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Pericles: Democratic Reformer



Under the leadership of Pericles, Athenian democracy reached its apex. Athens became a true democracy, in which common citizens possessed an unprecedented degree of power. Athens assumed the leadership of a confederacy centered in the Aegean, an empire that prevented further incursions by Persia into Greece. Among the products of Periclean Athens were art and architecture that remain the wonders of the world, the three greatest tragedians of ancient Greece, the most famous philosopher of the ancient world, and the first historians. The classicist C. E. Robinson once wrote: "Athens' heyday lasted less than eighty years, and the number of her adult male citizens scarcely exceeded fifty thousand. Yet this handful of men attempted more and achieved more in a wider variety of fields than any nation great or small has ever attempted or achieved in a similar space of time." Fifth-century Athens constituted both the culmination of Greece's Archaic period and the birthplace of Western civilization.

THE DELIAN LEAGUE

Once the Persians had been driven from Greece, Sparta, a land power, had neither the motivation nor the ability to free Ionia and to end the Persian naval threat. In order to accomplish these goals, in 478 B.C. a large number of poleis bordering on the Aegean Sea formed the Delian League, headquartered on the sacred island of Delos. The league agreed to maintain a 200-ship fleet. The confederation was funded by the contributions

of member poleis and by money seized from those city-states that had collaborated with the Persians during the war. Each member polis was required to contribute either a specific number of manned ships or their equivalent in money, based on its degree of wealth. Since nearly all of the other poleis chose to contribute money, Athens provided almost all of the league's ships.

It was the duty of the Athenian leader "Aristides the Just," one of the founders of the Delian League, to assess the wealth of each polis and determine its contribution. No assessment of his was ever challenged. Many poleis were assessed at only one ship.

Legends concerning the virtue of Aristides became part of Greek lore. One such story claimed that during a vote for ostracism, an illiterate man whom Aristides did not know asked the statesman to write the name "Aristides" on his potsherd for him. Startled, Aristides asked the man, "Has this Aristides injured you in some way?" The man replied that he did not even know Aristides, but was just sick and tired of hearing all of this praise of "Aristides the Just." Shaking his head sadly, honest Aristides wrote his own name on the man's potsherd. (Indeed, Aristides was banished that year, 483 B.C., at the instigation of his rival Themistocles, though he was later recalled when the Persians invaded Greece, and he distinguished himself leading the Athenians at Plataea. Athens was fortunate that Aristides had been banished in 483 B.C., since he had been one of the leading opponents of Themistocles' naval construction program. Virtue and wisdom do not always go together.) On another occasion, when Aristides was prosecuting an opponent, and the jury refused to listen to the defendant's case, Aristides jumped to his feet and demanded they do so. At another time, when Aristides acted as an arbitrator in a dispute, one party reminded him that the other party had once injured Aristides. Aristides replied: "Do not tell me about that. Tell me what he has done to you. I am here to judge your case, not mine." Before the Battle of Marathon, Aristides gave up his turn at command to Miltiades and persuaded the other generals to do so as well, since Miltiades was the best of the generals. After the battle, when Aristides was placed in charge of guarding the enemy's spoils, he did not help himself to any. Despite the numerous opportunities for the acceptance of bribes that his tenure as the league's assessor afforded him, Aristides left the post poorer than when he had assumed it. Indeed, since he did not even leave behind enough money to pay for his own funeral, the state paid for it and for his daughters' dowries.

The turning point in the history of the Delian League came in 465 B.C., when Thasos, a polis rich in precious metals, decided to leave the confederacy. Although Ionia had been liberated and the Persian threat had been considerably reduced, Athens treated the secession of Thasos as a revolt

and crushed it. The Athenians not only reimposed the polis's assessment, but also tore down the city's walls and seized a gold mine from it. Athens then forced some Aegean poleis that had not joined the league to do so, a policy that raised the number of member states to approximately 140. The Athenians explained that if they were forced to reduce the fleet through lack of funds, Persia would again threaten Greece. Why shouldn't all of the Aegean poleis that benefited from Athenian naval protection pay what all agreed was a fair price for it? The poleis that refused were taking advantage of their neighbors.

