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KYNOKEΦΑΛΟΙ AND KYNAMΟΛΓΟΙ IN CLASSICAL ETHNOGRAPHY

Klaus Karttunen

A look at Liddell—Scott and TLL reveals many uses for κυνοκέφαλος 'dog-headed, dog-faced'. Most commonly it is met as the name of an animal — it is the common name of the dog-headed baboon, *Cynocephalus hamadryas* or *Papio hamadryas*.¹ It is also rather common as the name of various (at least three) plants. In addition to the baboon the word was sometimes used to denote the jackal-headed Egyptian god, Anubis. This was no official denomination, and I have found it only in the scornful Lucian and some Christian authors,² who naturally had no piety towards the Egyptian cult. I have found three other religious significances. First is the obvious denomination of the dog's head as one of the three heads of Hecate.³ According to the editors, Tertullian used the word probably to denote the devil himself.⁴ The third use is met only in Coptic literature where a dog-headed demon of the underworld is sometimes mentioned besides the common dog-shaped one.⁵ In medieval times we meet the word denoting the furious masked soldiers of some Germanic peoples.⁶

¹ The ancient ape lore is dealt with by W. C. McDermott, *The Ape in Antiquity*, Baltimore 1938, on baboons see 35sqq.

² Noted in TLL.

³ Hsch. s.v. Ἐκάτης ἄγαλμα a.o.; cf. W. H. Roscher, *Das von der "Kynanthropie" handelnde Fragment des Marcellus von Side*, ASG 39:3 (1897) 42.

⁴ Scorp. 1 (ed. Reiffersscheid & Wissowa): *ab ipso scilicet cynocephalo (Diabolo?)*.

⁵ A. Jacoby, *Der Hundsköpfige Dämon der Unterwelt*, ARW 21 (1922) 219—225.

⁶ E.g. Langobards in Paulus Diaconus, see L. Kretzenbacher, *Kynokephale Dämonen südosteuropäischen Volksdichtung*, Beiträge zur Kenntnis Südosteuropas und des Nahen Orients 5, München 1968, 81sqq.

But the most famous *κυνοκέφαλος* of medieval times is of course the holy Christophorus. His legend is attested as early as the fifth century, but the oldest pictures are only from the 12th century.⁷ As the legend presents Christophorus as coming from the country (or island) of the *Κυνοκέφαλοι*,⁸ this sets him within our present theme.

Ever since the earliest Greek writers on ethnography (Hecataeus, Herodotus) there has been mention of a dog-headed people known as the *Κυνοκέφαλοι* situated either in India or Africa. These Dog-heads became popular in a later age, and medieval literature in Europe as well as in Islamic countries gives many accounts of them living somewhere on the rim of the known world. Some new motifs were linked with them. The Eurasian totemic tales⁹ may have had a part in their popularity as well as the Christophorus legend. In Eastern Europe, from Finland to the Balkans, 'a dog-head' was sometimes a common denomination of Easterners like Mongols and Tatars.¹⁰ A Baltic fertility ritual was interpreted sometimes with dog-heads, sometimes with lycanthropy.¹¹ In Arabic sources the dog-heads are often connected with the Himantopodes,¹² and everywhere we meet them as the husbands of the Amazones.¹³

After these introductory remarks I will concentrate on dog-headed people in classical sources, trying to show that we must distinguish three different traditions: dog-heads as one of the fabulous races of India, a

⁷ W. Loeschke, *Neue Studien zur Darstellung des tierköpfigen Christophoros*, Beiträge zur Kunst des christlichen Orients 3, Erste Studien-Sammlung, Recklinghausen 1965, 37—88, esp. 38, and Kretzenbacher 58—70.

⁸ P. Lindegger, *Griechischen und römischen Quellen zum peripheren Tibet II: Ueberlieferungen von Herodot zu den Alexanderhistorikern (Die nördlichsten Grenzregionen Indiens)*, *Opuscula Tibetana* 14, Rikon—Zürich 1982, 69—70.

⁹ Fr. Kretschmar, *Hundesstammvater und Kerberos* 1—2, *Studien zur Kulturkunde* 4, Stuttgart 1938 passim.

¹⁰ Kretzenbacher passim, with reference to Finland also H. Halén, *Idän vierasheimolaisten vierailuista Suomessa Venäjän sotaväen mukana*, *Historiallinen aikakauskirja* 1979, 99—109.

¹¹ Kretzenbacher 92—96 ja 110—112. On lycanthropy see Roscher.

¹² F. Meier, *Das Volk der Riemenbeinler*, *Festschrift für Wilhelm Eilers*, Wiesbaden 1967, 341—367.

