

Aegina, Thucydides Son of Melesias,
and Aristophanes' *Acharnians* 709:
An Old Crux Revisited

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τῷ γὰρ εἰκὸς ἄνδρα κυφόν, ἠλίκον Θουκυδίδην,
ἔξολέσθαι συμπλακέντα τῇ Σκυθῶν ἐρημίᾳ,
τῷδε τῷ Κηφισοδήμῳ, τῷ λάλῳ ξυνηγόρῳ; 705
ὥστ' ἐγὼ μὲν ἠλέησα κάπεμορξάμην ἰδὼν
ἄνδρα πρεσβύτην ὑπ' ἀνδρὸς τοξότου κυκώμενον
ὄς μὰ τὴν Δήμητρ', ἐκεῖνος ἦνικ' ἦν Θουκυδίδης,
οὐδ' ἂν αὐτὴν τὴν Ἀχαιᾶν ραδίως ἠνέσχετ' ἄν,
ἀλλὰ κατεπάλαισε μέντ' ἂν πρῶτον Εὐάθλους δέκα, 710
κατεβόησε δ' ἂν κεκραγῶς τοξότας τρισχιλίους,
ὑπερετόξευσεν δ' ἂν αὐτοῦ τοῦ πατρὸς τοὺς ξυγγενεῖς.

THIS IS THE TEXT of *Acharnians* 703–712, as printed in Nigel Wilson's recent OCT. In the vexed line 709, the reading αὐτὴν τὴν Ἀχαιᾶν follows the majority of the manuscripts and the scholia, although Wilson admits that the reading is “obscurum.” Olson, more conservatively, prints the phrase with a crux.¹ Coulon-Van Daele (and the previous OCT of Hall and Geldart) had tentatively accepted the alternative τὴν Ἀχαιᾶν (Hesych. a8806, *Suda* a4679, Phot. a3419). C's Ἀχαιρᾶν is gibberish.

The scholia provide two different etymologies for *Achaia*, a cult title of Demeter: one from ἄχος/ἤχος (“the Clamouring One”), and another from ἄχος (“The Sorrowing or Grieving

¹ S. D. Olson, *Aristophanes Acharnians* (Oxford 2002), with commentary 345 ff.

One”). Although the latter etymology is far more likely,² the exegesis emanates clearly from the former:

ὁ δὲ νοῦς, ἠνίκα ἦν Θουκυδίδης, οὐχ ὅπως τοξότην ἠνέσχετο ἂν καταβοᾶν αὐτοῦ, ἀλλ’ οὐδὲ τὴν Ἀχαιᾶν αὐτήν.

And the meaning is that when he was that eminent Thucydides, there was no way he would put up with an archer shouting him down, or even the Clamouring One herself.

The scholiast makes Aristophanes’ general meaning clear. In his prime, Thucydides son of Melesias,³ titanic in his physical and mental prowess, was equal to any opponent, mortal or divine; now that he is a feeble old man he is the plaything of *homunculi* like Euathlos son of Kephisodemos.⁴ However, connecting τὴν Ἀχαιᾶν with καταβοᾶν seems specious. Even if we accept *ad arguendum* the etymology from ἄχος (and not ἄχος), the αὔτιον associated with this attribute of Demeter has nothing to do with shouting anybody down: Demeter’s clamour, actually a clamouring sound of cymbals and drums apparently sent by Demeter, is said to have guided the Tanagrians to Attica or, alternatively, it is connected with the search for Kore.⁵ Evidently, the exact implications of τὴν Ἀχαιᾶν (or Ἀχαιᾶν) eluded the scholiast, as much as they perplex modern scholars.

² Cf. also Plut. *De Iside* 378E. The etymology Ἀχαιᾶ < ἄχος is accepted by A.-J. Festugière, “Deux notes sur le *De Iside* de Plutarque,” *CRAI* (1959) 312–319, esp. 316 ff. In a coda to this (319), P. Chantraine condemns it as “étymologie populaire,” but he does not seem to be right. On the Sorrowing or Grieving Demeter see also Nic. *Ther.* 483 ff. with Gow-Schofield’s commentary ad loc.

