

The Epigram on Apollonius of Tyana

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A RECENTLY PUBLISHED EPIGRAM on Apollonius of Tyana has been accorded two distinct interpretations,¹ with different supplements proposed for the damaged inscription, especially in lines 3–4. The first approach postulates that these lines deal with Apollonius after his death and assert that his beneficent activity continues from heaven. Thus, in a full and helpful discussion of the epigram,² C. P. Jones argues in favour of the following text:

[οὔτο]ς Ἀπ[ό]λλωνος μὲν ἐπώνυμος, ἐκ Τυά|[νων δ]ὲ
λάμψας ἀνθρώπων ἔσβεσεν ἀμπλακίας. |
[σῶμα τά]φος Τυάνων, τὸ δ' ἐτήτυμον οὐρανὸς αὐτὸν |
[δέξαθ' ὄ]πως θνητῶν ἐξελάσῃε πόνους.

This text has much to recommend it, but certain difficulties persist. The chief is that, thus restored, the inscription appears to contradict Philostratus, who denies the existence of a known tomb of Apollonius, at Tyana or elsewhere (VA 8.31). While not impossible, the explanations Jones suggests (*viz.*, that Philostratus lied or was mistaken; that the epigrammatist deliberately corrected Philostratus or was in innocent error; that the body was moved after Philostratus but before the epigram) do not seem satisfactory grounds for discarding a firm piece of ancient evidence by conjectural restoration.

A further problem might be thought to be the very wide-ranging powers which this restoration gives to Apollonius after his death. Jones adduces parallels from funerary epigrams for the idea of

¹ G. Dagron and J. Marcillet-Jaubert, *Belleten* 42 (1978) 402–05 with Pl. 6; independently, E. L. Bowie, *ANRW* XVI.2 (Berlin 1978) 1687–88. See also J. and L. Robert, *Bull. épigr.* 1979, 592.

² C. P. Jones, *JHS* 100 (1980) 190–94 with Pl. 1b. Jones's text is similar to Bowie's with the exception of his reading σῶμα τάφος in 3, where Bowie conjectured γαῖα τάφος. Jones's reading is supported by parallels from other funerary epigrams. In favour of γαῖα τάφος, however, it might be argued (1) that it eliminates the oddity of τάφος Τυάνων for "the tomb in Tyana"; and (2) that in the lettering of this inscription, where *iota* takes very little space in contrast to the broad lyre-shaped *omega*, γαῖα would more nearly fit the space available than σῶμα.

posthumous beneficence, but none of these gives the dead man such sweeping powers to aid mankind. Apollonius, of course, was no ordinary mortal, but the notion of him ‘driving out’ men’s troubles seems to fit better with his activity while on earth.³

These difficulties can be avoided by a restoration which takes lines 3–4 to be about Apollonius’ birth, not his burial and death. Thus Dagron and Marcillet-Jaubert suggested (*e.g.*) [εἶ γε or καὶ τὸ βρέ]φος Τυάνων in 3 and [πέμψεν ὄ]πως in 4.⁴ πέμψεν seems possible, but as Jones points out (191 n.18), βρέφος appears never to be used as a synonym for παιῖς or τέκνον, but simply to mean ‘fetus’ or ‘infant’.

A similar sense is provided easily and naturally by reading:

[γαῖα τρο]φός Τυάνων τὸ δ’ ἐτήτυμον οὐρανὸς αὐτὸν
[γείναθ’ ὄ]πως θνητῶν ἐξέλασιε πόνους.

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The idea of the land of Tyana as Apollonius’ τροφός is entirely natural and the word is commonly applied to cities (examples in LSJ *s.v.* 2). Γείνατο, which is often found at line-beginning in Homer (*Il.* 4.400, 476; 7.10; *Od.* 7.57; 11.268; 15.242, etc.) and Hesiod (*Th.* 129, 139, 334, etc.), makes a stronger contrast between Apollonius’ birth on earth and his real (τὸ δ’ ἐτήτυμον) heavenly birth than does πέμψεν.

