

THE TEMPLE OF APOLLO AT DIDYMA: THE BUILDING AND ITS FUNCTION

(PLATE VII)

THE Hellenistic temple of Apollo at Didyma presents several unique features in its plan. In its exterior it resembles the typical large Ionic temple of Asia Minor with a double colonnade surrounding it, no *opisthodomus*, and a *pronaos* containing three rows of four columns each. But at this point the plan of the temple was modified in the strangest manner. For the *pronaos* does not lead by a great central doorway into the *cella*, but where the doorway should come, the worshipper entering the building found himself faced with a blank wall 1.495 m high with above it a colossal opening 5.63 m wide (PLATE VIIa). Consequently the worshipper in the *pronaos* could not even look directly into the sanctuary. Instead, just above his eye-level beyond the embrasure of this 'window' stretched the floor of a large room, 14.04 m by 6.73 m with its roof supported on two columns. Through this room's central door (which was opposite the window) the spectator on ground level outside could catch a glimpse of the upper part of the *naiskos* in the inner court (the *adyton*). There was no direct approach to this room from outside, but it was connected with the inner court by a monumental stairway of twenty-two steps, 15.25 m wide, which led down by the triple doorways of the room to the ground level in the heart of the temple. This inner courtyard, as in the archaic period, contained the sacred spring, the *naiskos* with the cult statue, various altars and a grove of bay-trees. It was open to the sky, but cut off from the outside by the walls of the *cella*, which still tower up from 22 m to 25 m above the floor, and were probably designed to reach nearly 28 m. This height was never completed, but even as it stands at the present day the effect is overwhelmingly impressive. A plain unbroken wall of this height would have been unbearably dull. So the surface is diversified by eleven pilasters on each side and five on the end wall, springing from a basement running round the *adyton* at a height of 4.92 m.¹

This inner court could only be reached from the outside world by two long sloping passages, built in the thickness of the masonry and leading from the *pronaos* near the angle of the wall on its north and south sides. These passages were only just wide enough and high enough for a normal man to traverse, and could not admit two abreast. Each opened into a sort of small pavilion giving access to the court. While the grand staircase leading up to the room with the two columns was designed as though to accommodate processions, these passages were evidently meant to limit access, which could only be obtained in single file. The difficulty produced by the steep slope was evidently recognised by the architect, for the marble floor of the passage is heavily scored on a regular pattern to prevent slipping.

These highly peculiar and complicated arrangements are likely to have been related to the oracular procedure in use at the time. But unfortunately there is no account surviving of a consultation of Apollo of Didyma told from the point of view of an enquirer. Iamblichus gives some valuable indications about the role of the prophetess, but he was only concerned with the conditions determining her inspiration and tells nothing about the ceremonial involved in answering the enquirer. So it is more tempting to infer the oracular ritual from the surviving remains than to explain the design from known evidence for procedure.²

An obvious question to ask is whether the Hellenistic design reproduced in any of these

I am much indebted to Dr Dorothy J. Thompson, Girton College, Cambridge, for help about Ptolemaic Egypt. Also Dr J. D. Thomas, University of Durham, has supplied some useful references. Neither are responsible for the use which I have made of their kind assistance.

¹ For the description of the building and its dimensions, see H. Knackfuss, *Didyma* i, die Baubeschreibung (1939).

² Iamb. *De mysteriis* 3, 11. I have not discussed here the possible function of the twin staircases leading up from the room of the two columns. They were

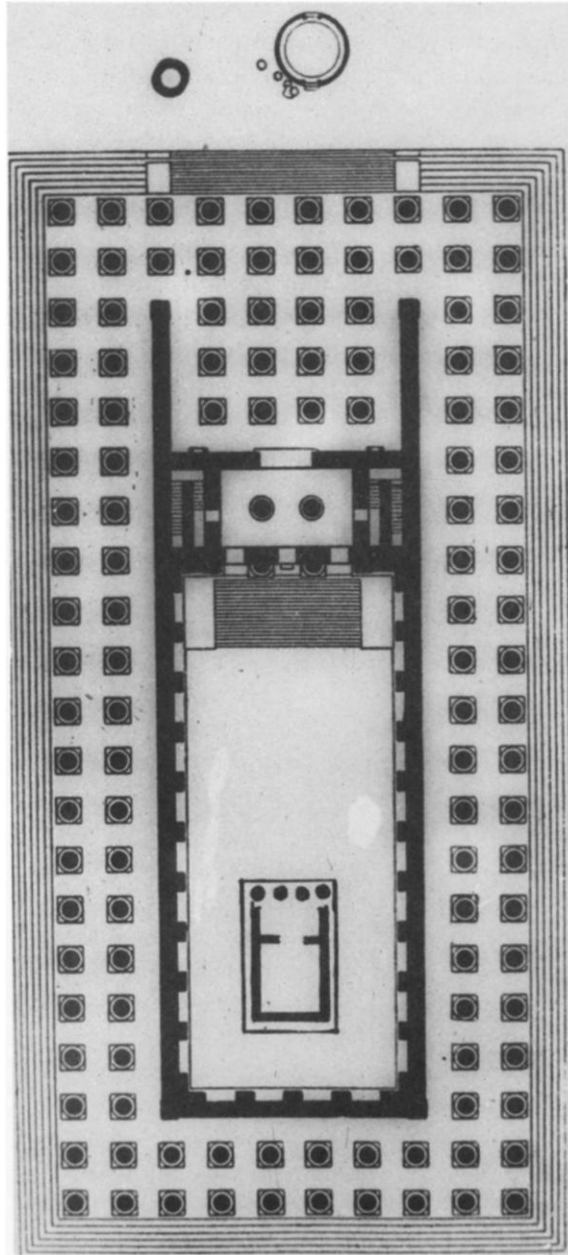


FIG. 1. The temple of Apollo at Didyma.

