

KEY THEMES IN ANCIENT HISTORY

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RELIGIONS OF THE ANCIENT GREEKS

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(iv) a stone temple built by the heroes Trophonios and Agamedes, burnt down in 548 BC.²²

Though it might be tempting to find archaeological correlates of all four of these temples, the temptation should be resisted. Though there might have been an eighth-century temple at Delphi constructed out of laurel and with an apsidal end, it is more likely that the laurel temple (i) is a refraction of the importance of the laurel in the cult of Apollo. There was an all-stone temple at Delphi from 675–650 BC, but temples (ii), (iii) and (iv) are likewise mythical creations designed to express ideas about the ideal evolution of Delphi from nature to humanity through the divine and heroic spheres.

The point that we must not, in the first instance, interpret archaeological evidence in the light of written evidence can also be seen in another Delphic example. A myth, perhaps originating in the Hellenistic period, told how the site of Delphi was first discovered by a goatherd who had lost some animals down a chasm in the rocks.²³ When he approached the spot, he was overcome by vapours and began to prophesy. A vivid story, which was taken at face value by some modern scholars who asserted that this explained the workings of oracular prophecy at Delphi. Unfortunately, the geology of Delphi is such that there can never have been actual vapours, and there was, at most, only a symbolic chasm in the temple itself.

Archaeological evidence and the written record each need some care in their interpretation and should ideally be studied in isolation before they are combined. The structures of the texts are themselves at least as interesting as the 'factual' details in them. One cannot pile together 'facts' culled from texts without regard for contexts, in categories of which one is unconscious and which may well be inappropriate. The historian of Greek religions needs to be alert both to modern categories and questions, and also to those of the ancients.

²² Pindar, *Eighth Paean* 58–99; Pausanias 10.5.9–13. Cf. Sourvinou-Inwood 1979.

²³ Diodorus Siculus 16.26. Cf. Price 1985.

CHAPTER 2

Gods, myths and festivals

According to a Christian writer of the second century, the Greeks had 365 gods.¹ For the proponent of one (Christian) god this alleged fact demonstrated the absurdity of Greek religion. Moderns too sometimes assume the nobility and superiority of one supreme god ('monotheism') as against the proliferation of little gods ('polytheism'). But the number of the Greek gods (not as great as 365) does not mean that those gods lack significance, any more than does the multiplicity of gods in the Hindu tradition.² In addition, proponents of monotheism (whether Jewish, Christian or Islamic) are often not ready to note the disruptive consequences of monotheistic intolerance or the extent to which alleged monotheisms contain plural elements. Within Christianity, what about the Trinity, the Blessed Virgin Mary, or the Saints? In fact the categories 'monotheism' and 'polytheism' do not promote historical understanding. In both ethnography/anthropology and ancient history scholars have sometimes sought to 'rescue' polytheism by arguing for an element of monolatry or henotheism, in which the power of one god in the pantheon is proclaimed as supreme.³ But the manoeuvre is conditioned by a Judaeo-Christian evaluation of monotheism. The terms 'polytheism' and 'monotheism' are best abandoned to the theologians.

PANHELLENIC MYTHS

The principal Panhellenic Greek deities were quite limited in number, though infinitely extensible via epithets: Zeus, Hera, Athena, Apollo, Artemis, Poseidon, Aphrodite, Hermes, Hephaistos, Ares, Demeter, and

¹ Proclaimed by Orpheus: Theophilus, *To Autolykus* 3.2 (trans. R.M. Grant, Oxford 1970); also Lactantius, *Divine Institutes* 1.7.6–7 (trans. M.F. McDonald, *Fathers of the Church* 49, Washington DC 1964). Cf. below, p. 161.

² Historiographical debates: Schmidt 1987; Hinduism: Fuller 1992.

³ Desy in Schmidt 1987; Versnel 1990a.

Dionysos.⁴ These 'twelve Olympians', the number that became conventional in the fifth century BC, formed a family. Zeus, 'father of gods and men', was at its head, Hera his sister-wife, and the others his siblings or children. The family structure was important up to a point: a nephew (Apollo) or a niece (Athena) might yield to an uncle (Poseidon) in Homeric contests.⁵ However, the extent of detail of family trees given in modern books and wall charts is very misleading. There was no one canonical ancient version and the Greeks were not bothered whether or not Poseidon was a first cousin of Demeter. What mattered was that they were related, that they all lived together on Mount Olympos and that there were other 'chthonic' (*chthon* = 'earth') gods who lived beneath the earth, Hades king of the underworld and his wife Persephone.

Stories about this family were told or represented in many different contexts.⁶ Children heard the myths at the knees of their mothers or nurses.⁷ Aristocratic men in archaic and classical Greece attending their *sumposia* (formalised drinking parties) liked to tell myths.⁸ As we shall see later, myths were omnipresent in sanctuaries and festivals, both iconographically and verbally. They were also very visible in other public places: in the Athenian agora, for example, one stoa (portico) gained its name 'Painted' because it served to display four fifth-century BC paintings by the outstanding artists of the day on mythical and historical topics (cf. below, p. 22). The thousands of extant vases of the seventh to fourth centuries BC depict scenes of the gods and heroes. Some of them are influenced by now lost works in other media (paintings, tapestries, metalwork), others are fresh creations of the individual pot painter. The contexts of these pots is important. They are the product of artists, including non-Greek slaves, working in different states and should ideally not all be lumped together as 'Greek'. Many of the pots, though preserved for us because they were exported to Etruria in Italy where they were buried in chamber tombs, were designed in the first instance for the aristocratic Greek *sumposion*. Myth-telling and the pottery for the wine-drinking were complementary.⁹

The most notable tellings of Greek myths were the works of Homer

⁴ Introduction: Guthrie 1950. For some approaches to Dionysos see McGinty 1978.

⁵ Homer, *Iliad* 21.469; *Odyssey* 6.329–30, 13.341–2. Cf. Euripides, *Tróades* 48–52 (Athena and Poseidon). ⁶ Buxton 1994: 18–66.

⁷ Plato, *Republic* 377a; Dionysios of Halikarnassos, *Thucydides* 6–7; cf. Aristophanes, *Wasps* 1174 ff.; below, p. 129.

⁸ Xenophanes 1.19–23, trans. Loeb *Elegy and Iambus* 1, criticised the usual absurd tales; cf. below, p. 127, for his other criticisms of myths.

⁹ Bérard 1989 explores the imagery of Athenian pottery; Carpenter 1991 systematises this material. On the imagery of the *sumposion* on pottery see Lissarrague 1990.

and Hesiod. The Homeric narratives describe interactions between the gods and the human protagonists: how Apollo attacked Patroclus in battle (*Iliad* 16.778), or how Athena gave guidance to Telemachos (*Odyssey* 1.178–323). Such interactions between gods and humans, and other Homeric stories about the gods, presuppose a degree of anthropomorphism: that the gods are like humans. Though this was a lasting legacy in Greece, sometimes criticised by later generations (below, p. 127), Homer equally emphasises that gods were also *unlike* humans, in their power and their immortality.¹⁰ When characters in Homer talk about divine interventions, they use not the names of specific deities, which the narrator uses, but indeterminate terms like a god (*theos*) or divine being (*daimon*). Hesiod's *Theogony* is a systematic treatise on the Greek pantheon, which has at its centre the establishment of the rule of Zeus and how he mastered challenges to it by other powers (Titans, Typhoeus).

The pre-eminence of Hesiodic thinking can be seen, for example, in the iconography of the massive altar of Zeus and Athena built at Pergamon in north-west Asia Minor in the second century BC. The wonderfully dramatic sculpture running 110 metres round the podium on which the altar stood celebrated the successful struggle of these and the other gods against the giants (Fig. 2.1). The casual observer could readily understand the frieze, but the attributes of the gods and the fact that all the gods and giants were also labelled would permit the more learned and leisurely viewer to appreciate the complex iconographical scheme of the monument. It deals with the battle of the Gods and the Giants, which does not appear in the *Theogony*, but Hesiod's account of a struggle of the divine order against a threat from outside was the inspiration for later accounts, which invented the battle of the Giants and then often conflated the two battles of the Titans and the Giants.¹¹

Homer and Hesiod were, as we have seen, privileged texts in the articulation of the Greek pantheon, but this did not mean that their stories were definitive. Neither author claims divine revelation, though both claim that the divine omniscience of the Muses, daughters of Zeus, remedied their own ignorance.¹² Nor was either writer comprehensive. Homer's *Iliad* focuses on four days of fighting during the ten-year Trojan war, and the *Theogony* is a genealogy of the gods, not a recounting of all the exploits known to the author. Subsequent writers, therefore, could

¹⁰ Griffin 1980: 144–204; Vernant 1991: 27–49; cf. also Burkert 1991.

¹¹ Cf. Smith 1991: 155–80. See further *LIMC* 4: 202–7; Kästner 1994.

¹² Homer, *Iliad* 2.484–93; Hesiod, *Theogony* 1–35.



Fig. 2.1. Part of the east frieze of the altar of Zeus and Athena, Pergamon (height 2.90m). In the centre Zeus is about to slay, with the thunderbolt in his right hand, a kneeling giant (Porphyrion?). To the left a captured giant watches; to the right a snake-legged giant (Typhon?), below the eagle of Zeus.

fill in the gaps left by Homer and Hesiod – such were the other, now lost, Homeric epics of the archaic period, and (especially important for mythology) the *Catalogue of Women*, a continuation of Hesiod's *Theogony* which was accepted in antiquity as being by Hesiod but which probably dates to the sixth century BC. They were also, as we shall see, at liberty to offer novel tellings of familiar tales. The tradition of telling and retelling myths extends from the archaic period right down to the mid-fifth century AD when Nonnos composed his great epic on Dionysos.¹³ Ancient scholarly handbooks of mythology were composed mainly between c. 250 BC and AD 150, but they could not cope with all the variants and conflicting versions. They fell into two types. One set of mythological studies collected myths to aid in understanding major Greek authors. For example, in the imperial period there circulated a huge collection of myths as background to Homer. The second category

¹³ Bowersock 1990: 41–9; Hopkinson 1994.

of mythological works took particular themes, such as love stories, transformation tales or genealogies. The principal extant example is the *Library* said to be by Apollodorus (first or second century AD), which is organised in terms of mythical genealogies, and which has been the foundation for many modern handbooks of Greek mythology.¹⁴ Given that Greek myths were not rigid, it is methodologically very important that we respect the individual telling or representation of the myths. It is absurd to weave together a compendium of Greek mythology from extracts in different authors.¹⁵

Reflection on the standing of the stories of Homer and Hesiod is attested already in the sixth and fifth centuries BC,¹⁶ and the iconography of sanctuaries also demonstrates the existence of privileged stories about the gods. Difficulties arose when historians and antiquarians sought to construct narratives down to the present on the basis of mythical tales. Was it reasonable for a writer in the classical period to treat a traditional tale about Theseus, the hero who united Attica, in the same way as one about the tyrant Peisistratos in the sixth century BC? Some writers did attempt to do just this, for example Hellanicus, writing the first history of Attica in the 420s BC; later historians of Attica, in the fourth century, were similarly committed to recounting a continuous tradition from Kekrops, the first king of Athens. But others took a more critical line to distinguish mythical from human history (below, p. 131). Just where that line was to be drawn was a matter of arbitrary personal judgement. Herodotos put King Minos of Crete in the mythical category unlike the sixth-century tyrant of Samos Polycrates (3.122), while Thucydides was perfectly happy to refer to Minos' dominion of the sea (1.4). Four hundred years later the geographer Strabo still found it necessary to assert his (personal) distinction between myth and history (1.2.35). Some degree of rationalisation was necessary, from the classical period onwards, if myth was to be recuperated for history.

Modern approaches to these myths have been very varied, but all distance themselves from Plato's rejection of others' myths as obnoxious and therefore false stories and all assume that myths are ways of constructing meaning, whether they are Greek myths of gods and Titans, Christian myths of the incarnation or New Age myths of Atlantis.¹⁷

¹⁴ Henrichs 1987. For best translation and commentary of Apollodorus see Aldrich 1975 and Simpson 1976; also Loeb and World's Classics.

¹⁵ Morford and Lenardon 1995, a work so much used for teaching that it is now in its fifth edition; cf. Rose 1958. ¹⁶ Xenophanes, below, p. 127; Herodotos, above, p. 6.

¹⁷ Cf. Calame 1991a on Greek categories 'myth' and 'ritual'.

There is no one modern method which is the key to all mythologies; different approaches seem to reveal different aspects of the subject; one needs to be eclectic, depending on the material one is considering and the objectives one has, and one needs to be alert to the dangers of imposing a modern model of myth (which arose in the eighteenth-century Enlightenment) onto the Greeks.¹⁸

The origins of Greek myths have interested many scholars. Though the details are largely lost to us, the origins of the Greek gods and their stories are certainly varied.¹⁹ The Greeks were Indo-Europeans and the names of their gods go back to Indo-European prototypes. Most clearly Zeus Pater (father) is cognate with Roman Dies Pater (Jupiter) and the Indian Dyaus Pitar (the sky), regarded in the ancient Indian sacred books, the Vedas, as the father and with the earth the origin of everything. But etymology tells us very little, and priority should be given to the function of the deities.²⁰ In our earliest evidence the (hypothetical) Indo-European mythology does not survive in a pure form. It is already an amalgam with elements borrowed from the Near East. The close parallels between Aphrodite and the love goddess of the Near East Inanna, the main divinity of the Sumerians circa 3,000 to 2,100 BC, the Semitic Ishtar and the Phoenician Astarte, suggest that Greek ideas of Aphrodite were at least in part modelled on those deities.²¹ The backbone of Hesiod's *Theogony*, the succession list, also has Near Eastern origins. In the beginning were Gaia (Earth), and Ouranos (Heaven), but Ouranos used to prevent his children being born until Gaia incited his son Kronos to castrate him. Kronos in turn swallowed his own children for fear of being overthrown by one of them until Rhea gave birth secretly to Zeus on Crete and gave Kronos a stone to devour in his place. When Zeus had grown up he forced his father to disgorge the children whom he had swallowed and, with their and other people's aid, he overthrew Kronos and his Titans.²² Although the story is fully assimilated to a Greek context, some of its elements can be understood much better with reference to Near Eastern deities. Knowing for example that Zeus' name is cognate with the ancient Indian word for 'sky' makes more comprehensible his relation to Ouranos, 'Heaven'. In fact, earlier versions of the succession story exist in various Near Eastern languages, including

¹⁸ Edmunds 1990, Bruit Zaidman and Schmitt Pantel 1992: 143–214, and Graf 1993a: chs. 1–2 between them survey the main current approaches. Buxton 1994 argues for eclecticism. See also Dowden 1992 and Calame 1996: 5–55. Vernant 1980: 186–242 remains a good introduction.

¹⁹ See Mondì 1990. ²⁰ Dumézil 1968–73: 1.11.

²¹ Friedrich 1978; Burkert 1987b; see further Burkert 1992a: 88–127. For a cult of Phoenician Aphrodite, see below, pp. 76–7. ²² Detienne and Vernant 1978: 57–130.

the Akkadian epic of creation, sometimes known from its first two words as *Enuma Elish*, dating probably to the second millennium BC, and certainly recited at the new year festival in Babylon.²³ The stories contain close parallels to Hesiod's succession of gods, including also castration, swallowing and a stone.

The origins of myths have also been sought in their relationship to rituals. Myths of sacrifice or specific local myths are indeed sometimes said to be derived from actual ritual procedures.²⁴ In one modern formulation of this old theory sacrificial rituals themselves are then traced back to the palaeolithic period by means of parallels from modern hunter-gatherer societies; parallels with animal behaviour then suggest that the need for such rituals is located at a very deep level.²⁵ Much of this is wishful thinking based on a peculiar selection of Greek data and an inadmissible retrojection of the practice of contemporary 'primitives'.

A variation of this search for meaning through origins lays great emphasis on 'initiation' as a category for understanding both myth and rituals.²⁶ Initiation rituals or 'rites de passage' are held to underlie many if not all myths, for example, that of the Athenian *arrhēphoroi*.²⁷ As a matter of fact classical Greece had very few initiation rituals and so the theory hypothesised that, while rituals had been lost or transformed, myths continued to be told in the classical and later periods. Compulsive detection of initiation rituals can be rather arbitrary and in the end casts little light on Greece of historic periods.

The search for origins cannot be the end of an enquiry into myths or rituals. In fact, the borrowing of a myth from the Near East does not entail that the myth had no meaning for the Greeks. Aphrodite is a composite figure whose Greek configurations are different from the originals, and Hesiod's succession myths make good Greek sense in emphasising the struggles lying behind the present sovereignty of the world. Zeus' first wife Metis ('Cunning Intelligence') was to have given birth first to Athena and then to a son who would overthrow Zeus. Zeus therefore swallowed Metis, gave birth himself to Athena (through his head), and prevented the birth of the son. Zeus' rule was not to be challenged.²⁸ That is, study of origins has to lead to a synchronic study of contemporary meanings.

²³ Trans. Dalley 1989: 233–77. ²⁴ Versnel 1990b.

²⁵ Burkert 1983, supported by Versnel 1990b. Cf. below, pp. 35–6, on sacrifice.

²⁶ Versnel 1990b: 44–59. ²⁷ Burkert 1983: 150–4; below, pp. 91–5, on *arrhēphoroi*.

²⁸ Hesiod, *Theogony* 886–900; cf. Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* 168–75.

The most influential contemporary studies of the synchronic meanings of myths, originating in France, have shown how Greek myths are ways of thinking about issues fundamental to society. They have explored the structures of thought and particular tellings of myths as structures that are common to many or all of the surviving versions. Analyses have been made both of texts and of images. The foundations of civilisation and its defence against disorder preoccupy both Hesiod and the kings of Pergamon. This reading of the story is fairly unproblematic, except that, in Hesiod, the Titans are not external monsters but kin of Zeus who have to be expelled from the society of heaven. Not all foes can be so easily identified or conquered. Other myths might explore the limits of rule by one man. In the story of Oedipus, that his name is derived from his lameness suggests the unsoundness of his royal rule. Similar stories of left-handedness or lameness circulated concerning Greek tyrants of the seventh century BC, which shows the durability of some patterns of thought.²⁹ In addition, major members of the Panhellenic pantheon were female, an obvious fact, but one whose implications for a patriarchal society are surely surprising and far reaching. Athena or Demeter were at least sometimes classified as 'female' rather than simply as 'divine', and myths involving goddesses sometimes address social issues such as the definition of gender roles.³⁰ Myths also relate to local rituals, but even so their interest is not merely aetiological, and they too have their own structure of meaning.³¹

One example of the way a myth can incorporate contemporary meanings is provided by the myth of Demeter and Persephone as told in the sixth-century BC *Hymn to Demeter*.³² The hymn tells of the seizure of Demeter's daughter Kore ('maiden') or Persephone by Hades, and Demeter's search for her. It has an oblique relation to the mysteries of Demeter and Persephone celebrated at Eleusis (below, pp. 102–7) in that the mourning Demeter disguised as an old woman is given hospitality by the king of Eleusis and, when she reveals her true identity, bids a temple to be built to her there and later teaches her secret mysteries to the leaders of the Eleusinians.³³ But the hymn is not a narrowly local aetiological myth; it concerns general Panhellenic themes. Demeter in her anger at the theft of Persephone prevented the crops from growing,

²⁹ Vernant 1982; Ogden 1997; Ginzburg 1990: 226–95 speculates on this pattern.

³⁰ Loraux 1992; below, pp. 98–100. ³¹ Introduction: Tyrrell and Brown 1991.

³² Parker 1991; compare below, p. 45 on Homeric Hymns. Trans. in Foley 1994 (or Loeb *Hesiod and Homeric Hymns*).

³³ Clinton 1992: 28–37 argues that the *Hymn* was an aetiology for the Thesmophoria, but this view does not account for the overall thrust of the piece.

an appropriate action by the deity whose name included the words Ge (earth) and Meter (mother) and whose specific sphere of responsibility was agriculture. The resulting famine would have led to the end of the human race and would hence have robbed the Olympians of the rites offered to them by mortals. That roused Zeus to action and he persuaded Hades to let Persephone return to her mother and the Olympians, though by a ruse Hades ensured that she would stay with him under the earth for a third of each year. The power of the female god was immense, but it was ultimately circumvented by that of the male gods. An analogy is established between the fertility of Demeter and that of the soil with a further suggestion that her mysteries were connected with human mortality and afterlife.³⁴

LOCAL MYTHS

The Panhellenic myths of Homer, Hesiod and the Homeric Hymns also had their local versions which either rooted the myths in the local community or elaborated significantly different versions of the myth. Local myths might concern the Olympians or they might relate to a further order of beings, 'heroes', normally conceived as mortals who had died and who received cult at their tomb or at a specific sanctuary. Heroes were very numerous (in Attica alone over 170 heroes were worshipped). They ranged from major Attic heroes like Erechtheus or Kekrops, worshipped in the Erechtheion on the Akropolis, down to minor and sometimes even anonymous heroes worshipped only in a particular deme (like Hyttenios at Marathon, or Heros Iatros, the hero physician, near the Athenian Agora).³⁵

Pausanias' *Guide book* is a wonderful repository of the stories told to him in the second century AD and thus a neat refutation of the view that the Greeks somehow outgrew mythology with the growth of 'rational' thought.³⁶ For example, the Athenians told of a contest between Athena and Poseidon for the control of Attica; the event was depicted on the west pediment of the Parthenon (Fig. 2.2). Poseidon created with a blow of his trident a salt spring on the Akropolis, while Athena planted there the first ever olive tree. Athena was adjudged the victor, but Poseidon in pique flooded a plain north-west of Athens, until a final reconciliation was brought about. Athena Polias became the guardian deity of the city, but the mythical contest left its material remains (Fig. 2.3). The unique

³⁴ See Nixon 1995.

³⁵ Kearns 1989; 1992; Larson 1995.

³⁶ Veyne 1988.

