Delphi and Beyond:  
An Examination into the Role of Oracular Centres Within Mainland Greece  
by  
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Abstract

The Delphic Oracle stands as one of the most prestigious sanctuaries in the Greek landscape and certainly as the most reputable oracular centre in the region. In contrast, few other oracular centres made even a slight mark on Greece’s long and illustrious history. This study considers not only the possible reasons behind Delphi’s spectacular rise to power, but also what the factors may have been that prevented other oracular sites from successfully challenging Delphi’s supremacy. The sites considered in this study are restricted to those found in mainland Greece: five oracles in Boiotia; four in Achaia; three each in Phokis and Laconia; two in Thessaly, Epirus and the Argolid and one each in Elis, Corinthia and Thrace. Based on archaeological and epigraphic evidence, supported through reference to literary sources, this study finds that there were four key factors in determining whether an oracular site’s reputation would spread beyond its local community: the oracle’s age, location, oracular deity and its method of consultation. As this study shows, in all these factors, Delphi had (or was promoted as having) a clear advantage.
The task of writing a thesis is both challenging and rewarding, and something that should not be attempted without the support of friends and colleagues. I would thus like to thank all those who have provided welcome assistance throughout this process. I owe my thanks to my fellow postgraduates (and a few notable undergraduates) who have offered their advice and also their much valued friendship. I must also thank my friends and family for giving me respite from the world of classical scholarship at those times when it was most needed. Thank you to my partner Tracey for your continued support and for allowing me to turn our living room into an office. Finally, I owe a debt of gratitude to my supervisor Dr. Arlene Allan for her time, her support, and for all her scholarly advice which has no doubt been of great benefit to this study. The merits of this work reflect all the support I have received from beginning to completion, but any failings are, of course, my own.

Jamie.
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Figure 9 courtesy of Les Pierres qui Parlent (http://lespierresquiparlent.free.fr/Amphiaraion.html)
List of Abbreviations

Ancient authors and works are abbreviated according to the conventions set out in the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* (rev. 3rd edition). In the case where a particular author or work is unlisted, then they will be recorded here in full.

Journal abbreviations follow the conventions set forth in *L'Année Philologique*. In the case that a journal is unlisted, its title will be given in full.
Fig. 1: Geographical Distribution of Apollo’s Oracles in Mainland Greece.
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The key to wisdom is knowing all the right questions.

John A. Simone Sr.
Introduction

When faced with issues beyond our control, it is human nature to seek advice from those who can provide guidance. Our modern rational world is overflowing with practical avenues for dealing with specific complaints: medical professionals advise patients on their health, local and national governments advise citizens on their rights and responsibilities, while friends and families can offer guidance on any number of matters. Occasionally, and with a great deal of scepticism, we look for answers in the most unlikely of places. Numerology, horoscopes and miracle healing are readily visible in western society, while Paul the Octopus has recently attracted great media attention for his successful predictions at this year’s FIFA world cup in South Africa.\(^1\) It is important to note that western attitudes to divination are not actually the norm and that religious systems worldwide often express the need for divine guidance.\(^2\) To these people, the most practical and trusted advice can be found in religion, and this behaviour was prevalent in ancient Greece. To the Greeks, communicating with the divine could be an everyday occurrence. Through prayer, sacrifice and festivals, they secured divine favour and expressed gratitude for their blessings. According to Theophrastus, the gods were honoured through sacrifice so that mankind could reject evils and secure good fortune (fr. 584a Fortenbaugh). The practice of divination took communication with the gods further still so that individuals and states were able to obtain not only good fortune, but practical and intelligible guidance on specific matters such as health, politics and religion. While


\(^2\) For example, the Yoruba tribe of south-west Nigeria believe that each woman is pre-destined to bear a specific number of children. In cases of infertility, women do not seek aid from doctors, but from spiritual advisors and herbalists. See Koster-Oyekan 13-26.
freelance seers were a convenient and readily available source of divine knowledge, this study focuses solely on another avenue, that of oracular centres.

Previous studies on Greek oracular centres have hitherto focused primarily on Delphi and Dodona. This is quite understandable; the wealth of literary and archaeological information for these sites significantly outweighs those of other centres. Yet, for all the attention placed on Delphi in particular, Greece’s alternate oracular centres have been somewhat overlooked. Individually, these alternate centres would not warrant a major research project, but collectively they offer valuable insight into the role of divination in Greek society. Delphi was without doubt the most revered oracle in antiquity, but there was no monopoly; one oracle could not cater to all manner of clients at all times. This study looks to shed light on a wide variety of oracular centres throughout the Greek mainland and account for their role and reputation in Greek society. The question this study seeks to address is: why was there such a need for multiple oracular centres in mainland Greece if Delphi had acquired such a reputation for being the most accurate? In other words, the aim here is to account for the main factors which allowed some oracular centres to extend their influence throughout the Greek world, while others, although performing a similar role, were only known to their surrounding community. In turn, it is also asked how and why these minor oracles continued to survive in the face of such overwhelming opposition.

The body of this work will thus examine a number of oracular centres in order to evaluate their reputation and identify the key aspects which influenced said reputation.

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3 Even studies on the general topic of Greek oracles tend to focus primarily on Delphi and Dodona. H.W. Parke’s 1967 Greek Oracles devotes only passing attention to the smaller centres, while Robert Flacelière excludes several in his Devins et Oracles Grecs (translated into English in 1965 as Greek Oracles). Sarah Iles Johnston’s recent publication Ancient Greek Divination shows a slightly wider focus, but still the most comprehensive works, which serve largely as a compendium of literary references to Greek oracles, remain Bouche-Leclercq’s four volume Histoire de la Divination and Kurt Latte’s entry under ‘Orakel’ in Pauly’s Realencyclopaedie.
Due to the paucity of information available for some centres, the scope here is fairly broad in both spatial and temporal terms. All of mainland Greece is included up to the region of Thrace, and begins from the earliest hints of oracular activity in the eighth century BCE, right through to the fourth century CE when oracular centres were banned in the attempt to rid the Roman Empire of pagan worship.\footnote{Henceforth, all dates provided are in BCE unless otherwise stated. Also, a number of oracular centres have been excluded from this study, either due to a lack of available information, or because their authenticity is not certain. A small selection of such centres is included in the Appendix (pages 146-49).} Due to the change in Greek divination over an extended time period, this factor will also be considered in the final conclusion. Since a great part of this study focuses on the prosperity of individual centres, their respective status must be identified by means of some tangible method. While they cannot be relied on for complete accuracy, the following factors will act as a guide: the material wealth of a sanctuary in terms of buildings and dedications; the number of references to each oracle in the ancient sources, especially those concerning prominent consultants; and finally, the length of time for which each centre was known to exist. Once each centre has been accounted for in this way, the task then is to identify a series of factors which may attribute to their status. A number of these factors can be anticipated here. The location of the oracle may be important, including its specific environment and its proximity to other centres. Also, the cost and availability of an oracle may have promoted or hindered its success. Finally, the nature and reputation of the specific oracular deity will be identified, as well as the specific oracular procedure. Of course, due to the scarcity of information for many oracles, some of these factors may not be forthcoming and this is where an examination of several oracular centres will prove beneficial.

Some points need to be made here on the treatment of sources, which come to include material remains, literary references and inscriptions. While these sources prove invaluable for creating the most thorough account of the topic, each has its respective
advantages and disadvantages which must be considered. While archaeology is certainly a
vital tool in reconstructing human past, its limitations are most explicit in the study of
religion. In regard to the religious life at Delphi, Amandry issues the following warning:

Do not ask or expect anything more from archaeology than what is in its
nature to give. It provides material documents, ranging from the objects of
everyday life to masterpieces of art, from house floors to temple columns.
These documents illustrate the life of a society in its visible, external aspect;
on their own, they do not reveal the thoughts and the feelings of the men
that lived in these houses and used these objects, or that ordered or executed
statues and buildings. This is particularly true in the field of religion.\(^5\)

Archaeology can certainly provide a wealth of material remains within a sanctuary, but
excavators can be somewhat reluctant to interpret objects as intrinsically religious.\(^6\) Ritual
implements, such as bowls and figurines, are often inseparable from secular objects and so
it is difficult to ascertain their true purpose. Since many secular objects can be converted
for religious purposes, the issue is compounded even further. Thus, while the
archaeological remains at many sanctuaries may provide some clues to the oracular
procedure, they cannot speak for themselves and must be treated in conjunction with other
sources. Nevertheless, material remains, such as building projects and dedications, can
attest to the size and wealth of a sanctuary, and thus they serve to estimate the popularity
of certain oracles and to indicate which groups frequented them. Furthermore, in dating

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\(^5\) Amandry (2000: 9): “Il ne faut pas demander à l’archéologie ni en attendre plus ni autre chose que ce qu’il est dans sa nature de donner. Elle fournit des documents matériels, allant des objets de la vie quotidienne aux chefs-d’œuvre de l’art, de sols de maisons aux colonnades de temples. Ces documents illustrent des détails de la vie d’une société dans sa partie visible, extérieure: ils ne révèlent pas, d’eux-mêmes, les pensées et les sentiments des hommes qui ont vécu dans ces maisons et utilisé ces objets, ou qui ont commandé ou exécuté statues et édifices. Ceci est particulièrement vrai dans le domaine de la religion.” All translations are the author’s own unless otherwise stated.

\(^6\) See Osborne 1-10.
these remains, one can estimate the age of an oracular site, as well as any periods of peak activity.

Literary sources do offer more descriptive information on cult proceedings than archaeological remains, and they are invaluable to the study of oracles. Literary references to these oracular centres provide not only the first clue to their existence, but also furnish many other valuable details. Historical accounts can attest to specific visitors to these sites, and what needs they sought to have addressed. They often tell us which gods were worshipped, who attended the sanctuary, how the oracular procedure was performed, and what actions the consultant was required to undergo. But for all the various references to oracles in ancient literature, a number of details must be considered such as author bias, contradicting accounts, and the true source of the information. Care must be taken to ensure that each report is reliable and accurate if it is to be treated as evidence. Epigraphy combines both the merits and weaknesses of archaeological and literary accounts. Inscriptions found on dedications and decrees provide useful guides for religious procedures pertaining to the oracle, for first-hand oracular enquiries, and also for recording grand building projects and renovations. Unfortunately, these records are often fragmentary and difficult to date. In order to present the most in depth and accurate account of oracular sanctuaries on the Greek mainland, every source must be explored to its fullest, but also treated with caution. Here I follow the view of Flower, who believes that all the various sources should be considered together, creating “a symphony in which each instrument makes its own contribution to the overall effect.” Unfortunately, in regards to an oracle’s periods of activity, material remains can only give a guide to how long a sanctuary was in operation, and not the oracle; literary references only provide

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7 Flower 14.
specific points in time during which the oracle was frequented. Together, they cannot give
exact dates to an oracle’s period of activity, but only a rough guide.

As another preliminary, a brief note must be offered for the various terms used in
this study which are specific to divination. The term ‘oracle’ can either refer to an
oracular response, or to an oracular centre from which the response is issued. The term is
used in respect to both meanings throughout this study, although context will dictate
which one is implied. Two distinct oracular methods are also used, and these are termed
intuitive and inductive.\textsuperscript{8} Intuitive prophecy is descriptive of prophetic utterances made
solely through a human medium, such as the Pythia at Delphi, as well as the rite of
incubation in which the consultant is visited by the god in his dreams. Inductive prophecy
refers simply to the observation of signs. Various inductive methods are possible and
several are used at Greek oracular centres. Such methods include empyromancy, the
reading of sacrificial fire and smoke; hieroscopy, the reading of entrails; cleromancy, the
casting of dice or lots, and cledonomancy, the interpretation of random utterances. It is
also important to distinguish prophets and prophetesses, who are integral to the oracular
procedure, from other sanctuary personnel such as priests and priestesses. Seers, also
mentioned at times, refer to those who offer oracular pronouncements, but need not be
attached to an oracular centre.

The body of this work is divided into four parts, with the final three chapters devoted
to specific groupings of oracular deities. The first chapter focuses solely on the oracle at
Delphi, which was widely regarded as the most reputable oracular centre in Greece. Key
topics to be discussed are the environment of the sanctuary, the history of the oracle, and
the oracular procedure. The aim here is to show how the oracle earned its reputation and
how this changed over the course of time. This section also looks into the running of the

\textsuperscript{8} The terms intuitive and inductive are first used by Bouche-Leclercq in his \textit{Histoire de la Divination}. Cicero makes the distinction between the two methods, but defines them as natural and artificial (\textit{Div. 2.26}).
oracle in order to evaluate which groups had access to Delphi and when. The second chapter discusses Apollo’s alternate oracles on the Greek mainland. Since the god was known as Greece’s chief oracular deity, it is to be expected that his other oracles were also well frequented. This section shows that the god possessed several such centres about Greece, and while some were held in high regard, not all of Apollo’s oracles were treated equally. The third section extends outside the sphere of Greece’s foremost god of prophecy, and introduces the oracles of Zeus and the other Olympians. Here it is noted how some deities could be treated as oracular, while others were not. It is also shown how the various gods were entreated by several methods and their oracles had rather different reputations. The final chapter explores the oracular centres of Greek heroes, who were one further step removed from the sphere of Apollo. One could expect that this group of deities exerted a fairly minor influence when compared to the other oracular centres, but, in fact, they were in some ways more popular than their Olympian counterparts. This section looks to account for their popularity over an extended period of time and ahead of many rival oracles, including several of Apollo, by outlining the various features which may have attributed to their success.
Chapter One: The Delphic Oracle

According to legend, Zeus identified the centre of the world first by freeing two eagles at either edge of the horizon, and then by marking the point where they met with a stone omphalos (Pind. *Pyth*. 4.74). This stone was thought to lie within Apollo’s temple at Delphi, and thus the sanctuary became renowned as the centre of the earth and as a common oracle to all mankind. This myth serves to express Delphi’s status over all rival centres of divination, which Tomlinson attributes to the reliability of Apollo’s responses. Dempsey goes somewhat further in outlining three key elements which influenced the oracle’s popularity; Apollo himself, the geographical environment, and the mantic procedure. These factors a certain merit. Apollo can be counted among the most important deities of the Greek pantheon; he is labelled as the most Greek of all the gods, and he was certainly honoured as the oracular god *par excellence*. Furthermore, he was a god of distance and clarity, and, in standing far away from human affairs, he possessed a unique perspective of the world and thus the ability to offer impartial advice. Delphi’s location also benefits from this concept of distance, for as Parker suggests, “the most convincing prophecy comes from afar.” States also chose to consult here because the oracle was considered to be politically neutral. Apollo’s sanctuary was very much isolated from the rest of the world, and for much of its history, Delphi was independent from the

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9 Eur. *Ion* 366; Livy 38.48.2.
10 Tomlinson (1976) 64.
11 Dempsey 41-51.
12 Apollo is a god of distance vis-à-vis his role as an archer and in his association with the sun. The god is often awarded the titles Ἑκηβόλος, ‘Far-shooter’ and Ἑκάεργος, ‘Far-worker.’ See Burkert (1985) 146-49; Otto 77-80.
surrounding region of Phokis. In terms of mantic procedure, Dempsey identifies Delphi’s intuitive method as “the higher kind of prophecy” and also suggests that this oracle was the originator of this method. In contrast, Suárez de la Torre believes that the two methods achieve the same purpose and are thus inseparable.

Delphi’s fame became widespread, and in return the oracle has received significant interest from both ancient and modern authors. Unfortunately, for all the attention awarded to Delphi in antiquity, no complete testimony to the oracle’s workings has survived. Heraclides Ponticus compiled a treatise on oracles in the late fourth century which now only survives in fragmentary form. Plutarch, who served as a priest at Delphi, wrote several essays on the subject of oracles; he was, however, writing in the first and second century CE, long after Delphi’s prime. Other written testimonies fare no better; several accounts are conflicted, others seem to be purely poetic invention, and most are based on second-hand information. Very few of these authors would have visited Delphi in order to get an accurate picture of the daily proceedings. The lack of accurate and trustworthy sources led Halliday to declare that “the real difficulty in the whole matter is the fact that antiquity was as much in the dark about these oracles as we are. We are building hypotheses with their hypotheses for foundation.” Fortunately, the École Française d’Athènes (ÉFA) have conducted a series of excavations at Delphi over the past one hundred years which yield a wealth of information about life in the sanctuary and its history.

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14 In the Homeric Hymn to Apollo, the god searches far and wide for a suitable place to establish his oracle. When he arrives at the spring Telphousa, Apollo is persuaded to go elsewhere, for as she says, πημανέει σ’ αἰεὶ κτύπος ἱππών οὐκ οὔρης ἱερὸν ἀπὸ πηγῆς, (“The noise of swift horses and mules drinking at my sacred spring will always irk you,” 262-63). Telphousa then compels Apollo to found his oracular centre near Crisa, a fertile plain in the quaint region of Phokis.
15 Dempsey 49-50.
16 Suárez de la Torre 177.
17 Halliday 268.
The Site of the Delphic Oracle

After centuries of slow decline, the Delphic oracle was shut down in 385 CE as the Roman emperor Theodosius looked to rid the last remnants of paganism from his empire. While Theodosius dealt the final blow to Delphi, his contemporary, Prudentius, was left to pronounce the oracle’s passing: *Delphica damnatis tacuerunt sortibus antra, non tripodas cortina regit, non spumat anhelus fata Sibyllinis fanaticus edita libris,* (“The Delphic cave is silent, the prophetic lots are damned, the cauldron does not command the tripod, and the frantic priestess no longer foams out prophecies from the Sibylline Books,” *Apo.* 438-40). A small Christian village briefly assumed the place of Apollo’s sanctuary on Mt. Parnassus, but nature eventually removed all trace of Delphi. Over the following centuries, numerous earthquakes have blasted the area and sparked a series of landslides which covered the ruins in layers of silt. It was not until 1893 that the EFA undertook the first systematic excavations at Delphi and began to uncover these hidden remains. The results of these excavations were published in 1902 by Albert Tournaire and the finds were held in a purpose built museum at the site. Subsequent excavations were held over the following years and are still ongoing, more of the site has been uncovered, and the numerous artefacts have filled the museum. And so, after many centuries had passed, travellers began to reappear at the site of Apollo’s oracle to marvel at its majesty.

Delphi, the spiritual centre of Ancient Greece, sat on the slopes of Mt. Parnassus in the region of Phokis. The sanctuary ruins are surrounded by rocky outcrops which included two giant cliffs known as the Phaedriades, the Shining Rocks (Fig. 4). From here, two ridges frame the sanctuary on both sides, and then slope down toward the

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18 Cod. Theod. 16.10.9. This decree, recorded in May of 385 CE, bans the acts of sacrifice and divination. Another decree set in 392 CE (16.10.2) outlaws sacrifices that seek to know about matters of life and death, and other matters which violate natural law.

19 Amandry and Chamoux (1991) provide a detailed description of the artefacts held at the Delphi Archaeological Museum.
Pleistos gorge until rising again in the form of Mt. Cirphis. The Castalian spring, used by the attendants of Apollo’s oracle, began at the base of the Phaedriades and ran through the plain of Crisa, until it reached the Gulf of Corinth. The harbour at Crisa provided sea access from the south, while Delphi itself stood near a junction of roads which extended north, south and east. Kyle notes that, in spite of its “illogical location,” Delphi’s environment was “intensely evocative.” Delphi’s natural beauty, still impressive today, was once matched by a wealth of elaborate artwork and architecture. Apollo’s magnificent sanctuary, surrounded by desolate rock, was filled with grand temples and monuments to rival any major Greek centre.

The sanctuary of Delphi was littered with treasuries which had been built to house the various dedications from many Greek states. The earliest monumental structures began to appear in the second half of the seventh century, beginning with the Corinthian treasury which stood at the entrance to the early sanctuary. The treasuries of Sicyon and Siphnos were built in the final quarter of the sixth century and stood side-by-side at the sanctuary’s southern entrance. The pediments and friezes of both treasuries were decorated with grand mythological scenes, and they would have attracted great interest from visitors as they entered Apollo’s abode. The Athenians built their own treasury in 478 in recognition of Apollo’s aid during the Persian wars. Further monuments and buildings were added throughout the sanctuary as conspicuous offerings to the god. The

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20 During the sixth century, the nearby Cassotis Spring was also diverted into the sanctuary. See Pouilloux and Roux (1963) 86-89.
21 For a description of Delphi’s environment, see: de Jongh, Gandon and Graham-Bell 101-13; Kalogeropoulos 59-60; Roux (1976b) 264-67.
22 Kyle 137.
23 The range of artistic styles exhibited at Delphi were unmatched by any other Greek sanctuary. See Roux (2000) 181.
24 For the date of the Corinthian treasury and its position in the early sanctuary, see Scott 41-42. Plutarch remarks that the Corinthian treasury was initially named after the tyrant Cypselus (657-27), and that the Corinthians later requested to change the name to their own (Mor. 400e).
25 The Athenians may have also built a stoa at this time, although it was possibly constructed after the Peloponnesian War. Roux (1976b) 264-67. For a chronology of treasury building at Delphi, see Dinsmoor (1912) 491-93.
great stone theatre was built in the third century and stood north of Apollo’s temple. At Marmaria, approximately one kilometre east of the main sanctuary, a secondary precinct housed the temples of Athena Pronaia and Demeter, two more treasuries, and a gymnasium which was built on two levels.26 Scott regards Delphi’s rugged terrain as a distinct advantage for those experiencing the sanctuary, for “viewing became a series of sudden encounters, a sequence of repeated viewings of dedications from different angles, heights and places.”27 During the Classical period, the numerous dedications and monuments became an attraction in themselves, but from the late seventh century, Apollo’s temple was the chef-d’œuvre of the sanctuary.

**Fig. 4: View from the Phaedriades down towards the sanctuary at Delphi.**

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26 Fontenrose (1978) 1-4; Kalogeropoulou 71-3; Roux (1976b) 264-67.
27 Scott 26.
Upon entering the sacred precinct from the south-east entrance, one follows a sharply winding path up a steep slope. This path, known as the Sacred Way, was flanked by the collection of treasuries and monuments until eventually it led up to the grand temple of Apollo. Just as Delphi was at the centre of the known world, this temple became the focal point of the sanctuary and it was here where the Pythia would make her prophecies. Apollo housed several successive temples during the course of Delphi’s lifetime, and the earliest of these appear to have existed in myth rather than history. The first historical temple of Apollo was erected in the second half of the seventh century and was destroyed by fire in 548; the second temple was completed at the end of that century and was heavily damaged by an earthquake in 373; the final temple was not completed until around 330 due to a series of conflicts at the sanctuary. There are hints that some form a building had preceded the earliest temple, for Homer twice refers to a λαίνος οὖδὸς, a ‘stone threshold’, at the sanctuary. Achilles refers to this structure in the Iliad (9.404-5), while in the Odyssey, Agamemnon is said to have stepped over this threshold in order to consult the oracle (8.79-81). This same phrase is repeated in the Hymn to Apollo when the god lays out his foundations for his temple upon which Trophonius and Agamedes laid a stone floor (294-97). Does this stone threshold confirm the existence of an early temple at Delphi? When Lerat uncovered the remains of an eighth-century wall south of Apollo’s temple, he suspected that these were the remnants of a religious

28 According to myth, Apollo’s first temple was constructed from laurel, the second from feathers and bees’ wax, and the third was made by Hephaestus from bronze (Paus. 10.5.9-13; Pind. fr.52i Race). The fourth temple was thought to have been made by Trophonius and Agamedes, two legendary builders who are also credited with building the treasury of the Elian king Augeas and the sanctuary of Poseidon at Mantinea (schol. Ar. Sub. 208; Paus. 8.10.2). Strabo provides a different account whereby the temple of feathers is the first, followed by the temple of Trophonius, and finally, the temple built by the Amphictyonic League (9.3.10). Strabo’s account therefore serves to merge the mythical with the historic past.

29 de la Coste-Messelière 731-37; Dinsmoor (1973) 71; Le Roy 121-28; Morgan (1990) 133. Cf. Luce (97-100) who has recently shown that the first peribolos wall around the sanctuary was constructed between 585 and 575; he suggests that the first temple may have been built as part of the same project. In contrast, Billot (161-77) believes that the temple was renovated during this time, rather than constructed. See Bommelaer and Laroche (1991: 95-100) for a brief background to the two rebuilding phases after 548 and 373.
structure, but also conceded that this hypothesis had no supporting evidence.\textsuperscript{30} Coldstream argued that an early temple at Delphi had inspired others to build similar structures and he adds that “what was mythical in Pausanias’ day must surely have had some reality in c.800.”\textsuperscript{31} Citing Homer’s testimony and stressing the fact that a prominent eighth-century sanctuary such as Delphi would require a temple, Sourvinou-Inwood asserts that this structure had actually served such a purpose.\textsuperscript{32} Yet Homer uses this phrase when referring to the threshold of Odysseus’ own home (\textit{Od}. 23.86-89), as well as that of the swineherd (\textit{Od}. 16.41), so it cannot be assumed that this stone threshold was an early Delphic temple. Segal notes that the threshold is a common literary element in the \textit{Odyssey} which serves as “the crucial juncture between worlds.”\textsuperscript{33} At Delphi, this phrase may not so much define a specific building as it did a boundary between the secular and the sacred.

The History of the Sanctuary and the Oracle (The Rise of Delphi)

Homer may provide the earliest evidence for Delphi as an oracular centre, but the area was home to a small community from as early as the second millennium. Excavators have recovered the remains of a settlement which had been established here at around 1500.\textsuperscript{34} This early settlement was centred about Marmaria, the area to the east of the main sanctuary, and included remains which indicate some form of cult or funerary practice. Among the finds were small clay figurines in the shape of women and animals which may

\footnotesize{
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{30} Lerat (1938) 215. Morgan (1990:132) also stresses the lack of evidence for an early temple and rather supposes that the building could also be the remains of a house.
\item \textsuperscript{31} Coldstream 322.
\item \textsuperscript{32} Sourvinou-Inwood (1979) 235-36. Hainsworth (\textit{ad} Hom. \textit{Il}. 9.404-05) also sees the reference to this \textit{λαίνος οὐ̂δός} as an implication that Delphi had a temple at this time.
\item \textsuperscript{33} Segal 79, and see 80-84.
\item \textsuperscript{34} Morgan (1990: 130) describes human remains and clay fragments from this time period.
\end{itemize}}
have been dedicated to an unknown deity. This worship was likely to have been purely local and on a minor scale. Two bull *rhyta*, similar to the types found on Crete, serve as another important find from this early settlement at Marmaria. Some have overstated the significance of these items by suggesting that they attest the worship of a Minoan Mother Goddess. Nevertheless, *rhyta* were also used in domestic and funerary contexts, and therefore it would be unwise to connect it with some form of worship based on such scanty evidence. Opinion has been divided over the fate of this early village; some argue that Delphi was continuously occupied throughout this initial period, while others, notably Catherine Morgan, suggest that the area had been abandoned until the beginning of the ninth century. The most recent excavations in the area, as well as other early Phokian settlements, suggest that Delphi was inhabited without interruption throughout the Late Helladic period (1550-1100).

Nevertheless, cult practice at Mycenaean Delphi appears to have ceased for an extended period and only resurfaced in the final stages of the ninth century. Numerous votive offerings, such as figurines and tripods attest the introduction of a new form of worship. Apollo arrived here in the eighth century, but his grand temple was not erected until the second half of the seventh, or perhaps later. When the village at Delphi was still young, and Apollo’s worship was slowly building, the region of Phokis was dominated by

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35 Lerat (1935) 329-75. The poorly stratified soil at Marmaria makes dating the artefacts difficult, for older deposits are not always found in the lowest areas. Concerning the Mycenaean finds, Lerat (1957: 708-10) suggests that these deposits were disturbed and relocated during the seventh-century building phase, which is why they are found in the same strata as Geometric remains. See also Amandry (2000) 11.

36 Lerat (1935) 329-75; Perdrizet 3. Rolley (2002: 274) states that one of the *rhyta* was certainly of Minoan origin, but was probably placed at Delphi by Peloponnesian visitors who frequented the region during its infancy.

37 Parke (1939) 8-9; Poulsen 3-8.

38 Sourvinou-Inwood (1991) 237n11. The author also refers to these claims as ‘wild.’

39 Morgan (1990) 106-09. Müller (475-89) provides evidence of pottery remains at Delphi from LH I through to LH III. For continuous occupation and cult practice at Delphi, see Desborough 199-200; Roux (1976a) 23.

40 Amandry (1944-45) 36-51; Perdrizet 133-40. Rolley (2002: 274) suggests both continuity and rupture at Delphi; while the settlement was occupied through the Late Helladic and the Dark Ages, cult activity only resurfaces immediately prior to 800.
Medeon and various settlements about the plain of Crisa. In the eighth century, Medeon was the largest settlement in Phokis which was primarily based on its trade links with Corinth.\textsuperscript{41} At this time, the rocky soil at Delphi was not conducive to farming and so the town could only support a small population. The balance of power shifted greatly in c.800 as Delphi began to secure strong connections with northern Greece. Corinth began to see Delphi as both a profitable and secure trading ally, and as a result, Medeon quickly lost a significant source of income. In turn, Delphi became the major settlement in Phokis, and Apollo’s sanctuary prospered not only from the increase in local residents, but also the large number of traders who frequented the region.\textsuperscript{42} Delphi prospered from this influx of trade and its oracle began to grow in reputation, but it was not until the beginning of the sixth century that Delphi would be regarded as a pan-hellenic sanctuary.

Delphi prospered greatly from its major trading partners. The presence of Corinth is illustrated by the numerous wares that began to appear at Delphi in c.800.\textsuperscript{43} Around 750, Corinth began to produce a range of high quality pieces which provided the impetus for an expanded trading network.\textsuperscript{44} Delphi also notices a wider collection of dedications in the final quarter of the eighth century, where the range of pottery intensifies to include wares from southern (Argive and Achaian), central (Attic and Boiotian) and northern states.\textsuperscript{45} Interaction with northern Greece, Thessaly especially, is most overt in the Amphictyony, the religious league which treated Delphi as a base of operations. This league was comprised of twelve regions, although the great majority of members resided in the

\textsuperscript{41} On the Corinthian influence at Medeon, see Coldstream 39-40.
\textsuperscript{42} For the growth of Delphi in the eighth century, see Morgan (1988) 314, 330; (1990) 106-47.
\textsuperscript{44} Dunbabin (1948) 65.
The league was traditionally based in the sanctuary of Demeter at Anthela, near Thermopylae. Thessaly was the dominant power in this league, which was probably due to its strong military and to its influence over several of the league’s other members. Either due to trade links or military expansion, Thessaly became keenly aware of Delphi’s growing prestige. The well established oracle was beginning to attract the interest of several major states; Thessaly may have seen Apollo’s sanctuary as a potential threat if it were to come under the influence of another political power, and thus it looked to incorporate Delphi into the Amphictyony as a second base of operations. Thessaly may have also sought to use the oracle as political endorsement for its own activities, or, as Forrest suggests, in order broaden its influence in the south. Nonetheless, while the Amphictyony was involved in running the sanctuary, it had little involvement in the oracle itself.

In its attempt to secure the oracle, the Amphictyony met stern resistance from Delphi’s local inhabitants, and this period of strife between the two groups is termed the First Sacred War. Traditionally, the First Sacred War is thought to have taken place between the years 595 and 591. Thessaly, Sicyon and Athens formed a united force against the Phokian city of Crisa, also known as Cirrha, which sat just south of Delphi on the Corinthian Gulf. According to later sources, the war was directed at the Crisaeans

46 The twelve members of the Delphic Amphictyony are as follows: Thessaly, Phokis, Delphi, Dorians of the Peloponnese, Ionians of Attica and Euboia, Perrhaebia, Boiotia, Locris, Achaia Phthiotis, Magnesia, Anianes, and Malia. See Roux (1979) 3. Thessaly had other possible early links to Delphi. According to Pausanias, the Thessalian Echecratides had made the first dedication at Apollo’s sanctuary (10.16.8), while the early king Aleuas the Red was said to have been chosen by the oracle (Plut. Mor. 492b).

47 Fine 116. Parke (1939: 120) suggests that the growing influence of the Amphictyony, and Thessaly’s role therein, had occurred in the mid-seventh century.

48 Forrest (1982a) 312.

49 For the various roles and responsibilities of the Delphic Amphictyony, see Bowden (2003) 67-84; Roux (1979) 20; Sánchez 44-56, 476-77.

50 For the involvement of Sicyon and Athens in the war, see Forrest (1956) 36-42. There is certainly some debate as to whether Crisa and Cirrha refer to the same place or to distinct towns. Here I follow Hall (2007: 296) in treating Crisa as the town with Cirrha as its port. See McInerney (309-12) for a summary of excavations in this region.
due to their religious impiety. Crisa was strategically placed so that it had control over all routes of access to Apollo’s sanctuary, except for the land route through Boiotia. Strabo says that the people of Crisa imposed taxes on those who wanted access to Delphi, and this action made them open to hostility from many groups, including Thessaly (9.3.4). Noel Robertson argues that this war was essentially created in the fourth century and used by Philip as a religious precedent for his own campaign in Greece.\textsuperscript{51} There is evidence, however, that the war was well-known before Philip had intentions of taking Greece; the Homeric \textit{Hymn to Apollo} and the Hesiodic \textit{Aspis} may have subtle reflections on the punishment of Crisa, while Isocrates issues a clear reference to the dispute in 371 (14.31).\textsuperscript{52} This period associated with the war, the early sixth century, also appears to have brought tremendous development to the sanctuary. The first \textit{peribolos} wall was put in place, the Pythian Games were established, and monumental dedications became more frequent and more elaborate.\textsuperscript{53} This change is best explained by the sudden appearance of the Amphictyony. The First Sacred War therefore seems to have been a real event, although its true impetus was political and economic. As a result of the conflict, Crisa was destroyed and the area – vital for access to Delphi – was made sacred to Apollo. Visitors were granted unobstructed access to the oracle, which was now placed under the aegis of the Amphictyony. To celebrate the victory, the Amphictyony introduced the Pythian Games which were funded by the accumulated war spoils.\textsuperscript{54} Delphi was thus emerged as

\textsuperscript{51} Robertson, N. (1978) 38-73.

\textsuperscript{52} In the \textit{Hymn}, Apollo advises his priests that if they transgress his rules, then other men would become their masters (540-43). Some scholars hold the opinion that this warning reflects the situation in the First Sacred War, and so date the \textit{Hymn} shortly after this incident. See Altheim 449; Forrest (1956) 33-44; Wilamowitz 441. The final lines of the Hesiodic \textit{Aspis} treat Cycnus as one who robbed visitors who came to Delphi (477-80). For the supposed relation between Cycnus and the First Sacred War, see Janko (1986) 45-47.

\textsuperscript{53} Rolley (2002) 278.

