INTRODUCTION

1 THE HOMERIC HYMNS

(a) Nature and purpose

The three poems studied in this book belong to a collection of thirty-three hymns in hexameter verse, composed in honour of ancient Greek gods and goddesses. Their title in the manuscripts is Ὁμήρου ὕμνοι. They vary considerably in length. In the collection as we have it, the four longest hymns, to Demeter (495 lines), Apollo (546 lines), Hermes (580 lines), and Aphrodite (293 lines), are preceded by the last section of a hymn to Dionysus, which originally must also have been a longer one. (For a possible reconstruction of this hymn see West (2001b); cf. also Dihle (2002) for a contrary view.) Of the others, the longest (*H.* 7, also to Dionysus) is fifty-nine lines, the shortest (*H.* 13, to Demeter) only three. Several deities are the subject of more than one hymn, and a few are short pieces composed of extracts from longer poems (13, 17, and 18 from the longer hymns to Demeter, the Dioscuri, and Hermes, and 25 from Hesiod's *Theogony*).

Most of these poems probably belong to the 'Archaic' period, i.e. between *c.* 700 and 500 BC, but some appear to be later in date. An Attic vase painting of *c.* 470 BC shows a boy holding a papyrus-roll, on which are written what appear to be the opening two words of *Hymn* 18. It has been inferred that some at least of the hymns could have already been used as school texts at this time (cf. *H. Herm.* 1n.). Our earliest explicit reference to one of the hymns is by Thucydides (3.104), who quotes two passages from the *Hymn to Apollo* (146–50 and 165–72), ascribes it to Homer, and calls it a προοίμιον (prelude). Later writers, however, from the second century AD onwards, express doubts about Homer's authorship of the *Hymns*. Athenaeus (22B) attributes the *Hymn to Apollo* to 'Homer or one of the Homeridae', and a scholiast to Pindar, *Nemean* 2.1 ascribes it to a rhapsode named Cynaethus (cf. 2(b) below). *Hymn* 2 is quoted by a scholiast to Nicander (*Alex.* 130) as 'among the hymns ascribed to Homer', and some of the *Lives of Homer* assert that only the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are definitely Homer's own work (cf. *Vita* v, p. 248.19–24, *Plutarchi Vita* p. 243–4.98–100, *Suda* p. 258.37–8 Allen). Alexandrian scholarship does not often refer to the *Hymns*, and this suggests that by the Hellenistic period, if not before, their authenticity as Homeric was questioned (cf. AHS pp. lxxix–lxxxi).

The passages quoted by Thucydides from the *Hymn to Apollo* describe a Pan-Ionian festival of this god on Delos, and the poet's own request to the Delian girls who are Apollo's attendants, to commemorate him as a blind man who lives in Chios and to praise him as the best of singers (cf. 140–78, 146–72, 165–76nn.). The poem therefore is set dramatically at the festival which is being described, and the poet's claim suggests, as Thucydides infers (3.104.5), performance of

this hymn at a poetic contest. In a similar way, *Hymn* 6 closes with a prayer to Aphrodite to grant the singer 'victory in this contest' (19–20), and several others end by asking the deity to grant favour or honour to the poet's song (10.4, 24.5, 25.6). The reference in the *Hymn to Apollo* to the singer's blindness also places him in the tradition of the Homeric bard (such as the blind Demodocus) who composed and performed without a written text.

