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διὸ δεῖ ἔπεσθαι τῷ (ξυνῷ, τουτέστι τῷ) κοινῷ·
ξυνὸς γὰρ ὁ κοινός. τοῦ λόγου δὲ ἐόντος ξυνοῦ
ζώουσιν οἱ πολλοὶ ὥς ἰδίαν ἔχοντες φρόνησιν

Heraclitus, via Sextus Empiricus, *Adversus mathematicos*, VII 133

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Sophocles' *Trachiniae* and the Apotheosis of Herakles: The Importance of Acheloios and Some Numismatic Confirmations

NICHOLAS J. MOLINARI¹

Although the *Trachiniae* receives relatively little attention among commentators and is considered by many to be inferior to Sophocles' other plays,² I believe this lack of attention and regard results from a misunderstanding of the role of Acheloios in the play.³ The *Trachiniae* was probably written in the second half of the fifth century B.C.E.,⁴ though we do not know precisely when. While I will offer no evidence about its dating (I follow Segal, so c. 430 B.C.E.),⁵ I will make it clear that Acheloios is essential to understanding the apotheosis of Herakles, and, moreover, we gain further insight about the *mythos* of Acheloios from Sophocles' treatment. To do this, in Part I of this essay, I will review some of my earlier work (written with Dr. Nicola Sisci) that explains some important elements of the cult of Acheloios and its surrounding *mythos*. In Parts II-V, I will exhibit many passages from the *Trachiniae* and argue that they are directly related to the Acheloios tradition. In doing so, I will try to demonstrate that the connection of the apotheosis of Herakles to Acheloios is not just a creative interpretation on my part, but a clear, deliberate strategy employed by Sophocles to situate Acheloios in his role as psychopomp. Moreover, I will argue that a careful reading of the play reveals how Acheloios functions as the expiatory sacrifice necessary for Herakles' transition to divinity, and that process involves the assimilation of Herakles with Acheloios. Part of this discussion will also involve the general notion of impiety as it relates to the cults of Acheloios and Kypris and how this impiety reinforces Herakles' need for redemption as a prerequisite to apotheosis. Finally, in Part VI, I will examine some coins from Tarsos, in Cilicia, and show how two particular varieties reinforce my interpretation of Acheloios' role in Herakles' apotheosis. Ultimately, by focusing my interpretation of the play on Acheloios and reinforcing that interpretation with numismatic evidence, I hope to prompt others to see what a treasure the *Trachiniae* truly is.

¹ I'd like to dedicate this essay to my friend and collaborator, Dr. Nicola Sisci. It was his brilliant insights into the role of Acheloios as psychopomp that inspired this essay, an insight which unlocks the door to interpreting Sophocles' play closer to what I think was the original intent. In addition, I'd like to thank Prof. Gavin Richardson, who provided many corrections to an early draft of the essay and has contributed to making me appear much smarter than I actually am. Finally, this essay has also benefitted from the thoughtful commentary of my industrious colleague Eamon Cunningham, my wise and patient doctoral advisor Prof. Sean O'Callaghan, and the gentleman and scholar Prof. Radcliffe Edmonds III. I am truly indebted to all of them. Nonetheless, all mistakes are my own.

² T.F. Hoey, "The Date of the *Trachiniae*," *Phoenix* 33, 3 (1979), 210; F.R. Earp, *The Style of Sophocles* (Cambridge, 1944), 161ff; G.M. Kirkwood, *A Study of Sophoclean Drama* (Ithaca, 1958), 289ff; Karl Reinhardt, *Sophokles*, 3rd Edition (Frankfurt, 1947) 42ff; Ernst-Richard Schwinge, *Die Stellung der Trachinierinnen im Werk des Sophokles* (Göttingen, 1962), *passim* (according to Hoey).

³ Naomi Rood noticed the same lack of attention to Acheloios in her remarks at the Classical Association of the Middle and Southwest (CAMSW) 2006 meeting, when she read her paper "Achelous and the Divine in Sophocles' *Trachiniae*".

⁴ Hoey, "The Date of the *Trachiniae*," 232.

⁵ Charles Segal, *Tragedy and Civilization: An Interpretation of Sophocles* (Norman, Oklahoma: Oklahoma UP, 1999), 60.

I. ON ACHELOIOS

Before we can have a meaningful discussion of the relation of Acheloios to Sophocles, we must first present an overview of Acheloios, particularly because he is relatively obscure. Acheloios' obscurity is due to the fact that so much of the core content of his tradition was foreign in derivation and became integrated into the western world in various stages, over a long period of time, and covering a truly vast area.⁶ It is therefore difficult to give a comprehensive summary of Acheloios, especially during the Iron Age into Archaic times, since different areas emphasized different aspects. The cultic practices, core mythology, and iconography of Acheloios undoubtedly derive from earlier Near Eastern traditions, with Sardinians, Cypro-Phoenicians, Ionians, and Carians acting as the leading exponents from East to West (mercenaries and seers were particularly important).⁷ In Archaic Etruria, where we find the oldest cultic attestations of Acheloios proper, he operates as a liminal figure often accompanied by or in the context of chthonic and/or celestial motifs, and specific emphasis was placed on his apotropaic nature.⁸ In the Archaic Eastern Greek world (Anatolia), his role in purification and agriculture was more prominent.⁹ During the Classical era, in which we have more literature to assist us, his *mythos* appears to become nearly all encompassing: lustratio rituals and other koureion rituals intimately related to individual and civic identity; a strong apotropaic dimension in which he is a protector of mercenaries and, indeed, entire cities; a chthonic dimension tied to notions of rebirth and the transmigration of the soul; agriculture and wealth related of course to the cornucopia and with it, the notion of expiatory sacrifice.¹⁰ In both Archaic and Classical times, Acheloios was seen by some as the source of all fresh water, indeed sometimes all water, but by late Hellenistic times he was mostly relegated to a particular river in Akarnania that flows into the Mediterranean at Oiniadai (this transition was more-or-less first suggested by Wilamowitz).¹¹ In his *Saturnalia*, Macrobius was the first to offer a detailed account that the "most ancient Greeks" (*antiquissimorum Graecorum*) identified Acheloios with water.¹² It is relatively late that evidence of a distinct cult of Acheloios appears in Greece proper, c. early fifth century B.C.E., there depicted in female dress¹³ and later

⁶ The most recent, comprehensive account of Acheloios and his earlier influences is found in my earlier work, Nicholas J. Molinari and Nicola Sisci, *ΠΙΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios. A Comprehensive Catalog of the Bronze Coinage of the Man-Faced Bull, with Essays on Origin and Identity* (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2016).

⁷ See *ibid.*, chapters 2 and 3, for the modes of transfusion of the iconography and accompanying religious practices into the West.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 48-55. He appears on shields and helmets, or as a rampant man-faced bull on multiple antefixes, for instance.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 55-66. Acheloios and Herakles are represented together in the early Eastern Greek world and later in Greece proper, which differs from his appearance in Etruria, where Acheloios is usually depicted alone, most frequently as a mask.

¹⁰ The notion of Acheloios as expiatory sacrifice—i.e. one sacrificed for the sake of atonement, should be evident by the end of the essay, but see also *ibid.*, chapter 4, for Acheloios in the Greek and Roman worlds. The reader is also advised to consult Rabun Taylor's excellent work, Rabun Taylor, "River Raptures: Containment and Control of Water in Greek and Roman Constructions of Identity," *The Nature and Function of Water, Baths, Bathing, and Hygiene from Antiquity through the Renaissance* (Leiden: Brill, 2009). For Acheloios as the symbol of regulated rivers, see Helga Di Giuseppe, "Acheloos e le acque deviate," *I riti del costruire nelle acque violate. Atti del Convegno Internazionale. Roma 12-14 giugno 2008* (Roma: Scienze e Lettere, 2010): 79-86. The basic characterization of Acheloios as regulated river stems from Strabo's interpretation of the myth of Herakles and Acheloios, but the history is much deeper (Strabo, *Geographica*, 10.458). Regulated rivers and accompanying man-faced bull iconography emerge first in the fifth to fourth millennium B.C.E., and consistently appear throughout various Mediterranean civilizations (and those immediately adjacent) for some five thousand years (Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΙΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios*, 97-9, for an overview). It is unclear if rivers were regulated in Old Europe, but they certainly were in Mesopotamia by the end of the first quarter of the Fourth Millennium. (*ibid.*, Chapter 1).

¹¹ Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Möllendorff, *Der Glaube der Hellenen* (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1931), I, 219. He claimed, however, that Acheloios was the original Hellenic god replaced by the Carian Okeanos.

¹² Macrobius, *Saturnalia*, 5.18.3-12.

¹³ M. M. Lee, "Acheloos Peplophoros. A lost statuette of a River God in Feminine Dress," *Hesperia* 75, No. 3 (2006): 319.

(c. 430 B.C.E.) on coinage in Akarnania as a man-faced bull.¹⁴ The first place for cultic worship in Greece was likely earlier in Dodona, where nearly all patrons were instructed to make a sacrifice to Acheloios,¹⁵ and this could not have been established later than the fifth century.¹⁶

In the Eastern Greek world, Acheloios was worshipped as an object of cult since at least the mid sixth century. We know this because in Ionia there was a workshop that manufactured *balsamarii* in the form of the head of Acheloios, dating to about the mid sixth century, and these are found distributed all over the Greek world. (Some were manufactured independently in Etruria, as early as c. 590 B.C.E.).¹⁷ These objects were part of the grave goods in burials and probably had some sort of final cleansing role for the deceased. Scholia T of the *Iliad* also attests to a cult of Acheloios at nearby Rhodes.¹⁸ Moreover, the two most enthusiastic issuers of coinage featuring Acheloios (in terms of sheer output) were Neapolis and Gela, both of which have early ties to Rhodian colonists.¹⁹ It is likely that Rhodes adopted the iconography of the man-faced bull and related mytho-religious traditions directly from the orient; there is textual evidence from Herodotus and Diodorus of Ionian and Carian mercenaries working for an Assyrian vassal king, Psammetichus I, in Egypt in the mid 7th century B.C.E.²⁰ These mercenaries were instrumental in the transmission and development of the cult of Acheloios in the west.²¹ This phenomenon of mercenaries using Acheloios iconography in art is seen continuously all over the Greek world in the following centuries, helping establish a common *mythos*.²²

There are a few key fifth-century passages that equate Acheloios with fresh water, indicating an early tradition in which Acheloios was more widely venerated and less the obscure river god most are familiar with: Sophocles (*Fr.* 5, Pearson) οἶνῳ παρ' ἡμῖν ἀχελῷος ἄρα νᾶ; Euripides (*Bacchae* 625), δμῶσιν Ἀχελῷον φέρειν ἐννέπων; Achaeus (*Athens* 4.9), μῶν Ἀχελῷος ἦν χεχραμένος πολὺς; Aristophanes (*Lys.* 381), σὸν ἔργον ὄχελῳε. In the earlier sources, there is more discrepancy. In Hesiod, Acheloios is merely mentioned along with other rivers as the son of Okeanos and Tethys (*Th.* 337f).²³ However, in Homer, an earlier version of the *Iliad* excluded *Il.*21.195 (italicized below), making Acheloios the antecedent of the relative pronoun and thus the source of all water:

¹⁴ O. Dany, *Akarnanien in Hellenismus. Geschichte und Völkerrecht in Nordwestgriechenland* (Munich: Verlag C.H.Beck, 1999), 276ff, 311ff.

