

# The Heraion of Argos in Comparison to the Temple of Epikourios Apollo at Bassae<sup>1</sup>

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This paper concerns the comparison of the Argive Heraion and the temple of Epikourios Apollo at Bassae, regarding the architecture and sculptural decoration as well as a preliminary discussion on the expenses. It is about two important monuments of the Peloponnese, which are contemporary in date.

## Introduction – Historical Frame

The late 5<sup>th</sup> century BC is an historical period that suffered political, financial and sociological aspects from the Peloponnesian War and led to the following decline of Athens.<sup>2</sup> Despite this historical situation, artistic creation did not stop in Athens nor in other cities-states, as archaeological research has already proved. Was it out of the deep respect to the gods? Or does it show an attempt to show off wealth? John Salmon states that the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War suspended building work at many sites.<sup>3</sup>

## The Temple of Epikourios Apollo

In the region of Phigaleia, near the borders of Messenia, the temple of Epikourios Apollo was built during the Great Plague that occurred in Athens in 429 BC.<sup>4</sup> Greek periegetes Pausanias considered this temple as one of the most splendid throughout Greece: “*ναῶν δὲ ὅσοι Πελοποννησίους εἰσὶ, μετὰ γε τὸν ἐν Τεγέῃ προτιμῶτο οὗτος ἂν τοῦ λίθου τε ἐς κάλλος καὶ τῆς ἁρμονίας ἔνεκα*”.<sup>5</sup> The temple of Epikourios Apollo was made of porous stone, whereas marble was used for the decoration. Its proportions are Archaistic (6 × 15).<sup>6</sup>

Concerning the temple, a series of innovations reveal its specific character. The deep pronaos is considered innovative in comparison to contemporary monuments.<sup>7</sup> The wide cella has a Π-shaped inner colonnade, which consists of Ionic semicolumns that are recognized as an Atticizing element. Another important feature within the cella is the use of Corinthian capitals. In the sculptural decoration, the existence of an Ionic frieze is a particularity of the monument. The small room to the south is considered as an *adyton*.<sup>8</sup>

### Heraion of Argos

According to Greek mythology, Hera was the patron deity of Argos.<sup>9</sup> The first temple dedicated to her was erected on the southern slopes of Aetovouno hill in the Geometric period and was probably made of wood. The geometric temple was built on the upper terrace of the sanctuary;<sup>10</sup> part of the south stylobates and a retaining wall have been preserved from this period. The five stoai excavated at the site are probably dated to the second half of the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC.

The Geometric temple of Hera was destroyed during a fire in 423 BC, after the goddess' priestess Chryseis fell asleep: “καὶ ὁ νεῶς τῆς Ἥρας τοῦ αὐτοῦ θέρους ἐν Ἄργει κατεκαύθη, Χρυσίδος τῆς ἱερείας λύχνον τινὰ θείσης ἡμίμενον πρὸς τὰ στέμματα καὶ ἐπικαταδαρθούσης, ὥστε ἔλαθεν ἀφθέντα πάντα καὶ καταφλεχθέντα”.<sup>11</sup> The testimony of Thucydides provides a *terminus post quem* of 423 BC for the erection of the Classical temple, which is thus almost contemporary to the temple of Epikourios Apollo.

Eupolemos from Argos was the architect of the Classical Heraion;<sup>12</sup> the dimensions of the stylobates are 17.30 × 16.90 m. The temple is reconstructed as having 6 columns on the narrow side and twelve along its long sides. So, the longitudinal axis is a bit narrower in comparison to the general rule for Classical temples (normally 13 columns in length).

The architectural details as well as the ornamentation reveal the intense influence of the Attic artistic tradition. Scholars have identified a series of Atticisms in the decoration.<sup>13</sup> Within the cella, the Ionic cyma recalls the decoration of the Erechtheion.<sup>14</sup> Roux concludes that Attic craftsmen worked on the Heraion.<sup>15</sup> The sima of the Heraion (figs. 1–6), made of Attic marble, recalls Attic monuments, according to Pfaff, namely in the form of its lion-heads and decoration.<sup>16</sup> The palmette akroteria belong to the complex type with spiral shoots, which is also known from the Parthenon.<sup>17</sup>

However, Pfaff also recognized a series of elements that seem to prove the Peloponnesian origins of the Heraion.<sup>18</sup> A typical example is the access ramp at the front of the temple, which is unusual in Attic monuments, as well as the design of the krepidoma, with steps of graduated height. At Attic temples, the steps are of equal height. A third Peloponnesian element is the differentiation among the mouldings, in comparison to Attic examples.

