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On the Text, Language, and Interpretation of Apellis' *defixio* (SEG 57.905B)*

Among the numerous *defixiones* discovered in classical Sicily,¹ Apellis' *defixio* (SEG 57.905B, Gela [?], ca. 475–450; *TheDefix* no. 250) stands out for its length, complexity, and striking language, and ever since its first publication, it has posed thorny textual and interpretative problems to scholars. Below is the text of the *defixio* as most recently edited by Eric Csapo and Peter Wilson:²

ἐὺχά. Ἀπέλλης ἐπὶ φιλότατι τῇ Εὐνίφῳ <—> μεδέν' [Ε]ὐνίφῳ σπευ-
δ[αι]ότερον ἔμεν μεδὲ φιντίονα, ἀλλ' ἐπαινέ<ν> καὶ ἐρόντα κἀέρ-
οντα καὶ φιλετᾶν. ἐπὶ φιλότατι τῇ Εὐνίφῳ ἀπογαράφο τὸ-
ς χοραγὸς πάντας ἐπ' ἀτελεία<ι> κέπεον καὶ ἔργον καὶ τ-
5 ὅς παῖδ {ι}ας ἀπὸ τένον καὶ τὸς πατέρας κἀπρακτίαι κὲν ἀγῶ-
νι κέχθῃς ἀγόνον οἵτινες μὲ παρ' ἐμ' ἀπολείποιεν. Καλεδίαν

* We wish to thank Peter J. Wilson for commenting on an earlier draft of this paper. We are especially grateful to Albio Cesare Cassio for his illuminating remarks. This paper is the product of collaborative discussion among the authors. To meet the requirements of research assessment, we have indicated individual or joint authorship in the commentary sections using the initials FF and OT; the introduction is by FF. The abbreviation *TheDefix* stands for *Thesaurus defixionum* (https://www.thedefix.uni-hamburg.de/html/heurist/?db=The_dema&website&id=41774&pageid=48841; last accessed 19/04/2025).

¹ For a corpus of Sicilian *defixiones*, see M. Del Amor López Jimeno, *Las Tabellae Defixionis de la Sicilia Griega*, Amsterdam 1991. Many additions can be found in L. Bettarini, *Corpus delle defixiones di Selinunte*, Alessandria 2005 and G. Rocca, *Nuove iscrizioni da Selinunte*, Alessandria 2009, who collect, edit, and comment the *defixiones* from Selinous. Additional texts have been published since the release of these *corpora*. For an overview of the current state of research and references to more recent publications, see T. Sommerschild, *A New Sicilian Curse Corpus. A Blueprint for a Geographical and Chronological Analysis of Defixiones from Sicily*, in: R. Morais, D. Leão, D. Rodríguez Pérez, D. Ferreira (eds.), *Greek Art in Motion. Studies in Honour of Sir John Boardman on the Occasion of his 90th Birthday*, Oxford 2019, 489–501.

² E. Csapo, P. Wilson, *A Social and Economic History of the Theatre to 300 BC. Volume II. Theatre beyond Athens. Documents with Translation and Commentary*, Cambridge 2020, 347. This text is based on that edited by D. R. Jordan, *An Opisthographic Lead Tablet from Sicily with a Financial Document and a Curse Concerning Choregoi*, in: P. Wilson (ed.), *The Greek Theatre and Festivals. Documentary Studies*, Oxford 2007, 335–350, who revised the tablet autographically (with the aid of a microscope); this has led to several improved readings compared to earlier editions of the text.

- [ἀπογ]αράφο ἀπ' Ἀπέλλιος καὶ τὸς {ς} τενεὶ πάντας ἐπὶ μεσοτερ-
 [ο ca. 3] ἐντάδα. Σοσίαν ἀπογράφο ἀπὸ τῷ καπελεῖο Ἀλκιάδαν ἐπὶ τῷ
 [ι Μελ?]ανθίῳ φιλότατι. Πυρία<μ>, Μύσσκελον, Δαμόφαντον καὶ τὸν
 10 [χοραγ]ὸν ἀπογράφο ἀπὸ τῷ παίδον καὶ τῷ πατέρον καὶ τὸς ἄλλ-
 [ος πά]ντας οἵτινες ἐντάδε ἀφικνοῖατο, μεδέν' Εὐνίκο σπευδαιό-
 [τερο]ν γενέσθαι μέτ' ἄνδρεσι μέτε γυναιέεσσι. ὅς οὔτος <ὁ> βόλμιος, τὸς ΤΕ-
 [. . ca. 5 . .]ΟΔΙΑΙΤΙΜΑΝ ἐρύσαιντο. Εὐνίκοι ἀεὶ νικᾶν παντὲ. ἐμ βολύμοι ἐπ-
 [ὶ φιλ]ότατι τῷ Εὐνίκο γάρφο.³

1 Εὐχά Miller, Dubois, Arena; Τύχα vel Εὐχά Jordan | 2 Φίντονα Miller, Dubois | 3 φιλετᾶν Jordan; Φιλέταν Miller, Dubois | 12–13 τε[|von ? ἐπ]ο<ι>δ{ι}αὶ τιμᾶν Wilson, Favi | 13 νίκαν Miller, Dubois.

This extraordinary text has been the object of careful study.⁴ Rather than offering a new comprehensive commentary, this article focuses on specific linguistic, textual, and exegetical issues that merit further consideration. Compared to the numerous and complex challenges posed by its content, the linguistic and stylistic aspects of Apellis' *defixio* have received relatively less attention. The exegetical challenges have also led some scholars to claim that the text *per se* was badly organised or that the writer's linguistic skills were poor.⁵ However, we argue that this is not the case, as can be proved on several accounts. In particular, we seek to highlight the formal sophistication of the

³ Csapo, Wilson, *Social and Economic History* (s. n. 2) 347–348 translate the tablet as follows: 'Prayer (or 'Fortune'): Apellis, for love of Eunikos <sc. prays> that no-one be taken more seriously or be more popular than [E]unikos, but <all> should praise and admire (him) both willingly and unwillingly (or perhaps 'that no-one be more enthusiastic or more affectionate than [E]unikos, but (he) should praise and be affectionate to (me) both willingly and unwillingly'). For love of Eunikos I mark down all the choragoi so that they be ineffectual both in word and in deed, along with⁵ their sons and fathers, and so that they fail both in the contest and outside the contests — whoever does not leave him (sc. Eunikos) with me (or perhaps 'whoever in my entourage should let me down' or 'whoever does not desert and come over to my side'). Kaledias I mark [down] (?) to separate him from Apellis, along with all those (??) in betw[een] there and here (or perhaps 'all those there against the arbiters here' or, less likely, 'all those there for more mediocre places here'). Sosias I mark down, from the shop of the Alkiadai, for his love of [Mel]anthios. Pyria<s>, Mysskelos, Damophantos and the[ir¹⁰ (?) chorag]os I mark down, along with their sons and fathers, and [a]ll the other[s] who arrive here. May none be taken [mor]e seriously than Eunikos either among men or women. As this lead (sc. does), so may [the sp]ells against tho[se men] draw away their honour. For Eunikos may there be victory always, completely (reading τε[|von ἐπ]ο<ι>δ{ι}αὶ τιμᾶν ἐρύσαιντο. Εὐνίκοι ἀεὶ νικᾶν παντὲ). I write on the lead for [I]ove of Eunikos'. Individual points where we suggest a different interpretation and/or translation are discussed in the commentary below.

⁴ For a comprehensive and up-to-date study see Csapo, Wilson, *Social and Economic History* (s. n. 2) 346–352.

⁵ See Jordan, *Lead Tablet* (s. n. 2) 244–245: 'Formulae imply that Apellis, the defigens, probably [...] turned to a practising magician for the curse. If this is right, there are mistakes and possibly omissions, however, that suggest either that the magician was unaccustomed to expressing himself very lucidly or that he produced a (papyrus?) model for another (the proverbially erring 'sorcerer's apprentice'? perhaps even Apellis himself?) to inscribe on the tablet'.

text, as well as certain features of marked language that may have been intended to enhance the curse's power. This preliminary section examines the general structure of the text, while the commentary section will address specific points in detail.

The first noticeable feature of this *defixio* is not just its length, but also its elaborate structure and organisation. Compared to other archaic and early classical curse-tablets — even those which are longer and more ambitious —⁶ this text undoubtedly stands out. It can be divided into three main sections, with the second further divided into two parts. After the heading, the introductory section (A: lines 1–3) features Apellis explaining that he writes because of his affection towards Eunikos and his desire for Eunikos to achieve the greatest success and admiration in the choral competition (εὐχά ... φιλετᾶν). The second section (B: lines 3–11) forms the core of the text (ἐπὶ φιλότατι τῷ Εὐνίκῳ ἀπογαράφο ... ἀφικνοῖατο), consisting of the actual curse (B.1: lines 3–6) followed by a list of all competitors targeted by the curse (B.2: lines 6–11). The final section (C: lines 11–14) opens with a wish for Eunikos to be the most successful; Apellis then prays for the curse to take effect, reaffirms his wish that Eunikos be always victorious, and concludes by reiterating that he writes this *defixio* out of affection for Eunikos (μεδέν' Εὐνίκῳ σπευδαῖό[τερο]ν γενέσθαι ... γάρφο). This arrangement of the content demonstrates a deliberate and structured composition. Section A and section C mirror each other, with Apellis' φιλότης for Eunikos and the wish for his success framing the entire text in a chiasmic disposition (affection for Eunikos + wish for victory, wish for victory + affection for Eunikos). This *Ringkomposition* is highly unusual for texts of this kind. Incidentally, this also suggests that a full stop rather than a comma should be placed at line 11 (ἀφικνοῖατο. μεδέν' Εὐνίκῳ), marking the precise boundary between sections B and C.

