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The Officials of Oracular Sanctuaries in Roman Asia Minor*

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Who were those who worked in the oracular sanctuaries in the Roman East as interpreters of the god's will? What were their functions? What part did they act in society?

In order to answer to these questions, this article takes a look at the officials in charge of the oracular sanctuaries in Roman Asia Minor during the first three centuries A.D. It will concentrate on the sacred personnel working at Clares and Didyma, which are the two main oracular shrines in the region, given both their importance at the time and the richness of surviving documentation.

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Abbreviations (Other abbreviations are taken from the Année philologique):

I Didyma

A. REIM and E. HARDER, Didyma II. Die Inschriften, Deutsches Archäologisches Institut (Berlin 1938).

Robert, Amyzon


Robert, Carie


Robert, Laodicée


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1 Indeed, though there is a number of places in Roman Asia Minor where the presence of an oracular cult is attested (e.g. Hierapolis, Gymnion, Patara), there is evidence for no other oracular sanctuaries for the analysis of their clergy members.
Introduction: Greek Cults under Rome’s Control

As is well-known, the sanctuaries of the Greek cities under Rome’s control continued to perform an important role in the civic and religious life, at least until the fourth century A.D. Following in the steps of Hellenistic kings, Roman rulers have always expressed their will to respect the religious traditions of the conquered populations. As long as they did not endanger the Roman authority, the traditional cults were maintained in the Greek-speaking Roman provinces and continued to function outwardly as in the archaic and classical periods. Therefore, the sanctuaries of the Greek cities were still an essential component of the structure of the civic community during the imperial period. As previously, they were asked by secular authorities to give their advice even on non-religious matters.

However, whereas the working of Greek sanctuaries seems not to have been affected by the changes within the central power, the traditional religious institutions were ascribed a new role to play in the Eastern Roman provinces, thanks to the particular attention the Roman authorities gave them. As imperial rule had some religious ideological basis, the emperors and the provincial governors, who represented them at the local level, wanted to win the foreign gods’ approval. Some of them, like Hadrian, even made the cults one of the central objects of their euergetism. The intervention of the Roman rulers into the sanctuaries’ administration was expressed by giving honours and was thus crucial for both the well-being of these religious institutions and the prosperity of the cities to which they belonged. In a context of economic affluence, the sanctuaries in Asia Minor enjoyed prestigious privileges, e.g. tax exemptions, which made them rich, renowned, and at the same time more powerful.

The increasing power of the rich religious institutions of the Roman East obviously had an impact on the part acted by the sacred officials who ran the sanctuaries: priestly office became extremely prestigious and the priests’ significance in society gained considerable importance. In this respect, oracular priests are of great interest because the interpretation of divine words and the making of sacred texts conferred on them effective means to act upon society.

A. Greek Priesthoods between Religion and Politics

Often neglected by scholars, Greek priesthoods provide a major focus for the analysis of the close interweaving of the political and religious spheres in ancient world.

Traditionally, modern scholars have not shown a great interest in the study of pagan priesthood. They have stressed the weakness of their function and organiza-

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4 Dignas (2002a) 139–217.
7 Le Cuen (1988).
tion in contrast with their Jewish and Christian counterparts, and they have concluded from that comparison that priests were unimportant to the workings of Greek religion. Therefore, specialists of Greek religion have often neglected the crucial significance of those who were employed by the sanctuaries.

Nevertheless, in recent decades, pagan priesthood has become a fruitful topic for the study of the functioning of Greek religion as well as for the analysis of the interplays between politics and religion in ancient society.

Modern scholars have attempted to point out the differences between pagan and Christian priests, in order to distinguish between the different individuals referred to by the same Greek word, ἱερεύς (hieros). It appears that, unlike their Christian equivalents, the pagan priestly function did not at all involve a moral support to the worshippers and that the pagan priests were not organized in a unified clergy.

At the same time, it has been asserted increasingly often that it is in the nature of Greek cults to be completely involved in the civic and political life of the poleis. Consequently, modern scholarship has emphasized the assumption that the priests were an essential component of the political sphere. Referring to the accounts of Plato's Laws (759c–760a) and Aristotle's Politics (1299a 15–19, 1322b 18–29), scholars have repeatedly stated that Greek priests are to be considered just as civic magistrates. In this perspective, their liturgical authority ought to be understood as the legislative, judicial, financial or military authority of other civic officials. If there were some life priesthoods, as for secular officials, the sacred personnel was usually taken on for a definite period, following the assembly’s decision. Greek priesthood was generally not a way of life, only a part-time and honorary office, which could bring great prestige and make a political career easier. Finally let us recall that priests were appointed by various means, as lot, election, birth or even sale. Except for cases of hereditary priesthoods, anyone could become a priest and, in principle, there were no priestly castes.

However, can we properly think about the religious officials’ role in ancient society merely as that of the other civic officials? Did the sacred character of the cults not impart to the priests a specific aura which would distinguish them from the magistrates?

In her recent study of the "Economy of the sacred" in the Hellenistic and Imperial periods, B. Dignas suggests that we should reconsider the commonly accepted features of priesthood. While asserting a substantial independence of the sanctuaries from the secular authority, she raises the issue of the distinctive character of

\[^4\] See, e.g., Ziehen (1913); Stengel (1920); James (1955); des Places (1969); Sabourin (1973) 35–40; but Frézouls (1987) (mostly based on Latin inscriptions).


priestly authority in relation to the civic power. According to her, priests possessed a group identity that marked them as distinct from the rest of civil society.

A number of key issues arise from this statement: every study of religious officials should take into account the specific status of priests, as well as the particular rights and privileges enjoyed by them, in order to question the precise relationships between secular and sacred power on the one hand, and between the sanctuaries’ and rulers’ policies on the other.

This article situates itself in this scholarly debate; more particularly, it aims at delving into the question of the staff of the Greek oracular sanctuaries during the Roman period. Indeed, these cult places had that distinctive feature of being in a position to provide the pilgrims with the divine answers to their enquiries. The production of sacred texts conferred on the oracular shrines great theological authority as well as political and economical power. Moreover, by focusing on the Greek priesthoods in the Roman Empire, this article will enable us to deal with the fascinating ways Greek-speaking people tried both to maintain their traditional religious culture and to adapt it to a new historical context.

It should be stressed that the officials who worked in the oracular centres have received only a very limited attention in modern scholarship, despite the tremendous attraction engendered by the oracular phenomenon. In addition, the previous studies of the oracular personnel have not approached this subject in order to analyse either their position in ancient society or their relationship to the political sphere.

However, an important article by S. Georgoudi has investigated the priests and prophets of oracular sanctuaries in order to understand their role in Greek religion from a general point of view, especially in the archaic and classical periods. In the course of the study, she also deals with the “spokesmen of the gods” of the sanctuaries of Didyma and Claros, but from a purely religious point of view.

On the question of the clergy’s role in the society of Roman Asia Minor, scholars rather focused on the priests of the imperial cult, whose interaction with the Roman power is more obvious. As regards the priests and prophets in Claros and Didyma during the imperial period, the reader must still consult the partial contributions by C. Picard, A. Rehm and R. Harder, J. and L. Robert, H. W. Parke, R. Lane Fox and J. Fontenrose.

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13 Dignas (2002a) 33–34, 247–248: “Surprisingly no systematic attempt has yet been made to analyse the distinction and co-operation between Greek magistrates and priests” (citation in p. 33).
14 Dignas (2002a) 34, 191.
15 See Debor (1982) 22, 309; Parker (1985); Rosenberger (1999); and Busine (2005).
In order to fill this gap, this article will first establish the variety and the religious functions of Clarian and Didymeian priesthoods as far as the surviving documentation allows. Secondly, this study will analyse in one hand to what extent oracular officials acted as other civic magistrates, being part of the municipal elite, and, in another hand, to what extent their religious authority differs from the civic authority. In this context, we will go into the role played by the officials of Claros and Didyma within the context of their civic community, as well as within the context of the external policy of the sanctuary.

B. Clergy Members in the Sanctuaries of Claros and Didyma

The oracular activity required particular staff members who were specialized in receiving Apollo’s inspiration and in turning divine will into intelligible texts. For this reason, oracular sanctuaries gathered specific kinds of priestly officials, whose functions were clearly distinguished. The most renowned of them were called ἱερέας (“priest”) and προφήτης (“prophet”). They played an important role not only in running the sanctuary, but also as the link between the god and pilgrims, since they were considered the interpreters of the message of Apollo.

During the Roman period, the magnificence of the shrines also called for setting up many categories of sacred personnel, whose functions were precisely defined.

Let us first take a closer look at the various people who ran the sanctuary of Claros, which was dependent upon the city of Colophon, and this of Didyma, which was dependent upon the city of Miletos, during the imperial period. We will view successively how Apollo’s inspiration was supposed to be transmitted to his interpreters; the variety of sacred officials who worked in these sanctuaries and their religious functions.

a) Didymeian Officials

The first point that needs to be discussed here is the surprising lack of evidence for the functioning of the Didymeian sanctuary despite the fame of such a religious place. Indeed, we only have the late and brief account of Iamblichus (De Mysteriis III 11) which gives in passing some information about the mania of inspiration of Apollo’s medium. According to the neoplatonic philosopher, there was a female oracle-speaker at Branchidai (ἡ γὰς ἐν βραχχίδας γυνῇ χρησμῳδῷ), elsewhere called prophetess (προφήτης). Origenes (Contra Celsum 1.70) also mentioned a prophetess in Didyma. Iamblichus told that she received the Apollinean pneuma by means of water\(^{30}\), after some preliminary rituals, like bathing (τὸ λουτρόν), three days’ fasting (ἡ τρίτην διάκονη κατατελεί), and her seclusion in the ἄδυτα (ἡ ἐν

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\(^{30}\) See, e.g., Lucian, Alexander the false Prophet 23, about the numerous religious officials at Abomotechos. See Sfameni Gasparro (1999); Chaniotis (2002).

Usually, modern scholars did not take into account Iamblichus' symbolic views on mantic inspiration when they discussed the meaning of this passage, but they tried to match the literary information and the atypical remains of the temple. However, I have recently shown that the Iamblichean account of divination by oracles in Claros, Didyma and Delphi fits with his own view of divine inspiration and theurgy, rather than being a 'realistic' description.

Next, it is scarcely possible to discuss the Didymean priesthood without evoking the so-called 'Branchidae'. Indeed, as it is still commonly asserted, there would have been in Didyma an old hereditary sacerdotal family named 'Branchidae', descended from Branchos, the legendary founder of the sanctuary; and it is generally agreed today that the Branchidae would have controlled the sacred site, especially in the archaic period, but also until the imperial times.

But we have no well attested ancient evidence about such an alleged priestly lineage. As N. Ehrhardt showed, the word Ἴστριστος (which was at the root of the etiological name of the local hero Branchos) has actually always been the name of the locality, except for the instances linked to an episode of the legend of Alexander the Great (Strabo 14.1.5, 11.11.4; 17.1.43 = Callisthenes FGrHist 124 F 14). Moreover, in the texts from the imperial period, the term Ἴστριστος always refers to the geographical area, and never to a hypothetical sacerdotal family. Therefore, we will here not concern ourselves with this highly probably unhistorical priestly lineage; we will rather focus on the available documentation about priestly functions in Roman Didyma, without drawing systematic comparisons between it and the more studied archaic and classical history of Miletos and Didyma.

If we look at the inscriptions of the Roman period, we first note that no prophetess, to which Iamblichus' text refers, is ever mentioned. Only once before, a προφήτισσα is attested in the Didymean documentation: she was called Tryphosa, lived round about the first century BC and belonged to an illustrious Milesian family.

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26 Iamblichus, De Mysteriis III 11: "ἐπε ρώματος ἓξωσε τὴν προβοτος ὑπὸ ἔκλει τινος παραδεισάειος πλησιάται τὴς θείας σκύης ἐπὶ ἕξει ἀξίων καθήμενη προλέγει τὸ μέλλον ἐπὶ τοὺς πόδας ἢ κρατώιδι τὸν τέτρομο στὸ ὕδατα ἤ ἐκ τοῦ ὕδατος ἀποκαλυπτῇ δέχεται τοὺς ἔθνη ("... either when holding a rod which was originally handed over by some god, she is filled with the divine radiance, or sitting on an auron she foretells the future, or dampening her feet or the hem of her robe with water or breathing from the water, she received the god" Parke's translation, slightly modified).


