

TRAVELLING TO DELPHI: THE *THEORIA* OF ATHENIAN WOMEN TO THE ORACLE

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Introduction

This chapter focuses on the *theoria* of Athenian women, the Thyiads, to the Oracle of Delphi¹, in order to celebrate, together with the local women, the biennial trieteric festival of Dionysus (Paus. 10.4.3). Firstly, an attempt is made to identify those women, then to determine the route that they took and, lastly, to gain further insights into their sojourn in Delphi. The rites of the Thyiads are known to us thanks to late sources², especially Plutarch, a personal friend of Clea, the leader or *archeis* of the Delphic Thyiads³. The ritual of the Thyiads might, however, have been much older, dating back to the Archaic Age⁴, already being performed, as evidenced by the references appearing in 5th-century-BC theatre, in the Classical period.

This festival points to the capacity for action, noteworthy mobility⁵ and high level of independence of Athenian women in the religious realm⁶. They did not only leave their homes and city, but also travelled long distances (between 150 and 160 km), passing through different localities (some even in conflict with Athens at specific times), before

1. On the festival: Jeanmaire 1978 [1951]: 187-198; Kerényi 1998 [1976]: 152 ff.; Villanueva Puig 1986; McInerney 1997; Suárez de la Torre 1998 and 2013: 65-66; Valdés Guía 2020: 163 ff.

2. Plut. *De Is. et Os.* 35 (*Mor.* 365a); Plut. *De primo frigido* 18 (*Mor.* 953d). Other sources: Plut. *Consolatio ad uxorem* 10 (*Mor.* 611d); Plut. *De E apud Delphos* 9 (*Mor.* 388e-399a); Plut. *De mul. vir.* 13 (*Mor.* 249e); Plut. *Quaest. Conv.* 2.3 (*Mor.* 636e). Orph. fr. 214 Kern; sch. Lycoph. *Alex.* 212. Delphic Thyiads involved in the ritual of *Herois* (McInerney 1997: 272) and in that of *Charila* (Plut. *Quaest. Graec.* 12: *Mor.* 293c-d; Suárez de la Torre 2013: 6, and 1998: 21-23).

3. Plut. *De Is. et Os.* 35 (*Mor.* 364e). Plut. *Quaest. Graec.* 12 (*Mor.* 293d-e). Epigraphic evidence: Robert & Robert 1948: 159; Villanueva Puig 1986: 32, n. 2.

4. Alcm. fr. 94 (*PMG*, Page); also in Aesch. *Sept.* 498 and 863; *Supp.* 564. Thyiads in the Siphnian Treasury: Themelis 1992. Triennial festivals in honour of the god in *Hymn Hom. Dem.* (4) of the 6th century BC. The antiquity of the rite: Dietrich 1992: 47. For *Thyia*, the eponymous nymph in Delphi: Hdt. 7.178; Paus. 10.6.4. McInerney 1997: 269-270.

5. Friese 2017.

6. Regarding the religious citizenship of women: Georgoudi 2005; Dillon 2006: esp. 223 ff.

arriving at their destination—although that they were accompanied by men cannot be ruled out (depending on the period). They did not travel individually for the purpose of consulting the Delphic Oracle (Apollo, moreover, was absent during the winter months), for the purpose of their journey—which was official, as with that of the embassy of the *pythaistai*⁷—was to represent the *polis* of Athens⁸ in Delphi so as to venerate Dionysus there, the traditional home of the god, as recorded by Philochorus (*FGrHist* 328 F 7) and Callimachus (fr. 643 Pf.). So, the journey of the Athenian Thyiads was made in parallel to that of the official *theoria* of men, although at a different time of year (in winter) and apparently with greater periodicity and regularity. It is likely that, as with the embassy of the *pythaistai*, it began with Solon⁹ back in the 6th century BC. With Peisistratos, this policy was confirmed and, moreover, the cult of Dionysus was promoted in Athens, as borne out by the representation of ‘maenadism’ on pottery¹⁰. Therefore, the 6th century BC¹¹ was an appropriate time for starting to send embassies of Athenian officials to Delphi in honour of Apollo, and their female counterparts there to worship Dionysus.

Who were the Athenian Thyiads?

In this section, the intention is to determine the identity of the Athenian women who, as Thyiads, journeyed to Delphi. They would have certainly been *astai*, viz. citizens since the enactment of Pericles’ Citizenship Law of 451 BC¹². Even so, it cannot be excluded

7. Str. 9.2.11 (404); Hesych. s.v. ‘ἀστραπή δι ἄρματος’; *LSCG* 17, B and C; Boëthius 1918: 145 ff. (*testimonia*). Parker 2005: 83–88; Rutherford 2013: 222–230; Pirisino 2015; Kühn 2018.

8. On the public character of the Maenads: Jaccottet 1995: 124–125.

9. The role of the *kolakretai* and the Naucratic fund (organised by Solon: Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 8.3) in the *theoria*: Androción *FGrHist* 324 F 36: sch. Ar. *Av.* 1541. The *theoria* in the *Nicomachean Ethics*: Lambert 2002: 363, 370–371; Rutherford 2013: 376–377. The initiation of the *theoria* with Solon: Jacoby 1949: 31. See Valdés Guía 2008: 22–23 and 31 (with bibliography).

10. Edwards 1960; Henrichs 1978: 144, and 1987: 99 ff.; Ustinova 2018: 176 ff. Women and Dionysus in 6th-century-BC iconography: Isler-Kerényi 2001: esp. 122, 142 and 226. Tyranny and Dionysus: Valdés Guía 2008: 220. Regarding maenadism: Henrichs 1978; Bremmer 1984; Jaccottet 1995; Osborne 1997.

11. Although nor should an earlier origin be discarded, since in the words of Pausanias, ‘The epithet Homer applies to Panopeus (“καλλίχορον”: *Od.* 11.581) [in Phocis] is thought to refer to the dance of the Thyiads’: Paus. 10.4.3.

