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Polemic in Greek Art and Architecture

At the sanctuary of Apollo at Delphi, as indeed within all religious sanctuaries of the Greeks, dedications to the god, once placed within the sanctuary, could not be removed, as they became the property of that god.¹ Such dedications would be offered in honour of the god, but, equally importantly, in order to commemorate publicly an achievement – be it military, sporting, political or cultural – of the dedicator. Delphi was perhaps a singularly important and attractive place to erect such a dedication, both because of its key historical role in Greek culture and events, and because any such monument would subsequently be seen by a large regular crowd of worshippers coming to consult the oracle or take part in the regular Pythian games. At the same time these dedications were, because of the steep mountain landscape on which the sanctuary was set, cramped together onto prebuilt terraces. The impact of this was to ensure that dedications were clustered much more tightly together than at other comparable sanctuaries.²

Delphi thus offers a case study in which works of art and architecture, set up by a wide range of individuals, cities, and states, commemorating nearly every key moment in Greek history, politics and culture, jostled in close confines with one another over an extended time period, creating a vibrant monumental artistic and architectural storyboard of Greek history, politics and culture.³ It was in these conditions, I will argue, that the art and architecture of these dedications developed a subtle and evolving polemical dynamic of their own, focused on how to understand the past and the roles played in it by the different dedicators.

In this chapter, I examine one particular set of monuments related to one (very important) period in Greek history: the Persian invasion of 480-79 BCE. I will investigate the ways in which, at the time of their creation, these monuments, in conjunction with, but also independent from, their creators offered their own critiques of the works of others that had come before them. In turn, these monuments claimed for themselves, as well as attempted to diminish, the authority of other monuments and their meanings, as part of an ongoing battle to offer a particular version of history. In turn, I will consider how this cluster of monuments, over the many centuries that they were on display at Delphi, continued that polemical dynamic for the many generations of visitors who came to see them.⁴

At the beginning of the fifth century BCE, the major reconstructions that had taken place in the sanctuary of Apollo at Delphi over c. 575-525 BC had been completed. A new temple to Apollo, fronted in marble paid for by the Alcmaeonids of Athens, stood at the heart of a newly expanded sanctuary area (increased by 13.25m on the east, west and south sides).⁵

¹ There is only one known example, before the Roman period, of dedications, once dedicated, being removed from the sanctuary of Delphi, due to their dedicators (the Phocians) having acted sacrilegiously by illegally taking over the sanctuary during the Third Sacred War of the fourth century BCE: *CID* II 34 II.56-62.

² E.g. Olympia, set on an open plain: Scott 2010.218-40.

³ Cf. Scott 2014. 285-90; Scott 2015.

⁴ All reference numbers in bold relating to monumental dedications constructed at Delphi (both in the text and in the figures) refer to those in Scott 2010.

⁵ *Hdt.* 2.180; 5.62.

While larger monumental dedications such as treasuries tended to occupy positions in the newly expanded (and thus eminently available) areas of the sanctuary (e.g. the Siphnian Treasury), there was also a rush to fill in the temple terrace around the front of the newly completed temple with statue dedications.⁶ In particular, these new statue dedications commemorated military victories, a reason for dedication that had in fact been largely absent at Delphi during the sixth century BCE.⁷ The Phocians, for instance, dedicated 'statues' on the temple terrace alongside 2000 shields to commemorate victory over the Thessalians.⁸

The city of Athens had commemorated its victory over the Persians at Marathon in 490 BCE in several parts of the sanctuary: with the completion of a new treasury (probably on the foundations of an older previous Athenian structure) in the lower part of the Apollo sanctuary; with the placement of a victory inscription on the Apollo temple façade itself, as well as hanging captured shields over the temple's metopes.⁹

A decade later the sanctuary itself was said to have resisted the Persians during the invasion of 480-79 BCE with the help of the gods, and soon after the key victories at Salamis and Plataea were commemorated at Delphi more visibly than in any other sanctuary.¹⁰ Crucially the monuments celebrating victory at Salamis and Plataea were placed exclusively on the temple terrace around the new Temple of Apollo. As such, within a very short space of time, a number of monuments by different groups, individuals and city-states, were all set up within close proximity to one another, that offered competing artistic and architectural visions of the same period of history.