As noted earlier, this *defixio* also merits closer attention for its language. Apellis clearly intended the text to be rhetorically effective and to convey an 'official' tone through its language and formulation. For instance, the use of formulas and phrasing characteristic of official decrees (an increasingly recognised feature of *defixiones*) is likely meant to lend authority to the heading.⁷ The first noticeable element is the opening word of the text, whose reading remains debated between εὐχά and τύχα (although one may incline towards the latter option, see 1 εὐχά). These words not only demonstrate 'the porosity between official and private formulae',⁸ but also highlight that the language of official texts 'may have seemed to increase the authority of a curse,

⁶ Sicilian examples of longer and more elaborate *defixiones* include nos. 13, 16, 20, 21, and 23 in the edition by Bettarini, *Corpus* (s. n. 1), but none of these is anyway close to the complexity of Apellis' *defixio*.

⁷ See J. B. Curbera, *Defixiones*, in: M. I. Gulletta (ed.), *Sicilia epigraphica. Atti del convegno internazionale. Erice 15–18 ottobre 1998*, Pisa 1999, 159–186, 167–169 and 171. This is paralleled in private letters, see M. Dana, *La correspondance grecque privée sur plomb et sur tesson. Corpus épigraphique et commentaire historique*, München 2021, 28–29.

⁸ A. P. Bekhter, M. Dana, A. M. Butyagin, *Opisthographic Lead Letter from Myrmekion*, *ZPE* 212 (2019) 161–171, 166.

and thus the power and reliability of that particular request'.⁹ In the case of Apellis' *defixio*, this observation is corroborated by several linguistic and stylistic peculiarities, suggesting that Apellis deliberately employed marked language to amplify the effectiveness of the text. Apellis' *defixio* also employs a vocabulary centred on friendship (see ἐπὶ φιλότατι τῇ Εὐνίῳ/Εὐνίκο at lines 1, 3, 13–14 and ἐπὶ τῇ Μελ[?]ανθίῳ φιλότατι at lines 8–9, φιντίονα at line 2; φιλετᾶν at line 3) and social recognition (σπευδαιότερον at lines 1–2 and 11–12, ἐπαινέν at line 2), complemented by terminology reminiscent of legal discourse (ἀπογ(α)ράφο at lines 3, 7, 8, 10), that is otherwise rare or unparalleled in *defixiones*, but that here is evidently intended to enhance the text's significance. This vocabulary articulates the relationship within a social group in contrast to rival social groups and the interaction of these groups within the broader community.¹⁰ Thus, Apellis' *defixio* is not merely an individual magical act, but is clearly presented as part of a larger action that involves broader social dynamics.

1 εὐχά. The reading is disputed, with scholars divided between εὐχά and τύχα. After autoptic examination, Jordan concludes that the traces of the first letter are compatible with either interpretation.¹¹ The use of εὐχή ('prayer', more specifically 'curse'), though rare in curse-tablets, finds parallels in the language of tragedy. Miller refers to Oedipus' curses against his sons in Aesch. *Sept.* 820 and Eur. *Phoen.* 69–70.¹² εὐχή may therefore be an element of marked language in Apellis' *defixio*. A previously unnoticed epigraphic parallel for εὐχή in the heading is in a much later curse-tablet from Kos (4th century CE) (line 1, εὐχὴ κατακλητικὴ κατὰ Ἑρμία Π[— — —]ΕΩΤΟΥ).¹³ The Koan tablet displays numerous similarities with the language and

⁹ See E. Eidinow, C. Taylor, *Lead-Letter Days. Writing, Communication and Crisis in the Ancient Greek World*, CQ 60 (2010) 30–62, 45. See also L. Bettarini, Βασίλισσα Κυρία. *Una defixio siceliota inedita: struttura e lingua*, in: G. Rocca, G. Bevilacqua (eds.), *Gift of a Book. Studi in Memoria di David Jordan*, Alessandria 2020, 51–67, 55–56 and n. 8, discussing the recurrence in the *defixiones* of headings and formulas taken from official public texts, with special regard to the new 1st- or 2nd-century-CE *defixio* from Selinous published and thoroughly discussed in Rocca, Bevilacqua (eds.), *Gift of a Book*. (s. above in this note) (see especially the contributions by G. Rocca, Βασίλισσα Κυρία. *Una defixio siceliota inedita: presentazione e tecniche di lettura*, 23–26; G. Rocca, Βασίλισσα Κυρία. *Una defixio siceliota inedita: il testo*, 69–85; G. Bevilacqua, Βασίλισσα Κυρία. *Una defixio siceliota inedita: epigrafia e religione*, 27–50; and Bettarini [s. above in this note]).

¹⁰ In this respect, the mention of the opponents' fathers (see τὸς πατέρας at line 5 and τὸμ πατέρον at line 10) and of their children (see τὸς παῖδ[ι]ας at lines 4–5 and τὸμ παῖδον at line 10) among the addressees of the curse may be further evidence that entire family groups are involved.

¹¹ See Jordan, *Lead Tablet* (s. n. 2) 344.

¹² See A. Miller, *Studies in Early Sicilian Epigraphy. An Opisthographic Lead Tablet*, PhD-Diss. University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill 1973, 73 and n. 102.

¹³ See IG XII, 4, 4, 3401, line 1 εὐχὴ κατακλητικὴ (= SEG 47.1291) (*TheDefix* no. 189).

formulas of magical papyri, and εὐχή in the heading being one such example.¹⁴ If εὐχά is accepted in Apellis' *defixio*, a self-referential heading of this kind — describing the content of the text rather than serving as an invocation or wish — further reinforces its official tone¹⁵. The alternative reading τύχα is better supported when considering the headings found in other curse tablets: *IG* II/III³ 8, 1, 396 (dating to the first half of the 4th century BCE; line 1: θεοί, ἀγαθῇ τύχῃ); *IG* II/III³ 8, 1, 296 (dating to mid-4th century BCE; line 1: [θε]ός, τύχῃ ἀγαθῇ); curse tablets no. 6 (recto, line 1: τύχα) and no. 7 (line 1: τύχα), from mid-5th-century BCE Selinous, published by Rocca.¹⁶ These parallels confirm that τύχα is a strong possibility in Apellis' *defixio*, arguably stronger than εὐχά.¹⁷ The presence of τύχα further corroborates the idea that the heading may have been intended to echo the formulary of official public documents.¹⁸ There is at least one parallel for τύχα in the heading of a mid 5th-century BCE public contract from the region between Agrigento and Enna (possibly Montagna di Marzo), thus very close to the area of Gela, where Apellis' *defixio* is reportedly from.¹⁹ [FF]

1, 3, 13–14 ἐπὶ φιλότατι τῇ Εὐνίφο/Εὐνίκο, 8–9 ἐπὶ τᾷ[ι Μελ?]ανθίο φιλότατι. This use of φιλότης is unparalleled in the language of *defixiones* and thus warrants closer examination.

The closest comparandum for this formulation is ἐπὶ τῇ φιλίᾳ in an Imperial *defixio* from Hadrumentum.²⁰ In that text, the context is clearly erotic, and ἐπί + dative indicates the intended aim of the curse (LSJ s.v. ἐπί B.III.2 'of an end or purpose'). It has been suggested that in Apellis' *defixio*, the relationship between Apellis and Eunikos — along with that between Sosias and Melanthios, also described with φιλότης

¹⁴ See F. Graf, *Prayer in Magic and Religious Ritual*, in: C. A. Faraone, D. Obbink (eds.), *Magika Hiera. Ancient Greek Magic and Religion*, New York, Oxford 1991, 188–213 for a detailed discussion. While magical papyri and the Kos curse-tablet contain prayers and invocations, often developed into full-fledged kletic hymns, Apellis' *defixio* does not mention the deity or deities to whom the prayer is addressed. The omission of deities is not at all uncommon in classical and Hellenistic *defixiones* (see Curbera, *Defixiones* [s. n. 7] 168). J. G. Gager, *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells of the Ancient World*, Oxford 1992, 76 concluded that the deities 'were probably invoked orally at some point during the preparation and burial of the tablet'. A reference to the oral spells accompanying the burial of the *defixio* has been reconstructed by P. Wilson, F. Favi, *Choragic Spells in Gela. A Textual and Exegetical Note on Apellis' defixio*, *SEG LVII 905B*, ZPE 204 (2017) 138–140 in lines 12–13.

¹⁵ One may compare, e.g., self-referential ἐπιστολή in *IG* II/III³ 8, 1, 303 A.1 (dating to 323/2 BCE) and *IG* II/III³ 8, 1, 405 B.1 (dating to the first half of the 4th century BCE).

¹⁶ See Rocca (s. n. 1) 23–30.

¹⁷ A fifth, possible example is briefly discussed by Eidinow, Taylor, *Lead-Letter Days* (s. n. 9) 45 n. 62.

