A HIGH SCHOOL STUDY OF GREEK ART

Thesis for the Degree of M. A.

MICHIGAN STATE COLLEGE
Betty M. Lyons

1944

A HIGH SCHOOL STUDY OF GREEK ART

by

Betty M. Lyons

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate School of Michigan State College of Agriculture and Applied Science in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of Art

1944

Table of Contents

Foreword

This survey is designed to give Junior and Senior High School students a better understanding of the cultural relation of the old democracy of Greece to the young democracy of America, and of the great debt we owe that ancient civilization.

As art is a symbol of the age in which it is created, the spirit of a civilization can be read through its art forms. This study is written mainly for use in art classes, but would also be of value in Social Studies, or History.

Athens was the center from which Greek art grew, and the Fifth Century B.C. was the age of its highest growth. The survey has been more or less limited to this area as it is sufficent for a young student's appreciation of Greek art.

The language has been kept simple, and dates and technical matter kept to a minumum. A bibliography has been appended and those books which the average High School student will find readable, are marked.

History

The land of Greece lies like an old fringed shawl flung down between the Ionian and Agean Seas. The coast line is ragged with deeply indented bays, and the water is dotted with islands. More than half the people in Greece have a sea breeze blowing through their houses. The original Greek people, Indo-European nomads who wandered to the Agean about 2000 B.C., were not naturally seafarers, but through economic necessity they became great sea traders.

The land in Greece is a series of plains and valleys encircled by mountains and sharp, limestone hills. In the days before highway engineers, airplanes, and telephones communication was difficult and the country was divided into separate city states. Only in times of great danger against an invading foe did they band together. But they had a common language, and a common spirit of independence and relations were friendly most of the time.

In the beginning, the political organization was loose and weak. There was a tribal king who governed with a council over as much territory as he could influence. The king's power, even in primitive days, was subject to the approval of the people. Gradually, the king, himself, was displaced and an aristocratic ruling class managed the city state. In Sparta this grew into a military democracy, and in Athens into the Commonwealth which later became a perfected form of democracy.

Growth did not come peacefully; there were continual

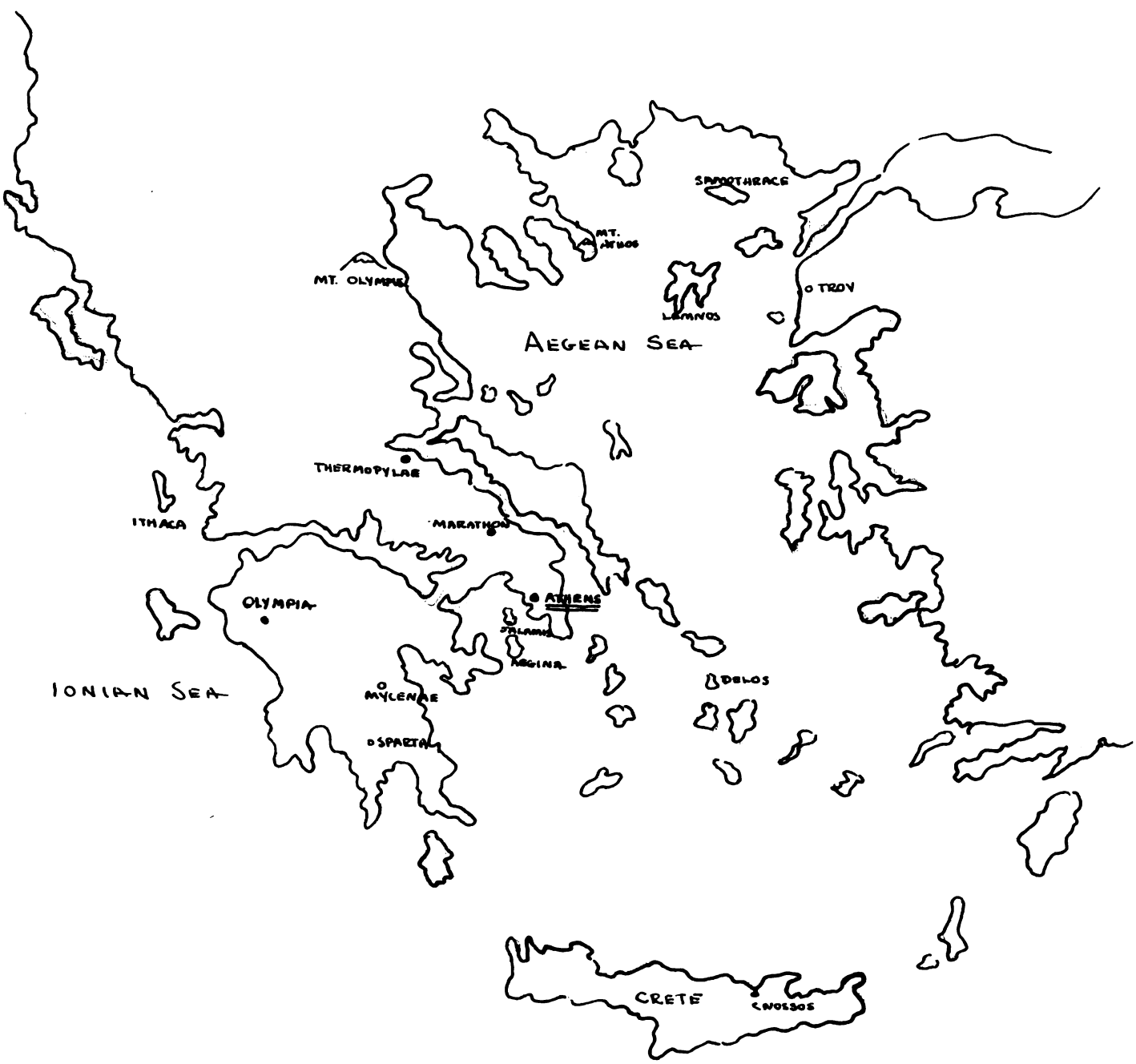
wars between states, and years of struggle with Persia. The battles of Marathon against Darius, and of Thermopylae and Salamis against Xerxes, where a small number of Greeks vanquished hordes of Persians, are thrilling and inspiring. They are of great importance to European history since it was a victory of democracy over Oriental tyranny.