The first to commemorate was a multi-regional Greek council, the Amphictyony, which, since the early sixth century BCE, had had a major role in governing the sanctuary. This was, however, their very first dedication (as a council) in the sanctuary since taking up that role just under a century previously. It did not commemorate the council's role in the battle, but instead honoured a father and a daughter who were said to have helped cut the anchor lines of the Persian fleet at Artemisium.¹¹ This statue group (**102**) of father and daughter stood on the east temple terrace somewhere near the front of the Apollo temple.

⁶ For discussion on the important question of what degree of autonomy dedicators had to choose the location of their dedication (as opposed to it being decided for them by sanctuary authorities): Scott 2010.29-41.

⁷ Jacquemin 1999.190.

⁸ Hdt. 8.27; Jacquemin 1999.174. At the same time, dedicators at Delphi seem to have begun to favour the use of tripods (which hitherto had been used to celebrate choragic victories) to celebrate military victories. This was not a change in use seen at other sanctuaries like Olympia at this time: Amandry 1987.99.

⁹ Treasury + accompanying statue group + inscription to victory at Marathon (*FD* III 2 1): Bommelaer 1991.136; Partida 2000: 56-8. Inscription on the temple: *FD* III 4 190; Courby 1927.106. Shields (potentially 490 or 479 BCE): Paus. 10.19.4; Bommelaer 1991.180. It is worth noting that Athens did not celebrate Marathon as a polis at Olympia, with the only surviving commemorations being a Persian helmet dedicated by the Athenians, and one by the Athenian general Miltiades himself: *IG* I³ 1467; *IG* I³ 1472.

¹⁰ Hdt 8.36. Reasons for highly visible commemoration of these victories at Delphi: possible 'medisation' of Delphi in this period: Scott 2010.81.n.30; need to ensure the continuing independence of the sanctuary and stop it from drifting into Spartan control: Plut *Vit. Them.* 20.3; follow up on an oath at Thermopylae to dedicate a tithe from all traitors at Delphi: Hdt. 7.132; re-lighting of all fires across Greece with fire from the sacred heart of Delphi (demanded by the Pythian priestess of Delphi): Parke and Wormell 1956. Cat No. 104.

¹¹ Paus. 10.19.1.

Almost immediately afterwards another statue – this time of Apollo – was dedicated, situated very specifically facing the statue of Apollo in the Temple’s east pediment, in line with the axis of the temple (103).¹² As such it faced (perhaps almost directly) the Amphyctyony’s father and daughter statue. The bronze statue of Apollo was 5.91m high, and was dedicated to commemorate victory at Salamis (exemplified by the model of a ship in Apollo’s hand).¹³ By whom it was dedicated is a more complex question as the accompanying inscription survives with the exception of the first word: the dedicator. The name, to fit the space of the neatly cut inscription, has to be 8 Greek letters, and scholars have suggested *Athenaioi* ‘Athenians’, *summachoi* ‘Allies’, or indeed ‘*Hellenes*’ ‘Greeks.’¹⁴ While we cannot know for sure which of these groups dedicated the statue, crucially they were not the same community grouping as the Amphyctyony who had dedicated the previous monument.