12. The Citizenship Law of Pericles: Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 26.3; Plut. *Vit. Per.* 37.3. Hitherto, conceivably lawfully married women (‘ἐγγυητῆς γυναικός’: Isae. 8.19–20; Dem. 57.54 and 66; Ps.-Dem. 59.60, 92 and 106). The Thesmophoria reserved for Ἀθηναίων εὐγενεῖς γυναῖκες (Ar. *Thesm.* 329–330) and *astai* (Ar. *Thesm.* 541).

that they were accompanied by servants, as also occurred in the Thesmophoria, although the latter would not have participated in the rites¹³.

They were surely women connected with the cult of Dionysus in Athens. A hypothesis¹⁴ is that they included the Athenian *gerarai* or venerable women in charge of the cult of Dionysus in the Anthesteria¹⁵. These were mature women who perhaps functioned as a 'college' of priestesses or assistants to the queen in the rites that they performed at the sanctuary of Dionysos at Limnai¹⁶. They were chosen by the *basileus*, plausibly from among women of the prominent *gene* of Attica devoted to the cult of Dionysus¹⁷, with a leader or *archeis*, who in this case would have been the *basilinna* herself. Her hypothetical presence in the delegation travelling to Delphi is based on the information in Pollux that these women were in charge, in addition to the rites of the Anthesteria, of another *theoria*¹⁸. Although *theoria* can simply refer to a 'ceremony' or 'festival', it can also signify a sacred delegation to a sanctuary or the activities that pilgrims carried out there¹⁹. That there is reference to the *Iobaccheia* as one of the rites that they were supposed to perform in the oath sworn by the *gerarai* at the sanctuary of Dionysos at Limnais may be further proof of this (Ps.-Dem. 59.78). It was precisely at Delphi where the choruses that sang the *Io Bacchos* were recognised, as indicated by the paean of Philodamus²⁰ and Sophocles' *Antigone*²¹, although this work also alludes to shouting Iacchus' name, typical of the

13. Ar. *Thesm.* 294 and 537; Isae. 6.49-50.

14. Developed in Valdés Guía 2020: 84 ff.

15. Dem. 50. 75-78; Hesych. *s.v.* 'γεραραί'; *Anecd. Bekk.* I, 231.32; I, 228.9: Γεραράδας (Ael. *Dion.* γ 7 Erbse). Poll. 8.108: *s.v.* 'γεραραί': 'αὐται ἄρρετα ἱερὰ Διονύσω ἔθουον μετ' ἄλλης θεωρίας. καθίστη δὲ αὐτὰς ὁ βασιλεὺς οὐσας τεσσαρας καὶ δεκά'. Etym. Magn. 277.35 *s.v.* 'γεραραί'; Harp. *s.v.* 'γεραραί'.

16. Denis 2009: 259. Reluctant to consider them as priestesses: Georgoudi 2005: 73. But *geraina* was a title given to the priestess of Dionysos also in Thera: *IG* 12(3).420.

17. See Burkert 1983: 232; Burkert 1985: 240; Valdés Guía 2020: 88 and 112-113. Blok (2017: 210) believes that it is conceivable that all the *gerarai* belonged to the *genos* of the *Theoinidai* (*SEG* 39 (1979) 135.2, since the 2nd century BC).

18. See note 15. Weniger 1906: 235; in Henrichs 1978: 154; Villanueva Puig 1986: 36; with reference to the passage from Pollux: Hamilton 1992: 55; Valdés Guía 2020: 88.

19. Rutherford 2000: 134-136; Nightingale 2004: 40-63; Rutherford 2013: 4-6.

20. A paean composed by the *Theoxenia* dating from 340-339 BC. For the formula 'Ἐοῖ ὦ ἰὸ Βάκχ', ὦ ἰὲ Παϊάν': lines 5, 18, 31, 57, 109, 122, 135 and 148. Stewart 1982: 210 ff.; Furley & Bremer 2001: 121-128; Suárez de la Torre 2013: 54-65. As an epithet of Dionysus: Bierl 2018: 237. *Iobacchos* with a religious song: Proclo *apud* Phot. *Bibl.* 320a 18-20; Archil. *Heph.* 15.9; Furley & Bremer 2001: 12, 33.

21. Soph. *Ant.* 1115-1116, 1120-21. Corycian Nymphs with their Bacchae: Soph. *Ant.* 1128-1129. After the chorus, the god is invoked, mentioning the slopes of Mount Parnassus: Soph. *Ant.* 1144-1145. Further on, he is invoked as Iacchus: see the following note.

Lenaia, perhaps as a ‘wink’ to the Athenian public²². Both rites (in Delphi and in the Lenaia), which were performed at night by torchlight²³, probably commemorated the death and rebirth of the child Dionysus, *Liknites* in Delphi²⁴. In the oath of the *gerarai*, the *Iobaccheia* was supposed to be held ‘on a suitable date’ (‘ἐν τοῖς καθήκουσι χρόνοις’: Ps-Dem. 59.78), which might have recalled, if referring to the rites of the Thyiads, that the Delphic festival was not held annually, but every two years, on an undetermined date during the winter months²⁵.

How many women formed the delegation is still a mystery. In Parker’s view, they would not have numbered more than 30²⁶. The *gerarai* were 12 or 14 women, plus the *basilinna*. It is highly likely that, besides this college of mature women, many young girls, under the supervision of the *gerarai* and the *basilinna*, also formed part of the delegation travelling to Delphi. The references to the women who worshiped Dionysus in the Corycian Cave on the slopes of Mount Parnassus appearing in 5th-century-BC theatre include allusions to Bacchae or Maenads²⁷, terms that can refer to maturity—like that of the main Theban Bacchae of Euripides—although without dismissing the presence of younger women. Furthermore, in the drama there is also reference to ‘nymphs’, ‘*parthenoi*’ and ‘*korai*’, which indicate the youthfulness of at least some of the participants²⁸. It should not be forgotten that the child Dionysus had been brought up by nymphs and that the Thyiads looked after his remains and took it

22. Soph. *Ant.* 1149-1152. With respect to this hymn: Furley & Bremer 2001: 301-302. In the Lenaia: Ar. *Ran.* 479 and scholium (PMG 879 Page).

