A REASSESSMENT
OF A MISINTERPRETED ORACULAR ENQUIRY
FROM DODONA (= LHÔTE, 2006: 214-216 NO. 100)*

Dr Dimitris Vitalis
University of Cyprus (Cyprus)
vitalisdemetris@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to reassess an oracular enquiry preserved on the front of a leaden plate and to reinterpret the last line of the text. The lamella was found during excavations conducted by Demetrios Evangelides at Dodona, and was first published by him in 1935. Since then, the epigraphic text and its dialectal features have been given relatively little attention, and the problematic last line has not yet received a satisfactory reinterpretation.

KEYWORDS: Dodona, oracular tablets, Greek dialectology, Ionic dialect, Greek epigraphy.

UNA REEVALUACIÓN DE UNA CONSULTA ORACULAR DE DODONA
MAL INTERPRETADA (= LHÔTE, 2006: 214-216 Nº 100)

RESUMEN

El propósito de este estudio es ofrecer una reevaluación de una consulta oracular conservada en el anverso de una placa de plomo así como reinterpretar la última línea del texto. La lámina fue encontrada durante las excavaciones realizadas por Demetrios Evangelides en Dodona, y fue publicada por primera vez por él en 1935. Desde entonces, el texto epigráfico y sus rasgos dialectales han recibido relativamente poca atención, mientras que la problemática última línea aún no ha recibido una reinterpretación satisfactoria.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Dodona, láminas oraculares, dialectología griega, dialecto jónico, epigrafía griega.

1. DESCRIPTION OF THE LAMELLA

Carefully incised and punctuated lead tablet, the right side of which is semicircular. The whereabouts of the lamella are unknown[1].

Dimensions: H. 0.049 m., L. 0.069 m.

Direction of script: Dextroverse.

Date: ca. 400-375 BC (Lhôte, 2006: 214 no. 100).

Bibliography: *Ed. pr.* Evangelides, 1935: 252-253 no. 9, PL. 27.β; Lhôte, 2006: 214-216 no. 100.

Cf. Parke, 1967: 271 no. 24 (text reproduced with a translation in English); *LGPN* III.A, *s.v.* Αἰσχυλῖνος; Eidinow, 2007: 79 no. 19 (text reproduced with a translation in English); Castiglioni, 2016: 118 (alternative transcription «*Pisates* al posto di *Tisates*»); (= Rousset, *Bull. Épigr.* 2017 no. 279); D'Ercole, 2019: 16 (mere reference to the content of the enquiry and the otherwise unattested Τισατε͂ς; cf. also D'Ercole, 2020: 41).

2. TEXT

Θεός, τύχη : εἰρω-
τᾶι : τὸν Δία τὸν
Ναῖον καὶ τὴν Δ[ιώ-
ν]ην Αἰσχυλῖνος : εἰ
5 μὴ αὐτῶι ἄμε͂νον
πλε͂ν ἐς Ἀδρίᾱν
ἐστὶ σ[ῆ]τες.
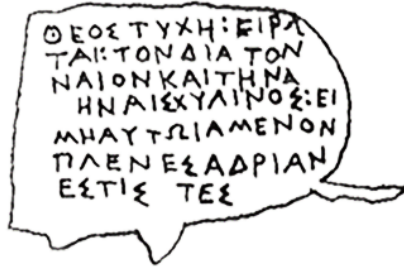

Fig. 1. Dodona: The front of a lamella with an inscribed enquiry concerning maritime travel. (Facsimile provided by Lhôte, 2006: 215 no. 100).

---

[1] Lhôte (2006: 214 no. 100: Musée de Jannina ?) informs us that he did not undertake an autopsy of the lamella, as he was not able to find it in the Archaeological Museum of Ioannina.

A private enquiry classified as Ionic is written in seven lines on the front of a lead sheet. The sequence ΜΗΠΕ on the back of the lead plate was interpreted by Evangelides (1935: 253 no. 9) as the response from the oracle, μὴ π[λ]ε̃[ν]: infinitive in lieu of imperative. Parke (1967: 271 no. 24) argues that it is the abbreviation of the enquiry, whereas Lhôte (2006: 216 no. 100) considers both interpretations unlikely.

Punctuation in the form of two dots (:) is used between: a) the introductory phrase and the interrogative verb (core of the independent sentence); b) the verb and the theonyms (objects of the verb) followed by the name of the enquirer (subject of the verb); and c) the aforementioned and the subordinate interrogative sentence (object of the verb). It would be possible to postulate that the role of the punctuation mark is to indicate syntactic separation within the text. Alternatively, it could be stated that the two dots before and after the interrogative verb seek to highlight the action of enquiring, which is central to a consultation process, whereas the dots preceding the interrogative particle call attention to the object of the enquiry, which is formulated as an indirect question. From this perspective, punctuation seems to provide a pragmatic rather than a syntactic analysis of the text[2].

2.1. TRANSLATION

God, fortune. Aeschylinus asks Zeus Naios and Dione whether it is not better for him to sail to the Adriatic this year.