Almost immediately at Delphi then, directly visible to any visitor to the temple terrace, within the context of the narrow temple terrace now increasingly full of military commemoration, were two visions of Greek community (the Amphyctyony v. potentially the ‘Athenians’/ ‘Greeks’/ ‘Allies’), which had each prioritised a different way of artistically memorialising the recent conflict. Visitors to Delphi we know often felt attachment to monuments erected by their own communities.¹⁵ We also know that visitors reacted as individuals to particular artistic representations, being impressed by their magnificence or sculptural beauty, debating their meaning and sculptural choices.¹⁶ Indeed it was the simultaneous exposure to so many different monuments, created by so many different communities from across the Greek world (not to mention sculptors), all congregated in one place (indeed squashed together on the tight terraces of the Parnassian hillside), that made the experience of visiting Delphi so unique in the Greek world.¹⁷ Visitors to the temple terrace, depending on their own experiences, understandings, and community allegiances, would, in turn, have perhaps felt themselves drawn to one or other of these groupings/representations. They may also have ended up sympathising with aspects of them both e.g. feeling allegiance to one community but empathising more with the representation of the other. At the very least they would have found themselves drawn into discussing the artistic representation and meaning of these monuments. These dedications would thus have initiated an on-going polemic amongst visitors to the temple terrace about the monuments, their sculptural form, as well as about the events (and communities) they commemorated, refreshed each time a new group emerged onto the temple terrace.

In short order, that polemic amongst visitors was also memorialised in monumental form by a number of individual groups who moved to put up their own monuments on the eastern temple terrace to commemorate their individual roles in the Persian invasion, several of which sought to align themselves stylistically with one of the proceedings monuments: the

¹² Laroche and Jacquemin 1988.

¹³ The statue’s height made it stand out: it was referred to as the ‘*meGas andrias*’ in later inscriptions: *FD III 5* 22.29-30.

¹⁴ *FD III 1 2*; Laroche and Jacquemin 1988.245. *Hellenes* would follow Herodotus’ description of the alliance fighting at Salamis: 8.96, 122.

¹⁵ Cf. the way in which visitors from a particular *polis* seem to have preferred to inscribe their own personal thanks to the God on monuments dedicated by their *polis*: Jacquemin 1999.224.

¹⁶ E.g. Eurip. *Ion* 185-240; Plut. *Moralia* 399F, 401A-D.

¹⁷ Cf Delphi created a ‘profound interest in interacting’: Tanner 2006.45.

Salamis Apollo. The Peperethians (**104**) celebrated their victory over Carian ships feeling from Salamis with an almost identical (although miniaturised) version of the Salamis Apollo: their dedication used the same material (bronze), had the same form of base, and copied the same pose as the Salamis Apollo. The Epidaurians (**106**) also erected an Apollo statue, to commemorate their small number of ships at Salamis, on the temple terrace. So too, at some point over the next two decades, did the Samians (**94**).¹⁸ The polemic instigated amongst visitors to the temple terrace at Delphi was thus reflected in permanent monumental form within the sanctuary, with these mimicking monuments expressing, through their stylistic similarities, an affinity with both the artistic expression of the victory and with the community (whoever that may have been) who erected it. Moreover, the sheer number of monuments coalescing around, and mimicking the style of, the Salamis Apollo in turn lent authority to the community who had set it up and the importance of their role in the battle these monuments all commemorated. In contrast, the Amphictyony, despite their important role in the running of the sanctuary, very quickly after 480 BC, I would argue, would have looked like a community not only out of step with the artistic consensus on how to commemorate victories over the Persians, but largely irrelevant to this moment in history.

There were also more individual monumental voices. The Aeginetans, in contrast to those who echoed the Salamis Apollo, erected a bronze mast with gold stars at its top (**105**). In the later literary sources, the need for this rather different and individual monument was explained as a request from the Oracle given that Apollo was not satisfied with the Aeginetan offerings thus far.¹⁹ Herodotus goes on to describe how the god's request for the 'victor's-prize' from Salamis was interpreted stylistically in the Aeginetans' offering of the bronze mast and gold stars (no doubt something that was being discussed by visitors to the temple terrace). Yet their dedication may also have been an attempt specifically to re-write (or rather re-present) history. Some Greeks, and especially the Athenians, felt that the Aeginetans had actually sided with the Persians at key points over the last decades and that this monument was an attempt to 'correct' the version of events as enshrined at Delphi (and the Athenians were also upset at this time by the Aeginetans' erection of another monument at Marathon claiming a role for themselves in that battle too, which the Athenians also denied they had had).²⁰ As such the Aeginetan monument did not simply induce polemic as to its stylistic choices, nor only in how it (and thus the Aeginetans) related to the community gathering of (and around) the Salamis Apollo, but in addition to the very historical narrative of the battle itself and the side the Aeginetans had taken.