\textsuperscript{54} Morgan (1990) 135-6. The Pythian Games are often dated to 586, shortly after the First Sacred War. Howe (144) plausibly suggests that the plain of Crisa was converted for the use of the sanctuary at the expense of local residents. These lands may have been used to house visitors to Delphi, for grazing beasts, and to house a new race track. This would suggest that the growth of the Pythian Games had, in fact,
an interstate sanctuary and the local residents came to serve Apollo. Delphi was now independent of the surrounding state, but the Phokians were granted membership to the Amphictyonic council. The First Sacred War was no doubt elaborated by later accounts, but this is no reason to cast doubt on the entire event.\footnote{55}{Hall (2007: 276-81) takes a cautious view of the whole war and considers any truth in later accounts to be “so minute as to be practically insignificant.”} In truth, the expulsion of Crisa may not have come in a single momentous occasion, but from decades of friction caused by two groups contending for control of a major interstate sanctuary.\footnote{56}{The earliest certain date for the Amphictyony at Delphi is 548 when they commissioned Apollo’s new temple. See Davies (1994) 204.}

Delphi achieved the height of its fame from the early sixth century, and, as a result, it became a prominent feature in myth and history alike. Delphi’s own existence became subject to various interpretations, and this is most overt in the early traditions of the oracle. In the Homeric \textit{Hymn to Apollo}, the Olympian god searches far and wide for a suitable place to build his oracular centre. Having been directed to Crisa on the folds of Mt. Parnassus, Apollo establishes a new worship and he meets resistance from one source alone, the Pythian serpent which plagues the land (267-299).\footnote{57}{The \textit{Hymn} states that Delphi was initially given the name Pytho, due to the rotting ‘πυθώ’ of the serpent (372-73). Homer and Hesiod also refer to Apollo’s sanctuary as Pytho, and therefore this aspect of the myth may have been created to explain the place name (\textit{Il}.9.405; \textit{Theog.} 499).} Over the course of time, competing traditions were recorded which made Apollo an invader to a pre-existing sanctuary at Delphi. Euripides describes a violent takeover in which Apollo seizes control of Delphi from Gê once he has dispatched of the guarding serpent. Gê then sought to restore the oracle to Themis, and in retaliation against Apollo, she allowed mortals to see the future in their sleep, which removed any need for his oracle. Zeus, acting for his son, halted the prophetic dreams of Gê, and restored Delphi to its original state (\textit{IT} 1234-83).

In his \textit{Eumenides}, Aeschylus lays out a peaceful transfer whereby the oracle passes from...
Gê to Themis, then to Phoebe, and finally Apollo (1-19).\textsuperscript{58} Themis, Gê and the Pythian serpent feature in further variants of the myth. Apollodorus says that Themis had been the first prophetess at Delphi and that the Pythian serpent guarded her oracle; Apollo, having first learnt the art of prophecy from Pan, then killed the serpent and ousted the goddess (1.4.1). Alternatively, Menander Rhetor claims that the serpent had plagued the region of Phokis and forced Themis to abandon her oracle; Apollo, having dispatched of this menace, would then claim the land as his own (441.16-33). Pindar first attests the presence of Themis at Delphi in his Eleventh \textit{Pythian Ode} (9-10), while the Berlin Painter depicts the goddess in the guise of the Pythia as she sits on the tripod and prophecies to Aegeus (Fig. 5).\textsuperscript{59} Hyginus reports that the Pythian serpent was a child of Gê and that it had issued oracles on Mt. Parnassus before the advent of Apollo (\textit{Fab.} 140). Aelian says that Apollo was first purified after killing the serpent and then took control of Delphi from Gê (\textit{VH} 3.1.49-53). Some sources also link Poseidon, Dionysus and Nyx with the oracle.\textsuperscript{60}

Were these myths based on historical fact? The archaeological evidence certainly permits such a theory. Morgan’s previous re-settlement date of 875-860 had all but quashed any belief in a previous oracle of Gê, but, according to the latest archaeological reports, the region of Delphi was inhabited well before the first hints of Apollo’s worship being to surface. History thus allows several centuries for the cult of Gê to be introduced at Delphi, and then for that to transfer onto Apollo. Even with the recent archaeological

\textsuperscript{58} Aeschylus may have included a tripartite succession to reflect the reign of Ouranos, Cronus and Zeus in turn. Gê would then be awarded her oracular office by Ouranos, Themis by Cronus, and Phoebe received the honour from Zeus before the birth of Apollo. See D.S. Robertson 69-70. Amandry (1950: 201-14) comes to a similar conclusion.

\textsuperscript{59} The name Themis has connotations of law and order, but in the plural \textit{θέμιστες}, it can sometimes mean oracular pronouncement. See Harp. \textit{sv. Θεμιστεύειν}; Hesychius \textit{sv. Θεμιστεύειν}; Hom. \textit{Od.} 16.403. For modern discussions on Themis in regard to prophecy, see Dempsey 23; Johnston (2008) 57-60; Lloyd-Jones (1971) 6-7,84.

\textsuperscript{60} Pausanias, who attributes this information to Musaeus, says that Poseidon shared the oracle with Gê; the goddess issued her own oracles, most likely through dreams, while Poseidon spoke through his prophetess Pyron (10.5.6). The scholiast to Pindar remarks that Nyx was the first to prophesy at Delphi, followed by Themis, and then the Pythian serpent occupied the sanctuary and Dionysus issued oracles (\textit{Pyth. Argum.} 1). See Fontenrose (1980) 376n14.
dates considered, there is no concrete evidence for a cult of Gê in Delphi’s early history and it is unwise to make definite conclusions at this stage. It is also likely that this myth had other purposes. One such consequence of this succession myth was that Apollo’s oracle was awarded a long and illustrious pedigree. Delphi faced stern competition from Dodona for the right to be known as Greece’s oldest oracular centre. In this respect, Apollo could not hope to outdo his father. Instead, if Gê became the original occupant of Delphi, the oracle’s heritage would then extend back into a pre-Olympian age. This succession myth would then make Apollo’s oracle, and not his father’s, the first of its kind. The myth of the early temples at Delphi appears to serve the same purpose. Of course, this succession myth need not have had a single cause. Sourvinou-Inwood suggests that this myth represents a power shift from chthonic deities to Olympian gods; from female to male authority. Early Minoan-Mycenaean religion had been devoted to the concept of a Mother Goddess, until patriarchal Olympian religion began to permeate throughout Greece. Apollo’s succession would then a major represent a religious revolution, not just at Delphi, but the region. Whether their origins lies in truth or fiction, the Delphic succession myth does show that several deities could be considered oracular, and of them, Pan, Dionysus and Gê held oracular sanctuaries of their own in Greece.

This succession myth, in its various forms, shows how easily the line between myth and history could become blurred. The same effect is seen in regard to Delphi’s earliest oracular pronouncements. Delphi’s reputation had become such that all major undertakings, even those of the mythical past, came under the aegis of Delphic Apollo.

61 There is inscriptional evidence for a temple of Gê at Delphi. See CID II: 62 IIIa. However, Quantin (179) sees no evidence for a Delphic cult of Gê, oracular or not, before the arrival of Apollo in the eighth century.
63 See the third chapter for the oracles of Dionysus at Amphikleia (76-77), in Arcadia (73-75) and Gê at Aigeira (72-73). For possible oracles of Poseidon at Onchestos and Nyx at Megara, see the Appendix (106-08).
This behaviour can be seen in the Spartan reforms of Lycurgus; scholars doubt whether Apollo had been consulted on the matter, but the god’s involvement is firmly cemented in Greek thought. Herodotus tells us that Lycurgus consulted the oracle at Delphi and the Pythia responded:

"Ἡκείς, ὦ Λυκόοργε, ἐμὸν ποτὶ πίονα νηὸν
Ζηνὶ φίλος καὶ τάσιν Ὀλύμπια δόματ’ ἔχουσιν.
Δίζω ἢ σε θεὸν μαντεύσομαι ἢ ἄνθρωπον:
ἀλλ’ ἐτι καὶ μᾶλλον θεὸν ἐλπομαι, ὦ Λυκόοργε.

Lycurgus, friend to Zeus and to all those who inhabit
Olympian abodes, you have come to my wealthy temple.
I do not know whether to pronounce you a man or a god,
But even so, I rightly deem you a god, Lycurgus.

(Hdt. 1.65.13-16)

Herodotus then adds two variant accounts; one that Lycurgus received his reforms from the Pythia, and another that he purchased them from Crete (1.65.4). Tyrtaeus also connects Pythian Apollo with constitutional reform in the Spartan state (fr.4 West). Plutarch embellishes the details of the event so that the Pythia offers far more detail than one would expect from an oracular response. Here, Lycurgus is told to organise the Spartans into clans and phratries, to form the gerousia (the thirty member senate) and to elect kings (Plut. Lyc. 6). Xenophon poses a far simpler scenario in that Lycurgus brought his reforms to Delphi and the Pythia merely sanctioned them in the name of Apollo (Lac. 8.5).  

64 See Fontenrose (1978) 115-16; Hammond (1950) 42-64; Parke (1939) 101-03; (1967a) 58.
65 The Pythia was also thought to have influenced constitutional reform at Cyrene in Libya. Thera founded its colony at Cyrene in the middle of the seventh century at the behest of an oracle from Delphi, and after a number of years the king, Battus the Fortunate, invited more Greeks to settle on their lands. The Pythia
Delphi was also seen to play a role in other state concerns in its early years. The age of tyranny was at its height in the seventh century, and Delphi was linked to would-be rulers such as Cypselus, Cylon of Athens, and Cleisthenes of Sicyon. For Cypselus, Delphi was said to have predicted his future reign even before he was born. His father, Eetion, had been childless, and the Pythia told him that he would give birth to a lion which would bring many low (Hdt. 5.92). Apollo also predicted that the sons of Deinomenes of Sicily would become tyrants, but that they would all suffer (Plut. Mor. 403c). As for

encouraged this enterprise, and as a result, the population rose greatly. The mona chy was not equipped accommodate these new residents and two kings were later assassinated. The Pythia was consulted again in c.550, and she advised the people to send for an arbitrator from Mantinea to make the much needed reforms (Hdt. 1.50-61). This event is also recorded in inscriptions from Cyrene; see Meiggs and Lewis 5-9. Malkin (1989: 140-41) briefly discusses the role of Delphi in the reforms of Solon.
Cylon, he was told to seize the Acropolis at Athens during Zeus’ greatest festival. The man was undone by Delphic ambiguity, for he attempted his coup during the Olympic Games rather than the Athenian’s own festival of Zeus (Thuc. 1.126.4-6). Cylon was given a response which he was not able to interpret. Cleisthenes of Sicyon, on the other hand, was openly discouraged from seizing power. Cleisthenes bitterly resented Argos and sought to purge Sicyon of anything Argive. He banned the epics of Homer because they praised Argive leaders, and he sought to remove the cult of Adrastus from the city. Cleisthenes asked the Pythia if he should cast the great hero from the city, and she replied that Adrastus was a king of Sicyon, but Cleisthenes was a mere skirmisher (Hdt. 5.67). This oracle would have been a huge insult to Cleisthenes, who had aided Delphi in the First Sacred War.\footnote{Cleisthenes was leader of Sicyon in the First Sacred War. Menaechmus, the fourth-century historian of Sicyon, claims that Cleisthenes led the entire Amphictyonic force (schol. Pind. \textit{8em} 9.2). Cf. Polyaeus 3.5. See Forrest (1956: 36-39).} The oracle may show that Delphi had developed an anti-tyranny policy to reflect the sentiment of Greece at the time, but, as with a great number of early responses, there is little guarantee for historical accuracy.\footnote{Fontenrose (1978: 244) assigns Delphi’s earliest historical response to 440-30 BCE.}

While Delphi had earned a reputation as a political advisor, the oracle was also relied upon for the concerns of plague and famine. During the plague of 596, the Athenians were told to cleanse the city, and the Cretan Epimenides performed the purification ritual (Pl. \textit{Leg.} 642d). The Amphictyony asked Apollo how to rid their camp of plague during the First Sacred War, and they were told to continue fighting (Hippoc. [\textit{Ep.}] 27.13). Pythagoras of Ephesos was told to bury the dead and build a temple in order to rid his city of plague (\textit{Suda sv. Πυθαγόρας}). When plague struck the whole of Greece, Apollo instructed the Athenians to offer sacrifice to Demeter (Aristid. \textit{Or.} 13.105, 196). Apollo was especially connected with plague, and so Delphi was often consulted on matters of this nature. Delphi was also consulted on cases of murder and pollution, which
impacted the wider community as much as those directly involved.\textsuperscript{68} While Apollo was suited to dealing with crises of health, Greek states also encounter a variety of social problems which prompted the colonization movement. According to Callimachus, men are guided by Apollo when they set out new cities (\textit{Hymn} 2.55), and Cicero questions if any Greek colony had been established without oracular guidance (\textit{Div.} 1.3). Delphi’s role in the phenomenon is difficult to assess; some suggest that the oracle provided the initial impetus for colonisation and prompted the Greek states to new lands, while others treat the oracle’s involvement as a later invention.\textsuperscript{69} The truth, of course, may lie somewhere in between the two extremes. Although exaggerated to a certain extent, this connection between Delphi and colonisation seems too commonplace to have been a complete fabrication. In particular, a number of these colonies actually recognised and worshipped Apollo as \textit{Ἀρχηγέτης}, ‘founder of cities.’\textsuperscript{70} Instead of inspiring the movement and directing Greeks to new lands, Delphi was more likely to have awarded religious approval to an enterprise that had been planned by the enquiring state, such as the case of Heracleia Trachinia (Thuc. 3.92). Delphi thus took great advantage from the undertaking; the sanctuary was to be rewarded with tithes from the colonisers, with influence in new regions, and often with his own cult and temple in the established

\textsuperscript{68} Lentakis 39.
\textsuperscript{69} Grote (67) allowed a significant role for Delphi in the colonization movement: “[Apollo] is moreover the guide and stimulus to Grecian colonization, scarcely any colony being ever sent out without encouragement and direction from the oracle at Delphi.” Bouche-Leclercq (iii. 132-4) sees Delphi as a locus of geographical knowledge gained from the numerous visitors to the sanctuary; in turn, he suggests that this knowledge was used to successfully advise on expeditions to new lands. Compare with Defradas (237): ainsi c’est crée, à une époque nécessairement tardive, postérieure en tous cas à la grande période de colonisation, le mythe d’Apollon delphien archégète, (“Thus the myth of Delphic Apollo Archegetes is formed at a suitably belated time, later in any case to the grand period of colonisation”). Defradas argues that Delphi did not function as an oracular centre until the sixth century, after the colonising movement; this view is not well supported. See den Boer 55-56.
\textsuperscript{70} For example, Apollo was worshipped under this title at the Chalcidian colony of Naxos (Thuc. 6.3.1).
colony. Apollo was thus a divine expounder, the god who ensured that new colonies would install the required systems of worship, including his own.

Due to its involvement in important state concerns, Delphi’s reputation blossomed and it was even attached post eventum to a number of significant battles from the near and distant past. According to Homer, Agamemnon was told that the Trojan War would end when the best of the Achaeans began to quarrel (Od. 8.78-81). Delphi also became attached to the events of the First and Second Messenian wars of the eighth and seventh centuries. Diodorus suggests that, during the siege of Ithome, the Messenians had initially sought advice from their own seers before they were told to consult the Delphic oracle for such an urgent matter (8.8.1-2). Apollo told them that they must sacrifice a maiden to the underworld gods if they were to achieve victory (Paus. 4.9.4). In another oracle, the Messenians are warned to be on guard against Spartan trickery (Paus. 4.12.4), which the Spartans themselves were advised to use in order to seize the Messenian land (Diod. Sic. 8.13.2). After the first war had gone on for some years, the Messenians were told that victory would come to the first side to erect one hundred tripods around an altar of Zeus (Paus. 4.12.7). During the second war, Sparta was advised to seek counsel from Athens if it was to achieve victory (Isoc. Or. 6.31). In the mid-sixth century, Sparta again consulted the oracle, this time seeking to acquire the land of Arcadia. Apollo, however, told them to set their sights on Tegea (Diod. Sic. 9.36.2). Yet after an unsuccessful siege, the Spartans again ventured to the oracle, and this time Apollo instructed them to gain the bones of Orestes if they wished to achieve victory (Hdt. 1.67).

Delphi was thus consulted on or drawn into, a number of pivotal issues that confronted individual states; yet the oracle’s most important task was in repelling a major

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71 Lentakis 41; Pease 19. Forrest (1957: 174) keenly notes that it was not so much Delphi that promoted colonisation, but colonisation that promoted Delphi.

foreign army. When the Persian threat began to loom in the early years of the fifth century, a number of states visited Delphi in order to obtain advice from the Delphic god. The Athenians, seeking counsel from Apollo in 481-480, were initially instructed to flee. Then, having requested another oracle, they were told that a ‘wooden wall’ would help them. After a great deal of debate, Themistocles suggested that this ‘wooden wall’ was actually the Athenian navy and that they should make their stand at Salamis (Hdt. 7.141-143). This prophecy was fulfilled in September of 480 when the Persian fleet suffered a significant defeat in the straits of Salamis. The Spartans also consulted the Pythia during this time and were told that they would either lose their city or their king, which is obviously a later justification for the death of Leonidas (Hdt. 7.220). Argos was told to ‘keep its spear within’, and to ‘protect its head,’ meaning that they should take no part in the conflict (Hdt. 7.148). Apollo also instructed the Cretans not to aid the Greeks due to an age-old curse that had arisen when their legendary king Minos aided Menelaus in battle (Hdt. 7.169). The Delphians themselves consulted Apollo about the perceived threat to their sanctuary. Apollo told them to leave the sacred treasures as he was capable of defending his own territory (Hdt. 8.36).

The History of the Sanctuary and the Oracle (The Fall of Delphi)

The Delphic oracle faced its greatest test in the face of the Persian invasion, and in the aftermath of the war, some believe that its reputation had suffered irreparable damage. Although this is never suggested by the ancient sources, certain modern scholars believe that Delphi had erroneously predicted a Greek defeat, or had even formed an alliance with

73 For the date of Athenian consultation, see Evans, J.A.S. 26-28. Crahay (295-304) suggests that the two responses were part of a single oracle which Themistocles himself had composed and persuaded the Pythia to deliver.

74 How and Wells (ad Hdt. 7.148) interpret this instruction as “stay at home and protect your leaders.”
the Persian forces.\textsuperscript{75} This argument rests on several key factors: that the Pythia had initially advised Athens to flee rather than resist the Persians; that nine of the twelve Amphictyonic states had also medized and that Apollo’s sanctuary passed by unscathed while many other Phokian sanctuaries faced destruction.\textsuperscript{76} Parke was ready to believe that Delphi had formed some secret pact with the Persians, but there is no evidence to back his suggestion.\textsuperscript{77} Nor is there any strong reason to believe that Delphi had sympathised with the Persians during the war. Apollo may have advised the Athenians to flee, but he also gave the ‘wooden walls’ oracle which aided them. Apollo also later suggested that the Greeks should fight Mardonius at Plataia (Plut. \textit{Arist.} 11.3; \textit{Mor.} 628f). There is also reason to believe that the Persians had made an effort to pillage the oracle. The late fifth-century historian Ctesius tells us that Xerxes had sent part of his force to capture Delphi, but that a huge thunderstorm dislodged a number of rocks on the mountain and created a massive landslide (\textit{FGrH} 668f.13.138-40, 153-56).\textsuperscript{78} Plutarch goes as far as saying that Apollo’s temple had been burnt during the war (\textit{8um.} 9). The victorious Greeks sent numerous dedications to Delphi, including the golden tripod of Plataia and the portico of the Athenians. The Greeks also consulted the oracle to ask whether their dedications were ample (Hdt. 8.122). Themistocles was also said to have brought Persian spoils to Delphi, and that Apollo rejected them (Paus. 10.14.5). In the aftermath of the war, there is no evidence that the Greek states were dissatisfied with Delphi, and the wealth of offerings at

\textsuperscript{75} Forrest (1982a: 319) argues that Delphi had medized along with the majority of the Amphictyonic members.

\textsuperscript{76} On Delphi’s advice to flee: Bowie (125) suggests that Delphi “played a wisely subtle game” in offering both positive and negative responses about the Persian threat. Dillon and Garland (2000: 219-220) believe that the Pythia’s initial response was a fitting reply given the circumstances. On the medism of the Amphictyony: Casson 145, referring to Hdt. 7.132. On Persian forces at Delphi: Munro (320) firmly suggested that the Xerxes had sent a force to the oracle, but with the intent to protect its treasures from thieves. However, as Bowden (2005: 28n15) rightly points out, these arguments take it for granted that the Delphic priests were able to engineer ‘pro-Persian’ or ‘pro-Greek’ responses.

\textsuperscript{77} Parke (1939) 188. The author later suggests (1967a: 107) that Delphi had effectively “changed sides” during the war.

\textsuperscript{78} Diodorus claims that the Delphians erected a trophy to mark this event at the temple of Athena Pronaia (11.14.4).
Apollo’s sanctuary suggests much the opposite. Forrest, however, maintains that the glorification of Delphi was a belated attempt to save the oracle’s reputation. Whether the Delphic priesthood had a specific agenda towards Persia or remained neutral, it appears certain that the oracle retained its reputation in the direct aftermath of the war.

Delphi continued to operate as normal until the middle of the fifth century when Phokis made an effort to regain Apollo’s sanctuary. At this time, Athens had gained political influence in several regions, including Phokis. The Athenians saw great benefit in supporting the region as Delphi would also come under their influence. The Phokians took possession of the sanctuary briefly, but in 449 Sparta intervened and restored Delphi to its previous condition (Thuc. 1.112.5). For their efforts, the Spartans were awarded promanteia, the right to consult the oracle before all others (Philoch. FGrH 328f.34b). Pericles led a successful expedition to return the oracle to Phokis, and the Athenians were also provided with promanteia. Although there is no reference to the event, the Delphians must have recovered the sanctuary soon after, for the Amphictyony is said to have enforced heavy fines on the defeated Phokians (Diod. Sic. 16.33.1). The Second Sacred War caused no direct harm to Apollo’s sanctuary, but it had no doubt interrupted consultations for an extended period of time.

The fallout between Athens and Sparta continued from the sacred war into the Peloponnesian War. Sparta, having accused its rival of breaking the Thirty Years Peace, sought counsel from Delphi in 431 with the intention of going to war. Apollo not only assented to the Spartan enquiry, but openly supported the war effort (Thuc. 1.118.3). It is easy to see why Delphi would take sides; Sparta had restored the Delphians to the

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79 Forrest (1982a) 319. Fine (326) maintains that Apollo had effectively medized in the early years of the war. He would then argue that the Delphic priests saw a shift in momentum after the Greek victory at Salamis, and thus decided to join their cause.

80 Hornblower (2007: 49-50) asserts that the Spartans had tried to assume control of the Amphictyony in the fifth century.
sanctuary only twenty years prior, and the Delphians would also welcome any opportunity to eliminate any future threat from Athens. If the Pythia had actually offered this response, which Fontenrose accepts, then Delphi may have begun to issue oracles for its own benefit.\textsuperscript{81} On the other hand, the Athenians cannot have perceived such bias, for they continued to consult the oracle throughout the war. Athens consulted the oracle three times between 421 and 415, with the most notable occasion referring to the exiles from Delos. Athens had previously removed the Delians from their island because they considered them to be polluted (Thuc. 5.1). Athens also sought advice from Delphi before the failed Sicilian expedition. Apollo instructed the Athenians to fetch the priestess of Athena from Klazomenai, whose name was \textit{Ἡσυχία}, or ‘Peace’ (Plut. \textit{8ic}. 13.4).\textsuperscript{82} For Athens, the most significant oracle during the war came in 430, when the city was in the grips of a plague. While Spartans could see the event as a sign of Apollo’s promised support, the Athenians received support from Delphi and, as Pausanias claims, the god was given the title \textit{Ἀλεξίκακος} in acknowledgement of his aid (1.3.4). Over the course of the fifth century, Athens not only lost power and influence in Greece, but its relationship with Delphi had become somewhat frayed. The Athenians did continue to consult Apollo in regard to religious affairs, but never again on other matters of state.\textsuperscript{83}

Sparta’s relationship with Delphi also seems to have cooled after the war. Their next recorded response of any significance came in 388 when the Spartan king Agesipolis frequented the oracle. Agesipolis had intended to invade Argos, but each time he did so the Argives would then plead a truce so that they may observe the Karneian festival. Agesipolis first took the matter to Olympia, and Zeus replied that he could reject the truce if it was offered unjustly. Agesipolis then brought the issue to Apollo, and as Xenophon

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{81} Fontenrose (1978) 246.
\item \textsuperscript{82} Plutarch elsewhere says that the priestess was from Erythrae (\textit{Mor}. 403b). Zeus’ oracle at Dodona was also questioned about the Sicilian expedition, and his reply was equally ambiguous. See page 87.
\item \textsuperscript{83} Arnush (2005) 107; Bowden (2005) 110.
\end{itemize}
says, he asked the god if he shared the same opinion as his father (Xen. *Hell.* 4.7.2). Sparta had previously defeated Elis in battle and therefore they had political dominance at Zeus’ oracle.\(^84\) Agesipolis may have used his power at Olympia to secure a favourable response, which was then used to coerce the same reply from Apollo, the god of the Karneian festival. The Spartans may have also been hesitant to visit Delphi first, for Apollo had a cruel way of dealing with questions of impiety.\(^85\) While the actions of Agesipolis seem somewhat devious, he may have simply exercised great caution in dealing with a matter of great religious significance. Instead of trying to manipulate one god against the other, Bowden believes that the Spartan king had presented a similar question to both.\(^86\) Agesipolis no doubt had to convince his own army that he was acting under divine auspices, and he may have done so by obtaining oracles from two separate centres.

After this period, Sparta ceased to consult the oracle at Delphi on matters of warfare. In 371, when war with Thebes was impending, Sparta decided to consult Zeus’ oracle at Dodona rather than Delphi. The reason for this absence could be seen to rest on the destruction of Apollo’s temple in 373. The sanctuary’s religious duties were not doubt hindered by construction, and an inscription from as late as 344/3 encourages the Amphictyony to finish building quickly so that suppliants are received in the proper month.\(^87\) In 342 there was some form of shelter built exclusively for consultants in the

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\(^84\) Parke (1939) 222. Hornblower (2002: 208) argues that Delphi was consulted because its oracle was more prestigious than that of Olympia. The Spartans may have also sought advice from Apollo as a major god in the Peloponnesian and the god of the Karneian festival. See also Bouche-Leclercq ii. 336-37; Parke (1967b) 187-88.

\(^85\) For example, when the Cymaeans asked whether they should hand over the suppliant Pactyes to the Persians, the god replied: \(\text{ναὶ κελεύω, ἵνα γε ἀσεβήσαντες θᾶσσον ἀπόληθε},\) (“Yes, so that in acting unjustly, you are destroyed all the quicker,” Hdt. 1.159.19-21).


\(^87\) Volgraff (1927) 467-68. Philodamus, who composed this hymn to Dionysus, indicates that the Amphictyony received an oracle instructing them to pay honour to the god. Some form of construction (probably the temple) had to be completed before the scheduled celebrations. Marcovich (168) reads here an instruction to finish building quickly or face the wrath of Apollo.
absence of a new temple, thus showing that renovations were still being carried out, and that the oracle continued to operate in some form.\textsuperscript{88} Pausanias does also say that the Thebans were able to consult with Delphi concerning war with Sparta. While he does not provide the response from Delphi, he does say that one was recorded, and he remarks that the Thebans had also consulted several other centres (4.32.5). The Pythia may not have been able to prophecy in her usual manner while repairs were being made to Apollo’s temple.\textsuperscript{89} The Athenian consultation of 352, concerning the sacred lands at Eleusis, hints at a change in procedure or a change in perception towards Delphi. The Athenians wished to know if it was permissible to till the land in order to pay for renovations to the temple of Demeter, and so they brought the matter to the oracle. Nevertheless, they did not present the question directly to the Pythia, but instead they sealed a positive and negative form of the question into distinct jars which remained at Athens, and asked the Pythia to choose between them.\textsuperscript{90} The consultation takes the form of a lot-oracle, whereby an oracular question is framed to allow for a binary response. While it is likely that Delphi was limited to this method while a new temple was being built, the grand ceremony of encapsulating the questions and sealing them at Athens shows some deliberate caution and an attempt to limit the Pythia’s response.\textsuperscript{91} Generally, the appeal of intuitive prophecy lies in the ability to elicit a descriptive response instead of mere indication. In this scenario, if the Athenians had asked the Pythia what they should do, they may have received an unwanted and unexpected response. In shaping the question as they had, the Pythia was

\textsuperscript{88} See Bourguet (1932) 119-27, esp. 124.

\textsuperscript{89} Amandry (1997: 202-04) stresses that drawing lots was a popular method of divination at Delphi and, citing Champeaux, he suggests that this method was no less revered than the Pythia’s ecstasy; both were guided by Apollo.

\textsuperscript{90} IG IF 204. The inscription describes the oracular procedure in such detail that it could not have been common practice.

\textsuperscript{91} Sokolowski (1969: 63) notes the great care taken to ensure the integrity of the response. Parker (2000: 84-85) suggests that this unprecedented procedure may indicate suspicion of the oracle.
limited to one of two set replies. Therefore intuitive divination was not always the ‘higher
form of divination,’ but had its own particular limitations.

The destruction of Apollo’s temple may have had some impact on the oracle during
the fourth century, but this setback was overshadowed by another yet event on the horizon.
In 355, the Phokians had again seized the sanctuary and a prolonged sacred war ensued.
Fresh from its defeat of Sparta at Leuctra, Thebes was now the head of the Delphic
Amphictyony and had also received the right of promanteia. As such, they led the war
to remove the Phokian menace. Athens, who supported the Phokian cause, was also weak
and initially provided little support. Therefore the Phokians were forced to use the
treasures of Delphi in order to fund an army of mercenaries; the Thebans, acting on behalf
of the Amphictyony, sought funding from the league’s members. Sparta was still
recovering from her previous defeat, and was not able to assist the Amphictyony, but
Philip II of Macedon entered the war in 352 and the Phokians were finally overwhelmed in
346. The victory was almost effortless for Philip as the enemy ran out of resources and
were forced to submit. The Phokians were expelled from the Amphictyony and Philip was
rewarded with their place on the council. The build-up to the fourth and final sacred war
began in 339 when the Ozolian Locrians laid a charge against Athens during a meeting of
the Amphictyony. Athens was accused of adorning the new Delphic temple before it had
been consecrated, while Aeschines, speaking on behalf of the accused, responded with
more severe allegations of impiety against the Locrians, that they had tilled the sacred land
at Crisa (Aeschin. 3.115-18). Aeschines had managed to deflect the charges against
Athens, but he had inadvertently placed the city in an awkward position. Philip and the
Amphictyony planned an attack against the Locrians who were supported by Thebes;

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94 For a summary of the war and its causes, see McInerney 205-226. Buckler (1989) discusses the matter in
great detail, while Green (368-70) provides a brief chronology of recorded events.
Athens was forced to choose sides. When Philip made clear his intention to invade Attica, Athens was compelled to unite with Thebes, and the two allies were thoroughly defeated by the Amphictyonic forces at the Battle of Chaeronea in 338.95

During the last sacred wars, access to the oracle would have been severely restricted and work on Apollo’s new temple only finished in 330. Moreover, after Philip had defeated Athens and Thebes, the traditional Amphictyonic members had lost all power at Delphi and the sanctuary came under the control of a single authority for the first time. Demosthenes tells us that Athens had lost its right of promanteia (19.327), and it can be expected that several other states suffered the same. Athens was uncomfortable with Philip’s position of authority at Delphi, and this led Demosthenes to declare that the Pythia had ‘Philippized’ (Aeschin. 3.130). Philip and Alexander had little need for Delphi on matters of politics, and one of the successors, Demetrius Poliorcetes, was said to exclaim that his own words should be treated as oracles (Plut. Demetr. 13).

From the Hellenistic period, Delphi ceased to play a major role in Greek history. It has been noted that after the ‘wooden walls’ oracle of 481/80, Athens seldom consulted Delphi on political matters. Sparta too became somewhat detached from Delphi after the Peloponnesian War. This trend has been described as a general decline at Delphi, which is true in part, but does not reflect the whole circumstance. When Plutarch served as priest at Delphi in the second century CE, he notes three major departures from the oracle of old; the number of Pythia was reduced from two (with one reserve) to one (Mor. 414b), the Pythia would no longer issue verse responses (Mor. 397d), and that the matters brought to the oracle had become mundane (Mor. 407c-08c). This final point illustrates the true decline at Delphi, which did not reflect a lack of patronage so much as a lack of prominent and wealthy clients. As a result, the famous verse responses were no longer needed in

95 See Ellis 186-90.
response to the simple requests of private enquirers. The oracle had once been centre stage in Greek politics, but its final response of any weight was delivered during the Punic War of 216 (Sil. *Pun.* 12.324-36). Earlier, Delphi was also asked to intervene in 332 when Athens was unwilling to pay a fine at Olympia and had been barred from the games. Since the Pythia had refused to prophecy until the dispute was sorted, the Athenians were forced to pay (Paus. 5.21.5). The oracle was called upon in 210 to approve a legislation of the Eretrians, and in 250 CE the oracle advised on an affliction in the land of Tralles. The oracle, therefore, was evidently consulted on similar matters from the fourth century, but at a noticeably lesser frequency.