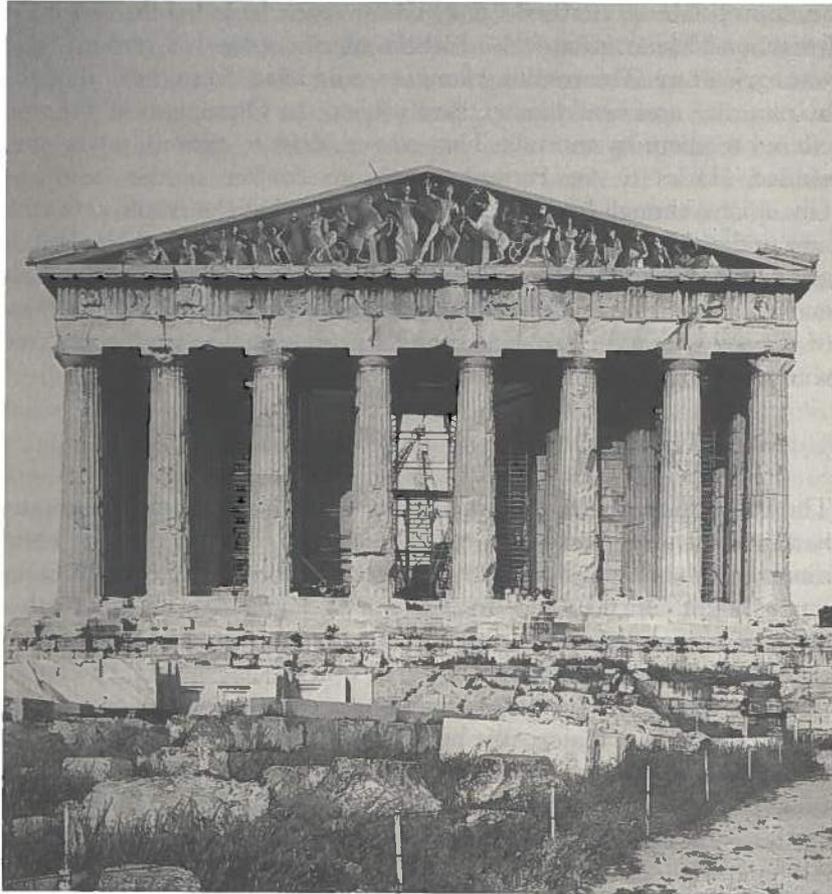


Fig. 2.2. A montage of the west front of the Parthenon, Athens. In the pediment is a restoration of the sculpture showing (in the centre) the struggle between Athena (left) and Poseidon (right). On the left (after two unknown figures) are Kekrops, Pandrosos, Herse, Erysichthon and Aglauros. (No. 4 on Fig. 2.14.)

plan of the Erechtheion was due in part to the need to incorporate the spring within the building where Poseidon and Erechtheus, the second king of Athens, were both worshipped, and when Pausanias visited the Akropolis he was shown both the salt spring and the olive tree behind the Erechtheion, which had regenerated miraculously after the Persians had burned it in 480 BC.³⁷

³⁷ 1.26.3, 27.2; Herodotos 8.55. Parker 1987b. Below, p. 40, on the Akropolis.

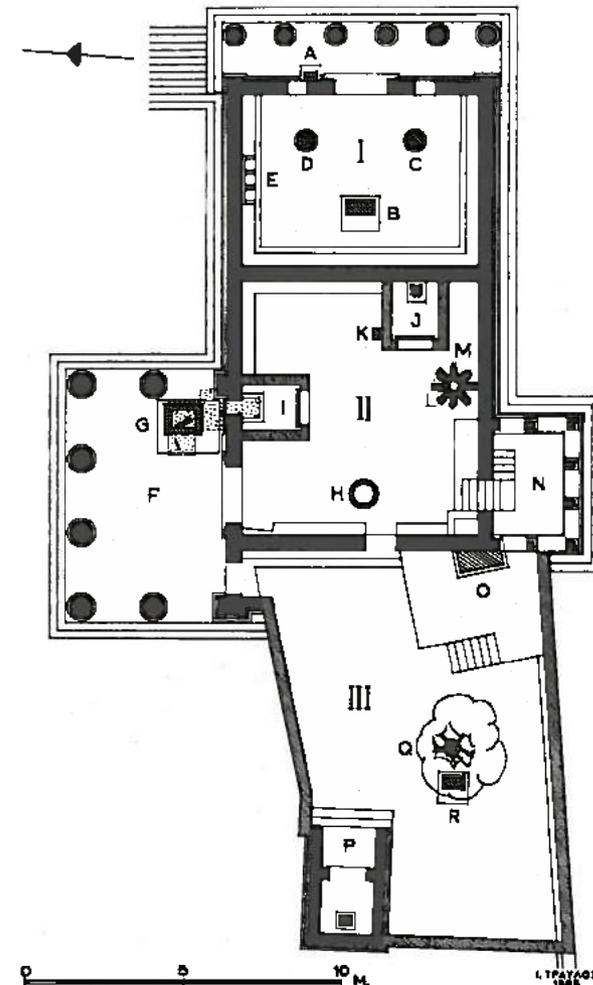


Fig. 2.3. Restored plan of the Erechtheion (421–405 BC) (No. 6 on Fig. 2.14).

- I Eastern section: A. Altar of Zeus Hypatos; B. Altar of Poseidon and Erechtheus; C. Altar of the Hero Boutes; D. Altar of Hephaistos; E. Thrones of the priests.
- II Western section: F. North porch; G. Altar of Thyechoos, with marks of the thunderbolt on the rocks below; H. Prostomiaion, salt sea and the trident marks; I. *Adyton* for the tomb of Erechtheus and the sacred snake; J. *Adyton* or *megaron* for the wooden cult statue of Athena Polias; K. Wooden statue of Hermes; L. Kallimachus' lamp with eternal fire and bronze palm tree chimney; M. Booty from the Persian Wars; N. Porch of the Maidens.
- III Pandroseion: O. Tomb of Kekrops; P. Temple of Pandrosos; Q. Olive tree of Athena; R. Altar of Zeus Hercios.

A fine Athenian example of a local hero in action is the story of Theseus and the Amazons. The Painted Stoa built c. 460 BC on the north side of the Agora displayed on its rear wall two paintings of mythological and two of historical scenes, described by Pausanias: the Athenians and Theseus fighting the Amazons, the Greek victory at Troy, the Athenian victory over the Persians at Marathon in 490 BC and (according to Pausanias) the Athenian defeat of the Spartans at Oenoe.³⁸ The story of the conflict between Greeks and Amazons was well known in Greece, but in fifth-century Athens it received a specifically local twist. Theseus had acquired and brought back to Athens an Amazon bride (who bore him a son, Hippolytus). The Amazons invaded Attica, encamping on the Areopagos hill opposite the Akropolis. In a great battle Theseus then defeated the Amazons. The story grew with the 'discovery' of the bones of Theseus on the Aegean island of Skyros in 476/5 BC and their removal to Athens where they were buried in a sanctuary to Theseus somewhere near the Agora.³⁹ Theseus' defeat of the Amazons at Athens was depicted in a mural in that sanctuary and in carvings on the Akropolis, certainly on the shield of Athena's cult statue and probably on the reliefs on the west end of the Parthenon.⁴⁰ The story glorified Athens as the defender of civilised (male) values as a prototype for the Athenian resistance to Persia. Indeed Herodotus describing the battle of Plataia in 479 BC between the Greeks and the Persians made the Athenians claim a position of honour partly on the grounds of their great victory against the threatening female Amazons.⁴¹

Athens was far from unique in having locally rooted myths. All over the Greek world towns claimed to be the birthplace of X, or the favoured spot of Y.⁴² Ephesos, for example, offers a myth analogous to the Athenian one of Athena and Poseidon. The ancient cult of Artemis was central to the city's sense of communal identity. Pride was taken both in the local cult and in the fact that the deity was worshipped all over the Greek world. (Remember the cult in the Peloponnese described by Xenophon.) The point comes over most vividly in the confrontation

³⁸ Pausanias 1.15; Camp 1986: 66–72; Castriota 1992: 76–89. In fact Pausanias may have been misinformed about the otherwise unattested battle at Oenoe; the scene may rather have shown the marshalling of Athenian forces at the Attic village of Oenoe before Marathon.

³⁹ Koumanoudis 1976; Castriota 1992: 33–53.

⁴⁰ Theseion: Pausanias 1.17.2. Cf. Barron 1972, esp. 33–40 for alleged influence of the painting on vase-paintings. Parthenon: Castriota 1992: 143–51.

⁴¹ 9.27. Amazons on the Athenian treasury at Delphi: Robertson 1975: 167–70. Amazons and Theseus: Dubois 1982; Tyrrell 1984; Tyrrell and Brown 1991: 159–88; John Henderson 1994; Blok 1995; Walker 1995; Parker 1996: 168–70; Mills 1997.

⁴² See, for example, Chuvin 1987 on Hierapolis and Lindner 1994 on Nysa.



Fig. 2.4. Part of frieze from temple of Artemis and Hadrian, Ephesos (early fourth century AD). Greeks under Herakles (marked by his club and lion's cape) scare off four Amazons, who seek sanctuary with Artemis (on block to right, not preserved).

dramatised in the Acts of the Apostles when Paul preached in the theatre at Ephesos only to be shouted down by the crowd chanting 'Great is Artemis of the Ephesians.'⁴³ Not only was Ephesos guardian of a unique image of Artemis, which had supposedly fallen from heaven, but Ephesos also claimed that Artemis had been born there (and not as was often claimed on the Aegean island of Delos). The Ephesians also sometimes claimed that her cult had been established by Amazons, who thus sometimes had a much more positive significance at Ephesos than at Athens (Fig. 2.4).⁴⁴ The benevolence of Artemis towards the Amazons is also illustrated in the local story of how the Amazons successfully sought refuge in the sanctuary of Artemis, both from Herakles and from Dionysos.⁴⁵ Artemis remained the protector both of the Amazons and of the city right through antiquity.

Some local myths did not simply invoke Panhellenic deities in actions affecting particular communities, they offered a refraction of the

⁴³ Acts of the Apostles 19.23–41; Oster 1976.

⁴⁴ Birth: Strabo 14.1.20; Appendix no. 15. Rogers 1991: 68–9, 144–51. Amazons: Bammer 1976, though the 'tradition' was disputed (Weiss 1984: 201 n.52).

⁴⁵ Fleischer in Bammer 1974: 78–82; Price 1984a: 255–6. Other scenes in LIMC 1.603 no. 249, 1.765 nos. 1 and 4. On city foundations see Tacitus, *Annals* 4.55–6; Weiss 1984; below, p. 156.



Fig. 2.5. Seizure of Persephone by mature, bearded Hades.

Panhellenic deity through the lens of local concerns. For Greek gods existed at both the Panhellenic and the local level, and the Panhellenic structures of the pantheon varied with different local selections and emphases. Though all accepted the ultimate supremacy of Zeus, the view from Athens or Ephesos where Athena and Artemis were the chief civic deities looked very different. The case of the cult of Persephone at the Greek city of Locri in southern Italy illustrates the point very nicely.⁴⁶ Seven series of clay relief plaques from the first half of the fifth century BC have been found in the sanctuary of Persephone at Locri (Figs. 2.5–2.8). The scenes depicted and particular symbols in them not only reflect the Panhellenic myth of Persephone's seizure by Hades, but moreover emphasise her sphere by extending it into that of marriage, which was in other Greek cities normally under the protection of Hera. One series adds an entirely new dimension to the cult, namely

⁴⁶ Sourvinou-Inwood 1978. For data see also Prückner 1968.



Fig. 2.6. Girl voluntarily entering chariot of young man; her female friends say goodbye. This series may have been dedicated by women on marriage.

Persephone as a protector of children (as Demeter was elsewhere). At Locri Persephone lacks the usual Panhellenic association with Demeter, but has incorporated the spheres of marriage and children, that is those female activities which were central to the community.

FESTIVALS AND SACRIFICES

For the Greeks, one way of dealing with the multiplicity of their gods was a firm structure of various calendars of festivals and sacrifices.⁴⁷ For us, however, the 'Greek Calendar' is something of a nightmare, because the names of the months varied in the different ethnic regions of Greece, and because the alignment of lunar and solar years by intercalation (as our 29 February) was done haphazardly by different cities. However, there were some common principles. There were twelve months, each divided into three groups of ten days; the individual months were generally named after a festival celebrated during that month: Lenacon was

⁴⁷ Deubner 1932 is the basic study (in German) of Attic festivals. Parke 1977 and E. Simon 1983 offer introductions in English, though both works are unsatisfactory in their interpretations. Neils 1992 and 1996 include good studies of one festival, the Panathenaia.



Fig. 2.7. Procession of female priest and four young women carrying a robe (which may be a bridal robe to be dedicated to Persephone).

the month in which the *Lenaia*, a Dionysiac festival, was celebrated (Fig. 2.9). At the Panhellenic level, there was agreement as to the years in which the Panhellenic festivals should be held; the *Olympia* and the *Pythia* (at Delphi) every four years, the *Isthmia* and *Nemea* every two years. But the uncertainties of calibration meant that sacred heralds had to be sent out each cycle to announce exactly when the festival would begin so that people could attend the festival and to prevent open hostilities by or against the host city and competitors.⁴⁸ The Athenians also proclaimed by heralds twice a year, in spring and autumn, a truce of fifty-five days both for the Lesser and for the Greater Eleusinian Mysteries; they protested vigorously when in 367 BC the heralds, members of the clans of the *Eumolpidae* and *Kerykes*, were arrested by a town in Aetolia in central Greece 'contrary to the laws common to the

⁴⁸ On these and other 'sacred periods' (*hieromeniai*) see Rougemont 1973; Dillon 1997: 1–11; Appendix no. 15.

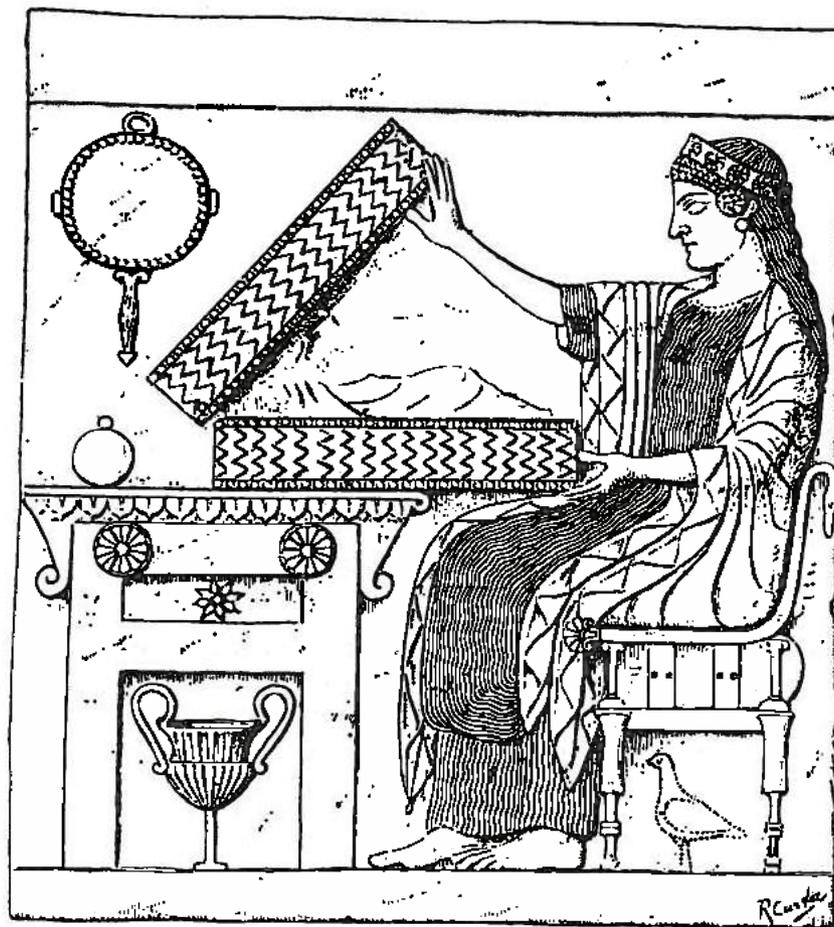


Fig. 2.8. Persephone seated, opening box, within which is the young Dionysos. This series was probably dedicated by parents on the occasion of their child's ritual presentation to Persephone.

Greeks'.⁴⁹ There was also agreement that certain months were 'sacred periods', not to be profaned by military action. When the Argives began to ravage Epidaurus just before the *Karneia*, they called each day of the invasion the 27th of the previous month, thus postponing the *Karneia* until their task was completed.⁵⁰ Conversely a generation later, when the

⁴⁹ *IG* 1³ 6.3 17–27, 36–47, trans. Fornara 1983: no. 75 (before 460 BC); *ML* 73.21–6, trans. Fornara 1983: no. 140 (c. 422 BC); *Tod* 2.137, trans. Harding 1985: no. 54 (367 BC).

⁵⁰ *Thucydides* 5.54 (419 BC).

<i>Months of the Athenian civil calendar, with modern equivalents</i>	
Hekatombaion	June–July
Metageitnion	July–August
Boedromion	August–September
Pyanopsion	September–October
Maimakterion	October–November
Posideion	November–December
Gamelion	December–January
Anthesterion	January–February
Elaphebolion	February–March
Mounuchion	March–April
Thargelion	April–May
Skirophorion	May–June

Fig. 2.9. Calendar of Athenian festivals.

Argives were themselves under threat of Spartan invasion they proclaimed a sacred truce every time the Spartans invaded. This worked until the Spartan king obtained a ruling from the oracles at Olympia (Zeus) and Delphi (Apollo – his son) that he need not be bound by such a truce.⁵¹

Within any given city the calendar specified exactly when each festival was to occur. At Athens, for example, the temple of Dionysos at Limnai had to be opened once a year on the 12th of Anthesterion (Demosthenes 59.76), while the Great or City Dionysia at which our tragedies were staged was a three- or four-day festival, beginning on the 10th of Elaphebolion. All this was spelled out in a great calendar inscribed on the walls of the Portico of the Basileus in the Agora.⁵² So rooted was the fixed date that, when in 270 BC it proved necessary to postpone the performance by four days, four days were inserted after the 9th of Elaphebolion; the Great Dionysia could thus still begin on 10th of Elaphebolion. When the Macedonian king Demetrios Poliorketes

⁵¹ Xenophon, *Hellenica* 4.7.2–3 and 5.1.29 (388 BC).

⁵² Below, p. 78. Longest sacrificial calendar from outside Attica from Erythrae: *LSAM* 26 = *Inscriptionen von Erythrae* 207, second century BC. Cf. *Syll.*³ 1024 = *LSCG* no. 96, trans. Austin 1981: no. 128 (Mycenae). For earlier examples see Parker 1996: 43 n.1. Cf. timetable at Magnesia on the Maeander: Appendix no. 3.

was briefly in Athens (302 BC), the Athenians renamed the actual month Mounuchion first Anthesterion and then Boedromion to permit him to be initiated in a single ceremony into the Lesser Mysteries of Eleusis celebrated in Anthesterion, and in the Greater Mysteries celebrated in Boedromion.⁵³ A city's calendar thus expressed in linear fashion the deities of the city.⁵⁴

The calendar of the Athenian state was complemented at local level by calendars of the 'demes' or villages that constituted the state.⁵⁵ Demes formed their own religious community and as such celebrated their own festivals and performed their own sacrifices. From the late fifth and fourth centuries BC, a period of peak deme self-consciousness, there survive fragments of five calendars. Nevertheless, these calendars relate to the central calendar in various ways. As Pausanias noted, 'Even those who in their demes have established worship of the gods nevertheless hold Athena in honour' (1.26.6). The fact that there were no deme festivals on the date of the Panathenaia, the principal festival in honour of Athena, shows that she was not a remote political deity of no concern to the ordinary Athenian: everyone was, in principle, free to attend the festival in Athens itself, at which the meat of sacrificial victims was distributed deme by deme among those sent by each deme.⁵⁶ Some central festivals had their deme analogues. The festival of the Arrhēphoria, performed on the Akropolis largely in private, perhaps had a corresponding festival 'on the Akropolis' at one deme (Erchia), presumably because the festival related to issues of fertility and marriage which also concerned the deme. The demes also celebrated festivals which had no central parallel. The rural Dionysia celebrated by most demes was a riotous affair held during the winter, when plays were performed as at the Great Dionysia in Athens itself.⁵⁷ Some deme calendars include the worship of heroes peculiar to that locality. For example, at the deme of Thorikos sacrifices were made to the local hero Thorikos; to Kephalos and to Prokris (Thorikos was the home of Kephalos, who accidentally shot his wife Prokris); to Philonis (a nymph who lived at Thorikos); and to two Panhellenic figures with local

⁵³ Plutarch, *Demetrios* 26; Habicht 1997: 79. This passage suggests, *pace* Deubner 1932: 91 and Mikalson 1975: 46, that the Greater Eleusinia were held not in late Metageitnion but in early Boedromion. For later honours at Athens see above, p. 7.

⁵⁴ Beard, North and Price 1998: II ch. 3 on Rome; Markus 1990: 85–135 on Christian transformations.

⁵⁵ Mikalson 1977; Whitehead 1986: 176–222; Parker 1987a; Rosivach 1994: 14–34. Cf. briefly Sourvinou-Inwood 1990: 313–16. ⁵⁶ For the Thesmophoria see below, p. 98.

⁵⁷ The benign face of the Dionysos of these and other cults has to be set alongside, and in tension with, the savage, wild Dionysos of Euripides' *Bacchae*. Henrichs 1990; *SEG* 43.26 for deme Dionysia.

associations, Demeter, who landed at Thorikos on arrival in Attica; and Helen, after whom an island lying off Thorikos was named, where she allegedly first slept with Paris on her way from Sparta to Troy.⁵⁸ The Attic demes were thus integrated into the religious life of the Athenian state while preserving their own individuality.

Attica was unique in Greece in the size of its territory (c. 2400 km²) and in the degree of political integration attempted at least during the fifth and fourth centuries BC, and there is no exact equivalent from other states for these Attic deme calendars. But other states did have their own sub-divisions depending upon their own scale and complexity, and these sub-divisions did sometimes participate as units in central state festivals (as the phratries in the Karneia at Sparta) and also had their own religious life, as phratries in Thasos, Delphi and indeed in Athens.⁵⁹ It is only the poverty of extant epigraphy outside Attica that keeps the details of the calendars of the civic sub-divisions from us.

