

**Zeitschrift:** Museum Helveticum : schweizerische Zeitschrift für klassische Altertumswissenschaft = Revue suisse pour l'étude de l'antiquité classique = Rivista svizzera di filologia classica

**Herausgeber:** Schweizerische Vereinigung für Altertumswissenschaft

**Band:** 45 (1988)

**Heft:** 1

**Artikel:** Ymnon thesauros : Pindar's sixth pythian ode and the treasury of the Siphnians at Delphi

**Autor:** Shapiro, Kenneth D.

**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-35134>

### **Nutzungsbedingungen**

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. [Siehe Rechtliche Hinweise.](#)

### **Conditions d'utilisation**

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. [Voir Informations légales.](#)

### **Terms of use**

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. [See Legal notice.](#)

**Download PDF:** 01.04.2025

**ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>**

## Ὑμνων ἠθσαυρός: Pindar's Sixth Pythian Ode and the Treasury of the Siphnians at Delphi

By Kenneth D. Shapiro, Berkeley

La vue d'un tel monument est comme une musique  
continuelle et fixée, qui vous attend pour vous faire  
bien quand vous vous en approchez.

Madame de Staël, *Corinne ou l'Italie*

Architectural sculpture at Delphi clearly attracted the attention of ancient Greek poets. The metopes and West pediment of the Fifth Temple of Apollo at Delphi (the so-called Alkmaeonid Temple<sup>1</sup>) are featured in Euripides' *Ion* (184–218)<sup>2</sup>; the East pediment informs the opening of Aischylos' *Eumenides* (1–19)<sup>3</sup>.

In a recent study of the Treasury of the Siphnians at Delphi, V. Brinkmann has demonstrated that its exquisitely sculpted East frieze depicts neither a scene from, nor a synthesis of the *Iliad*, as has been widely supposed, but rather an

\* In addition to the standard abbreviations, I employ the following:

Brinkmann = V. Brinkmann, *Die aufgemalten Namenbeischriften an Nord- und Ostfries des Siphnierschatzhauses*, BCH 109 (1985) 77–130.

Delphes = P. de La Coste-Messelière, *Delphes* (Paris 1943).

FD = Ch. Picard and P. de La Coste-Messelière, *Les trésors «ioniques»*, Fouilles de Delphes IV 2 (Paris 1928).

Musée = P. de La Coste-Messelière, *Au Musée de Delphes* (Paris 1936).

I am grateful to S. G. Miller for arranging my visit to Delphi in July, 1987, and to the Greek Archaeological Service for allowing me to view the sculptures of the Siphnian Treasury there; and to J. K. Anderson, K. Dickson, Th. Gelzer, J. Griffin, R. S. Stroud, and especially J. M. Tillotson for kind assistance in the preparation of this paper.

1 Cf. Pindar *P.* 7, 9–12. The text of Pindar employed throughout this paper is that of H. Maehler after B. Snell (Leipzig 1984).

2 See A. S. Owen, *Euripides Ion* (Oxford 1939) 82–86. E. Simon, *Ikongraphie und Epigraphik. Zum Bauschmuck des Siphnierschatzhauses in Delphi*, ZPE 57 (1984) 1–21 suggested, just before the publication of Brinkmann's new readings of the painted inscriptions, that Eur. *Ion* 206ff. reflect the gigantomachy on the North frieze of the Treasury of the Siphnians (not the pediment of the archaic temple), and (p. 15–21) interprets the East frieze as the fight for Patroklos' corpse (according to the *Iliad*). On the accuracy of Euripides' account see, most recently, T. Carpenter, *Dionysian Imagery in Archaic Greek Art* (Oxford 1986) 61–64.

3 See J. Dörig, *Lese Früchte III. Der Ostgiebel des Apollontempels in Delphi*, in: Festschrift K. Schefold, AntK Beiheft 4 (1967) 106–109.

episode from the Cyclic epic, the *Aethiopsis*, attributed to Arktinos of Miletos<sup>4</sup>. The frieze is divided in half: the battle of Achilles and Memnon over the fallen Antilochos to the right (North) (figs. 1 and 2), and the ‘Psychostasia’ (the weighing of their souls) on Olympos to the left (fig. 3). On this frieze, carved ca. 525 B.C.<sup>5</sup>, the episode receives its fullest treatment in art<sup>6</sup>. We need not here rehearse a detailed description. For the identification of the figures I follow Brinkmann, who employs the evidence of inscriptions, divine attributes, compositional symmetry, and comparative iconography.

