

4

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Doric Figuration

“E VERY ARCHITECTURAL FORM HAS ARISEN IN CONSTRUCTION AND HAS SUCCESSIVELY BECOME AN ARTFORM”¹ So

Otto Wagner, in the chapter on construction in his work *Modern Architecture*, used uppercase fonts to score the point. Writing around 1900, his convictions reflected the evolutionary concerns of the nineteenth century—the century of Darwin, Viollet-le-Duc, and Semper—while at the same time setting the tone for modernist theory in the twentieth century. The idea that art is born of necessity was not new, of course, beginning in antiquity with the Stoic philosophers and later Roman writers. The primary difference lay in the degree of autonomy and authority that the “art forms” acquire once established by custom, the latter being paramount in Cicero’s view:

It was certainly not the search for beauty, but necessity, that has fashioned the celebrated pediment of our Capitol and other religious edifices. But to tell the truth, once the principle had been established of collecting the water on either side of the roof, dignity came to be added to the utility of the pediment, so much so that even if the Capitol were to be set up in the heavens, where it should not rain, it could hardly have any dignity without its double pitch roof.²

The formation of the Doric order is the archetypal example of both the passage from construction to art and the doctrine of petrification, by which the formal characteristics of a timber system are canonized in stone. A half-generation or so after Cicero, Vitruvius described the developmental phases in a famous passage in his fourth book, telling how ancient carpenters employed tie beams projecting beyond the main walls, later cutting them off flush, and “as this had an ugly look,” subsequently covering them with boards “shaped as triglyphs are now made.” Similarly, the mutules in the geison or cornice capping the

frieze were “devised from the projections of the principal rafters.”³ Meanwhile, the Ciceronian triumph of custom is illustrated by countless versions of the Doric order down the centuries that have been treated in ways that have little or nothing to do with the tectonic context. From this arises the contradictory modern reception of Doric. It is both a paradigm of the constructive origin of form and as independent of constructional “truth” as any part of the classical lexicon.

The Vitruvian thesis is sustained by clear cases of petrification in disparate architectural traditions, particularly those of China, India, and ancient Lycia, where there are many surviving substantial stone sepulchral monuments, both free-standing and rock cut, that celebrate an elaborate timber language of beam, joist, log, mortise, and tenon. Vitruvius’s version of events sounds so reasonable, at least in general terms, that from the time of Raphael, artists, architects, and archaeologists have delighted in speculating about the possible primitive, timber form of the proto-Doric temple. For a century or so after 1750, propelled on the one hand by the success of the Greek Revival and on the other by Abbot Laugier’s discourse on the primitive hut, the theme became a staple of architectural theorizing, and the literature on Greek architecture contains dozens of variations on the theme.⁴

As a unique ancient witness, Vitruvius can hardly be dismissed out of hand, yet reams of accumulated criticism refute his interpretation.⁵ Since the sources on which he relied date from the fourth to the second centuries B.C., well after the rise of Doric in the seventh century B.C., it would not be surprising if Vitruvius had enlarged on a kernel of truth to create a comprehensive theory, and it is the equation of triglyph to beam end that smacks the most of postrationalization. Indeed, the physical configuration of the triglyph frieze positively contradicts a timber origin on several counts. Here I highlight the most frequent objections: that triglyphs run around both ends and flanks of rectangular buildings, whereas constructional logic anticipates them only on one or the other; that triglyphs are far too big and too frequently spaced to mimic beam ends;⁶ that early peristyles were only so wide as to require inclined rafters/mutules rather than cross-beams; that the timberwork of Greek temples typically lay not at the level of the frieze but above it.⁷ The detailed resolution of the triglyph, with the canonic three chamfered verticals and horizontal capping piece, is also something of a puzzle. Some have been tempted to see here the legacy of the joints between three slim beams,⁸ but I find it hard to believe that the early Greeks had stumbled on the structural advantages of composite deep beams only to forget them as technology otherwise improved. These and other doubts about the beam-end theory have prompted many attempts to trace the origin of the triglyph by applying the concept of evolution and petrification in other ways. Inspired by potential parallels in various vernacular traditions,

putative ancestors include windows or window bars (a theory that Vitruvius explicitly refuted),⁹ structural stub-piers,¹⁰ and colonnettes associated with a clerestory system or even a second story.¹¹ It cannot be denied that such exercises have a certain fascination, nor that vernacular construction down the ages offers important insights, but great caution is needed if we are not to force evidence to fit our preconceptions.

