Michael Vickers

The Caryatids on the Erechtheum at Athens : questions of chronology and symbolism

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It might be thought that little new could be said about the Erechtheum, a building that has been studied in great detail over the centuries. And yet, there are still many uncertainties surrounding its purpose, not least the reason for the distinctive southern Caryatid porch. The date at which the Erechtheum was built is also uncertain. Not that one would realise this from current scholarship; it is still widely believed that construction began in 421 BC after the Peace of Nicias; then work was suspended and resumed in 408 BC. I had already argued against this position in 1985 (Vickers 1985), but even though there have been some valuable subsequent studies (e.g. King 1998; Shear 1999; Rubel 2000: 271–286; Lesk 2004; 2007), I do not believe that my arguments have been satisfactorily met. I am grateful to my hosts in Gdansk for having provided the opportunity for another shot at the target, and for a restatement of the case that construction of the Erechtheum was only begun in 412 BC and that the Caryatid porch was intended to put current relations between Sparta and Persia in a bad light, in keeping with a tale told by Vitruvius.

Key words: The Caryatids, the Erechtheum, Athens, Greek, architecture

Whatever date construction of the Erechtheum began, however, it is clear that the Caryatid porch stood over the foundations of the peristyle of the Old Temple of Athena, a building that had been partially destroyed during the Persian sack of Athens in 480 BC. These remains can still be seen, and it has recently been argued that the cella of the temple remained in use throughout antiquity, as a permanent memorial to Persian aggression, rather on the lines of the Kaiser Wilhelms Denkmalkirche in Berlin, preserved for not unrelated reasons (Ferrari 2002). If so, it would be difficult to argue that the acute proximity of the porch to the surviving remains of the cella was not without significance in the eyes of the ancient viewer.

None of the six Caryatids is currently in situ. One was moved to safety by Lord Elgin's agents in the early 19th century, and is now in the British Museum (Paton,

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Caskey, Fowler, Stevens 1927: 598; Smith 1892: 233–235, n. 407). Four figures and part of a fifth were only rescued from the harmful air of modern Athens a couple of years ago, and are now in the new Acropolis Museum. The Erechtheum is highly fragmentary and its interior arrangements are open to debate. The North Porch is comparatively well preserved, with its tall, slender, Ionic columns, and an elaborately carved doorway, but for all the intricate carving, it should be recalled that what we have here is a rendering in stone of details that more properly ought to have been in bronze. A fragment of the East Door survives that shows that it, the most significant, even if not the largest, doorway was given a bronze frame that has now been lost. We shall return to these points later.

Caryatids

The Caryatids provide the clue to the elucidation of what is a very puzzling building. The fullest account of what an architectural Caryatid was is to be found near the beginning of Vitruvius's *De architectura*, written in the first century BC. Not only does Vitruvius's account of the origin of Caryatids (1.1.5) contain much of interest for students of architecture, but it also throws light on Graeco-Persian relations in the 5th century BC.

Vitruvius's explanation of Caryatids occurs among the subjects Vitruvius thought necessary as part of an architect's education:

> The architect should be equipped with knowledge of many branches of study and various kinds of learning… Let him be educated, skilled with the pencil, instructed in geometry, know much history, have followed the philosophers with attention, understand music, have some knowledge of medicine, know the opinion of jurists, and be acquainted with astronomy and theory of the heavens.

He then proceeds to elaborate on these various topics:

> A wide knowledge of history is necessary – he says – because architects often incorporate many ornamental features in the designs of their works, of which they must be able to give a reasoned account, when asked why they added them. For example, if anyone erects marble statues of robed women, which are called Caryatids (*statuas marmoreas muliebres stolatas, quae caryatides dicuntur*), instead of columns on his building, and places mutules and crowning members (*mutulos et coronas*) above them, this is how he will explain them to enquirers. Caryae, a city in the Peloponnese, allied herself with the Persian enemy against Greece. Later the Greeks were rid of their war by a glorious victory and made common cause and declared war on the Caryates. And so the town was captured, the males were killed and the Caryan state publicly humiliated. The victors led the matrons away into captivity, but did not allow them to lay aside their robes or matronly ornaments (*stolas neque ornatus matronales deponere*). Their intention was not to lead them on one occasion in a triumph, but to ensure that they exhibited a permanent

picture of slavery (*aeterno seruitutis exemplo*), and that in the heavy mockery they suffered they should be seen to pay the penalty for their city. So the architects of those times designed images of them for public buildings specially placed to uphold a load, so that well-known punishment of the Caryates' wrongdoing might be handed down to posterity.