¹⁵ Ephorus, *FgrH* 27= Macrobius, *Saturnalia*, v.18.6.

¹⁶ Giovan B. D'Alessio, "Textual Fluctuations and Cosmic Streams: Ocean and Acheloios," *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, No. 124 (London: The Council for the Society for the Promotion of Hellenic Studies, 2004): 32, for dating.

¹⁷ For a review of the literature concerning dating and places of manufacture of these *balsamarii*, see Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios*, 56-8.

¹⁸ Schol. T of *Iliad* 24.616.

¹⁹ For Neapolis, see Strabo, *Geographica*, 14.2.10; for Gela, see Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, 6.4.3 and Polybius 9.27.7f.

²⁰ See Herodotus, *Histories*, 2.152-4; Diodorus, *The Library of History*, 1.66.12-67.2. For coverage of western mercenaries in the east with an extensive overview of the literature, see Wolfgang-Dietrich Niemeier, "Archaic Greeks in the Orient: Textual and Archaeological Evidence," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, 322 (2001): 11-32, especially 16ff.

²¹ Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios*, Chapter 2. We follow W. Burkert, *The Orientalizing Revolution: Near Eastern Influence on Greek Culture in the Early Archaic Age*, translated by Margaret E. Pindar and Walter Burkert (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1992) and Niemeier, "Archaic Greeks in the Orient: Textual and Archaeological Evidence," 24, in arguing mercenaries "became...mediators in the continuing Oriental influx to Greece."

²² Some examples of mercenaries issuing man-faced bull coinage include, for Sicily: Agrigento, Gela, and Panormos, as well as the Kersini, Sileraians, and Sergetaians. Likewise, nearly the entire corpus of Campanian coinage fits this description, as first identified by Keith Rutter, who linked the spread of coinage to mercenaries, but did not discuss the relevance of the mythos of Acheloios. See N. Keith Rutter, *Campanian Coinages 475-380 BC* (Edinburgh: UP, 1979), and Chapter 6 (Historical Conclusions), especially 100. In Greece proper, Methylinion is an obvious example.

²³ In *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ*, we suggest this lowering of Acheloios was a deliberate move because Hesiod hated mercenaries. Indeed, in the later, classical Attic thinkers, mercenaries are still frowned upon for their employment by tyrants.

τῷ οὐδὲ κρείων Ἀχελώϊος ἰσοφαρίζει,
οὐδὲ βαθυρρεῖται μέγα σθένος Ὠκεανοῖο,
ἐξ οὗ περ πάντες ποταμοὶ καὶ πᾶσα θάλασσα
καὶ πᾶσαι κρήναι καὶ φρεῖατα μακρὰ νάουσιν

“Him not even Lord Acheloios equals,
nor the great might of deep-flowing Okeanos,
from whom, indeed, all rivers and all sea
and all springs and deep wells flow”²⁴

In fact, Zenodotus, the first librarian at the Library of Alexander, athetized the line, and it was also lacking from Megakleides’ text.²⁵ Likewise, in *Il.* 24.614 Acheloios is referred to in a general way: ὅθι φασὶ θεάων ἔμμεναι εὐνὰς νυμφάων, αἵ τ’ ἀμφ’ Ἀχελώϊον ἐρρώσαντο (his association with the nymphs indicates an identification with water in general).²⁶ According to Servius, Orpheus is the original source for the equating of Acheloios with water: *nam, sicut Orpheus docet, generaliter aquam veteres Acheloum vocabant.*²⁷

Acheloios’ watery nature naturally leads to the idea of shape-shifting, which is a core aspect represented in his descriptions in literature and in iconography. For the literary illustrations of this idea, the earliest to survive is Sophocles (*Trachiniae*, 9-14):

... Ἀχελῷον λέγω, ὅς μ’ ἐν τρισὶν μορφαῖσιν ἐξήτει πατρός, φοιτῶν ἐναργῆς ταῦρος, ἄλλοτ’ αἰόλος δράκων ἐλικτός, ἄλλοτ’ ἀνδρείῳ κύτει βούπρωρος· ἐκ δὲ δασκίου γενειάδος κρουνοὶ διερραίνοντο κρηναίου ποτοῦ.

...I mean Achelous, who came in three shapes to ask my father for me, at some times manifest as a bull, at others as a darting, coiling serpent, and again at others with a man’s trunk and a bull’s head; and from his shaggy beard there poured streams of water from his springs.²⁸

On coinage he is almost always represented as a man-faced bull, far and away his most popular form, with the sole exception being the early fifth-century stater from Metapontion that shows him depicted as a bearded man with bovine ears and horns (somewhat akin to Sophocles’ description, above), and

²⁴ Trans. G.S. Kirk, J.E. Raven, and M. Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers*, Second Edition (Cambridge: UP, 2004), 10. For the argument, see D’Alessio, “Textual Fluctuations and Cosmic Streams: Ocean and Acheloios,” 16-37. See also a summary of evidence by Michael Fowler in *Early Greek Mythography*, Vol. II (Oxford: University Press, 2013), 2-12.

²⁵ D’Alessio, “Textual Fluctuations and Cosmic Streams: Ocean and Acheloios,” 20ff; Fowler, *Early Greek Mythography*, 12. Naturally, I think Sophocles was familiar with this earlier version of the text.

²⁶ Later traditions might have played on this. In many accounts Acheloios is seen as the father of the sirens. See, for example, Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca*, 1.18, 1.63; Hyginus, *Fabulae Praefatio*, 141; Apollonius Rhodius, *Argonautica*, 4.892ff.

²⁷ See Servius *fr.* 344 Kern, as cited in D’Alessio, “Textual Fluctuations and Cosmic Streams,” 22.

²⁸ Translation Hugh Lloyd-Jones, *Sophocles: Antigone, Women of Trachis, Philoctetes, Oedipus at Colonus*, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 132-3.

holding a discus.²⁹ The designer apparently chose the human body in order to accompany the discus and make this an ΑΧΕΛΟΙΟ ΑΕΘΛΟΝ, as the inscription indicates.³⁰

By the fifth century, when he was often being identified in literature with water itself, his cult was widespread across the entire Greek world, as exhibited through a study of numismatics. There has been a long debate about the identity of the man-faced bull on Greek coinage, with the contemporary debate divided into two primary schools of thought: those who believe the man-faced bull is Acheloios, and those who believe the man-faced bull is a representation of a local river, Acheloios being one among many. Recently, however, I published (with Dr. Nicola Sisci) a theory of local embodiments of Acheloios, in which the man-faced bulls on Greek coinage are seen as sinews of Acheloios, sometimes displaying the appropriate qualifying locative epithet: Acheloios Gelas (Gela) (Figure 1), Acheloios Palagkaioi (Agyrion), and so on and so forth. This position finds support in *P.Derveni* XXIII, 11-12, ἵνας δ' ἐγκατ[έλε]ξ' Ἀχελωῖου ἀργυ[ρ]οδίνε[ω; τῷ] ὕδα[τι] ὄλ[ος] τίθη[σι] Ἀχελωῖον ὄνομα. ὅτι δὲ³¹ (“the sinews of silver-eddy Acheloios; to the waters the name Acheloios”);³² *P. Oxy* 0221, IX, 1-3, ἵνας[ι] ἐ]γκατέλεξα / Ἀχελωῖου ἀργυροδνεω, ἐξ οὗ πᾶσα θάλασσα (“the sinews of silver-eddy Acheloios, from where the whole sea [originates]”);³³ and, in my reading, *P. Oxy* 0221, IX, 8-11, πῶ[ς] δ' ἐπορ[εύθ]ης ῥεῦμα Ἀ[χ]ελ[ω]ίου ἀργυ[ρ]οδίνεα, Ὡκεανοῦ ποταμοῖο [δι'] εὐρέος ὕγ[ρ]α κέλευθα (“How did you cross the stream of silver-eddy Acheloios? Through River Ocean's wet paths?”),³⁴ in which there is a conflation between Okeanos and Acheloios, but emphasis is on the more fundamental Acheloios. Incidentally, the earliest man-faced bull on coinage in Italy is from Rhegion, c. 510 B.C.E., and probably features Acheloios Apsias, which we connected etymologically with the Near Eastern “Apsu” (i.e. Asallúhi Apsu - Acheloios Apsias).³⁵ Ultimately, this solution alleviated the dichotomy of the two schools of thought by incorporating both positions in a way consistent with Greek religion, a framework in which a god without an epithet is but an “artifact of language.”³⁶

Approximately seventy-one mints issued some variety of coinage featuring a local embodiment of Acheloios as a man-faced bull, covering millions of square miles.³⁷ The westernmost mint employing Acheloios is Emporion,³⁸ in modern Spain, and the easternmost hails from Ai Khanoum,³⁹ in modern Afghanistan. (There is an enormous dead-zone with no coinage featuring Acheloios between there and Cilicia). The northernmost mint is Istros,⁴⁰ on the northwestern shore of the Black Sea, and the

²⁹ BnF De Luynes 466.

³⁰ *IGASM* IV 84.

³¹ Ed. D'Alessio.

³² Gábor Betegh translates line 12 as “He does [not give] the name Achelous to water,” by inserting οὐ after ὕδα[τι]. Gábor Betegh, *The Derveni Papyrus. Cosmology, Theology and Interpretation* (Cambridge: UP, 2004), 48-9, and discussion on 215ff. Betegh was not aware of D'Alessio's work, *op. cit.*, which Janko pointed out in his review. See Richard Janko, “Review: Gábor Betegh, *The Derveni Papyrus. Cosmology, Theology and Interpretation*,” *BMCR* 2005.01.07. I know of no scholar that accepts this translation.

³³ Ed. D'Alessio, “Textual Fluctuations and Cosmic Streams,” 20-1.

³⁴ Ed. D'Alessio.

³⁵ Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios*, 93.

³⁶ Pierre Brulé, “Le langage des épicleses dans le polythéisme hellénique,” *Kernos*, 11 (1998): 18-19 (trans. Jenny Wallensten, “Personal protection and tailor-made deities: the use of individual epithets,” *Kernos*, 21 (2008): 82).

³⁷ For a comprehensive overview of the distribution of the iconography on coinage, covering all metals, see *ibid.*, 69-78.

³⁸ L. Villarronga, “La troballa de l'Emporda,” in *Acta Numismatica* 33 (2003), no.7-13.

