



Summary :

Claros was the seat of a famous Apollo sanctuary and oracle, 55 km.south of Smyrna and in a distance of ca. 2 km. from the shore. In Antiquity, it was a coastal site and the sanctuary with its staff belonged to the city of Colophon.

Geographical Location

Western Turkey

Historical Region

Ionia, Asia Minor

Administrative Dependence

Province of Asia, Roman Empire

1. The site of the sanctuary

Claros was the seat of a famous [sanctuary](#) and oracle of [Apollo](#). It was situated 55 km to the south of [Smyrna](#) and in a distance of ca. 2 km from the sea. In antiquity, however, it was a coastal site.¹ The most important element though, was the water spring at a point very close to the shore.

Claros was not an autonomous city: in terms of polity it belonged to the city of [Colophon](#) (either to old Colophon situated inland, 15 km. to the north, or to [Notium](#), ca. 2 km. south of Claros). The priests together with the sanctuary's staff belonged to Colophon as well.

2.The early use of the sanctuary

Beginning from the pioneer research by Macridy and Picard up to the systematic excavations by Louis Robert in the 1950s and those of the French Expedition under Juliette de la Genière between 1989 and 1998, the excavation research in Claros has been intensive and rich in findings.² In an area where the Mycenaean presence has been intense, human existence in Claros goes back only as far as the 10th cent. BC, at a time when the excavators place the beginning of the sanctuary within the domain of Colophon. During this period, the early votives include knives to Apollo and fibulae to Artemis. In a few words, already since this early phase the presence of both deities is attested. The few Proto-Geometric ceramic remains confirm the chronology of the beginning of the sanctuary to the end of the 10th cent. BC.³

Tradition attributes the establishment of the oracle to [Mopsus](#), son of [Manto](#). It is said that Mopsus was buried at the neighbouring Notium as well as that he won at a contest over [Calchas](#) who, according to other sources, was buried in Claros.⁴

Interesting though, is the fact that the establishment of the sanctuary is related to the expulsion of [Carians](#) and the first Greek settlement in the area.⁵ A similar position is also held by H.W. Parke, who linked the establishment of the oracle to pre-Hellenic people.⁶

The number of votives increased dramatically during the Geometric period (9th-8th cent. BC) and the early Orientalizing period (early 7th cent.). An important feature was the dedication of clay figurines, most prevalent of which were bulls.⁷ The pottery of the same period is restricted in few forms which refer to wine-drinking ceremonies and libations (kraters and kylikes).⁸ Among the most valuable finds are the head of an Apollo figurine, an amulet bearing the Egyptian god Sobek with a crocodile's shape as well as large lebetes decorated with griffin busts.⁹



3. The Archaic period

The sanctuary is mentioned for the first time in the 7th cent. sources and more precisely in the Homeric Hymns to Apollo and Artemis without any reference to its usage as an oracle.¹⁰ However, various researchers connect certain events in the history of Colophon with the possibility of the oracle being in use already since the 7th cent. BC. These events include the abandonment of the city and the transport to Siris after the invasion of Gyges or the abrupt capture of Smyrna according to the will of the Gods.¹¹ Nevertheless, it could be safely argued that the omitting of the name of the oracle at Claros from the list of oracles consulted by [Croesus](#), indicates that in the mid-6th cent., even if it might existed, the oracle wasn't famous.

In the 2nd half of the 7th cent. BC an impressive circular altar was built, 6,20 m. in diameter, ca. 30 m. east from the sacred spring.¹² A series of votive objects found in its ruins attest to the sacred character of the structure. It is worth-mentioning that during this period not a single dated votive figurine exists.

Just after the mid-6th cent. BC when the sanctuary underwent a building phase, the altar was destroyed. The excavators relate this phase to the capture of Sardis by the [Persians](#) (after 547 BC). The circular altar was incorporated to the new altar to Apollo, which is rectangular in shape and with larger dimensions (14.85 X 6.05 m.). The floor was initially made of irregular-shaped marble slabs. Later, in the beginning of the 5th cent. it was replaced by thick pebbles and sand.¹³

At the same time, a marble temple was constructed, of which only the western part of the cella is known.¹⁴ It is considered to be a replacement to an earlier structure, which has left no data. It is assumed that the temple was [peripteral](#), i.e. it had a collonade around the cella (8,5 m. wide). Its length has been calculated to 100 doric feet (ca. 32 m.).