With one or two exceptions (Schneider 1986; Schweitzer 2007: 122) Vitruvius's testimony is now usually dismissed as a late fabrication (e.g. Böttiger 1825; Blomfield 1826; Meineke 1843; Preller 1843; Frazer 1898: 320; Borchhardt 1976: 44; Lauter 1976: 14–15, n. 47; Schmidt-Colinet 1977: 135; Schmidt 1982: 22–33; King 1998; Lesk 2004; 2007), but it is instructive to observe quite how such a view came about. In general – and in very broad terms – Vitruvius was the inspiration for the architecture of Renaissance princes, popes and cardinals, kings and emperors. As such, he was associated with the *ancien régime*, he was unenlightened, and his testimony could be safely disregarded. More specifically, mistrust of Vitruvius on Caryatids can be traced directly to an essay on Caryatids written by G.E. Lessing in the eighteenth century (Lessing 1925: 385–386). J.J. Winckelmann had identified a male statue in the courtyard of the Palazzo Farnese in Rome with a rudimentary Corinthian capital on its head, as one of the Caryatids of Agrippa's Pantheon mentioned by Pliny (Winckelmann 1764: 387; Plin. *HN* 31.37). Lessing drew the implausible conclusion that since Winckelmann's "Caryatid" was male, then Vitruvius's account (referring as it did to female statues) must be fiction. I have long pondered the point, and still do not follow the logic of Lessing's rejection of Vitruvius, but it appears to have been influential and still to be accepted at face value (e.g. Lesk 2004; 2007). Lessing's point is rendered all the more unlikely because what were probably some of the Caryatids from Agrippa's Pantheon were found re-used as garden ornaments at Hadrian's Villa in Tivoli in 1952 (Schmidt 1973; Lesk 2007: 35–36). If they are indeed from an earlier Pantheon, they can serve as a vindication of the essential merits of Vitruvius's story. For Pliny describes the figures in the Pantheon as "Caryatides" and also supplies the information that they were the work of Diogenes of Athens (Plin. *HN* 36.11), who was presumably aware of the architectural traditions of his native city. Lessing's principal objection can thus be disregarded.

Vitruvius's account, with its reference to "mutules", envisages a Doric entablature over the version of the punishment exacted on the women of Caryae that he had in mind (cf. Plommer 1979: 98). There must have been several extant renditions, now lost, for Vitruvius to choose this topos as Exhibit A in his architectural history lesson. It may even be that there was an original "Caryatid monument" that stood in a public place in Sparta (Picard 1935; Schneider 1986); if so, doubtless a Doric structure. Mutules are echoes in stone of the ends of rafters in a hypothetical wooden fore-runner. As such, they regularly occur on the edges of sloping roofs. The roof of the South Porch of the Erechtheum, however, is flat and dentils, or stone analogues of the ends of horizontal wooden laths, are used instead. There is, however, a gesture in the direction of the Doric Order in the Erechtheum, in

that the capitals above the Caryatids' heads consist of an abacus and echinus that between them possess the profile of a Doric capital, albeit the surface of the echinus is carved, but with the kind of egg and dart moulding that was painted on the Doric capitals of the Parthenon (cf. Mallgrove 1996: 49, fig. 14; Jenkins, Middleton 1988: 184).

A slightly stronger objection raised by Lessing was to ask how a tiny town like Caryae could have sided with the Persians, could have medised. The fact was, as Herodotus put it:

> All the cities of the Peloponnese [with certain exceptions which included the Spartans] stood aloof from war; and by so doing, if I may speak freely, they in fact took part with the Medes (8.73).

