ABSTRACT

In light of the recent publication of the new corpus of oracular tablets from Dodona (mostly dating to the Classical and Hellenistic periods), this paper analyses whether these documents sometimes record answers from the oracle. Particularly interesting are short records of answers from the oracle, attesting to the prescribed necessity of worshipping certain gods, making specific offerings, and performing particular sacrifices. Only a handful of such answers are preserved, some of which are quite detailed (5 examples are discussed here). These texts attest to the authority of the oracle in answering the often vague or general questions of petitioners (“to which gods should I sacrifice?”). They also begin to yield insights into the mechanisms through which the oracle operated at Dodona: sortition, alongside other modes of divination and consultation. Revisiting these tablets containing prescriptive answers with lists of sacrifices and offerings also broaches the wider issue of the role of the oracle in the expression and development of Greek polytheism, notably in the shaping of different configurations of deities to be worshipped for specific concerns.

Keywords: Dodona, tablets, oracle, responses, sacrifice, sortition, Greek gods, Greek polytheism.

Thanks to the new publication of the vast collection of small oracular lamellae from Dodona, our understanding of the role played by oracles in Greek religion will increase immeasurably. Among the bewildering and fascinating diversity of subjects of enquiry now attested—besides the timeless staples of property and agriculture, childbirth and marriage—one area of investigation that particularly stands to gain is that of cult and ritual. Often understood as a mundane mechanism of sanction in such matters, the oracle is seldom recognised as a prescriptive, albeit also quite conservative authority for religious practice. This article, by revisit-
ing both “old” and “new” texts from Dodona, hopes to contribute to expanding the understanding of Greek oracles as sources of ritual norms. As will be seen, the oracle prescribed specific sacrificial rituals and other offerings, most often to highly traditional gods like Zeus Patroios, but occasionally also with telling variations.

Amongst the finds presented in the two new volumes, there are a good number of cases where answers to questions posed to the oracle appear to be preserved. For instance, there now exists a small variety of short replies, generally on subjects outside the religious sphere. The most basic kind sometimes consists of only one word, such as “here” or “there”. On the whole, though, responses are few and far between in the overall number of texts, whose total well exceeds 4000 items. It would thus appear that what the oracle or the priests/priestesses advised is only sporadically recorded.

A topic on which the oracle’s expertise is occasionally solicited is that of religious proficiency. One tablet records such an answer, apparently attributed to Diona, though she is only obliquely designated (ἁ θεός) and not explicitly named; the question is now lost. In this case, the goddess selects a priestess——here called an ἀμφίπτολος and apparently mentioned by name. It is probable that this candidate for the priestly office had been put forward for the approbation of the oracle. Furthermore, it is intriguing that such priestesses (ἀμφίπτολοι) are known to have served at the sanctuary of Dodona itself.

3. On answers in the previously known documentation, cf. Lhôte 2006: 355-358; Piccinini 2013; for the new texts, see now Parker forthc. Answers have not always been correctly identified by the editors of DVC, but cf. the commentary at DVC no. 42B for an attempt at a list of this material in the new corpus. A highly persuasive attempt at identifying one answer, prescribing the sacrifice of ἄρσαῖα to a hero, is now made by Liapis 2015.

4. “Here”: cf. DVC 1154A (end of 5th c.?), reading simply αὐτῆς, and probably to be read as a response to one of the questions written on the same tablet (inv. no. M464, viz. 1156B?). “There”: DVC 3809B (ca. 400-350?), ἐνθώ | θεός (again perhaps to be connected with one of three other texts incised on the same tablet, inv. no. M1256). Both of these cases are no doubt correctly identified as oracular responses in DVC. For other simple or straightforward responses, cf. e.g. DVC 107A + 108B (opisthographic, inv. no M96, ca. 325-300?): “should I campaign on land?” (στρατευόμαι | κατὰ γῆν); answer: “go on land, absolutely!” (ἐπί γῆς σχίζει : τελέος).

5. Several enquiries on the subject of priesthoods are present in the new collection: cf. especially DVC 1249A, 1397A, 1572A and 3192A. Beyond Dodona, compare for instance the question of the people of Herakleia-on-the-Latmos to an oracle of Apollo (Didyma?), concerning the mode of attribution of the priesthood of Athena: Wörle 1990: 23-24 no. SIIA (ca. 100-75).

6. DVC 70A-71A (end of 4th c.?, inv. no. M78): ἄ θεος[5] ... | τιείται | ἄμφιτολον | Ὀρειάνδραν. The text of the final line should more carefully be read as ὈΠΕ[-]ΑΝΔΡΑΝ. As the name read by DVC is completely unattested, it may be doubted; perhaps a name with the form ὑρα[-]άνδραν might also be possible (though it is equally unattested). On ἀμφίπτολοι at Dodona, cf. Quantin 1999: 75 with n. 59 (but add e.g. Ἐστὶ s.v. for other attestations). The reverse of the tablet (B) appears perhaps to have been originally inscribed, since DVC detected traces of rasurae.