Such a marked reduction in Delphi’s status is best explained by sweeping changes in the conditions of Greece over time. When leaders once sought divine guidance on a wide number of concerns, autonomous leaders would now make these decisions independently. Athens and Sparta, two of Delphi’s most illustrious clients, had also ceased to play a major role in the Greek world. As such, Delphi would no longer attract wealthy states and individuals who would pay well for the oracle’s services, but the humble everyday enquirer. As a further consequence of Alexander’s conquests, the known world was greatly extended and Greece was introduced to new religious cults and ideas. Delphi became one of several popular centres of divination, including Claros and Didyma in Asia Minor, and thus it could no longer be treated as the centre of the known world. Under Roman rule, Delphi was just one of many oracular centres vying for patronage, and, as

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97 Parke (1967a: 131) regards this consultation as a public relations drive to appease the disaffected Romans after two previous defeats.
99 Noting that Delphi had ceased to cater to the illustrious, Levin (1637-42) suggests that private individuals were attracted to other oracles, such as that of Trophonius at Lebadeia.
100 Delphic Apollo did have some influence in Asia Minor; a number of centres here began to celebrate their own Pythian Games in Roman times. See Wörrle 157-65.
noted by Liebeschuetz, the popularity of these centres was ever-changing.\textsuperscript{101} Roman Greece also faced extensive poverty and depopulation, and Delphi’s decline was very much associated with the harsh economic reality. The oracle no longer catered for wealthy individuals and states, like those which had made elaborate dedications in the Archaic and Classical periods. In contrast, the coast of Asia Minor, with its own set of oracular centres, was a thriving region.\textsuperscript{102} Delphi was thus competing with a number of centres which served a similar need, and the most frequented centres were either those that served a large local community, or those that were placed near busy travel routes.\textsuperscript{103} Nevertheless, Delphi continued to operate in some form until the fourth century CE, and the consultation of the physician Oribasius in 362 CE is often regarded as the oracle’s last response.\textsuperscript{104}

The Manner of Consulting the Delphic Oracle

At its peak, the Delphic oracle catered to a wide range of clientele on matters of great significance for both states and individuals. Apollo provided guidance on pertinent issues, and in return his sanctuary was rewarded with many riches. In rather frank terms, Arnush posits that “the oracular seat was a devotional magnet for pilgrims and politicians.”\textsuperscript{105} Delphi’s reputation, however, was such that the god could not satisfy the needs of every potential customer, especially when the oracle was so infrequently available. The oracle appears to have operated for nine days of the year. According to Plutarch, the oracle was available once per month, except during the three months of

\textsuperscript{101} Liebeschuetz 999-1000. Under the Pax Romana, individual Greek states had little need for Delphi as an arbiter and political advisor. See Dillon (1997) 86.
\textsuperscript{102} Lentakis 44.
\textsuperscript{103} Fowden 547-48.
\textsuperscript{104} Bowra 426-35; Thompson 35-36.
\textsuperscript{105} Arnush (2000) 293.
winter. The Delphic priests had to ensure that their most important clients were given guaranteed access to the oracle, and so an established order of priority was enforced. The local residents of Delphi would have assumed the right to consult the oracle first, followed by those states with the privilege of *promanteia*. Arnush suggests that individual consultants could make use of this state *promanteia*, but there is no evidence to support his claim. Individual enquirers had their own right of access, known as *proxenia*, which, from the third century, was awarded far more often than *promanteia*. The shift from state to individual consultations reflects the oracle’s estrangement from major political matters, and stresses the need to maintain clients. States and individuals that did not possess this right appear to have been selected by lot. Pouilloux has compiled evidence for the granting of *promanteia* to more than twenty states between the seventh and the

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106 The oracle was initially available once per year in the month of Bysios, until it was later extended (Plut. Mor. 398a; 292e = Callist. FGrH 124f.49). This change is said to have taken place ‘long ago’; was it introduced before Callisthenes, or Plutarch? Parke (1943: 19-20) suggests the change occurred during the Persian Wars where there is literary evidence for consultations at different stages of the year. However, the inscription IG II² 1096, dated to 37 BCE, is the earliest direct evidence for a consultation outside the month of Bysios. Sokolowski (1936: 140) doubts that there were any restrictions on the oracle’s availability, aside from Apollo’s absence in winter; il n’était pas de l’intérêt des prêtres de les multiplier et de fermer l’oracle à la foule des gens qui le consultaient sur les questions les plus banales (it was not in the interest of the priests to increase [these days] and to close the oracle to the crowd of people who consult it on the most commonplace questions). There is no reason to believe that Delphi would lose patronage by limiting the days of consultation. Rather, the oracle’s exclusive nature may have aroused interest from potential clients.

107 When Thebes was awarded *promanteia* in 363, they earn the right to consult the oracle after the Delphians. See Homolle 517. Photius describes the right as being able to consult the oracle “πρὸ τῶν ἄλλων ἀπάντησιν” which could either mean ‘before all others’ or ‘on behalf of all others’ (Phot. sv. Προμαντεία). Sokolowski (1954b: 169-71) briefly outlines the two options and suggests that those with *promanteia* were first to consult the oracle and that they may have also nominated others to receive this right. It remains to be understood how the Delphians established priority between those states with *promanteia*. It appears as though the head of the Amphictyony received first access after the Delphians, such as Thebes in 363 and Philip in 346 (Dem. 9.32). Also in the fourth century, the people of Thurii were given the right to consult the oracle before all Italians, with Tarantine to be given the same right. Roux (1990: 27-29) suggests that this decree was written to settle a dispute between the two parties, who each sought precedence at the oracle.


109 A Delphic decree from the early second century lists 135 recipients of *proxenia*. See Syll.Ⅰ 585. During this time, *promanteia* was offered to the Chersonese and a group of Dionysiac craftsmen. See Pouilloux (1952) 491-92.

110 See Aesch. Eum. 31-33.
second century. As can be expected, those groups with a strong political influence at Delphi – Athens, Sparta, Thebes, Philip, and the Aetolians – each received this honour. States such as Naxos, Siphnos and Lydia had each made generous dedications to Delphi in the past, and so this right seems to have been given in return. To them, the award of *promanteia* was not only about politics, but it was a conscious effort by Delphi to retain a generous client.

The cost and risk of travel may have also posed some trouble for those who wished to consult the oracle. For those who had to travel vast distances, the greatest challenge would come in timing their journey. The penalty in being one day late for an enquiry would equate to another month of waiting. While states such as Sparta had *Pythioi*, official delegates charged with receiving oracular responses, individual enquirers would face the journey themselves. To many, leaving their household for an extended period of time, coupled with the very real prospect of missing out, would be an effective deterrent. Pilgrims to Delphi were usually permitted to travel without obstruction due to *asylia*, but the events surrounding the Peace of Nicias in 421 suggest that this was not always the case. Previously, Athens had been denied access to Delphi by land and sea; this circumstance is noted by Aristophanes, who says that travellers would have to ask permission from the Boiotians before passing through their territory (*Av*. 188). Enquirers to the oracle may have also been averted due to the events at Delphi itself. The four sacred wars would have surely made an impact on the number of visitors to Delphi, and Apollo’s temple, destroyed in 548 and again in 373, both times took decades to be

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111 Pouilloux (1952) 486-92.
112 Dillon (1997) 153. Amandry (1950: 112n3) has suggested that *promanteia* would grant the recipient the right to consult the oracle on days outside the normal operation. This would certainly suit those communities which had to travel great distances.
113 The Spartans had two permanent Pythioi, one for each of the kings, who lived at the public expense. See Hdt. 6.57; Xen. *Lac*. 15.5.
replaced. Since the oracular procedure took place within the temple, regular practice would have been disturbed, although alternate arrangements may have been made.

After they had made the trek to Delphi and were given permission to consult the Pythia, states and individuals would also have to pay for the service. Not only would the consult be expected to provide the appropriate animal for sacrifice, but he would also be required to purchase a sacred cake which would be offered to the god. This preliminary payment is attested in Euripides’ \textit{Ion} whereby the consultant must offer the cake before performing the sacrifice at the altar (226-30). Only then would the consultant be permitted inside Apollo’s temple. The consultation fee, represented by this sacred cake, does not appear to have been set at a fixed price. An inscription from the late fifth century shows that the Phaselians were charged the equivalent of ten Attic drachma per state enquiry and one drachma for an individual. In the first half of the fourth century, the people of Skiathos were charged two drachma for a state enquiry and two obols (equal to half a drachma) for an individual. They were also exempt from paying for the animal sacrifice, which was set at two obols for the state, and one for an individual.\footnote{Skiathos inscription: see Amandry (1939) 183-219, esp. 190-91. Phaselian inscription: see Sokolowski (1954a) 157.} Parke suggests that the Phaselians were granted a special consultation fee and that the normal rate was much higher.\footnote{Parke (1939) 30n1.} The Skiathians would then have been awarded a far greater discount, which may have been accrued from their \textit{promanteia} status. It is also possible that there was no set rate for consultations and that each consultant was charged according to his means or status.\footnote{Sokolowski (1954b) 171.} It does seem apparent that individuals were charged far less than states, which means that financial cost may not have been a huge deterrent for private enquirers.

Once each consultant was selected, due preparations had to be made. The consultant would pay the required fee, and then the consultant, the Pythia and the priests would
undergo purification.\(^{117}\) Finally, it was still left to the god to decide if the procedure would take place. The oracle’s attendants would pour cold water over a sacrificial goat; if the animal shivered, it was taken as a sign that Apollo was in his temple and willing to prophecy (Plut. Mor. 435b). Plutarch presents an incident where these signs were unpropitious, and the Pythia faced fatal consequences when forced to prophesy against her will (Mor. 438b-c). If the signs did prove favourable, consultants were admitted into Apollo’s temple where they would present their questions to the priestess. This woman was selected according to set criteria: she was to be born from a lawful union and chaste to ensure that she was pure, while to maintain impartiality, the ideal candidate was uneducated and from a poor family.\(^ {118}\) Once selected, the Pythia would continue to lead a life of isolation (Plut. Mor. 438d). Initially the priestess was elected as a young virgin, but Diodorus tells us that this rule was altered after a man named Echecrates had violated a particularly beautiful Pythia. Henceforth, women of fifty years or more were only allowed to undertake the role (Diod. Sic. 16.26). The priestess continued to wear the attire of a virgin, but, since one Pythia was known to be a grandmother, abstinence must have only been enforced during her time of office.\(^ {119}\)

As the Pythia was regarded as the mouth-piece of Apollo, it is important to understand how her responses were delivered. Two completed departed views show how little we know of the process. One viewpoint suggests that the Pythia, having fallen into a frenzied state, would then speak in incomprehensible utterances which were recorded and

\(^{117}\) Purification for consultants: PA 14.71-74. For priests: Eur. Ion 94-101. For the Pythia: schol. Eur. Phoen. 224; Plut. Mor. 397a. There were several classes of priests at Delphi: the Hosioi (ὅσιοι), Hierus (ἱερεύς) and Prophetes (προφήτης). See Maurizio 83-84; Parke (1940) 85-89.

\(^{118}\) Plutarch says that the Pythia should possess nothing in the way of skill or experience when about to prophesy for the god (Mor. 405c-d). Diodorus says that virgins, with their innocence intact, were well suited to maintaining the secrecy of responses (16.26).

\(^{119}\) Bourguet (1929) 553. Compare with the oracle of Gê at Aigeira where women assuming the role of priestess were expected to have had no more than one sexual partner. See pages 101-02.
interpreted by the Delphic priests. In stark contrast, Fontenrose believes that the Pythia did not issue spontaneous responses, but calmly approved (or rejected) proposals that were put to her. The issue clearly affects how the responses were created and who created them. According to the first opinion, it was the priests who had a major influence on what the enquirer was told. The hexameter responses that the oracle was said to deliver can only have been created, and thus manipulated, by the Delphic priests. Under the guise of a neutral authority such as the Pythia was, the priests could then enforce their own ‘policy’ through the medium of the responses. If this was true, then the idea of a pro-Persian, pro-Spartan oracle is more readily accepted. On the other hand, if the responses were notoriously ambiguous, such as the ‘wooden walls’ response, then the priests may have worked to safeguard the oracle’s reputation for accuracy by placing the onus on the consultant to interpret correctly. Yet there are two factors which suggest that the Pythia, rather than the priests, was solely responsible for the oracular replies. First, in several cases where consultants sought to bribe the oracle, the proposition was always made to the Pythia directly and not the Delphic priests. Next, there are several reports which suggest that the Pythia prophesied spontaneously without involvement from the priests.

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120 Bouche-Leclercq (iii. 96-97) reflects the traditional view with these words: “La Pythie était toujours assistée, dans ses extases, d’un ou de plusieurs prophètes, qui recueillaient ses paroles confuses, ses cris inarticulés et en composaient un oracle ordinairement versifié, chargé des tours pompeux et des obscures calculées qui constituaient le style propre d’Apollon Loxias.” (The Pythia was always assisted in her ecstasy by one or more prophets, who collected her confused words, her inarticulate cries, and composed normal oracular verses, charged with pompous twists and calculated obscurities that were the style of Apollo Loxias.) See also Dempsey 54-55; Parke (1939) 30-31. Bouche-Leclercq (i. 353) and Rohde (288-89) attribute the Pythia’s madness to Dionysus whom they thought played a part in the oracular procedure. Latte (1940: 9-12) denies any involvement of Dionysus in the mantic procedure, and stresses that ‘mania’ does not always result in Bacchic frenzy, but also calm, trace-like states. Dodds (69) adds that Dionysiac ecstasy suited groups rather than individuals. See also Maurizio 69n2.

121 Fontenrose (1978) 223, with the support of Forrest (1982b) 428.

122 For examples of bribery, see Hdt. 5.62(64 and 66. The Spartan kings appear to have been more frequently involved in bribery than other leaders, which suggests to Crahay (180) that they were masters of oracular politics.

The Pythia’s spontaneous prophecies may have been somewhat exaggerated, but they are too well attested to have been completely fictional. Ancient authors describe the Pythia’s ecstasy in a number of ways, most of which have been firmly rejected by modern scholarship.\textsuperscript{124} The procedure was clearly held within the temple, and the Pythia would enter into the adyton and take her seat on the tripod.\textsuperscript{125} It is unclear where the others, such as the consultant or the priests who may have been recording the oracular responses, would sit. As for the source of this divine inspiration, Diodorus suggests that mantic vapours rose from the earth, which the scholion to Lycophron places directly under the tripod.\textsuperscript{126} Other sources refer to a mantic cave, which must have been associated with the dark recess of the adyton.\textsuperscript{127} Recently, a team of scientists, led by J.Z. de Boer, conducted a geological survey at Delphi and concluded that the site lay upon two intersecting fault-lines.\textsuperscript{128} Furthermore, this team propose that ethylene gas had once emitted from the earth, either into the oracular chamber, or into the water supply. In breathing the gas or drinking the water, the Pythia would then enter a brief altered state. Although minute traces of the gas were detected during their study, the authors state that concentration levels would be much higher after an earthquake, such as that of 373. The authors also stress that a wealth of ancient sources “consistently link the power of the oracle to natural features inside the temple.”\textsuperscript{129} As Fontenrose illustrates, references to an oracular chasm and mantic vapours are anything but consistent.\textsuperscript{130} This study also fails to explain why others in the temple,

\textsuperscript{124} Forrest (1982b: 429) believes that Delphi’s oracular procedure was well-known to the Greeks. However, the sheer number of conflicting accounts in ancient literature offers little assurance.

\textsuperscript{125} Eur. Ion 91.

\textsuperscript{126} Diod. Sic. 16.26; schol. Lycoph. 1419.

\textsuperscript{127} Lycoph. 207-8; Strab. 9.3.5; Lucan Bell. Civ. 94-95. Elderkin (127) suggests that the oracle was originally located within a cave, which was the replaced by a mantic crypt inside the temple.

\textsuperscript{128} A number of articles have been written on this matter. See Piccardi (2000) 651-54; de Boer, Hale and Chanton (2001) 707-10; Spiller, Hale and de Boer (2002) 189-96; Spiller, de Boer, Hale, Chanton (2008). This last article is in response to a highly critical paper by Foster and Lehoux (2007). See also Lehoux (2007) for further remarks.

\textsuperscript{129} Spiller, Hale, and de Boer (2002) 190.

\textsuperscript{130} Fontenrose (1978) 197-202.
such as the priests and enquirer, were not also affected by the ethylene. If the Pythia was affected by the water, then this too would have affected others unless it was placed off-limits.\textsuperscript{131} Another explanation seems more prudent. Instead of looking for possible external stimuli to explain the Pythia’s behaviour, another option is to consider psychological triggers. Graf explains this trance in relation to the preliminary procedure; the elaborate ritual, including the sounds, the smells, and the religious awe of the occasion, would drive the Pythia into an altered state.\textsuperscript{132} In searching to explain the Pythia’s mantic state, it is important to remember that Apollo was seen as the ultimate source of prophetic statements at Delphi, and so reaching a rational explanation from ancient sources alone may not be possible.\textsuperscript{133}

While the main oracular method at Delphi required consulting the Pythia on certain days, there may have been a secondary oracle available to enquirers. Apollo does have some link to cleromancy, the art of divining by chance. In the Homeric \textit{Hymn to Hermes}, Apollo says that as a child he practised a form of divination involving the Thriai, a trio of bee maidens who inhabited Mt. Parnassus. Philochorus speaks of the Thriai as three prophetic nymphs who inhabit the mountain (\textit{FGrH} 328f.195), while Hesychius refers to them as “\textit{μαντικαὶ ψῆφοι},” oracular pebbles (\textit{sv. Θρίαι}). Plutarch makes reference to the casting of lots at Delphi (\textit{Mor. 391e}), and the \textit{Suda} notes that lots were thrown from a container and then interpreted by the Pythia (\textit{sv. Πυθώ}). The image of Themis as Pythia (Fig. 5) shows the goddess peering into a bowl, which possibly contained these sacred lots.\textsuperscript{134} This oracular method, where the Pythia would choose one response from a number

\textsuperscript{131} Johnston (2008: 48-49) also sees problems in the ethylene theory and believes that traces of the gas were not strong enough to affect the Pythia.

\textsuperscript{132} Graf (2009) 62-64. Dodds (73) preferred to believe that the preliminary rituals, the bathing and fumigation, had no physiological effect on the Pythia and that her trance was completely self-induced.

\textsuperscript{133} Price 140.

\textsuperscript{134} Robbins 290. Holland (203) suggests that the sacred lots, regarded as the bones of Dionysus, were contained in the Pythia’s tripod.
of options, seems to suit several recorded consultations. When the Thessalians looked to
elect a new king, the name of each candidate was placed in a container and the Pythia
selected the recipient (Plut. Mor. 492b). When Cleisthenes wished to select names for his
ten new Athenian tribes, he presented one hundred options for the Pythia to select from
(Arist. [Ath. Pol.] 21.6). The lot-oracle suits a number of consultations where the Pythia is
merely asked to sanction a proposal. Fontenrose would argue that there was only one type
of prophetic session at Delphi, but Amandry distinguishes between the Pythia’s inspired
prophecy and the lot-oracle. He even suggests that the lot-oracle was available outside the
official consultation days.\textsuperscript{135} Alternatively, there was an oracle at the Corycian cave,
which lay above Delphi on Mt. Parnassus. Pan was worshipped here with the nympha from the seventh to fourth century, and the oracle operated by means of tossing dice,
hundreds of which were found in the vicinity.\textsuperscript{136}

Concluding Remarks

The Delphic oracle came to prominence in the seventh century and attracted the
interest of wealthy states and individuals from all parts of the Mediterranean. The earliest
visitors to Delphi treated the region as a secure trading post, and as more people appeared,
the oracle too came to attract attention. Delphic Apollo then became a source of
advisement for the political and religious concerns of the Archaic Age and newly forming
states rewarded the god with wealth and prestige. Delphi would then become independent
of Phokis in the sixth century in order to become an inter-state sanctuary and the oracle’s
reputation grew to the extent that states and individuals would compete for access by
offering grand dedications and political allegiance. During this time when Delphi catered

\textsuperscript{135} Amandry (1950) 29-36. Johnston (2008: 55) suggests that the lot-oracle may have been made available
when Delphi had to accommodate a high number of enquirers, and also to those who could not afford the
ecstatic prophecy.

to state politics and religion, the humble enquirer would have been forced to look elsewhere for advice; travelling to Delphi was expensive, time-consuming and infrequently available, while smaller local oracles provided a convenient alternative. The fourth century saw a drop in wealth and prestige for Delphi as the oracle’s clientele shifted from public to private enquirers. The factors which can be attributed to Delphi’s decline may apply equally to its prominence; the oracle had once played a key part in state decisions, while this role was now being fulfilled by autonomous leaders, and although Delphi was central to the major Greek states, it would no longer sit in the middle of a newly enlarged world.
Chapter Two: The Mainland Oracles of Apollo

During the course of its existence, the oracle at Delphi captured the interest of Greeks and foreigners alike. Delphi catered to states and individuals on matters of politics, family and religion, and in return, Apollo’s sanctuary become one of the most prominent and wealthy in Greece. As has been noted, the oracle at Delphi could not cater to everyone. Delphi attracted a great number of potential enquirers, enough to warrant an organised schedule for consultations. Even when Delphi had lost its political influence, these enquirers would always outweigh the Pythia’s ability to advise them. Fortunately for these people, there were several notable oracles of Apollo throughout the Greek mainland. Since the god was awarded a great reputation for divination, these alternate oracles of Apollo would also have no doubt prospered in turn. Were these oracles viewed as complementary to Delphi, as rivals, or completely independent? This chapter will focus on the popularity of these oracles, their history, their methods, their link to Delphi, and their role in Greek society.

Abae (Phokis)

If Delphi lay at the centre of the world, then Abae, in the surrounding region of Phokis, could lay claim to being second in this respect.\(^{137}\) The city took its name from Abas, the legendary king of Argos, and its citizens considered themselves to be of Argive

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\(^{137}\) A series of maps are presented in the preliminary section (pages viii-x) which illustrate the geographic distribution of those oracular sites mentioned in each of the following chapters.
The city was certainly known to possess an oracular centre in the fifth century, for Sophocles makes reference to Abae in his Oedipus Rex:

\[\text{Οὐκέτι τὸν ἄθικτον εἰ-}
\text{μὶ γὰς ἐπ' ὀμφαλὸν σέβων,}
\text{oὐδὲ τὸν Ἀβαῖσι ναόν,}
\text{oὐδὲ τὰν Ὀλυμπίαν,}
\text{εἰ μὴ τάδε χειρόδεικτα}
\text{πᾶσιν ἁρμόσει βροτοῖς.}
\]

No longer will I go in reverence
To earth’s inviolate centre,
Nor to the temple at Abae, nor Olympia,
If these things do not fit together
For all mortal men to point at.

\((OT\ 896-901)\)

Although Sophocles does not state explicitly that Abae contained an oracle, the context implies its existence. Jocasta has just warned Oedipus not to place too much faith in prophecy (848-58), and this speech delivered by the Chorus suggests that Delphi (earth’s inviolate centre), Olympia and Abae will lose prestige if the oracle given to Laius is not

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138 A brief recount into the mythology of Abas may explain his presence outside Argos and his connection to prophecy. Abas and his sons are credited with founding a number of cities in Greece. Abas himself was thought to have founded a city in Euboia which shared his name (Strab. 10.1.3). Abas was also credited with founding Pelasgian Argos in northern Greece (Strab. 9.5), while Pausanias says that Lykeia was founded by Lykos, an illegitimate son of Abas (2.25.4), and that another son Proetus founded the city of Sicyon (2.12.2). Acrisius, the twin of Proetus, was credited with founding the Delphic Amphictyony and building Demeter’s temple at Thermopylae, which was the league’s original base. Abas the coloniser was also linked with the Melampids, a family of seers which included Amphiaraurus and Amphilochus. Melampus was often considered to be the first seer in Greece, and while Abas was often thought to have been a son of Lyceus and Hypermnestra, both Pausanias (1.43.4) and Apollodorus (1.9.13) make Melampus his father. Melampus himself was connected to the royal house of Argos. Another son of Abas was Idmon, a seer who took part in the voyage of the Argo (Ap. Rh. Argon. 2.815). Although it is not attested, Abas may himself have been regarded as a seer.
fulfilled. It would not make sense to include Abae if it had not been recognised as an oracular site. Herodotus is more explicit in his reference to Abae; he counts the oracle among those tested by Croesus (1.46), and he adds that the Persian general Mardonius sent Mys to inquire here (8.134). In the fourth century, Callisthenes recognises the Abaian oracle among several others (FGrH 124f.11). Later sources make it clear that the oracle belonged to Apollo; Hesychius says that the god was worshipped under the title Abaios (sv. Ἄβαι), while the scholion to the Oedipus Rex names him as Apollo Lykeios (schol. Soph. OT 898). Pausanias provides the most detailed account of the township and its oracle. First he asserts that the Thebans had consulted this oracle, among others, before the Battle of Leuctra in 371 (4.32.5). He says that the people claim to descend from Argos and that Apollo’s oracle had been established long ago. He also notes two separate attacks on the temple during the Persians wars and the Third Sacred War, as well as a new temple dedicated to Hadrian in the second century CE (10.35.1-3).

The various accounts provide few details about Abae, but it is clear that the oracle had achieved some renown in the Classical period. Herodotus’ story of Croesus certainly appears to assert Delphi’s status ahead of its nearest rivals, including Abae.139 The other two consultations, those of the Persians and Thebans, also suggest that the oracle catered to prominent clients from the fifth century. According to Stephen of Byzantium, the oracle at Abae was older than Delphi (sv. Ἀβαι), but it is difficult to trust such a late source. Herodotus adds that after defeating the Thessalians sometime after 510, the victorious Phokians divided the spoils and dedicated them evenly to Delphi and Abae (Hdt. 8.27).140 This act may then suggest that Abae was treated as the primary religious centre of Phokis. Herodotus also adds that Apollo’s temple at Abae was filled with

139 Crahay (195) points out that Abae should be read as an important oracle in Herodotus’ fifth century, rather than Croesus’ sixth century.
140 For the date of this war, see How and Wells ad Hdt. 8.27.
various offerings, which were then seized by the Persians when they sacked and burnt the temple (8.33). This fire must have brought little damage to the temple, for Mys consulted the oracle soon after (Hdt. 8.134) and Pausanias states that the Phokians left the temple unrepai red in remembrance of Persian impiety (10.35.2). The same temple was attacked again in 346 during the Third Sacred War. Diodorus and Pausanias provide a similar account - that some Phokians had taken refuge in the temple during battle - but while Pausanias charges the Theban forces with burning the temple and its occupants (10.35.2), Diodorus suggests that the Phokians had met divine punishment for appropriating Delphi’s treasures to fund their army (16.58.4-6). Again the temple was unrepaire d, but the god’s worship was unabated. After the sacred war, Philip dissolved a number of Phokian cities; Abae alone was spared as it took no part in the conflict (Paus. 10.3.1-2). In 208, Philip V showed reverence to Apollo by exempting the Abaians from paying taxes. The Romans granted political autonomy to the Abaians in reverence to the god (Paus. 10.35.2). Hadrian commissioned a new temple to stand next to that of Apollo, which shows that the sanctuary still stood in later times (Paus. 10.35.4).

While the ancient sources attest to a prominent and wealthy temple, excavators are yet to secure its location. Strabo indicates that the site lay on the Corinthian Gulf (9.3.13), while Pausanias places it near Hyampolis on the eastern border of Phokis (10.35.1). Colonel Leake followed Pausanias’ guidance and located the remains of a city, as well as a smaller site to the north-west. Yorke excavated the township in 1894 and found no remains of a sanctuary. He then decided to test the secondary area, based on Diodorus’ reference to the attack on Abae in 346, which reads: εὐθὺ δ’ αὐτῶν οἱ μὲν εἰς τὰς εἰς τάς

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141 Diodorus suggests that that Phokians had built a fortress near Abae (16.58.4), which may indicate that the city did play some part in the war. Other interpretations are possible; the fortress may have been intended only for defensive purposes, or Abae had lost control of its outlying territory during the war. See Oulhen 408.
142 IG IX 1.78. See Bilco 171-75.
143 Leake ii. 163-66.
ἔγγιστα πόλεις φυγόντες διεσπάρησαν, οί δ' εἰς τὸν νεώ τοῦ Ἀπόλλωνος καταφυγόντες εἰς πεντακοσίους ἀπώλοντο, (“Some of them (i.e. the Phokians) had dispersed, taking refuge in the nearest cities, while five hundred others were killed, having fled to Apollo’s shrine,” 16.58.4). In this second set of ruins, he found several floor tiles inscribed with the word IERA to suggest its role as a sanctuary, and a fragmentary inscription with the term ἑκαβόλος which he connected to Apollo. Yorke identified a large stoa and two smaller buildings, which may have been the temple of Apollo and the one dedicated by Hadrian.144 Yorke’s identification is not secure, and Ellinger sternly doubts that these small ruins could represent a temple of such great renown.145 Further excavations in Phokis have shown the existence of a more elaborate sanctuary at nearby Kalapodi which would suit the prominent oracle. Kalapodi does have some connection to Abae, for the inscription containing Philip’s letter to the Abaians was discovered here. McInerney expresses caution on the subject since Kalapodi was known to have a sanctuary of Artemis Elaphebolos.146

Without firm material evidence, there is little to say about the running of Apollo’s sanctuary, although the literary sources do suggest that Abae was an important Phokian settlement with some trans-regional influence. The oracle was known to operate in the fifth century, and Pausanias suggests that it had ceased in his time, although the sanctuary still received the attention of Hadrian. In 371, the Thebans received the last known response from Abae, and it is possible that the attack of 346 had a significant impact on the oracle. Otherwise, Abae may have catered to a largely local audience, or simply faced the same testing factors which affected Delphi in the fourth century.

144 Yorke 296-99. The inscription ἑκαβόλος is fragmentary and Yorke’s suggestion is only one of several possibilities. Also, the title could apply to Artemis (Eur. Ion 213) who was also worshipped in the area.
145 Ellinger 25.
146 McInerney 288-89.
Mt. Ptoion (Boiotia)

While Abae has yielded few materials remains, the sanctuary of Apollo Ptoios in the Teneric Plain of Boiotia provides a welcome contrast. The sanctuary lay in an area known as Perdikovrysi, and was under the administration of the nearby city Akraiphia. Another sanctuary that of the local deity named Hero Ptoios, was situated at nearby Kastraki. The township appears to have been settled in the seventh century and exhibits a peak in wealth between the years 550 and 400. Like Abae, Akraiphia and Mt. Ptoion both had a mythical connection with seers. Corinna refers to Akraiphen as the third in a line of seers; his grandfather Hyrieus had seized the prophetic tripod which Apollo had awarded to Euonymus, bestowed it upon Orion, who then gave it to his son (3.15-30). Stephen of Byzantium says that Akraiphia was either founded by Akraipheus, here a son of Apollo, or by Athamas, the legendary king of Orchomenos (sv. Ἀκραιφία). Hero Ptoios, eponym of Mt. Ptoion, was known as the son of Athamas (Apollod. 1.9.2), or of Apollo and Athamas’ daughter Euxippe (schol. Paus. 9.23.6). Teneros, of the Teneric Plain, was known as a prophet and a son of Pythian Apollo (Pind. Pae. 9.41-46). He was regarded as a king of Thebes (schol. Lycoph. 1211), and as a seer who prophesied near the Ismenion River (schol. Pind. Pyth. 11.6). The myths of Akraipheus, Ptoion and Teneros serve to connect the region about Apollo’s sanctuary with two major Boiotian cities, Orchomenos and Thebes.

The city of Akraiphia was settled in the eighth century, and there is a distinct rise in population and wealth between 550 and 400. The sanctuary at Kastraki was split into

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147 Leekley and Efstratiou 14-15.
148 It is possible that Akraiphen and his ancestors were linked to the oracle at Mt. Ptoion. Corinna refers to Akraiphen as ‘ἀψευδής,’ a term which Pausanias uses for Mt. Ptoion (9.23.6). Berman (45) suggests that these men were priests of Apollo Ptoios.
149 Olivieri (68-69) argues that the local myths of Mt. Ptoion initially concentrated on Orchomenos, but they began to evolve as the Thebans took more interest in the sanctuary.
150 See Fossey 268-69; Leekley and Efstratiou 14-15.
two levels, with the temple of Hero Ptoios in the lower region. Pottery fragments found here date back to the mid-seventh century, while cult practices are attested from the late sixth century. During this time, the people of Akraiphia dedicated at least thirty monumental tripods to the local deity and a number of bronze figurines depicting warriors and animals.\textsuperscript{151} An early wooden building was constructed here in the sixth century and was replaced in the late fourth century, possibly after Alexander ravaged Thebes.\textsuperscript{152} The upper terrace had its own sixth-century temple, with clay figurines in the vicinity depicting a female goddess. As the male figurines were exclusively on the lower terrace, and the female on the upper, it appears as though the sanctuary was occupied by two distinct deities, Hero Ptoios and possibly his Kourotrophos.\textsuperscript{153}

The sanctuary of Apollo Ptoios lay in close proximity to both Akraiphia and Kastraki, and was built on three separate terraces on the side of Mt. Ptoion. The earliest pottery remains suggest that the area was occupied from the Geometric period, although the cult of Apollo Ptoios is first attested in the final quarter of the seventh century.\textsuperscript{154} The lowest area of the god’s sanctuary contained a large cistern for collecting spring water, while the middle terrace contained two long stoai which had been built in the third century. The upmost terrace contained the remains of a Hellenistic temple, as well as those of a sixth-century predecessor. The sanctuary is famous for its large collection of marble kouroi statues which sat in front of the temple (Fig. 6), and a number of bronze cauldrons were also uncovered.\textsuperscript{155} The area also contained what appears to be a great

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{151} Tripods: Roesch (1976b) 741-42; for a sixth-century dedication to Hero Ptoios from the people of Akraiphia, see Guillon (1943) i. 54a1. Bronze figurines: Daux (1964) 859.
\item\textsuperscript{152} Guillon (1936a) 3-10.
\item\textsuperscript{153} Guillon (1936b) 422-27. Touloupa (123) suggests that this goddess was Euxippe, the mother of Hero Ptoios, or possibly an earth goddess.
\item\textsuperscript{154} Geometric remains: Ducat (1971) 49-65. Apollo Ptoios: Ducat (1971) 439-40; Schachter (1981-94) i. 54.
\item\textsuperscript{155} Kouroi: Ducat (1971: 451) counts a minimum of 90 statues in total, 83 of which were made of bronze.
\end{itemize}
altar, or perhaps the remains of another small temple. Behind the temple was a small cavern from which a spring issued and flowed down to the lowest part of the sanctuary.

By the end of the sixth century, the local Akraiphians had erected and maintained two distinct sanctuaries on Mt. Ptoion. Pierre Guillon noticed that the earliest tripods were dedicated at Perdikovrysi, and then at Kastraki in the Archaic period. He thus suggested that the people of Akraiphia had initially worshipped Hero Ptoios at the Perdikovrysi sanctuary until the Thebans took control of the territory and installed the worship of Apollo Ptoios; in response, the Akraiphians began to worship their local god at the Kastraki sanctuary. The ousting of Hero Ptoios is chronologically possible as the Perdikovrysi site shows evidence of activity from the Geometric period, while Apollo is first attested in the late seventh century. Yet Jean Ducat dismisses the idea, stating that “Apollo has always been the lord of the Perdikovrysi sanctuary, there was no ousting of the hero and the equation Apollo =

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156 Guillon (1943) i. 99-115. Delcourt (137) also believes that Apollo had usurped the role of Hero Ptoios.
Thebes is without merit. Yet the area may have come under the authority of Thebes in the sixth century, for both Herodotus (8.135) and Strabo (9.2.34) indicate that the oracle was in Theban territory. Kowalzig suggests that Thebes was not in sole control of Akraiphia and the oracle, but only involved as part of the Boiotian Confederacy.\(^{158}\) Ducat also takes issue with the chronology; he argues that Hero Ptoios would have to be introduced at Kastraki shortly after Apollo arrived at Perdikovrysi, yet there seems to have been a delay of at least forty years. Furthermore, the author adds that there is no evidence for Hero Ptoios at Perdikovrysi, although he admits that this is an argument from silence. He does rightly question why the Akraiphians continued to honour Apollo Ptoios with grand dedications after their own local god had been deposed. In the absence of a clear history for these two early sanctuaries, it is difficult to side with either argument. Schachter proposes that Apollo Ptoios was the earliest deity worshipped at Perdikovrysi; he adds that the Akraiphians had built their own local sanctuary of Hero Ptoios once that of Apollo had attracted the interest of other cities, including Thebes.\(^{159}\) It is also worth noting that Akraiphia grew in wealth and size in the sixth century; this wealth, probably generating from Apollo’s sanctuary, seems to have been converted into a new sanctuary for Hero Ptoios.

The various remains at Perdikovrysi, particularly the collection of marble kouroi, suggest that oracle at Mt. Ptoion had attracted great interest and thus accrued noticeable wealth. The sanctuary received several prominent visitors from the sixth to fourth centuries: Mardonius sent Mys here during the Persian wars (Hdt. 8.135); the Thebans consulted the oracle before the Battle of Leuctra (Paus. 4.32.5) and dedications were left here from members of two prominent Athenians families; Alkmeonides of the

\(^{157}\) Ducat (1973) 63. “Apollon a toujours été le maître du sanctuaire de Perdikovrysi, il n'y a pas eu d'éviction du héros et l'équation Apollon = Thèbes est sans fondement.”