¹⁸ Concerning the heading of *IG* II/III³ 8, 1, 296 and *IG* II/III³ 8, 1, 396, see J. L. Lamont, *Curse-Writing and the Epigraphic Habit in Athens*, in: R. R. Benfield, C. M. Keesling (eds.), *Inscriptions and the Epigraphic Habit. The Epigraphic Cultures of Greece, Rome, and Beyond*, Leiden, Boston 2024, 274–292, 274–275. See also Eidinow, Taylor, *Lead-Letter Days* (s. n. 9) 44–45.

¹⁹ See *IGASMG* vol. 2², no. 119 (= *SEG* 47.1415).

²⁰ See Miller, *Studies* (s. n. 12) 102 n. 22.

— may similarly imply love in addition to simple friendship,²¹ though this remains a matter of debate. Miller has already noted that, unlike in the Hadrumentum *defixio*, ‘Apellis does not intend his curse to further any sort of erotic relationship between himself and Eunikos’.²² Thus, ἐπί + dative in this context would indicate the motivation behind the curse (‘Apellis, because of his friendship towards Eunikos, etc.’; see LSJ s.v. ἐπί B.III.1 ‘of the occasion or cause’) rather than its intended goal.²³ This use of ἐπί + dative is well paralleled in expressions denoting interpersonal relationships.²⁴ This interpretation also challenges Jordan’s interpretation of lines 2–3 (ἀλλ’ ἐπαινε<v> καὶ ἐρόντα κάεροντα καὶ φιλετάν), in which he suggests that Eunikos must be the subject of the infinitives, implying that Apellis’ goal is to secure Eunikos’ affection for himself.²⁵

The use of φιλότης clearly frames the relationship between Apellis and Eunikos within the ideology and vocabulary of public friendship — that is, the bond uniting members of the same social group; this might still leave room for a romantic connection between Apellis and Eunikos as part of their social bond.²⁶ φιλότης is by no means an obvious choice of word. To begin with, this term is extremely rare in prose inscriptions, although it does appear in the treaty between Sybaris and the Serdaioi.²⁷ Despite the

²¹ See P. Wilson, *Sicilian Choruses*, in: P. Wilson (ed.), *The Greek Theatre and Festivals. Documentary Studies*, Oxford 2007, 351–377, 365 and 366 and Csapo, Wilson, *Social and Economic History* (s. n. 2) 348.

²² See Miller, *Studies* (s. n. 12) 74.

²³ Miller, *Studies* (s. n. 12) 69 rightly translates ἐπὶ φιλότατι with ‘because of my friendship’. Later translations are slightly more ambiguous in the way they take ἐπὶ φιλότατι (see e.g. L. Dubois, *Inscriptions grecques dialectales de Sicile. Contribution à l’étude du vocabulaire grec colonial*, Paris, Rome 1989, 159: ‘pour l’amour d’Eunikos’, Wilson, *Sicilian Choruses* [s. n. 21] 352: ‘for love of Eunikos’).

²⁴ An example is Thuc. 8.108.4 Ἀντάνδριοι (εἰσὶ δὲ Αἰολῆς) παρακομισάμενοι ἐκ τῆς Ἀβύδου περὶ διὰ τῆς Ἰδης τοῦ ὅρου ὀπλίτας ἐσηγάγοντο ἐς τὴν πόλιν, ὑπὸ Ἀρσάκου τοῦ Πέρσου Τισσαφέρωνος ὑπάρχου ἀδικούμενοι, ὅσπερ καὶ Δηλίους τοὺς Ἀτραμύτιον κατοικήσαντας ὅτε ὑπ’ Ἀθηναίων Δήλου καθάρσεως ἔνεκα ἀνέστησαν, ἔχθραν προσποιησάμενος ἄδελον καὶ ἐπαγγείας στρατιὰν αὐτῶν τοῖς βελτίστοις, ἐξαγαγὼν ὡς ἐπὶ φιλία καὶ ξυμμαχία, τηρήσας ἀριστοποιουμένους καὶ περιστήσας τοὺς ἑαυτοῦ κατηκόντισεν. Here ἐπὶ φιλία καὶ ξυμμαχία is the false justification which Arsaces presents to lead out the Delians, playing on their good faith. Other examples with ἐπί + the dative of words like κακουργία, ἀρετή, εἴνοια, and ἔχθρα are collected in LSJ s.v. ἐπί B.III.1.

²⁵ Jordan, *Lead Tablet* (s. n. 2) 346. Csapo, Wilson, *Social and Economic History* (s. n. 2) 348 also take sides against Jordan’s interpretation.

²⁶ On the words φιλία and φιλότης as indicating an ‘official’ friendship, also connected with the values of aristocracy, see J. Taillardat, *Φιλότης, πίστις et foedus*, REG 95 (1982) 1–14, W. R. Connor, *The New Politicians of Fifth-Century Athens*, Indianapolis and Cambridge 1992, 35–84, L. G. Mitchell, P. J. Rhodes, *Friends and Enemies in Athenian Politics*, G&R 43 (1996) 11–30, D. Konstan, *Friendship in the Classical World*, Cambridge 1997, 36–37, and R. Gagné, *Ancestral Fault in Ancient Greece*, Cambridge 2013, 232. An observation along these lines was already made by Miller, *Studies* (s. n. 12) 74: ‘Apellis’ motives are those of friendship or, perhaps, the partisanship furthered by factional rivalry’. See also C. A. Faraone, *The Agonistic Context of Early Greek Binding Spells*, in: C. A. Faraone, D. Obbink (eds.), *Magika Hiera. Ancient Greek Magic and Religion*, New York, Oxford 1991, 3–32, 31 n. 81.

²⁷ IGASM 4, no. 3.

clear differences between these texts,²⁸ this demonstrates that φιλότης is part of the vocabulary of official public texts.²⁹ Additionally, in literature φιλότης is largely confined to poetry, and when it does occur in prose, it is diplomatic vocabulary.³⁰ All this suggests that φιλότης may represent a marked — that is, ‘official’ — term purposely employed by Apellis.³¹ [FF]

1–3 μεδέν' [E]ὐνίφο σπεν|δ[αι]ότερον ἔμεν μεδὲ φιντίονα, ἀλλ' ἐπαινῶ<ν> καὶ ἐρόντα κάεροντα καὶ φιλετᾶν. This sentence contains the expression of a wish/order, first with the subject in the accusative and the verb in the infinitive and then just with the infinitive; the implied source of the wish is Apellis, whose motivation is recorded in the previous sentence (‘Apellis, because of his friendship towards Eunikos. No one be more esteemed and loved than Eunikos and (everyone) praise (him), willingly and unwillingly, and love (him)'). On the absence of the finite verb, which to my mind is more likely deliberate than the result of an omission (which is the view taken by Jordan, *Lead Tablet* [s. n. 2] 342, who indicates a lacuna in the text, followed by Csapo and Wilson, *Social and Economic History* [s. n. 2] 347), see the iteration of the same wish at lines 11–12 (μεδέν' Εὐνίκο σπενδαϊό|[τερο]ν γενέσθαι) and below 13 νικᾶν. [FF]

1–2, 11–12 σπενδαϊότερον. This adjective (the diphthong in the first syllable, i.e. -ευ- in place of -ου-, is probably influenced by σπεύδω) is also unparalleled in the language and formulary of *defixiones*. Scholars have variously interpreted it as Apellis' wish that Eunikos be the most successful performer and the recipient of the greatest respect and admiration.³² σπουδαῖος is well attested as a term denoting excellence in a performer or craftsman in their field of competence,³³ and there is no reason to question this interpretation. However, like φιλότης, σπουδαῖος may also carry moral or social connotations. This nuance is well documented in Theognis: σπουδαῖος characterises the occupations that distinguish the elite and the masses (see Theogn. 63–65 ἀλλὰ δόκει μὲν πᾶσιν ἀπὸ γλώσσης φίλος εἶναι, | χρῆμα δὲ συμμείξης μηδενὶ μηδ' ὅτιοῦν | σπουδαῖον and 69–70 μήποτε, Κύρνε, κακῶ πίσυνος βούλευε σὺν ἀνδρί, | εὖτ' ἂν σπουδαῖον πρήγμ' ἐθέλῃς τελέσαι) and being σπουδαῖος and engaging in σπουδαῖα serve as markers of distinction between true φίλοι and everyone else (see Theogn. 115–116 πολλοὶ τοι πόσιος καὶ βρώσιός εἰσιν ἑταῖροι, | ἐν δὲ σπουδαίῳ πρήγματι παυρότεροι and 641–644 οὐ τοί κ' εἰδείης οὔτ' εὖνουν οὔτε τὸν ἐχθρόν, | εἰ μὴ σπουδαίου

²⁸ Dubois, *Inscriptions* (s. n. 23) 156, who rightly comments that the context is ‘tout à fait différent’.

²⁹ On φιλότης in the treaty between Sybaris and the Serdaioi see especially M. Giangiulio, *La φιλότης tra Sibari e i Serdaioi* (Meiggs-Lewis, 10), ZPE 93 (1992) 31–44.

³⁰ See LSJ s.v. 2.

³¹ For a useful discussion of φιλότης and φίλια on official inscriptions and their different meanings see especially M. L. Zunino, *Pronunciamento per gli Anaitoi e i Metapioi*, Axon 5 (2021) 7–34, 15–16.

³² See Miller, *Studies* (s. n. 12) 69: ‘Let no one be more successful than Eunikos’; Dubois, *Inscriptions* (s. n. 23) 159: ‘Que personne ne soit plus appliqué qu'Eunikos’; Wilson, *Sicilian Choruses* (s. n. 21) 366: ‘I have translated the adjective [i.e. σπενδαϊότερος] here as ‘(worthy to be) taken more seriously’, but perhaps closer to the mark is something like ‘arousing enthusiasm or admiration’.

