



# MASTERARBEIT

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„ACROPOLIS: THE REPATRIATION OF THE PARTHENON  
SCULPTURES & THE HISTORY OF THEIR CLAIM“

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### **Abstract**

Lord Elgin's collection of classical antiquities has long been a cause of dispute between Greece and Britain. The sculptures and architectural fragments that once decorated the Parthenon, the temple that looks down on Athens from the top of the Acropolis, were carved in the fifth century BC under the direction of Phidias, probably the greatest classical Greek sculptor. Today more than half the panels from the frieze, a third of the metope slabs from the outside of the Parthenon and 17 figures from the pediments—together representing most of the finest and least damaged pieces to have survived—are the pride of the British Museum's collection of Greek antiquities. The Elgin, or Parthenon marbles as they are called in Greece, were removed from the Acropolis on the orders of Lord Elgin, British ambassador to the Ottoman empire, in the years after 1801. Some pieces were found in excavations, but most were taken from the building by Elgin's agents and a large force of workmen. Housed in the British Museum since they were purchased under a British act of Parliament in 1816, their exile has been a source of hurt to the Greeks ever since Greek independence.

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## **Abstrakt**

Lord Elgins klassische Antikensammlung ist seit langer Zeit ein Grund für den Streit zwischen Griechenland und Großbritannien.

Skulpturen und architektonische Fragmente wurden im fünften Jahrhundert v. Chr. unter der Leitung von Phidias, dem wahrscheinlich größten klassischen griechischen Bildhauer, erbaut. Einst dekorierten sie den Tempel Parthenon, der auf Athen von der Spitze der Akropolis schaut.

Heute mehr als die Hälfte der Platten aus dem Fries, ein Drittel der metopen von der Aussenseite des Parthenons und 17 Giebelfiguren - die gemeinsam die Mehrheit der schönsten und am wenigsten beschädigten Stücke, die überlebt haben, bilden – präsentieren den Stolz der Sammlung der griechischen Altertümer des Britischen Museums.

Die Elgin oder "Parthenon Marbles", wie sie in Griechenland genannt werden, wurden von der Akropolis auf Befehl von Lord Elgin, britischer Botschafter im Osmanischen Reich, in den Jahren nach 1801 entfernt.

Einige Stücke wurden bei Ausgrabungen gefunden, aber die meisten wurden durch Agenten von Lord Elgin und vielen Arbeitern vom Tempel entfernt. Untergebracht sind sie im Britischen Museum, da sie unter einem britischen "Act" des Parlaments im Jahr 1816 erworben wurden. Ihr Exil ist seit der griechischen Unabhängigkeit Quelle des Leidens des griechischen Volkes. (der Griechen).

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## INTRODUCTION

The expansionary policies of powerful states highlighted the need of coalition of peoples. The common historical background, the consciousness of a common origin and a common culture led wider social groups in shaping the idea of Nation.

The survival of a nation depends on people's belief in cultural traditions and national ideals. To forge the spirit of unity is essential that members of ethnic groups be actuated by an ideology and that is nationalism.

First and foremost the feature of the well-understood nationalism is patriotism. From this love also other characteristics stem, such as the pursuit the restoration of national rights, the safeguarding of national heritage, of national independence and of tradition.

Today a strong focus has been given on the support and promotion of cultural production, since it is a necessary condition for the development of civilization. Worldwide the target and priority is the creation of a domestic cultural production, in order to spread everywhere.

The historical course of each country and its rich cultural heritage are inseminated elements for a creative and dynamic presence in the contemporary cultural scenery, which each country should celebrate and preserve, while creating the conditions for the greatest possible development of contemporary cultural creation.

Nowadays, the term "Cultural Heritage" refers to monuments, groups of buildings and sites with historical, aesthetic, archaeological, scientific, ethnological or anthropological value. Organizations such as UNESCO have been established to safeguard and protect all of these monuments. More specifically in 1972 had been adopted by the General Assembly of UNESCO, a Convention for the protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Internet Source: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization:  
<http://whc.unesco.org>

Concept of Culture in contemporary reality includes lifestyle, intake of history, a self-conscious society and technological progress. Therefore the extension of national heritage and cultural policy is directly linked to social cohesion, national economy, education and development of cultural diplomacy.

The assistance of Greek monuments and relics of the Past, in the construction of Greek national identity, were pivotal.

It concerns a characteristic turn of Greek intellect and social elite in antiquity, a Hellenistic response to European antiquarian currents, which from Renaissance onwards had spread to the educated strata of Western Europe.<sup>2</sup>

A topic such as the return of a national heritage can undoubtedly raise suspicions on behalf of the reader. One can question the difficulty of remaining totally objective, but I shall try and remain dispassionate and will seek to explore the debate by including both points of view.

The "Return of Parthenon Marbles" refers specifically to the request of the Greek government to repatriate the sculptures and architectural components of the Parthenon on the Acropolis of Athens. These were removed from the monument in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century by order of Lord Elgin, Ambassador then of His Majesty's to the Sublime Porte, and then bought by the British Government, after an Act of Parliament passed in 1816.

The Parthenon Marbles were placed under the tutelage of the British Museum in London, where they remain until today. These include: 15 metopes on the east side of the ancient temple, 56 sculptured surfaces of the frieze, 19 sculptures from the two pediments, other fragments belonging to the earlier sections, one capital, one vertebra column and a pedestal, nearly half of the sculptural decoration, which was once an integral part of the monument (see chapter I.2)

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<sup>2</sup> Toliás, G.: "*Hellenism, Antiquarianism and National Legacy: Greek Antiquities Before the War of Independence*", *Archaeologia* Volume 89, National Hellenic Research Foundation, NHRF publications, Athens, 2003

### The Greek claim for the return of the Parthenon Marbles

The Return of the Parthenon Marbles in Greece is a matter that troubled Greeks since their independence (see chapters III.1, III.2, V, V.1, V.1.1). The request for their return has been adopted by a large number of distinguished personalities, including eminent British intellectuals and politicians, for two centuries, since the removal of the monument.

In 1940-41 the return of Parthenon Marbles to Greece was taken up seriously at the British Government. In October 1983, the Greek Government submitted to the Government of the United Kingdom a formal request for the return of the Parthenon Marbles. The request was rejected.

The Greek Government has promoted the issue of returning the Parthenon Marbles in various international forums including those of UNESCO, which was raised for the first time, in 1982 and approved by an overwhelming majority of delegates.

A written declaration of the European Parliament in 1998 in favor of Return of the Parthenon Marbles to Greece, and UNESCO's recommendation, in 1999, to start bilateral talks between Greece and the United Kingdom constitute examples of recent movements. These actuations are a proof of the strong and continuing interest from the European and global side on the issue (see chapters IV.1 & IV.3).

### Consequences from the stripping of Parthenon

The stripping of Parthenon, between the years 1801-1811, irreparably damaged the structural integrity of the monument. The removal of the metopes had as a result the amputation of some adjacent architectural and structural elements and the destruction of the building.

The sculptures of the frieze were cut off from the support plates to facilitate the transfer. A Doric capital was cut in two for the same reason. Substantial building blocks of the temple (triglyphs and geisa) were destroyed.

These Interventions were recorded by delegates of Lord Elgin and confirmed also by foreign visitors in Athens.

There were blamed also, as equivalent to looting by eminent peer members of the House of Lords, by British politicians and intellectuals, synchronous to Elgin (see chapters III & III.1).

The Parthenon Marbles, near missed, to be lost in a shipwreck during a trip to Britain. On arrival in London, the Marbles were kept temporarily in a coal shed.

From documents in the archives of the British Museum, we know that in 1937-38 were cleaned with metal brushes and abrasives, an action which irreversibly destroyed the surface of a large number of sculptures.

These harmful interventions have been confirmed by a special team of Greek scientists, who examined the Parthenon Marbles in the British Museum in October 1999 [Appendix I.].

### Legal issues

The legality of ownership of the Parthenon Marbles is a controversial issue, and not only because of the controversial document "firman".

The "firman" of 1801 as also documents of 1802 do not exist, which supposedly confirm the previous violations. The only existing text is an Italian translation of a Turkish document dated in 1801, whose value as "firman" is disputed.

Elgin's actions far exceeded the authority that the "firman" determined, which simply empowered artists to enter the Acropolis, to design and make casts.

In addition, Elgin and his delegates were accused that they threatened and bribed Ottoman officials in order not to interfere in their doings.

Just the fact of removing the Marbles from Greece, which at that time was under Ottoman occupation, without the slightest hindrance from the Turkish authorities, it is not *ipso facto* proof of legal title.

## The uniqueness of the Parthenon

Works of art from all periods of ancient Greek civilization are exhibited in museums and galleries around the world, so as to offer in millions of people the opportunity to enjoy, appreciate and study them.

The Parthenon Marbles, however, represent a unique case.

The sculptural decoration and architectural elements of the Parthenon were not created as independent works of art, from the outset were conceived and designed as integral parts of the monument. This monument, built in the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC, still stands on the Acropolis of Athens.

Thus, I would like to begin by looking at the history and original intentions of Parthenon's creators (chapters I, I.1, I.2). For this will enable a clearer examination of the importance of the Parthenon, as a symbol and monument of national identity.

Chapter I.2, pinpoints the direct relationship between architecture and sculpture, especially pronounced in the Parthenon, and the notion of sculpture as a whole -now lost- that comprises a sum of masterpieces.

Chapters I.3, I.4 & II move in History, accompanied by historical documents, as also drawings showing how this ancient world masterpiece deteriorated and altered over the centuries.

Chapters II.1, II.2 & III.3 narrate "the adventures" of the Parthenon sculptures.

Chapters III.1, III.2, III.4, IV & IV.1 refer to the time of the request on the return of the Parthenon Sculptures, the International sensation and the first reactions of England.

Chapters IV.2 & V quote arguments of both sides and thereupon the refutation of British arguments.

The following chapters (IV.3, V.2 & V.3) refer to current reality.

## CHAPTER I.

### I. A tribute to Classical Athens and Acropolis (Ακρόπολις)

*“Our constitution is called a democracy because power is in the hands not of a minority but of the whole people”<sup>3</sup>*

5<sup>th</sup> century Athens, a model of proportion and harmony and centre of major intellectual achievements, gave rise to a fundamental form of civilization: one which is still adhered today.

Ancient Athens of the poet Pindar, was the Greek city ordained by destiny to fulfill a glorious mission to become a school for democracy.

The salient and governing characteristics of democracy continue after 2.500 years to guide the aspirations of great numbers of people seeking to attain the human benefits to be derived through self-determination. Primacy of the individual, freedom of speech, religion and assembly, representative government and an order of law had their genesis in Classic Greece and remain the hallmarks and standards by which desirable social orders are judged.

It was in the classical city of democratic institutions that man, *“of all wonders, the most wonderful”* according to Sophocles, was able to produce the most marvelous cultural achievements.

The Athenian citizen was the *“lover of his city”*,<sup>4</sup> he endowed it with the highest form of constitution and, at the same time, adorned it with the most perfect forms of art.

His life in the city and, particularly, in the Agora provided him with the opportunity for daily dialogue which sharpened his thought and allowed him to judge and decide how to follow the achievements of philosophy and science, in that miracle in the history of human thought, which was to

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<sup>3</sup> *“Ελλάδος παιδευσιν”*: Thucydides, *Peloponnesian War, Book II Chapters 37, 41*, Cactus publications, Athens 1992

<sup>4</sup> From Pericles’ *“funeral speech”*

leave a decisive mark on the cultural development of Europe and, consequently, of the whole world<sup>5</sup>.

The classic era in ancient Greece did not evolve smoothly from the archaic, but with the shock of the Persian raid, which united the Greeks, it created another kind of shared consciousness and pulled through them, new forces which led to cultivating great arts and letters of sciences.

A new grandiose building programme begins on the Acropolis during the Classical times. The south side is filled with the ruins of destroyed temples, broken statues, inscriptions and tons of earth in order to flatten the surface and make it ready to accept the huge foundations of the Parthenon dedicated to the main deity of the city Athena. A new Wall is constructed and the entrance is radically redesigned with the new Propylaea.

Some years later the Erechtheum is built and some other auxiliary buildings many of which will remain unfinished due to the Peloponnesian War. The ruins of the older temple of Athena are still visible as a reminder of the Persian Wars. The eastern part of them is converted to a smaller temple. According to Xenophon, the temple was set on fire in 405 B.C. but possibly was repaired and continued to exist, perhaps even until the Roman period.<sup>6</sup>

### I.1. Parthenon in History (Παρθενών 447-438 B.C.)

In 448 BC, the Athenian Assembly voted to use their surplus revenue, to rebuild the temple dedicated to Athena. The temple was first intended to commemorate those who, more than a generation earlier, had died in the wars against Persia. The previous temple was begun on the same site just before or just after the Battle of Marathon, in 490 BC. But the Persians

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<sup>5</sup> Mikrogiannakis, Emm.: *"The pathology of regimes in antiquity"*, Kastanioti publications, Athens, 1996<sup>5</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Bury, J.B. & Meiggs, R.: *"History of ancient Greece"*, part I & II, Chapter 9, Kardamitsa publications, Athens, 1998<sup>3</sup>



destroyed it during their brief occupation of Athens in 480 BC. The decision taken to rebuild the Acropolis was not only to brood on past victories. For, the Athenians were also concerned with the present and the future at a time when Athens was at the height of her political power. For this reason the building of the new temple was to reflect the intellectual and artistic awakening of a period led by the generation of the illustrious Pericles.

Pericles at the time was re-elected to political leadership, despite minor disagreements. With Pericles in charge, Phidias was assigned to produce the sculpture. He consequently became the artistic director of the building programme. The principle architect was Iktinos, who had earlier designed the impressive temple of Apollo at Bassae in Arcadia. The spirit of participation rang throughout the whole of Greece, as specialized stonemasons and craftsmen were invited to participate.<sup>7</sup> W.Wycherley comments on the attitude towards the building of Parthenon by saying. *“The Parthenon must have been the work of a committee. In a very real sense it was the work of the whole Athenian people”*<sup>8</sup>.

## I.2. A walk in fantasy- Architecture & Sculpture

The direct relationship between architecture and sculpture is especially pronounced in the Parthenon. The title of "A walk in fantasy" was also chosen to indicate that these wonderful drawings which illustrate Parthenon are largely fantastic.

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<sup>7</sup> Wilcken, U. : *“Ancient Greek History”*, (Greek translation): National Foundation of Greece Cultural Foundation, Morfotiko Idryma Ethnikis Trapezas, (MIET) publications, Athens, 1976<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> William Wycherley, (born 1641 — died Jan. 1, 1716, London), English dramatist who attempted to reconcile in his plays a personal conflict between deep-seated puritanism and an ardent physical nature (internet source: <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/650160/William-Wycherley>)

▪ I.2.1. Architecture of the temple<sup>9</sup>

The whole temple except the wooden roof, beneath the marble tiles is made of white Pentelic marble. It is huge, with a length of almost 70 meters, width 31 and height 15 meters. The exterior Doric columns have a diameter less than 1.19 meters and height of 10.50 meters. The building consists of approximately 16,500 pieces of marble, perfectly adapted to each other (Illustration α).

Built in just nine years during the rule of Pericles, a time when the city of Athens had reached the maximum of its power and when it was at the forefront of civilization throughout the ancient world. In six years after the completion of the temple, its sculptures were also completed.

Parthenon is characterized by archaeologists as octastyle, peripteros and double temple, with a six-column amphiprostyle cella (Illustration β). Some explanation is needed to understand this terminology:

The temple is characterized as peripteros (a pavilion) because it is surrounded by a colonnade (pteron) and octastyle, because each of the narrow sides has eight columns.

Each of the other two long sides has seventeen columns, so in total, the exoteric pteron consists of forty-six columns. The facade of the temple is facing east.

Cella is called the closed space which houses the large statue of the goddess Athena. The temple is characterized also as double, because the cella is divided into two different compartments, the east and west, which do not communicate.

In the eastern compartment, a Doric two-story colonnade Π-shaped, frames the statue and underlies the roof, while in the western compartment this role is fulfilled with four tall Ionic columns.

It is also a six-column temple with an amphiprostyle cella because in the two narrow sides, through the pteron, there is a second course of Doric columns again, called porch and consists of six columns. Therefore the temple has a total of  $46+12 = 58$  columns.

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<sup>9</sup> Choremi-Spetsieri, Alk.: "Acropolis, Acropolis Museum" next to title "Ancient and Roman Agora, Pnyx, Filopappou Library of Hadrian, Theatre of Dionysus, Odeon", Militos publications, Athens, 2010, - Mastrapas, A. N.: "Monumental topography of ancient Athens", Kardamitsa publications, Athens, 1999, - Spawforth, T. "The Complete Greek Temples", Thames and Hudson, London, 2006, - Internet Source: [http://www.eie.gr/archaeologia/gr/02\\_DELTIA/Acropolis.aspx](http://www.eie.gr/archaeologia/gr/02_DELTIA/Acropolis.aspx)

The space created between the porch and the east wall of the cella is called portal (pronaos) and the corresponding in the west opisthonaos (west porch). The pteron perimetrically, as also pronaos and opisthonaos, have marble ceilings of large plates with horizontal metopes, square deepenings with perimetric moldings and painted decorations in the center.

Temples comprised from the base, the trunk (the cella and columns) and the coronation (the entablature and the roof).

The base of the temple, the crepidoma consists of three stairs. Notice that these stairs are not just steps, as they are so tall that no one could tread on them. The columns step onto the third stair, which is called stylobate, because on that the columns are based.

The light curves that the stairs show in all aspects of the temple, are not immediately perceptible to the eye, but this curvature appears if you stand and look carefully from one corner to another. These curvatures, also noticeable in the entablature, as also along with a set of subtle declensions of the architectural limbs of the temple, constitute the marvelous refinements of ancient classic temples and although they are almost invisible, they give except from the harmony a unique vitality to the lifeless building.

The Doric columns have a trunk and a capital. They do not possess a separate basis, but tread directly on the stylobate. The upper diameter of the column is smaller than the under diameter, about sixteen centimeters. This difference is called reduction and gives to the columns the impression of stability. If one looks carefully, will see that the column become slightly thicker just below the middle of the trunk, it has what it is called tension that makes the column appear as a live member. The columns have perimetrically twenty flutes, which together form an acute angle. The way in which light and shade alternate in between flutes, as the sun moves from east to west, makes each column unique and animates its sculptural existence.

The entablature consists of architraves, the frieze and cornices. The cornice strongly projects and protects the underlying parts of the temple from the rain.

The two short sides of the temple with a pitched roof along with the cornice create a large triangle, the pediment. Within this there are the pedimental sculptures, statues sculpted in the round to tread in the horizontal cornice.

- I.2.2. The sculptures of the temple -The statue of Athena Parthenos

The iconographic program of the temple is created with political religious and social intentions. While the design of the temple was happening, the choices on the subjects of the sculptures were also taken. The consistency of all the sculptural decoration is unique. This is because everything were under Phidias' supervision, whom Pericles - instigator of the whole program and expressor of the will of the Athenian people-trusted.

Financial problems were solved. There were money in hand of the Athenian alliance, which the Athenians considered as compensation for the damage caused to the Acropolis by Persians, but also as the price of the protection offered to the allied cities.<sup>10</sup>

Therefore, the wealth of sculptural decoration of the temple is unique. All surfaces which, according to the architectural composition, could be decorated, have sculptures of marble, even though they may not be well viewed by a visitor.

Actually, located in rather high and dark places and with little visibility we observe some of the most beautiful sculptures.

All these outer sculptures carved in Pentelic marble, are colored: triglyphs and depth of the frieze are blue, shapes, sculptures all in around or carved, have their natural colors. The impression is completed by a

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<sup>10</sup> "*Classical Hellenism*": **History of the Greek nation: History of the Greek civilization since prehistoric times to 1941**", Vol. Γ2, Ellinika Grammata publications, Athens, 1972

multitude of small parts - bridles, weapons, etc.- that could not be made from marble and thus are nested out of metal, brass or sometimes gilded.<sup>11</sup>

Most important and best-known work on the Acropolis, is the amazing gold and ivory statue of Athena Parthenos, which stands at a height of 13.50 meters in the cella of the great temple. It is the work of Phidias and costs a huge amount of money (Illustration γ).

Its quality is excellent and its integration into the architecture of the interior of the temple unique.

The goddess is depicted standing, fully armed but peaceful. It breathes wisdom, total tranquility and purity, just like poets, orators, philosophers and artists imagine, as also all mortals who worship her.

This giant sculpture does not only impress with its form, but also with the precious materials of which it is made: the bare parts, are made of ivory and the dressed parts out of gold. It is estimated that the weight of gold used is up to 1,150 kg.<sup>12</sup> The Gold is "periairetos" that means that it can be removed from the statue and also it could be used in case the city needed it.<sup>13</sup>

### ▪ I.2.3. Pediments-ἀέτωμα<sup>14</sup>

There are two triangular pediments [(ἀέτωμα-/aetoma), Illustration δ]. The word comes from the Greek word "aetos" which means eagle. Just like an eagle with open wings!

Pilgrims saw the gables from the ground, ie from a distance of fifteen meters:

The figures of statues with their different attitudes, some standing and others sitting, grow wonderfully inside the triangle. Tread in the horizontal cornice, has a width of 90 cm and a length of 28.50 meters.

In the center sculptures have a height of approximately 3.30 meters. The details of the technique, the oblique placement of huge these volumes, but also members of the statues which a few times raise outside the geometric boundaries of architecture, are noteworthy.

<sup>11</sup> Choremi-Spetsieri, Alk.: *"The sculptures of the Parthenon"*, next to title *"Acropolis, British Museum, Louvre"*, Militos publications, Athens, 2004

<sup>12</sup> or 2.540 pounds

<sup>13</sup> Internet Source: [http://www.eie.gr/archaeologia/gr/02\\_DELTIA/Altar\\_of\\_Athena.aspx](http://www.eie.gr/archaeologia/gr/02_DELTIA/Altar_of_Athena.aspx)

<sup>14</sup> Palaggia Olga: *"The sculptural decoration of the Parthenon"*, Kardamitsa publications, Athens, 1998<sup>2</sup>

The subjects of the pediments derive from the life of the goddess Athena. Her supernatural birth in the presence of all the gods is depicted in the eastern pediment, while "Eris", the dispute between Athena and Poseidon for the sovereignty of the city in the presence of heroes, in the west pediment.

For the ancient Greeks the east side of a temple is the most sacred. In the East is the entrance, where stands the altar and the believers. The sculptures of the east side depict the most sacred scenes. The birth of Athena from Zeus's head is really one of the most important scenes of the ancient religion.