The festivals whose sequence was fixed in the calendars were central to the piety of Greek cities.⁶⁰ They vary greatly in scale and content depending upon the context and on the deity, but they have some common features. The festivals often opened with a grand procession through the town leading to the sanctuary of the god (Fig. 2.10). A vivid picture of a procession at Ephesos is given in a Greek novel of the second century AD, where it serves to link the hero (Habrocomas) and heroine (Anthia):

The local festival of Artemis was in progress with its procession from the city to the temple nearly a mile away. All the local girls had to march in procession richly dressed as well as the young men of Habrocomas' age. He was around sixteen, already a member of the ephebes, and took first place in the procession. There was a great crowd of Ephesians and visitors alike to see the festival, for it was the custom at this festival to find husbands for the girls and wives for the young men. So the procession filed past, first the sacred objects, the torches, the baskets and the incense; and horses, dogs, hunting equipment, some for war, most for peace. . . . Each of the girls was dressed as if to receive a lover. Anthia led the line of girls.⁶¹

At Athens the processions, especially at the Panathenaia, were so lavish that a special marshalling building, the Pompeion (*pompe* = procession),

⁵⁸ Appendix no. 1; Parker 1987a; Kearns 1989: 177, 195, 203. The claim about Helen and Paris was also made by Gytheum, the port of Sparta, the islet being Kranai.

⁵⁹ Sourvinou-Inwood 1990: 312–13 and 316–20. See more generally N.F. Jones 1987; Osborne 1990.

⁶⁰ Price 1984a: 101; Connor 1987; Parker 1996: 79–80.

⁶¹ Xenophon of Ephesos 1.2, trans. of whole in B.P. Reardon, *Collected Ancient Greek Novels* (Berkeley and London, 1989). Cf. Price 1984a: 110–11 and procession at Magnesia: Appendix no. 3.



Fig. 2.10. Sacrificial procession on Attic black-figure band-cup, c. 550–550 BC (height of cup 0.18m). The procession, which leads to Athena on the far left, is an image of the new Panathenaia (cf. also Fig. 2.15). A female and male stand either side of a flaming altar. They are approached by: a *kamphoros* bearing a *kanoun* (with sacrificial materials); three sacrificial animals (heifer, sow and ewe); three musicians (two shawm-players, one lyre-player); worshippers (three olive-branch bearers; three hoplite warriors with shields; one marshal (?); one horseman).



Fig. 2.11. Three youths leading sacrificial cow, on south frieze of the Parthenon, Athens (width 1.22m).

was constructed on the north-west outskirts of the city. The surviving building, circa 70 by 35 metres, dates to around 400 BC, but it replaced an abandoned predecessor of the fifth century BC.⁶² From there the procession made its way a thousand metres along a special route ten metres wide through the Agora and up the steep hill to the temple of Athena on the Akropolis.⁶³ As at Ephesos, the procession consisted both of religious objects (here a new robe woven for the ancient image of Athena) and of participants representing the state. An idealised version of the procession was carved on a frieze round the main building (*cella*) of the Parthenon (Fig. 2.11).⁶⁴ The relief was and remained unique in that no other Greek temple, so far as we know, featured a representation of a religious ritual. On the south and north sides of the frieze are horsemen and chariots emphasising the aristocratic tradition at Athens, preceded by elders, animals for sacrifice and ritual objects. The west side has

⁶² Knigge 1988: 79–82.

⁶³ Travlos 1971: fig. 540. The route, initially gravelled, was paved in the first and second centuries AD: Thompson 1960: 328–33; *Archaeological Reports for 1995–96* (London, 1996) 2–3. For cults on the Akropolis see Herington 1955, Hooker 1963 and Neils 1996.

⁶⁴ Jenkins 1994. Connelly 1996 offers a mythological interpretation of the frieze.

further horsemen. The climax of the frieze is on the east side: two processions of maidens lead towards the handling of the robe; the heroes who gave their names to the ten Attic tribes and the twelve Olympians are displayed to either side of the robe scene.

The robe itself displayed and (literally) paraded a mythological story.⁶⁵ Indeed it seems that Athena's robe was so important that not one (as used to be thought) but two robes were regularly woven. The new robe for the cult statue of Athena Polias woven each year for the annual Panathenaia by girls, the *arrhephoroi*, and women included a traditional design of the battle of the Olympians against the Titans. It may be the presentation of this annual robe which is shown in the east frieze of the Parthenon. In addition, from perhaps the 470s onwards, a second, and much larger, robe was woven by professional (male) weavers for the quadrennial Greater Panathenaia and featured Athena and Zeus as saviours of the divine order.⁶⁶ Weaving a figured cloth was extremely time-consuming and required the highest degree of skill; the annual robe will have taken most of the nine months allocated for its production, and the quadrennial robe was made as the result of an officially judged competition.

One of the components of processions including that of the Panathenaia were the animals which were to be sacrificed to the god.⁶⁷ A civic decree which formed part of the reorganisation of the annual festival in 335/4 BC specified the details.⁶⁸ The cattle bought with rent from land sacred to Athena, once they had reached the Akropolis, were sacrificed on the great altar of Athena in front of the Parthenon, with the finest reserved for a sacrifice on the nearby altar of Athena Nike 'Victory'. The sacrificial meat from two of the sacrifices was distributed there to various civic officials and participants in the sacrifice: the *prutaneis*, the chief magistrates, the treasurer of the goddess, the sacrificial officials, the board of generals and division commanders and also Athenians who participated in the procession and the maidens who acted as *kanephoroi* (Vessel Bearers). The meat from the other sacrifices was distributed to the Athenian people in the vicinity of the Pompeion, portions assigned to each deme in proportion to the number of participants in the procession from that deme. That is, under a democratic system all citizens were

⁶⁵ Mansfield 1985; Barber 1991: ch. 16, the relevance of which was pointed out to me by L.F. Nixon; Barber in Neils 1992: 103–17. Compare gifts of cloth to Artemis Brauronia below, p. 95.

⁶⁶ For the addition of Demetrios Poliorketes, see Plutarch, *Demetrios* 10.5, 12.3 (and above, p. 29); below, p. 128, for Plato's criticisms; below, pp. 90–2, for the *arrhephoroi*.

⁶⁷ Introduction to sacrifice: Jameson 1988a; Bremner 1996a.

⁶⁸ *IG* 2² 334 = *Syll.*³ 271, trans. Rice and Stambaugh 1979: 119–20; *LSCG* 33 and Schwenk 1985: no. 17 include a new fragment; below, p. 65 on the land, p. 81 on the context. Cf. Appendix no. 3.

eligible to a portion of the sacrificial meal, at public expense. Honoured civic officials (numbering up to sixty-six) dined in special rooms inside the Pompeion. Formal rules, varying from cult to cult, specified who could participate in the sacrifice. Sacred officials (both male and female) would receive their perquisites; both men and women attending the festival might receive portions of the roast meat. The rules were thus a reflection of the social groupings involved in a particular cult.⁶⁹

The Panathenaic sacrifices, when 100 oxen were killed, were unusual in their scale: smaller communities would not expect to kill so many animals. Cattle were the most prestigious sacrificial animal, no doubt because of their expense. Athenian state sacrifices in the fourth century involved at least 850 oxen, but cattle were rarely offered by Attic demes or by smaller cities. Sheep, goats and pigs were the normal victims for some deities and on lesser occasions: the animals and their prices are duly specified in, for example, deme calendars (Appendix no. 1). Private sacrifices usually involved these cheaper victims, as is illustrated on votive offerings.⁷⁰ Otherwise the sacrifices to Athena are exemplary of normal civic sacrifices. The meat derived from such sacrifices offered a modest addition to the normal Greek diet based on plant and milk products.⁷¹

Sacrifices were always accompanied by prayers which explained the purpose of the sacrifice and specified what was desired in return from the relevant deity. The combination of sacrifice and prayer in a private setting is brought out very clearly by a fourth-century Athenian legal speech arguing that the speaker was the son of a legitimate daughter of one Kiron. Kiron, it is claimed, never offered sacrifices without the speaker's participation:

This applied not only to rites to which we were invited, but also to the rural Dionysia, to which he took us; we attended performances seated beside him, and we celebrated all the festivals at his house. When he sacrificed to Zeus Ktesios [of Property], a sacrifice to which he gave especial attention, to which he did not invite either slaves or non-slaves not part of the family, and at which he performed everything personally, we used to participate in the sacrifice, we used to touch the offerings with him, put them on the altar with him, and do everything else with him; he used to pray that it would give us health and prosperity, as a grandfather would naturally do.⁷²

⁶⁹ Osborne 1993, against Detienne 1989, who argues for the complete exclusion of women from sacrifice. ⁷⁰ Figs. 3.3 and 3.5.

⁷¹ Jameson 1988b; Rosivach 1994. On costs of sacrifices, at Delos: Jacquemin 1991.

⁷² Isaeus 8.15–16. For nice examples of public prayers see Aristophanes, *Thesmophoriazousae* 312–71 (parody of prayer at Assembly); Thucydides 6.32 (at libations). Cf. Versnel 1981b; Pulleyn 1997. Below, p. 97, on Zeus Ktesios.

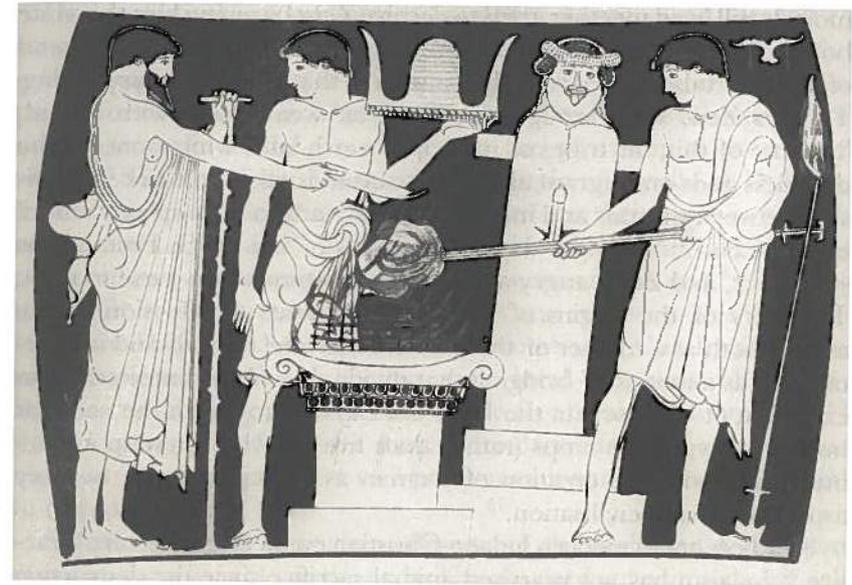


Fig. 2.12. Drawing of sacrificial scene on Attic mixing bowl (a column krater), c. 460 BC (height of image 0.20m). On the left an older man pours a libation over the altar, and a youth holds the *kanoun* (with sacrificial materials). On the right another youth cooks the innards (*splankhna*) of the sacrificial animal over the flames of the altar. Behind him is a herm. On the far right stands another spit with *splankhna*. At the top right, part of goat's skull with horns.

The handling of the animal and the distribution of the meat as prescribed in the Panathenaic decree followed conventional rules and also belonged in a religious setting.⁷³ The painting on a vase made in Etruria around 540 BC by an artist originally from east Greece depicts in detail the different stages of the sacrifice, the handling of the body after it is killed, the dismemberment of the body and the placing of sections of the meat on skewers prior to roasting.⁷⁴ The edible portions were served to the humans, while the inedible portions were burnt for the god, whose presence at the sacrifice is sometimes emphasised iconographically (Fig. 2.12).

The aetiology for the division of the animal in this way between humans and gods can be found in Hesiod's *Theogony* (535–57). The story comes as part of a sequence concerning the sons of a Titan who rebelled against Zeus. One son, Prometheus, at a time when gods and

⁷³ Durand 1986; Detienne and Vernant 1989; Durand and Schnapp in Bérard 1989: 53–70; Peirce 1993; van Straten 1995. Cf. Price 1984a: 207–33.

⁷⁴ *CAH* 3 2nd edn Plates vol. no. 324; Durand in Detienne and Vernant 1989: 87–118.

mortals still lived together, tried to deceive Zeus by giving him the white bones of a slaughtered ox wrapped in succulent fat, and the flesh and offal to mortals covered with the paunch so that it looked unappetising. Though Zeus saw through the trick, he went along with it and, 'because of this, the tribes of men upon earth burn white bones to the deathless gods on fragrant altars'. The event is taken to mark the division between mortals and immortals, and leads to a complex chain of events. Zeus in his anger deprived mortals of fire which Prometheus stole back, and Zeus, angry again, created woman as a curse to man. The story of the origins of sacrifice thus treats the division of the animal both as a marker of the distance between mortals and immortals and as a means of bridging that divide. It is also connected by an extension of the story (in the *Works and Days* 42–105) with the need for humans to cultivate crops (rather than live off what grew spontaneously) and with the creation of woman as a bane to man, two key aspects of Greek civilisation.⁷⁵

Sacrifices are to modern Judaeo-Christian eyes a rather peculiar practice.⁷⁶ Judaism has not practised animal sacrifice since the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem by Rome in AD 70, and the ideology of Christianity is intimately bound up with the theory that the death of Christ superseded animal sacrifice. As an early Christian explained when writing to Jews who had converted to Christianity:

The blood of his [Christ's] sacrifice is his own blood, not the blood of goats and calves and thus he has entered the sanctuary once and for all and secured an eternal deliverance. For if the blood of goats and bulls and the sprinkled ashes of a heifer have power to hallow those who have been defiled and restore their external purity, how much greater is the power of the blood of Christ . . .⁷⁷

This text expresses very forcefully the view that animal sacrifice is a form of religious worship inferior to the more spiritual practices of modern religions.⁷⁸ Sacrifices were no doubt noisy and rather messy affairs (but not particularly smelly, as anyone knows who has been present at the butchering of an animal by the roadside in Greece today). However, they were not just the pretext for a good meal, they were major religious events.

⁷⁵ Rudhardt 1970; Vernant 1980: 168–85.

⁷⁶ For very different modern approaches see Burkert 1966: 102–13 (more fully in Burkert 1983); Detienne and Vernant 1989. Cf. above, p. 17, on Burkert's search for origins.

⁷⁷ Letter to the Hebrews 9.12–13, ascribed to Paul.

⁷⁸ Sacrifice has an ambiguous position in modern Islam. Sanctioned by the Koran (Surah 22.32–7) and practised at the time of the annual pilgrimage to Mecca, sacrifice nonetheless has no place in official Islamic worship.

During festivals, in addition to sacrifices, hymns were sometimes sung. The standard structure was invocation of the god, honouring the god through recounting of one or more divine deeds, and finally a prayer for divine favour.⁷⁹ At Miletos there was a special association of singers (*malpoi*): on the 'Sacred Way', the processional route over twenty kilometres from Miletos to the temple of Apollo at Didyma, they stopped at six designated shrines to perform their hymn in honour of Apollo Delphinios.⁸⁰ Elsewhere in the Hellenistic and Roman periods there were special choirs to sing hymns to the god.⁸¹ Some of these cult hymns were inscribed on stone and survive to this day; two hymns at Delphi include a full musical notation.⁸² Cult hymns naturally deployed mythology, often with local emphasis; that from Palaikastro on Crete invokes Zeus and refers to his birth on Crete.⁸³ Such hymns were, from the start, a fundamental and autonomous mode of religious action – a well-performed hymn was in itself a 'gift' to the god.

Sacrifices, hymns and other offerings to the gods had a common purpose, namely to please the gods. The standard term for what we call 'cult statue', and indeed for other images, was an *agalma*, an object in a sanctuary which was a glory or a delight to the gods.⁸⁴ And the gods were certainly supposed to savour the offering of sacrifices to them. Conversely, the proper performance of cult could be drawn on in the future by the individual or the community.⁸⁵ A typical example is found at the beginning of Homer's *Iliad*, where Chryses, the priest of Apollo, prays to Apollo Smintheus:

Smintheus, if ever I roofed a temple that pleased you or if ever I burnt for you rich thighs of bulls or goats, fulfil this prayer for me. (1.39–41)

Though this form of prayer, 'if I ever . . . will you now . . .', is attested only in works of high literature, as here, most Greeks probably shared the assumption that previous offerings gave them some claim on the gods' attention. The point is made explicit in two verses inscribed on the thighs of a small bronze statue of a warrior:

⁷⁹ Bremer 1981; Furley 1995.

⁸⁰ *Syll.*³ 57 = *LSAM* 50; *RE* Supp.6.509–20; Gödecken 1986 and Schneider 1987 on route. Cf. Appendix no. 7. ⁸¹ Nilsson 1955–67: II.377–81; Price 1984a: 88.

⁸² West 1992: 279–80, 288–301.

⁸³ West 1965, with comment of Versnel 1990: 32–3 (trans. Rice and Stambaugh 1979: 29–30). Cf. below, pp. 118–19, for 'Orphic' hymns. ⁸⁴ Price 1984a: 178.

⁸⁵ Pulleyn 1997: 16–38; Parker 1998, on the importance of *charis* or reciprocity; Appendix no. 9.

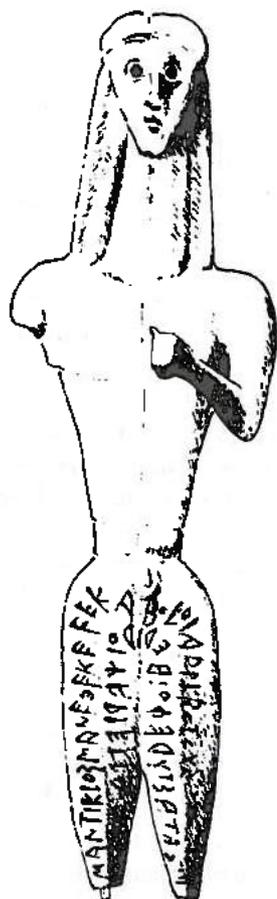


Fig. 2.13. Drawing of bronze statuette (height 0.20m) from Thebes, perhaps from the sanctuary of Apollo Ismenios (early seventh century BC). The figure may originally have worn a helmet, carried a spear in his right hand and a shield in his left.

Mantiklos dedicated me to the silver-bowed far-shooter [i.e. Apollo] from his tithē. Phoibos [Apollo], grant him grateful recompense. (Fig. 2.13)⁸⁶

That is, mortals and gods were in a relationship defined in terms of an exchange of favours. Moderns of an anti-ritualistic bent criticise this as merely *do ut des*, 'I give that you may give', but such criticism misses the point. Like other systems of gifts and counter-gifts, the Greek ritual system assumed choice on both sides. Gifts to the gods were not a way

⁸⁶ P.A. Hansen, *Carmina Epigraphica Graeca* (Berlin and New York 1989), no. 326.

of buying the gods, but of creating goodwill from which humans might hope to benefit in the future.⁸⁷

Festivals also often included competitions of various sorts. The most prestigious of these competitions, at the Panhellenic festivals at Olympia, Delphi, Nemea and the Isthmia, drew competitors from all over the Greek world in chariot racing, horse racing, athletics and, at Delphi and the Isthmia, musical events.⁸⁸ 'Sport' in the ancient world involved as much fervour and local pride as today, but it belonged overtly within a religious framework. In due course other cities sought to promote their own festivals to Panhellenic status, thus hoping to attract top rank competitors from all over Greece. The Athenians established the Greater Panathenaia as a Panhellenic festival in about 566/5, and in the Roman period in numerous cities there were 'sacred and crowned games', which operated on the cycles of the four ancient Panhellenic games and whose competitions and privileges were modelled on them.⁸⁹ This period marked the greatest flowering of competitions in the Greek world, in part because rivalry between cities under Rome found its outlet in civic display.

The Panathenaia, whatever its Panhellenic status, retained the structure of a civic festival.⁹⁰ In the Greater Panathenaia, every fifth year (on inclusive counting), there were competitions (for men, youths and boys) in reciting Homer, music, athletics, equestrian events, team events for tribes, a torch race, and a boat race. Some of the athletic and equestrian events probably took place along the Panathenaic Way, especially in the Agora; some remained there even after a special stadium for racing was built in 330 BC and a hippodrome in the Peiraeus.⁹¹ The musical events were also held in the Agora until the building in the mid-fifth century BC of a concert hall (*odeion*) on the south slope of the Akropolis (Fig. 2.14 no. 23). Whereas victors at Panhellenic games won only a crown and subsequently a pension from their own city, victors at Athens won substantial sums. In the fourth century BC first prize in the lyre competition was a crown of gold leaf worth 1,000 drachmas and

⁸⁷ For a comic application of this idea, involving Athena remembering the gift of the robe, see Aristophanes, *Knights* 1178–80. For another use of the analogy of gift-exchange see Price 1984a: 65–77. For philosophical criticism see below, p. 133, and Parker 1998.

⁸⁸ Finley and Pleket 1976; Raschke 1988; Tzachou-Alexandri 1989; Golden 1998.

⁸⁹ Establishment: Fornara 1983: no. 26. Fig. 2.10 is a response to the new festival. Appendix no. 11 for a new Hellenistic festival. Roman period: Cardedge and Spawforth 1989: 184–9.

⁹⁰ Tracy 1991; Neils 1992; Parker 1996: 75, 89–92; Neils 1996.

⁹¹ The stadium was rebuilt in the early 140s AD by the Athenian dignitary Herodes Atticus: Tobin 1997: 162–73.