Thucydides' use of the form προοίμιον has led scholars to conclude that hymns of this kind were (originally at least) composed as preludes to further song. The traditional closing formula αὐτὰρ ἐγὼ καὶ σεῖο καὶ ἄλλης μνήσομ' ἀοιδῆς (*H.* 2.495, 3.546, 4.580, etc.), whatever its precise translation should be, suggests this (cf. *H. Ap.* 546n.), and the close of *Hymn* 5 (293 = *H.* 9.9, 18.11) σεῦ δ' ἐγὼ ἀρξάμενος μεταβήσομαι ἄλλον ἐς ὕμνον is still more explicit. The hymns to Sun and Moon (31 and 32) end by declaring that the singer will go on to tell of the deeds of heroes. These two poems may be composed later than most of the others, but they reflect a tradition that such preludes could be followed by heroic epic narrative. An alternative opening line to the *Iliad* invokes Apollo as well as the Muses (Μούσας ἀείδω καὶ Ἀπόλλωνα κλυτότοξον). In the *Odyssey* Demodocus is said to begin a song 'from the god' (*Od.* 8.499): this has also been taken to indicate an opening invocation or prelude to a deity. Both Hesiod's *Theogony* and *Works and Days* open with hymns, to the Muses and to Zeus respectively, and the one to the Muses is of considerable length (cf. West on *Theogony* 1–115). Pindar (*N.* 2.1–3) speaks of the Homeridae beginning Διὸς ἐκ προοιμίου. This statement occasions a lengthy commentary by a scholiast about the Homeridae, in the course of which Cynaethus is named as author of the *Hymn to Apollo*. Tradition then seems to have associated the *Hymns* with the Homeridae (cf. also Athenaeus above), a group or guild of singers based in Chios, claiming links with Homer either as his descendants or as his followers (cf. Graziosi (2002) 201–34).

Something similar to the practice of singing hexameter hymns as preludes to epic song is described in the *Hymn to Apollo*, when the poet praises the Delian girls' choir. He says that they first sing hymns to Apollo, Leto, and Artemis, and then 'a song in praise of men and women of old' (cf. 158–61n.).

In the case of most of the shorter hymns, their original purpose as preludes has been generally accepted. Scholars have sometimes questioned whether the longer ones were really composed for this purpose, or rather were independent compositions, the term 'prelude' having lost its original meaning (cf. AHS xciii–xcv). But their length is not in itself an argument against their being designed as genuine preludes, if we consider for example the much larger scale of some early epic poems, which could have followed them. The longer hymns may, of course, represent a development from an earlier tradition of short ones. But some of the briefer ones, as mentioned above, are simply abbreviated versions of the longer hymns: so this process could go the other way (cf. also West on Hesiod *Th.* 94–7).

It is reasonable to assume that many at least of these hymns were originally composed for performance at a festival. It is often thought that an individual

hymn was designed to honour the god of the festival concerned. This may have been so, but it cannot be proved. In any case, it is clear that these poems continued to be reused over a period of time, since the manuscript tradition contains many variant readings, as with the Homeric epics (see Janko (1982) 2–4). In particular, Thucydides' text of the passages he quotes from the *Hymn to Apollo* differs considerably from that of our medieval manuscripts (see 146–72n.), and there are also cases where lines are quoted which appear to be alternatives (cf. especially on *H. Ap.* 135–9, where some of our texts have marginal signs, probably indicating this). Such re-performances could have been in different types of context from the original ones, as in the case of epic poetry (see Parker (1991) 1–2). Performance at banquets or *symposia* has also been suggested as a possible type of occasion (Clay (2006) 7). The longer *Hymn to Aphrodite* (*H.* 5) could have been composed for performance at the court of a ruler, as in the case of Demodocus' 'Song of Ares and Aphrodite' in *Odyssey* 8.

(b) Origins of the collection

We do not know how this collection of hymns came to have its present form. Whereas Thucydides identifies the *Hymn to Apollo* with the name προοίμιον, from at least the first century BC we find quotations from the longer hymns which refer to them as ὕμνοι of Homer (e.g. Diodorus Siculus 1.15.7, 3.66.3, 4.2.4, Philodemus, *On Piety* p. 42, tab. 91, vv. 12ff. Gomperz). This suggests that an edition of these at least was made by some time in the Hellenistic period. At *H. Ap.* 136–9 the marginal signs mentioned above probably derive from Alexandrian scholarship (see *H. Ap.* 135–9n.). Most of the ancient quotations or allusions to the *Hymns* are from the five longer ones. Schol. Pind. *P.* 3.14, however, quotes *H.* 16.1–3 as ἐν τοῖς Ὁμηρικοῖς ὕμνοις. This shows that by the time of this commentator the collection already included this shorter hymn. A second-century AD papyrus commentary on a comedy (*P.Oxy.* 2737, fr. 1.i.19–27) assigns the phrase κύκνος ὑπὸ πτερύγων (*H.* 21.1) to the 'hymns ascribed to Homer', after discussing attributions of it to various lyric poets by Aristarchus and other scholars. Moreover, a papyrus of the third century AD (*P.Oxy.* 4667) contains lines 4–11 of *Hymn* 18 (to Hermes), followed by two lines in prose, the second of which may possibly read εἰς Διόνυ]σον ὕμν[ος, and then lines 1–11 of *Hymn* 7 (to Dionysus). It is not clear why these two hymns are quoted, but the papyrus again shows that some of the shorter hymns were being discussed or quoted by this period. (It is interesting that this papyrus omits line 12 of *Hymn* 18, which had been regarded by some modern editors as a doublet of lines 10–11.)

