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**Death of Kebriones: Diving Birds, Mockery and Local Tradition**

The purpose of this paper is to elucidate peculiarities of imagery appearing in the description of death of Hector's charioteer, Kebriones.

Kebriones is killed at the very end of Patroklos' *aristeia*. Patroklos hurls a stone, smashing Kebriones' head, so that Kebriones falls from the chariot "like a diver" (*Il.* 16.742). It was long observed that the comparison of Kebriones' fall with a diver's leap is rather awkward. The same simile describes a fall of a killed warrior from a high wall in *Il.* 12.385, where the comparison with a diver seems to be warranted by the great height of the fall. The use of the simile in the case of Kebriones' fall from a low chariot was judged to be an inapt application of a formulaic expression. Despite its apparent awkwardness, the diver simile receives great emphasis, being developed by Patroklos, who comments on Kebriones' diving skills:

... I think if he were in the teeming deep, this man would satisfy many by seeking for oysters, leaping from his ship even if the sea were stormy... (*Il.* 16.745-749)

The rhetoric of Patroklos' taunt was repeatedly analyzed, receiving numerous, sometimes polar, interpretations. No agreement exists about the precise working of the mockery: The present paper attempts to understand the choice of the imagery using extra-Homeric sources. The starting point is the recognition of the traditional nature of Homeric similes, their deep-rooted connection to the narrative context. If the immediate setting of the simile does not endorse the comparison with a diver, which factors still do make it particularly appropriate in the case of Kebriones' death?

An intriguing suggestion comes from a circumstantial remark in Aristophanes' *Birds*. We find that the name of Kebriones was at some point connected with a name of a water bird. Further examination of attestations of closely related names reveals the following mythical pattern preserved in several sources (Apollodorus *Lib.* 3.12.5, *Scholia on Lycophron* 224, Ovid *Metam.* 11.750-795). Aisakos, a son of Priam, becomes a husband &ndash; or tries to woo - a daughter of river Kebren, and upon her death he is transformed into a bird. In Ovid's story &ndash; the most detailed of our accounts &ndash; the bird moreover is said to be *mergus* &ndash; a diver (*Metam.* 11.753, 795).

Aisakos' transformation into a diving bird strikingly parallels the simile of sea plunging describing the death of Kebriones. The presence of a common root in the names Kebren and Kebriones (very rarely attested elsewhere) is significant. Further, Aisakos is, like Kebriones, a bastard son of Priam. The two stories seem to be modifications of the same underlying theme.

We cannot restore the myth connecting Kebriones with a diving bird; however one can conjecture that its existence would have been likely. I would propose that Patroklos' taunt draws on the existence of such local tradition in the Troad. Local elements of ritual and myth are ironically transformed into a simile by the epic.

Certain details of Kebriones' death and the following description of the fight over his body prefigure deaths of Hector, Patroklos and Achilles. Kebriones indeed achieves glory – but only as long as he substitutes for greater heroes. The grandeur of the pan-Hellenic epic is pitted against the mocked insignificance of the local tradition in the taunt of Patroklos.