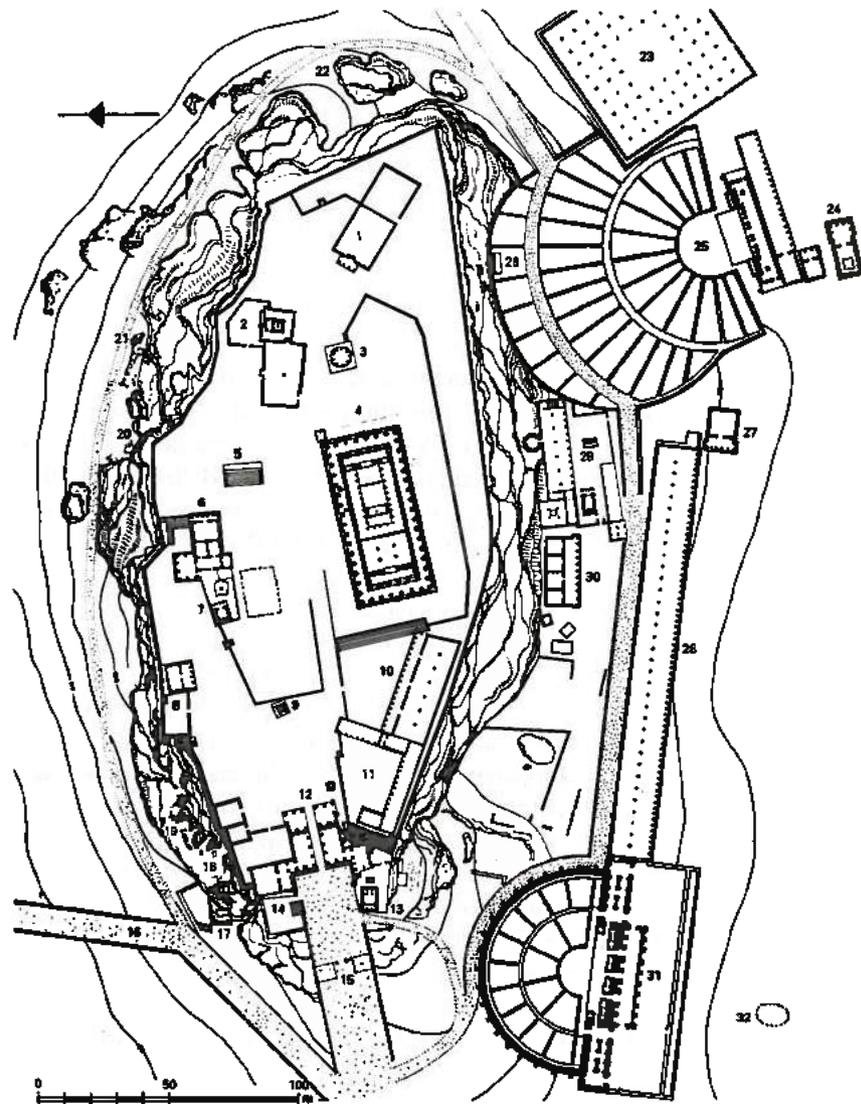


Fig. 2.14. The Athenian Akropolis and adjacent buildings in the second century AD
 1. So-called Ergasterion. 2. Shrine of Zeus Polieus. 3. Temple of Roma and Augustus.
 4. Parthenon. 5. Altar of Athena. 6. Erechtheion. 7. Pandroseion. 8. House of the
 Arrhephoroi. 9. Athena Promachos. 10. Chalkotheke. 11. Artemis Brauronia.
 12. Propylaea. 13. Temple of Athena Nike. 14. Agrippa monument. 15. Beulé Gate.
 16. Top of Panathenaic Way. 17. Klepsydra Spring House. 18. Apollo Hypoakrios.
 19. Cave of Pan. 20. Sanctuary of Eros and Aphrodite. 21. Peripatos inscription.

500 silver drachmas at a time when a skilled labourer's daily wage was one drachma, and prizes in the athletic competitions were jars of olive oil, for example forty for the winners of the youths' wrestling, worth about 480 drachmas. Oil was produced from special olive trees sacred to Athena levied by a magistrate on the owner of the fields where the trees were located, stored on the Akropolis and placed in special oil jars by 'the commissioners of the games'. These oil jars were substantial in size, usually 60 to 70 cm high, and contained 38 to 39 litres on average. They were unique in design and decorated with scenes of, on the front, Athena and, on the rear, the competition concerned, with the legend 'for the games at Athens'. The canonical shape and decoration established by around 530 BC were preserved through the third and second centuries BC, even though the design of a black figure on a red background had gone out of use on other Athenian pottery in the early fifth century (Fig. 2.15). Over 1,400 such vases were needed for prizes in each games but only about 300 in total survive today, a useful sidelight on the survival rate of our most plentiful material evidence for archaic and classical Greece.⁹²

Victories in the games were also celebrated and commemorated in poems specially commissioned for the occasion. The first known composers of such works were Simonides and perhaps Ibycus, in the sixth to early fifth centuries, but their poems do not survive intact. In the fifth century the most famous authors of this genre were Pindar and Bacchylides, whose works give a unique insight into aristocratic culture throughout the Greek world. The poems were performed, sometimes by the poet himself (or another solo voice), sometimes by a chorus, in various settings in the victor's native city: sanctuaries, where sacrifices were offered, perhaps in a victory procession, and at the victor's house. A nice example of the victory poem is one written by Pindar for a victory in a wrestling match by one Theaios of Argos at a festival of Hera at Argos.⁹³ The poem opens with praise for the mythical heroes of the city,

⁹² Beazley 1951: 88–100; Boardman 1974: 167–77. Compare Bérard 1989: 109–14 for various images of the Panathenaia.

⁹³ Pindar, *Nemean* 10. Performance: Heath 1988; Carey 1989 argues for choral performances.

Fig. 2.14 (cont.)

22. Sanctuary of Aglauros. 23. Odeion of Pericles. 24. Temple of Dionysos.
 25. Theatre of Dionysos. 26. Thrasyllus monument. 27. Nikias monument. 28. Portico
 of Eumenes. 29. Asklepieion. 30. Ionic portico. 31. Odeion of Herodes Atticus.
 32. Shrine of Nymphs.

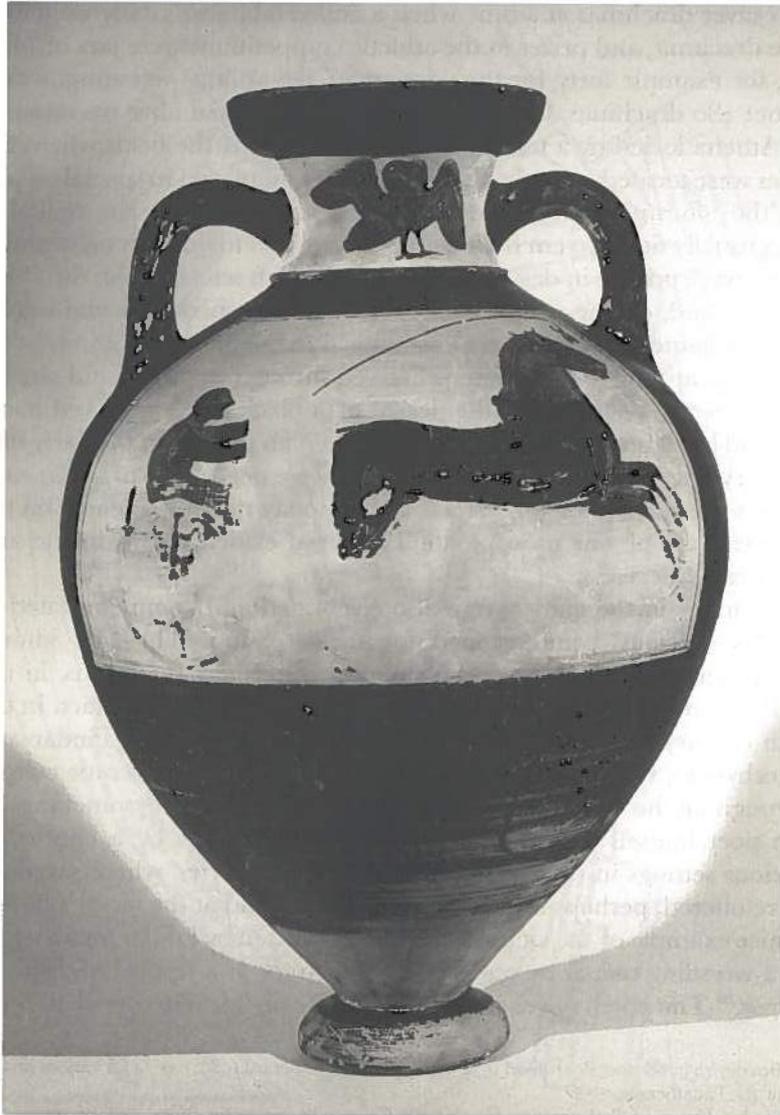


Fig. 2.15. The earliest surviving prize amphora, dating (on stylistic grounds) to the 560s, the decade in which the Panathenaia was reorganised (height 0.61m) (cf. 2.10). The main scene is of a two-horse chariot race, the specific competition for which this amphora was awarded. On the neck is a siren. On the other side is a representation of Athena, which is constant over many generations.

and then moves on to praise of Theaios, who had also won Panhellenic victories at Delphi, Isthmia, Nemea and Athens, where he had twice been awarded 'in earth baked by the fire olive oil in richly painted vases' (lines 35–6), that is Panathenaic oil jars. Praise of Theaios' family leads to a further, standard element of these poems, adaptation of local mythology in honour of the victor. Here Pindar tells the story of the friendship of the divine twins Castor and Polydeuces, who had once been entertained by ancestors of Theaios and whose patronage of his family might enable him to win a victory at Olympia. The poems in deploying myths in an allusive manner often assume knowledge by the audience of local mythology.⁹⁴

Drama, like 'sport', always occurred within a religious context. At Athens the major dramatic festivals were two festivals of Dionysos, the Great or City Dionysia and the Lenaia. Here all Athenian tragedies and comedies were performed during the festivals from the later sixth century in special seating in the Agora and then from the fifth century in a new theatre of Dionysos on the slopes of the Akropolis.⁹⁵ There is much dispute as to the extent to which the context should affect our interpretation of the plays.⁹⁶ Some have seen tragedy as essentially religious, while others have argued that the festivals were really just a holiday and merely the occasion for the plays. Both extremes are probably untenable. On the one hand, plays are not 'cultic' like the hymns sung in honour of the gods. Some plays do include aetiological myths for the cities where the action is set, for example Corinth, Thebes, Athens. For Athens Aeschylus' *Oresteia* trilogy closes with an Athena who is Athena Polias founding the venerable Athenian law-court of the Areopagus and establishing a shrine on the Areopagus hill for the Erinyes or Furies, now placated as the Semnai 'revered ones' or Eumenides who will grant blessings to the Athenians.⁹⁷ Euripides' *Ion*, set at Delphi, refers to the aetiology of the Athenian Arrhephoria,⁹⁸ and his *Iphigenia at Tauris* ends with Athena commanding the foundation of

⁹⁴ See, for example, Calame 1990, revised in 1996: 57–169; Dougherty 1993. On Pindar's social values see Kurke 1991.

⁹⁵ Fig. 2.14 no. 24. See Gebhardt 1974: 432–4; Polacco 1990, without reference to the work of the Greek Archaeological Service (*Archaiologikon Deltion* *Khronika* 40 (1985 [1990], 9–11). It was rebuilt in the fourth century under Lycurgus (cf. below, p. 81).

⁹⁶ Goldhill 1987; Connor 1990; Mikalson 1991; Seaford 1994: 235–80; Sourvinou-Inwood 1994 and 1997b; for the setting see Pickard-Cambridge 1988.

⁹⁷ *Eumenides* 681–706, 794–1047. Aeschylus was probably the first to identify the Panhellenic Erinyes with the local Semnai. For their cult, performed by an Athenian lineage, see Polemo in Scholiast on *Sophocles, Oedipus at Colonus* 489; Parker 1996: 298–9; cf. Lardinois 1992; Clinton 1996: 165–70.

⁹⁸ 8–27, 267–82; cf. below, p. 94.

the Attic cults of Artemis at Halae and Brauron.⁹⁹ But in general the relationship to Athenian or other local cults is not so close. The Athena of Sophocles' *Ajax* or Euripides' *Troades* is not the Athena Polias worshipped on the Akropolis nor was the Dionysos of Euripides' *Bacchae*, written in exile in Macedonia, the same as the Dionysos at whose festivals the plays were performed.¹⁰⁰ The gods represented in the tragedies operate in the first instance at the level of the Homeric/Hesiodic pantheon, and secondarily from time to time at the level of local cults.

Although the plays are not primarily cultic, the religious framework of procession and sacrifice and the civic setting of the festivals for Dionysos are important. They permit both tragedy and comedy to offer licensed commentaries on commonly held values, both religious and political. Thus tragedies can meditate on the nature and limits of divine justice, and sometimes explore general issues through particular focus on local cults.¹⁰¹ Similarly comedies can use explicitly religious settings for their own purposes. In Aristophanes' comedy *The Frogs* a drunken Dionysos on his way to the underworld meets a group of Eleusinian initiates who sing movingly of Persephone, Demeter and Iacchus (316–459), and in his *The Women at the Thesmophoria* the women debate formally at the festival of the Thesmophoria what punishments should be given to Euripides for his alleged slanders of women (373–519).¹⁰² There is no sharp divide between the gods of drama and the gods of Athens and other states. Rather, drama was one medium for exploring the religious ideas of the polis.

Tragedies and comedies were not exclusively Athenian, and not exclusively classical. The works of the Athenian dramatists, both tragic and comic, were staged not only in Athens but also in other Greek cities, as far west as Sicily and south Italy, in the fifth and fourth centuries.¹⁰³ They continued to be revived throughout the Hellenistic and Roman periods. Respect for the great masters did not mean the end of new work. New plays, tragic and comic, were composed for festivals until at least the late second century AD.¹⁰⁴ For example, new comedies were still being performed at the Dionysia of Smyrna (on the west coast of Asia Minor) in the mid-second century; a contemporary attests their popularity: the songs were sung later by everyone, including women

⁹⁹ 1449–67; cf. pp. 90–3 on Brauron.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. below, p. 115 for the absence of maenads in this or other Athenian festivals of Dionysos.

¹⁰¹ Parker 1997.

¹⁰² Cf. pp. 102–7 on Eleusis, pp. 98–100 for the Thesmophoria. Below, p. 52, on Dionysos' statue.

¹⁰³ Taplin 1993. ¹⁰⁴ C.P. Jones 1993.

and slaves, 'in the baths, in the alleyways, in the market-place, and at home'.¹⁰⁵

A particularly full record of the range of competitions in a festival of the Roman period happens to survive from Oenoanda, a small town in south-west Asia Minor.¹⁰⁶ This new festival, founded in AD 124–5, stretching over three weeks, included seventeen days of competitions and other events: musical competitions (singers accompanied by the *kithara* 'lyre', players of the shawm with a choir or *khorauloi*, trumpeters and heralds); dramatic competitions (poets, writers of encomia in prose, comic actors, tragic actors); mime acts outside the competition; and gymnasium competitions for the local citizens. These competitions are typical of the festivals of this period and demonstrate the continued vitality of the classical tradition.

The competitions involving words develop a tradition that goes back to the archaic period. From at least the sixth century BC onwards, poets wrote special hymns for performance in competition at festivals. The so-called Homeric hymns, some thirty-three in number, are a compilation of hymns of which at least some were originally sung competitively at festivals.¹⁰⁷ The extant hymns date to the seventh and sixth centuries BC (and perhaps later), and are called 'Homeric' only because their language stood in the Homeric tradition. The hymn to Delian Apollo itself refers to the festival at which the long-robed Ionians gather in honour of Apollo with their children and diffident wives:

The girls of Delos handmaidens of the Far Shooter [Apollo], when they have praised Apollo first and also Leto [his mother] and Artemis [his sister] who delights in arrows, they sing a hymn telling of men and women of past days, and charm the tribes of people. (146–61)

The singer of the Homeric Hymn also describes himself for the singers of the cult hymn and claims to be the one whom the girls most appreciate. Another Homeric Hymn, to Aphrodite (6.19–21), hopes that the god will grant him victory in the competition, though it is in fact hard to identify at what festival this might have occurred.

There were also competitions, at for example the Athenian Panathenaia, for the performance of epic, by *rhapsodoi*, and of lyric 'epic', by *kitharodoi*, who accompanied themselves with a *kithara*.¹⁰⁸ Such

¹⁰⁵ Aelius Aristides 29.30, trans. in C.A. Behr, Leiden 1981–6.

¹⁰⁶ SEG 38. 1962; Mitchell 1990, with translation.

¹⁰⁷ The collection may have been made in the fifth century AD by Proclus, on whom see below, pp. 168–9. See generally Parker 1991: 1–4; Calame 1995.

¹⁰⁸ Neils 1992: 69–75.

competitions are still found in second-century AD Oenoanda. Here, as elsewhere in the Roman period, we also find competitions for encomia of the gods in prose.¹⁰⁹ In addition, Greek orators of the Roman period also composed prose hymns to the gods, not for competitions, but for virtuosic performances, whether at festivals or in other settings. Ten such speeches by the second century AD orator Aelius Aristides survive, and rules for their composition were formulated in rhetorical handbooks.¹¹⁰ Competitive and epideictic praise of the gods was one of the enduring ways in which Greek mythology was deployed and constantly adapted and recreated for local circumstances.

¹⁰⁹ Price 1984b: 90 on encomia to gods and emperors.

¹¹⁰ Aelius Aristides, *Orations* 37–46 Keil, trans. C.A. Behr, Leiden 1981–6; cf. Russell 1990. Quintilian 3.7.7–8 (Latin, first century AD); Alexander Numenius, in Spengel, *Rhetores Graeci* 3.4–6 (second century AD); 'Menander Rhetor', trans. in Russell and Wilson 1981: 6–29 and (in part) in MacMullen and Lane 1992: 59–62 (third century AD).

CHAPTER 3

Religious places

Greek temples are among the most familiar surviving objects of antiquity. Thousands of visitors a year gaze at the Parthenon, and the influence of the temples, direct or indirect, is visible all the way from the White House in Washington DC to the Opera House in Ulan Bator, Mongolia. In antiquity too they were prestigious buildings. Architects around the Greek world rivalled one another in building bigger and finer temples, and cities were extremely proud of their religious architecture. Herodotos, who was fond of Samos, includes the temple of Hera there among the three architectural wonders that justified his writing at length about the Samians (the other two were an aqueduct one kilometre long through a mountain, and a harbour mole) (3.60). This temple of Hera on Samos was planned in the earlier sixth century BC on a colossal scale and, a generation later, probably because of marshy conditions, rebuilt on a similar scale. Work continued for the next five hundred years until hope of actually completing the temple was abandoned, but the temple was still an impressive sight. Bronze coins produced by Greek cities in the Roman period often feature their temples as matters of local pride; for example, coins of Samos from the first to the mid-third centuries AD proudly display the ancient cult statue of Hera in its temple.¹ Temples, however, are only the most prominent component of a Greek sanctuary and must be seen as secondary to the functions of the sacrificial altar, which was indispensable, and in the context of an area of sacred space surrounding both altar and temple.² An antiquarian writer of about 200 BC described the marvels of the Samian sanctuary of Hera (including her peacocks) in his treatise on the wonders of Samos.³

¹ Temple: Kyrieleis 1981; 1993. Coins: Price and Trelle 1977: 133–5.

² Price 1984a: 133–7; Schachter 1992; Marinatos and Hagg 1993. For general introductions see Melas 1973, Tomlinson 1976 and Osborne 1987: 165–92. On the Athenian Akropolis see Hopper 1971; Korres in Economakis 1994: 35–51; and on Athens generally Wycherley 1978.

³ Menodotos in Athenaeus 14.655a, 15.671d–674a (Tresp 1914: 151–8; FGH 541).

LOCATION

When Greeks from the eighth century BC onwards founded new colonies, one of their principal acts was the definition of sacred space.⁴ We find an example in Homer's *Odyssey*, which reflects many aspects of eighth-century Greece,

Nausithoös settled them [the Phaeacians] in Scheria far from men who live by toil. About the city he had drawn a wall, he had built houses and made shrines to the gods and divided the plough land. (*Odyssey* 6.7–10)

Some five hundred years later, Alexander the Great is said to have displayed similar concern when founding Alexandria in Egypt:

He himself marked out the ground plan of the city: where the market place was to be laid out, how many temples were to be built and in honour of what gods, both Greek and Isis the Egyptian, and where the wall was to be built round it. With this in view he offered sacrifice, which proved favourable. (Arrian, *Anabasis* 3.1.5)

Some sanctuaries in mainland Greece were sited in relation to divine intervention, for example those of Poseidon and Athena at Athens (above, p. 19), or at a particularly awesome spot like Delphi. But when founding new communities the Greeks assumed that the founder would locate sanctuaries as part of his overall urban planning. The assumptions of the colonial founders no doubt formalised views current at home. Although there was no divine sanction for the siting of most new Greek temples in the archaic and classical periods, no community could exist without temples to its gods.

The official assignment of sacred space was equally important when cities were refounded. Colophon, an ancient city on the west coast of Asia Minor, regained its freedom (from Persia) at the hands of Alexander the Great and his successors, and decided at the very end of the fourth century BC to incorporate within its walls the 'ancient city'. It seems to have been long ruined and abandoned. The decree of the city includes the following provision:

Resolved by the people to enclose within the same walls in addition to the present city the ancient city which, on receipt from the gods, our ancestors founded and where they set up temples and altars, our ancestors who were held in high esteem among all the Greeks. In order that this could be achieved quickly, the priest of Apollo and the other priests and priestesses and the chief

⁴ Malkin 1987: 135–86. See also the theoretical divisions of Hippodamus, criticised by Aristotle, *Politics* 1267b22–1269a28.

magistrate with the help of the council and the others listed in this decree should go down to the ancient Agora on the fourth of the next month and upon the altars of the gods which our ancestors bequeathed to us should pray to Zeus the Saviour, Poseidon the Securer, Apollo the Clarian, Mother Antaia ['appearing face to face'], Athena Polias and to all the other male and female gods and to the heroes who occupy our city and territory since we enjoy complete prosperity, to make a solemn procession and sacrifice in the manner the people decided.⁵

The revival of the old sacred places, which did not have to be freshly allocated, is marked by means of procession, sacrifice and prayer. God-given places as they were, the ten land-commissioners and the architect had to work around them when laying down the line of the roads, the building lots reserving the agora, the work-places and the other necessary public land.

Greek sanctuaries were carefully placed, within an urban, suburban or rural context. The urban sanctuaries were situated in a variety of contexts. Though the Parthenon stood out at Athens and 'makes a great impression on sightseers' as the author of a guidebook to Greece noted in the third century BC, this was unusual.⁶ Most urban sanctuaries did not tower over their towns like medieval cathedrals; rather they were integrated into the fabric of urban life, especially with the development in the classical period of imposing secular architecture.

The locating of urban sanctuaries may be illustrated archaeologically from the excavations of Megara Hyblaia, a Greek town founded on the east coast of Sicily in about 725 BC. In and around the agora were built a series of temples and shrines during the first phase of the settlement down to circa 650 BC (Fig. 3.1).⁷ Megara Hyblaia gradually grew into the division of space appointed by the founder: temples were built in and adjacent to existing sanctuaries and within the agora itself; other buildings came to sharpen the boundaries of the civic space, and the founder himself probably received heroic honours perhaps next to the house in which he had once lived.

Selinus, on the south-west coast of Sicily (founded in about 628 BC) followed the model of her mother city, Megara Hyblaia. There was a walled Akropolis, a grid plan of streets, and sanctuaries going back to the seventh century.⁸ Although the city possessed several temples on the

⁵ Maier 1959: no. 69, lines 9–21 (311–306 BC).

