DELPHI

HISTORY - MONUMENTS - MUSEUM

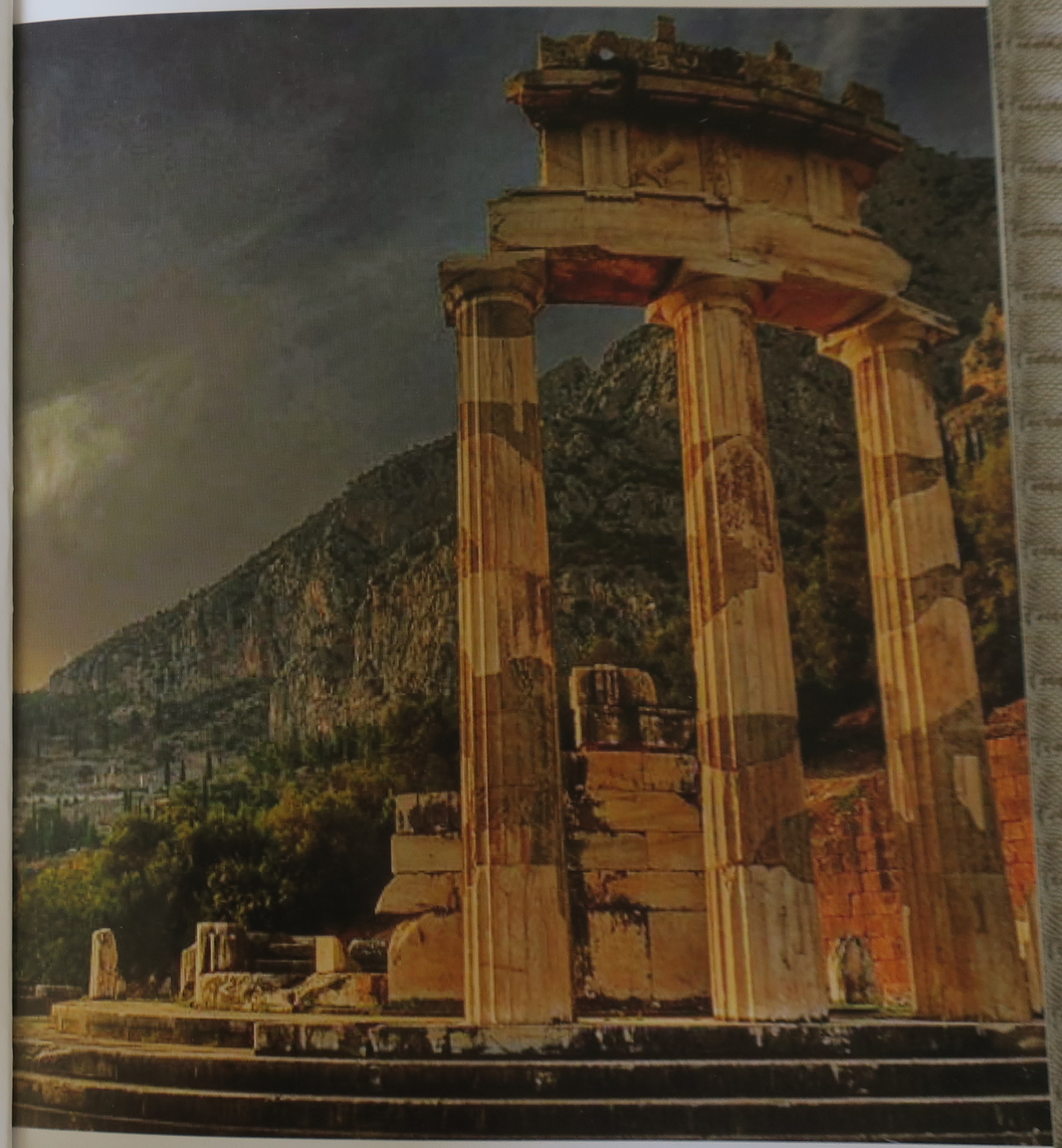
PLAN OF THE SANCTUARY OF APOLLO







DELPHI



PAPADIMAS
EKDOTIKI

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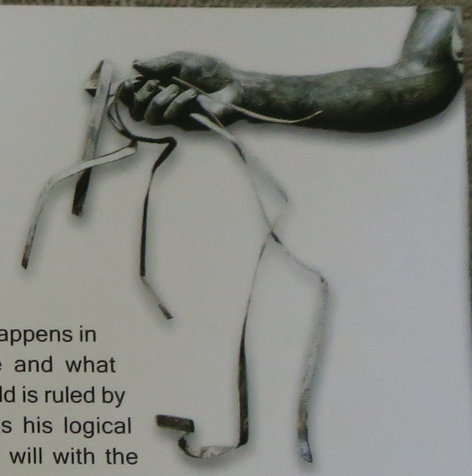


THE ORACLES

Oracle delivery is not only the art of foretelling the future but also the art of interpreting both current and past events. Homer attributes these gifts to prophet Calchas meaning that he was aware of what happens in the present, what will happen in the future and what happened in the past. Man's belief that the world is ruled by supernatural and invisible powers as well as his logical need to reach those powers and learn their will with the mediation of individuals who possess the gift of either communicating directly with them or interpreting various divine messages gave birth to the art of oracle delivery. People's struggles are the same worldwide and therefore, all the peoples in the world resorted to it in an attempt to unveil the unknown lying ahead of them. The art of oracle delivery flourished all over the known civilisations. The Greeks, the Romans, the Persians, the Egyptians, the Hebrews as well as the Chaldaians and the Assyrobabylonians practised it. The last ones, in particular, developed astrology in more or less the form it is known today.

The ancients divided the art of oracle delivery into *unskilful* (or *pure* or *natural*) and *skilful*. The unskilful art is not taught. It is a talent specific individuals such as Pythia of Delphi, Cassandra and Sybille possess allowing them to communicate directly with God either through an ecstatic trance or through dreams. This is what was mainly practised in the ancient oracles. The skilful art of oracle delivery is based on the people's belief that gods send them messages in the form of various signs or omens. It was strongly believed that if someone tried to decode them by observing them systematically, they would reveal gods' will. Thus, in the ancient times, 'prophetic' conclusions were drawn by observing the flight and voices of *omens*, large birds, (augury), by carefully examining the innards of sacrificed animals, the direction of the flames on the altar and the behaviour of the animal (pyromancy), as well as the weather phenomena, a sudden noise, etc.

The art of oracle delivery presupposes belief in fate and was strongly supported by the Stoics* whereas the Epicureans* renounced it. Although the church doomed it and emperor Theodosius banned its practice in 394 A.D., people always resorted to its various forms and numerous kinds such as astrology, palmistry, and fortune telling with cards and with coffee. Fortune telling with cards and with coffee are still very popular nowadays all over the world. In the ancient world though, foretelling constituted an integral part of religion as it was the means of pursuing contact with the divine will. It was practised at specific places called oracles or chresteria (because they delivered chresmous) which were next to sanctuaries dedicated to gods as well as to heroes who were worshipped mainly as chthonic deities. Among the numerous oracles existing in Greece, Libya and Asia Minor, the most renowned one was the oracle of Apollo at Delphi.







THE LANDSCAPE

Delphi is situated in Sterea Hellas, specifically in the prefecture of Phokis whose boundaries are not the same as those of ancient Phokis. It is a mountainous area covered by the Parnassus range and the western branches of mount Helicon.

The town of Delphi and the Sanctuary were built on the southern slopes of Parnassus (altitude 500-700m.) in a landscape of spectacular natural beauty, full of sharp contrasts, one of the most impressive and fascinating parts of Greece.

On arriving, the visitor in awe first comes in view of two huge rocks rising imposingly, almost vertical, over the Sanctuary separated in two by a wild gorge called Arkoudorema. These rocks used to be called the *Phaedriades*. The eastern rock is ancient *Hyambeia* and the western one is *Nafplia*. Nowadays they are called Phleboukos and Rhodini respectively. At their foot, where the gorge ends, the sacred spring of Castalia welled out. The Phaedriades suffuse the landscape with light especially at sunset when they reflect the last sunrays, thus justifying their name (phaedros = bright, sunny). At times though, they look frowned and threatening when clouds cover their peaks where wild vultures nest. A sad memory is related to Hyambeia.

There used to precipitate the sacrilegious and the criminals from its peak and, according to tradition, this was the end the priests held for the great fable-writer Aesop when he dared question their credibility and ridicule them.

Then, the visitor's eye goes with relief downwards the slope where the ruins of the Sanctuary of Apollo, irrefutable evidence of its old glory, come into sight surrounded by cypresses, pine -trees and almond-trees. As the view ends on the mountain chain of Kirphi opposite the sanctuary, the visitor's eye continues to wander downwards, towards the basin of river Pleistos, follows its winding flow to the Itea bay and rejoices upon seeing the peaceful, silver green olive grove of Chrissos in the distance. It is the ancient *Chrissaeon pedion* (=plain), which belonged to the Sanctuary of Apollo.

The sanctuary is not visible from the sea. That way it was better protected from the pirates who raided the Mediterranean since the 2nd millennium B.C. However, as soon as the visitor goes past the archaeological site and approaches the modern village of Delphi, he sees the port of Itea to the east of which can still be seen the remains of the port of Kyrra - seaport of Delphi -, the Corinthian bay as well as the mountains of the Peloponnese. It is then when the visitor becomes aware of the fact that Delphi was not only a religious and intellectual centre of Greece but also an important crossroads, a passageway between North and South, West and East, which justifies its characterisation as 'navel' (omphalos) of the earth.

Earthquakes are a common phenomenon in the area of Delphi. There are chalky rocks on layers of unstable slate and therefore landslides and rock falling are rather common. Tradition says that there existed a fissure in the earth there, a *chasm of the earth*, which issued natural vapours. The chasm was discovered by shepherd Koretas when he noticed that those of his goats that went near it fell down in a fit and bleated in a weird way. When he, himself, approached the chasm, he was immediately possessed by the action of the fumes and started to utter on things which, strangely enough, came true later on.

This is how the first oracle delivery was born. Poetically speaking, one would say that was Deity herself led the people to this full of wonders and mystery corner of the earth in order to reveal some of her mysteries to them. And this first deity was the Deity Earth herself, *Gaia Protomantis* (first prophet Earth), as Aeschylus calls her in his tragedy *Eumenides*.



THE GODS

Gaia was the deification of the earth. She was the great mother of the universe who gives life to all beings, nourishes them and then welcomes them again near her. People rushed to fissures in the ground, springs and caves in order to receive advice from her and, gradually, they worshipped her as the first and main prophetic deity. This is how the first oracles were created.

Initially, the sister and wife of Uranus, Gaia gave birth to monstrous and supernatural creatures such as the Ekatoncheires (having one hundred hands), the Cyclops and the Titans, while later, after she had eliminated Uranus, she brought to life more children on her own such as the Giants. Poseidon is reported as her last spouse, a god who inseminates her with his waters and shaking her innards he causes earthquakes. At the sanctuary of Delphi, Gaia and Poseidon were worshipped together.

The fact that Gaia and her daughter Themis came to be worshipped as one deity perhaps denotes the evolution of worshipping primitive gods who simply personified

the powers of nature into the worship of deities with a moral substance who represent justice and order in the world. According to a tradition, the authority of goddesses passed down to the Titan Phoebe later on who in turn, gave it to Apollo along with her name (Phoebus).

