

THE TEMPLE OF ZEUS  
AT OLYMPIA, HEROES,  
AND ATHLETES

## ABSTRACT

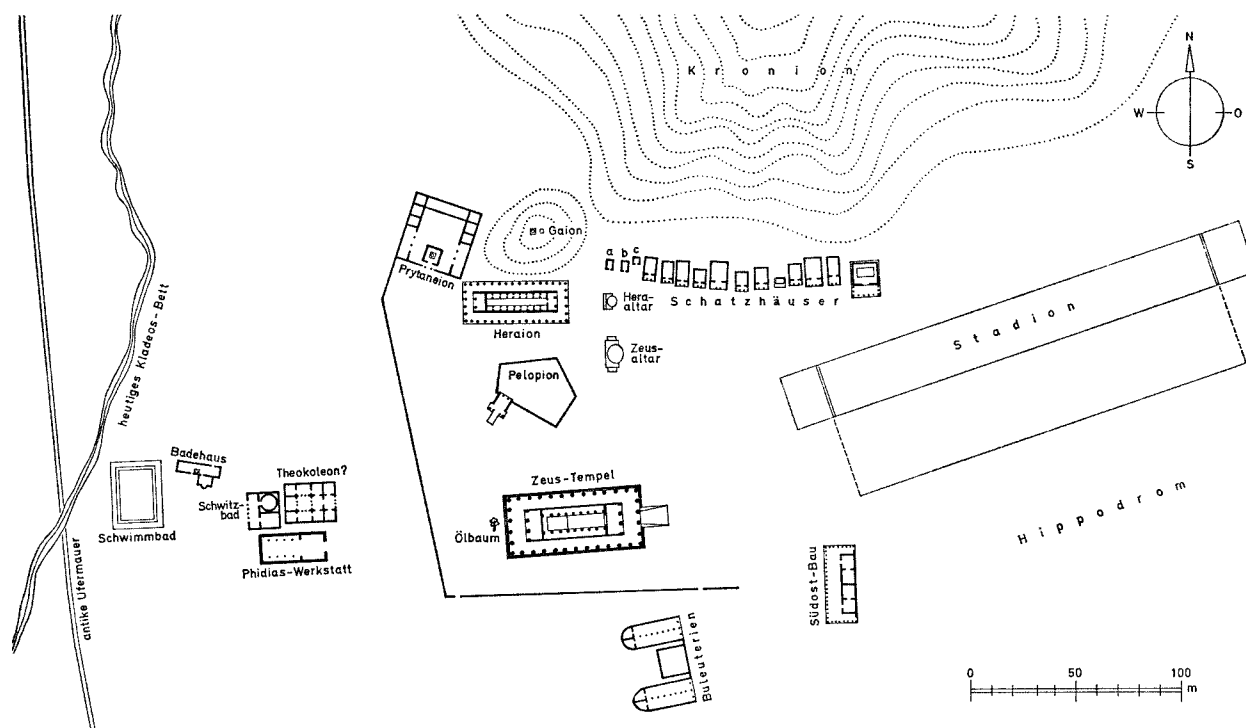
The two pediments and twelve metopes adorning the Temple of Zeus at Olympia of ca. 470–456 B.C. have been the subject of scholarly inquiry since their discovery in the 19th century. These inquiries tend to treat the sculptural elements separately from each other, or largely detached from their Olympic context, and to interpret the sculptures as negative admonitions about *hubris* and consequent justice, or about *dike* and *arete*, or as political allegories. The present study examines the sculptures as a programmatic unity intimately connected with Olympia and the activities that occurred there and argues that, contrary to previous interpretations, the sculptures were created to serve as positive models to inspire and exhort Olympic athletes to deeds of honor and glory.

As Olympic competitors entered the site of Olympia in the second half of the fifth century B.C. (Fig. 1), they walked past a crowd of onlookers, merchants, Olympic officials, and religious officials, who were able to admire the stunning specimens of masculinity filing by.<sup>1</sup> As they walked past the west side of the Temple of Zeus, the athletes could look up to see sculptures in the pediment that depicted the Centauromachy, a myth instantly recognizable to them (Fig. 2). Rounding the south side of the sanctuary, the athletes entered the Altis and assembled before the Temple of Zeus.

1. Mary Ann Carolan, Eve D'Ambra, Richard Garner, and Corinne Pache generously offered their expertise on various drafts of this article, and Hans Rupprecht Goette read and commented extensively on the text and kindly provided additional bibliography. Goette also provided new photos of the sculptures, a task made possible with the permission and assistance of Klaus Herrmann, the Ephorate at Olympia, and the guards at the Olympia Muse-

um. Norbert Eschbach shared his photos of the Göttingen lekythos and answered questions. Discussion generated by audiences at Wesleyan University, the AIA/APA meetings at San Diego in 2001, Yale University, the State University of New York at New Paltz, the Classical Association meeting at Leeds in 2003, the University of Edinburgh, and the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut in Berlin was also helpful in pushing this work forward.

Comments and criticism from the two anonymous readers sharpened the final product. And, as ever, Greg Barringer offered comments, advice, and support in innumerable ways. I am profoundly grateful to all of the above, whose suggestions and criticisms have improved this study and whose friendship and encouragement are deeply appreciated; whatever errors or omissions remain are my responsibility.



**Figure 1. Plan of Olympia, ca. 450 B.C.** After Säflund 1970, fig. 1; courtesy Åström Editions

Gazing down from the east pediment were figures of Pelops, Oinomaos, and Hippodameia—the key players in the myth of Pelops’s chariot race with Oinomaos (Fig. 3). All around the competitors were votive dedications from successful athletes and cities, grateful for divine favor in athletics or in battle, respectively. Having taken their oath of fair play on pieces of sacrificed boar (ἐπι κάπρου κατόμυσθαι τομίων) in front of a statue of Zeus in the Bouleuterion (Paus. 5.24.9), athletes made obligatory offerings to Zeus and to Pelops at the hero shrine to Pelops, the Pelopion (Paus. 5.13.8).<sup>2</sup> Many would have peered through the colonnade of the Temple of Zeus, where they could see the labors of Herakles depicted in metopes crowning the pronaos and opisthodomos of the temple (Figs. 4, 5), and, after ca. 430, catch glimpses of the magnificent, colossal, chryselephantine seated statue of Zeus within the cella.<sup>3</sup> What did these athletes see when they looked at the sculptures adorning the Temple of Zeus? What meaning did these myths and images convey to them? And what meaning did the patrons of the temple intend?

The meager architectural remains of the Temple of Zeus make it difficult to imagine this spectacle, but the sculptures from the temple survive in very good condition and have received the intense scrutiny of dozens of scholars since their discovery in 1831 and 1875.<sup>4</sup> Scholars have tended to treat the sculptures, the two pediments and twelve metopes, in isolation, both from each other and from the numerous activities at Olympia. The goal in this paper is to read the sculptures as a meaningful ensemble within the context of Olympia and its famous Panhellenic athletic games by examining not just the temple and its sculptures but also their physical and cultural context, an investigation that will entail discussion of three major

2. On worship at the Pelopion and its relationship to that of Zeus at the ash altar, see Burkert 1983, pp. 97–103. Tulunay (1998, p. 453) states that new excavations reveal Pelops’s stature to have been nearly as great as that of Zeus at Olympia.

3. Sinn (2000, pp. 58, 69) claims that victorious athletes were crowned in the pronaos of the temple.

4. For a brief overview of the history of the excavations, see Pimpinelli 1994, pp. 350–351.



Figure 2. Temple of Zeus, reconstruction of west pediment by A. F. Stewart. Drawing Candace H. Smith; courtesy Smith and Stewart

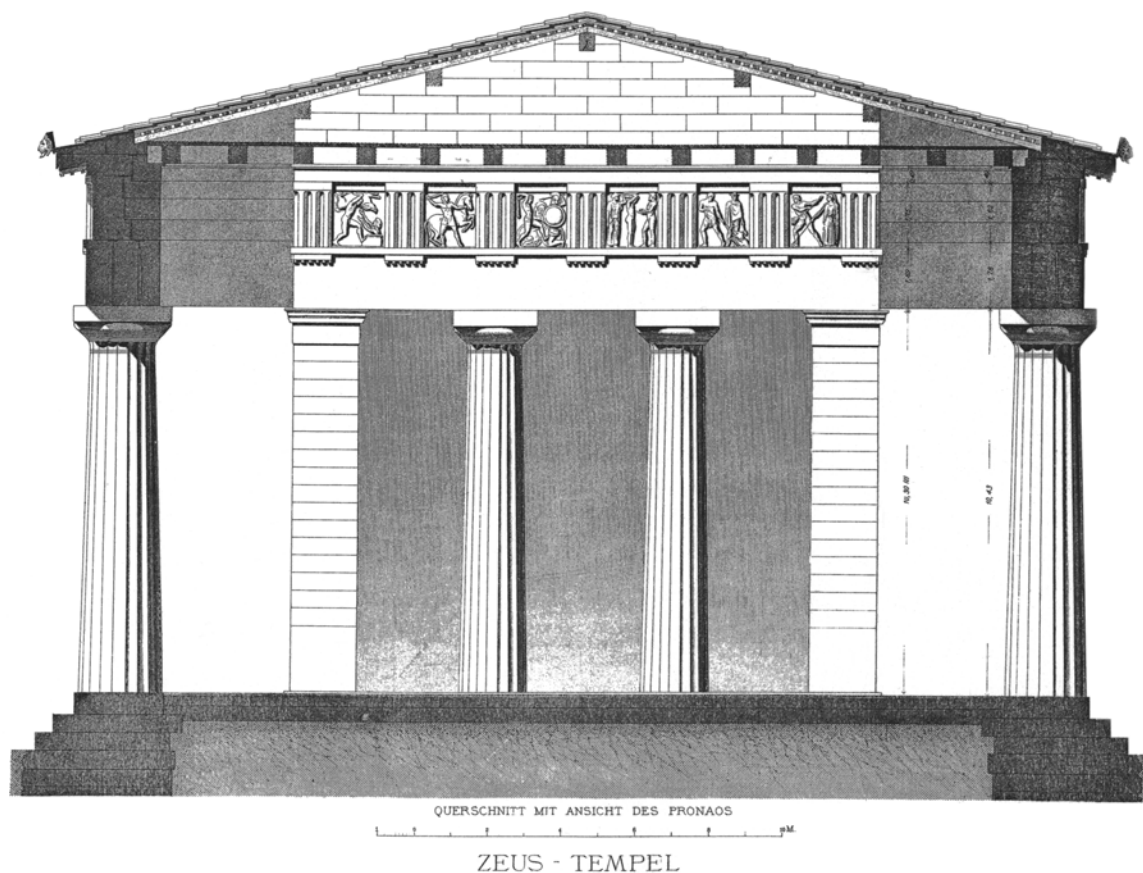


Figure 3. Temple of Zeus, reconstruction of east pediment by A. F. Stewart. Drawing Candace H. Smith; courtesy Smith and Stewart

issues: athletics and its relationship to warfare and military victory, gender roles and premarital rites, and the use of Olympia as display place for deeds of glory that can exalt a man beyond his mortality to everlasting *kleos*. The result of this study is a new interpretation of the sculptures and their meaning for the ancient viewer.

