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0521530814 - Classical Athens and the Delphic Oracle: Divination and Democracy

Hugh Bowden

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CLASSICAL ATHENS AND THE DELPHIC ORACLE

The Delphic oracle was where, according to Greek tradition, Apollo would speak through his priestesses. This work explores the importance placed on consultations at Delphi by Athenians in the city's age of democracy. It demonstrates the extent to which concern to do the will of the gods affected Athenian politics, challenging the notion that Athenian democracy may be seen as a model for modern secular democratic constitutions. All the known consultations of the oracle by Athens in the period before 300 BC are examined, and descriptions of consultations found in Attic tragedy and comedy are discussed. This work provides a new account of how the Delphic oracle functioned and presents a thorough analysis of the relationship between the Athenians and the oracle, making it essential reading both for students of the oracle itself and of Athenian democracy.

HUGH BOWDEN is Lecturer in Ancient History at King's College London. He is the author of numerous articles on Greek religion and history and is editor of the *The Times Ancient Civilizations* (2002).

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For my parents

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Acknowledgements

This book has been a long time in the writing. One of the starting points for it was a question I was asked at my D.Phil. viva examination, about the presence of verse-oracles in Herodotus' *Histories* and their absence afterwards. I was unhappy with my answer then, and subsequently unhappy with other explanations. One of the aims of the first three chapters of this book is to come up with an answer with which I am happy. I can therefore take this opportunity to thank both my supervisors, Anthony Snodgrass and the late George Forrest, and my examiners, Simon Price and the late John Gould, all of whom, wittingly or otherwise, set me off along the path that has led here. I owe a considerable debt to my colleagues in the departments of Classics and History at King's College London. Their interest, support and patience, in an age where the quantity of research seems often to be valued more than its quality or utility, has been invaluable. Versions of some chapters have been read at seminars at King's and at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, and they have benefited from the comments made on those occasions. I have learned a lot also from my students at King's; I hope that they learned something from me. While I was putting the finishing touches to the book I in my turn acted as a Ph.D. examiner, and was able to ask my own questions about oracles in Herodotus and afterwards. The process led me to rethink some aspects of this book, and I am grateful for that to Julia Kindt and those at the University of Cambridge who persuaded me to take on the task.

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Above all, I want to acknowledge the support of my family. My daughters Isabel and Clare have lived with this book all their lives, and my wife Jill has had to endure it for longer than many people would consider reasonable. I record here my love and thanks to them. And finally, I must thank my parents, to whom this book is dedicated, with gratitude and love for all they have done for me.

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NOTES AND APPENDICES)Abbreviations follow the conventions of *OCD*³.

Ael.	Aelian
NA	<i>De natura animalium</i>
Aesch.	Aeschylus
Ag.	<i>Agamemnon</i>
Cho.	<i>Choephoroe (Libation Bearers)</i>
Eum.	<i>Eumenides (Kindly Ones)</i>
PV	<i>Prometheus Vinc-tus (Prometheus Bound)</i>
Sept.	<i>Septem contra Thebas (Seven against Thebes)</i>
Aeschin.	Aeschines
Anth. Pal.	<i>Anthologia Palatina</i>
Ar.	Aristophanes
Ach.	<i>Acharnenses (Acharnians)</i>
Av.	<i>Aves (Birds)</i>
Eq.	<i>Equites (Knights)</i>
Lys.	<i>Lysistrata</i>
Nub.	<i>Nubes (Clouds)</i>
Pax	<i>Pax (Peace)</i>
Plut.	<i>Plutus (Wealth)</i>
Ran.	<i>Ranae (Frogs)</i>
Vesp.	<i>Vespae (Wasps)</i>
Arist.	Aristotle
Rh.	<i>Rhetorica (Rhetoric)</i>
[Arist.]	Works attributed to Aristotle
Ath. Pol.	<i>Athenaion Politeia (Constitution of the Athenians)</i>
Mir.	<i>De mirabilibus auscultationibus (Of marvellous things heard)</i>

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<i>Mund.</i>	<i>De mundo (On the Cosmos)</i>
Aristid.	Aristides
<i>Or.</i>	<i>Orationes (Speeches)</i>
August.	Augustine
<i>Conf.</i>	<i>Confessions</i>
<i>Ep.</i>	<i>Epistulae (Letters)</i>
CID	<i>Corpus des Inscriptions de Delphes</i> (1977–2002)
Dem.	Demosthenes
[Dem.]	Speeches attributed to Demosthenes
Diod. Sic.	Diodorus Siculus
Diog. Laert	Diogenes Laertius
DK	H. Diels and W. Kranz, <i>Fragmente der Vorsokratiker</i> (6th edition, 1952)
DPd	Inscription of Darius at Persepolis in Old Persian
Eur.	Euripides
<i>Andr.</i>	<i>Andromache</i>
<i>El.</i>	<i>Electra</i>
<i>Heracl.</i>	<i>Heraclidae (Children of Heracles)</i>
<i>IT</i>	<i>Iphigenia Taurica (Iphigenia in Tauris)</i>
<i>Med.</i>	<i>Medea</i>
<i>Or.</i>	<i>Orestes</i>
<i>Phoen.</i>	<i>Phoenissae (Phoenician Women)</i>
<i>Rhes.</i>	<i>Rhesus</i>
<i>Supp.</i>	<i>Supplices (Suppliant Women)</i>
<i>Tro.</i>	<i>Troades (Trojan Women)</i>
FGrH	F. Jacoby, <i>Fragmente der griechischen Historiker</i> (1923–)
Fornara	C.W. Fornara (ed.), <i>Archaic times to the end of the Peloponnesian war: translated documents of Greece and Rome 1</i> (2nd edition, 1983)
Fr.	Fragment
Harding	P. Harding, <i>From the end of the Peloponnesian war to the battle of Ipsus: translated documents of Greece and Rome 2</i> (1985)
Hdt.	Herodotus
Hes.	Hesiod
Hippoc.	Hippocrates
<i>Aer.</i>	<i>De aera, aquis, locis (Airs, waters, places)</i>

