

SOURCES AND FOUNTAINS IN THE ORACULAR SANCTUARIES: A “MANTIC” WATER ?

Résumé. — Dans son ouvrage de référence : Python. *A Study of Delphic Myth and Its Origins*, Joseph Fontenrose écrit (p. 548) : *Springs rise from the lower depths, the realm of death, and are therefore chthonian powers ... So the spring, a living deity that rises from the lower world, must have prophetic powers ... So oracular shrines grow up around springs ...* Cette affirmation (associée souvent à la quête d’une puissance féminine aux origines des sanctuaires oraculaires) résume parfaitement une *opinio communis*, qu’on aimerait reconsidérer et discuter, en interrogeant les données grecques relatives à la présence et à la signification de l’eau, dans ou près d’un nombre de centres oraculaires grecs (oracles et sources en Béotie, ainsi qu’à Delphes, Dodone, Didymes, Claros etc.).

Abstract. — In his book of reference: Python. *A Study of Delphic Myth and Its Origins*, Joseph Fontenrose writes (p. 548): “Springs rise from the lower depths, the realm of death, and are therefore chthonian powers ... So the spring, a living deity that rises from the lower world, must have prophetic powers ... So oracular shrines grow up around springs ...”. This assertion (frequently associated with the search of a feminine power at the origins of the oracular sanctuaries) sums up perfectly an *opinio communis*, reconsidered and discussed in this paper, on the basis of Greek evidence relative to the presence and the meaning of water, inside or near of certain oracular centers (oracles and springs in Boeotia, as at Delphi, Dodona, Didyma, Claros etc.).

The firm conviction that any spring found in the oracular Greek sanctuaries is in general “prophetic”, producing a “mantic” water, has been formulated a long time ago. Different assertions are presented as evidence, as those stated by the important historian of divination Auguste Bouché-Leclercq: “Water was in the origin, for the Greeks as for all known peoples, the generative element *par excellence* [...] the instrument and the necessary vehicle of revelation”, “the productive agent of the mantic enthusiasm”, “the necessary agent of *prophetic* and poetic inspiration” (speaking of the spring Kastalia)¹.

1. A. BOUCHÉ-LECLERCQ (2003), p. 147 (I, p. 186), 148 (I, p. 187), 262 (I, p. 352) respectively – italics are mine. I refer, in parentheses, to the volumes and pages of the first edition (1879-1882). Cf., in general, M. NINCK (1921), p. 47-99.

For the great scholar, not only Greek world were scattered with “a considerable number of miraculous and *fatidic* springs”, but also all “the symbolic personifications of water [as water or sea divinities] were endowed with divinatory faculties”². But from where does water acquire this mantic quality? For A. Bouché-Leclercq, there is no doubt: this comes from the Earth (with capital E), considered “as source of divination”, because it was “from the bowels of the Earth, common mother of all beings, that revelation comes out”, according to “a very old belief”. From his point of view, the Earth (Gaia / Gê) would represent, for the “Greeks of the first ages, the prophetic divinity *par excellence* ...”, owning “the *exclusive* privilege to nourish the inspiration of the oracles”. Consequently, caves, springs and even graves, all that fix oracles on the ground, can become “the efficient cause of the prophetic art”, thus forming “in primordial times, an *unlimited* number of *telluric* oracles”³.

This close relation between the mantic and the Earth is suggested also by Joseph Fontenrose, although slightly differently. In his book of reference on the Delphic myth, he writes: “Springs rise from the lower depths, the realm of death, and are therefore chthonian powers.” As living deities who rise “from the lower world, must have [also] prophetic powers ... So oracular shrines grow up around springs”⁴. Further, in his study on Didyma, he comes back to this question:

For the Greeks, and apparently for all ancient peoples, water arising out of the earth in springs had numinous chthonian powers, so that drinking water from a sacred spring would infuse one with mantic and magical powers⁵.

This kind of theoretical constructions, adopted by other scholars⁶, has an additional aspect: these statements consider divination from an evolutionistic point of view. They search and place “at the beginning, at the origins of oracles”, a *female* power, either Gaia or another, “chthonian”, as they say, deity associated with caves, springs and the like. This “primordial”, prophetic figure would be, in the course of time, replaced or evicted by a male oracular divinity, a “solar god” as Apollo, says A. Bouché-Leclercq, a god who, nevertheless, would not hesitate to encroach on his female

2. A. BOUCHÉ-LECLERCQ (2003), p. 454, n. 58 (II, p. 264, n. 3), 452 (II, p. 261) respectively – italics are mine.

3. A. BOUCHÉ-LECLERCQ (2003), p. 120 (I, p. 146-147); 445-446 (II, p. 252) – italics are mine.

4. J. FONTENROSE (1959), p. 548.

5. J. FONTENROSE (1988), p. 84.

6. For instance, cf. V. ROSENBERGER (2001), p. 128-137; Y. USTINOVA (2009), p. 88, on “the pristine idea that superhuman knowledge comes from the depths of the Earth”.

predecessors and to derive the prophetic “enthusiasm from the springs that flow under [his] tripods”.⁷

Boeotia and the so-called “mantic” springs

This evolutionistic process seems depicted in a theoretical scheme, elaborated by Albert Schachter who has studied the cults of Boeotia thoroughly. He has particularly examined six oracular cults in Boeotia, of which five were devoted to the worship of Apollo, that is “at Mt. Ptoion, north of Thebes, at the Ismenion of Thebes, at Telpousa west of Haliartos, at Mt. Thourion near Chaironeia, and at Tegyra near Orchomenos; the sixth is the cult of Trophonios at Lebadeia”⁸. It is not possible here to go through his sometimes complicated demonstration of what A. Schachter called “a Boeotian Cult Type”; nevertheless the main elements can be pointed out. In these six cults he has recognized, with more or less variations, some similar features: a physical environment consisting of a hill or a mountain; a *mantic spring* represented by a female figure (a nymph, a heroine or a goddess), possibly the nurse or the mother of a male figure (hero or god); a male prophet who, in some cases, is “inspired by drinking the waters of the spring”⁹. Moreover, according to A. Schachter, this “Boeotian Cult Type” must be “pre-Apolline”:

In most of the cults of this group, Apollo was grafted on the original complex, in some cases becoming the father of the incumbent [for example, of the hero Ptoios], with the goddess as mother: it is a classic pattern of Apolline usurpation¹⁰.

Let me repeat that this is a typical reasoning of general theories that launch out on what we call in French *la quête des origines*. This quest enthrones, in the “primordial times” a Great Goddess, a Great Mother or Mother Earth, considered by her supporters as an *archetypal* figure, “symbol of the unity of all life in nature”, “personification of all that was sacred and mysterious on Earth”, a supreme divine power whose “main functions were life-giving, death-wielding, and regenerative”, according, for instance, to Marija Gimbutas, a fervent defender of this hazy, indefinite being¹¹.

7. A. BOUCHÉ-LECLERCQ (2003), p. 148 (I, p. 187).

8. A. SCHACHTER (1967), p. 1.

9. A. SCHACHTER (1967), p. 8-9. On the validity of this theoretical plan, cf. the righteous hesitations of P. BONNECHÈRE (1990), p. 60 and note 43.

10. A. SCHACHTER (1981-1994), vol. I, p. 54, 58. On this theory, cf. Y. BÉQUIGNON (1948).

11. M. GIMBUTAS (1989), especially p. XV-XXI, 316-321.

My intention is not to revisit this self-styled universal Lady. I have tried briefly to discuss the inconsistencies of these theories elsewhere¹². Now, returning to the thesis of A. Schachter¹³, I wonder if we deal with “*mantic springs*” in these cult places. First of all, regarding the oracle of Ptoion, in the actual site of Perdikovrysi, there is nothing in the archeological, literary or epigraphic evidence liable to prove or even suggest the presence of the hero Ptoios (still less of an hypothetical “goddess or heroine”) *before* Apollo, whose cult had been established there since the last quarter of the 8th century BC. The cult of the hero Ptoios, at the nearby site of Kastraki was developed, very probably, in the second quarter of the 6th century¹⁴. So, the theory, formulated especially by the French scholar Pierre Guillon, who asserted that the oracular sanctuary at Perdikovrysi belonged originally to the “Hero Ptoios and his kourotrophos”, before their expulsion by the new arrivals, Apollo and Athena Προναία, turns out to be a gratuitous and unfounded hypothesis¹⁵.