We can see some principles at work in the ordering of the poems as we have them (cf. Van der Valk (1976), Fröhder (1994) 14–15 n. 1, Torres-Guerra (2003), West (2003) 21). After the first five long hymns comes the second one to Aphrodite (twenty-one lines), evidently as a pendant to the first, and then the second to Dionysus (fifty-nine lines), which contains an extended narrative of

Dionysus' capture by pirates, and so is probably grouped with the other major hymns. *Hymn* 8 to Ares has always been considered as an 'odd one out', since its language and style are completely different. It has been attributed to the fifth-century AD Neoplatonist Proclus (West (1970)), but differs from his hymns in several respects (cf. Devlin (1995) 338–42). But it was clearly composed in the Roman period. At some point the *Homeric Hymns* were combined with the *Orphic Argonautica*, and the *Hymns* of Proclus and Callimachus, in a single edition (cf. 5 below). It is still a matter for debate as to whether the inclusion of the *Hymn to Ares* with the Homeric ones was due to deliberate choice at this stage of editing, or a later accident of transmission (cf. West (1970), Gelzer (1987) and (1994) 125–9).

The shorter hymns (9–33) are ordered to some extent in groups: 9–14 are to goddesses, 15–17 to deified heroes, 18–23 to gods, and 27–30 are for goddesses. *H.* 30 (to Earth) also goes with 31–2 (to Sun and Moon) as hymns to cosmic deities. *H.* 33 (to the Dioscuri) may possibly fit in with this group, as it praises especially their elemental character as the calmers of storms at sea. *H.* 19 (to Pan) is a more elaborate composition of forty-nine lines, which follows directly after 18, the second hymn to Hermes, as Pan is Hermes' son.

For the later transmission of the *Hymns* see 6 below.

(c) Structure and themes

The shortest hymn (13) consists of two lines announcing its subject (Demeter and her daughter Persephone), and a closing verse saluting Demeter, and asking her to keep the city safe and begin the poet's song. The two deities are briefly characterised with epithets of praise.

The other short hymns add more information about the deity, often by means of a relative clause. Many of these describe typical activities and attributes in the present tense, but some have a narrative development in past tenses, and in some cases we also find variation between past and present. The enduring character of the god can be linked with certain past actions or events, or alternatively a narrative section can culminate in a description of how he now is, after these developments. Nearly all the hymns end with a closing verse or verses saluting the god, usually coupled with a prayer, and often also a transitional formula to another story.

This simple and basic structure forms the framework in which a longer narrative can be developed, as in *Hymns* 1–7. These poems (with their traditional epic style and language) resemble miniature epics, telling stories about the gods. Foremost among the themes of these is the god's birth, and then often how they acquired their distinctive powers or spheres of action (cf. *H. Hermes* 428 ὡς τὰ πρῶτα γένοντο καὶ ὡς λάχε μοῖραν ἕκαστος). The birth-narrative can be complicated, involving concealment or hostility (as with Apollo, Hermes, or the Dioscuri). It may also have wider or cosmic repercussions, as with Athene's birth fully armed from the head of Zeus (*H.* 28), or when the island of Delos greets Apollo's birth by covering herself in golden flowers (*H. Ap.* 135–9).

