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AN EPICUREAN PRIEST FROM APAMEA IN SYRIA

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AN EPICUREAN PRIEST FROM APAMEA IN SYRIA¹I. The inscription from Apamea recording the dedication made by Aurelius Belius Philippus:
its discovery, description, text, translation, date

Among several new inscriptions from Apamea on the Orontes in Syria published in 1973 by Jean-Paul Rey-Coquais² is one which is of considerable interest to students of Epicureanism. Carved on a reused column, it was discovered east of the Great Colonnade³ by Kamel Chéhadé, who at the time was Inspector of Antiquities in the province of Hamāh. It was deeply embedded in the ground, upside down. Only the last six lines were visible, and the first of these is severely worn. The letters are generally 4 cm. high, but much smaller letters occur four times (lines 3, 6); the interlinear spaces are 2 cm.; and the length of the lines is about 55 cm. Alternate lines are indented – lines 2 and 4 one space, 6 four spaces. Letter-forms include elongated alpha (the second oblique stroke extending above the apex) and the rounded forms of epsilon, sigma, and omega (ΑΕΩ) – forms popular in the Roman period. After the “head” of the last letter of AYP in line 3 is what I originally took to be a small sigma, but Rey-Coquais assures me that it is in fact an inverted S marking the abbreviated form.⁴

Rey-Coquais’ text is based on his examination both of the stone itself, which he saw in 1968, and of a squeeze.⁵ He provides a photograph of the squeeze (Pl. V.2) – a photograph which, thanks to his kindness, is reproduced here (Plate XII,3). In a letter dated 19th April 1986 he informed me that on a further visit to Apamea he re-examined the inscription, though in great haste. By this time the piece of column was no longer embedded in the ground, but he was unable to read anything which he had not read before. It seems that the stone may now have disappeared, for J. Ch. Balty informs me that he has been unable to rediscover it.

I have not had the opportunity to examine either the stone or Rey-Coquais’ squeeze. On the basis of the photograph of the squeeze, I read and restore the text as follows:

-- η.ον|ι --- ἐκ κ[ελεύ]-
σεως θεοῦ μεγίστου
ἁγίου Βήλου, Αὐρ(ήλιος) Βήλιος
Φίλιππος ἱερεὺς καὶ
5 διάδοχος ἐν Ἀπαμείᾳ
τῶν Ἐπικουρείων.

Before 1 perhaps [ἀνέθηκε] Smith || 1 Smith: perhaps [ἐξ] ἐκ[ελεύ]-: --- ON --- ἐπὶ [κελεύ]- Rey-Coquais || 3 Βήλου, (after Βήλου there appears to be a point above the line) Smith: Βήλου Rey-Coquais.

¹ I am very grateful to Mme Janine Balty, M. Jean Ch. Balty, Dr. E. D. Hunt, Dr. N. P. Milner, Dr. D. Obbink, Prof. J.-P. Rey-Coquais, and Dr. D. N. Sedley for reading a draft of this article and suggesting improvements. They must not be held responsible for any faults, particularly since I have had the temerity to reject some of their suggestions. I am further indebted to Dr. Obbink for sending me proof-copies of some pages of his edition of Philodemus’ *Περὶ εὐσεβείας*, to be published by Oxford University Press, and to Prof. Rey-Coquais for supplying the photograph reproduced in Plate XII,3. I wish to thank also Dr. G. Rehrenböck, Mr. A. R. R. Sheppard, and Mr. A. G. Woodhead for information and advice, and Mrs. S. R. Stoddart for providing an immaculate secretarial service from a distance of 800 kilometres.

² “Inscriptions grecques d’Apamée”, *Annales Archéologiques Arabes Syriennes* 23 (1973) 39–84.

³ For photographs of sections of the Great Colonnade, see J. and J. Ch. Balty, “Apamée de Syrie, archéologie et histoire. I. Des origines à la Tétrarchie”, *ANRW* II 8 (Berlin–New York, 1978) pl. II.2–III.1-2, between pp. 128–129; J. Ch. Balty, *Guide d’Apamée* (Bruxelles, 1981) 47–49 (in colour); J. Ch. Balty, “Apamea in Syria in the Second and Third Centuries A.D.”, *JRS* 78 (1988) pl. X.1.

⁴ Rey-Coquais, *op. cit.* (n. 2) does not mention this feature.

⁵ Rey-Coquais, *op. cit.* (n. 2) 39, 67.

“[. . . was dedicated, by command] of the mightiest holy god Bel, by Aurelius Belius Philippus, his priest and head of the Epicureans in Apamea.”

In 1, Rey-Coquais' ἐπὶ would not give the required sense, whereas ἐκ/ἐξ is just what is wanted (see LSJ s.v. κέλευσις, κέλευσμα, ἐγκέλευσις, and Lampe s.v. κέλευσις). The god's instructions will have been conveyed in an oracular response: for oracles of Bel, identified with Zeus, at Apamea, see Dio Cassius 79.8.5–6, quoting the responses which Septimius Severus received both before and after he became Emperor, Dio Cassius 79.40.4, quoting the response received by Macrinus, and the bilingual (Greek and Latin) inscription on an altar discovered at Vasio (Vaison).⁶

The inscription cannot be precisely dated. The find-place of the piece of column, which, as I have mentioned, had been reused, is of no assistance whatsoever. As for the style of lettering, Rey-Coquais now (in letters of December 1995 – February 1996) thinks that it is “late”, being led to this view more by “l'allure irrégulière de notre inscription, plus que tel ou tel détail”, and he tentatively suggests that the inscription may belong to “l'époque de l'empereur Julien, à laquelle la philosophie brilla particulièrement à Apamée”. But the lettering, whether one considers points of detail⁷ or its overall appearance, does not seem to require a date later than the second or third century A.D. I consider a date as late as the reign of Julian highly improbable. By then Epicureanism was probably virtually extinct,⁸ and in this connection it is to be noted that Julian himself says that by his time most of Epicurus' works had perished (*Ep.* 89b Bidez, 301c–d). Philosophy certainly did flourish under Julian, especially in Syria, but the system favoured by the emperor was Neoplatonism, and he had no love for Epicureanism; in fact, in the passage just mentioned he commends the gods for having destroyed Epicurus' works.

In his published discussion Rey-Coquais rightly considers whether the *nomen* Aurelius can help us to date the inscription. He points out that it does not preclude a date prior to the *Constitutio Antoniniana* (A.D. 212), whereby Caracalla granted Roman citizenship to all free citizens of the Empire, and his suggestion that Aurelius Belius Philippus was an obligee of L. Aurelius Verus, who arrived in Syria in A.D. 163, could be correct; in connection with it, he compares the bonds of clientship linking the important Apamean family of the Flavii Appii to L. Verus.⁹ However, he implies that he considers an earlier date possible, when he points out that a certain Aurelius Heraclides Eupyrides was Stoic scholarch in Athens under Hadrian.¹⁰ I shall suggest later that our inscription may be Hadrianic, though a date later in the second century or in the third century, probably in the first half of it, is perhaps more likely.