¹³ In Europe e.g. Adam of Bremen, in Chinese sources see B. Laufer, *JAOS* 51 (1931) 92, in Africa see Kretschmar I 169.

rumour of the dog-heads in Libya and the Κυνοκέφαλοι/Κυναμολγοί of Ethiopia. The following discussion is partly derived from my unpublished M.A. thesis.¹⁴

The main source of the Indian people supposedly equipped with a dog's head and sometimes even with some other canine characteristics is Ctesias.¹⁵ The few attempts at identification have been summarized by Wecker,¹⁶ but very little has been done since Lassen.¹⁷ Actually the traditional Indian identification, Sanskrit *śunāmukha-* is mentioned even by Lindegger only from a very unreliable and antiquated secondary source.¹⁸ Yet a survey of Purāṇic geography can give at least some valid evidence for the Indian origin of Ctesias' dog-heads.¹⁹ Many details in the long description of Ctesias have a clear Indian nature.

There is consequently no reason to deny Ctesias all reliability as some scholars have done. Thus Bunbury²⁰ supposed that Ctesias had taken an originally African tale and transplanted it to India. Of course there is always the possibility of a loan from Herodotus or rather Hecataeus, but the many genuinely Indian features met everywhere in his *Indica* argue against any such theory. Ctesias was clearly a rather uncritical writer and

¹⁴ Koirankuonolaisten alkuperä ja asema antiikin kirjallisuudessa ("The Origin and Place of the Dog-Heads in Classical Literature"), Helsinki 1977 (ms.).

¹⁵ Fragments edited by F. Jacoby, FGrH No. 688.

¹⁶ Wecker, *Kynocephaloi*, RE XII, 1925, 25—26, cf. F. F. Schwarz, *Der kleine Pauly* III, 1975, 400.

¹⁷ C. Lassen, *Indische Alterthumskunde* II, Bonn 1852, 654—656. The most important contributions after him are by W. Reese, *Die griechischen Nachrichten über Indien bis zum Feldzuge Alexanders des Grossen*, Leipzig 1914, 71—92, and Lindegger 51—83. The theory of R. Schafer, *Unmasking Ktesias' dog-headed people*, *Historia* 13 (1964) 499—503, is untenable.

¹⁸ F. Wilford, *Asiatick Researches* 8 (1805) quoted by Lassen 656 and still by Lindegger 108. Lindegger's reference to D. C. Sircar's *Cosmography and Geography in Early Indian Literature*, Calcutta 1967, is erroneous, the correct page is 233 (the index, s.v. *śunāmukha*). More important in this connection is Sircar's *Studies in the Geography of Ancient and Medieval India*, Delhi 1971, 69, where it is clearly stated that *śunāmukha* is met in the corresponding geographical lists in many Purāṇas.

¹⁹ Partly collected by me in Karttunen 1977, 129—160. Sircar 1967 and 1971 are good summaries of the Purāṇic geography.

²⁰ *History of Classical Geography* I, London 1883, 340—341.

collected many seamen's tales, but at least his tales always referred to India. I have discussed this point in my thesis²¹ and in a short paper on the reliability of Ctesias.²² Presently I am preparing a larger study of the information on India given by Ctesias, where I will discuss these points more comprehensively.

The African dog-heads have their origin in the well-known Herodotean list of the peoples and miracles of Inner Libya.²³ The same list also includes horned asses, headless people with eyes in their chests and wild men and women. If we rely on our author, all this is ὡς δὴ λέγονται γε ὑπὸ Λιβύων. This raises the possibility that we are dealing with local tales and it seems to me likely that such tales could have been composed to explain the old drawings easily seen on rocks in many places in the Sahara. In these drawings are animals and hunters of the kind described by Herodotus, and among them some human figures with a jackal's head, as identified by Frobenius.²⁴ Of course such masked or totemic figures are common in prehistoric art elsewhere, but this does not affect our theory.²⁵ There is no reason to doubt the Libyan origin of the Herodotean dog-heads, it fact his list also includes some clearly African items (lions and elephants). Its very nature as a list adds strength to our hypothesis — there are no elaborate tales as in the case of Ctesias, only short comments on pictures.

Entirely different is the case with the Ethiopian dog-heads. In fact the proper *Κυνοκέφαλοι* in Ethiopia become more or less nonexistent under critical examination. Among the three instances mentioned by Fischer²⁶ one is connected with the *Κυναμολγοί*.²⁷ The Aeschylus fragment²⁸ in Strabo is a mere mention and could well point at the baboons or even the Herodotean dog-heads. Artemidorus²⁹ mentions a ὕδρευμα, τὸ κυνοκεφάλων

²¹ Karttunen 1977 *passim*, esp. 102—103.

²² *Studia Orientalia* 50 (1981) 105—107.

²³ Hdt. 4, 191, probably from Hecat., cf. Jacoby, *RE Suppl.* 2, 1913, 473—474.

²⁴ *Kulturgeschichte Afrikas*, Leipzig 1933, 54—55, 109, 116 and plates 24—25.