Theories like those just mentioned all envisage an evolutionary process by which older constructional forms were progressively transformed or atrophied, just as horses' hooves developed from claws, or penguins' flippers from what were once fully functioning wings. But in the run-up to the seventh century B.C., there simply did not exist the social and economic framework capable of sustaining an extended evolution. Terra-cotta models of Dark Age buildings with their steep thatched roofs give no hint of proto-Doric. As J. J. Coulton observes, when they do arrive, "the forms making up the Doric order appear ready developed."¹² So there is growing support for the theory that Doric was invented around the third quarter of the seventh century B.C.,¹³ probably in the Peloponnese, although possibly in Corinth¹⁴ or Argos.¹⁵ The remaining challenge is how to explain the "ready developed" forms. One line of thought presumes that early Greek architects borrowed from Mycenae, the Near East, or Egypt, where there are forerunners to be found for the fluting of shafts, Doric capitals,¹⁶ decorative motifs like the palmette,¹⁷ and figural fabulations such as gorgons and griffins (which the Greeks used for acroteria, antefixes, and metopes). Once again the triglyph frieze eludes a sure ancestry. The most plausible pre-Greek source is the Mycenaean split-rosette frieze, the rosettes often being "split" by tripartite motifs;¹⁸ alternatively, the inspiration might lie with the characteristic alternation on Geometric vases of decorative fields and groups of vertical stripes,¹⁹ if not with the practical and aesthetic logic of working stone from the outset.²⁰ Nonetheless, there is nothing here to tell us why triglyphs have only a horizontal capping piece at the top, why the uprights have chamfered facets, nor why these are linked by arches.

The weaknesses of theories to do with constructive logic, evolutionary development, and external influence open the door to other kinds of interpretations. Modern perceptions of ancient theory have been overly conditioned by the much repeated Vitruvian triad: *firmitas*, *commoditas*, and *venustas* (firmness or durability, commodity or utility, and delight or beauty).²¹ This tripolar model should rather be seen in context—that is, Vitruvius's desire to devise a conceptual scheme for architecture comparable with the triads that Greek philosophers applied to other disciplines. In reality there is nothing inevitable about these three materialist or gratificational poles; elsewhere Vitruvius brought together *venustas*, *firmitas*, and *decor*;²² *decor* having little to do with mere decoration, but rather with propriety and meaning—with what is programmatically appropriate, subject to social

4.1

Panathenaic amphora showing
Athena striding between two
timber columns crowned with cocks
(ca. 530 B.C.). The tripod was a
common shield device. (Rome,
Museo Nazionale Etrusco di Villa
Giulia, inv. no. 74957. Photo:
Soprintendenza Archeologica per
l'Etruria Meridionale, neg. no. 22965)



hierarchies sanctioned by custom. If we must reduce ancient architecture to root principles, it seems to me impossible to do so without at least four: the realms of abstract theory, visual beauty, practicality, and communication of content.²³