Many Greek cities, indeed, had given earth and water, the traditional symbols of submission, when ambassadors came from the Great King of Persia in the months before Xerxes's invasion in 480 BC, and, as G.L. Huxley has convincingly shown, there is no reason to believe that Peloponnesian Caryae was not one of them (Huxley 1967; cf. Romano 2011). It has been objected that Caryae was not destroyed until after the Battle of Leuktra in 371 BC and thus too late for the tale that Vitruvius told (Lesk 2007: 29). However Vitruvius does not speak of the destruction of Caryae, but rather the slaughter and enslavement of its human resources. It has also been suggested that the Caryatids Vitruvius had in mind were intended to invoke the enslavement of women of Caryae after Leuctra (King 1998), but this is to overlook Vitruvius's explicit statement that "Caryae … allied herself with the Persian enemy against Greece" (*cum Persis hostibuscontra Graeciam consensit*; 1.1.5).

There is therefore no reason to doubt the historical basis of Vitruvius's story. It can, however, only regain credence if it can be shown to harmonize with the regular language of visual metaphor in Greece and Levant in the fifth century BC. The image with which Vitruvius is concerned is said to have been invented as a reaction to Persian political and military activity during the previous two decades or more. The memory of the Ionian Revolt and campaigns of 490 and 480/479 BC will have been very much to the fore when Caryatids of the Vitruvian kind are supposed to have been first employed in Greece, and it is in my view likely that the essential imagery had its origins in the Near East, in a long tradition that had its most recent manifestation in Achaemenid Persian imagery.

Many examples might be shown, but the image of the Persian king supported by his subject peoples, as for example on the Tomb of Darius at Naqs-i-Rustam, will suffice to illustrate the principle involved. To be made to support anything in this manner is to be shown as a slave, to be a subordinate (and all the subjects of the Great King, even the most prominent, were technically his *bandaka*, his *douloi*, his slaves (Francis 1992: 349–350; Missiou 1993; Briant 2002: 324)). It is not a situation of which to be proud. The inclusion of Caryatids in the superstructure of an earlier Pantheon has been taken either specifically to recall Athens' subject

status with respect to Rome after Actium (Lesk 2004: 245–249; 2007, 38–39) or "defeated peoples" (Zanker 1968: 12 ff.) in general, in a tradition that includes Persians at Sparta, Dacian prisoners in the Forum of Trajan and on the Arch of Constantine at Rome, and yet more Caryatids in the Forum at Merida (Lesk 2007: 38–41; Trillmich 2009: 450ff.).

Although it was a cause of acute shame to be a slave in antiquity, there was an exception to the rule, namely the institution of temple servants. This is exemplified in Euripides's *Ion*, where the eponymous hero is proud to be "the slave of the god" (132; cf. 309, 327), but is continually concerned throughout the play lest he should prove to be physically descended from slaves himself. This will account for the existence of many architectural supporting figures, such as the Graces and Seasons that supported part of the throne of Apollo at Amyclae (Paus. 3.18.10), or those thought to come from a shrine of Demeter on the Via Appia (Smith 1904: 100). In this category probably also belong the supporting figures on the façade of the Siphnian Treasury at Delphi. But whatever their precise significance, they are of little evidentiary value in the case of the Erechtheum figures and their relationship to Vitruvius's account, in that they neither support a connection nor disprove it.

The date of construction of the Erechtheum

It is in context of "paragons of slavery" therefore that I believe we should see the Caryatids of the Erechtheum on the Athenian Acropolis. But whatever date we assign to the Erechtheum, all would agree that it was erected during the period when the Athenians were frequently at war with the Spartans. Earlier in the fifth century, the Spartans had been the Athenians' allies against the Persians, but the two states gradually became estranged to the extent that war between them broke out in 431 BC. The Caryatids of the Erechtheum constitute forthright Athenian criticism of their Spartan enemy, criticism which is, moreover, couched in terms which are wholly in keeping with the explanation of the architectural use of Caryatids recorded by Vitruvius. If the case is a plausible one, it should also be possible to establish the date of the construction of the Erechtheum within narrower limits than has hitherto been possible.

There has been a wide range of dates proposed for the construction of the Erechtheum. Work has been supposed to have begun (1) as early as 435 (Dörpfeld 1942: 13, 31); (2) in c. 427/6 BC (Lesk 2005: 68): "using the money that had been put away for a rainy day". But Thucydides is quite explicit that the special reserve of 1000 talents that was set aside in 431 was not used until 412: (2.24.1; 8.15.1; cf. Rhodes 2005: 22); or (3) soon after the Peace of Nicias in 422/1 BC (Michaelis 1889: 362–363); (4) alternatively, the Caryatids were designed around or soon after 420, and completed at the latest by 415 (Lauter 1976). On such views, work on the Erechtheum of necessity came to a halt after the Spartan occupation of Decelea in the spring of 413 or the Sicilian disaster in the autumn of the same year.