\(^{158}\) Kowalzig 369.

\(^{159}\) Schachter (1989) 75; (1992) 53-54.
Alkmeonids, and Hipparchus, son of Peisistratus.\textsuperscript{160} It appears that Alkmeonides had made his dedication at Mt. Ptoion in celebration of his victory at the Panathenaian Games of 546. It is likely that the Alkmeonids had been exiled from Athens after the victory and so Alkmeonides was forced to make his dedication elsewhere.\textsuperscript{161} But this does not explain why Hipparchus also made his dedication here. Davies suggests that the dedication was made at Mt. Ptoion in response to Theban support for the reign of Peisistratus, yet it is not certain that the sanctuary was independent of Thebes at this time; Ducat argues that the Thebans had good relations with the Peisistratids in the sixth century, and thus the Alkmeonids would not have made the dedication if Thebes was involved in the sanctuary.\textsuperscript{162} It is also possible that Mt. Ptoion had simply won great renown in Athens during this time, especially when one considers that Apollo’s temple at Delphi had been destroyed in 548 and was not rebuilt until the end of the century. After the height of the sixth and fifth centuries, however, the influence of Apollo’s oracle appears to have lessened, although it continued to serve the Boiotian \textit{koinon} throughout the Hellenistic period.\textsuperscript{163} The Ptoian festival began at an unknown date; Schachter suggests that they were in honour of Hero Ptoios and thus may date back to his introduction at Kastraki in the sixth century.\textsuperscript{164} The Ptoia was reorganised in c.230-220 under the authority of the Delphic Amphictyony, and a number of Boiotian cities were invited to take part. The contest was again reorganised in the second century and continued until the third century CE.\textsuperscript{165} The oracle may have continued to operate at this late period, based on inscriptions which record the presence of a prophet at the games.\textsuperscript{166}

\textsuperscript{160} Ducat (1971) 242-58.
\textsuperscript{161} Dillon and Garland (2000) 114.
\textsuperscript{163} Schachter (1981-94) i.70.
\textsuperscript{164} Schachter (1981-94) iii. 21. The sanctuary of Hero Ptoios contains several figurines of charioteers and horse riders; Schachter thus suggests that he was the focus of the Ptoia.
\textsuperscript{165} Holleaux (1890) 19-33; Roesch (1982) 225-42; Rigsby 108; Schachter (1984) 258n5.
\textsuperscript{166} Bizard (1903) 296-99.
Apollo’s oracle at Mt. Ptoion attracted great interest in the sixth and fifth centuries, but there remains no complete account of the prophetic method. There are, however, clues from several sources which provide some indication on how the oracles were delivered. Herodotus, in his account of Mys’ consultation at Mt. Ptoion, provides three key details: three Theban citizens had been appointed to record the response; the prophet was male, and he spoke in an unusual manner (8.135). Plutarch offers a similar story in his De Defectu Oraculorum, in which the prophet of Mt. Ptoion offered an oracular statement, which none of the locals could understand, but only Mys (Mor. 412a-b). Elsewhere, Plutarch says that this unintelligible oracle had instead derived from the prophet of Trophonius at Lebadeia (Arist. 19). In conjunction with literary references, a dedication by an Aristichos in the third century may refer to an oracular procedure:

Πτώϊε, χρυσοκ[όμα], μαντήϊε, σοι τόδε, Ἀπόλλον· — / στῆσεν

Ptoios, golden-haired, seer Apollo, to you, Aristichos, son of Pastrophos dedicates this image. Accept it, and in exchange (according to the promise you made in person, when, smiling in the darkness, you responded to my voice) grant me and my forbearers truth, the good word of prophecy fulfilled.

From the evidence, it is suggested that the oracle housed a male prophet who may have issued prophecies in a frenzied manner. The consultation of Mys, even if historically accurate, is treated as an exceptional circumstance. Thus it is unwise to suggest that the

167 Flacelière (1946: 199-207) notes that while this text has largely been restored by following the account of Herodotus, there are a number of disparities between the two.
168 For the oracle of Trophonius, see pages 119-30.
169 SEG 53:454.
oracle catered to many people from Asia Minor, or that the Thebans were unaware of how the oracle operated. If Aristichos had consulted the oracle, it seems unusual for him to set up this image before the prophecy had been fulfilled, as would his direct encounter with the god when others refer to a prophet. If he had been a prophet, then it would follow that the role was hereditary, for Aristichos asks that his descendants also receive the truth. As for his encounter, Aristichos states that the god’s visit took place ἔννυχος, ‘in darkness.’ This would either refer to a hidden location such as a small enclosure or cave, or that the procedure took place at night or in a dream. Ustinova argues that the small grotto behind Apollo’s temple would be suitable for a sensory experience involving sights and sounds, such as Aristichos’ description of Apollo smiling at him. Guillon draws a comparison between the grotto and spring at Mt. Ptoion and the oracle of Apollo at Claros, whereby the prophet would enter an underground crypt and consume the waters of a sacred spring. Schachter suggests that Mt. Ptoion was part of a ‘Boiotian Cult Type,’ whereby a number of local oracular centres in the region would make use of a mantic spring. Yet, as it will be noted, there is little similarity to be seen among any of Apollo’s mainland oracles. Unfortunately, while the evidence offers several possible prophetic methods at Mt. Ptoion very little can be shown for certain. The oracle does appear to have employed a male prophet which, in itself, is a stark contrast to Delphi’s ‘uneducated’ and seemingly neutral female Pythia.

170 Bouche-Leclercq iii. 215; Robert 29-30.
172 Ustinova 115.
173 Guillon (1946) 222. This procedure at Claros is attested by Iamblichus (Myst. 361) and Tacitus (Ann. 2.54). Pausanias says that the oracle had a long history (7.3.1).
174 Schachter (1967) 1-16. Delcourt (75) also associates the grotto and the water with the oracular procedure.
Tegyra (Boiotia)

The city of Tegyra sat somewhere near Orchomenos and Lake Copaïs, but its exact location is not certain. Since there are no clear material remains for Tegyra, this section rests solely on ancient testimony for the oracular site. The oracle is first attested by Callimachus (*FGrH* 124f.11), and Plutarch adds that there was a temple of Apollo Tegyraios here with an oracle which had flourished up until the Persian wars (*Pelop. 16*). Plutarch also refers to a male prophet named Echecrates, a nearby mountain named Delion, and two springs called Phoenix (Palm) and Elaia (Olive). This description also serves to highlight Plutarch’s claim that Tegyra was the true birthplace of Apollo. In the Homeric *Hymn to Apollo*, the god was born on Delos while Leto clutched a palm tree (113-18); at Tegyra, the god is said to have been born near Mt. Delion and between the Palm and Olive Springs. Semos of Delos also includes Tegyra as one of several places which claim to be the birthplace of the god (*FGrH* 396f.20). In his *De Defectu Oraculorum*, Plutarch pits the two competing traditions against each other. Reputedly, when the people of Delos were exiled in 421, an oracle from Delphi instructed them to find the birthplace of Apollo and perform sacrifices there. Confused, the Delians received a second oracle to follow the crow to the spot, and at Tegyra they chanced upon a woman named Crow which led them to believe that they were in the right place (*Mor. 412c-d*).

Tegyra was thus an important religious centre in Boiotia, and it may have come under the authority of Thebes, like Mt. Ptoion. Theban involvement is first shown in 470 when they returned a golden statue which had been removed from the god’s sanctuary. Herodotus says that a man named Datis had discovered the statue on his vessel after receiving a dream vision; he then left the statue at Delos for it to be returned to Tegyra.

175 Pyrgos and Polygira have both been suggested as the site of ancient Tegyra. See Pritchett (1982: 104-09) for a brief summary and bibliography. See also Schachter (1967: 1-6) who also suggests the alternate site of Strovikon.
The statue was only collected twenty years later by the Thebans at the command of an oracle (Hdt. 6.118). Demand argues that, in aiding Tegyra, Thebes was working to gain a political ally. As for the oracle, Plutarch had stated that it was a prominent institution until the Persian wars. Elsewhere he claims that the prophet Echecrates had predicted a Greek victory in these same wars (Mor. 412b), and it is possible that this prediction had met resistance from the Persians and their Thebans allies. Plutarch does later suggest that the oracle at Tegyra had suffered from the general decline in Greece (Mor. 414b-c), which was particularly severe in Boiotia.

**Thebes (Boiotia)**

When passing through the city of Thebes, Pausanias notes the sanctuary of Apollo Ismenios standing on a mound outside the city walls (9.10.2). The author does not mention an oracle sponsored by this particular god, but he does refer to an oracle of Apollo Spodios which stood near the Herakleion (9.11.5). Concerning the oracle of Apollo Ismenios, Pausanias remained silent, yet several earlier authors attest to its existence. Herodotus says that Mys consulted with Apollo Ismenios as instructed by Mardonius (8.134). Plutarch notes that, during the Peloponnesian War, the Thebans received an oracle from Apollo Ismenios which predicted later battles at Tegyra and Haliartus (Lys. 29). Although the oracle may not have survived during Pausanias’ visit, Apollo had certainly been consulted at the Ismenion from at least the Classical period.

In 1917, Keramopoullos published his findings from an excavation at the Ismenion. Upon finding the remains of a Doric building, Keramopoullos claimed that he had identified the temple of Apollo Ismenios on a hill near the Isemnos River on the south-east

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176 Demand 27, 61. Herodotus must have been aware of some link between Thebes and Tegyra, for he refers to the latter as Δήλιον τὸ Θηβαίων ‘Theban Delion’ (6.118).
177 Schachter (1981-94) i. 75.
178 The region of Boiotia was once highly fertile, but began to suffer from land erosion. See Bintliff 15-33.
60

side of the ancient city-centre. He uncovered two sixth-century inscriptions – not at the site of the temple of Apollo Ismenos, but nearby – which name Apollo Ismenios and Athena Pronaia. According to Pausanias, a statue of the goddess stood at the entrance to the Ismenion (9.10.2). These inscriptions formed the basis of Keramopoullos’ claim that Apollo’s temple could be located in this area. In 1981, Schachter stressed that this area needed to be excavated more thoroughly in order to uncover the full sanctuary, but agreed that Apollo’s temple had been sufficiently identified. Shortly after, Symeonoglou went as far as to say that the sanctuary of Apollo Ismenios was the only Theban sanctuary which has been identified with certainty.

This Doric building identified by Keramopoullos seems to have been the latest in a succession of temples which date back to the ninth or eighth century: the earliest structure, built of wood and brick, was destroyed by fire at around 700; the following temple was built in the seventh century, and the Doric structure was possibly begun in the early fourth century, but never completed. Pausanias, who would have seen the last temple, took note of three cult statues dedicated to Apollo, Hermes, and Athena respectively (9.10.2). Herodotus, who noted a number of tripods housed in the Ismenion, would have seen the second temple (1.52; 1.92; 5.59). It is possible that Apollo’s worship at the Ismenion dates back to the ninth century with the earliest building, but the god is first attested at Thebes in c.700 with the epithet Pythios.

Apollo’s oracle at the Ismenion may have existed as far back as the late eighth century, but it seems to have reached its peak in the sixth to the fourth century, as with

179 Keramopoullos 33-98.
183 Schachter (1981) 81. Roesch (1976c) 904-06. Pausanias provides a tale in which Kaanthos destroyed the temple after Apollo had raped his sister Melia (9.10.2-5).
184 Jeffery 91.
several of the god’s other oracles. In the fifth century, Herodotus noted a number of
tripods dedicated at the Isemion, while Pausanias remarks that he had seen very few
(Paus. 9.10.4). Thus it appears that the Isemion had fallen into decline over time. As for
the oracle, it is first attested by Herodotus who includes the oracle among those consulted
by Mys during the Persian wars (8.134). Plutarch claims that the Thebans received an
oracular response from the Isemion during the Peloponnesian War which stated:
Ἐσχατιάν πεφύλαξο λύκους καμάκεσσι δοκεύων καὶ λόφον Ὀρχαλίδην, ὃν ἀλώπηξ
ουποτε λείπει, (“With spear, guard against the wolf, both the border and the Orchalides
Hill, that which the fox never abandons,” Plut. Lys. 29). Prior to the Battle of Leuctra in
371, the Thebans consulted several oracles, including the Isemion (Paus. 4.32.5).
Although Xenophon does not specify the source, he says that an oracle had predicted the
Theban victory at this battle (Hell. 6.4.7). Finally, the Isemion was said to have issued an
oracle which warned of Alexander’s arrival. Diodorus recorded the response, which
stated, in ambiguous terms: ἱστὸς ὑφαινόμενος ἄλλῳ κακόν, ἄλλῳ ἄμεινον,
(“The woven web is unfortunate for one, better for the other,” Diod. Sic. 17.10.3). After
Alexander’s attack, the Thebans fled to the town of Akraiphia (Paus. 9.23.5), and the
oracle appears to have disappeared from history. Again it seems as though a once
prominent oracle of Apollo had been reduced to local significance in the fourth century.

When retelling the consultation of Mys at the Isemion, Herodotus describes the
prophetic method in the following manner: ἔστι δὲ κατὰ περ ἐν Ὀλυμπίῃ ἐμπύροισι
αὐτὸθι χορητημίαξεσθαι, (“There, burnt offerings are the means of divination, as at
Olympia,” 8.134). He fails, however, to distinguish between two similar but distinct
methods; hepatoscopy, interpreting the remains of a sacrificial victim, and empyromancy,
interpreting the behaviour of the fire and smoke. Euripides refers to the second method in
his Phoenissae, when the messenger reports that seers were sacrificing sheep and noting
the shape of the flame (1255-58). It may have been that both methods were available to
the prophets at the Ilium, for even Olympia had several prophetic means available.\(^{185}\)
Animal sacrifice was a popular method of divination in Greece and Rome, and it is
thought to have originated in the Near East where the practice is attested from c.1800.\(^{186}\)
Divination by sacrifice entered Greece much later, but its use is alluded to in Homer (*Il.*
24.221; *Od.* 21.145, 22.321). The procedure is described in depth by the fifth-century
tragic playwrights. In Sophocles’ *Antigone*, Tiresias makes his conclusion, not by one
sign alone, but by a number of factors (1005-13). Euripides too demonstrates the
complexities of sacrificial omens:

\[
\text{ιερά δ’ ἐς χεῖρας λαβὼν Αἴγισθος ήθει, καὶ λοβὸς μὲν οὐ προσήν ἀντίπλαγχνοις, πῦλαι δὲ καὶ δοχαὶ χολῆς πέλας κακὰς ἔφατον τῷ σκοποῦντι προσβολάς.}
\]

Aegisthus, taking the sacred parts in his hands, began to inspect them. The
liver had no lobe attached, and the portal vein and gall bladder showed that
harm would soon befall upon the onlooker. (*El.* 826-29)

While any number of signs could be interpreted from the sacrifice, it appears that the liver
was the primary focus of inspection.\(^{187}\) This method of divination was far from being
confined to oracular centres; generals would often look for positive omens in sacrificial
victims before heading into battle. Plutarch recalls an instance whereby Aemilius Paulus
sacrificed as many as twenty one oxen to Heracles before he was granted a positive omen

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\(^{185}\) For Olympia, see pages 97-98.
\(^{186}\) Burkert (1992) 47.
\(^{187}\) On the complexity of sacrifice, see Burkert (1985) 112; Halliday 184-203. Collins (327) shows that the
liver alone can offer several signs of significance. On the importance of the liver, see schol. Ar. *Vesp.* 831,
and Philostratus who refers to the liver as the ‘tripod’ of divination (*VA* 8.7.15).
(Aem. 17). Even at Delphi, the priests used sacrifice to ensure that the day was propitious for issuing oracles.

Sacrifice, although capable of becoming a complex rite, was often confined to offering either a positive or negative response. This sits awkwardly not only with the attested verse oracles from Thebes, but with the nature of Apolline prophecy in general. There are two ways to explain the verse responses: either the oracular procedure at the Ismenion was equipped to provide such a reply or the accounts of Diodorus and Plutarch contain a certain amount of literary invention. The Pythia acted as the voice of Apollo at the Delphic oracle, but a number of recorded responses from here can certainly be regarded as legendary. The prophet at Mt. Ptoion also spoke on behalf of the god, and the oracle at Tegyra may have been the same. The Ismenion is thus distinct in that the method of divination was by reading the signs of sacrifice, and by the fact that no historical prophet is mentioned in connection with the oracle.  

Pausanias has nothing to say of empyromancy at the Theban oracle, but he does note an altar of Apollo Spodios (Σπόδιος) which offered divination by chance utterances (9.11.7). Holleaux argued that Pausanias has erred, and even went as far as saying that the geographer had never visited Thebes. Ziehen instead argues that Thebes had a dual oracle which offered two distinct types of divination. He also compares this practice with Olympia, where the priests would listen for sounds as well as inspecting sacrifices. Herodotus does in fact say that the procedure at Thebes was the same as at Olympia (8.134). This theory is somewhat restricted by the fact that the altar of Apollo Spodios was located near the Herakleion and not within the sanctuary of Apollo Ismenos. Schachter suggests that the altar originally belonged to Heracles, and that over time the

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188 Bouche-Leclercq (iii. 218) suggests that divination by sacrifice is a distinctly un-Apolline method.
189 Holleaux (1938) 195-209.
190 Ziehen 1501. This twofold oracle is attested in Pindar (Ol. 6.64-68) who refers to it as “θησαυρὸν δίδυμον μαντοσύνας,” a dual store of prophecy.
Thebans had mistakenly attributed it to Apollo. In truth, the altar of Apollo Spodios
does not appear to have been an oracular centre of great repute for it had no temple or
personnel attached. Therefore two explanations are plausible; either the altar was used as
a secondary oracle for the Ismenion, or it had been originally linked to Heracles. Symeneoglou compares the ash altar to that of Zeus at Olympia and suggests that Apollo
Spodios was the more ancient of Apollo’s Theban cults. It is also likely that the
Ismenion had ceased to function in the second century CE and that the altar of Apollo
Spodios acted as a minor replacement.

Due to the early success of Apollo’s oracle at Thebes, Wilamowitz suggested that
the Ismenion oracle had either been introduced before Delphi, or at least reached
prominence earlier. In one of the earliest references to the Ismenion, Pindar
patriotically stresses the importance of this Boiotian oracle: 
ἐς ἄδυτον τριπόδων
θησαυρόν, ὃν περίαλλ' ἐτίμασε Λοξίας, Ἰσμήνιον δ' ὀνύμαξεν, ἀλαθέα μαντίων
θώκον, (“At the treasury of tripods, the innermost sanctuary which Loxias honoured
before all others, named the Ismenion, the true seat of seers,” Pyth. 11.4-6). Symeonoglou
provides three examples which he believes to reflect hostility between Delphi and Thebes.
He suggests that the Homeric Hymn to Apollo excluded Thebes in an effort to undermine
the Ismenion; that the First Sacred War came as a result of the rivalry between the two
oracles; and that the mythical battle between Delphic Apollo and Theban Heracles for the
mantic tripod represented a very real struggle for oracular supremacy.

In regard to the First Sacred War, it is not altogether clear how events played out.

Later sources for the war seem to link events with the later sacred wars at Delphi, and in

191 Schachter (1981-94) i. 87. The author offers another explanation, in which the limits of the Ismenion had
been reduced over time, so that the altar eventually lay outside its reach.
192 Symeneoglou 130. The author cites Pausanias who states that the Thebans offered sacrifice to Apollo
Spodios τὸ ἀρχαῖον, ‘in antiquity’ (9.12.1).
193 Wilamowitz 44.
194 Symeonoglou 96-97.
any case, it is Thessaly, Athens and Sicyon who are the main protagonists. Thebes was involved in the war inasmuch as it was a member of the Amphictyony. The Amphictyony is usually regarded Delphi’s liberators and, from this perspective, Thebes would appear to support the oracle. Some have argued that Thebes entered into the war in order to advance her own interests. Guillen believes that the Thessalians had looked not only to expand their territory at the beginning of the sixth century, but also wished to control one of the two access roads to Delphi.\textsuperscript{195} The author argues that this territorial drive is shown in the Theban takeover at Mt. Ptoion. Thebes had certainly made the attempt to extend its influence onto Apollo’s oracles at Mt. Ptoion and Tegyra, but there is no reason to believe that the same intent was shown outside of Boiotia.

Turning to the Homeric \textit{Hymn to Apollo}, scholars have often found anti-Theban sentiment in the god’s search for a place to establish his oracle. As Apollo’s journey unfolds, Thebes is described as being covered in forest, \textit{οὐ γάρ πώ τις ἔναιε βροτῶν ἱερὴ ἐνὶ Θήβῃ} (“for as yet, no man lived in Thebes,” 225-26). Janko claims that the author of the \textit{Hymn} “goes out of his way to denigrate Thebes.”\textsuperscript{196} Guillen believes that Thebes was purposely left out in order to promote Poseidon’s sanctuary at Onchestos as Boiotia’s primary centre of worship.\textsuperscript{197} But Chappell disregards the idea of anti-Theban sentiment and suggests more plausibly that the author was adhering to Theban myth in which the city was founded under the guidance of Delphi.\textsuperscript{198} In the conflict between Apollo and Heracles for the tripod, scholars again see evidence for hostility between Delphi and Thebes. Apollodorus provides the standard account of the myth, in which Heracles seeks

\textsuperscript{195} Guillen (1963a). The author explains that the Telphousa episode arose from a Theban attempt to seize the Boiotian pass to Delphi.

\textsuperscript{196} Janko (1986) 46.

\textsuperscript{197} Guillen (1963a) 86ff.

\textsuperscript{198} Chappell 334. Clay (1989: 58-59) had earlier suggested that this reference to Thebes serves to connect the founding of Delphi with the remote past, and to establish Delphi as an instigator of the colonization movement. Although not stated, Clay’s view must also rest on Delphi’s role in the foundation of Thebes.
purification at Delphi after the murder of Iphitos. Since the Pythia refused to respond to him, Heracles seized the tripod in order to establish an oracular centre of his own. Apollo wrestles with the hero for possession of the tripod until the two are separated by Zeus (Apollod. 2.6.2). This scene becomes a popular motif during the sixth century (Fig. 7): Parke and Boardman argue persuasively that the battle for the tripod had been created to reflect the events of the First Sacred War.\(^{199}\) In this scenario, Heracles would represent the Crisaean and Apollo the Amphictyony. In a similar myth, Apollo, Artemis and Heracles quarrel over the possession of Ambrakia. The Dryopian Kragaleus is asked to settle the dispute and he sides with Heracles (Ant. Lib. Met. 4). Kragaleus also lent his name to a Phokian tribe which lived in the region of Crisa.\(^{200}\) As the ally of Kragaleus, Heracles shows his connection to the Crisaean. It is therefore plausible that the First Sacred War had inspired the motif of the tripod struggle in the sixth century, but yet again this example does not suggest (let alone prove) that the Theban Ismenion had any part to play. Finally, it must be stressed that Apollo was first worshipped at Thebes with the title Pythios, which may indicate that there was a Delphic presence at Thebes before the oracle of Apollo Ismenos was known to exist.

While the Ismenion may not have posed as a rival to Delphi, it was certainly a major institution to the Boiotians in the sixth century. The region was littered with oracles, not only of Apollo but also heroes. Schachter has noted several shared elements between these sites and he groups them into his ‘Boiotian Cult Type.’\(^{201}\) He argues that these sanctuaries were all placed near mountains and sacred springs, housed a male prophet, used water as part of the mantic procedure, and included a local nymph in their foundation.

\(^{199}\) Parke and Boardman (1957) 279.

\(^{200}\) Harp. sv. Κραγαλίδαι. Hesychius refers to the Kragalidai as rulers of the Crisaean (sv. Κραγαλίδαι).

\(^{201}\) Schachter (1967) 1-14.
myths. Adopting this argument, Kowalzig then suggests that, “the string of cults encircling Lake Copaïs liked to represent themselves as a highly interactive group.”

IMAGE REMOVED DUE TO COPYRIGHT RESTRICTIONS

Fig. 7. Apollo and Heracles struggling for the tripod. 8eck-handled amphora.  
Staatliche Museen, Berlin. F. 2159. Andokides Painter, 530-515 BCE.

Here, the author wishes to show that Thebes wanted to become part of a wider religious network in order to extend its influence throughout Boiotia. In truth, several of these elements appear to be strained. The oracular procedures at Mt. Ptoion and Tegyra are still unclear, so it is a bold assertion to promote water as a mantic substance. Furthermore, the connection with mountains and springs appears less significant when one considers how many sanctuaries are to be found near environmental landmarks. Larson remarks that such features denote the presence of the divine and that springs especially exude the notion of fertility and life.

202 Kowalzig 375.
203 Larson (2007b) 57-58. Cole (1988: 162-63) also notes that Apollo’s sanctuaries often possess a spring, but stresses that the water is not always used for prophetic means. Kearns (69-70) states that water and hills are common elements in a rural sanctuary.
Kowalzig thus appears to promote the ‘Boiotian Cult Type’ to serve her own argument.\textsuperscript{204} She wishes to distinguish the Ismenion from other Boiotian oracles in order to show that Thebes was an outsider which sought to be part of a common Boiotian religious tradition. Even without reference to a Boiotian oracular network, the Ismenion does appear unique when compared to Apollo’s other oracles. The oracular method is inductive, when others appear to be intuitive, and it is the only Boiotian oracle within the limits of a city. Apollo Ismenion, however, seems to have fostered strong ties only one other oracle, that of Mt. Ptoion. According to Pindar, Apollo entrusted his son Teneros, prophet at Mt. Ptoion, with authority over Thebes (fr. 52k. 38-46 Race). While it is plausible that the Thebans had developed a myth to strengthen their connection to Mt. Ptoion, there is no indication that their intent was to align themselves with a whole network of oracular centres. Guillon and others have suggested that the Thebans sought political control of the oracle at Mt. Ptoion, and Pindar’s ode may be an example of this intent.\textsuperscript{205}

**Argos (Argolid)**

A great number of Apollo’s oracles, certainly his major oracles, were centred about the regions of Phokis and Boiotia. In contrast, Argos possessed the only oracle of the god in the Peloponnese. Writing in the second century CE, Pausanias is the first known referent to this oracle; in Book Two, he tells us that Apollo had a temple at a place known as \textit{Δειράς} (Ridge), where the god would prophesy to mankind (2.24.1). Apollo was known locally as Deiradiotes due to the location of his oracle; officially, the god was known as Apollo Pythaeus, and the name was shared by the cult’s mythical founder.\textsuperscript{206} Pausanias, drawing upon the fifth-century poetess Telesilla, says that Pythaeus was a son of Apollo who had brought his father’s cult to Argos from Delphi (Paus. 2.24.1; 2.35.2).

\textsuperscript{204} Kowalzig 352-91.
\textsuperscript{205} See pages 53-56.
\textsuperscript{206} Tomlinson (1972) 23; Kadletz 93.
Kadletz notes that the figure Pythaeus is only known to us from this myth, therefore the story may have been specifically used to reinforce some cult connection between Argos and Delphi. 207 The myth thus promotes Delphi as the originator of Apollo’s worship at Argos, but Roscher suggests that the Argive cult may have been independent of Delphi and possibly the original navel of the oracular world. 208 No other author apart from Pausanias mentions the Argive oracle, but upon locating the sanctuary of Apollo Pythaeus, excavators found a series of inscriptions which confirm the oracle’s existence.

Pausanias’ clues allowed excavators to uncover Apollo’s oracle on the Deiras Hill, near the sanctuary of Hera Akraia (2.24.1). Upon searching the Aspis Hill, Volgraff identified several inscriptions which served as dedications to Apollo. Two of the inscriptions, dating from the fourth to the first century, record two male prophets and a prophetess at the sanctuary, and a third inscription retells an oracular consultation. 209

The surrounding buildings must have formed Apollo’s sanctuary. The complex was built on two terraces on the side of the Aspis Hill. Excavators have identified an altar which dates to the fourth century when renovations were being made to the sanctuary. 210 Here, they also uncovered the remnants of an original altar, and although it has not been accurately dated, the underlying terrace dates to the sixth or fifth century. 211 Hägg also notes a collection of high quality finds from the latter half of the eighth century which may

207 Kadletz 100.
208 Roscher 47. Ich halte es also, wie schon oben bemerkt ist, für nicht unmöglich, daß der argivische Kult des Apollon Deiradiotes (Pythaeus) ursprünglich vom Delphischen unabhängig, ja vielleicht noch älter als dieser war, und daß in älterer Zeit auch das so bedeutende Argos sich rühme, im Besitze des Erdnabels zu sein, (”I think it is, then, as remarked above, not impossible that the Argive cult of Apollo Deiradiotes (Pythaeus) was originally independent from Delphi, and perhaps even older than this, and that in ancient times as well the highly important Argos boasted to be in possession of the earth’s navel.”)
209 Volgraff (1909) 171-200. An individual received a prophecy from some source concerning an abyss in which he would meet his end. He consulted Apollo at Argos and he was told to search his house. In doing so, he found a pit near his front door. Then, while attempting to fill the hole, a wall fell on the man and killed him.
210 Tomlinson (1972) 247; Kadletz 99.
suggest early cult practice. To the east of the newer altar was a building which was possibly used as a dining hall; to the north were two stoai; and to the west was a building which has been tentatively identified as the temple of Apollo Pythaeus. The area upon which Apollo’s oracle housed a Bronze Age community, and cult practice may appear as early as the Archaic period.

While the sanctuary of Apollo Pythaeus may date back to this time, the oracle is first attested by the inscriptions of the third or fourth century. The procedure, as described by Pausanias, did not involve prophets, but a priestess who would become inspired upon drinking the blood of a sacrificed lamb (2.24.1). At the time, Volgraff concluded that oracles were issued by male prophets in the fourth-third centuries, and then a woman had assumed the role in the time of Pausanias. Another inscription, dating to the second or first century, attests to a female prophetess at the sanctuary. The oracular procedure is strikingly similar to the method used at the oracle of Gê at Aigeira in Achaia. At this oracle, Pliny states that the priestess would become inspired after drinking bull’s blood (H8 28.47). Pausanias, who also knows of the oracle at Aigeira, claims that the bull’s blood was only used to test the chastity of the priestess (7.25.8). This substance was considered a poison in ancient times and we possess several accounts of suicide via this method. If Pliny was correct about the procedure at Aigeira, then the oracle at Argos may share a common chthonic association. After all, the procedure at Argos took place at

212 Hägg (1992) 12. The author also notes (20) that the earliest sanctuaries in the Argolid were situated on hills, which would include that of Apollo Pythaeus at Argos.
213 Tomlinson (1972) 247. Kadletz (99) informs us that several buildings have been identified at the sanctuary of Apollo Pythaeus, but their function is yet unknown.
215 Volgraff (1903) 274. On constate donc qu’au III siècle c’étaient des hommes qui exerçaient les fonctions de προμάντεις dans l’oracle d’Apollon Pythien, tandis qu’à l’époque de Pausanias cette charge incombait à une femme. (“Therefore, one notes that in the third century, these were the men who exercised the function of prophet in the oracle of Apollo Pythaeus, while at the time of Pausanias, this task was placed upon a woman.”)
216 See pages 101-02.
217 Apollod. 1.9.27 (Aison); Hdt. 3.15 (Psammenitus); Strab. 1.3.21 (Midas).
night, once every lunar month (Paus 2.24.1). It seems striking that an oracle of Apollo would use such methods, therefore it is possible that Argos previously held a chthonic oracular god whose role was then usurped by Apollo.\textsuperscript{218} The oracle at Argos did utilise two male prophets, who either oversaw the procedure, as at Delphi, or, as Kadletz suggests, conducted their own. The author posits that there may have also been a lot-oracle at the sanctuary of Apollo Pythaeus, in which a terracotta phial was floated on a pool of water; if the phial sank, then the signs would prove favourable.\textsuperscript{219} As Volgraff suggested, it is also possible that the prophetic method changed over time, but, since there is no supporting evidence, there is no reason to accept the existence of a lot-oracle at Argos.

The sanctuary of Apollo Pythaeus was not the only sanctuary of the god in Argos. While Hera was recognised as the patron of the Argolid, Apollo was the chief god in Argos itself, and under the title Apollo Lykeios, he possessed a sanctuary in the city's agora (2.19.3). Apollo Lykeios could either mean Wolf Apollo or refer to the region of Lycia in Asia Minor.\textsuperscript{220} Pausanias tells us that it was Danaos who gave the title Lykeios to Apollo. When Danaos quarrelled with Gelanor over the throne of Argos, a wolf appeared one morning and attacked a bull. The Argives took this as an omen, for they had compared Danaos to a wolf because of his solitary lifestyle. Danaos was then made king, and he dedicated a temple and statue to Apollo because he believed that the god had sent the sign (Paus. 2.19.3). In his \textit{Electra}, Sophocles has the Old Slave point out “the Lycean marketplace of the wolf-killing god” (6-7), and Plutarch even mentions a prophetess of Apollo Lykeios; ἐν τῇ πόλει τῶν Ἀργείων ἡ τοῦ Λυκείου προφῆτις Ἀπόλλωνος...
In the city of Argos, the prophetess of Apollo Lykeios ran out crying that she had seen corpses and the city stained with blood, and the eagle which had spent time at the scene then departed,” Pyrr. 31.3). On the basis of Plutarch’s description, it has been suggested that the temple of Apollo Lykeios may have been a second Argive oracle. In 1880, Bouche-Leclercq was the first to suggest that Argos contained more than one oracle of Apollo; “Argos even had, if the memories of Plutarch are not mistaken, two oracles belonging to the same god, and provided the same rites. This fact has already been met at Thebes.”221 The priestess of Apollo may have been attributed to Apollo Lykeios instead of Apollo Pythaeus, and Bouche-Leclercq himself admits that Plutarch may have been mistaken.222 In any case, the priestess seems to have received a spontaneous vision rather than an official oracular message. Based on such evidence, it would be rash to attribute an oracular centre to the temple of Apollo Lykeios.

The oracle of Apollo Pythaeus was not only the sole oracle in Argos, but also the only oracle of the god in the Peloponnese. This becomes all the more striking when one considers the influence of Apollo in the eastern Peloponnese. Under the title Pythaeus alone, Apollo was worshipped at Hermione, Tyros, Kosmas, Sparta, and Asine.223 The eastern Peloponnesian states appear to have formed a religious alliance under the guidance of Apollo, with Asine being the original base.224 As noted by Bacchylides, the Melampus introduced the cult of Apollo Pythaeus to Asine before any other centre in the Argolid.