³³ See LSJ s.v. σπουδαῖος I.2.

πράγματος ἀντιτύχοις. | πολλοὶ πὰρ κρητῆρι φίλοι γίνονται ἐταῖροι, | ἐν δὲ σπουδαίῳ πράγματι παυρότεροι). In this case, beyond wishing for Eunikos' victory, Apellis would also hope for him to gain moral and social recognition for his efforts. [FF]

2 φιντίανα. Jordan suggests the comparative φιντίανα (φιντ- = common Greek φιλτ-) as a correlative to σπευδαιότερον.³⁴ This is a reasonable interpretation as far as morphology and syntax are concerned and is to be preferred over alternative interpretations.³⁵

Mimbrera Olarte and Bettarini also agree that Jordan's φιντίανα is possible.³⁶ Bettarini further suggests that the comparative *φιλτίων could be formed on a verbal adjective *φιλτός (Doric *φιντός), which is presupposed by the personal names in Φιλτ-/Φιντ-, a type abundantly attested in Sicily.³⁷ Alternatively, the comparative φιντίανα may represent the conflation of the comparatives φύτερος and φιλίων. The former is well attested in archaic and early classical poetry, while the latter appears only in two highly formulaic lines of the *Odyssey*.³⁸ A morphological parallel is the comparative βελτίων, which also arose from the false re-segmentation of βέλτερος into βελτ- + -ίων.³⁹

Regarding phonology, both Mimbrera Olarte and Bettarini consider φιντίανα noteworthy, arguing that it would be the only known instance in Sicilian Doric inscriptions — outside onomastics — where the common Doric development /lt^h/ >

³⁴ See Jordan, *Lead Tablet* (s. n. 2) 345. The possibility of reading a comparative was first advanced by Miller, *Studies* (s. n. 12) 75–76, though she ultimately adopted a different interpretation (see below n. 36).

³⁵ It had previously been suggested (see Miller, *Studies* [s. n. 12] 69 and 75–76; Dubois, *Inscriptions* [s. n. 23] 56; Del Amor López Jimeno, *Tabellae Defixionis* [s. n. 1] 110 and 113) that this form could be the proper name, that is, Φιντίων (Doric for Φιλτίων). However, a name Φιλτίων is only paralleled in *IG* XII, 5, 455 (Add. p. 316), line 4 (Paros, undated or Hellenistic-Imperial times according to *LGPN* vol. 1, s.v. Φιλτίων). Notice that Miller (followed by Dubois and Del Amor López Jimeno) originally read ΦΙΝΤΟΝΑ (i.e. Φίντονα), while the reading ΦΙΝΤΙΟΝΑ is Jordan's, *Lead Tablet* (s. n. 2) 345, who says that iota after tau is 'unmistakable'.

³⁶ S. Mimbrera Olarte, *Fonética y morfología del Dorio de Sicilia (siglos VII–I a.C.)*, Madrid 2012, 76, L. Bettarini, *Selinunte tra madrepatria e mondo coloniale. La testimonianza della lingua delle defixiones*, in: A. Iannucci, F. Muccioli, M. Zaccarini (eds.), *La città inquieta. Selinunte tra lex sacra e defixiones*, Milano 2015, 285–298, 288 and n. 13.

³⁷ A list is provided by Mimbrera Olarte, *Fonética* (s. n. 36) 76. Cf. also *DELG* s.v. φίλος. This verbal adjective *φιλτός would derive from the same athematic stem *φιλ- as the asigmatic aorist (ἐ)φίλατο (which occurs in Hom. *Il.* 5.61 and 20.304, see P. Chantraine, *Grammaire homérique. Phonétique et morphologie*. Nouvelle édition revue et corrigée par Michel Casevitz, Paris 2013, 169 and 337).

³⁸ See Hom. *Od.* 19.350–351 οὐ γάρ πώ τις ἀνὴρ πεπνυμένος ὄδε | ξείνων τηλεδαπῶν φιλίῳ ἐμὸν ἵκετο δῶμα ~ *Od.* 24.267–268 καὶ οὐ πώ τις βροτὸς ἄλλος | ξείνων τηλεδαπῶν φιλίῳ ἐμὸν ἵκετο δῶμα.

³⁹ P. J. Barber, *Sievers' Law and the History of Semivowel Syllabicity in Indo-European and Ancient Greek*, Oxford 2013, 180–181 and 185.

/nt^(h)/ (-λτ- > -ντ-, -λθ- > -νθ-) is attested.⁴⁰ However, another largely unnoticed parallel for this development occurs on the financial transaction recorded on side A of this very lead tablet (SEG 57.905A),⁴¹ where ΠOTENΘETO at line 6 should be read as ποτενθέτω (i.e. aor. imper. 3rd pers. sing. act. ποτενθέτω, Attic προσελθέτω) as first suggested by West (who translates it with 'let him go').⁴² West's interpretation has been surprisingly neglected by all later editors and, as a result, remains unknown to scholars who rely on their editions. Yet, it is by far the only plausible one. Given this general neglect, I take this chance to draw attention to this significant instance of the Doric development /lt^(h)/ > /nt^(h)/ (-λτ- > -ντ-, -λθ- > -νθ-), which parallels φιντίονα in Apellis' *defixio*.⁴³ [FF]

2 καὶ ἐρόντα κάεροντα. The expression 'both willingly and unwillingly' is noteworthy for several reasons. It is one of the antitheses that Apellis seems to have particularly favoured (ἐν ἀγῶνι | ἐχθρὸς ἀγόνων, κέπρον | καὶ ἔργον, ἄνδρες | γυναῖκεςσι).⁴⁴ Furthermore, this formulation has both closer and looser parallels in epigraphic and literary texts: for instance, εἴτε ἐκόντα εἴτε ἄκοντα, found in IG XII,3 174 (Astypalaea, 6 BCE) and, in the nominative (εἴτε ἐκὼν εἴτε ἀέκων), in Hdt. 4.164.21. Moreover, wordplay involving both words within the same phrase is particularly common in poetic texts: ἐκὼν ἀέκοντί γε θυμῷ (Hom. *Il.* 4.43), ἐκὼν ἀέκοντα δῖηται (Hom. *Il.* 7.197), ἀέκονθ' ἐκὼν μισθὸν ὑπέρβιον πρᾶσσοιτο (Pi. *O.* 10.29), ἄκοντά σ' ἄκων προσπασσαλεύσω (Aesch. *Pr.* 19), ἄκων ἀκούειν οὐδ' ἐκὼν εἶπεν λόγους (Soph. fr. 929 *TrGF*), πάρειμι δ' ἄκων οὐχ ἐκούσιν (Soph. *Ant.* 276), ἐκόντα κοῦκ ἄκοντα (Soph. *OT* 1230), ἐκόντα μήτ' ἄκοντα (Soph. *Phil.* 771), ἐκούσα κοῦκ ἄκουσα (Eur. *Heraclid.* 531), ἐκόντες οὐκ ἄκοντες (Eur. *Andr.* 357). The impression, therefore, is that this expression was chosen to elevate the language and give the *defixio* a more polished opening. [OT]

3 φιλετᾶν. Miller and Dubois take this as the (rare) personal name Φιλέταν, aligning it with Φίντονα, which they read in line 2.⁴⁵ However, after re-examining the tablet, Jordan has rejected Φίντονα and instead he takes φιντίονα at line 2 as a

⁴⁰ Mimbrela Olarte, *Fonética* (s. n. 36) 76, Bettarini, *Selinunte* (s. n. 36) 288 and n. 13, Bettarini, *Βασίλισσα Κυρία* (s. n. 9) 64. As far as literary texts are concerned, this development is well attested in Epicharmus, both in papyrus fragments and in fragments transmitted via indirect transmission. Superlative φίνταται (Epich. fr. 49,2 *PCG*) is a particularly relevant parallel. See further A. Willi, *Sikelismos. Sprache, Literatur und Gesellschaft im griechischen Sizilien* (8.–5. Jh. v. Chr.), Basel 2008, 127–128.

⁴¹ Last edited and commented on by Jordan, *Lead Tablet* (s. n. 2) 337–342.

⁴² W. C. West III, *New Light on an Opisthographic Lead Tablet in Chapel Hill*, in: *XI Congresso internazionale di epigrafia greca e latina (Roma 18–24 settembre 1997)*. Vol. 1, Rome 1999, 205–213, 205–206.

⁴³ Notice, too, that although Jordan, *Lead Tablet* (s. n. 2) 337 and 340–341 does record West's ποτενθέτω in the apparatus, he does not discuss this reading in the commentary.

⁴⁴ See Miller, *Studies* (s. n. 12) 76: 'Apellis seems fond of contrasting pairs'; Curbera, *Defixiones* (s. n. 7) 167.

⁴⁵ See Miller, *Studies* (s. n. 12) 69 and Dubois, *Inscriptions* (s. n. 23) 155–156. See above n. 36.

comparative of φίλος correlating with σπευδαιότερον (see above).⁴⁶ Furthermore, he argues that the final word of the sentence should be the infinitive φιλετᾶν rather than the personal name Φιλέταν, as φιλετᾶν at the end of line 3 would provide a correlative to ἐπαίνε<ν> in line 2. Indeed, a reference to a person is out of context here, since none of the rivals has yet been introduced; the recurring vocabulary of love and affection also makes φιλετᾶν a stronger option. Still, this form requires closer examination.

