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HISTORICAL MONUMENTS OF GREECE
ANCIENT GREECE



DELPHI

- MONUMENTS AND ARTIFACTS
- HISTORY
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GREECE



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From mythology to prehistory

Famed throughout the then-known world as the navel of the earth, Delphi was the intellectual and religious center of the ancient Greek world as well as a symbol of its unity.

The famed omphalos is a marble sculpture whose surface is covered by an entwined trellis.

MIKE EDWARD





Delphi's history stretches into prehistory and the myths of the ancient Greeks. According to tradition, it was originally the site of a sanctuary dedicated to the goddess Gaea which was guarded by her son, the fearsome dragon Python. Apollo is said to have left Olympus to conquer this sacred site and, according to local lore, he did so after slaying Python. Apollo then exiled himself as punishment and for purification before returning to Delphi as the victor. The god returns in the form of a dolphin guiding a ship of Cretan sailors whose aim was to settle Delphi, build a sanctuary, and become its priests. The site's name derives from the ancient Greek for dolphin, delphis.

The oldest archaeological finds from Delphi have been dated to the Neolithic Era (4000 B.C.) and are from the Corycian Cave on the slopes of Mount Parnassus where worship rituals were first held. Traces of a Mycenaean settlement and cemetery have also been found within the sanctuary site. These suggest that in the early Mycenaean Period, Achaeans from Thessaly settled the area, founding a city—possibly Pytho, which participated in the Trojan War—but abandoned it after the end Mycenaean times. In the eighth century B.C., the cult of Apollo spread through the region, leading to the construction of the sanctuary and oracle. Towards the end of the seventh century B.C., the first stone temples were raised, one dedicated to Apollo and the other to Athena, who was also officially worshipped there at her own temple as Athena Pronaia.

Delphi emerged as a center of the Greek world and sacred city of the ancient Greeks thanks to its oracle, the most important of the ancient world.

MIKE EDWARD

THE FOUNDING OF THE DELPHIC SANCTUARY

The Delphic sanctuary was founded long before historic times, although the Delphi oracle reached its peak in the first historic years. There were several reasons for this. First, its location in the center of the Greek world established it as the navel of the earth. Second, it was the site of one of the two annual assemblies of the Great Amphictyonic League, an ancient alliance of neighboring tribes. And, finally, it was the site of the panhellenic games known as the Pythia.

Delphi didn't attract only Greeks but tribes from Asia, like the Lydians and Phrygians, from Egypt, and central Italy, such as the Etruscans and the Romans. As a result, the sanctuary had global stature. In 548 B.C., when the old temple was torched, it was rebuilt under the patronage of the powerful Athenian family, the Alcmaeonids, with contributions of sums as large as 300 silver talents from throughout the known world. (One talent was equal to 33 grams of silver.)

Pilgrims who came to consult the oracle wore laurel wreaths on their heads and held laurel branches. Lots were drawn for the order in which they saw the oracle. No one was allowed in empty-handed: even those pilgrims who only came to worship brought pies as offerings while those who came to consult the oracle brought animals for sacrifices and other valuable votives. Aside from the offerings made to the sanctuary, worshippers donated one-tenth of

The Treasury of the Athenians is one of the most important structures at Delphi. It is located on the Sacred Way and was used as a vault for trophies signifying important Athenian victories.

LOUIS DREGON



any war spoils or other acquisitions as well as substantial amounts of money. Some cities, Greek but also foreign, built treasuries there to safeguard their offerings. The treasure amassed at Delphi was indeed great and in the Classical era estimated at some 10,000 talents or 60,000,000 Attic drachmae.

The god's maxims were conveyed to priests on tripods inside the sanctuary. After inhaling gas from a crevice beneath their feet and drinking water from the sacred Cassotid or Castalian spring, they fell into a trance and uttered the maxims. In the first centuries of the oracle's operation, anyone who sat on the tripod could convey the maxim. Later, however, this was done only by a virgin who was selected for this purpose. The first priestess was Phemonoe, but later still it was decided that the maxims will best be related by a woman over the age of fifty years, Pythia.

To issue a prophecy, Pythia prepared by abstaining from food for three days and then bathing in the Castalian spring which was located near the sanctuary. Afterwards, she burned laurel incense, entered the oracle's sanctuary, drank water from the Cassotid spring and, assisted by the seer, sat on the tripod that was covered in laurel leaves. At that moment, Pythia went into a holy trance. Anything she muttered in this state was interpreted by the priests around her according to what they believed appropriate to the context of the question; the answers were rendered in verse, which is why there were also poets inside the sanctuary.