³⁹ A. Houghton and C. Lorber, *Seleucid Coins: A Comprehensive Catalog* (Lancaster: CNG, 2002), no. 283 A.

⁴⁰ Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios*, no. 491-494.

southernmost hails from Kyrene,⁴¹ in North Africa. The earliest type (c. 550 B.C.E.) is a stater from Miletos,⁴² and the latest (Greek) type is probably a civic issue from Akarnania (c. 160 B.C.E.).⁴³

II. OVERVIEW OF THE PLAY

Quite generally, Sophocles'⁴⁴ play tells the story of Herakles' apotheosis. Herakles' wife, Deianeira, whom Herakles took from Acheloios in an epic battle mentioned in the opening lines, is at their home waiting for his return from his labors, when she learns that he is on his way from Euboea. It was there that Herakles utterly ravaged the place and unjustly stole all its women. (Deianeira was originally told a different story from what actually transpired.) After Deianeira learns that Herakles has fallen in love with a young maiden from Euboea, named Iole,⁴⁵ she devises a plan to win back his love. However, her plan is based on the deceitful advice she received from the centaur Nessus in an earlier episode. (Nessus tried to rape Deianeira and Herakles shot him with an arrow.) As Nessus was dying midstream, he told Deianeira to take some of his blood, and that if Herakles ever fell for another woman, anoint something with it and give it to him and it would essentially break the spell—As we

⁴¹ Nancy Waggoner, *Early Greek Coins from the Collection of Jonathan P. Rosen*, Ancient Coins in North American Collections, 5 (New York: ANS, 1983), no. 765.

⁴² Charles Seltman, *Greek Coins: A History of Metallic Currency and Coinage down to the Fall of the Hellenistic Kingdoms* (London: Methuen, 1955), Plate I, no. 25. Now part of Gulbenkian collection. Jenkins, in cataloguing that collection, wrote, "The man-faced bull as Acheloos is well known in Greek art and not least in the coins (cf. Isler, Acheloos 80 ff.; Jenkins, The Coinage of Gela 165 ff). But this version of the bull with wings is not so usual and may not necessarily be reckoned as an Acheloos figure; the wings, here and on some Lykian coins hark back to the winged bulls of the older near eastern cultures, in particular Assyria and Achaemenid Persia. There, the man-faced bull is *not a water-god* but a shed or guardian deity, the god of waters being depicted in quite other ways. The specific mint of this type cannot be determined, it is certainly Ionian, however, and along with a number of other types, may, it has been suggested, be a coinage of Miletos (Seltman, GC p. 87 ff. Kraay, ACGC p. 25)." (G. Kenneth Jenkins and Mário de Castro Hipólito, *A catalogue of the Calouste Gulbenkian collection of Greek coins* Part II (Lisboa: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 1989), 81-82). However, he was relying on Isler's assessment of the Near Eastern predecessors to Acheloios, which we demonstrated in *ΠOTAMIKON* certainly had an aquatic dimension in many cases. For that matter, the inclusion in the coin design of a dolphin just above Acheloios indicates his watery nature.

⁴³ Dany, *Akarnanien in Hellenismus. Geschichte und Völkerrecht in Nordwestgriechenland*, 311ff.

⁴⁴ The fact that mercenaries and seer-healers found Acheloios particularly appealing—indeed, these figures formulated the original *mythos* of Acheloios—is the first clue in offering a new interpretation of the play. Those who have not studied Sophocles beyond an initial reading of the Theban Plays might be surprised to find out that he served as a general right beside Thucydides and even mighty Perikles (Plutarch, *Nicias* 15.2; Plutarch, *Pericles*, 8.8; Scholiast to Sophocles, *Electra* 831; Cicero, *De Officiis* 1.144; Strobæus, *Anthology* 3.17.18; Valerius Maximus, *Factorum ac Dictorum Memorabilium Libri IX*, 4.3 ext. 1; Pliny, *Natural History* 37.40; Scholiast to Aristides 485.28; Strabo, *Geography of Greece*, 638c; Justin, *Historiae Philippicae* 3.6.12; Aristodemus *Fr.* 104 F 1.15.4; Σ Hermogenes *Rhetores Graeci* 5.388; *Vita Sophoclis* 1; *The Suda* M 496; Aristophanes *Argumentum* I to Sophocles *Antigone*). This fact is important: no general in charge of a navy employed virtually anywhere in the Mediterranean in the mid 5th century B.C.E. would have been unfamiliar with the Acheloios tradition as it developed from earlier mercenary traditions. For that matter, Sophocles' knowledge of military matters reaches back further than his employment as a general—his own father appears to have owned slaves that operated as blacksmiths producing weapons and armor, and thus his family profited from the arms trade, so much so that some thought Sophocles' father was a blacksmith (*Life of Sophocles* 1, but he himself was not a craftsman as Aristoxenos (fr. 115 Wehrli) and Ister (Fr. 334 F 33) maintained. Cf. Blake Tyrell, "The Suda's Life of Sophocles (Sigma 815): Translation and Commentary with Sources," *Electronic Antiquity* 9.1 (Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, 2006), 103.) Sophocles also achieved notoriety for his piety, especially to Herakles and Asclepius. He constructed a shrine to Herakles the Revealer after the god appeared to him in a dream and helped find a stolen treasure, for instance. (Libanius, *Letters* 390.9; *Life of Socrates* 12). He also often praised Eros (cf. Sophocles, *Antigone* 781-805); indeed much of the *Trachiniae* is overseen by Kyprius. Asclepius, a Greek god of healing, has very clear Near Eastern roots. (Plutarch, *Moralia* 1103A; *Etymologicum Magnum* 256.6; Plutarch, *Numa* 4.8; *Life of Sophocles* 11; *IG II/III*² 1252-3). His connection to Asclepius indicates, beyond the obvious forthcoming evidence from the play, that Sophocles was well aware of the traditions of Archaic seer-healers and their roles as leading exponents of many of the Near Eastern religious traditions. (Cf., e.g., Burkert, *The Orientalizing Revolution*, 75-9). Indeed, Sophocles is referred to as one of the initiated. (Sophocles fr. 837 Radt (753 Nauck), Plutarch, *Moralia* 21 E.).

⁴⁵ An anonymous reader for the journal pointed out the similarity between this story and Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*.

will see, he left out some important details. Deianeira does this when the time comes, anointing a robe that is then delivered to Herakles, who was delayed by a crowd and the performance of sacrifices. As soon as the robe is put on, the fire from the sacrifice causes Herakles to sweat, which binds the now-activated cloak to his torso, and there begins the hundreds of very graphic lines recounting the tortuous, grueling death of Herakles. After begging for his son, Hyllos—or in fact anyone—to kill him, Herakles finally convinces Hyllos to carry him to Mt. Oeta and build a pyre and burn him. Hyllos does this, with help, and this pyre is depicted on the coin from Tarsos, which we will soon discuss.

III. IMPIETY TOWARD ACHELOIOS

Before we get to the coinage, we ought to investigate Acheloios' role in the play. Throughout the first half of the play, before Herakles is given the robe from Deianeira, there are repeated references to impiety relating to Acheloios and the rituals associated with him and queen Kypris, with whom Acheloios has very close affiliations.⁴⁶ This is evident right from the opening stanzas: Acheloios, identified with water itself, was a key figure in pre-nuptial lustratio rituals.⁴⁷

Sophocles, *Trachiniae*, 6-9:

ἦ τις πατὴρς μὲν ἐν δόμοισιν Οἰνέως
ναίουσ' ἔτ' ἐν Πλευρῶνι νυμφείων ὄκνον
ἄλγιστον ἔσχον, εἴ τις Αἰτωλὶς γυνή.
μνηστήρ γὰρ ἦν μοι ποταμός, Ἀχελῷον λέγω...

While I still lived in the house of my father Oeneus, in Pleuron, I suffered painful affliction in the matter of my wedding, if any Aetolian woman did. For I had as a wooer a river, I mean Achelous...⁴⁸

Opening with the marriage of Deianeira is a deliberate narrative strategy: Herakles is openly fighting Acheloios for his bride, and in doing so violating the will of the god instrumental in pre-nuptial ritual, thus a double, or reinforced violation occurs here. (Even the Greek words for husband and wife share a common origin with Acheloios.)⁴⁹ The underlying theme of the lustratio rituals is suggested also at *Trach.* 148 (παρθένου γυνή), in which παρθένο refers to a maiden, deriving its name from Parthenope, Acheloios' own daughter, and γυνή to a (married) woman. In fact, later we learn that Deianeira is a "bride without wedding" (*Trach.* 893ff), essentially indicating a breach of ritual propriety, and presumably this description would have carried an obvious link to Acheloios for the audience. In other words, Herakles' "marriage" to Deianeira was not proper, because he took her from Acheloios and thus the proper involvement of Acheloios in ritual could not occur.

⁴⁶ For an overview of Acheloios and Cyprus, from where Kypris-Aphrodite originates, see Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios*, *passim*, but especially chapter 2.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 63.

⁴⁸ Trans. Hugh Lloyd-Jones.

⁴⁹ For discussion of the etymology of 'husband' (ἀκοίτης) and 'wife' (ἄκοιτις) in relation to the Acheloios tradition, see Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios*, 94. For an example in ancient art of the early roots of man-faced bull iconography and lustratio rituals involving women, see Urs Winter, *Frau und Göttin: Exegetische und ikonographische Studien zum weiblichen Gottesbild im Alten Israel und in dessen Umwelt* (Tübingen, 1983), no. 74, which depicts two man-faced bulls surrounding a woman and holding (presumably) a pot of water over her head.

The physical location of the bulk of the play is also particularly revealing. In the play, Herakles was marching against Euboea (Εὐβοία),⁵⁰ which in Greek literally means “good ox”: the prefix εὖ, meaning “well” or “good,” is attached to a derivative of βούς, meaning “bull, ox, or cow.” This is of the utmost importance, and so far as I can determine, has gone unacknowledged in the literature. The choice of Euboea was not random, but deliberate on Sophocles’ part insofar as it adds another layer to the atrocities committed by Herakles. In my reading, Herakles’ transgressions in Euboea are transgressions against the ‘good ox.’ The Acheloios-Euboea link is strengthened by the fact that the earliest extant cultic representation of Acheloios in Greece proper comes from Oichalia in Euboea, dating to the second quarter of the fifth century B.C.E.⁵¹ And in the play, even the meadow in which Lichas tells the story of Herakles’ shameful activities in Euboea is one in which the “cows graze” (βουθερεῖ, *Trach.* 188ff). Thus, the physical context of the bulk of the play is situated within Euboea, which the audience would connect with Acheloios. Modern readers would presumably miss this connection because they are introduced to Acheloios largely through Deianeira’s description, which, as in other cases, is not entirely accurate (she sees Acheloios as a horrible monster). Granted, her fear of being wed to a shape-shifting deity that appears in various, terrifying forms, is certainly legitimate. But we must be cautious not to misinterpret the play by filtering Acheloios entirely through Deianeira’s perception.