Jordan argues that while this verb would be a *hapax*, its formation as a denominative from φιλητής is unproblematic.⁴⁷ The first issue, however, is that φιλητής is unattested before Late Antiquity, although its formation presents no inherent difficulty. Indeed, the use of the hapax verb φιλητάω in place of the far more common φιλέω may reflect Apellis' effort to adopt a more 'marked' diction, especially given that φιλητής itself is otherwise unknown at this chronological level. More importantly, though, the choice of this verb may also underscore the distinct social function of φιλότης vis-à-vis φιλία (see above 1, 3, 13–14 ἐπὶ φιλότατι τῷ Εὐνίφο/Εὐνίκο, 8–9 ἐπὶ τῷ[ι Μελ.]ανθίῳ φιλότατι): φιλητάω 'to be a φιλητής' would have a more specific or 'technical' sense than the simple φιλέω. Rather than indicating a generic condition of φιλία, it denotes a closer relationship, potentially implying a social bond in this context.

Another difficulty is that in a Doric-speaking area the contraction between φιλητα- and the infinitive ending -εν should yield -ῆν rather than -ᾶν. A similar issue arises with Jordan's reading of the infinitive νικᾶν at line 13,⁴⁸ where the expected Doric form would be νικῆν. Attempts at justifying φιλετᾶν and νικᾶν are made by Mimbrera, who argues that these verbs may have developed into -ᾶω formations — thus with /a:/ as the regular outcome of contraction with the ending -εν — or that in Sicilian Doric /a/ + /e/ yielded /a:/ rather than /ε:/.⁴⁹ Mimbrera offers no argument in support of either suggestion. One possible explanation for the emergence of -ᾶω verbs (i.e. with non-etymological /a:/) is that they result from hypercorrection to contrast the development of -αω verbs (those with /a/) into -εω verbs, a phenomenon also documented in Sicilian Doric. Indeed, three possible examples occur in Epicharmus and Sophron, along with a fourth case where an -εω verb has shifted to -αω by hypercorrection.⁵⁰ In all these cases, editors accept the hypercorrect forms as dialectally genuine. This remains a plausible explanation for φιλετᾶν of the *defixio*.

⁴⁶ See Jordan, *Lead Tablet* (s. n. 2) 345–346.

⁴⁷ See also L. Sütterlin, *Zur Geschichte der Verba Denominativa im Altgriechischen. Erster Teil. Die Verba Denominativa auf -ᾶω -έω -όω*, Strassburg 1891, 16–19 and E. Fawcett-Tucker, *The Creation of Morphological Regularity. Early Greek Verbs in -έδ, -ᾶδ, -όδ, ὕδ and ἰδ*, Göttingen 1990, 242–243.

⁴⁸ See Jordan, *Lead Tablet* (s. n. 2) 343.

⁴⁹ S. Mimbrera, *Sicilian Greek Before the Fourth Century BC*, in: O. Tribulato (ed.), *Language and Linguistic Contact in Ancient Sicily*, Cambridge 2012, 191–222, 214. L. Rodríguez-Noriega Guillén, *On Sophron fr. 3 K.-A. (Athenaeus 11.480 B)*, SO 90 (2016) 55–77, 68 n. 43 expresses her scepticism.

⁵⁰ Evidence of verbs in -ᾶω in Epicharmus and Sophron are τελευτᾶσ(α) (Epich. fr. 113,390 PCG), ὀπτᾶντες (Epich. fr. 122,8 PCG), and ἐπεγγυάμενοι (Sophr. fr. 60 PCG). Hypercorrect -αω from -εω is infinitive κεντῆν in place of expected κεντεῖν (Epich. fr. 113,142 PCG). See Willi, *Sikelismos* (s. n. 40) 128.

As an alternative, if one accepts the accusative νίκαν at line 13 (see below), then the accusative φιλετάν could perhaps be an option at line 3 as well. The sentence would then run: 'No one be more esteemed and loved than Eunikos and (everyone) praise (him), willingly and unwillingly, and (be) an admirer (of his)'. The general sense is clear, but the syntax is quite loose. The switch from μεδέν' in line 1 to an implicit 'everybody' in lines 1–2 would be striking, and the switch from the infinitive ἐπαίνε<ν> to elliptic φιλετάν (ἔμην) would be even more jarring. In conclusion, while the accusative νίκαν is preferable to the infinitive νικᾶν at line 13, the infinitive φιλετᾶν can be retained at line 3, where it should be understood as a denominal -ᾱω verb. [FF, OT]

3, 7, 8, 10 ἀπογ(α)ράφο. This verb belongs to legal vocabulary ('to register', 'to enter a charge against', also 'to denounce').⁵¹ Miller rightly observes that, functionally, ἀπογράφω operates like other verbs of writing in *defixiones* (γράφω, ἐγγράφω, and καταγράφω). However, she also acknowledges that its use in a *defixio* may stem from its meaning 'to denounce'.⁵² Notably, Apellis clearly distinguishes the general act of writing the text, indicated by the simple γράφω (line 14), and writing with the intent of malediction, regularly indicated with ἀπογράφω.⁵³ This suggests that ἀπογράφω held a more 'technical' function, and its legal specialisation may further reinforce the official tone of the language used in Apellis' *defixio*.⁵⁴ [FF]

5 κἀπρακτία. The noun ἀπρακτία, a *hapax*, has been discussed by Miller.⁵⁵ She notes that the standard form would be ἀπραξία, but that ἀπραγία is also attested (ἀπραγία is only attested from the Hellenistic period onward, but Jordan points out that the closely comparable forma δυσπραγία is already attested in a 5th-century BCE *defixio*

⁵¹ Cf. D. R. Jordan, *An Athenian curse tablet invoking Palaimon*, in: A. P. Matthaiou, I. Polinskaya (eds.), *Μικρὸς Ἱερομνήμων. Μελέτες εἰς μνήμην Michael H. Jameson*, Athens 2008, 133–144, 140, discussing a 4th-century BCE judicial *defixio* from Athens (IG II/III³ 8, 1, 300) where at lines 5–7 one reads: ὦ Παλαῖμον, τιμωρὸς γένοιο τούτων ὧν ἀπέγραψα σοι (see also J. J. Bravo, *The Shrines of Heroes as a Context for Curse Tablets*, in: C. A. Faraone, I. Polinskaya [eds.], *Curses in Context III, Greek Curse Tablets of the Classical and Hellenistic Periods*, Athens 2021, 205–225, 216–220).

⁵² See Miller, *Studies* (s. n. 12) 77–78.

⁵³ Regarding ἀπογράφω (lines 3 and 7) and γάρφω (line 14), adjacent /g/ and /r/ in (ἀπο)γράφω have caused a metathesis or duplication of the vowel /a/; cf. K. Dieterich, *Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der griechischen Sprache*, Leipzig 1898, 110: "Zwischen einem Verschlusslaut (besonders π, κ, τ) und folgendem ρ [...] konnte sich leicht Stimmton entwickeln, der sich zu einem vollen Vokal auswuchs und dann den folgenden Vokal, dessen Farbe er angenommen, verdrängte, ein Vorgang, der, äusserlich betrachtet, als Metathese zur Erscheinung kam; im Grunde handelt es sich also um eine Kombination von Vokalentwicklung und Vokalschwund". For other epigraphic parallels, see G. Petzl, *Inschriften aus der Umgebung von Saittai (I): (Encekler, Hamidiye, Ayazvıran)*, ZPE 30 (1978) 249–276, 272 n. 69 and C. Brixhe *et al.*, *Asie mineure*, BE (2011) 460–489, no. 567. Heartfelt thanks to Georg Petzl for his generous advice on this point. For a discussion of the verbs of writing in Sicilian curse tablets (primarily from Selinous and Himera), see J. Lamont, *Orality, Written Literacy, and Early Sicilian Curse Tablets*, G&R 69 (2022) 27–51.

⁵⁴ See also Eidinow, Taylor, *Lead-Letter Days* (s. n. 9) 44 on public legal and business language in curse-tablets.

⁵⁵ Miller, *Studies* (s. n. 12) 80.

from Camarina, *IGDS* no. 121, line 2 [*TheDefix* no. 247]: ἐπὶ δυσπραγ[ίαι]).⁵⁶ Miller concludes that Apellis' ἀπρακτία is further evidence of his 'linguistic confusion', as it appears to be formed from the verbal adjective ἄπρακτος whose stem is mistakenly segmented as ἀπρακτ-. Miller's observations call for a more careful reconsideration of this word.

