

Introduction



The history of the Greek Revival as the result of archaeological investigations has already been widely analysed in the context of eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century travels to the Levant, together with the use of archaeological reproductions as models for architects and architectural historians. This work offers an original contribution to the study of the period through a new interpretation of Lord Elgin's expedition to the East (1799–1803): a significant chapter of this artistic process but one, so far, hardly known in its critical aspects.

The name of Elgin is traditionally associated with the famous acquisition of the Parthenon Marbles. However, an analysis of this issue, which remains highly controversial and questionable in its moral and legal aspects, is not the aim of the present book. In fact, it is the almost exclusive interest in this topic, among accounts of Elgin's activities in Greece and Asia Minor, that has led critics to pay relatively little attention to the study of other aspects of his expedition, which reveal important cultural and artistic achievements. As a result, most of the literature on this subject has never properly analysed the remarkably rich and original collection of archaeological drawings which were executed in Greece by draughtsmen in the service of Lord Elgin during his diplomatic post at Constantinople, and which are now kept at the British Museum.

This study of the 'Elgin Drawings,' together with the large quantity of manuscripts from various European archives – especially from the Bruce family archive – is an attempt to re-examine the question, focusing on and assessing the significance of Elgin's contribution to the archaeological investigations undertaken by European scholars in the late Eighteenth and early Nineteenth Centuries. Analysis of Lord Elgin's intentions, and of the results expected from the archaeological research, reveal

important novelties of approach to the study of ancient Greek art, and cast new light on the cultural achievements of his expedition.

In fact, Lord Elgin's idea of taking advantage of his public office to pursue artistic objectives was not an original one, but the aims that motivated his research and the results achieved show a significant originality in his approach. Since the artistic enterprise had been shaped according to suggestions from the architect Thomas Harrison – that is, from the point of view of a practising architect – the British ambassador's expedition changed from being a traditional all-inclusive tour to a specialized one. The results were, thus, specifically addressed to professionals, and were therefore intended for the advancement of British art, architecture and design. Accordingly, the production, and planned publication, of the most accurate and scientific architectural and sculptural drawings issued so far were intended to serve educational and cultural aims. The same intentions also motivated the making of plaster casts reproducing building details and the collection of original pieces of ancient sculpture.

Although Lord Elgin never succeeded in publishing his graphic collection, the drawings were regarded as very accurate and innovative by contemporary scholars, sufficiently so for the latter to reproduce some of them in their own publications. Interest in the Elgin Drawings was evident not only in Great Britain, but also in France and the Continent. The German architect Jakob Ignaz Hittorff was so enthusiastic about a set of drawings made by one of Lord Elgin's artists, showing the Propylaia, Erechtheion and Parthenon, that he invited him to display them at the Société libre des Beaux-Arts in Paris in 1831. These positive reactions were shared by

other contemporary scholars, such as William Kinnard and Thomas Leverton Donaldson, who had the opportunity to examine the original versions at the British Museum. According to these architects, as well as the French scholar Abel Blouet, the archaeological reproductions represented a major improvement on Stuart and Revett’s publication, thus fulfilling one of Lord Elgin’s aims. As a result, some copies of the original drawings

were inserted into their own publications with possibly momentous consequences. For apart from the significance of the collection in the context of archaeological studies, the Elgin Drawings may have also played a role in the Greek Revival process because, although they were never published by the British ambassador himself, they appeared in books that served as sources for nineteenth-century architecture.