Athens tried to draw the country together against the Persian threat by forming the Confedracy of Delos whereby each state kept up a navy, or contributed to the support of Athen's navy. For a long time there was peace, and Athens, under the leadership of Pericles, developed the art, the education, and the philosphy of living that made it famous for the rest of time.

However, the Greeks were independent to a fault, and Athens was forced into the position of a tyrant to keep the states together. One by one, they broke away, fighting, and the long Peloponnesian War began. Eventually, it led to the downfall of Athens, the rise and fall of Sparta, the rise of Macedonia under Philip, the world conquests of Alexander, and at the end of the long skid, the absorption by Rome.

Types of governments and civilizations die out, but a race does not. There is still a Greece, and still an Athens, and still the incomparable sky and mountains, but the spirit which gave it greatness has moved to other centers of the world.

THE AEGEAN AREA



The Olympic Games

Twenty seven hundred years ago, in776B.C., a reporter wrote a column of sport news. The Olympic games were over and the home town folks were celebrating with their victorious athletes. Tonight, there were banquets for the winners; tomorrow, the strangers from over the mountains would go home, and the local business, and wars would begin again. The Olympic games were so important to the Greeks that all the details of ordinary life were put aside: schools closed, business shut its doors, and even those city states who were at war declared a truce for the duration. Never before, and never after did a nation love sports as intensely as did the Greeks. You can not understand that feeling if you think of our Saturday afternoon football game, or if you have a mental picture of our sport fan stuffing himself with pop and peanuts and yelling at the professional players on the field.

All the Greek world came to the Olympic games. In fact, the games made up for the lack of telephone and radio communication between the separate, mountain-locked communities. Merchants made business deals, diplomats and politicians gathered information, old friends discussed their families and fortunes. There is no doubt that the reputation of the Delphic Oracle for truth-telling and good advice was made possible by the information picked up around the stadium. Still, the main reason for attendance was in the games themselves.

The program consisted mainly of footraces, wrestling, discus and javelin throwing, and broad jumping. These five

events, in which one man competed, made up the Pentathlon. It is comparable to the event in the modern Olympics,except that a 1500 meter run is now subsituted for the wrestling.

The Greek audience could also watch a boxing match that was a dangerous and bloody affair with no Marquis of Queensbury rules. The fighters wrapped their hands with thongs of leather and lead, and just went in there and slugged until one man dropped. Warfare, in the days of no machine guns, was often a matter of hand to hand combat, and boxing was excellent preparation for it-an ancient Commando training. Nevertheless, the Greeks considered it inferior to the other events because it was lacking in grace and dignity.

Sometime later in the history of the games, an even more gory event known as the Pankration was added. It was a combination of boxing and wrestling in which every thing but biting was allowed. Broken toes and fingers were common, and even death was not at all unusual.

The position of the ten judges for the games was one of considerable honor, and the men were carefully chosen from the leading citizens of the communities. For the duration of the contests they, like a jury, kept apart from any possible outside influences and resided together in a public building. An imposing group in their purple robes, they sat at the semi-circular end of the race course during the games, and the reporters say that their decisions were

fair and final.

The winner of an Olympic contest was an honored man. He had trained long and hard, proved himself in local contests, and finally to win, had defeated the best in all Greece. There were no second prizes in the games. The hero was the winner and he was paid off in public glory. At the end of the games, there was a ceremony of placing upon his head the wreath of laurel symbolic of victory. The best poets of the land gave him more lasting fame by describing the thrill of the race, the strength and grace of his body, his sportsmanship and fine character. In the following years, public school boys would learn those odes by heart. He endorsed no breakfast foods; the respect of his fellow citizens was the greatest thing a man could be given. After the early days of the games a practical trophy was added: the victor was given the privilege of eating his meals at a city club,and at public expense for the rest of his life.

Meanwhile, the artists were chiseling statues and reliefs of athletes, and many of these were set up around the Olympic grounds. The memorials must have gradually added up to the hundreds, because years after the Romans had taken away the best, and some had been destroyed, a traveler reported there were still two hundred left standing.

Each of these statues was a memorial to the strength and skill of the Greek people, and a symbol of their ideal of athletics. As the artist chipped and smoothed the creamy marble, he considered how the figure would look against the building where it would be placed. If it stood out as it

was intended to, the form must be decisive and simple, the lines must be clear, the curves smooth. He did not have to hire a model to pose for him. He could go to any of the gymnasiums around the city and watch the oiled nude figures of boys hurling the discus or going through other exercises. The Greeks admired the human body, and in the Olympic contests didn't even wear a loin cloth.

The famous statue by Myron, "The Discobolus", (Discus Thrower) might thus have been made. Myron lived sometime between 400 B.C. and 500 B.C. and must have been the popular artist of his day because he received orders from the most distant parts of Greece. He made several athlete statues for Olympia, and, although we don't know that the Discus Thrower was one of these, it was probably intended to mark some notable athletic victory.