⁶ Heraclides of Grete?, ed. F. Pfister, Vienna 1951, trans. in Austin 1981: no. 83, l. 1.

⁷ Vallet, Villard and Auberson 1976; 1983. For sanctuaries in and around the Athenian agora see Camp 1986.

⁸ Fifth-century listing of the gods of Selinus: ML 38, trans. in Appendix no. 10.

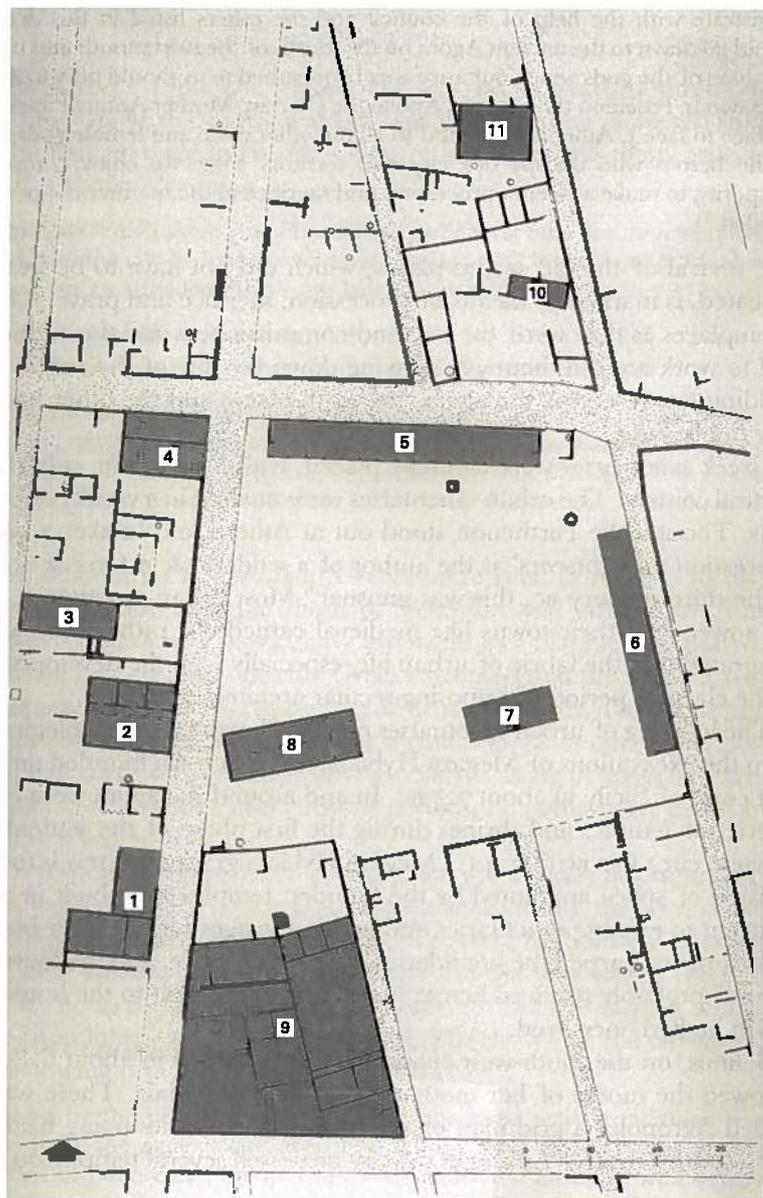


Fig. 3.1. Plan of archaic agora, Megara Hyblaea. Religious and civic buildings are shaded. 1. Secular public building (sixth century BC). 2. Hestiatorion (c. 530 BC). 3. Temple built c. 600 BC at rear of earlier sanctuary, destroying earlier buildings. 4. Building added c. 630 BC to house dating to period of foundation of colony.

[cont. on p. 51]

Akropolis, in addition there was a contemporary and no less important sanctuary of Demeter Malophoros 'apple bearer' about 750 metres to the west of the city outside which was probably the main gate.⁹ There is no reason to suggest that the complex perpetuated local cults predating the arrival of the Greek colonists. The sanctuary of Demeter Malophoros was probably designed to replicate a sanctuary to the same goddess at mainland Greek Megara, the 'grandmother' of Selinus. The founder of the city had been sent out from Megara, where too the sanctuary was sited just outside a gate on the way down to water, in this case the sea of the Saronic Gulf (Pausanias 1.44.3), and at Selinus the several thousands of terracotta votives of a goddess holding a pomegranate belong within a Greek iconographical tradition.¹⁰ The goddess was simply one of the major protectors of the community. The sanctuary consists of a large *temenos* (sacred precinct) roughly 110 by 80 metres, with an inner precinct about 60 by 50 metres (Fig. 3.2). The latter included an altar dating back to the mid-seventh century, and a shrine of the late seventh century, rebuilt in the sixth, and a large altar replacing the earlier one in the late sixth century. The chthonic elements of the cult are picked up by the sanctuary of Zeus Meilichios that lies in the north-east corner of the main precinct; a sanctuary of Hekate may be next to the main entrance.

The placing of this sanctuary on the periphery of the town fits into a pattern of 'suburban' sanctuaries.¹¹ The deities whose sanctuaries lay on a city's akropolis or agora were normally ordinary Olympian deities, central both physically and metaphysically. But the sanctuary of Demeter Malophoros, though important, was concerned with rites of transition and women, who were not politically central to the city.¹² Similarly the sanctuary of Persephone at Locri in south Italy, which as we have seen was especially concerned with women, marriage and

⁹ Original publication: Gábrici 1927; see briefly Coarelli and Torelli 1984: 97–103. Recent work synthesised: Jameson, Jordan and Kotansky 1993: 132–6.

¹⁰ See above, pp. 49–50. Merging of Greek and Punic traditions in the fourth century: Jameson, Jordan and Kotansky 1993: 137–41.

¹¹ Cole 1994 surveys the evidence on Demeter. See in general Vallet 1968: 81–8; de Polignac 1995: 21–5. ¹² Below, pp. 98–100, for festivals of Demeter.

Fig. 3.1 (cont.)

Pits inside, probably for chthonic sacrifice, suggest it was a 'heroon' for the city's founder, who will have received after his death the heroic sacrifices that were normal for founders. 5–6. Porticoes (650–600 BC). 7. Temple (650–625 BC). 8. Temple (625–600 BC). 9. Building for civic administration (640–630 BC). 10. Small temple (650–625 BC) built in large sanctuary. 11. Sacred building (550–500 BC).

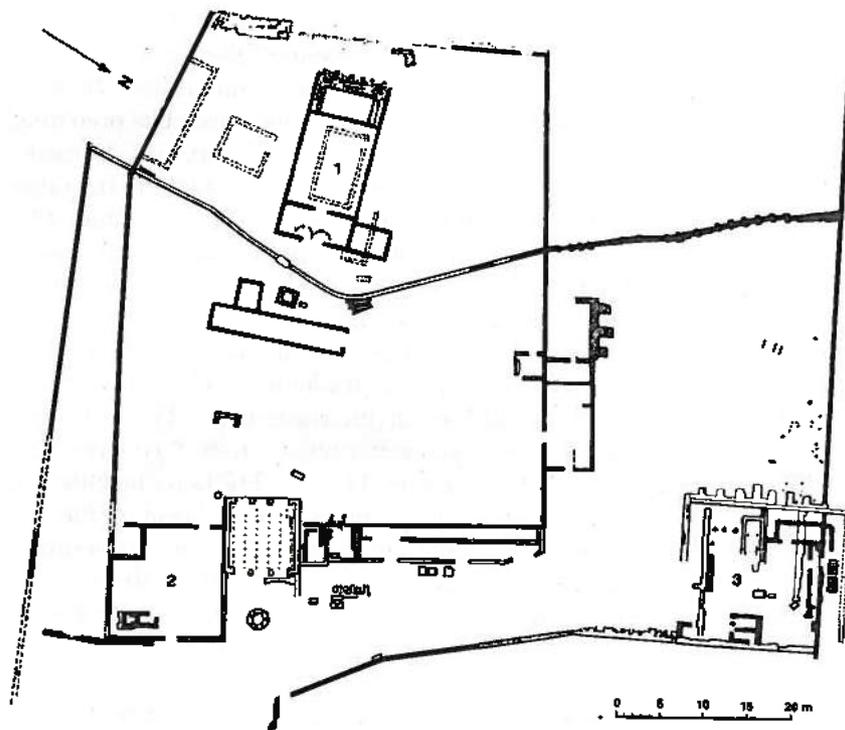


Fig. 3.2. Sanctuary of Demeter Malophoros, Selinus. 1. Shrine of Demeter Malophoros; 2. Sanctuary of Hekate? 3. Sanctuary of Zeus Meilichios.

child-rearing, lay on a large terrace, about 100 by 40 metres, on the north edge of the town outside the walls. Sanctuaries of Dionysos were also characteristically suburban: in some cities he bore the telling name 'in front of the city'.¹³ At Athens one sanctuary of Dionysos was outside the original city 'in the Marshes',¹⁴ the other was on the south slopes of the Akropolis (Fig. 2.14, nos. 24–5), but an annual ritual recalled that the statue of Dionysos displayed there during the Dionysia had been brought to Athens from outside, from Eleutheræ on the borders of Attica and Boeotia.¹⁵ The outsider-status of Dionysos made it appropri-

¹³ Gernet and Boulanger 1932: 105; cf. Robert 1948: 79 on the meaning of the phrase.

¹⁴ Thucydides 2.15.4. Probably in the Ilissus area but the precise location is unknown: Pickard-Cambridge 1968: 19–25; below, p. 117.

¹⁵ On the sixth-century origins of Great/City Dionysia: Connor 1990: 8–16; Sourvinou-Inwood 1994; Parker 1996: 92–6. Above, p. 44, on tragedies.

ate for the sanctuaries to be away from the centre, either physically or in terms of mythical origins. Deities associated with fertility often had their sanctuaries in a suburban location.

Sanctuaries are also found well away from the nucleated centre of the polis. Some were small shrines, perhaps dedicated by local groups or by individual families.¹⁶ Others were major civic sanctuaries.¹⁷ The reasons for the precise location of these rural sanctuaries must be varied, but one common reason was the definition of boundaries.¹⁸ The Argive Heraion, some eight kilometres from the city of Argos, lay at the edge of the fertile plain disputed by Argos, Mycenæ, Tiryns and Asine. The sanctuary, which may go back to the eighth century BC, may originally have been more in the orbit of Mycenæ, and become decisively 'Argive' only after the destruction by Argos of Mycenæ and Tiryns in the 460s.¹⁹ The role of sanctuaries on boundaries is clearer in, for example, Pausanias' account of Mantinea in the southern Peloponnese. The city was ringed by a series of sanctuaries at or near boundaries with the various neighbouring city states: a sanctuary of Poseidon Hippios near the frontier with Tegea, one of Zeus Kharinos on the way to Pallantion, one of Artemis on the way to Orchomenos, and at Anchisia also on the way to Orchomenos are 'the ruins of a sanctuary of Aphrodite and the boundary between Mantinea and Orchomenos'.²⁰ Such sanctuaries were not forts, they were symbolic markers laying claim to and hopefully defining the outer limits of a city's territory. Given that marginal areas were often important for grazing and that most Greek wars were fought over disputed border lands, such definitions were a matter of no mean importance.

In some cases at least a major procession as part of an annual festival served to make manifest the links between city and sanctuary. At Argos, for example, a major procession led from the city to the Heraion.²¹ The sanctuary of Demeter and Kore at Eleusis on the western edge of Attica was also closely tied to Athens. At the foot of the Akropolis at the edge of the Agora was a sanctuary, the Eleusinion, where special rites took place and any Athenian business concerning the Mysteries was carried out. From it there started the great procession of initiates and future

¹⁶ Edlund 1987: 98–102, 141–2.

¹⁷ Vallet 1968: 88–94; Edlund 1987; Osborne 1987: 165–71; Alcock 1993: 200–10; de Polignac 1995.

¹⁸ de Polignac 1994; 1995: 98–106; Nixon 1990 applies de Polignac's ideas to Crete.

¹⁹ Hall 1995; cf. de Polignac 1995: 52–3.

²⁰ 8.10–12. Cf. Bruit Zaidman and Schmitt Pantel 1992: 207–14, with fig. 11; and on Arcadia generally Jost 1994.

²¹ de Polignac 1995: 41–3, 46; Hall 1995: 594–6, arguing for a fifth-century origin.

initiates and youths (ephebes) who walked the seven kilometres from Athens to celebrate the Mysteries at Eleusis.²² During the latter stages of the Peloponnesian War, at a time when the Spartans controlled access to Attica, the Athenians had had to skip the procession to Eleusis, omitting the customary sacrifices, dances and rites which were performed on the road to Eleusis. In 407 BC Alcibiades, although found guilty of profaning the Mysteries in 415 BC, was able to assert his piety and to raise Athenian morale by leading the procession by land. 'He posted sentries on the heights, sent out an advance guard at daybreak, and then, marshalling the priests, novices and initiates, and placing them in the centre of his column, he led them along the road to Eleusis in solemn and complete silence.'²³ Ephebes, who were formally organised in the 330s under Lycurgus (below, p. 95), came to have a prominent and enduring role in the procession. In the third century AD the Athenian people gave fresh instructions to the official in charge of the ephebes to organise 'in accordance with ancestral custom' the procession escorting the sacred objects from Eleusis to the Eleusinion in Athens and the return procession six days later.²⁴ No doubt the organisation of the procession was very different from that of the classical period, but this and other similar processions long formalised and defined the ties between centre and periphery. Processions leading to popular festivities at sanctuaries outside the urban centre were normal in the Greek world.²⁵

APPEARANCE AND SETTING

Sanctuaries varied not only in location but also in appearance. Pausanias described the full range. On Mount Lykaion in Arcadia, central Peloponnese, known locally as Olympos or 'Sacred Peak', where (rather than on Crete) Zeus was believed by the Arcadians to have been born, was a sanctuary of Zeus Lykaios

into which people are not allowed to enter; if anyone ignores the rules and enters he inevitably lives no more than a year . . . On the mountain top is a mound of earth forming an altar of Zeus Lykaios, from which most of the Peloponnese can be seen. Before the altar on the east stand two pillars on which there used to be gilded eagles. On this altar they sacrifice in secret to Zeus Lykaios.²⁶

²² Travlos 1971: 198–203. ²³ Plutarch, *Alcibiades* 34.3–6; cf. below, pp. 82–5 on 415 BC; Graf 1996. ²⁴ *IG* 2² 1078 = *Syll.* 3 885, c. AD 220. Cf. Pélékidis 1962: 220–5.

²⁵ Note their discussion in Aeneas Tacticus 17.1 (trans. D. Whitehead, Oxford 1990; also Loeb).

²⁶ 8.38.6–7. Pausanias here alludes to the alleged local practice of human sacrifice: Bonnechere 1994: 85–96.

Some woods were sacred; indeed Pausanias is particularly interested in woods with a religious (or political) significance. On a mountain southwest of Argos at Lerna was a sacred wood consisting largely of plane trees bounded by two rivers stretching down to the sea.

Within the grove are cult images of Demeter Prosymne and of Dionysos. Of Demeter there is also a seated image of no great size. These are of stone, but elsewhere in a temple is a seated wooden image of Dionysos Saviour.²⁷

The god Pan and his associated nymphs were normally worshipped in caves, at least outside his 'home' in Arcadia. Pausanias mentions one on the slopes of the Athenian Akropolis; the cult was founded by the Athenians after Pan had appeared to the runner Philippides returning to Athens with the news that the Spartans could not help fight the Persians at Marathon in 490 BC (1.28.4, No. 19 on Fig. 2.14);²⁸ he also mentions an important one in the Attic countryside (1.32.7), which along with other such cave cults probably developed after that on the Akropolis. Caves were the perfect symbol for this god of the wild who could steal people's wits away. Then there were sanctuaries on level or terraced ground, defined perhaps by boundary stones or a wall, as the sanctuaries of Megara Hyblaia or Selinus. Take for example the sanctuary of Asclepius at Sicyon on the north coast of the Peloponnese,

On passing within the enclosure you see on the left a building with two rooms. In the outer one lies a figure of Sleep, of which nothing now remains except the head. The inner room is given over to Apollo Karneios. Into it no one may enter except the priests. In the portico lies a huge bone of a sea monster, and after it an image of the Dream-God, and Sleep, surnamed Epidotes ('Bountiful') lulling to sleep a lion. Within the temple of Asclepius on either side of the entrance is an image, on the one side Pan seated, on the other Artemis standing. When you have entered you see the god, a beardless figure of gold and ivory made by Kalamis [fifth-century sculptor]. He holds a staff in one hand and a cone of the cultivated pine in the other. (2.10.2–3)

Defining and analysing sanctuaries archaeologically without the aid of Pausanias or other texts is rather challenging. While excavators of pre-historic sites have begun to formulate explicit criteria for deciding that particular sites are 'sanctuaries' and explicit questions that may be answered archaeologically (see above, p. 9, n. 21), classical archaeologists have so far not been so ready to be explicit about their methods. They have often identified their buildings on the basis of Pausanias'

²⁷ 2.36.8–37.2. Cf. Herodotos 6.75–82 for violation of the woods sacred to the hero Argos by the Spartan king Cleomenes; Jacob 1993; Birge 1994.

²⁸ Borgeaud 1988 explores his cults; Parker 1996: 163–8.

descriptions or other texts, and they have not always been as ready to present evidence for the whole sanctuary as for the more prestigious architecture and sculpture.²⁹

The most prestigious building in a sanctuary was of course the temple. These were of different types. The most complex type looked inwards, it incorporated different elements of religious landscape within its walls. The Erechtheion on the Akropolis in Athens (above, Fig. 2.3) included a whole series of altars to various gods and heroes, marks resulting from the contest between Poseidon and Athena, and a shrine with the original wooden cult statue of Athena Polias, which was believed to have fallen from heaven.³⁰ Similarly the temple of Apollo at Delphi, though more regular in plan, was also replete with sacred objects.³¹ In the innermost part of the far end of the temple was the *omphalos* or navel which was believed to mark the centre of the world. A gold statue of Apollo probably stood beside it, another of wood was elsewhere in the temple. Beside it was the tomb of Dionysos, who was another important god at Delphi. Then there were the oracular items: Apollo's sacred laurel and the tripod with its 'oracular chasm' beneath it. Moreover the temple also housed the eternal flame of Hestia and an altar of Poseidon. The temple as a whole articulates the complex pantheon of Delphi.

More commonly temples had a much simpler design.³² A colonnade surrounds a rectangular room opening east, at the far end of which was a cult statue of the deity. It might be decorated in the pediment and on the architrave with sculpture depicting mythical scenes. The Parthenon, exceptionally, also has a frieze along the wall of the inner building. Being a dwelling place for the deity, it was the principal objective of the temple to house the cult image.

The image of the deity in the 'normal' temple might be of colossal size, of prestigious material, and by a famous craftsman. The statue of Athena Polias in the Parthenon was by Pheidias, the best known craftsman of the fifth century. It was some ten metres tall, adorned with gold and ivory; the gold weighed perhaps forty-four talents, which is more than a metric ton, and the total cost was about 750 talents, roughly

²⁹ For some interesting work on pre-Roman Gaul, see Brunaux 1988.

³⁰ The Parthenon itself is also abnormal in design (fig. 2.14 no. 4): the two chambers probably each had a cult purpose (the west chamber was called not a 'treasury' but 'parthenon', and the north aisle sheltered a small shrine and a round altar). Fig. 2.2; Korres in Tournikiotis 1994: 56-97; Harris 1995: 2-5.

³¹ Plan: Price 1985: fig. 28. Dionysos: Roux 1976: 175-84; West 1983: 150-2.

³² For plans, see Coulton 1977: 191 fig. 72, and Bruit Zaidman and Schmitt Pantel 1992: 236-8.

equivalent to the yearly income of 12,750 skilled labourers. The chamber in which the statue stood was specially designed to permit views of the statue not only from the front, but from all sides.³³ The image of Asclepius at Sicyon was no doubt smaller, but it too was of gold and ivory, and Pausanias was able to give the name of the fifth-century craftsman. Such images were very prestigious and excited strong feelings. In the second century AD people would travel to Olympia to see the work of Pheidias, his colossal statue of Zeus, and indeed deemed it a misfortune to die without seeing these sights.³⁴ Also noteworthy were the simpler wooden images, many of which were to be seen in the second century AD Pausanias describes wooden images (*xoana*) at, for example, the sacred grove near Argos or the eight-foot high cypress image of Hermes on a mountain peak in Arcadia (8.17.2). Some of these *xoana* were deemed by Pausanias to be of considerable antiquity, and prestige.³⁵ But even better were the images that had fallen from the sky and were not the work of human hands.³⁶

The cult statue in the temple was not supposed to be a literally accurate image of the deity. Despite the prestige of Pheidias' statue of Athena Polias, much copied by later sculptors throughout the Greek world, it was felt to be only a conventional representation. So in the early second century AD the orator Dio of Prusa delivered a great speech at Olympia in the sight of Pheidias' statue of Zeus explaining, in accordance with Stoic philosophy, how the statue was a representation of Zeus, based in part on his description in the *Iliad* (1.528-30).³⁷ That particular deities had their normal guises – old man, young woman, etc. – and their own attributes – thunderbolt, trident, etc. – was a matter of convention. The anthropomorphism of Greek cult statues does not mean that the Greeks thought that their gods actually were people.³⁸

The point of the cult statues was not to serve as the object of private devotions inside the temple, nor indeed normally of any public ritual. 'Normal' temples were not congregational buildings; rather, the deity, imagined to be temporarily present at festival time, looked out through

³³ See Robertson 1975: 311-22; Ridgway in Neils 1992: 131-5; Korres in Tournikiotis 1994: 93. Cf. ML 54 = *JG* 1³ 458, trans. Fornara 1983: no. 114. Below, pp. 63-4, on building costs.

³⁴ The philosopher Epictetos (1.6.23) criticises such folly.

³⁵ Pausanias' usage of *xoanon* has developed into the misleading modern notion of *xoana* as primitive, aniconic, cult statues; cf. Price 1984a: 176; Donohue 1988; Appendix no. 3.

³⁶ Pausanias 1.26.6 on the Athenian image of Athena Polias, housed in the Erechtheion on the Akropolis; Ridgway in Neils 1992: 120-7. Above, p. 23, on the Ephesian image of Artemis.

³⁷ Dio, *Oration* 12. Below, pp. 198-9 on Stoicism.