Although with this reading the epigram lacks the formal balance noted by Jones, in which the first couplet describing Apollonius’ activity on earth is matched by the second describing his activity

³ A parallel from a later legend of Apollonius is offered by J. Tzetzes, *Exegesis in Iliadem* p.93.3 Hermann. Here a seer named Laius is said to have carved a χαρώνιον πρόσωπον on the cliffs at Antioch εἰς ἐξέλασιν λοιμικῶν τοξευμάτων, and this is compared to the action of Apollonius of Tyana, who set up marble storks at Byzantium εἰς ἐξέλασιν πελαργῶν ὄφεις ῥιπτόντων ἐπὶ τὰς Βυζαντίων δεξαμενὰς καὶ οὕτω φθειρόντων πολλούς. On the story of Laius see G. Downey, *A History of Antioch in Syria* (Princeton 1961) 103–04. On the legends of Apollonius’ talismans in Byzantine authors see W. L. Dulière, “Protection permanente contre des animaux nuisibles,” *BZ* 64 (1970) 247–77. Such legends evolved from earlier traditions about his ability to bring an end to plagues and other troubles (*e.g.*, Philost. *VA* 4.10). For ἐξελαύνειν or ἐξέλασις in such contexts note Plutarch’s description of the βουλίμου ἐξέλασις at Chaeronea (*Mor.* 693εff; *cf.* V. Rotollo, “Il rito della βουλίμου ἐξέλασις,” in *Festschr. Eugenio Manni* VI [Rome 1980] 1947–61). Josephus (*BJ* 7.185) uses ἐξελαύνειν of an herb for driving out demons from the possessed. *Cf.* the prayer to Asclepius I. *Ephesos* IV 1253.6–7: τηλόσε δαίμον ελα[νε]/νούσων τὰργια φύλα (where there seems no need to punctuate after νούσων, as the editors do). Similarly, in *TAM* III 103 (Termessus) Honoratus is honoured δῖωζε γὰρ εἰς ἅλα λιμόν.

⁴ R. Merkelbach, “Das Epigram auf Apollonios von Tyana,” *ZPE* 41 (1981) 270, has suggested [ἦν δὲ βρέ]φος and [τέχθη ὄ]πως. Τέχθη, however, would surely have a passive sense, and so would be impossible here.

after death, it gains a different parallelism, with the first couplet stressing Apollonius' ethical activity, the second his role as healer and miracle-worker, in both cases while on earth. This parallelism has the advantage of accommodating easily the distinct meanings of ἔσβεσεν ἀμπλακίας and ἐξελάσσει πόνους. With Jones's reading one must either ignore the distinction and regard both terms as generally descriptive of Apollonius' good works, or accept the awkwardness of a heavy division between Apollonius' moral improvements while on earth and his expelling of men's pains when in heaven. A second parallelism is the elaborate chiasmic balance between Ἀπόλλωνος μὲν ἐπώνυμος, ἐκ Τυάνων δέ and Τυάνων, τὸ δ' ἐτήτυμον οὐρανός, where Ἀπόλλωνος and οὐρανός are paired, and τὸ ἐτήτυμον appears to answer ἐπώνυμος in position and sound, as well as in the related sense of the words.⁵ The parallelism is more complete, and its point clearer, with the reading γαῖα τροφός . . . γείναθ', since the second couplet now functions as an extension and elaboration of the first in regard to Apollonius' activities on earth.

It must be admitted that a clear decision between the two alternative interpretations of the epigram on Apollonius is not easy. It is unfortunate for the history of Apollonius and his legend that the stone is defective precisely for the three decisive words. Before the historical placement and importance of this document can be fully assessed, the issues raised by the alternative interpretations will require further study.⁶

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⁵ The chiasmic structure is noted by Dagron and Marcillet-Jaubert. The sense of ἐπώνυμος, 'aptly named after' (cf. Jones 191 for parallels), may be echoed by τὸ ἐτήτυμον, as ἐτήτυμος could be used of the true meaning of a name (e.g. Aesch. Ag. 682, Cho. 948), and τὸ ἔτυμον has this sense in later Greek. With γαῖα τροφός . . . τὸ δ' ἐτήτυμον οὐρανός αὐτὸν γείνατο cf. a recurrent formula of the gold lamellae, e.g. B1.6-7 (G. Zuntz, *Persephone* [Oxford 1971] 358-59): εἰπεῖν Γῆς παῖς εἰμι καὶ Οὐρανοῦ ἀστερόεντος· αὐτὰρ ἔμοι γένος οὐράνιον (i.e., my real origin is heavenly). On these inscriptions see W. Burkert, *Griechische Religion der archaischen und klassischen Epoche* (Stuttgart 1977) 432-51 (esp. 436-40), and "Neue Funde zur Orphik," *Informationen zum altsprachlichen Unterricht* (Arbeitsgemeinschaft klassischer Philologen beim Landesschulrat für Steiermark 2 [1980]) 34-36; S. G. Cole, "New Evidence for the Mysteries of Dionysos," *GRBS* 21 (1980) 223-38.

⁶ This note arises from discussion at a seminar on Apollonius presented to the Fellows of the Center for Hellenic Studies by Maria Dzielska of the Jagiellonian University, Krakow, in April 1981. The essential impetus was given by Bernard Knox's conjecture. In addition to these two, we thank Jan Bremmer and Tessa Rajak for valuable help.