Firstly, the formation of the abstract noun based on the verbal adjective is far from impossible in Greek. One may think of Doric ἄδυνατία (*Dinol.* fr. 9 *PCG*) and Attic-Ionic ἄδυνασία (attested in Herodotus, Thucydides, and Antiphon), which are formed on the verbal adjective ἄδύνατος (the difference between the two forms being the assibilation which takes place in Attic-Ionic and not in Doric; on this issue see also below).⁵⁷ A direct parallel for the derivation of Apellis' ἀπρακτία from the verbal adjective ἄπρακτος is offered by the *hapax* δυσασπασαλλακτία in Plato's *Philebus* (46d.1), which derives from the verbal adjective δυσασπασαλλακτος. This evidence shows that the formation of ἀπρακτία is not impossible. Thus, the noun does not betray any linguistic confusion on Apellis' part. Rather, if this abstract noun is an *ad hoc* creation, it may provide further evidence that Apellis intended it to elevate the tone.⁵⁸

Secondly, although ἀπρακτία is unparalleled as such, it may well be the exact morphological equivalent of ἀπραξία, resulting from non-assibilated -τία in place of -σία.⁵⁹ Besides the pair ἄδυνατία/ἄδυνασία (for which see above), a closer parallel supporting this hypothesis is the form πλεονεκτία which occurs in place of πλεονεξία in the fragments of the Doric treatise Περὶ βασιλείας, written by the Pythagorean Diotogenes (p. 72,29 and p. 73,10 Thesleff = Stob. 4.7.62).⁶⁰ In other words, the more

⁵⁶ Jordan, *Lead Tablet* (s. n. 2) 347.

⁵⁷ See also P. Chantraine, *La formation des noms en grec ancien*, Paris 1933, 40–42 and 83–84, who among the examples of abstracts in -τία/-σία also mentions the case of εὐπραξία from εὐπρακτος, along with other forms that similarly derive from the stem of a verbal adjective.

⁵⁸ One may compare the derivation of abstract nouns from adjectives such as λακκόπρωκτος > λακκοπρωκτία (*Eup.* fr. 385,4 *PCG*), εὐρύπρωκτος > εὐρυπρωκτία (*Ar. Ach.* 843 and *Vesp.* 1070), and ἀγάλακτος > ἀγαλακτία (*Autocr.* fr. 3 *PCG*). The fact that all such forms are only attested in comedy suggests that they may well be *ad hoc* comic formations.

⁵⁹ Regarding -τία and -σία see further the discussion and the evidence collected by E. Schwyzler, *Griechische Grammatik*. Vol. 1. *Allgemeiner Teil. Lautlehre. Wortbildung. Flexion*, München 1939, 270–271, who also discusses some instances where assibilation does not take place in Attic, and M. Lejeune, *Phonétique historique du mycénien et du grec ancien*, Paris 1987, 64–65.

⁶⁰ On the dating and language of this pseudo-Pythagorean text, see I. Andorlini, R. Luiselli, *Una ripresa di Diotogene Pitagorico, Sulla regalità, in PBingen 3 (Encomio per Augusto?)*, ZPE 136 (2001) 155–166, who also provide a comprehensive bibliography. It should be noted that, as far as pseudo-Pythagorean texts are concerned, Lysis' letter to Hipparchus (see A. Städele, *Die Briefe des Pythagoras und der Pythagoreer*, Meisenheim am Glan 1980, 154–159 and the commentary at 203–251) contains the assibilated form πλεονεξία (lines 39 and 48) twice. In the former case, the text actually reads ἀκρασίν τε καὶ πλεονεξίν, with Ionic vocalism. For an explanation see Städele (s. above in this note) 239–241. The use of πλεονεξία instead of πλεονεκτία is easily explained, as this concept is adopted here as a Socratic reminiscence, as suggested by Städele (s. above in this note) 242: 'Es handelt sich an dieser Stelle des Lysiasbriefes also um letztlich sokratisches Gedankengut' (see also the conclusion by Schwyzler, *Griechische Grammatik* (s. n. 59) 271: 'Die dorischen Beispiele für σις σιος σῖα, alle in

familiar form ἀπραξία too relies on ἀπρακτ- just like ἀπρακτία.⁶¹ The difference between ἀπρακτία and ἀπραξία is simply that the latter results from assibilation. [FF]

7 ἀπ' Ἀπέλλιος. Despite the scepticism expressed by later scholars, Miller's interpretation that ἀπ' Ἀπέλλιος means 'along with Apellis' is the most convincing.⁶² This interpretation requires that this Ἀπέλλιος is another person than the author of the *defixio*. As in other instances (lines 8 and 10), ἀπό + genitive indicates the group to which the named people belong (see LSJ s.v. ἀπό III.1.c: 'of connexion with the founder or leader of a sect'); in the case of ἀπ' Ἀπέλλιος, this person could be, e.g., Kaledias' father, a relative of his, or an eminent member of Kaledias' social group.

Alternative interpretations are less persuasive. Jordan concluded that this Ἀπέλλιος must, at all costs, be the *defigens*, even while openly acknowledging that we cannot explain why Apellis would write someone away from himself.⁶³ A difficulty is that if the Apellis mentioned at line 7 were the Apellis who wrote the *defixio*, we would expect him to use the first-person pronoun, as in line 6 (οὔτινες μὲ παρ' ἐμ' ἀπολείποιεν), rather than referring to himself in the third person. Shifts between direct and indirect speech, as well as transitions between third- and first-person narration, are not uncommon in informal documents such as private letters, where they may reflect the transition from dictated text to reported speech.⁶⁴ However, in our *defixio* not only would the switch be from the first to the third person, but there is no indication that it is a dictated text. Furthermore, if Apellis, *qua* the author of the *defixio*, were referring to his own group, why would he use ἀπογράφω given that in the other instances this verb conveys the notion of harming opponents? A different interpretation was suggested by Dubois, according to whom ἀπό expressed the wish for Kaledias be separated from (another) Apellis.⁶⁵ While one may accept that the Apellis at line 7 is distinct from the author of the *defixio*, the intent behind this sentence would still be unclear, making Dubois' interpretation unappealing. On balance, the Apellis mentioned in this line is best understood as a different person from the *defigens*, but the most convincing reading of the sentence remains Miller's 'along with Apellis'. [FF]

technischen Wörtern (z.B. des Rechts, staatlichen Lebens, des Handels und Wandels), sind Einfluß des Ionischen und Attischen').

⁶¹ The abstract nouns in -τία/-σία are words where the suffix -ια is attached to a stem ending with a dental stop. See Lejeune, *Phonétique historique* (s. n. 59) 64 n. 9: 'mots où, à l'origine, les suffixes -ιο-, -ια-, se trouvaient suivre un élément terminé par -τ-'.

⁶² See Miller, *Studies* (s. n. 12) 78–79.

⁶³ See Jordan, *Lead Tablet* (s. n. 2) 347. A tentative explanation is advanced by Wilson, *Sicilian Choruses* (s. n. 21) 353 n. 9: 'Assuming that the Apellis mentioned here is the author of the curse, I (tentatively) understand the difficult phrase Καλεδῖαν [ἀπο]γράφω ἀπ' Ἀπέλλιος to mean 'I mark down Kaledias [as failures] apart/in a separate category from Apellis ...'. See also Csapo, Wilson, *Social and Economic History* (s. n. 2) 350: 'Kaledias may be the individual whom Apellis sees as his greatest potential threat in the agon and this is why he is the first to be named after the generic 'all the choragoi' of ll. 3–4'.

⁶⁴ Clear examples of the switch from the third to the first person occur in texts nos. 6 and 7 in Dana, *Correspondance* (s. n. 7). See also P. Ceccarelli, *Ancient Greek Letter Writing. A Cultural History (600 BC – 150 BC)*, Oxford 2013, 45–47.

⁶⁵ See Dubois, *Inscriptions* (s. n. 23) 157.

7–8 ἐπὶ μεσοτερ[ο ca. 3]ἐντάδα. This passage poses serious linguistic and exegetical problems. We will consider two alternative interpretations.

The reading]εντάδα is usually understood as a mistake for ἐντάδε (which occurs at line 11).⁶⁶ As for the previous words, Albio Cesare Cassio suggests interpreting the sequence ἐπὶ μεσοτερ- as ἐπὶ μὴ + a form of σωτηρία. The option we consider more likely is ἐπὶ μὴ σωτηρίαν ‘for (their) not-salvation’. This construction with ἐπί + accusative to indicate the purpose of the writing down (cf. LSJ s.v. ἐπί A.III.1) may be connected to the legal undertones of ἀπογράφω (see above 3, 7, 8, 10 ἀπογ(α)ράφο). A later, but not irrelevant parallel is Plu. *Sull.* 5.1: ἐπὶ στρατηγίαν πολιτικὴν ἀπεγράψατο (‘(Sulla) presented himself as a candidate for the city praetorship’). Although the verb may assume a specific connotation in each case (i.e., ‘to curse’ in the *defixio*, ‘to present oneself as a candidate’ in the middle voice in Plutarch’s *Life of Sulla*), both passages share the common idea of writing down someone (or oneself) for a purpose (ἐπί + accusative). Besides the parallels where μὴ negates a noun or adjective that are collected in LSJ s.v. μὴ I.B.7,⁶⁷ a parallel construction to the one in the *defixio*, where μὴ is placed between a preposition and a noun, occurs in Anaxag. D.–K. 59 B 10: ‘πῶς γὰρ ἄν’, φησὶν, ‘ἐκ μὴ τριχὸς γένοιτο θρῖξ καὶ σὰρξ ἐκ μὴ σαρκός’. The sense of lines 6–8 of the *defixio* would therefore be ‘Kaledias I write (down) along with Apellis and all those there for (their) not-salvation here’. This formulation, where Apellis ‘writes down’ a list of people who will hopefully be damaged and/or unsuccessful when they come ‘here’ (arguably, where the competition takes place), finds a significant parallel at lines 9–11 (‘Pyria<s>, Mysskelos, Damophantos and the [choragos] I write down, along with their sons and fathers, and all the others who arrive here’).

