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AN ORACLE AGAINST PESTILENCE FROM A WESTERN ANATOLIAN TOWN

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## AN ORACLE AGAINST PESTILENCE FROM A WESTERN ANATOLIAN TOWN\*

### 1.

In the first issue of a new periodical edited by the Austrian Archaeological Institute, Dieter Knibbe gives the text of an inscription found in the Austrian excavations in Ephesus<sup>1</sup>; this publication is the appendix to a long article on the Monument for the Parthian Wars in Ephesus and intends nothing more than to give a first information about the text, with but a very short commentary and no photographs. Reinhold Merkelbach, who took up the text with some modifications and a conjecture as to its origin, rightly stresses the merit of such a quick, even if very temporary and provisional publication.<sup>2</sup>

The text is written on a coffer slab ("Kassettenfüllung") of white marble (height 1.09 m, width 0.89 m) which had been reused as a pavement block near the small square where the two main Ephesian streets, "Theaterstrasse" and "Kuretenstrasse", meet, close to the library of Celsus, the arch of Trajan and a monumental altar which Knibbe (among others) thinks the Parthian monument of Lucius Verus; the find spot is relevant for the text, as will become clear soon. The letter forms date the inscription to the 2nd cent. A.D. For its reuse, the top of the slab was cut back: we thus miss the beginning of the text. There is no hint as to its original dimension, and since it belonged to an architectural structure with (presumably) more than one such piece, we cannot be certain whether the text has been written only onto one such slab.

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\* This paper develops a contribution given to the Second International Seminar on Ancient Greek Cult at the Swedish Institute in Athens; I am very grateful to its director, Robin Hägg, who granted the permission to publish it before the publication of the Acts of the symposium.

R. Merkelbach read a first draft of this paper, I thank him for generous help, for the invitation to publish in the ZPE, and the permission to keep the English of my original paper.

#### Abbreviations:

IK = Die Inschriften griechischer Städte Kleinasiens, Bonn 1972ff.

Robert, OMS = L. Robert, Opera Minora Selecta, 7 vols., Amsterdam 1969-1990.

<sup>1</sup> D. Knibbe, 'Das "Parthermonument" von Ephesos. (Parther)siegaltar der Artemis (und Kenotaph des L. Verus) an der "Triodos. Anhang: Orakel Apollons"', Oesterreichisches Archäologisches Institut. Berichte und Materialien 1, 1991, 14f.

<sup>2</sup> R. Merkelbach, 'Ein Orakel des Apollo für Artemis von Koloe', ZPE 88, 1991, 71f.

## 2.

With the exception of the top line, the text seems beautifully preserved; I give the version of Merkelbach with slightly changed interpunction and his two corrections (misprint rather than cutter's mistake in line 6; cutter's mistake in l. 15).

[ . . . ]Α Η [ ]ΩΙΔΑΠ[ ] . . . ΗΣ[  
 2 [Ἄρ]τεμιν εὐφάρετρειαν ἐμῆς γενεῆς γεγαυῖαν·  
 [π]άσης γὰρ πόλιος προκαθηγέτις ἐστὶ γενέθλης  
 4 μαῖα καὶ ἀυξήτειρα βροτῶν καρπῶν τε δότεира·  
 ἦς μορφὴν Ἐφέσοιο κομίσσετε χρυσοφάεννον,  
 6 κάτθετε δ' ἐν νηῶ πολυγηθέες· ἢ κεν ἀλύξει  
 πῆματα καὶ λοίμοιο βροτοφθόρα φάρμα[κ]α λύσει  
 8 λαμπάσι πυρσοφόροις νυχίᾳ φλογὶ μάγματα κηροῦ  
 τηΐξασα, μάγου κακοτήϊα σύμβολα τέχνης·  
 10 ἀτὰρ ἐπὴν τελέσητε θεῆ προστάγματ' ἐμεῖο,  
 ὕμνοις ἰοχέαιραν ἀπρόσμαχον ἰθυβέλειαν  
 12 καὶ θυσίαις ἄζεσθε κλυτὴν ἐπιωπέα κούρην,  
 ἔν τε χοροῖς ἔν τ' εἰλαπίναις κοῦραὶ θ' ἅμα παισίν  
 14 παρθένον ἀλμήεσσαν ὑπὲρ χθόνα Μαίονος Ἑρμοῦ  
 πάντη κυδαίνοντες ἀναστέφει· εὐρέα μύρτα  
 16 κεκλόμενοι γαίης Ἐφεσηίδος Ἄρτεμιν ἀγνήν  
 εἰς αἰὲν ὅπως ὕμμι πέλοι ἄχραντος ἀρωγός·  
 18 εἰ δέ τε μὴ τελέοιτε, πυρὸς τότε τείσετε ποινάς·  
 Χρηματισθεὶς ὑπὸ τοῦ Ἀπόλλωνος

App.: 6 κάτθειε Knibbe, corr. Merkelbach. — 15 ἀναστεφει Stein, ἀναστεφέ(ε)ς Knibbe, ἀναστέφει Merkelbach

I translate as follows (details will become clear in the course of my comment):

"[ . . . For Help, you have to look to] Artemis with the golden quiver, born from my family; for she is the ancestral leader of the entire town from its origin, [4] midwife and augments of mortals, giver of harvest. Her form bring in from Ephesus, brilliant with gold. Put her up in a temple, full of joy: she will provide deliverance from your affliction and will dissolve the poison (or: magic) of pestilence, which destroys men, and will melt down [8] with her flame-bearing torches in nightly fire the kneaded works of wax, the signs of the evil art of a

sorcerer. But when you have performed for the goddess my decrees, worship with hymns the shooter of arrows, the irresistible, straight shooting one, [12] and with sacrifices, her, the renowned and vigilant virgin; and during dancing and feasting, you girls together with the boys, above the salty lands of Maeonic Hermus, praising her in every respect wear crowns of large myrtle, [16] having called from the Ephesian Land the pure Artemis, in order that she might always be to you an unfailing helper. If you should not fulfill the rites, then you will pay the penalty of fire."