The transition from the older worship of Gaia (matriarchal state) to that of Apollo (patriarchal state) would not be normal to occur smoothly and easily. Reality is reflected better by another tradition that echoes more violent conflicts. According to this tradition, Apollo, son of Zeus and Leto, after wondering for a long time in his quest for a suitable place in order to found his sanctuary, arrived at the Phaedriades, at a spring which was protected by a terrifying dragon, Python, the son and symbol of Gaia. Apollo slew him with shooting an arrow and the beast died and rotted in the earth. The legend justifies the ancient name of Delphi, which was Pytho, as well as the name Pythia that derives from the verb pythomai (= rot). Another attempt to etymologise from the verb pynthanomai (= seek knowledge) is not grammatically correct. Each and every activity and adventure of god Apollo added a new adjective to his name: Pythios, Ekatevolos (= shooting the arrow very far) and Argyrotoxos.

Then, amazingly and unusually for the ancient society and religion, the legend goes like this. Until then, assassination had to be punished with another assassination. This resulted in a macabre chain of killings that, inevitably, sowed the seeds of mischief and hatred among the people and led to the elimination of whole families and races. Apollo, however, preferred self-punishment and self-humiliation in order to expiate the killing of Python. He went to Thessaly and worked as a slave for the mortal king of Phaeres, Admetus, for eight years.

Apollo





Marble slab depicting the music contest between Apollo and Marsyas

He returned to Delphi laurel-crowned as the god of catharsis, the god of spiritual light, in order to dispel the darkness of ignorance and barbarism, appease morals and teach people logic, self-knowledge, gentleness, wisdom, moderation and order.

As regards the origin of the worship of god Apollo there exist various versions. One of them supports that it originated from the East and another from the North, the country of the Supernortheners as it was called by the Greeks who, strangely enough, picture it a land with eternal sunshine. There, Apollo spent the winter during which they believed that he gave authority over to god Dionysus or Bacchus and his Maenads. Dionysus, god of fertility and vegetation who dies every year and resurrects to revive the powers of life with orgies, was certainly completely different from Apollo the peaceful god of logic and harmony. As this coexistence of the gods reveals, the Greek spirit, free and open to every direction, achieved the coexistence of logic and emotions that proved beneficial for the development of the arts and culture. Finally, a third tradition supports the Cretan origin of the god. It refers to a sea adventure of Apollo with Cretan seamen before whom he appeared in the form of a dolphin, guided them to Delphi and proclaimed them his priests. According to this version, it was the Dolphinian Apollo who gave his name to Delphi.

No matter which version regarding his origin is true, what is significant is the fact that Apollo was worshipped as the most important god after Zeus and the Greeks resorted to him for anything each of them needed.

It is no wonder then why he became the patron of health, travellers, flocks, as well as of fields that he protected from rats (Smintheas).

The masculine beauty of the blond god combined with grace and kindness set the ideal model for the youngsters who eagerly participated in the Pythia while it inspired artists to serve poetry, painting and sculpture.

Apollo met the Muses, who were worshipped before him on Parnassus, and became their leader (Mousagetas), god of poetry and music. This is the form he is more familiar to us from the arts since he is usually portrayed with a lyre in his hands. Further down there will be reference to another important deity who was worshipped in Delphi, at a different sanctuary though, goddess Athena.

THE HISTORY OF DELPHI IN SHORT

The sun-kissed slopes of Parnassus, the springs, the fertile plains at its foots and the sea attracted people to this area from very early in times.

1600 - 1100 B.C. Evidence of an organised settlement was found from the post Helladic era, the one called Mycenaean. They are traces of houses and tombs with important findings, such as earthen statuettes, bronze items and jewellery, which were located both at the sanctuary of Apollo and at the sanctuary of Athena Pronaia.

1100 - 800 B.C. The very few findings of this era, the so called *dark years*, prove the fact that Delphi did not escape the fate of the rest of Greece which is disturbed by movements and raids of new populations and new races. Towards the end of the 9th c. B.C. however, findings become more frequent and it seems that it is then when the worship of Apollo was introduced.

8th - 4th c. B.C. From the 8th c. B.C. and then the sanctuary evolves rapidly into an important religious and intellectual centre for the Greeks. It increased in size and was adorned with a host of monuments, statues and other offerings. Speaking about Athens, Pausanias* said that there was an era when one could count more statues than people there. If this is an exaggeration concerning Athens, it could accurately describe the reality at Delphi. Nero alone seized five hundred statues from there in 67 A.D.

But this small Sanctuary, which had neither the size nor the population, the politics and the military force of a town, knew how to give such weight to its oracles that it influenced not only the activities of the individuals who sought advice but also the most important areas of the public life of the Greek town - states: legislature, commerce, war undertakings and, mainly, colonisation.

Every time a group of people decided to settle a colony they sought advice from the oracle regarding the problems they faced, the choice of the proper area and the individual who would be their leader, the *coloniser*. This explains the fact that a substantial number of the settlements the Greeks founded all over the Mediterranean and up to the Euxine Sea bore the name *Apollonia*.

The fame of the oracle travelled beyond the boundaries of the Greek world very fast. Kings from faraway countries, such as King Midas of Phrygia and later on King Gygis or King Croesus of Lydia, offered precious treasures to god. And when in the 6th c. B.C. the temple of Apollo was destroyed, Croesus and the Pharaoh of Egypt Amassis despatched enormous amounts of money to contribute to its reconstruction.

The rapid development and the wealth of Delphi caused their neighbours' envy and greed. As a result, Delphi had to participate in big historical adventures (specifically, four wars which were called *sacred*) in order to maintain its independency. At first, Delphi disengaged from the guardianship of neighbouring Chrissa and won powerful allies proceeding to an Amphictyony of the towns of central Greece and Thessaly.

THE AMPHICTYONY. The word *Amphictyons* means people settled in the vicinity, neighbours. This Amphictyony (the League) was a coalition of twelve Greek nations and, at first, had religious purposes. Later the purposes became political as the aim was to defend the members' common interest. The Amphictyony is first met in history in about the 7th c. B.C. According to the tradition, however, which supported its institution in times immemorial, it was Amphictyon, brother of Hellene, the founder of the nation of the Hellenes (the Greeks), who first organised it. That is why the word is spelled with a y, i.e. the *Amphictyons*.

Initially, the seat of the Amphictyony was at the sanctuary of Demetra in Anthily close to Thermopylae (Pylae) and that is why it was named *Pylaia*. Later on Delphi was appointed as the second seat of the amphictyonic convention. This convention was held at Delphi in spring and at Anthily in autumn. After the 4th c. B.C. though it was held at Anthily in spring and at Delphi in autumn. Each nation was represented by two delegates (a total of 24), the *hieromnemones* and the *pylagores*, in order to peacefully settle the existing problems not only among the members of the League but also very often among other town - states of Greece which resorted to them for arbitration. Although this pioneer institution did not manage to unite the country, it definitely elevated the moral and political level of the Greeks often providing fair and bloodless solutions to their differences and disputes. We could say it was a distant ancestor of U.N.

At the beginning of the 6th c. B.C., the *first* sacred war (590 - 580) broke out. Not being in a position to intervene in the domestic affairs of Delphi, the residents of Chrissa tried to at least profit from the numerous travellers who went to and from the oracle through their land and port, Kirra, and imposed a heavy tax on them. The relationship between Delphi and Chrissa became tense. The Thessalians seized the opportunity to make their way to the Corinthian bay and, with the help of the Boeotians and the Athenians, declared war against Chrissa. The town was destroyed and its land was donated to Apollo.

THE PYTHIA. After this incident, the prestige and the glory of Delphi grew even more, the Sanctuary was adorned with a host of monuments and the Pythian Games were reorganised. At first, the Pythia were a local music contest in memory of Pytho's elimination by Apollo. They were held every eight years because that was how long it took the god to purify himself working in Thessaly. Starting in the 6th c. B.C. they were held every four years and became pan Hellenic contests as famous as Olympia. They took place at the end of the summer and lasted approximately a week. They included religious ceremonies at the Sanctuary, music and later drama contests at the theatre, nude contests at the stadium (race, pankration, pentathlon, etc.) and, finally, equestrian contests at the plain of Chrissa.



The flautist, perhaps the winner in the flute-playing Pythian contests

The winners were awarded only a laurel wreath, which was Apollo's sacred tree, but a victory in the Pythia Games constituted a great honour for both the winners and the town they represented. A three-month truce was mandatory for the Pythia as well as the Olympia.



At the beginning of the 5th c. B.C., when the Persians attempted to occupy Greece, the oracle priests, perhaps because they were afraid the oracle would be destroyed, maintained an attitude that could be characterised from neutral to philopersian and gave the Greeks weird advice that confused them. The fact that Delphi was saved from the Persians was attributed by the diplomat priests to the miraculous intervention of the local heroes Phylakus and Autonoos who threw big rocks from the Phaedriades Rocks and put the enemy to flight. Bad memories soon died out and the Greeks hastened to offer the sanctuary monuments as well as loot from their victories against the Persians.

Unfortunately, a little later, distressing disputes started between the Greek town - states. The *second* sacred war (448 - 446) took place because the Phokeans committed a sacrilege when they cultivated the sacred plain of Chrissa. The Spartans drove them out but, as soon as they left, the Athenians under Pericles gave the sanctuary back to the Phokeans.

The *third* sacred war lasted ten years (356 - 346). In 356 B.C. the Phokeans again, supported by Athens and Sparta this time, occupied and looted the sanctuary. The rest of Greece was indignant with them and Philip B ΄ of Macedonia took advantage of the situation and intervened decisively in the affairs of southern Greece. In 346 B.C. he defeated the Phokeans completely and condemned them to a huge fine as compensation. In addition, he held the votes in the amphictyonic convention which they lost because of the sacrilege they had committed, and took it upon himself to officially protect the Sanctuary.

A little later the *fourth* sacred war broke out (339 - 338) when the Lokroi of Amphissa violated the sacred plain. Then again Philip intervened, punished the Amphissians and moved on to Cheronea where he defeated the Athenians and the Thebans who had allied against the Macedonians.

3rd c. B.C. - 4th c. A.D. Alexander, in his short life, changed a lot of things in the world. New horizons opened up and power passed on to other big forces. The Sanctuary lost some of its authority but not its glory. It kept being adorned with monuments, only now most of them were offerings and statues of powerful leaders who aspired to demonstrate their power this way and propagandise for themselves.

In 279 B.C. Galatian hordes under the leadership of Vrennos attacked Delphi to loot the sanctuary but, once again, as during the Persian invasion, god intervened and sending storms and rocks from the Phaedriades Rocks drove the enemy away. In fact, the Galatian hordes were repelled by the Aetolians who became the new masters of the Sanctuary and established an annual celebration, Sotiria, to commemorate this victory.

The Aetolians,in their turn, were expelled by the Romans and Delphi was declared an independent town. In 86 B.C. the Sanctuary met the brutality of the Roman Consul Syllas who stripped it of all the offerings made of precious metals, while three years later it was looted by a Thracian nation, the Maedans, who burnt the temple of Apollo down.

Later in time, Roman emperors, such as August, Domitian, Hadrian, Antoninos, and even Nero, despite the fact that he transferred a lot of offerings to Rome, favoured the sanctuary in many ways. Plenius the younger informs us that in his era one could still find there 3,000 statues, while Pausanias in 170 A.D. found it in decline but rich in works of art. Nevertheless closure was approaching as scepticism was dominating. Lucian openly scoffed at the gods and oracles while, in parallel, a new religion was rising, Christianity. Constantine the Great transferred a lot of offerings to Constantinople to adorn the new capital city. And when the romantic Emperor Julian (360 - 363 A.D.) in his desperate attempt to revive the old religion sent the physician Horebasius to the oracle, Pythia gave him her last 'prophesy' sealing the end of the antiquity:

Tell the king the adorned yards were torn down, lost,
Phoebus has no hut any longer, neither foretelling has laurel,
Nor a speaking spring, and the talkative water fell silent.

