

The Fascinating Etruscan Krater of Aristonothos

The Fascinating Etruscan Krater of Aristonothos by Mel Copeland



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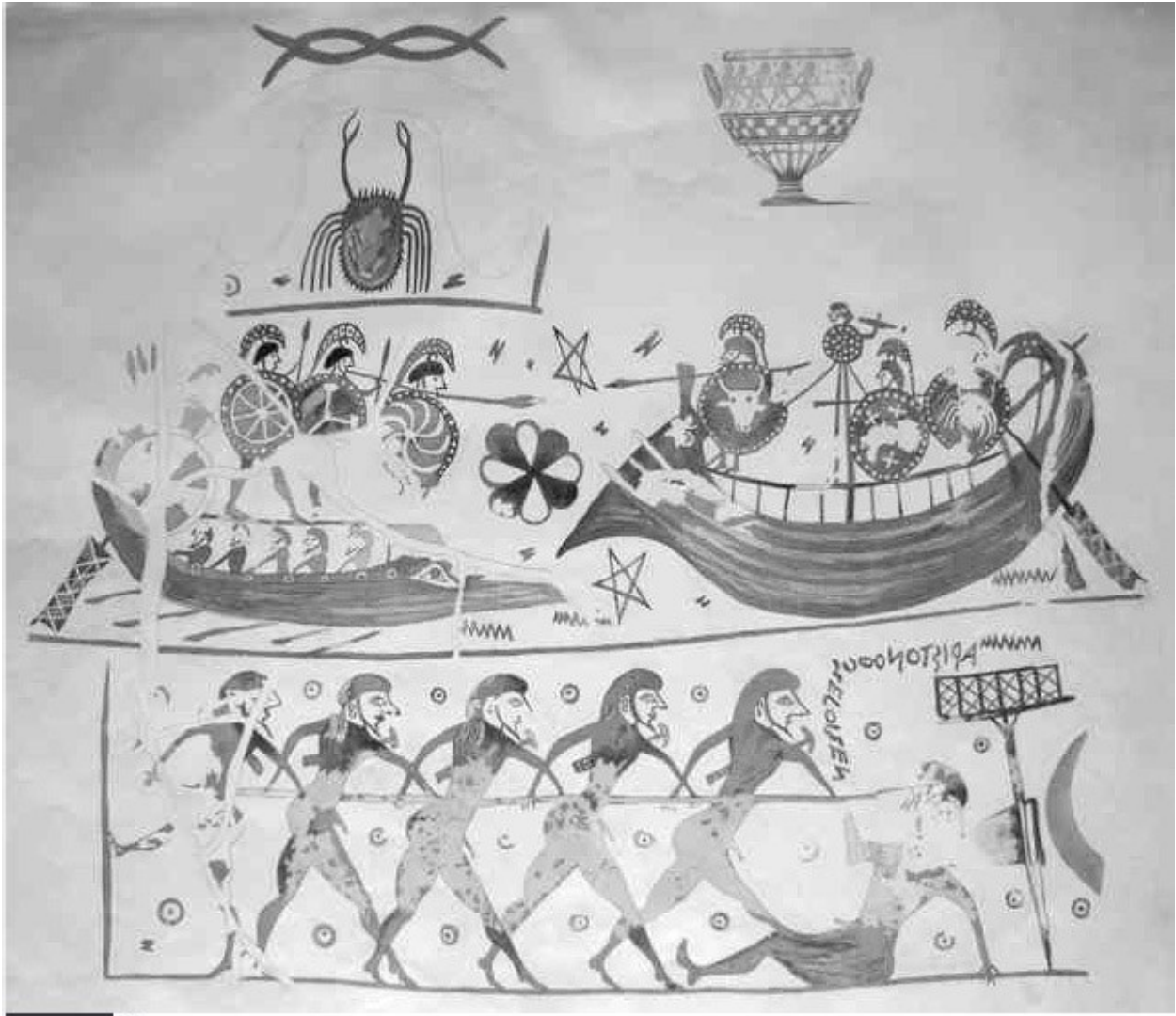





Image from: Le Banquet du Monarque dans le Monde
by *Natacha Lubtchansky*
Uploaded to academia.edu 5.14.15

Regarding the image, Lubtchansky says:

“Sur le cratère d’Aristonothos, pour comprendre la signification de bataille navale, il faut là aussi se servir du parangon mythologique, qui montre où se trouve le camp barbare, –'emblématisé par le géant qui ne sait pas boire le vin correctement’–, et où sont les vainqueurs : les Étrusques, aussi civilisés que les Grecs.”

This inscription appears to be in Etruscan letters and written in Greek but the use of “E” (Etruscan and Latin, e, from, out of) is problematic. What others have transcribed as “th,” the Greek character Θ, is actually Φ, the Greek character “phi,” suggesting the name referred to as ARISTONOTHOS is

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ARISTONOPHOS. Still there is a problem with the “name,” since the last character “S” appears to be the ancient Greek  (mem) or Etruscan  as compared to the classical Greek M. Note that the “S” in ARIS looks like a bow, unlike the “S” in OTHOS that is a sharp cornered zig zag. The use of the “phi” or “th” can favor the “th,” however, since the usual “th” used by the Etruscans is a , and there may have been some confusion on the part of the artist as to the correct letter for “th.” Furthermore, the “m” is probably an “s,” suggesting that the creator of the krater, which was used for mixing wine, may have been mixing his Etruscan with Greek. This would not be unusual. The English language is a mix of Greek, predominately Latin, Celtic, French and German (sic. The Angles) words. We may also note that some of the best Corinthian pottery was made in Etruria, and much of the extant Greek pottery in our museums was made by Etruscan hands.

