *c*

FIGURE 91 *Parthenon, east pediment, Dionysos. Plaster cast in the archaeological collection of the University of Zurich, made before 1871.*

a. frontal view of the head (photograph Archäologisches Institut der Universität Zürich, Frank Tomio).

b. profile view of the head from the left (photograph Archäologisches Institut der Universität Zürich, Frank Tomio).

c. Dionysos (reconstruction by C. Isler-Kerényi).

FIGURE 92 *Handle of a bronze mirror, Copenhagen, The National Museum of Denmark 4833 (photograph museum).*

and the children that resulted. However, none of Zeus' children had divine offspring: at best they produced heroes, of immortal fame perhaps, but nevertheless mortals who, in their turn, sired mortals. Zeus' sovereignty could therefore not be contested and he could not be dethroned, like he had dethroned his own father Kronos, who had dethroned *his* father Uranos.³⁸ The sons of Zeus, who as father figures could never be on a par with him, were in this way guarantors of the future of the order of Zeus. Naturally, Zeus' daughter Athena also belonged to this order. The east pediment of the Parthenon was meant to show the Athenians, their allies and their subjects, as well as every visitor that, within the order of Zeus, the birth of Athena inaugurated a new era under the direction of the city whose patroness she was.

The transformation of Dionysos into a son figure must, at the time, have made a considerable impression on the beholders: vase painting after 430 abundantly testifies to this, as we will see. The change cannot, however, have been completely unanticipated. We have already discussed some representations of Dionysos as a naked komast: on the column krater by the Agrigento Painter, on the bell krater by the Methyse Painter in a ritual procession with

38 Kerényi 1997a, 26–28.

satyrs and Dionysiac women, on the calyx krater from Tarquinia with the mid-night visit.³⁹ As we have seen, the motif of the infant Dionysos—especially Dionysos as the child of Zeus—was topical in the years around 450 BC.⁴⁰

In the east pediment of the Parthenon Dionysos presents himself as the son of Zeus and therefore as the brother of Apollo. Evidence from various art forms makes it clear that this is not a modern projection influenced by Nietzsche's ideas, but a reality of that time.⁴¹ In vase painting, just after 440 BC, we find a Dionysos who, in the role of punisher of Pentheus, shows a startling resemblance to Apollo in the role of punisher of Marsyas.⁴² As far as coin engraving is concerned: Walter Burkert already pointed out that coins from Naxos from around 460 BC still had the traditional bearded head of Dionysos, but that after 420 BC the god was deliberately made to look like Apollo (Figure 93).⁴³

The increased similarity to his brother Apollo first of all has a mythological explanation. In the decades after the Persian Wars, Apollo was generally seen as the one who, among the sons of Zeus, enforced his father's order in times of crisis: he took center stage in the west pediment of the temple of Zeus at Olympia (where, significantly, another protagonist is Theseus, the founder of Athens), completed some years before the Parthenon. Phidias was commissioned to make the cult statue of Zeus—the same Phidias created the statue of Athena at the Parthenon.⁴⁴ In Athens Dionysos had held a comparable role as guarantor of the order of Zeus since the time of Solon.⁴⁵ If Phidias and/or Perikles had the intention to proclaim a new permanent world order under the

39 Rome, Villa Giulia 846: ARV 575.20; BA 206620 (Agrigento Painter); New York 07.286.85: ARV 632.3; BA 207338 (Methyse Painter); Tarquinia RC 4197: see above Chapter 6, note 129, and in addition the representations of Dionysos as a boy mentioned in Chapter 5, note 94.

40 See above Chapter 5, p. 111.

41 For the theme of Dionysos versus Apollo in the history of the *Altertumswissenschaft*, see Isler-Kerényi 2007, 235–254.

42 Lekanis Louvre G 445: BA 45070 (no image); Moraw 1998, pl. 20, fig. 50c (Dionysos: here p. 202 fig. 106); volute krater by the Kadmos Painter in Ruvo 1093: Addenda 340 (1184.1); BA 215689; Sichtermann 1966, pl. 16 (Apollo). Compare Queyrel 1984, 157 concerning the work of the Pothos Painter who was active around the same time: "N'étaient ses attributs, Dionysos risquerait d'être pris pour Apollon."