Other references to “sins” against Acheloios are even more blatant. Indeed, Herakles is going to sacrifice an ox(!)⁵² on the shore of that sacred landscape (*Trach.* 237ff), repeated later for emphasis at *Trach.* 609 and *Trach.* 754ff. As Lichas tells us, Herakles has destroyed the land of these women (*Trach.* 240f: εὐχαῖς ὅθ’ ἤρει τῶνδ’ ἀνάστατον δορίχώραν γυναικῶν ὧν ὀρᾷς ἐν ὄμμασιν/ “Because of a vow, since he has conquered and devastated the land of these women whom you see with your own eyes”).⁵³ The connotation, to me, is something like “Herakles devastated and conquered the land of the good ox,” which again summons up the notion of Acheloios, who opened the play and is always operating at a sub-textual level as water itself. I say this because the land of these woman *is* the land of the “good ox.” Indeed, Herakles did not just destroy the place, he even stole the women from Euboea (*Trach.* 293ff), just as he stole Deianeira from Acheloios. He even killed the king (Eurytus) and stole his daughter.⁵⁴ This connection is emphasized when Lichas is not forthcoming with Iole’s name to Deianeira, instead insisting she is “one from Euboea!” (Εὐβοίς, *Trach.* 401). Sophocles, it seems, cleverly devised the original, false tale to add textual elements such as this, in which Iole is emphatically linked with the “good ox.” Thus, in an important sense, Herakles’ savagery violates those things sacred to Acheloios: the rituals associated with him, “his” daughters (παρθένου), and even himself, associated with the country in which these episodes take place.⁵⁵ This might also explain why Sophocles describes Acheloios as βούπρωρος in the opening stanzas, as opposed to something like βουγενῆ ἀνδρόπρωρα⁵⁶ or ταύρους ἀνθρώπων κεφαλὰς ἔχοντας⁵⁷ (a man-faced bull), which is his standard iconic representation. Later on in the play as Herakles begins to realize the function of

⁵⁰ *Trach.* 74.

⁵¹ M. M. Lee, “Acheloos Peplophoros. A lost statuette of a River God in Feminine Dress,” *Hesperia* 75, No. 3 (2006).

⁵² We will see below that this is an impious act as it relates to Kypris and Acheloios, at least according to my understanding of Empedokles.

⁵³ Trans. Hugh Lloyd Jones, *Women of Trachis*, 155.

⁵⁴ *Trach.* 360ff.

⁵⁵ It should be noted that Acheloios was not strictly linked to the river in Akarnania in Archaic times. See Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΙΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios*, 96, for references.

⁵⁶ Empedokles, Fr. 61, Aelian *Nat. anim.* XVI, 29.

⁵⁷ Berossus, *FGrHist* 680 F 1, fr. 12 Schnabel.

the deadly robe and what this means in terms of the oracles concerning his fate, he demands to be removed from the area: “let me not die *here!*” (*Trach.* 802). Ultimately, all of this evidence reinforces the importance of Sophocles’ choice of Euboea as the setting for desecration and thus the critical need for redemption, in which Acheloios plays an essential role.⁵⁸

Kypris and Eros

Queen Kypris, who also plays an important role in the play, further emphasizes these violations of the sacred. In fact, Kypris functions as an overseer of the entire *Trachiniae*. In *Trach.* 354f, for instance, Eros is identified as the cause of all the strife (Ἐρως δὲ νῦν μόνος θεῶν θέλξειεν αἰχμάσαι τάδε/ “and that it was Eros alone among the gods that bewitched him [Herakles] into this deed of arms”).⁵⁹ This is reinforced at *Trach.* 441: Ἐρωτι μὲν νῦν ὅστις ἀντανίσταται, πύκτης ὅπως ἐς χεῖρας, οὐ καλῶς φρονεῖ: οὗτος γὰρ ἄρχει καὶ θεῶν ὅπως θέλει / “Whoever stands up to Eros like a boxer is a fool, for he rules even the gods as he pleases.”⁶⁰ And at *Trach.* 489 we learn that it is Eros, agent (or force) of Kypris-Aphrodite, that vanquishes Herakles: “For he who in all other matters has excelled in might has been altogether vanquished by his passion (ἔρωτος) for this girl.” This becomes even more explicit when Sophocles refers to the Cypriot Queen directly at *Trach.* 497ff: μέγα τι σθένος ἡ Κύπρις ἐκφέρεται νίκας αἰεὶ/ “A mighty power is the Cyprian!”⁶¹ Indeed, Kypris is called the umpire of the battle between Herakles and Acheloios at *Trach.* 515: μόνα δ’ εὐλεκτρος ἐν μέσῳ Κύπρις ῥαβδονόμει ξυνοῦσα/ “and alone in the center the beautiful Cyprian was there to umpire in the contest.”⁶² Later in the play the mighty queen is reintroduced (*Trach.* 860): ἡ δ’ ἀμφίπολος Κύπρις ἀναυδος φανερά τῶνδ’ ἐφάνη πράκτωρ/ “And the Cyprian, silent in attendance, is revealed as the doer of these things.”⁶³ Thus the role of Kypris and Eros is clear and unambiguous: the overseer of the battle and its driving force.

It is critically important at this juncture to point out that Kypris and Acheloios share an intimate bond.⁶⁴ Aside from the archaeological evidence (early coinage from Paphos featuring Acheloios; a long history of androcephalic bulls on the island, etc.), we find interesting parallels in Empedokles, who has a direct link to the Acheloios tradition.⁶⁵ He discusses the Cyprian Queen in some fragments, and advocates against the killing of “sacred animals” (specifically ταύρων) while discussing the cult of Kypris:

Empedokles, ΚΑΘΑΡΜΟΙ, 118(128)

οὐδέ τις ἦν κείνοισιν Ἄρης θεὸς οὐδέ Κυδοιμός οὐδέ Ζεὺς Βασιλεὺς οὐδέ Κρόνος οὐδέ Ποσειδῶν, ἀλλὰ Κύπρις βασιλεία ... ταύρων δ’ (ἀκρίτοισι?) φόνους οὐ δεύετο βωμός, ἀλλὰ μύσος τοῦτ’ ἔσκεν ἐν ἀνθρώποισι μέγιστον, θυμὸν ἀπορραΐσαντας ἐέδμεναι ἡέα γυῖα.⁶⁶

⁵⁸ Contra G.M.A. Grube, *The Drama of Euripides* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1961), 5: “The gods are taken for granted in Sophoclean tragedy which centers upon human characters.”

⁵⁹ Trans. Hugh Lloyd Jones, *Women of Trachis*, 165.

⁶⁰ Cf. *Trach.* 465 (beauty destroyed her life)

⁶¹ Trans. Hugh Lloyd Jones, *Women of Trachis*, 179.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 181. Note that different words are used in the description, “Zeus the god of contests decided well,” in *Trach.* 26.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 209.

⁶⁴ One of the earliest representations of Acheloios on Greek coinage comes from Paphos, and there are clear iconographic similarities between the Cypriot coins and slightly later Italian types. For discussion, see Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios*, Chapter 5.

⁶⁵ For the link, see Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios*, 24-5.

⁶⁶ Fragments from Porphyry *abst.* 2.20 (1-8), 2.27 (8-10).

They did not have Ares as a god or Kydoimos, nor king Zeus nor Kronos nor Poseidon, but the queen Kypris. ... Their altar was not drenched by the (unspeakable?) slaughter of bulls, but this was the greatest defilement among men—to bereave of life and eat noble limbs.⁶⁷

According to my reading of the play, Sophocles must have been aware of these traditions, as were (presumably) the audience members. I say this because the employment of specific themes—Acheloios, Euboea, Kypris, and the sacrifice of bulls—serves a very clear purpose is establishing the parameters for understanding Herakles' violations of the sacred and, as we will soon see, his redemption. Incidentally, even the centaur Nessus, who plays a pivotal role in the poisoning of Herakles, is a reference to bulls, "centaur" coming from the Greek Κεντάυρου, meaning "like bull," and used by Sophocles in place of his name for added emphasis: Κεντάυρου (*Trach.* 831); Κένταυρος (*Trach.* 1162). As explained in our previous work, following Semerano, the word probably stems from Semitic *ken-* (as well as, such as) and *tora* (bull).⁶⁸ Indeed, there are many Cypriot "bull centaurs" and corresponding examples of Acheloios as a centaur in early Greek art.⁶⁹ In fact, Levy, in her analysis, refers to Nessus as "the double of Acheloös."⁷⁰

IV. DODONA, LOCRI, AND ASSIMILATION

The repeated references to Euboea and the Cypriot Queen are not the only links to Acheloios by any means. Another essential link is the connection to Dodona, which plays a pivotal role in the play, for the oracles of Dodona tell Herakles his fate. We learn from Ephorus that at Dodona nearly all patrons were instructed to make a sacrifice to Acheloios.⁷¹ As we will entertain throughout the remainder of this section, Herakles is becoming intermixed with Acheloios in the play, becoming in a sense the expiatory sacrifice necessary for his own apotheosis, Acheloios being (in my view, at least) the ultimate pre-Christian symbol of expiatory sacrifice. The first case in which Dodona is mentioned is *Trach.* 170ff, in which it is prophesized by the "doves" (oracles) of Dodona that Herakles will see an end to his suffering, possibly through death, after he'd been absent three years. The second reference comes at *Trach.* 1167ff; here Herakles himself recounts receiving the oracle from the Selli (another name for the priests of Dodona), concerning the end to his suffering—τὸ δ' ἦν ἄρ' οὐδὲν ἄλλο πλὴν θανεῖν ἐμέ. τοῖς γὰρ θανοῦσι μόχθος οὐ προσγίγνεται/ "But it meant no more than that I should die; for the dead do not have to labour."⁷² The link to Acheloios best explains why Sophocles uses the oracles from Dodona, as opposed to the more common Delphi. This explanation may have

⁶⁷ Trans. M.R. Wright, *Empedocles: The Extant Fragments* (London: Bristol Classic Press, 1981), 282.

⁶⁸ G.Semerano, *L'infinito. Un Equivoco Millenario. Le antiche civiltà del Vicino Oriente e le origini del pensiero Greco* (Milano: Mondadori, 2001), 14.

⁶⁹ H.P. Isler, *Acheloos: Eine Monographie* (Bern: Francke, 1970), no. 74-76 and no. 85. The man-faced bull quickly overshadowed the bull centaur iconography and became the standard representation for Acheloios in the Greek world.

⁷⁰ G. Rachel Levy, "The Oriental Origin of Herakles," *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 54, Part 1 (1934): 44.