Thus, we have these possibilities:

ΑΡΙΣΤΟΝ ΟΦΟΜ (Ariston ophom)

αριστα, excellently, best

οφόμ or οφόσ (ophom or ophos?); οφια is a cormorant (a bird); οφις is a snake. None of these options seems to make sense. This leaves us with a mixed vocabulary of Greek and Etruscan words:

ΑΡΙΣΤΟΝ ΟΥΔΕΙΣ (ΟΘΥΣ) Ε ΠΟΙΜΕΝ

αριστα, excellently, best; the –on indicates Gen. Plural, referring then to both ships in the battle.

ουδεις, no, nobody, no one or Οθυς, UThUZE, Etr. Name for Ulysses? (Alleged by Wikipedia, but needs to be confirmed).

επομεν, therefore

or:

E, from, out of, by (Etruscan and Latin, e, et)

Ποίμιν, shepherd (L. pastor-oris)

Except for the fact that we have a non-Greek character “e”, translating it as Latin “out of,” used in a Greek expression, we could have the following translation: “The best nobody out of a shepherd” or “the best Ulysses/Odysseus out of a shepherd.” Odysseus and his men hid among the sheep in the Cyclops cave, and after getting him drunk and putting out his eye, each climbed under a sheep exiting the cave for their pasture and escaped.

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Etruscan artists were fantastic story-tellers, as evidenced in particular through illustrations in Etruscan mirrors, such as The Divine Mirror, our Script DM (Etruscan Phrases [Divine Mirror.html](#)). This mirror tells the entire story of Helen of Troy, from her being born from Zeus' (Etr. TINI's) rape of Nemesis (Etr. THALNA), to her bargain with King Agamemnon (Etr. ACHMEMNVN) to wed his brother Menelaüs (Etr. MENLE). In the Greek story Helen's father King Tyndareüs (Etr. TVNTLE) made the bargain with King Agamemnon.

In the wings of the scene is King Priam's son, Paris / Alexander (Etr. ELCHINTRE) who would abduct Helen (Etr. ELINAI), the queen of Sparta, daughter of King Tyndareüs. According to the story of Helen, Zeus fell in love with Nemesis (some versions say Leda) and Nemesis fled away from Zeus, taking the form of a goose. Zeus changed himself into a swan and caught up with the goose. As a result she laid an egg in a grove in Sparta. Shepherds found the egg and took it to Leda (Etr. LATFA), wife of King Tyndareüs.

After Helen was hatched from the egg Leda reared her as her own daughter. Another Etruscan mirror (Etruscan Phrases Script DA) shows Helen's brothers Castor (Etr. CASTVR) and Pollux (Etr. PVLTVCEI)—not shepherds—presenting Helen's egg to King Tyndareüs.

Also in the Divine Mirror scene is Aphrodite (Etr. Turan) who caused Alexander to fall in love with Helen, and on the far left of the scene is Alexander's brother, Aesacus (Etr. AECAL), who possessed the ability to interpret dreams, interpreting Hecuba's dream, "that Alexander would be a firebrand to Troy." His sister Cassandra (LASA THIMRAE) also had warned Priam and his wife Hecuba of the destruction of Troy, but she was never believed. Cassandra was abducted by King Agamemnon and taken back to Mycenae.

In the story of Helen of Troy on Mirror DM a goddess like Artemis (Etr. ARTVMES) is crowning Alexander with a laurel, recalling the Judgment of Paris theme, how Aphrodite, Hera and Athena asked Alexander to judge which was the fairest and be awarded the golden apple thrown into a wedding party by the goddess of discord, Eres (Etr. ERIS)—She was the only divinity of Mt. Olympus that was not invited to the wedding of Peleus (Etr. PELE) and Thetis (Etr. THETHIS), parents of Achilles (ACHLE). Alexander chose Aphrodite as the fairest, since she promised him the most beautiful girl in the world (who turned out to be Helen of Troy who was betrothed to Menelaüs). While Aphrodite (Etr. Turan) is in the scene in Script DM, it is another goddess named MEAN (from the name of Lydia *Maionia* (Μαίονία), or *Maeonia*) that awards Alexander. MEAN has a doe beside her, suggesting that she is the virgin goddess of the hunt, like Artemis. Artemis also appears on many Etruscan mirrors and, thus, MEAN is a character unique to the Etruscan version of the story. Also, Heracles (Etr. HERCLE) is in the story though not in the Greek version. He is presenting TINI a cherub who appears to be the son of Aphrodite, Eros (Etr. EPE VR), who was used to entice Alexander to fall in love with Helen. This mirror suggests a connection between Aphrodite (Etr. TVRAN) and Heracles (Etr. HERCLE); only the deities know why.

Like the Divine Mirror, the Aristonothos krater is yet another great story with what appears to be many nuances.

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The Story of Polyphemus and Odysseus from the *Odyssey*, Book IX:

(From <http://classics.mit.edu/Homer/odyssey.9.ix.html>)

"When the child of morning, rosy-fingered Dawn, appeared, we admired the island and wandered all over it, while the nymphs Jove's daughters roused the wild goats that we might get some meat for our dinner. On this we fetched our spears and bows and arrows from the ships, and dividing ourselves into three bands began to shoot the goats. Heaven sent us excellent sport; I had twelve ships with me, and each ship got nine goats, while my own ship had ten; thus through the livelong day to the going down of the sun we ate and drank our fill,- and we had plenty of wine left, for each one of us had taken many jars full when we sacked the city of the Cicons, and this had not yet run out. While we were feasting we kept turning our eyes towards the land of the Cyclopes, which was hard by, and saw the smoke of their stubble fires. We could almost fancy we heard their voices and the bleating of their sheep and goats, but when the sun went down and it came on dark, we camped down upon the beach, and next morning I called a council.