Secondly, taking as an evidence “the importance of water in the oracular process at the other sanctuaries belonging” to his “Boiotian cult type”, A. Schachter considers an artificial “grotto” found by M. Holleaux behind the temple of Apollo, and a spring supposed to issue from this cave in Antiquity, as sufficient proofs of the existence “in fact” of “a sacred mantic spring at the Ptoion”¹⁶. Now, if we follow A. Schachter’s theory, this spring would be represented by “a goddess or heroine” before the coming of Apollo (see *supra*, p. 127, with notes 8 and 9). Nevertheless, Jean Ducat had

12. S. GEORGUDI (1994-1995). Cf. also S. GEORGUDI (2002), on Gaia / Gê in relation to these theories.

13. A thesis sometimes adopted without further discussion: cf. S. G. COLE (1988), p. 162: “Water is central to a group of local Boeotian sanctuaries associated with Apollo and prophecy” (following A. SCHACHTER [1967]).

14. On these questions, and on the sanctuary of Apollo Πρώιος (or Πρωϊεύς) in general, I follow the substantial et rigorous study of J. DUCAT (1971). Cf. also P. BONNECHÈRE (1990), p. 56, who is inclined to favour the pre-existence of the Apolline cult.

15. P. GUILLON (1943), p. 99-143. See the critical review of P. Guillon’s theories by J. DUCAT (1964). A. SCHACHTER (1981-1994, vol. I, p. 57) establishes willingly at Perdikovrysi the hero Ptoios as “Apollo’s predecessor there”. As for the sanctuary at Kastraki, one continues to locate there the early cult of “a hero Ptoios and a goddess”, a pair which would be later “suppressed by Apollo and Athena Pronaia”: see Y. USTINOVA (2009), p. 113, who follows – among others – A. SCHACHTER (1981-1994), vol. III, p. 16-17 (on the “Hero Ptoios” and “a mother goddess” as the deities of the sanctuary at Kastraki).

16. A. SCHACHTER (1981-1994), vol. I, p. 65. His opinion is shared also by Y. USTINOVA (2009), p. 114: the prophet of this oracle “appears to have acted by direct inspiration, probably induced by entering the cavern and drinking the sacred water”, and p. 131, note 482.

already positively shown, first, that the alleged “prophetic grotto” is not dated earlier than the temple of Apollo; second, that we know nothing whatever about the function of the spring located below the sanctuary, serving in all likelihood the preliminary, purificatory rites before consultation of the oracle¹⁷. So, there is no evidence that the prophet of Apollo gave his oral responses inspired by the water of this spring and therefore we have no reason to evoke Claros – as does, for example, Pierre Guillon – to justify a cave and a “mantic water” also at Ptoion. The French scholar praised indeed the “prophetic properties” of the spring at Ptoion, and deduced the existence of an original “chthonian couple ... presiding”, as he says, over “*la mantique des eaux*”, from the simple fact that one of the mouths of the spring was formed by the neck and the head of a bronze serpent, “characteristic figure of the chthonian cults”¹⁸ – a definition inappropriate to the polysemous aspects and functions of this animal.

Analogous reflections concern other oracles included by A. Schachter in his “Boeotian Cult Type”. At the Ismenion of Thebes, for instance, the method of divination practiced was “by fire” (διὰ ἐμπύρων), that is by the observation of the burnt offerings and the shape of the flames, but probably also by the inspection of the ashes, as is suggested by the verse 21 of *Oedipus Tyrannus*, where Sophocles refers to the “oracular ashes of Ismenos” (Ἰσμηνοῦ ... μαντεία σποδῶ). In this case, one must not identify this Apollo Ἰσμῆνιος, whose sanctuary was on a hill, at S.-E. of the Electran Gates of the city, with the cult of another Apollo, named Σπόδιος, “of the ashes”, whose oracle was situated on the Kadmeia, the citadel of Thebes¹⁹; because, despite of the cult epithet Σπόδιος – due no doubt to the altar of the god formed with the ashes of sacrificial animals, according to Pausanias – the divination practiced there was based on voices and noises, it was a *klêdonomancy* (μαντική ... ἀπὸ κληδόνων)²⁰. As for a “mantic spring” in the Ἰσμῆνιον, A. Schachter himself is obliged to accept that “there is no stream” there, and “even the river Ismenos is separated from the sanctuary by another low hill”. Nevertheless, he asserts that we have to do, here again, with an original pre-Apolline pair of “a male and a female deity”, that is Melia and her son Teneros. In this context, Melia, associated with water as a daughter of Okeanos, would have given her name, says A. Schachter, to “a spring figured in the supposed original sanctuary”²¹. Indeed, Pausanias (9,

17. J. DUCAT (1971), p. 447-448.

18. P. GUILLON (1943), p. 140-143.

19. Cf. J. C. KAMERBEEK (1967), p. 36, who qualifies this supposition as “unnecessary”.

20. Pausanias, 9, 11, 7. On the location of the “open-air sanctuary of Apollo *Spodios*”, cf. S. SYMEONOGLOY (1985), p. 129-130.

21. A. SCHACHTER (1967), p. 4-5, 8, and ID. (1981-1994), vol. I, p. 78.

10, 5) situates, vaguely, “above” (ἄνωτέρω) the Ismenion, a “fountain (κρήνη) which they say is sacred (ιεράν) to Ares, and [they add] that a dragon was posted by Ares as guardian of the spring (πηγή)” – very probably the “source” of the “fountain”, situated farther off. Now, in their commentary on this passage of Pausanias, Mauro Moggi and Massimo Osanna, without referring to A. Schachter on this point, consider the relation between Melia and the spring as evidence of the “*potere oracolare radicato sul colle Ismenio*”. The presence of the fountain – they assert – constitutes an element which clarifies “*le forze oracolari*” of the sanctuary²². Maybe all this is going too far, in my opinion, since the supposed divination by way of “mantic water” at the Ἰσμῆνιον seems based more on speculations than on the available Greek sources, especially in the case of an oracle where the type of divination practiced was the *empyromancy*²³.

We may express the same doubts upon the other four cults included in A. Schachter’s plan. The spring Telpheusa (Τελφοῦσ[σ]α, or Τελφῶσσα), at the foot of the homonymous mountain, “about fifty stadia from Haliartos”²⁴, is, in fact, related to the sanctuary of Apollo Τελφοῦσιος, founded by the god himself, when he made the spring vanish, hiding her streams “with a shower of rocks”, according to the well known narration of the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* (v. 239-276, 375-387). Was it a spring with “mantic powers”, as sometimes supposed²⁵? It has been actually suggested, by A. Schachter, that the story of Teiresias, who “drinks the water of the spring and dies”, would mark “the existence of an oracular spring” and thus “explain the peculiar potency of the water drunk by the seer”. All these elements are re-considered as proofs of a pre-Apolline cult, developed around an “oracle situated at the foot of a mountain, from which issued a spring with ‘mantic’ powers, presided over by a nymph, and perhaps served by a male prophet, personified by Teiresias”²⁶. This story has been compared with the waters of the infernal springs of Lethe and Mnemosyne, drunk by those consulting the oracle of Trophonios at Lebadeia. According to A. Schachter again, these waters “cleansed the mind of the prospective consultant of memories of things past, and made it receptive to the oracular response”²⁷. I have no intention to touch such a difficult subject, treated thoroughly by Pierre BONNECHÈRE (2003). I will merely point out that we can-

22. M. MOGGI and M. OSANNA (2010), p. 278-279.

23. P. BONNECHÈRE (1990), p. 55; S. GEORGIOUDI (1998), p. 343-344.

24. Pausanias, 9, 33, 1; cf. Strabon, 9, 2, 27, C411.

25. P. GUILLON (1943), p. 104-105.

26. A. SCHACHTER (1967), p. 5, 8, and ID. (1981-1994), vol. I, p. 76, where the “nymph” is transformed into “a goddess”. The author follows perhaps here P. GUILLON (1943), p. 105, for whom the “nymph Telpheusa” was *une ancienne divinité féminine*.

27. A. SCHACHTER (1967), p. 8.

not place on the same level, on one hand, the “mantic water” of a spring which, drunk by a prophet or a seer, that is a cult agent, would “inspire” him, as scholars say (but see below), and, on the other hand, the waters of these two chthonian sources, drunk by people consulting the oracle of Trophonios, going through a very complicated and polysemic ritual, at the end of which they could say what they had “seen and learned”²⁸.