This period is marked by the first monumental votives.¹⁵ A kouros carrying a small animal was excavated southwest of the Propylaea of the sanctuary by L. Robert in 1953 and nowadays, is at the Smyrna Museum.¹⁶ Two more kouros were excavated by S. Verger south of the temple to Apollo on the site of a 1st cent. BC structure that has been destroyed and belonged to L. Valerius Flaccus.¹⁷ The first kouros, the head of which has been preserved, held tightly on the chest a sacrificial animal, which hasn't been preserved. The second kouros, the torso of which is preserved down to the knees, bears an inscription on the thigh where the person who dedicated the statue is mentioned, who is the priest Timonax son of Timotheos. The head of a kouros and a fragment from the thigh of another one have been found in the same area. It is thought that on that spot there was, at some point in the late 2nd cent., an exedra where precious sculptures were placed.

In the southmost end of the sanctuary, a rectangular altar of small dimensions (3.50 X 1.50 m.) in honour to Artemis was built, in an area known for its religious activity. Two bases of kouros were found to the south of this altar. One of these found in 1959 bears a dedicatory inscription where the same priest who dedicated the headless kouros is mentioned, Timonax of Timotheos.¹⁸

Few metres to the west of the altar to Artemis a peculiar building was found consisting of two chambers, a prostyle one with an almost square ground plan (dimensions 8.5 X 9 m.), and the other which cuts the first vertically (dimensions 9 X 7 m.). Apparently, this is the temple to Artemis.¹⁹

4. The Classical period

Since the end of the 6th cent. BC down to the 2nd cent. BC, votives are mostly terracotta figurines. In the areas of the sanctuary dedicated to Apollo, the form that predominates is that of the late Archaic dressed Ionic kouros carrying a [barbitos](#) or a [lyre](#) and thought to depict Apollo himself. On the contrary, the cult of Artemis is represented by a series of figurines typical of many female deities.²⁰



As far as the topography of the sanctuary is concerned no indications of any work done in the 5th cent. BC exist. In the beginning of the 4th cent. a few alterations took place on the building near the altar of Artemis as well as some repairs in the rest of the structures.

5. The Hellenistic period

In the beginning of the Hellenistic period some important events in the history of the sanctuary took place. On the occasion of the foundation of Smyrna by [Alexander the Great](#) we have the first confirmed use of the oracle, as this is attested in Pausanias, "it is said that Alexander went hunting at the Pagos Mt. In his return he went to the sanctuary of the Nemeses and found in front of the sacred spring and above the water a grown plane-tree. He slept beneath it and saw in his sleep the Nemeses who ordered him to build a city there and settle the Smyrnaeans, thus removing them from the old city".²¹ Following the dream, the Smyrnaeans rushed at the nearby Claros which uttered the oracle, "thrice and four times will be happy those who will settle on Pagos opposite the sacred Meles", that led to the refoundation of Smyrna. Parke rejects the historicity of this episode and claims that it was [Antigonos I the One-Eyed](#) who founded the city.²²

An Athenian inscription, dated to the end of the 4th cent. BC, mentions an athlete victor in the games at Ilium, Ephesus and Claros, the latter concerns equestrian events.²³

In the beginning of the 3rd cent. BC, Colophon is destroyed by [Lysimachus](#) who removed the inhabitants to the new Ephesus. After 281 BC and the death of Lysimachus, Colophon loses in importance to the advantage of Notium or Colophon by the sea, which assumed control of the sanctuary. The most important works in the sanctuary date to the 3rd cent. BC and were those that drastically changed its Archaic form.

The Archaic altar was destroyed and leveled and in its place a monumental marble altar was built. Its orientation was parallel to the eastern side of the new temple of Apollo. The altar was dedicated to both Apollo and Dionysus and beside it was a solar clock that belonged to the same period.

The new temple to Apollo was built on a five-leveled pedestal. On the eastern side and along the four steps of the **crepis** there are inscriptions with lists of the representatives of the cities that visited the sanctuary. The temple, with dimensions 26 × 46 m. was peripteral with six columns on the narrow sides and eleven on the long ones. This is one of the very few Doric temples in Asia Minor. Its construction began in early 3rd cent. BC but it lasted long. Two corridors led from the pronaos to the **adyton** of the temple which was below the **cella**. The adyton consisted of two subterranean vaulted chambers where, during the night and on specific days of the year, the oracles were uttered. Inside the first chamber, built seats were found as well as a marble omphalos, similar to the one at Delphi. Here stayed the thespiodos, i.e. the poet who turned the oracle into a metrical verse, together with the secretaries. The second chamber was directly under the complex of the cult statues. This was the site of the sacred spring and the holy water from where the prophet, who received Apollo's oracle, drank.