28 Busine (2002).


Modern scholars do not agree whether or not there was a priestly official called ἵππος; working at Didyma. Ancient sources do not tell us much more about the Didymean 'priest' than about the prophetess: undoubtedly, we have an isolated mention (ἵππος) in an third century verse inscription; but it is not impossible that this term was used for metrical purpose, as suggested by A. Rehm (I Didim 113).

In my opinion, we cannot take into account the two other examples used by S. Georgoudi in order to assert the presence of a character named hieraeus in Didyma. Firstly, as regards the Hellenistic inscription of a treaty between Miletos and Mylasa in which a priest of Apollo Didymus is mentioned. I would follow J. Fontenrose's suggestion, according to which the Mylasan decree seems to indicate a cult of Apollo Didymus at Mylasa, rather than use this text as a evidence for the existence of a priest in Didyma.

Secondly, in the imperial period, a hieraeus is quoted in a text found in Didyma which consists in a dedication made to Apollo by Rhodians. In reality, the priest Eutyches is quoted here as one of the sacred envoys (theopropoi), together with a poet (1 9–11: Εὐτυχῆς τῶν Αἴαντων προσήκον καὶ Εὐτυχῆς ιερατῶν). Seeing that Theon and Eutyches are both attested in Rhodian onomastics, it seems to me more likely to consider the character cited as priest here not as a Didymean official but rather as one of the Rhodian ambassadors, sent as an envoy to Didyma in order to consult the oracle on behalf of their city. In support of this, it should be added that this inscription uses a word close to the Clarian lists of delegations (see below) and that, similarly, it was quite common in Claros that some local priests and poets took part in the group of the sacred envoys sent from their homeland to the oracular shrine.

The evidence does not allow us to say more about the functions of prophetess and priest in Didyma during the imperial period; and we now turn to the sacred officials in charge of the Milesian sanctuary which are attested in the surviving documentation.

According to Milesian and Didymian inscriptions, there was a wide range of religious officials at Didyma. The main characters were apparently Apollo's.

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27 I Didyma 82 B = SéG I (1998) 01/19/228.
28 I Milet I 3 n° 146 B 1, 75–76: τῶν ιερατῶν ἱερατῶν τοῦ Διδυμοῦ.
31 I Didyma 83. Note that the inscription is also dated thanks to the mention of the Didymian prophet ἱππὸς τῆς Ἰάντων (I 8–9).
32 See LGPN I sv Εὐτυχῆς, and Θεῖον.
33 See for the same opinion Robert (1959) 662.
34 As regards the priests, see, for instance, the prophet of Apollo Pythios (ὁ προφήτης τοῦ Πυθίου 'Ἀπόλλωνος') in numerous delegations from Laodicea on the Lykos; Macridy (1905) 164 n° II 1; 165 n° II 3; 167 n° III 1; 169 n° IV 3; SéG 37 (1987) 961; 968; Robert, Laodicée n° 8, 11–19, 21–25; and the 'priest of children' (ἱππὸς τῶν παιδιῶν) from Aphrodisias (in an unpublished text mentioned in Robert, Carie 226 n. 4 and Laodicée 304), from Tabai: Robert, Carie n° 24–28, 31, 33, 192–193, and from Hierakleia under Salbake: Robert, Carie n° 135, 145, 194–196.
prophet (ὁ προφήτης), the *hydrophoros* (ὁ υδροφόρος) or ‘water-bearer’, which was the priestess being in the service of Artemis Pythia, and the *tamiás* (ὁ ταμιάς) or treasurer.

But the presence of other religious officials working in the sanctuary is also attested. While the name of the *ὑπορμητίς*, who could have been the prophet’s assistant, has sometimes been recorded, other secondary priestly officials are quoted in list of honours, without any quotation of their names: they are the secretaries (γραφεύματίς), the τάκτης, the *παρασφυλάξ*, “all those around the oracle” (οἱ περὶ τὸ μνημεῖον πάντες) and “the people who inhabit the sanctuary” (οἱ κοινοκούστες ἐν τοῖς ἱεροῖς).

These numerous kinds of religious officials in the first centuries AD can be explained by the diversification of the staff due to the magnificence of the Didymean shrine at that time.

As regards the prophets, they are mainly known thanks to about a hundred texts inscribed on the flat walls and the columns of a building in Didyma, which the German excavators christened the ‘Prophet’s House’, *Prophezentenhaus*.

Some modern scholars identified these remains with the so-called *Chremonogaphion*, or record office of oracular responses, mentioned in two building account inscriptions. For starting in the first century BC, it became quite usual for the outgoing prophets to get their name inscribed on this monument, whatever it may be.

Thanks to that habit, we know that the prophet served for one year and that he was chosen by lot or, more exactly, if we take his own point of view, that he was designated according to the god’s approval.

The office of prophet was annual, but could be renewed several times. For instance, L. Iunius Pudes (= Pudens) and Tib. Claudius Markianus Smaragdos Soterichos were prophet at least three times. Their memorial inscriptions were in high probability inscribed together but, as we are not able to date them precisely, we cannot assert whether these men would have carried out these posts in consecutive years.

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38 I.Didyma 353, l. 18 (ὑπορμητίς κούντες); 381, l. 14; 393, l. 8; 394, l. 5.
39 Secretaries: I.Didyma 393, l. 8; 394 l. 6–7; Neocoroi: I.Didyma 394 l. 7; 400, l. 11; Paraphrases: I.Didyma 400, l. 9–10; 417, l. 9; οἱ περὶ τὸ μνημεῖον I.Didyma 395, l. 7; 396, l. 3; οἱ κοινοκούστες ἐν τοῖς ἱεροῖς I.Didyma 392, l. 4; 394, l. 8; 395, l. 7; 399, l. 3; etc. See Rehm, I.Didyma 239; Robert (1959) 668; Günther (1971) 115–119; Fontenrose (1988) 59.
41 I.Didyma 31; 32: τοῦ χρησμογραφίου. See Tuchelt (1973) 49–50; Fontenrose (1988) 43. For the identification *Chremonogaphion* = Prophet’s House, see Knackfuss (1941) 150–154; Rehm, I.Didyma 135, 328; Robert (1959) 664.
42 The earlier prophet inscriptions are dated 89–100 BC (I.Didyma 227A 1; 228 II 5) and the later are dated AD 290 (I.Didyma 207).
43 For the recruitment process, see Launmont (1958) 172; Fontenrose (1988) 46–48.
45 Note that according to Fontenrose (1988) 49, “the record shows no instance of two years in succession.”
As reflected in their numerous memorial inscriptions, the prophets served as eponymous magistrates alongside the stephanephoroi and seem to have been the chief magistrates of the sanctuary of Didyma. They often wore the title of κοιτάρχος, a term unknown so far which is only once explained as a priesthood of the Theoi Kabeiros'. Prophets would have played a significant part in running the religious institution, except the emperors (see below), whose prophet office was no doubt honorary. However, we do not know what they precisely did there.

The prophet inscription of T. Flavius Ulpianus, from the third century AD, records an epigram praising him for always having taken care of the sacrificial altars (l. 19–20 = v. 7: συμφίλα τοις πολίτην βασιλέων πέρας προφητικὰ θέματα). The text specifies that, afterwards, the prophet had asked the god “where he should put the sacred table (restored)” (l. 21–22: τοῦ τὴν ιερὰν τὰ τράπεζαν ετήσιον). According to two fragmentary prophet inscriptions, it might be possible that the prophet had also to organise some mystery initiations.

If we accept the restorations of A. Rehm, the prophet would have had to organise the sacrifices in honour of Apollo and the sacred banquet, by providing the table and the meal for this occasion, as well as some initiatory rituals.

Added to that, in a second century BC inscription dealing with divine sanction of a treaty between Miletos and Herakleia under Latinus, “the prophet, assisted by the tammis, has to conduct sacrifices and processions of victims in the sanctuary in honour of Apollo Didymus, Artemis Leto, Athena, and Zeus Soter” (l. 20–23: τῷ μὲν προφήτῃ μετὰ τοῦ τομίου τοῦ παπρασκευόμενος ἐν τοῖς ιεροῖς θυσίαις ποιήσασθαι καὶ προσόδοου ιεροῖς τοῖς τῷ Ἀπόλλωνι τῷ Διδυμῷ καὶ Ἀρτέμιδι καὶ Αθηνᾷ καὶ τῷ Δίῳ τοῖς [Σωτηρίᾳ]). This Hellenistic text suggests that the prophet would have superintended the cult and the sanctuary and presided over all rites performed in honour of Apollo Didymus and other deities, as sacrifices and festivals, and one might justifiably suppose that prophets would still have been assigned that kind of function during the imperial period.

But the prophet’s role in the oracular sessions remains unknown. At least, the literal meaning of the word προφητής allows us to conjecture that the Didymian prophet had a certain role to play in the oracular giving process. According to Parke’s description “largely based on hypothesis and only offered exempli gratia”, the prophetess would have received the divine inspiration, hidden in the adytum, after having undergone long preliminary rites, while the prophet would have been in charge of the versification of Apollo’s words. He then would have pronounced the oracles through the large window leading to the pronaos, where the pilgrims would have waited for the god’s answers.

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11 I.Didyma 252, l. 4: κοιτάρχος τῶν Μεγάλων Θεῶν Καβίρων; 256; 261; 267; 269; 270; 279a; 286; 287. See Robert (1960) 447–448.
12 I.Didyma 277, l. 19 (v. 7 of the epigram) 21–22.
13 I.Didyma 299, l. 13: [- τῶν λαρίσιων μυστερίων ...]; I.Didyma 280, l. 9: ... τὰς γάτης ... (only word legible on the line).
As far as the *hydrophoroi* are concerned, they would have ruled the sanctuary of Artemis Pythie, which might be identified with the temenos, with altar and spring, discovered by German excavators in Didyma on the west side of the Sacred Way. In the prophets' commemorative inscriptions, the *hydrophoros* is often quoted just after the prophet, and before the two *tamiai*,[2] and she seems to have held the most prestigious priestly office at Didyma after the office of prophet. Exactly as their male counterparts, the prophets, the priestesses of Artemis Pythie are known from numerous commemorative texts set up at the end of their office year. These inscriptions inform us that this female priesthood was annual but could be renewed.[3] As we will see below, the *hydrophoros* was in all likelihood a young girl, often the daughter of the prophet.

