

DELPHI AS A WORLD CULTURAL PLACE

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Abstract

The objectives of this research are to present Delphi as a Greek cultural place and outline its development up to now. These objectives are facilitated by a theoretical approach and a field questionnaire survey of students in secondary education of Greece visiting Delphi to record their opinions, in regard to their attitude, mainly, toward the cultural places that they prefer to visit, but mainly their opinion during and after their visit to Delphi. Finally, the conditions for easier access to the site of Delphi by avoiding any environmental disruption in this cultural place are explored.

Keywords: Museum, Culture, Delphi, Delphi Museu, cultural heritage

Introduction

1. Delphi: a short walkthrough in the cultural environment of Delphi

The cultural entity of Delphi as a site of cultural destination has been considered by previous studies such as those Kouveli (2000), Ntatsi (1999), Mpezebegki and Pavlopoulos (1990), Dimitrakos (1986), Pantelidoy-Maloyta (1991), and Kyrтата (2002). The current research explores the cultural areas of "Delphi" and the relation of existence and their maintenance with the visits of culture visitors throughout the world.

Delphi is one of the most beautiful and imposing landscapes in Greece. It is under the region of Sterea and specifically in a altitude of 570 meters roughly, situated on the lower southern slopes of Mount Parnassos and set by two big rocks, Faidriades: Hyampeia and Nauplia. And down below, the valley of Pleistos leads to the gulf of Itea. The population of the municipal unit of Delphi is 3,511, and the settlement is within 233.000 acres (Theoharopoulos D., 2011). According to the Hellenic Statistical Authority, in 2001, the broader municipality of Delphi had 26.700 residents while in 2011, 26.992 were recorded. That is to say 292 residents less than before, which means - 1,1% compared to the population number existed a decade ago (Greek Statistics Service, 2011).

The city of Delphi was the most sacred place of ancient Greece... It was established by the residents of Crisa and its population reached the 1.000 residents; a city governed by itself, with a legislature that was composed out of 15 assemblies, 8 chancellors, and the secretary, while the judiciary was applied by Delfinio (supreme court), the headquarters seat of Amphictyonic Council, which was well known during ancient times (Oxford Dictionary, 2004). The settlement of "Delphi" is characterized by tradition and has been a World Heritage Place by Unesco since 1987.

Delphi is perhaps the most representative example of the cultural model development in Greece, given its important history throughout the centuries. Culture is the total of intellectual achievements (ideas, customs, arts, education, technical, scientific and artistic achievements) of a

particular society or a nation (Oxford Dictionary, 2004). During ancient times Delphi was considered one of the most important religious centers known for the oracle of god Apollo (Mpampiniotis G., 2008). According to ancient tradition "Delphi" acquired from the classic years enormous historical importance since they were connected with the most important Greek historical events. The excavations revealed the temple and Apollo's sanctuary, the ruins of ancient theatre, the stadium, Athena Pronaia's temple and a circular building called Tholos (New Encyclopedia ALPHA, 1993). Delphi has always been the means for the classic education and the ancient Greek civilization to be promoted. The archaeological place is one of the basic elements of the town's cultural product and in general of Greece.

2. *Delphi through times*

Delphi today is perhaps the best known and most historic place of the world and it is no coincidence its characterization as "navel" of the earth. However, this reputation was based on an oracle, inspired straight from Apollo and spoke in his name (Κοσμούπουλος Π., 2011). Delphi developed at the 8th century B.C. and the first information for the worship of Apollo are known from this time. Apollo delivered oracles in the Earth's Sanctuary by the mouth of Pythia, who sat tied up in the "orifice of" «a chasm in the rock», from which came out "spirit". The answers given by the oracle of Delphi to the believers were ambiguous. This is the reason why Apollo was called "Loksias" as well (Papari Katrina, 2002). It should be pointed out that during all times people had the need to forecast the future, thus they were seeking for the answer at the oracles. Delphi oracle, dedicated to Apollo was the most famous one. Apollo spoke through his Pythia in an ambiguous way (Koutsoulakos Th. et al., 2009). The Galatians aimed at invading Delphi and take the treasures that were in the sanctuary. The citizens of Delphi opposed in this raid, the cities that were round Parnassos and the soldiers terrified the Galatians while they were throwing rocks gathered from Parnassos (Smpiliris G. et al., 2005). Even kings from Egypt and Lydia consulted the oracle (Katsoulakos D., 2010). The oracle acquired big fame not only in the Greek but also in the entire known world. Individuals from Greece and barbarian monarchs, or even cities would send envoy in order to consult the oracle and as a return they offered sumptuous gifts. According to the myth, Zeus wishing to find the centre of the earth let loose two eagles from the two ends of the world; the birds met at Delphi, thus the place was the "navel" of the earth, a sacred symbol among other (Petsas F., 2008).