Three of the twenty Doric columns of the Temple of Athena Pronaia have been restored. The temple is an impressive circular building dated to 380 B.C.

SAM CORN



The French Archaeological School's restoration of the Delphi sanctuary is an incredible feat that involved the clearing of massive quantities of soil covering the monuments. A small settlement, Kastri, had also been built over the site and excavations involved locals' resettlement elsewhere.

LOUIS DREGON



The omphalos and the acanthus column with dancers are exhibited in the Delphi Archaeological Museum (Hall 11).

PETER MAHNKE



The oracle site was tended by five men who served as caretakers for life. Each man represented one of the five tribes comprising the ancient classes of nobles at Delphi, the Deucalionids. The administrators of Delphi were chosen from these five families; their head was a noble addressed as king, the five ephors were addressed as osios, and their head was the seer.

Initially, prophecies were only handed out once a year, on the seventh of the month of Vysios –the birthday of Apollo. But as the number of worshippers at the oracle grew, maxims were handed down on the seventh of every month, except during winter as, according to mythology, this is when Apollo left Delphi. In the Greek world, these maxims were considered law and thus the oracle had great power and influence.

THE ORACLE AND THE CITY OF KRISSA

The oracle predates the city of Delphi, which slowly grew up around it and was on the southern slope of Mount Parnassus at an altitude of roughly 600 meters. Krissa, a city of Phocis, was also located nearby, at roughly the same altitude on another section of the Parnassus ridge. Hovering over it were the Phaedriades rocks, two cliffs marking a deep and narrow gorge through which the Pleistos River runs.

Mount Kirfi rises on the opposite side of the river. The peak extends south to the Corinthian Gulf where the Pleistos empties, after coursing through the Krissa or Kirrha valley –a very fertile expanse of land that stretches west. Even in antiquity it was a matter of controversy whether Krissa or Kirrha were different cities, although most concur that Kirrha was Krissa's port. Of these three cities– Delphi, Krissa, and Kirrha, the first and last were unknown while Krissa was powerful as it ruled the entire valley (or Krissa plain) and the sanctuary of Pythia, that is, the Delphic oracle.

Later, however, and as sometimes happens in such circumstances, the port of Kirrha began to expand at Krissa's expense. Meantime, the sanctuary priests eyed the new city of Delphi emerging around the oracle as an opportunity to shake free of Krissa's dominance and rule the oracle themselves. Krissa, of course, could not accept this change without some reaction as they would lose the benefits from the oracle at the same time as they were losing a significant share of their income from Kirrha. The situation was exacerbated by the Kirrha's demand of heavy taxes on worshippers arrive by sea and many violent acts against pilgrims.

Thus as the oracle's fame and power grew, so did the hostility between city-states vying for control of the sanctuary and its treasures. Phocis, Amphissa, even Athens, all tried to intervene in the financial and religious power wielded by the sanctuary.

The first sacred war

This was the situation in 595 B.C., when the Amphictyonic League decided to intervene and punish Kirrha according to the famed speech by the lawmaker Solon. This result in a ten-year war, the first sacred war, which was successful thanks to the alliance of the Thessalians under Aleuadis Eurylochus, the Sicyans under Cleisthenes, and the Athenians under Alcmeon. Kirrha resisted bravely until Cleisthenes mounted a sea blockade. Yet even after the city was taken, Kirrha's inhabitants continued to fight on Kirfi but in the end surrendered. The city was razed.

This relief depicted the Titanomachy from the frieze of the Treasury of the Siphnians is exhibited at the Delphi Archaeological Museum. It dates from 525 B.C.

PETER MAHNKE



The Charioteer



The Charioteer is a bronze votive statue dedicated by Polyzalos, tyrant of Syracuse, to Apollo and was installed at the Delphi sanctuary in 479 B.C. after his victory in the chariot races at the Pythian Games.

The Charioteer is part of a group featuring four-horse chariots, of which only two rear legs have survived. Other surviving pieces are a section of the reins and part of the difros, the chariot's rear axle, as well as a piece from what appears to be a child's hand.

