NOTES

Sickle and *Xyele*

Mr John Boardman's suggestion[1] that the sickles dedicated to Artemis Orthia at Sparta were used as strigils is most enlightening, and perhaps I may be allowed to find support in it for a theory that I have advanced elsewhere,[2] that this form of sickle is the *ξυήλη* of Xenophon, *Anabasis* iv 7.16; iv 8.25. It is true that the dedicating inscriptions never use the word *ξυήλη*. The sickle is only named twice, being called *δρέπανον* once and once *δρεπάνη*.[3] But this may be explained by the late date of all the inscriptions. *Ξυήλη* is only found in the two passages already cited from Xenophon, in the lexicographers (Hesychius and the Souda s-v.), who also give the Doric form *ξυάλη*, and in Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* (vi 2.32), where it means a spokeshave for smoothing the shafts of spears. It is probable that the word was obsolete even at Sparta in the Hellenistic period, and that even in Xenophon's time it was not in common use throughout Greece. Pollux (i 137) mentions the Laconian *ξυΐνη* in a list of weapons, including *δρεπάνη* and *δορυδρέπανον*, and this misspelling (more probably that of a scribe writing from dictation than Pollux's own) does indicate the unfamiliarity of the word.

But Pollux does count the *xyele* among weapons, and so does Hesychius, who describes it as 'a small sword (*ξιφίδιον τι*) which some call a sickle (*δρέπανον*)'. They are probably relying on the passages in the *Anabasis*, where Xenophon says that the Chalybes butchered and beheaded their prisoners with a knife (*μαχαίριον*) as big as a Laconian *xyele*, which they carried at their belts, and that the Spartiate Dracontius had been exiled from home as a boy because he struck another boy with his *xyele* and accidentally slew him. Accordingly some modern scholars, including Kromayer,[4] have supposed that *ξυήλη* was the technical term for the famous Spartan short sword, and that this sword can therefore have been used only for slashing, not for stabbing. But, as Miss K. M. T. Chrimes has justly pointed out,[5] the 'sword-swallower's' blade that was mocked at by Demades must have been straight, and it would also seem that the sword of Spartan type that was used to kill Dion was probably in the circumstances of the murder, used for stabbing. The New York relief,[6] which shows a fallen hoplite, almost certainly a Spartan, stabbing upwards with a straight, short blade, confirms this evidence. After all, Xenophon does not say that the knife of the Chalybes was a *xyele*, and his story of Dracontius implies that the *xyele* was used by the boys, and not normally as a weapon.

Mr Boardman's suggestion allows us to regard the boys' *xyele*, like the spokeshave of the *Cyropaedia*, as a 'scraper', which the connection of the word with *ξύω* (noted by Liddell and Scott) implies. *Ἀποξύω* in the sense of scraping oneself with a strigil, seems to be found only in Pliny's description of the famous statue of the Apoxyomenos (*HN* 34.62). Xenophon himself prefers *ἀποστλεγγίζω* (*Oeconomicus* xi 18).

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[1] J. Boardman, *JHS* xci (1971) 136–7.

[2] J. K. Anderson, *Military Theory and Practice in the Age of Xenophon* (1970) 38–9.

[3] R. M. Dawkins (ed.), *Artemis Orthia* (1929), 298, 302.

[4] J. Kromayer, in Kromayer-Veith, *Heerwesen und Kriegführung der Griechen und Römer* (1928) 39 n. 3.

[5] K. M. T. Chrimes, *Ancient Sparta* (1948) 363, citing Plutarch, *Moralia* 553D. *Cf.* also Plutarch, *Dion* 57–8.

[6] G. M. A. Richter, *Catalogue of the Greek Sculptures in the Metropolitan Museum of Art* (1954), No. 82.

Cleon caricatured on a Corinthian Cup

For Bernard Knox in gratitude

John Boardman has recently published a Sam Wide Group cup, on the interior of which is painted a caricature of Oedipus and the Sphinx.[1] His accompanying illustration (Plate II 1) fully confirms the interpretation offered, that the Theban Sphinx—for once, in its physiognomy as well as in its anatomy, obtrusively male—is committing the nuisance of public masturbation. Although such offensive conduct seems, as Boardman observed, inexplicable within the Sphinx's mythic context, the artist's motive for this innovation becomes clearer if one can detect here an instance of the easy 'glide from the contemporary into the mythical world'.[2]

First, however, it should be recalled that, at least as early as Aeschylus' satyr play *Sphinx*, the Theban pest could be called *Σφίγγα δυσαμεριᾶν πρύτανιν κύνα* (182 Mette, 236 Nauck). Sophocles' characterisation of the Sphinx (*ἡ ῥαψῳδὸς . . . κύων*, *OT* 391) may not reflect specifically Aeschylean inspiration, since both playwrights possibly draw on established terminology for the Sphinx in her role of agent, attendant, and watcher: a fragmentary Thessalian epitaph, dated *c.* 450 B.C., addressed the guardian figure that once surmounted the funeral column as 'Hound of Hades'.[3] But *Κύων* was also—in the very years when the Oxford cup seems likely to have been

[1] *JHS* XC (1970) 194–5.

[2] T. B. L. Webster, *The Art of Greece: The Age of Hellenism* (N.Y. 1966) 71.

[3] L. H. Jeffery, *The Local Scripts of Archaic Greece* (Oxford 1961) 97 f., 99 (8), 402, pl. 11 (8); cf. *SEG* XXIII 453.