

THENIAN SPOILS 'FROM THE PELOPONNESIANS' IN DODONA (*IG I³ 1462*)¹

Abstract:

One of the most important epigraphical findings from Dodona is a slightly damaged bronze plaque with an Athenian dedication of spoils from the naval victory over the Peloponnesians. Author recapitulates old arguments for relating this inscription to the double victory of Phormio near Rhium/Naupactus in 429 BCE and adds new ones. He rejects the traditional view that the choice of distant Dodona as the place of advertisement of the Athenian victory was dictated by the inaccessibility of Olympia and/or Delphi due to the Peloponnesian War. Instead, he argues that it was a deliberate act of propaganda aimed at the cities and tribes of the northwestern Greece, conceived and carried out by Phormio.

Keywords:

Athens, Dodona, Peloponnesians, votive offering, Phormio

In his 1878 monograph of ancient Dodona, Konstantinos Karapanos published, among a number of inscriptions found at the sanctuary, two fitting fragments² of a bronze plaque ('bandelette') with the following text:³

εσιον ναυμαχίαι νικέσαντες ἂ

¹ Adam, a rare combination of a Teacher and a Friend, is given to speaking of himself as one of 'us, Romans', as opposed to those like me, 'you, Greeks'. As a 'Greek', I shall not encroach on the territory of Roman history, but I hope a contribution on a Greek dedication of the spoils of war will serve as an appropriate tribute to the author of a number of important studies of Roman spoils of war, starting with the sadly unpublished PhD thesis, see bibliography of Adam's works in this volume: Ziółkowski 1980, cf. Ziółkowski 1986b and 1993b. The modest size of my contribution stands in reverse proportion to my debt to the *honorandus* accumulated over three decades.

² The fracture runs across the vertical hasta of the letter *chi*.

³ Karapanos 1878: 47 and pl. 26.2 (erroneously marked in the text on p. 47 as 'Pl. XXIV.2').

Karapanos identified the inscription as belonging to a public monument erected after a naval victory and dated it correctly to the fifth century BCE.⁴

Before the year was out, Max Fränkel made the connection between the fragments published by Karapanos and another one from the Berlin Museum collection, acquired on the understanding of a provenance from Dodona.⁵ After combining them into a whole, Fränkel came up with the following reconstruction of the text:

Ἀθηναῖοι : ἀπὸ Πελοπον[ν]ησίων ναυμαχίαι νικήσαντες ἀ[νέθηκαν].⁶

The Athenians dedicated (this) from the Peloponnesians having won a naval victory

Fränkel did not rule out that the deity suggested by the location of the offering, namely Zeus, may also have been mentioned at the end of the text.

Three years later Roberts rightly suggested the reading of ἀ[νέθεσαν] in place of ἀ[νέθηκαν].⁷ Thus has the text been reproduced in subsequent editions from *SIG*³ 73 to *IG* I³ 1462.⁸

⁴ Since metal objects (shield, cuirass, helmet, spearhead etc.) dedicated as spoils of war were typically inscribed, it may be supposed that the plaque was nailed to a wooden structure. And indeed Karapanos' find was soon associated with a fragment (see next footnote) that does have a nail hole. The whole clearly fits a dedication after a naval battle, perhaps the bow or wooden decoration of a captured warship, cf. Paus. 10.11.5. It could also have been a mast (or any wooden part of a ship). For the masts of Salamis used for the construction of the Odeion, see Vitruv. 5.9.1 (my attention to this case was drawn by Marek Węcowski).

⁵ Fränkel 1878: 71–73 (drawing on p. 71).

⁶ Fränkel in his edition changed the Attic to the Ionic alphabet. This change may have slightly confused Roberts, who three years later gave the following text in his edition of the epigraphic material from Dodona: Ἀθηναῖοι ἐκ [sic – lapsus – AW] Πελοπον|εσίων ναυμαχία νικέσαντες ἀ[νέθηκαν or ἀνέθεσαν] with the comment: '[t]he characters belong to the fifth century B.C., and as may be seen from Πελοποννεσίων and νικέσαντες are pre-Ionic' (Roberts 1881: 107). Roberts does not say clearly what he means by pre-Ionic fifth-century letters (= Attic alphabet): in the first word, he may mean the inverted *lambda*, most of all, he is probably talking of the *epsilon* for a long open *e* found in both words. If so, then the Attic alphabet is indicated most of all by the Ἀθηναῖοι, where the *epsilon* is replaced in Fränkel's edition by an *eta*. If, however, Fränkel consistently 'normalized' the spelling by rendering the long *e* and the long *o* by *eta* and *omega* respectively in place of the original *epsilon* and *omikron*, then Roberts was inconsistent in reproducing the inscription partly in the Attic alphabet used in its production and partly in the transliteration to the Ionic, including restorations in the latter alphabet (in addition to the examples above, there is also the proposed restoration ἀ[νέθηκαν, as suggested by Fränkel).