Returning now to Telphousa, I would argue that this spring is, in my knowledge, nowhere qualified as “oracular”. Moreover, even if scholars always refer to the “nymph” Telphousa, she is not qualified as such in the Greek sources²⁹. She is a kind of personification of the spring presented in a positive as well as in a negative light. From the one side, it is a “beautiful-flowing”, a “clear-flowing” spring (κρήνη καλλίρροος), as mentioned in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* (376). Besides, according to a fragment of Pindar, the water that flows from the “fair spring” (καλλίκρηνος) of Τιλφῶσσα, is “honeyed delight, ambrosial”³⁰. From the other side, this water can be mortal to humans³¹, as is shown precisely by the tragic destiny of Teiresias who, according to a version of the story, died “not being able to bear the coldness” of this ὕδωρ, “because of his old age”³². However, Telphousa is accused, in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*, of another misdeed: she “deceived” (v. 376: ἐξάπαφθησε) Apollo Φοῖβος, thus provoking the anger of the god and her own punishment and disappearance (see above). As for the supposed archaic oracle “presided over” by the “nymph” Telphousa, which would have been a hypothetical dangerous concurrent of the Delphic μαντεῖον, and finally ruined by Apollo, I find no element, in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*, liable to uphold such a theory. The fact that Apollo, when arrived at the spring of Telphousa, “was minded to make a glorious temple (νηόν), an oracle (χρηστήριον) for men”, in this “lovely place” (χῶρον [...])

28. Pausanias, 9, 39, 13. On this ritual, see P. BONNECHÈRE (2003), *passim*, especially p. 250-262, 282-291.

29. In addition to references cited above (note 24), see, with respect to the spring, to Teiresias or to Apollo *Tilphousios*: Strabon, 9, 2, 36, C413; Diodorus, 4, 67, 1; Apollodorus, 3, 7, 3; Lycophron, *Alexandra*, 562 and *Scholia*.

30. Pindar, fr. 198b Schröder (*apud* Athenaeus, 2, 41e): μελιγαθὲς ἀμβρόσιον ὕδωρ.

31. As the water of Styx, which was fatal for men or for every living being: see Pausanias, 8, 18, 4, and Pliny (*NH*, 2, 231), who mentions also, in the country of the Tauri, three other springs, which “inevitably produce death, but without pain”.

32. Athenaeus, 2, 41e. Moreover, Telphousa is in some texts associated with worryng beings, she can even be identified with Erinys: the serpent which guarded the source of Ares in Thebes is said to be the offspring of the god and of Tilphōssa Erinys (*Schol. Soph., Ant.* 126: δράκων ἐγγόνει ἐξ Ἄρεως καὶ Τιλφώσσης Ἐρινύος). On the spring Telphousa and its different aspects, see quite recently S. DALMON (2016), p. 101-106.

ἐρατόν)³³, does not presuppose, in my opinion, the existence of a pre-Delphic oracle belonging to a female power, who would be superseded by a male usurper. The only permanent structure mentioned at this place is the altar (βωμόν) which Apollo “made himself [...] in a wooded grove”, where “all men pray to the lord (ἄνακτι) by the name Τελφούσιος, because he humbled the stream of holy Telpousa”³⁴.

Before leaving Telpousa, let us make a last remark briefly. Even if Teiresias is related to this spring by his death, he could not personify a “male prophet” in the service of the supposed “oracle of the nymph”, as A. Schachter believes. The divinatory art of the seer had nothing to do with “water mantic”, but with birds. In fact, in the *Antigone* of Sophocles, Teiresias refers clearly to his “old seat of observing birds” (παλαιὸν θᾶκον ὀρνιθοσκόπον), from which he surveys the “gathering-place” (λιμὴν) where come all kinds of birds. The seer can take omens not only from the cries of the birds, but also from their flights, their movements, from the whirring of their wings, or their behaviour and attitudes towards each other³⁵. Pausanias saw on the Kadmeia, the citadel of Thebes, this famous “bird observatory” of Teiresias, this οἰωνοσκοπεῖον, located probably in the northeast area of the citadel³⁶.

Finally, to close the catalogue of the six Boeotian cults of A. Schachter, we can agree with him when he recognizes that, concerning the temple of Apollo Θούριος “at the foot of the Mt. Thourion near Chaironeia”, there is no direct reference of an oracle or of a spring found there. The fact that the temple was built near a “current” (ῥεῦμα, not a “river”) called *Môrion* (Μώριον), according to Plutarch, does not support a supposed association with “mantic waters”³⁷. Nevertheless, A. Schachter thinks that the story of the seer Peripoltas, established in ancient times at Chaironeia, could

33. *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*, 287-288, 380. Besides, there is nothing, in this hymn, suggesting that Telpousa had any oracular properties.

34. *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*, 384-387.

35. As is the case here (*Antigone*, 998-1022): the strange, unintelligible cries of the birds, the indistinct rush of their wings, their murderous ripping and killing one another “with their talons” (ἐν χηλαῖσιν), all these signs – as also some other ones – constitute for Teiresias bad omens for the destiny of the city of Thebes.

36. Pausanias, 9, 16, 1. On the localization of the observatory of Teiresias, established probably in the Archaic period, and its relation with the other sanctuaries cited by Pausanias on the Kadmeia, cf. S. SYMEONOGLOY (1985), p. 131-132. On the different methods of divination practiced by Teiresias, see L. BRISSON (1976), Index, s.v. *Divination* (nothing on *hydromancy*).

37. A. SCHACHTER (1967), p. 1, 6; Plutarch *Sulla*, 17, 7. Although scholars refer to a “mountain” called Thourion, Plutarch gives another name to this mountain: *Orthopagon* (Ορθόπαγον), “steep-hill” (ὄρος ὃ καλοῦμεν Ὀρθόπαγον), whereas he calls Thourion a locality, not far from Chaironeia.

possibly indicate that “Peripoltas and his historical descendants were associated with an oracle at Thourion”³⁸ – a rather hazardous hypothesis.

As for the oracle of Apollo Τεγυραῖος, at Tegyra near Orchomenos, where local tradition placed the birth of the god, it is true that Plutarch mentions two “springs” (πηγαί) or “streams of water” (νάματα), behind the temple, called “Palm” and “Olive” by the inhabitants³⁹. However, in the evidence, these springs have nothing to do with a supposed “mantic function”. They are admired for their sweetness of taste, their abundance, their coolness. Now, as Plutarch relates, the “goddess” (ἡ θεός, that is Leto), gave birth to Apollo not between two trees, a palm and an olive tree, according to the Delian tradition, but here, at Tegyra, between two streams (ῥεῖθρα). For A. Schachter again, this local tradition of the god’s birth at this Boeotian city would mean that “the god at Tegyra was young and accompanied by a mother goddess”⁴⁰ – another unfounded hypothesis in accordance with the “Boiotian cult type” of the author⁴¹. Anyway, in this oracle, which flourished during the Persian Wars, the prophets do not deal with springs or waters. The god himself gave oracles as, for example, when, under the prophet Echecrates, Apollo foretold “for the Greeks victory and might in the war” against the Medes⁴².

Didyma and Claros

Saying all this, I do not mean that there is no evidence of waters to which some Greek sources attributed oracular qualities, as is shown particularly in the examples of Didyma and Claros. The examination, even rapidly, of the mantic practices of these well known oracles is certainly outside the scope of this paper. However, I would like to return very briefly to some points. It is true that the archeological evidence for the archaic period at Didyma does not exclude the presence of a spring in the vast, inner, walled court-yard of the sanctuary, called ἄδυτον in some inscriptions⁴³. It is true also that literary tradition associates Didyma with fountains, and even with the “twin fountains” (κρῆναι δίδυμα), according to a poem of Callimachus

38. A. SCHACHTER (1967), p. 6. On the seer Peripoltas: Plutarch, *Kimon*, 1, 1.

39. Plutarch, *Obsolescence of oracles*, 5, 412 B; *Pelopidas*, 16, 5-6.

40. A. SCHACHTER (1981-1994), vol. I, p. 75.

41. The problem with the theoretic propositions of A. Schachter is that, sometimes, his followers transform certain suppositions of the author in evident facts: cf. Y. USTINOVA (2009), p. 131, note 482: “Water plays a *prominent* role in other Boeotian oracles of Apollo, at Telpousa and Tegyra” (italics are mine).