2.2. APPARATVS

L. 7 ἐς Τισατε̃ς Evangelides, 1935: 252-253 no. 9; Lhôte, 2006: 215-216 no. 100. ἐς Τισάτες Parke, 1967: 271 no. 24. ἐς Τισατες Eidinow, 2007: 79 no. 19. ἐς Πισατε̃ς (transliteration of *Pisates*) Castiglioni, 2016: 118.

3. COMMENTARY

A man–probably a trader–named Aeschylinus[3] poses a question to Zeus Naios and Dione about the possibility of him undertaking a sea journey. His enquiry shows the following formulaic elements, typical of the Dodona lamellae *corpus*[4]:

Moreover, the lead plate was not included within the DVCh *corpus* of the Dodona lamellae unearthed by Evangelides. The evidence at hand suggests that the lamella has been lost.

[2] I wish to thank an anonymous reviewer for this alternative suggestion.

[3] Personal name with a total of 31 attestations (*LGPN*, *s.v.* Αἰσχυλῖνος). The anthroponym derives from αἶσχος (*HPN* 1917: 29) 'shame, ugliness'; hence, it means either 'shameful' as a moral designation or 'ugly' as a physical or mental quality of the bearer of the name (*LSJ*⁹, *s.v.* αἶσχος). On the morphology and semantics of the name, see *LGPN-Ling*, *s.v.* Αἰσχυλῖνος, https://lgpn-ling.huma-num.fr/Aischylinos [13 Oct 2022].

[4] See Tselikas, 2018: 250-251.

a) stereotypical phrase θεός, τύχη (l. 1), b) syntactic sequence εἰρω|τᾶι τὸν Δία τὸν | Ναῖον καὶ τὴν Δ[ιώ|ν]ην Αἰσχυλῖνος (ll. 1-4) followed by c) an indirect question[5]: εἰ | μὴ αὐτῶι ἄμενον | πλ̄εν ἐς Ἀδρίᾶν | ἐστι σ[ῆ]τες (ll. 4-7). In this case, the discontinuity between the constituents of the impersonal construction ἄμε̄νόν ἐστι[6] is due to *hyperbaton* (cf. the enquiry of Kleoutas, fn. 6 below).

The oracular enquiry under consideration also presents some interesting forms that need to be commented upon in more detail. For this purpose, in the rest of this chapter I will demonstrate why the proper name Ἀδρίᾶν (acc. sg.) most likely refers to the Adriatic Sea rather than to the city of Adria as suggested in previous studies. Afterwards, and in combination with my conclusions on Ἀδρίᾶν, I will proceed to defend the new reading and interpretation of the final line of the text.

L. 6 ἐς Ἀδρίᾶν: In previous studies, including Lhôte's (2006: 216 no. 100), the proper name in question was considered as the toponym Ἀδρίᾱ (ἡ), a late sixth-century BC settlement (*polis-emporion*) probably of Aegina, in the Po Valley[7]. More recently, Castiglioni (2016: 117) also supported the idea of a feminine toponym by mentioning that «attestazioni letterarie contemporanee alla nostra iscrizione documentano infatti prevalemente l'uso di Ἀδρίας preceduto dall'articolo maschile»; the sources she cites are orator Lysias' texts in which we encounter the prepositional phrase εἰς τὸν Ἀδρίαν.

In this case, I believe that a comparison between literary texts composed by an Attic orator and a private enquiry posed by (probably) a merchant is not the most appropriate method of investigating the matter at hand. The texts preserved on the Dodona lamellae follow a stereotypical syntax and are also written in a simple and, oftentimes, elliptic style because of their formulaic character. It would therefore be more cautious to compare Aeschylinus' enquiry to other Dodona consultations and see whether the article is omitted in similar prepositional expressions. The inscriptional

---

[5] On the introduction with the particle εἰ of subordinate interrogative sentences in oracular texts written in Attic-Ionic or the Koiné, see Nieto Izquierdo, 2019: *passim* (especially p. 116, the recapitulation of the analysed data).