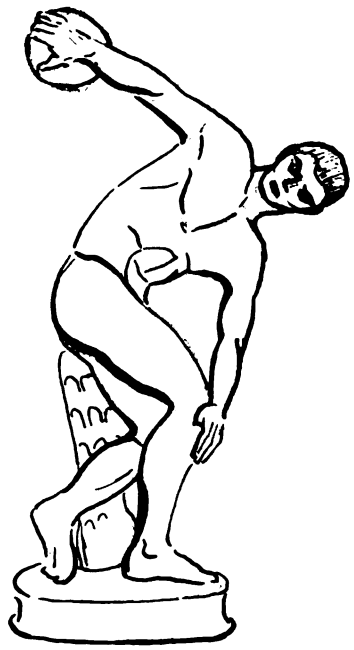
It is no peculiarity on the part of the photographers that almost all the reproductions show the side view of the statue. Like all Greek statues until the Roman influence, it was not made to stand in the center of a room, or an art gallery where it would be looked at from all angles, but it was created with the idea that it would become part of the design of a building and be seen from one point of view. Statues at Olympia were placed against the entrance walls, the colonades, the buildings, where they could break the plain surface, and were themselves framed by it. "The Discus Thrower" was meant to be viewed from the flat side. The great, smooth S curve of the body can be fully seen only from that position. The figure of the victorious athlete

is poised at the exact moment between the two large motions of discus throwing. He has passed the bronze plate from his left hand to his right, and swung it back as far as possible. In the next instant he will shoot his arm and left foot forward and let the discus fly. It is rhythm, and it is rest, like the fraction of time between the "tick" and the "tock" of a clock pendulum. The rhythm is so strong in the statue that the eye glides along the curves as easily as it follows a line on a map. The movement starts with the discus, comes down the shoulder and the right arm, then swings back up the right leg to the discus again. It is the body of the athlete that implies the motion and rhythm. There is no expression of his zest for the game, in his face; no hint of what he may be feeling. Nor is the face a portrait that his friends would quickly recognize. Myron was interested, like other Greek sculptors, in the ideal of the athlete, not in the individual man.

Even in the head of Pericles, a statue set up to honor a particular man, the features are not very realistic. They have been softened here, sharpened there, so that all may see the strength, the heroic character, the wisdom in the face. It is a symbol of a leader of the people more than it is a faithful portrait of Pericles.

Greek sculpture was highly idealistic. Their commemorative statues, and their gods and godesses were human beings, but unblemished, as ordinary human beings rarely are. They were an exaggeration of what was beautiful and

powerful in mankind. That is why we get an impression from the Olympic statues and tablets that Greece was, indeed, a land of Super-Athletes.



DISCUS THROWER
MYRON

Architecture

The Greeks were a very sociable people. They liked to do things together, go places together or just meet old friends and make new ones. Although family and clan ties were strong, and a man was extremely proud to have good sons, the family house was just a place to sleep, and sometimes to eat. In military Sparta, the men, and the boys after they were seven years old, lived and ate in dormitories and were only visitors to their homes.

There are a few stories about the palaces of old kings in the Odyssey, mansions that had tiled floors and fireplaces and bathrooms and innumerable servants quarters, but we know very little of ordinary domestic architecture, except that it was simple, without plumbing and furnaces. The climate was mild, and the Greeks preferred a public life anyway, so a house only needed to be a shelter and a storeroom. The great architecture was reserved for the public buildings, temples, auditoriums, theaters, which could be used by all the citizens.

Athens is situated around a large, flat-topped hill, The Acropolis. The hill was a center of life for the people. In time of war it could become a fortified garrison as well as a look-out post. It could be seen from the sea, and must have been lighthouse and Statue of Liberty to many an Athenian sailor. From anywhere in Athens, one had only to lift one's head to see the Acropolis; so it was only natural that the Athenians should build upon it their most sacred

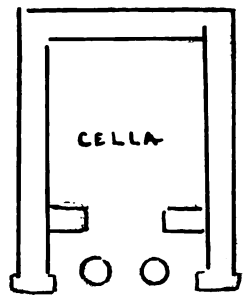
and beautiful buildings.

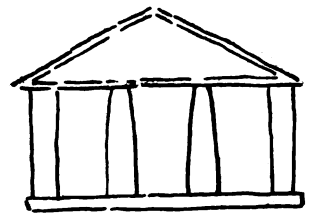
There were many Gods in the Greek Heaven, and as Heaven was close to earth on cloud-covered Mt. Olympus in northern Greece, so were the Gods close in form to mortal men. They were the spirits of nature in human shape, and like many earthly people had a very complicated family life. Zeus, ruler of the air, was the most powerful; his brothers Poseidan and Hades, whom the Romans knew as Neptune and Pluto, ruled the sea and the realms below the earth. Their large families were employed as assistants to help run the various departments of the world, and deal with the problems of mankind. Many of the Gods were mischievous, irresponsible,and fun loving, yet they were a powerful force in man's daily life. They inspired him to be brave and decent, and assured him that they would certainly punish evil actions.

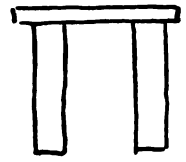
The Greek was on intimate terms with his Gods. In songs, plays, poetry, in marble, clay, and gems, and even on the household pots and pans, he told the legends of the Gods over and over again. He told of their nobility and virtues, and often of their frailities, of their powers and emotions from love to terrible anger, and especially how they rewarded or corrected man. In honor of these Gods were created the great temples and sculptures, and these memorials have carried the name and philosphy of Greece to the rest of the world.

The temple of the Greeks was the dwelling house of a specific God. The most important part of the building was the cella, a small enclosed room where the statue of the God

was kept like a jewel in a box. The temples were simple structures and small in comparison to some of the huge, towering churches we know today. The plan of the most simple ones was very much like a one room peasant's hut. Originally, the columns were tree trunks, and the capital was a heavy block of wood to cushion the weight of the roof. The Greeks did not use the arch in their roofs or doorways, but this was a matter of choice and taste, not ignorance. They found that the system of construction called" post and lintel" was much easier to build, and quite adequate to their needs.







