

IG ii² 2343, PHILONIDES AND ARISTOPHANES' BANQUETERS

The Aristophanic relevance of IG ii² 2343, a late fifth or early fourth century cult table of Heracles, listing a priest and fifteen thiasotai, was first argued by Sterling Dow. Dow's summary of the communication which he presented to the Archaeological Institute of America is brief¹ and a number of his conclusions may be too confident, but something of substance appears to remain.

It is of special interest in the present context that three of the sixteen celebrants named on the table can be more or less firmly identified as figures who were of importance for the comedies of Aristophanes performed in the 420s: the priest, Simon of Cydathenaeum (Aristophanes' deme), as the *hippeus* of *Knights* 242;² the first thiasotes, Philonides, as the man who produced a number of Aristophanes' plays from (at least) 422 onwards;³ another thiasotes, Amphitheus, as the original of the character in the *Acharnians*.⁴ Of the three, the identification of Simon is the weakest, that of Amphitheus the strongest. While Simon is not an uncommon name,⁵ Amphitheus is so unusual that it used to be thought that it must be a coinage of Aristophanes. In terms of probability, the identification of the first thiasotes as the poet's *didaskalos* ranks somewhere between the other two. Philonides is a common enough name, but the identification (regarded as certain by Dow and almost certain by Griffith)⁶ receives some support from the fact that the *didaskalos* also belonged to Cydathenaeum,⁷ the deme of Simon, the priest of the thiasos.⁸

Moreover, the identifications of Simon, Philonides and Amphitheus gain strength not only from each other but from the reference to Antitheus at *Thesm.* 898. This was almost certainly intended to recall to (at least) some of the audience the thiasotes who bore the implausible name.⁹ To the early 'group of three' might also perhaps be added the thiasotes Lysanias. At *Clouds* 1163 Strepsiades triumphantly proclaims that his

¹ *AJA* 73 (1969), 234–5.

² According to Σ 243, the latter was a hipparch. For the identification with the author of the treatise *περὶ ἵππικῆς* (*PA* 12689), cf. Neil, n. ad *Knights* 242; Gelzer, *RE*, Suppl. 12 (1970), 1398.

³ For the controversy surrounding *Wasps* Hyp. i. 32–4, see Gelzer, op. cit. 1405–6. Since it is inconceivable that the *didaskalos* also wrote a *Proagon* which has disappeared without trace, it seems at any rate certain that he brought out Aristophanes' *Wasps* or *Proagon* (or possibly both) in 422. The testimony of the *Π. κωμ.* (below with n. 17) does not prove that he produced the first version of the *Clouds* in 423, but *Wasps* 1017–22 indicates that he did in fact bring out a play of Aristophanes before 424 (below, with n. 18). He later produced the *Amphiaras* (*Birds*, Hyp. ii. 25) and *Frogs* (Hyp. i. 28–9).

⁴ *Ach.* 45 f., 129, 175 f.

⁵ The rascally Simon of *Clouds* 351, 399 (*PA* 12686) is unknown.

⁶ J. G. Griffith, *Hermes* 102 (1974), 367.

⁷ cf. *PA* 14904.

⁸ For the importance of the demes as religious units, cf. J. D. Mikalson, *AJP* 98 (1977), 424–35. Dow's assumption that the cult table must originally have come from a sanctuary in Cydathenaeum is plausible, but (presumably) based upon the identification of Philonides as well as the deme of Simon. There is an obvious danger of circular arguments here, but (if Dow is correct) Aristophanes' membership of the deme does provide a coherent and economic explanation for his acquaintanceship with Heracles' celebrants.

⁹ As Griffith, op. cit. 368, observes, the name is 'scarcely less improbable than Amphitheus'. Dow suggests (without argument) that Antitheus was the brother of Amphitheus and that the latter's son was another member of the thiasos mentioned by Aristophanes.

son will prove a *λυσανίας πατρώων μεγάλων κακῶν*, and since the common noun is so rare, it is likely that the spectators would have been put in mind of a contemporary individual.¹⁰ To give the line in the *Clouds* point, a Lysanias who was known for his filial piety or forensic ability (or lack of the same) seems required, and it is obviously impossible to say whether the thiasotes fits the bill.¹¹ Yet the number of correspondences compels one to suspect that they should not be ascribed to coincidence.¹² Moreover, since the common demoninator is membership of the thiasos it seems a reasonable inference that these men were involved in Heracles' worship during the Archidamian War even if *IG* ii² 2343 was cut some time later.