CHAPTER 1

Early Expeditions to Greece

FROM THE MIDDLE AGES TO THE RENAISSANCE

The history of travel to Greece and the sites of Greek civilization in Asia Minor is a long one.¹ During the Age of Antiquity, Roman philhellenism gave rise to extensive Eastern travels by renowned historians such as Strabo, Pausanias, and Plutarch, whose accounts provided later scholars with invaluable sources of information on ancient architectural monuments. Subsequently, in the late Christian period of Western history, the starting point can be traced to medieval times, when crusaders and pilgrims on their way to the Holy Land happened to call at places in Greece and the Middle East. However, ancient Hellas was not the principal aim for these early travellers, who were almost exclusively focused on the itinerary itself and such remains as were connected to the Christian story. They showed no curiosity in the antiquities and civilization of the pagan world, and only very rare and passing references to classic lands or remarkable sites can be found in their travel books.² The theological devotion of their estranged Greek Orthodox contemporaries seemed to interest them more than the great remains of their glorious past. At Athens they appeared indifferent to the Parthenon and what was seen as the heathen sculpture of its exterior. The only object of concern to them was the Christian church into which the cella of the Parthenon had been converted around the Fifth and Sixth Centuries. This had been due to the Edict of Milan and the later decrees of Theodosius I and II that led to the recognition of Christianity as the official religion of the Roman state, and the conversion of many pagan temples.

Then we passed on to a larger church, located within the previously mentioned citadel and dedicated to Saint

Mary, built with large marble blocks, all connected with lead, and as big as the church at Capua. Around this church, on the outside, there are sixty big columns taller than the ladders used for collecting fruit, and in circumference as wide as five men joining hands with arms fully stretched. And above these columns are beams of marble long and thick. [...] It seems impossible to the mind of man how such big buildings could have been constructed.³

Significantly, Niccolò da Martoni, a notary from Carinola, near Capua, who wrote this rare report during his pilgrimage to Jerusalem in 1395,⁴ failed to notice that a new, larger apse, which had been added during Frankish rule at the east end of the Parthenon's naos, had caused the detachment of the corresponding central portion of the cella frieze and pedimental sculptural groups. His main interest was focused on the impressive Christian relics kept within the converted Parthenon, as well as the medieval legends concerning many Athenian monuments.

For centuries ancient Greece remained almost forgotten by medieval Europe, or remembered only in myth. The first significant attention to its cultural and artistic productions can be documented in Italy in the Fifteenth Century. It is not surprising that this new concern with classical antiquities occurred in that country, in view of the flourishing revival of classical studies and the related artistic productions which the Age of Humanism had promoted. This was part of a major process of rediscovery and reappropriation of a past history which Humanists believed they had a duty to continue after the break forced by the barbarian invasions.⁵ The passing of the Duchy of Athens to the Florentine Acciaiuoli family in the late



1. Ciriaco d’Ancona, West façade of the Parthenon, Athens, c. 1435 (Deutsche Staatsbibliothek, Berlin, Codex Hamiltonianus Berolinensis 254, fol. 85^r)

Fourteenth Century had further facilitated these new contacts between Italian scholars and Greek antiquities.

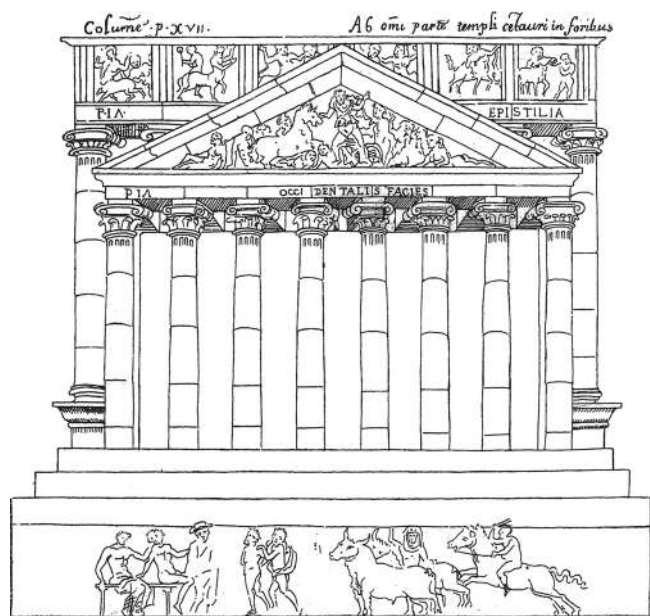
Accordingly, Ciriaco di Filippo de’ Pizzicolti di Ancona was the first traveller known to have made a drawing of the Parthenon, among other ancient Athenian buildings;⁶ and the learned Florentine historiographer Gian Francesco Poggio Bracciolini was a pioneer in the collection of Greek marbles to adorn the garden of his house in Valdarno in the style of the ancient Romans.⁷ In particular, Ciriaco, an adventurous traveller, merchant, antiquarian, man of letters, epigraphist, and self-taught artist who visited Athens in 1436 and 1444, went as far as to use, on the basis of Pliny, the name of Pheidias in reference to the Parthenon sculpture:

I was most pleased to observe that on the summit of the town’s citadel there is a huge and wonderful marble temple of the goddess Pallas, a divine work by Pheidias. It is tall, with fifty-eight columns seven feet in diameter, decorated with remarkable figures on both pediments,

and within on the topmost band [frieze] of the walls, as well as outside on the epistylia, where a battle of centaurs may be seen, marvellous products of the sculptor’s art.⁸

However, it would have been too much to expect a consistent rendering of Pheidias’s style. Arbitrarily winged figures on the west pediment are shown in a drawing from one of the several codices derived from Ciriaco’s lost *commentaria*, indicating that his vision of the temple was still filtered through the eyes of an amateur antiquary.⁹ It is very relevant, however, that the copyist did not fail to notice and represent the peristyle, in accordance with Vitruvius, with Doric columns, that is, without bases and with flutings, although of the Ionic type (see Figure 1).

Significantly, Giuliano da Sangallo’s copy, in the following century, of a model of the Parthenon based on Ciriaco’s drawing, replaced this original feature with Composite capitals.¹⁰ Moreover, Sangallo integrated the west elevation with the frieze of the south peristyle showing the Centauromachia, and placed it, on the basis of the prototypes of Roman arches, as an attic storey behind the pediment, giving rise to a version similar to the Pantheon at Rome (see Figure 2).¹¹ This provides a critical insight into the theoretical approach of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century scholars to Greek architecture. Giuliano da Sangallo transformed the Ciriacan model in order to make it conform to his preconceived notion of proper classical



2. Giuliano da Sangallo, Copy of a model of the Parthenon, Athens, based on Ciriaco d’Ancona’s drawing, n.d. (Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Rome, Codex Vaticanus Barberinus latinus 4424, fol. 28^v)

3. Hartmann Schedel, View of Athens as a late Gothic town (From H. Schedel, *Weltchronik*) (Nuremberg, 1493), fol. XXVII^r)



architecture built *all'antica*; and this notion derived from examples of Roman antiquities, reconstructed imaginatively to coincide with the ideal mathematical proportions of perfect harmony, as codified by Leon Battista Alberti.¹² In fact, even though Humanist and Renaissance commentators on the fourth book of *De Architectura* had instilled into the contemporary mind Vitruvius's idea that Greece was the birth place of the architectural orders, whose proportional and harmonic rules embodied the foundation of all proper architecture, the true model for these orders could only have been perceived vaguely through the remains of their Roman imitations.

The reason for this can be seen in the difficult conditions existing in the Levant following the foundation of the Ottoman Empire and the conquest of Greece, seven years after the fall of Constantinople and the Byzantine Empire in 1453. This circumstance, together with continual hostilities between Venetians and Turks, as well as the assaults of pirates from Algeria, had made it extremely difficult for European travellers to explore the eastern areas of Greek civilization, which had in consequence remained almost inaccessible to them. Direct knowledge of Hellas was therefore still very limited. Significantly, in 1493 Hartmann Schedel's great Nuremberg chronicle represented Athens as a town in the German late Gothic style (see Figure 3).¹³

Thus it was eventually through the more accessible Roman remains, even if considered mere imitations of the Greek originals, that the primary sources of inspiration for the classical vocabulary of Renaissance architecture derived. However, it was inevitable that these external conditions in the following centuries would lead to a

parallel process of theoretical replacement of Greece by Rome as the source of the best principles of architecture from which to draw models for contemporary productions.

