

## 43. Note to OF 586: κρᾰνιάρχης

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In chapter V of A. Bernabé's *Orphicorum Fragmenta*, in section *de Orphei sectatoribus*, we take interest in, under OF 586, one of several inscriptions that illustrate the flourishing of associations of mystic type and some Orphic heritage<sup>1</sup> during the imperial period, especially in Asia Minor, Macedonia, Thrace and Moesia. As it has been observed<sup>2</sup> as opposed to the *Orpheotelestai* of previous periods, which acted independently, this kind of associations are characterized more for their dependence from the State, their sedentary condition, meaning their bond with a sacred place, and especially for the wider range of posts, functions and internal hierarchies.

The case we are going to discuss<sup>3</sup> is a list of members of an association (σπειρά), created by the chief of the association, the σπειράρχης, at his own expense, ἱερωσύνης χάριν, with the purpose of “dar lostro al proprio officio sacro” (Guarducci 1978: 189). Next to the names of some of the members are the posts that they hold in the association. Some of them have previously appeared in other texts, or are relatively easy to analyze, as the σπειράρχης, the ἀρχιμύστης, the ἀρχιβουκόλος the ναρθηκοφόρος, the κισταφόρος, the λυχνοάπτρια, etc.<sup>4</sup> On the contrary, the interpretation of some is more open to discussion and problematic. This is particularly the case with the presence of three κουρής (ll. 21–23), one σειστημάρχης (l. 23) and one κρᾰνιάρχης (l. 26).<sup>5</sup>

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1 A quite complete catalogue of these inscriptions can be found in the second volume of Jaccottet's documented monograph (2003). The most famous for the wealth of information it contains is Torre Nova's, in Latium, from mid-II century AD: *I Urb. Rom.* 160, cf. Guarducci (1978: 183–189), Jaccottet (2003: 302–311, n. 188).

2 A good summary of these texts can be found in Jiménez (2008: 1469–1481). Also see Nilsson (1957: 45–66).

3 *IGBulg.* 3(1).1517 comes from Cillae, in Thrace, close to Philippopolis, and can be dated with precision between 241 and 244 AD. Guarducci (1978: 189), Moretti (1986: 247–249), Morand (2001: 265–266), Slavova (2002) and Jaccottet (2003: II, 95–97, n. 47) have studied this inscription among others.

4 See Slavova (2002: 141–143, 148), Turcan (2003: 49 ff.).

5 Both σειστημάρχης and κρᾰνιάρχης are not present in *LSJ's* dictionary and *LSJ Revised Supplement*.

Before we analyze the latter, we will study the first two because their interpretation is related. Regarding the first, Moretti (1986: 248) simply describes them as “danzatori”. For Merkelbach (1988: 84) and Slavova (2002: 142) they are related with the Orphic myth of the child Dionysus and the Titans. Their function would be to reproduce the dances, which in the myth was performed by the Curetes who watched over Dionysus, cf. Bernabé (2008a: 319; 2008b: 600). Slavova insists also on their condition as “armed mystai” (cf. *infra*).<sup>6</sup> Regarding the second, authors seem to agree on considering it, following Mihailov’s suggestion, a latter spelling of *συστημάρχης*. For Slavova, it means the “chief of a σύστημα”, that is, of a lower subdivision of the *σπείρα*. The word σύστημα may refer to a body, a group or a contingent of persons with political, ethnic or military interests, to a professional corporation, and finally to a religious<sup>7</sup> group, club or association. Moretti simply considers him the chief of the Curetes “danzatori”, what in my opinion is quite plausible if we take into account its place in the inscription, lined up next to the names of the three Curetes. Slavova, on the contrary, thinks that the chief of the “armed Curetes” is no other than the *κρανιάρχης*, a term which has puzzled some of the researchers previously quoted<sup>8</sup> and which she links with *κράνεια* ‘cornel, cherry’, a word which we also find substantivated in two Hellenistic epigrams with the meaning of ‘spear of cornel-wood’.<sup>9</sup> The *κρανιάρχης* would be for Slavova the chief of the Curetes, armed with a spear made of cornel-wood, something like the “lancer chief”, the “chief of the spears”.<sup>10</sup>