Dow may have gone too far in concluding that Aristophanes certainly knew all sixteen celebrants, if by this he meant to imply that he was on familiar terms with them.¹³ At some point before 422, however, the poet must have become friendly with the first thiasotes, Philonides, if the latter served as his *didaskalos* at the Lenaea of this year. In the light of this, it is interesting that the chorus of the *Banqueters*, performed in 427, was composed of thiasotai of Heracles (who were probably fellow-demesmen),¹⁴ particularly since Holwerda's careful editing has now made it clear that a scholium to *Clouds* 531 names Philonides as the producer of Aristophanes' first comedy.¹⁵ This testimony must still be set against the categorical assertion in the *Π. κωμ.* that Aristophanes brought out his first play through Callistratus: *ἐδίδαξε δὲ πρῶτος ἐπὶ ἄρχοντος Διοτίμου διὰ Καλλιστράτου*.¹⁶ Yet although the date is right, the comedy is not named and it does not inspire much confidence that the statement immediately continues: *τὰς μὲν γὰρ πολιτικὰς τούτῳ φασὶν αὐτὸν διδόναι, τὰ δὲ κατ' Εὐριπίδου καὶ Σωκράτους Φιλωνίδη*.¹⁷ Moreover, the testimony of the

¹⁰ Only Theopomp. Com. fr. 30. 4 (Kock) and Hsch. (s.v.) are also cited in LSJ. The first is a dubious conjecture (Edmonds reads *λύσανδρον*), while Hesychius (somewhat gratuitously) explains that the word means *ὁ λύων τὰς ἀνίας*. The whole speech of Strepsiades (1154–64) is full of paratragic phrases (cf. Dover, n. ad loc.), and Σ^E cites S. fr. 801 (Nauck) for *πανσανίας*. Yet it is doubtful whether the spectators could have picked up the parody (or that it was intended), and in any case this does not affect the point.

¹¹ Prominent individuals of the name include the archon of 443/2 (Diod. 12. 24) and the trierarch who was killed in action in the last decade of the fifth century (cf. Bradeen, *Hesp.* 33 (1964), 43, no. 15, 48 f.).

¹² It is almost certainly a coincidence that Apollodorus is listed as a thiasotes in *IG* ii² 2343 and that an Apollodorus was also the protagonist of the *Peace* (Hyp. i. 42). The name is very common, and it is doubtful whether the comic playwrights had any say in the selection of their actors at this date; see, however, below (n. 15) for Callistratus and Philonides.

¹³ cf. Gelzer, op. cit. 1398, who suggests that Aristophanes' demesmen in the thiasos could have played a role in his troubles with Cleon, who was also from Cydathenaeum.

¹⁴ For these thiasotai, cf. Suid. (s.v. *δαιταλεις*); Orion, 49. 10. Galen refers to the old father who was one of the main characters as *ὁ ἐκ τοῦ δήμου τῶν Δαιταλέων πρεσβύτης* (Kühn 19. 66; fr. 222). This apparently indicates that the thiasotai of Heracles were fellow-demesmen and that Aristophanes transformed the thiasos into a comic deme. See in general A. Cassio, *Aristofane: Banchettanti* (Pisa, 1977), pp. 21–5.

¹⁵ Σ^N (531b, Koster) states that the 'other girl' who *ἀνείλετο* this play was Philonides. Σ^N (531a) also reads *δηλονότι ὁ Φιλωνίδης καὶ ὁ Καλλίστρατος οἱ ὕστερον γενομένοι ὑποκριταὶ τοῦ Ἀριστοφάνους*. This is apparently only intelligible if it is a preliminary attempt to explain *ἐτέρα* (*Clouds* 531) which has been wrongly interpreted to mean 'one of the two'. The assertion that Philonides and Callistratus were actors (Philonides is also designated a *hypokrites* in Σ^N 531b) is common in the ancient sources, and is usually dismissed as a misinterpretation of such expressions as *ἐδιδάχθη διὰ Φιλωνίδου (Καλλιστράτου)*. Yet perhaps it is not totally impossible. According to the *Π. κωμ.* (Koster, *IA*, iii. 26–30), both Crates and Pherecrates were once actors, and Σ *Knights* 537 says that Crates acted in the plays of Cratinus. The latter statement implies that a generation earlier a poet could make regular use of the same actor.

¹⁶ Koster, *IA*, iii. 38.

