Oracular inquiries and daily life
The oracle of Dodona in the Classical and Hellenistic period

Karolina Barbara Frank

University College London

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Declaration of Authorship

I, Karolina Barbara Frank, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

Signed: Karolina Frank

Date: 14.04.2021

Abstract

This thesis examines the daily life and religiosity of ancient Greeks through their consultations at the oracle of Zeus Naios and Dione in Dodona, Epirus, during the Classical and Hellenistic period, as well as explores the role that the oracle played in shaping its supplicants' day-to-day reality. Past scholarship has predominantly centered on literary and archaeological sources in order to investigate the functioning of the sanctuary, its divinatory practices, and its staff. Of late, the focus of studies has shifted to the inquiries made by those visiting the oracle. However, it has been the very recent publication of the corpus of over 4000 oracular inscriptions from the Epirote sanctuary (Dakaris *et al*. 2013, 2 vols.), which has significantly expanded the source material for the study of Dodona and its supplicants. These previously unpublished tablets, dated to the 6th-2nd c. BC, contain a wide range of queries made by private individuals, *poleis*, and *koina* at the oracle, as well as answers given by the gods. By placing these texts in a broader socio-economic and historical context, this thesis analyzes the portrayal of the lives of the individuals and communities consulting at Dodona through the prism of their questions, requests, and concerns. It examines the identity of the supplicants, arguing that most seem to have been of local Epirote and Northwestern Greek origin. Each chapter addresses a different topic of inquiry concerning religious, social, and economic issues, demonstrating the extent and range of the oracle's influence over worship, local economies, and socio-cultural norms. The thesis also explores the different ways in which the supplicants used oracular divination to solve their problems. It contributes to the understanding of the role of oracles in personal religiosity and communicating with the divine in order to alleviate one's concerns and shape one's decision-making process.

Impact Statement

This thesis is the first comprehensive historical study of the published oracular tablets from Dodona that examines the epigraphic evidence as a whole rather than as smaller separate case studies. This broader scope has allowed for a thorough analysis of overarching themes and trends in the consultations from the 6th to 2nd c. BC, particularly regarding the types of issues faced by the supplicants and the ways in which they used the oracle to mitigate their concerns. The personal nature of the oracular inquiries shifts the focus to the individual and their experiences, offering glimpses into the lives of various social groups, such as women, labourers, or slaves. By decentering – when possible – traditional narratives about the perspectives of free men, elites, and the *polis*, this thesis contributes to the knowledge about the daily existence of ancient Greeks who have largely been omitted in other source material. Additionally, the examination of the identities of the visitors at the oracle of Dodona has demonstrated that many of them were locals of Epirote or Northwestern Greek origin. The socio-economic history of this region is not well-attested; the oracular tablets have helped shed light on some of the societal bonds, religious practices, and economic pursuits of the inhabitants of Epirus. The historical and social topics this thesis addresses will be of interest to ancient historians studying daily life in the Classical and Hellenistic periods, especially those focusing on regional studies or on the narratives of underrepresented groups.

Furthermore, in investigating when and how the supplicants utilized oracular divination to address their problems, this research explores the elusive concept of personal religiosity in ancient Greek religion. In recent years, the idea that the religious rituals and beliefs of individuals were wholly dictated by the religion practiced within the context of the *polis* has been strongly contested by scholars, who have called for an exploration of religious customs and attitudes expressing personal devotion; this thesis aims to help close this gap in the scholarship. Through an analysis of the religious topics about which visitors consulted the sanctuary of Dodona and the ways in which they formulated their queries, this study discusses the difficulties people encountered in their communication with the sphere of the divine, but also highlights their initiative and agency in facing these issues, demonstrating that personal choice was one of the defining elements of personal religiosity. By examining the role of the oracle in guiding individuals through their problem-solving process and the mantic strategies supplicants used to alleviate their concerns, this

work also hopes to provide insight beyond academic scholarship about faith, risk and decision-making – universal concepts that have recently become particularly relevant in the public debate as a result of the uncertainty people across the globe face due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

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Table of Contents

List of Abbreviations

The abbreviations in this thesis follow *Oxford Classical Dictionary* guidelines.

The list below includes other specific references.

Epigraphic references

CGRN: Carbon, J.-M., Peels, S. and Pirenne-Delforge, V., *A Collection of Greek Ritual Norms (CGRN)*, Liège 2016 (http://cgrn.ulg.ac.be).

DOL: Dodona Online (https://dodonaonline.com/).

DVC: Dakaris, S., Vokotopoulou, J. and Christidis, A.Ph. *Τα Χρηστηρια Ελασματα της Δωδωνης των Ανασκαφων Δ. Ευαγγελιδη*. Athens: The Archaeological Society at Athens, 2013 (2 vols.).

IDyrrh: Cabanes, P. and Drini, F. *Corpus des inscriptions grecques d'Illyrie méridionale et d'Épire. I. Inscriptions d'Épidamne-Dyrrhachion et d'Apollonia. 1. Inscriptions d'Épidamne-Dyrrhachion*, París: École Française d'Athènes, 1995.

LOD: Lhôte, É. *Les lamelles oraculaires de Dodone*. Genève: Droz, 2006.

List of Maps

Maps were designed by the author and Emil Frank

Introduction

The oracle of Zeus Naios and Dione in Dodona, Epirus, considered by the ancients as the oldest oracle of the Hellenic world, has long been shrouded in mystery; Greek and Roman literary sources offered scarce and sometimes conflicting information about the sanctuary and its visitors. To date, the study of the Epirote oracle has predominantly relied on literary sources and material evidence in the form of votive gifts and architectural remains uncovered at the site. However, the rediscovery of the shrine of Zeus and Dione and subsequent excavations brought to light a forgotten and surprising element of the divination process: lead tablets containing oracular consultations, dated to the Classical and Hellenistic periods. The progressive inclusion of the tablets found at Dodona into the research about the site has not only allowed for a more detailed understanding of the functioning of the sanctuary and its position in the Ancient Greek world but has also provided ample information concerning the supplicants seeking the help of Zeus and Dione. Unlike the epigraphic evidence found in many of the other well-known ancient oracles such as Delphi or Didyma, the oracular inscriptions from Dodona are mostly queries made by private individuals (although a few inquiries can be attributed to *poleis*, *koina* or *ethne*), which touch on a variety of subjects, including marriage, children, property, religion, travel, trade, health, and justice. These texts offer unique and intimate insight into the daily life of the supplicants. Through an investigation of thematic case studies, this thesis will examine how and why the visitors interacted with the oracle of Dodona, as well as demonstrate the extent and range of its influence over local economies and socio-cultural norms. This study will also contribute to the understanding of the role of oracular divination in the decision-making process and personal religiosity of the supplicants.

1. Rediscovering Dodona and the oracular tablets: A historiography

Any scholar seeking to delve into the history of the oracle should begin with the circumstances surrounding the discovery of the shrine and oracular tablets, which initiated the subsequent archaeological excavations and studies of this previously unknown evidence. The location of the sanctuary was generally believed to be in Epirus, within the vicinity of Ioannina, but it was not until 1819 that Thomas Leverton Donaldson identified the ancient Greek ruins south-west of the

city as Dodona, a theory later expanded by Christopher Wordsworth.[1] Konstantinos Karapanos was the first to excavate the site in 1875, his finds confirming Donaldson's hypothesis.[2] Karapanos' work – though not conducted to the standards of contemporary archaeological excavations – produced a number of votive and religious objects, including 42 oracular tablets later published and translated for the first time in *Dodone et ses ruines*.[3] The discovery of the tablets proved to be a decisive moment in the study of the oracle, shedding light on its mysterious divination method. However, Karapanos' deciphering of the inscriptions was far from satisfactory, prompting a wave of publications reinterpreting the texts,[4] crowned with Hoffmann's exhaustive study of the tablets.[5]

Further explorations of the Dodona site, led by G. Soteriadis, began in 1920; after a second break, they resumed in 1929, under the auspices of D. Evangelidis and the Greek Archaeological Society.[6] The excavated tablets were consistently published in the Πρακτικὰ τῆς ἐν Ἀθήναις Ἀρχαιολογικὴ Ἑταιρεία, though often without much context and interpretation.[7] After Evangelidis' death, S. I. Dakaris took over research at Dodona. His collaboration with I. Vokotopoulou and A.-Ph. Christidis began yielding extensive results, leading to a series of smaller studies and building up to the *magnum opus* that would be the corpus published in 2013.[8]

But the first work to provide a comprehensive overview of the sanctuary since Karapanos' text was H. W. Parke's *The Oracles of Zeus. Dodona, Olympia, Amon* (1967), in which he included the more recent excavations along with the tablets. The focus, however, was on the sanctuary's role and functioning as an oracle rather than on the epigraphic evidence. Since then, several other landmark publications about Dodona and the oracular tablets were produced. Most notably, E. Lhôte's *Les lamelles oraculaires de Dodone* published in 2006, offered a re-examination of the 167 tablets previously published. In his comprehensive study of the oracular texts, Lhôte focused primarily on their palaeographic, linguistic, and dialectological aspects, providing a thorough set of guidelines for the dating, reconstruction and interpretation of the tablets. Though his work does

[1] Piccinini 2017: 20.
[2] Dakaris 1971: 33.
[3] Karapanos 1878.
[4] Rangabé 1878; Bursian 1878; Blass 1879; Wieseler 1879; Roberts 1880; Rochl 1882; Pomtow 1883.
[5] Hoffmann 1899.
[6] Chapinal-Heras 2021: 8.
[7] Lhôte 2006: 4.
[8] Dakaris *et al.* 1993; Vokotopoulou 1992; Christidis 1997; Dakaris *et al.* 1999.

attempt to set the inscriptions in their historical context, its primary emphasis is on a philological analysis of the material.

Almost simultaneously, E. Eidinow published *Oracles, Curses, and Risk Among the Ancient Greeks* (2007), a study exploring the concept of risk through the prism of oracle consultation and curse writing. The similarity between the tablets and the *katadesmoi* had been previously noted by other scholars, but Eidinow is the first one to have attempted such a comparison in detail.[9] Her monograph incorporated a catalogue of 137 inscriptions, including some that Christidis, with whom she was cooperating, had not yet published. Through a comparison with literary sources and epigraphic evidence of personal inquiries at other sanctuaries, her work placed the tablets in the broader setting of ancient Greek oracles, discussing the patterns of individual consultations at Dodona and their role in decision-making.

Also published in 2007, M. Dieterle's *Dodona: Religionsgeschichtliche und historische Untersuchungen zur Entstehung und Entwicklung des Zeus-Heiligtums* approaches the topic of the oracle from an archaeological perspective, placing it within the ancient context of the surrounding buildings, institutions, and administration. She also devotes a chapter to the oracular tradition of the sanctuary, including the tablets and the practices surrounding their production and use. The most recent book-length study dedicated to the sanctuary, J. Piccinini's *The Shrine of Dodona in the Archaic and Classical Ages. A History* (2017), delves into the history and development of Dodona into a Pan-Hellenic place of cult between the 7th and the 4th centuries BC. The author examines the oracle's relationship with various *ethne* and *poleis*, as well as its evolving role in the Ancient Greek world through literary, archaeological, and epigraphic sources.

A common feature of contemporary scholarship about the oracular tablets was a call for the publication of a corpus which would include all the excavated tablets, a feat finally achieved in 2013 through the collective work of the aforementioned Dakaris, Vokotopoulou and Christidis. Τα χρηστήρια ελάσματα της Δωδώνης: Των ανασκαφών Δ. Ευαγγελίδη published in two volumes, comprises a catalogue of 4216 oracular inscriptions with apparatus, proposals for restorations of lacunae, and commentary. This outpour of new material met with responses by several scholars seeking to clarify the reading and interpretation of specific texts or to provide an overview of their

[9] Lhôte 2006: 428.

content.[10] The Dodona Online Project, led by P. Bonnechere, was launched after the publication of the tablets by DVC.[11] Its aim is to provide a critical edition and translation of all the published tablets. Case studies of selected tablets in their historical and social context have also been collected in *Dodona. The Omen's Questions. New Approaches in the Oracular Tablets* (2017).[12] Most recently, D. Chapinal-Heras published *Experiencing Dodona* (2021), a study of the evolution of the sanctuary against the broader background of political changes in Epirus. Unlike previous works discussing the shrine, Chapinal-Heras utilizes the tablets to reexamine the history of Dodona and its connection to the region.

2. The oracular tablets: Discussion of sources

The oracular inscriptions are central to this thesis; they constitute its primary and most significant source material. Comprising of over 4200 textual fragments, this extensive epigraphic corpus encompasses the inquiries made by the supplicants visiting the sacred site, answers given by the oracle and miscellaneous letters, personal names or individual words believed to have been part of the divination process. The texts were inscribed on thin sheets of lead, often folded, ranging between 2 and 14 cm in length and 1 and 6 cm in width. The tablets were found in the *temenos* of the sanctuary. Their precise location is rarely specified; Karapanos writes that the lead inscriptions, along with other votive items, were found scattered among the ruins of the temple of Zeus, about 3 meters underground.[13] Piccinini adds that a few were also excavated at the entrance of the sanctuary.[14] The tablets contain questions asked by both individuals and communities, concerning a wide variety of economic issues (such as work, finances, trade, agriculture, and inheritance), social matters (including marriage, children, slaves, health, and crime) and affairs of the community. The two main corpora which form the basis of this thesis are Lhôte's *Les lamelles*

[10] General discussion of tablets: Parker 2015; Pantermalis *et al.* 2016; Parker 2016; Chapinal-Heras 2017; Chaniotis 2018. Grammatical analysis: Méndez Dosuna 2016; Méndez Dosuna 2018; Tselikas 2018. Case studies: Mack 2014; Carbon 2015; Piccinini 2015; Liapis 2015. Additionally, P. Funke and K. Knäpper are working on an edition of the 96 oracular tablets (Inv.-Nr. Misc. 10755, 1-96) found in the collection of antiques of the Museums in Berlin. These tablets, which were sold to the Museums of Berlin in 1875-1876, have only recently been made available to scholars and a thorough autopsy and analysis of these materials is very much needed. The project, funded by the DFG, is expected to end in 2022.

[11] DOL (https://dodonaonline.com/)

[12] Edited by K. Soueref, this volume is the product of the conference *Dodona. The Omen's Questions. New Approaches in the Oracular Tablets*, which took place on September 16th, 2016, alongside the exhibition *Dodona: The Oracle of Sounds*, held at the Acropolis Museum in Athens.

[13] Karapanos 1878: 19.

[14] Piccinini 2013: 64.

oraculaires de Dodone and DVC's *Τα χρηστήρια ελάσματα της Δωδώνης: Των ανασκαφών Δ. Ευαγγελίδη*. Together they encompass all of the oracular inscriptions published to date; some of the tablets from Lhôte's work overlap with tablets found in the DVC corpus.

While the inscriptions offer remarkable and intimate glimpses into the everyday life of the supplicants and present the perspectives of various social groups, such as workers, slaves, and women, usually omitted in ancient literary sources, they also provide a challenge to those researching them. Buried for over two millennia, the metal tablets have suffered corrosion and sustained other damage, which has impacted on the legibility of some of them.[15] Further issues with deciphering and understanding the questions arise from the manner in which they are written. The layout of the texts on certain tablets is confusing – queries, answers and individual letters are mixed up, a side effect of the reuse by several supplicants of the same lead material. The content of the oracular queries themselves can equally be confusing. The questions are frequently fragmentary, either as the result of the erosion of the metal or by choice of the person inscribing and are written in a veritable plethora of dialects. It is uncertain who exactly wrote the queries – the supplicants themselves or a member of the sanctuary staff – but the dialectal variety found in the texts suggests that many of them would have been inscribed by those visiting the oracle.[16]

Finally, the tablets prove very difficult, if not impossible, to date precisely. Scholars who worked on them have approached this problem from two opposite sides. On one end of the spectrum are Dakaris, Vokotopoulou and Christidis, the editors of the largest and most recent corpus of oracular material from Dodona, who propose a broad date range for each tablet, with a margin of error oscillating around half a century. While erring on the side of caution seems like the more reasonable strategy, the editors unfortunately did not specify the criteria they used in order to assign dates to the inscriptions, making it difficult to understand the reasoning behind their chronological estimates. The other method is the one followed by Lhôte, who assigned each of the tablets a very precise date based on the content of the query, as well as the dialect, alphabet and letter shape. Despite the perhaps overly optimistic outlook, Lhôte's research yielded a compelling

[15] Lhôte 2006: 2.

[16] Lhôte 2006: 363-380. The most thorough dialectological analysis of the oracular texts from Dodona to date was conducted by Lhôte, who examined 167 tablets. In his catalogue, he distinguishes inscriptions written in Doric Greek (including Epirote Doric, colonial Corinthian Doric, and Doric from Magna Graecia or Sicily), Aeolic Greek, Ionian Greek and Attic Greek. He also notes the various Greek alphabets, which appear in the tablets, such as the Corinthian alphabet and the local alphabet from Dodona. See also Méndez Dosuna 2018.

suggestion – the *post quem* and *ante quem* dates for the ensemble of the tablets. The former is established as the middle of the 6th c. BC based on three instances of the use of archaic alphabets. As these are the earliest tablets Lhôte could comfortably chronologically date, he establishes them as the oldest ones among those he had access to.[17] It is worth noting that DVC also believed the 6th c. BC to be the earliest time during which the inscriptions could have been written. They similarly follow Lhôte's suggestion for the *ante quem* date, which they estimate to be in the 2nd c. BC, while Lhôte proposes a more exact moment in history, the year 167 BC, during which the Roman army of Lucius Aemilius Paullus Macedonicus ravaged Epirus and destroyed Dodona. No tablets that could indisputably be dated to a time following the disaster have been found.[18]

Though the topics of the questions vary, the structure of the inquiries themselves is formulaic, resulting in the presence of recurring elements in a number of inscriptions.[19] The first commonly encountered, though not obligatory, element is an invocation to the god or gods, as well as wishes of good fortune, expressed in the opening through a variant of the θεός˙ ἀγαθὴ τύχη formula.[20]

Subsequently, a phrase composed of the name of the supplicant, the verb "to ask" (mostly ἐρωτάω) and the consulted divinities would precede the question. Visitors at Dodona would traditionally seek help from Zeus Naios and Dione, the divine couple presiding over the oracular site, as well as occasionally invoke other deities.[21] Besides changes in the choice of invoked gods and goddesses, the opening composition of the query could be subject to modification, with an absence of the name of the supplicants or no mention of the divinities.[22]

The final part of an oracular text was the question itself. Queries could be asked in the first person ("I inquire") or in the third person ("he/she/they inquire"). The inscriptions from Dodona present a great diversity of subject matter, however the form in which the subject matter was approached is relatively standardized. In his study of the tablets, Lhôte discerns two primary constructions, the ἦ formula and the τίνι formula, though Piccinini has recently suggested to

[17] Lhôte 2006: 11.
[18] Lhôte 2006: 12-15.
[19] Eidinow 2007: 125-126.
[20] And varieties thereof: θεοί (LOD 13), τύχα ἀγαθά (DVC 4135), θεός τύχα ἀγαθά (DVC 1568), θεοὶ τύχα ἀγαθά (DVC 1195), θεός ἀγαθὰ τύχα (DVC 2650), θεοὶ ἀγαθᾶι τύχαι (DVC 3196), θεὸς τύχα (DVC 2242), θεός τύχη ἀγαθή (DVC 3141).
[21] The gods invoked during the oracular consultation are discussed in Chapter 2.2.1.
[22] Lhôte 2006: 337.

expand these categories by a third one – the περί formula (topic questions).[23] The ἦ formula describes dichotomous queries, in which the supplicant asks the gods to choose between two presented alternatives. Lhôte points to a number of variants of this construction: certain questions might be missing the opening part of the formula, including the interrogative ἦ, while in other cases ἦ can be replaced by πότερον, πότερα, αἰ or εἰ.[24] The τίνι formula refers to non-polar questions, following broadly the structure: "to which god or hero should the supplicant sacrifice in order to succeed".[25] In these instances, the optative paired with the modal particle (dor. κα, att. ἄν) expresses the potential mood. Certain cases combine two or more questions within one text, but these two types of formulas are never merged together. Nevertheless, if they pertain to an eventuality, they can share a feature in the form of the λῶιον καὶ ἄμεινόν formula, through which the supplicant inquiries about the best and most successful outcome for him or her.

An altogether different question structure is the one that opens with περί accompanied by the object of the question in the genitive. These can be long, complex queries which provide details about the supplicant's situation or, more often, they are simple, short statements indicating the subject matter about which the supplicant is seeking advice (such as the overwhelmingly recurrent περὶ γενεᾶς query). Unlike the questions relying on the ἦ and τίνι formulas, those with the περί formula often lack an invocation and rarely address the gods directly. The brevity of the text appears to have been intentional and not the result of damage to the tablet – on occasion it may have functioned as a summary of a longer version of the question found on the reverse of the tablet, but in most cases, it seems to be the inquiry itself.[26] All three versions of oracular questions are well represented in the corpus, occurring indiscriminately throughout the Classical and Hellenistic period. The supplicants, however, favoured inquiries constructed with the ἦ formula,[27] which points to a divinatory process heavily centered on a "yes" or "no", or otherwise binary, answer system.

Among the abundance of oracular questions, a small number of oracular answers has been identified. As Lhôte remarks, determining what was an inquiry and what was an answer is a

[23] Lhôte 2006: 336-337; Piccinini 2013: 72.
[24] Lhôte 2006: 338-339.
[25] Carbon 2015: 75.
[26] Parker 2016: 73.
[27] The ἦ formula questions outnumber the περί and τίνι formulas 2 to 1 respectively. Furthermore, the περί formula is marginally more common in the Dodona corpus than the τίνι formula.

problem that has plagued researchers since the early publications of the inscriptions, with some of the shorter queries being mistakenly understood as divine responses.[28] These misinterpretations are, in part, the consequence of the structure and layout of the texts themselves. The fragmented questions, often clustered together, sometimes appear at first glance to be declarative or imperative clauses instead of interrogative ones. The final decision about their status can be only made upon examination – often what determines whether an inscription is considered the divine reply or not lies in its connection to a question featured on the same tablet. It would seem that the inquiry can be found on one side of the tablet, while the oracular reply is inscribed on the other side. In his analysis of several answers, Lhôte highlights an important aspect: the handwriting in which questions and answers are written is different, suggesting that the supplicant or a scribe wrote the question, while the oracle's reply was etched into the lead by someone else, most likely a functionary of the Dodona sanctuary.[29] Nevertheless, the limited quantity of preserved answers seems to suggest that recording them was not common practice.

The statements that can be regarded as answers come in various forms. The first can be classified as responses to the queries with the ἦ or περί formulas. They inform the supplicant of what to do in the situation he or she has presented to the oracle. The advice from the gods could be concise, no longer than one or two words, or could carry more complex concepts and present elaborate suggestions. The second type of answers is the one linked to the questions following the τίνι formula, in which supplicants wanted to know to which divinities they should offer sacrifices for a successful outcome to their issue. The information the oracle produced was recorded in the form of lists of deities and the offerings they were to receive.[30]

A final category of texts is what Lhôte names the "annex inscriptions", a grouping consisting of all that cannot be labelled neatly as questions or answers. Among these miscellaneous texts, several subsets can be differentiated. The first consists of names (in the nominative or genitive) and abbreviated names, presumably belonging to the supplicant. These are interpreted as

[28] Lhôte 2006: 357.
[29] Lhôte 2006: 356.
[30] Carbon 2015: 75-79. The length and level of detail varies across the answers. Some, such as, LOD 166c (Διόνε θύην), are laconic and brief, while others, as LOD 142 (Διὶ Ναίωι σκύφον / Διὶ Ὀλυμπίωι χοιρίον Διὶ Βρόνται [— — —] / Διὶ Εὐκλεῖ χοιρίον / Διὶ Βουλεῖ λοιβάν / Κόραι χοιρίον / Ἀρτέμιτι Ἀγεμόναι ἄγαλμα / Ἥρωι Ἀρχαγέται λοιβάν), provide elaborate information on what the supplicant should do to gain the favour of gods and heroes. Whether such a discrepancy is the result of supplicants intentionally receiving answers of different length or simply someone not recording the entire oracular response remains uncertain.

means of designating the person making the inquiry. In the case of full names inscribed on the tablet, they tend not to include patronyms or ethnonyms.[31] The second group is composed of individual letters or sets of letters, which have been to-date understood as numbers used as markers linking each tablet to a supplicant.[32] The third subcategory of "annex inscriptions" refers to titles or summaries of questions. They are short texts, containing two or three words that encapsulate the topic of the query.[33] While not all of these inscriptions can be explained, this thesis will argue that some of these brief texts are, in fact, answers to the questions.

The inscriptions found on the oracular tablets from Dodona, though diverse in the topics they address, tend to follow a formulaic structure. Their fragmentary status and often uncertain or unclear interpretation and date do not allow a systematic approach; nonetheless, the way in which the queries and answers are formulated may help in understanding both the workings of the oracle and the way in which supplicants consulted it. For the purpose of my thesis and the thematic approach I have chosen, I will be using tablets regardless of these categories.

3. Methodology and Structure of Thesis

In this study, two main approaches were taken. The first examines the oracular queries as manifestations of personal religiosity. Until recently, the *polis* religion model, coined by Sourvinou-Inwood, painted religion in the Hellenic world as "embedded" in the network of relationships within the *polis* and as intrinsically tied to it.[34] However, some scholars have questioned the model, noting that it did not account for other types of religious behaviours or institutions. Due to their panhellenic status and visits from both foreign individuals and communities, mantic sanctuaries were part of a greater religious framework that went beyond the *polis*.[35] While oracles on an institutional level fit within the concept of *polis* religion, they equally provided individuals with "services" that exceeded what was offered by the religion of the *polis*. Indeed, the evidence from Dodona attests to manifold and unique personal religious choices and approaches to the gods that are not seen very often and that clearly underline the Greeks insecurities about the gods rather than a structured system as suggested by the *polis* religion

[31] Lhôte 2006: 351.
[32] Robert 1883: 466-472; Lhôte 2006: 352-353.
[33] Lhôte 2006: 354.
[34] Sourvinou-Inwood 2000a; Sourvinou-Inwood 2000b.
[35] Scheid 2016: 15.

model.[36] In this manner, oracles provided a religious space that went beyond the *polis*. The ways in which the oracular tablets fit into this paradigm will be explored in this thesis.

Within the context of personal religiosity, two more key concepts must be included. One is the idea of choice and initiative, introduced as an element of personal religion by Versnel.[37] The notion of agency becomes important in one's relationship with the sphere of the divine; to partake in divination practices was a deliberate choice on the part of the individual, who presumably believed that seeking out the help of the gods as the best solution to his or her problem. Thus, this thesis will place the emphasis on the supplicants and the ways they utilized the oracle of Dodona. It will build on Eidinow's argument that for private visitors, the oracle was not a means of sanctioning an already pre-made decision,[38] but rather a strategic component of their decision-making process and a method of mitigating uncertainty in everyday life.[39] The other concept useful in analyzing personal religiosity is that of "low-intensity" and "high-intensity" ritual activities.[40] The former refers to actions undertaken to maintain a constant positive relationship with the divine rather than interfering in it, such as communal, regularly observed festivals or sacrifices; while the latter is used to define practices conducted in unusual and distressing circumstances.[41] This study will demonstrate that consulting the oracle was primarily a high-intensity ritual, aimed at obtaining the support of the deities in reducing the level of risk the supplicant faced. However, the degree and methods by which the gods were expected to help varied, depending on the phrasing of the question and topic of consultation.

The second approach found in this thesis frames the oracular queries in a regional socio-economic and historical context. In order to better interpret the stories behind the oracular consultations, one must strive to understand the conditions from which they arose. Lhôte's dialectological analysis of tablets prior to the publication of the DVC corpus has demonstrated that some of the people visiting Dodona were, unsurprisingly, inhabitants of Epirus and neighbouring regions, but that residents of Thessaly, Boeotia, Athens and Magna Graecia were also well represented in the inquiries.[42] Curbera's overview of the personal names found in the DVC corpus

[36] Kindt 2012: 17-18; Kindt 2015: 36.
[37] Versnel 2011: 121-124. This will be further discussed in Chapter 2.
[38] Particularly in the case of consultations made by *poleis*, see Morgan 1990: 156-157.
[39] Eidinow 2007: 137-138.
[40] Originally formulated as "high-intensity rites" and "low-intensity rites" (van Ball 1976). On adoption of these concepts to the notion of "belief", see Versnel 2011: 548, 558.
[41] On role of "low-intensity beliefs" in Ancient Greek society, see Eidinow 2019.
[42] Lhôte 2006: 429-430.

confirms this, situating the origins of many of the supplicants in Northwestern Greece.[43] This thesis will argue in Chapters 4 and 5 that the new evidence points to the majority of the supplicants being of Northwestern Greek, and more specifically Epirote, origin. While not a complete study of any single region, this thesis does follow some of the tenets shared by works focusing on regionalism in ancient Greek history. The imprecise nature of the source material – e.g. the frequent absence of identifiers that can clearly distinguish the identity of the supplicants – encourages the decentering of the role of the *polis* as a framework and the exploration of narratives belonging to groups that operate within different political and cultural contexts (such as the Epirote region in which the oracle of Dodona is situated) or outside the normative level of a male adult citizen (such as women or slaves).[44] With this in mind, when possible, the oracular tablets will be compared with literary sources about Epirus and epigraphic evidence from the region, including other inscriptions from Dodona, Bouthrotos, Phoinike and Gitana, building on the work of scholars such as Hammond, Cabanes and, more recently, Meyer and Domínguez *et al.*[45] Placing the oracular texts against a Northwestern Greek background will not only shed light on the content of the tablets, but also provide insight into the social, political, and economic life of a region of which relatively little is known about.

The scope of this research is not without its constraints. The broad dating of the tablets does not always allow for a precise identification of the time period during which the text would have been inscribed. Even though recent studies of the queries have argued that some of the inscriptions offer enough information to be placed in very exact historical contexts,[46] not every tablet contains such detail. Similarly, the frequent lack of patronymics or ethnica, or of defining dialectal variations, disallows the identification of the origin of the supplicant, and thus a more precise socio-economic context of the question. These issues are acknowledged in the thesis and several solutions are offered to mitigate them. The tablets are grouped by subject, which, at the least, allows for internal comparisons of the queries within the Dodonean oracular corpora and demonstrates larger trends in the evidence. Furthermore, when no geographic information is offered by the inscriptions, they are placed in a broader, ancient Greek setting rather than focusing on regional specificities.

[43] Curbera 2013: 419-420.
[44] Constantakopoulou 2017: 14.
[45] Hammond 1967; Cabanes 1974; Cabanes 1976; Meyer 2013; Domínguez (ed.) 2018.
[46] Lhôte 2017.

While previous scholarship has investigated the tablets either as focused case studies or utilized them as auxiliary evidence, this thesis is the first to offer a comprehensive historical analysis of the oracular queries from Dodona while taking into consideration all of the published inquiries. The time period covered in this work is defined by the dating of the tablets: 6th to 2nd c. BC, with the majority of the evidence belonging to the 5th-4th c. BC. This thesis is comprised of a series of case studies, which have been collected into overarching themes and divided into five chapters.

The first chapter of this thesis provides the historical background for the rest of the study. It focuses on the development of the oracle of Dodona in the socio-political Epirote context, from its establishment in the Mycenaean period to its evolution into a political and cultural center of the *koinon* of the Molossoi. It also presents an overview of the functioning of the oracular sanctuary and its staff, the Selloi and the priestesses. By comparing the literary evidence with the recently published corpus of oracular inscriptions, this chapter will broaden the discussion about the various methods of divination attested in the sources, the practical aspects of the mantic process and the divine responses. The following three chapters concern personal queries. The second chapter addresses the questions supplicants had about religious matters. By examining the diverse and individual approaches to oracular consultation and communication with the gods exhibited by the visitors at the sanctuary, as well as their concerns about other ritual practices, the chapter will investigate how the tablets can contribute to the understanding of personal religiosity. In the third chapter, the focus is placed on the individual and his or her relationship with the *oikos*. It analyses how the oracle was utilized to expand, shape, and protect this social unit. The main subjects of inquiry here concern marriage and children, slaves, and the health of the supplicant and his relatives. The fourth chapter revolves around various aspects of socio-economic life: work and money, travel and trade, as well as legal problems. It aims to inspect the role of the oracle in impacting local economies and social practices, as well as to reassess the geographic scope of Dodona's influence. The fifth chapter examines queries asked by *poleis* and tribes. It will fill in the gaps concerning the range of Dodona's reach, as well as discuss their relationship with the oracle. This analysis of the oracular tablets will demonstrate the nature and scale of the role of the oracle of Zeus Naios and Dione in shaping the lives of the individuals and the communities consulting at the sanctuary.

Chapter 1. The history and functioning of the oracle of Dodona

This chapter will serve as the foundation for the study of the oracular tablets by providing the context in which the sanctuary of Dodona existed and functioned. First, it will examine the development of the sanctuary and its socio-political position in Epirus. Establishing the role of Dodona in the region will set the scene for the analysis of the queries through the prism of Northwester Greek history. Second, this chapter will discuss the workings of the oracle: its staff and the possible divination methods they used.

1.1. History of the sanctuary: Contextualizing Dodona

The sanctuary of Zeus Naios and Dione at Dodona is located in north-western Greece, about 22 kilometres south-west from the present-day city of Ioannina. Situated in a valley, the site is flanked by mountains, with Mount Tomaros rising to its south.[47] The entire region of Epirus, in which Dodona is found, is split by the Pindos chain, which averages at about 2000 m above sea level. Its temperatures differ from those of central Greece and the Peloponnese, with significantly colder winters and more rainfall throughout the year.[48]

The image of Dodona that can be constructed from literary texts – a perspective rather too often Athenian – is that of a distant and somewhat liminal place, separate from the cultural and political workings of the *poleis* located in the more prominent areas of mainland Greece. In the earliest recorded mention of Dodona, Homer described it as "wintry" (δυσχείμερος) and remote, a destination faraway enough to give the story an appropriate air of mystery and gravitas, but presumably familiar enough to the audience to avoid any confusion about the divination practices offered at the sanctuary of Zeus.[49] After all, the site was widely considered to be the oldest oracle in Greece.[50] Indeed, while no relics dating to the Neolithic period were found in proximity of Dodona (unlike in the case of the plain of Ioannina), excavations uncovered items, including two groups of vases from the late 3rd or early 2nd millennium BC, that suggested human presence in the

[47] Dakaris 1971: 14.
[48] Hammond 1967: 14-17; Cabanes 1990: 70; Piccinini 2017: 31.
[49] Hom. *Il.* 16.234.
[50] Lhôte 2006: IX.

region during the early Bronze Age.[51] The origins of the earliest inhabitants of Dodona remains uncertain. Based on an etymological study of local toponyms, Hammond, Dakaris, and Lhôte identify them as pre-Hellenic groups and credit them with the introduction of an Earth goddess cult, which they believe to have preceded the worship of Zeus and given Dodona its initial reputation as a religious centre.[52] Piccinini, on the other hand, points to transhumance as the driving force for local socio-economic organization; this led to the formation of a community for which the religious site at Dodona functioned as a landmark amid the trade paths that passed through Epirus.[53] Contrary to the image of a remote area painted by ancient sources, the region was interconnected with adjacent lands through an elaborate system of routes used by shepherds moving cattle and sheep, as well as trading goods and ideas with neighbours. This network dating to the Late Bronze age, which linked the mountains with the coastal area, was the basis for the development of local settlements. Within this socio-economic context, Piccinini theorizes that Dodona would have most likely originated as a meeting place or path marker for the pastoral communities, whose members travelled across Epirus. The archaeological finds from the Bronze Age, including mostly domestic items such as loom weights and axes, suggest that the area, which later would become the location of the *bouleuterion*, most likely housed the transhumant shepherds and their families.[54] Dodona's role as a religious site emerged later, most likely because of its function as a node in the communication and exchange networks of the region.[55]

[51] Dakaris 1971: 16.

[52] Hammond 1967: 369; Dakaris 1971: 14-17; Lhôte 2006: X. For Dakaris and Lhôte topographical names such as Dodona and Tomaros are not of an Indo-European origin.

[53] Piccinini 2017: 36-38. Ancient authors such as Hesiod, Pindar, Aristotle, and Varro wrote about the large and impressive cattle and sheep herds of Epirus (Hes. *Eoiai* fr. 240; Pind. *Nem*. 4, 51-53; Arist. *Historia Animalium* 3, 21, 522b and 8, 7, 595b; Varro, *RR* II 6). While Piccinini notes that the archaeological evidence from the Late Bronze and Archaic periods does not seem to corroborate the textual evidence due to the lack of zoomorphic figurines or imagery found in Dodona, a number of oracular tablets (predominantly dated to the Classical and Hellenistic periods) from the site demonstrate that animal husbandry was a frequent concern of the people consulting the Dodonean oracle of Zeus.

[54] Tartaron 2004: 20-23; Piccinini 2017: 40-41. Attesting to Epirus's commercial connections to other regions of the Mediterranean world, archaeological evidence from the Middle Helladic period includes Mycenaean imports and local imitations (see Hammond 1997).

[55] Piccinini 2017: 39. Piccinini draws analogies between the oracle of Dodona and the sanctuary at Olympia, which was also founded at the crossroad of transhumant paths in the region of Elis (on the development of the sanctuary at Olympia, see Morgan 1990). A similar situation could be found at Delphi, which lay at the intersection of roads oriented on the North-South and East-West axes near Mount Parnassos. Shepherds would cross the area as they travelled with the animals to the plain of Itea (Wagner-Hasel 2000: 266-281).

The first recorded Hellenic tribe to have occupied the region was the Thesprotians, who migrated to Epirus between 1900 and 1600 BC.[56] They settled, among others, in the territory that would later house the oracle of Dodona. Dakaris links the Thesprotians to the earliest mention of the sanctuary, a passage from Homer's *Iliad*, in which the Selloi are named as the interpreters of the divine will of Zeus.[57] He, along with other scholars, believed them to be a community living in the plains of Ioannina and Dodona, most likely a subgroup of the Thesprotians. Despite the arrival of a new group, the economy of Epirus seems to have remained unchanged, with a heavy focus on cattle breeding and transhumance between Pindos mountains and the coastal plains. The excavations dated to the Late Bronze Age consist predominantly of double axes, swords, and spearheads.[58] Their nature, votive or not, remains disputed. Dakaris links their presence at Dodona to an already functioning oracle, while Piccinini avoids any conclusive judgement, noting that there is not enough context for any definitive statement about the items' purpose.[59] However, what can be determined is a rearrangement in Dodona's role within the region's exchange and travel system, as it became a more prominent node in the network. This change followed an overall shift of interests inland, perhaps the result of a growing exploitation of minerals and metal ores, such as gold, silver, and amber, in Epirus.[60]

Signs of an unquestionably religious function of Dodona appear in the 8th-7th c. BC. Early Iron Age items uncovered at the site, such as fragments of bronze tripods and cauldrons decorated in wave and spiral motifs, bear a strong resemblance to the finds from Olympia and Delphi.[61] Piccinini argues that they are a sign of ritual commensality practiced by the visitors. The custom of sharing meals would have helped build a sense of unity among an otherwise transient community of shepherds and seasonal inhabitants of the Dodona region. The bronze objects, alongside horse figurines and weapons, were also associated with wealth and are generally interpreted as offerings presented to the sanctuary by elite members of society.[62] Their occurrence at the oracular site is testimony to its growth beyond local significance. The rise in Dodona's popularity has been attributed to the appearance of Greek colonists on the coast of Epirus –

[56] Strab. 7.7.11; Dakaris 1971: 16.
[57] Hom. *Il.* 16.233-235.
[58] Hammond 1967: 331-362.
[59] Dakaris 1971: 17; Piccinini 2017: 41.
[60] Piccinini 2017: 35.
[61] Dakaris 1971: 19; Dieterle 2007: 170-181; Piccinini 2017: 41-42.
[62] van Wees 1992: 103-105.

Corinthians, led by Charikrates, who according to tradition founded Corcyra in 733 BC.[63] Corinthian-made helmets, pottery, and bronze fragments of vessels, dating to the 8th-7th c. BC, have been uncovered at the Epirote sanctuary.[64] Whether they were gifts donated by affluent Corinthians or offerings imported by local elites is uncertain, but it is worth noting that an oracular tablet from the mid-6th c. BC, one of the oldest found in Dodona, is written in the archaic Corinthian alphabet.[65] Other objects left at the site were four bronze male anthropomorphic figurines, naked except for three belts around their waist, one arm raised above their head. Cast in the 8th c. BC, they are believed to represent a warrior or a god, perhaps Zeus as they do bear a resemblance to later depictions of the divinity.[66] Despite its growing role and prestige, Dodona would remain a sanctuary without a temple, the site most likely marked by the sacred oak tree surrounded by the tripods and votive gifts, until the 5th c. BC.[67]

The Peloponnesian War that engulfed the Greek world set a new course for Epirus as well. Local tribes, ruled by hereditary kings, do not appear to have involved themselves in the politics of the southern *poleis*. Everything changed when the most prominent Epirote tribe, the Molossians, allied with the Athenians.[68] The Aeacid king Tharyps, whose reign lasted from 423 to *ca.* 400, had fled as a child to Athens.[69] The king's stay in Attica seems to have had a profound effect on him,

[63] Hammond 1967: 414-415. Hammond remarks that the Corinthian settlers were believed to have expelled earlier occupants of the island: the Eretrians (Plu. *Quaes. Gr.* 11), Liburnians (Strab. 6. 2. 4), and Colchians (Ap. Rhod. 4. 1206 f.). Both he and later scholars such as Piccinini (2017: 49-54), note that out of the three stories, the narrative of Erethrian colonists appears the most plausible since Euboeans began settling Western Greece before the Corinthians and Corcyra would have been a strategic location for expansion in the region. Furthermore, the literary tradition of other Euboean settlements in Epirus (Paus. 5.22.3) can be supported by Euboean toponyms (Euboea, Hellopia, Abantis, and Makris), which are present in the region. However, archaeological evidence of a well-established Euboean presence in Epirus remains scarce. Piccinini proposes to solve this discrepancy by theorizing that the Euboeans were transient seafarers rather than colonizers. A similar problem is posed by Elean settlements of southern Epirus. Their existence in the 8th c. BC is most prominently attested in literary sources (Hammond 1967: 427), while the archaeological excavations have not yielded conclusive proof of such early colonization (Morgan 1988: 318-319).

[64] Piccinini 2017: 63.

[65] Lhôte 2006: 11, no. 133. The inscription has special significance, as Lhôte uses it to determine the *terminus post quem* of the 167 oracular tablets he analyses. None of the tablets from the DVC corpus are deemed older than the 6th c. BC either.

[66] Dieterle 2007: 181-183, F 51 and F 52.

[67] Dakaris 1971: 39-40.

[68] Dakaris 1971: 20; Lhôte 2006: XIII.

[69] According to Thucydides, Admetus was Tharyps' predecessor (Thuc. 1.136-137), though this statement has been questioned by modern scholars (Meyer 2013: 13). The dates of Tharyps' rule are also debated. According to Hammond, the reign ended around the year 400 BC (Hammond 1967: 508), while Funke maintains it should be extended by ten more years (Funke 2000: 127). Dakaris suggests an even later date – 385 BC (Dakaris 1971: 20).

tightening his bonds with Athens and fuelling his fascination with the culture of the *polis*.[70] His return to Epirus marked a period of intense political, social, and economic change. Under his rule, the region began a process of urbanization.[71] The small villages were grouped into larger, fortified communities and new settlements, such as Cassope, Goumani, and Ammotopos, were founded. Silver and bronze coins were minted. The Attic alphabet was introduced.[72] The old administration system underwent reorganization as well, although the degree of these transformations remains a point of debate. Dakaris and Lhôte emphasize the Athenian influence on Tharyps' reforms, ascribing to them the democratisation of the governing institutions through the introduction of yearly appointed magistrates and a *boule*. Hammond, citing Plutarch and Justin-Trogus, interprets the late 5th c. changes as rather a codification of the administrative and legal changes that had been slowly occurring in the region even before Tharyps' ascension to power.[73] Meyer, on the other hand, question the extent of the Aeacid king's innovations. In her study of Dodonean manumission and dedicatory inscriptions from the 4th-2nd c. BC, she argues that Tharyps can only be credited with creating the amphictyony presiding over Dodona and awarding his supported the title of *demiourgoi*. The rest of his supposed achievements appear to be more the result of Plutarch and Justin-Trogus' bias against the inhabitants of Epirus, which they viewed as backward compared to southern Greek *poleis* and therefore unable to develop any administrative institution on their own.[74] While the extent of Tharyps' governmental reforms remains uncertain, it is commonly agreed that under his leadership, the sanctuary of Dodona changed hands, passing under Molossian control. The earliest building discovered on the site, a small stone building – either a temple or a space to store votive gifts – is believed to have been erected near the oak tree during this time, at the end of the 5th c. BC.[75]

If literary evidence such as Kallisthenes's recounting of the failed Spartan consultation or Demosthenes' mention of a prophetic instruction given to the Athenians indicates the increasing popularity of the Epirote oracle in the Greek world of the 4th c BC, then the lead tablets discovered

[70] Meyer 2013: 13. The degree of Tharyps' Hellenization is perhaps best illustrated by the citizenship grant he received from the Athenians (*IG* II³,1 411).
[71] Domínguez 2018: 5.
[72] Dakaris 1971: 20.
[73] Plut. *Pyrrh*. 1.3; Justin-Trogus 17.3.11; Hammond 1967: 507-508.
[74] Meyer 2013: 115.
[75] Hammond 1967: 508-509; Dakaris 1971: 40; Meyer 2013: 116.

at the site solidify the scope of its universal appeal.[76] DVC dated the bulk of the oracular inscriptions to the 4th-3rd c. BC, while Lhôte's linguistic analysis of the tablets has demonstrated that the supplicants, who wrote their queries on the lead, spoke a variety of different dialects – Doric, Aeolian, Attic, and Ionian, as well as several local variations of these main groups – attesting to the broad reach of the oracle.[77] Furthermore, the tablets reveal that consulting Zeus Naios and Dione became a practice performed not only by individuals or the great *poleis* of the time, but also by cities and *koina* less readily written about by ancient historians.[78] The prestige of the divinatory site increased in tandem with Dodona's political importance in Epirus. Between the years 400 and 330-325 BC, under the consecutive reign of the Aeacid kings Alcetas I, Neoptolemos I, Arybbas, and Alexander I, the region underwent substantial political changes. Older scholarship supports the idea of the emergence of a Molossian *koinon* (κοινὸν τῶν Μολοσσῶν). The grants of privileges, manumissions, and dedications, dated to the first half of the 4th c. BC, are believed to signify that the Molossians were in fact a group of Epirote tribes united under federal governance, ruled by some form of constitutional kingship with officials appointed to limit the king's power.[79] However, Meyer has recently proposed that the idea of a federal *koinon* in Epirus of the 4th c. BC is the result of the misdating of epigraphic evidence, pushing the Molossian "federation" and territorial expansion into the 3rd c. BC.[80] She argues that the key developments in the 4th c. BC were the inclusion of the sanctuary at Dodona into the political sphere, as well as its management, and that the new board of officials mentioned in the decrees was not composed of representatives of different tribes, but rather should be seen as a religious amphictyony.[81] While Meyer's work offers a bold re-examination of the source material, Chapinal-Heras convincingly argues against her interpretation, demonstrating that it lacks conclusive evidence. He contests Meyer's suggestion that the Epirote *koinon* only emerged after the fall of the Aeacid dynasty on the basis that without pre-existing federal structure would have facilitated and encouraged such a political transformation.[82]

[76] Kallisthenes (*FGrH* 124 F 22); Dem. 21, 53.
[77] Lhôte 2006: 363-422.
[78] The diverse origins of individual supplicants, as well as the *poleis* and *koina* consulting at the oracle will be discussed in Chapters 4 and 5.
[79] Hammond 1967: 525-540, 564; Cabanes 1976: 164, 534-540.
[80] Meyer 2013: 22-38, 53.
[81] Meyer 2013: 56-63, 117-118.
[82] For an overview and critique of Meyer's hypothesis, see Chapinal-Heras 2021: 52-60.

The rule of Alexander I marked another pivotal moment in the history of Epirus. The king exploited the memory of an alliance between neighbouring groups, Molossians, Thesprotians, and Chaonians, and the nascent sense of local identity. He thus appears to have envisioned a greater Molossian state, minting bronze coins with the legend "of the Apeirotes" and symbols of Dodona and Zeus.[83] Hammond and Cabanes believe that following Alexander's murder in Italy and the crisis of power that ensued, the Molossians expanded their "federation" to include other members, therefore taking on the broader name of Apeiros/Epirus, while Meyer continues to see the changes as less structural and more in the context of regional identity.[84] Around the time of Alexander I's death, his widowed sister, Olympias, settled in Epirus. She championed Dodona in an attempt to counteract Athenian involvement at the shrine. Olympias is also believed to have influenced her son, Alexander the Great, in his decision to help finance improvements to the Epirote sanctuary, including the construction of a circuit wall of isodomic masonry around the first temple of Zeus Naios.[85] Furthermore, the second half of the 4th c. BC and the beginning of the 3rd c. BC have been identified as the period during which the temples of Aphrodite and Themis, as well as the older temple of Dione, were erected at the oracular site.[86]

The thirty years that followed the death of Alexander I were tumultuous; Molossia's fate was dictated by outside forces – Macedon, exiles, and the Illyrians.[87] The kings Aeacides, Neoptolemos II, and Alcetas II ruled briefly and interchangeably. It was not until Pyrrhus I's return to Epirus in 297, aided by Ptolemy I of Egypt, and the murder of his co-ruler Neoptolemos II in 295 that the region saw a more stable reign. Molossia increased its openness to outsiders; the inclusion of the coastal cities of Epirus into Molossian territory allowed for more dynamic trade and exchange of ideas with other parts of the Greek world.[88] The sanctuary of Dodona came to be one of the biggest beneficiaries of Pyrrhus' ascension to the throne. The Aeacid king sought to win the favour of the oracle. The old circuit wall was replaced by a larger one, with three Ionic colonnades along the north, west, and south side with the sacred oak still present within the walls. Archaeological evidence suggests that the columns must have been decorated with the captured

[83] Meyer 2013: 120.
[84] Hammond 1967: 557-563; Cabanes 1976: 172-183; Meyer 2013: 72.
[85] Dakaris 1971: 21-22, 41-42; see Hyp. 4.24.
[86] Dakaris 1971: 22. On the contestation of this identification, see Chapter 2.2.1.
[87] Meyer 2013: 125-126.
[88] Meyer 2013: 129-130.

shields of the Romans and Macedonians, commemorating Pyrrhus' victories in 280 and 274 BC.[89] The *bouleuterion* and the theatre are also dated to the beginning of the 3rd c. BC.[90] The organization of the Naia festival, which was held every four years and consisted of athletic and dramatic contests, has similarly been ascribed to this period.[91] Pyrrhus' attention to the development of Dodona, along with the emphasis placed on it by his predecessors, transformed it into the political centre of Molossia, a meeting place for all the allied tribes.[92] A sense of community focused on Dodona and not, as previously, on the monarchy had begun to emerge in Epirus, the ramifications of which would be felt half a century later.[93]

Alexander II continued the legacy of cultural and political progress. After Pyrrhus' death in 272 BC, he strove to maintain the Molossians' central role in the alliance of neighbouring groups. However, the strength of this position was not lasting; although Alexander's rule was a long one (272-255 BC), it did not cement Molossia's favourable position in the region. His successors – two young sons, Pyrrhus II and Ptolemy, as well as their regent mother, Olympias II – reigned briefly, plagued by attacks of Illyrian bandits and Aetolians.[94] The Aeacid dynasty came to a brutal end with the murder of Pyrrhus II's daughter, Deidamia, who was assaulted by a mob in Ambracia in 232 BC. In place of a monarchic state, a true *koinon* emerged. This new Epirote federation (composed of Molossians, Thesprotians, and Chaonians, though a common "Epirote" citizenship for men had been introduced) was headed by a *strategos* and its structure included an *ekklesia*, *synarchontes*, and a *synedrion*.[95]

The Epirote *koinon* (or Epirote League) lasted between 232 and 167 BC. The first decades of this period were marked by a continued close relationship with Macedon, which proved to be useful during a raid by Aetolians in 219 BC. The invaders plundered and destroyed the sanctuary of Dodona, burning many of the temples, including the main one belonging to Zeus Naios.[96] Interestingly, this attack does not appear to be reflected in the oracular tablets themselves.[97] Philip

[89] Dakaris 1971: 43 and 46.
[90] Dakaris 1971: 58; Dieterle 2007: 136, 141.
[91] Dakaris 1971: 90-91.
[92] Chapinal-Heras 2017: 32.
[93] Meyer 2013: 126-127.
[94] Cabanes 1976: 40-42; Meyer 2013: 130.
[95] Dakaris 1971: 22-23; Meyer 2013: 130-131.
[96] Dakaris 1971: 23.
[97] Lhôte 2006: XIV.

V of Macedon led a Macedonian and Epirote army in a retaliatory assault on Aetolia, occupying Thermum right before the Thermia festival. The spoils from that incursion helped rebuild the Dodonean site. The temple of Zeus was reconstructed in a monumental style; the damaged temples of Dione, Themis, Heracles, and Aphrodite were also repaired. The theatre was expanded and a stone stadium, most likely intended to be used during the Naia festival, was erected nearby.[98]

Though initially beneficial, the Macedonian alliance proved to be the undoing of the *koinon*. As the conflict between Epirus' north-eastern neighbour and Rome grew, the tribes became divided in their allegiances. The Chaonians and northern Thesprotians sided with the Romans, while the Molossians and southern Thesprotians supported Macedon.[99] In 168 BC, Roman troops, under the command of Aemilius Paullus, defeated the army of Perseus of Macedon at Pydna. While Macedon would be forcibly divided into smaller states, its punishment was not nearly as harsh as the one Rome had devised for the Molossians. Aemilius Paullus and his soldiers entered Epirus in 167 BC, raiding and razing to the ground seventy cities across Molossia, as well as enslaving 150,000 of its people.[100] The oracle of Dodona is believed to have been among the targeted locations, thus ending its period of greatest prominence in the Mediterranean world.[101]

1.2. Functioning of the oracle

1.2.1. Religious officials: The Selloi and the priestesses

The first mention of sanctuary staff can be found in the sixteenth book of the *Iliad*, when Achilles offers a libation to Zeus invoking the god by his Dodonean epithet (Δωδωναῖος) and proceeds to describe the men residing at the sacred site: "Oh Zeus, king, Dodonean, Pelasgian, residing afar, ruler of wintery Dodona; the Selloi (Σελλοί), interpreters with unwashed feet who sleep on the

[98] Dakaris 1971: 23-24, 46-49, 51.
[99] Meyer 2013: 133.
[100] Meyer 2013: 135.
[101] Dakaris 1971: 25 – 26; Lhôte 2006: XIV, 12-15. Despite the tragic consequences of the Roman intervention, the oracle of Dodona is believed to have functioned (in one form or another) until the 4th c. AD. Strabo reported that the sanctuary, as well as the entire region of Epirus, was deserted in the late 1st c. AD (Strab. 7.7.9); but restorations were made during the Imperial period (Paus. 1.77.5). Epigraphic evidence suggests that the Naia festival was celebrated until the 2nd-3rd c. AD (Cabanes 1976: 552, n. 30). The emperor Justin is also recorded to have consulted the oracle around the year 362 AD (Gregory of Nazianzus, *Contra Julianum imperatorem*). However, Lhôte argues that despite still providing divinatory services, the method of obtaining a prophecy must have undergone change, as no lead tablets can be dated after the devastation of Molossia in 167 BC.

ground, dwell around you".[102] In its briefness, the passage has proven to be something of a puzzle to scholars by revealing significant but otherwise unattested information about the oracle. The origins of the Selloi are uncertain; even ancient Greeks could not agree. Scholiasts noted a second form of the name given to the priests: the Helloi (Ἕλλοί), a variation predominantly associated with Pindar. It can also be also found in Aristotle's works, though it is believed that this version is derived from the commentaries on the *Iliad*.[103] The choice of one version or the other has often resulted from etymological discussions. The ancient writers, who used the term "Helloi", derived it either from "ἕλος", the Ancient Greek word for marshes, linking it the marshlands near Dodona, or from Hellos, the son of Thessalos, associated with a lesser-known story about the founding of the oracle.[104] A further possibility is to link the term with Hellopia, Hesiod's name for the region in which Dodonean sanctuary is located.[105]

The etymology of "Selloi" is less well-argued in Greek and Roman sources, but the term was seen as no less authentic than the "Helloi" version. Its popularity appears to have predominantly resulted from the tradition of the written text, since it was believed to have been an original reading of Homer's work.[106] Another theory about the name's possible local link was presented by Apollodoros of Athens, who believed the word "Selloi" to be connected to the river Selleeis near Ephyra.[107] The historian identified Ephyra with Epirus, a conclusion contested by present-day scholarship, which challenges any relationship between the Selloi and the Selleeis.[108] There have been more recent attempts to uncover the origins of the name given to the priests. Mayer and Van Windekens suggest an Illyrian or a Pelasgian origin, the latter supported further by Zeus' epithet Πελασγικός present in the Homeric passage.[109] However, according to Hammond and Parke, the Selloi/Helloi name is more closely connected etymologically to the word "Hellenes" (Ἕλληνες), placing them at the intersection of the two groups, the Hellenes and the Pelasgians,

[102] Hom. Il. 16.233-235. Ζεῦ ἄνα Δωδωναῖε Πελασγικὲ τηλόθι ναίων / Δωδώνης μεδέων δυσχειμέρου, ἀμφὶ δὲ Σελλοὶ / σοὶ ναίουσ᾽ ὑποφῆται ἀνιπτόποδες χαμαιεῦναι.
[103] Helloi: Pindar fr. 259 (Bowra) in Str. 7.7.10; Eust. Il. 1057.57; Sch. A, Il. 16.234; Sch. T, Il. 16.235. Selloi: S. Tr. 1167; Eur. fr. 367; Arist. *Mete*. 572 a 41; see Parke 1967: 7.
[104] Schol. Soph., Trach. 172 and Pindar fr. 59 (see Parke 1967: 7, Piccinini 2017: 123).
[105] Hes. fr. 181 (Most).
[106] Strab. 7.7.10.
[107] Apollodorus, *FGrHist*. 244f. 181 and 198, cited by Strab. 7.7.10.
[108] Parke 1967: 8.
[109] Mayer 1959: 102; Van Windekens 1961: 92-93.

which made up the ancient Greek population according to the theories presented by classical Greek writers.[110]

The nature of the Selloi was equally a point of contention among ancient scholars. Their association with larger ethnic groups provoked a debate about their status; the scholiasts commenting Homer's work wondered whether the name was attributed to a tribe inhabiting the area or a particular family (γένος) to whom the hereditary priesthood belonged.[111] Hammond interpreted the ascetic-like behaviour of the Selloi as a description of the simple lifestyle of Epirote peasants, judging the term to be the name of a community living near the sanctuary and occasionally providing divination services to others.[112] Dakaris thought that such a community might have belonged to the larger Thesprotian tribe.[113] Parke, on the other hand, dismissed the idea of the term "Selloi" describing an entire people on the grounds that the rituals they observed seem to be related to a specific religious function instead of practices observed by a society. Lhôte attempted to reconcile the two notions by suggesting that the Selloi/Helloi were indeed a tribe that lived in Hellopia, the name given by Hesiod to the region surrounding Dodona, from which the priests of Zeus Naios were chosen.[114] He cites the lexicon of Hesychius of Alexandria, in which the Helloi are described as "the Hellenes from Dodona and priests".[115] Parke and Lhôte's interpretations seem the most plausible. The majority of the evidence attempting to place the Selloi in a local Epirote context, connecting them to a tribe or geographic location, is very late – dated to Hellenistic and Roman period. Furthermore, the passage from Homer identifies the Selloi as "ὑποφῆται", a title ascribed to specific groups of individuals who interpret the will of the gods, which supports the idea about the rites carried out by them as practices specific to a religious rank rather than an entire community.[116]

In Classical and early Hellenistic sources describing Dodona, the Selloi are much less present, and are mentioned mostly in reference to the *Iliad*. In fact, there are no certain mentions of a male interpreter of Dodonean prophecies. In one of Pindar's paeans, the poet writes about the

[110] Hammond 1967: 372; Parke 1967: 8.
[111] Parke 1967: 7-8; Sch. B.T. Il.
[112] Hammond 1967: 372.
[113] Dakaris 1971: 16.
[114] Lhôte 2006: X – XI; Hes. *Cat.* 240.
[115] Hesychius s.v. Ἕλλοί: Ἕλληνες οἱ ἐν Δωδώνῃ καὶ οἱ ἱερεῖς.
[116] LSJ defines "ὑποφήτης" as "an interpreter of esp. divine will or judgement, e. g. priest who declares an oracle", see: Theoc. 16.29, 17.115; Id. 22.116.

᾽Ελλῶν, who have been understood be the Selloi.[117] A second possible reference to the priests can be found in Demosthenes' speech *Against Meidias* containing two oracles from the Epirote sanctuary. In both instances it is said that "he of Zeus shows by sign" divine recommendations to the Athenians.[118] Demosthenes never explicitly states about whom he is writing, but the text is believed to describe the priest of Zeus at the oracle.[119]

A second literary tradition portrays women as being charged with the maintenance of the site's divinatory traditions. The appearance of priestesses in sources is not simultaneous with that of the oracle itself; Homer made no mention of them in the passages describing Dodona in the *Iliad*.[120] However, in Herodotus' extensive account about the oracle, the Selloi disappear and the focus was placed solely on the priestesses serving at the sanctuary. In fact, the narrative presented in the *Histories* involves women in the story of Dodona bilaterally: in its past and in its present.

When recounting the history of the oracle's origin, Herodotus references two stories. First, he quotes the Egyptian account of the kidnapping of two Theban priestesses by Phoenicians.[121] One was taken to Libya and sold there, while the other was taken to Hellas; the two women later founded places of divination in the foreign lands they were brought to.[122] Next, Herodotus gives the version of events as explained to him in Dodona by the three priestesses he encountered there, who informed him that two black doves flew from Thebes in Egypt to Libya and Dodona. The first established the oracle of Ammon, while the second one settled in an oak tree and commanded the local people to establish a shrine for Zeus.[123]

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[117] Pind. P. fr. 59, see also: Kittelä 2013: 39; Chapinal-Heras 2017: 23. These scholars believe that Pindar dedicated four paeans to Dodona, which he would have written during his time as a *proxenos* at the royal court of the Molossians. At the time, the sanctuary was under Molossian rule.
[118] Dem. 21, 53: τῷ δήμῳ τῷ Ἀθηναίων ὁ τοῦ Διὸς σημαίνει (…) ὁ τοῦ Διὸς σημαίνει ἐν Δωδώνῃ.
[119] Fennell 1887: 38; Chapinal-Heras 2017: 23. It must also be noted that the authenticity of the oracles has been long debated by scholars such as MacDowell (1990) and Canevaro (Canevaro 2013: 209). However, even if the texts are a later addition, their structure follows that of other oracular answers and names gods (Zeus Naios, Dione, Zeus Ktesios, and Dionysos) that have been recorded in the Dodona tablets (see Carbon 2015 and tablets: Lhôte 2006, no. 142, as well as DVC 2393), which suggests that the author of the pseudo-prophecies may have had detailed knowledge of the sanctuary and of the composition of Dodonean oracles.
[120] The *Odyssey* (Hom. *Od.* 14.321) also mentions Dodona and its prophetic oak tree but the passage does not contain any information concerning the staff of the sanctuary.
[121] Surprisingly, an earlier passage about Egyptian religious customs suggests that women would not have been able to hold a position as a religious official in the same capacity as Greek priestesses (Hdt. 2.35.4). Instead, they would have been assistants to priests (Asheri *et al.* 2007: 263).
[122] The Libyan oracle in question is that of Ammon Zeus (Hdt. 2.54.1).
[123] Hdt. 2.55.

What follows in Herodotus is an attempt to rationalize this version of events by combining it with the Theban anecdote; the Theban priestesses were sold into slavery and the one that arrived in Thesprotia did, in fact, found the oracle in Dodona once she learned Greek, teaching the local population about divination.[124] The term "doves" (πελειάδες) would have been ascribed to the priestesses by the inhabitants of Dodona because the sound of the language the women spoke prior to learning Greek resembled the chirping of birds.[125] Although Herodotus understood the ornithological interpretation of the religious site's founding story to be a metaphor, the motif of doves will remain linked with the narrative about Dodona for centuries to come.

In fact, the connection made between the priestesses and birds will become a source of confusion among later authors. When discussing the sanctuary in his *Geography*, Strabo initially mentions that perhaps the oracles were given through doves, but later adds that *peliai* was a name given by Molossians and Thesprotians to old women. Therefore, the Peleiades were not birds, but three old women who served at the temple.[126] Strabo presented the analogy as a hypothetical explanation, but ancient lexicographers, such as Hesychius, have drawn connections between words of similar form as meaning "old woman" or "old man".[127] Parke also suggests that the association of doves with Zeus may be another explanation behind the choice of such a name for the servants consecrated to the god.[128] Several later sources continue with the convention of calling the priestesses by the term "Πέλειαι". Pausanias unambiguously refers to the prophetesses of Dodona as "doves", while Maurus Servius Honoratus, in his *Commentary on the Aeneid of Vergil* from the late 4th and early 5th c. AD, introduces an old priestess "Pelias".[129] However, the discussed examples are all much later than Herodotus' work, which casts a certain shadow of doubt on the use of the title "dove" to describe the priestesses of Dodona, at least in the Classical and Hellenistic periods.

The ornithological digression aside, Herodotus offers rich new information about the oracle. Both the Theban and Dodonean traditions do not reference male priests at the site. They both ascribe the origins of the divinatory practices to the abducted priestesses and establish a

[124] Hdt. 2.56..
[125] Hdt. 2.57; Munson 2005: 68.
[126] Strab. 7, fr. 1a.
[127] Hsch. s.v. πελείους.
[128] Parke 1967: 65-66.
[129] Paus. 10.12.10; Serv. A. 3.466.

connection between the oracular sanctuaries in Egyptian Thebes, Dodona, and Libya. These seemingly conflicting concepts of male and female religious officials can be reconciled when Strabo's account about Dodona is taken into consideration.[130] In it he explains that while men were initially the "interpreters of the will of gods" (προφητεύοντες), that function was later assigned to three older women once Dione had been introduced as Zeus' partner deity. The legitimacy of the association between the female presence in the sanctuary and the worship of Dione remains questionable; Hammond, followed by several other scholars, has theorized about Dodona being the site of a pre-Hellenic cult, which most likely saw a change from the worship of an independent female divinity to Zeus' consort, later renamed Διώνη, which shares the same etymological derivation as the name "Zeus".[131] Parke does not seem entirely convinced of this, arguing instead that she may have simply been present at Dodona as Zeus' counterpart since the oracle's inception. The shrine certainly seems to be the goddess's greatest center of worship in Greece, as the only other significant examples of the cult of Dione come from a later time, primarily from Asia Minor.[132] Furthermore, the references to the goddess in Greek literature are unhelpful in discerning a distinct cult of Dione, which could have been brought into Dodona. Dione is identified by Homer as the mother of Aphrodite.[133] Though it is supposed that the connection drawn between the two deities in the *Iliad* was initially intended to help connect Aphrodite to the action of the story, it later became part of the literary tradition.[134] However, perhaps the relation between the goddesses can be explored as more than a literary treatment. Among Dione's varying parentage, Tethys and Okeanos have been two of the more prominent figures named as her parents, thus giving her a close association with water.[135] In light of this, her link to Aphrodite might seem less surprising, considering that the goddess of love was believed to have been born of sea foam.[136] If Dione had indeed been perceived as a deity connected to water, then perhaps the idea of her long-established presence in Dodona should not be unexpected. After all, the epithet given to Zeus, as evidenced

[130] Strab. 7.7.12 = Souidas of Thessaly, *BNJ* 602 F 11a (see also F 11b, and Kineas of Thessaly *BNJ* 603 F 2a and 2b).
[131] Hammond 1967: 369; Dakaris 1971: 16-17; Lhôte 2006: XII.
[132] Parke 1967: 70.
[133] Homer, *Il.* 5.370-372. As has been mentioned earlier in this chapter and as will be discussed in Chapter 2.2.1, scholars believe that Aphrodite may have been worshipped at Dodona alongside her mother. While no ancient sources directly support this connection, the question of whether her association with doves could have contributed to the priestesses' title does present itself.
[134] Parke 1967: 70.
[135] Hes. *Th.* 353; Kerenyi 1974: 68–69.
[136] Hes. *Th.* 190-197.

by the oracular tablets found at the site, is *Naios*, usually explained as derived from the Greek verb νάω (to flow) and associated with flowing water.[137] Regardless of the accuracy of the theory suggesting a later arrival of the cult of Dione, there seems to be a perception of the prophetesses as outsiders. Strabo also cites a second version of events, one that he openly is skeptical of, in which, according to the historian Suidas, author of a chronicle of Thessaly, the oracle had been moved from Thessaly to Dodona and the current priestesses are the descendants of the women who migrated with the cult.[138] The tradition of priestesses being newcomers in Dodona appears to be strongly rooted in literature.

The various sources discussing Dodona refer to the women residing there by several titles: ἱέρειαι, ἱεραὶ γυναῖκες or προμάντιες, suggesting that the activity of the priestesses centered on providing visiting supplicants with answers to the issues they sought to resolve.[139] They are widely presented as the prophets or interpreters of the will of Zeus, conducting divination sessions on his behalf. There is, however, a general lack of consensus among ancient historians and writers on their role in the oracular process. This tradition of omitting specifics of the divination dates to Homer's *Iliad*, which, while naming the Selloi as ὑποφῆται of Zeus Pelasgikos, did not provide any actual information about the process of consulting the god. The fragment of the *Odyssey* mentioning Odysseus' visit to Dodona to learn about his future from a sacred oak tree gives equally little insight to the functioning of the oracle, although it does signal the importance of the tree, which will echo through other ancient works.[140] The absence of concrete details about the procedure of creating prophecies and predictions extends to the priestesses as well. Several texts attempted to draw parallels between different oracular shrines. Dodona is placed by contemporaries alongside the sanctuaries of Apollo at Delphi and Libyan Ammon Zeus, as well as the shrine in Egyptian Thebes, to explain the functioning of the site. As the following sections of this chapter will demonstrate, the key to a better understanding of the development of the Epirote oracle may be found in these comparisons.

Despite the inability to come to a consensus on the origins or the function of women at the Dodona oracle, ancient writers agree on one thing: the priestesses became an intrinsic part of the

[137] Parke 1967: 68. See Chapter 2.2.1 for discussion of the etymology of *Naios*.
[138] Strab. 7.7.12
[139] Plat. *Phaedrus* 244b; Hdt. 2.55.3 and 2.56.1.
[140] Hom. *Od*. 14.5.

sanctuary. The prophetesses were always referred to in plural form and the usual number associated with the site was, as initially established by Herodotus, three.[141] The emphasis he placed on the priestesses seems to suggest that the role they played at the Dodona sanctuary required a lore, which, unlike in Homer's account, involved a female presence in the founding of the site, thus helping legitimize the later *modus operandi* of the sanctuary.[142] Regardless of the changes that could have occurred between the Archaic and Classical periods, it seems certain that women helped run the oracle at least by the 5th c. BC. Their importance is further accentuated by the precision with which Herodotus reported the names of the priestesses he interviewed, listing them in order of age. They are introduced not only as the repositories of knowledge about Dodona and keepers of its history, but also as προμάντιες, the representatives of Zeus and the organs of his prophecies, a title shared only in Herodotus' writing with the Pythia.[143]

The Halicarnassian historian's choice of words might not have been accidental, as it can be argued that the analogy between the Epirote and Delphic priestesses appears to be founded in more than a coincidental similarity of function. The geographical proximity and similarity of function between the two famous oracles did not go unnoticed by the ancients. Plato was the first to compare the Pythia with the priestesses of Dodona, ascribing a state of prophetic madness to the women.[144] Pausanias echoes this sentiment, claiming that the priestesses conducted their mantic rites under divine inspiration.[145] However, the quote he gives as being associated with the direct voice of a god differs from what one would expect from a hexameter verse in prophecy. Zeus is both invoked and described in the third person, similarly as Mother Earth, which suggests that the priestess reciting the lines, regardless of being in a state of frenzy or not, retained her own personality and was not "possessed" by a god.[146] Perhaps the verse, if accurately attributed to the Dodonean priestesses, is part of a prayer rather than an oracular response. Ecstatic behaviour did not appear to be praxis of the staff at the shrine. In fact, a number of other authors seem to favour the notion that priestesses sought guidance from the gods through signs, such as lots or through

[141] Though some sources, like Sophocles' *Trachiniae*, mention two "Peleiades" or priestesses (Trach. 172).
[142] Asheri *et al*. 2007: 275.
[143] Hdt. 6.66.2, 7.111.2, 7.141.2.
[144] Plat. *Phaedrus* 244b.
[145] Paus. 10.12.10: καὶ αἱ Πέλειαι παρὰ Δωδωναίοις ἐμαντεύσαντο μὲν ἐκ θεοῦ.
[146] Paus. 10.12.10: Zeus was, Zeus is, Zeus will be; O great Zeus. Earth allows the harvest, wherefore celebrate in song Mother Earth (Ζεὺς ἦν, Ζεὺς ἐστίν, Ζεὺς ἔσσεται: ὦ μεγάλε Ζεῦ. Γᾶ καρποὺς ἀνίει, διὸ κλῄζετε Ματέρα γαῖαν). See: Parke 1967: 82, 159-160.

the sound of rustling oak leaves, the flight of doves or the murmur of a spring, as opposed to being their direct mouthpiece.[147] Modern scholarship acknowledges that the mantic practice of the Pythia of Delphi was a unique phenomenon in the ancient Mediterranean world.[148] Rather than attempting to draw parallels between the oracles of Apollo and Zeus Naios based on the divination methods their staff practiced, attention should be turned to the ways both sites were run.