An oracle given by Apollon.

The language is straightforward as one could ask for in an oracle of the 2nd cent. AD. There are some poetical hapax legomena<sup>3</sup> and a few rare and poetical compounds<sup>4</sup>; both present no difficulty to the understanding. I hesitate only about the construction of v. 3; it could seem slightly easier to construe γενέθλης with μαῖα - but that would create an obligatory enjambement otherwise avoided in these verses.

Some comment, however, is needed for my translation of μάγματα (1.8) as "kneaded works", that is small statuettes or figurines. LSJ gives only the meaning "thick unguent", with references to medical or paramedical texts, and Knibbe accordingly translates "Salbe" - but a thick unguent of wax, made by a magician, makes no point in our context. But μάσσειν, the basic verb, means "to knead, press into a mould" (LSJ) and is used especially of dough and unbaked cakes which can have different forms, even of figurines, as in the case of the μάζεινος βοῦς, an ox made of dough (Hsch.s.v.): in the highly stylized wording of our text, the meaning of μάγμα ("what has been kneaded") in the sense of "kneaded figurine" seems perfectly plausible.

The text falls into four parts which have a clear progression. The speaker is, as usual in an oracle, the god Apollo himself; he addresses the petitioners.

Lines 2-4 determine Artemis as generally beneficial divinity: she is the leader of the polis (presumably in general as well as in the case of the specific polis addressed in the oracle); she helps birth and growing up of men (μαῖα καὶ ἀύξήτειρα βροτῶν)<sup>5</sup> as well as growth of crops: therefore (γάρ), it is her the petitioners should call in for help.

Lines 5-9 prescribe the actual course of action: one has to bring a statue of Artemis Ephesia from her home town and consecrate it in her temple in the petitioners' town (the temple, thus, is already there: Artemis' cult is long established in the town); the goddess, embodied in this image, will avert the plague which ravages the town. This statue has an iconography radically different from what we know about the famous statue of Ephesian

<sup>3</sup> 2 εὐφάρετρα, 4 ἀύξήτειρα, 9 κακοτήϊα (= κακός, in a strange derivation), 11 ἰθυβέλεια (ἰθυβόλος for a spear Apollod.bibl. 3, 15, 1), 12 ἐπιωπής.

<sup>4</sup> 5 χρυσοφάννος Anacr., frg. 25; 7 βροτοφθόρος Aesch., Eum. 787 (lyr.) etc.; 8 πυρσοφόρος Nonn., Dion. 7, 340; 14 ἀλμῆεις Aesch., Suppl. 844 (lyr.; the text, though, is unmetrical, and Page sets a crux).

<sup>5</sup> See Plat., rep. 565 C τρέφειν καὶ αὖξειν τινὰ μέγαν "bring someone up to manhood".

Artemis: it is not the archaistic xoanon with its many breasts<sup>6</sup>, but a statue of a more common type, with two torches, if we can trust the plural *λάμπασι πυρσοφόροις* in 1.8. Such an image is attested on coins of Ephesus, from late hellenistic cistophori till Valerius and Gallienus<sup>7</sup>. Numismatists tend to call her Hecate or Artemis-Hecate – but since once, on a coin of Iulia Domna, the identical type is accompanied by two stags, the ordinary attributes of Artemis, there is no valid reason not to call her Artemis as well. Neither is there any reason not to think that the coins represent an actual cult image of Artemis in Ephesus, given the span of time they cover<sup>8</sup>.

Lines 10-18 order further action, to be taken after the plague has been healed by Artemis: the townspeople are to organize choirs of girls and boys for Artemis and to bring her sacrifices – evidently thank-offerings for her help. The place of this ritual is defined as "the salty land of Maeonian Hermus" (1.14). "Maeonian" means Lydian, either – in a narrow sense – Upper Lydia or, in a wider sense attested both in the poets and in Stephanus, Lydia in general<sup>9</sup>. Merkelbach therefore looks for a salty or marshy place in Lydia: the only one available is the salt lake of Koloe, the *Γυγαία Λίμνη* of Homer, modern Mermere Gölü northwest of Sardis close to which Strabo attests an important sanctuary of Artemis<sup>10</sup>. This seems convincing, less so the consequence that the oracle would speak about the Lydian town of Koloe: no literary source attests a town (*πόλις*) of Koloe close to the lake of Koloe and its sanctuary of Artemis Koloene; the only larger settlement close to the lake being Sardes: the two Lydian towns called Koloe are much more inland and in no way connected with salty marshes or lakes<sup>11</sup>. The text, however, does not necessarily refer to cult in the home-town of the petitioners, but to a ritual of thanksgiving in a sanctuary outside this town: the plague oracle given to Hierapolis ordered the town to send an embassy with thank-offerings to Clarus once the plague is over<sup>12</sup>. Since in this case the help against the calamity had come from Clarus as well, in our case the natural assumption would be a ritual in Ephesus: in imperial times, its Artemision bordered those salty marshes which later were to swallow it up, and any river coming from inland Lydia could still be Maeonian at the coast –

<sup>6</sup> For which see R. Fleischer, *Artemis von Ephesos und verwandte Kultstatuen aus Anatolien und Syrien* (= EPRO 35), Leiden 1973.