Athens established and maintained democratic governments in those member poleis that revolted. The Athenians explained that the imposition of democracy on league members was merely designed to ensure their future loyalty to democratic Athens and to protect their citizens from greedy and powerful aristocrats. (Indeed, many poleis that did not belong to the Delian League, such as Argos and Syracuse, established democratic systems without the slightest pressure from Athens.) The Athenians considered it a dangerous policy to allow foreign aristocrats who had proved themselves disloyal to Athens to continue to rule their poleis. They noted that Sparta had long since installed oligarchies in the poleis of the Peloponnesian League.

In 454 B.C., after losing a whole army and two fleets helping Egypt launch an ill-fated rebellion against Persia, the Athenians moved the treasury of the Delian League from Delos to Athens in order to better protect it from a resurgent Persian navy. In 445 B.C., the Athenians required that disputes between league members—even those between Athens and its allies—be settled in Athenian courts. The Athenians explained that settling disputes in the relatively fair Athenian courts was better than settling them through internal warfare, which would destroy the league. Most imperial powers of the day did not use courts at all. As the Athenians told the Spartans, the attitude of most powerful cities was that "where force can be used, courts of law are unnecessary." Indeed, most of the league members' complaints did not concern the fairness of Athenian courts, but regarded the expense of staying in Athens while awaiting a hearing, a need exploited by the city's greedy innkeepers. Finally, the Athenians offered the right of appeal to Athenian courts for any allied citizen facing the death penalty or the deprivation of citizenship in his own polis. To some citizens of member poleis, especially to aristocrats already angry with Athens for robbing them of their power, these actions constituted clear evidence that Athens had become a tyrannical power and that the "Delian League" had become the Athenian empire.

Indeed, the Athenians did effect an air of imperialism. Aristides' successors increased league members' assessments. The Athenians expropriated land from their "allies" to build their own settlements, which

were often little more than garrisons to watch over the allies. The Athenians also used the league fleet to establish colonies elsewhere. They used their control of the Hellespont to levy a 10 percent tax on grain exported through the Turkish Straits anywhere but to Athens. They mandated the use of Athenian coinage throughout the league, though this policy was partly due to the desire to substitute a standardized, silver currency for the heterogeneous coinage of the allies, which varied considerably in substance and weight. Finally, they demanded that each ally send a cow and a panoply of arms as an offering at the city's Panathenaic Festival. Athens had become the political, military, economic, and cultural center of the Aegean.

CIMON

The most powerful political leaders in Athens were the ten strategoi, the only elected officials. One of the strategoi usually led the prodemocratic faction, another the proaristocratic faction. Since common men could vote in the Ecclesia, Athens's legislature, the leader of the prodemocratic faction sometimes possessed such power that he was able to have his rival banished. But the leader's military power, like that of the other strategoi, rested on his annual election, and his political power was based solely on his ability to persuade. In other words, all of the leader's power was dependent on the continuous support of the people.

Cimon, a son of Miltiades who had distinguished himself at Salamis, succeeded Themistocles as the leader of Athens. Though not particularly eloquent, Cimon was brave and just, refusing all bribes. It was Cimon who greatly reduced the Persian threat to Greece by defeating them and capturing two hundred Persian ships in a naval battle near the Eurymedon River on the western coast of Asia Minor in 466 B.C. On the same day, he defeated Persian land forces, thereby freeing parts of Asia Minor. Cimon also led the Delian League in clearing the Aegean Sea of pirates. He ordered the construction of sturdy walls from the city to Piraeus, Athens's best harbor. These walls would allow Athens to resist sieges by continuing to import food via the sea. Although Cimon's aristocratic sympathies inclined him to maintain friendly relations with the Spartans, even naming his own sons after them, the Spartans remained deeply suspicious of the new Delian League. (As early as 479 B.C. an anxious Sparta had suggested that all poleis outside the Peloponnesus destroy their own walls, since they might be useful to the Persians in the event of another invasion, and rely on the Spartan army for protection instead. Most poleis had simply ignored the suggestion. Themistocles, on the other hand, had quietly accelerated work on the

reconstruction of Athens's walls, had presented Sparta with the fait accompli, and had warned that thenceforth Sparta must consider Athens capable of defending itself.)