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- 6 Surprisingly, Slavova does not mention the fact that the upper side of the stele is decorated with a triangular seal “in qua scutum et lancea ficta sunt”, cf. Morand (2001: 265). The shield and the spear are traditional attributes of the Curetes, cf. Bernabé (2008a: 315). There is another example of *κουρής* in singular form, in a non-Dionysiac context, in an inscription from Odessos from the imperial period: Ἀρτεμίδωρος Ἀπολλοδώρου κ. εὐποσιάρχης (*IGBulg.* 1<sup>2</sup>.167). However, in *IG-Bulg.* 1<sup>2</sup>.23 (Dionysopolis III AD) *κουρής* is clearly a proper name. Jaccottet (2003: vol. II, 100) is mistaken when she considers that in our inscription *κουρής* is also a proper name in the three cases, arguing that in another case the third one would also hold the post of *σειστημάρχης*. This is not the case because, as Mihailov already observed, this name is written in three separate lines, in parallel with the names of the three Curetes. It is a fourth person.
- 7 Cf. *LSJ Rev. Suppl.* s. v. 2. For this last use, besides Slavova’s quote which links the term to the cult of Dionysus (D. S. 4.3.3 τὰς δε γυναικας κατὰ συστήματα θυσιάζειν τῷ θεῷ καὶ βακχεύειν), see other references in Turcan (2003: 87), especially a fragmentary inscription from Argos (*IG IV* 659) in which *συσ[τ]ημα* (l. 22) could be the name of an association of *μύσται* of the Mother of the Gods.
- 8 Cf. Guarducci (1978: 189): “not easy to explain”; Moretti (1986: 248): “new and mysterious”, Jaccottet (2003: 100); Jiménez (2008: 1480): “in charge of the skull, of the cherry tree?”.
- 9 *μαινὰς Ἐνναλίου πολεμαδόκε, θοῦρι κράνεια AP* 6.122 (Nicias), *ἔσταθι τᾶδε, κράνεια βροτοκτόνε AP* 6.123 (Anyt.). Cf. also *κρανία· τόξον Hsch.*
- 10 A. Bernabé takes note of these interpretations in the critical apparatus of his edition *OF* 586.

At this point it is relevant to recall an inscription from Thessalonika, also from the middle of century III AD, already published in 1999, and which has tended to be overlooked. It is a new catalogue of members of a Dionysiac σπεῖρα, in many cases accompanied by the name of the post or function they performed in the association (ἀρχιγάλλαρος, [ναρθη]κοφόρος, νεβριαφόρος, παλεομύστης, etc.) just as in Cillae. For its characteristics, it could well have been included in A. Bernabé's *Orphicorum Fragmenta*.<sup>11</sup>

Among the many novelties it presents, it is interesting to notice the fact that two of the posts which we could consider 'directors' are repeated several times. One of them is the ἀρχιμύστης, which is mentioned four times (ll. 2, 14, 15, 16), probably five (cf. l. 3 μύστης). The other one is the ἀρχικραν(ε) ἀρχης, which is mentioned three times (ll. 3, 7 γ 17), but probably five as well.<sup>12</sup> This fact, together with other indications from other inscriptions that Nigdelis quotes, proves that in this type of associations there might be internal subdivisions, especially when their size was large. It is clear that some posts performed their activities in the frame of the σπεῖρα (the ἱερεύς, the ναρθηκοφόρος, etc.) and others in the frame of lower units, if there were any. In Cillae there were none and we only find one ἀρχιμύστης and one κρνιαρχης, while in Thessalonika we probably find five ἀρχιμύσται and five ἀρχικραν(ε)ἀρχαι, one of which apparently occupied both positions at the same time (cf. l. 3 μύστης ἀρχικραν(ε)ἀρχης). Each of the latter probably performed their function in one of the five groups commanded by the ἀρχιμύσται. But, what was their responsibility? Chaniotis, in both publications quoted in note 11, succinctly refers to one obscure gloss by Hesychius: κρναοίκονρον· μοῖρά τις τοῦ ἱερείου.<sup>13</sup> Nigdelis (2006: 117) tentatively accepts this connection: the ἀρχικρανάρχης would be in charge of distributing the sacrificed victims among the members of the association.

Apart from this, it is convenient to make a couple of brief considerations. First, we must take into account that the association not only had, as is usual, one ἱερεύς (l. 10), but also one ἀρχιμαγαρεύς ἀθύτου (l. 5), assisted by a μαγαρεύς (l. 18 and two μαγάρισσαι (ll. 13 and 15). This presumes the

11 Archaeologists Lioutas and Mandaki (1977 [1999]: 371–374) were in charge of the first edition; they presented a provisional text, with some reading errors. It was reviewed in *BE* 2000.471 and also by Chaniotis (1999, n. 144), before it was included in *SEG* 49: 814 (2002), where Chaniotis contributed with some improvements to the text. Finally, a revised edition with an extensive commentary by Nigdelis (2006: 101–128) was published. This final version has now been reproduced in *SEG* 56: 754 (2010).