As shown by the epigraphical evidence, the priestess of Artemis Pythie would have presided over the sacrifices (*θυσίαι*) and libations (*στούνδαι*) made in honour of the goddess and was also in charge of the organisation of mysteries (*μυστήριον*).[4] (See, for instance, I.Didyma 326, l. 5–6: τὸς θυσίας καὶ μυστήριον πάντα ἐπέλευσεν; I.Didyma 352, l. 5–10: πάσας τὰς κατὰ νόμο ἐπιτελέσεις τῆς θεοῦ θυσίας καὶ στούνδας καὶ τὰς τῶν μυστηρίων τιμήτας ἐστήβοικ; I.Didyma 353, l. 12–15: ποιήσασα δὲ καὶ τὰς νομιζόμενας πάσας ἡθείας τε καὶ στούνδας ἐστήβοικος). As regards the *musteria*, F. Graf has recently suggested that these passages refer to real initiations, and do not reflect the extension of initiatic vocabulary to other ritual practices, as often asserted by scholars.[5]

Finally, the *tamiai*, or treasurers, are also known thanks to commemorative texts they set up after their period of office.[6] Two *tamiai* were usually appointed each year, one of them performing his office during each half the year (for example: I.Didyma 391BIII. 2–4: ἐπισκεψαν καὶ παρήθεσαν τῆς πρῶτην ἔξαπεραν. As suggested by their title, they took care of the sanctuary's finances. Their activity is recorded in the numerous Hellenistic inscriptions recording the inventories of the sacred treasure.[7] A second century BC inscription also records that a *tamias* supervised the construction of the new temple of Apollo.[8] Moreover, the use of the verb

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[3] For example, I.Didyma 269, l. 14–15; 271, l. 4–5; 276, l. 4–6; 293, l. 8–9.
[5] Mentions of sacrifices (*θυσίαι*): I.Didyma 312, l. 24; 326, l. 5; 327, l. 4; 352, l. 7; 353, l. 14; 373, l. 6; 382, l. 4; 384, l. 5. Mentions of libations (*στούνδαι*): I.Didyma 352, l. 8; 353, l. 15; 358B, l. 9; 375, l. 7; 382, l. 5; 384, l. 1. Mentions of mysteries (*μυστήριον*): I.Didyma 312, l. 24; 326, l. 5–6; 327, l. 4 and 329, l. 6 (restored); 333, l. 5; 352, l. 1; 356, l. 1; 373, l. 7; 381, l. 5; 385, l. 5.
[9] I.Didyma 132 = SoGom 01/19/02, l. 10–12: ἐπιστατῶν τῶν ὁμοδομίας τοῦ ναοῦ τοῦ Ἀπόλλωνος τοῦ Διδυμίως.
πορεδρεύειν in the usual expression describing the tamiai’s activity, ἱταμίους καὶ πορεδρεύειν, indicates that the tamiai might have assisted the prophet in his functions.\(^{57}\)

b) Clarian Officials

The ancient authors give us a quite restricted and confused picture of the various officials employed at Claros. According to Tacitus, there was only one male sacerdos in the Colophonian shrine, mostly untaught in literature and poetry and drawn from specific Miletian families.\(^{58}\) Maximus of Tyre is the only author who mentioned a certain ὑποφήτης working in Claros, which was also mentioned in a Hellenistic decree from Colophon honouring a Smyrnean chremsolegos who was invited to preside over the mantelion.\(^{59}\) Finally, in their philosophical commentaries about mantic inspiration in Claros, Porphyry recalled the presence of a priest (ἱερέας), while Iamblichus ascribed this part to a prophet (προφήτης).\(^{60}\)

According to the literary evidence, the Clarian Apollo passed his divine will on to his medium by means of water which was drunk.\(^{61}\) We are told that the sacred spring was located in an underground room, which was discovered and identified by the French excavators as the subterranean adytos of the temple.\(^{62}\) The adytos was reachable by a narrow passage beneath the temple, which changed direction several times, as though it was a labyrinth.

Finally, the texts explain that oracular answers were given after undergoing rites of preliminary purification and, according to Tacitus, with knowledge of the number and the names of the consultants, but not apparently of the subject of their consultation.\(^{63}\)

We now know more about the diversity of the oracular staff at Claros thanks to the numerous Clarian inscriptions recording the comings of the pilgrims to the oracle mostly during the second century AD. These texts, which were inscribed everywhere in the sacred site, e.g. on walls, on steles, on columns, and even on the steps of the temple, consist of lists of the delegations sent by various cities in order to consult the oracle on their behalf. Typical entries begin with the reference to the prynaios, which was the eponymous magistrate of Colophon, followed by a yearly

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\(^{58}\) Tacitus, Annals II 54: non femina illic, ut apud Delphos, sed certis e faciliis et ferme Milet-o accitus sacerdos […] ignarus pluramque literarum et carminum.


\(^{60}\) Porphyry, Letter to Anebo II 2d (Sodano) = Iamblichus, De Mysteriis 3.11 (Parthey).

\(^{61}\) Tacitus, Annals II 54: hausta fontis arcani aqua, Pliny, NH II (106) 222; Maximus of Tyre, Dissertationes VIII 1: ὕδας ἐκ πηγῶν ἀργοσάμων καὶ πικας, Iamblichus, De Mysteriis III 11: ὕδας πιεύεις; δι’ ὑδάτων χρηστικύνει.


\(^{63}\) Tacitus, Annals II 54: numerum modo consultanium et nomina audit; Iamblichus, De Mysteriis III 11.
account of the various Clarian officials, and give us therefore some direct information about the oracular clergy during the Roman period.

Most of the lists can be dated thanks to the mention of the eponymous magistracy. Indeed, although the Prytan was ordinarily occupied by a human magistrate, it appears exceptionally that a deity was designated to this office, mostly in times of economic depression\(^6\). However, in Roman Colophon, the position of prytanis was unusually entrusted to Apollo himself almost as often as ordinary mortals, at least one hundred twenty-three times\(^6\). In order to be distinguished, the different ptyanies of the gods were numbered and, consequently, a relative chronology can easily be drawn up within most of the lists of delegations. Some external evidence, such as the mention of members of imperial family, of a local era, or of a proconsulship, allow in some cases an absolute dating. Combining the precise dates given to some Apollinian ptyanies and the relative dates of the others, we can quite precisely date most of the inscriptions of delegations, and thus the annual composition of the oracular staff\(^6\).

It is worth pointing out that the Clarian inscriptions have been so far overlooked because the whole corpus has not been completely published by J. and L. Robert, whereas the available texts are still scattered in various journals and publications. Hopefully, this critical situation will improve since the publication of the inscriptions from Claros has now been entrusted to J.-L. Ferrary. Given the current deficiency of the documentation, the reader will not find in these pages a systematic analysis of the Clarian priesthood, which should take into account the texts which remain unpublished\(^6\). It will rather consist in giving a limited insight into the issues raised by this exceptional dossier\(^6\).

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\(^6\) See Sherk (1991) 241–242, who mentions 129 times. Yet, 123\(^th\) and 122\(^th\) ptyanies of Apollo are mentioned in Robert, Laodicæ 21 and 22 (in the parts of the texts which are not published). In Robert (1954) 20, the author mentioned once a 130\(^th\) ptyany, but not anymore in his subsequent publications.

\(^6\) For some chronological accounts, see Robert, Carie 210–214; Robert, Laodicæ 301–303; SEG 37 (1987) 961–975, and soon Ferrary (forthcoming, see n. 67). Because of the partial publication of the texts, my datings are certainly not definitive. For this reason, I have decided to mention each time the number of the ptyany or other chronological elements which allow to date the texts.

\(^6\) This article was already in press when J.-L. Ferrary kindly allowed me to read his chronological conclusions based on the whole corpus of the Clarian inscriptions. Every study on Claros and its chronology must now refer to this seminal article ("Les mémoriaux de délégations du sanctuaire oraculaire de Cilicos et leur chronologie", forthcoming in CRAI 2005), in which the reader will find some minor variations of the datings I propose here.

\(^6\) Indeed, the corpus of Clarian inscriptions is fascinating not only because it enlightens Clarian history, but also because it gives unprecedented information about the onomastics and institutions of the numerous recorded consulting cities, some of them being almost unknown before.
The inscriptions from the Roman period found in Claros generally recorded three functioning Clarian officials: the priest (ἐρήμης), the thespiodos (θεσπιωδός) and the prophet (προφῆτης), together with one or two secretaries (γραμματεύς, ἕτος).

We should mention here the problematic and isolated mention of the function of ὑποψήφιτης which was attributed to a chresmologus from Smyrna during the Hellenistic period (see above). J. and L. Robert identified him as the Clarian prophet60. Furthermore, let us note that the Clarian inscriptions never mention the priesthood related to the cult of Artemis, whose different altars were discovered by the French excavators north-west of the temple of Apollo61.

In actual fact, the lists of delegations dated to the pepyty of Koskônia Myrton, possibly around AD 11072, until the 61st pepyty of Apollo, dated by the proconsulship of Juventius Celsus, that should be in AD 129/3072, originally recorded only two priestly functions, which were priest and prophet, assisted by one or two secretaries73. After AD 131/2, and after that each year, there appears in the epigraphic documentation from Claros a religious character named καὶ ἀφαίρεσθαι, or "oracle singer", who seems to have been a Clarian peculiarity74.

We notice that the post of priest was held for a long time, theoretically for life, while the functions of prophet and secretary seem to have been annually attributed. In fact, the lists dated by the pepyty of Koskônia Myrton elucidate this point by recording clearly that a certain C. Julius Agathoclès was this year "priest for life" and "prophet for the year" (ἐρήμης τοῖς δὲ ... διὰ βίου καὶ προφῆτου κατ' ἔτος)75.

As regards the thespiodoi, they appear to have been appointed for a long period, very likely for life too.

It appears, then, that in the Roman period the Clarian sanctuary generally employed each year a priest, a thespiodos and a prophet, but there is still some doubt surrounding the exact functions and duties assigned to each of them. As regards the

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63 L. Robert dated the 61st pepyty of Apollo in AD 130/1. However, it does not fit with other chronological evidence: indeed, the 63rd pepyty is dated thanks to the year 163 of the era of Amisos, in AD 131/2. Consequently, AD 130/1 should be the date for the 62nd, and not for the 61st pepyty. Juventius Celsus should then have been designated as proconsul of Asia just after his consulship, in AD 129, and not after AD 130.
65 See Chamonard and Legrand (1894) 218 = OGIS 530 = Macridy (1905) 170 n° V 4, dated thanks to the mention of the 262nd year of the Amisos era.
role of priestly officials during the mysteries and penteteric games organised by the sanctuary of Claros, it remains totally unknown\(^7\).

It is however commonly admitted that the priest mentioned in the inscriptions, who was appointed for life, was probably responsible for the performance of sacrifices and presided over all the ceremonies\(^7\). Modern scholars do not agree on the distribution of functions between the two remaining characters mentioned by inscriptions, that is the prophet and the thespiodos. From the descriptions of ancient authors and the archaeological excavations which revealed two underground rooms\(^8\), one could imagine that the procedure of oracle giving would have necessitated at least two people, one who received the divine inspiration by drinking the sacred water in the inner room containing the sacred spring, and another who listened in the adjacent room to the uttered sounds stemming from the act of inspiration, and turned them into verse.

According to L. Robert, it was the thespiodos who drank the sacred water and then "sang the oracles", leaving to the prophet the task to compose and versify them afterwards\(^9\). Conversely, H.W. Parke and R. Lane Fox argued that the prophet drank the water and pronounced the oracle, while the thespiodos reproduced it in verse which he sang and which the secretaries kept in a written record\(^10\).

One cannot choose between these divergent speculations about the distribution of the religious functions on the basis of the laconic inscriptions of delegations, which have recorded only the Clarian officials' name and title. Perhaps new sources could in the future help us to reconstruct the different stages of the oracle giving process as well as to draw up the precise duties of each religious office. This brings us to the question of which type of information the current documentation from Claros could eventually bring concerning the various officials employed in the sanctuary. Another way of looking at this question might be to consider more accurately the practice of recording names and to investigate them as a mirror of social representations. Indeed, the way in which ancient Greeks inscribed their names on stones for eternity tell us much about their relative importance in the society.

First of all, let us notice that the earlier mentions we have of the Clarian clergy, before AD 131/2, mostly mentioned only the prophet\(^8\). Therefore, influenced by Tacitus's account, modern scholars maintained that there was only one officiating function in Claros before the flourishing period of the sanctuary\(^9\).

However, in some cases, the names of both the priest and the prophet were recorded together also at this early period\(^9\). Moreover, some later texts sometimes

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\(^7\) For these activities, see de la Genière (1998); Graf (2003) 246.
\(^9\) Robert (1954) and (1967).
\(^10\) Robert (1954) and (1967); followed by Potter (1994) 43.
\(^12\) Robert, Carie n° 180 (46\textsuperscript{th} prytany); Macridy (1912) 18 (46\textsuperscript{th} prytany); Robert, Carie n° 136 (52\textsuperscript{th} prytany); Macridy (1912) n° 27; n° 21 (55\textsuperscript{th} and 56\textsuperscript{th} prytanyes).
\(^13\) See Pecard (1922) 197–199; Parke (1985) 146–147.
\(^14\) See Macridy (1912) n° 25 = Robert, Carie n° 132 (51\textsuperscript{th} prytany); Macridy (1905) 167 n° III 1 (61\textsuperscript{th} prytany). Here I do not take into account the text published by Macridy (1912) n° 34, such
only recorded the priest and the thespiodos, ignoring the prophet, or only mentioned the prophet and the thespiodos, omitting the priest. In my opinion, these non-systematic records result from a lack of rigour in the recording habit, rather than from an irregularity among the appointment of the religious officials. Take the case of Artemidiores: he was mentioned as priest during the 47th and the 51st ptyanies of Apollo, while not mentioned in the lists of the 48th, 52nd, 55th, 58th ptyanies, which omitted the name of the priest and only recorded the prophet. The numerous lists of the 100th ptyany of Apollo serve to illustrate this kind of irregular epigraphic habit as well: only one of the five inscriptions mentioned the prophet, Apollônios the second son of Papión, whereas the four other contemporary texts only recorded as thespiodos the illustrious Tib. Claudius Ardyas and as priest P. Aelius Philippus.