In the immediate aftermath of 479 BCE, another monument (**109**) was erected, almost side by side with that of the Salamis Apollo, to commemorate victory ostensibly at Plataea. Its location (to the south of the Salamis Apollo) meant that it would now be seen first by visitors walking up through the Apollo sanctuary to the temple terrace, and its size (at 9m tall, not to mention the fact that it was placed on top of the sanctuary's older boundary wall as a foundation) meant that it was not only even more visible, but that it dwarfed all the other Persian invasion monuments in the area.²¹

¹⁸ *FD* III 4 455; Strauss 2004.34.

¹⁹ *Hdt.* 8.121-2.

²⁰ Paus. 10.18.1; Jacquemin 1999.251; Scott 2014.110-11.

²¹ Scott 2014.121.

Yet this monument – in its artistic form – completely differentiated itself from previous commemorations of victory over the Persians at Delphi and was in fact unique across Greece. It consisted of 3 intertwined bronze serpents, with a tripod in gold resting on their heads.²² Both the serpents and the tripod linked directly to Delphic mythology and practice (the importance of the tripod as the seat of the Pythian priestess and the serpents as Delphi once being the home of the serpent Pytho defeated by Apollo when he took control of the sanctuary), as well as echoing the recent move to use tripods at Delphi for military (rather than choregic) victories.²³ Such a monument, in its design, would not only have inspired discussion from visitors as to its meaning related to Plataea, but also have encouraged discussion of its linkages through to other parts of Apollo’s sanctuary at Delphi, and indeed to other monuments within it (and thus to other mythical and historical events commemorated within the sanctuary, as well as to the individuals, *poleis* and community groupings involved in them).

That discussion is evidenced for us in the later writings of Demosthenes, who argued that this monument sought to evoke the power of human endeavour. The material it was made from (according to Demosthenes) evoked the battle itself: the monument was composed from spoils taken from the Persians on the battlefield.²⁴ It was, according to Demosthenes, set up to Apollo, but as a monument to human bravery.

The monument itself also inspired an ongoing polemic on the topic of its dedicatory community. Inscribed onto the coils of the intertwined serpents (and still visible today) were the names of the different Greek city-states who claimed the victory. The total number of city-states recorded, 31, is, however, larger than the number of communities we know to have taken part in the battle of Plataea. As such, this monument seems to have been set up as more of a catch all for all those who had fought against the Persians at some point during the invasion.²⁵

Yet Demosthenes also reveals that the list of city-states inscribed on the monument was not its first inscription. He claims that Pausanias, the Spartan general, initially had the monument inscribed to reflect the victories over the Persians as his own personal victories:

‘Pausanias, the king of the Lacedaemonians, puffed up by this, inscribed a distich upon the tripod at Delphi... “Pausanias, supreme commander of the Greeks, when he had destroyed the host of the Medes, dedicated to Phoebus this memorial.” He wrote thus, as if the achievement and the offering had been his own and not the common work of the allies; and the Greeks were incensed at this, and the Plataeans brought suit on behalf of the allies against the Lacedaemonians before the Amphictyons for one thousand talents, and compelled them to erase the distich and to inscribe the names of all the states which had had a part in the work.’²⁶

²² Scott 2010.85.

²³ *Hom. Hymn Apollo* 182-387; *Plut. Mor.* 417F; Jacquemin 1999.133.

²⁴ *Dem. Neaera* 59.97.

²⁵ Meiggs and Lewis 1988. Catalogue No. 27; *Dem. Neaera* 59.97.