⁷ In fifth-century Athenian inscriptions, the normal form for the third-person plural aorist is ἀνέθεσαν. In his review of DAA in *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg*, 3 (1953/1954), 377–390 on p. 387 (= SEG 14.12) Werner Peek supplied ἀνέθεκαν (= ἀνέθηκαν in Ionic script) on metrical grounds in two votive inscriptions dated to c. 500–480 BCE, but in both cases we are dealing with speculation characteristic of Peek, which some scholars decline even to note in the apparatus. For the two aforementioned inscriptions, see respectively CEG I.244 = IG I³ 705 = DAA 248 and CEG I.246 = IG I³ 703 = DAA 284+.

⁸ Cf. also Lazzarini 1976: no. 988 and now Cabanes 2020: no. 8.

It is to Fränkel that we owe the first attempt at an accurate dating of the inscription. A diagonal hasta across the *alpha* argued for an early date since, as he claimed on the authority of Schütz⁹ – an *alpha* in this form is last seen in Athenian public inscriptions in Ol.83.2 (= 447 BCE). An early date would also be supported by the archaic forms of *mu* and *nu*. Since, however, the inscription also consistently employs a four-bar *sigma*, first seen in the well-known casualty list of the phyle Erechtheis (CIA I 433 = IG I² 929 = IG I³ 1147) of 460 or 459 BCE, Fränkel decided against too early a date for the dedication. In consequence, when looking for an historical context in the second quarter of the fifth century, he connected it to the events referenced by the aforementioned casualty list, namely to the military operations in the Saronic Gulf, described in his *Pentekontaetia* by Thucydides (1.105.1-2):

Ἀθηναῖοις δὲ ναυσὶν ἀποβάσιν ἐς Ἀλιᾶς πρὸς Κορινθίους καὶ Ἐπιδαυρίους μάχῃ ἐγένετο, καὶ ἐνίκων Κορίνθιοι. καὶ ὕστερον Ἀθηναῖοι ἐνανυμάχησαν ἐπὶ Κεκρυφαλείᾳ Πελοποννησίων ναυσί, καὶ ἐνίκων Ἀθηναῖοι. πολέμου δὲ καταστάντος πρὸς Αἰγινήτας Ἀθηναῖοις μετὰ ταῦτα ναυμαχία γίγνεται ἐπ' Αἰγίνῃ μεγάλη Ἀθηναίων καὶ Αἰγινητῶν, καὶ οἱ ξύμμαχοι ἑκατέροις παρήσαν, καὶ ἐνίκων Ἀθηναῖοι καὶ ναὺς ἐβδομήκοντα λαβόντες αὐτῶν ἐς τὴν γῆν ἀπέβησαν καὶ ἐπολιόρκουν, Λεωκράτους τοῦ Στροίβου στρατηγοῦντος.¹⁰

An Athenian fleet made a descent upon Halieis, where a battle took place against some Corinthian and Epidaurian troops; the Corinthians gained the victory. Soon afterwards the Athenians fought at sea off Cecryphaleia with a Peloponnesian fleet, which they defeated. A war next broke out between the Aeginetans and the Athenians, and a great battle was fought off the coast of Aegina, in which the allies of both parties joined; the Athenians were victorious, and captured seventy of the enemy's ships; they then landed on Aegina and, under the command of Leocrates the son of Stroebus, besieged the town. [trans. B. Jowett, slightly modified]

Fränkel's epigraphic arguments, and thus the proposed dating and historical context of the monument, were soon questioned by B. Haussoullier, who saw the lettering as more likely to be linked to the twin victories of the Athenian fleet under Phormio at Rhium/Naupactus in 429 BCE.¹¹

⁹ Schutz 1875: 64.