[6] The verb ἐστί is frequently omitted from this syntactic formula (see Lhôte, 2006: 339 §74), though there are also cases where it is normally expressed; see e.g. Lhôte, 2006: 47-51 no. 8B (Ἐπικοινᾶται Μον[δ]αιατᾶν τὸ κοινὸν Δὶ Νάωι καὶ Διώναι{ς} πὲρ | το<ῖ> [ἀρ]|γύρροι τᾶς Θέμιστος αἰ **ἀ<ν>εκτ[ό]ν ἐστι** τᾶ Θέμι|<σ>τι καὶ βέλτιον ἐσκιχρέμεν; third century-167 BC), 59-61 no. 11 (Ἀγαθᾶι τύχαι – Αἰτεῖται ἀ πόλις ἀ τῶν Χαόνων | τὸν Δία τὸν Νάον καὶ τὰν Διώαν ἀνελεῖν εἰ **λῶι|ον** καὶ **ἄμεινον** καὶ **συμφορώτερόν ἐστι** τὸν ναὸν | τὸν τᾶς Ἀθάνας τᾶς Πολιάδος ἀγχωρίξαντας | ποεῖν; ca. 330-320 BC), 165-168 no. 75 (Ἀγελόχωι ἐξ | Ἡεργετίαο ho|ρμημένωι | **ἄμεινόν ἐστι** | γαοργῆ(ν); ca. 350-300 BC; cf. also DVCh 1432), 173-175 no. 80 (Ἐρουτᾶι Κλεούτας τὸν Δία καὶ τὰν | Διώαν αἴ **ἐστι** αὐτô προβατεύοντι | **ὄναιον** καὶ **ὠφέλιμον**; ca. 375 BC; note, also, the *hyperbaton* between the components of the impersonal expression); DVCh 133 ([θεὸ]ς τύχα· Λαχάρης δεῖ(τ)αι | τοῦ θε[οῦ] εἰ οἴκαδε ἀπιό(ν)τι κα|ὶ ἐργαζομένωι<ν> οἱ **βέλτιόν ἐστι**; mid-fourth century BC).

[7] See Wilkes - Fischer-Hansen, 2004: 326-327 §II no. 75; *OCD*⁴, *s.v.* Atria [Ridgway - Roberston].

data demonstrate that the definite article is, indeed, frequently omitted in the syntactic construction εἰς/ἐς + acc. of a toponym, as shown in the following examples: Lhôte, 2006: 113-117 no. 46 (εἰς Ἐλίνην, εἰς Ἀνακτόριον; ca. 350-third century BC), 148-149 no. 63 (ἐς Ἀλυζέαν; fourth century BC), 211-212 no. 98 (ἐς Ἐπίδαμνον; ca. 475 BC; cf. also DVCh 3), 212-214 no. 99 (ἐς Ἐπίδαμνον; ca. 450 BC), 217-218 no. 102 (εἰς Σικ[ελίαν]; fourth century BC; cf. also DVCh 4154B), 219-221 no. 103 (εἰς Συρακόσας; ca. 400-375 BC), 225-226 no. 106 (ἐς Μεσσήνην; fourth century BC), 275-276 no. 132 (ἐς Τάραντα; ca. 350-300 BC; cf. also DVCh 3111). To sum up, the absence of the masculine article in ἐς Ἀδρίᾱν does not seem to be a convincing argument in defence of a feminine toponym.

For the reasons exhibited above, I believe that the proper name in the prepositional phrase is rather the hydronym referring to the Adriatic Sea[8]. It is possible to speculate that the consultant expressed his concern as to whether it was a good idea to embark on a journey or an enterprise to the Adriatic. His worry was most probably triggered by the unpredictable and, frequently, unfavourable weather conditions at sea[9], but also because of piracy, which constituted another major hazard in the northern and the wider Mediterranean region[10].

An essential observation as regards the dialect of the enquiry is that the ᾱ in the ending of the proper name does not fit in with the phonology of Ionic; in a text in Ionic we would rather expect the form Ἀδρίην. Should we then postulate influence by a regional dialect of the oracle[11]? At any rate, in the *corpus* of the Dodona tablets, dialectal mixture is not an unusual phenomenon[12], although it also constitutes

---

[8] See Eidinow, 2007: 79 no. 19; cf. also D'Ercole, 2019: 16; D'Ercole, 2020: 41.

[9] See Wilkes - Fischer-Hansen (2004: 321 §I): «The north-east wind (Bora) in winter and sudden squalls in other seasons were the main hazards to Adriatic navigation, well known in the Greek world». See also Eidinow (2007: 65-66) for enquiries concerning maritime journeys to the Adriatic.

[10] For enquiries about the topic of maritime journey in connection with seasonality and dangers of the ocean, see Carbon, 2017: 99-100. For the occurrence of pirate raids in the Adriatic, see D'Ercole (2019: 15), with bibliography; cf. also D'Ercole, 2020: 41.

[11] Influence by the Koiné could also be supposed. Some enquiries (from DVCh's edition) dated to the late fifth or the early fourth century BC are generally believed to show impact of this language form, but these cases (mainly) concern texts written in a Doric variety with traits of the Koiné (see Crespo - Giannakis, 2019: 52 fn. 3). On the other hand, it is known that the dates found in DVCh's edition are frequently disputable (Lhôte, 2017: 41; Méndez Dosuna, 2018b: 265 fn. 2); hence, if Lhôte's (2006: 377 §120) generally more cautious dates can be relied on, influence by the Koiné is evident from ca. the mid-fourth century BC onwards.

