

# Heritage disappeared?

## Some notes on the interpretation of the Eurymedon bronze palm tree in Delphi

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To commemorate the victory in the Battle of the Eurymedon, a palm tree to support a statue of Athena was offered at Delphi. Although, the base foundation of this monument is the only vestige that remains of this offering<sup>1</sup>, ancient literary sources refer to it when narrating two military conflicts. Firstly, its erection was in connection with the Battle of the Eurymedon in 467 BC, during the Third Greco-Persian War. Secondly, a reference was made when the monument was attacked by crows that pecked its golden surface - which was interpreted as a bad omen - advising against the expedition to Sicily.

Amandry proved that the remains found near the northern extremity of the facade of the Temple of Apollo at Delphi corresponded to the foundation and base of the Eurymedon palm tree (fig. 1)<sup>2</sup>. It is a structure with a hole in the centre like the one found in Delos that supported the palm tree offered by Nikias (fig. 2). Offering of Nikias in Delos is undoubtedly identified by the inscription carved at its base. As well, both fastening systems are similar<sup>3</sup>. The most striking thing about the offering of Nikias in Delos is the erection of this immense bronze palm tree, however this was only part of the offerings of that day, which included

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1 Amandry, 1947, p. 466-468.

2 Neither Plutarch nor Pausanias specified in their descriptions the location of this votive offering. Preliminary indications on this monument were given in Amandry, 1947-1948, p. 449-451; 1947, p. 374-375 and 466-468. The detailed study was published by Amandry in 1954 (295-315). He makes an analysis, description, and demonstration of why it was the remains associated with the Eurymedon palm tree. The interpretation of the votive offer was only outlined, requiring a thorough review of its meaning, which is what we intend in this article.

3 The palm tree of Nikias is a great bronze sculpture erected in Delos in 417 BC. Traditional scholarship has focused more on following Plutarch's account (Nic.3) than archaeological discoveries (Courby, 1921, p. 174-241; Picard and Replat, 1924, p. 215-263; Courbin, 1973, p. 157-172, Hermery, 1993: 11-19; Bruneau, 1975, p. 267-311 and 1990, p. 567-571; Ducat, 1965 and 1983).

processions in honour of Apollo. This means that this palm tree is linked to the Delian Apollo cult<sup>4</sup>.

The stone blocks are held between them by lead crampons fixed deep into the stone. These crampons, which are partially conserved, suggests that a column would be embedded in this hole in the middle of the monument. By the type of camprons used, the remains can be dated in the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC<sup>5</sup> (fig. 3).

Jacquemin points out how the victories of the Second Medical War are remembered by the allied Greeks with collective offerings mostly related to Apollo: Apollo of Salamis, the tripod of Platea, the Apollo from Epidaurus and the palm tree of Eurymedon among others<sup>6</sup>. The reason lies more in the fact that Apollo is the great protector of poleis and a symbol of the Delos League rather than Delphi being the place where the offerings take place.

Traditionally, palm trees have been considered a symbol from the East, thus, reduced to a mere ornament<sup>7</sup>. In this paper, we intend to analyse the meaning of the ex-voto linked to military conflicts and to provide an interpretation of its founding and destruction as a symbol that encoded deeper ideas. The oracle of Delphi was an attraction point for politicians, artists, and thinkers<sup>8</sup> who turned their historical concerns into the monuments they built.

## 1. Historical context of the erection of the monument

A palm tree that supported a statue of Athena was offered at Delphi to commemorate the victory in the Battle of the Eurymedon. As Pausanias notes:

“The bronze palm-tree, as well as a gilt image of Athena on it, was dedicated by the Athenians from the spoils they took in their two successes on the same day at the Eurymedon, one on land, and the other with their fleet on the river. The gold on this image was, I noticed, damaged in parts.”<sup>9</sup>

4 Nikias landed on Renea with a large choir, sacrificial victims, and a magnificently decorated bridge that he had brought from Athens. At night he built the bridge between Renea and Delos, and at dawn led the procession with the choirs in honour of Delian Apollo (Plut.Nic.3.). One of the heroes who wielded a similar cult on Delos was Theseus. Callimachus (H.4.307-315) collects the tradition of crowns, dances, and choirs that he established when he returned victorious from Crete and went to Delos to worship Apollo.

5 The way in which this structure had to be embedded and fixed with lead necessarily refers to a bronze structure. It is the same case as the palm tree of Nicias de Delos. Cf. previous note.

6 Jacquemin, 1999, p. 83-86.

7 Plants play a determining role in Greek myths and in ancient believes: Detienne, 1972; Meiggs, 1982; Matz, 1982; Baumann 1982 and 1984; Siebert; 1992; Amigues, 2002; Prance & Wesbitt, 2005. For the specific case of the palm tree: Tarbel, 1908; Claesen, 1938; Miller, 1971 and 1996; Le Roy, 1973; Hurwit, 1981-1982, p. 193-199; Sourvinou-Inwood, 1985, p. 125-146; Torelli, 2002; Galán, 2005; Valtierra, 2005 and 2017. In this case, the palm tree is a *sema*, it would not be part of the decoration. Plant motifs were frequent at Delphi. For example, there is an acanthus column called dancers high not far from there in the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC.

8 Defradas, 1972, p. 286.

9 Paus. 10.15.4. translation by W.H.S. Jones and H.A. Ormerod. ἱππικοῦ δὲ ἡγεμόνας ἀναβεβηκότας ἐπὶ ἵππους Φεραῖοι παρὰ τῷ Ἀπόλλωνι ἔστησαν τρεψάμενοι τὴν Ἀττικὴν ἵππον. τὸν δὲ φοῖνικα ἀνέθεσαν Ἀθηναῖοι τὸν χαλκοῦν, καὶ αὐτὸν καὶ Ἀθηνᾶς ἀγάλμα ἐπίχρυσον ἐπὶ τῷ φοῖνικι, ἀπὸ

This celebration belongs to an episode of the Greco-Persian Wars: it took place when the Greeks expelled the Persian invaders from Hellas, especially from the coast of Pamphylia (Asia Minor) in 468 BC. It was a decisive land and naval victory by Cimon with the help of the allies of the islands. This battle ensured Athens the hegemony on the Aegean Sea, attracted Lycia and Caria for the cause and strengthened the Delian League.

The origin of the Greco-Persian Wars was the uprising of the Ionian colonies under Persian power<sup>10</sup>. Aristagoras, tyrant of Miletus, took advantage of the revolts and asked for help to the metropolis in Hellas. Only two poleis responded: Athens, which sent twenty ships, and Eretria, which sent five. Hence, the Battle of the Eurymedon closed a cycle from the Athenian point of view: the Greco-Persian Wars had begun with those ships sent to help the Ionians and with the victory, Athenians regained those lands, becoming the undisputed masters of the Aegean Sea in a confederation that although controlled by them was centred in Delos, the very same site that the Persians themselves had not dared to attack<sup>11</sup>. It is obvious that the participation of the allied cities was not a voluntary adhesion, an added reason to create a symbol with political connotations<sup>12</sup>.

