ARCTOS

ACTA PHILOLOGICA FENNICA

VOL. XVI

INDEX

THE MYSTERIOUS Φώλαρχος

Martti Leiwo

A number of attempts have been made during the last two decades to solve the exact meaning of the epithet φώλαρχος met in the inscriptions of Velia. The argumentation about its meaning has, however, been built on mere assumptions, since there is but a little explicit evidence available. The latest suggestion of S. Musitelli reaches a seemingly plausible conclusion, but to obtain it he has to make some unacceptable assumptions.[1] The epithet is thought to be of some importance in the cultural history of Velia. It is also the reason why in trying to clarify its status, one has resorted to unmotivated generalisations. I therefore think it is fit to return once more to the question about the φώλαρχοι of Velia. I will not try to present a final solution to the problem — I do not see it possible for the moment — but what I will try to do is give a picture of the problem as a whole and to give some new proposals to go on. On the other hand, I will try to show the weaknesses in the earlier argumentation.

Three different solutions have been put forward:

1 a There was a medical school at Velia and φώλαρχος was the head of it.[2]

  b Φώλαρχος was the head of a Pythagorean society, which counted its beginning from Parmenides (generally connected with the medical school).[3]

2 There was a cult of Asclepius (and Hygieia) at Velia, and φώλαρχος was a temple magistrate connected to it.[4]

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1 Musitelli, PP 35 (1980) 241—255.

2 Ebner, Rass. Stor. Salernitana 22 (1961) 196—198. Id. Apollo 2 (1962) 125—136.

3 Ebner (1962) 133. Pugliese Carratelli, PP 18 (1963) 385—386.

4 Pugliese Carratelli, PP 25 (1970) 243—248.

3 Φώλαρχος was an ἀρχιερεύς who was responsible for certain in-
   cubation rites in a *Pholeon* or sanctuary (ἄβατον).[5]

I think it is useful to cite once more the main evidence.
The Greek inscriptions of the φώλαρχοι were found within a building
in the second insula close by the Porta Marina Sud. However, the finds
originally came from elsewhere, perhaps from the neighbourhood of the
Agora and the Baths, and were moved to the discovery place as an infilling
of the Hadrianic restoration.[6] The main material is as follows:

1 An acephalous herm with an inscription:[7]
   Οὖλις ᾿Αρίστωνος / ἰατρὸς φώλαρχος / ἔτει σπ᾽ (280)
2 A male statue in a toga with an inscription:
   Οὖλις Εὐξίνου ῾Υελήτης ἰατρὸς φώλαρχος ἔτει τοθ᾽ (379)
3 An acephalous herm with an inscription:
   Οὖλις ῾Ιερωνύμου / ἰατρὸς φώλαρχος / ἔτει υμς᾽ (446)
4 An acephalous herm with an inscription:
   Πα[ρ]μενείδης Πύρητος / Οὐλιάδης φυσικός

To (4) has been connected a head of a recognisable philosopher type
presumably representing Parmenides.[8] Finally, various statues and portrait
heads which resemble one another in type, a small statue of Asclepius, and
an acephalous female statue were discovered close by.[9] The last one is often
identified with Hygieia.[10] The style of the statues is late Hellenistic and
on this basis they are dated to the 1st century B.C.[11] The inscriptions
on the bases are, however, dated on palaeographical grounds to the beginning
of the 1st century A.D., probably to the Julio-Claudian period,[12] which

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[5] Musitelli, op. cit.
[6] Napoli, PP 21 (1966) 200—201, 210.
[7] The inscriptions (1—4) are edited by Ebner (1961) 196—198, and again
     (1962) 125—129.
[8] Cf. Jucker, MH 25 (1968) 181—185. He connects the head with the herm;
     De Franciscis, PP 25 (1970) 267—268 disagrees.
[9] Napoli, Atti del 5. Convegno di Studi sulla Magna Grecia, Taranto 1965, 140.
     Id. (1966) 224. About the statues cf. De Franciscis 267f.
[10] Cf. 5. Conv. Magna Grecia, cit. 298. Nutton, PP 25 (1970) 212; Pugliese
     Carratelli, (1970) 246.
[11] De Franciscis 280—282.
[12] Pugliese Carratelli (1963) 385; Napoli (1966) 225.