The marble sculptures that adorned the stuccoed, limestone Temple of Zeus, constructed by Libon of Elis (Paus. 5.10.3), are some of the best known and most often seen monuments of antiquity.<sup>5</sup> The temple is securely dated to ca. 470–456 b.c. on the basis of historical events. The terminus post quem derives from Pausanias (5.10.2), who relates that the temple was erected by the city of Elis from the spoils of its conquest of neighboring Pisa, which Elis conquered ca. 470. The terminus ante quem is established by the evidence of the Spartans' dedication of a gold shield on the Temple of Zeus in commemoration of their defeat of Athenians and others at Tanagra (Paus. 5.10.4). The defeat occurred in 457 b.c., and

5. On the marble, see now Herrmann 2000. All the sculptures are of Parian marble, save the corner figures of the west pediment, which are of Pentelic marble and are thought to be repairs. See, e.g., Rehak 1998, p. 194.



**Figure 4. Temple of Zeus, reconstruction of east facade of the cella.**  
After *Olympia I*, pl. X

because the Spartans placed the shield in the center of the temple's apex, the temple had to have been finished by that time. Although scholars cannot pinpoint the exact date of inception of the construction, the temple's creation followed upon general improvements to the site, including a renovation and enlargement of the *stadion* in the 470s and the introduction of a new roster of events and expansion of the athletic games from three to five days, innovations that seem to have occurred ca. 472.<sup>6</sup>

Twelve sculpted metopes of Parian marble, approximately 1.6 m square and carved with the labors of Herakles, graced the entablature of the pronaos and opisthodomos,<sup>7</sup> six per side (Figs. 5, 6). The completion of these labors guaranteed Herakles' immortality; he was apotheosized at the time of his death and is the only mortal to be honored in this fashion. Pindar (*Ol.* 6.67–69; 10.24–25, 57–59) and Pausanias (5.7.6–10) claim that Herakles founded the Olympic games, and Pindar specifies that he did so at the site of the Pelopion (*Ol.* 10.24–25), which, according to Pausanias (5.13.2), Herakles founded. Pausanias also reports that Herakles founded the central ash altar to Zeus at Olympia (5.13.8) and introduced the wild olive into Greece from the land of the Hyperboreans (5.7.7; also Pind. *Ol.* 3.11–18); these olive trees provided the victory crowns for the Olympic victors (Paus. 5.7.7; Pind. *Ol.* 3.11–18). Herakles thus has many claims on Olympia.

Both pediments, each ca. 26 m wide and 3.3 m high at center, presented a dazzling spectacle of sculpted figures, seen today at eye level in the Olympia Museum (Figs. 7, 8). The subject of the west pediment is the

6. Sinn (1994, p. 592; 1991, p. 50), who cites Felix Jacoby; Knell 1990, pp. 79–80. On the motivation for erecting the temple, see, recently, Pimpinelli (1994, pp. 402–405), who provides further bibliography.

7. This arrangement is unusual, found again only at the late-fifth-century Temple of Apollo at Bassai.



Figure 5. Temple of Zeus, reconstruction of the metopes. After *Olympia* III, pl. XLV



Figure 6. Temple of Zeus, metope of Herakles and the Cretan Bull. Olympia Museum. Photo H. R. Goette

Centaumachy, the battle between the Lapith Greek men and the Centaurs at the wedding of Perithoos, king of the Lapiths (Figs. 2, 7).<sup>8</sup> The Centaurs, friends of mankind, had been invited to the wedding, where they became drunk and tried to rape the Lapith women. A fight broke out as the Lapith men, led by Theseus and Perithoos, tried to defend the women, and the Centaurs were soundly defeated. Scholars have argued over the placement of the various intertwined groups of energetic, struggling figures and have debated the identities of several players, particularly the three central males (Fig. 9).<sup>9</sup> Most scholars now agree that the central figure is Apollo;<sup>10</sup> the flanking figures are usually read as Theseus and Perithoos.<sup>11</sup>

Pausanias identifies the subject of the east pediment (5.10.6–8): the preparations for the chariot race between Pelops, who gave his name to the Peloponnese,<sup>12</sup> and Oinomaos, king of Pisa, for the hand of Oinomaos's daughter, Hippodameia (Figs. 3, 8). The basic elements of the myth can

8. On the myth, see *LIMC* VIII, 1997, pp. 671–721, s.v. *Kentauroi et Kentaurides* (M. Leventopoulou et al.).

9. Tersini (1987, pp. 141–145) offers a recent discussion.

10. He presumably held a bow and arrow in his left hand (Tersini 1987, p. 141). Tulunay (1998, p. 454), however, thinks the bow was a fourth-century B.C. addition by someone who misunderstood the original figure, whom he recognizes as Anatolian Pelops holding a *kentron*. Pausanias (5.10.8) identifies him as Perithoos, and other scholars have adhered to this suggestion (e.g., Lapalus [1947,

pp. 175–179]), but Herakles and a youthful Zeus Areios have also been proposed—by Kardara (1971), and earlier by Wilhelm Dörpfeld, Fritz Weege, and Franz Dornseiff (as reported in Lapalus 1947, p. 174). Sinn (1994, pp. 593–594) summarizes the various arguments and concludes that the figure is Apollo.

11. The heroes' poses are borrowed from the Athenian statue group of the Tyrannicides, the men credited with having overthrown Athens' tyranny in 510 B.C. The credit was misplaced, but the association stuck and the poses of the commemorative statues of 477, replacements for an earlier group, were

quickly borrowed by other artists to signify "heroism" when applied to any figure, as they were, for example, on the friezes of the Hephaisteion and on vases. On the transfer of artistic motifs from Athens to Olympia, see, e.g., Raschke (1988, pp. 46–47), who posits that the Eleans appropriated Athenian symbols when they adopted a democracy along the lines of that of post-471 Athens.

12. See Howie 1991, p. 69, for Pelops as ruler of the Peloponnese, and Herrmann 1980, p. 59, for Pelops as a Peloponnesian hero. See also Lacroix 1976.



Figure 7. Temple of Zeus, west pediment. Olympia Museum. Photo H. R. Goette

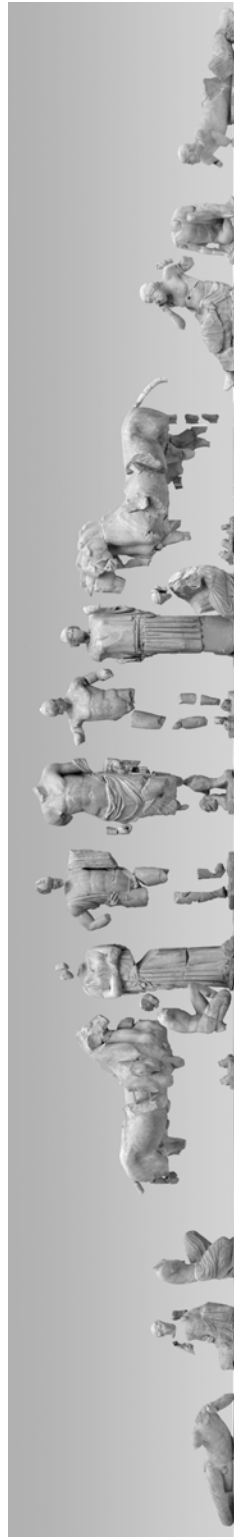


Figure 8. Temple of Zeus, east pediment. Olympia Museum. Photo H. R. Goette



Figure 9. Temple of Zeus, west pediment, central figures. Olympia Museum. Photo H. R. Goette

be summarized as follows. Oinomaos had invited suitors to vie for Hippodameia by competing with him in a chariot race. Thirteen had made the attempt and failed, costing them their heads.<sup>13</sup> Pelops was the fourteenth to compete, and he succeeded, winning both the hand of Hippodameia and the kingdom of Oinomaos.

Differing accounts of how Pelops won are preserved in written sources,<sup>14</sup> from which two distinctive variants emerge. The “divine favor” version claims that Pelops won with help from Poseidon, his erstwhile lover, who provided Pelops with special, infallible, winged horses. The earliest preserved written source for this version of the myth is Pindar, *Olympian* 1, composed ca. 476 B.C.<sup>15</sup> The “cheating” version maintains that Pelops bribed Oinomaos’s charioteer to substitute wax for the metal linchpins of Oinomaos’s chariot, so that, when the race began, the chariot fell apart and Pelops won.<sup>16</sup> The charioteer subsequently threw himself, or was pushed, off a cliff and, as he fell, he called down a curse on the house of Pelops—the famous curse of the house of Atreus, one of Pelops’s descendants. Pherekydes (*FGrHist* 3 F37), floruit ca. 440, provides the first attestation of this version of the myth, though it may have existed prior to this date.<sup>17</sup> Pelops is often credited with founding the Olympic games, which, according to legend, were instigated by this chariot race (Pind. *Ol.* 1.67–88). But Pindar and others also assign the foundation of the games to

13. A list of victims killed by Oinomaos is recorded in Hes. fr. 259 (M–W), but the circumstances of their deaths are not preserved.

14. For a complete account of the literary sources, see Howie 1991; *LIMC* V, 1990, p. 435, s.v. Hippodameia I (M. Pipili).

15. See Howie 1991 for Pindar’s account. Bulle (1939, pp. 210–211) and Shapiro (1994, pp. 78–83) discuss the relationship between the poem and the

Olympia sculptures, a connection made originally by Franz Winter in 1925.

16. Another account of this version, which has Hippodameia bribing the charioteer Myrtilos with sexual favors, is not attested until the Hellenistic period, although Howie (1991, pp. 92–104) speculates that it was known to Pindar’s audience.

17. See, e.g., Säflund 1970, p. 119. Cf. Stewart (1983, p. 134), who thinks that the “cheating” version is Phereky-

des’ invention. Scholars in favor of an earlier date for an account involving the corruption of Myrtilos include Howie (1991, esp. pp. 57–59, 99–100); Hurwit (1987); and Giovanni Becatti in 1939 (reported in Säflund 1970, p. 36). Other ancient authors who recount this version or variants on it: Eur. *Or.* 988–1013; Ap. Rhod. 1.752–758 and the scholia *ad loc.*; and Diod. Sic. 4.73, in which Oinomaos kills himself after Pelops wins the race by bribing Myrtilos.