In fact, art and architecture were not the main reason for the early travellers to visit the East. Nor is it surprising that, following the fall of Constantinople to Mehmed II, and the subsequent conquest of Athens by Omar three years later, there was almost no reaction from scholarly Europe to the conversion of the Christian Parthenon into a mosque.¹⁴ The Humanist Enea Silvio Piccolomini, later Pope Pius II, was one of the very few Europeans to lament the end of 'noble Greece':

O noble Greece, behold now your end, now you are at last really dead. Alas, how many cities once so mighty in reputation and material objects are now no more! Where now is Thebes, where Athens, where Mycenae, where Larissa, where Lacedaemon, where Corinth, where those other memorable cities of old whose walls you may seek, and find not even their ruins.¹⁵

Highly profitable trade was a more urgent reason for the promotion of new travels in those regions, especially for British voyagers. In addition, the powerful new Ottoman Empire had aroused a curiosity among Europeans concerning Turkish customs and manners. Accordingly, even though they were little affected by the contemporary Continental enthusiasm for a past history that they did not share, British travellers did show some interest in the remote Levantine shores they happened to visit during their commercial activities. Sometimes a phrase book and dictionary of modern Greek was attached to

their accounts, or general geographical descriptions of the places visited could be found. However, these appendices were intended mainly for the practical rather than cultural purpose of helping future voyagers in finding their way around exotic places and languages.¹⁶

In this context, Continental travellers of the Sixteenth Century showed a more scholarly approach and a more exploratory attitude to the classical sites than did the British. This can be seen especially in the records of late Renaissance French scholars like the diplomat Pierre Belon, and the king's chamberlain and geographer Nicholas de Nicolay, where we find some reference to historical sites and ancient art, as well as learned quotations from ancient authors.¹⁷ However, these represented only some of the widespread interests of these first travellers, for whom sciences such as mineralogy, geology, botany, geography, and natural history, as well as Turkish religion, government, customs, manners, and merchandise, seem to have been the main objects of a highly miscellaneous curiosity. The all-inclusive nature of these early accounts of Eastern journeys was to remain a characteristic of travel books for centuries to come.

It would not be an exaggeration to say that concern with ancient remains at this time was mainly connected with acquisition. The strangeness and rarity of ancient sculpture, pottery, bronzes, coins, and gems from Greek and Middle Eastern regions acted as a magnet for Western travellers. Their collecting mania can be documented from the Fifteenth Century, a tendency which developed on a much larger scale in the following centuries. Antique pieces were collected as travel souvenirs, as evidence of an ancient and great age, or as symbols of prestige and wealth for the owners.¹⁸ Whatever the reasons for this phenomenon, it undoubtedly led to a great deal of damage to ancient artistic remains.¹⁹ As early as the end of the Sixteenth Century, Master Thomas Dallam, an English organ builder who had been sent to the Porte to present Sultan Mehmed III with one of his complex musical instruments as a gift from Queen Elizabeth, enthusiastically reported how he had succeeded in detaching a marble fragment from a pillar in Troy:

... we saw more at large the rewins of the wales and housis in Troye, and from thence I broughte a peece of a whyte marble piller, the which I broke with my owne handes, havinge a good hamer, which my mate Harvie did carrie a shore for the same purpose; and I broughte this peece of marble to London.²⁰

However, not all travellers showed the same uncritical attitude, and we can detect at this early stage the beginning of the approach which would lead to the idea of 'rescuing' ancient remains from oblivion, decay, or Turkish vandalism. A significant example of this approach is given by Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq, the representative of Ferdinand I of Austria at Suleyman I's court from 1554 to 1562, and an assiduous collector of coins and manuscripts for the Imperial Library at Vienna:

While we were at Nicaea, some Turks, who were digging up stone from the ruins for the construction of public buildings at Constantinople, came across a statue of an armed soldier, of excellent workmanship and almost perfect. But with their hammers they soon reduced it to a shapeless mass. On our expressing vexation at this act of theirs, the workmen jeered at us, and asked us if we wanted, in accordance with our customs, to worship the statue and pray to it.²¹

THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

In the second half of the Seventeenth Century, the number of travellers and the attraction of antique sculpture increased steadily. External political and commercial factors now made journeys to the Levant easier, particularly the cessation of hostilities between Venetians and Turks after the Siege of Candia (1669), and the establishment of the Ottoman dominion throughout the Archipelago. This was a short but fruitful interlude which lasted until the Austrian and Venetian coalition of Christian powers against the Turkish menace in 1684, and the consequent occupation of the Morea and capture of Athens. The last event had momentous consequence for the architecture of the Acropolis, whose form was changed irreparably. On 26 September 1687, after Athens had been besieged for eight days, a shell fired at the Ottoman military fortress on the Acropolis by the cannons of the Venetian general Francesco Morosini landed on the roof of the Parthenon, where gunpowder had been stored. The explosion destroyed the central part of the structure, and further damage was caused by a fire which burned in the monument for two days, as well as by Morosini's attempt to plunder pieces of sculpture from its west pediment.²²

To make things worse, when the Turks recaptured Athens the following year, they built a small mosque in the centre of the Parthenon's cella.



4. Francesco Fanelli, View of the Acropolis of Athens under Morosini's bombing in 1687 (From F. Fanelli, *Atene Attica* (Venice, 1707), p. 308)

Fortunately, some travellers had been able to view the Acropolis in its former condition before these events took place. In fact, in addition to the improving political situation, commercial and diplomatic missions had made it possible to travel the East with security. In particular France and England, the two traditional trading rivals, had developed commercial relations with the Sublime Porte through the establishment of 'capitulations', or trade treaties. This meant that the usual Venetian interference was bypassed, with the significant consequence that privileges and measures of protection were obtained for other European merchants in the Bosphorus area. In addition to the dozens of French *maisons de commerce* which spanned the East from Anatolia to Egypt, the development of the Levant Company, established in 1581 by the British, gave their fellow-travellers the opportunity to make their journeys in company with merchants who were aware of the safest routes, thus avoiding the numerous dangers and difficulties usually involved in travels to the Ottoman dominions.

On the other hand, within the delicate international political situation, trading companies were also founded as a political manoeuvre in order to enlist the sympathies

of the Turkish power against rival European countries. Thus, the establishment of diplomatic missions and more powerful consulates in the East became a characteristic of the century.²³ As a result, the first travellers motivated by the new interest in the remains of ancient Eastern civilizations tended to be ambassadors and diplomats. As residents of some years' standing in Levantine countries, they had time to observe carefully the places they visited, and to write more reliably about them, as well as to give advice and safe places to stay to new visitors. Their main focus was, however, Constantinople, and their principal antiquarian aim the acquisition of manuscripts and coins, together with pieces of sculpture and reliefs. No specific attention was paid to architecture at this stage, but the collection of antiquities became systematic through their activities. This practice of acquiring ancient remains through the office of ambassador in the East was initiated by Cardinal Jules Mazarin and the French chancellor Pierre Séguier, a policy further developed by the royal minister Jean-Baptiste Colbert. Jean de la Haye, the French ambassador to the Ottoman Porte from 1638 to 1659, was particularly prominent as an agent in the collection of antiquities at Constantinople and Asia Minor

for Louis XIV, and the same policy was echoed on the other side of the Channel, where Sir Thomas Roe, British ambassador to Constantinople from 1621 to 1628, accomplished the same task on behalf of the Duke of Buckingham and the Earl of Arundel.²⁴ In 1634, Henry Peacham commented on the collecting achievements of the latter:

And here I cannot but with much reverence, mention the every way Right honourable Thomas Howard Lord High Marshall of England, as great for his noble Patronage of Arts and ancient learning, as for his birth and place. To whose liberall charges and magnificence, this angle of the world oweth the first sight of Greeke and Romane Statues, with whose admired presence he began to honour the Gardens and Galleries of Arundel-House about twentie yeeres agoe, and hath ever since continued to transplant old Greece into England.²⁵

Although Italy and Rome were still recognized as the best sources for procurement of sculptural antiquities, regulations forbidding their export induced the main collectors of the time to turn to the East for easier acquisitions. This attitude reflected one of the primary purposes of the collecting mania which was of a private nature: ancient sculpture was meant for the embellishment of the mansions and estates of the European aristocracy. There was no critical attempt to classify sculptural pieces by period or style, as their collection was not aimed at acquiring knowledge about ancient art. In view of their status value, it was more important that they should be complete than authentic, and as a result the ‘headlesse and lame’²⁶ pieces buried in Greece, even though ‘most of them venerable for antiquitie and elegancy’,²⁷ were not seen as suitable for conferring distinction on noblemen’s palaces. The skilled restorers in Rome were still setting the standard of seventeenth-century artistic taste through their academic copies of Greek classical and Hellenistic sculpture.²⁸