fits well with the dating of the toga of Οὗλις Εὐξίνου.[13] It has been suggested that the statues are copies of earlier originals,[14] but one must remember that dating an inscription on mere palaeographical grounds can never be very strict. Anyway, it is strange that the statues should be expendable material already at the beginning of the 2nd century A.D., if they are made on the Julio-Claudian period. The dates on the inscriptions have not been fixed. It has been proposed that they are counted either from the foundation of the city (c. 540 B.C.) or from some point in the life of Parmenides.[15]

In addition two Latin inscriptions have been discovered at Velia, which give the word *pholarchus*:

5 ...] *Valerio C.f.*

    Rom(*ilia*) *Cae*[*p*—]

    ioni

    aed(*ili*) *IIIIv*(*iro*) *i*(*ure*) *d*(*icundo*) *pholarc*[*ho*]

    v(*ixit*) *a*(*nnos*) *XLII*

    Valeria Caepilla

    patri[16]

6 ...] *is* [...

    ] *metrio*

    apol (?)

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[13] Cf. De Franciscis 280.

[14] De Franciscis 282.

[15] Ebner (1962) 125; Pugliese Carratelli (1963) 386. Pugliese Carratelli also suggests that they date from the consecration of the temple of Apollo Oulios or Asclepius, (1970) 248.

[16] Ebner, PP 21 (1966) 337 n. 18. The original has been lost. The inscription is published on the basis of a 19th cent. manuscript, which has in l. 6 *Caepilia*. My suggestion is that we should read *Caepilla*, and give her father a *gentilicium Caepio* after a most general custom of forming the daughter's *cognomen* from the father's *gentilicium* with a diminutive suffix *-illa*, see Kajanto, The Latin Cognomina, 1965, 126—127. Pugliese Carratelli has the restoration *Cae*[*pilio decur*]*ioni*, but the name *Caepilius* is not attested in Schultze, Gesch. lat. Eigen-namen, 1933 (1904), nor in the indexes of CIL or the Année Epigraphique. The restoration therefore seems to be unacceptable, and it must be rejected (1970) 244.

ph]olarcho

. . .]tuisc[17]

Finally, a Greek inscription which has been connected to the theme of all the others:

7   Ἡ σύγ[κλητος . . .] Οὐλιά[δην . . .
    ἰατρό . μ[αντιν
    Ἀπόλλ[ωνος
    κα]ὶ ἀρετ[ῆς ἕνεκα[18]

Any two of these inscriptions have at least one key word in common.

This is the main primary material, which is, as can be seen, scarse and problematic. The epithet φώλαρχος seems to be veiled in a thick fog. We can ask several questions: what is the relationship between ἰατρός and φώλαρχος? Why at least three (cf. n. 6 Oul]is?) of the *pholarchi* bear the name Οὖλις? Is there some link between Parmenides Οὐλιάδης and these *pholarchi?*[19] Why the statues from the Julio-Claudian period, as is assumed, are useless infilling material already at the beginning of the 2nd century? Why do we not know anything about φώλαρχοι before this? These questions have given rise to the three different solutions mentioned above.

1. The first solution of the problem is wholly dependent upon the assumption that there was a medical school at Velia from the 4th century B.C.

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[17] Published by Ebner, PP 25 (1970) 264 n. 9 (picture). In his own version Pugliese Carratelli leaves out apol, and the last letters *tuisc*, justly, as it seems, and reads l. 3 *M* [. . .] *ct.*; l. 4 [. . .] *i.*

[18] Published by Ebner (1970) 262 n. 2. I quote the reading of Pugliese Carratelli (1970) 247.