In the beginning of the 2nd cent. BC the colossal complex of the [three deities](#) was placed inside the cella. Apollo is seated and surrounded by the standing figures of Artemis and Leto. The monument, ca. 6 m. high, is known from a coin struck during the reign of [Caracalla](#). In addition, some fragments of the sculptures have survived which together with iconographic testimonies have allowed J. Marcadé to restore part of it.²⁴

The building to the west of the Artemis altar was destroyed and on the site a new structure was raised. It was a small Ionic temple which hasn't been excavated because it was covered by 150 column **drums** and fragments fallen from Apollo's temple. However, the Archaic altar was preserved. In an adjacent depository, a good many figurines in new forms was found which possibly refer to ceremonies on the site (Selenoi, Nike, dance girls etc.).²⁵

A series of honorary monuments was set up during the Hellenistic period in the southern part of the sanctuary, the foundations of



which only survive. Among the persons identified are [Seleucus I](#), [Antiochus III](#) and members of the [Attalid family](#). Later, the monuments of the 1st cent. BC Roman proconsuls were erected in the same area. The most famous of these is the dedicatory stele in honour of Quintus Tullius Cicero (61-59 BC), brother of the orator.

After the establishment of the province of Asia and thanks to the efforts of two important Colophonians, Polemaios and Menippos, honoured by decrees in Claros, the city retained its autonomy, legislation, the right to judge all the crimes committed within its boundaries, thus avoiding any intervention of the governor of the province in the affairs of the city.²⁶ As far as the sanctuary is concerned it went through a period of great development. At that time, the monumental **propylon** was built -known even before the beginning of the excavations in the area- as well as a number of structures in honour of various proconsuls and other Roman officials of the province of Asia. During the same period, an area of monumental dimensions was constructed between the altar and the temple for sacrificial purposes, i.e. hecatombes. The traces of the posts have been found where the one-hundred sacrificial animals were tied up in an arrangement parallel to the temple.²⁷ In the 1st cent. BC, a new monumental marble altar of Artemis was also built.

6. The Roman period

The history of the oracle of Appolo Clarios during the Roman period is particularly known since it flourished greatly and for long. Information on its activity derives from both hundreds of inscriptions dedicated by the worshippers and the reports of the ancient historians.²⁸

On the occasion of Germanicus' visit to the oracle in AD 17, the Latin historian Tacitus gave a complete -but not quite accurate- description of the procedure of receiving an oracle. The oracle predicted -in the usual dark language- the death of a young man and it was confirmed. Tacitus' description has been dated to AD 115. Apparently, at the time the oracle was not well-known to the Romans and Tacitus considered the visit a peculiar incident.²⁹

According to Tacitus, the oracles were pronounced by a male-sheer elected from certain particular families of [Miletus](#). He was the only one who knew the number of the worshippers and their names but not their questions. After having drunk water from a sacred spring he would retire in a cave and recite the oracles in god-inspiring verses, even though he had no knowledge of poetry or literature. Of this, generally true, testimony some points should be corrected: a) the «illiterate» prophet is not identified with the familiar, from surviving inscriptions, poet, b) priests from Miletus are not known from other sources while two of them are mentioned: the sheer who composed the initial answer and the thespiodos who transformed it into a metrical word before he actually sang it. In contrast to the oracle at Delphi and its dedication to the dactylic hexameter, there was a development in the metre of the oracle in Claros. During the Hellenistic period, the oracles were uttered in common hexametres while in the Roman Imperial times, in variations of the iambic trimetres and tetrametres and of the trochaic and anapaistic tetrametres.

The oracle was refounded by [Hadrian](#) and met its pick in the 2nd cent AD.³⁰ This has been attributed to the specialization of Claros in theological and cult matters. Its fame was worldwide and oracles from Claros have been found from Africa and Dalmatia to Britain and Syria.³¹ The old Greek colonies in Asia Minor are not represented (with the exception of [Cyme](#) and [Phocaea](#)), possibly due to their long-term relations with the oracle of [Apollo at Didyma](#), while Claros was neither popular in Greece in a time when Delphi were still in decline.

After an oracle was pronounced the believers inscribed at the temple a text with references to the priests to praise Apollo. Gradually, hundreds of inscriptions covered the stairs, the columns and the walls of the temple, thus comprising one of the largest epigraphic sets in the Mediterranean.

The present-day preserved sections of the temple have been dated to the Roman period and as a result, we have a decent knowledge of its topography. The worshippers reached the sacred grove of Apollo, where the sanctuary was situated, through the 2nd cent. BC monumental Doric propylon. On the left there was a stoa and on the right a semicircular platform (exedra). The Sacred Way was framed by statues and votive stelai and reached the eastern corner of the temple. The construction of the latter, which had begun half a millennium earlier, was completed in Hadrian's time.