⁷¹ Ephorus, *FgrH* 27= Macrobius, *Saturnalia*, v.18.6: τοῖς μὲν οὖν ἄλλοις ποταμοῖς οἱ πλησιόχωροι μόνον θύουσι, τὸν δὲ Ἀχελῶν μόνον ἅπαντας ἀνθρώπους συμβέβηκε τιμᾶν· (οὐ τοῖς κοινῶς ὀνόμασιν ἀντὶ τῶν ιδέων gloss.) τοῦ Ἀχελῶου τὴν ἰδίαν ἐπωνυμίαν ἐπὶ τὸ κοινὸν μεταφέροντας· τὸ μὲν γὰρ ὕδωρ ὅλως, ὅπερ ἐστὶ κοινὸν ὄνομα, ἀπὸ τῆς ἰδίας ἐκείνου προσηγορίας Ἀχελῶν καλοῦμεν· τῶν δὲ ἄλλων ὀνομάτων τὰ κοινὰ πολλάκις ἀντὶ τῶν ἰδίων ὀνομάζομεν, τοὺς μὲν Ἀθηναίους Ἑλλήνας, τοὺς δὲ Λακεδαιμονίους Πελοποννησίους ἀποκαλοῦντες. Τοῦτου δὲ ἀπορήματος οὐδὲν ἔχοντες αἰτιώτατον εἰπεῖν ἢ τοὺς ἐκ Δωδώνης χρησμούς· σχεδὸν γὰρ ἐφ' ἅπασιν αὐτοῖς προσάγειν ὁ θεὸς εἴωθεν Ἀχελῶφ θύειν· ὥστε πολλοὶ νομίζοντες οὐ τὸν ποταμὸν τὸν διὰ τῆς ἀκαρνανίας ρέοντα, ἀλλὰ τὸ σύνολον ὕδωρ Ἀχελῶν ὑπὸ τοῦ χρησμοῦ καλεῖσθαι, ἰδιοῦνται τὰς τοῦ θεοῦ προσηγορίας· σημείον δὲ· ὅτι πρὸς τὸ θεῖον ἀναφέροντες οὕτω λέγειν εἰώθαμεν· μάλιστα γὰρ τὸ ὕδωρ Ἀχελῶν προσαγορεύομεν ἐν τοῖς ὄρχοις, καὶ ἐν ταῖς εὐχαῖς καὶ ἐν ταῖς θυσίαις ἅπαρ πάντα περὶ τοὺς θεοὺς.

⁷² *Trach.* 1172f, Trans. Hugh Lloyd Jones, *Women of Trachis*, 239.

escaped notice in the extensive scholarship on Sophocles because commentators have been focused exclusively on Zeus.⁷³

Another essential, seemingly overlooked link to Acheloios is the mention of Herakles' screams heard from Locris to Euboea:

Trach. 786ff:

ἐσπᾶτο γὰρ πέδονδε καὶ μετάρσιος,
βοῶν, ἰύζων: ἀμφὶ δ' ἐκτύπουν πέτραι,
Λοκρῶν τ' ὄρειοι πρῶνες Εὐβοίας τ' ἄκραι.

For the pain dragged him downwards and upwards
shouting and screaming; and the rocks around resounded,
the mountain promontories of Locri and the Euboean peaks.

This is not the Locris near Delphi, in my opinion. This is a reference to Locri Epizephyrii (modern day Calabria), which is one of the most important cultic sites for Acheloios in the entire ancient world, and a substantial part of the section on Greek man-faced bulls found in *ΠOTAMIKON* was devoted to some archaeological discoveries there.⁷⁴ For instance, there were sixteen arulas featuring not just Acheloios, but Acheloios battling Herakles, uncovered at the site (Figure 2). These were in some cases used as the walls for tombs, indicating the psychopompic nature of Acheloios, which is occasionally exhibited on coins: at Panormos, for example, we see a man riding on the back of Acheloios Orethos (Figure 3).⁷⁵ Likewise, at Katane, a man with Selin-like features also holds the horns of Acheloios Amenanos.⁷⁶ These rituals evolved from earlier Nuragic Sardinian practices (among others) in which the deceased traveled to the afterlife, usually in a boat with bull protome attached.⁷⁷ Sophocles' use of Locri Epizephyrii would skillfully reinforce Acheloios' role as an agent in Herakles' apotheosis, akin to his general role as psychopomp, as exhibited in the arulas of Locri itself.

The notion of assimilation is paramount to understanding Acheloios' role in the apotheosis, beyond a mere role as an adversary for the hand of Deianeira. The most important indication of this comes from the following passage, a pivotal turning point in the text in which Herakles transitions from one who happily sacrifices one hundred cattle (the preceding line!) to sacrificial victim (*Trach.* 763-771):

⁷³ Cf. e.g., Tycho von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Die dramatische technik des Sophokles* (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1917), 89-164. Surprisingly, although Dodona is mentioned repeatedly in his treatment, Acheloios is barely mentioned, despite the fact that Tycho's father, Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff contributed to the text, and he argued, in *Der Glaube Der Hellenen*, that Acheloios was the original Hellenic god of all water who was displaced by the Carian Okeanos (Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Der Glaube Der Hellenen* (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1931), 219). Perhaps Ulrich's opinion on Acheloios as the original Hellenic god developed after his son Tycho published his commentary. See also Sir Richard Jebb, *Sophocles: The Plays and Fragments, with Critical Notes, Commentary, and Translation in English Prose. Part V: The Trachiniae* (Cambridge: UP, 1902); Bruce Heiden, "Trachiniae," in *Brill's Companion to Sophocles* (London: Brill, 2012), 129-148 (or any other contribution in that important resources, for that matter); Charles Segal, "The Oracles of Sophocles' 'Trachiniae': Convergence or Confusion?," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 101 (2000), 151-71, etc.

⁷⁴ Molinari and Sisci, *ΠOTAMIKON: Sinews of Acheloios*, 66-8.

⁷⁵ Cf. F. Imhoof-Blumer, "Fluß- und Meergötter auf griechischen und römischen Münzen. (Personifikationen der Gewässer)," *Pl.II*, no.12a.

⁷⁶ H.P. Isler, *Acheloos*, no. 345; C. Arnold-Biucchi, *The Randazzo Hoard 1980 and Sicilian Chronology in the Early Fifth Century B.C.* (New York: ANS, 1990), 22-24.

⁷⁷ Molinari and Sisci, *ΠOTAMIKON: Sinews of Acheloios*, 36-41.

καὶ πρῶτα μὲν δειλαιοὺς ἔλεφ' φρενί,
 κόσμῳ τε χαίρων καὶ στολῇ, κατηύχετο:
 ὅπως δὲ σεμνῶν ὀργίων ἐδαίετο
 φλόξ αἵματηρά κάπν' πείρας δρυός,
 ἰδρῶς ἀνήει χρωτί, καὶ προσπύσσεται
 πλευραῖσιν ἀρτίκολλος, ὥστε τέκτονος,
 χιτῶν ἅπαν κατ' ἄρθρον: ἦλθε δ' ὀστέων
 ἀδαγμὸς ἀντίσπαστος: εἶτα φοινίας
 ἐχθρᾶς ἐχίδνης ἰὸς ὧς ἐδαίνυτο.

At first, poor man, he spoke the prayer cheerfully, rejoicing in the fine attire. But when the resinous pine blazed up, *the sweat came up upon his body*, and the thing clung closely to his sides, as a carpenter's tunic might, at every joint; and a biting pain came, tearing at his bones; then a bloody poison like that of a hateful serpent fed upon him.⁷⁸

The key word here is ἰδρῶς (sweat), related of course to ὕδωρ (water, usually fresh water unless employing an epithet).⁷⁹ As was explained above, Acheloios is equated with water itself; indeed Sophocles is one of our sources for this (*Fr.* 4, quoted in full above). In the depiction of Herakles' demise, we should regard Acheloios as the active agent transforming Herakles into the sacrificial victim since it is the water, as sweat, that makes the cloak stick to Herakles and consume his flesh.⁸⁰ It is therefore the internal moisture, the ἵνας...Ἀχελωΐου, that binds the punishment to Herakles—a punishment for his many sins, especially those against Acheloios. Indeed, this notion of assimilation has been brought up in a similar fashion in Segal's brilliant essay: "The victor, a new sacrifice in a new robe (611-612), will roar (805) like the bulls he immolates; the devouring disease (*diaboros nosos*, 1084) turns the celebrant into the animal which is eaten after the sacrifice."⁸¹

As Segal indicated, the assimilation is further emphasized by this βρυχώμενον (bellowing) of Herakles, much like a sacrificial bull. In Sophocles' *Ajax* (322) βρυχώμενον is used precisely this way: ταῦρος ὧς βρυχώμενος. Segal also suggests that the manner in which Herakles woos Iole is animalistic. The secret bed (*Trach.* 360: κρύφιον ὡς ἔχοι λέχος) relates to the raw, sexual nature of Herakles' desire for Iole, and his pursuit of her is more savage than Acheloios' of Deianeira.⁸² After all, Acheloios approached Deianeira's father multiple times (*Trach.* 10ff), whereas Herakles killed Iole's father after the first attempt (*Trach.* 360ff). For Segal, Herakles, despite his laborious purification of savagery from the world, is reverting to savagery himself: "This figure is not the 'hero-god,' as Pindar calls him (*Nem.* 3.22) or the 'divine man' of the Stoics, but the hero-beast."⁸³ I'm tempted to go one step further than Segal, however, and claim Herakles is all three: man, beast, and god, with man and beast purged on the pyre.

⁷⁸ Translation Hugh Lloyd Jones, *Women of Trachis*, 201-3.

⁷⁹ Cf. Richard Cunliffe, *A Lexicon of the Homeric Dialectic*, 185, following LSJ's initial observation.

⁸⁰ Charles Segal, *Tragedy and Civilization: An Interpretation of Sophocles* (Norman, Oklahoma: Oklahoma UP, 1999), 67: "But here too the ritual backfires. Instead of dispelling that impurity, it intensifies it. Instead of desacralizing Heracles, it makes him *sacer*—as the victim, not the celebrant."

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 69.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 63.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 61

In any case, a further note on assimilation is the role of the πέπλον (the robe Deianeira gives Herakles), which can refer to any piece of cloth including those draped over the deceased, but in some cases is used specifically for women. This is how it appears on the earliest cultic statue of Acheloios in Greece proper, Acheloios Peplophoros.⁸⁴ In fact, that artifact comes from Euboea. Taylor thinks this statue indicates the emasculation suffered by Acheloios when Herakles snatched his horn.⁸⁵ Likewise, Sophocles appears to be playing on that same theme: Herakles is being emasculated for his impiety—rather than getting Iole, the object of his sexual desire, he will suffer a horrible, painful death. Indeed, when Herakles was a slave of Omphale he was forced to dress (and act) as a woman,⁸⁶ which, when coupled with the example in cult, is another indication that Sophocles is alluding to assimilation between Herakles and Acheloios. In fact, at one point Herakles is described as a weeping girl (*Trach.* 1071), and Herakles' priest at Kos wore women's clothes. As we'll discuss later, one early scholar connects the Tarsian Sandan to Herakles via the "Sandyx," the dress worn by Herakles in service to Omphale. We should also mention in this general context an Etruscan mirror dating to the mid fourth century that features Herakles battling Acheloios, labeled AXΛAE and HEPAKΛE.⁸⁷ On this piece Acheloios is clearly depicted with a feminine face (no beard) and long, flowing hair, so the phenomenon of a feminine Acheloios was not isolated to Greece proper and the eastern colonies.