[19] This has been suggested by Pugliese Carratelli because of the names Οὖλις, Οὐλιάδης, which in turn are, according to him, to be related to Ἀπόλλων Οὔλιος, the god of healing (1963) 385—386, id. (1970) 247—248. Another hypothesis is put forward by Gigante who writes "potrebbe Οὐλιάδης φυσικός indicare piuttosto il filosofo naturalista che aveva concretamente affermato l'essere come οὖλον, 'un tutto nella sua struttura', 'un tutto nella sua natura' ", Gigante, PP 19 (1964) 136. Cf. id. PP 19 (1964) 450—452, and RFIC 95 (1967) 487—490. A good review of the problem is Casertano, Parmenide, il metodo la scienza l'esperienza, 1978, 293—294.

onwards.[20] The meaning of the word φώλαρχος was connected to this school, taking as a starting point the meanings 'school', 'meeting place of a secret society' of the word φωλεός/φωλεόν. The meanings are both glosses.[21] The weakness of the premiss depends, I think, on these very speculations, which seem to be unprovable at least for the moment. They have met serious criticism, too.[22] In fact all the evidence which has been put forward in favor of the medical school only seems to show the existence of a spa connected, perhaps, with some doctors.[23] This meaning of the epithet is therefore now generally rejected.

In a slight modification to the first solution Velia has been seen as a seat of a Pythagorean association.[24] This society, as Pugliese Carratelli proposed, got its inspiration in one way or another from Parmenides.[25] It is possible that there was Hellenistic Pythagoreanism at Velia, though one must be very cautious about grounding a Pythagorean association on the basis of a single coin which bears a pentacle, a symbol which is not at all typical on the coins of Velia.[26] The statues alone are not sufficient

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[20] The influence of Apollo in the founding of the city is evident (cf. Hdt. 1,167), but a cult of Apollo as a healing god is not attested in Magna Grecia before, see Ebner, (1962) 132. There was a cult of Apollo Oulios in Asia Minor, viz. at Miletus and Delos (Strab. 14,1,6), and it has been assumed that it existed also at Velia brought from Phocaea. But as we have seen (cf. fn. 19) the names Οὖλις, Οὐλιάδης have no necessary connexion with Apollo Oulios. This cult has been hypothesized at Velia starting from the names, and not vice versa as it should.

[21] Hesych. s.v. φωλεόν; φωλεύει; Poll. 4,19; 4,41; 6,8. Cf. also Callim. Fr. 68 Pfeiffer; Philet. Fr. 10 Powell.

[22] Gigante, (1964) 450—451; Cantarella, 5. Conv. Magna Grecia, 147; id., Importanza della scuola medica salernitana nella cultura dell'Europa medievale, 1966, 9; Nutton, PP 25 (1970) 211—225.

[23] Cf. Plut. Aem. Paul. 39; Hor. epist. 1,15; SEG XII 378; also Nutton, 212, 217—219.

[24] Pugliese Carratelli, (1963) 385—386.

[25] Id. (1963) 386.

[26] Ebner, Boll. Circolo Numism. di Napoli (BCN) (1951) 8f., id., BCN (1961) 17f.. The coin is e.g. PP 21 (1966) 363 Pl. V n. 17. On the general symbols of the coins of Velia, see Head, Historia Numorum, 1911, 89—90; Ebner, PP 21 (1966) 342—365; id. PP 33 (1978) 68—73.

evidence either, because some of them can be portraits of any other important persons, e.g. of a *patronus municipii.*[27]

The meanings 'school', 'meeting place of a secret society' are not met elsewhere in literary sources, except in the glosses cited in fn. 21. The semantic development of the word φωλεός/φωλεά gives no clues to this direction, and the meaning in Modern Greek is 'nest, lair, burrow' (φωλεά K, φωλιά Λ) or 'the torpidity of animals during the winter' (φωλεῖα).