¹⁰ Cf. Diod. 11.78.1-4. It is not clear to me if Fränkel saw the dedication as connected to the battle of Cecryphaleia, to the immediately following battle off the shores of Aegina or to both at the same time.

¹¹ Haussoullier 1881: 18, cf. 16 n.1. Fränkel himself was aware of the weakness of his argument. Noting that the *regular* use of the four-bar *sigma* begins with the tribute list from Ol. 82.4 (= 449 BCE), he considered the possibility that the Dodona dedication was only made some time after the events to which it referred. What he saw as an argument in his favour was the absence of major naval engagements between the Athenians and the Peloponnesians in the following decades.

The dating of the dedication remains controversial to this day.¹² At the same time there seems to be a near universal agreement that (i) the dedication must refer to an event so important that it could not have escaped the attention of Thucydides whose work covers the entire range of possible datings based on the palaeographic criteria; (ii) the only naval battles (both of which came in pairs) fought by the Athenians with an enemy that could have been identified as the Peloponnesians in this period are Cecryphaleia/Aegina and Rhium/Naupactus. We are thus faced with a choice of either 460–459 or 429 BCE.

While the former assumption seems unquestionable or at least unfalsifiable, when it comes to the latter, one might wonder whether the text should not be linked to the battle at Sybota between the Corcyraeans supported by an Athenian squadron and the Corinthians supported by their allies at the end of the summer 433 BCE.¹³ On balance, however, the events of 460–459 and 429 BCE provide a more likely historical context.¹⁴

Which then of these historical moments should be chosen? The arguments for one or the other are twofold in nature. Some refer to the lettering, others to history: is it 460–459 or 429 BCE that provides a more fitting context for the Athenians to make a dedication at Dodona (the only such occurrence in the fifth century!)? We have, I believe, good reasons to choose the latter date.

To start with the lettering,¹⁵ Fränkel's epigraphic arguments suffer from a serious flaw: he applies the criteria derived from Athenian public inscriptions carved in stone by professional cutters to an inscription on a bronze plaque

¹² In favour of 460 BCE, see Jeffery and Lewis in *JG* I³; Lazzarini 1976: no. 988 ('metà del V sec. a. C. '); Podlecki 1976: 411 and n. 58. In favour of 429 BCE: Parke 1967: 136, Hornblower *CT*, I *ad* 2.94.2 and *ad* 3.104, Giuliani 2001: 122 and n. 37; Lazenby 2004: 47; Piccinini 2017: 144–145. Gomme was hesitant: compare his comment *ad* Th. 1.105.1 in *HCT* I.308 with his comment *ad* Th. 2.92.4 in *HCT* II.232.

¹³ According to Thucydides, it included alongside some 90 Corinthian ships, around 10 from Elis, 12 from Megara, 10 from Leucas, 27 from Ambracia and 1 from Anactorium (Th. 1.46.1). This composition, given the Corinthian hegemony, may have justified calling the enemy the 'Peloponnesians' (cf. Th. 1.53.4 where the historian has the Athenians address the Corinthian envoys arrived in a boat following the battle 'ὁ ἄνδρες Πελοποννήσιοι').

¹⁴ Connecting this battle to Dodona recommends itself by the proximity of the battlefield to the sanctuary and the Corcyraeans' links to the oracle (on these links, see Piccinini 2017: index s.v. Corcyra, Corcyreans). On the other hand, in this particular case, the Athenians may not have been interested in advertising their victory since, at least according to Thucydides, they came to Corcyra purely to frighten the Corinthians off and not to escalate the conflict that could have led to the breaking of the Thirty Years' Peace of 446 BCE – and on diplomatic grounds, they would most certainly not describe the enemy as 'the Peloponnesians'. The only scholar I know to have connected the dedication to the battle of Sybota is Cabanes (2020: 209, no. 8).