<sup>7</sup> F. Imhoof-Blumer, *Kleinasiatische Münzen*, vol.1, Vienna 1901, 54 no.42 with T.ii 15 (cistophorus; "Hekate"); *ibid.* 60 no.66 with T.ii 20 (Iulia Domna; "Artemis-Hekate"); BMC Ionia 104 no.373 (Gallienus; "Hekate"); more *ibid.* p. 60.

<sup>8</sup> It should not be forgotten that the well-known Ephesian image is of recent date, superseding presumably an earlier, more usual iconography, see R. Fleischer (*supra* n.6) – although H. Cahn could push the Ephesian iconography back into the late 5th/early 4th century, since it appears on a coin from Mysian Astyra issued by Tissaphernes and dated before 395 BC: 'Tissaphernes in Astyra', *Arch.Anz.* 1989, 587-594, esp. 593 (I thank H. Cahn for advice in numismatical matters).

<sup>9</sup> St.Byz. s.v. *Ματωνία*; Ov., *met.* 3, 583 (Lydia). 6, 103 (Maeonis = Arachne).

<sup>10</sup> Strab. 13, 4, 5 p. 626 C.

<sup>11</sup> See L. Robert, *A travers l'Asie Mineure*, Paris 1980, 334 for the one on the Kayster valley, and D. Magie, *Roman Rule in Asia Minor*, Princeton 1950, 738 for all three.

<sup>12</sup> ASAA 41/42, 1963/64, 360 Nr. Iib 1.21-25; M.L. West, *ZPE* 1, 1967, 183-187.

only that the river of Ephesus is the Kayster, not the Hermus. Since, on the other hand, we know of no sanctuary of Artemis at the mouth of Hermus, the sanctuary of Artemis Koloene on lake Koloe remains a plausible guess: thus, the oracle would order the petitioners to thank Artemis in her sanctuary of Koloe for the permanent help her Ephesian sister had given the petitioners (l.17 should be taken as a causal clause). This solution assumes narrow ties between the Artemisia on Lake Koloe and of Ephesus which, at the present state of our knowledge, must remain pure guesswork: although from the famous sacrilege inscription of the late fourth cent.BC, we know of a sanctuary of Artemis in or near Sardes which the Ephesians viewed as an Ephesian foundation, it is not necessarily the one on lake Koloe<sup>13</sup>. The oracle assumes also narrow ties between the sanctuary at Koloe and the petitioners' home-town, which could give a clue to its identity (see below).

Line 18, finally, warns them of the consequences if they should not take up the trouble and expense of such a proskynesis; the "punishment of fire" seems an easy poetical way for saying "fever", that is a return of the plague.

### 3.

Incidentally, this discussion already touched upon the questions which are open because of the loss of the beginning: who were the petitioners? who is Apollon? and which is the reason for the request?

The reason is obvious: the home-town of the petitioners suffered from a plague (λοιμός). Already Knibbe connected the text with the great plague brought from Mesopotamia by the armies of Lucius Verus which had ravaged the Imperium after 165 AD. The impact of the disease is not only shown by the historians' reports<sup>14</sup>, but by a series of oracles which all are connected with the sanctuary of Clarus<sup>15</sup>; their texts come from Kallipolis/Gallipoli on the Thracian Chersonnesus<sup>16</sup>, Kaesareia Troketta in Upper Lydia<sup>17</sup>, Pergamum in Mysia<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> D. Knibbe, *OeJh* 46, 1961/63, 175-182 = *I.Ephes.* vol.1 (= IK 11:1) no. 2; see also O. Masson, *REG* 100, 1987, 225-239 and G.E. Hanfmann, *Bull. Asia Institute (Detroit)* 30, 1989, 55-71 (*SEG* 36, 1011) (bibl., text); both Hanfmann and Masson rightly insist that the sanctuary of Artemis in Sardis mentioned in this inscription l.8 τὸ ἱερόν τῆς Ἀρτέμιδος τὸ ἰδρυμένον ὑφ' Ἐφεσίων is not the major Artemision of Sardis.

<sup>14</sup> The sources in D. Magie (*supra* n. 11), 1523f.

<sup>15</sup> For a discussion H.W. Parke, *The Oracles of Apollo in Asia Minor*, London 1985, 150-158.

<sup>16</sup> Franz, *Analecta Instituti* 1842, 136 (Kaibel 1034; K. Buresch, *Klaros. Untersuchungen zum Orakelwesen des späteren Altertums*, Leipzig 1889, 81 no. IX; *Inschriften von Kallipolis* [= IK 19] 11).

<sup>17</sup> K. Buresch, *op.cit.* 10; J. Keil - A. von Premerstein, *Bericht über eine Reise in Lydien und der südlichen Aiolis* (= *Denkschr. Wien* 53: 2), Wien 1908, 8 Nr. 16.

<sup>18</sup> *CIG* 3528 (Kaibel 1035; M. Fränkel, *Die Inschriften von Pergamon*, vol.1, Berlin 1895, 239f.; *IGRR* 4, 1360); the decisive supplement which confirms the attribution to Klaros is due to C. Picard, *BCH* 26, 1922, 190f.

and Hierapolis/Pammukkale in Phrygia<sup>19</sup>; an epitaph from Odessos/Varna attests at least an embassy to Clarus for the same reason, but without giving a text of the oracle brought back<sup>20</sup>. Although some scholars doubted whether all these texts should be connected with the same plague (after all, the symptoms of the disease as disclosed in the inscriptions differ), the oracles are so close and homogenous and the plague after 165 made such an impact that the unity seems virtually certain<sup>21</sup>; a further confirmation might come from our inscription which Knibbe connected with the Parthian Monument of Lucius Verus in Ephesus – a monument which commemorated this same expedition which had brought the disease.