The sanctuary at Delphi, while popularly associated with the female Pythia, was managed by male priests. Epigraphic evidence attests that there were two priests of Apollo (ἱερεῖς) appointed at the Delphic sanctuary, which, from the 2nd c. BC onwards, served for life. Men also performed the function of oracle-interpreters (προφῆται), a title possibly given to the priests of Apollo, and *hosioi* (ὅσιοι), who helped the interpreters with the religious functions during a consultation.[149] A supplicant seeking to make an inquiry at the oracle had to perform several sacrifices, during which he would have been accompanied by male religious officials and a *proxenos* of his native *polis*. Until the moment of the encounter with the Pythia, he was assisted solely by other men.[150] While the traditional perspective implying a lack of agency ascribed to the woman speaking under the influence of Apollo has been questioned by modern scholars, who tend to disagree with the notion that it was the priests who interpreted Pythia's incoherent words, the role of the male functionaries in the running of the sanctuary is indisputable.[151]

The example of Delphi may provide a useful template for the understanding of the less well-attested functioning of the Epirote oracular site. Instead of assuming that the Selloi and the priestesses were two separate entities overseeing the Dodonean sanctuary at different times in history, they could be viewed as coexistent. The oldest sources give priority to the Selloi, which would suggest that the female religious officials were a later addition, appearing sometime during the Archaic or Early Classical periods. Quantin and Chapinal-Heras argue that the emergence of one group did not necessarily signal the disappearance of the other.[152] Even in the first account heralding the existence of the priestesses, Herodotus mentioned the presence of other Dodonians at the shrine, though their role in the cult was never clarified. It has been suggested that "the other

[147] Kallisthenes (*FGrH* 124 F 22); Cic. *Div.* 1.76; Strab. 7, fragment 1a; Serv. A. 3.466; Suid. Sv. Δωδώνη.
[148] Stoneman 2011: 31.
[149] Fontenrose 1978: 217-219.
[150] Parke and Wormell 1956: 32-33.
[151] Price 1985: 142; Maurizio 2001: 46-50; Bowden 2005: 21-22; Connelly 2007: 219.
[152] Quantin 1999: 74; Chapinal-Heras 2017: 25.

Dodoneans" (οἱ ἄλλοι Δωδωναῖοι) could be a reference to the Selloi of the *Iliad*.[153] Similarly, the aforementioned passages from Demosthenes' speech *Against Meidias* and Pindar's paean suggest that a male figure helped deliver the prophecies of Zeus at least until the 4th c. BC. A later work, *Imagines*, attributed to Philostratos of Lemnos and dated to the 2nd-3rd c. AD, contains a description of the sanctuary at Dodona. Although it relies heavily on Homer's verses, the excerpt attempts to further explain the roles of the shrine's staff. Each priest is said to be tasked with a specific chore: hanging the garlands, reciting prayers, attending to the sacrificial cakes, handling the basket and the barley groats, making the offering, and flaying the sacrificed animal. They are also the ones called the "interpreters of Zeus" (οἱ δ' ὑποφῆται τοῦ Διός), suggesting perhaps a more active role in the oracular process. The author mentions the priestesses as well, though their role is not specified.[154] The text was produced during the Roman Imperial period, following the era of Dodona's greatest prestige, but it does point to a division of duties and the requirement of a larger body of staff to ensure the functioning of the sanctuary. The analogy to the oracle of Delphi is evident – the author even mentions the Pythia's tripod. Nevertheless, it is the allocation of the care over the sacrificial and organizational aspects of visits at the sanctuary to male priests that suggests a more evident similarity between the two sites.

Further comparisons can be drawn. First, although the employment of women in the performance of mantic duties was not unheard of in the Hellenic world, it did not appear to be as commonplace as the use of male seers. Literary and archaeological sources placing women formally in charge of divinatory practices are scarce.[155] Set against this evidence, the Pythia and

[153] Asheri *et al.* 2007: 275.
[154] Philost., *Im.* 2, 33.
[155] Flower 2008: 211-215. In *The Seer in Ancient Greece*, Flower lists five instances of "mortal" female seers (excluding the Pythia), fictional or otherwise, in literary works and two examples of female mantic practitioners corroborated by archaeological evidence, all dated between the Archaic and early Hellenistic periods. Authors writing in the 1st-2nd c. AD, Pliny the Elder (*Historia Naturalis* 28.147) and Pausanias (7.25.13), mentioned a priestess of the sanctuary of Ge, near Aegeira in Achaea, who would enter a cave and return with a prophecy. Pausanias also reported a priestess acting as the mouthpiece of Apollo Pythaeus at Argos (2.24.1). In another passage, he discusses the Sybils - the first was the mythical daughter of Zeus and Lamia and the second, Herophile, was born before the Trojan War and proclaimed oracles in a number of places, including Delphi, under the divine influence of Apollo. The third Sybil, Demo, came from Cumae, though Pausanias remarks that the Cumaeans do not recall any of her prophecies. She, too, was associated with Apollo and her bones were supposedly kept in his sanctuary. A fourth Sybil, Sabbe, lived near Palestine. Pausanias ends his list of prophetesses with Phaennis, daughter of a king of the Chaonians, and the priestesses of Dodona, who were not considered Sybils but who also were the mouthpieces of gods (10.12). He appears to differentiate between the Sybils as independent agents and the prophetesses (the priestesses of Dodona in this instance) formally associated with a sanctuary (Bultrighini and Torelli 2017). See also: Parke 1967: 26-32; Nissinen 2013: 27-58.

the priestesses of Dodona present themselves as outliers, exceptions to the rule – prophetesses who officially represented a sanctuary and relayed the divine will. In Euripides' *Melanippe Captive*, they are portrayed as the crowning example of women's importance in dealing with the gods, their prominence highlighted through an almost intimate knowledge of Apollo's and Zeus' minds (Λοξίου φρένα... Διὸς φρένας).[156] However, while the Pythia is the recipient of a legacy of prophetic goddesses, Ge, Themis, and Phoibe, the mantic role of the "sacred women" from Dodona is somewhat more puzzling.[157] Even Herodotus' story about their links to the oracle from Egyptian Thebes does not provide a satisfactory explanation for their function at the Epirote sanctuary. Though his statement that "the fashions of divination at Thebes of Egypt and at Dodona are like one another" appears to be supported by evidence dating as early as the 4th c. BC excavated in Egypt in the form of pieces of papyrus containing questions addressed to the gods, which bear a great resemblance to the oracular tablets uncovered at the Greek site, it was priests who oversaw the mantic process at the site.[158] Also, no analogies can be found with the other distinguished sanctuary of Zeus on mainland Greece, Olympia; believed to have been a place where oracles were delivered, Olympia's history is also heavily connected to family lines of male prophets, the Iamidai and the Clytiadai.[159] The feminine aspect of formalized divination affiliated with a sanctuary remains unique to Dodona and Delphi.

Second, just as the Dodonean priestesses were always referred to in the plural, there was no one single Pythia. The interest in the oracle's services was so great, that, at least by the 1st c. AD, two Pythias were assigned to attend to the consultants, with a third one in reserve.[160] Likewise, it should be noted that the similarities between the mantic methodologies of the two sites extends beyond the gender and number of their staff. Scholarship on the subject suggests that Delphi's renowned sessions with the Pythia may have, on occasion, relied on a "lot oracle", which would

[156] Eur. Melanippe fr. 494 (Kannicht).
[157] Connelly 2007: 74.
[158] Hdt. 2.57.3 (transl. Godley): ἡ δὲ μαντηίη ἥ τε ἐν Θήβῃσι τῇσι Αἰγυπτίῃσι καὶ ἐν Δωδώνῃ παραπλήσιαι ἀλλήλῃσι τυγχάνουσι ἐοῦσαι; Several Egyptian locations – Memphis, Fayum, Oxyrhynchus, Hermopolite, Thebes, and Elephantine have yielded papyrological evidence: Buchholtz 2013: 89-92.
[159] Parke 1967: 164, 174-178, 183-186. Parke interprets Herodotus' story about Hippocrates' visit at Olympia (Hdt. 1.59), a fragment of Pindar's Sixth Olympian ode concerning the founding of an oracle (Pind. O. 6, 65-70) and Strabo's direct reference to an oracle of Olympian Zeus (Strab. 8.3.30) as meaning that oracles were obtained through the burning of sacrifices at the sanctuary of Olympia.
[160] Stoneman 2011: 27.

have involved the drawing of a lot with the answer to the visitor's question.[161] As will be discussed further in this chapter, the Dodonean tablets may have operated in a similar fashion.

Finally, it is essential to take a closer look at the chronology of the development of both sanctuaries. Material evidence found at the site dedicated to Zeus Naios and Dione dates the inception of the cult to the Mycenaean era, most likely predating the cult of Apollo at Delphi.[162] However, excavations have demonstrated that the Apollonian sanctuary was firmly established by the mid-8th c. BC.[163] Even though the first attestation of the Pythia comes later – Theognis mentions the presence of a priestess at Pytho in his work from the 6th c. BC – the oracle from Delphi had already gained its renown in the Mediterranean world through its involvement in the Greek colonization process.[164] Dodona, on the other hand, began to expand as an oracular and religious location in the Classical period, reaching its peak as a cultural center during the 4th and 3rd c. BC. The earliest mention of the priestesses serving at the site also coincides with the acceleration of the growth of the Epirote shrine.

The reason behind the comparison of Dodona and Dephi is motivated by the original issue approached in this section of the chapter: who managed the oracle of Zeus Naios and Dione? Both sanctuaries functioned through a distinctive divinatory practice involving female seers, a relatively unique phenomenon in the Greek world. The similarities that they share through the history of their expansion and growth indicate that perhaps certain procedures found in one successful sanctuary could have been copied in the other. If that were the case, then the following timeline can be proposed: the oracle of Dodona was originally operated by male priests, the Selloi. At some point between the Archaic period (though most likely no earlier than the 6th c. BC to which the earliest lead tablets are dated) and the second half of the 5th c. BC, priestesses were introduced into the sanctuary. The women displaced the male prophets, taking their place as the new interpreters of the oracles of Zeus. However, this did not have to imply a complete removal of the priests from

[161] Amandry 1950: 29-36; Parke 1967: 85-88; Fontenrose 1978: 219-223; Bowden 2005: 527-529. An inscription from the early 4th c. BC, regulating the consultation tariffs for the people of Sciathus, cites the price for an oracle received through the method of two beans, implying a drawing of lots (*CID* 1.13).
[162] Lhôte 2006: X-XII.
[163] Fontenrose 1978: 4-5; Malkin 1987: 22-27; Morgan 1990: 148-149, 158-160. Fontenrose, Malkin, and Morgan agree on the connection between the rise of the oracle at Delphi and the colonisation movement in the 8th c., placing the functioning of a divinatory center firmly in the early Archaic period. Morgan remains skeptical towards any attempt to date the oracle to an earlier period due to a lack of material evidence, viewing any mythological stories promoting an earlier pedigree as propaganda in the context of rivalry with other sanctuaries.
[164] Theognis 807-808; Parke and Wormell 1956: 49.

the sanctuary. In fact, if the Delphic model is to be used as an example, then the hierarchy of the shrine would have most likely been filled with men performing various religious duties. Though the coexistence of priestesses and Selloi/priests cannot be definitely proven, literary and comparative evidence suggests that, following the Archaic period, the oracle of Dodona housed both groups.

1.2.2. Mechanics of oracular divination

The discussion surrounding the method of divination at the oracle of Dodona was revolutionized through the discovery and publication of the oracular tablets. In the early stages of archaeological excavations, the understanding of the functioning of the sanctuary and the process through which the oracles were given relied heavily on literary sources.[165] Regrettably, ancient historians and poets do not reveal much about the practical aspects of consulting the gods. The Selloi mentioned by Homer are said to be the ὑποφῆται of Zeus of Dodona, but what exactly their role as interpreters might entail is never touched upon.[166] Their practice of sleeping on the ground had initially been understood as referencing incubation; but there is actually no evidence for this.[167]

The second reference to Dodona in Homer's work, in which Odysseus had gone to Dodona to "hear the counsel of Zeus from the towering tree of the god", is one that echoes more loudly throughout Greek and Latin literature.[168] The fascination with the Dodonean oak tree seems understandable, both on a visual level, as it occupied a prominent and visually unique position in the sanctuary, and on a religious one, due to its ties to the cult of Zeus. It remained an integral part of the sacred site as Dodona grew and the new architecture introduced in the Classical and Hellenistic periods very carefully incorporated the tree into the *hieros oikos* and later temple designs.[169] The oak tree is a constant element of the narratives surrounding the Epirote oracle. Herodotus, Strabo, and Pausanias all mention the presence of the great tree in Dodona, linking it

[165] The first scholarly publication extensively examining the *modus operandi* of the sanctuary at Dodona was H. W. Parke's *The Oracles of Zeus. Dodona, Olympia, Ammon*, published in 1967. Parke gathered and analysed Greek and Latin literary sources but dedicated little of his study to material and epigraphic evidence. Cf. Nicol 1958.
[166] Hom. *Il*. 16. 235
[167] Parke 1967: 9-10.
[168] Hom. *Od*. 14.327-328: "ὄφρα θεοῖο ἐκ δρυὸς ὑψικόμοιο Διὸς βουλὴν ἐπακούσαι".
[169] Dakaris 1971: 40-49.

to the sanctuary and to Zeus.[170] Others are even more explicit in correlating the oak to divination. The passage from the *Odyssey* implies that the will of the god came from the tree. The idea of a "talking oak" or of receiving a prophecy through the sound of rustling leaves is reiterated by numerous ancient authors.[171] The tradition of an oak as the source of prophecy lasted well into the Byzantine period, as the *Suda* mentions female seers who would listen to the sound of the tree.[172] It is worth noting that DVC 2510 mentions a sign that appeared in an oak; however, the oracular query does not explicitly state that it refers to the tree at Dodona.

Three other divinatory methods are discussed in ancient literary sources: the song of doves, the murmur of a fountain, and the sound of the bronze vessels donated by Corcyreans.[173] The emergence of the story about prophetic doves can be explained as a conflation with the possible title of *Peleiai* given to the priestesses conducting the divinations.[174] Even Strabo, who most thoroughly discusses this in his work, remains sceptical of the idea. The theory of hydromancy is equally improbable. It appears to be a product of Latin literature based on a narrative that gained popularity during the Roman period but is unattested during the earlier height of the sanctuary's prominence under Thesprotian or Molossian rule. The only connection scholars have been able to make between a prophetic spring or fountain and the oracle of Dodona is in the possible water-based origin of the epithet of the Dodonean Zeus Naios. Nevertheless, the link between the epithet and its possible etymology fails to explicitly point to an art of divination reliant on flowing water. The third technique involved a cauldron or gong. The earliest, and only pre-Roman mention of it, can be found in Callimachus' *Hymn to Apollo* in which the poet references "the Pelasgians of Dodona (…) sleeping on the earth, servants of the never silent cauldron".[175] The passage links the priests with the vessel, implying the cauldron's role in the mantic procedures. A more detailed description of the suggested divinatory method can be found in Strabo's work, which reports the presence of a bronze vessel with a statue of a man holding a chain whip placed above it at the sanctuary. When the winds rose, the knucklebones (ἀστράγαλοι) attached to the whip would begin

[170] Hdt. 2.56.2; Strab. 7.7.10; Paus. 1.17.
[171] Hes. fr. 319 (Merkelbach-West); Aesch. PV 830-835; Plat. Phaedrus 275b; Ov. Met. 7.622-633.
[172] Suid. Sv. Δωδώνη.
[173] Soph. *Trach*. 172; Aristoph. *Av*. 710-733; Strab. 7.7.7 and 10; Cic. *Div.* 68-69; Mela II 3,43; Lucan. 7.879-889; Plin. *Nat. hist.* 2.228; Callimach. *Hymn.* 4.286; Strab. 7.7, fr. 3; Steph. Byz. *s.v. Δωδώνη*; Suid. *s.v. Δωδώνη*.
[174] Hdt. 2. 54-57; Parke 1967: 65.
[175] Callimach. *Hymn.* 4.284-286: ἃ Δωδώνηθι Πελασγοί / τηλόθεν ἐκβαίνοντα πολὺ πρώτιστα δέχονται / γηλεχέες θεράποντες ἀσιγήτοιο λέβητος.

to rattle in the cauldron, creating long, resounding tones.[176] This particular story is further reimagined by Christian writers Clement of Alexandria and Eusebius of Caesarea, claiming that the statue was controlled by a demon who beat the bronze kettle causing the priestesses to enter a state of oracular frenzy.[177] The sound this cauldron made must have been very characteristic, since the term "the copper vessel in Dodona" even became a proverb used to describe talkative people.[178] However, the relatively late appearance of the vessel in written sources casts a shadow of doubt on its possible role in the divination process. Scholars are torn on the matter. Cook has theorized that gongs or kettles may have played a part in cult practices of Zeus Naios, perhaps to drive off malevolent influence or to mimic the sound of thunder, only to later become integrated into the mantic procedures.[179] Following suit, Stephens interprets the cauldron (λέβης) to be a tripod, from which the oracles were spoken.[180] Others, such as Parke, completely dismiss the idea that the vessels were used to make prophecies by the staff of the sanctuary.[181] Perhaps the popularity of the story of bronze cauldron at the Dodona site was inspired by the impressive number of bronze items donated to the sanctuary as votive objects, which included fragments of tripod stands and decorative features.[182]

However, the concept of the bronze vessel being utilized to craft prophecies might not be as improbable as some believe. A fragment from the work of the historian Kallisthenes, dating to the 4th c. BC, recounts the Spartan consultation at Dodona before their battle with the Boiotians at Leuktra in 371 BC: "after their messengers had duly set up the vessel in which were the lots, an ape, kept by the king of Molossia for his amusement, disarranged the lots and everything else used in consulting the oracle, and scattered them in all directions".[183] The priestess read this as a bad omen, informing the Spartans that their victory was not secure. Indeed, Sparta lost the battle. This incident, though the oracular process was never completed, demonstrates the use of a lot system in the divination. If true, this would help account for both the mention of a "mantic" kettle at the sanctuary, from which the lots with the answer to oracular questions would be drawn, as well as

[176] Strab. 7.7, fr. 3.
[177] Clem. Al. *Protr*. 2.11.1; Euseb. *Praep. Evang.* 2.3.1.
[178] The saying in question is τὸ ἐν Δωδώνῃ χαλκίον, see: Strab. 7.7, fr. 3; Zenobius 6.5; Stephanus Byzantinus, s.*v. Δωδώνη*.
[179] Cook 1902: 22 and 28
[180] Stephens 2015: 225.
[181] Parke 1967: 91.
[182] For a detailed listing of the bronzes excavated in Dodona, see: Dieterle 2007 and Pantermalis *et al.* 2016.
[183] Kallisthenes BNJ 124 F 22a (Cic. *Div*. 1.76, transl. Falconer).

the distinctive noise the kettle made, resulting from lots hitting the bronze vessel during the sortition. The concept of drawing lots was common in the ancient Greek world. The arguably most famous oracle of the Hellenistic world, Apollo's oracle at Delphi, gave out answers obtained through a lot system.[184] Though the Pythia's prophetic frenzy was most commonly associated with the sanctuary's mantic methods, consulting her was only possible for a few days during the year, which meant that many of the less privileged visitors were relegated to cleromancy. Such an arrangement is believed to have worked best for binary questions, resulting in a yes/no answer. A similar system is thought to have functioned at Dodona with the lead tablets playing a role in the oracular process.

Though literary sources, despite the diversity of mantic procedures they present, fail to reveal the place of the lead tablets in the practices at the oracle of Dodona, there is no doubt that the tablets excavated at the sanctuary were a part of the divination procedures. The question, however, remains as to the degree of their involvement. Most scholarship leans towards the theory of cleromancy. Parke was among the first to connect the tablets to a lot-based oracle.[185] Taking his cue from Kallisthenes' story about the sortition thwarted by the pet monkey, he interprets the tablets as lots, which, having been folded, would be dropped into a vessel and later drawn by the staff of the sanctuary. Parke compares this suggested method to the cleromantic practices used at Delphi, comprising of two different coloured "beans", one signifying a positive answer, the other a negative one. He notes however that not all queries found at the Dodona site could be answered through a binary system of responses, especially in the case of inquiries about gods and sacrifices. Here Parke suggests a modified procedure, in which the lots chosen by the priestesses were inscribed with the names of the divinities to which the supplicants were supposed to making an offering. The lead tablets would have been kept at the sanctuary not as votive gifts, but to be reused for other consultations.

Parke's hypothesis had a profound effect on the interpretation of the Dodonean tablets. From that point on, scholarship has been divided into two factions: those who agree that the inscriptions are evidence of some form of divination by sortition and those who see them as detached from the oracular process. Among the former, Eidinow has attempted to make a

[184] Eidinow 2007: 70; Stoneman 2011: 27; Scott 2014: 13
[185] Parke 1967: 108-109.

connection with the knucklebones mentioned by Strabo.[186] The ancient world provides numerous examples of lot or dice-based methods. *Astragaloi* were particularly popular in Asia Minor, mostly in Lycia and Pisidia, during the Roman period. These oracles were consulted by casting dice or knucklebones and reading the prophecy that matched the result of the throw from a list of pre-written fortunes, usually inscribed on a large pillar placed in the agora.[187] None of the answers obtained through these means were particularly detailed: they tended to oscillate around generic yes/no suggestions or broad advice that could easily be applied to any number of situations. Although some of the oracular texts from Dodona can be read as simple, binary-type answers, others are much more complex.[188] In LOD 95, the oracle responds to the consultant's inquiry about conducting commerce by sea or land with an elaborate suggestion about future financial endeavours, demonstrating a degree of intricacy and detail far surpassing that of a pre-written prophecy drawn by lot.[189] Furthermore, many of the answers to questions concerning sacrifices seem equally tailored to the consultant's background. LOD 141 contains both the query and response. The woman addressing Zeus, Nike, is most likely an Athenian and her question concerns her opponents in a legal case. The oracle advises her to make offerings to deities related both to her polis (Erechtheus, the mythical king of Athens) and to family property (Zeus Patroios and Athena Patroia).[190] The answer is specifically tailored to her situation. Similarly, in a prophecy recounted by Demosthenes, the oracle of Dodona instructs the Athenians to sacrifice, among others, an ox to Apollo Apotropaios, whose cult was strongly established in the *deme* of Erchia.[191] Though not all queries obtained such a curated response (or not all were written down with such meticulous care), those that did are numerous enough to make one wonder whether a simple lottery or knucklebone-based divination is enough to explain the degree of detail in certain answers.[192] The divination system in place would have had to been more intricate, allowing the oracular staff to answer not only layered questions, but also to exercise a degree of control over the responses.

[186] Eidinow 2007: 69. Stoneman however points out that knucklebones are meant to be thrown, not drawn, which puts this theory at odds with the accounts told by Kallisthenes (in Cicero), which distinctly refers to "lots" in its narrative about the divination at Dodona (Stoneman 2011: 63).
[187] Stoneman 2011: 137; Nollé 2007: 84-91.
[188] E.g. DVC 915, 1212, 1485 and 2253.
[189] Lhôte 2006: 201-205.
[190] Lhôte 2006: 291-294; Carbon 2015: 78.
[191] Dem. 21, 53; see Polinskaya 2013: 230 and Parker 2005: 414.
[192] Carbon 2015: 79 and 84.

Eidinow also brings up the presence of the word "lot" (κλῆρος) in the tablets as an argument in favour of a lottery-based system.[193] Only six inscriptions in the entire corpus include the word, none explicitly referencing a consultation at Dodona.[194] While it is not impossible for the tablets to have been addressing a cleromantic practice at the sanctuary, the context in which they appear fails to confirm this beyond any reasonable doubt. They could have just as easily been part of an inquiry about a civic lottery or about other forms of oracular sortition.[195]

The idea of a lot oracle has recently received further support by Parker. Based on the large quantity of polar questions, as well as three tablets which include the expression "if X is true, then pick this", he makes the assumption that a consultant could have submitted two tablets to the oracle – one with a positive answer and the second with a negative one. The tablet drawn would have represented the divine response.[196] While this system draws analogies to other oracular methods known to ancient Greeks such as the demotic, Greek, and Coptic ticket oracles from Egypt, which also appear to involve a divination process that included choosing between two pieces of papyrus containing a positive and negative outcome to the inquiry, it is not unanimously reflected by the epigraphic material.[197] Firstly, the verb found in DVC 1170 and 1410 is ἀναιρέω; it is interpreted by Parker as "to pick up, to take", which is the primary meaning of the verb, though in both cases it could also be understood as "to give an answer or oracle" without specifically referring to cleromancy. Secondly, the number of oracular inscriptions containing negative words (μή/μά, μηδέ, μηδείς, οὐ/οὐκ/οὐχ, οὐδέ, οὐδείς) oscillates around 200, which is less than 5 percent of the overall texts.[198] If the divination process had indeed required each supplicant to submit two versions of the same question, there should be more examples of negative variations of the inquiry. Regardless of the accuracy of his hypothesis about the functioning of the oracle at Dodona, more importantly Parker's work also highlights the socio-cultural weight of a prophecy and its potential impact on the individual and community it is directed at. He remarks that "either the divinatory

[193] Eidinow 2007: 78. The spelling commonly found in the inscriptions is κλᾶρος. Dakaris *et al.* 2013b: 554.
[194] DVC 226, 1491, 2401, 3032, 3128, 4014.
[195] There are examples of consultants visiting Dodona to ask about other forms of divination, such as LOD 144, in which the supplicants ask whether they should see a psychagogos (Lhôte 2006: 300).
[196] Parker 2016: 88 (tablets: DVC 1170, 1410 and 2222). See also Parker 2015: 111-114. A similar hypothesis is presented by Johnston, who suggests that there may have been two vessels, one with the tablets containing questions and the other with yes/no lots. One lot would be drawn from each urn, thus providing an answer to the query (Johnston 2008: 70).
[197] Buchholz 2013: 89; Martin 2004: 413-426.
[198] This number includes texts that may be interpreted not as questions themselves, but as answers to the queries, for example DVC 1212 can be read as an answer to 1211.

technique had to involve a group and allow a consensus to emerge, or the diviner had to know what was expected and be in sufficient control of the mechanism to produce, in a good proportion of cases, an outcome in accord with expectations".[199] This idea will be revisited later in this subchapter.

On the other end of the spectrum of the speculations about the role the tablets, there are those who are sceptical of Parke's hypothesis of sortition. Lhôte rejects it and proposes to link the oracular tablets to *defixiones*. There are certain undeniable connections that can be drawn between the two.[200] Both are made of lead and share features such as holes punctured through the metal. Some of the oracular tablets, just as the curse ones, were found folded and buried underground. Additionally, Lhôte demonstrates similarities of vocabulary, such as the phrase "τὸς ἀντιδίκος καὶ τὰς ϝοικίας" from LOD 141A, also found in Attic *defixiones*.[201] He explains the incomprehensible jumbles of letters present in LOD 107 and 126 as *ephesia grammata*.[202] These resemblances lead him to believe that the practices surrounding the oracular tablets could have mimicked those related to curse tablets. He suggests that the tablets were treated as magical objects, a means of conveying a message to the resident gods of Dodona. They would have been inscribed privately and in secrecy, folded and buried by the consultant in the *temenos* of the sanctuary, by the oak tree, in the hopes of reaching Zeus and Dione. The priests or priestesses play a secondary role here, rarely intervening in the process, which would explain why so many tablets do not carry an answer. Finally, Lhôte believes that the multiple accounts of reused tablets were not motivated economically, but rather betray instances of supplicants wanting to utilize materials already containing supplementary magical or divine properties.

This interpretation, though including an enticing attempt at reconciling the role of the oak present in literary sources and the archaeological evidence in the form of the tablets, is not entirely convincing. Firstly, though lead had been associated with magical properties in antiquity and mentioned in instructions on creating curse tablets, scholars have questioned the extent of the connection between the metal and magic.[203] Lead is a by-product of silver smelting, cheap and accessible, especially in mining regions. As a result, the metal could have been used in the

[199] Parker 2016: 90.
[200] Lhôte 2006: 428-429.
[201] Lhôte 2006: 359.
[202] Lhôte 2006: 260-261.
[203] Curbera 2015: 98.

production of curse tablets along with other materials, such as papyrus or wax, out of convenience and due to its availability. The belief in its magical nature is theorized to have derived from the frequency of its use.[204] Analogically, the employment of lead in the oracular tablets may have been circumstantial – it was, after all, an inexpensive material, easy to obtain and inscribe. Furthermore, producing inscriptions on metal appears to have been common practice in the Epirote region.[205] Secondly, a similarity in vocabulary between the two types of tablets cannot be unequivocally confirmed. Lhôte supports his argument with very few examples, which have been interpreted by other scholars differently, as in the case of the incoherent letters, which are understood by Lhôte to be *ephesia grammata*, but are seen by others as abbreviations or numbers correlating a tablet to a consultant.[206] In fact, the Dodonean tablets demonstrate a greater resemblance to oracular questions and responses from Delphi, both through similar phrasing and topics of inquiry.[207] While the resemblance between the oracular tablets and the *defixiones* should not be ignored, there are simply not enough instances of grammatical or stylistic similarities between the two.

Another dissenting theory has been put forward by Piccinini; unlike Lhôte, Piccinini completely negates the notion that the Dodonean tablets were in any way involved in divination. She does not contest the possibility of oracles produced through sortition or other means, but she proposes to separate the lead tablets from any divination procedures conducted at the Epirote sanctuary.[208] Taking her cue from the passage of *Trachiniae*, in which Heracles mentions prophecies from Dodona that he "wrote down at the dictation of the ancestral oak", Piccinini interprets the tablets as an act of recording the inquiry or oracular response *ex post facto*.[209] She

[204] Curbera 2015: 97-98.
[205] Most of the manumission inscriptions and "political" inscriptions (awarding certain privileges to individuals) dated to the late Classical and Hellenistic periods and excavated in Dodona were written on copper or bronze plates (Meyer 2013: 19).
[206] Parke 1967: 102, 109; Dakaris *et al*. 1999: 68.
[207] The phrase λῶιον καὶ ἄμεινόν is found in the inscriptions concerning oracles from both sanctuaries (for example, see *IG* XII.3.248 and Lhôte 2006, no. 11, 46, 53, 65 and 69). The topics of consultation at Delphi and Dodona are also similar. Though the epigraphic evidence from the Epirote site demonstrates that personal consultations were more common than collective ones, while consultations made by individuals are attested in the Delphic material much later than the collective ones (Morgan 1990: 160), the oracle of Delphi was known to have addressed questions about everyday matters such as marriage, business or travel (Plut. *De Pyth*. 28, 408c), which are among the most common topics that appear in the Dodona tablets (Parker 2016: 78-86).
[208] Piccinini 2013: 72.
[209] Easterling was among the first to link the oracular tablets of Dodona to the passage of *Trachiniae*, though there is debate about whether the act of inscribing the obtained prophecy was common practice or the result of Heracles' initiative. Furthermore, Piccinini notes that the procedure of writing only includes the answer received from Zeus rather than the question posed to him (Easterling 1982: 95-96, 219; Piccinini 2013: 69). See Soph. *Trach*. 1166-

argues that the tablets, while following very broad grammatical structures, appear to be ruled by disorder and are far too chaotic to meet the expectations of rigour associated with a ritual procedure.[210] The oracular texts are very personal – they not only reflect intimate problems faced by the consultants, but also demonstrate the socio-economic and cultural background of those visiting Dodona through the dialects, vocabulary and level of literacy they represent. Piccinini sees them as a manifestation of personal initiative rather than a requirement placed on the supplicants by the sanctuary. She rejects the idea of the tablets being left at the sacred site as *ex voto*, but rather sees them as memories of consultations, inscriptions composed after the divination process had been finished and left at the oracle to commemorate the visit to Dodona.[211] She suggests that their function as testimonies of the consultation, written down on the whim of the supplicant, would explain why certain texts were long and detailed while others were shorter (such as the ones following the περί formula) or composed solely of letters (here understood to be the initials of the consultants instead of their number in the queue to the oracle). The consultation would have been done orally and following it, the visitor would be allowed to inscribe their question or answer on a lead tablet, which would be then left attached to the tree or the building. This acknowledgement of one's presence at the sanctuary would have not been intended for others to see, which would explain why many of the tablets were found folded, with only the name of the consultant or some other identifying mark inscribed on the exterior surface.[212]

Piccinini's hypothesis is perhaps the most unique of those advanced by modern scholarship; indeed, she acknowledges that there are no parallels in the Hellenic world of tablets serving as a testimony of mantic consultations.[213] While erecting and publicly displaying stelae commemorating oracular responses was a fairly common practice, especially on the part of communities or *poleis,* this seemingly private and secretive form of memorializing mantic consultations is not analogous to any other divination customs, which raises the question about the probability of such a tradition existing in Dodona.[214] Furthermore, where Piccinini perceives

1168, transl. Lloyd-Jones. ἃ τῶν ὀρείων καὶ χαμαικοιτῶν ἐγὼ / Σελλῶν ἐσελθὼν ἄλσος εἰσεγραψάμην / πρὸς τῆς πατρῴας καὶ πολυγλώσσου δρυός.

[210] Piccinini 2013: 73.

[211] Piccinini 2013: 74.

[212] Piccinini 2013: 75.

[213] Piccinini 2013: 75.

[214] Several inscriptions describing state and personal consultations at the Delphic oracle (the questions, the answers or both), dating from the late Classical to the Hellenistic period, have been uncovered (including *IG* I^2.77, *IG* I^2.80, *IG* I^2.333, *FD* 3.1.560, *IG* XII 3.248). These inscriptions have been published and analyzed in Parke and Wormell's

disorder, other scholars see distinct and established rules, if not stringent ones. The questions and answers, though not uniform, do follow distinct patterns and, grammatical structures and make use of a similar vocabulary, rarely truly deviating from them.

The *communis opinio* of scholars is that the oracle of Dodona functioned through some form of a cleromantic system. The hypothesis of divination by sortition not only agrees with the information found in literary sources from the Classical and Hellenistic periods, as well as being analogous to other mantic practices found in the Hellenic world, but it also fits in with the structure of the queries found in the Dodonean tablets. The predominantly polar-type questions (following the ἦ formula, maybe even the περί formula) could easily have been answered through some form of lot system. Even inquiries about gods and sacrifices could be resolved in a similar manner. However, a number of the texts that have been identified as answers reveal a degree of sophistication that casts some doubt on the seeming straightforwardness of the use of cleromancy.[215] Some answer far exceeds the original inquiry, suggesting that perhaps there was an oral component to the consultation, which would help explain how the staff of the sanctuary would be able to better tailor the oracular answer to the visitor's expectations or to adequately respond to queries composed of more than one question.[216] The audiences with the oracle appear to be very personal, conducted in such a way that would allow for some control over the result in order to reasonably satisfy the consultant's needs. Not relying on a purely lot-based system, but rather subjecting it to some form of interpretation, would also address the concerns raised by Parker about the potentially dangerous consequences of a randomly assigned answer (as in the case of questions about theft) and the need for some control over the results of the divination.[217] After all, the outcome of a consultation did hold social weight and could be understood as a binding directive.[218]

Finally, there is the issue of the tablets themselves. The supplicants or, if they were illiterate, a sanctuary official would have written their queries down – to the best of their abilities and in accordance with certain general standards – as a requirement of the oracular procedure. The

The Delphic Oracle. Volume 2 The Oracular Responses (1956), as well as further discussed in Fontenrose's work *The Delphic Oracle* (1978).

[215] Carbon 2015: 84.

[216] An example of how consultations could be expanded on can be found in DVC 2319, the consultant seems to have added a second part to his question after a lacuna in order to make it more precise (DOL s.v. DVC 2319).

[217] Parker 2016: 90.

[218] Parker 2000: 78.

involvement of the tablets in the process of divination seems the most likely course of events; the fact that many were excavated in the *temenos* of the shrine seems to confirm that the supplicants would have brought them to their consultations. Their theorized role as a lot in cleromancy is difficult to unequivocally support due to the various formats of questions, a concern raised even by Parker.[219] It would have been more probable that different methods of divination (most likely involving sortition) were used depending on what type of inquiry was made. The tablets, therefore, would not have been involved in the lottery, instead serving a symbolic role in the ritual rather than a practical one, as a way of communicating one's query to both the gods of the oracle and to the sanctuary's staff. The procedure most likely would have been accompanied by an oral consultation, which would have helped to explain the contents of the occasionally unclear queries to the sanctuary staff.[220] The answers may have also been given out orally. The very small number of oracular responses found in the corpus of tablets would suggest that the process of writing down the answer was not obligatory. Alternatively, the responses may have been erased over time or, in some cases, mistakenly identified as the summary of the question instead of the answer.[221]

1.3. Conclusion

The history of the oracle of Dodona is strongly tied to that of Epirus. The religious site is believed to have originally been a landmark on the paths travelled by transhumant shepherds. It later grew into a place of religious significance occupied by the Thesprotians. Its heyday, however, can be dated to the 5th-3rd c. BC, after it was conquered by the Molossians and developed by the Aeacid monarchy. During this period, Dodona was slowly urbanized, growing in significance on a regional (and even "international") level, and the sacred space dedicated to Zeus Naios and Dione became a formalized sanctuary. These changes also coincided with the appearance of the oracular tablets, suggesting a fundamental shift in how the divination at the shrine may have been conducted. The end of this era is dated to the mid-2nd c. BC when the Romans invaded and sacked Epirus.

[219] Parker 2015: 113-114.
[220] On the connection of writing and orality in divination, see Beerden 2013: 140-13, 158-162, 162-165 (about Dodona).
[221] E.g. in LOD 114 and 144.

The location of Dodona on the margins of the Greek world seems to have contributed to the lack of information on the oracle and its functioning in literary sources. Conflicting accounts of who ran the precinct and how have long puzzled scholars. The identity of the staff of the oracle poses the first issue, as two separate traditions, one championing the Selloi/Helloi (priests) and the other – the Peleiades (priestesses), have circulated among ancient authors. However, as this chapter has demonstrated through a comparison with the organization of the sanctuary staff of Delphi, both the Selloi/Helloi and the Peleiades could have administered the shrine together, though the priestesses were introduced most likely around the time of Herodotus. From the early Classical period onwards, they would have been the ones in charge in the divination procedures. A similar issue of diverging and conflicting narratives concerning the mantic practices at Dodona can be found in the written sources. Surprisingly, the oracular tablets are never mentioned in literary sources and have only been discovered through archaeological excavations. Since the earliest ones uncovered are dated to the 6th c. BC, it is highly probable that a different method had been used previously. The tablets themselves seem to have been used in some form of cleromancy, accompanied by an oral component in order to help explain any details missing from the oracular inscriptions.

Chapter 2. Personal religiosity and religious practices in oracular queries

2.1. Introduction

In the following chapters, consultations concerning all aspects of life – personal and collective – will be examined; this chapter will focus instead on what the questions concerning religion can reveal about the relationship between the supplicants and the sphere of the divine. Consultations about "which god should be worshipped and how?" were among the most frequently asked questions, revealing that the ancient Greeks sought guidance from the gods about the gods, and exposing their insecurities about interacting with their deities. Supplicants thought it necessary to visit oracles to ensure the right outcome of their worship. The oracle of Delphi is credited with establishing several cults of both gods and heroes, designating sites for the foundation of temples, confirming details concerning festivals, as well as authorizing the cult titles given to certain deities.[222] Visitors at Delphi also inquired about rituals, purification, and sacrifices.[223] Questions presented to Apollo in Didyma similarly included the subject of offerings, along with issues revolving around religious laws and customs such as the regulations at sanctuaries, the appointment of a prophetess or the endorsement of certain cults.[224] Comparable evidence has been found among the queries at Dodona, which address topics broadly understood as referring to cult, ritual, and the religiosity of the supplicants.[225] What sets the material evidence from Dodona apart from other oracles is its personal nature. The issues about which the supplicants consulted were not centered on the community and its relationship with religion, instead focusing on an individual's concerns about ritual or their connection with the world of the divine. The oracular inscriptions from Dodona can help in understanding the personal approach of Ancient Greeks to religion outside of cult practices overseen by the *polis*.

The Dodonean tablets published before the DVC corpus primarily contained questions about rituals and worship presented to the oracle by entire communities.[226] However, the newer material demonstrates that individuals were also interested in receiving answers about religious

[222] Parke and Wormell 1956a: 322-323, 330-337, 340.
[223] Parke and Wormell 1956a: 362-366; Rhodes – Osborne *GHI* 97.
[224] Fontenrose 1988: 89, 180, 197.
[225] Carbon 2015: 74.
[226] Parker 2016: 85.

matters. The inquiries appear to overwhelmingly have been made by men, though there is also evidence of women consulting at the oracle.[227] The standard supplicant at Dodona was a private person, with a presumably average knowledge of ritual norms – the questions posed to Zeus Naios and Dione were meant to elucidate nuances of religious behaviour. There are also, however, documented instances of "specialists" or religious officials seeking guidance from the gods. The religious inquiries present in the tablets are very varied. Supplicants sought information about sacrifices and the proper methods of worshipping the gods, but also about divine property, as exemplified by questions concerning the statue in a temple of Artemis or knowledge about the phiale dedicated to Poseidon, though in both cases the unprecise wording of the queries makes it difficult to establish the exact reasons for the inquiry.[228] Other topics included the allocation of priesthoods, sacred land, sanctuaries, and ritualistic purity.[229] Finally, a popular theme was that of divination. Besides questions about seeking help from diviners, around fifteen of the surviving tablets show that visitors asked the oracle of Zeus about signs (σημεῖον).[230] It is unclear whether they are requesting an omen or asking for an explanation of one that has already occurred. DVC 2510, which concerns a sign that appeared in an oak tree, suggests that the oracle could have been used to clarify other mantic occurrences or responses. These queries overwhelmingly illustrate the uncertainty that ancient Greeks experienced in their communication with the divine. The difficulty in understanding what the gods actually wanted to say was an ever-present problem, that could only be solved with the help of a divine translator in the form of the oracle.

What is particularly interesting about the tablets from Dodona as evidence is that, as Chaniotis points out, they can offer a very intimate perspective on the individual supplicant's religious experiences, practices and beliefs.[231] Of course, discussing personal religion can be tricky. Recent scholarship has provided a critique of Sourvinou-Inwood's *polis* religion model, in which an individual's worship fell within the framework of religion practiced by/in the polis but

[227] Examples of queries that can securely be attributed to women are DVC 541 and 1082. There are other instances where the inquiry may have been made by a female supplicant, such as the question/answer combination in DVC 585 (εὐτοκία · Δάματρι / *Q: concerning an easy delivery? A: Sacrifice to Demeter*), on which see Carbon 2015: 79-80, but the lack of detail makes it difficult to establish if the woman was asking herself, if someone asked on her behalf or if they made an inquiry about her.
[228] DVC 1012. περὶ τῶ ἀνδριάντος τῶ ἐκ τῶ ἰερῶ τῶ Ἀρτέμιδως / *concerning the statue from the temple of Artemis*; DVC 56. ἦ σύϝοιδε Ἄγιας τὰν φιάλαν τὰν τοῦ Ποτε(ι)δᾶνος; / *If Agias knows about the phiale of Poseidon?*
[229] DVC 336, 1249, 1397, 1572, 2275, 3192, 3447, 1635, 2329, 3479, 1263, 1475, 2473.
[230] DVC 60, 188, 268, 408, 495, 989, 1089, 1609, 1834, 2189, 2510, 2937, 3026, 3179, 3264.
[231] Chaniotis 2017: 54.

does not leave much scope for an individual's personal religious motivation and agency.[232] Kindt argues this theory to be reductive, instead proposing that the "public and private should be referred to as relational, mutually qualifying categories, which together and in communication with each other shaped and structured the socio-cultural landscape of the ancient world".[233] The tablets from Dodona demonstrate that it was possible for religion and its ritual practice to function in both spheres; votives, rites and beliefs could have both collective and personal aspects. This becomes particularly obvious in those tablets in which the individual visitors at the Epirote sanctuary consulted about rites or religious artefacts tied to broader cult practices. Such inquiries reveal which spheres of religion may have been unregulated, as well as the supplicants' concerns in how to approach the unconventional circumstances or simply their insecurities about how to best communicate with the gods, individually. It is important to account for the supplicants' initiative in solving their problems. A helpful concept in addressing this aspect of the consultations is Versnel's definition of private religiosity, of which an important component was personal choice. In particular, he relates the idea of individual choice and initiative, which is not subject to *polis* regulation, to private cults.[234] However, these notions can be applied to other forms of religiosity dictating how and why the supplicants engaged with uncertainty in religious practices. Even though supplicants often followed formulas when consulting the oracle, a number of inscriptions contain unique invocations and different approaches to communication with the gods of Dodona. Some of the supplicants also appear to utilize the act of consultation in non-standard ways, including negotiating with the divine and attempting to influence the outcome of the divination. In what follows, this chapter will examine the various aspects of the personal religiosity of those consulting the oracle of Zeus Naios and Dione.

[232] These reappraisals include Kindt's (2009: 9-34) reassessment of the *polis* religion model, Bremmer's (2010) analysis of the role of the written word in empowering individuals to engage more independently with *polis* religion, and Rüpke's (2011: 191-204) discussion of lived religion as a framework for examining individual religious experiences.
[233] Kindt 2015: 42, 44.
[234] Versnel 2011: 121-124, also footnote 358.

2.2. Personal religiosity

2.2.1. Invoking the gods of Dodona

While Zeus Naios and Dione have been considered the main patron deities of the Epirote oracle, the tablets demonstrate that the supplicants did not limit themselves to only invoking the head pair. Although not a frequent practice, the presence of other gods in the inscriptions raises questions about how the visitors of the sanctuary approached and understood the role of the divinities in the oracular consultation process.

The primary god presiding over the divination process at Dodona was Zeus. The supplicants visiting the oracle invoke him predominantly with the epithet Νάιος or Δωδωναῖος, but also called him Ἄλκιμος, Κτήσιος, Μιλίχιος, Ναεύς, Πατρώιος, Προνάιος, and Χαμονάιος.[235] The etymology of *Naios* has long been debated. The interpretation of *Naios* as "the god of ships", "the god of the temple", or "the god who dwells" was proposed by Cook, but more recent scholarship has strongly contested the connection the epithet to ναῦς or ναός.[236] Parke hypothesized that it was derived from the verb νάω (to flow).[237] However, Dakaris, Vokotopoulou and Lhôte present a compelling argument in favour of linking the epithet to ναίω (to dwell), thus making Zeus the "resident" god of Dodona.[238] This aspect of the god seems to be a relatively recent addition, unattested in any literary or archeological evidence predating the tablets. The epithet appears for the first time in LOD 133 from the mid-5th c BC, though Zeus himself is mentioned in the oracular inscriptions as early as the 6th c. BC (LOD 414).[239] The older Homeric title of *Pelasgikos* disappears completely, while *Dodonaios* appears only approximately twenty times in the corpus of the oracular inscriptions, pointing to changes that the cult of Zeus at Dodona had undergone.[240] Ancient writers cite Zeus as the only deity presiding over the oracle and the sole source of the prophetic power.[241] The oracular tablets, however, reveal a much more complex relationship between the divination process and the deities involved in it.

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[235] Dakaris *et al*. 2013b: 477-482.
[236] Cook 1903. For a critique of the "naval" etymology, see Lhôte 2006: 415-416 and Quantin 2008: 30.
[237] Parke 1967: 67-68.
[238] Vokotopoulou 1992: 69; Lhôte 2006: 416-418.
[239] Chapinal-Heras 2021: 105-106.
[240] Lhôte 2006: 409 and 420; Quantin 2008: 30-31. Quantin also remarks that the epithet *Naios* is missing in Herodotus' passage about Dodona, arguing that this is evidence of the cult not having yet undergone the change.
[241] Hom. *Il.* 16.233-235; Hom. *Od*. 14.321; Hdt. 2.55.2; Plat. *Phaedrus* 275b.

The goddess Dione, wife of Zeus at Dodona, commonly appeared in the invocation following Zeus.[242] The couple is mentioned together in over 75% of the cases, although DVC 431 and 2373 suggest that, on rare occasions, Dione may have also been called upon alone. While her involvement in the oracular procedures might seem surprising, as Dodona was the only place where she was associated with divination, her presence in the tablets can perhaps be explained by the status she held at the sanctuary. She is described by Strabo as the σύνναος (sharing the same temple) of Zeus.[243] Remains of Dione's temple – the first was constructed in the late 4th or early 3rd c. BC and the second during the late 3rd-early 2nd c. BC – have been uncovered at the site; but prior to obtaining her own sacred space, she is believed to have shared Zeus' precinct.[244] Dione's worship at Dodona seems to predominantly be connected to that of Zeus, her presence in his cult is prominent.[245] In Demosthenes' speech *Against Meidias*, the Athenians are ordered by the oracle to offer a sacrifice to both deities.[246] A lead tablet found in Apollonia in Illyria,[247] bearing resemblance to the oracular tablets of Dodona, prescribes sacrifices to both Dione and Zeus Naios.[248] Another inscription from Dodona itself, dated to the 3rd-2nd c. BC, is believed by Meyer to be a dedication of a slave to the two divinities.[249] It is also worth noting that the tablets with consultations from *poleis* or *koina*, which contain a reference to the gods, are overwhelmingly addressed to the divine pair, presumably as a sign of respect.[250] Though Zeus is the leading god at Dodona, Dione consistently appears at his side. The two function as a couple both in the context of worship and as the patron deities of the oracle.

The roster of deities addressed in the inquiries also includes Tyche, or Fortune, though her role in the tablets remains uncertain. Many of the questions posed to the oracle begin with some form of the ἀγαθὴ τύχη formula, which is commonly found in non-oracular inscriptions across the

[242] Some coins minted by the Epirote Koinon represented Zeus and Dione together (Papaevangelou-Genakos 2013: 141-146).
[243] Strab. 7.7.12.
[244] Dakaris 1971: 22-23, 50-51; Quantin 2008: 28-29; Chapinal-Heras 2021: 108.
[245] Parke 1967: 69-70.
[246] Dem. 21.53.
[247] *CGRN* 40 (http://cgrn.philo.ulg.ac.be/file/40/); DOL s.v. *SEG* LXIII (2013) 408. Small, lead tablet, dated to ca. 425-375 BC, opisthographic. Face A contains information about a mantic consultation, while Face B holds the list of offerings. *CGRN* 40 is reminiscent of the oracular tablets from Dodona, both visually and in terms of content. The inscription mentions not only the head pair of gods from Dodona, but also notes that the sacrifice was prescribed by a female seer (ηα μάντις) who divined it through cleromancy.
[248] Dione is also recorded as the recipient of an individual sacrifice (LOD 166).
[249] *SGDI* 1363; Meyer 2013: 147-148.
[250] LOD 2, 3, 5, 8, 9, 11, 14, 16.

Ancient Greek world, including Dodona.[251] Eidinow remarks that while the mention of τύχη in the opening of a query can be interpreted as an attempt to lend the solemnity of a civic text to that of an oracular one, calling upon the goddess of fortune within the context of divination is also a likely explanation of this phenomenon.[252] Yet, her argument in favour of interpreting τύχη in the tablets as a divine being is difficult to substantiate. Tyche was worshiped at other oracles; her cult is attested at Didyma.[253] Supplicants who wished to undergo incubation at the sanctuary of Asklepios in Pergamon were required to make an offering to Tyche, Mnemosyne, and Themis, while those awaiting their turn at the oracle of Trophonios would stay at the house sacred to Tyche and Daimon.[254] However, there is no archaeological or literary evidence of a formal cult of Tyche at Dodona. She is only ever directly addressed in DVC 80.[255] Tyche is also named in one of the few preserved oracular answers, LOD 141Ba, as one of the divinities to whom the supplicant must offer a sacrifice; she is to receive a libation. This list of deities is believed to be a response to a question on the same tablet, posed by a certain Eumenos and Nike, who were involved in a lawsuit.[256] But the gods they were told to supplicate are not related to Dodona. Instead, they appear to be tied to the inquirers' place of residence, Athens (e.g. Erechtheus), or to the problem they were dealing with (propitiating Tyche would provide the supplicants with the "good fortune" they needed to win the legal dispute).[257] The prescribed sacrifices, therefore, did not reference the gods of the oracle. While Tyche did play a more significant role at other oracles, her presence at Dodona was much less prominent, and maybe even incidental.

Another goddess who is invoked in an oracular query is Hestia.[258] In DVC 2171, she is named first, ahead of Zeus and Dione:

Ἰστία καὶ Ζεῦ Νάϊε καὶ Διώνα, πότερά κα συναλλάσων ὄ[ν]α[ιον] καὶ ἄμεινον πράσσοιμι;

[251] Meyer 2013: 138-164; *SGDI* 1348, 1349, 1350, 1353, 1360, 1361, 1365, 1359+1362; Cabanes 1976, no. 47, 49, 68, 70, 74.
[252] Eidinow 2019: 92-93, 96-97. For a discussion on the shifting cultural meanings of τύχη, cf. Eidinow 2011: 66-75.
[253] Fontenrose 1988: 161-162.
[254] Eidinow 2019: 93.
[255] [ἐπ]ικοινῆται Εὐμή<δη>δης τῶι Διὶ τῶι Νάωι καὶ τᾶι Διών[αι κ]αὶ τᾶι Τύχαι / *Eumedes consults with Zeus Naios and Dione and Fortune.*
[256] See Chapter 4.5 for complete text.
[257] LOD 141; Carbon 2015: 78-79.
[258] DVC 2171. Hestia is mentioned a second time in DVC 3275, but it is unclear whether her name is part of a question or an answer.

Oh Hestia, Zeus Naios and Diona, will I be more successful if I reconcile?

Perhaps her presence can be explained through the query itself, in which the supplicant asks about reconciliation or associating with someone. Though the question is vague, it can be hypothesized that it may have referred to family matters or safety, over which Hestia presided. If such were the case, then the act of calling upon the goddess would take on a prayer-like aspect and involving Hestia was intended to improve the chances of a successful oracular response.

Themis, goddess of divine law and personification of order, custom, and fairness, is mentioned in six tablets, always alongside the two main divinities.[259] Her presence in the context of divination is not surprising, since ancient Greeks already connected her with divination at the sanctuary of Delphi. She was believed by them to have predated Apollo as one of the patron goddesses of the oracle.[260] In his *Theogony*, Hesiod also names her as the consort of Zeus, with whom she bore the Horai and the Moirai.[261] Furthermore, the goddess, along with Zeus and Dione, is mentioned as one of the *Naioi*, marking her as a "resident" of the sacred site in Dodona.[262] The cult of Themis has been confirmed in Epirus, having been attested in a manumission inscription from Goumani.[263] The worship of the goddess appears to have been a regional phenomenon, which also included the neighbouring Thessaly.[264] There are other known instances of cults of Zeus and Apollo – in Olympia, Corinth, and Delphi to name a few – being preceded by that of Themis or an Earth goddess, suggesting that the presence of Themis in Dodona would not have been an outlier. According to Dakaris, a temple was eventually built to her, most likely in the 4th-3rd c. BC, just like Dione.[265] On the other hand, Emmerling and Chapinal-Heras have argued that there is not enough evidence to prove conclusively that she did have her own shrine at Dodona.[266] Themis may have simply shared the temple of the main presiding deities.

[259] LOD 21 and 94; DVC 128, 1006, 2524, and 3055.
[260] Aesch. *Eum*. 1-4; Eur. *IT*. 1259-1267; Berti 2002: 225-228.
[261] Hes. *Th*. 901-906.
[262] LOD 94 (ὦ Ζεῦ καὶ Θέμι καὶ Διώνα Ναῖοι / *Oh Zeus and Themis and Dione Naioi*).
[263] Cabanes 1976: 576.
[264] For a list of epigraphic evidence, see Berti 2002: 231-232; The cult of Themis is also attested in LOD 8B, in which the Thessalian tribe of Mondaia asks about the money belonging to the goddess.
[265] Dakaris 1971: 52-52 and 84; Stoneman 2011: 34-35.
[266] Emmerling 2012: 206-207; Chapinal-Heras 2021: 67-68, 70-71, 111. Chapinal-Heras even hypothesizes that Building Z, which has long been believed by scholars to have been the temple of Themis, was instead the precinct of Dione (and perhaps her daughter Aphrodite).

Berti, who also questions Dakaris's identification of the shrine, proposes that the goddess most likely did not have her own cult in Dodona, but may have instead played the role of a "shadow-wife", functioning similarly to or interchangeably with Dione as the companion to Zeus Naios. The recently published tablets appear to give further credence to her theory. In DVC 2524, for example, only Themis and Zeus are addressed by the supplicant. She is also listed before Dione in DVC 128. Berti further argues that Themis' part in the mantic process, both at Dodona and at other oracles, was to provide "a foundation of justice" to the divinatory practices.[267] She would have functioned as a guarantor of the credibility of the prophecies. Furthermore, the oracular tablets suggest that she may have been invoked not only because to her association with mantic practices but also as a result of her connection to the subject of the query; in LOD 21 and 94, she is asked for safety (σωτηρία), which could have been a reference to her epithet σώτειρα and a possible reason for including her in the consultation.[268] Nonetheless, the remaining questions cover a variety of topics, none of which explicitly tie into a domain over which she presided: economic woe (LOD 94), request for an oracle (DVC 128), sacrifices (DVC 2524), future progeny (DVC 3055).

Finally, Apollo seems to be named in the tablets. Dakaris and Lhôte restore the text to include the name of the god in the invocation from LOD 21:

[Ζεῦ Ναῖε καὶ Διώνα Να]ία Θέμι καὶ Ἄπολλ[ον] | [--- περὶ σωτ]ηρίας καὶ τύχας ἀ[γαθᾶς]

(Oh Zeus Naios and Dione Naia) Themis and Apollo (…concerning) safety and good fortune

Their argument for including Apollo rests on a comparison to LOD 94, in which Archephon asks about a ship he built on the orders of Apollo, possibly received at the oracle of Delphi; this tablet shares lexical similarities with LOD 21.[269] Both were also found near each other during the archaeological excavations. Lhôte suggests that they were written by the same supplicant, who seems to have initially consulted an oracle of Apollo but, unsatisfied with the answer, sought a second response from the gods at Dodona. He points to the two tablets sharing unique vocabulary, such as the mention of Apollo, Themis, and σωτηρία.[270] Lhôte's hypothesis that the results of a

[267] Berti 2002: 230, 233.
[268] Pind. *O.* 8.21.
[269] Lhôte 2006: 75-76. Lhôte restores the second line to [Ἀρχεφῶν περὶ σωτ]ηρίας καὶ τύχας ἀ[γαθᾶς].
[270] Lhôte 2006: 198-201.

first prophecy could have been brought to a second oracle for confirmation is an interesting one. Seeking an answer at several shrines was not unheard of in the ancient world – Herodotus reports two separate instances where Delphi and Dodona were consulted. Xenophon, Demosthenes, and Hyperides also report on the Athenians seeking counsel at both sanctuaries.[271] The Dodonean tablets similarly reveal that inquiring about other oracles or predictions was a practice that took place at the Epirote sanctuary.[272] With view to this, DVC 565 is of particular interest, as it discusses a sign from Apollo.[273] Invoking Apollo in the oracular query LOD 21 may have been the result of his previous involvement with the subject of the question. The supplicant's choice of pairing of Apollo with Themis could have been the response to the practice of naming the other divine couple, Zeus and Dione, during consultations. After all, they were already associated with divinatory practices at the oracle of Delphi, where – if Lhôte's hypothesis holds true – the supplicant would have received the original prophecy about which he was now consulting at Dodona. Furthermore, if LOD 21 and 95 were written by the same person, then the presence of Apollo as a god who was called upon during the divination procedure is an anomaly, which resulted from the supplicant's previous personal experience with the god. When making his consultation, the supplicant not only asked the patron deities of Dodona for a second opinion, but also chose to invoke Apollo in order to involve the god from whom he originally received the unclear guidance.

The invocation of gods other than Zeus Naios in the oracular queries and the request of their help in the mantic procedure is an unusual phenomenon. Though oracular sanctuaries could house many different cults, typically one designated deity would preside over the act of divination. For example, at the oracle of Apollo in Didyma, the *temenos* housed temple buildings and altars dedicated to Artemis Pythie, Leto, Zeus Soter, and other deities. Although the deities forming the "Didymean family" are occasionally worshiped together, they are not involved in the mantic procedures of Apollo.[274] At Delphi, the term σύνναος is ascribed to Hermes, who is believed to have shared a temple with Apollo, in an inscription from the 3rd c. AD.[275] At Dodona, Zeus and Dione were the ones to whom the oracular queries were addressed, although supplicants

[271] Hdt. 1.46 and 9.93; Xen. *Ways* 6.2; Dem. 19.297-299 and 21.51-53; Hyper. 4.24-25. Cf. Double consultations in Bonnechere 2013a.
[272] Parker 2016: 85.
[273] [τοὶ Ἀπόλ]λονι σαμᾶναι | [--- τίνι κα ἐ]ρόον εὐχόμενο[ς ---]οι. See Dakaris *et al.* 2013a: 169.
[274] Fontenrose 1988: 44, 123-144.
[275] *FD* III 4:266, *FD* III 4:266[2]; See Roux 1976: 186-187.

occasionally mentioned other gods along with the divine couple. In one instance, Zeus and Themis are even listed without Dione.[276] Four more tablets can perhaps help shed light on this tendency. In DVC 95, the supplicant addresses Zeus Naios, Dione, and – additionally – the resident gods ([Z]εῦ Νάιε καὶ Διώνη καὶ σύν[ναοι]).[277] Similarly, DVC 2546 reads:

Ζεῦ Νάιε καὶ Διώ[να] καὶ σύνναοι, εἰ λώ[ιον] καὶ ἄμεινον ἔσ[ται τ]ὸν Στέφανον [. . .] [. . .] πλῆν [. .]Σ[---]

Oh Zeus Naios and Dione and other resident gods, will it be better and more profitable for Stephanos (…) to sail by sea (…)?

In both inscriptions, the supplicants address all the gods directly, which is emphasized through the use of the vocative, making it clear that the *sunnaoi* were also called upon to help with the divination. Additionally, DVC 228, in which a man named Aristodamos seeks information about his travels, can be interpreted as a query addressed to other gods (ἐπ[ικ]οινῆται Διὶ Ναΐωι καὶ Διώναι καὶ θεῶν). Though θεῶν is in the genitive, while Zeus and Dione are in the dative, the position of the word in the sentence has led DVC to include it in the invocation of the deities.[278] Finally, LOD 23, a request made by Diognetos of Athens, includes the term *Dodonaioi* in addition to the Zeus and Dione duo.[279] Here, the supplicant firmly establishes Zeus as the dominant god, but also acknowledges that there were other deities present at Dodona.

To which gods the supplicants were referring remains something of a mystery. Zeus Naios, as the primary divinity presiding over the oracle, would have been excluded. Similarly, Dione, though named σύνναος by Strabo, is never awarded this title by the supplicants. She figures separately, not sharing quite the same rank as Zeus, but also functioning as one of the main divinities of Dodona. However, the title *sunnaoi*, given to the other invoked gods, implies that they were co-residing with Zeus and Dione at Dodona, which could mean a variety of arrangements. After all, divinities were known to sometimes share a *temenos*, a temple, and even an altar.[280] The

[276] DVC 2524.
[277] Quantin remarks that the restitution of σύνναοι is uncertain due to the damaged state of the tablet; however, the term (in the context of sharing a temple) had been attested in other sources (Quantin 2008: 28; Nock 1986: 202-251). Furthermore, DVC 2546 and 799 (possibly 1559) demonstrate that σύνναοι is present in the tablets.
[278] Dakaris *et al.* 2013b: 477, 482. It should be, however, noted that the typical structure found in the tablets is ἐπικοινάομαι + dative.
[279] δέσποτα ἄναξ Ζεῦ Ναῖε καὶ Διώνη καὶ Δωδοναῖοι / *Oh Zeus Naios, ruler and lord, and Dione and other Dodonean gods.*
[280] Nock 1986: 237-238.

uncovered foundations of buildings located in close proximity to the shrine of Zeus were established by Dakaris to have been temples of Dione, Heracles, Themis, and Aphrodite, erected in the late 4th or early 3rd c. BC, thus attesting several additional cults at Dodona.[281] However, modern scholarship is beginning to question the identification of these constructions. Dieterle is very cautious in attributing the buildings to specific deities. Furthermore, she remains sceptical that the votive offerings to Athena, Artemis, Apollon, Herakles, and Hermes found at the site confirm the existence of other cults at Dodona.[282] Quantin, on the other hand, has argued for the existence of lesser official cults at the precinct of Zeus, believing that the remaining buildings at the site, with the exception of the new temple of Dione, have been misinterpreted as temples instead of votive monuments or treasuries.[283] It should be noted that both scholars published their works before the release of the DVC corpus of Dodonean tablets. Even if Dakaris did erroneously identify the excavated buildings, the oracular inscriptions reveal that deities other than Zeus and Dione must have been present at the sanctuary and were to some extent involved in the divination process. Furthermore, the tablets in which other gods are invoked have all been dated to the 4th c. BC, thus preceding the construction of the possible temple buildings.

In the case of the Epirote oracle, *sunnaoi* should be, therefore, interpreted as "the gods who live in the temple of Zeus Naios", deities whose cults were most likely welcomed into the main shrine and who would have been secondary to Zeus. This term may have referred to some the gods mentioned in other tablets. Themis was theorized by Dakaris to have belonged to a "divine trinity" with Zeus Naios and Dione. Because of the inscription LOD 94, in which Zeus, Themis, and Dione are described as *Naioi* (ὦ Ζεῦ καὶ Θέμι καὶ Διώνα Ναῖοι), and because of the similarity in building materials (soft sandstone) between the temple of Zeus and those ascribed to Dione and Themis, he argued that the cult of the three deities was interconnected.[284] This view has been recently questioned by Dieterle.[285] While the tablets do not reveal any clear indication of a cult of a "trinity" at Dodona (for comparison, Zeus and Dione are invoked about 300 times in the tablets of the Lhôte

[281] Dakaris 1971: 50-56. Dakaris establishes the existence of these cults predominantly based on votive gifts found in buildings neighbouring with the Sacred House of Zeus Naios, where the oracular consultations took place. Each of these buildings, known as temples Γ, Z, Λ and A were believed to have belonged to Dione, Themis, Aphrodite and Heracles. In the case of Themis, the identification was done based on the presence of the goddess in the tablets.
[282] Dieterle 2007: 103-159, 199-209. For other critiques of Dakaris's hypothesis about the temples, see Emmerling 2012, Piccinini 2016, Chapinal-Heras 2021.
[283] Quantin 2008: 20-25, 28-29.
[284] Dakaris 1971: 52.
[285] Dieterle 2007: 74-75.

and DVC corpora, while Themis is only called upon in six texts), some of the people consulting the oracle consciously included her in the divination procedures. One reason for this may be tied to her local significance. Lhôte recognizes that LOD 21 and 94 are written in the Doric dialect.[286] The remaining four DVC tablets, in which she is mentioned (128, 1006, 2524, and 3055), also appear to be written in Doric Greek. It can be, therefore, tentatively proposed that supplicants speaking in the Doric dialect (and possibly originating from Northwestern Greece[287]) were the ones who invoked Themis in their oracular queries, perhaps as a result of the influence of her cult in the region. The second reason for her appearance in the queries is most likely due to Themis' connection to mantic practices. In the same vein, Tyche, through her association with oracular sanctuaries and lot oracles in particular, seems like another possible candidate as a formal *sunnaos* in Dodona.[288] The presence of Apollo and Hestia at the oracle is more doubtful. In the case of Apollo, a single votive figurine representing the god, dated to the 6th c. BC, has been uncovered at the site, but it bears a dedication to Zeus.[289] No other evidence has been excavated or attested in literary sources. Consequently, his mention in the tablets was probably incidental and related to the query itself, rather than a reflection of his worship at Dodona.[290] Chapinal-Heras argues instead that the additional deity could have been Aphrodite, the daughter of Dione with whom she would have shared a shrine.[291] Two votive gifts dedicated to her, as well as two oracular inscriptions mentioning her name, have been excavated at Dodona, which suggest the possibility of her cult at the oracle.[292] Nonetheless, no questions are addressed to her directly and strong evidence in support of her worship at the temple of Dodona is yet to be provided.

The act of invoking multiple unspecified deities during the consultations at the oracle is unconventional, since even within the corpus of the Dodonean tablets, this phenomenon does not occur frequently. The decision to question supplementary gods seems to have been the initiative of the supplicant, as well as a deliberate choice. There does not appear to be any overwhelming connection between the subject of the query and the deities invoked. An exception to this are DVC

[286] Lhôte 2006: 75-76, 199-201.
[287] Cf. discussion about Κούα (DVC 3055) in Curbera 2013: 427.
[288] Eidinow 2019: 93.
[289] Dieterle 2007: 203.
[290] Lhôte 2006: 201.
[291] Aphrodite is presented in the Iliad as the daughter of Zeus and Dione (Hom., *Il.* 5, 370–372). Cf. Chapinal-Heras 2021: 112.
[292] Chapinal-Heras 2021: 108; DVC 987 and 3479.

228 and 2546, the questions asked by Stephanos and Aristodemos, in which both supplicants mention sailing.[293] However, questions about travel, including by sea, were common and did not usually contain references to gods other than Zeus and Dione.[294] Perhaps the potential risks of the voyage inspired the supplicants to seek out help from a broader array of deities. The involvement of other deities in the divination, as in the cases of Themis and Tyche – personifications of justice and luck, both important elements in influencing a positive outcome of the consultations – may have also been perceived as helping tip the balance of fate in one's favour. Finally, calling upon all those present at the precinct could have been a sign of respect and acknowledgement of all the "residents" of Dodona. Just as dubitative formulas were sometimes used in prayer when the supplicant was unsure of which god to address,[295] the inclusion of the *sunnaoi*/*Dodonaioi* seems to recognize the presence and importance of all the gods at the oracle, thus helping the supplicant to avoid offending any of the deities by not omitting them and ensuring their favour in order to bolster the success of the plea.

2.2.2. Negotiating with the gods: Sacrifices, prayers, and curses in oracular queries

Among the most frequent queries at Dodona were those concerning sacrifices and prayers.[296] This form of exchange and reciprocity between humans and deities has been highlighted by scholars as important in understanding ancient Greek religion.[297] *Charis*, or the concept of presenting offerings to gods and receiving something in return, shaped the interactions people had with the sphere of the divine. The dynamic was a complex one: sometimes the gods responded favourably to the gifts, in other cases their reaction was much less predictable. What remained consistent, however, was what Jim characterizes as a "sense of dependence on the gods", a need to engage with them through ritual.[298] Similar behaviour was exhibited by the visitors of Dodona.

Over 100 of the published inscriptions contain questions in which people consulting the oracle wanted to find out which deities (τίνι θεῶν ἢ ἡρώων) had to be implored. The supplicants

[293] These queries will be further discussed in Chapter 4.
[294] Eidinow 2007: 72-82; Dakaris *et al*. 2013b: 540, 575.
[295] Versnel 2011: 49-50.
[296] Parker 2016: 74.
[297] For a discussion of reciprocity in worship, see Bremer 1998 and Parker 1998.
[298] Jim 2014: 65-66, 96.

employed verbs such as εὔχομαι (to pray), θύω (to sacrifice), θεραπεύω (to worship) or ἱλάσκομαι (to appease).[299] This broad range of terminology hints at the different expectations supplicants may have had towards the gods they were trying to propitiate. For example, in LOD 72, in which the inquirer is suffering from an ocular illness, the use of *h*ιλαξάμενος implies a need to conciliate an offended god causing the medical problem rather than simply asking for a favour. The supplicants typically used the umbrella term θεοί to account for any and all divinities they would have to placate, but more precise inquiries, which involved a request to name goddesses, daimons, and heroes alongside gods, were also frequent. The recurrence of these queries demonstrates the scale of the uncertainty individuals felt when dealing with the divine. Although deities had their assigned spheres of control, the frequency with which supplicants inquired about whom to propitiate concerning both familial, social and economic issues confirms one of the phenomena of polytheism scholarship has pointed out – the ancient Greeks' constant quest for identifying the gods.[300] While the role of oracles in establishing who to pray to has been well-documented, particularly in collective consultations, the evidence from Dodona highlights the prevalence of this concern in the private, everyday life of the inhabitants of the ancient Greek Mediterranean world. As will be further demonstrated in subsequent chapters, unlike questions with the ἦ or περί formula, those with the τίνι formula were not intended to provide an answer about the past, the present or the future. Instead, they were a plea for a successful outcome to the activities undertaken by the supplicant; the desired result could only be achieved through the intervention of the appropriate gods, which the oracle would help identify.