7. In this regard, other lamellae may easily mislead. One tablet preserves an intriguing question, “if they shouldn’t consult (or have dealings with) with Dorios the psychagogos?”, DVC 172 (end of 5th c.?, inv. no. M166): ἡ μὴ χρηστίται Δωρίων ταῖ θυσιαγωγοί. The oracle might have answered simply “yes, Δωρίς is your man”: DVC 173B, reverse of the same tablet reading ΔΩΡΙ, i.e. Δωρίς(os). However, a better and simpler interpretation is that the repetition of the name was a kind of label or summary, a form of identification of the tablet’s subject, as correctly noted by DVC: “Συντηρομορφία τοῦ ονόματος Δωρίς, αναγραφικό τής 172Α”. For this phenomenon of the repetition of the name of the enquirer, cf. already Lhôte 2006: 352.
The related subject which will form the focus of enquiry here is animal and vegetal sacrifice, one of the core mechanisms in Greek religion. Sacrifice in and of itself naturally forms a subject of enquiry: worshippers ask whether they should employ a certain ritual mode, or whether a given offering is to be deemed appropriate. By far the most common question asked of the oracle is “to which gods (or goddesses or heroes) should I sacrifice?” (or, more widely, “who should I worship to get the best result”)? It was thus perfectly appropriate and suitable to this line of questioning that the oracle would answer: “Sacrifice to the following…” Answers prescribing lists of sacrifices and other offerings are known from Delphi. A new tablet from Apollonia in Illyria, not the result of oracular consultation but rather of divination by a female *mantis* (probably using lots), provides a further sample of this type of answer. Sacrifice, along with the concrete dedication of objects, can thus form the core of a divinatory or oracular answer.

Among the previously known texts from Dodona is a notorious tablet, for which the only evidence is a German translation. The tablet is opisthographic and contains an unpublished question on its other face; it is possible that the two sides might be related. Though it is now presumed to be damaged or irrecoverable, it is not impossible that the inscriptions may someday be more adequately published. Retranslating a text back into ancient Greek from our sole source of evidence—the German translation—is an admittedly dubious process. Hypothetically, the known text may be reconstructed as follows:


---

8. Mention of a sacrifice can be as simple as asking “how it went” (i.e. how favourable were the omens?), DVC 361 (beginning of the 4th c.?): πιὸς ἡρεμι ὅσιος [θυσίας], or the reference can be more allusive and obscure: e.g. “concerning Artemis, with regard to the ancient sacrifice”, DVC 2091A (ca. 400-350?), Ν([κ]οίνοι ἑπερωτήτι [περί] ἧ行 τὸ ὅσιος Ἀ[ρ]τέμισιττος [φύλο] ἔρχαί ὁσιότατα [θυσίαν]. Advice can be sought on specific elements of ritual practice, for instance if libations should be made of mixed wine (diluted with water): DVC 2273 (end of 4th c.?); ἐπικρασίαν ἐπισττίθθεσε. See also App. here.

9. Cf. notably the index in DVC s.v. τίς. On this type of question at Dodona, see esp. Lhôte 2006: 336-342; varieties of this formulaic line of enquiry are found at most other oracles, such as Delphi and Didyma.

10. Prescriptive Delphic oracles: cf. e.g. *IsM* III 48.B-50 (Kallatis, 2nd c.), and now *I. Kaunos* 31 (2nd c.), as correctly intuited by Lupu, *NGSL* p. 35 with n. 162 (see Carbon forthc. for a full revision of this document).

11. Lead tablet from Apollonia in Illyria (ca. 450-400): Cabanes 2013: 51-53 no. 2 (sides A and B), though it is worth noting that the text also seems to be at least partly connected to Dodona (side B invokes Diosa, [Zeus N]aios). A revision of the tablet is currently being prepared by P. Cabanes, F. Quantin, and the present author.

12. The rediscovery of several (if not all) of these tablets in Berlin (originally in the Museum of Charlottenburg) has recently been reported (personal communication). It remains to be hoped that they may be legible through autopsy and/or using new methods of analysis (e.g. Computed Tomography [CT] scans).
“To Zeus Naios, a kid(?); to Zeus Olympios, a piglet; to Zeus Brontaioi, an animal; to Zeus Eukles, a piglet; to Zeus Bouleus, a libation; to Kore, a piglet; to Artemis Hegemone, a statue; to the Hero Archegetes, a libation.”

As printed by Lhôte, both σκύφων(? in line 1 and διαλήμμα in line 6 may at first glance seem out of place in this list. However, the new lead tablet from Apollonia (Cabanes 2013: 51-53 no. 2.B2) demonstrates that objects, especially ones relating to a divine statue (namely, clothes, a belt, and a pin), could be prescribed in a similar list. For the διαλήμμα offered to Artemis, see especially text no. 4 below. It is σκύφων (“eine Schüssel” in Kekule von Stradonitz and Winnefeld), especially given the apparent uncertainty in the reading (cf. Lhôte), which fails to readily win our approval. If only a part of the relevant letters were read by Kekule von Stradonitz and Winnefeld, then [ἐρ]φων can be suggested as a more plausible sacrifice to Zeus Naios.

Whatever the due degree of caution which must be exerted given our secondhand knowledge of this inscription, it is clear that it was a prescriptive oracular response of the highest order. Historians of Greek religion—interpreters of configurations of gods in Greek polytheism—can easily have a field day with such material. Though the context remains lost—at least for the time being—one might propose that there are three subsets of gods forming this larger cohort prescribed by the oracle at Dodona. First and foremost, the local god, Zeus Naios, is appropriately invoked, perhaps receiving the most important and costly offering of a young he-goat, if the interpretation proposed here is correct. He is accompanied by what one might cautiously call two “canonical” figures of Zeus: Olympios and Brontaioi. Next, comes a further triad, still declined under the sign of Zeus, but apparently strongly connected with the earth and agriculture: Zeus Bouleus (often identified with Plouton), Zeus Eukles (rare, but likewise identified with Plouton or Hades), and Kore (Persephone). Two among them receive piglets, a