From this point of view, it is likely that the architectural orders were more than the fruit of constructional logic mediated by aesthetic experience. In recent years we have learned from George Hersey, John Onians, and Joseph Rykwert that the orders can sustain multivalent layers of meaning founded on ritual acts and responses to the human organization of space and material that often refer back to the body itself. Yet while there is much to appreciate in these writers' reflections on the nature of the Doric order, they have relatively little to say on the old problem of the frieze itself. Onians pursues a masculine and military analogy for the Doric colonnade as a whole, seeing in its strength, erectness, and

disciplined regularity the qualities most prized in the phalanx of a hoplite army.²⁴ In chapter 3, he presents a compelling clue to the distributive qualities of Doric temples—their compact and relentless repetition of standard elements, their competitive, bristly character—but he leaves the frieze out of account. At the danger of taking this idea too literally, might we not expect forms recalling a run of hoplite shields, such as a pattern of overlapping circles? Rykwert too is concerned with the anthropomorphic component of classical architecture, but regarding the triglyph he is persuaded by Vitruvius's constructional explanation.²⁵ Hersey alone embraces this element within his etymologically driven interpretation of the orders as assemblages of sacrificial victims and related paraphernalia. Aware that thigh bones figure prominently in Homeric accounts of sacrifice as the gods' portion,²⁶ Hersey reads the uprights of the triglyph, which Vitruvius says the Greeks called *meroi* or thighs, as the thigh bones of goats and oxen, or rather thrice-cloven thigh bones since *triglyphos* can mean thrice recessed, thrice sculpted, thrice cut.²⁷ But such a notion is hard to sustain without some ancient image of triglyph-like thigh bones. And might not a triglyph better be read as something with three *meroi*, three thighs, or perhaps three legs? In fact, a three-legged object was of considerable importance in early Greek social and religious ritual and is referred to more times in Homer than sacrificial thigh bones: the tripod cauldron. It might seem that any thesis claiming an important role for an object (man-made or not) stands in opposition to analogies with human and animal figuration of the kind just mentioned. Yet the tripod can in fact be seen to reinforce certain aspects of the theme of body and building.

Intriguingly, several Greek vases depict preparations for sacrifice in front of or beside a tripod-topped Doric column (see figure 4.4e).²⁸ Since images such as this tend not to date much before the mid-fifth century B.C., they might only reflect a fashion for this kind of monument in the sanctuaries of the classical period. The symbolic character of tripod representations, however, is evident from other types of images which were popular in earlier periods. From around the second quarter of the sixth century, tripods were frequently used as talismanic devices on the shields of both mortal warriors and the goddess Athena (figure 4.1).²⁹ Representations of single stylized tripods were often framed in an heraldic manner by two opposing horses as early as the eighth century B.C. Significantly, architectural elements were used likewise.

During the seventh and early sixth centuries B.C.—around the time of the invention or consolidation of the Doric order—there are considerable formal parallels between triglyphs, tripods, and representations of tripods.³⁰ As in the case of triglyphs, representations of tripods invariably show one leg on the central axis, with the other two disposed symmetrically either side, with a horizontal piece on the top alone. Triglyphs are mostly

4.2

Terra-cotta tripod kothon from Thasos (first quarter of the sixth century) showing three stylized tripods alternating with mythological creatures. (Athens, National Museum, inv. no. 17874; Line drawing by author after Haspels 1946)



straight and vertical, but a minority have the side legs inclined inward; on occasion they are bowed.³¹ The same can be true of tripods and trident heads, but there are further telling parallels regarding tripods. Solid-core bronze tripod legs tend to have a roughly hexagonal cross-section, a form that presents to the viewer one front face and two chamfers on either side. The tripod over which Apollo and Hercules wrestle on the Siphnian treasury pediment has regularly spaced chamfered legs of equal width all in one plane, as in the case of triglyphs. In some tripod images, the legs are joined at the top by pronounced curves or arches, the forms of which (semicircular, pointed, and ogive) find counterparts on early forms of triglyph. A few noncanonic archaic triglyphs display features found on bronze tripod legs, including facets with a slight concavity and frontal ones enriched by a slim central rib.³² Equally significant is the existence of a genre of late Geometric pottery friezes with tripod representations used to divide, frame, or punctuate decorative scenes, as do triglyphs and metopes. A three-legged vessel from Thasos—an *exaleiptron* or tripod kothon (figure 4.2)—is an unusual variant on the theme in the form of three stylized tripods introduced between the standard main supports.³³ The character of the fantastical creatures framed by the tripods—sphinx, triton, and hippocampus—recalls the gorgon on one of the famous late seventh-century B.C. painted panels (*pinakes*) from the Temple of Apollo at Thermon, as well as a slightly later bronze relief of griffin and young from the Heraion at Olympia. Both panels may have accompanied triglyphs or proto-triglyphs.³⁴ It is true that tripod representations like those on the Thasos kothon typically have ring handles on top as well as gaps between the individual legs, whereas triglyphs do not; nonetheless this absence might be attributed to the transformations that seventh-century B.C. designers judged necessary in an architectural context due to either the physical or perceptual need for tripod/triglyphs to carry a load.