The consultations about sacrifices could be very detailed, as seen in DVC 2091:

Ν(ί)κων ἐπερωτῆι [περὶ] <τᾶς> τᾶς Ἀ(ρ)τάμιτο[ς] τὰν ἀρχαίαν θυσία[ν];

Nikon asks about Artemis, should he conduct the ancient sacrifice?

Nikon's question not only mentions a particular type of sacrifice, one that has been presumably traditionally performed for the goddess, but also which goddess he wants to appease. Inquiries

[299] Dakaris *et al.* 2013b: 528-529, 544-546. Other variations include ἀνατίθημι (DVC 1134) and ἐπεύχομαι (DVC 2117). The term ἱλᾶσκομαι is also found in Delphic oracles (PW. nos. 32, 326, 335).
[300] Versnel 2011: 23-26, 37-38.

about offerings dedicated to named gods are, however, rarely found in the oracular corpus.[301] Apollo and Artemis are both mentioned five times each.[302] Their more frequent appearance can be explained by the popularity of the cults of Leto's children in Epirus and surrounding regions; Apollo had a shrine in Aktion, along with the Actia games dedicated to him, while the worship of Artemis is well-attested in Ambracia, Orikos, and Apollonia, as well as among the Thesprotian and Molossian *koina*.[303] Demeter, Athena, Asclepios, Aphrodite, Dionysos, Ennodia, Hestia, Heracles, Isis, and Rhea are also referenced, though only a handful of times.[304] While specific divinities were attributed patronage over particular aspects of everyday life, those worshipping them did not always know which deity or which aspect to address. Oracles offered guidance in establishing both who should be petitioned and how they should be worshipped by the supplicants.[305] Despite the prevalence of this type of question, very few examples of oracular answers that prescribe who and how to propitiate have been found.[306] They are commonly identified through their lists of names of gods in the dative, sometimes accompanied by details concerning the type of sacrifice that should be offered. These tablets suggest that the selection process of the deities to supplicate would not have been completely random; on the contrary, Carbon has shown that the selection of the gods and prescribed sacrifices presented to the supplicants was curated, rendering the consultation very personal.[307] As previously mentioned, in LOD 141Ba Zeus Patroios, Tyche, Herakles, Erechtheus, and Athena Patroia all must be appeased. The list is believed to be a response to LOD 141A, and the designated gods were either connected to the subject matter of the tablets (lost property) or the supplicant's origin (Athenian). LOD 142, in which Zeus Naios, Zeus Olympios, Zeus Eukles, Zeus Bouleus, Kore, Artemis Hegemone and Hero Archegetes are all named, similarly demonstrates how exhaustive the oracular responses

[301] The inscriptions counted in this category either include an outright query about sacrifice or solely the name of the deity, which, as suggested by Chaniotis, can be interpreted as the response to questions about who to present an offering to (Chaniotis 2016: 287).
[302] Apollo: DVC 224, 1045, 1229, 2726, 3671; Artemis: LOD 142, DVC 541, 1611, 2091, 3393.
[303] Piccinini 2012: 319; Quantin 2010: 432-437. The Doric spelling of Artemis in the oracular inscriptions suggests that the inquiries could have been made by residents of Epirus and surrounding areas – a testament to the local importance of the goddess.
[304] DVC 109, 987, 2264, 3375, 2376, 525, 623, 2393, 2327, 806, 746, 3650, 2800, 2885 and possibly 117. DVC 1330 also prescribes an Isiac sacrifice.
[305] Versnel 1981: 11; Versnel 2011: 43-47.
[306] LOD 141Ba, 142, 166c; DVC 585, 1045, 1299, 2393 and possibly 1122. Lhôte 2006: 355-357; Eidinow 2007: 123-124, footnote no. 4; Dakaris *et al.* 2013a: 21; Carbon 2015; Parker 2016: 88.
[307] Carbon 2015: 84.

could be.[308] Carbon suggests that the nature of the listed divinities related to agriculture and leadership, as well as the local iteration of Zeus, point to this inscription being a response to a collective, rather than personal, query.[309] A well-tailored list of deities and offerings, suited to the issue the supplicant was attempting to solve, would have further reassured them of a positive outcome to their request.

While establishing the ritual procedures of obtaining divine support, certain supplicants would go a step further in their attempts to profitably garner the attention of the gods. In DVC 541, a female supplicant asks:

Ἀρτάμι[τι] ἐ τύχοιμ[ί κα] hισσαμένα;

Will I be successful if I set up a dedication to Artemis?

She sought the oracle's reassurance that her offering would not be futile. The worry that the effort and costs that went into a sacrifice would be in vain, which appears to underpin all the queries about which gods should be implored, is made explicit in LOD 113:

ἀγαθᾶι τύχαι. ἐπικοινῆται Σάτυρος τῶι Διὶ τῶι Νάϙι καὶ τᾶι Διώναι. οὐκ ἀνεθέθη ὁ Σατύρου σκύφος; ἐν Ἐλέαι ἂν τὸν κέλητα τὸν Δωριλάου ὁ κ(έλης) ἀπ' Ἀκτίου ἀπέτιλε.

Good fortune. Satyros asks Zeus Naios and Dione: was the cup of Satyros not set up as a votive gift? At Elea, the horse from Action should have beaten the horse of Dorilaos.[310]

Satyros, who had dedicated a cup in the hopes of securing a win for the horse of his choice during a race at Elea in Thesprotia, seems disappointed and frustrated at the fact that his votive gift did not tip the scales in his favour. His query is almost accusatory – he is demanding to know why his offering did not guarantee him success. The phrasing of the inscription implies an element of negotiation with the gods, since what was considered a usual reciprocal exchange between the one making the offering and the deity was not upheld by one of the sides. The query is very personal and exudes a sense of familiarity; the supplicant appears as a disgruntled customer, who believes it appropriate to inquire at the oracle as to why the votive gift failed to ensure his win. The

[308] This inscription, although acknowledged and studied by scholars researching Dodona, is a highly contested text. The Greek text has been reconstructed from a German translation (Kekule von Stradonitz and Winnefeld 1909: 41-42). The original is yet to be located. See Lhôte 2006: 296-297.
[309] Carbon 2015: 76-77.
[310] Lhôte 2006: 238.

inscription reveals the supplicant's paths of recourse in such situations. Just as an oracle would help establish which gods to pray or sacrifice to, it also seemed to serve the function of mediator in cases when the communication between the human and the deity was not running smoothly despite the appropriate rites being practiced.

Similarly, in DVC 2024, the supplicant attempted to create an arrangement between himself and a god (possibly Zeus) concerning the escape of a friend or family member from Meliteia in Thessaly:

θεός· Δαμαίνετος πὲρ Προξένου πος κε ἐκ Μελιτείας σωθῆ καὶ τίνι θεῶν ἢ δαιμόνων εὐχόμενος σωθῆ διὰ θαχέων καὶ τῶι θεῶ[ι] δῶρον ἀποφέρει;

God. Damainetos asks concerning Proxenos about how he can escape from Meliteia and to which god or daimon to pray for a swift escape? And he brings the god a gift.

Chaniotis interprets διὰ θαχέων as meaning a speedy oracular response from Zeus, while Méndez Dosuna argues that it refers to the act of escaping.[311] Both, however, agree that the final section of the text is not part of the question, as is hinted by the verb in the indicative, but rather an attempt to bribe Zeus into a positive outcome to the query. Securing the success of an undertaking could be a layered project, which first required bargaining with the gods of the oracle. The examples of attempting to leverage the gods were not unheard of. They appeared to be a byproduct of the gift-giving and reciprocity between the divinities and the supplicants, leading the latter to conceptualize their relationship as that between partners.[312] The tablets demonstrate a sense of familiarity and entitlement on the part of the supplicants, who were willing to attempt negotiation, expecting the gods to fulfill their end of the bargain in return for the sacrifice.

While most of the supplicants attempted to influence their futures by inquiring about the proper ritual practices, some were even more direct. In LOD 23 and DVC 95, the supplicants chose to address the gods in a very personal manner:

[311] Chaniotis 2016: 288; Méndez Dosuna 2016: 131.
[312] Jim 2014: 63-64.

LOD 23. [θεός. τύχη] ἀγα[θή]. δέσποτα ἄναξ Ζεῦ Ναῖε καὶ Διώνη καὶ Δωδοναῖοι, αἰτεῖ ὑμᾶς καὶ ἱκετεύει Διόγνητος Ἀριστομήδου Ἀθηναῖος δοῦναι αὐτῶι καὶ τοῖς ἑαυτοῦ εὔνοις ἅπασιν καὶ τεῖ μητρὶ Κλεαρέτει καὶ [---][313]

God, good fortune. Oh lord and master, Zeus Naios, and Dione, and Dodonaeans, Diognetos of Athens son of Aristomedes asks and beseeches you to give to him and to all his friends and to his mother Klearete and (…)

DVC 95. [Z]εῦ Νάιε καὶ Διώνη καὶ σύν[ναοι αἰτῶ ὑ]μᾶς ἀγαθεῖ τύχει δοῦνα[ι ἐμοὶ γ]ᾶν ἐργαζο[μ]ένωι καὶ EN[.][---]

Oh Zeus Naios and Dione and resident gods, (I ask you to) give me good fortune, as I work the land, and (…)?[314]

Both texts begin with an invocation in the vocative. While this is not a unique feature of these two inscriptions, the direct address to the gods gives the queries a personal feel. The emotional vocative in LOD 23 is particularly evocative, especially as it is followed by more powerful imploratory language, such as the verb ἱκετεύω (to beseech).[315] Furthermore, the supplicants directed their requests not only to Zeus and Dione, but also to the other resident gods of Dodona. Their texts do not appear to be a question nor an oracular answer, but rather a prayer to the gods of Dodona.[316] A third tablet, LOD 24, which begins with Ζεῦ Ναῖε and contains the verbs ἱκετεύει and δοῦναι, but which otherwise is heavily damaged and illegible, seems to fit the pattern of a prayer as well. Hoffmann suggests that it too was a request for the supplicant's prayers to be heard, but Lhôte rightfully cautions against it.[317] However, he does acknowledge certain similarities to LOD 23. Though not a trend overwhelmingly evidenced in the mantic inscriptions, the use of the lead tablets as mediums for prayer rather than divination seems to have been a strategy the supplicant employed in securing their wishes. As Versnel remarked, the line between an oracular consultation and a prayer could be blurry – seeking knowledge and seeking help were often the same thing at a

[313] Based on a similar phrasing found in Xenophon's *Apology of Socrates* (*Apol*. 27), Lhôte (2006: 81) interprets τοῖς ἑαυτοῦ εὔνοις to mean "ceux qui sont bienveillants", which he translates to friends. Cf. translation in Parke 1967: 263.
[314] For translation cf. Lhôte 2006: 168 and Eidinow 2007: 95; For the interpretation of the dative as a request for luck, see Eidinow 2019: 94.
[315] Eidinow 2007: 135.
[316] Parke 1967: 263; Versnel 1981: 6-7.
[317] Lhôte 2006: 82-83; Eidinow 2007: 122.

mantic sanctuary.[318] Some of the visitors at the sanctuary of Dodona seem to have chosen this approach in their interactions with the deities presiding over the site and simply pleaded for good fortune instead of asking whether they could have it.

Another example of the personal use of the oracle by individuals found in the corpus is DVC 849, dated to the 4th c. BC:

Ἀλκὰν ἀπάγεν

Take away the strength.

The text, as noted by the editors, resembles magical incantations found on curse tablets.[319] It is a request to take away the power or might of the "victim". Though no deity is mentioned in the tablet, as was habitual in binding formulas found in curses, it can be assumed that the supplication was addressed to Zeus Naios. The situation, which would have called for such an inscription, is uncertain. Just as with all curse texts, the context must have been agonistic, though whether it related to amatory, judicial, commercial or sports matters remains uncertain.[320] However, if ἀλκή is to be understood as "physical strength", then DVC 849 can be explained as a curse made against an athlete. After all, the topic of games such as the Actia, along with the worry about losing money at such events, is attested in the Dodonean tablets, so an attempt to secure one's winnings by ensuring the competition underperforms is unsurprising.[321] Nonetheless, while scholars such as Lhôte have previously linked the oracular tablets to curse tablets, DVC 849 presents itself as an isolated instance rather than a common practice at the oracle.

The oracle of Dodona was not only tasked with providing answers about future or past events, but it also served as a means of achieving one's objectives. Its visitors understood the consultations to be part of the process of ensuring a successful result to their request or problem. Through various strategies, such as requesting help in identifying the gods they should propitiate or using the lead tablets to present a prayer to Zeus and Dione, the supplicants took on an active role in influencing their reality and negotiating with the gods the best possible outcome to their endeavours.

[318] Versnel 1981: 7-8.
[319] Dakaris *et al.* 2013a: 226.
[320] Faraone 1991: 10-15.
[321] LOD 113, 122; DVC 3220.

2.3. Religious practices

2.3.1. Mantic specialists and religious officials

Some of the Dodonean queries addressed the more practical aspects of religious practices. Around eight inscriptions concerned religious officials and practitioners of mantic arts, demonstrating that even they needed the assistance of the oracle in taking decisions regarding the divine. The first of these is a tablet, DVC 70, dated by the editors to the early 4th c. BC, which states that:

ἀ θεὸς αἰρεῖται ἀμφίπολον ᾽Ορεάνδραν[322]

The goddess takes Oreandra as servant.

The text, which has been interpreted as an oracular answer rather than a question due to its use of the indicative in lieu of the standard subjunctive, asserts that a goddess takes Oreandra as a servant for herself.

The name ᾽Ορεάνδρα is not attested elsewhere, making it unique to the tablets from Dodona and possibly a local name. DVC suggest that the oracular response may have been a confirmation of her suitability for the position of priestess.[323] Though the word ἀμφίπολος does not make a second appearance in the texts of the tablets, it can be found in literary texts in reference to serving a god. In Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris*, the titular heroine is described as τᾶς ἐλαφοκτόνου θεᾶς ἀμφίπολον κόραν, a servant to Artemis.[324] The verb ἀμφιπολεύω is also present in Herodotus' account of the history of Dodona, describing the first priestess's role as a handmaid at the temple of Zeus in Thebes, from which she was abducted.[325]

While many priesthoods were hereditary in the ancient world, there were other means for men or, more importantly in this case, women to obtain the placement. Though most priesthoods were acquired through purchase, election or appointment,[326] evidence of allotted feminine and

[322] DVC 70.
[323] Dakaris *et al.* 2013a: 30. This theory is also upheld by Parker in his overview of the tablets (Parker 2016: 76), though he classifies the inscription as a collective query made by religious officials, rather than by private individuals. While functionaries have been known to consult the oracle (e.g., the Diaitoi in LOD 16), DVC 70 does not offer enough evidence to confidently establish who was the original inquirer.
[324] Eur. *If. Taur.* 1113-1114.
[325] Hdt. 2.56.
[326] Connelly 2007: 50-55.

"hereditary" priesthoods can be found as early as the second half of the 5th c. BC.[327] Oreandra may have been a candidate for such a position and the confirmation written on the tablet could have been an answer to an inquiry made by her personally, by a family member interested in her success or perhaps even by those in charge of choosing the new priestess. The role of the oracle at Dodona in choosing Oreandra as a priestess does not seem to be unconventional. Evidence from both Delphi and Didyma reveal that other mantic sanctuaries were used to select candidates for priesthoods.[328]

A second inscription, DVC 1515, appears to describe a similar situation:

Σίβυλλ[α] θεία

Sibulla belonging to the goddess.

In their commentary, DVC suggest that Σίβυλλα may be the title or the function of the priestess;[329] this seems rather unlikely, especially when one considers the popularity of the name in Epirus.[330] While these two tablets do not reveal the identity of the goddess (or goddesses) they mention, it is tempting to suggest that Dione may have been the one they were referencing, considering her prominent presence at the Dodonean sanctuary. The examples from Delphi, however, do demonstrate that these types of queries were not necessarily made about cults present at the oracular sanctuary, but could be questions asked by foreign communities. The tablets from Dodona simply prove that the Epirote oracle could contribute to the process of choosing religious personnel.

Priestesses were not the only subject of queries. LOD 144A, dated to the 4th c. BC, mentions the seeking out of the help of a psychagogos:[331]

[οἱ δεῖνες ἐπικοινῶνται τῶι Διὶ] τῶι Νάωι καὶ τᾶι Διώναι ἦ μὴ χρῆυνται Δωρίωι τῶ[ι] ψυχαγωγῶι;

(X ask Zeus) Naios and Dione if they should surely consult Dorios the psychagogos?

[327] Connelly 2007: 49. The practice of choosing a priestess by lot has been attested throughout the Mediterranean region, with the earliest instance recorded in Athens regarding the cult of Athena Nike.
[328] Two Athenian inscriptions about consultations at Delphi (PW 278, PW 437) that Fontenrose classifies as historical texts concern the choice of priests, while one from Didyma (Rob. 36) names the woman designated to become the seer.
[329] Dakaris *et al.* 2013a: 373.
[330] DVC 4; *IBouthrot* 25, 30; *IBouthrot* 27, 4; *IBouthrot* 68, 9.
[331] LOD 144A = DVC 172; Evangelidis 1935: 257, no. 23; Lhôte 2006: 299.

The term psychagogos is not common; it is attested as an epithet of Hermes meaning "leading departed souls to the nether world" or conjurer of the dead.[332] Ogden translates the term to "evocator" or "soul-charmer". Just as Hermes, who brought souls into the underworld, the psychagogoi would have been charged with summoning restless ghosts and laying them to rest.[333] Dakaris, Christidis and Vokotopoulou understand the term to be a synonym of "necromancer".[334] In light of this, Lhôte interprets the construction χρῆνται with dative to mean something akin to "consult an oracle".[335] The plural form of the verb indicates that the query was made by a group of people, perhaps family members or a community, as has been suggested by the aforementioned scholars. Lhôte believes that the name Dorios is, in fact, an ethnicon and the man referenced in LOD 144A was a psychagogos of one of the Epirote tribes. However, Δώριος is also attested in Delos and Aspendos – it is rare but not unheard of.[336] It seems more plausible to link the function of the psychagogos with the Acheron nekuomanteion in Thesprotia.[337] The precise functioning of this sacred space, its management and the method of divination that would have been practiced there are uncertain.[338]

The possible connection between the tablet and the nekuomanteion would provide some insight into how it operated. The use of μή in the question implies the inquirers may have expected a negative answer and highlights the uncertainty surrounding seeking out such a "specialist". The fact that such a decision had to be consulted with the oracle of Dodona demonstrates that this would not have been considered a common solution to whatever problem the inquirers faced. Furthermore, it appears that the issue those asking the question faced was not considered suitable to bring before the oracle, but a different type of expertise was needed in this case. Literary evidence provides one other analogous example of an oracle being consulted about psychagogoi. The Spartans, who locked their regent Pausanias in the temple of Athena Chalkioikos, causing him to die of starvation on sacred ground, were soon forced to ask an oracle for help in ridding the

[332] LSJ s.v. ψῡχᾰγωγός; Aesch. *Pers*. 687; Eur. *Alc*. 1128; Hesychius ψ 287 Cunningham = Soph. Fr. 327a Radt.
[333] Ogden 2001a: 95-97.
[334] Dakaris *et al*. 1999: 71.
[335] Lhôte 2006: 300.
[336] ID 477 A, 8; IPerge 10, 67.
[337] Herod. 5.92; Paus. 9.30.6; Ogden 2001a: 43-44; Stoneman 2011: 66-67. Later sources also mentioned a psychopompeion in Molossia (Hesychius s.v. θεοεπής; Phot. Lex. s.v. θεοί Μολοττικοί; Eustath. on Hom. *Od*. 1.393 and 10.514), however Ogden believes it to have simply been a different name for the same nekuomanteion (cf. Ogden 2001b: 168).
[338] For an overview of possible methods, see Ogden 2001a: 52-57.

shrine of the man's ghost. The answer was to make the appropriate offerings to the slighted deity, but also to seek the help of the psychagogoi in dealing with the spirit itself.[339] In another version, Pausanias was the one to consult the psychagogoi in order to make peace with the spirit of a young woman, Kleonike, whom he had murdered.[340] Regardless of the variations of the story, what remains consistent is that the psychagogos was responsible of dealing with the spirits, something that the oracle was unwilling or unable to solve. LOD 144A confirms that there had been a "division of labour" between the different institutions, and one would refer the supplicant to the other if the issue at hand required an alternative approach. Furthermore, the presence of an inscription on the back of the tablet (LOD 144B) containing the word ΔΩPI, an abbreviation of Dorios, can be interpreted as a positive answer, encouraging the supplicants to seek out the help of the psychagogos.[341] The notion of consulting Zeus Naios and Dione about other specialists may not have been unique to LOD 144A – Chaniotis suggests a similar explanation in regard to DVC 2128, in which the supplicant asks about seeking advice from another oracle.[342] Other questions about diviners and priests, including a seer (μάντις) and a religious official (ἱερομνάμων), a female hierophant (ἱερόφαντις), as well as a sacrificing priest (θυοσκόος) can also be found in the tablets, though the inscriptions are too damaged to establish the full context of the queries.[343]

It must be noted that some of the oracular inquiries are believed to have been made by religious officials and diviners who visited Dodona, albeit the identity of the supplicants cannot be confirmed with certainty. According to Chaniotis' reading of DVC 2409, this tablet was inscribed by Archippos, who may have been a religious official.[344]

Ἄρχιππος ἐπερωτῆι τὸν Δία καὶ τὰν Διώναν περὶ τῶ hιαρῶ ἀργυρίω τῶ τᾶς Ἀθαναίας πότερα κατθύσηι πᾶν αἰ μέλλει βέντιον ἦμεν ἢ οὔ

Archippos asks Zeus and Dione concerning the sacred money of Athena. Would it be better to sacrifice it all or not?

[339] Plut. *Homerikai Meletai* F1 (= Scholion on Euripides, *Alcestis*, 1128); Plut. *Moralia* 560c (= [Themistocles] 4.14 Hercher/Doenges. Aristodemus FGH 104 F8). See Johnston 1999: 62.
[340] Paus. 3.17.9.
[341] Lhôte (2006: 300) believes the text to be an abbreviation of the query. His argumentation, however, is unsubstantiated, particularly since other oracular answers have frequently been found on the verso of the queries.
[342] ἄλλε μαντεύ(εσθαι) / *to consult another oracle?* Cf. Chaniotis 2017: 55.
[343] DVC 984, 2179, 3411.
[344] Chaniotis 2016: 287.

The query is somewhat puzzling, as the management of the property of a god would have been regulated by religious laws. In this case, however, it seems that Archippos is either asking about spending the money from a personal perspective or is trying to resolve a dispute about the money. This is not the only question pertaining to property belonging to a deity. In LOD 8B, which will be further discussed in Chapter 5, a Thessalian tribe asks about how to proceed with the money of Themis. Such queries concerning divine property can also be found at other oracles, such as in the case of the Athenian inquiry about the Sacred *Orgas* of the Two Goddesses from the 4th c. BC. Although the land belonging to the Goddesses was being cultivated at the time and the money was presumably used to help support the sanctuary at Eleusis, the practice did not appear to be formally regulated and Athenians were unsure whether the Goddesses approved of this. To solve this debacle, an Athenian embassy was sent to consult the matter with Apollo at Delphi.[345] Archippos may have found himself in a similar position, where no previous clear directives existed concerning Athena's money (the procurance of which, perhaps as in the Athenian case, was not regulated) and sought the advice of the oracle of Dodona as an arbiter in cult matters. It appears that if there were no other guidelines which could be consulted, the oracle was expected to help establish the appropriate religious procedure – a role that will be further explored in the following subsection.

One more inscription may also have been a question posed to the gods of Dodona by a divination "specialist". In DVC 1082, certain Timothea, accompanied by another individual whose name and gender are uncertain due to a lacuna in the tablet, consulted the Epirote oracle:[346]

[.]TH[. . .] καὶ τύχαν ἀγαθάν·KA[- - -] | [π]ερὶ πάντων καὶ ἰαρῶν καὶ ὁσ[ίων - - -] | ἐστ[ὶ τὰν] Τιμοθέαν καὶ Ἀριστ[- - - ἐκ τᾶς τέχν]-| ας τ[ᾶ]ς μαντικᾶς ὡς εὐτυχ[οῖ- - -] | αὔτα προφατεύει καὶ πε[ρὶ- - -] | [- - -]ὡς τάχιστα (τἄλ)λα[- - -]

[345] *IG* II³,1 292; cf. Lambert 2005: 132-135; Bowden 2013: 44.
[346] Despite its poor state, Kastadima (2017: 135) identifies this query as having been made by a woman. DVC, however, believe that the second person mentioned alongside her (Ἀριστ---) would have been a man (Dakaris *et al.* 2013a: 276), since often in cases of two supplicants mentioned in a tablet, a man and a woman would be named (see Chapter 3 about couples' inquiries). However, it is worth pointing out that inscriptions such as DVC 4, in which a certain Anagulla and Sibulla are named side by side, demonstrate that on occasion, two women could consult the oracle together.

(…) and good fortune. Concerning all the ritual behaviours (…) is Timothea and Arist(…) mantic craft thus will be fortunate (…) she is an interpreter (of the gods) and concerning (…) most swiftly the other (…)[347]

The text of this inscription from the first half of the 4th c. BC is lacunose and therefore does not reveal the full content of the query. However, if the restorations are correct, it appears to refer to divination practices. DVC believe that the latter part of the text (αὖτα προφατεύει) does not concern Timothea but rather the priestesses of Dodona.[348] Yet the verb προφᾱτεύω is not a typical manner of referring to divining at Dodona; in fact, it is only used this one time in the corpus. Similarly, the use of τέχνη (craft) in the Dodonean tablets is tipically tied to skills or work the supplicant does himself.[349] It normally is used to describe the occupation of the person making the inquiry; in this case, it would be referring to the art of divination practiced by the supplicant. After all, the existence of female seers at the time – besides the priestesses of Dodona and the Pythia – has been confirmed.[350] For example, a Thessalian epitaph from the 3rd c. BC mentions a female *mantis* named Satyra.[351] Therefore, Timothea may have been a diviner who consulted the oracle about a matter that involved her prophetic craft, demonstrating that even "specialists" would seek help in communicating with and obtaining answers from the gods.

Religious officials and "specialists" can be found as both subjects and objects of the oracular queries at the Epirote sanctuary. The oracle, just as many others across the Mediterranean world, could be consulted about their selection. Inquirers also requested the help of Zeus Naios and Dione in establishing whether pursuing the help of other mantic practitioners was the right choice, presumably in situations where their problem required a "specialist" with a particular set of qualifications. Finally, the Dodonean sanctuary was visited by priests and seers, who sought advice in ritual matters they were not able to solve by themselves; even those qualified to decipher messages from the gods were not always sure of what the gods were saying. The oracle served as an interpreter of the divine for the "specialists" just as it did for laypeople, positioning its authority in conveying the will of the gods over other forms of divination.

[347] It must be noted that ἱερά καὶ ὅσια have primarily been used in the context of the behaviour of the inhabitants of a *polis*, rather than for individuals. For a discussion on the different meanings, see Blok 2014.
[348] Dakaris *et al.* 2013a: 276.
[349] Kozey 2018: 211-213.
[350] Beerden 2013: 72.
[351] *SEG* 35.626; Flower 2008: 214.

2.3.2. Sacred trees and hero cults: How the oracle shaped ritual norms

Trees have played a significant role at Dodona since the earliest mentions of the oracle. The great oak of Zeus dominated the landscape long before any temple had been erected at the site, remaining the one constant element in the ancient descriptions of the sanctuary throughout the growth and development of the area.[352] It is perhaps this connection that encouraged supplicants to bring arboreal queries to the attention of the Dodonean gods. Seven tablets can be identified as addressing issues related to trees, in particular the question of cutting down or removing those that might be considered sacred or dedicated to a deity. Among these, three inscriptions, dated to the 4th c. BC, concern trees in the context of hero cults. The first is DVC 80, a query in the Doric dialect put forward by Eumedes:

[ἐπ]ικοινῆται Εὐμή<δη>δης τῶι Διὶ τῶι Νάωι καὶ τᾶι Διών[αι κ]αὶ τᾶι Τύχαι περὶ τᾶς δρυὸς τᾶς ἐν τῶι ἡρώωι ἦ ἐξελῶ κ[αὶ τύχ]οιμι ναόνδε ἀνθεὶς αὐτῶ;

Eumedes consults with Zeus Naios and Dione and Fortune. Concerning the oak tree at the shrine of the hero. Should I remove it, and will I succeed if I dedicate it at the temple?[353]

The removal of trees from sacred or temple grounds is a topic that must have been raised frequently enough to merit its own regulations. Vegetation growing on the premises of a sanctuary appears to have belonged to the deities presiding over the site or, at the very least, was protected under the notion of the inviolability of a temple's territory. The destruction of sacred groves could result in divine punishment, as happens in the myth about Erysichthon, who is cursed by Demeter for destroying her trees, or in the story of Paraibios, who suffers because his father chopped down a tree belonging to a hamadryad.[354] The suicide of Cleomenes I, king of Sparta, was also believed

[352] Chapinal-Heras 2021: 43.

[353] The reading of the text has been heavily debated. DVC propose the option of ναόνδε, thus interpreting the inscription as an inquiry about cutting down the tree in the heroon and dedicating it in the temple (Dakaris *et al*. 2013a: 35-36). Méndez Dosuna agrees with their analysis but asserts that αὐτῶ should be understood as a pronominal adverb of origin and translates it as "from there" (Méndez Dosuna 2016: 119-120). His proposed translation is: "Eumedes consults Zeus Naios, Diona and Tyche about the oak in the heroon: Shall I succeed in digging it up and replant (alternatively, offer) it at the temple from there?". Chaniotis, however, suggests that ναόν δε is the more probable version. He argues that the reasoning behind eliminating the tree would be to open up space (in this instance to build a shrine) rather than to dedicate the wood at a sanctuary (Chaniotis 2016: 287). While not implausible, this interpretation finds little support in the remaining oracular tablets, as well as analogical epigraphic and literary evidence.

[354] Call. *Hymn to Demeter*; Hes. 70 (Most) ap. Schol. Lycophr. 1393 (43b MW); Ovid *Metam*. 8.738-778; Ap. Rhod. 2.476-483.

by the Argives to be the result of divine retribution for burning the grove dedicated to Argos, the eponymous founder of their *polis*.[355] Legislation further enforced the hallowed status of shrine vegetation. The regulations concerning the Mysteries at Andania stipulated that anyone cutting down trees at the sanctuary of Apollo Karneios was to be penalized accordingly to their social standing – a free man with a fine, a slave by whipping.[356] The crime was considered serious enough that a reward was allocated to the person who informed the authorities about the transgression, the only such provision present in this legislation.[357] A similar type of punishment could be found in Athens for any damage done to the trees at the shrine of Apollo Lykeios or the removal of dead branches from the premises.[358] A sanctuary in Euboea fined 100 drachmas for cutting down wood on its territory.[359] While it is worth noting that not every law was equally punitive – as exemplified by the purity regulations from Cyrene, which allowed people to purchase wood from the sanctuary of Apollo for both religious and secular purposes, or those of Gortyn, which forbade the use of sanctuary trees for shipbuilding, but allowed for the gathering of dry branches – many shrines did have rules stating that trees growing in spaces consecrated to a deity should not be touched.[360] Breaking these laws meant that the victimized divinity had to somehow be compensated.

Eumedes' inquiry demonstrates an awareness of the possible sanctity of the oak tree growing in the *heroon* and the potential religious or legal ramifications of carelessness in removing it. The supplicant is unsure whether he should cut down the tree, a sentiment that is echoed in DVC 3838:

θεὸς τύχα ἀγαθὰ· Ζεῦ Νά[ϊε ---] τὰ ἐν τῶι ἡρώωι δένδρα [.][---] πράσσοι καινόν;[361]

God good fortune. Oh Zeus Naios (…) the trees in the shrine of the hero (…) would it be more successful to cut?

The vegetation present on the land consecrated to a hero seems to have been awarded protections just as that in the cases of sanctuaries dedicated to the gods. Evidence of this tradition is reasonably

[355] Hdt. 6.75.3 and 6.80.
[356] *LSCG* 65; *CGRN* 222.
[357] Dillon 1997b: 115.
[358] *LSCG* 37.
[359] *LSCG* 91.
[360] *LSCG Suppl*. 115 and *CGRN* 99; *LSCG* 148; other tree-related regulations include: *LSCG* 36, 47, 57, 84, 111 and 150, *LSCG Suppl*. 36 and 81.
[361] DVC 3838 is also dated to the 4th c. BC.

well attested. Pausanias writes about the *heroon* of Hyrnetho, daughter of Temenos, who was killed during a power struggle between her husband Deiphontes and her brothers over the right to rule Argos. Wild olive trees grew in the sacred space devoted to her; however, no one was to move any dead or broken branches from the *heroon*.[362] Likewise, an inscription from Akraiphia from the 5th c. BC, that forbids harming the surrounding laurel trees, has been identified by Sokolowski as belonging to a funerary monument.[363] Based on the type of sacrifice mentioned in the text, the monument and the surrounding grove are believed to have probably been dedicated to a hero.[364] If the removal of the sacred trees was prohibited by law or custom, it can be assumed that attempting to do so may have required some form of consent from the gods, as well as compensating the deity whose property is being taken. Eumedes and the supplicant from DVC 3838 seek assurance from the Dodonean gods that their actions are the right ones, going as far as to address Zeus Naios directly in the case of the latter query. The interpretation of Eumedes' tablet as an offer to consecrate the oak tree at a temple also fits into this framework – if the tree must be cut down due to some extenuating circumstance, then postulating that it remains in the sacral sphere by dedicating it in a temple may "lessen" the severity of the deed.

An analogous case can be found in DVC 1108 – the oldest tree-related oracular inscription, dated to the mid 5th c. BC:[365]

δρυὸς δ' ἀεθαλ(οῦ)ς ἐ τύχοιμι ἐπικόπτον hᾶι κα[---];[366]

[362] Paus. 2.28.3-7.
[363] *LSCG Suppl.* 36.
[364] Sokolowski 1962: 75. Sokolowski suggests that in l. 5 the incomplete word could be τόμια, used to designate sacrifices to heroes and the deceased.
[365] Dakaris *et al.* 2013a: 282.
[366] The reading of the word ἀεθαλ(οῦ)ς is contested. DVC have interpreted it as meaning αειθαλής or "evergreen" (Dakaris *et al.* 2013a: 282), though as Méndez Dosuna points out, there are substantial grammatical, dialectal, and stylistic reasons (such as the contraction εο > ου being rare outside of Attica or the adjective being found solely in poetic register at the time) to rule out this option (Méndez Dosuna 2016: 126). Furthermore, the use of αειθαλής to describe an oak tree, which happens to be a deciduous plant, seems illogical. Instead, Méndez Dosuna interprets ἐπικόπτω as referring to the process of cutting off the top of a tree and therefore proposes δρυὸς ΔΑ ‹κ›|εφαλάς – "the heads (i.e. the crowns) of the oak" (2016: 127). Though an interesting option, this suggestion hinges on the assumption that the κ is missing from the inscription. Upon inspection of the facsimile provided in DVC, there does not appear to be reason to believe that there is a lacuna or a missing tablet section at the end of l. 1. The letters of the remaining lines are aligned evenly with the end of the first one and the words ending l. 2 and 3 continue uninterrupted into the consecutive line of the inscription. As a result, the proposition put forward by Tsantsanoglou in the DVC commentary and dismissed by Méndez Dosuna, which recommends that the word be read as αἰθαλόεις or "smoky, sooty, burnt" presents itself as a viable alternative, especially in the broader context of Dodonean inquiries about removing trees – a burned or otherwise devastated oak tree might need to be cut down, regardless of its sacred status.

ηιαρόν

Q: *Will I succeed in cutting down the sooty oak tree and (…)?*[367]

A: *Sacred.*

Admittedly, the place of ηιαρόν in DVC 1108 remains puzzling. DVC have originally suggested to link the word, which is written vertically on the left margin of the tablet, with the remainder of the query.[368] However, Méndez Dosuna notes that the word not only appears to be physically separate from the longer text, but is also visibly written in a different handwriting: the alpha is symmetrical, the rho is tailed, and the omicron is rounder – all features that are not present in the longer section.[369] While ηιαρόν could be interpreted as an unrelated oracular text, its location can also indicate that it was the answer to the question. Through this interpretation, DVC 1108 would provide context for why the gods of Dodona might be consulted about the removal of a presumably tree, such as it being irreparably damaged or possibly posing a safety threat as a result of the devastation. However, the answer provided by the oracle suggests that the oak was sacred, which may have prevented the supplicant from cutting it down.

Alternatively, providing the slighted god or hero with a different sacrifice would also be sufficient compensation, as exemplified by DVC 2432:

ἐξελεῖν τὰν ἀγριέλαιον τῷ̣[ι] δε ἥρωι λινὰς καθρὰς ὡραῖα ῥέ̣[ξαι][370]

Remove the wild olive tree. To the hero offer as a sacrifice pure pounded flour by way of seasonal fruit-offerings.

The inscription appears to be an oracular answer, informing the person making the inquiry about what to do with a wild olive tree and what sacrifice to perform. As noted by Liapis, ἐξελεῖν τὰν ἀγριέλαιον is not typically used to denote the removal or pruning of trees, but rather means "setting apart", evidently an already damaged tree, for the hero.[371] The wild olive tree is presumed to belong to the hero and touching or otherwise moving it required the supplicant to propitiate the divine

[367] The inscription appears to be incomplete; perhaps the lower half of the tablet, below l. 4, is missing.
[368] Dakaris *et al.* 2013a: 282. Proposed reading: δρυὸς δ' ἀεθαλ(οῦ)ς ἐ τύχοιμι ἐπικόπτον hᾶι κα ηιαρόν;
[369] Méndez Dosuna 2016: 126.
[370] Dated to the mid 4th c. BC. Edition and translation in accordance with Liapis (2015: 85-86) and DOL s.v. DVC 2432. The editors (Dakaris *et al.* 2013b: 50) recommend the reading: ἀγνᾶς καθ(α)ρᾶς ὦραι ἀργ[αί]. They also theorize that DVC 2432 may be the answer to the question in DVC 2430.
[371] Liapis 2015: 88.

figure who owned it. The sacrifice prescribed by the Epirote oracle, the pounded flour (or barley meal), is attested as an offering to heroes in other sources.[372] Moreover, though the evidence of oracular answers with sacrificial directives is scarce, DVC 2432 appears to be in keeping with the two other tablets containing information about offerings presented to a hero, which also involved modest, bloodless sacrifices.[373]

Finally, the tablets also reveal certain trends within the religious beliefs they address. The oak was the tree most frequently asked about. Besides appearing in DVC 80 and 1108, it also can be found in DVC 2951:[374]

Ἐπερωτᾶι Ε[---] δρῦν ἀνακ[όπτειν ---] κειράμ[ε]ν[ος ---] ἢ ἐᾶν;

E(…) asked (… cutting) the oak tree (…) pruning (…) or leave it?

Although the text is missing sections, enough of it remains to classify it as a personal query about cutting down or pruning an oak tree. The choice of consulting Dodona about matters related to sacred oak trees seems unsurprising, considering the important role the tree played at the oracle and its connection to the patron deity of the site. Copper votives in the form of oak leaves and branches, dated to the 4-3 c. BC, have been excavated at the site.[375] Perhaps the offerings included also real plants, in light of which the temple from Eumedes' query can be interpreted as the sanctuary of Zeus Naios to which the supplicant will deliver the sacred oak wood. The tablets may also suggest that the particular care or protection awarded to oak trees could have been a local phenomenon. Méndez Dosuna argues that DVC 80 is a text in the Doric dialect, while DVC 1108 is written in the Corinthian script of the Epirotan or Corcyraean type.[376] The famed arboreal aspect of the cult of the Dodonean Zeus could have, therefore, influenced the practices linked to other divine figures in the Epirote area, especially in the case of the much more elusive and dynamic hero cults. The places of worship dedicated to heroes did not follow a standardized pattern and included burial sites, precincts, and even temples.[377] Ekroth notes that *heroa* in particular involved more than just the hero's tomb.[378] As the oracular tablets seem to point out, sacred groves were

[372] Liapis 2015: 86-87; DOL 2432.
[373] LOD 141 and 142; Carbon 2015: 75-79.
[374] Dated to the mid-4th c. BC.
[375] Pantermalis *et al.* 2016: 64-65.
[376] Méndez Dosuna 2016: 119, 126.
[377] Larson 1995: 9-13.
[378] Ekroth 2007: 108.

associated with the territory dedicated to the hero.[379] The demarcation of spaces belonging to local, less prominent hero cults through natural boundaries such as trees seems plausible if one considers the history and development of the residential patterns in Epirus, which involved an economy centered on transhumance and, until the 4th c. BC, favoured small, scattered communities formed of two or three house clusters. The slow growth of the oracle of Zeus Naios, which initially consisted solely of the sacred oak tree and did not see a temple structure until the 5th c. BC, also could have reinforced the idea of sacred spaces delimited by natural landmarks.[380] The sanctuary of Dodona itself did not acquire a formal building dedicated to a hero until the 3rd c. BC, when Pyrrhus erected a temple in honour of his mythical ancestor, Heracles.[381]

The tree-related queries brought forth to the oracle concerning cutting down or pruning a tree reveal an understanding of the special status awarded to the vegetation growing on sacred land, such as a *heroon*.[382] The removal of trees from certain spaces was a dubious procedure, requiring divine approval in order to avoid sacrilege.[383] The worry of those consulting at Dodona focused more on the religious aspect of their actions rather than any legal consequences; the "payment" for damage done to the vegetation is of sacrificial nature. DVC 80, 1108, and 2432 demonstrate that the wood in question remained sacred and presumably could not be used for secular or impure purposes, but instead became an offering as compensation for removing it. The deity or hero, to whom the tree belonged, may have had to be further placated with a separate sacrifice. The oracular texts express the visitors' anxiety surrounding the possibility of breaking religious norms and uncertainty in their interactions with the sphere of the divine. They also demonstrate the supplicants' initiative in establishing the proper course of action and regulating their relationship with the gods and heroes. The need for a consultation about the trees also suggests that, beyond a broad social acknowledgement of the protection awarded to the flora growing on a god's or hero's territory, there may not have been any firmly established regulations

[379] It should be noted that the invocation in DVC 3838 suggests that the text was written in a Doric dialect, demarking the supplicant as presumably a resident of Northwestern Greece and thus giving the inquiry a local aspect.
[380] Dakaris 1971: 39-40; Quantin 2008: 24; Piccinini 2017: 36-38; Pliakou 2018: 136-138.
[381] Hammond 1967: 583; Dakaris 1971: 53-54. An imitation of Heracles' club (4th c. BC) was uncovered at Dodona, further attesting the existence of the hero's cult. A similar item was found at Apollonia (Pantermalis *et al.* 2016: 62).
[382] Two short inscriptions, DVC 3795 (αἰ τάμνο / *should I cut down?*) and 4177 (ταμόν / *cutting down*), are also believed to refer to the removal of sacred trees (Dakaris *et al.* 2013a: 36). DVC 4177 has been linked to DVC 4181 (σῦκα), located on the verso of the tablet, which mentions a fig-tree.
[383] Parker 2016: 85.

concerning every sacred grove, especially in the case of smaller, local *heroa*.[384] As a result, the oracle took on a guiding role in both establishing cultic norms when, presumably, no other source of authority was available, and in helping the supplicants manage their interactions with divinities.

2.4. Conclusion

The sanctuary of Dodona offered its visitors a space to express and hopefully resolve their worries about religious matters, particularly those that were not regulated by the *polis*. Individual supplicants were free to ask about their own relationship with the divine, gods and heroes they should propitiate or rites that they would perform individually. The oracular tablets illustrate what types of issues individuals faced when approaching the gods independently and for personal reasons. The location of these manifestation of personal religiosity is, of course, not accidental. As Kindt notes, oracular shrines operated beyond the model of polis religion – they were not explicitly connected to religious practices that functioned within the framework of *polis* institutions.[385] Instead, they offered customised advice to individuals approaching these shrines, motivated in most cases by their personal piety. In fact, oracles were considered an authority due to their unique and direct connection to the divine and therefore could provide guidance in matters independently from other religious norms. At the same time, oracles were not subversive; they functioned within the religious mindset of their time. The consultations they received from supplicants did not concern, for example, theological issues directly questioning the deities' existence and nature, but revolved around standard problems of identifying the correct deity, sacrifice and other ritual practice.

Although the information contained in the oracular queries from Dodona is, by its nature, incomplete and incidental, the tablets provide several insights into the religious mentality and practices of the supplicants. A closer examination of the tablets revealed that the supplicants' sometimes chose to address other deities alongside Zeus Naios and Dione during their oracular

[384] Directives concerning the treatment of trees during the lease or management of the land of a *heroon* were not uncommon (*LSCG* 47; *IG* I³ 84; see Dillon 1997b: 116-117). However, literary evidence suggests that some of the rules surrounding sacred vegetation, such as in the case of the groves of Hyrnetho and Argos, were not necessarily legally binding, but rather customs adhered to by the local population. Not all heroes enjoyed codified cultic practices or formal worship (Ekroth 2007: 101).
[385] Kindt 2012: 17-18.

consultations. While not a frequent practice, it suggests that certain supplicants chose to bolster their requests by invoking gods beyond the presiding duo, possibly due to their association with mantic practices (as in the case of Themis) or the problem that needed solving. The decision to call upon other deities may have also reflected the supplicant's personal relationship with the god or goddess and reveals a very intimate approach to divination.

The inscriptions demonstrate a sense of agency on the part of those consulting the oracle. Even though standardized terminology was often utilized in the tablets, some of the supplicants chose to phrase their inquiries differently, asking about sacrificial rites rather than about answers to their future. The oracle was a means of relieving their anxiety about their relationship with the deities, acting as a mediator between the two parties, helping establish who they should propitiate and in what manner. It facilitated both the identification of the gods best suited to help the supplicant and the act of *charis* between both parties. At the same time, the queries expose the discrepancy between the ancient Greeks' belief in the omnipresence of the gods and their awareness of how little they actually knew about them. The supplicants could use this communication channel to engage in negotiation with both Zeus and Dione, as well as other gods, in an attempt to further their cause. While the deities were still revered, the clients of the Epirote sanctuary seemed to be empowered (or emboldened) in their belief that sacrifice and prayer were bilateral transactions, where the god had to honour their end of the bargain. Perhaps this attitude was the result of the context in which they found themselves. After all, oracular sanctuaries worked on a similar principle – one paid the deities for their mantic services. Texts such as LOD 23 and DVC 95 demonstrate that the queries could take on other forms, such as prayers; supplicants were able to adapt and personalize the divination procedures to better suit their needs and to more efficiently communicate their requests to the divine. Both these acts of consulting the oracle, as well as the sacrificial rites discussed in the inquiries, were an attempt to enter into a dialogue with the gods, to intercede on one's behalf with them.

The oracle of Dodona also functioned as an advisor in matters of ritual and cult practice. First, it played the more traditional role, shared by other oracles, of helping choose religious staff members, possibly for the Dodonean sanctuary itself. Second, supplicants sought its help in solving practical issues concerning the sphere of religion in a wider sense. The oracle served as a guide to those who were considering using the services of other divination "specialists". The gods

of Dodona did not seem to be perceived as jealously guarding access to their area of expertise. Perhaps the supplicants needed the particular skillset offered by the diviner, which could not be provided by the oracle. "Specialists" and religious officials also turned to Dodona for advice, particularly in what seems like situations that were not regulated otherwise. This role in clarifying uncertainty in ritual norms and practices is especially well illustrated in the case study of the trees in hero shrines. These local sacred spaces most likely lacked a structured and established set of laws governing the neighbouring population's interactions with them. When there were no official rules in place, the individuals who wished to avoid incurring the wrath of the patron deity diverted their concerns to the Dodonean gods, who would inform the supplicant of the appropriate action. The oracle of Dodona is seen as "granting authority", which Bowden describes as one of the main functions of ancient Greek oracles.[386] It offered answers to problems with ritual practices and legitimized the solutions through the authority of Zeus Naios and Dione. However, the tablets reveal that private supplicants not only seemed to want the oracle's input because it provided divine "insurance" supporting their actions, but they also believed the oracle would guide them in making decisions that were pleasing to the gods.

[386] Bowden 2013: 45-46.

Chapter 3. The individual, the family, and the *oikos*

3.1. Introduction

Visitors of the sanctuary of Zeus Naios and Dione presented the gods with questions on a plethora of subjects. The one, however, that prominently emerges from the tablets is the topic of family. Queries about marriage, spouses, children, parents, siblings, relatives, and slaves account for about 10% of the total of published oracular tablets.[387] There are between 400 and 500 lead tablets that mention relatives or care for one's family. While this number might seem low at first glance, it must be remarked, that many of the texts from the DVC corpus, though counted towards the impressive total of 4216 published tablets, are too fragmentary to reconstruct and properly understand. As a result, inscriptions concerning the oikos and its members appear to have been among the most frequent types of queries. Their frequency results from the central role a family household, or the *oikos*, played in ancient Greek culture.[388] According to Aristotle, the *oikos* formed the smallest social unit on which the rest of the community was built. The core of each family was comprised of the union between a man and a woman for the purposes of procreation.[389] Legitimate children, especially sons, were the desired outcome. Kinship through blood or marriage were not the only types of relations binding an *oikos* – servants, or slaves, were a significant component of an ancient Greek family.[390] The term *oikos* can also refer to the property owned by a particular household.[391] However, the following chapter will focus on the members of the *oikos*, their wellbeing, and internal relations within existing families or prospective ones, while the

[387] See Parker's commentary on the legibility of Dodonean oracular inscriptions (2016: 72). According to Bonnechere (2017: 74), 17% of the queries are about marriage and children, 3% concern slaves and 9% involve health and illnesses. The numbers he presents are based on calculations made by Nancy Duval in her PhD thesis *La divination par les sorts dans le monde oriental méditerranéen du IIe au VIe siècle après J.-C.: Étude comparative des sortes Homericae, sortes Astrampsychi et tables d'astragalomancie en Asie mineure* (Université de Montréal, 2016). Only 1323 texts were deemed complete enough to qualify for this study.
[388] Lacey 1972: 15.
[389] Aristot. *Pol.* 1.1252a-1252b.
[390] Lacey 1972: 31; Pomeroy 1997: 21.
[391] LSJ s.v. οἶκος (cf. And. 4.15; Lys. 12.93; Is. 5.15; Dem. 27.4). Modern scholarship is divided on the proper definition of "*oikos*". MacDowell (1989: 11-12, 15) has argued that the original meaning, particularly in the context of Athenian law, equated *oikos* with the patrimonial property or estate, while the reference to "family" is a later, colloquial addition. He defines it as a line of descent, passed on from father to son. In her book *The Family in Greek History*, Patterson disputes this, arguing that the *oikos* was always seen as a combination of people and property. She interprets it as relying more on the relationships within the household and rather than simply focusing on the "line of descent" (Patterson 1998: 1-3, 231).

material aspects of the household will be discussed in chapter 4, which addresses broader socio-economic themes in the tablets.

The relations between members of the *oikos* have been primarily studied through the prism of the Athenian perspective in the Classical and Hellenistic periods due to the extensive source material available in the form of speeches, plays, philosophical treatise, and other literary texts, which have allowed a more in-depth look into the formation and functioning of a family. In fact, the Athenian model seems often to be the one presented by scholars as the archetypal one in the ancient Greek world. A few other family structures have been researched, such as the ones from Sparta, Gortyn or Ptolemaic Egypt.[392] However, it is the availability of sources that has primarily determined which *poleis* or regions have been more thoroughly investigated and which aspects of the *oikos*, as well as an individual's interactions with it, have been examined. Any discussion of family organization in Northwestern Greece, particularly Epirus, has been based mostly on the work of Cabanes, who studied the Hellenistic manumission inscriptions from Bouthrotos.[393] In light of this, the Dodonean oracular inscriptions provide a new perspective on the subject of the *oikos*. The personal queries, written predominantly by supplicants from Northwestern Greece,[394] shed new light on the lives of the inhabitants of Ancient Greece, particularly Epirus and neighbouring regions.

The following chapter will focus on how the individual and his or her relationship with the smallest unit of society – family – is presented in the tablets from Dodona, as well as the manner through which the oracle was used to shape, protect, and build this unit. First, the topic of marriage and children will be addressed. Oracular inquiries about choosing the proper spouse or about producing descendants are not unique to Dodona; in his description of consultations at Delphi, Plutarch mentions that these subjects were commonplace.[395] However, through their large number and the diverse contexts they present, the Dodonean tablets allow for a study of the reasoning

[392] For a general discussion of the family in Archaic and Classical Ancient Greek society, particularly Athens, see Lacey 1972. The transitional time frame from the Classical to the Hellenistic period, primarily concerning families in Athens and Ptolemaic Egypt, is covered in Pomeroy 1997. For a history of the studies on ancient Greek family and a comparison of the role of households in Athens, Sparta, and Gortyn in the context of the development of the *polis*, see Patterson 1998. For an analysis of family dynamics and matrimonial strategies in building a household's power and fortune seen through the prism of Athenian sources, see Cox 1998.
[393] Cabanes 1974 and 1976; cf. Sakellariou 1997.
[394] For a discussion of the geographic scope of the oracle see Chapters 4 and 5.
[395] Plut. *De Pyth. or.* 28, 408c.

behind the worries surrounding these family-building problems. Furthermore, they provide not only the traditionally dominating male perspective on matrimony and conceiving children, but also the much more elusive female one. Secondly, this chapter will explore queries made by and about the less prominent members of an *oikos*, the slaves, with the aim of highlighting the multifaceted relations between masters and servants, as well as how the oracle was utilized by the supplicants to help strengthen or sever these social and family ties. Finally, the subject of health-related issues faced by the visitors at the sanctuary of Dodona and their relatives will be discussed. Their focus on the illnesses experienced by the supplicants or their loved ones and the healing strategies they expected the Dodonean oracle to recommend are an important component of the survival of the individual and the preservation of the household.

3.2. Marriage and children

3.2.1. Searching for a wife: Marriage, remarriage, and divorce

Even before the publication of the DVC corpus, personal queries about marriage, children, and relatives were well-known.[396] The interest in one's future family is not surprising, as marriage was a fundamental building block at the basis of social order.[397] It provided stability and continuity of lineages, especially if descendants were born of the union. Furthermore, marriage played an economic role in the preservation of patrimony by producing an heir to whom the property would be bequeathed or in enlarging the family's wealth through the dowry brought by the wife.[398] The decisions concerning matrimony and the choice of partner tended to be made by men. In Athens, a marriage was a business contract between a man and his prospective father-in-law, with the future bride having no say in the matter.[399] Ancient sources provide little information about the

[396] Lhôte classified 28 Dodonean inscriptions under the category of "problèmes familiaux" (Lhôte 2006: 83-135), while Eidinow's catalogue added another 37 family-themed oracular queries (Eidinow 2007: 82-93).
[397] Foxhall 2013: 29-30.
[398] The importance of marriage and the resulting progeny in the financial context of the preservation of family wealth is particularly well documented in Athens, see discussion in Patterson 1991: 97-101, 108-110; Cox 1998: 3-37, 68-77; Cox 2011: 236-237. Even in the case of Sparta, where scholarship – following evidence found in the texts of later authors such as Plutarch (*Lyk.* 8.3-6, 16.1; *Agis*. 5.2-3) – has previously argued that private property and, therefore, inheritance did not play as significant a role as in other *poleis*, more recent work by Hodkinson (1986: 378-406; 1989: 79-121) has demonstrated that the marriage strategies of the Spartiates were centered on the maintenance of patrimony within family lineages and the securing of heirs who would inherit the land.
[399] Patterson 1991: 51.

matrimonial procedures in other *poleis*, but the privileged position of men throughout the ancient Greek world implies that they were the active parties in arranging marriages. The rare exceptions to this rule, such as the right of the heiress to choose her spouse mentioned by the Gortyn law code,[400] only seems to confirm it.

This deep awareness of the importance of marriage is exhibited by the consultants of the Epirote oracle. While female supplicants occasionally inquired about their marital prospects, the bulk of the tablets belongs to male visitors, as they would have been the ones who ultimately made the decision about marriage. Over 100 tablets contain variations of the περὶ γυναικός (concerning a wife) question, in which the consultant asks whether he should marry a woman.[401] Queries containing γαμέω and γάμος can also be found among the oracular consultations.[402]

Though matrimony appears to have been something of a cultural expectation in the ancient world, the Dodonean tablets betray the complexity of the decision to take a wife. The commitment to enter into a marriage was not one made lightly, as seen in DVC 1352 where the supplicant is wondering whether he should even consider finding himself a spouse.[403] Nuptials involved the investment of economic and social capital; they forged alliances between different families, allowing, amongst other things, for an exchange of political and social influence, as well as ensured financial benefits to the new *oikos* in the form of dowries.[404] Echoes of these motivations can be, on rare occasion, found in the tablets, as some of the male supplicants asked directly about their potential wife's dowry or about the possibility of having children as a result of the union. About 18 oracular questions are broadly about wives and children; the supplicants seemed to want to know whether they would have children if they married.[405] The focus on procreation is particularly visible in DVC 2387:

γυνα[ῖ]κ' ἄγωμα[ι] καὶ γενε[ὰ ἐσσῆταί μοι]

should I take a wife and ([will there be] children [for me]

[400] Patterson 1991: 94.
[401] Eidinow 2007: 82. These questions are often accompanied by the verbs: ἄγω, ἔχω, λάζομαι, and λαμβάνω.
[402] DVC 395, 701, 1600, 3113, 3751, 4049, 4055, 4135, 4178.
[403] πὲρ γυναικὸς αἰ ἔχε ἒ μὲ; / *concerning a wife, should he take one or not?*
[404] Leese 2017: 33-36.
[405] DVC 24+25, 124, 252, 282, 312, 387, 1036, 2050, 2493, 3034, 3207, 3481, 3530, 3554, 3555, 3602, 3997, 4161.

The tablet DVC 4161 is another example, where matrimony is explicitly connected to conceiving children:

θεὸς τύχαν ἀγαθάν· Δόσι πὲρ γενεᾶς γυναῖκα ἀγομένō[ι] γίνεται ἔρσεν [γ]ένος πάρμο[νον][..]E[...]EN[.....]E[...] καὶ ἀ[γο]μέν[ōι---]

God. Good Fortune. To Dosis, concerning progeny. By taking a wife, will there be a male descendant that stays… and taking…[406]

In the latter example, a certain Dosis appears to be predominantly interested in marrying for the purpose of obtaining a living male heir, possibly after having lost children capable of inheriting from any previous relationships. Queries about the wealth brought into the *oikos* by the woman are more difficult to identify. In DVC 2326 (as well as possibly 184 and 722), the term τίμησις (assessment) is utilized in relation to a wife:

περὶ γυναικὸς πότερον τίμασις εἴη ἐχ ΘΑΣΙΩΙΟ[---]

Concerning the wife. Whether the assessment from [---]

The editors of the corpus, along with Eidinow, have argued that τίμησις here refers to the estimation of the value of the wife's dowry.[407] While Eidinow suggests that this question would have been asked after a divorce, nothing in the inscription itself indicates this. Instead, the supplicant may have simply made the inquiry about what to do with his wife's dowry, perhaps whether to invest it or whether it would generate profit. Although financial gain was one of the reasons for marriage, it appears infrequently in the tablets as a primary cause for nuptial, while the desire for children seems to be a lot more prevalent as a motivation or, at the very least, is more clearly pronounced in the texts.

Men who were considering marriage wanted to know whether their decision would be advantageous – choosing the right moment in their life for matrimony, as well as the right wife to marry was pivotal to their success. These concerns can be seen in LOD 25:

θεός. Γῆρι<ς> τὸν Δία ἐπερωτῆι περὶ γυναικὸς ἦ βέλτιον λαβόντι.

[406] Cf. Parker 2016: 78.
[407] Eidinow 2007: 83; Dakaris *et al.* 2013a: 71, 2013b: 25. On the expression τίμησις ἐν προικί in relation to the composition of a dowry, see Beauchet 1976a: 227.

God. Geris asks Zeus whether it would be better to take a wife.

The supplicant displayed an interest in figuring out whether pursuing marriage would be beneficial to him. In other instances, such as DVC 210, establishing the correct timing for the nuptials seemed to be at the core of the supplicants' questions:

Ἡγησίμαχος ἐρωτᾶι τὸν θεὸν εἰ ἤδη γαμίσκοντί μοι λώϊον καὶ ἄμεινον ἔσται;

Hegesimachos asks the god: will it be better and more profitable for me to marry now?

Similarly, the supplicant from DVC 2223 seemed unsure about marriage:

θεὸς τύχα· Δ[.....] ἐρωτῆι ᾖ γυναῖκα ἄγωμαι ἤδη;

God. Fortune. D[…] asks: should I take a wife now?

The reasoning behind these questions can only be hypothesized about. Perhaps the uncertainty expressed by the supplicants making the inquiry can be linked to their status. After all, the example of Athens demonstrates that men were expected to marry at an older age – approximately 30 years of age – when they would have presumably attained a certain social and economic position, especially once their father had passed away or ceded control of the family property.[408] Similarly, the Gortyn code established that men could wed only once they reached puberty; by comparison, women were considered fit to marry at 12 years old.[409] The supplicants from DVC 210 and 2223 may have wanted to know whether their social standing and financial status at the time of their visit in Dodona was sufficient to successfully obtain a wife that would be advantageous for them.

The connection between the economic sphere and matrimony is more clearly drawn in DVC 2367:

θεὸς τύχα ἀγαθά· Ἐπίλυτος ἐπερωτῆι τὸν Δία τὸν Νάϊον καὶ τὰν Διώναν τί κα εὐτυχιοῖ καὶ τίνι θεῶν θύσας καὶ πότερα τὰν τέχναν hὰν ἐπαιδεύθην ἐργάζωμαι ἢ ποτ' ἄλλο τι hορμάσω καὶ ᾖ λαμψῶμαι αἴ κ' ἐπιχηρῆι καὶ πότερα τὰν Φαινομέναν γυναῖκα λάβω ἢ ἄλλαν καὶ πότερα καὶ δὴ λάβω ἢ ποτιμένω;

[408] Hes. *WD* 695-701; Plat. *Laws* 4.721, 6.785; Cox 1998: 70.
[409] *IC* IV 72. 12.17-19, cf. Cantarella 2011: 324; Gallant 1991: 18-19. Gallant calculates that the average marital age of a man in Ancient Greece would have been between 25 and 30 years of age, while the bride would have most likely been between 16 and 19 years old.

God. Good fortune. Epilytos asks Zeus Naios and Dione will he be successful and by sacrificing to which god and whether I should practice the trade which I was taught or should I take up another and whether I will get it if he attempts it and whether I should take Phainomena as wife or another woman and whether I should take a wife now or wait?[410]

Epilytos, whose query has been dated to the second half of the 4th c. BC, visited the sanctuary of Dodona in a critical moment of his life. He was simultaneously considering changing career paths and marrying a woman named Phainomena, both endeavours entailing enough risk to warrant travelling possibly from as far as Neapolis in Magna Graecia to obtain divine guidance in the matter.[411] Abandoning the trade he was trained in would place Epilytos in a precarious financial situation, which could possibly be alleviated by a wife with a suitable dowry and skilled at household management. However, it ultimately appears that the supplicant was not certain he should even be entertaining the idea of marriage considering the impending unpredictably of his economic circumstances.

About 50 tablets include a version of the ἦ ἄλλαν (another woman) formula, which has also been linked to marriage inquiries.[412] The meaning of these texts is ambiguous. In certain cases, as in DVC 2448 (Κλεπὸι ἐ ἄλλα[ν]; / *Klepoi or another?*)[413] or the aforementioned DVC 2367, the consultant is asking the gods to help him choose between two options: marrying a specific woman he has in mind or waiting for another candidate. A second possible interpretation of these tablets is that they allude to instances of remarriage, perhaps after the death of the spouse, or divorce.[414] In DVC 314, the supplicant inquired:

ἢ τᾶ[ι] γυναικὶ τᾶι νυν ἒχει ἢ ἄλλα(ι);

Should he keep his present wife or (take) another?

[410] Modified translation by Parker (2016: 77).
[411] Perhaps the long travel to the oracle was the reason why Epilytos decided to ask several questions – he was attempting to make the best possible use of his consultation. Concerning the supplicant's origin, see LGPN s.v. Ἐπίλυτος; Dakaris *et al.* 2013b: 35. The name "Epilytos" is only attested in Neapolis, once in the 4th c. BC (Xen. *Ec.* 11.4, cf. Leiwo 1995: 63) and 18 times in the 1 c. BC-1 c. AD (*INap* 81, 102, 114-116, 152, 172).
[412] Verbs such as ἄγω and μαστεύω can be found in these queries. See Lhôte 2006: 90.
[413] Κλεπόι is an abbreviated version of Κλε(ο)πάτρα (Curbera 2013: 423).
[414] Bresson 2016: 43. Bresson, following Thompson's study of Athenian marriage patterns (Thompson 1972), argues that both divorce and remarriage after the death of a spouse was a common occurrence for both genders in the ancient Greek world.

A similar sentiment can be found in DVC 1406:

ἦ τύχοιμί κα ἄγων ἄλλαν;

Would I succeed if I took another (woman)?

While cases of divorce in the Epirote or, more broadly, Northwestern Greek regions are not well-documented, Athenian law and orations provide insight into the process.[415] It was primarily the husbands who initiated the separation, and the procedure was not particularly complicated – the man could simply dismiss his wife.[416] The reasons for such a decision varied; the lack of children seems to have been one of the reasons for a separation. Kallikrates, the author of LOD 48, wanted to know whether he would have progeny with his wife Nike if he remained with her (ἦ ἔσται μοι γενεὰ ἀπὸ τᾶς Νίκης τῆς γυναικὸς ἧς ἔχει συμμένοντι). In two other queries, LOD 45 and 46A, the male suppliants ask about heirs from their current wives (ἐκ τᾶς/τῆς νῦν γυναικός), indicating either that the spouses they were referring to in the inscription were not their first ones or that the continuance of their marriages was contingent on successful procreation. LOD 45 is of particular interest, as it appears to have been written by an Epirote or Illyrian local – the name of the wife, Gontha (Γόνθα), can be linked to the Illyrian male name Γένθιος, demonstrating that ancient Greeks outside of Athens similarly faced the complexities of marriage and remarriage.[417] A woman's perceived infertility could be grounds for dissolving the union.

Considering that there is approximately one ἦ ἄλλαν query per two marriage inquiries, the Dodonean tablets reveal that divorce and remarriage were a phenomenon that occurred relatively frequently outside of well-documented centers such as Athens and that the perceived infertility of the wife appeared to be a motivating factor. From a legal standpoint, the divorce did not appear to penalize the husband. According to Athenian regulations, the man was able to keep the dowry even after leaving his wife, in which case it became a loan to be paid at a regulated percentage. Even the Gortyn Law Code permitted the husband to retain half of the profits gained from the dowry during the period of the marriage.[418] Nonetheless, it must not be forgotten that the dotal property or money was the most significant injection of funds an *oikos* would experience. Divorcing the

[415] Thompson 1972: 211-221; Cohn-Haft 1995: 3.
[416] Cox 2011: 232.
[417] Genthios was an Illyrian king during the 2nd c. BC (Plb. 28.8), cf. Lhôte 2006: 112.
[418] Leese 2017: 34.

wife would ultimately entail the loss of a certain amount of capital, which was a factor to be assessed when contemplating the end of a marital union.[419] The decision to seek out another partner was not one made lightly. In fact, the inscriptions identified as mantic answers suggest that the oracle of Zeus was weary of promoting such drastic life changes. In LOD 32, the supplicant is told "to love the one (he has)",[420] which Lhôte convincingly identifies as a response to the ἦ ἄλλαν question.[421] Another consultant asked about a woman (ἀ γυνά;) in LOD 35, most probably in the context of divorce, to which the oracle demanded that he stay with her (μένε).[422] The oracle's rulings appear to be consistently conservative, perhaps out of worry that a change to the status quo – the marital state of a couple in this case – could cause social upheaval.[423]

Some of the supplicants visited Dodona to ask about marriage to a particular woman. In certain instances, such as DVC 165, the potential wife is named:

λαβεῖγ γυνα[ῖ]κα Ἀρχεστράτην;

To take as a wife Archestrate?

In others – for example DVC 1127 – the future bride remains anonymous:

Θεὸς τύχαν ἀγαθάν· ἦ τύχοιμί κ' ἀγόμενος γυναῖκα τὰν Φ[ι]λωνίδα θυγατέρα τὰν ἀδελφεὰν Πανφίλα;

God good fortune. Would it be better for me to take as wife the daughter of Philonidas and sister of Pamphilas?

The name of the future wife is omitted in DVC 2474 as well:

Λυσανία αὔτα μοι συμφ(έρ)ει καὶ ἔστι αἰτέοντι;

[419] Cox 1998: 75.
[420] τὰν ἔσσαν {σ} στέργιν
[421] ἔσσα (Dor.) = οὖσα (Att.). See Lhôte 2006: 92-93.
[422] Lhôte 2006: 95-97; Eidinow (2007: 101) offers a different interpretation of the tablet, in which the entity of the text forms one answer and can be translated to "the woman stays". However, the facsimile demonstrates that μένε was very deliberately written separate from the first part of the text by moving it to the second line, the two lines of text appear separate. In this case, μένε must be read as an imperative.
[423] Carbon 2015: 83. Carbon notes that a similarly "traditional" and reserved approach to answers can be seen in the responses about sacrifices offered at Dodona, in line with what was expected from such a sanctuary. Innovation was not the *modus operandi* of the oracle when it came to prescribing offerings; it is not unreasonable to assume that a comparable attitude was adopted when approaching social issues.

Is the daughter of Lysanias good for me and will I get her if I ask?

The women often appear to have been primarily defined by their relationship to the men in their family. The patterns emerging from the tablets reflect the reality of ancient Greek marriages, which were predominantly understood as an arrangement between a male relative of the bride and the future husband, with the dowry serving to seal the contract.[424]

Though modern scholarship has argued that girls were perceived as a burden on families precisely due to the need to provide them with dowries when they came of age, some of the tablets demonstrate that fathers were also interested in their daughters' marital prospects, as demonstrated in LOD 39, dated to the 3rd c. BC:

ἐρωτῇ Κλεμήδης τὸν Δία καὶ τὰν Διώναν ἦ ’πιτύχοι κα [δοὺς] θυγατέρα Ὀλυνπιάδα[ι] τῷ Νικάρχου ἦ δέδασται τούτ[ῳ] [425]

Klemedes asks Zeus and Dione. Will he succeed after giving his daughter to Olympiadas son of Nikarchos in how he divided with him?

LOD 53C was another query made by a concerned father:

δεῖξον, ὸ Ζεῦ, εἴ μοι εἴη λ[ο]ι[ο]ν [κ]αὶ ἄμε[ι]νο̣[ν δ]ο̣ῦ̣ν[αι] φυγα̣τέρας Θεοδ[ό]{N}[ρ]οι καὶ Τεισίαι.[426]

Reveal, oh Zeus, if it is good for me to give my daughters to Theodoros and Teisias?

[424] Leese 2017: 34.

[425] Lhôte (2006: 103-105) rightly adds "δοὺς" to the inscription, suggesting that the supplicant is discussing giving his daughter in marriage to Olympiadas, based on analogous texts, such as LOD 38 and 53C. Following this, he links δέδασται to δαίνυμι (to give a banquet), in particular found in the phrase δαίνυμι γάμον or "to celebrate a marriage" (Hom. *Il*. 19.299; Eur. *Iph. A.* 707 and 12; Diod. 5.49; Philostratus, *On Heroes*, 19.16). He, therefore, interprets ἦ δέδασται τούτ[ῳ] as meaning "in how the marriage was celebrated by him", referring to the festivities accompanying the nuptials. He theorizes that Klemedes is worried that the appropriate rites were not observed by the groom, which could lead to ritual impurity (cf. LOD 14). However, the exact meaning of the verb δατέομαι is "to divide", used often in the context of possessions (LSJ s.v. δατέομαι). The inscription, therefore, can be interpreted as possibly referring to the division of Klemedes' property through the marriage or the dowry given to his daughter. Klemedes may be wondering whether the investment in the form of this marital arrangement (and possibly the financial loss he incurred through the dowry) will ultimately be beneficial to him in other ways – political, social, etc.