#### ▪ I.2.4 Metopes<sup>15</sup>

In Parthenon all metopes are decorated with sculptures, a unique case in ancient Greek architecture. The reliefs are so exergue, in such a manner that if someone could see the temple from the side and at this height, he could not distinguish triglyphs and he would think that the reliefs are continuous! But metopes are actually those that came sliding among negative indents that are opened in the side of triglyphs, and are sealed above the cornices. Thus, metopes had to be ready before the placement of cornices and roof's construction, and therefore are the first sculptures made for the temple.

The ninety-two metopes were carved in the ground, and even from different workshops of sculptors and marble-carvers, which took the project separately. Among them were metics who had come to Athens mainly from Aegean islands. This explains the slight differences in the style of metopes. Many were made by old and conservatives craftsmen, however among them begin to distinguish great talents.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Illustration: Drawing restoration of Metopes from the South side-Centaurs (B.Loviot 1879-1881, Paris)

<sup>16</sup> Choremi-Spetsieri, Alk.: *"The sculptures of the Parthenon"*, next to title *"Acropolis, British Museum, Louvre"*, Militos publications, Athens, 2004 - Palaggia Olga: *"The sculptural decoration of the Parthenon"*, Kardamitsa publications, Athens, 1998<sup>2</sup>

The subjects of the reliefs on the metopes derive from Greek mythology. In most, in fact, is depicted a favorite theme of ancient Greek art, the agon (struggle). It concerns an excellent variety of scenes and no metope is similar to the other!

To the east one can see scenes from Gigantomachy, the legendary battle between the gods of Olympus and the Giants, who tried to overthrow the world order. Apart from one metope, which depicts the chariot of the sun, the other thirteen represent gods -others in chariots, others on foot-fighting, each one separately with a Giant.

In the opposite narrow side, the west, is depicted: scenes from Amazonomachy, Greeks with their hero -Theseus- who face Amazons, a barbaric people of female warriors, which in the myth lived somewhere in Pontus, "Sea".<sup>17</sup>

On the north there are scenes from the Trojan war, especially from the capture and destruction of Troy by the Greeks, a theme known as "*Iliu persis*".<sup>18</sup> But there are also scenes from other myths.

On the south side, the theme of twenty-three metopes is, Centaurs, while the remaining nine, placed in the middle, depict once again different subjects:

Lapiths from Thessaly invited to the wedding of their king, Pirithous, their neighbors, the Centaurs, who, according to legend, were a barbaric race with body and torso of a horse and human head. The Centaurs at the wedding got drunk and tried to grab the women of Lapiths, thus ensue fight body to body.

The battle with Centaurs symbolizes for Greeks, the collision of civilisation and logic with barbarism. Among the heroes you also see Theseus, the hero founder of Athens who also was, according to legend, a guest at the wedding of Pirithous.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Pontus or "sea", is a historical Greek designation for a region on the southern coast of the Black Sea, located in modern-day northeastern Turkey

<sup>18</sup> Iliu persis: Sack of Ilium, also known as The Sack of Troy

<sup>19</sup> Kakridis, I.Th.: "*Heroes*", **Greek Mythology**, Vol. 3, Ekdotiki Athinon publications, Athens, 1986

In conclusion, the metopes of the Parthenon have four main themes, also known by many other Greek sculptures, from many other temples, and from several other works of art.

These themes relate to agon, the struggle which is always dubious and uncertain.

▪ I.2.5. The Frieze<sup>20</sup>

Frieze/ Ζωφόρος (Zoforos): The word is complexional, comes from the noun "life" (in Greek: Ζωή/Zoi) and the verb "bring" (φέρω/fero). Actually it is a continuous film depicting people and animals in motion that adorned Ionic order temples. For the Doric Parthenon, this constant Frieze was an unprecedented novelty. Of course, its placement here aimed to enrich an artistic monument, the like of which had not been done before then<sup>21</sup> (Illustration ε).

Most interesting, however, is the subject of the Frieze the Panathenaic procession (Panathenaic Games). The Panathenaic Games is the most important Athenian festival for the birthday of the goddess. Every four years were celebrated with great splendor, lasting several days and including athletic and equestrian games, music, Rhapsodies and other. On that day in Athena's birthday, in 28 Hekatombaion -around 15<sup>th</sup> of our month August- occurs the great cortege to Acropolis. Then the Athenians offered to the goddess a new dress, the luxurious veil which they prepared and made sacrifices to her honor.<sup>22</sup>

As it was earlier mentioned the iconographic programme of a temple has political, religious and social intentions. The Panathenaic cortege (Illustration στ) in the frieze of the Parthenon indirectly illustrates the fairest and most perfect constitution ever existed, Democracy.

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<sup>20</sup> For a better understanding of the Parthenon frieze, also see: <http://www.parthenonfrieze.gr>

<sup>21</sup> Choremi-Spetsieri, Alk.: "Acropolis, Acropolis Museum" next to title "Ancient and Roman Agora, Pnyx, Filopappou Library of Hadrian, Theatre of Dionysus, Odeon", Militos publications, Athens, 2010

<sup>22</sup> "Classical Hellenism": **History of the Greek nation: History of the Greek civilization since prehistoric times to 1941**", Vol. Γ2, Ellinika Grammata publications, Athens, 1972



Several discussions had been made, at that time, over the theme and the way of its development in length of, more or less, 160 meters. The cortege would certainly end up on the east side, but from where should it begin? Pheidias made an ingenious design: two processions would commence at the southwest corner, one along the west and north side and one along the south. So the cortege would always walk forward to the eastern side of the temple, on the north side from right to left and on the south from left to right. The processions would meet on the east side.

To the procession both men and women participated. Priestesses with the sacred vessels, horsemen, chariots, animals for sacrifice. The gods of Olympus would also “attend” the procession. But how would they stand out?

The solution was found; they would be larger and in order to fit the height of the frieze they would be represented as seated on stools. They would occupy the east side, of course.

What could be in the center? Athenians decided to depict the time of delivery of Athena’s veil. Thus, among the gods, the Priest, Priestess and three children are involved in the ritual.

This huge sculpture aggregation was completed in four years. The composition includes 360 human figures, and about 250 types of animals, mainly horses. At stones 65 cm thick reliefs were designed and carved, which, like metopes have slight differences between them in style. The sculptors were many and sometimes in number reached perhaps fifty.<sup>23</sup>

So, here ends the chapter "walk in fantasy". I tried to introduce, Parthenon, a building of the ancient world, in a manner which it was completed by its creators. A building that Athenians consider not only a brilliant tribute to the goddess who protects the city, but also a pioneering work of art, architecture and sculpture within their cultural hegemony, an hegemony of this kind, that makes Pericles to boast that Athens is "*School for whole Greece*"<sup>24</sup>.

<sup>23</sup> Op.cit: "*Classical Hellenism*": **History of the Greek nation...**

<sup>24</sup> "*Ελλάδος παιδευσιν*":Thucydides, **Peloponnesian War**, Book II Chapter 41

### I.3. A Walk in History- The Damage

The construction of the Parthenon was between 447 and 432 BC. For 700 years the building remained almost intact. Only the gold and ivory statue of Athena Parthenos appears to have been destroyed shortly before 160 BC and replaced by another smaller one, maybe out of marble.

The damage sustained by the Parthenon – and, generally, by all the monuments of the sacred rock – was extensive and some of incalculable:

α. The first significant ravage took place in 267 A.D. during the invasion of Heruls who set fire to the inner temple (the cella); as a result, its columns were rendered useless by the thermal radiation and they were replaced by other, thinner ones, belonging to a Hellenistic arcade of the lower city.

β. In the early Christian years the sculptures of the Parthenon were regarded as pagan and, as a consequence, many of them were down while the majority of the Metopes were defaced – hammered out so that the figures could not be discerned. Only one was left in place, the one situated at the western end of the north side of the Parthenon, as it evoked the image of the Annunciation.<sup>25</sup>

The fanaticism of people without artistic and historic culture and the new conditions of an authoritarian state led to this terrible disaster. Probably at that time, in the middle axis of the pediments, large metal crosses were erected, as provided by the relevant ordinances during the consecration of the ancient temples.

Centuries have passed since then without significant changes. The Parthenon became the church of the Holy Mother -called Athinotissa out of the city's name, Athens- and it was the largest church of the city. It is known that after the year 1000, it had great prestige as a pilgrimage and that gradually took over and created some admiration for its beauty.

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<sup>25</sup> Krikelis, K.: "*Parthenon Sculptures: The Damage*", Metexmio publications, Athens, 2010

The worship of Basil II, in 1018 and the sermons of an educated bishop, Michael Choniates<sup>26</sup> in the late 12<sup>th</sup> century, attest this.<sup>27</sup>

Changes in the building up to this time are probably minimal and reversible. The same applies to the additions made after 1205, when the Acropolis passed to Franks during the fourth crusade and became church of Latin doctrine, and later, in 1460 when the Ottoman Turks conquered Athens and turned the church into a large Muslim mosque. The changes imposed by the new features in both cases were not serious for the architecture and sculpture of the monument.

Thus, another 120 years passed. The temple was used in a clumsy way, but was not degraded. Meanwhile, in Europe ideas on education, art and life, ideas of Renaissance prevail. The Turkish slavery keeps Greece out of these new concepts, in which crucial part has the shift to antiquity, the spirit and art. Thus at that time begins a great interest for monuments which have survived in Italy and later for the originals in the isolated Greece.<sup>28</sup>

All these have an indirect relationship with the Parthenon which passively until now is preserved as an Ottoman mosque. However, at the same time, the first European scholars who have left us descriptions, plans and travelogues, begin to visit Greece with an ever increasing rate. For the study of the Parthenon sculptures, it is of great importance, the visit to Athens by the French ambassador in Constantinople Charles-Francois Olier, Marquis de Noitel,<sup>29</sup> followed by a great number of people in 1674. Among them probably belonged a new painter, Jacques

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<sup>26</sup> Michael Choniates or Acominatus (c. 1140 – 1220), Byzantine writer and ecclesiastic, was born at Chonae (the ancient Colossae). At an early age he studied at Constantinople and was the pupil of Eustathius of Thessalonica. Around 1175 he was appointed archbishop of Athens. In 1204, he defended the Athenian Acropolis from attack by Leo Sgouros, holding out until the arrival of the Crusaders in 1205, to whom he surrendered the city.

<sup>27</sup> Karayiannopoulos, I.: *"The Byzantine State"*, Vaniass publications, Thessaloniki, 1996<sup>4</sup>

<sup>28</sup> *"Hellenism under foreign domination (1453-1669)"* : **History of the Greek Nation: Turkish-Latin period**, Vol. VII, Ellinika Grammata publications, Athens, 1975

<sup>29</sup> Charles-Marie-François Olier, marquis de Nointel (1635-1685), a councillor to the Parlement de Paris, was the French ambassador to the Ottoman court, 1670 to 1679, charged from the first with renegotiating the Capitulations under which French merchants and others did business within the Ottoman Empire

Carrey,<sup>30</sup> who made the most accurate drawings of most representations of sculptures in the temple, which back then were still visible. These drawings are valuable because thirteen years later occurred the great disaster.

γ. The war between Venice and the Ottoman Empire had already started. The mercenary troops of Venice under Francesco Morosini disembarked in Piraeus and with powerful artillery bombarded the besieged Turks in Acropolis. They have stored gunpowder of their own artillery in the Parthenon.

On the evening of September 26, 1687 happened one of the worst disasters in the history of Greek civilization: a terrible explosion, which in a few seconds ruined the temple overturning three of the four walls of the nave, almost the entire six-column porch of pronaos, six columns of southern side and eight columns of northern side. Nothing remained from the roof. Large fire ensued. The monument had suffered terrible shock.

The Venetians are leaving Acropolis in the spring of 1688. The Turks returned and built inside Parthenon, a small mosque, which was oriented towards Mecca. The road to the sacking and looting has now opened.

δ. First, the Venetians wanted to get some statues to their homeland as trophies of their victory, as the Fortress of the Acropolis was surrendered to them after the explosion. So with equipment and crews of their ships, they tried to take down the chariot's horses of Athena and Poseidon from the west pediment. They failed, however, and the statues fell and torn into the ground.

Then the Turks, for a century and more, were using the ruined Parthenon as a marble quarry for building and lime manufacture.<sup>31</sup>

And finally the collectors of antiquities from Europe arrived...

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<sup>30</sup> Jacques Carrey (1649 -1726) was a French painter and draughtsman, now remembered almost exclusively for the series of drawings he made of the Parthenon, Athens, in 1674.

<sup>31</sup> "*Hellenism under foreign domination (1669-1821)*" : **History of the Greek Nation: Turkish-Latin period**, Vol. IA, Ellinika Grammata publications, Athens, 1975

#### I.4. Architects and Dilettanti

After the conquest of the Byzantine Empire gradually all the Greek provinces were occupied by Turks. The rapacious plunder and looting of historical monuments in Greece, of all categories, -out of lack of resistance- became a systematic and unrelenting work of numerous "civilized" Europeans, officials and unofficials, ambassadors, consuls and other diplomats,<sup>32</sup> travelers, merchants, sailors, and even other more ruthless destroyers.

Many of them acted under commands of European sovereigns, with huge fees. There are countless cases, according to which many times if they could not "kidnap" a whole monument, they did not hesitate to enrich their art collections, *"to chop manuscripts , to cut off miniatures, to break the unity of archival collections in order to impersonate and appropriate valuable documents and maim or slice ancient monuments and statues"*,<sup>33</sup> unique and priceless.

These indeed savage actions, from the so-called "friends of Greek antiquities" Europeans, can be defined, with a great clemency, as "barbaric smuggling of antiquities" as it can be easily found and ascertained from their own publications; in which, with obvious and incredible boastfulness, these people were reporting from which and how many Greek monuments they managed to bring archaeological objects to their homeland and in their mansions.

The largest number of these alleged tourists, who toured in Greece during the time of the last centuries of Turkish rule, were Englishmen.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Among the most notable and large collections, formed with the abduction and transfer of antiquities from Greece, is the Giustiniani and Grimani collection. The family of the Giustiniani of Genoa, Italy, had established close relations with Chios, which succeeded in many ways to acquire a large number of significant ancient objects, with which they have enriched their collection. Grimani transferred these antiquities, which they detached from Greece to Venice, 1523. : Rumpf, A. *Archäologie J. Einleitung. Historischer Überblick*, 1962, in a footnote from Protopsalti, E. G.

<sup>33</sup> Protopsalti, E. G: "*Historical documents, concerning antiquities and other monuments during the years of [Greek] Revolution and of Kapodistriasis*", Athens, 1967 - Forbin, C. "*Voyage dans le Levant en 1817 et 1818*", Vol. 2-Source: Library of History, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens

<sup>34</sup> Lalande, L. : "*Des Pèlerinages en terre Sainte, avant les Croisades*", Paris, 1845- Source: Library of History, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens

The behavior of these foreign "adventurers" -both in Athens and also throughout Greece, where they had been informed that there were antiquities and monuments- towards the Greek people, was far from civilized and polite. According to their interests, -which concerned archaeological works and ways to conduct their trade with the sale of the stolen- it served them best to create strong relationships with deforciantes in order to facilitate the looting of Greek artistic and intellectual heritage. Clearly, this wretched cooperation was generally against the Greek people.

The easiness in which excavations were effected and antiquities seized from Greece, during the Ottoman occupation, cultivated in England -mainly among the class of titled noblemen-, the mentality, that the British aristocrat had to visit Greece and the Greek cities of Asia Minor, with its rich archaeological treasures, from where they could obtain overall many archaeological objects and manuscripts. These rich private collections somehow managed to end up to the British Museum and accrue the enrichment of the Museum.<sup>35</sup>

A large hit, in the same period, were also ambassadors or representatives of the great European Powers, who literally ravaged the Greek archaeological sites. I mention suggestively consul of France Fauvel who acquired a large collection of various antiquities, which he exposed in his big house in Athens, with beautiful frescoes from Dupre<sup>36</sup> (Illustration ζ). Another "celebrity" was Gropius, who -like Fauvel- was actually an agent of different European rulers and important personalities. His main task was the acquisition, by any manner, illegal or predatory, of Greek antiquities.

This situation additionally served the unhindered plunders of antiquities. Another characteristic paradigm comes from Englishman Lord Arundel who, without any hesitation, even suggested with

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<sup>35</sup> See also: *An Description of the Collection of Ancient Marbles in the British Museum*. It concerns an edition of the British Museum, consisting of 10 volumes ... on foreign rapines.

<sup>36</sup> Jules Dupré (1811-1889), French painter

persistence to transfer the entire of ancient Greece to England! ... -*"To transplant old Greece, into England"* -.<sup>37</sup>

## CHAPTER II.

### II. Thomas Bruce, 7<sup>th</sup> Earl of Elgin (1766 - 1841)

At the height of this mania, the Parthenon suffered its greatest blow; the looting of its sculptures from Scott Thomas Bruce, seventh Earl of Elgin.

In 1802, Elgin was appointed to the Sublime Porte as an ambassador. On this occasion, he was advised by one of his architects (Elgin was having an estate built on the occasion of his recent marriage to "pretty" Mary Nisbett) to visit the ruins of Greece and notably the Parthenon. The idea pleased Elgin and the innocent decision to have casts and drawings made of the sculptures was taken.

On this occasion, Elgin decided to seek out Turner (at the age twenty four and beginning to gain artistic fame). Turner was willing to participate but it became difficult for them to come to an agreement. For Turner requested 400 pounds a year in exchange for drawing the Parthenon and giving Lady Elgin drawing lessons. However Elgin felt that *"it was out of (his) reach altogether"*<sup>38</sup>. As a result he missed the chance of working with a great artist and incidentally ended up paying 500 pounds a year, for an insignificant artist, Giovanni Lusieri. Most of Lusieri's drawings were lost at sea and only few of his works survive. But, apart from being one of the archvillains in the story, he had the reputation of being an excellent draughtsman but little talent for light or shade.

<sup>37</sup> De Laborde, Athènes, aux XXe, XVIe, et XVIIe siècles, Vol. 1. - Michaelis, A. : *"Die Archäologischen Entdeckungen des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts"*, Leipzig, 1906-Source: Library of History, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens

<sup>38</sup> Hitchens, C.: *"The Elgin Marbles, should they be returned to Greece?"*, Chatto & Windus publications, London, 1988<sup>2</sup>

In the beginning access to Parthenon was denied by the Turks and they were obliged to pay five guineas a day. But Elgin's workmen soon had difficulty in executing their task. Bribery seemed to be a good solution:

*"Everything that has been done up to now in the citadel has been by means of presents to the Disdar who is the commandant..."*<sup>39</sup>

Until the Turks became more vigilant and Lusieri wrote to Elgin requesting to have the notorious firman issued:

*"I therefore beg your Excellency to have one sent to us as soon as possible, drawn up in such terms as to prevent us meeting with new difficulties in resuming and peaceably continuing our work"*<sup>40</sup>

Up to this point, Elgin's intentions were only to have copies and representations of the sculptures made and perhaps gather *"a few pieces of stone... among the rubbish"*. But as Elgin was to tell the House of Commons, his whole plan changed around May in 1801.

*"I proceeded to remove as much of the sculpture as I conveniently could; it was no part of my original plan to bring away anything but models"*.<sup>41</sup>

This appeal for a firman was seconded by Elgin's two other assistants, the Reverend Hunt and Logotheti. The firman was first issued in Italian and then translated into English. Although the translation was poor, the terms stated quite crudely the following:

*"That the artists meet no opposition in walking, viewing, contemplating the pictures and building they may wish to copy; or in fixing scaffolding around the ancient temple; or in modeling with chalk of gypsum the said ornaments and visible figures; or in excavating when they find it necessary in search of inscriptions among the rubbish. Or when they wish to take away some pieces of stone with old inscriptions or figures thereon, that no opposition be made thereto..."*<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Op.cit. Hitchens, C.: *"The Elgin Marbles..."*

<sup>40</sup> Op.cit.

<sup>41</sup> Op.cit.

<sup>42</sup> Melina Mercouri's speech to the Oxford Union (June 1986)- Source: Melina Mercouri Foundation



One must not forget that Elgin held a definite advantage over the Turks. Lord Nelson's victories had greatly impressed the Turks and they were by no means against the English, who had been their allies in the struggle against Bonaparte. By judging the politic climate it seems quite improbable that Elgin would stick to his first intentions. After all, who would stop him from removing more? The Greeks certainly could not and the Turks held the British in esteem; so in a certain way the road was clear. In a letter to Lusieri, one can see Elgin's possessiveness becoming rather excessive:

*"One can easily multiply ornaments of beautiful marble without overdoing it and nothing, truly, is so beautiful and also independent of the changes of fashion. These reflections apply only to unworked marble. You do not need any prompting from me to know the value that is attached to a sculpted marble, or historic piece".<sup>43</sup>*

However conscious Elgin was of the irrationality of his doing and of the universal value of the pieces he was mutilating, nothing was going to stop him now. Nothing? Well perhaps a few outcries which were only muffled by the magnificent of his doings. Elgin's apparent "megalomania" was further incited by his friend the Reverend Philip Hunt, who suggested that the whole Caryatid porch of the Erechtheion be removed.

*"If your lordship would come here in a large Man of War, that beautiful little model of ancient art might be transported wholly to England. Nothing can exceed the exquisite beauty and delicacy of all its details..."<sup>44</sup>*

Immediately after, Elgin enthusiastically wrote to Lord Keith, who was the naval commander in chief, and requested that a ship should be given to him:

*"At this moment I possess advantages beyond belief... now if you would allow a ship of war size to convoy the Commissioner's ship and stop a couple of days at Athens to get away a most valuable piece of architecture at my disposal there..."*

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<sup>43</sup> Hitchens, C.: *"The Elgin Marbles, should they be returned to Greece?"*, Chatto & Windus publications, London, 1988<sup>2</sup>

<sup>44</sup> *"History Today"*, Magazin, by John Gould, March 1984-Source: Melina Mercouri Foundation

*and do a very essential service to the arts in England Bonaparte has not got such a thing from all his thefts in Italy".<sup>45</sup>*

Fortunately, Lord Keith could not spare any ship, (imagine the disaster if he could have lent him a ship!) and so the embellishing of the arts of England was concentrated on the decoration of Elgin's own little private collection. In the meantime, Elgin felt that the pieces he had removed were a little bit shabby. He even took it for granted that the sculptures would be sent to Rome, for restoration, before their arrival in England. But Canova refused the task saying that ever if time and barbarism had injured the statues; they still remained the unretouched "*work of the ablest artists the world had ever seen (and) it would be a sacrilege in him or any man to presume to touch them with a chisel*".<sup>46</sup> For the act of restoring them would be by far inferior to the original parts. After 1814, Elgin was persuaded to leave the statues unrestored.

