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A Themistoclean Myth

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Kock *ad. loc.*) the -*iv*- must be short. They would not invent a name which could not be used in iambs.

Πυθίας is marked -*iv* in Pape's Lexicon, I suspect by a misprint, since in similar names Pape marks -*iv*. The name only occurs, I think, in Delphian prose inscriptions; e.g. Collitz 2023. If Ἐρασινάδης (-*iv*-) is the right form in Ar. *Kanæ*, 1196 we may infer Ἀλκινάδας in Thuc. v. 24: but the variant spelling -ιδης is probably correct in both cases, and the patronymics come from Ἐρασίνος, Ἀλκίνος, rather than from Ἐρασίνης Ἀλκίνης.

The upshot seems to be that our evidence is at present inconclusive. The suffixes -*ino*-*ina*- are well established in Greek proper

names (Κρατῖνος &c.) as well as in words like ἄγχιστῖνος, κορακῖνος, χοιρίνη (Brugmann Engl. Trans. ii. p. 157 § 68): -*ino*-*ina*- are common in adjectives (δρῖνος, φήγινος, ἀνθρώπινος) and are found in such quasi-proper names as Μυρρίνη &c. We find conclusive evidence for Αἰσχίνης and slight indications in favour of Λεπτίνης. Etruscan forms like *Caecina* may or may not be analogous.

May I at the same time correct a more serious error which escaped my notice on p. 398 of the same book? Galen is there placed in the time of 'Augustus.' It should of course be 'M. Aurelius.'

GILBERT MURRAY.

A THEMISTOCLEAN MYTH.

It has sometimes been asserted that myths may owe their origin or at least their form to works of art, of which the meaning was misapprehended. Such myths would form an interesting variety of the aetiological species. Hitherto it has not been easy to point to satisfactory instances of the variety.¹ Recent investigation offering us a curious instance of a myth which seems to owe its shape to a well known statue, it seems worth while to set forth briefly its character and history.

I can claim no merit of discovery in the matter. The credit of discovering the evidence belongs to Dr. Rhousopoulos of Athens; the application of the evidence to the question of the origin of a myth is due to Dr. C. Wachsmuth.² I have only worked out their suggestions in more detail in order to present an interesting discovery to a wider English audience.

In regard to the circumstances of the death of Themistocles at Magnesia we have, as is well known, varying accounts. Thucydides (i. 138) states that he died a natural death, though some asserted that he poisoned himself, because he was unable to carry out the promises he had made to the Great King. Thucydides must here refer to the tale which is alluded to in the *Knights* of Aristophanes (l. 83):—

βέλτιστον ἡμῖν αἶμα ταύρειον πιεῖν,
ὃ Θμιστοκλέους γὰρ θάνατος αἰρετώτερος,

¹ Compare, however, Milchhoefer in *Ath. Mitth.* v. 45; Goblet d'Alviella, *Migration des Symboles*.

² *Rheinisches Museum*, 1897, p. 140.

which shows that the belief that Themistocles had died of drinking bull's blood was accepted at Athens in B.C. 424, and had almost given rise to a proverb. Of later writers Cornelius Nepos follows Thucydides. But Plutarch and Diodorus both accept the tale of the bull's blood. Modern historians naturally prefer the Thucydidean story of a natural death. In so doing they follow the line already taken by Cicero (*Brutus*, xi.). That writer asserts that it was Clitarchus and Stratocles who invented the story that Themistocles sacrificed a bull, and receiving its blood in a patera, drank it and died. Cicero adds that this version was naturally preferred by later writers as more susceptible of rhetorical and tragical embellishment; and here he seems to express the truth.

Themistocles is not the only celebrated man who was said to have thus met his death. Among prehistoric heroes Jason and Midas thus died; among historic characters Psammenitus, and Smerdis the brother of Cambyses. Hannibal is also by some said to have committed suicide by drinking bull's blood in imitation of Themistocles. The earlier of these reputed poisonings can only have been vouched for by vague rumour. The manner of the suicide of Hannibal is probably an invention of the rhetoricians.³

It seems fair to assume with Cornelius Nepos, Cicero, Grote, and others, that the historic fact was, as Thucydides says, that Themistocles died a natural death, and that

³ See Roscher in *Neue Jahrbücher für Philologie*, 1883, p. 158.