221 Bouche-Leclercq iii. 227. “Argos avait même, s’il ne s’est pas glissé d’erreur dans les souvenirs de Plutarque, deux oracles appartenant au même dieu et pourvus des mêmes rites. Le fait s’est déjà rencontré à Thèbes.”
222 Bouche-Leclercq iii. 226-27. However, the author does remark that the modern historian has no right to question Plutarch on this matter when no other ancient author offers evidence to the contrary.
223 Kowalzig 145-46. For the role and spread of Apollo Pythaeus in Greece, see Davies (2007) 57-69. The author notes that Apollo Pythaeus was relatively absent from areas with their own strong oracular traditions, such as Boiotia.
224 Christien 165.
Asine was also thought to have been inhabited by the Dryopians who migrated from Mt. Parnassus and brought the cult of Apollo Pythaeus with them (Paus. 4.34.11). Apollo’s temple at Asine was established in the eighth century and contained several early dedications which included a number of enormous geometric amphorae. This suggests that Asine’s sanctuary of Apollo Pythaeus was well frequented at an early period. Once the cult of Apollo Pythaeus had spread across the eastern Peloponnese, each member of the religious alliance had a duty to the god and to Asine. Furthermore, the pottery remains about the region show that Asine was part of a highly interactive trade group which did not involve Argos. Therefore, having destroyed Asine around 710, Argos thus eliminated its strong rival and could then promote itself as the dominant religious centre of Apollo Pythaeus. Kowalzig argues that the cult of Apollo Pythaeus had a strong role in settling land disputes and mediating between various groups in the region. The basis for the Argive-Epidaurian War of 419 appears to have been due to Epidaurus not paying tribute to Apollo Pythaeus at Asine (Thuc. 5.53). The fact that Argos could make such demands when it had little military authority shows that the city had a high degree of religious authority in the area. Barrett sees the myth of Telesilla as an Argive invention which had been used to shift the focus of the cult away from, and to justify their control over Asine. The Argives altered the myth of Apollo Pythaeus in order to increase their own influence in the cult, and it is possible that the Argive oracle was used for the same purpose. As the only city with an oracle of Apollo,

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225 Kowalzig 145. Leekley and Efstratiou 142. For Apollo’s temple at Asine, see Wells 157-61.
226 Langdon 68.
227 Kelly 428-31; Morgan (1990) 9-11.
228 Kowalzig 142-160. de Polignac (1985: 61) suggests that the sanctuary of Apollo at Asine sat at the undefined border between Argolid and Laconia; after the takeover of Asine, this border was then given “la présence civilisatrice d’Argos,” (the civilising presence of Argos). Schachter (1992: 38) sees the Pythian Apollo as a god responsible for the development of urban religion.
229 Barrett 438-9.
Argos may have used this to heighten its own role within the Argolid.\textsuperscript{230} If Apollo was consulted on local disputes, then parties would most likely have been forced to take their matters to Argos. This prestige gained from the cult of Apollo Pythaeus was important for Argos, not only to extend her influence into the Peloponnese, but to protect its borders from surrounding states.\textsuperscript{231}

**Korope (Thessaly)**

The city of Korope sat on the eastern coast of Thessaly, aside the bay of Pagasai. Apollo’s sanctuary sat below the Petralona Hill and near the modern river of Bufa.\textsuperscript{232} The god’s temple was erected in the sixth century, and a stele decree from the same period sets a penalty for misusing temple objects.\textsuperscript{233} Korope was incorporated into the newly established city of Demetrias in 293, and in the second century, the local authorities instigated a reform of Apollo’s oracle. A decree from this period contains a number of important details for the running of the consultations.\textsuperscript{234} According to the inscription, the ancient oracle had recently seen an increase in patronage which had negatively impacted on the procedure. In order to maintain order, secretaries were employed to record the names of consultants and admit them one at a time, while rod-bearers were given the task of upholding the peace. Once admitted, the consultant would first perform a sacrifice in order to ensure good omens and then write his question on a tablet which would be sealed and placed in the god’s temple overnight. It appears that some consultants had the right of *promanteia*, and it is also stated that the oracle catered to questions of health and personal safety.

\textsuperscript{230} Piérart (319-31) suggests that the oracle at Argos was the central feature of a wider religious network.

\textsuperscript{231} Argos also appears to have formed some connection with the Delphic Amphictyony. The Argive king Acrisius is credited with founding the alliance, and Demeter Pylaia, patron goddess of the league’s second base at Thermopylae, was also worshipped near Apollo’s temple at Argos. See Volgraff (1956) 27-28.

\textsuperscript{232} Mackay (1976a) 463-64.


\textsuperscript{234} *IG* IX 2.1109; *SEG* 17.302. Part of this decree is translated by Parke (1967a: 124-25).
While the decree pays attention to the running of the oracular procedure, no reference is made to the exact method of divination. Since the oracular questions were sealed in tablets, and assuming that they were not secretly opened, then the priest must have only been able to offer a positive or negative response. Sokolowski compares the tablets used at Korope with the ‘Sacred Orgas’ oracle at Delphi whereby the Athenians asked the Pythia to select between two responses. The method of selecting a response is suggested by Nicander, who was writing at a similar time. The author makes reference to the tamarisk branch which has been imbued with mantic power by Apollo Koropaios (Ther. 612-14), while the accompanying scholion associates the tamarisk with a prophetic method known as rhabdomancy (613a). Herodotus refers to a Scythian practice in which willow rods are allowed to fall onto the ground and interpreted according to where they lay (4.67). The priests at Korope may have performed a similar ceremony.

**Pagasai (Thessaly)**

Pagasai was another Thessalian city which housed an oracle of Apollo. The city began as a port of Pherai before becoming independent in the fourth century. Pagasai was known in myth as the port from which the Argo took voyage, and the Hyperborean Pagasos is said to have been the founder of Delphi (Paus. 10.5.8). At the beginning of the third century, Pagasai, like Korope, was absorbed into the city of Demetrias. Pagasai was inhabited from the seventh century and an Archaic temple of Apollo or Poseidon was situated near the Poros Hill. The temple was later abandoned once Pagasai had merged with Demetrias.

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236 Sokolowski (1969) 63.
237 Leekley and Efstratiou 133-35.
Apollo Pagasaios is first attested in the Hesiodic *Aspis*. The story describes the battle between Heracles and the Thessalian Cycnus, a son of Ares. The grove of Apollo Pagasaios features as the scene of the battle. Meyer argued that the myth reflected Apollo’s introduction to Pagasai at the expense of Cycnus and Ares. In contrast, Janko states that “the sanctuary is ascribed to Apollo from the first, Cycnus and Ares never lay claim to it.”

The scholion to the Hesiodic *Aspis* provides the only evidence for an oracle at Pagasai: Ἡρακλείδης δὲ ὁ Ποντικὸς ἐν τῷ περὶ Χρηστηρίων τὸν ἐν Παγασαίᾳ Ἀπόλλωνα ὑπὸ Τροφωνίου ἱδρύσθαί φησι, (“In his work *Concerning Oracles*, Heraclides Ponticus says that the oracle of Apollo Pagasaios was founded by Trophonius,” schol. Hes. Sc. 70). It is interesting that Trophonius, who had his own oracle at Lebadeia, is said to have paved the way for Apollo’s oracle at Pagasai.

Concluding Remarks

By the fifth century, if not sooner, Apollo was known as an oracular god at several Greek centres. The god had a popular oracle at the city of Abae which the Phokians gave much the same honours as they did to Delphi. The region of Boiotia contained three prominent oracles of Apollo, Thessaly possessed two oracles of local repute, while Argos held the only oracle of the god in the Peloponnese. Oracular Apollo was thus prominent in Central Greece, and these oracles tend to be the earliest established and the most prominent oracular centres of the god. Apollo’s alternate oracles were not awarded equal standing, and age and location seem to be a particularly strong influence on success. Delphi appears to have won widespread influence due to the fact that it was not aligned with a particular state, and thus Thebes and Argos stand alone as the only oracular centres formed within the limits of a major city. These two oracles would thus seem to have catered, not to outsiders, but to groups with political or religious ties to their respective centres.

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239 Janko (1986) 46.
cities. The oracles of Apollo share few common elements, especially in regard to the prophetic method. The inspired Pythia did not form the basis for Apolline prophecy, although she may have influenced the priestess at Argos.
Chapter Three: The Oracles of Zeus, the Olympian and the Pre-Olympic Gods

In the Homeric Hymn to Apollo, the newly born son of Zeus takes his seat among the Olympian gods once proclaiming himself as the spokesperson of his father’s will (131-32). Soon after, Apollo heads to Delphi, kills the great serpent which plagues the area, and then establishes his first oracular centre (208-374). While Apollo is certainly oracular in Homer, the Hymn is the earliest extant reference to the patron of Delphi and several other oracles as Greece’s foremost god of prophecy. While Euripides suggests that Gê was the first owner of Delphi, he does still echo the sentiment that Apollo was Zeus’ chosen prophet to mankind (IT 1270-82). In the Homeric Hymn to Hermes, Apollo is again credited with knowing the will of his father. In fact, Apollo claims to be the only Olympian privy to Zeus’ will: αὐτὰρ ἐγὼ γε πιστωθεὶς κατένευσα καὶ ὤμοσα καρτερὸν ὤρκον ἵνα νόσφιν ἐμεῖο θεῶν αἰειγενετάων ἄλλον γ’ εἴσεσθαι Ζηνὸς πυκνόφρονα βουλήν, (“I am pledged and have vowed and sworn a strong oath that no other of the eternal gods save I should know the wise-hearted counsel of Zeus,” Hymn. Hom. Merc. 535-38). Apollo does advise Hermes to make use of a lesser form of divination, one which does not involve Zeus. The god is speaking of the Thriae, bee maidens who are inspired to speak the truth when induced by honey (550-66). Hermes is also encouraged to share this art with mortals, and this fact seems to set a precedent for other Olympians, besides Zeus and Apollo, to found their own oracular centres.

Hermes does in fact receive his own oracle in the town of Pharai in Achaia. The god is joined by Dionysus, Demeter and several others who possessed their own oracles on the
Greek mainland. Dempsey claims that those oracular centres outside Apollo’s influence were of secondary importance; if so, why did so many of these centres exist? Why did the Greeks accept these oracles if Apollo was thought to be the only god privy to Zeus’ will? It is worth noting certain instances where other gods do share this trait. First, it has been shown that several gods were later seen to have preceded Apollo at Delphi; Gê is often treated as a goddess of divine revelation, and Themis, Dionysus, Poseidon and Nyx are all attached to Greece’s premier oracle. Furthermore, in the *Odyssey*, Zeus informs Hermes of Odysseus’ future so that the son of Maia can deliver this information to Calypso (5.41). At other times it is Iris who takes upon this role (II. 11.200). In the Hesiodic *Aspis*, Athena delivers Zeus’ will to Heracles before the hero’s battle with Cycnus (325-27). Herodotus tells us that the Enarees of Scythia learnt divination from Aphrodite rather than Apollo or Zeus (4.67). To Plutarch, the sea-goddess Amphitrite was capable of issuing oracular responses (*Mor.* 984e). In Attic tragedy, the gods often deliver advice that can be considered oracular. At the end of the *Bacchae*, Dionysus foresees that Cadmus will turn into a snake, lead a barbarian army, and finally, reside in the land of the blessed. The god attributes the oracle to Zeus (1330-39). In this instance, Dionysus is asserting his divine status by showing that he has access to knowledge far superior to mortals. The distinction between human and superhuman knowledge is spelt out in Euripides’ *Hippolytus*. While Artemis knows the complete circumstances surrounding the death of Hippolytus, she spares Theseus from guilt because of his ignorance. As the goddess states: τὴν δὲ σὴν ἁμαρτίαν τὸ μὴ εἰδέναι μὲν πρῶτον ἐκλύει κάκης, (“ignorance frees you from the wickedness of your error,” *Hipp.* 1334-35). Prophecy is not always concerned with the future, for it can also explain the present and the past. Even if the gods do not usually have access to Zeus’ will, they still have access to knowledge.

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240 Dempsey 46.
beyond that of humans. For this reason, it is understandable why Demeter, Hera, and Dionysus have their own oracular centres and their own methods of prophecy. As stated earlier, Apollo granted Hermes another form of divination which did not rely on knowing the mind of Zeus.

As for Zeus, the ultimate source of prophecy, he did not require the aid of Apollo. The god had his own oracles on the Greek mainland including Olympia and Dodona. At these centres, Zeus communicated directly to his attendants, who would then deliver the god’s word to mankind. Like Delphi, these oracular centres had a great reputation. Olympia became home to the most famous of athletic games, while Dodona became a fierce rival to the oracle at Delphi. It is these two oracles which will be addressed first.

Zeus at Dodona (Epirus)

‘Oh! Where, Dodona, 
is thine aged grove, 
Prophetic fount, and oracle divine?
What valley echoed the response of Jove?
What trace remaineth of the Thunderer's shrine?’
(Lord Byron Childe Harold. canto 2.53)

Many years after the oracle had fallen silent, Byron was quite certain that all traces of Dodona had been lost. Once it had attracted thousands of visitors, but in the nineteenth century, Zeus’ famous sanctuary lay desolate after centuries of neglect. Nevertheless, Dodona’s fame was still alive in the great works of Homer, Vergil, and many more ancient authors, and so great interest was placed in recovering its ruins. Christopher Wordsworth declared that ‘none can point to its place,’ although he still managed to hazard a guess.²⁴¹

In 1835, Colonel Leake was left to believe that the location of Dodona could not be known for certain. This would all change by the end of the century. During his excavations of Epirus in 1875, Constantine Carapano managed to identify the sanctuary of Dodona within the prefecture of Ioannina. Carapanos uncovered a large number of lead tablets inscribed with questions to Zeus Naios and Dione; the earliest of which date back to the seventh century. Continued excavations first under Demetrios Evangelides, and then under Soter Dakaris, have yielded more evidence to confirm the beliefs of Carapanos. Thus, it is now accepted that these ruins excavated by Carapanos were known in antiquity as Zeus’ famous oracle at Dodona.

The ruins of Zeus’ sanctuary at Dodona lie sixteen kilometres south of the city Ioannina and the lake of the same name. This region proves suitable for a god of thunder; storms are said to ring through the region more than three times a month. Mt. Tomaros, part of the Pindus Range, rises to the east of the sanctuary which lay at the head of a great valley. The landscape proves an awesome sight, and the Hellenistic rulers of Dodona took advantage of the view by building a

Bronze Statuette of Zeus with Thunderbolt from Dodona. National Archaeological Museum of Athens. 8o. 16546. c. 460 BCE.

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242 Leake iv. 168.
243 Carapanos i. 70-83. Lhôte (11) suggests that the earliest lead tablets, on which Zeus’ name is inscribed, may date back to the sixth century.
great theatre which looked out toward the valley and the snow-capped mountains. This tract of land, which would later become Zeus’ sanctuary, shows evidence of continuous occupation from c. 1200. Parke believes that the first evidence of cult activity began in the late eighth century, although a collection of votive axes may date back to the Mycenaean period. Most of the early votive offerings at Dodona were of a general nature, not to be identified to any one deity. The earliest cult image of Zeus found at Dodona dates back to the fifth century: on the rim of a small votive tripod, Zeus stands in the act of hurling a thunderbolt spear-shaped object (Fig. 8). The first attested literary evidence to Dodonaean Zeus is to be found in the Iliad, when Achilles invokes Zeus as ἄνα Δωδωναῖε (16.233), while Herodotus and the tragic playwrights of the fifth century provide further evidence that Zeus was connected with Dodona at this time.

Dodonaean Zeus was initially worshipped around a great oak tree which stood in the centre of the sanctuary. The fourth-century historian Demon claimed that Zeus’ sanctuary was encircled by bronze cauldrons sitting atop tripods. These cauldrons touched one another so that when one shook and made a sound so too did all the others (Suda sv. Δωδωναῖον χαλκέιον). These objects were a popular offering in the Archaic period and so it is possible that they were used as boundary markers to the sanctuary. Polemon, writing in the early third century, argued against Demon and posited another use for the bronze cauldrons at Dodona. He stressed that there was only one bronze displayed in the

244 Hammond (1967) 299.
245 Parke (1967b) 274-79; Quantin 181. Carapanos (i. 100-01; ii. plate 54.6-10) published four out of twenty three bronze axes which he had uncovered during his excavations. These axes were too small to be of practical use (5-12cm), and several were decorated with incised patterns. Hammond (1967: 407-09) compares these to similar axes from Troy and Italy which date to c.1100-1000. This same style of axe was later produced in iron between 800 and 600. He argues that the bronze axes were offerings to Zeus, symbolising his role as Areios, a god of war. This line of argument merely suggests a possibility that a war god was worshipped at Dodona before being assimilated into or replaced by Zeus. Kowalzig (338) describes Dodona as ‘war-orientated’ due to the number of weapons and warrior statues found at the sanctuary. She adds that Zeus was often consulted on matters of warfare. However, Delphi too was consulted on warfare and the oracle housed a number of dedications which could be considered ‘war-orientated.’
246 Parke (1967b) 99-100.
sanctuary, which stood next to a statue of a boy holding a whip. When the wind blew, the whip flew into the air, and then struck the bronze to create a ringing sound (Steph. Byz. sv. Δωδώνη).

By the end of the fifth century, Dodona came under the control of the Epirote League and Zeus was gifted his first temple. This modest structure measured 13 by 20 feet, and probably did not detract attention from the sacred oak. Dakaris suggests that the temple was used to store dedications to the god.247 At the beginning of the third century, the Molossian king Pyrrhus undertook developments in order to increase the prestige and marvel of Zeus’ sanctuary and to create a suitable venue for the newly created Naia festival. He added a large courtyard around Zeus’ temple, the great stone theatre, and small temples for Dione, Aphrodite, Heracles, and Themis.248 Pyrrhus also instigated the construction of the bouleuterion, a meeting house for the Epirote League. Alexander the Great had planned to erect a new temple at Dodona, but his death prevented any action (Diod. Sic. 18.4.4-5). Dorimachus, leader of the Aetolians, looted Dodona in 219, laying waste to much of the sanctuary, including Dione’s temple (Polyb. 4.62, 67). By the end of the century, Philip V of Macedonia defeated the Aetolians and restored Dodona’s sanctuary with the war spoils. Philip constructed a new temple for Dione, renovated and enlarged Zeus’ temple, added a stadium to the sanctuary, and built a large festival hall.249 Epirus continued to be allied with the Macedonians in the second century under Philip’s son Perseus, and for this it suffered greatly. The Roman Army defeated Macedon in 167, and in the following year Epirus was ravaged in response to their role in the war (Livy 45.34).250 Macedon then came under direct rule of the Romans, and Epirus was

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247 Dakaris (1973b) 159-60.
248 For the stone theatre built during the reign of Pyrrhus, see Daux (1960) 746-50.
249 Dieterle 153-68.
250 The lead tablets, used as part of an oracular procedure, disappear abruptly in 167. See Lhôte 11.
incorporated into the province in 148. Dodona continued to mint coins even after Epirus had lost all political control. These coins are likely to have funded the Naia festival, which continued throughout the period and may have been celebrated as late as 243-44 CE.

Dodona faced another huge setback in the year 88 when Mithridates and the Thracian tribes looted the sanctuary. Yet Dodona recovered and, as mentioned, the games continued well into the third century CE. The following century spelt the end of Zeus’ worship at Dodona, as the Roman emperor Theodosius banned divination in 385 CE. It was during this time that the sacred oak was uprooted and removed from the sanctuary, and a Christian basilica was erected in its place. This church, also upgraded in the sixth century, was the symbol of a new worship at Dodona. The removal of the sacred oak was a sign that Zeus was no longer present. Over the course of many centuries, Dodona underwent radical changes, and the elaborate ruins which now stand below Mt. Tomaros betray the humble origins of Zeus’ oracle.

While Dodona was later to attract the attention of major states, the oracle’s initial influence appears to have been locally based. The oak forests about Dodona were a key ingredient to the Epirote economy, and in turn, visitors to the region would have provided a great source of patronage to the oracle. Dodona was linked to several main centres in Epirus, which would have accommodated traffic to and from the oracle in great numbers. The Epirote Alliance, formed around 330, treated Dodona as its religious and administrative centre, and in the third century the Molossian king Pyrrhus pushed

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251 Eidinow 62.
252 See Riemann (1877) 294. Daux (1960: 744) records an inscription from 241/2 CE which attests the presence of Zeus Naios and Dione at Dodona.
253 McGing 62.
254 Dakaris (1960) 36.
Dodona’s prominence further by making it the main sanctuary of Epirus.\textsuperscript{256} Dodona’s local influence is also reflected in the collection of lead tablets. Although some enquiries do some from Athens and the Peloponnese, most are from within Epirus or other northern regions, including the nearby island of Corcyra.\textsuperscript{257} Powerful states such as Athens and Sparta seem to have taken a later interest in the oracle, which seems to have coincided with the turbulent period at Delphi.\textsuperscript{258}

Sparta was one of Delphi’s earliest trading partners, and Apollo had offered his full support to the Spartan army during the Peloponnesian War. Sparta’s presence at Dodona in the next century, therefore, seems to have major significance. Delphi had become unstable during the fourth century due to political upheaval and the destruction of Apollo’s temple. For these reasons the Spartans may have gone elsewhere due to necessity. The Ephors, however, still had convenient access to the nearby oracle of Pasiphae at Thalamai when required (Cic. Div. 1.43).\textsuperscript{259} Sparta’s appearance at Dodona may have little to do with Delphi’s instability. After an expedition to Acarnania in 389, the Spartans began to show a greater awareness of the north. In 385, Sparta aided the Molossians in their battle with the Illyrians (Diod. Sic. 15.13.3); Wardle suggests that the Spartans hoped to win a powerful ally in the Molossians by frequenting their local oracle.\textsuperscript{260} But yet, even when dealing with issues closer to home, Sparta continued to make use of Dodona. In 403, when attempting to reform the Spartan state, the general Lysander made an attempt to bribe the major Greek oracles. After failing at Delphi, he tried again at Dodona through

\textsuperscript{256} Hammond (1967) 636-38. In the second century, an inscription by the Alliance attests to the involvement of the island of Tenos in the Naia festival. Etienne and Braun (1986) 102-06.

\textsuperscript{257} Parke (1967b) 113 and 259-73. From another perspective, these tablets may have been used as part of a secondary oracle, which was used for everyday private matters. It may well be that Greeks from other states would only consult Dodona on matters of great importance. The Dodonaeans and their neighbours could make use of the oracle at any time, which is confirmed by the large number of questions concerning health, family and business. Also, it is likely that consultants from other regions may have taken their tablet home with them.

\textsuperscript{258} Delphi in 5th-4th cent.

\textsuperscript{259} For the oracle at Thalamai, see pages 130-35.

\textsuperscript{260} Wardle 291.
an intermediary. It is said that he then propositioned the oracle of Zeus Ammon at Siwah (Plut. *Lys.* 25; Diod. Sic. 14.13.4; Nep. *Lys.* 6.3.1). This is the first literary evidence for Spartan presence at Dodona, and the first actual consultation seems to have come three decades later, prior to the Battle of Leuctra in 371. The Spartans, seeking advice on their chances of victory against the Thebans, were told to think of safety instead of victory (Callis. *FGrH* 70f.206 = Cic. *Div.* 1.34). Sparta’s opponents at Leuctra, the Thebans, had apparently consulted several oracles, including Delphi (Paus. 4.32.5). Pausanias, who describes the Theban consultations, provides a hexameter response from Trophonius at Lebadeia but nothing from Delphi. Maybe Delphi was not able to respond to the Thebans. Since the Spartans chose to consult with Zeus, Delphi was either unavailable, or Apollo had offered his support to the Theban forces. This seems to be a complete role reversal; the Thebans, traditionally connected with Dodona, had brought their question to Delphi, while the Spartans opted for Zeus rather than their ally Apollo. The Spartans again questioned Dodona on warfare in 367, this time against the Arcadians, and were promised a ‘tearless war’ (Xen. *Hell.* 7.1; Diod. Sic. 15.72.3). Although Zeus offered his support, this was the last attested consultation for the Spartans at Dodona.

Athens appears to have formed an earlier relationship with Dodona, one which had been linked with the distant past. According to Pausanias, Athens received an oracle from Dodona while under the reign of Apheidas, grandson of Demophon. The oracle ran as follows:

φράζεο δ’ Ἀρείον τε πάγον βωμοῦς τε θυώδεις
Εὐμενίδων, ὅθι χρὴ Λακεδαιμονίους <σ’> ἱκετεύσαι
δοὺς πεζομένους. τοὺς μὴ σὺ κτεῖνε σιδήρῳ, μηδ’ ἱκέτας ἱεροῖ καὶ ἁγνοί.

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Consider the Areopagus and the fragrant altars of the Kindly Ones, where the Lacedaemonians, pressed by the spear, must take refuge. Do not slay them with the sword, do not wrong suppliants: They are both hallowed and sacred. (7.25.1)

This pronouncement later came to fruition when a group of Spartan soldiers had taken refuge on the Athenian acropolis and were spared (Paus. 7.25.2-3). Parke suggests this event was during the tyranny of Peisistratus, when Cleomenes gave his support to the opposing Alcmeonids. If event is historical, then the Athenians had a tradition of consulting Dodona from the end of the sixth century at least. This relation was made stronger during the Peloponnesian War when Apollo not only predicted victory for the Spartans, but he had promised his support (Thuc. 1.118.3). In response, it seems that the Athenians were forced to take their political inquiries to Dodona. The Athenians consulted Dodona on the Sicilian Expedition during 415-13. Zeus gave his support to the expedition which ended in failure. Dodona was later exonerated through ambiguous phrasing, and the sources suggest that Athens misinterpreted the oracle (Paus 8.11.2; Dio Chrys. Or. 17.17). Earlier, in 429, the Athenians had made a dedication at Dodona after winning a naval victory. This event was likely to have been Phormio’s successful campaign at Naupactus. It is possible that Dodona had advised the Athenians before this expedition, and was rewarded for its support with a dedication. In the same year, Dodona seems to be responsible for introducing the cult of the Thracian god Bendis into Athens as an Attic guild of the god acknowledges Dodona for its inception. Michael Arnush demonstrates that, as a result of the Peloponnesian War, the Athenians had avoided Delphi on matters of politics for a period of almost 150 years. Such extensive aversion to Delphi

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261 Parke (1967b) 131-33.
262 Syll. 73.
263 LGS 2.1.42.
allowed Dodona, and possibly other oracles, to find influence among the Athenians. \(^{264}\) It is also possible that Athenian presence at Dodona had incited a negative response from the people of Epirus. According to Hyperides, Olympias, the mother of Alexander who was born in Epirus, had chastised the Athenians for making dedications at Dodona (Eux. 4.24). It is unclear, however, whether this was an isolated incident or a general sentiment felt by the Epirotes.\(^{265}\)

Zeus’ oracle was initially an open-air sanctuary until the end of the fifth century, where worship was centred upon a great oak. The oak was also the centre of two myths which explain the origin of Dodona. One brief account says that an oak-cutter named Hellos was made aware of an oracle by a dove (schol. Il. 16.234). Fortunately, other authors embellish the story some much needed details. Philostratus speaks of an axe which, having been abandoned by Hellos, lies on the ground near the oak (Imag. 2.33), and Servius notes a dove, perched on a Dodonaean oak, who warns a woodcutter not to fell the sacred tree (Aen. 3.466). Herodotus is told by the priestesses of Dodona that a dove, settling on the sacred oak, told the people to found an oracle of Zeus on that spot.


\(^{265}\) There are various clues to suggest that the Boiotians also had strong links to Dodona. Philostratus describes an artistic scene from Dodona where a group of people stand about the sacred oak. He refers to a group of Thebans who stand about the tree, and they also ‘claim its wisdom as their own’ (Imag. 2.33.1). Pausanias provides a tale which links Dodona to the Boiotian sanctuary of Demeter at Potniae. During a festival for the goddess, young pigs are let loose and in exactly one year they reappear at Dodona (9.8.1). The Boiotians also visited Dodona yearly as part of a religious rite termed the Tripodophoria in which the Boiotians would deposit a tripod at Zeus’ sanctuary (Procl. ap. Phot. Bibl. 239.321b.32-322a.12). Pindar, albeit in a poorly preserved fragment, does seem to describe a similar event (fr.S8 Rutherford). However, as it stands, the fragment makes no mention of the Boiotians. According to Thucydides, the Boiotian people were originally from Thessaly, and had re-settled after the Trojan War (1.12). The region of Boiotia was inhabited by a tribe known as Pelasgians, who were then expelled from the land. In the fourth century, Ephorus provides a possible impetus for the Tripodophoria. When at war with the Pelasgians, the Boiotians sought council from Dodona. The prophetess advised the Boiotians to commit sacrilege, and suspecting that she had sided with the enemy, they killed her. The Boiotians were later told that this sacrificial act that they were to perform was to remove sacred tripods from their own temples and dedicate them at Dodona (FGrH 70f.20). Zenobius, who was aware of this story, provided an alternate version in which Dodona played no part. During the war, the Thebans questioned their appointed seer, Bombos, and he advised them that they would be victorious if they killed one of their commanders. The soldiers, after receiving this commandment, made the decision to kill Bombos (Zen. 2.84).
These various tales combine neatly to form a single narrative. The woodsman Hellos was warned by a dove not to fell the sacred oak upon which it sat. Startled, Hellos dropped his axe and then established an oracle upon the advice of the dove. Hellos became an attendant of the oracle and gave his name to those who would succeed him, the Helloi, or Selloi. As can be expected, the dove, oak, and Selloi play an important role in this myth.

Proxenus, a historian for Pyrrhus in the third century, seems to have adapted and expanded upon the woodcutting tale. In this account, a shepherd named Mardylas has stolen the flock of his neighbour. The victim, having failed to find his sheep, asks ‘the god’ to identify the thief. The sacred oak issues an oracle, saying that the youngest of the followers was the guilty party. The response turns out to be cryptic, for follower was another term for shepherd and youngest meant the most recent one to move to that region. Once he had been identified, Mardylas sought revenge by cutting down the oak. At that moment, a dove sprang from the oak and ordered Mardylas to desist. The thief then fled in surprise and later the people of Epirus established an oracle here (schol. Od. 14.327). The dove retains a similar role in this myth, while the oak is credited with issuing an oracular response. Proxenus, however, makes no mention of the Selloi; it is possible that they had lost any significance by the time of Pyrrhus.

To Proxenus, the most important part of this origin myth was that Dodona had always been in Epirus. Suidas of Thessaly and Cineas, both writing in the fourth century, suggest that Dodona was originally at a place called Skotussa in Thessaly. According to Suidas, the oracle was transported to Epirus after the sanctuary at Skotussa had been burnt down (FGrH 602f.11). Cineas seemed to think that even the oak had been transported as part of the relocation (FGrH 603f.2). Homer may have provided the basis for this alternate claim. When Achilles invokes Dodonaean Zeus, he refers to the god as Pelasgian
The term Pelasgi offers no great clue: Herodotus says that it was the former name of Thesprotia in Epirus (2.56), while Homer elsewhere identifies this group as allies of the Trojans (Il. 10.429; 17.288). Strabo later states that Skotussa was a city of Pelasgiotis (7.fr.1a Jones), but he may derive this knowledge from Homer. It seems best to settle with the conclusion of Parke, who says that Pelasgian could refer to northern Greece in part or as a whole. Homer provides some geographical clues to the location of Dodona in his time. In the *Catalogue of Ships*, he associates Dodona with the Enienes and Perrhaebi who dwell about the Titaressus River (Il. 2.749-51). Herodotus includes these two groups among the Thracian forces under Xerxes (7.185). It appears that Xerxes led his army into Thessaly by the Perrhaebian town of Gonnus (Hdt. 7.173). Strabo says that the Titaressus flows through the land of the Perrhaebians, which is near the Vale of Tempe (9.5.20). This description certainly does not fit with the Dodona in Epirus, but nor does it fit with Skotussa. This jumbled geography seems to have facilitated rival claims to host the original oracle, and Suidas must have used this confusion to promote an original Dodona in his home nation.

Dodona does not seem to have originated in Skotussa, but the myth does serve to extend the pedigree of the oracle. Dodona had acquired the reputation of being Greece’s oldest oracle, and a preceding oracle in Thessaly would have stretched back to a time even more remote. The Succession Myth at Delphi seems to have served a similar purpose. In order to compete with Delphi for supremacy, Dodona relied on its reputation as Greece’s most ancient oracle. In one version of the flood myth, Deucalion first settled at Dodona after the deluge. While in Epirus, Deucalion encountered a dove which was perched upon an oak tree, who then told him to settle on that spot. Deucalion then married Dodona, an Oceanid, and named this new city after her (schol. Il. 16.233). Plutarch adds that

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266 Parke (1967b) 4.
Deucalion erected a sanctuary to Zeus here (Pyrrh. 1). Herodotus, although he does not mention the flood myth, does say that Dodona was the most ancient oracle in Greece (Hdt. 2.52). It seems that the sacred oak at Dodona also had a reputation for its age. Pausanias claims that this oak was one of eldest in Greece, while Strabo says that it was revered for being the first plant created (7. fr.1c Jones). Even the tradition of dove priestesses was used to show Dodona’s superior age in comparison to Delphi. Pausanias regarded these women as being older than Phemonoe, the first priestess at Delphi (10.12.5).

As an oracle of Zeus, Dodona already had one reason to take precedence over Apollo. After all, Greece’s prophetic god received his gift from his father. If Dodona was to become recognised as Greece’s oldest oracle, then it would have a second reason to claim superiority. Delphi hit back by promoting her own antiquity. Several scholars argue that the succession myth, in which Apollo takes over the oracle of Gê, served to enhance the perceived age of Delphi. In this way, Delphi could take its inception from a pre-Olympian Age, before the reign of Zeus; just as Apollo could not expect to precede his father, so too Zeus could not expect to precede Gê. At the same time, Delphi was included in several myths which had usually been associated with Dodona. In one version of the Flood Myth, Dodona was the first region to be settled after the deluge (Arist. Mete. 352a; Plut. Pyrrh. 1). Nevertheless, a later form of the myth serves to promote Delphi. According to Pausanias, Deucalion and Pyrrha had landed on Mt. Parnassus after the deluge (10.6.2), and other versions state that Deucalion went to Delphi and was told by Themis how to restore mankind. Deucalion was then made a descendant of the Delphic priests, while Amphictyon, the son of Deucalion, lent his name to the religious council there. In the Argonautica legend, the prophetic prow of the ship was made from Dodonaean oak. At the same time, Apollonius of Rhodes (Argo. 4.529-36) and Valerius

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267 See Delphi chapter.
Flaccus (3.617) introduce Delphi into the story by making Jason consult its oracle. The
ship also had two seers; Idmon, represented in the lost epic *8aupactia*, was regarded as a
son of Apollo, and elsewhere as a member of the Melampid line. His counterpart,
Mopsus, seems to originate from the town of Titaressus, whose river was near Dodona
according to Homer (*Il. 2.749-52*). Why did the Argo need two seers when its prow also
had prophetic powers? It seems that the two rival oracles wished to be part of the myth.
Dodona could claim its relevance via the oak and its proximity to the bay of Pagasai from
which Jason embarked. Delphi may have been included as the most prominent oracle in
Greece at the time.

Like Delphi, Dodona was frequently mentioned in ancient literature, and its oracular
method was also subject to much discussion. In his *Phaedrus*, Plato states that the Delphic
and Dodonaean priestesses accomplish little when sane, but achieved much benefit for
Greece when mad (244b). The creatures of Aristophanes’ *Birds* declare themselves as
prophetic: Ἐσμέν δ’ ύμῖν Ἀμμών, Δελφοί, Δωδώνη, Φοῖβος Ἀπόλλων, (“We are your
Ammon, your Delphi, your Dodona, your Phoebus Apollo,” 716). For Dodona this may
ring true, but prophetic birds had little part in the oracle at Delphi. Perhaps a more fitting
connection comes from Callimachus who joins the laurel and the oak in a prophetic
context (fr.195 Trypanis). The *Suda* makes this connection more explicit in claiming that
the Pythia and the priestesses of Dodona would divine using trees (*sv. Προφητεία*).

