

Croesus and Delphi

H. W. Parke

IT WAS IN 1939 that I first essayed this subject in print, and in 1956, when Dr Wormell and I dealt with the Delphic oracle on a larger scale, this particular section was not greatly altered.¹ Now, more than forty years since my first attempt, I try to go into some aspects of the subject in greater detail, and follow up some problems at which I merely hinted. The impulse to do so now is immediately occasioned by work which I have recently done on the Greek Sibyls, but some of the ideas have been in mind for long, and it is only the convergence of various lines of research that suggested the hypotheses which I now offer.

I

When Herodotus visited Delphi in the 440's B.C., the most impressive collection of dedications there were those presented about a century earlier by Croesus, king of Lydia. Also, the Delphians had an elaborate tale to tell of the king's dealings with the Pythian Apollo. Everything points to the conclusion that no one had previously described these objects in writing nor recorded their story. So it was appropriate for Herodotus to undertake the task and make them the climax of his account of the kings of Lydia. This, rather than as part of the history of Delphi, is the aspect from which they are treated in the first book. As Herodotus listed them, Croesus' dedications consisted of:

(1) A lion of pure gold weighing ten talents (*ca* 600 lb.), standing on four half-bricks of pure gold each weighing two and a half talents (*ca* 150 lb.), which surmounted a pyramidal heap of 113 half-bricks of white gold (*i.e.* a mixture of gold and silver) each weighing two talents (*ca* 120 lb.). This impressive collection of precious metal, as Herodotus narrated (1.50), had been the product of a colossal burnt offering made in Lydia to the honour of the Pythian Apollo, in which

¹ H. W. Parke, *A History of the Delphic Oracle* (Oxford 1939) 146–58; H. W. Parke and D. E. W. Wormell, *The Delphic Oracle* (Oxford 1956) I 129–39.

Croesus had sacrificed three thousand victims and had burnt beds encrusted with gold and silver, gold cups, and purple garments, while his Lydian subjects had been required to contribute their individual offerings to the pyre.

In Herodotus' day the lion monument had long ceased to stand on its original site in the temple at Delphi. For the building, which had been erected in the later seventh century, had been destroyed by an accidental fire in 548/7.² As Herodotus records, the lion fell from its position on the pile of half-bricks, and three and a half talents were melted from its total weight of ten talents. The damaged remains in his day lay in the treasury of the Corinthians. This location has led to speculation about its bearing on the relations of Corinth and Lydia, but probably without warrant.³ The Corinthian treasury, the oldest foundation of this sort, stood at the top of the sacred way on the right hand side at the nearest point to the temple entrance of any of these buildings. When the temple was burnt down, one of the immediate problems facing the Delphians was how to provide safe shelter for what remained of the dedications. The golden lion still weighed some three and a half hundredweight of precious metal, which must be stored in the precinct under secure conditions. The reasonable step was to transfer it, as soon as possible, to the nearest building which could be locked up, and the Corinthian treasury was probably that place. Some forty years later it could have been moved back to the new temple, but by then no doubt the Delphians (and the Corinthians) were used to the site which had actually been chosen in an emergency.

(2) Two huge mixing bowls, one of gold and one of silver, which previously had stood respectively on the right and the left hand as one entered the temple (Hdt. 1.51.1). The golden one weighed nine and a half talents and twelve minas, nearly the original weight of the golden lion; the silver one could hold 600 amphoras (rather over 5000 gallons). In Herodotus' day the golden mixing bowl stood in the treasury of the Clazomenians. It appears not to have been damaged by the fire. So presumably it had not been set up within the area devastated by the conflagration. Where the treasury of the Clazo-

² Hdt. 1.50.3 and 51.2; that it was accidental, 2.180.1. There was a tale, doubtless a fictitious scandal, that it had been caused by the Pisistratidae (schol. Pind. *Pyth.* 7.9 b). For the date *cf. infra*.

³ E.g. Roland Crahay, *La littérature oraculaire chez Hérodote* (Paris 1956) 206, "Les offrandes des Mermnades étaient déposées dans le Trésor des Cypselides." I assume that the dedications of Gyges had been removed from the temple to the Corinthian treasury at the same time as the lion, though Herodotus does not state this (1.14.2).

menians was situated in the precinct is not known, but one is led to suppose that it was near enough to the entrance of the temple for the easy transport of this weighty object. The foundations of several archaic buildings conjectured to have been treasuries are available. Again it was probably because of some practical consideration of storage that this site was chosen for the golden mixing bowl. Perhaps the Corinthian treasury could not conveniently hold both large objects.

The silver mixing bowl had also been moved to some unspecified place of safety, but it alone of the dedications of Croesus was restored again to approximately its previous position. Herodotus described it as standing "in the angle of the pronaos" of the Alcmaeonid temple. The reason for this special treatment was that it alone was regularly used in the temple ceremonies, when it was filled with wine and water.⁴ If the worshippers drank its full contents, either the attendance must have been very large or the capacity of the drinkers prodigious.

(3) Four silver jars, about which Herodotus gives no further details.

(4) Two vessels for sprinkling (*perirrhantaria*), one of gold and one of silver: these also were in the treasury of the Corinthians.

(5) A golden figure of a woman three cubits tall (over five feet), which the Delphians said was the likeness of his baker.

(6) "Many other uninscribed dedications and circular bowls of silver."

(7) Besides, Croesus' queen gave her necklace and her girdles.⁵

The first impression after reading this list is the vast intrinsic value of the offerings. No doubt Herodotus intended to produce this effect, and in explanation he supplies the account, which the Delphians gave, how Croesus had decided that, before the power of the Persians grew too large, he would attack them, and as a preliminary he

⁴ It was probably because of this practical use that it alone of the Lydian dedications was restored after the melting-down of the treasures in the Third Sacred War. It was presumably one of the unspecified silver dedications of Croesus coined by Phayllus (Diod. 16.56.6). But it was replaced, according to the account of the *naopoiot* (FD III.5 62 and BCH 12 [1897] 489), and used in the early third century at the Theoxenia (FD III.3 224). Either Herodotus made a slip in mentioning the Theophania, or it may have been used at both festivals (P. S. Derow and W. G. Forrest, BSA 76 [1982] 84). About 86 B.C. Sulla's agent plundered it with other Delphic treasures. Plutarch (*Sull.* 12.6) believed it was at that time the one surviving dedication of Croesus, but he was probably mistaken in not recognising it as a restoration. He records that, because it was too large and heavy for the transport animals, it had to be broken up. There is no evidence that it was ever replaced. Presumably Delphi from the first century B.C. had not sufficient funds, and also the attendance at festivals in this period may not have justified the use of such a large vessel.

⁵ Hdt. 1.51.3-5.

would test the oracles in Greece and Libya. The story of how the Pythia alone succeeded has continued to be accepted by some modern scholars, but I would adhere to my earlier view that it is simply an invention of the Delphic priesthood.⁶ When Croesus' empire was overthrown by the Persians, it was necessary to explain how he had been led to make such exceptionally generous offerings to the Pythian Apollo and yet had come to a bad end. As reproduced by Herodotus the legend reaches its climax in a great apologia for the Delphic oracle's part in these events, which is put into the mouth of the Pythia (Hdt. 1.91).