"'Stay here, my brave fellows,' said I, 'all the rest of you, while I go with my ship and exploit these people myself: I want to see if they are uncivilized savages, or a hospitable and humane race.'

"I went on board, bidding my men to do so also and loose the hawsers; so they took their places and smote the grey sea with their oars. When we got to the land, which was not far, there, on the face of a cliff near the sea, we saw a great cave overhung with laurels. It was a station for a great many sheep and goats, and outside there was a large yard, with a high wall round it made of stones built into the ground and of trees both pine and oak. This was the abode of a huge monster who was then away from home shepherding his flocks. He would have nothing to do with other people, but led the life of an outlaw. He was a horrid creature, not like a human being at all, but resembling rather some crag that stands out boldly against the sky on the top of a high mountain.

"I told my men to draw the ship ashore, and stay where they were, all but the twelve best among them, who were to go along with myself. I also took a goatskin of sweet black wine which had been given me by Maron, Apollo son of Euanthes, who was priest of Apollo the patron god of Ismarus, and lived within the wooded precincts of the temple. When we were sacking the city we respected him, and spared his life, as also his wife and child; so he made me some presents of great value- seven talents of fine gold, and a bowl of silver, with twelve jars of sweet wine, unblended, and of the most exquisite flavor. Not a man nor maid in the house knew about it, but only himself, his wife, and one housekeeper: when he drank it he mixed twenty parts of water to one of wine, and yet the fragrance from the mixing-bowl was so exquisite that it was impossible to refrain from drinking. I filled a large skin with this wine, and took a wallet full of provisions with me, for my mind misgave me that I might have to deal with some savage who would be of great strength, and would respect neither right nor law.

"We soon reached his cave, but he was out shepherding, so we went inside and took stock of all that we could see. His cheese-racks were loaded with cheeses, and he had more lambs and kids than his pens could hold. They were kept in separate flocks; first there were the hogs, then the oldest of the younger lambs and lastly the very young ones all kept apart from one another; as for his dairy, all the vessels, bowls, and milk pails into which he milked, were swimming with whey. When they saw all this, my men begged me to let them first steal some cheeses, and

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make off with them to the ship; they would then return, drive down the lambs and kids, put them on board and sail away with them. It would have been indeed better if we had done so but I would not listen to them, for I wanted to see the owner himself, in the hope that he might give me a present. When, however, we saw him my poor men found him ill to deal with.

"We lit a fire, offered some of the cheeses in sacrifice, ate others of them, and then sat waiting till the Cyclops should come in with his sheep. When he came, he brought in with him a huge load of dry firewood to light the fire for his supper, and this he flung with such a noise on to the floor of his cave that we hid ourselves for fear at the far end of the cavern. Meanwhile he drove all the ewes inside, as well as the she-goats that he was going to milk, leaving the males, both rams and he-goats, outside in the yards. Then he rolled a huge stone to the mouth of the cave- so huge that two and twenty strong four-wheeled wagons would not be enough to draw it from its place against the doorway. When he had so done he sat down and milked his ewes and goats, all in due course, and then let each of them have her own young. He curdled half the milk and set it aside in wicker strainers, but the other half he poured into bowls that he might drink it for his supper. When he had got through with all his work, he lit the fire, and then caught sight of us, whereon he said:

"Strangers, who are you? Where do sail from? Are you traders, or do you sail the as rovers, with your hands against every man, and every man's hand against you?"

"We were frightened out of our senses by his loud voice and monstrous form, but I managed to say, 'We are Achaeans on our way home from Troy, but by the will of Jove, and stress of weather, we have been driven far out of our course. We are the people of Agamemnon, son of Atreus, who has won infinite renown throughout the whole world, by sacking so great a city and killing so many people. We therefore humbly pray you to show us some hospitality, and otherwise make us such presents as visitors may reasonably expect. May your excellency fear the wrath of heaven, for we are your suppliants, and Jove takes all respectable travelers under his protection, for he is the avenger of all suppliants and foreigners in distress.'

"To this he gave me but a pitiless answer, 'Stranger,' said he, 'you are a fool, or else you know nothing of this country. Talk to me, indeed, about fearing the gods or shunning their anger? We Cyclopes do not care about Jove or any of your blessed gods, for we are ever so much stronger than they. I shall not spare either yourself or your companions out of any regard for Jove, unless I am in the humor for doing so. And now tell me where you made your ship fast when you came on shore. Was it round the point, or is she lying straight off the land?'

"He said this to draw me out, but I was too cunning to be caught in that way, so I answered with a lie; 'Neptune,' said I, 'sent my ship on to the rocks at the far end of your country, and wrecked it. We were driven on to them from the open sea, but I and those who are with me escaped the jaws of death.'

"The cruel wretch vouchsafed me not one word of answer, but with a sudden clutch he gripped up two of my men at once and dashed them down upon the ground as though they had been puppies. Their brains were shed upon the ground, and the earth was wet with their blood. Then he tore them limb from limb and supped upon them. He gobbled them up like a lion in the wilderness, flesh, bones, marrow, and entrails, without leaving anything uneaten. As for us, we wept and lifted up our hands to heaven on seeing such a horrid sight, for we did not know what else to do; but when the Cyclops had filled his huge paunch, and had washed down his meal of human flesh with a drink of neat milk, he stretched himself full length upon the ground among

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his sheep, and went to sleep. I was at first inclined to seize my sword, draw it, and drive it into his vitals, but I reflected that if I did we should all certainly be lost, for we should never be able to shift the stone which the monster had put in front of the door. So we stayed sobbing and sighing where we were till morning came.

