

Πρωτότυπα ποὺ ἐπιπλέον εἶναι ἔργα ἀν ὅχι τοῦ ἴδιου τοῦ Φειδία, ὅμως τοῦ ἔργαστηρίου καὶ τῶν μαθητῶν του, δηλαδὴ μίας ἀκόμη ἀπὸ τις πραγματικὰ μεγάλες φυσιογνωμίες τοῦ 5ου π.Χ. αἰώνα.

SUMMARY

Riace statues: Gods, Heroes, Athlets? (A fresh approach).

Amongst the important Classical Greek bronzes, two statues found in 1972 off the coast of Riace in Calabria, Italy, have a very special significance. The over-life-size male nudes are originals from the mid-5th century BC. Following conservation work in Florence, where they were exhibited for the first time in 1980 and then in Rome in 1981, they have found their permanent place in the Museo Nazionale of Reggio di Calabria. It has been suggested that these spectacular examples of Greek bronze statuary once formed part of a larger group of honorific statues known from the literary sources of Pausanias and Pliny; thus Onatas of Aegina's group at Olympia (c. 470-460 BC), the Phidian group dedicated by the Athenians at Delphi (450 BC) and a group of heroes from the Theban saga at Argos have, among others, been proposed. From a different starting-point and based on the assumption that the two statues did not belong to any such large group of commemorative statues but were an independent monument, it is possible to see them as historical personalities and link them to the Tyrannicides, a well known type of images first made by Antenor. The age difference, the difference of the heads, one with helmet, the other without, allow us to assume that the statues represent the great Athenian statesmen of the mid-5th century BC, Ephialtes as the older man and Pericles as the younger one. They are depicted as Tyrant-Slayers since they are the defenders of Athenian democracy. We can also attribute them to the Phidian workshop taking into consideration the close ties between Pericles and Phidias. It should be noted too that the Riace bronze representing Pericles was most probably the model for the statue of Pericles by Cresilas, of which the idealized head survives in several Roman copies.