Euripides's fragmentary *Erectheus* has been adduced as chronological evidence. Athena clearly alludes to the construction of the Erechtheum in the play (Pap. Sorb. 2328, 90–91; Euripides 1968: 22), and the discovery of new fragments in the 1960s gave rise to a series of studies in which arguments were put forward in support of c. 421 BC, with obvious consequences for a supposed building program. The Dionysia of 422/1 BC, immediately after which the Peace of Nicias was ratified was especially favored (Calder 1969: 147–156; Clairmont 1971: 485–495). The only evidence which might support such a view is ambivalent. It consists of a quotation by Plutarch of a line from the *Erectheus* in the context of foreign visitors to the City Dionysia in 422/1 who have come to make peace (Plut. Nic. 9.7; Eur. *Fr*. 369 (Nauck[2])). The words in question are of a proverbial nature (concerning cobwebs on spears), appropriate in the context, but they neither prove that the *Erectheus* was performed in 422/1 nor prove that it was not (cf. the doubts expressed by Austin 1967: 17).

The balance of probability may be tilted by the fact that Aristophanes makes two references to the *Erectheus* by way of parody in plays which were performed at the Dionysia of 411 and 410, namely the *Lysistrata* and the *Thesmophoriazusae* (at *Lys.* 1135 and *Th.* 120; for the dates, see Vickers in preparation). W.M. Calder III thought that: "in 412, Aristophanes had apparently been reading *Erectheus*" (Calder 1969: 151). But might not Aristophanes have heard the play for the first time prior to that year? It is more economical to look for topical allusions rather than to have to explain a delay of eight or nine years.

It is possible too that the plot of the *Erectheus,* which dealt with the repulse of a Thracian invasion of Attica, may have had a particular relevance in 412. If tragic performances really were intended "to purge the emotions by means of pity and fear", then such a plot may well be associated with the atrocity carried out at Mycalessus in Boeotia in 413 BC by a band of Thracian mercenaries whom the Athenians had decided not to employ for reasons of economy. On their way home, these Thracians had acted with the utmost brutality, even killing the children in a school. "No calamity more deplorable occurred during the war", according to Thucydides (7. 27.1–2; 29–30), presumably reflecting widespread horror at what had happened (cf. Quinn 1995). If Euripides shared this horror, and if he wanted to distance the Athenians from an event for which they were indirectly responsible, to represent the Thracians as traditional enemies might have been an effective dramatic device.

So much for circumstantial evidence for the date of the construction of the Erechtheum. The earliest objective evidence we have is in the form of inscriptions, dated beyond question to 409/8 BC, which describe in detail how much of the building had been completed by that date, and how much needed to be done (Paton, Caskey, Fowler, Stevens 1927: 277–422, 648–650; *IG* i[3] Nos 474–479). The assumption is nearly always made that these inscriptions imply that work was resumed after a break. But the sudden appearance of a detailed account of the work – work in progress – may perhaps be put down instead to political changes

that occurred at Athens in 409 BC, when the quasi-oligarchical regime of the Four Hundred was replaced by a democracy characterized by bureaucratic zeal to make careful checks on public expenditure. Regime change is often followed by careful accountancy: checking up on what predecessors had spent money on. It was an age that saw the beginning of an intense program of re-codifying Athens' laws (Rhodes 2006: 166). The Erechtheum inscription refers in passing to the female figures as *korai* or "maidens" (*IG* i^3 474.86), the assessors being more interested in the undressed state of the ceiling blocks over their heads. This has been taken by some to mean that they were not Caryatids, but the expression is rather the kind of description to be found in lists drawn up by lawyers and bailiffs, who are less concerned with the finer points of art history or political symbolism than with simply putting bare facts on record. "Korai", moreover, was quicker and cheaper to inscribe than "gynaikes" or "Karyatides".