Birth can be followed directly by the god's assuming his powers (e.g. *H. Ap.* 127–32), or performing exploits (*H. Herm.* 17–23). It can also lead directly to another major theme, the introduction of the new deity to the company of the gods on Olympus, as for example in the miniature hymn of the nymphs, within the *Hymn to Pan* (19.28–47), where they describe how Hermes immediately takes his newborn son and introduces him to the other gods. This theme can be used in a wider variety of ways. In the short *Hymn to Heracles* (15), since Heracles is a mortal, life on Olympus and marriage come as a reward at the end, after his Labours. In the longer *Hymn to Demeter*, Persephone is picking flowers on earth when she is carried off by Hades, and Demeter deserts Olympus and creates a famine on earth, forcing Zeus to order Persephone's rescue. At the end of the hymn both goddesses go up to Olympus and live there (483–6), but Persephone must still spend part of the year in the Underworld (cf. 393–403). In the *Hymn to Hermes*, by a typically comic twist, Hermes' first entry to Olympus occurs when his brother Apollo takes him there in order to accuse him before Zeus of stealing his cattle (322–96). After the return of the stolen goods and their reconciliation the two brothers go back to Olympus and are welcomed there by Zeus (504–7).

The *Hymn to Apollo* makes a double use of this theme, in an original and powerful way. The poem opens dramatically with the scene of Apollo's entry to Zeus's palace, as an archer with his bow drawn, causing consternation among the gods until Leto unstrings the bow and leads him to a seat (1–13). The theme recurs as a prelude to the account of the founding of the Pythian oracle: here Apollo is portrayed as a god of music, going up to Olympus from Pytho (i.e. Delphi), and leading the gods there in music and dancing (182–206).

Another natural development after birth is the god's nursing or upbringing, usually by other divine beings. Apollo is bathed and wrapped in swaddling-clothes by the goddesses present at his birth, and then fed on nectar and ambrosia by Themis (123–5). Dionysus in *Hymn* 26 (3–6) is nursed by the nymphs in the glens of Nysa, and then roams with them through the wilds. In *Hymn* 6 Aphrodite's birth is suggested, as the sea foam (in which she was traditionally born) carries her to Cyprus, where the Seasons clothe her and adorn her with jewellery, after which she is introduced to the other immortals. By contrast, Hermes does not stay in his cradle after his birth, but immediately sets off in search of Apollo's cattle (*H. Herm.* 20–3). Divine nursing is also a motif transferred to specially favoured mortals, such as Demophon, the nursling of Demeter, whom she tries to immortalise (*H. Dem.* 219–91), and Aeneas, who as Aphrodite's son will be brought up by the nymphs (*H. Aph.* 256–75). Sometimes such divine attendants become the god's habitual companions, as in the case of Dionysus and the nymphs of Nysa, or Pan with his nymphs, who also praise his birth (*H.* 19.19–47), or Persephone picking flowers with the Oceanids when she is carried off (*H. Dem.* 5–18).

The *Hymns* are primarily concerned with the divine world, like Hesiod's *Theogony*. Consequently their portrayal of the world of mortals and of the interaction between gods and men is understandably different in some ways from

what we find in the Homeric epics, although broadly speaking the divine society of these epics is the same as that of the *Hymns*. But the gods' interaction with mortals is an important aspect of these poems, especially the longer ones. The *Hymn to Hermes* is unusual in that only one mortal character actually appears in the narrative, an anonymous old farmer, who does however play an important role as the witness of Hermes' cattle-theft (87–94, 185–212, 354–5). The Greek gods were traditionally ambivalent towards mortals, conscious of their own vast superiority but at the same time unable to detach themselves from the human world, and also reliant on their worship and sacrifices, if not physically then at least for prestige and honour. When Demeter's famine robs the gods of sacrifices on earth this creates a crisis in heaven and Zeus is compelled to intervene (*H. Dem.* 305–41).

Naturally also the poets and their audiences who are seeking the favour of the gods will tend to speak of the honours men pay them and of their favourite sanctuaries, as was the case in prayers to the gods from Homer onwards. In several of the *Hymns* the deities are described as visiting their special places of cult. Some take this theme an important stage further, as they tell of how a major cult was first instituted. Much of the *Hymn to Demeter* is concerned with Demeter's favourable reception at Eleusis and its consequences, leading to her command to the Eleusinians to build her a temple and altar there. In this temple she remains until Persephone's return to the upper world, and then at the close of the poem she teaches her secret rites (the Eleusinian Mysteries) to the leaders of the people. The poem thus asserts the special status of Eleusis as a (or the) leading centre for the cult of Demeter and Persephone. In a similar way Leto promises Delos that Apollo will build his first temple on the island, and Delos is said to be his favourite place of worship (49–88, 143–8). This is counterbalanced by the narrative of how he came to choose Pytho as an oracular site, and appoint his first priests there.