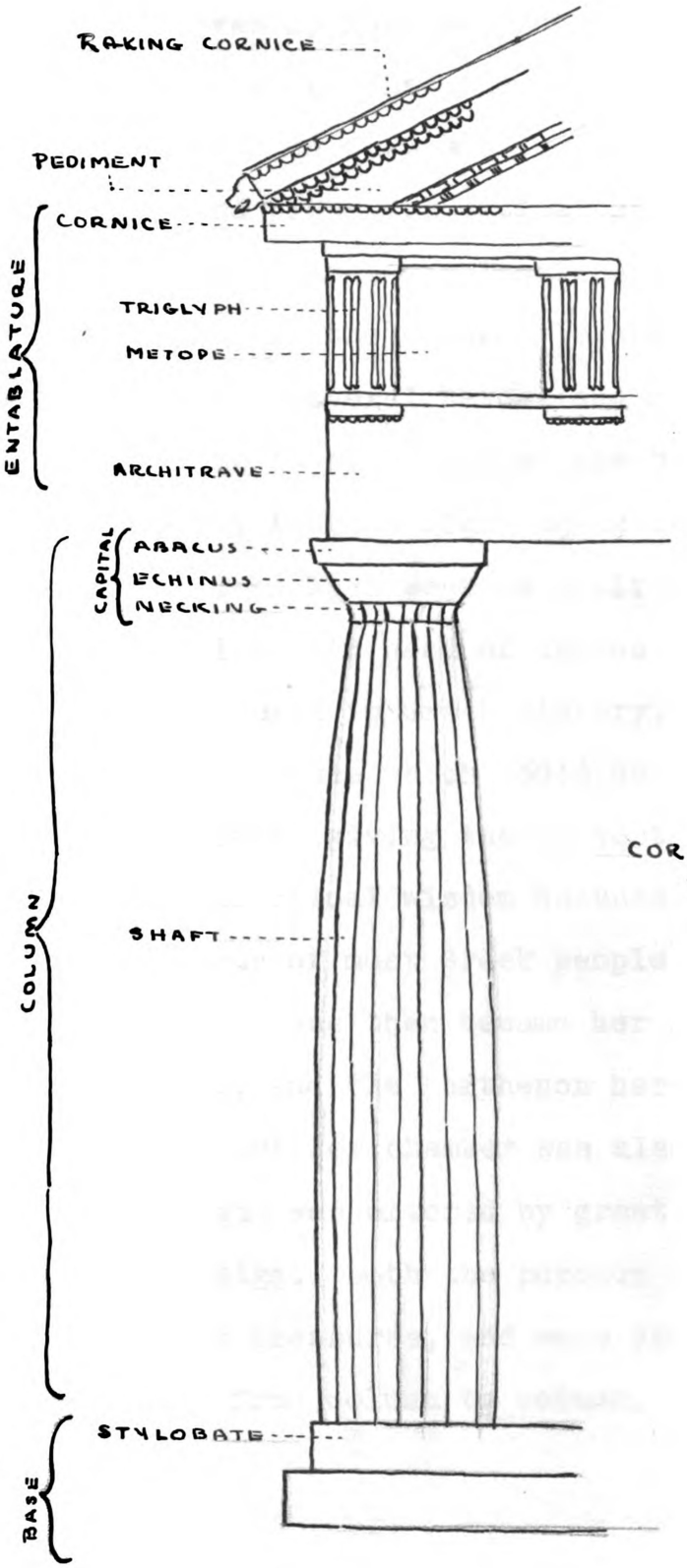
POST AND LINTEL

There was no worship <u>in</u> the temple; it was dedicated to the Gods. The congregation held their festivals and ceremonies outside, usually in the sacred enclosure around the temple. A man could, however, go in by himself, or with his family, and personally ask a favor of the deity or leave an offering.

Of all the temples in Greece, the one which to us is a symbol of Greek architecture and Greek ideas, is the Parthenon. It is the most beautiful building on the Acropolis, and in all of Greece. It is the refinement of a hundred years experience in building. Most Greek temples are built of sandstone, but the Parthenon is of faultless

marble.

It is built on a platform, 228 feet in length from East to west, and 102 feet in breadth. There are two sets of three steps surrounding it, the upper of marble, the lower of local stone. The building is an oblong about 150 feet by 70, and divided into two unequal rooms. On either end is a shallow porch, each with a row of six columns, a little smaller than the columns that surround the whole building. A study of these pillars makes us realize how keen was the Greek's sense of rhythm and proportion, and how much knowlege they had of engineering. The columns taper a little from the base to the top, but not in a perfectly straight line. There is a swelling curve to them that the eye does not detect; nor are the columns set in a straight line, the middle ones are pushed out a little. The pillars are slightly tilted inwards; someone estimated that if the pillars were extended they would come together like tent poles about two miles high in the sky. Someone has said, also, that there really isn't a straight line in the whole Parthenon. Even the steps around it slowly rise to four inches higher in the middle than they are at the corners. This very gradual curving of a line to give it an optical illusion of straightness is called,"entasis". Without it, the imperfect human eye would see a concave line; the steps would seem to sag, the pillars would seem to lean out at the top, and the whole building would not have its air of stability and vitality.



CORNER OF A DORIC BUILDING

The larger of the two chambers contained the spectacular and gigantic, gold and ivory statue of Athena that was carved by Pheidias, the most famous sculptor of Greek times.