At the end of the most exhaustive discussion to date, J.M. Paton concluded that "in the light of our present knowledge the year in which the Erechtheum was begun cannot be definitely determined" (Paton, Caskey, Fowler, Stevens 1927: 456). A case can, however, be made for work having been begun in 412 BC, some three or four years before the inscription describing work in progress. The literary evidence, such as it is, no longer stands in the way of such an argument. Not only might it be possible to establish the occasion, however, but perhaps more important, to find the money.

Whatever the precise date at which work on the Caryatids of the Erechtheum was begun, it is a cause for no little surprise that hardly anyone in modern times has ever associated them with Aristophanes's *Lysistrata* of 411 BC, a play whose central theme is the occupation by women of the Acropolis. Whether Caryatids were to be seen on the Acropolis from before 431, from c. 420, or only from 412, they will surely have given Aristophanes the idea for the conceit. And if Aristophanes preferred new jokes to old, then 412 would appear to be the most appropriate candidate of the three. Before they were raised into position, the Erechtheum Caryatids will have stood around on the Acropolis in public view and will doubtless have been the objects of precisely the kind of crude remark addressed to Spartan, Corinthian and Theban women early in Aristophanes's play (77 ff.): "And here's our lovely Spartan. Hello Lampito dear. Why darling, you're simply ravishing! Such a blemishless complexion – so clean, so out-of-doors! And will you look at that figure – the pink of perfection" – and "what unbelievably beautiful bosoms…". Ismenia the Theban is referred to with knowing nudges in the context of "picturesque Boiotia: her verdant meadows, her fruited plain… her sunken garden where no grass grows. A cultivated country", while the Corinthian is said to "hail from over by Corinth, but her kinfolk's quality, mighty big back there" – to which the answer comes, "she's mighty big back *here*" (trans. Douglass Parker).

Joking apart, the Caryatids share one characteristic which is distinctly un-Athenian, namely their hair-styles. I know of no contemporary parallels from Athens. Their coiffures, consisting of thick braids above and massive tresses be-

low, are quite unlike those of Athenian women we see on vase-paintings. Even the *kanephoroi* of the Parthenon frieze who are sometimes compared to the Caryatids have their hair arranged differently. Something similar is known at Athens decades earlier, if images of women at public fountains are relevant. The evident conservatism of the hair-styles has been the subject of comment, but rather than seeing it as a nod in the direction of *korai* destroyed by the Persians (Lesk 2004: 108), better perhaps to view it as part of an attempt to show the women of Laconian Caryae, whose coiffures will inevitably have looked old-fashioned, rather like those on archaic Peloponnesian bronze statuettes (e.g. Congdon 1981: n. 18, 31, 34). It has been objected that the only reason that our Caryatids have so much hair descending below their necks is to permit the figures to carry the weight of the superstructure above (Shear 1999), and there is some merit in the observation. But conservative hair-style and constructional need are not mutually exclusive, and the precise nature of the hairstyle remains a problem that needs to be addressed.

Other contemporary references in the *Lysistrata* are well known. D.M. Lewis has argued persuasively that Lysistrata herself is partly based on Lysimache, the Priestess of Athena Polias, a redoubtable lady who held the position for more than sixty years (Lewis 1955). Myrrhine was the name not only of Lysistrata's accomplice, but of the Priestess of Nike at the time the play was performed (Mark 1993: 111–113). It is also the case that the name of Lampito, the Spartan woman in the play, is the same as that of the mother of the Spartan king Agis who in 411 was in command of the allied occupation force at Decelea (BNP 2005: 187, s.v. Lampito, 1 (Welwei)).

The occupation of Decelea in the spring of 413 BC was, indeed, the most serious setback the Athenians had received during the whole course of the Peloponnesian War. All the results which Alcibiades had foretold to the Spartans came true:

> The whole stock of the country will fall into your hands. The slaves will come over to you of their own accord; what they have besides will be seized by you. The Athenians will be deprived of the revenues which they obtain from the silver mines of Laurium, and of all the profits which they make by the land or by the law courts: above all, the customary tribute will fail; for their allies, when they see you are now carrying on the war in earnest, will not mind them (Thuc. 6.91.6).