On Olympos (fig. 3), as on the plain of Troy, the figures are grouped symmetrically on either side of a central focal point – Hermes<sup>7</sup>: now only traces of his fingertips, foot, and stool remain. He held the scales in which the souls of the heroes were being weighed<sup>8</sup>. To the left sit the pro-Trojan gods: Zeus, Apollo, Aphrodite, and Eos, the mother of Memnon; to the right the pro-Achaian: Poseidon has been restored to mirror Zeus, behind him are Athena, Hera, and Thetis. Ares, in full armor, sits apart behind Eos on the far left. Overlapping the margin of the cornerstone, he frames the entire frieze with Nestor on the far right of the Trojan plain. There (figs. 1 and 2), the focal point is the meeting of Achilles and Memnon over the body of Antilochos, Nestor’s son; behind each is a second hero and a charioteer with quadriga: Aineas and Lykos on the Trojan left; Ajax (?) and Automedon on the Achaian right<sup>9</sup>. Nestor, on the edge of the right cornerstone, gestures emphatically toward the fallen Antilochos.

4 On the East frieze of the Siphnian Treasury, which is carved in Parian marble and measures 6.125×0.64 m, see Brinkmann 109–121; *FD* 98–111; *Musée* 331–359; T. Homolle, *Séance du 15 janvier 1896*, *BCH* 20 (1896) 586; F. Poulsen, *Delphi* (London 1920) 116–124; M. Robertson, *A History of Greek Art* (Cambridge 1975) 153–154; J. Boardman, *Greek Sculpture: The Archaic Period* (London 1978) fig. 212, 2; E. Simon, l.c. (supra n. 2). The best photographs of the frieze are to be found in *Delphes*, pls. 76–81, and in R. Lullies and M. Hirmer, *Griechische Plastik* (Munich 1979) pls. 44–45. On the sculptor’s style and possible identity see B. S. Ridgeway, *The West frieze of the Siphnian Treasury at Delphi: A rearrangement*, *BCH* 86 (1962) 25–28 and *The Archaic Style in Greek Sculpture* (Princeton 1977) 270 and notes; E. Simon, l.c. (supra n. 2) 4f. On the *Aethiopsis*, which survives only in the brief epitome of Proklos, *Chrestomathia* 2, see the salutary comments of D.L. Page, *CR* 77 (1963) 21–24 and, more recently, J. Griffin, *The Epic Cycle and the uniqueness of Homer*, *JHS* 97 (1977) 39–53. This identification (Brinkmann esp. 110–117) was first suggested at the beginning of this century by Reisch and Karo (s. Brinkmann n. 103).

5 J. Boardman, *Signa tabulae priscae artis*, *JHS* 108 (1984) 162–163 defends this dating against E. D. Francis and M. Vickers, *Signa priscae artis: Eretria and Siphnos*, *JHS* 103 (1983) 54–67.

6 For the iconography of the *Psychostasia*, which first appears in extant Greek vase-painting in the last quarter of the sixth century B.C., and on the battle of Achilles and Memnon see A. Kossatz-Deissmann, *LIMC* 1 (1981) 172–181.

7 Cf. *Musée* 335.

8 A drill hole to anchor the left scale-pan, known from an inscription to have held the soul of Achilles (Brinkmann 87), is present before the left shin of Zeus (*Delphes* pl. 77).

9 The disposition of the gods – pro-Trojan on the left, pro-Achaian on the right – corresponds to that of the warriors; that of the souls of the combatants, however, does not (s. Brinkmann 118–119).

According to Xenophon, Antilochos enjoyed much fame (εὐκλεία) for filial piety as he bought with his death the rescue of his father<sup>10</sup>. It is in the second exemplum<sup>11</sup> of Pindar's Sixth Pythian ode (28–46), addressed to Thrasyboulos, son and charioteer(?) of the victor, Xenokrates of Akragas, that the Antilochos episode received its fullest preserved literary treatment<sup>12</sup>. It appears only here in Pindar's extant oeuvre and has provoked criticism from commentators. Gildersleeve, for example, asserts that "the step from Antilochos to Thrasyboulos is too great for sober art ... The parallel is strained, and it is hard to keep what follows from flatness."<sup>13</sup> Pindar, however, is excused as chariot racing was dangerous and Pythian 6 is, after all, one of his earliest odes: it is conventionally dated to 490 B.C.<sup>14</sup>.