## 2. Athena and the palm tree: iconography of the ex-voto

To commemorate this event, they chose a very particular iconography: a palm tree and above it, a sculpture of Athena. The widespread tendency to associate palm trees with the Oriental world has led some authors to understand it as a Persian symbol. Thus, the composition would have been an allegory of the preponderance of the Athenians over their Eastern enemies<sup>13</sup>. Athenian ‘imperialism’ was always aggressive and oppressive, benefiting the Athenians at the expense of other less powerful states. This strengthens the position of making an “athenocentric” reading of this offering at Delphi. A more aggressive iconography emphasizing the authority of Athens would be more in line with the thinking of the moment<sup>14</sup>.

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ἔργων ὄν ἐπ’ Εὐρυμέδοντι ἐν ἡμέρᾳ τῇ αὐτῇ τὸ μὲν πεζῆ, τὸ δὲ ναυσὶν ἐν τῷ ποταμῷ κατόρθωσαν. τοῦτου τοῦ ἀγάλματος ἐνιαχοῦ τὸν ἐπ’ αὐτῷ χρυσὸν ἐθεώμην λελυμασμένον. On the Delphic offerings described by Pausanias, see Lacroix, 1992.

10 Cf. Cassola, 1957; Sakellariou, 1958; Huxley, 1966; Mastrocinque, 1979; Roebuck, 1984; Mac Sweeney, 2013.

11 Hdt. 6.97.2.

12 The idea that Athens behaved in an acceptable way towards her allies was maintained in 20th century historiography supported by the reconstruction of the Athenian tribute lists and reinforced by the dating of various decrees. Yet many authors have shown that Athenian ‘imperialism’ was always aggressive and oppressive, benefiting the Athenians at the expense of other less powerful states. This strengthens the position of making an “athenocentric” reading of this offering at Delphi. The bibliography on the Delian League and the Athenian hegemony is very extensive. Cf. for example Pritchard, 2019; Constantakopoulou, 2012, p. 51-72; Pébarthe, 2011, p. 57-88 and 2000, p. 47-76 ; Keen, 1997, p. 29-48 ; Rhodes, 1992, p. 34-61. Meiggs, 1972.

13 Stähler, 1989, p. 308-317.

14 The bibliography that emphasizes this aggressive character of the Athenians is abundant. Cf. for example some of the most recent: Pritchard, 2019 ; Bonnin, 2015 ; Constantakopoulou, 2012, p. 51-72 ; Pébarthe, 2011, p. 57-88.

However, at that time, the palm tree was already fully integrated and adapted to Greek mentality, especially in the Aegean world and the sanctuary of Delos. We shall see in depth that, even though it was a symbol imported from the East<sup>15</sup>, it became the cult tree of Delos. A confederate symbol of propagandistic connotations very much in line with the political momentum. Following this line of research, some scholars have unsuccessfully tried to find an explanation that would link it to a Greek symbol. To Deonna, the choice of a palm tree was a detail of no importance, as it was referring to a more general motif: the tree of fecundity, of past and future victories and power<sup>16</sup>. Amandry<sup>17</sup> pointed out that the palm tree was a symbol of Apollo that entered Delphi at a very early stage, through the monument of Cypselus. We have evidence of the existence of several palm tree-shaped votive offerings in the Greek world: Nikias's palm-tree is a great bronze palm tree erected in Delos in 417 BC.<sup>18</sup> There is other in the Erechtheion<sup>19</sup>: a palm tree that was the flue of a lamp that was lit day and night for a whole year. This is a symbolic idea. Athens had just conquered the Aegean and became the head of the Delian league and the eastern empire. As well, it is related to the idea of endurance and eternal flame. Another palm with frogs and snakes around existed in Cypselus chapel in Delphi<sup>20</sup>.

So, the palm tree as a votive offering is not a foreign element to the sacred places of Greece, highlighting its location in the Erechtheion of Athens, Delphi, and Delos. These three enclaves had a strong relationship that we can trace through the iconography, such as the polychrome pyxis of the National Museum of Athens where Leto gives birth holding on to a palm tree in Delos. Written and visual sources show the interest of the Athenians to connect the cults of Delos and Delphi, where the palm tree is a reiterated element<sup>21</sup>.

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15 Danthine, 1937; Perrot, 1937.

16 Deonna, 1951, p. 173-207. These two authors (especially Danthine) did a study on the importance of the palm tree in Mesopotamia, where we conserve more than a thousand species of palm trees. In this area the palm tree was used for everything (food, clothing, construction ...) and all of it was used (fruit, leaves, trunk ...), which is why it was assimilated in the iconography to the tree of life. This iconography is the one that was imported to the island of Delos, an obligatory waypoint on all trade routes between East and West. Here it was adapted to the birth of Apollo, creating a cult iconography easily recognizable to all who visited the island. Cf. Valtierra, 2005, p. 29-58.

17 Amandry, 1954, p. 314ff.

18 About this sculpture, blown down by the wind, we keep the base and the mention of Plutarch. (Plut. Nic.3.). This offering has been highly debated by historiography. Cf. Courby, 1921, p. 174-241; Courbin, 1973, p. 157-172; Hermary, 1993, p. 11-19; Bruneau, 1975, p. 267-311 and 1990, p. 567-571; Ducat, 1965 and 1983; and Picard and Replat, 1924, p. 215-263. It was erected as an overtaking maneuver between Nikias himself and the polis, following the pattern of other major mythical and heroic individuals; a symbol of *niké*.

19 Paus. 1.26. 6-7.

20 Plut. Septem.164f.

21 Athens consciously manipulated the myth of Leto's labour, and the palm was seriously affected, explicitly when they tried to substitute it for the olive tree in the texts (Eur. IT 1095-1105; Strab. 14. 20; Catul. 34. 5-6; Hyginus, Fab. 140), and implicitly through the integration of elements strange to the myth in the images, as in the polychrome pyxis from the Archaeological Museum of Athens, 400 BC (*LIMC* s. v. 'Leto' n. 6; 'Aphrodite' n. 1384; 'Artemis' n. 1273; 'Athena' n. 458; 'Eileithya' n. 56).

It is important to repeat the existence of another palm tree in Delphi associated with Cypselus. The myth tells that Cypselus was saved from death miraculously on several occasions when he was just a baby. He believed that he owed his life to Apollo, so he had a chapel built to show gratitude at Delphi<sup>22</sup>. In this chapel, Cypselus sent sculpted the image of a palm tree that has bronze frogs and snakes at the base. In the time of Plutarch, the meaning of this votive offer had already been lost, but in recent years, several researchers have sought an interpretation. Deonna said that the palm tree could symbolize the tyrant and the frogs the people of Corinth who asked for a king, as in Aesop's fable<sup>23</sup>. The study of this votive offer would require an in-depth study that goes beyond these lines, but it is important to underline the allegorical, symbolic, political, and extremely complex meaning of this type of votive offer at Delphi<sup>24</sup>.