The Charioteer was found during excavations in 1896. The statue was not found whole: the upper half was unearthed ten meters away from the lower half. Unfortunately, the left arm and a section of the belt holding the chiton have not survived. The statue is

dressed in a long chiton held together by a crossover belt, or analavos, commonly worn by charioteer. It also sports a headband decorated with a meander. The detail of the cloth and facial features showcase the techniques of early Classical art.



Edward Dodwell's painting depicts the Castalian Spring as he saw it in 1821. The Pythia and priests bathed at the spring, as did all those seeking the oracle's advice.



From the first sacred war onwards, Delphi emerges as an independent city which participated in the Phocis alliance and had oversight of the oracle, although the city's right to this was periodically disputed by Phocis.

THE PYTHIAN GAMES

The Pythian Games were one of the four panhellenic competitions of the ancient Greek world, along with the Olympic Games, the Nemean Games, and the Isthmian Games.

The Pythian Games were dedicated to Apollo and were initially held every eight years, with competition solely in music. Later, the games were held every four years at the end of summer and other events –naked and equestrian– were added. The games were organized by the Amphictyony and each member appointed a representative for this purpose. The first Pythian Games in their later version were held in 586 B.C. and the victors were given spoils from Krissa as prizes. From the second games onwards, champions were crowned with a laurel wreath.

The games' fame was such that it was believed unnecessary to award any prize other than this wreath. Pindar wrote odes to the games; the best known celebrates the victory of Hieron, tyrant of Syracuse, in the chariot race in 470 B.C.

Votive offerings commemorating victories by a number of cities and individuals have been found during excavations of the Temple of Apollo. One such find was the Charioteer, dedicated by Polyzalos, tyrant of Gela and brother of the Hieron, two-time champion in the four-horse race at the Pythia, in 478 B.C. and 474 B.C.

The site where the omphalos was found.

PUBLIC DOMAIN



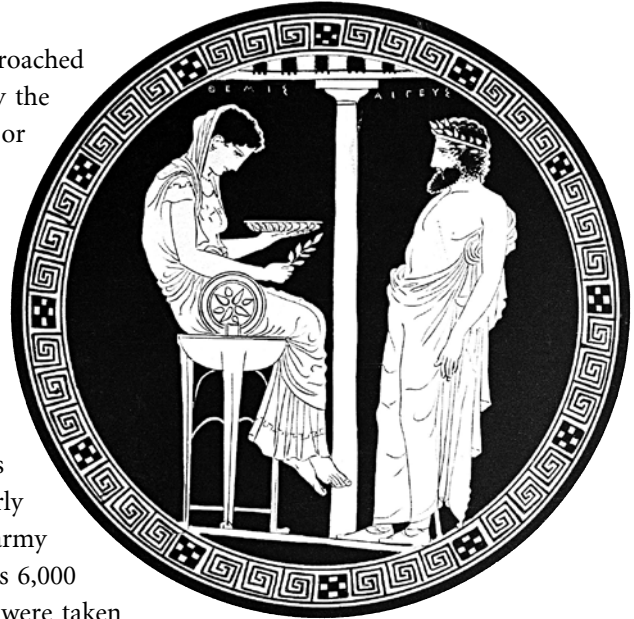
The second sacred war

Phocis triggered the second sacred war when it encroached on the sanctuary –an action for which it was fined by the Amphictyony. The fine outraged the city’s council or ecclesia, which voted to defy the order.

With the exception of meager assistance from the Achaeans, Phocis fought alone against a formidable list of foes that included the Thebans, Thessalians, Dorians, and Locrians. Philomelos, their leader, was forced to seek the aid of mercenaries, whom he paid with some of the sanctuary treasury. After winning a few early battles, Philomelos was defeated in 354 B.C. in the Kifissos valley. The war continued under Phocis’s new leader, Onomarchus. Again, despite a few early victories, he was also defeated by Philip II and a huge army in the spring 352 B.C.; the loss of life was enormous as 6,000 Phocians died in the fight and some 3,000 more men were taken prisoner.

In 346 B.C., with little resistance, Philip became ruler of Phocis. He immediately summoned the Amphictyonic League, which was controlled by the Macedonians. The council decreed the destruction of all twenty-two Phocian cities and the forcible resettlement of their inhabitants to hamlets of no more than fifty households. Phocis was also forced to make payments of sixty talents a year until it repaid the treasures seized from the sanctuary.

During Philip II’s rule, Delphi continued to attract pilgrims but not in the numbers of previous years.