²⁶ *Dem. Neaera* 59.97 (Loeb Translation)

Demosthenes is not alone in telling this story. Thucydides, writing closer in time to the events in question, offers us a slightly different version, one in which the Spartans themselves censured Pausanias' arrogance, rather than it being left to the rest of the Greeks to do so:

'Now the Lacedaemonians had immediately chiselled off these verses and inscribed on the tripod by name all the cities which had had a part in overthrowing the Barbarians and had together set up this offering.'²⁷

We hear from the later writer Diodorus Siculus that the famed poet Simonides was also then commissioned to write a couplet to have inscribed on the column (although no record of it can be found on the column today). His couplet, if it was put up, once again, spoke to the human community effort in resisting the Persians: 'The saviours of Greece at large dedicated this, having delivered the cities from wretched servitude.'²⁸

Within just a few short years, therefore, around the cramped east end of Apollo's temple at Delphi, had gathered a plethora of monuments commemorating the same key events in Greek history, dedicated by a range of different individual cities and wider community gatherings. These monuments confronted one another physically within the confines of the temple terrace, even standing side by side in some cases. What they offered to the visitor was a series of jumping-off points for polemical discussion about their artistic choices and sculptural meaning as well as the role and importance of the communities who had dedicated them. That polemic did not unfold, however, simply between the visitors, but also between the gathering number of monuments themselves, creating between them more and less authoritative visions for how to understand the recent past. The dynamic polemical space thus created on the temple terrace at Delphi was refreshed every time new visitors, with different experiences, beliefs and expectations arrived at the sight, every time a new interpretation of (or story to be associated with) a particular monument was offered, and each time a new monument was itself added to the space.

Perhaps most polemical was the discussion these monuments created around the issue of whose victory it had been against the Persians. Set up round the temple terrace were monuments articulating very different definitions of Greek community: from the Amphictyony, an old multi-regional association of city-states and older tribal *ethne*; to (potentially) 'the Greeks' of the Salamis Apollo, to the specific 31 city-states listed (eventually) on the Plataean Serpent column. The monuments reflect the confused, competing and overlapping temporary community identities the Greeks gathered in, and felt themselves part of, at the time of the Persian invasions. Accompanying these competing articulations were the stories – very probably well known to the visitor to the temple terrace – of individual actions to claim these victories for themselves (e.g. by Pausanias), as well as of course, the dedications by individual city-states underlining their own particular roles in the battles, and even those by city-states like the Aeginetans, potentially seeking to re-present their roles not only in particular battles but also indeed across the entirety of the

²⁷ Thuc. 1.132 (Loeb Translation)

²⁸ Dio. Sic. 11.33.2.

Persian wars. The temple terrace at Delphi was thus a dynamic polemical space in which the very nature of the past was at stake.

Almost immediately after the erection of the Plataean Serpent column, the clamour of competing versions of what happened during the Persians invasions on the eastern temple terrace of Apollo at Delphi intensified further. On the one hand, just as after Salamis, individual city-states came forward to underline their own particular presence at the battle of Plataea. The Plataeans erected a statue of an ox (**112**) in-between the temple and the community Salamis and Plataean monuments.²⁹ Yet the other dedications at this time were more complicated. The Carystians, like the Plataeans, offered a statue of a cow and a calf (**111**), this time placed close to the Amphictyonic statue (**102**). Yet the Carystians, according to Herodotus, actually fought on the Persian side during the Persian wars.³⁰ Their monument seems to have been an(other) attempt not just to offer a competing version of history, nor indeed simply to add their individual voice to that history, but to re-present history. Nor were the Carystians the only ones to do this. Alexander I of Macedon placed a large golden statue of himself near to the Salamis Apollo, and in so doing eliding the fact he had originally supported the Persians and only later come over to the Greek side.³¹

That certain Greek city-states were attempting to use monumental dedications in this area in front of Apollo's temple not only to stamp a particular slant on recent history, but re-present it entirely, does not seem to have gone unnoticed – or indeed unchallenged. The Aeginetan offering of bronze stars on a gold mast, dedicated after Salamis, seems to have been visually challenged – in artistic and architectural form – by their arch enemy the Athenians, and particularly by the Athenian general Kallias, who dedicated a horse statue from spoils he had taken in the Persian war, very close to the Aeginetan offering.³²

