



<https://publications.dainst.org>

iDAI.publications

ELEKTRONISCHE PUBLIKATIONEN DES
DEUTSCHEN ARCHÄOLOGISCHEN INSTITUTS

Dies ist ein digitaler Sonderdruck des Beitrags / This is a digital offprint of the article

C. P. Jones An Oracle Given to Trajan

aus / from

Chiron

Ausgabe / Issue **5 • 1975**

Seite / Page **403–406**

<https://publications.dainst.org/journals/chiron/1487/5836> • urn:nbn:de:0048-chiron-1975-5-p403-406-v5836.0

Verantwortliche Redaktion / Publishing editor

Redaktion Chiron | Kommission für Alte Geschichte und Epigraphik des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Amalienstr. 73 b, 80799 München

Weitere Informationen unter / For further information see <https://publications.dainst.org/journals/chiron>

ISSN der Online-Ausgabe / ISSN of the online edition **2510-5396**

Verlag / Publisher **Verlag C. H. Beck, München**

©2017 Deutsches Archäologisches Institut

Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Zentrale, Podbielskiallee 69–71, 14195 Berlin, Tel: +49 30 187711-0

Email: info@dainst.de / Web: dainst.org

Nutzungsbedingungen: Mit dem Herunterladen erkennen Sie die Nutzungsbedingungen (<https://publications.dainst.org/terms-of-use>) von iDAI.publications an. Die Nutzung der Inhalte ist ausschließlich privaten Nutzerinnen / Nutzern für den eigenen wissenschaftlichen und sonstigen privaten Gebrauch gestattet. Sämtliche Texte, Bilder und sonstige Inhalte in diesem Dokument unterliegen dem Schutz des Urheberrechts gemäß dem Urheberrechtsgesetz der Bundesrepublik Deutschland. Die Inhalte können von Ihnen nur dann genutzt und vervielfältigt werden, wenn Ihnen dies im Einzelfall durch den Rechteinhaber oder die Schrankenregelungen des Urheberrechts gestattet ist. Jede Art der Nutzung zu gewerblichen Zwecken ist untersagt. Zu den Möglichkeiten einer Lizenzierung von Nutzungsrechten wenden Sie sich bitte direkt an die verantwortlichen Herausgeberinnen/Herausgeber der entsprechenden Publikationsorgane oder an die Online-Redaktion des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts (info@dainst.de).

Terms of use: By downloading you accept the terms of use (<https://publications.dainst.org/terms-of-use>) of iDAI.publications. All materials including texts, articles, images and other content contained in this document are subject to the German copyright. The contents are for personal use only and may only be reproduced or made accessible to third parties if you have gained permission from the copyright owner. Any form of commercial use is expressly prohibited. When seeking the granting of licenses of use or permission to reproduce any kind of material please contact the responsible editors of the publications or contact the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut (info@dainst.de).

C. P. JONES

An Oracle Given to Trajan

About the year 100 the philosopher Dio of Prusa led a delegation from his city to the emperor Trajan in Rome.¹ In a speech delivered after his return, Dio claimed that the resulting benefits for Prusa were «such as have not been gained by many people, but only by one city, and that virtually one of the most renowned in [the province of] Asia, one which has such a great claim on the emperor, since the god there prophesied and foretold to him his rule, and was the first of all openly to declare him master of the world».²

The city and its oracle have not been satisfactorily identified: indeed, it has recently been maintained that identification is impossible.³ The last editor of Dio suggested Smyrna, noting that in another reference to this embassy Dio mentions that city as the object of Trajan's generosity.⁴ However, Smyrna did not have any very conspicuous oracle, and the gifts mentioned by Dio were for the benefit of the city's twin Nemeseis.⁵ A better proposal was made by REISKE: Asclepius' oracle at Pergamum.⁶ Pergamum flourished under Trajan, and there is a possibility

The following abbreviations have been used: IDidyma = TH. WIEGAND, *Didyma*, 2. Teil: Die Inschriften, bearb. von ALBERT REHM, hrsg. von RICHARD HARDER, Berlin 1958; Milet = Milet. Ergebnisse der Ausgrabungen und Untersuchungen seit dem Jahre 1899, hrsg. von TH. WIEGAND, Berlin 1906 sqq. I am grateful to Professor G. W. BOWERSOCK for his criticism.