42. Plutarch, *Obsolescence of oracles*, 5, 412 B.

43. Spring: K. TUCHELT (1991), p. 85-89; ἄδυτον: *Rev. Phil* (1920), p. 261.

(*Branchus*)⁴⁴. However, different narratives about the spring of the Διδυμαῖον put the accent on two important moments concerning this κρήνη. First, the spring “failed”, “ceased” to function (ἐκλελοιπυίας [...] τῆς κρήνης), in the time of Xerxes, when Apollo abandoned his oracle being plundered by the Branchidae who had taken the side of the Persians. Nevertheless, after a long time, very probably when Miletus recovered its independence under Alexander, “the spring re-appeared”, “emerged” (τότε ἢ τε κρήνη ἀνάσχοι), as a sign of the revival of the oracle (between 334 and 331 BC)⁴⁵. Second, during the Gothic invasion in the third century AC, when people took refuge inside the walls of the ἄδυτον, and suffered from thirst, a “miracle (θαῦμα) of the Pythian god [...] saved (διέσωσε)” them: at the commands of Apollo, “a spring bubbling with golden-running streams” (πηγή βλύσασα νάμασιν χρυσορρύτοις) burst up, thanks to the salutary intervention of the god, who unfolded this “vein” (φλέβα). This marvellous event, narrated by three poems preserved on an inscription, is followed by the praise of Festus, “governor of the famous Asia”, who ornamented magnificently this spring, “having surrounded it with a polished decoration” (κόσμον γὰρ αὐτῇ ξεστὸν ἀμφιθεῖς)⁴⁶.

Whatever the history of this spring may be, let us return to the question asked before in the case of other oracles: is the spring of Didyma “mantic”, is it a “prophetic” water supposedly associated with the “depths of the earth” (or even with a “Mother Earth”) according to an opinion shared by many scholars⁴⁷? The only document referring to the role of the water

44. Callimachus, fr. 229, v. 11, with the commentary of R. Pfeiffer ; cf. Y. DURBEC (2006), p. 192-195. Would these “twin fountains”, be an allusion to the “twins” Apollo and Artemis, as I had supposed (S. GEORGOUDI [1998], p. 323)? I think now that, in the context of this poem, which begins with an invocation to Phoibos and to Zeus qualified as “ancestors of Didyma” (Διδύμων γενάρχα), it would be possible to consider the κρήναι διδυμαί as indicating the existence of “double fountains” (or springs) in the sanctuary. According to a decree of Miletus, Didyma was claimed as the place where “Zeus and Leto were united in love” (Λητοῦς καὶ Διὸς μεῖξιν) and therefore where Apollo was conceived (*Syll.*³ 590, l. 8-11, ca. 196 BC). Stephanus Byzantius (*s.v.* Διδύμα) mentions also the presence of “fountains” (in the plural) at Didyma, designated as “place and oracle of Miletus, dedicated to Zeus and to Apollo” (τόπος καὶ μαντεῖον Μιλήτου, ἀφιερωμένον Διὶ καὶ Ἀπόλλωνι).

45. Callisthenes, *FGrHist*, 124 F 14 (Jacoby), *apud* Strabon, 17, 43, C814.

46. The three poems: *SEG* IV (1929), 467, I, II, III. Cf. L. ROBERT (1948), p. 25, 68-70, 74-75; H. W. PARKE (1985), p. 94-97 (the author thinks, contrary to most scholars, that Festus had decorated not “the sacred prophetic spring itself”, but a “new fountain”, a “fresh source of water”, which the people encircled in the temple would have discovered by digging elsewhere in the ἄδυτον).

47. Cf., for example, A. LAUMONIER (1958), p. 563: *une source oraculaire*; H. W. PARKE (1985), p. 41: “the spring, as no doubt in primitive times, was the local source of inspiration”; H. W. PARKE (1986), p. 124: “The sacred spring would seem to have been the centre and source of prophecy”; J. FONTENROSE (1988), p. 23-24.

(ὕδωρ) and of the spring (πηγή) at Didyma is a long passage of Iamblichos which constitutes the unique description of the functioning of the oracle⁴⁸. As Parke says judiciously, Iamblichos, writing by the end of the third century AD, “will not have derived his knowledge from direct personal enquiry, but from literary sources now lost”⁴⁹. Interested particularly in the divination practised at Delphi, Claros and Didyma, Iamblichos distinguishes four different methods of inspiration at Didyma, four modes separated, I would say, by the conjunction εἶτε:

The woman at Branchidae, a singer of oracles (χρησιμῶδος), either (εἶτε) when holding the rod which was originally handed over by some god, is filled with the divine radiance (πληροῦται τῆς θείας ἀγῆς), or (εἶτε) sitting on an *axōn* she foretells the future, or (εἶτε) dampening her feet or the hem of her robe with water, or (ἦ) being vaporized by the water, she receives the god (ἐκ τοῦ ὕδατος ἀμιζομένη δέχεται τὸν θεόν). (Transl. Parke, slightly modified.)

According to J. Fontenrose, this passage of Iamblichos suggests that the προφῆτις of the oracle “apparently drank it [the spring water] too”⁵⁰. In fact, an analysis of Iamblichos’ text shows that the act of “drinking” is *not* mentioned. Probably, Iamblichos assembled these methods from different sources, according to a tendency observed in late authors who used to transfer the divinatory practices of an oracle to another. We could also say that, for Iamblichos, the woman he names χρησιμῶδος or προφῆτις “receives the god” (δέχεται τὸν θεόν), by means of different procedures, of which water represents *one* of these possible ways. No doubt this is not sufficient, because, to become “fit... for receiving [the god] from outside” (ἐπιτηδεῖα [...] πρὸς τὴν ὑποδοχὴν ἔξωθεν), the προφῆτις must prepare herself by some preliminary acts: baths, fast for three whole days, long stay in the ἄδυτα etc. Only then will she be ready to “partake” (μεταλαμβάνει) of the god⁵¹.

If drinking from a “mantic water”, at Didyma, remains a hypothesis privileged or even considered an evidence by scholars, in the oracle of Claros, we are in front of a fact, if we relay on archaeological and literary

48. Iamblichos, *de Mysteriis*, 3, 11 (127, 4 - 128, 4). On Iamblichos and his treatise, see the pertinent paper of A. BUSINE (2002).

49. H. W. PARKE (1985), p. 210.

50. J. FONTENROSE (1988), p. 83-84 (see also above, p. 126 and note 5, what the author says “about drinking water from a sacred spring”). On the analogy of Claros, H. W. Parke (1985, p. 214) supposed that at Didyma, “in the archaic period the prophet had drunk inspiring draughts of water from the fountain”, but I see no evidence in favour of this hypothesis. On the prophet and the other ministrants of Apollo Didymeus, see J. FONTENROSE (1988), p. 45-62; on the relation between the προφῆτις and the ἱερεύς (priest) at Didyma, cf. S. GEORGIOUDI (1998), p. 352-354.

51. Iamblichos, *de Mysteriis*, 3, 11 (127). Cf. also A. BUSINE (2002), p. 196-197.

sources. An official who, for some scholars, was the prophet, and for others the θεσπιφῶδός, the “singer of oracles”⁵², drank from the water of a well in the temple, and pronounced or sang the oracular responses. According to the report of L. ROBERT, who excavated the temple of Apollo in Claros, in the underground ἄδυτον composed of two chambers, the water was originally collected at the far end of the inner chamber, behind a kind of balustrade. Later on, a rectangular well was installed in the pavement, into which the water arrived from the plain⁵³. Anyway, Greek or Latin authors refer in general to a “spring” (πηγή, *fons*), as, for example, Iamblichos or Tacitus. According to Iamblichos, “the oracle at Colophon ... prophesies by means of water (δι’ ὕδατος χρηματίζειν). For there is a spring in a subterranean chamber, from which the prophet drinks (ἀπ’ αὐτῆς πίνειν τὸν προφήτην) ... and having drunk, he utters oracles (πιόντα δὲ χρησιμωδεῖν).” As for Tacitus, it is not a woman, “as at Delphi” – he says – but a “priest” (*sacerdos*), chosen from certain families, who descends “into a grotto (*specus*), and taking a draught of water from a hidden spring ... he produces replies in set forms of verse” (transl. Parke)⁵⁴.