23. See the previous note and Soph. *Ant.* 1216; Ar. *Nub.* 603 ff.; Eur. *Ion* 714-717; Eur. *Bacch.* 306 ff.; Plut. *De Is. et Os.* 35 (*Mor.* 365a). Torchlight ritual of the Thyiads: Dietrich 1992: 47. The Lenaia by torchlight: Poll. 8.90. See Valdés Guía 2020: 143 ff.

24. For Dionysus *Liknites*: sch. Lycoph. *Alex.* 212; Hesych. *s.v.* ‘Λικνίτης’. The *Orphic Hymn* 46 invokes Dionysus *Liknites*, the child Dionysus (Ricciardelli 2000: 125 and 413-417). Antiquity: Dietrich 1958: 244-248. *Liknon* and *Liknites* with an agricultural meaning: McNerney 1997: 273.

25. Every two years: Paus. 10.4.3. Probably in the month of *Dadaphorios*: Valdés Guía 2020: 165, with n. 564. In the winter: Plut. *De E apud Delphos* (*Mor.* 389 b-c). Kerényi 1998 [1976]: 154; Jeanmaire 1978: 195; Villanueva Puig 1986: 37. Some authors have suggested a movable date in the year for holding the festival: Vallois 1931: 258-273. McNerney (1997: 273) associated it with the harvest cycle. Regarding its relationship with the adaptation of the solar and lunar calendars: Hannah 2005: 32-33; Hdt. 2.4; Censorinus, *DN*, 18.2-4.

26. Parker 2005: 83.

27. ‘Maenads of Bacchus’: Eur. *Ion* 553; ‘night-walking Bacchae’: Eur. *Ion* 717; ‘Delphic Bacchae’: Ar. *Nub.* 603-606.

28. Aesch. *Eum.* 22-26 (nymphs who dwell in the cave of the Corycian rock). Bacchic Corycian Nymphs: Soph. *Ant.* 1216 (‘Κωρύκται νύμφαι Βακχίδες’). *Parthenoi*: Eur. *Hyps.* 1-3. *Korai*: Eur. *Ion*, 552; paeon of Philodamus: line 22.

upon themselves to bring him back to life²⁹; the Corycian Nymphs also appear to be related to Dionysus, as the image of the Thyiads³⁰.

In sum, the maenadism inherent to women in Delphi, and specifically to the Athenian delegation, possibly involved both mature and young women, as confirmed in Diodorus for maenadism in general³¹. Further evidence of the presence of young women is to be found in Euripides' *Ion*, which at a given moment alludes to the festival of the Thyiads (714-717), called the 'torches of Bacchus' ('ἔξ φανός γε Βακχίου': Eur. *Ion* 551). Xuthus, the queen's husband, believes that Ion was conceived on this occasion; Ion himself wants his mother to be an Athenian woman (Eur. *Ion* 670), which points to the inclusion of *parthenoi* who might have run the risk of being raped or abducted.

Representations, specifically on ceramics³², are another source of information for attempting to identify these women who travelled to Delphi. Some have recognised the Athenian Thyiads on 'the Lenaia vases'³³. There is also a possibility that they were the same women, *astai*, in both the festivals of the Anthesteria and the Lenaia in Athens, and in Delphi, which the vases reflect in some way, dancing 'as the Hours, or as nymphs, or as bacchantes' (Philostr. *V A.* 4.21). In a nutshell, the delegation would have comprised married adult women³⁴, basically the 12 or 14 *gerarai*, accompanied by young girls or *parthenoi*.

29. Nymphs as Dionysus' wet nurses: *Homeric Hymn* 26 to Dionysus. Phanodem. *FGrHist* 325 F 12; Philoch. *FGrHist* 328 F 5b; Diod. Sic. 5.52.2. The Thyiads would have imitated the nymphs who looked after Dionysus when the god awoke following his dismemberment: Plut. *De Is. et Os.* 35 (*Mor.* 365a); Otto 1997 [1933]: 64. There is also reference to this reality in the *Orphic Hymn to Amphietus Bacchus* 53, vv. 1-7. And allusion to the Nymphs of Nysa and the Bacchic choruses of the Bacchae: Eur. *Cyc.* 64-75.

30. The Corycian Nymphs in relation to Dionysus: Aesch. *Eum.* 22; Soph. *Ant.* 1128-1129. Regarding the *Thriai* (nymphs) of Mount Parnassus, the wet nurses of Apollo, also connected in some way or another with the Thyiads: Luce 2001. For the nymph *Thya*: see note 99. There is an ongoing debate on the relationship of the Corycian Nymphs with Dionysus (see note 74); for a negative vision of this relationship, see: Larson 1995: 343-345. See, however: McInerney 1997: 279-281.

31. Bremmer 1984. On the participation of *parthenoi* and *gynaikes* in the trieteric *baccheia* in the Hellenistic period: Diod. Sic. 4.3.2-3; Henrichs 1978: 147.

32. Thyiads depicted on 5th-century-BC vases: Krauskopf 2011: 117-118.

33. Thyiads on the famous 'Lenaia vases': Sourvinou-Inwood 2005: 211 ff.; Olsson 2006: 208 ff. Represented in the temple built by the Athenians for Apollo in Delphi in the 4th century BC: Paus. 10.19.4; Stewart 1982: 211; Villanueva Puig 1986: 38-39; McInerney 1997: 281. *Contra*: Luce (2001) who is of the mind that they are the *Thriai* (nymphs). Rites of Delphi on a *chous* (the vase of the Anthesteria): Valdés Guía 2020: 174 ff.

34. Similar to the *gerarades* of Argos (Hesych. *s.v.* 'γεραράδες') and 'the sixteen' of Elis (Paus. 5.16.2-6 and 6.24.10). Denis 2009: 58-59 and 257-258.

As already noted, it is unknown whether or not the delegation included men, although this is indeed the case in Euripides' *Ion* (although the context, that of consulting the Delphic Oracle, is different). In the Hellenistic Age there was the figure of the *gynaikonomos* whose job was to ensure the safety of women participating in processions and rites³⁵. Neither can it be dismissed that they were accompanied by men³⁶ for their protection, nor that they journeyed alone, as Plutarch seems to indicate when referring to the Thyiads in Phocis. Irrespective of whether or not they were accompanied by men, in the rites that they performed on Mount Parnassus they were doubtless left to their own devices in their choruses, conducted by Dionysus himself³⁷.