Finally, it should be noted that the available inscriptions mentioned only once a Clarian character called klidoforos or 'key-bearer'. This should have been a subsidiary office, in view of his last place in the officials' list, or an office related to another deity than Apollo. It would be then quite unconvincing to imagine that this post was created or carried out only this year. Note that the klidophoros does not even appear in the two other contemporary texts we possess. This man, Bassos 'the third', was in all likelihood quoted this time as klidophoros because he was apparently the son of one of the secretaries, Bassos 'the second', which name was recorded just the line above. This isolated mention in our sources is thus highly probably due to the fame of the influential family of the klidophoros.

All this goes to show that Clarian lists did not record each year the entire staff of religious officials. We cannot yet fully explain the apparent irregularity among the recordings of Clarian religious officials. However, we know how honorific and how costly the inscribing practice was: therefore, the composition of inscribed lists of names was partially linked to the social position and the economical power of the recorded persons themselves. We will then avoid using these inscriptions as

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as from the 61st ptyany as well. This reading of the inscription appears illogical, and it would be more appropriate to date the text to the 71st ptyany, compare with Sahin (1977) n° 19 = SCS 37 (1987) 963. We should then restore the lacuna as [pri]φεντος Πυθιωνος instead of [γραμματιτες Πυθιωνος.

6 Robert, Carie 212 (list from Clion): n° 139; Macridy (1912) n° 26.

6 Unpublished list from Bergusa, see Picard (1922) 302 and Macridy (1912) n° 25 = Robert, Carie n° 132; [pri]φεντεύνος Αρτεμιδώρου Αλεξιάδου.

66 Macridy (1912) n° 2, 5, 7, 11.

65 Macridy (1905) 168–170 n° IV 3: Κλιδηφωροῦντος Βάσσου γ'. This title is also known for a female priesthood related to Hekate at Lagina, see Launonier (1958) 368–369, van Bremen (1996) 91, 95.

64 According to Picard's hypothetical suggestion, this office had probably been in charge of a sort of 'symbolic key procession' ("processions de la clé, symbole de musique"), see Picard (1922) 248–249.

63 Macridy (1912) n° II 2, n° II 4.

62 Macridy (1905) 166–170 n° IV 3: γραμματιτεως Κλαυδίας Κρυταλάου και Βάσσου γ'.
absolute sources of information and take them rather as evidence of the relative importance and influence of the religious officials.

In this perspective, we should also question the absence of thespiodoi before AD 131/2. One could interpret that by supposing the creation of a new post within the oracular team, which would have been generated by the increasing success of the Clarian sanctuary oracle during the second century, as is implied in most modern accounts. However, are we allowed to have recourse to this kind of argumentum e silentio in order to explain changes among the oracular staff? Would it not be more cautious to consider this merely as a development of the recording habit itself? Thus, this change could reflect an evolution among the importance assigned to the office of thespiodos rather than a ‘proof’ for the addition of a new post.

We now turn to what can be said about the particularities of each Clarian office. Let us note that, like the Didymean prophets, the offices of prophet and secretary, while annual, could also be renewed: for instance, Claudius Kritolaos was designated prophet for the Prytany of L. Aelius Caesar, in AD 136/7, and once again during the 72nd Prytany of Apollo, probably in AD 147/8.

Added to that, as we will see below, a single man could simultaneously carry out the functions of prophet together with that of pytianis, and also with that of priest. As opposed to the prophets, secretaries never performed another function during their tenure of office: this probably means that their function was considered less significant or at least less prestigious than that of prophets. It is also interesting to point out that, by contrast, priests and thespiodoi, whose important functions seem to have been highly regarded, never carried out the eponymous magistracy of pytianis at the same time.

Thespiodic function seems to have been separate from other Clarian officials. Thespiodoi usually did not carry out another function, neither that of pytianis, nor that of prophet, and obviously nor that of priest too. Except for the isolated case of Tib. Claudius Ardis, who was prophet, in AD 162/3, during the 85th Prytany of Apollo, before becoming thespiodos from at least AD 175/6 during the 91st Prytany of Apollo until AD 185/6 during the 101st Prytany, other thespiodoi appear to have occupied exclusively this post.

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9 See for instance Park (1985) 146-147, 222.
92 See Robert, Loebéé 316; Bullép. 1792 n° 461.
95 Robert, Carie n° 193. I follow here L. Robert’s attribution of this inscription to the 85th Prytany. It seems to me that the attribution to the same Prytany of Şahin (1987) n° 13 = SEG 37 (1987) 972 is illogical and should be attributed to the 65th Prytany (compare with Macridy (1965) 168 n° IV 2, where Claudius Auleides was thespiodos too): evidence shows that, during the 85th Prytany, the thespiodos should be Cn. Iulius Reginos Alexandros.
97 See, in the chronological order: SEG 37 (1987) 975; Robert, Carie n° 196, n° 27; Macridy (1912) n° 28; Robert (1955) 276 (C) = Bollépip. 1955 n° 251 = SEG 15 (1958) 715; Macridy (1912) n° 6; Robert, Carie n° 133; Macridy (1912) n° 2; n° 5; n° 7; n° 8; n° 11; Macridy (1912) n° 9; n° 10; n° 5; Robert, Carie n° 135; n° 30; Macridy (1912) n° 3.
As we will see below, this religious office appears to have been confined to some specific and traditional families. Actually, one of them, Asklepiades, was named in relation to his ancestral distinction only once, in AD 131/2, before he received the Roman citizenship. He did not mention his noble ancestry before, during the undated papyri of Kritôn, Ailias Amion and Ailias son of Stephanos, nor in AD 132/3. The astonishing thing is that he did not refer anymore to his prestigious ancestry from the moment he was called by his Roman name, Tib. Claudius Asklepiades. On the contrary, except for the first time he was thespios, during the 91st ptyany of Apollo in AD 175/6, the other, Tib. Claudius Ards, was always named according to his ‘Lydian’ origin.

What our epigraphic documentation basically reveals is that thespios appears to have increasingly gained importance in running the Clarian sanctuary during the second century AD, in all probability thanks to the political power of their families. In support of this statement, let us briefly examine the order in which the Clarian officials were quoted. When the prytanis was the same person as the prophet, the title of prophet just follows the mention of the prytany, introduced by the words ἐπὶ προφήτησι καὶ προφητήσεως (‘when was prytanis and prophet’), certainly in order to avoid repeating his name. Aside from these particular cases, we observe an evolution between the pre-eminence of the priest and that of the thespios. Indeed, from the 63rd ptyany of Apollo, in AD 131/2, that is to say the first dated mention of a thespios, until the 93rd ptyany in AD 177/8, the priest was generally always placed in first, secondly was mentioned the thespios, then the prophet and finally the secretaries. Conversely, from AD 180/1 during the 96th ptyany of Apollo, until our last attestations, during the 101st ptyany in AD 185/6, the thespios occupied first place, while the priest was mentioned in second.

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19 Chamonard and Legrand (1894) 218 = OGIS 530 = Macridy (1905) 170 n° V 4: ἔνθετατο δύνατον [τῷ Δαύμαλιν[[[ τῶν ἀπὸ Ἀρδοῖς Ἡρακλείδου] Πατρούχηνδος. Thanks to the discovery of new inscriptions, Piard (1922) 209, 212 n. 2 and Robert (1956) 153 n. 6 were able to restore Ἡρακλείδου in stead of Ἡρακλείδου, which was the first (and wrong) restoration of Macridy, following Soussoulier (1838) 259.

20 Macridy (1905) 164–165 n° II 1; 167 n° III 2; Macridy (1905) 165 n° II 2; II 4; 168–170 n° IV 3: ἔνθετατο δύνατον [Ἀσκληπιάδου τοῦ Δημοκλήδου. See Macridy (1905) 167 n° III 2; 168–170 n° IV 3; 165 n° II 2; n° II 4; Robert, Carie 212; Sähin (1987) n° 20 = SEG 37 (1987) 966; Robert, Carie n° 139; Macridy (1912) n° 22 = Robert, Amaryon 2; Sähin (1987) n° 8 = SEG 37 (1987) 964; Macridy (1905) 167–158 n° III 3; 168 n° IV 2: ἔνθετατο δύνατον [Κλαύδιου] Ἀσκληπιάδου.

21 Sähin (1987) n° 6 = SEG 37 (1987) 975: ἔνθετατο δύνατον [Τὶ ὑπὲρ Κλαύδιου] Ἀρδοῖς. See Robert, Carie n° 196; n° 27; Macridy (1912) n° 28; SEG 15 (1958) 715; Macridy (1912) n° 6; Robert, Carie n° 133; Macridy (1912) n° 2; n° 5; n° 6; n° 8; n° 11; n° 9; n° 10; Robert, Carie n° 135; n° 30; Macridy (1912) n° 3: ἔνθετατο δύνατον [Τὶ ὑπὲρ Κλαύδιου] Ἀρδοῖς τῶν ἀπὸ Ἀρδοῖς Ἡρακλείδου Πατρούχηνδος.

22 See for Kritôn: Macridy (1905) 164–165 n° II 1; for Claudius Rufus: Macridy (1905) 165 n° II 2; II 4; 168–170 n° IV 3; for Apollônios Eurychôn: Macridy (1912) n° 22; n° 26; Robert, Amaryon 54 = SEG 38 (1983) 964.

23 Except during the ptyany of L. Adlius Caesar, in 136/7, and the 69th ptyany of Apollo, in 143/4.
This changing among the placings of the two life-appointed Clarian officials would certainly have reflected a noticeable increase of the power ascribed to the thespodic function in relation to that of the priest.

To sum up, the sanctuaries of Claros and Didyma in the Roman period gathered various religious officials. The increasing complexity of the clergy was in all likelihood linked to the magnificence of the two shrines in the Roman period. However, we still lack the means to analyse the precise functions of each of them, which were in all certainty well defined. As in other sanctuaries, clergy members had to take care of the worship of the deity (e.g. sacrifices, banquet) and to organise festivities. In addition, oracular officials had to provide the pilgrims with oracular texts interpreting Apollo’s will. It is worthy of note that both the oracular sanctuaries of Claros and Didyma organised mystery initiations, which seem to have been a complementary activity of oracular shrines in the Roman period, such as in the oracles of Lebadea and Abonouteichos.

C. Oracular Officials as Elite Members

Who were the priestly officials of the oracular sanctuaries in the society of Roman Asia Minor? As everywhere else in Roman Asia Minor, being priest in Claros and Didyma was undoubtedly an occupation for the elite. I propose to consider now the place of the Didymean and Clarian officials in the civic community to which they belong, and to locate their priestly function in the context of Graeco-Roman cities.

a) Origin and Family Context

Here, we will analyse the social origin of the clergy members in Didyma and Claros, and have a careful look at their family context.

In Roman Didyma, as modern scholars have already pointed out, we know that most members of the clergy belonged to powerful Milesean families. As we will examine below, prophets had also often carried out important offices in Miletos. In many cases, they received Roman citizenship. Some of them had even wholly Roman names, like L. Iunius Pudens or L. M. Satorinus. However, as their commemorative inscriptions differ in no respect from others, it remains hard to identify them with Romans settled in Miletos rather than with Greeks who had taken wholly Roman names as Roman citizens.

What should be established at the very outset is that three Milesians are described once as being prophets διὰ γένους in an inscription on the base of a boxer’s

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106 See Rehm, LDidyma 174, 192, 196, 217, 220 (family trees); Laumonier (1958) 572; Robert (1960); Robert (1968); Lane Fox (1986) 192, 219–221, 228; Fontenrose (1988) 50.