¹⁵ Note that the epigraphic argument is of particular importance here, as the scholars with a more epigraphic bent tended to favour the earlier date (Jeffery, Lewis, Lazzarini).

attached to the offering proper by an unknown hand at an unknown place¹⁶. Just how risky this can be is made abundantly clear by the example of the letter *chi*: not later than the mid fifth century monumental public stone inscriptions used to carry the letter *chi* in the form of St Andrew's cross, whereas the Dodona dedication has a *chi* in the form of the Greek cross, as typically found at Athens rather in private inscriptions. But even going by the dated stone inscriptions, the criteria do not all point in the same direction. The four-bar *sigma*, as mentioned above, first appears in the casualty list of the Erechtheis phyle from the very year which Fränkel proposes for the dedication, and then only in the names added by a second hand.¹⁷ This would make the Dodona dedication the oldest known example of the four-bar *sigma* in a public text.

That leaves as the most important arguments in favour of an early date the diagonal hasta across the *alpha* and the slightly slanted *nu*.¹⁸ Yet apart from the *alpha* with the diagonal hasta, the inscription features another, nearly symmetrical *alpha* with an horizontal hasta,¹⁹ and even the diagonal hasta deviates from the horizontal by a significantly smaller margin than in the archaic inscriptions. This sort of variation in the *alpha* finds its analogies in inscriptions later than the mid-fifth century.²⁰ The best analogy comes from the bronze spearhead with a dedication to the Dioscuri on the occasion of a victory over the Lesbians. The artefact found in 1971 in a well on the Athenian agora, clearly references the pacification of the Mytilene during the rebellion of 428/7 BCE.²¹ The spearhead inscription, in addition to the diagonal hasta across the *alpha* also features a slightly slanting *nu*. In conclusion, nothing about the lettering of the Dodona dedication rules out a connection to the twin battles of Rhium/Naupactus in 429.

The dating of the dedication on historical grounds comes down to two factors: (i) are the events of 460/459 and of 429 BCE equally likely to have been seen by the Athenians as combat against the Peloponnesians?; (ii) the context of which battle more appropriately explains a dedication at Dodona?

¹⁶ Assuming that it is a dedication of the spoils from the battles of Rhium/Naupactus, then it is more than likely that the inscription was not made at Athens but on the spot, or in Dodona.

¹⁷ *IG* I³ 1147, ll. 62–70.

¹⁸ In the most complete catalogue of letter shapes from the Attic alphabet these are *alpha* (5) and *nu* (6) respectively, see Immerwahr 1990: xxii–xxiii.

¹⁹ See *alpha* in ἀπό and the first *alpha* in ναυμαχία.

²⁰ Both an *alpha* with a horizontal hasta and an *alpha* with a slightly slanting hasta can, according to me, be seen in e.g. *IG* I³ 46 (445 BCE regulations regarding colony in Brea), see the photo in the internet archives of Sara B. Aleshire Center for the Study of Greek Epigraphy, photo no. 7129. Cf. also *IG* I³ 39 (regulations regarding Euboea of 446 or 424/3 BCE), *IG* I³ 48 (treaty with Samos, 439 BCE) and *IG* I³ 61 (regulations regarding Methone, 424/3 BCE) = Sara B. Aleshire Center for the Study of Greek Epigraphy, photo no. 7139.

²¹ *Ed. pr.* McK. Camp II: 1978.

(i) It must be born in mind that the term ‘the Peloponnesians’ does not belong to the technical vocabulary of interstate relations and is entirely absent from the surviving diplomatic documents: the Athenians would agree their treaties with the ‘Lacedaemonians and their allies’. In public inscriptions, the term appears only occasionally and never in a formal sense.²² The question is then which enemies and in which conflict would be the more likely to be defined by the Athenians as ‘the Peloponnesians’?

In the first battle of 429, at Rhium/Naupactus, the Athenians fought against a fleet dominated by a Corinthian contingent and including ships from Sicyon and an unknown number of *poleis* ‘from that region’.²³ Thucydides himself refers to the enemy force as ‘the Peloponnesians’ (οἱ Πελοποννήσιοι in 2.83.5 and 84.5). In the second battle, the survivors of the first battle were joined by a number of Leucadian, Anactorean and Ambraciot ships that had previously taken part in the Spartan nauarch Cnemus’ land-and-sea operation in Acarnania as well as new ships prepared ‘in the cities’ (κατὰ πόλεις).²⁴ Thucydides is consistent in referring to these forces as ‘the Peloponnesians’, both in his narrative and in the pre-battle speeches by the commanders on both sides.²⁵ The dedication could thus refer to either battle.