43 Burkert 1977, 341; Franke/Hirmer 1972, pl. 4.11 (Dionysos), pl. 4.12 (Apollo), both dated 420–403 BC. Compare in addition the tetradrachms from Maroneia, idem pl. 139.431 v, dated 430–400, as well as the later ones from the same town (LMC III, Dionysos 194, 195): head of Dionysos with Apollo hairstyle.

44 Hurwit 2005, 140–142.

45 Isler-Kerényi 2007, 75 and 104.

FIGURE 93 Coins from Naxos (Sicily).

a. didrachma: Apollo (Franke/Hirmer 1972, pl. 4 above left).

b. tetradrachm: Dionysos (Franke/Hirmer 1972, pl. 4 above right).

leadership of Athens, it would be natural to assign a complementary stabilizing task to both Apollo and Dionysos.

On the other hand, Apollo held a very special position in Athens.⁴⁶ He had four sanctuaries here and was therefore very much present in the city's cultic life. His pre-eminence is also evident in vase painting. Reference to Delos seems logical in this context: this is where the treasury of the Delian League had been kept before it was transferred to Athens and it was the traditional religious center for all Ionians.⁴⁷ Moreover, the transfer of the treasury to Athens—a significant decision in view of the Athenian ambitions—had been the occasion for the building of the Parthenon. It explains why the statue of Athena in the cella of the Parthenon was influenced by the cult statue of Apollo at Delos.⁴⁸ In addition there is the relationship with Delphi; according to Aischylos, Apollo had traveled from Delos to Delphi via Athens.⁴⁹ As the center of the earth, it was in the 450s of strategic importance for Athens in its rivalry with Sparta.⁵⁰

46 Shapiro 1989, 50–52.

47 For the relationship Athens-Delos before Perikles: Tausend 1992, 52; Ulf 1997, 51 f. After Perikles: Etienne/Braun 2007, 26 f.

48 Fehr 1979, 71–80, especially 77: "... die Parthenos nimmt als die jüngere Statue auf das archaische Apollonbild Bezug und legt dem Betrachter einen Vergleich nahe."

49 A. Eu. 8–11.

50 Welwei 1999, 122 f. Correspondingly Suárez de la Torre 2002, 160: "Pendant le V^e siècle, on observe un effort redoublé d'assimilation et de rapprochement des traditions mythiques

If indeed Perikles intended the conformity of Apollo and Dionysos, it can hardly be a coincidence that the Athenian tragedians of the time made mention of the presence of Dionysos in Delphi. In this context, it is worthwhile to quote a recently published study: "It can be demonstrated that Apollo and Dionysos shared the same sacred spaces, cultic practices and mythical tales, and that their relationship is revealed in their encounter, and their dividing and even exchanging roles."⁵¹ The antithesis is not so much between Apollo and Dionysos, as has been maintained ever since Nietzsche, as between these two complementary guarantors of the order of Zeus, and Ares, the god of war.⁵²

Incidentally, from the hypothesis proposed above it follows that the reflection and discussion concerning the relationship between Apollo and Dionysos (which lies at the basis of the one-sided interpretation of Dionysos in the study of antiquity)⁵³ was set in motion in the Athens of the 5th century BC, probably in the circle of Perikles. For this reason it is extremely regrettable that all that remains of the Apollo on the north side of the east pediment of the Parthenon are his tortoise-shell armor, the sounding board of his lyra, and part of the arm that held it.⁵⁴ We do not know in what way he wore his hair and if he resembled Dionysos.⁵⁵ Still, the assembly of gods in the frieze, dilapidated though it may be, still shows very well that their beardlessness distinguishes the sons of Zeus from the father figures Zeus and Poseidon—with the exception of Hephaistos, however, who, as the ancestor of the mythical kings of Athens, was represented as a father figure.⁵⁶