Although Cimon won popularity for a while by giving his own money, food, and clothes to the poor, his aristocratic leanings and pro-Spartan policies finally led to his ostracism in 461 B.C. After the helots, with help from some of the perioikoi, had taken the opportunity to revolt afforded by a devastating earthquake, an embarrassed Sparta had requested Athens's assistance in crushing the revolt. Cimon had persuaded the reluctant Athenians to dispatch 4,000 soldiers to Sparta, asking, "Will you look on Greece lamed and Athens without her yoke-fellow?" But alarmed by the democratic spirit of the Athenian soldiers and worried that these soldiers might go over to the helots' side, the Spartans had changed their minds about Athenian aid. The Spartans had told the Athenians that their services were no longer needed and that they should go home. The Athenians blamed Cimon for this humiliation, since they had not wanted to aid the Spartans in the first place.

Following his decade of exile, Cimon returned to Athens and died fighting against the Persians on Cyprus. Plutarch later offered Cimon the backhanded compliment that his accomplishments were especially impressive considering that he was exceptionally lazy and drunk most of the time.

DEMOCRATIC REFORMS

Ephialtes

Ephialtes, Cimon's successor, led Athens less than one year before a Boeotian assassin hired by Athenian aristocrats killed him. While in office, Ephialtes persuaded the Ecclesia to transfer all judicial power from the aristocratic Areopagus, except for its ancient authority to hear homicide cases, to the democratic heliaea. First created by Solon but given little power, the heliaea was a body of 6,000 jurors chosen by lot annually from among citizens thirty years and older. Between 101 and 2,501 jurors (usually 501) were selected by lot out of the 6,000 to serve on each particular jury. Due to the large size of the juries, a majority vote, cast by secret ballot, was sufficient for a decision. A chairman presided over the trial. There were no lawyers. The defendant had to plead his own case, though he might hire a speechwriter to assist him. Whoever brought forth the charge acted as prosecutor. Each side argued its case in six minutes, or in some multiple of six minutes, as measured by water dripping from a special jar. Whenever a jury found a defendant guilty of a crime

for which there was no specific penalty, the jurors then decided between the penalties proposed by the defendant and the prosecutor. Whenever a plaintiff brought forth a case so dubious he was unable to win at least one-sixth of the jury vote, he was punished. (Like modern Britain's "English rule," which states that if a plaintiff loses a civil suit he must pay the defendant's court costs, this policy was designed to discourage frivolous litigation.) Significantly, Ephialtes also pushed through the Ecclesia a measure authorizing the payment of jurors, thereby making it possible for the poor to serve on juries.

Pericles

Pericles, the son of Xanthippus (the hero of Mycale) and protégé of Ephialtes, led Athens from 454, when he was about thirty-six, until his death in 429 B.C. Pericles forced all outgoing members of the Council of 500 to submit to the assembly an "audit," an account of their official acts. Until a council member did so, he could not leave Athens or sell property. Under Pericles, the polis used "surplus funds" from the Delian League to pay members of the Council of 500 one drachma per day, thereby allowing the poor to participate in the council. He also used league funds to rebuild the temples of the Acropolis and to fill them with some of the greatest art ever produced. These public works programs provided employment, especially for rowers put out of work by peace, and increased Athens's beauty and fame. One critic, who was later ostracized by the people, questioned the propriety of using league funds in such a manner and added that Pericles was dressing Athens "like a vain woman with precious stones and statues and thousand-talent temples." Pericles retorted that since Athens had lost her temples fighting the same Persians the league had been created to oppose, it was only just that the league reimburse Athens for its losses. He also deflected criticism by offering to spend his own money on some of the works, if the people considered his public spending excessive. The people refused his offer. Pericles created prestigious offices (the *litourgoi*), held by the wealthy, that required the officeholder to pay for ships, plays, statues, and other public services, which would be dedicated to himself. In this way, Pericles made the wealthy vie with one another for the honor of strengthening, educating, and beautifying Athens.