Figure 10. Temple of Zeus, east pediment, central figures. Olympia Museum. Photo H. R. Goette

Herakles, as noted above, an attempt, some have suggested, to assert a clearly Dorian claim to the foundation of the games, since Herakles is a Dorian hero.<sup>18</sup>

Pausanias names several figures depicted in the east pediment, including those in the center who have been identified as follows: Pelops (G, the unbearded male) and Hippodameia (K) on one side of a centrally placed Zeus (H); Oinomaos (I, who is bearded) and his wife Sterope (F) on the other (Figs. 3, 10). But Pausanias's use of the terms "right" and "left" in describing what he sees is ambiguous, with the result that the original placement of the central figures and of others is in doubt, and he also misidentifies the sex of one figure (O). Thus the contribution of Pausanias's identification of the subject and of some figures is partially outweighed by the accompanying uncertainty about the placement of the figures, on which scholars have seized, producing over 70 reconstructions over the last century.<sup>19</sup>

The rendering of Zeus's neck muscles (see Fig. 10) suggests that he turned his head toward his right, perhaps bestowing divine favor on the protagonist, presumably Pelops, to that side, while his thunderbolt, the symbol of the justice he dispenses, would have been held in his left hand, perhaps an indication that Oinomaos was placed there. But this reconstruction is hypothetical, and the argument also has been made that Zeus's

18. See Sinn 1991, pp. 48–49. Zeus is also credited with having founded the games in honor of his victory over Kronos (Paus. 5.7.10). On the founding of the Olympic games and the first event(s), see Burkert (1983, pp. 94–96), who maintains that the *stadion* was "the preeminent *agon*" at Olympia (p. 96) but does not specify when this was the case. On the numerous equestrian elements of the myth of Oinomaos's chariot race, see Calame 1997,

pp. 243–244; Howie 1991, p. 75.

19. The arguments are summarized in Trianti 2002; Kyrieleis 1997, pp. 13–14; and Tersini 1987, pp. 140–142. See also Stewart 1983, pp. 135–136; Säflund 1970, for a summary and another reconstruction; and Simon 1968. Note that the current arrangement of the figures in the Olympia Museum (Figs. 8, 10) differs from the reconstruction presented in Fig. 3.

uneasy gesture of gripping his garment with his right hand indicates that he looks at the object of his wrath.<sup>20</sup> As we shall see, the uncertainty concerning who is to the left and to the right of Zeus has influenced scholars' understanding of the pediment.

On each side of the central group is a chariot and seated or crouching figures: Pausanias (5.10.6–7) identifies two of the figures as charioteers, adding that Oinomaos's charioteer sits in front of his horses, but it is not clear which crouching figure should be placed in front of which set of horses. An old man on each side (L, N) is recognizable as a seer on the basis of his pose and appearance, and Pausanias reports that the corner figures (A, P), whose placement is certain, are personifications of local rivers.

Having completed this survey of the sculptures, we may turn to questions of interpretation: Why do these sculptures appear on the Temple of Zeus, which was constructed by the city of Elis from war spoils in the years ca. 470–456 at Olympia, a Panhellenic sanctuary and site of the famous Olympic games? How should we understand the sculptures in this political, religious—and, most importantly, here—agonistic context? Although some of the earliest scholars to work on this material viewed Pelops's representation in the east pediment as a positive one,<sup>21</sup> that interpretation was largely discarded by later scholars, who propose that the east pediment refers to the cheating version of the myth, often pointing to parallels in Attic tragedy to support this reading.<sup>22</sup> According to this later interpretation, the two pediments together—and sometimes the metopes—are admonitory statements about *hubris* or justice evidenced in the recent Persian Wars,<sup>23</sup> or declarations about various types of *dike*, *ethos*, and *arete* represented by all categories of beings in the temple's sculptures. For example, the *dike* imposed by Zeus and Apollo, who display divine *ethos*, prevails over the *hubris* and the human and bestial *ethos* exhibited by Oinomaos and the Centaurs; the Centaurs' attack on the Lapith women is read as a mythological metaphor for the recent Persian attack on Greece; and

20. E.g., Kyrieleis 1997, pp. 21–22; Simon 1968, p. 155. See now the description and photographs of the current arrangement of figures in the Olympia Museum, together with an account of new fragments, their position, and technical observations, in Trianti 2002; she makes the argument that Zeus looks to his left, where she places Pelops (pp. 294–297). This arrangement differs from the reconstruction by Stewart (Fig. 3), where Zeus turns his head to his right to see Pelops, while Oinomaos stands on Zeus's left.

21. Gustav Hirschfeld in 1877, Georg Loeschke in 1885, and J. Six in 1889, followed by Franz Studniczka in 1923, Frederik Poulsen in 1943, Ludwig Drees in 1967, and José Dörig in 1967; all are reported in Säflund

1970, pp. 11–12, 19, 21, 31, 39, 45, 119, respectively. See also the views of Franz Winter in 1925, reported by Simon (1968, p. 154).

22. See, e.g., Hansen 2000, p. 23; Osborne 1998, pp. 170–172; Spivey 1996, p. 33; Shapiro 1994, p. 80; Knell 1990, pp. 93–94; Hurwit 1987; Tersini 1987, pp. 147–159; Boardman 1985, p. 36; Pollitt 1972, p. 34; Säflund (1970, pp. 110, 119–123, 127, 144), who identifies figure C as Myrtilos and reconstructs him as fiddling with the wheel of Oinomaos's chariot, though not necessarily touching the linchpin; Säflund (1970, pp. 36–37), reporting the opinion of Giovanni Becatti in 1939; Lapalus 1947, p. 169. Stewart (1990, p. 143; 1983, p. 134), Lacroix (1976, p. 341), Robertson (1975, pp. 277, 279), and Holloway (1967, p. 99) are notable

exceptions, though Stewart (1983) draws numerous comparisons with tragedy.

23. E.g., by Stewart (1997, pp. 192–193), who does not accept the cheating version as influential on the pediment, but does make the case for divine admonition; see also Knell 1990, p. 87 (in respect to the west pediment); Belloni 1987, p. 270; Tersini 1987, p. 140; Raschke 1988, p. 47; and Stewart 1983, p. 134. Contra: Sinn (1994, pp. 598–599), who also notes (p. 598) Erika Simon's demonstration that the Centauro-machy on the south metopes of the Parthenon cannot allude to the Persian Wars. Simon (1968, pp. 165–166) and Bulle (1939, pp. 217–218) recognize in the west pediment, and in regard to Zeus, the theme of *hubris* and consequent vengeance, but do not link the theme to the Persian Wars.

Herakles' *arete* exemplifies heroic *ethos*.<sup>24</sup> Such interpretations regard the reestablishment of order in the face of *hubris* as the chief theme of the pediments, and usually include Pelops's cheating as part of this misbehavior. The pediments also have been read as reflecting other political meanings; so, for example, the west pediment has been viewed as a warning against internal strife within Greece,<sup>25</sup> and the east pediment as an Olympian claim to control all the Peloponnese.<sup>26</sup>

In the present article, I propose a different reading of the sculptures. Rather than serving as negative paradigms about hubristic behavior and the *dike* administered by the gods, or as paradigms against political misbehavior, I think that when they were read as a unified ensemble in their original visual and cultural landscape, the pediments and metopes offered positive models of heroism, *arete*, and glory expressly aimed at the Olympic competitors and at others, who were urged to emulate these examples.<sup>27</sup> This interpretation finds support in the victory odes of Pindar, whose poems, commissioned to celebrate Panhellenic crown victors, can be mined for information about cultural values of the aristocracy, who largely comprised the Olympic and other Panhellenic victors throughout the Archaic and Classical periods.<sup>28</sup> Pindar's odes praised the victor in both overt and oblique ways—always naming the victor's hometown and describing his family line, often in mythological allusions, and frequently likening the victor to great mythological heroes—and it is Pindar who provides the earliest preserved source for the divine favor version of the Pelops myth.<sup>29</sup>

## EAST PEDIMENT

In depicting the chariot race, purportedly the founding event of the Olympic games, the sculptures on the east pediment are closely related to the site of Olympia. By the fifth century B.C., the chariot race had become the most renowned event at the Olympic games.<sup>30</sup> As noted above, although Pherekydes, of ca. 440, provides the first attested account of the cheating version of the myth, many scholars assume that this version existed earlier,

24. Hurwit 1987, pp. 6–7; Tersini 1987; Stewart 1983; 1990, pp. 142–146; 1997, pp. 191–195. Kardara (1971, p. 19) advocates the view that the west pediment demonstrates “the crushing of the brutal violence of the early period, the predominance of moral principles and the establishment of the Law and Standing Order of Zeus,” and that the east glorifies an older Zeus as judge.

25. In support of this view, Sinn (1994, pp. 599–600) points to the only existing evidence for Olympia's arbitration, the bronze tablet *SEG XXXI* 358, which describes how a board of arbiters at Olympia mediated civil strife between Athens and Boiotia.

26. Sinn 2000, p. 60. Kyrieleis

(1997, p. 24) also offers a political explanation for the choice of Pelops in the temple's decoration, briefly stating that the Eleians promoted Pelops in an effort to justify and extend their expansionist policies. Likewise, Raschke (1988) argues that the pediments and metopes refer to the democratization of Elis and of the Olympic games. See also Pimpinelli (1994, pp. 406–410), who, drawing heavily on Pindar, views the sculptures, especially the metopes, as expressions of nature overcome by culture (the *vóμος* of Zeus) and posits a political reading concerning Elis's claims to power.

27. Cf. Raschke (1988, p. 48), who briefly states that the viewer of both the

temple and surrounding athletic statues was inspired “to emulate an idealized *arete*.”

28. On the issue of athletes' social status, see Pleket 1992; Raschke 1988, p. 47. On the cultural values associated with athletics as revealed by Pindar, see Lee 1983.

29. Robertson (1975, p. 277) and Säflund (1970, pp. 120–121) suggest that Pindar invented a new, sanitized version of the myth.

30. See Nagy 1986. On the relationship of the Pelops myth to the chariot race at Olympia, see Davidson (2003), who also surveys the literary tradition, visual evidence, and the cult of Pelops at Olympia.



and interpret the Olympia pediment as a reflection of it. Archaeology offers no grounds for this assumption, for nothing in the material record supports a version of the cheating myth before Pherekydes' account.