³ On Thucydides’ biography see T. Wade-Gery, “Thucydides, the Son of Melesias. A Study of Periclean Policy,” *JHS* 52 (1932) 205–227 (repr. *Essays in Greek History* [Oxford 1958] 239–270); J. K. Davies, *Athenian Propertied Families* (Oxford 1971) 230–237; E. K. Borthwick, “Aristophanes and the Trial of Thucydides Son of Melesias (*Acharnians* 717),” *Phoenix* 54 (2000) 203–211.

⁴ Cf. Ar. fr.424 K.-A. (Ὀλκάδες). Whether *Wasps* 592 ff. “proves” that Euathlos belonged to Cleon’s “inner circle,” as Rennie wants it (W. Rennie, *The Acharnians of Aristophanes* [London 1909] 199), is not certain.

⁵ Schol. *Ach.* 708a and 708c.

Editors who print the text as transmitted by the majority of the manuscripts (paroxytone or proparoxytone ΑΧΑΙΑΝ) generally postulate some unrecoverable reality related to the cult of Demeter Achaia in Athens. But this cult was reputedly an import restricted only to the obscure group of the Gephyraioi, and as such it is explicitly stated by Herodotus (5.61) to have remained isolated and distinct from general Athenian religious practice.⁶ Alternatively, the paradosis has been defended as an elliptical sentence, which recapitulates and expands the preceding line's oath to Demeter but omits *μά*.⁷ In either case, no adequate explanation is given for the prominence of such a fringe cult or such an emphatic, curiously phrased⁸ oath in this context.

The advocates of emendation suppose that behind the corruption τὴν Ἀχαιάν lies a “threatening, bullying or otherwise hostile presence.”⁹ This adversary was posited to be a god or at least a hero. Thus, Headlam proposed αὐτὴν τὴν Ἀγραιάν (*Ἀγραιά* being a cult title of Artemis), whereas Herwerden and Hamaker, making further adjustments to the syntax, propose οὐδ’ ἂν Ἄνταῖος παλαίων and οὐδ’ ἂν Αὐτοκλήης παλαίων respectively. Nigel Wilson ventured αὐτὸν τὸν Ἀνάχαρσιν, on account of Euathlos being berated as a Scythian.¹⁰ Borthwick,

⁶ Other speculations are, to my mind, rather far-fetched: e.g. Rennie, *Acharnians* 199, takes ἡ Ἀχαία to mean “Our Lady of Sorrows” and suggests that Aristophanes “may be punning on the name” of a Thracian town in the Cimmerian Bosphorus to allude to Euathlos’ Scythian origin (*Ach.* 712): Thucydides “would not lightly have given best to the mother town of Scythians itself.” B. B. Rogers, *The Acharnians of Aristophanes* (London 1910) 110–111, takes “the Hellenic Ἀχαία” to be Aristophanes’ idea of a polarity with “the barbarian Σκύθης.”

⁷ C. Austin, “Seven *crucis* in Aristophanes (*Acharnians* and *Thesmophoriazusaë*),” *QUCC* 72.3 (2002) 73–76. Austin revives a suggestion of Sir Denys Page: οὐδ’ ἂν — αὐτὴν τὴν Ἀχαιάν — ῥαδίως ἠνέσχετ’ ἂν.

⁸ Nigel Wilson, *Aristophanea. Studies on the Text of Aristophanes* (Oxford 2007) 30, points out that oaths which omit *μά* are restricted to Doric Greek.

⁹ Wilson, *Aristophanea* 30.

¹⁰ Wilson, *Aristophanea* 30.

taking his cue from the scholiast, countered that Thucydides' supposed adversary should be formidable not so much in archery or wrestling as in shouting.¹¹ Thus he conjectured οὐδ' ἂν αὐτὸν Ἄρταχαίην, correlating Aristophanes' passage with Herodotus 7.117, where the historian refers to a huge Persian aristocrat of this name with a stentorian voice, μεγάθει τε μέγιστον ἔοντα Περσέων (ἀπὸ γὰρ πέντε πήχεων βασιλῆων ἀπέλειπε τέσσερας δακτύλους) φωνέοντά τε μέγιστον ἀνθρώπων. But to privilege shouting over archery and wrestling seems arbitrary in a passage that makes much of deriding Euathlos as an archer. Such derision is consequential, as it focuses on Euathlos' very entitlement as an Athenian citizen. On the other hand, Artachaeês was indeed a booming colossus, but he was undoubtedly an obscure figure, a mere footnote in Herodotus' account, and his cult in Acanthus seems to have been every bit as parochial as Achaia's in Athens.