Without sight of other illustrations to back up these assertions, I can only invite readers to suspend disbelief temporarily and participate in a series of reflections aimed at understanding why tripod imagery might have been adopted for temple exteriors. Talking of the sanctuary of Apollo at Delphi, Rykwert notes:

Tripods of various sizes proliferated in the sanctuary. By far the most important of them was the golden tripod inside the temple on which the Sybil sat for the god to possess her when she prophesied. . . . Display and ritual tripods were *apuroi*, “not meant for the fire” or cooking, much as modern athletic trophy cups are not really meant for drinking. . . . In Greek ritual usage, the tripod proper had assumed a curious role: in its votive form it was bullion, and such bronze, electrum, gilt and even golden tripods crowned temple treasuries . . . or stood on stone stands at temple approaches, as many did at Delphi. Tripods were also tokens of power in diplomatic exchange. They could be used as trophies as well as ritual instruments.

Rykwert suggests that a link between the tripod and the Corinthian order then proceeded via connections with Medea, rejuvenation, acanthus, and monuments such as the extraordinary acanthus or dancers’ column at Delphi (figure 4.3). Perhaps such cross-fertilization could have taken place as early as the seventh century B.C. It then follows that the order most affected by this was the oldest, the Doric.

To amplify Rykwert’s summary, it may be helpful to remember that the root function of tripods was domestic, as mortars or cooking receptacles. Unlike ones with a single central pillar or four legs, three-legged vessels are stable on uneven surfaces. Is it possible that tripod imagery on a building may have conveyed a sense of stability, of unshakability?

Homer cites tripod-supported cauldrons for heating bath water for Achilles, Hektor, and Odysseus³⁵ and for washing Patroclus’s corpse.³⁶ But already in the Bronze Age a proportion of tripods began to transcend utilitarian roles, made out of bronze or other metals for ceremonial or ritual functions and display. For this purpose, the preferred form of tripod shifted from three-legged stands and removable cauldrons to the so-called tripod-cauldron, in which the legs were integral with a relatively shallow vessel akin to a brazier.³⁷

The Homeric epics underscore the aspect of ritual; tripods are cited as princely gifts and tokens of honor and respect,³⁸ as appeasement,³⁹ and as ransom payment.⁴⁰ On several occasions Homer tells of tripods offered as prizes for the winners of athletic, equestrian, or martial competition in which the donor and the contestants include major protagonists in the Trojan wars (Achilles, Aias, Idomeneus, Odysseus).⁴¹ The same themes find correspondence in visual art,⁴² earlier in formulaic vignettes, as when a tripod prize is flanked by two horses, and later as part of more realistic scenes, sometimes with a narrative content. Chariot races, for example, either pass in front of or terminate at one, two, three, or five tripod prizes (figure 4.4a), and rivals are shown grappling with a tripod, a theme played out on a divine plane in the struggle between Apollo and Hercules for the Delphic tripod (figure