special features the plan of the archaic temple. But here again our evidence is defective. The German excavators working inside the court found the bottom courses of the previous building under a burnt layer identifiable as the result of the Persian sack. But this only accounts for the east end and sides of the archaic temple; the original west end is lost under the Hellenistic structures which we have described. So it is impossible to demonstrate what was the earlier design.³ It was usually supposed that the archaic temple had a *pronaos* connected to the *cella* in a normal manner, and that the surviving remains are the product of a more sophisticated age. But recently scholars have proposed to restore the east end of the archaic temple on the same general lines as its Hellenistic successor. It is admitted that the normal reconstruction cannot be disproved, but Fehr, the latest protagonist of the reconstructions on the later model, starts from 'the axiom that in the Didymeion we must reckon on that cultic connection in the plan's conception which we can observe also in other Greek temples as a constant in the change of building periods' (my translation).⁴ He takes as examples the Parthenon, the temple of Apollo at Delphi and the Artemisium at Ephesus. But this is sheer dogmatism, which takes no account of the difference of local circumstances.

First of all, at Delphi and Ephesus the temple was restored as soon as practically possible after its destruction. At Athens there was a longer interval, but also the resulting building was somewhat different from any predecessor. At Didyma the Persian sack was in 493 BC and it was not until more than a century and a half later in 334 BC that the first steps to revive the oracle were taken. Still more important is the fact that there had been a complete break in the administration of the temple and its cult traditions. Down to 493 BC the worship of Apollo had been in the hands of a priestly family, the Branchidae, who were traditionally of non-Milesian origin. Actually it was believed that the oracle ante-dated the Ionian migration. These hereditary prophets who gave their name to the place in the archaic period, can be compared to the families which elsewhere in Asia Minor managed priestly states down to the time of the Roman empire. At the end of the Ionian revolt Darius had punished the Branchidae by transporting them to Bactria, and when Miletus was restored after 479 BC, the city authorities made no attempt to rebuild the temple. They confined themselves to making an annual procession to the site under the direction of the Apolline guild of Miletus, the Molpoi of Apollo Delphinios.⁵

When Alexander captured Miletus in 334 BC and overthrew the pro-Persian oligarchy, the new democracy which came to power was grateful to the king, and determined to make a fresh start. Alexander was nominally elected chief magistrate for the year (*stephanephoros*). Also according to the rather written-up version which has been preserved from the contemporary Callisthenes, the oracle of Didyma was revived again to play an active part in supporting the king's cause. His description of the oracular spring, which had ceased since the sacking of the

designated the Labyrinth in the building accounts. John C. Montego, 'Note on the Labyrinth in Didyma', *AJA*, lxxx (1976), 104-6, has proposed a use by the *Prophetis*, which involves a misinterpretation of Iamblichus. On the subject see Parke, *The oracles of Apollo in Asia Minor* (London 1985), 52 and 216-17.

³ F. Gruben, *JDAI* lxxviii (1963), das archaische Didymeion, 95 ff.; W. Hahland, *JDAI* lxxix (1964), 144 ff.; H. Drerup and R. Naumann, *A.A.* (1964) col. 333-4.

⁴ B. Fehr, *Marburger Winckelmannsprogramm*. (1971/2), 14-59.

⁵ Hdt. vi 19.3 ff. The German excavators found fragmentary remains of architecture attributable to the fifth century and have been tempted to conjecture a revival of the oracle before the time of Alexander. Hahland, *JDAI* lxxix (1964) 146 for altars restored:

Knackfuss, *Didyma* i 127 and 142 ff. for a roofed building conjectured from some of the material which Hahland assigns to altars. The latest reconstruction is by W. Voigtländer, *Ist. Forsch.* xxii (1972) 93 ff. He reproduces from the remains a design of a well-house and also a 'cult-room'. He argues with much special pleading for the possibility of a fifth-century revival of the oracle. But I regard this as disproved by our literary evidence. For the interruption, note how Herodotus, who always refers to the sanctuary as Branchidae, except when quoting the Delphic oracle about it, refers to the oracle in the past tense in his explanatory mention (i 157.3.) Callisthenes (*FGrH* 124 F 14) positively states the interruption. The annual procession in the fifth century, Ditt. *Syll.*³ 57. The oracle as pre-Ionian, Paus. vii 2.6. For Callimachus' inconsistent references, cf. Parke (note 2) 226 notes 7 and 8.

temple, bursting forth and inspiring prophecies of Alexander's future successes is designed to suggest the miraculous and shed glory on the king. But one need not doubt that it is clear evidence that the oracle at Didyma was first revived after 334 BC.⁶

The city fathers of Miletus were faced with a difficult problem: how to manage a revived oracle-centre after a century and a half's interruption. It appears that instead of trying to hark back to the lost techniques of the Branchidae, they planned their restoration largely on the model of the great contemporary oracle—that of the Pythian Apollo at Delphi. The inspired instrument of the god's utterance was a woman—the *prophetis*—who like the Pythia at Delphi has left little personal impression in our records. The prominent official again as at Delphi was the *prophetes*. But while the Delphian prophet was appointed for life, the liberated Miletus was a democracy. So the office was made annual, appointed by lot (probably from a short list). Its standing became considerable, ranking even above the *Stephanephoros*, who was the eponymous magistrate. A short-term officer of this sort could scarcely be expected to manage an oracle-centre, but one may suspect that, while the *prophetes* provided the great and conspicuous figurehead in the oracular ceremonies, some permanent officials of less prominence organized the practical arrangements.⁷

