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HEROIC HONOURS FOR PHILETAS?

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Inter Callimachi sat erit placuisse libellos
 et cecinisse modis, Coe poeta, tuis.
 haec urant pueros, haec urant scripta puellas,
 meque deum clament et mihi sacra ferant!

(Propertius 3,9,43–46)

Commentators have had surprisingly little¹ to say about line 46. A poet is commonly the servant, interpreter or priest of the Muses or Apollo or some other deity. He may also be called a θεῖος ἀοιδός/sacer vates. But what Propertius wishes for himself here goes far beyond such expressions.² It is natural to connect lines 45–46 with the previous couplet, which mentions his great elegiac predecessors, Callimachus of Cyrene and Philetas of Cos. If the claim to divinity and worship could be shown to derive from something in Callimachus, we would hardly need to look for any further explanation. In default of such evidence, it is not unreasonable to wonder whether Philetas might have claimed (or even been granted) semi-divine or heroic honours.

The very first line of Propertius Book Three offers some encouragement to this speculation:³

Callimachi manes et Coi sacra Philitae

The phrase ‘Coi sacra Philitae’ is of course controversial, and has been much discussed, but most naturally and most probably it implies that worship was offered to Philetas. That is the interpretation of D. R. Shackleton Bailey⁴, who adds “We do not know that such worship was really paid to Callimachus or Philetas, but, equally, we do not know that it was not; and Propertius may in any case have taken it for granted.” I would like to suggest that Philetas himself, in his own poetry, may have expressed the hope that he would receive honours from his Coan compatriots.

First, however, one must confront the widely-held view⁵ that, perhaps from the second century B.C., knowledge of Philetas’ poetry declined, until, to the Latin poets in the reign of

¹ In the case of Butler and Barber, nothing at all.

² Some references to poets as divine clearly will not help us here: e.g. Empedocles’ ἐγὼ δ’ ὑμῖν θεὸς ἄμβροτος, οὐκέτι θνητός (fr. 112,4, cf. Horace, *Ars Poetica* 464–465 ‘deus immortalis haberi | dum cupit Empedocles’), or the casual impiety of Ovid, *Amores* 3,3,43–44 ‘si deus ipse forem, numen sine fraude liceret | femina mendaci falleret ore meum’. On the other hand *Amores* 3,9,18 ‘sunt etiam qui nos numen habere putent’ seems relevant, since Ovid means more than a θεῖος ἀοιδός, which has been covered in the previous line (‘at sacri vates et divum cura vocamur’).

³ This link between Propertius 3,9 and 3,1 is made by P. Fedeli, *Properzio, Il Libro Terzo delle Elegie*, Bari, 1985, p. 326 (on 3,9,46).

⁴ *Propertiana*, Cambridge, 1956, pp. 135–136, following Butler and Barber, and himself followed by e.g. G. Luck, “The Cave and the Source”, *CQ N.S.* 7, 1957, 175–179.

⁵ Summarized by Peter E. Knox (who does not himself take this view) in “Philetas and Roman Poetry”, *Papers of the Leeds International Latin Seminar, Seventh Volume*, 1993, pp. 61–83, at p. 62 with p. 77 n. 8.

Augustus, Philetas had become merely a name to be mentioned together with Callimachus because these two were, canonically, the leading Greek elegists. This is indeed a knotty problem; the citizens of Oxyrhynchus do not seem to have read Philetas as they did Callimachus, and none of the few additions⁶ which *Supplementum Hellenisticum* makes to the fragments of the Coan comes from a papyrus text of his poetry. The most recent scholar to consider this question, Peter Knox⁷, is more optimistic, suggesting (p. 75) that Propertius 3,3,52 ‘Philita . . . aqua’ and 4,6,3 ‘Philiteis . . . corymbis’ may reflect specific passages in the poetry of Philetas.⁸ He might have given more prominence to Ovid, *Ars Amatoria* 3,329–330 ‘sit tibi Callimachi, sit Coi nota poetae, | sit quoque vinosi Teia Musa senis’; it would be strange to prescribe a reading list of three poets, two of whom (Callimachus and Anacreon) were available to everyone, but the third (Philetas) wholly inaccessible.⁹

Even those who deny¹⁰ that the Romans had direct knowledge of Philetas’ poetry accept, for the most part, that they were familiar with the lines on Philetas composed by Hermesianax of Colophon¹¹ (fr. 7,75–78 Powell):

οἴσθα δὲ καὶ τὸν ἀοιδόν, ὃν Εὐρυπύλου πολιῆται
 Κῶιοι χάλκειον στήσαν ὑπὸ πλατάνωι
 Βιττίδα μολπάζοντα θοήν, περὶ πάντα Φιλίταν
 ῥήματα καὶ πᾶσαν τρυόμενον λαλιήν.