Apart from the highly suspicious and interested motivation behind the Delphic tradition, one may note that, as even Herodotus was well aware, Croesus had given magnificent dedications to other Greek shrines. Herodotus himself calls attention to the shield and spear, all of gold, both shaft and blade, which had been presented to the oracular sanctuary of Amphiaraus. He had included this in the list of the oracle-centres tested by Croesus and it should therefore have been classed as a failure, but Herodotus explains away the king's generosity by providing a different motive: he had heard of Amphiaraus' bravery and his tragic end. Actually Herodotus mentions that in his day the shield and spear survived in the temple of the Ismenian Apollo, whither they must have been moved in some episode of Theban expansion. Evidently he had seen them there, and the guides, who knew nothing of Croesus' alleged test of the oracles, had given Croesus' motive as Herodotus reported it. But he had also tidied up his narrative by inserting Amphiaraus in the list of oracles tested.⁷

⁶ The most effective argument in favour of the authenticity of Herodotus' story of the test is produced by Hans Klees, *Die Eigenart des griechischen Glaubens an Orakel und Seher* (Stuttgart 1965) 62ff. He stresses the unhellenic elements in Croesus' conduct. But this need not prove more than that the Greeks who invented the story and developed it to its ultimate form had a nice feeling for the characteristics to attribute to a barbarian monarch.

⁷ Hdt. 1.52; the Amphiareum in the list at 1.46.2. The shrine of Amphiaraus was probably not the one famous in Classical and later periods at Oropus, which was first established in the late fifth century, but was somewhere in Theban territory (Strab. 9.2.10; Paus. 9.8.3 and 19.4; J. G. Fraser, *Pausanias's Description of Greece* V [London 1898] 31). Two hypotheses are open: either this sixth-century shrine, if in Theban territory, had been suppressed, and its treasures transferred to the Ismenion between the Persian wars and the time of Herodotus, or there had been an archaic shrine at Oropus, which the Thebans had sacked (Albert Schachter, *Cults of Boeotia* I [London 1981] 32). The difficulty in the latter hypothesis is that it goes against the archaeological evidence in Oropia, which indicates a cult first established there in the last years of the fifth century B.C. The *terminus ante quem* for a cult of Amphiaraus in Oropian territory is Aristophanes' *Amphiaraus* (fr.17ff K.-A.) produced at the Lenaia of 414 B.C. See A. Petropoulou, *GRBS* 22 (1981) 57ff.

Again, in three places Herodotus mentions Croesus' dedications to Apollo of Branchidae, which he said he heard "were equal in weight and similar to those at Delphi." Once more the oracle-centre of Branchidae appears in the list of those tested by Croesus and found wanting.⁸ Yet another dedication of Croesus is mentioned by Herodotus, a golden tripod in the temple of the Ismenian Apollo at Thebes. This oracle-centre does not appear in the list assigned to Croesus' test by the Delphians (1.92.1). The easiest way to get round these apparent inconsistencies would be to argue that all these other oracle-centres had received their offerings early in Croesus' reign, at a time when he had not decided to consult any shrine on such a critical issue as the war against Persia. But this leads to the question whether Croesus' dedications are to any extent datable.

Herodotus, as elsewhere in his history, does not give any absolute dates in his account of the Lydian monarchs. He simply records the lengths of their reigns, and allows his narrative to run on from one episode to the next consecutively. In the case of Croesus, after narrating his interview with Solon and the tragic death of his son Atys at the hands of Adrastus, he records that Croesus spent two years in mourning and then, in the face of the fall of Astyages and the Median empire, decided to intervene before Cyrus grew greater. The events from the test of the oracles to the capture of Sardis follow without any division by years. Only the fall of Astyages, now usually dated to 550 B.C., provides a *terminus post quem*.⁹ To arrive at a more exact dating, all one can do is to suggest a hypothetical timetable. For instance, if one assigns the dispatch of the dedications and the enquiry about the success of the proposed expedition to one sailing season, one should perhaps allow another year for the negotiation of the alliance with Sparta and a third year for the beginning and end of the war. At this rate the dedications were sent some two and a half years before the fall of Sardis, which took place in the autumn of a

⁸ Hdt. 1.92.2, 5.36.3, 6.19.3; in the list at 1.46.2.

⁹ The date for the submission of Media to Cyrus is now placed at 550/549 by reference to the Nabonidus Chronicle: T. F. R. G. Braun, *CAH*² III.3 23 and J. M. Cook, *The Persian Empire* (New York 1983) 27. But Robert Drews, *Historia* 18 (1969) 1–11, argues for 554/3 on the additional evidence of the Nabonidus cylinder from Sippar. Africanus (*apud* Eus. *Praep. Evang.* 10.10.5) stated that all authorities in antiquity accepted Ol. 55.1 (560/559). It had probably been established by Apollodorus on the basis of Herodotus' figure of twenty-nine years for the reign of Cyrus (1.214.3; cf. Alden A. Mosshammer, *The Chronicle of Eusebius and Greek Chronographic Tradition* [Lewisberg/London 1979] 262). Only 550/549 would fit closely with Herodotus' picture of Croesus' motives. The Eusebian date, though probably based on Herodotean data, is inconsistent with it. But Herodotus, of course, had been unable to work out the implications of much of his own data.

campaigning season. Alternatively, it might be possible to compress these events into one and a half years, if the alliance could have been negotiated in the latter half of the first year.

So in order to achieve some absolute datings for these events, we need to know the date of the fall of Sardis and count back from it. Herodotus merely records that Croesus had reigned for fourteen years and the siege of Sardis had lasted fourteen days (1.86.1). The Marmor Parium is the first document preserved to offer absolute dates for Croesus: he “dispatched from Asia to Delphi [sacred ambassadors]” in the year 556/5. The following entry recorded the capture of Sardis by Cyrus, but the date is missing. So all that can be proved is that it fell before 536/5—the next dated entry.¹⁰ These represent a chronology which would be very difficult to harmonize with Herodotus’ account and which was produced before the great Hellenistic scholars had got to work on the problem. They dated the fall of Sardis to 547/6 (Apollodorus), and it is likely that this was not derived from any original Greek source, but from the Babylonian records, as published by Berosus. Modern scholars can now also approach this problem direct through the Nabonidus Chronicle, but it is teasing that there the entry is defective. We find Cyrus setting out north-westward up the Tigris with an army in the spring of 547. This was no doubt the expedition which ended in the capture of Sardis, but a gap occurs leaving incomplete the name of a city which Cyrus captured with its king in May 547. It is not likely that this was Sardis, which fell in the autumn, and we cannot tell whether the campaign against Croesus should be compressed into the remainder of that year or carried over into 546.¹¹

At this point we must introduce another chronological datum. Herodotus had given no dating for the burning of the Delphic temple, though he mentions it again in connection with a contribution towards its restoration given by the pharaoh Amasis, and its rebuilding figures prominently in his account of the return of the Alcmaeonidae to Athens. Pausanias, however, in describing the different

¹⁰ *FGrHist* 239 A41–42 (*θεωροῦς* restored). The event appears to be placed in the year of Croesus’ accession, as the accession of Alyattes is dated to 605/4, and according to Eusebius his reign was forty-nine years. I presume the Marmor Parium meant to refer to the test. The fall of Sardis (42) is usually restored to date fourteen years later (541/0).

