State Pilgrims and Sacred Observers in Ancient Greece

For at least a thousand years Greek cities took part in religious activities outside their territory by sending sacred delegates to represent them. The delegates are usually called theōroi, literally ‘observers’, and a delegation made up of theōroi, or the action of taking part in one, is called theōriā. This is the first comprehensive study of theōroi and theōriā. It examines a number of key functions of theōroi and explains who served in this role and what their activities are likely to have been, both on the journey and at the sanctuary. Other chapters discuss the diplomatic functions of theōroi, and what their activities tell us about the origins of the notion of Greek identity and about religious networks. Chapters are also devoted to the reception of the idea of theōriā in Greek philosophy and literature. The book will be essential for all scholars and advanced students of ancient religion.

IAN RUTHERFORD is Professor in the Classics Department, University of Reading. He works mostly on Greek poetry, Greek religion and relations between Greece and other cultures: chiefly the Hittites and Egypt. He has published extensively on ‘pilgrimage’ in the ancient world (e.g. Seeing the God: Patterns of Pilgrimage in Graeco-Roman and Early Christian Antiquity, co-edited with Jaś Elsner, 2005) with a related interest in travelling poets (Wandering Poets in Ancient Greek Culture: Travel, Locality, and Pan-Hellenism, co-edited with Richard Hunter, 2009). He has also published a full commentary on Pindar’s Paeans (Pindar’s Paeans: A Reading of the Fragments with a Survey of the Genre, 2001) and has another volume forthcoming on Hittite and Greek religion.
State Pilgrims and Sacred Observers in Ancient Greece

A Study of Theōriā and Theōroi

IAN RUTHERFORD
In memory of my father Charles Simmers Rutherford
1925–1999
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Preface

In ancient Athens, the time for the dispatch of the sacred embassy to Delphi known as the *Pūthaïs* was determined by people who on certain days of the year watched for the sign of lightning over a place called Harma (ʼChariotʼ) on Mt Parnes. The sign appeared so seldom that ὅταν διʼ Ἅρματος ἀστράψηι (ʼWhen the lightning flashes across Harmaʼ) became a proverbial expression for something happening rarely or late.¹ The same expression could perhaps be used for books that have taken a very long time to gestate.

I started thinking about this subject as long ago as the late 1980s, at a time when I was working on Pindar’s *Paeans*, many of which were performed by choruses accompanying sacred delegations sent to national sanctuaries. I remember being struck then by the absence of a comprehensive study of *theōriā*, and in a youthful way that now makes me smile wondering whether this meant that there wasn’t much of a subject there. Undeterred, I began the project when I was a Junior Fellow at the Center for Hellenic Studies in 1992–3, under the nurturing supervision of Debbie Boedeker and Kurt Rauflaub. The fact that it has taken so long to complete is partly to be attributed to my having not infrequently become distracted by other commitments, but mainly it is because the scope turned out to be far greater than I had originally anticipated, requiring familiarity with more periods, subdisciplines and theoretical paradigms than I had bargained on. Looking back on it now, the fact that I have learnt so much in the process of writing it is some compensation for the length of time it took.

Adequately to acknowledge, still less to pay back, all the debts I’ve incurred would be impossible, and to do it systematically would mean distinguishing debts of different sorts. I have to admit that in general I learn most from people who disagree with me, which means that some of the people listed below may be surprised to be included. For many years Barbara Kowalzig’s intellectual interests have seemed to run parallel with, and occasionally intersect with, my own, and if writing this book has been my *agōn*, she deserves credit as the *theōros*. I owe a great debt also to Jas Elsner, with whom I shared the happy task of editing a volume of essays on

¹ See §11.1, pp.176–7 below.
ancient pilgrimage a decade ago, and who has always gone out of his way to convince me that this was a project worth completing. Above all, I'd like to express my thanks to the late Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood, my colleague at Reading from 1995 till 1998, but who was a sort of intellectual arkhíthēòros for me from when we met in 1985 till her death in 2007. Christiane enthused me with her passion for ancient Greek culture, tried to communicate to me something of her own exacting methodological rigour, and, above all, gave me the confidence to believe that maybe I too could make a contribution.