The hereditary prophets of the Branchidae may have claimed to possess an inherited faculty of prophecy, but no Milesian woman had such a traditional gift. So some technique must have been employed to induce inspiration. The sacred spring would seem to have been the centre and source of prophecy, and of Iamblichus' four suggested methods, three—that the *prophetis* sat on an *axon* or dampened her feet or the hem of her robe in water or breathed in inspiration from the spring—can best be explained by supposing an attempt to adapt contemporary Delphic technique to the situation at Didyma.⁸

It is noteworthy that Iamblichus does not describe the *prophetis* as drinking from the sacred spring in marked contrast with the male prophet at Claros, the other most important Apolline oracle-centre in Asia Minor where water provided the inspiration. Venturing into the realm of conjecture, can this be because the water at Claros was abundant, but at Didyma was scanty? The present state of the sites would certainly suggest this picture. Even at the height of summer the chambers and passages of Claros are now so full of water as to make one wonder how the ancient priesthood controlled the supply. At Didyma on the contrary the floor of the *adyton* is normally dry. Of course there is some danger in assuming that conditions were identical in antiquity. The water-table in both places may have shifted in opposite directions in the last two thousand years. But it is significant that ancient tradition treated the Didymaeon spring as disappearing between 493 and 334 BC, and again at the time of the Gothic invasion in the third century AD it was hailed as a miracle that enough water could be found in the *adyton* to provide drinking for the local populace.⁹ If the sacred spring was often no more than a puddle, the practice may have been instituted that the *prophetis* need only have contact or near proximity to acquire inspiration.

In one other respect, too, the procedure of Didyma imitated that of Delphi. The inscriptions of the archaic period which record responses of Apollo Didymeus are all written in prose. But when the oracle was revived, its replies are all framed in hexameter verse, and continue to retain that form exclusively until the late third century AD at least. This again is best explained as an imitation of Delphi. But it is almost ironical that at the very time in the late fourth century BC

⁶ Arr. *An.* i.18.3. Alexander *Stephanephoros*, *Milet*, i. 3.132. Callisthenes, *l.c.* For a detailed discussion of the relations of Alexander with Didyma and the Branchidae, see Parke, *JHS* cv (1985) 59–68.

⁷ The *prophetis*, Rehm, *Didyma* ii p. 323b, and no. 273 (second century AD) and no. 235B (an obscure graffito of sarcastic intent) and a new important reference, W. Günther, *Ist. Mitt.* xxx (1980) 170–5, on which see Parke (note 2) 231, note 72. For Delphic

influences on the revival it may be significant that after 346 BC there had been an attempt by the Delphians to restore their traditions and foreign relations. Cf. Ditt. *Syll.*³ 292–5, the reinscribed *promanteiai* and the *Register of the Pythian victors* by Aristotle and Callisthenes (N. Robertson, *CQ* xxviii [1978] 54).

⁸ Iamb. *De mysteriis* 3.11; cf. Porphyry, *ad Aneb.* p. 3. For a detailed discussion, see Parke, (note 2) 212–13.

⁹ Rehm, *Did.* ii, no. 159.

when the Pythia was beginning to speak less and less in verse, the *prophetis* of Didyma adopted and clung tenaciously to this antiquated form.¹⁰

In a manner typically Greek the imitations of Delphic practice were mirrored by the provision of a mythological connection between the two oracle-centres. This purpose was achieved by fabricating a genealogy for Branchus from a Delphian, Machaereus, the son of Daitas, who had killed Neoptolemus at the sanctuary there. These ancestors were probably chosen, not for any special preference, but because they were the only individual Delphians named in early Greek legend. Obviously their names had been invented from the words 'sacrificial knife' (*machaera*) and 'feast' (*dais*), because of the legendary sacrifice. It was probably as old as the sixth century at least, since the method of seizing a share from the offering died out by the classical period. But it is impossible to believe that the Branchidae would have accepted descent from a Delphian as an honour. Also one implication of the legendary genealogy was that the oracle-centre postdated, instead of antedating, the Hellenic settlement of Miletus. It first appears in a fragment of Callimachus some fifty or sixty years after the revival of the oracle.¹¹

These instances showing how the Milesians modelled themselves on the Delphic oracle when reviving the oracle of Apollo at Didyma might suggest the likelihood that the plan of the new temple would not be markedly different from that at Delphi in principle. According to Vitruvius the architects were Paeonius of Ephesus and Daphnis of Miletus. Of these Paeonius is also credited by him with being responsible together with Demetrius for the Artemisium at Ephesus, which had been restored after the fire of 356. Work there was largely accomplished, but still incomplete, when Alexander freed the city from the Persians in 334. So if Vitruvius' statement can be taken as evidence that Paeonius was junior architect or successor to Demetrius at Ephesus, he can well have been commissioned by the Milesians to draw up the plans for the revived Didymaeum from the late thirties of the fourth century.¹² But there is no evidence that the building was begun so soon. Building accounts in plenty have been discovered for the period from the middle of the third century, but none for the period before 300 BC. The only inscriptions which might indicate some progress are very fragmentary catalogues of sacred treasures, which, if correctly dated about 310 BC, would show that by that time Apollo had received a number of dedications, some of gold and of silver, which would presumably have been housed in some building for their safe keeping.¹³ One could reasonably suppose that, apart from any clearing of the site and removal of the ruins of the archaic building, the first step would be to erect a central shrine, like the *naiskos* in the previous temple, which would hold dedications and house a cult-statue. This must have become urgently needed after Seleucus returned from Ecbatana the original bronze statue of Apollo by Canachus, which had been carried off by the Persians in 493 BC. This might have been recovered at any time after Seleucus obtained control of Media in the years immediately after 312 BC. But it was not till the battle of Ipsus had assured his position, that he, his queen Apamea and his son Antiochus embarked on an elaborate programme of financing the building of the temple at Didyma.¹⁴

¹⁰ See my discussion in *Hermathena* cxxx-cxxxi (1981/2) 99-112.