Pericles was the kind of man who was equally comfortable discussing the finer points of poetry and charging into battle. A man of immovable dignity, Pericles once ignored the taunts of a heckler for an entire day while conducting business in the agora. The heckler even followed Pericles home at the end of the day, still spouting insults. By then it was dark, so Pericles dispatched a servant with a torch to lead the man home. Peri-

cles never attended parties, saving all of his energy for state affairs. He was very frugal, to the distress of his daughters-in-law. He was a man of great eloquence. Comics depicted him wielding a thunderbolt in his tongue, and a political rival who was fond of wrestling used this analogy concerning Pericles' rhetorical ability: "Whenever I throw him in wrestling, he beats me by arguing that he was never down, and he can even make the spectators believe it." Yet Pericles spoke only about important subjects, leaving his friends to speak on minor matters, so that the people would not tire of him.

Despite his numerous accomplishments, Pericles adopted a harsh stance toward Sparta that ultimately proved fatal to Athens. Athenian and Spartan forces, joined by some of their allies, fought a series of battles in Boeotia between 460 and 446 B.C., leading some historians to call the conflict the "First Peloponnesian War."

Pericles was willing to use bribery to promote Athenian interests whenever necessary. In 446 B.C., a huge Spartan army poised to attack Athens retreated for no apparent reason. That year, when Pericles submitted his audit to the assembly, there was one item in his account concerning which he refused to speak: ten talents "for necessary purposes." Since everyone knew what had happened earlier in the year, and since everyone knew that Pericles would not steal money (he cared so little about wealth he allowed his own estate to decay), no one questioned the expenditure. The furious Spartans executed the royal advisor whom Pericles had bribed into persuading King Pleistoanax to retreat, and they imposed so large a fine on the king himself he was forced to flee Sparta. The words "for necessary purposes" remained good for a laugh on Athens's comic stage for another generation.

WAS ATHENS A DEMOCRACY?

Some modern critics have questioned Athens's claim to the title of first major democracy. The Athenians granted citizenship to 50,000 adult males at most, out of a total population of about 250,000. The Athenians excluded women, children, *metics* (resident foreigners—*metoikoi*, "those who live with" us), and slaves from the franchise.

But no society enfranchises children or resident foreigners. True, after 451 B.C., when the Ecclesia passed Pericles' law making Athenian descent on both sides of one's family a requirement for citizenship, an act perhaps motivated by a large influx of metics, it became virtually impossible for metics to become citizens. But such restrictions were typical among the ancient Greeks, who considered the polis an extended family. More remarkable is the unprecedented laxity of Athens's naturalization laws

from the days of Solon (594 B.C.) until 451 B.C. While it is also true that a metic could not own land, speak in court, or marry a citizen, a person walking through the streets of Athens who came across a prosperous shield or leather factory had no way of knowing whether its owner was a citizen or a metic. Prosperous and loyal to Athens, metics socialized freely with Athenian citizens. By the time of the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War in 431 B.C., the population of Athens included 30,000 metics, most of whom were engaged in trade at the port of Piraeus.

At the same time, Athens possessed about 120,000 slaves. Every ancient society owned slaves. Most slaves were prisoners of war, whether acquired directly in military campaigns or through slave traders. Small farmers who owned a few slaves worked beside them. Nearly all masters lived in the same house with their slaves. Wealthy Athenians often used their slaves as domestic servants or hired them out to others or to the polis. Indeed, the polis itself owned some slaves, who were employed as road builders, coin minters, secretaries, executioners, heralds, and even policemen. Scythian slaves were employed as policemen so that no Athenian citizen would ever have to lay violent hands on another. When it was time for the assembly to meet, the policemen went out into the agora and herded citizens to the meeting by walking behind them with outstretched ropes dipped in red paint. Some slaves learned and practiced a trade, purchased their freedom with the profits (they received one-sixth of their earnings), and established their own businesses; a few who belonged to merchants became the stewards of their masters' overseas ventures. Indeed, it was often impossible to tell a slave from his master. As the Athenian orator Demosthenes once noted: "One may see many a servant in Athens speaking his mind with greater liberty than is granted to citizens in some other states." Contrary to popular myth, the leisure time that Athenians and other Greeks utilized to revolutionize philosophy, science, art, and literature was not chiefly the product of slavery, but of a frugal lifestyle. Most harshly treated were the mine slaves, who lived much of their lives hundreds of feet below ground. In fact, many slaves were sent to the mines as punishment for some offense.

