

KENT J. RIGSBY

ASCLEPIUS IN ILLYRIA

aus: Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik 207 (2018) 55–56

© Dr. Rudolf Habelt GmbH, Bonn

ASCLEPIUS IN ILLYRIA

A lead lamella excavated at Apollonia in Illyria, inscribed on both sides, has been published by P. Cabanes; he estimated the date of the writing as 425–375 B.C.¹ The two texts are full of difficulties. That on one side, a list of sacrificial offerings, has been clarified by J.-M. Carbon and S. Peels,² after a fresh examination of the lamella by Carbon. On the other side they read:

- θεός. τ[ύ]χα ἀγαθά. δ[εδόχθ]-
αι τοῖς Ἀπολλονιά[ταις].
ἡα μάντις τὸν κλάρ[ον . . .]
4 ἀπαγόρεσε τὸν Ἀσχ[λαπ]-
τὸν δέκησθαι καὶ[.]
καὶ ἡ[. . .]ολιαγ καὶ[.]
8 νες αὐ[. . .] καὶ[.]
καὶ π . [— — — — —]

1–2, “[It was resolved] by the citizens of Apollonia”: Cabanes considered this verb but rejected it as being proper to a decree rather than to a lamella, and what follows is not a decree. He preferred δ[ιατ]/αι, “arbitrates” to the Apollonians, or possibly δ[ιαγραφ]/αί, “regulations” for them. A. Chaniotis has suggested δ[έδοτ]/αι, “it is given ...”³ I would urge instead δ[οῦν]αι, “Give to the Apollonians”: an infinitive serving as imperative is sometimes found in the responses issued to those consulting the oracle at Dodona.⁴ What follows is an independent sentence, rather than indirect discourse – the report of a seer’s pronouncement.

3–4: The verb in line 4 has troubled the commentators. Cabanes emended to the standard Greek ἀπαγόρε(υ)σε. Carbon and Peels considered “make a proclamation from” but preferred the usual “prohibited”. They were cautious about the reference to a lot – both its genitive case and its substance; they offered tentatively “The female seer from the lots (drawn) forbids ...” Chaniotis hesitantly suggested that ἀπαγόρεσε derives from a verb *ἀπηγορέω “defend” and preferred the singular τὸν κλάρ[ον]: “the seer approved of the lot to accept Asclepius”, that is, she permitted the introduction of a cult of the god. But the form of the verb here, as NW Greek, is correct: Carbon and Peels cited καταγορήσαι “accuse” in Ambra-
cia;⁵ earlier is καταγορέω at Delphi.⁶

In my view, at the end of line 3 Cabanes’ treatment was correct: he printed κλάρ[δov]. The photograph shows the lamella broken off after alpha. Carbon saw a hasta there and printed ρ[. Supporting the more cautious reading, there are grounds for accepting Cabanes’ restoration κλάρ[δov]. For it is not evident how a lot could involve a consultation with a μάντις. A μάντις spoke with her own authority based on access to the gods’ will; a lot did the same, its outcome being the gods’ signal of which option must be preferred. In order to settle a doubtful question, one might either consult a μάντις or employ a lot, but not both. That is, one would not ask a μάντις either to use a lot or to decide whether or not to abide by the result of a lot.

By contrast, a suppliant branch as restored by Cabanes points in a different direction and to a different anxiety: “The μάντις has prohibited that Asclepius receive the branch”. Thanks to Andocides, an Athenian law is famous (1.110):

¹ In *Le voyage des légendes. Hommages à Pierre Chuvin* (Paris, 2013), 51–55.

² Dossier of regulations from Apollonia in Illyria, *Collection of Greek Ritual Norms* no. 40 (<http://cgren.ulg.ac.be/file/40/>).

³ *EBGR* 2014, 28 (*Kernos* 30 [2017] 286), cf. *SEG* LXIII 408.

⁴ E. Lhôte, *Les lamelles oraculaires* 92 ἀντεῖ οἰκεῖν καὶ ἐξέχεσθαι, 166 Διόνε θύην. Classical examples: Ar. *Eq.* 1187 ἔχε καὶ πίνειν (cited by Y. Duhoux, *Le verbe grec ancien*² [Louvain-La-Neuve, 2000], 267, who notes the frequent occurrences in the Gortyn Law Code); Thuc. 5.9.7 ἐπεκθεῖν καὶ ἐπείγεσθαι.