In the event, "more than 20 000 slaves escaped, some of them artisans" (Thuc. 7.27.5), and everything had to be imported at great cost. To compound the Athenians's difficulties, news came later in 413 of the disastrous fate of the expedition to Syracuse. A programme of drastic public spending cuts was instituted, and a board of ten senior temporary officials, the *probouloi*, was appointed to replace the democracy. The *probouloi* were doubtless chosen with regard to their general trustworthiness (Sophocles the tragedian was one of them (Arist. *Rh*. 1419a; Foucart 1893; Wilamowitz-Moellendorff 1893: 102), and they do not appear to have been obliged to make a permanent record of their actions (or perhaps they were, but rendered their accounts on materials that have not survived). At all events

their brief regime, like the "hidden life" of the Erechtheum, is remarkable for an almost complete lack of any epigraphic evidence.

Although the *probouloi* were committed to cutting down on public spending, their period of office witnessed the expenditure of the 1 000 talents which had been put aside in 431 BC (Thuc. 2.24.1) against the day when Athens should be beset by the kind of dangers which threatened in 412. Chios had revolted and Athens' remaining allies were likely to rise as well; as a direct result a decree was passed allowing the 1 000 talents to be used at last. The only items on which we hear money being spent are ships, but is it not too much to assume that the goddess was given her share – a tithe – if only as a thank-offering for having kept the money safe for so long? It is difficult to believe that Lysimache, the high-born long-standing Priestess of Athena, would have allowed the *probouloi* not to pay their dues to the goddess. The cost of the Parthenon has been estimated as somewhere between 500 and 800 talents, and in view of temple costs elsewhere, 100 talents is not a surprising figure for the Erechtheum.

If the Erechtheum was begun in 412, then several problems – not least Vitruvius's explanation of the origin of Caryatids – can be resolved. It is clear that a major preoccupation of the Athenians in 412 and succeeding years was the danger that the Persians might be encouraged once more to take an active interest in Greek affairs. This was no idle fear, and was fuelled in no small way by the fact that in 412/11 the Spartans and Persians made three peace treaties: one in the summer of 412 BC, and the next in the winter of the same year, and the third shortly before the Dionysia of 411 BC (*HCT* 5, 450–452), at which I believe *Lysistrata* was performed (Vickers, in preparation). The report we have of the second treaty makes explicit reference to its solemnisation by means of libations, or *spondai.* D.M. Lewis has observed in this context that "*spondai* generally imply the termination of hostilities, and it is possible that someone has woken up to the fact that Sparta and Persia have been at war with each other for seventy years" (Lewis 1977: 93, citing Amit 1974).

Although the Spartans had only medised in order to gain a temporary financial advantage over the Athenians, voices were raised in criticism even on their own side. Lichas, son of Arcesilaus, took great exception to the two treaties which had been made at the time he spoke:

> For the Great King… to claim power over the countries which [the Spartans'] ancestors had formerly held was monstrous. If either treaty was carried out, the inhabitants of all the islands, of Thessaly, of Locris, and of all Hellas, as far as Boeotia, would again be reduced to slavery; instead of giving Hellas freedom, the Lacedaemonians would be imposing upon them the yoke of Persia (Thuc. 8.42.3).

The prospect of their two traditional enemies acting in concert was a cause of great concern in Athens, a concern which, I would suggest, was manifested in a graphic way in the persons of Caryatids. The way in which Caryatids were employed by

architects to recall the punishment meted out to the womenfolk of a Pelopon-
nesian city which had medised now makes good sense. The Erechtheum Caryat-
ids will have carried a powerful political message, to the effect that the Spartans
were behaving in a manner which betrayed everything a Greek should stand for.