7. The last years of the sanctuary

The oracle must have been closed, along with the rest of the Greek oracles, in AD 395 when the emperor Theodosius banned their operation. In later times, a strong earthquake completely destroyed the temple and the remaining buildings.

1. As it was confirmed by the geophysical research of Prof. Ilhan Kayan, which La Genière refers to in La Genière, J., de, "Lectures de Claros archaïque", *REG* 111 (1998), p. 393, note 11.
2. The site was identified in the end of the 19th cent. by surface inscription finds: Schuchhardt, C., «Kolophon, Notion und Klaros», *AM* 11 (1886) p. 398-434. On the first research attempts, see Macridy, T., Picard, C., «Fouilles du Hiéron d'Apollon Clarios à Colophon. Première campagne: 1913», *BCH* 39 (1915) p. 33-52. On Louis Robert's excavations, see the excavation reports in the periodicals *Türk Arkeoloji Dergisi*, *Anatolian Studies*, as well as the scholarly introduction of the research in a lecture: Robert, L., *Les fouilles de Claros, Conférence donnée à l'Université d'Ankara, le 26 octobre 1953* (Limoges 1954). On an overall account on the excavations conducted before 1961, see de La Genière, J., *Cahiers de Claros*, I (Paris 1992) p. 11-17. The excavations of the French expedition are under publication. Excavation reports have been presented in the periodical *Türk Arkeoloji Dergisi*. The results of the excavation sessions (ten in all) are concisely presented in La Genière, J. de, «Claros. Bilan Provisoire de dix campagnes de fouilles», *REA* 100 (1998) p. 235-268.
3. La Genière, J. de, « Lectures de Claros archaïque », *REG* 111 (1998) p. 392-393.
4. See Hesiod, frag. 278: Merkelbach, R., West, M.L., *Fragments Hesiodica* (Oxford 1967) p. 157. Strabo 14.1.27. Callinus of Ephesus apud Strabo, 14.4.3.
5. Pausanias 7.3.1. Strabo 14.1.27.
6. Parke, H.W., *The Oracles of Apollo in Asia Minor* (London 1985) p. 126. The fact that at the nearby "divinatory cave" have been found traces of habitation since the Neolithic period does not affect the history of the oracle of Claros. In earlier times, it was believed that the oracle was situated inside a cave. However, this was refuted by Louis Robert's excavations: the cave of the water-sources are the subterranean chambers beneath the Hellenistic temple.
7. 60 out of the 73 figurines found, depict a bull. See, Dewailly, M., «Le sanctuaire d'Apollon à Claros: place et fonction des dieux d'après leurs images», *MEFRA* 113 (2001) p. 368.
8. La Genière, J. de, «Claros. Bilan Provisoire de dix campagnes de fouilles», *REA* 100 (1998) p. 237.
9. La Genière, J. de, «Claros. Bilan Provisoire de dix campagnes de fouilles», *REA* 100 (1998) p. 240.
10. *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*, 3.40. *Homeric Hymn to Artemis*, 9.5.
11. See correspondingly Parke, H.W., *The Oracles of Apollo in Asia Minor* (London 1985) p. 120 and Allen, A., *The Fragments of Mimnermus* (Stuttgart 1993) p. 74-83.
12. La Genière, J. de, « Lectures de Claros archaïque », *REG* 111 (1998) p. 393-399.
13. La Genière, J. de, «Claros. Bilan Provisoire de dix campagnes de fouilles», *REA* 100 (1998) p. 2 and p. 24-141.
14. La Genière, J. de, «Le Sanctuaire d' Apollon à Claros, découvertes récentes», *CRAI* (1992) p. 195-208, εκ. 1-2.
15. Overall preview: Dewailly, M., Verger, S., Pécasse, M., «Les sculptures archaïques de Claros», *Monuments et Mémoires de la Fondation Eugène Piot* 83 (2004) p. 5-59.
16. Robert, L., «Fouilles de Klaros. Rapport sur la campagne de 1953», *TürkArkDerg* 6 (1956) p. 4. Holtzmann, B., « Les sculptures de Claros », *CRAI*



(1993) p. 810, fig. 7-8.

17. See Dewailly, M., Verger, S., Pécasse, M., « Les sculptures archaïques de Claros », *Monuments et Mémoires de la Fondation Eugène Piot* 83 (2004) p. 13-20.

18. Holtzmann, B., « Les sculptures de Claros », *CRAI* (1993) p. 812, fig. 9-10. On the inscriptions on the statues, see Lejeune, M., Dubois, L., «Dédicaces archaïques de Claros», *CRAI* (1998) p. 1141-1151.