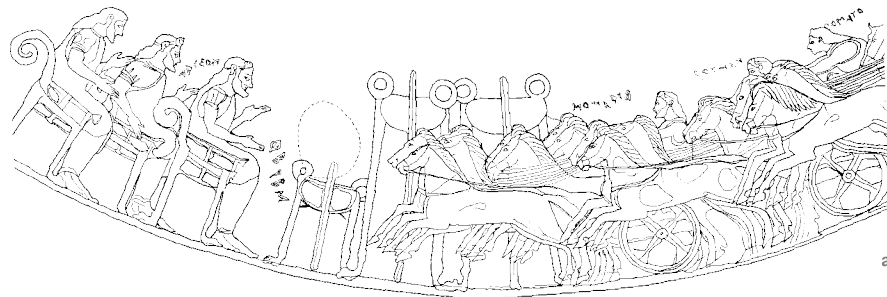
4.3

So-called dancers’ or acanthus column, a votive monument from Delphi with the shaft punctuated by tiers of acanthus leaves and a capital-cum-colonette in the form of three dancers with acanthus leaves, which together originally supported a bronze tripod. (Delphi, Archaeological Museum; Photo: Ecole Française d’Athènes, neg. no. 2.266)

4.4a–e

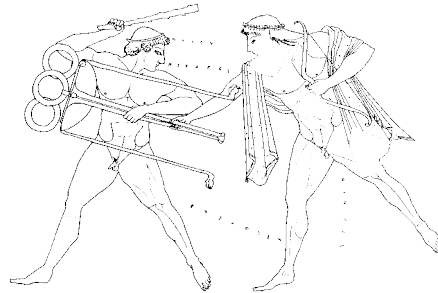
Selection of red figure vase paintings. (Drawings by author.)

a. Chariot race at the funeral games for Pelias. (Berlin, Antikensammlung F 1655—so-called Amphiraios Vase, now lost; drawing after Adolf Furtwängler and Karl Reichold, *Griechische Vasenmalerei*, Munich, 1904—, hereafter *FRGV*, pl. 121.)



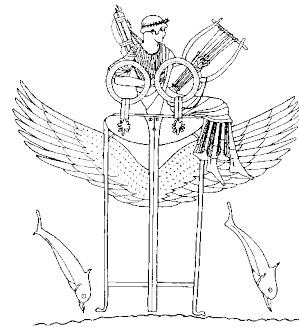
a.

b. Struggle for the Delphic tripod between Hercules and Apollo. (Tarquinia, Archaeological Museum, inv. no. RC 6843; drawing after *FRGV*, pl. 91)



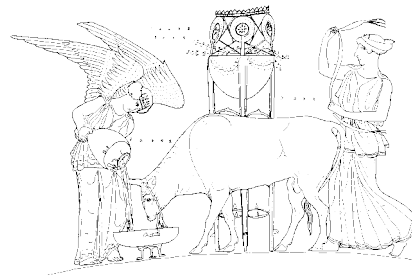
b.

c. Apollo seated on a winged tripod, with allusion to his voyage over the sea from Delos to Delphi. (Vatican, Museo Gregoriano Etrusco inv. no. 16568; drawing after *FRGV*, pl. 144, and Louise Bruit Zaidman and Pauline Schmitt Pantel, *Religion in the Ancient Greek City*, Cambridge 1992, fig. 16 by F. Lissarrague)



c.

d. A Nike and woman prepare a bull for a sacrifice associated with the consecration of a tripod. (Munich, Antikensammlung, inv. no. 2412; drawing after *FRGV*, pl. 19)



e. Laurel-wreathed man and assistant about to decorate a bull prior to sacrifice in the sanctuary of Apollo at Delphi, which is symbolized by the presence of a tripod-topped column and the acanthus/dancers' column in the background (see figure 4.3). (Leningrad, National Museum, 33; drawing after *FRGV*, and Jean-Louis Durand, *Sacrifice et labour en Grèce ancienne. Essai d'anthropologie religieuse*, Paris, 1986, fig. 44 by F. Lissarrague)



e.