### The Costs

As far as the costs of both temples are concerned, few has been written till now. Due to the lack of primary sources, the discussion can be only theoretical. The factors that played an important role in the costs of both cases are the size, the materials used, the transfer of the stone and marble blocks, the decoration, as well as the wages of the workers and artists that were employed. As far as the size is concerned, the Heraion is



Fig. 1: Konstantinos Voursouras (sculptor) explains the ways that marble was processed in ancient quarries.



Fig. 2: The first stage after selecting and transferring the appropriate piece of marble is to sketch the motif on its smooth surface.



Fig. 3: The motif is ready to be carved.



Fig. 4: The sculptor works out the motif using a chisel.



Fig. 5: The sculptor uses different angles of his body.



Fig. 6: After finishing the work, he cuts off the slab from the raw part of the marble block.

wider than the temple of Apollo (dimensions of the pteron: 39 × 20 m and 39.87 × 16.13 m respectively). For both buildings, local stones were used, which means that the building material should not be transferred over a long distance.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, as the limestone of Bassae is a harder material than the porous one used in the case of Argos, it is obvious that more working days were demanded. Pfaff also states that a softer, cheaper, and porous stone was used for the foundations of the temple in order to reduce the cost.<sup>20</sup> Despite the Heraion being slightly (3.87 m) wider, it consists of materials that can be carved more easily, and so the cost of the buildings themselves should be approximately the same.

The temple of Epikourios Apollo had elaborate sculptural decoration. In this case, it is probable that Athenian artists worked here. The quality of the work as well as the number and size of the sculptural fragments and the capitals preserved indicate a high cost for the decoration of the temple. On the other hand, the sculptural decoration of the Argive temple is preserved in a poor condition and thus, it cannot be compared in quality and size to the previous temple. Preliminarily, one could say that the temple of Epikourios Apollo had higher costs than required for the Heraion. Further research would enlighten the matter.

### Conclusions

Despite the fact that both temples have almost the same size, the costs in the case of Apollo's temple appear to be higher. This is not only due to its material, but also because of the quality and techniques used for its decoration.

### Notes

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<sup>2</sup> See Powell 1980, 87–114.

<sup>3</sup> Salmon 2002, 195.

<sup>4</sup> Paus. 8.41.8. However, Cooper (1996, 4) suggests that the epiclesis derives from the Arcadian military force of the epikouroi, who served in Athens during this period.

<sup>5</sup> Paus. 8.41.8.

<sup>6</sup> Arapogianni 2007, 47; Gruben 2001, 128 f. The number of columns, the proportion of length to width and the external dimensions have been, according to Gruben, influenced from the temple of Apollo in Delphi.

<sup>7</sup> Arapogianni 2007, 41; Nielsen 2017, 7.

<sup>8</sup> Nielsen 2017, 7f.

<sup>9</sup> Paus. 2.15.5: λέγεται δὲ καὶ ὧδε λόγος: Φορωνέα ἐν τῇ γῆ ταύτῃ γενέσθαι πρῶτον, Ἴναχον δὲ οὐκ ἄνδρα ἀλλὰ τὸν ποταμὸν πατέρα εἶναι Φορωνεῖ: τοῦτον δὲ Ποσειδῶνι καὶ Ἥρᾳ δικάσαι περὶ τῆς χώρας, σὺν δὲ αὐτῷ Κηφισόν τε καὶ Ἀστερίωνα [καὶ τὸν Ἴναχον] ποταμὸν: κρινάντων δὲ Ἥρας εἶναι τὴν γῆν, οὕτω σφίσιιν ἀφανίσαι τὸ ὕδωρ Ποσειδῶν.

<sup>10</sup> Strøm 1998, 37–126.

<sup>11</sup> Thuk. 4.133.2; Pfaff 2003, 191.

<sup>12</sup> Paus. 2.17.3: ἀρχιτέκτονα μὲν δὴ γενέσθαι τοῦ ναοῦ λέγουσιν Εὐπόλεμον Ἀργεῖον.

<sup>13</sup> Schuchhardt 1927, 147–155; Pfaff 2003, 21 no. 90.

<sup>14</sup> Pfaff 2003, 171 no. 17.

<sup>15</sup> Roux 1961, 58; Pfaff 2003, 23 no. 119; 195.

<sup>16</sup> Pfaff 2003, 181.

<sup>17</sup> Pfaff 2003, 141–143.

<sup>18</sup> Pfaff 2003, 71. 195f.

<sup>19</sup> For the cost of transport in Antiquity, see Burford 1969, 184–191; Pfaff 2003, 27f. no. 3.

<sup>20</sup> Pfaff 2003, 27f.

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