According to a scholiast on Nicander, *Theriaca* 3,¹² Hermesianax was personally acquainted with Philetas; so he could have known independently of the honours which the Coans had

⁶ *Suppl. Hell.* 673–675D, all from treatises, lexicons or scholia on other works. Of course our attested fragments of Philetas are so few that we would probably be unable to ascribe any anonymous papyrus fragment to him; it is a rare stroke of luck that the badly damaged SH 674 (in which the name of Philetas has not survived) happens to overlap with fr. 23 Powell. The Editors (p. 320) mention the faint possibility that SH 983 (a riddling epigram on the Oyster accompanied by copious commentary, from a second century B.C. papyrus) might be by Philetas.

⁷ See n. 5 above.

⁸ In these two cases (although generally sympathetic to Knox’s view) I tend towards scepticism. On water-drinking, Pfeiffer (*Callimachus*, vol. I p. 11, on Schol. Flor. to fr. 2) wrote ‘Apud Propertium omnes poetae e fontibus aquam haurire vel bibere videntur’. As for the ‘corymbi’, these might come from the θαλεροῦς κισσοῖο κορύμβους with which Meleager (*Anth. Pal.* 4,1 = 1 Gow–Page, 15) characterizes Leonidas of Tarentum (in Philip’s introduction to his later collection, the κόρυμβος stands for Crinagoras, *Anth. Pal.* 4,2,7). Prop. 2,34,31 ‘tu satius memorem Musis imitere Philitan’ certainly looks as though it may contain a more definite allusion to something in Philetas’ own poetry (Knox p. 75), but it is hard to have much confidence in this text or any particular emendation thereof.

⁹ This point made by A. La Penna, ‘“Ipse Coo plaudente Philitas” (Stat. silv. 1,2,252): Un’ipotesi su Fileta di Cos’, *RFIC* 116, 1988, 318–320 at 320.

¹⁰ E.g. W. Kuchenmüller, *Philetas Coi Reliquiae*, Diss. Berlin 1928, pp. 28–37.

¹¹ Kuchenmüller (n. 10 above), pp. 33–35, is convinced that the references to Bittis (see n. 35 below) in Ovid, *Tristia* 1,6,2 ‘nec tantum Coe Bittis amata suo est’ and *Ex Ponto* 3,1,57–58 ‘nec te nesciri patitur mea pagina, qua non | inferius Coa Bittide nomen habes’ (both addressed to Ovid’s wife) depend solely on Hermesianax. On the other hand he expresses doubt (p. 33 n. 6) whether Propertius knew this passage of the Leonian; but such knowledge is surely the most reasonable explanation of Prop. 2,34,45 ‘tu non Antimacho, non tutior ibis Homero’ – Antimachus loved Lyde (Hermesianax fr. 7,41–46) and Homer Penelope (*ibid.* 27–34).

¹² = Philetas Test. 20a) Kuchenmüller, though the information must be regarded with some scepticism (cf. on Hermesianax fr. 12 Powell).

conferred upon their poet. But it seems probable that in at least one or two cases Hermesianax has deliberately incorporated verbal reminiscences of the poet whom he is mentioning.¹³ Thus Hermesianax writes (fr. 7,42) of Antimachus, in love with Lyde, Πακτωλοῦ ῥεῦμ' ἐπέβη ποταμοῦ. By chance we may possess the very line of Antimachus' famous elegy which Hermesianax has in mind, Πακτωλοῦ χρυσεοισιν ἐπ' ἀνδρήροισι θάασσον.¹⁴ Similarly it is tempting to connect Hermesianax fr. 7,76 ὑπὸ πλατάνωι with Philetas fr. 14 Powell θρήσασθαι πλατάνωι γράιη ὑπο 'to sit under an aged plane-tree', although we do not know the context of Philetas' words. If we possessed a full text of the Coan, we might find that Hermesianax here had introduced more extensive verbal reminiscence of him.¹⁵

There is one more passage of Latin poetry which may contain a specific allusion to something in Philetas, relevant to this enquiry. When celebrating the marriage of Stella and Violentilla, Statius says that all the past masters of Elegy¹⁶ would have been glad to hymn this day (Silvae 1,2,252–255):

hunc ipse Coo plaudente Philetas
Callimachusque senex Umbroque Propertius antro
ambissent laudare diem, nec tristis in ipsis
Naso Tomis divesque foco lucente Tibullus.