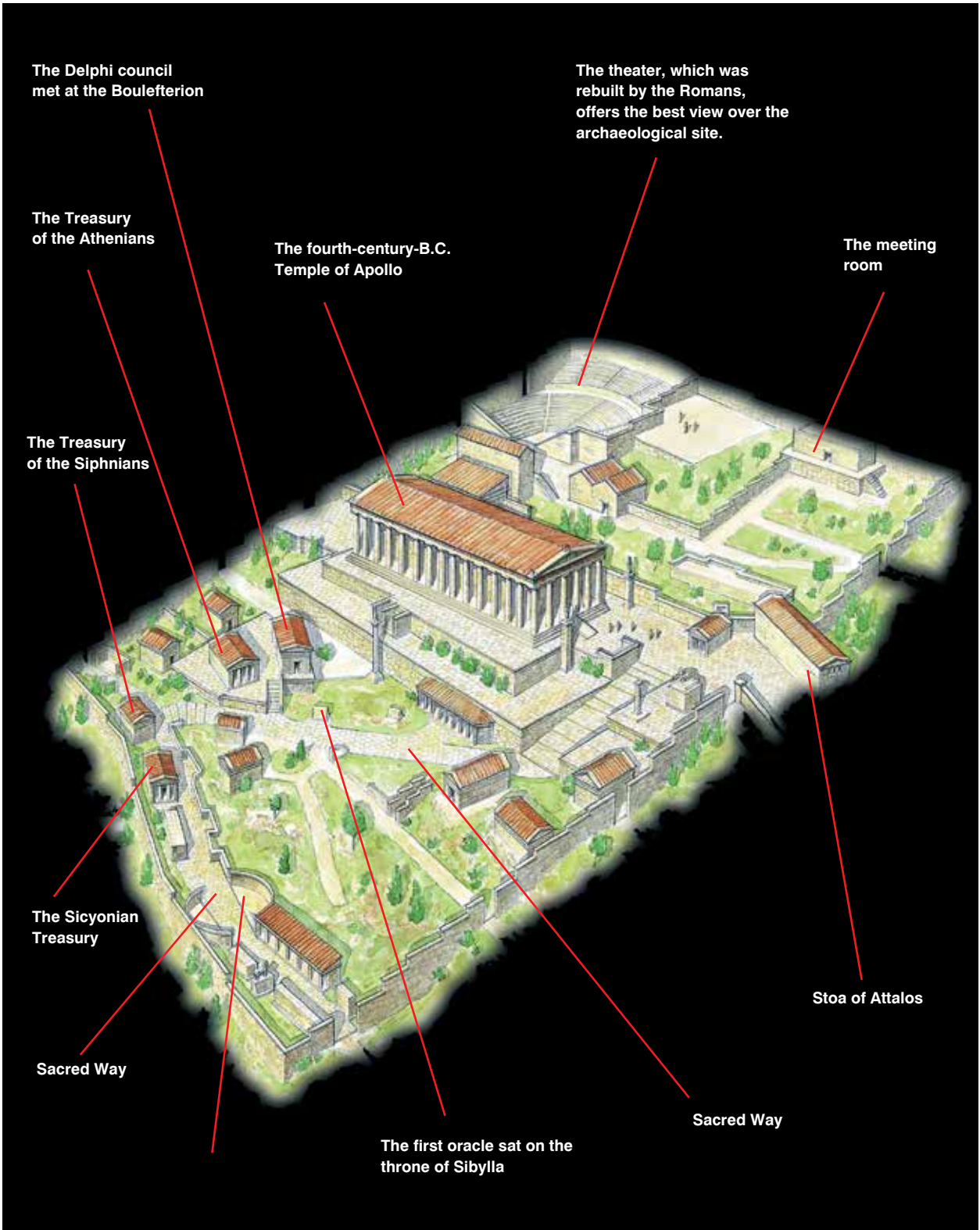
Pythia is a common motif in ancient Greek art.

PUBLIC DOMAIN



The ancient stadium at Delphi is preserved in good condition. The Pythian Games were held here, the second panhellenic games in fame and stature after the Olympics.

LOUIS DREGON



The Delphi council met at the Bouleferion

The theater, which was rebuilt by the Romans, offers the best view over the archaeological site.