Another matter about which we are ignorant is the identity of the object dedicated. One possibility is that the column supported a statue.

In his otherwise helpful discussion of the inscription the first editor has little to say about its

⁶ *IGRR* I 14; *IG* XIV 2482; *CIL* XII 1277; Dessau *ILS* 4333. On the oracle of Bel at Apamea, see especially J. Balty, “L'oracle d'Apamée”, *AC* 50 (1981) 5–14, pl. I–II. J. Balty quotes and comments on our inscription in her article (10–11 n. 34) and J. Ch. Balty, “Apamea in Syria . . .” (see n. 3) 95 makes a brief mention of it, as do J. and J. Ch. Balty, *op. cit.* (n. 3) 129 n. 184.

⁷ Including the inverted S abbreviation, which, though more common later on, especially in the sixth century A.D., is found in inscriptions of the second and third centuries. See e.g. M. Avi-Yonah, “Abbreviations in Greek Inscriptions [The Near East, 200 B.C. – A.D. 1100]”, reprinted in A. N. Oikonomides (compiler), *Abbreviations in Greek Inscriptions, Papyri, Manuscripts and Early Printed Books* (Chicago, 1974) 37. As for the elongated form of alpha, it occurs from the first century A.D. onwards, according to W. Larfeld, *Handbuch der griechischen Epigraphik* II (Leipzig, 1902) 487 ff.

⁸ Even in Apamea, a “ville conservatrice”, which, unlike Antioch, showed “résistance aux idées nouvelles et . . . fidélité à la culture hellénique” (J. Balty, *op. cit.* [n. 6] 12–13).

⁹ For his published discussion of the date of our inscription, see Rey-Coquais, *op. cit.* (n. 2) 67; on the Flavii Appii of Apamea, see Rey Coquais, *op. cit.* (n. 2) 66.

¹⁰ *IG* II² 3801 (cf. 3989). J. Glucker, *Antiochus and the Late Academy* (Göttingen, 1978) 366–367, doubts whether Aurelius Heraclides or Julius Zosimianus (*IG* II² 11551), each of whom is described as διάδοχος τῶν ἀπὸ Ζήνωνος λόγων, was scholarch, suggesting that the expression may mean rather “a professor of Zenonian philosophy”.

significance from the Epicurean point of view: he makes no reference to the history of Epicureanism in Syria; nor does he consider whether there is anything surprising about the combination of offices held by Aurelius Belius Philippus. The main purpose of the present article is to deal with these matters.

II. The Apamea inscription in the context of the history of Epicureanism in Syria

The philosophies for which Apamea is best known are Stoicism, Neopythagoreanism, and Neoplatonism: both Posidonius (c. 135–c. 51 B.C.), unique among the Stoics for the extraordinary range of his interests and knowledge, and Numenius (second half of the second century A.D.), a Neopythagorean who exercised strong influence on Plotinus and Neoplatonism, were natives of the place, and the celebrated Neoplatonist Iamblichus (A.D. c. 250–c. 326), though born in Chalcis in Coele Syria,¹¹ taught in Apamea. The news that there was an Epicurean community in the city under the Roman Empire is interesting, but not at all surprising, for Epicureanism had been well established in Syria in the first two centuries B.C.¹²

The first Syrian Epicurean of distinction known to us is Basilides of Tyre, the fifth head of the Epicurean school in Athens.¹³ He was scholar from 201/200 B.C. until his death in c. 175 B.C.¹⁴ 175 B.C. was the year in which the Seleucid king Antiochus IV (Epiphanes) began his twelve-year reign, during which the Epicurean philosopher Philonides is said to have succeeded in converting him after bombarding him with scores of specially composed treatises.¹⁵ Philonides continued as court-philosopher under Demetrius I (Soter) of Syria, who reigned 162–150 B.C. Alexander Balas, pretended son of Antiochus IV, who succeeded Demetrius I as king of Syria (150–145 B.C.), after defeating him in a battle in which Demetrius was killed, favoured the Stoics, but nevertheless welcomed the presence at court of the Epicurean philosopher Diogenes of Seleuceia on the Tigris.¹⁶ Unfortunately for Diogenes the boy-king Antiochus VI (Epiphanes Dionysus), son of Alexander, was less welcoming and ordered his throat to be cut.¹⁷ Maybe Diogenes almost deserved his bad end, because his character and behaviour, if accurately reported, did not reflect well on his school.¹⁸

Another Epicurean who was no credit to his school was Lysias of Tarsus, which, though in Cilicia, came under Seleucid rule, when it was renamed Antioch on the Cydnus, and so may be included here. Lysias, whose date is not known, was appointed priest of Heracles, refused to give up his office, and

¹¹ This Chalcis, between Berytus (Beirut) and Damascus, is not to be confused with the place of the same name situated about 50 miles north-east of Apamea.

¹² See especially W. Crönert, “Die Epikureer in Syrien”, *Jahreshefte des Österreichischen Archäologischen Instituts* 10 (1907) 145–152.

¹³ The four previous heads, in chronological order, were Epicurus, Hermarchus, Polystratus, and Dionysius. See Diog. Laert. 10.25.

¹⁴ Basilides was born c. 245 B.C. For his dates, and for the chronology of heads of the Epicurean school from Epicurus to Patro, see T. Dorandi, G. Indelli, and A. Tepedino Guerra, “Per la cronologia degli scolarchi Epicurei”, *CronErc* 9 (1979) 141–142, and T. Dorandi, *Ricerche sulla cronologia dei filosofi ellenistici* (Stuttgart, 1991) 45–54, 62–64.

¹⁵ The fragmentarily preserved biography of Philonides, by an anonymous author, is in *PHerc.* 1044, edited by W. Crönert, “Der Epikureer Philonides”, *Sitzungsberichte der Kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften* (Wien, 1900) 942–959, and by I. Gallo, *Frammenti biografici da papiri. II. La biografia dei filosofi* (Roma, 1980) 23–166. For references to other work on this text, see *Catalogo dei papiri ercolanesi*, sotto la direzione di M. Gigante (Napoli, 1979) 241–242, L. Amarante, G. Auriello, and R. Pappalardo (edd.), *Indici dei papiri ercolanesi in “Cronache Ercolanesi” 1971–1995*, terzo suppl. a *Cronache Ercolanesi* (Napoli 1995), 53–54, 126.