In the case of Cecryphaleia and Aegina the situation is more complex. The battle off Cecryphaleia was according to Thucydides fought ‘against the Peloponnesians’, but the brevity of the narrative leaves us in the dark as to their identity, apart from the likelihood that they included the Corithians and Epidaurians, given the mention of an earlier Athenian defeat at hands of the land forces of those two *poleis* (1.105.1).²⁶ The same cannot be said for the battle of Aegina, involving the Athenians and the Aeginetans alongside their allies (cf. Lys. 2.48). It seems unlikely that the Aeginetans would be perceived in the fifth century as Peloponnesians,²⁷ and it was them who constituted the main opponent of the Athenians in the second battle. The dedication, if dated to 460 r 459, would thus have to be

²² Wolicki 2018: 212–237; Peloponnesians in Attic inscriptions, see Wolicki 2018: 216 n. 21.

²³ Th. 2.80.3: τὸ ναυτικὸν ἐκ τε Κορίνθου καὶ Σικυῶνος καὶ τῶν ταύτῃ χωρίων; 80.8: τὸ ἀπὸ Κορίνθου ναυτικόν; 83.1: τὸ δ’ ἐκ τῆς Κορίνθου καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ζυμμάχων τῶν ἐκ τοῦ Κρισαίου κόλπου ναυτικόν; 83.3: οἱ Κορίνθιοι καὶ οἱ ξύμμαχοι.

²⁴ Th. 2.80.3 with 84.5. For new ships see 85.3.

²⁵ Th. 2.90.1; 4; 5; 91.1; 4; 92.5. Cnemus and his advisor Brasidas address the troops as ὧ ἄνδρες Πελοποννήσιοι’ (87.1, cf. 88.1); Phormio addressing the Athenian fleet speaks about the enemies as ‘Peloponnesians’ (89.10).

²⁶ For more on the peace ending that very war (the so-called First Peloponnesian War), see Cawkwell 1993: 374–375.

²⁷ See Figureira 1981/1993, cf. Wolicki 2018: 225–237, esp. 226 and 233.

linked to the battle off Cecryphaleia,²⁸ meaning the Athenians probably decided to send a dedication to the remote Dodona between the two battles.

(ii) Dodona was by no means the usual place for an Athenian dedication on the occasion of the victorious battle or war.²⁹ The venue of choice for advertising military prowess to a Panhellenic audience was Olympia or Delphi³⁰ where we find a number of Athenian dedications from the fifth century.³¹ Thus, setting aside the unlikely hypothesis that the dedication at the Dodona sanctuary was dictated by the connection of the victory to the oracle's pronouncement,³² the question arises: what extraordinary circumstances justified an Athenian dedication there?

In the eyes of some scholars, the Dodona dedication would be linked to the presumed banning of the Athenians from Delphi and Olympia at the height of their conflict with those who controlled both Panhellenic sanctuaries. While not directly attested in the sources, the ban has been hypothesised by numerous historians, going back to at least George Grote. The hypothesis hinges on what is thought to be article 1 of the truce of 423, which seems to suggest that the Athenian access to the sanctuary of Delphi was at the time blocked or at least constrained and that this constituted a matter of such interest to them that Spartans agreed to include it in the very opening of the treaty.³³ Two years later, the opening clause of the Peace of Nicias would suggest that the problem may have

²⁸ The possibility that we are dealing with a wholesale dedication of loot from several battles seems to be ruled out by the singular dative ναυμαχίαι though it could be argued that it is a generic term.

²⁹ On later war spoils in Dodona, see Chapinal-Heras 2021: 82.

³⁰ In the case of Athens, another possibility would be Delos, on whose (quasi)Panhellenic status, see Neer 2007: 225–226.

³¹ Olympia: loot from the Lemnians (early 5th century BCE?), see *SEG*.14.350 = *IG* I³ 1466; from the Persians (Medes) see Kunze 1961 = *IG* I³ 1467 (cf. individual dedication of Miltiades, *IG* I³ 1472); Delphi: Marathon, see *IG* I³ 1463 (the treasury of the Athenians was presumably the dedication of the spoils of Marathon, see Amandry 1998); the expedition of Xerxes and perhaps its immediate aftermath, see *IG* I³ 1464 and 1465.