The Treasury of the Athenians

The fourth-century-B.C. Temple of Apollo

The meeting room

The Treasury of the Siphnians

The Sicyonian Treasury

Stoa of Attalos

Sacred Way

The first oracle sat on the throne of Sibylla

Sacred Way



Delphi remained important under the Romans. This structure dates from Roman times.

KYROS APOSTOLOU

GRECO-ROMAN TIMES

In 290 B.C., during Hellenistic times, the Delphi sanctuary came under the control of the Aetolian League. In 279 B.C. the city came under threat during a Gaul raid but this was successfully repelled by the Aetolians.

The sanctuary slid into decline with the rise of the rationalist philosophers in the third century B.C., yet it continued to operate until the second century A.D. and the rule of Hadrian. The traveler Pausanias visited during this period. The Romans took over from the Aetolians in 190 B.C. and a few years later, in 168 B.C., Delphi's control passed to Rome. During the Mithridatic Wars, the area was looted by Sylla in 86 B.C. and later by successive Roman emperors, especially Nero, who removed votive offers and took them to Rome. Delphi maintained its importance through the fourth century A.D. when it the oracle was shut by decree of Emperor Theodosius I, who banned all ancient worship and rituals.

After Christianity took hold, Delphi became the seat of bishop but was abandoned in the early seventh century, during the rise of the Slavs. The ancient sanctuary was slowly covered and eventually the village Kastri was built over it.

THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATIONS

The Delphi sanctuary closed after Theodosius banned all pagan worship. Apollo's sanctuary fell silent and slipped into decline as the site was abandoned to its fate.

In 1829, following the Greek independence revolution, Greece's first governor, Ioannis Kapodistrias, expressed interest in Delphi and sent the German Edmund Laurent to excavate the site. Twelve years later, Alexandros Rizos Ragavis identified the ancient theater there, despite its being covered by some houses.

An earthquake in 1870 caused severe damage to the village of Kastri which had been built over the sanctuary. As a result, a number of the village's inhabitants applied to be relocated, something the government could not finance. The Koumoundourou government then awarded the site's excavation to the French Archaeological School as Olympia's excavation had already been given to German archaeologists.

In 1881, Harilaos Trikoupis was elected prime minister. Trikoupis assured the French that he would honor the agreement, which was signed in 1891. France then earmarked an astonishing sum for the times – 500,000 gold French francs– to expropriate the village and fund the excavation. The task was assigned to Theophile Homolle, who had previously excavated Delos. Work started in 1892 and the theater was discovered in 1895.

Today excavation work continues with the mutual cooperation of the French Archaeological School and the Greek Archaeological Service.

THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE

The Archaeological Museum of Delphi

Funded by the national benefactor Andreas Syngros, the museum opened to the public in 1903. It has operated for over a century, except for a short period during the German occupation, and today ranks among Greece's most important archaeological museums.

Its holdings include sculptures, masterpieces of microscopic art, statues, and votive offerings to the sanctuary spanning its entire operation. Notable

The Delphi Archaeological Museum is one of Greece's largest museums. Its holdings include architectural elements, sculptures, masterpieces of the miniature arts, and votive statues from the sanctuary spanning its entire period of operation.

ANDRÉ FRANZ RICARDO





The last Temple of Apollo was built in 510 B.C. on the site of earlier shrines dedicated to the god.

JOSH CLARK

exhibits include the twin kouroi, Kleobis and Biton; the three of Apollos and the silver bull; architectural and decorative elements from the Treasury of the Siphnians; architectural elements from the Temple of Apollo as well as Archaic and Classical pediments; the sculptures from the Treasury of the Athenians; the sculpted and inscribed decorative elements from the treasuries at the Temple of Athena Pronaia; the group dedicated by Daochus; the omphalos, symbol of Delphic maxim; and the famed Charioteer.

Temple of Apollo

The Temple of Apollo was dedicated to the cult worship of Apollo and the issuing of maxims by the oracle. Records of the winners of the Pythian Games were also kept inside at the chrysmografeio. According to ancient myths, an earlier temple was a plain structure woven from the branches of the laurel, a plant believed to be sacred to Apollo. A later temple was built from beeswax and features; this was followed by a third built from copper, while the fourth was built from tufa on designs by the architects Trophonius and Agamides. This fourth temple was destroyed in the great fire of 548 B.C. and a new, large temple built on the site and completed in 510 B.C. This was a Doric peripteral temple with columns along the front and fifteen on the sides. It had a marble façade and exquisite pediments by the famed sculptor Antinoros.