¹⁶ Ath. 5.211a–d. This Epicurean Diogenes (*RE* no. 47; R. Goulet [ed.], *Dictionnaire des philosophes antiques* II [Paris, 1994] 803) is not to be confused with the Diogenes of Seleucia (often called Diogenes of Babylon) who was head of the Stoic school in Athens at about the same time.

¹⁷ Ath. 5.211d.

¹⁸ Ath. 5.211b–d.

established himself as tyrant.¹⁹ A much more respectable Epicurean from Tarsus was a Diogenes, probably of the second half of the second century B.C., who wrote an epitome of Epicurus' ethical doctrines²⁰ and a work entitled ἐπιλεκτοὶ σχολαί (*Selected Disputations*);²¹ it is not certain whether he is to be identified with the philosopher Diogenes of Tarsus who composed poems²² and wrote a treatise on poetical problems.²³

Towards the end of the second century B.C. the Epicurean school in Athens appointed its second Syrian head, Zeno of Sidon.²⁴ Zeno, born c. 150 B.C., was scholarch (the seventh after Epicurus) from c. 110 B.C. until c. 75 B.C.²⁵ Possessing a sharp intellect, he was an able exponent of Epicureanism and a vigorous and effective polemicist. His writings were notable for their range as well as for their quantity, and it is regrettable that only meagre fragments of them are preserved.²⁶ He exercised considerable influence, not least on Philodemus, who was born in the Syrian city of Gadara between c. 110 and c. 100 B.C. and studied under him, probably in Athens.²⁷ At a date which is uncertain – perhaps in the 70s B.C., perhaps as late as the mid-50s B.C.²⁸ – Philodemus took up residence in Italy under the patronage of L. Calpurnius Piso Caesoninus, who probably owned the Herculaneum villa, the remains of whose library, consisting mainly of Epicurean works and including many by Philodemus himself,²⁹ were discovered in the eighteenth century. The villa had been overwhelmed in the eruption of Vesuvius in A.D. 79. Philodemus, though less able than Zeno as a philosophical thinker, was for many years an influential teacher, and his works are important sources of information about Epicurean philosophy.

Philodemus' death in or soon after 40 B.C. brings to a close a period of over 150 years which saw a succession of Syrian-born Epicureans exerting considerable influence through their writings and teachings in the country of their birth and/or elsewhere.³⁰ But, although he is the last Syrian-born Epicurean of whom we have substantial knowledge, and Crönert's account of the Epicureans in Syria³¹ concludes with him, our inscription proves that Epicureanism in Syria did not come to an end in the first century B.C. What the inscription proves is what one would in any case have expected, not only because the philosophy had been well established in that country for a long time, but also because we know that it continued to have a considerable following in other parts of the Greco-Roman world. For example, in Asia Minor there was a lively Epicurean presence in the second century A.D., as is evidenced by (*inter alia*) Lucian's *Alexander*, in which the Epicureans are represented as the chief opponents of the false

¹⁹ Ath. 5.215b–c.

²⁰ Diog. Laert. 10.118.

²¹ Diog. Laert. 10.26 (cf. 10.119, 138).

²² Strab. 14.5.15.

²³ Diog. Laert. 6.81.

²⁴ Also a native of Sidon and belonging to the second century B.C. was a certain Philocrates, otherwise unknown, whose epitaph was set up at Orchomenus in Boeotia, and whose discipleship of Epicurus is proclaimed in the following elegiac couplet: ἦ γὰρ ἀπὸ πρᾶτας μεμελημένος ἦς Ἐπικούρου | δόγμασιν εὐξυνέτοις, [ὦ]ς [θ]έμις ἀλικίας (*IG VII 3226*).

²⁵ He was certainly still alive, though aged, in 79/78 B.C., when Cicero heard him lecture in Athens (*Tusc.* 3.38).

²⁶ See K. von Fritz, "Zenon von Sidon", *RE X A* (1972) col. 122–138, and especially A. Angeli and M. Colaizzo, "I frammenti di Zenone Sidonio", *CronErc* 9 (1979) 47–133.

²⁷ Some of Philodemus' philosophical writings, e.g. his *Περὶ παρρησίας*, are based on notes which he made when attending Zeno's lectures.

²⁸ For a brief statement of the arguments on both sides, see E. Asmis, "Philodemus' Epicureanism", in *ANRW II* 36.4 2371 n. 7.

²⁹ About seventy are ascribed to Philodemus.

³⁰ Although Basilides, Zeno, and Philodemus did most of their teaching outside Syria, that country's production of these prominent Epicureans may be taken as indicative of the healthy state of Epicureanism there, and one may also reasonably assume that their success abroad in turn gave a boost to the philosophy in the places of their birth.

³¹ See n. 12 above.

prophet of Abonouteichos, and the massive inscription set up by the Epicurean Diogenes of Oinoanda,³² and one could reasonably assume that the situation in Syria was no different.

Epicurean fortunes throughout the Empire are likely to have been assisted by events in the second and third decades of the second century A.D. Trajan's wife, Pompeia Plotina, widely respected for her upright behaviour, dignity, and lack of ostentation, was, at any rate in the last years of her life, an Epicurean. In A.D. 121, four years after Trajan's death and shortly before she herself died, she successfully requested Hadrian to favour the Epicurean school in Athens by freeing it from the restriction that the scholar must be a Roman citizen.³³ Her adherence to Epicureanism is likely to have benefited Syrian Epicureans at least as much as Epicureans elsewhere, because Syria was very much at the centre of events in the last years of Trajan's reign and at the time of Hadrian's accession. Trajan arrived in Syria early in A.D. 114, at the beginning of his Parthian campaign, and left Hadrian there as governor. Plotina too remained in Syria, and, although it is possible that she did not make public her adherence to Epicureanism while Trajan was alive, she may well have had some discreet contacts with local Epicureans. When Trajan, on his way back to Rome, died at Selinus in Cilicia on or about 8th August A.D. 117, with Plotina at his bedside, Hadrian was in Antioch, and it was there that despatches reached him on 9th and 11th August. The first despatch informed him that Trajan had adopted him as his son and successor; the second informed him that Trajan was dead. On the same day that the news of Trajan's death was received, Hadrian was saluted as emperor by the eastern army, which Trajan had left under his command. Allegations that Plotina took advantage of Trajan's illness and death to arrange a succession which was contrary to his intention are most unlikely to be true: Trajan, to whom Hadrian was nearest male relative, and who had entrusted the army in Syria to him, can hardly have had anyone else in mind. But at the very least Plotina encouraged the formal adoption of Hadrian by her dying husband, and, since his illness prevented him from writing, it was she who signed the adoption document. The relationship between Hadrian and Plotina was already a very close one – much closer than that between him and Trajan –, and this bond can only have been strengthened by the events at Selinus. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that Hadrian, once he had become emperor, demonstrated his special affection and veneration for her: he honoured her on coins, and, when news of her death reached him at Nemausus (Nîmes) in A.D. 121/122, he commemorated her with a temple there and both Trajan and her with a temple in Rome. There can be no doubt that the Epicureans, both in Athens and elsewhere, including Syria, would have been grieved to learn of her death, and it would be surprising if they did not find ways to commemorate her. Although, as we have seen, the *nomen* Aurelius may mean that our inscription is to be dated after A.D. 163, a Hadrianic date for it cannot be ruled out, and one must leave open the intriguing possibility that the dedication ordered by Bel and made by the head of the Epicurean school in Apamea was in honour of Plotina. What a pity that the beginning of the inscription is lost!