The mythos, nevertheless, is not out of place. This ode, which is a celebration of Thrasyboulos' filial piety, is processional. Even before introducing the victor and his city, the poet leads the way to the temple of Apollo: ὀμφαλὸν ἐριβρόμου / χθονὸς ἐς νάϊον προσοιχόμενοι (3–4). Commentators have noted that Pindar localizes the ode in the Delphic sanctuary through reference to its monuments, topography, and climate in the first two strophes<sup>15</sup>. Note the following key words: ὀμφαλόν, χθονός, νάϊον, ἠησαυρός, πολυχρύσῳ Ἀπολλωνία νάπα, χεράδει, πρόσωπον, Κρισαίαις πτυχαῖς.

The link between Pythian 6 and Delphic architecture, moreover, is made explicit in the proem: ἐτοῖμος ὕμνων ἠησαυρός ἐν πολυχρύσῳ / Ἀπολλωνία τετείχισται νάπα (7–9). The word ἠησαυρός appears elsewhere in Pindar only twice. In both cases its architectural sense is clear: ἠησαυρὸν δίδυμον / μαντοσύνας (O. 6, 65–66) refers partly to the physical altar and χρηστήριον of the Lamidai; elsewhere the word is an explicit reference to the interior of the Ismenion at Thebes (P. 11, 5). The ὕμνων ἠησαυρός (P. 6, 7/8), moreover, is explicitly built (τετείχισται) in Apollo's sanctuary. Pindar not infrequently uses architecture as a metaphor for his own song<sup>16</sup>. Here he presents the beauty and

10 *Kyneg.* 1, 14; cf. *Odyssey* 4, 186–188 and *Iliad* 8, 80–117.

11 The first exemplum, 21–27, is the *Χείρωνος ὑποθήκαι*.

12 Pythian 6 appears to have been commissioned for, if not by Thrasyboulos, as according to the scholia on *I.* 2 (inscr. a) Xenokrates had already commissioned an epinician ode from Simonides.

13 B. L. Gildersleeve, *Pindar: the Olympian and Pythian Odes* (New York 1885) 316. 319.

14 See e.g. C. M. Bowra, *Pindar* (Oxford 1964) 406.

15 See e.g. U. v. Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Pindaros* (Berlin 1922) 139; F. Schwenn, *Der junge Pindar* (Berlin 1940) 135; R. W. B. Burton, *Pindar's Pythian Odes* (Oxford 1962) 17; F. J. Nisetich, *Pindar's Victory Songs* (Baltimore 1980) 194; and most recently Th. Gelzer, *Μοῦσα ἀθλητικῆς: Bemerkungen zu einem Typ Pindarischer und Bacchylideischer Epinikien*, *Mus. Helv.* 42 (1985) 95–120.

16 *O.* 6, 1–4; *P.* 3, 113; *P.* 7, 3–4; *N.* 2, 4; *N.* 8, 46–48; and fragment 194, 1–2. See C. M. Bowra, *Pindar* (Oxford 1964) 20–22; J. Svenbro, *La parole et le marbre* (Lund 1976) 189–193; C. Greengard, *The Structure of Pindar's Epinician Odes* (Amsterdam 1980) 7; and D. Steiner, *The Crown of Song* (London 1986) 55. On Pindar's possible reference to actual buildings on the

monumentality of his own work as on a par with and superior to the finest and most strongly built buildings in the Pythian sanctuary<sup>17</sup>.

As visitors to the sanctuary at Delphi zig-zagged up the Sacred Way toward the Temple of Apollo, whether in procession or some other act of piety, they passed various eye-catching treasuries and other dedications. The Siphnian Treasury, one of, if not the finest at Delphi, was situated prominently on the South side of the Sacred Way at the top of the first ascent<sup>18</sup>. High above the buildings which stood below, its sculpted pediment, East frieze, and Ionic and Lesbian kymas, carefully painted and further elaborated by the addition of detail in metal, could escape the notice of only the most uninterested pilgrim.

As one approaches the treasury from the East, the nearest sculpted figure, the one which most arrests attention and which can best be scrutinized, is that of Nestor, who gestures inward from the North corner of the East frieze (fig. 1 right). Standing safe, outside the heroic conflict whence the composition unfolds, he calls attention to the exemplary ἀρετή of his son, Antilochos, who, mortally wounded, lies slack amidst the fray of battle.

Ascending the Sacred Way in Pythian 6, admiring the sights of Delphi, praising and instructing Thrasyboulos, Pindar states that the façade (πρόσωπον) of his ὕμνων θησαυρός will proclaim Thrasyboulos' glorious victory (εὐδοξον νίκαν) (14–18)<sup>19</sup>. Wilamowitz notes that πρόσωπον, often a technical term signifying the front of a building<sup>20</sup>, is significant here as it is the part of the building which bears the dedicatory inscription which saves the dedicator's name from obscurity<sup>21</sup>. This insight can now be taken further. For ten lines

site of performance see *Paian* 2, 3–5 and the comments of S. L. Radt, *Pindars zweiter und sechster Paian* (Amsterdam 1958) 26–32.

