



Jessica Piccinini

**The Shrine of Dodona  
in the Archaic  
and Classical Ages.  
A History**







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and Classical Ages. A History

eum

Cover Illustration:

Ram-horned Zeus Ammon from a bronze *situla*, probably from Dodona (Louvre Br 4235)

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## Abbreviations

AAA	Athens Annual of Archaeology.
ABSA	The Annual of the British School at Athens.
AE	Archaiologike Ephemeris.
AIIN	Annali dell'Istituto Italiano di Numismatica.
AION(archeol)	Annali di archeologia e storia antica.
AJA	American Journal of Archaeology.
AJPh	American Journal of Philology.
ALGRM	W.H. Roscher (hrsg.), <i>Ausführliches Lexicon der griechischen und römischen Mythologie</i> , Leipzig 1886-1937.
ASAA	Annuario della Scuola Archeologica di Atene e delle Missioni Italiane in Oriente.
ASNP	Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa, Classe di Lettere e Filosofia.
BASP	The Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists.
BCH	Bulletin de Correspondence Hellénique.
BE	<i>Bulletin Epigraphique</i> .
BIBR	Bulletin de l'Institut historique belge de Rome.
BICS	Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies.
BNJ	<i>Brill's New Jacoby</i> .
CAH	<i>The Cambridge Ancient History</i> .
CEG	P.A. Hansen, <i>Carmina epigraphica graeca saeculorum VIII-V a. Chr. n.</i> , Berlin 1983-1989.
ClAnt	Classical Antiquity.
CJ	The Classical Journal.
CPh	Classical Philology.
CQ	Classical Quarterly.

CR	Classical Revue.
DVC	S. I Dakaris, J. Vokotopoulou, A. Ph. Christidis, <i>Τα μολύβδινα χρηστήρια πινάκια της Δωδώνης των ανασκαφών Δημητρίου Ευαγγελίδη</i> , Athina 2013.
<i>EpeirChron</i>	<i>Epeirotika Chronika</i> .
<i>FGrHist</i>	F. Jacoby, <i>Die Fragmente der Griechischen Historiker</i> , Berlin 1923-1958.
<i>FGH</i>	K. Müller, <i>Fragmenta historicorum Graecorum</i> , Paris 1841-1884.
GIF	Giornale italiano di filologia.
GRBS	Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies.
HSCP	Harvard Studies in Classical Philology.
<i>IApollonia</i>	P. Cabanes, N. Ceka (éds.), <i>Corpus des inscriptions grecques d'Illyrie méridionale et d'Épire 1. Inscriptions d'Épidamne-Dyrrhachion et d'Apollonia</i> . Vol. 2. <i>Inscriptions d'Apollonia d'Illyrie</i> , Études épigraphiques, 2. Athens 1997.
<i>IBouthrotos</i>	P. Cabanes, F. Drini (éds.), <i>Corpus des inscriptions grecques d'Illyrie méridionale et d'Épire 2.2. Inscriptions de Bouthrôtos</i> . Études épigraphiques, 2. Athens 2007.
<i>IDélos</i>	F. Dürrbach <i>et al.</i> , <i>Inscriptions de Délos</i> , Paris 1926.
<i>IEpidamnos</i>	P. Cabanes, F. Drini (éds.), <i>Corpus des inscriptions grecques d'Illyrie méridionale et d'Épire 1. Inscriptions d'Épidamne-Dyrrhachion et d'Apollonia</i> . Vol. 1. <i>Inscriptions d'Épidamne-Dyrrhachion</i> , Études épigraphiques, 2. Athens 1995.
<i>IG</i>	<i>Inscriptiones graecae</i> .
<i>Inventory</i>	M.H. Hansen, T.H. Nielsen (eds.), <i>An Inventory of Archaic and Classical Poleis</i> , Oxford 2004.
<i>IvO</i>	W. Ditteberger, K. Purgold, <i>Die Inschriften von Olympia</i> , Berlin 1896.
JGA	Journal of Greek Archaeology.
JhBerlMus	Jahrbuch der Berliner Museen.
JHS	Journal of Hellenic Studies.
<i>LIMC</i>	<i>Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae</i> , Zurich 1981-1999.