"When the child of morning, rosy-fingered Dawn, appeared, he again lit his fire, milked his goats and ewes, all quite rightly, and then let each have her own young one; as soon as he had got through with all his work, he clutched up two more of my men, and began eating them for his morning's meal. Presently, with the utmost ease, he rolled the stone away from the door and drove out his sheep, but he at once put it back again- as easily as though he were merely clapping the lid on to a quiver full of arrows. As soon as he had done so he shouted, and cried 'Shoo, shoo,' after his sheep to drive them on to the mountain; so I was left to scheme some way of taking my revenge and covering myself with glory.

"In the end I deemed it would be the best plan to do as follows. The Cyclops had a great club which was lying near one of the sheep pens; it was of green olive wood, and he had cut it intending to use it for a staff as soon as it should be dry. It was so huge that we could only compare it to the mast of a twenty-oared merchant vessel of large burden, and able to venture out into open sea. I went up to this club and cut off about six feet of it; I then gave this piece to the men and told them to fine it evenly off at one end, which they proceeded to do, and lastly I brought it to a point myself, charring the end in the fire to make it harder. When I had done this I hid it under dung, which was lying about all over the cave, and told the men to cast lots which of them should venture along with myself to lift it and bore it into the monster's eye while he was asleep. The lot fell upon the very four whom I should have chosen, and I myself made five. In the evening the wretch came back from shepherding, and drove his flocks into the cave- this time driving them all inside, and not leaving any in the yards; I suppose some fancy must have taken him, or a god must have prompted him to do so. As soon as he had put the stone back to its place against the door, he sat down, milked his ewes and his goats all quite rightly, and then let each have her own young one; when he had got through with all this work, he gripped up two more of my men, and made his supper off them. So I went up to him with an ivy-wood bowl of black wine in my hands:

"'Look here, Cyclops,' said I, you have been eating a great deal of man's flesh, so take this and drink some wine, that you may see what kind of liquor we had on board my ship. I was bringing it to you as a drink-offering, in the hope that you would take compassion upon me and further me on my way home, whereas all you do is to go on ramping and raving most intolerably. You ought to be ashamed yourself; how can you expect people to come see you any more if you treat them in this way?'

"He then took the cup and drank. He was so delighted with the taste of the wine that he begged me for another bowl full. 'Be so kind,' he said, 'as to give me some more, and tell me your name at once. I want to make you a present that you will be glad to have. We have wine even in this country, for our soil grows grapes and the sun ripens them, but this drinks like nectar and ambrosia all in one.'

"I then gave him some more; three times did I fill the bowl for him, and three times did he drain it without thought or heed; then, when I saw that the wine had got into his head, I said to him as plausibly as I could: 'Cyclops, you ask my name and I will tell it you; give me, therefore, the present you promised me; my name is Noman; this is what my father and mother and my

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friends have always called me.'

"But the cruel wretch said, 'Then, I will eat all Noman's comrades before Noman himself, and will keep Noman for the last. This is the present that I will make him.'

"As he spoke he reeled, and fell sprawling face upwards on the ground. His great neck hung heavily backwards and a deep sleep took hold upon him. Presently he turned sick, and threw up both wine and the gobbets of human flesh on which he had been gorging, for he was very drunk. Then I thrust the beam of wood far into the embers to heat it, and encouraged my men lest any of them should turn faint-hearted. When the wood, green though it was, was about to blaze, I drew it out of the fire glowing with heat, and my men gathered round me, for heaven had filled their hearts with courage. We drove the sharp end of the beam into the monster's eye, and bearing upon it with all my weight I kept turning it round and round as though I were boring a hole in a ship's plank with an auger, which two men with a wheel and strap can keep on turning as long as they choose. Even thus did we bore the red hot beam into his eye, till the boiling blood bubbled all over it as we worked it round and round, so that the steam from the burning eyeball scalded his eyelids and eyebrows, and the roots of the eye sputtered in the fire. As a blacksmith plunges an axe or hatchet into cold water to temper it- for it is this that gives strength to the iron- and it makes a great hiss as he does so, even thus did the Cyclops' eye hiss round the beam of olive wood, and his hideous yells made the cave ring again. We ran away in a fright, but he plucked the beam all besmirched with gore from his eye, and hurled it from him in a frenzy of rage and pain, shouting as he did so to the other Cyclopes who lived on the bleak headlands near him; so they gathered from all quarters round his cave when they heard him crying, and asked what was the matter with him.

"'What ails you, Polyphemus,' said they, 'that you make such a noise, breaking the stillness of the night, and preventing us from being able to sleep? Surely no man is carrying off your sheep? Surely no man is trying to kill you either by fraud or by force?

"But Polyphemus shouted to them from inside the cave, 'Noman is killing me by fraud! Noman is killing me by force!'

"'Then,' said they, 'if no man is attacking you, you must be ill; when Jove makes people ill, there is no help for it, and you had better pray to your father Neptune.'

"Then they went away, and I laughed inwardly at the success of my clever stratagem, but the Cyclops, groaning and in an agony of pain, felt about with his hands till he found the stone and took it from the door; then he sat in the doorway and stretched his hands in front of it to catch anyone going out with the sheep, for he thought I might be foolish enough to attempt this.