As Iamblichos remarks, it is “obvious” (πρόδηλον) that this water of Claros is “mantic” (μαντικόν). But, for the Neoplatonist philosopher, this

52. On the prophet: cf., for example, H. W. PARKE (1985), p. 220-222. In favor of the θεσπιφῶδός: L. ROBERT (1967), p. 310-312; L. and J. ROBERT (1989), p. 3; J. and L. ROBERT (1992), p. 286; J.-L. FERRARY (2010), p. 102-106.

53. L. ROBERT (1967), p. 311 (“*un puits rectangulaire de 1,41 m sur 96 cm*”). I would add at this point, that we find, this time in main Greece, another example of a “well”. According to Pausanias (9, 2, 1): “On Mount Cithaeron, within the territory of Plataea, if you turn off to the right for a little way from the straight road, you reach the ruins of Hysiae and Erythrae. Once they were cities of Boeotia, and even at the present day among the ruins of Hysiae are a half-finished temple of Apollo and a sacred well (φρέαρ ἱερόν). According to the Boeotian story oracles were obtained of old from the well by drinking of it.” One has the impression here that everyone can be inspired by the water of the well, not only the prophetic agent in the service of Apollo. However, we cannot generalize and affirm that, in this passage, “Pausanias records that in Boeotia of old, oracles were obtained by drinking water” (Y. USTINOVA (2009), p. 131-132). – On the oracle of Claros, see most recently J.-C. MORETTI and L. RABATEL (2014).

54. Iamblichos, *de Mysteriis*, 3, 11 (124). Tacitus, *The Annals*, II, 54: H. W. PARKE (1985), p. 136-138, 219-224. The word *specus*, used by Tacitus (but also by Pliny the Elder, *NH*, 2, 232), to describe the place where enters the *sacerdos*, has been considered as the evidence of a “prophetic grotto” at Claros, a “natural or artificial cavern”: Y. USTINOVA (2009), p. 111-112. The author refers to L. ROBERT, indicating that, in his paper of 1967, he “exposed the artificial grotto in its basement, fully preserved” (p. 111). However, in this description of the excavations at Claros, L. ROBERT speaks about the “*adyton souterrain*”, the “*crypte oraculaire*”, or the “*partie souterraine*”, but he does not mention a *grotto* (L. ROBERT 1967, p. 309-311). On the controversial problem of a grotto at Claros, cf. S. GEORGOUDI (1998), p. 325-326; A. BUSINE (2002), p. 191.

ὔδωρ depends completely on Apollo. In fact “the divine ... it is by providing from outside and illuminating the spring, that it impregnates it with its own mantic power”⁵⁵. We find the same idea expressed in an Anacreontic poem, where the poet celebrates the “babbling water (λάλον ὔδωρ) of bay-bearing Phoebus by the slopes of Claros”⁵⁶. In final analysis, the water drawn from the spring of Claros has nothing to do with a vague “chthonian” divinity; it is the god himself who confers to this ὔδωρ its mantic qualities and functions.

Dodona, Delphi and others

In any case, without denying the existence of such kind of mantic waters, the interest for me relies on the manner in which some scholars try to transform a spring, in an oracular sanctuary, into a powerful “mantic” factor. We read, for example, that

Apollo is also associated with *prophetic springs* ... near Pharai in Messenia, Pagasai in Achaia ...in Epirus ... [or] in the Karnasian grove near Megalopolis⁵⁷.

If we read carefully the references cited as proofs of this assertion, we see: first, that “not far from Pharai”, Pausanias (4, 31, 1) mentions *simply* a spring of water (ὔδατος πηγῆ), in a grove (ἄλσος) of Apollo Κάρνειος, without any other indication; second, that Hesychius (*s.v.* Παγασίτης) refers only to the epithet Παγασίτης after which Apollo is called “among the Achaeans in Pagasai and among the Thessalians”; third, that in Epirus, Aelian mentions *no spring*, but a grove (ἄλσος) of Apollo, a god honoured by the people of Epirus. Aelian describes there an oracular procedure, which has nothing to do with water. In this grove live serpents, considered as “pets of the god” (τοῦ θεοῦ ἄθουμα), fed by the priestess of Apollo. If the serpents “take the food with eagerness”, this is the sign of a year of prosperity and free from sickness; if they refuse the food, the serpents “are foretelling (μαντεύονται) the reverse of the above”⁵⁸. As for the Karnasian grove (ἄλσος) near Megalopolis, “thickly grown with cypresses”, Pausanias (4, 33, 4) mentions only a “water which rises from a spring” (ὔδωρ δὲ ἀνεισιν

55. Iamblichos, *de Mysteriis*, 3, 11 (124-125): Τὸ γὰρ θεῖον [...] ὡς παρέχον ἔξωθεν καὶ ἐπιλάμπων τὴν πηγὴν, πληροὶ δυνάμεως αὐτὴν ἀφ’ ἑαυτοῦ μαντικῆς. Cf. A. BUSINE (2002), p. 193-194.

56. *Anacreontea*, 12 (Campbell). The poet adds also that a number of those who drink this ὔδωρ of Apollo “go mad and shout”. Anyway, the effects produced by this water can be terrible. Pliny will say (*NH*, 2, 232), that, by drinking the water of Claros, “a power is acquired of uttering wonderful oracles; but the lives of those who drink of it are shortened” (cf. also above, p. 131, with note 31).

57. S. G. COLE (1988), p. 162 (italics are mine).

58. Aelian, *On the characteristics of animals*, 11, 2.

ἐκ πηγῆς), close to the statue of Ἀγνή, “epiclesis of Kore, daughter of Demeter”, with no other indication of a so-called “prophetic” character of the spring.

We find comparable attempts to establish “oracular springs” in various places, even if there is no evidence to prove or suggest such a “mantic property” of the waters. This is the case, for example, of the extra-urban sanctuary of Apollo Σμινθεύς, at Chryse, the Ionian city in the Troad, where, according to Pausanias (10, 12, 5-6), there was a tomb of the Sibyl Herophile in the grove of the god. “By the side of the tomb – he says – there is a Hermes of stone, a square-shaped figure, and on the left, water is descending to a fountain (ὔδωρ δὲ κατερχόμενον ἐς κρήνην), and statues of the nymphs.” It is not a question here of “a spring of the nymphs”, as affirms H. W. Parke, who thinks that we deal with “a setting of divination like those known elsewhere”⁵⁹. The fact that, according to some sources⁶⁰, Apollo Σμινθεύς delivered oracles says nothing concerning the method used⁶¹, nothing on a supposed “prophetic water”, and Strabo (13, 1, 63), called for help, keeps silent about the presence of a spring.

Leaving aside other analogous cases, where the eagerness to invent “mantic springs” is not corroborated by Greek sources, I would like to refer, very briefly, to the oracle of Dodona. For some scholars, as for example for Greek archaeologists, not only do we have “talking doves”, “rustling oaks”, “resounding bronze cauldrons”, as fundamental supports of prophesy at Dodona, but also a “mantic spring” flowing from the roots of the oak tree⁶², a spring associated with Zeus called Νάϊος. According to these scholars, this epithet would be derived from the verb νάω, “flow”, although this association is rejected by P. Chantraine and his etymological dictionary⁶³. Others derive the epithet Νάϊος from the verb ναίω, “dwell”, “abide”, and consider, arbitrarily, this Zeus of Dodona as a “chthonian” god, whose “dwelling” place is the earth of Dodona⁶⁴. In addition, some scholars, particularly Dakaris, one of the main excavators of Dodona, affirm that the cult of the

59. H. W. PARKE (1985), p. 176-177, followed by S. S. G. COLE (1988, p. 163), who includes this sanctuary among the “oracular spring shrines”.

60. See: Ovid, *Fasti*, 6, 420-429: the king Ilus, after founding Ilium, consulted Apollo Σμινθεύς about the Palladium fallen from heaven on the hills of the Ilian city; Menander Rhetor, *Sminthiakos* (ed. D. A. Russel and N. G. Wilson, Oxford, 1981), p. 206 *sqq.* Neither Ovid, nor Menander say anything about spring waters.