4.4b).⁴³ Other scenes concern the events following victory, as when athletes or their stewards are shown carrying off tripod prizes (figure 4.5).⁴⁴ Another type of image (figures 4.4d and 4.4e) depicts ritual preparatory to the animal sacrifice accompanying the consecration of tripods to the gods in their sanctuaries.

There is abundant complementary archaeological evidence at Olympia, Delphi, and other sites where games were celebrated and tripods were won or dedicated. Susan Langdon explains that at sites like Olympia, “bronze tripods bridge the two worlds of Homeric poetry and archaeological reality.”⁴⁵ Apart from the agonistic aspect, at Delphi there was an Apolline and oracular resonance to tripod dedications. In vase paintings, tripods often alluded to one or both. A curious example is the depiction of a young Apollo sitting on a winged tripod (figure 4.4c). Tripods were associated with non-Apolline oracles as well—notably that of Zeus at Dodona. This similarly helps account for the quantities of tripods found at this remote yet venerable sanctuary.

Tripods were also offered as prizes for musical, choregic, poetry, and theatrical competitions. Hesiod makes proud mention of the time he won a tripod at Chalcis and then dedicated it at the sanctuary of the Muses at Helicon.⁴⁶ The monumental tripod dedications in Athens that led to Dionysios’s sanctuary became so numerous that they created the “Street of Tripods.” The choregic Monument of Lysicrates, built to support a bronze tripod on the crowning finial, is only the most imposing survivor of what must have been a spectacular accumulation. The architect made a further reference to tripods in a frieze of stylized tripods in between the Corinthian capitals. Could a similar impulse some three centuries earlier have affected the design of the Doric entablature?

By virtue of their cost and long-standing associations with value, metal tripods were frequently the vehicle that civic and military authority leaders chose for absorbing the gods’ “10 percent” (the tithe due to them following a victory in war or when some other prayer was answered).⁴⁷ After defeating the Persians at Plataea, the Greeks elected to show their gratitude with an extraordinary gold or gilded tripod supported by three bronze serpents twisted into a tall column.⁴⁸ It is therefore with good reason that the tripod has been called the Greeks’ dedication *par excellence*.⁴⁹

Finally, tripods were loosely identified with the divine lifestyle. Homer describes a visit to Hephaistos’s palace that happens to catch him in the process of fabricating twenty bronze tripods to line the hall.⁵⁰ According to one of the Homeric hymns, there were tripods “all around the house” of the goddess Leto.⁵¹ Attic vase painters of the classical period showed tripods on columns to indicate sacred space in views of sanctuaries (figure 4.4e) or in the company of a god (often, but not always, Apollo). Tripods on columns also

appear in the background of scenes with multiple divinities, a probable symbol of their home or environment whether it was Mount Olympos or the depths of the sea in the case of Poseidon and Amphitrite.⁵²

Having thus reviewed the roles played by the tripod in Greek ritual and religion, the goal is to understand how this might have influenced temple design in the seventh century B.C. First and foremost, temples were the conceptual house of a divinity and the real house of his or her cult statue.⁵³ Significantly, tripods were fixtures of the gods' ex-terrestrial homes. We might even intuit an analogy between the triglyphs of a temple and the tripods that Hephaistos made to line the hall of his house or those that stood "all around" Leto's house.

Temples and tripods were both made and set up for display. The tripod was a symbol of competitive excellence, and the *poleis* competed with each other to build magnificent temples. Just as the god's tithe of war booty could take the form of tripods, temples were similarly the fruit of war. Kendrick-Pritchett may go too far when he declared that "without wars, few of the temples and other sacred buildings of Greece would have been built,"⁵⁴ but he certainly has a point.

Treasures were introduced in the first half of the sixth century B.C. at sanctuaries to protect the most valuable votives, including tripods. Until this time, and often later too, this function was served by temples. Alexandre Mazarakis-Ainan stresses the importance that this aspect had for the emergence of autonomous temples.⁵⁵ Tripod imagery therefore could have signaled this purpose too.