107 LDidyma 215a, 235A3, 265 and 223b.
statue\textsuperscript{108}. Does it mean that being prophet in Didyma was the privilege of a religious hereditary cast?

Despite the fact that the prophet was officially chosen by lot, each deme nominating one candidate\textsuperscript{109}, evidence clearly shows that the same families appear to have produced generations of male and female religious officials. Indeed, both prophets and hydrophoroi often seized the opportunity to record their family background at the end of their year office. The evidence shows clearly that the priestesses of Artemis was generally the daughter of a prophet. R. van Bremen has convincingly shown that hydrophoria was normally a girl’s title, and that the norm for female members of the Miletan elite was to take on the hydrophoria at some point during their youth\textsuperscript{110}. Though they are often recorded holding their respective titles in different years, it happened that father and daughter fulfilled their office during the same year, as, for instance, Aelia Aelina and her father Aelios Aelianos (I Didyma 310, l. 3–5: Ἄλια, Ἄλια, Ἄλια, Ἀληνηῖν θυγατέρα Ἀληνῆν θυγατέρα έτος οὖσαν θυγατέραν). Artemón son of Eiremenos even mentioned in the same inscription that his younger daughter Theodórea was hydrophoros during his post of prophet and that the elder was previously hydrophoros\textsuperscript{111}. Some inscriptions show that the hydrophoroi’s mother had been hydrophoros herself too\textsuperscript{112}. We also know some prophets having a former prophet as father and a former hydrophoros as mother\textsuperscript{113}. Others have previously performed the post of tamias\textsuperscript{114}. Let us note that prophets and hydrophoroi proudly proclaimed that they were born in a famous family of prophets, using the terms ἑγονος or πρόγονος\textsuperscript{115}.

Nevertheless, whereas most of the priestly officials in Didyma seem to belong to hereditary families of the Miletan elite, it is worth stating at this point that some foreigners apparently held the office of prophet too. For instance, Damianos, a Didymean prophet around AD 300, inscribed two oracular answers Apollo gave to him about the erection of an altar for Kore Sótera in the sanctuary\textsuperscript{116}. Damianos described Kore Sótera as “the goddess of his fatherland” (l. 5–6: τῆς ... πατρίου κύρια Αἴγυπτος), which suggests that he was a native of another city than Miletos, a

\textsuperscript{108} I Didyma 179, l. 11–14: τῶν διὰ γίγνοντ᾽ ἰερείων Ὠλυμπιακῶν Ἡγεμόνιδρου καὶ Ἀνδρέα καὶ Ἀλεξανδροῦ Ποπλάτου. Voir Robert (1960) 441–442; Robert (1968) 574.

\textsuperscript{109} See Laronde (1987) and (1988) for similar conclusions about the prophets of Apollo and the prophetesses of Hera in Roman Cyrene.

\textsuperscript{110} van Bremen (1956) 90–95, 324–327.

\textsuperscript{111} I Didyma 235, l. 8–11: δρομοφοροποιής αὐτοῦ τῆς νεωτήρας ἡγεμόνιδρος Θεοδόρας; Θεοδόρας; Θεοδόρας Θεοδόρας; ... 1. 12–14: ὑδροφορόποιος αὐτοῦ τῆς προφητηρείας ἀγκαθίων Θεοδόρας.

\textsuperscript{112} See l. Didyma 330 l. 1–2; 345 l. 11.

\textsuperscript{113} See for example l. Didyma 287.

\textsuperscript{114} See for example l. Didyma 258, 261.

\textsuperscript{115} For prophets, see l. Didyma 219 (ἐγονος προφητῶν καὶ στεφανοφόρων); 272 (προφητῶν καὶ ἄρχητοραν ἐκεῖνον[ες]); 277 (ὑπὸ προφητῶν προφητῶν). For hydrophoroi, see l. Didyma 312 (προφητῶν ἤγερουν), 326, 327, 334 (ὑγιόνως προφητῶν), 343, 346, 368A (Paplas), 372.

\textsuperscript{116} I Didyma 504 = SCoSt I, 1998, n° 01/19/08. The inscription is dated by Rehm (l. Didyma 301) thanks to paleographic elements.
city where Koré was worshipped, like Cyzíkos, if we follow L. Robert's suggestion.\footnote{17}

It appears then that most of the religious officials in Didyma were members of the same local elite from Mileto. Some of them even proclaimed that they were part of an hereditary system. Carrying out a religious office in Didyma gave to the officials an effective mean of displaying their titles and filiation, but it also enabled prophets and hydrophores to remind titles and benefactions of their relatives. All this clearly aimed at highlighting the existence of a Milesian family network linking together the Didymean religious officials.

In Claros, however, it is quite hard to determine the origin of religious officials. We should first note that, as members of the elite, most of the religious officials received Roman citizenship and sometimes bore real Roman names. But their laconic evocation in the lists of delegations does not detail their eventual political career in Colophon or somewhere else.

At least, following the example of Didymean officials, one might justifiably suppose that many of those who are recorded as clergy members in Claros were (more or less) prestigious citizens of Colophon. Yet, in contrast to the abundance of names in Clarian inscriptions, the epigraphic evidence for Roman Colophon is extremely poor; therefore, we lack the means to connect the people known from the Clarian material with Colophonian society of the period.

If one looks at the epigraphic evidence for Colophon during the Hellenistic period, one finds several names identical to those listed in inscriptions of Clarian officials. Could we assert from this observation that some religious officials in Claros during the imperial period were descendants from the same families as their homonyms? The commonness of certain names in epigraphic material, such as, for instance, Metrodoros, Artemidoros or Pythinon, obviously does not prove the Colophonian origin of those religious officials in Claros during the imperial period.

But rarer names are also present in both Clarian and Colophonian sources. Consider the case of Paspantáyos, prophet in Claros for the second time during the 69th prytany of Apollo, in AD 143/4\footnote{17}. The name appears several times in inscriptions and coins from Colophon: four different people wear this name in a list of subscribers regarding the enlargement of the city walls at the end of the fourth century BC.\footnote{139} A few Hellenistic coins from Colophon, dated to the years 320–294 BC, also record a magistrate named Paspantáyos\footnote{137}. The father of the famous Colophonian benefactor Polemasios known thanks to the long honorific decree published by the Roberts was also called Paspantáyos\footnote{138}. Seeing that the name appears in only seven
other cases\(^{122}\), we can suppose that the prophet of Apollo in Claros during the mid-second century AD called Pentagnôtos was a citizen of Colophon, possibly belonging to a very prestigious family like that of the great Polemais.

Even if the lack of sources for imperial Colophon does not allow us to draw precise conclusions about the Colophonian origin of priestly officials in Claros, we can conjecture that some of them belonged to important Colophonian families already attested in Hellenistic sources. Here it is worthwhile to recall that two thespiodoi claimed to belong to a very old and famous local dynasty with illustrious ancestors: Asklepiades, son of Demophilus, and his son Tib. Claudius Ardyss proudly claimed to be descended from the branch of the Herakliadii to which belonged Ardyss (τὸν ἀπὸ Ἀρδίους Ἡρακλείδαν), a semi-mythological king of the illustrious Lydian dynasty before Gyges\(^{123}\). Note that one of them was even called Ἀρδίους with a direct reference to the king’s name\(^{124}\). The two thespiodoi are also called by the unknown term ‘patrogenides’ (πατρογενίδου). We actually know nothing before the second century AD about this family whose roots apparently are said to be Lydian\(^{125}\). The term πατρογενίδου qualifying these noble thespiodoi is not found elsewhere in our documentation. Some scholars consider the term ‘patrogenides’ as a common noun, with the simple meaning of ‘descended on the father’s side’\(^{126}\), while others assert that this hapax should actually correspond to the proper name of a Colophonian genos\(^{127}\).

It would be quite rash to imagine from these mentions that the thespiodic function was linked at Claros from time immemorial to a local elite family, remote from Colophonian society. In my opinion, the evidence we have is not enough to assert the existence of a priestly hereditary dynasty proper at Claros, which would have been out of the control of the city of Colophon, as enthusiastically claimed by Ch.

\(^{122}\) According to the PHIT: 2 in Attica, 1 in the Black Sea; and 4 in Samos according to LGBM.

\(^{123}\) For Asklepiades, see Chamounard and Logrand (1894) 218 = OGIS 530 = Macridy (1905) 170 n° V 4; Macridy (1905) 167 n° III 2; 168–170 n° IV 3; 165 n° II 4; Robert, Carie 212; Şahin (1987) n° 20 = SEG 37 (1987) 966; Robert, Carie n° 139; Macridy (1912) n° 22 = Robert, Anyzou 32; Şahin (1987) n° 8 = SEG 37 (1987) 964; Macridy (1905) 167–168 n° III 3; 168 n° IV 2. For Ardyss, see Şahin (1987) n° 6 = SEG 37 (1987) 975; Robert, Carie n° 196; n° 27; Macridy (1912) n° 28; SEG 15 (1958) 715; Macridy (1912) n° 6; Robert, Carie n° 133; Macridy (1912) n° 2; n° 5; n° 7; n° 8; n° 11; n° 9; n° 10; Robert, Carie n° 135; n° 50; Macridy (1912) n° 3; θεσποδότου Τίτταρίου Κλεοκάρου Ἀρδίους τοῖς ἀπὸ Ἀρδίους Ἡρακλείδου Πατρογενίδου. On Ardyss, see Herodotus 1.7; Nicolaus of Damascus ForHst 90 F 44, and P. HogeMANN, Ardyss no 1, DNP 1 (1996) 1040.

\(^{124}\) The name Ardyss is attested only once elsewhere in the epigraphic documentation, in Athens (IG II* 2065, 11; 3687, 10; 3742, 1).

\(^{125}\) Talamo (1973) 345 suggested a ‘philo-lydian’ dynasty.

\(^{126}\) See Picard (1922) 209, 212; Glare & Thompson, LSJ Suppl. (1996) sv. πατρογενίδες.

Picard. At any rate, we need not concern ourselves here with the unlikely historical background of that asserted kinship. Let us confine ourselves to noting that is was quite frequent in the Roman period that families traced back their ancestry to legendary figures and boasted of this descent in public records. In this connection, the thespiodos' conspicuous claim for the antiquity of their families is not completely at variance with the thesis of a creation of a new religious office, but it rather could reflect the will of powerful families to give a new visibility to ancient local religious traditions in order to turn these to their advantage. Be that as it may, in the Roman period the thespiodic function seems to have been considered as confined to specific and traditional families, but we are still not able to state whether or not they were Colophonians.

There is another point which deserves special consideration. According to Tacitus, the Clarian priest was chosen from specified families, generally summoned from Miletos (sed certis e familis et ferme Mileto accitus sacerdos)Modern scholars have generally not attached importance to it, in all likelihood because of the alleged competition between the two famous oracular shrines. Let us note that the epigraphic evidence does not allow us to disprove the account of Tacitus. Indeed, several identical names appear in both Clarian and Didymean inscriptions at the same time. Again, the presence of very common names as metrodotos or Menophilos in both sanctuaries at the same period can not tell us anything about an eventual Milesian origin for Clarian officials. However, Tacitus' account could be validated by instances of less common names. Take the case of Claudius Smaragdos, quoted as secretary at Claro during the 76th Prytany of Apollo, in AD 153/4.

Though the combination of the names Claudius and S/Zmaragdos is found only twice elsewhere in the documentation, in the second century AD Didyma, an illustrious prophet called T. Claudius Markianus Smaragdos appears four times in our documentation. Therefore, it is possible that this Didymean prophet belonged to the same family as the Clarian official Claudius Smaragdos.

Then, the question of the presence of foreigners among the Clarian officials should at least be raised, since we also know that in the Hellenistic period the city of Colophon officially summoned a Smyrniac chreomologos in order to preside over the oracular shrine.