Within a decade of the Persian invasion, the eastern end of the temple of Apollo at Delphi had become a highly charged polemical space, offering competing versions of history itself. Before any history books could be written of the Persian invasion (and subsequently be criticised by, and competing versions be offered in, subsequent historical texts), the dedication of monuments at Delphi acted as the primary – and indeed only – means of establishing a permanent historical record visible to all. What we see at Delphi is the capture in permanent monumental form of the near immediate rush to create a narrative of, and way to understand, the recent past, with polemic at its very heart.

It should come as little surprise that other dedicators, not immediately associated with the events at Salamis and Plataea, should have subsequently sought to utilise the particular dynamics of this space, not to insert themselves specifically into the Salamis and Plataean narratives, but to claim association with them for their own achievements. Gelon, the tyrant

²⁹ Scott 2010.87.

³⁰ Hdt. 9.30-1; Jacquemin 1999.261.

³¹ Medisation: Hdt. 8.142, and its reversal: Hdt. 9.44-5; Jacquemin 1999.253. The statue itself teetered on hubris: close to the statue of Apollo dedicated after Salamis, Alexander's figure would have echoed that of Apollo himself. It was, we think, the first such commemorative statue – of the dedicator – ever seen at Delphi (bar that of Pythian games victors): Hammond and Griffith 1979.103.

³² Statue: Paus. 10.18.1. Confronting Aegina's version of events: Scott 2010.97; Jacquemin 1999.251; Amandry 1954.300.

ruler of Syracuse, soon after 480 BCE, dedicated at Delphi to celebrate his victory at Himera over the Carthaginians. It was later claimed by Herodotus that the battle took place on the same day as the battle of Salamis, and later still by Diodorus Siculus that it took place on the same day as the battle of Thermopylae.³³ While this has been heavily disputed by modern scholars, we can see this desire to equate the war to save Greece from the Persians with the war to save Magna Graecia from the Carthaginians implicit in Gelon's monumental dedication at Delphi in the immediate aftermath of his victory. His monument (**110**) was placed on the eastern temple terrace, in the midst of the many Persian war victory monuments. Its artistic design – that of a bronze column, supporting a caryatid figure in turn supporting a golden tripod – immediately linked it with the nearby Plataean serpent column (with its gold tripod on top of the entwined snakes).³⁴ Nor is this simply an attempt to create equivalence through sculptural similarity. It is, in addition, also an example of Gelon, in the spirit of Alexander I of Macedon, trying to re-present history. For it was to Delphi, we hear from Herodotus, that Gelon had sent gifts, only a few years earlier (and thus potentially still viewable somewhere at the site), for the Persian King to welcome him to Greece during the early part of his invasion.³⁵

As noted above in the introduction, one of the most important features of dedications within sanctuaries is their longevity: they could not be removed from the sanctuary. The dedicatory landscape developed in front of the temple terrace related to the Persian invasions thus remained for visitors to engage with over the following centuries. However, that does not mean that, over that time, the polemical dynamic created between these monuments, and between the monuments and the visitor, did not itself continue to evolve.

In part, this was because of the increasing importance over time of the Persian wars as a key defining moment in Greek history. As Osborne comments “‘what did this city do in the Persian wars?’ [became] the first historical question whose answer mattered that could be asked of all Greek communities.”³⁶ The very questions at the heart of the permanent polemical dynamic created by the different monuments on the temple terrace at Delphi – regarding the roles played by different individuals and communities in the Persian wars – became ever more crucial questions to offer an authoritative answer to.

At the same time, Delphi continued to evolve. For example, in the period 479-460 BCE, it was Athens, more so than any other central Greek city-state, who sought to contribute further at Delphi to underline their (ongoing) contribution to the fight against the Persians. Monuments were erected on the temple terrace, as well as at the entrance of the sanctuary.³⁷ All of these monuments would have been seen by visitors making their way up

³³ Hdt. 7.166; Diod. Sic. 11.24.1.