While the ancient sources seldom speak of intuitive divination at Dodona, the dove
and the oak are both connected to the oracle. The sacred oak was an important feature of
Dodona’s sanctuary; before the first temple was built, Zeus was worshipped around this
tree. The concept of a talking oak is first attested in Homer (*Od. 14.327-30*), while
Aeschylus and Sophocles both refer to this method in the fifth century (*P.V. 830; Trach.
1164-71*). According to the Hesiodic corpus, the oak was inhabited by doves, and it was
these birds that delivered Zeus’ oracles (*Eoiae* fr. 97 Evelyn-White). As mentioned, the birds of Aristophanes’ play associated themselves with Dodona (*Av.* 716). Later sources also treat the talking dove as a symbol of Dodona’s oracle. Lycothron refers to a chattering bird who speaks in mortal voice at Chaonia (1320), and both Propertius and Nonnus continue this concept of the prophetic Chaonian dove (*El.* 1.9; *Dion.* 3.292-4). While the image of the prophetic dove may have been influenced by the priestesses of the same name, it is possible that the sounds of the bird formed part of the oracular procedure as well.

Later sources also furnish further elements to the oracular procedure at Dodona; the bronze cauldron and the sacred spring. Valerius Maximus states that the bronze cauldron of Dodona should be given the same honours as the Pythian tripod, the fountain of Ammon, and the ashes of the prophetic hero Amphiaraus (8.15.ext3). Lucan, also writing in the first century, refers to a man named Sextus who wishes to learn his fate, but was not content to listen to the sounds of the Dodonaean cauldrons which stood near the oak (*Bell. Civ.* 6.427). According to the scholion to Clement of Alexandria, men prophesied by the sounds of the bronze cauldrons (schol. Clem. Al. 299.31-33). Yet Servius, commenting on the *Aeneid*, describes a spring which protrudes from the sacred oak. The sounds of the spring are then interpreted by an old woman named Pelia (3.466). Here, yet again, the prophetic source derives from sound. Servius probably takes his information from Pliny the Elder (*H8* 2.106) and Pomponius Mela (2.43), who both attribute magical properties to a spring of Jupiter at Dodona. This spring is said to extinguish torches and then rekindle them if they are brought near it. 268 While the concept of a prophetic spring is common to

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268 Lucretius earlier refers to the same spring, although he does not identify it with Dodona (*De Rerum Satura* 6.879).
several oracular sites, in this case it is important to note that this spring has not been identified within the sanctuary at Dodona.\textsuperscript{269}

Is it possible for these various oracular methods to be rationalised into a single procedure? The concept of an oracular spring can be disregarded since there is no evidence for such a spring within the sanctuary and the idea is first introduced after the oracle was in decline. The bronze cauldrons are also given a prophetic function in later sources but they were part of the sanctuary from the outset. If the prophets of Dodona could read the sounds of the doves and of the swaying oak, then it is possible that the sounds of the cauldrons could be read as well. Although the early sources do not say, the sounds of the cauldron may have been interpreted as the voice of Zeus along with the noise of the oak and the doves. Sound is a common element amongst these three methods, and so it does make sense to compile them into a single overarching ritual. Under this concept, Zeus would speak through the oak, doves and cauldrons, and any chance sounds would be interpreted into a response. The many-tongued oak of Sophocles may have been represented by the various sounds that echoed through the sanctuary. This would allow for the chattering doves and Zeus’ cauldrons to also be a part of the procedure. While it is possible to speculate on various oracular methods, the lead tablets are the only concrete evidence for any oracular procedure at Zeus’ oracle. It is also possible that the oracular method changed over time, in response to Dodona’s growing popularity. A similar event occurred at Apollo’s oracle at Korope.\textsuperscript{270}

Zeus at Olympia (Elis)

Olympia began as a settlement in the third millennium before becoming a major pan-hellenic sanctuary in the eighth century. A small local sanctuary was established at

\textsuperscript{269} Parke (1967b) 68.
\textsuperscript{270} For Korope, see pages 74-75.
the base of Mt. Cronus, which took its name from Zeus' father, the leader of the Titans. Olympia also stood at the point where the rivers Alpheios and Kladeos combined. As a result, the land around Olympia was rich and fertile, and covered in green shrubbery. Initially, this land was home to a farming community, who may have first made use of Zeus' oracle for advice on matters of work and family. The rivers which sustained settlers at Olympia would eventually go on to serve Zeus' sanctuary. The waters would have been used to perform purification rituals and to sustain the various hostels and baths on the Kladeos River. These rivers later served a more destructive purpose. Having been demolished by earthquakes in 522 and 551 CE, the ruined sanctuary also became victim to large floods which covered the site in a thick layer of silt. Objects from Olympia began to resurface in the eighteenth century, but the first systematic excavation did not begin until 1875 under Curtius, Adler, and Dorpfeld.\footnote{Bernard de Montfaucon was the first to suggest a search for Olympia in 1723, and in 1766 Richard Chandler found the remains of a temple near the hill of Cronus. J.S. Stanhope completed his topographical survey of Olympia in 1824. See Schöbel 109-110.}

Excavators have uncovered the remains of several elaborate building projects at Olympia which began in the Archaic period and continued well into the Christian Age. The monumental temple of Hera, built at the dawn of the sixth century, was the first of its kind on the Greek mainland. The Heraion was joined in the Archaic period by a line of treasuries which sat at the base of Mt. Cronus and by the bouleuterion which lay at the southern end of the sanctuary.\footnote{Tomlinson (1976) 57-59; Yalouris (1976b) 647.} Zeus' temple was built in c. 470 and was funded by the war spoils after the Elians defeated Pisa.\footnote{Pausanias (5.10.2). For the dating of this event, see Morgan (1990) 18.} Over the ensuing centuries the sanctuary was filled with temples and altars to gods and heroes alike. Pausanias records a great number of statues and altars to the gods at Olympia (5.14.4-10). At its peak, the sanctuary must have been an impressive sight, with various temples, treasuries and buildings assigned to
the games and its athletes. The growth and prosperity of Olympia came as a result of its pan-hellenic games. The cult of Zeus is attested here from the tenth century, and seems to have served local chiefdoms in the western Peloponnese. The year 776 is regarded as the formal inception date for the Olympic Games, but it does not appear to have become a pan-hellenic institution until the end of the eighth century. Colin Renfrew suggests that it was not until the sixth century that the games had fully developed.\textsuperscript{274} The earliest victors do appear to have been local athletes, and the earliest known victors came exclusively from the Peloponnese.\textsuperscript{275} Olympia originally belonged to the district of Triphylia, whose central city was Pisa. In the early sixth century, the invading tribe of Elians managed to wrest control of the sanctuary from the local inhabitants.\textsuperscript{276} Polybius says that during the fifth century, Olympia was granted \textit{asylia} by the Greek states (4.73). The Spartans, however, defeated Elis in the late fifth century and the Elians were forced to recognise the Triphylians as the original owners of the sanctuary. Yet for the time being, the Elians retained authority at Olympia. In the fourth century, the Arcadians briefly took control of Olympia, and the Tegeans plundered the sanctuary in 364 (Xen. \textit{Hell.} 7.4) In 80 BCE, Sulla sacked the sanctuary and relocated the games to Rome, and they were not restored until 29 BCE. Christian attacks led to the abandonment and destruction of Olympia in the fourth and fifth centuries CE. The last Olympic Games were held in 393 CE and Theodosius banned them in the following year.

Inscriptions show that Olympia took its oracular priests from two families, the Iamids and Clytiads.\textsuperscript{277} The Iamids take their name from Iamos, the son of Apollo and

\textsuperscript{274} Renfrew 22-23.
\textsuperscript{275} Lee 112. Eusebius (\textit{Chron.} col. 195) lists Orsippus of Megara as the first victor from outside the Peloponnese in the fifteenth Olympiad. Also, Pantaclès became the first Athenian victor in the twenty first Olympiad.
\textsuperscript{277} Dittenberger and Purgold (1896) 135-234. This inscription records those who served as priests at Olympia from 30 BCE to 265 CE.
Evadne. Iamos was also instructed by his father to establish an oracular centre at Olympia (Pind. *Ol*. 6). Here it is significant that an oracle of Zeus could be seen to result from a pronouncement of Apollo. Herodotus knew of the family’s reputation in the fifth century, and he remarks that an Iamid seer, Tisamenus, had advised the Spartans in battle (9.33). The Iamid Callias aided the people of Croton in 510 (Hdt. 5.44), and another Iamid, Thrasyboulus, acted as seer to the Mantineans in 244 (Paus. 6.2.4). The Clytiads took their name from Clytius, a grandson of the seer Amphiaraus (Paus. 6.17.6). Each family provided one priest who took the office for life. There were cases where one family could not provide an eligible male so the other would nominate a suitable candidate. In 180 CE, the rules were changed so that each family provided two priests.\(^{278}\) This may indicate that the oracle underwent some form of revival in the second century CE.

When discussing the oracle of Apollo at Thebes, it was pointed out that Olympia had two distinct prophetic methods. In his victory ode to Hagesias of Syracuse, Pindar says that Iamos, standing on the Hill of Cronus, was granted the ability to hear a voice of truth (*Ol*. 6.65). Parke was right to disregard this voice as the sound of chance utterances, for the peak of the hill stood well above the sanctuary where one would not expect to overhear conversations.\(^{279}\) It is likely that the priests would interpret the cries of birds, or perhaps other sounds which were available at the time. The second method of prophecy took place upon Zeus’ great altar which stood near the base of Mt. Cronus. Pindar says that the prophets of Olympia interpret the will of Zeus from the signs of sacrifice (*Ol*. 8.5-8). The scholion to Pindar’s sixth *Olympian* describes a detailed procedure in which the portions or skin of a sacrificed animal would be placed in the fire and inspected. The author does not describe how the animal’s quarters were inspected, but as for interpreting the skin, it is

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\(^{278}\) As illustrated in the inscription (note 277), one priest was chosen from each family until 180 CE when two from each family were listed annually.

\(^{279}\) Parke (1967b) 178.
The oracle at Olympia was certainly well known in the fifth century. Pindar was aware of Zeus’ oracle in his victory odes, and Sophocles refers to Olympia alongside Delphi and Abae (OT 896-901). Strabo says that Olympia had won early fame on account of its oracle, and that the sanctuary had retained its glory on account of the games (8.3.30). While Olympia certainly received a great deal of attention from ancient authors, very few oracular consultations are recorded here. The Spartan king Agis attempted to consult the oracle during the Peloponnesian War, but as Xenophon records, the Elian priests had turned him away. Apparently Agis had been refused because the oracle could not be consulted on matters of war between Greeks (Xen. Hell. 3.2.22). Xenophon records another instance in 387 when the Spartan king Agesipolis consulted Zeus at Olympia concerning war against Argos. The Argives had managed to hold off the war by holding its Karneia festival whenever the Spartans were ready to attack. Agesipolis sought oracular advice concerning the validity of the Argive truce, and having received support from Zeus, the king then went to Delphi to ask if Apollo agreed with his father (Hell. 4.7.2). This event appears to have been the only time that Olympia had given advice on a major political matter. Noting the high number of major battles which involved either an Iamid or Clytiad, Ulrich Sinn has suggested that the seers ‘hardly ever worked in Olympia itself.’ It may be for this reason that so few oracular pronouncements are attested from the oracle at Olympia.

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280 This oracle is discussed in the Delphi chapter, pages 30-31.
281 Sinn 20.
Demeter at Patrai (Achaia)

Near the town of Patrai, Pausanias describes a sanctuary of Demeter with images of Apollo, Aphrodite, Persephone, and Gê. He goes on to describe a glade near the sanctuary and a path that leads to a spring. The spring had an important function, for as Pausanias claims:

μαντεῖον δὲ ἐνταῦθα ἐστιν ἀψευδές, οὐ μὲν ἐπὶ παντὶ γε πράγματι, ἀλλὰ ἐπί τῶν καμνόντων. κάτωπτρον καλαδίῳ τῶν λεπτῶν δήσαντες καθιάσι, σταθμώμενοι μὴ πρόσω καθικέσθαι τῆς πηγῆς, ἀλλ᾽ ὅσον ἐπιψαῦσαι τοῦ ὕδατος τῷ κύκλῳ τοῦ κατόπτρου. τὸ δὲ ἐντεῦθεν εὐξάμενοι τῇ θεῷ καὶ θυμιάσαντες ἐς τὸ κάτοπτρον βλέπουσιν: τὸ δὲ σφισι τὸν νοσοῦντα ἢτοι ζῶντα ἢ καὶ τεθνεῶτα ἐπιδείκνυσι.

Here there is a truthful oracle, not for every matter, but those concerning illness. Having tied a mirror to a fine cord they let it drop, judging the distance so that it does not fall too far into the spring, but just far enough so that the rim of the mirror lightly touches the water. Then, having prayed to the goddess and burnt incense, they look into the mirror, which now shows them the patient either alive or dead. (7.21.12)

This method appears highly unique and nothing like the previous oracles discussed. Nevertheless, the description does highlight two important facts. First of all, the oracle addresses issues of sickness alone. In this way, the oracle is not competing with Delphi, Dodona or any other major oracle. Also, the oracle of Demeter is located upon a spring, and the waters are an integral part of the procedure. This shows that, while water was commonly used in sanctuaries for purification, it was also treated as a mantic substance.

The archaeological record tells us little else about the oracle at Patrai. The area had been occupied in the Mycenaean period and the later city was built over its ruins. Excavators have identified a seaside temple of Demeter near a sacred spring, which
matches the description of Pausanias. In history, Herodotus includes Patrai among the
twelve tribes that first settled in Achaia (1.145). These men were led by, and took their
name from a Lacedaemonian named Patreus (Paus. 3.2.1). Later, Augustus made Patrai a
colony of the Roman Empire (Paus. 7.18.6). While Pausanias refers to the oracle as
working during his time, there is no indication when it was formed or when it ceased to
function.

Hermes at Pharai (Achaia)

Along with Patrai, the city of Pharai was among the twelve Achaian tribes who first
settled the region (Hdt. 1.145). The oracle was located within the marketplace township,
and, yet again, Pausanias provides the only literary evidence. The author says that within
the marketplace, stood a stone statue of Hermes atop a mound of earth. Pausanias
describes the procedure in which the enquirer puts his question to the statue:

ἀφικόμενος οὖν περὶ ἑσπέραν <ὁ> τῷ θεῷ χρώμενος λιβανωτόν τε ἐπὶ
tῆς ἑστίας θυμίᾳ καὶ ἐμπλήσας τοὺς λύχνους ἑλαιοῦ καὶ ἐξάψας
tίθησιν ἐπὶ τὸν βωμὸ τοῦ ἀγάλματος ἐν δεξιᾷ νόμισμα ἐπιχώριον—
cαλεῖται δὲ χαλκοῦς τὸ νόμισμα—καὶ ἐρωτᾷ πρὸς τὸ θεὸν
ὅποιον τι καὶ ἑκάστῳ τὸ ἐρώτημά ἐστι. τὸ ἀπὸ τούτου δὲ ἀπείρον ἐκ τῆς
ἀγορᾶς ἐπιφραξάμενος τὰ ὄτα: προελθὼν δὲ ἐς τὸ ἐκτὸς τὰς χεῖρας
ἀπέσχεν ἀπὸ τῶν ὄτων, καὶ ἤστινος ἂν ἐπακούσῃ φωνῆς, μάντευμα
ἤγειται.

Coming in the evening, the inquirer of the god first burns incense upon the
hearth, and fills and lights the oil lamps, then he places a local coin at the
altar on the right of the statue – termed a copper - and whatever he wishes to

282 Petsas 681-82.
283 Alcock (167-73) shows that Achaia was radically transformed under Roman rule and the region saw a
uniform decline in rural occupation.
ask, he puts the question into the god’s ear. Then, having blocked his ears, he leaves the marketplace. Having gone away, he removes his hands from his ears, and whatever sound he overhears, he regards as prophetic. (7.22.3)

A similar example to this method comes from Euripides’ *Ion*, where Xuthus is told that, upon leaving Apollo’s temple, the first person he sees is his child (534-36). When Odysseus returns to Ithaca, he asks Zeus for a word of omen to confirm that he has arrived in his homeland (*Od*. 20.98-122). Pritchett points out that the prophetic method at Pharai is similar to that of Zeus at Olympia. The marketplace of Pharai, however, seems more conducive to hearing chance utterances than the tranquil peak of Cronus’ Hill.

**Gê at Aigeira (Achaia)**

At the oracle of Apollo Deiradiotes in Argos, the priestess was thought to achieve her prophetic trance by consuming the blood of a sacrificed lamb (Paus. 2.24.1). This chthonic rite was difficult to associate with the pure and heavenly Apollo. Similar practices appear to have been performed at Aigeira, but under the influence of Gê, known locally as Ἐὐρυστέρνος, ‘Broad-breasted’ (Paus 7.25.13). Pliny the Elder, while discussing the damaging properties of animal blood, says the following: *taurinus quidem recens inter venena est excepta Aegira. ibi enim sacerdos Terrae vaticinatura sanguinem tauri bibit prius quam in specus descendat.* (“Indeed, fresh bull's blood too is regarded as a poison, except at Aigeira. There, when about to prophesy, earth’s priestess first consumes the blood of a bull before she descends into the chasm,” *H8* 28.147.3-6). Pausanias also says that bull’s blood was used at Aigeira, but not for the same purpose:

όδός δὲ ἀπὸ τοῦ τάφου σταδίων ὅσον τριάκοντα ἐπὶ τὸν καλοῦμενον Γαῖον: Γῆς δὲ ἱερὸν ἐστὶν ὁ Γαῖος ἐπίκλησιν Εὐρυστέρνου, ἔσανον δὲ τοῖς

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Pritchett (1998-99) i. 348-49.
The journey from the grave to the place they call the Gaios is some thirty stades. The Gaios is a temple of Gê, also named Broad-Breasted, and the image of her likeness is extremely old. As is custom, the woman undertaking the role of priestess is to remain chaste henceforth, and must not have engaged in intercourse with more than one man before her appointment. She proves herself worthy by drinking bull’s blood. Any woman who, by necessity, does not speak the truth shall immediately pay the penalty. If more than one woman come seeking the role of priestess, she is selected by the drawing of lots. (7.25.13.4-14)

While for Pliny, the bull’s blood acts as a prophetic substance, for Pausanias it serves as a test of chastity. But the two accounts need not contradict one another. It is possible that Pausanias was not aware of the oracular procedure at Gê’s sanctuary. Bouche-Leclercq suggests that Pliny had mistakenly attributed the oracular procedure at Argos to Aigeira. If the oracular procedure was as Pliny suggests then it is curious that an oracle of Gê could be so similar to that of Apollo.

Pausanias’s brief account furnishes some further details. First, it appears that the role of priestess is not confined to certain families, for the only requirement mentioned is chastity. The sanctuary also appears to be quite old, although this depends on how one treats the phrase ‘extremely old.’ The wooden statue may suggest that the oracle was in

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285 Bouche-Leclercq iii. 255.
fact rather ancient. Finally, the sanctuary is located outside the township, at what
Pausanias calls the Gaios. This peripheral location is common to many oracular centres.

Pan at Lycosoura (Arcadia)

According to Dionysius of Halicarnassus, the Arcadians regarded Pan as
ἀρχαιότατός, 'the most ancient,' and τιμιώτατός 'the most honoured' of all the gods
(1.32.3). Pan was a prominent Arcadian deity, and he was worshipped at several modest
mountain sanctuaries throughout the region. He was worshipped at the Corycian Cave
oracle near Delphi, but he was foremost an oracular god in Arcadia. Apollodorus states
that Pan was actually Apollo’s teacher in the prophetic art (1.4.1), while the scholion to
Pindar adds that Pan prophesies attentively to all the Arcadians (Pyth. Argum. 1).287
Lycosoura, Pan’s main oracular centre, was located near the city of Megalopolis, founded
by Epaminondas in 372. The only sanctuary that has been identified is that of Despoina,
an ancient form of Persephone. Her temple appears to have been constructed in the fourth
century. Excavators have found no evidence of Pan’s cult as of yet, apart from an
inscription bearing his name. Here there was a sanctuary, and a maintained fire next to
a cult image of Pan, but as Pausanias says:

λέγεται δὲ ὡς τὰ ἐτι παλαιότερα καὶ μαντεύοιτο οὐτὸς ὁ θεός, προφῆτιν
dὲ Ἐρατὼ Νύμφην αὐτῷ γενέσθαι ταύτην ἢ Ἀρκάδι τῷ Καλλιστοῦς
συνώκησα: μνημονεύουσι δὲ καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς Ἐρατοῦς, ἀ δὴ καὶ αὐτὸς
ἐπελεξάμην.

It is said that long ago the god himself would prophesy, and the nymph
Erato served as his prophetess, she who wedded Arcas, son of Callisto.

286 Jost (1985) 474.
287 Jost (1985: 294-95) suggests that the myth was formed out of Arcadian chauvinism.
288 IG V 2.530.
They call to mind the prophetic utterances of Erato, which I have also read. (8.37.11.6-12.2)

Pausanias mentions no oracular personnel apart from the dryad Erato; whether or not the historical oracle continued to use a prophetic priestess is unknown. In Book Three of Statius’ *Thebaid*, Amphaiaraus prays to Zeus as the source of bird omens, the most accurate oracles. The hero includes an oracle of Pan amongst those which cannot compete with Zeus. Pan’s oracle is referred to as Lycaonian, and takes place at night and *in umbra* (3.471-80). Statius, however, is not referring to the oracle at Lycosoura, for it appears that Pan also had a sanctuary on Mt. Lykaion in Arcadia. Pausanias says that this particular sanctuary was in the middle of a grove and that a festival was once celebrated there (8.38.5). Porphyry refers to a cave in Arcadia sacred not only to Lykaion Pan, but also the moon (*De antr. nymph.* 20). In myth, it is said that Pan enticed the moon into his forest with a bribe of shiny wool (Verg. *G.* 3.392-3). The oracle seems to have been located within this cave, which may explain Statius’ phrase *in umbra*. The moon goddess may have been represented by a priestess who performed the oracular procedure. Excavators uncovered a race track near the sanctuary, along with victor lists from the Lykaian Games. An inscription dates to the end of the fourth century and attests athletes from various regions of Greece, including Athens and Sparta.²⁸⁹

According to Pausanias, Pan had ceased to issue oracles at Lycosoura in the second century CE, but his image may have continued to be addressed for good omen. Pausanias refers to the small statue and then says that Pan can answer prayers and punish evil as effectively as the most powerful of gods (8.37.11). Theocritus suggests that Arcadian hunters would pray to Pan for good fortune, and blame him for an unsuccessful chase (*Id.* 7.103-07).

²⁸⁹ Kuruniotis 161-78.
Hera at Perachora (Corinthia)

The oracle of Hera Akraia is said to lie on the Corinthian Gulf between Lechaeum and Pagae (Strab. 8.6.22). The sanctuary was highly frequented by the Corinthians in the Archaic period, but subsequently fell into disuse and was last used in c. 300. Strabo attests to the oracle, which had ceased to exist by his time, yet provides no further information. Although several minor settlements were found in the region, two temples of Hera have been uncovered at the ancient township of Heraion. The temple of Hera Akraia has been identified by several inscriptions, and lay beside the ancient harbour. Another temple of Hera, lying at the eastern end of the precinct, housed a large number of elaborate offerings. Several of these dedications are made to Hera Limenia, which suggests that the goddess was worshipped under two distinct titles. Dunbabin, however, has put forth that the name Limenia was not an official title, but at alternate name which related to seafarers.\(^{290}\) Dunbabin also suggests that a purpose-built pool, near the Limenian temple, had been used as part of an oracular procedure. A large number of bronze phials were found in this pool, which may have facilitated a lot-oracle. This phial-oracle, in which the objects are floated on a pool of water, gives a positive sign if the object sinks. Kadletz suggested that the same method was used at Argos.\(^{291}\)

The concept of phial-oracles at either site is based on conjecture rather than concrete evidence. Tomlinson has dismissed Dunbabin’s theory on several grounds. First, the bronze phials date between the seventh and sixth centuries, many centuries before Strabo attests to the oracle. Second, statues and pottery were also found in the pool. Next, a total of 200 phials were deposited over two centuries which suggests a rather infrequent practice. Finally, the author sees the procedure as rather expensive if the consultant had to

\(^{290}\) Dunbabin (1951) 61-63.

\(^{291}\) Kadletz 96.
purchase and dedicate such an item in order to consult Hera. Tomlinson instead suggests that the objects had been washed unto the pool after the site was abandoned. Salmon also discounts Dunbabin’s theory because this sacred pool was not in close proximity to the temple of Hera Akraia. It is possible that a single phial was dedicated as part of a yearly ritual which Strabo later knew as an oracle, yet it is more likely that the objects were used as utensils during ritual dining. Édouard Will argues that Perachora held a necromantic oracle, while Lisle suggests that a statue of Hera ‘spoke’ to consultants. But there is too little evidence about Perachora’s oracle to form any conclusions.

Dionysus at Amphikleia (Phokis)

So far, the Olympian oracles have been located either in the far north of Greece, or in the Peloponnese. These oracles catered to mainly locals, who lived far from the oracle at Delphi. The oracle of Dionysus in Amphikleia is significant, for it had been located in the same region as Delphi. Yet, judging by Pausania’s description, Amphikleia also catered to a predominantly local audience.

λέγεται δὲ ὑπὸ τῶν Ἀμφικλειέων μάντιν τέ σφισι τόν θεόν τούτον καὶ βοηθὸν νόσων καθεστηκέναι: τὰ μὲν δὲ νοσήματα αὐτοῖς Ἀμφικλειεύσι καὶ τοῖς προοικοῦσιν ἰᾶται δὲ ὁ νεωράτων, πρόμαντις δὲ ὁ ιερεύς ἐστι, χρῷ δὲ ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ κάτοχος.

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293 Salmon 165.
294 Will 145-69. See also Vilatte and Donnadieu 86-90. Will sees the sacred pool as a gateway to the underworld, with the phials being used to offer libations. He does also admit (169) that he is hesitant to push his theory too far. Lisle (in an unpublished thesis cited by Salmon 166-67) notes curious holes in both the temple walls and in Hera’s statue which he suggests the priests would speak through in imitation of Hera.
It is said by the people of Amphikleia that this god is their prophet and bringer of aid in regard to sickness. The diseases of the Amphikleians themselves and of their neighbours are cured by means of dreams, and the prophetic priest, possessed by the god, issues oracles. (10.33.11.3-8)

Unfortunately, this oracular site has left no trace on the archaeological record and so Pausanias’ testimony is the only information available. Pausanias appears to describe two distinct procedures. The oracle offered both intuitive prophecy and healing by incubation. The healing oracle thus allowed the Amphikleian oracle to attract patrons for it did not have to compete with Delphi, although at this time. Of course, with the reduced status of Delphi in the second century CE, even the Phokians may have treated it like any other oracle.

Aside from Amphikleia, Dionysus seems to have possessed an oracle in Thrace. In Euripides’ *Hecuba*, Polymestor, the Thracian king, advises Hecuba of her fate (1260-84). When asked how he knew, Polymestor said that Dionysus, the prophet of Thrace, had told him. In his *Rhesus*, the playwright says that god’s prophetic priests lived in a cave about Mt. Pangaeum (970). According to Herodotus, this oracle was situated high up in the mountain and its attendants were named the Bessi. Cassius Dio says that the Odrysae had become attached to the oracle, and he adds that Crassus awarded them the lands of the Bessi (51.25). Dio also describes another event in which Vologaesus, a priest of Dionysus with a great reputation for divination, led the Bessi in an uprising (54.34). Strabo seems to agree with this aggressive image of the Bessi (7.5.12). Yet Herodotus says that the priestess delivered oracles, and in the same manner as the Pythia (Hdt. 7.111). How and Wells suggest that Herodotus undervalued this Thracian oracle because it drew attention away from Delphi.295 Suetonius refers to an oracle of Thrace which was consulted by

295 How and Wells *ad* Hdt. 7.111.
Augustus, and that the oracular rites were barbaric. The oracle was located in a grove of Pater Liber, a deity which had been assimilated with Dionysus, and Suetonius argues that Alexander the Great had also visited the oracle (Aug. 94).

Concluding Remarks

While the Olympian gods possessed a great number of oracular sanctuaries throughout the Greek mainland, few had acquired any sort of reputation in the Classical period. In fact, apart from Dodona, Olympia and the Thracian oracle of Dionysus, no other Olympian oracle is attested before the time of Strabo. The distinct lack of sources for any of these later oracles suggests that they were either catering to a local clientele, which the Amphikleian oracle certainly appears to have done, or these oracles had not existed before the Roman period. Perhaps both of these factors were true. It is tempting to think that these oracles were part of an oracular resurgence in the second century CE. Hadrian frequented a number of Greek oracular centres and the oracles of Didyma and Claros were both popular at this time. Therefore, it is possible that smaller oracular centres benefitted from this oracular renaissance.

The only Olympian oracle to pose as a serious rival to Delphi was Zeus’ oracle at Dodona. Dodona was reputed as being the eldest oracle in Greece, and there does appear to have been a conscious effort made by Delphi to counteract this. While initially the oracle catered to a local audience, Dodona began to earn a reputation among the other Greek states. Athens, Sparta and Thebes all had strong connection with Dodona. In the fifth and fourth centuries in particular, Dodona was consulted by Athens and Sparta on major political matters. It was during this time that Delphi had been rocked by internal troubles and had begun to lose some sway in this area. It is apparent that among the Olympian gods, only Zeus and Apollo possessed notable oracular centres.
Chapter Four: The Oracles of Heroes and the Oracles of the Dead

Having examined a number of Olympian oracular centres in the Greek mainland, it is apparent that prophetic ability was not shared equally among the gods. Apollo possessed several prominent oracular sites and thus he ranked as the most highly sought after god for divine guidance. Zeus, with his renowned oracle at Dodona, stood nearest to Apollo in the realm of prophecy. Gods such as Pan and Dionysus had developed a strong local reputation as diviners, while others, such as Artemis and Athena, show no traces of possessing their own oracular centres. Such a hierarchy of prophetic gods comes as no great surprise; Zeus and Apollo, the all-perceiving one and his spokesperson, were both well suited for the role. Nevertheless, the prominence of heroes in Greek oracular centres shows that divination was not reserved to gods alone. The concept of prophetic heroes is already known in the *Iliad*, for Hector predicts the death of Achilles moments before his own death (22.348). Asclepius, Amphiaraus and Trophonius were heroic figures who stood somewhere between the mortal and the divine realm, each had their own oracular or healing centres which outshone those of other Olympian deities. The capacity of these heroes to provide divine guidance, in lieu of the gods, poses an interesting and complex state of affairs. As Bouche-Leclercq notes, these heroic figures possess their own unique origins, and their mantic ability cannot be explained under one overarching theory.\(^{296}\) It is also difficult to trace the origin of heroic figures; some are identified as early deities which have been downgraded, others as real people who have been worshipped after death.

\(^{296}\) Bouche-Leclercq iii. 316.
Nevertheless, this chapter will focus on several heroes and their oracular centres in an effort to understand their prominence among Greece’s other oracles. This chapter also briefly discusses another series of oracles, known as νεκυομαντεῖον, ‘oracles of the dead.’ This necromantic practice of calling upon the dead for the purpose of receiving advisement is a common literary theme (Odysseus and Tiresias in the *Odyssey*, Xerxes and Darius in Aeschylus’ *Persians*) and some authors indicate that such places existed on the Greek mainland. If such practices did exist, then it will be of value to note what role they played in the wider context of Greek divination.

**Asclepius (Various)**

In myth, Asclepius was a son of Apollo, and widely renowned as a physician, having learnt the art from Chiron. Asclepius’ skill was such that he could bring mortals back from the dead; Zeus struck the physician down for this reason, but he later underwent apotheosis and joined the ranks of the divine. Asclepius was worshipped throughout mainland Greece and the islands, and many of his sanctuaries offered healing to the sick. Greek medicine sought to relieve illness by harmonising the body with the mind, and so, at Asclepius’ healing sanctuaries, patients were helped to find a cure within themselves. Asclepius’ most renowned sanctuary lay at Epidaurus in the Peloponnese. The original hill-top sanctuary was relocated in the late sixth century in order to cater to a rising clientele. The small but ornate religious temples were overshadowed by medical facilities such as the *Enkoimeterion* or giant *stoa*, the baths, and the gymnasium. Here the patients were surrounded in beautiful landscapes, took part in music and exercise, and

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298 See Curnow for a brief summary on each of Asclepius’ many healing centres. Hart (53-78) gives a more detailed account of Asclepius’ main sanctuaries at Epidaurus, Cos and Pergamum. Thraemer (1642-97) shows evidence for almost two hundred sanctuaries of Asclepius.

299 Hart 79-80.

300 Lambrinoudakis 226.
maintained a simple diet in order to purify their minds and their bodies.\textsuperscript{301} On some occasions, the patient would take part in an incubation ritual, in which they would sleep in the \textit{Enkoimeterion} and receive the god in their dreams. If Asclepius’ visit had not cured the illness and the dream did not suggest a clear remedy, then the priests would interpret the dream and suggest their own therapy. Asclepius’ sanctuaries were successful healing clinics, and patients who had been cured would often leave dedications to Asclepius or have their testimony recorded for others to read. One such dedication describes a dream in which Asclepius had cut open a man’s belly in order to remove an abscess and then stitched him back together.\textsuperscript{302} While Asclepius had offered many a dream-cure, there is no evidence that oracular pronouncements were offered at his sanctuaries. Other hero oracles often maintained a healing function, but they also offered divine advisement.

\textbf{Amphiaraus at Oropus (Boiotia)}

Oropus sat on the border of Boiotia, equidistant from the cities of Thebes and Athens. Oropus was also a sea-port in a valuable location, for, as Thucydides states, it provided the shortest route to Euboia (7.28.1). Situated in the hills north of the city, the sanctuary of the hero Amphiaraus was undoubtedly Oropus’ \textit{raison d’être}. The sanctuary was built on both sides of a ravine, and was enveloped in a dense forest of pine. Although it is difficult to identify the role of each building, the southern area appears to have comprised of domiciles for the priests and other attendants, as well as dining halls and other amenities. On the northern bank sat the sanctuary proper; here were the temple of Amphiaraus, the theatre, and the \textit{Enkoimeterion}, the one hundred metre-long \textit{stoa} which

\textsuperscript{301} Sanctuary buildings: Yalouris (1976a) 311-14. Healing regiment at Epidaurus: Christopoulou-Aletra, Togia and Varlami 259-63; Hart 79-90. Philostratus remarks about a young Assyrian man who suffered from edema. The man sought advice from Asclepius, but was turned away on account of his avaricious appetite (\textit{VA} 1.9).