- 17 The architectural sense of the word θησαυρός is attested at Delphi in the second quarter of the sixth century B.C. in the dedicatory inscription of the Knidian Treasury (SIG 8). N. Tersini, who has made a special study of treasuries, kindly informs me that θησαυρός was the only term applied to these buildings until the fourth century B.C.
- 18 See Herodotos 3, 57, 2 and Pausanias 10, 11, 2. The Siphnian Treasury is marked IV on the plan in *Delphes* 312. On the date of the extension of the Sacred Way to a Southeast entrance to the temenos see B. Bergquist, *The Archaic Greek Temenos*, Acta Inst. Athen. Regni Sueciae, ser. in-4° XIII (Lund 1967) 30–32. Her plan 12 gives a better impression of the disposition of the monuments at Delphi in the late sixth/early fifth century B.C. M. Vickers has recently argued that the building in question is not the *Siphnian Treasury*, but the dedication of another state, *Persepolis, Vitruvius and the Erechtheum caryatids: The iconography of medism and servitude*, RA (1985) 9 n. 36. I do not agree, but the identity of the building's dedicators is not important to my argument.
- 19 On the preferability of this reading to others see R. W. B. Burton, *Pindar's Pythian Odes* (Oxford 1962) 18–19.
- 20 LSJ s.v. πρόσωπον, I.2.
- 21 “Das πρόσωπον, die Front; hat nur das Schatzhaus, und manches, an dem der Zug vorbeiging, erzählte in der Inschrift von seinem Stifter, der so ἐν λόγοισι θνατῶν nicht in das Dunkel der Vergessenheit versank. Angesichts dieser πρόσωπα, die wirklich in hellem Lichte lagen, ist die Übertragung auf den θησαυρός ὕμνων allein berechtigt, da aber auch von besonderer Schönheit.” Wilamowitz, l.c. (supra n. 15) 139–140. See also the comments of R. W. B. Burton.

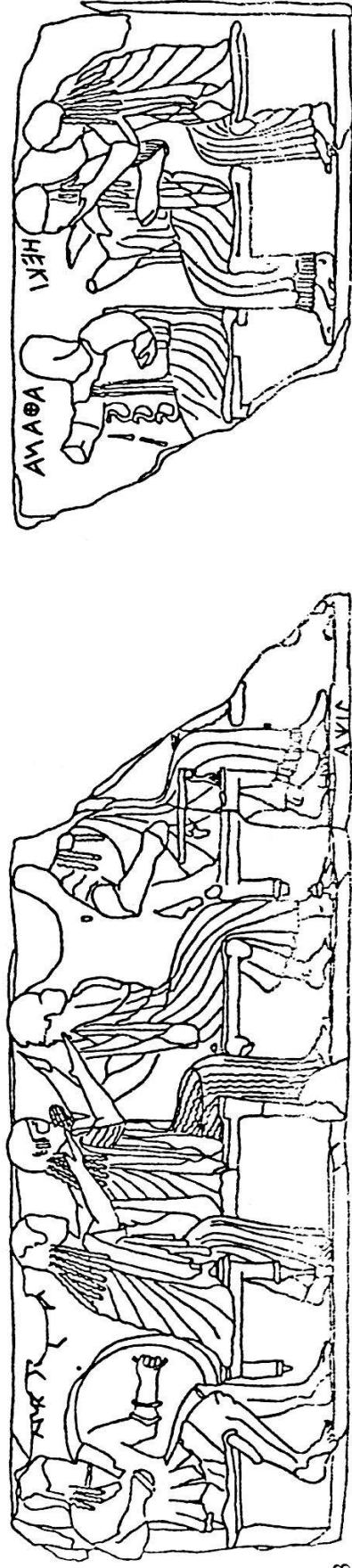
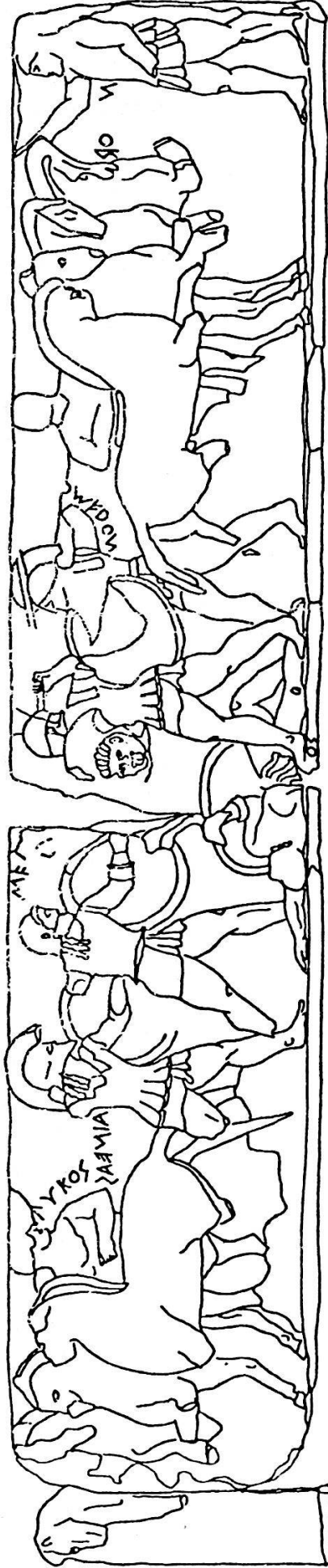