Although there was never a genuine abolitionist movement in Athens, or anywhere else in the ancient world, some fifth- and fourth-century Athenians did criticize slavery. Euripides referred to slavery as "that thing of evil, by its nature evil, forcing submission from a man to what no man should yield to." Plato wrote, "A slave is an embarrassing possession." The Stoics denounced slavery as an intolerable violation of natural law.

It is also true that the status of women in Athenian society, like that of women in most other Greek societies, was unenviable. Few women were educated, since their sole functions were to bear children and to manage the household. Custom forced women to stay in their own quarters in the

back of the house when their husbands entertained guests. By necessity, lower-class Athenian women worked as spinners, weavers, and vendors, but upper-class women were not allowed to work outside the home. Women were allowed to attend plays but sat apart in the back rows. Athenian women possessed few legal rights. They could own only clothes, jewelry, and slaves. They could not enter into any business transaction involving more than a small amount of money. Wealthier men generally kept an educated, foreign-born mistress called a *hetaira* (companion). The hetairai sometimes owned businesses and often moved about the city more freely than the sequestered wives, sisters, and daughters of many citizens, who could only leave the house during festivals or on other special occasions. In Sophocles' *Tereus*, Procne, while preparing to kill her own son in revenge for her husband's seduction of her sister, declares: "We [women] are nothing. When we reach puberty and understanding, we are thrust out. . . . Some go to strangers' homes, others to foreigners', some to joyless houses, some to hostile. And all this, once the first night has yoked us to our husbands, we are forced to praise and to say that all is well."

Yet it would be wrong to assume that all Athenian women were docile. Socrates' wife, Xanthippe, was notoriously harsh toward her husband—justifiably so, since his philosophical dialogues did not bring in any money with which to feed the family. Xanthippe once even assaulted Socrates in the agora, tearing the cloak off his back. When Socrates' friends advised him to strike back, he refused to take the bait, replying: "Yes, by Zeus, in order that, while we are sparring, each of you may join in with, 'Well done, Socrates!', 'Good punch, Xanthippe!'" When Xanthippe scolded Socrates and drenched him with water, he said, "Did I not say that Xanthippe's thunder would end in rain?" When one of their three sons complained bitterly to his father about his mother's nagging, Socrates urged the young man to be patient with her, reminding him of the aggravations and troubles Xanthippe had endured on his behalf when he was a baby. Socrates said of his wife's scolding: "I have gotten used to it, as to the continued rattle of a windlass." When asked why in the world he had married her, he replied that one of his chief goals in life was to get along well with people, and he figured that if he could get along with her he could get along with anyone. Despite these good-natured jests, theirs was hardly a loveless marriage. Xanthippe wept profusely at his execution.

Legend has it that Pericles' mistress, Aspasia, played a large role in his public decisions. Pericles had divorced his wife, by mutual consent, years before he took Aspasia as his mistress in 445 B.C. At the time he was about forty-five, and Aspasia about twenty-five. Plutarch later claimed that Aspasia was responsible for an Athenian decision to aid her home polis of Miletus against its traditional enemy, Samos. Politically adept, Aspasia

had once been a diplomat of sorts for the king of Persia. Socrates and other Athenian philosophers visited her frequently, and she tutored numerous would-be politicians in the art of public speaking. Socrates called Aspasia "the admirable mistress I have in the art of speaking—she who has made so many good speakers, one of whom was the best among all the Greeks—Pericles." When Pericles' enemies tried her for impiety in the 430s B.C. (the real purpose of the trial was political), Pericles had to weep and plead for her until the jurors, always gratified to see their leaders cut down to size, voted for acquittal.

Of course, women were not guaranteed the right to vote by the U.S. Constitution until 1920 and did not begin to approach social equality until the 1960s. Indeed, modern criticism of Athens as "undemocratic" highlights the ambiguity of the word "democracy." If democracy means the political participation, however indirect, of all adults, then democracy is a twentieth-century invention. If, on the other hand, it means the direct political participation of all citizens, however narrowly the citizenry is defined, then democracy was a purely ancient phenomenon, since every modern democracy is representative, not participatory.