2. This solution of G. Pugliese Carratelli was proposed after Ebner had published some new inscriptions of Velia, where it was noticed that the epithet existed also in two Latin inscriptions with no reference to a doctor (5,6).[28] Pugliese Carratelli now rejected his previous position, and started anew from the basic meaning 'cave' of the word φωλεός. He connected it with the figurative cave of the snake, the cult animal of Asclepius, in the *Thesaurus* of the god's temple. In the beginning, he states, an offer cake, πελανός, was given to the snake at the sanctuary. Later on, however, the πελανός was changed to a money offer while the earlier terminology was kept alive.[29] On these grounds Pugliese Carratelli supposed that φώλαρχος was the title of a person responsible for the *Thesaurus* of the temple of Asclepius as some kind of a magistrate, if not necessarily a priest.[30]

This ingenious speculation has, however, at least a few weaknesses. In assuming a cult of Asclepius at Velia Pugliese Carratelli is building his arguments on an uncertain ground. We do not know for sure whether a cult of Asclepius existed at Velia.[31] The statue of the god discovered there is not a cult statue, as De Franciscis has shown.[32] Also the assumed statue

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[27] A *patronus* of Velia was Lucius Nonius Asprenas (CIL X 8342b) who was distantly related to Augustus. Ebner wondered whether Augustus himself did not visit at Velia and erect in his honour a statue resembling that of 'Prima Porta' (1962) 135 fn. 19. But statues were sometimes erected to the important persons of a city (e.g. *patroni*), which were exact copies of the imperial model, only the head was later united to the body. See e.g. the statue of Holconius Rufus in Pompeii, Zanker, AA (1980) 349—361.

[28] Pugliese Carratelli, (1970) 243—248.

[29] Pugliese Carratelli, (1970) 245—246.

[30] Id. 246.

[31] See Ebner's evidence on behalf of the cult, (1962) cit.

[32] De Franciscis 283.

of Hygieia does not specifically represent that goddess, but rather a priestess.[33] Should we rather connect the statue of Asclepius with the Gymnasium, which surely existed at Velia, and which according to M. Napoli could be the seat of the statues found from the 2nd insula?[34] The inscription Ebner refers to in order to motivate the cult of Hygieia in the city is a lapse of his, it being dedicated to Hestia (Ἱστίη IG XIV 658).

If we, however, accept that the snake on some Velian coins,[35] the inscriptions (1—7), and the spa activity do imply a cult of Asclepius, we must wonder about the total absence of the kind of magistrate or epithet elsewhere. We must consider it as an evident weakness in the theory, even if it is perhaps not enough to refute it totally. I also suspect that Pugliese Carratelli, on the other hand, makes too much ado about the lack of the title *medicus* in the inscription (5).[36] Professional titles have not been studied enough, and it is probable that they were not always written on the epitaph.[37] We must also, of course, keep in mind that the implicit meaning of *pholarchus* could be *medicus* at the time the epitaph of Valerius was written.[38] In this complex situation we seem to have to admit that there is no indisputable solution of the relationship between ἰατρός/*medicus* and φώλαρχος/*pholarchus*. In the *cursus honorum* of Valerius the epithet is placed last, stating a Greek honorary title which did not belong to a normal Roman career of a magistrate. The other Latin (?) inscription (6) is very fragmentary and erased, and so offers almost no information to us.

3. After these attempts to solve the problem, S. Musitelli brings us a great deal of new information.[39] He analyses with care the semantics of the words φωλεός/φωλεόν/φωλεύειν, and states that they are used to mean the torpidity, if not real lethargy, of certain animals during hibernation, e.g.

[33] De Franciscis 283—284.

[34] A Cornelius Gemellus was *gymnasiarchus*, inscript. publ. by Dito, Velia, colonia focese, 1891, 95, and Mingazzini, Velia, Atti e mem. Soc. Magna Grecia, 1954, 51; cf. Napoli (1966) 225.