³⁸ Gordon 1979; Vernant 1983: 328-30. Above, p. 13, on Homer.

the doors of the temple especially opened for the occasion at the ritual happening outside.³⁹

Some deities, however, it was not thought proper to honour in this manner. In sanctuaries of Demeter there was generally no 'normal' temple, though there were some buildings. For example, the sanctuary of Demeter and Kore at Corinth was laid out on three terraces, on the lower slope of the hill overlooking the city. The lowest terrace, which was used for dining, had thirty dining rooms, with couches for 200 people; the middle terrace had pits for sacrifice and other offerings, but neither a temple nor a normal altar; the highest terrace had two theatre areas cut into the rocks, with space for 80 to 90 spectators.⁴⁰

The offering of sacrifices normally took place outside the temple on an altar; altars, not temples, were in fact the key element of sanctuaries. At Olympia the altar of Zeus where 100 oxen were sacrificed during the Olympic games consisted of a mound of ashes that accumulated over the centuries. Pausanias reported that in his day it was 6.5 metres high (5.13.8–9). When there was a temple, the standard design of an altar from the seventh century BC onwards was a square or rectangular stone structure placed in front of the temple at the east end where the sacrifice would be performed in sight of the deity.⁴¹ Raised altars and temples formed a single unit. Offerings to chthonic deities, who often lacked a regular temple, took a different form. Sacrifices to heroes often involved low hearths and the burial of objects in pits, as probably for the heroic founder of Megara Hyblaia, and in Demeter sanctuaries such as that at Corinth there were also pits for ritual purposes.

VOTIVES

Sanctuaries were not just places for the performance of ritual; they were also places where communities and individuals could display their gratitude and piety toward the god. From the earliest to the latest times offerings were made to the gods, though the nature of these offerings changed over time. Some were of marble or bronze, and were thus relatively durable (and familiar); others were of more perishable materials, such as ivory or wood (Fig. 3.3).⁴² We have to imagine that sanctuaries

³⁹ For access to temples see Corbett 1970.

⁴⁰ Nixon 1995: 77–85. The sanctuary of Demeter Malophoros at Selinus (above, p. 51) had a shrine, but not a full temple. ⁴¹ Cf. Rupp 1983.

⁴² For other votives see Figs 2.5–8, 8.2 (terracotta); 2.13 (small bronze); 3.5 (relief), 5.2 (pottery); 1.1 and 5.3 (marble statues). Cf. Appendix nos. 9–10.



Fig. 3.3. Painted wooden plaque, from a cave sanctuary at Pitsà (near Sicyon), 550–500 BC (length c. 0.30m). A family prepares to sacrifice. On the right, a lighted altar. Next to it, a woman carries on her head a *kanoun* (with objects for the sacrifice), and in her left hand a vessel for libations. A boy leads the sacrificial sheep. There follow two other youths, playing a lyre and a double shawm. Three women advance, in time to the music, carrying branches. All the figures are wearing garlands. The four women are named, and were perhaps a mother with her three daughters. They are described as making a dedication to the Nymphs (to whom the cave was sacred).

which to today's visitor seem an empty expanse of open ground were cluttered with votive offerings: sanctuary inscriptions recorded, often in meticulous detail, the proper transfer of the votives from one board of annual magistrates to the next.⁴³ Sometimes the numbers grew so great that the old ones had to be cleared away to make room for new dedications. Particularly in sanctuaries of Asclepius and other healing gods, special sacred regulations governed the removal and disposal of such objects.⁴⁴ Some survive to this day, sometimes because old or damaged offerings were piously buried, others are attested by the inscriptions which survive from their bases, yet more are described by Pausanias. This abundant information on votives makes them important for our understanding of Greek religions.⁴⁵

In the Panhellenic sanctuaries cities from all over the Greek world

⁴³ Linders 1988.

⁴⁴ LSCG nos 41–3, 70, LSCG Supp. 43, 107, LSAM 59 = *Inscriben von Iasos* 220. Cf. Appendix no. 8.

⁴⁵ Rouse 1902 remains a good starting point; see briefly Osborne 1987: 185–8. Above, pp. 24, 51, on Locri and Selinus. Neumann 1979; van Straten 1981, 1992; Simon 1986; Linders and Nordquist 1987; Alroth 1989; Morgan 1990: 194–203, 225–33; Jackson 1991; Muller 1996 on the Thesmophorion at Thasos.

made offerings to the gods. After defeating the Persian invasion of 480–479 BC, the Greeks made collective dedications. Pausanias reports that at Delphi 'the Greeks in common dedicated from the spoils taken at the battle of Plataia a gold tripod set on a bronze serpent' (10.13.9). By his day the gold tripod had been removed, but the bronze serpent column, which was about 5.5 metres high, remained until the early fourth century AD, when Constantine took it to his new city of Constantinople (modern Istanbul), where the remains of it stand to this day. Dedications by communities and individual citizens were often kept in special buildings or 'treasuries'.⁴⁶ At Olympia eleven treasuries stand in a line overlooking the altar of Zeus and the end of the stadium. At Delphi treasuries, about thirty in total, mainly flank the Sacred Way that leads up through the sanctuary to the temple. The Delphic treasuries were erected by cities from all over the Greek world: mainland Greece (Corinth, Sicyon, Thebes, Athens), northern Greece (Potidaea), the Aegean islands (Siphnos), eastern Greece (Knidos), north Africa (Cyrene) and the west (Syracuse and Massilia). They range in date from the mid-seventh century through into the mid-fourth century BC. Those of the archaic period are themselves adorned with sculpted reliefs of the highest quality. By the time of Pausanias most if not all the treasuries were empty, the lavish offerings having been removed in the passage of time by other Greek states and by Romans.

Fortunately for us, the contents of one treasury which seems to have been damaged by fire were carefully buried under the Sacred Way at Delphi, to be rediscovered only in 1939. The cache dates mostly to the seventh and sixth centuries, though there are also some fifth-century pieces. Gold, silver and ivory were used in great abundance as well as bronze. The cache included three beautiful anthropomorphic statues, the flesh in ivory with gold plates for the clothing, perhaps of Apollo, his mother Leto and his sister Artemis; a life-size bull in gold and silver and a large number of ivory reliefs of mythological scenes, which once adorned either the side of a throne or a separate votive, perhaps a chest.⁴⁷ Evidently, an extraordinary amount of wealth went into these dedications (Fig. 3.4).

At Delphi monuments and objects were also dedicated outside the treasuries. The Naxians around 560 BC dedicated just below the temple a marble column about 10 metres high surmounted by a sphinx a further

⁴⁶ Roux 1984.

⁴⁷ Amandry 1939; 1977; Robertson 1975: 140–1. On gifts of gold and silver to sanctuaries see Lewis 1986; Linders 1987; Harris 1990–1.

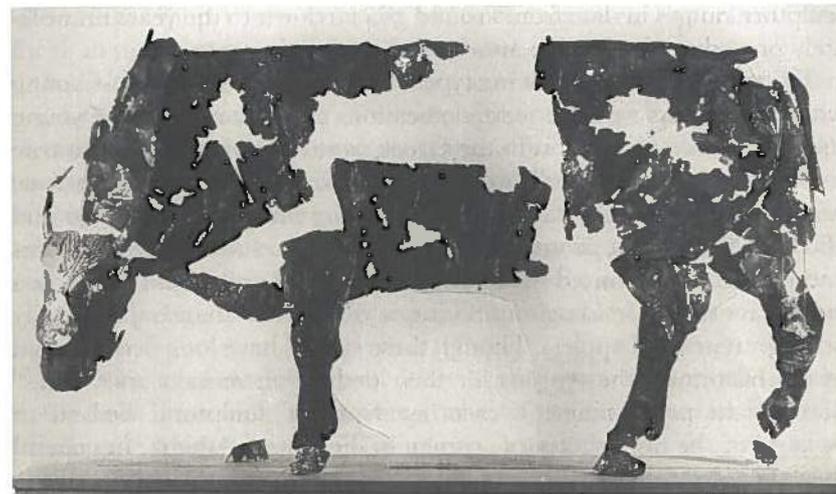


Fig. 3.4. Gold and silver statue of bull (on wooden frame), Delphi (sixth century BC) (height 1.45m).

2.3 metres high. The Athenians built not only a treasury, perhaps around 500 BC, but also a monument from the spoils of victory against the Persians at Marathon in 490 BC and a portico from spoils taken during the Peloponnesian war. From the late fourth century BC such monuments replaced the building of treasuries. One commemorated a lion hunt by Alexander the Great, and from the early third century BC victory dedications, by Hellenistic kings and others, took the form of lavish buildings.

In civic sanctuaries dedications were made both by the local community and by individual men and women, both in their own names and as members of families.⁴⁸ One of the best known assemblages happens to survive from the Athenian Akropolis. After the sack of the Akropolis by the Persians in 480 BC the damaged dedications were gathered up and carefully buried together. Subsequently votives accumulated again in abundance. One Polemon composed four books about them in the second century BC, and Pausanias also described many dedications. The surviving archaic votives, while not as lavish as the Delphic cache, include some of the finest extant works of archaic Greek sculpture and the picture is filled out by the inscriptions on the votives' bases.⁴⁹ The

⁴⁸ Van Straten 1992: 274–84 stresses the representation of women in votives as members of families, but the point is also true for men. On dedications by women see Kron 1996: 155–71.

⁴⁹ Sculpture: Schrader 1939; Payne and Mackworth-Young 1950. Inscriptions: Raubitschek and Jeffery 1949; *JG* 1³ 526–947; some trans. in Rice and Stambaugh 1979: 150–1.

sculpture ranges in date from around 560 BC down to the years immediately preceding the Persian attack.

The most common surviving type of dedication was statues of young women, *korai*. As we have seen, dedications of similar statues of young men (*kouroi*) were common in the Greek world (above p. 4), but no true *kouroi* it seems were dedicated on the Akropolis. Seventy-five *korai* survive, some only in small fragments, dating mainly between 530 and 480 BC. The statues, around life size or less, stood sometimes on bases and sometimes mounted on columns for greater visibility. The women are always shown holding an offering in one or both hands (principally pomegranates and apples). Though these statues have long been studied by art historians, the reasons for their dedication remain uncertain.⁵⁰ *Korai* might predominate over other types of sculptural dedication because of the importance of women in the cult of Athena. In general the extant groups of *kouroi/korai* in sanctuaries parallel the gender of the deity: *kouroi* in the sanctuary of Apollo Ptoios in Boeotia, and of Apollo at Didyma; *korai* in the sanctuary of Hera on Samos, though there are some cross-gender dedications. But the statues were not necessarily put up by women. In the two cases on the Akropolis where inscribed statue bases can plausibly be associated with *korai* it was men who dedicated the statues. For example, 'Nearchos the potter (?) dedicated the work from the first fruits (*aparkhe*) to Athena.'⁵¹

A wide range of dedications was made by non-aristocrats. The inscribed bases record potters and painters (in addition to Nearchos and a relief showing a seated potter), a tanner, an architect, a shipbuilder, a fuller and a washerwoman. The dedicatory inscriptions regularly indicated that the offerings were made 'from the first fruits' or 'from a tithe'. It is unclear if there was a real difference in meaning between the two terms, but in any case they both draw attention to wealth as the source of the dedications. The Akropolis *korai* would thus be signs of the piety of the wealthy (but not necessarily aristocratic) class of archaic Athens.⁵²

Another range of sculpture is to be associated with aristocrats. The magnificent statue of a man bearing a calf on his shoulders for sacrifice is surely aristocratic, and the most common representations of men are those of horsemen and charioteers, both free standing and in relief. One surviving horseman wears a wreath of wild celery, the prize in two of the Panhellenic games, at Nemea and at Isthmia. As extant inscribed bases

⁵⁰ Holloway 1992. ⁵¹ *IG* 1³ 628.

⁵² Cf. the assumption of the author of the Hippocratic treatise *Airs, Waters, Places* 22 that the wealthy are more able than the poor to make sacrifices to the god and to set up votive offerings.

show, this group commemorates victories in games, Panhellenic and local, in the most prestigious and expensive of the sports.

Individuals also commemorate themselves in exceptional ways. There is a free-standing sculpture of a man with a writing tablet on his lap (a Treasurer of Athena? or a democratic official?); a relief of a family (mother, father, two boys and a girl) making a sacrifice to Athena. Nor was only marble sculpture dedicated: there were numerous bronze figurines, such as a youth probably holding jumping weights, presumably commemorating an athletic victory, and vases. Some of these were quite modest offerings, a world apart from the lavish marble statues of *korai* or horsemen.⁵³

Sanctuaries of Asclepius and other healing gods were much used by individuals in search of healing, who often made personal votive offerings.⁵⁴ Many votive objects, of stone and clay, survive from such sanctuaries.⁵⁵ In the sanctuary on the south side of the Akropolis of Athens stone reliefs form about a fifth of all the dedications recorded in the (extensive) inscribed inventories; the extant ones often feature Asclepius (Fig. 3.5). The other principal categories of dedication in the sanctuary were of anatomical objects, or of gold or silver coins destined to be melted down to form new cult equipment.⁵⁶ Asclepius continued to be popular through into the Roman period, and the sanctuary at Pergamon was one of the most famous (below, pp. 110–12).

EXPENSES

The costs of building and running Greek sanctuaries could be considerable. The only detailed extant figures for the building of a Greek temple relate to the temple of Asclepius at Epidauros 375–370 BC. This cost something over twenty-three talents. Accounts also survive for most of the twenty-five other items, the cult's buildings, the cult statues, the structures in the sanctuary that were constructed in the period 370–250 BC. The total expenditure was probably in the region of 250 to 300 talents.⁵⁷

⁵³ Later, in the fifth and fourth centuries, Akropolis temple inventories record dedications by (male) citizens, wives/daughters of citizens, resident (male) foreigners, other (male) foreigners, and women (unspecified): Harris 1995: 223–38.

⁵⁴ A visit to such a sanctuary is vividly described by Herodas, *Mimiambi* 4, c. 280–265 BC. Cunningham 1966: 115–17 argues that the sanctuary is not specifically that on Kos, but see Sherwin-White 1978: 349–52. ⁵⁵ For paintings, see *LMC* 2.1, 891 (cf. above, fig. 3.3).

⁵⁶ Aleshire 1989; 1992; cf. also Rouse 1902: 208–27. Below, fig. 8.2.

⁵⁷ Burford 1969. Cf. the contract price of 300 talents for rebuilding the temple of Apollo at Delphi, burnt in 548 BC: Herodotos 2.180; 5.62.2. For contributions to a rebuilding in 360 BC see Tod 2.140, trans. in Harding 1985: no. 60. Introduction: Tomlinson 1976: 49–53.



Fig. 3.5. Votive plaque from sanctuary of Asclepius, probably in Athens (350–300 BC) (height 0.50m). On the left, Asclepius seated; Hygieia standing, her right hand resting on a disc on top of a votive pillar. In the centre an altar, to which a slave leads a bull. On the right a family: the man places on the altar an offering from the basket carried by a naked servant; then two women, one with a little girl; finally, a servant carrying a baby.

This figure does not reflect the level of expenditure we can normally expect from a modest city (for comparison, Athens received circa 400 talents per year as tribute in the mid-fifth century BC). Epidaurus being a Panhellenic sanctuary, some of the money was in this case donated by other states and individuals. Fifth-century Athens, too, was certainly atypical, with her resources including her Aegean empire. Extrapolation has been made from the Epidaurus figures to Athenian building projects, but it is difficult to control the key variables, cost of marble and cost of transport. In fact the accounts for the Parthenon, Pheidias' cult statue and the entrance gateway, the Propylaea, suggest that the total there may have been as high as 2,000 talents.⁵⁸

These and other costs to do with the upkeep of cults were met by public subscriptions as well as – especially in the Hellenistic and Roman periods – private individuals. In the case of the fifth-century Athenian Akropolis building programme, the revenues of the empire were employed too. Many of the regular expenses, however, were paid for by

⁵⁸ ML pp. 164–5. For some accounts see ML 59 and *IG* 1³ 436–51, partially trans. in Fornara 1983: no. 120. The contribution of allied tribute should not be exaggerated: Kallet-Marx 1989; Giovannini 1990. See in general Burford 1963; Coulton 1977: 18–23.

the so-called sacred revenues of the gods themselves. During the Athenian empire Athena's income was exceptional, again, in that 'first fruits' (*aparkhai*), one-sixtieth of the regular tribute of the cities, was paid to her; the so-called 'Athenian tribute lists' are in fact massive inscribed records of the quotas, set up on the Akropolis. Like other deities elsewhere, Athena also owned large areas of land which were leased out for profit. It has been guessed that 5 to 10 per cent of all Attica was sacred land of one sort or another.⁵⁹ Mass leases of sacred property (houses, fields, orchards etc.) were established in 343–2, and repeated ten years later, one aspect of the regularisation of public finances in this period.⁶⁰ A similar picture is implied in the civic decision, probably in the late first century BC, to restore Attic sanctuaries and to lease out their properties.⁶¹ When 'new land', perhaps in the newly restored territory of Oropos on the border between Attica and Boeotia, became available in the 330s BC, it was leased to provide revenues particularly earmarked to meet the costs of the Lesser Panathenaia.⁶² In the previous century during the Athenian empire boundary stones of 'Athena ruler of the Athenians' are found in three Greek states (Samos, Kos and Chalcis); they probably mark lands confiscated by the Athenians whose revenues went to Athena. Land sacred to Demeter lay near the border of Attica with Megara, its alleged cultivation by Megarians being one of the pretexts for the outbreak of the Peloponnesian war, and also nearly the cause of Athenian military action in the late 350s.⁶³

Although sacred lands existed everywhere in the Greek world, their extent and size would have varied from state to state.⁶⁴ In Aristotle's ideal state the revenues of a quarter of the territory were dedicated to cover the expenses of the worship of the gods, while in Hippodamus' ideal state the proportion of the territory devoted to this purpose was as high as a third.⁶⁵ In a number of cases the survival of boundary stones helps us to trace the evolution of a particular deity's lands. In the case of Artemis of Ephesos we can actually plot her extensive estates all the way

⁵⁹ Cf. Lewis 1973: 198–9. See survey of Faraguna 1992: 341–6.

⁶⁰ Walbank 1983: 100–35, 177–23; on the reforms of Lycurgus, below, p. 81.

⁶¹ *IG* 2² 1035 = *SEG* 26.121. Cf. Culley 1977.

⁶² Above, p. 33. Robert 1960: 189–203 identified the 'New Land' with Oropos; Langdon 1987 identified it with an Aegean island. In democratic Athens festivals were financed partially through 'liturgies', a system of para-taxation falling on the rich: J.K. Davies 1967; 1971: xvii–xxxii; Parker 1996: 128.

⁶³ Boundary stones: see now Parker 1996: 144–5. Megara: *LSCG* 32, trans. in Harding 1985: no. 78; de Ste. Croix 1972: 254–6.

⁶⁴ Debord 1982: 127–80; Ampolo 1992; Isager and Skydsgaard 1992: 181–98.

⁶⁵ Aristotle, *Politics* 1330a8–16, 1267b33–7.

up the river valley running east from Ephesos. Artemis' estates included two lakes which afforded the goddess good revenues. Not that they were untouched. Our sources also tell us that the Attalid kings despoiled the goddess of these revenues, that the Romans restored them before the Roman tax-gatherers claimed them again for themselves, but that finally Artemis recovered them when an Ephesian embassy appealed to Rome.⁶⁶ Sacred lands were vulnerable not only with respect to central rulers, but also to forces within the communities themselves. A story is told that in the fifth century the Byzantines were so pressed for money that they sold off publicly owned sacred lands, the fertile land for a period, the infertile in perpetuity. They also dealt in a similar manner with the sacred lands belonging to religious associations and phratries (especially when they were sited in the midst of the property of a private individual, who would pay a high price for this land); only in the case of the lands belonging to religious associations and phratries was there any form of compensation.⁶⁷

Sacred revenues derived from various sources were stored in cash in the sanctuaries, at Athens in the Parthenon.⁶⁸ The money was, in principle, the deity's, though in the fifth century the Athenians felt able to borrow it for secular purposes so long as they paid interest on it, and in the last decade of the Peloponnesian War golden dedications to Athena were converted into coins. However, theft of sacred property was a capital crime, and the temple-robber might be denied burial.⁶⁹ The pillaging of the Delphic sanctuary by the Phocians in 356 BC to pay for mercenaries sent shock waves through the Greek world. It was noted piously that the subsequent war was waged for ten years until the annihilation of those who had divided among themselves the sacred property; the Phocians were then condemned as temple-robbers to pay a huge indemnity to the sanctuary, which they did for some twenty years.⁷⁰ Despite occasional pillaging, temple properties survived into late antiquity, when they faced new threats from the rise of Christianity in the fourth and fifth centuries AD.⁷¹

⁶⁶ Strabo 14.1.27, 642c; *Inchriften von Ephesos* 7.2.3501-16.

⁶⁷ Ps.-Aristotle, *Oeconomica* 2, 1346b13-21.

⁶⁸ Tod 1.69 = *IG* 1³ 351, trans. in Fornara 1983: no. 141; ML 76 = *IG* 1³ 329, trans. in Fornara 1983: no. 143; *IG* 2² 1988, trans. in Harding 1985: no. 10. Harris 1995 analyses (and translates) the inventories. Eleusinian revenues: Cavanaugh 1996: 211-12 (on *IG* 1³ 386-7).

⁶⁹ Thucydides 2.13.4-5; ML 72 = *IG* 1³ 369, trans. in Fornara 1983: no. 134; Linders 1987: 115; cf. Parker 1983: ch. 5.

⁷⁰ Diodorus Siculus 16.14.3; Tod 2.172, trans. in Harding 1985: no. 88; contributions to 'Sacred War': Tod 2.160, trans. in Harding 1985: no. 74; Linders 1987: 117; Bousquet 1988.

⁷¹ See below, pp. 164-71.

CHAPTER 4

Authority, control and crisis

'Polytheism', in contrast to Christianity or Islam, is often seen as a tolerant and open religious system. It is associated with amateur priests, who lacked authority, and with an absence of dogma, orthodoxy and heresy. Already having many gods, it is attributed the capacity to accommodate even more at any time. This romantic view of Greek religious liberalism has little to commend it. The absence of dogmas did not entail that anything was permitted, nor was the pluralism of gods open-ended. In fact the terms 'polytheism' and 'monotheism' are unsatisfactory (above, p. 11), and the issue of tolerance/intolerance is anachronistic. As a matter of state policy, religious toleration does not predate the eighteenth century.¹ The best way forward to understand this issue is to examine religious authority and responses to religious crisis. The chapter sets the scene for Greek cities in general, and then concentrates on Athens, largely because the Athenian evidence best illuminates the issues.