The roots of the notion of Herakles' assimilation with Acheloios run very deep, stemming from his Near Eastern predecessors. In Mesopotamian traditions the winged man-faced bulls that stood on either side of an entranceway, or flanking a throne, served as apotropaic devices.⁸⁸ Annus suggested that these winged man-faced bulls often represented the king's vanquished enemies,⁸⁹ which in *IIOTAMIKON* we related to the aforementioned Greek mercenary tradition under Psammetticus I (those figures that served as exponents of the man-faced bull tradition).⁹⁰ There is also some indication of this assimilation among the Nuragic Sardinians, often depicted wearing horned helmets, and later Italic traditions that were influenced by them.⁹¹ In fact, assimilation between man and god is reflected in the earlier Cypriot traditions that were influential in the western Mediterranean, among Sardinians, Italians, and Sicilians.⁹² For instance, there are artifacts featuring Cypro-Phoenician priests wearing masks of androcephalic bulls, and also rituals in which priests shouted "I am Asallúhi!" (Asallúhi being Acheloios' closest Near Eastern predecessor).⁹³ Another example, contemporaneous with Sophocles, is Euthymos of Locri (Epizephyrii), who won three Olympic boxing titles in the fifth century B.C.E.

⁸⁴ Lee, "Acheloos Peplophoros. A lost statuette of a River God in Feminine Dress," 319

⁸⁵ Taylor, "River Raptures: Containment and Control of Water in Greek and Roman Constructions of Identity," 36.

⁸⁶ Taylor, "River Raptures: Containment and Control of Water in Greek and Roman Constructions of Identity," 36. See also Nicole Lorax, *The Experiences of Tiresias: The Feminine and the Greek Man*, trans. P. Wissing (Princeton: UP, 1995), 116-39; Monica S. Cyrino, "Heroes in D[u]ress: Transvestism and Power in Myths of Herakles and Achilles," *Arethusa* 31 (1997), 207-41; Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones, "Herakles Re-dressed: Gender, Clothing, and the Construction of a Greek Hero," in *Herakles and Hercules: Exploring a Greco-Roman Divinity*, ed. Louis Rawlings and Hugh Bowden (Swansea, 2005), 51-69.

⁸⁷ Isler, "Acheloos," *LIMC*, 26, 47, no. 230.

⁸⁸ Molinari and Sisci, *IIOTAMIKON: Sinews of Acheloios*, 5-15. Man-faced bulls represented various deities in Mesopotamian cultures, though often times the characteristics would overlap. In virtually every case discussed through the cited pages, the deity served an apotropaic function.

⁸⁹ A. Annus, *The God Ninurta: in the Mythology and Royal Ideology of Ancient Mesopotamia* (Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2002), 117.

⁹⁰ Molinari and Sisci, *IIOTAMIKON: Sinews of Acheloios*, 26-8.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 44-5, especially note 156. They also had bull head-shaped entrances to their various shrines, which indicates a liminal passage in which the patron assimilates with the god.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 14.

He was actually depicted there as a man-faced bull on some votive tablets dating to the fourth century, assimilating with Acheloios, in our interpretation, to become Acheloios Kaikinos Euthymos.⁹⁴ As Taylor puts it generally, “The crux of deification by water is not, perhaps, that the sacrificial victim, or the river, achieves divinity. The crux is that the body of water becomes assimilated to some kind of a sacrificial victim, which it seizes, purifies, and dissolves into itself.”⁹⁵

V. HERAKLES’ PUTRID PURIFICATION

There is no ambiguity in the play that Herakles is being punished for his sins, which the careful reader will note are violations against Acheloios, and this punishment is brought about in part by an agent of Acheloios, the bull-like Nessus. Since Acheloios is the governing source of all water, Nessus, as a watery figure attempting to rape Deianeira in a stream, falls under the domain of Acheloios.⁹⁶ It is worthwhile to take the time to appreciate Sophocles’ language concerning Herakles’ “punishment,” because it drives home the gravity of his violations. Sophocles paints a picture of βαρεῖαν ξυμφορὰν (dire calamity),⁹⁷ witnessed first-hand by his own son, Hyllos. At first it is described as a “biting pain...tearing at his bones”...as though “a hateful serpent fed upon him” (*Trach.* 768ff). The mention of a serpent is surely another “hidden” reference to Acheloios, who in the beginning of the play (and, indeed, in ancient vase paintings)⁹⁸ is described as a serpent (here ἐχίδνης, but cf. *Trach.* 12, δράκων). Again, Herakles’ pain is such that he throws himself to the ground and screams so loud that it can be heard in the land of the “good ox” and the area where he is most vehemently worshipped as a liminal figure, Locri (*Trach.* 788ff), which to me represents a rather clear vindication of Acheloios. Indeed, the pain at some points is referred to as ἄσπετόν θέαμα (a sight unspeakable, *Trach.* 961), as though all other vivid descriptions fall short of the stark reality of the event. Nonetheless, there are plenty of other well-chosen words: it is ὠμόφρονος (savage, *Trach.* 974);⁹⁹ ἀγρία νόσος (a cruel plague, *Trach.* 1030); ἄτης σπασμὸς ἀρτίως (spasms of torture, *Trach.* 1083);¹⁰⁰ μίαν βρύκει (the putrid disease consumes him, *Trach.* 987). At one point, the pain is so bad Herakles begs to be decapitated:

Trach. 1014ff:

ἐέ,
οὐδ’ ἀπαράξαι <μου> κρᾶτα βία θέλει
μολὼν τοῦ στυγεροῦ; φεῦ φεῦ.

Ah, ah! Will no one come and lop off my head,
ending the misery of my life? Ah, ah!

Such is the state of Herakles as his fate begins to unfold. To an Acheloios enthusiast, it reads like pure poetic justice. Of all his trials and tribulations (he mentions his labors, giants, monsters, etc.) nothing comes close

⁹⁴ Ibid., 87-8, 96.

⁹⁵ Taylor, “River Raptures: Containment and Control of Water in Greek and Roman Constructions of Identity,” 34.

⁹⁶ In her essay, Levy refers to Nessus as Acheloios’ “double.” See Levy, “The Oriental Origin of Herakles,” 44.

⁹⁷ Trans. Hugh Lloyd Jones.

⁹⁸ British Museum 1971, 1101.1; Isler, “Acheloos,” LIMC, no. 245.

⁹⁹ Cf. with Segal’s treatment of this theme: Segal, *Tragedy and Civilization: An Interpretation of Sophocles*, 71-2.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. LSJ re ἄτη, related to Ἄτη, “personified, the goddess of mischief, author of *rash actions*,” etc. (emphasis added). This is a well-chosen word in terms of Herakles’ behavior.

to this episode and the horrible δειλαία (evil, wretched thing)¹⁰¹ that consumes him. His various labors are repeated slightly later, cf. *Trach.* 1089-1111, and again as paling in comparison to the present episode.

This idea of a wretched disease that will bring about redemption also has early roots, stemming (so far as Dr. Sisci and I could trace it) to the binary nature of early man-faced bulls. Most notably, there are two figures, the Lamassu and Sēdu (both probably depicted as winged man-faced bulls), traditionally representing a good protective deity and a demon of disease, respectively.¹⁰² However, in at least one extant ritual text, both are labeled as agents of good:¹⁰³ “you shall write ‘who repels the evil constables’ and on his left ‘who causes to enter the sēdu of good and the lamassu of good’—you shall make”... “To block the entry of the enemy in someone’s house.”¹⁰⁴ This notion of pollution and consecration has been explored in depth in terms of the Greek world by Dougherty: “The Greeks conceptualize defilement as the inversion of a positive religious value; it still carries religious force. Blood and dust can bring pollution, but they can also consecrate.”¹⁰⁵ Sophocles apparently plays on this general theme of ambiguity from the very first lines (*Trach.* 1-3):

λόγος μὲν ἐστ’ ἀρχαῖος ἀνθρώπων φανείς,
ὥς οὐκ ἂν αἰδῶν’ ἐκμάθοις βροτῶν, πρὶν ἂν
θάνη τις, οὗτ’ εἰ χρηστὸς οὗτ’ εἴ τῳ κακός

There is an ancient saying among men, once revealed to them, that you cannot understand a man’s life before he is dead, so as to know whether he has a good or a bad one.¹⁰⁶

That is to say, the ambiguity surrounding consecration and desecration, including the use of φαρμακεὺς to refer to Nessus,¹⁰⁷ is an important hermeneutical layer in the same manner as the initial moral ambiguity, as is the ambiguity surrounding Deianeira’s mistake (i.e. giving the robe to Herakles). Was it truly a mistake? She did not intend for Herakles to be tortured, but if it was necessary for his apotheosis, then in the end we know it was good. Thus, it is not until the end of the play—the final scenes of Herakles’ life before becoming a god—that we come to truly understand the necessity of his tortuous final hours in bringing about his apotheosis. In other words, it is through the torture that Herakles can be redeemed, and we the audience can make sense of the whole business. Ultimately, Herakles is purified through the vindication of Acheloios.

Herakles’ “Death”

Recapping the end of the play is the perfect segue into the following discussion of some important numismatic considerations: Herakles’ death comes about after his realization of the true meaning of the Selli of Dodona’s prophecy that his labor would end. As Herakles realizes, it means he will die: “But it meant no more than that I should die; for the dead do not have labour.”¹⁰⁸ Starting at

¹⁰¹ *Trach.* 1027.

¹⁰² Jeremy Black and Anthony Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia: An Illustrated Dictionary* (Texas: UP, 2011), 115.

¹⁰³ For discussion, see Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios*, 12.

¹⁰⁴ F.A.M. Wiggerman, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 11 (lines 122-3).

¹⁰⁵ C. Dougherty, “It’s Murder to Found A Colony,” *Cultural Poetics in Archaic Greece: Cult, Performance, Politics*, edited by C. Dougherty and Leslie Kurke (New York, 1993), 186.

¹⁰⁶ Trans. Hugh Lloyd Jones.

¹⁰⁷ *Trach.* 1140; Cf. Segal, *Tragedy and Civilization: An Interpretation of Sophocles*, 72.

¹⁰⁸ *Trach.* 1072f.

Trach. 1195ff Herakles instructs Hyllos to bring his body to Mt. Oeta, build a pyre, and place him atop it. Hyllos agrees, save for lighting the actual fire, and verbally reinforces the notion that Acheloios and Nessus (being of Acheloios) are the cause: ἀλαστόρων (“of avenging deities,” note the plural, *Trach.* 1235). If Sophocles meant only Nessus, the target of Herakles’ arrow, he would have used the genitive singular.

