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ANIMAL AND HUMAN SACRIFICE IN DIONYSIUS EPICUS

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## ANIMAL AND HUMAN SACRIFICE IN DIONYSIUS EPICUS

This note is conceived as a very small supplement to A. Benaissa's new edition of the fragments of Dionysius, the author of *Bassarica* and a *Gigantias*.<sup>1</sup> A new edition of the fragments of Dionysius was made necessary by the publication in 2011 by Benaissa himself of a novel fragment of Dionysius, P.Oxy. 5103, which was reunited with a previously unattributed fragment written in the same hand from the Oxyrhynchus collection, P.Oxy. 2818 ( $\pi^2$  in B.'s edition). This discovery gave us thirty more lines of Dionysius, which are absent from the previous editions by Livrea<sup>2</sup> and Heitsch.<sup>3</sup> The new Oxyrhynchus fragments are added to a corpus already featuring two papyri, one from the British Library (P.Lond.Lit. 40 =  $\pi^1$ ) and one from the Oxford collection (P.Oxy. 2815 =  $\pi^3$ ). B. gives a greatly improved text, based on a fresh examination of the papyri, particularly of P.Lond.Lit. 40, which was not checked against the original by Livrea and Heitsch after Milne's *editio princeps*.<sup>4</sup> Preparatory work on P.Lond.Lit. 40, including numerous notable new readings, were already published by B. in a 2013 article.<sup>5</sup> I will add here a few observations on two fragments from P.Lond.Lit. 40, namely fr. 33<sup>v</sup> and 34<sup>v</sup> B.

This is a papyrus codex consisting of seventeen fragments of varying size and interest, dated to the third or fourth century by Kenyon and Milne, but to the late fourth or possibly early fifth by Cavallo (*ap.* Livrea). The hand is a semi-cursive of the same type as P.Oxy. XXXIII 2656 = *GMAW*<sup>2</sup> no. 43 (Menander, *Misoumenos*, IV AD) and P.Reinach 69 = Cavallo–Maehler, *GBEBP* 6a (IV<sup>ex.</sup>, *Iliad*). Within hexameter papyri, the closest parallels seem to be P.Flor. III 390 (ethopoea, IV<sup>ex.</sup> AD) and PSI XV 1468 (adespota = Perale, *APHex* 37, IV AD). A picture of the papyrus is available in the Digitised Manuscript section of the British Library website.<sup>6</sup>

The largest fragment of the codex is fr. 33, whose *verso* Benaissa contextualizes as follows: “Dionysus offers the Indians for the *sparagmos* their own comrade Modaios, now disguised unbeknownst to them as a deer, and orders them to collect the remains of the victim in silver containers at daybreak, so that they may not be exposed to the sun (35–40). The maddened Indians display eager desire for the meat, while Deriades answers with the wish that they would rather tear apart and eat raw Dionysus himself (41–8).” As the apparatus below shows, these lines have been variously supplemented by several modern commentators, none of whom have attempted to reconstruct the last line of Deriades' response to Dionysus:

45 αἰ γὰρ δὴ μελεῖτ' ἰδιὰ κρέα κείῳ ταμίοντες  
ὠμὰ καταβρώξαιμεν· οἴομαι οὐδ' ἔτι δηρόν  
ὦδε λίην μαλεροῖο πυρὸς <ς>μύξεσθ[αι ἀντιμῆν  
οὐδ' ἔθ' ὁμῶς ὡς τὸ πρὶν ἐπίστυα φ[ — — — x.

45 ταμίοντες Henry : τάμοιμι Milne : ταμείη Kenyon : τάμοιντο Ludwig || 46 οὐκέτι δηρόν Henry : οὐδ' ἔτι δηρόν Keydell : οὐδ' ἔτι δαλούς Ludwig || 47 <ς>μύξεσθ[αι Keydell : μύξεσθ[ε Kenyon : μύξεσθ' [ὄν ἔμελλον Ludwig : μύξεσθ[αι ἀντιμῆν Livrea || 48 φ[ Benaissa : [θηρί' ἔδεσθαι Ludwig

<sup>1</sup> A. Benaissa, *Dionysius. The Epic Fragments*, Cambridge 2018, 13–41. Reviewed by E. Magnelli, *Prometheus* 47 (2021), 294–297 and M. Perale, *JHS* 142 (2022).