The palm tree will be linked to Apollo by extension, making its appearance in the iconographies related to the sanctuary of Delphi. An example is the red-figure bell crater in the Hermitage Museum (St. Petersburg) (fig. 4)<sup>25</sup>. It comes from Athens and is dated from the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC. Side A depicts the meeting of Apollo and Dionysos at Delphi, which we recognize from the narration of the myth and the representation of the omphalos and the palm tree. Apollo, crowned with laurel, holds in his hand a branch of the same plant that is crossed in front of the palm tree. He wears a transparent and decorated himation that reveals his right shoulder. He shakes hands with Dionysos, crowned with ivy and a thyrsus in his right hand. There are two maenads behind Apollo. One sitting on a rock with a *tympanon* and another who places a cushion on a chair and turns to look at the satyr behind her with a thyrsus. There is another maenad and a satyr playing the double aulos behind Dionysos too. On the left side, at the top, appears the tripod.

Also, it appears on the volute crater of the painter of Ilioupersis, as Jacquemin reminds us<sup>26</sup>. It is dated between 500 and 450 BC. (fig. 5)<sup>27</sup>. It presents a very bloody scene from the Trojan War. Aeneas, Anchises and Askanios flee the city. Ajax is about to rape Cassandra before the altar and the statue of Athena. Astyanax lies dead on the knees of Priam, who covers his head to protect himself from the mortal blow that Neoptolemos is about to deliver<sup>28</sup>. He

22 Plut. Septem.163f-164f.

23 Deonna, 1951, p. 52. Guilmot, 1947, p. 245 points out that there is a theme of Hermopolitan cosmology that could inspire the ex-Voto: the lotus surrounded by frogs and primordial snakes.

24 For a review of this topic, cf. Deonna, 1947, p. 163-207.

25 Beazley, 1969, p. 1185, 7; 1971, p. 460 and 1989, p. 341: Kadmos Painter; *LIMC* (s. v. "Hera" n. 411A); Metzger, 1951, 177, 182; Arafat, 1990, i122-3; Paribeni and Capecchi, 1998, 26.1; Lissarrague, 2000, p. 63.

26 Jacquemin, 1999, p. 179.

27 There is an extensive published bibliography on this ceramic. Cf. for example Lissarrague and Thelamon, 1983, p. 27; Ducrey, 1985, p. 245; Hurwit, 1985, p. 351; Shapiro, 1994, p. 166; Boardman, 2001, p. 88.

28 Moret 1975, p. 45 pointed out that in Attic ceramics the preferred version at this time is the simultaneous death of Priam and Astyanax in two versions. In the first version, Neoptolemos uses the boy to attack the old man. In the second version, represented in the pediment of Corfu and in the bronze reliefs of Olympia, it is a warrior with a sword or spear who kills him. In contrast, in Greater Greece, Astyanax's death was not represented.

is sitting next to a palm tree, symbol of Apollo, the god who protected Troy. This document reinforces the reference to Delos, which, precisely, we would like to show.

*A priori* the palm is a properly Delian element. Metzger said that palm trees appear in the iconography of the sanctuary of Delphi sometimes. It will be the rest of the elements of the scene the ones who will give us the key to identify whether the scene is developed in Delos or Delphi<sup>29</sup>. Dionysos and Apollo shared the sanctuary of Delphi. It is there where they carried out the exchange, which is what the vase represents to us: the division of the Delphic year. Apollo and Dionysus shake hands in a very significant gesture. They are saying goodbye at the time of the exchange. The maenad accommodates the chair on the side of Apollo because it is this god turn to be at Delphi now. The palm tree was never a symbol of Delphi as such, but it was a symbol of Apollo by extension. It was frequently used as an emblem of power, of victory, of fertility. It was not only the tree of victory, but the symbol of power by Athens and its island allies.

According to Amandry<sup>30</sup>, the ex-voto of Eurymedon could have united the god of Delphi and the goddess of Athens, but as he highlighted, if that have been the case, there would have been an excess of subtlety in the monument since the Delphic tripod was the most popular symbol of Apollo by then. He has not been the only author who has made an appreciation of this kind: Miller considered undeniable the link between the victory in the physical sense and the spiritual connotations of the location of the palm tree of the Eurymedon, four meters from the northeast corner of the Temple of Apollo at Delphi<sup>31</sup>. In this case, as we agree with the researcher, we intend to delve into the real meaning of this war monument<sup>32</sup>.

After the second Greco-Persian War, Sparta and many cities of the Peloponnese came out of the Hellenic alliance. In 477 BC the *poleis* interested in continuing fighting against the Persians met in Delos, constituting the Delian League<sup>33</sup>. At first, it was a group of *poleis*

29 Metzger in a first study pointed out how from 425 BC new themes appear on Apollo's epiphany and his relationship with the Dionysian world. The introduction of the palm tree refers us to both Delos and Delphi, an issue that will be corrected at the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC. adding the omphalos or the tripod, which undoubtedly refers us to Delphi (Metzger, 1951, p. 25-26 and 178-179). However, in a second study (1996, p. 261-263) he is not so convinced about this theory, saying that the Athenian painters did not care much to specify the place of the scenes they represented, and that "if the omphalos and the palm tree can evidently suggest the Pythic sanctuary, but the palm tree can also allude to Delos".

30 Amandry, 1954, p. 314ff.

31 Miller, 1971, p. 40.

32 On war trophies and their meaning: Janssen, 1957; West, 1969, p. 7-19; Rice, 1993, p. 224-256; Gabaldón 1997 and 2003; Hölscher, 2003, p. 1-17.

33 Delos League and Athenian imperialism is a widely debated topic. Cf. the studies of Hammond, 1967; Jackson, 1969, p. 12-16; Popp, 1969, p.425-443; Meiggs, 1972; Culham, 1978, p. 27-31; Robertson, 1980, p. 64-96 and p. 110-133; Giovannini, 1983 and 2007; Cataldi, 1984, p. 127-159; Rodhes, 1985; Badian, 1993; Keen, 1997, p. 57-79; Sammons, 2001; Pébarthe, 2008, p.33-55; Ma, Papazarkadas, et Parker, 2009; Kagan, 2010.

with equal rights whose target was to devastate Persian territory in revenge of the damages suffered in the war and whose treasury was deposited in Delos<sup>34</sup>.