Whatever its faults as perceived through the subjective lens of modern values, the participatory nature of Athenian democracy prevented the rise of an inefficient and haughty bureaucracy and produced citizens who were excellent soldiers, sailors, legislators, administrators, and judges. Athens demanded so much talent from its citizens and gave them so much freedom to express their talent the city produced an incredible array of geniuses. To an Athenian, public service was as much a duty to oneself as an obligation to the polis.

ATHENIAN ART AND ARCHITECTURE IN THE AGE OF PERICLES

Pericles appointed Phidias to supervise the colossal project of reconstructing the Acropolis temples the Persians had destroyed, granting him a huge budget of 5,000 talents. The speed with which the Acropolis was transformed—all of the work was nearly finished in a decade—was astonishing considering the genius of its works. Many observers expected that the project would take generations to complete. Even Plutarch, who could be critical of Athenian democracy, later marveled at the grace, beauty, and durability of the temples. He noted that "they were created in so short a span, and yet for all time" and that they possessed "a youthful vigor which makes them appear to this day as if they were newly built." "This day" was over five centuries later.

The most famous and impressive of the temples, designed by Ictinus and constructed by the master-builder Callicrates, was the Parthenon, the

temple dedicated to Athena Parthenos (Athena the Maiden), built between 447 and 432 B.C. The largest Doric-style temple in Greece, the building is 228 feet long and 101 feet wide. A photograph cannot capture the beauty of the Parthenon. It possesses a grandeur beyond its size. Ictinus calculated the spacing, height, and curvature of the marble columns with remarkable precision. He included a host of subliminal features in the structure that account for much of its emotional impact. Aware that a perfectly symmetrical building appears asymmetrical from a distance, he achieved the appearance of perfect symmetry by tilting the front of the building inward less than one degree (about two inches) and by increasing the circumference of the corner columns about two inches. He also sloped the temple's platform more than four inches from the center to the corners. He placed eight columns in the front and rear, instead of the usual six, and seventeen columns on each side. He used Ionic columns for the internal colonnade, thereby relieving the grandeur of the Doric temple with a touch of elegance.

The centerpiece of the Parthenon was Phidias's forty-one foot, ten-inch statue of Athena, armed with spear and shield and wearing her helmet and magical goatskin cloak. He fashioned Athena's face and hands from ivory and her draperies from gold that weighed more than a metric ton. The total cost of the statue was 750 talents, the equivalent of the annual income of 12,750 workers. As a worshiper entered the dark temple, he would see nothing. Then, as his pupils began to dilate, he would find himself in the presence of the enormous, exquisite Athena, whose image was reflected in a shallow pool that stood before her. The pool also helped preserve the ivory by humidifying the atmosphere. Unfortunately, the statue was destroyed in a fire in the fifth century A.D.

The Parthenon was further adorned with ninety-two external metopes, various pedimental groups, and a long, internal frieze—in all, the most substantial body of first-class sculpture that any Greek temple has left us. A small army of sculptors from different parts of Greece descended on the Acropolis, moving from project to project under the supervision of Phidias. They observed one another's work, exchanged ideas, and competed for glory. The artistic climate must have been similar to that of Renaissance Florence. In just a few years, these sculptors set the standards by which Western art—including that of Renaissance Florence—would be judged for centuries.

Sculpted by many different artists from 442 to 438 B.C., the metopes depicted battle scenes between the gods and the giants and between the Greeks and the Amazons. One exquisite metope featured a mourning Athena, wearing her helmet and the thick woolen dress of an Athenian noblewoman, leaning heavily on her spear, head bowed, reading a casualty list on a stele below. The common theme of the metopes was the victory of

civilization over barbarism, reason over irrationality. It was no easy victory; in some of the reliefs the heroes are losing.

The pedimental groups were equally impressive. The western group portrayed the battle between Athena and Poseidon for dominion over Athens, the eastern her birth from the head of Zeus, cloven free by the ax of Hephaestus.