This theme of the institution of cult is closely linked to that of the god's epiphany, or his appearance in true form to men, which is often the signal for cult or worship. When Aphrodite comes in disguise to Anchises his first response is to assume (correctly) that she is a goddess, and to promise to set up an altar and make regular sacrifices to her, in return for which he prays for her favour (*H. Aph.* 91–106). Later, after their union, Aphrodite reveals her true identity, but in this case, instead of this leading to cult, she foretells the birth of Aeneas and his future kingship (168–99). Aphrodite wants her liaison to remain a secret (281–8). When Demeter in disguise as an old woman sets foot on the threshold of the palace at Eleusis, her divinity is momentarily revealed in language very similar to that of Aphrodite's epiphany. Queen Metaneira is overcome by awe, reverence, and fear, and the following scene actually foreshadows some of the preliminary rituals of the Mysteries (*H. Dem.* 187–211; cf. Richardson ad loc.). Later Demeter reveals her true identity more explicitly both in words and in action, and this is accompanied by her command to set up her sanctuary and the promise to institute her rites (251–80).

In the *Hymn to Apollo*, the god's birth on Delos is followed by the elaborate description of the Delian festival (146–76), and although this is not portrayed as the direct consequence of his appearance, the association between the two events is evident, since it is because of Delos' reception of Leto and Apollo's birth there that this island has such a special status. The theme of the search for an oracular site later in this hymn is explicitly linked to a series of *aitia* for cults of the god, as Pythios, Telphousios, and Delphinios (cf. 371–4, 375–87, 486–510). The building of Apollo's temple at Delphi (281–99) is directly followed by the narrative of the killing of the Pythian serpent, and this in turn may be connected with the festivals commemorating this event, the Septerion and the Pythian Games (cf. *H. Ap.* 300–74, 357–62nn.). At the end of the poem the god reveals his identity to his future priests, sets up his cult on the shore of Crisa, and leads them in procession to the site of Delphi, where he commands them to take care of his worship (474–544).

Aetiology is a powerful factor in the shaping of these poems, not only on a religious level but also on a wider cultural plane. The *Hymn to Hermes* is rich in this respect, because of the god's ingenuity and inventiveness (see 3(f) below). Equally, it seems probable that a major impetus for the creation of the longer *Hymn to Aphrodite* is the wish to account for the origin of the family of Aeneas as rulers of the Trojans in later times (cf. 4(a) and (b) below, and *H. Aph.* 196–7n.). On a broader level, the *Hymns*, especially the narrative ones, focus on the phase when the current divine order was being established, and help to account for this. They can be fitted in mythologically between the earlier cosmogonic eras which the *Theogony* includes, and the heroic age reflected in the Homeric epics (cf. Clay (2006)).

The *Hymns* also explore the relationship between the divine and human worlds, and they emphasise both the gulf between gods and men, and also their closeness in some ways. Demeter's wish to immortalise the child Demophon is thwarted as a result of human folly, because Metaneira spies on her, although he is promised an annual commemorative festival (*H. Dem.* 242–67). But the gift of the Mysteries offers men the hope of divine favour, both in this life and in life after death (473–82, 486–9). The *Hymn to Aphrodite* describes her power in mixing gods with mortals (34–41), and how she herself fell victim to this. But it also reflects on the limits of mortality. In her long final speech to Anchises the goddess says that his family was always close to the gods, and mentions the examples of Ganymede, who escaped old age and death, and Tithonus, less happy because he became immortal but not ageless. She would not wish such a fate for Anchises. Even the nymphs who will nurse Aeneas will eventually die, as the trees which share their life come to their natural ends (200–72).

