

# Anthemocritus and the ὄργας Disputes

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THE STORY of the Athenian herald Anthemocritus in its only extensive form is recounted in Plutarch's *Life of Pericles*, ch.30. According to Plutarch, Anthemocritus was sent out on the motion of Pericles just before the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War. His mission at that time was to denounce the Megarians for their encroachment on the *ἱερά ὄργας*, a strip of land between Athens and Megara which was sacred to Demeter and Persephone. Although he was to visit both Megara and Sparta, Anthemocritus never completed his mission but was murdered, and the Megarians were blamed. Consequently a certain Charinus moved a decree which was passed through the Athenian assembly with these stipulations:

1. That there should be irreconcilable enmity on the part of Athens toward Megara.
2. That any Megarian found on Attic soil would be put to death.
3. That the generals should swear as part of their ancestral oath upon entering office that they would invade the Megarid twice during each succeeding year.
4. That Anthemocritus should be honorably buried at the Dipylon Gate.

Plutarch ends the account by adding that the Megarians denied the murder, throwing the blame for Athenian hatred on Pericles and Aspasia and appealing to verses 524ff of Aristophanes' *Acharnians*, which state that enmity arose between the two states because of some woman stealing.

Although Thucydides mentions biannual invasions of the Megarid for the first years of the war (2.31.3; 4.66.1), which would seem to reflect the third provision of Charinus' decree as presented in Plutarch, it has always puzzled scholars that he says nothing specifically of either Anthemocritus' murder or Charinus' subsequent retaliation. Furthermore, as most scholars now agree, the problem of Thucydides' silence cannot be solved by seeing in the provisions of

the Megarian Exclusion Decree (Thuc. 1.39.1) a veiled allusion to the first stipulation of Charinus' decree.<sup>1</sup>

These difficulties have recently prompted W. R. Connor to propose that the Anthemocritus-Charinus episode belongs not to the period immediately preceding the Peloponnesian War but rather to the ὀργάς dispute waged by Athens and Megara in the mid-fourth century (ca. 352–349 B.C.).<sup>2</sup>

Connor's argument relies heavily on a chance notice in the *Letter of Philip* (XII in the Demosthenic corpus), generally accepted as a fourth century work.<sup>3</sup> In referring to two of the more obscure events occurring prior to Chaeronea, namely the seizure of the herald Nicias by the Athenians and their ill treatment of the Macedonian ambassador Amphilocheus, the *Letter* remarks (§4): *καίτοι τὸ παρανομεῖν εἰς κήρυκα καὶ πρέσβεις τοῖς ἄλλοις τε πᾶσιν ἀσεβὲς εἶναι δοκεῖ καὶ μάλισθ' ὑμῶν· Μεγαρέων γοῦν Ἀνθεμόκριτον ἀνελόντων εἰς τοῦτ' ἐλήλυθεν ὁ δῆμος ὥστε μυστηρίων μὲν εἶργον αὐτούς, ὑπομνήματα δὲ τῆς ἀδικίας ἔστησαν ἀνδριάντα πρὸ τῶν πυλῶν.* Since the *Letter* usually alludes only to contemporary events (except in §§7 and 20 where it is quite specific about referring to "ancient history," viz. τὸ παλαιόν and Ἀλεξάνδρου τοῦ προγόνου), Connor interprets this passage as indicating a fourth-century context.

The desired context is supplied by IG II<sup>2</sup> 204, which attests that in 352/51 the Athenians voted to fix new boundaries in the ὀργάς and, as we learn from Philochorus (*FGrHist* 328 F 155) and Androtion (*FGrHist* 324 F 30), they did just that in 350/49, the Megarians offering no resistance. In this connection Demosthenes 13.32 (ca. 350) praises a recent Athenian decision: . . . πρὸς τοὺς καταράτους Μεγαρέας ἀποτεμνομένους τὴν ὀργάδα, ἐξιέναι, κωλύειν, μὴ ἐπιτρέπειν. Elsewhere (23.212. ca. 352) Demosthenes again refers to the Megarians as *κατάρατοι*, a term certainly applicable to people who had lately murdered a herald. These are the main points of Connor's argument.