As for the location of the monument, it should be noted that the Greco-Persian Wars led to a rise in the number of votive offerings in Delphi<sup>35</sup>. The battle of Marathon had synthesised a history of confrontations in the imaginary of ancient Greeks, as the glory of Miltiades, the great victor, was still alive. In 471 BC the military authority was passed on to Kimon, his son, who led the campaign in Eurymedon reaffirming his power over Western Asia and the Aegean Sea. The power of Athens was growing in the Delian League, which at the same time, increased the importance of Delphi as a place to display votive offerings. The staging of military victories through memorials had a great presence in panhellenic sanctuaries, such as Delphi. Through them, the polis could communicate his political, economic, and military power in a privileged space. There is, however, a fundamental difference between the votive offerings made after the first Greco-Persian War and after the second one in this site. Although the Athenians considered themselves as the saviours of Greeks and exaggerated the dimensions of the battle of Marathon, the monuments erected in Delphi did not have panhellenic connotations. As Jacquemin stated, it would only be after the second Greco-Persian War when the motif of the Greek victory against the barbarians appeared<sup>36</sup>. Therefore, the ex-voto of Eurymedon should be understood in this context.

### 3. Meaning of the votive offering

Fruit and vegetables could become more durable offerings if they were modelled from bronze, gold, ivory, or clay<sup>37</sup>. In addition to such fruits and vegetables given as *anathemata*, trees made from bronze and precious metals have been reported as offerings at some of the major Greek sanctuaries<sup>38</sup>, as Delphi or Delos.

We have evidence of the use of the palm tree as a symbol of victory. Tarbell argued that in the 4<sup>th</sup> century the palm was already used as a symbol of victory. The use of this symbol

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34 “The Athenians having thus succeeded to the supremacy by the voluntary act of the allies through their hatred of Pausanias, fixed which cities were to contribute money against the barbarian, which ships; their professed object being to retaliate for their sufferings by ravaging the king’s country. Now was the time that the office of ‘Treasurers for Hellas’ was first instituted by the Athenians. These officers received the tribute, as the money contributed was called. The tribute was first fixed at four hundred and sixty talents. The common treasury was at Delos, and the congresses were held in the temple”/ Παραλαβόντες δὲ οἱ Ἀθηναῖοι τὴν ἡγεμονίαν τούτῳ τῷ τρόπῳ ἐκόντων τῶν ξυμμάχων διὰ τὸ Πausανίου μῖσος, ἔταξαν ἅς τε ἔδει παρέχειν τῶν πόλεων χρήματα πρὸς τὸν βάρβαρον καὶ ἅς ναῦς· πρόσχημα γὰρ ἦν ἀμύνεσθαι ὧν ἔπαθον δηοῦντας τὴν βασιλέως χώραν. καὶ Ἑλληνοταμίαι τότε πρῶτον Ἀθηναίοις κατέστη ἀρχή, οἱ ἐδέχοντο τὸν φόρον· οὕτω γὰρ ὀνομάσθη τῶν χρημάτων ἡ φορά. ἦν δ’ ὁ πρῶτος φόρος ταχθεὶς τετρακόσια τάλαντα καὶ ἐξήκοντα. ταμειῶν τε Δῆλος ἦν αὐτοῖς, καὶ αἱ ζυνοδοὶ ἐς τὸ ἱερὸν ἐγίνοντο. Thuc. 1.96., trad. J.M. Dent.

35 Jacquemin, 1999, p. 84ff.

36 Jacquemin, 2001, p. 100-105. Other works by Jacquemin on the Delphi votive offerings can also be consulted, specially Jacquemin, 1999. Cf. Vatin, 1991.

37 Rouse, 1902, p. 66 and Kyrieleis, 1993, p. 138.

38 Castoldi, 2014, p. 18-27.

is absent in literature, but it appears in art from the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC<sup>39</sup>. However, we can affirm that the use of the palm in art as a symbol of victory is older. There are Panathenaic amphorae from the 6<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> century BC decorated with palms that signify victory<sup>40</sup>.

These commemorative monuments in sanctuaries were not only symbols of victory, but also a display of the polis power and its rulers<sup>41</sup>. They were works loaded with a strong allegorical component, where it was difficult to discard an iconography of propagandistic nature. In this case, the sculpture of Athena was the symbol of Athens, as she was the goddess that guarded the city and the divinity that embodied the intelligent and fair war, just like the alleged cause of the League was (at least in its origin). The palm tree was a symbol of Delos<sup>42</sup>, hence it placed the spectator there<sup>43</sup>. At the same time, it became the symbol of Apollo too.

It was also loved by the Ionians, who defended the cult of Apollo on the island<sup>44</sup>. Besides, they were the ones that started the Greco-Persian Wars with their revolts, and with the victory of Eurymedon ended the cycle. Very significantly, this victory united the causes of Lycia and Caria<sup>45</sup>.

39 Tarbell, 1908, p. 264-272.

40 Miller, 1971, p. 36-38.

41 Gabaldón and Quesada, 2008, p. 132.

42 Greece did not have abundant palm trees, while in neighbouring Mesopotamia we conserve more than a thousand images of this tree associated with the tree of life (Danthine, 1937; Perrot, 1937). There, it was used for everything. We can find representations of figures touching the palm tree, a gesture that stands out for its similarity to the birth of Leto. The Greeks assimilated the old Mesopotamian theme of a woman giving birth (Valtierra, 2005, p. 29-58). The oldest surviving mentions of the palm tree in Delos appear in the *Odyssey* (6.160-169) and in the *Homeric Hymns* (3.115-118). One of the votive offerings that appeared in Delos raised the debate as to whether the image represented could be the cult palm tree. In this relief, a woman holding a torch whose flame is bent upward by the wind, advances towards a four-column Doric prostate temple. In front, there is a palm tree. Demangel, 1922, p. 83 raises, given the ignorance today of the exact location of the cult palm of Delos, that it could be the birth of Leto to appear in front of a temple or, in any case, the offering by Nikias.

43 The rarity of the palm tree meant that in Greek antiquity it was not only given great value, but also required the human hand to grow. These cares, when the palm tree was part of the temple property, were documented in the inscriptions of the expenses: they paid for its care. A temple property is mentioned as *Phoinikes*, probably because of the trees there (Deonna, 1948, p. 91). Near the temples of Apollo and Artemis, it was relatively frequent to deposit votive offerings in the shape of palm trees (Dugas, 1910, p. 239-240). We have documented several palm trees in Delos because it was the cult tree.

44 Gallet de Santerre, 1958, p. 207.

45 The Lycian Olen was the first poet who composed hymns to Apollo if we trust Pausanias (10.5.6.) Carians were the former inhabitants of the Cyclades and Western Asia, ancient dwellers of Delos too, who taught the Greeks how to use many ancient weapons (Gallet de Santerre, 1958, p. 42-43; Forrest, 1969, p. 95-110; Ball, 1977, p. 317-322). They were an ancient community that already appeared in the Iliad fighting on the Trojan side (Hom. Il. 10.428-429 and 21.86-87). They also had a great bond with Delos since they were mentioned specifically during the second purification of the island (Thuc. 1.8.). Athenians believed that more than half of the tombs found there belonged to Carians due to two reasons: the type of weapons in them and the method of burial. Today it is doubted that the Carians were buried in Delos. Surely the remains found belong to the ancient inhabitants of the island.