³² On the categories of questions and answers at Dodona attested in the sources, see Eidinow 2007: 72–124; on the questions about military campaigns, pp. 113–114 (but these were all questions from individuals, not political bodies).

³³ Th. 4.118.1: περί μὲν τοῦ ἱεροῦ καὶ τοῦ μαντείου τοῦ Ἀπόλλωνος τοῦ Πυθίου δοκεῖ ἡμῖν χρῆσθαι τὸν βουλόμενον ἀδόλως καὶ ἀδεῶς κατὰ τοὺς πατρίους νόμους. Cf. Hornblower *CT* I.388–390, Parker 1985: 325–326. However, it seems more probable that what we find in Th. 4.118.1–10 is not the text of the treaty itself but only Spartan negotiation proposals recorded in Athens by the secretary of the council. Let us note that the understanding of the loss of access to a sanctuary is unclear in some works. It could be understood very broadly (all Athenians excluded from a given sanctuary), broadly (official state delegations excluded formally or informally from asking questions) or narrowly (refusal to erect a particular dedication). More on the political uses of oracles, see Parker 1985.

applied not just to Delphi but also to Olympia, since it talks generally of access to 'the common sanctuaries of the Hellenes' (Th. 5.18.1-2).

The proponents of this view give various dates for the beginning of the Panhellenic sanctuary ban on the Athenians. In 1961 Emil Kunze published an Asiatic helmet found at Olympia with the dedication 'To Zeus, the Athenians, having won [it] from the Medes (dedicated)'.³⁴ The German archaeologist speculated that the helmet was removed before the mid-fifth century which might point to a ban on Athenian dedications. While ingenious, the idea is highly speculative, since the other Athenian trophies of the Persian wars were not removed. An exclusion of a Greek community from traditional religious practices would intuitively seem to call for a conflict qualitatively different from earlier ones: were the patrons of Panhellenic sanctuaries to regularly discriminate against some dedications, their Panhellenic status would have been problematic. In the late archaic period, it is not unusual to find dedications at Panhellenic sanctuaries that may not have been to the liking of their caretakers. To take but one example, in the sixth century the Argives made a massive dedication of trophies won from the Corinthians, even though both Corinth and Elis were at the time Spartan allies.³⁵ During the Messenian war, the Messenians dedicated trophies won from the Spartans and the Athenians.³⁶ Thus the assumption of such a ban would again favour 429 over 460/459 as a better fit for an attempt to find a 'replacement' Panhellenic sanctuary.³⁷ By that time, in anti-Athenian propaganda, Athens had grown to an unprecedented threat to all Greeks. The last Spartan envoys before the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War made a demand of the Athenians that stood out completely from the traditional animosities and mutual complaints of Greek city-states: the demand to 'leave the Hellenes free' placed Athens *outside* the Greek community.³⁸ Such an idea could naturally justify the exclusion of the Athenian *polis* from Panhellenic sanctuaries.

Should we thus take the Dodona dedication as an *Ersatz* of one at Delphi or Olympia, 429 is a much more likely date than 460. The hostility of Delphi was obvious from the moment of the Spartan announcement of Apollo's approval for the breach of the Thirty Years' Peace in the summer of 432 (Th. 1.118.3). An exclusion from Olympia would have been a burning question in 429: the following year was to see the first Olympic Games since the beginning of the war. Shortly

³⁴ Kunze 1961 = West 1965/2009: no. 60. Note that if Kunze is right, we would be dealing with more than just a ban on Athenians dedicating their spoils, but also with a removal of their earlier dedications, and that of booty from barbarians, not Greeks.

³⁵ Jackson 2000.

³⁶ *IvO* 247, *SEG* 40.362 and 42.342, see further Bauslaugh 1990.

³⁷ On the Peloponnesian War leading to a break with a variety of traditions and practices upheld previously, see e.g. Lateiner 1977.