(Translation: N. Kazantzakis)

The coup de grace was given to the oracle in 394 A.D. by Theodosius the Great who closed the ancient sanctuaries and banned the practice of the pagan religion. For a long period of time after that, a Christian community inhabited Delphi and, inevitably, it was abandoned in approximately the 7th c. A.D.

The area was covered with earth from the landslides and, later on, a village, Kastri, was built there. In 1891 this village was expropriated and the French School of Archaeology under the direction of Theophile Homolle started excavations gradually bringing to light priceless archaeological treasures which can be admired at the site and in the museum.

PYTHIA AND THE ORACLE

The information on oracle delivery available to us is not complete while a substantial part of what we know has not been verified from the excavations. In fact, some of this information comes from Christian writers who express their own viewpoint.

It seems that many forms of fortune telling were practised at Delphi but the most important one was god's oracle delivering via Pythia's mouth. First Pythia is said to have been Phemonoe who delivered her oracles in metrical form. At first, the priestess who had the role of Pythia was a young virgin from a good family of Delphi. After the 5th c. B.C. however, when a Thessalian abducted one of these priestesses, Pythia was selected among serious women over 50 years of age, one who already had a family of her own and was of impeccable behaviour. Dressed in youthful clothes and jewels,

Pythia first had to purify herself in the Castalia Spring and then enter the adyton (inner sanctum) of the temple of Apollo. She drank water from the Kassotida spring, chewed laurel leaves and, seated upon a prophetic tripod, inhaled the vapours issuing from a fissure in the earth. She soon fell into an ecstatic trance and uttered unintelligible words.

Theopropoi (individuals and delegates of towns who sought an oracle) had also undergone the procedure of catharsis in the Castalia Spring and had paid a tax, *pelanus*, which was higher for the towns and less for the individuals. Moreover, they had sacrificed an animal, usually a goat, after they had damped it with water - if the animal trembled then the day was appropriate for oracle delivery. Then they entered the house, a small place near the adyton and posed their question. Special priests, the Prophetai, interpreted Pythia's unintelligible words and delivered the oracle in metrical form. Sometimes they were assisted in their interpretation by the *Exegetes*.

The questions had to be clear (will harvest be good or not, shall I travel / start a war or not). This was not the case though with the oracles, which were frequently ambiguous and difficult to understand and that is the reason why one of Apollo's names was *Loxias*. The most characteristic example of an ambiguous oracle was the one delivered for King Croesus of Lydia while he was at war with King Cyrus of Persia (6th c. B.C.): "If Croesus passes beyond river Aly (the borders with Persia) he will destroy a great country". Croesus misunderstood the oracle, went ahead with the war but he was defeated and destroyed his own country.

Some other time, an oracle became the reason for a serious mathematical problem, known as the Delean problem. The residents of Delos asked the oracle what they had to do in order to protect themselves from the famine. According to the oracle, they had to double the size of Apollo's altar, which was cubical. Thus, the problem of doubling the cube was created, a problem that has not been solved till today with the ruler and the dividers.

Here follows a touching story: When in about 700 B.C. Spartan Phalanthos began his journey to Italy in order to found a new town, the oracle told him that he would find a country and a town when he felt the rain under 'aethra' (clear sky). Time went by, until one day his wife, while holding his head on her lap and taking care of it, started to cry seeing her desperate husband. Her tears fell on Phalanthos who was the only one to connect the oracle with his wife's name 'Aethra' and understand its meaning. Thus, the same night he occupied Taras, a big and wealthy town.

During the period the oracle was flourishing there were three Pythias but as its decline started only one was left. Initially the oracles were delivered only on Apollo's birthday, at the end of February. Later they were delivered on the 7th day of each month except for the three winter months, which Apollo spent with the Supernortheners. The order of priority among the theopropos was arranged after a draw. On special occasions the privilege of priority was awarded to some of them without a draw and this was called *promantea*.





THE SANCTUARY OF APOLLO

The sanctuary of Apollo with the numerous elegant buildings and offerings dedicated to god in commemoration of historical events can be characterised as a museum of the Greek history. It was built on successive levels on the slopes of mount Rhodini at the highest part of the ancient town. It was protected by a surrounding wall of an irregular trapezoid shape (about 200 X 130) and had many entrances. The main gate was at the point where the visitor enters nowadays.

Before the entrance, one can see the ruins of the agora as it was in the Roman era. North of it there are the ruins of an Ionic stoa with small shops at its far end from where worshippers bought offerings.

The visitor can see pedestals of Roman statues and turrets of the paleochristianic era transferred there from other spots. As soon as one passes through the gate, he will follow the winding Sacred Way leading to the temple. Its present form was taken at the beginning of the Byzantine era.

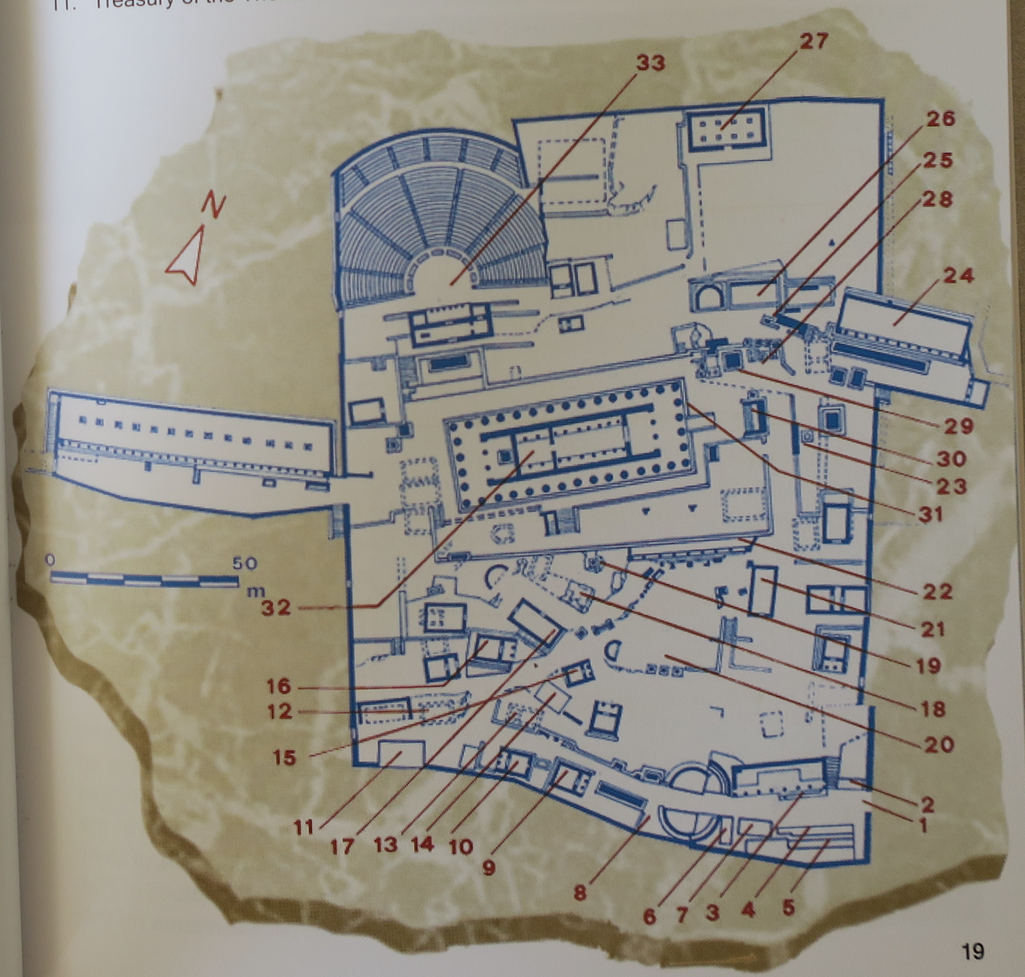
Right after the entrance on the right is the pedestal of a bronze bull, which was dedicated to god by the people of Corfu and was a piece of art by the sculptor



Paleochristianic column at the stoa of the Roman Agora

PLAN OF THE SANCTUARY OF APOLLO

1. The Roman Agora
2. The bronze bull of the People of Corfu
3. Arcadian offering
4. The Monument of Marathon
5. The Monument of the "Admirals"
6. Bronze Trojan Horse
7. Statues of the "Seven against Thebes"
8. Descendants
9. Sikyonian Treasury
10. Siphnian Treasury
11. Treasury of the Thebans
12. Treasury of the Boeotians
13. Treasury of the Megarians
14. Treasury of the Syracusans
15. Treasury of the Knidians
16. Athenian Treasury
17. The Bouleuterion
18. The Rock of Sibylla
19. The Naxian Sphinx
20. The Alos
21. Corinthian Treasury
22. The Athenian Stoa
23. The monument of Krotaniates
24. The Attalus Stoa
25. The Column with the dancers
26. The monument of Daochos
27. The Knidian club
28. The gold tripods of Deinomenides
29. Apollo Sitalkas
30. The Altar of Apollo
31. Statue of Prousiou B'
32. The Temple of Apollo
33. The Theatre







Reconstruction of the
Roman Agora

Theopropus. Further on, always on the right, before a Doric stoa there is another pedestal of nine bronze statues representing gods and heroes of Arcadia in commemoration of the victory of the Arcadian League under Epameinondas against the Spartans at Leuctra(371 B.C.) The monument of Marathon was established to commemorate the Athenians' victory over the Persians (490 B.C.) and consisted of thirteen statues made of bronze among which that of the great victor of the battle, Miltiades.

Next to it was erected the imposing monument of the Spartan *Admirals*, who under the leadership of Lyssandrus defeated the Athenians at Aegos Potamous putting an end to the Peloponnesian war* (404 B.C.). It consisted of thirty-seven bronze statues representing gods as well as the generals and the admirals who had taken part in the naval battle. There follow four offerings by the Argians in commemoration of their victorious wars against the Spartans (456 - 369 B.C.): a Trojan Horse, the statues of The Seven against Thebes*, in the left semicircle the statues of the 7 Descendants (of the

7 against Thebes) and in the right semicircle ten bronze statues of the mythical kings of Argos.

A little further up one encounters the ruins of the Treasuries. The *treasuries* are small, elegant temple-shaped buildings erected by the Greek cities in commemoration of a historical event in order to house precious offerings. First we see the site where was the *Sikyonian Treasury* in the foundations of which architectural parts of two older buildings were found. Among them are the metopes made of limestone that can be seen in the Museum.

Next comes the luxurious *Ionic treasury* built by the Siphnians (end of 6th c. B.C.) from the tithe on their goldmines revenue. The Caryatids adorning its façade instead of columns can also be seen in the Museum. There follow *the treasuries of the Thebans, the Boeotians, the Megarians, the Syracusans and the Knidians.*

The only treasury that was restored was the Athenian Treasury. It is built of Parian marble in the shape of a small Doric temple with columns on its façade. The thirty metopes of the frieze were decorated with sculptured in relief representations of the labours of Hercules and Theseus and an Amazon battle (the authentic pieces of art are in the Museum). On the walls, among the many inscriptions, which are mainly resolutions in honour of Athenian citizens, were also found two hymns to Apollo with the ancient music signs (exhibited at the Museum). It is questionable whether the treasury was established to commemorate the Marathon Battle or a few years earlier to commemorate the establishment of Democracy in Athens. In any way, on the triangular platform south of the treasury, the Athenians had displayed booty from the battle.