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<i>Epid.</i>	<i>Epidemiae (Epidemics)</i>
Hom.	Homer
<i>Il.</i>	<i>Iliad</i>
<i>IG</i>	<i>Inscriptiones Graecae (1873–)</i>
<i>IGRom.</i>	<i>Inscriptiones Graecae ad res Romanas pertinentes (1906–)</i>
Isae.	Isaeus
Jer.	Jeremiah
Joseph.	Josephus
<i>BJ</i>	<i>Bellum Judaicum (The Jewish War)</i>
Julian.	Julianus Imperator (The Emperor Julian ‘the Apostate’)
<i>Or.</i>	<i>Orationes (speeches)</i>
<i>LSCG</i>	F. Sokolowski, <i>Lois sacrées des cités grecques (1969)</i>
LSJ	H.G. Liddell and R. Scott, <i>Greek–English Lexicon</i> , (9th edition, revised H. Stuart Jones 1925–40)
Lycurg.	Lycurgus
<i>Leoc.</i>	<i>Against Leocrates</i>
Lys.	Lysias
ML	R. Meiggs and D. Lewis, <i>A selection of Greek historical inscriptions to the end of the fifth century BC</i> (revised edition, 1988)
Nep.	Nepos
<i>Milt.</i>	<i>Miltiades</i>
<i>OCD</i> ³	S. Hornblower and A. Spawforth, <i>Oxford Classical Dictionary</i> (3rd edition revised 2003)
Paus.	Pausanias
Pl.	Plato
<i>Ap.</i>	<i>Apologia (Apology of Socrates)</i>
<i>Euthyd.</i>	<i>Euthydemus</i>
<i>Leg.</i>	<i>Leges (Laws)</i>
<i>Phdr.</i>	<i>Phaedrus</i>
<i>Prt.</i>	<i>Protagoras</i>
<i>Resp.</i>	<i>Respublica (Republic)</i>
<i>Ti.</i>	<i>Timaeus</i>
Plut.	Plutarch
<i>Ages.</i>	<i>Agesilaus</i>
<i>Arist.</i>	<i>Aristides</i>
<i>Cim.</i>	<i>Cimon</i>

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<i>Dem.</i>	<i>Demosthenes</i>
<i>Demetr.</i>	<i>Demetrius</i>
<i>Lyc.</i>	<i>Lycurgus</i>
<i>Lys.</i>	<i>Lysander</i>
<i>Mor.</i>	<i>Moralia (Philosophical Essays)</i>
<i>Nic.</i>	<i>Nicias</i>
<i>Per.</i>	<i>Pericles</i>
<i>Phoc.</i>	<i>Phocion</i>
<i>Sol.</i>	<i>Solon</i>
<i>Thes.</i>	<i>Theseus</i>
Polyaenus, <i>Strat.</i>	Polyaenus, <i>Strategemata (Stratagems)</i>
RO	P. Rhodes and R. Osborne, <i>Greek historical inscriptions, 404–323 BC</i> (2003)
schol.	scholiast or scholia
SEG	<i>Supplementum epigraphicum Graecum</i> (1923–)
SHA	Scriptores Historiae Augustae
<i>Alex. Sev.</i>	<i>Alexander Severus</i>
<i>Claud.</i>	<i>Claudius</i>
<i>Clod.</i>	<i>Clodius</i>
<i>Hadr.</i>	<i>Hadrian</i>
Soph.	Sophocles
<i>Ant.</i>	<i>Antigone</i>
<i>El.</i>	<i>Electra</i>
OC	<i>Oedipus Coloneus (Oedipus at Colonus)</i>
OT	<i>Oedipus Tyrannus (Oedipus the King)</i>
<i>Suda</i>	Greek Lexicon formerly known as <i>Suidas</i>
Thgn.	Theognis
Thuc.	Thucydides
Val. Max.	Valerius Maximus
Xen.	Xenophon
<i>Agēs.</i>	<i>Agēsilaus</i>
<i>An.</i>	<i>Anabasis (Persian Expedition)</i>
<i>Ap.</i>	<i>Apologia Socratis (Apology of Socrates)</i>
<i>Cyr.</i>	<i>Cyropaedia (Education of Cyrus)</i>
<i>Eq. mag.</i>	<i>De equitum magistrato (On the cavalry commander)</i>
<i>Hell.</i>	<i>Hellenica (History of Greece)</i>
<i>Mem.</i>	<i>Memorabilia (Recollections of Socrates)</i>
[Xen.]	Works attributed to Xenophon

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- Ath. pol.* *Athenaion Politeia* (*Constitution of the Athenians, known as 'the Old Oligarch'*)
- XPh Inscription of Xerxes I at Persepolis (so-called 'Daiva inscription')

2 ACADEMIC JOURNALS (USED IN THE BIBLIOGRAPHY)

Abbreviations follow conventions of *L'Année Philologique*.