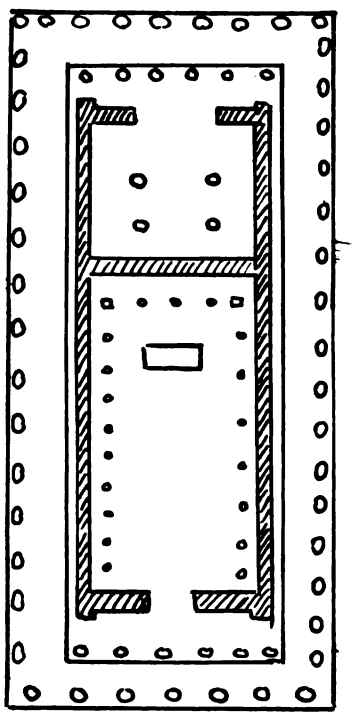
It was appropiate that such an important Goddess be so honored. Athena had the most marked personality of all the Greek Gods and Goddesses. She is the Goddess of Wisdom, who builds and preserves cities, and since their preservation often means wars, she inspires strength and courage in the warriors. In the Homeric legend,"The Odyssey", she is the champion of several heros, and a big help in their adventures. She is often called the Warrior Maid, the spirit of Greek civilization fighting against savagry. Even today, the American Wacs wear on their lapels, as official insignia, a tiny gold head of Athena.

But, back in Greek history, Athena and Poseidon had a contest to see which could do the most for mankind. Athena won by giving the olive tree to the earth, a bit of very practical wisdom because the olive is still the staple crop of most Greek people today. In winning the contest, Athens then became her special city, she its protector, and the Parthenon her home.

The smaller chamber was also the bank vault of the temple, and was entered by great bronze folding doors, 33 feet high. Both the porches were used for the display of temple treasures, and were protected by tall metal gratings from column to column.

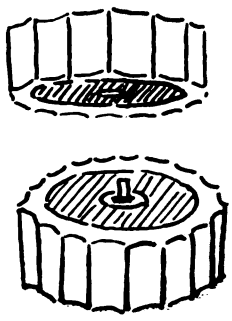
The sloping roof formed at each end a gable, or pediment, a large triangle that was filled with sculptures. Around the temple, stretching above the pillars was a band of plain stones called the architrave. There was a space between the band and the cornice of the roof, that was filled in with panels called "metopes" and "triglyphs". In the Parthenon, the metopes are marble slabs carved in low relief.

We don't know much about the roof except that it was probably formed of thin slabs of marble supported by wooden beams. Parian marble is sufficently transparent that under the bright sunlight of Greece enough light would filter into the rooms.



PLAN OF THE PARTHENON

The workmanship of the Parthenon is amazing. No craftsman of today with his modern mechanical tools could make a more perfect column then did the artisans of Greece who worked mainly with love and patience. The great fluted shafts are not one solid piece of marble. They are made up of separate drum like pieces. In the center of each section was a bronze or wooden pivot which held the stones in place, perfectly centered. The middle of the drum was slightly depressed and left rough; the rim was smooth and polished. When the drums were rotated, the slight unevenness of the edge was ground down until the joining was so tight that a knife blade can not be slipped between the sections. Some times the crack can not even be seen.



This, then, is the Parthenon, a building that is a symbol of beauty, and classic Greece to all the world. It is a symbol of endurance, too. Time did not destroy it; perhaps it would still be intact if the Turks had not used it for an amunition dump, and as idiot named Morosini had not fired upon it in 1687. When he tried to pick up some of the pieces to take back to Venice, he destroyed much of the sculpture of the western group, the Contest of Athena and Poseidon. Man often makes better ruins than Time.

There are other buildings on the Acropolis almost as famous as the Parthenon. Close to the northern edge of the rock is the Erechtheum, a temple that is a group of associated shrines. The Parthenon is simple and powerful; the Erechtheum is richly decorated and of different shape from the usual temple. It is not symmetrical; there is a long portico on the north side that extends beyond the building, and a small portico on the opposite side. This is the unusual Caryatid Porch where the figures of women(Caryatids) with graceful poise...and endurance, take the place of pillars. There are six of them supporting the entablature with their heads. The bands of carving along the walls and on the bases of the columns are delicate and richly finished.

Then, there is the small Temple of Athena Nike. Its platform is only 27 feet by 18, and it has only four columns at each end. These columns are the thinner, more delicate Ionic columns in contrast to the simple, strong, Doric ones of the Parthenon. "It is to the Parthenon as the carved jewel to the marble statue"[1]

It was pulled down in 1684 by the Turks so they could build some new fortifications, but the stones were not destroyed and it was carefully rebuilt in 1835 by some German archaeologists. The Museum that is now on the Acropolis has one of the figures from the parapet wall that once protected the temple. This figure of a woman(The Wingless Victory) stooping to fix a sandal strap is considered one

James: Our Hellenic Heritage, MacMillan 1926

of the most beautiful fragments of Greek sculpture.

Greek architecture has in the past played a large part in the architecture of America, especially in the South where a plantation house was of little account unless it had a row of Doric pillars across the front. Many of our public buildings are based on the design of Greek architecture. Sometimes they are imposing, but often it is difficult to see how they express our age, or our country. For example, the Lincoln Memorial is a classic, white marble Greek temple, a beautiful building, but a strange home for the statue of Lincoln who is the symbol of a simple, homespun man, and of middle western America.

In the beginning of our country, there was a feeling of kinship with the democracy of the ancient world. The pioneers also looked back to the homelands they had known, and Europe was having a classical revival. Greece had many splendid buildings, but the builders constructed them for their own age and climate. A Greek temple--and it is the temples we immitated, not the domestic dwellings--is built to be looked at from the outside, and not lived in. It has no windows, and the necessary addition of them to our copies often spoils the design. The long, pillared porches make the interior too dark in Northern climates, so usually our "Greek" architecture turns out to be neither a good temple, nor a good house, and certainly not a good Greek design.