"As for myself I kept on puzzling to think how I could best save my own life and those of my companions; I schemed and schemed, as one who knows that his life depends upon it, for the danger was very great. In the end I deemed that this plan would be the best. The male sheep were well grown, and carried a heavy black fleece, so I bound them noiselessly in threes together, with some of the withies on which the wicked monster used to sleep. There was to be a man under the middle sheep, and the two on either side were to cover him, so that there were three sheep to each man. As for myself there was a ram finer than any of the others, so I caught hold of him by the back, ensconced myself in the thick wool under his belly, and flung on patiently to his fleece, face upwards, keeping a firm hold on it all the time.

"Thus, then, did we wait in great fear of mind till morning came, but when the child of morning, rosy-fingered Dawn, appeared, the male sheep hurried out to feed, while the ewes

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remained bleating about the pens waiting to be milked, for their udders were full to bursting; but their master in spite of all his pain felt the backs of all the sheep as they stood upright, without being sharp enough to find out that the men were underneath their bellies. As the ram was going out, last of all, heavy with its fleece and with the weight of my crafty self; Polyphemus laid hold of it and said:

"My good ram, what is it that makes you the last to leave my cave this morning? You are not wont to let the ewes go before you, but lead the mob with a run whether to flowery mead or bubbling fountain, and are the first to come home again at night; but now you lag last of all. Is it because you know your master has lost his eye, and are sorry because that wicked Noman and his horrid crew have got him down in his drink and blinded him? But I will have his life yet. If you could understand and talk, you would tell me where the wretch is hiding, and I would dash his brains upon the ground till they flew all over the cave. I should thus have some satisfaction for the harm this no-good Noman has done me.'

"As he spoke he drove the ram outside, but when we were a little way out from the cave and yards, I first got from under the ram's belly, and then freed my comrades; as for the sheep, which were very fat, by constantly heading them in the right direction we managed to drive them down to the ship. The crew rejoiced greatly at seeing those of us who had escaped death, but wept for the others whom the Cyclops had killed. However, I made signs to them by nodding and frowning that they were to hush their crying, and told them to get all the sheep on board at once and put out to sea; so they went aboard, took their places, and smote the grey sea with their oars. Then, when I had got as far out as my voice would reach, I began to jeer at the Cyclops.

"Cyclops,' said I, 'you should have taken better measure of your man before eating up his comrades in your cave. You wretch, eat up your visitors in your own house? You might have known that your sin would find you out, and now Jove and the other gods have punished you.'

"He got more and more furious as he heard me, so he tore the top from off a high mountain, and flung it just in front of my ship so that it was within a little of hitting the end of the rudder. The sea quaked as the rock fell into it, and the wash of the wave it raised carried us back towards the mainland, and forced us towards the shore. But I snatched up a long pole and kept the ship off, making signs to my men by nodding my head that they must row for their lives, whereon they laid out with a will. When we had got twice as far as we were before, I was for jeering at the Cyclops again, but the men begged and prayed of me to hold my tongue.

"Do not,' they exclaimed, 'be mad enough to provoke this savage creature further; he has thrown one rock at us already which drove us back again to the mainland, and we made sure it had been the death of us; if he had then heard any further sound of voices he would have pounded our heads and our ship's timbers into a jelly with the rugged rocks he would have heaved at us, for he can throw them a long way.'

"But I would not listen to them, and shouted out to him in my rage, 'Cyclops, if anyone asks you who it was that put your eye out and spoiled your beauty, say it was the valiant warrior Ulysses, son of Laertes, who lives in Ithaca.'

"On this he groaned, and cried out, 'Alas, alas, then the old prophecy about me is coming true. There was a prophet here, at one time, a man both brave and of great stature, Telemus son of Eurymus, who was an excellent seer, and did all the prophesying for the Cyclopes till he grew old; he told me that all this would happen to me some day, and said I should lose my sight

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by the hand of Ulysses. I have been all along expecting some one of imposing presence and superhuman strength, whereas he turns out to be a little insignificant weakling, who has managed to blind my eye by taking advantage of me in my drink; come here, then, Ulysses, that I may make you presents to show my hospitality, and urge Neptune to help you forward on your journey- for Neptune and I are father and son. He, if he so will, shall heal me, which no one else neither god nor man can do.'

"Then I said, 'I wish I could be as sure of killing you outright and sending you down to the house of Hades, as I am that it will take more than Neptune to cure that eye of yours.'

"On this he lifted up his hands to the firmament of heaven and prayed, saying, 'Hear me, great Neptune; if I am indeed your own true-begotten son, grant that Ulysses may never reach his home alive; or if he must get back to his friends at last, let him do so late and in sore plight after losing all his men [let him reach his home in another man's ship and find trouble in his house.']

"Thus did he pray, and Neptune heard his prayer. Then he picked up a rock much larger than the first, swung it aloft and hurled it with prodigious force. It fell just short of the ship, but was within a little of hitting the end of the rudder. The sea quaked as the rock fell into it, and the wash of the wave it raised drove us onwards on our way towards the shore of the island."

Here is an argument that the Etruscan spelling of Odysseus, UThUZE, has Mesopotamian roots.

(From <http://paleoglot.blogspot.com/2009/11/pre-greek-name-for-odysseus.html>):

"In my previous post ([Odysseus, Uthuze and Utnapishtim](#)), I finished off with the dangling idea that the name *Odysseus* had reached Anatolia and the Aegean by the second millennium BCE. This shouldn't be a provocative speculation given the facts and *communis opinio*. However, the question is exactly *how* the name entered Greek and *how* a Sumerian name *Utu-zi* suggested by the Babylonian rendering of the name *Utnapishtim* (*UD.ZI^{tim}*) might have even influenced Greek if Sumerian is said to have been a dead language by the beginning of the 2nd millennium BCE!