Less easy to determine the petitioners. The text makes it clear (as Merkelbach realized, against Knibbe) that they cannot be the Ephesians; they have to call the goddess from Ephesus (ll.5. 16). There are further items which point towards an identification: (i) Artemis plays a central role in their town (προκαθηγετίς 1.3<sup>22</sup>), which (ii) is somehow connected with Lake Koloë. (iii) Perhaps it is large enough to have semi-professional choirs of trained girls and boys: the Pergamene plague oracle asks for such choirs from Pergamum in order to appease the gods at home with hymns<sup>23</sup>; and the Hierapolis oracle demands an embassy to be sent to Clarus, such embassies containing usually trained choirs<sup>24</sup>. Only large and rich towns could afford such choirs – the size and richness of Pergamum is beyond doubt, and Hierapolis presumably had similar choirs as an important cult center of Cybele<sup>25</sup>. A likely guess which takes account of all three items would be Sardis, a large town not far away from the sanctuary of Artemis Koloene and where Artemis played an important role, being called Σαρδιανή<sup>26</sup>.

Sardis would have another advantage: its close ties with Ephesus would explain some peculiarities of the god who had given the oracle. A first guess would be Apollo of either Clarus or Didyma. Closer reasoning narrows down the choice to Clarus: all oracles against the plague issue from Clarus, and they have a very definite character which marks them clearly off from those of Didyma. Louis Robert once pointed out the essential differences

<sup>19</sup> G. Pugliese Carratelli, ASAA 41/42, 1963/64, 357-366.

<sup>20</sup> IGBulg 1, 224 (Peck 1145); cp. L. Robert, RevPhil 33, 1959, 190; H.W. Parke (supra n. 15) 158.

<sup>21</sup> Doubts in Keil–Premerstein (supra n. 17) 10f., arguments for unity in H.W. Parke (supra n. 15) 150f.

<sup>22</sup> Προκαθηγετίς is a title of Athena in Phaselis (CIG 4332) and of Hekate in Lycian Sidyma, Roscher 1 (1886) 2; προκαθηγεμών is the title given to Artemis in Ephesos (I.Ephes. vol.1 [IK 11:1] no.20) and Iasos, Inschriften von Iasos (IK 28) 88,3. 92,7. 248,5; more common is ἀρχηγετίς, e.g. to Athena in Athens, IG II/III<sup>2</sup> 3175; Roma in Attaleia, SEG 2, 696. 17, 582; Eleuthera in Lycian Antiphellos and Myros, L.Robert OMS 2,1010. – See also the oracle given to Hierapolis which stresses the role of Apollon as Archegetes: the oracles are inscribed κατ' ἐπιταγήν θεοῦ ἀρχηγέτου Ἀπόλλωνος, ASAA 41/42, 1963/64, 357 Πα.

<sup>23</sup> Pergamon (supra n.18) l.24ff.

<sup>24</sup> Hierapolis (supra n.19) l. 22ff.; for the custom of such embassies (proskyneseis) L. Robert, CRAI 1968, 591f. = OMS 5, 571f.

<sup>25</sup> See Strab.13, 4, 14 p.630 C.

<sup>26</sup> CIG 3459 = I. Sardis 55.



between the texts from those two sites: (i) practically all oracles of the Diymaeian Apollo were recorded in the sanctuary and none outside, in the home of the petitioners, whereas all Clarian oracles come exclusively from these home-towns; and (ii) the Didymaeian oracles were all given to individuals and concerned mostly matters of ritual propriety, whereas the Clarian oracles were all given to entire communities and concerned communal calamities such as plagues, earthquakes, warfare<sup>27</sup>. (iii) Furthermore, in all the Clarian plague oracles as well as in other oracles – one given to Syedra, a second one to Iconium, both plagued by external strife<sup>28</sup> – the main ritual act to avert the evil is the erection of a statue – of Apollon Alexikakos with his bow in the plague oracles<sup>29</sup>, of Ares bound by Dike or Thesmos in Syedra and Iconium.

All this points to Clarus and makes the Diymaeian god highly unlikely. There are, though, three differences to take into account between the plague oracles we already knew and the new one. (i) In the former oracles, the erection of the statue is accessory to a fairly detailed ritual which we lack in our text. (ii) In the other texts, the cure is closely connected with the Clarian cult, the statue to be erected being one of Apollo (Κλάριος as the text from Hierapolis specifies); our text prescribes to install the statue of Artemis from Ephesus, not Apollo from Clarus – and Ephesus is given even more prominence because the actual stone has been put up there. (iii) Which leads to the third difference: as stated above, all the Clarian oracles were inscribed in the home town of the petitioners; our text comes from Ephesus, from where the healing statue originated.

The first difference might just follow from the mutilation of the stone and the consequent loss of an unknown portion of the text: a ritual might have been ordered there. More serious are the other differences which are interconnected. Knibbe argued that Apollo was not the Clarian god but his younger brother, the Ephesian Μαντεῖος τῆς πόλεως Ἀπόλλων whose statue was, between 105 and 120 AD, erected in the prytaneion and which, in his view, attested an actual Apolline oracle in Ephesus which is otherwise unattested<sup>30</sup>: this would explain both the role of Ephesian Artemis and why the text was found in Ephesus.

This might seem tempting. Nevertheless, it is somewhat odd that this local oracle should not have been better attested in a town as well known as Ephesus. In later Ephesian inscriptions, Apollo in the Prytaneion is Apollon Κλάριος<sup>31</sup>; given the close ties between

<sup>27</sup> L. Robert, CRAI 1986, 590-592 = OMS 5, 570-572.

