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The Sicyonian Chronicle — a Forged Archaic Inscription?

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Heraclides of Pontus (active ca 360–310 BC) is one of the sources used in Ps.-Plutarch's *De musica*. In his turn, the Pontic philosopher is known to have quoted a list of ancient poets and musicians and their achievements from an epigraphical document preserved in Sicyon. Incising such a work in stone would be natural as a dedication to some divinity in a sanctuary, where it would promote the fame of the historian who composed it. The system of dating used in the Sicyonian chronicle was based on the records of Hera's priestesses held in Argos. As far as we know, this approach was first applied by Hellanicus of Mytilene (ca 480–395 BC). If the unknown author of the chronicle borrowed his method of dating from Hellanicus, this implies that the document was created in the late fifth or early fourth century BC. Nevertheless, for Heraclides this inscription was, on the one hand, anonymous, and on the other, authoritative. Both these peculiarities lead us to assume that he believed the Sicyonian chronicle to be an archaic document. Perhaps the author forged it to pass for an ancient inscription, in order to quote from, and thus give weight to his arguments in discussions on music.

Keywords: Ancient Greek music, Ps.-Plutarch, Heraclides of Pontus, Sicyonian chronicle.

To Michael M. Pozdnev

Modern views on the history of ancient Greek music are significantly influenced by the only treatise dealing with this topic that came down to us from Antiquity: Ps.-Plutarch's *Περὶ μουσικῆς*. It is in this work that the exposition of musical achievements (beginning from the point at which it seems to become historical rather than mythological) is largely based on certain pieces called *nomes* (νόμοι). In particular, it records lists of the first *nomes* attributed to the authors of the seventh century BC: Terpander is said to have composed the citharodic *nomes* named Βοιωτικός, Αἰόλιος, Τροχάϊος, Ὀξύς, Κηπίων, Τερπάνδρειος, Τετραοίδιος; Clonas, the aulodic *nomes* Ἀπόθετος, Ἐλεγιοί,

Κωμάρχιος, Σχοινίων, Κηπίων, Ἐπικήδειος (coni. Westphal : τε καὶ Δεῖος codd.), Τριμερής (or Τριμελής); and Polymnestus, the aulodic nomos named in his honour (*De mus.* 1132D, cf. 1132C, 1133A, 1134B). Since the nature of these pieces has been a riddle that scholars from Hellenistic time to present have grappled with, studying the source in which they were first recorded is of particular interest.

Fortunately, Ps.-Plutarch refers to Heraclides of Pontus (active ca 360–310 BC), who in his turn borrowed a list of πρῶτοι εὔρεται in music from an epigraphical document exposed at Sicyon (1132A):¹

πιστοῦται δὲ τοῦτο (sc. Heraclides) ἐκ τῆς ἀναγραφῆς τῆς ἐν Σικυῶνι ἀποκειμένης (*FGrHist* 550 F 1), δι' ἧς τὰς τε ἱερείας τὰς ἐν Ἄργει καὶ τοὺς ποιητὰς καὶ τοὺς μουσικοὺς ὀνομάζει.

The evidence for this is in the inscription preserved at Sicyon, which Heraclides relies on for his lists of the priestesses at Argos, and of the poets and musicians.

The other explicit mention of this document (1134B = *FGrHist* 550 F 2: ἐν δὲ τῇ ἐν Σικυῶνι ἀναγραφῇ τῇ περὶ τῶν ποιητῶν) proves that it was entirely dedicated to musical and poetical matters.² We may imagine its contents through analogy to several later epigraphical chronicles, especially the famous Parian Marble (263 BC):³ most likely, it listed poets and musicians with their achievements in chronological order based upon records of the order of succession of Argive priestesses.

Heraclides' evidence based on the Sicyonian inscription is recounted through indirect speech from 1131F up to 1132C (Heraclides fr. 157 Wehrli). Starting exactly with the lists of aulodic and citharodic nomos (1132D), the text switches out of *accusativus cum infinitivo*, but as it relates to the same subjects and characters as above, there is no doubt that Ps.-Plutarch's source for this passage is still Heraclides.⁴ That he took the list of Clonas' nomos from the Sicyonian document is clear from two further references to it (1134B and 1133A).⁵ That the list of citharodic nomos originated from the same source cannot be proved with equal confidence, but it is a very plausible hypothesis.

One detail mentioned by Ps.-Plutarch (1132A) gives rise to some further conjectures on the Sicyonian document. The method of dating events by means of following the chronological succession of the priestesses of Argos is by no means a standard approach. As far as we know, it was first applied by Hellanicus of Mytilene (ca. 480–395 BC), an historian who experimented with various chronological bases (thus, his latest work named *Ἀτθίς* — the earliest known history of Attica — was founded on the lists of Athenian archons).⁶ Hellanicus used the lists of Hera's priestesses at Argos in a work referred to exactly as "Argive priestesses" — τὰς ἱερείας τὰς ἐν Ἄργει⁷ — by Dionysius of Halicarnassus (*Antiqu. Rom.* 1. 72. 2). Since they were appointed for their lifetime, events could be dated

¹ Ps.-Plutarch is quoted from the edition of Ziegler 1959. Translation: Barker 1984, 207.