Lastly, nor is there any indication of how this delegation was funded. As in the case of other festivals, the women's fathers/husbands might have offered them some assistance, along with some or other type of contribution from the *polis*.

The journey to Delphi

This section begins with a passage from Plutarch, which tells how the Delphic Maenads, the Thyiads, lost their way at night and arrived, completely exhausted, at the agora of Amphissa, in Phocis, in the winter of 354-353 BC. After they had fallen asleep there, they were surrounded by the women of the city, who later on provided them with food and saw them safely on their way. The passage reads as follows:

When the despots in Phocis had seized Delphi, and the Thebans were waging war against them in what has been called the Sacred War, the women devotees of Dionysus, to whom they give the name of Thyads, in Bacchic frenzy wandering at night unwittingly arrived at Amphissa. As they were tired out, and sober reason had not yet returned to them, they flung themselves down in the market-place, and were lying asleep, some here, some there. The wives of the men of Amphissa, fearing, because their city had become allied with the Phocians, and numerous soldiers of the despots were present there, that the Thyads might be treated with indignity, all ran out into the market-place, and, taking their stand round about in silence, did not go up to them while they were sleeping, but when they arose from their slumber, one

35. Chaniotis 2013: 30.

36. Friese (2017: 55) distinguishes between women who were officially chosen to participate in a procession and, consequently, more supervised, and those who decided to participate in a ritual off their own bat.

37. Soph. *Ant.* 153, 1146. Eur. *Ion*, 716-719; Furley & Bremer 2001: 303. Ar. *Thesm.* 985-1000. Dionysus as the divine *choregos*: Bierl 2012.

devoted herself to one of the strangers and another to another, bestowing attentions on them and offering them food. Finally, the women of Amphissa, after winning the consent of their husbands, accompanied the strangers, who were safely escorted as far as the frontier³⁸.

The image of these Maenads, sleeping exhausted after performing their nocturnal rites, calls to mind Euripides' description in his *Bacchae*, which is reproduced in the following section. From Plutarch's texts it can be inferred that in this case the women seemed to have been travelling alone when they lost their way. Amphissa was the capital of Ozolian (western) Locri, bordering on Phocis, on the route to Delphi³⁹. In the episode narrated by Plutarch, it is observed that this locality was still a dangerous place because of its political upheavals. This is not the only source commenting on the hazards that pilgrims faced⁴⁰ when passing through Amphissa, for Strabo also notes how the Amphictyonic League declared the First Sacred War against this very city, for having cultivated the sacred plain of Krissa and for having inconvenienced pilgrims on their way to the Delphic Oracle⁴¹. Although Amphissa was not on the route from Athens to Delphi—the women lost their way and ended up there unintentionally—it was indeed from other localities, for which reason it can serve as an example of what might have happened in other places.

The route to Delphi, possibly defined or considered as a sacred way⁴², was international because it passed through several different states⁴³, thus complicating travel. Conceivably, the first stage of the journey from Athens to Eleusis coincided with the sacred way (*hierá hodos*) of the latter⁴⁴. A 4th-century-BC *horos*, bearing the inscription, 'Boundary of the Sacred Road by which the Pythais journey to Delphi'⁴⁵, has also been found here. The itineraries followed by the *pythaistai* and the Thyiads did not have to coincide exactly, although it is possible that many of their stages were the same⁴⁶.

38. Plut. *De mul. vir.* 13 (*Mor.* 249 e-f). Henrich 1978: 136; Dillon 2002: 145.

39. Paus. 10.38.4. It is located in the valley of Itea to the northeast of Delphi, on the border with Phocis. See Daverio Rocchi 2013: 141, 146 and 151, and 2015: 195.

40. For the risks and dangers of different types of pilgrimages: Dillon 1997: 11 and 27-28.

41. Str. 9.3.4 (abuses—imposing taxes—committed by the people of Krissa and the Amphissians against foreign pilgrims). Daverio Rocchi 2013: 151.

42. Daverio Rocchi 2002: 149.

43. Dillon 1997: 37 ff.; Daverio Rocchi 2002: 140.

44. Harp. *s.v.* "Ἱερὰ ὁδός". *IG I³* 1095 (before 445 BC): '[h]ό[ρο]ς [τ]ῆς ὁδοῦ τῆς Ἐλευσινάδε'; *IG I³* 1096 (dating from 420 BC; discovered in the Ceramicus): 'ἡόρος τῆς ὁδοῦ τῆς Ἐλευσινάδε'; *IG II²* 2624 (4th century BC): 'ἡόρος τῆς ὁδοῦ τῆς Ἐλευσινάδε'. Ficuciello 2008: 25.

45. Parsons 1943: 237; Dillon 1997: 37; Daverio Rocchi 2002: 150; Pirisino 2015: 70.

46. No full coincidence: Daverio Rocchi 2002: 155.

The Sacred Way to Eleusis was institutionalised as such at the beginning of the 6th century BC⁴⁷. This part of the route passed through places that played a significant role in the construction of memory and the landscape in relation to the mythical past of Athens and Eleusis⁴⁸. Between these milestones were found the *Iaccheion* (Plut. *Vit. Aristid.* 27.3; Paus. 1.2.4), Scirum, the Pythion, the sanctuary of Aphrodite at Daphne, the Rheiti and Eleusis itself (Paus. 1.36.3-38.5). This stage was undoubtedly fairly safe for Athenian women. Since in the procession of the Mysteries, some of the participants journeyed by cart⁴⁹, it is conceivable that, also on this occasion, the women forming the delegation of the Thyiads, or some of them, also did so; in works such as those of Pikoulas, stress has been placed on the importance of the road network for carts in Greece⁵⁰. In addition, in the case of the Eleusinian Mysteries, the priestesses of Eleusis and the *hiera* were escorted by *ephebes*⁵¹. Be that as it may, there is no evidence that the Thyiads were escorted on their journey to Delphi, although, as already observed above, they might have had some male protection. Conceivably, the women forming part of the delegation wore some sort of distinction so as to be recognisable as such and to guarantee their safety and immunity, while the carts of the *theoroi* were adorned with garlands not only in honour of the gods, but also as a possible warning to potential assailants⁵². This might have also been the case with the delegation of the women and their carts, if they indeed used them.