<sup>28</sup> L. Robert, Documents de l'Asie Mineure méridionale, Geneva/Paris 1966, 91-9; H.W. Parke (supra n. 15) 159 adds IGR 1, 767 (dedication from Hadrianopolis/Edirne: a group of women puts up statues according to the order of Apollon Klarios) and, tentatively, Corinth, Paus. 2, 2, 8.

<sup>29</sup> Kallipolis (n. 16) l.29f.; Kaisareia (n. 17) C 7ff.; Hierapolis (n. 19) l.18-20 (A. Klarios); the oracle to Pergamum (n. 18) lacks the end which in the other examples contains this prescription.

<sup>30</sup> D. Knibbe, Der Staatsmarkt. Die Inschriften des Prytaneions (Forschungen in Ephesos IX:1:1), Wien 1981, 27 no.B 24 (= I.Ephes. vol.4 [= IK 14] 1024), see D. Knibbe, *ibid.* 102 n.203.

<sup>31</sup> D. Knibbe, *op. cit.* 55 no.C 1,3 (I.Ephes. vol.4 [= IK 14] 1060) (IIIp init.); 67 no. F 12,12 (*ibid.* 1072) (do.).

Ephesus and Clarus, the "mantic Apollo of our Town" could already have been the god of Clarus, worshipped in Ephesus without possessing necessarily an oracle there. But if we thus fall back on Clarus, we would have to explain why a Clarian oracle given to a third town was inscribed in Ephesus. There might be an easy explanation. The other pest oracles show that the Clarian god used to take into account the local cultic specialties (in the case of Pergamon he stressed the cult of the polis divinities Zeus, Athena, Dionysus, Asklepios, in the one of Kallipolis the role of Persephone, in the oracle to Hierapolis the ties between Clarian and Carian Apollo): thus, in our town Artemis must have played an important role – as she did in Sardis (see above). In Western Asia Minor, this could already be enough to establish narrow ties with Ephesus and its Artemis cult – ties which were especially close between Ephesus and Sardis and its Artemis cult, as the sacrilege inscription demonstrates<sup>32</sup>. The Ephesian copy of the oracle then would be an honorary copy given by the Sardians to the town where the help came from – perhaps with the additional aim of honoring Lucius Verus at whose monument it was displayed.

#### 4.

The oracle presents Artemis as an averter of evil. It is not a widespread function of Artemis; whereas Greek cult knows an Apollon Alexikakos, there is no similar epiclesis of Artemis. But there exists an Artemis – often called, with a not very specific epiclesis, Soteira<sup>33</sup> – who has comparable functions, and, more interesting, is sometimes connected with fire and torches. To be precise: whereas one torch is a very common attribute of Artemis of no importance to our problem<sup>34</sup>, two torches – as in the image ordered by the oracle – are rare and specific: they belong to Artemis Soteira in Megara<sup>35</sup> and Delus<sup>36</sup> and to an even more interesting Artemis Phosphoros in Byzantium<sup>37</sup>, Odessus<sup>38</sup> and (attested in the Latin form Diana Lucifera) in Philippi<sup>39</sup>. Etiological tales from Megara, Byzantium and Athens connect this aspect of Artemis with help in collective disaster and, in two cases, with fire

<sup>32</sup> See above n. 13.

<sup>33</sup> For the epiclesis see F. Graf, *Nordionische Kulte. Religionsgeschichtliche und epigraphische Untersuchungen zu den Kulturen von Chios, Erythrai, Klazomenai und Phokaia* (= *Bibliotheca Helvetica Romana* 21), Rome 1985, 242 n. 188-190; for many details of the following discussion *ibid.* 228-236.

<sup>34</sup> Callim., *hymn.* 3, 6-12; more F. Graf, *op.cit.* 228.

<sup>35</sup> Coins: Head 394; L. Lacroix, *Les reproductions des statues sur la monnaie grecque*, Liège 1949, 293s.; L. Robert, in: N. Firatli – L. Robert, *Les stèles funéraires de Byzance gréco-romaine*, Paris 1964, 157.

<sup>36</sup> Relief I.Délos 2379 (BCH 90, 1966, 454 fig.6); two statuettes I.Délos 1417 B ii 57 and 68.

<sup>37</sup> Coins, L. Robert (*supra* n. 35) 155.

<sup>38</sup> *IGBulg* 1<sup>2</sup>, no. 88.

<sup>39</sup> P. Ducrey, in: *Mélanges P. Collart*, Lausanne 1976, 155, connects an anepigraphical relief (fig.10) with the inscription BCH 57, 1933, 331 no.7.

phenomena: in Megara, nightly Artemis terrorized the soldiers of Mardonius and made them an easy prey to the Megarian defenders<sup>40</sup>; in Byzantium, the same divinity warned the defenders of the town with nightly fires in the sky when the army of Philipp II. attacked them<sup>41</sup>; in Athens finally, in 404/3 nocturnal Artemis showed the way to Thrasybulos with a fiery column "at the place where now there is an altar of Artemis Phosphoros", according to Clement of Alexandria<sup>42</sup>. Artemis, fire, two torches and the protection of the polis against outside dangers seem closely connected, the image ordered by the oracle fits into a perfect Greek background: this Artemis is the equivalent of Apollon Alexikakos with his arrows. We should not forget that fire, in antiquity, is (besides the sun) the main source of light, and that light, in Greek thought, is closely associated with life and with salvation<sup>43</sup>.

The provision to set up a golden image of Artemis belongs to the same sphere of symbolism. Often, a golden statue was just a precious gift to the gods (even if gilded). In our context, however, there could be more to it: the use of gold for amulets might be as pertinent<sup>44</sup>, and even more so its use in purification rituals both in Pythagoreanism and in polis ceremonies<sup>45</sup>. More important still, the oracle orders an ἄγαλμα χρυσοφάεν-νον, "gold-shining": any golden image has a stunning visual aspect, like being itself the source of light or fire<sup>46</sup>; cognate adjectives, χρυσοφαής and χρυσαυγής, denote among other things the face of Helios<sup>47</sup>. Thus, the same fire which is sought for in the torches is important also in the over-all appearance of the helping statue.