13. Zeus Naios is also the only god in the group who recurs in the evidence from Dodona; the others are unique to this tablet. See also Lhôte 2006: 407-420 for an attempt at identifying the etymology of the epithet Naios. Cf. now [Zeus N]aios in the tablet from Apollonia, Cabanes 2013: 51-53 no. 2.B3, to be restored as coming immediately after Diona. A discussion of the importance of Zeus Olympios would far exceed the reaches of this article. Brontaioi must be the correct epithet here, rather than Brontas reported in the preliminary German translation and in Lhôte. Cf. esp. [Arist.] 401a 17 (On the Cosmos): (Zeus) ἀφροτραπαυὸς τε καὶ βρονταίος καὶ αἰθρός καὶ αἰθρίος κεραυνός; IC III:iii 13 (Hierapytna, 1st c.): Δίὸς Βρονταίου; and several epigraphic attestations from Mysia and Bithynia, e.g. Marek 1993: nos. 17 and 26.

14. Zeus Bouleus: cf. esp. LSCG 96.15-17 (appearing with Demeter and Kore in the sacrificial calendar of Mykonos, ca. 230-200). For the more common form Eubouleus, cf. IG XII,7 76 (Arkesine, 4th c.; following Demeter and Kore) and IG XII,5 227 (Paros, 1st c.; appearing with Demeter Thesmo-
prevalent form of sacrifice in this context. Finally, there comes a pairing which is connected with the wider sphere of leadership: Artemis Hegemone (“Guide”) and a Hero Archagetes (“Chief-Leader Hero”, or more simply “Founder-Hero”).\(^{15}\) Elements of the iconography of Artemis Hegemone are known. The goddess, wearing a chiton, boots and a quiver, holds a large torch in one hand: it is possible that the statue or statuette prescribed at Dodona was of a similar figure.\(^{16}\)

In the detailed list commanded by the oracle, the divine register thus seems to evolve from the local and the lofty sky, to agricultural concerns, and, in turn, to leadership. Was the oracle’s response perhaps stimulated by a public rather than a personal consultation?\(^{17}\) Some form of consultation by a city or group would particularly suit the presence of Artemis Hegemone, in her capacity as a “leader”, and the Hero Archagetes, typically the mythical founder of a community and also its leader. That being said, the offerings prescribed remain relatively modest (mostly piglets and libations; even the statue for Artemis need not have been particularly valuable, in contrast to the one found below no. 4). Nevertheless, the elaborate list and its combination of agricultural and “leader” deities remain highly suggestive of an answer given as a response to a public consultation.

Only a few other answers prescribing rituals were available in the material previously known from Dodona, and these have been correctly identified by Lhôte. One, by contrast, pro-

---

\(^{15}\) Hegemone: the epithet is widespread; beyond a possible link with hunting, it usually has a flavour of political and military leadership. Cf. for instance, a boundary stone for a sanctuary of Artemis Orthosia on Tenos (IG XII,5 894, 2\(^{nd}\) c.), which is contemporaneous with a dedication to Artemis Orthosia and other gods by Rhodians who have gone on campaign and received a Delphic oracle (IG XII,5 913; cf. also Artemis Orthosia in the Delphic oracle reported in the treaty between Philip II and Olynthos, GHI 50.11-16, 357/6; for Artemis Orthosia, ancestral goddess of the Geleontes on Thasos, see Rolley 1965: 449, with the discussion at 457-458). A Hero Archagetes is mentioned in an almost certainly apocryphal (but nonetheless comparable) Delphic oracle cited in Dem. 43.66: Μαυτέα, ἀγάθη τύχη, ἔπερωτα ὁ δῆμος ὁ Άθηναίων πεί τοῦ σημείου τοῦ ἐν τῷ σμοραίῳ γεγομένῳ, ὃ τι ἐν δρόσῳ Άθηναίοις ἢ ὧν θεό βόσκειν ἡ εὐχημένους εῇ ἐπὶ τὸ ἄμενον ἀπὸ τοῦ σημείου (…) θυσίας καλλιερεῖν Δί τῇ ὕπατῳ, Άθηνᾶ ὑπάτῃ, Ἡρακλεί, Ἀπόλλων Σωτῆρι, καὶ ἀποστέπωμεν ἁμφίστειν: πείρα τύχης ἄγαθᾶς Ἀπόλλων Άγοιεν, Λατοῖ, Ἀρτέμιδι (…) Θεοῦ Όλυμπίοις καὶ Ολυμπίαις πάντεσσαι καὶ πᾶσαις, δεξίας καὶ ἀριστερᾶς ἁνέχοντος, μοισπορέσει κατά πάτρια; Ἦρω Ἀρχαγέτα, οὐ ἐπόνομοι ἔστε, θεὺς καὶ διορετέλινα κατά πάτρια. On such heroes at Athens, see e.g. IG II\(^{2}\) 1641A and 2829 (both 4\(^{th}\) c.).

\(^{16}\) Cf. a stele with a relief in a niche from Kallindia, intriguingly showing both Apollo Pythios (depicted as kitharoidos) and Artemis Hegemone (pouring a phiale over an omphalos) with her other hand: Despinis, Stefanidou Tiveriou, and Voutiras 1997: 95-97 no. 69 (Museum of Thessaloniki inv. 106, late Hellenistic; see also Hatzopoulos and Loukopoulou 1992: 80-82 no. K3, pl. XXV-XXVI). Cf. also, though less certainly, the female figure and the graffito on a fragmentary red-figure kylix discussed in Makarov and Ushakov 2009 (Tauric Chersonese; the inscription reads: ΑΓΕΜΟΝΑΣ ΚΑΛΑΣ).