¹¹ Mosshammer (*supra* n.9: 118, 268) traces the change of the dating of the fall of Sardis to the influence of Berosus. For the text of the Nabonidus Chronicle, A. K. Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles* (Locust Valley 1975) 107. For the interpretation of the evidence, Cook (*supra* n.9) 28, and for a different view, A. Andrewes, *CAH*² III.3 401.

temples of Apollo at Delphi, gives the date for the fire as the first year of the fifty-eighth Olympiad and the archonship of Erxecleides at Athens: that is 548/7 B.C. It is usually agreed that this very precise statement probably goes back to some temple record, and so can be taken as accurate.¹² The process of harmonizing it with the Herodotean account of Croesus presents curious problems.

If we take it that Croesus' campaign fell in 546, then the alliance was negotiated in 547 and the dedications were sent in 548. So they must only just have arrived in Delphi in time to be burnt. If the campaign is dated a year earlier (547), and the time-table shifted accordingly, the dedications can be allowed a year's residence in Apollo's temple, but not much more. If we were to suppose alternatively that the events from the dedications' arrival to the fall were compressed into a year and a half instead of two and a half years, it would be necessary to reject 546 B.C. for the fall of Sardis, as not allowing time for the lion to arrive before the fire.

Clearly Herodotus had no conception of this problem. In fact the Delphians seem to have conveyed the impression that the dedications had stood for some time in the temple before they were damaged or removed. Herodotus shows no sign of having understood that the fire took place before Croesus' crossing of the Halys, though this seems a necessary implication of our dates. At the time the impression created by the disaster must have been prodigious, not only because of the loss of the shrine, but also the damage to the dedications must have appeared highly ominous against Croesus, the dedicator. This superstition is perfectly illustrated twice in the classical period. At the time of the Sicilian expedition an Athenian dedication consisting partly of a bronze palm tree with golden dates was attacked by crows, which pecked at the fruit and broke it off (Plut. *Nic.* 13.3). Again Plutarch records three different omens involving Spartan dedications before the Battle of Leuctra (*Mor.* 397E-F). The damage to Croesus' golden lion, especially if he had dedicated it in anticipation of his campaign against Cyrus, would normally have been seen as a presage of disaster. But no hint of this interpretation appears in Herodotus or later. Evidently at least by the mid-fifth century the Delphians had developed their own version of Croesus' relations with the Pythian

¹² Hdt. 1.50.3 and 51.2, 2.180, 5.62.2, etc. Paus. 10.5.12, where also the name of the Olympic victor, Diognetus of Croton, is added. One is inclined to suppose that the dating goes back to Aristotle's *Pythionikai*, but it is not known what system of chronology he used. So Pausanias may be deriving it indirectly through one of the Delphic guide-books or chronicles. There is no indication when in the year 548/7 the fire occurred.

Apollo, which did not allow room for the burning of the temple together with its dedications to be treated as ominous.

Besides the effect on the Delphians, one may wonder what impression the fire produced on Croesus and on the mainland Greeks. If Croesus, as seems likely, had time to hear of the catastrophe to his offering before the expedition across the Halys started, one would expect the news to be very discouraging. But presumably the preparations were too advanced to suspend the campaign.¹³ Still more on the Greek mainland one would imagine it would leave a very disquieting impression on any intended allies. Herodotus records how, after the Delphic oracle had advised him to make the most powerful of the Greeks his friends, Croesus had decided on the Spartans as those designated by the Pythia, and had sent an embassy, which had negotiated an alliance with them (1.69ff, *cf.* 3.47.1). But the Spartans evidently did not send troops to reinforce Croesus' expedition across the Halys. After Croesus' defeat and retirement Herodotus mentions messengers sent to the allies inviting them to gather at Sardis in the fifth month (*i.e.* for a campaign next spring), followed up by later messengers warning them that Sardis was under siege. But, as he explains, the Spartans had been involved in their recurring war with the Argives over the Thyrean plain, which ended in the Battle of the Champions. Yet at the news of Sardis' investment, they started to prepare a relief expedition; but, as Sardis fell within fourteen days, the news of its fall put a halt to any further action. We need not doubt that the border-war with Argos took place at this date, and may of itself have been sufficient to prevent the Spartans from aiding Croesus till it was too late. It is therefore not necessary to trace any actual influence of the fire on the course of events.

If we return to Herodotus' list of Croesus' dedications, besides the great specific value of the offerings, one may also note their very miscellaneous character. If we accept that the testing of the oracles was not

¹³ I have not discussed Croesus' final gift of two gold staters to each individual Delphian (Hdt. 1.54.1) since it was not in the strict sense a dedication. It was usual to regard all Delphians as in some sense servants of Apollo (*cf.* the proverbial references to them, Parke and Wormell I 113 n.18). No doubt Croesus thought of them not as the citizens of a Greek polis, but as the dwellers in an Asian priest-state. H. Pomtow (*RE* 4 [1901] 2551 s.v. "Delphoi" and *RhM* 51 [1896] 334) had the ingenious theory that Croesus meant to pay, in whole or part, the quarter share of the restoration of the temple (75 talents) which the Delphians had undertaken (Hdt. 2.180). This theory presupposes that Croesus had time to hear not only of the fire, but also of the subsequent plans to finance the restoration; but Pomtow dated the fall of Sardis to 541/0, allowing an interval of seven years. Plutarch (*Mor.* 556D) from quite a different tradition (the story of Aesop) represents Croesus' gift as four (silver) minas per Delphian: more than three times as much. The discrepancy cannot easily be explained.

an authentic happening, but a fiction invented later at Delphi to provide an honourable explanation of Croesus' generosity, then this great collection of offerings need not all have been made in connection with the campaign against Cyrus, but could have been given earlier in Croesus' reign at different times and for various other purposes.¹⁴

Here it is worth noting some other traditions about Croesus' dedications at Delphi and elsewhere. In a sort of footnote appended to his Lydian history (1.92) Herodotus lists briefly the golden tripod in the temple of the Ismenian Apollo, "the golden heifers and the majority of the columns at Ephesus, and a large golden shield in the temple of Athena Pronaia at Delphi. These were surviving up to my time, but other offerings had perished." As an example of the latter he mentions the dedications at Branchidae, "which, as I learn, were equal in weight and similar to those at Delphi." He goes on to make the curious remark:

The dedications at Delphi and the Amphiareum were his own and a first-fruit (*aparche*) from his ancestral possessions, but the other dedications came from the property of a man who was a personal enemy; one who before Croesus became king had formed a party to resist him, conspiring that the kingship of Lydia should come to Pantaleon. Now Pantaleon was a son of Alyattes and a brother of Croesus, but not by the same mother. For Croesus was Alyattes' son by a Carian wife, but Pantaleon by an Ionian. When Croesus took control of the kingdom by the gift of his father,¹⁵ he slew the man who had worked against him, by dragging him over a carding-comb, and his property, which he had previously consecrated by a vow, he dedicated in the fashion described to the temples mentioned.

This appendix represents quite different traditions from the Delphic legend which forms the core of Herodotus' account of Croesus. It

¹⁴ Those who wish to overturn any argument based on the miscellaneous character of Croesus' gift might consider the other striking example of a royal benefaction to an Apolline shrine—the letter from Seleucus Nicator to Miletus accompanying his dedications to Apollo at Didyma (*OGIS* 214; Welles, *Royal Corres.* 5; Rehm, *I. Didyma* 424; W. Günther, *Das Orakel von Didyma in hellenistischer Zeit* [*IstMitt* Beih. 4 (1971)] 44ff). It lists ten articles of gold and two of silver. The total weight of the gold is a little over half a talent, and of the silver over a talent and a half. The pieces of plate are very miscellaneous, and some of them are evidently antique. But the great contrast with Croesus' gift is not so much that the total weight was very much smaller, but also that there was no obviously outstanding piece. Seleucus had to pile up his list of objects to make it impressive. Croesus' gift included single items each of which would make an imposing benefaction for one occasion.