RELIGIOUS OFFICIALS

Priests were an essential component of every Greek state.² Aristotle's *Politics*, an analytic study of the fourth-century Greek political community, includes among the necessary offices of the state superintendents of religion, namely priests and, especially in larger states, a range of officials concerned with the performance of rites, the upkeep of temples and religious accounts, and also civic magistrates who were responsible for religious festivals (1322 b.18-29; cf. 1328 b.11-13). Aristotle's assumption that there was a clear category of 'priests' runs counter to the suggestion of modern scholars that the category is a Judaeo-Christian

¹ Garnsey 1984.

² Burkert 1985: 95-8; Jordan 1989; Sourvinou-Inwood 1990: 320-1; Garland 1984 catalogues Athenian religious officials; Garland 1990b; Kron 1996: 139-55 on female priests.

one which has limited correspondence with Graeco-Roman patterns of thought.³ *Hieris* or *hieriai* may not be Christian priests and do not constitute a unified 'clergy', but equally they are a recognised ancient category with a wide range of functions. Though those appointed as priests did not necessarily serve full-time or life-long, their office might be a privileged aspect of their life.

Both men and women could be priests. The presence of women here is surprising, given that all other public offices were occupied by men. Nevertheless, priesthood was not a field of equal opportunities for men and women. Priesthoods were to some extent homologous to the pantheon, so that priesthoods of female gods such as Demeter, Athena or Artemis were normally held by women, while those of the male gods, Zeus or Hephaistos, were normally held by men; exceptionally the priest of Apollo at Delphi, the Pythia, was always a woman. The corresponding gender was chosen to represent the community in its relations with the particular deity, while divine possession of the Pythia by Apollo was facilitated by her gender.

The function of priests was principally ritual.⁴ They might preside over sacrifices, though their presence was not always necessary. Although other officials were responsible for the actual killing and dismemberment of the sacrificial animals, the priests commonly received special parts of the sacrificial animals as the perquisites of their office, normally the skins, which could be sold. More generally, priests were central figures in most festivals. In their special clothing they were prominent in processions and they took part in the main ritual actions. We can see this, for example, in the Parthenon frieze, which represents at the centre of the climactic panel on the east side the priestess receiving a ritual stool from a young girl and the king archon receiving Athena's robe from another girl. Despite their ritual importance, priests are often said to be not professionals, the implication being that they were somehow not very important. This is untenable. Priests were absolutely essential for the proper working of the religious system. Classifying them as 'amateurs' is very misleading. Some priesthoods were limited to members of particular 'lineages' (*gene*).⁵ The Eleusinian Mysteries were run both by civic magistrates and by members of two Athenian 'lineages', the Kerykes and the Eumolpidai, and the role of these 'lineages' continues throughout antiquity from the archaic period down to the ending of the Mysteries at the end of the fourth century AD.⁶

³ Beard and North 1990. ⁴ Appendix nos. 3, 6.

⁵ Feaver 1957 studies the 'lineage' and 'democratic' priesthoods. ⁶ Clinton 1974.

Similarly at Pergamon the cult of Asclepius was introduced by one Archias; it subsequently became a civic cult, but the priesthood remained in the 'lineage' of Archias. In the second or third century AD one Flavius Aristomachus was honoured as the priest of Asclepius, twenty-second in line from Archias.⁷ Limitation to particular 'lineages' was understood as a traditional privilege, but may have created a degree of specialisation. Admittedly in democratic Athens when new cults were established or old ones reorganised the priesthoods were open to all Athenians appointed by lot.⁸ This procedure is parallel to the democratic procedure for appointment to political office and implies that religious and political competence is shared by all citizens. Thus the first female priest of the new fifth-century sanctuary of Athena Nike (which developed a cult going back to the sixth century BC) was appointed by lot 'from all Athenian women'.⁹ In some cases (though not necessarily in the case of Athena Nike) priesthoods might be held for long periods or for life. One fifth-century female priest of Hera at Argos actually served for fifty-six and a half years before accidentally burning the temple down and being deposed from office.¹⁰

Priests were appointed by various means: lot, election, birth or sale. Whatever the mode of appointment or duration of office, they often had to follow particular rules which set them apart from ordinary citizens and made them appropriate intermediaries with the divine. The priest of Athena Polias at Athens could not eat cheese from Attica, for reasons that are unknown, and priests of Poseidon generally abstained from eating fish from Poseidon's realm of the sea. Sexual abstinence was sometimes prescribed, either, for men, immediately before entering the sanctuary or, in the case of women, long term. Some female priests held office only until they reached marriageable age, others remained unmarried and held office for life. One of the most famous of the latter group was the Pythia, who was required to remain a virgin. Male priests who were not expected to be unmarried could prepare themselves for a festival by temporary abstinence but women had to be perpetually pure in order to be open to the divine.¹¹

⁷ Pausanias 2.26.8; *LSAM* 13, trans. Edelstein 1945: 1.280-2; Habicht 1969: no. 45; below, pp. 109-12. For other hereditary priesthoods see Horsley 1992: 122-4.

⁸ Cf. Isocrates 2.6. On appointment (by lot) see Aleshire 1994.

⁹ *ML* 44 = *IG* 1³ 35, trans. Appendix no. 4 (c. 448 BC); *SEG* 12.80 = *IG* 1³ 1330 (trans. Appendix no. 5) is the tombstone of the first priest. Cf. Parker 1996: 125-7. On the uses made of the name of this priest in Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* see Lewis 1955; Loraux 1993: 176-83.

¹⁰ Thucydides 2.2.1, 4-133. ¹¹ For purity rules for worshippers see Appendix no. 6.

Such regulations necessarily marked out the holders of priesthood as distinct from the rest of society. The distinction of priests was echoed and emphasised iconographically. Priests, male and female, were honoured in the Hellenistic and Roman periods in sanctuaries with statues of themselves as priests. For example, in the sanctuary of Athena Polias at Priene on the west coast of Asia Minor were a statue of Niko, a female priest of the fourth century BC, and an early imperial statue of a male priest of Rome and Augustus; there also survives the bust of a young girl, also of the fourth century BC, who may have taken part in the cult of Athena.¹² Tombstones also feature priestly office. For example, classical Attic tombstones show men in distinctive dress holding a knife, and women with a huge key (of a temple): their office was the distinctive feature of their personal identity (Figs. 4.1–2).¹³

Priests were not the only authority within the religious sphere. Complementing their ritual authority were people with particular expertise in interpreting the sacred laws. At Athens special officials (*exegetai*) were appointed for the task, at least from the fourth century BC onwards. They are to us somewhat shadowy figures, but they were presumably important upholders and (re-)interpreters of traditional practices.¹⁴ They could also give advice to individuals especially on problems arising from pollution and murder. Plato presents a paradoxical case in which a son prosecuted his father for murder of a murderer. The original murderer, perhaps a hired agricultural workman, had killed a household slave and then been left tied up in a ditch while the father enquired of one of the official interpreters what should be done. The murderer died before a reply came back from the interpreter.¹⁵ For Plato the story sets off a dialogue about the role of piety. For us the enquiry of the interpreter reveals the possible importance of an official religious expert.

Whereas these *exegetai* were officially appointed, other religious experts of a similar kind were not. According to Plato:

Vagrant priests and diviners (*manteis*) go to the doors of the wealthy and as if they possessed a power provided to them from the gods because of their sacrifices and incantations they persuade the wealthy person that they can remedy

¹² *Inschriften von Priene* 160, 222; Carter 1983: 276 no. 86; Price 1984a: 179. Cf. below, pp. 92–3 for other representations of young girls.

¹³ Clairmont 1993, men: no. 1.186, 1.250, 2.341b, 2.412a, 3.297–297a, 3.305, 3.320b, 4.781–2; women: no. 1.248, 1.350a, 1.934, 3.390b, 4.358. Cf. further, index 6.147–8. Mantis 1990: 28–65, 82–96, 114–15. Cf. Connelly in Ridgway 1994: 28–31. For an inscribed tombstone see Appendix no. 5.

¹⁴ Jacoby 1949: 8–51; Oliver 1950; Clinton 1974: 89–93. Their early history is obscure; Parker 1996: 49 n. 26. For other officials see Appendix nos. 2, 6, 7. ¹⁵ *Euthyphro* 4 b–d; below, p. 128.



Fig. 4.1. Grave relief from Athens, of an elderly man, 'Simos of the deme Myrrhinous' (c. 400 BC) (height 0.62m). The clothing (a long *chiton* with short sleeves) and the prominent knife are characteristic of male priests.



Fig. 4.2. Grave relief from Kerameikos cemetery, Athens (height 1.01m). A young woman 'Polystrate' carries in her right hand a long key; her left hand may originally have carried a smaller (painted) object. The key marks her as a female priest.

with rejoicings and religious celebrations any injustice which the wealthy man himself or his ancestors may have committed, and if the wealthy man wishes to harm some enemy they say that at little cost they will harm a just man as well as an unjust with some invocations and spells. They do this as they say by persuading the gods to serve them. (*Republic* 2.364 b-c)

Plato's depiction of the priests and diviners is part of an argument about the nature of true justice and virtue (which cannot be bought) and is sharply hostile, but diviners could be prominent and prestigious figures. In the *Anabasis* Xenophon regularly turned to diviners for help in the

interpretation of sacrifices, dreams and omens (above, p. 1). They were often itinerant figures who moved from place to place as occasion demanded.¹⁶ In the fifth century a certain Lampon was a prominent Athenian religious expert. He was not only influential as far as measures of a religious character were concerned, but also the first signatory of the peace between Athens and Sparta in 421 BC. When the Athenians decided to reorganise the first fruits given to Eleusis an amendment on various technical matters proposed by Lampon was passed,¹⁷ and he was sufficiently well known to be the butt of jokes in the comic poets.¹⁸ However, he was an exceptional figure and the more normal standing of the diviner is described by Euthyphro, the son prosecuting his father for murder:

The people laugh at me and say I am an enemy when I say anything in the assembly about divine things and forecast the future to them, and yet there is not one of those things I have foretold that is not true, but they are jealous of all such men as you are [Socrates] and I am. (Plato, *Euthyphro* 3c)

What for the diviner seemed to be jealousy was experienced differently by the members of the assembly. They could prefer detailed arguments over religious expertise, though speakers always appealed to the general benevolence of the gods for the city.¹⁹

ORACLES

The consultation of oracles by the state represented an appeal to religious authority of a rather different kind. In the archaic period it seems from the narrative of Herodotos that it was perfectly normal for states to consult oracles, especially the oracle at Delphi, on a wide variety of issues.²⁰ Indeed the consultations about founding a new city were so standard that Herodotos is not surprised when a Spartan, Dorieus, who omitted to consult Delphi failed the first time and, when he went beyond his oracular brief the second time, lost his life.²¹ About the founding of

¹⁶ For exceptional Athenian honours for a diviner (in 394-3 BC) see M.J. Osborne 1970, repeated in M.J. Osborne 1981-3; 1.43-5, 2.45-8. Cf. Herodotos 9.33-6. See further on *mantis* Bremmer 1996b. On other mobile skilled workers see McKechnie 1989: 142-77.

¹⁷ ML 73, trans. Fornara 1983: no. 140 (? c. 422 BC).

¹⁸ Cratinus in Athenaeus 8.344E = fr. 6a Kassel-Austin, Eupolis fr. 319 Kassel-Austin; cf. below, pp. 129-30. For another Athenian diviner see SEG 16.193.

¹⁹ See Parker 1997 for assumption in oratory of divine benevolence.

²⁰ Parke 1967 and 1985; Vernant 1974; Price 1985; Parker 1985. On attitudes to oracles see Nock 1942. Cf. Appendix nos. 11-12.

²¹ 5.42-5. Sparta had four Pythioi, whom Dorieus bypassed: Herodotos 6.57.

Cyrene by Thera in circa 630 BC Herodotos tells two different and incompatible stories which he has heard in the two cities. Delphi plays a role in each but is especially prominent in the Cyrene version. A century after Herodotos heard this story, the people of Cyrene decided to inscribe what purports to be the original seventh-century document, starting with a reference to the special role of Apollo in instigating the foundation.²²

The authenticity of such consultations has been doubted, but is supported, for example, by the Athenian consultation in 481 BC about their response to the threat of Persian attack (Herodotos 7.140–4). The Athenian envoys first received a bleak oracle advising the Athenians to flee to the ends of the earth, as other Greek cities had done, rather than capitulate to Persia. The envoys were dismayed at the advice and returned as suppliants to ask Apollo if the future need be so bleak. The Pythia replied that Athena could not prevail upon the will of Zeus but that a wooden wall would ultimately protect the Athenians and divine Salamis would bring death to women's sons. On their return to Athens the envoys reported the oracle to an assembly of the people where a spirited debate occurred as to its meaning. Herodotos' report of this public debate, which should have occurred within his own lifetime, has strong claims to historicity. If the debate and the oracle are rejected as fictitious, we open up serious general problems with our major ancient account of archaic Greece. The debate centred on the interpretation of the text: was the wooden wall a wall round the Akropolis, or ships? If the latter, why was Salamis to be a place of death? The final interpretation, by the Athenian politician Themistocles, claims that the unofficial interpreters of oracles (*khresmologoi*) are wrong to take the deaths to be of Athenians, for Salamis was called 'divine' and he therefore persuaded the Athenians to hope for victory by sea. Rational argument, based on a close reading of the oracular text, carried the day.

Consultations of oracles on major political issues were less common in the classical period. This was not because of a loss of faith in Delphic authority, or in the gods generally, but because of the development of political institutions that could reach political decisions within the state. The Athenians, after 481 BC, did not again consult an oracle on an overtly political matter. The development of democratic debate made that unnecessary.²³ But even the Athenians consulted an oracle, that of

²² Herodotos 4.150–8. ML 5, trans. Fornara 1983: no. 18 (first half of fourth century).

²³ The consultation in 352 about Megarian cultivation of sacred land (above, p. 65) blended 'political' and 'religious' factors.

Zeus at Dodona, perhaps in 430, and perhaps about how they should respond to the plague devastating Athens.²⁴ Some states did continue to consult Delphi and other oracles, but they were states where internal debate was less developed. So Sparta consulted Delphi in 432 BC as to whether it would be better or worse for her to go to war with Athens (Thucydides 1.118), and any state could find itself in a real quandary. Should a state on the borders of Macedon make an alliance with Macedon's mighty Philip II? The Chalcidians consulted Delphi.²⁵ And what was a city to do about the incursion of pirates? In the first century BC the city of Syedra in southern Turkey had to ask Apollo for his advice.²⁶

Although by AD 100 Delphi was perhaps a shadow of its former self, oracles did not fade away.²⁷ Elsewhere in the Greek world they certainly did flourish in the Hellenistic and Roman periods. The oracle of Apollo at Didyma, in the territory of Miletos on the west coast of Asia Minor, continued to issue divine responses until its sack by the Persians in 494 BC. The revival of the oracle and the rebuilding of the temple, on a grand scale, began in the late fourth century BC, and oracles continued to be issued there until the mid-third or even early fourth century AD.²⁸ One hundred kilometres to the north was the oracle of Clarian Apollo. This too probably went back to the archaic period, but the temple was redesigned in the early Hellenistic period and, in the first century AD, colossal statues of three gods (Apollo seated between his mother Leto and his sister Artemis) were added, and the temple at least was completed in the second century AD by the emperor Hadrian. In the second and third centuries AD delegates came from numerous Greek cities of inland Asia Minor and the west coast of the Black Sea to consult the oracle, some every year, some only at times of public crisis (like the city of Syedra).²⁹ Consultation of all oracles about matters of religious propriety remained perfectly normal, and it was always possible to argue that an external crisis (plague or brigands) had a religious cause and so could best be solved by asking an oracle which god should be placated. For example, a series of cities asked the oracle of Clarian Apollo how

²⁴ Cf. below, p. 77 for the recommendation to create an official cult of Bendis.

²⁵ Tod 2.158, trans. Harding 1985: no. 67.

²⁶ SEG 41.1411, trans. Appendix no. 12. Cf. Robert 1966: 91–100; Parke 1985: 157–9; see Faraone 1992: 74–93 on binding images.

²⁷ Plutarch, *The Obsolescence of Oracles* (*Moralia* 410E–438E), explained the diminution of Delphic importance in terms of population decline.

²⁸ Archaeology: Tuchelt 1991. Above, p. 37 on the route between Miletos and Didyma.

²⁹ Parke 1985; Lane Fox 1986: 168–261.

they should handle the great plague which devastated the Roman empire after AD 165.³⁰ Oracles remained through antiquity pre-eminent sources of religious authority.

THE CITY AND RELIGIOUS CHANGE

On the one hand, the observance of religious guidelines impinged on the political life of the community in many ways. Meetings of the Athenian assembly began with the purification of the auditorium by the sacrifice of a pig and the carrying of its body round the auditorium, the reading of a prayer and a curse against speakers who spoke and acted against the interests of the city, and the making of offerings to various gods. The Athenian council probably also opened in a similar fashion.³¹ Religious items were privileged in the conduct of assembly business. Sacred matters were taken first at two of the four monthly meetings of the assembly, at any rate after 350 BC, followed by questions concerning heralds and embassies and then questions concerning secular matters.³² This privileging of religious items was normal in Greek cities. On the other hand, the overall control of the religious life of the community lay with the citizens and their magistrates and political leaders. While the assembly considered religious items that required decision, the council held a watching brief over religious matters as over all other aspects of civic life. The council assisted the treasurers of the gods when necessary and was involved in temple-building and repair. It often provided from its members boards of religious officials (*hieropoioi*) for particular festivals and it heard reports from priests and others on the performance of their religious duties.³³ The role of the state was to co-ordinate the sacred and the human spheres, to ensure that the community flourish.³⁴

One of the matters regulated by the assembly was the introduction of new cults.³⁵ Foreigners living in Athens who wished to establish shrines to their native deities sought the permission of the assembly. In 333 BC Phoenician merchants from Kition on Cyprus gained permission to found a sanctuary of their ancestral deity Astarte/Aphrodite (who had

³⁰ Graf 1992, with trans., on *SEG* 41.981. Cf. Faraone 1992: 54–73 on Apollo's statues as protectors.

³¹ Rhodes 1972: 36–7; Hansen 1987: 90–1.

³² Aeschines 1.23; Aristotle, *Ath. Pol.* 43.6; cf. 30.5. For the particular importance of speeches on 'rites' see a fourth-century rhetorical handbook, probably by Anaximenes, ascribed to Aristotle: *Rhetoric to Alexander* 3.1423a20–1424a8 (trans. Loeb Aristotle vol. 16).

³³ Rhodes 1972: 127–34. Appendix no. 11 for *hieropoioi* elsewhere.

³⁴ Connor 1988, rejecting the sacred/profane dichotomy.

³⁵ Garland 1992; Parker 1996: 214–17.



Fig. 4.3. Bendis on an Attic red-figured cup (430–420 BC) (height 0.18m). On the left, Themis with a torch in her right hand, and a *kanoun* (for sacrifices) in her left. On the right, Bendis in exotic Thracian dress carrying two spears, accompanied by a doe. Themis, as the god of order, stands for the recent placing of Bendis among the state cults; her attributes allude to the new festival, with its sacrifice and torch race.

a temple at Kition) on the analogy of the permission given to Egyptians for the sanctuary of Isis.³⁶ As they were not citizens, they could not own land in Attica, but rather than merely rent land they obtained the special right of land ownership for their sanctuary. In the fifth century similar permission seems to have been granted to Thracians for a sanctuary in the Peiraeus of their native (female) god Bendis, perhaps in accordance with an oracle from Zeus at Dodona. In this case the assembly took a subsequent interest in the cult. On making a second enquiry to Dodona, the assembly was told for reasons that are entirely unclear to placate Bendis. The Athenians negotiated with the Thracians and instituted their cult as a state cult. Payment for the cult was made from at least 429/8 BC by the Treasurers of the Other Gods (that is of the gods other than Athena); at some stage the festival was expanded and the nocturnal torch race at the festival in the Peiraeus became a notable event (Fig. 4.3). Plato's *Republic* opens with Socrates recounting that (in about 410 BC) he went down to the Peiraeus the previous day to pray to Bendis and to see the inauguration of her new festival. He was impressed by the

³⁶ Tod 2 189 = *LSCG* 34, trans. Harding 1985: no. 111. Cf. Parker 1996: 160–1.

procession of Athenian citizens and also that of the Thracians.³⁷ The establishment of this foreign cult as a civic cult is often condemned as a symptom of religious decay in Athens. In fact the assembly's action was prompted by oracular advice, and the civic adoption of the foreign cult remained almost unique at Athens in the following centuries.³⁸ Though in practice individual citizens may have introduced new gods without seeking permission, they might be called to account, if their actions were found objectionable (cf. below, p. 85); foreigners, who had to tread more warily, could have merely rented accommodation for their shrines, but in fact sought official permission for them, by asking for permission to buy the necessary land. The introduction of new deities at Athens whether for private or for civic worship was in principle tightly controlled by the Athenian people.

Given that there was a religious setting for public business and that the council and the assembly organised the religious life of the state, it is hardly surprising that political and religious change often went hand in hand. At Athens a religious reorganisation did indeed accompany political change. The reforms of Solon in 594 BC, which are often seen as purely politico-economic, had an important religious dimension. Solon apparently established a scale of rewards for victors in the games at the Isthmia and at Olympia and a scale of values for sacrificial offerings, and the publication of his laws included publication of the sacrificial calendar of the state.³⁹ This calendar remained intimately connected with Solon's laws. At the end of the fifth century BC political strife between oligarchs and democrats centred on claims to the 'ancestral constitution' which they both wished to (re-)establish. After the overthrow of an oligarchy in 410, the restored democracy created a commission including one Nikomakhos to republish Solon's laws. This complex task was probably unfinished when the democracy was overthrown in 404 by Sparta and another oligarchy established. After the restoration of democracy in 403, the commission was reappointed to republish a revised Solonian code, which was achieved in 399. The whole law code including the sacrificial calendar was inscribed on large marble tablets and displayed in the Portico of the Basileus (Archon) in the Agora.