² Weil-Reinach 1900, IX.

³ See Jacoby 1904, especially entrance 34 dealing with Terpander (= *IG XII. 5.* 444, 1. 1. 1.3049–50 = *FGrHist* 239 A 34 = Terp. Test. 5 Gostoli). The analogy to the Parian chronicle is suggested in particular by Franklin 2012, 758. Another parallel might be provided by the Lindian chronicle of dedications to Athena made by mythological and historical persons, *I.Lindos* 2 (99 BC).

⁴ Weil-Reinach 1900, VII; 17 ad § 41; Barker 2007, 30; Barker 2009, 278; Barker 2014, 30; Lucarini 2020, 74.

⁵ Westphal 1865, 70–71.

⁶ On Hellanicus' pioneering role, see Jacoby 1912, 147–148; Jacoby 1949, 225.

⁷ The fragments are *FGrHist* 4 F 74–84; see Möller 2001, 241–262.

by referring to a certain year of a certain priesthood. Hellanicus did not confine himself to the history of poetry and music in this work, yet he is known to be interested in this topic: he was also the author of the book named *Καρνεονίκαί*, which was most likely dedicated to the famous kitharodes from Lesbos — his fellow countrymen who for several generations were the undisputed winners of the Carnean contests at Sparta. Terpander (*FGrHist* 4 F 85a–b) and Arion (*FGrHist* 4 F 86) featured in *Καρνεονίκαί*, and it seems likely that the information on Lesbian kitharodes from ch. 6 of Ps.-Plutarch's treatise (*De mus.* 1133C) originated in Hellanicus.⁸

Thus, the author of the Sicyonian chronicle must have known and addressed the “Argive priestesses” by Hellanicus. It follows that the inscription dated back to the late fifth or early fourth century.⁹ Technically Hellanicus could have composed it himself — yet in order to defend this hypothesis one has to explain what made the historian duplicate his own work and why Heraclides did not name Hellanicus as its author. If the Sicyonian document was another man's work, it cannot be ruled out that he only borrowed Hellanicus' method of dating and collected information himself. Yet most scholars believe that the Sicyonian inscription built on Hellanicus' work, extracting evidence about poets and musicians from it. If this is the case, then it cannot be valued as an independent source,¹⁰ raising a question as to why Heraclides quoted the Sicyonian chronicle rather than Hellanicus. However, various explanations are easy to find: for example, one can imagine that Heraclides, in the absence of bibliographical databases, was not aware of Hellanicus' work; or for some reason only had access to the Sicyonian document, but not the “Argive priestesses”; or, possibly, the inscription, with its selection of musical and poetical matters, seemed a more convenient source to Heraclides.

Yet another possible motivation of the Pontic philosopher seems the most important. Ps.-Plutarch makes it clear that Heraclides considered the Sicyonian chronicle's evidence reliable (see πιστοῦται in 1132A) and cited it as an authoritative source when discussing controversial cases. We know that Heraclides unequivocally attributed two nomes under debate, Ἀπόθετος καὶ Σχοινίων, to Clonas rather than to Terpander (1133A, Poll. 4. 65; 79) trusting the Sicyonian document (cf. 1132D). Such confidence is understandable if Heraclides believed (or made his readers believe¹¹) this inscription to be an archaic document. Likewise, it appears that, when taking it for granted that Polymnestus was a composer of aulodic nomes, but having less clarity as to whether or not he composed Orthian nomes, οὐ γὰρ εἰρήκασιν οἱ ἀρχαῖοί τι περὶ τούτου (1134D), Heraclides was also relying on the Sicyonian chronicle (cf. 1132D, 1133A).

A. Barker put forward an alternative hypothesis regarding the date of the Sicyonian chronicle (although he declared himself unable to prove it). He proceeds from the assumption that a polis in which a list of poets and musicians was on display must have been a famous cultural centre, and that such an inscription was likely drawing attention to the art it was famous for. Indeed, Sicyon seems to have played just such a role in the sixth century BC, an era shared with two of its outstanding musicians: Pythocritus, an aulos player who won the Pythian games six times in succession (Paus. 6. 14. 9–10), and Lysander, who

⁸ Franklin 2012, 732–748.

⁹ Jacoby 1955, 476–477 (he notes that the Sicyonian chronicle cannot have been written too contemporaneously to Heraclides, who already considered it an authoritative source).