Over and above the various functions cited, Walter Burkert argues that when all is said and done, temples were dedications to the gods; they were the most visible and expensive offerings made by the Greeks.⁵⁶ And since the tripod was their most time-honored votive—one that was already present in both large sizes and large numbers in sanctuaries *before* the creation of the Doric temple—here is perhaps the most conclusive possible motivation for the adaption of tripod iconography to the dressing of temples.

The possibility that the Doric frieze initially conveyed an intelligible and appropriate message might answer two longstanding puzzles: the remarkably rapid diffusion of the triglyph frieze and the consistency of the triglyphs themselves. Neither follows directly from the logic of constructional evolution and petrification, although it is possible to supplement this with the quasi-Ciceronian hypothesis that once a timber system happened to become sanctioned in a stone temple of great renown, such renown would then have been enough to authorize later copies. Vitruvius himself gives some credence to this scenario with his statement that Doros, the mythical progenitor of the Dorians, "chanced" to use what was later called the Doric order at Hera's temple in her sanctuary near Argos, and then

in other temples in Achaëa.⁵⁷ The tripod-triglyph connection resolves the arbitrariness Vitruvius describes, giving us the reason for Doros's choice of architectural language over rival candidates.

The proposed tripodaic connotations of the Doric frieze meshes intriguingly with other Vitruvian notions. He famously promulgated a gender hierarchy for the orders, likening the Doric column to the upright body of a man, the Ionic column to that of a woman, the Corinthian to that of a maid or virgin. This was a fundamental theme, although it is unlikely that earlier associations and nuances were harnessed into a clear system until after the appearance of Corinthian in the fifth century. Aside from military and sexual attributes, there could hardly be a more male symbol than the tripod: a status gift for Homeric heroes and princes, a prize for male agonistic events, a symbol of victory in either a competitive or military context. Thus, the masculine overtones of the tripod seem to complement well both Vitruvius's gender theme and Onians's emphasis on its military component. The only female figures that regularly accompany tripods are personifications, especially Victories (*Nikai*) (figure 4.4d). The great majority of Greek personifications were in any event female, despite the masculine character of the values for which they stood. The few male personifications that appear with any frequency in figural art are Eros, Ploutos (Wealth), Hypnos (Sleep) and Thanatos (Death). There was no particular reason for any of these to be associated with tripods, save for Ploutos, because tripods were commonly costly status symbols.⁵⁸ The masculine associations of the tripod were certainly overwhelming in the seventh century B.C., although later, specifically at Delphi, feminine aspects arrive in the guise of Apollo's medium Themis, the Sybil, and architecturally as caryatids, paving the way for the combination of tripod and female dancers/caryatids on the Delphic acanthus column. Originally the bronze tripod was either supported on the three dancers' outstretched hands (figure 4.3), or they supported the cauldron itself, with the legs coming down in front of them to rest on the upper tier of acanthus. Unfortunately, the top of the monument is missing from the fragment illustrated here (figure 4.4e).

The very existence of caryatids sustains the analogy between body and column. But what do they carry apart from beams? Once again the tripod insinuates itself into speculations of this kind. There is, for example, a kind of parallel between paintings on vases depicting tripod-bearing columns (figure 4.4e) and tripod-bearing men. The latter are admittedly rather enigmatic, as it is often difficult for scholars to distinguish between real events and mythic allusions. The amphora at Villa Giulia in Rome (figure 4.5) shows a beefy nude athlete presenting his crowns of victory to a seated figure (patron? peer? spectator?). The two tripod-bearing men could be the victor's attendants, while the tripods