The republication of the sacrificial calendar was part of a claim by

³⁷ *Republic* 327a. The principal epigraphic evidence (*IG* 1³ 136 and 2² 1283) is very difficult to interpret. Cf. Simms 1988; Parker 1996: 170–5. On literary representations see Montepaone 1990.

³⁸ The cult of Isis seems to have become official, or at least in the hands of the Athenians, by the end of the third century BC: Dow 1937; Dunand 1973: 2.4–17. See further below, pp. 123–5.

³⁹ Plutarch, *Solon* 23 (though the Isthmian games were by tradition founded only in 582/580). *Lysias* 30.17–20. Parker 1996: 43–55, 218–20. Above, p. 28, for the calendar.

the restored democracy to legitimacy: traditional sacrifices were an important part of the 'ancestral constitution'. But Nikomakhos was challenged in court, partly on the grounds that he had tampered with the sacrificial code by introducing some new (and expensive) sacrifices and deleting others.⁴⁰ The speaker argued firmly for the importance of tradition:

Now our ancestors by sacrificing in accordance with the tablets [of Solon] have handed down to us a city superior in greatness and prosperity to any other in Greece so that it behoves us to perform the same sacrifices as they did if for no other reason than that of the success which has resulted from those rites. (*Lysias* 30.18)

Nikomakhos and his fellow commissioners did indeed change the sacrificial calendar: the law code published after 403 includes a revised calendar of sacrifices, which was itself revised once. But the speaker's claim that nothing should have been changed was weak. Nikomakhos had the trust of the people, having just been reappointed for a second term, and the remit of the commission permitted a degree of rationalisation: the commissioners were to ensure that the city offered the sacrifices as specified by Solon and also the sacrifices subsequently determined by decrees of the people. Change was thus possible in the name of tradition.

The democratic reforms of Kleisthenes in 507 BC also entailed religious change. Kleisthenes is often seen as a radical who swept away the old, but in fact his strategy was to create new structures parallel to the old. The four ancient Ionic tribes were not abolished in favour of his ten new tribes; they remained in existence for religious purposes, and are duly mentioned in the sacrificial calendar as revised by Nikomakhos. The ancient brotherhoods (*phratries*) were also not abolished. People given citizenship in the classical period are given the choice of *phratry* in which to enrol, and the *phratries* were the basis for the annual celebration of the *Apatouria* in the *phratries'* local sanctuaries throughout Attica (below, p. 90). But Kleisthenes also made villages (*demes*) the basic units of the state and they, as we have seen, proudly celebrated their own cycles of sacrifices.⁴¹

The development of Athens' empire in the fifth century BC also had religious aspects, though they were not the product of a single reform.⁴²

⁴⁰ Rhodes 1991 on the code; Todd 1996 on Nikomakhos.

⁴¹ Above, pp. 29–30, on *demes*. Cf. Aristotle, *Politics* 1319b20–8 on Kleisthenes' tactics. Kearns 1985; Parker 1996: 112–21; Sourvinou-Inwood 1990: 316–20 and Parker 1996: 104–8 on religious roles of *phratries*. ⁴² Meiggs 1972: 290–305; Parker 1996: 142–5.

After the transfer of the Delian League's treasury from Delos to Athens in 454 BC, representatives of the allies were expected to bring their tribute to Athens each year at the time of the Great Dionysia, when they could take part in the festival and watch the performance of tragedy and comedy. Every fourth year the allies were also expected to send representatives to Athens, along with a cow and panoply, to take part in the Greater Panathenaia (eight months before the Dionysia).⁴³ The order to send the cow and panoply which would be paraded in the Panathenaic procession was peculiar. Normally only citizens took part in their city's festivals. The exceptions were colonists, who did not retain citizenship of their mother city but who were expected to continue participating in that city's festivals. Thus an Athenian colony founded in Thrace in the 440s was to send a cow and panoply to the Greater Panathenaia as well as a phallos to the Great Dionysia.⁴⁴ The Athenians were therefore exploiting the belief that the Ionian cities who formed the core of the allies had originally been founded from Athens; they extended the participation to other non-Ionian cities and established severe penalties for the breach of an alleged convention.⁴⁵

Athens also exploited the religious value of Eleusis. The Eleusinian Mysteries were unique at Athens: though a civic cult, initiation in them was open to all Greeks, and to Greek-speaking non-Greeks. The Athenians had traditionally offered first fruits of grain to Demeter, goddess of agriculture. Perhaps in the mid-430s BC they decided to extend the scope of the offerings: Athenian allies were ordered to appoint local collectors of grain who would take the first fruits to Eleusis; other Greek cities were invited but not obliged to do likewise. The increased volume of grain presented to Demeter necessitated the building of new storehouses in the sanctuary.⁴⁶ The Athenians claimed it was ancestral custom, sanctioned by the Delphic oracle, for other Greek cities to give first fruits to Eleusis; as rulers of an empire, they could insist on observance of the custom by their allies. In the fourth century, with the ending of Athens' centralised empire, Athenians and Athenian citizens living in settlements overseas (cleruchs) continued to send grain to

⁴³ ML 40.2-8 = IG 1³ 14, trans. Fornara 1983: no. 71; ML 46.41-3 = IG 1³ 34, trans. Fornara 1983: no. 98; ML 69.55-8 = IG 1³ 71, trans. Fornara 1983: no. 136.

⁴⁴ ML 49.11-13 = IG 1³ 46, trans. Fornara 1983: no. 100. Cf. Parker 1994 for the cults of such colonies.

⁴⁵ Ionian cities in the fourth to second centuries BC again sent representatives (*theoroi*) to the Panathenaia, by now without Athenian compulsion: Habicht 1991: 329; Parker 1996: 221.

⁴⁶ ML 73 = IG 1³ 78, trans. Fornara 1983: no. 140. Cf. Mylonas 1961: 125-7; Clinton 1987 and Cavanaugh 1996: 73-95 on date; below, pp. 102-7, Fig. 5.4 no. 5.

Eleusis. No obligation was or could be imposed on other states but many Greek states apparently did send first fruits each year. Laggards were chastised by the Delphic oracle.⁴⁷

The reorganisation of Athenian finances at a time of financial crisis in the 330s BC involved considerable reorganisation of the financing of festivals; over a period of twelve years from 338 to 326 BC the politician Lycurgus succeeded in restructuring all aspects of Athenian finances and gradually increasing Athenian revenues.⁴⁸ This reorganisation included religious expenditure, and was designed to maintain or even to enhance the celebration of traditional cults. A series of laws allocated specific revenues for specific festivals and was designed to ensure that money was not wasted and that traditional sacrifices could be carried out. One law concerned the regulations for festivals, the money raised by selling the hides of sacrificial victims and the making of the appropriate cult vessels for processions. Oracular approval, presumably that of Delphi, was to be sought for these changes, which involved the melting down of many old offerings.⁴⁹ Another law, on the leasing of newly acquired land on the northern border of Attica to provide revenues for the Lesser Panathenaia, entailed a complete revision of both the Lesser and the Greater Panathenaia.⁵⁰ Financial concerns were accompanied by and were directed towards general changes in the civic cults.

The guiding spirit behind the whole series of reforms was that of democratic patriotism, a strong sense of attachment to the gods of the land of Attica. As Lycurgus himself said in a speech prosecuting one Leocrates for abandoning the city after its defeat at the hands of Philip of Macedon:

I pray to Athena and the other gods and heroes established in the city and its territory, if I have acted justly in denouncing and bringing to trial Leocrates, who betrayed their temples and images and sanctuaries and the rites and sacrifices laid down by law and handed down by your forefathers, make me today a fit prosecutor of Leocrates' crimes.⁵¹

Lycurgus' reforms constitute a great period of Athenian religious consolidation and revitalisation, which left as its heritage a system of 'traditional' cults which endured for centuries to come.

⁴⁷ Isocrates 4.31. The law on the Mysteries was revised at this time: *SEG* 30.61. Cf. Clinton 1994b.

⁴⁸ Mitchel 1970: 34-52; Humphreys 1985; Faraguna 1992: 355-80; Parker 1996: 242-55.

⁴⁹ *IG* 2² 333 = Schwenk 1985: no. 21, 335-4 BC ⁵⁰ Above, p. 33.

⁵¹ Lycurgus, *Against Leocrates* 15 (trans. Loeb, *Minor Attic Orators* 2). See below, p. 95, on the oath of the ephebes.

RESPONSES TO RELIGIOUS THREATS

The protective concern of the Athenian demos in religious matters comes over very clearly in cases where the religion of the state was allegedly threatened or challenged. Two episodes from the later fifth century illustrate the mechanisms of control and the appeals to popular religious belief: the profanation of the Mysteries and the mutilation of the herms in 415 BC, and responses to Socrates.⁵² Both episodes illustrate the scope of the law against impiety (*asebeia*). Though the law, like other Athenian laws, did not offer an extensive definition of impiety but rested on ordinary usage, it applied (as we shall see) both to actions that offended the gods (415 BC) and also to the promulgation of scandalous beliefs concerning the gods (Socrates). That is, both episodes refute the common modern view that democratic Athens was basically liberal and open-minded in relation to deviant actions and opinions.⁵³

The affair of 415 BC involved two religious scandals that were separate, though it was believed that the same group of people was involved in both. Establishing what actually happened is not possible; apart from Thucydides' brief narrative, the main evidence is a speech of defence delivered by Andocides in (probably) 400 BC which is, naturally, very tendentious. He was standing trial for alleged breach of a decree of 415 banning him from the Athenians' Agora and sanctuaries. We also have part of a speech for the prosecution (one of the handful of cases in ancient history when arguments on both sides survive). Both speeches are suspect as to matters of fact, but very important in terms of their arguments and assumptions.⁵⁴

One night shortly before the Athenian expedition to Sicily set out, a gang of men mutilated most of the herms in Athens. The herms were plain rectangular shafts with a head of the god Hermes on top and a set of male genitalia half way up (cf. Fig. 2.13). Following customs that went back to the later sixth century BC these herms were dedicated throughout Athens in large numbers outside houses and shrines, and in the Agora in a special Stoa of the Herms.⁵⁵ The mutilation of the faces was deeply shocking and an ill omen for the expedition (Fig. 4.4). Thucydides (6.27) and Andocides (1.36) agree that it was also generally taken to have been done as part of a conspiracy designed to overthrow the democracy

⁵² See generally on impiety Cohen 1991: 203–17; Parker 1996: 162–3; Parker 1983: 144–90 on sacrilege. ⁵³ See below, pp. 133–4, for Plato's impiety law.

⁵⁴ Cf. MacDowell 1962; Dover 1970; Osborne 1985; Murray 1990; Furley 1996.

⁵⁵ Thompson and Wycherley 1972: 94–6; Parker 1996: 80–3.



Fig. 4.4. Head of herm found in the Athenian Agora (height 0.23m). It was buried in the late fifth century BC, and may have been one of those mutilated in 415 BC.

and install an oligarchy. The logic of this anxiety, which has worried some scholars, is perfectly clear. The connection of religion and politics was so close that to attack one was automatically to undermine the other.

Andocides in 400 was defending himself against accusations of being involved in the mutilation and of thus having turned informer to save his own skin. He had opposed the mutilation, which took place while he was incapacitated by injury. Only one herm in the city escaped mutilation, that near his house, which the conspirators had expected him to mutilate. Apparently, on his return to Athens from exile in 403, he had instituted proceedings for impiety against someone for mutilating a herm

belonging to his own family. This ploy to clear his own name disgusted his prosecutor in 400, who argued that it showed contempt for the gods. Andocides' own speech and that of the prosecution concur in their condemnation of the impious nature of the crime.

The profanation of the Eleusinian Mysteries came to light immediately before the Sicilian expedition set off. It was alleged that Alcibiades and others had celebrated the Mysteries in at least five private houses in the presence of non-initiates. Some scholars assume that the profanation was a parody and exceedingly funny to the participants, but the prosecution of 400 stressed that the rite was performed by the wrong person and that in imitation of the rites sacred things were revealed to the uninitiated (*Lysias* 6.51). This celebration was even more shocking than the mutilation of the herms and challenged one of Athens' central religious rites. So sensitive was the matter that the assembly in 415 to which news of the profanation was brought was cleared of non-initiates before matters could proceed and Andocides' jury in 400 again consisted only of Eleusinian initiates. Others might inadvertently have learned some of the secrets of the Mysteries.⁵⁶

Those implicated in the scandal, including Andocides, were the subject of an awesome curse by male and female priests.⁵⁷ Andocides himself was excluded by a special decree of 415 from the Athenian Agora and sanctuaries. He thus wandered the Greek world for thirteen years until his return in 402. At his trial in 400 Andocides denied that he had acted impiously or had turned informer, especially not on his own father. He also argued that the exile decree of 415 was no longer valid because of subsequent constitutional changes. He stressed his performance of religious functions for the state since his return in 402 and argued that his safe passage over the seas in the years of exile demonstrated that the gods did not seek his death. Conversely, the prosecution argued for the continuing validity of the exile decree, expressed horror at the impious nature of his advising the council on religious matters and the possibility of his being appointed magistrate in charge of the Mysteries, and claimed that he had been preserved from the sea specifically to stand trial in Athens. But the central event which had brought about the trial was Andocides' alleged participation in the Mysteries while still debarred. The prosecution argued for the absolute necessity of punishing impiety: the gods were capable of punishing impiety themselves, but the jury should here act as agents of the gods. Andocides

⁵⁶ Andocides 1.12, 29, 31. ⁵⁷ *Lysias* 6.51; Plutarch, *Alcibiades* 22.

evaded the issue of his alleged participation in the Mysteries, obfuscated the events of 415 and appealed successfully for leniency. But he entirely agreed with the prosecution that those actually guilty of impiety deserved death (1.30).

Threats to the religious system were not always unreligious acts, like the mutilation of the herms; they might also be more conceptual, but no less repugnant to the Athenian people. In the second half of the fifth century BC Athens was the centre towards which thinkers from all over the Greek world gravitated. Their free thinking about the gods and about the world, so exciting to those interested in 'progress', was checked by a series of trials. The evidence for all the fifth-century trials is late and has been rejected in part as mere inferences from jokes in comedy,⁵⁸ but it is no weaker than many sources for the fifth century BC and perhaps should not all be dismissed. However, only with Socrates are Athenian responses to these thinkers well attested and clear. The evidence for attitudes to Socrates is principally Aristophanes' comedy, *The Clouds*, first performed unsuccessfully in 423 BC but substantially revised a few years later to meet popular criticism, though not actually staged again.⁵⁹ The play, often seen as merely comic, in fact articulates a set of profound objections to the free thinkers. Possible defences of Socrates are found in *Apologies* by Plato and Xenophon. Plato's version, because it is more surprising and less conciliatory than Xenophon's, is likely to be nearer to what Socrates said, but both stand as possible lines of defence against the accusation of impiety.⁶⁰

The actual charge sheet at Socrates' trial in 399 consisted of the following points. Socrates is guilty:

- (1a) Of refusing to recognise the gods (*theoi*) recognised by the state;
- (1b) Of introducing other new divinities (*daimonia*);
- (2) He is also guilty of corrupting the youth. The penalty demanded is death.⁶¹

The first charge (1a), that Socrates does not recognise the gods of the state is explicitly stated in the *Clouds*. In the play a father, Strepsiades, overwhelmed by the debts run up by his son Pheidippides, urges his son

⁵⁸ Dover 1975 demonstrates the weak evidential base for the decree of Diopiteus (allegedly c. 432 BC), and for the trials of Anaxagoras, Diagoras, Protagoras and Euripides, against (for example) Dodds 1951: 189–91. For later trials at Athens see Parker 1996: 275–8; below, p. 127.

⁵⁹ Dover 1968; Jeffrey Henderson 1993 on revision.

⁶⁰ Versnel 1990a: 123–31; Connor 1991: 203–17; Cohen 1991; Parker 1996: 199–217; Burnyeat 1996 stresses the provocativeness of Plato's *Apology*. Hansen 1995 argues for the historicity of both speeches. See also below, p. 128, on Plato's *Euthyphro*.

⁶¹ Diogenes Laertius 2.40; cf. Plato, *Apology* 24B and Xenophon, *Apology* 10.

to learn at Socrates' think tank how to make the Right Argument lose so that he could evade his debts. Pheidippides refuses and Strepsiades himself goes, a comic reversal of the age of Socrates' normal pupils. There he finds an institution devoted to science (including geometry and astronomy), he hears of enquiry into alleged trivia, how far can a flea jump, the sort of research still pilloried by those hostile to universities, and he finds Socrates hanging in a basket to contemplate the sun. Strepsiades immediately takes this to mean that he looks down on the gods, which Socrates confirms: gods like Zeus do not exist, and are not responsible for the workings of nature, like rain or thunder. Later Strepsiades passes on the lesson and reproves his son for believing that Zeus exists.

The defence against these charges differs in Xenophon and Plato. Xenophon simply claims that Socrates was conventionally pious; everyone could have seen him sacrifice at the public festivals and at the state altars. Xenophon's Socrates could thus sanction Xenophon's own religious actions described in the *Anabasis* (above, p. 1). Plato goes deeper into the charge, seeking to distinguish between old prejudices against Socrates articulated long ago by Aristophanes and the arguments of the actual prosecution: standard charges against all philosophers about teaching things up in the clouds and under the earth, having no gods and making the worse appear the better cause are inapplicable to Socrates. He was not interested in science, and it was the philosopher Anaxagoras who claimed that the sun was stone and the moon earth and that they were not therefore gods. Here Socrates accepts the logic of the prosecution, but denies that it happens to be true of himself. He also rejects the idea that he was completely godless (*atheos*). He did recognise the gods, though not in the same way as the prosecution (a surprising admission that charge (1a) was at least half true).⁶²

The counterpart of the alleged denial of civic gods (1a), was the introduction of new deities (1b). In the *Clouds* the admission of Strepsiades to the think tank takes the form of initiation into the mysteries. Strepsiades sits on a sacred bed, is crowned with a garland and is sprinkled with a special substance and finally sees a vision of the only true gods, the Clouds, who of course are responsible for rain and thunder. He decides that he will now not pour a libation or sacrifice to any other gods but these. Xenophon and Plato both deny that Socrates had any interest in

⁶² Fahr 1969; Yunis 1988: 62–6. For the unconventional nature of Socrates' piety see Vlastos 1991: 157–78.

new gods, but both admit that he had privileged access to the divine through a special voice or divine being (*daemonion*) that spoke to him. Socrates' claim to have his personal divine being, which no doubt underlay the prosecution's argument, was paradoxical. The man who claimed to know least had a hot line to the divine. It was also threatening to the principles of communal life in which access to wisdom and knowledge was supposed to be evenly distributed.

The consequences of the religious charges were supposed to be the corruption of the youth (2). The whole purpose of Strepsiades' education was to enable him not to pay his son's debts. The Clouds are said by Socrates to teach all the sophisticated skills of logic and persuasion, and Strepsiades later watches a debate in which the Wrong Argument triumphs over the Right. Strepsiades puts his lesson into practice by forswearing himself by Zeus, Hermes and Poseidon that he owes a creditor any money: after all, he has been taught that Zeus does not send thunderbolts to strike down perjurers.⁶³ Later, however, Pheidippides turns his own skills in logic on Strepsiades and starts to beat up his father, at which point Strepsiades repents of his rejection of the gods and sets the think tank on fire:

For with what aim did you insult the gods
And pry into the seat of the moon?
Chase them, hit them, pelt them for many reasons
But most because they have wronged the gods. (1506–9)

This act of violence which closes the play may be an alteration to the original version, but it has the same logic as that of the prosecution of 399: the elimination of Socrates from the community.⁶⁴

The moral consequences of Socrates' teaching were a serious issue in 399. Socrates himself had acted honourably during the vicious oligarchy of 404–403, but he had been associated with Critias, one of those oligarchs, and with Alcibiades, the aristocratic playboy implicated in the scandal of 415, who had eventually betrayed his city.⁶⁵ Because of an amnesty passed on the restoration of democracy in 403, political accusations against suspected oligarchs could not be brought, but it is wrong to see the actual charges against Socrates merely as a device to circumvent the amnesty. The charges did have their own logic and their own force.

⁶³ The issue of oaths and perjury also recurs in Athenian tragedies: Mikalson 1991: 80–7. For a civic oath see Appendix no. 1.

⁶⁴ M. Davies 1990 shows that the ending of *Clouds* does not imply the actual killing of Socrates.

⁶⁵ Xenophon, *Memorabilia* 1.2.9–12; Aeschines 1.173.

Xenophon and Plato both deny that Socrates actually corrupted anyone, but Xenophon makes Socrates claim it was sensible for young men to obey him rather than their parents because of his wisdom. Plato offers the defence that he was educating the young, but offers a vignette of the idle sons of the rich picking up his philosophical teaching and undermining the alleged expertise and knowledge of others. Both arguments concur with Aristophanes' horror of perjury: oaths were the foundation of civil society and anyone who undermined their authority deserved to be punished. Impiety necessarily had social implications and had to be punished by the Athenian people. Socrates was found guilty, and though he could presumably have 'escaped' – either by flight or by paying a huge fine – he was put to death.

CHAPTER 5

Girls and boys, women and men

Greek religion was certainly not a formality affecting only the public life of the community, but rather it was embedded in all aspects of ancient life. This does not mean, however, that it gave all these aspects an all-embracing religious significance. It is also a mistake to imagine that areas which possess such a significance for Christianity today can be assigned their ancient equivalents. The modern Christian services for birth, marriage and death have no exact ancient equivalent. Furthermore, it is unhelpful to search for 'the religion of the Greek household' as the prime locus of Greek religiosity. Archaeologically, Greek houses had no separate room for a household shrine and rarely had special permanent altars.¹ And the literary evidence, by its silence on this subject, also suggests strongly that the family is not the basic ideological unit of Greek religion. Rather one should see the individual as a basic unit operating within the overall framework of the private and public worship of the gods.² This chapter will therefore focus on the individual citizen from birth to death, distinguishing throughout between the rituals appropriate for males and those for females.

CHILDREN

The birth of a child was not marked by a formal religious service, like modern christenings. Though our evidence is meagre and mainly poor in quality, it seems that (so long as the father had agreed the child should be reared) the five-day-old child was carried around the hearth, the symbolic centre of the house, perhaps by its parents and that five days later a party was held to celebrate the birth. Though a formalised character of the first event can be seen in the fixed term *Amphidromia* (Running Around), neither event had a firm religious context. However, there was

¹ Jameson 1990: 192–4. ² Sourvinou-Inwood 1988a, 1990. Cf. above, p. 61, on votives.