the story of the suicide by drinking bull's blood was a myth. Let us then examine the myth and separate its elements. A myth may fairly be regarded as having commonly three parts, an ethical motive, an intellectual justification, and a body or form. The motive of the myth before us may be, as Cicero suggests, merely the desire to have a tale suited to rhetorical and tragical treatment. Or there may have been mingled with this, very Greek, motive, one more strictly moral, the feeling that one who like Themistocles had been a traitor to Greece, ought not to have died in his bed. Mingled with this ethical element are others of a more intellectual or rationalistic kind. Thucydides records, as we have seen, the explanation that Themistocles slew himself because he could not fulfil his promises to the Great King. Another explanation is given by Diodorus¹, that Themistocles induced Xerxes to swear that he would not attempt again to invade Greece save with him as general, and then committed suicide heroically, and so secured Greece from Persian attack. The two explanations seem alike to have arisen in the schools of rhetoric. We have a glimpse which suggests of how flimsy material much of Greek history is made up.

There yet remains for consideration the body or form of the myth. Why is Themistocles said to have sacrificed a bull and then drunk its blood? It is the more desirable fully to explain this form, because it was already fixed at the earliest time to which we can trace the myth, B.C. 424.

It is impossible that any one could drink bull's blood, and straightway fall dead. I am informed on excellent physiological authority that there is nothing poisonous in the blood of bulls. To drink hot bull's blood would be unpleasant, and might make one ill, but it would not be fatal. Pliny² writes 'Taurorum (sanguis) celerrime coit atque durescit, ideo pestifer potu maxime.' This is at the least a great exaggeration. It is possible that the popular notion of its poisonous character may have arisen from the use of the blood of victims by priests, first for producing a temporary inspiration, and secondly, as an ordeal.³ When used as an ordeal fresh blood or even less injurious substances might when allied with a guilty conscience prove fatal.

The belief that Themistocles took bull's blood as a poison, almost to a certainty arose out of the details of a statue of the hero erected at Magnesia, the place of his decease.

Thucydides (l.c.) tells us of a monument, *μνημεῖον*, set up at Magnesia in Ionia in memory of Themistocles. Cornelius Nepos gives us a hint of the character of this monument. It was a sculptural group, *statuæ in foro Magnesiæ*. In the Athenian *Mittheilungen* for 1896 (p. 22), Dr. Rhousopoulos of Athens publishes a coin of Magnesia, struck in the reign of Antoninus Pius, which almost beyond doubt gives us a trustworthy representation of this monument. It was in the form of a bearded statue of the hero, naked, wearing a wreath, holding in the left hand a sword, in the right a patera over an altar, while a bull lies dead at its feet. The identifying inscription, ΘΕΜΙCΤΟΚΛΗC is added in the field.⁴ The statue is quite in the style of the earlier fifth century. It reminds us especially of the naked bearded figure at Munich commonly called a heroic king, but regarded by Furtwängler as Zeus,⁵ which dates from about B.C. 460.

Dr. Rhousopoulos sees in this statue a representation of the last scene of the life of Themistocles. This appears to me a mistaken view; and I do not hesitate to prefer to it the interpretation suggested by Wachsmuth, which I have worked out in more detail.

The accessories of the statue are intended to show clearly in what light Themistocles was regarded by the people of Magnesia, namely as a civic hero or *οἰκιστής*. The offerings which were brought to persons raised to heroic rank were libations, and a bull, usually sacrificed at an annual festival. The animal was slain at the tomb, and its blood allowed to run into a trench. The ceremony was called *βοῦν ἐναγίζειν*⁶ as opposed to *βοῦν θύειν*, the word *θύειν* being usually reserved for the Gods. Slain bull and patera were added, it would seem, to the statue, to show that Themistocles held heroic rank. But how natural and easy it was for stupid people, among whom myths frequently take their rise, to see in these same accessories allusion to the manner

⁴ The magistrate's name is ἐν Διοσκουρίδου Γράτον.

⁵ *Meisterwerke* Pl. xxiii, xxiv: *Masterpieces*, p. 212.

¹ xi. 58, 3.

² *N.H.* xi. 222, cf. xxviii. 147.

³ See Frazer, *The Golden Bough* i. 34. Pausanias (vii. 25, 13) mentions the draught of bull's blood as an ordeal to test the chastity of the priestess.

⁶ See Hdt. ii. 44: Diodorus iv. 39. &c. Cf. the inscription in Kaibel, *Epigr. Græcæ*, No. 461, *μὲχρις ἐφ' ἡμῶν ἡ πόλις ταῦτον ἐναγίζεν*: also the inscriptions of the Diogeneion at Athens.

of the death of Themistocles, and thus to furnish an embodiment for the conviction that he must have met with a violent and a self-inflicted death. The very form of the myth as Cicero gives it, *hunc isti aiunt, quum taurum immolavisset, excepisse sanguinem patera, et eo potu mortuum concidisse*, seems to point direct to the statue as it stood.