As was also the case with the Sacred Way to Eleusis, the route from Athens to the Delphic Oracle was also sacralised and constructed on the collective memory of Apollo's voyage to Delphi from Athens, which was considered to be a civilising itinerary associated with the god, as Ephorus and Aeschylus note⁵³. On the other hand, Herodotus (6.34.2) mentions a 'sacred way' to Delphi, passing through Boeotia and Phocis⁵⁴.

47. Daverio Rocchi 2002: 151; Ficuciello 2008: 24-25; Mohr 2013: 65 ff.

48. See Valdés Guía (forthcoming).

49. The law of Lycurgus that prohibited women from travelling by cart to Eleusis during the Mysteries: Plut. *Mor.* 842a; a law in Hyperides which refers to fines imposed on 'disorderly women on the way': Harp. *s.v.* 'ὄτι χιλίας'; Hyp. fr. 14 Jensen.

50. Daverio Rocchi 2002: 158; Pikoulas 2007.

51. Dillon 1997: 35-36; Parker 2005: 346-347; Agelidis 2020: 181.

52. Dillon 1997: 33 (the ships that journeyed in the *theoria* to Delos were also decorated with garlands).

53. In relation to land cultivation and road building: Ephorus, *FGrH* 70 311 (= Str. 9.3.12). Additionally: Aesch. *Eum.* 12-14; Daverio Rocchi 2002: 150 and 152-154. See also Dillon 1997: 35; Karila Cohen 2005: 222-224 and 227.

54. Dillon 1997: 37; Daverio Rocchi 2002: 157; Pikoulas 2007: 78-87.

In all likelihood, after leaving Attica the women would have reached Eleutherae⁵⁵, a significant and symbolic place of Dionysian worship⁵⁶. On this route, the places of worship consecrated to the god would have been especially appealing to the Athenian women on their journey to Delphi, not only due to the fact that they offered them the chance to venerate him, but also because they served as places of refuge and rest, stop-overs and camp sites for passing the night. Therefore, it is interesting to focus on the places along the route to Delphi with particularly strong links to the cult of Dionysus, inasmuch as they were perhaps relevant in the women's pilgrimage to Mount Parnassus; they might have been places where they stopped to perform certain rites, such as dances, songs, sacrifices or libations⁵⁷, and to pass the night⁵⁸. They were also surely welcomed and protected by local women, particularly those linked to the cult of the god in those *poleis*. In Amphissa, it was the local women who attended to the Thyiads' needs and protected them. For which reason, it seems reasonable to assume that there was a 'network of female solidarity' of an 'international' character⁵⁹, revolving around the cult of Dionysus, at least on the route to Delphi, and perhaps in Boeotia, also strongly linked to the Muses/Nymphs who, in this region, were apparently associated with this cult in several places—as was the case (Dionysus and the Nymphs) in the Corycian Cave⁶⁰.

One of the first of those 'Dionysian' spaces, after leaving Attica, might have been the *Iaccheion*, the temple of Iacchus, the alter ego of Dionysus in Eleusis and one of the stages of the Eleusinian procession, located in the Ceramicus, close to the Dipylon Gate; Eleusis and Iacchus are both mentioned in the paean of Philodamus, composed in Athens in the 4th century BC, which included the song/invocation of *Io Bacchos* intrinsic to Dionysian enthusiasm in Delphi⁶¹.

55. Paus. 1.38.8. He believes that the *Pythais* passes through here: A. Boëthius 1918: 46 ff.; Daverio Rocchi 2002: 151. The cult of Dionysus at Eleutherae: Schachter 1981: vol. 1, 174-175.

56. Daverio Rocchi 2002: 151 (with bibliography).

57. As has been established on the route to Eleusis in the procession: *IG II²* 1078, li. 29-30. With respect to rituals of this type on the way to Delphi: Kerényi 1998[1976]: 153.

58. Friese 2017: 56 also assumes the existence of 'hostels' with separate rooms for men and women (who also washed and bathed apart).

59. Suggested by Konstan (1995: 57-59) for Attica.

60. See Valdés Guía 2021.

61. *Iaccheion*: see *supra* in text. Like the song of the *mystai* in the Eleusinian procession: Hdt. 8.65; Kerényi 1998 [1976]: 66. In the paean of Philodamus, v. 35. Perhaps the paean of Philodamus might indicate, with the itinerary of the god himself, some of the places of symbolic importance to the Thyiads on their journey from Athens to Delphi.

Nothing is known about the Boeotian stages of the route, except for a brief mention in Herodotus. In addition to Eleutherae, the women would have probably passed through Plataea, a city on friendly terms with Athens and, maybe, Thespieae, where there seems to have been a cult of Dionysus which might have been linked to that of the Muses⁶². There is a possibility that, making a short detour, they might have also passed through Thebes, where the cult of Dionysus was especially relevant (also with trieteric festivals), although Thebes' relationship with Athens was often conflictive and this alternative route would have added a few kilometres to the journey⁶³.

Without additional documentary evidence, it is impossible to speculate any further⁶⁴, although presumably one of the places en route was Livadeia, where the cult of Dionysus was associated with the Nymphs and Pan⁶⁵. Indeed, one of the routes to Delphi departed from Livadeia, before passing over Mount Arachova⁶⁶. However, it appears that both the route taken by the embassy of the *pythaistai* and that followed by the Thyiads would have passed through Chaeronea⁶⁷, entering Phocis by way of Panopeus. This enclave is mentioned by Pausanias in relation to the rituals of the Thyiads, alluding to a Homeric passage describing it as 'of many choruses', which would confirm their ritual activities in specific places on their journey to Delphi. The Perieget himself observes that passing through Panopeus was the easiest way of reaching Delphi

62. Paus. 9.26.8 and 30.1; Schachter 1981: vol. 1, 192-194. Sanctuary of Dionysus: *IG VII* 1786. For these localities, see Fossey 1988: 102 ff. and 135 ff. Regarding the sanctuary of Dionysus next to the theatre in Plataea: Konecny, Aravantinos & Marchese 2013: 146-148. For the Sphragitides (nymphs) on Mount Cithaeron in Plataea: Plut. *Vit. Arist.* 11.3; Plut. *Mor.* 628D. On this area, see Bintlif et al. 2017.