¹¹ The earliest reference to Branchus appears to occur in Call. *fr.* 229 (Pfeiffer), *P. Oxy.* 2172, 1-22, though the name itself cannot be restored in the fragment. There is, however, an allusion to him as descended on his father's side from the family of Daitas and on his mother's from the Lapiths. Strabo (ix 3.9) when describing the tomb of Neoptolemus at Delphi, mentions that 'Branchus who was in charge of the sanctuary at Didyma' was a descendant (*ἀπόγονος*) of Machaereus, who slew him. For Machaereus as a son of Daitas, Asclepiades of Tragilus, *FGrH* 12 F 15.

¹² Vitr. vii preface 16. On the architects of the Artemisium, Str. xvi 1.22. In the latest discussion of the Didymeion from the point of view of its decoration, W.

Voigtländer (Der jungste Apollontempel von Didyma. *Istanbuler Mitteilungen*, Beiheft xiv [1975] 14 ff.) accepts Paeonis as architect, but would date the production of the design unnecessarily before 334 BC.

¹³ Rehm, *Did.* ii, no. 434-7. See W. Günther, *Das Orakel von Didyma in hellenistischer Zeit*, *Istanbuler Mitteilungen*, Beiheft iv (1971) 37, n. 70; these inscriptions were dated by Rehm to c. 250 BC. But L. Robert, *Gnomon* xxxi (1959) 669 and *REG* 74 (1961) 232, no. 637 has shown that they should be dated in the period 311-306 BC.

¹⁴ The return of the statue by Seleucus (undated), Paus. i. 16.3 and viii 46.3. Cf. a statue base at Miletus in honour of Seleucus. *OGI* 744, the decree for Antiochus, *OGI* 213, Rehm, *Did.* ii, no. 479, Günther, *op. cit.* 29; for Apamea, *Did.* ii, no. 480, Günther, 21. Günther's

If (as one may suppose) Paeonius' original plan had been on the general scale of the building which was ultimately erected, it was conceived on far too large a size for the resources of Miletus to achieve unaided. Perhaps the city fathers had originally supposed they could tap the resources of Alexander, and their embassy to the king at Memphis in 331 BC, bearing the flattering oracular responses, may have been the first step in this approach. But, if so, there is no sign that it evoked any favourable response, and in the *Hypomnemata*, if they represent a genuine scheme of Alexander's intentions, the six temples which he proposed to build did not include any at Didyma. So the work had to wait thirty years before it could be undertaken properly. But fortunately the new royal patrons did not merely provide one single, once for all, payment. Antiochus, the heir-apparent, devoted his money to construct at Miletus a large colonnade, a furlong in length. This covered building would provide protection for shops and market stalls, and the proceeds derived from letting the sites were to be assigned for the 'equipping of the sanctuary'. Thus the cost of construction was funded for an indefinite future; which was as well, since the work on the building was to continue with interruptions for over five hundred years, and even then it was to be left incomplete.¹⁵

Of the surviving remains the first construction was the *naiskos*, which judging by its style may have already been begun by 300 BC.¹⁶ After that the next stage may have been the lowest course of the *cella*-wall so as to guarantee the privacy of the *adyton*—a usual requirement for oracular ceremonies. When the basic lines of the *cella* had been laid down, fixing the western end of the building and its north and south sides, construction proceeded from the west towards the east end. A problem facing the architect was that the original ground-level of the court had to be retained so as not to interfere with the sacred spring, to which access was essentially required. So a stairway had to be provided to reach at least the upper level of the *pronaos*, set by the height of the ground at the east end plus the rise of the external steps to the top of the stylobate. Actually, of course, the present great staircase is somewhat longer, so as to reach the higher floor-level of the room with the two columns. The important point, however, which has been lately indicated by Voigtländer, is that the walls of the *cella* appear to have been originally constructed with an allowance for the great staircase only to reach the level of the stylobate.¹⁷ If this is correct, it implies that the original plan for the Hellenistic temple placed no obstacle in the way of the enquirer advancing through the *pronaos* and going straight down the stairs to the floor of the *cella*. Otherwise, the original restorers of the oracle-centre had not thought of the practice of Didyma differing in this respect from Delphi. Of course, this does not mean that access to the *cella* was to be uncontrolled. Our indications from Delphi show that enquirers were only allowed to approach the *adyton* after the proper ritual had been fulfilled.

The exact date of this important change of design is uncertain, but it could well be before the mid-third century BC. If so, it may have been contemporary with the erection of another building. This was the *Chresmographion*, which appears first in the building accounts of the temple from the last years of the third century. There it is mentioned as a location in the sacred precinct and had evidently been already erected. As its name shows, it must have been an office connected with the writing of oracles. Now at Delphi the whole procedure was conducted orally. Apparently the questions were told to the *prophetes*, who put them by word of mouth to

datings and reading should be corrected in view of J. Seibert's criticisms (*GGA* 1974, 199–200).