12 It appears as ἀρχικρανεάρχης in the ll. 3 and 17 and as ἀρχικρανάρχης in l. 7. In the two other passages the word is broken: l. 8 κρ]ανεάρχης, l. 13 κ]ρανάρχης.

13 Latte edits the gloss previously adding a *crux*, and writes in a note “latet compos. in -χοριον”, that is, the placenta and the intestines, the guts in general. Latte surely had in mind fragments with cooking topics like Eub. 109.4: μήτραν, χόρια, πύον, λάβρακος κρνανιον.

presence of a μάγαρον, a term which we know from other inscriptions and which probably designated an artificial underground space where the sacrifices of the association were made. According to Nigdelis (2006: 115–117), the ἀρχιμαγαρεὺς αὐτοῦ would be in charge of choosing the suitable victims and of preparing the food together with his assistants for the members of the association. The presence of five people, with a title as high-blown as ἀρχικρανάρχης,<sup>14</sup> in charge of a function as secondary as distributing food, sounds unlikely.

On the other hand, both Slavova's aforementioned hypothesis and Chaniotis' presume a quite unusual compound in -άρχης, because it is formed from the name of a thing. Effectively, this kind of compounds in -άρχης usually stem of the name of a group or from of the name of a place or space which refers directly or indirectly to a group of people, especially in the religious (σπειράρχης, βεννάρχης, etc.), military (δεκατάρχης, ἰλάρχης, etc.), political-administrative sphere (ἐμποριάρχης, νομάρχης, etc.), or from the field of professions and trades (ἐργαστηριάρχης, μιλωνάρχης, etc.). Also from the name of an activity in which a group is involved (οἰνοποισιάρχης, πανηγυριάρχης, etc.). Occasionally they may come out of an abstract name (εἰρηνάρχης, εὐθηνιάρχης, etc.). The compounds in -άρχης formed from the name of a thing are rare and in all cases assume a degree of responsibility in the activity of a group related with the object in question. Thus, the ἰστωνάρχης is the 'master weaver' or the κεραμιάρχης the 'master potter'. Therefore, the root that stands at the base of the κρανιάρχης should refer to a group of persons or to a space or an activity associated with a human group and not a concrete object.

Another possible interpretation can be made out of A. Bernabé's ingenious conjecture about an old Orphic poetic fragment reconstructed out of different sources in prose, *OF* 121: ⟨ἐκ δὲ⟩ σχισθέντος κρανίου πολυχανδέος ὠιοῦ / ἐξέθορε πρῶτιστος (Φάνης). Bernabé speculates on the existence of a diminutive κρανίον, of κράνος 'helmet', a derivative with the meaning of 'shell' (of the egg from which Phanes came out).<sup>15</sup> We could find a possible link with this root assuming κράνος or κρανίον bear the meaning of 'vault' or '(subterranean) vaulted camera'. This type of space is documented, in Torre Nova, where we find two ἀντροφύλακες, in three inscriptions of Cal-

14 In my opinion, this double compound was redundant, equivalent to Cillae's simple κρανιάρχης. Other compounds which present the same phenomenon are ἀρχιμεταλλάρχης (*Pan* 51.6), a person, which in another inscriptions is simply called μεταλάρχης (*Koptos* 41), and probably the ἀρχιγερουσιάρχης quoted in *JWEur.*2.521 (Roma III/IV AD), cf. Horsley (1982: 18).

15 "κρανίου mea sententia deminutivum (cf. κράνος 'galea') 'ovi putaminis' metaphorice significans". Also see Bernabé's own translation (2003: 112): "y, una vez rota la descomunal cáscara del huevo, saltó el primerísimo (Fanes)". Cf. also Bernabé (2008a: 312).

latis. One of them (*ICallatis* 61.3, I AD) commemorates the consecration of one ἄντρον to Dionysos and to the members of the thiasus. Another (*ICallatis* 44.42, I AD) calls this space μυχός. A third one (*ICallatis* 35.39–40, III BC), which refers to the same association and apparently to the same space as the previous, mentions the construction of ἄλεαν εἰς τὸ θύρωμα κοίλαν καὶ ψαλίδας among the maintenance works of Dionysus temple. The last researchers who have studied this inscription agree on seeing these ψαλίδες as vaulted subterranean chambers where Bacchic ceremonies were performed.<sup>16</sup> In our case, the κρانيάρχης or ἀρχικραν(ε)άρχης would be the chief of each κράνος, the vaulted rooms where the μύσται groups met, each commanded by their corresponding ἀρχιμύστης.

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16 Cf. Avram (1999: 298–300), Jaccottet (2003: I, 152–154; II, 114).