The palm tree was the tree of life in eastern Asia, a symbol that was later transmitted to the Mediterranean world. It was assimilated by the Greeks through the iconography developed in the sanctuary of Delos, linked to the divine birth of the god Apollo<sup>46</sup>. In the eastern area of the Aegean Sea existed a significant cult to Delian Apollo based on the island of Delos. Its cult had a “federative” character, people from different cities or poleis could identify themselves with it, since it was a crossroads of commercial routes. This “federative” nature of the cult in Delos has been highlighted sometimes in opposition to the Apollo from Delphi, which had a panhellenic character<sup>47</sup>.

The link between the palm tree and Athens is clear when considered how this shrub became a symbol of victory in ancient Athenian imaginary, which was established by Theseus. He was the Attic hero par excellence, also deeply associated with Delos. He was not just any hero: although not important in the earliest stories “Theseus suddenly makes his way into Literature with the splendour of Athens and due to the political reuse of his image by the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC”<sup>48</sup>. Athenians turned an insignificant character into a hero involved in the myths and traditions of the most venerable sites<sup>49</sup>. It was Theseus himself who gave the first palm leaf to the winner of the games, taken from the palm tree of Delos<sup>50</sup>. In another text by Plutarch, while questioning the palm tree as a symbol of victory, Protogenes had recently read in a story about Athenaëus that it was Theseus who set up the tradition. He did it by plucking a palm branch from Leto’s birth tree, the sacred tree, so it was called *spadix*<sup>51</sup>. It is very significant that this gesture, regardless its veracity, was accepted in the ancient Greek imaginary. Tearing off branches of cult trees was forbidden, let alone touching those in the temple or collecting their fruit. There was only one reason for this to be allowed: it had to be a sacred cause, it had to be dedicated to a god. The branch of palm tree became a symbol of victory that survived in the Roman world, passing to Christianity with the same meaning of victory<sup>52</sup>.

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46 Valtierra, 2005, p. 29-58.

47 In the Archaic and Classic eras there was no difference between both *Apollo*s, although it may have existed two different cults or conceptions. Cf. Gallet de Santerre, 1958.

48 Bernabé, 1992, p. 116.

49 “The Donjuanesque Theseus has yielded before the re-founder of the polis, the creator of great Athens, the just and benevolent monarch, an example of moral and good sense, hospitable and magnanimous, saviour of other heroes in distress, as Heracles and Oedipus. This evolution shows a clear intention of political propaganda” (García Gual, 1992, p. 217). Cf. Dugas and Flacelière, 1958; Connor, 1970, p.143-171; Brommer, 1982; Calame, 1990.

50 After passing through Crete, he made sacrifices in honour of Apollo; consecrated an effigy given by Ariadne in honour of Aphrodite and established a dance that Delians continued to do over time which imitated his wandering through the labyrinth (Plut. *The*s. 21).

51 περιγητήν ‘οὕτω δὴ τούτους’ ἔφη ‘τούς ῥήτορας ἐάσομεν περαίνειν τὸ οἰκεῖον, ἐξ εἰκότων καὶ πιθανῶν ἐπιχειροῦντας: αὐτοὶ δ’ ἄφ’ ἱστορίας οὐδὲν ἂν ἔχοιμεν τῷ λόγῳ συμβάλλεσθαι; καίτοι δοκῶ μοι μνημονεῖν ἐν τοῖς Ἀττικαῖς ἀνεγνωκῶς ἔναγχος, ὅτι πρῶτος ἐν Δῆλῳ Θησεὺς ἀγῶνα ποιῶν ἀπέσπασε κλάδον τοῦ ἱεροῦ φοίνικος καὶ σπάδιξ ὠνομάσθη (Plut. *Quaes. Conv.* 724a).

52 Valtierra, 2017, p. 105-124.

Theseus was the son of Aegeus where all allies were helping to win the war. The taking of Skyros revealed how the cycle of Theseus was present in these campaigns<sup>53</sup>. Before heading to the Eurymedon, Kimon conquered the island of Skyros, traditionally believed to be the place where the great Athenian hero had died. Athenians argued that they would be avenging their hero's death by taking over the island. Indeed, an oracle had ordered in 476 BC that the bones of Theseus should be taken to Athens, while Skyros was conquered in 469 BC<sup>54</sup>. Once they took over the site, they searched and found Theseus' bones, which were moved with great pomp to Athens<sup>55</sup>. This image may have promoted the return of Theseus to Athens as a part of Kimon's campaign, although the dating according to the existing sources seems to be different<sup>56</sup>. In addition to the Theseion, other monuments celebrated the association of Kimon's family with Theseus at Delphi, like the Stoa Poikile, built by Kimon's relative Peisianax, featured paintings of mythological and historical battles of great significance to the Athenians, including Marathon depicted Miltiades alongside Apollo and Athena<sup>57</sup>. All the Kimon's conquests and campaigns reached the highest point at Eurymedon, since:

“And surely there was no one who humbled the Great King himself, and reduced his haughty spirit, more than Cimon. For he did not let him go quietly away from Hellas, but followed right at his heels, as it were, and before the Barbarians had come to a halt and taken breath, he sacked and overthrew here, or subverted and annexed to the Hellenes there, until Asia from Ionia to Pamphylia was entirely cleared of Persian arms.”<sup>58</sup>

It was in the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC when there was an ambition to link Athenian myths to Delians'. Moreover, the bond between Ionians and Athens would become very important, even Solon considered Athens as the oldest land in Ionia:

53 Cf. Connor, 1971, p. 143-171; Kearns, 1989; Walker, 1995; Gouschin, 1999, p. 168-187; Hall, 1999, p. 49-59; Ekroth, 2009, p. 120-143.

54 Thuc. 1.98.2; Plut. Cim. 8.2-7; Diod. 11.60.1-2. On the alleged repatriation of the bones of Theseus see Moreau, 1990, p. 209-218; McCauley, 1999, p. 85-98; Mayor, 2000; Zaccarini, 2015, p. 174-198; Fragkaki, 2016, p. 285-302.

55 Zaccarini (2015, p. 174-198) suggests the existence of two main, originally separate themes and entwined by the time of Plutarch. The first dating back at least to Thucydides, of the Athenian conquest of Skyros after Xerxes' retreat, attributed to Kimon at least by the time of Diodorus. The second major theme is the recovery of Theseus' bones from the island. This story is first attested in the fourth century BC and eventually attributed to Kimon no earlier than Plutarch.

56 “Athens' national hero was back home, for it was he who had founded Athens by uniting the villages of Attica into one polis (*synoikism*), who had established the democracy, and who appeared at Marathon to help deliver victory to the Athenians (...) Theseus became a focus of Athenian identity in the nascent years of its golden age when men like Kimon were laying the foundations of the Athenian empire” (Fragkaki, 2016, p. 292-293).