[12] Crespo - Giannakis (2019: 50-51 §7, table 1) exhibit a catalogue of more than 100 dialectally mixed queries (question + answer) collected mainly from the editions of DVCh (4,216 texts) and Lhôte (ca. 200 texts), as well as from other relevant studies. The vast majority of those inscriptions show dialectal mixture between a Doric variety and the Koiné for reasons dealing with the gradual dissemination of the latter in Dodona. However, we may hypothesise that the oracular texts written in a mixed dialect may have been many more than those gathered by Crespo - Giannakis, given that a large amount of the *published* enquiries are (extremely) fragmentary and/or brief; therefore, it is not

a special feature of these findings[13]. Perhaps the most characteristic example is the interference of */a:/ in texts of Attic-Ionic provenance[14]. This could be interpreted as the result of linguistic interaction between the enquirer and the sanctuary officials during the consultation process. In this situation, some Doric traits of the oracle officials' speech penetrated the speech of the consultants, especially when the latter were illiterate and had to dictate their enquiry to a local who was literate[15]. The cases of mixed dialect in the Dodona lamellae indicate that the enquirers tended to adapt their dialect to the oracle officials' dialect or vice versa (Crespo - Giannakis, 2019: 59 §11). In Aeschylinus' enquiry we encounter the former case, since /ε:/ of the consultant's speech is adapted to */a:/ of the oracle's dialectal environment.

L. 7 ἐστὶ σ[ῆ]τες: According to the reading I propose, the verb ἐστί (syntactically linked to ἄμε̄νον of l. 5) is followed by a temporal adverb meaning 'this year'. In the facsimile of the lead plaque (Fig. 1), the letter between *sigma* and *tau* is left untranscribed by Lhôte, who points out that «la lecture» (i.e., Τισατε̄̃ς) «est certaine sur la photographie[16]» of the lamella provided by Evangelides (1935 PL. 27.β). This is a fairly low-resolution photograph, and thus it was not possible for me to distinguish what the scribe wrote between <Σ> and <T>. As a result, the restoration (with an <H>) I propose–based on the facsimile–mainly relies on dialectal criteria, given that the text was classified as Ionic. On the other hand, if we assume that the obscure grapheme is indeed an <A> in the photograph provided, then it could be considered another instance of Doricism (cf. the form Ἀδρίᾱν of l. 6 above).

 The temporal adverb also appears as σάτει on a leaden plate dated to the beginning of the fourth century BC and concerning a Doric question[17] similar to

always possible to extract any safe information about their dialectal characteristics. Additionally, the possibility of dialectal admixture increases even more, if it is taken into consideration that a good number of the (unearthed) lamellae remain unpublished (Tselikas, 2017: 35-36) or that some of them have been lost.

 [13] On the possible reasons behind dialect mixture in the Dodona lead plates, see Crespo - Giannakis, 2019: 56-59 §11.

 [14] The presence of Doric features in Attic-Ionic texts is more common in (proper and common) names, most of which appear in formulaic phrases, e.g. Διώνᾱ, τύχᾱ, ἀγαθᾱ̃. However, there are also other instances where long ᾱ intrudes into enquiries written in Attic-Ionic. For a discussion of the phenomenon with examples, see Lhôte, 2006: 377 §119; Méndez Dosuna, 2018b: 273-276 §5.

 [15] For this possibility, see Méndez Dosuna 2018b: 276 §5; Crespo - Giannakis, 2019: 48 §4.

 [16] By stating this, Lhôte probably means that the sequence ΤΙΣ.ΤΕΣ observed in the photograph of the lamella appeared to him as a plausible match for Evangelides' reading (from the 1930s) of an otherwise unattested ethnonym.

 [17] See DVCh 228B, albeit the editors erroneously mention that the enquiry is written in the Koiné. The suggestion concerning the recognition of an adverb (σάτει) is attributed to Méndez Dosuna, 2007: 280-281 (= Dubois - Lhôte, *Bull. Épigr.* 2007 no. 340); Lhôte, 2017: 42-43; Méndez Dosuna, 2018a: 38.

Aeschylinus'. The dialectal distribution of the adverb showing a different evolution of the cluster *ḱi̯- (Lejeune, 1972: 109-110 §100) in the original form *ki̯āwetes[18] 'this year' is as follows: Mycenaean *za-we-te*, Attic τῆτες, Ionic σῆτες, Doric σᾶτες/τᾶτες, among others (*DMic.* II, *s.v. za-we-te*; *LSJ*[9], *s.vv.* σᾶτες, τῆτες; *DÉLG*[2], *s.v.* τῆτες; *EDG, s.v.*).