According to Pausanias, the Kypselos Chest, of ca. 550, dedicated at Olympia, included among its array of mythological decoration a representation of the chariot race of Pelops, in which, Pausanias goes out of his way to say, Pelops's horses had wings and Oinomaos's did not (5.17.7). The description suggests that the divine favor version of the Pelops myth, not the cheating version, influenced this depiction. Obvious reference to cheating is absent, too, from the two extant vase paintings closest in time to the temple at Olympia that show Pelops preparing for, or involved in, the chariot race. These two Attic black-figure lekythoi of ca. 500–490 by the Sappho Painter, one in Göttingen and the other in Athens, refer to the winged horses given to Pelops by Poseidon.<sup>31</sup> On the Göttingen example, which depicts the competitors racing in chariots, Pelops's horses have wings, and Oinomaos holds two spears and a shield (Fig. 11). On the Athens lekythos, Oinomaos sacrifices at an altar while a figure whose identity is uncertain, most probably Pelops, mounts a chariot drawn by winged horses; armor is piled in front of the horses (Fig. 12).<sup>32</sup> Both portrayals suggest the divine favor version of the myth.

Compositionally, nothing in the east pediment of the temple definitively refers to the cheating version of the myth either. Scholars have cited

31. Göttingen, Georg-August-Universität J22 (*ABV* 508, no. 1): Shapiro 1994, p. 80, figs. 52–54; Lacroix 1976, p. 336; 1974, p. 82, pl. XIII; Jacobsthal 1912, p. 14, no. 22, pl. VI:21. Athens, National Museum 595 (CC968): *LIMC* VII, 1994, p. 20, no. 5, s.v. Oinomaos (I. Trianti); p. 284, no. 12, s.v. Pelops (I. Trianti); Lacroix 1976, p. 336; 1974, p. 82, pl. XIV; *ABL*, p. 98, pl. 33; Sauer 1891, pp. 33–34, fig. 23. Trianti misidentifies the Athens lekythos as red-figure. Haspels (*ABL*, p. 98) doubts that the Athens lekythos depicts Pelops and Oinomaos and suggests instead that the scene shows a “moment before battle,” specifically a

Trojan context. The winged horses on both lekythoi, according to Lacroix (1974, p. 82), prompt the identification of Pelops and Oinomaos although he admits that the interpretation is not certain. I agree with this assessment. Another example of Pelops's winged horses in vase painting appears on an Attic red-figure cup of ca. 420–410 B.C. attributed to the Hippacontist Painter (Madrid, National Archaeological Museum 1999/99/85), illustrated in Warden 2004, pp. 120–122, no. 26. Here, both Pelops and Oinomaos, whose names are inscribed, are armed and unbearded, and Oinomaos's horses are without wings. I thank

Figure 11. Attic black-figure lekythos by the Sappho Painter, ca. 500–490 B.C. Göttingen, Georg-August-Universität J22. Photo Norbert Eschbach; courtesy Norbert Eschbach and Daniel Graepler

Jenifer Neils for this reference.

32. For the depiction of Oinomaos at sacrifice on the Athens lekythos, cf. Diodoros (4.73.4), who recounts that Oinomaos gave the suitors a head start while he sacrificed a ram. On the same vase, the name label above the figure stepping into the chariot is illegible. Trianti (*LIMC* VII, 1994, p. 20, no. 5, s.v. Oinomaos) admits ambiguity in the reading in one instance, identifying the figure as “Pélops (?),” but displays no hesitation elsewhere (*LIMC* VII, 1994, p. 284, no. 12, s.v. Pelops). Säflund (1970, p. 120) identifies him as Oinomaos's charioteer.



Figure 12. Attic black-figure lekythos by the Sappho Painter, ca. 500–490 B.C. Athens, National Museum 595 (CC968). Courtesy Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Athens; photo Haspels, negs. 1969/1119 (left), 1969/1116 (center), 1969/1117 (right)

the expression of figure N (Figs. 13, 14), known as the Old Seer, as an indication of Pelops's cheating and of the subsequent disaster for Oinomaos because the seer seems to gaze and gesture with concern at the chariot wheel before him or at omens above him.<sup>33</sup> But there are two seers in the pediment (L, N; Fig. 3), one on each side, and the facial expressions of figure L (Fig. 15), to judge from the extant features, are similar to those of figure N. Furthermore, since the exact placement of Oinomaos and Pelops on either side of Zeus is unknown, no certainty exists as to which chariot belongs to each figure, and thus, whose chariot is next to the Old Seer. Seers are, in fact, appropriate to the narrative, since they were well established in connection with the oracle at Olympia (e.g., Pind. *Ol.* 8.1–17; Xen. *Hell.* 3.2.21–22, 4.7.2; Strabo 8.3.30), so their presence here could be merely a local reference,<sup>34</sup> like the personifications of the Alpheios and Kladeos rivers in the corners of the pediment (A, P),<sup>35</sup> or they could be depicted as foreseeing the outcome of the race.<sup>36</sup> But there is no need to

33. E.g., Osborne 1998, pp. 171–172; Spivey 1996, p. 34; Hurwit 1987; Pollitt 1972, p. 34; August Frickenhaus in 1923 (as cited in Säflund 1970, p. 31).

34. Stewart (1997, p. 260) suggests that the prominence of the two seers

may be a political gesture on the part of the Eleans to link Elis to Sparta. For the identities of the seers, see Bulle 1939, p. 213; and Simon (1968, pp. 157–162), who counts figure E as yet a third seer, Melampus, and ex-

plores the seers' links to Zeus.

35. On the identity of the river gods, see Simon 1968, pp. 162–165.

36. Cf. Kyrieleis's observation (1997, pp. 19–20) regarding Sterope's mourning gesture.

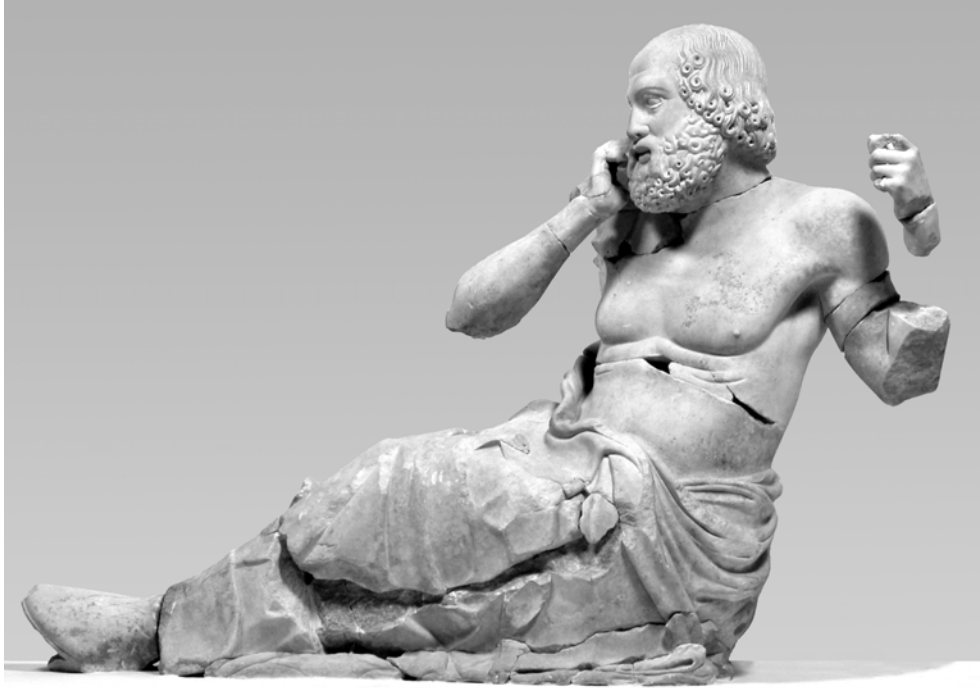


Figure 13. Temple of Zeus, east pediment, seer (N). Olympia Museum. Photo H. R. Goette

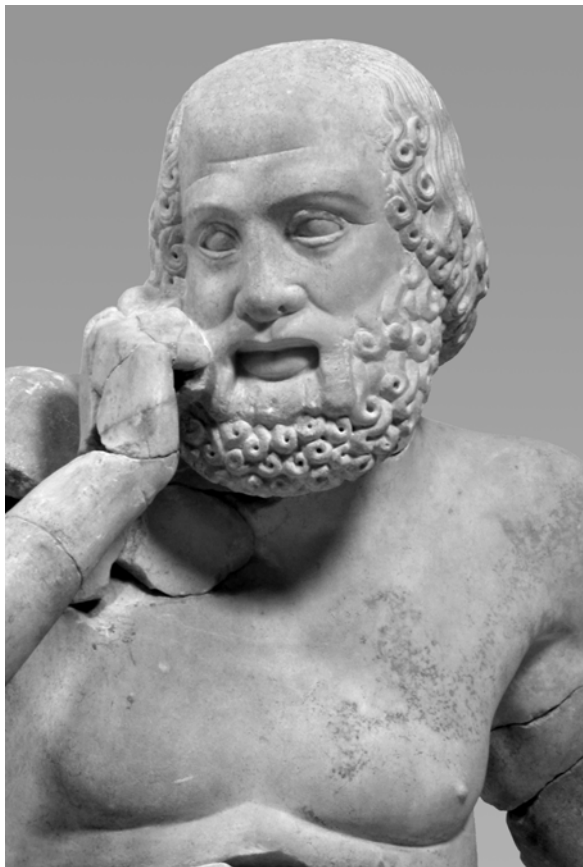


Figure 14. Temple of Zeus, east pediment, seer (N). Olympia Museum. Photo H. R. Goette



Figure 15. Temple of Zeus, east pediment, seer (L). Olympia Museum. Photos H. R. Goette

posit cheating and disaster from their presence or even from their expressions, which could simply be responses to seeing Oinomaos's defeat.<sup>37</sup>

The presence of at least one charioteer has also prompted some to interpret the pediment as referring to the cheating version of the myth, but since uncertainty exists as to which figure is the charioteer, whose charioteer he is, or what he is doing, this seems a rash assumption. The absence of wings on any of the horses (D, M; Fig. 3) might also provide fodder for those who wish to see the cheating version here, since Pausanias recounts that Pelops's horses depicted on the Kypselos Chest had wings, the two lekythoi show the same, and Pindar mentions winged horses. But much of the areas on which one would expect the horses' wings to appear—their shoulders and the foreparts of their torsos—is unfortunately lost and has been restored.

It is implausible, moreover, that the Eleans would have celebrated their hero and the founder of the games, Pelops, with sculptures that depicted him as a cheat,<sup>38</sup> particularly since athletes took their oath of fair play in front of a nearby statue of Zeus (Paus. 5.24.9), whose image dominates the east pediment of his temple (H; Fig. 3). Further evidence of the attitude toward cheating at the games are the *Zanes*, bronze statues of Zeus paid for with fines levied on cheaters, that lined the entrance to the *stadion* (Paus. 5.21.2–3).<sup>39</sup> As Pausanias piously pronounces (5.21.4), inscriptions

37. Indeed, several scholars have suggested that the two seers' visages are portraits of contemporary priests descended from Iamos and Klytios. See Säflund 1970, p. 41; Bulle 1939, p. 213. Stewart (1983, pp. 139–140) regards the seers' expressions as responses to their foreseeing of Oinomaos's imminent defeat. Cf. Simon 1968, p. 158.