²⁵ As was remarked by Lindegger 65 on Karttunen 1977, 104sqq.

²⁶ *RE* XII, 1925, 24—25.

²⁷ Pliny *nat.* 6, 190.

²⁸ Fischer falsely Aeschines.

²⁹ In Strabo 16,4,14, p. 774.

καλούμενον in remotest Ethiopia, but again, we have no reason to suppose that he did not mean baboons. A little later³⁰ he actually speaks of the baboons living in the same area, but never of a dog-headed *people*. To this we may add the κυνοπρόσωποι of Aelian³¹ who lived at a distance of seven days from Egypt. But their description is clearly that of baboons even if Aelian himself seems to think it is some kind of wild tribe (ἄνθρωποι).³²

But even if we have no Κυνοκέφαλοι as a people in Ethiopia, there are still the *Cynamolgi caninis capitibus* of Pliny.³³ The Κυναμολγοί are mentioned by many authors and they have been a cause of much confusion. Two authors, Pollux and Aelian,³⁴ mention them as described by Ctesias, but a comparison of their accounts with others preserved for us by Diodorus and Photius shows very clearly that the real source is another well-known Cnidian author, Agatharchides.³⁵ In his fragments³⁶ we find no trace of the supposed canine appearance of the Κυναμολγοί; only the very corrupt Pollux says that οἱ δὲ Κυναμολγοί κύνες εἰσὶ. Pliny has probably only mistaken them for the dog-heads. The common features of the Κυναμολγοί are their many big dogs, living on dog's milk and fighting with the Indian bulls.³⁷ Without doubt both the Cnidian origin of the two authors and the Indian bulls in the story were reasons for the transferring of the Agatharchidean story to Ctesias. There is no reason to understand any Indian Κυναμολγοί.³⁸

³⁰ Ib. 16,4,16, p. 775 Γίνονται δέ, φησί, καὶ σφίγγες καὶ κυνοκέφαλοι καὶ κῆβοι λέοντος μὲν πρόσωπον ἔχοντες...

³¹ Nat. anim. 10, 25.

³² Lindegger 134—135 identifies them with the Κυναμολγοί.

³³ Nat. 6, 195.

³⁴ Onom. 5, 41 and nat. anim. 16, 31 — both as F 46 of Ctesias in FGtH.

³⁵ This is noticed also by Lindegger 67.

³⁶ Agatharch. 60 in Diod. Sic. 3,31 and Phot. Bibl. CCL 60, p. 453b, cf. Artemidorus in Strabo 16,4,10, p. 771.

³⁷ The common confusion between India and Ethiopia has lately been discussed by U. P. Arora, *India vis-a-vis Egypt-Ethiopia in Classical Accounts, Graeco-Arabica* 1 (1982) 131—140.

³⁸ This was done by Wecker, RE XII, 1925, 26, and H. G. Rawlinson, *Inter-course between India and the Western World*, Cambridge 1916, 66.

The Ethiopian *Κυναμολγοί* can rather easily be put on the map,³⁹ but in fact we have very few grounds to give them any real historicity. In this connection the most interesting explanation is suggested by Lindegger.⁴⁰ According to him this is a case of ethnographic parallelism so well-known in classical literature. Already Homer and Hesiod mentioned the *Ἰππημολγοί* of the remote North and it is possible that the milkers of dogs were invented as a southern parallel of these milkers of horses. To this I would like to add that the Indian bulls troubling the fields of the *Κυναμολγοί* could perhaps be a parallel to the cranes known to haunt the Pygmies. But the confusion with the *Κυνοκέφαλοι* is only secondary.⁴¹

We have the Indian *Κυνοκέφαλοι*, who are described with many details by Ctesias and who seem to have originally belonged to India. The Libyan *Κυνοκέφαλοι* are a mere mention invented as an explanation of a pictorial motif no more understood in its original meaning. The Ethiopian *Κυνοκέφαλοι* are nonexistent,⁴² arising merely from the misunderstood baboons and a confusion with the *Κυναμολγοί*. And the *Κυναμολγοί* are Ethiopian people sometimes erroneously ascribed to Ctesias and India and even undeservedly given the canine characteristics of the *Κυνοκέφαλοι*.

³⁹ According to S. Hable-Selassie, *Beziehungen Äthiopiens zur griechisch-römischen Welt*, Bonn 1965, 25 they lived somewhere in the borderland between Amhara and Tigre.

⁴⁰ Lindegger 1982, 67—68.

⁴¹ Otherwise Lindegger *l.c.*

⁴² Some tales about the dog-heads in African folklore — see Kretschmar I, 169 and Vivien de Saint-Martin, *Le Nord de l'Afrique dans l'Antiquité Grecque et Romaine*, Paris 1863, 190 — are too recent in this connection.