[426] Lhôte proposes to read θυγατέρας.

The questions tend focus on the father.[427] It was to his benefit that the daughters were to be married, though the specifics of what the bride's family would gain as a result of this transaction are never mentioned. In Athenian matrimonial arrangements, particularly those among the elite, the agreement was bilateral; social and economic capital was exchanged between the father and the son-in-law. Marriage was an investment that helped build strong relationships between different households, allowing them to access each other's power, networks, and finance, as well as providing a safety-net for both parties.[428] Besides expressing doubts about the socio-economic gains of a marriage, the oracular consultations may also have reflected genuine concern about the daughter's prospects. As the head of the family, the father was in charge of securing his children's welfare; the oracle was a tool he could use to make sure that his decisions would, in fact, guarantee his daughter a stable future.[429]

If the father was not present, brothers could shoulder the responsibility of taking care of their sisters, as evidenced in DVC 1051:

[Θεὸς τύ]χα ἀγαθ(ά). Ἀριστοκ[λέ]ας ἀδελφεᾶς μεριμνήσας τυνχάνοι(τ)ο;[430]

God good fortune. Will Aristokleas succeed having taken care of his sister?

Ensuring that the women of the household were provided for sometimes fell upon the son. If he became the head of the family, his newly acquired responsibilities included finding his sister a suitable husband and paying her dowry.[431] In fact, evidence from Athens suggests that even prior to finding a wife for themselves, brothers who were charged with their sisters' care had the obligation to arrange an appropriate match for their sisters. Sisters would often be married off

[427] Some queries about giving away the bride do not reveal who was the inquirer, e.g. DVC 1302. εἰ ἐγδῶι; / *Give in marriage?*
[428] Leese 2017: 37-38
[429] The worry about the future of one's children is present in a number of tablets, e.g. LOD 55: ἐξοικήσαντες ἐκ τᾶς οἰκίας βέλτειον πράξοντι τὰ παιδία τὰ Εὐρύνου; / *Whether Eurynos' children will do better by moving from the house?* (see Lhôte 2006: 138). In another query, DVC 347, a woman asked about concord among her (presumably grown-up) children.
[430] DVC restore Ἀριστοκ[λεί]ας, arguing that it is the name of the sister rather than the brother (2013a: 269). However, in none of the other tablets mentioning a sister does the name of the woman appear (2013b: 491). The male name Aristokleas is well-attested in epigraphic evidence, including an inscription from Larissa in Thessaly (*IG* IX, 2.517).
[431] Golden 2015: 110.

first.[432] Aristokleas' inquiry may have been prompted by his sister's wedding and his need to find out whether the matrimonial arrangement would work out.

The oracular tablets also provide additional insight into the mechanic of building social bonds through marriage in Northwestern Greece. Klemedes, the supplicant from LOD 39, seems to be a resident of Epirus or an adjacent region, a fact Lhôte deduces based on his use of the Doric dialect and on the structure of his name, which places Κλε- instead of Κλεο- in front of a consonant – a linguistic phenomenon found in Corinthian colonies, primarily Epidamnos and Ambrakia.[433] Olympiadas was a Doric name (similarly to Klemedes), attested primarily in the Peloponnese. It also makes an appearance in Leukas and Thessaly, both neighbours of Epirus.[434] The name of Olympiadas' father, Nikarchos, though generally common throughout the Mediterranean world, has been found in inscriptions from Corcyra, Ambrakia, Bouthrotos, along with Thessaly and the Peloponnese.[435] Therefore, this may have been a marriage alliance between two Doric-speaking families, with both sides hailing from either Epirus or Corinthian colonies.

Two more inquiries address the issues associated with the husband and wife's origins. The first is LOD 36A:

Θέλυτος πότερά κα κατὰ χόραν ἔχον τὰν γυναῖκα ἔχο ΝΚΟΔΟΙ *h*άπερ νῦν ἒ καὶ ἔϝον;

Thelutos (asks) if by having a wife in the country, I will have (…) exactly what I have now or even happiness?[436]

Dated to the mid-5th c. BC, the question is believed by Lhôte to have been written by a man from the Corinthian colonies on the east coast of Epirus and Illyria. The text is inscribed in the Corinthian alphabet, while the name of the supplicant, Thelutos, follows the phonetic rule of omitting the ο from Θεο- (the more common variant) before a consonant. This practice is found

[432] Cox 1988: 386; Gallant 1991: 19.
[433] Lhôte 2006: 104-105 (Epidamnos: *IDyrrh* 39 and Maier 271 (coin). Ambrakia: AD 39 (1984) Chron. p. 190 & pl. 77 γ).
[434] LGPN s.v. Ὀλυμπιάδας.
[435] LGPN s.v. Νίκαρχος, attested 233 times (Corcyra: *PAE* 1965, p. 76; *IG* IX, 1. 728; *SEG* XII 377. Ambrakia: *AD* 39 (1984) Chron. p. 190 & pl. 77 γ; Cabanes, *L'Épire* p. 548 no. 19; *CIG* 1799; *CIG* 1803; *SEG* XLII 543. Bouthrotos: *IBouthrot* 30, 30; *IBouthrot* 38, 1; *IBouthrot* 121, 2; *IBouthrot* 151, 6. Thessaly: *AE* 1910, p. 367 no. 11; *IG* IX, 2. 536, 11; *IG* IX, 2. 536, 18; *AE* 1924, pp. 156-7 no. 400 A, 13; *IG* IX, 2. 1282, 20; *BMC Thessaly* p. 12; *AE* 1917, p. 21 no. 311, 18. Peloponnese: *IG* V, 1. 103, 13; *IG* V, 1. 676, 13; *SEG* XI 565, 4; *BSA* 61 (1966) p. 272 no. 4 B II, 20; *NC* 1999, p. 96 (coin); *SGDI* 1612, 19; *SGDI* 1612, 53; *IG* IV, 1. 757 B, 20; *IG* V, 2. 1, 13; *IG* V, 2. 43, 4).
[436] Translation based on Lhôte's interpretation of the text (2006: 98-100).

predominantly in epigraphic evidence from the Northwestern Greek Corinthian colonies. Lhôte connects this query to the ones found on the other side of the tablet (LOD 36Bb[437]), in which the supplicant asks about another wife. He suggests that Thelutos was seeking to divorce his foreigner wife in favour of a local woman but was hoping to not lose on this decision.[438] Epirote society was rural and pastoral, with the non-city dwelling population organized in small villages of two or three residences, indicating strong kinship bonds of the communities.[439] Cabanes also argued that at least until the 3rd c. BC, there appears to be a more communal or family-based approach to property, rather than an individualistic one.[440] A strategic endogamic marriage could help build and foster these social relations, especially in such closely-knit communities, which may have been the reason why Thelutos considered remarriage with a fellow countrywoman. DVC 2052 is also of interest in this context:

ὦ πολυτίματον Ζεῦ Νάϊε, ἦ λώϊόν κα πράσσοιμι τὰν Ἐπιδαμνίαν γυναῖκα ἀγόμενος αὐτῶι;

Oh Great Zeus Naios, will it be better and more successful for me to take an Epidamnian wife?

In this query, dated to the early 4th c. BC, the male supplicant wanted to know whether his choice of a bride who was a citizen of Epidamnos would be the more beneficial one. The emphasis in on the origin of the future wife suggests that the supplicant was interested in the social connections and benefits her status in her community would bring to the table; he may have also been from Epidamnos, which would explain why he sought a woman of that particular background. After all, marrying outside of one's *polis* entailed risk, particularly if the spouse's citizenship status could affect the rights of the children.[441]

The oracle of Dodona appears to have played a very particular role in the marriage strategies of the male supplicants who visited the sanctuary. Outside of a few queries on the part of the fathers and, occasionally, brothers, the questions about marriage were most often the initiative of the future grooms. While some seem to have simply inquired about the suitability of the bride they chose, the evidence points to supplicants seeking guidance from the gods in non-normative situations. It should be noted that the grammatical formulas predominantly used in

[437] αἴ κ' ἄλλαν ἔχο; / *Will I have another?*
[438] Lhôte 2006: 99-100.
[439] Pliakou 2018: 138.
[440] Cabanes 1976: 198-200, 423.
[441] See Chapter 4.4.2 for discussion of citizenship and migration in the tablets.

marriage-related queries – the ἦ type formula instead of questions about which deities to sacrifice to – indicate that those asking wanted clear advice on what to do rather than divine support in their undertakings. Several of the men ask about the right timing of the nuptials, probably due to a precarious financial situation. It is, however, issues with remarriage and divorce that seem to have been among the greatest concerns. The wife's fertility is mentioned several times as the condition of a successful marriage and, possibly, a reason for divorcing her. Remarriage for the purpose of producing male heirs is similarly a recurring motif. In fact, the tablets reveal that financial gain in the form of a dowry was less of a priority to the supplicants deciding about matrimony than establishing whether the potential wife would conceive children. In matters of divorce, the oracle's responses were cautious, encouraging the men to remain with their current wives.

3.2.2. Requesting descendants: Children, fertility, and the future of the family

In the ancient Hellenic world, children were at the center of the *oikos*. Marriages were arranged for the purpose of obtaining legitimate heirs and the birth of the first child confirmed that the union had been consummated.[442] Infertility or problems with conceiving were seen as disastrous, sometimes leading to the dissolution of a family. Birthing a baby, though a joyous occasion in the life of the *oikos*, did also not guarantee that the progeny would survive until adulthood. Mortality rates among children were high.[443] As a result, families with one or two children, including a boy who would grow up to inherit the property, were considered the ideal.[444] Family sizes in Epirus were similar. The manumission inscriptions from the theater of Bouthrotos from the 3rd c. BC, which enumerate the family members who manumitted the slave, suggest that the average family size tended to oscillate between one and three children.[445] Archaeological evidence from the cemetery of Dourouti, dated to the 6th-5th c. BC, further confirms that many children died at an early age.[446] The distress surrounding the lack of children was not unfounded –about a quarter of

[442] Dasen 2011: 296; Golden 2015: 137.
[443] Cf. Frier 1983: 329. Frier calculates that, in the Roman Empire, about 25-35% of children died in the first year of their life.
[444] Dasen 2011: 296.
[445] Cabanes 1974: 113. Cabanes (1976: 414-415) believed this number to be exceedingly low, attributing it in part to the omission of certain family members, such as daughters, in the lists. However, manumission inscriptions from Dodona, similarly dated to the 4th-3rd c. BC, also mention no more than five family members among the manumittors (*SGDI* 1315, 1360, 1359+1362). Households in Northwestern Greece were simply not that big.
[446] Katsadima 2017: 133.

the manumissions from Bouthrotos were done by individuals or couples that were *ateknoi*, without descendants.[447] This suggests that on average, one in four households would have been childless. Even though adoption was a practice known in the region, it appears that not everyone resorted to it.[448]

Against this background, it should not be surprising that visitors at the sanctuary of Dodona were particularly interested in whether they would have offspring. Over 200 tablets can be classified as inquiring about descendants. The terms most frequently used are γενεά (progeny), but also παῖδες and τέκνα (children). The context of many inscriptions is unclear. Not even the gender of the person asking the question can be securely ascertained. However, the oracular queries that do contain information about the supplicant can be predominantly ascribed to men.[449] Eidinow notes that ancient Greek beliefs about procreation tended to assign the more important role in the conception of a child to the man, which, along with the patriarchal structure of the society, would have encouraged him to take on an active approach to solving problems with fertility.[450] As in the case of LOD 50, a consultation made by a visitor from Apollonia in Illyria, female partners were not always named in the query:[451]

ἐπ<ι>στορεῖται Δεινοκλῆς Ἀπολλωνιάτας τὸν Δία καὶ τὰν Διώναν περὶ γενεᾶς τ[ί]ν[ι] κα θεῶν θύων καὶ εὐχόμενος φυ{Η}τέβοι καὶ γένοιτό κ’ ἄρα γ[ενεά].

Deinokles from Apollonia asks Zeus and Dione about progeny. To which god he should sacrifice and pray in order to procreate and have progeny?

[447] Cabanes 1974: 194-199; Cabanes 1976: 402-404. Three more cases are attested in Dodona. On *ateknoi*, see Cabanes 1977.
[448] Cabanes 1974: 200; Cabanes 1976: 411-412. Cabanes remarks that perhaps the manumitted slaves could have been freed through adoption into their former master’s family, but due to the lack of other supporting evidence, he concludes that while some remained in the *oikos* after obtaining their freedom, they did not seem to acquire any new rights or privileges.
[449] Piccinini 2015: 141. The two qquestions about progeny that can be securely attributed to women are discussed in the following section.
[450] Eidinow 2007: 88-89.
[451] Examples of questions asked by men without mentioning wives include LOD 43, 49bis, and 52.

Sometimes a woman is mentioned but remains nameless.[452] Questions that seem to refer to the possibility of having children with a named woman, but do not include the man's name, are very rare.[453]

The point at which the man sought out the advice of Zeus and Dione about his progeny varied. As previously discussed, some consultants were interested in finding out whether their future marriage would be crowned with offspring and made the inquiry presumably before agreeing on a wife.[454] A number of tablets, however, suggest that those already married were frequent customers at the oracle of Dodona. There are eight well documented cases of couples in the tablets (Hermon and Kretaia, Pythion and Myrthis, Kleanor and Gontha, Heracleidas and Aigle, Kallikrates and Nike, Anaxippos and Philista, Amynandra and Peisandros), where at least one of the spouses (if not both) is requesting advice from the gods about their possibility of producing children.[455] The questions follow as similar pattern – both spouses ask whether they will have offspring and how to ensure this successfully – as can be seen in DVC 282:

Πυθίον Μυθρὶς πε(ρ)ὶ γενεᾶς γυν[αικ]ὸ(ς ἦ) εὐχομένοι[ς γ]έν[οιτο];

Pythion and Mythris (ask) concerning the children of the wife. Whether by praying they can conceive?

The driving force behind the inquiries varies. Some couples, like Pythion and Mythris, seem to be childless at the time of the oracular consultation. Others visited Dodona in order to request more descendants, as seen in LOD 41:

Ηέρμον τίνα κα θεόν ποτθέμενος γενεά ϝοι γένοιτο ἐκ Κρεταίας ὀνάσιμος πὸτ τᾶι ἐάσσαι.

Hermon asks with what god he should reconcile to get from Kretaia offspring in addition to what he has now.[456]

[452] DVC 124: [περὶ] γενεᾶς τᾶς γ[υναικὸς] / *about the children of the wife?* or DVC 3034: πὲρ π[αί]δων ἐκ τᾶς γυναικ[ὸς] / *about the progeny from the wife*
[453] DVC 2933, 3082.
[454] LOD 49. [θε]ός κα(ὶ) τὰν [Διώναν] γενεᾶι αὐτοῦ [εἰς τὸ]ν ἔπ[ειτα χρόνον]; / *Zeus and Dione, will he have children at a later time?*
[455] DVC 5, 282, 313; LOD 41, 46, 47, 48, 140. Cf. Piccinini 2015.
[456] Transl. Piccinini (2015: 143).

Hermon clearly already had progeny but wished to grow his family further. Perhaps Kretaia was his second wife, with whom he wanted to conceive more children.

The plea for the baby to survive evokes a common concern parents had about the fate of their offspring, as illustrated by DVC 2493:

Ζεῦ καὶ Διώνα· ἦ ἔσσονται παῖδες ἐκ τᾶς γυναικὸς Κεβαλίωι τᾶς νῦν ἔχει κ[α]ὶ ζώσοντι;

Oh Zeus and Dione, will Kebalios have children from his current wife, and will they live?

Ensuring that there was someone who would continue the lineage and provide future support for the family was pivotal. Children that lived until adulthood would take on the role of caretakers for their elderly parents, a hope reflected in the oracular tablets.[457] Curiously enough, there do not seem to be that many explicit requests for male heirs; only two have been identified.[458] In fact, there is even evidence of supplicants hoping for a daughter.[459] It must also be noted that the men making the inquiries often described the women they were with as their current wives (νῦν ἔχει), indicating perhaps that if no children were born to the marriage, the relationship would have to be formally annulled.

The cluster of queries relating to couples reveals that those visiting the oracle of Dodona not only wanted to know whether there would be children in their future, but that they also approached this problem in a proactive way. Five out of the eight couples asked about which gods they should pray and sacrifice to in order to produce offspring. Their aim in making the pilgrimage to the sanctuary of Zeus and Dione was to ensure their success in obtaining progeny. Dodona was not, of course, a healing site in the manner of the Asclepeion in Epidaurus, which boasted instances of cured infertility and was a place frequented by those seeking medical aid.[460] Nonetheless, it could offer its visitors a sense of control and the ability to influence their precarious situation. The couples that sought the oracle's help in this manner were of diverse origin. LOD 41 is written in a Corinthian alphabet, placing its author as a resident of one of the Corinthian colonies on the coast

[457] LOD 52. [ἐρωτ]ᾶι εἰ λ[ῶ]ιον γυναῖκα λαμβάνοντι [κ]αὶ ἄμε<ι>νον καὶ παῖδες ἔσονται [γη]ροτρόφοι Ἰσοδήμωι / *[Isodemos] asks if it is better to take a wife, and will he have children who will take care of Isodemos in his old age* (…) For full text, see Chapter 4. The children's sense of responsibility for their aged parents is evidenced in the Dodonean tablets as well. In LOD 23 and DVC 2674, the supplicants ask about the wellbeing of their mothers.
[458] DVC 313, 4161.
[459] DVC 1426 (written in the Ambrakian alphabet; Dakaris *et al.* 2013a: 353). [θυ]γάτερ ε͂ τύχοι κα [κό]ρας ἐπάγουσα; / *whether (my) daughter will succeed to bring forward a girl?*
[460] Dillon 1997a: 189; see *IG* IV² 1, 122.

of Northwestern Greece, while the husband and wife named in LOD 45 were Illyrian or Epirote.[461] There is also evidence of consultants from Athens (LOD 46) and Boeotia (DVC 313), signaling the wide range of the oracle's influence, as well as its presumed efficiency, which would encourage people to make the long travel in order to consult it.[462]

The concerns brought forth to the oracle by the supplicants were not limited to conceiving children. Two tablets, DVC 585 and 2270, mention εὐτοκία (easy delivery). In the case of the former, a sacrifice to Demeter is prescribed to help ensure a successful childbirth.[463] Considering the dangers associated with birthing a baby, the small number of inscriptions concerning the topic seems somewhat surprising.

Another query, LOD 49A, posed by a certain Lysanias reveals his worry about the paternity of the child carried by Anylla:

ἐρωτῇ Λυσανίας Δία Ναῖον καὶ Δηώνα<ν> ἦ οὐκ ἔστι ἐξ αὐτοῦ {phallus} τὸ παιδάριον ὃ Ἀννύλα κυεῖ.[464]

Lysanias asks Zeus Naos and Dione whether the child Annyla bears is his.[465]

While men could engage in some degree of extramarital sexual activity[466], women were expected to remain unfailingly faithful to their husbands in order to guarantee that the children they bore them were legitimate heirs.[467] A divine ruling about the parentage would quell any concerns, both on the part of the father and on the part of the community, as the oracular response could be used as convincing evidence if further questions were raised.[468]

[461] Lhôte 2006: 107, 111-112.
[462] Lhôte 2006: 116; Méndez Dosuna 2016: 123.
[463] Chaniotis 2016: 287.
[464] In l. 5 of the inscription, there appears to be an ithyphallic symbol (Lhôte 2006: 120; Piccinini 2015: 144), though Karapanos also offers a second interpretation according to which the drawing could be the letters "OI" that have become eroded over time (Karapanos 1878: 75). Drawings on tablets are not common in the corpus; but another attested example also has been thought to relate to producing children – LOD 49bis contains what looks like a drawing of a key, possibly analogous to later Graeco-Egyptian magical intaglios or spells encouraging fertility (Lhôte 2006: 122-123).
[465] Transl. Piccinini (2015: 144).
[466] The extent and nature of these extramarital relations were heavily defined by social context. In Athens, for example, an adulterer who became involved with a married woman was subject to legal penalties, see Cohen 1991: 98-132.
[467] Cox 2011: 233.
[468] Parker 2000: 82.

The wish for the birth of children was a universal desire, exhibited by many of the visitors at Dodona who wanted to find out whether they would produce offspring. The popularity of the term γενεά in these queries implied that the children were seen primarily as a continuation of the family line and it is in this context that they were asked for. The supplicants requesting progeny were predominantly male, though in certain cases, both spouses are mentioned as making the inquiry. They sought the help of the oracle of Zeus Naios and Dione not only to establish if the marriage would produce children, but also attempted to positively influence this outcome by asking about ritual practices that would help secure the birth of a healthy baby.

3.2.3. Feminine perspectives on marriage and children

Despite marriage arrangements falling under the charge of men, a number of tablets from Dodona present the feminine perspective on the question of matrimony. Female supplicants can be seen taking initiative with regards to the opposite sex. Tablets 2120 and 2404,[469] both following the structure of περί with a singular genitive (περὶ ἀνδρός) as seen in men's questions about wives, demonstrate that women also were interested in finding out about their matrimonial possibilities and would use available resources, such as the oracle of Dodona, to establish whether they should pursue their search for a husband. The question could also concern marriage with a specific person, as seen in DVC 2764 from the late 4th c. BC:

ἐπε[ρω]τᾶ[ι] Εὐδίχα [Δία Νάϊον] ἦ ἐσ(σ)εῖ[ται γ]ενεὰ [……..] Δευκ[αλίων]ος ὑὸς [..] ΚΛΕΥ[..]Ν[.] καὶ ἀνήρ καὶ συνοικήσει [..]ΣΤΑΚΑ Εὔπατρος

Eudicha asks Zeus Naios if she will have progeny (…) son of Deukalion (Kleu…) and husband and will live with (him) in wedlock (…) Eupatros [470]

The text poses interpretive problems. It seems at any rate clear that a woman, Eudicha, a variant of the name Εὐδίκα attested in Thessaly and Boeotia,[471] is inquiring about the possibility of marrying and having children. This consultation finds its analogies among the ones made by men,

[469] Dakaris *et al.* 2013a: 492; Dakaris *et al.* 2013b: 43.
[470] Dakaris *et al*. 2013b: 124.The editors state that they are not certain of who is making the inquiry. However, when the inscription is compared to other texts, it becomes clear that Eudicha, whose name is in the nominative case and follows directly the verb ἐπερωτᾶι, must be the consultant. The significance of the name "Eupatros" at the end of the text is undetermined.
[471] *IG* IX, 2, 1249; Darmezin 1999, 76, 109.

where the supplicants ask about marrying a specific woman.[472] However, while men's queries can be explained by their traditionally active role in pursuing a potential wife and arranging the marriage, Eudicha's tablet raises questions about the extent of a woman's choice and influence over designing her future.[473]

Two oracular tablets, both dated to the mid to late 4th c. BC, further demonstrate that women, just as men, looked to the gods when seeking answer to matters of selecting their partner and successfully conceiving children. The first is DVC 2552:

Θεός. αἰτ[εῖ]ται Κλευν(ί)κα [τ]ὸν Δία τὸν Νάϊο[ν] καὶ τὰν Διώναν [τ]έκνα⟨ν⟩ οἱ γενέσθαι ἐξ ἄλλω [ἀ]νδρὸς καὶ τίνα κα θεῶν θεραπευο(ύ)σα(ι) γένοιτο τέκνα

God. Kleunika requests Zeus Naios and Diona for a child to come to her from another man and what god should she worship to get children [474]

Similarly, the female supplicant from DVC 2609 wanted to know if she would have children:

ἀ(γα)θὴ τύχη: ἐπερωτῆι Πλαυρ̣άτα τὸν Δία [καὶ τὰν] Διώνα(ν) ἦ ἐντ(υ)γχάνουσα Πλάτωνι Κάρπω[νος] Ạ̣ΙΔΑΓΟΝΝΟΙΣ[.]ΙΟΓΟΙΣ ἐσεῖταί μοι ἀγαθὸν καὶ ὠφέλ̣ε̣ια

Good fortune. Plaurata inquires Zeus and Dione if having sexual relations with Platon, son of Karpos, with the help of deities who give children will be good and helpful for me? [475]

[472] DVC 165, 790, 999, 1127, 2052, 2229, 2367, 2474, 2508, 2631; LOD 22.

[473] Literary evidence, particularly about Athenian society, does provide instances of women having a say in their marital arrangements. Demosthenes claimed that his mother decided against remarriage after his father's death of her own volition (Dem. 29.26). Plutarch mentioned that Elpinice, Cimon's sister, was the one to consent to her marriage (Plut. *Cim*. 4.7). Another example of a female consultant asking about the progeny of a man, Phidus, is DVC 1268. The text does not specify if she is his wife or another woman from his household (Dakaris *et al.* 2013a: 316).

[474] Translation by Parker (2016: 79).

[475] The editors understand ἐντυγχάνω as "having sexual intercourse". This use of the word seems to be corroborated by DVC 2229A and 2231B (both written on the same tablet and most likely part of the same query), in which a man is wondering with which woman he should sleep with. The text of the third line in Plaurata's question also remains uncertain, due to a break in the tablet. DVC propose reconstructing the words as [σύν π]αι̣δογόννοις [ἀ]ρ̣ογοῖς, to be understood as "with the help of deities who give children". The word παιδογόνος functions as an epithet to describe gods, Zeus and Cypris/Aphrodite (Eur. *Supp*. 629; AP 5.53 Diosc.), and is interpreted as such in the case of the tablet as well, which would mean that Plaurata was seeking some sort of divine aid in conceiving a child (Dakaris *et al*. 2013b: 92). This seems an especially attractive reading of the tablet in light of Kleunika's similarly themed inquiry about sacrificing to the gods in order to successfully become pregnant.

The name Κλευνίκα appears eight times in Greek inscriptions between the 4th and 1st c. BC from central Greece.[476] A variation of the name, Κλευνίκη, has been attested in a dedication to Aphrodite from the 4-3 c. BC.[477] The inscription was found in Pharos, a colony established by settlers from the island of Paros in the late 4th century, which is mentioned in the oracular tablets several times as a place to which suppliants considered migrating.[478] Πλαυρατα, considered to be an alternative spelling of Πλευρατα, is an Illyrian name,[479] which would place the female suppliant's origins north of Dodona. The two women appear to have a lot in common: they are both wondering if becoming sexually involved with a certain man will result in children and they both seek some sort of divine involvement in the process of successfully conceiving offspring.

The explicit language of Kleunika and Plaurata's inquiries contrasts with the social norms women were expected to abide by. In both cases, the implication of sexual relations is undeniably present. Women, who in the Hellenic world were expected to be demure and sexually passive,[480] are seen here as taking initiative not only in shaping their sexual experiences, but, more broadly, in determining their future by producing children. However, the use of ἐντυγχάνουσα in Plaurata's queries in particular seems direct and bluntly refers to Platon's virility. This raises the question about the perception of men's ability to produce children. Male supplicants certainly seemed to believe that certain women were better suited to be wives than others. Their consultations about children often focused on the woman's fertility, rather than their own. However, on occasion, they also worried about their own abilities to procreate, as shown in Deinokles' consultation about sacrificing to the gods in order to be able to have offspring.[481] Women could have shared the same concern about their partners, therefore intervening with the gods to ensure their husband would give them children.

[476] LGPN s.v. Κλευνίκα.
[477] *Brunšmid, Inschriften* 15, 2.
[478] See Chapter 4 about Pharos.
[479] Curbera 2013: 420.
[480] Blundell 1995: 103.
[481] LOD 50. ἐπ<ι>στορεῖται Δεινοκλῆς Ἀπολλωνιάτας τὸν Δία καὶ τὰν Διώναν περὶ γενεᾶς τ[ί]ν[ι] κα θεῶν θύων καὶ εὐχόμενος φυ{Η}τέβοι καὶ γένοιτό κ' ἄρα γ[ενεά] / *Deinokles from Apollonia asks Zeus and Dione about children. To which gods to sacrifice and pray to procreate and then produce children?* Lhôte (2006: 123-126), who did not autopsy the tablet and saw only its facsimile (Dakaris *et al.* 1993), argues that φυτέβοι is in fact φυτεύοι and that the misspelling of the word in the edition of the text was most likely caused by the difficulty in deciphering the palimpsests on the tablet.

The identity of the men the female supplicants are interested is equally of interest. Plaurata's case is straightforward. She mentioned Platon, son of Karpos, and even though she does not specify their marital status, he presumably was her present or future husband. The other consultant, Kleunika, omited the name of the potential suitor altogether, referring to him only as ἐξ ἄλλω ἀνδρὸς. Whether she has someone particular in mind or is simply asking about the possibility of a prospective husband is uncertain. Analogical questions containing ἦ ἄλλαν are quite common among male suppliants. Lhôte interprets them as inquiries about marrying "another woman",[482] which might suggest either a choice of candidates for the role of wife or a need for remarriage as a result of a divorce or the death of the previous spouse. Kleunika's situation may have been similar – a childless widow searching for a new husband.[483] This would not be the first case of a widow inquiring about her future. Another tablet containing a question by a certain Myrta has been explained by DVC as a query by the widowed woman about unity and agreement among her existing children and about the possibility of future happiness for her, perhaps in the form of a new marriage.[484]

It is also worth noting that both Kleunika's and Plaurata's consultations reference seeking divine intervention in order to produce children. Plaurata wished to know if she can conceive a child by Platon with the help of a deity, probably through offering a sacrifice. In Kleunika's case, she did not inquire if she would have children but rather how to ensure that she would have them. The act of seeking ritual reassurance implies a sense of urgency, perhaps even crisis.[485] The women were not interested in finding out if they can be successful in their endeavor. Instead, by visiting the oracle of Dodona, they wanted to guarantee that success. The consultations made by Kleunika and Plaurata demonstrate that women also actively sought the means of conceiving children.

The tablets from the sanctuary of Zeus Naios and Dione reveal that issues concerning marriage and children were not just a problem considered by men. Women, though not as

[482] Lhôte 2006: 94.
[483] Based on Angel and Bisel's calculations of life expectancy in Classical and Hellenistic populations of various *poleis*, Gallant estimates that men lived about 40 years, while women – 38 years (1991: 20). However, considering that women married men who were 10-15 years older than them, it seems unsurprising that even with a shorter life expectancy, they would have most likely outlived their husbands. If the widowed woman was of childbearing age, as Kleunika appears to be, another match would have been arranged for her by male relatives (McGinn 2008: 25).
[484] DVC 347. Dakaris *et al.* 2013a: 117.
[485] Parker 2016: 74-75.

numerous as male consultants, would also take it upon themselves to visit the oracle in the hopes of finding out about their marital prospects and their possibility of having children.

3.3. Slaves and masters

It is perhaps fitting that the subject of slavery makes its appearance in the oracular tablets. After all, according to the narrative presented by Herodotus, the founder of the oracle at Zeus herself had been an enslaved temple servant brought over from Egypt. In an ironic twist, the presumed end of the era of Dodona's greatness and the *ante quem* date for the final lead tablets is also marked by the mass enslavement of the Epirote people by the Romans after the Third Macedonian War. The themes of slavery and kidnapping seem to have been imbued in the history of the sanctuary of Dodona.

Due to the scarcity of identifying information available in the mantic questions themselves, the social status of many of the visitors at the oracle or the people about whom they inquired remains elusive. However, questions concerning purchase, ownership, and freedom help circumscribe a specific group, the slaves. While they constituted the subject of queries made by masters who wanted to know whether the acquisition or release of a slave would be profitable for them, enslaved individuals, including two instances of female slaves, were also among those consulting Zeus Naios and Dione.[486] Through these unique point of view of both sides involved in the practice of slavery, the Dodonean tablets provide insight into three aspects of Classical and Hellenistic slavery: the perspective of the slaves on the issue of their potential liberation, the various types of dynamics between free people and slaves, and the slave trade in Northwestern Greece.

3.3.1. Questions asked by slaves

Slaves visited the oracle of Dodona as supplicants. Their presence at a religious site was not considered unusual. In Euripides' *Ion*, slaves are shown to be accompanying their masters to the Delphic sanctuary and are told that if they offered the appropriate sacrifice, they could even ask

[486] Eidinow 2007: 100.

for a consultation with Apollo.[487] It remains uncertain whether the slaves attested in the oracular tablets were public or privately-owned ones, whether they lived locally or travelled from afar. Eidinow remarks that the term used in DVC 163 – δίχα οἰκέσιος – is the west Greek equivalent of χωρίς οἰκοῦντες, referring to slaves who lived apart from their owners and worked outside of the *oikos*, paying their masters part or all of their earnings.[488] Certain slaves were given more freedom, both in terms of finance and movement, which could allow them to visit the Epirote sanctuary by themselves. The oracular inscriptions often fail to provide sufficient context for the personal stories they contain, but what little detail can be found in the tablets points to the slaves being owned by private individuals: Kittos by Dionysos, Rhazia by Teitukos, an unnamed slave by his master.[489] In DVC 1572 and 2242, the slaves are called οἰκέτα signifying their status as belonging to the household. There is no outright mention of public slaves.[490]

Within the oracular corpus, the slaves can be identified by their inquiries, which center on the subject of obtaining freedom and being manumitted. The worry about securing one's liberty permeates the texts. Several brief inscriptions containing the phrase περὶ ἐλευθερίας (concerning freedom) are present in the corpus. It cannot be established with certainty whether these belonged to slaves or masters, however the term ἐλευθερία is more frequently associated with inscriptions that are linked to the former group. Between fourteen and twenty-two queries appear to have been asked by enslaved individuals.[491] These consultants attempted to directly establish whether they would ever be liberated by their masters, as seen in DVC 606:

[ἦ] ἐλεύθερος γ[ενοίμην;]

[Will I be] free?

Another example of a query about freedom is DVC 1395:

[Z]εῦ Νάϊε καὶ [Διώνα, ὁ δεῖνα] τίνα κα θεῶν ποτθέμεν[ο]ς βέντιον εἴη καὶ ἐλεύθερ[ος] ποκ' ἔσσωμαι;

[487] Eur. *Ion* 220-236.
[488] Eidinow 2007: 100.
[489] DVC 1411, 73, 3690.
[490] Meyer suggests that DVC 3473 may be referencing a slave bought for the Dodonean community, but since the tablet is heavily damaged, a secure restoration of the question is impossible (Meyer 2017: 156).
[491] According to DVC, 22 tablets can be ascribed to slaves (2013a: 100-101). However, Meyer convincingly argues that only 14 can safely be attributed to slaves (2017: 151).

Oh Zeus Naios and Dione, by praying to which gods would it be better, and will I be free at some point?

As Parker remarks, the questions posed by slaves are unique in as far as they do not involve a decision the supplicants can make themselves. Instead, they express their desire for freedom.[492] While this passive approach dominates the slaves' queries, some, such as the aforementioned DVC 1395, or DVC 574 included the request for the names of the gods and heroes that could be propitiated in order to ensure their eventual release:

[περὶ] ἐλ(ε)υθε[ρίας τίνι κα] θεῶν [ἢ ἡρώων θύων] β[έ]ντερα [πράσσοι]

Concerning freedom. To which god and hero would it be better to sacrifice?

DVC 2428 is another such example:

περ' ἐλ[ευθερίας τίνι θε]ῶν θύω;

Concerning freedom. To which god should I sacrifice?

This in itself, of course, does not indicate any actual power the slaves had in making the decision, but it implies an attempt to influence the decision-making process in their favour. After all, there were enslaved individuals who were permitted to keep some of the money they earned, allocating it to paying for their freedom.[493] It must also be noted that male slaves were not the only ones to seek information about their future – an enslaved woman named Heraklea can be found asking about her freedom.[494] Rhazia from DVC 73, whose case will be further discussed in this section, was another female slave who turned to Zeus and Dione in order to figure out her fortune.

Though slaves dreamed of freedom, the road to liberation was rarely simple. As Kittos' query (DVC 1411), dated to the mid-4th c. BC, illustrates, some scenarios involving manumission presented to the oracle were very ambiguous:

Κίττωι εἰ ἔστι ἡ ἐλευ[θ]ερία ἡ παρὰ Διονυσίου ἣν οὖν ἔθετ' αὐτῶι Διονύσιος;

Will Kittos get the freedom from Dionysios that Dionysios promised him?[495]

[492] Parker 2016: 84.
[493] Fisher 1993: 52.
[494] DVC 3003. ἐπερωτῆι Ἡρ]άκλεα ἐ ἐν[--- ἐσσεῖ]ται ἐλευ[θέρα] / *Heraklea asks (…) will she be free?*
[495] Transl. Eidinow (2007: 102).

The text discloses that Kittos and his master Dionysios had some sort of agreement concerning the supplicant's manumission. Perhaps this deal was the result of a special relationship between the two, which is hinted at by the name Kittos, an Attic version of κισσός (ivy), that Dionysios may have given his slave as a nod to his own theophoric name.[496] DVC 1411 is a testimony to the difficulties encountered by slaves in their pursuit of freedom even if they had previous assurances from their masters. As exemplified through the case of Kittos, even in instances when the possibility of being manumitted materialized itself, the certainty of it was never guaranteed, hence the need for divine reassurance.[497] Regardless of the agreement the slave and the master may have come to, the final decision was always dependent on the will of the latter. The conditions of the manumission also varied. They could include a payment the slave offered the master for their freedom or clauses involving a deferral of the emancipation and the legal obligation to remain alongside one's previous owner, which are classified by modern scholarship as *paramone* contracts. In Hellenistic inscriptions, *paramone* referred specifically to the duty of a freed person towards his liberator, to whom the former slave had to provide his or her services for a contractually established period of time or until the costs connected to the manumission had been covered.[498] This type of manumission is well-attested outside of Epirus, particularly in Athens and Delphi.[499] DVC have counted 28 cases of possible *paramone* among the oracular queries,[500] which offers substantial evidence in favour of the popularity of this procedure among those visiting the sanctuary of Dodona.

Meyer, however, contests the prevalence of *paramone* in the oracular tablets. She argues that in the heavily restored texts, the letters that are reconstructed to read παραμονή can be interpreted as other words or names. In certain inscriptions, such as DVC 3116, the context in which the term appears does not seem related to manumission but rather refers to the physical act of staying and settling down in a specific location.[501] There are only four tablets that Meyer

[496] Cf. LGPN s.v. Κίττος, Κιττός.
[497] DVC restore the word ἀ(ν)δόλομα and interpret it to mean "re-enslavement" (2013a: 265). The possibility of becoming re-enslaved could happen in cases where the individual failed to fulfill their obligations established during the manumission or if they could not afford the ransom they were required to pay (Fisher 1993: 36). See also Eidinow 2011b: 262.
[498] Zelnick-Abramovitz 2005a: 222-223.
[499] Zelnick-Abramovitz 2005a: 224-225.
[500] For the extensive list, see Dakaris *et al.* 2013a: 32.
[501] Meyer 2017: 154-155. Names beginning with Par-/Parm- can be counted 19 times in other tablets (Dakaris *et al.* 2013b: 469), making it one of the most popular name prefixes in the corpus.

believes to be about *paramone*. The first, DVC 1450, is too damaged to extract any context from it.[502] DVC 3999 is similarly fragmentary.[503] In both cases, it is unsure whether a slave or a master is making the inquiry. The two remaining inscriptions provide a little more context. DVC 1675 mentions *paramone* for a group of people.[504] Meyer questions whether this interpretation is viable – the meaning of a "common" *paramone* is unclear, therefore leading her to propose that the text may be referring to a female name (Parmona). Perhaps the "common" *paramone*, coupled with the plural form of the verbs, can be interpreted as referring to deferred manumission for a group of slaves. In fact, DVC 3354, which mentions several women in the context of working (ἐργάζεσθαι), is believed by the editors to have been a list of freed slaves who were obliged to continue providing services under a *paramone*-like contract.[505] It is worth noting that manumissions of a number of individuals at once are documented even in Dodona[506], just as there are recorded instances of one owner requiring several liberated slaves to remained bound by a *paramone* contract.[507] DVC 1675 may be an example of a similar case. Finally, in DVC 3690 the word *paramone* is restored, but the context provided by the inscription makes this scenario likely.[508]

ἐπερωτῆ τὸν θεὸν τί κα ποι[έων] περὶ ἐλευθερίας ε[ἴ] ‘στι αὐτῶι [παραμο]νὰ πὰρ τὸν δεσπότα(ν)
X asks the god do(ing) what about freedom, i(f) (paramo)ne alongside the master is possible for him?

The query, which appears to have been made by a slave, presents the *paramone* contract as a desirable scenario – one that the enslaved individual was trying to actively achieve. Meyer also remarks that the dating of the four tablets in question is incorrect; based on the letter forms, she believes that they were produced in the 3rd c. BC, while the earliest appearance of the word *paramone* in inscriptions was is the 2nd c. BC.[509] She comes to the conclusion that, overall, the tablets do not reveal much about the process of *paramone* – neither about whether it was, in fact,

[502] [ἦ] παρμονὰ TON[..]N[..])
[503] [--- Δία] Νά[ϊ]ον Διώναν [...] [---]ΔΑ[....] ἐρωτῆι [..][---][..]Α[....] παρμονάν [---][.....β]έντατα π[ράσσοι ---][.]Α[..]AIT[...]NTOM[.] / *Zeus Naios, Dione (...) asks (...) paramone (...) best*
[504] Transl. Meyer 2017: 155. […]ΕΑ[...] ἐργαζόμεν[ο]ι κοινὰν παρμονὰν ἑλόμενοι / *working having chosen common paramone*
[505] Dakaris *et al.* 2013b: 247.
[506] *SGDI* 1347, 1352.
[507] Zelnick-Abramovitz 2005a: 226. In his will, the philosopher Theophrastus simultaneously liberates two of his slaves, Manes and Callias, under the condition that they work the garden for four more years (D.L. 5.2.55).
[508] Transl. Meyer (2017: 155).
[509] Meyer 2017: 157-158.

a practice that was present among the people who visited the oracle of Dodona, nor about whether it would have been, as Parker states, an option the slaves were interested in.[510] Meyer convincingly argues against the overwhelming presence of *paramone* in the mantic inscriptions; however her assumption that deferred manumission contracts are not evidenced in the queries, particularly those predating the 3rd c. BC, and that the tablets reveal little about what happened after one was free can be challenged through the case study of DVC 73 in which a female slave asked about the possibility of leaving her manumittor during his lifetime.

An inquiry posed by a female slave is a unique piece of evidence in itself. Not much is known about the lives of enslaved women in the Classical and Hellenistic periods. Literary sources of the time seldom focused on individuals outside the dominant social group. As a result, information about female slaves is often presented in the context of someone else's story. Servants appear in secondary or tertiary roles, functioning solely as background characters. In Athens, most "average households" would have been able to afford a domestic slave, which would often be female. Their work could include shopping, cleaning, cooking, wool-working and taking care of the children.[511] They could enter into relationships with other slaves or free men, if their master allowed it. Beyond these few pieces of information, not much else is known about their everyday life. The situation of female slaves in other areas of the Hellenic world is even more obscure, which is why the inscriptions from Dodona are a remarkable source of data about enslaved women, which not only provides a rare glimpse into their world, but also presents their perspective, as in the case of DVC 73, from the late 5th c. BC:

Θεὸς τύχα ἀγαθά Ῥαζία ἐπέθετο αἰ διαλλαγὰ μέλλει γενέσθαι ἀπο Τειτύϙō ζōοντος καὶ ἀποχώρησ(ις)

God, good fortune. Rhazia asked whether there would be separation and departure from Teitukos during his lifetime? [512]

Just as with other women mentioned in oracular tablets, Rhazia's identity is difficult to establish. Ραζία is a name that is not attested in any other epigraphic or literary sources; Curbera thinks that it is a by-form of Ραδια, a name which appears to be epichoric in Thessaly; but the name might

[510] Parker 2016: 84.
[511] Blundell 1995: 146.
[512] Transl. Parker (2016: 84).

have Illyrian origin, as suggested by Tsalikas.[513] The name of her master, Teitukos, is also unique to the Dodona tablets, though it is clearly a variant of the Illyrian Τεύτικος.[514] The names imply that the supplicant and her master were both locals, living in the neighbourhood of Dodona. After all, if Rhazia was still a slave at the time of her visit to the sanctuary, she would not have had the possibility to travel far alone.[515]

Although the question Rhazia poses does not explicitly mark her as an enslaved individual, it bears a resemblance to other queries that were undoubtedly made by slaves, including another female slave, Heraklea, who wanted to find out whether they would obtain freedom from their masters.[516] Furthermore, the woman interrogates the gods specifically about the possibility of leaving Teitukos during his lifetime. The very particular choice of wording presented in her question has led to her situation being interpreted as a case of *paramone*.[517] While Rhazia's inquiry does not mention a *paramone* clause, she appears to be formally bound to her manumittor, unable to leave him until all the conditions of her freedom are met.[518]

A similar case is attested among the manumission inscriptions from Dodona, in which Boiskos, Phormiskos, Echenika and Damnagora set their slave Phleucho free with an addendum that she will be able to go wherever she wants, once Boiskos and Damnagora die and Phormiskos grows up ([ᾶ]ς κα Βοΐσκος καὶ Δαμναγόρα τελευτά[σ]ωντι καὶ Φορμίσκος ἡβάση, τρ[α]πεῖσθαι

[513] Curbera 2013: 431; Tsalikas 2018: 256.
[514] Dakaris *et al.* 2013a: 32. The Latinized version of the name, Teuticus, was documented by Livy as belonging to an Illyrian tribal leader and emissary sent to the Romans by king Genthios after his defeat in 168 BC. (Liv. 44 31)
[515] Eidinow 2007: 131.
[516] Eidinow 2007: 100-102; see DVC 3690 and 3003. Eidinow (2007: 102; 2014: 259-560, 262-263) also argues that another query about staying put was made by a slave woman named Leuka, however the question is too broad to assess whether Leuka was indeed enslaved. Therefore, the tablet will be omitted in this discussion.
[517] Eidinow 2007: 131; Dakaris *et al.* 2013a: 32; Eidinow 2011b: 262; Pantermalis *et al.* 2016: 110; Parker 2016: 84.
[518] The subject of freedom of movement and migration must be briefly addressed here. One other query topic ascribed to slaves is that of leaving one's master. In his analysis of the tablets, Lhôte interprets several inscriptions – LOD 62, 63, and 64 – as referring to cases of freed slaves who seek to separate themselves from their former owners (Lhôte 2006: 148). All three texts include the verb ἄπειμι, which Lhôte links to a manumission inscription from Apollonia (dated to the 4th c. BC, Cabanes 1997c: 98, no. 385), in which the term ἴμεν ὅπα λεν is used to inform that the freedman in question can go wherever he wishes. Eidinow, on the other hand, offers a more dramatic context – she suggests that the inquiries may have been made by slaves planning to escape from their masters (Eidinow 2007: 101). However, nothing explicitly links these tablets to runaway slaves. As Parker remarks, it is improbable that enslaved individuals would have been allowed to make such controversial inquiries at the oracle (Parker 2016: 85). Similarly, Lhôte's analysis, though interesting, remains tenuous at best. After all, questions about travel were among the most popular ones in the corpus (Parker 2016: 77). Without additional context, as in the case of Rhazia, it is impossible to classify these queries as belonging to slaves, freedmen or free individuals. See also Zelnick-Abramovitz 2019.

ὅπαι κα θέλη).[519] As part of their obligations, slaves liberated under the *paramone* clause were sometimes required to remain near their former masters in order to serve them.[520] In this regard, Rhazia's situation is similar to Phleucho's – both women had to fulfil certain responsibilities towards their former masters before gaining a larger degree of freedom. Though this method of manumission was common across the Hellenic world, it is not frequently mentioned in the manumission texts from Epirus. Among the 26 manumission texts from Dodona from the 4th-2nd c. BC, solely the aforementioned one involving Phleucho resembles a *paramone* contract.[521] In his study of the 31 inscriptions from the theater in Bouthrotos dated to the 3rd-2nd c. BC, Cabanes notes that only 13 slaves out of the 400 recorded were subjected to the *paramone* clause.[522] Women dominate in this group, comprising nine of the thirteen cases. The structure of the agreement is always the same – the freed slave must remain to care for one or more of his or her liberators until their deaths. The obligation to care for an aging individual (or a child, as seen in Phleucho's case), an activity associated with the role of a woman, explains why female slaves were the ones chosen for the task more frequently than their male counterparts. It is not difficult to imagine that Rhazia may have been a recipient of a similar agreement ensuring that she would take care of her former master as he grew old.

Having established the context of Rhazia's situation, the question then arises about the reasoning behind her consultation. The fact that a liberated slave wants to know about the possibility of fully obtaining her freedom is not exceptional. It is what happens to a freedwoman after her liberation that is of interest. An earlier end to one's *paramone* contract was rare, though not impossible. Zelnick-Abramovitz cites 41 examples of early release out of the 400 manumission through *paramone* clauses found in Delphi between 201 BC and 100 AD. Paying a previously established sum or providing a replacement slave were the usual methods through which a slave obtained their complete freedom.[523] In one instance, the female slave Agathameris was required to remain with her manumittors until their death, but another inscription shows that eight years later she was able to pay for a release from her *paramone* obligations.[524] Agathameris' case stands out

[519] *SGDI* 1359, 1362
[520] Zelnick-Abramovitz 2005a: 225.
[521] Cf. Meyer 2013: 136-161.
[522] Cabanes 1974: 206.
[523] Zelnick-Abramovitz 2005a: 236-237.
[524] Zelnick-Abramovitz 2005a: 235; *SGDI* 1918, 1919.

because not only is it one of the few that tracks a slave's journey to freedom, but also because her initial contract did not contain a provision for an earlier discharge. None of the manumission by *paramone* texts from Epirus are accompanied by an early release clause. However, Rhazia's inquiry seems to suggest that, just as in the inscriptions from Delphi, the termination of the *paramone* obligations before the contractually established time period was to some extent possible.

When looking more closely at the Epirote manumission inscriptions, Rhazia's hopeful query about a shortened period of *paramone* is not completely unjustified. The Hellenistic manumission texts from Dodona and Bouthrotos appear more favourable towards the freed man or woman than those from other regions of the Greek world, where the manumittors could retain significant control over their former slave's mobility, possessions, and even children.[525] In the majority of the Epirote cases, the slaves are manumitted without a *paramone* clause and immediately awarded their freedom along with special provisions, securing certain additional privileges. This is particularly visible in the texts from Dodona, which record three instances in which the freedom of the former slave's progeny has been guaranteed, four in which the former slave is allowed to choose their place of residence and travel at will, and four in which the slaves are manumitted through *xenike lusis*, which may have relieved the newly freed slaves from paying the taxes of the *xenoi* (a status they would have acquired upon liberation).[526] It is worth noting that the varying methods and details of manumission point to the circumstances of the slave's freedom being at the master's discretion, placing it alongside Aetolia rather than Athens, where only the *polis* dictated the privileges a freed slave could hold.[527]

The status of the former slaves in Epirus was also much more ambiguous than in central and southern Greece. In his discussion of the Bouthrotos inscriptions, Cabanes presents three separate cases of freed slaves, two of which are women, who appear twice in the sources: the first time when they are being manumitted and the second, when they are listed alongside their former masters as the manumittors of another slave.[528] The role the women, Neaira and Sibulla, play in

[525] Zelnick-Abramovitz 2005a: 239.
[526] Zelnick-Abramovitz 2005b: 111-112.
[527] Zelnick-Abramovitz 2005a: 316-317. In Aetolia, the privileges exempting a person from paying certain taxes, though previously approved by the *polis*, were formally granted to the freed slave by the manumittor and not by the *polis*.
[528] Cabanes 1976: 411-412; Cabanes 1974: The slaves in questions are Neaira (no. 13 and 19), Sibulla (no. 4 and 13) and Menexios (no. 1 and 30).

their families is uncertain – they may be wives, concubines or adopted daughters. They have, however, moved from the rank of slave to the rank of master, becoming equal to their manumittors and integrating into the family. Cabanes suggests that the status of a liberated slave not bound by *paramone* would not have been inferior to that of their former master or, at the very least, allowed for a degree of social mobility.[529] Zelnick-Abramovitz builds on this conclusion by placing Epirus in the broader context of Aetolia, Phocis, and Thessaly, which seemed to have offered manumitted slaves a less legally restricted existence, as well as provided them with the opportunity to assimilate into the community, especially when compared to other well-documented areas such as Athens.[530]

Where does Rhazia's inquiry fit into this discussion? First of all, though her tablet predates Phleucho's manumission text from Dodona, as well as the *paramone* inscriptions from Bouthrotos, by at least 150 years, Rhazia's contract follows the same rules, which involve serving her manumittor until his death, implying that the structure of the Epirote *paramone*-like arrangement remains consistent throughout the centuries. Rhazia's mention of the possibility of leaving also mirrors the clause in Phleucho's manumission contract about not being able to move away freely until she fulfills her obligations to her former masters.

Secondly, Rhazia's question suggests a degree of possible negotiation of her manumitted status between her and Teitukos, whom she must serve. It is unknown if her contract could have originally included a clause allowing for an earlier release. Manumission texts containing a provision for early release are rare in other parts of Greece and completely inexistent in the Epirote epigraphic evidence from the Hellenistic period. The fact that she does make the inquiry implies that she must be aware of existing methods allowing for an earlier termination of her *paramone*. Rhazia does not specify what she has in mind. Paying for her freedom would have been the most likely scenario. The worry about producing the required sum could have driven her to ask the gods of Dodona if she would be able to eventually afford such an expense. A change to her manumission contract, especially one that might not have had a provision for earlier release, would have also required a certain amount of bargaining with her former master. The later evidence from Dodona and Bouthrotos points to the details of a manumission being devised by the manumittor. In light of this, Rhazia's broad question might not only refer to her ability to buy her freedom, but also

[529] Cabanes 1974: 206-207.
[530] Zelnick-Abramovitz 2005a: 319.

Teitukos' will to cooperate regardless of the contract binding them. Her mention of ἀποχώρησις could imply that she was interested in receiving an additional clause allowing her unrestricted movement, as seen in other manumission inscriptions from Dodona, a specification which would have also been to the discretion of her manumittor.

The parallels between Rhazia's inquiry from the late 5th c. BC and the Hellenistic manumission texts, though not sufficient to allow a definitive conclusion, can offer some insight into the late Classical Epirote society's treatment of slaves. Similarities that Rhazia's case shares with those of her later counterparts suggest that certain traditions surrounding manumission, such as the specifics of the *paramone*, the role of the manumittor (rather than the *polis*) in shaping the manumission contract, and the subsequent status of a manumitted slave, could have preceded the Hellenistic period in which they are so widely attested.

The slaves visiting Dodona were concerned with obtaining their freedom. Even though the preliminary theories about the frequent use of manumission through *paramone* in the tablets cannot be confirmed, the Dodonean inscriptions do contain hints of examples of delayed manumission, as well as different worries enslaved individuals may have had concerning the details of their liberation. Freedom, even if promised, was not guaranteed, driving some of the slaves to seek out the assurance of the Epirote oracle in whether they would eventually be released by their owners and on what terms. As Eidinow points out, the degree of control they had over the decisions surrounding their manumission was limited, which is reflected in their questions that primarily focused on events that would affect them rather than on their own actions.[531] However, some of the queries – the ones asking about which gods to pray to or Rhazia's tablet – demonstrate a more active attempt to influence their fate. The claim put forward by scholarship that slaves played solely a passive role omits the symbolic function the consultation at the sanctuary may have had. Performing a sacrifice or a prayer in order to secure one's freedom was one of the few actions a slave could carry out. Therefore, seeking the counsel of Zeus and Dione should be seen instead as being proactive through the means available to enslaved individuals, even if those were limited to the sphere of belief rather than actual legal or social power to influence one's condition. Though they only present a narrow image of the life and hopes of slaves, the oracular queries award the

[531] Eidinow 2011b: 265.

slaves a greater sense of personhood than expressed in literary texts or manumission inscriptions, which failed to show the perspective of the slaves themselves.

3.3.2. Questions asked about slaves

The second distinct group of questions relating to slavery are the ones asked about the slaves. As many as seventeen tablets appear to have been produced by slave owners.[532] These inquiries can be divided into three categories: the slave trade, legal queries about slaves, and the relationships bewteen free individuals and slaves. Contrary to questions present in the tablets attributed to slaves, their owners were less interested in involving the oracle of Dodona in the nuances of manumission. Only three inscriptions appear to reference the freeing of slaves, such as DVC 3609:[533]

[ἐ ἀπ]ολύομαι ο[ἰ]κέα;

Should I free the house-slave?

DVC 76 is another example:

ἐπερωτῆ Ἀσκλεπιάδας τόν Δία τὸν Νᾶον καὶ τ[ὰν Δι]ώναν ἦ λώιον καί ἄμεινον ἀπολυομένωι παῖδα [....] καί ἄλλο τι πράσ(σ)οντι

Asklepiados asks Zeus Naios and Dione whether it will be better and more profitable to release the slave (…) or do something else?

Four inquiries made by slave owners at the oracle were about the acquisition of slaves, as shown in DVC 853:

<ἦ> ἦ πριάμενος ἀνδρόποδα καινά;

Should I purchase new slaves?

DVC 1591 also addresses the purchase of slaves:

[532] Meyer 2017: 152.
[533] DVC 856 appears to be a query about manumission as well, though it is fragmentary. Finally, the editors suggest that DVC 2488 might involve the freeing of a slave due to the use of the verb ἀφέντες, but the context of the question remains unclear (2013b: 64).

[ἦ ἀ]νδροπόδια πιπασκόμε(νος);

Should I buy slaves?

The slaves themselves are referred to in standard and broad terms, with ἀνδράποδον/ἀνδρόποδον used more frequently than δοῦλος or οἰκέτης.[534] The verbs πιπάσκομαι and πάομαι (to acquire)[535] were commonly used to describe the act of purchasing.[536] The latter, in particular, is a feature of Doric dialects,[537] which would suggest that the questions about procuring slaves were asked by inhabitants of the Northwestern Greek region, possibly even from Epirus. This could be explained by the principle of cost-benefit analysis – the costs and risks of travel to the oracle in order to inquire about the investment of funds into buying a slave should not have outweighed the cost of the purchase itself. In his study on slavery in Ancient Greece, Fisher notes that slaves in Athens cost between 70 and several hundred drachmai; unskilled labourers were not considered particularly expensive.[538] For comparison, an inscription from the 4th-3rd c. BC found in Dodona recounts a sale of a slave for a silver *mina*.[539] The prices in both locations seem comparable. While the expenditure involved in buying a slave was not insignificant for an average ancient Greek household, enslaved servants did not appear to be an outrageously luxurious commodity either – Epirote society during the Hellenistic period, for example, was not lacking in slaves.[540] The fact that only four tablets can be identified as inquiries about the acquisition of slaves suggests that this was not an issue believed to require the judgement of the gods. The need for a consultation may have arisen when the purchase was unusual, such as buying more than one slave at once (DVC 853, 1591), which would have been a greater investment burdened with more risk or procuring a slave in the context of a scenario which deviated from what the buyer was used to (e.g., a slave of a specific ethnicity or from particular sellers, as in the case of the Thracian slave in DVC 1387).[541]

[534] The former appears in the tablets fourteen times, while the latter two only four times each (Dakaris *et al.* 2013b: 496, 508, 531, 561). Most of the questions are simply "about the slave/slaves", without much more context.
[535] Dakaris *et al*. 2013a: 10. The editors connect the word πιπάσκομαι to πάομαι.
[536] Purchase of slaves: πάομαι: DVC 22, 500, 1387; πιπάσκομαι: DVC 3207.
[537] Méndez Dosuna 1985: 233; Tselikas 2018: 258.
[538] Fisher 1993: 45; cf. Jameson 1977/78: 122-146.
[539] Cabanes 1976: 583, no. 60; *SGDI* 1356. According to Aristotle, 100 drachmai equalled to one mina in Athens. Previously, it had been 70 drachmai (Aristot. *Const. Ath.* 10, 2).
[540] Cabanes 1974: 114; Gallant 1991: 30-33.
[541] This, of course, did not mean that slave owners were not concerned about their slaves and did not attempt to ensure that their property was looked after. In a rather unclear query, DVC 170, Timokrates asked about runaway slaves that appear to have belonged to him (τῶν φευγόντων ὅδε δόλον ἐονηκώς). Another master (DVC 2287)

Another mark of locality in the queries is, as argued by Meyer, the reference to the regional slave markets, as seen in DVC 3473:

ἐπερωτῆι Σιλαν[ὸς τὸν Δία τὸν Νάϊον] καὶ τὰν Διώναν πε[ρὶ παρμονᾶς ἦ τὸν οἰ]κέταν τὸν ἀπείλα[φα- - -] τὸν ἀπ᾽ Ἀκτίου ἐπριάμ[αν- - -] Δωδωναίο[ι]ς ὅσαπερ [- - - καὶ] ἦ ἐσεῖται πα[ράμονος- - -]

Silan(os) asks (Zeus Naios) and Diona abo(ut – the sl)ave the one I too(k …) the one I purchased from Actium (…) for/to the Dodonaians, as much as (…) and if it/he will be pa(…).[542]

While DVC interpret Aktion to be the name of the seller, Meyer argues that the tablet more likely mentions the city of Actium.[543] After all, the *polis* is evidenced in the tablets; it is referenced in DVC 1156, while the Actia games appear in DVC 3220 and LOD 122. The slave market held there was incorporated into the festival at the sanctuary of Apollo.[544] Through an analysis of the shape of the letters, Meyer dates the inscription to the 3rd c. BC, thus linking it to the height of Actium's position as a slave trade center in the first half of the 3rd c. BC.[545]

While the origins of the slaves are more difficult to gauge than where they could had been purchased, the Dodonean corpus offers some insights in this regard as well. In DVC 1387 the potential buyer specified the ethnicity of the slave they have in mind:

πέπα πὲρ Θρακός; [546]

To buy a Thracian slave?

The Thracian assignation is not surprising, as Thrace was one of the major regions that supplied the Greeks with slaves.[547] While warfare and piracy ensured that Greeks, regardless of gender, age or social status, could also find themselves sold into slavery, many of the slaves in the Hellenic world were, in fact, of barbarian origin.[548] Onomastics can also be of help in identifying

wanted to know to which deity he should pray concerning his slaves. Finally, Kratippos (DVC 1572) and Eulkis (2242) inquired about the health of their house slaves (ϝοικέται). See Parker 2016: 84-85.

[542] Transl. Meyer (2017: 156).

[543] Dakaris *et al.* 2013b: 272; Meyer 2017: 156.

[544] Blawatsky 1974: 497-500; Garlan 1988: 54; Dillon 1997a: 216.

[545] Meyer 2017: 157. See *IG* IX 1² 2, 583, which presents the tax rates imposed on the slave trade by the Acarnanian League.

[546] DVC (2013a: 343) interpret πέπα as an abbreviation of πέπαμαι or πεπαμένος.

[547] Fisher 1993: 37.

[548] Garlan 1988: 46-50.

information about the slaves, though, following Masson and Curbera's remarks, it must be remembered the Greeks did not have names they specifically assigned to slaves.[549] However, the context in which they appear can help designate them as enslaved individuals, as in the case of Tata from DVC 3354. The name itself is Illyrian in origin, suggesting that the slave woman was either from that region or from a nearby area in contact with the Illyrian language.[550] The connection with Illyria is notable, since it was the dominant source of slaves in the north-west.[551] Pausanias recounts raids conducted by the Illyrians in Epirus during the late 3rd c. BC, as well as their enslavement of the people of Mothone.[552] As neighbours to the Epirotes, they were both a supplier of slaves and a threat to the safety and freedom of those living at their borders. DVC 3132, from the mid-4th c. BC, offers further evidence of the slave trade with Illyria.

τοῦ ἀνδραπόδου<ου> τὰν δίκαν δικαξοῦμαι Σκιδαρκας ΩΚΑ τού[τ]αν [553]

Shall I, Skidarkas, proceed quickly with the private legal case of the enslaved captive?[554]

The name in the query is believed by Tselikas to be Illyrian, while the dialect of the query has been identified as Western Thessalian.[555] Tata, Skidarkas, and possibly Rhazia – the presence of these Illyrian names in the tablets reaffirms Illyria's reputation as a slave trade hub.

DVC 3132 is also an example of the involvement of the oracle of Dodona in legal cases connected to enslaved individuals. The supplicant sought to find out whether immediately pursuing legal action was the optimal decision to make. The exact nature of the term used in the query – δίκη ἀνδραπόδου – is unclear. Beauchet has suggested that it refers to the claim on a slave.[556]

[549] Masson 1973: 21; Curbera 2013: 421.
[550] Curbera 2013: 420. The name is attested six times in Epidamnos-Dyrrhachion (*IDyrrh* 49, 391, 392, 393, 394, 395).
[551] Garlan 1988: 48. The Illyrians were among the groups living on the margins of the Mediterranean world, that specialized in piracy and raiding.
[552] Paus. 4.35.5-6.
[553] Transl. Eidinow (2007: 103). Eidinow also proposes to read ΩΚΑ as ὦκα. The dialect of the query has been identified by Méndez Dosuna as Western Thessalian, establishing the supplicant as a resident of a region in proximity to Illyria (Meyer 2017: 152).
[554] There are two interpretations of Σκιδαρκας in DVC 3132. According to the first, proposed by the editors of the corpus, the name is feminine and in the genitive case, making Skidarka the object of the query (Dakaris *et al.* 2013b: 201). The second interpretation, which has garnered more support among scholars, assumes that Sidarkas, read in the nominative, is the name of the male supplicant who is making the query about an unnamed slave (Eidinow 2007: 103; Meyer 2017: 152; Tselikas 2018: 256).
[555] Tselikas 2018: 256; Meyer 2017: 152.
[556] Beauchet 1976b: 513-515.

Ownership disputes are further attested in the oracular corpus. For example, in LOD 123, the consultant attempted to figure out who was responsible for the enslavement of another woman:

[θ]εός. τύχα ἀγαθά — οὐκ ἀνδροποδίξατο Ἀρχωνίδας τὰν Ἀριστοκλέος ἄοζον οὐδὲ Ἀρχέβιος ὁ Ἀρχωνίδα υἱὸς οὐδὲ Σώσανδρος ὁ Ἀρχωνίδα δοῦλος τόκα ἐὼν ἢ τᾶς γυναικός;

God. Good fortune. Did Archonidas not enslave the servant of Aristokles or was it Archebios son of Archonidas or Somandros, at the time he was the slave of Archonidas or his wife?

The query, dated to the 4th c. BC, was most likely made by Aristokles, whose female attendant had been unrightfully taken. Lhôte theorizes that Aristokles was a priest.[557] After all, the term "ἄοζος" was often used to designate a servant belonging to a temple.[558] Therefore, the woman had perhaps already been a slave, who was later stolen from her original owner.[559] Arguments over the rights to a slave were not unheard of. Epigraphic evidence, such as the Gortynian inscription from the 5th c. BC, which discusses the legal procedures surrounding disputes over the ownership of a slave, demonstrates that slaves could be abducted from their masters and that an owner's property rights to an enslaved individual could be contested.[560] The mention of Sosandros' former status as a slave in LOD 123 is also of interest. His manumission may have been connected to the kidnapping of Aristokles' attendant, who could have been traded for his freedom. After all, in certain cases of *paramone*, the contract allowed for an earlier release if the freed slave could provide a "replacement" to serve in his or her stead.[561] What remains striking about this oracular query is the precision of the accusation, as well as the involvement of an entire family in the crime. Furthermore, the purpose of such a consultation poses a fascinating conundrum – the location of the kidnapped woman was clearly known, so what use would the oracle's ruling have had? Perhaps the supplicant sought to use this information to provide evidence of the crime and retrieve the servant or to pinpoint the person, from which to seek compensation for the crime. After all, DVC 3132 proves that the oracle of Dodona was consulted about the validity of pursuing legal action in slave-related cases.

[557] Lhôte 2006: 254.
[558] LSJ s.v. ἄοζος.
[559] Parke 1967: 271.
[560] *IC* IV 72.
[561] Lhôte 2006: 254. Zelnick-Abramovitz lists several examples from Delphi and Calymna, in which the manumitted slave is allowed to either purchase or raise another slave, who will take their place at their former masters' side (2005: 236-237).

Finally, DVC 1422 reads:

ἐ τοῦ παιδο[λ]έτου παῖς μολετὰν ἔχον τύχοιμι;[562]

Will I succeed in initiating court-proceedings against the slave of a slave-killer?[563]

Presumably the author of the query was the one whose slave was killed. Seeking retribution for the loss of a slave would have been the natural course of action. Evidence from classical Athens demonstrates that even an enslaved individual was awarded some degree of legal protection.[564] The murder of a slave could result in a suit brought against the accused. However, in DVC 1422, the legal action appears to be directed towards the slave of the murderer, instead of the guilty party, possibly in an attempt to obtain reparations for the loss of one's property by seizing the slave as compensation. The nuances of this query, just as in the two other "legal" texts, are not precise and perhaps it is the very murkiness of the situations described in the inscriptions that led the supplicants to visit the oracular sanctuary in the hopes of obtaining clarity on how to proceed in these unusual instances.

Another aspect on which the oracular tablets help shed light is the complexity of relationships between free people and slaves. Two tablets contain queries about the fate of families of slaves. The first, DVC 22, is dated to the late 5th or early 4th c. BC:

Περὶ Κορυ(δ)άλλας καὶ τῶν Κορυδάλλας παίδων πότερα κα τυγχάνοιμι πεπαμένος [κ]αθάπερ πατήρ;

Concerning Korydalla and Korydalla's children. Will I succeed in acquiring ownership of them as their father?

The second query, DVC 2383, was written in first half of the 4th c. BC:

Πότερον Ἀριστοβούλαν καὶ τὰ παιδία κομιῶ καὶ λύωμαι;

Will I bring back and free Aristoboula and her young children?

[562] DVC (2013a: 352) amend the text to: ἐ τοῦ παιδο[λ]έτου παῖδα μολετὰν ἔχον τύχοιμι.
[563] Modified translation by Meyer (2017: 152), who accepts the emendations proposed by DVC.
[564] Aristot. *Const. Ath.* 57; Morrow 1937: 213. Wrenhaven 2012: 65.

The two cases appear to have been local – Aristoboula's name is well-attested in Epirus and the query about Korydalla contains Doric features.[565] The situation in DVC 22 seems clear. A male supplicant, who has fathered children with an enslaved woman named Korydalla, wishes to know if he will be able to purchase her and their offspring. Sexual relations with female slaves were not prohibited in the Ancient Mediterranean world. Sleeping with one's own slave was not formally penalized, nor was it particularly frowned upon.[566] Examples of sexual or familial relationships between masters and their slaves can be also found in manumission inscriptions. In a text from Chaeronea from the 2nd c. BC, a man frees his slave son, born to him and to his slave fosterling.[567] Another example of manumission, this time of both the children and their mother, is the case of Zosimos of Phthiotic Thebes, who not only freed his sons, but also allowed them to use his name. Afterwards, he manumitted his daughter and the woman who bore him his children, who is named in the inscription as his wife.[568] Zelnick-Abramovitz argues that slave-concubines were not uncommon and that the children they gave birth to could even come to be acknowledged by their fathers as legitimate heirs, especially if there were no other surviving male offspring.[569]

Considering how prevalent the question about having children is among the Dodonean tablets, it is not surprising that the high mortality rates or problems with fertility may have encouraged some masters to adopt their children born to slave women. The practice of freeing and publicly legitimizing one's progeny appears to have also been customary in Epirus. In *SGDI* 1348, a manumission act from Dodona dated to the 3rd c. BC, a woman named Kanthara was liberated and described as the "free daughter of Krateraeus".[570] As discussed in the aforementioned case study of Rhazia, there are three documented instances of the inclusion of a former slave into the family in the manumission acts of Bouthrotos from the Hellenistic period, two of which pertain to women.[571] Local practices seemed to allow for the integration of a freed slave into Epirote society, therefore the inquiry about the acquisition of Korydalla and her children could conceivably have

[565] Aristoboula: Attested in Molossia (*SGDI* 1353). The name is only attested 10 times in epigraphic material. Another Aristoboula is referenced in DVC 1028. This, along with the Molossian inscription dated to the 4th-3rd c. BC, suggest that it could have been a name more frequently used in Epirus. Korydalla: Tselikas 2018: 258.
[566] Scheidel 2011: 111.
[567] *IG* VII 3301.
[568] *SGDI* 1803 and 1935; Lazaridis 1975: 647-648, no. I, II 7-13.
[569] Zelnick-Abramovitz 2005a: 168-169. Bearing a child to a free man could result in the slave woman's freedom as well.
[570] Meyer 2013: 149-150. Though the name(s) of the manumittor(s) are missing from the inscription (with the exception of the suffix -λις), Meyer proposes that Krateraios would have been one of the people freeing Kanthara.
[571] Cabanes 1976: 411-412.

been aimed at eventually manumitting the group. However, it must be noted that the man asking about Korydalla was most definitely not her owner, at least at the time of the mantic consultation, a fact that sets DVC 22 apart from the scenarios presented in the manumission inscriptions mentioned above. Nonetheless, literary evidence, as well as iconography on pottery, provide examples of free men engaging in sexual relations with slave women who presumably were not their property, such as prostitutes or *hetairai*.[572] In Menander's *Epitrepontes*, a *hetaira* is even told to pretend that the child she bore belonged to the free man who raped her, as that would ensure that he paid for her freedom.[573] The exact nature of the relationship between Korydalla and the supplicant cannot be inferred from the query, but it appears that affection for the slave woman and her children or the will to ensure the continuity of one's family line drove the supplicant to visit Dodona.

