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DID APICIUS USE THE ACCUSATIVE ABSOLUTE?

Anne Helttula

In the 4th century veterinarian manual of *Mulomedicina Chironis*¹ the accusative absolute is quite frequently used, as can be seen from the examples painstakingly listed by H. Ahlquist.² No examples have been quoted from Apicius' *De re coquinaria*, which is considered roughly its contemporary.³ Nor has the particular use of this construction in practical handbooks and technical treatises of various kinds been much studied, either. In the following article I propose a survey of Apicius' recipes to show how an absolute construction in the accusative could develop from the special nature and special needs of the language of recipes.

The recipes in Apicius' book consist mainly of 1) *nouns* indicating ingredients, and 2) *verbs* indicating what is done to these ingredients. The nouns are logically objects, even when grammatically this is not the case, and appear most often in the accusative form.⁴

An Apician recipe in its simplest form gives the name of the dish

¹ Ed. by Eug. Oder, Leipzig 1901.

² Studien zur spätleinischen *Mulomedicina Chironis*, Diss. Uppsala 1909, 50—53.

³ Ed. by M. E. Milham, Leipzig 1969. On the date see E. Brandt, *Untersuchungen zum römischen Kochbuche*, Leipzig 1927 (*Philologus Suppl.* 19:3) 129—130, followed by Milham (Preface, 1).

⁴ For Apicius' accusatives, see M. E. Milham, *An inventory of the double accusative in Apicius*, *Cl.Phil.* 54 (1959) 40—42, and *Case and prepositional usage in Apicius*, *Glotta* 39 (1960/61) 276—302 (on acc. 277—279, 292—293). For the use of the accusative in technical treatises in general, see e.g. J. Svennung, *Untersuchungen zu Palladius und zur lat. Fach- und Volkssprache*, Uppsala 1935, *passim* (172—174 on the acc. in headings, 186—187 on recipe accusatives).

(that, too, is frequently in the accusative: "you will make this dish in this way"), followed by a list of ingredients; e.g.

82,12⁵ *Ius in pisce elixo: piper, ligusticum, cuminum, cepulam, origanum, nucleos, caryotam, mel, acetum, liquamen, sinapi, oleum modice. Ius calidum. si velis, uvam passam.*

83,1 *Ius Alexandrinum in pisce asso: piper, cepam siccam, ligusticum, cuminum, origanum, apii semen, pruna damascena enucleata, mulsum, acetum, liquamen, defritum, oleum, et coques.*

The list of words in the accusative is actually a clause, with the predicate verb (*accipies*, etc.) not expressed; a second predicate (*coques*) could be added to it in coordination.⁶ The accusatives appear clearly as objects ("take these ingredients, mix them, and cook them"), and often the verbs are expressed:

82,18 *Ius in pisce elixo: piscem curabis diligenter, mittes in mortarium salem, coriandri semen, conteres bene, volves eum, adicies in patinam, cooperies, gypsabis, coques in furno. Cum coctus fuerit, tolles, aceto acerrimo asperges et inferes.*

We see that the order of the actions is expressed simply by the order of the finite verbs. Apicius also makes frequent use of past participles, not only as attributes (*piper tritum*, *amygdala tosta*, etc.), but also with their full verbal force to indicate action. Both absolute and appositional participles appear so frequently that they can well be considered characteristic of Apicius' language.

The frequency of the ablative absolute is shown by Milham's examples.⁷ Some cases are excellent illustrations of the function of the participle. In 3,9 we have: *tum <mittes> piperis uncias IV iam triti, masticis scripulos III, folii et croci dragmae singulae, dactilorum ossibus torridis quinque, isdemque dactilis vino mollitis, intercedente prius suffusione vini de suo modo ac numero... His omnibus paratis...* Obviously *dactilorum ossibus torridis quinque* is just another ingredient, which should appear in the accusative (or partitive) form of those preceding. It seems to me that the ablative has been

⁵ The page and line numbers refer to Milham's edition.

⁶ The tense of the predicate in recipes varies; on the alternation of the future indicative and the present subjunctive, see Svennung, *Unt.*, 467—468.

⁷ Case and prepositional usage, 293—294.

raised in the mind of the writer by the following ablative which indicates not merely a simple ingredient, but an ingredient which has had to undergo a certain process: the dates had to be soaked in wine first, and the ablative *isdemque dactylis vino mollitis* has arisen from the correct ablative absolute *intercedente prius suffusione vini*, of which it is only an amplification ("put in the dates themselves, after you have soaked them in wine long enough to make them soft"). It is worth noticing that the language of this passage is more complicated, more "literary" than elsewhere: so the participial construction brought out by the idea of action, materialized as the traditional ablative absolute.