The successive Spartan-Persian treaties – σπόνδαι (literally "libations") would
have been poured from φιάλαι ("libation bowls"). This becomes significant when
we examine the more complete copies of the Erechtheum Caryatids on the tomb
of Pericles of Limyra and those from the so-called Canopus at Hadrian's lavish vil-
la at Tivoli. These can be seen to carry *phialai* (Borchhardt 1976: 85–87; Schmidt
1973: pls 19, 20, 21, 26), the implements necessary for pouring libations, without
which a treaty was not complete. The libation bowls are adorned with a series
of acorns, a motif which can be paralleled on extant *phialai*. Surviving gold ex-
amples exist, for example, in the Metropolitan Museum (Bothmer 1962; 1984: 86;
cf. Vickers 1984), and another that has oscillated between Sicily and the United
States over the past twenty years (Manganaro 1989, 302–304; cf. Rose 2000:).
A gold phiale of the fourth century BC from Panagyurishte in Thrace weighs 100
Persian darics (Hitzl 1996: 124; Vickers 1984), and is decorated not with acorns,
but with the heads of black boys, probably an allusion to the biennial tribute sent
by the Ethiopians to the Great King (Hdt. 3.97). *Phialai* do not survive on the
Erechtheum originals but the discovery of an arm fragment from one of the Athe-
nian Caryatids wearing a triple bracelet similar to those on the Hadrian's Villa
versions (Brouskari 1984: 61, figs 6, 7) strongly suggests that the copyists were
faithful to their models.

It may even be possible to associate the six Erechtheum Caryatids with the
six Spartan invasions of Attica (in 431, 430, 429, 428, 425, and 413 BC), of which
the occupation of Decelea under Lampito's son was the latest and most damag-
ing. Numerology may not be welcome by academic fare today, but it had its place
in ancient Greece (e.g. Hom. *Il.* 2.311-29; Philostr. *VA* 1.22). The very position
of the Caryatids, too, actually standing within the ruins of a building destroyed
by the Persian can scarcely have been unintentional. Indeed, not very much later
Sophocles was to link the severity of the Persian and Spartan invasion of Attica in
his *Oedipus at Colonus* (694–706).

The appropriate imagery of the Caryatids is not the only reason for believ-
ing that the Erechtheum was begun in 412. The building displays certain features
which suggest that it was both designed and built at time of economic stringency,
the 100 talents notwithstanding. The first and most obvious indications are the
plan and the scale. The building of which it was the successor and substitute was
the Temple of Athena Polias, largely destroyed by the Persians in 480. Normally,
a new temple would have been built over the foundation of an earlier one, but
the decision appears to have been taken to preserve the surviving portion of the
Athena Polias temple and to build a smaller temple to the north. This looks like
a decision taken in the interest of economy. The older building still served a useful
purpose – as a Treasury – and it would have been wasteful to demolish it. In real

estate terms, the older temple covered about 990 m², the new one about 370 m². The new building will thus have been more than 2 ½ times smaller in plan than the old, and the volumetric discrepancy will have been even greater.

There are also apparent economies made in the materials employed on the building. Only the east door, which led to the principal shrine, was given a bronze frame (Paton, Caskey, Fowler, Stevens 1927: 43–44, fig. 29). The details of the other doors and windows are metallic in appearance, but were rendered in carved and painted marble. It has recently been observed, too, that certain details of the Caryatids appear to copy the characteristics of bronze sculpture (Lauter 1976: 33). Had the Caryatids actually been of bronze we might have expected the traveller Pausanias to have taken note of them; in fact, as with most marble sculpture on the Acropolis, he ignores them.

In the Athens of Pericles, when sculptural reliefs were painted, the blue pigments employed for their background was imported, doubtless at no little expense, from Egypt (cf. a recent analysis of the Parthenon evidence: Verri 2009). In the Erechtheum, the decision was taken to give the relief sculpture of the frieze a blue background by more economic means, for instead of the reliefs being carved on slabs of Pentelic marble and then coloured, they consisted of separately carved (and presumably painted) Parian marble figures fastened by means of dowels on to a blue-grey background of Eleusinian limestone (Fowler in Paton, Caskey, Fowler, Stevens 1927: 239; Lesk 2004: 117–129). Again, this will have proved somewhat cheaper, and was probably quicker, than the traditional method.