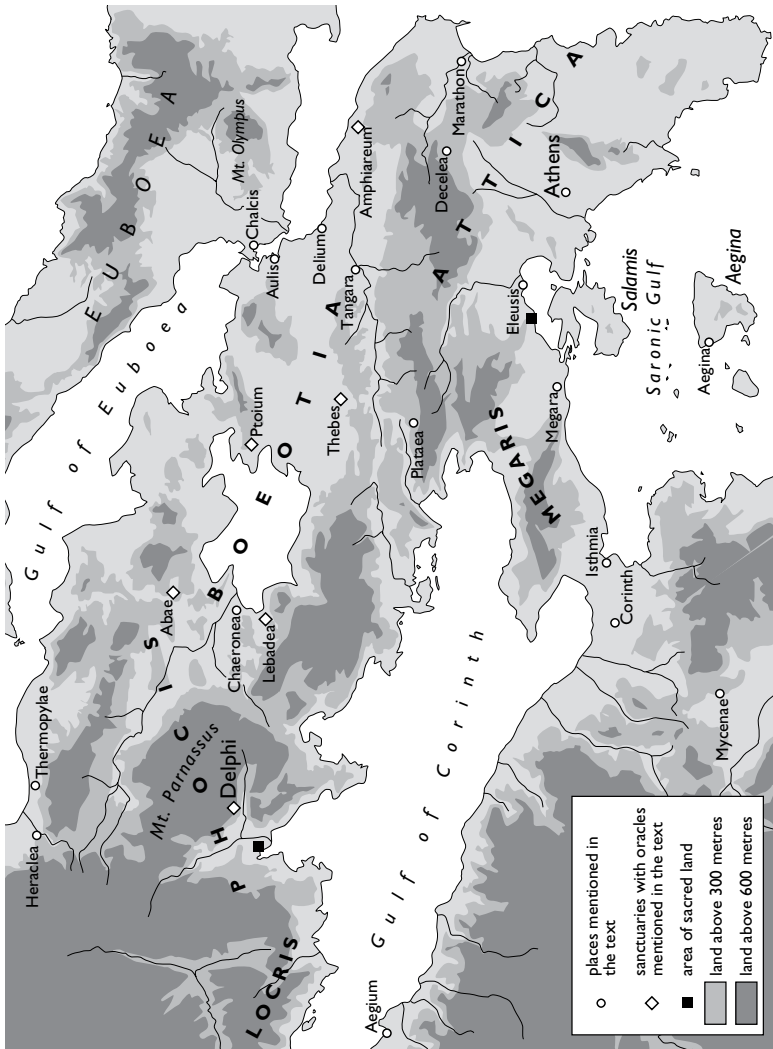
- A&A* *Antike und Abendland: Beiträge zum Verständnis der Griechen und Römer und ihres Nachlebens* (Berlin)
- ABSA* *The Annual of the British School at Athens* (Athens and London)
- AC* *L'Antiquité Classique* (Louvain)
- AJA* *American Journal of Archaeology: the Journal of the Archaeological Institute of America* (Boston)
- AJPh* *American Journal of philology* (Baltimore)
- AncSoc* *Ancient Society* (Leuven)
- BICS* *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies* (London)
- C&M* *Classica et Mediaevalia: revue danoise de philologie et d'histoire* (Copenhagen)
- CJ* *The Classical journal* (Ashland, Va.)
- ClAnt* *Classical Antiquity* (Berkeley)
- CPh* *Classical Philology: a Journal Devoted to Research in Classical Antiquity* (Chicago)
- CQ* *Classical Quarterly* (Oxford)
- DHA* *Dialogues d'histoire ancienne* (Besançon and Paris)
- GRBS* *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* (Durham N.C.)
- HSCP* *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* (Cambridge, Mass.)
- JHS* *The Journal of Hellenic studies* (London)
- PCA* *Proceedings of the Classical Association* (London)
- PaP* *La Parola del Passato. Rivista di Studi antichi* (Naples)
- RA* *Revue archéologique* (Paris)
- RhM* *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie* (Frankfurt)
- SCI* *Scripta Classica Israelica: Yearbook of the Israel Society for the Promotion of Classical Studies* (Jerusalem)
- TAPhA* *Transactions of the American Philological Association* (Philadelphia)
- TAPhS* *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* (Philadelphia)

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Map 1 Greece

- places mentioned in the text
- ◇ sanctuaries with oracles mentioned in the text



Map 2 Central Greece