These improbable brigandish activities of Elgin literally captured him with the fury of pillage and destruction. His cooperators were not confined to the Acropolis only, but under his orders, they made also clandestine excavations in other areas of Greece, -especially in Argolis- they detached many pots and inscriptions: Elgin wrote to Hunt: *Even the smallest thing from Athens, is priceless. First in the list are metopes, anaglyphs and the relics of statues, whatever you can find. Especially the figures from pediments...The more metopes you are able to obtain.*<sup>47</sup>

He managed to obtain from the rest monuments of the Acropolis in Athens the following: two heads of philosophers from Acropolis, architectural parts and sculptures from Propylaea, Parthenon, Erechtheion and from the Temple of Athena Nike. As if these unique works were not enough, he grabbed also columns of the Temple near the Stadium and epigraphs from Orchomenus.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Lowenthal, D.: "*The Past is a Foreign Country*", Cambridge Uni. Press, 1985

<sup>46</sup> Op.cit.: Lowenthal, D.: "*The Past is a Foreign...*"

<sup>47</sup> "*The Society for the Study of Greek History*", The Seizure of the Parthenon Sculptures, Introduction by H. E. Koukkou, Pataki publications, Athens, 2002.

<sup>48</sup> Orchomenus: the setting for many early Greek myths, is a municipality and a rich archaeological site in Boeotia, Greece, that was inhabited from the Neolithic through the Hellenistic periods.- op. cit.: "*The Society for the...*"

Whatever it could not be achieved by ambassadors of other European countries since 1718, Elgin succeeded with bribes.

Elgin's operation is not lacking accidents: one of the metopes of the south side (particularly interesting because of their good preservation), slipped off ropes, as Elgin's workmen took it off from its place and crashed on the rocks of Acropolis.

Likewise the removal of Marbles was not always easy: Some cornices were thrown to the ground in order to remove the Metopes, stones of the frieze were cut in the back part with a saw, so as to reduce their weight and facilitate their transfer, and many works were cut in the middle by sawing for the same purpose.<sup>49</sup>

The damage done to the monument was irreparable!

Lord Elgin's acquisition of the sculptures is evidently subject to dispute. Some praise him and say that he has saved them for posterity: *"In 1799 (the Parthenon) was in danger of total despoliation. The peerless sculptures were being removed for building materials by the local Greek population, destroyed in the lime kilns or mutilated by religious fanaticism... it is therefore due to Lord Elgin that this sculpture the most beautiful the world has ever known, is preserved for posterity"*.<sup>50</sup>

And others (perhaps the more perceptive ones?) see him in a harsher light.

So let's take a look at the facts: According to the correspondence between Lord Elgin and Lusieri, at the time when the removal of the metopes became systematic and careless, Lusieri wrote to Elgin saying: *"I have the pleasure of announcing to you the possession of the eight metope, that one where there is the centaur carrying off the woman. This piece has caused much trouble in all respects I have been obliged to be a little barbarous"*.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> "The Society for the Study of Greek History", The Seizure of the Parthenon Sculptures, Introduction by H. E. Koukkou, Pataki publications, Athens, 2002.

<sup>50</sup> Watson, V. : *"The British Museum"*, British Museum Press 1973- Internet source: <http://www.parthenonuk.com>

<sup>51</sup> Hitchens, C.: *"The Elgin Marbles, should they be returned to Greece?"*, Chatto & Windus publications, London, 1988<sup>2</sup>

In another letter Lusieri wrote: *“That the barbarisms that I have been obliged to commit in your service may be forgotten”*.<sup>52</sup>

Not once, in any of their correspondence, are the words “rescue” or “preservation” mentioned. So Elgin’s claims to rescuing the Parthenon marbles from barbarism and indifferent natives seem highly incredible. One of the witnesses of the time, Robert Smirke, wrote:

*“Each stone as it fell shook the ground with its ponderous weight with deep hollow noise; it seemed like a convulsive groan of the injured spirit of the temple”*.<sup>53</sup>

Elgin eventually did more harm to the Parthenon than any natural catastrophe, Turk or time... Yet time was running out for Elgin, as the 1821 revolt was only a few years away and the curses of the ravished Parthenon would soon come and torment Elgin and his family. Thomas Harrison warned Elgin and wrote expressing the need to take advantage of the present situation because:

*“As it appears very uncertain from the fluctuating state of Europe, how long this part of Greece may remain under its present master... Greece may be called maiden ground”*.<sup>54</sup>

Harrison was right to certain extent, the political climate was becoming unstable for Elgin’s party. Yet one can ironically question whether a country so ravished by usurpers and war can be called maiden.

As the year of 1802 wore on, Lusieri wrote to Elgin:

*“I advise you, my lord, to procure a firman from the disdar, in which everything that he has done for your Excellency is approved. It is a paper that you promised him before you left Athens”*.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Op.cit.

<sup>53</sup> Hitchens, C.: *“The Elgin Marbles, should they be returned to Greece?”*, Chatto & Windus publications, London, 1988<sup>2</sup>

<sup>54</sup> Op.cit.

<sup>55</sup> Op.cit.

This firman was to license the work that had already been undertaken! Did not Lusieri and Elgin realize that they had exceeded the formalities of the first firman? Elgin shrewdly replied to Lusieri saying that:

*“So long as he is my friend, he will have solid proofs of my friendship”.*<sup>56</sup>

These “solid proofs” in the end amounted to an incredulous amount of money spent on lavish gifts to the Disdar and his family. If this is not called bribery, what is it then?

## II.1. "The adventures" of the Parthenon Marbles - Shipwreck of the Mentor

The British warship "Mentor" was found in the port of Piraeus in September 1802, to load the sculptures of the Parthenon and other monuments of Acropolis: three marble statues (but only the top part of their body so as to detach them from the east pediment of Parthenon) sculptures of the frieze from the small temple of Athena Nike and a marble throne.<sup>57</sup>

But when the "Mentor" reached near Kythera, because of the great storm, the ship wrecked in the port of Kythera, Avlemonas, dragging into the bottom of the sea all the crates with priceless Greek antiquities. Elgin, in agony and knowing how difficult the hauling up of shipwrecked sculptures would be, wrote to E. Kaloutsis, the Greek vice-consul of England to Kythera: *The boxes with marbles do not have much value, but for me it is important to be saved.*<sup>58</sup>

At this point I would like to stress that historically we are witnessing a unique case, where a Greek family rescued and kept the correspondence of the time on the vexed question of removal of the Parthenon Sculptures and their beginning to their place of exile.

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<sup>56</sup> Op.cit.

<sup>57</sup> This throne was sent to England later, on February 16, 1805, with the troopship "The lady Shaw Stewart". Also, another marble throne with a representation of Tyrannicides came from the spoils, which also Elgin detach, and now is located to the Paul Getty Museum.- Frel, J. : "*Some notes on the Elgin Throne*", Athenische Mitteilung 91, 1976-In a footnote from Protopsalti, E. G

<sup>58</sup> Nisbet, M.: "*Elgin, How sculptures were looted from the metopes of the Parthenon*", Mistress of the Elgin Marbles: A Biography of Mary Nisbet, Countess of Elgin, by Susan Nagel, William Morrow Paperbacks publications, 2005

N.S. Kaloutsis, grandson of Emmanuel Kaloutsis, English vice-consul in Kythera at the time of "Mentor's" wreck, preserved diligently the writings of his ancestor, realizing their great value. Unfortunately such cases are rare in Greek libraries and archives, resulting the "documents" from which until recently our information derive, stand mainly in public and private archives in Great Britain.

The surviving historical material contains official documents (passports, documents, epistles, reports, affirmations or information), which were recorded in the vice-consulate of Kythera, starting from the departure of "Mentor" from Piraeus, its maritime tragedy outside of Kythera, to the successful hauling up and rescue of its precious cargo.

This material reflects a microcosm of the whole Lord Elgin's enterprise to remove sculptures from the Parthenon in Athens. We read the names of ordinary Greeks who participated in the rescue, some of whom, did not know even how to sign: names and surnames familiar from Kalymnos, Hydra, Spetses and Kythera. We see customs, the administration and bureaucracy of the time, the relations of the protagonists of the episode, weaknesses and ambitions, the software of the time, the complex language of Greeks.

The curtain opens with the first document, dating from 16 February 1802, signed by Lord Elgin, under which free passage is allowed to B. Manonchini on Spetses, protected by Great Britain and closes, ten years later, with a letter of the elderly now Giovanni Battista Lusieri, from 4 November 1812 to Emm. Kaloutsis, with which he sends 15 okes waxes fat and 8 okes dry octopus. Several letters (English, French, Italian) are accompanied by a translation into Greek of that time.

The information obtained are very useful: exact number of boxes that were loaded in the "Mentor", the rescue process, the incidents of the wreck, the conditions of stopover of the sculptures on the beach Avlemona (the cover of boxes with seaweed, shrubs, and large stones), dealings of Hamilton (British politician, Elgin married his daughter) with the Kalymnian sponge-divers and other similar.

From these documents that are apposed intact, the reader, expert or otherwise, can learn a lot about the looting of the Parthenon sculptures, through the words of protagonists themselves about the sad event of the sinking of the "Mentor".

Furthermore the above manuscripts can be very constructive for the current studies on the conditions under which the Parthenon Sculptures were removed. For example, from Kaloutsi's calendar of expenses is evident that pay up to 40 people who worked for one week was 40 piastre. So if one consider that the bribes in cash (separate from the gifts), given by Elgin occasionally to Turks notables of Athens in order to "close their eyes" during the removal of sculptures from Parthenon ran into 5,000 piastre, becomes then apprehensible the size and the need of "buying out" of competent official consciences.<sup>59</sup>

#### ▪ II.1.2. The Parthenon Marbles in London

The whole operation of salvaging the sculptures and the throne was completed much later, in 1805, when the "tormented" Marbles were loaded on another ship and sent to England.

When Elgin's incumbency as an ambassador to England in Constantinople ended in 1803, the ship "Braakel" departed from Piraeus with the greatest sculptures of the east pediment of Parthenon, with two figures of the west, two metopes and slabs from the frieze of the Athena Nike, architrave from Erechtheion and panels from the so-called "Thisseio". After the sinking of "Mentor", a daughter Caryatid of the Erechtheion, along with its northeast column and many other sculptures, were sent to England.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Archives of the **Historical and Ethnological Society**, unedited documents (1802-1812)

<sup>60</sup> Nisbet, M.: "*Elgin, How sculptures were looted from the metopes of the Parthenon*", Mistress of the Elgin Marbles: A Biography of Mary Nisbet, Countess of Elgin, by Susan Nagel, William Morrow Paperbacks publications, 2005

Meanwhile, missions continued and dozens of boxes were shipped to London. The last load was lost forever when the frigate "Cambian" commanded by Hamilton, sank near Gramvousa.<sup>61</sup>

The first containers arrived via Malta to Plymouth in January 1804. But, Elgin was not there to collect them: He has already been arrested in Paris by the regime of Napoleon and only in 1806 managed to return to England. All this time the ancient sculptures remain abandoned and unclaimed at the port of Plymouth.

Elgin's arrival in London did not improve things much: the ancient sculptures (250 boxes in total), suffered three removals, until they were exhibited temporarily for a few years in a damp shed in Elgin's backyard. Later they were moved to a coal-cellar, where they remained until 1816, a time when the British Museum received them.

Yet there was more that could be removed: but there was a need for another firman. For the third firman, one of the relevant Turkish officials had been promised "*a watch and a gold snuff box*". These two vital necessities did not arrive, and this is how the apple of discord grew between Lusieri and Elgin. From then on their correspondence becomes querulous and there is a repetitive talk of a firman, bribery and local intrigues.<sup>62</sup>

Lusieri continued missions of ancient Greek statues until 1818. He, himself without any moral hesitation or inhibition, sliced into two pieces a Doric capital from the Propylaea, for easier transport, which now is exposed chopped up, at the British Museum ...<sup>63</sup>

In 1819 Elgin announced the final break of his collaboration with Lusieri. He did this in a letter that rings with a note of self pity.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Gramvousa: refers to two small uninhabited islands off the coast of north-western Crete in the regional unit of Chania.

<sup>62</sup> Hitchens, C.: "*The Elgin Marbles, should they be returned to Greece?*", Chatto & Windus publications, London, 1988<sup>2</sup>

<sup>63</sup> Nisbet, M.: "*Elgin, How sculptures were looted from the metopes of the Parthenon*", Mistress of the Elgin Marbles: A Biography of Mary Nisbet, Countess of Elgin, by Susan Nagel, William Morrow Paperbacks publications, 2005

<sup>64</sup> "If it were possible, I should have nothing so much at heart as to continue to employ your talents on a theatre so worthy of them. But the injustice I have suffered with respect to this collection, many misfortunes that have come upon me and a numerous family have so curtailed my means, that with real



## II.2. Select Committee of the House of Commons

Since Elgin's initial plan, of furnishing his Scottish house at Broomhall with the Parthenon freeze had long since expired, the idea of keeping them at Park Lane was also impossible. Poor Elgin, after all the trouble he went through to get them!

So the decision to sell the collection was made. Accordingly, Elgin was asked to write up a memorandum of his acquisition. The following stated the enormity of the expenses undertaken (a sum of a minimum of 62,440 pounds) followed by a strict denial that Elgin had abused his position as an ambassador in order to obtain the firman.

Spencer Percival, then prime minister, suggested that 30,000 pounds would suffice for the collection. This made Elgin go very pale... so he wrote to Perceval complaining:

*"I had no advantage from the Turkish government beyond the Firman given equally to other English travelers. My successors in the Embassy could not obtain permission for the removal of what I had not myself taken away. And on Mr. Adair's being officially instructed to apply in my favour, he understood, The Porte denied that the persons who had sold those marbles to me had any right to dispose of them".<sup>65</sup>*

Here it is written that Elgin did not legally acquire the marbles as he later was to claim that he did possess the authority to do so. This letter was followed by a series of discussions on how much would be paid. It was later suggested that an offer of 40,000 pounds should be made. Yet the assassination of Spencer Perceval, in 1812, brought all negotiations to a stop.

Eventually after a long string of controversies the Commons passed an Act of Parliament which chiefly stated the following:

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regret I submit to the necessity of bringing everything to a close that can cause expenses": Hitchens, C.: *"The Elgin Marbles, should they be returned to Greece?"*, Chatto & Windus publications, London, 1988<sup>2</sup>

<sup>65</sup> Hitchens, C.: *"The Elgin Marbles, should they be returned to Greece?"*, Chatto & Windus publications, London, 1988<sup>2</sup>

*“The said Earl hath agreed to sell the same for the sum of thirty five thousand pounds, on condition that the whole of the said collection should be kept together in the British Museum and open to inspection and called by the name of “The Elgin Marbles” and that said Earl and every person who should attain the rank of Earl of Elgin should be added to the Trustees of the British Museum”.*<sup>66</sup>

The arrogant thing was done, and the weary sculptures that had once so beautifully adorned the Parthenon, ended up confined in the austere and cold vaulted rooms of the British Museum in 1816.

The reasons which led Elgin to sell his "collection" were purely economic. Elgin, could not find for his "collection" a better buyer than the English State. His proposal to the British government met with mixed reactions in England and also elsewhere in Europe.

Among the people who first criticized Lord Elgin is the MP H. Hammersley. He argued that if some oncoming Greek government in the future asked the Marbles back, England would have to return them without further proceedings or denial.

On the 7 June 1816 the first proposal for the return of the marbles was made. This gesture was initiated by Mr Hugh Hammersley who specified the following, after having met with the Committee of Supply:

*“This committee, therefore, feels justified, under the particular circumstances of the case, in recommending that 25.000 pounds be offered to the Earl of Elgin for the collection in order to recover and keep it together for that government from which it has been improperly taken, and that to which this Committee is of great opinion that a communication should be immediately made, stating that Great Britain holds these marbles only in trust till they are demanded by the present, or any future, possessors of the city of Athens; and upon such demand, engages, without question or negotiation, to restore them, as far as can be effected, to the places from whence they were taken, and that they shall be in the meantime carefully preserved in the British Museum”.*<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Op.cit.

<sup>67</sup> Internet source: <http://www.parthenonuk.com>

Though the proposal was well expressed, it met with a sarcastic reaction saying that the Greeks would never rule Athens and that the idea of sending them back was “*chimerical and ridiculous*”.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Op.cit.

### CHAPTER III.

#### III. Greece under Ottoman occupation-Could Greece react?

It is difficult to say precisely when the dispute for the return of the marbles began, but one thing is certain, people questioned the legality and ethics of Elgin's conduct from the very beginning.

One of the first to do so was the famous English poet, Lord Byron. He was not indifferent to how the Greeks must have felt when the Parthenon was ravished of its sculpture and this outrage was brought out in his work entitled "*Child Harold*"<sup>69</sup> and later in "*The curse of Minerva*"

Although, some consider Byron as a romantic buffoon, his work did more than just strike romantic aspirations. For the gravity of his stanzas are not to be misunderstood, as he later wrote:

*"When one pillages and destroys the marvels of centuries, which time and Barbary have managed to spare, no excuse may be found, whoever the author of*

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<sup>69</sup> I quote an excerpt from "Child Harold":

*"But who, of all the plunderers of yon fane  
Oh high, where Pallas linger'd, loth to flee  
The latest relic of her ancient reign;  
The last, the worst, dull spoiler, who was he?  
Blush, Caledonia! such thy son could be!  
England! I joy no child he was of thine;  
Thy free-born men should spare what once was free;  
Yet they could violate each saddening shrine,  
And bear these altars o'er the long-reluctant brine.*

*But most the modern Pict's ignoble boast,  
To rive what Goth, and Turk, and Time hath spar'd;  
Cold as the crags, upon his native coast,  
His mind as barren and his heart as hard,  
Is he whose head concern'd, whose hand prepared,  
Aught displace Athena's poor remains:  
Her sons too weak the sacred shrine to guard,  
Yet felt some portion of their mother's pains,  
And never knew, till then the weight of Despot's chains".*

**"Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, Canto the Second"**, by Lord Byron: Internet Source: English Poetry 1579-1830: Spencer and the Tradition-<http://spenserians.cath.vt.edu>

*this base destruction may be... I am speaking objectively, I am with Greece and I do not believe that the pillage in India or Attica is to England's honour".*<sup>70</sup>

However, tragic epilogue of this criminal action of Elgin, of the destruction and looting of the Parthenon sculptures, and of so many other precious archaeological monuments of Greece, was the fact that it gave incentives to looting new Greek antiquities, that took place in 1811, by a group of unfortunately "educated" people, architects: Haller von Hallerstein, C. Cockerel, and the painter J. Foster Linkh, with the removal of a large number of sculptures from the temple of Athena Aphaia at Aegina.

About a year later, the summer of 1812, same architects, along with Baron von Stackelberg, Gropius, a diplomat in Athens, the traveler Leigh and the archaeologist P. Bronstead, removed the great slabs of the frieze of the Temple of Epicurean Apollo at Bassai of Figaleia (Peloponnese). Both collections were sold at an auction in 1815. The first was sold to King Ludwig of Bavaria (now are located to the gallery of sculptures in Munich) and the second to British (located in the British Museum).<sup>71</sup>

The terrible results of all these disasters -perpetrated with complete unconsciousness, unfortunately by scientists-, would fill many volumes of description of unprecedented looting, which archaeological treasures suffered, at a time during which Greece could not respond effectively because of the continuing Ottoman slavery.<sup>72</sup>

Inevitably, later writers have accused the Greeks unwitnessed that during this period, they neither reacted nor protested against these criminal actions of Europeans, in order to prevent terrible disasters.

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<sup>70</sup> Hitchens, C.: *"The Elgin Marbles, should they be returned to Greece?"*, Chatto & Windus publications, London, 1988<sup>2</sup>

<sup>71</sup> Raybaud, M.: *"Mémoires sur la Grèce"*, Paris, 1824-5, Vol. 2-Source: Library of History, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens.

<sup>72</sup> For the peculiar and largely unexplained behavior of the Turkish conquerors of Greece, who showed some respect towards ancient monuments.

The most likely explanation, according to my opinion, is that they probably were not aware of value of these treasures and thus they preferred the abundant monetary bribes, instead of these treasures. Given that when they conquered Constantinople, they did not hesitate to destroy everything, since there were no corresponding bribes.

These critics, however, consciously are unaware that the Greeks, being enslaved, and without befitting officers were unable to react effectively. When, however, they were given a chance, they did whatever it was possible to save these monuments.<sup>73</sup>

The most expressive words are those of General Makriyiannis, a great popular leader in the Greek revolt, who wrote:

*"What I write down I write down because I cannot bear to see the right stifled by the wrong. For this reason I learned to write at this old age and to do this crude writing because I did not have the means to study it when I was a child".*<sup>74</sup>

On another occasion, Makriyiannis found some soldiers thinking of selling an ancient statue:

*"I took these soldiers aside and told them this: You must not give away these things, not even for a thousand talers, you must not let them leave the country; it was for them we fought".*

The Greek poet, Seferis, also fought for the same cause and speaking of Makriyiannis, said to the soldiers:

*"You see? It is not Lord Byron speaking, nor a great scholar nor an archaeologist. It is a shepherd's son from Roumelia, his body covered with wounds. "It was for them we fought". There is more weight in this sentence of a simple man than in the effusions of fifteen gilded academies. Because it is only in feelings like this that the culture of a nation can be rooted – in real feelings, and not in abstractions about the beauty of our former ancestors or in hearts that have become dried up from a cataleptic fear of the common people".*<sup>75</sup>

During and after, the Greek War of Independence, the Greeks expressed their outrage concerning the removal of the Parthenon

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<sup>73</sup> Sourmeli,D.: "History of Athens during the struggle for freedom", Athens, 1853<sup>2</sup>-Source: Library of History, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens

<sup>74</sup> Hitchens, C.: "The Elgin Marbles, should they be returned to Greece?", Chatto & Windus publications, London, 1988<sup>2</sup>

<sup>75</sup> Op.cit.

marbles and undertook several measures so as to protect their national and cultural heritage:

In 1660, when Ottomans tried to demolish the monument called Thisseio, in order to use its precious architectural material for the construction of a mosque, Athenians reacted efficiently. By their actions to the High Porte, they succeeded in issuing a firman, which forbade the destruction of the ancient temple.<sup>76</sup>

Another case worth mentioning at this point is the following: During the first siege of Acropolis in 1821 by the Turks, Pittakis Kyriakos, who was a teenager during this first siege (later served as the first General curator of antiquities in Greece), the moment he learned that the besieged Ottomans were breaking down columns and walls of monuments in order to take the lead (Pb), to manufacture bullets, in consultation with other Greek besiegers, sent to the enemy a significant amount of leaden bullets. Unique and unprecedented act of heroism of Greeks! They offered the enemy the means that would have brought them certainly death, to save from destruction their ancestral artistic heritage<sup>77</sup> (Illustration η).