\(^{17}\) For a wider discussion of public enquiries at Dodona and other oracles, see still Parker 1985, and now Bonneckere 2013 and 2014.
bably derives from a personal consultation, that of a woman named Nike. The response begins with an invocation to Diona or Zeus Naios:


This tablet likewise appears to be lost and Lhôte was unable to confirm the readings through autopsy. The traces at the end of line 2 remain problematic. Given the standard character of oracular enquiries, it might be expected that we have here a summary of the subject on which the consultation was made (see also text no. 3 below). Still, the placement of the phrase would remain an oddity in the list. Tentatively, one might perhaps think instead of restoring an offering to Zeus Patroios, e.g. a ἰπερβο[ίλ]ο[ν]α (cp. how in both lines 4 and 5, an iota is either missing to the right or was left uninscribed). Alternatives are difficult to discern: a sacrifice called περί[βο[ίλ]ο[ν]]α (vel sim.) might be envisaged, though the term is only found in much later sources: e.g. the honours prescribed for Kore Soteira in an oracle (I. Didyma 504.15-16, end of 3rd c. AD): τιμήν περίβο[ίλ]ο[ν]ά Δήμα; a περί[θυτ]ι[ο]δε[υ]ν (cp. IvP III 79, 140, 161A-B, all mid-2nd c. AD) would be still more improbable.

Since the relationship between the question on side A of the tablet and this list of divine recipients (side Ba) is probable on several grounds (date, mixed dialect, content; so Lhôte), the response given by the oracle can be seen as well suited to the enquiry. Nike, likely an Athenian woman, petitions the oracle on behalf of someone else (perhaps her husband), and the subjects in question are judicial adversaries and houses (side A, lines 4-5: τῶς ἀντιδίκος καὶ τὰς γονίας). Accordingly, the oracle recommends a group of gods related to Athens (Erechtheus), concerned with ancestral properties (Zeus Patroios and Athena Patroia), and perhaps with struggles (Herakles) and good fortune (Tyche)—both appropriate in disputes. In particular, it is worth underlining that Zeus Patroios is one of the most frequently invoked gods in the small group of sacrificial lists collected in the present article (cp. below nos. 3, 4 and 5): his

18. Side A remains problematic and in Lhôte’s text is given as: θεός. τύχα. διαστάρι. ἱερά: [Εὐμένης Νίκη ὑπὲρ τοῦ ΧΟΙΟΥ (= Εὐχώθη?)] τοῦ Ἀριστογείτονος ΣΑΠΕΔΟΧΟΙ τῶς ἀντιδίκος καὶ τὰς γονίας. Cf. Lhôte’s detailed discussion, noting that it contains “un curieux mélange d’attique et de dorien archaique”. He emits the plausible hypothesis that (2006: 293): “Nike doit être d’origine athénienne, mais mariée à un dorien, et elle doit résider en pays dorien”.

19. For Herakles, see also now DVC 746A and 806B. Tyche: repeatedly invoked in the new tablets, and cf. DVC 80A.
ancestral character and his supervision of patrimony together form an aspect of Zeus particularly apt to be worshipped by individuals and by families. Though it remains unclear if some of the gods received explicit offerings—the reading at the end of line 2 is uncertain; a lacuna to the right in lines 4–5, or below, is possible; only the libation for Tyche can be confirmed—the cohort of deities in this oracular response again appears to form a varied but coherent whole. At Dodona, as one might of course expect, it would therefore seem that the answer matched the character of the question and/or the consultant, at least to some degree.

These are only two cases, however, and for the most part, individuals simply do not seem to have bothered to record the responses of the oracle in much detail (alternatively, records could have been kept elsewhere, by the priestly personnel, or on other materials). On some occasions, the oracle was proverbially pithy, or it is the individuals recording the response who were laconic. One answer reads simply: “Sacrifice to Diona.” The new corpus of tablets provides evidence for perhaps a few further, extremely simple responses concerning sacrifice.

One of these is straightforward: “Give (i.e. offer) female sheep.” Since most of the lamellae from the sanctuary of Dodona are extremely fragmentary, other instances are difficult to identify with any certainty.

20. On “paternal gods”, see esp. Parker 2008. In the new collection, cp. DVC 3210A, also concerned with sacrifices, but the precise meaning of this tablet is difficult to ascertain. For an Apolline oracle advising an individual and his family that sacrifices be performed to Zeus Patroios (and other ancestral gods), cf. Carbon and Pirenne-Delforge 2013: Appendix, “The Stele of Poseidonos” (Halikarnassos, ca. 285-250).

21. Lhôte 2006: 322-324 no. 166c (ca. 400; with facsimile): Δίανε θόην (i.e. Διώνυσι θυείν). See Lhôte for his astute interpretation, despite the noticeable textual errors in the copy: “une réponse de l’oracle inscrite par un consultant athénien”. The question on the same tablet (no. 166a, badly preserved or deciphered) takes the form τι κα ἔδοσας (line 2), but it may be doubted that the texts are related. The individual called Διονύσιος, mentioned in the summary inscription no. 166b, appears to be the practitioner who visited the oracle.