¹⁵ The embassy of the Milesians to Alexander at Memphis in 331 (early spring), Callisthenes, *FGrH* 124 F 14. The *Hypomnemata*, D.S. xviii 4.5. Voigtländer (n. 12) 23 takes the phrase κοσμησαι τὸ ἱερόν on the Antiochus decree in too restricted a sense. It was a deliberately vague expression meant to allow the use of the funds for any purpose in the sanctuary even after the temple was completed.

¹⁶ The *naiskos*, Kraus, *Ist. Mitt.* 11 (1961) 126 and W.

Hahland, *JDAI* xix (1964) 234. Voigtländer, *Jüngste Apollontempel*, 34–43, dates the *naiskos*' design to c. 300 and believes it was finished before 270 BC.

¹⁷ Voigtländer (n. 12) 33 and Taf. 1.3 (the cymation on the side wall is encroached on by the staircase). He estimates that the staircase was to stop at the nineteenth step—five short of the present height—approximating to the extra elevation of the wall under the great window. It is therefore reasonable to regard it as an alteration introduced into the original plan after the side walls had been erected so far.

the Pythia within the *adyton* in the hearing of the enquirer. How the function of conveying the reply was distributed between the Pythia and the *prophetes* is one of the insoluble problems of Delphi. But it is clear that it was not conveyed in writing at any stage of the proceedings. So Delphi had no *chresmographion*.¹⁸

The building at Didyma was probably what the Germans describe more cautiously as the Prophet's House. This stood on some unidentified site in the sacred precinct. It was demolished in the Christian period, but so many of its stones have been recovered from their later reuse that Knackfuss has been able to produce a hypothetical reconstruction. This shows that it was built in the Doric style with a front consisting of four columns *in antis* and a pediment. It was evidently closely connected in use with the prophets. For starting from about 39 BC it became usual for each of these annual officials to have his name inscribed on the outside and also often to add any reference to events in his year of office which he chose to record. This does not imply any change in the use of the building in 39 BC but is probably connected with the fact that in that year an embassy returned from Rome with a grant of 'the restoration of the previous assembly and the laws' in recognition of Miletus' loyalty during the invasion of Labienus and the Parthian army. Evidently the city magistrates felt a new confidence in the importance of their office, but we need not suppose that the function of the building had changed since it was erected in the mid-third century BC.¹⁹

It is clear that these two innovations in building—the complicated design of the east end of the temple and the provision of a *Chresmographion*—both tended in the same direction; to distance the enquirer from the *prophetis* and her prophesying. He could not approach the *adyton* directly and his question or the oracle's reply, or both, were conveyed in writing. Actually the present construction of the temple would not prevent enquirers being led into the *cella*. In fact they could have descended by one of the sloping passages and ascended by the other, without any problem of traffic-flow. The general effect would have been not unlike the two entrances to the underground passages at Claros. But if one supposes that this was the normal procedure at Didyma, one is left with the function of the large opening on to the *pronaos* quite unexplained. Yet it is the most conspicuous feature of the design, and is normally recognised as the place from which the *prophetes* could have announced the responses of Apollo to those standing below in the *pronaos*.²⁰ Nothing like it is known on any other oracular site. The nearest description of such a consultation is a vague and quite fictitious instance—Vergil's account of Aeneas' enquiring at Apollo's temple on Delos. An oracle-centre on that island figures at various places in Greek mythology, usually in association with the legendary king, Anius, who was also connected with the foundation of Lavinium in some Hellenistic source. But for practical purposes there was no such oracular activity on Delos in historic times. So Vergil invented the scene to suit the purpose of his narrative. As Aeneas narrates: 'I worshipped the temple of the god built of ancient stone. "Give, Lord of Thymbra, a rightful home—give, father, an augury and slide into our minds." Scarcely had I spoken, when everything was seen of a sudden to shake, the threshold and the bay-tree of the god, and all the mountain around to move, and, as the *adyton* was laid open, the tripod to roar (et mugire adytis cortina reclusis). In obeisance we sank to the ground, and a voice issued to the open air.' (There follow five lines of ambiguous hexameters.) 'Thus spake Apollo'.²¹

¹⁸ See Parke, *Hermathena* cxxx–cxxxii (1981–2), 101 for the Delphic procedure. The *chresmographion* in the building-account, *Did.* ii, no. 31.5 ff. (183/2 BC), translated by Voigtländer (n. 12) 91 and 155.

¹⁹ Knackfuss's reconstruction, *Did.* i 150 ff. The Prophet's House inscriptions, Rehm *Did.* ii 150 ff. The restoration of Miletus' constitution, *Did.* ii 218, 4–6 and *Milet* 1.3.126.23. In *Did.* ii, no. 302.9, there is a reference to τὴν στοᾶν τῆς προφητικῆς οἰκίας which might imply the existence of a prophet's house as well as a *chresmographion*. But this is probably an unnecessary duplication.

²⁰ E.g. Günther (n. 13) 122.

²¹ Anius' daughter and Lavinium, *DH* i 59.3. Aeneas at Delos, Verg. *Aen.* iii 84–99. The latest to discuss the oracle of Apollo on Delos are Raymond Den Adel, *Classical World* lxxvi (1985) 288–90 and Timothy E. Gregory, *ib.* 290–1. They confine their discussion to literary sources. For epigraphic evidence for the Hellenistic period, see H. Gallet de Santerre, *Delos, primitive et archaïque*, (Paris 1958) 249.