"There are additional facts that make this topic very intriguing, such as the fact that Ὀδυσσεύς ("Odusseús") is but one Greek reflex of the name, others being Ὀλυσσεύς ("Olusseús"), Οὐλίξεύς ("Oulikseús") and Οὐλίξης ("Oulíksēs") from whence Latin *Ulysses*. Notice the alternation of *d* to *l*? Strangely enough Robert Beekes identifies a lot of "Pre-Greek" words with this same alternation and many of the pairs seem to me to be rather convincing. As previously mentioned, the Etruscan name shows an aspirated plosive *th*, yet another phoneme for what is surely the same sound in the beginning.

"So here's what I hypothesize to explain all this maddening variation. Let's presume that Beekes' observation of "Pre-Greek" d/l alternation is suggestive of Minoan phonology. The unetymologizable d/l pairs in Greek are afterall inexorably linked to the current awkwardness of the Minoan transliteration (cf. [Paleoglot: A new value for Minoan 'd'](#)) which doesn't exhibit a natural phonology for a language. I've previously suggested an affricate /tʃ/ for Minoan "d" but I'm lately honestly considering an affricate /tʰ/, attested in Athabaskan languages, which when unaspirated may be mistaken as either a "d" or an "l", particularly in a language like Mycenaean Greek which evidently lacked this sound. This brings us to a reconstructed Minoan form *Oduze /'Otʰutʰse/ which is more in line with the presumed Sumerian form.

"Now how might the Sumerian form enter Minoan by chance? Certainly one way would be if

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a Minoan scribe moderately knowledgeable in Babylonian characters read the Sumerograms *UD.ZI* literally as Utuzi. The use of the original Sumerian phonetic values for the Babylonian symbols when writing Babylonian long postdates the extinction of the Sumerian language.

“Finally, back to the Etruscan aspirated plosive, I would suggest that there may be a correspondence between Minoan "d" /tθ/ and Proto-Cyprian *tʰ. (Note: I've now decided to call *Proto-Etrusco-Cypriot* simply *Proto-Cyprian* since, for one thing, it's easier to type. Lol.) From Cyprian, we get the derivative languages Etruscan, Lemnian, Rhaetic, Eteo-Cypriot and Eteo-Cretan.”

The following is an analysis of the krater by Izzet:

Vedia Izzet, “Purloined Letters: The Aristonothos Inscription and Krater,” Christ’s College, Cambridge ([from https://books.google.com/](https://books.google.com/) pp. 191-204): Greek identity in the western Mediterranean: papers in honor of Brian Shefton / edited by Kathryn Lomas; 1960-IV Series.

Introduction

“The nineteenth-century reports of the finding of the vase give no other information that that it was found in a tomb in Cerveteri.¹...Since the discovery of the krater it has been incorporated into almost every account of early Greek and Etruscan history. Scholarly debate has focused around two main areas. First the origin of the maker of this extraordinary testament of early Greco-Etruscan contact, and second the extent of Etruscan comprehension of Greek myth. Investigation of the possible meanings of the vase has not been a major feature of analyses of this unique artefact. One notable exception is that of Mario Torelli, who has suggested that the vase expresses contemporary Etruscan aspirations to thalassocracy, both directly and symbolically. This he sees directly in the confrontation between the Etruscan and Greek ships. In the scene of the blinding of Polyphemos, Torelli sees Odysseus as the pot’s Etruscan owner, and the Cyclops as Sicilian Greeks in a speculative battle in which the pot’s owner/Odysseus is victorious...This is a framework of interactions between Greeks and Etruscans, and here the Aristonothos krater provides much for us to consider...”

The Inscription

“One aspect of the Aristonothos krater which Torelli did not examine in detail is the placing of this inscription on the pot. Though it could have been placed anywhere on the krater, Aristonothos has inscribed his name not just on, but into the mythical scene of blinding. In fact, he signs his name in the narrative center of the blinding scene. At this point, according to the story, Polyphemos is already drunk and has asked Odysseus his name, and Odysseus has replied that he is called “Outis”: “No-one,” or “No-name.” Thus, the point at which the onomastic inscription is inserted is that at which Odysseus’ namelessness is crucial for the outcome of the story. The scene of the myth onto which Aristonothos writes his name is one in which names deceive, and cannot be taken at face value. When Odysseus gives his name to the barbarian Cyclops, the latter, not being Greek, thinks it is a real name. When, at precisely the same point,

¹ (Vedia Isset’s note k#4) See Förster, ‘Vaso Ceretano con rappresentazione dell’ Accamento di Polifemo’; Wilamowitz-Möllendorff ‘Demokratia der attischen Metoeken Hermes (1887) 107-128.

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the painter gives us, or his Etruscan client, his name, we too, believe him.

“The inscription interrupts the image at the moment that the stake blinds the eye of the Cyclops. The deliberate penetration of the scene by the inscription is emphasized by the bend it takes at its midpoint: the inscription does not continue above the heads of the protagonists, in a manner detached from them; instead, it is deliberately diverted to enter the scene and thus becomes a protagonist itself. If we were to read a parallel between the scene and the inscription, the inscription itself should be read as an act of blinding, and, paradoxically the act of reading the inscription blinds the reader.

“The location of the inscription thus reveals uncertainties about how we should read what is before our eyes. The way that the inscription is written, and the mythical scene into which it is inserted, alerts us to the importance of naming, and the caution with which we must approach such names. The emphasis on names, which is set within a scene of blinding, warns us not to read these things at face value. The painter gives the pot a name, thus, in a sense, legitimizing the pot; yet simultaneously this calls into question the legitimacy of the very name given.