Similar also are the declarations of Adamantios Korais,<sup>78</sup> to rescue antiquities. His brilliant work deserves special mention, for saving the manuscripts of monasteries, as he assigned their safekeeping to the Patriarchate of Constantinople: "*Neither we gift, nor we sell our ancestral land*".<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Sourmeli,D.: "*History of Athens during the struggle for freedom*", Athens, 1853<sup>2</sup>

<sup>77</sup> Ragavis, A.R.: Elogium in the funeral of Kyriakos Pittakis, Superintendent of Antiquities, 1864-  
Source: Library of History, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens

<sup>78</sup> Adamantios Korais or Coraïs (1748-1833), was a humanist scholar credited with laying the foundations of Modern Greek literature and a major figure in the Greek Enlightenment. His activities paved the way for the Greek War of Independence and the emergence of a purified form of the Greek language, known as Katharevousa. Encyclopædia Britannica asserts that "his influence on the modern Greek language and culture has been compared to that of Dante on Italian and Martin Luther on German"

<sup>79</sup> Korais, A. "*Sequence of improvised reflections on Greek Language and Education*", in his Preface of "*Isokratous, Reasons, and Epistolai*", Part I, Paris 1807, (Korais, Collected Works, original works, vol. A, Athens, 1963)-Source: Library of History, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens

Finally, in 1813 the "Filomousos Company" was founded in Athens, with the primary purpose of saving *"the blasted and degradable glorious monuments of antiquity"*.<sup>80</sup>

So those who claim that the Greeks were indifferent are simply ignoring the literary and historical facts. The inventor of this infamous lie was the Reverend Philip Hunt, whom Lusieri mentions in his letter, concerning the removal of the Erechthion.

*"The details of these various monuments are masterpieces. Without a special firman it is impossible to take away the last (the Pandroseion). The Turks and Greeks are extremely attached to it, and there were murmurs when Mr. Hunt asked for it"*.<sup>81</sup>

Yet in 1816, Hunt denied any opposition when asked if the *"the natives"*, had shown any resistance. Again, that was another lie.<sup>82</sup>

### III.1. Count Ioannis Antonios Kapodistrias

Effective and stringent measures for the safeguard and preservation of ancient monuments in Greece, received the first Governor of Greece, Ioannis Kapodistrias (11 February 1776 – 9 October 1831), as soon as he arrived according to his words *"in an endless ruin"* which was Greece, in January 1828.

Meaningful and responsible care, as also important and effective public works for the preservation of antiquities and explicit prohibition of the sale and export of ancient works, were applied immediately, after his arrival in Greece on January 8, 1828.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Yotopoulos-Sicilianos, K.: *"Filomousos Company and Greek antiquities"*, in memory of Fotis Apostolopoulos. Asia Minor Studies Centre, Athens, 1984.

<sup>81</sup> Hitchens, C.: *"The Elgin Marbles, should they be returned to Greece?"*, Chatto & Windus publications, London, 1988<sup>2</sup>

<sup>82</sup> Op.cit.

<sup>83</sup> **General State Archives (State Archives):** *General Newspaper of Greece*, January 25, 1828, No.6- No. 7, of January 28, 1828



Then for the first time strict and effective measures were received for the collection and preservation of all antiquities, both for the existing and for any new revealed. There were also given specific and detailed instructions and directions to the local governors which were applied - as much as the terrible conditions prevailing in a belligerent country allowed- under state's monitoring for archaeological sites and illicit excavations by foreigners, who had come to Greece, often with the deceptive guise to help.

It must be particularly emphasized the fact, that Ioannis Kapodistrias, despite the overall dramatic situation of the country, throughout the short time that was let to rule<sup>84</sup> -January 1828 to September 27, 1831- both the British government, which unacceptably reacted against the vast work he performed, and also a small number of Greek notables, as the measures he applied had banned their illegal enrichment, he never ceased to be concerned about the rescue of Greek antiquities, from foreigners, the so-called "travelers".<sup>85</sup>

Moreover he proceeded in establishing Archaeological Museum, where by order of the governor himself, all the antiquities which were discovered by Greek villagers in the fields during cultivation from all provinces of the Greek state, mainly from the Aegean islands were gathered there. Most of villagers offered all these valuable findings for free, to enrich the museum. The Governor had ordered the names of citizens to be published in the official government newspaper along with an expression of gratitude towards them.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> In 1831, Kapodistrias ordered the imprisonment of Petrobey Mavromichalis, the Bey of the Mani Peninsula, one of the wildest and most rebellious parts of Greece. This was a mortal offence to the Mavromichalis family, and on October 9, 1831 (September 27 in the Julian Calendar) Kapodistrias was assassinated by Petrobey's brother Konstantis and son Georgios on the steps of the church of Saint Spyridon in Nafplion.

<sup>85</sup> **General State Archives (State Archives):** *General Secretariat*, Document No. 2434, issue 6 - Protopsalti, E. G: "*Historical documents, concerning antiquities and other monuments during the years of [Greek] Revolution and of Kapodistrias*", Athens, 1967

<sup>86</sup> **General State Archives (State Archives):** *General Newspaper of Greece*, No. 11, September 11, 1829 – See also, op.cit: Protopsalti, E. G: the document of Nicholas Flogaitis from Aegina, to the Governor, who offered all the ancient objects that he possessed in order to be settled into under construction Archaeological Museum. – Detailed list of all these antiquities see: P. Kavadias: "*Sculptures of the National Museum-descriptive catalog*", Athens 1890 -1892, in a footnote from Protopsalti, E. G

Kapodistrias knew that countless archaeological treasures that enriched - and still enrich- the greatest and most famous museums in the world, were stolen and looted Greek antiquities, especially during the Ottoman occupation. However he harbored no illusions that it would be possible to demand and obtain their return to the homeland. He knew that in famous museums, such as Germany, France, England, Italy and so many other countries, artifacts of unique and unprecedented art were the Greek antiquities.

### III.2. 1835: The first claim on the Parthenon Sculptures - 1935: Restoration and Reconstruction of the ancient temple

The Greek state since the time of Kapodistrias and until our days has not ceased, by all means and all ways, to fight for the repatriation of antiquities especially, concerning this unique monument of humanity, the Parthenon of Athens.

Thus when, later, in 1835, the British Museum first proposed to supply plaster casts of the Parthenon Marbles in exchange for copies of the sculptures which were still in Athens, the Greek government's response was to demand the return of originals.<sup>87</sup>

Immediately after the founding of the Greek State, discussions about the construction of an Acropolis Museum on the Hill of the Acropolis began (Illustration θ).

In 1863, it was decided that the Museum should be constructed on a site to the southeast of the Parthenon and foundations were laid on 30 December 1865.

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<sup>87</sup> A new publication, titled "*The Acropolis of Athens*", has been presented to emphasize the timeless debate on the reunification of the Parthenon sculptures. This marvelous piece of work contains 21 documents highlighting the Greek state's first attempt to restore the Acropolis to its previous glory including among other efforts, the return of the Parthenon sculptures removed by Lord Elgin. The publication is presented in a perfect replica of the original General State Archive folder and contains the 21 documents adroitly replicated using the method of facsimile reproduction. Within the folder there is also a volume offering an academic analysis of the various documents and their significance. The presentation of "*The Acropolis of Athens*" took place at the New Acropolis Museum on Monday 19<sup>th</sup> March 2012. It will soon be available for purchase through the gift shops within the museum. Alternatively, it can also be purchased directly through the Alithia publishing company. Internet Source: <http://www.parthenonuk.com>

From 1935 onwards monuments of Acropolis will be put for the first time under scientific care and their cleaning will start, as also excavations and later restorations. Several of sculptures from the great ancient temple, escaped Elgin's plunder as they were buried under the ruins of several second buildings, and were able to be found, preserved and later exhibited in the Acropolis Museum, where we see them today.

The building itself was upgraded with fixings and restorations, to reach its present form. Various architectural members repositioned into place in an effort to give to the wounded building some kind of continuance of its structural forms and be better comprehensible to its guests. The most extensive of the restoration programs was carried out between 1898 and 1933. It is known as N. Balanos program and included the restoration of eight columns on the north colonnade along with its entablature and five columns on the south<sup>88</sup>(Illustrations 1.1-1.2).

After forty years, new procedures were needed, on the one hand due to oxidation of metallic elements which were used during the restoration of Balanos and on the other hand because of air pollution.

In 1975, an interdisciplinary Committee for the Preservation of the Acropolis Monuments (E.S.M.A.) was established, and created the technical office of the Acropolis, which since then organizes restoration projects of monuments, initiating new research and new practices of international level on matters of restoration of ancient monuments.

Unfortunately pollution had direct implications on the few remaining sculptures still up in the Parthenon. Thus it appeared that their salvation from the surface damage caused by pollution required their removal and storage at a closed space, ie in a museum, and then their replacement with exact replicas.<sup>89</sup>

The adventures of the long life of this marvelous ancient temple are forever imprinted onto the marble and help us to study its course through time.

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<sup>88</sup> Internet Source: <http://www.theacropolismuseum.gr>

<sup>89</sup> Casanaki, M.: *"The Acropolis at Athens: Conservation, Restoration and Research 1975-1983"*, [exhibition] Athens, National Gallery - Museum Alexandros Soutzos, Athens, 1985

Traces of ancient tools as well as of newer, traces of fire, of medieval inscription, from the hagiography of the church, from the bombardment of Morosini, from the forcible extraction of lead for bullets, and at the same time from erosion and air pollution, are all now elements of History.

But what was the state of the "rescued" sculptures during the same time? Were they safe and sound inside the British Museum?

### III.3. The disastrous "cleansing"! <sup>90</sup>

The Parthenon Marbles, as we have seen, in Elgin's time had survived under difficult conditions. But still, in one sense they were intact: their surfaces were left unchanged and untouched by human hands for at least 500 years.

It is further known that the Parthenon was painted both externally and internally with a rich brown gold color. The impression it gave to anyone who saw the Parthenon varied depending on the light, whether it was summer or winter, noon or twilight.

Over the years, the chemical interaction of moisture with the elements contained in the marble produced a superficial patina of colors with a rich mix of white, orange, brown and sometimes black colors. This was the result of 2000 years of their exposure out in the open.

This diffuse brown color, according to the opinion of several experts, was mainly due to ferrous minerals, which react in rainwater and atmospheric moisture. However, the first official version of the British Museum for the Parthenon Marbles, said that: *"Many remains of Greek architecture, during their first revealing through the ground, were showing their colors in all their freshness ..."*

However, the written history on the surface of the Marbles was perceived by the people responsible in the British Museum as "dirt".

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<sup>90</sup> St. Clair, W.: *"Lord Elgin and the Marbles"*, Oxford University Press, USA, 1998 - Hellenic Republic: Ministry of Education & Religious Affairs, Cultures & Sports: Internet Source: [http://www.yppo.gr/Cultural\\_Heritage-Painting](http://www.yppo.gr/Cultural_Heritage-Painting): British Museum, Robert Smirke, 1823-52

Both times, that they made new molds -because Parthenon Sculptures were in great demand as object-models for artists-, the remaining traces of color disappear even more. These ancient surfaces were also lost as a result of time spent near the sea. However, when transferred to the British Museum in 1861, their ancient patina was largely intact.

The Parthenon Marbles, although frequently washed, looked dark and dirty in the dull and cloudy London, while the plaster casts were uniformly white. A visit to the British Museum, for those who had seen copies of the Marbles was pure disappointment.

Joseph Duveen,<sup>91</sup> who funded the British Government for the implementation of a wing in the British Museum with his name, said: *"the old Marbles should be cleaned completely, so completely that I would dip them into acid."*

At the end of 1936 began the work of "cleansing" the Marbles and artisans stopped their supervision. The usage of metal tools on the surface of sculptures had been disastrous. The carborundum,<sup>92</sup> an artificial substance made at very high temperature incandescent furnaces was at the time, along with the diamond, the hardest substance for grinding steel tools and polishing the hardest granite.

The head of the horse of Moon, the Sun and Iris had suffered *"huge damage"* according to director of the British Museum. In September 1938, museum's director John Forsdyke when he was informed about the *"wild"* look of Marbles, ordered all further works of "cleaning" to cease and also ordered an administrative investigation. The Standing Committee of the Museum had to decide what to do...

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<sup>91</sup> Joseph Duveen, 1st Baron Duveen (1869- 1939) was a British art dealer, considered one of the most influential art dealers of all time

<sup>92</sup> Silicon carbide (SiC), also known as carborundum, is a compound of silicon and carbon with chemical formula SiC. It occurs in nature as the extremely rare mineral moissanite. Silicon carbide powder has been mass-produced since 1893 for use as an abrasive

In 1939 the new wing of the British Museum, the "Duveen Gallery" was ready and the Parthenon Marbles had to be exposed in public. If the facts became known, the Director of the Museum, the Chief Curator, as also trustees would have failed in their task. The government would have been furious because out of their incompetence and mismanagement, the argument that England was able to protect the sculptures, would have been refuted. They decided to say, as few as possible, as if nothing serious had happened. But the dramatic change in the appearance of Parthenon Marbles (which they had a warm brown color and now their color was a dull white), was evident not only in the eyes of specialists but even for the most ignorant observers.

There were three sculptures, whom "cleansing" had been discontinued. The extent of scratching, abrasion and the discoloration shouted for an explanation. The "offhanded solution" that was found, as stated in the minutes of the meeting of the Standing Committee of the museum, was to cover the marbles with some kind of color coating, depending on the color that was removed! However, for specialists the damage would have still remained visible.

The Director of the Museum placed the full blame on the staff and the International Committee decided to reprimand them and lead them into early retirement or resignation. Thus, they avoided openly to admit that something went wrong. In fact they said they acted quickly to some "*innovative*" methods of cleaning that was done without permission and were indistinguishable to laymen.

In the House of Representatives, the Minister refused to answer certain questions, with the excuse that these were issues that only concerned trustees of the Museum. The minister's answers had so little truth inside them, as to become misleading.

Trustees of the Museum had drifted the government into conspiracy. In the Greek government, a dossier to Foreign Ministry in 1939 entitled: "*Handling Elgin Marbles: using coppery wire brushes for the cleaning of Marbles, with subsequent destruction of the surface*" was destroyed.

When in 1945 the war ended, the Marbles had completed 12 years since the last time that they were viewed publicly and because they were for years in storage, they looked again darker than the walls of the "*Duveen Gallery*". Few people could remember the events. There was no declaration, there was no publication of the event, and the files were closed for both staff and public. The cynical deception of the Museum had passed and the scandal remained under control.

#### III.4. The contribution of Melina Mercouri in the campaign for the return of Parthenon Marbles

The first and second world wars caused a standstill concerning the return of the marbles, although the suggestion of returning the sculptures in recognition of Greece's efforts in the wars, were made; but that too was denied.

The wars passed, and the polemic for the return persisted. Then, during the late 1960's and 1970's the debate was hushed possibly due to the political dictatorship that was imposed on Greece. Yet the cause never lacked British defenders.

In 1974, democracy was finally restored. This time a more dynamic proposal was brewing... Greece became a member of the European community in 1981 and Melina Mercouri (1920-1994) was appointed as the Greek Minister of culture. Despite the long history of the debate, most people associate it with Mercouri's campaign which began in 1982 (Illustration ιβ).

Her plea echoed across the world, motivated personalities both in Greece and England and created a positive climate for the return of the sculptures, which hopefully will bring the desired result.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> See also: "Address of Melina Mercouri, Minister of Culture and Sciences of Greece, to the World Conference on Cultural Policies, organized by UNESCO in Mexico, July 29, 1982, on the submission by Greece of a Draft Recommendation on the Return of Cultural Property to its Country of Origin" "Address by Melina Mercouri, Minister of Culture, to the Oxford Union 12<sup>th</sup> June 1986"- Internet Source: <http://www.melinamercourifoundation.org.gr/Speeches>

*“The Greek Government has entrusted me with the responsibility of announcing to you here that Greece, through the intermediary of the Intergovernmental Commission of UNESCO for the return of the cultural treasures to the countries of their provenance, and in accordance with the formal procedures laid down and with the legislation in force in England today, with apply for the official restitution of the Marbles of the Acropolis.*

*We are not naïve. The day may come when the world will conceive of other visions, other notions about ownership, cultural heritage and human creativity. And we fully appreciate that museums cannot be emptied. But I would like to remind you that in the case of the Acropolis Marbles we are not asking for the return of a painting or a statue. We are asking for the restitution of part of a unique monument, the particular symbol of a civilization.*

*And I believe that the time has come for these Marbles to come home to the blue skies of Attica, to their rightful place, where they form a structural and functional part of a unique entity”<sup>94</sup>.*

Melina Mercouri

Minister of Culture 1981-1989, 1993-1994

In all honesty, her arguments were not new, but they gained international attention (something which had not yet occurred). Despite numerous efforts to popularize the long held opposition of the British Museum (even a committee, The British Committee for the restitution of the Parthenon Marbles was set up in order to reinforce public awareness<sup>95</sup>). Mercouri’s modest proposal met with a firm no.

Yet something happened in 1994... Melina Mercouri died. Her death aroused several sentiments; pangs of sadness on behalf of those who admired her, and a certain amount of relief from the side of the retentionists.

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<sup>94</sup> World Meeting of UNESCO, Mexico, 26/7-6/8/1982- Source: Melina Mercouri Foundation

<sup>95</sup> See also chapters: XVII, XX & Appendix IV



The ex-director of the British Museum, Sir David Wilson said: "*She was a bloody nuisance to the museum, but I doubt if anyone else has the Charisma to tackle the battle now*".<sup>96</sup>

## CHAPTER IV.

### IV. Should the Parthenon Sculptures finally be returned to Greece? - The Time of submission of the Greek request.

The history of the Greek request for the return of the Parthenon Marbles from the British Museum begins in 1974 when Greece submitted a proposal to the United Nations, for their repatriation.

In 1982 Melina Mercouri in an interview to BBC, lays the request of repatriation by connecting it with the ongoing restoration work of monuments on the Acropolis.<sup>97</sup>

A few months later, in Mexico, Melina, as a national delegate to the Conference of Ministers of Culture of UNESCO, brings back the question. The request was placed to an open vote and passed by the participants with 54 votes, 11 against and 23 abstentions [Appendix II.]

In May 1983 in Constantinople, the Director of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities, Yiannis Tzedakis, through his interposition mentioned the Return of the Parthenon Sculptures during the 3<sup>rd</sup> Session of the UNESCO's Intergovernmental Committee and placed a report for the return of cultural property to countries of origin.<sup>98</sup>

In October 1983, Greece formally submits the request to the British government through diplomatic channels. A year later, in April 1984, the answer arrives. The British government responds negatively.

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<sup>96</sup> Article from the Guardian, Tuesday, 8<sup>th</sup> March 1994 - Source: Melina Mercouri Foundation

<sup>97</sup> World Meeting of UNESCO, Mexico, 26/7-6/8/1982- Source: Melina Mercouri Foundation

<sup>98</sup> UNESCO: "*Fourth General Assembly of States Parties to the Convention concerning the protection of the World Cultural and natural Heritage*", CLT-83/cONF.022/6, Summary record, Paris, 1983

In September Greece hands over to UNESCO (held in Paris) the official form of the Organization; a form established for the demands of return of cultural objects. In October 1985 the British government again responded negatively to the Greek request, this time through UNESCO.<sup>99</sup>

In April 1985 during processes of the fifth General Assembly UNESCO's Intergovernmental Committee, the Greek delegation brought back the question, including the Greek government's arguments and intentions to build the new Acropolis Museum for the formation of better conditions for protection of the Parthenon Marbles.<sup>100</sup>

In the sixth session, held in April 1989, the Commission decided to consider the final drafts of the new under construction Museum. Moreover, in the same session, the Commission undertook to request from the British Museum information on the status of marbles, to seek the opinion of an expert in museology, which would suggest the most appropriate housing for them to ICOM (International Council of Museums) and lastly to continue efforts for bilateral talks between Greece and England.<sup>101</sup>

In 1991, after the Greek proposal, the Intergovernmental Committee meets in Zappeion building, where it was announced the notice of international tender for the preparation of plans of the New Acropolis Museum. In the competition the Italian team of architects was chosen. However, Italians were excluded in the second competition by the group of American-Swiss architects.<sup>102</sup>

However, despite UNESCO's patronage, the new museum was postponed. Why? Because like in all competitions, there is always a sore loser. The media in Greece called it the "Acropolis Museum Serial" and so the matter was not taken very seriously...

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<sup>99</sup> Hellenic Republic: Ministry of Education & Religious Affairs, Cultures & Sports:Internet Source: <http://www.yppo.gr/Cultural Heritage>

<sup>100</sup> UNESCO: "*Fifth General Assembly of States Parties to the Convention concerning the protection of the World Cultural and natural Heritage*", CLT-85/CONF. 009/5, Summary record, Paris, 1985

<sup>101</sup> UNESCO: "*sixth General Assembly of States Parties to the Convention concerning the protection of the World Cultural and natural Heritage*" SC-89/CONF.003/008, Summary record, April, 1989

<sup>102</sup> Hellenic Republic: Ministry of Education & Religious Affairs, Cultures & Sports:Internet Source: <http://www.yppo.gr/Cultural Heritage>

In 1993 in the thirteenth General Assembly 106 people vote for the return of cultural objects. There were 25 abstentions. Between them there were also those representatives of European Community countries.<sup>103</sup>

In 1994 the Secretariat of the Intergovernmental Committee undertook to request more information about the legal arguments of the English side, since the British insist -until this day- that they legally hold the Parthenon sculptures.

In 1995, the fiftieth UN General Assembly had taken a new decision for the return of cultural property with 124 votes in favor and 24 abstentions.