¹⁷ Koster, *IA*, iii. 38–40.

scholiast has at least one point in its favour. It clears up the problem at *Wasps* 1017–22 without involving the assumption that Aristophanes wrote a fourth play (in addition to the *Banqueters*, *Babylonians* and *Acharnians*) which was produced by Philonides between 427 and 425.¹⁸

Aristophanes was young and inexperienced in 427,¹⁹ and Philonides was himself a comic playwright who competed personally on at least three occasions.²⁰ If he did produce the *Banqueters*, his (probable) involvement in Heracles' cult suggests that Aristophanes may have received more help in the composition of the play than has generally been suspected.²¹ On the other hand, if it was Callistratus who brought out the comedy it still remains an intriguing possibility that Aristophanes became interested in the worship of Heracles through his other friend(s) and utilized his knowledge of it in his first play.

A further point may be pertinent. In the parabases of both the *Wasps* and the *Peace* Aristophanes claims that earlier in his career he had grappled not with ordinary mortals but with the monstrous Cleon and his attendant flatterers 'Ηρακλέους ὀργήν τιν' ἔχων'.²² The repetition shows that he was pleased with the image (not that either passage is misplaced), and he develops it in the *Wasps* by designating himself ἀλεξικάκος and a καθαρτής.²³ In the first two passages Aristophanes is referring to the *Knights*;²⁴ at *Wasps* 1043 he has just recalled the merits of a play of 423, either the *Clouds* or one of the lost comedies performed at the Lenaea.²⁵ Despite the arguments of Rostagni, it is difficult to believe that the audience could have recognized any sort of direct allusion to the *Banqueters* here.²⁶ Yet there is reason to suspect that Aristophanes was prompted in part to compare himself to Heracles by the reaction of one or more of his comic rivals to the production of his first comedy.

The lines in the *Wasps* and *Peace* must be connected with the gibe apparently enjoyed by Aristonymus, Ameipsias and Sannyrio that, by producing his plays through Callistratus and Philonides, Aristophanes was 'labouring' like Heracles on

¹⁸ At *Wasps* 1017–22, Aristophanes describes his career as falling into two parts: before the *Knights* he had spoken through the lips of 'other poets'; the *Knights* itself he had produced in his own name. The 'other poets' are naturally Callistratus and Philonides, but it is certain that Callistratus brought out the *Babylonians* and *Acharnians*. It is highly unlikely that there can be an anachronistic reference to the *Clouds* here, even if Philonides did produce it (above, n. 3), or that ἐτέροισι ποιηταῖς is a 'generic plural' (cf. MacDowell, n. ad loc.). The attempts which have been made to date one of the lost plays (usually the *Δράματα ἢ Κένταυρος*) before 424 are not convincing (cf. Gelzer, op. cit. 1408–9), and it would seem to have been enough for Aristophanes to compete with one play annually during the first three years of his career.

¹⁹ *Knights* 514–16, 541–6; *Clouds* 528–31.

²⁰ Suidas (s.v. Φιλωνίδης) describes him as a κωμικὸς ἀρχαῖος and names three of his plays: *Κόθορνοι*, *Ἀπήνη*, *Φιλέταιρος*. Some fragments of the first have survived.

²¹ Cassio, op. cit. 24, also cited *IG* ii² 2343 in his discussion of the *Banqueters*, but he accepted the testimony of the *Π. κωμ.* that the play was produced by Callistratus.

²² *Wasps* 1029–37; *Peace* 751–60.

²³ For the possible prominence of the cult of Heracles Alexikakos through the plague of 429, cf. S. Woodford, *AJA* 80 (1976), 291–4. For Heracles, as καθαρτής, MacDowell, n. ad *Wasps* 1043, cites S. *Tr.* 1012, E. *HF* 225. This 'Heracles–Aristophanes' harmonizes neatly with the 'Cerberus–Cleon' of *Knights* 1030, *Peace* 313.

²⁴ At *Wasps* 1029, ὅτε πρώτὸν γ' ἦρξε διδάσκειν must allude to Aristophanes' first production in his own name. There is no indication that Cleon figured in the *Banqueters*, and everything that is known about the politician and his 'oratory' suggests that he would have enjoyed watching the (presumed) downfall of the precocious καταπύγων who affected the neologisms of fashionable politicians and sophists (fr. 198).

²⁵ πέπυσεν at *Wasps* 1037 makes this explicit.

