

A Poem of the Ainianes

George Huxley

THE ARISTOTELIAN WORK *On Marvellous Things Heard* relates that an ancient pillar, found near Hypate in Ainis, was inscribed with early letters, which the Ainianes could not read.¹ So they sent a deputation with it to Athens. On the way the messengers were escorted into the Ismenion in Thebes, because they had been told that the text was most likely to be read there, as certain offerings with similar ancient letters were preserved in that place.² Consequently the following verses were transcribed (I give the text according to Bekker and note variants):

Ἡρακλῆς τεμένισσε Κυθήρα Φερσεφάαση,
Γηρυνείας ἀγέλας ἐλάων ἦδ' Ἐρύθειαν ἄγων.
τὰς δ' ἐδάμασσε πόθῳ Πασσιφάεσσα θεά.
τῆδε δέ μοι τέκνω τῷ δ' Ἐρύθου τε δάμαρ
5 νυμφογενῆς Ἐρύθη· δὴ τόδ' ἔδωκα πέδον
μναμόσυνον φιλίας, φηγῶ ὑπο σκιερᾶ.

1. ἥρακλέους Ba (*Palatinus Vaticanus* 162), Ra (*Vaticanus* 1302), et rc. Sa (*Laurentianus* 60 19): pr. enim ἥρακλέος. τεμενις τε vel τεμένιστε Ba, Ra, et pr. Sa, τεμένει τε rc. Sa. φερσεφάαση Ba, Na (*Marcianus* 215), Ra. 2. γηρυνείας Na, τηδορουνῆας Ba, Ra. ἀγέλαν Ra, ἀγέλων Ba. ἐρυθθὸν Sa. 3. τὰς δάμασσε Sa, an forte τὰς ἐ δάμασσε? πασιφάεσσα Ba, Ra. 4. ἐρύθοντι Ba, Na, Ra. δάμαρ νυμφογενῆς Sa, δάμαρτι νυμφογενῆς Na, δαμαρ νυμφογενῆς Ta (*Laurentianus* 86 3). 5. ἐρυθιδῆ τόδ' Na. 6. φιλότας Ba, Na, Ra, Sa. φυτὰ Ba, Na, Sa, φητὰ Ra. σκιερὰ Sa.

The following variants in the printed Loeb text are noteworthy: 2. *Γηρυνέως*. 3. δ', μ', Loeb.

The scheme of the poem was two hexameters followed by four pentameters. Of the corruptions those in the second line are deepest,

¹ Arist. *Περὶ θαυμασίων ἀκουσμάτων* ch. 133, 843b15–844a5 (ed. Bekker, VI [Oxford 1837] p.135). Aristotle, *Minor Works* ed. W. S. Hett (LCL, London/Cambridge [Mass.] 1936) pp.304–307.

² See Hdt. 5.59–61.1.

but even here the sickness is not incurable: there are too many words for a pentameter, but a hexameter is simply obtained by reading

Γηρυόνεως ἀγέλαν ἐλάων ἰδ' ἄγων Ἐρύθειαν.

The alternation of Ἐρύθη (v.5) with Ἐρύθειαν is quite acceptable: compare *Penelope* with *Penelopeia*. Joined to the epithet *Κυθήρα, Φερσεφάαση* can have nothing to do with Persephone. As in v.3, we must read *Πασιφάεσσα* at the end of v.1; the divinity meant is Aphrodite-Pasiphaessa,³ Aphrodite in the guise of Pasiphae, whom some thought to be a daughter of Helios.⁴ In v.4 the name of the child of Herakles and Erythe is needed and the correction to Ἐρύθοντα gives good sense, though a hero of this name is, so far as I know, otherwise unknown. *τέκνω τῷ δ'* is opaque; read perhaps here *τέκνον δῶκ'*. In view of the *μοι* in v.4 we should read *μ'* for *δ'* in v.3, and hence a first person singular in v.1 gives even sense—*τεμένισσα*.

Thus corrected, the poem may be set out and translated:

*Ἡρακλῆς τεμένισσα Κυθήρα Πασιφάεσσα
Γηρυόνεως ἀγέλαν ἐλάων ἰδ' ἄγων Ἐρύθειαν.
τᾶς με δάμασσε πόθῳ Πασιφάεσσα θεα.
τῆδε δέ μοι τέκνον δῶκ' Ἐρύθοντα δάμαρ
νυμφογενῆς Ἐρύθη· δὴ τόδ' ἔδωκα πέδον
μναμόσυνον φιλίας, φηγῶ ὑπο σκιερᾷ.*

“I, Herakles, dedicated a precinct to Kytheran Pasiphaessa when I was driving the cattle of Geryon and bringing Erytheia with me. The goddess Pasiphaessa subdued me with a yearning for her. Here did my newly wed spouse Erythe give to me a child Erython; then I gave this plain as a memorial to our love under a shady oak tree.”

The *τέμενος* in the plain is dedicated to Pasiphaessa, but Erythe, not she, is perhaps the recipient of the gift in the last sentence; this would be certain if we were to read *τῆδε δέδωκα πέδον* in v.5. If however the precinct is to be supposed to include the whole plain, *φιλία* may mean ‘Pasiphae’s affection for me’. There is no sign that the Ainianes are the intended recipients. The plain was the birthplace of the son of Herakles and Erythe, but we are not told that it was also where their nuptials

³ For this joint divinity see Jo.Lyd. *De Mens.* 4 p.89, quoted by L. R. Farnell, *The Cults of the Greek States* II (Oxford 1896) 748; U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Der Glaube der Hellenen*³ I (Basel 1959) 113; H. K. Usener, *Götternamen* (Bonn 1896) 58.