As already mentioned, it was generally accepted that the Greeks had been the teachers of the Romans, having first developed proper architecture through a system of proportions. But the theoretical and artistic evaluation of Greek and Roman architecture deriving from this premise could move in opposite directions. In accordance with the traditional evolutionary interpretation of artistic development, many scholars were led to regard Roman architectural achievements as improvements on Greek productions. This was the most widely accepted interpretation in the Seventeenth Century, especially within French theoretical and artistic milieus, in accordance

with the policy of renewing classicism promoted by the strengthening of Louis XIV’s absolutism.

However, though relatively rare, the opposing notion that architecture had reached an unsurpassed degree of perfection in Greece was beginning to find support in the intellectual artistic debate, and would gain further influence in the following century. The Neo-Platonic classicism of Giovanni Pietro Bellori,²⁹ secretary of the Accademia di S. Luca in the middle of the century, found a parallel with Roland Fréart de Chambray and his search for ideal archetypal norms to direct the architecture of his own time. Fréart insisted on the need to return to Greek principles, unhistorically interpreted as the architecture of the origins. In the *Parallèle de l’architecture antique avec la moderne*³⁰ he upheld the theoretical distinction between the three Greek orders and the two Latin ones, regarding the Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian as the embodiment of all that was perfect and necessary in architecture, and seeing the development of architecture as a process of degeneration. Fréart’s theoretical advocacy of the excellence of Greek architecture was however of a purely aesthetic nature, since the Greek orders he praised were still interpreted on the basis of Roman examples. Direct archaeological knowledge of authentic Greek architecture remained very restricted, and it was being accumulated at a very slow pace. Only a few authentic vases and pieces of sculpture were to be seen in private cabinets and royal collections, and few travellers, none of them professionals, had seen the major monuments of Greece. Nor was a proper record yet available.

Nevertheless, by the end of the century there was a new urge to return to original sources through the direct study of monuments, as opposed to the uncritical acceptance of authoritative theories taken from the traditional architectural treatises, such as Vitruvius, Serlio, Palladio, or Vignola. In 1682, Antoine Babuty Desgodets, the French architect and protégé of Colbert, published *Les édifices antiques de Rome, dessinés et mesurés très exactement*, where he displayed a new empirical method in the quest for the absolute canon in architecture. Desgodets may have concentrated on Roman architecture in his direct and accurate investigations, but his method offered a fundamental legacy for the Greek archaeological publications which appeared in the following century.

With this general background in mind, we should not be surprised that one of the first man to introduce the art of Greece to Europe was a diplomat, the French ambassador of Louis XIV to the Sublime Porte, Charles-Marie-François Olier, Marquis de Nointel et d’Angervilliers.³¹

Sent to Constantinople in 1670 to renew the French ‘capitulations’ with the Ottoman power, Nointel spent five of his nine years in this diplomatic post travelling throughout Greece, arriving in Athens in 1674. His approach to Greece was of a multifaceted, all-inclusive nature, as can be seen from the various scholars he attached to the expedition or employed *in situ* to investigate his different fields of interest. These included Antoine Galland, the orientalist, future translator of *Les mille et une nuits: Contes arabes*, and Nointel’s personal antiquary, who worked on ancient inscriptions and erudite theological problems;³² two gentlemen, a Frenchman named Antoine des Barres and an Italian named Cornelio Magni of Parma, who published miscellaneous but unreliable accounts of Asia Minor, the Archipelago and Athens;³³ and two artists, the Flemish Rombaut Fayd’herbe (who died at Naxos in 1673), and a Frenchman from Troyes, Jacques Carrey, who were there to give visual form to the French ambassador’s artistic interests in Greek antiquities. In particular, Nointel had an opportunity to view the Parthenon before the destruction resulting from Morosini’s bombing and looting attempt in 1687. At that time, its sculpture was almost intact, apart from the already mentioned collapse of the central part of the east pediment, the opening of six windows in the cella frieze, and the defacing of the metopes on the north, west, and east sides. As a result, Nointel’s artist, usually referred to as Jacques Carrey, who was concerned with recording these pieces of sculpture through a vast number of drawings,³⁴ has provided us with invaluable archaeological evidence concerning the Parthenon’s classical style: in particular, the only surviving survey of fifteen metopes on the south side, most of the original figures of the west pediment, and part of the cella frieze³⁵ (see Figures 5–6, 182–185).