³⁸ Th. 1.139.3.

after the second battle of Rhium/Naupactus, it was to Olympia that the Spartans brought their allies in order to hear the Mytilenaeen delegation in an ostentatious gesture of appropriation (Th. 3.8.1, cf. the reference to the location of the deliberations in the Mytilenaeans' speech in Th. 3.14.1).³⁹ Dodona would in such circumstances have made a natural choice for the Athenians who at the time remained in good relations with a number of communities neighbouring or closely associated with the sanctuary, mainly the Corcyraeans and the Acarnanians. Nor is the chronology of known contacts between Athens and Dodona of no relevance in this context. The first time we hear of an Athenian interest in the western shore of continental Greece and the Corinthian Gulf is when they take over Naupactus and settle there Messenians refugees from the Peloponnese after the Third Messenian War in 456 or 455.⁴⁰ This interest was presumably bolstered by Megara's alliance with Athens which opened the Corinthian Gulf to the Athenian navy via the port of Pegas.⁴¹ Soon after that, an Athenian fleet under Tolmides apparently circumnavigated the Peloponnese, as suggested by its sojourn at Acarnania,⁴² while two years later another Athenian fleet under the command of Pericles attacked Oeniadae (Th. 1.110.3). Yet, although the sanctuary features regularly in Athenian literature from the *Suppliants* of Aeschylus onwards, it is relatively late that we have incontrovertible evidence of an official contact between the Athenian state and Dodona. It was probably in 413/412 that the Athenians received an oracle on the cult of Bendis.⁴³ What seems interesting in this context is the keen interest in

³⁹ On the Doric, despite all its Panhellenic role, character of Olympia, see Mallwitz's comments cited in Hornblower *CT ad* 3.8.1.

⁴⁰ Th. 1.103.3, but cf. 1.107.3 about the Athenian plan to block the Spartans on their way back from Doris. The dating of the Messenian settlement at Naupactus depends on the assumed length of the Third Messenian War, given by the Thucydides manuscripts at 1.102.1 as ten years. On the many (unconvincing) ideas for a correction of the numeral, see Gomme *HCT* I.410-411. I am of the opinion that 'in the tenth year' is correct and that the end of the war, most likely in 456/455, comes in the Thucydidean narrative outside of the chronological order. Cf. now Rahe 2019: 163 and n. 21.

⁴¹ Th. 1.103.4.

⁴² Th. 1.108.5.

⁴³ *JG* I³ 136 cf. Piccinini 2017: 138-140. Interestingly, Arph. *Av*.716 confirms that in 414 Dodona was viewed in Athens as one of three main oracles along with Delphi and Siwa. All earlier Dodonaeen oracles for the Athenians seems invented. On an oracle about 'Spartan suppliants' allegedly given to the Athenians in mythical times, see Paus. 7.25.1-3. For an ingenious but unconvincing hypothesis about the (early) historical circumstances of its invention, see Parke 1967: 131-134. The late tradition connecting Themistocles to Dodona (Plut. *Them.* 28.5) is most likely a pure invention, though perhaps going back all the way to the fourth century (Phanias of Eresos?). Finally, Paus. 8.11.12 suggests that the Athenians sought Dodona's advice prior to the Sicilian expedition (see Powell 1979: 17, cf. Parker 1985: 309) but this oracle seems a typical literary fiction built according to a well-known pattern of the oracle ambiguity due to the 'topographical homonymity' (cf. Hdt. 3.64.3-4 on Cambyse's death at Agbatana and 6.79-82 on king Cleomenes and his Argos campaign).

Dodona (and broadly in the lands of the Molossians) shown by Eurypides from c. 425 onwards, a possible sign that an official relationship with the region had recently been begun.⁴⁴ In a recently published huge corpus of tablets with mostly private questions, it is in the late fifth century that we first find possibly Athenian names among those seeking oracular advice.⁴⁵ In short, in 460 Dodona was probably outside the horizon of Athenian politics, in contrast to the situation in 429.

This being said, the above theory concerning the reason of the choice of Dodona as a place of dedication in 429 is flawed: as mentioned above, the dedication in question is a unique one. There is no trace of a permanent exposition of Athenian dedications and trophies at Dodona. What's more, Pausanias mentions Phormio's dedication(s) from the same battles set up in Delphi (Paus.10.11.6). Hence, the presence of a single 5th century Athenian dedication in Dodona calls for a different explanation.

The commander in the twin battles of Rhium/Naupactus was Phormio the son of Asopion, one of the most experienced of Athenian generals and presumably a close associate of Pericles with whom he had shared command during the rebellion of Samos (Th. 1.117.2). It may have been the memory of his success at Samos that won him the command of an expedition against the rebellious Potidaea on the eve of the Peloponnesian War (Th. 1.64.2; 65.2). At the very beginning of the war he held command at Chalkidike (Th. 2.29.6) and his position must only have risen after Pericles' death.