LGPN	<i>Lexicon Greek Personal Names.</i>
LSAG <sup>2</sup>	L.H. Jeffery, <i>The Local Scripts of Archaic Greece. A Study of the Origin of the Greek Alphabet and Its Development from the Eighth to the Fifth Centuries B.C.</i> , Oxford 1990 <sup>2</sup> .
MedA	Mediterranean Archaeology.
MEFRA	Mélanges de l'École française de Rome.
MN	Museum Helveticum.
OMI	<i>Odegos Museion Ioanninon.</i>
PAE	<i>Praktika Archaiologikes Etaireis</i> (Proceedings of the Archaeological Society).
PdP	La Parola del Passato.
QUCC	Quaderni urbinati di cultura classica.
RBPh	Revue belge de philologie d'histoire.
RE	A.Pauly, G. Wissowa, W. Kroll, K. Witte, K. Mittelhaus, K. Ziegler (hrsg.), <i>Paulys Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft</i> , Stuttgart 1894-1980.
REG	Revue des études grecques.
RFIC	Rivista di filologia e istruzione classica.
SEG	<i>Supplementum epigraphicum graecum.</i>
SemRom	Seminari romani di cultura greca.
SIFC	Studi italiani di filologia classica.
Syll. <sup>3</sup>	W. Dittenberger, <i>Sylloge inscriptionum graecarum</i> , Leipzig 1915-1924.
TAPhA	Transactions of the American Philological Association.
ZPE	Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik.



## Preface

The list of people to thank might well turn out to be longer than that of the known devotees of Dodona. This book originates from my D.Phil. thesis, defended at the University of Oxford in November 2011. Since then, the content and form of the research has evolved considerably. I am grateful to my supervisors, Robert Parker, for his expertise and patience, and to Milena Melfi, who initiated me into the study of archaeology and always believed in my work, even when I did not.

Among the scholars, colleagues and friends, who at various levels have contributed, also with their constructive criticism and questions, in developing my research, I wish to thank Peter Agócs, Ilaria Caloi, Silvia Piccini, Danilo Nati and Ian Rutherford.

I am also grateful to Lieve Donnellan, Ugo Fantasia, Mario Lombardo and Elisabetta Onnis for sending me their own works long before their actual publication; and the whole staff of the Ephoria of Antiquities at Ioannina, who have been consistently helpful down these years.

A special thank-you also goes to Cathy Morgan and John K. Davies, who a long time ago showed me the importance of context and landscape. Our visits to archaeological Greek sites widened my scholarly perception and approach to the ancient world.

I could have not carried out this project without the financial assistance of the Onassis Foundation and the Margo Tytus Programme of the University of Cincinnati. I also gratefully acknowledge the financial support for publication by the Sezione di Storia, Dipartimento di Studi Umanistici of the Università degli studi di Macerata. I wish to thank the staff of all institutes

and libraries visited during these years, the Sackler Library, the British School at Athens, the Italian School of Archaeology, the Blegen Library and the Classics Department of the University of Cincinnati, the Bibliothek of the Institut für Alte Geschichte und Altertumskunde, Papyrologie und Epigraphik of the Universität Wien and the Biblioteca di Scienze Archeologiche e Storiche dell'Antichità of the Università degli studi di Macerata.

Such book would have never been possible without the support of my sister and parents, who provided me with biggest gifts of character, obstinacy, practical sense and resilience; and Prof. Luisa Moscati, *magistra optima atque carissima*, who, a long time ago, first intuited the potential of this research. She sustained, encouraged and guided me during the work and undertook the enormous job of editing my style and correcting inaccuracies.

The responsibility for the remaining shortcomings is of course only mine.

Special encouragement came my way from Yuri A. Marano, whose love, critical judgement and wide knowledge of the Classical world, have been often indispensable, especially in these last years.

The last thought goes to Alessandro, questioning engineer, avid reader, beloved brother(-in-law), but most of all Viola's *papà speciale*. To him this book is dedicated.

Osimo, September 2017

J.P.

## Note

The abbreviations of ancient authors and texts are in general those given in *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, occasionally with familiar variation; references to modern scholarship generally take the form of Author-Date quotations, but short forms, all listed in the list of abbreviations, have sometimes been used.

Unless otherwise noted, translations in the texts are my own.



εἰς μνήμην τοῦ  
*Alessandro Candelari*  
(05.01.1984 – 20.06.2017)



## Introduction

Oh! where, Dodona! is thine aged Grove,  
Prophetic Fount, and Oracle divine?  
What valley echoed the response of Jove?  
What trace remaineth of the Thunderer's shrine?  
All, all forgotten—and shall Man repine  
That his frail bonds to fleeting life are broke?  
Cease, Fool! the fate of Gods may well be thine:  
Wouldst thou survive the marble or the oak?  
When nations, tongues, and worlds must sink beneath the stroke!  
(Lord Byron, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, Canto II, 53)