In my opinion, archery cannot be taken out of the equation; we cannot be looking for a shouter alone. Neither should we be searching necessarily for a bully: ἡνέσχετ' does not inevitably presume an opponent who has *offended* the Athenians or Thucydides in some specific way,¹² only someone whom Thucydides would meaningfully stand up against.¹³

Let us try to hold to the core meaning of Aristophanes' text. All the chorus is saying is: in his day Thucydides son of Melesias was equal to antagonists much more important and powerful than Euathlos. They are talking hypothetically, not referring to a real event. The sole criterion warranted by the text, therefore, is that this notional adversary of Thucydides—man, god, or whatever—be the perfect foil for Euathlos, whose most foregrounded characteristic is that he is a despicable τοξότης. Euathlos' foil must certainly share this definitive trait; he

¹¹ E. K. Borthwick, "Aristophanes *Acharnians* 709: an Old Crux, and a New Solution," *BICS* 17 (1970) 107–110, at 107.

¹² Thus Olson, *Aristophanes Acharnians* 254 ("the behaviour ... was offensive").

¹³ For the meaning of the verb see Austin, *QUCC* 72.3 (2002) 176.

or she must be majestic and mighty, not necessarily obnoxious, only someone who would theoretically pose a much bigger challenge than the “Scythian.”

Furthermore, I believe we should use another criterion for our search. The parabasis of *Acharnians* weaves a nexus of metaphors around Thucydides as a politician and as a citizen. It is only reasonable to suppose that any named “adversary” of Thucydides invoked here, however notionally, can only be in some way or another connected with his life and career; I find it hard to believe that in such a densely topical context Thucydides’ “opponent” would simply be some archetype completely unrelated to Thucydides himself. I suggest that we focus our search in the Thucydidean frame of reference so firmly established by the parabasis. None of the proposed emendations satisfies this premise.

Wrestling is the densest source of relevant imagery in this passage, not only because it is a generally legitimate way of metaphorizing confrontation and refutation (cf. Protagoras’ *Λόγοι Καταβάλλοντες*), but also because it is particularly associated with Thucydides. In Plutarch *Per.* 11.1, Thucydides’ notorious rivalry with Pericles is invoked with *συμπλεκόμενος*, a technical term for wrestling (cf. *Mor.* 407F *συμπλακέντα*). Again in *Moralia* 802C, Thucydides himself is said to have presented this rivalry as a dichotomy between straightforward, sportsmanlike confrontation, on his part, and sophisticated chicanery on Pericles’, whose tactics are just as vile as Euathlos’:

ἀλλ’ ἐρωτηθεὶς οὗτος ὑπ’ Ἀρχιδάμου τοῦ βασιλέως τῶν Σπαρτιατῶν πότερον αὐτὸς ἢ Περικλῆς παλαίει βέλτιον “οὐκ ἂν εἰδείη τις” εἶπεν· “ὅταν γὰρ ἐγὼ καταβάλλω παλαίων, ἐκεῖνος λέγων μὴ πεπτωκέναι νικᾷ καὶ πείθει τοὺς θεωμένους.”

Shouting was apparently another favourite method of Thucydides to tussle with his political opponents (*Per.* 14.1 τῶν δὲ περὶ τὸν Θουκυδίδην ῥητόρων καταβοώντων τοῦ Περικλέους, cf. *Ach.* 711 *κατεβόησε*). Thucydides is indomitable, willing to use political brawn or sheer pulmonary force to overcome his opponents, whoever they may be. A multiply ironic parallel may be detected in the bullying tactics of the *Acharnians* in

Aristophanes' play.