¹⁵ Professor Huxley has suggested to me that the phrase δόντος τοῦ πατρὸς may imply that Alyattes had associated Croesus in the kingship during his last years.

looks as though the list of dedications here had been compiled by Herodotus on his travels. The story which he tells about the property of Croesus' enemy consecrated by a vow before his accession and dedicated afterwards appears in a somewhat different version in Nicolaus of Damascus, probably drawing on Xanthus the Lydian (*FGrHist* 90F65). According to this authority, when Croesus was governor of the district centred on Adramyttium, he was suddenly called on by his father to produce troops for a war. He had been squandering his resources. So he tried to raise a loan from a wealthy merchant, named Sadyattes, but was rudely repulsed, and therefore vowed to dedicate to Artemis all the property of this enemy, if ever he became king. Instead he managed to raise the money by the help of Pamphaes, son of Theocharides, who provided a wagonload of silver staters. On succeeding to Alyattes, Croesus consecrated Sadyattes' house and the place where it stood to the goddess, and repaid Pamphaes by sending him a wagon laden with gold.

These two stories circulating a century after Croesus' fall are evidently based on the same pattern of events, the consecration of an enemy's property by a vow to Artemis; but each has been developed to emphasize a different legendary motif. Herodotus was interested in the fascinating cruelty of oriental torture, Nicolaus' source in the fantastic scale of Croesus' opulence. Pantaleon, the rival claimant to the Lydian throne, looks to be a historic character, and ever since Duncker made the proposal, it has been usual to identify the unnamed enemy of Herodotus' narrative with Sadyattes. This is not very sound methodologically, as the reason given for the enmity is quite different between the two historians; but they agree on the fact, which concerns us, that before his accession Croesus had vowed to dedicate to Artemis of Ephesus an enemy's property, and fulfilled the vow on becoming king. This serves to date the dedication at Ephesus—presumably the golden heifers—to the beginning of Croesus' reign. Herodotus also includes the majority of the columns of the temple in the same offering, and even more extraordinarily implies that the golden tripod at the temple of the Ismenian Apollo in Thebes and the very considerable gifts to the Didymaeon Apollo at Branchidae came from the same confiscated property. Frankly this is hard to believe. One can imagine Croesus, in a truly oriental fashion, dedicating his enemy's property to Artemis, the great neighbouring goddess revered by Greeks and Asiatics alike. But he can scarcely also have included two shrines of Apollo, one near Miletus, the other on the Greek mainland, in the same vow. It looks as though Herodotus had heard the story in connection with Ephesus and then ex-

tended its application to all other dedications of Croesus in Greek temples, except those covered by the Delphic legend.

Actually even at Delphi there was a folk-tale ignored by Herodotus, which connected one of Croesus' dedications with the struggles over his accession. Herodotus mentions the golden image of a woman, three cubits tall "which the Delphians say is the likeness of his baker" (1.51.5). Why they gave the statue that name he does not explain, but the story is told in Plutarch's dialogue *De Pythiae Oraculis*:

Alyattes married a second wife, by whom he had a second family of sons. So this wife, in a plot against Croesus, gave poison to the baker-woman, and bade her knead it into bread and serve it to Croesus. But the baker-woman secretly warned Croesus, and served the bread to the second wife's sons. In return for this action, when he became king, Croesus before the god as witness requited this favour done by this woman and paid a service to the god (*Mor.* 401E-F).

This legend in some form must be as old at least as the time of Herodotus, as the title can only have been applied to the statue with some story to explain it. It has been worked up to include such favourite motifs of Greek mythology as the murderously wicked step-mother and the plot to poison which recoils on the poisoner. But if it has any explicable origin, it would be because Croesus had presented this statue to the Pythian Apollo soon after his accession and in gratitude for that event. Modern scholars reasonably interpret the statue as not a human figure, but a goddess—Cybele has been suggested. But I would propose instead to identify her with Artemis of Ephesus. Of course at this period she would have been represented by a normally robed female figure without the many breasts and other special features of later iconography.

We have seen the other legends which suggest that Croesus before the beginning of his reign had put himself under the protection of Artemis by vowing to her the property of his enemy. It was therefore appropriate that Ephesus was the first of the Ionian cities which he set out to subdue. It was under the power of a tyrant, Pindaros, who himself was the son of a Lydian princess. When the city was in danger of falling to a siege-attack, the Ephesians in desperation attached a rope from their walls to a column of the temple of Artemis, which stood outside. Thus they had enveloped the city in the sanctity of the shrine. The effect was to end the war by a compromise. Pindaros went into voluntary exile, and the Ephesians recognised Croesus as overlord, while he honoured the goddess with his dedication

and subscribed largely for the building of the great new temple of stone.¹⁶

All this evidence for the connection of Croesus with the Ephesian Artemis early in his reign supports the view that he regarded her as his patroness among the deities of Ionia. If so, it would be quite appropriate for him to have sent to Delphi, soon after his accession, this golden statue of Artemis. This act had been simply intended to renew the traditional connection of the Lydian monarchy with the Pythian Apollo by presenting a statue of his sister goddess, and thus inviting for himself the recognition of the oracle. To the Delphians of the archaic period the model for Artemis was the huntress or the mistress of wild beasts, which would be quite different from the appearance of the statue, as it may be conjectured.¹⁷ Popular tradition retained the connection with Croesus' accession, but formed around it the folk-tale of the baker who saved the king's life.

If we suggest that Croesus may have given an important dedication to Delphi soon after his accession, it is worth noting other pointers, though indecisive, towards the view that Croesus had a devotion to the Pythian Apollo from a time before the alleged test of the oracles. One instance has been inferred from Herodotus' story of Pythius, the son of Atys, the man who was so wealthy that he could entertain all Xerxes' army. It has been suggested that he was actually a grandson of Croesus, and son of the ill-fated Atys, who can be regarded as a historic person, even if Herodotus' account of his death is pure romance. If so, we have evidence that the Pythian Apollo was held in high regard at the court of Croesus before the expedition against Cyrus was considered. But the indication rests on hypothesis and is essentially a circular argument.¹⁸

Another reference in Herodotus, if we can combine it with other sources, at least shows Croesus' earlier interest in Apollo and possibly in the Delphic Apollo in particular. When Herodotus has described how Croesus, in accordance with his interpretation of the Delphic response, sought and obtained an alliance with the Spartans, he adds in one of his typical footnotes a further detail derived from a different source (1.69.3-4):

¹⁶ Hdt. 1.26.1; Ael. *VH* 3.26.

¹⁷ Perhaps in appearance something between the bronze statuette from Ephesus (D. G. Hogarth, *Excavations at Ephesus* [London 1908] 145 pl. 14) and the Hera of Cheramyces.

¹⁸ Hdt. 7.28-29 and 38-39 (his tragic punishment) with W. W. How and J. Wells, *Commentary on Herodotus* II (Oxford 1912) 138, 145. Under the name of Pythes he is the subject of a group of moralizing tales: Plut. *Mor.* 262E-263C.