3. *Delphi archaeological museum*

The first museum of Delphi was built in 1903 and people could only visit it during April. They would reach Delphi in caravans, after they had debarked at Itea. In our days the museum is housed in a two-storey building with a total surface area of 2270 square metres, with fourteen exhibition rooms, 558 square metres of storerooms and conservation laboratories for pottery, metal objects and mosaics. New lobbies and service areas were created during the museum's latest refurbishment (Partida E., 2011). Among the most famous exhibits are: the room with the pottery and ivory finds from the sanctuary, the room with the shields and helmet from the dated on the 8th and 7th century BC. The room with the Kourous, Kleobis and Biton, made by the sculptor Polymedes (610 – 580 BC), five poros metopes with a scene from the expedition of the Argonauts from the Sicyonian Treasury, the rape of Europe by Zeus who had assumed the form of a bull, and the Dioskouroi. chryselephantine objects probably from Apollo and Artemis as well as other founds with golden decoration. The room with the Siphnian Treasury where the sculptures belong in the Archaic period (6th century BC) as well as the enormously big Sphinx of the Naxians made from marble (570

BC) the Karyatid. The room of Apollo with sculptures like a marble pediment, which represents his arrival at Delphi, as well as the inscriptions of the Delphic hymn. The room with the Tholos, the altar and the tombs (4th century B.C.), as well as the small statue of Flying Nike. The room with the Charioteer the bronze masterpiece, the young charioteer (470 bc). The room of Antinoos contains the statue of Antinoos, prehistoric art ceramics (3rd – 2nd millennium bc), figurines and statues of Greco-Roman period, as the 'smiling child', and a small statue depicting a young child holding a goose. etc. (Valavanis P., 1990).

There are a lot of cultural events conducted at Delphi archaeological museum nowadays, like “open your memory box” as well as “ the archaeological museum of Delphi in the ark of time”, and also “ revealing past culture”. (Psalti Athanasia, 2011)

According to the latest statistical reports there has been a decline in the tendency of visits at the archeological museum of Delphi since there have been 11.900 visits in June 2009, whereas in June 2010 there were reduced to 10.400. The visits were reduced 12,6%. In June 2009 the visits at the archeological site of Delphi were 22.100, whereas in June 2010 they were reduced at 20.450. The reduction was 7,5% which shows a decline in tendency (SETE, 2011). Apparently the economic crisis which has affected everyday life has been transformed to culture influencing the cultural events the way they had been shaped and commercialized during the last past years (Anagnostakis Man., 2011).

4. European Cultural Centre of Delphi

It was founded in order to create a European and International centre at Delphi. According to its founding law, its aim is to “serve international cultural interests” and “develop common cultural principles that will unite the peoples of Europe”. It presents ancient Greek drama events, international music events, educational events (e.g. ancient Greek Language), symposiums, meetings, seminars and conferences (www.eccd.gr).

Material and Methods

The research was conducted during summer months of 2011 (March – August 2011) and was based on the research marketing technique according to ethics. Random sampling was used for data collection and the random sample was 314 people. The Methodological frame was based on a number of visits, discussions and meetings with high school students of the country who visited mainly the historical area of Delphi. It was pointed out that all answers given in the anonymous questionnaire will be strictly confidential, free of any kind of criticism and not to be known in any case.

Results

1. Demographic characteristics

The results for the demographic characteristics showed that out of the total of 314 people, 180 were male students and 134 were female students in gymnasium. 29,6% were 17 years old, 23% were 18 years old, 19,7% were 16 years old, 16,6% were 15 years old and 11,10% were 14 years old. Random sampling was used for data collection. The Methodological frame was based on a number of visits, discussions and meetings with high school students of the country who visited mainly the historical area of Delphi. It was pointed out that all answers given in the anonymous questionnaire will be strictly confidential, free of any kind of criticism and not to be known in any case.