Nointel’s artistic interest was mainly limited to sculpture. His artist made only a few sketches of architectural remains, and these were very inaccurate, with no attempt to record the architecture in scale drawings. Moreover, the Parthenon’s sculpture was regarded, in the spirit of the Seventeenth Century, as an ornamental appendage to the main structure, detached from its support. Consequently, no understanding of the architectural integration of the plastic elements can be found in Nointel’s drawings.³⁶ Nevertheless, Nointel’s genuine admiration of ancient Greek art had important consequences. He may have been incapable of critically perceiving stylistic differences, but his comments on the antiquities of Athens contained in essence the premises of the next-century debate on the superiority of Greek against Roman art, a debate now

based on archaeological evidence rather than on abstract theories:

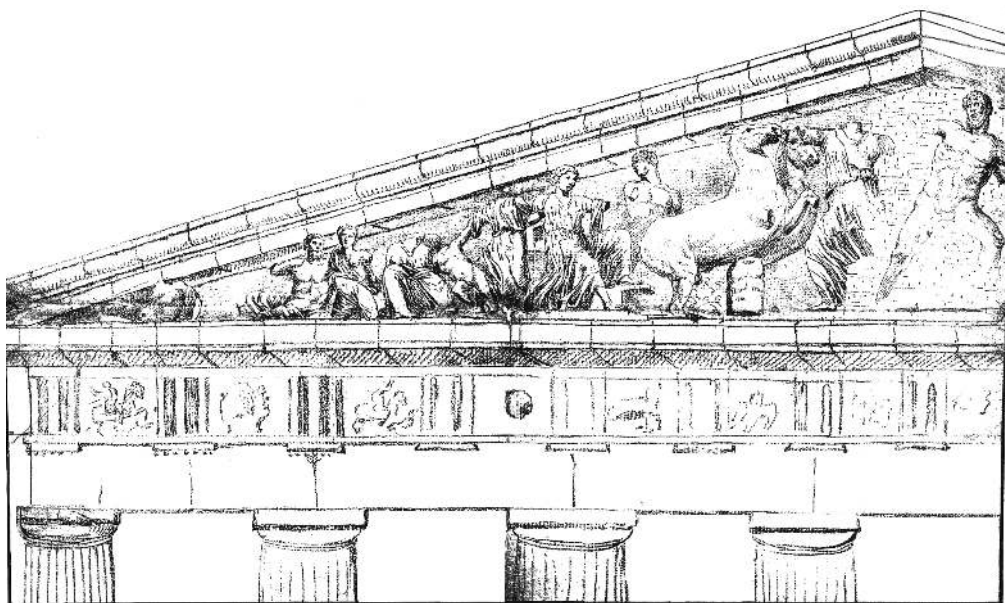
There are many connections, but I can assure you, Sir, that nobody has had as many means as myself to investigate all of these artistic riches, and we can say that those to be seen in the fortress around the temple of Minerva surpass whatever is finest among the reliefs and statues of Rome.³⁷

Nointel’s ideas never received wide dissemination, although it had been his firm intention, when back in France, to write an account of his Eastern travels. Eventually this was to be the task of Jacob Spon and George Wheler.