22. Other fragmentary cases cannot be as securely established, but they are nonetheless suggestive. In the previously known material, possibilities for short answers related to specific questions include Lhôte 2006: no. 67 (cf. SEG 15, 386; Eidinow 2007: 121 no. 3; ca. 425–400). Side A preserves the following question: τίνι [!] κα θεὸν εὐδομενος πράξας [!] hâ èπι νῦν ἕξε,. Side B may record the response or a summary: Ἡγυγει [⟨γεί⟩]. Cf. already Lhôte: “Il peut s’agir de la réponse de l’oracle, au datif, gravée par le consultant sous la dictée du prêtre; le consultant doit adresser des prières à Hygie”. Potentially similar responses in the new corpus, mentioning a single deity in the dative for instance (e.g. DVC 1299B: Ἀπόλλωνα [ν], or an apparent list of female deities in the dative (e.g. DVC 892: [−]Δι[−] Α[−]), ought to be investigated more carefully, through autopsy and further decipherment of the tablets. Similarly, Éric Lhôte (forthc.) has proposed a connection between DVC 272A and the apparent response in 274B (at least a female deity in the dative; no offerings are preserved); see also now Liapis 2015.

23. DVC 1149 (ca. 450–400?): ΔΟΜΕΝΟΙΑΣ. As K. Tsantsanoglou convincingly suggests apud DVC, the text is clear and is to be interpreted as: διόμεν διός. Though this does not necessarily point to sacrifice, the imperative use of the infinitive (cf. n. 24 above) can nonetheless be thought to indicate a response. It remains unclear whether this answer is connected with any of the other traces of inscriptions preserved on the same opisthographic tablet (DVC 1148-1152, inv. no. M463). Once again, the tablet from Apollonia (Cabanes 2013: 51–53 no. 2, side B) provides an intriguing parallel, attesting to several sacrifices of sheep (once as διός, line 3); for the Doric form, cf. also IG XII,4 350.60 (Kos, end of 2nd c.).

24. Another potential response may be identified in DVC 585A (ca. 450–400?; inv. no. M301): εὐτόκεια [−] Διώματι, i.e. “Easy delivery; (sacrifice?) to Demeter” (cp. perhaps DVC 2270B, though the restoration there can be doubted). If an answer, this text might be associated with the apparently
Yet detailed lists of offerings and sacrifices can also be found in the newly published collection. One of the prime instances of a response prescribed by the oracle is the following list:

3. Ed. pr. DVC 2393A (ca. 400-350?; inv. no. M837, same tablet as nos. 2393-2396).²⁵

[?περί τῶν] ν χρεών ἄνεχελε· Δί Κήρσιοι αη[γα] “(Concerning?) debts(?), select (or the god/goddess selected? the following):

tῶι Δί τῶι Πατρ[όωι - - -] to Zeus Patroios, (offering);
tῶι Διονύσσωι ἀπ[αρχάν?] to Dionysus, (a “first offering”?);
tῶι Ε[- - - - - - - - -] to E(…), (offering);
5 τά<ι> Ε[λε[ι][ει]θ[αί] [- - -] to Eileithyia, (offering).”

As the apparatus indicates, a few textual improvements to the recent edition have been suggested here. In light of the other prescriptive lists analysed earlier (nos. 1-2), we should also think of an answer containing a series of gods followed by appropriate offerings or sacrifices: Zeus Ktesios is thus to be honoured with a goat; Zeus Patroios probably with another offering; Dionysus, if not with a “first offering”, perhaps also with a goat. The last line, as given by the editors, makes little sense: the traces are more suggestive of a female deity, and thus better reconstructed as mentioning Eileithyia.

Unusually, perhaps, we seem to have a sort of heading in the first line of the response. A record of a response beginning with an indication of the subject matter, in the form περί or ὑπέρ κτλ., is in fact well attested for Delphic oracles.²⁶ Prima facie, the word ἄνε<ε>λε read in the recent edition is to be interpreted as an imperative of ἄναρπέω, meaning both “answer” and “choose”. Indeed, the verb is etymologically linked with the action of “selecting” or “drawing up” lots, used during divination through sortition: the mechanism of the oracle chooses and, at the same time, the god answers and ordains.²⁷ Yet the reading of an imperative ought to point contemporaneous question in 586A, which seems to relate to a woman’s anxiety about staying at home (line 2: [μύν]σά κα το[ί]κο[ι]).

25. As with the other cases discussed here, this text is incorrectly identified by the editors as a question: “Ἰδιωτικόν ἐρώτημα”. The response might relate to the partially preserved enquiry in 2395B, though this is far from obvious.


27. For ἄναρπέω in this sense, cf. LSI s.v. III. See now Parker 2015 for a discussion of some of the new evidence from Dodona, including the imperative ἄνε<ε>λε found as part of the question on certain tablets.
to a question rather than a response: perhaps the question or request made to the god or the
goddess (Zeus Naios or Dione) was simply repeated as a preamble to the response. Alternatively,
it could be presumed that the form and the subject of ᾽νελεῖν are imperfectly under-
stood. An alternative would then be to take ᾽νελεῖν as an unaugmented third-person singular
aorist indicative, implying a restoration like [(ὅ/ ἄ] θεός περὶ τὰ ὅρια) χρεοῖν ᾽νελεῖ="(the
god/goddess) chose/answered (the following) concerning debts…",—or perhaps better yet to
restore the verb as the augmented third-person singular aorist ᾽νελεῖν, yielding the same
sense.  