2. Questions:

Question 1: What are the cultural sections you prefer to visit

The majority of the students, 38% stated they prefer to visit the museums, 28% of them stated they prefer cultural events, concerning to cultural sections, 13% stated they prefer oracles (such as Delphi), 11% stated they prefer other forms, 6% stated they prefer ancient temples and 4% stated they prefer religious places of ancient Greece. It should be highlighted that during our field research was being conducted we had the chance to discuss with local people and culture fans who claimed, off the record, among others that the municipality of Delphi lacks professionalism in some ways since for example the train that is in the municipality's possession does not function properly. The dishes and the drinks of hospitality businesses of Delphi seem to be expensive and the cheap dishes are poor in quality. The questionnaire was formed with questions about their knowledge before they entered the museum and how much of this knowledge was gained in school, then the level of satisfaction from the services offered by the museum and finally the proposals after their visit.

Question 2: Did you know that according to ancient tradition Delphi was the "omphalos" (navel) of the earth?

66,9% claimed that they knew that Delphi is the navel of the world, according to ancient tradition and 33,1% claimed that they didn't know it.

Question 3: Were you aware of the pottery and bronze findings, the shields the helmets and the tools of the 8th and 7th century BC before you enter the museum? Were you also aware of the chryselephantine objects, the Sanctuary of Apollo, the small statue of Nike, the statue of Dionysos etc?

39,9% answered that they were aware of the exhibits, 29% believed that there was something different and 30,2% only knew nothing of the above.

Question 4: Were you aware of the fact that the archeological site of Delphi together with the settlement is considered to be a monument of cultural heritage and it is under the protection of Unesco since 1987?

In this question 80,2% was not at all aware of the fact that Delphi is under the protection of Unesco, whereas 10,8% were aware and 9% knew nothing of the above.

Question 5: Do you believe that the national archeological treasures are being demonstrated correctly in high schools?

The majority of the sample (95,6%) gave a negative answer at the above question that has to do with if or if not there is a thorough support of the archaeological Treasures and 4,40% gave a positive answer.

Question 6: Which section of Delphi were you taught the most at your school?

Out of this sample, 62% answered that they were taught about the museum at school, 17,2% about the archaeological area and in much lower rates, 14,3% about the myth of Zeus "about the navel of earth". Finally 6,37% mentioned the European Centre.

Next, we entered a second phase of questions, through which they were asked about the museum's services (*Were you offered the needed information – explanations during your visit at the museum?*),

where 39,9% answered positively, 30,2% answered negatively and 29,9% didn't answer. As far as the point of satisfaction offered by the museum (*What is the level of satisfaction by the offered services within the Museum of Delphi?*), "very much" satisfied claimed to be 23% and "much" answered 29,6%. So and so answered 19,7%, bad claimed 16,6% and very bad 11,10%. These findings show that both the services as well as the point of satisfaction are not in really high rates.

In the question number nine they were directly asked (multiple choice questions) which the strongest point of Delphi are. The percentages are almost shared, that is to say 39,8% the archaeological area, 30,3% the Museum and the 29,9% the European Cultural Centre. They were later asked (question 10) *with an evaluation scale about the picture of Delphi, as religious center of ancient Greece.* 39,8% found it medium, 35,6% found it bad, 10,50% found it very bad, 6,4% found it good, 4,50% found it very good and 3,2% found it excellent. Also, as far as the *question 11 is concerned, according to the opinion of 71,6%, the monuments were not reserved appropriately, whereas 28,4% claimed that they were reserved appropriately .*

Question 12: Do you believe that the archaeological treasures of Delphi and other places should be demonstrated by the Media in our country?

The majority, 99,04%, answered yes.

In addition to this, they were asked (question 13) *whether they consider necessary the integration of the archaeological section of Delphi as a shortcut for its access so that the place could be protected by the pollution of vehicles.* 96,9% therefore agreed with this proposal whereas 3,1% didn't agree. At the same time 57,3% favored the reformation of the sidewalks in the region of Delphi with suitable materials that would add to the traditional style of the settlement and its upgrade. Instead, 42,7% didn't find it a good idea. Unfortunately, in the final question (question number 15) that was about the social and the environmental consequences, as well as, the commercialization or even the corruptness that derive from the visit in Delphi, apart from the profits, 97,7%, almost the majority, agreed!