What is important in this context, we have reason to believe that Phormio paid particular attention to the propaganda value of Athenian victories under his command. Following the first battle of Rhium/Naupactus, not only did he erect the traditional, ephemeral *tropaion*, but as Thucydides is keen to point out, he also dedicated a whole ship to Poseidon at the cape Rhium (Th. 2.84.4), consciously perhaps drawing on the dedication of entire Phoenician ships after Salamis.⁴⁶ The propaganda value of this symbol of the Athenian naval supremacy visible to all entering and leaving the Corinthian Gulf clearly did not escape the enemy who after the second battle dedicated the only ship seized from the Athenians on the Peloponnesian shore vis-à-vis Rhium in an evident 'counter-dedication' (Th. 2.92.5, on the topography, cf. 2.86.2-4). After the second, basically undecided bat-

⁴⁴ Piccinini 2017: 144 and n. 56, cf. Parke 1967: 80.

⁴⁵ The oldest ones from the turn of the fifth and fourth centuries BCE, identified as Attic/Euboic by Curbera (2013: 419 and n. 2), are Chione at no. 33B and Skione at no. 3156B. On tablets written in Attic dialect, see Lhôte 2006: §.116 and Dosuna 2018. Their chronology also points to ca. 400 BCE for the beginning of the pilgrimage of the Athenians to the oracle.

⁴⁶ Hdt. 8.121.1, cf. West III 1965/2009: no. 28; Duffy 2016: 469–470; Nováková & Šályová 2019: 258–259. The norm after a naval battle was a *tropaion* alone, see Th. 7.23.4; Xen. *Hell.* 5.4.66; Diod. 13.40.6.

tle, Phormio erected a *tropaion*, again perhaps for the sake of propaganda rather than tradition, and again provoking a Peloponnesian reaction in the form of a counter-*tropaion* (Th. 2.92.4-5). As it was already told the tradition of Phormio's rich trophy dedications at Delphi has been passed on by Pausanias.⁴⁷

It is this concern for a 'visualisation' of the recent Athenian military presence in the region that I see as the context for the Dodona dedication. Phormio's possible sojourn at the sanctuary aside,⁴⁸ there can be no doubt that it was the most important religious site not only to the Epirotes but also to the peoples of the Ambracian Gulf, where the most important roads to the sanctuary originated. It was these peoples who at least since the Athenian alliance with Corcyra had become the subject of an intense rivalry between the Athenians and the Corinthians, as the latter traditionally regarded the area as their sphere of influence. A dedication at Dodona, frequented primarily by the tribes of north-western Greece, would thus serve as another way to render visible both to Athenian allies (primarily the Acarnanians and Amphilocheans) and to pro-Peloponnesian Ambra-ciots the military might of Athens in this region (and this would be especially so if our plaque served as a 'legend' to a monumental dedication), a propaganda complement to the fleet stationed at Naupactus and to regular *periploi* of the Pelopon-nese, which not only served to divert the Peloponnesians from *esbolai* to Attica, but most of all to demonstrate that a city unable to defend its own territory in pitched battle could nevertheless inflict serious damage on enemies far away.

It is eloquent testimony to Phormio's success that soon after his death the Acarnanians asked the Athenians to send them 'a son or relative of Phormio as a commander' (Th. 3.7.1): the ship at Rhium and the dedication at Dodona successfully served to remind the local Greeks not only of Athenian victory but also of the leader who had won it.⁴⁹

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⁴⁷ On the problems with the account of Pausanias, see Bultrighini, Torelli 2017: 319–320.

⁴⁸ Dakaris et al. 2013: no. 460 with commentary.

⁴⁹ In another paper I will try to show that it was probably the result of these two naval battles and their advertisement in Dodona, that Molossoi changed sides in the Peloponnesian War joining the Athenians. For the moment see Th.2.80.5 (Molossoi on the Peloponnesian side in 430/429) with *Iust.*17.3.11 and *IG* II² 226 = *IG* II³ 1.411 = Osborne 1981–1983: D14 = RO.70 (Tharyps, Molossian heir of the throne, educated and naturalized in Athens).

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