The previous reading (ἐς) Τισατῆ̃ες pointed to the acc. pl. of an otherwise unattested ethnonym Τισατεύς (nom. sg.), an allegedly remodelled variant in -εύς of the ethnic name Τισιάτης 'he, who originates from Tisia', a city in Italy[19]. According to Lhôte (2006: 216 no. 100), this ethnonym pertains to Venetian or Etruscan tribes with whom the consultant presumedly envisaged conducting a sort of trading activity. However, among the problems arising from this interpretation[20] is that a presumed ending -[e:s] in Τισατ-ῆ̃ες (= -εῖς) contrasts with basic phonological characteristics of the Ionic dialect[21]. The acc. pl. ending of nouns in -εύς (< *-ε:w-s)–among other morphological categories–is -έας in Ionic[22], i.e. Τισατέας, such as βασιλέας. For the same reason, and owing to palaeographical considerations, I believe that the alternative reading Πισατῆ̃ες[23] is also problematic: the grapheme that was read anew as <Π> is clearly <T>, with the vertical stroke slightly shifted to the left, as seen in the facsimile (Fig. 1). Consequently, it can be inferred that Aeschylinus did not enquire about embarking on a journey towards Τισατῆ̃ες. Instead, he sought divine guidance

---

[18] The form consists of the element *ki̯ā- (< *ḱi̯ā-) and the stem *wetes- of the noun ϝέτος 'year'. The *-ā- in *ki̯ā- is due to analogy with the adverbial *ki̯ā-meron (< *-m) 'this day', which shows the following dialectal distribution: Attic τήμερον, Ionic σήμερον, Doric σᾱ́μερον. In turn, *ki̯ā-meron is the result of a reanalysis of *ki-āmeron, which is constituted of the deictic element *ḱi- 'this' + the lexical unit for 'day', ἦμαρ (mainly Homeric), Doric-Arcadian ἆμαρ and the lengthened forms ἡμέρα (Attic), ἡμέρη (Ionic), ἀμέρα (Doric), among others; see Sihler, 1995: 193-194 §199c; *DÉLG*[2], *s.v.* ἦμαρ; *EDG, s.v.*; Joseph, 2018: 208-209.

[19] St. Byz., *s.v.* Τισία (τ 137) Billerbeck - Neumann-Hartmann: ὡς Ἀσία, πόλις Ἰταλίας. τὸ ἐθνικὸν Τισιάτης ὡς Ἀσιάτης, καὶ Τισιᾶτις θηλυκόν.

[20] For instance, one might wonder what happened to the second [i] in the supposedly remodelled variant in -εύς, i.e. why Τισατεύς and not Τισιατεύς?

[21] One could argue that the ending -ῆ̃ες = -εῖς points to an Attic origin of the text, since the majority of the enquiry's features are also typical of the Attic dialect (cf. §4.2). However, the suffix -εῖς in Attic inscriptions is only attested from the late fourth century BC, whereas during the Classical period until ca. 325 BC the acc. pl. is always in -έᾱς; see Threatte, 1996: 247. Combining the aforesaid observation with the convincing date of our text to ca. 400-375 BC (cf. §§1 and 4.1), we may conclude that a presumed Attic ending -ῆ̃ες (= -[e:s]) in our text is highly unlikely.

[22] Buck, 1955: 91-92 §111.3; del Barrio, 2014: 262-263 §2.c.2, 7. The later acc. pl. -[e:s] (= -εῖς) in Attic (and, afterwards, in the Koiné) was analogically borrowed from the homophonous nom. pl. ending ensuing from contraction, i.e. -[ees] > -[e:s]. For further information on this topic, see Sihler (1995: 330 §320), who also exhibits the Ionic inflectional paradigm of nouns in -εύς in comparison to that of other dialects.

[23] See Castiglioni (2016: 118-126), according to whose reading and historical interpretation the ethnonym derives from the toponym Πῖσα (ἡ), probably pertaining to a Ligurian settlement on the Arno; *OCD*[4], *s.v.* Pisae [Salmon - Potter].

on whether it was more advantageous for him to sail to the Adriatic (possibly for commercial purposes) during the year of his visit to the oracle shrine at Dodona.

4. ALPHABET AND DIALECT FEATURES

4.1. ALPHABET

a) East Ionic <H> for /ɛː/ in τύχη (l. 1), τὴν Δ[ιώ|ν]ην (ll. 3-4), μή (l. 5).
b) East Ionic <Ω> for /ɔː/ in εἰρω|τᾶι (ll. 1-2), αὐτῶι (l. 5).
c) Alternations between <EI> and <E> for /eː/ emerging from compensatory lengthening and contraction, as well as for the rendering of the old diphthong /ei̯/. More precisely, the following graphemic fluctuations are observed:

i. digraph spelling <EI> ('spurious diphthong') for /eː/ in εἰρω|τᾶι (ll. 1-2),
ii. <EI> as a conservative spelling for /ei̯/ in the interrogative particle εἰ (l. 4),
iii. <E> in ἄμε͞νον (l. 5) most probably serves as an inverse spelling, since this word is thought to contain a real diphthong /ei̯/ rather than /eː/ (e.g. in Attic-Ionic) arising from compensatory lengthening in a hypothetical form *ameni̯on[24],
iv. <E> as an archaic spelling for /eː/ < /e+eː/ in the inf. πλε͞ν < πλέ(ϝ)-ειν < *ple(w)-e-(s)en (l. 6).