38. Others who find a cheating version on the pediment incredible include

Gustav Hirschfeld, Georg Loeschke, and J. Six, reported in Säflund 1970, pp. 12, 19, and 21, respectively, and Wilamowitz-Moellendorff (1922, p. 414, n. 1). While it could be argued that cheating would be justified in this instance on grounds of Oinomaos's cruel or obstructive behavior, hence allowing Pelops to maintain heroic stature, such an ambiguous reading is not supported by surrounding monuments

and practices at Olympia, which exhibit clear disapproval of cheating, nor is official art likely to have encouraged such a multivalent reading of Pelops.

39. Although the earliest *Zanes* base can be dated to the early fourth century B.C., it seems reasonable to assume that the sentiment against cheating already existed in the fifth century B.C. See Mallwitz 1972, pp. 74–75.

on the Zanes make it clear that victory is to be won not by cheating but by strength and swiftness and that the Zanes are intended to warn against cheating—specifically bribery, apparently the most common offense. Lastly, had Pelops been regarded as a cheat at Olympia, the Achaians would hardly have claimed descent from him, as they did on their prominent sculptural dedication of the Late Archaic period located just next to the Temple of Zeus;<sup>40</sup> the inscription, according to Pausanias (5.25.10), read: “To Zeus, these images were dedicated by the Achaeans, *descendants of Pelops*, the godlike descendant of Tantalos” (italics mine).

That *later* viewers may have regarded Pelops in the east pediment at Olympia as a cheat is entirely possible, and it may be that the perception of Pelops as a cheat was a later invention for political purposes. In recounting the background to the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War, Thucydides (1.27.2–30) relates the Eleans’ support for Corinth against the Corcyreans in 435, and the consequences suffered by Elis after the Corcyrean victory.<sup>41</sup> As already noted, the Athenian Pherekydes of ca. 440 provides the first written attestation of the cheating version of the Pelops myth. Athens allied itself with Corcyra, the enemy of Elis and Corinth, in 433, so perhaps Pherekydes’ account was written shortly afterward to discredit Elis and the Eleans’ hero, Pelops.<sup>42</sup>

But this study is concerned with the issue of the *original* intention of the Eleans, who commissioned the building, the Olympian officials whose approval was undoubtedly required, and the sculptors who designed and executed the work. If it is unlikely that the Eleans and other viewers had the cheating version in mind in 470, what did viewers see when they looked at the east pediment?

One thing viewers would have seen both on the east pediment and all around them at Olympia was hoplite armor. Pelops and Oinomaos on the east pediment wear helmets, and both figures originally held spears planted on the ground (Figs. 3, 10, 16, 17).<sup>43</sup> Pelops also held a shield, as indicated by the shield band remaining on his left forearm, and once wore a bronze or metal cuirass, as evidenced by the holes for attachment on his torso.<sup>44</sup> Such hoplite weapons are peculiar equipment for a chariot

40. Robertson (1975, p. 271) mentions that the bases of the dedicatory monument were partially covered by dumped material from the construction of the Temple of Zeus, hence the Late Archaic date. On this dedication, see Kyrieleis 1997, p. 18; Eckstein 1969, pp. 27–32.

41. Cyllene, Elis’s naval arsenal, was burned. Along with this historical alliance between Elis and Corinth, a mythological connection exists between the two cities: the course of Pelops’s and Oinomaos’s chariot race led from Pisa, Oinomaos’s hometown, to the isthmus of Corinth, specifically to the altar of Poseidon. See Lacroix 1976, pp. 331–332, with references.

42. For positions on Pherekydes’

origination of the cheating version of the myth, see above, n. 17. Sophokles (in 468 b.c.) and Euripides (in 409 b.c.) both wrote plays about Oinomaos. Euripides presumably used the cheating variant, and may have been the inspiration for a number of fourth-century Apulian vases on which Oinomaos’s charioteer Myrtilos appears with Oinomaos, Pelops, and Hippodameia. See Howie 1991, p. 55, n. 1, and p. 59. But I think that Sophokles may not have done so.

43. Attachment holes on Pelops’s helmet indicate that metal cheek-pieces were separately added. Simon (1968, p. 156) speculates that Pelops’s spear is the scepter given to him by Zeus, and that Oinomaos holds the

spear of his father, Ares.

44. Kyrieleis (1997, p. 14) believes the cuirass to be a fourth-century b.c. addition, since the torso is well executed, but one sees finishing on portions of the sculptures that would not have been visible, so this does not seem a good reason to discount a cuirass as part of the original composition. Sandro Stucchi in 1955 (as reported in Säflund 1970, p. 42) considered the cuirass a Hellenistic addition, and Säflund (1970, p. 75) calls it a “secondary addition.” In 1914, Heinrich Willers (as reported in Säflund 1970, p. 29) judged that the cuirass was part of the original composition, a prize awarded to Pelops after his victory in the chariot race.





Figure 16 (*left*). Temple of Zeus, east pediment, Pelops (G). Olympia Museum. Photo H. R. Goette



Figure 17 (*right*). Temple of Zeus, east pediment, Oinomaos (I). Olympia Museum. Photo H. R. Goette

race.<sup>45</sup> According to some sources (e.g., Pind. *Ol.* 1.76), Oinomaos used a spear to kill the unsuccessful suitors, and he is the son of Ares, but the combination of hoplite weapons, borne by both competitors, and athletic contest in particular would have resonated with the viewer at Olympia, where hoplite armor was evident in abundance.<sup>46</sup> Armor of all kinds from all places in Greece was dedicated at Olympia, a showcase for military

45. So much so that Carl Robert, in 1919, discounted Pausanias's identification of the subject of the pediment and maintained that it presented the departure of two warriors; see Säflund 1970, p. 9, for a summary of Robert's views. But armor also appears on the two lekythoi that depict the chariot race of Pelops and Oinomaos (Figs. 11, 12; see pp. 12–13 above), and Pindar (*Ol.* 1.77) mentions Oinomaos's bronze spear. Al-

though the lekythoi show the competitors themselves steering the chariots, armed figures riding in chariots suggest a parallel with the *apobates* in the Athenian Panathenaia. An Olympic version of the *apobates* contest also existed (see Paus. 5.9.2), but whether the competitors were armed or not is unclear.

46. Howie (1991, p. 114) notes the armor, but misses any connection with Olympia.

trophies and thank offerings for Zeus.<sup>47</sup> The Temple of Zeus itself was funded from a military campaign, and its entablature was adorned with Spartan military trophies.

The military dedications at the site of the Olympic games suggest an association of military endeavor and athletic contest.<sup>48</sup> This idea finds concrete expression in the altar of Zeus Areios (Zeus the Warlike) at Olympia, which Pausanias cites (5.14.6–7) as the location where Oinomaos sacrificed before his races against the suitors. The armed race or *ὄπλιτοδρόμος*, which was added to the roster of athletic events at Olympia ca. 520 to provide military training (Paus. 5.8.10),<sup>49</sup> and perhaps in imitation of the Panathenaic event,<sup>50</sup> also combines military and athletic *agon*. Moreover, scholars suggest that the foundation or reorganization of previously existing Panhellenic games in the sixth century B.C. was a response to the development of hoplite warfare and the need for trained bodies.<sup>51</sup> Olympia has a further connection to the military: its oracle, like that at Delphi, was consulted on military matters in the sixth and fifth centuries B.C.<sup>52</sup>

Ancient literature offers ample attestation of the association between athletics and warfare.<sup>53</sup> Numerous ancient writers indicate that athletic competition was regarded as excellent preparation for warfare and was ideal for training young warriors to fight.<sup>54</sup> Plutarch describes the Spartan military practice of placing a Panhellenic athletic victor next to the Spartan king in battle (*Quaest. conv.* 2.5.2; *Lyc.* 22.4), presumably not purely as an honor for the athlete but also as a benefit to the king, and Panhellenic victors were sometimes chosen as military commanders (Hdt. 5.102, 8.47; Paus. 4.17.9). In an effort to explain the origin of the various Panhellenic games, some scholars point to funeral games in honor of heroes, such as those for the warrior Patroklos, and posit that Pelops's death provided the *aition* for the foundation of the Olympic games.<sup>55</sup> His tomb was said to be beneath the Pelopion at Olympia, and his ivory shoulder was an honored relic displayed in Elis (Paus. 5.13.4–6).<sup>56</sup> Pelops is not usually re-

47. On the military votives at Olympia and their association with its oracle, see Sinn (1991, pp. 42–49), who emphasizes the particularly heavy concentration of military monuments in the southern part of the Altis. The latest dedications of armor at Olympia that can be dated with certainty are of ca. 440 B.C. (see Siewert 1996, p. 144), but military dedications, including prominent ones, continued in other forms, such as the Nike of Paionios of ca. 424 B.C.

48. Cf. des Bouvrie 1995, pp. 63, 67; Scanlon 1988.

49. Des Bouvrie (1995, p. 67) gives the date. The armed race began at the Pythian games at Delphi ca. 480, and may ultimately derive from an event at the Panathenaic games or elsewhere.

Cf. Bonfante 1989, p. 555.

50. Panathenaic amphoras attest that the armed race was already part of the Panathenaia as early as the mid-sixth century B.C. See, e.g., Bentz 1998, p. 124, nos. 6.011, 6.012.

51. E.g., Scanlon 1988, pp. 233–235. Cf. Paus. 5.8.10.

52. See Sinn (1991, pp. 46–49), who dates the inception of the oracle to the eighth century B.C., at the latest, and notes its new prominence for west Greek colonists in the seventh century B.C.

53. Scanlon (1988) gathers the written evidence. Indeed, the term *agon* is used for both types of contest. I thank Corinne Pache for reminding me of this point.

54. E.g., Pl. *Prt.* 326b–c; Plut. *Mor.*

639d–e; Philostr. *Gymnasticus* 19. See Serwint 1993, p. 417.