⁵ *SEG* XXXV 665 A.34 (II B.C.).

⁶ *CID* I 9.38–40 (early IV) καταγορεῖν ... καταγορεῖτω.

κατηγόρησαν δέ μου καὶ περὶ τῆς ἱκετηρίας, ὡς καταθείην ἐγὼ ἐν τῷ Ἐλευσινίῳ, νόμος δ' εἴη πάτριος, ὃς ἂν θῇ ἱκετηρίαν μυστηρίοις τεθνάναι.

They accused me also about the suppliant branch, that I deposited it in the Eleusinion, whereas ancestral law is that whoever deposits a suppliant branch at the mysteries is executed.

Supplication was a rite undertaken *in extremis*. It demanded a response, interrupting and halting whatever other action might be in progress. The Athenians disallowed such an act to disrupt the mysteries, and threatened the gravest of penalties.

By contrast, Asclepius could be appealed to by anyone who was in need of healing, after some purification and likely paying a fee – the healing gods were unusual in receiving cash.⁷ To augment that appeal with the rite of supplication would be to make an extraordinary demand upon the god or his agents, a demand that must be addressed. Human beings normally supplicated not gods but other human beings;⁸ and even supplicating Asclepius' priest might seem an arrogation to others who were waiting to be presented to the god. Thus, the suppliant branch raises a question of hybris, an attempt to force one's way into the god's consideration. My suggestion is that an episode of this sort prompted the Apolloniates to consult a seer about whether such an added and insistent claim to access to Asclepius was proper; her answer was no.

The text continues with one or more accusatives, evidently further items that the seer has forbidden. At line 5 Cabanes printed κα[ῖ - -] / καί; a partial stroke that he did not treat as a letter Carbon takes as part of a hasta: καῖ [. . .] / καί. This leaves little space to work with, a noun of three or four letters. In a continuation of such a list, especially after contorted word-order, we might expect κα[θώς] / καί: she has prohibited that Asclepius receive the branch “as well as” certain other things. But a short noun here may well be right.

In 7 Cabanes restored ἡ[μ]ολίαν, and no alternative to this seems possible: “an additional one-half”, that is, a payment of 50% more than some expected amount.⁹ If I am right about the Apolloniates' anxiety, this larger payment may also have given the appearance of pressuring the god or his agents, by offering extra money for access. Given the numerical specificity of ἡμολία, we can suspect that this had in fact been a policy of the temple, that those who paid this higher fee were admitted first. This too the μόντις judged to be an affront to piety. Disquiet about the seeming greediness of Asclepius is expressed by authors early and late (Pind. *Pyth.* 3.54; Pl. *Resp.* 408c; the theme of Libanius *Decl.* 34).

“Give to the Apolloniates: The seer has prohibited that Asclepius receive the branch, (as well as/and ...) an additional one-half ...” If this is correct, the occasion was not the introduction of a cult of Asclepius but a civic concern for fair and equal access to the god. Apollonia was famous for good government: πόλις εὐνομοτάτη (Strab. 7.5.8).

Kent J. Rigsby, 15 Estrella Ave., Piedmont, CA 94611, USA
krigsby@duke.edu

⁷ Asclepius had a θησαυρός at Lebena (*I.Cret.* I xvii 6) and at Cyrene (Tac. *Ann.* 14.18 *thesaurum Aesculapii*: rich enough to provoke a governor's malfeasance). For the history of the admission fee (ἐπαρχή) paid to Amphiaraus at Oropus see A. Petropoulou, *GRBS* 22 (1981) 39–63.

⁸ F. Naidan, *Ancient Supplication* (New York, 2006), 7. Occasional use of such language in the authors is generic, e.g. Philostr. *V.Apol.* 1.10 ἱκετεύει δὲ τὸν θεὸν ἀποδοῦναί οἱ τὸν ἕτερον τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν ἐξεργηκότα.

⁹ On σὺν ἡμολίᾳ in the papyri see N. Lewis, *TAPA* 76 (1945) 126–127 [= *On Government and Law in Roman Egypt* (Atlanta, 1995), 17–18].