The query about Aristoboula and her progeny mirrors, to a certain extent, Korydalla's situation. Though it is not explicitly stated that the person making the inquiry begat her children, the interest in their safety implies a close connection and sense of duty towards them. However, in the case of Aristoboula, the supplicant clearly intended to free her and her children. It is difficult to say whether he was a free man or a former slave. Though relationships between slaves were monitored by their owners, some, such as Xenophon, believed that allowing them to have children was an incentive to make them remain obedient.[574] After being manumitted, a freedman would find himself in a precarious financial and legal situation, which could make reconnecting with his still-enslaved family difficult, driving him to consult the oracle about the possibility of buying the freedom of his family members. The notion that a relative would finance the manumission of their kin, especially in the case of children and parents, was not farfetched. A Thessalian inscription from the 1st c. BC has been theorized to address a similar situation – a slave-woman paid the fee for her children who were manumitted with her.[575] In another manumission act from Delphi, a father financed the release of his daughter.[576] Ensuring the freedom of one's family, even if the

[572] Wrenhaven 2012: 71.
[573] Men. *Epitr*. 538-540.
[574] Xen. *Ec*. 9, 5; Lacey 1972: 137-138; Garlan 1988: 52.
[575] *AE*, 1923, 126, no. 364; see Zelnick-Abramovitz 2013: 47.
[576] *FD* 3.2.216. See Tucker 1982: 227-229.

person providing the funds remained a slave themselves, appeared to be a priority among enslaved individuals.[577]

A second interpretation of DVC 2383 can also be offered. The noteworthy feature of the query about Aristoboula is the language used by the supplicant. The verb λύω is only used in this instance; for comparison, in three other inscriptions concerning the freeing of a slave, the masters making the inquiry employ ἀπολύω or ἀφίημι to signify the act of releasing.[578] In its middle voice, λύωμαι can be understood as "release by payment of ransom". Similarly, κομίζω carries the meaning of "to recover, to bring back". The verbs paint an image of a scenario, in which the woman and children in question may have been taken captive and enslaved during war or as a result of piracy. Other inscriptions in the corpus, such as DVC 729, refer to paying a ransom.[579] It is perhaps not accidental that ἀνδράποδον is the most frequently used term to describe enslaved individuals in the oracular tablets. Literary evidence provides many examples in which the word explicitly refers to war captives.[580] Although, as Meyer remarks, one should be careful in assigning very specific meanings to ἀνδράποδον as it could also be used to simply describe a slave[581], the deliberate choice of the term by supplicants may have implied that the slaves had indeed been captured during raids or military conflicts, especially when considering the proximity of Illyria and its slave trade resulting from piracy. Having established this, the inquiry about Aristoboula and her children can be understood as a question concerning the safe retrieval of individuals reduced into slavery. Those enslaved under such circumstances could be ransomed by family members or friends.[582]

The queries made about slaves are not numerous when compared to other types of questions found in the oracular corpus. Slave owners did not appear to consult the oracle of Dodona often about the management of slaves. The subjects of purchasing or manumitting enslaved individuals were rarely brought up, with the exception of instances that may have involved higher financial risk

[577] Hopkins 1978: 165-166.
[578] DVC 76, 3609, and 865. See Meyer 2017: 153.
[579] [θεὸς τύχ]αν. [ἐπ]ερωτᾶι [--- Δία Ν]άιον καὶ Διώνην [---] ἦ μὴ ἀργύρια ἴκατι Α[---]ωι ἀποινοῖ Α[--- λώιον] καὶ ἄμεινον [..] / *God, good fortune. (…) asks Zeus Naios and Dione (…) if it would not be better and more profitable to pay the ransom money*
[580] The term ἀνδράποδον is used, among others, by Herodotus in reference to the Miletan women and children captured by the Persians (6.19.3), by Thucydides in his description of the enslaved population of Iasos (8.28.2–4), and by Xenophon, in his account of the plunder of Asia by the Greeks (*Anabasis* 6.6.38).
[581] Meyer 2017: 152.
[582] Fisher 1993: 38.

(such as buying more than one slave at once). Rather than quantitative, the information the tablets provide is qualitative, allowing for insight into both the local slave trade, as well as some of the dynamics between slaves and non-slaves. The majority of the inquiries made about the acquisition of slaves contain Doric features, thus suggesting that the consultants asking the questions could have been locally based, within proximity of Dodona. Moreover, the mention of Actium as a place of purchasing slaves, along with the identification of Illyrian slaves in the tablets, brings to light some of the slave trade connections in the Northwestern region of the Hellenic world. The tablets also highlight the complexity of relationships between slaves and non-slaves. The questions about Korydalla, Aristoboula and their children reveal the familial connections that transcended one's social status. In Korydalla's case, the male supplicant wished to purchase her and the children he fathered with her, simultaneously acknowledging his paternity; in Aristoboula's, the consultant wanted to know whether freeing her and her progeny was possible – perhaps evidence of a family torn apart by the capture and enslavement of the mother and the children. Other examples of unlawful enslavement or ownership disputes can be found in the mantic queries, as supplicants seemed to consult the gods on whether pursuing legal action was wise or simply asked for the culprits to be named. What is notable is the dominance of female slaves as the subjects of these inquiries (when the gender can be established), further accentuating the insecurity of the position of a female slave in Ancient Greece.

3.4. Health, illness, and the oikos

While the oracle at Dodona is not recorded as a sanctuary connected to healing, over one hundred lead tablets have been identified as addressing the topic of health and illness.[583] When comparing this number to those of the inscriptions concerning spouses and children, it can be noted that, though not quite as frequent, inquiries about healing, sickness, and cures were among the more commonly asked questions. Although no anatomical votives or reliefs, often associated with sacred spaces dedicated to healing such as Asclepieia, were found near the shrine of Zeus Naios, the gods of Dodona were evidently trusted to provide their visitors with help concerning medical issues.

[583] Dakaris *et al.* 2013a: 44; Chaniotis 2017: 52. Chaniotis classifies 99 tablets as relating to the broadly understood subject of "health", along with six tablets previously discussed by Lhôte (LOD 46, 66, 68, 71, 72, 73 and, possibly, 69).

After all, the line between oracle and healing sanctuary was not always distinct and consulting with the divine concerning one's health was common practice. Sick supplicants would visit the temple of Asclepius in Epidauros in order to undergo the process of incubation, during which the god would bestow upon them epiphanic dreams with information about the remedies to their ailments.[584] However, epigraphic evidence from the site demonstrates that while obtaining a cure was the main objective of incubation, some, such as Kallikrateia who was seeking the location of a treasure hidden by her late husband, asked Asclepius for help and guidance in other matters.[585] Divination practices and healing were often closely associated with medicine in the ancient Greek world.[586]

The people visiting the Dodonean oracle with questions about health appeared to be predominantly the residents of Northwestern Greece. LOD 65 is the only inscription that mentions a specific location – Ambracia – from which the supplicant hailed. Nevertheless, the analysis of the texts from other health-themed tablets demonstrates a dominance of local alphabets and dialects. LOD 66 and 67 have been identified by Lhôte as written in the Corinthian alphabet, possibly designating the person making the query as a resident of the Corinthian colonies, while four of the other six texts concerning cures and illnesses in his corpus also contain grammatical elements that mark them as Doric.[587] The tablets from the DVC corpus similarly seem to favour the Doric dialect.[588] Texts, such as DVC 481 and 2401, were inscribed in the Corinthian or Epirote alphabet.[589] Another prominently represented group are the Thessalians, particularly those using the Pelasgiotis variant of the dialect.[590] The proximity of Thessaly to Dodona explains the comparatively high number of visitors from that region. Individual examples of tablets containing clear examples of other dialects or alphabets (from Boeotia, DVC 313, or from Tarentum, DVC 1402) have been identified by scholars, but they do not evidence any noticeable pilgrimage patterns revolving around health-related issues from other areas of the Hellenic world.[591]

[584] Stoneman 2011: 119.
[585] LiDonnici 1995, no. C 3.
[586] Collins 2008: 36; Stoneman 2011: 114-115.
[587] Lhôte 2006: 153-155, 157-164.
[588] In fact, the spelling of the word ὑγίεια has been cited by Méndez Dosuna as one of the features that helps establish the dialect of the inquiry (Méndez Dosuna 2018: 270).
[589] Dakaris *et al.* 2013a: 149.
[590] Examples include DVC 556 and 1134, as well as DVC 1369 and 2641, in which Dakaris et al. establish the names of the supplicants as Thessalian.
[591] Dakaris *et al*. 2013a: 108, 347; Méndez Dosuna 2018: 270.

Both men and women consulted Zeus Naios and Dione about medical problems. Though more masculine names – at least twenty-four – appear in the tablets, following the overall trend in the corpus which favours men as the dominant group among the supplicants, at least three feminine names have been identified: Areia, Euanaxa, and Nikokrateia.[592]

DVC 3346. ᾽Αρεία περὶ νό[σου]

Areia. About the illness.

DVC 1134. [Ζεῦ Νάϊ]ε Εὐανάξα πράσ(σ)ο[νσα κὰτ νοσεί]ματος τίννι κε θ̣ε[οῦν ἀν(α)τιθ]ένσα ὑγιεὶς γέν[οιτο];

Oh Zeus Naios, Euanaxa asks to which god she should sacrifice in order to succeed against her illness and become healthy?

LOD 46. Ἰστορεῖ Νικοκράτ[ει]α τίνι θεῶν θύουσα λῶιον καὶ ἄμεινον πράσσοι καὶ τᾶς νόσου π̣αύσα(ι)το

Nikokrateia inquires to which of the gods should she sacrifice in order to do well and end her illness?

All three women turned to the oracle in a time of emergency but displayed different attitudes. While Areia's consultation is broad and appears to be a question about the possibility of becoming healthy, Nikokrateia and Euanaxa's inquiries look for a concrete solution to their problem. By asking about the gods to whom they should sacrifice, they use the oracle as a method of obtaining treatment. This approach was not uncommon; supplicants frequently asked about ritual procedures which would help them.[593] When compared to evidence from healing sanctuaries such as Epidauros however, the lack of gender-specific medical conditions may seem somewhat surprising. Votive breasts, vulvas, and uteri were found in Asclepieia across the Hellenic world.[594] The consultations at Dodona made by the women did not specify what type of diseases they were

[592] A fourth, unnamed woman consults about her eye illness in DVC 3907. The small number of female supplicants inquiring about health is unexpected. Women readily participated as worshipers and supplicants in cults related to healing deities such as Asclepius (Dillon 2002: 27). Perhaps their underrepresentation in the oracular corpus of Dodona can be, in part, attributed to the lack of identifying names or gendered verbs in many of the inquiries.
[593] Parker 2016: 83.
[594] Dillon 2002: 28-29.

seeking help with (likewise, it should be noted that men's questions do not reference male-only illnesses).

Visitors at the oracle appealed for help not only for themselves but also for relatives.[595] In DVC 1384, Ladikos asks about the well-being of a woman, possibly his wife.[596] An analogous question seems to emerge from DVC 3508, where a husband consulted about the health of his spouse.[597] Another inquiry appears to revolve around the state of health of the supplicant's mother:

ἐπερωτεῖ Μεξίας Δία πῶς ὑγιανε[ῖ][....?....] ΑΜΑΝΕ τᾶς ματρὸς [...]μενος ΑΤΑΠΑΣΤΑΣ[598]

Mexias asks Zeus how to be healthy (…) of the mother (…)

Parents also travelled to Dodona in order to ensure their children's health.[599] As the large number of previously discussed queries containing pleas for descendants indicates, children were very important to their families. The tablets do not reveal any bias towards care for progeny of one particular gender. Lhôte's corpus provides one example of a father worried about his son:

θεός. τύχα. ἱστορεῖ Λεόντιος περὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ Λέοντος ἦ ἐσσεῖται ὑγεῖα τοῦ νοσήματος τοῦ ἐπὶ μ[ασ]τοῦ(?) ὃ λάζεταί νιν;[600]

God. Fortune. Leontios inquires about his son Leon. Will he regain health from the illness of the breast which affects him?[601]

Two other fathers were concerned about the health of their daughters:

DVC 1217. [πὲρ κορ]άον hυγι[είας ---]λος τί κα [---]

Concerning the daughters' health (…).

[595] Eidinow 2007: 136.
[596] Λάδικος περ' ὑγιείας Πονείρα[ς] / *Ladikos. About the health of Poneira*
[597] [περ]ὶ γυν[αικὸς ὑγι]είας / *Concerning the wife's health*
[598] DVC 2763. This interpretation follows the suggestion of the editors of the corpus that the inquiry concerns the health of the mother (Dakaris et al. 2013b: 124).
[599] Evidence of parents making pilgrimages to sanctuaries in place of their children has been discovered at other sites as well. In Epidauros, one of the inscriptions describes the case of the mother of Arata of Lacedaimon, who visited the Asclepieion to secure her daughter's health (LiDonnici 1995, no. B1).
[600] LOD 73.
[601] Lhôte 2006: 164-165.

DVC 3174. Θεὸς : τύχα : Μνασέ(ας) [περ]ὶ τᾶς θυγατρὸς πότερά κα Παιονί[ας] χερσὶ χρευμένα hυγια(ί)νο[ι] [.]E[..]AIE[.....]| ἀλλ’ ἐξυγιανεῖ

God. Fortune. Mnaseas. Concerning his daughter. Will (she) become healthy if the hands of Paionia are used (on her) | but will fully recover health.

The gender of the children mentioned in LOD 69, DVC 3044, and DVC 58 is unknown, but the inscriptions remain examples of seeking aid in curing one’s progeny:

LOD 69. ἐπερωτεῖ Ἀμύντας Δ[ία Να]ῖον καὶ Διώναν ἦ λῶιον καὶ ἄμει[νον το]ῦ παιδὸς [---] ṗαγάσασθαι;

Amyntas asks Zeus Naios and Dione if it is better and more profitable to wash in the spring the child’s (…)?[602]

DVC 3044. [--- πε]ρὶ ὑγιείας πα[ιδός]

Concerning the health of the child/children.

DVC 581. [περὶ] ὑγ(ι)είας [ἐμο]ὶ καὶ γε[νεᾶι]

(Concerning) health for me and my progeny

The ones making the consultations in place of their relatives appear to be solely men. In two other example confirming this trend, DVC 2242 and LOD 68 respectively, Euklis sought to find out which god to propriate in order to ensure health for himself and his household slaves, while Antiochos made an inquiry about the well-being of his father and sister.[603] This may result of men’s role as the heads of their households and, therefore, the ones charged with care over relatives. In four of the tablets, the inquiries directly referred to possible cures through medical,

[602] Lhôte 2006: 160; *SGDI* II, no. 1588. The interpretation of ṗαγάσασθαι is uncertain. This translation follows the suggestion of Hoffmann and Lhôte, who suggest the verb to be linked to πᾱγάομαι (to wash in a spring). There is no indication as to what body part belonging to the supplicant’s child was supposed to be bathed. Hoffmann supplements the inscription with πόδα (foot), but, as Lhôte remarks, there is no indication in the text that can confirm such an interpretation.

[603] Concerning DVC 2242: Though the name Euklis is a feminine one (LGPN sv Εὐκλίς), the supplicant making the inquiry is clearly male and is referred to per “αὐτοῦ” in the inscription (Dakaris et al. 2013b: 6). The name is, therefore, perhaps a dialectal variation of another, for example the more common “Εὐκλῆς”. Concerning LOD 68, cf. Lhôte 2006: 157-158 and Meyer 2017: 152. The gender of Antinochos’ sibling in LOD 68 has been contested by Eidinow, who interprets ἀδελφ[ε]ᾶς to mean “brother” (2007: 106).

magical, or ritual means, suggesting that if the supplicant made the effort to travel to the oracle to consult about someone else's health, they were interested in obtaining a more pragmatic and precise answer concerning the remedies rather than simply being told whether the person in question would eventually heal.

The level of detail of the information about the medical condition of the person making the consultation or their relatives differs from tablet to tablet. Some of the inscriptions were very vague – approximately sixteen simply contain the phrase "about health" (περὶ ὑγιείας) or a variation of it. These requests appeared to fulfill one of two functions. In certain instances, the reference to ὑγίεια was formulaic, accompanied by pleas for general well-being along with safety or good fortune. [604] In other cases, however, the inscriptions concerning health referred to an illness or specific physiological issues experienced by the sanctuary's visitors. The queries vary in terms of the level of detail, though a noticeably recurring element is the mention of ocular problems. Eyes and eye-sight are brought up about twenty-six times.[605] Texts such as DVC 3296,[606] focus on regaining one's sight rather than on curing other types of known ocular ailments such as diseases of the eyelids.[607] The terminology of the health problems could, in fact, be very precise, as in DVC 1780 and 2549, which respectively mention jaundice (ἴκτερος) and leprosy (λέπρα), both terms found in the Hippocratic Corpus.[608] The choice of wording appears deliberate – the supplicants were exact in their requests and instead of asking broadly about health, which was also common practice, they focused on specific body parts or ailments. The recurrence of the motif of the eye, therefore, should not be seen as a coincidence, but rather as evidence of a connection between the oracle and ocular illnesses. Parker suggests that this may indicate that either the sanctuary of Dodona was linked to medical practices or beliefs that involved curing eye diseases or that ocular illnesses may have been particularly common in the region.[609] Correlations between the frequency of specific anatomical votives at healing sanctuaries and local susceptibilities to specific medical conditions or ailments have long been theorized about, for example in the case of votive heads

[604] DVC 2468. Περὶ ὑγιείας καὶ σωτηρί[ας] / *About health and safety*; DVC 558. Δεινοκράτης ἐπερ[ωτῆι τόν Δία π]ερὶ hυγιείας καὶ ἐυ[τυχίας] / *Deinokrates asks (Zeus) about health and good fortune*
[605] DVC 118, 384, 556, 573, 730, 968, 1393, 1466, 1803, 1921, 2090, 2145, 2193, 2329, 2379, 2879, 2911, 3119, 3204, 3296, 3524, 3528, 3907, 3933; LOD 71 and 72.
[606] ὁρῶν εὐτ[υχοῖ κα ---] / *To see well*
[607] The awareness of the distinction between various illnesses of ocular tissues in Antiquity has been argued by Jackson based on the different types of representations of eyes in votives (Jackson 1988: 160-161).
[608] Byl 1992: 79 and 85; Hp. *Aph*. 3.20 and 4.62.
[609] Parker 2016: 83.

discovered at Ponte di Nona and associated with headaches, believed to be a byproduct of symptoms of malaria, which was prevalent in the area.[610] However, eye-related afflictions seemed to be a fairly common problem throughout Ancient Greece, as attested by the miracle inscriptions from Epidaurus, of which ten mention the curing of blindness or ocular illnesses.[611] Chaniotis notes as well that among the confession inscriptions from Phrygia and Lydia, diseases of the eyes were among the most frequently described medical conditions.[612] He speculates that the assumption of their divine origins may have arisen from the fact that such problems as sight loss are often not caused by external factors, leading the afflicted people to believe that their health issues were caused by an angry god. Blindness and other problems with sight were a debilitating condition, which would heavily impact one's life. Since ancient Greek physicians did not possess the ability to cure most ocular ailments, divine intervention must have appeared as the only other valid solution. Therefore, perhaps the explanation of the prominence of questions about eyes lies more with the perceived affinity of the oracle in these matters rather than with the local population's predisposition to eye-sight problems.

Some of inquiries about conceiving children could be categorized as medical queries – problems surrounding childlessness were often brought before healing deities.[613] The tablets reveal that the supplicants of both genders worried about their ability to procreate or the fertility of their spouses.[614] The act of asking about which deity to propitiate in order to obtain divine assistance with pregnancy mirrored similar requests directed to the oracle about health and ailments. The supplicants were seeking a practical method – in these cases involving ritual practices – that would ensure progeny. However, unlike Asclepius, the gods of Dodona are not recorded as directly curing infertility. In fact, there is mention at Epidaurus of an Epirote woman, Andromache, who visited the Asclepieion in order to gain the help of the physician-god in conceiving a child, at which she succeeded through Asclepius' intervention.[615] Based on this example, along with the scarcity of tablets addressing the matter of progeny among the documents which had been published at the

[610] Cf. Jackson 1988.
[611] LiDonnici 1995, nos. A4, A9, A11, A18, A20, B2, B12, B20, C22, D3. The motif of ocular disease can even be encountered in fictional accounts of healing. In Aristophanes' *Plutus*, the titular god of wealth becomes blind and regains his sight only with the help of Asclepius. (Aristoph. *Pl.* 727-734)
[612] Chaniotis 1995: 327-328.
[613] Dillon 2002: 30.
[614] For example: LOD 41, 46, 48; DVC 2552.
[615] LiDonnici 1995, no. B11.

time, Piccinini argued that Dodona was not an oracle that specialized in solving fertility issues.[616] However, since the publication of the DVC corpus, the number of inscriptions concerning pregnancy has significantly increased. The suppliants at the sanctuary were not only interested in finding out whether they would ever have progeny, but – more importantly – wanted to know what "cure" in the form of prayers and sacrifices would guarantee this success.

Supplicants regularly asked the oracle about which god or hero to address and propitiate in order to regain or ensure their health, as seen in DVC 1393:

[Θ]ρασύβολος τίνι κα θεῦν θύσ[ας] καὶ hιλαξάμενος τὸς ὀπτίλλο[ς h]υγιέστερος γένοιτο;

Thrasybolos (asks) to which god to sacrifice and appease in order to have healthier eyes?

Similarly, in DVC 97:

Πότερα ὁ θεὸς ἰάηται;

Will the god cure?

The belief in the divine origins of illnesses has a long history in Hellenic culture and can be traced back to the archaic literary tradition.[617] The motif of seeking the counsel of oracles or healer-seers is present in various ancient sources; in the *Iliad*, for example, Calchas recommends to the Greeks to perform sacrifices to Apollo, in order to soothe his anger over Chryseis and stop the plague he sent on them.[618] Despite the development of Hippocratic medicine and the growing social significance of physicians, the conviction about gods cursing mortals with illness and misfortune lasted well into the Imperial period and was attested across the Mediterranean world; propitiatory inscriptions from Phrygia and Lydia show that locals believed that the medical issues they or their relatives had were caused by a slighted deity and could only be cured by an adequate sacrifice or admission of sin.[619]

That an ailment was the punishment of an offended god or hero is perhaps best illustrated by DVC 118, in which a supplicant appears to have made a consultation on behalf of Xenon:

[616] Piccinini 2015: 146.
[617] Hesiod, *Works and Days*, 238-245; Panagiotidou 2016: 81.
[618] Hom. *Il*. I. 93-100.
[619] For a discussion on the divine origins of health issues, particularly in Phrygia and Lydia in the 2nd-3rd c. AD, cf. Chaniotis 1995: 323-344.

Ξένωνι περὶ [τ]οῦ [ὀ]φθαλμ[οῦ] ἦ ἀπὸ θεᾶς ἐστι αἴτε οὔ;

For Xenon. Concerning the eye. Is it (the illness) from the goddess or not?

Similarly, DVC 2248[620] and possibly DVC 3907[621] imply that the reasons for the suffering of both supplicants could have been ritual impropriety or divine retribution. In another tablet, DVC 556, the relatives making the consultation, wanted to know how to avoid the spread of an ocular disease within their family:

θεὸς τύχα ἀγαθά· ἐρωτᾶι Ἀγιλαίδας καὶ οἱ συγγενέες πὲρ τοῦ ἀρρωστέματος τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν τῶν οἱ πατέρες ἀρρωστήσαεν αἰ ἔστι κίννι κε θεῶν δρᾶντες τοῖς λοιποῖς στάμα γενηθείε καὶ ὑγίεια;

God, good fortune. Agilaidas and his relatives ask concerning the illness of the eyes of which the fathers fell ill, if there is one of the gods to whom sacrificing might put a stop (to the illness) for the future and health?

As argued by Chaniotis, the request of Agilaidas and his kinsmen implies the belief that the medical problems the family faced resulted from some sort of inherited punishment from deities.[622] The Dodonean tablets confirm that the belief in a divine origin of certain ailments circulated among those visiting the sanctuary. Therefore, propitiating the appropriate deity was one of the strategies in addressing health crises.

The oracular tablet corpus even contains a few examples of answers that can be understood as the names of the deities that needed to be appeased. The tablet LOD 67 holds two inscriptions, one on each side:

Q: τίνι {I} κα θεῶν εὐξάμενος πράξαι *h*ὰ ἐπὶ νόοι ἔχε;

To which god to pray in order to achieve what he has in mind?[623]

A: *h*υγίε(ια)

(The goddess) Hygieia.

---

[620] αἴ (κ)α Φιλίσστας ἀξιῶ(ι)το νοσέματος / *Does Philisstas deserve his illness?*; Transl. Chaniotis 2017: 53.
[621] θεὸ[ς] τύχα[ν] ἀγαθάν· ἐπικοινῆτα[ι ---]ὼι τᾶι Διὶ τᾶι Νάω[ι] καὶ τᾶι Διώναι [ἦ τυγ]χάνοι κα <ι> ἀμελήσας(α) καὶ ταῦτα [νο]σοῦσα περὶ τῶν ὀμμάτων / *God. Good fortune. X consults with Zeus and Dione, whether she happens to have been negligent and for this reason she is ill in her eyes?*
[622] Chaniotis 2017: 53.
[623] Translation following Parke 1967: 264, no. 4.

Lhôte was the first to propose that the inscription on the reverse of the tablet (in the same handwriting as the text of the question) was the name of the goddess Hygieia, though he admits that it could also be a reference to the subject of the inquiry.[624] However, in most cases where the text on the other side of the lead tablet has been recognized a summary of the consultation, it included words or names that appeared in the original query, rather than providing more information. Furthermore, considering that the supplicant was seeking a deity to propitiate, the interpretation of ὑγίεια as the name of the goddess provided to him by the oracle seems plausible.

A similar case can be made for DVC 118, in which the supplicant sought to find out whether a particular goddess caused Xenon's disease of the eye. The tablet in question contains a several texts, including DVC 117.[625] It is heavily lacunose, but dated to the 4th c. BC, just as DVC 118. The editors suggest the following reconstruction: [--- πρά]σσο [.]Ο[.] ἐ[φ]όδια [---]. While not improbable, as travel is among the more frequent themes present in the oracular questions,[626] the word ἐφόδιον (supplies for travelling) is never used in the tablets. However, if DVC 117+118 are read as analogous to LOD 67, then a different interpretation can be offered; DVC 117 could be seen as the response to DVC 118, with its text restituted to: Ἐ[ν]οδία / *En(n)odia*. The name of the goddess is attested two other times in the oracular corpus.[627] She is believed to be a local Thessalian deity, whose cult became assimilated with that of Artemis or Hecate.[628] Though her worship has not been evidenced in Epirus, she was a prominent deity in the neighbouring Thessaly. The evidence of other Thessalian supplicants visiting Dodona, along with grammatical features that point to the use of an Aeolic or Doric dialect in DVC 118,[629] support the notion that the person consulting about Xenon could have been Thessalian and was asking about the involvement of his locally worshipped goddess in Xenon's health issues. If both these interpretations are correct, they provide evidence of how carefully curated the answers to the inquiries must have been, ensuring that the deities mentioned by the oracle were suitably chosen for the occasion.

[624] Lhôte 2006: 155.
[625] There are five inscriptions in total, DVC 115-119. They do not appear to all be interconnected.
[626] See Chapter 4. 4.
[627] DVC 2800 and 2885.
[628] Mili 2014: 147. DVC theorize that the inscription may have referred to Ephodia (an epithet of Hecate or Artemis; cf. Chaniotis 1996: 360).
[629] αἴτε is the Doric and Aeolic form of εἴτε (see LSJ s.v. εἴτε).

Finally, LOD 68, in which Antiochos asks for health for his family, also contains a second text, which has been identified as the answer.[630] The oracle orders the supplicant to go on a pilgrimage to the sanctuary in Hermion in Argolis, presumably to worship the deities of that site in order to secure his family's wellbeing. Sacrifices, prayer, and pilgrimages were the "remedies" prescribed by Zeus Naios and Dione.

It is worth noting, following Chaniotis' observation about the choice of who to placate, that tablets link health not only to gods, but also to the cult of heroes, as seen in DVC 3084:

[θεὸς τύχ]αν· Αἶσχ(ρ)ος ἐπικοι[νῆται Διὶ Δ]ωδωνα(ίωι) Διών[αι τίνι θύω]ν ἥρωι [εὖ] κα πράσσοι [περὶ ὑγι]είας[631]

God, fortune. Aischros consults Zeus Dodonaios and Dione about which hero to sacrifice to in order to obtain health?

This, in itself, is not surprising. Heroes and hero-gods, such as Amphiaraus, Amynos, Heros Iatros or even Asclepius, were widely associated with healing. Their worship – particularly in the case of Asclepius – was attested both in Epirus, as in the case of the shrine of Asclepius in Bouthroton, where the physician-god is named in several manumission inscriptions as presiding over the liberation of the slaves, and more broadly in Northwestern Greece, for example in Trikka.[632] Asclepius is even mentioned by name in DVC 3741, possibly in regards to whether he should be consulted or propitiated about the disease:

[---]Η τῶι Ἀσχλα[πιῶι ---][.]Ο πράσ(σ)ω [--- π]έπονθε λέρπα[ν]

to Asclepius… would I be successful… (someone) had leprosy

Further evidence of connections between a regional cult of Asclepius and Dodona comes in the form of two tablet excavated in Illyrian Apollonia. The inscription on the first lead tablet, an inquiry made about sacrifices, references a prophetess, cleromancy and Dione; this has led scholars

[630] εἰς Ἑρμιόνα ὁρμάσα{α}ντι / *To go to Hermion*. According to Lhôte (2006: 157), both inscriptions have been written in the same handwriting, solidifying the argument in favour of the texts being a question and answer pair. Eidinow (2007: 104) is more cautious with this conclusion, stating that the "answer" could also be a fragment of another question.
[631] DVC 3084.
[632] Rouse 1902: 194-195; *IG* VII.235; Cabanes 1974: 196; Hart 2000: 4-6; Melfi 2007: 26; Stoneman 2011: 118; Schachter 1981: 19-26; Purday 1987: 69-102.

to hypothesize that it is a transcription of a collective consultation made at Dodona.[633] The second tablet contains the earliest attestation of a hymn to Asclepius, dated to the 4th c. BC. Both texts primarily address the offerings and ritual practices surrounding the cult of Asclepius, leading Lhôte to believe that the original question presented to the oracle may have concerned the health of the residents of Apollonia. The existence of nearby centers of worship dedicated to Asclepius did not exclude the need to consult other deities – Zeus Naios and Dione – about methods of ensuring the well-being of the community. Furthermore, the open-ended nature of the questions in the oracular corpus about who to pray and sacrifice to suggests that there may have been a more complex relationship between the cults of particular gods or heroes and the belief in the role they played in one's health. Even if the presence of Epirote pilgrims at famous healing sanctuaries, such as Epidauros, has been confirmed, it appears that supplicants did not always know how to proceed in order to secure their health or recovery, nor which divinity to placate. The oracle helped guide their efforts.

Not all the supplicants inquired solely about ritual means of ensuring good health. The oracle could also offer guidance to those uncertain of how or where to seek treatment. The tablets demonstrate several instances of supplicants asking about specific cures or individuals providing them. Some visitors wanted advice on the success of particular treatments:

DVC 968. αἴτε ἄλλα[ι]←

ἀλοιφᾶι (h)ορο←

βέλτερον ←

Will I see better by using another ointment?

DVC 1143. εἶ καὶ περὶ τᾶς ἰά<α>σεος ἐπικρατεῖ;

Concerning the remedy. Will it prevail?

Five other inscriptions, though fragmentary, appear to concern seeking unnamed medical treatment (ἰατήριον).[634] Zeus Naios and Dione were consulted about the most promising healing method, whether it be about which deity to placate or about effectiveness of the treatment the patient was

[633] *CGRN* 40; see Chapter 2.2.1.
[634] DVC 1397, 1572, 2275, 3192, 3447.

undergoing. The only text that seems to counter this rule is DVC 2525, in which the supplicant directly asked the Dodonean gods for a treatment method:

ἐρωτῆι δὲ καὶ περὶ τῶ ϙώματος [τί] κα ποιήσας hυγιαίνω;

And asks about the body what should I do in order to become healthy;[635]

The implication here, however, may be that the person making the inquiry is not seeking therapy, but rather ritualistic procedures that would help alleviate the disease, just as in DVC 2517, where the supplicant also specifically refers to his sick body:

[θεὸς τύ]χα ἀγαθά· ἐρωτᾶι Ἀγά[θ]αρχος τὸν Δία τὸν Νᾶον [καὶ τὰ]ν Διώναν τῶν νοσημάτων ὧν ἔχει ἐν τῶι σώμα[τι πότ]ερα τοῖς θεοῖς ἐπιτρέπων κα κατατυνχάνοι [τ]ῆς ὑγι(εί)ας;

(God) good fortune. Agatharchos asks Zeus Naios and Dione about the illnesses he carries in his body, whether by turning to the gods he might obtain health?

The tablets also demonstrate several instances of supplicants asking about specific individuals providing medical services. There are two instances in the corpus of queries about seeking the help of physicians:

DCV 3009. ἤ ἰατροῖς χρῶ[μαι];

Shall I consult physicians?[636]

DVC 1587. ἦ φιάλλε(ι) ἰατρο(ι) EP[---]

To seek physicians?

Going through the trouble of consulting an oracle about going to the doctor seems counter intuitive. Just as in the case of the query about seeing a psychagogos (LOD 144A), there may have been an unease about seeking out professional help – perhaps their abilities were not always trusted, which would explain the many oracular queries about successful healing and treatment in the first place. Physicians may have also been expensive, not widely available, and required travel to reach. While city-dwellers had easier access to medical services, the same cannot be said for those living in rural areas, especially in more remote regions like Northwestern Greece.[637] The supplicants would have

[635] Cf. DOL s.v. DVC 2525A.
[636] Cf. DOL s.v. DVC 3009A.
[637] For discussion on patient-doctor relations and public doctors, see Samama 2003: 35-39.

wanted assurance that pursuing the help of a doctor, involving money and time, would pay off. LOD 50, in which a father asked about being able to purchase the health of his son, explicitly addresses the issue of finance:

περὶ ὑ{Π}ὸς ὑγι[είας] {Π} ἦ ὠνέωμα[ι];

about (my) son's health – can I purchase it? [638]

While it is uncertain whether the supplicant is thinking of a sacrifice or of hiring a physician, the text reveals a degree of worry about the finances surrounding the cure. Chaniotis further remarks that evidence from other regions, such as a propitiatory inscription from Lydia dated to the 1st c. BC demonstrates, the services of physicians may have been fiscally inaccessible to many ordinary people, encouraging them to seek divine guidance instead.[639]

Two other inquiries, dated to the mid-5th c. BC, seem to concern a female healer named Paiania/Paionia, the aforementioned DVC 3174, in which Mnaseas asks whether the healer could help his ill daughter, and DVC 2549:

[ἐ] τύχοι κα Μάτρ[ōν ἐπὶ] τὸ φῦμ[α] χερα Παιανίας ἐπιβαλ[λούσα]ς τὸ ἐν τᾶι λέρπα(ι) καὶ hα[πτο]μένα[ς];[640]

Would it be successful for Matron if Paiania were to lay her hand on his tumor, curing his leprosy (illness of the skin)?

DVC, as well as Parker, argue that both texts refer to the same woman. Chaniotis convincingly argues that Paiania/Paionia could have been a title connected to the epithet of Apollo Paion.[641] The tablets provide a remarkable amount of detail: Paiania/Paionia was a healer of some kind, who would "place her hands" on the patients in order to cure them. The nature of her "medical practice" is uncertain. There is evidence of female physicians throughout the Greco-Roman world, including mainland Greece in the Classical period.[642] Sources show that over 60 women were officially

[638] See Lhôte 2006: 123-127
[639] *SEG* XXIX 1276; Chaniotis 1995: 331; Chaniotis 2017: 53.
[640] See discussion in Parker 2016: 83.
[641] Chaniotis 2016: 289; Chaniotis 2017: 52. For a discussion about the origins of the epithet, cf. Graf 2009: 81-84.
[642] Women tended to be associated with midwifery and the healing of female illnesses, but evidence suggests that they could have also specialized in other medical fields, cf. Retief and Cilliers 2005. Plato mentions female

recognized by medical societies as practicing medicine. They were called ἰατρίνη/*medica* or were named as authors of medical texts.[643] It is therefore not improbable that Paiania/Paionia could have been a physician of some sort, formally trained or otherwise. DVC remark a similar choice in wording between DVC 3174 (χρευμένα) and DVC 3009 (χρῶμαι), the query about consulting physicians. However, the repeated mention of the use of her hands and touching in the healing process could point to a more magical nature of her *modus operandi*. DVC 3622 also references the act of "placing hands".[644] Although the exact circumstances of the inquiry are uncertain, the supplicant appears to be asking the oracle if he or she should "place their hands" – a seemingly nonsensical inquiry, unless framed in a magical or ritualistic context.[645]

Finally, the editors remark that DVC 2549 is written in a Corinthian-Corcyrean alphabet, while DVC 3174 was inscribed in a Corinthian-Epirote one, which points to both consultants being of a Northwestern Greek origin. This, in turn, would suggest that Paiania/Paionia could have been a local woman as well. Not much is known about female physicians or healers through magic in Northern Greece. Late Antique sources associate Thessalian women with *pharmakeia*, but no evidence can be found about the medical or healing abilities of the female inhabitants of Epirus and surrounding areas.[646] However, Paiania/Paionia's case demonstrates that specialized healing women could be sought out for their expertise in treating an illness and might even have been perceived as an alternative to physicians. Inquiries about her are matched by those about visiting male physicians and seeking treatment; the uncertainty of which healer to see may have been one of the reasons for consulting the oracle.

The relationship between secular and religious medicine could be a contentious one. Magical and ritualistic remedies are almost never mentioned in Ancient Greek medical treatises.[647] This did not necessarily mean that one method excluded the other and that patients did not seek the help of physicians and gods simultaneously, as demonstrated by a dedication from Cibyra, in

physicians in the *Republic* (Pl. *Republic* 454d2, 455e6-7). A female healer (μαῖα καὶ ἰατρός) named Phanostrate is also attested in *IG* II^2 6873 (400-350 BC, Attica). See also Samama 2003: 15-16.

[643] Parker 2012: 122.

[644] Healing through touch is referenced several times in the miracle inscriptions from Epidauros, where the pilgrims visiting the sanctuary dreamed of Asclepius's physical contact with the diseased body parts, which healed them (LiDonnici 1995, nos. A 18, B 11).

[645] Dakaris *et al.* 2013b: 300. For a discussion about the association of "touch" and "hands" with the act of healing, both human and divine, see Headlam's notes on Herodas 4.18 (Headlam 1922: 181).

[646] Mili 2014: 85.

[647] Edelstein 1967: 205, 231.

which the supplicant thanks both Asclepius and the medic that treated him.[648] The evolution and dissemination of Hippocratic medicine in the ancient Mediterranean world did not diminish the importance of Asclepieia and other healing sanctuaries.[649] Nonetheless, doubts about the physicians' skills or the proposed therapy permeate the corpus. The supplicants required the reassurance of the Dodonean gods about pursuing certain cures, presumably when they failed to produce the desired results. Having recourse to the oracle's counsel offered the visitors another viable resource in their healing process. Consultations about pursuing the help of physicians or healers similarly betray a worry about whether making such a financial investment or taking up the risk of travel to reach the specialist were going to pay off, raising a question about the accessibility and availability of such treatment options. Questions about non-religious treatment options constitute about 10% of the health-related queries, whereas tablets in which the supplicant asked about deities to pray and sacrifice to account for 20%. Even though this format of question was not unique to inquiries about health and illness, the oracle's response about who to supplicate and how to do it did provide a remedy to the pilgrim's medical issues, simultaneously attributing disease and physical well-being to the sphere of the divine.

The epigraphic evidence from Dodona demonstrates how the supplicants visiting the site utilized the oracle in their quest for good health and relief from ailments. Eye-related problems were the most commonly referenced disease, a trend mirrored throughout other regions of the Mediterranean world. No definite cause of this tendency has been identified, but perhaps the need to seek out divine assistance with ocular issues point to the belief that only a god could help with such an illness. After all, physicians of the time were not equipped to deal with many of the ocular conditions.[650] Supplicants of both genders visited the Epirote sanctuary, though men are more prominently represented in the oracular inscriptions. They were also the ones consulting in place of their ill relatives, particularly children; as the head of the family, they would have had to shoulder the burden of the travel to the oracle. A sense of responsibility and care emanates from the tablets. Progeny, which, as the previous section has demonstrated, was not always easily

[648] Chaniotis 1995: 331.
[649] Scholars have pointed out that conventional medicine existed amicably alongside healing sanctuaries in places such as Kos, which was renowned for its physicians. Cf. Cohn-Haft 1956: 27-31; Sherwin-White 1978: 275-278; Dillon 1997a: 76.
[650] While evidence of surgical materials from the Imperial period used to cure eye-related ailments, such as cataracts, has been discovered, it is uncertain if the ancient Greek physicians knew of such methods (Hart 2000: 152; cf. discussion about Roman surgical instruments found in Britain in Gilson 1981).

obtained, was an important asset to any household. Seeking out the best treatment to ensure their cure, or simply the wellbeing of the family, was in the supplicants' best interest.

Many of the queries appear to have been written in Northwestern Greek dialects or mention locations and personal names that place the supplicants within Epirus or directly neighbouring regions. The local profile of the pilgrims consulting about medical issues could have been the result of convenience – traveling to Dodona would have been easier and less expensive than going on a long pilgrimage to one of the Panhellenic healing sites for those who were sick. Analogous situations occurred across the ancient Greek world, where the existence of large sanctuaries did not diminish the need for and popularity of smaller temples of local importance.[651] Another reason for choosing Dodona over a healing sanctuary may be linked to the site's function as an oracle. If the inquiry about health was one among many additional questions the supplicants had concerning other aspects of their life, then visiting Zeus Naios and Dione would have been the more pragmatic option. Obtaining answers to as many issues as possible mitigated the effort of travelling to the sanctuary.

The oracle often played the role of a mediator between gods and the patient. The majority of questions that were not simply "about health" involved a request for the name of the deity that was believed to be responsible for the illness or that should be propitiated in order to become cured. The belief in divine origins of disease and medical problems emerges from the oracular queries. The prescription of prayer and sacrifices is a frequent *modus operandi* of the Dodonean sanctuary, regardless of the subject of the inquiry, but in the case of health-related concerns, the oracle's response appears to take on the function of a "cure". However, unlike healing sanctuaries such as Epidauros, Dodona did not provide specific remedies. Instead, it suggested offerings as a means of placating an angered deity suspected of cursing the one who was ill. The few answers that have been identified demonstrate that the oracle seemed to carefully curate its responses, naming deities relevant to the topic of the query or to the supplicant's regional background. People also visited Dodona with concerns about conventional medicine. They wanted to know if their current cure would be successful or whether visiting a medical professional, a physician or a female healer, would be helpful. Such queries seem to reveal an element of distrust towards non-religious medicine, as well as, perhaps, issues with accessibility to treatments that did not rely on ritual

[651] Dillon 1997a: 75.

practices. Visiting a physician may have been considered a more significant financial investment, so the person who considered undertaking it may have wanted to confirm first that the risk would pay off. The sanctuary of Zeus Naios and Dione functioned as a medical resource for those seeking good health, a cure to their disease in the form of religious practices or advice on how to proceed with their treatment, further blurring the lines between oracle and divine healing center.

3.5. Conclusion

The concern about one's wellbeing and ability to successfully build and sustain one's household lies at the core of many of the queries composed by visitors at the oracle of Dodona. Supplicants most frequently inquired about marriage and children, often in tandem, then about their own health as well as that of their *oikos* members, and, finally, about their slaves. Tablets belonging to slaves are also present in the corpus. They predominantly involve consultations about obtaining freedom from the owner. The origin of the people making the queries is often uncertain, though linguistic and onomastic analyses point to Doric-speaking communities, most likely from Northwestern Greece or Illyria. Thessalians were another prominent group among the frequent visitors of Dodona, particularly in relation to problems with health. It must be noted that the women, who have been identified as supplicants of the Epirote sanctuary, appear to be overwhelmingly local residents.[652] Although the women of Ancient Greece were known to travel to sanctuaries, especially healing centers, the evidence from Dodona suggests that those making the query by themselves seemed to travel shorter distances, while the ones who may have come from afar (e.g. LOD 46, DVC 313) were less numerous and accompanied by chaperones such as husbands or female relatives, with whom they consulted the oracle together.[653] The origins of the slaves making the queries are even more difficult to establish, partly due to the fragmentary nature of the queries. It is only in the case of Rhazia (DVC 73) that a local, Epirote-Illyrian identity can be attributed. However, in queries posed by other people about enslaved individuals, many of the named slaves or captives seem to have ties to Illyria, further supporting the notion that many of the supplicants

[652] Katsadima (2017: 140) draws similar conclusions in her analysis of female supplicants' queries. She establishes that out of 75 feminine names mentioned in the tablets, 52% can be identified as Epirote or Northwestern Greek, 23% as belonging to supplicants who appear to have traveled from outside of Epirus, and the remaining 25% as uncertain.
[653] Dillion 1997: 183-186.

traveling to Dodona, especially those belonging to groups that traditionally did not have as much freedom of movement in Greek communities as free men, would have most likely been residents of Epirus or, at most, Northwestern Greece.

The Dodonean oracular inscriptions reveal that consultations were made in times of emergency. General inquiries about the supplicant's welfare and the success of their family can be found, but the more detailed questions concerning matrimony, progeny, slaves, or health appear to have been posed when they were faced with a particular problem. This is distinctly visible in the case of queries about matrimony and children, where the visitors present the Epirote oracle with situations that deviate from the norm. While marriage was a social expectation, which was needed to help build and maintain one's *oikos*, not all the supplicants were certain whether it was the right decision or, at the very least, whether their timing was beneficial to them. Both men and women appear to have consulted the gods about finding a wife or husband. The phrasing of their questions, however, points to seeking out a spouse in instances of remarriage, particularly following a divorce, which was often contingent on the wife's fertility. The practice seems to have been controversial,[654] as evidenced by the need to consult the oracle of Dodona on the matter and by its rather conservative answers aimed at maintaining the *status quo*.

The worry about childlessness is another prominent topic in the tablets. Individuals and couples traveled to the sanctuary of Zeus Naios and Dione in order to obtain information about whether they would eventually produce progeny. Heirs, particularly male ones, were essential to maintaining the continuity of the family line, as well as guaranteeing that the parents were cared for in their old age. Ensuring that a child was born into the marriage was a priority. Queries about descendants can be grouped in two categories: those asked by supplicants seeking to know whether their future marriage would result in children and those already married, who may have had trouble conceiving. The onus of fertility always seemed to fall on the other party; if a man made the consultation, he wished to know whether his wife would bear him progeny (e.g. LOD 46). Women, on the other hand, inquired about the virility of their present or potential husbands (DVC 2552, 2609). Both genders actively sought to ensure that the partners they chose would provide them

[654] As Cohn-Haft (1995) demonstrates, even in Athens, from which comes the biggest body of evidence concerning divorces, the act of divorcing a wife or husband could cause severe social and economic repercussions for both parties.

with descendants, which appeared to be the most important feature defining a desirable spouse, superseding even the financial aspects of marriage.

The concerns slaves themselves brought in front of Zeus Naios and Dodona were straightforward – they were interested in the timing and conditions of their manumission. Rhazia and Kittos (DVC 1411), the only two named slaves, wished to know whether the circumstances surrounding their freedom would be to their benefit. The precarious situation they have found themselves in made them completely dependent on their masters' whims. In must be, however, noted that in both cases the slaves appear to be interested in being manumitted under specific rules (though in the case of Rhazia, the *paramone* arrangement she is in does not suit her). The visit at the sanctuary of Dodona was an attempt to influence their situation to their benefit, which is even more clearly visible in queries in which the slaves ask about the offerings they should make in order to secure their freedom (e.g. DVC 1395 and 574). They seem to utilize the oracle as a ritualistic means of exerting a degree of control over their life. The complicated relationship between master/free person and slave is further accentuated in the queries made about by the former about the latter. Slave owners occasionally consulted about the purchase of slaves, as well as manumission, demonstrating that the Epirote oracle was not often used as a means of making decisions concerning this aspect of the *oikos*. Even so, the queries that do stand out are the ones concerning the family of slaves. The two instances of questions about an enslaved or captured woman and her children (DVC 22 and 2383) exemplify different types of familial relations that formed between free people and slaves. Perhaps unsurprisingly, many of the tablets betray a Northwestern Greek aspect to them, either visible in the local names of the slaves mentioned or in the location – Aktion – present in DVC 3473. This may be connected to the Illyrians neighbouring with Epirus, who were notorious for their raids and slave trade.

Finally, the supplicants expressed unease about their health, as well as that of their family. While the primary subject of consultations was frequently the supplicant him or herself, questions about the wellbeing of relatives were not uncommon, particularly in regard to children – a man's responsibility for his household extended to its members' health (curiously enough, all of the three queries identified as having been asked by a woman concerned only themselves). DVC 556 even suggests that there may have been a belief in inherited diseases, possibly as a result of divine punishment. Eye-related illnesses appear to have been the most prevailing ailment among the

visitors and their families, though in most queries the medical problem remained unspecified. The oracle of Dodona could be consulted about the efficiency of a cure or about the need to seek assistance from other specialists, such as medics or a female healer, but did not appear to be expected to provide the degree of assistance that could be found in healing centers such as Asclepieia. The visitors at the sanctuary of Zeus Naios and Dione did, however, seem to take on a different approach to problems centered on health in comparison to inquiries related to marriage, progeny or slaves. All types of consultations include the various question formulas found in the tablets. Nonetheless, approximately 20% of the health queries include a request for the name of the deity to propitiate in order to successfully overcome the problem, making this the greatest number of tablets containing the τίνι formula in the cluster discussed in this chapter.[655] While supplicants asking about children or nuptials appeared to want a clear answer concerning the decisions they were making or guidance about what the future held, those consulting about health desired help in actively combating their problems. The belief in the divine origin of certain illnesses, which could only be expunged through appropriate sacrifices and prayer, also emerges from the texts.

The oracular tablets from Dodona demonstrate the various concerns visitors of the sanctuary had about themselves and their *oikos*, particularly in the context of establishing and supporting their household. While the pragmatism does appear to have been a motivating factor in consulting the oracle, the queries also demonstrate the strength of family bonds exhibited by the care and concern for the well-being of one's relatives. There does not seem to be much of a difference in what the supplicants desired based on gender. Both men and women consulted the oracle in order to confirm that their choice of spouse would be beneficial to them, with the partner's ability to procreate being at the forefront of requirements, though the women's tablets raise the question of their purpose – if the female supplicant received an unsatisfactory answer, could she withdraw from the betrothal or divorce her husband? The men also fulfilled their obligations as heads of the household by taking upon themselves to inquire about the health of their relatives and sought cures for those dependent on them. A greater divide seems to appear along the lines of the master-slave relationship. In the few cases that have been identified as belonging to enslaved individuals, the supplicant distrusts his or her master's intentions of setting them free or does not

[655] Furthermore, if the very brief (περὶ + gen. formula) or heavily lacunose tablets are omitted, texts referencing sacrifice or prayer constitute about 40-50% of this cluster.

wish to remain tied to the master's household. Their concerns were not unwarranted; queries by masters about manumission demonstrate that the decision to rid oneself of a productive household member and property was not an easy decision. Furthermore, questions about children by slave women further blur the lines of relations between free people and slaves.

Chapter 4. Travel, economy, and justice

4.1. Introduction

Outside of oracular queries broadly revolving around family matters, the other substantial group of the questions posed by visitors at the sanctuary of Dodona include various aspects of socio-economic everyday life: work and money, travel and trade, as well as legal problems. Scholars such as Prestianni Giallombardo and Eidinow had noticed the prevalence of some of these topics in the inscriptions they could access.[656] These observations were later confirmed by the DVC corpus, in which, as Parker in his overview of the tablets remarks, themes of mobility, finance and labour are particularly popular.[657] Further supporting this notion are Bonnechere's calculations that 155 tablets – or 12% – (out of the 1323 he deems complete enough to offer sufficient information for analysis) fall under "travel, residence, emigration"; "work" (195) and "money" (203) each respectively account for 15%; while "success in business" (232) and "justice/law" (32) represent 18% and 2% of the inscriptions.[658] Combined, they constitute over half of the legible evidence, demonstrating the not insignificant part that the oracle was expected to play in the decisions the supplicants made about their wealth, their work or their travels.

While the exact origins of those visiting Dodona remain elusive, the majority of location names – referring either to places of residence or travel destinations – in these tablets are *poleis* and *koina*, located a relatively short distance from the oracular site.[659] They are found primarily in Epirus, Illyria and Acarnania, as well as Magna Graecia, and Eastern Sicily, along with certain inland areas, such as Thessaly. As Piccinini notes, to the inhabitants of a number of these regions, Dodona would have been the nearest large sanctuary they could reasonably visit.[660] This will allow to place the inquiries of the supplicants in a Northwestern Greek context as well as draw their connections with some of the regions bordering the Adriatic and Ionian seas. Even though Dodona itself was landlocked, flanked by the Pindus mountain range and with no access to any larger rivers connecting the oracle to the sea, evidence suggests that it played a part in the broader economic

[656] Prestianni Giallombardo 2002: 125; Eidinow 2007: 72.
[657] Parker 2016: 80-82.
[658] Bonnechere 2017: 74.
[659] Castiglioni 2016: 113-114.
[660] Piccinini 2017: 73.

and transportation network of the Adriatic and Ionian basins. This trend is perhaps unsurprising; Epirus, in which the oracle was located, tended to face westwards as its economy was linked to the Adriatic due to its topography.[661]

The position of Epirus within this larger network of routes and trade remains however elusive. As far as the infrastructure was concerned, although the pre-Roman roads of Epirus have not been as thoroughly studied as those of other regions, such as Attica[662], the Epirote territory has been proven to have a sufficient network of paths and roads which connected the mountainous interior with the coast, facilitating the journey across the land.[663] In fact, Cabanes argues that the Pindus mountains, one of the prevalent geographic features in Epirus, were not a hindrance to those trying to pass through them, as they would have been permeated by pathways created by the transhumant shepherds who crossed the mountain chain.[664] This crossing would have also been made by those visiting Dodona from Thessaly, most likely through the Zygos pass.[665] Due to its inland location, anyone journeying to the oracle was forced to travel to the sanctuary on foot. The roads connecting Ambracia and Illyrian Apollonia, which passed through Epirus, were famously used at the start of the Peloponnesian War by the troops allied with Corinth, which were dispatched to Apollonia. In order to avoid running into the Corcyreans, who controlled the waters in the region, the Ambracian and Leucadian soldiers travelled by land, mostly likely through the Ioannina plain.[666] In his study of this military episode, Beaumont demonstrates that there were several paths connecting the north and south of Epirus, allowing for passage comfortable enough for an army to use.[667] Archeological excavations in the Ambracian Gulf further confirmed this theory, revealing that Ambracia was located at a crossroads of paths linking it with Dodona and, further north, with

[661] Bresson 2016: 34.
[662] Cf. Lohmann 2002:73-91. Lohmann demonstrates that while evidence of roads for earlier time periods – Mycenean, Geometric, and Archaic – is scarce, a lot can be said about the Classical period in-land communication networks. His analysis of the Attic road system reveals a dense network of roads and pathways, which ran through the urban, industrial, and agrarian parts of the region, allowing for easier access and transportation. Such detailed evidence of the infrastructure is, of course, not always available for every territory, but the Attic example shows the significance of roads and overland travel in the functioning of a region, as well as the existence and maintenance of such a transport network.
[663] Cabanes 1976: 495.
[664] Cabanes 1990.
[665] Hammond 1967: 284; Carbon 2017: 98.
[666] Thuc. 1.26.
[667] Beaumont 1952.

Illyria; to the south, the road ran through Acarnania; to the east it let through Athamanian territory; and finally to the west it connected the interior of Epirus with Thesprotia and the Ionian Sea.[668]

Epirus also boasted several port-cities during the Classical and Hellenistic periods. Supplicants travelling to Dodona from afar most likely arrived by boat to coastal cities such as Bouthrotos (later crossing through the Cassopea territory to reach the oracle) or Ambracia.[669] However, the latter, along with Illyrian Apollonia, was under Epirote domination only during the reign of the Aeacid monarchy. The importance of controlling Ambracia due to its position as an economic hub and as a key entry point into the region was further highlighted by the Epirotes' attempt to reclaim the territory, succeeding in recapturing Ambrakos, the port, in 219 BC, though not the main city. Despite the loss of direct control over Apollonia as well, the colony remained in good trading relations with Epirus. This shift led to a growing prominence of Bouthrotos as a city facilitating maritime commerce.[670]

The commercial contacts between Epirus and other *poleis* are signaled through the coins found in various Epirote cities, particularly from the period between the 4th and 2nd c. BC. While each region had its peculiarities – Chaonia's development, for example, benefited greatly from its proximity to Corcyra[671] – overviews of excavation reports from Dodona, Kassope, Arta, Ambracia, Ammotopos, Nekromanteion, Rhodotopi and Thesprotia have shown that beside the circulation of Epirote coinage across the territories of the different *koina*, Greek cities in Illyria, such as Oricon, Dyrrachium, and Apollonia are well represented. Equally significant is the presence of coins from the Peloponnese, in particular Corinth, which had ties to the region, and Acarnania. Despite their proximity, Macedonia, Aetolia and Thessaly are not well represented in the evidence, possibly due to their contentious relationship with Epirus, which could have affected trade between the regions.[672] As Hammond observed, there are very few coins from Magna Graecia and Sicily, leading Cabanes to theorize that Epirus's trade was primarily limited to the Northwestern Greek coast.[673] Despite this lack of proof concerning extensive commercial relationships between Epirus

[668] Andreou 1993: 91.
[669] Hammond 1967: 172; Carbon 2017: 99; Milán 2018: 114.
[670] Cabanes 1976: 496, Cf. Céka 1972.
[671] Cf. De Maria and Mancini 2018. The close ties between both regions are further attested by the large number of Corcyrean coins found in Bouthrotos, Phoenice and Antigonea between 360/350 and 168 BC, second only to the number of uncovered Epirote coins (listed in Gjongecaj 2008: 135-136).
[672] Cabanes 1976: 497-499; Caramessini-Oeconomides 1990: 267-269.
[673] Hammond 1967: 724; Cabanes 1976: 501-502.

and the cities of Southern Italy, both territories were entangled in a shared political and military history initiated and sustained by members of the Aeacid dynasty.[674] One of the earliest examples is that of Alcetas, son of Tharyps, who took refuge at the court of Dionysius I of Syracuse in 385 BC and who was later aided by the tyrant in retaking the Epirote throne.[675] Fifty years later, king Alexander I sailed across the Ionian sea to help Taras in its war against Italic tribes.[676] Under the reign of Pyrrhus, after a second call for help from Taras, soldiers from Epirus repelled Roman forces, effectively placing the *polis* under temporary Epirote domination.[677] Pyrrhus also campaigned in Sicily against Carthage, briefly tightening the bonds between the island and his kingdom.

While the actions of the Aeacid monarchy embroiled Epirus in extraterritorial wars, they also were what finally brought the region into the fold of the "known" ancient Greek world. Through its contacts with Athens facilitated by king Tharyps, Epirus, slowly gained a more prominent position on the international stage. Prior to the Peloponnesian War, Epirus was predominantly known for its cattle farming and transhumant animal husbandry. Cattle remained a valuable resource throughout the reign of the Aeacids, as kings themselves most likely owned large herds.[678] Nonetheless, as Bresson points out, in Kassope, between the 3rd and 1st c. BC, the number of cattle bones drops, while an increase in the excavated remains of pigs, wild game, birds and seafood demonstrates a need for the diversification of meat sources most likely due to the limitation of space available for cattle grazing.[679] This change is reflected in the structure of the villages across the area, which underwent change as well: the emergence of new, small to medium sized settlements (e.g. Rachi Platanias) and architectural renovations such as the construction of stone buildings in place of old ones, exemplified by the development of Vitsa and Dodona. The population in Molossia appeared to have been growing and becoming more concentrated in the

[674] Cabanes 1976: 530.
[675] Diod. Sic. 15.13.2. Dionysius' political ambitions in the Adriatic basin and his role in founding and securing Greek colonies along the Dalmatian coast are particularly well attested in the Dodonean tablets and will be discussed in this chapter.
[676] Justin XII.2.
[677] Plut. *Pyrrh*. 13, 16, 18. Epigraphic evidence of this is provided by *SIG*^{3} 392, a dedication found in Dodona offered to Zeus Naios by Pyrrhus, the Epirotes and the Tarentines commemorating their defeat of the Romans.
[678] Plutarch (*Pyrrh*. 5.5) mentions a man who oversaw the cattle herds belonging to Neoptolemos I.
[679] Bresson 2016: 133, following the data in Niskanen 2009.

komai (villages), which began functioning as centers of an expanding administrative system.[680] The religious site of Dodona also rose to prominence during this period, with a larger number of supplicants visiting the site from the 5th century onwards.[681] According to Domínguez, the dynamic political and social developments of the Epirote territory eventually would impact the region's economic growth as well. He points to a passage in Lycurgus' *Against Leocrates*, in which Epirus is described as exporting wheat to Corinth, meaning that there was a substantial surplus in the production allowing for trade.[682] While this era of prosperity is dated to the reign of Alexander I, Domínguez argues that it would have been the result of the reforms made by the king's predecessors, including Tharyps.[683] The culmination of the economic growth is dated to the period of the Epirote Koinon, from the second half of the 3rd c. to the Roman conquest.[684]

Even though Epirus was divided into larger (Molossia, Thesprotia, Chaonia) and smaller *koina*, which had their idiosyncrasies such as somewhat unusual labour divisions as in the case of the Athamanians, where the women supposedly worked the fields, while the men looked after the flocks[685], the society of the region appeared to share a similar set of characteristics. The Epirote communities were primarily rural.[686] In their earlier stage, they are believed by scholars to have been centered around families or place, with a system of communal or family-based property ownership. However, the introduction of practices more aligned with those of central Greece under the Aeacid monarchy, and the socioeconomic development that followed, brought legal change in the direction of a more individualistic approach to property, favouring the man as head of the family and in charge of the familial possessions.[687] Despite these shifts, it must be reiterated that the position of women in Epirus and, more broadly in Northwestern Greece, remained quite different from that of their counterparts in places such as Athens. As will be further discussed in

[680] Domínguez 2018: 12, 15-16; Pliakou 2018: 138; Papadopoulos 2016: 444-447. Even though new settlements were being founded and developed, it must be noted that the landscape of Epirus remained largely non-urban, with the population living predominantly in unwalled *komai*.
[681] Piccinini 2017: 74.
[682] Lyc. 1, 26.
[683] Domínguez 2018: 26.
[684] Cabanes 1976: 515; Gjongecaj 2008: 134.
[685] Heraclides, ed. C. Müller, *FHG* II, p. 219, 33.
[686] Cabanes 1976: 490.
[687] Cabanes (1976: 399-423) convincingly demonstrates these changes based on the analysis of family ownership of slaves in manumission inscriptions from Bouthrotos during the late Hellenistic period; see also Domínguez 2018: 32.

this chapter in the context of oracular queries, they appeared to enjoy more freedom such as a greater control over property.

Having broadly outlined the socioeconomic practices in Epirus and its neighbouring regions, this chapter will place the oracular tablets pertaining to travel and commerce, work and money, and legal issues in the Northwestern Greek context. The aim is to establish the role that the oracle of Dodona fulfilled in addressing social and economic problems or uncertainties faced by local communities.

4.2. Work: Agriculture, and other crafts

The queries made by people visiting the sanctuary of Dodona reveal the range of economic endeavours concerning which they sought the oracle's help. Many of these are brief, consisting of περί + subject, devoid of further context, which presumably would have been explained orally during the consultation. Among commonly asked questions are those concerning farming (γεωργέω, γεωργία).[688] These, for the most part, were straight-forward. The supplicants presented the oracle with queries that required a binary answer concerning working the land, most likely relying on a lot system consisting of a positive and negative version of the statement, as illustrated by DVC 3128:

[---]λλωνίδαι [---]ΟΙ μέλλει βέντι[ον] καὶ ὄναιον ἦμεν γαοργέοντι τὸν χῶρον τοῦτόν μοι τὸν κλᾶρον ἐξενθεν

(...)llonidas (asks) is it both better and more useful for me to farm the land, may this lot come true.

While Parker indicates that the examples which mention lots explicitly or provide two opposing versions of the same question are too few to securely assume that this type of cleromancy was used at Dodona, the simplicity and format of the inquiries about farming suggest that the oracle could have provided the supplicants with one of two answers through a yes/no response method. This would mean that, unlike in the case of consultations where the inquirer asked about gods to

[688] γεωργέω: DVC 57, 98, 252, 275+278, 702, 788, 827, 1155, 1156, 1213, 1340, 1341, 1432, 1705, 1952, 1987, 2133, 2215, 2291, 2353, 2489, 2755, 2762, 2956, 3002, 3016, 3128, 3499, 3612, 3631, 3708, 4068. γεωργία: DVC 218, 307, 1245, 1604, 1814, 2403, 2904, 4037, 4043, 4070. These queries follow a similar structure, e.g. DVC 1155 ἦ γειοργέν; / *to farm?* or DVC 307 Φατύλδι πὲρ γαϝροί(ας) / *Phatylos concerning farming?*

sacrifice to in order to secure success, here the oracle would help influence the decision of the supplicant concerning pursuing their plan or abandoning it.

Agriculture was one of the staples of the ancient Greek economy; it played a crucial role in Epirus as well. The little evidence that exists about the economic life of Epirus mentions the cultivation of cereals such as wheat and barley.[689] The local interest in pursuing farming is therefore not surprising. However, as Parker remarks, what might be unusual is the frequency with which the supplicants made such inquiries.[690] This recurring theme in the tablets indicates a growing social concern surrounding farming as a sustainable activity. Most of the texts are dated to the 5th-4th c. BC. DVC 2755 has been identified by DVC as written in the Epirote alphabet and many others contain Doric features, yet the exact identity of the inquirers remains elusive.[691] A few tablets mention specific location, such as DVC 1156, which refers to Aktion in Acarnania:

[Χ ἐπερωτῆι Δία] Νᾶον [καὶ Διώναν] ἦ γαοργεν ἐ[ν] Ἀκτίωι ἢ ἀλλοῖ πο[ρευόμενος]

(X asks Zeus) Naios (and Dione): to farm in Aktion or to go to another (place)?

In DVC 1339+1340, the supplicant wished to know whether he should farm in Thessalian Pharkadon; in DVC 2762, an Epirote woman was asking about her relative's opportunity to do farm work after sailing north to Pharos, a recently established colony; in LOD 75, Agelochos from Hergetion in Sicily consulted about devoting himself to working the land. The supplicants seem to be, for the most part, locals from Northwestern Greece, but it seems that some were even willing to cross the Ionian Sea in order to received advice from the oracle of Dodona on the subject of their future work.[692]

The reason for the substantial number of these inquiries can be explained by a number of factors. First, it must be noted that the use of γεωργέω in these inscriptions is not always precise. It can refer to the act of farming, as well as becoming a landowner.[693] Access to land was not synonymous with farming; private landowners could work their own property or hire others to do

[689] Lycurg. *Leoc*. 26; Liv. 44. 16; see Cabanes 1976: 493; Cabanes 1997a: 90.
[690] Parker 2016: 82.
[691] Dakaris *et al*. 2013b: 122.
[692] A more in-depth analysis of these tablets and Dodona's geographic reach can be found in later sections of this chapter.
[693] LSJ s.v. γεωργέω.

the job.[694] The supplicants, therefore, could have been consulting about either farming on their land or becoming a salaried agricultural worker. DVC 2762 might illustrate the latter – Materina's relative was sailing to a new colony in order to farm there. The inscription is dated by DVC to the 2nd half of the 3rd century, over 100 years after the foundation of Pharos.[695] The man mentioned in the query was, therefore, not part of the original wave of colonists. The text states that he was traveling to the colony in order to work,[696] though it is unclear whether the owned land there or was just hoping to find employment upon arrival. Similarly, in DVC 1156, it appears that the supplicant was wondering about farming in Aktion or moving elsewhere, presumably also in search of work.

Queries about agriculture also seem to have been linked to its sustainability. As Bresson notes, small landowners could rarely provide for themselves and their families from farming alone, often simultaneously having to pursue other trades or taking up work as agricultural workers on wealthier farms.[697] Concern about harvest is mirrored in the numerous inquiries about fruits and crops, such as the query made by Kraton in DVC 2319:[698]

Κράτων ἐπερωτᾶι τὸν θεὸν περί τῶν καρπῶν ὧ̃ ἡ γῆ φύει [---] ἦ̃ ἂν ἐντελέες γίνωνται;

Kraton asks the god concerning these fruits the earth produces (…) will they be perfect?

Consultations at the oracle of Dodona were made in an attempt to predict whether farming would turn out to be profitable to the inquirers. The supplicant from DVC 95 even wrote what appears to have been a prayer rather than a query, in which he pleads the gods to ensure him fortune as he works the land.[699]

A final implication of the questions about farming may have been the interest of the supplicants in the purchase of landed property, as can be seen in DVC 305:[700]

[694] Bresson 2016: 152-153.
[695] Dakaris *et al*. 2013b: 124.
[696] [εἰς] Φάρ(ον) εἰς ἐπ[ίλοι]πον [γα]οργέον. For complete text, see Chapter 4.3.
[697] Bresson 2016: 155.
[698] See also καρπός: DVC 160, 1758, 2173, 3287, 3319, 3426, 3440; καρπεία: DVC 772, 1025A+B, 2153, 2988, 3278.
[699] DVC 95.
[700] DVC propose an accusative here: ὀνευμένους. However, Méndez Dosuna (2016: 122-123) argues in favour of the dative originally found in the inscription, arguing that it fits with the typical inquiry formula [λωΐον καΐ ἄμεινον ἔστι]. Furthermore, the editors suggest that this inscription should be connected to DVC 302, in which the supplicant

ἦ γᾶν ὀνευμένοις;

(is it better and more profitable) to buy land?

Although land was often transferred through inheritance, with each heir receiving their equal share and each heiress being given a dowry, estates were also bought as investments and then sold.[701] It should be noted that the purchased land did not have to be in close proximity to the place of residence of the buyer. Land fragmentation, usually resulting from the division of the patrimony among descendants, was a feature of agriculture in the ancient Greek world. As Gallant points out, the farming of many scattered plots of land was a strategy that helped minimize the risk of losing crops in cases of natural disasters.[702] While evidence demonstrating the nuances of land ownership in Epirus is scarce, a testament inscription from the 4th c. BC found in Dodona also reveals that the owner had four plots of land, each with a different function and in a different locations.[703] Glimpses of this type of ownership can be seen in the oracular tablets. In DVC 3220, which will be discussed in more details later in this chapter, a supplicant, who most likely inhabited one of the former Corinthian colonies in Northwestern Greece, expressed an interest in selling his estate near Corinth. Supplicants were seeking information on the profitability of their investments. In LOD 109A, the inquirer consulted the gods about the purchase or rental of a pond, most likely for the purpose of fishing or animal husbandry:[704]

ἦ τὸ λιμνίον τὸ πὰρ τὸ Δαμάτριον πριάμενος πράξω τι ἀγαθὸν κὰτ ΤΟΥΤΟΝ φρέᾳ[ρ](?) Σ.Ι

If by buying/renting the pond near the Demetrion, I will do something good concerning this water reservoir (…)

Not every query about buying property concerned farmland. At least two separate cases, DVC 2418 and LOD 117, involve the supplicant referring to the purchase of a house (οἰκία).

asks about purchasing a ship. The complete text would therefore have referred to a choice between investing in land or a ship. While this suggestion is an interesting one, the shape of the letters of both inscriptions, based on the facsimile provided in the published corpus, do not seem to match, which would suggest that they were written by two separate people.

[701] Bresson 2016: 153-154.

[702] Gallant 1991: 41-45.

[703] Dareste, Haussoullier and Reinach 1898: 61.

[704] Lhôte 2006: 231.