That Epicureanism in Apamea was thriving in the second half of the second century A.D. is suggested by some remarks of Numenius.³⁴ Numenius, as we have seen, was born in the city, and it is probable that he did at least some of his teaching there.³⁵ After commenting on the fidelity of the Epicureans to Epicurus' doctrines and on their harmonious relations with one another, he refers to the fervent discipleship which they have exhibited, still exhibit, and apparently will continue to exhibit.³⁶ Whilst Numenius is no doubt referring primarily to the flourishing state of the Epicurean school as a

³² For the latest and fullest edition, see M. F. Smith, *Diogenes of Oinoanda: The Epicurean Inscription* (Napoli, 1993).

³³ *IG* II² 1099; Dittenberger, *SIG* 834; Dessau, *ILS* 7784. For the latest text and discussion of Hadrian's two letters to the Epicureans in Athens, written in A.D. 125 and fragmentarily preserved, see S. Follet, "Lettres d'Hadrien aux Épicuriens d'Athènes (14.2–14.3.125): *SEG* III 226 + *IG* II² 1097", *REG* 107 (1994) 158–171.

³⁴ Quoted by Euseb., *Praep. Evang.* 14.5.3.

³⁵ See e.g. J. Dillon, *The Middle Platonists* (London, 1977) 361.

³⁶ . . . ἦσαν καὶ εἰςὶ καὶ, ὡς ἔοικεν, ἔσονται φιλακόλουθοι.

whole, it is a reasonable assumption that he saw the situation in his home locality as no different.

It was in Numenius' lifetime that Epicureanism benefited from a second manifestation of imperial favour, when Marcus Aurelius endowed at least one chair, and probably two chairs, in it as well as in Platonic, Peripatetic, and Stoic philosophy.³⁷ Marcus was of course a Stoic, but the climate of his reign was favourable to philosophy as a whole.

After Marcus Aurelius Syria continued to occupy a significant place on the philosophical map. The importance of the cultural and philosophical circle which gathered round the Syrian-born³⁸ Julia Domna, second wife of Septimius Severus and mother of Caracalla and Geta, and which existed probably from the late 190s until Julia's death in Antioch in A.D. 217, has been much exaggerated by some writers, according to whom it included almost all the most famous writers and thinkers of the time, whereas in fact the only members known to us by name are Flavius Philostratus, author of *Vita Apollonii*, and the sophist Philiscus.³⁹ However, its existence will presumably have helped, at any rate in the period after the assassination of Plautianus (A.D. 205), when Julia's influence at court was restored, to maintain a climate favourable to philosophy, and that climate may have been of some benefit to the Epicurean school, even if it was not represented in her salon.

For how long the Epicurean communities in Syria continued in existence we do not know, but it is likely that in the third century A.D. they experienced severe decline. Christianity expanded rapidly, and, whilst pagan beliefs were not ousted by it (least of all in Apamea, which was less receptive of new ideas and influences than Antioch),⁴⁰ the predominant philosophy was Neoplatonism, one of whose chief exponents was, as we have seen, Iamblichus of Apamea. It is improbable that our inscription is much later than about A.D. 250, and it may well belong to the second century A.D., when Epicureanism in the Roman Empire, Syria included, was probably at its peak.

III. What is meant by "diadochos of the Epicureans in Apamea"?

The words διάδοχος ἐν Ἀπαμείᾳ τῶν Ἐπικουρείων indicate that the Epicureans in Apamea were an organised body with an appointed leader. διάδοχος originally meant "successor", but, since it was used particularly of succession in office, with the idea of inheriting authority, privileges, and tradition, it came also to mean "head". It was often used of the head of one of the schools in Athens: for example, Plotina, writing to Hadrian, uses it of the head of the Epicurean school in Athens,⁴¹ and in Philodemus' *Index Stoicorum* it is used of Panaetius succeeding Antipater of Tarsus as head of the Stoic school in Athens.⁴² But it might be used also, as in our inscription, of the head of a school, or of a branch of a school, elsewhere. For example, Jason of Nysa is referred to as διάδοχος of Posidonius' (his grandfather's) school in Rhodes,⁴³ and Eusebius, in mentioning that Anatolius established an Aristotelian school in Alexandria, uses the cognate term διαδοχή.⁴⁴ From Didyma we have an inscription recording that Φανίας ὁ διάδοχος dedicated a herm of Plato,⁴⁵ but he may have occupied an established

³⁷ Lucian, *Eun.* 3 ; Philostr., *VS* 566; Gal., *Libr. Ord.* 80–81 Müller. Glucker, *op. cit.* (n. 10) 146–153, argues that the holders of the chairs had no attested connection with the established schools of philosophy. He may well be right, but discussion of his view is not relevant here: whether the Epicurean professors had any connection with the school in Athens or not, their appointment must have given a significant boost to Epicurean morale.

³⁸ She was born at Emesa.

³⁹ See G.W. Bowersock, *Greek Sophists in the Roman Empire* (Oxford, 1969) 101–109 (= Chapter VIII, "The Circle of Julia Domna").

⁴⁰ See J. Balty, *op. cit.* (n. 6) 12–14.

⁴¹ *IG* II² 1099.2.

⁴² 53.1–3 Dorandi.

⁴³ *Suda* s.v. Ἰάσων, no. 52 Adler = Posidonius T 40 Edelstein–Kidd.

⁴⁴ *Hist. Eccl.* 7.32.6 τῆς ἐπ' Ἀλεξανδρείας Ἀριστοτέλους διαδοχῆς τὴν διατριβήν.