⁴ For the kinship: [Apollod.] *Bibl.* 3.1.2.

were consummated. The mention of the shady oak points to Dodona,⁵ which, we infer, Herakles visited during his journey to fetch the cattle of Geryon to Mycenae.

It is fitting that Aphrodite-Pasiphaessa blessed the love of Herakles at Dodona, because Aphrodite was the daughter of Dione,⁶ who was the special consort of Zeus at Dodona.⁷ Dione's kinship with Aphrodite is recalled by Theokritos (15.106) in the *Adoniazousai* by the invocation *Κύπρι Διωναία* or *Διαναία*.⁸

Pasiphae or Pasiphaessa, who in her mortal guise was a wife of Minos,⁹ may well be a Greek memory of a Minoan goddess. Her appearance at Dodona is remarkable because of the important rôle of doves in the foundation legend of the Epirote sanctuary.¹⁰ We may well have in this Ainianian poem an allusion to the Minoan dove goddess who in historical times was manifest as Aphrodite.

The epithet 'Kytheran' is not less interesting than the link between Aphrodite and Pasiphae. The form *Κυθήρα* is rare, the regular Homeric epithet being *Κυθήρεια*. It has been doubted that *Κυθήρεια* is to be connected with Aphrodite's island of Kythera,¹¹ but *Κυθήρα* is surely a variant of *Κυθήρεια*, and the two epithets can reasonably be associated with the name of the island, where, moreover, there was a Minoan colony. The variation between long and short *e* may have been due as much to the peculiarities of the non-Greek language to which the name 'Kythera' belonged as to metrical adaption by epic poets.

When Herakles stopped in Ainis with Erythe and the cattle of Geryon, he was not, to be sure, on the way back from the region of Tartessos and the island in the far western Ocean, of which Stesichoros sang.¹² Ainis lies beside the Spercheios river, not far from Mount Oeta whence Herakles ascended to the immortals from his pyre; the territory is approached from the west by way of the upper Spercheios (through

⁵ This was pointed out by N. G. L. Hammond, "Prehistoric Epirus and the Dorian Invasion," *ABSA* 32 (1931/32) 158.

⁶ *Iliad* 5.370.

⁷ Strabo 7.7.12, C 329.

⁸ H. L. Ahrens, "Ueber den Namen des Poseidon," *Philologus* 23 (1866) 208-209. See also A. B. Cook, *Zeus II* (Cambridge 1925) 350 and n.6. Cf. Serv. *Aen.* 3.446: (*Dodona*) *ubi Iovi et Veneri templum a veteribus fuerat consecratum.*

⁹ [Apollod.] *Bibl.* 3.1.2.

¹⁰ Hdt. 2.55.

¹¹ D. L. Page, *Sappho and Alcaeus* (Oxford 1955) 127 n.1. Cf. West, Hesiod, *Theogony* (Oxford, 1966) on v.198.

¹² Stes. fr.184 Page.

the modern Karpenisi), the starting point of this ancient west-to-east route being Amphilocheian Argos.¹³ It cannot be a coincidence that Hekataios supposed Herakles to have driven the cattle of Geryon, not from the land of the Iberians and the island of Erytheia, but from the mainland of Ambrakia and Amphilocheia; here, the historian claimed, Geryon had been king.¹⁴ Hekataios' statement has been regarded as a rationalising of the earlier legend, but as the Ainianian text shows, it may rather have been a return to the earliest and least extravagant form of the tale. After his encounter with Erythe at Dodona, we may suppose, Herakles took her to Amphilocheia, whence they travelled with the oxen to Ainis. The author of the *Περὶ θαυμασίων ἀκουσμάτων* (133.4) correctly denies, therefore, that the Herakles of the Ainianian poem brought the cattle from Iberia, but we need not agree with his inference that their home was near Hypate in Ainis at a place called Erythos. Nor need we agree with Hammond when he writes that the Thebans interpreted the inscription "to mean that Herakles had given them (the Ainianes) their land in memory of their friendship 'under the shady oak'" of Dodona:¹⁵ for neither the Peripatetic author nor the text of the inscription proves that *φιλία* between the Ainianes and Herakles at Dodona is meant. The allusion is to the love between Herakles and Erythe at Dodona or to Pasiphaessa's kindness to the hero there. The Ainianes, it is true, wandered from upper Molossia deviously to the Spercheios valley¹⁶ and once dwelt near a Dodona, perhaps the Molossian;¹⁷ but our inscription does not record those ancient ties. Its concern is with the journey of Herakles.

No archaic inscriptions have been found in Ainis,¹⁸ and our text cannot be confidently claimed as one; but it does have the merit of showing that Herakles, as the Thebans and Ainianes believed, had ties with the Spercheios valley as well as with Trachis and Oeta nearby. It helps, too, to illumine the earliest cults of Aphrodite and the earliest form of the legend of Geryon's oxen.

The *Περὶ θαυμασίων ἀκουσμάτων* does not state when the Thebans deciphered the text from Ainis, but Herodotos shows (5.59) that

¹³ Hammond, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.5) 143 and 158 n.4.

¹⁴ *FGrHist* 1 F 26.

¹⁵ *supra* n.5.

¹⁶ Plut. *Quaest.Gr.* 13.

¹⁷ *Iliad* 2.748–50.

¹⁸ L. H. Jeffery, *The Local Scripts of Archaic Greece* (Oxford 1961) 96.

attempts to read early inscriptions at Thebes had begun in the fifth century B.C. The Theban reading of the inscription may well date from this period of awakening interest in epigraphy.

THE QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY OF BELFAST

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