[35] Carelli, Nummorum Veterum Italiae, 1812, 93 n. 96; 94 n. 115; Numm. Vet. Ital. Tabul., 1850, Pl. 141 n. 6; Pl. 139 n. 6; Garruzzi, Le monete dell'Italia antica, 1885, II p. 174 n. 11 (Pl. 119).

[36] Pugliese Carratelli (1970) 244.

[37] Korpela, Medici Urbis, Master's Thesis, Univ. of Helsinki, 1980 (unpublished).

[38] End of 1st cent. B.C./beginning of 1st cent. A.D..

[39] Musitelli, op. cit.

bears, some birds, some fishes, snakes.[40] Giving numerous examples he argues that the meaning is mostly a certain state of temporary immobility sometimes even connected with people.[41]

In addition he calls into attention that at Megalopolis there was a place called Φωλεόν or Κωλαιόν.[42] It was situated somewhere near the walls of the city, in the place where the Spartan Cleomenes attacked the city (223 B.C.). Musitelli connects the place with a sanctuary dedicated to Demeter and Kore described by Pausanias.[43] On both sides of the entrance to the area there were reliefs of different gods: on one side Artemis, on the other, Asclepius and Hygieia.[44] The identification with the Φωλεόν/ Κωλαιόν is made using the reliefs as an evidence. He concludes these arguments by asking if there could be a Φωλεόν of this kind at Velia, too, since it also existed at Megalopolis.[45]

Finally, Musitelli has ingeniously noticed some medieval map texts describing places with words foleia/folia/foleria/foliata.[46] The meaning of foleia/folia in these texts must be, he claims, some kind of a pavilion.[47] Hence he writes "sospetto non si possa escludere si tratti, qui, di veri e proprî s a c e l l a nel senso di cappelle/oratorî... (Musitelli's emphasis)". With this, he identifies the places mentioned on the maps as situated along the 'tin road' of Massiliots (Phocaeans), and suggests that foleia etc. would be a loan from the Phocaean dialect.[48]

On the basis of these premisses he gives his solution: φώλαρχος was the head of a Pholeon, which has the meaning of a 'sanctuary', "ove i fedeli si ritirarono a φωλεύειν, ossia dove si pratica l'i n c u b a z i o n e, ove si c a d e n e l s o n n o onde ricevere dal Dio il sogno terapeutico" (Musitelli's emphasis).[49]

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[40] Musitelli 244—249.

[41] Musitelli 247; cf. Plut. Mor. 733C = Arist. Fr 9, p. 22 Ross.

[42] Polyb. 2,55,5; 9,18,1.

[43] Paus. 8,31,1f.; cf. 8,32,4.

[44] Paus. 8,31,1—2.

[45] Musitelli 254.

[46] Du Gange, Gloss. ad Script. Med et Inf. Lat., 1938, s.v., p. 538—539.

[47] Musitelli 251.

[48] Musitelli 252—253.

[49] Musitelli 254.

In spite of its brilliancy this solution also has some weak links in the chain of argumentation. When analysing the meaning of the word φωλεός/ φωλεόν Musitelli seems to emphasize too much the abstract significance of the word, the *state* of temporary immobility, almost a kind of 'disease'. This kind of metonymy is, of course, possible in principle, but it seems hard to find in the texts cited by him. They give us rather a concrete meaning: a *place* where the animals retreated to hibernate, or where they fell into a temporary torpidity. Also the verb φωλεύειν seems to have a very concrete meaning 'to hibernate'. However, these remarks do not alter much the general meaning of the words in question, and one must evidently seek the solution from that direction, if one at all connects φώλαρχος to this family of words.