In 1996 at the ninth<sup>104</sup> Session of the UNESCO's Intergovernmental Committee, Greece rejects the arguments of the other side, for the legal ownership of the Marbles. The Committee passed a recommendation, noting the recommendation of 1982, according to which invites the Director-General of the Organization to continue its negotiations with the two states.<sup>105</sup>

In 2000 Greece sent to the British Parliament a bulky file containing in a few pages the Greek memo with the arguments and a variety of documents, including the first official representation of the Greek government in 1983, statements of British politicians, corresponding documents for the construction of the Acropolis, findings of Greek experts for damages suffered the unfortunate sculptures by cleaning in the British Museum and also a map of projects for the unification of archaeological sites in Athens around Acropolis.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> UNESCO: "*Thirteenth General Assembly of States Parties to the Convention concerning the protection of the World Cultural and natural Heritage*" WHC-93/CONF.003/6 Summary record, October, 1993

<sup>104</sup> UNESCO's Committee also organizes, if needed, extraordinary sessions and that was the case here according to the Hellenic Ministry of Culture

<sup>105</sup> UNESCO: "*Report by the Intergovernmental Committee for promoting the return of cultural property to its countries of origin or its restitution in case of illicit appropriation on its activities (1996-1997)*", Summary record, Paris, 1997

<sup>106</sup> Hellenic Republic: Ministry of Education & Religious Affairs, Cultures & Sports:Internet Source: <http://www.yppo.gr/Cultural Heritage>

#### IV.1. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) & the Parthenon Marbles

UNESCO's mandate is to contribute to peace and security *"by promoting collaboration among nations through education, science and culture in order to further universal respect for justice, for the rule of law and for human rights and fundamental freedoms which are affirmed for the peoples of the world, without distinction of race, sex, language or religion, by the Charter of the United Nations"*.<sup>107</sup>

UNESCO's role is that of mediation and the facilitation of bilateral negotiations.

Through its good services, UNESCO has played a crucial role in keeping this issue before the world since every two years at the General Conference, the 186 state members of UNESCO must address the recommendations of the Intergovernmental Committee about the Parthenon Marbles.<sup>108</sup>

The Athenian Acropolis was inscribed in the World Heritage List of UNESCO in 1987.<sup>109</sup>

Extracts from the criteria according to which the inscription of the site was accepted by the World Heritage Committee are presented here:<sup>110</sup>

✓ Criterion I: The Acropolis of Athens is the ultimate expression of the adaptation of architecture to a natural landscape. This extraordinary composition, in which the volumes are in perfect harmony, creating a monumental landscape of unique beauty, comprises an ensemble of masterpieces of the 5<sup>th</sup> c. BC: the Parthenon, the Propylaea, the temple of Athena Nike and the Erechtheion.

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<sup>107</sup> UNESCO: "Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention", Paris, 2008

<sup>108</sup> Hellenic Republic: Ministry of Education & Religious Affairs, Cultures & Sports: Internet Source: [http://www.yppo.gr/Cultural\\_Heritage](http://www.yppo.gr/Cultural_Heritage)

<sup>109</sup> Internet Source: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list>

<sup>110</sup> Exhibition's proceedings: *"The Unity of a Unique Monument: Parthenon"*, organized at UNESCO headquarters (31.3-18.4.2003), upon the initiative of Ms. Marianna V. Vardinoyiannis, UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador, by the Cultural Sector in cooperation with the Hellenic Ministry of Culture and the Melina Mercouri Foundation

✓ Criterion II: The monuments of the Acropolis of Athens have exercised an enormous influence, as far as Classical architecture is concerned, not only during Greek and Roman antiquity when they were considered to be exemplary models in the Mediterranean world but also in modern times.

✓ Criterion III: The Athenian Acropolis has a special meaning in Greek religion: it was the sacred place where the fundamental myths were born.

✓ Criterion IV: The Acropolis of Athens has represented the civilizations of Greece for more than a millennium.

✓ Criterion V: The Athenian Acropolis is directly associated with events and ideas that were never forgotten in history. These monuments are living proof of the words of Plato and Aristotle, of the Philippics of Demosthenes, and of St. Paul. They keep alive the memory of priceless part of the heritage of humanity.

In 1999 the European Parliament took a decisive vote, which was officially forwarded, among others, to UNESCO:<sup>111</sup>

A. Noting that a MORI Institute opinion poll conducted in the UK (autumn 2002) found that a substantial majority of the population is in favour of returning the Elgin Marbles to Greece and that a precious opinion poll organized by Channel 4 TV showed over 90% in favour.

B. Having regard to Article 128 of the Treaty on cooperation between the European Union and international cultural organizations such as UNESCO, and whereas, in Mexico in 1982, UNESCO declared the Parthenon a World Cultural Heritage site and supports the return of Marbles.

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<sup>111</sup> Op.cit. Exhibition's proceedings: "*The Unity of a Unique Monument: Parthenon*",...

- C. Having regards to the Commission's answer to Question E-2800/98 on 30 September 1998 in which it stated that: *"the Parthenon of the Acropolis and its sculptures form an integral and invaluable part of the European cultural and architectural heritage"*.
- D. Noting that the Elgin Marbles were removed from Athens during its occupation by the Ottoman Empire.
1. Takes the view that the return of the Elgin Marbles to Greece would be a key more in promoting Europe's common cultural heritage;
  2. Calls on the UK Government to give positive consideration to Greece's request for the return of the Elgin Marbles to their natural site;
  3. Instructs its President to forward this Declaration to the Council, the Commission, the governments and parliaments of the UK and Greece, UNESCO and the UN Secretary-General.

#### IV.2. Arguments in favor of the Parthenon Marbles staying in London

- Lord Elgin "saved" the Marbles from a worse fate by removing them to safety in Britain
- Lord Elgin "legally" acquired the Marbles and the British Museum subsequently "legally" acquired them from him for the British Museum
- The Greeks are unable to look after the Parthenon Marbles properly
- It is impossible to restore the Parthenon and thus the aspiration towards "reunification" is a false one
- The Marbles are better off in London where they can be seen in the context of other world cultures

- The Marbles belong to "the world", to all of us, and should therefore be left where "everyone" can enjoy them
- If the British Museum agreed to return the Marbles to Athens, it would "open the floodgates", leading to the denuding of the world's encyclopedic museums
- The Marbles are too important a part of the British Museum collection to allow them to be given up
- The Marbles can only be "loaned" to Athens if the Greeks agree to concede Britain's legal ownership of the sculptures
- "The Elgin Marbles are no longer part of the story of the Parthenon. They are now part of another story".<sup>112</sup>

#### ▪ IV.2.1. The British Museum's Response

In the past, the British Museum has issued many statements clarifying that it does not intend to grant ownership of the Parthenon Sculptures to a Greek museum. Their official position, as given on their website in 2009, is:

*"The British Museum's Trustees argue that the Parthenon Sculptures are integral to the Museum's purpose as a world museum telling the story of human cultural achievement. Here Greece's cultural links with the other great civilizations of the ancient world, especially Egypt, Assyria, Persia and Rome, can be clearly seen, and the vital contribution of ancient Greece to the development of later cultural achievements in Europe, Asia, and Africa can be followed and understood. The current division of the surviving sculptures between museums in eight countries, with about equal quantities present in Athens and London, allows different and complementary stories to be told about them, focusing respectively on their importance for the history of Athens and Greece, and their significance for world culture. This, the Museum's Trustees*

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<sup>112</sup> Neil MacGregor, Director, British Museum

*believe, is an arrangement that gives maximum public benefit for the world at large and affirms the universal nature of the Greek legacy.”<sup>113</sup>*

The British Museum has also claimed they have a right to keep the Elgin Marbles because they effectively saved them from further damage. Ian Jenkins was quoted by the BBC, while associated with the British Museum, as saying If Lord Elgin did not act as he did, the sculptures would not survive as they do. And the proof of that as a fact is merely to look at the things that were left behind in Athens.<sup>114</sup>

Yet the British Museum has also admitted that the sculptures were damaged by “heavy handed” cleaning, although the precise level of damage is disputed by campaigners in Britain and Greece. Pressure continues to build.

In an interview the ex-director of the British Museum, Robert Anderson in the Times of London on January 15, 2002, said that the museum goes beyond national boundaries, as it has never been a museum of British culture. It is a museum of the world and its purpose is to exhibit works of all eras and regions of the earth.

Prominent figures in Britain during its history managed to comprehend the value of artistic masterpieces, even before others could appreciate them. One of them was Elgin, and according to Anderson's point of view, he has been unfairly maligned through the campaign for the return of the Marbles, but he deserves a place in history alongside that of other diplomats, who brought collections to the museum.

Claiming that the museum follows a very generous policy of lending works from its collections, nevertheless he goes on to say that such borrowings should not be an obstacle for visitors to enjoy collections for which the museum is famous and through which they can have an overview of the past.

In closing, Robert Anderson said that the sculptures will remain where they are in a specially constructed for them place, where admission is

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<sup>113</sup> Internet source: <http://blog.britishmuseum.org/>

<sup>114</sup> Internet source: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news>



free. It is the most convenient and safe place not only for the "Elgin" Marbles but also for every other object of its collections. It is owned by the museum, which cannot put them at risk through borrowing, nor wish to make such an agreement, as there is no guarantee that they will return and is also contrary to the interests of visitors from around the world.

At a lecture at UWA in Perth, British Museum director, Neil MacGregor insisted that artifacts should not be returned by museums to their countries of origin. Instead, he proposes that travelling exhibitions will become more popular in future, allowing some of the artifacts in question to be exhibited around the world:<sup>115</sup>

*"When you see these objects they will mean more to you in your own experience than they would in London or the place where they were made,"* he said.

*"The value of an object is to explain history to as many people as possible and explain the present to as many people as possible that may not be achieved by it being returned to the place where it was made."*

*"It is ever more important for the citizen who is a citizen of the world, to make sense of the world and that is what museums are for everywhere".*

Mr. MacGregor also outlined how travelling collections are now used *"to explore key elements of our shared history"*.

*"In the last 40 or 50 years, migrations from all over the world have happened in all directions by tourism and people travelling for business, we now have in most cities, populations that are by no means local and in some cases are entire global."*

More specifically, MacGregor, talking about the Parthenon Marbles, stressed that:

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<sup>115</sup> op.cit.

*“The specific artifacts make sense only when shown together, as a storyteller of human history. So, it is necessary to find the best possible way to present them to the whole world, since they cannot be reattached to the Parthenon”.*

As he said, the museum is willing to lend them to Greece on priority, and has already proposed this to the Greek government, receiving a negative response -when the New Acropolis Museum was launched, British Museum had appeared “willing” to lend the sculptures, as long as the Greek government would recognize the right of ownership of the British Museum; a proposal which of course was not accepted-.

#### ▪ IV.2.2. The Law: British Museum Act, 1963

Under English law, the British Museum is a public corporation and wholly independent from the government. The law strictly limits the circumstances under which the British Museum may dispose of any object in the collection and it is obvious that it would be illegal for the museum to have the Parthenon Marbles, according to the law as it stands. This means that primary legislation would be needed simply and only to allow the museum to return the Marbles to Greece. In strictly legal terms it would be possible such permissive legislation.

However, fundamental problems would have arisen if, despite such a permissive law, the museum was not willing to return the sculptures. It is obvious that the museum appears as legal owner of the Marbles. So to be effective, an additional primary legislation, should dominate the government, to deprive the British Museum its legitimate estates. Such distraint legislation would be contrary to Article 1 of the First Protocol in the European Convention on Human Rights, unless the attachment had been for the public interest and unless compensation was provided.

According to the case law of Human Rights such compensation must have some relation to the market value of properties which are confiscated. Although from one side the Parthenon sculptures are priceless, it is obvious on the other that their market value amounts to

several million pounds. Such costs would be unacceptable for the government of the United Kingdom.

In conclusion, the government of United Kingdom considers that Article 1 of the First Protocol in the European Convention on Human Rights prevents the entering of a legislation that compels the British Museum to return the Parthenon sculptures without unacceptable cost. The cost is both economical, and also is considered breach of commitment of the Museum in terms of public interest.<sup>116</sup>

The British Museum found the right support and comfort among British media. Several journalists, given the opportunity, kept the issue in timeliness with announcements, news and acrimonious comments in favor of staying the Parthenon sculptures in London.

As an example I quote what the journalist Jonathan Jonas wrote in 2007 under the title *"The Parthenon marbles should not be returned to Greece"*, after visiting the new Acropolis Museum:

*"...Now that Greece is a free democracy the memory of earlier struggles persists. And the demand to return the Parthenon marbles is a ghost of these past struggles. To claim a cultural identity between modern Greece and the ancient Greek city states who created Hellenic classical culture 2, 500 years ago is spurious. It is a fiction: no national identity is continuous in that way. To say Greek classical art "belongs" to modern Greece is to demean the universal legacy of ancient Athens".*

*"Ancient Greece -whose most brilliant city state was Athens- invented philosophy, history, mathematics, tragic drama, and the idea of democracy. This is NOT a Eurocentric legacy. On the contrary, in the early middle ages it was Islam that preserved Greek thought".*

*"It's so typical of the left's romanticism about the marbles to keep quoting Lord Byron, the Romantic poet who damned Lord Elgin at the time for despoiling the Parthenon. Who cares what Byron thought about anything? Compared with the minds that shaped the Parthenon he is a minor, tedious figure. Everything about this Cause involves looking at the Parthenon through*

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<sup>116</sup> Internet source: Ministry Of State for National Heritage and Culture (1996)-  
<http://www.nationalheritage.go.ke/>

*the wrong end of the telescope so Byron becomes more interesting than Phidias and the amour propre of modern Greece becomes more significant than one of humanity's most stupendous cultural achievements. "*

*"...To give the Parthenon marbles back to Greece would be to endorse an insidiously racist view of the classical legacy. The British Museum must hold its ground".*

### IV.3. Illicit traffic of cultural property and International Law: Internationality of Museums - Return of Cultural Objects- International Conventions, Agreements, Directives and Resolutions

After reading all the above premises, now, consider the following: *"although it is a basic tenant of international law that a legitimate government in power has the sovereign right to disposes itself of any piece of its property, when a nation is occupied by a foreign military government, and that military government allows a third country to remove the cultural treasures of the occupied people",<sup>117</sup>* then the question that necessarily follows is who "owns" these treasures? And when a non-independent, occupied country has its cultural treasures stolen at a time when it is unable to defend itself, what then is the rule of law? How does international law protect a subjugated race from cultural exploitation and the theft of its cultural property?

#### ▪ IV.3.1. International Conventions, Agreements, Directives and Resolutions

Cultural Property has been defined as *"property which, on religious or secular grounds, is specifically designated by [a] State as being of importance for archaeology, prehistory, history, literature, art or science . . . ."* When such property is a product of archaeological excavations or of archaeological discoveries, has elements of artistic or historical monuments or archaeological sites which have been dismembered, are antiquities more

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<sup>117</sup> United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, art. 1., Nov. 14, 1970

than one hundred years old, or are property of artistic interest, such as original works of statuary art and sculpture in any material it is considered "*Cultural Property*" under international law. Perhaps no other piece of art, history, and archeology fits this definition better than the Parthenon. Without question, it is the cultural property of Greece and the Greek Diaspora.<sup>118</sup>

An emerging norm in contemporary international law favoring the repatriation of Cultural Property to its country of origin when immorally taken out of that country, may be seen through numerous International Conventions, Agreements, Directives and Resolutions on the subject. These agreements show a trend in the world community to recognize the right of countries of origin to repatriate their Cultural Property which has been taken abroad.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property supported the principle that "*cultural property constitutes on the basic elements of civilization and national culture*" and that "*every State has a moral obligation to respect the cultural heritage of all nations*".

The Convention requires State Parties to prohibit the exportation of cultural property which is not authorized by the country of origin and espouses the principle that each Member State must protect cultural property from "*theft, clandestine excavation, and illicit export*". The Convention also requires cooperation between Member States and calls for States to make "*necessary reparations*" for any breaches thereof.<sup>119</sup>

The Convention declared that "*it is essential to take steps, at both the national and international levels, for the most effective protection and retrieval of cultural treasures*".<sup>120</sup>

In 1993 the Council of the European Community passed a Directive concerning the Return of Cultural Goods. The Directive "*was spurred on*

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<sup>118</sup> Op.cit.: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Convention...

<sup>119</sup> Op.cit.

<sup>120</sup> Op.cit. at Preamble

*by the concern that thieves would take stolen cultural property directly from countries with a rich cultural heritage to civil law nations where the purchaser of stolen property could gain good title".*<sup>121</sup>

Thus, if a purchaser of stolen property does not know or learn about an object's illicit removal from its rightful owner, the purchaser has "good title" to the piece.

The 1995 European Convention on Offenses Relating to Cultural Property<sup>122</sup> intended to put "an end to the offenses that too often affect . . . [the cultural heritage of a country, by] urgently adopting international standards to this end."<sup>123</sup>

It recognized that the nations of Europe had a "common responsibility and solidarity in the protection of the European cultural heritage".<sup>124</sup>

The 1995 UNIDROIT Convention on Stolen or Illegally Exported Cultural Objects<sup>125</sup> was enacted to apply to claims of an international character for "the restitution of stolen cultural objects . . . [and] the return of cultural objects removed from the territory of a Contracting State contrary to its law regulating the export of cultural objects for the purpose of protecting its cultural heritage".<sup>126</sup>

The purpose of this Convention, is to "facilitate the restitution and return [of] cultural objects . . . [and to initiate] a process that will enhance international cultural cooperation".<sup>127</sup>

Collectively these Treaties, Conventions, Agreements and Directives form the basis of what International Law is today on the subject of Cultural Property. Collectively they protect the Cultural Property of a

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<sup>121</sup> Council Directive 93/7/EEC, "The Return of Cultural Objects Unlawfully Removed from the Territory of a Member State", **Official Journal of the European Communities**, 1993 O.J. 74, (1993)-Internet source: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu>

<sup>122</sup> "European Convention on Offences relating to Cultural Property": Delphi, 23.VI.1985, European Treaty Series - No. 119 (June 23, 1985, 25 I.L.M. 44)-Internet source: <http://www.conventions.coe.int/Treaty/Commun/ListeTraites>

<sup>123</sup> Op.cit. at Preamble

<sup>124</sup> Op.cit.

<sup>125</sup> **International Institute for the Unification of Private Law (UNIDROIT)**: "Convention on Stolen or Illegally Exported Cultural Objects", Rome, June 24, 1995, (reprinted in 34 I.L.M. 1322)-Internet source:<http://www.unidroit.org/english/conventions/1995culturalproperty>

<sup>126</sup> Op.cit.

<sup>127</sup> Op.cit. at Preamble.

people and unanimously call for the return of Cultural Property wrongfully taken from a country of origin.

#### ▪ IV.3.2. Internationality of Museums - Return of Cultural Objects

The current economic and political environment requires redesign and new discussions, as new trends and challenges must be addressed without any further delay. Under UNESCO'S database is observed a growing number of requests from countries for the return of items held outside their borders, as these countries seek for assistance in order to reestablish their cultural memory and traditional knowledge.<sup>128</sup>

The culture sector is an increasingly lucrative business, creating a strong and diversified demand for cultural goods and services. The Cultural consumption boosts budgets and national economies, and this is ascertained by the fact that museums around the world are flourishing as well as the number of visitors of museums grows.

Alongside this economic "boom" in the field of culture, we see that societies claim their sovereign rights under their cultural individualities and require, as a consequence, the right to reclaim and re-describe their, perhaps, stigmatized past or even unspoken parts of their history, in the name of the promotion of cultural diversity and identity.<sup>129</sup>

In this context museums have become much more than sites of mere aesthetic contemplation and judgement. And this relatively recent development of museums brings to memory, the original Greek sense of the word "Mousseion",<sup>130</sup> which means "lodging of the Muses" (all nine of them): places dedicated to learning all of the arts and harmony with the world.

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<sup>128</sup> United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, art. 16 October - 3 November 2007

<sup>129</sup> Op.cit. at Preamble

<sup>130</sup> Papandreopoulos, G.: *"Dictionary of Ancient Greek language of Attica prose"*, Ianos publications, Athens, 1994<sup>3</sup>

Museums therefore today, whatever they may be, are rediscovering their holistic vision: They have become open spaces of cultural expression, exchange and dialogue, and constitute the means to preserve cultural diversity as a common heritage of mankind.

This vision of culture, challenges traditional notions of "universality" and emphasizes the organic bond that connects the artwork or artifact and the place where it was created. But what exactly do we mean by the term "universal"? And how this principle is related to the idea of property? How could universal access to cultural goods be promoted, while we accept as legitimate, the requests for the return and restoration of cultural property?

It is fact and an undoubted Truth that Monuments contribute in the creation of a cultural awareness in a particular geographic place. They are deeply rooted in the land and pavements in which they stand up, in collective memories and minds of people who preserve them. For this reason, UNESCO General Conference stressed the fact that the concept of universal access to cultural objects displayed in some museums of universal character cannot override the moral and legal notion of ownership of cultural property.<sup>131</sup>

The increasing mobility of people facilitated the access to elements of cultural heritage of countries, elements that remained unknown for the general public. Some would argue that people have a much greater opportunity today to visit "*universal*" museums, in order to detect the traces of their own culture. This has unfortunately resulted, numerous objects to acquire a status not of "universality" but of "familiarity", which progressively erodes the singularity and inherent symbolic value of cultural objects.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, art. 16 October - 3 November 2007

<sup>132</sup> Exhibition's proceedings: "The Unity of a Unique Monument: Parthenon", organized at UNESCO headquarters (31.3-18.4.2003), upon the initiative of Ms Marianna V. Vardinoyiannis, UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador, by the Cultural Sector in cooperation with the Hellenic Ministry of Culture and the Melina Mercouri Foundation



The reverse situation would be much more interesting. Indeed, wouldn't the universality of cultural property be extended, if we promoted the preservation of cultural property to their places of origin, or their return to them, given that this would bring visitors closer to cultural objects and their environment, instead of bringing cultural objects to visitors? Otherwise, I am afraid, that we run the risk of depriving them of their universal quality and beauty by making them "familiar" objects of consumption.

Neither the existence of universal museums nor the proliferation of museums in different locations can resolve the problem of the relationship between the object and the society of yesterday, today and tomorrow that produced it. The situation calls for a "*cultural or pedagogical accompaniment*", a narrative, an explanation of the framework, and furthermore a joint political will and capacity to protect and conserve our common heritage.<sup>133</sup>

In this context, UNESCO must and ought to explore every path that can lead to the most appropriate solutions for all, according to internationally agreed norms. Nowadays, "*Res Judicata*" cases constitute the so-called success stories that have been resolved both within and beyond the realm of the Intergovernmental Committee, and therefore provide invaluable knowledge for the resolve of diplomatic, legal and ethical dilemmas concerning the return of cultural property.

In the spirit of "*loyal collaboration*", I quote the 2007 agreement between the Ministry for Cultural Heritage and Activities of the Italian Republic and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

This particular agreement could be considered historic, since it represents the first time that an important world museum has acknowledged the true ownership of cultural objects acquired through illegal trafficking.