Behind the treasury are the ruins of the *Bouleuterion* where the thirty deputies of the town - state of Delphi (25 per semester) held a session. Next to the bouleuterion was the ancient *temple of Gaia*. There, near the sacred spring according to the legend, Apollo shot his arrow at Python and there at the rock the first fortune-teller, Sybille, delivered her oracles. It is said that the first Sybille, Herophile from Asia Minor, foretold the Trojan War. At the rock in the back on a high pillar was *the Naxian Sphinx*, which can be seen in the Museum.



Turret at the stoa
of the Roman Agora



Reconstruction of the
Athenian Treasury



Reconstruction of the Siphnian Treasury

In front of the sanctuary of the earth there is a small opening. This was *the Alos* (threshing floor) where during the events of Pythia the assassination of Python by Apollo was represented. Further down was the Corinthian Treasury, the earliest at Delphi, built by the tyrant Kypselos in the 7th c. B.C.

Opposite the Alos *the Athenian Stoa*, 30 metres of length, is predominant. Seven marble columns of the Ionic order supported its wooden roof and the inscription that can be seen on its limestone pillar informs us that the arcade housed booty from the Athenians' naval victories over the Persians (478 B.C.).

An important architectural piece is the polygonal supportive wall behind the stoa, about 85 metres long. It was constructed after the destruction of the temple of Apollo in 548 B.C. to support the earthwork on which the new temple was built. There are about eight hundred inscriptions on it referring to public and private affairs (mainly acts of emancipation of slaves).

Continuing our way, we can see the circular base of *the tripod of the Krotaniates* and behind it can still be seen the foundations of the base where the tripod of the Plateans stood commemorating the victory of the Greek towns over the Persians (479 B.C.). The monument was a gold tripod fixed on a column made of bronze that consisted of the bodies of three twisting snakes. On them were inscribed the names of the thirty-one towns which had participated in the battle of Plateas. The bronze column is still kept at the Hippodrome in Constantinople where Constantine the Great transferred it. Behind the two bases, a big pedestal with the gold chariot of the Sun was erected, offering of the Rhodians.

The Stoa of Attalus, king of Pergamus, we encounter on our right was turned into a water tank in the Roman times.

At the northern side of the temple there was *the Knidian Club*, a place for meeting people and holding discussions, renowned for its murals created by a great artist of the 5th c. B.C., Polygnotus.

We return to the area in front of the temple where we can see pedestals on which stood gold tripods offered by the tyrants of Gela and of Syracuse, Gelas, Hieron and their brothers, after their victory over the Carthaginians at Himera (480 B.C.). Nearby was a colossal statue of Apollo Sitalka, i.e. patron of the wheat. One can see the big altar of Apollo, built of white and dark marble. As two inscriptions, one at the top and the



Reconstruction of the Athenian Stoa

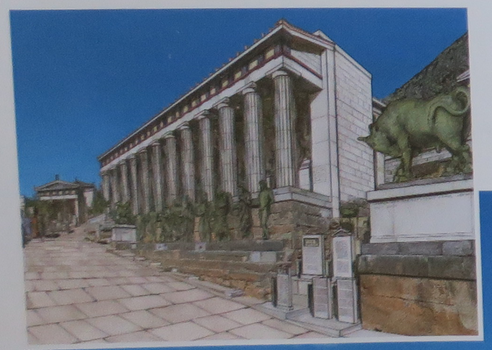




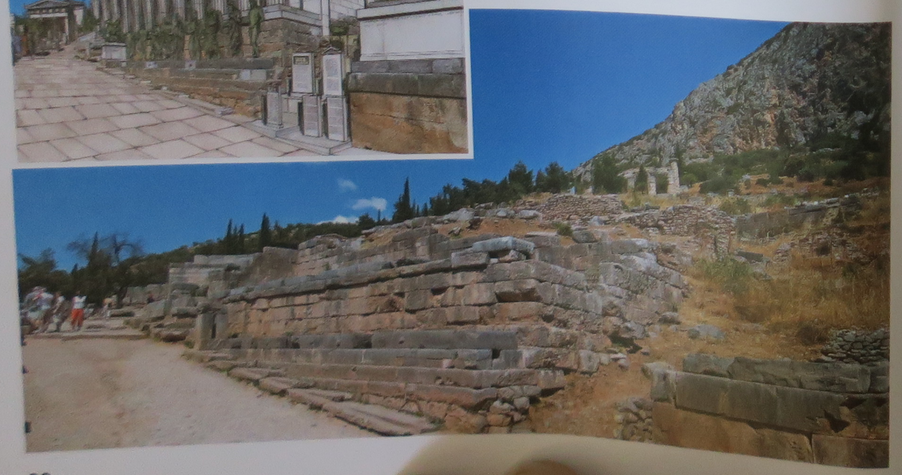
The Alos

other at the bottom, inform us, it was dedicated by the Chians who managed to earn the privilege of promanteia.

On the façade of the temple, on the right, the Aetolians had erected a high post, an equestrian statue of Prousias B,΄king of Bythiny (2nd c. B.C.) because he had benefited them. Somewhere nearby, a tall pedestal hosted the statue of the Roman general Aemilius Paulus who defeated the king of Macedonia, Perseas, in the battle of Pydna in 168 B.C.



Reconstruction of the Arcadian offering - Doric Stoa



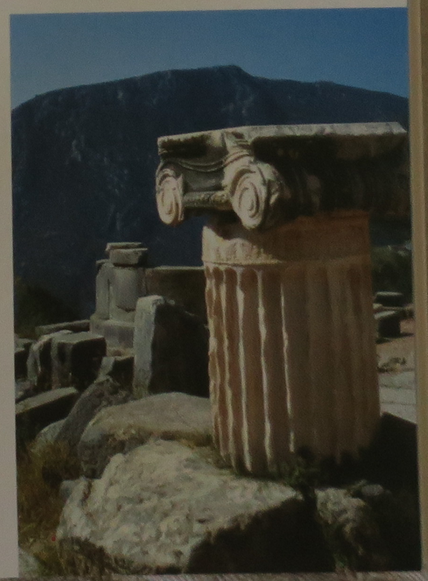
THE TEMPLE OF APOLLO

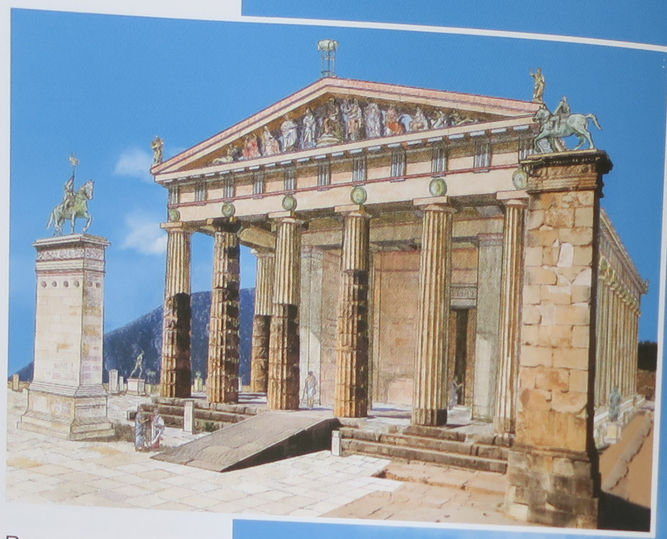
Now the visitor has the temple of Apollo, built in 330 B.C., before his eyes. It is said that five more temples had been built at this place. According to tradition, the first one was a hut made from laurel leaves brought from Tempi, the second was made from wax and feathers and the third from bronze. Their existence though was not documented during the excavations.

Debris was found belonging to the other two stone temples. The fourth was built by the mythical architects Trophonius and Agamedes in the 7th c. B.C. and was destroyed by fire in 548 B.C. A new, bigger temple began to be built with the contribution of many towns and foreign leaders. The Alkmeonids, a noble Athenian family who were exiled by the tyrant Pisistratus, undertook the completion of the fifth temple at their own expense. An earthquake destroyed this temple in 373 B.C. after which the temple we see today was built by the architects Spintharos, Xenodoros and Agathon with contributions from all over Greece. The Athenian sculptors Praxias and Androsthenes created the statues that decorated the pediments representing Apollo among his Muses (east pediment) and Dionysus with his Maenads (west pediment). The temple was in the Doric peristylar order, with 6 X 15 columns. The materials used were limestone for the columns and the entablature (which were coated) and grey stone from Parnassus for the rest of the building.

The entrance was from an inclined plane. According to descriptions in ancient texts, on the walls of the narthex were written sayings by the seven wise men of ancient Greece, such as “everything in moderation” and “know thyself” as well as the incomprehensible letter E, for which there is a special treatise by Plutarch*.

In the narthex, there was also a bronze representation of Homer, the poet who belonged to all Greeks. Further inside, in the nave, were the statues of Apollo, Zeus and the Fates, an altar of Poseidon, the common for all Greeks hearth with everlasting fire, and an iron throne where the great poet of Pythionics, Pindar, used to sit and chant. The second part of the nave was an underground place, the adyton, separated in two parts: the oikos, a waiting room for the theopropous and the antron, where only Pythia entered. There was her tripod placed on the chasm issuing vapours, the omphalos which sealed the tomb of either Python or Dionysus, and a gold statue of Apollo while somewhere close water from the spring Kassotida flowed. However, nothing of the abovementioned was documented from the excavations. To the north of the temple a supportive wall called Ischegaon (keeping the earth) was built in the 4th c. B.C. On its western edge one can see a large square angle hosting statues by sculptors Lyssipus and Leochares representing Alexander fighting a lion and his friend Kraterus running to his help.





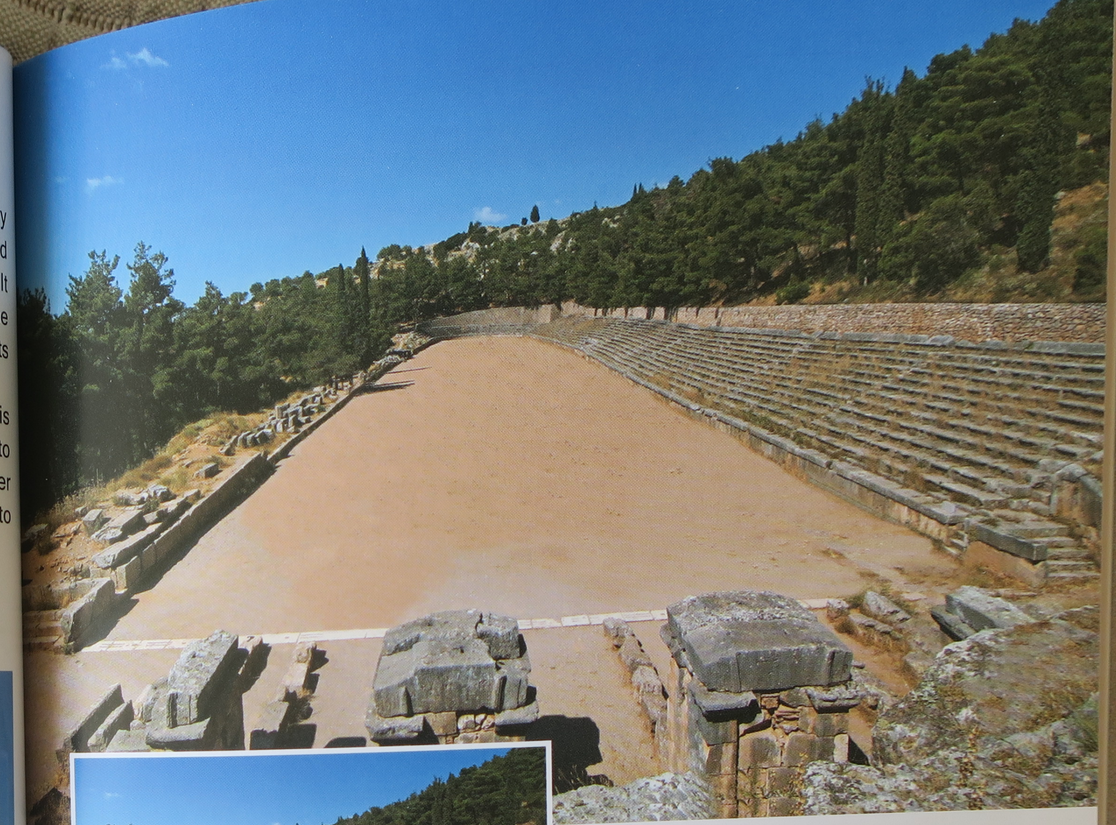
Reconstruction of the
Temple of Apollo

THE THEATRE

After the angle, one encounters a stairway leading up to the theatre, which is very well preserved. Built in the 4th c. B.C. of grey limestone and reconstructed in the 2nd c. B.C. by king of Pergamus, Eumenes B ΄ it took its final form in the Roman times. It consists of the stage, which can't have been very high in order to allow the view of the spectacular delphian scenery, the paved orchestra, and the cavea with 35 rows of seats accommodating an audience of five thousand.