VI. NUMISMATIC EVIDENCE

Although the labors of Herakles have been depicted on coins, particularly the beautiful Roman Egyptian series of Antoninus Pius,¹⁰⁹ this episode, the culmination of his life and his transition into divinity, appears only at Tarsos, and there with some ambiguity. Recognition of this reverse type as representing Herakles (or Herakles-Sandan) on the funeral pyre is longstanding. Hill¹¹⁰ made this identification in cataloguing the British Museum Collection and Ramsay commented on it in his famous study of St. Paul (who hailed from Tarsos).¹¹¹ Likewise, Levy, in her important study of Herakles’ eastern origins, makes references to the same coin.¹¹² What none of these earlier studies observed, however, was that the figure under Herakles on some rare varieties is a (winged) man-faced bull—Acheloios. Instead, all the earlier accounts associate the “creature” with the Sandan tradition exclusively, since Sandan is often depicted above a horned lion (cf. e.g., SNG France 1307-1343, and 1433-4, where one notices the figure beneath Herakles-Sandan is anything but a winged man-faced bull: often a winged, horned creature, so e.g., Figure 7,¹¹³ but many times the figure is unidentifiable, so e.g., Figure 8.)¹¹⁴ In writing *ΠΙΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ*, Dr. Sisci and I discovered the peculiar Acheloios variety of this bronze “Burning Sandas” type from Tarsos (Figure 4a).¹¹⁵ There are eight extant specimens that feature Acheloios as a winged man-faced bull, with two distinct varieties differentiated by the field marks. I have personally examined three. Variety one (cf. Figure 4a-4h), which I date earliest due in part to the quality of the die engravings, has ⚡ over ⚡ in field to left. Variety two (Figure 5a & 5b) features ⚡ over ⚡ in field to left. Supporting the attribution of variety two to a later date is a transitional piece, Figure 6, which features ⚡ over ⚡ in field to left, but the figure is clearly not a winged man-faced bull; it is not androcephalic, but perhaps bovine. I therefore date all subsequent non-Acheloios types after this transitional piece. The problem with the account in *ΠΙΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ* is that it did not properly address the significance of this issue in relation to the actual story of Herakles’ apotheosis, and moreover listed the wrong local river: not “Acheloios Kalykadnos,” but “Acheloios Kydnos,” presumably.¹¹⁶

Tarsos, of course, was allegedly founded by Herakles, as we learn from Dio Chrysostom, and they honored him every year by lighting a pyre with his effigy: “If, I ask you, your own founder,

¹⁰⁹ Cf. e.g., K. Emmett, *Alexandrian Coins* (Lodi, 2001), no. 1555.4 (Nemean Lion), no. 1545.5 (Lernaean Hydra), no. 1547.4 (Cerynean Hind), no. 1543.6 (Stymphalian Birds), no. 1550.6 (Cretan Bull), no. 1553.6 (Mares of Diomedes), no. 1540.5 (Golden Girdle of Hippolyte), no. 1542.4 (Cattle of Geryon), no. 1554.10 (Apples of Hesperides), no. 1557.5 (Capture of Kerberos).

¹¹⁰ G. F. Hill, *British Museum Cat. of Greek Coins: Lycaonia, Isauria, and Cilicia* (London, 1900), lxxxvi.

¹¹¹ W. M. Ramsay, *The Cities of St. Paul* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1907), 148.

¹¹² G. Rachel Levy, “The Oriental Origin of Herakles,” *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 54, Part 1 (1934), 40-53, but especially 51-2.

¹¹³ CNG eAuction 261, lot 126. Special thanks to Ed Snible for the SNG France references.

¹¹⁴ CNG eAuction 354, lot 199.

¹¹⁵ Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΙΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios*, 289. Catalog reference: MSP I, 501 (CNG, Triton VII, 329)= SNG Levante 947 (this coin)

¹¹⁶ This might be a unique instance in which a local embodiment is not intended.

Herakles, should visit you (attracted, let us say, by a funeral pyre such as you construct with special magnificence in his honour)...¹¹⁷ Moreover, there is relatively early evidence for a conflation between Herakles and Sandan; Levy provided the sources in her work, but they are worth repeating. For instance, Syncellus, a ninth-century Byzantine Scholar, in his *Chronographia*, mentions: Ἡρακλέα τινές φασιν ἐν Φοινίκῃ γνωρίζεσαι (Δι)σάνδαν ἐπιλεγόμενον, ὡς καὶ μέχρι νῦν ὑπὸ Καππαδοκίων καὶ Κιλικίων.¹¹⁸ An even earlier scholar, Nonnus, makes the Herakles-Sandan connection without the mistaken (Δι) addition: ὅθεν Κιλικίων ἐνὶ γαίῃ Σάνδης Ἡρακλῆς κυκλήσκειται.¹¹⁹ One of the more interesting commentaries, as mentioned above, comes from Lydus, a sixth-century Byzantine antiquarian, who connects the name Sandan to Herakles' robe, the "Sandyx" he wore when enslaved by Omphale.¹²⁰ This is an interesting idea, especially since the πέπλον is an essential part of Herakles' apotheosis, and, indeed, the notion of the emasculation of both Herakles and Acheloios plays an important part in their shared *mythos*. (As mentioned above, even the priest of Herakles at Kos had to wear a woman's robe.)¹²¹

The final piece of literary evidence offered by Levy is most interesting. She quotes Berossus, a third-century Babylonian priest, as also equating the two: Σάνδην δὲ τὸν Ἡρακλέα.¹²² Moreover, since the ideogram for Marduk is used to translate Sandan,¹²³ this passage confirms the Marduk-Sandan-Herakles link.¹²⁴ What we can presently add to this chain of scholarship is the following: Berossus¹²⁵ claimed that images of ταύρους ἀνθρώπων κεφαλὰς ἔχοντας (bulls with human faces) "were set up (ἀνακεῖσθαι) in the temple of Βῆλος (Marduk)."¹²⁶ This fact, then, confirms that man-faced bull iconography would have been perfectly natural for Marduk (and probably Sandan, as well). But this should not be construed to mean that the man-faced bull beneath Herakles-Sandan is something other than Acheloios (especially for the Greek observer). What it does confirm, rather, is that man-faced bull iconography is in no way incompatible with Sandan because his oriental equivalent, Marduk, was associated with the iconography in Babylon. Indeed, according to the Weidener god list, Asallúhi, arguably the closest relative to Acheloios, was listed right after Marduk.¹²⁷

In this regard another coin should be pointed out, from nearby Mallos, in which we find a winged, two-faced man holding a solar disc above the forepart of Acheloios (Figure 9). This might be Herakles-Marduk: Levy suggests a double bust in the Vatican¹²⁸ might represent the two aspects of Herakles (youthful and "dying-god") and points out that Marduk is featured as two-faced on Akkadian seals.¹²⁹ Indeed, the solar disc would make terrific sense in this scenario insofar as Herakles'

¹¹⁷ Dio Chrysostom, *Discourses* 33.47. See also Dio Chrysostom, *Discourses* 33.1; 33.45.

¹¹⁸ Transcription of Syncellus, *Chronographia*, I, p. 290 (via Frazer, *Adonis, Attis, Osiris: Studies in the History of Oriental Religion* Volume I (London: MacMillan, 1990), 125, no. 3.)

¹¹⁹ Nonnus, *Dionysiaca*, XXXIV, 19. (per Levy)

¹²⁰ ταύτῃ καὶ Σάνδων Ἡρακλῆς ἀνηνέχθη, Lydus, *de Magistr. Roman.* III, 64. (per Levy)

¹²¹ Plutarch, *Quaest. Gr.* LVIII. (per Levy)

¹²² Berossus, *Fragm.* p. 51 (Richter). (per Levy)

¹²³ *KUB.* IX, 31, ii, 22; I, 36 (= HT. I, I, 29); Albrecht Götze, *Kulturgeschichte des Alten Orients*, III, I: *Kleinasien* (Munich, 1933), 127. (per Levy)

¹²⁴ Levy, "The Oriental Origin of Herakles," 52.

¹²⁵ *FGrHist* 680 F 1, fr. 12 Schnabel.

¹²⁶ For discussion in relation to Tiamat and the *Enūma Eliš*, from which the Greek tale stems, see D'Alessio, "Textual Fluctuations and Cosmic Streams," 26.

¹²⁷ Egbert Von Weiher, "SpTU 3, 108," *CDLI* P348712 (1988), transliterating a Hellenistic period cuneiform tablet from Uruk.

¹²⁸ E.Q. Visconti, *Musée Pie-Clémentin* (Milan, 1821), vi. 100, 102, pl. 13, 2.

¹²⁹ Levy, "The Oriental Origin of Herakles," 44.

solar dimension is seemingly related to the Marduk tradition in which the character represents the “imprisoned sun,” released when Ninurta shoots the bird-god Zu.¹³⁰ For that matter, the reverse of the coin features a bird, though of course it could have no relation. Another type, also from Mallos, features the head of the janiform figure on obverse and forepart of Acheloios on the reverse.¹³¹

In any event, archaeological attempts to find the pyre itself have failed,¹³² though they have uncovered some enlightening artifacts: terracotta plaques featuring pyramidal “monuments” with Sandan, similar to the coins. Originally Goldman differentiated the structures appearing on the coins and plaques, but later argued both show the pyre.¹³³ These plaques have been interpreted as cheap offerings at the shrine (or pyre) of Sandan-Herakles. According to Goldman, all of the plaques show a horned lion, though he acknowledges that none are complete. On the same hill where archaeologists found these plaques, which is presumably the same hill housing the original pyre, archaeologists found terracotta figurines of Hellenic Herakles, with no semblance of Sandan in the iconography and no objects relating to Sandan in the group.¹³⁴ This indicates that there was distinct worship of Hellenic Herakles at Tarsos.¹³⁵ Since the Bronze Age, a particular god would have many different forms within the same city, which is why distinct forms of Sandan and Herakles could be found here.¹³⁶ So the idea that a distinctly Hellenic Herakles might be worshipped in one ritual context right alongside Herakles-Sandan is perfectly normal, for Tarsos, at least. The same must hold true for Acheloios and the theriomorphic creatures appearing on later varieties.

Ultimately, all this evidence suggests that the change in iconography is rather commonplace, since the three figures—Marduk, Sandan, and Herakles—often overlapped in cult, and the same can be assumed for their respective iconographies. But this analysis leaves two unanswered questions. First—Who is the horned lion, or the other mixanthropic creature, depicted below Herakles-Sandan¹³⁷ on the other varieties?¹³⁸ Should we equate it with Acheloios? That would be a mistake, in my opinion. There is no evidence of Acheloios represented as a horned, winged lion. There is, however, plenty of evidence of earlier figures that influenced the iconography of Sandan from the region, specifically Teshub and his earlier counterpart Adad (both being depicted standing atop bulls or lions, or even a “dragon lion,” but none are androcephalic).¹³⁹ Therefore, the horned lion (or similar theriomorphic

¹³⁰ Ibid., 45, for discussion.