61. Cf. W. FRIESE (2010), p. 394: “Methode/Medium: Unklar. Möglicherweise inspiriertes Kultpersonal”.

62. Cf. S. DAKARIS (1973), p. 90-91; D. EVANGELIDIS and S. DAKARIS (1959), p. 142 (with references).

63. P. CHANTRAINE (1968-1980), *s.v.* νάω. On Zeus Νάϊος at Dodona and the different theories about the signification of this epithet, cf. W. PÖTSCHER (1988), p. 173-207.

Dodonaean Zeus was not the oldest of the sanctuary; “it was preceded by the cult of the Earth goddess, the mother of Nature, common throughout the Aegean area”⁶⁵. Moreover, in order to reinforce the argument of the “prophetic spring”, they propose to identify this primordial “Great Goddess of fertility” with Dione, a “local form of the Earth-Mother”, as conjectures L. R. Farnell⁶⁶. According to this theory, Dione, as daughter of Oceanus, or as one of Nereids⁶⁷, would have taken the form of “an ancient local divinity of water”, a “mistress of waters and life”⁶⁸. I have tried elsewhere to reconsider, among others, the groundless theory of an archetypal female deity worshipped at Dodona before Zeus, and also the persistent modern legend about the “rustling of the leaves of the oak tree”, a sound through which the oracles would be conveyed⁶⁹. I will only point out here that there are no traces, literary or archaeological, of any “mantic spring” at Dodona, except in a passage of the Servius’ commentary on Virgil’s *Aeneid* (3, 466), which, however, is full of inaccuracies. In fact, Servius speaks about a fictitious temple, in the territory of the Aetolians, consecrated to Jupiter and to Venus. “By this temple – continues Servius – there is said to have been a large oak tree, from whose roots a fountain (*fons*) used to flow which by its murmur (*suo murmure*) through the inspiration of the gods used to deliver oracles. These murmurs an old woman, by name Pelias, interpreted and expounded oracles⁷⁰.” As H. W. Parke rightly remarks (*ibid.*), the Servian commentary, “tested on what we know better of Dodonaean history ... seems to preserve at most very *distorted* echoes of the tradition”. Actually, “the spring with prophetic murmurs is not mentioned elsewhere”, but “in the Roman period there were stories of a famous spring at Dodona”. Pliny, for example, mentions a fountain of Jupiter at Dodona, whose special feature was that “though it is cold and extinguishes torches dipped in it, when they are brought near it without fire, it sets them alight”⁷¹. The same fountain, con-

64. Cf. É. LHÔTE (2006), p. 415-420; I. VOKOTOPOULOU (1992), p. 68 (on the “chthonian character” of Zeus).

65. S. DAKARIS (1971), p. 82; cf. also p. 30, 40, 53.

66. L. R. FARNELL (1896), p. 39: “The Dodonean earth-goddess must be Dione”. Cf. also G. RACHET, fervent supporter of this theory (1962, p. 88): *Et cette déesse-mère est bien représentée dans le culte dodonéen par Dioné*.

67. Hesiod, *Theogony*, 353; Apollodorus, 1, 1, 3; 2, 7.

68. J. RUDHARDT (2006), p. 102; A. GARTZIOU-TATTI (1990), p. 183.

69. S. GEORGIOUDI (2012). See also H. W. PARKE (1967), p. 70: “There is certainly nothing in all this material to suggest that the worship of Dione had once existed as something independent of Zeus and elsewhere than at Dodona.”

70. H. W. PARKE (1967), p. 66-67 (I quote the translation of Parke). This fanciful commentary of Servius seems willingly accepted by I. VOKOTOPOULOU (1992), p. 69: “selon une tradition Zeus donnait ses oracles même par le murmure des eaux d’une source” (although the author does not mention Servius – emphasis is mine).

71. Pliny, *NH*, 2, 106 (228).

tinues Pliny, “always stops flowing at noon and for this reason it is called ἀναπαύομενον⁷², but later it rises again and towards midnight flows abundantly”. One can note here, following again H. W. Parke, that although this fountain is mentioned also by other roman sources, as Mela, or Solinus, neither Pliny nor these authors make any reference or suggestion that its water “was used for divination”.⁷³

This text of Pliny, quoted above, gives me the occasion to make a remark. A confusion is often made between waters considered by the Greeks as “mantic”, and springs or fountains with extraordinary features, like those that Greeks define as “marvellous”, belonging to the category of the θαυμάσια. Therefore, it is not judicious, in my view, to classify among the “oracular springs”, waters with such a character as, for example, the waters of a κρήνη (or a πηγή) at the oasis of Siwa, near the oracular temple of Ammon. It was called the “Spring of the Sun” out of its behaviour: for “its waters change in temperature oddly in accordance with the hours of the day. At sunrise it sends forth a warm stream, but as the day advances it grows cooler [...] until under the noonday heat it reaches its extreme degree of cold”⁷⁴. As observes H. W. Parke: “The fountain of the sun does not seem to have been brought into any connection with the oracle. It simply remained a local marvel⁷⁵.”

72. This word is repeated later by *Etymologicum Magnum*, s.v. ἀναπαύομενον ὕδωρ (“water taking rest”), referring to a “spring in Dodona”, with the same characteristics described by Pliny. As H. W. Parke reasonably remarks, “there is no suggestion of anything except a natural marvel, and no hint that it could be used for divination” (H. W. PARKE [1967], p. 68).

73. Mela, *De chorographia*, 2, 43 (ed. P. Parroni, Roma, 1984); Solinus, 7, 2 (p. 55 Mommsen). Lucretius (*De natura rerum*, 6, 879-882) refers to a *frigitus fons*, where “a torch will kindle and flare round, along its waves”, without giving a place name; very probably it concerns the *Iouis fons*, mentioned by Pliny. See H. W. PARKE (1967), p. 67. On the absence of a “mantic” source at Dodona, cf. also: E. EIDINOW (2007), p. 67; M. DIETERLE (2007), p. 41-42 (with references): the possible relation of Zeus Νάϊος with flowing waters or with springs in the territory of Dodona does not support the theory on the cult of an “uralter Quellgott”, identified later with Zeus; S. I. JOHNSTON (2008), p. 66 (even if she finds “interesting, however, that the idea of an inspirational spring eventually attached itself to Dodona”). We must also remark that neither the word πηγή, nor κρήνη appear in the numerous lead tablets of the oracle: see now S. DAKARIS, I. VOKOTOPOULOU and A.-Ph. CHRISTIDIS (2013).

74. Diodorus, 17, 50, 4 (κρήνη); cf. Herodotus, 4, 181 (κρήνη Ἡλίου); Arrian, *Anabasis*, 3, 4, 2 (πηγή); Lucretius, *De natura rerum*, 6, 848-852 (*apud Hammonis fanum fons*); Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 15, 309-310 (*unda*); Pliny, *NH*, 2, 106 (228): *Iouis Hammonis stagnum*, etc.

75. H. W. PARKE (1967), p. 199 (and see, p. 245-249, his discussion on this spring in relation to Roman poets).

On the other hand, I think that we must not put and treat the act of *drinking* water, considered as “mantic”, on the same level with other types of oracular modes, having their own codes, contexts and agents, as *hydromancy*, “water-divination”⁷⁶, or *katoptromancy*, “divination by means of a mirror”, a practice in use in the sanctuary of Demeter at Patrai, in front of which there was a spring (πηγή). “Here – says Pausanias – there is a “not lying” (ἄψευδής) oracle, not indeed for everything, but only in the case of sick people. They tie a mirror to a fine cord and let it down, judging the distance so that it does not sink deep into the spring, but just far enough to touch the water with its rim. Then, after praying to the goddess and burning incense, they look into the mirror, which shows them the patient either alive or dead”⁷⁷. Finally, there must not be confusion with what we could call *ichthyomancy*, “divination by means of fish”, as practised, for example, by the “fish-diviners” (ἰχθυομάνταις) of Lycia, near the shore of the sea, where there was a grove of Apollo. The responses to oracle-seekers were given by observing the kind of a great quantity of fishes (τὰ εἶδη τῶν ἰχθύων) appeared in a pool of sea water⁷⁸.