Among the numerous travellers still engaged in the Levant in various professional capacities, Spon and Wheler were the first to plan their expedition solely for the study of ancient monuments.³⁸ Despite the difference between the two scholars in their respective attitudes and approaches to classical antiquities, the publications resulting from their journey set a new standard for modern Greek travel literature, and remained a benchmark for future undertakings.³⁹

Spon was a doctor of medicine, but a deeper passion for classical studies had involved him in the editing and publishing of the first detailed guide to Athens by the Jesuit Jacques-Paul Babin in 1674.⁴⁰ This was the work which developed Spon’s admiration for Athens, and inspired him to undertake the journey to Greece in order to appreciate at first hand what he had described through passages from ancient authors and modern travellers. Spon met Wheler, an amateur botanist, in Rome, where the latter was visiting classical sites in the company of his Oxford tutor, and the two men decided to set out together for Greece. The Eastern journey had however a radical different meaning for Wheler, who saw it merely as an extension of his traditional Grand Tour in France and Italy. On 20 June 1675 they began their Levantine travels, sailing from Venice to Constantinople, together with two Englishmen, Sir Giles Eastcourt and the astronomer and mathematician Francis Vernon. The latter travellers, after having separated at Zante, did not survive their journey.⁴¹

Despite the improved accuracy of the publications arising from Spon and Wheler’s expedition, they nevertheless remained works characteristic of antiquarians and collectors, concerned with topographical research based on classical authors’ accounts, rather than specialized works on art and architecture. However, just as they had based their books on previous travel literature,



5. Jacques Carrey [?], Left half of the west pediment of the Parthenon, Athens, 1674 (From H.A. Omont (ed.), *Athènes au XVII^e siècle* [. . .] (Paris, 1898), pl. II)

from ancient authors to contemporaries or very recent predecessors, so they in their turn provided later travellers with information on which they were to build their own accounts. Inevitably, this process resulted in not only their correct observations, but also their misjudgements, to be disseminated through space and time. In particular, Spon and Wheler's accounts left an extremely relevant description of the Parthenon, since they were the last to see the monument in its almost intact state before Morosini's bombing. As a result, despite inaccuracies in the dating and interpretation of the pediments, their work was to have a tremendous popularity and diffusion in Western Europe during the following century. The description of the Parthenon included an architectural engraving of the monument which, while correct in its representation of the Doric order with fluted columns without base, was nevertheless of very poor quality in its rendering of the proportions and general layout of the temple⁴² (see Figure 7). This illustration, together with those of the Hephaisteion, Horologion of Andronicus Cyrrhestes, Monument of Lysicrates, and Doric Portico, was no doubt inaccurate and partially mistaken, but it remained authoritative for more than half a century, until Le Roy's survey in the 1750s and the first issue of his publication in 1758.

Spon and Wheler may not have been as radical as Nointel in their praise of Greek rather than Roman art, but they nevertheless contributed significantly to the

development of a new attitude towards the appreciation of Hellenic artistic production. 'As to the eminent Monuments of Antiquity, yet remaining at Athens', Wheler wrote, 'I dare prefer them before any Place in the World, Rome only excepted.'⁴³ This comment followed the view of Francis Vernon, who had written earlier, in 1676: 'In Athens I have spent two months. Next to Rome I judge it the most worthy to be seen for Antiquities of any I have yet been at.'⁴⁴

The increasing interest in Greek art urged travellers to take records of ancient monuments, especially of the Acropolis of Athens. 'But it is difficult', Vernon observed, 'because the Castle of Athens, in which it [the Parthenon] stands, is a garrison, and the Turks are jealous, and brutishly barbarous, if they take notice that any measures it.'⁴⁵ Accordingly, even at this early stage we can document travellers' attempts to bribe the Turkish authorities in order to gain access to the Athenian Citadel. We know, for example, that the first sketchy images of the Acropolis monuments which Western scholars were able to appreciate cost Spon and Wheler three okes of coffee for the Turkish garrison.⁴⁶ Even the Marquis de Nointel, notwithstanding the great privileges and concessions that he enjoyed in the Levant, was forced to pay 'a cut of six braccia [arm lengths] of Scarlet of Venice [cloth] of remarkable quality, and half a dozen okes of coffee of four pounds each, for a total of fifty sequins' to gain access to the Citadel.⁴⁷ His artists were under the