Echoes of the named poets are ingeniously incorporated. To start with the most obvious, Tibullus (1,1,5–6) was content with paupertas, 'dum meus adsiduo luceat igne focus'. 'Umbroque Propertius antro' seems to combine the 'antrum' of Prop. 3,1,5 with the Umbrian patriotism of 4,1,63 'ut nostris tumefacta superbiat Umbria libris'. 'Nec tristis in ipsis | Naso Tomis' covers not only the fact of Ovid's exile, and the title Tristia, but also the recurring motif that, even in Tomi, Ovid had rare occasions for celebration, e.g. Tr. 4,2,71–74 (the prospect of a triumph), 5,5,7–8 (his wife's birthday), Ex Ponto 2,1,3–12 (another triumph), 4,4,21–22 (news of Pompeius' consulship) 'at mihi dilapsis inter nova gaudia curis | excidit asperitas huius iniqua loci'. 'Callimachusque senex' probably refers to the poet's complaints about old age in fr. 1,33ff. Pf.¹⁷ In all the above cases (with the possible exception of Ovid)¹⁸ Statius alludes to a programmatic poem which stands at the head of a book or collection.

¹³ This technique was further developed by the Romans, as we shall see in the case of Statius, Silvae 1,2,252–255 (below).

¹⁴ The credit for recognizing this belongs to Pfeiffer (on Callimachus fr. 814 dub.), who emended †καὶ ἄλλως† in the quoting source to καὶ Ἀντίμαχος rather than Καλλίμαχος (Nauck, Bergk). Ascription to Antimachus is accepted in Suppl. Hell. 79, though the editors do not mention any particular poem.

¹⁵ Including, I suspect, the epithet applied to Bittis, θοήν, which has the air of a learned tease (P. Maas in JHS 52, 1932, 150 "Das Wort ist eine Glosse, also unübersetzbar", see now J. N. O'Sullivan in Lexikon des frühgriechischen Epos, s. v. θοός) suitable for discussion in Philetas' own Lexicon (which Hermesianax seems to refer to immediately after θοήν).

¹⁶ The absence of Cornelius Gallus is worth noting.

¹⁷ Though Knox (n. 5 above), p. 83 n. 91, rightly says "If the Aetia Prologue had not been recovered, it is unlikely that anyone would have thought *senex* an allusion to his poems."

¹⁸ One could remove the anomaly by laying stress on Ex Ponto 2,1,3 'nil fore dulce mihi Scythica regione putavi | . . . (5–6) tandem aliquid pulsa curarum nube serenum | vidi, fortunae verba dedique meae | . . . (12) hac ego laetitia, si vetet ipse [sc. Caesar], fruar'.

We are left with ‘ipse’¹⁹ *Coo plaudente Philetas*. Of the Silver Latin poets, Statius was without question the most deeply imbued with Hellenistic poetry, and it would be disappointing if his reference to Philetas were the only one not to include a specific allusion to the work of the named poet. Note that the personification of a joyful Cos occurs in another early Hellenistic poet, Κόως δ’ ὀλόλυξεν ἰδοῖσα. | φᾶ δὲ καθαπτομένα βρέφους χεῖρεςσι φίλησι κτλ. (Theocritus 17,64–65, on the birth of Ptolemy Philadelphus). Some scholars have thought that Philetas composed a poem on the history of his native island; Knox²⁰ points out that the elegiac Demeter offered opportunities for mentioning the antiquities of Cos. But the basic implication of ‘Coo plaudente’ is surely that Philetas was highly esteemed by his fellow citizens. In this respect the words of Statius harmonize with *Hermesianax* fr. 7,75–78: the Coans took pride in their native poet and erected a statue of him. But it does not seem likely that Statius’ reference derives wholly from *Hermesianax*, and I suggest that Philetas in his own poetry may have expressed a hope for future honours (of whatever sort), or gratitude for honours already received from his countrymen.