There is a change from an ablative to what could be considered an accusative absolute in 13,17 *sex ovi vitellis coctis, nucleis pineis concisis, cepam, porrum concisum, ius crudum misces...* It is obviously the idea of an object emerging in the mind of the writer that has encouraged the change in form.

Participial clauses, both in the ablative and in the accusative, indicate preparations necessary for the further stages of work. But Apicius also uses absolute ablatives or accusatives and coordinate finite verbs interchangeably; e.g.

90,26 *piper asparso inferebis*

47,28 *piper aspersum inferes* (sim. 50,1; 50,8; 50,22; 70,28)

50,17 *piper aspergis et inferes* (passim)⁸

They can even alternate so that the copula *et* links the two verbal phrases, the non-finite and the finite one (strictly speaking, the participial phrase is not an absolute any more):

54,30 *cum coctae fuerint, levas et siccas, sine iure, piper asperso, et inferes*

59,9 *coques ex oenogaro, piper asperso et inferes*

In the light of these examples there is no need to correct the reading of A in Excerpta a Vinidario 90,6 *asparso piper et inferes*. Milham follows Giarratano and Vollmer⁹ and writes *asparso pipere inferes*.

Piper aspersum is clearly an absolute accusative. *Piper asperso* could be explained as an ablative absolute with its nominal part in the universal

⁸ Cf. also 40,19 *adiecto oleo ponis ut ferveat* — 39,2 *adicies oleum, agitabis*.

⁹ Ed. Leipzig 1922.

case,¹⁰ or as a neutral nounless ablative absolute to which an accusative object has been added.¹¹ The question is by no means simple. We can compare Marcellus Empiricus 16,43 (127,33)¹² *piper adiecto* (Helmreich *pipere adiecto*), where M. Niedermann, referring to the confusion between the endings *-um* and *-o*, has even been tempted to write an accusative absolute *piper adiectum*.¹³ Whichever the case, *piper* is the psychological object in the object case. A similar construction in Apicius is 60,3 *perfusum melle, aspersum inferes* (*piper* to be added?). Is *melle* an ablative or an accusative? In my opinion, it is an accusative,¹⁴ which means that the phrase is another example of the accusative absolute. *Perfundere* is used by Apicius with an ablative (e.g. 93,23 *et levato haedo atque exsucato ipso iure perfundis*), but also with a double accusative (e.g. 52,1 *versabis in lance quem perfundis ius tale*).¹⁵ Note the alternation of *mel* and *melle* in 59,23 *melle perfundis ... piper aspargis et inferes* — 59,26 *mel superfundis et inferes* — 60,7 *perfundis mel, piper aspargis et inferes* — 60,19 *melle perfundis, piper aspargis et inferes*.

To express fulfilled action Apicius often uses clauses like *ubi* (or *cum*) *ferbuerit/bullierit/coctum* etc. *fuert*. With transitive verbs, a past participle (without a noun) can be used instead; e.g.

28,18 ...*coques. coctum in patellam collocabis*

31,22 *cum ferbuerit, coctam tolles*

31,25 *coctam piper minutum asparges*¹⁶

Cf. also 40,25 *despumatam subtrito lasare Parthico, liquamen et caroeno condies* — 40,22 *ubi despumaverit, teres mel* — 41,5 *cum despumaverit*;

¹⁰ The theory of Havers in his article *Eine syntaktische Sonderstellung griechischer und lateinischer Neutra*, *Glotta* 13 (1924) 182sq.

¹¹ Cf. E. Löfstedt, *Philologischer Kommentar zur Peregrinatio Aetheriae*, Uppsala 1911, 292—293.

¹² Ed. by M. Niedermann, Leipzig 1916.

¹³ *Sprachliche Bemerkungen zu Marcellus Empiricus de medicamentis*, Festgabe Blümner, Zürich 1914, 328—329.

¹⁴ Cf. Apic. 29,25 *melle cocleare asparges*. Examples of the acc. *melle*, *ThLL* VIII 605,37sqq.

¹⁵ Cf. Milham, *Case and prepositional usage*, 293.

¹⁶ Giarratano: *<cum> cocta <fuert>*, *p. m. a.* — as an interpretation it is, of course, correct in meaning, but as a completion it is wrong and totally unnecessary.

66,11 *calefactum amulo obligas et carnem perfundes* — 90,5 *cum calefeceris*. Participles used in this way are very numerous. It is quite clear that it is the action expressed by the verb in the participle that is essential, not the unexpressed noun, which is grammatically the object of the finite verb (69,13 *in furnum mittis, assatum inferes*). Often, of course, the object noun or pronoun is expressed, and in these cases we are approaching a formal two-part accusative absolute; e.g.