Certain good services from Croesus, which had occurred some time before, influenced them [the Spartans]. For when they had sent to Sardis and were buying gold, as they wished to use it on the image of Apollo which now stands at Thornax in Laconia, Croesus gave it to them as a free gift instead of a purchase.

Other references to this episode give a somewhat different version. Theopompus is cited *in extenso* by Athenaeus (231E) on the subject of the scarcity of gold, especially golden offerings, in archaic Greece (*FGrHist* 115F193):

The Spartans, indeed, when they wished to gild the face of the Apollo at Amyclae and could not find gold in Greece, sent to the god [at Delphi] and asked him from whom they should buy gold, and he answered them to go to Croesus of Lydia and purchase it from him. So they went and bought it.

Here there is no suggestion of Croesus' generosity; the whole emphasis is on the point that gold in quantity was so difficult to get in the mid-sixth century that Sparta needed the help of the Delphic oracle. Also one notices that the gold is not for the lesser known Apollo at Thornax, but for the famous Apollo of Amyclae.

One might be tempted to ignore this version entirely in favour of the Herodotean, but a passage in Pausanias offers yet a different picture of events (3.10.8):

At Thornax . . . is an image of Apollo Pythaeus made in the same style as that at Amyclae . . . To the Spartans the importance of the Amyclaeon is greater, so that even the gold, which Croesus of Lydia sent to Apollo Pythaeus, they applied instead to the decoration of the image at Amyclae.

This rather abbreviated account, if correct, would reconcile the apparent differences between Herodotus and Theopompus. It would seem to suggest that the original plan to gild the Apollo at Thornax was changed to gilding the Apollo of Amyclae after the gold was received from Croesus. Perhaps it is implied that the gift was more than originally estimated and so could be applied to the much larger statue. But the version in Pausanias could be interpreted in a different way. The description of Croesus as "sending to Apollo Pythaeus" suits with it being a gift. Only Pausanias makes no reference to the Spartans having previously attempted to purchase it. In fact it would be most appropriate if one interpreted Pausanias as meaning that Croesus, acting on his own initiative, had sent the gold to gild the face of the image at Thornax, but the Spartans had chosen in view of the greater importance of the Amyclaeon Apollo to transfer the royal benefaction there.

It is rather a matter of speculation to decide how to choose among, or combine, these three different versions. But at least one can argue that they show again Croesus in conjunction with Delphi and taking an interest in Apollo, perhaps particularly in Apollo Pythaeus, at some time before the alleged test of the oracles.

We have proposed to detach the female statue from the list which Herodotus implicitly dates to the last years of Croesus' reign. Are there any others which can be dated separately? Perhaps we might put the argument another way. If Herodotus' all-embracing motivation for the gifts is to be discounted as a Delphic fiction, the only dedication which seems closely linked with the war against Cyrus is the lion on the pile of bricks. Herodotus explicitly describes this as made of the metal derived from a special sacred pyre offered by all the Lydians, as well as Croesus, to Apollo. Of course it is not impossible that the gold and silver mixing bowls and the gold and silver sprinklers were given at the same time. But they are not described as coming from the pyre and were evidently designed primarily for practical use in the worship of Apollo. So they might represent quite a different gift on a separate occasion. The four silver jars (*pithoi*) seem to imply large containers, but no details of size or function are given. So it is best to leave them aside. There remain then "the many other uninscribed dedications" (apparently of gold) "and circular bowls of silver sent at the same time" as the listed offerings (1.51.5). It is possible to make a suggestion about them.

Herodotus records, evidently from official Delphic information, that the golden lion had originally weighed ten talents, but after the fire its weight had been reduced to six and a half (1.50.3). Evidently three and a half talents of gold had been melted off it. He does not mention the golden bricks, but it is impossible to believe that all had survived intact. What became of this quite considerable quantity of precious metal? The gold and white gold could run in extreme heat, which might have been produced, if the blazing beams of the burning temple's roof had fallen on it. But even so, the melted ore would remain, and would be recoverable from the ruins. The Delphians evidently had made no attempt to restore the lion, but left it lying in the Corinthian treasury where it had been removed for security. It must have been severely damaged, and they probably found that they had neither the resources nor the technique for the formidable task of restoration. In view of the deep respect which the Greek held for dedications, the melted metal, if recovered, would not have been treated as secular. If it could not be replaced in its original monument, a reasonable procedure would be to convert it into small plate

and retain it as consecrated offerings. These would, as Herodotus described them, have lacked their dedicatory inscriptions from Croesus, but will have been pointed out by the Delphic guides as part of his gift, without necessarily describing why they were in this form.

II

We have suggested that instead of explaining the presence of Croesus' dedications in the Delphic sanctuary as one colossal consignment of various precious objects sent on the occasion of the Pythia's success in the oracular test and dedicated with a view to the immediate campaign against Cyrus, these objects may have been dispatched on three or more occasions at different times throughout Croesus' reign: the golden figure of Artemis soon after his accession, the mixing bowls and sprinklers at some later date, and only the golden lion and its stand of bricks as a prelude to the war. If these benefactions are not to be accounted for by Herodotus' single motive, then some other underlying purpose appears to be needed, and it will be the more plausible if it can also be used to account for his other offerings to oracular shrines at Branchidae, Thebes, and the Amphiareum.

The fact that Croesus' recorded dedications, apart from those to the Ephesian Artemis, were all made to oracular sanctuaries suggests that his underlying intention was to obtain responses of an approving kind from Hellenic deities. Here one may note the curious ambivalence in our Greek traditions about this Lydian monarch. Herodotus introduces him dramatically to his readers (no doubt originally to his audience) as "the first who began unjust deeds against the Greeks" (1.5.3). This description is not fully justified by Herodotus' own narrative of the Lydian dynasty. Gyges, according to him, had invaded the territory of Miletus and Smyrna and had seized the town (but not the acropolis) of Colophon. Ardys took Priene and also invaded Miletus. Two generations later Alyattes took Smyrna and invaded Clazomenae and engaged in a long series of campaigns against the Milesians, before making peace with them.¹⁹ In fact it could be regarded that Croesus was simply reviving the imperialist traditions of his father and

¹⁹ Hdt. 1.14ff. On this problem, F. Jacoby, *RE* Suppl. 2 (1913) 337ff s.v. "Herodotos," who explains it by the previous existence of a Lydian *logos*. B. Shimron, *Eranos* 71 (1973) 45–51, introduces a distinction by stressing Herodotus' use of *οἶδα*, but I think this point is much exaggerated.

the earlier Mermnads, when he set out to subdue systematically the Greeks of Asia Minor: Aeolians, Ionians, and Dorians. But though Herodotus attributed "unjust deeds" to Croesus, the general picture produced by his narrative is not of a villain. In the dialogue with Solon (1.29–33) Croesus exhibits the *hybris* which was expected of a monarch of fabulous wealth, but Herodotus does not intend him to be an entirely unsympathetic figure. Instead, like a hero in Greek tragedy, though presumptuous in his pride, by his fall he is meant to inspire pity and terror. Similarly, in the fable of Adrastus and Croesus' son (1.34–35) we have the favourite Greek motif of ineluctable fate. Once more Croesus earns our sympathy, though this time the central tragic figure is Adrastus. The Delphic legend, which follows, as told by Herodotus, ends by tying together the various strands. It was fated that the dynasty of the Mermnads must end with Croesus, and his pious offerings could at most convince Apollo to wring from the Fates a delay of three years in his fall (1.91).