Any work aiming to reconstruct the history of a major ancient Greek sanctuary from its very beginnings comes face to face with two *auctoritates*: Pausanias and previous modern scholarship dealing with the same issue(s). The author of the *Periegesis* supplies decisive information on and full accounts of the sacred landscape of major and minor sanctuaries, which help the modern reader and archaeologist to reconstruct in detail these places of ancient cult and pilgrimage<sup>1</sup>. As for Dodona, alas, Pausanias, although he might have visited the site<sup>2</sup>, is quite tight-lipped, limiting himself to describing the sanctuary only by its rough position in north-western Greece, i.e. Thesprotia, and by mentioning a *ιερόν* and a sacred oak worth seeing – γῆς δὲ τῆς Θεσπρωτίδος ἔστι μὲν πού καὶ ἄλλα θεᾶς ἄξια, *ιερόν τε Διὸς ἐν Δωδώνῃ καὶ ἱερὰ τοῦ θεοῦ φηγός*<sup>3</sup>. In another passage he mentions the Dodona oak again as the second most ancient tree

<sup>1</sup> The term “pilgrimage” to describe journeys for religious purposes in pre-Christian societies and cultures is widespread, but controversial (Dillon 1997; Elsner, Rutherford 2005; Scullion 2005; Rutherford 2013).

<sup>2</sup> Musti, Beschi 1982, p. XXI and p. 303; Bearzot 1988, pp. 106-107; Zizza 2006, p. 134.

<sup>3</sup> Paus. I, 17, 5.

in antiquity after the Lygos at Samos<sup>4</sup>, but no further specification is given about the sacred landscape, the monuments and votives within the *temenos* of the sanctuary of Zeus. Therefore, the *auctoritas* of Pausanias, for the study of the oracular sanctuary of Dodona is noticeably weak, at least in shaping *a priori* the sacred landscape without the support of material evidence<sup>5</sup>. The second touchstone, against which all is to be measured, is modern scholarship. The history of studies on Dodona can be divided into four main phases: the search for the site; the publication of the archaeological research of C. Carapanos in 1878; the appearance in 1967 of H.W. Parke's *The Oracles of Zeus, Dodona, Olympia, Ammon*<sup>6</sup> and a few years later, in 1971, of the first archaeological guide to the site by S.I. Dakaris<sup>7</sup>; and, lastly, the very recent blooming of studies on the Epirote oracle after the publication of Lhôte's and Dakaris, Vokotopoulou and Christidis' collections of the oracular tablets of Dodona<sup>8</sup>.

«To ascertain the site of Dodona would seem now to require a response from the oracle itself». With these words in 1839 Wordsworth, Bishop of Lincoln, expressed all the frustration of 18<sup>th</sup>-and-19<sup>th</sup>-century travellers who had been attempting to determine the site of the most ancient oracle of the Greek world<sup>9</sup>. At the time, the exact location of Dodona in north-western Greece was a mystery, the most ancient oracular shrine of the ancient Greek world «continuait à se dérober aux recherches des voyageurs et des archéologues»<sup>10</sup>. Centuries of oblivion had literally buried the sanctuary of Dodona under dust and earth, frustrating the curiosity of travellers and giving birth to numerous hypotheses about its exact location in the region of modern Ioannina.

<sup>4</sup> Paus. VII, 25, 1.

<sup>5</sup> Little help from other sources, for example Polybius (IV, 67, 3-4), who touches briefly upon the *stoa*, the *anathemata* and the *hiera oikia*.

<sup>6</sup> Parke 1967.

<sup>7</sup> Dakaris 1971.

<sup>8</sup> Lhôte 2006; Dakaris, Vokotopoulou, Christidis 2013 (from now on DVC).

<sup>9</sup> Wordsworth 1839, p. 142; Lincoln 1881, p. 229.

<sup>10</sup> Carapanos 1878, p. 2.

Travel literature along with illustrations of ancient ruins proliferated in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, especially once the first “archaeological” explorations had commenced<sup>11</sup>. This widely spread European phenomenon inspired erudite scholars, military officers, noble men and diplomats from France to Greece, from Germany to Italy, to write travel guides, finding their model and archetype in Pausanias’ *Description of Greece*<sup>12</sup>. Travellers and painters fixed their attention on ancient Mediterranean locations, especially those less explored, remote and more exotic, as the sanctuary of Zeus at Dodona. In Sir William Gell’s words, in the 1830s Dodona was «one of the most interesting and difficult questions in Greek geography». The ancient toponym(s) had not survived<sup>13</sup> and no trace of the ancient glory of the oracular shrine of Zeus was apparent. This nourished the curiosity of travellers and scholars, who, puzzled by the shifting sub-regional divisions of ancient Epirus (Thesprotia, Molossia and Chaonia) through the centuries<sup>14</sup>, exercised themselves with conjectures. The ancient authors – first and foremost Homer, Herodotus and Strabo – in their hands, they had but windy mountains, a river (i.e. the legendary ancient Tomaros chain and the Acheloos), and a large assemblage of oaks as their vague geographical references to guide them.

