

PRÉCIS

Central Superior Services Examination (CSS) 2022

Passage.

The fear of human beings when faced with the mysteries of life and their weakness in comparison with the vastness of nature created in them a need to communicate with the divine, with the superior powers which they believed regulated the universe and determined their own fates. Knowledge of the gods was always a sure guide for human behavior. In ancient Greece, the precise nature of these wishes was 'decoded' by the art of giving oracles, practiced by soothsayers who had the gift of understanding the signs or signals sent by the gods. 43

The soothsayers uttered their oracles by interpreting flashes of lightning, rolls of thunder, or the flights of certain birds of prey (omens); alternatively, they might observe the direction in which the fire burned when a sacrifice was made, examine the entrails of animals which had just been sacrificed, or base judgments on the sacrificial beast's willingness to approach the altar. The interpretation of dreams was popular too, and so was palmistry. The most notable soothsayers of ancient Greece were Tiresias, Calchas, Helenus, Amphiaraus, and Cassandra. 150

However, there were abundant instances in which the gods did not manifest themselves to the faithful in the forms of signs but spoke directly to an intermediate who for a short time was overcome by a 'divine mania' and transcended his own human essence. Here the prophet-or more usually the prophetess- entered a state of ecstasy in which they delivered the message from the gods to the suppliants. 160 x 71 = 261

These practices for foreseeing the future were the basis on which the ancient Greek oracles operated. Each oracle was located within a properly-organized sanctuary and was directly associated with one or other of the gods. Apollo was the archetypal soothsayer for the Greeks, the god who was responsible for conveying to mortals the decisions pronounced by Zeus. The most important of all the oracles, that at the Delphi, delivered the messages with the intervention of Apollo, while the oldest that of Dodona, functioned with the assistance of Zeus. 350

119
~~350~~
3

9
3520
1/27

Upon encountering the mysteries of life and limited capacity compared to nature, humans developed the need to communicate with the divine and creator of the universe.

Ancient Greece decoded this notion through oracles and Sooth Sayers that understood God's signals. The sooth sayers observed nature and omens, in addition to interpreting dreams. However, in other instances, God spoke directly to individuals in divine mania, causing them to deliver God's message in a state of ecstasy. Oracles functioned through the practice of predicting the future, and were organised in sanctuaries or carried association with other Gods. Apollo was the God responsible for communicating Zeus's decisions to humans. Delphi, the most important oracle, was aided by Apollo while Dodona was helped by Zeus.