A continuous frieze circumscribed the wall inside the colonnade. A band 3 feet, 5 inches in height and 524 feet in length, this frieze depicted the Panathenaic procession. The procession begins at the west or rear door, proceeds around the sides, and culminates over the east door, where priests, elders, and the family of gods—from elderly Zeus to little Eros (Cupid), sheltered under his mother Aphrodite's parasol—await the worshipers. The speed and vigor of the horses is contrasted with the Olympian calm of their riders. Each figure is interesting in its own right, yet each relates to the whole, the triumphant combination of the unique and the universal that is the essence of great art.

The Parthenon was Athena's temple for nine centuries, a Christian church for ten, a mosque for nearly four, and a tourist attraction for more than a century now. It was fairly well preserved until 1687, when it was badly damaged by Venetian artillery, which struck a gunpowder magazine the Turks had stored in the temple, in the belief that no one would dare fire on the Parthenon. In 1800, Lord Elgin, the British ambassador to Turkey, which then controlled Greece, secured permission from the Turks to remove some of the Parthenon's pedimental sculptures and reliefs to London, where they are still housed in the British Museum. This was an act of imperialism, to be sure, but one that saved the reliefs from the storms and air pollution that defaced much that remained on the Acropolis in Athens.

Opposite the Parthenon stood the Erechtheum, a temple dedicated to Athena, Poseidon, and the mythical king Erechtheus, constructed between 421 and 405 B.C. While Ionic porticoes fronted its eastern and northern sides, its southern side featured the famed Porch of the Maidens. The columns of this portico were six maidens (the *caryatids*) who appeared to support that side of the temple on their heads. In addition to an olive tree planted by Apollo and a salt spring created by Poseidon, the temple housed an olive-wood statue of Athena, embellished by gilt, which the Athenians had unearthed and which they believed had fallen from heaven. (It was actually a statue fashioned by other Athenians centuries earlier. Fifth-century Athenians did not know that their ancestors had sculpted wood.) Each year, during the Panathenaic Festival, the people brought the decayed statue a new robe, woven and embroidered by the girls and women of Athens, which took almost nine months to fashion. Every four years there was a Greater Panathenaia, in which a much larger

robe was woven for Athena by professional, male weavers who had won a contest.

Yet another temple located on the Acropolis was that of Athena Nike (Athena Victory), constructed in the 420s B.C. The elegant, well-proportioned little structure housed winged female figures, dressed in windblown, tight-clinging draperies, who represented victory in battle.

First accused of stealing gold, a false charge soon refuted, and then of insinuating his own image and that of Pericles among the warriors on the shield of his giant statue of Athena, Phidias left Athens and moved to Olympia. There, he fashioned a famous colossal statue of Zeus, also made of ivory and gold. The statue was so large Greeks claimed that Zeus sat by necessity, since if he stood, he would take the roof off the giant temple in which he was housed. One of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, the majestic statue presented the greatest of gods with so sublime and gentle an expression, it was said that the statue could console the deepest of sorrows. (The figure was later used as the model for a colossal statue of George Washington. The sight of an enormous Washington draped in classical robes amused many observers. One fan of Washington protested that the general had been too careful of his health to wander around half-naked in such a fashion. A prankster climbed the huge statue and shoved a large "plantation cigar" in Washington's mouth.)

The constraints placed on Greek architects and sculptors by the existence of only three types of columns and by limited space for metopes paralleled the human struggle to achieve greatness despite the limitations and shortness of life. The essential elements of Greek culture, the emphasis on restraint, dignity, and proportion, are all present in fifth-century Athenian art.

DRAMA IN THE AGE OF PERICLES

The Athenians developed drama, the source of many modern forms of entertainment, from the religious rites of the cult of Dionysus. In these rites, a chorus of men sang and danced. Although Athenian drama eventually moved beyond the few stories concerning Dionysus, even in later days a statue of Dionysus was carried in procession from a temple outside the city to the theater, so that he could watch the plays performed in his honor.

Around 534 B.C., Thespis introduced an "answerer," who conversed with the chorus—the beginning of dramatic dialogue (hence the term "thespian" for actor). By wearing different masks, the answerer could play a different character each time he took the stage. Masks were also more clearly visible than an actor's face in a large theater with only natural lighting, and they