However, wrestling was relevant to Thucydides not only because of his feisty political temper, but also because his father Melesias is thought to be a famous trainer of professional wrestlers, who excelled as victors in Panhellenic games and were praised, along with their mentor, by Pindar.¹⁴ Significant for our case is the detail that all Melesias' clients we know of were Aeginetans, apparently of the highest (oligarchic) rank. The Aeginetan question was frequently linked with domestic partisan politics in Athens before the Persian Wars, as well as throughout the Pentecontaetia. It was particularly topical, however, at the time of the *Acharnians*, since in 426 the Lacedaemonians apparently renewed their claim on behalf of the autonomy of Aegina, as part of their peace proposals to Athens (*Ach.* 652–654).¹⁵ The Aeginetan question popped up in the beginning of the parabasis in reference to the ποιητής of the play, who is in danger of being snatched up by the Spartans, if Aegina is given away. This is more probably Aristophanes than Kallistratos, especially if the former's alleged ties with Aegina are factual.¹⁶

Aegina is prominent both in the *Acharnians* and in the life of Thucydides. References to Thucydides' wrestling are another way of underlining this prominence. After Melesias' death his son took over his father's entrepreneurial and political interests in Aegina.¹⁷ Details of Thucydides' activities in Aegina are not

¹⁴ Pindar refers to Melesias in *Ol.* 8.54–59, *Nem.* 4.93, 6.65, perhaps also *Nem.* 5.49. The identification of this Melesias with the father of Thucydides is due to Wade-Gery, *JHS* 52 (1932) 205–227. Thucydides' two sons were also wrestlers (Pl. *Meno* 94C).

¹⁵ For details see T. J. Figueira, "Autonomoi Kata Tas Spondas (Thucydides, 1.67.2)," *BICS* 37 (1990) 63–88.

¹⁶ For a discussion of the problem see T. J. Figueira, *Athens and Aegina in the Age of Imperial Colonization* (Baltimore 1991) 79–103. For the relation between Aristophanes' alleged Aeginetan origin and his early career see especially D. MacDowell, "Aristophanes and Kallistratos," *CQ* 32 (1982) 21–26, and N. Slater, "Aristophanes' Apprenticeship Again," *GRBS* 30 (1989) 67–82.

¹⁷ Davies, *APF* 236.

known, beyond a jumbled anecdote in the biographical tradition of the historian Thucydides, son of Oloros, which speaks of murky financial dealings during Thucydides' exile on the island (Anon. *Vit. Thuc.* 7; Marcellinus *Vit. Thuc.* 24).¹⁸ The issue is too deeply buried in uncertainty and political manipulation to be fathomed. However, there can be little doubt that Aegina was the cornerstone, a definite point of reference for Thucydides' life and career, connected with his business ventures, but also with his personal and political plight.

The Thucydides—and the Aegina—theme of the parabasis are inseparably knit together. I believe we can emend line 709 in a way that reinforces this connection. I propose to read:

οὐδ' ἂν αὐτὴν τὴν Ἀφαίαν ῥαδίως ἠνέσχετ' ἄν.

The corruption from ΑΦΑΙΑΝ to ΑΧΑΙΑΝ, if this is so, is obviously very ancient. To my mind it appears to have been more a case of deliberate substitution than of scribal oversight, although hereon we can only speculate. At any rate, the references to this Aeginetan patron goddess in Greek literature were rare enough to puzzle any scribe;¹⁹ on the other hand, the oath to Demeter in 709, as well as the most probably erroneous interpretation of Achaia as the Clamouring One and the subsequent association with *καταβοᾶν* attempted by the scholiast, might easily have caused the substitution of τὴν Ἀχαιάν by a learned scribe. Demeter—Achaia or otherwise—is of little consequence to the *Acharnians* passage in question or to Thucydides son of Melesias overall. Aphaea, by contrast, was the pride and glory of an island with which Thucydides had much to do.

Her temple looming over Aegina (it was situated at its highest point),²⁰ Aphaea was significant enough for the Aeginetans to

¹⁸ Figueira, *BICS* 37 (1990) 114–115 n.28.

¹⁹ The only certain occurrence of Aphaea in the classical literature we now possess is Pindar's *prosodion Eἰς Ἀφαίαν* (fr.89b). For the case of Euripides' *Hippolytos* see n.21 below.