Alternations like those exhibited above demonstrate that the orthographic reform had not yet been completed at the time the oracular text was inscribed on the lamella. The reason being that in the reformed orthography achieved by ca. the mid-fourth century BC <EI> and, correspondingly, <OY> (instead of <O>) predominate for the representation of the mid-close vowels ensuing from compensatory lengthening, contraction and the monophthongisation of the respective diphthongs /ei̯/, /ou̯/. The date of our inscription to ca. the first quarter of the fourth century BC (cf. §1) seems to be in line with the above-mentioned observation.

4.2. DIALECT

a) Fronting of */aː/ to /æː/ and subsequent raising to /ɛː/ in τύχη (l. 1), τὴν Δ[ιώ|ν]ην (ll. 3-4), but */aː/ in Ἀδρίᾱν (l. 6). For the dubious second letter of the adverb cf. §3, comments on l. 7.
b) Contraction (Buck, 1955: 37 §41; Lejeune, 1972: 249-250 §272) of /a+ei̯/ (α+ει) to /aːi̯/ (ᾱι) in εἰρω|τᾶι (ll. 1-2).

---

[24] *DÉLG²*, *s.v.* ἀμείνων; *EDG*, *s.v.* For a more recent study on the possible development *-er/ni̯- > -ei̯r/n-* in some Greek dialects (including Attic-Ionic), see Kostopoulos, 2023: 141-143 §7.

c) /e:/ ensuing from the so-called 'third compensatory lengthening' after the simplification of *rw (Buck, 1955: 49-50 §54; Sihler, 1995: 185-187 §190) in εἰρω|τᾶι[25] (ll. 1-2) < *ἐρϝ- (*DÉLG*², *s.v.* ἐρέω; *EDG*, *s.v.* ἐρωτάω).

d) Interrogative particle εἰ (l. 4).

e) Preposition ἐς (l. 6). The quantity of the vowel is not certain. Ionic is traditionally considered to have forms with /e/, i.e. lacking compensatory lengthening, in contrast to Attic, which generalised εἰς, [e:s] < *en-s. Other varieties that dropped the nasal show the following distribution: ἐς + consonant, εἰς + vowel (Buck, 1955, 68-69 §78; Lejeune, 1972: 131 §125.b; Sihler, 1995: 216-217 §228.4; Colvin, 2007: 39 §32.10).

f) Temporal adverb σ[ῆ]τες (l. 7), with ṣ- < *ki̯-.

As previously stated, the enquiry belongs to the dialectal area of Ionic. This is principally verified by the outcome /e:/ after the loss of postconsonantal /w/, typical of (East and Central) Ionic (del Barrio, 2014: 263 §2.d.i.2, 265 §2.d.ii; Miller, 2014: 161 §14.9, 181 §15.8), as well as by the sibilant reflex of *ki̯- in the word that I read anew as an adverb. These two characteristics may oblige us to preclude the possibility of dealing with an Attic text, given that the remaining four traits (and assuming that *epsilon* in the preposition ἐς stands for /e:/) could also be regarded as Attic.

5. CONCLUSIONS

In this paper I have attempted to provide a detailed analysis of the linguistic and orthographic characteristics of an oracular enquiry from Dodona, as well as to reinterpret the final line of the text. In former studies, we encounter an otherwise unattested ethnonym (ἐς) Τισατῆ̣ς, which also poses problems with respect to the dialect of the inscription. With the proposed new reading ἐστὶ σ[ῆ]τες, I argue in favour of a verb (part of the frequently attested impersonal construction ἄμεινόν ἐστι) followed by a temporal adverb. In addition to being syntactically and contextually reliable, this reinterpretation also serves as an additional example regarding the occurrence of the adverb within the *corpus* of the Dodona lamellae (cf. the Doric variant σάτει [DVCh 228B; beginning of the fourth century BC] in a private enquiry that also concerns maritime travel).

Furthermore, the linguistic data of the inscription examined indicate dialectal admixture. This phenomenon is observed in the acc. sg. ending -ᾱν of the proper name Ἀδρίᾱν (l. 6), where the 'expected' Ionic suffix -ην is replaced by its Doric equivalent, probably influenced by a regional variety spoken in the oracle. The same

---

[25] On the Ionic form of the verb in the Dodona tablets, see Méndez Dosuna (2018b: 279 §6), with bibliographical references to relevant enquiries.

could also hold for the adverb, if it were known without a doubt that the scribe had written <A> and not <H>. However, the poor-quality photograph of the lead plate (now lost?), in conjunction with the fact that the letter in question is left untranscribed in Lhôte's facsimile, cannot lead us to a safe conclusion.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Billerbeck, M. - Neumann-Hartmann, Ar. (2016): *Stephani Byzantii Ethnica* (vol. IV: *Π-Y*), De Gruyter, Berlin - Boston.

Buck, C. D. (1955): *The Greek Dialects. Grammar, Selected Inscriptions, Glossary*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago - London.

Bull. Épigr. = *Bulletin Épigraphique*, *REG* 1888-.