\textsuperscript{302} \textit{IG} IV\textsuperscript{²} 1.121-22.
formed part of the oracular procedure. Amphiaraus’ sacred precinct extended some distance and came to include the harbour which lay three kilometres from the temple.

The Argive king Amphiaraus was well suited to the task of divine succour, for, as a descendant of Melampus (or possibly Apollo), he was a seer of great repute. Amphiaraus may have inherited this gift from his father, but Pausanias claims that Amphiaraus was not born a seer, and only attained the art after sleeping in a Sicyonian temple fittingly named ‘the house of divination’ (2.17.3). Amphiaraus took part in the Calydonian boar hunt (where he lost an eye) and joined the voyage of the Argo, but his most famous exploit was no doubt in the expedition of the Seven against Thebes. When the sons of Oedipus, Eteocles and Polynoeis, were quarrelling over the right to rule Thebes, Amphiaraus was approached by Adrastus, his compatriot, to join the expedition. Although the seer had foreseen his dire fate, he took part in the expedition under the compulsion of his wife, and Adrastus’ sister, Eriphyle. When the battle was lost, the seer fled in his chariot which was driven by his relative Baton. Then, while Amphiaraus was speeding past the Ismenos River when, Periclymenus was poised to hurl a spear at the fleeing seer; Zeus then struck the ground with a thunderbolt, opened a chasm in the earth, and Amphiaraus disappeared.

Judging from Apollodorus’ account, Amphiaraus would seem to have descended in Theban territory, near the Ismenos River (3.6.8). Aeschylus has each of the Seven pitted against an elected Theban warrior at the city’s seven gates, and thus the battle must occur on Theban soil. Amphiaraus, fleeing the scene of the battle, would then have descended

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303 Eliot 656; Wallace, 43-45.
304 Strabo 9.2.6 refers to the harbour as sacred, which suggests that it too belonged to Amphiaraus in the first century CE. See Eliot 656; Wallace 45.
305 Amphiaraus is most often regarded as a son of Oicles. However, in some instances he is made a son of Apollo. Note that Hyginus (Fab. 70) offers both competing versions.
306 Calydonian boar hunt: Apollod. 1.8.2. Voyage of the Argo: Apollod. 1.9.16. Seven against Thebes: Apollod. 3.6.1-8; Paus. 1.34.2; Philostr. Imag. 1.27; Pind. Sem. 9,10, Ol. 6.
into the earth at a nearby location. Nevertheless, the point at which Amphiaraus descended was marked with a sanctuary at Oropus, a city which stood on the Boiotian border with Attica. The Oropians erected a sanctuary to the hero near to their city, and they claimed to be the first to worship Amphiaraus as a god (Paus. 1.34.2). In addition, two Boiotian towns, Harma and Potniai, were also put forth as the resting place of Amphiaraus. Harma, according to Plutarch, was founded at the spot where Amphiaraus descended into the earth while riding his chariot (Mor. 307a). Pausanias was also aware of this version, having heard it from the people of Tanagra (9.14.4). Nonnus even assigns an oracular centre to this place: καὶ πέδον εὐρυάλω, χθονίῃ πεφυλαγμένον ὀμφῆ, ἀφιματος ὀψιγόνιο φερώμενον Ἀμφιαράου, (“the land of the wide threshing-floor had maintained a chthonic oracle, later bearing the name of Amphiaraus’ chariot,” Dion. 13.68-69). The scholion to Aelius Aristides says that Mardonius sent consulted Amphiaraus at Harma (144.4). Strabo presents a different account in which Amphiaraus’ chariot does not descend with the hero, but continues to be dragged without rider until halting at Harma (9.2.11). Pausanias says that the people of Potniai also lay claim to the resting place of Amphiaraus. Apparently outside Potniai, on the road towards Thebes, there lay a small peribolos which no animal would go near (9.8.3).307

Just as Tegyra had pitted itself against Delos as the birthplace of Apollo, several Boiotian towns looked to gain repute as being the place of Amphiaraus’ descent. But only one of these towns could boast to having an oracle of Amphiaraus, or so it would seem. According to Herodotus, the oracle of Amphiaraus was listed among those tested by the Lydian king Croesus. In fact, along with Delphi, Amphiaraus’ oracle was also judged to

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307 Frazer (v. 30-31) had equated this building with the unidentified oracle of Amphiaraus at Cnopia. However, as Wallace (47) points out, the oracular precinct would need to contain more than just an enclosure. Amphiaraus was also worshipped at another mystical place near Lerna in the Argolid. The Spring of Amphiaraus sat in close proximity to the Alkyonian Lake, which was thought to be a gateway to the underworld. Dionysus descended into Hades from here in order to retrieve his mother Semele (Paus. 2.37.5).
have spoken the truth (1.49). Croesus rewarded both oracles with gifts from his own treasury: the king dedicated a golden shield at Delphi, and to Amphiaraus he also gave a golden shield, as well as a golden spear (1.52). Yet Herodotus reports that these offerings to Amphiaraus were held at the temple of Apollo Ismenos at Thebes when one would expect them to have been dedicated at Oropus. It is a widely held opinion that the oracle tested by Croesus was not at Oropus, but near the city of Thebes. Aeschylus has his Amphiaraus exclaim: ἔγωγε μὲν δὴ τήνδε πιανῶ χθόνα, μάντις κεκευθὼς πολεμίας ύπο χθονός, ("I myself will enrich this here land, having been buried under the soil of the enemy," Sept. 587-88). Strabo in fact states that Amphiaraus’ temple had been transferred to Oropus in accordance with an oracle from the Theban Cnopia (9.2.10). Scholars assume two factors in regard to this statement; first, that Amphiaraus was the oracular deity who issued this pronouncement, and in turn, that this Theban oracle was to be transferred to Oropus. Cnopia has thus been deemed as Amphiaraus’ first oracular centre, the one to which Croesus sent his emissaries and rewarded with gifts. The exact whereabouts of Cnopia is unknown, but the scholiast to Nicander claims that Cnopia was not only a Boiotian city, but also the name of a river which merged with the River Ismenos (schol. Ther. 887-89). Cnopia seems, therefore, to have been situated within close proximity to Thebes, and this may explain why the offerings to Amphiaraus were found in Apollo’s Ismenion temple.

Another problem arises when looking at the location of Amphiaraus’ new oracle. The shift appears to have taken place between 467 when Aeschylus wrote his Seven against Thebes, and 414 when Aristophanes presented his Amphiaraus. The play appears

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308 Mikalson 122; Murray and Moreno ad Hdt. 1.49; Parke (1967a) 105.
309 Frazer (v. 31) remarks: "Strabo expressly says that the oracle of Amphiaraus was brought to Oropus from Knopia." Compare with Parker (1996:147-48) who agrees that the oracle of Amphiaraus had been relocated, but only because it is the most likely candidate.
310 How and Wells ad Hdt. 8.134.
311 Symeneoglou (108-09) argues that the oracular site was near the House of Pindar at Thebes.
to have been set at an oracular sanctuary, and as Thebes had sided with Sparta in the Peloponnesian War, Aristophanes would not wish to promote an oracle of Thebes.\footnote{115} Oropus, which was highly contested between the two cities for many centuries, was at that time controlled by Athens. But then why would the Thebans allow Amphiarraus’ oracle to be transferred from nearby territory into that of their enemy? Parker notes that it was highly unusual for a cult to shift premises, more so when the new residence was on foreign soil. He accounts for part of the problem by suggesting that the oracle at Oropus had been established by Boiotia, only to fall into Athenians hands at a later date.\footnote{313} The two oracular sites may have existed concurrently, and while Oropus prospered, the Cnopia oracle had fallen into decline.\footnote{314} It is conceivable that this oracle at Cnopia would have suffered from a lack of patronage; enquirers from other Greek states would be unlikely to expect a neutral response from an oracle so close to another city, while, as Herodotus states, the Thebans themselves were forbidden to consult here (8.134).

It is unclear whether this second cult of Amphiarraus had been transferred from Thebes or had grown independently, but it was certainly the most famous shrine of the hero from the fourth century onwards. The cult at Oropus transferred between Athens and Boiotia on a regular basis, while the city itself appears to have been established by the Eretrians of Euboia (Nicocrates FGrH 376f.1). Oropus then came under the authority of Athens by 446-45.\footnote{315} Then, in lieu of evidence to the contrary, the sanctuary of Amphiarraus was appears to have been established in the latter half of the fifth century during this period of Athenian influence. Oropus was captured by the Boiotians in 412-

\footnote{312} PCG iii.2. 29. These lines have been generally interpreted as an oracular response, but cf. Faraone 320-27.\footnote{313} Parker (1996) 147-49; (2008) 150-52. Ustinova (96) states that Amphiarraus was seen to be physically present at his place of worship, and as such, there can only have been one Amphiarraion at a particular time.\footnote{314} Wardle (319) suggests that the original oracle at Cnopia ceased to function as it was unable to compete against rival claims to host the divinity.\footnote{315} IG i¹ 41.67-71. Thucydides recounts that the Oropians were ‘subjects to Athens’ in 430.
411 with aid from Eretria and the Oropians themselves, but they withdrew shortly after in 409.\textsuperscript{316} At the end of the fifth century, either 402 or 401, Oropus was again taken under Boiotian control while the Athenians were engaged in other affairs.\textsuperscript{317} Oropus came back under the authority of Athens between 386 and 384, but ceded control again in 366 during the King’s Peace.\textsuperscript{318} At a period in the middle of the fourth century, a great stoa was built on the northern side of the sanctuary which functioned as the location of the oracular procedure. Coulton, having studied this stoa in detail, believes it to be either a Macedonian construction, or that of the Thebans in recognition of Epaminondas’ war victories.\textsuperscript{319} The heightened building activity between the years 377 and 338 shows that the Amphiaraiouion had become a popular sanctuary in the fourth century. After the Battle of Chaeronea in 338, the Thebans forfeited their stake in Oropus and a few years later the Macedonians restored the territory to Athens. The Athens then established a four-yearly festival at Oropus.\textsuperscript{320} During the third century, it appears as though Oropus was under the authority of the Boiotian koinon. The theatre, which sat next to the great stoa, was developed in this period. The proscenium, or theatre space, is dated to c. 200, the stage between 150 and 140, and the proedria were built during the time of Sulla’s visit to Oropus.\textsuperscript{321} Greece then came under Roman control from 146 and, during his campaign against Mithridates in 87, the Roman general Sulla appropriated funds from many Greek sanctuaries, including Oropus.\textsuperscript{322} Then, one year later, Sulla repaid his debt to Oropus. The limits of Amphiaraius’ sanctuary were effectively increased when Sulla decreed that

\textsuperscript{316} Buck (1994) 123. Lys. 20.6; Thuc. 8.60.1-2.
\textsuperscript{317} Buck (1994: 28) puts forth a date of 401 for the event, while Cartledge (1987: 285) argues for 402. According to Lysias, the Athenian Philon had left Athens in 403 to live as a metic at Oropus. This suggests that Oropus was either under Boiotian control or independent at this time.
\textsuperscript{319} Coulton (1968) 180-83. Travlos (301-02) suggests an earlier date of 360 for the stoa.
\textsuperscript{320} IG VII 4253-54.
\textsuperscript{321} Travlos 301-02.
\textsuperscript{322} See Knoepfler (1991) 274-76 for a brief sketch of Oropus’ history between 146 and 87.
the land about the sanctuary be made inviolable. Sulla also diverted the city’s taxes from Rome to Amphiaraus, greatly enhanced the sanctuary’s wealth. This created wealth was to be used in sacrifices and in festivals, which now included the Rhomaia, a celebration of Rome. Sulla’s new measures came under intense scrutiny back in Rome, and L. Domitius Ahenobarbus led a protest under the argument that the sacred land was set aside for the gods, and that Amphiaraus should not be considered one of them. This dispute was decided by the senate in 73, with Oropus being awarded the victor.\textsuperscript{323} Amphiaraus’ oracle appears to have continued without interruption for several more centuries, and was one of many oracular centres banned by Theodosius in 381 CE. Although Oropus was abject to a number of rulers throughout its history, it thrived, and continued to serve as one of Greece’s major oracular centre for nearly eight centuries.\textsuperscript{324}

In spite of the oracle’s fame and the great interest of ancient authors, Amphiaraus was not often consulted on matters of politics. The consultations of Croesus and Mys, reported by Herodotus, appear to have been conducted at another oracle of Amphiaraus in or near Thebes. The only other political response attested from this oracle came shortly after 338, and was concerned with the territory of Oropus itself.\textsuperscript{325} Oropus had recently returned to Athenian dominance through the efforts of either Philip or Alexander. The territory was then incorporated into the ten Athenian tribes, with Amphiaraus’ sanctuary awarded to the tribes Hippothoontis and Acamantis. But some, however, regarded the area as sacred and argued that it should belong only to Amphiaraus, so Euxenippus was entrusted to sleep in the sanctuary in order to settle the dispute. Euxenippus reported his

\textsuperscript{323} See J.A.O. Larsen. 307-08, 365. Cicero appears to have been part of the deciding committee, and he refers briefly to the event (but not his own involvement) in \textit{De Satura Deorum} 3.49.

\textsuperscript{324} Petarakos presents a collection of inscriptions in \textit{Hoi Epigraphes tou Oropou} which illustrate the large number of states represented at Oropus in proxeny decrees; for example, Miletus (insc. 12), Ephesus (insc. 14) and Sicyon (insc. 17).

\textsuperscript{325} Suárez de la Torre (194) suggests that the nature of the Oropian oracle was altered over time due to the influence of local politics and the cult of Asclepius.
dream to the assembly which suggested that Amphiaraus’ sanctuary be returned to the hero and the two tribes be compensated for their loss. But this suggestion was quashed and Euxenippus was charged with receiving bribes from the Hippothoontis and Acamantis tribes.  

Fig. 9. Marble votive relief found at the sanctuary of Amphiaraus at Oropus.  
National Archaeological Museum of Athens 3369. 400-350 BCE.  

While it was possible for consultants to receive oracular advice from Amphiaraus, the sanctuary at Oropus was most often associated with healing. The method of consultation was similar to that of Asclepius, which was also chiefly concerned with matters of health. Consultants would first pay an incubation fee, which was set at one Boiotian drachma, and later, when Oropus was independent, this fee changed to eight Boiotian drachma.  

Hyp. Eux. 15-16. For a summary of events, see Cooper 102-03.
According to Philostratus, the consultant would then fast for a day, and abstain from wine for three days prior to the incubation ritual (VA 2.37). Immediately before the procedure, the consultant would then perform a sacrifice at the great altar, which was divided into five sections, each devoted to various deities (Paus. 1.34). A sacrificial tariff from the fourth century shows that the consultant could sacrifice any type of animal to the deities, and they were also charged a fee based on the animal chosen. The consultant would then sacrifice a ram, whose skin would be removed. Then, the consultant would sleep on the animal skin in the great stoa and receive Amphiaraus in his dreams (Paus. 1.34; Fig. 9). The oracle does not appear to have provided a priest for the interpretation of these dreams, so once he had woken up, the consultant was free to leave, after depositing a coin in Amphiaraus’ sacred fountain.

**Trophonius at Lebadeia (Boiotia)**

While Asclepius had earned great repute as a healer, and Amphiaraus as a seer, the hero Trophonius and his brother Agamedes plied a less remarkable trade as mythical builders. Together they laid the foundations for Apollo’s temple at Delphi (Hymn. Hom. Ap. 294-97), and the pair built Alcmenes’s bridal chamber at Thebes (Paus 9.11.1). Trophonius alone appears to have had some role in establishing the oracle of Apollo at Pagasai (Heraclid. Pont. fr.137b = Etym. Magn. 646.39-42). In the Homeric Hymn to Apollo, the two legendary builders are named as sons of Erginus, the king of Orchomenos. Conversely, the Hesiodic Catalogue of Women presents Trophonius as the son of

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327 Petropoulou 58-59.
328 Bonnechere (2006: 84) associates Trophonius’ role as builder with an ability to establish and cross boundaries. “Trophonios n’est pas devin de son vivant, c’est un architecte qui construit des pièces chthoniennes, closes mais comportant une ouverture "surnaturelle" vers l’autre monde.” (Trophonius is not a seer in his lifetime, but an architect who constructs chthonic buildings, enclosed, but with a “supernatural” opening to the other world.)
329 The Suda (sv. Τροφώνιος κατὰ γῆς παίγνια) gives Trophonius as a son of Ersinus (sic) (Τροφώνιος Ἔρσινου παῖς) and brother of Agamedes.
Apollo and Epicaste (fr. 157 Evelyn-White). Philostratus also treats Trophonius as a son of Apollo (VA 8.19), and Pausanias, aware of the inconsistency in the hero’s parentage, settles upon Apollo as the true father (9.37.5). Prior to this, Pausanias had recounted a story that Erginus, desiring children, sought advice from the Delphic oracle. In turn, the Pythia advised him to ἱστοβοῆι γέροντι νέην ποτιβαλλε κορώνην “put a new tip on the old plough”, and in taking a new wife, Erginus bore two sons, Trophonius and Agamedes (Paus. 9.37.3-4). Charax provides a further alternative in making Agamedes the son of Stymphalos, and the father of Trophonius (FGrH 104f.5). Cicero, rather than solving the dispute, instead assimilates Trophonius with a subterranean form of Mercury (8at. D. 3.56). The status of Trophonius becomes even more confused when one considers that both Livy (45.27.8) and Strabo (9.2.38) use the name as an epithet for Jupiter. Plutarch also claims that those who had consulted with Trophonius had likened him to Olympian Zeus (Sull. 17). As a local cult figure, Trophonius’ influence was limited to Boiotia, and so in becoming attached to Olympic deities, the hero obtained a wider appeal.

As the birth of Trophonius was often debated in antiquity, so too was his death. One tale records the death of Trophonius and Agamedes soon after they had built the foundations for Apollo’s temple at Delphi. After the two men had completed their task and had asked to be paid, Apollo promises to pay them in seven days time. In the meantime, Trophonius and Agamedes feasted at the god’s expense, and on the seventh

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330 The territory of Lebadeia is thought to have been firmly under the control of Orchomenos in its early history. See Buck (1979) 97. Guillon (1963a: 77-78) therefore argues that Trophonius was not assimilated to Apollo, as Hero Ptoios had been at Mt. Ptoion, because Theban influence was needed for this change.

331 The literary references are complemented by inscriptional evidence from Lebadeia which attests to the god as Δί Τρεφώνιοι (IG VII 3090) and Δίς Τρεφώνιοι (IG VII 3098). Unfortunately, these inscriptions have not been dated; however, the second-century inscription from Mt. Ptoion (concerning the shared sacred fund with Lebadeia) distinguishes between Trophonius and Zeus Basileus (IG VII 4136). Photius also refers to Lebadeia as an oracle of Zeus (syn. Λεβαδεία).
night they went to sleep, but did not wake up (Pind. fr.2-3 Race). Pausanias gives another story in which Trophonius and Agamedes built a treasury for the Boiotian king Hyrieus, but they had left a stone loose so that they could rob the temple. After a series of raids, Hyrieus set up a trap which snared Agamedes when the pair of thieves next entered the treasury. Trophonius proceeded to behead his brother so that he would not be identified for the crime, but as he fled, Trophonius was swallowed by the earth (Paus. 9.37.5-7). This myth came to explain why Trophonius was consulted, not in a temple, but in his underground abode, and why Agamedes was not also recognised in the same manner. According to Pausanias, the discovery of Trophonius’ oracle came at the behest of Delphi. When the people of Boiotian had suffered drought for two years, each city sent a delegate to the oracle to ask for a means of respite. The god told the delegates to find a cure from Trophonius of Lebadeia, but they were unable to locate the oracle until Saon, the delegate from Akraiphia, followed a swarm of bees into a cave and there he encountered the hero (9.40.1). Bouche-Leclercq sees this oracle as a continuation of the story of Apollo’s gift to Trophonius and Agamedes. The Delphic god may take the lives of the two builders, but he rewards Trophonius with mantic powers and his own oracular centre.

Trophonius’ descent, or κατάβασις, was an intrinsic element in the oracular procedure and a prominent feature of the hero’s sanctuary at Lebadeia. Those who wished

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332 Plutarch claims that Pindar, in his old age, had consulted Delphi on what was best for men; in turn, the fate of the two heroes may have reflected the Pythia’s response (Mor. 109b-c).
333 Hyrieus was the king of Hyria, a town near Tanagra, and the father of Orion (Strab. 9.2.12). According to Corinna, Orion and Hyrieus were part of a family of seers which included Akraiphen, the toponym of Akraiphia. The people of Tanagra celebrated the Orioneia festival. See Berman 41-62.
334 According to Charax, Trophonius and Agamedes built the treasury for Augeas in Elis, rather than for Hyrieus in Boiotia. In this version, it was the craftsman Daedalus who devised the temple trap (FGrH 104f.5). Later authors offered a rational version of the myth, making Trophonius a charlatan who lived underground so that others would think him divine. See schol. Aristoph. Sub. 508; schol. Lucian Dial. Mort. 10; Greg. Naz. In Sancta Lumina 5.
335 Bouche-Leclercq iii. 323.
to consult the oracle would enter into Trophonius’ underground abode by means of a cave within the sanctuary. Pausanias, who claims to have experienced the phenomenon first-hand, describes the cavern in some detail:

The oracle is on top of the mountain, beyond the sacred grove. On it is a circular foundation made of white stone. The circumference of the foundation is the size of the smallest threshing floor, and the height is slightly less than two cubits. (9.39.9.1-5)

Within the enclosure is an opening in the earth; not natural, but man-made in the most precise manner. And the shape of this building resembles an oven; the diameter of which is just about four cubits, and its depth, one could guess, reaches no more than eight cubits. (9.39.9.7-10.6)

In the second century CE, the oracular crypt appears to have been purpose built on a hilltop outside the limits of the sanctuary. The crypt was not alone, for there was also a sanctuary of Apollo, and a temple of Zeus Basileus had also been built on the hill. Schachter argues that Zeus’ temple was strategically placed so that it could be seen by

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336 Philostratus attests to a similar setting, with the cave being located outside the sanctuary on the peak of a hill. The author also describes a barrier of iron stakes which the philosopher Apollonius had to remove in order to access the cave (VA 8.19).
those on the road between Lebadeia and Delphi.\textsuperscript{337} Zeus’ temple had first been commissioned in the late third century and further work seems to have taken place between 175 and 170.\textsuperscript{338} The monumental temple, perhaps due to its enormous expense, was never fully completed. Pausanias, noting the temple’s unfinished state, attributes the fact either to war or to the great size of the temple (9.39.3). The temple was certainly a great feature at Lebadeia, and may have influenced Trophonius’ assimilation with Zeus. The oracular cavern, purpose built by the people of Lebadeia in the third century CE, seems to have replaced an earlier structure. Vallas and Pharaklas suggest that the initial cavern was mistaken for a treasury and sacked during the Herulian invasion.\textsuperscript{339} In regard to the initial cavern, Schachter suggests that it lay within the confines of the sanctuary, and posits that the pit of Agamedes, the point at which Trophonius was thought to have been swallowed by the earth, had originally acted as the hero’s oracle and abode.\textsuperscript{340} Elsewhere in the sanctuary was Trophonius’ temple, which has not yet been successfully identified. Pausanias also notes a number of other features in the sanctuary: there was an open-air site in which Zeus Hyetios and Demeter Europa were worshipped; a number of springs near the river Hercyna which ran between the city of Lebadeia and the sanctuary; and a shrine of Hercyna at the bank of the river (9.39.1-3). The sheer number of deities worshipped at Lebadeia suggests to Betz that the sanctuary held a prominent reputation.\textsuperscript{341} There was also a hostel within the confines of the sanctuary to host visitors

\textsuperscript{337} Schachter (1981-94) iii. 74. Lebadeia was situated on the only road from Delphi into Boiotia and Attica.


\textsuperscript{339} Vallas and Pharaklas (1969: 228-33) first excavated the site and they date the artificial cavern to the third century CE. This date has been generally accepted. See Bonnechere (2003b) 20-21; Roesch (1976a) 492. Schachter, on the other hand, argues that the artificial cavern had been in place by the first or second century CE. During this period, an inscription from Lebadeia (IG VII 3077) refers to the collection of funds for, and a number of contributors to the sacred enclosure. Schachter (1981-94: iii. 75) believes that this inscription refers to the second cave on the hill. There is, however, no conclusive evidence to confirm his supposition.

\textsuperscript{340} Schachter (1981-94) iii. 75. Elsewhere (1984: 269-70) the author suggests that Zeus’ new temple and the oracular cavern were moved to provide space and to give pride of place to the two most important features of the sanctuary.

\textsuperscript{341} Betz 578.
to the oracle (9.39.4). A series of niches were carved in the rock on the bank of the river; the smaller of which were used to display votive offerings, and the larger niches appear to have been used as seating. These seats, along with the springs and the river Hercyna, may have played some role in the elaborate ritual surrounding a consultation with Trophonius.  

As with the features of the sanctuary, Pausanias is again the most comprehensive authority on the oracular procedure. Having undergone the experience first-hand, he describes the event in three stages; the initial preparation, the descent into Trophonius’ abode, and then interpretation of the experience. During the preparation, the consultant would take lodging in a house consecrated to Good Fortune and Good Fate. There he dwells for a number of days, bathing only in the Hercyna and eating the meat from a number of sacrifices which he must perform. At each of the many sacrifices, a prophet observes the signs to ensure that Trophonius is willing to receive the consultant. The final sacrifice, to Trophonius’ brother Agamedes, is performed on the night of the consultation, and the prophet must observe good omens in order for the procedure to take place. If all the signs have been propitious, the consultant is led again to the river Hercyna and anointed with olive oil by the Hermai, two young local boys who serve Trophonius. The consultant is then led to two springs, the Lethe and Mnemosyne, and made to drink; first from the Lethe so that he may purge his mind of all thoughts, and then from the Mnemosyne so that he may remember his encounter with Trophonius. The consultant must then pray before a statue of Trophonius which only those who are about to descend may see. At some stage the consultant must also adorn a linen tunic and boots.  

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342 Kowalzig (378n108) suggests that these niches were used to seat patients in some form of incubation procedure.

343 Ogden (2001: 84) suggests that these boots were specifically designed for the oracular procedure. Pausanias provides the example of one man who had died after consulting the oracle without performing the preliminaries (9.39.12).
Having reached the oracular cavern, the consultant would then enter the structure with the aid of a ladder, and once inside, he would lie on the ground and place his feet into a small aperture in the ground. The man holds honey-cakes, which Philostratus states were used to appease the serpents which dwelt in the cave (VA 8.19). Then, suddenly, his body is seized and drawn into the hole. In this state, Pausanias says that not all encounters are the same; some may hear the future while others see visions. Clark, noting the irregular phrasing of this passage, suggests that all consultants heard things, but only a few saw visions. After the encounter, the consultant returns to the same spot, although they return feet first so that their body is the reverse of when they entered. The descent and subsequent return is radically enhanced by Philostratus who claims that consultants may sometimes reappear at another location, and even in neighbouring states (VA 8.19). Plutarch, who recounts the experience of his friend Timarchus, says that the man was given up for dead after remaining in Trophonius’ realm for two days (Mor. 590a-b).

Having ascended from the oracular cavern, the consultant is then taken to the throne of Mnemosyne, so that he may recount his experience with the divine. The oracular priests interpret the event and the consultant is taken back to his lodging. The consultant is usually in a terrified state after the ordeal, and descending into the cave of Trophonius became proverbial for one who could not laugh. Those who have undergone the rite are also compelled to recount their story, and the written testimony was then dedicated at the temple. While Pausanias does not speak on the matter, it appears that the oracle would only operate on specific days. Philostratus reports that when Apollonius wished to consult with Trophonius, the oracular priests forbade him on the grounds that the day was

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344 Clark 70.
345 See Apostolius 6.82; Diogenian. 1.8; Macarius 3.63; Zenobius 3.61. Semos of Delos (FGrH 396f.10) remarks that one such consultant had later visited Delphi and was told how to recover the ability to laugh.
inauspicious (VA 8.19). Plutarch presents a similar story, saying that, on certain days, Lebadeia was engaged in the business of sacrifices and oracles (Mor. 431d).

A consultation with Trophonius was highly unique in the Greek world, for as Philostratus comments, it is the only oracle whereby the consultant acted as his own medium (VA 8.19.27-8).\(^{346}\) At inductive oracles, the will of the gods was interpreted through signs, and the god spoke through an intermediary at intuitive oracles. The practice of incubation, in which the consultant would sleep in a temple and received advice in dreams, is a prominent method at healing oracles. These oracles are typically connected with heroes rather than gods. Consultants to the cave at Lebadeia undergo a similar experience, and this had led some scholars to label Trophonius’ oracle as incubation.\(^{347}\) Trophonius’ oracle has been connected in particular with that of Amphiaraurus at Oropus. Both heroes share a similar fate in being swallowed by the earth, and they both have a connection with snakes.\(^{348}\) Consultants at Lebadeia would also visit the Trophonius during the night, while Amphiaraurus’ cures were worked during sleep. Trophonius is also thought to have offered cures to consultants and the hero’s name has been interpreted as deriving from the verb τρέφω ‘to nourish.’ In fact, the hero also shows similar characteristics to the mythical physician Asclepius.\(^{349}\) Pausanias testifies that the images of Trophonius and the river nymph Hercyna strongly resembled that of Asclepius and his consort Hygeia (9.39.3). Asclepius also shares this strong connection to snakes. Although Trophonius shares similar traits to Amphiaraurus and Asclepius, who are both patrons of incubation oracles, there is no evidence in the sources that the procedure at

\(^{346}\) Two consultants in Plutarch’s Life of Sulla even manage to compare Trophonius’ likeness to Zeus (17).
\(^{347}\) Pley (1258) includes the oracle of Trophonius among those which use incubation. Guillén (1943: i. 104n2) considered the oracle to be iatromantic. Arafat (99) believes that Sulla took an interest in Lebadeia and Oropus because they both held healing sanctuaries.
\(^{348}\) Schachter (1981-94) iii. 70.
\(^{349}\) Radke 693. Motte 243-44.
Lebadeia involved sleeping. As Clark points out, the burden of proof rests on those who assert that Trophonius had a dream oracle at Lebadeia. Clark, however, does assert that, like Delphi, Lebadeia was initially an earth oracle. Of course, there is no evidence for this dream oracle of Gê at Delphi. A handful of scholars do argue that the procedure experienced by Pausanias at Lebadeia was highly refined when compared to the original oracle. Betz judges that the initial ritual focused on drinking the waters of a sacred spring. Parke believes that the basis of the oracle was always the cave, and that the elaborate sacrifices and drinking of the waters were superficial additions. Bouche-Leclercq deemed that Trophonius’ oracle was once intuitive, only to have been ‘overloaded by local ceremonies which altered the character somewhat.’ Nilsson attributes any change in procedure to a general decline felt by all oracular centres, including Delphi: “Pausanias’ report clearly shows the concern of a later time, making the oracular procedure more elaborate in order to counteract the oracle’s fatigue.” Betz suggests that the oracles centres were forced to use eschatological myths in order to maintain their significance; Trophonius, with the advantage of fear, was able to enact moral conversion more effectively than other oracles. Of course, this does not suggest any modification in procedure, but rather a change in the needs and beliefs of consultants.

350 Clark (1968) 72. Potter (43-45) and Flaceliére (1965: 24) also contend that Lebadeia was not a dream oracle.
351 Clark (1968) 74.
352 Betz 578.
353 Parke (1967a) 127-29.
354 Bouche-Leclercq iii. 327. “Surchargée par la liturgie locale de cérémonies qui en dénaturent quelque peu le caractère.” In the De Mundo, attributed to Aristotle, it is said that Delphi and Lebadeia are both places where prophetic πνεῦματα were said to emanate from the earth (395b). Bouche-Leclercq thus proposes that Trophonius was initially called upon as an earth power before he took on the character of a mortal hero.
356 Betz 596. It has also been noted that the oracular procedure at Lebadeia reflections the ritual of initiation into mystery religion. See Bonnechere (2003a) 169-92; (2003b) 289-302.
So how did the oracle change over time, if at all? The earliest references to Trophonius’ oracle at Lebadeia occur in the fifth century, with the oracle included in Herodotus’ reference to Croesus and Mys (1.46, 8.134). In the case of Mys, Herodotus does say that a local man, consulting on behalf of Mys, descended as part of the procedure. An inscription from the c.350 attests to a Macedonian king named Amyntas who consulted the oracle on his own behalf. This suggests that one could opt to elect a proxy to consult Trophonius. In the Clouds of Aristophanes, Strepsiades is hesitant before entering into the mysteries, and he compares the ordeal to descending into the cave of Trophonius (506-08). Strepsiades also asks for honey-cakes, which suggests that entering the cave and supplicating snakes were an early tradition at the oracle. Trophonius then became feature both Old and New Comedy between the fifth and third centuries, with a number of plays named for the hero. Cratinus, in particular, has been cited to suggest that consultants at the oracle were forced to fast in preparation for the oracular procedure. Pliny was aware of the two springs, Lethe and Mnemosyne and their ability to make a man forget and remember (H8 31.15). In addition, Plutarch complements Pausanias in saying that the procedure took place at night (Mor. 590a-b). It is not that surprising that Pausanias should illustrate a more elaborate procedure than any other author, for as many have noted, this account is the only complete description of a procedure at any Greek oracle. If Pausanias’ account is indeed accurate, and there is no reason to believe otherwise, then the procedure would have been costly and time consuming. Consultants

357 See IG VII 3055 where Amyntas has consulted the oracle ὑπὲρ αὐτοσαυτῶ, ‘by his own accord.’
358 A number of later authors also refer either to a descent into the oracular cave, or the return: Diod. Sic. 15.53; Julius Obsequens Prodigia 50; Livy 45.27.8; Lucian Dial. Mort. 10; Philostr. VA 8.19; Strab. 9.2.38. See Schachter (1981-94) iii. 80n2.
359 Alexis (PCG 2.238-40), Cephisodorus (PCG 3.3-6), Cratinus (PCG 3.233-45) and Menander (PCG 6.ii.351-54) all treat the hero as a subject of their plays.
360 The fragments of Cratinus’ Trophonius refer to some ban on food, but the context is not provided (PCG 3.233-45). Schachter (1981-94: iii. 82n3) suggests that the oracle demanded at least some partial restrictions on eating during the fifth century.
were obliged to spend a number of days lodging in the sanctuary, to sacrifice multiple beasts during the preparation, and pay the customary fee. In the fourth century, this fee was set at ten drachma, and there was even an extra charge for the obligatory honey-cakes.\footnote{\textit{IG VII} 3055.}

In spite of the great expense, Lebadeia enjoyed tremendous prestige which is reflected in the ancient sources. It is fortunate that several consultations have been recorded for Trophonius’ oracle. The earliest attested consultations, whether or not they took place, were those of Croesus in the sixth, and Mys at the commencement of the fifth century (Hdt. 1.46; 8.134). Even earlier than this, the Messenian king Aristomenes is said to have been directed to Lebadeia in order to recover his shield during the Messenian wars (Paus. 4.16.7). In the beginning of the fourth century, Lebadeia was sacked by Lysander prior to the Battle of Haliartus in 395 (Plut. \textit{Lys} 28). Nevertheless, Trophonius continued to be worshipped at Lebadeia, and the sanctuary’s priests are said to have presaged the Theban victory at Leuctra in 371 (Callis. \textit{FGrH} 124f.22a-b). This prediction is embellished by Pausanias who says that the Thebans, having consulted Trophonius about the war, were given a hexameter response:

\begin{quote}
πρὶν δορὶ συμβαλέειν ἐχθροῖς, στήσασθε τρόπαιον, 
ἀσπίδα κοσμήσαντες ἐμήν, τὴν εἵσατο νηῷ θοῦρος 
Αριστομένης Μεσσήνιος. αὐτὰρ ἐγὼ τοι ἀνδρῶν 
δυσμενέων φθίσω στρατὸν ἀσπιστάων.
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
Before clashing spears with the enemy, 
dedicate a trophy, adorned with my shield, 
that which impetuous Aristomenes of Messenia placed in my temple. 
Then, bearing shield, I will slay the enemy army for you (4.32.5).
\end{quote}
Polyaenus says that Trophonius had advised the Thebans that those who attack first would win the battle (2.3.8). As a result of the victory, the Thebans awarded Lebadeia with a festival dedicated to Zeus Basileus (Diod. Sic. 15.53). Trophonius was again consulted on matters of war in 86, when Sulla led the Roman army against Mithridates. Sulla received reports from two men who had consulted Trophonius’ oracle; from Quintus Titius, he received information on his affairs in Greece, while from a soldier named Salvenius, Sulla was told about future events in Italy (Plut. Sulla 17). With Boiotia forming the backdrop for Sulla’s battles, Lebadeia became a war casualty when it was sacked by Roman troops without orders to do so (Plut. Sull. 16).