These breakthroughs and innovations have only begun to alter the sense of universalism that governed the creation of museums. The future of the

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<sup>133</sup> Op.cit. at Preamble

collections and their “*universal character*” is in the making and in many ways rests on our goodwill and ability to come to similar agreements.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, art. 16 October - 3 November 2007

## CHAPTER V.

### V. The compelling Arguments in favor of repatriation of the Parthenon Sculptures

The return of sculptures from Lord Elgin's collection to Athens is a constant demand of Greeks from the establishment of the Hellenic State up to date. The request was supported and continues to be supported by many spiritual people from around the world and from England itself because they believe that these priceless ancient artifacts form the Greek nation's heritage and should be a unity with those that still stand in Athens.

- V.1. The British Committee For the Reunification of the Parthenon Marbles (BCRPM)<sup>135</sup>

When Melina Mercouri announced in 1982 that Greece would demand the return of the marbles that Lord Elgin had removed from the Parthenon in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, a small group of British philhellenes founded the British Committee for the Restitution of the Parthenon Marbles (BCRPM).

The British Committee was established in December 1982. Since then the Committee has gained support from many British scientists, museologists and other influential people who are following the logical path of keeping all parts, of one of the most important monuments of the civilized world, in the same location from which they came, instead of many parts detained 3500 km away from the buildings that were once embodied.

The contribution of the British Committee for the return of the Parthenon Marbles is considered very important. Among other things, has created a

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<sup>135</sup> Internet source: <http://www.parthenonuk.com/> -See also chapter XX. & Appendix IV.

website through which those interested can vote but also learn about ringleaders and movements of the Committee.

It is an excellent effort, enhanced with many historical figures, photographs and information on how one can help for this purpose, by people who love and respect the Greek culture.

- V.1.1. The Claim - Reinstatement of the Truth - Arguments for the repatriation of the Parthenon Sculptures

Since 1835 the newly formed Greek government formally demands and eponymously asks the return of the ancient Marbles. Since then, all ringleaders were convinced about two things:

The first was that the road to success will not be the creation of a large organization, but rather the pursuit of extensive contacts with politicians, journalists, academics, writers, lawyers and others who could influence public opinion and above all Parliament's position, since only the Parliament could decide to return the Marbles to Greece.

The second was that the most urgent action should be to dispel the climate of confusion, ignorance and lying that has been formed on the marbles over two centuries.

Such crass lies are now shattered, such as that Lord Elgin bought the marbles or that was authorized by the Ottoman Government to remove from the Parthenon what Pheidias's hand had placed there under the gaze of Pericles and with the command of Athenian people. The untrue of arguments was proved, i.e. that Greece is not able to take care of her artistic legacy.

Today the British public and parliamentarians are better informed than ever about the historical, legal, ethical and aesthetic reasons militating for return of Parthenon Marbles.

Now the effort is for Greece to proclaim and explain the reasons why the time has now arrived for their return. <sup>136</sup> [See also chapter IV.3. and appendix IV].

The arguments are simple: <sup>137</sup>

✓ First, Parthenon is an artistic masterpiece, the greatest work of art in the world and is absurd its components to be within distance of 2000 miles. In Athens, the sculptures will be exhibited near Parthenon and in visual contact with it so that the visitor could form a complete picture of the entire monument.

Additionally, I strongly believe that the return of the Parthenon Marbles would add to the broken puzzle that the archaeologists are tackling to re-piece.

✓ Secondly, Parthenon is not only a symbol of historical continuity of the Greek people, but a symbol of civilization and culture worldwide.

✓ Thirdly, in 2009, Greece opened the new Acropolis Museum, which includes a space for all the surviving Acropolis sculptures to be displayed in their original order, with the Parthenon temple clearly visible through the gallery's glass walls. (See also chapter XVIII.: the new Acropolis Museum)

#### ▪ V.1.2. British Museum: Refuting Arguments

British arguments against the return of the Parthenon Marbles have already been broken and there is a strong response to each one of them:

Lord Elgin "saved" the Marbles from a worse fate by removing them to safety in Britain:

Elgin as we have seen not only caused enormous damage to Parthenon and Erechtheion detaching sculptures, but trying to get as much as

<sup>136</sup> Internet source: <http://www.melinamercourifoundation.org.gr>

<sup>137</sup> Official request of the Greek government, October 1983- Internet source: <http://www2.mfa.gr/www.mfa.gr/en-us/>

possible, sawed some of the sculptures, so cutting them in half to reduce weight and to facilitate their transfer.

Lord Elgin "legally" acquired the Marbles and the British Museum subsequently "legally" acquired them from him for the British Museum: Any purchase by the occupier of a country is equivalent to receiving stolen goods. Furthermore there is not any kind of evidence that the purchase of the marbles was legal.

The Greeks are unable to look after the Parthenon Marbles properly:

"The Acropolis Restoration Project is a highly significant project worldwide. The Greek team uses a technique of combining infrared and ultraviolet beams to avoid a yellowing effect of lasers on the marble. Commencing in 1983, the project is still only partially completed with the main part of the Acropolis and the Temple of Athena remaining".

"In a report, Evangelos Venizelos, the former Greek Minister of Culture mentions that the main aims of the program are structural and surface maintenance and the protection and re-orientation of old restored sculptures".<sup>138</sup>

From the 1950's onwards, pollution has become another concern for the archaeologists. The sulphur dioxide is wearing the surface of the Athenian monuments, just like it is wearing Notre Dame in Paris or Albert Memorial in London. However, serious measures have been taken in all the cases and Greece is not an exception.

"According to Theodore Skoulikidis, the chief chemical engineer of the Acropolis Restoration Project, there are six main types of limestone and marble deterioration caused by atmospheric pollution. These include: water freezing in the fissures causing stone cracking due to expansion; erosion caused by suspended particles; biodeterioration; marble cracking due to the corrosion of steel clamps and junctions introduced either during construction or restoration; attack by acids contained in the atmosphere combined with rain water; and attack by SO<sub>2</sub> that in absence

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<sup>138</sup> Internet source: <http://www2.mfa.gr/www.mfa.gr/en-us/>

of rain water creates a gypsum formation (sulfation) on the stone surface”.

Athens is not trying to hide her atmospheric problem but it takes time for measures to produce their fruits:

“Monument reconstructor Konstantinos Boletis emphasises that the corrosion of the Marbles due to air pollution has been limited since the ‘80s when the Greek government implemented a range of measures to combat the issue: restriction and relocation of industrial activities; restriction of road traffic; extensive pedestrian areas; promotion of public transport and fuel quality improvement for industry and households were the main provisions.”.<sup>139</sup>

Ian Swindale is a British teacher who in 1997, lead an online student campaign on this subject. He says that the British Museum argument about air pollution is quite obsolete.

*“I suspect that the British Museum doesn’t want to return the Parthenon Marbles because it would create a vacuum in the British Museum’s collection of worldwide artifacts”, he said.*

*“The Marbles suffered far more damage from their lengthy stay in the heavily polluted and humid atmosphere of London than they would have done if they had stayed in Athens where pollution is only a very decent phenomenon recently”.*

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Indeed, Lord Elgin himself in 1816 before the House of Commons admitted that London's dampness had caused erosion in the sensitive Pentelic marble. The fact is that an ancient work of art when removed from its original environment loses most of its value and simply becomes an object of archaeological interest.

It is impossible to restore the Parthenon and thus the aspiration towards “reunification” is a false one.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> Internet source: <http://www.tanea.gr/Culture, Law & Ethics, Pollution>

<sup>140</sup> Internet source: <http://www.parthenonuk.com/>

<sup>141</sup> See also chapter ...the new Acropolis Museum

Even if the atmospheric pollution did not exist, the marbles would not be placed in their original positions, unless technological improvements prove otherwise, this is partially due to time and erosion but it is also thanks to Elgin's cautious workmen!

In 2009, Greece opened the new Acropolis Museum, which includes a space for all the surviving Acropolis sculptures to be displayed in their original order, with the Parthenon temple clearly visible through the gallery's glass walls.

*"There's only one place on earth where you can have a simultaneous visual and aesthetic experience of the Parthenon and the sculptures, and that's in that gallery,"* says Mr O'Hara.<sup>142</sup> (See also chapter XVIII. the new Acropolis Museum)

The Marbles are better off in London where they can be seen in the context of other world cultures:

Although I believe that chapter XVII (*"Internationality of Museums - Return of Cultural Objects"*) is sufficient enough to contradict this argument, I would also like to add in response to that, that there is something irrational and unaesthetic about the separation of the marbles from their natural context.

Undeniably, my argument has more merit in feeling than in execution. However another relative argument that persisted to the present day belongs to D. Lowenthal, who emphasizes the importance of the sculptures and the Parthenon forming a unity:

*"The sculptures Lord Elgin removed from the Parthenon may be seen in absorbing detail in the British Museum, but remain divorced there from diachronic context, at the Acropolis they were an integral part of an enduring local landscape and could be experienced as a past connected with the present".*<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> Eddie O'Hara, Former MP, new chairman of the British Committee for the Reunification of the Parthenon Marbles (BCRPM). Internet source: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/>

<sup>143</sup> Lowenthal, D.: *"The Past is a Foreign Country"*, Cambridge Uni. Press, 1985



The Marbles belong to "the world", to all of us, and should therefore be left where "everyone" can enjoy them:

Since 2009, according to the Greek national statistics service, the hike in visitor numbers for the new Acropolis Museum jumped to 2,813,548 largely due to the opening of the museum in Athens that brought in over 800,000 people.<sup>144</sup>

Speaking at the opening ceremony of new Acropolis museum in Athens, the Minister of Culture back then and current Prime Minister Antonis Samaras said: *"The main British argument against was that there was no deserving museum in Greece to house the marbles. Now, this argument is off the table."*<sup>145</sup>

If the British Museum agreed to return the Marbles to Athens, it would "open the floodgates", leading to the denuding of the world's encyclopaedic museums:

That the return of the Parthenon marbles would set a precedent for the emptying of museums I quote Mr. Eddie O'Hara's<sup>146</sup> answer in bbc where he rejects this argument and believes that the Marbles present a unique case:

*"There really aren't a lot of examples of Unesco world heritage monuments, integral components of which are in the wrong place".*<sup>147</sup>

The uniqueness of the Parthenon Sculptures becomes even more apprehensible and explicit if one reads Chapter I.2: "A walk in fantasy-Architecture & Sculpture", which I placed side by side with chapters I.3: "A walk in history- the Damage" and I.4: "Architects and Dilettanti" in order to serve this specific purpose of the Monument's distinctiveness' and singularity.

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<sup>144</sup> Internet Source: <http://www.theacropolismuseum.gr>

<sup>145</sup> Internet Source: <http://www.tanea.gr/Culture, Law & Ethics, Pollution>

<sup>146</sup> Eddie O'Hara, Former MP, new chairman of the British Committee for the Reunification of the Parthenon Marbles (BCRPM). Internet source: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/>

<sup>147</sup> Op.cit: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/>

The Marbles are too important a part of the British Museum collection to allow them to be given up:

The most important part of the British Museum's work in the future will be the fostering of creative cultural partnerships with other nations. These can lead to groundbreaking exhibitions such as the Terracotta Army from China and Moctezuma from Mexico. Returning the Parthenon Marbles would open a new chapter in cooperative relations with Greece and enable visitors to the British Museum to see new objects loaned by Greek museums. Refusal to return the Marbles is hampering this process. The Parthenon Marbles display in the Duveen Gallery at the British Museum could be reconfigured using high-quality casts.

The decision to return the Marbles to Athens would be seen as the British Museum leading the way in enlightened cultural diplomacy, the benefits of which would be diverse, long-term, and far-reaching.<sup>148</sup>

The Marbles can only be "loaned" to Athens if the Greeks agree to concede Britain's legal ownership of the sculptures:

Attaching such a precondition to a dispute over cultural property has been widely viewed as insulting and condescending and reminiscent of colonialist approaches to international relations. Seemingly intractable cultural disputes require both parties to adopt a spirit of open-minded generosity and to enter into discussions on equal terms and with no preconditions.<sup>149</sup>

On that point I also quote Melina Mercouri's words: "*A country's greatness does not reside in what has conquered or taken or kept. The true pride of a nation is in its righting of wrongs, in its recognition of truth and justice*".<sup>150</sup>

"The Elgin Marbles are no longer part of the story of the Parthenon. They are now part of another story." (Neil MacGregor, Director, British Museum):

It is not the role of museums to rewrite history to further their own nationalistic ends. As their correct name makes clear, the Parthenon

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<sup>148</sup> <http://www.parthenonuk.com/index.php/refuting-the-bm-s-statements>

<sup>149</sup> Op.cit.

<sup>150</sup> Hitchens, C.: "*The Elgin Marbles, should they be returned to Greece?*", Chatto & Windus publications, London, 1988<sup>2</sup>

Marbles are, and will always be, integral to the story of Parthenon, one of the finest cultural achievements bequeathed to us by the ancient Greeks.<sup>151</sup>

Another argument of the British is that during the period which the sculptures had been "kidnapped", the Greeks were indifferent to the fate of archaeological treasures.

When reading the previous chapters one realizes that this argument is untrue. In parallel it should not be forgotten that every Greek reaction would have directly and violently been suppressed by the Turks.

Furthermore, the oral tradition allows the conclusion that the Greeks felt sorry for the looted treasures. Characteristic in this respect is the myth that at that night, were heard the lamentations of the Caryatids for their lost sister. In addition to that we also have allegations of porters carrying the statues that they heard screams coming out of boxes into which the sculptures were packed. Thus, Athenians mourned the destruction of their antiquities and accused the Turks that allowed foreigners to do such looting.<sup>152</sup>

As far as those who add with a condescending note that the Greeks had no claim to the marbles, by speaking of them as

*"The mixed little population which now lives upon the ruins of ancient Greece",*<sup>153</sup>

I answer, that this does not justify their removal from the Parthenon.

I would also like to stress once again that the "Marbles" are not independent statues on their own. No. They form part of an integral building which still stands, in a country that still exists and where the people have preserved their language and heritage despite four hundred years of Ottoman rule.

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<sup>151</sup> <http://www.parthenonuk.com/index.php/refuting-the-bm-s-statements>

<sup>152</sup> <http://www.24grammata.com/Caryatid> and the New Acropolis Museum, article by N. Ligeros: **Weekly magazine of culture**, 30/7/2012

<sup>153</sup> Cavafy, C.: *"The Elgin Marbles and the Cypriot Question"*, Ikaros publications, Athens, 1988

Besides, the Parthenon Marbles are merely another attraction in the British Museum and I quote a touristic magazine with a photograph of the "Elgin Collection".

*"No visitor should miss the treasures of the British Museum".*<sup>154</sup>

Kazantzakis was right and his words are still applicable:

*"In her sooty vitals, London stores these marble monuments... just as some unsmiling puritan might store in the depths of his memory some past erotic moment, blissful and ecstatic sin".*<sup>155</sup>

Even if time has managed to keep the marbles in London the irrationality of them being there has not been forgotten.

## V.2. The New Acropolis Museum

The decision for a museum inside Acropolis was taken in 1824, even before Greece liberalized and the first Greek Museum was founded in Aegina in 1829, even before the European recognition of Greek independence.<sup>156</sup>

In 1971, experts from UNESCO, stressed the gravity of the situation and The Commission for the Conversation of the Acropolis Monuments was set up. This Commission has the task of studying, planning, and executing the work that is needed to restore such a monumental complex.<sup>157</sup>

In 1989 at the sixth meeting of the Intergovernmental Committee, the Greek delegation announced that Greece was proceeding to an international architectural competition, held under the auspices of the

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<sup>154</sup> "Atlas Magazin", Article by Peter White, March 1994 – Source: Melina Mercouri Foundation

<sup>155</sup> "The Smithsonian Magazin" Article by Donald Dale Jackson, December 1992 - Source: Melina Mercouri Foundation

<sup>156</sup> Official request of the Greek government, October 1983- Internet source:  
<http://www2.mfa.gr/www.mfa.gr/en-us/> - **General State Archives (State Archives): General Newspaper of Greece**, No. 11, September 11, 1829

<sup>157</sup> Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Tourism -Acropolis of Athens: Internet Source:  
<http://odysseus.culture.gr>

International Union of Architects, for the design of a museum in Athens to house the Parthenon Marbles.<sup>158</sup>

In response to this, 1.270 architectural practices from 52 countries offered to participate, but only 438 studies were submitted to the jury. The first prize was finally voted for the 10<sup>th</sup> of November 1990.

The Italian architects, Prof. Manfredi Nicoletti and Lucio Passarelli, won the competition.<sup>159</sup>

The main features of the new Acropolis Museum are the following:<sup>160</sup>

**An open eye onto the Acropolis:** One of the most original features of their design is that the new museum contemplates the images of its own creator. This inclusion of the Acropolis acts is a visual link between the whole and its fragments.

**The Parthenon space:** Space and size being of the key factors towards a clear understanding of the Acropolis and its monuments, the new museum has the aim of reuniting its many fragments into a single unitary space, where the sequence of the different levels corresponds to the chronological sequence of the exhibits.

**Participation and enjoyment:** The visitor can be involved with the museum's ever-changing content, for the collection is growing as new discoveries are made, and this is combined within the museum's flexible structure.

**The Parthenon exhibits:** The central idea is based on displaying the Parthenon sculptures in their original positions so as to respect their architectural and symbolic importance. (Something that is not taken into account in the Duveen Gallery at the British Museum).

So as to reconstruct the Parthenon's unity, the casts of the original frieze and metopes are exhibited together but they are distinguished by being

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<sup>158</sup> UNESCO: "sixth General Assembly of States Parties to the Convention concerning the protection of the World Cultural and natural Heritage" SC-89/CONF.003/008, Summary record, April, 1989

<sup>159</sup> Acropolis restoration Service: Internet Source: <http://www.ysma.gr/en/parthenon>

<sup>160</sup> <http://www.theacropolismuseum.gr>

setback a little bit. These casts could be replaced by the originals as soon as the Parthenon Marbles are repatriated from the British Museum.

Diffused natural lighting: The Attic sunlight was taken advantage of by using diffused natural lighting to present the exhibits. This means that the sculptures are best perceived in their original light but at the same time are preserved from sun damage, due to the roof eye slab and podium.

Materials used and seismic precautions: The building materials have been chosen so as to maintain a link with the museum's natural surroundings, where the stones used (Grey ochre stone and sand white marble), are similar to the Acropolis rock.

The new museum at the foothills of Acropolis, in essence unifies the archaeological sites. Within this framework of integration, guests can visit with one ticket, six archaeological sites and three museums! This way the visitor tastes a unique experience of the landscape of classical Athens. However, the new Acropolis Museum is also connected as the place to accommodate the waiting migrant Parthenon Marbles which are 2000 miles away from the building with which was once, one and the same.

### V.3. Reunification, a subject of politics: Negotiations & Suggestions for resolving the matter, International Comments and Reactions, recent statements and reports-Conclusions

The matter of the reunification became a matter of foreign politics between Greece and Great Britain. A political issue initiated by Melina Mercouri in the early 1980s that continues until this day. From that day onwards many politicians tried to exploit the reunification of the Parthenon Marbles, as the subject was appealing to crowds or better said to voters, in both countries. Thus this chapter historically analyses the issue from the aspect of politics.

In a resolution of the European Parliament for the return of the Parthenon in 1996, is stated: Over 250 MPs coming from all Member States and from all political groups signed the statement with the relative request submitted according to Protocol of the European Parliament by Alf Lomas, an Englishman and Labour Member.

During the press conference, Alf Lomas said that the signatures of so many MEPs' "*confirm the strong feeling among the peoples of Member States that the sculptures should be returned to the legal space, the Acropolis of Athens*" and asked the British government "*to consider positively the Greek request for the return of the Parthenon sculptures in their natural setting*".  
"*It would be a great act of international solidarity. These sculptures are an important part of Greek history and Greek culture*".

However, Loma's proposal could not gather the half (314) of the needed votes of all members of the Parliament in order to become the official position of Parliament. Signatures gathered were 252, when in fact most decisions of the session pass with about 200 votes.

Characteristic is that MEPs that signed came from all political hues, of all states, meaning that there was a dynamic that could be translated into a great majority.

Indeed, according to a resolution in early 1999, European Parliament believes that the return of the Parthenon Marbles to Greece would be a key action to promote common European cultural heritage.

Furthermore, European Parliament invited the UK Government to consider favorably the request of Greece for the return of the Parthenon Sculptures in their natural setting.

Finally, instructed the President to forward this report to the Council, the governments of the United Kingdom and Greece, the parliaments of both countries, as well as UNESCO and the UN Secretary General.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> European Commission - European Capitals of Culture- "*Written declaration on the return of the Elgin Marbles*", **Official Journal of the European Communities**, 28.01.1999, " (O.J. C 128/07.05.1999)-  
Internet source: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu>

It is remarkable that after the landslide victory of the Labour party in general elections on May 1<sup>st</sup> 1999 the policy regarding the return of the Parthenon Marbles changed completely.

While, during hustings the Labour party kept a positive attitude, just a month after his election Tony Blair appeared adamant and categorically denying the return of the sculptures on the grounds that they belong to the British Museum and the government is not able nor wishes to interfere.<sup>162</sup>

At this point it should be noted that the request of Greece is just this one and it always has been the same: the return of the Parthenon Marbles. Besides, ancient Greek artifacts are also located in other museums and this is an honor for Greece-.

Discussions and meetings taking place lately, have as a core the return of Marbles with any formula.

Moreover, the Greek government has declared repeatedly its proposal for resolving the issue of returning the Marbles.

Greece desires the return of sculptures in the form of long-term borrowing, with no legal ownership of Greece. It also suggests a close partnership with the British Government and British Museum so as to host periodically exhibits of ancient Greek civilization of great value and in exclusivity, in order the halls of the British Museum that previously hosted the Parthenon Marbles, not to be left empty. In this way one of the last scruples of the British, concerning the return, will also be refuted.<sup>163</sup>

This was precisely the attitude of former Culture Minister Evangelos Venizelos, who has emphasized that our request is not related to legal claims [Appendix III].

Within the framework of a united Europe, there is a spirit of cooperation between the museums for exchanging of their exhibits for a certain time. This did not happen before. The museological status has changed and managements of some museums have opened their doors to accommodate other museum exhibits. In exchange for lending some of

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<sup>162</sup> Internet Source: <http://www.uk.digiserve.com/mentor/marbles/campaign.htm>

<sup>163</sup> Hellenic Republic: Ministry of Education & Religious Affairs, Cultures & Sports: Internet Source: [http://www.yppo.gr/Cultural\\_Heritage](http://www.yppo.gr/Cultural_Heritage)



their own exhibits for some time. Museums have ceased to operate conservatively.