-
- d'Athènes et de Delphes." The oracle played an important part in the development of Athenian power, see Knell 1990, 125. For Delphi as the center of the earth: Parker 1985, 303.
- 51 Massa 2006–2007, 77: "Da questa analisi è possibile mostrare che Apollo e Dioniso condividevano spazi sacri, pratiche culturali e racconti mitici e che il loro rapporto si rivelava giocato sull'incontro, sulla condivisione e talvolta persino sullo scambio delle parti." The same holds true for Alkaios and his world: Privitera 1970, 106. The Kadmos Painter may be referring to the reception of Dionysos in Delphi on the calyx krater we will discuss in detail in the next chapter, note 25 fig. 103, and Gasparri 1986, 509 f.
- 52 For instance in Sophokles: Massa 2006–2007, 87.
- 53 See above note 41.
- 54 Despinis 1982, 37–44: the author is of the opinion that a standing Apollo is more probable than a seated one. In earlier representations of the birth of Athena Apollo likewise usually takes part as a musician: LIMC II.1, 315 (W. Lambrinoudakis and others).
- 55 On the basis of their attitudes and the attributes in their left hands as attested by the sources it may, incidentally, be assumed that the Delian Apollo and Phidias' Parnopios statue were quite similar: LIMC II.1, 234, Apollo 390, cf. LIMC II, Apollo 295. There was no canonical image for the Delphic Apollo: Pfeiff 1943, 16.
- 56 LIMC IV.1, 629 f. (A. Hermay); Kerényi 1997a, 94–96 and 1997b, 172; Shapiro 1995, 1–3.

FIGURE 94 *Monument of Lysikrates, Athens, detail of the frieze (Ehrhardt 1993, 32, fig. 5).*

In this regard, the fact that Dionysos turns away from Athena emerging from her father's head in full armor and looks towards his theater instead, acquires a deeper meaning. Although every genre had its own mode, the antique drama presented severe conflicts and their solutions in a manner that demanded strong emotional participation from the audience. In this way, it served as a beneficial safety valve for the citizens amidst the stresses and strains of society; the same may be said for the symposium. This is typical for the effectiveness of Dionysos and forms the basis of his prestige among the deities of the state.⁵⁷ That the optical relationship between the reclining figure in the pediment and the theater is not a modern over-interpretation, is supported by the Monument of Lysikrates, erected near the Acropolis in 335/4 BC. It shows a reclining youthful naked Dionysos watching a satyr play (Figure 94).⁵⁸ Thus, the idea of a Periclean vision of peace offers an explanation for the fact that in the Parthenon pediment Dionysos looks away from the great central event. We should therefore have a closer look at his appearance in the context of this event and the tradition of its imagery.

⁵⁷ Pellizer 1990, 182.

⁵⁸ LIMC III, Dionysos 792; Ehrhardt 1993, 12: locks of hair reach to the neck. The iconographic connection has already been determined by Palagia 1993, 20 and Carpenter 1997, 87.

In vase painting the presence of Dionysos at the birth of Athena goes back to the beginnings of the motif in the first half of the 6th century.⁵⁹ People apparently believed that Dionysos was already there when the miraculous birth of Athena inaugurated a new world era. But even though he is present, we rarely see him near the main protagonists Zeus, Athena and Hephaistos; he is usually placed in a marginal position, which indicates a certain distance.⁶⁰ At the Parthenon—in the east pediment and, as we shall see, also in the frieze—his proximity to the Eleusinian goddesses is of special significance. In the Carrey drawings he seems even nearer to them than in the British Museum display or in the drawing by Ernst Berger.⁶¹ This could be an allusion to their cultic propinquity in Eleusis and in Athens.⁶² After all, the Panathenaic procession came past the city's Eleusinion.⁶³

As mentioned above, however, it is also significant that he turns away from the central event: this expresses an inner distance. Whether one assumes a seated or a standing Zeus, the center of the image was dominated by Athena emerging in full armor. Aphrodite, who figures near the north side of the pediment, matches Dionysos perfectly. She looks towards her sanctuary on the north slope of the Acropolis and expresses the same outward and inner distance.⁶⁴ And the same relaxedness: no other deity embodies the idea of peace as does the goddess of love.⁶⁵ Perhaps both Aphrodite and Dionysos are so little impressed by the birth of Athena because the scope of their power is larger and their influence on the world and on human beings is older and reaches beyond Athens. The denomination *lysios* ('he who unfastens') presents itself as a suitable designation for the Dionysos in the east pediment of the Parthenon. On the basis of an Eretrian inscription from the end of the 4th century BC, Anne-Françoise Jaccottet has demonstrated that Dionysos *Lysios*'

59 LIMC III, Dionysos 490–492. Concerning the Tyrrhenian amphora Berlin F 1704, see Isler-Kerényi 2008a, 75 f.

60 To conclude that Dionysos is not an Olympian, as does Neils 2005, 238, is, however, unwarranted in view of his marked presence in the decoration of the east side. Contentions of this kind are, finally, expressions of long-standing prejudices within the history of the study of antiquity: Isler-Kerényi 2007, 235–254.