57 Fragkaki, 2016, p. 294. According to legend, Theseus himself would have come to Marathon to help the Athenians.

58 καὶ μὴν αὐτοῦ γε τοῦ μεγάλου βασιλέως οὐδεὶς ἐταπείνωσε καὶ συνέστειλε τὸ φρόνημα μᾶλλον ἢ Κίμων. οὐ γὰρ ἀνῆκεν ἐκ τῆς Ἑλλάδος ἀπηλλαγμένον, ἀλλ' ὥσπερ ἐκ ποδὸς διώκων, πρὶν διαπνεῦσαι καὶ στήναι τοὺς βαρβάρους, τὰ μὲν ἐπόρθει καὶ κατεστρέφετο, τὰ δὲ ἀφίστη καὶ προσήγετο τοῖς Ἑλλησιν, ὥστε τὴν ἀπ' Ἰωνίας Ἀσίαν ἄχρι Παμφυλίας παντάπασι Περσικῶν ὀπλῶν ἐρημῶσαι. (Plut. Cim. 12.1., trad. B. Perrin).

“The party struggle being violent and the parties remaining arrayed in opposition to one another for a long time, they jointly chose Solon as arbitrator and Archon, and entrusted the government to him, after he had composed the elegy that begins: ‘I mark, and sorrow fills my breast to see, Ionia’s oldest land being done to death.’”<sup>59</sup>

This union between Delos, Ionia and Athens is made explicitly through the palm tree and the rituals around the god Apollo. Ionia is a land of palm trees, and the oldest sources defend that the Ionians were the first to sing about Apollo. Regarding the connection between Ionia and Athens, we can mention that some mythical versions of the history of Ion, son of Apollo and Creusa, tried to prove that Athenians colonised Ionia in remote times<sup>60</sup>. When the Greco-Persian wars happened, Aristagoras of Miletus used several arguments to convince Athenians to send aid, among them this very same myth<sup>61</sup>. Thus, Ionians asked Athenians to pay attention to their kinship “these resorted to the Athenians and requested them as their kinsmen to become their leaders, and to stop any attempt at violence on the part of Pausanias”<sup>62</sup>. Political propaganda insisted on the leadership of the Athenians over the Ionians: they even believed that the Ionians from the Cyclades and Asia Minor were of Athenian origin, justifying the great privileges they enjoyed.

As they considered the Ionians as part of them, highlighting the Ionian origin of Delos and the cult of Apollo was a clever strategy to claim the territory as their own. The myth of Ion was therefore trying to demonstrate that Athenians colonised that land in ancient times. These are late versions that appear in Euripides<sup>63</sup> and Aristotle<sup>64</sup>. The most ancient and sacred myths of Athens were linked to the Aegean Sea, which were embodied by the cult of Delos. This cult was valid for everyone who arrived at the sanctuary, a crossroads between East and West, whose great defenders were the Ionians. It should also be noted the many attempts made by the Athenians to unite their iconography to the Ionians, since Gallet Santerre believed that many of the images were part of an Athenian plan to merge the cults of Delphian and Delian Apollo<sup>65</sup>.

In summary, the palm tree is a symbol of victory<sup>66</sup>, but also of Delos and by extension of Apollo. The Athenians sought to link the Delos most sacred cults of the Ionian tradition to their own in an open attempt at propaganda manipulation. In this way the palm tree was used

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59 *ισχυρᾶς δὲ τῆς στάσεως οὔσης καὶ πολὺν χρόνον ἀντικαθημένων ἀλλήλοις, εἴλοντο κοινῇ διαλλακτὴν καὶ ἄρχοντα Σόλωνα, καὶ τὴν πολιτείαν ἐπέτρεψαν αὐτῷ, ποιήσαντι τὴν ἐλεγείαν ἧς ἐστὶν ἀρχή: “γινώσκω, καὶ μοι φρενὸς ἔνδοθεν ἄλγεα κείται, πρεσβυτάτην ἑσπορῶν γαῖαν Ἴαονίας κλινομένην* (Aristot. Const. Ath. 5.2., trad. H. Rackham).

60 Paus. 7.5. Aristotle (Const. Ath. 1.1-3.) even tried to link Ion with the institution of Athenian polemarchia, arguing that local kings were too coward and needed to bring Ion to rule. This association is explicit in Bacchylides (Dith. 18.1-5) when Theseus goes to Crete, young men of the entourage are called Ionians, when the origin of this tradition is, in fact, Athenian.

61 Hdt. 5.97.2. Ion is a name etymologically related to Ionia: he was Erechtheus’ grandson who was born to virginal Athena. These links are not only explicit but constitute a *topoi* themselves.

62 Thuc. 1.95. trad. J.M. Dent.

63 Eur. Ion 661-663.

64 Aristot. Const. Ath. 1.1-3.

65 Gallet de Santerre, 1976, p. 294-298.

66 Jacquemin, 1999, p. 189, n. 261.

as a complex symbol of its own victory and preponderance over Greek territory, personified in the Delian league.

#### 4. Aspect of the votive offering

While the aspect of Athena's image in the monument has not been cause of debate, the image of the palm tree itself has raised many questions. The main reason is the doubt about the existence of real palm trees in Greek territory and the possibility (or not) of the sculptor seeing a real palm tree or an accurate image of it. Amandry believed that the palm tree in Delphi was quite realistic: it would not have been a column with a capital decorated with palm leaves, but the representation of a real tree<sup>67</sup>. Plutarch<sup>68</sup> and Pausanias<sup>69</sup> state that it had dates that looked so real that crows tried to eat them. Thanks to these testimonies, we can identify the species: it was a date palm tree. This depiction, and not a generic palm tree, is almost mythical in Greek thought. Palm trees planted in this territory hardly ever bore fruit, and when they did it not was edible<sup>70</sup>. Greeks were aware that different peoples celebrated up to 360 benefits of the palm tree, but that was not their case<sup>71</sup>. We can affirm, therefore, that the plant did not arrive in Greece as a product, but as a tree-icon. Many legends circulated on the wonders of its fruit, their utilities and sweetness: the Greeks however, never got to enjoy them, as the land did not favour the cultivation.

Jacobsthal on the other hand, believed that as the palm tree was the support of the statue, it was not a representation faithful to nature<sup>72</sup>. Thus, he downplays its symbolism by considering it a mere base for the sculpture. According to the author, it would have been like a column with a Palladion on it surrounded by spirals, resembling the tree of life. He stated that the Delphian palm tree, very different to the one in Delos, should have been something very similar to a votive offering found in Delphi<sup>73</sup>. This ex-voto is quite flat and could hardly stand on its own, let alone bear the weight of a sculpture. We believe that the monument commemorating the victory of Eurymedon could not have had this type of column, as it would have needed enough room to hold the statue of Athena. In addition, we acknowledge the difficulty of comparing these two types of votive offerings due to their different sizes and purposes. The monument was the public offering of a city in a great sanctuary and may have had a much more careful three-dimensional structure. The votive offering, which Jacobsthal referred to was a smaller ex-voto, nothing to

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67 Amandry, 1954, p. 314.