¹ D. Chr. 40, 13–15; 45, 3–4. The date is indicated by the fact (i) that Dio undertook the embassy soon after his return from exile about 97 (40, 1) and (ii) that the embassy met Trajan in Rome (40, 13): Trajan did not return to Rome until late 99 (A. N. SHERWIN-WHITE, *The Letters of Pliny*, Oxford 1966, 576) and left in March 101 (CIL 6, 2074 = ILS 5035). Thus H. VON ARNIM, *Leben und Werke des Dio von Prusa*, Berlin 1898, 325.

² D. Chr. 45, 4: μή πολλοῖς ὑπάρξαντα ἑτέροις ἀλλ' ἢ μιᾷ πόλει, καὶ ταύτῃ σχεδόν τι τῶν ἔλλογιμωτάτων κατὰ τὴν Ἀσίαν καὶ τηλικούτου ἐχούση δίκαιον πρὸς τὸν αὐτοκράτορα, τοῦ θεοῦ παρ' ἐκείνοις μαντευσαμένου καὶ προσιπόντος τὴν ἡγεμονίαν αὐτῷ καὶ πρώτου πάντων ἐκείνου φανερώς αὐτὸν ἀποδείξαντος τῶν ὄλων κύριον. Ἀσία usually means the province in imperial authors: thus D. Chr. 35, 13. 17.

³ BETTIE FORTE, *Rome and the Romans as the Greeks Saw Them*, Papers and Monographs of the American Academy in Rome 24, Rome 1972, 263.

⁴ H. L. CROSBY, *Dio Chrysostom* (Loeb Classical Library) IV, London 1946, 210 n. 2, adducing D. Chr. 40, 14.

⁵ On the oracles of Smyrna: C. J. CADOUX, *Ancient Smyrna*, Oxford 1938, 205 (Asclepius). 208 (Cledones, Paus. 9, 11, 7). Nemeseis: D. Chr. 40, 14.

⁶ J. J. REISKE, *Dionis Chrysostomi orationes*², Leipzig 1798, II 204 n. 21.

that the road leading from the city to the Asclepium was built early in his reign.⁷ But while the Pergamene Asclepius was famous for his medical advice, he is not very suited to promise a Roman the mastery of the world: Dio's «god» should rather be Apollo.

In this period Asia's two foremost oracles were both of Apollo: that at Didyma, controlled by Miletus, and at Claros, controlled by Colophon. One of these two cities ought to be the one meant by Dio. There can be little doubt that it is Miletus.⁸ Miletus was indeed still «one of the most renowned cities in Asia». It was the head of an assize district; for Strabo, it was with Ephesus «the best and most glorious» city of Ionia; it was one of the five finalists, with Ephesus, Smyrna, Sardis and Halicarnassus, in the competition to build a temple to Tiberius.⁹ Colophon, by contrast, had sunk from its old eminence and was now noted chiefly as the warden of Claros.¹⁰ Moreover, while Trajan is not yet known to have been a benefactor of Claros or Colophon,¹¹ with Miletus the case is very different.

In the late nineteenth century, a large inscribed stele was found *in situ* beside the Sacred Gate at Miletus, which faces toward Didyma. The text is as follows:¹² *Imp(erator) Caes(ar) divi Nervae f(ilius) Nerva Traianus Aug(ustus) Germ(anicus) pontifex max(imus) trib(unicia) pot(estate) co(n)s(ul) [II]II¹³ p(ater) p(atriciae) viam necessariam sacris Apollinis Didymei, intuitus et in hoc quoq(ue) utilitates Milesiorum, excisis collibus completis vallibus instituit con[su]mavit dedicavit per [Q. Iul]ium Balbum proco(n)s(ulem), [cura]m agente L. Passerio [Rom]ulo legato pro pr(aetore).* Fragments of inscriptions with almost identical texts and a Greek translation have been found elsewhere at Miletus and at Didyma;¹⁴ in addition,

⁷ Prosperity: D. MAGIE, *Roman Rule in Asia Minor*, Princeton 1950, I 594–595. II 1451–1452. Road: CH. HABICHT, *Altertümer von Pergamon VIII*, 3: *Die Inschriften des Asklepieions*, Berlin 1969, pp. 154–155 no. 157.