Among the most famous travellers in Epirus was Lord Byron, who visited and admired the remains of the theatre at a site that only sixty years later was identified as Dodona. On the 19<sup>th</sup> of November 1811, Byron wrote to Rev. Richard Valpy, fellow of the Society of Antiquarians and Headmaster of Reading School, communicating that they had not «discovered anything worthy in the Levant, except an amphitheatre about three hours ride from Yanina in Epirus»<sup>15</sup>. Likewise, these ruins of the theatre

<sup>11</sup> It is indeed not really correct to define these first explorations as archaeological excavations, since the birth of archaeology as a scientific discipline based on stratigraphical investigations dates to the 1920s-1950s (see for instance, Woolley 1930; Wheeler 1943; Wheeler 1954).

<sup>12</sup> Eisner 1991, pp. 89-124.

<sup>13</sup> The south-eastern region of Ioannina, named Tomarochoria, indeed misled Leake (Dakaris 1971, p. 13).

<sup>14</sup> Already Strabo VII, 7, C 326-329.

<sup>15</sup> Marchand 1973, p. 134; Byron took the theatre for an amphitheatre.

attracted others visitors, none of whom identified the place as the seat of Zeus Dodonaeus<sup>16</sup>.

The first identification of the site, on the basis of its geographical position and the disproportionate size of the theatre in relation to the city, was made in 1819 by Thomas Leverton Donaldson, a British architect, who only in 1830 published the plan of the building in a supplement of the *Antiquities of Athens*. He advanced the hypothesis that the site may have been ancient Dodona<sup>17</sup>.

However, Christopher Lincoln-Wordsworth is commonly considered the first “discoverer” of the exact location of Dodona<sup>18</sup>. His article “Where was Dodona?”, appeared first in his book *Greece: Pictorial, Descriptive and Historical*<sup>19</sup>, and, later, in the wake of Carapanos’ discoveries, was reproduced as an excerpt in the *Journal of Hellenic Studies* in 1881<sup>20</sup>. He strongly suggested that the ruins on the eastern slope of Mount Olytza, in the middle of a plain South-West of Ioannina and known by the modern name of Kastro or Dramisos, should be recognised as Dodona. Despite the distinct presence of a fortified citadel, Wordsworth, like Donaldson, dismissed the hypothesis that the visible remains belonged to Passaron, the seat of Pyrrhus<sup>21</sup>, because of the discrepancy between the size of the urban centre and the magnificence of the buildings placed outside the city-walls: a large theatre and the vestiges of two temple-like buildings, one of which sported the fragments of fourteen still-standing columns. The singular presence of a monumental theatre, unusual for this district, made Wordsworth assume that it should have been designed not «for the entertainment of the citizens only», but rather it served «as

<sup>16</sup> Hobhouse 1817, pp. 66-67; Leake 1835, pp. 263-268; Hughes 1830, p. 488; Lear 1851, pp. 379-380 and pp. 385-386; Pouqueville 1820, pp. 145-146; Holland 1815, pp. 142-147; Hawkins 1820.

<sup>17</sup> Donaldson 1830, pp. 46-47.

<sup>18</sup> On the paternity of the “first” identification Potts 2010, pp. 21-23; Manopoulos 2012.

<sup>19</sup> Wordsworth 1839, pp. 247-253.

<sup>20</sup> Lincoln 1881.

<sup>21</sup> Of this opinion also Pouqueville 1820, pp. 467-469; Donaldson 1830, pp. 46-47; Bowen 1852, pp. 205-207.



# The Shrine of Dodona in the Archaic and Classical Ages. A History

Travelling to oracular sanctuaries was one of the main motivations for long-distance movements in antiquity. Located on the fringes of the Greek world, the oracular sanctuary of Zeus at Dodona attracted visitors from the Early Iron Age, but only from the mid-7<sup>th</sup> century BC onwards did its catchment area expand far beyond the Pindos mountain range. This book covers the history of the shrine from its emergence as a cult place up to the acquisition of a pan-Hellenic reputation, taking into account the communities and private individuals who dedicated, consulted, and performed rituals there.

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Cover Illustration:

Ram-horned Zeus Ammon from a bronze *situla*, probably from Dodona (Louvre Br 4235)



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