Besides farming and issues of land ownership, several questions, also dated to the 5th-4th c. BC, address the topic of animal husbandry. At least five queries concern oxen.[705] Their number could be explained by the prominent role of cattle in the Epirote economy, which included large herds owned by the Aeacid monarchy.[706] Vast pastures and grazing lands were not only a feature of Epirus, but also of its neighbours – Acarnania or Thessaly, in which cattle raising was a marker of wealth and prestige among its aristocratic elites.[707] The queries were not only limited to oxen. Other grazing animals, such as sheep and goats, appeared in the queries even more frequently.[708] The growing interest in sheep, rather than the expected cattle, could be the result of a progressing urbanization of the Northwestern Greek region, which would diminish the pastures available to animals for grazing.[709] Horses and horse-breeding are also mentioned, albeit to a much lesser degree.[710] Finally, in LOD 82, a supplicant sought the advice of the Dodonean gods about raising ducks:

[θε]ός. τύχα. [ἦ] ἐπιμ[ελόμενος] νάσ(σ)ας λῶιον καὶ ἄμινον πράσ(σ)οιμι αὐτίκα καὶ ἰς τὸν ὕστερον χρόνον;

God, fortune. If it would be better and more profitable for me to raise ducks now and at a later time?

Lhôte remarks that although ducks are believed by scholars to have been a novelty introduced to farmsteads in the Hellenistic period, the Archaic letters indicated the tablet should be dated to the beginning of the 4th c. BC, suggesting that the birds were already being raised for profit at an earlier date. The letter ε in ὕστερον is written in the Corinthian alphabet. The Corinthian dialect tends to use ι instead of ει, as in ἄμινον or ἰς. These features point to the author's origin from the Northwestern colonies.[711] The query remains a unique addition to the questions about animal husbandry, perhaps asked by the supplicant precisely due to the unfamiliarity with this type of

[705] DVC 101, 564, 1277, 1919, 2457.
[706] Several ancient sources lauded the abundance of oxen in Epirus: Pind. *Nem*. 4.83; Plut. *Pyrrh*. 5.5; Caes. *Civ*. 3.47.
[707] Bresson 2016: 137-138; on animal husbandry in Thessaly, see Howe 2008: 69-71.
[708] E.g. DVC 2028: περὶ τῶν προβάτων ἦ 'πίπαμα; / *Concerning the sheep. Should I acquire (them)?* See also προβᾰτεία: LOD 80B, DVC 795, 1083, 2617. πρόβᾰτον: DVC 925, 2760, 3688, 3761, 3891. προβᾰτεύω: LOD 80A, DVC 8, 202, 2969, 3059; αἴξ: DVC 1199.
[709] Bresson (2016: 134) points out that different animals had different special needs, with oxen having the biggest requirements, while sheep were a lot less demanding.
[710] ἵππος: DVC 466. ἱπποφορβείω: DVC 2434.
[711] Lhôte 2006: 178.

livestock and the uncertainty of the investment. While many of the questions do not provide much context, it appears that the acquisition of the animals and possibly the concern about the financial risk it entailed seemed to be the main reason for consulting about this subject. Inquirers also worried about the health of their livestock.[712] In DVC 1199, a supplicant even appears to have consulted about his dead goats, presumably wishing to find out what caused them to perish or how to prevent future disasters.[713]

Against all these inquiries concerning animal husbandry and fruitful harvests, the lack of pragmatic questions about how many animals to purchase or which crops would be the most profitable to cultivate is rather striking. A similar tendency can be seen in oracular inscriptions about commerce, which will be discussed later in this chapter; the cargo traded by the supplicants is very rarely mentioned. This appears to have been a deliberate choice. Requesting this level of detailed information from the gods may have been considered as overstepping the boundaries of what was appropriate to ask. Thus, it seems that, in the context of economic queries, the oracle of Dodona was consulted about macrolevel decisions – whether to become/remain a farmer, to raise animals or to engage in trade. The gods were meant to advise on the outcome of such life-altering and financially risky choices, while the supplicants kept the details of their plans private.

Not all the visitors of the Epirote sanctuary farmed or raised animals for a living. Questions about pursing different trades can also be found in the oracular tablets,[714] though it must be noted that craftsmen were often people who were simply unable to sustain themselves and their families from their properties and had to seek other sources of income. From this perspective, queries about τέχνη can be seen as connected to the farming ones, providing a job alternative to those unsure whether working the land would be economically sufficient. Profit appeared to be one of the main motivating factors in consulting the oracle, as seen in DVC 1248 from the 4th c. BC:

ἦ [τὰν τέχν]αν ἐ[ργα]ζομένωι λώ[ιον καὶ] ἄμεινον ἔστα[ι μοι] εἰς τὸν ἔπειτα [χρόνον];

If it would be better and more profitable for me to work my techne in the future?

[712] An example of this can be found in DVC 2457, where the supplicant asks: [---] πὲρ τõ νοσέ[ματος ---π]ε[ρ]ὶ βοῦν ΠΟ[---] */ concerning the disease (...) concerning the ox (...)?*
[713] [περὶ] αἰγῦν ἀπολομέν[ων] / *(concerning) the dead goats*
[714] DVC s.v. τέχνα

The worry about being able to support one's family can be seen in LOD 105A:

[θεός. τύχαν ἀγαθάν. τῶι Διὶ τῶι Ναί]ωι καὶ τᾶι Διώναι Σωκράτης ἐπικοι[νῆται ἦ — — — — — — — — — — — —] ἐργαζόμενος λῶιον καὶ ἄμεινον [πράσσοι κα — — — — — — — — — — —]ΟΣ καὶ αὐτῶι καὶ γενεᾶι.

(God, good fortune) Sokrates consults with (Zeus Naios) and Dione. Would it be better to work (…) for him and his progeny?

Even more explicitly, the supplicant from DVC 2421, also dated to the first half of the 4th c. BC, inquired about repaying his debt by changing his profession:

[Ζ]εῦ Δωδωναῖε [καὶ] Διώνα ἦ τὰν τέχναν ἐργαζομένωι τὰν μαγιρικὰν τῶν χρ[εῶ]ν ἀπονοήσας;

Oh Zeus and Dione, if by working as a cook I will repay my debts?

However, as Hulme Kozey points out, changing one's trade and pursuing a new one was not a simple undertaking. First, in cases like the one presented in DVC 2367, the supplicant – Epilytos – consulted about practicing a craft he was trained in (ἐπαιδεύθην) or taking up something new. Hulme Kozey suggests that since he would have undergone training in his craft, which would have entailed an investment of time and money into the apprenticeship, Epilytos' decision to possibly abandon the trade he was already practicing was a life-altering one.[715] Any new training would be time-consuming and costly, restricting one's ability to earn substantial wages during that period. The supplicants would want to consult with the gods in order to ensure they were not making a mistake.

Another aspect to consider when changing trades was the social implications of such a switch. Many of the queries about craft refer to them as "ancestral" (πατρῷος or τοῦ πατρός), as exemplified by DVC 1394, dated to the latter half of the 4th c. BC:

θεός. τύχαι ἀγαθᾶι. Φαικύλωι θεμιστεύει ὁ θεὸς τὰμ πατρώιαν τέχναν ἐργάζεσθαι, ἁλιεύεσθαι, καὶ λῶιον καὶ ἄμεινομ πράξειν;

[715] Hulme Kozey 2018: 214. For comparison, apprenticeship contracts from Hellenistic and Roman Egypt stated that a weaving apprentice would have to pay fees for her training, which lasted four years (see Hasaki 2012: 186-187).

God, good fortune. Does the god reply to Phaikylos that he should practice his ancestral trade, fishing, and do better and succeed?[716]

By describing the trade as ancestral, the supplicants signaled that it was handed down to them by their fathers, a common practice in the Ancient Mediterranean world.[717] The craft they pursued was, therefore, tied to their family's identity, and abandoning it may have been perceived as rejecting one's heritage. Belonging to a certain trade meant that social connections and relationships were built within that group. Similarly, religious rites and celebrations might differ depending on which gods were the patrons of a given craft.[718] As a result, changing trades could have serious ramifications in the life and identity of the individual, who would risk losing the social network cultivated by his father and being cut off from the rituals his family practiced. Such a decision could not be made lightly and may have required divine insight.

Finally, it should be noted that a small number of questions about employment does not fall under the aforementioned τέχνη category of supplicants considering changing their craft. Some simply wanted to know whether their choice of employment was the right one. In DVC 1587, the supplicant was considering pursuing a medical career.[719] Several queries also concern military or mercenary service. Men asked the oracle whether they should serve under specific leaders or in particular roles.[720]

4.3. Women and finance

The Classical and Hellenistic Mediterranean world did not present a uniform stance on the subject of a woman's right to own property. The accessibility of the spheres of finance, ownership and property management to the female part of the population varied greatly depending on the geographic region and time period. The best documented *polis*, Athens, is an example of a systemic exclusion of women from the control over economic means. Citizen women were limited in the

[716] It should be noted that Φαικύλος is a fairly uncommon name, attested in Corcyra, which may suggest that he was an inhabitant of Northwestern Greece (*IG* IX 1, 928).
[717] Burford 1972: 82-87.
[718] Hulme Kozey 2018: 126.
[719] ἦ ’φιάλλει (i)ατρῶ ἔρ[γōι] / *if he should undertake work of a physician?* (see DOL s.v. DVC 1587).
[720] LOD 127, 128. DVC 471, 2625, 2981, 3648, 3811.

extent of their interactions with personal or family finance. They were not allowed to enter into contracts beyond one *medimnos* of barley,[721] presumed to be the equivalent of food enough to feed a family for five to six days, nor were they free to manage the money and property that belonged to them, making their *kyrios* the de facto owner of their possessions.[722] A woman's greatest source of financial means was her dowry, in the form of money, property such as furniture and sometimes even land, given to her on her wedding day.[723] Larger dowries attracted better suitors, providing the woman with a more comfortable future, which is why it was important for a woman's family to supply her with the most optimal sum they could manage. It was understood as her "contribution" to her new *oikos*, giving the bride a stake in her new household and, theoretically, providing her with protection against poor treatment from her husband, since in the event of abuse, her family could request a divorce, which would require the spouse to return the dowry.[724] However, the dowry, which would be passed on from the woman's old *kyrios* to the new one, was not managed by her and remained in the hands of men. Athenian women were also allowed to inherit property, but only if there were no other living male relatives.[725] From the perspective of daily life though, literary accounts imply that it was common for women to be placed in charge of domestic funds.[726]

In the broader scale of the Hellenic world, Athens presents itself as somewhat of an outlier. Spartan women were allowed to own property and could inherit a portion of the family's wealth even if there were male heirs available.[727] In his critique of the Spartan distribution of private property, Aristotle claims that two-fifths of the land belonged to women as a result of the inheritance laws and of large dowries.[728] The women appear to have had more control over their wealth, even using it to infiltrate spaces that were traditionally reserved for men, as exemplified by Kyniska, the daughter of the Spartan king Archidamus II, who bred her own horses and later entered them into a race at the Olympic Games, which her chariot won.[729] The women of Gortyn

[721] Isaeus 10.10.
[722] Blundell 1995: 114-115.
[723] Blundell 1995: 115.
[724] Blundell 1995: 116.
[725] Foxhall 2005: 3.
[726] Blundell 1995: 141.
[727] Blundell 1995: 155.
[728] Aristotle *Politics* 1270a.
[729] Xenophon *Agesilaos* 9.6; Plut. *Ages*. 20; Paus. 3.8.1.

were also allowed to inherit, even though it was only half the sum allotted to a son.[730] A unique feature of Gortynian law was that the property of the man and woman was not merged once the couple married, but remained separate and was inherited separately by male and female descendants.[731] Property laws in the Cyclades permitted for childless widows and divorcées to keep their own possessions, perhaps even entitling them to a portion of the common property.[732]

Similarly, regions north of Attica appear to deviate from the Athenian standard. The women of Locris, as was argued by Lerat, were not subject to the tutelage of a male relative.[733] The manumission inscriptions from Delphi also demonstrate that women from Phocis had a certain amount of freedom in managing their property – slaves. Darmezin points out that while some of the texts mention the need for the consent to the manumission by the rest of the family, this requirement appears to be the result of some sort of familial ownership rather than the gender of the manumittors, as both men and women need their relatives' approval to release a slave. Furthermore, women are listed as sanctioning manumissions conducted by their male relatives.[734] Thessalian women seemed to equally enjoy a certain degree of ownership rights, which would permit them to make decisions about their property without needing the approval of their *kyrios*. A group of Hellenistic inscriptions from Larisa, believed to have been part of an inventory of the landed property owned by various individuals and groups in the city, names women among the landowners.[735] Other epigraphic evidence from the region points to women also being able to manumit slaves on their own.[736] Even in Hellenistic Boeotia, where women were believed to be under a guardianship system,[737] the situation was not as definite, as several manumission inscriptions depict women singlehandedly freeing their slaves.[738]

The epigraphic evidence from Epirus appears to align itself with the trends seen outside of Athens. The very limited number of Classical and Hellenistic sources render assessing the place

[730] See discussion in Patterson 1998: 79-83.
[731] Patterson 1998: 82.
[732] Stavrianopoulou 2006: 322.
[733] Lerat 1952: 141.
[734] Darmezin 1982.
[735] *SEG* XIII 394-395;The interpretation of the documents is contested. Some say that it is an inventory of all civic land (Salviat and Vatin 1974), while others consider this a donation to the *poleis* for religious (or other) purposes (Habicht 1976); see Mili 2014: 55 for overview of the discussion.
[736] Mili 2014: 80.
[737] Vatin 1970: 249.
[738] Cabanes 1983: 205; Inscriptions: *IG* VII 3314; Vollgraff 1901: 361; For an overview of Boeotian manumission texts, see Darmezin 1999.

of a free woman in Epirote society a difficult task. The most significant attempt to remedy this situation had been undertaken by Cabanes, who proposed looking at one of the most substantial bodies of evidence from Hellenistic Epirus, the manumission inscriptions from Bouthrotos, Dodona, Phoinike, and Gitana, as the basis for analysing social relations between individuals and within families.[739] He notes that in the inscriptions from Bouthrotos dated between 272 and 167 BC, out of the 257 instances of a family group[740] manumitting slaves, 244 groups include at least one woman. However, only 18 women appear as individual manumittors, constituting 22% of cases where a single person liberates his or her slaves. In total, about a third of slave owners seemed to be female.[741] A closer look at the place of the woman's name in the groups of manumittors reveals that, while not a frequent occurrence, women could find themselves at the head of a family, even if just temporarily until the eldest son came of age.[742] It is worth noting that in the remaining cases, the names of wives and daughters are also listed as part of the group manumitting the slaves. While careful about applying his analysis of the inscriptions of Bouthrotos to the general Epirote population, Cabanes reaches two important conclusions with regards to the status of free women in the region: first, that women could exert a certain degree of control over their property and secondly, that decisions concerning family property were made, at least formally, by the entire family and that women were seen as important enough to be included in these decisions.

The non-oracular epigraphic evidence from Dodona dating to the 4th-3rd c. BC fits Cabanes' deductions. In one of the inscriptions, a certain Matudika is mentioned as independently purchasing a slave for a *mina* of silver from Damoxena.[743] This text is perhaps the most emblematic of the Epirote woman's social position: two women, striking a deal without the need for male permission or assistance.[744] The possibility of North-western Greek women exercising a larger degree of control over their finances also seems to be hinted at by a Corcyrean inscription from the 3rd-2nd c. BC, in which Lamaitha appears as the creditor who lent a substantial sum of 225 units

[739] Cabanes 1976: 399.
[740] Cabanes 1976: 404-406. Through an analysis of the patronyms in the inscriptions, Cabanes convincingly argues that each group of manumittors consists of people forming, either through blood or through marriage, a family unit. This observation becomes particularly significant in the context of establishing the potential role of each individual in the family based on the order of the names listed (each list starts with the name of the head of the family, usually the father, then followed by the son or wife).
[741] Cabanes 1976: 408.
[742] Cabanes 1976: 410. There are 16 cases out of 224 of women being named first in the group of manumittors.
[743] Cabanes 1976, no. 60; *SGDI* 1356.
[744] Cabanes 1983: 203.

of silver to a woman named Myrtis. Myrtis put up property in the hills as collateral.[745] Two instances of women as independent manumittors have been recorded in Epirus: Pheideta, who frees Kleanor, and Sosipatra, who releases two slaves through *xenike lusis*.[746] The legal meaning of *xenike lusis* as a method of manumission has long been debated by scholars.[747] However, the most convincing explanation of this phenomenon has been provided by Zelnick-Abramovitz, who by reviewing cases from Epirus and Thessaly, argued that freed slaves were awarded the status of *xenoi* in these communities and, as a result, were made to pay the taxes ascribed to that group. Manumission by *xenike lusis* relieved them of this obligation.[748] Sosipatra's case would suggest that women, just as men, were able to grant a freed slave the privilege of a certain tax exemption. The epigraphic evidence from Dodona also presents five other cases of manumission in which women are listed as part of the manumitting group.[749] The women named in the inscriptions are shown to have significant control over what they do with their property without involving male relatives in their decisions.

Against this broader background, the Dodona tablets add a unique female perspective to the discussion of an ancient Greek woman's financial rights, particularly regarding the situation of women in Epirus and neighbouring regions.[750] The oracular inquiries addressed the most essential aspects of everyday life, so the collection unsurprisingly includes issues of finance, money and property not only from the expected male perspective, but also from the point of view of women, as in DVC 3113:

[θεὸς τύχα]ν ἀγαθάν· Ζεῦ Δ[ωδωναῖε καὶ Δι]ώνη<ι>· Καλλιρόα ἐπερω[τᾶι τὸν θεὸ]ν καὶ τὰν θεὸν περὶ τᾶς [--- κορ]άουν τοῖς θεοῖς τοῖς θε-[---] αἰ ἔστιν οι βέλτιον καὶ [ἄμεινον --- θ]εραπεύονσαν εἰ πὲρ τ[---]ν καὶ τᾶς παγκλαρίας [---] ̣τοῖ κατ<ε>ιγνείτοιο αἰ ἀρκέ[σει ---] εἰ σούσεται πὲρ τᾶς κό[ρας ---] γάμοιο Ἀ̣νδρομάχας

[745] *SEG* LIII 503; Grandinetti 2011: 587-588.
[746] Cabanes 1976, no. 74; *SEG* XXVI 714.
[747] Rensch 1908: 121-123; Cabanes 1976: 462.
[748] Zelnick-Abramovitz 2005a: 76-81.
[749] *SGDI* 1351, 1360; 1359, 1361 and 1347; Cabanes 1976, no. 71.
[750] In her study of the female names found in the DVC corpus, Katsadima (2017: 137-140) remarks that 52% of the names appear to belong to women from Epirus and adjacent territories, while 23% are from places outside Epirote boarders. The remainder cannot be identified.

(God) good fortune. Zeus Dodonaios and Dione. Kallirhoa asks the god and goddess concerning (…) of the daughters to which gods (…) is more fitting and (better…) to sacrifice concerning (…) and the inheritance (…) of the brother if it will suffice (…) will be saved concerning the wedding of the daughter Andromacha?

Though this late 4th c. BC text is severely damaged, the editors interpreted it as a question posed by Kallirhoa, who asks to which gods she should sacrifice in order to secure her and her brother's inheritance, as well as (or perhaps in order to) provide her daughter Andromacha with a dowry for her wedding.[751]

The name Καλλιρόα is infrequent (it is attested only once in a Theban inscription from the 3rd-2nd c. BC).[752] However, the name of her daughter, Ἀνδρομάχα (and its variation Ἀνδρομάχη), is attested several times between the 6th and 2nd c. BC, in Epirus and Thessaly.[753] The presence of the name Andromacha (and Andromache) in Thessaly is especially relevant, since the editors identify the inscription as written in the Thessalian dialect.[754] The name and language of the text point to the supplicant residing in Northern Greece.

Kallirhoa's inquiry touches on one of the most important financial aspects of a woman's life, the dowry. The query seems to reveal a dramatic situation: the family possessions are at risk, which will affect her daughter's dowry, the means of securing her future. The husband, father to Andromacha, is not mentioned in the inscription, implying that he could not contribute to his daughter's dowry and had most likely passed away. In light of such a situation, the widow's family appears to be expected to help with the financial burden of covering the expenses of her daughter's wedding. The incomplete state of the oracular tablet does not allow establishing if Kallirhoa's brother is her guardian, as well as the guardian of her daughter.[755] It does, however, point to the family possessions being tied to him, suggesting that he had control over the sum that would be allocated to Andromacha's dowry. Kallirhoa's relationship to the property she mentions is more enigmatic. The word παγκλαρία/παγκληρία, frequently attested throughout the oracular inscriptions, has been identified by Parker as specifically referencing "family inheritance", as

[751] Dakaris *et al.* 2013b: 196.
[752] *IG* VII 4247. The name Kalliroe is also attested in Boeotia: LGPN s.v. Καλλιρόη.
[753] *IG* IV,1 2:122; *SEG* XXIV 591; *SEG* XLVII 107; *AJA* Ser. 1, 7 (1891) 406, VI; *IG* IX 2, 317; See LGPN.
[754] Dakaris *et al.* 2013b: 196.
[755] A brother's responsibility for the proper upbringing of his sister and securing her future is also attested in DVC 1051.

opposed to another word frequently used in the context of possession, παμπασία, which was used to describe newly acquired wealth.[756] Therefore her use of the word may not have been accidental, signaling that the property she was inquiring about was hers to some degree as well. Though women from Northwestern Greece have been proven to have greater freedom in managing their own affairs, Kallirhoa's case shows that where inheritance was concerned, a male family member's right to and control over the property had to be accounted for.[757] The inquiry also points to the family's responsibility for the woman's financial well-being, as well as that of her children, if her husband is unable to guarantee it.

Kallirhoa's inquiry also touches on the subject of female agency in the face of financial problems. Her main motivation in consulting the oracle is her daughter's well-being. However, when the safety of her family's property is put in jeopardy, directly affecting her daughter's dowry, Kallirhoa takes it upon herself to look for solutions to her financial troubles. Her proactive approach reveals a reversal of gender expectations, where a woman both asks about matters that belong to the masculine realm of influence (in this case, finance) and in place of a male relative. The phrasing of her inquiry about which divinities she should sacrifice to in order to successfully resolve her predicament betrays a need for ritual reassurance rather than help in the decision-making process.[758] She did not consult Zeus Naios and Dione for guidance in her choices, but rather to ensure a successful resolution to her family's turmoil.

Several other texts in which women are linked to their own wealth or which demonstrate their role and interest in the management of household finance. Inquiries highlighting a female consultant's concerns about family wealth focus on her male relatives. In DVC 2762 from the 3rd c. BC, a local woman named Materina[759] seeks to find out about the potential safety and success of the journey of a male relative – possibly her husband or son – in finding work:

[756] Parker 2016: 87.
[757] The importance of the wealth and property the male supplicant could access to through a female relative or wife is highlighted in a handful of oracular inscriptions. For example, in LOD 116, a man asks about πανπασίο αὐτοῦ καὶ γενεᾶς καὶ γυναικὸς (his possessions and those of his descendants and of his wife), indicating a degree of division between the property owned by him and his wife; while in DVC 1484, another supplicant seeks to find out ἦ ἀδελφειὰ τύχοι πανπασίας (if the sister may obtain property).
[758] Parker 2016: 74-75.
[759] The name Ματερίνα is only attested in Bouthrotos (*IBouthrot* 78, 7, 9; *IBouthrot* 79, 7-8; *IBouthrot* 80, 6, 8; *IBouthrot* 81, 6, 8; *IBouthrot* 82, 6-7; *IBouthrot* 83, 5-6; *IBouthrot* 84, 6, 8; *IBouthrot* 85, 6, 8; *IBouthrot* 86, 7, 9; *IBouthrot* 87, 7-8; *IBouthrot* 88, 5-6).

ἐπερωτῆ Ματερίνα Δία Νᾶον καὶ Διώναν ἦ ἀσφάλεια εἰς δίμηνον (ν)αυτι(λλο)μένου [..] αὐτός καὶ [εἰς] Φάρ(ον) εἰς ἐπ[ίλοι]πον [γα]οργέον

Materina asks Zeus Naios and Dione if there is safety (for her male relative) if he sails for two months and (…) to Pharos (…) thereafter farming?[760]

As will be discussed later in this chapter, Pharos, the Parian colony established in the first half of the 4th c. BC in Dalmatia, was not an unusual travel destination for the supplicants visiting the oracle of Zeus Naios.[761] Materina's male relative was not voyaging to uncharted territory. However, risk associated with the trip by sea and the uncertainty of finding work in the new location, which threatened the family's well-being, prompted Materina to inquire if this was a gamble worth taking. The fact that she is inquiring for him suggests a common and equal decision-making process within the relationship.[762] Another tablet, LOD 122, reveals that a certain Bostrycha took it upon herself to find out about the money that Dion, who was likely her husband or relative, lost during the games:

Βοστρύχα ἀ Δόρκωνος ἦ οὐκ ἐκ<λ>[έφθη τὸ ἀ]ργύριον τὸ Δίων ἀπώλεσε Ε[----------] τοῖς νῦν Ἀκτίοις, ὦ Ζεῦ Νάε κ[αί Διώνα].

Oh Zeus Naios and Dione, Bostrycha, daughter of Dorkos, asks if the money Dion lost was not stolen (…) now at the Actia games?

The question suggests that Bostrycha either wishes to confirm Dion's story or suspects that foul play was somehow involved in the loss of the money, perhaps as a result of gambling related to

[760] Both the editors of the corpus (Dakaris *et al.* 2013b: 124) and Parker (2016: 82) interpreted αὐτός as referring most likely to Materina's husband, however it should be noted, following Carbon's (2017: 102-103) remark, that this is not made clear in the question. Carbon notes that Materina could be asking about another male relative, such as her son, particularly since she appeared not to be travelling with him even though he will be staying in Pharos for the foreseeable future (ἐπίλοιπον). Traditionally, a son would have been the one to leave the household in order to search for work in a newly founded colony (Gallant 1991: 136-137). Furthermore, oracular queries made by mothers asking about their progeny are found in the Dodonean corpus, as evidenced by DVC 3113 and 347, in which Myrta inquiries about the harmony among her children.

[761] Dakaris et al 2013: 85; DVC 228, 2762, 3030. The topic of sailing to Pharos will be discussed later in the chapter.

[762] The notion that a woman could play a more significant part in the decisions made by her family is further evidenced by the queries made by couples, which were discussed in Chapter 3. The fact that both the husband and wife consulted the oracle together demonstrates that both individuals were taking an active role in shaping their family's future.

the Actia.[763] In either case, the female supplicant appears to have a stake in establishing what happened to the money and takes the initiative to consult the gods.

Women also appear alongside their husbands in consultations about prosperity and financial issues. Mastaka is named with her husband Alkidamos in DVC 2482 as having made a payment of a mina together. In a second tablet, DVC 2524, Silanos and Kleonis are also mentioned by a male supplicant as offering a sacrifice. A final query, DVC 313, consists of a Boeotian couple[764] who asked, among other things, about the security of their property:

Θιός· τύχα ἀγαθά ⋮ Βοκολῦ κὴ Πολυμνάστη τί κα δραόντοιν hυγία κὴ γενιὰ κἀνδρογένεια γινύο[ι]το ϙὴ παραμόνιμος ἰοιὸ[ς] ϙὴ χρεμάτων ἐπιγγ[ύ]ασις ϙὴ τῶν ἰόντων ὄνασις;[765]

God. Good fortune. Boukolos and Polymnaste (ask) what they should do for there to be health and male offspring that will survive and security of properties and will they profit?

The question does not make it clear whether they link their wealth (χρήματα) with the male progeny (γενιὰ κἀνδρογένεια), thus making an inquiry about possible inheritors who would secure their family's money, or whether they are asking about children and property separately. Nevertheless, financial security was their concern. Even though the man is always listed first in these inscriptions, the fact that the consultations are made by or about the couple together is not without significance. It places the wife in the role of a partner to her husband, whose voice is important enough in the decision-making process to list her as a party actively participating in making the inquiry about the financial state of the family.

[763] Lhôte 2006: 237-238. Unsuccessful bets placed on horse races at the Actia games are lamented by another consultant (LOD 113).

[764] The identity of the supplicants has been strongly debated. Following Chaniotis' interpretation (*SEG* LVII 536), Piccinini (2015: 146) reads "Βοκολῦ" as a female name "Βουκολώ", interpreting the question to have been posed by two women – perhaps sisters. However, Méndez Dosuna (2016: 123) convincingly demonstrates that based on other examples from the DVC and Lhôte corpora, a husband and wife were more likely to inquire about having children. He also argues that δραόντοιν agrees with dative, which would mean that both names could not be in the nominative, and that Πολυμνάστη with -η in the nominative does not make sense in a Boeotian query. Therefore, the first supplicant was a man, whose name would have been Βουκόλος.

[765] Méndez Dosuna (2016: 123) understands the word to mean "male progeny" based on evidence from the DVC corpus, instead of "offspring like his father" as proposed by Eidinow (2007: 92, no. 13) or "offspring from the husband", as suggested by Chaniotis, see also LSJ s.v. ἀνδρογένεια. It must also be noted that Méndez Dosuna (2016: 123-124) suggests the reading of ἐπιγγ[ύ]ασις as ἐπίππασις, which is attested in Boeotian proxeny decrees. It is a apocopated version of ἐπίπᾱσις (see also Méndez Dosuna 2007).

One more unique inscription seems to address the issue of women's finances. DVC 3400, dated to the mid-4th c. BC, contains an inquiry made by Theudote about sacred objects:

[Θ]ευδότη ἐρω[τῆι περὶ χρημ]άτων ἰ(α)ρ(ῶ)ν [--- τὸν Δί]α τὸν Νάϊο[ν καὶ τὰν Δι]ώναν περὶ τ[---] ἐπ' ἰδίαν δοίη [καὶ ---] κα ποιῶσα λω[ϊον καὶ ἄμει]νον πράσ(σ)οι κα[ὶ --- ἔν]δικον γέν[οιτο ---]

Theudote asks about sacred objects (…) Zeus Naios and Dione concerning (…) gave for her own (and…) would it be better and more profitable and (…) become right?

Though the tablet is severely damaged, it seems to concern an offering she made by herself.[766] While there are many attested cases of women across the Mediterranean world who dedicated votives[767], Theudote is the only female supplicant in the corpus who appears to display wealth which she has control over.

The tablets from Dodona paint a picture of women's financial stability as strongly tied to their family and relatives by blood or marriage. Though some women display an active interest in the state of their family finance, they seem to have a limited ability to influence it. With the exception of Theudote, all remaining female supplicants include, to some extent, men in their consultations, often as the source of the income or wealth they are asking about. Perhaps, in the case of Theudote, as well as the women mentioned in non-oracular inscriptions and shown to conduct business on their own in Epirus, the lack of men involved in their financial dealings implies that they were either widows or orphaned daughters without any adult male relatives. They are shown to manage their property relatively freely, though it should be noted that their business matters appear to only involve other women. While the oracular inquiries made by women at the sanctuary of Dodona do not unilaterally confirm the assertion that women of North-western Greece enjoyed more legal rights with regards to finance or ownership, especially when an adult male relative is present, they do demonstrate that women did play a role in the decision-making process about the family's fiscal affairs.

[766] Dakaris *et al.* 2013b: 257.
[767] For example, a study of Delian inventories from the 3rd c. BC revealed, that individual women accounted for 17% of all the dedicants (Constantakopoulou 2017: 197-198). For other case studies, see also Prêtre (ed.) 2009.

4.4. Travel: Connectivity, commerce, and migration

Just as Plutarch's account about the oracle of Delphi mentions that "whether it is beneficial to sail" (εἰ συμφέρει πλεῖν) was a commonly posed query[768], the sanctuary at Dodona is documented as frequently offering guidance to its supplicants in matters of travel. The vocabulary found in the Dodonean queries demonstrates that those visiting the site were interested in the oracle's help in deciding whether to travel, as well as how, when and where. The primary aim of such journeys seemed to be commercial activity; the verb "ἐμπορεύομαι" (to travel for business) appears in the oracular inquiries 46 times.[769] The second significant cluster of travel-themed tablets pertains to issues of migration and residence, most commonly addressed in "οἰκέω/ϝοικέω" questions (to inhabit or to settle in), which appear in 40 inscriptions.[770] Supplicants also asked about emigrating (ἐξοικέω), residing abroad as a foreigner (μετοικέω/πεδαϝοικέω), dwelling in their home (οἴκησις) or moving out, and even about *proxenia*. In short, many of those consulting at Dodona visited the oracle in the hopes of establishing whether further journeying or a complete relocation would be to their benefit.

4.4.1. Risks of travelling for business

The first category of questions establishes the search for profit and work as one of the greatest motivating factors for travelling. The wording of these questions was usually connected to commerce. Besides the aforementioned term "ἐμπορεύομαι", tablets include mentions of trade (ἐμπορία) and selling (πωλέω). The visitors at the sanctuary of Dodona sought to find out whether undertaking travel would be advantageous to their business, as seen in DVC 2108:

ἦ ἐμπορευόμενός κα [λ]ώϊον καὶ ἄμεινον πράσσοιμι;

Is it better and more profitable for me to travel for business?

Another example can be found in DVC 4065:

ἐρωτᾶι τὸν Δία τὸν Νᾶον καὶ τ[ὰν Διώναν] Ἀριστοκράτης πότερα ἐνπ[ορεύεσθαι σύμ]φορόν ἐστί μοι καὶ ὀνηλα[---] καὶ αὐτῶι

[768] Plut. *De E apud Delphos*, 386c.
[769] s.v. ἐμπορεύομαι in Lhôte 2006, Dakaris *et al.* 2013.
[770] s.v. οἰκέω/ϝοικέω/οἰκεῖν in Lhôte 2006, Dakaris *et al.* 2013.

Aristokrates asks Zeus Naios and Dione: is it better for me to travel for business (…) and for myself?

The desire for financial gain is most explicitly expressed in queries such as DVC 3653,[771] along with 1854 and 2802, where the consultation appears to directly correlate property and money (χρήματα) with the journey. Merchants functioned in a world full of uncertainty – beyond the concern about the dangers of a journey, they also had no guarantee that the products they were selling would be in demand at their destination.[772] Therefore, they relied on various sources of information that would help them in their decisions about engaging in certain types of commerce, as well as the benefits and perils of their undertakings. Consulting the Epirote oracle appeared to be one of their strategies in shifting the odds in their favour.

While an assurance of financial success was part of the reasoning behind the consultations, the anxieties expressed by the inquiries go beyond a simple concern about the profit margin of the supplicants' endeavours. A common motif, which emerges from the tablets, is that of the method of travel. Some, like Kleochares in DVC 2048, wished to know whether overland transport was a sensible idea:

<ε>ἐπερωτᾶι Κλεοχάρης τὸν θεόν εἰ αὐτῶι λώϊον ἐμπορευομένωι κατὰ γῆν[773]

Kleochares asks the god if it is good for him to travel for business by land?

More frequently, however, inquiries were made about sailing and maritime commerce, as illustrated by DVC 2054:

ὦ Ζεῦ Νάϊε, πλέων καὶ ἐμπορευόμενος [λ]ῶον πράσσοι;

Oh Zeus Naios, would it be better to sail and travel for business?

A similar inquiry is found in DVC 3364:

ἐρωτεῖ Π[..]Ν[...] τ[ὸ]ν Δία τὸν Νάϊον καὶ τὰν Διών[α]ν [ἦ ἐμ]πορευόμενος κατὰ θά(λ)ασσαν βέλτιον πράσσοι;

(…) asks Zeus Naios and Dione would it be better to travel for business by sea?

DVC 3001 offers another example, this time naming the supplicant:

ἦ ἐμπορ(ε)υομένωι <η> Ρίνθων(ι) κατὰ θάλασσαν;

---

[771] [--- ἦ τ]υνχάνοιμί κα καὶ χρήμα[τα --- ἐ]μπορευόμενος [..]ΥΣΚΑ [---]νει καὶ ΑΠΟΛΟ[..]Σ[.]ΔΟΣ[---]Μ[---] / *is it more successful for me and money [---] traveling for business [---]*

[772] Morley 2007: 30-31.

[773] LOD 95A+B also revolve around landbound commerce. A possible third example of travel on land can be found in DVC 597, in which DVC suggest "κατὰ γ[ᾶν ἐμπορευόμενος]". Unfortunately, the tablet is too damaged to securely confirm this restoration.

Whether for Rhinthon travelling for business by sea?

It is perhaps not surprising that maritime commerce is overrepresented in the tablets. The interest in seaborn travel related to commercial activity is best illustrated by the numerous queries that mention sailing (πλέω), which are attested 22 times in the DVC corpus. The prominent role of maritime travel and commerce on a local and interregional level in the Ancient Greek world has long been discussed by scholarship. In their groundbreaking work on the Mediterranean basin, Horden and Purcell establish that the entire region was subdivided into microregions, which were not self-sufficient. In order to mitigate this problem, the different areas developed a strategy of "connectivity", which forced them to collaborate with each other through an exchange of goods and people.[774] Bresson builds on this idea, arguing that these trade networks were not only essential to ensure access to resources in shortage or entirely missing in the region, but also formed a complex system of production through the import of raw materials and export of processed goods.[775] The economy of ancient Greece was, therefore, based on communication and exchange between the different communities. Seaborne travel was pivotal in ensuring this arrangement was sustainable. From a financial perspective, sea trade would have also been the less costly option. While no exact numbers are available for the Classical and Hellenistic periods, Bresson, who builds on the calculations made by Duncan-Jones based on prices found in Diocletian's *Edict on Maximum Prices*, estimates that the cost of transporting products by land was tens of times greater than through seaborne travel.[776] In his study of roads in Roman Anatolia, Mitchell similarly concludes that it was not practical to transport certain types of cargo, such as low-cost commodities, over long distances as the price growth made their later sale difficult; he notes that despite this, roads linking landlocked cities and villages remained a pivotal element of the region's economy.[777] Epirus, which had large inland territories and a fairly elaborate road system serving not only as a connection between its various parts but also allowing for travel to neighbouring regions, was such a case.

[774] Horden and Purcell 2000: 133-135, 172.
[775] Bresson 2016: 351-361.
[776] Bresson 2016: 80-81. Duncan-Jones (1982: 366-369) calculates that during the imperial period, the price of cargo transported by land was forty times higher than that of cargo carried by ships. For a critique of Duncan-Jones's work, cf. Arnaud 2005 and 2007.
[777] Mitchell 1993: 246.

The importance of both types of commercial routes is demonstrated by two tablets in which Zeus Naios and Dione were expected to confirm to the visitor that engaging in both overland and sea trade would prove beneficial. The first is DVC 430:

ἦ ἐνπορευομένωι καὶ κατὰ γᾶν καὶ κατὰ θάλασ(σ)αν καὶ λώϊον καὶ ἄμεινο[ν] καὶ χ(ρ)ημάτων ἐπίπασι[ς][778]

If traveling for business not only by land but also by sea (is) better and more profitable (for) further acquisition of property?

A second tablet, LOD 95A, accompanied by an oracular answer which will be discussed later in this section, also touches on this topic:

θεοί. τύχαν ἀγαθάν. ὦ Ζεῦ, ἀναίρει Τιμοδάμοι· ἐμπ[ο]ρεύεσθαι καὶ κατὰ γ[ᾶ]ν καὶ κατὰ θάλασσαν ἀπὸ τῦ [ἀ]ργυρίο, ὅσσον κ' αὐτὸς [*h*]έληται χρόνον, ταῦτα κράτιστα;[779]

God. Good fortune. Oh Zeus, give a response to Timodamos: to trade not only by land but also by sea, using his money, for as long as he will choose, are these (things) best?

The use of the correlative pair καὶ-καὶ demonstrates that the people making the queries were not interested in choosing between the two types of commercial activities, instead undertaking both in order to ensure greater profits. Perhaps the supplicants were merchants seeking to diversify their sources of income by undertaking new ventures or – particularly in the case of Timodamos – newcomers to the trade, interested in finding out whether commerce would turn out to be a worthwhile investment.

In the case of DVC 2048 and 3001, a closer look at the names of the supplicants making the inquiry might further illuminate their reason for turning to Dodona for help. Kleochares is a name most commonly found in central Greece.[780] As a foreigner, he would have had limited knowledge of the Epirote roads and hoped to gain some insight into their usefulness. Considering how much of a higher financial risk commerce by land posed, deferring to the ruling of an oracle ran by a staff better acquainted with the local context could have been seen as an attempt to mitigate

[778] DVC (2013a: 138) propose that ἐπίπασις is the Doric version of ἐπίκτησις (Att.).

[779] Surprisingly, Eidinow (2007: 97) reads the text as "τὰπὸ τἄ [ἀ]ργυρίο", proposing that the fragment may be referring not to Timodamos' silver/money, but to a silver mine he owns. While an interesting interpretation, she does not provide sufficient evidence to support her claim. Instead, Salviat's suggestion that the fragment may have meant "to involve the money in trade" (engager de l'argent dans le négoce) seems more probable in the context of the query (1993: 61-64).

[780] Athens: *IG* II² 11875, *SEG* XLIV 96, *JÖAI* 7 (1904) p. 121, 2; Eretria: *IG* XII (9) 400, *IG* XII (9) 248 B, 19. Oporos: *IG* VII 474, *IG* XII 9, 244 B, 22. Tribe Aiantis: *IG* II² 681 II, 22; Rhamnous: *IRhamnous* 291; *IG* II² 1217, 1 and 2. Kephisia: *Hesp*. 46 (1977) p. 114 no. 32, *IG* II² 1623 and *SEG* XXII 137, 162.

potential losses. Conversely, the interest expressed by Rhinthon – a name only attested in Syracuse[781] – in maritime trade is unsurprising. The tablet, dated to the first half of the 4th c. BC, coincides with the reign of Dionysius I of Syracuse, who greatly expanded his *polis*' economic influence in the Adriatic, thus opening up new possibilities for business ventures.[782]

There are other noted instances of consultations about becoming involved in commerce. For example, in LOD 93, Hippostratos asked the gods of Dodona if becoming a shipowner was the best course of action for him (ᾗ μὴ ν[α]<υ>κλαρη[ῦ]ν λῶιογ καὶ ἄμμεινομ πράσσοιμι).[783] The purchase of a ship would have been a costly expenditure, involving not only payment for the vessel itself, but also the hiring of a crew and administrative staff.[784] Therefore Hippostratos may have wanted a divine confirmation that his investment would return itself. The author of DVC 2810 also sought to know whether purchasing a ship and becoming involved in commercial activities would be to his advantage:

[---ναυ]κλερέ[ον--- καὶ ἐ]νπορε[υόμενος---] καὶ λόϊον [- - -] ἀμένον

To be a shipowner… travel for business… and more profitable… better?

Finally, a similarly themed inquiry can be found in DVC 167:

ἐφερωτᾶι Ἀπολλόδωρος τ[ὸν] Δία τὸ(ν) Νᾶον καὶ Διώναν περὶ ἐργασίας πότε[ρον κα κατ]ατυγχάνοι ναυκληρῶν ναυῶν;

Apollodoros asks Zeus Naios and Dione about business. Would it be luckier to become an owner of a ship?

The phrasing of the query implies that Apollodoros was already involved in commercial activities prior to his visit at Dodona; he appeared to be seeking out different methods of conducting his business.

Those engaged in commerce were not necessarily dependent on only one form of trade. Cases of multiple sources of income including commercial endeavours have been documented in Athenian court speeches revolving around maritime loans. In Demosthenes' *Against Phormio*, the

[781] *CGF* 1 pp. 183 ff. (dated to 4-3 c. BC).
[782] Justin XII.1; cf. Woodhead 1970.
[783] Lhôte (2006: 392-393) establishes that ναυκλαρηῦν is a Doric variant of ναυκλαρέων. He (2006: 198) also translates the verb to "outfit a ship" (*armer un navire*). In the DVC corpus, ναυκληρέω seems to consistently refer to "being a ship owner", e.g. DVC 167, 302, 1182, 1687, 2810, 3214. cf. Eidinow 2007: 98.
[784] According to Casson (1971: 314-319), a "ναύκληρος" could have also doubled as the captain of his own ship. However, it appears to have been a more common practice to hire not only sailors, but also the "κῦβερνήτης" who would steer the boat, manage the crew, and address any administrative matters. Further costs of manning the vessel would include a sailing master and a specialist in charge of obtaining the cargo.

shipowner of the vessel in question, Lampis, is not the one who navigates the ship or conducts the sale of the cargo.[785] He provides both the ship and the loan to the merchant with the objective to be paid back with interest once the merchant returns from his voyage – an aim perhaps shared by Hippostratos and Apollodoros. The borrowed funds tended to be substantial and were laden with large interest charges since the investor would only get repaid on the condition that the ship returns safely.[786] Maritime loans were a high risk, high reward type of money lending procedure. While a tempting prospect to some, the tablets show that it entailed a level of uncertainty that necessitated consulting the oracle of Dodona about the success rate. In *Against Apaturius*, the plaintiff discloses that he had been a seafaring trader in the past, until he managed to accumulate a sufficient capital to rely solely on providing loans to maritime economic ventures.[787] Likewise, Timodamos and the unnamed supplicant from DVC 430 may have travelled themselves and invested in other commercial undertakings, which would have allowed them to operate both on land and at sea. A final example of participating in many different types of enterprises can be found in LOD 89Aa, in which the supplicant asks:

τύχα ἀγαθά. ἦ τυγχάνοιμί κα ἐμπορευόμενος ὅπυς κα δοκῆι σύμφορον ἔμειν καὶ ἄγων τῆι(?) κα δοκῆι ἅμα τᾶι τέχναι χρεύμενος.

Good fortune. Will I be more successful in travelling for business where it seems profitable for me, to import and export, while at the same time practicing my craft?[788]

The tablets reveal that the barriers between different professions and sources of earnings were not rigid. If one gathered enough savings, investing into a different field, such as trade, would help generate further income, ensuring that the person did not have to rely on one type of work. The supplicant from LOD 89Aa would have perhaps been able to sell what he produced himself, gaining more control over the prices and avoiding losing money paid to the merchant middlemen.

Another strategy undertaken by supplicants to mitigate risks was a careful choice of associates. An example of this can be found in DVC 1313:

Ἀριστόμαχο[ς] ἐρωτῆι πότερα ἐκπλέων ἐργάζηται σὺν Στράτωνι.

[785] Dem. 34.6.
[786] Millett 1991: 189; Bresson 2016: 283-284.
[787] Dem. 33.4.
[788] Lhôte (2006: 188, 204) theorizes that, similarly as in LOD 95, "ἄγειν" in the context of queries concerning commerce means "to import-export". Eidinow (2007: 97) proposes translating the verb as "doing business". In the LSJ, one of the definitions of "ἄγω" includes "carry as cargo, import", particularly in relation to ships, though this interpretation would suggest that the query implied maritime commerce, which cannot be securely extrapolated from the text.

Aristomachos asks if, (when) sailing, he should work with Straton?

Alternatively, as DVC 279 demonstrates, the supplicants wished to know if they could successfully oversee maritime trade by themselves, without having to rely on third parties:

θεὸς τύχα ἀγα[θ]ά· ἦ οὔ κα τυγ[χ]άνοιμι κατὰ θάλασσαν ἐμπορ[ε]υόμενος [ο]ὐδ᾽ ἄλλωι ξυναν<ι>ών;

God. Good fortune. Would I not be more successful travelling for business by sea and not sailing out with another [partner]?

Fraudulent failure to repay a loan or tricking investors into funding unprofitable ventures were some of the issues encountered when dealing with business partners.[789] Likewise, if the associate in question was to sail alongside the person making the consultation, he had to be a reliable and capable crew member on board the vessel. Trustworthiness was a coveted characteristic in business partners, particularly due to the financial and physical dangers travelling merchants encountered.

Outside of the obvious economic concerns focusing on profit margins and investments, the queries posed at Dodona betray the precariousness of travel. Sailing was an efficient method of transportation across the Mediterranean world, but it was not without its problems. In the earliest recorded piece of advice concerning seaborne journeys, Hesiod counseled his readers to limit sailing to the fifty days after the summer solstice.[790] This very brief window of opportunity has been dismissed by scholarship as being overly cautious.[791] Instead, the consensus is that the Greeks' sailing season started in early spring (March-April) and lasted until October or November, most likely further expanding as the inhabitants of the Mediterranean expanded their understanding of the sea and developed new seafaring technologies.[792] Nonetheless, maritime travel during certain times of the year was riskier. The winter period entailed storms, high waves, and powerful winds, which besides being more intense than during summertime also varied according to region, adding an additional challenge for those who may not have been familiar with the waters of that particular area.[793] Some of these concerns can be seen in DVC 1453, which has been identified by Carbon as an inquiry concerning wintertime sailing:

αἰ λώϊον μοι καὶ ἄμεινον πλέοντι πάραυτα ΝΕΩΝ χε[ιμ]ῶνα

[789] Dem. 32, 34, 35, and 56. Cf. Millett 1991: 189-190.
[790] Hes. *Works and Days* 663-669.
[791] Casson 1971: 270.
[792] Beresford 2013: 9-13.
[793] For a detailed account of the Mediterranean climate, cf. Beresford 2013: 53-105.

Is it better and more advantageous for me to set sail immediately … (during?) the winter?[794]

The inquiry was written in a North-Doric dialect, implying that the supplicant making it would have most likely journeyed across the Adriatic or Ionian seas, meaning that, during winter, he would have had to contend with reduced visibility near the coastline, a dangerous depression system, and increasingly violent winds.[795] While Carbon admits that the interpretation of the final part of the query is not without its problems, including the lack of preposition accompanying "χεῖμα", the consultation appears to confirm that there was a widespread belief concerning optimal sea travel season and that deciding to sail outside of it necessitated divine counsel.[796] The worry about bringing one's ship safely to shore, probably in the context of avoiding dangerous sailing conditions, is illustrated in DVC 2641:

[---]ΧΩΙΠ[---] Ἀλεύα(ς) να[ῖ κ]αταγόμ[ενος τύχοι]. [Ζεῦ Ν]άϊε, ὑγ(ι)είας τίνι [θεῶν εὐχόμενος]

Will Aleuas succeed bringing the ship to shore? Zeus Naios, to which god to pray to for health?

A second possible reference to obstacles to safely travelling seems to appear in DVC 366:

[εἰς] Ἀπολλωνίαν πλεύσας ᾖι ἀλᾴστων τῆ[ιδε] ὄντων πυνθάνοιτο [797]

Sailing to Apollonia will he learn about the unsufferable ones there?

DVC follow Chadwick, who translates the inscriptions as "on sailing to Apollonia, whether he will get news of the miserable wretches there".[798] Lhôte, however, offers an alternative reading: [ὁ δεῖνα ἐς] Ἀπολλωνίαν πλεύσας ᾖ{ι} ἀλᾴστων τῆ[δε (e.g.) τόπων (e.g.)] ἐόντων πυνθάνοιτο. His interpretation differs from the earlier ones proposed by other scholars.[799] First, following Pleket's proposal,[800] he considers ᾖι an error and substitutes it with ᾖ. Secondly, he dismisses the assumption that the adjective ἄλαστος in the inscription refers to "calamities", as it is only used in poetry. Instead, he suggests it may be a hapax derived from ληιστός which should be read as "without pirates" (*sans pirates*). He bases this on a Doric honorific inscription from Thera which references pirates[801], where λαιστός is used, which he links to ἄλαστος, which is missing the ι. Finally, he notes that πυνθάνομαι requires a nominal subject complement in the genitive, for e.g. τόπων.

[794] Transl. Carbon 2017: 100.
[795] Beresford 2013: 57, 64, 96.
[796] Carbon 2017: 101-102.
[797] DVC 366; LOD 97.
[798] Dakaris *et al.* 2013a: 122-123.
[799] Lhôte 2006: 209-210 ; cf. Dakaris *et al.* 1993: 55-56 and Cabanes 1997b: 92.
[800] *SEG* XLIII 333.
[801] *ID* XII, 3 Suppl. 1291, 13-14.

While Lhôte's connection between ἄλαστος and ληιστός might be difficult to support, his assumption that the tablets concern pirates merits more attention. Piracy was a problem that notoriously plagued the Mediterranean. The most infamous pirates in proximity to Apollonia were the Illyrians, who prowled the Adriatic. Their feats are predominantly known from the works of later authors, such as Pausanias or Polybius, who describes the Illyrians' attempt to seize the population of Epidamnos.[802] In the 3rd c. BC, under the rule of Agron and later his widow Teuta, the Illyrians managed to occupy Epidamnos and a portion of Epirus, including Phoenike.[803] Evidence of this threat, however, can be found in earlier periods as conflicts between the Greeks and Illyrians seem to be a permanent element of the history of the Hellenic colonies on the Adriatic coast. An inscription from Issa, dated to the second half of the 4th c., honours Kallias who fought against an Illyrian ship and died during the confrontation.[804] Several other Corcyrean epigrams from the 3rd c. BC also describe battles with Illyrian pirates.[805] LOD 97 appears to be an inquiry about avoiding such unwanted encounters during the journey. Curiously though, the supplicant seems to want to figure out whether he will acquire information about the location of the pirates rather than asking Zeus and Dione to save him from such a misfortune. It is the only inscription that references pirate attacks. Perhaps this concern was implicit to the broader queries about "σωτηρία" (deliverance, safety), such as the one in DVC 1363:

ἰς Καρχαδόνα κα τυγ[χ]άνοιμι κα(τ)απλῆν ἐ[κ]εῖ καὶ ΚΩΕΚ[.]Ν ἐμπο[ρευόμε]νον [ἐπὶ] σωτηρίαι αὐ[τ]οῦ καὶ να[ὸς] καὶ χρ[η]μάτων;[806]

To Carthage, would it be more successful for me to sail back there and travel for business with a view to gaining safety for me and my ship and my property?

In this particular case, the supplicant appears to be a veteran of the long journey from Carthage to Dodona. It is unsure if he is seeking protection against theft and piracy or against the elements, however his request demonstrates that the original voyage was difficult – perhaps also not yielding the appropriate profit which would justify such an expedition – and that he is not certain whether embarking on it again is a wise choice.

[802] Polyb. 2, 9. For an overview of Pausanias' accounts of Illyrian pirates, see chapter 3.
[803] Polyb. 2, 2-4 and 8; Ormerod 1924: 169-177; Hammond 1967: 591; Wilkes 1995: 158.
[804] Rendić-Miočević 1950-51: 167-179; Robert 1953: 148, no. 123; Krigin 2008: 86-87.
[805] *IG* IX, 1, 871, 1; *IG* IX, 1, 873; Geffcken, *Griech. Epigramme* (1916), 182; *IG* IX 1, 683.
[806] Dakaris *et al.* 2013a: 337. The editors propose to read κωεκ[ῶ]ν as κωικῶν = κῷον (a light semi-transparent garment, made at Cos; see LSJ s.v. Κῷος), however this interpretation seems unlikely.

Another example of a general σωτηρία consultation is LOD 94, in which Archephon asks about his safety as well as that of his ship, along with the payment of debts he had incurred:

ὦ Ζεῦ καὶ Θέμι καὶ Διώνα Ναῖοι : Ἀρχεφῶν τὰν νᾶ : ἂν ἐναυπαγήσατο ⟦ν⟧ κελομένο τô Ἀπόλλωνος ἔχω κατὰ χώραν καὶ σωτηρία μοι ἐσσεῖται καὶ ἐμὶν καὶ τᾶι ναὶ αἵ κα ⟦*rasura*⟧ καὶ τὰ χρέα ἀποδ(ώ)σω;

Oh Zeus and Themis and Dione Naioi. Archephon about the ship he built on Apollo's orders. Should I stay put and will there be safety for me and for my ship if […] and will I pay the debts?

Archephon, to the contrary of the supplicant in DVC 1363, was inquiring about the security of his ship in the context of remaining in place. Considering his possible Corcyrean identity[807], he may have sought to conduct his business locally, perhaps even in Dodona. However, the latter part of his consultation concerning debts suggests that his prospects of earning the necessary money to pay them off were not ideal. Having found himself at this crossroad, Archephon decided to seek out the help of the Dodonean deities. The second notable feature of the text is the mention of having built the vessel on Apollo's orders. Scholars interpret it as a reference to an earlier oracular inquiry, possibly at Delphi.[808] The supplicant seems to not have sufficiently profited from fulfilling this divine request, thus necessitating a second consultation, this time at Dodona, in order to clarify how to safekeep his property and ensure he is able to pay his financial obligations.

The merchants, shipowners, and those seeking business ventures abroad appear to have used the oracle of Dodona as a means of verifying how successful their plans would be – whether their journey would be safe and profitable or whether they were making the right investments. This is best illustrated through the type of questions asked. Unlike the oracular inscriptions about progeny or marriage, the queries concerning travelling for business and commerce predominantly required a binary answer. Only a handful of inquiries requested information about sacrifices to deities which would ensure the supplicant's success.[809] The role taken by the oracle of Zeus Naios and Dione in matters of trade and travel was that of an advisor consulted prior to making a final decision. In DVC 2054, the abbreviated εμπ on the reverse of the tablet with an inquiry about commerce seems to imply that the oracle endorsed the supplicant's undertaking. Nonetheless, the extent of the responsibility the sanctuary was willing to shoulder is another matter. LOD 95B,

[807] Lhôte 2006: 200-201.
[808] The double consultation is discussed in Chapter 2.2.1.
[809] DVC 580, 3497, and possibly 597.

identified as an oracular response to the aforementioned LOD 95A in which Timodamos inquired about seaborne and overland commerce, states:[810]

θεοί. τύχαν ἀγαθάν. ἐν τοῖ ἄστει οἰ[κ]ῆν καὶ καπηλεύην καὶ ἐμ[π]ορεύεσθαι, τὰ δ' ἐν τοῖ γαὐ[λοι] ἐγδιδόμεν· ἐμπορε[ύ]εσθαι δὲ χρήματα ἄγοντα [καὶ] κατὰ γᾶν καὶ κατὰ θάλασ[σα]ν, πώλοντα καὶ ὠνόμ[ε]νο(ν)

Gods. Good fortune. Live in the city and engage in petty trade and travel for commerce, but give up the share in the trading-vessel; to travel for commerce to make money by land and by sea, exporting and importing.

Scholars agree that many different elements of the text point to it being the divinatory answer to query LOD 95A; both inscriptions share the same handwriting, probably that of Timodamos, and address the same subject matter, although the mentions of inhabiting a city and different types of trade suggest that the original question must have been more elaborate than what was written down on the tablet.[811] The answer given by the oracle, while complex, is also vague, sensibly counseling the supplicant to invest in various commercial activities without giving too many details. Allocating his capital in diverse ventures would presumably be the safer option, minimizing the risk of both Timodamos losing his money and the Dodonean oracle making a mistake.

4.4.2. Migration and movement

The second category of inquiries that emerges from the travel-related oracular texts concerns movement and migration. This cluster is defined by the presumably more permanent nature of residence in the new location. Of course, the ambiguity of some of the questions does not allow to definitely establish the reasons for undertaking the journey or the duration of the stay[812], but most of the texts clearly address matters of residency. Certain tablets, as in the case of LOD 88, even provide the motives for the supplicants' mobility, some of which revolved around finding employment:

[810] Lhôte (2006: 203) remarks that the two inscriptions were written in the same handwriting, presumably that of Timodamos, who is mentioned in LOD 95A.
[811] Salviat 1993: 61-64; Lhôte 2006: 203; Eidinow 2007: 98.
[812] E.g. DVC 1809: [ἐ] κατὰ θ[άλασσαν πλέ]οντες λόι[στά κα καὶ βέ]λτιστα [πράσσοιμες;] / *would it be better for us to sail by sea?*

ἐ ἀποδάμῑν τύχοιμί κα ἐπὶ τὰν τέχναν;

Will I be more successful at my trade by going abroad?

Another such example can be found in LOD 86:

[---] καὶ ἐ ἄμενόν μοι μετὰ Διο[τί]μῑ ἐργαζομένωι Μεγαροῖ;

(…) and will it be better for me to work with Diotimos in Megara?

In both inscriptions, the devotees displayed interest in moving in order to obtain work; the first to an unknown location and the second to Megara. LOD 88 is dated to ca. 450-425 BC, while LOD 86 is believed to have been written in the first half of the 4th c. BC, but they both appear to have belonged to supplicants from Corcyrean colonies.[813] Both these cases seem to refer to locals seeking information not only about whether to migrate – in the case of LOD 86 completely out of the Northwestern Greek region – but also an assurance that the risk of moving to a new location in order to practice their craft would pay off. Perhaps those making the inquiry were apprentices seeking a workshop where they could learn the necessary skills or artisans who could not find work in their trade. For comparison, in Classical Athens, over half of the craftsmen were foreigners.[814] What is remarkable, however, is that while queries about pursuing the family trade were numerous, very few (outside of those related to trading) openly discussed moving locations for the purpose of finding work.

More commonly, the supplicants sought to know whether they should migrate. In four queries (though more fragments have been interpreted as referring to this subject)[815], those visiting the sanctuary of Dodona directly asked about residing as a foreigner, as seen in DVC 3304:

[θεὸς τύχα] Δ[α]μο[σ]θένης ἐπερω[τῆι Δία Νάϊ]ον τίνι κα θεῶν ἢ θε[ᾶν θύων λ]ώϊογ καὶ ἄμεινον [πράσσοι κ]αὶ πό[τ]ερα κα μετ[οικέων ἐν Χ]αλκίδι λώϊογ κα[ὶ] ἄμεινον

[813] According to Lhôte (2006: 183-185), LOD 88 is written in a Corcyrean alphabet and contains Doric grammatical features. Similarly, LOD 86 contains the closure of the diphthong ει (ἄμενον < ἄμεινον), which is a feature of Corinthian Greek.
[814] Randall 1953; Harris 2002: 70.
[815] DVC 3304, 3348,1276, 329; See μετοικέω/πεδαϝοικέω in Dakaris *et al.* 2013.

God. Fortune. Damosthenes asks Zeus to whom of the gods or goddesses it would be better to sacrifice to and would it be better to reside as a foreigner in Chalkis?

The inscription, dated to the first half of the 4th c. BC, presents several issues. The identification of the destination is one of them. Two options can be suggested. The first is Chalkis in Euboea. A connection between Euboea and Epirus can be dated back to the 8th-7th c. BC, with the Euboeans being the first extra-regional Greeks to interact with Dodona.[816] Plutarch and Lycophron even claimed that Euboeans colonized the Epirote and Illyrian coasts. While scholars are divided on whether ancient authors can be relied on as proof of Euboean settlements, Piccinini's suggestion that travelers from Euboea were transient seafarers who never established permanent trade-settlements offers a reasonable interpretation of the literary material and explains the lack of convincing archeological evidence of a long-lasting Euboean presence in the region.[817] Nonetheless, Damosthenes' choice of Chalkis may not have been random, but rather based on the preexisting connection between Northwestern Greece and Euboea. Further evidence of supplicants who may have been of Euboean origin can be found in DVC 35, 2217 and LOD 149.[818] However, locations outside of Northwestern and Central Greece, as well as Magna Graecia, Sicily and the Peloponnese are rarely found in the corpus and appear to overall be outside the realm of interests of those visiting Dodona. Therefore, a second interpretation of the location in DVC 3304 can be offered. An Aetolian Chalkis "from which the Achelous flows" is mentioned by Stephanus Byzantinus, but Hammond locates this *polis* in Epirus.[819] Not much else is known about it, but the previously established scope of Dodona's influence, limited predominantly to localities on both sides of the Ionian and Adriatic seas, would suggest that Damosthenes was interested in moving to an Epirote *polis* rather than a far-off Euboean one.

The other issue DVC 3304 touches on is the critical aspect of moving to a different community, namely the issue of citizenship. After all, emigration could result in the loss of the

[816] Piccinini 2017: 49.
[817] Plut. *Mor*. 293 A-B; Lycophr. *Alex*. 1034-1046; For a brief overview of the debate, see Piccinini 2017: 54-55.
[818] Méndez Dosuna (2016: 126, 131) remarks that the Att.-Ion. η for long ᾱ and the rhotacism of intervocalic σ in the name of the supplicant (Ὀνήριμος) from DVC 2217 reveal the dialect to be Euboean from Eretria. In the case of LOD 149, he proposes an alternative reading of the supplicant's name (Θειοτιμίδ̣ε̣ς̣), presuming it to be Euboean and not Thessalian (Dakaris *et al*. 2013a: 242) or Boeotian (Lhôte 2006: 304-305). Finally, DVC 35 mentions a Porinos Κυμαῖος, who is believed to have been an inhabitant of either Euboean Kyme or Italian Cumae, an Euboean colony (Méndez Dosuna 2018: 266).
[819] St. Byz. s.v. Χαλκίς; Hammond 1967: 708.

status of citizen in the migrant's new residence and taking on the role of a "*metoikos*", which – in the case of Damosthenes' query – appears to be the case. The status of a metic, or foreigner living in a non-native city or region, could differ slightly between *poleis*, though it broadly entailed certain obligations, such as paying special city-taxes.[820] In Athens, for example, ownership of land and engagement in politics was restricted to citizens only.[821] Acquiring these privileges was not an easy task either, as Perikles' decree of 451-450 BC tightened the division between who could and who could not be a citizen, rendering this desirable position difficult to access for newcomers. The matter of status obtained by foreigners after relocation was, therefore, something to consider before moving. Additional payments, such as the metic tax, were also a concern. Thus, the uncertainty accompanying such a decision could have warranted a consultation with the Dodonean gods. LOD 52, dated to the 3rd–2nd c. BC, best illustrates this conundrum:

[ἐρωτ]ᾶι εἰ λ[ῶ]ιον γυναῖκα λαμβάνοντι [κ]αὶ ἄμε<ι>νον καὶ παῖδες ἔσονται vac. [γη]ροτρόφοι Ἰσοδήμωι vac. [κ]αὶ Ἀθήνησι ἐπιδημοῦντι vac. [τῶ]ν πολιτευομένων Ἀθήνησι. vac.

[Isodemos] asks if it is better to take a wife, and will he have children who will take care of Isodemos in his old age and to reside in Athens and be one of the citizens at Athens?

Parke interprets the inscription as an inquiry made by an Athenian, who wishes to know whether he should stay in Athens or leave.[822] However, Lhôte suggest instead that he either is an Athenian who is living abroad and is considering returning to his native *polis* or a foreigner who would like to emigrate to Athens but is worried about the possibility of gaining political rights in his new place of residence.[823]

Several other oracular inscriptions also address the issue of citizenship.[824] In LOD 61B, the supplicant wanted to know when he should pursue obtaining his political rights:

ἦ αἰτέωμαι τὰν πολιτείαν ἐπὶ ταὐτὶ ἢ τοῦ εἰσιόντος;

[820] Whitehead 1977: 7.
[821] Harris 2002: 70, 86, 217 (see *IG* II^2 10, 1553-78); Watson 2010: 272-274.
[822] Parke 1967: 133.
[823] Lhôte 2006: 130.
[824] DVC 1209, 1238, 2959.

Should I claim the citizenship at this time or later?[825]

A more enigmatic query, DVC 349, also appears to tie residence with citizenship:

[---] καὶ πᾶν Α[--- ἐνα]ντίον ἐστ[ι ---] πολιτευόμ[ενον --- πό]τερα ϝοικ[εῖν --- βέν]τατα [---]

(…) and all (…) opposite is (…) be a citizen (…) better to reside (…)

Although the context of these queries cannot be definitively established, the supplicants consulting at Dodona may have been living locally, particularly in the case of LOD 61B, which seems to refer to someone who has already relocated and was seeking to obtain the status of citizen. After all, evidence of citizenship grants in Epirus can be dated as early as the first half of the 4th c. BC. The inscription records two cases of women, Philista and Phinto, as well as their children, who are bestowed the status of citizen.[826] Two later decrees, from the 3rd-2nd c. BC, also awards an Epirote *politeia* to Damarchus and an unnamed individual.[827] The Epirote tribes did not seem to view their citizenship as exclusionary. To the contrary, an expanding political entity such as the Molossian federation would have been open to broaden its population numbers.[828] Even their approach to awarding *politeia* to women seems to have been more relaxed due to their history of intertribal cooperation as well as the more privileged economic and social status Epirote women held.[829] The citizenship itself carried certain rights such as the ability to participate in federal institutions, which could have encouraged people, such as the supplicant in LOD 61B, to pursue obtaining it rather than settling with the award of *proxenia*, for example.[830] The possibility of achieving the desired status after changing one's place of residence would have been a quintessential factor to consider ahead of a relocation.

[825] The translation follows the suggestion made by Lhôte (2006: 147), based on Pomtow (1883, no. 20) and Hoffmann (1899, no. 1579), in which he equates τοῦ εἰσιόντος with τοῦ ἐπιόντος understood as "in the future".
[826] *SEG* XV 384. There is some debate among scholars whether the phrase Φιντοῦς γενεᾶι refers to "Phintas' wife" (Larsen 1967) or the "children of Phinto" (Daux 1964). Harvey (1969: 227-228) convincingly demonstrates that the name must belong to a woman and that it is her, along with her offspring, who are the direct recipients of the citizenship (as opposed to it only being awarded to her children, as Larsen proposed).
[827] *SGDI* 1338; Cabanes 1976, no. 34.
[828] Harvey 1969: 228.
[829] Hoffmann 1996: 408.
[830] As Pascual (2018: 81-82) remarks, the privileges granted through a *politeia* and a *proxenia* appear to be similar (taxes, property ownership, full rights), thus inferring from this that the difference must involve participation in federal institutions.

4.4.3. *Travel destinations*[831]

Although the topic of journeys frequently resurfaces in the tablets, very few of them explicitly mention where the supplicant wished to travel. The destination was either communicated verbally during the consultation at the sanctuary or omitted entirely. Rarely did the supplicants visit Dodona to ask for help in deciding on the objective of their travels, instead preferring to ask if their choice of destination would be fortuitous.[832] In this context, the many consultations made about Pharos appear as an unusual phenomenon. Prior to the publication of the DVC corpus, two inscriptions involving the colony were known. This number eventually rose to nine.[833] As previously mentioned, Pharos was a colony established by the Parians in 385-384 BC on an island off the coast of Dalmatia with the help of Dionysius I and the Syracusans.[834] Scholars cannot agree on what prompted Paros to found the colony. Theories range from the rise of a pro-Spartan group in the *polis*, which led it to take interest in colonization in the Adriatic with the help of the Spartans and Dionysius, with whom they were friendly, to possible relationships between public figures from Syracuse and Paros, as well as attempts to trace an ancient connection between Paros and the Adriatic basin.[835] What can be certain, however, is that the decision to establish Pharos was in line with the interests of the Syracusan tyrant, who was expanding his reach in the region, having previously founded the colony Issa.[836] Dionysius' ambition to expand westwards, into the Ionian *poros*, and through it into Epirus and the Adriatic, was furthered by the help he offered Alcetas in claiming the Molossian throne.[837] This was not without significance, since at the time the Molossians controlled Dodona, which became their political center; it was a place of meetings between the king and his magistrates.[838] As Meyer observes, the *politeia* decrees found near the *naiskos*, which mentioned the Molossian king and Molossian *prostatas*, demonstrate the Molossian oversight of the sanctuary.[839] In light of this, the political ties forged between Epirus and Syracuse may have ensured that the staff at the oracle of Dodona would have a more thorough

[831] Due to the fragmentary nature of many of the Dodonean oracular inscriptions, only the ones containing names of locations that can be identified as travel or migration destinations (either through the context of the query or by the accompanying prepositions) will be taken into account.
[832] The only possible example of this is DVC 1715.
[833] LOD 6B, 130; DVC 228, 463, 2762, 3030, 3146, 3280, 3517.
[834] Diod. Sic. XV 13, 4.
[835] See Vecchio's (2017: 125-126) overview of this debate.
[836] Concerning the founding of Issa, see Budić 2018: 101-102, footnote 3.
[837] Vecchio 2017: 126-127; Castiglioni 2018: 330.
[838] Quantin 2008: 42; Domínguez 2018: 23-24.
[839] Meyer 2013: 116-117.

knowledge of the colonial enterprises in the north, as well as been positively predisposed to encouraging these undertakings.

The establishment of Pharos appeared to have generated quite a bit of interest concerning travel and migration to the colony. The oldest consultation, dated by most scholars to the first half of the 4th c. BC, is believed to have been made around the time Pharos was founded.

ἦ μετὰ τῶν Παρίων ἐς Πάρον [μοι οἰ]κέοντι ἐς τὸν Ἰόνιον κόλπον λῶιον καὶ ἄμεινον;[840]

Is it better and more profitable for me to live among the Parians in Paros by the Ionian gulf?

The mention of the Ionian gulf in the tablet has securely allowed for Paros to be identified as the colony Pharos in the Adriatic basin.[841] Conversely, the dating of the inscription has been a more contentious point. Vokotopoulou maintains that it must have been written the year of the colonization of Pharos or soon after.[842] Budić, on the other hand, calls for more caution as the paleographic arguments may not be sufficient to support such a conclusion.[843] He does acknowledge though that there are instances of Greeks joining a colonization effort of another *polis*. Cyrene, Zancle (later Messina) and the Parian colonies of Thasos and Parion had been populated by colonists from other regions than their metropolis.[844] The identity of the author of LOD 6B is unknown since the only noticeable dialectal form (οἰκέοντι) can be either Doric or Ionic,[845] but the inquiry demonstrates a broader interest in joining the settlement effort of Pharos that went beyond the Parians.