So far, on the basis of references to Philetas²¹ in *Hermesianax*, Propertius and Statius, we have postulated the existence of a programmatic poem by the Coan. Further evidence is only circumstantial. But, remarkably enough, just such a poem was composed in the generation after Philetas by a writer of substance who would undoubtedly have been familiar with the works of the master. This poet asks for semi-divine honours (revealing incidentally that the heroization of poets was a topical issue in the third century B.C.) and for a statue of himself to be erected in the market-place of his home town. It seems likely that the poem was intended as a Seal, to stand at the head of a collection, on the subject of Old Age (perhaps even entitled ΓΗΡΑΣ). The Seal was apparently 28 lines long.

Its author, Poseidippus of Pella,²² is chiefly known to us – and indeed to antiquity²³ – as a writer of better than average epigrams.²⁴ In style, the Seal poem not surprisingly differs

¹⁹ Why does Statius emphasize the name of Philetas with ‘ipse’? Perhaps because Philetas was the oldest of the five elegists. Or could Statius be expressing an unorthodox preference for Philetas over Callimachus? According to the conventional ranking order of elegists, ‘princeps habetur Callimachus, secundas confessione plurimorum Philetas occupavit’ (Quintilian 10,1,58).

²⁰ (N. 5 above) pp. 73 and 75–76. See also the article by A. La Penna cited in n. 9 above.

²¹ Or, in the case of Propertius 3,9,46, a sentiment expressed immediately after a mention of Philetas.

²² I am greatly indebted to the article by Professor Hugh Lloyd-Jones (with a new transcription of the text, aided by J. W. B. Barns), “The Seal of Poseidippus”, *JHS* 83, 1963, 75–99 = *The Academic Papers of Sir Hugh Lloyd-Jones: Greek Comedy, Hellenistic Literature, Greek Religion and Miscellanea*, Oxford, 1990, pp. 158–195 (henceforth I quote page numbers from *Academic Papers*). Despite mention of Poseidippus’ name (lines 5 and 9) and his home town (Macedonian Pella, line 16) in the actual text, some scholars have denied this poem to the famous Poseidippus, and have ascribed it to the first century A.D. (the date of the tablet). In particular, D. L. Page was never convinced by Lloyd-Jones; but my sympathies are with the latter (see his review of Page, *Further Greek Epigrams*, *CR N.S.* 32, 1982, 140 = *Academic Papers* (as above) p. 225).

²³ In about 264–3 B.C. the Aetolian League granted proxeny at Delphi Ποσειδίππῳ τῷ ἐπιγραμματοποιῷ Πελλαίῳ (see Lloyd-Jones p. 160, with pp. 194–195 for correction of a slip). The chronology of Poseidippus’ life and works is not altogether clear. His public poems indicate that he was active in Egypt between c. 284 and c. 270 B.C. (references in Lloyd-Jones, p. 192), while the Seal (line 7) seems to show him as an old man in Thebes (surely Boeotian). It might be a reasonable guess that Poseidippus was some thirty years younger than Philetas. If all the epigrams on the mummy-case (see n. 24 below) are by Poseidippus, we

from these, being written in the grand manner, with the vocabulary too sometimes striking an epic note.²⁵ After an initial cletic invocation of the Muses (lines 1–8), asking them to leave Helicon and to come and join Poseidippus in singing of hateful old age (line 5 $\nu\acute{\nu}\nu$ δὲ Ποσειδίππῳ στυγερὸν συναείσατε γῆρας), the poet appeals to Apollo (9–17):²⁶

κεῖ σὺ Ποσ(ε)ίδιππὸν ποτ' ἐφίλα(ο), Κύνθιε, Λητοῦς
 10 υ
 10A [. .] [.] [.]
 †φημητινιφιεντοικεια† τοῦ Παρίου.
 τοῖν ἐκκρήσ(α)ις τε καὶ ἐξ ἀδύτων κᾶναχῆσαις
 φωνὴν ἀθα(νά)την, ὦ ἄνα, καὶ κατ' ἐμοῦ,
 ὄφρα με τιμήσῃσι Μακηδόνες οἳ τ' ἐπὶ γῆσων
 15 οἳ τ' Ἀσίης πάσης γ(ε)ίτονες ἠϊόνος.
 Πελλαῖον γένος ἀμόν' ἔοιμι δὲ βίβλον ἐλίσσω
 †άμφω† λαοφόρῳ κείμενος εἰν ἀγορῆι.