63. Thebes: Fossey 1988: 199 ff. As regards the trieteric festivals in honour of Dionysus in Thebes: Kerényi 1998 [1976]: 137 ff. On Dionysus in Thebes: Robert 1977; Schachter 1981: vol. 1, 185 ff. Thebes appears in the paean of Philodamus. There is a cult of Pan (Plut. *Vit. Aristid.* 11.3) linked to the Nymphs (Paus. 9.3.6.) which, in some way or another, might have been connected with Dionysus. In view of Lucan's (*De bello civili* 5.74) theory that the Thebans also participated in the rites on Mount Parnassus (Kerényi 1998 [1976]: 156), they might have accompanied the Athenians on their journey.

64. It is possible that it passed through Ascrea (Fossey 1988: 142-145), perhaps Chaeronea (although Dionysus has not been documented there much: Schachter 1981: 177; Fossey 1988: 324 ff.) and, maybe, Haliartus (Fossey 1988: 301 ff.).

65. *IG* 8, 3092 and 3094; see Schachter 1981: vol. 1, 178. For the 'Dionysation' of the god Pan: Porres Caballero 2012.

66. Daverio Rocchi 2002: 152.

67. The cult of Dionysus in the agora of Chaeronea (Plut. *Vit. Cim.* 2); the Agrionia (a women's festival in honour of the god) and a *Dionysia* were held there, while the god was also possibly worshiped in connection with the Muses: Schachter 1981: vol. 1, 173-174. For female choruses at customary way stations between Athens and Delphi such as Panopeus: Budelmann & Power 2015: 273-275.

from Boeotia⁶⁸. Ephorus, cited by Strabo, also mentions Panopeus in relation to Apollo's voyage to Delphi from Athens, which opened the sacred way of the *pythaistai*⁶⁹. This route would have finally passed through Daulis⁷⁰ in Phocis, before arriving at Delphi and Mount Parnassus⁷¹.

The sacred way to Delphi was constructed in the Athenian imaginary, as can be seen in Ephorus and Aeschylus, for whom the god's journey from Athens and his role—and, by extension, that of Athens—was 'civilising'. Athens appropriated the route in its imaginary and constructed a memory of the past in which it assigned itself the role of imposing order and civilisation⁷². The opportunity for both the official delegations of the *pythaistai* and the Thyiads and individual pilgrims to consult the Delphic Oracle was an issue of concern and management in international relations. In the case of Athens, the procedures for guaranteeing freedom of access to the Oracle were formalised with the Peace of Nicias, although customary rules had existed beforehand⁷³.

The last stage for the Thyiads, now in Delphi, was undoubtedly the Corycian Cave on the slopes of Mount Parnassus, dedicated to Pan and the Corycian Nymphs and inhabited by Bromius, as stated in the *Eumenides* (Aesch. *Eum.* 22-26)⁷⁴. Once there, the Thyiads probably performed their rites or some of them, for, according to Plutarch⁷⁵,

68. See note 11. Paus. 10.4.2; Fossey 1988: 63-67; Daverio Rocchi 2002: 158. Path of Daulis: Paus. 10.5.1; Fossey 1988: 46-49.

69. See n. 53.

70. Daverio Rocchi 2002: 158. See n. 68.

71. Dillon 1997: 37 ff.; Daverio Rocchi 2002: 152.

72. See note 53. Ellinger 1993: 87 and 103; Daverio Rocchi 2002: 153-154. Athens' elaboration of the *ktiseis* of Phocis: Paus. 10.35.5. For the Phocians, see Fossey 1988; McInerney 2013. On legends: Ellinger 1993. I am grateful to J. Pascual for his indications and recommended bibliography.

73. The Peace of Nicias in 421 BC (already in a previous truce in 424-423 BC): Thuc. 4.118.1 and 5.18.1-2; Daverio Rocchi 2002: 153. The Peace of Nicias would formalise or acknowledge a sort of immunity (*asylia*), which would have already been in force: Dillon 1997: 28; Daverio Rocchi 2002: 159; Arnush 2007: 99.

74. Paus. 10.32.2 and 7; CIG 1728; Borgeaud 1979: 134 and 148 n. 38; Porres Caballero 2012: 76. On the Corycian Cave as a cultic space: Daverio Rocchi 2002: 158. Inscriptions and votive offerings in the Corycian Cave since the 7th century BC: Amandry 1981; 1984; Sporn 2013: 205. For the geographical location and natural environment: McInerney 1997: 276, fig. 1; Partida 2011: 236; the most common offerings in the cave were talus bones of sheep and goats (a possible use in divination: Partida 2011: 278). There are inscriptions with dedications to Pan and the Nymphs and, in one of them, reference to the Thyiads: Pomtow 1912: 91-92; McInerney 1997: 278. Amandry has denied that there was any cult of Dionysus in the Corycian Cave. See, however: McInerney 1997: 279; Kerényi 1998[1976]: 159 ff.

75. Plut. *De Is. et Os.* 35 (*Mor.* 365a): The *Hosioi* (Sacred) also performed a secret sacrifice. For the sources dealing with the rites of the Thyiads, see *supra* notes 2 and 3. Valdés Guía 2020: 163 ff. (with bibliography).

they raised Dionysus *Liknites*, the child Dionysus, from the dead with a mystical torchlight ceremony possibly in the Corycian Cave⁷⁶. The Corycian Nymphs were recognised as Maenads and Bacchae, while in Sophocles' *Antigone* it is noted that Dionysus is seen there, before going on to mention the Thyiads⁷⁷. The god also appears to the Bacchae on the Corycian peaks in Euripides (*Eur. Bacch.* 559).