³⁴ It was also likely similar in height to the Plataean serpent column: Scott 2010.88

³⁵ Hdt. 7.161-3.

³⁶ Osborne 2009.312. This idea, of the Persian invasions of Greece becoming such a key defining moment for Greece as a whole, links to the famous quotation of Xenophanes Frag. 22 (Leshner 1992), relating to the experience of the Persian invasion in Ionia in 546-5 BCE: “In winter, as you lie on a soft couch by the fire / Full of good food, munching on nuts and drinking sweet wine / Then you must ask questions such as these: / ‘Where do you come from? / Tell me, what is your age? / How old were you when the Mede came?’” (Leshner).

³⁷ A palm tree with a golden statue of Athena (**136**) was erected on the temple terrace to celebrate Athenian success at Eurymedon, physically opposing (like Callias' horse) the Aeginetan monument from the Persian wars cf. Amandry 1954.300. Athenian statue group at the entrance to the sanctuary (**142**): Scott 2010.97.

to the temple terrace, making them part of the polemic about how to understand the past, and the role of particular communities in it.³⁸

That polemic – as played out amongst the ever-increasing number of monuments on display at Delphi – only became more complex in the second half of the fifth century BCE. On the one hand this was because there were now available historical accounts alongside that of Delphi's monuments (e.g. those of Herodotus and Thucydides), which, as we have seen, often spoke about (and relayed particular kinds of information on) the monuments erected at Delphi, adding further layers to the polemical dynamic these monuments created for the visitor. At the same time, the temple terrace of Apollo continued to change. During the second half of the fifth century BCE, it became one of the key areas in which to oppose Athenian domination (of the sanctuary but also of Greece) with monuments set up by Athens' enemies. The Athena and palm tree dedication, for example, on the temple terrace, was itself confronted by a statue group of cavalry riders (**144**) offered by Pherai in Thessaly in honour of a battle in which they had opposed Athens.³⁹

The polemical dynamic continued to evolve in the fourth century BCE thanks to the removal of certain parts of some of these monuments. During the Third Sacred War in the first half of the fourth century BCE, the Phocians took over the sanctuary at Delphi. While dedicating their own new monuments, they also – sacrilegiously – melted down precious metals from monuments to pay for their campaign. Amongst these were the golden tripod that stood atop the Plataean serpent column, the golden tripod crowning Gelon's commemoration of the battle of Himera, and perhaps even the entire golden statue dedicated by Alexander I of Macedon.⁴⁰ While the Phocians were punished for their religious crimes (and their own monuments later removed from the sanctuary), the objects lost were not replaced. These key monuments in the ongoing polemic about how to understand the Persian wars, now limped on – in some cases half the monuments they were, in others, now only stories of what they had once been.

Such evolution of this polemical space continued throughout Delphi's history, both in terms of the stories told about these monuments in the ever-increasing number of ancient writers who wrote of these events and monuments, and in terms of continued changes to the dedications on display on the temple terrace. That these specific monuments to the Persian wars, which we have focused on in this chapter, continued to hold particular importance and regard, as part of Greece's history, right through into the later Roman empire, however, is evidenced by the fact that in the fourth century CE, when the Roman Emperor Constantine, was choosing monuments to take from across the Empire to set up in his new capital at Constantinople as representative of that Empire, the one monument he took from Greece was from Delphi: the Plataean Serpent column dedicated some 800 years previously.⁴¹

³⁸ Equally the Cnidian Lesche, constructed by the mid fifth century BCE in the northern half of the sanctuary of Apollo at Delphi, contained paintings which depicted the battle of Eurymedon, and more widely also reflected on Greece post the Persian wars: Jacquemin 1999.210-11; Kebric 1983.

³⁹ Scott 2010. 98.

⁴⁰ Diod. Sic. 16.56.6; Jacquemin 1999.238.

⁴¹ Jung 2006. 378-81.

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