<sup>2</sup> E. Livrea, *Dionysii Bassaricon et Gigantiadis Fragmenta*, Rome 1973.

<sup>3</sup> E. Heitsch, *Die griechischen Dichterfragmente der römischen Kaiserzeit*, I<sup>2</sup>, Göttingen 1963.

<sup>4</sup> Milne was the first responsible for the edition of all fragments (*Catalogue of the Literary Papyri in the British Museum*, London 1927) twenty-five years after Frederick Kenyon published only what is now *Bass.* fr. 33<sup>v</sup> B. ('Fragments of an epic poem', in *Album gratulatorium in honorem Henrici van Herwerden*, Utrecht 1902, 137–142).

<sup>5</sup> A. Benaissa, P.Lond. Lit. 40 Revisited: New Readings in Dionysius' *Bassarica*, *APF* 59.2 (2013), 280–297.

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Papyrus\\_273](http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Papyrus_273).

Benaissa's new reading φ[ before the break at 48 opens up new textual possibilities. Assuming a change of subject from l. 47, l. 48 could be completed as e.g. φ[έγγεα λάμπειν, with φέγγεα agreeing with the (rare) adjective ἐπίστυα: 'Would that we might cut up *your* flesh limb from limb and swallow it raw! I think that [the breath] of fierce fire would no longer smoulder with such force, and no longer like before [would] the fire-torches [gleam] rushing forward.'<sup>7</sup> Compare Nonn. *D.* 35.257 ἀλλ' ὅτε φέγγος ἔλαμψε καὶ οὐκέτι δέρκετο Βακχάος (on Deriades, waking up after chasing the Bacchantes); on φέγγος as subject of λάμπω see already *h.Cer.* 278–279; cf. *S. Ant.* 1006–1007 ἐκ δὲ θυμάτων / Ἥφαιστος (= fire) οὐκ ἔλαμψεν.

Fire is, along with wine, Dionysus' own weapon: see 33<sup>r</sup>.5–8 ]ω πυρὸς οὐδ' ἔτι φειδώ / ἐ]ν φλογὶ κάμνον ἴοντες / ἐρε]μνὴ γαῖα δέδηκε / τεφρ]ωκαῖατο δαλοῖ]ε '... of fire, and (there was) no longer any sparing / ... coming they toiled in the flame / ... the black earth blazed / ... might be burnt to ashes with firebrands' (transl. Benaissa).<sup>8</sup> As Dionysus' army was using torch-fire against the enemy just a few lines before (cf. 27 πυρὶκαυτον ἐπὶ μῦθον), it is likely that the expression ὡς τὸ πρὶν' in 33<sup>v</sup>.48 refers to that specific episode of the battle. It is ironic that Deriades refers to the prospect of seeing Dionysus' κρέα cut and eaten and his gleaming fire extinguished, when the sacrificial victim Modaios, one of his men, has just been dressed up as a stag with gleaming κέρα (an anagram of κρέα), see fr. 33<sup>v</sup>.6–7 αὐτὰρ ὑπερθε κ[έ]ρα πάμφαινεν ἰ[δέσθαι] / τηλόθεν.

At 33<sup>v</sup>.31–35, Dionysus had told the Indians that the only way to assuage the pain of maddening wine would be to 'tear apart the raw flesh of a living animal and consume it': οὐ γάρ κεν πρὶν τοῦτο κατὰ φρενὸς αἴθο[πος] – × / οἴνου ἐρώησασθε καὶ ἐκ κακότητος φύ[γοιτε], / πρὶν κε θοῆι ἐνὶ νυκτὶ διάλλουδι εἰρύ[σαντες] / ὠμάδια κρέα θηρὸς ἀπὸ ζωοῖο φάγη[τε]. In his reply to Deriades at ll. 50ff., he seems to reiterate that Modaios/the stag's destiny is to be dismembered. Again, for these lines, unlike the previous ones, no supplements have been proposed. Based on Benaissa's new readings before the break at ll. 51–52 and in light of the vocabulary used by the Indian king in his verbal attack on the god at 45 (κρέα and forms of τέμνω), one could posit e.g.:

50 “πρῶτά νυν ὡς ἐπέοικε δι[άτμηγ] ἀχένα θηρὸς.  
αὐτὰρ ἐν ἀνδρομέοισι τα[μῶν] κρέα δώμασι δώσει  
δαῖτα φίλην θήρεσσ[ι], τὰ<sup>9</sup> ἔδμεναι οὐκ ἐθέλων περ.”

51 ἐν Benaissa : ἐπ' Milne | δώσει vel τεύξει possis || 52 θήρεσσ[ι] Benaissa : θηλεσσ[ι] Milne

'First, as it is customary (ὡς ἐπέοικε), cut the animal's neck. But once you have cut it, you will give away the flesh in a *human* body as meal (or you will make it a meal) dear to the beasts, if you do not want to eat it.' For the wording, cf. Nonn. *D.* 4.413 ἀχένα θηρὸς ἔτεμνε, 40.44 λέοντος ... ἀχένα τέμνειν, 44.160 οὐδὲ διατμήξω μέσον ἀχένος. The concept of corpses as feast for animals may intentionally recall another famous epic line on desecration and destructive wrath, that of Achilles over the Trojan bodies in *Il.* 1.4–5, which according to Zenodotus read: αὐτοὺς δὲ ἐλώρια τεύχε κόνεσσιν / οἰωνοῖσι τε δαῖτα.<sup>10</sup> It is perhaps not coincidental that Modaios, described by Nonnus in Achillean terms as a fighter 'to whom bloodshed was more pleasing than a banquet (εἰλαπίνης)' (*D.* 32.167),<sup>11</sup> is threatened here with becoming himself the object of the feast.<sup>12</sup> As the adjective ἀνδρόμεος (51) is used of the flesh of Modaios dressed up as a

<sup>7</sup> Transl. by Benaissa, adapted.

<sup>8</sup> On fire as weapon, see especially Benaissa's introduction to fr. 33<sup>r</sup> (p. 173) and commentary to 35<sup>v</sup>.2 πυρὰ πολλά, 14 (p. 208). Livrea (1973, 30), believed the fires in 35<sup>v</sup> could have burnt the oak-tree (δρῶν) mentioned in l. 13. At 35<sup>v</sup>.3, an easy supplement would be πατρ]ός ἔκητι (= *h.Hom. Dion.* 6, cf. A.R. 1.116–117), i.e. by the will of Dionysus' father Zeus, as oak trees are sacred to him.

<sup>9</sup> For the Homeric (*Il.* 4.345, 22.247) hiatus cf. fr. 34<sup>v</sup>.1 κρέα ἔδμεν, with Benaissa's introduction, p. 59.

<sup>10</sup> Rejected by Athenaeus, who used θηρίων in reference to both dogs and birds: 1.12e καὶ ἐπὶ μόνων ἀνθρώπων δαῖτα λέγει ὁ ποιητής, ἐπὶ δὲ θηρίων οὐκέτι. This is confuted by *Il.* 24.43. Helpful *loci similes* in Finglass *ad S. Aj.* 829–830 and 1064–1065.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Achilles' speech to Agamemnon in *Hom. Il.* 19.209–214 πρὶν δ' οὐ πῶς ἄν ἐμοίγε φίλον κατὰ λαιμὸν ἰεῖη / οὐ πόσις οὐδὲ βρώσις ... τό μοι οὐ τι μετὰ φρεσὶ ταῦτα μέμνηεν, / ἀλλὰ φόνος τε καὶ αἶμα καὶ ἀργελέος στόνος / ἀνδρῶν.