This is a reality that serves the question of returning the Marbles.

On this basis, from the British side, there is a desire within the context of lending to be exposed indefinitely to the British Museum the recent findings that emerged during the work of the Metro, which have never been exposed abroad.

However, the British government has not yet stated its position on this issue, since a negotiation meeting has not yet taken place. Nevertheless, if the British government embraces this position, the Greek side will not accept an exhibition of ancient Greek finds in a permanent base.<sup>164</sup>

After the submission of pleadings of the Greek and the British Government at the Assembly of the Intergovernmental Committee of UNESCO in 1999, the British Government made a very important step. After so many negative responses to the demands of Greece, Britain agreed to sit at the negotiating table.<sup>165</sup>

However, by the end of 1999 Greece was waiting by the British Government a meeting to discuss the return and the conditions under which it would be conducted. The British Government maintains that it is a question of the British Museum and the Museum, a question of the Government.

In other words, they find some excuses, which change every time.

In early 2002, given the campaign for the return of Parthenon Marbles for the Olympic Games in Athens (2004), the director of Victoria & Albert Museum in London, Mark Jones, said that the British Museum should share the Marbles and that there must be some way for both sides, England and Greece, to be happy. Since this is a very serious issue, there must be some movement. Apathy is our biggest enemy.<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> Hellenic Republic: Ministry of Education & Religious Affairs, Cultures & Sports:Internet Source: [http://www.yppo.gr/Cultural\\_Heritage](http://www.yppo.gr/Cultural_Heritage)

<sup>165</sup> Internet source: <http://www2.mfa.gr/www.mfa.gr/en-us/>

<sup>166</sup> Internet source: <http://www.guardian.co.uk>

The Cambridge Union in 2008 held a much publicized debate on the subject: "This House would return the Parthenon Marbles to the New Acropolis Museum in Athens".<sup>167</sup>

With 114 votes in favor and 46 votes against ended the issue of the debate in the club debate Group at the University of Cambridge (Cambridge Union Society) on the Restitution of the Parthenon Marbles. In the case of the Elgin Marbles in particular, two main speakers exhibited their arguments for the return and two others argued the opposite, with interventions from the audience, consisting primarily of students.

Strong was the absence of representatives of the British Museum, who chose to reject the invitation of the organizers, while twenty others candidate speakers for the evening refused the proposal.

Dominant personality of the event was Professor Snodgrass. He advocated the return and said that "*the more people learn about the events, the more convinced in favor of repatriation of the Marbles,*" while he also noted that "*the New Acropolis Museum is light years ahead of the hall of the British Museum which looks like a tomb*".

In favor also voted the President of the British Committee for the International Association reunion, David Hill<sup>168</sup>: "*We are dealing with a case that can correct an injustice of history*".

The London 2012 Olympics were once again the pretext so as to bring, the question of the repatriation of the Parthenon sculptures, in the foreground and mostly at a time where the Greek government noticeably abstains from the dispute and with officials invariably citing Athens's dire financial straits.

Mr. Eddie O'Hara - former MP, who chairs the British Committee for the Reunification of the Parthenon Marbles commented:

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<sup>167</sup> Cambridge Union Elgin Marbles debate , February 19, 2008: Internet Source: <http://www.elginism.com/20080219/cambridge-union-elgin-marbles-debate-results/>

<sup>168</sup> David Hill is the Chairman of the International Association for the Reunification of the Parthenon Sculptures in Australia- See also the site: <http://www.parthenoninternational.org>

*"The Olympics are a four-yearly reminder to the world of all we owe to Greece", "The meeting, he added, "ought to remind people in London and throughout the world that there's one debt to Greece that will never be repaid until those sculptures in the British Museum are returned".<sup>169</sup>*

Alexis Mantheakis, who chairs the International Parthenon Sculptures Action Committee, makes the superb point that:

*"...the London Olympics would be a perfect opportunity for Britain to magnanimously put an end to what Greeks and the majority of people in the EU, including the UK, see as a historical wrongdoing."*

*"Prime minister, history and future generations will honour you, as will Greece, if you take that one small but monumental step of amending the 1933 Museums Act to allow for the return of the Parthenon sculptures".*

*"If Britain could give back India, then surely the emptying of one room of a London museum is a small price to pay to right a historical wrong".<sup>170</sup>*

I feel that both countries can do something which is important for the world culture relatively to the Olympic Games and G. Britain has the ability and the opportunity (at the 2012 Summer Olympics held in London) to associate its name with this tradition forever.

### Chapter V.3.1. Major international conference on the reunification of the Parthenon Marbles-Eddie O'Hara Chairman of the British Committee for the Reunification of the Parthenon Marbles

Over the years, despite the rigid attitude of the British Government, the people who supported the return increased, even within the bosom of the British Parliament and British citizens.

Among them I would like to single out Mr. Eddie O'Hara, one of the pioneers of this effort and chairman of BCRPM.

<sup>169</sup> Internet Source: <http://www.parthenonuk.com/>

<sup>170</sup> Internet Source: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/2012/apr/01/elgin-marbles-greece>

In my effort to obtain information about the most recent developments concerning this matter, I contacted Mr. O'Hara, who with alacrity and pleasure, replied promptly, and in addition through his assistant Ms. Marlen Taffarello, provided me all the information material and results from the recent major international conference on the reunification of the Parthenon Marbles (19-20 June 2012).<sup>171</sup> [See also Appendix V]

This conference was held on the occasion of the anniversary of the opening of the Acropolis Museum and the occasion of the London Olympics which started one month later and was presented jointly by the British, American and Australian Committees for the Reunification of the Parthenon Marbles.

I would like therefore to conclude this chapter by quoting the Conference's declaration:<sup>172</sup>

### V.3.2. DECLARATION FROM THE LONDON INTERNATIONAL COLLOQUY 2012

On the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> of June 2012 a colloquy was held at the Hellenic Centre in London. The colloquy was a collaboration between The British Committee for the Reunification of the Parthenon Marbles (BCRPM), The American Committee for the Reunification of the Parthenon Sculptures (ACRPS) and the International Organising Committee –AUSTRALIA – for the Restitution of the Parthenon Marbles Inc. The colloquy was attended and addressed by representatives from four continents. On the 20<sup>th</sup> of June colloquy members joined the ACRPS for the launch of their Missing since 1801 campaign in the courtyard of the British Museum.

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<sup>171</sup> In our colloquy another recent development arose. In this light I would like to quote Mr. O'Hara's exact words:

*"There have been reports emanated from sources in Australia that the BCRPM was intending to sue the British Museum over their title to ownership of the Elgin Marbles. These reports had no basis in fact and as soon as we heard of them we immediately published a disclaimer"* (31 Jul 2012).

*"Litigation is a high risk strategy. It is a fact that certain organizations do not rule it out. The BCRPM would prefer the issue to be settled on cultural and ethical grounds"* (31 Jul 2012).

<sup>172</sup> For more detailed Information on the "DECLARATION FROM THE LONDON INTERNATIONAL COLLOQUY 2012", [see also Appendix IV.]

This declaration is an outcome from the colloquy.

1. The focus of the campaign should be solely on the reunification of all the Parthenon sculptures. The campaign should not be weakened by association with wider claims for restitution of cultural objects. Emphasis should always be placed on the uniqueness of the Parthenon as a Unesco World Heritage monument parts of which have been forcibly removed and transported for display in another country and to which the “floodgates” argument thus need not apply.
2. Care should be taken to ensure that images of these sculptures alone should be used to support the campaign.
3. Unity of purpose and effort is essential if the world-wide support for the campaign is to be harnessed and deployed to maximum and optimum effect.
4. However the dynamism of local initiatives is to be respected, such as the Missing since 1801 campaign of the ACRPS and the EU dimension being pursued by the Swiss Committee. These should be shared as widely as possible and may give rise to coalitions of effort.
5. Litigation over the legal title to the Elgin Marbles cannot be ruled out. However it is a high risk strategy and requires much further research.
6. Legislation, specifically amendment of the British Museum Act 1963, is possible, but needs to be carefully framed and is not likely to receive British Government support in the foreseeable future.
7. Public education about the issues is known to result in increasing support for reunification and should be pursued in as many ways and on as broad a front as possible.
8. The focus of this education should be on the cultural and ethical justifications for reunification.

9. Cultural justifications should take account of the increasing reliance of the British Museum on the purpose of the Parthenon sculptures in the context of a universal museum.

10. Ethical justifications should take account of the perception by the Greek people of the Parthenon sculptures as symbols of their ethnicity. This is a cultural concept not to be confused with the political concept of nationalism.

11. More must be done to take advantage of developments in information technology and the social media to harmonize and bring to the widest possible audience all initiatives wherever they be taken.

12. Any movement on reunification if and when it comes will take place on a London-Athens axis. All initiatives should feed into this axis. This is not a claim for the primacy of any London based campaigning organisation but a simple statement of geographical and political fact.

**EPILOGUE:***THE PARTHENON MARBLES: HISTORY OF A THEFT OR THE THEFT OF HISTORY?*

Civilization/Culture is the corporeal and pneumatic progress of man and parallel to that, his moral evolution. The word civilization comes from the ancient Greek word «Πόλις» (polis=city) and has the meaning of a collective effort.

Important role in the cultural development exercises the work of a united team in all aspects of human activity. This effort strengthens the inherent sociability of man, his spirituality and his language.

From the unstoppable team effort, over the centuries, great goods are evident which today pinpoint the course of cultural history.

Factors such as geography, society and economy, contributed to the development of Culture. The need to improve life generated Civilization. In the field of Genii, great achievements were considered, language, numbers and writing, science, art, education and in the field of Ethics, religion, law and rights, tradition and customs, the learning of moral conscience.

Ancient Greeks showed as the highest of values, pneuma, ie. mind/genii. With Philosophy they liberated the mind and with Art the human body. They became pioneers and founders of rational thought and of science. They moved from Philosophy to Mathematics. Today the calculation speed of the missiles is done by applying the Pythagorean Theorem. In astronomy, first Anaximander (611-546 BC) spoke of the Earth's motion around the center of the World.

In medicine, Hippocrates (5th century BC) was the introducer of scientific medicine.<sup>173</sup>

Similar performance Ancient Greeks showed in all other areas of the absolute knowledge and of human activity. Especially in Art,

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<sup>173</sup> Loizos, D.: "Ancient Greece and Oriental People, from the Sumerians to Alexander the Great, 3000-323 BC", Militos publications, Athens, 20122

architecture, Sculpture, Painting and Culture, they impressed their seal of eternal beauty and of thoughtful and profound discourse and symbolism.

Today, the immense cultural heritage of Ancient Greeks is a reality. This cultural tradition must be assimilated and provide a basis for new attainments for the whole Europe.

The light of classical civilization continues to “irradiate” from Greece to all countries and to lead them pneumatically.

The British poet Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822) stated, “*We are all Greeks, our laws, our literature, our religion, our arts have their roots in Greece*”.<sup>174</sup>

In the early 21<sup>st</sup> century the concepts of historic preservation, protection and interpretation of world’s cultural heritage has changed drastically. Within this context, the Parthenon, a monument of world importance, is no longer possible to remain mutilated.

These artifacts whose rapture is a national crime, for the citizen of the country who stole them and a moral unforgivable mistake for the country, Britain, that purchased them, and refuses to remedy this unacceptable action, is a fact which would not do credit to the country. In addition to that, they find excuses and inadmissible arguments, such as that in Britain, millions of visitors can see them, and will lose the economic benefits! ...

I think that arguments of the British Government and the British Museum’s have no significance any longer.

Their last hesitations are daily invalidated by the existence of a vacancy in the new Acropolis Museum, which remains blank in the eyes of millions of visitors, waiting for the day of restoration of the Parthenon.

In my opinion, in negotiations both sides must relent to find a solution that meets the Greek Government and the British. A benefit is also needed for England, to proceed in loaning the Marbles.

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<sup>174</sup> Internet Source: Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia: [http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Percy\\_Bysshe\\_Shelley](http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Percy_Bysshe_Shelley)

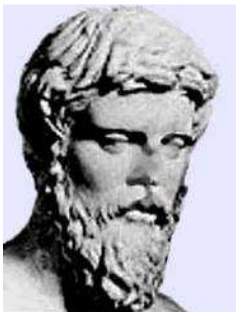


At the beginning the British government did not even want to discuss it... and today we got to talking about the return of the Marbles. It is very difficult to speak of legal arrangements. England has not shed its colonial character and could not accept more. The British acknowledge the efforts of the Greeks for the return of the marbles, but they do not want to see aggressive policy from Greece.

The Parthenon Marbles, when returned to Athens, will be housed at the New Acropolis Museum, in the very heart of their birth, Classical Athens. A part of this "heart" survives intact both in the Rock of Acropolis and also in surrounding areas.

The conditions are now ripe for the reunification of the Parthenon Marbles to their birthplace. Their return will restore the cultural and moral injustice created by their enforced exile.

I am confident that the United Kingdom will demonstrate a willingness to address this important issue.



<sup>175</sup>“ἀναβαινόντων δὲ τῶν ἔργων ὑπερηφάνων μὲν μεγέθει, μορφῇ δ’ ἀμιμήτων καὶ χάριτι, τῶν δημιουργῶν ἀμιλλωμένων ὑπερβάλλεσθαι τὴν δημιουργίαν τῇ καλλιτεχνίᾳ, μάλιστα θαυμάσιον ἦν τὸ τάχος. ὧν γὰρ ἕκαστον ὦντο πολλαῖς διαδοχαῖς καὶ ἡλικίαις μόλις ἐπὶ τέλος ἀφίξεσθαι, ταῦτα πάντα μιᾶς ἀκμῆ πολιτείας ἐλάμβανε τὴν συντέλειαν”.<sup>176</sup>

“...the works of Pericles [are] all the more to be wondered at; they were created in a short time for all time. Each one of them, in its

<sup>175</sup> Marble bust of Pericles, 340-320 BC, Roman copy, Hellenistic era, National Museum of Rome: Internet Source: Classical era 478-323 BC/ Pericles: <http://museduc.gr/docs/Istoria>

<sup>176</sup> Plutarch Parallel Lives, Pericles: Volume 21, Chapter 13, §1<sup>st</sup> Cactus publications, Athens, 1993,

beauty, was even then and at once antique; but in the freshness of its vigor it is, ever to the present day, recent and newly wrought. Such is the bloom of perpetual newness, as it were, upon these works of his, which makes them ever to look untouched by time, as though the unfaltering breath of an ageless spirit had been infused into them".

## APPENDIX I.

**The conclusion of the Greek Committee for the state of the Parthenon Marbles (Athens, 11 November 1999)<sup>177</sup>**

Elizabeth Papazoi: Minister of Culture from February 19, 1999 to April 13, 2000 (Photograph: Taken from internet, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Greece:<http://www2.mfa.gr/www.mfa.gr/en-us>, the photographer is not mentioned)

According to statements made by Culture Minister Elizabeth Papazoi, the findings of the autopsy conducted at the Parthenon sculptures, members of the Working Group of the Hellenic Ministry of Culture (E. Korka, E. Papakonstantinou, Th. Skoulikidis, K. Kouzelis, A. Mantis and S. Mavromatis), confirms conclusions of previous observations, but also information on cleaning the Marbles (1937-1938) presented in the archives of the British Museum. *"For the first time we have a systematic and scientific examination of the lesion by specialists outside the scientists of the British Museum"*, said Ms Elizabeth Papazoi.

The preliminary findings and conclusions of this review are revealing and show that the extent of the problem is even greater than originally assumed. From this brutal "cleansing" suffered all southern metopes, the frieze in its larger surface and at least four figures of the eastern pediment. *"The effects of interference are incalculable and irreversible"*.

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<sup>177</sup> Hellenic Republic: Ministry of Education & Religious Affairs, Cultures & Sports: Internet Source: [http://www.yppo.gr/Cultural\\_Heritage](http://www.yppo.gr/Cultural_Heritage)

## APPENDIX II.



### The open votes - Results of 1982<sup>178</sup>

#### FOR:

Mexico, Mongolia, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Panama, Poland, Qatar, Syria, Laos, Dominica, North Korea, Ukraine, Belarus, Vietnam, St Lucia, Trinita Y. Tobago, Tunisia, Uganda, Czechoslovakia, Egypt, United Arab Emirates, Cyprus, Bulgaria, Congo, Cuba, Russia, Bangladesh, Benin, Bolivia, Venezuela, Argentina, Yemen, Yugoslavia, Albania, Angola, Zaire, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Saudi Arabia, Philippines, Gabon, Ghana, Grenada, Greece, Guinea, Hungary, Iran, Jordan, Cambodia, Kuwait, Maldives, Morocco, Mauritania.

#### AGAINST:

Norway, Netherlands, Denmark, Belgium, England, Germany, Sweden, Austria, Canada, USA, Israel.

ABSTENTIONS: New Zealand, South Africa, South Korea, East Germany, Cameroon, Rwanda, Switzerland, Thailand, Togo, Turkey, Australia, Barbados, Brazil, Costa-Rica, Chile, Spain, Finn land, France, Italy, Japan, Jamaica, Indonesia, Luxembourg

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<sup>178</sup> Unesco's logo: internet Source Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia: <http://en.wikipedia.org> , On behalf of UNESCO, the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) created a database to record information literacy materials from different parts of the world among them a project and contest was made for UNESCO's logo.

## APPENDIX III.



Evangelos Venizelos: Minister for Culture & Sports

2000-2004

*“The question of the restitution of the Parthenon Marbles to their natural place in Athens is not a claim in the name of Greek cultural sensitivity, neither is it made in the name of Greek cultural or foreign policy. Rather, it is stated in the name of the mutilated monument itself, that is, in the name of world cultural heritage.*

*During the past few years, the Hellenic Ministry of Culture is not focusing its attention on the historic side of the restitution of the Parthenon Marbles, neither on what is in my opinion, an unproductive issue, that of the legal ownership of the Parthenon sculptures. Every critical cultural matter is in the end innately political, which is why we are trying to approach the question politically.*

*The proposal we have addressed to the British side, that I think fully respects all the British sensibilities, consists in organizing in Athens, a grand exhibition of the Marbles in their entirety, which will bear the signature of both the British Museum and the New Acropolis Museum.*

*In practical terms, this means that we have officially proposed to the British side to found and operate, within the building of the New Acropolis Museum constructed according to the architectural designs of Mr. Tschumi and Mr. Fotiadis, an annex of its own which will exhibit the Marbles along with naturally, the Marbles currently located in Athens. This annex will have the ownership and control of the Marbles that are presently exhibited in the British Museum. Consequently, not only will the British Museum not be alienated from the Marbles, but rather -will in a most creative way- come closer to the universal character which it insists on.*

*We also take on the responsibility, in an official and categorical way, to organize –in collaboration with the British Museum- a series of highly important temporary exhibitions in the British Museum. These exhibitions will travel to*

*regional museums of Great Britain as well. We are convinced that this will perpetually stimulate the interest of the public, attract new visitors to the British Museum and will of course function as a permanent and living bridge of cultural exchange between the two countries that have close historical ties. I strongly believe that the British side can easily perceive the importance of such a grand gesture in the field of cultural politics. It would be a grand gesture in international politics, a very important message of civilization and a message of peace in a world that must offer security. And of course, it is a matter of sending a message of a Pan-European character, much needed by the European Union at a time when it is in search of its future, its geopolitical and institutional substance".<sup>179</sup>*

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<sup>179</sup> Professor Evangelos Venizelos, Greek Minister of Culture, 2004, (Photograph: Taken from internet, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Greece: <http://www2.mfa.gr/www.mfa.gr/en-us>, the photographer is not mentioned).

## APPENDIX IV.



**Eddie O'Hara<sup>180</sup>:**

**OLYMPICS AND MARBLES – OUR DEBTS TO GREECE  
LONDON INTERNATIONAL COLLOQUY, 19<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2012**

The Olympic games always remind us of our cultural debts to Greece . London Olympics 2012 brings this particularly close to home. This is why the British Committee for the Reunification of the Parthenon Marbles (BCRPM) is organising an international colloquy to link the Olympic spirit with their cause.

The colloquy is being organised in conjunction with the American Committee for the Reunification of the Parthenon Sculptures, the International Organising Committee - AUSTRALIA - for the Restitution of the Parthenon Marbles Inc. Our purpose is to review and renew our campaign. What have we to discuss?

Many of the traditional justifications for the retention of the Parthenon Marbles held in the British Museum are now historical curiosities, discredited variously as inconsequential, disingenuous, debatable, statistically dubious or just plain wrong. The one traditional argument which continues to be seductively persuasive is the “floodgates” argument, that the return of the Parthenon Marbles would set a precedent for a flood of claims for restitution which would empty our museums. This argument is specious, but anyway the BCRPM argues that it does not apply to the Parthenon marbles which are integral components of a fixed monument which is a Unesco World Heritage Site,

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<sup>180</sup> Eddie O'Hara: Former MP, new chairman of the British Committee for the Reunification of the Parthenon Marbles (BCRPM), Photograph taken from internet (BBC news: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk>), the photographer is not mentioned, the article is dated on January 5<sup>th</sup>, 2011.

hacked off and displayed in another country. In this they are arguably unique. Thus to reunite them with their monument need set no precedent. Indeed the onus of justification is for not doing so.

But, it is argued, the Parthenon cannot be restored to its original state with its marbles reattached. To this we respond that the Acropolis Museum is the one place on earth where it is possible to have a simultaneous visual and aesthetic experience of the Parthenon and its sculptures.

More recently the BM has rested its case on its supposed status as a “Universal” museum with a consequent higher order claim on the marbles than the merely “parochial” Acropolis Museum. The debate about “Universal” museums is well rehearsed in the professional literature. Suffice it to say here that BCRPM questions their claimed status and prerogatives. However it is good at least to see the argument turning to principles of museology. It would be even better to have a more open debate with the BM about the marbles in the context of collaboration, interdependence and cultural mobility. Why cannot the BM display their marbles in Athens and share responsibility for their display, curation and study with their Greek counterparts? Instead we have not so much a debate as an entrenched position based on the principle of *“What we have we keep”*.

Then there are the legal arguments for the retention of the marbles: the highly debatable question of whether Lord Elgin acquired them legally and whether this is testable by litigation; and whether it is or could legally become possible for the trustees of the BM to divest themselves of objects held in their trust.

Finally there is the issue of cultural injustice. The Greek state since its establishment has recognised the Parthenon as an iconic symbol of its cultural heritage. Any doubt about this has been dispelled by the recent publication of a set of contemporary facsimile documents demonstrating this early claim for the restitution of the marbles. According to the Faro



convention it is a violation of the human rights of the Greeks to deny them the continued enjoyment of this cultural heritage.