The Serpent Column

According to Herodotus, the Serpent Column was financed with one-tenth of the Greeks' spoils from the Battle of Plataea.

The tripod was placed very close to the altar in the Temple of Apollo and the names of the thirty-one cities participating in the battle were inscribed on the



Today the ancient stadium at Delphi is used for performances of ancient Greek comedy, like Aristophanes's *Peace*, which was staged by the National Theater during the 10th International Conference on Ancient Greek Drama.

JOSH CLARK

serpent's body. Today, the Serpent Column is at the Byzantine-era Hippodrome of Constantinople where it was taken by Constantine the Great when the new city was inaugurated. Three serpent heads are missing from the column; these were removed around 1700 and the sole surviving one is exhibited at the Istanbul Museum. The tripod's gold upper section disappeared about a century after it was dedicated when the Phocians melted it so they could mint coins to fund their war.

The Tholos of Athena Pronaia

The Tholos is the most recognizable monument at the Delphi archaeological site. This imposing round structure is located in the sanctuary of Athena Pronaia, between the newer temple dedicated to the goddess and the Treasury of Marseille. The purpose of the tholos is unclear but it is believed to have been dedicated to some chthonic deity. It was built by the architect Theodoros of Phocis, or perhaps Phocaia. Three of its twenty Doric columns have been restored.



The bronze Serpent Column whose base supported the tripod of a votive offering dedicated after the Battle of Plataea is now at the Hippodrome of Constantinople, where it was taken by Constantine the Great.

PUBLIC DOMAIN





A marble statue of a woman at the Delphi museum is believed to represent the goddess Nike and has been dated to 470 B.C.

PETER MAHNKE

Traces of the Delphi gymnasium have been discovered between the Castalian Spring and the Temple of Athens Pronaia. The ruins include a palaestra and baths; the structure dates from the fourth century B.C.

LOUIS DREGON

The ancient theater

The theater's initial shape is unknown and it is thought that guests sat either on the ground or on wooden benches. The first stone theater was built from limestone in the fourth century B.C. and its capacity is estimated at 5,000 spectators. The theater likely acquired its present form thanks to the sponsorship of the Hellenistic kingdom of Pergamus, and alterations were made in the first century A.D. by the Romans. The theater was used to host voice contests and musical competitions held during the Pythian Games as well as other religious festivals and rituals. After the third century A.D. it also hosted the competitions of the Sotirian games dedicated to Zeus Sotiros and Apollo.

The ancient stadium

The stadium was used to host the Pythian Games and had a capacity of 6,500 spectators. It was first cleared in the fifth century B.C. and laid with stone under Herodes Atticus. It is 177.5 meters long by 25.5 meters wide. Two rows of stones mark the starting line and finish line at each end.

Sacred Way

The 200-meter Sacred Way was the sanctuary's main thoroughfare and was provided access to all those seeking to consult the oracle. The Sacred Way was lined with votive statues and treasuries built by Greek cities but also private individuals who had received some important maxim from the oracle.



The Treasury of the Athenians

The Treasury of the Athenians is one of the most important and most impressive structures at the sanctuary of Apollo at Delphi. It was used for the safekeeping of the trophies earned from the city's important victories as well as other valuable items dedicated by worshippers to the sanctuary. The traveler Pausanias says the treasury's construction was funded with the spoils from the Athenians victory over the Persians at Marathon in 490 B.C., a view which is endorsed by many scholars.

The new treasury replaced an older structure from tufa that stood on the same spot. Only sections of the treasury's sculpted decoration has survived. The pediments depict the labors of the Attic hero Theseus. Those removed from the monument have been preserved and are exhibited at the Delphi Archaeological Museum, with plaster replicas inserted in their original position.

Little remains of the friezes depicted the snatching of the Delphic tripod and slaying of the dragon.

The Treasury of the Siphnians

The Treasury of the Siphnians was a small temple at Delphi used to safeguard valuable votive offerings. It was built shortly before 525 B.C. in the Ionian style. The ancient writers Herodotus and Pausanias describe it as lavish. The treasury was built of marble and was the first all-marble structure on the Greek mainland.