The Theater

The theater of Dionysus was a large outdoor auditorium. It was built in a hollow of the hills, with rings of stone seats where the sheep had once grazed, and only the sky for a roof..some what like our Hollywood Bowl. The mountains around the stage acted like cupped hands that caught an actor's voice and tossed it back to the crowd. This was often helped by scenery built up in back like a band shell, and it is said that a whisper on the stage could be heard in the peanut gallery. It was a gallery only in height, not in price, because all the seats in the house cost only two obols, a small sum. There were some reserved seats down in front, but they were for priests, honored guests, perhaps the theater judges, and could not be bought by anyone. There were times, when the city treasury was full, that each citizen was given the price of a theater seat so none would have to miss the great festival. That seems as amazing to us as though the Mayor of New York were to stand in Times Square giving away free tickets to the opera.

The theater in the days of Greek wisdom was not just to amuse a bored crowd. It was a great civic enterprise, and combined the features of our movies and radio entertainment, Sunday school, debating contests, and historical pagents. During the annual festivals the crowd came in the morning, brought their lunch, and stayed all day because the playwriters had a sort of Olympic contest of the

drama and each was presenting three or four plays. The great tragedies were written on themes that the Greeks knew by heart: stories of the fight for Troy, legends of old kings, and other tales from the historical and mythological past of Greece. The plays were supposed to be good examples of moral conduct as well as entertainment. The villain never won, though half the cast might die in tragedy before he was punished.

The comedy was mainly satire; it made fun of political figures, city laws, fads and fashions of the times or any thing of which the dramatist did not approve. Neither their Gods, nor their beloved philosphers like Socrates were spared their healthy laughter. Sometimes the humor was very subtle, and sometimes it was as lusty and crude as a pie throwing comedy, but they dared to laugh at anything. They really had the right of free speech, and they must have had incredible patience with each other because there is a record of only one man having been killed, and three having been forced to leave the country. Think of the many thousands that have died in Europe for no crime but the words they have written or spoken.

There were certain rules of play writing which were generally observed such as the idea that the action must take place within twenty four hours, and the hero must be a man of fine character. There was no glorifying of gangsters. The use of the chorus is most interesting to us. This was a group of singers that commented on the action, explained the background, or gave a clue to what was com-

ing next.

The actors dressed in fantastic clothes, and in both comedy and tragedy they wore masks. These masks exaggerated the type of person the actor was supposed to be, such as hero, God, villain. This made it easier for the people in the back of the theater not to confuse the charactors. Two of these masks, the laughing face of comedy, and the sorrowful face of tragedy are still known the world over as the trade mark of the theater.

Sculpture

Greek sculpture can be put into six different types according to the purpose which it served.

1. Architectural sculpture.

No temple would have been considered complete unless it was decorated with sculptured works. There was very little decoration on non-religious buildings.

The sculptures of the Parthenon were more extensive then those of any other Greek temple. There were two large pediment groups, 92 metopes, and a continuous frieze of bas-relief that was 522 feet in length.

The best preserved metopes are those which represent scenes from the fight between the Lapinth women and the Centaurs who attempted to carry them away. The metopes are so different in style that they must have been done by different artists. A few of them are rather crude and have little action, but some have a vigorous design.

The frieze which runs around the top of the cella wall is a continuous band of low relief describing the Panathenaic procession that took place every four years. The citizens of Athens gathered in the market place, and then paraded up the slopes of the Acropolis carrying a woven robe to drape over the statue of Athena. It was a happy thought of the artist who hit upon the idea of the Procession: it was exactly appropriate to the shrine of Athena, and it was a large enough subject to fill the space, 522 feet.

All classes joined in the parade. Priests, magistrates, youths, maidens, citizens, foreign residents, all these are in the frieze along with horses, oxen and sheep.

The frieze begins on the western side. The procession is forming; a boy is lacing his sandals, and the other boys are mounting their horses. Some are already mounted and are reining in the animals made nervous by the noise and confusion of the market place. For half the length of the northern side you see the youths riding in loose order on their prancing spirited horses. Ahead of them are the four horse chariots with their two accupants..the long robed driver, and the fighting man who could jump down from the car and back again while it was in motion. Next in front, is a group of Athenian citizens strolling along in easy conversation with each other, and beyond these in the Athenian band with pipes and lyres, and then the refreshment committee, men carrying jars of wine and trays of cakes. Ahead of them are the animals for sacrifice, the oxen and the sheep. Around the corner is the procession of maidens carrying the robe. They are recieved by dignified officials and prominate citizens. From the south side comes another part of the procession, the cattle, and a more orderly rank of cavalry. The procession ends in the presence of the Gods. Two groups of figures greet the procession coming from north and south, and between them a figure of a priest takes the robe from the hands of a boy attendant.

The design is extremely sucessful; the men and horses move against the background in a natural rhythm without crowding the space. By distorting the natural proportions the heads of both men and horses are made to touch an approximately even line. This device that helps make a balanced design is often used by Greek artists.

The relief is very shallow, never more then two inches deep. Otherwise, since the light came from below, shadows would have been thrown upon the upper part. For the same reason the whole surface is slightly tilted forward.

It is the horsemen of the north frieze that are considered the most interesting part of the design. The whole section is one rhythmic movement and spirited action. The eye passes again and again over the throng of prancing horses and gracefully balanced riders.

2. Religious images.

Every temple or shrine contained at least one statue of the God or Goddess who was worshipped there. It is s said that the colossal statue of Zeus in a temple at Olympia was the most dignified creation of Greek artistic imagination, but we have only a dim idea of what it was like. It was made of precious gold and ivory, and during the early ages of Christianity statues of valuable materials were either taken apart for their wealth, or destroyed in a religious revolt against the pagan gods. The statue of Zeus has been reproduced on some coins of the period. They show a God of commanding pose and strong

face seated upon a throne, holding a figure of Victory in one hand, and a scepter in the other.