The superiority of the gods is shown not only by their power and freedom from age and death, but also because of their greater knowledge of destiny. When Demeter is detected by Metaneira she laments the ignorance of mortals, who cannot foresee the future (*H. Dem.* 256–8), and in the *Hymn to Apollo* the Muses

sing of 'the gods' immortal gifts, and the sufferings of men, all that they have at the hands of deathless gods as they live in ignorance and helplessness, and cannot find a remedy for death or defence against old age' (189–93). In these various ways the *Hymns* explore the limitations of mortality, as well as portraying so vividly the nature of the gods.

By contrast, the closeness of men to the gods is beautifully illustrated in those scenes where their worship is described. In the picture of the Delian festival we are told that a spectator would believe the Ionians gathered there to be immortal and ageless (*H. Ap.* 151–2). In this hymn the scenes of music and singing both at Delos and also on the way up to Pytho are linked thematically with the singing and dancing of Apollo and the gods on Olympus (see 2(a) below). Within several of the *Hymns* the praise of the deities concerned is echoed internally by the songs sung either by gods or mortals (cf. *H. Ap.* 158–9, 516–19, *H. Herm.* 54–61, 424–33, *H.* 19.27–47, 27.18–20; cf. also *H.* 21.1–4, 30.13–16). The self-reflexive character of these poems suggests that the *Hymns* themselves, divinely inspired as they are, can bring their audiences closer to the heavenly realm.

In telling stories about the gods the *Hymns* follow many of the traditional conventions used by other early Greek hexameter poetry. But at the same time they show greater freedom when it comes to narrative realism (cf. Parker (1991) 4). For the first time in early poetry we meet a talking island (Delos) and fountain (Telphousa). The *Hymn to Hermes* is full of marvels and oddities, and in *Hymn* 7 to Dionysus, one of the most delightful and picturesque of all, a series of miracles takes place on the pirates' ship which is carrying Dionysus as a prisoner. Wine flows everywhere on board, a vine grows along the sail, ivy twines around the mast, and garlands decorate the rowlocks. The god becomes a roaring lion and creates a bear in the midst of the ship, and the pirates leap overboard and are turned into dolphins (34–53). As Parker says, the *Hymns* 'present divine myths . . . with all the freedom of fantasy that such serious subjects demand' (Parker (1991) 4).

In their richness of ornamental detail and also their language, the *Hymns* may be viewed as similar to some early lyric poetry, and in fact they could be located stylistically between Homeric and Hesiodic poetry on the one hand and lyric on the other. They also can evoke comparison with the Archaic art of the seventh and sixth centuries BC. The famous Exekias vase in Munich (*LIMC* s.v. Dionysus, no. 788, late sixth century), showing Dionysus on a ship beneath two spreading vines, with dolphins sporting in the sea, is a good example of how close the *Hymns* can come to visual art. The vivid description in *H.* 28 of Athena's birth, fully armed and brandishing her spear, from the head of Zeus is well illustrated by another famous early seventh-century amphora from Tenos (*LIMC* s.v. Athena, no. 360; cf. also some black-figure representations, such as nos. 345, 346, and 353). In their mixture of charm and seriousness the *Hymns* brilliantly portray the double character of the Greek gods, as both benevolent and awe-inspiring. Throughout them runs a strong sense of delight and joy in the natural world, of whose powers the gods are the manifestation. For this reason these

poems from a remote past still speak to us today so vividly and with so clear a voice.

On structure and themes see also Danielewicz (1973) and (1976), Lenz (1975), Janko (1981), Sowa (1984), Parker (1991), Fröhder (1994), Calame (1995), Devlin (1995) 31–81, Clay (2006). On the theme of epiphany see also Garcia (2002). Narrative technique is discussed by Nünlist (2004). On ancient Greek hymns in general see Devlin (1995), Haubold (2001), and Furley and Bremer (2001).

2 HYMN TO APOLLO

(a) Structure

The hymn tells the story of the birth of Apollo, the god's foundation of his temple and oracle at Delphi, and his choice of Cretan merchants as his first priests there. The narrative is preceded by a dramatic prologue (1–18), which describes Apollo's entry to Zeus's palace on Olympus with his bow drawn, and his welcome by his parents, Zeus and Leto, and the other gods. This also forms a miniature hymn to Leto, as the mother of Apollo and Artemis.