⁸ Dio refers elsewhere to «the Milesians' Didymeum»: 40, 8.

⁹ Assize: MAGIE, *op. cit.* II 1061. Strabo: 14, 634. Temple: Tac. ann. 4, 55. Cf. T. R. S. BROUGHTON in TENNEY FRANK, *An Economic Survey of Ancient Rome*, Baltimore 1938, IV 720.

¹⁰ Cf. Strabo 14, 642–643; BROUGHTON, *op. cit.* 718–719.

¹¹ This is not excluded, however. Note J. G. MILNE, *Kolophon and its Coinage*, Numismatic Notes and Monographs 96, New York 1941, 14: «A sudden outburst comes in the reign of Trajan, for which no reason can be suggested».

¹² First published by R. KEKULE VON STRADONITZ, *SDAW* 1900, 106–107; republished, with a small fragment added, by A. REHM, *Milet II*, 3, Berlin and Leipzig 1935, 133–134 no. 402 (*AE* 1937, 258; E. M. SMALLWOOD, *Documents Illustrating the Principates of Nerva, Trajan and Hadrian*, Cambridge 1966, no. 416). The lacunae are filled by IDidyma no. 55.

¹³ KEKULE read [I]II, REHM in *Milet III*; REHM, IDidyma p. 105 b, re-examined the squeeze in view of IDidyma no. 57 and read [II]II.

¹⁴ *Milet I*, 7, Berlin 1924, 343–344 nos. 272 a–b (cf. REHM in IDidyma p. 105 n. 3); IDidyma nos. 55–56. The latter are in fact a composite of three separate inscriptions: see now KL. TUCHELT, *Vorarbeiten zu einer Topographie von Didyma*, MDAI(I) Beiheft 9, Tübingen 1973, 25–28.

a milestone discovered near Apollo's temple at Didyma marks the eleventh mile of this road and is apparently contemporary with them.¹⁵ The texts taken together show that in 101 or 102, since Trajan is *cos. IIII* but not *Dacicus*, he had completed a major rebuilding of the sacred way from Miletus to Didyma.¹⁶ His agent Romulus is called in the Latin text from Didyma, though not in that from Miletus, *legatus Aug(usti) pro pr(aetore)*: provided that this is correct, it indicates that Romulus was not a legate of the proconsul but directly responsible to the emperor, and may have commanded troops engaged on Trajan's road.¹⁷

The road was not Trajan's only mark of favour towards Didyma. In or before 102, and so probably at the time of the construction or completion of the new road, he became *prophetes* of Apollo there; near the end of the reign he also held the office of *stephanephorus*.¹⁸ He must have done yet more for Miletus, since the inscriptions commemorating his road say that he «considered in this as well (*et in hoc quoque*) the convenience of the Milesians». One of these benefactions may have been the construction of the great Nymphaeum, since this appears to date from his reign.¹⁹ It is not surprising that Trajan was honoured with several statues in Miletus, of which the earliest that can be dated is of 103/4, just after the completion of the new road.²⁰

It seems evident that these favours of Trajan to Miletus are those which Dio refers to in his speech delivered in 102 or soon after.²¹ It follows that on some occasion before his accession he had received from Apollo of Didyma a prophecy that he would one day rule the world. Dio's language suggests, though strictly it does not show, that Trajan visited the oracle in person. He would have had several occasions to do so, but one is perhaps worth noting: his father was pro-

¹⁵ IDidyma no. 57, with REHM's discussion.

¹⁶ It was argued by B. HAUSSOULLIER, *Études sur l'histoire de Milet et du Didymeion*, Paris 1902, 154–156. 281–287, that the journey had previously been made by sea: the more general view is that Trajan merely rebuilt an older road (thus M. MAYER, RE 15 [1932] 1651).