An alternative interpretation, tentatively proposed by Miller, is the integration π]εντάδα, the accusative of πεντάς, -άδος ‘group of five’. Despite Miller’s reservations,⁶⁸ one possible hypothesis is that πεντάς refers to the group of five judges overseeing the choral competition. Sicilian evidence for such a committee is provided by Epich. fr. 237 PCG: ἐν πέντε κριτῶν γούνασι κεῖται. According to 5th-century BCE

⁶⁶ Scholars have interpreted this realisation with /t/ in place of /t^h/ (i.e. ἐνθάδε), which is paralleled by Argolic ἐντάδε and Elean ἐνταῦτα, as due to either the influence of forms like τάδε and ταῦτα (cf. C. D. Buck, *The Greek Dialects. Grammar, Selected Inscriptions, Glossary*, Chicago, London 1955, 60 and Mimbrera Olarte, *Fonética* [s. n. 36] 53, who also envisage that the adjoining nasal may have influenced the loss of aspiration) or of the Sicel substrate (cf. Willi, *Sikelismos* [s. n. 40] 20). The aspirated consonants in the adverb κέχθός (= καὶ ἐχθός, i.e. ἐκτός) at line 6, a form paralleled in Delphic, Locrian, and Argolic, are best explained as due to the influence of the sibilant rather than as a hypercorrectism (*εκσ-τος) (cf. Buck [s. above in this note] 60).

⁶⁷ The evidence in LSJ is limited to cases like (article +) μὴ + noun in the nominative or accusative case (Ar. *Ec.* 115: δεινὸν δ’ ἐστὶν ἢ μὴ ῥμπερία, Pl. *Grg.* 459b.1–3: ὁ δὲ μὴ ἱατρός γε δήπου ἀνεπιστήμων ὢν ὁ ἱατρὸς ἐπιστήμων, Pl. *Lg.* 759b.6–7: μειγνύντας πρὸς φιλίαν ἀλλήλοις δῆμον καὶ μὴ δῆμον ἐν ἐκάστη χώρα καὶ πόλει, Pl. *Lg.* 966c.8–d.3: τὴν δὲ μὴ ἐπιτροπὴν εἶναι τὸ μηδέποτε τῶν νομοφυλάκων αἰρεῖσθαι τὸν μὴ θεῖον καὶ διαπεπονηκότα πρὸς αὐτά, μηδ’ αὖ τῶν πρὸς ἀρετὴν ἔγκριτον γίνεσθαι;).

⁶⁸ Miller, *Studies* (s. n. 12) 91: ‘The only noun listed in Buck, Petersen which could be restored here is πεντάς (‘a group of five’) and this does not suit the context’.

sources, the Athenian dramatic competitions were also judged by a committee of five members.⁶⁹ However, the mention of the choragos at lines 9–10 seems to rule out the possibility that the pentad refers to judges. Still, if one accepts the integration π[εντάδα, an alternative scenario is possible: that πεντάς here refers to the group of people cursed in the *defixio*. The sense of this middle section of the text could then be: 'I write down Kaledias (1)⁷⁰, from the Apellis group, and all those there in the pentad; I write down Sosias (2) from the Alkiadaí workshop because of his friendship for Melanthius; I write down Pyrrhias (3), Muskelos (4), Damophantos (5) and the choragos together with their sons and fathers and (I write down) all who come here'. The pentad would therefore consist of the five rivals mentioned by name (Kaledias, Sosias, Pyrrhias, Muskelos, Damophantos), who are given prominence in contrast to the subsequent anonymous rivals (the choragos, these individuals' families, and all other participants). If the πεντάς refers to a team of five people, it is possible that the choral competition involved multiple teams, each consisting of five members.

To develop this possibility further we may start from the hypothesis that the sequence μεσοτερ[ο could hide a form of μεσότερος.⁷¹ A comparative of this kind is only attested in Late-antique Greek, in Lachares' *Rhetorica*, where it has an oppositional meaning, denoting a middle ground between two extremes — the ancient and the modern rhetoricians.⁷² Despite this being the sole attestations, earlier parallels can be found in comparable formations, such as the comparative and μεσαίτερος and the superlative μεσαίτατος. μεσαίτατος is well attested, with its earlier occurrence in Herodotus (4.17.1). The only instance of μεσαίτερος in classical sources — and the only one in a literary text — appears in Plato's *Parmenides* (165a–b), though it might

⁶⁹ Ancient evidence and relevant bibliography are collected by A. Bagordo, *Leukon – Xenophilos. Einleitung, Übersetzung, Kommentar*, Heidelberg 2014, 63–64.

⁷⁰ Concerning the name Καλεδίας, Albio Cesare Cassio suggests comparing it with Latin *Calendius* and suspecting that Καλεδίας may be an Italic personal name with omission of the implosive nasal, whose articulation was weak in spoken Latin (cf. V. Väänänen, *Introduction au latin vulgaire. Complétée d'une anthologie de textes en latin vulgaire*, Paris³ 1981, 63; however, the tendency of the Italic dialects of Central and Southern Italy was towards the assimilation /nd/ > /nn/). Alternatively, one might consider interpreting Καλεδιάν as Καλ(λ)ε<ι>δ{ι}αν (i.e. Καλλεΐδαν); a parallel for the failed notation of the geminated consonant is the form Πυρία<μ> for Pyrrhias at line 9, and a possible parallel for the misplaced iota is ἐπ[ο<ι>δ{ι}αί at line 13. According to the data provided in *LGPN* and *LGPN-Ling*, the personal name Καλλεΐδᾱς is attested as early as the 4th century BCE in Arkadia and then especially at Delphi.

⁷¹ Other scholars had weighed the possibility that here there occurred a form of μέσος followed by a noun beginning with τερ- meaning a space or time 'boundary', such as τέρμα (see Miller, *Studies* [s. n. 12] 91, who weighs various options) or τέρμων (in Sicilian inscriptions, this form occurs at Halaesa, see *IG* XIV 352).

⁷² *Fragmentum e cod. Par. suppl. gr.* 670 (ed. H. Graeven, *Ein Fragment des Lachares*, *Hermes* 30 [1895] 291–298) p. 298, 13–18: ταῦτα γινώσκοντας τὴν φράσιν μεταδιώκειν <δεῖ> τῶν ἀρχαίων ῥητόρων ἐκφεύγοντας τοὺς τῶν μεσοτέρων φληνάφους, οἵτινες ἐκτραχλισμοὺς, οὐκ ἀρετὴν λογικὴν μεταδιώξαντες καὶ τοὺς ἀπείρους παντοίως τῶν λόγων τούτων καταθαρρεῖν παρεσκεύασαν τὴν ἀμαθίαν αὐτῶν ἐπὶ τὸ μείζον ἐξάραντες.

be an *ad hoc* creation.⁷³ While neither of these forms directly supports μεσότερος, they suggest that a similar formation is at least conceivable. Accordingly, Apellis may have written something like ἐπὶ μεσοτέρ[αν π]εντάδα (an integration compatible with the lacuna of approximately three letters posited by previous editors) to indicate the ‘middle pentad’. We may sketch this scenario: the *defigens* Apellis’ team may have been the first πεντάς; the contestants he curses in the *defixio* may be the members of the second πεντάς (i.e., the middle pentad); the third πεντάς might have included people from outside the city (see lines 10–11). Accordingly, if Apellis wrote something like ἐπὶ μεσοτέρ[αν π]εντάδα, he might have been referring to the second team (i.e., the middle pentad), consisting of five members, among the three teams in the competition. We could then perhaps read ἐπὶ μεσοτέρ[αν π]εντάδα, meaning ‘in relation to the middle πεντάς’ (see LSJ s.v. ἐπί C.III.2), which, crucially, would be the pentad including the most prominent rivals, those mentioned by name. According to this interpretation, the mention of the Apellis’ group, the Alkiadai workshop, and Melanthios (?), would provide insight into the broader social group to which the competitors belong. [FF, OT]

8–9 ἐπὶ τῷ[ι Μελ?]ανθίῳ φιλότατι. Jordan initially found it incongruous that Melanthios (or whatever the name in the lacuna may be) could be ‘a second interest of Apellis’ (i.e. Apellis wishes to obtain the φιλότης of Melanthios [?] besides that of Eunikos).⁷⁴ A different perspective is offered by Wilson, who resolves this incongruity by proposing an alternative interpretation of ἐπὶ τῷ[ι Μελ?]ανθίῳ φιλότατι, namely, that ‘Sosias is targeted because of *his* love of [Mel]anthios’ (i.e. that of Sosias for Melanthios [?]).⁷⁵ Wilson’s more convincing interpretation of the function of ἐπί + dative is supported by the syntactic analysis presented above regarding ἐπὶ φιλότατι τῷ Εὐνίῳ/Εὐνίκο as indicating the motivation, rather than the aim, of Apellis’ curse. As discussed earlier, in this context too φιλότης probably refers to the public friendship among the members of a social group, although we cannot simply rule out the existence of a romantic relationship between the individuals (see above 1, 3, 13–14 ἐπὶ φιλότατι τῷ Εὐνίῳ/Εὐνίκο. [FF])

12 μήτ’ ἄνδρεςι μήτε γυναίκεσσι. This expression is used to emphasise Apellis’ repeated wish that nobody be more successful (again expressed by σπευδαιότερον) than Eunikos. In classical texts from Sicily analogical -εσσι datives in third-declension non-sigmatic stems are attested in the *lex sacra* from Selinous, as well as in two fragments of Epicharmus (fr. 18 and 224 *PCG*), and three fragments of Sophron (fr. **8, 124, and 151 *PCG*).⁷⁶ They also become a feature of the official Doric *koina* of the Hellenistic age. These datives are traditionally thought to be typical of Syracusan

⁷³ On the ancient grammatical sources discussing the morphology of μεσσίτερος see Philox. fr. 334 Theodoridis and the parallels collected by C. Theodoridis, *Die Fragmente des Grammatikers Philoxenos*, Berlin, New York 1976, 245.