As with Sardanapallus, the other Asian monarch in popular Greek legend, it was agreed that Croesus mounted a pyre, but at this point again tradition varied whether voluntarily or involuntarily and whether he escaped and how. But as to his epitaph, when Pindar sang that his "kindly-hearted virtue does not perish" (*Pyth.* 1.94), he was a very different figure from Herodotus' "man who first began unjust deeds against the Greeks."

These opposite poles, as we may suppose, were represented in the views on the one hand of his unwilling subjects in the cities of Asia Minor and on the other of the sanctuaries which were the grateful recipients of the royal bounty. Herodotus, speaking to a European audience, generally gave expression to the favourable view, but it is reasonable to suppose that the contemporary Greeks of Aeolis and Ionia were not mute on the subject of their barbarian overlord. No literature on the subject has survived, but I would suggest that some faint indications of its former existence can be detected in the traditions about Sibylla. She is mentioned first by Heraclitus of Ephesus at the end of the sixth century.²⁰ To him Sibylla is not a descriptive title, but the personal name of a prophetess, whom he uses to illustrate one of his aphorisms in the same way in which he mentions Homer and Hesiod as poets and Thales and Pythagoras as philosophers. No explanation was supplied or thought necessary. His readers could be sup-

²⁰ 22F92 D-K; also C. H. Kahn, *The Art and Thought of Heraclitus* (Cambridge 1979) fr.34; M. Marcovich, *Heraclitus* (Merida 1967) fr.75; G. S. Kirk and J. E. Raven, *The Presocratic Philosophers* (Cambridge 1963) fr.248.

posed to be familiar with Sibylla and her prophecies. As this passage of Heraclitus is only known from a single reference in Plutarch, it is not easy to be sure what he actually said about Sibylla: certainly that she spoke “with raving mouth” (*μαινομένῳ στόματι*), but also probably he emphasized the unattractive character of her utterance. “Without laughter and without charm of sight or scent” are the words in Plutarch (*ἀγέλαστα καὶ ἀκαλλώπιστα καὶ ἀμύριστα*). This could refer to style, but it is likely that Heraclitus drew no distinction between form and content. The general subject matter can be guessed from the description of Sibylline prophecy which Plutarch in the same context puts into the mouth of a learned visitor to Delphi: that it contained “the numerous desolations and migrations of Greek cities, the numerous descents of barbarian hordes and the overthrows of empires.” The style in which these events were grimly foretold is echoed in such books as the Third and Eighth of the *Oracula Sibyllina*, which, though dating in their present form from centuries later, imitate the manner and in places reproduce the matter of earlier ages.²¹

That there were Sibylline prophecies which actually mentioned Cyrus is a reasonable deduction from Varro’s list of these prophetesses. His eighth is “the Hellespontine who was born in the territory of the Troad, in the village of Marpessus near the town of Gergithus, of whom Heraclides of Pontus writes that she lived in the times of Solon and Cyrus.”²² Heraclides, the Academic philosopher, was the first to distinguish and describe individual Sibyls. He did this not merely on the basis of various local traditions, but also from a study of the actual texts of their prophecies. This critical approach to literature was appropriate in the scholar whom Plato had once commissioned to collect in Colophon the literary remains of the local poet Antimachus. His account of the Hellespontine Sibyl’s birth place is evidently derived from the lines which Pausanias quotes:

And I am born betwixt a mortal and a god, of an immortal nymph
and a father feeding on bread, from my mother Ida-born, but my
fatherland is red Marpessus, consecrated to my mother, and its
river is the Aidoneus.²³

²¹ Plut. *Mor.* 398D. On the *Oracula Sibyllina*, e.g. V. Nikiprowetzky, *La troisième Sibylle* (Paris 1970), and J. J. Collins, *The Sibylline Oracles of Egyptian Judaism* (Missoula 1974).

²² Varro *apud* Lactant. *Div. Inst.* 1.6.8. F. Wehrli, *Die Schule des Aristoteles*² VII (Basel 1969) fr.131a; and H. B. Gottschalk, *Heraclides of Pontus* (Oxford 1980) 3. For Heraclides’ use of Sibylline verse, cf. fr.130 W., where he quoted and explained lines from the Delphic Sibyl.

²³ Paus. 10.12.3. I treat the Erythraean version of these lines as a later distortion. For Marpessus see J. M. Cook, *The Troad* (Oxford 1973) 281.

Similarly one can properly suppose that this Marpeesian Sibyl's oracle contained references either directly by name or indirectly in some easily interpretable periphrasis to Solon and to Cyrus.

Sibylla, Cyrus, and Croesus reappear again together in a further passage in a Greek historian, but one which is so picturesquely worked up into a dramatic episode that it is not easy to extract authentic material from it. Nicolaus of Damascus, in the very detailed section of his *Universal History* which dealt with the Lydian kings, based his narrative to some extent on Herodotus, but also drew much native tradition from the lost works of Xanthus the Lydian. As Jacoby has pointed out, Nicolaus sometimes simply looted passages from his authorities, but at other times elaborated his various sources into set pieces of his own sensational writing. Such a passage is the scene of Croesus on the pyre:

As Croesus was mounting the pyre, Sibylla was seen to descend from a height so that she herself might observe the happenings. Quickly a murmur passed through the crowd that the singer of oracles had come, and all were in expectation to see if she would be inspired with regard to the situation. After a short pause she shouted vehemently:

Miserable men, why do you pursue what is impious?
Neither Zeus nor Phoebus nor famous Amphiaraus will
permit it.

But obey the undecieving oracles of my words,
lest you perish by an evil fate for your folly against God.

Cyrus, when he heard her, bade them distribute the oracle among the Persians, that they might be warned against their error (*FGrHist* 90 F68.8–9).

(Nicolaus, unlike Herodotus, represents the decision to burn Croesus as taken by the Persians against the will of Cyrus.)

This Sibylline oracle cannot have been borrowed by Nicolaus from Xanthus verbatim, still less from a manuscript of prophecies, because of the extraordinary reference to Amphiaraus. This is clearly derived from the passage in Herodotus where he had mentioned that Croesus had approved of that legendary warrior-seer, and honoured him with a munificent dedication.²⁴ It is most unlikely that Xanthus or any other source associated Croesus and Amphiaraus in this way, and so it was from Herodotus' narrative that Nicolaus drew the fantastic notion of making Amphiaraus with Zeus and Apollo a defender of the Lydian king. The resulting conjunction is very questionable theology.

²⁴ Cf. *supra* 212 and n.7.

Sibylla's words, as quoted by Nicolaus, must then be his own invention, but it is most unlikely that he invented the whole idea of her participation in these events. This was not the only place where she appeared in Nicolaus' narrative. An earlier extract mentions baldly: Cyrus "sent for Sibylla from Ephesus, the prophetess called Herophila."²⁵ This looks as if it was intended to prepare for her appearance at Croesus' pyre, but without the full text of Nicolaus' history it is difficult to work out such details. However, the one point which may be made is that evidently Xanthus had associated Sibylla with Cyrus and Croesus, and the most likely explanation for this feature is that Sibylline oracles were still extant in his day (mid-fifth century) which could be interpreted as having foretold the fall of Croesus and the victory of Cyrus. In fact there may have been a forecast of Croesus on the pyre in the form of an address to the Persians warning them of the impiety of such an action.