“The inscription itself is an extraordinary one: *Aristonothos epoisen*. The second word is relatively unproblematic: *epoisen* is the usual form for indicating the maker of a pot.² The actual name of the maker, however, is not so common. In fact it is unique: the krater contains the only known instance of the name Aristonothos. This in itself is not sufficient to raise doubts over its legitimacy as a name (there are many name with a single known citation). However, the absence of comparanda does allow the possibility that there is more here than meets the eye.

“There are other ways in which the name Aristonothos is peculiar. The prefix Aristo — (“best” or “noble”) is a very common one in Greek personal names, and I have counted some 267 in total. However, in all these instances save one, the word which follows to make up the compound name carries positive connotations. Names such as Aristo-demos (best tribe) and Aristo-kleia (best reputation) make up 266 of the names we know; Aristonothos is the only Ariston-name to contain a word like *nothos*, “bastard.” The name is therefore not only exceptional in terms of its frequency, but also in its composition.

“In addition to being unique, the name is also strikingly oxymoronic. The juxtaposition of the words Aristo- and -nothos, “noble bastard,” is a contradiction in terms. In this name, the incompatible are joined, and things which do not fit together are mixed. In this sense, the name itself is a bastard: elements which should not be joined are united. This is underlined by the fact that one of these elements in the name is the word bastard itself. The name refers explicitly to its own questionable nature. The incongruity of this aspect of the Aristonothos inscription is startling, and it is this incongruity which draws us to examine it further. The scene of blinding acts as a warning that there may be something hidden here, in front of our eyes, and it invites us to look beyond the first glance.

“...the question “who is Aristonothos?” has many possible answers: the painter, Odysseus, Polyphemus, and even the Etruscan owner of the pot. But this question leads to many more, such as who is legitimate? Who is barbarian, and who is civilized?

“The scene of the blinding of Polyphemus on the Aristonothos krater is often cited as one of the most accurate depictions of the Homeric version of the myth. This is principally due to the

² (Vedia Izzet’s note #14) This is the only instance of this spelling of the more usual *epoiesen*, Gallavolti ‘La firma di Aristonothos e alcuni problemi di fonetica,’ 1030. “Pu

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number of Polyphemus' attackers: Odysseus, followed by his four companions.³ Polyphemus is shown on the floor of his cave, leaning on one arm as he tries to push away the blinding stake with the other. His attackers are aligned along the stake which they are driving into his eye. They are all in the same position, except the last man, whose body turns backwards as he pushes off the wall of the cave with one leg. The torsion in his torso is evinced by the direction of his sword, which is in the opposite way round from those of his companions. All are on the tips of their toes as they stealthily approach their victim. Between the figures, in three rows, are lines of small circles containing a point. In a scene of blinding, the background is made up of single, staring eyes.

"In the sense that Polyphemus is not doing anything in this scene, the name seems in applicable to him. However, in at least two ways the name Aristonothos applies to Polyphemus very well. First, he is *nothos* in many ways. Poseidon is known to be his father, and though his mother is not mentioned, his divine father gives the Cyclops at least half divine parentage. In this sense, uncertain parentage leaves him a bastard. Similarly, his hybrid nature, as a giant, human in form but with the deformity of a single eye, also emphasizes the mixtures and contradictions which he embodies. This, in conjunction with his mixed ancestry, would make the word *nothos* describe him well. His behavior adds a further element of difficulty because he is known to eat human flesh, an inherently inhuman act, and to Greeks a common *topos* for barbarian or savage behavior. Polyphemus' barbarity is compounded by the fact that he eats his guests, an extreme flouting of the usual rules of guest-friendship. At the same time, his supreme status (*aristo-*) as a bastard (*-nothos*) is emphasized in his semi divine parentage (he is superior to other bastards) and in his behavior (which is particularly barbaric through its cannibalism). The name Aristonothos would fit him well....In contrast to Polyphemus, who is *aristo-nothos*, Odysseus would be *Aristo-aristos*, because his not only of noble birth, but also in his battle against barbarism, of noble deed. However, his deeds may not be exemplary; the act of blinding, and the problematic nature of the trickery which led to that act, both of which are set within the frame of being a guest, may also suggest that Odysseus, too, combines the two elements of *aristo-* and *-nothos*....Thus these two characters are transitional, and this allows them to act as bridges over the gulf between gods and mortals, each, in his person, bringing the two closer by one step. The figures of Polyphemus and Odysseus thus mediate between the two worlds, allowing the possibility of traveling the distance between them..."

Side B

"These are themes which are played out on the other side of the krater. The parallels between the two scenes invite a reading of the two together, and the light of one another. The scene is one of a naval battle. More specifically, it has been demonstrated that the scene shows an encounter between a Greek oared-ship on the left and an Etruscan sailing boat on the right. Parallels between the narratives of the two scenes are not difficult to find. On the simplest level, the two are linked by a maritime theme: Odysseus is the main protagonist in a narrative of maritime travel, and the Cyclops is the son of the god of the sea, Poseidon.

³ (Vedia Izzet's note #24) Homeric accuracy is posited on the grounds not only of the five assailants, but also of the cheese rack behind Polyphemus, features which are not present on other early vascular depictions of the scene (the Eleusis Amphora, Eleusis; and an Argive krater fragment, Argos Museum). However Snodgrass raises doubts over the stake, and the sitting position of Polyphemus (Snodgrass, *Homer and the Artists*, 94).