⁴⁵ A. Rehm and R. Harder (edd.), *Didyma II: Die Inschriften* (Berlin, 1958) no. 150: Πλάτωνα τὸν Ἀρίστωνος Φανίας

chair of Platonic philosophy rather than been head of a local school.⁴⁶ If Aurelius Belius Philippus had been described as διάδοχος Ἐπικούρειος, one could not have been sure of his position, but διάδοχος ἐν Ἀπαμείᾳ τῶν Ἐπικουρείων must surely mean that he was the local scholarch.

Although, so far as I am aware, there is no other surviving text which mentions an Epicurean διάδοχος in a place other than Athens, this does not mean that local Epicurean scholarchs were not often so described. That the Epicurean community in Apamea was not unique, among places outside Athens, in having a “head” cannot be doubted: another instance is provided by Lucian,⁴⁷ who names Lepidus, whom I shall have occasion to mention in section IV, as leader of the Epicureans in Amastris.⁴⁸

What duties would Aurelius Belius Philippus have been expected to perform in his capacity as leader of the Epicureans in Apamea?

Presumably his chief duty would have been to ensure that Epicurean doctrines were faithfully followed⁴⁹ and made available as widely and effectively as possible in the locality. The recruitment of new followers and the instruction of those who had been recruited will have been prime concerns for the local school, and the leader will have participated in these activities as well as organised them.⁵⁰ He will have presided over the celebration of events in the Epicurean calendar such as the founder’s birthday.⁵¹ His responsibilities will certainly have been administrative as well as philosophical, educational, and pastoral, and his administrative duties will have been concerned not only with the internal affairs of the school in Apamea, but also with relations with other Epicurean communities: just as the Epicurean inscription at Oinoanda reveals that Diogenes, who divided his time between his home-city in northern Lycia and Rhodes, was in touch with Epicurean communities in Athens, Thebes, and (Euboean) Chalcis,⁵² so we may suppose that the Epicureans in Apamea maintained epistolary and personal contacts both with the school in Athens and with Epicurean communities elsewhere in Syria (e.g. in Antioch) and perhaps further afield (e.g. in Tarsus).

As διάδοχος, Aurelius Belius Philippus is certain to have had some financial responsibilities too. The early Epicurean community in Athens received regular financial support from Epicureans living elsewhere. We have a passage of a letter from Epicurus to Idomeneus, requesting such support.⁵³ From a passage of another letter⁵⁴ we learn that a subscription (σύνταξις) of 120 drachmas per annum was expected of outside members, and there are several other references to the subscription.⁵⁵ Subscriptions to the school in Athens in the early years were perhaps expected of Epicurean communities elsewhere,

ὁ διάδοχος. Rey-Coquais, op. cit. (n. 2) 79 n. 122 makes reference both to this inscription and to the passage of Eusebius.

⁴⁶ For an important discussion of διάδοχος, διαδοχή, διαδέχομαι, see Glucker, op. cit. (n. 10), especially 144–158, 364–369.

⁴⁷ *Alex.* 25.

⁴⁸ Another likely case is mentioned by Phld., *De Piet.* 954–956 Obbink, referring to Phyrson, a contemporary of Epicurus, as τὸν Κολοφ[ώνιον] ἄνδρα – a reference which apparently “designates Phyrson as an Epicurean ‘master’ at Colophon” (Obbink, op. cit., 453), ἀνὴρ being, as Francesca Longo Auricchio, “La scuola di Epicuro”, *CronErc* 8 (1978) 21–37, has shown, a term frequently used in the papyri from Herculaneum in reference to an Epicurean “master”.

⁴⁹ The question of whether the διάδοχος himself was faithfully following Epicurean doctrine when he accepted appointment as priest of Bel is discussed in section IV.

⁵⁰ However, we learn from Phld., *Περὶ παρρησίας* (based, as I point out in n. 27, on lectures of Zeno of Sidon), that, whilst an Epicurean community contains leaders and trainees, all its members endeavour to improve themselves and one another.

⁵¹ On the festivals of the Epicurean year, see D. Clay, “Individual and Community in the First Generation of the Epicurean School”, *Syzetesis: studi sull’epicureismo greco e romano offerti a Marcello Gigante* (Napoli, 1983) I 255–279, especially 270–279.

⁵² Diog. Oen., fr. 62–63 Smith.

⁵³ Plut., *Mor.* 1117d–e = Usener no. 130.

⁵⁴ Usener no. 184. For an improved text, see L. Spina, *CronErc* 7 (1977) 62.

⁵⁵ See Arrighetti² fr. 74, 76 (Usener no. 151), 97 (Usener no. 109), 120.

as well as of individuals. I know of no evidence that such subscriptions were levied in later times, but, even if, as seems likely, the Apamean Epicureans were not expected, either individually or collectively, to send regular contributions to the school in Athens in the time of Aurelius Belius Philippus, it may be confidently assumed that they would have been asked to pay subscriptions in support of local activities and for the maintenance of any property which the Apamean school may have owned. Even if my tentative suggestion that the dedication ordered by Bel was in honour of Plotina is incorrect, it is possible that whatever it was that Aurelius Belius Philippus dedicated was paid for, at least in part, by the Epicurean community – a circumstance which would help to explain why his position as head of the Epicureans in Apamea, as well as his priesthood, is mentioned.

It would be interesting to know the size of the Epicurean community which Aurelius Belius Philippus headed. We have no information whatsoever, but it is a reasonable guess that, as in most organisations, the number of activists was much smaller than the number of less active or inactive members and sympathisers, and no doubt one of the prime concerns of the *διδάχος* would have been to persuade more of the larger group to be more wholehearted and active in their support and, at the very least, to make a financial contribution.

IV. Should an orthodox Epicurean have been priest of Bel?

Now let us consider the combination of offices held by Aurelius Belius Philippus. Although Rey-Coquais, as I have said, is silent here, J. and L. Robert, who mention the inscription in their “Bulletin épigraphique”, comment: “L’alliance des deux titres, le prêtre de Bêl et la ‘diadoque’ des Épicuriens, nous paraît remarquable pour l’épicurisme à cette époque et en cette région; elle est même, semble-t-il, aussi surprenante que bien attestée par ce document.”⁵⁶ They are right in finding the matter noteworthy,⁵⁷ though the words “à cette époque et en cette région”, with their apparent implication that the combination of priest and Epicurean leader might be less remarkable in a different age and different area, seem unwanted: Epicurean doctrines did not vary significantly either from age to age or from place to place, so that the combination was either always remarkable or never remarkable.