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128 Picard (1922) 212: "Il y avait donc à Claro une famille sacerdotale, comparable à celle des Branchides à Milet. Elle disposait, encore en pleine époque latine, de la charge de thespiodos, à titre héréditaire".
129 Tacitus, Annals II 54.
130 See Hassounille (1898) 267; Picard (1922) 219–220; Lave Fox (1986) 172.
131 Robert, Carne n° 24, 1: 4: γραμματευόμενος τῷ Κλ. Κριτολίου νήσου καὶ Κλ. Ζμαρεύδου
132 In Athens: IG II 2191, l. 120–121; Κλ. Ωδόρους Ζμαρεύδου (AD 193–195); in Tomos: SNGCep 269.
133 LDidyma 236CIII, 269, 270, 271.
While prosopographical research does not allow us to be confident of the origin of the Clarian officials, it is fairly clear that, as in Didyma, several priestly functions in Claros were held by members from the same families.

It appeared that people from the same family were recorded in the same year religious teams, as shown by the case of Diocles Phoibos son of Diocles, and Diocles Phoibos the "second", respectively quoted as prophet and secretary during the 91st ptytany of Apollo, in AD 175/6. We have already mentioned that the thespiodos Tib. Claudius Ardis, was the son of another thespiodos, Claudius Asklepides. We also observe that some priests were son of a previous priest, like, for instance, Artemidoro, son of Alexandros, priest from the 47th until the 51st ptytany of Apollo, in years before AD 116 and Ulpius Artemidoro, priest from the 60th until the 64th Apollanian ptytany.

Besides, we know how long the career of priests and thespiodoi could be. For instance, C. Julius Zóchichos was priest during at least fifteen years, from the 85th ptytany, that should be in AD 162/3, until at least the 93rd ptytany of Apollo, in AD 177/8. The thespiodos Cn. Julius Reginos Alexandros held his office for nineteen years, from the 76th ptytany of Apollo, in AD 153/4, until the 90th Apollonian ptytany, in AD 174/5. In this context, the long-term offices would have conferred more power on families whose members would have controlled the Clarian sanctuary for a long period.

To conclude, religious officials in both Didyma and Claros belonged in all likelihood to the elite. One might justifiably assume that most of them were respectively members of the Mileian and Colophonian wealthy communities. However, it should not be forgotten that foreigners seem also to have carried out priestly offices in both the oracular shrines, even if prosopographical research does not allow us to precise to what extent the presence of external people among the religious teams was common or not.

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119 Robert, Carie n° 193: ἰεραματίας Τιταιρίου Κλ. Οὐρίου Αρδίου Ασκληπιδάκη Κλ. Οὐρίου.
120 For the first Artemidoro, see an unpublished list in Picard (1922) 202 and Macridy (1912) n° 25 = Robert, Carie n° 132: ἰεραματίας Λ. Αρτεμιδόρου Αλεξάνδρου. For the second, see Šahin (1987) n° 18 = SEG 37 (1987) 964; Robert, Carie n° 137; Macridy (1905) 167 n° III 8; Chamonard and Legrand (1894) 218 = OGIS 530 = Macridy (1905) 170 n° V 4; Šahin (1987) n° 8 = SEG 37 (1987) 964: ἰεραματίας Ο. Οὐρίου Αρτεμιδόρου. Ulpius Artemidoro could be the same person as Artemidoro son of Alexandros, having then received the Roman citizenship; but in view of the improbability of a such length of life, he might more likely have been his son.
121 Robert, Carie n° 193.
122 See Robert, Carie n° 196; n° 27 (dated thanks to the mention of the year 262 of the province of Asia).
What is quite certain is that, in both cases of annual and long-term offices, priestly families did exist, in the sense that most of the clergy members had kinsmen who performed or had performed the offices in the same sanctuary. As shown by the ἀδίδακτος Didymean prophets, the Milesian families which produced generations of male and female officials might reveal the trace of the institution of a traditional and closed system of hereditary succession. If so, however, this does not exclude that, within the context of the issues regarding the financing of cults of the Graeco-Roman city-states, the costly priesthoods were also assigned to the wealthiest citizens, and henceforward to their descendants.

In return, the inscribing practice allowed Clarian and Didymean officials to parade their family linkages. Let us be clear that, in this context, performing priestly functions aimed also at reinforcing family networks and at keeping alive the memory of the whole family.

b) Careers

Let us now examine priestly functions in the oracular sanctuaries in connection with the political career of the religious officials.

In their commemorative inscriptions, Didymean prophets recorded the offices they have carried out beforehand: they have often been in charge of the Milesian eponymous magistracy, that is to say the stephanephoros. A great number of prophets have been gymnasarchos, some of them having been in charge of only one or two of the three gymnasia in Miletos, others having supervised all of them. In some cases, Apollo’s prophets have performed other offices connected with the organisation of festivals, as the panegyriarchia and the agonothetia. We also know instances of prophets having been strategos, choregos, grand priest of the imperial cult, tamias, pайдonomos, agoranomos, boulearchos and archiprytanias. We should also mention that a Didymean prophet was a physician and that two of them were described as philosophers, one as Epicurean, the other as Stoic.

J. Fontenrose quoted the two exceptional cases of M. Ulpius Flavius Phileas, who was only twenty-three years old when he carried out the function of prophet, and Claudius Damas, who was prophet for the second time when he was eighty-one, in order to state that there was no age requirement to be prophet. Con-
versely, considering that prophets have usually been in their past in charge of several costly and prestigious liturgical offices and that they were often father of the *hydrophoros*, the post of prophet appears to have been usually performed as an end-career occupation.

As shown by A. Relm, the position of prophet was often held about a decade after the post of *stephanephoros*\(^\text{147}\). However, it is worth stating that it was not always the case: the prophet Aelianus Poplus was probably *stephanephoros*, *pangyriarchos* and twice priest of the Sebastoi after his post of prophet\(^\text{148}\).

At this point, we should note that the inscriptions do not establish a distinction between religious and secular posts: all the offices performed by the prophet are listed in a similar way, as if they were the different stages of his career. In this connection, it appears that the office of prophet was regarded as a title and very prestigious post within a political career. Moreover, it is interesting to note that some functions, like the eponymous *stephanephoria* or the *gymnasiarchia*, were regularly performed before the post of prophet. This brings us to the question of whether rich people in the Graeco-Roman cities were encouraged, perhaps even compelled, to perform these costly liturgical offices before having the right to carry out the post of prophet, which definitively appears to have been one of the most prestigious offices for the Milesian elite\(^\text{149}\). We shall turn to this question below.

As for the *hydrophoroi*, they have sometimes taken on other priestly charges later in life. For instance, we know that a certain Artemis, a *hydrophoros*’ mother, has been *hydrophoros*, and afterwards priestess of Artemis Boudaia for life as well as *laotrophoros* of the Megaloi Theoi Kaberoi\(^\text{150}\). Another *hydrophoros* has also been grand-priestess of the Sebastoi (I.Didyma 315, L. 30 restored). As was increasingly common for women and children during the Roman period, some *hydrophoroi* are also known for having held civic functions traditionally attributed to men only, such as the *stephanephoria* and the *agonotheta*\(^\text{151}\). Let us mention the case of this anonymous *hydrophoros* who performed an exceptional career, by having been archiereia of the Sebastos, *stephanephoros*, *gymnasiarchos* of the three gymnasia, *paideuton*, *choregos* of all choreges, *agonothetes* of the Didymeia Commodia and *kotarchis*\(^\text{152}\). For my part, I am not sure the evidence allows us to assert that the *hydrophoria* was followed by so-called political functions only occasionally, as stated by R. van Bremen\(^\text{153}\).

\(^{147}\) Relm, L.Didyma 171, 380–387.


\(^{149}\) For a parallel, see Sartre (1991) 144–145, quoting Select papyri II n° 241.


\(^{151}\) I.Milet 17 265. See van Bremen (1996) 77, 94, 326.

\(^{152}\) van Bremen (1996) 93.
As far as the Clarian officials are concerned, we have already pointed out that nothing is known about their eventual career outside the sanctuary. Nevertheless, the numerous inscriptions of delegations indicate a kind of internal hierarchy between the several priestly offices in Claros, if one takes into consideration the difference between the positions of priest and thespiodos, appointed for long period and quoted in inscriptions in first position, and those of prophet and secretary, rotating each year and quoted later.

Moreover, we observe that the functions of secretary and prophet have often been performed by future priests before entering their life office. Some cases of priestly careers illustrate the truth of this: we know that Claudius Rufus was prophet at the beginning of his career, in AD 132/3, and that he became priest about twenty years later, from the 76th prytany of Apollo, in AD 152/3 until AD 158/9, during the 81st prytany of Apollo. Similarly, Tib. Claudius Kritolos 'the young' was secretary in AD 153/4 and held the post of prophet in AD 155/6, during the 79th prytany of Apollo, and finally that of priest in AD 159/60, during the 82nd Apollonian prytany.

It appears then that the offices of secretary and prophet were respectively considered as prime stages in the priestly service, and that Clarian officials would have been used - or perhaps even urged (see below) - to perform annual religious functions before they rose to the prestigious life offices.

We have only one slight clue indicating that Clarian clergy members seem also have been assimilated in a way to other civic offices: as Clarian religious teams were dated by naming the pryanis under whom each annual function served, the term of all priestly offices was then associated with the Colephonian civic year.

To sum up, epigraphic evidence suggests that both short- and long-term religious offices in the oracular sanctuaries of Claros and Didyma were performed within the framework of a kind of cursus honorum, in the sense that the most prestigious priestly posts, that is to say priest and thespiodos in Claros and prophet in Didyma, were usually carried out after having performed other political and/or religious charges in the city and/or in the sanctuary. In that context, it appears that the prestigious office of prophet in Didyma was regarded as a stage at the end of the political career of wealthy Milesians, without any apparent distinction between their religious and secular occupations. As regards the female priesthood, the Didymian hydraphoria, held during the youth, was also followed by so-called political functions and it is not impossible that this religious office was also considered as a prime stage of the 'career' of rich Milesian women.

314 See Macridy (1965) 168–170 n. IV 3; 165 n. II 2, n. II 4; Robert, Carie n° 24; SEG 37 (1987) 969; Robert, Carie n° 192, Macridy (1912) n° 15; Robert, Carie n° 25; SEG 37 (1987) 970. He could possibly have become priest already in AD 152/3, since we have no information about this year's officials.


316 For such a religious cursus honorum, see B. Dignas' remarks on Rhodian priests, Dignas (2003) 40–42, 50.
c) Duties and Benefactions

As members of the elite, belonging to rich families and having prestigious careers, priests and prophets should have got involved in the complex relationships between prestige and compulsion which was an aspect of civic life of the elite in Graeco-Roman cities. Considering the financial issues of the Greek cities in the Roman period, people from wealthy families were in all likelihood socially encouraged to fulfil civic offices, among others priestly functions, which were as costly as prestigious.

Indeed, although evidence is silent about the precise financial outlay required by priestly functions, Clarian and Didymean priesthoods should have included great expenses, connected to the many aspects of the performance of the cults of the gods, the organisation of festivals and mysteries and other duties the oracular charges must have included.

We will here examine in what extent members of clergy tried to withstand the social constraint exerted on the elite and how their religious offices offered at the same time a considerable scope for benefactions.

Let us first consider the case of Aelianus Poplas, prophet at Didyma belonging to a prestigious Milesian family. In a seminal article published in 1968, L. Robert demonstrated that the character called Poplas in the Tübingen Theosophy, a late fifth century Christian collection of pagan oracles, should be identified with the second century Milesian person known from epigraphic and numismatic evidence. Consequently, the French epigraphist showed that some revelations in the Tübingen Theosophy should be considered as original Didymean oracles. In the introduction to the first oracle, Poplas asked to Apollo whether he should go on an embassy to request the Emperor’s financial support about the ‘liberalties’ (ἐν συμφέρει πρεώ χρηματων εἰς φιλοτιμίας πίματι πρὸς βασιλέα). In the second oracle, Poplas presented himself as being at a low ebb, because his property had begun to diminish and his health was failing (τὸν προγοιμάτων ἱναντισμένων αὐτῷ καὶ τῆς οἰκίας μειούμενας καὶ τοῦ σώματος ὅπως εἶ ἐχεότως). These two texts show us a great Milesian citizen, belonging to a prestigious priestly family, suffering financial problems due to the costs generated by his munificent career.

