STUDIES IN AITHON

BY

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1. Hesiod Op. 363

There has been wide disagreement among scholars on the propriety of introducing Hesiod Op. 363 into any discussion of the Erysichthon-Aithon story. There the MSS. read δὲ δ’ ἐπ’ ἑόντι φέρει, δ’ δ’ ἀλέξεται αἰθόπα λυμὸν, a reading retained by Rzach, Wilamowitz and now Mette (Lex. d. frühgr. Epos, s.v. αἰθόν). Bergk proposed the unusual αἰθονικός which Mazon and Sinclair have adopted. For this a parallel ¹) seemed forthcoming from Soph. Ai. 222 where the dominant reading is ἄνεφος αἴθοπος, but some MSS. show αἴθονος (including the first hand in the Laurentian codex) and αἴθονος (contra metrum). Here Dindorf maintained αἴθονικός as original, and Jebb, most modern editors and Liddell-Scott-Jones lend their support. However Prof. J. Kamerbeek in his 1953 commentary on the Ajax cautiously returns to αἴθοπος. He cites the evidence advanced to justify Dindorf’s reading—the testimony of Eustathius that (a) Sophocles wrote αἴθων ἄνεφρος somewhere (1072.6) and (b) αἴθοψ would not be applied to a man (862.10) ²)—but seems to attach great weight to three arguments:

(a) Timotheus Persae 223 (αἴθοπη μῷῳφ) and Agathias A.P. V 217.10 (αἴθοπα βασικάβιτη) show that αἴθοψ can be used metaphorically.

(b) Aithops and aithon were felt to be synonymous.

(c) The occurrence of ο instead of ω tends to discredit the correction in the text.

Naturally the third objection is not self-sufficient, for the very irregularity of short-vowelled forms would hasten their disap-


²) The first example that I can find of Aithops as a personal name is in Quintus Smyrnæus.
pearance. Dindorf (ad Soph. Ai. 222, 1836 edtn.) has argued the case, and there are two additions to his material which should be made. The Townleian Scholiast at Il. 8, 185 produces ... Αἴθον 
'Αγγελέωνονος, ήν Αἴθονα νών εἶπε μεταθείς τὸ γένος and, rather more important, a lexicon entry in Cramer Anecd. Gr. Par. IV 212 reads Αἴθονα: Ἐνθημόν, λαμπρόν. In view of its proximity to a case of the normal declension (Αἴθωνας (sic)· Λαμπροῦς, ξανθοῦς, πυρώδεις), the difficilior lectio should be respected. Cramer in his discussion of the lexicon comments:

Prius dicitur esse interpretatio uocum ex Athanasio depromptatarum, sed multae sunt quae procul dubio aliunde insertae sunt, sicut in omnibus his glossariis euenit (p. 201).

There is then at least a chance that the material is ancient. It is of course impossible to be convincing on this point. Only where αἴθωνα, etc. are metrically impossible could all doubts be removed, and in such cases the temptation to restore the familiar αἴθωπα, etc. would have been overwhelming for a scribe. But at least αἴθωνα has not left itself without some sort of witness.

More important is the belief that aithops and aithon were synonymous in Greek eyes. Here it is vital to be chronologically precise, and ask “When?”. In Homer aithon is applied to σίδηρος, λέβητες, τρίποδες, ιπποὺς, βόες, ταῦρος, λέων; it is also in use as a proper name (Od. 19, 183), as it was in Mycenaean Greek (at KN Da 6061 ai-to seems in arrears with his tribute of rams) 1). Aithops is used of οἶνος, χαλκὸς and once of καρπός. Here the two epithets overlap for ‘shining’, but semantically aithon is the more productive, and continues to be so. It is applied to persons by Aeschylus (Sept. 448), Sophocles (Ai. 1088), [Euripides] (Rhes. 122) and Lycophron (Alex. 109); also to the sort of animal which had a reputation for boldness or cunning: the lion (e.g. Tyrt. 10 Diehl8), fox (Pind. O. 11.20), leopard (Mythogr. ἀπ. Suid. s.v. ἄδεν), wolf (Lycophr. Alex. 1248), hawk (Alex. 529) and wild beasts in general (Plat. Rep. 559D). In the case of some of these beasts the original reference would have been to colour, but the term develops early the meaning with which it is credited in Bachmann Anecd. Gr. I p. 49.16: αἴθων.