Fig. 1. Nestor (far right) looks on as Achilles and Memnon battle over the body of the fallen Antilochos; from the North (right) half of the East frieze of the Treasury of the Siphnians at Delphi, ca. 525 B.C. (Hirmer photo). — Fig. 2. Drawing of the left half of the frieze with indication of the readable fragments of the inscriptions. — Fig. 3. Drawing of the right half of the frieze (drawings by H. Koch, Brinkmann fig. 07)

Leere Seite  
Blank page  
Page vide

later, Pindar points out the ἀρετή of Antilochos as if he is following with his eye the deictic gesture of Nestor on the prominent face, though not the front, of the Siphnian Treasury (28–39):

ἔγεντο καὶ πρότερον Ἀντίλοχος βιατὰς  
 νόημα τοῦτο φέρων,  
 ὃς ὑπερέφθιτο πατρός, ἐναρίμβροτον  
 ἀναμείναις στράταρχον Αἰθιόπων  
 Μέμνονα. Νεστόρειον γὰρ ἵππος ἄρμ' ἐπέδα  
 Πάριος ἐκ βελέων δαΐχθεις· ὁ δ' ἔφεπεν  
 κραταιὸν ἔγχος· Μεσσανίου δὲ γέροντος  
 δονηθεῖσα φρῆν βόασε παῖδα ὄν,  
 χαμαιπετὲς δ' ἄρ' ἔπος οὐκ ἀπέριψεν· αὐτοῦ  
 μένων δ' ὁ υἱὸς ἀνήρ  
 πρίατο μὲν θανάτοιο κομιδὰν πατρός,  
 ἐδόκησέν τε τῶν πάλαι γενεᾷ  
 ὄπλοτέροισιν ἔργον πελώριον τελέσαις  
 ὕπατος ἀμφὶ τοκεῦσιν ἔμμεν πρὸς ἀρετάν.

Pindar does not merely describe the treasury frieze. Rather, searching for a paradigm for Thrasyboulos, he extracts one of the frieze's many elements (indeed one of its sub-elements) and elaborates on Antilochos' ἔργον πελώριον (41). On the frieze Nestor gestures in grief for his fallen son: “Le geste est celui d'un héraut. Et nullement d'un écuyer.”<sup>22</sup> In Pindar's narrative, however, Nestor calls out to his living son for help amidst the chariots. The visual image of Nestor – his right arm extended, calling to his son – is identical, but the context differs. For the sculpted frieze and the epinician ode emphasize different, though equally crucial moments in the life and death of heroes.

The πρόσωπον of Pindar's ὕμνων θησαυρός is not that of the Siphnian Treasury. For although the exemplum reminds Schroeder of the visual arts<sup>23</sup>, it is only the most masterly in a series of links which bind the poem externally to its Delphic setting and internally to the filial piety of Thrasyboulos which it celebrates. For through a web of references to the finest of the buildings at Delphi, the young Pindar manages not only to elevate Thrasyboulos' glory to the height of Antilochos', but also to equate his own τέχνη and its fruits with those of Archaic Greece's master sculptors and architects.

22 *FD* 98.

23 O. Schroeder, *Pindars Pythien* (Berlin 1922) 62: “Man hat den Eindruck wie von einem Vasenbilde, und zwar einem meisterlichen.”