We must notice that in all these cases, there is no need to imagine a “chthonian” power or a “mantic”, autonomous, capacity of the water. The divinity (god or goddess) is always there, in order to communicate her responses by means of a mirror, or of a spring water functioning as a mirror, or through animals as fish, of which the behaviour reveals, sometimes, the answer of the oracular god, as in a bay at Myra of Lycia. In fact, there were a spring and a temple of Apollo, where the priest of the god used to scatter the flesh of previously sacrificed calves in the water. If the fish come and

76. As at the oracle of Aphrodite at Aphaca: Zosimus, 1, 58; cf. W. FRIESE (2010), p. 97, 205, 256, 422. Or, at the oracle of Apollo *Thyrxeus*, close to Cyanae by Lycia, where the water of a spring shows to the person looking into “all the things that he wants to contemplate” (θεάσασθαι): Pausanias, 7, 21, 13. We have no reason to suppose here the existence of “*un vieil oracle chthonien émanant de la source-nymphé prophétesse*”, which Apollo would usurp later, as affirms R. LEBRUN (1990), p. 193, in accordance with the “cliché” interpretative.

77. Pausanias, 7, 21, 12. Nothing in the text of Pausanias allows us to speak about an oracle belonging to Demeter *and* to Gaia / Gê, or about a “Priester”, as believes W. FRIESE (2010), p. 97, 380), following perhaps the unfounded assertions of J. HERBILLON (1929), p. 27-34. Pausanias says only that, in the sanctuary of Demeter, there are statues of the goddess and her daughter standing, while the image of Earth is seated. The divinity to whom sick people pray and for whom they burn incense is no doubt Demeter, ἡ θεός (εὐξόμενοι τῇ θεῷ), who delivers her responses by means of the mirror. Cf., on the mirror, F. FRONTISI-DUCROUX (1997), p. 194-195 (I cannot find evidence supporting the idea that this spring was “*un lieu d’ouverture sur le monde d’en bas, monde des morts*”).

78. Polycharmus (“in the second book of his *History of Lycia*”), *apud* Athenaeus, 8, 333 df.

eat the flesh, this is a good omen for the sacrificers because it shows that “the god is propitious” (ἴλεων εἶναι τὸν θεόν). If however the fish cast the food ashore with their tails, “this is believed to signify the wrath of the god” (τοῦ θεοῦ μῆνις)⁷⁹. Anyway, the oracular god himself presides over the mantic procedure and delivers his replies, even if he chooses different means of transmission of his wills.

This brief and inevitably incomplete survey of springs and fountains could not be closed without some very rapid considerations about Delphi; certainly not with the intention to go into long explanations about the role and the function of the two important springs, Castalia and Cassotis, essential elements of the Delphic scenography. I would like to refer very summarily to the problem of a “mantic spring” at Delphi, which continues to provoke discussions, even if it is above all the thorny question of the πνεῦμα, which occupies scholars since a long time ago. The conviction that there was an “oracular water” at Delphi which inspired the Pythia has not lost its strength. For A. Bouché-Leclercq⁸⁰ and some others, unaware of our current archaeological evidence, the “running waters” of Castalia or Cassotis played this role. Castalia was considered a source of prophetic inspiration by some later writers of the second century AD, as Oenomaos of Gadara⁸¹ or Lucian. In the *Zeus Tragôidos* (30), Lucian makes Apollo respond to Momus, the spirit of mockery, and confess that he cannot foretell which sophist will win a competition, because there is no tripod, nor fumigations, or “a prophetic spring like is Castalia” (πηγῆς μαντικῆς οἷα ἡ Κασταλία ἐστίν)⁸². Very soon, Cassotis became the “mantic spring” *par excellence*, on account of the often quoted passage of Pausanias (10, 24, 7): “they say (λέγουσι) that the water of this Cassotis sinks under the ground and, in the ἄδυτον of the god, makes the women mantic” (τὰς γυναῖκας μαντικὰς ποιεῖν). We may remark here that Pausanias describes what he *saw* in the πρόναος and in the ναός, but what he relates about Cassotis and its “mantic” power depends only on hearsay⁸³. It is almost certain that

79. Aelian, *On the characteristics of animals*, 12, 1. For other versions of the same story concerning this *fons Apollinis*, see Pliny, *HN*, 31, 18 (22), and 32, 8 (17). Cf. also R. LEBRUN (1990), p. 192-193.

80. A. BOUCHÉ-LECLERCQ (2003), p. 260-261 (I, p. 349-350); 613-614 (III, p. 100-101).

81. Oenomaos *apud* Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica*, 5, 28, 9 (on Castalia as source of prophetic inspiration by drinking its water: τὸ Κασταλίαις ὕδωρ πινόντων); cf., with regard to this text, H. W. PARKE (1978), p. 209.

82. See also Lucian, *Dialogue with Hesiod*, 8: “I will foretell and give an oracle in advance, even without Castalia and laurel and Delphic tripod ...”

83. Pausanias relates what he “sees” by himself (cf. the verb θεάομαι), or what he hears from others (λέγουσι, “it is said that ...”). On this direct and indirect style of Pausanias, cf. V. PIRENNE-DELFORGE (2008), p. 54-55, 58, 61, 125, 139, 220.

Pausanias has not entered the “innermost part of the temple” (τοῦ ναοῦ τὸ ἐσωτάτω), the ἄδυτον, where “few are present”. However, as it is well known now, the excavations of the Apollo temple have neither found a subterranean spring, nor a conduit leading into the ἄδυτον, in order to bring there the waters of a spring exterior to the temple⁸⁴. In addition, it must be remarked that, a long time before these recent, improved conclusions, some specialists of Delphi had already criticized severely the idea that a “mantic water” or vapours and exhalations were used to inspire Pythia to prophecy⁸⁵. Nevertheless, this idea is so deeply rooted, that some scholars try to find various explanations: for example, that, one way or another, Pythia had access to this inspirational water, given that in “*several sanctuaries of Apollo water was an important instrument in the mechanism of prophesy-giving*” (italics are mine)⁸⁶ – a rather general and exaggerated statement, which does not correspond, in my opinion, to the reality of Apollo’s cults; or that a channel bringing the water into the ἄδυτον existed in the Alkmaionid temple of the sixth century BC⁸⁷, even if this fact is contradicted by the excavators⁸⁸. However that may be, the supporters of a “mantic spring” at Delphi, leave without answers a series of questions, as, for example, why the Greek authors, from the archaic period onwards, like Pindar, Bacchylides, Herodotus, Euripides, etc., remain silent about a supposed “oracular spring” at Delphi; or why Plutarch, a person with strong interest in prophesy, occupying an official post at Delphi, does not even men-

84. P. AMANDRY and E. HANSEN (2010), p. 73. Cf., on this point, the excellent paper of Georges ROUGEMONT (2013), offering a substantial assessment of the archaeological information, available now, regarding of the interior fitting of the temple, where the oracle was consulted. His conclusion is perfectly clear (p. 58): *l’adyton n’était pas souterrain ... aucune adduction d’eau n’y pénétrait*.

85. Cf. P. AMANDRY (1950), p. 137 (referring to the text of Pausanias, cited above): *ses dires ne sont pas confirmés par le résultat des fouilles*; p. 219: *Les fouilles n’ont découvert aucune trace de fissure dans le sous-sol de l’adyton du temple de Delphes*. J. FONTENROSE (1978), p. 202-203 (referring also to the text of Pausanias): “As is well known, the geological and archaeological exploration of the temple site ... has revealed no chasm, cave, or exhalations of any kind”; although he declares that “All that we know with some certainty is that the Pythia prepared herself by bathing in the waters of the Castalian spring”, the author makes the hypothesis that “she probably drank from this spring too” (p. 224) – relying on the very uncertain and confused testimonies of Oenomaos of Gadara and Lucian (already quoted), or of Gregory of Nazianzus (see below, p. 145-146 with note 101).

86. Y. USTINOVA (2009) p. 131: “Before entering the adyton, the Pythia drank from a sacred spring ... Water of the Cassotis spring near the temple of Apollo was said to sink under the ground to make the Pythia prophesy in the adyton.”

87. Cf. S. G. COLE (1988), p. 162.

88. P. AMANDRY (1950), p. 137: the channel fedded by a reservoir constructed in the sixth century, to the south of the temple, on the level of the adyton, did not pass through *nulle part les soubassements du mur de la cella*.

tion Castalia or Cassotis in his Pythian Dialogues (an issue requiring further study).