Carbon, J.-M. (2017): «Sailing to Dodona: On the Naa, the Aktia, and Times of Consultation at the Oracle», K. Souref (ed.), *Dodona. The Omen's Questions. New Approaches in the Oracular Tablets*, Ministry of Culture and Sports - General Directorate of Antiquities and Cultural Heritage - Ephorate of Antiquities of Ioannina, Ioannina, pp. 95-111.

Castiglioni, M. P. (2016): «Dodona e il commercio nell'Adriatico: a proposito della lamella oracolare sui *Tisates*», St. Struffolino (ed.), *Ἡμέτερα γράμματα. Scritti di epigrafia greca offerti a Teresa Alfieri Tonini* (*Aristonothos* 12), Ledizioni, Milano, pp. 113-130.

Colvin, St. (2007): *A Historical Greek Reader. Mycenaean to the Koiné*, Oxford University Press, Oxford - New York.

Crespo, E. - Giannakis, G. K. (2019): «Dialectally Hybrid Inquiries in the Dodona Lamellae», *Linguarum Varietas* 8: 43-61.

D'Ercole, M. C. (2019): «*Kata thalassan*. The Western Networks of Maritime Circulation and the Sanctuary of Dodona», *Hesperìa* (*Studi sulla Grecità di Occidente*) 35: 9-19.

D'Ercole, M. C. (2020): «Cults, Navigation and Maritime Practices in the Middle and Southern Adriatic (6th-2nd century BC)», E. Giorgi - G. Lepore - A. Gamberini (eds.), *Boundaries Archaeology. Economy, Sacred Places, Cultural Influences in the Ionian and Adriatic Areas*, Propylaeum (Heidelberg University Library), Heidelberg, pp. 37-44.

del Barrio, M. L. (2014): «Ionic», *EAGLL* (vol. II), Brill, Leiden - Boston, pp. 260-267.

DÉLG² = Chantraine, P. (2009²): *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque. Histoire des mots. Nouvelle édition avec supplément*, Klincksieck, Paris.

DMic. = Aura Jorro, F. (1985-1993): *Diccionario Micénico* (2 vols.), Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Instituto de Filología, Madrid.

Dubois, L. - Lhôte, E. (2007): *Bull. Épigr.* «Épire», *REG* 120: 687-689.

DVCh = Dakaris, S. - Vokotopoulou, I. - Christidis, A. F. (2013): *Τα χρηστήρια ελάσματα της Δωδώνης των ανασκαφών Δ. Ευαγγελίδη*; vol. I: *Επιγραφές 1-2220*; vol. II: *Επιγραφές 2221-4216*, Βιβλιοθήκη τῆς ἐν Ἀθήναις Ἀρχαιολογικῆς Ἑταιρείας nos. 285-286, Ἀθῆναι.

EAGLL = Giannakis, G. K. *et al.* (eds.) (2014): *Encyclopedia of Ancient Greek Language and Linguistics*; vol. I: *A-F*; vol. II: *G-O*; vol. III: *P-Z*, Brill, Leiden - Boston.

EDG = Beekes, R. (2010): *Etymological Dictionary of Greek*, Brill, Leiden - Boston.

Eidinow, E. (2007): *Oracles, Curses, and Risk among the Ancient Greeks*, Oxford University Press, Oxford - New York.

Evangelides, D. (1935): «Ἠπειρωτικαὶ ἔρευναι», *Ἠπειρωτικὰ Χρονικά* 10: 193-264.

Giannakis, G. K. - Crespo, E. - Filos, P. (eds.) (2018): *Studies in Ancient Greek Dialects. From Central Greece to the Black Sea*, De Gruyter, Berlin - Boston.

Giorgi, E. - Lepore, G. - Gamberini, A. (eds.) (2020): *Boundaries Archaeology. Economy, Sacred Places, Cultural Influences in the Ionian and Adriatic Areas*, Propylaeum (Heidelberg University Library), Heidelberg.

HERMAN-HANSEN, M. - HEINE-NIELSEN, Th. (eds.) (2004): *An Inventory of Archaic and Classical Poleis*, Oxford University Press, Oxford - New York.

HPN = BECHTEL, Fr. (1917): *Die historischen Personennamen des Griechischen bis zur Kaiserzeit*, Max Niemeyer, Halle.

JOSEPH, B. D. (2018): «Linguistic Contact in the Ancient Balkans: A *Sprachbund*, or Something Else?», G. K. GIANNAKIS - E. CRESPO - P. FILOS (eds.), *Studies in Ancient Greek Dialects. From Central Greece to the Black Sea*, De Gruyter, Berlin - Boston, pp. 197-211.

KALAITZI, M. *et al.* (eds.) (2018): *Βορειοελλαδικά. Tales from the Lands of the Ethne: Essays in Honour of Miltiades B. Hatzopoulos*, (MELETEMATA, 78), National Hellenic Research Foundation / Institute of Historical Research, Athens.

KOSTOPOULOS, G. (2023): «The Outcome of **-er/n̥-* in Greek», *Glotta* 99: 122-153.

LEJEUNE, M. (1972): *Phonétique historique du mycénien et du grec ancien*, Klincksieck, Paris.