In 1927 and 1930, the great Modern Greek poet Aggelos Sikelianos and his ingenious American wife Eva Palmer organised the Delphian Festival in an attempt to revive the amphictyonic idea of the fraternisation of the peoples. It was then, after thousands of years of silence, when the theatre of Delphi revived with the Hymn to Apollo and the performances "Prometheus" and "Iketides" by Aeschylus.







Reconstruction of the Stadium

THE STADIUM

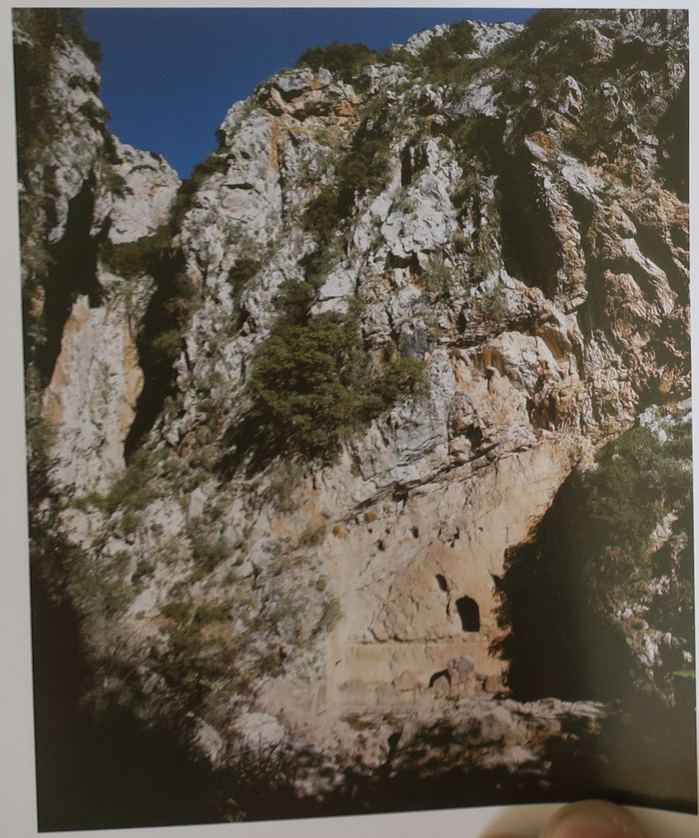
Further up the theatre, a steep winding path leads up to the Stadium dated in the 5th c. B.C. It took its present form in the 2nd c. B.C. when Herod Atticus* restored it and built the stone seats which could accommodate an audience of seven thousand. In the middle of the northern side, a row of seats with a back was intended for the judges. The length of the track was 178.35 metres from the start to the finish line. The Stadium had a monumental entrance with three arches standing on four square columns. The two middle ones have niches to host statues.



THE CASTALIA SPRING

At the foot of the Phaedriades Rocks, at the point where the road turns towards Arachova (lower than the road) burbles the sacred spring Castalia. According to the legend, Castalia was a nymph who found shelter there to avoid Apollo's amorous advances to her.

The spring was constructed in about 600 B.C. It is a square building made of limestone and consists of a water tank and a paved yard. Its crystal clear water running through lion-head spouts initially had only purificatory powers but later on it was related to the prophetic and poetic inspiration. In the Roman times, a second spring was curved in the rock of Hyambeia, a few steps higher than the ancient spring. Thus was created a chamber, approximately 11 metres wide, open to the visitor. On the surface of the smooth rock one can see niches where offerings were placed. Below there is a ten metre long basin. The water from the spring flowed into its right corner. In its left corner was a lock, which opened for the basin to be cleaned. When shut, the water flowed in the square yard in front of the spring through seven lion-head spouts surrounded by eight half columns fixed on the surface of the rock.



The sacred spring Castalia in the Roman times



THE TEMPLE OF ATHENA

In a very short distance from Castalia, on the way to Arachova, a sign leads to the path towards the Temple of Athena Pronaia. The site is also known as Marmaria. The goddess was named here Pronaia because her Sanctuary was located before the temple of Apollo for those approaching from eastern Greece. The female Mycenaean statuettes found in the excavations of the temple were considered the evidence of the early worship of a female deity evolving into Athena. However, nowadays we are aware of the fact that these statuettes were funeral gifts of Mycenaean tombs. Here were altars dedicated to Athena and to other deities. Two of the inscriptions found inform us that Athena bore there the properties of Zosteria, patroness of fertility and childbirth, as well as those of Erganis, patroness of work and science.

Reconstruction of Treasuries and the Archaic Temple at the Sanctuary of Athena Pronaia



The first archaic temple, whose capitals and other architectural elements were found, was in the Doric order built of limestone in the 7thc. B.C. After its destruction, the new temple was also built of limestone, in the Doric order and peristylar, with 6 X 12 columns, in approximately 500 B.C. Despite the fact that even this temple was destroyed in the 4th c. B.C., archaeologists discovered fifteen columns still standing in place. In 1905 though, rocks from the mountain slid and completed its destruction.

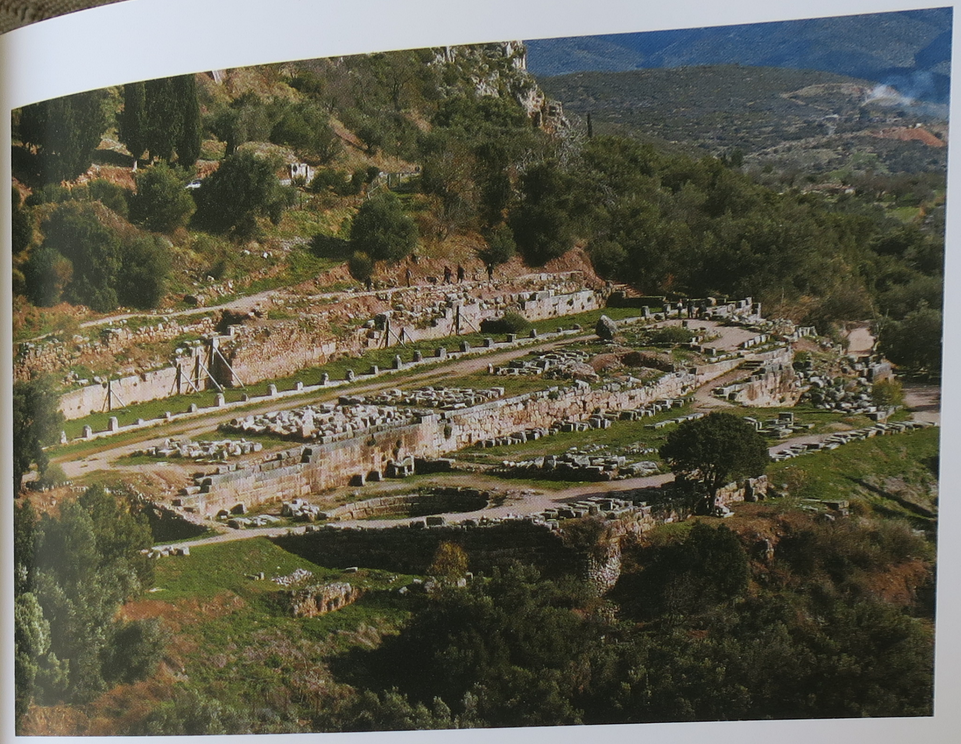
In the area one can see the foundations of two treasuries built of Parian marble. One was in the Doric order and was built in around 470 B.C. The other one, in the Ionic order, was one of the best monuments richly decorated with sculptures, built in around 530 B.C. most probably by the Massaliots (settlers of the Aeolian town Phokaea).

The site of Marmaria is dominated by the three restored columns of the Tholos, a monument of exquisite mastery of the 4th c. B.C., of uncertain intention though. Its architect is believed to have been Theodoros from Phokaea. It is a circular building, 13.50m. in diameter, of white marble from mount Pendeli, built on a base of grey marble from Eleusis. A colonnade of fifteen Doric columns that supported the entablature surrounded the nave. In the inner part of the nave, ten Corinthian half columns were attached. The embossed representations on the metopes pictured Amazon battles and Centaur battles.

Finally, one can see the remains of the second temple of Athena, which was built in the 4th c. B.C. after the destruction of the older one. It was also of the Doric order but prostylar, i.e. with columns only at the façade. At its west side are the ruins of a building which, conventionally, is called the house of priests.

Reconstruction of the Tholos at the Sanctuary of Athena Pronaia



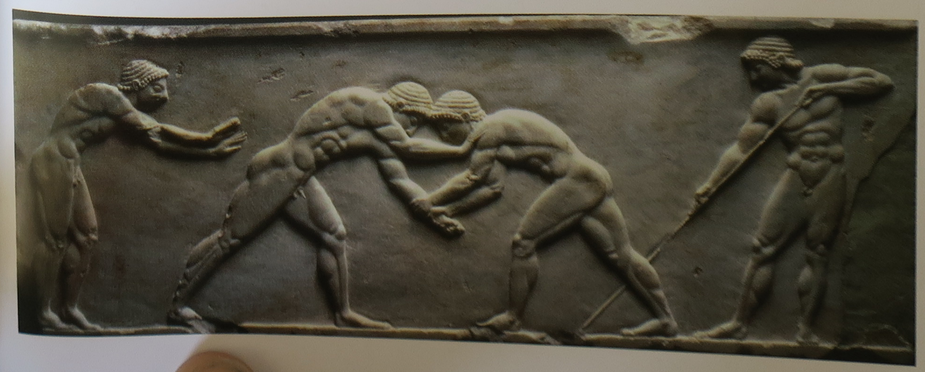


THE GYMNASIUM

Next to the temple of Pronaia towards Castalia lies the Gymnasium in two parallel levels. On the highest level there was a big stoa, called xystos, where athletes trained in racing when the weather conditions were unfavourable. When the weather was good, they used the paradromida, which lies in front of the xystos, in parallel to it.

On the lower level there was the Palaestra, a square yard surrounded by a small sanctuary and chambers used for the various activities of the athletes training in wrestling and boxing.