Despite the damaged and lacunose²⁷ state of the text, we may be able to discern the flow of the argument. First, Poseidippus refers to the favour which the god has shown him in the past (line 9), i.e. to the success which his previous poetry has already achieved.²⁸ Presumably Apollo was asked likewise to favour the present undertaking. The corrupt line 11 contains an ‘utterance’ (φήμη, in whatever case) and ‘the Parian’. Fortunately the next two couplets (12–15) make the sense plain: ‘May you deliver and shout forth from your innermost sanctuary a similar immortal pronouncement, Lord, with regard to me too, so that the Macedonians may honour me, and those in the islands, and the dwellers near the coast of the whole of Asia.’ As Lloyd-Jones convincingly shows (pp. 178–179), ‘the Parian’ is Archilochus the poet; at some time in the third century B.C. the Delphic Oracle ordained

should note that no. 24 in Posidippo, Epigrammi (edd. G. Bastianini and G. Gallazzi, 1993) celebrates a chariot victory won at Olympia by the horses of a Berenice. Should this be Berenice II, wife of Ptolemy III Euergetes (who competed at Olympia according to Hyginus, Astr. 2,24, cf. Pfeiffer on Callimachus fr. 388 and P. J. Parsons, ZPE 25, 1977, 45), we would have evidence that Poseidippus was still composing in the 240s B.C. Lloyd Jones (pp. 192–194) is especially interested in the chronological relationship between Poseidippus’ Seal poem on Old Age and Callimachus’ Aetia Prologue, which includes the same theme (fr. 1,33ff.).

²⁴ From ancient times he was linked in various ways to Asclepiades, though the latter’s poems (in my opinion) are markedly superior. The corpus of Poseidippus’ epigrams may soon be multiplied several times over by publication of a papyrus from a mummy-case. Several of these poems have already seen the light of day; no. 21 edd. Bastianini and Gallazzi (see n. 23 above) was already known from Anth. Plan. 119 = Gow–Page, Hellenistic Epigrams, Poseidippus 18 (though there are variations in the text of the third line). One waits to hear the full reasons for thinking that all the poems on this papyrus are by Poseidippus.

²⁵ Lloyd-Jones (n. 22 above), pp. 189 and 193. He sees (pp. 189–190) greater affinity between the Seal and the epigrams on public themes which Poseidippus composed for the Ptolemaic royal house (nos. 11 and 12 Gow–Page, to which one could add no. 13, and nos. 19–20, both on Arsinoe, from the new collection (nn. 23–24 above)).

²⁶ I reproduce the text as in Supplementum Hellenisticum 705, which differs slightly from that in Lloyd-Jones, Academic Papers, pp. 167–168.

²⁷ The scribe (perhaps writing from memory) omitted the second half of line 10.

²⁸ So Lloyd-Jones, pp. 177 and 195.

that men should honour Archilochus.²⁹ Poseidippus now asks Apollo³⁰ to make a similar pronouncement about himself, so that he too receives semi-divine honours.³¹ In addition to these, Poseidippus requests a statue of himself in the marketplace of his home town, Macedonian Pella (16–17), which will show him as a poet, perusing a roll (16, βίβλον ἐλίσσω). This recalls the statue of Philetas which, according to Hermesianax (fr. 7,75–78) his fellow Coans erected – likewise recognizable as that of a poet (Βιττίδα μολπάζοντα θοήν, presumably holding a roll or a musical instrument).