55. Golden 1998, pp. 12–14, 91–95, with further bibliography; Nagy 1979, p. 117.

56. For recent discoveries at the site of the Pelopion, including a Mycenaean grave beneath it, see Kyrieleis 2002. Antonaccio (1993, p. 62) places the foundation of the Pelopion in the Archaic period, but Kyrieleis (1997, p. 13) dates it to the Late Bronze Age. Herrmann (1980, pp. 62–66) traces the Pelops myth, the Pelopion, and the Olympic competition to the Mycenaean period. Wolf-Dieter Heilmeyer (as reported in Serwint 1993, p. 405) claims that the earliest votives are Protogeometric, and therefore dates the instigation of cult to the tenth century B.C.

garded as a conventional warrior, but he does wear armor on the east pediment, and the Greeks believed that the Achaians had to have possession of his bones in order to take Troy (Apollod. *Epit.* 5.10; Paus. 5.13.4). In the Homeric poems, athletic contest and battle are frequently combined; obvious examples include the funeral games for Patroklos in the *Iliad* and the contest of the bow, which results in deadly combat, in the *Odyssey*.<sup>57</sup> This connection persists: Pindar (*Isthm.* 1.51–53) declares that victors in war and in athletics receive the same prize—praise from others<sup>58</sup>—and he commends athletic victors in Homeric and elegiac language usually reserved for the acclaim of warriors.<sup>59</sup> Finally and most tellingly, Pausanias reports that the olive wreaths awarded to the Olympic victors were kept in the Temple of Hera on a table together with images of, among others, a personification of Agon and Ares, the god of warfare and father of Oinomaos (5.20.2),<sup>60</sup> and that victors displayed their crowns in the pronaos of the Temple of Zeus (5.12.5).

In addition, as scholars have pointed out, the conduct of hoplite warfare and athletics was much the same, sharing the elements of rules, discipline, taunting,<sup>61</sup> and victory monuments. Indeed, athletic competition was regarded as a kind of warfare, an idea that receives confirmation at Olympia: the labors of the great athlete Herakles, a descendant of Pelops, ornamented the metopes of the Temple of Zeus, and he was honored with numerous altars within the Altis, including one dedicated to Herakles Parastates (Herakles the Defender, or Herakles the Right-Hand Man in the Flank) (Paus. 5.14.7).

Having examined the link between athletics and warfare, let us return to Pelops and Oinomaos. The late-fifth-century viewer of the east pediment would have seen Pelops, the hero of the Eleans, dressed in combat gear (Fig. 16), ready to race against Oinomaos, the king of Pisa, who was also armed for battle (Fig. 17). The Temple of Zeus was constructed from the spoils of Elis's military conquest of Pisa, the *raison d'être* for the temple, and it is plausible, as some have suggested, that Pelops and Oinomaos were understood as allusions to that conquest.<sup>62</sup>

This vision of military and athletic valor and *arete* is reinforced by the sexual associations of Olympia and its games. In the divine favor version of the myth, Pelops received special horses from his former lover, Poseidon. Another mythological pederastic couple also is associated with Olympia: Zeus and Ganymede, represented at Olympia by a terracotta sculptural group of ca. 470 (Fig. 18),<sup>63</sup> the time of the inception of the temple, and by numerous images of the couple dedicated near the Pelopion (Paus. 5.24.5).

The earliest votives seem intended for Zeus; worship of Hera may not have begun until the sixth century. Serwint (1993, pp. 405–406) summarizes challenges to the traditional founding date of 776 B.C. for the Olympic games and notes that recent scholarship, on the basis of fill from wells near the stadium, places the founding in 704 B.C. Cf. Mallwitz (1988, pp. 96–101), who

dates the inception of the games ca. 704 but that of the cult to the Proto-geometric period, at the latest.

57. Scanlon 1988, p. 240.

58. Noted by Scanlon (1988, p. 243).

59. Perysinakis 1990.

60. Hera was worshiped elsewhere, e.g., at Argos, through rituals flavored with military overtones, such as military processions and contests for which

armor was awarded as prizes: Pind. *Nem.* 10.22–23. See Burkert 1983, p. 163, for further references.

61. Barringer 2001, pp. 32–46, with further bibliography; Golden 1998, pp. 23–28; Scanlon 1988, pp. 235–238.

62. E.g., Stehle and Day 1996, p. 105; Tersini 1987, p. 140; Stewart 1983, p. 134.

63. Olympia Museum T2.



Figure 18. Zeus and Ganymede, terracotta group, ca. 470 B.C. Olympia Museum T2. Photo H. R. Goette

Both pederastic pairs are mentioned in Pindar's *Olympian* 1.40–45, in which Pindar describes Pelops's victory over Oinomaos. To explain Poseidon's intervention on behalf of Pelops, Pindar describes Poseidon's love for the boy and his consequent abduction of him to Mount Olympos, which he compares to Zeus's love for, and abduction of, Ganymede.

The mythological theme of pederasty had a real-life counterpart at Olympia, where youthful male competitors raced, boxed, wrestled, and so on, in the nude, before a largely male audience, who enjoyed this display of potential *eromenoi*; Pindar says of one victor, "What a shout as he walked amid the circle of onlookers, young and noble in achievement as in looks!"<sup>64</sup> The combination of athletics and pederasty is common enough in ancient Greek cities: Athens, for example, provides ample evidence that the *gymnasion* was a chief locus of pederastic activity, and the Dorian cities, of which Olympia is one, included pederasty together with athletics as part of military training.<sup>65</sup> The Olympic competitors' nudity, a tradition established perhaps by the Archaic period,<sup>66</sup> may ultimately derive from Dorian initiation rituals that required young men to strip off their clothes in order to attain adult warrior status.<sup>67</sup>

Considering the assemblage of themes discussed thus far—athletics, military activities, and pederasty—the myth of Pelops's armed chariot race with Oinomaos in which Pelops is aided by divine horses given to him by his erstwhile lover Poseidon is particularly apt for this temple to Zeus,

64. *Ol.* 9.94; cf. fr. 123.10–12 (ed. F. Nisetich, Baltimore, 1980). On this subject, see also Steiner 1998; and on nudity and Greek athletics, see Bonfante 1989; Crowther 1982.

65. Barringer 2001, pp. 113–114.

66. Contra: Crowther 1982.

67. Bonfante 1989, pp. 551–554. Scanlon (2002) is skeptical that the Olympic games served as an initiation for males (pp. 38–39), and doubts that the Spartan *paideia* derives from a common Dorian practice (p. 77), but acknowledges the connection among initiation, pederasty, and athletics (p. 97). He also notes the Spartan practice of encouraging a hetero/homosexual attraction between athletes and spectators (p. 78).



Figure 19. Temple of Zeus, east pediment, Hippodameia (K). Olympia Museum. Photo H. R. Goette

lover of Ganymede and a chief deity at Olympia, the site where nude young men competed before the eyes of an admiring male audience.

A consideration of Hippodameia and of the role of women at Olympia, both as athletic competitors and spectators, yields further levels of meaning from the east pediment. The aim of Pelops's armed chariot race was marriage with Hippodameia, whom scholars now identify with the figure on the east pediment plucking at her peplos (K; Figs. 3, 19); this gesture is associated with the *anakalypteria*, the moment in the Greek wedding ceremony when a bride lifts her veil and reveals herself to her husband.<sup>68</sup> In Greek iconography, the gesture signals "bride" or "female sexual partner," and so is appropriate in this context.<sup>69</sup> Because athletic contests between a male suitor and the father of the bride, or among the suitors themselves, are a common feature in Greek myth, the ancient Greek viewer of the east pediment of the Temple of Zeus would have understood the chariot race myth not only as an athletic/military *agon* between male competitors but also as a prenuptial contest for the suitor to win the girl.

The mythological prenuptial race represented by the myth of Pelops had a real-life counterpart at Olympia with one dramatic difference. The Heraia was an athletic event for girls that was probably instituted by the early sixth century B.C. at the latest and is described only by Pausanias (5.16.2–4).<sup>70</sup> He relates that this footrace was founded by Hippodameia, that it took place every four years (a parallel to the male games founded by Pelops), and that the girls ran with one breast bare.<sup>71</sup> Scholars interpret the Heraia as a prenuptial rite of passage designed to advance girls to marriageable status,<sup>72</sup> governed by Hera, who was honored by this event, and suggest that Sparta, where females exercised and danced naked in initiation rites, may have been the inspiration for the partial female nudity in the Heraia, as may have been true for the male events.<sup>73</sup> Just as a male suitor would compete athletically to win a wife, the girls in the Heraia also may have competed athletically to advance to a marriageable state.

Pausanias does not report who the spectators of the Heraia were, but he does relate that the Olympic athletic games, the male events, were viewed not only by men but also by virgin women, and that the only married woman permitted was the priestess of Demeter Chamyne (5.6.7,

68. E.g., Simon 1968, pp. 148–149, with discussion of previous scholarship. On earlier efforts to identify this figure and the suggestion that she is Sterope, a possibility that no longer holds weight, see Säflund 1970, p. 12 and *passim*.

69. Säflund (1970, p. 42) reports that Floriani Squarciapino, in 1955, pointed out that Hippodameia's gesture with her veil links her to Hera, who is often characterized by the same gesture.

70. On the parallels between the Heraia and the Olympic games, see Scanlon 2002, pp. 111–112; Golden

1998, pp. 129–131; des Bouvrie 1995; Scanlon 1984. *Stadia* for girls also existed elsewhere in the Classical period; see, e.g., Dillon 2000; Serwint 1993, pp. 417–419. On the date, see Scanlon 2002, pp. 110–117; Serwint (1993, pp. 405–406) summarizes previous scholarship.

71. The girls may have worn a man's *exomis* (Serwint 1993, pp. 416–422; followed by Scanlon [2002, p. 108]), although Scanlon (1984, pp. 79–81) had earlier suggested a short chiton such as those worn by Amazons, Spartan girls, and participants in the Arkteia. Serwint (1993, pp. 407–408,

fig. 1) and others (e.g., Scanlon 2002, pp. 101–102, 116) associate two statues of female runners, a Lakonian(?) bronze statuette (London, British Museum 208) and a Roman marble copy (Vatican, Museo Pio-Clementino 2784), with participants in the Heraia.

72. E.g., Scanlon 2002, pp. 98–99, 101, 119–120; Dillon 2000, p. 460; Clark 1998, p. 21; des Bouvrie 1995, pp. 62–63. Cf. Calame 1997, pp. 115–116; Serwint 1993, pp. 418–422; Scanlon 1984, pp. 79, 83–85, 90.