In this highly dramatic account the god himself delivers the oracle from his temple, and to that extent the whole scene is miraculous and unreal. But the points of contact with the realities of Didyma appear to be that Aeneas does not enter the temple, but addresses his enquiry from outside the *adyton*. Also just before the god gives his response the doors of the *adyton* fly open. It would be possible for Vergil to have imagined the whole scene with no basis in fact, but also it would be possible that he had heard or read of the procedure at Didyma, and worked up an enhanced account of such a consultation. The god himself, not his prophet, speaks, and the enquirer does not submit an enquiry in writing, but addresses the god direct.

The Vergilian episode of Aeneas' enquiry at Delos is at most a distant echo of the ceremonies at Didyma, and provides no explanation why, if the Milesians had set out by modelling their revived oracle on Delphi, it should have ended with this strangely different design of building and presumably a corresponding difference of procedure. If we seek for an analogy in ritual, the best direction in which to look is Egypt—and that is most interesting, for Hölbe has recently argued that other aspects of the temple's architecture are influenced by Egyptian models.²² In Ptolemaic documents of the earlier half of the second century BC from Memphis there are several references to the *thyris* in connection with written appeals to the king (Ptolemy Philometor VI). As the appeals were sent from Ptolemaeus, a 'recluse' (*katochos*) living in the Serapeum, it was originally supposed that this 'window', through which the document passed, was a communicating opening in his cell or the cloister. But Adolf Wilcken in a highly authoritative discussion showed that it must instead have been what he calls an 'audience-window' by which documents could be submitted to the king and also returned again marked with the royal seal of approval. It appears that such an architectural feature and royal institution had an ancient origin in Pharaonic practice. At Medinet Habu Rameses III built a combined temple and residence where in the middle of the palace-façade which formed the left side of the temple there was a window at which the Pharaoh could show himself to those assembled in the courtyard. The sill was some 2 m above ground level. The audience-window of Rameses III may have been intended for religious ceremonial rather than civil communication between the ruler and his subjects. But it appears that the Ptolemies, while taking over this form of building adapted it for this somewhat different purpose. There is no architectural evidence at Memphis such as that at Medinet Habu, but Wilcken conjectured that the Serapeum as well as the temple contained somewhere in its precinct a royal residence with an audience-window or some similar building. How exactly the Egyptians or Hellenistic Greeks used this facility is not described, but presumably on certain occasions the petitioner could come with his written plea and place it on the sill of the window at the feet of the king or his representative. Also perhaps then or on a later occasion he could receive the official rescript, probably endorsed on the document which he had presented.²³ If this is a correct imagining of the procedure, something very similar could have

²² Cf. n. 31, below.

²³ For the Egyptian evidence, see A. Wilcken, *Urkunden der Ptolemaerzeit*, I (1927) no. 15.7; 16.20; 53.5. These documents date from 162 BC, and are addressed to Ptolemy and Cleopatra Philometeres. For the controversy over the *θυρίς* and the *κάτοχοι* see Wilcken's commentary, pp. 63–5 and 174. L. Delekat, *Katoche Heirodolie und Adoptionsfreilassung* (Münchener Beiträge zur Papyrusforschung und Antike Rechtsgeschichte xlvii [1964]) 20–21 argues in favour of the older interpretation, but his criticism does not appear to refute Wilcken's interpretation of 53.5. Hieroglyphic and demotic inscriptions from the Serapeum Memphis, recording the titles of the local family of princes and priests, show the survival into the third and second centuries BC of the Pharaonic tradition there of a 'window of appearance' (E. A. E. Reymond, *From the records of a priestly family from Memphis*, *Ägyptologische*

Abhandlungen [Wiesbaden 1981] 77, no. 4, 9 etc.) An earlier use of *thyris* occurs in Heraclides of Cyme. *FGrH* 689 F 4 (Ath. xii 13.517B), though in a somewhat fanciful context, where he describes the method of consulting the king of the incense-bearing country, in S. Arabia. If he wrote in the mid-fourth century, as is usually supposed, an Egyptian custom may have been, correctly or not, attributed to other southern peoples. Josephus (*B.J.* vi 253), using the same noun, refers obviously from personal knowledge, to an architectural feature in the Temple complex at Jerusalem, which recalls the Great opening at Didyma—*θυρίδι χρυσεῖ, καθ' ἣν εἰς τοὺς περὶ τῶν ναῶν οἴκους εἰσίτον ἦν*. It was above ground level for Josephus tells how a Roman soldier was lifted up by a comrade (*ἀνακουφισθεὶς δ' ὑπὸ συστρατιώτου*), so as to thrust some burning timber through it. Like the Didymaeon opening it was highly decorated, and must have fulfilled some purpose

taken place at Didyma. The interesting point is that from soon after the death of Seleucus I early in 280 BC until 258 BC Miletus was within the dominions of Ptolemy II. Therefore, if the Ptolemies were already imitating this Pharaonic custom, the Milesians might have borrowed the idea from them at a time of close contact.

It may seem strange that the procedure of an oracle-centre should be modelled on that of a royal court, but it was not a question of the heart of the ritual—the inspiration by the god. The ceremony of the audience-window simply involved the receiving of the enquiry and the delivery of the response. Also the attitude of the period was to regard kings and gods on much the same plane in their dealing with human beings. For that matter the window at Medinet Habu was in a building which was as much a temple as a palace. The general effect of the change of architectural plan and of ceremonial at Didyma was to enhance the solemnity of the occasion and increase the dignity and importance of the *prophetes*.