Beside the palaestra were the baths. The cold water coming from the Castalia spring ran through eleven spouts into stone basins and from there flowed into a circular tank. In Roman times baths with hot water were added westwards.





THE MUSEUM

The Museum exhibits, which come from workshops from all over Greece and cover an amazing artistic activity of many centuries, demonstrate the immense love of the Greeks for the arts, their admiration for man and their respect for the gods.

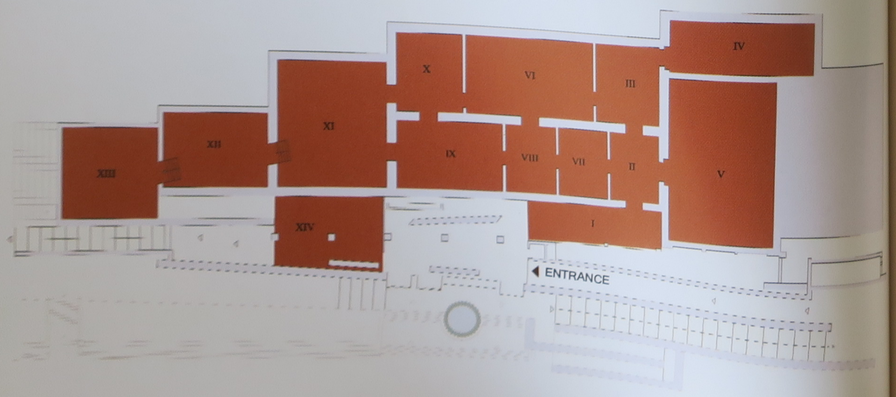
Their detailed description, though, exceeds the capacity of a small album. For this reason, we shall limit ourselves to the most impressive and characteristic exhibits but would advise the visitor not to ignore the tiny artefacts that prove that beauty does not relate to size.

The exhibition begins with the earthen statuettes of the Mycenaean times (1400-1100 B.C.), which evidence life at Delphi as well as the worshipping activities of its residents long before the arrival of Apollo.

There follow the bronze offerings worshippers dedicated to the sanctuary during the first centuries after its establishment (8th - 7th c. B.C.): geometric statuettes of warriors (display in the centre of the hall) and remains of tripods.

In the 8th c. B.C., the boiler tripod, the most characteristic offering to Apollo, has circular handles and is connected to the three legs that support it, while in the 7th c. prevails the eastern type with decorative handles representing mythical monsters, griffins and Sirens.

THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM OF DELPHI



I-II The beginning of the sanctuary and early offerings
III The early archaic years
IV The displays with the gold and ivory items
V The Siphnian treasury
VI The Temple of Apollo
VII The Athenian treasury (a)
VIII The Athenian treasury (b)
IX Offerings of the 5th c. B. C.
X The dome of the sanctuary of Athena Pronaia
XI Post-classical - Hellenistic times
XII Post-Hellenistic - Roman times
XIII The Charioteer
XIV The end of the sanctuary



Bronze geometric statuettes



The bronze boiler on the iron tripod



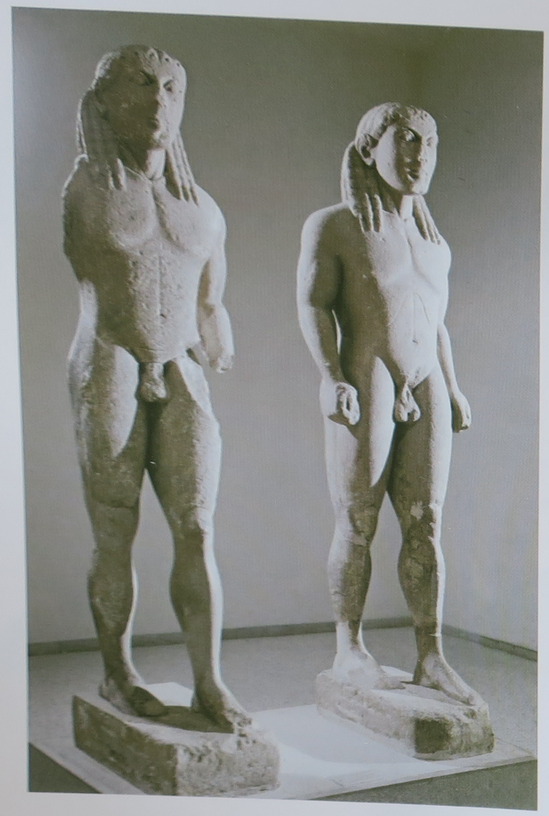
Early bronze offerings







A daedal kouros



Kleovis and Byton

A bronze boiler and an iron tripod (two different findings) were placed together to demonstrate the tripod of the eastern type.

At the far end of the hall are displayed offerings which came to the sanctuary from countries of the East such as the hammered shields with embossed representations from Crete and the boiler supports with dentelated decoration from Cyprus.

In the second hall (II) follow bronze man-shaped or animal-shaped statuettes, which constitute decorative accessories on pots, jewellery for women, dedicative casques and of the great plastic arts.

In the next hall (III), that of the Kouroi (that is what the archaic statues of young men are called), we can see the first works of the monumental plastic arts at Delphi. The twin Kouroi of Delphi impress with their youthful vigour, their robust muscles and their wide-open, full of life eyes. They are transitional works from the daedal to the archaic style. The anatomy on the stomach is depicted with conventional lines. As Herodotus writes, they represent two brothers of exceptional character from Argos, Kleovis and Byton, who harnessed to their mother's cart, a priestess of Hera, because the oxen moved slowly, and carried her to the festival of Hereon. Their mother asked the goddess to spare them happiness, as they deserved it. The young men went to sleep and never awoke. The gods took them with them and the people immortalised them and dedicated



The metope with the abduction of Europe

their statues to Apollo as eternal symbols of virtue (around 600 B.C.).

On the wall is depicted part of the frieze with the preserved limestone metopes of the Sikyonian treasury (560 B.C.). The figures were painted in bright colours while some details are inscribed.

The first metope (on the right of the entrance) represents a scene from the Argonautic expedition. We can see the bow of Argo, Orpheus with another musician and two equestrians, Castor and Pollux. These are the Dioskouri, deified heroes from Laconia, who were considered to be a model of courage and ethos as well as patrons of seamen by the Greeks.

The second metope depicts the Dioskouri again and their cousins marching rhythmically while guiding the oxen they had stolen in Arcadia.

The third shows the abduction of princess Europe of Phoenicia by Zeus transformed into a bull.

The fourth metope represents a scene from the hunting for the terrifying Caledonian wild boar in which all the heroes of the Argonautic expedition participated. The last, damaged metope depicted the mythical hero Phrixus.

Returning now to the previous hall, on the left, opens out the hall of the Siphnian treasury (V) that contains marvellous creations of the archaic Ionic art. Its three walls are occupied by the frieze of the Siphnian treasury, one of the most luxuriously



The frieze of the Siphnian treasury: Gods' council

decorated in the sanctuary (525 B.C.).

The style is not the same everywhere. The figures on the west and south sides, which are characterised by a certain inflexibility and immobility, were created by a conservative artist, loyal to the tradition of the Asia Minor coast. On the contrary, the vividness of the figures on the north and east sides reveal another, more pioneer and imaginative artist, influenced by the art of Attica.

The whole composition was painted with bright colours and had decorations of bronze. On this frieze, the familiar to us from Homer to Herodotus narrative mood of the Greeks in Ionia is conveyed.

On the east pediment we can see the cruel scene of a fight. It is the story of Hercules who, according to the legend, attempted to steal the Delphian tripod when Pythia refused to deliver an oracle on the grounds that he had not purified after killing Hiphitus. Hercules, on the right, pulls the tripod while Apollo, on the left, tries to keep it and, as always happens in fights, the people around run to calm them down. Zeus is shown in the middle, while a female figure tries to keep furious Apollo back. The bottom part of the figures is embossed and the upper part is sculptured.

Further down, the east side of the frieze represents a conflict between the Greeks and the Trojans around a dead warrior. On the left side the gods are watching the battle from mount Olympus and are talking vividly. From the left, Mars in full armour, Leto, Artemis and Apollo, in other words the gods in favour of the Trojans. In the middle is Zeus, impartial judge in every argument, seated in an elegant throne. Then Athena, Hera and Demetra supporting the Greeks. The identification of the gods is questionable since the inscriptions accompanying the figures are illegible nowadays, and more names of gods have been suggested.

The north side, full of movement and life, represents the war of the Giants. The Giants who were the daemons of violence, havoc and the catastrophic powers of nature, motivated by their mother, Gaia, fought against the gods who represent moderation and harmony in the world. They were defeated, though, with the help of Hercules. On the left,

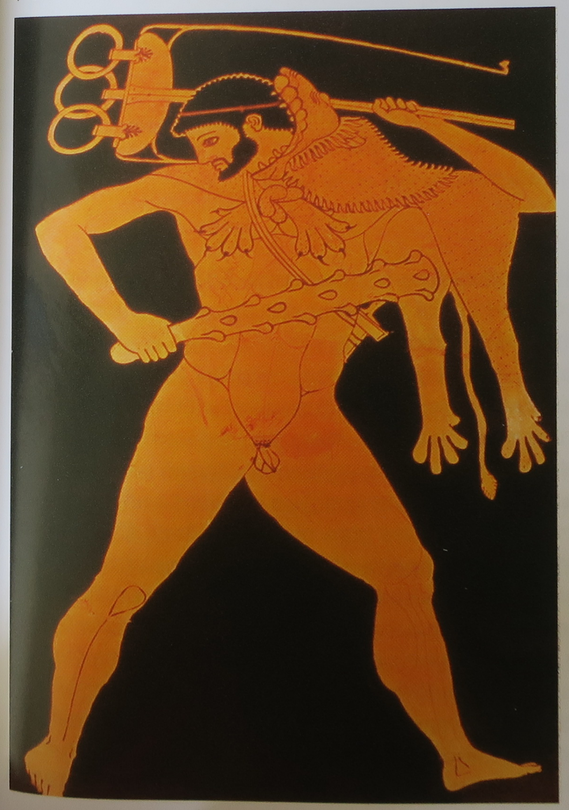
Hephaestus blowing his bellows, two goddesses, the goddess Thetis on a chariot drawn by two lions, Hercules, Apollo and Artemis, Hera, Athena, Mars and Hermes are fighting against the Giants.

The artist wrote his name on the shield of one of the Giants who are fighting with Apollo but this part is worn out and this great sculptor remains unknown.

The west side represents the judgement of Paris. On the mountain Pelion, the wedding ceremony of king Peleas and Thetis was in progress. Goddess Eris was not invited and, in order to take revenge, threw among the guests a golden apple bearing the inscription "to the most beautiful one". This resulted in a hot argument between Athena, Aphrodite and Hera. Zeus assigned the judgement to the prince of Troy, Paris, who gave the apple to Aphrodite after she had promised beautiful Helen of Sparta for him. On the relief we can see Hermes as the charioteer of a winged chariot drawn by four horses, Athena mounting it in haste, behind her some god and then Aphrodite who is coming off her chariot with a coquettish gesture. Hera was not found.

Few parts from the south side are preserved and this is the reason why the picture is difficult to be interpreted. It represents an abduction scene, perhaps that of Hippodamea by Pelops. We can see a woman on the left, a four-horse chariot in front

Snatching away the tripod from the oracle
(representation from a pot)





The head of a Caryatid
of an Ionic treasury



The frieze of the Siphnian treasury: details from the war of the Giants

of an altar, two equestrians and one more four-horse chariot. The surfaces here are multiple, the figures are placed one on top of the other consequently enhancing the shading, and the shaping of the horses is remarkable.

