THE IMPERATIVAL INFINITIVE IN HOMER, WITH
SPECIAL REFERENCE TO A 20

BY

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Παῖδα δ’ ἐμοὶ λύσατε φίλην, τὰ δ’ ἄποινα δέχεσθαι. So runs A 20 in
the Oxford text of D.B. Monro and T.W. Allen, who record
λύσατε or λύσατε as the vulgate, and λύσαί τε of Apio and
Herodorus, with six mediaeval manuscripts. δέχεσθε is the vulgate,
dέχεσθαι the reading of Apio and Herodorus, and of some manu-
scripts. The source for ‘Apio and Herodorus’ is Eustathius 28.2ff.
(M. van der Valk 1. p.45): ὅτι τὸ ‘παῖδα δὲ μοι λύσατε (sic) φίλην,
tὰ δ’, ἄποινα δέχεσθε, ἀξόμενοι Δίῳς υἱόν’ Ἀπίων καὶ Ἡρόδωρος, ἦν
βιβλίον εἰς τὰ τοῦ Ὅμηρου φέρεται, διδόοσι καὶ ἀπαρέμφατους
γράφεσθαι. ‘παῖδα δὲ μοι λύσαι τε φίλην, τὰ δ’ ἄποινα δέχεσθαι
λαμβανομένου, φασίν, ἀπὸ κοινοῦ τοῦ δοίεν, ἵνα λέγῃ, ὅτι δοῖεν θεοὶ
tὴν τε παῖδα λύσαι καὶ τὰ δόρα λαβεῖν. The comment, λαμβα-
nομένου, φασίν ... λαβεῖν is absurd and may be ignored. Clearly, if
λύσαι and δέχεσθαι are read, they are imperative and not de-
pendent on δοῖεν, cf.schol. b T ad loc. τὸ δὲ δέχεσθαι ἀντὶ προστα-
kτικοῦ ἀπαρέμφατον.

The readings of the Oxford text are preferred by La Roche, W.
Leaf, P. Mazon (Budé), and P. Chantraine1), and are taken for
granted in the commentaries of M.M. Willcock and G.S. Kirk. On
the other hand Wolf, Becker, Dindorf and K.F. Ameis–C. Hentze
have παῖδα δ’ ἐμοὶ λύσαι τε φίλην τὰ τ’ ἄποινα δέχεσθαι. That is
they follow ‘Apio and Herodorus’, except that they change τὰ δ’ to
τὰ τ’ in view of the preceding τε. With this reading the place of the
first τε suggests that παῖδα and ἐμοὶ are common to both the co-

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1) Grammaire homérique II,317 § 460. Chantraine notes the “opposition entre l’op-
tatif et l’infiniif”, but he does not interpret the change in mood.

ordinated members: λύσαι and τὰ ἂποινα δέχεσθαι. ἐμοὶ could then be taken as personal dative with δέχεσθαι (cf. O 87 f. Θέμιστι ... δέκτο δέπας) and παίδα could be understood as παιδός with ἂποινα (cf. A 111 κούρης ... ἂποινα). But perhaps the change of δέ to τε is not needed, as “the collocation of τε and δέ is not very rare in Homer". As λύσατε seems now to have become the vulgate, it would not be superfluous to consider the merits of λύσαι τε.

The fact that Eustathius is the authority for ‘Apion and Herodorus’ might give the impression that λύσαι τε is only a late variant. But this is not necessarily so. It has been shown by H. Erbse that a Byzantine commentary under the names of Apio and Herodorus was a source both for the scholia on the Iliad in Eustathius and for the scholia in Venetus A. Moreover Erbse suggests that the scholium in Eustathius containing λύσαι τε is based on one of Nicanor. If so, the reading was known in the second century A.D., and may also have been known to Aristarchus. No doubt this is not certain, but on the other hand it does not appear from an examination of the tradition that λύσατε was necessarily the earlier of the two readings, with λύσαι τε formed from it. So it follows that the two readings should be considered on their merits.

Discussion may begin with Leaf’s note on A 20, which concludes: “But the text (i.e. λύσατε) may pass, as the optative is well suited to a suppliant. As between δέχεσθε and δέχεσθαι there is nothing to choose; in either case the change of mood is rather harsh.” He refers to Monro’s Homeric Grammar (2nd ed.), 271 § 299b for the view that λύσατε expresses “a gentle or deferential Imperative, conveying advice, suggestion, or the like.” Whether Chrysese’s suppliant status calls for the use of the optative will be considered at a later stage;

2) Leaf on E 359 κόμισαι τέ με δος δέ μοι ὑπονν. To his examples add I 519 νῦν δ’ ἄμα τ’ αὐτίκα πολλά διδοῖ, τὰ δ’ ὄψεθεν ὑπέστη, Σ 211 πυρσοὶ τε φλεγέθουσιν ἐπήρωμαι, ὑψάσε δ’ αὐγή / γίνεται Η 418, 420, Ψ 178, 277, Ω 377. τε is followed by δέ τε at K 226, Ψ 590. On τε ... δέ Denniston (Greek Particles, 513) remarks “δέ is often unnecessarily emended by editors”; cf. Jebb on S. Tr. 143.


4) See Erbse on schol. A 20 (Scholia ... Iliadem I, 15).