The Epicureans have often been represented, if not as atheists and enemies of religion, as attaching little importance to the gods and their worship. However, Epicurus not only accepted the existence of the gods, but also attached great importance to them, and he believed firmly in the value of religion, which he wished to reform, not abolish.⁵⁸ Although, in his view, the gods did not create the world and have no desire or power to intervene in its affairs, but live lives of perfect self-sufficiency, peace, and happiness in the spaces between the infinite number of worlds in the universe, our minds are able to receive, both when we are awake and especially when we are asleep, the images (*εἶδωλα*, *simulacra*) which flow from their anthropomorphic bodies⁵⁹ and convey to us something of their tranquillity and

⁵⁶ *REG* 89 (1976) 566.

⁵⁷ F. Millar, *The Roman Near East, 31 B.C.–A.D. 337* (Cambridge, Mass.–London, 1993) 262–263, also finds the combination noteworthy, but what interests him is that “an attachment to a characteristic element of Hellenistic culture is visibly combined with an apparently quite different one, the worship of Bel”. This is a legitimate matter of interest (and he rightly draws attention to “the man’s composite Roman name, with Latin, Greek and Semitic elements”), but my concern here is with the combination of Epicurean and priest.

⁵⁸ Epicurus, *Men.* 123–124.

⁵⁹ A. A. Long and D. N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers* (Cambridge, 1987) I 144–149, following J. Bollack, *La pensée du plaisir* (Paris, 1975) 217–238, argue that the gods are nothing but “our own instinctive thought-constructs”, being “the projections of the ethical ideal of human beings”. Their theory is interesting, but, in my view, mistaken, being in conflict with the evidence of the ancient sources. Although the precise interpretation of some of Epicurus’ few, but important, surviving pronouncements on the gods is controversial, there is nothing in them to justify the Bollack–Long–Sedley line, and much in them to contradict it: for example, Epicurus, *Men.* 123, refers to god as a “living being” (*ζῶον*) and states that “the gods exist, because we have knowledge of them by clear perception”, thus making clear that they are not just concepts, but beings with an existence independent of our minds. Moreover, as Long–Sedley 148–149 admit, Lucretius, Cicero, and

beauty; and although no god can ever be influenced by prayer or sacrifice, the wise man will participate in traditional acts of worship, because, provided that people are not handicapped by traditional misconceptions of the divine nature, such participation will make it easier for them to receive the images.⁶⁰ Epicurus himself piously performed the traditional acts of worship, sacrificing to the gods, praying to them, and celebrating their festivals.⁶¹ He thought that festivals bring one closest to the gods.⁶² It is almost certain that he had even been initiated into the Eleusinian mysteries.⁶³ So our Apamean friend could certainly worship Bel and still be an orthodox Epicurean. But what about his priesthood? Would the master have approved of that?

Although there is no extant pronouncement of Epicurus specifically discouraging his followers from accepting priesthoods, one supposes that his advice to persons about to become priests would usually, if not always, have been “don’t!”. It is likely that he would have raised two objections. In the first place, although he might have conceded that priests, if they had a true (Epicurean) conception of the gods whom they served, would be particularly well placed to get close to them, he would probably have felt that this advantage was outweighed by the disadvantage that they would be publicly promoting, even if not privately adopting, a false ὑπόληψις about the nature of the gods, as beings who intervene in human affairs and are to be feared.⁶⁴ His second objection would have been that holding a priesthood would not

Philodemus, whose works are the most detailed and informative surviving sources for Epicurean theology, agree that the gods are (here I borrow a phrase of Long–Sedley 148) “a specially privileged extraterrestrial life-form”, and it seems inconceivable that all three fundamentally misunderstood Epicurus’ teaching on such an extremely important matter. (P.G. Woodward, “Star Gods in Philodemus, PHerc. 152/157”, *CronErc* 19 [1989] 29–47 thinks that a passage of Phld. *De Dis* III [cols. VIII–X] may lend some support to the view of the “idealists” [Bollack, Long–Sedley], but in the end decides that it cannot resolve the issue between them and the “realists”.)

⁶⁰ Usener no. 385; Lucr. 6.68–78. See also the passages listed in the next note.

⁶¹ See Usener nos. 12–13, 169, 386–387. Cf. Diog. Oen. fr. 19.II.12–III Smith.

⁶² Usener no. 386.

⁶³ Usener no. 169, a passage from Phld., *De Piet.* (807–810 Obbink), where reference is made to Epicurus’ participation in the celebration of the festival of the *Choes* (Wine-jars) and the mysteries (τὰ μυστήρια τα- -|κα). Unfortunately it is uncertain what adjective is to be restored. The most probable suggestions are Usener’s τὰ [ἄστυ]|κα, for which Obbink prefers τὰ[στυ]|κα, and Bücheler’s τὰ [Ἄστυ]|κα. It is relevant to note that earlier in *De Piet.* (554–559 Obbink) there is mention of Epicurus’ “enthusiasm for participation in the mysteries at Athens”. Whether Usener’s or Bücheler’s conjecture is preferred in 809–810 (I prefer Bücheler’s), it may be taken as almost certain that the reference both there and in the earlier passage is to the Great Mysteries at Eleusis and the Lesser Mysteries at Agrae. Although the Great Mysteries were revealed at Eleusis, “at Athens” is not unnatural, particularly if it is allowed that the reference is to the Lesser Mysteries as well: the Great Mysteries were controlled by the Athenian state; the “sacred things” were brought from Eleusis to the Eleusinion in Athens the day before the festival; before the “sacred things” were taken back to Eleusis, the would-be initiates assembled in Athens and had to bathe in the sea at Peiraeus or Phaleron; Agrae, where the Lesser Mysteries were celebrated, was a suburb of Athens, on the Ilissus; and it was the normal practice for those who wished to be initiated into the Great Mysteries to undergo initiation at Agrae first. Obbink’s tentative suggestion that [ἄστυ]|κα might refer to the events of the City Dionysia (p. 416) or to the Lenaea (note on the translation of 809–810) seems to me very improbable. (If one is to reject the obvious explanation, that the Great and Lesser Mysteries are meant, one might think of reading τὰ[υρι]|κα in 809–810 in reference to the *Bouphonia*, but I am not thinking of it!)

We learn from an inscription published by A.E. Raubitschek, “Phaidros and his Roman Pupils”, *Hesperia* 18 (1949) 101–103 (reprinted in his *The School of Hellas: Essays on Greek History, Archaeology and Literature*, ed. D. Obbink and P.A. Vander Waerdt [New York–Oxford, 1991], 342–344) that Appius Saufeius, brother of Lucius Saufeius, the Epicurean friend of Cicero and Atticus, dedicated to the Eleusinian deities a herm of the Epicurean scholar Phaedrus, setting it up in the Eleusinion close to the Athenian Agora. The dedication has been thought very odd (see Raubitschek, *op.cit.* 101–102, R.E. Wycherley, *The Agora of Athens* [Princeton, 1972] 154, and *The Stones of Athens* [Princeton, 1978] 72), but, in view of Epicurus’ own celebration of the mysteries and his dictum “the veneration of the wise man is a great good to those who venerate him” (*Sent. Vat.* 32), one should not be so surprised.