61 Knell 1990, 122.

62 Clinton 1992, 123–125.

63 Kavoulaki 1999, 300.

64 Queyrel 2006, 222. The relationship between the pediment figures and the topographical situation around the Parthenon has been noted before. It is plausible in the cases of Dionysos and Aphrodite, but less convincing for other gods.

65 Pironti 2007, 284: "... cette déesse est capable à la fois d'assurer la cohésion de la communauté et de maîtriser les forces diverses qui traversent tout l'ensemble civique."

preeminence lies in the fact that he liberated the city in a peaceful way, without combat.⁶⁶ On the east pediment of the Parthenon, Dionysos embodies the idea of peace—as does Aphrodite, to whom this role was more familiar.⁶⁷ As we all know, Perikles' vision of peace would soon be shattered by political reality. This would explain why, outside vase painting, Phidias' Dionysos did not have a lasting effect. The cult statue for the temple in the temenos of Dionysos next to the theater, created somewhat later by Alkamenes, was again in line with traditional iconography.⁶⁸

As far as the attributes of the Dionysos of the east pediment are concerned: already at this time the kantharos (or phiale) and the thyrsos were closely associated with him. These two do not refer to the theater, but, as many vase paintings have shown us, to the ritual aspect.⁶⁹ The thyrsos was introduced into the iconography around 530–520 BC, at first as an attribute of Dionysiac women. Dionysos himself uses it in the Gigantomachy and it increasingly takes the place of his traditional attributes, the branches of ivy and vine. As we have seen, it is a fixed element of the ritual thiasos, which, from the second quarter of the 5th century, gradually supersedes the mythical thiasos. The thyrsos, the *ferula communis*, is light as a feather, but very tough and therefore eminently suitable as a weapon for women. That it can be used for the transport and keeping of fire is not so well known.⁷⁰ Prometheus already did so when he brought fire to the humans.⁷¹ It therefore also symbolizes civilized life. This is remarkable in view of Plato's oft-quoted passus about the many bearers of thyrsos and the few real bacchantes.⁷² Apparently, Bacchic rites and a real Greek way of life were inseparable, as was also Herodotus' opinion.⁷³ As an attribute of the Dionysos of the east pediment of the Parthenon, the thyrsos defines him as the god of Bacchic celebrations. In the next chapter, we will see that, as the result of radical changes in the political climate, vase painters after 420 BC address

66 Jaccottet 1990. It is significant that the temple in Thebes was dedicated to *this* Dionysos. Like in Athens and Eretria, it was situated next to the theater, see Jaccottet 1990, 152–153.

67 It may not be a coincidence that on two vases and an altar from the late 5th century one of the women in Dionysos' retinue is called Eirene: Shapiro 1993, 45–48; Smith 2011, 78.

68 LIMC III.1, 446 Dionysos 214; Rolley 1999, 144.

69 For the kantharos as a mark of heroes or the transition to the state of heros, see Isler-Kerényi 1990, 45. For the cultic connotations of the thyrsos, which appears in the Dionysiac thiasos around 520 BC, see Schöne 1987, 192; Krauskopf 2001, 47; similarly Kaeser 1990, 333.

70 Baumann 1982, 61. This confirms the close relationship between Hephaistos and Dionysos.

71 Vernant 1988, 265.

72 Phaidon 69c, compare Krauskopf 2001, 50.

73 Isler-Kerényi 1999, 45.

themselves to the individual rather than to the collective of the polis and come to emphasize the Bacchic aspect of Dionysos.⁷⁴

The third attribute, the animal skin, characterizes Dionysos as the master of a predator, probably the panther. More than the lion, the panther evokes colorfulness, the untamed, the exotic, in other words: the Asiatic.⁷⁵ Dionysos, who in the Gigantomachy was supported by a panther, here presents himself as the vanquisher of the panther. This is remarkable in the context of Perikles' peace policy of around 450 BC and the allegations made by his political adversaries that he was too little anti-Persian.⁷⁶ After 420 BC the Dionysiac world repeatedly presents a third panther type: the tamed, playful one.

Finally we must discuss the unusual nudity of Dionysos. Robin Osborne, who made an extensive study of this motive in Greek art, ascertains that "... the beardless body is very often a sculptural construct, an idealization, distanced from the male body of life by its combination of beardless immaturity with distinctly mature musculature," and concludes: "To show a male figure without clothes was certainly to invoke the beautiful body of the young athlete ..."⁷⁷ The beauty of Dionysos brings us to the consideration of the frieze.

