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TWO CRETAN EPITAPHS


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Two funerary epigrams of late Hellenistic date, discovered in 1983 at Lato in Crete, have been published by M. W. Baldwin Bowsky (Hesperia 58 [1989] 115-129). I suggest here some changes of interpretation.

One monument is the grave of a child of seven years. The poem presents many problems; my concern here is the heading in larger letters that precedes it, which the editor took to name two persons in the nominative, the deceased Theodotus (with three patronymics) and his mother Aristono:

\[\text{Θιόδωτος Θιόδ[ότ]ω} \]
\[\text{Βιαννω Εὐαγόρω Ἀρι[ό]ν-}

Several features are troubling: that so many generations of Theodotus are specified; that the living and the dead are not distinguished by case — one would have preferred a dative for the dead; that we must assume a feminine nominative in -όι, attested in Cretan but unusual; that the mother’s father bears the same name as her husband and his father; that she alone is named in the heading, yet the poem itself invokes both father and mother (without however naming them in what survives). I would urge a simpler construction, father and mother in the nominative bidding farewell to their son in the dative:

\[\text{Θιόδωτος Θιόδ[ότ]ω,} \]
\[\text{Βιαννω Εὐαγόρω, Ἀρι[ό]ν-}

The mother’s name Βιαννω has a feminine ending found everywhere in Greece, in Crete e.g. Cωκίτω of I. Cret. I xxii 58, Φιλακκό of III iv 37.26.1 The dead child is Ἀριστόνου, a frequent enough masculine name, and his father is the same Theodotus as in line 1; the stemma offered by the editor can be simplified accordingly.

The other monument is the grave of a scholar (οἱοντήκ), Cleitonymus son of Mnastocles, the eighth of the seven sages. Lines 10 ff. are difficult; he is lamented by the whole city,

\[10 \quad \text{oú γαρ [οὖν] ἦρως ἐν γῆραι βίον ὥς δὲ τις ἄστηρ λάμψας ἐκβεσθή δαίμονος ἀκρισίας} \]
\[12 \quad \text{πατρίδα ῥυόμενος βουλαῖς ἀγαθή δὲ προνοῖα οἰκονόμοι δόξης κόμως ἐκράτεσαν. τριεικοὺς γάρ λίπε παίδας ἐθους. (κτλ.)} \]

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The editor translates, “The hero certainly did not extinguish his life in old age glowing like some star, through the imprudence of his daimon, while protecting his country with his counsels. Rather the oikonomoi, pillars of his reputation, prevailed in good foresight. For he left three sons of his own.”

The sequence of thought is less than clear. In line 10, ÓÔn is not logical or metrical (and is perhaps too long for the space), βίον cannot easily depend on the passive ἐβεῖ θῆ, and δὲ is intrusive. The sentiment, frequently met, is that the deceased did not reach old age but died in his prime; after γὰρ an active verb is needed, to take βίον as object and to contrast (δὲ) with ἐβεῖ θῆ. Restore then:

10 οὐ γὰρ [ἐπ]ήρωκεν γὴρας βίον, ὡς δὲ τις ἀετήρ

As to what follows, I would interpret thus:

10 for he did not cripple his life with old age, but, having blazed forth like some star, he was extinguished by the caprices of fortune,
12 he who guarded the fatherland with his counsels. But by his good foresight, pillars have prevailed as custodians of his fame:
for he left his three sons…

For the metaphor of a crippled life,² compare the gnome πήρωκεν ἀπασι βίος at Anth. Gr. 9.359.7 (attributed to Plato Comicus), and ἀναπροβίων γερόντων, "old men of crippled life," in Phrynichus (fr. 4 Demiańczuk [70A Edmonds]). This association of crippling and old age is obvious and familiar; cf. γέροντας καὶ ἀναπήρους, Isaeus fr. 10 Roussel. In 13, οἰκονόμοι are not civic magistrates but generic "custodians" or "dispensors," metaphorical like οἰκονόμοι της τῶν ἄκουόντων ἡδονῆς in Alcidamas;³ τομίας often serves similarly in the poets (Theog. 1186, Critias fr. 1.11, Anth.Gr. 6.42.4). As to κίονες, the editor rightly remarked the frequency of "pillars" for sturdy males in Greek literature. I would mention too a more esoteric usage, "shooting stars." The scientists had labored to distinguish meteors of divergent appearance (cf. Arist. Meteor. 341; Mund. 392b, 395b); that κίον, "column," was the name given one type we know from Heracleides Ponticus (fr. 116 Wehrli²: a bare list that does not reveal what characterized the κίον). If this is meant here, that would be consistent with the conceit of the poem: the star is extinguished, but he has left behind a meteor shower, his sons, to carry on his fame.⁴ But I hesitate to recommend this interpretation without knowing of what subject Cleitonymus was a "sophist." At 7–8 we have κοίρατον ἱκτορίτης, πιστὸν ἐξεις μα νότον. The editor, who reasonably identified him with one the kosmoi attested at

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² [ἐπλ]ήρωκεν is possible, "he did not fill (out) his life with old age”; but this strains the verb, which should mean "fill one’s life with" (as Philo Gig. 55, Aristid. Or. 1.349 Behr).
³ Cited at Arist. Rh. 1406b26 as an example of frigidity.
Lato in 116/5 B.C., translated ὑγιης "statesman," then "master of historical inquiry." But ἱερός need not be specifically historical research (e.g. Eur. fr. 910 N.). If there is a labored astronomical image in the epigram, we might suspect that his investigations were astrological and that it was by those counsels, rather than an historian's lore, that he protected his city. But while kings and emperors resorted to astrologers, I can cite no instance of a city doing so, and leave the question open.

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5 Καπτόνωνικος Μυστοκλεικος, I.Cret. I xvi 26 and 33.