The most appropriate order for the names of my other thankees would probably be a sequence of broad geographical trajectories, like the Delphic Theōrodokoi List (see pp.74–5), but in the end it seemed easier to use the conventional, alphabetic method. In different ways and for different reasons I am indebted to Sanna Aro, Emma Aston, Lukia Athanassaki, Sandra Blakeley, Ewen Bowie, Jan Bremmer, Felix Budelmann, Miriam Carlisle, Paola Ceccarelli, Angelos Chaniotis, Elena Chepel, Willy Cingano, Bruno Currie, Giambattista D’Alessio, John Davies, Matthew Dillon, Stephen Durnford, Elena Chepel, Arnold Enklaar, Lucy Fletcher, Fritz Graf, Julia Griffin, Theodora Hadjimichael, Albert Henrichs, Liz Irwin, Vicky Jefferson, Theodora Jim, Christopher Jones, Athena Kavoulaki, James Ker, Julia Kindt, Troels Myrup Kristensen, Leslie Kurke, Robin Lane-Fox, Jane Lightfoot, John Ma, William Mack, Paraskevi Martzavou, David Mitten, John D. Morgan (to whose careful reading of the proofs I am much indebted), Fred Naiden, Andrea Nightingale, Dirk Obbink, Jacques Oulhen, Robert Parker, Elena Partida, Natasha Peponi, Georgia Petridou, Ivana Petrovic, Verity Platt, Lucia Prauscello, Tessa Rajak, Kent Rigsby, Peter Rhodes, Scott Scullion, the late Charlie Segal, Michael Sharp, Julia Shear, Amy Smith, Philip Smither, Sari Takacs, Rosalind Thomas, Ken Walton and Peter Wilson. I'd also like to thank all my colleagues at the University of Reading for putting up with me during the final stages. Thanks also to the readers of Cambridge University Press, who improved the book and saved me from some serious mistakes.

Long ago, Harvard’s Loeb Fund made it possible for me to engage in practical theōriā of some relevant sites, the most exotic of which was the oracle of Ammon in the Siwa Oasis (I recommend this trip to anyone who doubts whether there was such a thing as pilgrimage in the ancient world). The AHRC (or AHRB as it then was) gave me a fellowship to work on the project some more in 2000–1, and I also received two awards from the University of Reading, the more recent one in 2011, engineered by Peter
Kruschwitz, *vir versutus*, when the penultimate draft was written. Florida State University were also generous in their support when I was a visiting professor there in 2004. I owe a huge debt too to the Sackler Library at Oxford and its long-suffering staff, and ultimately to the Sackler Foundation.

Over the years, I have published a number of papers on *theōriā* and related subjects, often as the result of contributions to conferences. Some of these were points of punctuation in the otherwise even evolution of my thinking on the subject (the ‘Music and the Muses’ conference at Warwick in 1999, organised by Peter Wilson and Penny Murray stands out in my mind). However, comparing my articles with the book, I am surprised how few of them overlap with it significantly. In retrospect, some of these pieces turn out to have been merely thought-experiments to see how far I could push one particular approach, and now I find I’ve changed my mind. Not everything stands the test of time, though with any luck some of it will.

Despite all the acknowledgements, I am entirely responsible for all errors. I doubt whether I’ve said the last word on *theōriā* (in fact, I hope I haven’t), but it’s a wonderful subject which deserves a lot more attention than it has hitherto received. If the book stimulates the imagination of students of the subject in the future, I’ll think it was well worth the effort.
Abbreviations

Abbreviations of journal titles follow L’Année Philologique. Readers should notice in particular the conventions in use for several recent works which contain corpora of inscriptions: Aneziri for the Dionysiac Artists, Clinton for Eleusis, Dimitrova for Samothrace, Lhôte for Dodona, PerlmanEC for the theārodokoi of the Peloponnese, RigsbyA for asylia inscriptions.

Aneziri        S. Aneziri, Die Vereine der dionysischen Techniten im Kontext der hellenistischen Gesellschaft; Stuttgart, 2003
App.           Appendix of Texts
BE             Bulletin Épigraphique, published yearly in Revue des Études Grecques
Carie          L. Robert and J. Robert, La Carie. Histoire et géographie historique avec le recueil des inscriptions antiques. II. Le plateau de Tabai et ses environs; Paris, 1954
CID            Corpus des inscriptions de Delphes
CID1           G. Rougemont, Corpus des inscriptions de Delphes. I. Lois sacrées et règlements religieux; Paris, 1977
CID2           J. Bousquet, Corpus des inscriptions de Delphes. II. Les comptes du quatrième et du troisième siècle; Paris, 1989
CID4           F. Lefèvre, Corpus des inscriptions de Delphes. IV. Documents amphictioniques; Paris, 2002
CIS            Corpus inscriptionum semiticarum; Paris, 1881–xxi
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<td>CPG</td>
<td>E. von Leutsch and F. W. Schneidewin eds., <em>Corpus Paroemiographorum Graecorum</em>; Hildesheim 1808–87</td>
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<tr>
<td>Didyma</td>
<td>A. Rehm and R. Harder, <em>Didyma. II. Die Inschriften</em>; Berlin, 1958</td>
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<td>DTL</td>
<td>Delphic Theòrodokoi List; citations follow the unpublished doctoral thesis of J. Oulhen (1992); see §5.2.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>EAA</td>
<td>Enciclopedia dell’arte antica, classica e orientale (7 vols.); Rome, 1958–66</td>
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<tr>
<td>FD</td>
<td><em>Fouilles de Delphes</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>FGrH</td>
<td>F. Jacoby, <em>Die Fragmenten der griechischen Historiker</em>; Berlin, 1923–58</td>
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<tr>
<td>FHG</td>
<td>C. and T. Müller eds., <em>Fragmenta Historicorum Graecorum</em> (5 vols.); Paris, 1843–70</td>
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List of abbreviations


GD (Musée) Guide de Delphes. Le Musée (École Française d’Athènes, sites et monuments VI); Paris, 1991