<sup>12</sup> On Nonnus' reworking of Dionysius' Modaios, see Benaissa's commentary, pp. 189–190.

stag a few lines before (45 κρέαεcci ... ἀνδρομέοιc), it must be referring to him here as well. By placing ἀνδρομέοιc before the *caesura*, Dionysus lays emphasis on the human nature of the beast's flesh; as he realizes that his plan to induce the Indians to eat one of their own is not working, the god decides to reveal that the stag is actually Modaios.

The following fragment, 34<sup>r</sup> opens with references to Modaios' spurious (i.e. counterfeit) ribs (πλευρὰ νοθεῖα, 1) and horns (κεράεcciv, 2). On the verso, the Indians are still preoccupied with 'eat[ing] the meat as a remedy against the furious onslaught' ([ κρέα ἔδμεν ἄκοc ζαχραέoc ὄ[ρμηc], 1)'; perhaps they have not fully grasped Dionysus' words, or Deriades has not communicated to them that the stag is in fact Modaios. Then, "αἶμ' ἀπέλειχον, emphatically repeated over two lines (6, 7), and ὀρνόμενοι (6) reinforce the impression that a frenzied scene of omophagy is taking place, while εἶρνον (5) recalls διάλλυδιc εἰρύc[αντεc] (sc. ὠμάδια κρέα) in Dionysus' speech (fr. 33<sup>v</sup>.33) and suggests a *sparagmos*" (Benaissa, p. 201). But there is an unexpected turn of events; for reasons we cannot fully appreciate, a goat (4) is substituted for the stag/Modaios, perhaps following Dionysus' injunction.

... [τ]ράγον ἀμφεπ[έροντο  
 05 ] αὐτὰρ ἔπειτα [ . . . ] αc εἶρνον α[  
 ] αἶμ' ἀπέλειχ[ο]ν ὀρνόμενοι φ[ρέναc εἶω  
 ] αἶμ' ἀπέλειχον, ...

5 εἶρνον Benaissa : εἶρνον edd. || 6 ἀπέλειχ[ο]ν Milne | ὀρνόμενοι φ[ Benaissa : ὀρνομένοιο [ edd. | φ[ρέναc εἶω] Henry ap. Benaissa

'they were busied about a goat, / ... but then ... they were tearing ... / ... they were licking off the blood, excited in their minds ... / they were licking off the blood' (transl. Benaissa)

At 34<sup>v</sup>.5, before Benaissa's new reading εἶρνον, I believe we can read θ[η]λάc,<sup>13</sup> followed perhaps by ἄ[λλαc at verse-end: after ἔπειτα, the left extremity of the crossbar of θ can be seen at mid-height; before αc, we have traces of two obliques crossing also at mid-level. Deriades' men would then be tearing apart the goat's meat. If so, the Indians would be impiously eating the meat raw, as announced by Deriades at fr. 33<sup>v</sup>.46 ὠμά καταβρώξαμεν. A θηλή is that part of an animal that is normally burnt in the sacrifice and given to the gods.<sup>14</sup> Was the goat then supposed to be sacrificed to appease the fury of Dionysus? Is the substitution the result of Dionysus' intervention to save Modaios' life, and was it meant to show Dionysus' clemency? The fragmentary state of the text does not allow us to draw any conclusion. However, the detail of the substitution of Modaios for the goat may have played a significant role in Nonnus' characterization of Modaios in the *Dionysiaca*, where not only is the threatened *sparagmos* never mentioned, but Modaios becomes the successor of Deriades (*D.* 40.236) and eventually a follower of Dionysus.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Cf. Orph. *L.* 743 ἔνθαδ' ἔπειτα θηλάc, in the same *sedes*.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Hom. *Il.* 9.220 ὁ δ' ἐν πυρὶ βάλλε θηλάc, with Leaf *ad loc.*

<sup>15</sup> G. Agosti, *Crudeltà dionisiache dall'alto impero*, *Analecta Papyrologica* 13 (2001), 115–147, 142–146. Whilst the reading κατὰ [τ]ράγον in 34<sup>v</sup>.9 is now obsolete, the points Agosti made remain valid.