On the right of the entrance we can see a representation of the façade of the Siphnian treasury: on the wall the frame of the door is decorated with rosettes, lotuses and anthemia, and in front of it is one of the two girls who supported instead of columns the entablature of the façade of the treasury. These statues are known as Caryatids.

The girl of the Siphnian treasury bears a basket (polo) on her head and the holes in the hair and the ears document the fact that she bore metal jewellery. Opposite the entrance, in a different setting, appear the remnants of two elegant girls who belong to the Caryatids of the first Ionic treasuries in the sanctuary: a woman' head with a bright smile, characteristically slanting eyes and rich adornments on the head and the basket (530 B.C.), and a girl's body who, with her right hand she is graciously raising the long robe with its radiant folds (it probably belongs to the Knidian treasury, around 550 B.C.).

In the same hall dominates the imposing and impressive marble Sphinx with the mysterious smile, dedicated by the Naxians (560 B.C.). She was placed on an Ionic column that had six fulcrums and forty-four shallow grooves and stood at the sanctuary

of Gaia, the natural environment for a daemon of the earth, in order to protect her oracle.

We continue with the hall of the Bull (IV) with the unique exhibits made of gold and ivory, exhibits which give us an idea of the feeling of awe the works by Pheidias, Athena on the Parthenon and Zeus at Olympia, would evoke those times.

They were found in two pits under the paved Sacred Way, where they had been buried after the fire which destroyed the building that housed them, so that they would forever remain next to the god they belonged to. They are masterpieces by Ion artists of the 6th c. B.C.

In the showcases on the left are displayed the miniatures and the remains of three statues of the rare technique which combines gold and ivory. A statue, perhaps of Apollo, in natural size, dominates the centre. The bare parts were made of ivory and the rest of gold fitted on a wooden frame. There can be seen the gold braids of his hair, jewellery and two gold plates with embossed representations of animals.

A proportional woman's head (Artemis?) is seen in the next showcase and a little further a third one (Leto?) damaged by fire. In the showcases around the three gold and ivory figures of the Apollonian triad stand out the ivory tiles with curved mythological



The Naxian Sphinx



The head of the silver bull

scenes (the Phineas legend, the warrior's departure, war scenes, etc.).

They are miniature masterpieces that decorated a wooden utensil or a throne. A piece of work by a Greek artisan from Asia Minor is the figure of the god or the hero who is taming a wild beast.

At the far end of the room the figure of the bull of hammered silver with gold-plated details is dominant.

In hall (VI) the pediments of the archaic and the classical temple of Apollo are represented.

The east pediment of the archaic temple (of the Alkmeonids, 510 B.C.) from Parian marble represents the "Epiphany" of Apollo, i.e. his grand arrival at Delphi with his mother, Leto, and his sister, Artemis. Their four-horse drawn chariot is depicted in the centre, on the left stands one of the three kouroi who welcomed the god, and on the left

two of the three girls who probably represented the daughters of the King of Athens Kreops. Around the scene are lions mangling a bull and a deer.

Winged Nike was a corner ornament of the temple. In the sculptured adornment of the temple of the 4th c. B.C., the god of moderation and harmony coexists with the god of drunkenness and absurdity.

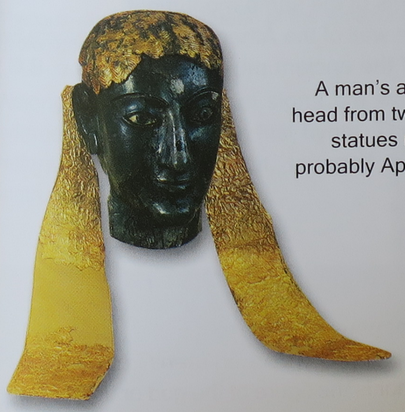
On the east pediment, seated on the oracle tripod, Apollo is surrounded by Leto, Artemis and the Muses.

On the west pediment, the central figure is Dionysus, uncommonly represented as a guitar-player, surrounded by the Thyads, women from his retinue who, according to the local tradition, danced on the slopes of Parnassus.

Halls (VII) and (VIII) are devoted to the Athenian treasury. In the first are exhibited the best-preserved marble metopes of its thirty in total (about 500 B.C.) representing Hercules Labours (north and west sides), Theseus Labours (south side) and an Amazon battle (east side, that is the façade). For the creation of the bas-relief, at least five artists worked divided into two teams, a more conservative one, archaic (Hercules - Kerynite deer) and a pioneer and classical (Hercules - Kyknos, Theseus - Minotaur).

Of the best preserved ones are: Hercules overpowering the Kerynite deer, Hercules and the lion of Nemea and Hercules eliminating the son of Mars, the horrible robber Kyknos.

Directly opposite can be seen: Theseus, the founder of the town-state of Athens, with its patroness Athena, Theseus overpowering the bull of Marathon, Theseus fighting with the queen of the Amazons (warlike women who once besieged Athens), Antiope,



A man's and a woman's head from two gold and ivory statues representing probably Apollo and Artemis





The Phineas legend: the Boreads are chasing the Harpyes who are snatching Phineas meal





The white wide cup with Apollo making a libation

Winged Nike, a corner ornament on the archaic temple of Apollo

who he fell in love with and kept with him, and Theseus eliminating the beast of the Labyrinth on Crete, Minotaur.

In the second hall of the Athenian treasury (VIII), in a show-case are exhibited remains of the sculptures which were preserved from the pediment of the treasury along with two Amazons on horses, corner ornaments of the same monument.

Opposite we can see parts of the southern wall of the Athenian treasury where two hymns to Apollo are inscribed, great texts of the ancient music (end of 2nd c. B.C.).



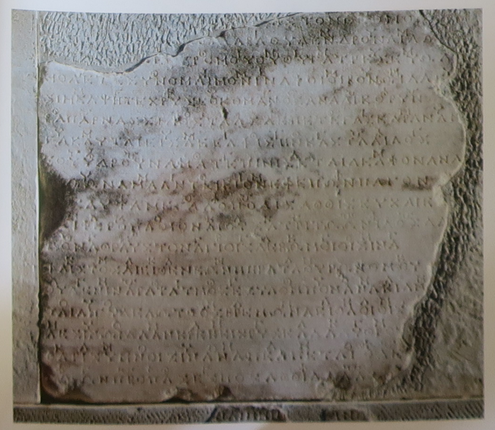
Metope of the Athenian treasury: Hercules overpowering the Kerynite deer



Theseus' duel with the queen of the Amazons, Antiope, from the metope of the southern part of the Athenian treasury

Among the lines musical signs are written. These are letters of the Ionic alphabet addressing a choir in the first hymn. The second hymn contains various symbols and letters which are straight, inverted and leaning to the right and are written for instrumental music.

Excerpts from the musical hymns to Apollo







Agias



Sisyphus A'



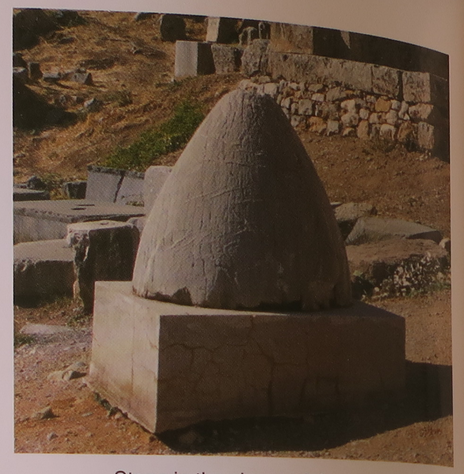
Acnonius



The prickly column with the "dancers"



The marble omphalos with the “agrenos”



Stone in the shape of the omphalos

The white wide cup is the work of a great Athenian painter. It depicts Apollo, crowned with myrtle leaves sitting on a stool (difro) and holding a seven-chord lyre made of carapace. With his right hand he is making a libation before a black bird, perhaps a crow symbolising princess Koronis who Apollo obtained from Aesculapius (490-480 B.C.).

In hall (IX) are presented offerings of the 5th c. B.C. among which one distinguishes in the central show-cases the three pieces of the small bronze-plastics of the austere rhythm times (pro-classical era 490 - 460 B.C.) which were found in the pit under the Sacred Way: the bronze incensory fixed on a female figure full of grace and elegance, the flute-player and the complex of two athletes.

On the right of the entrance, on the wall, one is impressed by the remains of decorative tiles (corner-tiles, corner ornaments) with their rich and very well preserved colours coming from the roofs of various buildings of the sanctuary.

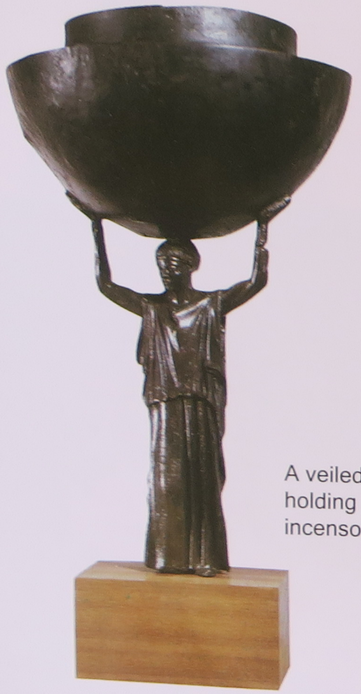


The circular altar of the sanctuary of Pronaia





Antinoos



A veiled woman holding a bronze incensory



Marble portrait probably representing Titus Cointius Flaminius

The next hall (X) hosts part of the sculptures and architectural parts from the circular marble Tholos of the temple of Pronaia (380 B.C.). The building had two friezes, an external one with embossments on its metopes representing an Amazon battle, and one inside with smaller metopes which went round the nave. The sculptures are of exquisite art characterised mainly by freedom, daring and dash in the movement as well as love for the details.

Now we enter the hall of the Monument of Daochos (XI) which occupies its right part. Daochos B' was a tetrarch of Thessaly and the chairman of the amphictyonic convention (337 - 331 B.C.) and with this offering he wanted to honour members of his family who distinguished themselves as politicians, military men or athletes.

The statues are placed in a straight line on the pedestal, however, with the variety in expression, posture and clothing that suited their personality the unknown artist managed to give the composition a lot of vividness and to avoid monotony.

From the right, the patriarch of the family Acnonius, a politician from Pharsala, presents his descendants to Apollo who is sitting on the omphalos (not preserved).

There follows his son Agias, a multiple champion in pankration* in all the Pan Hellenic Games. His characteristics document the fact that the statue came from the workshop of the great artist Lyssippus. Next come Agias' brothers (Telemachus and Agelaos), his son (Daochos A'), Daochos' son (Sisyphus A'), the dedicator Daochos B' and last his son (Sisyphus B').

Another impressive piece of art of the 4th c. B.C. is the complex of the three girls standing on a vegetable column of a prickly plant leaves. One of their legs is raised in the slow motion of a ritual dance. They are holding their ethereal short robe with their

left hand while with their right they are supporting the tripod that was placed over their heads. The total height of the monument was 13 metres. An inscription on the base (can be seen in the place where the offering stood to the northeast of the temple) informs us that it was a dedication by the Athenians.

According to the latest restoration, the roofing of the monument was the Delphian omphalos found in the centre of the hall, a replica of the omphalos which used to be in the adyton of the temple. The relief decorating the omphalos represents the agrenos, that is a net of woollen strips, which covered the real omphalos with its two gold eagles at the top.

Delphi was the place where, according to the tradition, the two eagles Zeus freed from the two edges of the horizon in order to locate the centre of the earth met.

