

## Transcript

### What was the Amphiaraia?

#### Dr Alex Wilding:

The Amphiaraia was a festival held in honour of the Greek hero Amphiaraus. It was celebrated at his major cult sanctuary at a place called Oropos which lay in between Attica and Boeotia. It's likely that the festival was celebrated every four years, but we don't know exactly where it fell within the calendar year.

Amphiaraus is known as one of the seven Argives sent on the expedition against Thebes. He was from a family of seers and famously predicted that the expedition would end in disaster.

Amphiaraus is well known for how he met his fate. When the Earth opened up to receive him and his chariots as he tried to flee the battle.

By the 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE, we know that people visited Amphiaraus' sanctuary to make use of his oracular powers. We also know from beliefs such as this one that he was connected with healing as well.

The Amphiaraia was probably celebrated for several days. However, much of what we know about what took place at the festival comes from the competitions which took place there. Inscribers and victors from the sanctuary tell us that people could participate in athletic, equestrian, musical and later even theatrical events.

Of particular importance was an event known as the Chariot Dismount Competition depicted here in which competitors could leap in and out of moving chariots.

Certainly, this event resonated closely with the stories told about Amphiaraus' mythological demise.