4.5

Victorious athlete showing off his crowns to a seated man, followed by two stewards or companions bearing tripods (ca. 530 B.C.). (Rome, Museo Nazionale Etrusco di Villa Giulia, inv. no. 8340; photo: Deutschen Archäologischen Institut, Rome, neg. no. 59.1666)



themselves are either prizes like the crowns or the dedications that victor or patron consecrate as thanksgiving.⁵⁹ If such a scene describes a specific event, this is not the case for an unusual *loutrophon* from Kerameikos. It consists of two tiers of multiple tripod bearers treated in almost friezelike manner (figure 4.6). The necropolis context and the type of vase signify that it was commissioned to commemorate a funeral. Yet the economic standing of the defunct cannot be remotely commensurate with the level of wealth implied by the display of so many valuable tripods. The vase therefore harks back to a mythical heroic funerary procession, one in which the tripods were paraded as evidence of the wealth and *aretē* (excellence) of the dead man, or perhaps as prizes awarded at the funeral games.⁶⁰ Sometimes tripod bearers carry their load with nonchalance, as though they were almost featherweight; at other times they struggle and strain. A vase in Munich shows Hercules attempting to stagger off with a tripod that is much bigger than he is. The legs of the tripod still touch the ground. The hero fits roughly into the space defined by the legs and bears the cauldron on his bowed shoulders.⁶¹ It is also interesting to ponder on the spatial implications of the Kerameikos *loutrophon*. Can we liken the rhythmical procession of tripods on bodies to a linear file of columns or a circuit of them—a kind of living *tholos*?

The outstanding question concerns the Dorian connection. It remains possible that the Doric was named by virtue of its being Doros's choice. Yet as has often been noted, there seems to be at least a loose match between the diffusion of the Doric order and the Dorians' sphere of dominance, primarily central Greece and the Peloponnese. This is where

the greatest concentration of tripods has been found, most notably at the sanctuaries of Olympia and at Dodona, Delphi, Ptoion (a Boetian sanctuary), Sparta, and Thebes. Tripods may well have been prominent in Apollo's sanctuary at Corinth, the city that was not only in the vanguard of Greek architecture in the seventh century B.C. but also the leader in bronze production. There is evidence of tripods in the sanctuaries of Athena on the Athenian acropolis, and Hera in the Argive plain and on Samos, but in fewer numbers than those found at Olympia and Delphi. Samos aside, tripods did not enjoy such a prominent role in other Ionian-Ionic strongholds like Miletos, Ephesos, or Naxos—or for that matter anywhere else in Ionia.

So the circle closes. According to this interpretation, a single clue may clarify an extraordinary web of trends, values, and meanings. Male and Dorian, the tripod could symbolize competition, excellence, victory, oracles, gifts to the gods, and even their divine realm. So many are the possibilities that it is probably futile to try to isolate the particular influences that could have created the first Doric temple. At some point the architect of a prestigious temple in the Peloponnese realized just how appropriate would be a tripod frieze (the frieze always being a prime locus for display), and so was born the progenitor of all later Doric temples. It is not possible, however, to know how different were the first triglyphs or proto-triglyphs from the definitive solution; nor is it possible to know with any certainty whether the frieze was generated *ex novo* or was applied to a preexisting timber structural element, as Vitruvius relates. A constructional influence cannot after all be ruled out altogether; by virtue of their rhythm, shape, and inclination, it is reasonable to interpret mutules as rafter ends, and guttae may well hark back to some system of pegs or dowels. The details of the synthesis will no doubt always elude us. This much, however, is clear: Wagner's assertion quoted at the beginning is a statement of conviction and not a historical fact. It fails to acknowledge the rich potential of architecture for content, allusion, and communication. The Doric order, in origin, had meaning.



4.6

Funerary procession with two tiers of men carrying tripod prizes on their shoulders, perhaps to present to the clothed man visible on the left side of the upper tier. Black figure Loutrophon by the circle of Pan Exekias from Kerameikos (ca. 540 B.C.). (Athens, Kerameikos inv. no. 1682; photo: Deutschen Archäologischen Institut, Athens, neg. KER 6138)