The mountain is defined as wild in contrast and counterpoint to the role of civilisation and order allotted to Apollo of Delphi (who kills Python). As McInerney has observed, it would have been divided into two areas, the most distant and wild and the closest and most 'civilised', suitable for farming and pasturing. The Corycian Cave would have been located precisely between these two areas⁷⁸ and, therefore, the Thyiads would have made the transition from order/civilisation to the wild/far removed inherent to the Oribasia. Besides Mount Parnassus, in general, and the Corycian Cave, in particular, the enclosure (*temenos*: Hdt. 7.178) of *Thyia*, the eponymous nymph of the Thyiads, would have surely been a meeting place for the women⁷⁹.

The time has now come to focus on their stay in Delphi and the rites that they performed there.

The stay in Delphi: the rites on Mount Parnassus

The rites of the Thyiads were performed by torchlight and linked, as seen in the previous section, to the Corycian Cave on the slopes of Mount Parnassus. Plutarch refers to *Nyktelia*, namely, rites performed at night by both men (*Hosioi*) and women⁸⁰.

However, it was the Thyiads who woke Dionysus *Liknites* and who performed other rites also in Delphi. The tradition of the Thyiads, as well as the Oribasia, on Mount Parnassus is omnipresent in 5th-century-BC Attic theatre⁸¹, whereby it can be assumed,

76. A mystical torchlight ceremony at Delphi: *Eur. Ion* 715-720. The myth of Dionysus' dismemberment and rebirth: Suárez de la Torre 1998; Suárez de la Torre 2013: 65-66; Valdés Guía 2020: 163 ff.

77. *Soph. Ant.* 1126-1130 and 1146-1152.

78. McInerney 1997: 264.

79. Kerényi 1998 [1976]: 156; inscriptions in Bourguet 1903: 25. Following Bourguet, Kerényi places it next to the Temple of Apollo, outside the inhabited part of Delphi, in the modern-day area of the Halos (Bourguet 1903: 27), but McInerney (1997: 270) hypothetically locates it to the east of Delphi, in Arachova.

80. *Plut. De Is et Os.* 35 (*Mor.* 365a). For *Hosioi*, see also: *Plut. Quaest. Graec.* 9, 292d; *Plut. De def. or.* 51 = *Mor.* 438b); *Plut. De def. or.* 49 = *Mor.* 437a.

81. Konstantinou 2019.

as observed above, that the Athenian delegation was already being dispatched to Delphi at the time. The women organised themselves in choruses and *thiasoi* (Eur. *Bacch.* 559), conducted by the god himself. In the *Bacchae*, these *thiasoi* are called by the god with a ritual shout, ‘ἰὼ βάκχαι, ἰὼ βάκχαι’⁸², to which the *Bacchae* reply, ‘ἰὼ ἰὼ δέσποτα δέσποτα’ (Eur. *Bacch.* 582). In Euripides’ *Hypsipyle*, the god appears with a nebris and thyrsus dancing with Delphian virgins—*parthenoi*—on Mount Parnassus⁸³. In Euripides’ *Ion* there is reference to Mount Parnassus, ‘Where Bacchus holds the two-flamed Torch, leaping lightly with his Nighttime wandering Bacchanals.’⁸⁴ In his *Clouds*, Aristophanes alludes to the rites of the rock of Parnassus in which the god ‘shakes his torches as he leaps, lord Dionysus, whose shouts call amid the Delphic bacchanal [Βάκχαις Δελφίσιν]’⁸⁵, while in his *Frogs*, ‘Bacchus, who, clad in fawnskins, leaps and bounds torch and thyrsus in the choral dance along Parnassus.’⁸⁶ In *Antigone* (Soph. *Ant.* 1149-1152) there is the epiphany⁸⁷ of the child Dionysus (*Pais*), called Iacchus, who the Thyiads invoke by torchlight. Conceivably, the dismemberment and death of the child Dionysus, and his subsequent rebirth—his epiphany—were being recalled⁸⁸. In the ritual of the Thyiads, which was performed in the winter, probably in the month of *Dadaphorios*⁸⁹, Dionysus led them to the mountain⁹⁰ to the rhythm of shouting, singing and dancing. Should the theory put forward in the first section be correct, the choruses were conducted by women and in the Athenian delegation their conductor would have been the *basilinna*. Euripides’ *Bacchae* offers an idea of this Oribasia and ecstatic choruses of women in a description that is also similar to the aforementioned passage from Plutarch in relation to Amphissa:

82. Eur. *Bacch.* 577; Holzhausen 2008: 54.

83. Eur. *Hyps.* 1-3; Santamaría 2013: 46.

84. Eur. *Ion* 714-717.

85. Ar. *Nub.* 603-606.

86. Ar. *Ran.* 1211-1213. See also Eur. *IT* 1242; McInerney 1997: 265.

87. Epiphany highlighted by Diodorus: Diod. Sic. 4.3.3.

88. Further developed in Valdés Guía 2020: 163 ff.

89. In the month of *Dadaphorios*: see note 27. The month in the inscription of the *Labyadai*: CID, I:9 side D lin. 4-5. Dietrich 1992: 47. *Contra*: Robertson 2003: 224, n. 29 (he believes that *Thyia* was probably the name of the festival of Delphi, as in Elis: Paus. 6.26.1). Nevertheless, there is a solid link to torches in theatre. Mystical torchlight ceremonies: sch. *Lyc. Alex.* 212. Eur. *Ion* 715-720.

90. ‘πομπὸς θεωρίας’: Eur. *Bacch.* 1047. The meaning of *theoria* here is ‘sacred delegation’: Rutherford 2013: 206. The leader of the chorus in *Antigone* (153 and 1146). In Euripides’ *Ion*, the god holds the torches, while dancing with the ‘Bacchanals’ in Delphi: Eur. *Ion* 716-719; cf. Furley & Bremer 2001: 303; Santamaría 2013: 48. See also Ar. *Thesm.* 985-1000. Dionysus as the divine *choregos*: Bierl 2012.