The statue of Athena in the Parthenon was also of gold and ivory and of colossal size. The gold in it weighed over a ton. Its height was thirty-eight feet, and the only copies that we have are about three feet in height and not in exact scale. She wears an elaborate helmet and carries a shield within which curls a serpent. It was a figure of great majesty and one which would awe the devout beholder of it.

3. Memorial sculptures.

The Greeks dedicated all sorts of objects to the deities in recognition of past favors, or in hopes of favors to come. The subjects were varied from the clay reproductions of an arm or leg or some part of the body which the God was supposed to have cured from disease, to a large statue of the God to whom the dedication was made. But more common perhaps, were figures representing human persons, either the dedicators themselves or others in whom they were interested. Under the latter class would come the many statues of victors in the athletic games. They were in theory intended as thank offerings rather than as means of glorifying the victors themselves. The statue of the Discus Thrower discussed in the chapter about the Olympic games is one of this type.

4. Grave monuments.

The usual monument was a slab of marble with an idealized representation of the one who had died, sculptured in low relief. The Greeks accepted death calmly, as an inevitable event which comes to all men. There are no melodramatic scenes of grieving and anguish in these monuments; usually the deceased is shown engaged in some incident of daily life. The Grave-Relief of Hegeso shows a seated woman taking a necklace from a jewel box her maid is holding. There is no reference to death. The figures are carefully balanced and fitted into the architectural background. Another monument shows a young Athenian cavalryman on a charging horse. This monument also ignores death, choosing rather to represent the youth in a moment of victory.

The ultimate quality of Greek grave stones is one of quiet restraint. This controlled emotion is often more profound and moving then the tableaus of violent grief which are produced later in history.

5. Honorary statues.

Statues that represented distinguished men could be set up by state authority in some public, non-religious place. The earliest known one of this kind is that of Harmodius and Aristogiton, about 510 B.C. The two youths had killed a tyrant who had moved in on Athens, and the liberty loving Athenians looked upon them as the liberators of the city. There is a certain stiffness to the figures, but a vitality of spirit as they stand, one foot advanced,

brandishing their daggers.

The group was carried off to Persia by Xerxes in 480 B.C., but the story of the heros was so popular that the Athenians promptly replaced it with a copy. A century later, the original was restored by Alexander the Great and the two groups stood side by side in the market place.

6. Ornamental sculpture.

This type of sculpture that had no sacred or public character was very rare until after the age of Alexander. There were a few statues or reliefs produced for the decoration of private houses but we know of them only by references in the literature, and they can be ignored in a broad survey of the period.

Color In Sculpture

To look at the fragments and casts of Greek statues and the models of temples that we see in the museums is like seeing the face of a great man in a newspaper photograph. The features are there, but are his eyes blue, or brown?. Was Athena a blonde or a brunette? We may never know, but the Greeks did. This marble with its pure and creamy tones which we praise, was covered with bright paint. Blue and green and red and gold, the statues flamed against the white walls of the temples, or fitted into the painted decorations, and sometimes the exterior of the temple was painted, wholly or in part.

The Greeks even burned into the surface of the statues a composition of wax and oil that gave the marble a yellow finish, and a texture that was peculiarly like tanned skin. Sometimes they fitted their Gods with "glass eyes" of white marble or jewels that must have shone with startling effect.

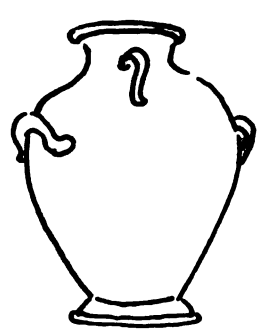
Some historians have spoken in low and almost ashamed tones about what they considered a regrettable lapse of taste on the part of the noble Athenians. However, there are two or three good reasons for painting their sculptured works of art. In the earliest days, the statues were crude things, hewn out of a tree, or chipped roughly from the hard stone. They undoubtably needed a touch of paint to bring out the features and make them recognizable from a distance. Tradition and custom are hard things to change. Then, the best reason might lie in the climate of Greece.

Southern countries usually go in for brighter colors then do the darker, more stern northern ones. With the peacock blue water, and yellow sand surrounding the green hills and red clay of Greece, and the blazing blue sky, it would take a very bright spot of color to impress the eye. Such colors as might look gaudy anywhere else would fit into the Greek scene, and the thronging crowd of people, dressed mainly in white would themselves be a contrast that would make the bright Gods and temples all the more impressive.

Pottery And Minor Arts

There was plenty of clear sparkling water in Athens, but in none of the houses did it come out of a chromium faucet with the twist of a wrist. It had to be carried from the great public fountains by the slaves, women, or a henpecked husband. Perhaps it wasn't such a dismal chore as it sounds. It could be pleasant to take a morning stroll in the bright air, to meet friends and tell the latest story about Mrs. Socrates, and to admire Cebes' new water jar. They were beautiful things, large and gracefully shaped, with three handles, two for lifting, and one for carrying. Usually they were red and black, and decorated with figures, and no doubt the air around the fountain was often filled with argument of whether this vase with the design of youths filling and carrying water jars was not more beautiful, and certainly more suitable,then this one of Achilles fighting with a foe.

The Greeks loved a good argument as much as the Irish, but the battle would be confined to words; th resort to bricks would be shameful proof of a man's dull wit and poor education. Much of their education consisted of courses called "rhetoric" which were really the art of conversation and argument.



An Athenians idea of a good way to spend an evening was to spend it at a banquet. The food might be good, although simple; there was music, perhaps some good looking dancing girls, but the chief enjoyment was in talking. It was keen, friendly argument with a sparkle of wit and much good sense, or a very intricate form of the Question and Answers game, and occasionally a short interesting speech. Meanwhile, the waiters were passing food and keeping the beautiful cylixes filled with wine. The cylix was a wide mouthed goblet, and like the hydria it was decorated by the artist.