But in iconography, Artemis with two torches is close to Hecate, as the confusion of the numismatists already showed. And not only of the numismatists: there are some instances where Artemis Soteira or Phosphoros with her two torches is, at the same time, called Hecate<sup>48</sup>. And Hecate easily leads to magic.

The originality of our oracle lies in the etiology of the plague. Among the other oracles, only the one from Hierapolis preserves an etiology: the plague results from the wrath of the

<sup>40</sup> Paus. 1, 40, 2.

<sup>41</sup> Hesych. Miles. FGrHist 390 F 1, 27; St.B. s.v. Βόσπορος.

<sup>42</sup> Clem., Strom. 1, 163, 2.

<sup>43</sup> Short bibliography in F. Graf (supra n.33) 232 n.121.

<sup>44</sup> Plin., nat. 33, 84 ut minus noceant quae inferantur veneficia; compare φάρμακα in our text, 1.6. – The magical papyri, though, only partly confirm this: PGM VII 580 prescribes for an amulet a gold or silver or tin leaf or hieratic papyrus; cp. also VII 719. XI a 39. XII 210; see A. Audollent, *Defixionum tabellae*, Paris 1904, xxxivf.; R.G. Collingwood – R.P. Wright, *The Roman inscriptions of Britain*, vol.1, Oxford 1965, Nr.436; R. Kotansky, in: C.A. Faraone – D. Obbink (eds.), *Magika hiera. Ancient Greek magic and religion*, New York/Oxford 1991, 114-116.

<sup>45</sup> Pythagoreanism: Iambl., *vita Pyth.* 153; ritual of Cos F. Sokolowski, *Lois sacrées des cités grecques*, Paris 1969, no. 154 A 29 etc.; more in R. Parker, *Miasma. Pollution and purification in early Greek religion*, Oxford 1983, 228.

<sup>46</sup> Pind., *Ol.* 1, 1; Plin., nat. 33, 59 (aurique experimentum ignis est, ut simili colore rubeat ignescatque et ipsum).

<sup>47</sup> χρυσοφαής Eur., *Hec.* 636; χρυσαυγής PGM 3, 133 (ibid. χρυσοπρόσωπος).

<sup>48</sup> The evidence in F. Graf (supra n. 33) 229f.

earth (χθὼν κοτέουσα 1) and the gods (θεῶν ὄδυσημοσύναισι 5), and they have to be appeased – therefore the elaborate list of sacrifices with an emphasis on the chthonic powers, Gaia (7), Demeter (12), the ἥρωες χθόνιοι (15). In Pergamum – where no etiology is given – the intensified cult of the polis divinities rather aims at reinforcing their help than to ward off their wrath; in Troketta, the part of the text which could have contained the etiology is missing, and the ritual ablutions prescribed give no clue<sup>49</sup>. In Kallipolis finally, the part of the inscription which could have given the etiology is heavily damaged (ll. 9-18); the oracle demands libations and sacrifices to the gods of the Underworld, including Hades and Persephone (23) – perhaps the etiology was similar to the one for Hierapolis.

An any rate, everywhere the reasons for the plague were sought in the divine world, according to a well-known and wide-spread explanatory model which coexists with the scientific explanation<sup>50</sup>; there is no other instance for an explanation from the world of human black magic, as in our inscription where the evil art of a μάγος and his defixio with the help of waxen figurines is held responsible.

In general, black magic and witchcraft as an explanation of misfortune are not new; on the contrary, in many societies, witchcraft is the accepted explanation for otherwise unexplained calamity<sup>51</sup>. The Greeks and Romans were no exception – when Cicero's contemporary, C. Scribonius Curio, spectacularly lost his memory at the beginning of a judicial speech, he explained this with black magic<sup>52</sup>, as did Libanius, when he was struck by headaches, speech inhibitions and rheumatism at the same time<sup>53</sup> – to cite only two examples. But usually, this pattern of explanation held good only in the world of private calamities<sup>54</sup>: to explain communal mishap by black magic, as our oracle does, is nearly unheard of in the Graeco-Roman world. One possible exception is a clause in the public imprecations of Teus directed against people who "make lethal pharmaka (φάρμακα δηλητήρια) against the Teians either in common or a private individual"<sup>55</sup>: given the wide meaning of φάρμακον which, as Plato most clearly shows, meant both poison and black magic<sup>56</sup> (the latter

<sup>49</sup> Ablutions: C 3-5.

<sup>50</sup> See R. Parker (supra n. 45) 256-280, who, however, on p. 256f. underlines the much wider sense than just "plague" λοιμός as a result of divine wrath could have.

<sup>51</sup> Still a model study is E.E. Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft, oracles and magic among the Azande*, Oxford 1937 (abridged version 1976); for the Ancient Near East, see Marie-Louise Thomsen, *Zauberdiagnose und Schwarze Magie in Mesopotamien* (The Carsten Niehbur Institute of Near Eastern Studies, Publications 2) Kopenhagen 1987, 9-14 (Mesopotamia); J.F. Borghouts, art. 'Magie', in: *Lexikon der Ägyptologie* vol.3 (1980) col.1137-1151 (Egypt).

<sup>52</sup> Cic., *Brutus* 217.

<sup>53</sup> Liban., or. 1, 247-250 etc., see C. Bonner, 'Witchcraft in the lecture room of Libanius', *TAPA* 63, 1932, 24-44.