73. Scanlon 2002, pp. 101–107, 111; Bonfante 1989, p. 559.

6.20.9).<sup>74</sup> Ancient literary sources suggest, and modern scholars speculate, that virgin women viewed athletes as potential husbands and evaluated them accordingly.<sup>75</sup> Perhaps men viewed the female participants in the Heraia in the same way;<sup>76</sup> their partial nudity suggests not merely the athletically gifted Amazons, who were often portrayed in art with one breast bared,<sup>77</sup> but also the male Olympians, who were fully nude when they competed. In other words, the girls' bared breasts in the Heraia may be an instance of a token gesture of nudity. If the assessment of potential husbands took place at Olympia, as ancient sources suggest, then Pelops offered a model of enviable husband material to the ancient female spectator, who could identify with Hippodameia. Male viewers would have seen Pelops as an exemplar of heroic and martial prowess.<sup>78</sup>

## WEST PEDIMENT

The west pediment (Figs. 2, 7, 9), with its heroes and nuptial context, is firmly linked to the east pediment and to other themes explored above, but the heroes and location of the Centauromachy seem an odd choice for Olympia, since the myth takes place in Thessaly, where Perithoos, king of the Lapiths, and Theseus, an Athenian hero, led the Lapith men to defeat the unruly Centaurs at Perithoos's wedding.<sup>79</sup> In order to explain this choice of myth, some scholars posit that the west pediment offers a local variant of the Centauromachy myth, and Joachim Heiden recently has argued that a genealogical link between the Thessalian Lapiths and the Eleians makes this myth particularly apt for the temple.<sup>80</sup>

74. Both Aelian (*NA* 5.17) and Philostratos (*Gymnasticus* 17) indicate that women were excluded from watching the games, but make no exceptions for unmarried women. Dillon (2000) responds to criticism of the accuracy of Pausanias's text and argues that the exclusion of married women derives from a myth concerning Hippodameia after her marriage (Paus. 6.20.7). Burkert (1983, p. 100) rightly points out that the presence of a representative of Demeter at Olympia unites Pelops, Zeus, and Demeter, who were joined in the myth of Tantalos's infanticide.

75. E.g., Pind. *Pyth.* 9.97–100; Achilles Tatius 1.18. Dillon 2000, pp. 458, 461–462, 468; Steiner 1998, pp. 140–143. On the Pindar passage, see, e.g., Perysinakis 1990, pp. 43–44; and, more generally on the ode and its association of wedding and athletics, Carson 1982.

76. Men certainly watched Spartan girls exercise in the nude. See Dillon (2000, pp. 465–466), who also notes that Plut. *Mor.* 249d attests suitors on Keos watching *parthenoi* engaged in

sports and dances but does not mention nudity. Indeed, Dillon goes so far as to claim that female athletics were a Dorian feature (p. 466).

77. As inspired by the Heraia runners, according to Scanlon (2002, p. 108).

78. Stehle and Day (1996, p. 105) maintain that Hippodameia and Pelops are counterparts: both are heroic patrons of athletics and revered as such by women and men, respectively.

79. Perithoos is sometimes claimed as Athenian, e.g., *Il.* 1.263.

80. Heiden 2003. Lapalus (1947, p. 171) accepts the myth depicted on the west pediment as Thessalian, but cites Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff's idea that the pediment portrays the Centaurs of Mount Pholoe attacking the daughters of Dexamenos (p. 171, n. 2); Holloway (1967, pp. 97–98) refutes Wilamowitz-Moellendorff's proposal. Barron (1972, pp. 26–33), Robertson (1975, pp. 280–281), and others suggest that the sculptor took his inspiration from the Centauromachy painted in the 470s B.C. in the Theseion

in Athens (see Paus. 1.17.2–3), basing the claim on compositional similarities between Athenian vase paintings of the subject and the Olympia pediment. They do not consider the possibility that the Olympia pediment may have been the initial source for both vase and wall paintings; it is remarkable that the Olympia pediment is the first depiction of the myth to include women, who thereafter appear in the same context in Athenian vase painting (see below, n. 88). Even if the Olympia pediment relies on an Athenian original for its composition, it clearly adapts and appends local references to suit its Olympian context. Raschke (1988, p. 46) raises other connections between Athens and the Olympia sculptures, but omits an important possible link: Hippodameia is not only Oinomaos's daughter but is also named an Athenian, daughter of Butes in some cases, though it should be noted that this is a late tradition. See *LIMC* V, 1990, p. 440, s.v. Hippodameia II (E. Simon).



Figure 20. Temple of Zeus, metope of Herakles cleaning the Augean stables. Olympia Museum.  
Photo H. R. Goette

An interpretation of the west pediment that stresses local relevance is persuasive. Local flavor seems to have been the inspiration for the inclusion of Herakles' Augean stables labor in the east metopes of the temple (Figs. 4, 5, 20): this Elean story had never appeared before in Greek art, and its first written attestation is Pindar, *Olympian* 10.28, composed ca. 476 B.C.<sup>81</sup> Furthermore, the east pediment's myth, and its adjacent figures of seers and rivers, are closely connected to local concerns. The two chief protagonists of the Thessalian Centauromachy myth, Perithoos and Theseus (K, M; Fig. 2), also have close ties to figures honored at Olympia: ancient authors name Perithoos as the son of Zeus (*Il.* 2.741, 14.317–318; Paus. 5.10.8) and Theseus as the great-grandson of Pelops (Plut. *Thes.* 3.1; Paus. 5.10.9).<sup>82</sup>

Although the Centauromachy is attested as early as the Homeric poems and appears on earlier small objects and Attic vases, such as the François Vase of ca. 570,<sup>83</sup> it is noteworthy that its appearance on the Olympia pediment is the first instance of its use as architectural sculpture; on such a large scale, this melee between humans and Centaurs must have been arresting.<sup>84</sup> Elean designers could have chosen to depict something

81. Robertson 1975, pp. 273–274. See also Pimpinelli (1994, pp. 398–403), who interprets the myth as a political statement; and Geertman 1982, p. 76.

82. A further connection might be drawn between Theseus's Sikyonian origin and the fact that the Sikyonians claimed to possess Pelops's sword (Paus. 6.19.6).

83. Florence, Museo Archeologico Etrusco 4209 (*ABV* 76, no. 1; *Paralipomena* 29; *Beazley Addenda*<sup>2</sup> 21). Also on a bronze relief of ca. 650–

625 B.C. from Olympia (Mallwitz and Herrmann 1980, pp. 77–78, no. 42). See also *LIMC* VIII, 1997, pp. 671–721, s.v. Kentauroi et Kentaurides (M. Leventopoulou et al.).

84. The equine nature of both pediments is noteworthy, as is Hippodameia's name ("horse tamer") and the fact that Perithoos's wife is sometimes named as Hippodameia, too (e.g., *Il.* 2.742). The importance of horses and chariot racing at Olympia was not limited to the fifth century; the numerous bronze dedications of

horses at Olympia date back to the Geometric period. Mallwitz (1988, pp. 81–85) notes that all such votives were damaged, which is unusual for bronzes. It is also remarkable that a number of divinities honored at Olympia are linked to horses by means of the suffix *-hippios/-hippia* (see Paus. 5.15.5–6). See also Lacroix (1976, pp. 330–331), who points out the importance of horses to Elis and their connection with Hippodameia's name.



Figure 21. Temple of Zeus, west pediment, Lapith (Q). Olympia Museum. Photo H. R. Goette

different, such as the Gigantomachy, which appears repeatedly as architectural sculpture on earlier buildings including the Megarian Treasury of ca. 550 at Olympia and the Temple of Apollo at Delphi of ca. 510. But the Gigantomachy emphasizes divine power, not the achievements of heroes—except for those of Herakles, whose presence was required for the gods' victory. The Centauromachy, by contrast, is purely in the human realm, and stresses human achievement; although Apollo appears on the Olympia pediment, he only directs action, and does not participate in the fight. Compositional elements reinforce the association with the human realm: Wendy Raschke points out that the tangled poses of Centaurs wrestling with Lapith men echo actual wrestling holds that would have been familiar to the Olympic athletes,<sup>85</sup> and, as Paul Rehak observes, one Lapith has a distinctive cauliflower ear (Fig. 21), a common injury in boxing and wrestling, which differs from the normal ears of the Lapith youths on the pediment.<sup>86</sup> Such references invited the athletes to see themselves in the heroic Lapiths.<sup>87</sup>

Other aspects of this portrayal of the Centauromachy are “firsts” that may be adaptations to local concerns. The Lapith women (E, H, O, R; Fig. 2) play an unusually prominent role here: to my knowledge, they are not present in any earlier depictions of the myth. In addition, several of the Lapith women (E, H, R) have one breast bared (see Figs. 22, 23), an innovation that may have been designed to remind the ancient viewer of

85. Raschke 1988, pp. 42–43; their familiarity would most likely have come from contemporary works of art. Raschke views Apollo to be acting as athletic judge, but this seems to go too far.

86. Rehak 1998, p. 199.

87. By contrast, Raschke (1988, pp. 41–45) takes the view that the statues on the temple are meant to emulate statues of Olympic victors in the Altis.





Figure 22. Temple of Zeus, west pediment, Lapith woman (H). Olympia Museum. Photos H. R. Goette



Figure 23. Temple of Zeus, west pediment, Lapith woman (R). Olympia Museum. Photo H. R. Goette

the competitors in the Heraia.<sup>88</sup> The presence of the Lapith women appealed to the ancient viewer, who easily would be reminded of the women at Olympia who were participants in the Heraia and spectators at the male games, women who were elevated to marriageable status in the former venue and were perhaps seeking husbands in the latter. Although the Lapith women do not seek husbands, they are assaulted by the Centaurs at a wedding and are defended by the heroic, athletic Lapiths, overseen by the god Apollo (L; Fig. 2).

Apollo's commanding presence in the west pediment is remarkable, and although he appears elsewhere at Olympia, as attested by statues and an altar, and Pausanias (5.7.10) credits him with Olympic victories, he is absent from all other written and visual accounts of the Centauromachy. His presence may well be a reference to the oracle he established at Olympia (Pind. *Ol.* 6.64–67),<sup>89</sup> and here he exhorts the Lapiths to behave heroically by behaving athletically, like Olympic athletes, a point emphasized by the depiction of recognizable wrestling holds. In sum, the west pediment addresses the male spectator, offering examples of courageous and heroic behavior. Rather than a negative exemplum,<sup>90</sup> the west pediment, read together with the east pediment, was intended to be an inspiring exhortation to the Olympic athletes: "Successful athletes, who behave like heroes such as Pelops, Theseus, and Perithoos, will win honor, glory, and wives not by violence like the Centaurs but by athletic prowess and martial honor in both types of *agones*. Win, and win honorably, and all will be yours." *Nike*, not *dike*, seems more prominent in the minds of the Eleans, victors over Pisa, and patrons of this temple, an interest also reflected in the gilt Nike (or Victory) and gilt cauldrons that once crowned the roof as akroteria (Paus. 5.10.4)<sup>91</sup> and in the Nike held in Zeus's hand within the cella (Paus. 5.11.1).<sup>92</sup>

## METOPES

Like the pediments, the metopes (Figs. 4–6, 20) include local elements and offered a model of heroic behavior to the ancient viewer, especially to Olympic athletes. Herakles' twelve labors are set in both Peloponnesian and distant locales,<sup>93</sup> choices suited to a Panhellenic sanctuary, the site of

88. Pausanias says that competitors in the Heraia had their right breasts bared, whereas the Lapith women of the sculpted Centauromachy have their left breasts exposed. However, Pausanias's ambiguous use of right and left in describing the pediments, already noted, may explain this discrepancy. Even if the choice of breast bared did differ, I think the association would have been made. One Attic red-figure column krater of ca. 470–460 by the Florence Painter (Florence, Museo Archeologico 81268/3997) also portrays a female victim of the Centauromachy with a bared breast. Its reverse carries a *komos*.