Whatever the exact case may be, it is fairly clear that the subject of enquiry appears to have
been some financial business, “debts”, or more simply “things” and property. Though the
precise circumstances remain murky, the group of gods convoked in the response once again
coheres very well with the subject matter at hand: Zeus Patroios has already been witnessed in
connection with familial disputes and houses; Zeus Ktesios is the protector par excellence
of the household, its wealth and property. Likewise, Eileithyia, if correctly restored, has a clear
connection with the familial sphere, particularly with concerns relating to descendants and
their legitimacy. We thus have an enquiry concerning debts (or possessions), together with a
response of the oracle to propitiate gods closely connected with the sphere of familial property
and inheritance. However, the inclusion of Dionysus and of another missing recipient in line 4
may also add further, fleeting complexities to this picture.

Also interesting, but still more enigmatic, is another list found on a fragmentary lamella:


---

[... ca.6? ...]ΩΛΙΟΝ, “(To male god?), (offering);
[Δ(ι)]ΠΑΤΡΙΟΙ ᾽τελείον, To (Zeus) Patroios, an adult animal;
[... ca.6? ...]ΑΛΙΟΝ, (To recipient), (offering);
[... ca.5? ...]γάλακτος καινὸν χρυσόν, (To recipient), a new, gold statue;
5 ... ca. 6 ...] ὶσαζειτ [- ? -] To (deity called) Attendant, (offering)."

---

the infinitive ἐλεῖν of στέλλω); and the elaborate divinatory procedure in ΙΕλεύσις 144.49-50 (352/1): ...
ό | θεός[5] ὁ[ν]ό [λεια]ν [καὶ] ᾽μειν[ο]ν εἶναι... In this context, recall also the middle form of στέλλω
(στέλλειν) in the tablet where Dione herself (αὐτός “selects” a priestess (cf. n. 6 above).

29. Cf. esp. ΛΣΠ σ.θ. χρήσκος Ι, II and VI, and cp. the few instances in DVC index s.n., which also
appear to relate to “financial obligations” or “things”. For debts, cp. also the record of a dispute concerning
what a certain Gorgias owed to a certain Oniator, DVC 2976A-2977B (this is apparently claimed in
the latter text to total 400 drachmæ).

καὶ ἀλλα Κτισίσιον Διὸς χάριν. The god is also invoked in the pseudo-Dodonaian oracle quoted in Dem.
21.53, where he receives a white male ox (cited above, n. 8).

31. On Eileithyia “at work” in this context, cf. Pirenne-Delforge and Pironti 2013 (esp. p. 84 for a
discussion of filiation).

32. Again labelled “ἱδιωτικό εἴρημα” in DVC. It is unclear whether this response is to be related
with any of the questions fragmentarily preserved on the same opisthographic tablet.
JAN-MATHIEU CARBON

1 Ω δλιον DVC, id. in l. 3; perhaps -ως\\<\\> δλιον, though the trace of omega appears far from clear on the facsimile—the reading may thus be doubted, Carbon. | 2 [Δ(ι)] Πατριςɔιων C.: ΩιΩι DVC, sugg. [Νετ]ωι {ωι}. | 3 δλιον DVC. | 4 καιν\\<\\> υ C.: ΚΑΙΝΥ facsimile; καιν υυ DVC. | 5 οτσαδει DVC.

It is clear that a series of offerings is also being recorded here, according to what the oracle prescribed, but the character of the recipients is much less clear. According to my restoration, Zeus Patroios again makes an appearance in the second visible rank. In the final line, the dative of ὑπηδός might naturally be viewed as a common noun, denoting in this case an attendant who participates in the rituals, and thereby gets a share from them or some other benefit. Instead, ὑπηδός might more attractively be interpreted as a new epiklesis for a deity, which would cohere with the format of the list and appear as expected in the dative. Such an epithet is not unexpected, since we find the word ὑπηδός used for gods who work in an ancillary capacity (Pan, Hekate, or even Apollo; perhaps others). And at least one epigraphic ritual norm may provide a supporting parallel for a god or goddess called by an epithet meaning “Helper”.

The offerings themselves are unproblematic in two cases only: an adult animal (τελειον), and more surprisingly but again not wholly unexpectedly, a new golden statue or statuette. This object indeed recalls the figure offered to Artemis Hegemone in the response seen above (no. 1), but here the offering is no doubt more special and more expensive (though its exact value remains unspecified). The requirement that a new object (e.g. a cup) be made for the purpose of a specific ritual is sometimes found in the epigraphical evidence, and this “newness” was a marker of the purity of the object in question, as was the material used here: gold. The other traces of an offering in the masculine or neuter accusative, ΑΛΙΟΝ or ΑΛΙΩΝ repeated in lines 1 and 3, are more troublesome. If δλιον is indeed the correct reading, then we will have to think outside the usual box of sacrifices and offerings. But it is not impossible that earlier traces and letters further elucidated this word. Thus, we could think e.g. of a [φι]δλιον or small cup, or perhaps even better of [υηη]δλιον, a “wineless” libation or sacrific—