<sup>54</sup> See already Plat., rep. 1, 364 C: the itinerant priests (ἀγύρται καὶ μάντιες) promise "damage to enemies" only among individuals; the same holds good for Plato's legal provisions, legg. 11, 933 CE.

<sup>55</sup> R. Meiggs – D. Lewis, *A selection of Greek historical inscriptions to the end of the fifth century*, Oxford 1988, no. 30 A who, however, read only the possibility of poison.

<sup>56</sup> Plato, legg. 11, 932 E.

meaning attested also in our text), I think the Teians really reckoned with the possibility that their entire polis could be the victim of witchcraft<sup>57</sup>.

The same holds true for the cure – there too might be only one tenuous parallel. We saw that Artemis with her two torches blends with Hecate – and Hecate can be an averter of demoniac evil as well: Porphyry knows an oracle of Pan which, as the first line suggests, serves to avert demons; it orders to fashion a statuette of Hecate, with a torch, a sword and a whip<sup>58</sup>. Though the attributes are different – perhaps in order to make an unambiguous Hecate, not an Artemis-Hecate-Soteira – the function comes close to the one in our oracle.

The rest of the story – the torches of Artemis burning the waxen figurines – is isolated in the Graeco-Roman world. When black magic was suspected, one had to find the magical objects – after the death of Germanicus, his private rooms were searched<sup>59</sup>, in the case of Libanius, his friends had a close look at his lecture room; in a story by Jerome, the objects are dug out from under the threshold<sup>60</sup>. Presumably, they then had to be destroyed, though we have only one story, late and fictitious, where one has only to remove the nails from the voodoo-doll which had caused the illness to heal the patient<sup>61</sup>. However that may be, the ritual destruction of figurines which cannot be located (and whose firm location is without importance anyway) is without a parallel in the Graeco-Roman world.

Fire, on the other hand, is prominent in Near Eastern rituals to undo black magic: the two main Assyrian ritual books which are pertinent bear the simple title "Fire" and "Burning" – *Shurpu* and *Maqlû*<sup>62</sup>. To us, *Maqlû* – counter-magic against securely diagnosed attacks of witchcraft – is more important, *Shurpu* being concerned with averting evil from less specific sources; and at first glance, it seems promising. Prominent among its counter-rituals is the

<sup>57</sup> The Latin inscription from Tuder, however, in which Iupiter O.M. is thanked for having brought to light a defixio which cursed some decuriones (CIL 11,3639, see H.S. Versnel, in C. Faraone – D. Obbink [supra n. 44] 63), probably belongs into the private sphere, despite the role of the officials (I owe the reference to Henk Versnel).

<sup>58</sup> Porph., *de phil. ex orac. haur. frg.* 130 Wolff = Eus., *Praep. Evang.* 5, 14, 2. See S.I. Johnston, *Hecate Soteira. A study of Hecate's roles in the Chaldaean Oracles and related literature*, Atlanta 1990, 130f.

<sup>59</sup> Tac. *ann.* 2,69.

<sup>60</sup> Hieron., *Vita Hilarionis* 12 (A.A.R. Bastiaensen, in: *Vite dei santi*, vol.3, Mailand 1975); Jerome insists that usually this is the first step towards healing, only Saint Hilarion preferred to talk first to the demon *ne ... solutus incantationibus recessisse daemon videretur* (12,10): the Saint has his own power. See Th. Hopfner, *Griechisch-ägyptischer Offenbarungszauber. Seine Methoden. Teil 1*, Amsterdam 1990, 20 (= *Studien zur Palaeographie und Papyruskunde*. vol.23:1, Frankfurt 1924) and the commentary of Bastiaensen *ad loc.*; see also Sophronius, *Narratio miraculorum SS Cyri et Ioannis sapientium Anargyrorum* 55 (ed. N. Fernandez Marcos, *Los 'Thaumata' de Sofronio*, Madrid 1975; also in Audollent [supra n.44] cxxii).

<sup>61</sup> Sophronius, *op.cit.* 35 (Audollent cxxiif.).

<sup>62</sup> Erica Reiner, *Šurpu. A collection of Sumerian and Akkadian incantations* (= *Arch. f. Orientforsch.*, Beih. 11), Graz 1958; G. Meier, *Die assyrische Beschwörungssammlung Maqlû* (*Arch. f. Orientforsch.* Beih. 2) Berlin 1937, see J. Bottéro, *Mythes et rites de Babylone*, Geneva/Paris 1985, 163-219; Tzvi Abusch, *Babylonian witchcraft literature. Case studies* (= *Brown Judaic Studies* 132), Atlanta 1987; M.-L. Thomsen (above n.51).

burning of figurines, waxen ones as well as others; both torches and fires play a role – to cite just one invocation, Maqlû I 135

"I lift the torch, I burn the figurine / of Utaku, of Sêdu etc. [139] and of all evil which attacks men. / Liquefy, dissolve, melt! / Your smoke shall ascend to the sky! Your embers shall extinguish the sun!"

At a closer look, though, the similarity is superficial. Although in the etiology of witchcraft the fabrication and burying of figurines is important<sup>63</sup>, the figurines which are burnt are made in the course of the counter-ritual, and they represent the witch and the sorcerer, are not the product of their witchcraft; accordingly, the fire is handled by the cathartic priest; on the theological level, the priest asks the Fire-god to destroy the sorcerer, not his fabrications<sup>64</sup>. One is left with a closely comparable etiology (production of figurines by a sorcerer) and the very general fact that burning figurines undoes a witchcraft attack. Thus, one could only argue for a vague Near Eastern influence on our oracle – or one could be content with the interpretation that the oracle blends traditional Greek ideas about Artemis with equally traditional Greek ideas about black magic by means of voodoo dolls<sup>65</sup>; given the survival of Mesopotamian magic well into imperial times and its blending with the Graeco-Roman world, I would advise against to narrow an outlook<sup>66</sup>.