There is one other prophecy attributed to the Sibyl which can be connected with the fall of Croesus. Pausanias, when describing the monuments on the first stage of the Sacred Way at Delphi, states that the bronze model of the Trojan Horse was dedicated by the Argives after the battle of Thyrea, because they claimed it as a victory.²⁶ He introduces this subject by mentioning that Sibylla had foretold that it would be a draw, and ends by recording that the work was made by Antiphanes of Argos. Now Pausanias' attribution of the monument to this battle can be taken as an error. It would be most unlikely that a dedication for a mid-sixth century victory could have been erected at this place in the sanctuary. The lower part of the Sacred Way was not laid out till much later. And if Antiphanes was the artist, it must have been produced in the late fifth or early fourth century, and therefore have been a monument for the wars of 421 or 395 B.C. No doubt the dedicatory inscription simply stated that it was the spoils of the Argives from the Lacedaemonians, and the signature of Antiphanes was carved on the base.

²⁵ *FGrHist* 90F67. The name, Herophila, was probably added by Nicolaus. The Marpessian Sibyl had no personal name, except Sibylla. But in the Augustan period it was usual to treat Sibylla as a descriptive title, and call the prophetess Herophila.

²⁶ Paus. 10.9.12. Earlier discussions of the archaeological evidence are superseded by J. Pouilloux and G. Roux, *Énigmes à Delphes* (Paris 1963) 60ff. No inscribed stone can be assigned to this dedication. One might ask whether this quotation from Sibylla was part of the stock patter of the second century A.D. guides. But I believe that it was typical of them to quote rather banal and unauthentic Delphic responses, e.g. Parke and Wormell II no. 483, while Pausanias deliberately inserted other oracles from his extensive reading: here so as to provide a literary link with the previous monument, the Spartan dedication for Aegospotami, about which he had quoted Sibylla and Musesaeus.

For our present purpose it does not matter that the Argive monument was misdated by Pausanias. His error does not invalidate his citation of a Sibylline oracle about the Battle of the Champions. Evidently by at least the second century A.D. a prophecy of this famous event was to be found in the Sibylline corpus. The question is: was it written in the sixth century B.C. in close conjunction with the historical occurrence, or was it inserted at some later date as a literary embellishment? Since Pausanias for once does not furnish a quotation, decisive evidence is lacking. But it is worth considering the arguments available.

As we learn from Herodotus, one of the well-known synchronisms of ancient history was that the battle of Thyrea took place when Croesus went to war with Cyrus. In fact Herodotus implies that the failure of the Spartans as allies to assist Croesus on his expedition across the Halys was because they were preoccupied by their border war with the Argives. Even so when they heard that Croesus was besieged in Sardis, they were preparing to come to his aid, until the news of his capture put an end to their expedition (Hdt. 1.83). If, as we have seen, there is reason to believe that the Sibyl's prophecies were deeply concerned with the fall of Lydia, then it would possibly have been appropriate to include a reference to the Battle of the Champions so as to account for the failure of Croesus' mainland allies to come to his assistance. Herodotus' account suggests a Spartan apologia for their absence, and as such it may have been circulating immediately after the Thyrean campaign, and so may have been incorporated early into the Sibylline picture of events.

The alternative argument would be to draw attention to the fact that, so far as other evidence goes, the Sibyl did not concern herself with events in Hellas until well into the latter half of the fifth century when first her oracles reached Athens.²⁷ By then the Battle of the Champions had little significance in the pattern of history. But it became popular again by the Hellenistic period through its scope for sensational treatment in epigrams.²⁸ One might argue that at this late

²⁷ The first reference to a mainland subject in a Sibylline oracle is the address to Athens as a leather bottle (*askos*), Plut. *Thes.* 24.5. The metaphor is made the subject of jokes, Ar. *Eq.* 963 (424 B.C.) and fr.308 K.-A. Pindar (*Pyth.* 2.80) had used the metaphor earlier, but not of Athens. Euripides in his satyr-play *Busiris* (date unknown) had made Lamia in the prologue refer to Sibylla as her daughter (fr.914 N. with B. Snell, *Supplementum* [Hildesheim 1964] 7). This produced the picture of a Libyan Sibyl, but may show how vague the Athenians of that day were in their concept of a Sibyl. In Aristophanes' *Bacis*, her mainland counterpart, is still the more prominent source of oracles. For Sibylla, *Eq.* 61 (σὺ βυλλῆ) and *Pax* 1095 and 1116.

²⁸ E.g. *Anth.Pal.* 7.430, 431, 526.

time it was vamped into the Sibylline corpus for literary effect. This hypothesis cannot be refuted, but I would myself prefer to believe in the early origin of the *post eventum* forecast of the battle.

On the basis of these somewhat scattered indications, I would suggest the following hypothesis: that in the early years of Croesus' reign, if not earlier, there had begun to circulate poems in hexameter verse which claimed to be the products of a prophetess born in the southern Troad. She was the daughter of a nymph and had acquired her power of divination from her mother. She had also inherited the nymph's natural longevity, claiming that she would live a thousand years. So she could foretell the Trojan War, but she concentrated her prophecies on more recent and significant events, such as that the Lesbians would lose their command of the seas.²⁹ Her chief theme, however, was the fall of the power of Lydia. In earlier versions this would be vaguely ominous in tone: a host from the East, perhaps identified with Media, would wreak destruction. Solon also may even have come in for mention in an early version. As T. F. R. G. Braun has pointed out, if we abandon as legendary the connection of his travels with the end of his legislation, there is no great chronological difficulty in his meeting Croesus, and his poems show that he travelled as far as Cyprus and visited royal courts.³⁰ (In a Sibylline oracle he would probably be thinly disguised in allusive language: *e.g.* "there shall come a venerable man who has given laws to the men of Pallas; take heed of his warnings.") I suggest that it was from a germ such as this that the famous dialogue in Herodotus was developed. Then when the fall of Sardis actually occurred the oracles would be revised and extended to include more precise *post eventum* prophecies of the Battle of the Champions and the fate of Croesus. It is not perhaps likely that even at the beginning Sibylla hailed Cyrus as a saviour with the enthusiasm shown a few years later in Babylon by

²⁹ Solinus 11.18: *hanc* [the Delphic Sibyl] *Herophile Erythraea annis aliquot intercedentibus insecuta est, Sibyllaque appellata est de scientiae parilitate, quae inter alia Lesbios amissuros imperium maris multo ante praemonuit quam id accideret.* The Erythraeans, as Paus. 10.12.7 shows, borrowed and adapted the Marpessian Sibyl's oracles for their Sibyl. The Delphic Sibyl is not found before the fourth century, and I believe her legend dates from that period.