3,4 *quod igni lento et aridis lignis calefactum, commotum ferula dum coquitur, si effervere coeperit...*

56,9 *elixum vero collare, si voles, sine conditura assas*

50,29 *pullum refrigeratum et siccatum mittis, quem perfusum inferes*

Whatever the grammatical position of the phrases, they certainly function as clauses. Detached from their proposition, they would be absolute accusatives.

In some cases the independence of the participial construction as a clause with its own predicate is emphasized by a pronoun referring back to it and repeating its nominal part as the object of another, finite verb; e.g.

23,3 *nucleos pineos, nuces fractas et purgatas, attorrebis eas...*

24,7 *nucleos, nuces fractas, torres eas*

"After breaking and cleaning the nuts, roast them."

One more example remains to be quoted, syntactically an unquestionable accusative absolute, in which detachment from the main proposition has taken place:

61,1 *bulbos elixos in pultarium pressos, mittis thymum...*

It is not certain whether the author has deliberately chosen it as such. But in the light of Apicius' language in general, this participial phrase is quite natural and a good illustration of how an accusative absolute could have developed in professional jargon, in which clear information and concise expression were the obvious needs. As a fertile background there was the abundant use of the accusative to denote the object (grammatical or psychological), of past participles in various constructions to denote action, and, of course, the tradition of the ablative absolute as a convenient but also literary means of expressing chronological order.

In *Mulomedicina Chironis*, phrases like *haec omnia bene trita, commixta haec omnia, haec omnia tusa et crebellata* are very frequent;¹⁷ e.g. 65,23: *piperis grana numero L, petrosillini, quantum 4:or digiti possunt capere, cimini Alexandrini tantundem cum cimini Afri, argini semen, murra, nepita, trisaginem aequis ponderibus, in quo admiscebis nitrum ad dimidiam omnium eorum partem. haec omnia bene trita, ex vino calido et oleo tantundem aequis partibus et mellis quod satis fuerit, hanc potionem dabis.* In Oder's edition some of these phrases are by punctuation connected with what precedes, others with what follows them. They do indeed seem rather independent, expressing yet another stage of preparation, which could also be expressed with a finite phrase ("mix these ingredients, grind them all well together, dilute with wine etc. and give to the patient to drink"; cf. Apicius 55,1 and 59,9 *piper asperso* quoted above). They do, of course, refer back to the preceding list of ingredients, acting as a conclusion to make the instructions clear, but logically they rather belong to what follows the list.

H. Ahlquist could not say whether these expressions were real absolute accusatives (or nominatives) or merely formulas of recipe language. Similar phrases, originally grammatical parts of the following sentence, are indeed characteristic of recipe language, e.g. Celsus (1st century A.D.):

6,7,3 A ... (ingredients). *Quae separatim contrita, rursus mixta ex aceto conteruntur, atque ita condita, ubi utendum est, aceto diluuntur.*

Unlike Apicius' accusatives, the starting point here is a *nominative* phrase. But since it is the subject (i.e. logical object) of a passive verb, the difference is only apparent. In both cases something is being done to the ingredients, and the appositional participles indicate the successive stages of work. The object notion was no doubt facilitated by the fact that the expression was neutral and, consequently, there was no formal difference between the nominative and the accusative.

A large number of similar examples can be quoted. A most interesting if somewhat different example is found in Celsus:

5,25,3 B *Haec per se contrita, rursus instillato subinde passo, simul omnia teruntur, donec crassitudo sordium fiat*

¹⁷ Ahlquist 52.

The phrase is becoming detached from the main proposition, though still linked to it through the repetition of its nominal part as the subject of the passive predicate (*omnia*; cf. Apicius 24,7 and 28,3 with the pronoun *eam* referring back to the participial phrase). But the most interesting and important point is the ablative absolute *instillato ... passo*, which makes the preceding participial construction function in a similar way ("When all this has been ground separately and wine immediately poured onto it, grind it all together again..."). It would perhaps be premature to call this an accusative absolute. But the elements are there for an unquestionable accusative absolute to develop. Because of the formulary nature of this kind of literature, the accusative absolute could appear in the form of set phrases, "formulas of recipe language" (such formulas include Apicius' *coctum/coctam* and *piper asperso/-um*, too). An interesting parallel is offered by inscriptions, which also demand clarity and conciseness and have a similar tendency to develop formulas; we have indeed epigraphical evidence of grammatically independent participial phrases in the accusative form from very early times onwards.¹⁸ But the accusative absolute could also appear as individual expressions of new situations, like Apicius' 61,1 *bulbos elixos in pultarium pressos* and many of Chiron's passages. Participial constructions in the accusative (or, with neuters, in the nominative-accusative) can be considered with good reason to be an essential element of recipe language.

¹⁸ See my article Some new evidence of the Late Latin accusative absolute, *Classica et mediaevalia*, Diss. IX (1973), 344—345.