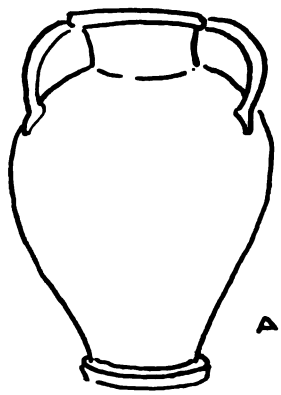
CYLIX

There were other jugs and vases of a dozen different shapes in the household. They were good examples of functional craftsmanship, that is: the form of each was well suited to its purpose. The tall thin lecythos was used for the precious olive oil that was poured out a few drops at a time. The amphora, a large jar which was used for storing provisions, had an opening large enough to admit a ladle, and usually a lid to protect the contents. Two handles made it easy to carry.

If one was not sure of the proper jar for the purpose,

he might be helped by finding a picture of two youths picking olives, and know it was the oil jar. Of course, if, as often happened, the jar was decorated with a scene of Ulysses and the Sirens, he would have to figure it out for himself.

LECYTHOS



AMPHORA

The jars that have survived time are kept in museums as examples of Greek pottery and the art of painting, but they were not considered as anything wonderful by their original owners. They were just the pots and pans of the household. Some,of course, were more expertly painted than others, and the fact was probably recognized, but good craftsmanship was an ordinary standard.

It is interesting to us that these jars are all decorated with human figures. There are no flower, bird, or fish patterns such as decorates our own tableware. One can not day that the Greeks did not love nature, but they were not aware of it in the same way we are. Their landscapes were peopled with Gods and Goddesses and various half divine figures like nymphs and satyrs, so when they painted a river they were more likely to paint the figure that

that symbolized it, rather then the actual picture. Then, too, the human figure was to them the most noble creation on earth. And certainly the artists had plenty of chance to study anatomy in all the gymnasiums and athletic games.

Not many men in Athens had more money then they knew what to do with. Greece never was a rich country; she would rather spend her money for leisure-time living, or to decorate her temples, then to hoard it. There were no regular banks for the citizens, and the man who wanted to save a little gold often hung it around his wife's neck.

Greek jewelry makers were fine artists and incredibly patient workmen. Some of the gems must be looked at under a magnifying glass to see the delicate lines of the detail. One Athenian woman had a pair of earrings that show what a goldsmith could do with his skilled hands. Suspended on a little chain is the figure of a winged Victory driving a two-horse chariot. The design is very complete and sensitively balanced, but the detail is really amazing; the tiny figure of the Victory is wearing earrings herself!

A Greek beauty admired her face in a piece of highly polished bronze, and she also admired the case in which the mirror was kept. One such cover is ornamented with a head in three-quarter view molded in high relief. The eyebrows

and hair are incised with a fine tool, and the serene face is a smooth contrast.

What money the Greek citizen jingled in his pockets was also made in an artistic manner. It was the Greeks who invented the style of coins that we use today. The high standard of public taste made even these commercial pieces of silver be fashioned in design as carefully as would a piece of jewelry. In fact, many an old Greek penny has been dug out of the earth and made into modern jewelry. Some of the designs reproduce historical scenes, or famous sculptures, others use eagles, and symbolic heads in a manner that reminds us of our own dimes and nickles.

Summary

Greek art of the fifth century is simple. Its temples are small and of elementary construction. Sculpture and painting are restricted in subject almost completely to the human figure. Everything has great reserve and dignity and depth of spirit that saves it from narrowness. The serenity and quiet joy of Greek art comes from a profound knowlege, acquired through centuries of endeavor which could select what was essential and omit the irrelevant. The architect restrained his ornament, realizing that his purpose was the harmony of the whole design. The sculptor presented a broad, generalized aspect of man. And, the craftsmanship of the worker in household materials, jewelry, and coins is indicative of the high standard of taste among the Greek people. The religious beliefs made a conception of the ideal man as one in whom body and spirit formed a harmonious unit.

Pericles, the greatest ruler of Athens spoke for the people: "We are lovers of the beautiful, yet simple in our tastes; and we cultivate the mind without loss of manliness"

Bibliography

Faure, Elie. History of Art. (Ancient Art)
Harper, N.Y. 1921

Gardner, Helen. Art Through The Ages *
Harcourt, N.Y. 1936

Gardner, Percy. Principles of Greek Art
MacMillan, N.Y. 1914

Gardner, E.A. A Handbook of Greek Sculpture
MacMillan, N.Y. 1920

Hillyer, V. and Huey, E. A Child's History of Art*
D. Appleton, N.Y. 1939

Hutton, Edward. A Glimpse of Greece
Macmillan, N.Y. 1928

James, H.R. Our Hellenic Heritage*
MacMillan, N.Y. 1927

Mahaffy, J.P. Rambles and Studies in Greece
MacMillan, N.Y. 1913

Marquand, Allan. Greek Architecture
Macmillan, N.Y. 1909

Miller, Henry. The Colossus of Maroussi*
Colt Press, SanFrancisco 1941

Mumford, Lewis. Sticks and Stones*
W.W.Norton, N.Y. 1924

Reinach, Salomon. Apollo*
Scribner, N.Y. 1924

Tarbell, F.B. A History of Greek Art
Grossett and Dunlap, N. Y. 1905

Weller, Charles. Athens and its Monuments
Macmillan, N.Y. 1924

Winckelmann, J. History of Ancient Art
Osgood, Boston 1880

Zimmern, Alfred. The Greek Commonwealth *
Clarendon Press, Oxford, England 1924

* These books are not too technical for the understanding of a High School student