That Philetas was honoured (or hoped to be honoured) with a public statue would be consistent with heroic worship,³² but by no means implies it. I would, however, conjecture that Philetas too may have expressed a desire both for a statue and heroic honours,³³ either at the start of a substantial poem, or in a programmatic piece introducing a larger collection. The Seal of Poseidippus shows that such a poem by Philetas (which we originally postulated on different grounds) would be entirely credible in the literary climate of the third century B.C. The existence of such a poem would give a more specific and more interesting literary background to Poseidippus' Sphragis³⁴ and illuminate what Hermesianax (fr. 7,75–78) says about the Coan. One might guess, from Hermesianax, that Philetas expressed his hope for honours in connexion with his poetry addressed to Bittis; that, of course, need not imply that he wrote poems for Bittis which closely resembled the work of the Roman elegists.³⁵ Above all, we might have found the origin of two references in Propertius, 'Coi sacra Philetæ' (3,1,1) and 'meque deum clament et mihi sacra ferant' (3,9,46, immediately after a mention of Philetas). I will end with two points about Propertius: (a) his hope for divinity

²⁹ The third-century inscription, erected in the Archilocheion on Paros by Mnesiepes, was published by M. Kondoleon in *Εφ. Αρχ.* 1952, 32–95. It seems likely (Lloyd-Jones p. 179) that the original hero-cult of Archilochus was ordered by an earlier Delphic pronouncement.

³⁰ 'With monstrous impertinence', according to Lloyd-Jones (p. 194), though the offence might be palliated if, as I suspect, Philetas had also coveted semi-divine honours.

³¹ The list of peoples who will honour Poseidippus "well suits a Macedonian living in the time of Antigonos Gonatas" (Lloyd-Jones, p. 180).

³² See Lloyd-Jones, pp. 180–181 on lines 16f. of Poseidippus. He remarks that Theocritus, Epigram 21 Gow = 14 Gow–Page = Anth. Pal. 7,664 might perhaps have been written for a statue of Archilochus, to be placed in the Parian Archilocheion.

³³ I doubt, however, whether Philetas would have appealed to the precedent of Archilochus. His associate Callimachus seems to have disapproved of the Parian (cf. fr. 544 τοῦ ᾤ μεθυπλήγοζ φοροῖμιον Ἀρχιλόχου); Pfeiffer notes that Archilochus is set up against the Callimachean school of poetry by Antip. Thess., Anth. Pal. 11,20 = 20 Gow–Page, Garland of Philip. It is conceivable that in this same poem Antipater specifically attacks Philetas – (the phrase ἐπέων κόσμον (line 3) is also found in Philetas fr. 10,3 Powell). Lloyd-Jones (p. 193) discusses the inclusion of Poseidippus in the list of Telchines given in the Florentine scholia to the Aetia Prologue (Pfeiffer, Callimachus vol. I p. 3). But he does not observe that we now have another reason why this learned commentator might have thought of Poseidippus: Callimachus and Poseidippus held diametrically opposed views not only about the Lyde of Antimachus, but also (as the Seal now indicates) about the merits of Archilochus.

³⁴ Lloyd-Jones (pp. 193–194) compares the Seal of Poseidippus very unfavourably with the Prologue to Callimachus' Aetia. If there was any close comparison between Poseidippus and Philetas, I would expect the latter to prove superior.

³⁵ Philetas' poetry addressed to Bittis more probably resembled the Lyde of Antimachus (Lyde and Bittis are mentioned together in Ovid, Tristia 1,6,1–2), or the Leontion of Hermesianax.

rests not upon an oracular pronouncement by Apollo (as in the case of Archilochus and, prospectively, Poseidippus), but upon popular acclamation ('meque deum clament'), (b) he looks for honours not from his fellow countrymen³⁶ (such as Archilochus, Philetas and Poseidippus received or coveted) but from his natural constituency, the young (3,9,45 'haec urant pueros, haec urant scripta puellas').³⁷

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³⁶ Though Propertius, of course, shared the local patriotism exhibited by so many Latin poets (4,1,63 'ut nostris tumefacta superbiat Umbria libris').

³⁷ I must thank Professor Kassel for editorial help. Also, on Philetas and Bittis (see notes 11 and 35 above), he kindly drew my attention to J. Latacz, "Das Plappermäulchen aus dem Katalog", in *Catalepton*, Festschrift für Bernhard Wyss, ed. C. Schäublin, Basel, 1985, pp. 77–95. Latacz firmly rejects the eccentric idea of W. Kuchenmüller (n. 10 above), pp. 25–28, that Philetas' beloved Bittis (or, as K. would prefer, Battis) was no more than a play on γλωσσα, 'quae quantum cordi fuerit Coo, nemo nescit' (K. p. 27). Kuchenmüller's view is rejected no less decisively by Knox (n. 5 above), p. 79 n. 25.