The oracle ends by prescribing sanctions in case the petitioners should not offer due thanks to Artemis: in this case, they should suffer the punishment of fire. The other plague oracles do not preserve comparanda, although a similar, less specific clause seems provided in the oracle to Hierapolis whose end, however is lost – at least its final reference to pious behavior (which might sound rather gnomic) becomes more specific in the light of the new

<sup>63</sup> Maqlû IV 27-47; among the materials mentioned are wax, dough, asphalt, clay.

<sup>64</sup> Maqlû I 110 etc., see T. Abusch, (supra n.62) 24; id., 'Mesopotamian anti-witchcraft literature. Texts and studies. Part I: The nature of Maqlu, its character, divisions and calendrical setting', JNES 37, 1985, 91-100.

<sup>65</sup> Another vague Near Eastern parallel concerns the story pattern: someone makes a figurine to do harm – the figurine is hidden (buried) – it works at a distance until a divinity undoes the charm. Such a myth, starting from the Babylonian creation story, is told in A. Falkenstein, *Die Haupttypen der sumerischen Beschwörung* (= Leipziger semitistische Studien, N.F.1), Leipzig 1931, 50.

<sup>66</sup> To give just a few random instances: the Sumerian goddess of the Netherworld, Ereshkigal, reappears in the Magical Papyri, see the discussion in W. Burkert, *Die orientalisierende Epoche in der griechischen Religion und Literature* (= Sb.Heidelberg 1984:1), Heidelberg 1984, 68; after the death of Germanicus, defixiones and other magical paraphernalia were dug out from floor and walls of his rooms (Tac. ann. 2, 69, 3) – already Assyrian texts reckon with the hiding of figurines in walls, Maqlû IV 33-35; W. Lambert, *Arch. f. Orientf.* 18, 1957/58, 292, R. C. Thompson, *Assyrian medical texts*, London 1923, 86, 1; in other texts, they are hidden under the threshold, Maqlû IV 34, as in Plat. legg.11, 933 B (wax figurines). Hieron. vit. Hilar. 12, 10 (Gaza). – The professional magicians in Theocr. id. 2, 90. 162 are Assyrian; in later texts, Chaldaea is taken together with Egypt as the origin of magic, Claudian. in Rufin. 1, 145-148; (Ps.-)Cyprian. conf. 3, 10, see Th. Hopfner (supra n.60) vol. 2, 22f. §15: this might be more than just literary convention, attesting the survival of the Mesopotamian traditions well into Graeco-Roman time, at least under the Seleucids, there were in Babylon families of learned priests busying themselves with the magical tradition, according to the texts edited and commented by A. Ungnad, 'Besprechungskunst und Astrologie in Babylon', *Arch. f. Orientf.* 14, 1941/44, 251-282.

Ephesian text<sup>67</sup>. The thought that the gods punish neglect of religious duties is too well known in ancient religion to need documentation; more interestingly it occurs in some of the Lydian confession steles which tell about divine wrath after a neglected promise of thanksgiving for divine help in disease<sup>68</sup> and where fever – the punishment of fire – is well attested in this connection<sup>69</sup>. The final clause of our text thus points – in its surprising brevity – to a Western Anatolian background well known both to the oracle god and to the petitioners.

## 5.

Whatever the origin of the ritual details, our oracle counteracts the defixio of the entire town with a collective festival, performed by the polis around the statue of Artemis in her temple, with her two torches, and with a thanksgiving ritual with sacrifices and hymns in the sanctuary of Artemis Koloene. According to most current definitions of magic and religion in our society and science, the defixio would be magic, and the countermeasures would be religion<sup>70</sup>. The ancients would have agreed – but they would not have construed any categorical opposition and difference between the two: rather, both rituals, the clandestine of the unseizable magos and the polis festivals, are part of the same general phenomenon – explaining and doing away with crisis through recourse to the supernatural world. The ancients used the term magic normatively, the descriptive use and the consequent categorical oppositions are ours, and they are quite wrong. We should rather stick to the "emic" definitions<sup>71</sup>.

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<sup>67</sup> Hierapolis (n. 19) ii B 26-39.

<sup>68</sup> H. Malay – G. Petzl, *Epigr.Anat.* 12, 1988, 150 Nr. 3 (Bergama Museum, II/III AD) (wish for a child); E. Varinlioglu, *Epigr.Anat.* 13, 1989, 42 Nr. 2 (health of a son) (Usak Museum); see already P. Paris, *BCH* 8, 1884, 376 (unknown reason).

<sup>69</sup> F. Steinleitner, *Die Beicht im Zusammenhang mit der sakralen Rechtspflege in der Antike*, Leipzig 1913, 98. – See the contribution of Henk Versnel to the Athens Seminar, to be published in *Kernos*.

<sup>70</sup> Though the minimal consensus prevalent in our studies – viz. that there is a categorical difference between magic and religion – fortunately begins to crack, see C. R. Phillips III, 'The sociology of religious knowledge in the Roman empire', in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* 2:16:3, Berlin/New York 1986, 2677-2773, esp. 2681-2697.

<sup>71</sup> As has been forcefully argued for another field, medieval and Renaissance Christianity, by Natalie Zemon Davis, 'Some tasks and themes in the study of popular religion', in Ch. Trinkhous and H. A. Oberman (ed.), *The pursuit of holiness in late medieval and Renaissance religion*, Leiden 1974, 307-336; but see the opposite position, as forcefully argued, in H. S. Versnel, 'Some reflections on the relationship magic-religion', *Numen* 38, 1991, 177-197.