A more serious possibility of error lies in the speculation about the place named Φωλεόν/Κωλαιόν at Megalopolis. It is not without danger to base one's arguments on a name which has two different variants in the same author (see fn. 42), choosing only the other. Bölte and Meyer also have the variant Φωλεόν, and they give it the explanation 'Mauerabschnitt'.[50] If we consider the other variant Κωλαιόν, we notice it could support the given explanation when related with the word κώλον.[51] But if we accept the name Φωλεόν as the right one, we must consider the premisses on which Musitelli identifies the place with a sanctuary. Once more the cults of Asclepius and Hygieia are brought forward, and put in contact with the Φωλεόν. But as we already saw, the existence of these cults at Velia is not proved, and so they should not be relied on as evidence. On the other hand, the identification of the place from Pausanias' mere description calls for caution.

The most suspicious step is, however, Musitelli's account of the semantic development of *foleia/folia*. Having accurately analysed the meaning of the words in question in the map texts, Musitelli moves with too little evidence from the meaning 'pavilion' to the meaning 'sanctuary'.[52] The texts cited in his paper do not justify this kind of metonymy, it being thus a mere guess. On the other hand, we have no evidence that the word φωλεόν would be Phocaean dialect, as we can not ascertain the original

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[50] Bölte-Meyer, Pholeos, RE XX, 1941, col. 513.
[51] The meaning is 'side or front of a building'.
[52] Musitelli 251—252.

provenance of the word φώλαρχος and its date. We have nothing similar to it at Massilia in our sources. Thus Musitelli's mention of the 'tin road' of Phocaeans amounts to nothing but a guess, too.

4. After these profound interpretations it is difficult to find totally new arguments to explain the meaning of the epithet. A linguistic possibility is to connect the word φώλαρχος with the word φύλαρχος. This kind of phonological, or rather graphemic variation is at least in theory possible. In other words, we can posit a synchronic variation υ~ου~ω using the existing dialect material, e.g. ἀργύριον~ἀργούριον, τύχα~τούχα.[53] Hence a variation φυλή~*φουλή is possible; that can have a graphic or phonetical variant *φωλή, as there is in βουλά~βωλά.[54] Unfortunately, we do not have enough material from Velia to prove this hypothesis. We have only the variation ο~ου in the gen. sing. of o-stems, e.g. Ὀλύμπιο Καίρ[ο and Ζηνὸς Ὀρίο,[55] which proves at least that similar variation existed at Velia, but it is not sufficient alone to prove the whole hypothesis.

We could also find a new clue from the name Οὖλις, but it seems to lead only to a new ἀπορία. Some sources mention in fact that Demeter was called Οὐλώ,[56] which is derived from the word οὖλος 'corn-sheaf'. There was a cult of Demeter at Velia at least from the 1st century B.C. onwards, and it is probable that Demeter had an important place in the religion of Velia.[57] The cult also had the kind of mystery ceremonies to which φώλαρχος could be connected, if we hold to the gloss meaning of the word φωλεός. However, with the exception of Latin evidence the sources about the cult of Demeter are only implicit, and we can only assume its existence in the city before the 1st century B.C.[58] This seems, however, more

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[53] Cf. Buck, The Greek Dialects, 1955, p. 28. The stress is of no relevance here.

[54] Cf. Buck p. 29; p. 65, in West-Greek both variations exist.

[55] Publ. by Guarducci, PP 21 (1966) 287—294; id. PP 25 (1970) 253—254 n. 1. See also Buck, p. 184 n. 1f..

[56] Sem. FHG IV p. 492, 19 = Athen. 14,618 de. The hymns sung in honour of the goddess are called οὖλοι, Did. apud Schol. Apoll. Rhod. 1,972.

[57] Cic. Balb. 24,55; Val. Max. 1,1,1; CIL X 467; Ebner (1978) 65 n. 11.

[58] Cf. an inscription on a candelabrum Φερσεφόνη, Ebner (1966) 337 n. 23.

probable than not, but does not help actually with the problem of the *pholarchi*.

As a conclusion we must admit that the problem of φώλαρχος can not have a final solution on the basis of the present sources. Every argument has its weaknesses. But we are left little to operate with, when we reject all speculative evidence.