LGPN = FRASER, P. M. - MATTHEWS, E. *et al.* (eds.) (1987-): *A Lexicon of Greek Personal Names*, Clarendon Press, Oxford. https://www.lgpn.ox.ac.uk/search [20 Nov 2023].

LGPN-Ling = MINON, S. *et al.* (2015-): *Etymology and Semantics of Ancient Greek Personal Names*, Paris - Oxford. https://lgpn-ling.huma-num.fr/about.html [20 Nov 2023].

LHÔTE, É. (2006): *Les lamelles oraculaires de Dodone*, Librairie Droz S.A., Genève.

LHÔTE, É. (2017): «La datation des textes oraculaires de Dodone», K. SOUEREF (ed.), *Dodona. The Omen's Questions. New Approaches in the Oracular Tablets*, Ministry of Culture and Sports - General Directorate of Antiquities and Cultural Heritage - Ephorate of Antiquities of Ioannina, Ioannina, pp. 41-49.

*LSJ*⁹ = LIDDELL, H. G. - SCOTT, R. - JONES, H. S. (1940⁹): *A Greek-English Lexicon. With a Revised Supplement* (1996), Clarendon Press, Oxford.

MÉNDEZ DOSUNA, J. (2007): «Παρατηρήσεις στις νέες μαντειακές πινακίδες της Δωδώνης», *Μελέτες για την ελληνική γλώσσα* (*Studies in Greek Linguistics*) 27: 277-285.

MÉNDEZ DOSUNA, J. (2018a): «West by Northwest: A Linguistic Survey of the Doric Oracular Inquiries of Dodona», M. KALAITZI *et al.* (eds.), *Βορειοελλαδικά. Tales from the Lands of the Ethne: Essays in Honour of Miltiades B. Hatzopoulos* (MELETEMATA, 78), National Hellenic Research Foundation / Institute of Historical Research, Athens, pp. 33-52.

MÉNDEZ DOSUNA, J. (2018b): «The Language of the Dodona Oracular Tablets: The Non-Doric Inquiries», G. K. GIANNAKIS - E. CRESPO - P. FILOS (eds.), *Studies in Ancient Greek Dialects. From Central Greece to the Black Sea*, De Gruyter, Berlin - Boston, pp. 265-296.

MILLER, D. G. (2014): *Ancient Greek Dialects and Early Authors. Introduction to the Dialect Mixture in Homer, with Notes on Lyric and Herodotus*, De Gruyter, Boston - Berlin.

NIETO IZQUIERDO, E. (2019): «La phrase interrogative totale dans les lamelles oraculaires de Dodone et dans les dialectes doriens», *Linguarum Varietas* 8: 107-118.

*OCD*⁴ = HORNBLOWER, S. - SPAWFORTH, A. - EIDINOW, E. (eds.) (2012⁴): *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

PARKE, H. W. (1967): *The Oracles of Zeus. Dodona, Olympia, Ammon*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge - Massachusetts.

ROUSSET, D. (2017): *Bull. Épigr.* «Grèce centrale, Épire, Illyrie», *REG* 130: 535-536.

SIHLER, A. L. (1995): *New Comparative Grammar of Greek and Latin*, Oxford University Press, New York - Oxford.

SOUEREF, K. (ed.) (2017): *Dodona. The Omen's Questions. New Approaches in the Oracular Tablets*, Ministry of Culture and Sports - General Directorate of Antiquities and Cultural Heritage - Ephorate of Antiquities of Ioannina, Ioannina.

STRUFFOLINO, St. (ed.) (2016): *Ἡμέτερα γράμματα. Scritti di epigrafia greca offerti a Teresa Alfieri Tonini* (*Aristonothos* 12), Ledizioni, Milano.

THREATTE, L. (1996): *The Grammar of Attic Inscriptions*, vol. II. *Morphology*, De Gruyter, Berlin - New York.

TSELIKAS, S. (2017): «Χρηστήρια ελάσματα της Δωδώνης. Εκδοτικά και ερμηνευτικά ζητήματα», K. SOUEREF (ed.), *Dodona. The Omen's Questions. New Approaches in the Oracular Tablets*, Ministry of Culture and Sports - General Directorate of Antiquities and Cultural Heritage - Ephorate of Antiquities of Ioannina, Ioannina, pp. 35-39.

TSELIKAS, S. (2018): «The Doric Dialects in the Corpus of the Oracular Tablets from Dodona», G. K. GIANNAKIS - E. CRESPO - P. FILOS (eds.), *Studies in Ancient Greek Dialects. From Central Greece to the Black Sea*, De Gruyter, Berlin - Boston, pp. 249-263.

WILKES, J. - FISCHER-HANSEN, T. (2004): «The Adriatic», M. HERMAN-HANSEN - Th. HEINE-NIELSEN (eds.), *An Inventory of Archaic and Classical Poleis*, Oxford University Press, Oxford - New York, pp. 321-337.