Evidence indicates that some oracular officials tried to evade the financial burdens linked to their office. Indeed, we know one of the duties of the Didymean prophet thanks to a first century AD inscription from the temple of Apollo Delphinios in Miletos. The statute requires that the prophet and the stepphanophoros provide the festivities of the Kosmoi, probably a board of sacred officials responsible for some kind of decoration in the sanctuary, and the Molpoi, in accordance with the ance-
tural customs (1. 13–17: δεδοχθαυ τωι κα τοις στεφανοφόροις ετπάναγε επιτελειν τοις ευώχιας τοιν τε κοσμιον και των μιλανων κατα τα παιτεροι τοις λειτουργιας τωτοις[152]). It is added that no one could divert these λειτουργιας into a means of revenue (1. 19–20: μεταγηγειεν εις άργυρην πόρον των λειτουργιας ταισε[153]). The following specifications about the legal procedure to be brought against those who do not respect this duty imply that several prophets have not always performed this expensive obligation.

Furthermore, the significant expenses of the priesthood should also have generated difficulties in recruiting the sacrificial personal. Evidence suggests that the unwillingness among the Milesians to serve as prophet was not unusual. For example, Claudius Chilonis explicitly stated that he carried out both the position of archipræstatis and that of prophet during the same year because no citizen was willing to accept either office[154].

In this connection, the institution of the long-term positions of priest and thespiodos in Claros surely diminished the difficulty in recruiting religious officials. Nevertheless, the annual appointment of the prophet was Apparently still problematic: when there was no candidate for the position of prophet, it happened that some Charian prytaneis and priests had also to carry out simultaneously the function of prophet[155]. In that context, the setup of a religious cursus honorum among Charian offices (see above) would have helped to remedy this lack of candidates by urging people to perform the annual and surely costly function of prophet before having the right to rise to the prestigious life offices.

Here, it is worthy of note that three emperors, Trajan, Hadrian, and later on Julian, were chosen as prophets at Didyma[156]. On the one hand, the nomination of Trajan and Hadrian as prophets should certainly be considered as a mark of honour, given in response to their policy of restoration of the Didymean sanctuary[157]. As regards the case of Julian, his prophecy should also be associated with his effort to renew the oracular activity in decline[158]. On the other hand, we know that, in many cities of Roman Asia Minor, emperors and members of imperial family held highly regarded and costly posts in time of financial crisis, when nobody wanted to take care of the expenditure of the post[159]. In addition, it is also highly probable that the three emperors were nominated as prophets in Didyma also because in those years there was no candidate for this post.

155 I. Didyma 318 (Trian); I. Didyma 494 2–3 (Hadrian); Julian, Epist. 451bc (Julian).
156 See Mitchell (1987).
Let us note that it was also probably in order to reduce the expenses of the position of prophet that it happened once that two brothers were prophets at the same time.\(^{166}\)

Even if one must not underestimate the rhetorical element when elite people displayed their financial problems, yet, Clarian and Didymeian prophecies appear to have involved so burdensome expenses that prophets tried to escape their duties\(^{170}\).

In return, those who fulfilled costly religious posts took advantage of the commemorating of their year of office to display their piety as well as the magnificence of their generosities.

Let us notice that there is an evolution among inscriptions of Didymeian prophets and hydrophoroi. Indeed, during the first centuries BC and AD, the texts are very short and concise, naming for instance only the prophet, his father and qualifying him as 'pious' (σωφρόνος). Later, during the second and the third centuries AD, the commemorative texts became increasingly long, as if prophets and priestesses of Artemis have wanted to outbid their predecessors. In this context, prophets and hydrophoroi seized the opportunity to proudly recall the distributions (or cheapening) of wheat and oil they made to the boule or to another group as, for instance, the women and the parthenoi\(^{72}\). One hydrophoros prided herself on having offered the bronze gates of the temple of Artemis, another has provided the curtain of the temple\(^{73}\). In some cases, prophets and hydrophoroi also had inscribed at Didyma sophisticated epigrams which celebrated their piety\(^{73}\).

In a context of lack of candidates, it is not surprising that some prophets emphasized the fact that they were volunteers for the office of prophet (οιτηπάγγελτος), or that they were chosen without lot (ἀθλητός) or that they took the post as a 'gift'.\(^{74}\).

As shown by these examples, Didymeian prophets and hydrophoroi acted, and were represented, as benefactors: because they were considered as rich, they had to show to the civic community their will to contribute to the fame and magnificence of their own city. The rivalry between Didymeian religious officials is surely the result of a strong competition between the rich Milesian families. This was overemphasized by the social constraint which compelled rich people to hold as prestigious as costly posts.

\(^{166}\) 1Didyma 284.

\(^{170}\) For differing conclusions, see Dignas (forthcoming) who recently argued that being priest was firstly a benefitting activity.

\(^{72}\) 1Didyma 248, 1. 8–9: ποιήσαν εἰςὑμῶν[τού]μην τοῦτο καὶ ἱλασίαν; 255; 269, 312, 314, 329, 333, 353, 360, 375, 381, 384.

\(^{73}\) 1Didyma 381 (χαλκός, δώρος); 360 (παραπέτασμα); see Robert (1969) 470–471.

\(^{74}\) See for example SCGest 01/19/21–35.

\(^{74}\) See, for example, 1Didyma 236, 269, 270, 286, 348, 327 Il. λοιπον την προφητετ[ι]αν δωρεάν.
In conclusion, as far as we know, the analysis of the role of the religious officials in Claros and Didyma during the Roman period shows that they acted like other contemporary members of the elite: in fulfilling their religious offices, they contributed to build and perpetuate family networks, which was essential at this time to keep alive the civic memory of the family. Oracle priestships were truly integrated into a civic career and seem to have constituted a context for benefactions.

D. Oracular Officials as Interpreters of Apollo’s Words

Let us now analyse the functions of oracular officials in Claros and Didyma according to their position as interpreters of Apollo’s will. Indeed, unlike other priests, clergy members in oracular shrines had to provide the pilgrims with texts supposed to be an intelligible translation of the divine answer. In the Roman period, people were accustomed to resort to the Greek oracular shrines, mostly in Claros and Didyma, in order to ask questions to the deity concerning problems that were political, private or even theological.

We will here consider the priests as authors of the oracular texts. In this connection, oracles, which are preserved in both epigraphic and literary sources, can offer an original way of looking at the priestly activity. Even if it is not possible to study here in an extensive manner the implications of oracular texts, we will briefly survey to what extent the interpretation of divine word was used by priestly officials as a means of power.

It is not my intention to question the faith of oracular officials, who certainly took their task piously and seriously. However, their religious scrupulousness is compatible with the fact that priests and prophets took advantage of the particular and powerful authority given to them thanks to the making of oracles.

a) Internal Control

First of all, prophets could act upon the internal policy of the sanctuary, by making oracular answers about cult matters. For example, an oracle received by a tamias called Hermias gave Apollo’s approval of including the altar of Tyche in the altar precinct.

In some cases, Didymean prophets consulted the oracle themselves. The case of the two oracles given to the prophet Damianos around AD 300 (I.Didyma 504 = SGOst 01/19/08) illustrates how an oracular officiant could act on the sanctuary’s internal policy. Indeed, the first time Damianos asked the deity if he would allow him to endow an altar to Kore Soteira near the one of Demeter Karphoros (1. 10–13: τι ἐπιτρέπεις αὐτῷ παρὰ τοῦ τῆς Καρποφόρου Δήμητρας βωμὸν ἱδρύσσεαι βωμὸν τῆς ταιός αὐτῆς). Apollo, that is to say the prophet himself

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177 Günther (1971) n° 1 = SGOst 01/19/06. See Fontenrose (1988) 162, 202.
speaking on the behalf of his god, gave his approbation (l. 15: Σωτηρίς Κόρης τιμήν περίπλομα δίκες “Make Soteira Kore’s glory in the prescient altar”). The second time, Damianos asked Apollo how the goddess should be called in hymns, and again a clear answer was given to him.

Because they were responsible for answering on behalf of the god to their own questions, prophets could use this situation in order to underline their piety and to increase their personal fame. For example, the prophet T. Flavius Ulpiamus inscribed an oracle in which Apollo praised his piety.

By asking the god, prophets could also legitimate their acts with a divine sanction. We have already mentioned the oracle given to Poplas wanting to know Apollo’s advice regarding an embassy to the emperor. Poplas took the advantage of his second consultation in order to display how poor he was (see above).

Prophets had a sacred guarantee for their acts, considering that Apollo’s oracles were witnesses of their piety, as emphasized by T. Flavius Ulpianus (I.Didyma 277, l. 9–11: αὐτὸς ἡ θείος δίκαιος [προσ]μετά[τον] πολλάκις ἐμερμήρεσαν).

In addition, the officials of oracular sanctuaries had the opportunity to control the internal functioning of the religious institution in the recruiting process of new officials.

In this connection, let us note that the candidates for the oracular priesthoods were apparently allotted according to Apollo’s decision. We know that the Didymean prophets were also designated by Apollo: for instance, an epigram glorifies the fact that a certain Poseidionios was chosen three times by Apollo as prophet. The prophet Q. Pompeonios Pollio was also nominated by the god. It is likely that the priestesses of Artemis were designated by the god’s approval too.

As interpreters of Apollo’s words, Didymean prophets had then the right to inspect the candidates not only for the posts of prophet and hydropboros. Moreover, they could also control the appointment of other Milesian priesthoods, as shown by the instance of a certain Sardonela, priestess of Athena Polias around the third century AD and “chosen by the god Apollo Didymaeus for her temperance and piety by the means of his divine oracles” (l. 6–9: αἱρετικὰς ὑπὸ τοῦ ἀθέου ἱστού θεοῦ Διδυμοῦς ὑπὸ τῶν ἱστήκηται τῶν [ποιήμων] τοῦ αὐτοῦ λογίαν).

In Claros too, Apollo seems to have chosen his officials. Indeed, a partly restored Hellenistic inscription tells that the Smyrnian hypophetes Menophilos was chosen to preside over the oracular shrine on one hand according to the will of the Colophonian Apollo (l. 4–6: τοῦ ἱστηκέως ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ ἱστήκης τῇ πολέμῳ ἱστήκης ἱστήκης). And on another hand “in view of the de-

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174 I.Didyma 277 = SCol 01/19/10, l. 11–12.
175 I.Didyma 282 = SCol 01/19/23, l. 2, 5: τρίς... δὲ Ἀπόλλων σε προφέτημψ.
176 I.Didyma 280: προφήτης Κ(ι)στοκος Ποιμανος Πολλην τὴς εἰρήνης, πανηγυρικος, ἱστήκης ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ κτλ.
178 Herrmann (1971) = SCol 01/20/03.
mos' regard and zeal, due to his piety towards the gods and his religious observance towards humans etc" (l. 6–9: φιλοτιμίας δὲ καὶ ο[ποδή του δῆ][μου κα-]

tοκειλημένος ... διὰ τε τὴν προ[ς θεοὺς εὐσέβειαν καὶ τὴν πρὸς αὐθεντόπους ὀσιο[τητα] (125).

This last example shows that the recruitment of the god's servants was a deal for both religious and civic authority. It should be stressed that, in case of rivalry between civic magistrates and religious authority, oracular officials would have had the opportunity to disagree with the decision of the civic body, by refusing the nomination of a candidate, for example. In this context, oracular clergy members could have represented external opposition forces.

However, if their prophetic activity could have given them the opportunity to express some opposition to the civic power, evidence shows that, as part of the Milesian elite, Didymean prophets have rather acted on the behalf of their civic community. The second oracle given in the second century AD to a priestess of Demeter called Thesmophoros illustrates the truth of this. The question is not known, but the text written by a Didymean official shows how Demeter should be honoured by recounting in an original way the prehistory of those who are descended from Neleus (l. 9: Νελής ὁ κομνοδόκουα νοετήρας, "inhabitants of (the city of) Neleus hit by the dart"), that is to say the people from Miletos: according to the oracle, thanks to her gift of fruits, Demeter offered to Milesians the opportunity to leave their bestial habits and to become civilized (126).

Here, it is pretty clear that the identity of religious officials merged into the civic identity. As with the foundation of C. Vibius Salutaris in Ephesus in AD 104 (127), the oracle aimed at providing common roots for the sacred past of the Milesian citizens.