²⁶ Rostagni, *RFIC* 53 (1925), 175 f.

behalf of others.²⁷ Since he utilized the services of the two men on a regular basis throughout his career, the question is when the joke began to circulate.²⁸ More specifically, was Aristophanes provoked into comparing himself with the demigod because of this taunt, or did a competitor seize upon the joke because of the flamboyant boasts in the *Wasps* and *Peace*? Everything points to the first. Aristophanes' relationship with Callistratus must have been thrust into the limelight in 426 in the course of the proceedings which Cleon initiated after the *Babylonians*,²⁹ and at this date it was not common practice for a comic playwright to bring out his work through another man. The only other contemporary who is reliably stated to have done so is Eupolis, and it was in 420 that Demostratus produced his *Autolycus*.³⁰ If Aristophanes was breaking new ground at the outset of his career it is unlikely that his rivals would have failed to exploit the opening, especially as the *Banqueters* won second prize (a considerable success for the youthful poet)³¹ while the production of the *Babylonians* became something of a cause célèbre. Accordingly, there seems no reason to doubt that one of the *Lives* is (perhaps fortuitously) correct in linking the gibe with the fact that Aristophanes brought out his *first* plays through Callistratus and Philonides.³² A festival of 425 is the logical occasion for a competitor to have exercised his humour upon him. The barb would presumably have lost some of its sting after 424, when Aristophanes demonstrated his ability as a producer by winning the first prize with the *Knights* in his own name,³³ and the parabasis of the play indicates that at the beginning of the year he had recently experienced some sort of pressure for not applying for a chorus in his own name.³⁴

Again, however, if it was Callistratus who produced the *Banqueters* as well as the *Babylonians* and *Acharnians*, either Philonides brought out a lost play between 427 and 425³⁵ or his name is gratuitously included in the statement in the *Vita*. The second

²⁷ One *Vita* (Koster, IA. xxviii. 9–11) states that Aristonymus (fr. 4) and Ameipsias (fr. 28) mocked him in this way. Another (Koster, IA. xxxi. 8–11) names Aristonymus (fr. 4) and Sannyrio (fr. 5), citing their *Ἥλιος ῥιγῶν* and *Γέλως* respectively. It is not certain whether Plato Com. is referring to Aristophanes in his *Peisander* (frs. 99, 100).

²⁸ That two or more poets independently inserted it into plays which were performed at the same festival is obviously improbable. It is logical to assume that one playwright coined the joke and the other(s) took it up.

²⁹ Whether any secrecy ever surrounded Aristophanes' authorship of the *Banqueters* and *Babylonians* is a controversial question which depends upon the exact significance of *Wasps* 1016–22 (particularly *οὐ φανερώς* and *κρύβδην* in 1017). In any case, Aristophanes' relationship with Callistratus (and with Philonides if he produced the *Banqueters*) must have become public knowledge during Cleon's action of 426. This is partially confirmed by *Knights* 512–14.

³⁰ Athen. 6. 216d. The tradition that Plato Com. was compelled by poverty to sell his plays to other men is clearly suspect; cf. Norwood, *Greek Comedy* (London, 1931), p. 166. In any case he was (like Eupolis) a contemporary of Aristophanes.

³¹ *Clouds* 528–9 with Σ.

³² Koster, IA. xxviii. 7–10.

³³ This, however, would not preclude repetition of the joke if it had initially gone down well with the spectators. Perhaps a playwright used it again in 423 and this provoked Aristophanes to reply in the *Wasps* and *Peace*.

³⁴ The chorus preface their long explanation why Aristophanes has never undertaken production before with the statement that he has ordered them to answer a question which has perplexed many (512–14). As Neil, n. ad loc., observes, *προσιόντας* and *βασανίζειν* indicate that the poet's numerous interrogators had approached a superior in a meddling manner. They can scarcely have been 'a number of his friends' as MacDowell, n. ad *Wasps* Hyp. i. 32, suggests. *καθ' ἑαυτούς* at 506 anticipates *καθ' ἑαυτόν* at 513 and also shows that something about the public reaction to his reliance upon Callistratus and Philonides had annoyed Aristophanes.

³⁵ Probably in 427 or 426. It would be cutting things fine to suppose that a competitor learnt that Philonides was going to produce a play of Aristophanes at the Dionysia of 425 and inserted the joke into a play of his own which was performed at the same festival.

alternative is entirely possible, but if Aristophanes did entrust the *Banqueters* to Philonides the comic possibilities could clearly have been increased for his rivals. A mocking reference to Heracles' thiasotai who had formed the chorus of Aristophanes' first play in any case provides an attractive context for the unflattering analogy between the poet and the demigod. The comparison would have taken on another dimension, at least as an 'in joke' for some of the spectators, if Philonides produced the *Banqueters* and his participation in Heracles' worship was known to his fellow-playwrights. One of the two men for whom this 'Heracles-Aristophanes' had 'laboured' was himself a devotee of the demigod.

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