33. Cp. e.g. the sacrificial calendar of Thorikos, NGSL 1.15-16, for a lunch provided by the attendant (who brings the sacrifices) to the priest of Zeus Polieus: τώι ἄκουλοβοντι δριστοι παρέχην τὸν ἱερέα.
34. Pan: Pi. fr. 95, Πάν, Ματρός μεγάλας ὑπαδέ. Hekate: Phld. Piet. 91, cf. 33, τὴν Ἐκάτην ὑπαδόν Ἄρτεμιδος εἶναι. Apollo (speaking): h.Merc. 450, ἑγὼ Μοῦρσην ὑπηδόν. All examples given here are derived from LSJ s.v.
35. IG II² 4970.1-4 (Piraees, mid-4th c. BC): Ἄρτεμιδος. | Ἀκόλουθοι | μοινόμφαλ[α] | III. Though the formulation remains odd, it may be presumed that Akolouthos is here an epithet or a byname of Artemis, rather than a human figure, since divine figures are virtually always the recipients of cakes offered on altars and in other prescriptive inscriptions. The list of parallels for “assisting” deities could of course be extended even further, cf. e.g. Herakles Παραστάτης at Olympia (Paus. 5.8.1; 5.14.7).
36. New objects: cf. the new oven or furnace, ἰτός καυός, employed in the context of a sacrifice for Herakles on Kos, IG XII,4 276.13 (ca. 350); or the new cups at Selinous NGSL 27.Α15-16, and at IG XII,4 274.25-26 (Kos, id.). For gold objects used in purificatory rituals, see Parker 1996: 228 with n. 118.
37. A substantivised adjective ἄλιος (LSJ s.v. A) might suggest something “of the sea”, e.g. perhaps fish or a maritime object. Alternatively, we might—very desperately!—recall the corrupt lemma in Hsch. s.v. τὰλην κάρπος. Μακεδόνες.
Five Answers Prescribing Rituals in the Oracular Tablets from Dodona

Though the scale of the offerings envisaged here may again suggest a public consultation of the oracle (as in no. 1 above), we regrettably cannot even begin to reconstruct the context of this enquiry and its response.

I take as a final example an even more fragmentary lamella, notably for the purpose of demonstrating that a revision of the recent edition of the texts would be highly desirable. The text of this snippet is given in the new edition as:

5. DVC 1122B (end of 5th c.?; inv. no. M456).

]Α Δί Πατρωι[ων
]. ἀκροίος

The editors implausibly suggest that the word in line 2 has something to do with entrails. It may be better to reconsider these traces altogether, either as a locative epithet for a deity which was part of a list, or better yet as both an epithet and an offering, thus yielding the following text—a conjecture that could only be confirmed through autopsy:

- - - - - - - - - - - - - -
[- - - - -]Α, Δί Πατρωι[ων, “(recipient + offering?); to Zeus Patroios (+ offering?);
[- - - ἐπί/ἐν] ἀκρο[ω/i] οἶς. to (god/goddess on?) the height, sheep.”

vacat (?)

2 [- - - ἐπί/ἐν] ἀκρο[ω/i] οἶς Carbon: ἀκροῖος DVC.

There appears to be a fold or tear in the tablet where the iota of ἀκρω[ω/i] or ἀκρο[ω/i] may have been inscribed. In my reading, οἶς could be the nominative singular or, perhaps more plausibly, the contracted accusative plural of δῆς.

At the outcome of this brief investigation of difficult fragments, one may wonder if our understanding of the oracle at Dodona has been improved in any way. The responses of the oracle, such as we have them here, appear traditional or conservative, much as at Delphi or in other oracles. The local gods of Dodona recommend sacrifice to themselves (Zeus Naios, Dion) and to other gods who are widespread in Greek polytheism: Zeus Patroios, other “Olympians”, standard local heroes, etc. The offerings prescribed by the oracle—and of course

38. For such “wineless” offerings in ritual norms and other sources, see Pirenne-Delforge 2011.

39. DVC again comment: “Ἰῶτα τοῦ {ἐπί} τοίς ἀκρωις”. The text, if correctly identified here as a prescriptive answer, might tentatively be related to one of the fragmentary and more or less contemporaneous questions preserved on the same opisthographic tablet, perhaps esp. one of DVC 1123-1125.

40. DVC, citing Hsch. s.v. ἀκροια, στιλαχχα, ἐντερα.

41. Epithet: cf. e.g. SEG 20, 316 (Karpasia on Cyprus, 2nd c. AD): Ἀθ[ριστή]τη τῇ ἐπί τοίς ἄκροις; IG V,1 1336.22-23 (Gerenia in Lakonia): τὸ ἱερόν τοῦ Ποσιδάνιος τοῦ [ἐπί] ἄκρωι; IG IX 4, 862 (ca. 500-450; cf. Α. Ρ. Matthaiou, Παρατηρήσεις σε μία Κερκυραϊκή ύπαθη, ΠΡΑΜΜΑΤΕΙΟΝ 1 [2012] 31-32): ὁδρος ἐκορός τᾶς Ἀκριας (Hera?); cp. also Apollo Hypakrais/Hypomakrais at Athens.
through the agency of the cult personnel involved in the sanctuary—are, for the most part, equally unexceptional: libations, adult sheep or piglets, and other normative sacrificial animals.

In all likelihood, the innovative quotient of the recommendations of the oracle was thus very limited. Yet many other questions remain. To begin with, why are answers so seldom preserved? It can hardly be that they were deemed unimportant. Is this then because they were written on other material supports, or that copies were more often taken away by those consulting the oracle? Did the sacrifices prescribed merely take place at the sanctuary in Dodona, or were they sometimes carried out on returning from the oracle, thereby potentially having a more longstanding and durable impact on cult practice, whether in the home or in the community at large?

Despite these lingering questions and other reservations, I would nonetheless argue that we now have a firmer hold on the modes in which the oracle at Dodona operated. Given the language of the oracular responses themselves—the verbs ἀναρέω and ἀναίρεω denoting both the action of “drawing” lots and uttering a prescriptive response (cf. again no. 3)—and the limited question-answer framework through which consultations were made, the use of lots has been plausibly suggested as the prevalent mechanism of divination in use at Dodona. Sortition would indeed readily explain some of the fairly conventional groups of gods which are found in the responses at Dodona (much as at Delphi and elsewhere). There is also now a growing body of evidence for the use of lots by diviners to prescribe this exact sort of response.