This much and more for us to debate at our colloquy and much for us to decide as we take stock. But if there is one message which we wish to send out to the world it is this: as the London Olympics 2012 remind us once again of our many debts to Greece, there is one debt here in London which will not be repaid until the Parthenon Marbles are returned to Athens.

Eddie O'Hara, Chairman of the British Committee for the Reunification of the Parthenon Marbles. This article has been published in the June 2012 Museums Journal.

## APPENDIX V.



<sup>181</sup> Professor Sidjanski, chairman to the Swiss Committee for the Restitution of the Parthenon Marbles, are being particularly proactive in preparing a European based campaign. As a result from our colloquy with Fabrizio Micalizzi, special advisor to the Swiss Committee, I was also informed with the following which I quote:

*“Earlier this year we have participated in a European Commission consultation on a possible revision of Directive 93/7/EEC on the return of cultural objects. The Directive does not cover the Parthenon marbles, because of the retroactivity prohibition. We thought it would be appropriate, however, to use the opportunity to make the case in Brussels closely. There was already a 1998 statement by the European Parliament for the return of the Parthenon marbles. The Swiss Committee is considering to initiate a re-statement of the EP (European Parliament)” .*

For better understanding of Swiss Committee's position I quote a small part from Prof. Sidjanski's message:

*“My first choice would be to reassemble the pieces of our European heritage by considering exchanges, long term exhibitions or compensation in the form of artifacts donated to the British Museum by Greece. This is my message to the Greek and British authorities, to the European Institutions and to all the Associations and citizens in Europe and throughout the whole world campaigning for the return of the Parthenon Marbles. Driven by a common desire, together we will find a solution worthy of this symbol of European unity.*

*The time has surely come to reunite all the existing Marbles in one of the most beautiful museums in the world, bathed in Attic light and largely devoted to exhibiting the friezes and sculptures of Acropolis. At a time when Europe is striving to bring together the States and peoples divided for so long by the twists*

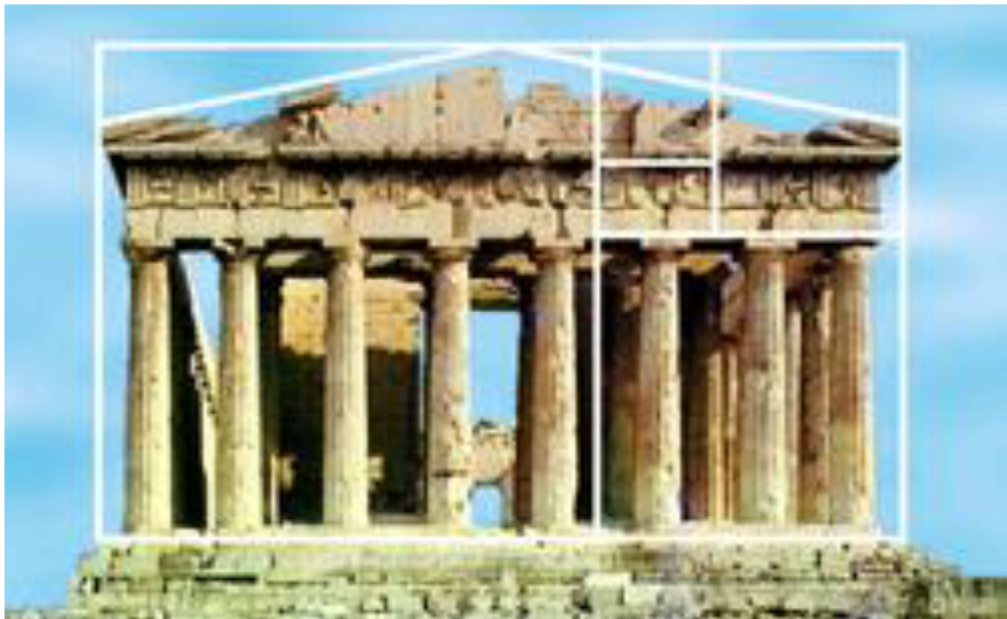
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<sup>181</sup> Swiss Committee's logo: The picture was sent to me from Fabrizio Micalizzi, special advisor to the Swiss Committee, along with the documents that concern the committee's campaign.

*and turns of history, it is all the more important that we reunite the scattered pieces of this major monument of our European cultural heritage”.*

Message from Dusan Sidjanski  
Chairman of Swiss Committee,  
Vice-Chairman of International Association  
Geneva, 20<sup>th</sup> April 2

## ILLUSTRATIONS



**Illustration α:** The definition of “golden section”  $\phi$

The famous “golden section”  $\phi$  is defined as the quotient  $\frac{\alpha}{\beta}$  of positive numbers when applied:  $= \frac{\alpha + \beta}{\alpha}$  equal to approximately 1.618.

The “golden section”  $\phi$  is considered to give harmonious proportions and therefore it has been used in architecture and painting, both in ancient Greece as also in Renaissance.

The golden section was introduced and calculated by Pythagoras (585-500 BC).

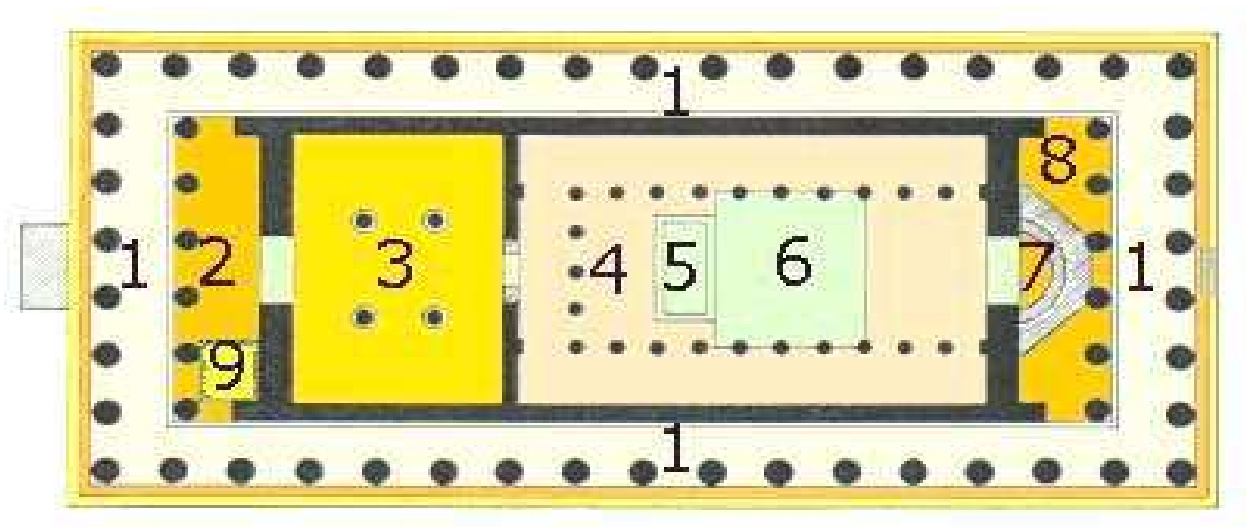
The balance is symbolized by the letter  $\phi$  in honor of Phidias.

“Golden section” is also called the mathematical relationship 4:9 that prevails in the Parthenon. For example, the width of the stylobate to its length, the diameter of the columns to the wheelbase (1.905 m : 4.296 m), the height of the temple for amplitude (13.72 m: 30.88 = 4:9), while the width of the temple to the height have a relationship 16:81, 42:92.

<sup>182</sup> The Parthenon: Photograph taken from internet: Royalty free pictures of Greek Parthenon: Images Copyrighted by Historylink101.com & found at Greek Picture Gallery (<http://www.historylink101.net/greece>), the photographer is not mentioned. The picture went through Photoshop processing, by John Karayiannis.

The facade of the Parthenon was built using two large rectangular with sides of radical five (**side  $\sqrt{5}$** ) and four smaller.

The analogy of the length of the building to the height of the facade is  $\phi$ , the golden section. There is an even number of stylobates along the front, which are eight, and an odd number along the sides, which is seventeen. The Parthenon on these grounds, it has become to be known as a "perfect building".



**Illustration β:** Parthenon: A Doric Peripteral Octastyle (surrounded by one row of columns, 8 columns in the front and back side) Temple.

Picture taken from Internet: <http://www.mlahanas.de/Greeks/Arts/Parthenon.htm>, creator: Michael Lahanas

1. Peripteros
2. Opisthodomos
3. "Hall of the Virgins"
4. Cella (Naos) with internal pillars
5. Athena Parthenos
6. Water pool
7. Apsis of Christian church
8. Pronaos (or Prodromos)
9. Minarett of islamic Church

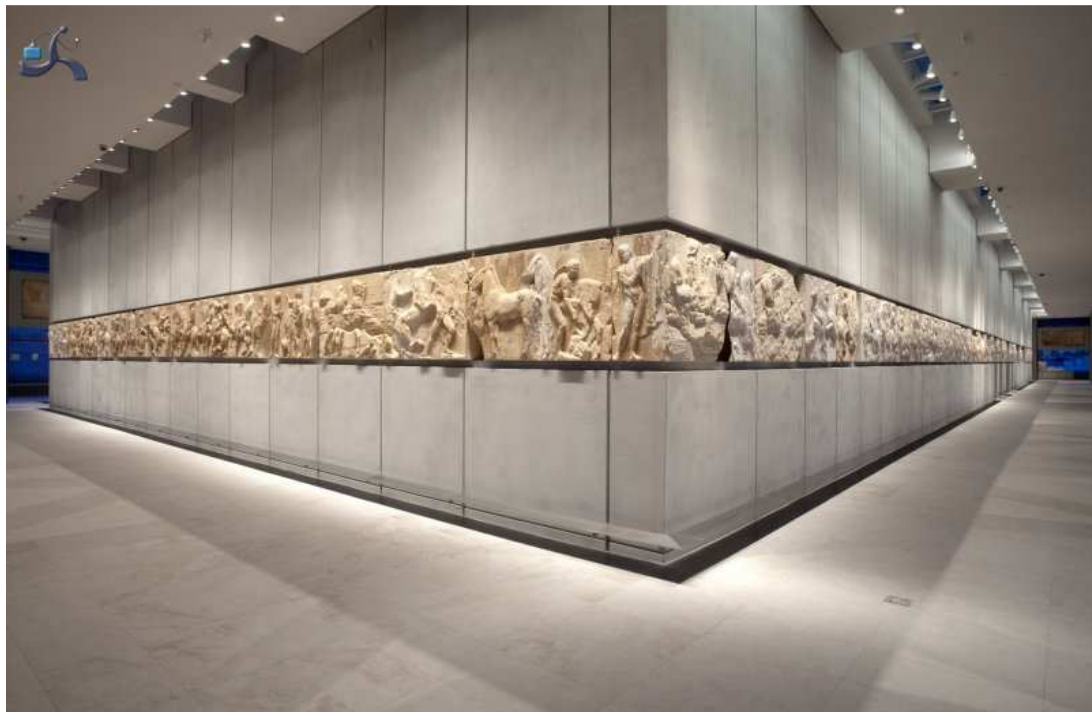


**Illustration γ:** Paint incision depicting the cult statue of Athena in the Parthenon.  
Internet Source: Archaeologia, Greek Magazin: <http://www.eie.gr/archaeologia/gr>, the painter is unknown.

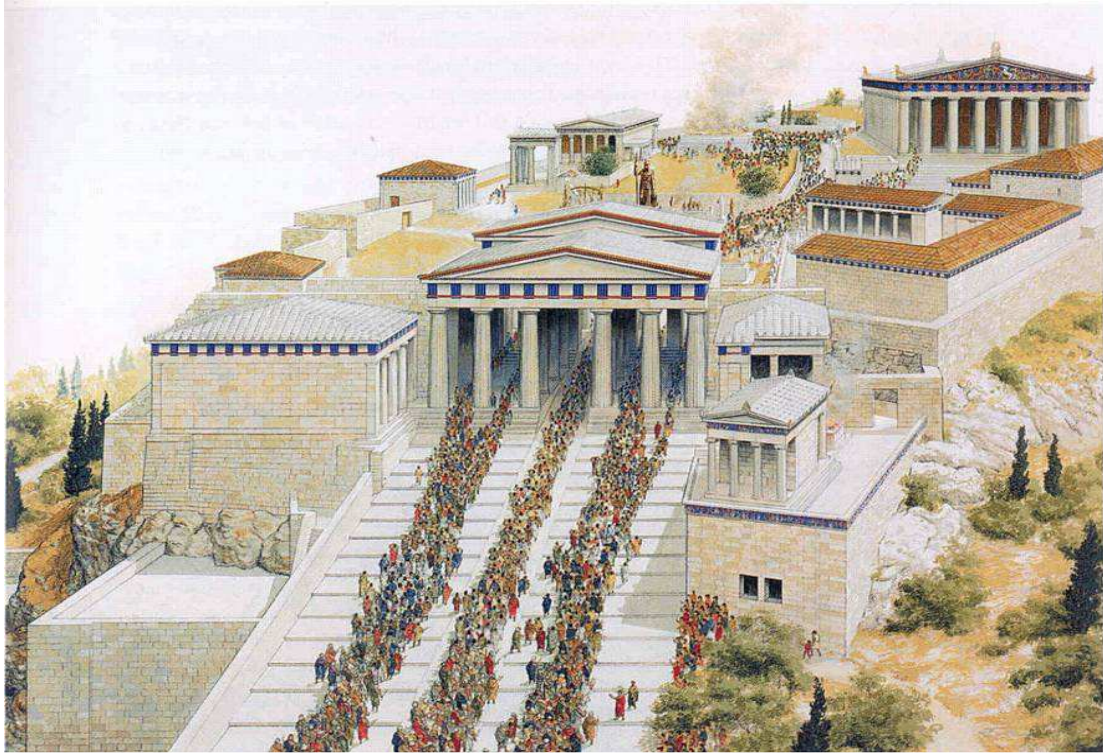


**Illustration δ:** West & East Pediments

(Internet Source: Greek Civilization, The Parthenon, West & East Pediments: <http://apollonionfos.forumotion>, Pictures taken by publications *Monternoi Kairoi*).



**Illustration ε:** Parthenon's Frieze placed today in New Acropolis Museum along with molds (Photograph taken from Internet: Royalty free pictures of Greek Parthenon: Images Copyrighted by Historylink101.com & found at Greek Picture Gallery (<http://www.historylink101.net/greece>), the date and photographer are not mentioned).



**Illustration στ:** Painting: “The Panathenaic cortege”

(Internet Source: Classical era 478-323 BC/ The Panathenaic cortege: <http://museduc.gr/docs/Istoria>, the creator is not mentioned, published by the Greek Ministry of Education).



**Illustration ζ:** Louis Dupré “Portrait of M. Fauvel, the French Consul, with View of the Acropolis, 1819” French, 1789-1837, Oil on canvas, 20 1/2 x 25 1/4 in. (52.1 x 64.1 cm.), Collection of the David and Alfred Smart Museum of Art, University of Chicago, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Frank H. Woods.  
Internet Source: Collections - Smart Museum of Art - The University of Chicago:[cuip.uchicago.edu/wit/99/teams/portraits/portrait1](http://cuip.uchicago.edu/wit/99/teams/portraits/portrait1)

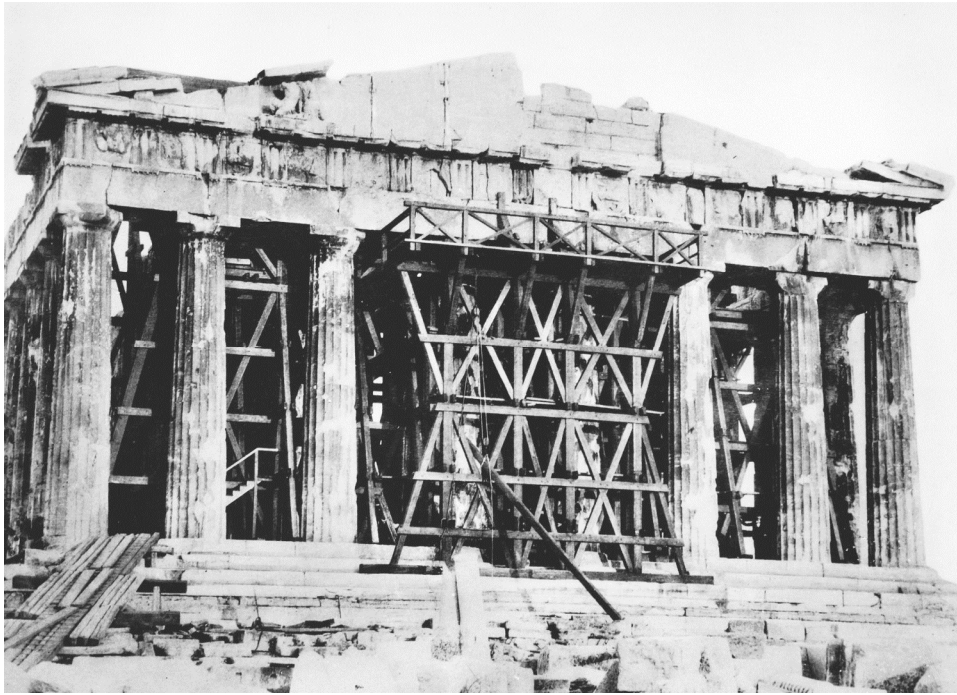




**Illustration η:** Gravure: 1821: *General Makriyiannis Ioannis-Memoirs, Athens 1907*,  
Internet Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Greece: <http://odysseus.culture.gr>  
No further information are given about the gravure



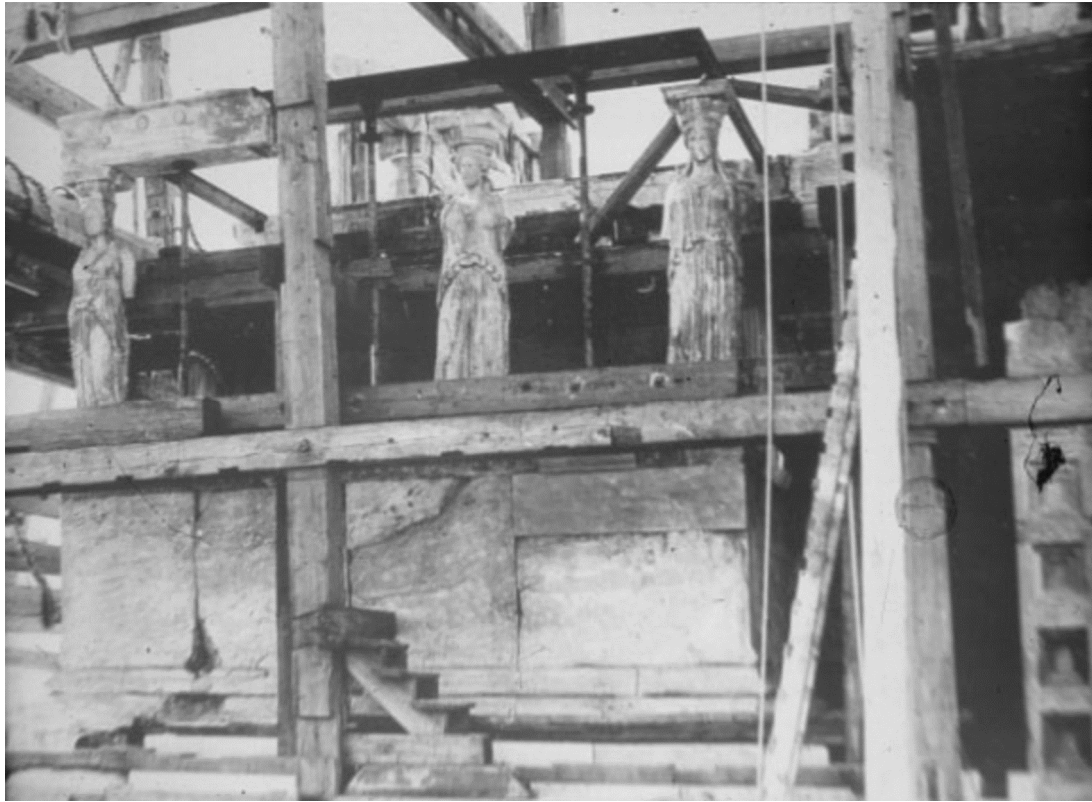
**Illustration θ:** View of the Parthenon from the northwest in 1839 (P.G. Joly de Lotniere - Benaki Museum)- period of Otho's rule (1833-1863).  
Internet Source: Acropolis Restoration Center, Ypiresia Suntirisis Mnimeion Acropolis (YSMA). No further information is given for this photo.



**Illustration 1.1:** Restoration works by N. Balanos at the West Side of the Parthenon  
Internet Source: Acropolis Restoration Center, Ypiresia Suntirisis Mnimeion Acropolis (YSMA). No further information is given for this photo.<sup>183</sup>

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<sup>183</sup> “The First Restoration Program of the Parthenon reflects the new spirit and new demands of the time, in terms of the interventions on monuments. An effort to effect them with high quality and in a scholarly way is seen in the establishment of an interdisciplinary committee to determine the programme and to supervise the works, the drawing up of preliminary proposals for the intervention with graphic documentation, the use of contemporary mechanical worksite equipment, the use of superior materials that do not harm the monuments (imported from abroad), and the involvement of specialized personnel. The Programme signals also the beginning of work on the Acropolis by the county-engineer, Nikolaos Balanos, who was given the responsibility of carrying out the work, which was considered to a large extent technical. The work is of particular significance for the theoretical considerations that accompanied it in all its phases concerning the limits, techniques and material for accomplishing the work. This would have a decisive influence on Balanos in the development of his approach to anastelosis”. Internet Source: Acropolis Restoration Center, Ypiresia Suntirisis Mnimeion Acropolis (YSMA).



**Illustration 1.2:** Restoration works by N. Balanos at the West Side of the Parthenon  
Internet Source: Acropolis Restoration Center, Ypiresia Suntirisis Mnimeion Acropolis (YSMA). No further information is given for this photo.



**Illustration ια:** Balanos Nikolaos (1860-1942)

Internet Source: Acropolis Restoration Center, Ypiresia Suntirisis Mnimeion Acropolis (YSMA). No further information is given for this photo



**Illustration 1β:** Melina Mercouri, Minister of Culture 1981-1989, 1993-1994, waving in front of Parthenon.

Internet Source: Melina Mercouri Foundation: <http://www.melinamercourifoundation.org.gr/>.  
No further information is given about the photo

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