²⁰ On the temple see D. Ohly, *Tempel und Heiligtum der Aphaia auf Ägina* (Munich 1977); H. Bankel, *Der spätarchaische Tempel der Aphaia auf Aegina* (Ber-

commission a *προσόδιον* in her honour from Pindar (fr.89b). Important for us here is the fact that Aphaea was a divinity associated, in terms of cultic character, not so much with Athena (this was the side-effect of Athenian domination of Aegina), but with *Artemis*. Pausanias (2.30.3) and Antoninus Liberalis (*Metam. Synag.* 40), for whom Aphaea is unquestionably identified with Britomartis, tell of an Artemis-like figure,²¹ who thrived *δρόμοις τε καὶ θήραις* and was indeed *Ἀρτέμιδι μάλιστα φίλην*. In later times, Aphaea was identified with further two of Artemis' attendants, Diktyнна (Hesych. α8533) and Laphria. This kind of literary and cultic syncretism was not unknown in the fifth century,²² and it was usually founded on tangible similarities in cult. I think that it would not be reckless to assume that the seed of Aphaea's eventual identification with the attendants of Artemis was present as early as the fifth century.

Callimachus, *Dian.* 188, celebrates Britomartis as *ἔλλοφόνον* ... *ἔϋσκοπον*, "a sharp-shooting slayer of stags", i.e. an excellent archer like Artemis herself, apparently like Aphaea, too. This nexus of associations makes Aphaea perfectly suited to be Euathlos' majestically superior analogue, with the additional advantage (over Headlam's *Ἄγραία*, for instance) that she fits in perfectly with the Aeginetan tint of the passage.

But what quarrel would Thucydides son of Melesias possibly have with Aphaea? As suggested above, Aphaea should be taken not as an obnoxious adversary *per se*, but as a notional

lin 1993).

²¹ On the possible references to Aphaea in Euripides' *Hippolytus*, 1123 and 1459, see J. W. Fitton, *Pegasus* 8 (1967) 33–34, and G. L. Huxley, *GRBS* 12 (1971) 331–333, who arrived at the same conjecture independently. Diggle (OCT) and Stockert (Teubner) accept the conjecture. Contrast Alan H. Sommerstein, *BICS* 35 (1988) 39–40, and C. W. Willink, *CQ* 49 (1999) 408–427, at 423–425, who adds Halleran and Kovacs to the list of those contra (references at 408 n.1). In my view, these objections are far too sweeping and technical: given that Aphaea-Britomartis was practically Hippolytus' female *alter ego*, Fitton's and Huxley's conjecture is worth taking seriously.

²² An example is provided by Eur. *Hel.* 1301 ff., where Demeter is fused with the Great Mother.

“opponent,” worthy of a youthful Thucydides. Thucydides in his prime would not have tolerated any insult whatsoever from whichever source; he would have taken on even an archetypal archer-goddess, his own goddess, as it were, the Aeginetan equivalent of Artemis. Now, as a decrepit relic of a glorious past, even the poorest excuse of an archer drags him around in humiliation. In his youth, Thucydides, whom the chorus apparently ranks among the *μαραθωνομάχοι*, the children of the Golden Age, would be a giant wrestling gods. Now, in the Iron Age of degeneration and disrespectfulness, even a *homunculus* is too much for him. The chorus is bitter: Thucydides, the man who took on mighty Pericles, a political god (Pericles was routinely “likened” to Zeus, e.g. Cratinus *Θρᾶτται* fr.73 K.-A., and in the *Acharnians* itself the famous lines 530 ff.), is now being humiliated by *ἀνδράρια μοχθηρά* (*Ach.* 517) like Euathlos—a plight not dissimilar to that of Dikaiopolis or Aristophanes (or perhaps Kallistratos?) at the hands of Cleon (377 ff.).

To conclude: restoring *αὐτὴν τὴν Ἀφαίαν* in line 709 would fit well the overall Thucydidean frame of reference in this passage; furthermore, it would further emboss the presence of Aegina in the parabasis at a time when the island may have returned to the political foreground. Aegina, after all, is a thread which connects the chorus (in the guise of their stand-in figure, Thucydides son of Melesias) with Dikaiopolis (who shares Thucydides’ contempt for Pericles and whose name recalls an attribute of Aegina in Pindar *Pyth.* 8.22–24, *ἡ δικαιοπόλις ... νᾶσος*), and eventually with Kallistratos and/or Aristophanes (for whom Aegina was apparently dear at heart).²³

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