<sup>1</sup> The problems related to Charinus' decree and the Megarian Decree have already been treated extensively. See P. A. Brunt, "The Megarian Decree," *AJP* 72 (1951) 269–82, and K. Völkl, "Das megarische Psephisma," *RhM* 94 (1951) 330–36, for full details. Also valuable is the article of W. R. Connor (*infra* n.2).

<sup>2</sup> "Charinus' Megarian Decree," *AJP* 83 (1962) 225–46.

<sup>3</sup> Usually scholars have followed P. Wendland, "Die Schriftstellerei des Anaximenes von Lampsakos," *Hermes* 39 (1904) 419–43, in attributing the *Letter* to Anaximenes of Lampsacus; cf. K. J. Beloch, *Griechische Geschichte* III.2<sup>2</sup> (Leipzig 1923) 24–25; A. Momigliano, "Due problemi storiografici," *RendIstLomb* 65 (1932) 569–73. Whether Wendland is

Although K. J. Dover<sup>4</sup> has already questioned the Connor thesis, no one has yet noticed one important consideration in this regard which can be drawn from the testimonia for the fourth-century *ὄργας* affair. In addition to the fourth-century testimonia already cited, we have now from a papyrus the complete commentary of Didymus<sup>5</sup> on Demosthenes Or. 13, the speech which congratulates the Athenians for stopping the “accursed” Megarians.<sup>6</sup> Except for his concern in dating the oration, Didymus devotes his chief attention to commenting on Demosthenes’ reference to the *ὄργας*; clearly he was interested in the episode and must have studied it in some detail. The commentary discourses on what an *ὄργας* is, on the philological origins of the word, on the location of the *ὄργας* in question and, of course, on the dispute itself. Didymus’ sources were the best—Androtion, who actually took part in affairs of state at this time, and Philochorus, whom Jacoby calls “the first scholar among the Atthidographers”; Theopompus (*FGrHist* 115 F 164) is also quoted. The fragments of Androtion and Philochorus cited above are in fact drawn from Didymus’ commentary. It would seem, therefore, that if Anthemocritus had been murdered sometime in the late 350s, Didymus would assuredly have known about it, since the possibility that neither Androtion nor Philochorus mentioned such an event is extremely remote. Aside from developments in the Sacred War there should have been little else besides the *ὄργας* dispute to occupy the interest of an Attic historian in these years; and since, as Jacoby remarks,<sup>7</sup> an *Atthis* “always arranges according to the sequence of the facts in the year, adding documentary evidence as to movers, ambassadors, generals, etc.,” details should not have been lacking.

Although it may be argued that there were surely earlier developments in the *ὄργας* affair entered by Androtion and Philochorus *suo anno*, and although Didymus was selective in the entries he extracted from their *Atthides* (e.g. those of 350/49), it still seems unlikely that

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right or wrong, the often minute knowledge of fourth century history evident in the *Letter* suggests a contemporary composer.

<sup>4</sup> “Anthemocritus and the Megarians,” *AJP* 87 (1966) 203–09.

<sup>5</sup> *Didymi de Demosthene commenta*, ed. H. Diels and W. Schubart (Leipzig 1904).

<sup>6</sup> Dem. XIII, *Περὶ συντάξεως*, has often been pronounced spurious by earlier investigators. However, in 1938 Werner Jaeger still considered the question open (*Demosthenes, the Origin and Growth of his Policy* [Berkeley 1938] 241f n.24), and Didymus certainly regards the speech as genuine. None of these considerations needs effect the contents of the speech in any case.

<sup>7</sup> *FGrHist* IIIb Suppl. 1, p.534, Comm. on 328 F 158.

Didymus would have forgotten or simply neglected to mention Anthemocritus and Charinus. After all, he even took the trouble to explain why Demosthenes called the Megarians 'κατάρατοι'. Since the sacrilegious murder of a herald, if anything, would have accounted for the use of the term, it is telling evidence against Connor's case when Didymus (14.52) says simply: *κατάρατους εἶπε [Δημοσθένης] Μεγαρέας, παρ' ὅσον δυσνόως εἶχον αὐτοὶ καὶ Βοιωτοὶ πρὸς Ἀθηναίους*. Didymus then goes on to quote Theopompus, who records an excerpt from a speech by the demagogue Philocrates which mentions only the animosities of the various Greek states toward Athens. Nowhere is there the slightest hint about Anthemocritus or Charinus' decree. Accordingly it would seem that the difficulties of redating the Anthemocritus-Charinus incident to the fourth century are sufficiently great to confirm that it must belong to the period just prior to the Peloponnesian War, as Plutarch would have it.