Two other indications pointing in the direction of the picture which we had drawn may be added as footnotes. If one compares the literary and epigraphic tradition of Didyma, it differs notably from that of other oracle-centres in one respect. It is very usual for the tradition to record not only the response, but also the original enquiry. This is exceptional in other instances. For example the responses of Claros were often inscribed in the city which had enquired: in fact it might even be conjectured that the priestly authorities of Claros may have encouraged the practice. But normally the response only is recorded and the question has to be inferred. At Didyma or elsewhere in Milesian territory when oracles were inscribed (and there are plenty of examples), the question comes first, followed by the formula 'the god said', and then the response.²⁴ The linking of the two together in this way is more easy to explain if they normally occurred together on the same document in this form. Also from the point of view of the priesthood and the enquirer alike it must have been more convenient if those consulting the oracle went first to the *chresmographion*, explained their problem, and received the question written on a form which they could then lay at the feet of the *prophetes* in the temple. This method would guarantee to the authorities that questions were of a suitable kind and in a presentable shape. Also it might have been necessary to register in advance how many enquirers were to attend and in what order. From the point of view of the enquirer it had one great advantage: he could be sure that his question had been put correctly to the god. At Delphi he could hear the *prophetes* address the enquiry to the Pythia on the tripod, but at Didyma under the new arrangement whereby he was not admitted to the *adyton*, this critical act took place beyond his control. However, a written form was a guarantee of the accuracy of presentation.

The other point to note is that the period when Miletus passed under Ptolemaic influence had its effect on Egypt as well as Didyma. It was probably at this time that Callimachus started his career as a poet, and it is worth remarking that Miletus and Didyma figure prominently in a number of places in his poems. Unfortunately these references are only known either from fragmentary papyri or from literary allusions elsewhere. So the works cannot be precisely dated, and the full significance of the mentions is obscured. But the examples are worth listing together for their cumulative effect. The most important is the *Branchus*, a hymn addressed to Zeus and Apollo as the gods of Didyma. It contained an account of the foundation of the shrine: Apollo had appeared there to Branchus, and presented him with a staff of bay wood, which became the stock of the sacred tree in the *adyton*, and also provided him with a magic wand.²⁵ These elements occurred again in one of Callimachus' iambic poems, where he tells the parable of the contest for precedence between the bay-tree and the olive. The bay-tree cites its employment in

of communication, judging by Josephus' phrase. I have left out of discussions the late use of $\theta\upsilon\rho\acute{\iota}\varsigma$ for a wall-cupboard, especially in monastic cells, well illustrated by G. Husson, *Actes du XIV^e Congrès International de Papyrologie* (Oxford 1974) 177–82: see also R. Kassel, *ZPE* xl (1980) 87–8.

²⁴ For the inscribing of both question and answer in

the Hellenistic period, e.g. *Milet* 1.3 no. 33 and 36. For the numerous later examples from Didyma itself, Rehm, *Did.* ii, no. 495 ff.

²⁵ *Call. fr.* 229 (Pfeiffer). I have collected these references from P. M. Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria* i, ch. 11.

the ritual of divination, and, after mentioning its use by the Pythia, continues: 'Did not Branchus make whole again the sons of the Ionians with whom Phoebus had been angry, striking them with the branch of bay, and speaking his obscure(?) utterances to the people twice or thrice.'²⁶ This is an allusion to one of the local legends of Didyma. Also a story of Miletus was told in the third book of Callimachus' *Aetia*, how king Phrygius fell in love with Pieria of Myus. The tale, as preserved in Aristaenetos, ends inconclusively with no obvious *aition* to justify its place in the poem. This may make it all the more plausible to suppose that Callimachus was led to insert it because of some contemporary interest in the local histories of Miletus.²⁷ Again in the first of his *Iambi* Callimachus retold the familiar story of the Seven Wise Men. In his version it is the gold cup of Bathycles, an Arcadian, which is to be given to the wisest; he is said to have used as his source Leandrius of Miletus. The interesting point is that Callimachus makes the quest begin and end in the Didymaeum. It is there that the son of Bathycles finds Thales drawing geometric figures in the dust of the sanctuary, and the quest ends with Thales dedicating the cup to Apollo of Didyma. But there are indications that the earlier version in Leandrius may have named instead the Delphinium at Miletus. He probably wrote in the fourth century, and before the restoration of the Didymaeum had made any progress, if it had even begun. So he would appropriately name the chief shrine of Apollo in Miletus itself as the site of the dedication. But Callimachus showed the contemporary interest in the Didymaeum by substituting it for the Delphinium.²⁸

It was a typical practice of Callimachus and of his contemporaries to collect and reproduce local traditions, which up till then had not found a place in Greek poetry. So his retelling of the legends of Miletus and Didyma is a feature, which does not of itself call for special explanation, but it is significant that these occur in such numbers. No other single city-state provided so many subjects for Callimachus; which may indicate the amount of interest and intercourse produced by this accession to the Ptolemaic empire.