Conclusion

The respect of the cultural heritage derives either from school or the family, or the book; it can be a combination from of all the above. Some of the people that were questioned about the section they were taught in school, the majority most said that they were taught mostly about the museum and the archaeological place, rather than the myth about the "navel of earth". So, 39,9% said that they were informed, 29,9% believed that there was something different and 30,2% stated that knew nothing about it. In total, 66,9% of the students claimed that were not aware that Delphi is the "navel of the Earth", according to the ancient tradition, nor the existing reserves of immense value such as the ceramic and bronze findings, the helmets and the tools of the 8th and 7th century B.C., or still the cryselephantine objects, Apollo room with the sculptures and the small statue of Flying Nike, Dionysos bust. This, as well as the fact that 80,2% claims total ignorance on major issues of cultural interest such as that the settlement of Delphi together with the archaeological site were pronounced as World Heritage Monument and are protected by Unesco since 1987, create to us educational questioning. And this is because the students are not aware of major cultural issues of their - our country.

This leads to a strictly structured and absolutely controlled educational environment, in order to maintain the change in student's attitude and to avoid any deviation from the wanted model (Dafermos Man., 2008). The cultural excursions from students such as the ones of our research are led to unknown, since we the education system is considered to be additional. Within the frame of

Greek culture it seems to be changing rapidly, while...it is influenced by general social, political and cultural changes that each generation will be engaging according to its own special inclinations (Malouta-Panelidou M., 1991). Culture is a "Plankton" of knowledge, observation and material goods or maybe it is like a mineral, which comes from deep inside the earth and often the time, unspecified, to satisfy educational, ideological, intellectual needs, hence also political or even religious (Kalomoiri P., 2001). It must be observed that "Delphi", is not the only culture –cultural activity but also concerts, festivals, religious and cultural events, folklore dances and songs, sights, archaeological places, traditional settlements, arts galleries, libraries, demonstration of local traditional products etc.

There is also something very interesting together with the comment of the answers that were given. It is the question regarding the services offered in the museum. There is a high degree of satisfaction from the services offered in the museum, 52,6%. And then the evaluation shows that 39,8% is satisfied by the archaeological site (as the strongest point), 30,3% by the Museum and 29,9% by the European Cultural Centre. 71,4% claimed that the model of Delphi as the religious centre of ancient Greece is bad or very bad. We are not able to be on the safe side since the answers to our questions are not crosschecked. It is likely that these opinions reflect the problematic local structures, which identify how the cultural rejuvenation is being applied, in a way that the cultural reserve becomes differentiated and fragmented (Souliotis N., 2009).

Suggestions

From all the above, we can conclude that Delphi can still progress in culture highlights, if the local organizations are activated to face the major problems that this research has pointed out. This can also be succeeded throughout the discussions with local people and foreigners in order not to jeopardise the cultural environment of the place. There has to be a unification of the archaeological area, so that its access will be easier. This must be done soon enough, because the archaeological site is being polluted from the vehicles for many years. Based on the local microclimatic data (cold during winter, heat during summer), unsatisfactory conditions are raised in the facilities during summertime and winter time as well, because of the typology – morphology of the buildings, the materials that were used, the lack of greenery within the settlement and the wide urban plan (Kosmopoulos Pan., 2011). It is believed that with the necessary projects for the reformation of the sidewalks, with suitable materials for the model of this settlement that the sample claimed, not only there is going to be an aesthetic upgrade but a balance as well (Tasiou-Gourgouri Maro, 2011).

A culture fan wants to understand a place and feel its history. He wants to feel that he lives within a different civilization, compare old to the new times and understand the reasons of the change and the evolution. Delphi is undoubtedly an area with a major cultural reserve and numerous monuments and findings, so that the last try should have as a goal the creation of a unique place of international cultural reflection (Mitoula R. et al.,2001). Apart from the enchanting and varied natural environment, Delphi generously offers to the visitors its civilization with the cultural treasures and may give the opportunity to the visitors to live authentic cultural experiences. According to Aggelos Sikelianos, Delphi is the chosen area that a temple should be built. A temple that will not have columns out of marble but one that its pediment will be knowledge, economy and justice for the whole earth (Merendites Christos.,2004).

21st century might not be the one for ideological juxtaposition, but a century of cultural outbreaks and rearrangements, in what was internationally accepted up to this moment. It is therefore obvious that the management of Greece's entire cultural treasure should be of basic priority. In this direction the regular and classified upgrade in order to highlight and demonstrate its cultural history and importance are absolutely necessary (Patargias P. et al., 2011).

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