19. La Genière, J., de, "Claros. Bilan Provisoire de dix campagnes de fouilles", *REA* 100 (1998), p. 243.

20. Dewailly, M., «Le sanctuaire d'Apollon à Claros: place et fonction des dieux d'après leurs images», *MEFRA* 113 (2001) p. 369-371 (Apollo) and 374-377 (Artemis).

21. Pausanias 7.5.1-3.

22. Parke, H.W., *The Oracles of Apollo in Asia Minor* (London 1985), p. 127.

23. Preuner, E., "Die Panegyris der Athena Ilias", *Hermes* 61 (1926), p. 130-132.

24. Marcadé, J., «Rapport préliminaire sur le groupe cultuel du temple d'Apollon a Claros (état de mai 1995)», *REA* 96 (1994) p. 447-463, «Nouvelles observations sur le groupe cultuel du temple d'Apollon à Claros (état d'octobre 1997)», *REA* 100 (1998) p. 299-323. Marcadé, J., Bourbon, M., «Le Groupe cultuel du temple d'Apollon à Claros», *CRAI* (1995) p. 519-524. For coins from the reign of Caracalla: Head, B.V., *Catalogue of Greek Coins in the British Museum*, 14 (London 1892) p. 42, no. 47, pl. VIII, 11.

25. Dewailly, M., "Le sanctuaire d'Apollon à Claros: place et fonction des dieux d'après leurs images", *MEFRA* 113 (2001), p. 377.

26. Robert, L., *Claros, I : Décrets hellénistiques* (Paris 1989) p. 63-104. On the importance of the decrees, see Ferrary, J.L., «Le Statut des cités libres dans l'empire romain à la lumière des inscriptions de Claros», *CRAI* (1991) p. 557-577.

27. La Genière, J., de, «Claros. Bilan Provisoire de dix campagnes de fouilles», *REA* 100 (1998) p. 247-248 and pl. I, 11.

28. All the written evidence was compiled by Stauber, J. and Merkelbach, R., «Die Orakel des Apollon von Klaros», *EpiGAnat* 27 (1996) p. 1-53. See also, Toutain, J., «Inscriptions mentionnant l'oracle d'Apollon de Claros», *BAntFr* (1915) p. 141-148.

29. Parke, H. W., *Ta Ellēniká Manteía* (Athēna 1977) p. 168 [*Greek Oracles*].

30. On the Roman period, see especially Robert, L., *Les fouilles de Claros, Conférence donnée à l'Université d'Ankara, le 26 octobre 1953* (Limoges 1954).

31. On the cities of Asia and Caria, see Robert, L., Robert, J., *La Carie II. Le plateau de Tabai et ses environs* (Paris 1954) p. 203-229 and *Documents de l'Asie Mineure méridionale* (Genève-Paris 1966) p. 96. Other cities: Sokolowski, F., «Sur l'oracle de Claros destiné à la ville de Syédra», *BCH* 92 (1968) p. 519-522. Thouvenot, R., «Un Oracle de l'Apollon de Claros à Volubilis», *BAMaroc* 8 (1968-72) p. 221-227. See also the studies mentioned above (note 28).

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	Claros, Temple of Apollo http://www.brynmawr.edu/Admins/DMVRC/lanterns/ionia.html

Glossary :

	adyton or avaton The most sacred area of a temple where only the priests were allowed to enter.
	cella Interior enclosed part - nucleus of a temple or other temple-shaped building.
	crepis / crepidoma The solid mass of stepped masonry serving as the visible base of a building. The crepidoma usually consists of three steps. The top step from which the columns spring is called the stereobate.



	drum
The cylindric parts of stone or marble, of which a column is built up.	
	peripteral temple
Having a single row of columns on all sides.	
	propylon
Monumental architectural entrance, most often to a sanctuary or a building complex.	

Chronological Table

10th cent. BC.: Foundation of the sanctuary

ca. 700 BC.: Hesiod refers to Claros («Melampodia»)

7th cent. BC.: First architectural formations on the site

end 7th cent. BC.: The cults of Apollo and Artemis in Claros are mentioned for the first time

mid- 6th cent. BC.: Replacement of an older altar with a new one, construction of an altar to Artemis

end 4th cent. BC.: The oracle on the refoundation of Smyrna is given. This is the first certain reference to the oracle's function

3th cent. BC.: The foundation and the marble staircase of the Apollo temple are completed

AD 18: Germanicus visits Claros

AD 117- 138: During Hadrian's reign the temple is completed