Dionysos in the Parthenon Frieze

For constructional reasons this part of the external sculptural decoration of the Parthenon must have been completed before the pediment. In its present form, however, it seems to have been planned after the pediment had been devised.⁷⁸ But its place in the total effect justifies taking it into consideration after the metopes and the pediment: the viewer would, after all, only perceive it on his way towards the interior of the temple, after he had seen the metopes and the pediment. The frieze shows a festive procession, in which representatives of the Athenian population, male and female, and of various ages, participate. The procession leads to the assembly of Olympian gods who, divided

74 Paul-Zinserling 1994, 10. Concerning Dionysos in vase painting after 420 BC see below Chapters 8 and 9.

75 Wiesner 1965, 2213; Isler-Kerényi 2011a, 85 f. For more details on the panther in ancient thought see also Detienne 2007, 66–69.

76 Klein 1979, 501. It is significant that the panther supports Dionysos in the Gigantomachy, while after 420 BC so many representations show it peacefully at his side.

77 Osborne 1998, 100. Similarly Himmelmann 1990, 47: "... Nacktheit... ist vielmehr die natürliche Begleiterscheinung von Jugend und Schönheit."

78 Wesenberg 1983, 83–86; Neils 2001, 39.

FIGURE 95 *Parthenon, east frieze, detail with Hermes, Dionysos, Demeter, and Ares. Plaster cast in the archaeological collection of the University of Zurich, made before 1871 (photograph Archäologisches Institut der Universität Zürich, Frank Tomio).*

into two groups of six persons, are seated to the left and right of a central scene, the interpretation of which is the subject of controversy.⁷⁹ As in the metopes and the pediment, Dionysos is the last figure but one in the left group; only his brother, the divine messenger Hermes, separates him from the humans in the procession.

As in the pediment, he presents himself as a young adult, with the thyrsos in his left hand (Figure 95). Because of the condition of the frieze, his hairstyle cannot be determined, but it was probably smarter than that of Hermes; he may even have worn a diadem. The face was shown in three-quarter view; the contours of the right jaw still remain and perhaps some traces of the right eye.⁸⁰ The composition suggests a close relationship between Dionysos and Hermes. This is in line with the iconographic history of the divine assembly, but it is particularly emphasized here.⁸¹ The emphasis on this relationship is the reason why Dionysos' seated body is turned towards the other gods, which

79 Against the traditional reading of the scene as the presentation of the peplos to the priests of Athena, Wesenberg 2014, with arguments worthy of consideration, proposes that the scene juxtaposes a ritual belonging to the Arrhephoria and one which took place during the Plynteria.

80 This is evident from a cast, made before 1871, in the hall of the University of Zurich. I am grateful to Simone Voegtle and Rolf Fritschi for assisting me in my research. Compare Brommer 1977, pl. 172. This aspect should be corrected in reconstruction drawings that still show Dionysos in profile.

81 Isler-Kerényi 2008a, 75–77. Compare the “...très grande familiarité qui existe entre Hermès et Dionysos...”, LIMC V.1, 373 (G. Siebert).

necessitates the turn of his head to face the incoming procession. Without this turn of the head, Dionysos would have his back towards the humans and remain invisible. On the other hand, his contrary position brings him closer to the grieving Demeter. This underlines their common quality as mystery gods, already indicated in the east pediment, and explains the proximity of Hermes, who is not only the messenger of the gods, but also the conductor of souls, *psychopompos*.

This position enables Dionysos to present his fine torso in all its beauty. The frieze shows Hera in a similar manner, although she is fully dressed. She is more than just beautiful here: her gesture of unveiling clearly has an erotic meaning. It is of interest, that the beauty of the Athenian men was very much a theme of the Panathenaic festival. Beauty contests for men of various age groups were part of the competitions at many festivals, but the Euandria of the Panathenaea were the most famous.⁸² The most beautiful among the mature men took part in the procession as bearers of olive branches, *thallophoroi*. These are perhaps also shown in the Parthenon frieze.⁸³