Trophonius’ oracle also issued pronouncements on matters of general interest. Xuthus had asked Trophonius about children before taking the question to Apollo at Delphi (Eur. Ion 403-09). Theophanes of Haliartus asked Trophonius whether to marry his daughter to Callisthenes, a close family member, or the wealthy Strato from Orchomenus (Plut. Mor. 772a). The sheer number of responses from Trophonius, political or otherwise, suggests that his oracle was treated as a major institution in the Greek world for several centuries.

Ino-Leucothea/Pasiphae at Thalamai (Laconia)

As her name suggests, Ino-Leucothea is a heroine and goddess intertwined, and as such, she poses as an ambivalent figure in Greek thought. Ino, the daughter of Cadmus, was known as the wife of the Orchomenian king Athamas and as nursemaid to the infant Dionysus. Leucothea, the white goddess, was a sea deity and acted as a mistress of good voyage (Nonnus Dion. 9.86-87). The poet Xenophanes highlights the contradictory nature of Ino-Leucothea when he states: εἰ μὲν θεὸν υπολαμβάνωσιν, μὴ θρηνεῖν, εἰ δ’ ἄνθρωπον, μὴ θύειν, (“if receiving her as a goddess, do not bewail her, and if a mortal,

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362 Trophonius is credited with four distinct portents concerning the Battle of Leuctra. See Tuplin 99-103.
do not offer sacrifice to her,” Arist. *Rhet.* 1400b). Ino’s apotheosis was also known to Homer: ἥ πρὶν μὲν ἔην βροτὸς αὐθήεσσα, νῦν δ’ ἁλὸς ἐν πελάγεσσι θεῶν ἐξέμμορε τιμῆς, (“Before she was mortal, speaking with human voice, but now in the briny sea, she has obtained reverence among the gods,” *Od.* 5.334-35). In myth, Ino is often depicted as the evil step-mother; she plots to kill Phrixus and Helle, the sons of Athamas to his previous wife Nephele. When Athamas discovers the plot, he pursues Ino, and the woman leaps into the sea while carrying her own son, Melicertes. This myth exists in several versions, but one key element is consistently retained; Ino, having leapt into the sea with her child, is transformed into the goddess Leucothea. \(^{363}\)

According to Pausanias, Ino’s body had washed ashore near Megara, and these citizens were the first to address her as Leucothea (1.42.7). Ino-Leucothea was present in sanctuaries both in mainland Greece and beyond; in Rome she was recognised as the goddess Mater Matuta. \(^{364}\) The worship of Ino was particularly strong in Laconia, and Pausanias attests a minor oracle of the goddess at Epidaurus Limera. Here there was a pool of Ino which was used once a year, during the festival of Ino, to obtain favourable omens. \(^{365}\) Local residents would throw barley cakes into the pool and, if they sank, then good fortune was expected (Paus. 3.23.7). This simple practice, held once per year, does not register as an oracular institution. In the Laconian township of Thalamai, however, Ino was worshipped in her own sanctuary which contained a dream oracle (Paus. 3.26.1). \(^{366}\) Ino-Leucothea does not appear to have had a strong oracular connection; she was loosely connected to the founding of the oracle at Didyma, and her name ‘white

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\(^{363}\) For the various depictions of this myth and a comprehensive list of ancient sources, see Fontenrose (1948) 125-29. For the transformation of Ino into the goddess Leucothea, see in particular Apollod. 3.4.3; Paus. 1.44.7; Philostr. *Imag.* 2.16.

\(^{364}\) Eitrem 2293-97.

\(^{365}\) This reference to the deep lake ‘τῆς γῆς δὲ ἐν βάθει μᾶλλον’ suggests that the ritual represented, not the sea, but rather some chthonic element. See Larson (2007a) 125.

\(^{366}\) Archaeology of Thalamai: Forster (1903/04a) 158-66; Dickens 124-36.
goddess’ may suggest some connection to healing.³⁶⁷ At Thalamai, incubation seems to go beyond a pure healing purpose. As Pausanias remarks: ὡπόσα δέ ἂν πυθέσθαι δειθώσιν, ὀνείρατα δείκνυσι σφησιν ἢ θεός, (“whatever they wish to learn, the goddess reveals to them in dreams,” Paus. 3.26.1). Plutarch, in his Life of Cleomenes, reports the only attested response from the dream oracle at Thalamai. During the war with the Achaian (229-222), the Spartan king Cleomenes III thought that matters would fare better if he took sole control of the state. At the same time, one of the Spartan Ephors dreamt that in the council chamber there was one chair instead of five, and a voice told him that τοῦτο τῇ Σπάρτῃ λῷόν ἐστι, “this is more desirable for Sparta.” Taking this dream as a positive omen, Cleomenes then returned to Sparta whereupon he slew the Ephors and anyone who looked to protect them (Plut. Cleom. 6-8). In this instance, Plutarch assigns the oracle to Pasiphae rather than Ino. Elsewhere, the author offers two possible identities for Pasiphae:

Some count her among the Atlantids and as begetter of Ammon with Zeus, but others regard her as Cassandra, daughter of Priam, who having died here was addressed as Pasiphae because her prophesies gave light to all (Plut. Agis 9.2.2-3.1).³⁶⁸

³⁶⁷ According to the myth, the oracle at Didyma was founded by Branchus. While a child, Branchus’ father, Smicrus, had contested with his brothers over a swan which happened to be the Leucothea. The goddess then asked the boys to establish athletic contests in her honour (ap. Phot. Bibl. 186.136b10-23). See Fontenrose (1933: 98-99) for a detailed account. As a nurse to the infant Dionysus, Ino is often seen as a healing divinity, and is confused with Eileithyia, the goddess of child-birth. See Farnell (1916) 36.

³⁶⁸ Zeus Ammon had become a popular figure in Laconia. See Malkin (1994) 158-64. For Ammon in Greece, see Classen 349-55. In the Alcibiades, attributed to Plato, the prophet of Zeus Ammon states that the god prefers the prayers of the Spartans rather than all the offerings of the Greeks (149b). Pausanias
Pausanias notes a bronze statue of Pasiphae at Thalami, and he refers to her as a moon goddess, and not a local divinity (3.26.1). Apollonius, the second-century paradoxographer, also refers to an oracle of Πασιφάης which comes tantalisingly close to Πασιφάη (Mir. 49.2.3). The reference to Pasiphae at Thalami suggests some connection with Crete, and Dickins attributes its founding to the prophet Epimenides, who advised the Spartan state in the sixth century. Chew interprets the moon goddess Pasiphae and her father Helios as navigation deities, and thus making Pasiphae complementary with Ino-Leucothea. Nevertheless, the reference to Cassandra may prove more suitable. Gina Salapata shows that Cassandra held a strong worship in Laconia under the title Alexandra. While the author’s suggestion for an oracle at Amyklai lacks substance, it is not difficult to see how the Trojan prophetess could become associated with the oracle at Thalami. Whether Cassandra, as Pasiphae, succeeded Ino as Thalami’s oracular goddess, or the two heroines worked in tandem, is unclear. Forster published a fourth or third-century inscription from Koutiphari, modern Thalami, which addresses Pasiphae in what seems to be a prophetic context, so it may be that she was most closely related to the oracle at this time.

While the Spartan kings habitually sought oracular advice from Delphi and Dodona (and created the office of Pythioi for this purpose), Thalami appears not only to have catered to local enquirers, but also to the Spartan Ephors. Plutarch attests one such ephor consulting the oracle in the third century, and Thalami may have also been involved in a curious practice held every eight years whereby the Spartan monarchy could be

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369 Scherling (2070) believes it to be possible that Apollonius was referring to Pasiphae.
370 Dickins 20-21.
371 Chew 1093.
372 Salapata 139-41.
373 Salapata 139.
374 Forster (1903/04b) 188-89. IG V 1.1317.
deposed. This practice is treated in Plutarch’s *Life of Agis*, and in the same book Lysander’s attempt to reform the Spartan kingship had gained the support of the oracle at Thalamai (9.3-4). It is tempting to see Thalamai as being used by the Ephors in an effort to control the power of the Spartan kings. The Spartan kings traditionally held great religious authority in that they would conduct public sacrifice on the state’s behalf (Xen. *Lac.* 15.2). Sergent not only assumes this viewpoint, but he also posits that the oracle at Thalamai had originally been relatively minor, like that of Epidaurus Limera, and then developed as it attracted more interest. This argument assumes that two oracles of one deity would initially share the same traits. This is not true in the case of Apollo at his various oracular centres, and also, Pasiphae appears to have been part of the ritual at Thalamai and not at Epidaurus Limera.

The oracle at Thalamai, made prominent by Lysander in the fourth century and by Cleomenes in the third, nonetheless appears to have gone out of fashion by the first century. Cicero treats the oracle as an abandoned institution. Cicero’s testimony may not be accurate, for he also locates the oracle *in agro propter urbem*, when, in fact, Thalamai was some distance from Sparta (*De Div.* 1.96). There is, however, evidence that worshippers frequented the sanctuary at Thalamai as late as the second century CE. Two inscriptions from Thalamai record a series of Spartan delegates present at the sanctuary under the reigns of Trajan, Hadrian and Antoninus Pius. One such delegation, in the year 127/8 CE attests the presence of four out of the five Spartan Ephors. Tertullian provides reference to a Laconian oracle of Pasiphae, which shows that Thalamai

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375 Cartledge and Spawforth (1992) 44. The authors suggest that Delphi was not consulted on this occasion because the oracle happened to be under the control of the Aetolians during this period. See also Cartledge (2001) 64.
376 Richer (208-12) believes that the Spartan kings could also make use of the oracle at Thalamai.
377 Sergent 40-44.
378 Cartledge and Spawforth (1992) 196.
379 Wide (247) suggests that there was another secondary oracle of Ino/Pasiphae nearer to Sparta.
was still known as an oracular centre in the beginning of the third century (De anim. 46). Thalamai thus retained its religious value to the Spartan state during the Imperial Age, and it is also likely that the oracle, along with many others in the Greek mainland, had attracted interest during this time.

Heracles at Hyettos (Boiotia)

The life and exploits of Heracles appeal as much to a modern audience as they did to their ancient counterparts. In myth, Heracles frequented both Delphi and Dodona; he attempted to steal Apollo’s tripod from one (Apollod. 2.6.2), and he was told of his fate at the other (Soph. Trach. 169-72, 1164-71). Heracles possessed two of his own oracles on the Greek mainland, the prominent one being in the Boiotian city of Hyettos. The city took its name from an Argive hero who had been exiled after killing another man. Orchomenos, namesake of the Boiotian city, received Hyettos and assigned him an adjacent plot of land with which to build his own city (Paus. 9.36.6). Concerning the oracle at Hyettos, Pausanias says that the city contains a temple of Heracles whence the sick would receive cures (9.24.3.10-11). While Pausanias is the only author to describe this particular oracle, inscriptions from the late Hellenistic period attest some form of oracle at Hyettos.381 Bouche-Leclercq felt that Heracles, although lacking the intelligence for divination, was well equipped to offer advice on healing; after all, the hero was often staving off injuries, as well as fits of madness and bouts of miasma.382 But Heracles was not the only healing god to be worshipped at Hyettos. An inscription from the city, dated

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381 SEG 26.524; 44.411. Étienne and Knoepfler (184-85) restore the first inscription as ὁ ὁ ἀνείς ἐπί τῷ ἐπί τῷ μαντείῳ, ‘The one who has made a consecration shall approach the oracle.’ Schachter (1981-94: iii. 163-64) suggests, rather, ὁ μανεὶς ἐξί τῷ μαντείῳ, “The madman shall keep out of the oracle.”

382 Bouche-Leclercq iii. 308-09. Farnell (1921: 149-50) connects Heracles’ title of ἂνείς ἐπτάντος ‘avertor of evil’ with the ability to ward off disease. See schol. Lycoph. 663.1; Etym. Magn. 511.28, sv. Κήρ. Parker (1983: 211) also regards Heracles as an averter of evil vis-à-vis his ability to rid the earth of monsters. Ginouvès (237) insists that Heracles was often worshipped at sanctuaries with hot springs, which may also link the hero with a healing function.
to the third century CE, records a ἱερὰ γερουσία of Asclepius Soter. Roesch describes this council as an aristocratic body which oversaw civic and religious matters of local significance. As far as the mantic procedure is concerned, consultants most likely slept within the confines of the temple and received their cutes in dreams. Pausanias mentions an unwrought stone image at the sanctuary in Hyetos. It is possible that the image was comprised of magnetite, a common mineral in the region, which was sought after for its healing properties.

The oracle of Heracles at the Achaian city of Boura is, again, only noted by Pausanias in the second century CE. In myth, Boura is given as a daughter of Ion, the son of Xuthus (Herodian 3.1.259). Boura suffered in 373 from the same earthquake as Delphi, but the town seems to have been rebuilt soon after. Pausanias locates the oracle in a small cave near the Boura River. This cave contained a small statue of Heracles, named Βουραϊκὸς, along with a number of dice and a board, on which a series of numbered oracular responses were written. Consultants, having thrown four dice, would tally the result and then match that with the corresponding response (Paus. 7.25.5). This manner of divination was popular in the second century CE, but more often associated with Hermes, the god of games and chance oracles.

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383 IG VII.2808.
384 Roesch (1982) 157-59. The author explains that the epithet Soter is awarded to Asclepius in this city alone. Thus, the cult would appear to have been of local rather than major significance.
385 Pliny (H8 36.128) remarks that one of the five magnet types is found in Hyetos. Plato (Ti. 533d) says that the stone is commonly referred to as Ἡρακλείαν, which suggests that the name either derives from the hero, or from a city. Zenobius (sv. Ἡρακλεία λίθος) derives the term directly from a city in Lydia, and Blakely (261n20) believes there is no reason to connect the stone with Heracles. Lupu (2005: 240) is not convinced by this theory of a magnetic healing oracle. See also Étienne and Knoepfler (1976) 178-81.
386 Philo Judaeus, in the first century CE, mentions the destruction of Boura and the neighbouring city of Helike (Aeternitate Mundi 140).
387 Potter (27) suggests that this oracle was well frequented due to the high number of dice available.
Oracles of the Dead (Various)

δὴ τὸτ' ἐπειθ' ἑτάροισιν ἐποτρύνας ἐκέλευσα μήλα, τὰ δὲ κατέκειτ' ἐσφαγμένα νηλέϊ χαλκῷ, δείραντας κατακῆαι, ἐπεύξασθα ι δὲ θεοῖσιν, ἱφθίμῳ τ' Αἴδη καὶ ἐπαινῇ Περσεφονείῃ· αὐτὸς δὲ ξίφος ὀξὺ ἐρυσσάμενος παρὰ μηροῦ ἥμην οὐδ' εἴων νεκύων ἀμενηνὰ κάρηνα αἵματος ἄσσον πρὶν Τειρεσίαο πυθέσθαι.

Then I called to my comrades and bade them flay and burn the sheep that lay there slain with the pitiless bronze, and to make prayer to the gods, to mighty Hades and dread Persephone. And I myself drew my sharp sword from beside my thigh and sat there, and would not suffer the powerless heads of the dead to draw near to the blood until I had enquired of Tiresias. (Hom. Od. 11.44-50. Trans. Murray)

In order to find his way back to Ithaca, Odysseus is sent to the land of Thesprotia to consult the fallen seer Tiresias. Circe instructs Odysseus to make for the grove of Persephone in Thesprotia, where the Cocytus River runs into the Acheron. There he is told to dig a pit in the earth and pour libations to the dead: first of milk and honey, then sweet wine, and finally water. Odysseus is then to sacrifice a black ram, and to keep the souls of the dead away from the blood until he has enquired of the ghost of Tiresias (Od. 10.503-40). In Aeschylus’ fragmentary Psychagogoí, Odysseus is instructed to sacrifice a sheep near a lake, so that the blood falls into the water. He is then told to call upon Zeus and Hermes of the underworld to send up the wanderers of the night (TrGF 273a). According to Herodotus, the Corinthian ruler Periander sent messengers to an oracle of the dead on the Acheron River to consult with the ghost of his dead wife Melissa. Periander
had wished to recover a lost deposit, and he was made to placate his dead wife before she would reveal the location (5.92).

Based on geographical clues, Odysseus and Periander appear to have consulted the same oracle, which lay near the Acheron Lake in Epirus.\textsuperscript{389} The land was devoted to Hades and Persephone, and both Orpheus and Heracles had come here in order to descend into the underworld. Theseus had come to the region to kidnap Persephone, the wife of Ephyra’s ruler Aidoneus (Plut. \textit{Thes}. 31,35). Dakaris uncovered the ancient ruins of this oracular centre which lay south of this city of Ephyra. This oracle was identified beneath a modern church and cemetery. The ancient structure comprised of thick labyrinth-like walls, including an underground chamber which Dakaris labelled the palace of Hades and Persephone. There were a number of chambers and stores for catering to consultants, and elaborate machinery which Dakaris suggests was used to create the image and sound of ghosts. This complex also contained a clay figurine from the third century which depicts the goddess Persephone.\textsuperscript{390}

Nevertheless, this large complex near Ephyra has been identified, not as an oracular centre, but as a farming stronghold. The thick walls and food supplies were designed to withstand a siege, while the iron machinery was most likely to have been used as farming implements. As Ogden suggests, the oracular procedure was likely to have taken place on the Acheron Lake, which is likewise described in a number of literary sources and artistic depictions.\textsuperscript{391} Oracles of the dead are attested throughout Greece and Rome, but at this time none have been identified through archaeological excavation.\textsuperscript{392} Although these

\textsuperscript{389} Dakaris (1973a: 140) states that Homer’s description of the area has some geographical merit.
\textsuperscript{390} Dakaris (1973a) 139-49.
\textsuperscript{391} Ogden (2001) 47-51.
\textsuperscript{392} Ogden (2001: 17) identifies four prominent oracles of the dead, and two of which, Acheron and Tainaron, were located in mainland Greece. Tainaron was located on the southern tip of Laconia, and in myth, Apollo was said to have received Delphi from Poseidon in exchange for his sanctuary at Tainaron (Ephorus \textit{FGrH} 70f.150). See also Ogden (2001) 34-42; Schumacher 72-4.
oracle types are attested from Homer through to Lucius Ampelius in third of fourth century CE (*Liber Memorialis* 8.3), Periander’s consultation in Herodotus is the only circumstance which can be regarded as historical. In lieu of archaeological evidence and historical consultations, there is no means of knowing what these oracles were used for and how much attention they received. The oracle at Tainaron in Laconia does appear to have been subordinate to Delphi, for Apollo sent his enquirers away to this death oracle when asked about the death of the poet Archilochus (*Suda sv* Ἀρχίλοχος).

**Concluding Remarks**

Much like the oracles of the dead, oracular heroes had a strong association with the underworld. Trophonius and Amphiaraus were both swallowed by the earth while fleeing, and Ino’s fateful leap into the sea suggests a similar fate. The prominent hero Heracles had also spent time in the underworld, retrieving Cerberus and Theseus in the process. Hero oracles often reflected this chthonic influence in their procedure. Ino at Thalamai and Amphiaraus at Oropus issued oracles by means of incubation, and such practices were commonly associated with Gê. The oracle of Trophonius at Lebadeia had its own unique method where a consultant would undergo the terrifying experience of entering the hero’s subterranean dwelling. It is worth noting that several of these hero oracles had gathered a prominent reputation in the Classical period. Trophonius and Amphiaraus were included in the consultations of Croesus and Mys, while Ino was an important oracular deity to the Spartan leaders from the fourth century. This prominence was reflected at Oropus and Lebadeia by means of the grand building projects carried out during the fourth and third centuries, as well as the steep fees exacted from consultants during their stay.
Conclusion

To the Greeks, divine knowledge vastly exceeded that of even the greatest of men. The Greeks, collectively as states and as individuals, sought to access this knowledge in order to improve their lot, and so they erected and maintained oracular centres throughout the land. Some centres, such as Delphi, attracted tremendous wealth and renown, while several more were limited to a purely local audience. If not for the likes of Strabo and Pausanias, the oracles of Hermes, Demeter, Hera and others would have been long forgotten. Further centres featured more prominently in history and literature, and memory of their existence is preserved by Herodotus, such as the oracles of Apollo at Aabe, Mt. Ptoion and Thebes, as well as the oracles of Trophonius and Amphiaras. The oracle of Zeus at Dodona also stood in great repute, while the oracle at Delphi outshone them all.

Such disparity in wealth and reputation suggests that some oracles were more able to generate patronage than others. In this regard, both time and timing had a notable impact on success. The role of divination in Greek society began to shift in the Hellenistic period from matters of state concern to matters of the private individual. Thus, those oracles attested in the fifth century catered to a notably different audience than their later counterparts. For this reason, Dodona, reputed to be Greece’s oldest oracle, could boast to being Delphi’s nearest competitor. With great age came great authority, while the early oracles also faced far less competition before they were joined by their later counterparts. Of course, it is impossible to determine the true age of any given oracular centre based on the limited amount of information available. The oracle of Apollo Pythaeus at Argos is
first mentioned by Pliny the Elder in the first century CE, yet inscriptions attest to a prophet here several centuries earlier.

Age cannot have been the sole determining factor for success, or Dodona would have been no less successful than Delphi. Location therefore appears to have played some part. Delphi sat in the centre of Greece, readily accessible to the major states, while Dodona was somewhat isolated in the far north. This fact also explains the general popularity of the Boiotian oracles, and of Abae in Phokis. In contrast, the Peloponnese could only boast to having Olympia as a prominent oracular centre and northern Greece had none apart from Dodona. Location was thus a strong determiner for success in that such oracles could attract a wider audience. Location also affected popularity in another sense, in that oracular centres that were too close to a major city would alienate patrons from other cities. The oracles at Thebes and Argos would have catered to locals and their allies, but it cannot be expected to attract patrons from rival states. Here is where Delphi again succeeds, for it lay outside the influence of a single authoritative power, and was regarded as a neutral advisor. Delphi thus offered twin benefits in terms of location; it was close enough to allow convenient access, but far enough away to be considered impartial.

While an oracle’s location is fairly easy to determine, the oracular method has proven far more elusive. Some centres, such as Abae, have left few clues, while others, like Delphi and Dodona, yield a wealth of conflicting accounts of the oracular method. Therefore, it is difficult to say that the Pythia’s intuitive prophesies allowed Delphi to outshine its opponents, for other centres may have used the same method. Intuitive prophecy is certainly implied at several other centres, including Apollo’s oracles at Mt. Ptoion and Argos, as well as the oracles of Pan, Gê and Dionysus. It is worth noting that each of these deities had an association to Apollo and Delphi in myth. Intuitive prophecy also emphasised the mystical versus the rational side of inductive prophecy. The Pythia’s
entranced state, Dodona’s talking oak, and the fear inducing cavern of Trophonius each captured tremendous interest among Greek audiences and this intrigue may have also been converted into patronage at these oracles. It is also important to distinguish healing oracles from their counterparts. These oracles offered assistance of a particular kind and would therefore not have been forced to compete with the likes of Delphi. Sickness was a fact of life that affects all, and thus healing centres had a strong presence throughout the Greeks world as evidenced by the proliferation of sanctuaries devoted to Asclepius. Some centres, such as Oropus, offered both prophecy and divine healing, which allowed them to attract a dual network of enquirers.

Greece certainly had a wide array of prophetic deities, yet few could boast to great success. Zeus, the source of divine knowledge, and Apollo, his father’s spokesperson, suitably stood at the forefront in this respect. Yet there was some disparity among the oracles of these two gods, which must reflect the relevance of the aforementioned factors. Apollo’s oracle at Mt. Ptoion was more widely revered than his oracle at Korope, and so age, location and method certainly had their influence. In regard to other oracular deities, the most significant aspect is the prominence of two heroes, Amphiaras and Trophonius. For Amphiaras, his status as a seer cannot have played a vital role, for no other seer is known to possess a reputable oracle. The fact that the oracle at Oropus was attested early, was central, and offered both prophecy and healing must have played some part in its success. It is tempting to think that Athens and Thebes also played some role in the success of Oropus. Both cities vied for possession of Oropus, both cities took part in the sanctuary’s development, and both would have offered their patronage at the oracle. For Trophonius, the same basic factors of age and location apply. The prophetic method at Lebadeia also generated tremendous interest and entering the cave of Trophonius became proverbial for a state of intense paralysing fear. Trophonius was also aided in his
association with Zeus and Apollo. For a brief period, the oracular deity at Lebadeia was known as Zeus Trophonius, while Apollo was often treated as the hero’s father. Trophonius and Lebadeia also had strong mythical links with Delphi; Trophonius and his brother were regarded as builders of Apollo’s Delphic temple, and the Boiotians were said to have discovered Trophonius’ oracle at the behest of the Pythia. The oracle of Pan at Lycosoura shows how location and god can combine to influence an oracle’s reputation. Pan was worshipped throughout the region of Arcadia, and here he was treated, rather than Apollo, as the chief god of prophecy.

As for Delphi, the factors of age, location, method and oracular god were vital for success, but they were also embellished and promoted in such a way that no other oracle had done. Material remains show that Delphi was one of Greece’s oldest oracles, but in being tied to the myths of Aeneas, Troy, and the Great Flood, Delphi’s pedigree was pushed back to time immemorial. The Delphic succession myth and the myth of the first temples were also used to promote Delphi’s age ahead of all other oracles, especially Dodona, its nearest competitor. Again in myth, Delphi was promoted as the centre of the world, while Apollo was awarded the title of Zeus’ spokesperson. Even Delphi’s prophetic method was promoted and embellished. The Pythia’s frenzied behaviour, and her famous obscure responses, did not give an accurate picture of the oracle’s working, yet they were fundamental to its success. Delphi was thus marketed according to its strengths and its nature was unashamedly enhanced, which is why the oracle’s true nature is so difficult to unearth. Yet Delphi’s prominence was not solely the result of self-promotion. Delphi Apollo became a source of guidance for the concerns of the Archaic period. The god was thus consulted in regard to tyranny and constitutional reform, to colonisation and the tending of cults, and to plague, famine and moral defilement. For this religious and political guidance, Delphi initially attracted the interest of Corinth, Athens and Sparta, and
in turn other rival centres were attracted to Apollo sanctuary, each vying for oracular endorsement. By its limited availability, Delphi promoted competition, and was thus rewarded with grand offerings and with loyalty from many patron states.

Something that has not been explored here, and may prove useful, is the role of chthonic influences in regard to prophecy. In Olympian religion, Zeus becomes the source of all divine knowledge while Apollo acts as his spokesperson. Nevertheless, chthonic influences are to be found in a number of oracular centres. Incubation oracles were certainly influenced by the powers of the earth, and Gê herself is linked to dream divination. A number of oracles are centred on caves, such as that of Gê at Olympia and Aigeira, Trophonius at Lebadeia, and Heracles at Boura. Other possible cave oracles include Apollo at Mt. Ptoion and Pan in Arcadia, while the adyton at Delphi conjured the image of an underground cave. Water, emanating from the earth, was also a vital element in prophecy, and may have been used for more than just purification. The sex and the intuitive method of the Delphic Pythia do not acquit well with a rational male god, and so the idea of Gê preceding Apollo at Delphi should not be entirely dismissed. The concept of an Olympian usurping a local chthonic deity is suggested at Apollo’s oracle at Mt. Ptoion, and this same fact is seen at Lebadeia when Zeus briefly absorbs the hero Trophonius. The above factors could possibly suggest that divination began as a chthonic practice, only to be incorporated into the domain of the Olympians. Those oracles which had successfully made this change may then have been more equipped to serve Olympian religion.

Returning to the main focus of this work, it is important to make one final remark. The Delphic oracle did not suddenly spring from the earth with great renown; its rise was gradual and the sum of several key factors. It should not be taken for granted that Delphi’s reputation was due to Apollo’s influence alone, for the god had several oracles
throughout Greece which did not receive the same prominence. In turn, a few centres even managed to attract great interest without the involvement of Apollo, such as the oracles of Trophonius at Lebadeia and Amphiaras at Oropus. Therefore, it is important not to look at the success of Delphi without taking into account the wider context. The Delphic oracle was one of many oracular centres throughout the Greek world, and it is difficult to appreciate its role and function in Greek society without acknowledging that there was a prosperous network of oracular activity beyond Delphi, beyond the centre of the world.
Appendix: Possible Oracular Centres on the Greek Mainland

The following section is intended as a brief sketch of those centres that were not included in this study due to their questionable authenticity. For each oracular centre, I have included any key ancient sources, as well as select modern discussions.

Athens (Aegeus)
Ancient Sources - Suda sv. Αἰγείον.
As the tomb of the hero Aegeus, the Aegeon is noted by the Suda as an oracle.

Chaeronea, Boiotia (Apollo Thourios)
Ancient Sources – Lycoph. 352; Paus. 9.40.5-6; Plut. Cim. 1; Plut. Sulla 17.
Modern Discussion – A. Schachter Cults of Boiotia. i.44; ‘A Boiotian Cult Type.’ BICS 14 (1967) 6.
According to Pausanias, the city of Chaeronea took its name from Chaeron, a son of Apollo and the nymph Thero. Lycophron refers to Apollo under the name Thourios, and Plutarch, in his Life of Sulla, says that Apollo Thourios had a temple at Chaeronea. Plutarch also states in his Life of Cimon that the seer Peripoltas and his descendants settled at Chaeronea, which Schachter uses to suggest that the seer took residence at Apollo’s temple and developed it into an oracular centre. Schachter also admits that there is no direct evidence for this oracle.

Corinth (Apollo)
Ancient Sources – Paus. 2.3.5.
Pausanias makes no direct mention of an oracle at Corinth, but he does note a temple of Apollo which stood near the spring of Glauke. Bookidis and Stroud point out a terracotta plaque found near what is dubbed the ‘Old Temple,’ which they believe refers to an oracle of Apollo. Others speculate that what is known as ‘Temple B’ was in fact dedicated to Apollo in antiquity. A nearby fountain connected to the temple by an underground channel, which then emerged within the temple as a megaphone shaped opening. Smith argued that this temple had all the components for ‘oracular deception.’ Elderkin later suggested that the temple was shared by Apollo and Dionysus, whose rituals were combined to produce some sort of wine oracle. This theory, however, was heavily influenced by Rohde and Bouche-Leclercq, who both believed that Dionysus was once thought to be responsible for the Pythia’s frenzy. Evidence is tenuous for an oracle of Apollo at Corinth, which is largely due to the fact that the ancient authors never provide direct evidence.

Epirus (Apollo)

Ancient Sources – Aelian 8A 11.2.

According to Aelian, Apollo possessed an oracular sanctuary somewhere in Epirus. Here the god would prophesy, aided by mantic snakes which are said to descend from the Pythian serpent.

Eutresis, Boiotia (Apollo)

Ancient Sources – Steph. Byz. Εὔτρησις; Eustathius ad Homer Iliad 1.409.21.

Modern Discussion – L. Bizard. ‘Inscriptions de Béotie.’ BCH 28 (1904) 430-31; D. Leekley and N. Efstratiou Excavations in Southern Greece. 22.
Eutresis was famous as the original home of Zethus and Amphion, the rulers of Thebes. Apollo’s oracle at Eutresis does not appear to have been well frequented in antiquity, although Stephen of Byzantium refers to it as ἐνδοξότατον, ‘held in the utmost esteem.’ The area was settled in the sixth-century, and Bizard shows that Apollo is attested as Eutresites in the first half of the second century. Apollo’s temple has not been identified.

Hysiai, Boiotia (Nymphs)
Ancient sources – Paus. 9.2.1.

Modern discussion – A. Schachter. *Cults of Boiotia* i. 49.

While the city of Hysiai was in ruins during his visit, Pausanias claims that a mantic well lay near the temple of Apollo. As Schachter notes, Pausanias may simply have been misled by his informants.

Ichnae, Thessaly (Apollo)

According to Hesychius, the city of Ichnae held an oracle of Apollo, and the city also worshipped Themis Ichnae who was present at Apollo’s birth in the Homeric *Hymn*.

Megara (Nyx)
Ancient Sources – Hesychius *sv*. Βριζῶ; Paus. 1.40.6.

Modern Discussion – A. Bouche-Leclercq *Histoire de la Divination*. ii. 256.

Pausanias alludes to an oracle of Nyx atop the acropolis of Megara, alongside temples of Dionysus, Aphrodite and Zeus. Unfortunately, nothing else is known concerning this oracle. Nyx is only known as oracular in the myths surrounding Apollo’s predecessor at Delphi, and in the Orphic belief where she receives the power of prophecy from Phanes. Bouche-Leclercq connects Nyx with the Delian goddess Brizo who was known as a dream diviner (from βρίζειν, ‘to sleep’) and a protector of seafarers.

Onchestus, Boiotia (Poseidon)

The *Hymn* describes a curious practice at Onchestus whereby a young ride would drive a horse and chariot, leap off, and the horse would either ride safely along or crash into the nearby forest. Bouche-Leclercq suggests that this practice was conducted as part of an oracular procedure, whereby Poseidon, the prominent deity of Onchestus, would offer positive or negative omens based on the fate of the horse and chariot. Sokolowski argues that the practice was not oracular, or even ritual based, but pertaining to local traffic laws. Teffeteller instead suggests that the Onchestus episode actually refers to the training of war horses as they head into battle.

**Orobia, Euboia (Apollo)**

Ancient Sources – Strabo 10.1.3.


Orobia lay on the island of Euboia, which, according to Bouche-Leclercq, contained several sanctuaries of Apollo. At Orobia, excavators have noticed visible walls at the town and an abundance of pottery from the Classical period, but very few from earlier. The oracle is attested by Strabo, but no further details are revealed.
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