Making oracles was thus a way for oracular officials to control the internal functioning of the sanctuary, as the recruitment of priestly officials and cult matters. At this occasion, they contributed to build the identity of their civic community while seizing the opportunity to increase their personal fame.

b) External Policy

When people came from abroad to take Apollo's advice in his shrine, oracular officials had the possibility to act upon the relationships between the sanctuary and external authority, both that of other cities and sanctuaries as well as that of Roman rulers.

Thanks to the Clarian oracular texts, whose inscriptions were found in the pilgrims' cities, we know how oracular clergy could develop the external policy of the shrine towards other sanctuaries (128).

First, the answers they made reveal the way Clarian officials tried to diffuse the image of their Apollo in Asia Minor. For example, in an oracle found in Phrygian

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126 L.Didymos 496 B = SCoa 01/19/05, l. 5–9.
127 See Rogers (1991) 144–149.
Hierapolis, Clarian officials proposed to erect statues of Apollo Clarios in front of the city gates in order to repulse a plague. Similar prescriptions are found in Clarian oracles given to people from Pergamon, Callipolis in Thracean Chersonesus, and Caesarea Troketta in Lydya.

In other cases, Clarian oracles express Apollo's will to become allied to other local deities, as the case of Aelius Aristides, to which the Clarian Apollo gave advice to follow Asclepios' prescriptions. In this context, it is worth to note that some oracles emphasize Apollo's kinship with the deities he supports, like in a Clarian oracle inscribed in Pergamon where Asclepios is said to be Apollo's beloved son (v. 19: 'Ἀσκληπιὸν ἔμοι φίλον ἤέμα'). For Clarian officials, it could be a way of asserting the superiority of their Apollo.

Some Clarian oracles express a real will to establish customer loyalty: we know that oracular officials asked to their clients to come again to the oracle, as shown by the case of an answer inscribed in Hierapolis, in which Apollo prescribed to the consultants to send at Colophon choirs of young boys and girls (παιδίας παιδικοὺς οὓς Κολοφών νέας θυατικοὺς), singing hymns and performing libations and hecatombs in his honour (μειλέως τῶν λοιπόν έπιλειψαν τό κατάβας). The Clarian oracle found in Pergamon also recommended pilgrims to come again in Claros and gave a quite precise description of rites having to be performed at this occasion, like the performing of hymns by choirs of young people in honour of several deities.

These examples reveal that the oracles written by Clarian officials took an active part in the policy between the sanctuary of Colophon and other religious communities. The making of sacred texts gave the officials the opportunity to secure a steady clientele for the oracle. It should not be forgotten that the coming of pilgrims must have had important economic repercussions for the finances of the sanctuary.

While dealing with people from other cities or sanctuaries, Clarian oracular officials appear then to have identified their interests with those of their religious institution.

As regards the attitude of oracular officials towards Roman authority, let us first mention that, as was common for members of the Greek-speaking elite, several Didymean prophets were praised for having gone on embassies to the emperor.

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187 Pugliese Carratelli (1963–64) n° II b = Merkelbach-Stauber (1996) n° 4 = SCoA 02/12/01, v. 18–20: ... ἐμφί πολλάς Κλαρίδοι μετέξετε Φοίβου | τῶν ἑορτῶν ἀκοπών ληστάρα τῆς λείας λοιπών.
188 Aelius Aristides, Sacred Tales 3.12.
189 I.Pergamon 234 = Merkelbach-Stauber (1996) n° 2 = SCoA 06/02/01.
192 For example, 1.Diodora 264: προσέβαλαν πρὸς τὸν Σεβάσταν; 269; 270; 272: παρασκευάζοντος ὑπὲρ τῆς πατρίδος πολλάκις προς | τοὺς αὐτοκράτορας. On embassies to emperors, see Millar (1977) 375–385, Kokkinia (2003).
Representing their civic community, they have surely asked privileges on the behalf of the city of Miletos. However, it is very likely that they also took advantage from this trip to increase their own prestige.

Consider again the case of Poplas, who asked Apollo whether he should go on an embassy to Rome because of personal problems regarding the costs of the liberalities (philotimiai). The sanctuary gave a vague answer, but we know that Poplas went effectively to Rome thanks to coins minted by the city of Miletos under Commodus which represented Poplas' sailing (ὅς Ποπλᾶς κατάσκηνας). Considering that such embassies were really expensive, we could interpret the reference to Apollo's advice in this context as an attempt to prove the necessity of the expedition to the emperor and, in case, to evade civic reluctance.

From the beginning of the imperial rule in Asia Minor onwards, Clarian officials tried to present as reliable their predictions about famous Romans. Indeed, after the sudden death of Germanicus, they propagated the rumour that, when he came and visited Claros in AD 18, Germanicus was already told by Clarian Apollo his forthcoming demise.

Moreover, as shown by the numerous inscriptions in honour of Romans found alongside the Sacred Way in Claros, the sanctuaries of Claros and Didyma seem to have attracted in their shrines important people representing Roman authority. Many emperors came to the Apollonian shrines in the Greek East and contributed to build the magnificence of the oracles. At this occasion, the priestly officials probably proposed to the Romans to give them a divine confirmation of their policy. According to Dio, Trajan was told by a god that he would become the lord of the universe (αὐτὸν ἐπιβεβαιωκύριον). As suggested by C. P. Jones, this prediction might have been given to the emperor in the sanctuary of Apollo at Didyma. Later, we know that the oracular officials in Didyma supported imperial policy when Diocletian was about to lead the great persecution against Christians in AD 303.

Oracular institutions were then in a position to use their religious authority to support Roman rule. In return for this divine support of imperial policy, it is very likely that sanctuaries received buildings, honours and privileges.

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75 See Baldu (1985).
74 Tactitus, Annals II 54: οἱ ἄνθρωποι Ασιας νεκτὸν Κολόφον, χτις Απολλίνες ορακολούσαθεν. ... Εἰ δὲ ἐρμήνευσιν Ζένονος ἡμών, χτις Κολόφον, ορακολούσαθεν. ... "He skirted the Asian coast once more, and anchored off Colophon, in order to consult the oracle of the Clarian Apollo. ... Rumour said that he had predicted to Germanicus his hastening fate, though in the equivocal terms which oracles affect." Translation by J. Jackson. On this passage, see Potter (1994) 169; Vignont (2001) 366–367.
76 See Ferrary (2000).
77 See Mitchell (1987).
78 Dio Chrysostom, Discourse XLV 4.
80 Lactantius, De mort. pers. XI 7–8.; Eusebius, Vita Constantinii II 50.
c) Religious Authority

Finally, it is worth analysing to what extent the particular activity of oracle making would have distinguished the oracular priesthoods from other priestly and/or civic offices.

Indeed, by comparison with other officials, Clarian and Didymean oracular officials preserved in Roman times some traditional prerogatives of Greek priesthoods. In this connection, let us consider the case of the eponymous magistrates.

In Colophon, although Hellenistic decrees only mention human perytanes, we have already mentioned that, in the Roman period, the Colophonian ptyany was entrusted to Apollo himself at least one hundred twenty-three times. Besides, five women are also known to have been perytanes in Colophon. Finally, we know that L. Aelius Caesar and Hadrian were also chosen as perytanes.

Similarly, although it was usually exclusively attributed to men, during the Roman period the post of stephanephoros in Miletos was also regularly attributed to Apollo himself, at least thirty times. Augustus (twice), Gaius Caesar, Tiberius, and two Romans, A. Popillius Rufus and M. Cornelius M.F. Capito, were also stephanephoros in Roman Miletos, and so were at least twelve women.

Whereas there is a noticeable dilution in the Roman period of the original features of other civic and religious offices, by contrast, priests, thespidoi, and prophets in Claros and Didyma were always men, mainly Roman citizens, who really performed their function, with the exception of the three emperors who were prophets at Didyma. Note that the female characteristic was also preserved for the priestesses of Artemis in Didyma.

As opposed to the eponymous offices of their city, oracular officials in Claros and Didyma conserved some traditional characteristics of Greek priesthoods, like gender differentiation and real performance of the religious office.

One might not explain this difference by pointing out the religious feature of oracular functions, since we know that the functions of stephanephoros in Miletos and perytanes in Colophon were partly religious too. Indeed, evidence suggests that the perytanes of Colophon had to take care of the cult of Dionysos in Claros. We also know that, during the Hellenistic period, the Milesian stephanephoros had to perform the same rites in honour of Apollo Delphinios as those the Didymean prophet had to perform for Apollo Didymus. The functions of prophet and the

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266 See Robert (1992) 95.
*stephanephoros* are also linked in the inscription from the temple of Apollo Delfinios in Miletos (first century AD), which lists the duties of both the posts, that is to say banquets for the Kosmoi and the Molpoi (see above)²⁰⁸.

If we compare other officials, even those with religious functions, the preservation of the priestly characteristics of oracular officials in Roman Claros and Didyma seems to be due to a particular religious authority linked to the oracular activity itself.

**Conclusion**

To sum up, this study has firstly reviewed the situation regarding the variety and religious functions of the priestly officials in charge of the two greatest oracular shrines of the Roman East, Claros and Didyma. Considering that the ancient evidence for each sacred place differs in its nature, number and state of conservation, we have questioned which type of information could bring the literary and epigraphic documentation about the clergy members of both the Clarian and the Didymean sanctuaries, and it was also necessary to establish what our sources could not tell about it.

Secondly, we went into the role played by the oracular officials in their relation to their own civic community and to the extra-civic authority.

At the level of the civic community, the oracular officials acted merely as other members of municipal elite. They were widely involved in the local policy and they belonged to the same powerful families which raced in order to occupy all the important spheres of civic life. Being wealthy people, oracular officials were often great benefactors, who were probably urged to fulfill prestigious but costly posts. In addition, the oracular activity gave them the opportunity to control the functioning of the religious institution, as, for instance, the recruitment of religious personnel and the performance of cults.

At the level of the province of Asia, the making of oracles was an effective manner for priests and prophets to act upon the relationships between their sanctuary and other religious communities.

At the level of the Empire, the relationships between the authorities of Greek sanctuaries and the Roman rulers illustrate, on the one hand, the way the Romans managed to take advantage from Greek gods’ prestige in order to impose their rule. On the other, it also shows how the Greek-speaking elite integrated their religious traditions, like the consultation of the oracle, to the new political environment created by the Roman Empire.

The overwhelming impression conveyed by the evidence is that, at each level, oracular officials took advantage of their activity of oracles making in order to increase their personal and family fame. At the same time, they also appear to have constantly contributed to the building of political and cultural identity of their own

city. There seems to be no contradiction nor conflict between these two different levels of action. In that respect, the role of priestly officials in Roman Claros and Didyma does not completely fit with B. Dignas' main conclusions about the specific status of priests and their relative independence from the civic sphere. Indeed, evidence suggests that Clarian and Didymean oracular officials identified themselves with their city and that their oracular activity merged in most cases into the civic identity, or that, more exactly, one was incorporated by the other.

In that connection, can we assert that priestly officials possessed a group identity, as suggested by B. Dignas? As shown by the cases of yearly offices, it appears that the specific status of oracular officials concerned their temporary function, rather than the individuals themselves. However, the setting up of a kind of curas honorum might have contributed to build a group identity for those who worked in the oracular shrines. Furthermore, the geographical distance between the sanctuaries of Claros and Didyma and their respective cities might also have had an impact on the constitution of such a group identity, distinguishing oracular officials from other officials living in the city-centre.

The most sensible conclusion we can come to is that the particular activity of oracles making conferred on priests and prophets a great religious aura which distinguished the oracular priesthoods from other religious and civic offices. Even though Clarian and Didymean prophets had to perform some rituals identical to those performed by contemporary eponymous magistrates, we have shown that oracular officials enjoyed a distinct religious authority which required the preservation of traditional features of Greek priesthood.

All this goes to show that we should not make generalisations about Greek priesthoods in studying their role in society. In my opinion, the kind of relationship they had with the deity – whether passive (sacrifices, libations or processions) or active (mantic inspiration or mystery initiations) – determined the level of the sacredness of religious officials. In that connection, the direct link oracular officials had with the sacred world, as well as the great power they had on the human world, have conferred on them a special authority which distinguished them from other civic officials associated with cult matters.

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