Taking part in a procession meant making a spectacle of oneself. More than any other form of ritual behavior the procession is therefore related to the theater: "... processional ritual shares with theatrical performances... an explicitly declared emphasis on viewing: processions as well as theatre... are 'viewing occasions', 'spectacles', *theoríai*, *théai*."⁸⁴ What did processions represent? First of all: the community itself in its most glorious, timeless form, and secondly the community's relation to divine power. "The procession is articulated as a response to the authority of the divine but it articulates at the same time a call for the response of the divine."⁸⁵ Processions can also fulfil these roles in the context of a theatrical performance, such as Aischylos' *Eumenides*, which had its premiere 458 BC.⁸⁶ Needless to say, the same holds true for the procession on the Parthenon frieze. The visitor would only behold the frieze after he had seen the warlike metopes and had experienced the tension and release of the event depicted on the pediment. All of this supports the idea that the actual theme of the frieze was the celebration of the alliance between gods and humans.⁸⁷

To sum up, at the Parthenon Dionysos successfully embodies various aspects of peace, its conditions and its consequences: in the metopes he is a

82 Crowther 1985, 285 f. In addition, Goldhill 1994, 355.

83 Berger/Gisler-Huwiler 1996, text volume p. 68.

84 Kavoulaki 1999, 294.

85 Kavoulaki 1999, 303.

86 Kavoulaki 1999, 306–307.

87 Similarly Osborne 1994, 148–149.

champion of the legitimate order; in the east pediment he represents male beauty and divine ease following victory; in the frieze he expresses the joyful alliance between gods and humans. It would have been hard to believe that this Dionysos had no influence on the vase painters and their clients, and as we will see in the next chapter his appearance, indeed, underwent a permanent change. Before moving on, however, we should have a look at two special vases which help to explain the meaning of the representation in the west pediment of the Parthenon, and in one case document an unusual manifestation of Dionysos.

Reflections of the West Pediment in Vase Painting

Some years ago a lavishly decorated hydria turned up, which is attributed to the workshop of the Pronomos Painter and may, on stylistic grounds, be dated around 400 BC.⁸⁸ It was found in a necropolis of the Macedonian capital Pella. The unique and very rich decoration takes up the theme of the west pediment of the Parthenon: it shows the bolt of lightning sent by Zeus to end the dispute between Athena and Poseidon about Attica in the presence of several gods—Amphitrite, Triton, Apollo, Artemis, Hermes—, the heroes Erechtheus und Eumolpos, as well as Kekrops, Nike, and, above each handle, a figure which has been variously identified.⁸⁹ From the top of the image, on the left, a youthful Dionysos rides towards Athena on a peculiar horned panther (Figure 96). He is greeted by a nymph with an ivy wreath, who seems to be rising from the earth.

Dionysos was not represented in the west pediment of the Parthenon and there are no literary sources mentioning his presence at the event.⁹⁰ On the other hand, it is not really surprising to find him on Athena's side in view of the group of pointed amphorae or the pelikai of the Painter of the Birth of Athena, which all show his special close relationship with the polis.⁹¹ Incidentally, the scene on the hydria from Pella possibly has a parallel in that on the very fragmentary lid of a lekanis of about the same date, found on the Acropolis of

88 Pella 80514; BA 17333; Drougou 2000; Tiverios 2005; Neils 2013. This painter will be further discussed in the next chapter.

89 Tiverios 2005, 306 f.: Kydoimon and a maenad; Neils 2013: Kychreus and the personification of Marathon.

90 Tiverios 2005, 301.

91 See above Chapter 4. Tiverios 2005, 314 also concludes that in the dispute with Poseidon, the god of the aristocracy, Dionysos, supports Athena, because "dieser Gott der politische Gott der 'Volksherrschaft' (dem Gegenteil der Aristokratenherrschaft) und der Demokratie ist."

FIGURE 96 *Kalpis, workshop of the Pronomos Painter, Pella, Archaeological Museum 80514 (Drougou 2000, pl. 35.1) © Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports, 17th Ephorate of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities.*

Athens. Apart from Athena with her olive tree, it showed Kekrops and probably Poseidon—and also a lively Dionysos, who comes running in a short chiton and boots.⁹² Michalis Tiverios convincingly links this images with the peace treaty of 403 between Athens and Sparta, and the reconciliation of the democrats and the oligarchy within the polis. The mythical model for these reconciliations is the end of the dispute depicted on the west pediment of the Parthenon. Still, the hydria painter has pushed Poseidon into the center of the image, and has highlighted his armor in white: the capital of Macedonia, with its aristocratic governance, is likely to have been sympathetic to the Poseidon Hippios of the Athenian elite.⁹³