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“However in a more explicit and visual manner the naval scene mirrors that of the blinding of Polyphemus: for instance in the equal number of Greek oarsmen and Greeks in a similar way to the olive stake.”

“The Greek ship is emblazoned with an eye on its prow. Unlike the barbarian eye of Polyphemus which is penetrated, and which goes blind, the Greek eye is the true eye: it is the eye which is not blinded, and which, on the beak-like prow, is the penetrator. Thus, the Greek ship should be read as the aggressor in the encounter. On the other side of the krater, it is Odysseus, the Greek, who attacks the barbarian Cyclops. Similarly it was Odysseus who penetrated the world of the Cyclops, both by landing on his island and entering his cave; and it was Odysseus who, as a sailor, entered the maritime world, a world controlled by Polyphemus’ father, Poseidon. A reading of the naval battle which draws on the themes raised on the other side of the vessel seems inevitable.”

An argument that the krater was made near Cerveteri:

“Greek Identity in the Western Mediterranean,” edited by Carol Dougherty and Leslie Kurke, 2003; Carol Dougherty, “The Aristonothos Krater: Competing Stories of Conflict and Collaboration” <https://books.google.com/books?isbn=9004133003>, pp. 50-52.



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Dougherty's article includes for comparison an eighth century B.C. Spartan fibula that carries a similar battle scene between a Greek and barbarian ship (After Charbonneaux, 1932, fig. 4)

In comparing the two scenes both Greek ships are on the left, leaving the foreign ship on the right. The foreign ship in both the fibula and krater is a sailing vessel, whereas the Greek ship has no mast. The shields held by the men on both ships on the fibula are "Mycenaean" figure-of-eight shields. Both ships in the fibula have rowers below deck. The krater

allocates rowers only to the Greek ship.

The ship with the waterline beak is a warship whose design is abundant in extant illustrations from pottery and tiles. The ship on the right could be a merchant vessel, such as shown in a mural from www.rgzm.de, found on google images, were it not for the fact that it is armed; however, apart from the Spartan fibula, we have not found other images of such a beaked ship.



Dougherty confirms that the krater was found in the necropolis at Cerveteri (Caere) and notes that the color and nature of the clay itself, and provenance, suggest that the pot was made locally. She says:

"The potter himself, however, to judge from his name and the alphabet form of his signature, was Greek. The signature "Aristonothos (Aristomphos) made me" is written in letter forms consistent with the Chalcidian alphabet used in the Euboean colonies...The discursive logic of the krater's paired images draws upon the same colonial rhetoric at work in Odyssey Book 9 and applies it to the complicated seventh-century relationships between Greeks and Etruscans. On the one hand, the story of the production of the Aristonothos krater, together with Demaratus' ⁴ story, describes a world which Greeks and Etruscans worked, traded, and even lived together in

⁴ Dougherty refers to Strabo's and Dionysius of Halicarnassus' description of a rich Corinthian merchant who traded with the Tyrrhenian cities and was driven from his home owing to political uprisings in Corinth. He moved to Etruria, married an Etruscan woman and one of his two sons, Tarquin, became the fifth king of Rome (616 -578 B.C.). The last king of Rome was Tarquinius Superbus (Tarquin the Proud) who ruled from 534 -510. B.C. The Tarquins and the monarchy were cast out of Rome in 510 BC in a revolt led by Lucius Junius Brutus and Lucius Tarquinius Collatinus. The Senate voted to never again allow the rule of a King and formed a Republic in 509 B.C.

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relative harmony with mutual profit. Greek and Etruscan piracy, on the other hand, both real and imagined, suggests a genuine friction between these two peoples, a tension that no doubt stems from this close relationship, both economic and domestic.”

We may conclude that the combined battle scene and blinding of Polyphemos include a complex motif and certainly well within the sublime story-telling skills of Etruscan artisans. As a whole Etruscan mythology follows the Greek, but often provides a twist in the storyline that is not in the Greek, as seen in many Etruscan illustrations/stories.

In another mirror known as the Volterra mirror (See [http://www.maravot.com/Uni_suckling-](http://www.maravot.com/Uni_suckling-Heracles.html)



Heracles.html), Hercules is suckling the breast of Hera, as represented in the Greek story; however, in the Etruscan version of the story he is suckling as an adult! The Greek story tells of Hera (Etr. VNI) suckling the babe Heracles (Etr. HERCLE). Although Hera attempted to destroy the child even in his mother’s womb, and after his birth — Hera put two poisonous snakes in his crib — Hera was somewhat tricked into suckling the babe. Fear of Hera's further revenge led his mother Alcmena to expose the infant Heracles, but he was taken up and brought to Hera by his half-sister Athena, who played an important role as protectress of heroes. Hera did not recognize Heracles and nursed him out of pity. Heracles suckled so strongly that he caused her pain, and she pushed him away. Her milk sprayed across the heavens and there formed the Milky Way. But with divine milk, Heracles had acquired supernatural powers. Athena brought the infant back to his mother, and he was subsequently raised by his parents.

Beside Hera and Heracles in the Volterra mirror is the supreme god TINI (Zeus, Jupiter) who is holding up a

plaque describing the sublime scene. For more mirrors and other Etruscan texts see:

http://www.maravot.com/Etruscan_Phrases_a.html and our Work notes on academia.edu, such as “Unique Perspectives in Etruscan Mythology.”

I chose to provide the discussions above on the meaning of the Arstonothos krater because I found them interesting, though, as indicated above, I don’t particularly agree with their conclusions and subscribe to the translation, “The best nobody out of a shepherd” or “the best Ulysses/Odysseus out of a shepherd.”

Mel Copeland

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