¹⁷ For such imperial legates in senatorial provinces, H.-G. PFLAUM, *Hommages à Albert Grenier* (Collection Latomus 58), Brussels 1962, III 1232–1242.

¹⁸ IDidyma nos. 318, 407 (*prophetes*), 293 (*stephanephorus*). Note REHM's comment on no. 318: «Man fragt sich, ob Trajan zu solchen Gnadenerweisen besondere Gründe gehabt hat».

¹⁹ Milet I, 5, Berlin und Leipzig 1919. The principal evidence is the inscription on the architrave, in honour of Trajan's father but apparently cut in his reign: H. DESSAU, *ibid.* pp. 53–54 (replacing ILS 8970), cf. G. W. BOWERSOCK, JRS 63, 1973, 134–135; the date is questioned by REHM, IDidyma p. 210 and n. 1.

²⁰ CIG 2876; Milet I, 2, Berlin 1908, pp. 118–119 no. 17; Milet I, 7, Berlin 1924, pp. 309–311 nos. 226–229 (no. 226 was set up under the proconsul C. Aquilius Proculus, cf. W. ECK, *Senatoren von Vespasian bis Hadrian*, Vestigia 13, München 1970, 161).

²¹ D. Chr. 45 is dated to 102 by H. VON ARNIM, *Leben und Werke des Dio von Prusa*, Berlin 1898, 385; to early 104 by C. VIEMETTI, SIFC 18, 1941, 100–101, 107.

consul of the province in 79/80, and Trajan could have accompanied him, either privately or as his quaestor or legate.²²

Under the early principate, the other great oracle of Asia, Claros, seems to have enjoyed a greater vogue in the Roman world. It was Claros that Germanicus Caesar consulted on his last journey, and that Lollia Paulina was supposed to have questioned about her prospects of marrying Claudius;²³ and in general Claros drew its clients rather from the newly prosperous cities of the empire, such as those of Thrace, than from the older ones already attached to Didyma.²⁴ In the second century, however, Didyma as well as Claros reached the zenith of its fortunes,²⁵ and this may be due in part to Trajan's benefactions, particularly the improved access from Miletus.

Trajan's favours to Didyma perhaps have a further explanation. As emperor, and presumably before his accession also, he was notoriously devoted to the memory of Alexander of Macedon.²⁶ Now a long tradition linked Alexander with Didyma: it was said that the god there had prophesied to him the defeat and death of the Persian king, and that he had massacred in Bactria the descendants of the Branchidae who betrayed the shrine to Xerxes.²⁷ It may therefore be that emulation of Alexander led Trajan to consult Apollo of Didyma, if he did, and that the oracle he received itself contributed to the shrine's last glory.

²² Date: ECK, *op. cit.* 127. For this suggestion, R. PARIBENI, *Optimus Princeps I*, Messina 1926, 75. Note also the several dedications from Myndos made on behalf of Traianus, his wife and children: L. ROBERT, *BCH* 60, 1936, 199–202 (*Opera minora selecta*, Amsterdam 1969, II 906–909).

²³ Tac. ann. 2, 54, 2–4; 12, 22, 1.

²⁴ L. ROBERT, *Les Fouilles de Claros*, Limoges 1954, 27–28.

²⁵ L. ROBERT, *Gnomon* 31, 1959, 670 (*Opera minora selecta*, Amsterdam 1969, III 1635).

²⁶ W. WEBER, *Untersuchungen zur Geschichte des Kaisers Hadrianus*, Leipzig 1907, 8–12; R. SYME, *Tacitus*, Oxford 1958, II 770–771.

²⁷ Strabo 17, 814 (JACOBY, *FGrHist* 124 F 14 a), cf. 11, 517–518; 14, 634. The massacre at least is usually thought fictitious: thus W. W. TARN, *Alexander the Great II*, Cambridge 1948, 272–275. Note that, like Trajan, Alexander was *stephanephorus* at Miletus: *Milet I*, 3, Berlin 1914, pp. 130–134 no. 122 II 81.