About that hour when the sun lets loose its light to warm the earth, our grazing herds of cows had just begun to climb the path along the mountain ridge. Suddenly I saw three companies of dancing women, one led by Autoñoë, the second captained by your mother Agave, while Ino led the third. There they lay in the deep sleep of exhaustion, some resting on boughs of fir, others sleeping where they fell, here and there among the oak leaves but all modestly and soberly, not, as you think, drunk with wine, nor wandering; led astray by the music of the flute, to hunt their Aphrodite through the woods⁹¹.

The place where the women performed their rites is therefore well known: not only Mount Parnassus and, above all, the Corycian Cave in Delphi, but also on the peaks, the most distant and wildest part of the mountain.

There is also the question of where and how the Athenian Thyiads were accommodated in Delphi and how long they stayed, taking into account that they travelled there in the winter and thus needed to take shelter from the cold. Plutarch recounts how they had to be rescued when they were surprised by a snow storm on the mountain (Plut. *Mor.* 953d). It is possible that they were hosted and fed by Delphian women⁹². This function of proxeny, namely, the hosting of foreigners arriving at the Delphic Oracle, is mentioned in Euripides' *Ion*⁹³. The Delphians rendered this service to both public and private consultees, as was also the case with the Thyiads. Perhaps all or part of the delegation stayed at the homes of *proxenoi*, hosted by Delphian women, presumably local Thyiads. It is also possible, however, that some or other space in the sanctuary was set aside for all or part of the delegation, perhaps in tents (*skenai*) erected for that purpose, as in the Thesmophoria⁹⁴, or in more or less permanent structures, like the temporary huts built for the artisans in an area earmarked for this purpose⁹⁵. Nor should it be ruled out that they might have spent some nights, following their nocturnal rites, on Mount

91. Eur. *Bacch.* 678 ff.

92. In Amphissa (see note 38), they were fed. The myth and purification rituals of the festival of *Charila*, in which the Delphic Thyiads played a role (see note 2), may also evoke the importance of feeding all the members of the community, as suggested by McInerney 1997: 274-275. Residential neighbourhoods expanded on the periphery of the *temenos* or sanctuary: Partida 2011: 238.

93. Eur. *Ion* 335: 'Why did you come? Tell me and I will help' (Ion to Creusa) and 551-552 (Xuthus came to 'the wine-god's torch feast' and stayed at the house of a proxenus). Proxenoí also in 1039. See Dillon 1997: 154-5 and n. 23; Arnush 2007: 99.

94. Tents in the Thesmophoria: *Thesm.* 624 and 658. Building a tent for a banquet in Euripides' *Ion* (1122 ff.). In addition, Ion is helped by workmen or artisans ('τεκτόνων': Eur. *Ion*, 1129).

95. Partida 2011: 238 (close to the Castalian Spring and the gymnasium).

Parnassus itself, maybe also in provisional tents (*skenai*). At Delphi, they would have doubtless been lodged in spaces separated from the accommodation set aside for men⁹⁶.

As to food, that they brought their own provisions and cooking equipment⁹⁷, and that they might have also purchased food there⁹⁸, as well as supplying themselves with water, chiefly from the Castalian Spring⁹⁹, should not be excluded. In other places, like, for example, Olympia, guest houses, baths and even shops¹⁰⁰ have been discovered, while in other sanctuaries, such as those at Brauron and Perachora, plus the sanctuary of Demeter and Core at Corinth, dining rooms and/or larger banqueting halls have been excavated¹⁰¹. Also in Delphi, Bookidis identified the building known as the ‘priest’s house’, discovered in the area of the Marmaria in 1901, as a *hestiatorion* due to its resemblance to that of Perachora¹⁰², while also observing that provisional ‘tents’ might have been erected for banquets in the sanctuary, as mentioned in Euripides’ *Ion* (for the banquet of Xuthus)¹⁰³.

During their stay, there might have also been safety issues in the Delphic Oracle. Although, as already noted, the sanctity of those who publically or privately consulted Pythian Apollo was theoretically guaranteed in the sanctuary and also on the round trip there.

In short, the Athenian ‘Thyiads’ journey to Delphi suggests that they enjoyed a high level of autonomy and independence as to the performance of their rites, with the capacity for management and action in the religious realm, without losing sight of the fact that it was a small delegation of handpicked women. On their journey to Delphi, they enjoyed the same safety measures and privileges as the official *theoroi* of other cities, while it can also be assumed that they performed ritual and cultural activities relating to the cult of Dionysus and/or the Muses/Nymphs in Boeotia on the way. And, in theory, after passing

96. Friese 2017: 56 (he mentions shops in Andania and temporary bathhouses).

97. Friese 2017: 56-57.

98. Dillon 1997: 214: in the Greek world, any festival would have featured a market and even more so in festivals of pilgrimage.

99. Also a place of purification of the Delphians: Parke 1978: 102. *Thya* as the daughter of Castalius and the first priestess of Dionysus who performed the rites in his honour: Paus. 10.6.4. The Castalian Spring in references to the Corycian Nymphs, the Bacchae of Dionysus: Soph. *Ant.* 1130.

100. Sinn (1993: 75-77) notes the division and distinction between a more restricted enclosure (sanctuary, altar, cult) and a larger one for these activities and for the hosting of pilgrims. Friese (2017) studies them as ‘gendered spaces’.

101. Pedley 2005: 75-76; Friese 2017: 56-57.

102. Bookidis 1983. The sanctuary also possibly included temporary dining rooms: see n. 94. For women’s dinners and cult personal in both public places and sanctuaries: Bergquist 1999. See the recent thesis put forward by Kilker 2008.

103. See note 94. For structures of this type: Kilker 2008: 114 ff.

through Amphissa, they could rely on an ‘international’ network in different localities, with protection from women linked to the cult of Dionysus who hosted them en route.

Lastly, in Delphi per se the centre of their activity would have been the Corycian Cave, in particular, and Mount Parnassus, in general, without forgetting other spaces, such as the place of worship of the nymph *Thyia* and the Castalian Spring. At the Delphic Oracle, as occurred along the route that they took, there was a women’s solidarity network revolving around the cult of Dionysus, with prospects of assistance, accommodation and amenities during their stay in Delphi and without ruling out the possibility of more or less permanent structures or tents (*skenai*) in which to sleep, plus other spaces for performing their rites and/or activities and their other personal needs.

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