See *ARV*<sup>2</sup> 541, no. 1; *Paralipomena* 385; *Beazley Addenda*<sup>2</sup> 256; *LIMC* VIII, 1997, p. 685, no. 171, s.v. Kentauroi et Kentaurides (M. Leventopoulou et al.). The motif of the Lapith women's bared breasts turns up again later on the south metopes of the Parthenon, where sometimes the left breast, sometimes the right, is bared; see Brommer 1967, pls. 150–152, 197, 198, 200, 201, 209 (where both breasts are bared), 224–228.

89. Sinn 1994, pp. 596–598; 1991, pp. 50–51.

90. E.g., des Bouvrie (1995, pp. 66–67) views the west pediment as an inversion of social order, designed to em-

phasize the opposite of such inversion, the institution of marriage.

91. Probably added later; see Robertson 1975, pp. 284–290, for a discussion of date and authorship.

92. See Lapatin (2001, pp. 84–85), who briefly discusses the importance of Nike in the iconography of the Zeus statue and posits that many of the myths incorporated in the Pheidian image at Olympia concern the punishment of *hubris*.

93. On the geographical distribution of the labors, see Pimpinelli 1994, pp. 379, 405–410, and passim; Geertman 1982, pp. 74–75.

Panhellenic games, and visitors and votives from all over Greece.<sup>94</sup> Herakles clearly provided an athletic model to the Olympic athlete; he was especially famed for his skills in running (Paus. 5.7.7), wrestling, and the *pankration* (Paus. 5.8.4).<sup>95</sup> Some of the metopes depict Herakles in the manner of contemporary athletes,<sup>96</sup> showing, for example, his cauliflower ear in the Nemean lion metope,<sup>97</sup> and numerous metopes portray him physically engaged with his opponent in activities that recall Olympic events, such as wrestling—with the Cretan bull and the Keryneian hind—and slaying the Hydra, whose ever-renewing heads, another popping up as soon as one is dispatched, require darting, quick movements that recall boxing skills or the like to cauterize the stumps. Pausanias (6.5.5–6) offers explicit written evidence for the model that Herakles provided the Olympic athlete when he states that the athlete Polydamas, victor in the *pankration* and other events, was inspired by Herakles' exploit against the Nemean lion, and, like Herakles, also had an adventure with a bull.<sup>98</sup>

The hero's aging appearance over the series of metopes, moving from unbearded youth to bearded, full-bodied adult, may reflect the Olympic athlete's coming of age. Herakles also offers the promise of immortality to his most disciplined imitators, for it was the successful completion of Herakles' physically taxing labors that assured his apotheosis to live among the gods after his death.

Of course, mortal athletes could not achieve actual immortality, but sought everlasting *kleos*,<sup>99</sup> and the Olympic victors got it. Victors at the Olympic games enjoyed a renown unmatched in the ancient Greek world: it was the most prestigious of the Panhellenic games (Pind. *Ol.* 1.1–7), the victory most coveted, and it had a profound effect on the rest of the victors' lives. Panhellenic victors, particularly those who won at Olympia, commemorated their victories by erecting statues in the sanctuary, and athletic victors received various extraordinary honors when they returned home, such as free meals for life, a front seat at the games or in the theater, public praise in the form of commissioned poems, and a public statue.<sup>100</sup> Crown victors were also singled out to found colonies (see, e.g., Paus. 3.14.3). Pindar, *Olympian* 1.97–99, tells us: "And for the rest of his life, the victor enjoys a honey-sweet calm, so much as games can provide it."<sup>101</sup> Some Panhellenic victors even enjoyed hero shrines and sacrifice after their deaths,<sup>102</sup> and victors and their statues also were thought to possess

94. See Holloway 1967, pp. 99–101.

95. Herakles' mares were also victorious in the Olympic games, according to Pausanias (5.8.3).

96. Pimpinelli 1994, p. 354; Raschke 1988, pp. 43–44.

97. Pimpinelli 1994, p. 353.

98. Mackey (2002) has recently demonstrated a more general identification between Herakles and athletes in Attic vase paintings from the middle of the sixth century B.C. onward, which portray both Herakles and athletes, especially wrestlers, with the same unusual short hair.

99. See Raschke 1988, pp. 43, 47.

100. Evidence for the meals is preserved in, e.g., *IG I<sup>3</sup>* 131, an Athenian decree of ca. 430. On the extraordinary stature of athletic victors, see Kurke 1993, where citations are also provided. She points out that both at Olympia and in the athletes' hometowns, praise and the metaphorical crowning of the athletic victor were reiterated and reenacted each time the inscription on the commemorative statue was read aloud. See also Steiner 1998; Lattimore 1988; and, for the statues, Raschke 1988.

101. Trans. W. H. Race, Cambridge, Mass., 1997.

102. This was especially true of athletes in south Italy and Sicily, but is also attested for others, including Theagenes of Thasos, Olympic victor of 480 and 476 (see Lattimore 1988, p. 250, for the dates), who is said to have won 1,200 or 1,400 athletic victories (Dio Chrys. 31.95–97; Paus. 6.11). The Olympic victor Philippos of Croton (ca. 520) was honored by Egesta with a hero shrine erected on his tomb where he was worshipped after his death (Hdt. 5.47).

magical properties, including the power to sicken, to heal, and to award athletic victories to their hometowns.<sup>103</sup> The victors in the Olympic *stadion*, in fact, gave their names to the calendar year. The losers, on the other hand, went home to public humiliation.<sup>104</sup>

Some of the best evidence for this quest for everlasting *kleos* comes from Pindar's victory odes. In *Olympian* 6.9–11, for example, he emphasizes the necessity of risk for a success to have any significance: "A deed done without danger, hand to hand or aboard the hollow ships, lacks glory but men remember if someone dares and wins."<sup>105</sup> Elsewhere (e.g., *Ol.* 2.95–100; *Pyth.* 1.82–84), the poet warns that athletic success and the consequent praise may yield envy or *hubris*, which can disrupt the community and occlude the victor's achievement.<sup>106</sup> As evidence for this concern with the envy of others, it was decreed at Olympia in the second half of the fifth century B.C. that only a three-time Olympic victor could erect, or have erected for him, a statue at Olympia (Plin. *HN* 34.16) and that it could not be over life-size—one can only imagine what had come before!<sup>107</sup> One might argue that this decree and Pindar's treatment of envy and *hubris* support interpretations of the temple sculptures as warnings against hubristic behavior.

But certainly this is too one-sided a view. Both Pindar's epinicians and the site of Olympia itself were celebrations of glory and human achievement, both on the battlefield and fairly won on the racing track. If the temple were truly meant to speak about *hubris* and *dike*, one would expect to see images and myths illustrative only of *hubris* and its inevitable, inescapable punishment. Instead, the Temple of Zeus offers a much more nuanced collection of themes, including Herakles' labors; the heroic actions of Perithoos and Theseus overseen by the prime example of youthful, masculine, nude beauty, Apollo; and the preparations for the event that will lead Pelops to marriage, founding the games, athletic glory, and eternal *kleos*. To be sure, *hubris* is present in both the Centaurs' and Oino-maos's actions, but this is not all there is and is not the dominant chord. To speak only of *dike* is to see only the gods and to miss the glory and *arete* of the heroes. Details of the sculptures and their protagonists—the prominent inclusion of women in the Centauromachy and their bared breasts; the presence of the episode of the Augean stables; the entwined familial relationships of Pelops, Herakles, Perithoos, and Zeus; and, of course, the

103. Pausanias (6.11.8–9) tells us that statues of Theagenes of Thasos, the Olympic victor already cited, were set up in many places, where they were worshiped and could heal the sick. Theagenes' statues were not unique in their perceived ability to heal, and cities are recorded to have appeased Olympic victors' statues or to have erected statues because the deceased victor was believed to have *caused* disease or famine or to have withheld athletic victories from a given city. Once victory statues became standard, in the fifth century, cities began to erect statues to

Olympic victors of the *past*; such gestures were clearly politically motivated in some instances and attest to the power and prestige accorded to both the victor and his city. Oibatas of Dyme, who won the Olympic *stadion* in 756, is said to have withheld victory from his city until, in 460, on the advice of the Delphic oracle, they erected a statue to him at Olympia (Paus. 6.3.8; 7.17.6–7, 13–14). See Lattimore 1988; Raschke 1988.

104. Cf. Pind. *Nem.* 8.85–87, where losers cannot even earn a smile or laughter from their mothers; *Ol.* 8.65–

69 and fr. 229 (ed. W. H. Race, Cambridge, Mass., 1997). See also Perysina-kis 1990, p. 48.

105. Trans. F. Nisetich, Baltimore, 1980.

106. On Pindar's treatment of this theme, see Steiner 1998, pp. 144–146.

107. See Steiner 1998, pp. 124–126; and Raschke (1988, p. 39), who interprets the three-victory rule as a concern with the heroization that was implied by statues erected to individuals.

myth of Pelops's race itself—glorify the participants, and encouraged ancient viewers to draw connections between what they saw in the sculptures and what went on around them at Olympia. As athletes gazed up at the sculptures on the Temple of Zeus at Olympia, they would have seen heroic models for their own mortal *agon*. Yet Olympic victors would have achieved a glory that far outlasted their mortal bodies, one that was closer to Herakles' immortality. In *Pythian* 1.83–84, Pindar states that “hearing others extolled rouses secret hatred.”<sup>108</sup> But he also goes on to say<sup>109</sup>

. . . nevertheless since envy is better than pity, do not pass over any noble things. . . . Do not be deceived . . . by shameful gains, for the posthumous acclaim of fame alone reveals the life of men who are dead and gone to both chroniclers and poets. . . . Success is the first of prizes. To be well spoken of is second. But he who finds them both and keeps them wins the highest crown.

108. Trans. F. Nisetich, Baltimore, 1980.

109. I adapt the translations by F. Nisetich (Baltimore, 1980) and W. H. Race (Cambridge, Mass., 1997). Lee (1983, pp. 34–35) points out that Pindar stresses the mortality of the athletes he celebrates, yet I think the poems themselves indicate that Pindar was well aware of the lasting power of fame and human achievement.

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### *Judith M. Barringer*

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH  
CLASSICS  
SCHOOL OF HISTORY AND CLASSICS  
DAVID HUME TOWER  
EDINBURGH EH8 9JX  
SCOTLAND

J.M.Barringer@ed.ac.uk