Still, one may doubt that this is the whole picture. When one asked “to which gods should I sacrifice?”, the response one received was almost certainly not a pure product of sortition, not merely pro forma or arbitrary. Sortition was used, certainly, but the answers we have also display a coherent and well-structured list of deities that were to be honoured with sacrifices or other offerings. Much of the procedure of consultation now admittedly lies hidden from our view. Yet the cult personnel at Dodona must sometimes have influenced the results of the drawing of the lots, favouring the worship of gods which had meaning for the enquirer, or whose worship he or she might be thought to “have in mind”: consultation of the oracle thus surely occurred on a personal level. As I have tried to suggest, even in the limited evidence from Dodona, it is remarkable that the response of the oracle was substantially tailored to the question, to the origin of an individual, or to the needs and concerns of a group. So, an Athenian received an answer mentioning Erechtheus (no. 2), someone concerned with debts or ma-

42. The dossiers of Delphic oracles recorded at Kyzikos and Kaunos, for instance (n. 10 above), likely testify to the continued preservation and observance of the oracular commands, notably through ritual practice in the community.

43. Parker 2015 (and forthc.) builds a compelling case for the fundamental use of this divinatory practice at Dodona. On other forms of divination at Dodona, see also Georgoudi 2012.

44. Cf. esp. the little bronze spheres (lots?) published and reviewed in Brugnone 2011, probably originally part of a kleromantic kit (Himera, near the end of 5th c.). Three of the spheralae are incised with the names of Zeus Soter, Herakles, and Leukathea, in the genitive (a further specimen, reading ἐπελυσεμένος, may in fact be an epithet or a byname of Eileithyia). Cf. also again the new evidence for a female diviner at Apollonia in Illyria, who probably practiced sortition (Cabanes 2013: 51-53 no. 2.A3).
Material possessions was told to propitiate Zeus Ktesios and other related gods (no. 3), etc. No doubt receiving such customised responses explained much of the utility and the popular appeal of the oracle. It also presents a fascinating case-study for our understanding of Greek polytheism and its multifarious modi operandi, which remains to be enriched with still further sources and comparative material.

Jan-Mathieu Carbon
Saxo Institute, University of Copenhagen
fpz408@hum.ku.dk, jmcarbon@ulg.ac.be

APPENDIX

The Triple Sacrifice at Dodona

One of the prominent rituals featured in the collection of lamellae is a unusual “triple” form of sacrifice. This was apparently a highlight of the sacrificial practice performed in the sanctuary at Dodona, cf. DVC 87B (beginning of 4th c.?; Lhôte 2006: no. 138; Eidinow 113 no. 3): ἡ τριθυτικῶν; and 3250A (end of 5th-early 4th c.): ἡ χρωμεθα τοῦ […] τριθύται. As the editors rightly point out, this form of triple sacrifice is surely to be related with the one offered to Zeus Naioi in the first of the two oracles cited as sources in Dem. 21.53 (likely derived from collections of chresmologues): Ἐκ Δωδώνης Μαντείας. (1) τῷ δήμῳ τῷ Ἀθηναίων ὁ τοῦ Δίου σημαίνει. ὅτι τὰς ἄρας παρηγέγατε τῆς θυσίας καὶ τῆς θεωρίας, σήμερος πέμπειν κελεύει θεορίας ἕνεκα τούτου διὰ ταχέων τῷ Διῷ τῷ Ναίῳ τρεῖς βοῦς καὶ πρὸς ἐκάστῳ βοῦι δύο οἶς, τῇ Δίωνῃ βοῶν καλλιερέιν, καὶ τράπεζαν χαλκῆν καὶ πρὸς τὸ ἀνάθημα ὁ ἀνέβηκεν ὁ δήμος ὁ Ἀθηναίων. (2) ὁ τοῦ Δίου σημαίνει ἐν Δωδώνῃ, Διονύσῳ δημοτῇ ἱερά τελείν καὶ κρατήρα κεράσαι καὶ χοροὺς ἱστάναι, Ἀπόλλωνι Ἀποτροπαῖο βοῶν θύσαι, καὶ στεφανηφόρειν ἐλευθέρους καὶ δούλους, καὶ ἐλινύειν μίαν ἥμεραν. Διὶ Κητησίῳ βοῶν λευκῶν. On the problematic use of documentary sources in the Demosthenic corpus, see now Canevaro 2013: esp. 209-236 (Harris) on the Against Meidias, with further refs. Note, however, that doubting the oracle’s authenticity does not diminish its verisimilitude as a religious document: the rituals within it may still be reckoned as plausible points of reference. In particular, the offering of τρεῖς βοῦς καὶ πρὸς ἐκάστῳ βοῦι δύο οἶς to Zeus Naioi—i.e. (1+2) x 3 = 9, an interesting form of ritual mathematics—strongly suggests that this was a habitual form of “triplicate sacrifice” (τριθυτικῶν) offered at Dodona, most likely in the context of more elaborate public consultations.
Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Author(s) and Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Bibliography


J.-M. Carbon, A Dossier of Oracles from Kaunos, forthc.


R.C.T. Parker, Seeking Advice from Zeus at Dodona, forthc.

Jessica Piccinini, Beyond Prophecy: The Oracular Tablets of Dodona as Memories of Consultation, Incidenza dell’Antico 11 (2013) 63-76.


C. Rolley, Le sanctuaire des dieux patrôoi et le Thesmophorion de Thasos, BCH 89 (1965) 441-483.