¹⁰ Weil, Reinach 1900, XI; Griffin 1982, 160; Christensen 2007, 517.

¹¹ Franklin 2012, 757.

introduced important technical modifications into cithara playing (Ath. 14. 637f–638a). Epigonus, a cithara player and theoretician, migrated to Sicyon from Ambracia (Ath. 4. 183d), demonstrating the attraction the polis held for professional musicians. Although it is unlikely that an Argive chronological canvas would have been used in a Sicyonian document during the tyranny of Cleisthenes, who was notoriously hostile to Argos (Hdt. 5. 67), normal relations between Sicyon and Argos were restored after the expulsion of the tyrants ca 550 BC. If the Sicyonian chronicle was written in the second half of the sixth century, then it would have existed around 100 years prior to the work of Hellanicus, and the Lesbian historian would have been able to draw upon it when speaking about musical matters; perhaps, it was this particular document that led him to consider the records of the Argive priestesses as a convenient chronological framework for his history. In his turn, Heraclides could have found references to the Sicyonian inscription in Hellanicus, alongside information on musicians.¹²

Even if our knowledge of the archaic age is insufficient to make conclusive objections to the hypothesis of Barker, it still seems to go against our notions of the formation of Greek historiography. There are no parallels for writing chronicles at so early a period — we only have sporadic evidence of record-keeping regarding lists of rulers, officials, priests, or winners in the games.¹³ Both the surge of interest for the literary and musical past and the first known catalogues of *πρῶτοι εὐρεταί* date back to the late fifth century, to the époque of the sophists.¹⁴ Therefore, the traditional view that the Sicyonian chronicle was composed during Hellanicus' lifetime or a little later still appears more likely. The fact that the inscription happened to be preserved in Sicyon may be explained by possible personal ties of its author to this city, including perhaps respect to its glorious musical past.

Yet in this case we must ask ourselves why Heraclides did not identify the author. All the references to this document in Ps.-Plutarch — who apparently follows Heraclides — are anonymous (*οἱ ἀναγεγραφότες* 1133A–B, *ἀναγέγραπται* 1134B). This is unusual, because incising a work of this kind in stone would be natural as a dedication to some divinity in a sanctuary,¹⁵ where it would promote the fame of its author.¹⁶ It seems unlikely that the dedicator's signature had already been lost by Heraclides' time, and further unlikely that the document was preserved so carelessly that the missing fragment was not restored. In the light of *φιλοτιμία* cultivated in classical Greece the decision of an author not to give his name looks strange and suspect. To my mind, this lack of a signature betrays a conscious desire to make the document appear archaic, in order to render its data more authoritative. There are known cases of such falsification in Greek epigraphy; their aim was to support a tradition or to glorify a place, a family, a work of art, etc.¹⁷ In the case of Heraclides, the deception was a success — if only the Sicyonian chronicle was not his own work.

¹² Barker 2014, 50–51.

¹³ Jacoby 1949, 58–59, 177, 181, 184; Jakoby 1955, 476; 282, n. 6.

¹⁴ Kleingünther 1934, 135–143.

¹⁵ Weil, Reinach 1900, IX; Jacoby 1955, 476; Chaniotis 1988, 91. The Parian Marble must be a dedication by a historian whose name was once indicated, but did not survive (Guarducci 1974, 83–84).

¹⁶ Compare Aristotle and Callisthenes honoured in Delphi for composing the list of Pythian winners (SIG³ 275, 334/332 BC).

¹⁷ Guarducci 1967, 488–501. — Däbritz 1912, 480, believes that Heraclides quoted “eine wohl gefälschte pythische Siegerliste”, as he referred to the Pythian victories of Terpander and Sacades (Ps.-Plut. *De mus.* 1132E, 1134A).

Some ancient evidence does damage to Heraclides' reputation. Diogenes Laertius (5. 92) reports that his quotes of Sophocles' verse were not authentic, which Heraclides refused to admit, even after the falsification had been proved (Heraclid. fr. 13 Wehrli); Chamaeleon accused him of plagiarism (fr. 181 Wehrli), and Aristoxenus of writing forged tragedies ascribed to Thespis (fr. 176 Wehrli), apparently in order to use them as an argument in a discussion on the history of theatre. H. B. Gottschalk suspected that the Sicyonian chronicle, which is only known through the references in Ps.-Plutarch, did not in fact exist at all and was invented by Heraclides.¹⁸ However, the apparent views of the document's author do not entirely align with those of the Pontic philosopher. Notably, there is no reference to Orpheus in the Sicyonian list of the first musicians (*De mus.* 1131F–1132B). This would be an unusual omission for Heraclides, who elsewhere not only acknowledged Orpheus' existence, but called him the greatest of citharodes (*Sch. Eur. Rhes.* 364 = Heraclid. fr. 59 Wehrli).¹⁹

Otherwise, one might imagine that the “archaic” inscription was forged by Hellanicus with the aim of making his conclusions indisputable. Yet this accusation can also not be proved — not least because the work “Argive priestesses” was dedicated to more than the history of poetry and music, so there is no reason to think that chronological calculations in this specific area were of particular importance to its author.