68 Plut. Nic. 13.

69 Paus. 10.15.4-5.

70 The juicy and good date was an almost mythical vision within the Greek imagination. Herodotus (Hdt. 4.177) compared them to the food of the Lotus-eaters because of their sweetness. Strabo (6.2.) and Pliny (Nat. 13.45) speak of a famous palm grove of antiquity located in Jericho that produced one of the most precious dates in the world: the Nicolaos, the name given to this fruit in honour to Nicolaus of Damascus. Large dates were a symbol of a delicacy, a food of kings. In later times there were emperors famous for their frugal diets who could not resist eating dates (Plut. Quaes. Conv. 724d).

71 Plut. Quaes. Conv. 724b-c.

72 Jacobsthal, 1927, p. 94-102.

73 Inv. 715. Amandry, 1953, p. 132.

do with the great pretensions of a polis who wanted to thank victory in battle. If we can already observe something more than just basic schematization in the smaller version of the palm tree, it would have certainly had a better depiction of it in the Athenian offering. Agreeing with this author would mean that the monument had no artistic aspirations, but merely a utilitarian function. However, remains showing palm branches have appeared in different archaeological sites, such as Samos, proving to be a key testimony of the naturalism achieved by Greek artists when depicting this shrub. Indeed, in 1927 we hardly knew the base, which Amandry precisely identified and published in 1954. What Jacobsthal says is obsolete.

For the reasons stated above, it is more than likely that, as Amandry pointed out, the palm tree would have looked realistic<sup>74</sup>. As we will explain in the next section, we have information on the destruction of the ex-voto “that the crows also broke off the spear, the owls, and the imitation fruit on the palm-tree”<sup>75</sup>. That is, the fruits were made imitating natural dates. This story bears a curious resemblance to the one narrated by Pliny (concerning the ἀγών between Zeuxis and Parrhasius in the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC.)<sup>76</sup> According to the story, Zeuxis painted grapes which resembled real ones so much that birds came down from the sky and tried to peck them. Proud of his work, the painter asked Parrhasius to draw the curtain to see what he had painted, just to reveal that the cloth itself was painted, too. Zeuxis had to finally acknowledge the victory of his opponent. The difference between both tales is that the birds that attacked Zeuxis’ grapes did so because of a matter of *mimesis*, while the crows, on the other hand, were mantic animals that attacked the symbol to transmit an oracular message<sup>77</sup>. We have trees and vegetables likes *realia*: an example in bronze, that represents a branch of an oak, the tree sacred to Zeus was found in Karapanos in Dodona; bronze branches and laurel leaves in the sanctuary of Apollo in Klaros, and those found in Magna Graecia, in Kroton, Kaulonia, and Metaponto (fig. 6)<sup>78</sup>.

Jacquemin said that the requirements for an offering to have abundant literature are twofold: that the offeror is an illustrious person or that it commemorates a historical event that has been written extensively.<sup>79</sup> A common bond between the two must be added as a third requirement: the magnificence of the ex-voto, it is usually related to them. The polis or the illustrious offeror wants to be remembered. In the case of the Eurymedon palm tree, its magnificence is based on these premises: the giver, the abundant literature of the event that it commemorates and the size and wealth of the offering.

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74 As for the palm tree, as shown by the base, would be a column with realistic ornaments “to a fairly large extent”, as Amandry (1954: 314), but not completely realistic. Trying to define the difference between realistic and quite realistic in ancient Greece would be difficult. We keep a very high number of religious or funeral offerings in the form of a palm or votive crown that reproduce plants. Their shape aspires to resemble reality, so we could classify them as naturalistic or realistic.

75 Paus.10.15.5., trad. W.H.S. Jones, Litt.D., and H.A. Ormerod.

76 Plin. Nat. 35.65.

77 Realistic fruits made of metal were offered in the temples, such as a golden grapevine offered as *anathema* in the Artemision of Delos in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC, for example. Pausanias collected a legend by which the ancestral architecture of Delphi was made with its sacred tree: “They say that the most ancient temple of Apollo was made of laurel, the branches of which were brought from the laurel in Tempe” (Paus. 10.5.9).

78 Castoldi, 2014, p. 32-41.

79 Jacquemin, 1999, p. 287.

## 5. The destruction of the votive offering

Pausanias did not merely describe the monument, but added a bad omen associated with this memorial, although in relation to another battle. He presented the story when he personally saw the damaged gold on the image, while at the same time, cited an older source to explain the reasons for it: Cleidemus. According to the Attic historian, when the Athenians were preparing their expedition to Sicily, a murder of crows pecked it, tearing the gold from its surface. This event appeared associated with a series of omens that discouraged the Athenians from sailing to the island:

“But Cleitodemus, the oldest writer to describe the customs of the Athenians, says in his account of Attica that when the Athenians were preparing the Sicilian expedition a vast flock of crows swooped on Delphi, pecked this image all over, and with their beaks tore away its gold. He says that the crows also broke off the spear, the owls, and the imitation fruit on the palm-tree. Cleitodemus describes other omens that told the Athenians to beware of sailing against Sicily.”<sup>80</sup>

The palm tree of Eurymedon had a very peculiar ending. Just before the expedition against Sicily, it was attacked by a murder of crows who pecked the image of Athena, the spear, the owl, and the fruits of the palm tree made to resemble real ones. The crow is an animal that served the gods to transmit their divine designs<sup>81</sup>. They served in this passage to transmit the omen to the Athenians of the expedition against Sicily. They especially attacked the dates, an almost unreal fruit in Greece. If they had pecked Greek dates, they would have eaten a fruit that not even the Greeks wanted, since the plant produced fruits of poor quality<sup>82</sup>. Juicy and good dates were almost mythical food in the Greek imaginary. Herodotus would compare them in their sweetness to the food of the lotus-eaters<sup>83</sup>. Strabo<sup>84</sup> and Pliny<sup>85</sup> tell us about a