³⁰ *Supra* n.9: 54. Unfortunately the alleged date of Solon's death (560/559) is not readily established. See P. Rhodes, *Commentary on the Aristotelian Athenaion Politeia* (Oxford 1981) 169–70, for bibliography. Most scholars would not put it later and so would exclude the interview with Solon, but perhaps significantly Heraclides Ponticus put it "much later" (Plut. *Sol.* 32.3). *Cf. supra* n.15 for a possibility that Croesus had been co-ruler with Alyattes, though Herodotus does not picture their interview in those terms.

the Deutero-Isaiah.³¹ All too soon it must have become clear that the effect of the exchange of Persian for Lydian overlordship was merely to be plunged into a more efficient and wider imperialism. So the tone of Sibylline prophecy became grimmer and more threatening. Also the later versions of the oracles may not have emanated from the same place as the earlier. I am prepared to believe that the first Sibylline oracles were composed in Aeolis: whether actually at Marpessus and whether even by a woman, is beyond our power to establish.³² But with the growth in popularity and importance of this new genre of verse, the game was taken up and developed in the great centres of Ionia. Hence Xanthus made the prophetess be fetched from Ephesus, and Heraclitus may actually have regarded her as a resident of his own city.

On this hypothesis Croesus through a great part of his reign may have been the object of attack from a popular literature in the form of Sibylline prophecies. At this period it may have been circulated by word of mouth. (In the fifth century Sibylline oracles were already committed to writing and preserved in books by professional *chresmologoi*.)³³ Against this attack Croesus prudently replied by a similar weapon. By dedications in the oracular shrines of Branchidae in Asia Minor, and of Delphi, the Ismenion, and the Amphiareum in Greece, he secured responses which could be quoted in reply to any hostile propaganda. Branchidae alone would probably not have been enough. It was the Apolline sanctuary in the territory of Miletus, the one city which the Lydians did not attempt to subdue after Alyattes' failure. So perhaps its utterances would have been regarded as subject to Lydian influence. Also if the three inscriptional texts of archaic responses are a sufficient indication, the oracle only replied in prose and in a form which would not be effective to circulate.³⁴ Hence it

³¹ 45.1 (New English translation): "Thus says the Lord to Cyrus, his anointed, Cyrus, whom he has taken by the hand, to subdue nations before him and to undo the might of the kings."

³² The problem is parallel with Agnes Shipton (Mother Shipton) of Knaresborough. That small Yorkshire town must have seemed as distant and strange to the inhabitants of London in the seventeenth century as Marpessus to the citizens of Ephesus in the sixth century B.C. Modern authorities (e.g. the *Dictionary of National Biography* and *Chambers' Encyclopaedia*) differ on the question whether Agnes Shipton was an historic personage of the early sixteenth century. She was credited with prophesying the death of Cardinal Wolsey, but her prophecies in various versions only emerged in print during the Civil Wars as pamphlets concerned with contemporary events.

³³ Ar. *Eq.* 109 and even more significantly *Av.* 974 (λαβὲ τὸ βιβλίον), though only Bacis, not Sibylla, is mentioned in this scene.

³⁴ Jeffery, *LSAG* 343 nos. 33, 36, 39. Cf. the discussion, Parke, *Hermathena* 130/131 (1981) 102.

would be a reasonable stroke of policy for Croesus to revive the Mermnad connection with Delphi and obtain from the Pythia such approving verses as would confirm Croesus' piety and vouch for the permanence of his reign. These original oracular responses are not preserved. The verses in Herodotus were composed after the fall of Croesus and were the framework of Delphi's apologia after it had proved to have been an error to back him against Cyrus.³⁵ Then also it was simplest and most convincing to attribute all Croesus' dedications to one occasion and connect them with the last subject of his enquiries—the campaign against Persia.

In invoking Apollo to answer Sibylla Croesus was also acting appropriately, because in mythical tradition there was a strong love-hate relation between the two. Modern scholars treat the Sibyl as inspired by Apollo, or having her gift of prophecy from him, but there is no ancient evidence to support this view until we come to the Cumaean Sibyl in the *Aeneid*. Vergil in his description of Aeneas' consultation, as elsewhere in his epic, produced an extraordinary compound of ancient traditions and his own poetic fantasy. Here, as often, contemporary motives derived from Augustan policy were one of the factors at work in his composition. When Aeneas promises the Cumaean Sibyl a place in a marble temple which he will build to Apollo and Diana, he is giving expression to Augustus' plans for the Palatine temple with its shrine for the Sibylline books, which actually was not completed till 12 B.C. Archaeological evidence shows that the oracle at Cumae in the sixth century B.C. was inspired by Hera. The Marpessian Sibyl was probably regarded as deriving her inspiration from the nymph, her mother. Certainly Bacis, who was her male counterpart on the Greek mainland, is explicitly described as inspired by nymphs.³⁶

It is from this difference between the Sibyl and Apollo that the various legends arose of their hostile relations: that she had agreed to

³⁵ Parke and Wormell II no. 52: the connecting particle in the first line should be taken as an indication that the response as quoted is only the latter half; it will have begun with an address to Croesus and a paraphrase of the query. No. 54: a sheer fiction. No. 53: the hexameter line, though probably extant in Herodotus' time, was not the authentic response, which will have had no obvious ambiguity; the advice about allies was doubtless in some form in the original response. No. 55: this is the only purely personal reply to Croesus and might possibly be genuine.

³⁶ The Sibyl and the Palatine in anticipation, Verg. *Aen.* 6.71. The temple of Apollo was dedicated by Augustus on October 9th 28 B.C., but Suetonius (*Aug.* 31) places the transfer of the Sibylline Books after Augustus' election as pontifex maximus in 12 B.C. But E. Norden, *Vergilius Aeneis Buch VI* (Leipzig 1903) 142, notes Tib. 1.5.17 for the connection of Apollo with the *Libri Sibyllini*. The inscription from Cumae (a *sors*) for the oracle under Hera: Jeffery, *LSAG* 238. Bacis and the Nymphs: Ar. *Pax* 1070.

yield her virginity to him and then repulsed him. Cassandra probably from the Epic cycle was already known as the frustrated prophetess whose words would never be believed, because she had disappointed Apollo. She provided a model, but the Sibyl's penalty was to have longevity without perpetual youth, a motif derived from another character in the Epic cycle, Tithonus. Elsewhere later the Sibyl's hostility to Apollo is openly expressed in her oracle or she foretells that he will slay her in jealousy. So the appropriate reply to a Sibylline forecast of Croesus' downfall would be an Apolline response to his honour.³⁷

This conflict of religious propaganda was ended abruptly by the victory of Cyrus. The Delphic authorities revised their version of events, until they had produced the legend preserved by Herodotus. The Sibylline oracles of Asia Minor, like so much of the literature of that place and period, perished, except for a few fragments. During the fifth century B.C. the concept of the Sibyl and her prophecies crossed to the Greek mainland, where her oracles were to re-emerge again in times of war and the fall of empires.³⁸

DURHAM UNIVERSITY, ENGLAND
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³⁷ The classic statement of the relations of Apollo and the Sibyl is Ovid *Met.* 14.130ff. For her thousand years, *cf.* Heraclitus F92 D-K (Plut. *Mor.* 397B); Phlegon *FGrHist* 257F37.v. For her hostility to Apollo, Heraclides Ponticus fr.130 Wehrli (Clem. Al. *Strom.* 1.21 [p.108.1] and Phlegon. Cassandra as prophetess: Proclus, ed. T. W. Allen, V p.102 (*Cypria*); and her frustration of Apollo, Aesch. *Ag.* 1202ff. For the motive of Tithonus' dwindling, *Hymn.Hom.* 5.218ff and Hellanicus *FGrHist* 4F140.

³⁸ I wish to thank Professors George Forrest and George Huxley for some useful criticisms, and Professor Peter Rhodes for some helpful assistance.