¹³¹ SNG Levante 137.

¹³² Hetty Goldman, “The Sandon Monument of Tarsus,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 60, 4 (1940): 544.). Goldman believes the creature below “Sandan” is always a horned lion, comparing it to other representations in earlier oriental art (Goldman, “The Sandon Monument of Tarsus,” 546, 550; citing Heuzey, *Les Origines orientales de l’art*, 239).

¹³³ Cf. Hetty Goldman, “Excavations at Gözlü Kule, Tarsus, 1936,” *AJA* 41 (1937), 274-276. On later observations Goldman claims the plaques and the coins do show the same structure—a pyre in both cases. See H. Goldman, “Sandon and Herakles,” *Hesperia Supplements* 8, Commemorative Studies in Honor of Theodore Leslie Shear (1949): 164.

¹³⁴ Goldman, “The Sandon Monument of Tarsus,” 545; Hetty Goldman, “Excavations at Gözlü Kule, Tarsus, 1938,” *AJA* 44 (1940): 72, Figure 22; Hetty Goldman, “Preliminary Expedition to Cilicia, 1934 and Excavations at Gözlü Kule, Tarsus, 1935,” *AJA* 39 (1935): 529f.

¹³⁵ Phoenician Melcarth was also burned in a pyre each year. Goldman, “The Sandon Monument of Tarsus,” 545; Goldman, “Excavations at Gözlü Kule, Tarsus, 1938,” 72.

¹³⁶ For early Bronze Age conflations, in which local variations of some gods occurred even in the same city, see Beatrice Teissier, *Egyptian Iconography on Syro-Palestinian Cylinder Seals of the Middle Bronze Age*, Orbis biblicus et orientalis 11 (Fribourg: University Press, 1996), 44. The same is true of the Greek world.

¹³⁷ I would not separate the two, despite the aforementioned distinct worship of Hellenic Herakles.

¹³⁸ For examples without the pyre, cf. e.g., SNG France 1270-1276, 1295-1306, and 1344-1353.

¹³⁹ For the conflation of Sandan and Teshub quite generally, see A.R.W. Green, *The Storm-god in the Ancient Near East* (Eisenbrauns, 2003), 170. For the iconography of Adad, see D. Schwemer, “The storm-gods of the ancient Near East: summary, synthesis, recent studies, part II,” *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions* 8 (2008): 1-44. For an example of Teshub, see E. Larouche, “Le dieu anatolien Sarruma,” *Syria* 40 (1963): 262f.

creature) represents the creature often depicted beneath Sandan's other oriental predecessor Teshub, but so far as I can determine, carries no decipherable meaning concerning the Hellenic Herakles' myth. To the Greek observer living in Tarsos, the difference would be noticeable, just as the "native" inhabitant of Tarsos would not confuse the statues of Hellenic Herakles for Sandan.

The other question still remaining is: How do we know the reverse featuring a man-faced bull alludes to the Hellenic myth? I think the answer lies in the original artist's intent. Let's consider one final piece of evidence—the eagle atop the pyre on the coin, a numismatic device seemingly reflecting Sophocles' ominous final lines of the play, *κοῦδὲν τούτων ὅ τι μὴ Ζεύς* / "and none of these things is not Zeus!"¹⁴⁰ Recall, for instance, that Herakles does not vanquish Acheloios by his own might in the beginning of the play. Quite the contrary—we learn from Deianeira at *Trach.* 26, *τέλος δ' ἔθηκε Ζεὺς ἄγώνιος καλῶς, εἰ δὴ καλῶς* / "But in the end Zeus the god of contests decided well, if it was well."¹⁴¹ Thus it is Zeus' intervention at the outset that initiates the process of Herakles' apotheosis through the first "profane" act against Acheloios. And Herakles' ultimate consecration through the desecration of Acheloios positions Acheloios as the expiatory sacrifice needed for the apotheosis, which occurs via assimilation. Thus Sophocles ties all the loose ends together with his final line, driving home the notion that Acheloios operates as an agent of Zeus, just like at Dodona—and, indeed, a sacrifice to Acheloios will be made! This explanation ties the coin iconography together, makes sense of the confusing final lines of the play that seemingly emerge from nowhere, and positions Acheloios in his historical role as expiatory sacrifice.¹⁴² Moreover, this final piece of evidence suggests that the die designer was well aware of Sophocles' play, incorporating all the essential elements into a reverse design in which Acheloios and Herakles are sacrificed on the pyre together. And why shouldn't the designer be aware of this myth?¹⁴³ For the people of Tarsos celebrated Herakles' apotheosis every year.

In the final analysis, then, I suggest the following scenario: When the Acheloios varieties were struck, probably in the second quarter of the second century B.C.E., the dies were carefully carved with a particular emphasis on the myth's Hellenic version,¹⁴⁴ in which Acheloios is clearly an essential component. It is still Herakles-Sandan over Acheloios, judging from the double axe he holds. But the iconography takes on a more native (oriental) flavor, hence the winged, horned lion or other ambiguous creature on later varieties. Dio tells us that Tarsos was particularly well administered in the past, and it wasn't until his time, in the second half of the first century C.E., that public affairs were quite messy and the people of Tarsos divided into the *ἐκκλησιασταί* and the *πολίται*.¹⁴⁵ So I think these first few series (Acheloios and non-Acheloios) exhibit differentiation because of a differentiated populous of occidental and oriental cultures and a minting authority that was sensitive to the competing myths in such a population. And as we know from the Hellenic Herakles figures, it

¹⁴⁰ *Trach.* 1278 (Trans. Hugh Lloyd Jones).

¹⁴¹ Trans. Hugh Lloyd-Jones.

¹⁴² It was Dr. Rabun Taylor who first pointed out, in a private correspondence, that the iconic image of Acheloios "swimming" was actually him kneeling in assent to being sacrificed. See Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΙΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios*, 13, not 195.

¹⁴³ Later dies not featuring Acheloios presumably copied the original motif.

¹⁴⁴ Of course, Greek man-faced bull iconography stems from earlier Near Eastern versions, but by this late date the iconography was thoroughly Greek, especially when accompanying Herakles.

¹⁴⁵ Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 34, 21ff. For discussion, see T. Callander, "The Tarsian Orations of Dio Chrysostom," *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 24 (1904), 65f.

would be perfectly acceptable to highlight one myth over another depending on the circumstances—numismatics being no exception.

VII. CONCLUSION

This essay serves a few purposes. On the one hand, it should be clear that Acheloios is of the utmost importance in understanding the *Trachiniae*, yet he has gone largely overlooked. He is there at the outset to battle Herakles, and throughout the play we are constantly reminded of his underlying presence and the urgent call for Herakles' redemption. In the pivotal shift of the play, in which Herakles transitions from ritual officiate to sacrificial victim, it is Acheloios, assimilated with Herakles and emerging through Herakles' own sweat, that orchestrates the process of purification through defilement. Thus the *Trachiniae*, in an important sense, is also the story of the vindication of Acheloios, which is inseparable from Herakles' apotheosis; this is an important reason why the two are often paired together in art. Furthermore, this essay provides us with a new account of two particular varieties of bronze coinage from Tarsos by demonstrating how the iconography fits nicely with our reading of the play and the evidence we have about the city. The employment of Acheloios iconography is indeed a reference to Herakles' "rebirth,"¹⁴⁶ but now our understanding of what that entails is much richer: The coins feature Herakles-Sandan on his funeral pyre. Beneath him is Acheloios, who operates as an essential, underlying agent in the story of his apotheosis.

¹⁴⁶ Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΙΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios*, 289.



Figure 1: Forepart of Acheloios Gelas as a man-faced bull, Gela, Sicily, c. 490 B.C.E.¹⁴⁷

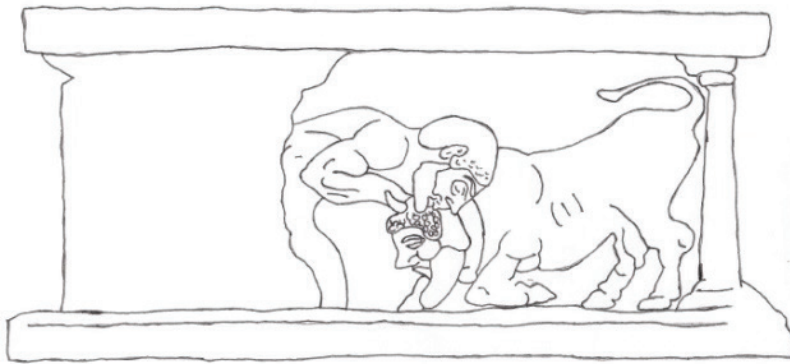


Figure 2: Arula from Locri, mid 6th century B.C.E.¹⁴⁸



Figure 3: Litra of Panormos featuring Acheloios Orethos acting as a psychopomp.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁷ Private collection. Photo courtesy of CNG.

¹⁴⁸ Line drawing from Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios*, Figure 70.

¹⁴⁹ Hunter, Plate 24, 6=Jenkins *Punic*, Plate 2, Y.



Figure 4a: Bronze Unit from Tarsos featuring Herakles over Acheloios¹⁵⁰



Figure 4b: Enlargement of Acheloios as a Winged Man-Faced Bull



Figure 4c: As last, same dies¹⁵¹

¹⁵⁰ CNG Triton VII, lot 329, 14.82g

¹⁵¹ Savoca Numismatik, Live Online Auction 12, Lot 265, 7.43g.



Figure 4d: As last, new obverse die.¹⁵²



Figure 4e: As last, new, cruder reverse die.¹⁵³



Figure 4f: As last.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵² Private collection= LAC Guttus Auction 11, lot 61, 6.00g.

¹⁵³ HessDivo, The Lugdunum Sale 13, Lot 1080, 8.00g.

¹⁵⁴ CNG eAuction 203, lot 176, 7.48g



Figure 4g: As last.¹⁵⁵



Figure 4h: As last.¹⁵⁶



Fig 5a: Herakles and Acheloios, Variety Two.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁵ BnF 1966.453, 7.42g

¹⁵⁶ Private collection

¹⁵⁷ Private collection.



Figure 5b: As last, new obverse and reverse dies (perhaps Acheloios).¹⁵⁸



Figure 6: Transitional piece, new reverse die (not Acheloios).¹⁵⁹



Figure 7: Herakles-Sandan over the winged, horned creature (often a lion)¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁸ CNG eAuction 384, lot 297, 7.47g

¹⁵⁹ CNG 66, lot 621, 8.65g

¹⁶⁰ CNG eAuction 261, lot 126.



Figure 8: Herakles-Sandan over a creature with unclear features¹⁶¹



Figure 9: Cilicia, Mallos.¹⁶²

¹⁶¹ CNG eAuction 354, lot 199.

¹⁶² CNG eAuction 299, lot 122.

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