Here then we have an excellent instance of the rise of a myth, not out of words misunderstood, but out of a statue misinterpreted. And a specially interesting feature is the rapidity with which the myth sprang up. Themistocles was banished about 471, after which he lived for several

years in Asia. The *Knights* was acted in 424. Within some forty years of the death of Themistocles, and during the lifetime of hundreds who had known him, this curious myth in regard to his death arose, and had become so generally accepted as to be almost proverbial. There is in some quarters a notion that myths in regard to historical persons take a long time to spread and find acceptance. One would like to know on what evidence this view is based. At all events we have in the myth before us an instance to prove the contrary of it.

PERCY GARDNER.

VARIOUS EMENDATIONS.

ARISTOPHANES, *Vesp.* 765 sqq.

- BA. ἀλλ' ἐνθαδὶ
αὐτοῦ μένων δικάζε τοῖσιν οἰκέταις.
ΦΙ. περὶ τοῦ; τί ληρεῖς;
BA. ταῦθ' ἄπερ ἐκεῖ πράττεται
ὅτι τὴν θύραν ἀνέωξεν ἡ σκηὶς λάθρα,
† ταύτης ἐπιβολὴν ψηφιεῖ μίαν μόνην κ.τ.λ.

The point lies in the awarding of petty punishments to petty crimes. Editors who have tried to keep ταύτης have explained (1) τῆς δίκης, which is far to seek, and, when sought, is hardly a satisfactory genitive, (2) τῆς σκηίδος. For the latter, the dative is a much more natural case, and hence ταύτῃ γ' of Blaydes. But, even admitting ταύτης ἐπιβολὴν to be capable of meaning 'a fine in her case,' what is to be understood with μίαν? The commentators say δραχμὴν. Yet this word is not (as in such idioms it should be) at once suggested by the context and by usage. Moreover, even if the plural δραχμῶν is in certain circumstances easily omitted with numerals, e.g. *χίλιας*, it does not follow that the singular δραχμὴν is to be omitted with μίαν. We can say in English 'I will charge him five hundred,' viz. 'pounds,' but we cannot equally say 'I will charge him one.' Such expressions are decided by use. Again, would a Greek master fine a slave 'only one drachma' as a paltry infliction for a paltry offence? In the land of the triobol the sum would be a large one to a slave, even if money-fines were likely in such a case.

If any word is to be supplied, it should rather be *πληγὴν*; but the truth lies otherwise. I feel convinced that we should read

βλαύτης ἐπιβολὴν ψηφιεῖ μίαν μόνην

'you shall vote one single application of the slipper.' ἐπιβολὴν then contains a neat play on the sense of 'fine,' and that of ἐπιβάλλειν *πληγὰς*. For 'slipping' (not yet obsolete as a punishment) cf. *βλαντώ*; Lucian, *De Consc. Hist.* 10, *παύμενος ἐπὶ τῆς Ὀμφάλης τῷ σανδαλίῳ*; Terence, *Eun.* v. 7, 4 (1028), etc.

Theocritus, xiii. 8-15 (Heracles and Hylas).

καὶ νιν πάντ' ἐδίδαξε, πατὴρ ὥσει φιλον νῖα,
ὅσσα μαθὼν ἀγαθὸς καὶ αἰδοῖμος αὐτὸς ἔγεντο·
χωρὶς δ' οὐδέτοκ' ἦς
ὥς αὐτῷ κατὰ θυμὸν ὁ παῖς πεποναμένος εἶη,
† αὐτῷ δ' εὖ ἔλκων ἔς ἀλαθινὸν ἄνδρ' ἀποβαίη.

There is no need to detail the suggestions hitherto made upon the last line. The exact sense required is not, perhaps, so certain as in the case of some other corruptions, but I think the following restoration satisfies all the conditions, most of the mischief having been done by erroneous breathings and an iota subscript. Read

αὐτῷ δ' εὖ εἰκὼν ἐς ἀλαθινὸν ἄνδρ' ἀποβαίη

'and that, an image (copy) of himself (Heracles), he might turn out a genuine man.' αὐτῷ εὖ = ἑαυτοῦ. Hylas was to be an exact copy of Heracles.

[In the fragment of Eubulus *κυβευταί*, 1, 1