80 ἐγὼ μὲν δὴ τὸ ἐγκλημα ἐς κακούργους τε ἦγον καὶ φῶρας ἀνθρώπους: Κλειτόδημος δέ, ὅποσοι τὰ Ἀθηναίων ἐπιχώρια ἔγραψαν ὁ ἀρχαιότατος, οὗτος ἐν τῷ λόγῳ φησὶ τῷ Ἀττικῷ, ὅτε Ἀθηναῖοι παρεσκευάζοντο ἐπὶ Σικελίᾳ τὸν στόλον, ὡς ἔθνος τι ἄπειρον κοράκιων κατῆρε τότε ἐς Δελφοῦς, καὶ περιέκοπτόν τε τοῦ ἀγάλματος τούτου καὶ ἀπέρρησσον τοῖς ῥάμφεσιν ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ τὸν χρυσόν: λέγει δὲ καὶ ὡς τὸ δόρυ καὶ τὰς γλαυκάς καὶ ὄσος καρπὸς ἐπὶ τῷ φοίνικι ἐπεποιήτο ἐς μίμησιν τῆς ὀπώρας, κατακλάσαιεν καὶ ταῦτα οἱ κόρακες. Ἀθηναῖοις μὲν δὴ καὶ ἄλλα σημεῖα μὴ ἐκπλεῦσαι σφᾶς ἀπαγορεύοντα ἐς Σικελίαν διηγῆσατο ὁ Κλειτόδημος, Κυρηναῖοι δὲ ἀνέθεσαν ἐν Δελφοῖς Βάττον ἐπὶ ἄρματι, ὃς ἐς Λιβύην ἦγαγε σφᾶς ναυσὶν ἐκ Θήρας. ἠνίοχος μὲν τοῦ ἄρματός ἐστι Κυρήνη, ἐπὶ δὲ τῷ ἄρματι Βάττος τε καὶ Λιβύη στεφανοῦσά ἐστιν αὐτόν: ἐποίησε δὲ Ἀμφίων Ἀκέστορος Κνώσσιος Paus.10.15.5-6. Trad. W.H.S. Jones, Litt.D., and H.A. Ormerod.

81 This theory of the fall of a monument as a sign of a bad omen has been applied to other similar votive offerings, such as Nikias’s palm tree, which according to Plutarch was thrown by the wind and broke the Naxians’ colossus (Plut. Nic.3). Although Plutarch does not link the event to any dire omen, Bruneau (1995, 57-59) proposed a hypothesis about the reason for the fall of the Nicias palm tree: that it was one of the dire omens given to the Athenians when they went to start the Expedition against Sicily. The reason would be for parallels about the fall of the Eurymedon palm tree. What we know for sure is that the palm tree fell between 417 BC, the date it was supposedly erected, and the date Plutarch writes.

82 Plut. Quaes. Conv. 724b-c.

83 Hdt. 4.177.

84 Strab. 6.2.

85 Plin. Nat. 13.45.

famous palm grove in Antiquity located in Jericho that produced the greatest and fairest dates in the world: the Nicolai, to honour Nicolaus of Damascus. According to Plutarch, this name was given to the date since the peripatetic philosopher of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC was a “very sweet-humoured man”<sup>86</sup>.

The expedition against Sicily was full of bad omens. The destruction of the ex-voto of Eurymedon was just another one. The most famous episode was the mutilation of the *hermai*. They were statues of the god whose invention was attributed to the Athenians<sup>87</sup>. Great rewards were offered to find the culprit of the great sacrilege. It was a bad omen for the expedition and a plot that would lead to revolution and the attempt to overthrow democracy.<sup>88</sup>

## Conclusions

This article offers a historical interpretation of the monument of Delphi, the palm tree of Eurymedon, in which we see an allusion to Delos, land of the hero Theseus, from which Cimon, the architect of victory, thought he had recovered the bones in Skyros. It was necessary to explore in-depth these theories and the meaning of the ex-voto.

Eurymedon is a celebrated victory of the Greeks on the coasts of Asia thanks to the insular allies. With this victory, the emancipation of Eastern Greece was achieved, and its power strengthened on the Delian League, an instrument of Athenian power in the Aegean Sea. For this reason, the Delian Apollo has been considered the patron of the Athenian Empire.

When the Athenians were offering the ex-voto of the Battle of Eurymedon in Delphi, they were not representing Apollo and Athena, but the culmination of the victories of the Delian League synthesised in the image of the palm tree, led by Athens or Athena. The palm tree is a symbol of victory, which will endure in later Roman and Christian iconography. This plant was the amalgam of a common cult in the area, to which all these Greek peoples had shown devotion. Therefore, the palm tree and Athena became the perfect symbol to celebrate this battle and meant not only the consolidation and victory of the Delian League with Athens as the leading role, but its hegemony in the Aegean Sea as well, the area that worshipped Delian Apollo. The palm tree referred to Delos, the place where the treasury was guarded and to the victory established by the Athenian hero par excellence: Theseus. Hence, it was not only the idea of the victory in battle that was being perpetuated in the monument, but the preponderance of Athens as the head of the Delian League as well.

The commemorative monument on the Battle of the Eurymedon in Delphi is a representation with a federative character, with Athens at the head. The Sanctuary of Delphi is a place of political propaganda where we can see an illustrated history of the battles through its monumental offerings. The theme of victory is one of the most represented in the offerings of Delphi, where the victories in the Battle of Marathon will have a great representation. The palm tree was an ancient symbol respected by a great amalgamation of peoples and colonies, at whose head they wanted to place Athens.

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86 Plut. Quaes. Conv. 724 d.

87 Hdt. 2.51. 1-2.

88 Thuc. 6.27.3.

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**Fig. 1.** The pillar monument of Prusias of Bithyn and the base of the palm tree of the Eurymedon at Delphi. Image: Commons.



Fig. 2. Base of the Bronze Palm Tree dedicated by Nikias in Delos. Image: the author.

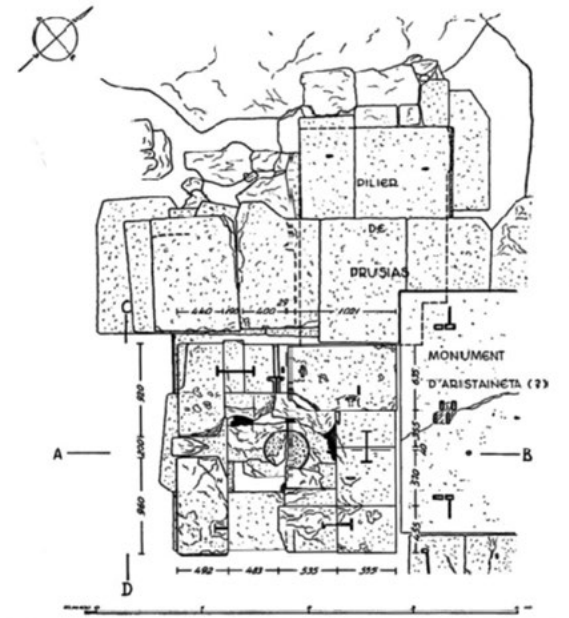


Fig. 3. Plan of the foundation of the Eurymedon palm tree and the adjacent monuments. Image: Amadry, 1954, p. 292.



Fig. 4. Red-figure bell crater, Athens, 5<sup>th</sup> century BC, Hermitage Museum. Image: Pinterest.



Fig. 5. Red-figure volute crater, Athens, painter of Ilioupersis, 500-450 BC. National Archaeological Museum, Naples. Image: the author.



**Fig. 6.** Bronze laurel leaves from the temenos of Apollo and Aristeas on the agora of Metaponto.  
Image: Castoldi, 2014.