⁶⁴ For the Apameans’ fear of Bel/Zeus, see Libanius, *Or.* 48.14.

J. Fontenrose, *Didyma: Apollo’s Oracle, Cult, and Companions* (Berkeley–Los Angeles–London, 1988) 55 n. 15, making brief reference to our inscription, finds “nothing surprising in an Epicurean’s serving as priest”, because “the Epicureans believed in the gods as superhuman beings who had nothing to do with governing the world. Epicureans could revere them as perfect beings, as Lucretius invoked and eulogized Venus in *Rer. nat.* 1.1–40”. But it is one thing to revere

be in accordance with the recommendation that the wise man should not (except in an emergency)⁶⁵ get involved in public life, but should heed the precept *λάθε βιώσας* (“live in obscurity”);⁶⁶ in this connection it should be borne in mind that the borderline between priestly and secular functions was often not clearly defined, and that a priesthood might well be held in conjunction with a magistracy. However, if it was Epicurus’ recommendation that one should not accept a priesthood, there were among his adherents some who ignored it, just as there were some who disregarded his advice to keep out of politics and public life,⁶⁷ and I shall now mention three cases from Asia Minor of persons who were both Epicureans and priests.⁶⁸

The first case is that of Tiberius Claudius Lepidus, who was, according to Lucian,⁶⁹ leader of the Epicureans in Amastris and, as we learn from an inscription,⁷⁰ chief priest of the imperial cult. Secondly, there is a second-century A.D. inscription from Rhodiapolis honouring a certain Heraclitus, who was not only a doctor and philosopher, but also priest of Asclepius and Hygieia,⁷¹ and there can be no doubt that he was an Epicurean, because among those who have honoured him are οἱ Ἀθήνησιν Ἐπικούρειοι φιλόσοφοι.⁷² Thirdly, from Didyma we have an inscription, probably of the second or third century A.D., mentioning Philidas as both *προφήτης* and *φιλόσοφος Ἐπικούρειος*.⁷³ The office of prophet was the highest at Miletus, to which the temple and oracle of Apollo at Didyma belonged. Appointment was by lot, but there must have been a carefully prepared short-list of candidates, for the prophet had duties which necessitated the expenditure of substantial sums of his own money, and Philidas, who, so the inscription claims, was descended from Ajax, was evidently a member of one of the leading families which in the Roman period supplied most of the prophets. The appointment was an annual one, and the prophet was normally required to spend his year of office at Didyma, though this requirement was waived in the case of Trajan and Hadrian, each of whom accepted the office,⁷⁴ and they cannot have performed the prophet’s duty of communicating to clients, in written form, the

the gods as perfect beings, and quite another thing to undertake duties which would involve promoting false conceptions of the gods.

⁶⁵ Cic., *Rep.* 1.10: *negant sapientem suscepturum ullam rei publicae partem, extra quam si eum tempus et necessitas coegerit*; Sen., *De otio* 3.2 (= Usener no. 9): *Epicurus ait: “non accedet ad rem publicam sapiens, nisi si quid intervenerit.”* It is not known precisely what circumstances would, in Epicurus’ view, justify the wise man’s entry into public life. For discussion, see D.P. Fowler in M. Griffin and J. Barnes (edd.), *Philosophia togata: Essays on Philosophy and Roman Society* (Oxford, 1989) 127–128, part of his paper “Lucretius and Politics” (pp. 120–150).

⁶⁶ Usener no. 551.

⁶⁷ Prominent examples from the late Roman Republic were L. Calpurnius Piso Caesoninus, L. Manlius Torquatus, and C. Cassius Longinus.

⁶⁸ Add the case, mentioned above, of Lysias of Tarsus, who was priest of Heracles as well as an Epicurean, and who behaved disreputably.

⁶⁹ *Alex.* 25.

⁷⁰ *CIG* III 4149.

⁷¹ Four Epicurean *hetairai* (Mammarion, Hedeia, Nikidion, and Boidion) apparently made dedications to healing deities, Asclepius at Athens (*IG* II² 1534.27, 41) and Amphiaraus at Oropus on the border of Attica and Boeotia (*SEG* XVI 300.6, 9, 12), during Epicurus’ lifetime. The dedications are discussed by C. J. Castner, “Epicurean Hetairai as Dedicants to Healing Deities?”, *GRBS* 23 (1982) 51–57. She thinks that Epicurus would have disapproved of them, but this is not necessarily so: it is probable that he would only have done so, if the dedicants had held the superstitious belief that they could persuade the deities to intervene. However, it is unlikely that he would have approved of Heraclitus’ priesthood, though he might have considered it more acceptable for an Epicurean to be priest of Asclepius and Hygieia, particularly if he was a doctor, than to be a priest of an oracular deity.

⁷² *TAM* II 910.

⁷³ The inscription, which was actually found at Teichiussa, was first published by P. Le Bas and W.H. Waddington, *Voyage archéologique en Grèce et en Asie Mineure* III (Paris, 1870) no. 239. It appears in Rehm–Harder, op. cit. (n. 45), as no. 285.

⁷⁴ Trajan was probably prophet in A.D. 101/102. There is no evidence that he even visited Didyma. Hadrian, who did visit it (A.D. 129), accepted the office of prophet in A.D. 136/137.

versified oracles of the prophetess. It is of course indicative of the political importance of the office that it was offered to the emperors.

The case of Philidas at Didyma is of particular interest to us, being the one which is closest to that of Aurelius Belius Philippus at Apamea. Each was the servant of an oracle, and each held a sacred office which also had considerable political significance. It is difficult to believe that Epicurus would have approved either of the public prominence attached to their offices or of their association with oracles. Although Epicurus and his followers liked to compare their own pronouncements to those of oracles or to say that they spoke more reliably than oracles,⁷⁵ they emphatically rejected prophecy and all forms of divination.⁷⁶ If Philidas and Aurelius Belius Philippus had been challenged by fellow-Epicureans to justify their combination of offices, no doubt their response would have been along the lines that, while they believed in the existence of the gods whom they served and found their service to them spiritually beneficial, they did not believe that the oracles really expressed the will of Apollo or Bel, and that it was better, both for the Epicurean community and for the community at large, that these influential priestly offices should be held by rational Epicureans rather than by persons in the grip of superstitious beliefs; and if the Apamea inscription related to some matter which was to the benefit of the Epicurean school, the dedicator would have had an especially strong argument in favour of his decision to put pragmatism before principles.