Two other inscriptions appear to fall in the same category of migrating to the new location (both containing the verb οἰκέω). The first, LOD 130, is also dated to 385-384 BC:[846]

Ἐξάκων ἐρωτᾶι τὸν Δία καὶ τὰν Διώναν εἰ λῶιον αὐτῶι οἰκῶντι ἐμ Φάρωι

Exakon asks Zeus and Dione if it will be better for him to live in Pharos?

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[840] LOD 6B. The text of the tablet contains and unexplained gap in its second line. When originally publishing the inscription, Vokotopoulou (1992: 83, no. 11) suggested an integration, "πόκ(αι)κέοντι ἐς τὸν Ἰόνιον", interpreting it as an inquiry made by a group. Lhôte (2006: 39-44), on the other hand, convincingly argues in favour for the reading μοι οἰκέοντι, which would mean that a single individual consulted the oracle.

[841] Strabo 7.5.5. Strabo mentions that the original name of the Pharos was Paros. See Vokotopoulou 1992; Lhôte 2006: 42.

[842] Vokotopoulou 1992: 83-84.

[843] Budić 2018: 105-106.

[844] Malkin 2011: 55-57. Parion was also settled by Miletians and Eretrians (Strab. 10.5.7; 13.1.14). The refoundation of Thurii in Magna Graecia in the 5th c. BC is another example of a Panhellenic colonization effort (Diod. 12.10-11).

[845] Lhôte 2006: 42.

[846] Dakaris 1967: 50; Lhôte 2006: 271.

While the name Exakon is equally present in Doric (Crete, Cyrenaica, the Peloponnese, and Sicily) and Ionian (Athens) parts of the Greek world, Lhôte points to the Attic dialectal features, such as the contractions in οἰκῶντι and ἐρωτᾶι, as well as the use of ει instead of αι, as the definite argument in favour of the supplicant's Athenian origin.[847] The second query, dated to the early 4th c. BC, is much briefer and appears to have been written in a Doric dialect, possibly by an Epirote.[848] Along with LOD 6B, they demonstrate that Pharos may have enjoyed a rather cosmopolitan population. Such an initiative appears to have been an interesting opportunity for those seeking a better, more prosperous life. However, the dangers that migration entailed were not insignificant and a consultation at Dodona, a prominent sanctuary with knowledge of local politics, could have been perceived as a way to mitigate the risks of such a decision, particularly for foreigners who were not familiar with the region.

Evidence of interest in the new colony by the local population of Northwestern Greece is also illustrated by other tablets. In the aforementioned DVC 2762, Materina, most likely a native of Bouthrotos, sought to establish whether her husband should sail safely to the Parian colony in order to farm there. She mentions that her husband's journey will take two months (εἰς δίμηνον). As Carbon points out, this phrasing, used to denote rations allocated to crews preparing for a lengthy stay at sea, implied that the voyage to the colony was considered to be long.[849] Such an extensive trip would have to be planned out and timed well. Further concerns about the duration of sea travel northward are mirrored in DVC 228:

Θεὸς τύχα ἀγαθά· Ἀριστόδημος ἐπ[ικ]οινῆται Διὶ Ναΐωι καὶ Διώναι καὶ θεῶν <ἦ> ἦ λώϊον καὶ ἄμεινον ΣΑΤΕΙ πλέοντι [κατὰ θάλασσ]αν καὶ ἐς Φάρον τοῦ θέρεος;[850]

God good fortune. Aristodemos asks Zeus Naios and Dione and the gods is it better and more profitable to sail this year [by sea] and to Pharos this summer?

[847] LGPN, s.v. Ἐξάκων; Lhôte 2006: 272.

[848] ἦ ἰς Φάρον Ϝοικέων; / *whether to live in Pharos?*; Lhôte (2017: 42) points to the use of the digamma and the ἰς instead of εἰς as evidence of the supplicant's Epirote origin.

[849] Aristot. *Econ*. 2.1353a; Carbon 2017: 102-103.

[850] Although the text presented here follows the DVC edition and restorations, some issues must be noted. Carbon (2017: 103, footnote 44), following Méndez Dosuna's suggestion, interprets σᾶτει as a Doric version of σῆτες (this year). Lhôte (2017: 43), on the other hand, offers a different restoration of the lacuna in l. 5: ἐς Κορκυράν (or possibly ἐς Ἀπολλωνίαν). This version is championed by Carbon, who argues that an additional stop in Aristodemos' journey would explain why he was concerned about the timing of his voyage. While this is an interesting theory which could help map more precisely commercial journeys along the Epirote and Illyrian coasts, there is not enough evidence to securely argue in favour of this restoration. As was demonstrated earlier in this chapter, the term κατὰ θάλασσαν appears very frequently in tablets related to seaborne travel, making it statistically more probable to have been present in DVC 228.

Based on the northwestern Doric dialect present in the query, Carbon infers that the supplicant would have been a local resident. He also theorizes that the consultation must have happened later in the summer, leading Aristodemos to worry whether he had enough time to travel from Dodona to the Parian colony before the sailing season ended.[851] In both cases the supplicants or those they inquire about already seem to have made up their mind about their journeys. What they sought at the oracle was the assurance that the travelers would reach their faraway destination and that the risk they took would pay off. Finance appeared to be, after all, the primary motivation for sailing to Pharos in order to relocate permanently or temporarily, as evidenced by Materina's query about her relative's ability to find work as a farmer and by DVC 3030, in which Theokleidas explicitly asks whether sailing to the colony would bring him wealth.[852] The tablets demonstrate personal initiative on the part of the supplicants. While the Parian colonization effort would have been coordinated by the metropolis, the visitors at the sanctuary who inquired about moving to Pharos appear to have been acting independently and of their own accord. The colonization endeavor sent ripples across nearby communities, prompting some of their members to consider relocating in the hopes of finding work in their new home.

The echoes of the geopolitical changes that occurred in the Adriatic during the early 4th c. BC can be found in other oracular queries. LOD 100A, dated by Lhôte to 400-375 BC, contains a question about travel to present-day northern Italy:[853]

Θεός τύχη : εἰρωτᾶι : τὸν Δία τὸν Ναῖον καὶ τὴν Διώνην Αἰσχυλῖνος : εἰ μὴ αὐτῶι ἄμενον πλεῖν ἐς Ἀδρίαν ἐς Τισατεῖς

God fortune. Aischylinos asks Zeus Naios and Dione: will it not be better for him to sail to Adria then to the Tisates?

Lhôte believes that the inscription references the *emporion* of Adria, which was refounded by Dionysios I as part of his expansion into the Adriatic.[854] The supplicant, Aischylinos, appears to have wanted to take advantage of this freshly reactivated commercial route, with Adria as his first stop and the land of the Tisates as a second one. This group remains something of a mystery to

[851] Carbon 2017: 103-104.
[852] καὶ χρημάτων ὄνασις ἐσσεῖται; / *and will there be profit of money?*; Theokleidas appears to have also been a Doric speaker based on some of the dialectal features of his query (e.g. ὄνασις/ὄνησις). His name is well-attested in the Peloponnese, see LGPN s.v. Θεοκλείδας.
[853] Lhôte 2006: 215-216. Between 403-402 and 375 BC, E and EI are used interchangeably in the Ionian dialect to transcribe the 'long' *e* sound.
[854] Lhôte 2006: 216.

scholars. Lhôte suggests that the ethnonym may have referred to a Venetic or Etruscan tribe which lived in the area.[855] Castiglioni, however, offers a different explanation. She argues that the T in the inscription actually resembles a Π, which would mean that Aischylinos was, in fact, seeking --information about the Pisates, that is the inhabitants of Pisa (Πίση). While the Pisa in central Italy could have been the destination the supplicant had in mind, as a crossing through the Apennines at the time would have been possible as well as travel by river, Castiglioni suggests that the location mentioned in the query is in fact another Pisa, which, based on Peretti's interpretation of the *Periplus of Pseudo-Scylax*, would have been located in the Veneto region and in proximity of Adria.[856] Such a journey, limited to the Adriatic sea, seems to be the more probable option.

Even though archeological excavations at Adria revealed that Greek imports of Corinthian and Attic origin are well-attested in the 6th c. BC, Castiglioni cautions against assuming that it was a Syracusan colony, as there is not enough evidence to support this claim.[857] Instead, she proposes to view Adria's relationship to Syracuse through the prism of Dionysios' growing influence over the Adriatic sea region, bolstered by his help at Pharos and by the establishment of the colony of Issa on the Illyrian coast.[858] The secured control of the maritime travel routes would have renewed the interest in trade and migration to these more distant areas. A final oracular inscription, LOD 103A, appears to fit into this context: [859]

θεός. Ἀρίστων ἐροτᾶι τὸν Δία τὸν Ναῖον καὶ τὴν Δηόνεν εἰ λοῖόν μοι καὶ ἄμενον καὶ δυνήομαι πλεῖν εἰς Συρακόσας πρὸς τὴν ἀποικίαν ὕστερον;

God. Ariston asks Zeus Naios and Dione: is it better and more profitable for me and will I be able to sail to Syracuse, later to the colony?

The supplicant, Ariston, wished to know whether he should sail to Syracuse and from there head to a colony, presumably one tied to the Sicilian *polis*. This tablet, along with the Pharos and Adria ones, testify to the effects of the changing political landscapes on individuals. The new colonial endeavours in the Adriatic, along with a more secure sea route, generated interest among the

[855] Lhôte 2006: 216. When the tablet was originally published, Evangelidis (1935: 252, n. 9) argued that Tisates must have been Tisia, a "πόλις Ἰταλίας" (St. Byz.s.v. Τισία). However, until the 2nd c. BC, the name Italia corresponded to the southern part of the Italian peninsula. It would have made little sense for Aischylinos to travel to Adria and then back south, rendering this interpretation very unlikely (Castiglioni 2016: 117).
[856] Peretti 1979: 218; Castiglioni 2016: 121.
[857] For a discussion on Greek commercial presence in the Adriatic, see D'Ercole 2015.
[858] Castiglioni 2016: 122-123.
[859] Lhôte 2006: 220-221. Lhôte also dates the tablet to the early 4th c. BC, just as in the case of LOD 100A, see footnote 178 for explanation.

residents of neighbouring regions, who saw these undertakings as economic opportunities. Investing into maritime commerce or deciding to immigrate to such faraway[860], recently settled regions involved considerable risk, which could be mitigated by consulting the Dodonean sanctuary. As Castiglioni notes, the close relationship between the courts of Dionysios I and Alcetas at the beginning of the 4th c. BC most likely translated to support for the Syracusan tyrant's undertakings at the Molossian-controlled oracle.[861] In addition to the possible top-down influence,[862] the sanctuary staff would have been privy to more detailed knowledge about the Epirote and foreign political situation through news brought by the diverse visitors at Dodona, which could have allowed them to better advise the supplicants. The oracle of Dodona was, therefore, entangled in the local circulation of information, directly influencing movement, migration and trade in the Ionian and Adriatic regions.

This tendency – consulting the Epirote oracle about traveling to or engaging in commercial activity at local destinations – is further reflected in the tablets. In certain cases, just as with the questions about Pharos, Adria and Syracuse, they can be placed in a more detailed historical context, which can help explain the reasoning behind the supplicants' inquiries. For the most part, other *poleis* or *koina* referenced in the queries tended to be located in Northwestern Greece. The oracle of Dodona provided information about travel, particularly related to migration, within Epirus itself. A supplicant named Agathokles, whose consultation is dated to the latter half of the 4th c. BC, inquired in DVC 524:

[λώιον καὶ ἄμεινόν ἐστι] Ἀγαθοκλεῖ κατοικεῖν ἐν Δωδώναι;

(Is it better and more profitable) for Agathokles to settle in Dodona?

Not much can be inferred about the origins of the man making the query,[863] but his interest in moving to Dodona in the late 4th c. BC aligns with the growing political prominence of the *polis* within Epirus.[864] To the north, supplicants consulted about living in the land of the Chemarians

[860] The direct distance between Dodona and Pharos is approx. 534 km, while Dodona – Adria is approx. 942 km.
[861] Castiglioni 2016: 125-126.
[862] The connection between the Aeacid kings and the oracle of Dodona in the 4th and early 3rd c. BC is confirmed further by both literary and epigraphic evidence. Strabo (6.1.5) mentions that Alexander I, son of Alcetas I, consulted the oracle before his expedition to Magna Graecia. Pyrrhus also sought the advice of the Dodonean gods (Cassius Dio, 36 frag. 40, 6). His involvement in the development of Dodona is much better attested than that of his predecessors. In the oracular corpus itself, DVC have identified the names of several 5th-4th century kings: Tharyps (DVC 2148), Arybbas (DVC 2111), Alexander I, son of Neoptolemos I (DVC 41).
[863] Agathokles is an extremely popular name across the Hellenic world, see LGPN s.v. Ἀγαθοκλῆς.
[864] Dakaris *et al.* 1999: 151-153. Archeological evidence demonstrate that the sanctuary of Dodona was expanded in the 4th c. BC, and at the turn of the 4th and 3rd centuries, the Prytaneion and Bouleuterion were constructed.

and in Orikos. In the case of the former, the inquiry – LOD 131 – appears to have been made by several people, perhaps a family or a group travelling together:

περὶ τᾶς οἰκήσιος τᾶς ἐγ Χεμαρίων πότερον αὐτεῖ οἰκέωντι;

Concerning dwelling in (the land of) the Chemarians. Should they live there?

The inscription has been originally dated to the third quarter of the 4th c. BC based on the letter shapes, but Lhôte cautions against it, instead suggesting to simply date the text to the 4th c.[865] The ethnicon most likely applies to the inhabitants of Chemara, located along the coast, north of Corcyra.[866] The *polis* is better attested in the late 3rd and early 2nd c. BC, due to its presence on the Delphic list of Thearodoci from Epirus.[867] In light of this, Lhôte argues that this is the earliest attestation of this ethnicon and that the query is tied to the inception of the *polis*. The text appears to be written in a Doric dialect (e.g. use of αὐτεῖ instead of αὐτοῦ), which could imply the supplicants were local to the region, interested in a newly developing city.

The second tablet, LOD 54, is an inquiry made by an inhabitant of Orikos, further north of Chemara:

θεός. τύχα. ἐν Ὠρικοῖ κα λοῖον πράσ(σ)οιμι κατὰ χόραν ἢ *h*όσ̣π̣ερ ̣ῦν ϝοικέο̣ν;

God, fortune. In Orikos will I do better living in the country or where I live now?

DVC identify the alphabet as a Corinthian one, dating it to the mid-5th c. BC.[868] Though Orikos was not a Corinthian or Corcyrean colony, it eventually formed a close relationship with Corcyra, probably due to their proximity and function in the regional trade routes.[869] The supplicant in LOD 54 consulted the oracle of Zeus in order to find out whether he should stay in the city, or move to its rural outskirts. The tablet not only hints at the connection between Corcyra and Orikos, suggesting that Orikos may have been influenced by Corcyra or, more likely, its colony Apollonia, but also provides some insight into the possible size of the settlement at the time, which in its earlier phase is referred to simply as a "harbour" (λιμήν) and only later is called a *polis*.[870]

Dodona also played a role in answering queries about Epirote commercial activity, as can be seen in DVC 1259:

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[865] Dakaris *et al.* 1993: 59-60; Lhôte 2006: 272-275.
[866] Identified with present-day Himarë, see Funke, Moustakis and Hochschulz 2004: 340.
[867] Hammond 1967: 656-657.
[868] Dakaris *et al*. 1993: 60.
[869] Lhôte 2006: 136-137; see also LOD 2.
[870] Cf. Filos: 2018: 225, footnote 28; Funke, Moustakis and Hochschulz 2004: 347. For "harbour" see Hdt. 9.93, St. Byz. s.v. Ὠρικός.

ἦ ἐμ[πορευόμενος ἐς] Ἀθαμ[ᾶνας πράσσοι]μι<μ> βέλ[τιον ---] δος;

Is it better for me to travel for business to the Athamanians?

Though heavily restituted, the inscription appears to refer to the Athamanians, a tribe that inhabited south-eastern Epirus and west Thessaly.[871] They are named as one of the Epirote tribes, though the nature of their status remains ambiguous – according to Diodorus Siculus they still acted independently in the mid-4th c. BC.[872] Knowledge about the neighbouring region would have been readily available at Dodona, as evidenced by another tablet containing the tribe's consultation at the oracle, which suggests that the sanctuary was in direct contact with the Athamanians and thus could have facilitated the circulation of information, guiding the supplicant from DVC 1259 in his decision to travel to Athamania.[873] By the 4th c, journeying across Epirus would have certainly been possible (the supplicant would have had to travel overland from Dodona, possibly using the road to the south leading through Ambracia), with a functioning system of roads believed to have already been in place, growing in significance especially in the urbanized coastal areas and in Dodona.

In another inscription, LOD 46Bb, the supplicant – presumably Iolas, whose name is inscribed on the verso of the tablet – asks whether he should choose to sell his goods in Epirus or neighbouring Acarnania:

ἦ εἰς Ἐλίναν ΠΕΡΙΕΛΟ[---] ἢ εἰς Ἀνακτόριον [---] ἢ πωλοῦντες τὸν [---]

To Elina (…) or to Anaktorion (…) selling (…)

The name Ἰόλας, along with Νικ(οκράτεια), are both written on the reverse side to their respective queries and, according to Lhôte, in the same handwriting, but differing from that of the questions. He theorizes that they were, therefore, inscribed by the sanctuary staff while the queries were written by the supplicants themselves.[874] Elina, which had to date been known only through its inhabitants' ethnonym Ἔλινοι, has been identified by scholars as located at the site of Dymokastro/Elimocastro, across the channel from the southmost point of Corcyra.[875] As Hammond notes, pairing it with the port city of Anaktorion suggests that Elina itself was a port as

[871] Hammond 1967: 682.
[872] D. S. 14.82.7 and 16.29.1. Cf. Hammond 1967: 450, 524; Filos 2018: 288.
[873] DVC 4016.
[874] Lhôte 2006: 115. LOD 46 contains several questions.
[875] St. Byz. s.v. Ἔλινοι; *FGrH* III A 265 (Rhianos) F 17; Cabanes 1976: 123, 507; Hammond 1967: 678, 704. LOD 46Bb is the only known text which contains the name of the urban center, rather than the name of the people inhabiting it.

well. The development of Elina from tribal territory into a town most likely occurred in the mid-4th c. BC, when Epirus underwent further urban growth as a region. The emergence of new urban centers would have invigorated the local economy and created new markets, thus making it an attractive destination for merchants. The query appears to be overall concerned with trade in the North and central western Greek region. Acarnania, in which Anaktorion is located, was named several times in the Dodonean corpus as a possible journey destination, demonstrating the frequency of travel from Dodona to the neigbouring area.[876] Because of the typically Attic contraction in πωλοῦντες, Lhôte suggests that Iolas (whose Doric spelling of the name Ἰόλεως would have been the result of sanctuary staff inscribing it) was of Athenian origin.[877] This, however, is not reflected in the occurrence of the name itself, which can be found in the Peloponnese or in Macedonia, but not in Attica.[878] Therefore the origin of the trader remains uncertain, but his interest in commerce in the territories in proximity of Dodona hinted at a developing and interconnected local trade system.

Even though direct references to locations remain scarce, the oracular tablets provide further evidence of Northwestern Greek merchants consulting the sanctuary about local business. Much can be inferred from the analysis of the names and dialects in which the tablets were written. In the case of the aforementioned LOD 95A, Lhôte deduces that Timodamos would have spoken in a Corinthian dialect due to his use of OY and EI instead of ω and η. He also dates the tablet to 400-390 BC, based on the letter style and the mix of Corinthian and Attic grammar. Lhôte concludes that the supplicant must have been a resident of local Corinthian colonies, perhaps Corcyra, Apollonia or Ambracia.[879] Incidentally, the name Timodamos is well attested in Hellenistic Ambracia, further supporting Lhôte's theory.[880] Evidence of merchants from Ambracia consulting the Dodonean sanctuary can be seen in LOD 106A, where the supplicants ask about remaining in the *polis* or travelling to Messina.[881] The grammar in DVC 430 also confirms that the one making the inquiry most likely had been a Doric speaker.[882] The text is dated to the first half

[876] DVC 2014, 2354.
[877] Lhôte 2006: 116.
[878] Ἰόλας: *SEG* XXXVIII 609 (Europos, 1st c. BC-1st c. AD) and *SEG* II 581 II, 18 (Teos, 2nd c. BC); Ἰόλεως: *SGDI* 5614 (Kolophon, 3rd c. BC). However, it must be noted that Ἰόλαος is attested twice in Attica (LGPN s.v. Ἰόλαος).
[879] Lhôte 2006: 203-204.
[880] *CIG* 1800, 10; *IG* IX (1) 537; cf. *AM* 27 (1902) p. 354 (father and son both named Timodamos).
[881] [περὶ ἐργα]σίης καὶ εἰ π̣[ορευώμε]θ̣α ἐς Μεσσήνην [..7-8…]ΠΟ̣Υ ἢ ἐν Ἀμπρα[κίαι μέν]ωμεν / *[--- concerning tra]de and if we should travel to Messina[---] or (stay) in Ambracia [---]*
[882] Méndez Dosuna 2016: 124.

of the 4th c. BC, placing it in a similar time frame as LOD 95A.[883] The authors of the questions seem to have been local to the Epirote region.

The *polis* of Ambracia was a destination of particular interest to those visiting the oracle of Zeus Naios and Dione.[884] The oldest tablet, DVC 3549, is dated to the first half of the 6th c. BC and is written in the Ambraciote alphabet, implying that the supplicants was a native of the city.[885] The majority of the texts, however, have been dated to the 5th and 4th c. BC, before Ambracia came to be ruled by the Aeacids. Since its founding by the Corinthians around 625 BC, it stood as a feat of architecture and urban organization, by far surpassing the surrounding Epirote *komai*. Its strategic location at the southern entry point to Epirus and as a useful trading point between the Adriatic and the Ionian seas helped the *polis* prosper,[886] thus making it an appealing destination for trade, work, and migration. Unfortunately, none of the texts are detailed enough to establish what exactly the supplicants wished to know.

The time period to which most of these tablets belong – the second half of the 5th c. and 4th c. – coincides with a shift in the development of Epirus. Cities such as Elina or Elea, a *polis* in Thesprotia with a harbour, which is also mentioned in the oracular inquiries, are believed to have been founded in the first half of the 4th c. BC.[887] The growth of the *poleis* in Epirus would have reinvigorated the area and made these developing urban centers appealing locations for people seeking new opportunities. Such shifts in the socioeconomic landscape of Epirus and its progressive integration with the Hellenic world would have encouraged merchants to become more active in the region. With the exception of the queries about the Athamanes and Dodona, the supplicants were predominantly inquiring about travel to coastal cities or ones connected to ports, which were in the unique position to offer access to both maritime and land-based trade routes, thus developing into prospering communities.

Many of the Dodonean queries reflect this pattern of interest in locations along the Northwestern Greek coast. Epidamnos, a port city founded by Corinth and Corcyra in the late 7th

[883] Dakaris *et al.* 2013a: 137.
[884] DVC 1066, 2089, 3549, 2295, 3979, 2265, 618, 1473, 814, 891. The supplicant making the inquiry in LOD 65A is from Ambracia.
[885] Dakaris *et al.* 2013b: 287.
[886] Cf. Andreou 1993, Andreou 1999.
[887] LOD 113, in which there is mention of horse racing at Elea (Lhôte 2006: 238) and DVC 3429, which seems to imply a question about residing in the city. About Elea, see Hammond 1967: 803; Cabanes 1976: 506-507, 519; Funke, Moustakis and Hochschulz (2004: 340) identify Elaias Limen as being the harbour of Elea.

c. BC,[888] is mentioned five times in the tablets.[889] It was among the northmost colonies located in Illyrian territory. Those attempting to access it by land or sea would be faced with the risk of encountering Illyrian pirates or brigands monitoring the area. Therefore, the questions about trade with the colony may have resulted from worries about the merchants' well-being and assets. Consultations would have played a part in the risk-assessment of the journey. Another reason for the inquiries can also be offered. Tablets LOD 98 and 99A, as well as DVC 3185, are dated to the mid-5th c. BC (while DVC 1770 is presumed to have been written in 5th-4th c. BC), which saw conflict arise between different social groups within Epidamnos. The domestic dispute led to the military involvement of the Corcyreans and Corinthians, which Thucydides points to as the spark that ignited the Peloponnesian war.[890] The queries could have been asked as a result of the worrying news about the internal struggle in the northern colony and the armed intervention of its mother *poleis*. LOD 98, 99A, and DVC 3185 have also been identified as written in the Corinthian alphabet, meaning that those inscribing the tablets were most likely inhabitants of the Northwestern Greek Corinthian colonies or even traders from Corinth itself, which could have resulted in additional concerns when traveling to a contested region. Despite these risks, however, Epidamnos remained one of the most notable trading partners of Epirus, serving as an intermediary through which Epirote products could be exported beyond the Adriatic and Ionian basins.[891] Its regional economic significance is further highlighted by its numerous attestations among the commerce-related queries, as well as in a question concerning living in the *polis*, probably made by a supplicant interested in moving there.[892] The third famous Illyrian *polis*, Apollonia, also appears as a sailing destination in the Dodonean corpus – the aforementioned DVC 366. The inquirer's concern in this case, however, lies not in whether he should sail to the city, but rather in his ability to obtain information about the location of pirates, a prominent threat in the region. Finally, in DVC 1229, someone consulted Zeus Naios about travel to Corcyra.[893] It might seem surprising that, so few inquiries involved the Corinthian colony, particularly since it was a major trading center in the region with proven ties to the sanctuary in the form of a famous statue of a

[888] Wilkes and Fischer-Hansen 2004: 330.
[889] LOD 98: ἐμπορίας ἐς Ἐπίδαμνον / *Commerce to Epidamnos*. Other similarly phrased texts are LOD 99A, DVC 3 and 3185, possibly 1770.
[890] Thuc. 1.24-28; cf. Kagan 1969: 205-221; De St. Croix 1972: 67-79.
[891] Cabanes 1976: 501; Bresson 2016: 138.
[892] DVC 1345: [Χἐπερωτᾶ]ι η ζόη [ἐν] Ἐπιδα / *(X asks) if he should live in Epida(mnos)*. Another tablet, DVC 2025 (discussed in Chapter 3), mentions a wife from Epidamnos.
[893] Αἰ (i)ς Κόρκυ(ραν ---] Δία Νάιο[ν ---].

boy on columns, beating cauldrons with a whip, which the Corcyreans erected at Dodona.[894] Perhaps its established and successful position in the local economy was precisely the reason why it did not appear to be as risky a destination as its northern and faraway colonies. It should also be noted that despite not being frequently mentioned in the tablets, its inhabitants were most certainly among those visiting the oracle.[895]

To the south, Acarnania and its *poleis* – as previously mentioned – were visited by the supplicants of Dodona. DVC 2014 and 2354, both dated to the first half of the 4th c., contain consultations about travel to the region. The latter tablet is particularly abundant in details concerning the journey:

Φυσαίων ἐπερωτεῖ Δ[ί]α Νάιον καὶ Διώνα(ν) ἦ διαβαίνη τᾶι hιαρομηνίαι εἰς Ἀκαρνανία[ν] ἦ πράξει τι ὧν κα χρεῖ κατὰ γνώμαν ἀσφαλέως

Physaion asks Zeus Naios and Dione whether he should cross over to Acarnania on the sacred month, whether he will accomplish something of what is necessary according to his purpose safely?[896]

Physaion has been identified by Carbon as a Doric speaker, most likely from Epirus – the use of the verb διαβαίνω, understood here as "to cross over"[897], in order to describe the path into Acarnania, hints at travelling across the Acarnanian Gulf. The ἱερομηνία, used to describe the Nemean or Pythian festivities, can only refer to the Actia, the largest festival in honour of Apollo in Acarnania. Physaion's travel during the sacred month of celebration, games, and fairs would have provided ample opportunities for business ventures. The Actia are also used as a time frame in DVC 3220:

ἦ λοῖόν μο[ί] κα καὶ ἄμειν[ον] ΝΕΙΑ αἴ κ[α] τὰ χώρια πωλ(έ)ων εἰς Κόρινθον ἀποδαμῶ ἐν τοῖ ἔρποντι ἐνιαυτοῖ πρὸ Ἀκτίων κα[ὶ] ἦ ἀσφάλεια ΩΝ ἐσσε[ῖ]ται ἀποδαμοῦν[τ]ι αὐτο‹ῖ›;

[894] Concerning Corcyra as a regional trading hub, see Bresson 2003: 138; Concerning the Corcyrean *anathema* at Dodona, see Steph. Byz., s.v. Δωδώνη, Dieterle 2007: 64, fig. 11, as well as Intrieri 2018.
[895] DVC 1088 is an inquiry made by Pheides of Corcyra, while a number of other tablets can possibly be attributed to Corcyreans (e.g. DVC 1193, see Méndez Dosuna 2016: 127). Several other inscriptions might also refer to Corcyra (DVC 105, 193, 3116, 3442), but due to the damages sustained by the tablets, it is impossible to definitely establish if they reference the Northwestern Greek *polis* or another city, e.g. Corinth.
[896] See transl. Carbon 2017: 105.
[897] Carbon 2017: 106; LSJ s.v. διαβαίνω.

Is it better and more profitable for me, if selling my lands, I shall leave for Corinth in the coming year, before the Actia, and if I myself (will have) safety regarding the things that will come about for me when I go abroad?[898]

Scholars agree that the tablet is written in a Northwestern Doric dialect, though the identity of the inquirer was most likely Acarnanian rather than Epirote, due to the mention of Corinth, with which the region – filled with Corinth's former colonies – had a more intimate connection. Moreover, the mention of the Actia as a means of establishing a timeline of the voyage would imply that the festival played an important role in the life of the supplicant, further pointing to his Acarnanian origins. The supplicant's concern was not with the sale itself, but rather with the timing of his journey, which would take around a month and which led through dangerous waters of the Corinthian Gulf.[899] The prominence of the Actia festival as an important regional event is evidenced also by other tablets, the aforementioned LOD 122, in which Bostrycha asks about stolen money at the games, and LOD 113, in which Satyros inquires about a horse that raced at the Actia games. The *polis* Aktion is also named in the tablets. For example, in DVC 1156, the supplicant wonders whether he should become a farmer at Aktion or go elsewhere.[900] The author of DVC 3473 mentions a slave bought there. Besides Aktion, other Acarnanian *poleis* figure in the oracular corpus as possible travel destinations: the coastal Astakos[901], Echinos[902] by the Ambracian Gulf and Thourion/Thyrium.[903]

Two other regions in mainland Greece are prominently represented in the tablets. The first is Epirus's eastern neighbour, Thessaly.[904] Several inquiries mention Pharkadon, a *polis* in Histiaeotis. DVC 1339 and 1340, dated to the second half of the 4th c., are on the same side of the tablet and are believed by the editors to have been written by the same hand, suggesting that they were one question:

ἐν Φαρκαδόνι

εἰ γαοργέω [κ]αὶ ἔστι μοι τυχαῖον

In Pharkadon, should I farm and is it lucky for me?

[898] Translation based on Carbon 2017: 105. See also DOL s.v. DVC 3220; Méndez Dosuna 2016: 135-136.
[899] Carbon 2017: 106.
[900] A more fragmented tablet, DVC 1930, also references the *polis*.
[901] DVC 2086.
[902] DVC 345: ἐν Ἐχίνοι ἐὸ(ν) τυνχάνω; / *in Echinos, will he fare well?*
[903] DVC 967: [---] Θούριον ἀπ[ιόν] / *Concerning Thourreion, is it good?*
[904] As a region, it is only named once, in DVC 3738.

Based on choice of wording (τυχαῖος as "lucky", which appears only in the Thessalian queries DVC 31 and 221), Méndez Dosuna argues the supplicant must have been Thessalian.[905] The remaining three inscriptions, dated to the 5th-4th c. BC, are heavily damaged, but two of them (DVC 92 and 233) concern something in Pharkadon, while the last one (DVC 490) possibly refers to traveling to the city. Pharkadon's location in the northwestern area of Thessaly, and thus in closer proximity to Dodona, may have contributed to its frequency in the oracular queries. Similarly, Trikka, situated in the same region as Pharkadon, may feature more prominently in the tablets because of its position near the Epirote border, which would have facilitated travel to the *polis*. Trikka was also known for its Asklepieion, which may have been the reason why the supplicants from DVC 40 and 2784 consulted the gods about journeying there.[906] In DVC 2786, an abbreviated form of the name of the Thessalian *polis* could be interpreted as the oracle's response to DVC 2784 encouraging the crossing of the mountains. Another city in the area, Aeginion, is mentioned in DVC 303.[907]

One final inscription, DVC 2024 from to the first half of the 4th c BC, involves an incident at Melitaia in Southeastern Thessaly:

θεός· Δαμαίνετος πὲρ Προξένου πος κε ἐκ Μελιτείας σωθῆ καὶ τίνι θεῶν ἢ δαιμόνων εὐχόμενος σωθῆ διὰ θαχέων καὶ τῶι θεῶ[ι] δῶρον ἀποφέρει;

God. Damainetos about Proxenos, will he escape Melitaia and to which gods or daimons to pray for the swift escape and he brings a present to the god.[908]

Both Damainetos and Proxenos are names attested in Thessaly, though what securely establishes this query as Thessalian are the grammatical features (use of apocope of περί and modal κε) and the mention of Melitaia.[909] Damainetos seems to be consulting about a friend or relative who found himself in trouble. The situation appears dire enough that the supplicant is not only asking whether the man he is inquiring about will manage to leave the *polis*, but also wishes to pray for a successful rescue. The difficulty of the problem may have been the reason why someone from an otherwise unattested region travelled to the Epirote oracle for help. Outside of these queries, the Thessalian

[905] Méndez Dosuna 2016: 127-128.
[906] Strabo 8.374; see Mitropoulou 1994.
[907] ἐν Ἀιγινίωι ἦ μέν[ω] / *in Aeginion, should I stay?*
[908] The translation follows the suggestions of Méndez Dosuna 2016: 131.
[909] Δαμαίνετος: *IG* IX, 2, 553 and *IG* IX, 2, 90. Πρόξενος: *CID* II 1 I, 13 and *IG* IX, 2, 515.

dialect can be frequently found in the Dodonean corpus, attesting to the mobility of people between the two neighbouring lands.[910]

A few of the locations the visitors at the sanctuary of Zeus Naios inquired belong to the Peloponnesian peninsula. Corinth, which only is accounted for once, has already been discussed, but two more *poleis* must be noted. First, Olympia seems to have been consulted about at least four times.[911] Part of its appeal as a travel destination may have been – just as in the case of Aktion – the Panhellenic festival, which were held there. DVC 2986, for example, appears to have been asked by a competitor at the event:

ἐ οὐ νικάσ[ω] ἀκονιτὶ (ἐ)ν [Ὀλ]υμπίαι;

Will I not win without struggle at Olympia?

The remaining queries, though fragmentary, refer to travel and staying at the *polis*, with DVC 4080 possibly being a response of the oracle, encouraging the supplicant to stay put. The other Peloponnesian city mentioned in the tablets is Nemea. In DVC 1358, a consultation is made about living in Nemea.[912] The text provides little information about his origins; the name mentioned in the tablet, Thyestes, is attested in Greek mythology, but not elsewhere as a name of individuals.[913] DVC 3294, on the other hand, appears to be an inquiry about the success in buying a slave from Nemea, presumably involving travel to the *polis* in order to finalize the purchase.

Interest in travel across the Ionian *poros* was not only limited to the aforementioned LOD 103A but can be found in several other tablets. LOD 102, for example, is a query about traveling to Sicily:

θ[ε]ό[ς]. τύ[χα] ἀγαθά. Ἀρχω[— —] [ἰ]στορε̣[ῖ τὸ]ν θεὸν πότερον πλέω εἰς Σικ[ελίαν]

God. Good fortune. Archo(…) inquires the god whether I should sail to Sicily?

Manganaro proposed to interpret the inscription, which has been dated to the 4th c. BC[914], as linked to the colonization effort organized by Timoleon of Corinth after repelling the Carthaginians from the island in the 330s, the Corinthian settlements in the Ionian and Adriatic regions began sending

[910] Examples of inscriptions containing Thessalian dialectal features include DVC 1433, 2204, 2761 and 3274; Tselikas 2018: 254-255.
[911] DVC 2986 and 3509 (restored), DVC 1207, 4079+4080 (about travel to or remaining in Olympia), DVC 2986.
[912] Ζε[ῦ] ἦ Νεμέαι οἰκ[ῶν π]ό[τ]ερον Θυέστου[.]Ι[..]; / *Oh Zeus, concerning living in Nemea, should ... of Thyestes…*
[913] Thyestes was a mythical king of Olympia. See Aesch. *Ag.*; Hyginus *Fabulae* 85, 86, 88; Sen. *Thy*. The Thyestadai are also the name of a phratry in Delos but due to the lack of further context in the inscription, this connection is tenuous at best.
[914] Lhôte 2006: 217-219.

people to Sicily. Manganaro argues that the Epirote coins, dated to the mid and latter part of the 4th c. BC, as well as coins from Pharos, Apollonia, Epidamnos-Dyrrhachion and Ambracia, discovered on the island suggest that Northwestern Greeks were among those who migrated to Sicily.[915] Although not impossible, this interpretation can be contested based on an earlier suggestion by Vokotopoulou, who dated the tablet to around 375 BC based on the letter shape.[916] However, Manganaro's evidence demonstrates the longevity of the ties forged between Epirus and Sicily at the beginning of the 4th c. BC, while LOD 102 underlines the interest that those visiting Dodona had in travelling to locations across the Ionian sea. Other examples include LOD 106A, in which the supplicant who seemed to reside in Ambracia was considering travel to Messina, and DVC 280, in which Syracuse appears to be named as a destination.

A few other oracular queries also mention locations in southern Italy. Barion is referenced in DVC 562, while the author of DVC 2554 wished to know whether to stay in Thouria. In LOD 132, Nikomachos inquires "*whether it would be more profitable for him to register (to migrate) from Heracleia to Taras*".[917] Though the inscription is dated broadly to the second half of the 4th c. BC, Lhôte notes that this inquiry may have been tied to the political turmoil caused by the invasion of Italic tribes, including the Lucanians and Bruttii. This aggression prompted Taras to ask Alexander I of Epirus for help, which he provided, liberating in 326 BC, among others, Heracleia, a Tarentine colony.[918] The uncertainty of the situation may have prompted Nikomachos to seek his fortune in the metropolis.

Kroton is also the subject of an inquiry:[919]

θεός. τύχα ἀγαθά. περὶ πανπασίας καὶ περὶ ϝοικέσιος ἰς Κρ<ό>τονα ε͂ βέλτιων καὶ ἄμεινο(ν) αὐτοῖ καὶ γενεᾶι : καὶ γυναικί;

God, good fortune. Concerning the property and residence in Kroton. Will it be better and more profitable for him and his progeny and his wife?

According to Lhôte, the alphabet in which this inscription from the early 4th c. BC has been written, along with the use of the ἰς, suggest the person who wrote it was most likely from Epirus.[920] The tablet provides insight into the process of relocating a family – as opposed to individuals migrating

[915] Manganaro 2002: 118-122.
[916] Vokotopoulou 1995: 84.
[917] ἦ ἀπογραψάμ[ε]ν[ός] κα ἐς Τάραντα ἐξ Ἡρακληίας ἄμεινον [πρ]άσ<σ>ο[ι]
[918] Liv. 8, 24; Lhôte 2006: 276.
[919] LOD 114A.
[920] Lhôte 2006: 240.

alone as is the case in the majority of the inscriptions. The move of an entire family often was the result of unfavourable circumstances, such as fleeing war or poverty[921], yet in LOD 114A the inquiry seems to be deliberate, a carefully thought-out attempt at establishing whether the journey to Kroton would benefit the supplicant, his family and his property. Migration across the Ionian Sea would have been a significant and risky change in the life of the person considering it. Consulting the oracle of Dodona appeared to be an early step in the planning process, helping to establish whether such a change should even be considered. In turn, LOD 114B, which reads *"in Kroton*" (ἐν Κρότονι), can be interpreted as the gods' response, endorsing the decision to move. A query about the possibility of travel to Sybaris, dated to the late 6th c. BC before the *polis* was destroyed by Kroton, has also been identified.[922] Finally, three other supplicants, from Kyme (DVC 35),[923] from Metapontion (DVC 2333), and from Hergetion (LOD 75), consulted Zeus Naios and Dione. Though not concerned with travel, these queries help establish the reach of the oracle.

The corpus contains a few geographical outliers. DVC 186 mentions the *polis* Orchomenos in Boeotia and DVC 296 contains a query about, among other things, staying in Oropos. As previously discussed, the Boeotian dialect can be found in the oracular tablets, signaling that inhabitants of that region did, on occasion, visit the Dodonean sanctuary. DVC 1363, on the other hand, in which the supplicant asks about returning to Carthage for business, is one of the furthest locations found in the oracular tablets. Its role as a major trading hub and its location at the junction of two Mediterranean basins made it a lucrative objective for merchants.[924] Furthermore, the city's proximity to Sicily, which is well-attested in the tablets as both a destination for trade and travel, places it within the commercial interest zone of the supplicants visiting the Epirote sanctuary. However, the weariness about returning there expressed by the author of the inscription demonstrates that the journey was not an easy one, particularly for someone setting out from Dodona. One final inscription, DVC 3899, contains a reference to the Bosphorus.

[921] Gallant 1991: 137.
[922] LOD 133; Lhôte 2006: 278.
[923] Lhôte (2017: 43) suggests that the Kyme mentioned in query is the one in Aeolis since the supplicant was interested in serving a satrap. However, evidence of supplicants traveling to Dodona from territories east of continental Greece is scarce (a single votive plaque from the 4th c. BC, dedicated by a supplicant from Cyprus has been uncovered at Dodona; Dieterle 2007: 380, F601; see also commentary about foreign votives in Chapinal-Heras 2021: 127, 184), while the connections with Magna Graecia and communities across the Ionian Sea are numerous. It therefore would be more plausible that the Kyme mentioned in the oracular query is, in fact, the Italian one.
[924] Bresson 2016: 379.

The oracle's stance on the subject of travel is not made clear. Inscriptions interpreted as answer, both in this chapter and the previous ones, point to a more reserved approach, as in LOD 95B, where the inquirer is told to invest in all methods of trade in order to minimize risk. Nevertheless, LOD 114B hints at Dodona's openness to encourage its supplicants to migrate or travel for commerce. Following Chaniotis' suggestion,[925] other short inscriptions composed of a preposition and the name of a location or abbreviated names of places could be considered a positive answer. Examples include some of the queries about Ambracia (DVC 814 and 1473) or the abbreviation of Trikka written on the verso of 2786.

4.5. Crime: Culpability, litigation, and justice

A final notable category of tablets found in the oracular corpus from Dodona are what can be broadly categorized as inquiries involving legal matters. These could range from the mundane, for example litigation, to the grim, such as murder. Prior to the publication of the DVC corpus, only nine inscriptions were identified as belonging to this thematic cluster;[926] but the newly available evidence has allowed scholars such as Bonnechere and Chaniotis to expand that number to 32 texts,[927] making the legal queries much more common than initially believed.

A distinction between the various types of oracular consultations concerning legal disputes can be made; certain supplicants visited Dodona to establish whether they should take legal action, while others asked the gods to indicate whether a crime had occurred or to name the culprit. The first subsection of inscriptions is composed of queries about being involved in legal proceedings (δῐκάζω) or lawsuits (δίκη).[928] The inquirers were often wondering about the successful resolution of their court cases, is seen in DVC 192:

ἐπικοινῆται Σώσανδρος [πὲρ] τᾶς ἐπαράσιος τᾶς Ἀλε[....] ἦ τυγχάνοιμι κα δικαζόμ[ενος]

Sosandros consults the oracle concerning the oath of Ale(…) will I succeed in pleading my case?

[925] Chaniotis 2017: 58.
[926] LOD 119-127.
[927] Bonnechere 2017: 74; Chaniotis 2017: 59-61.
[928] δῐκάζω: DVC 142, 192, 224, 548, 1141, 1447, 1681, 1772, 1792, 1845, 1960, 2186, 2227, 2284, 2881, 3132, 3357, 3478; δίκη: DVC 214, 224, 386, 423, 436, 747, 874, 1124, 1447, 1771, 2254, 2521, 2643, 2676, 2709, 3022, 3074, 3132, 3321.

Another such example can be found in DVC 2521:

αἰ νικασέω τὰν δίκ[αν]

Will I win the trial?

There is often little information offered about the cases on trial, with the exception for DVC 2709, in which the supplicant asks about legal action against thieves. Some of the visitors at the oracle wanted to know whether they should pursue a lawsuit against someone, as in DVC 1088:

Θεὸς τύχα· ἐπικοιν[ῆται] Φείδης ὁ Κορκυραῖος τῶι Διὶ τῶι Να[ΐ̈ωι καὶ τ]ᾶι Διώναι περὶ τᾶς διαλυτήα[ς ....]ΟΤΑΠΑΛΕΑΝ ἀντεγράψ[α]το ἦ τυχ[αῖον] ΥΝ[...]ΗΥΝ[.] καὶ λώϊον [πρ]άσσοι

God. Fortune. Pheides from Corcyra asks Zeus Naios and Dione about the dissolution (…) if he would succeed in bringing a counter-accusation (…) would it be better?

Although the tablet is heavily damaged, it can be identified as a request for advice in legal matters.[929] What makes it a unique piece of evidence is that the origin of the inquirer is stated in the inscription – the only such case. The supplicants also asked about subjecting themselves to judgment. One such case is LOD 159:[930]

αἴ κ' ἰς δίϙαιταν;

Should he undergo arbitration?

The text has been identified by Lhôte as written in the local alphabet of Dodona.[931] Lhôte also links the use of δίαιτα to the Διαιτοί, a board of officials or arbitrators located at Dodona, an institution convincingly identified by Wilhelm as analogous to the Athenian Diatetai, who presided over private legal cases.[932]

A second, heavily damaged tablet – DVC 548 – from the second half of the 4th c. BC, also mentions the Diaitoi:

[929] Piccinini 2017: 79.
[930] LOD 159 = DVC 1015.
[931] Lhôte 2006: 247, 332-333.
[932] Wilhelm 1953: 75-76; Lhôte 2006: 71.

ἦ οὐκ ἐδ[.....]ΝΑΝ τοὶ Διαιτοὶ Δαμοξένοι κα[ὶ] Φιλωτίδι Δαμόξενον ὀμόσαι μηδὲ ἀπεῖμεν Δαμοξένοι [..] ΤΟΝ[....] δι[κα]ξαμένου τὰν δεκατόμναν [..][---]

If not (…) the Diaitoi, for Damoxenos and Philotis, Damoxenos to take an oath and not to be absent, for Damoxenos (…) pleading one's case about ten minas (…)

DVC point out that the query is too damaged to assume the identity of the inquirers; the consultation could have been made either by the individuals mentioned in the tablet or the Diaitoi.[933] It does, however, offer some insight into the legal process. While Damoxenos is a name attested across the Mediterranean, including regions neighbouring with Epirus such as Thessaly and Illyria, Philotis is a name more commonly found in the area, as well as attested twice more in the oracular inscriptions.[934] The people in the query must have been locals, particularly if their dealings involved Dodonean officials, who, as Chaniotis suggests, may have attended this consultation as well.[935] After all, the presence of the Diaitoi at the oracle is attested in LOD 16, in which they inquired about finances.[936] The theme of money is repeated in DVC 548; the litigants were involved in a lawsuit. The woman – Philotis – appears to have been an important element of the case. Her name figures on the verso of the tablet (DVC 546), though it is difficult to establish what purpose it served: name of the one making the inquiry, subject of the question or maybe the oracle's answer. However, as Damoxenos is the one required to take an oath and is bid not leave, it seems that he is the one who is being accused, making Philotis the one who sought justice, possibly involving financial compensation.[937] Although the complete context behind DVC 548 is uncertain, the presence of Philotis in a query about legal issues appears to confirm that Epirote women may have had the ability to exercise their rights through formal channels.

A third tablet, LOD 141A, may also have concerned the Diaitoi:

[933] Dakaris *et al.* 2013a: 165.
[934] LGPN s.v. Δαμόξενος; LGPN s.v. Φιλωτίς, as well as DVC 36 and 121.
[935] Chaniotis 2017: 59.
[936] ἐπερωτῶντι τοὶ διαιτοὶ τὸν Δία τὸν Ναῖον καὶ τ[ὰν Διώναν]. For full text, see Chapter 5.2.
[937] Chaniotis (2017: 63) proposes reading this tablet as an exculpatory oath, with Damoxenos's oath pertaining to money given to him and Philotis by the Diaitoi. While an intriguing proposition, it ignores the presence of DVC 546 and Philotis' role in the matter.

Θεός. Τύχα. Διαιταὶ ΙΚ Εὐμένος Νίκε ὑπὲρ τοῦ ΧΟΕΟΥ τοῦ ᾽Αριστογείτο ΣΑΠΕΔΟΙΟΧΙ τὸς ἀντιδίκος καὶ ϝοικίας [938]

God. Fortune. For arbitration (…) Eumenos (and) Nike on behalf of (…) of Aristogeitos (…) the opponents and household.

The traditional interpretation of this text has been somewhat different. Both the damaged state of the tablet and the unclear handwriting render the tablet difficult to read;[939] Lhôte proposes approaching the task of deciphering the text by comparing it to curse tablets. He notes that the expression τοὺς ἀντιδίκους καὶ τὰς οικίας is frequently used to curse opponents in court. He argues that Εὐμένος, which he believes to be a genitive of Εὐμένης, is the patronymic of Nike, who is the subject of the sentence. Lhôte also believes that διαιταῖ is a verb (δῖαιτάω), which describes Nike's actions. He also proposes to read ΧΟΕΟΥ as Εὐόχο, the name of the son of Aristogeitos, on whose behalf Nike is acting. Therefore, he argues that Nike may have been searching for a way of undoing a malediction cast on Euochos.[940] However interesting, this interpretation hinges predominantly on the notion that the order of the words in the query has been mixed up on purpose, just as was done in curse tablets. A comparison with LOD 159, LOD 16, and DVC 548 might be more useful. Just in the case of LOD 159, the deliberate use of δίαιτα could hint at the involvement of the Diaitoi, particularly since the inquiry concerned legal matters. Perhaps they were even part of the consultation process, as in LOD 16, where the officials are the ones making the inquiry, or in DVC 548. As for Eumenos (admittedly a *hapax*) and Nike, it is more likely that they were named together as a couple – consultations made by a couple, where the husband is named first, are well attested in the corpus. In this scenario, it seems that the couple asked about a legal matter involving a third party. The text on the reverse side of the tablet, LOD 141Ba, is believed to have been an answer to this query.[941] It contains a series of sacrifice and libation recommendation, perhaps prescribed in order to help settle the issues with the opponents that Eumenos and Nike were facing.

[938] Lhôte (2006: 294) suggests a translation along the lines of: *God. Fortune. Nike, daughter of Eumenes, appeases on behalf of Euochos, son of Aristogeitos, (…) the opponent and (his) household*.
[939] Lhôte reports the tablet as missing. There is also no available facsimile, which makes the reexamination of the text very difficult.
[940] Lhôte 2006: 292; see also Eidinow 2007: 178.
[941] Lhôte 2006: 293-294.

One more query, DVC 2254, involving a woman participating in a legal case must be noted here:

θεὸς τύχα ἀγαθά· α(ί) Λίβυσα βὸςκα μ[α]ρτυρεύσε ἐν τᾶ δί(κ)α ποτὶ Χοιρίαν;[942]

God, good fortune. Will Libysa the shepherdess bear witness in a case against Choirias?

The proposed reading of the inscription follows the suggestions of Lhôte and Carbon. DVC and Méndez Dosuna believed the inquirer to be Libysabos (Λιβύσαβος); but, as Lhôte and Carbon point out, such a name would be a hapax, while the ethnicon Λίβυσα can be found in Attica and the name Λίβυσσα is also attested.[943] The term βοσκός appears also in DVC 4107. The commonness of animal husbandry in the Epirote region also contributes to the validity of this interpretation. Lhôte and Carbon propose διά(λυσις) instead of τᾶ δί(κ)α suggested by DVC, yet the word is not found elsewhere in the corpus, while δίκη is attested numerous times. Furthermore, there is simply not enough space on the tablet to fit five more letters. The role of a woman as a witness might be contested. In Athens, for example, a woman's male guardian would testify on her behalf.[944] In DVC 2254, however, mention of a *kyrios* in the query may have simply been omitted. Furthermore, a manumission inscription from the Epirote *polis* Phoinike names three women as witnesses additionally to the two men who possibly were their relatives.[945] Female witnesses were not unheard of.

The second cluster of questions related to legal matters is very much different from the first. Instead of looking towards the future, they seek answers about the past, aiming to establish whether an individual was guilty of the crime the supplicant was investigating.[946] In rare cases, the offense is not mentioned, as in DVC 454.[947] Two women, Anagylla and Sibylla, also made a cryptic inquiry:

[942] DOL s.v. DVC 2254. DVC (2013b: 9) propose to read τύχα(ν) ἀγαθά[ν]· due to the extra syllable AN, however the lacuna at the end of the first line is large enough to have held another word, of which the syllable would have been part.
[943] Dakaris *et al.* 2013b: 9, Méndez Dosuna 2016: 132-133; for ethnicon, see *IG* II² 9210-0212; for name, see LGPN s.v. Λίβυσσα.
[944] Thür 2005: 151.
[945] Cabanes 1976, no. 47.
[946] Eidinow 2007: 116.
[947] θεὸς τύχα - ἦ οὐ ποταίτιος Πασικλες; / *God. Fortune. Is Pasikles not guilty?* Another such text is DVC 2780.

θεὸς τύχα ⁝ γνέφας ⁝ Ἀνάγυλλα Σίβυλλα ⁝ ἐπερωτῶντι τὸν θεὸν αἰ τὰ δίκαια μαστεύοντι ταύταν νικῆν περὶ θἠματίᾱ[948]

God, fortune. Concerning wool. Anagylla and Sibylla ask the god if it is just that they seek this victory concerning the cloth?

It is worth noting that the name Sibylla is mentioned in DVC 1515 and can also be found in Bouthrotos, which would point to the supplicant's local origins.[949] The text, although well-preserved, is unclear. By analogy to DVC 2521, the wording of the women's consultation seems to imply they are considering pursuing a legal case concerning a woolen cloth or garment, which had, perhaps, been stolen. The relationship between the women is uncertain; they may have been relatives who shared an interest in retrieving their property.

The transgression, about which the supplicants consulted Zeus Naios and Dione, was frequently described in detail. A few queries concern loans and payments.[950] A couple mentioned in DVC 2482, Alkidamos and Mastaka, paid a contribution of one mina, though the inscription is so fragmented that the reason for their inquiry is uncertain. In DVC 2976+2977, Onator asked about money Gorgias owed him:

θεὸς τύχα ⁝ ὀφέλε Γοργίας Ὀνάτορι τὸ ἕκτον περὶ τροπὰν ἀργυρίο ἐμετρήσατο πρὶν Ὀνάτορος;

God, fortune. Does Gorgias owe a sixth (in terms of interest) of the money to Onator around the solstice that he received from Onator before?[951]

θεὸς τύχα ⁝ φατὶ Ὀν<ι>ά<ι>τορ Γοργίαν ὀφέλεν ⁝ HHHH

God fortune. Onator says Gorgias owes 400.

The inscriptions concern a debt Gorgias had towards Onator. The currency is not specified Chaniotis assumes Onator meant *drachmai*, while Lhôte argues in favour of staters (which would mean 800 *drachmai*). The loan appears to have been made privately between individuals. Such

[948] DVC 4, cf. Dakaris *et al.* 2013a: 4-5. Chaniotis (2017: 59) suggests that ταύταν νικῆν refers to the lot that a staff member of the oracle would pull in order to establish the answer to the query.
[949] *IBouthrot* 25, 30; *IBouthrot* 27, 4.
[950] DVC 2482, 2767, 2976+2977, 4015.
[951] This translation follows the suggestions of Chaniotis (2017: 60) and Lhôte and Carbon (DOL s.v. DVC 2976+2977). For comparison, Méndez Dosuna (2016: 134) proposes to interpret περὶ τροπὰν as the date during which the money should be returned.

acts of solidarity and support among relatives or within friendship networks were common practice in the Ancient Greek world. The sum borrowed, even if in *drachmai*, was not insignificant. As Bresson points out, institutions that lent money, as the sanctuary of Nemesis in Rhamnous, would grant loans of 200-300 *drachmai*, the equivalent of a yearly salary of a worker.[952] Therefore, Onator's loan would have been a substantial amount of money. The reason for his consultation at the oracle of Dodona about it is, however, puzzling. Lhôte and Chaniotis argue that the inscriptions were written by both men involved in the transaction. DVC 2977 would have been Orator's query, DVC 2976 – the one made by Gorgias, in which he asks whether he truly owes an interest of 1/6 of the sum. The role of the Dodonean oracle would have been that of a mediator, settling the dispute between both parties.[953]

Theft accounts for the majority of the inquiries posed to the gods of Dodona. Sometimes supplicants simply wanted to know whether someone stole something of theirs. Bostrycha from LOD 122 was one such person, asking about money Dion lost during the Actia games. Others came to Dodona hoping that the gods would confirm or deny their suspicions, as can be seen in LOD 119:

ἔκλεψε Θωπίων τὸ ἀργύριον;

Did Thopion steal the money?

Both men and women were accused of larceny. The items stolen varied. Besides money,[954] inquirers listed clothing,[955] a bowl,[956] flowers,[957] a ladle,[958] pigs,[959] covers,[960] as well as unidentified objects.[961] In some instances, the supplicants listed several suspects and wanted the oracle to designate the culprit or accomplices, as in DVC 2005:

[952] Bresson 2016: 279; cf. *IG* I³ 248.
[953] Chaniotis 2017: 61-62.
[954] DVC 389, 3169, 3356, 3407, LOD 119.
[955] LOD 120, LOD 120.
[956] DVC 56.
[957] DVC 311.
[958] DVC 1646.
[959] DVC 2005+2006.
[960] LOD 121.
[961] DVC 33, 36, 631, 877, 1170, 2222, 2623.

ἦ σύνοιδε Μίρ<ι>ων καὶ Εὐθύδ[αμος καὶ --- κιος] καὶ Μέλισ(σ)α τᾶν ὑῶν τᾶνν Χ[αρῖ]νος [---] ἀνέκλεψε;

Whether Miron and Euthydamos (…) and Melissa know about the pigs that Charinos stole?

Serious crimes were also the subjects of inquiries. While kidnapping and wrongful enslavement is mentioned only once,[962] murder is consulted about on a number of occasions.[963] People also visited the Epirote oracle in order to find justice for their slain relatives, friends and loved ones, as exemplified by DVC 2047:

Ἀριστόδαμος : ἰστορεῖ τὸν Δί[α ἦ αἴτιος] Λύσανδρος τοῦ θανάτου [---]

Aristodamos asks Zeus if Lysandros (is guilty) of the death of (…)

Finally, there were queries about poisons or potions/spells. This uncertainty is derived from the ambiguous vocabulary used by the supplicants (καταφαρμᾰκεύω and φάρμᾰκον).[964] Magic is mentioned in DVC 473, where a man is seeking a method to "*treat magic*" (μαγείας ἰᾶσθαι). Keeping this context in mind, the queries seeking to uncover those that administered the *pharmakon* will be interpreted as being of a magical nature (curse, spell or potion), as in the case of LOD 125:

Κατεφάρμαξε Τιμὼι ᾽Αριστοβούλαν;

Did Timo curse Aristoboula?

The oracle appears to provide the means of undoing a malediction. As seen in Aristoboula's case, it was consulted in the hopes of establishing the culprit who had cast the curse. Another example of this use of the oracle is LOD 125bis:

ἐπήνεικε φάρμακον ἐπὶ τὰγ γενεὰν τὰν ἐὰν ἢ ἐπὶ τὰγ γυναῖκα [ἢ ἐ]π᾽ ἐμὲ; παρὰ Λύσῳνος;

Did he use a magical potion against my offspring or against my wife or against me? From Lyson[965]

[962] DVC 123, see Chapter 3 for discussion of this tablet.
[963] DVC 84, 2047, LOD 126.
[964] Eidinow (2017: 118) and Chaniotis (2017: 59-60) offer both versions, while Lhôte (2006: 256 and 258) interprets the queries as referring to magical potions. *Pharmaka* are also referenced in DVC 272 and 962.
[965] Transl. Chaniotis 2017: 59. Lhôte (2006: 258) translated παρὰ Λύσῳνος as "on behalf of Lyson".

As Chaniotis observes[966], the tablets pertaining to legal matters share a number of features: they all seek to establish the suspect of the crime, they often mention the suspect by name or through the demonstrative pronoun οὗτος and most can be answered by a "yes" or "no". Furthermore, a number of the queries suggest that they were used in cleromancy, such as DVC 1170 (τοῦτον : ἀνελέτω). Others are formulated as a negative statement, and Chaniotis argues that they would have had sister-tablets with affirmative statements. Both lots would have been cast into a receptacle and one would have been picked out by the sanctuary staff, thus offering divine insight on the guilt or innocence of the accused. These queries, therefore, would have represented disputes brought to the oracle in order to obtain some sort of resolution to the conflict. The need for the help of the sanctuary, instead of a court of law, implied that the supplicants may not have had enough evidence or witnesses to seek formal judgement. In the case of loans, for example, failure to repay would usually end in a lawsuit.[967] However, those seeking advice about this matter at Dodona may have simply not had the necessary documents to pursue other legal means. The oracle was their only chance at obtaining justice. Chaniotis further asserts that the use of demonstrative pronouns, as in DVC 2222, implies that in some case, both parties would have been present at the consultation, with the sanctuary staff serving as mediators. In order to achieve reconciliation, most likely an exculpatory oath would have to be sworn (as perhaps in DVC 548). Analogous evidence can be found in Phrygia and Lydia in Asia Minor, where people involved in a dispute were asked to swear an oath in order to support their claims. The oaths were made in front of and annulled by sanctuary staff.[968] The sanctuary, therefore, would have served as an alternative to the judiciary system, particularly in instances where the supplicant could not pursue more formal means of obtaining justice.

Chaniotis' interpretation is an interesting one. Considering the nature of the questions, the oracle would have certainly played a part in diffusing the conflicts it was presented with. However, the extent of its possible role as a mediator between two present parties is difficult to gauge. Apart from DVC 548, no other examples of oath-swearing have been attested in these tablets; the oath Damoxenos was asked to swear may have been related to the fact that he was dealing with the Diaitoi, a body of magistrates, rather than in the context of a reconciliation. The use of

[966] Chaniotis 2017: 61-62.
[967] Bresson 2016: 279.
[968] Chaniotis 2009: 128. An example of such an oath can be found in the inscription, dated to the 3rd c. BC, in which one of the sides involved in a quarrel over sheep was asked to swear an oath (Petzl 1994, no. 34).

demonstrative pronouns to designate the culprits did not necessarily mean that they referred to people physically present at the oracle. Instead, the supplicant may have simply declined to mention the accused by name, assuming that the gods would know who they were thinking about, or spoken about them to the sanctuary staff, since the consultations appeared to have an oral component to them. It would be, therefore, more probable that in some of the cases, at least, the consultation was done privately and served more as a cathartic experience for the supplicant who was seeking confirmation or rebuttal of their suspicions.[969] The judgement of the Dodonean gods would have presumably been sufficient in cases that could not be taken to court.

How would the oracle of Dodona have judged the cases with which it was presented? Chaniotis believes that the sanctuary's staff would not have risked social upheaval and would have opted to settle any disputes amicably by avoiding confirming accusations.[970] Elements of its mediatory and reconciliatory role can be found in the tablets. DVC 2780, although its text is very fragmented, appears to exculpate an accused woman.[971] The structure of several inscriptions pertaining to legal matters also raises a question. Even though some, like DVC 454, follow the traditional structure of inquiries found in other tablets, many resemble statements rather than questions – they do not contain interrogatives or verbs in the subjunctive. The theory that they were lots with positive and negative versions of the statements drawn by the staff may hold true in some cases, like DVC 1170, which explicitly reference cleromancy. Other oracular tablets, particularly those containing two texts concerning the same issue, such as DVC 2005+2006, do not seem to fit this model. A tentative explanation can be proposed here: one of the inscriptions should be understood as the gods' response. Oracular answers, inscribed on the same tablet as the question, have been attested, as in the case of LOD 95B. In DVC 2006, those accused of profiting from the theft of pigs are exonerated.[972] The inscription was written on the same side of the tablet as DVC 2005, the question, which would exclude it from being used as a second lot in a draw. It appears to have been the oracle's response. Another example of a possible answer to a crime-

[969] An example of the oracle providing the supplicants with closure can be seen in DVC 2980: ἦ τέθνακε Ἀριστώνυμος [καὶ ὡς τεθ]νακότ[ι] τοὶ παῖδες καὶ ἁ γυνὰ τ[ελεῖν] τὰ νόμιμα ὡς τεθνακότι; / *Is Aristonymos dead? Should his wife and children do the customary rites for him as being dead?* – transl. Parker (2016: 87).
[970] Chaniotis 2017: 63.
[971] οὐκ αἰτία [---] / *not guilty.*
[972] [--- οὐκ ἐ]δέξατο Μίρων οὐδ' Εὐθύδαμος [οὐδὲ ---]κι[ο]ς οὐδὲ Μέλισσα τὰς ὕας τὰς [Χαρῖνος ἀνέκλεψε] οὐδὲ συγκατέφαγον / *Neither Miron nor Euthydamos (…) nor Melissa received the pigs (Charinos stole), nor they ate them*

related inquiry is DVC 84, in which Daulios is deemed not responsible for Hermion's death also appears to have been an answer.[973]

The oracle's staff clearly sought to soothe the concerns of the supplicants and avoid further inflaming the situation. Even if the answer was given through a lottery, they must have had control of the lots they chose. Such a system would have ensured that the inquirer would feel vindicated through the divine judgement, while simultaneously avoiding disrupting his or her surroundings with further unprovable accusations. This may have proven particularly valuable in small communities, as the ones in Epirus. Just as in the case of many other Dodonean inscriptions, the origins of the supplicants cannot always be stated with certainty, yet some of the queries can be identified as belonging to locals. Philotis from DVC 548 and Sibulla from DVC 4 have already been established as inhabitants of Northwestern Greece, possibly Epirus. The name Aristoboula from LOD 125 is attested in Dodona and Molossia.[974] Lhôte establishes that Onator from 2977 is from a Corinthian colony based on the alphabet in which he writes.[975] He also notes that while Θωπίων from LOD 119 is a hapax, variants of the name are found in Acarnania.[976] The local origin of a number of the supplicants is not surprising. One cannot imagine that someone would have travelled across the Ionian Sea to find out who stole their clothes.[977] Furthermore, if all the sides of the conflict were expected to attend such a consultation, it would be more likely that they were living in Epirus or neighbouring regions, from which journeying to Dodona for an unofficial judgment would have been convenient. Despite its development in the 4th c. BC and the growth of *poleis*, parts of Epirus remained composed of smaller, tightly-knit communities with families practicing collective forms of ownership (a cultural observance present also in urban communities),[978] in which a dispute over stolen goods, unpaid loans or – in the most dramatic instances – murder could prove to be extremely damaging to the social relations within the group. When evidence was unavailable, yet conflicts went unresolved, the oracle of Dodona would have

[973] [θ]εὸς τύχα ἀγαθά· [ο]ὐκ αἴτιος Δαύ[λ]ιος [τ]οῦ θανάτο τοῦ [Ἑ]ρμαιο / *God, good fortune. Daulios is not guilty of Hermion's death*; Chaniotis (2017: 59, footnote 38) remarks that the tablet could be restored to ἢ οὐκ αἴτιος, however the facsimile in the DVC corpus shows that there is not enough room on the left side of the tablet to fit another letter.
[974] DVC 2383 and *SGDI* 1353, 2 respectively.
[975] DOL s.v. DVC 2977.
[976] Lhôte 2006: 247.
[977] Other examples of complaints about thieves presented to gods, here in the form of curse tablets, often referenced crimes committed very locally, as in the case of the Bath tablets (2nd-3rd c. CE), many of which are directed at bathhouse thieves (Gager 1992: 193).
[978] Cabanes 1997a, 1997b.

served as a mediator, putting an end to the issue while still offering the victims emotional relief through divine judgement.

4.6. Conclusion

Although the information included in the oracular inquiries from Dodona is fragmentary and often incomplete, when set together it presents an image of a dynamic Northwestern Greek society. Many of the tablets can be dated to the Classical and early Hellenistic periods, particularly to the 4th c. BC, when Epirus underwent significant socio-economic shifts, such as the growing urbanization of the region, as well as became more involved in local politics, forging bonds with rulers across the Ionian Sea and engaging both in trade and armed conflict with neighbours. The changes in the region are reflected in the economic concerns of the supplicants. Unsurprisingly, queries about farming and animal husbandry, which were the livelihood of many Ancient Greek families, including those living in Epirus, were extremely common. What is striking is how often they were asked. Parker juxtaposes them with the travel inquiries, maintaining that they counterbalance the vision of a hyper-mobile world.[979] It can be argued, however, that such consultations about pursuing this traditional form of labour reveals an upset in the everyday life of the supplicants, which caused them to consider alternative work or even migration. Particularly notable here are DVC 2762 and DVC 1156; in the former, Materina's relative is travelling to Pharos in order to find work as a farmer there, while in the latter, a man from Aktion wished to know whether he should stay and tend to crops at home or whether he should move elsewhere. The development of the *poleis* in Epirus and the subsequent emergence of new opportunities would have been a factor in the decisions to possibly abandon farming and pursue other, more lucrative work. The region's changing property laws, influenced by Central Greek customs, shifted from communal and family-based ownership to a more individualistic approach, which may have led to issues of inheritance or ownership, causing the alienation of certain individuals.[980] The stabilization of the Adriatic region, new colonial enterprises and a closer relationship with the *poleis* of Sicily and Magna Graecia also seem to have generated interest among the local populations, encouraging them to consider leaving their current lives in order to find luck

[979] Parker 2016: 82.
[980] Cabanes 1976: 423.

elsewhere. Queries about changing "careers", continuing to pursue the family trade or taking up a new one that would be more profitable, also reveal how the supplicants grappled with and adapted to a shifting economy. The oracle of Dodona clearly served as a guide in navigating these changes.

Commerce, especially by sea, was also a common theme among inquiries related to work. Despite Dodona's landlocked position, the sanctuary was frequently consulted about sailing and commercial endeavours. The primary reason motivating people to seek out the help of Zeus and Dione seems to have been financial in nature. Seaborne trading was an expensive investment. Supplicants attempted to mitigate the risk by establishing through the oracle whether their venture would turn out to be cost-effective. Some concerns about the hazards of travel related to pirates or the timing of the voyage are also attested, but the desire to profit remains the main reason for many of the consultations. This interest in trade could be explained by two factors. The first is the proximity of the Corinthian colonies and spheres of influence, Corcyra, Epidamnos, Apollonia and Ambracia, all of which flanked Epirus and promoted a trade network in the region even prior to the Molossian expansion in the 5th c. BC.[981] The second could be attributed to the result of said expansion, which led to the subsequent growth of the kingdom of Epirus thus opening up new opportunities to its inhabitants. The tablets explicitly mentioning trade destinations are not numerous and confirm the established commercial routes along the Northwestern Greek coast. Queries, such as LOD 46Bb (Elina and Anactorion) or 106A (Ambracia and Messina), show in more detail the connections between Epirote and foreign *poleis*. Even though interest lay mostly in seaborne commerce, inquiries such as the one about travelling to trade with the Athamanians (DVC 1259), as well as the fact that Dodona had to be reached on foot by supplicants, point to a reasonably well-developed network of roads in the region. While specific destination names are not frequently present in the tablets, the available examples demonstrate that, exception made for a couple of outliers, supplicants asked the oracle about commerce with *poleis* or *koine* within Epirote borders or those neighbouring the regions, particularly in the 4th c. BC onwards.

The remainder of the travel-related tablets often offer less information about the reason for the supplicant's journey. In some cases, the inquirer expresses the will to migrate, while in others, only the destination is given. This evidence does not offer a detailed overview of the migration or trade patterns of the Ionian and Adriatic regions. It does, however, attest to the mobility of people

[981] Cabanes 1997: 90a.

and further confirms the prominence and importance of coastal and maritime travel routes. In some instances, as with the colonization of Pharos and Syracuse's expansion into the Adriatic under the rule of Dionysus I, the queries clearly reflect the geopolitical events of the time. The newly settled territories generated interest among local population. The oracle of Dodona not only helped the supplicants in their decision-making, but also may have encouraged certain migration trends due to its ties to the Aeacid court in the 4th and 3rd c. BC.