Of course, it is unlikely that we shall ever discover the true identity of the author of the Sicyonian chronicle.²⁰ His name may not even be mentioned in any of the ancient sources that survive today. If it was a student or admirer of Hellanicus, one would expect him to borrow material from his work. Yet if the hypothesis of producing a forged “archaic” document is right, then the author would have had to include his own original research alongside extracts from Hellanicus' “Argive priestesses”, otherwise, due to the extent of overlap, its recent origin would have been too noticeable. Therefore, in this case, the anonymous chronicle should get points for some measure of originality.

As to the author's own sources, we can only guess. Perhaps Dionysius of Halicarnassus is right to ascribe the use of both oral tradition and records held in sanctuaries and poleis' archives to ancient historians.²¹ Besides, it was possible to build upon the texts and perhaps music of the nomes themselves.

Finally, what was the aim of composing such lists of musicians and their works? Ps.-Plutarch's treatise reflects the turbulent situation of the late fifth and the fourth centuries, as ethical and political significance was given to heated discussions on music. Ancient nomes ascribed to legendary inventors were used as evidence by debaters asserting that noble and truly Hellenic music had long been successfully developed in line with immutable laws, before being violated by vulgar innovators (cf. Ps.-Plut. *De mus.* 1132D–E, 1133C). Alongside general exploratory interest in *πρῶτοι εὑρεταί*, attributing “correct” nomes to

¹⁸ Gottschalk 1980, 138, n. 37.

¹⁹ φησὶ δὲ (sc. Heraclides) “ἔβδόμη δὲ Καλλιόπη, <ἦ> ποίησιν εὖρε [πάντων καί], συνοικήσασα Οἰάγρω γεννᾷ Ὀρφέα τὸν πάντων μέγιστον ἀνθρώπων ἐν τῇ κιθαρωδικῇ τέχνῃ γενόμενον...” This evidence was first counterposed by Lucarini 2020, 83. However, see Almazova 2021, 269–271, for possible explanations of the discrepancy.

²⁰ Thus, the hypothesis that the author of this inscription could be Menaechmus, a Sicyonian chronist (Diehls 1901, 79–80, n. 1; Pfister 1913, 535–536), is unanimously considered unfounded (Jacoby 1930, 443; Griffin 1982, 160; Chaniotis 1988, 90; Möller 2001, 259).

²¹ Dion. Hal. *De Thucyd.* 5: ὅσαι διεσφάζοντο παρὰ τοῖς ἐπιχωρίοις μνήμαι κατὰ ἔθνη τε καὶ κατὰ πόλεις, εἴ τ' ἐν ἱεροῖς εἴ τ' ἐν βεβήλοισι ἀποκείμενα γραφαί.

“correct” authors might offer support as an argument in a debate over the development of music, for example, on whether the wind or the stringed instruments came first, or the direction of influence between composers. An intense dispute might provoke one participant to write a chronicle and “set it back in time” to bolster his argument.

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Была ли Сикионская хроника поддельной древней надписью?

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Гераклид Понтийский (время его творческой деятельности приходится примерно на 360–310 гг. до н. э.) — один из источников, которые упоминаются в трактате «О музыке», дошедшем до нас в корпусе сочинений Плутарха. Сам понтийский философ, в свою очередь, ссылался на список древних поэтов и музыкантов и их достижений из эпиграфического документа, хранившегося в Сикионе (ἡ ἐν Σικυῶνι ἀναγραφὴ ἢ περὶ τῶν ποιητῶν). Вырезать подобного рода труд на камне было бы естественно в качестве приношения некому божеству в святилище, где он должен был бы служить к вящей славе его автора. В качестве хронологической канвы в Сикионской хронике использовались списки жриц Геры в Аргосе. Насколько нам известно, впервые эти списки задействовал в своем историческом сочинении Гелланик из Митилены (время жизни которого ок. 480–395 гг. до н. э.). Если неизвестный автор хроники заимствовал новаторский способ датировки у Гелланика, отсюда следует, что документ был создан в конце V или начале IV в. Однако Гераклид не знает имени его составителя и при этом относится к надписи как к авторитетному источнику. То и другое позволяет предположить, что он считает надпись из Сикиона древним документом. Возможно, автор хроники сознательно стремился выдать ее за архаическую, чтобы затем, ссылаясь на нее, придать весомость своим аргументам в спорах о музыке.

Ключевые слова: древнегреческая музыка, Псевдо-Плутарх, Гераклид Понтийский, Сикионская хроника.

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