Whether it was a trace of an immemorial stone-worship or it sealed the tomb of the old chthonic deities in the historical era, the omphalos evolved in the symbol of the spiritual radiance of Delphi all over the then known world.

To the category of the family dedications belongs the composition of the five statues that are opposite the monument of Daochos.

It must be the family of a respectful and gentle man, a philosopher or a priest, whose statue constitutes a characteristic example of the depicting art of the early Hellenistic times, around 270 B.C. In the Hellenistic times date the statues of three children: the boy with the goose, the smiling girl and the little winged Eros sleeping carelessly on a rock.

In the hall of the Roman times (XII) dominates the embossed frieze of the column erected by the Roman general Aemilius Paulus in commemoration of his victory over the Macedonian King Perseas at the battle of Pydna (168 B.C.). This battle, which heralds the establishment of the Roman domination over Greece, is depicted on the frieze as an authentic historical event.



Marble statue of a little girl

At the far end of the hall, in a special setting is presented the statue of Antinoos from Bythiny, favoured by emperor Adrian. The renowned for his beauty young man drowned consciously in the Nile in 130 B.C. believing in the superstition that this way he would favour his benefactor with the remaining years of his life. He was under 20 years of age and, of course, after this sacrifice Adrian deified him, established sanctuaries in his memory and minted coins bearing his figure.Thus, many of his statues adorn our museums nowadays and this one at Delphi is one of the best. The marble was varnished and looks like alabaster. The holes in his rich hair indicate that it was adorned with a golden wreath. His head inclines a little to the left, his look is romantic and somehow melancholic, the posture nonchalant and his body soft like a girl's.

Beside Antinoos, a portrait is displayed, a masterpiece in the history of depicting-plastics. It probably represents the Roman consul Titus Cointius Flaminius (2nd c. B.C.) regarded as the liberator of the Greeks from the Macedonian domination.

The circular marble altar comes from the sanctuary of Athena Pronaia. The embossment shows twelve girls in pairs decorating a garland from leaves surrounding the altar. On the wall to the left of the entrance expands the frieze from the front of the stage of the theatre with Hercules labours (2nd c. B.C.) and higher up a Latin inscription referring to the repair of the temple by emperor Domitian (84 A.D.).

Continuing, we enter the hall of the renowned Charioteer (XIII), an exquisite piece of the beginning of the 5th c. B.C., i.e. the austere rhythm, which denotes the transition from the archaic to the classical art. The Charioteer was part of a bronze complex which, according to the prevailing view, was dedicated to Apollo by Polyzalos, tyrant of Gela in Sicily, in commemoration of his victory in the chariot race in the Pythian Games in 478 or 474 B.C. The complex represented the Charioteer standing on the four-horse drawn chariot right after his victory.



Details from the Charioteer



On the head he bears the victor's band decorated with meanderings and he is still holding the reins in his hands. He is dressed in a robe fixed on the chest with two strips running under the armpits and crossing on the back so that the robe does not swell from the wind during the race. His very lively eyes are inlaid from white enamel and brown stone, and the eyelashes are from bronze line while two sheets of reddish bronze would emphasise his sensuous lips. His arms and legs are very realistic.

His bearing is stately as he is doing the round of triumph. On his face we can see the serious expression of the winner after the tension of the race. His features are very idealised because the Charioteer is not a portrait. The artist did not aim at expressing a spur of the moment; on the contrary, he tried to create the eternal, immortal, diachronic symbol of power, beauty and the grandeur of the victor in the noble games. Unfortunately, this artist is unknown.

Pieces from the horses and the reins of the chariot as well as the arm of the little groom who guided the horses outside the hippodrome are exhibited in the showcase on the right. Beside is the stone-plinth from the base with the dedicatory illegible inscription.

In the last hall (XIV) findings dated from the last centuries of the life of the Sanctuary are exhibited.

Distinguished are the column that bore the bust of Plutarch (50 - 125 A.D.), author and life-priest of Apollo (the inscription with his name is preserved), and the marble bust of a bearded man with a stochastic expression.

It is a wonderful piece of a philosopher, priest or official, of the last representatives of the Hellenic-Roman world in the 3rd c. B.C., when the sanctuary lives its last flash before its setting.

Finally, the depictions of the mosaic floor we can see on the right of the staircase leading to the entrance of the Museum express in the most representative manner the transition of the most renowned sanctuary of the ancient times from idolatry to Christianity.

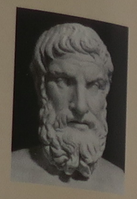


Details from the Charioteer



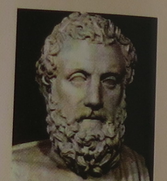
REFERENCES

NAMES AND TERMS INTERPRETATION



THE EPICUREANS

Followers and successors of philosopher Epicures (341 - 270 B.C.). The school he established in Athens and was called kepos (garden) worked for 227 years. The Epicureans believed that the utmost wealth is pleasure, which meant spiritual growth and practice of merit as well as elimination of struggle and pain. They also fought against superstitions and the belief in supernatural intervention.



THE SEVEN AGAINST THEBES

A tragedy by Aeschylus describing the dispute between the sons of Oedipus. Polynikes along with six other polemarchs from the Peloponnese besieged Thebes, aiming at his brother's, Eteocles, throne.



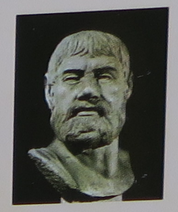
HEROD ATTICUS

A noble Athenian from Marathon, philosopher, orator and great benefactor of Athens and many other Greek towns and sanctuaries. He lived in the 2nd c. B.C.



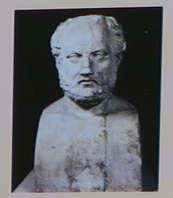
PANKRATION

A composite event in the Pan Hellenic Games combining wrestling and boxing.



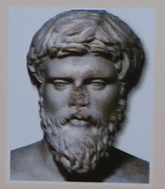
PAUSANIAS

Ancient traveller from Magnesia in Asia Minor who lived in the 2nd c. B.C. His book, 'Sightseeing Greece' constitutes a valuable source of information on archaeology, history, mythology and geography.



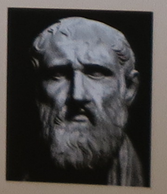
THE PELOPONNESIAN WAR

Disastrous for the whole of Greece, the war between Athens and Sparta involved all their allies (431 - 404 B.C.) and resulted in the defeat of Athens. This war was reported by the founder of the scientific method of historical research, Thucydides, who had actively participated as an Athenian general.



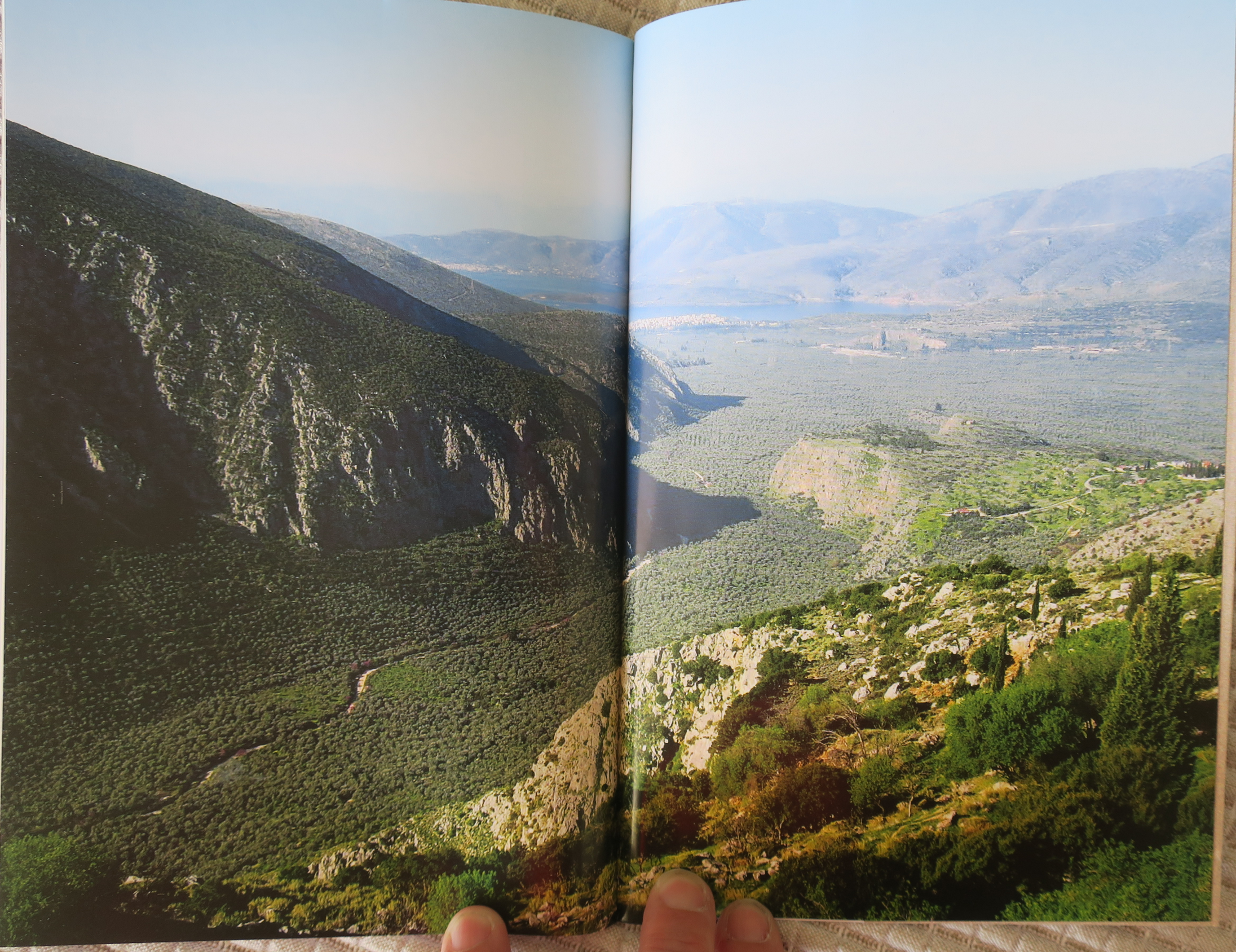
PLUTARCH

Ancient Greek prose-writer (45 - 120 A.D.).



THE STOICS

Followers of the philosophic school founded by Zenon (from Kitio, Cyprus) in Athens in 315 B.C. They were called the Stoics after the 'Poikily Stoa' where he used to teach. They believed that the order of the world is rational and right and adopted its fatalistic acceptance and heroic subordination to it. That is why they led an austere and ascetic life. Prominent representatives of the Stoic Philosophy were Epictetus, Seneca and Markus Aurelius.





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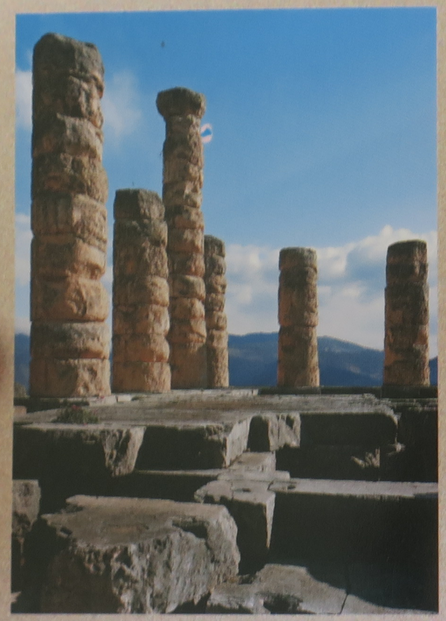
Delphi





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