For our purpose the influence of Egypt on Miletus would be more important than the effects in the opposite direction. Evidence is less easy to find. Ptolemy II began well by conferring a gift of territory on the city, probably property belonging to the Seleucids, which he had taken over and then remitted. The importance which he attached to the region can be judged from the fact that he was represented by a member of the royal family, Ptolemaeus, as the local governor, based on Ephesus.²⁹ A strange, but plausible, example of the interaction of Miletus and the Ptolemies can be identified in 'the town of Ampelone, a colony of the Milesians' on the coast of Arabia north of Jeddah, which appears in Pliny the Elder's gazeteer. At the very period when Ptolemy Philadelphus was engaged on his expeditions into the Red Sea (c. 270 BC), Miletus was in his alliance, and its inhabitants may have been successfully invited to found a settlement on the newly explored territory. A more dubious example of their interaction may be found in the sphere of religion. Two years after the Ptolemaic control of Miletus was established (276 BC), a law was instituted there which regulated the practice of Dionysiac rites performed by private *thiasoi*. The best analogy for this kind of restriction has been found in a Ptolemaic ordinance of rather later date. So, if this had been a consistent policy of the Ptolemies, as P. M. Fraser suggested, the influence of Egypt may lie behind this Milesian legislation.³⁰

Also it is even possible to maintain the existence of a two-way traffic in other architectural features, besides the great opening, between Miletus and Egypt and vice-versa. In 1971 Hoepfner pointed out that the Ionic capitals and bases of the monument of Ptolemy II and Arsinoe at Olympia are closely related to those of the Didymaeum, and while this present article was in

²⁶ Call. *Iambi*. iv fr. 194, 28 ff.

²⁷ Call. *Aetia*. iii fr. 80, 3, the legend in Aristaenetos i 15 (Herscher).

²⁸ Call. *Iambi*. i fr. 191. Leandrius *FGrH* 492 F 18 (D.H. 1.27); the iambic version of the dedication is from Callimachus: the prose version probably from Leandrius.

²⁹ 279/8 BC *Milet* 1.3.123.38 ff. Günther (n. 13) 51. Ptolemaeus as governor of Ephesus, E. Will. *Histoire politique du monde hellénistique* i (Nancy 1979) 208.

³⁰ Pliny, *HN* vi 159. P.M. Fraser (n. 25) i 177 and ii n. 352. Sokolowski, *LSAM* 48 (Miletus, 276 BC) and Fraser, *id.* ii 115. n. 146.

preparation Hölbe has argued at length for Egyptian influence on the design of the temple, though without suggesting the great opening as an instance.³¹ Besides, the sensational discovery of scratched drawings on the walls of the Didymaeum may offer new evidence for the relative dating of different parts of the building, and also may alter basically the picture of architectural planning in the Hellenistic period. We may have to suppose that the work started with a rough general plan, which was elaborated and modified as the progress of the building demanded. Anyway, it is not improbable that the procedure and design of the great temple under construction at Didyma might have been modified on lines suggested by the practice of the Ptolemaic court. Before his death Ptolemy Philadelphus and his sister-wife Arsinoe were to be recognised by the Greeks of Alexandria as divine. So it was only reasonable that the methods of petitioning them could be applied appropriately to Apollo of Didyma. A connection between the window in the temple and the Ptolemies may not have been forgotten. It was two centuries after the Egyptian control of Miletus, when at last that part of the building was sufficiently completed to receive its final ornamental fitting. It may be significant that the Milesians approached the Ptolemies to provide the most expensive of the materials needed. In 54/3 BC Ptolemy Auletes gave 24 $\frac{1}{3}$ talents weight of ivory, enough to supply half the surround and the one door; and some four or five years later Ptolemy XIII completed the other half with the same quantity.³² Egypt was, of course, the main market for ivory, but the benefactors approached for the purpose were a remarkably appropriate choice.

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³¹ Wolfram Hoepfner, *Zwei Ptolemäerbanten*, *A.M. Beiheft* i (1971) 7, but Voigtländer, *Jüngste Did.* 187–8, would date the Didymaeon capitals later. Lothar Haselberger, *Werkzeichnungen an jüngeren Didymeion*, *Ist. Mitt.* xxx (1980) 191–215 and xxxiii (1983) 90–123. I owe these citations and comments to one of the *JHS* referees. Günther Hölbe, *Ägyptischer Einfluss in der griechischen Architektur*, *Oe. Jh* lv (1984) 15–16, seems to me to press his arguments too far.

³² Rehm, *Did.* ii, no. 394 (Ptolemy xii, 54/3 BC) and 218 (Ptolemy xiii 51–48 BC). Günther (n. 13) 93, n. 170. Voigtländer (n. 12) 9 and 91, n. 250, maintains that the

opening was too large for any doors to be hung, and suggests that the ivory was for the triple doorway above the stairway. The term used ($\mu\acute{\epsilon}\gamma\alpha\ \theta\acute{\upsilon}\rho\omega\mu\alpha$) would only be appropriate to the main oracular window. Admittedly $\theta\acute{\upsilon}\rho\omega\mu\alpha$ would apply to a door-frame, but I follow Rehm in supposing that each of the two benefactions covered the cost of decorating one leaf of a giant double door with its appropriate frame, not merely the empty frame of a window. On the meaning of $\theta\acute{\upsilon}\rho\omega\mu\alpha$ in Egyptian building, see E. Bernard, *ZPE* lx (1985) 81, citing Genevieve Hasson, *Oikia, le vocabulaire de la maison privée en Egypte* (Paris 1983) 107–9.



(a) The Chieftain Cup. Courtesy Herakleion Archaeological Museum.



(b) Seventh-Century bronze relief plaque. Courtesy Louvre Museum.



(c) The Temple of Apollo at Didyma: colossal 'window' above pronaos wall.

THE CHIEFTAIN CUP AND A MINOAN RITE OF PASSAGE

THE TEMPLE OF APOLLO AT DIDYMA