Dionysos' mount on the hydria from Pella is very peculiar indeed. As has been mentioned above, the panther stands for Asia, for the exotic. The horns, however, turn it into a creature of the imagination. The god then comes from a world that is unknown to us. Perhaps it is the world of timeless bliss in which, as we will see, he is placed by the vase painters active after 430—the world he hurries towards with Ariadne. But how can it be explained that of all the gods, the one who spoke to humans and walked with them in torch-lit processions now comes riding from unknown territories? The place where the vase

92 Tiverios 2008b, 130, fig. 4.

93 Tiverios 2005, 312 f.

FIGURE 97 *Kalpis*, St. Petersburg, State Hermitage Museum Π 1872.130 (Pfuhl 1923, 246, fig. 604).

was found, the necropolis of Pella, perhaps offers a clue for this expansion of Dionysos' domain beyond Asia into the supernatural: ultimately, the image was meant for a dead person.

Another reflection of the west pediment of the Parthenon, and one of long standing, is provided by a hydria from the ancient city of Pantikapaion on the Black Sea, created about half a century later.⁹⁴ The vase has red-figure paintings, but the bodies of the two protagonists were individually sculpted in relief and subsequently painted, whereas molds were used for the heads. Several parts of the image and the decoration were painted over in white or gilded. From the end of the 5th century, such techniques were applied for sumptuous, high-quality ceramics not meant for practical use.⁹⁵ Consequently, our hydria, too, served as a cinerary urn for a man's grave.⁹⁶

The center of the image is taken up by an olive tree; above it Nike flies towards Athena on the left, while on the ground a large snake is moving towards the trunk of the tree. Athena strides towards the left, carrying her shield and a raised spear. Poseidon, trident also raised, comes from the right. His left hand holds the reins of his rearing horse. Dolphins are jumping in the water depicted next to him, which must have sprung at the touch of his trident. Behind the horse, a woman wearing a diadem, possibly Amphitrite, is running

94 St. Petersburg Π 1872.130 (KAB 6 a): BA 6988 (no image); Tiverios 2005, 310, fig. 11; Cohen 2006, no. 105, 339–341; Brinkmann 2013, 246 and 334 no. 47.

95 Zervoudaki 1968, 37.

96 Cohen 2006, 339.

away while performing the familiar gesture of the bride.⁹⁷ Below, on the right, a seated male figure with a scepter, possibly Kekrops, is looking on. A schematic representation of a temple, perhaps the Acropolis, may be seen at the top on the right. In the foreground, Dionysos, with youthful curls and wearing a short chiton, a panther skin, and boots with tongues, storms into the image from the left. He points his thrysos at a slant towards the right, as if it were a weapon. As in the Gigantomachy metope at the Parthenon, and later in the Gigantomachy frieze of the Pergamon Altar, he is accompanied by a panther.⁹⁸ On the left, above Dionysos, a reclining female figure is looking on. She may be a personification of Attica (Figure 97).⁹⁹

In comparison to the hydria from Pella, the bolt of lightning is conspicuous by its absence, which creates the impression of a confrontation in progress, with only the figure of Nike indicating the victory of Athena. Dionysos has been given a more active role here: even more than Athena he seems to be Poseidon's adversary.¹⁰⁰ The clear reference to the Athenian myth and the west pediment of the Parthenon must have been of importance to the original buyer of the vase, a high-ranking citizen of a town on the border with the barbaric regions; it showed his cultural affiliations. For our discussion the participation of Dionysos on the side of Athena is significant. His appearance as Gigantomachos and his role as fellow combatant of the polis goddess are unusual in 4th-century vase painting, and seem more appropriate for monumental art forms than for the more private ceramic art. Here again, as in earlier instances, he is close to the goddess of the most Greek of all poleis. The presence of the panther, however, seems to indicate that his influence now reaches beyond Athens, even beyond Greece, and has come to include Asia.

97 The various possible interpretations are listed in LIMC III.1, 19 f., s. v. Attike 2 (G. Berger-Doer).

98 Isler-Kerényi 2010b, 66 f.

99 The various possible interpretations are listed in LIMC I.1, 291, s. v. Aglauros 38 (U. Kron).

100 Tiverios 2005, 310, fig. 11.