GD (Site) J.-F. Bommelaer and D. Laroche, Guide de Delphes. Le site (École Française d’Athènes, Sites et monuments VII); Paris, 1991

IACP M. H. Hansen and T. Nielsen eds., An Inventory of Archaic and Classical Poleis; Oxford, 2004


ICret M. Guarducci, Inscriptiones Creticae Opera et Consilio Friederici Halbherr Collectae, I–IV; Rome, 1935–50


IG Inscriptiones Graecae; Berlin, 1873–

I.Gonnoi B. Helly, Gonnoi. II. Les inscriptions; Amsterdam, 1973

I.Iasos W. Blümel, Die Inschriften von Iasos (2 vols. IK 28.1–2); Bonn, 1985

I.Ilion P. Frisch, Die Inschriften von Ilion (IK 3); Bonn, 1975

IK Inschriften griechischer Städte aus Kleinasien; Bonn, 1972–

I.Kaunos C. Marek, Die Inschriften von Kaunos; Munich, 2006

I.Magnesia O. Kern, Die Inschriften von Magnesia am Maeander; Berlin, 1900


I.Olympia W. Dittenberger and K. Purgold, Olympia: Die Ergebnisse der Ausgrabung. V. Die Inschriften; Berlin, 1896
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<td>F. B. Poljakov, <em>Die Inschriften von Tralles und Nysa</em> (IK 36); Bonn, 1989</td>
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<td>LGPN</td>
<td><em>Lexicon of Greek Personal Names</em>; Oxford, 1987–</td>
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<td>LGPN I</td>
<td>P. M. Fraser and E. Matthews eds., <em>The Aegean Islands, Cyprus Cyrenaica</em>; Oxford, 1987</td>
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<td>P. M. Fraser and E. Matthews eds., <em>Central Greece: From the Megarid to Thessaly</em>; Oxford, 2000</td>
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<td>LGPN IV</td>
<td>P. M. Fraser and E. Matthews eds., R. W. V. Catling asst ed., <em>Macedonia Thrace, Northern Regions of the Black Sea</em>; Oxford, 2005</td>
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List of abbreviations

LSCG  F. Sokolowski, Lois sacrées des cités grecques; Paris, 1969


LSS  F. Sokolowski, Lois sacrées des cités grecques, Supplément; Paris, 1962

Milet I, 3  A. Rehm ed., 'Die Inschriften' in G. Kawerau and A. Rehm eds., Das Delphinion in Milet; Berlin, 1914, 162–442 (nn. 31–186)

Milet VI, 1  P. Hermann, Nachträge und Übersetzungen zu den Inschriften n.1–406 in Milet VI. Inschriften von Milet. Teil 1; Berlin, 1997


ML  R. Meiggs and D. Lewis, A Selection of Greek Historical Inscriptions to the End of the Fifth Century BC; Oxford, 1969


OED  Oxford English Dictionary

OMS  L. Robert, Opera Minora Selecta: épigraphie et antiquités grecques (7 vols.); Amsterdam, 1969–90

POxy.  Oxyrhynchus Papyrus


PEP  Princeton Epigraphical Project
List of abbreviations


PEP (Teos) D. F. McCabe and M. A. Plunkett, *Teos Inscriptions. Texts and List* (printout from computerised list, given limited circulation, 1985)

PerlmanEC Epigraphic Catalogue in P. Perlman, *City and Sanctuary in Ancient Greece: the Theorodokia in the Peloponnese* (Hypomnemata 121); Göttingen, 2000: 171–245

PerlmanPC Prosopographical Catalogue in id.:247–85


Pūthaīs 1, i.e. the first revived Athenian Pūthaīs to Delphi sent in 138/7 BC

Pūthaīs 2, i.e. the second revived Athenian Pūthaīs to Delphi sent in 128/7 BC

Pūthaīs 3, i.e. the third revived Athenian Pūthaīs to Delphi sent in 106/5 BC

Pūthaīs 4, i.e. the fourth revived Athenian Pūthaīs to Delphi sent in 98/7 BC


RAC Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum; Stuttgart, 1950–

RE Pauly's Real-Encyclopädie der klassischen Altertumswissenschaft

RigsbyA Asylia decrees according to the enumeration of K. J. Rigsby, *Asyla: Territorial Inviolability in the Hellenistic World*; Berkeley, 1996


SEG *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum*; Leiden, 1923–


List of abbreviations


SIG3  W. Dittenberger and F. Hiller von Gaertringen eds., *Sylloge Inscriptiorum Graecarum* 3; Leipzig, 1915–24


ThesCRA  Thesaurus Cultus et Rituum Antiquorum; Basel, 2004–


ThesCRA IV (2005): Cult Places Representations of Cult Places

ThesCRA VI (forthcoming) Stages and Circumstances of Life. Work, Hunting, Travel

ThesCRA VII (2011) Festivals and Contests

TitCal  M. Segre, ’Tituli Calymnii’, *ASAtene* 22–3 (= N.S. 6–7), 1944–5

