

## Spencer POPE

### IG I<sup>3</sup> 449: Evidence for Chryselephantine Doors in the Parthenon

The Parthenon building accounts for the year 434/3 BC (IG I<sup>3</sup> 449) list the sale of 1,372 Dr. worth of gold and 1,305 Dr., 4 ob. worth of ivory. This material is generally considered to be scrap sold off by the epistatae in an effort to recover outlaid construction expenses. While the exact use of the gold and ivory within the building cannot be determined from the extant accounts, the late date of the sale suggests that they were employed in an aspect of the building completed only at the very end of the entire project. Inlaying the enormous doors of the naos and opisthodomos would be one such undertaking. A study of related epigraphic and literary evidence reinforces the possibility that the Parthenon had chryselephantine doors.

Ivory, gold and silver first appear in the Parthenon building accounts in 439/8 BC (year 9), at which time ivory is purchased and payments are made to metal workers (IG I<sup>3</sup> 444, l. 266-276). These transactions have been associated with work on the base of the chryselephantine statue of Athena Parthenos, which was embellished with a representation of the birth of Pandora, possibly in gilded metal (Dinsmoor, 1913; Burford 1960; Hurwit, 1999). That these materials were used in the base is assured by a reference in the inventory of the Hekatompedon to a sculpted warrior wearing a helmet with "gold cheek pieces and a plume of ivory" (IG II<sup>2</sup> 1421, cf. Harris, 1995, p. 116, V 13). The outlays for precious metal working and ivory occurred shortly before the dedication of the statue, installed in time for the Panathenaic festival of 438/7 BC, making it probable that the sculpture of the base was completed at the same time as the Parthenos itself. While it is possible that the gold and ivory sold off in year 14 was excess from this project, its delayed sale would be incongruent with the assiduous financial control exhibited throughout the Periclean building program.

Entries in the Parthenon treasury inventories confirm that gold was used to adorn the cedar doors of the Parthenon (IG II<sup>2</sup> 1424a l. 46-7, cf. Harris, 1995 p. 150, V 202). The fragile nature of inlaid gold, often in the form of thin foil, necessitated that the decoration of the doors occurred toward the end of the progression of building, given the possibility for theft or damage while the Parthenon remained a construction site. The adornments for the doors would then have been carried out as the Ionic frieze was completed and the iron grilles were set in place between the columns of the porches. If the gold sold off in 434/3 BC is from this project, then it is highly probable that ivory was inlaid in the doors as well.

Literary and epigraphic evidence suggests that such an adornment would be a likely possibility for the Parthenon. Cicero praises the artistry of the gold and ivory work decorating the doors in the temple of Athena at Syracuse in the context of its theft at the hands of Verres (In Verrem, II, 4.56). This temple was commissioned by Gelon on the occasion of the victory over the Carthaginians and no expense was spared in its construction, as was the case for the Parthenon. Building accounts from Epidauros, Delphi, Delos and Didyma corresponding to temples dated from the fourth through the last century BC all include ivory, often mentioned in conjunction with doorways. Thus, a

tradition of gold and ivory adornment for temple doors both predating and postdating the construction of the Parthenon can be established. The sale of gold and ivory near the completion of the Parthenon may be an indicator that this building as well had chryselephantine doors, creating a worthy complement the splendid image of the Athena Parthenos.