If it is thought odd that Epicureans were sometimes prepared to accept offices concerned with the service of oracles, when their school emphatically rejected prophecy and divination, it may be thought at least equally odd that such offices were sometimes offered to them, when the Epicurean school's orthodox position in this area must have been well known. In the case of Philidas at Didyma, the explanation may be that it was a case of "beggars can't be choosers": the prophetship, which, as I have said, involved a heavy financial burden, became restricted more and more to a small group of families, and by the third century A.D. the shortage of suitable candidates had become so acute that on some occasions there was a danger of the office remaining unfilled.⁷⁷ In the case of the priesthood of Bel at Apamea, there is no evidence, so far as I know, that financial obligations attached to the office and the requirements of tradition meant that the number of candidates was likely to be severely limited, but the possibility that this was the case cannot be ruled out. In any event, the appointment of Philidas and Aurelius Belius Philippus to their religious offices appears to show that neither they nor those who appointed them were unduly troubled by the manifest inconsistency of their position, and this is a point which is of some interest for the study of both Epicureanism and religion under the Roman Empire.

Foula, Shetland Islands

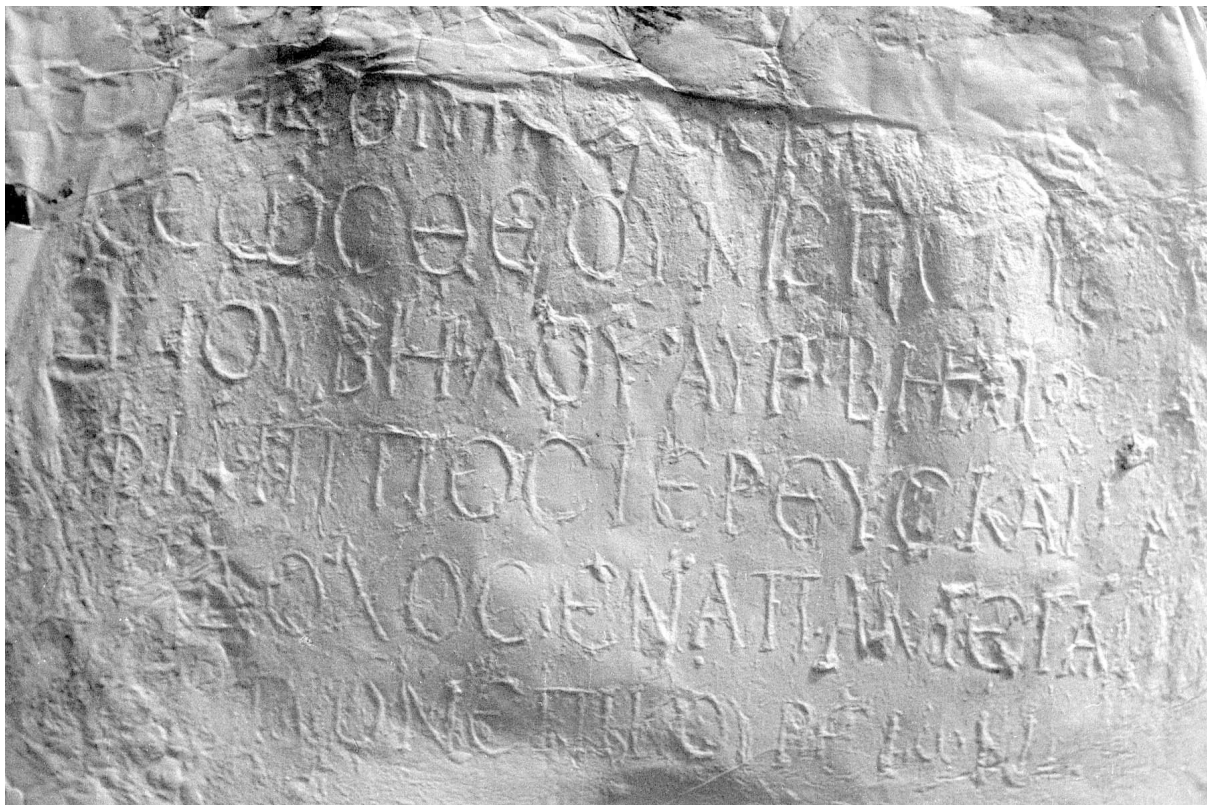
Martin Ferguson Smith

⁷⁵ Epic., *Sent. Vat.* 29; Phld., *De Piet.* 2043–2046 Obbink; Lucr. 5. 110–112 (cf. 1.737–739, where he is referring to Empedocles and others with similar views); Cic., *Fin.* 2.20, 102, *DND* 1.66. D.N. Sedley, *GRBS* 30 (1989) 278–279, discussing Lucr. 1.736–739, denies that the poet is crediting Empedocles and company "with an authority comparable to that of an oracle" and (279 n. 34) considers it "*prima facie* implausible that an Epicurean should speak with implicit approval of oracular authority". He thinks it more likely that the passage "expresses a contrast – between, on the one hand, the clear and unambiguous assertions of the pluralists, and, on the other, the Delphic ambiguities so characteristic of Heraclitus". But, although Lucr. elsewhere (1.639–644) expresses strong disapproval of the riddling language of Heraclitus, the text of 1.736–739 does not support Sedley's view, for Lucr. here states that Empedocles and company, "in making many fine and inspired discoveries, delivered oracles as it were from the innermost shrine of their mind (*ex adyto tamquam cordis responsa dedere*) with more sanctity and much more reliability than the Pythia", and in 5.110–112 declares that he himself is going to utter oracles (*fundere fata*) with more sanctity and much more reliability than the Pythia. These passages and the others listed above leave no room for doubt that the Epicureans did compare the pronouncements of philosophers, and not least their own pronouncements, to those of oracles. But this does not mean that they approved of actual oracles, and Lucr., as we have seen, contrasts his own pronouncements and those of Empedocles and other pluralists with those of the Pythia.

⁷⁶ See e.g. Usener nos. 27, 395; Cic., *DND* 1.55; Diog. Oen. fr. 23–24, 52–54 Smith. For discussion of the Epicurean attitude to divination, see especially C. Diano, *SIFC* 12 (1935) 237–239, reprinted in his *Scritti Epicurei* (Firenze, 1974) 23–25.

⁷⁷ See e.g. H. W. Parke, *The Oracles of Apollo in Asia Minor* (London–Sydney–Dover, New Hampshire) 86–87.

TAFEL XII



Inscription from Apamea recording the dedication by Aurelius Belius Philippus (photograph of his squeeze by J.-P. Rey-Coquais)