The supplicants can be seen moving principally within the territories bordering the Ionian and Adriatic seas.[982] The majority of the questions involve locations in Northwestern Greece, particularly Epirus, the Corinthian colonies and Acarnania, as well as Magna Graecia and Sicily. The large volume of supplicants from the latter two regions could have been the result of not only tighter political bonds with Epirus, but also of the convenience of travel to Dodona, the closest oracular sanctuary they had access to. Other regions, such as the Peloponnese and Thessaly, are also accounted for. Particularly in the case of the latter, the presence of Thessalian *poleis* in the tablets along with the numerous texts written in the Thessalian dialect[983] attest to the flow of people between them and Dodona or, more broadly, Epirus. The sanctuary attracted both locals and foreigners, as well as merchants and other travelers, who would bring information about the regions they lived in or visited. Dodona, therefore, functioned as an information hub of sorts, facilitating the circulation of news among its visitors.

On what appears to have been a more local scale, the sanctuary played the role of mediator in socially disruptive situations. While visitors of both genders asked for advice on pursuing legal proceedings, the oracle appears to also have been treated as an arbiter in conflicts. The cases on which people sought the gods' judgement predominantly involved loans, theft, murder or magic. The inquiries often name a possible culprit, asking the oracle to confirm or deny their involvement in the offence. Scholars such as Chaniotis have proposed that the Dodonean sanctuary may have served a reconciliatory function. When a crime was committed but the victim did not have enough evidence to take the matter to the legal court, he or she would visit the oracle and present the case to Zeus and Dione. The presence of the culprit would not have been necessarily required. It may have been enough that the culprit was aware of the consultation and knew that divine justice was sought out. The gods would then proceed to pass judgment – presumably exonerating the possible

[982] See Map 1.
[983] See Filos 2018; Helly 2018.

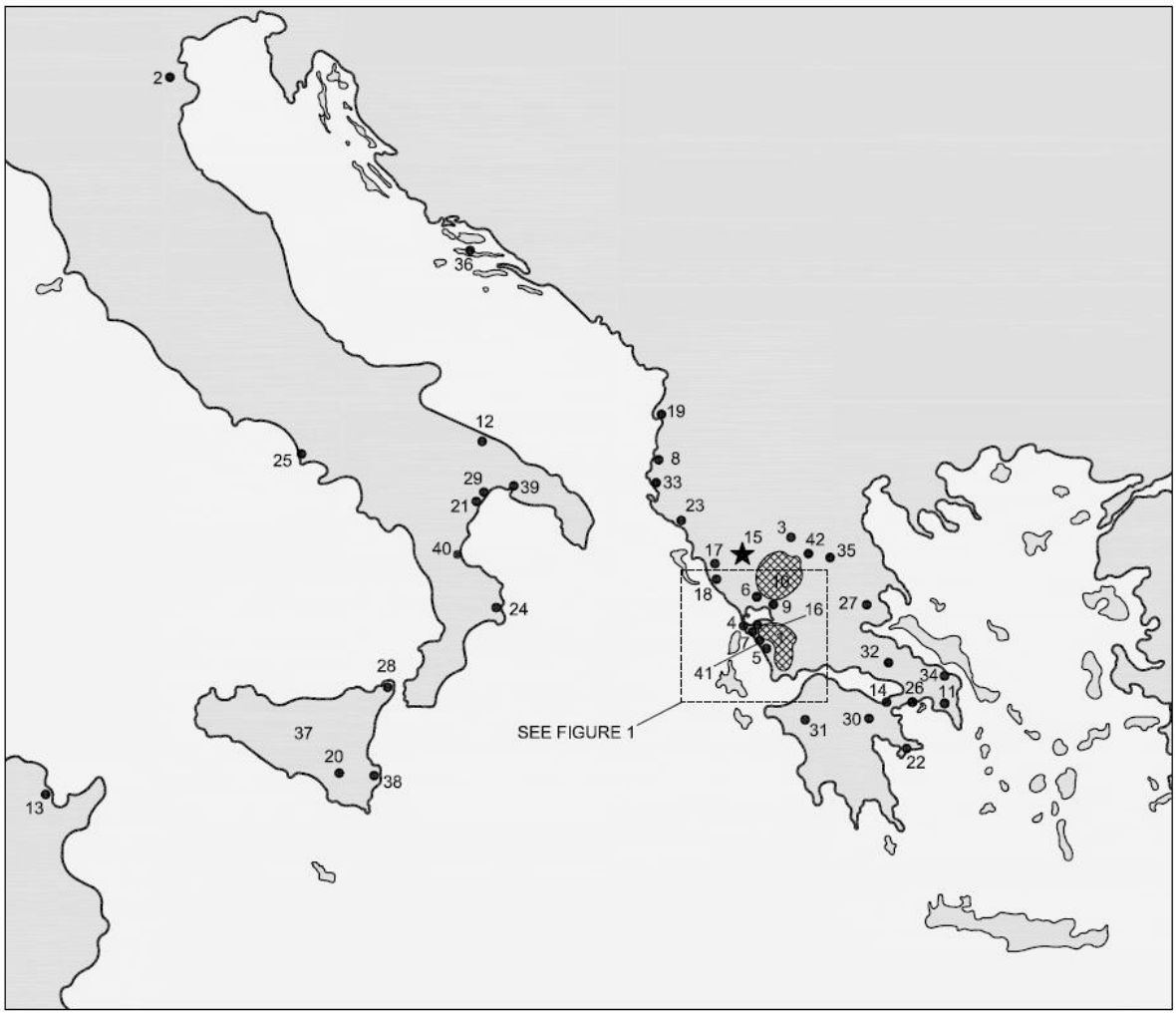
offender as the inscriptions identified as answers have demonstrated – thus restoring peace to the community. The proposed method of establishing guilt or innocence is presumed to have been cleromancy, although considering the stakes the answer carried in these situations, the sanctuary staff must have had control over what the supplicant found out. A number of these inquiries can be ascribed to locals of Epirote or Northwestern Greek origin. This connection is of particular interest, as the population of Epirus outside of the *poleis* remained was divided into smaller, close-knit communities. Quarrels within these groups could be especially damaging, particularly if there was no other means of legal recourse to settle the problem. The "unofficial" role the oracle of Dodona played in conflict-resolution and its less-restrictive accessibility may have also been the reason why women appear to have been better represented within this group of supplicants.[984]

Women's queries were not only limited to legal troubles, but also included some economic matters. Most of the ones who consulted at Dodona were Epirote or from the neighbouring areas. Their questions, about money, dowries (which were also the subject of inquiries made by men about women in the context of finance) or the travel of relatives, seem to predominantly be tied to their family's wealth and well-being. They demonstrate that women also took an interest in the economic sphere and may have participated more actively in the decisions being made about family finance.

Regardless of the topic the oracular inscriptions touched on, many of the inquiries of socio-economic nature share certain features. Very few of the texts discussed in this chapter follow the τινι formula, instead following the ἢ formula or other grammatical structures that can be answered with a binary choice (e.g. yes/no), unlike in the case of the questions about conceiving children or health, where the inquirer wished to know to which gods to pray in order to succeed. The supplicants seemed to have visited the oracle of Dodona to find confirmation whether or not to proceed with their decision: to travel, to farm, to migrate, to try a new trade… The oracle appeared to be an important element of their decision-making process, confirming or denying the legitimacy of their idea. Many of the questions revolve around crucial, even life-changing decisions (as the resettlement of one's entire family in LOD 114A). Even in less dramatic situations, such as asking

[984] While the manumission inscriptions and *politeia* grants from Epirus attest to a greater independence enjoyed by women in that region, their access to pursuing justice through legal means in uncertain. For comparison, in Classical Athens, women could not appear in court as litigants or witnesses on their own behalf (Thür 2005: 151, Cantarella 2005: 245).

about duck farming (LOD 82), the change of work or new investment entailed financial risk that could jeopardize one's economic situation or even the well-being of one's family. It must be, however, noted that although the Epirote sanctuary may have provided the impulse needed by the inquirer to pursue their undertaking, it was more of a reactive force. The oracle was only consulted once the supplicant had an idea of their own and was only expected to give the gods' opinion on the validity of the proposed plan of action. The inscriptions that can be identified as responses appear to be measured. In LOD 95B, Timodamos is told to invest in both land and sea trade. The responses to the accusations of committing crimes either exonerate the possible culprits or, as in the case of DVC 2976+2977, try to find a compromise that would satisfy a both parties involved in the loan. The oracle also seemed to be predisposed to answer the queries about migration and travel more positively, particularly in instances of possible political pressure from the Molossian court as may have happened with Pharos, but these texts cannot be treated as representative, since many of them are damaged and lack context. The consultations at the sanctuary of Dodona reflect the changing reality of Northwestern Greece in the 5th-3rd c. BC and people's attempts at adapting to it, all the while revealing the oracle's role in helping guide them, influence the socio-economic landscape and avoid social upheaval.



LEGEND

1. Acarnania (region)
2. Adria
3. Aeginion
4. Aktion
5. Alyzia
6. Ambrakia
7. Anaktorin
8. Apollonia
9. Astakos
10. Athamanes (tribe)
11. Athens
12. Barion
13. Carthage
14. Corinth
15. Dodona
16. Echinos
17. Elea
18. Elina
19. Epidamnos
20. Hegertion (location uncertain)
21. Heraclea
22. Hermion
23. Himara
24. Kroton
25. Kyme
26. Megara
27. Melitaia
28. Messina
29. Metapontion
30. Nemea
31. Olympia
32. Orchomenos
33. Orikos
34. Oropos
35. Pharkadon
36. Pharos
37. Sicily (island)
38. Syracuse
39. Taras
40. Thourioi
41. Thourion/Thyrium (in Acarnania, exact location uncertain)
42. Trikka

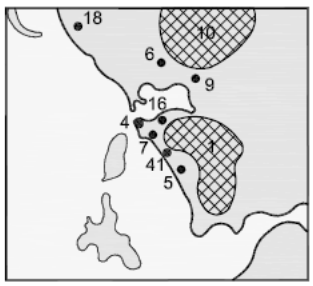


FIGURE 1

Map 1: The *poleis*, *koina*, and regions mentioned in private oracular inquiries

Chapter 5. Collective consultations at Dodona

5.1. Introduction

Even though the oracular inscriptions from Dodona are primarily personal queries made by individuals seeking the counsel of the sanctuary's deities, there is also evidence of collective consultations. Prior to DVC's publication of their corpus, only about seventeen texts had been identified as questions made on behalf of entire communities.[985] Around fourteen have been added to this pool, broadening the number of localities attested as consulting at the sanctuary, but also demonstrating that they account for less than 1% of the texts.[986] They constitute one of the smallest thematic categories, which may be surprising when compared to other panhellenic oracles.

The oracle of Apollo at Delphi, for example, was known for providing guidance to *poleis* in religious or political matters.[987] As Morgan notes, the earliest consultations recorded at Delphi in the 8th-7th c. BC were solely made by communities. Even in later periods, by comparison to Dodona, the number of attested queries posed by individuals is much smaller than that of cities. She further argues that the rise of the prominence of this oracle in the Archaic period would have been linked to the political instability which accompanied state formation, which necessitated

[985] These queries have been gathered by Lhôte (2006: 29-73) – LOD 1-17. Most do explicitly name cities or tribes as the inquirers, making this identification unquestionable. However, LOD 15 (εἰ τὰν Κλεολαεὶ προξενε[ίαν — — —] / *if the proxenia given to Kleolais* [---]), which Lhôte also classifies as a collective consultation, is less certain. Lhôte (2006: 65-66) and Mack (2014: 155-158) both argue that the subject matter of the query – the *proxenia* – implies that it must have been made by a community. Lhôte believes it concerned the allocation of the status, possibly due to the presumed gender of the recipient, while Mack argues that a *polis* or *koine* would not ask about this, as granting the *proxenia* was a fairly standard procedure that did not require an oracular consultation. Instead, he points to the syntax of the inscription involving the use of a definite article with the noun προξενία, which would never be used to describe the allocation of the status, but rather refer to the existing *proxenia* already awarded to an individual. He therefore argues that it must have been a question about the possible rescinding of the grant, which is much less frequently attested in sources and which may have been a more controversial decision, particularly if the decree had been dedicated to the gods of Dodona. It should also be noted that Mack believes the recipient to have been male, as cases of female *proxenoi* were very rare – there is only evidence of nine such instances. However, Lhôte's interpretation of the name as female is supported by the attestation of Κλεολαΐς in LOD 22Ba, as well as in a local inscription from Acarnania (Ep. Chron. 10 (1935) p. 256 no. 18 B). Furthermore, the *politeia* grants awarded to women (discussed in Chapter 4.4.2) demonstrate that women at Dodona were, to some extent, present in the political sphere. While the issue of the gender of the recipient of this grant remains a fascinating puzzle, it must be noted that the inscription itself is too incomplete to establish whether it was made by a community or by Kleolais or a family member asking about her status. Nothing in the question itself indicates who made the inquiry, which is why this oracular text will be omitted in this chapter.

[986] All published Dodonean inscriptions, regardless of how legible their contents are, are being taken into account in this calculation. By comparison, collective queries constituted 10% of the 167 texts Lhôte gathered in his corpus.

[987] Fontenrose 1978: 25, 27.

divine corroboration of community decisions.[988] The subject of the consultations tended to be limited to a few concrete spheres. The Delphic oracle frequently resolved issues concerning cult practices and religious rites, as well as helped monitor the relations of communities with divinities, a function it shared with many other oracular sanctuaries.[989] It also addressed concerns surrounding matters of domestic and external politics, such as war, interstate relations, legislation, and colony foundation. Delphi's support of the colonization effort during the Archaic period has been famously highlighted by scholars, although researchers such as Fontenrose and Parker have questioned the authenticity of a number of the transmitted prophecies attributed to the oracle, arguing that its intervention in these endeavours would not have been needed.[990] The issues *poleis* consulted about evolved with time. Internal politics and legislation were commonly inquired about during the Archaic period, becoming less common in favour of questions about religious matters and interstate politics in the Classical period and focusing primarily on crops, fertility of animals and public health by the time Plutarch wrote about the Delphic oracle.[991] Another famous ancient oracle, the sanctuary of Apollo at Didyma, was also known for providing advice to *poleis*. Its thirty-three historical responses, as identified by Fontenrose, demonstrate that much of the oracle's effort was directed at resolving issues brought forth by Miletos, as well as its colonies and several other cities in the region.[992] Individuals did, of course, consult at the oracle, but the epigraphic evidence highlights its role in providing communities help in civic and military matters, as well as with problems revolving around worship.

Despite the small number of tablets concerning public consultations, literary and archeological sources confirm that Dodona, just as Delphi or Didyma, had been visited by several *poleis*. Spartans were recorded as seeking the advice of the Dodonean gods about the outcome of two battles in the 4th c. BC.[993] There is mention of the oracle's response to an Athenian consultation about colonizing Sicily and religious practices.[994] Dodona's role in matters of religion also appears

[988] Morgan 1990: 160-161.
[989] Parker 2000: 82-83. Fontenrose 1978: 244-267. Out of 74 historical queries, at least 35 were made by communities.
[990] Cf. Forrest 1957: 160-175; Malkin 1987; Morgan 1990: 172-178; Fontenrose 1978: 137-144; Parker 2000: 84-85.
[991] Morgan 1990: 160; Parker 2000: 90-92; Dillon 1997a: 87.
[992] Fontenrose 1988: 104-105, 179-208. Around eleven queries were made by the people of Miletos; the cities of Iasos and Teos also consulted at Didyma. At least twelve of the answers were given to individuals.
[993] Diod. Sic. 15, 72, 3 and Callisth. *FGrHist* 124 F 22a (= Cic., *De div.* 1. 74-76); Cf. Piccinini 2017: 94-96.
[994] Paus. 8.11.12, Dio Chr. 17, 17 (cf. Parke 1967: 136-137); Hyp. *Pro Eux.* 24-26. Cf. Piccinini 2017: 133, 144-145. Piccinini also remarks that a dedicatory inscription from the 5th c. BC was found in the *temenos* of the Dodonean sanctuary. It described an Athenian naval victory over the Peloponnesian League (Karapanos 1878: 47, no. 20, pl.

in an inscriptions concerning the cult of Bendis in Attica.[995] It must be noted as well that an *anathema* dedicated by the Corcyreans was initially believed to have been a communal gift to the sanctuary, but more recent scholarship has theorized that it was not so much a dedication tied to divination as rather a gift from Corcyra's elite.[996] Finally, there is an account of a consultation by the city of Illyrian Apollonia, during which the Apolloniates wanted to find out why their flocks were not reproducing and their crops had failed – a result of their sentence passed on Euenios, a legendary seer, who failed at overseeing the flock sacred to the Sun and who was blinded as punishment. The historical accuracy of this story is questionable; nonetheless, the proximity of Apollonia to Dodona suggests that it quite possible that the polis would have sought the advice of the Epirote sanctuary.[997] Furthermore, an inscribed lead tablet found at Apollonia, which mentions a female seer (hα μάντῐς) who divines from lots (τὸν κλάρον) and which contains a list of sacrifices to gods such as Dione and Zeus Naios, has been theorized as referring to a prescription of ritual norms possibly recommended by the staff of the Dodonean oracle.[998] This further reinforces the possible connection between the city and the sanctuary.

Curiously enough, none of the *poleis* mentioned in other sources, with the exception of Corcyra, are attested in the tablets uncovered at the sanctuary. This may be a testament to how much of the epigraphic evidence might be missing – perhaps because the oracular answers would have been brought back as evidence to the community that made the inquiry, as in the case of the Apollonian tablet – thus offering only a limited understanding of Dodona's role in collective consultations. Nonetheless, this chapter will examine the *poleis*, *koina* and *ethne* that consulted the Dodonean gods, their topics of inquiry, and their relationship with the oracle.

XXVI, 2), though unfortunately it does not mention any connection to a possible earlier collective consultation in this matter.

[995] *IG* I³ 136; *IG* II² 1283.

[996] Piccinini 2017: 80-85. Concerning the *anathema*, see also Chapter 4.4.3.

[997] Hdt. 9, 2-94. Cf. Piccinini 2017: 77-78; Griffiths (1999), for example, argues that the story is mythical in nature. Its aim in Herodotus' work is to deliver a particular moral in the narrative (in this case that Euenios, the symbol of a faithful worshiper, received the support of the Greek gods and, by extension, that regardless of how dire the circumstances seemed, the gods would support those devoted to them) instead of a historical account of events.

[998] *CGRN* 40. See Chapters 2.2.1 and 3.4 for further discussion about the inscription.

5.2. The communities consulting the oracle

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the Dodonaians were the most frequently attested group among the communities inquiring at the oracle of Zeus Naios and Dione. Six queries can be identified as having been asked by them.[999] Due to their proximity to the oracle, inhabitants of the city of Dodona, just as the Milesians with Didyma, would have had the easiest access to the sanctuary, allowing them to seek divine guidance most freely. The earliest consultation, DVC 268, is dated to the late 5th-early 4th c. BC:

[θεὸς τύχα ἐρωτ]ει ἁ πόλις [τῶν Δωδωνα]ίων τὸν Δί[α τὸν Νᾶο]ν καὶ τὰν Δι[ώναν περὶ τ]ῶ σαμείω τῶ [---]γενομένω τί [κα εἴη λώϊ]ον καὶ ἄμει[νον ---] ἢ μηδὲν [--- γέν]οιτο

The city of the Dodonaians (asks) Zeus (Naios) and (Dione about) the sign (…) becoming (…) is it better and more profitable (…) no one (…)

The text is too fragmented to convey the full content of the question, but it does appear to be a request for help in interpreting a sign from the gods. A similar query can be found in DVC 2519 from the first half of the 4th c. BC:

[Θε]ὸς τύχα ἀγαθα. ἐ[π]ἐρωτ[ῶ]ν[τ]ι Δ[ι]ωδωναῖοι Δία Νᾰ́ον καὶ Δ[ιών] α[ν] [ἦ ἐ]ν τῶι δρυί σαμῆον ἐστι;

God, good fortune. The Dodonaians ask Zeus and Dione if there is a sign in the oak tree?

The tree in the inscription could be a reference to the oak growing at the sanctuary, believed by some ancient authors to have been involved in the divination process of the Dodonean oracle. It is uncertain whether the inhabitants of Dodona were interested in the explanation of a different prophetic sign, not originally provided by the oracle, or whether they are referring to a consultation at the sanctuary of Zeus and Dione.

A third enigmatic inscription, DVC 1089, dated to the late 5th-early 4th c. BC, also features the word σαμῆον:

[999] LOD 14, DVC 268, 1089, 2425, 2519, 2952 (this text only really denotes the Dodonaians as the ones making the inquiry).

θεὸς τύχα· Δωδω[ναῖοι ἱ]στορεῦ[ν]ρι Δία Νάϊον καὶ Διώ[ναν αἰ] τὸ σαμῆον ἐστι παιδὶ κλάριο[ν...]Ν

God, fortune. The Dodonaians inquire of Zeus Naios and Dione if the sign is favourable for the child (...)?[1000]

The inscription is puzzling, offering no clear reason why an entire community would preoccupy itself with consulting about an omen concerning some child. Perhaps the child belonged to a prominent local family or close-knit communal bonds found among Epirote tribes encouraged the group to watch over its more vulnerable members. However, what is certain is that DVC 1089, along with DVC 268 and 2519, highlight the role of the oracle as an interpreter of divine signs. As has been discussed in Chapter 2, the oracle was a mediator between the gods and the supplicants – it helped people navigate the world of the divine. The Dodonaians were the only community attested in the tablets as consulting Zeus Naios and Dione about omens. Just as other ancient Greek *poleis* were known to occasionally employ divination "specialists" to help explains supernatural signs,[1001] the residents of Dodona may have used "their" oracle as a convenient method of clarifying messages from the gods.

Out of the remaining oracular questions asked by the *polis* of Dodona, LOD 14 from the 4th-3rd c. BC is concerned with "release from evil", a central theme found in many oracular queries:[1002]

ἐπερωτῶντι Δωδωναῖοι τὸν Δία καὶ τὰν Διώναν ἦ δι' ἀνθρώπου τινὸς ἀκαθαρτίαν ὁ θεὸς τὸ<ν> χειμῶνα παρέχει;

[1000] The interpretation of this text is particularly problematic. DVC propose that κλάριον could refer to "bonds, notes for debt" (see Dakaris *et al*. 2013a: 278; LSJ s.v. κληρίον), however the context of the query more probably would point to a connection with κλῆρος (oracular lot, sort), which is frequently attested in the corpus.
DVC note that the plural κλαρία could refer to "bonds, notes for debt" (see Dakaris *et al.* 2013a: 278; LSJ s.v. κληρίον); but they also point out that this is a singular, and that here it seems that the meaning of this word in the context of the question is "fortunate" or "favorable". Another possibility is to think of a connection with κλῆρος (oracular lot, sort), which is frequently attested in the corpus (see κλῆρος/κλᾶρος in Dakaris *et al*. 2013b).
[1001] Beerden 2013: 60.
[1002] Parker 2000: 90. It must be noted that, for example, among the Delphic oracles, only one classified by Fontenrose as historical referred to a calamity that befell the land, see Fontenrose 1978: 442, 264 (H68); Parker 1983: 271. Nonetheless, this motif is prevalent in literary accounts of answers given by the Pythia.

The Dodonaians ask Zeus and Dione if it is because of the impurity of some man that the god sends the storm?[1003]

The community sought to establish the reason for their recent misfortune, attributing it to the ritual impurity of an unspecified individual. The notion that the group could suffer as the result of the wrongful behaviour of one of its members was prevalent in Ancient Greek societies. In order to appease the offended gods, it was essential to undergo certain ritual actions, which could entail identifying the culprit and punishing him.[1004] In LOD 14, it appears that the Dodonaians were unsure whether the poor weather they suffered could be attributed to someone's transgression or other causes. Perhaps the next step would have been the attempt at identifying the offender (as in the case of personal queries concerning crimes, which were discussed in the previous chapter) or, more probably, an oracular inquiry about sacrifices necessary to placate the deities.

The final legible question posed by the Dodonaians, DVC 2425, concerned resettlement:

Θεὸς τύχα· ἐπερωτῶντ[ι] Δωδωναῖοι τὸν θεὸν ἦ ἀσφαλέω[ς] ἐστὶ μένειν [αὐτ]εῖ καὶ αὐτοῖς [κ]αὶ χρήμασι

God, fortune. The Dodonaians asked the god it is safer to remain here, for them and their property?

As Parker remarks, the reason for asking about a change in location is unknown. The group may have had already taken refuge in a stronghold and were asking the oracle about staying there.[1005] DVC date the inscription to the 1st half of the 4th c. BC.[1006] It must be noted that Lhôte and Carbon propose a different date – 167 BC, when Romans sacked Epirus and destroyed Dodona. They argue this by stating that the shape of the θ resembles lettering from the 2nd c. BC and that no events from the 4th c. BC would have prompted an inquiry by the Dodonean community about leaving their place of residence.[1007] This, however, not quite accurate, as the region did experience turbulent times during the late Classical period that may have encouraged locals to consider migration, such as the Molossian takeover of the Dodonean territory at the end of the 5th-beginning

[1003] Following the translation by Bonnechere (2017: 72).
[1004] Parker 1983: 257-259. See also Petrovic and Petrovic 2016: 78-100.
[1005] Parker 2016: 76, footnote 24.
[1006] Dakaris *et al.* 2013b: 49.
[1007] DOL s.v. DVC 2425.

of 4th c. BC or the Illyrian-Syracusan raids on Epirus during the restauration of Alcetas I in 385 BC.[1008]

Local communities seemed to be the most avid visitors of the sanctuary of Dodona. Besides the Dodonaians, a number of other *poleis* and *koine* from Epirus also consulted at the oracle. An inquiry – DVC 4195 – from the late 5th c BC. was made by the Molossians, possibly aligning with their newly acquired dominance over Dodona:[1009]

[ἐπικοινῶ]νται Μολοσσ[οὶ τῶν Διὶ Ναΐ̃ωι καὶ τᾶι Διώναι τίνι κα θεῶν εὐχ]όμενοι καὶ θύ[οντες---]
[---]ΣΕ Μολοσσ[---]

The Molossians ask Zeus Naios and Dione (to which god) to pray and sacrifice to (…) Molloss(ians…)

The question seems to be a standard query about venerating the right gods to ensure the successful outcome of some unnamed endeavour. Carbon proposes to restore the final section of the inscription to:[1010]

[ὁ θεὸς ἔχρη]σε Μολοσσ[οῖς θύειν τῶι δεῖνα]

(The god) proclaims to the Molossian (to sacrifice…)

The repeated name of the tribe would, therefore, be part of the answer rather than the question. While an interesting suggestion, there is not enough evidence to support the claim that the second "Molossians" was not part of the inquiry.[1011] The restoration also poses the problem of the answer being given solely by Zeus, while the question was originally asked to both patron deities of the oracle. Furthermore, the lack of any other identified responses to collective queries among the tablets coupled with the discovery of *CGRN* 40 in Apollonia, suggest that the answers to collective consultations were likely taken back to the communities they concerned. Thus, DVC 4195, found on site in Dodona, would most likely not be a response.

[1008] Diod. Sic. 15. 13.
[1009] Dakaris 1971: 21; A second query, DVC 110, also appears to have been made by the Molossians. However, not much beyond the name of the tribe is legible.
[1010] LOD s.v. DVC 4195.
[1011] The editors' concern with justifying the reason for the repetition of the name of the group is unfounded. In LOD 6, for example, the name of the polis and of its inhabitants is repeated.

A similarly phrased query, DVC 4016, was made by the tribe of the Athamanians in the 1st half of the 4th c. BC:

Ζεῦ Νάϊε καὶ Δ[ιώνα τύχα] ἀγαθά· Ἀθ[α]μᾶν[ες ἐπερωτῶντι τίνι κα] θεῶν θύο(ν)τες [---] κάλλιστα πράσ[σοιεν ---][.]ΟΙΗ ἄριστα τὸν [---] [...]ΑΕΑ οἰκῆας [---]

Oh Zeus and Dione. Good fortune. The Athamanians ask to which god to sacrifice (…) will (these) be more auspicious (…) best (…) servants (…)

Once again, the context of the question is obscured by the *lacunae* in the text. It seems to relate to servants or slaves, possibly ones owned communally by the tribe. A similar reference can be found in DVC 3473, where the inquirer asked about the slave he appeared to have purchased for the Dodonaians.[1012] The Phylatoi in DVC 2150, dated to the mid-5th c. BC, asked about concord or unity:

ἐ Φύλατ[οι ---] Ε *h*(ο)μόνο[οι ---]

If the Phylatoi (…) concord (…)

The Phylatoi were named among the tribes with *synarchontes* mentioned in a Molossian citizenship decree from the 4th c. BC found at Dodona.[1013] It is only through this list of magistrates that the group is attested, making the oracular inscription an important piece of evidence in further establishing the existence of this small community. One other Epirote tribe, the Genoaioi[1014], is believed to have made an inquiry – DVC 1042:

τοῦ Γενεοῦ φλευμός

The scorching of Geneos

The text, dated to the late 6th c. BC, appears to fall into the category of questions attempting to establish the cause of a calamity that has befallen the city or ways in which it can be counteracted.

[1012] See Chapter 3.3.2.
[1013] Cabanes, L'Épire 536, 2.
[1014] Cabanes (1976: 122, 125) notes that the Genoaioi are very well attested in non-oracular inscriptions uncovered in Dodona. Members of this group figure among the demiourgoi and synarchontes of Epirus. Stephanus of Byzantium also listed them as a Molossian tribe (s.v. Genoaioi).

Other groups neighbouring Dodona, such as the Chaonians, equally sought the oracle's opinion, as seen in LOD 11:

ἀγαθᾶι τύχαι — αἰτεῖται ἁ πόλις ἁ τῶν Χαόνων τὸν Δία τὸν Νάον καὶ τὰν Διώναν ἀνελεῖν εἰ λῶιον καὶ ἄμεινον καὶ συμφορώτερόν ἐστι τὸν ναὸν τὸν τᾶς Ἀθάνας τᾶς Πολιάδος ἀγχωρίξαντας ποεῖν;

Good fortune – The polis of the Chaonians ask Zeus Naios and Dione to give an oracle: is it better and more profitable and useful to rebuild the temple of Athena Polias after having moved it?

As has been argued by some scholars, the term *polis* should be understood as "community" or "state" rather than "city" (which in this case would have meant Phoenike, the most significant city of the region and Chaonia's capital).[1015] Thucydides described the Chaonians as "not ruled by a king" (ἀβασίλευτοι), instead led by two magistrates elected annually from a royal family line, during the Peloponnesian War.[1016] They are believed to have remained independent from the Aeacids until the latter part of the 4th c. BC, when they assist Pyrrhus in his military campaign in Magna Graecia and Sicily, which would date the tablet to 330-320 BC.[1017] Pascual, however, asserts that the unification of Epirus may have happened earlier; while Chaonia most likely was the hegemon in the region during the 5th c. BC, its power waned and the Molossians became the dominating group. The *koinon* of the Chaonians would have been part of the Aeacid kingdom.[1018] Thus, according to him, the tablet most certainly concerns Phoenike, particularly since the goddess in question is a *polis*-centered deity. That said, the cult of Athena has yet to be explicitly confirmed there, although recent excavations have uncovered a small building located in the *agora*, originally believed to be a *thesauros*, which has been associated with Athena due to the oracular tablet.[1019] Due to its shape, it was later identified as a temple, dated to the 4th-3rd c. BC, similarly as the tablet.[1020] Quantin suggests that the verb ἀναχωρίζω – used predominantly in a military and topographic context – should be understood as "to move back" in reference to a shorter distance. By comparing this case to other instances of moving shrines in the ancient Mediterranean world, he argues that the query most probably meant that the older temple would have been constructed

[1015] Larsen 1968: 280; Cabanes 1976: 156; Lhôte 2006: 61; Quantin 2007: 177. The latter three scholars translate πόλις to "l'état". In earlier publications (Dakaris *et al.* 1993; Parke 1967: 261), the term was interpreted as "city".
[1016] Thuc. 2.80.5.
[1017] Cabanes 1976: 183; Quantin 2007: 178. Concerning dating, see Lhôte 2006: 60.
[1018] Pascual 2018: 55-81.
[1019] Ugolini 1932: 93-109; Hammond 1967: 574; Quantin 2007: 180.
[1020] Quantin 2007: 181-182.

of perishable materials such as wood and eventually required reconstruction. The urban development and growth of Phoenike in the 4th c. BC could have also been one of the reasons for moving the shrine.[1021] The cult of Athena has also been attested in another Chaonian city, Butrintos, marking it as another possible candidate for the location to which the query may have referred.[1022] It is worth mentioning that Phanote, also a Chaonian city, is mentioned as the subject of DVC 3822, dated to the mid-5th c. BC. The exact details of the query are uncertain due to the damage the tablet sustained, but the tablet further reaffirms that Chaonian communities did, in fact, consult the oracle of Dodona.

The Corcyraeans were the other most prominently featured Northwestern Greek group in the queries. Four tablets containing their queries have been uncovered, of which three are undamaged enough to discern the full text of the inscriptions.[1023] Two of the oracular tablets are dated to the first half of the 4th c. BC:

LOD 3. θεόν. τ[ύ]χαν ἀγαθᾷ[ν]. ἐπ[ι]κοινῶνται τοὶ Κ[ο]ρκυρα[ῖοι τῶι Δὶ τῶι] Νάωι καὶ τᾶι Δ[ι]ώναι τίνι κα [θ]εῶν [ἢ] ἡρώων θύον[τ]ες καὶ εὐχ[ό]μενο<ι> ὁμονοοῖεν ἐ[π]ὶ τὠγαθόν;

God. Good fortune. The Corcyraeans ask Zeus Naios and Dione to which god or hero to sacrifice and pray to in order to achieve concord for their own good?

LOD 1. [θεός. ἐπικοινῶντ]αι Κορκ[υραῖοι τῶι Διὶ τῶι Ναίωι καὶ τᾶι Διώναι τί]νι κα θεῶν [ἢ ἡρώων θύοντες καὶ εὐχόμενοι τὰν πόλιν κάλ]λιστα καὶ ἀ[σφαλέστατα — — — — — — — — — —] ϝοικέοιε[ν];

(God.) The Corcyraeans ask (Zeus Naios and Dione to which god and hero to sacrifice and pray to in order to) govern (their city) most rightly and securely (…)?

Both inquiries revolve around the successful governance of Corcyra. While the text of LOD 3 is heavily reconstructed, LOD 1 explicitly discusses living in harmony or concord (ὁμονοοῖεν) for the benefit of the community, the terminology used reminiscent of DVC 2150. A third

[1021] Quantin 2007: 179-180, 193-196; For use of ἀναχωρίζω, see Xen. *Cyr*. 7.1.41, Xen. *An*. 5.2.10.
[1022] De Maria and Mancini 2018: 198-199.
[1023] LOD 4 contains only the name of the community. Lhôte proposes to restore it as follows: θεός. ἐπικοινῶνται τοὶ Κορκυραῖοι τῶι Διὶ [Ναίωι καὶ τᾶι Διώναι τίνι κα θεῶν ἢ ἡρώων θύοντες — —].

consultation, LOD 2 dated to the latter half of the 4th c. BC, similarly pertains to the political sphere:

[θ]εός. ἐπικοινῶνται τοὶ Κορκυραῖοι καὶ τοὶ Ὠρίκιοι τῶι Διὶ τῶι Ναίωι καὶ τᾶι Διώναι τίνι κα θεῶν ἢ ἡρώων θύοντες καὶ εὐχόμενοι τὰν πόλιν κάλλιστα οἰκεῦεγ καὶ ἀσφαλέστατα καὶ εὐκαρπία σφιν καὶ πολυκαρπία τελέθοι καὶ κατόνασις παντὸς τὠγαθοῦ καρποῦ;

God. The Corcyraeans and the Orikians ask Zeus Naios and Dione to which god or hero to sacrifice and pray to in order to govern their city most rightly and securely and fruitfulness and abundance of fruit may come into being for them and profit from their full harvest?

The requests expressed in this question are not particularly original – the inquirers wished for a stable political situation and for a prosperous harvest, topics that appear in both collective and personal queries. What does make LOD 2 unique is that two different groups, the inhabitants of Corcyra and Orikos, consulted the oracle together. The economic connection between the two *poleis* has already been discussed in Chapter 4. These ties, however, seem to run deeper as epigraphic evidence in the form of a decree announcing Corcyra's acceptance of the invitation from Magnesia on the Meander to the Leucophryena games from the end of the 3rd c. BC was also co-signed by Orikos.[1024] It has been suggested that the *poleis* may have entered a *sympoliteia*, though they must have remained two distinct entities as both are named separately in the oracular query.[1025]

Communities from Illyria also visited the Epirote oracle, seeking its guidance. LOD 7 demonstrates that the Bylliones consulted at Dodona in the mid-4th c. BC:

περὶ παμπασίας Βυλλίονες τίνε θεῶι θύοντες βέλτιστα πραξοῦντι.

Concerning the property, the Bylliones (ask) to which gods to sacrifice to succeed the most?

It is uncertain whether the inscription refers to Byllis as the city or as the *koinon*.[1026] Although the tablet predates the extensive growth and development that Byllis underwent in the 3rd-2nd c. BC, it is the first time the Bylliones are attested as acting as a political entity.[1027] The meaning of the term

[1024] *IMagnesia* 44; cf. Intrieri 2019.
[1025] Cabanes 1976: 315, footnote 97; Lhôte 2006: 33.
[1026] For a discussion on the nature of this *koinon*, see Cabanes 1999: 379-381.
[1027] Funke, Moustakis and Hochschulz 2004: 343; Céka and Céka 2018: 977-978, 981-983.

παμπασία is also unclear, but it seems plausible that the inquiry is not referring to communal property but rather to something affecting the well-being of the group, such as a harvest, as seen in LOD 2. In DVC 1184, the city of Thronion is recorded as having made an inquiry, though the tablet is too damaged to discern the exact content. It is worth noting that both communities were under the influence of Illyrian Apollonia.[1028]

Since individuals from Thessaly are very well-attested in the tablets as frequent visitors at the oracle, it is not surprising that *poleis* from that region sought the help of their neighbouring oracular sanctuary. Two inscriptions appear to belong to Thessalian communities. The first one, DVC 2940 from the 1st half of the 4th c. BC, is a consultation was made by the city of Pherai:

Ζεύς· πὲρ πόλιος Φεραίας σοτηρίας

Zeus. Concerning the deliverance of Pheraians (…)

While only part of the question remains legible, it seems that the inquiry concerned the general well-being of the *polis*. It most likely would have been followed by a question about propitiating deities, similarly to the Corcyrean inscriptions. The second tablet, LOD 8B, contains a more detailed query made by the koinon of the Mondaiates in the 3rd-2nd c BC:

ἐπικοινᾶται Μον[δ]αιατᾶν τὸ κοινὸν ‘Δὶ Νάωι καὶ Διώναι {ς}′ πὲρ το<ῖ> [ἀρ]γύρροι τᾶς Θέμιστος αἰ ἀ<ν>εκτ[ό]ν ἐστι τᾶ Θέμι<σ>τι καὶ βέλτιον ἐσκιχρέμεν;

The koinon of the Mondaiates asks Zeus Naios and Dione about the money of Themis: if it is more tolerable and better for Themis to lend out (the money)?

The origin of the Mondaiates has been long disputed. On the one hand, the aformentioned Molossian citizenship decree from Dodona, which serves as evidence for the existence of the Phylatoi, contains what appears to be an ethnicon tentatively restored by Cabanes to mean “Mondaios”.[1029] On the other, scholars lean towards interpreting the text as an inquiry made by the inhabitants of Mondaia in Thessaly.[1030] As Mili points out, the cult of Themis thrived in this *polis*; the goddess’s shrine was where public decrees were displayed.[1031] While both interpretations

[1028] Hammond 1967: 523; Funke, Moustakis and Hochschulz 2004: 328.
[1029] Cabanes 1976: 538.
[1030] Lhôte 2006: 49-51; Méndez Dosuna 2018: 266.
[1031] Mili 2014: 130; Cf. Helly 1973, no. 69.

are plausible, and while it would be tempting to see in the Mondaiates an Epirote group, the fairly consistent number of enquiries of individuals form Thessaly in the corpus makes the possibility of an inquiry form the city of Mondaia attractive.

The presence of cities from Magna Graecia has also been noted among the communities visiting the oracle.[1032] Two oracular texts have been identified as belonging to *poleis* from across the Ionian Sea. The first inquiry, LOD 5, belongs to the Tarentines:

θεό[ς]. τύχαι ἀγαθᾶι. [ἐπερωτῆι] *h*α πόλις — *h*α τῶν Ταραν[τίνων] τὸν Δία τὸν Ναῖον καὶ τ[ὰν Διώναν] περὶ παντυχίας καὶ π[ερὶ χωρίων(?)] τὰ χ̣ηρῶι(?) καὶ περὶ τῶν [— — —]

God, good fortune. The city of the Tarentines asks Zeus Naios and Dione concerning prosperity and (the land) under control and (…)

Lhôte, following Hoffmann, proposes that χ̣ηρῶι corresponds to the Attic χειροῖ ("in hand"). Since he dates the inscription to 350-280 BC based on the letter shape, he argues that Hoffmann's interpretation would align the inscription in the historical context of the era – either the Molossian expedition to Italy under Alexander I in 334 BC, which was the result of Taras' request for help, or the Tarentine embassy to Pyrrhus in 281 BC.[1033] A second query, LOD 6, appears to have been made by the inhabitants of Heraclea in the second half of the 5th c. BC:[1034]

[Ἡρακλεῶται(?) πε]ρὶ Ἡρακλέας [ε̃ — — — — —]ΣΑ κομίζοντι [τὰν πόλιν ἀ]σφαλέος καὶ οἱ φύ[λαρχοι(?) τοῖ] Ἡρακλεοτᾶν;

Concerning Heraclea, (the Heracleotai ask) can they take care (of their city) safely, they and the phylarchoi of the Herakleotai?

The presence of Taras in the queries has led scholars to believe that the Heraclea named in the query is, in fact, Heraclea Lucania, founded by the Tarentines in 434-433 BC.[1035] The consultation

[1032] Vokotopoulou 1992.
[1033] Hoffmann 1899, no. 1567; Lhôte 2006: 37-38.
[1034] LOD 17 is also a consultation about Heraklea, but it is unsure whether it was made by the community or by a private individual.
[1035] Lhôte 2006: 41. ἐπερωτῶντι τὸ κοινὸν τῶν […]ων Δία Νάον καὶ Διώναν ἦ α[ὐ]τὶ αὐτοῖς συμπολειτεύουσι μετὰ Μολοσσῶν ἀσφαλῆ ἦι / *The koinon of (…) ask Zeus Naios and Dione whether it is safe for them to sign a sympoliteia with the Molossians?*

would have, therefore, been made soon after the city was established, most likely by its newly minted inhabitants anxious to find out whether their endeavour will be successful.

Finally, the corpus of Dodonean tablets contains a few examples of collective inquiries that are more difficult to attribute to specific groups. LOD 9, dated to 170-168,[1036] was presented to the oracle on behalf of an unnamed *koinon*. What makes this query particularly interesting is its mention of a sympoliteia treaty with the Molossians. It remains the only question in which the community that made the consultation directly asked for the oracle's opinion about a political decision. Another, more damaged tablet refers to a collective consultation about either a plague or a famine ravaging the land.[1037] In DVC 4132, a community possibly identified as the Opountians from Lokris, also sought the help of Dodona.[1038] A final mention must be given to the questions posed by the Diaitoi.[1039] As discussed in Chapter 4, they are believed to have been magistrates whose role involved arbitration. Lhôte originally argued that they were officials from outside of Dodona, due to the mention of the prytaneion in LOD 16, which he believed was not associated with Epirote institutions.[1040] Most recently, however, Gartziou-Tatti pointed out that a prytaneion in Dodona has been identified, which, along with the epigraphic evidence from the DVC corpus mentioning δίαιτα/διαιτοί, suggests that the Diaitoi could have been located in Dodona and would have been tasked with overseeing legal disputes.[1041]

5.3. Examining the collective queries

Chapinal-Heras notes that the location of Dodona on the border of the Hellenic and barbarian worlds awarded the oracle a liminal status of a frontier sanctuary; with time, however, it tightened its ties to other Greek regions, reaching a panhellenic status.[1042] While the "international" perception of the shrine of Zeus Naios and Dione evolved along with the growth of Epirus and the

[1036] For a discussion on the paleographic and historical dating criteria, see Lhôte 2006: 53-54.
[1037] LOD 13; Lhôte 2006: 63-64.
[1038] Dakaris *et al.* 2013b: 401.
[1039] LOD 16 and DVC 548.
[1040] Lhôte 2006: 66-72; ἐπερωτῶντι τοὶ διαιτοὶ τὸν Δία τὸν Ναῖον καὶ τ[ὰν Διώναν ἦ βέλτιον τὰ χρήμα]τα ἰς τὸ πρυτανῆον τὰ πὰρ τᾶς πόλιος ἔλαβε δικαίως [ὸ δεῖνα τοῦ δεῖνα τοὺς] διαιτοὺς ἀναλῶσαι ἰς τὸ πρυτανῆον δικαίως τοῦτα / *The Diaitoi ask Zeus Naios and Dione if it is preferable, about the (sum) that (someone) received from the city in all fairness, that the Diaitoi spend this money for the prytaneion, in all fairness?* Transl. Bonnechere (2017: 71).
[1041] Gartziou-Tatti 2017: 145.
[1042] Chapinal-Heras 2021: 277.

development of its role in the politics and culture of the Hellenic world, the tablets demonstrate that the oracle of Dodona primarily advised local communities, in particular to those from Northwestern Greece.[1043] Local *poleis*, *ethne* and *koina* often visited the sanctuary of Zeus Naios and Dione with precise and immediate questions. The Dodonaians, who are seen to most often solicit the oracle for information, appear to ask solely questions that both pertain to very specific situations and can predominantly be resolved with a binary yes/no answer. A similar tendency can be seen in the queries made by the Mondaiates and the Chaonians, as well as in those brought forth by the Diaitoi, both which address current financial matters. Conversely, the further the consulting community was located from the oracle, the more general their inquiries seem to be. The three Corcyrean inscriptions all focus on the city's well-being and ability to successfully rule itself. The Illyrian Bylliones asked about their property, the Thessalian city of Pherae inquired about its deliverance. The themes of prosperity and self-governance can also be found in the tablets belonging to Heraclea and Taras. The distance between the sanctuary and the community consulting it was a factor in how that community utilized it. The oracle served as a method of solving current issues for the locals, most likely due to the convenience and ease of accessing it. Their familiarity with the sanctuary, as in the case of the Dodonaians, may have encouraged them to use the oracular divination procedures more frequently, particularly in the case of interpreting the will of the gods. The *poleis* located further away tended to ask more general questions revolving broadly around their community's well-being, possibly due to the distance from the oracle and time it would take to travel to it; consulting about urgent matters would not have been practical. Instead, the oracle served more as a way of securing success for their community long-term.

The topics addressed in the oracular inquiries fall under two categories: matters pertaining to religious practices and beliefs as well as civic and political issues, often in the context of their general well-being. The first category is the largest one. A similar tendency can be observed among the Delphic oracular inscriptions, which, as Fontenrose remarks, overwhelmingly consisted of

[1043] Nine different Epirote-Illyrian groups have been shown to consult at Dodona. The editors (Dakaris *et al.* 2013a: 122) also suggest that DVC 363 is a collective query made by the *polis* of Kassope. This is identification is dubious since only part of the name of the city remains visible on the tablet, making it impossible to assert whether the query was posed by Kassopeans or by an individual asking about the *polis.* Another Epirote ethnos, the Dexaireatans, seems to be attested in DVC 1070, although here too it is uncertain whether the query was collective or personal.

responses focused on religious content.[1044] The oracle operated as a guide in cult foundation, sacrifices and ritual laws. Echoes of this function can be found in the Dodonean queries, albeit to a much lesser degree. The Epirote oracle was primarily asked to offer what Parker calls "ritual reassurance".[1045] Several of the inquiring *poleis* and *koina* consulted the oracle not for advice on how to proceed, but rather on how to secure their welfare through sacrifices and prayer to the appropriate deities.[1046] The τινι formula appears to be commonly used in the context of ensuring good governance and, in LOD 2 and 7, protecting crops or possessions. Questions about the well-being of the community did not always have to be propitiatory, as demonstrated in the queries made by the Pheraians, who asked about the deliverance of their city, or the Dodoneans in LOD 14, seeking confirmation about whether their misfortune was brought on by the impurity of an individual. A number of the communities also asked about prophetic signs, which would suggest that the oracle played a role in mediating not only Zeus and Dione's responses, but also may have elucidated the meanings of other divine omens inquirers received outside of the sanctuary. Lastly, the oracle was expected to help the *poleis* and *koina* decide how to manage the property of gods. It seems that in both LOD 8B and 11 concerning the money belonging to Themis and the temple of Athena respectively, the sanctuary of Dodona was only asked to intervene in a moment of uncertainty, when the communities had to address a specific issue, as opposed to examples from the Delphi and Didyma, in which the oracles are seen establishing ritual norms.[1047] Nonetheless, deferring to the oracle in these matters meant that the communities sought out a source of divine authority that would support and justify their decisions.[1048]

The strictly political or civic queries are very few.[1049] They appear to mimic the same pattern of visiting the oracle in times of need found in religious-themed inscriptions. The dating of the Italiote queries about governance demonstrates that they were made during a period of political uncertainty; the Tarentines were embroiled in military conflicts, while the Heracleans were in the process of establishing their city structures. LOD 9 is perhaps the most explicitly political inquiry. The Dodonean oracle also was asked to pass judgement on whether the unnamed

[1044] Fontenrose 1978: 25-26.
[1045] Parker 2016: 74-76.
[1046] Bonnechere 2014: 86.
[1047] E.g. PW 280; Rob. 5.
[1048] Bowden 2013: 43-44.
[1049] This tendency is not unique to Dodona and places it within the broader trend of oracles not advising on political matters (Bonnechere 2013b).

koinon should join the Molossians in a *sympoliteia*. The Molossian kingdom and later the Epirote League were composed from different *poleis*, *ethne*, and *koina* of the region.[1050] The idea of a local *koinon* entering into a more intimate union with the Molossian tribe would, therefore, not have been too outlandish a suggestion, although the act of joining one of the political powers of the region could have entailed a fear of losing a certain degree of independence, which may have prompted the community to seek divine advice in the matter. One might wonder, however, whether in this particular case the question was not posed with an expected answer in mind, as the consultation was made at an oracle under Molossian control and presumably, more positively predisposed towards them.[1051]

Despite having been brought forth by communities, the collective oracular queries share a lot of similarities with the personal ones. Both types of questions follow similar structures – there are no unique formulas reserves for communal inquiries. Just as individuals sought the help of Zeus Naios and Dione in moments of crisis, cities and *koine* similarly consulted the oracle when they were facing situations they did not know how to resolve or when they needed ritual reassurance in how to proceed. It also appears that the method of conducting a consultation made by a community or delegation did not differ from one made by an individual. Several of the lead tablets containing collective queries were also used by private visitors at the sanctuary.[1052]

5.4. Conclusion

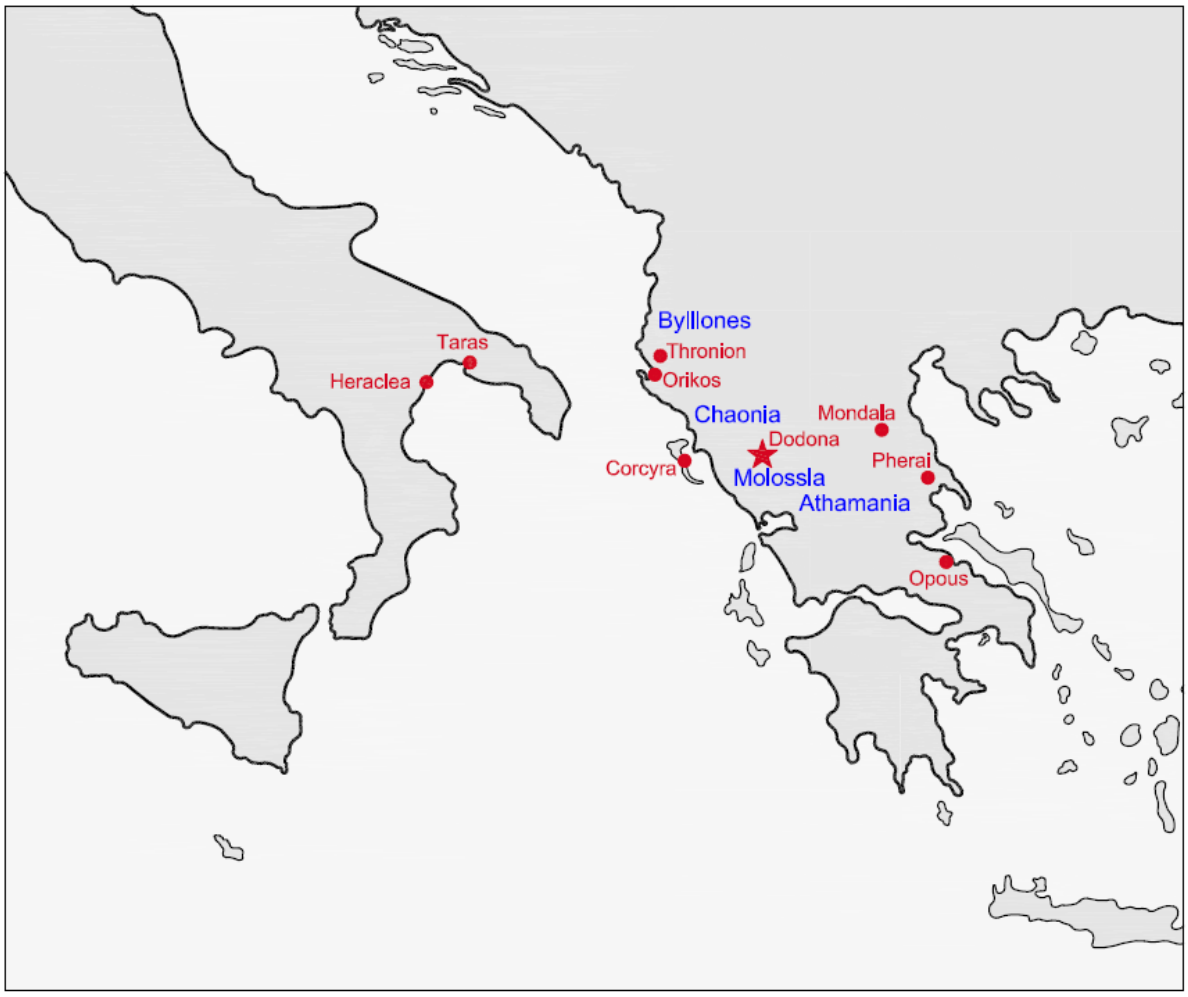
The collective consultations at the oracle of Dodona were primarily made by local communities, *koina* and cities from Epirus, but also from neighbouring Illyria and Thessaly.[1053] This mirrors the evidence found in personal queries, such as references to Illyrian locations or names, or inscriptions written in the Thessalian dialect, further confirming the connection between these areas and Dodona.[1054] The frequency of Epirote *koina*, particularly the smaller ones, among the groups seeking the help of Zeus Naios and Dione equally bolsters the supposition that Dodona's

[1050] Cf. Cabanes 1999.
[1051] For a discussion about the role of oracles as arbiters and problem-solvers or adjudicators providing confirmation bias, see Stoneman 2011: 48-49.
[1052] Examples include: LOD 6A+6B, 8A+8B; DVC 4016+4017, 2425-2428, 2517-2520.
[1053] See Map 2.
[1054] Curbera 2013: 420; Méndez Dosuna 2018: 280-287.

influence was greatest on a local scale; it is thus likely that many of the private visitors would have also been Epirotes themselves. The proximity of the communities consulting at the oracle appears to speak to a more regional, rather than Panhellenic significance of the sanctuary of Zeus Naios and Dione. Perhaps the lesser number of collective queries can be attributed to the general trend in the Ancient Greek world to move away from communal consultations from the 5th c. BC onwards, relying instead on other methods to decide about issues faced by the community.[1055] This period, however, coincides with the growth and development of the oracle of Dodona. The Classical period was when the sanctuary entered its heyday and began generating international interest among private inquirers beyond the local sphere. The lack of queries by faraway *poleis*, besides Taras and Heraclea, which had other political connections to Epirus at the time of their consultations, does suggest that Dodona's importance as a place where the dominant political players, like Athens, would seek advice was far lesser than Panhellenic centers such as Delphi.

The communities that visited the sanctuary at Dodona mostly did so regarding religious concerns. They sought ritual reassurance in order to secure their success, usually in relation to governance or property. Some of the communities, especially the Dodoneans, asked about mantic signs, which seem to have required additional interpretation that the oracle provided. Locals, such as the Chaonians and Mondaiates, also inquired about the management of the possessions of gods. A few political and civic questions can be found in the corpus as well. One tablet asks for the gods' opinion about the possibility of a political union, but it is the only such precise query. The rest refers more broadly to the city's ability to self-govern. The *poleis* and *koina* tended to consult Zeus Naios and Dione in times of need or even crisis, viewing the oracle either as a preemptive measure against possible disasters or as a means of obtaining an authoritative answer to the problem they were faced with. This seems to be especially noticeable among the communities closest to the sanctuary, such as the Dodoneans, which looked to the oracle for help with pressing and current matters.

[1055] Parker 2000: 101-105.



LEGEND

POLIS:

CORCYRA
DODONA
HERACLEA
MONDAIA
OPOUS
ORIKOS
PHERAI
TARAS
THRONION

REGION/TRIBE:

ATHAMANIA
BYLLIONES
CHAONIA
GENOAIOI (EPIROTE TRIBE) - LOCATION UNKNOWN
MOLOSSIA
PHYLATOI (EPIROTE TRIBE) - LOCATION UNKNOWN

Map 2: The communities consulting at the oracle of Dodona

Conclusions

The oracular tablets from Dodona are extraordinary pieces of epigraphic evidence from the Classical and Hellenistic periods. They are not without their problems; their fragmented and often damaged texts, which are riddled in dialectological oddities and grammatical mistakes, do not always offer detailed information about the supplicants or their queries. However, even with these issues the oracular inscriptions, containing the voices of both individuals and communities, offer unique insight into the everyday life of the visitors who consulted the gods at the Epirote shrine. This thesis set out to demonstrate how the tablets could illuminate aspects of daily life and problems people faced – topics often omitted in other source material – as well as the ways that the oracle was used to address these concerns. It also examined the tablets' role in the expressions of personal religiosity. In doing so, this study aimed to better define the supplicants' relationship with the oracle of Dodona and the scope of its influence over their reality.

The majority of the oracular queries can be placed in 5th-4th c. BC,[1056] with the supplicants representing all walks of life: locals and foreigners, free and enslaved, men and women (though the latter were minority among the visitors at Dodona). As this thesis has demonstrated, individuals sought advice at the sanctuary of Zeus Naios and Dione about matters that had the potential to shape their lives and livelihoods for many years to come; the most frequent questions concerned the well-being of the family and travel. Collective queries predominantly involved problems of a religious nature and general pleas for safety and successful self-governance; political advice was of less interest. The communities closest to the sanctuary, such as the Dodonaians, used it to address pressing and current matters, possibly due to the convenience of proximity, as well as their stronger ties to the oracle. The overwhelming number of personal queries in comparison to collective ones suggest that the oracle played a more significant role in providing divination services to individuals than *poleis* and *koina*. In practice, this meant that its influence would have been felt more on a personal micro-level rather than, as in the case of the oracle of Delphi, on a larger, systemic level.

[1056] For the decline in the mantic role of Dodona in the 3rd c. BC onward, see Chapinal-Heras 2021: 192-196.

The act of consulting the gods about a future spouse, the possibility of having children, migration to a new location, changing one's means of supporting oneself or justice for a murdered relative demonstrates that the supplicants saw the oracle of Dodona as a resource to be employed in cases where the choice they were pondering involved a high degree of risk. While some of the questions omitted details, perhaps to avoid overstepping one's position as the subordinate party and angering the deities of the oracle, many requested the gods' advice about very specific plans. The queries reveal that the supplicants understood the limits of what they could and could not ask: Zeus and Dione were never expected to offer a solution to the problem the supplicants faced, but could be asked to give a verdict on how effective the idea would be. However, it must be noted that not all inquiries focused on the supplicants' choices – the queries made by slaves about their possible manumission or questions about wrongdoers did not stem from the supplicants' indecision about their actions, but rather from an attempt to gain assurance from the gods. Following Eidinow's assessment that the personal consultations at Dodona were made by individuals seeking to obtain a sense of security for themselves, the tablets demonstrate that the oracle was used as a tool to achieve control over one's life, particularly in moments of crisis.[1057] The high degree of risk involved in the problems the supplicants brought to the attention of the Dodonean deities suggests that participating in mantic practices functioned as a "high-intensity ritual", a method of negotiating the advice and, in certain cases help, of the gods in mitigating uncertainty.

The private supplicants utilized the oracle in different ways, which is reflected in how they phrased their inquiries. The περί formula is the most versatile – it often appeared together with the ἦ or τίνι formula and introduced the topic of the question. When used by itself, it reveals very little about how the supplicant wanted his query answered; it had to be accompanied by additional information, which probably would have been spoken out loud. This supports the idea that consultations at Dodona must have had an oral aspect to them. The ἦ formula, requiring a binary yes/no answer, was the most frequent type of question. While it was used by the inquirers to broadly help elucidate their future (e.g. whether they would be successful), it also appeared in very precise questions. The ἦ formula was present in queries about the future, delineating concrete plans of action or possible changes to one's circumstances. It could also reference unknown events from the past, as seen in requests for the confirmation of a suspected wrongdoer's guilt or be used to

[1057] Eidinow 2007: 137.

reveal the meaning of other divine signs. In all three cases, the gods were asked for assurance. The τίνι formula, which involved establishing to which god or hero to sacrifice and pray to, is less common in the oracular inscriptions. It is primarily associated with specific topics of inquiry; they were most often used when consulting about health and fertility. Ancient Greeks attributed certain disasters to the wrath of a slighted god, though it was not always clear whom the offender had to propitiate.[1058] The language used in some of the questions (e.g. ἰλάσκομαι) suggests that some inquirers did perceive their illnesses as a divine malediction. However, more neutral terms (e.g. θύω or εὔχομαι) are also present. The oracle served to identify the deities that either might help with the supplicants' issues or that needed to be appeased in order for the problem to be solved. The τίνι formula did not leave much room for doubt; its use implied that the supplicant wanted to ensure a successful resolution to their problem by invoking deities rather than seek advice about whether they were making the right decisions. This is perhaps why this type of question was popular when dealing with physiological problems, where the ability of people to intervene was limited and divine help was deemed necessary. In certain instances, the supplicants can be seen negotiating with the gods through consultations that resembled prayers rather than questions. Individuals adapted the strategy of how to approach the consultation at the oracle of Dodona depending on what they were asking about and what type of help they wanted to receive.

It is also worth mentioning that there appears to be a gender component to how supplicants made use of the oracle as a resource in their problem-solving process and as a means of decreasing the level of risk involved in their decisions. Based on the tablets, for example, it would seem that women did not visit the sanctuary with general queries in mind,[1059] but rather sought the help of Zeus Naios and Dione once they had a concrete idea or solution to their problem and wished to know if the plan they were about to undertake was going to succeed.[1060] Around 50% of the inquiries made by women ask about prayers and sacrifices that would guarantee a triumphant outcome to the problem at hand. Female supplicants tend to use it in very specific instances when dealing with concrete problems. They were not seeking advice about proceeding with their plans, but rather looking for reassurance in the successful resolution of their issues. While the queries seem to align with the traditional view that women in Ancient Greece took on a more passive

[1058] Versnel 2011: 43-44.
[1059] The only unambiguous exception to this is DVC 1787 in which Helene asks broadly about success and well-being.
[1060] Eidinow 2013: 133.

social role, their consultations at the oracle of Dodona not only demonstrate that divination was one of the outlets available for women to exercise more control over their lives but also provided them with the means, and, perhaps, with a certain level of authority derived from wielding an oracular decision,[1061] to influence their surroundings.

The personal oracular consultations, which served as a way of connecting with the Dodonean gods and receiving divine reassurance, can be considered as a manifestation of personal religiosity. They were, after all, a personal adaptation of broader communal religious practices – in this case, divination.[1062] What truly comes to the forefront of the discussion are the themes of agency and personal choice that emerge from the oracular tablets. The supplicants' decision to seek divine counsel, the intimate nature of the problems they consulted about, and the different approaches they demonstrated in their queries reveal their willingness to adapt religious procedures to suit their own aims, but also their need for some form of ritual reinforcement and divine support in their personal time of need, when presumably *polis* or community rites were not enough to help. However, as was discussed in Chapter 2, the sanctuary of Dodona was not a subversive institution. The oracle gave people a symbolic space to articulate their hopes and worries, to "test out" their aspirations and ideas, to connect with the gods on a more personal level, while still enveloping this expression in a culturally sanctioned and ritualized procedure. The few inscriptions that have been identified as oracular responses suggest that the answers supplicants received tended to be rather conservative. "Do not leave your wife" and "invest in both overland and maritime trade" was far from revolutionary advice. Dodona's reserved approach is not surprising – after all, the problems it was asked to help with were often serious and possibly life-changing. Exercising caution when offering an answer would not only help prevent any possible upheaval in the supplicant's family and community but would presumably also minimize any repercussions to the oracle's reputation if the advice turned out to be false. This degree of self-awareness implies that the staff of the sanctuary would have had some control over the results of the divination. Carbon's examination of the offerings lists that were provided by the oracle of Dodona revealed that the answers were curated.[1063] Therefore it stands to reason that a similar mindset would have accompanied the delivery of other oracular responses.

[1061] Parker 2000: 78.
[1062] Kindt 2015: 37-38.
[1063] Carbon 2015.

This thesis has also discussed their use in examining the sanctuary's regional position and its influence over local norms. Dodona has long held the status of a "Panhellenic" sanctuary, a belief dating back to Greek and Roman authors, which has been to some degree upheld by present-day scholarship. Both literary and archeological evidence shows that groups outside of Epirus, such as Athenians, Spartans or Boeotians, cultivated a relationship with the oracle through collective consultations and participation in ritual practices at Dodona. Similarly, the tablets themselves reveal a variety of dialects, hinting at the diverse origins of the people visiting the sanctuary. Nevertheless, the analysis of locations mentioned in the inscriptions paints a somewhat different image, revealing that the oracle of Dodona predominantly served Northwestern Greek supplicants, both private individuals and communities. Unlike in the case of Delphi, the other famous "international" oracle, which was consulted by a variety of groups from different regions,[1064] the collective queries found at Dodona highlight the local role of the oracle. The majority of consultations made by *poleis*, *koina*, and *ethne* came from Epirus and neighbouring territories, Thessaly and Illyria.[1065] The most notable exceptions to this rule are the inquiries made by two cities in Magna Graecia, Taras and Heraclea, presumably due to their convenient proximity to the oracle and their political ties to the kingdom of Molossia. It is worth noting that the tablets offer no evidence of queries made by Athens or Sparta, despite their attestation in literary sources, though this may simply be the result of the appropriate tablets not having been preserved or, if the case of Apollonia is indicative of a larger trend, of the tablets having been brought back by the envoys to the city as proof of the consultation. Private individuals, however, did travel from Athens to the Dodonean sanctuary, though they do not account for a significant percentage of visitors. Perhaps the limited number of supplicants from Central Greece, particularly Attica and Boeotia, was the result of other oracles functioning in the area: at Delphi, Abae, Lebadaea, Thebes or Ptoios.[1066] There would have simply not been a need to travel far north if viable divinatory options could be found closer to home. On the other hand, the residents of Northwestern Greece and Magna Graecia and Sicily had a lesser array of possibilities to choose from, and thus constituted the

[1064] Cf. Parke and Wormell 1956; Fontenrose 1978.
[1065] It must be noted that the term "Illyria" is used here to denote both native non-Greek peoples of the region, as well as Greek colonies. However, Chapinal-Heras (2021: 233-234) is correct in concluding that the oracle appears to have been oriented more towards a Greek clientele instead of a "barbarian" one.
[1066] Dillion 1997: 80-81, 97.

biggest group among the pilgrims at Dodona. Visitors from Thessaly and Acarnania were also numerous – these regions appear interconnected with Epirus.

The geographic scope of Dodona's influence that emerges from the tablets can be characterized as being particularly strong in Epirus proper and in Illyria. It then radiates into the surrounding regions, Thessaly and Acarnania, with a weaker presence in Boeotia, Attica, as well as Locris. The Epirote oracle appears to have equally been visited by people with ties to the northern Peloponnese, primarily the Elis region and Corinth (most likely through its association with Corcyra). Westwards, Dodona was revered by Greek cities in Magna Graecia and the eastern part of Sicily. Any connections the sanctuary may have had to cities in Northern Italy, Asia Minor or Northern Africa are tenuous at best. The oracle of Dodona, therefore, functioned as an important regional religious site and primarily served its local community and neighbouring areas – most of its visitors would have been of Northwestern Greek (in particular Epirote) origin.

Chapinal-Heras argues that Dodona was a "frontier sanctuary", drawing the boundaries between what was Greek and what was not.[1067] A closer analysis of the oracular tablets reveals that the oracle not only delineated the peripheries of the Hellenic world, but also appeared to be part of initiatives to expand the Greek sphere of influence. While it did not share Delphi's position in the colonization effort, private individuals did seek its advice about the more recently founded colonies such as Pharos in the Adriatic. Echoes of other examples of regional politics, in particular related to the Aeacid monarchy and their ambitions across the Ionian *poros*, are found in the queries. As discussed in Chapter 4, Dodona's connections to local political players, coupled with the news about other regions brought by supplicants of diverse backgrounds, would have kept the staff of the sanctuary well-informed, placing the oracle of Zeus Naios and Dione in the unique position of facilitating the circulation of local information.

Although the oracular inscriptions by themselves do not provide much detail about the political decisions of rulers or governing bodies and are of little help in reconstructing historical events, they offer insight into how regular people reacted to these changes. The trends found in the tablets, such as the growing number of questions about pursuing commerce, farming, or a different line of work, coincide with the changes occurring in Epirus primarily under the Aeacid dynasty

[1067] Chapinal-Heras 2021: 234.

(and, to a lesser degree, during the time of the Epirote *koinon*). The development and growth of the region and its progressive integration into the Hellenic world during the Classical and early Hellenistic period resulted in socio-economic shifts that forced local residents to adapt to the new reality. Exploring new types of work or entertaining the possibility of migrating were some of the ways in which supplicants chose to face the changes. The oracle of Dodona served as a guide in these initiatives and as a divine countermeasure to the uncertainty involved in such high-risk decisions.

A few separate remarks must be dedicated to the topic of female supplicants, as their voices are heavily underrepresented in ancient sources and the oracular inscriptions provide one of the few windows into their everyday life. The portrait of women that emerges from the tablets of Dodona is a dynamic one.[1068] The analysis of their names demonstrates that most of the female supplicants would have likely been inhabitants of Northwestern Greece, predominantly Epirus, and Thessaly. While the tablets do not unequivocally reinforce the idea of greater personal and legal freedom believed to have been enjoyed by Northwestern Greek women by comparison to well-documented places such as Athens,[1069] they do paint a picture of an active woman who engages in shaping her life and the lives of those around her. While the queries include topics in line with women's role as homemakers, the tablets unveil another side that is rarely seen: in fact, women and men ask similar questions concerning marriage, conception and offspring, their children's fortunes, etc. The queries also show women taking charge of financial matters and property belonging to their families. Their consultations, often made alongside men they were married or related to or even made in their stead, imply that women were part of the decision-making process in matters concerning their family. Furthermore, the tablets reveal how women also functioned outside of the domestic sphere; they took on the roles of priestesses, prophetesses, and healers. Their expertise was sought out by other people and they themselves consulted the oracle about their work.

By examining the various themes supplicants consulted about and the different ways in which they formulated their inquiries, this study has outlined the oracle's capacity to not only

[1068] Although it must be noted that they are also heavily underrepresented at Dodona. Only approximately 6% (about 250 tablets) of over 4200 oracular inscriptions can be linked to women as either the ones asking for advice or the subjects of a query.
[1069] Cabanes 1983: 202.

guide its supplicants through their day-to-day problems, but also to help them navigate the religious dimension of their life. The importance of this cannot be stressed enough – the tablets show that deities were thought to be involved in every aspect of the supplicants' existence, from marriage to travel. The oracular texts also highlight the dichotomy between the uncertainty that ancient Greeks felt about the gods as well as the difficulties in identifying them and their messages, and the belief that despite these problems, the deities would somehow be of help. Supplicants demonstrate the need for a personal connection with the divine; the rites performed as part of communal worship did not always seem to suffice. As this thesis has demonstrated, the oracle of Dodona was believed to be part of the solution to the issue of communication with the gods. It functioned as a mediator between its supplicants and the sphere of the divine, helping to establish which deities to appease and how in order to secure success.

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