The main narrative opens, after a brief survey of the range of themes for the god's praise, with a catalogue of islands and other landmarks around the Aegean, which were visited by Leto in her search for a birthplace. None would receive her, until she came to Delos, whose initial reluctance was overcome by the promise of a rich and famous cult of the new god (19–88). Because of Hera's jealousy the other goddesses summon Eileithyia secretly, and when she sets foot on Delos Leto gives birth to her son, who is fed on nectar and ambrosia by Themis, and immediately proclaims that he will be a god of the *kitharis*, the bow, and prophecy. Delos is covered in golden growth in response to his birth (89–139).

This opening movement of the narrative ends with a passage in which Apollo's special love of Delos is illustrated by a description of the Ionian festival in his honour there, and the choir of Delian girls who are attendants of the god and whose songs the poet praises. In return he asks them to praise him as the sweetest and best of singers, and proclaims himself as a blind man who lives in rocky Chios (140–78).

The second main theme, Apollo's search for a site for his oracular temple, is preceded (after a brief transitional passage, 179–85) like the first by a prologue which describes Apollo's arrival on Olympus, this time as god of music, and a splendid scene of the gods singing and dancing in response to his arrival, under the admiring eyes of Leto and Zeus (181–206). A short list of Apollo's love affairs is reviewed, only to be passed over in favour of the theme of the search (207–15). This is developed in a second geographical catalogue, describing Apollo's journey through the northern part of mainland Greece from Olympus until he finally reaches Crisa, the site of his future oracle (216–93). In the course of this he is dissuaded by the spring Telphousa from choosing her, because she wants to keep the honour of the place to herself (244–76). The god then founds his temple,

kills the serpent of the place, which is called Pytho, and takes the name Pythios (299–374). A parenthetic episode (305–55) describes how this serpent had been the nurse of the monster Typhaon, born to Hera because of her anger with Zeus over Athena's birth. Then Apollo returns to Telphousa, angry with her because she deceived him, covers her spring with rocks, and sets up his own altar there as Apollo Telphousios (375–87).

The third and final movement of the poem again begins with a lengthy geographical catalogue, this time describing the journey of the Cretan merchants round the Peloponnese and through the Gulf of Corinth to Crisa (388–439). Apollo sees their ship on its way from Cnossos to Pylos, appears to them in the form of a dolphin, and guides the ship to Crisa. He announces his arrival by taking the form of a shooting star at midday, and then meets them disguised as a young man and asks where they come from. He reveals his true identity, promises that they will be his priests, and instructs them to set up an altar to him on the shore as Delphinios, which they do (440–512). He then leads them up to Pytho, singing the paean and dancing, and assures them that they will always have an abundance of offerings to live off. He ends with a solemn warning that if they misbehave they will be subjected to others as their governors in future (513–44). The poet closes with a salute to Apollo and a formula of transition to another song (545–6).

Traditionally this hymn has been divided by scholars into two sections, the first describing Apollo's birth and the second being concerned with his oracle, and these have been labelled 'Delian' and 'Pythian'. Since David Ruhnken in 1782, a popular view has been that these were originally separate hymns, which were joined together at some date to form a new whole. It is certainly the case that the passage in which the poet salutes the Delian choir and speaks of himself bears some resemblance to an *envoi*. But it is also possible to see the hymn as falling into three main sections, each one being to some extent articulated by a geographical catalogue. Together these three catalogues make up the Greek world of the Aegean and northern and southern mainland Greece, which represents the range of Apollo's power (as described in 20–4, 140–5, and especially 248–52 and 288–92). It is also clear that there are many motifs which recur at different points, and these recurrent themes help to bind the different sections to one another. This is best illustrated by the following table:

First movement: Birth of Apollo (1–178)

1–18	Proem: Apollo's entry to Zeus's palace (*bow*) Leto's joy, and salute to her as mother of Apollo and Artemis (12–18)	cf. 182–206 cf. 125–6, 204–7
19–29	Choice of theme: birth of Apollo (19 = 207) Priamel: universal worship of the god (20–9)	cf. 207–15 cf. 140–5, 248–52, 288–92