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This kind of questioning could bring us very far. So, in conclusion I would like to say that, finally, the “harvest is proved rather meagre”. The ancient cult reality of the oracular centers does not confirm the presence of a “considerable number of *mantic* springs or fountains” asserted by A. Bouché-Leclercq and other scholars, a supposed *important* number which would “bring to light”, according to R. Ginouvès, “the *inspiring power* of the water”⁸⁹. Many springs or fountains existed in the oracular sanctuaries and, in general, in many other sacred places, particularly in the healing *ιέρα*⁹⁰. Anyway, most of them served to ablutions and purifications, as precisely Castalia⁹¹, or the fountain in the sanctuary of Amphiaraios at Oropos⁹², and many others. There is even, according to Diodorus (17, 50, 3), a “sacred spring” (*ιερὰ κρήνη*) of Ammon (other than the one mentioned before), “in which the offerings addressed to the god are purified”⁹³. Some springs could also serve to quench pilgrims’ thirst, as the “sacred spring”, flowing near an oracle of Inō, in Laconia, the water of which, as Pausanias says, was “sweet to drink”⁹⁴. We are not obliged to attribute “mantic” qualities to this water; all the more so, because the mode of divination in this oracle was the *oneiromancy*: “They consult the oracle in sleep, and the goddess reveals whatever they wish to learn, in dreams.”

Finally, few springs could play a role during the divinatory procedure, and in this case the water can function as one of the many other agents of transmission, in the service of the “mantic power of the gods” (*ἡ μαντικὴ τῶν θεῶν δύναμις*). In fact, as Iamblichos says, this power is not limited to one factor, but “it fills up all things (*πληροῖ πάντα*), permeates all the elements (*ὄλων τε τῶν στοιχειῶν*), seizes the earth, and the air, and the fire, and the water (*γῆν τε καὶ ἀέρα καὶ πῦρ καὶ ὕδωρ*)”⁹⁵. Perhaps, for this reason, Iamblichos qualifies the “inspired” method of divination of the oracles (*τῶν*

89. A. BOUCHÉ-LECLERCQ (2003), p. 454, n. 58 (II, p. 264, n. 3); R. GINOUVÈS (1962), p. 329 (italics are mine).

90. Cf., for example, E. LUPU (2005), p. 29 (sanctuaries’ regulations to protect their water sources); p. 339 (source of water with therapeutic qualities in a sanctuary of Asclepius at Lissos of Crete, with references). See also R. GINOUVÈS (1994).

91. See on this point, H. W. PARKE (1978), p. 202-203.

92. Cf. P. SINEUX (2007), p. 136.

93. Diodorus, 17, 50, 3: τὰ τῷ θεῷ προσφερόμενα τυγχάνει τῆς ἀγνείας.

94. Pausanias, 3, 26, 1: ῥεῖ δὲ καὶ ὕδωρ ἐκ πηγῆς ἱερᾶς πιεῖν ἡδύ.

95. Iamblichos, *de Mysteriis*, 3, 12 (129).

χρηστηρίων) as “manifold” (πολυμερὲς ἔνθεον μαντεῖον), because it can take diverse forms⁹⁶. So, I would say that the spring water in an oracular center has not automatically and by its own qualities a “prophetic” power, supposed to be of “chthonian” character, since it is “arising out of the earth”, as some scholars assume. This water is an element of the nature which could be used, sometimes, by the oracular god as a kind of “transmitter”, to inspire the human agent and convey his answers and wills to him. From this point of view, the god can dominate springs (as rivers or mountains) and obtain whatever he wishes from them. As Philostratos says, it would be easy for Apollo “to alter the springs of Castalia and make it pour out wine”⁹⁷. In this way, the water becomes an instrument handled and controlled by the divinity, in his possession, as is shown in a response that Apollo was supposed to have given on the obsolescence of oracles: the god, named in this case Helios, is presented as the only deity *having* still “the inspired water of Mykale in the hollow grounds of Didyma”⁹⁸. However, one has the impression that Christian authors attribute the capacity to utter oracles more to some elements or objects than to gods, as if they wanted to occult the prophetic power of oracular Greek divinities. So, particularly the disappearance of the “talking spring”, the extinction of the “babbling water”, indicates that the oracles of Apollo have ceased to function, as it is shown by the well known oracle of Apollo quoted by Philostorgius, a Cappadocian resident in Constantinople, author of a *Historia ecclesiastica*: “Say to the king... (that) Phoibos has no more hut, no more mantic laurel, neither talking spring, and the babbling water is extinguished”⁹⁹. Already, Clement of Alexandria had pointed out the silence of the spring Castalia (at Delphi), and “of the other spring of Kolophon” (at the oracle of Claros), as well as the “death of the other mantic streams”¹⁰⁰. Similarly, for Gregory of Nazianzus (4th century AD), “the oak does not speak and the cauldron does not give oracles” (no doubt an allusion to the oracle of Dodona), and “again the spring Castalia [at Daphne] ceased to speak and keeps silent, and water

96. Iamblichos, *de Mysteriis*, 3, 11 (123).

97. Philostratos, *The life of Apollonius of Tyana*, 6, 10: ῥαδίον γε ἦν αὐτῷ [...] τὴν Κασταλιάν δὲ οἰνοχοῆσαι μεταβαλόντι τὰς πηγὰς.

98. Porphyry *apud* Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica*, 5, 16, 1: Μούρω δ' Ἑελίω [...] εἰσέτ' ἔασιν ἐν Διδύμων γυάλοις μυκαλήϊον ἔνθεον ὕδωρ. Cf. J. FONTENROSE (1988), p. 219-220.

99. Philostorgius (4th-5th century AD), *Historia ecclesiastica*, 7, 1^o (eds. Bidez, Des Places, *Sources chrétiennes*, n^o 564, Paris, 2013): Εἶπατε τῷ βασιλεῖ [...] Οὐκέτι Φοῖβος ἔχει καλύβαν, οὐ μάντιδα δάφνην, οὐ παγὰν λαλέουσαν, ἀπέσβετο καὶ λάλον ὕδωρ.

100. Clement of Alexandria (2nd-3rd century AD), *Protrepticus*, II, 2, 1: καὶ τὰ ἄλλα ὁμοίως τέθνηκε νόματα μαντικά.

is no more prophetic, but laughable”¹⁰¹. But, in reality, there is no reliable evidence of a “prophetic” function of this spring, or of water drunk by an agent; it is Apollo who “utters oracles” (χρησιμολογεῖν)¹⁰².

To sum up, at the end of these partial reflections, I would say that the question of the “mantic spring waters”, in the context of Greek divination, can give an example of how some general and global ideas can, in the course of time and by dint of repetition, be considered as “evident” facts, despite a more equilibrated and differentiated image presented by the poly-semantic Greek cult practice.

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101. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Or.*, V, 32 (*In Julianum ... invectiva* II [Κατὰ Ἰουλιανοῦ σηλιτευτικός λόγος Β], ed. Bernardi, *Sources chrétiennes*, N° 309, Paris, 1983). This spring, called also Castalia, was in the oracle of Apollo at Daphne, near Antioch: cf., among other references, Sozomen (d. ca. 450 AD), *Historia ecclesiastica*, V, 19, 5-11 (ed. Bidez, Hanse, *Sources chrétiennes*, N° 495, Paris, 2005); N. BELAYCHE (2004), p. 155.

102. *Souda*, s.v. Κασταλία. — In 2015, during the excavations carried out in Cerameicus by the German Archaeological Institute of Athens, a well, eight meters deep, was found in a sanctuary dating from the Roman Imperial Period, and already known from the excavations of the nineteenth century. This well, the opening of which was covered by an *omphalos*, is coated by clay-rings, each of which bears the following inscription: ΕΛΘΕ ΜΟΙ Ω ΠΑΙΑΝ ΦΕΡΩΝ ΤΟ ΜΑΝΤΕΙΟΝ ΑΛΗΘΕΣ (“Come to me, oh! Paian, bringing the true oracle”). According to recent research, the sanctuary “may be identified with an oracular *hieron*”, consecrated to Artemis *Soteira* and to Apollo *Paian*. The archeologist Jutta Stroszeck, responsible of the excavations – to whom I am grateful for this information – thinks that we have here an *hydromanteion*. Awaiting the final publication of this archeological report (see, for the moment, J. STROSZECK [2015-2016]), one could think that the water of the well played probably a role in the mantic ritual. However, I notice that the accent is not put on the water (the word ὕδωρ is nowhere mentioned), but on the action of the god, the only divine power capable to give oracles, using any means he likes.

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