Bouleferion

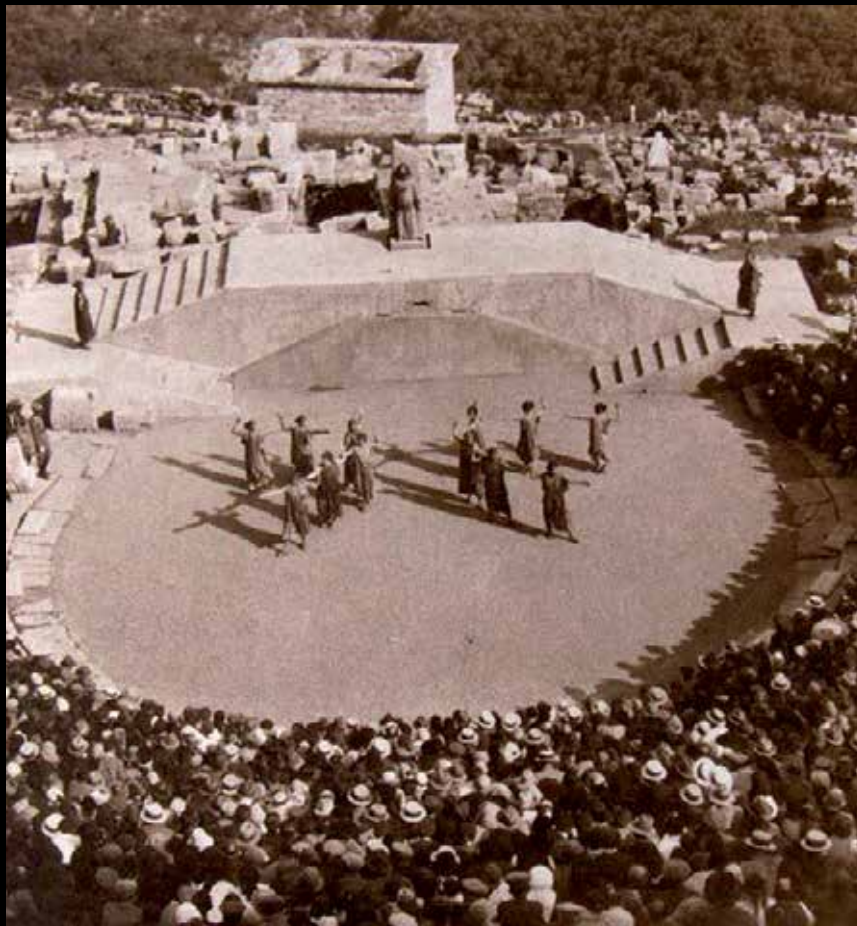
This small rectangular building was located inside the sanctuary peribolos and served as the seat of the small local boule or council. It dates from the late sixth century B.C. The structure was identified as the bouleferion from literary texts and inscriptions. Its ruins are not well preserved.

The marble Naxos Sphinx, a work dating from 570 B.C., stands on a ten-meter-high Ionian column.

PETER MAHNKE



THE DELPHIC FESTIVALS, envisioned by the poet Angelos Sikelianos and his American wife Eva Palmer-Sikelianos, were inspired by the Delphic ideal. The festivals were held in 1927 and 1930 at Delphi with the aim of founding a new amphictyony of the international intelligentsia to promote peace and brotherhood among nations. The first Delphic Festival opened on May 9, 1927, and lasted three days. The program included a performance of Aeschylus's *Prometheus Bound*, foot races, concerts, lectures, and more. A second festival was held on May 1, 1930, featuring a performance of Aeschylus's *Suppliants*. Eva Palmer-Sikelianos had woven the costumes worn by the actors from sample of ancient art. Although the festivals boosted the scant tourism to the site, they were never repeated because the Sikelianoses could not afford to fund them. Nonetheless, in 1929 they were awarded a silver medal for their effort by the Academy of Athens.



Photograph from the 1927 performance of *Prometheus Bound* at the Ancient Theater of Delphi.

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Photograph from the first Delphic Festival by Angelos and Eva Sikelianos (above).

JOSH CLARK



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SELENA A.E.

Kolokotroni 5, Neo Psychico, Athens
Exclusive holder in Greece
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HISTORICAL MONUMENTS OF GREECE

ANCIENT GREECE



According to mythology, Delphi was the omphalos or navel of the Earth because that is where two eagles released by Zeus met after flying around the earth in different directions. Zeus is said to have tossed a sacred boulder at the spot which became known throughout the ancient world as the spiritual and religious center of the Greek world as well as a symbol of its unity.