⁷⁴ Jordan, *Lead Tablet* (s. n. 2) 348.

⁷⁵ Wilson, *Sicilian Choruses* (s. n. 21) 353 and n. 11.

⁷⁶ See Mimbrera Olarte, *Fonética* (s. n. 36) 152–153.

Doric, which is believed to have borrowed them from Corinthian.⁷⁷ However, both assumptions have little factual basis, and the distribution of these forms in classical Sicilian texts shows that this feature — regardless of its origin — was shared by the Doric dialect of Selinous, Gela, and Syracuse.⁷⁸ In some instances, the use of an -εσσι dative may have been influenced by the prestige this ending held in epic and lyric poetry, especially when there is a clear connection between the -εσσι morpheme, the register of the lexeme, and the prosodic effect it creates. The expression μήτ' ἄνδρεσι μήτε γυναίκεσσι may be a good example.⁷⁹ Perhaps it is a conscious imitation of the Homeric line-end μήτ' ἄνδρῶν μήτε γυναικῶν, which in *Od.* 13.308 is equally preceded by a middle-passive infinitive (ἐκφάσθαι: 'do not tell anyone, either man or woman, etc.'). The expression 'neither man nor woman', with anaphora of μήτε, is not common in Greek: there is only one parallel in the accusative (μήτ' ἄνδρα μήτε γυναῖκα) in a decree from Delphi, dated to 425–375 BCE (*FD* III, 1, 194, col. i.11), though the positive ἀνδράσι καὶ γυναῖξί has a few attestations in prose texts. [OT]

12–13 ὅς οὗτος <ὁ> βόλμιος, τὸς ΤΕ| . . ca. 5 . .]ΟΔΙΑΙΤΙΜΑΝ ἐρύσαιντο. The correlation between comparative subordinates and main clauses is very common in Greek *defixiones* as a means of strengthening the curse, typically (but not exclusively) based on the principle *similia similibus*.⁸⁰ In this case, the coordination ὅς ... τός is discussed by Wilson and Favi, who suggest that the purpose of this passage is to link two moments in the cursing process: the *defigens* hopes that, just as (ὅς) the writing of the *defixio*, so (τός) the uttering of the spells may be effective (cf. the use of the desiderative optative) in damaging the victims of the curse.⁸¹ Thus, the aim is to strengthen the power of the curse. This same coordination ὅς ... τός is paralleled three times in the new 5th-century BCE Sicilian *defixio* Schøyen Collection MS 1700,⁸² where the comparison takes a different form: the *defigens* hopes that, just as (*hós*) a past event had negative consequences for the person involved, so too (τός) will the present

⁷⁷ See C. D. Buck, *Notes on Certain Forms of the Greek Dialects*, CR 19 (1905) 242–250, J. L. García Ramón, *Les origines postmycéniennes du groupe dialectale éolien*, Salamanca 1975, 116, J. B. Curbera, *Consideraciones sobre el dórico de Sicilia*, in: *Actas del VIII Congreso Español de Estudios Clásicos*, vol. 1, Madrid 1994, 93–100, 94, and Mimblera Olarte, *Fonética* (s. n. 36) 153.

⁷⁸ See the full study of O. Tribulato, *Analogical -εσσι Datives in Sicilian Doric. Borrowing, Independent Development, or Both?*, in: A. Alonso Déniz, E. Nieto Izquierdo, G. van Heems, J. V. Méndez Dosuna (eds.), *Contacts linguistiques en Grèce ancienne. Diachronie et synchronie*, Lyon 2024, 209–228, as well as M. Del Barrio Vega, *The dative plural -εσσι in the Saronic dialects and their colonies. A new analysis of the epigraphical data*, ZPE 220 (2021) 163–172.

⁷⁹ ἄνδρεσι is more probably a mistake for ἄνδρεςσι (degemination of σσ for instance is always found in the -εσσι datives of the Selinous *lex sacra*), unless one were to take it as a hybrid between ἄνδρεςσι and ἀνδράσι.

⁸⁰ See the references collected by Bevilacqua, Βασίλισσα Κυρία (s. n. 9) 29 and n. 1 and Bettarini, Βασίλισσα Κυρία, (s. n. 9) 54–55.

⁸¹ Wilson, Favi, *Choragic Spells* (s. n. 14) 139–140.

⁸² *Editio princeps* by D. R. Jordan, G. Rocca, L. Threatte, *Una nuova defixio dalla Sicilia (Schøyen Collection MS 1700)*, ZPE 188 (2014) 231–236. See already Jordan, *Lead Tablet* (s. n. 2) 349.

circumstances affect the people involved in the events.⁸³ Despite this difference, the parallel formulation reflects a shared approach to writing curses and seeking to secure their effectiveness in the Sicilian context. [FF]

13 ἐρύσαιντο. In their interpretation of line 13, Wilson and Favi propose that the optative expresses the wish that ‘like the lead [tablet] so may the spells (uttered orally by Apellis) draw away their (Eunikos’ opponents) honour’.⁸⁴ ἐρύω is a very common verb in the Homeric epics, but otherwise rarely attested in prose. An exception is found in *FD* III, 1, 294, col. ii.12, an early-4th-century BCE law, where the expression τὸν ἀδικηθέντα φερυσάτω can be translated as ‘let him draw the culprit [into court]’.⁸⁵ The verb is typically employed to refer to a physical act of drawing out or away something (such ships, swords, bodies, etc.), whereas, in the Gela *defixio*, it takes on a metaphorical meaning. This exceptional metaphorical usage may be accompanied by a quasi-hexametric clausula: the sequence of a dactyl and a spondee in (τί)μαν ἐρύσαιντο. Both elements could therefore suggest that the conclusion of this text was marked by an increasingly poetic register. [OT]

13 νικᾶν. Accusative νίκαν (‘For Eunikos (may there be) victory always’), rather than infinitive νικᾶν (concerning the vocalism /a:/, see above 3 φιλετᾶν), seems the better option.⁸⁶ This is a proposition expressing a wish/order with the subject in the accusative and the verb in the infinitive which in this case is implied (i.e. ἔμειν); we thus have a parallel formulation to lines 1–3 and 11–12, where the finite verb is equally not expressed, but may be easily inferred by the context (see above 1–3 μεδέν’ [E]ὐνίφο σπευ|δ[αι]ότερον ἔμειν μεδὲ φιντίονα, ἀλλ’ ἐπαινέ<v> καὶ ἐρόντα κάεροντα καὶ φιλετᾶν). [FF]

Finally, we hereby present a revised translation that, although based on that by Csapo and Wilson, *Social and Economic History* (s. n. 2) 347–348, aims to make clear some of the points where our interpretation of the text differs from previous ones:

“(Good) fortune. Apellis, because of the friendship towards Eunikos. No one be more esteemed and loved than Eunikos and (everyone) praise (him), willingly and unwillingly, and love (him). Because of the friendship towards Eunikos I mark down all the choragoi so that they be ineffectual both in word and in deed, along with [5] their sons and fathers, and so that they fail both in the contest and outside the contests,

⁸³ See Jordan, Rocca, Threatte, *Una nuova defixio* (s. n. 82) 235: ‘La particolarità consiste nel paragone istituito tra un fatto accaduto nel passato, mitologico o reale che sia, per cui è sufficiente la menzione e che si è concluso male per Oltis, e una situazione del presente che possa portare allo stesso risultato’. This pattern, in which a past event is referenced to make a present request more likely to be fulfilled, is typical of wishes and prayers (an obvious parallel being Sapph. fr. 1 Voigt = Neri).

⁸⁴ Wilson, Favi, *Choragic Spells* (s. n. 14) 140.

⁸⁵ ‘Quiconque voudra en fera le recouvrement et le défailant, il le traînera et il intentera contre lui une action de *prostasis*’ (T. Homolle, *La loi de Cadys sur le prêt à intérêt. Une crise sociale et politique à Delphes au VII^e siècle*, BCH 50 [1926] 3–106, 19); ‘il danneggiato potrà condurlo e accusarlo ...’ (D. Asheri, *Leggi greche sul problema dei debiti*, SCO 18 [1969] 5–118, 107).

⁸⁶ Thus Miller, *Studies* (s. n. 12) 69 and Dubois, *Inscriptions* (s. n. 23) 155.

whoever does not leave him (i.e. Eunikos) with me. Kaledias I write down along with Apellis and all those there for (their) not-salvation here. Sosias I mark down, from the shop of the Alkiadai, because of his friendship towards Melanthios. Pyria<s>, Mysskelos, Damophantos and the [10] choragos I mark down, along with their sons and fathers, and all the others who arrive here. No one be more esteemed than Eunikos either among men or women. As this lead (does), so may (the spells against those men) draw away (their honour). For Eunikos may there be victory always, completely. I write on the lead because of the friendship towards Eunikos". [FF/OT]

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