Such a conclusion naturally raises once again the unanswered problem of Thucydides' silence; but perhaps scholars have been overly sensitive to this argument. Whether or not we can explain his motives, omissions in Thucydides do occur. In connection with the reorganization of the Delian League, for example, he says nothing about such important events as the transfer of the League treasury from Delos to Athens, the Congress Decree of Pericles and the Peace of Callias. In itself Thucydides' silence proves nothing. Moreover, Thucydides does not appear to remain completely silent on the matter, for he seems to allude to Charinus' decree when he records biannual invasions of the Megarid early in the War. Any one of several reasons might account for his failure to mention Anthemocritus' mission.

Dover, for example, argues that the Megarian encroachment on the *ὄργας* did nothing to alter the political situation between Athens and Sparta but constituted a strictly religious offence.<sup>8</sup> Athens, therefore, was obliged to enhance her righteousness, not only in the eyes of the other Greek states, but especially in the eyes of her own deities. Seen in this light, Anthemocritus' mission had nothing directly to do with the cause or the conduct of the Peloponnesian War so that, given the aims of his history, there was no reason for Thucydides to include it.

An alternative possibility is that the Anthemocritus story is exaggerated, perhaps as a result of Athenian propaganda. It was, after all,

<sup>8</sup> Dover, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.4) 206.

never made certain that the Megarians murdered Anthemocritus; Plutarch says only that people believed it.<sup>9</sup> Given wide circulation, this sort of popular belief would surely have worked to the advantage of the Athenians, and they may very well have invented the more flagrant details. Other rhetorically augmented accounts of historical occurrences were initiated during the early years of the Peloponnesian War for propaganda purposes.<sup>10</sup> Some of these Thucydides critically recorded, such as the Athenian charge that the Spartans poisoned the water supply in Piraeus, thus bringing on the plague (2.48). Others, which we know from other testimonia, he omitted. The Anthemocritus story could very well have been among them.

The reference to Anthemocritus in the *Letter of Philip* adds significantly to what we learn from Plutarch's account. Its mention of an ἀνδριάς πρὸ τῶν πυλῶν, also attested by Harpocration s.v. Ἀνθεμόκριτος, who cites one of the lost speeches of Isaeus and Pausanias 1.36.3 (though Pausanias speaks of a μνήμα and a στήλη), is perfectly in accord with Charinus' stipulation that Anthemocritus receive an honorable burial. The exclusion of the Megarians from the Mysteries is perfectly in accord with the second stipulation of Charinus' decree as reported by Plutarch, namely that no Megarian should set foot on Attic soil under pain of death. In order for a Megarian to attend the Mysteries he naturally would have to journey to Eleusis and therefore into Attic territory. Although this latter provision is not recorded elsewhere, it is certainly plausible that the writer of the *Letter* knew about it from some lost work such as one of the *Atthides*. Melanthius' Περὶ τῶν ἐν Ἐλευσίνι μυστηρίων (FGrHist 326) has also been suggested. What the *Letter* supplies, therefore, are events which could have happened only after Charinus' decree was passed and which, along with Thucydides' reference to biannual invasions of the Megarid, indicate that the decree was implemented.

Thus the *Letter* serves to complement Plutarch's narrative of the Anthemocritus incident and Charinus' decree. But that it can be used to redate Plutarch's account appears doubtful.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> *Vit. Per.* 30: ἐπεὶ δ' ὁ πεμφθεὶς κήρυξ Ἀνθεμόκριτος αἰτία τῶν Μεγαρέων ἀποθανεῖν ἔδοξε. . .

<sup>10</sup> Cf. L. Pearson, "Propaganda in the Archidamian War," *CP* 31 (1936) 33-52.

<sup>11</sup> I wish to acknowledge my indebtedness throughout to Professor Lionel Pearson of Stanford University.