If the Erechtheum were begun in 412, then economies of scale and material can be explained, as can the decision not to demolish the still functioning remains of the older temple. Another reason for building a smaller temple in 412 than may have originally been envisaged is that in 413 most of the slaves who might otherwise have done the heavy laboring jobs on the site had escaped. The craftsmen who did remain, however, would have been highly skilled and doubtless able to work quickly. It is in fact easier to postulate a continuous construction of the Erechtheum from 412 onwards than to explain the resumption of work after a break which has been assumed in the past. If there was no break in work on the Erechtheum, then the first inscription, rather than being an assessment drawn up after a long gap, was a reflection of a constitutional change as a consequence of which detailed accounts had once more to be given. The timetable envisaged is a tight one, but far from impossible. The decree allowing the 1 000 talents to be used was passed not long before the first Spartan peace treaty with the Persians, in the summer of 412. The news of the latter will have reached Athens in days rather than weeks, and so, even assuming that the Athenians had no foreknowledge of the Spartans' medism, the Erechtheum could have been designed and been well under way by the autumn of 412. The Athenians were, after all, "equally quick in the conception and the execution of every new plan" (Thuc. 1.70.2). The anti-Spartan manifesto of the Erechtheum's principal sculptural ornament will have ensured continuity of the building program during successive Athenian regimes,

and the anti-Persian message will have been reinforced in 410 with the performance at Athens of Timotheus's propagandistic *Persae.*

Vitruvius's explanation of the origin of Caryatids also applies to the Caryatid porch on the tomb of Pericles of Limyra in Lycia (Borchhardt 1976; Zahle 1979: 342, no. 56). Pericles was a dynast who ruled from c. 380 to c. 360 BC. It has been said of him that "during the Satraps' Revolt it would seem reasonable that [he] was in touch with the Athenians and other movers in the rebellion" (Childs 1981: 79). His tomb has rightly been seen to derive its Caryatid porch from the Erechtheum (Childs 1981: 77), but there is one feature that occurs on the Lycian Caryatids, but which does not appear on the Athenian ones, namely the elaborate *rhyta* which they hold in their left hands. These *rhyta* belong to a typically Persian type (Borchhardt 1976: 40–41), and we might well ask why. If we take into account Pericles of Limyra's known antipathy towards the Persians, together with the tradition that the architectural use of Caryatids frequently bore a special meaning – that they were intended to recall those who had betrayed their country to the Persians – hen perhaps we may begin to understand the reason for Caryatids on Pericles's tomb.

We otherwise hear of Caryatids in the literary sources in the guise of dancers in the service of Artemis Caryatis, and it is usually thought that these are wholly unconnected with the enslaved matrons (e.g. King 1998). There is, however, a context in which they may overlap. The earliest recorded reference to a Caryatid dancer occurs at the very end of the fifth century BC, when in 401 the Spartan Clearchus gave a ring to the Cnidian Ctesias then resident at the court of Artaxerxes II. The intaglio bore "dancing Caryatids" and the gift was made "as a symbol of [Ctesias's] friendship towards his kith and kin in Lacedaemon" (Plut. *Artax.* 18; Cnidus was a Spartan colony: Hdt. 1.174). It may be that this Spartan image was created as a direct response to the way in which Athenians had recently employed Caryatids as vehicles for anti-Spartan propaganda. Clearchus had served at Decelea (Thuc. 8.8.2), and was presumably aware of the significance with which Caryatids might be endowed.

Vitruvius on Caryatids is vindicated. It is salutary, however, to reflect on how it has come to pass that in modern times the Erechtheum Caryatids in particular have been so misunderstood and have been endowed with benign rather than hostile characteristics. The reason seems to lie in the fact that in the early nineteenth century they became in effect the patron saints of philhellenism, and when for example, the South Porch appeared in paintings an implicit contrast was made between the Greek sculpture (good) and lounging Turks (bad). There was also a romantic tale, which recurs in many travellers' accounts of early nineteenth century Athens, that when Lord Elgin's agents removed a Caryatid from the Erechtheum, "the whole town was filled with doleful sighs and lamentations as the remaining Caryatids mourned their ravished sister" (St. Clair 1998: 212, 298, n. 22), and this will only have encouraged a sympathetic view. The fact that Vitruvius's testimony had been challenged by a scholar of Lessing's stature was of itself enough to ensure that most of educated Europe would continue to disregard

it even when arguments were brought in its defense. More seriously, to accept the Vitruvian story would have resulted in the Caryatids being shown to be philo-Persian, from which it would be a very short step to declaring them to be a symbol of Turkish oppression rather than "Maids of Greece" who might one day "still be free" (to quote Byron). Once they are shorn of their mystery, however, the Erechtheum Caryatids are revealed as collaborators and quislings, ready to place Greece beneath a Persian yoke.

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