

What's in a *Kordylē*? Pheidippides (in Ar. *Nub.* 10)!

In Aristophanes' *Clouds*, Strepsiades qualifies his remark in line 9 that his son Pheidippides is *πέρδεται* ("farting away," i.e., "sleeping soundly"; Dover 93; Henderson 1991: 196) by adding in the next line (10): *ἐν πέντε σισύραις ἐγκεκορδυλημένος*. The *hapax legomenon* verb *ἐγκορδυλέω* (whence the participle *ἐγκεκορδυλημένος*) is translated by LSJ (s.v.) as to "wrap up in coverlets" and by BrillDAG (s.v.) as simply "to wrap up." Thus, most commentators take the four words in *Clouds* 10 much as Henderson (1998: 11) does: "wrapped up in five woolen coverlets." Of the four Greek words in *Clouds* 10, *σισύραις* poses no problem (see Sommerstein 159; Hutzfeld 99; Chantraine 971-72; Beekes 1336; Rosól 206); on the Aristophanic line Pollux comments that *σισύρα* is "a blanket [made] from skins" (*περίβλημα . . . ἐκ διφθέρας*, *Onom.* 7.70), and Aristophanes uses the word twice more in other plays (*Ran.* 1459; *Vesp.* 738). Instead, interpretive problems arise from the word *ἐγκεκορδυλημένος*. In this paper I argue that scholars have consistently underappreciated the specific sartorial connotations that the participle *ἐγκεκορδυλημένος* has in *Clouds* 10: it does not just mean "wrapped up (in coverlets)," but rather "wrapped up in/like a *κορδύλη*" or "*kordylized*." In this passage, Aristophanes exploits his audience's knowledge of the turban-like headdress *κορδύλη* for comic effect.

Scholarly readings of *Clouds* 10 have been led astray by the multivalent nature of the word *κορδύλη*. The word appears to have four meanings: "club, cudgel" (LSJ s.v. I.1; BrillDAG s.v. A), "bump, swelling" (LSJ s.v. I.2; BrillDAG s.v. A), "wrapping for the head, head-dress" (LSJ s.v. II) or simply "a type of headdress" (BrillDAG s.v. A), and a "young tuna" (BrillDAG B; cf. LSJ III), which is also spelled *σκορδύλη*. Some scholars (BrillDAG s.v. A; cf. Ruiz) take "swelling" as the meaning of *κορδύλη* that is suggested by the participle *ἐγκεκορδυλημένος* in *Clouds* 10. Presumably, such scholars think that in this passage Pheidippides, wrapped up in his

“leather blankets” (σισύραι), appears positively *swollen*. For *Clouds* 10, however, the meaning of “headdress” for κορδύλη would seem to be more appropriate. Even more suggestive is the fact that Greek sources indicate the κορδύλη was worn wrapped around the head in some fashion (“Creon in the first book of his *Cyprica* says that the wrapping for the head was called a κορδύλη,” *Suda* s.v. = *BNJ* 753 F 1; “Cypriots say that the wrapping for the head is a κορδύλη,” *EM* 310.51). Head wraps (worn like modern turbans?) were usually associated by Greeks with both foreigners and women; such headdresses include the μίτρα (an even more multivalent term: Austin and Olson 111; Lee 159-60, 295 n. 218), which Herodotus describes as being “wound” around the head by Cypriot kings (7.90).

If we accept that the primary meaning of κορδύλη that Strepsiades is referencing with ἐγκεκορδυλημένος in *Clouds* 10 is a “head wrap,” then the poet Aristophanes accomplishes three effects at once. One, Strepsiades asks the audience to imagine that Pheidippides wrapped up in his σισύραι looks as if he is wearing an over-sized κορδύλη around his body, instead of his head. Two, Strepsiades alludes to the κορδύλη because the non-Greek head wrap would seem exotic and possibly humorous to a Greek audience. Third, by associating the foreign headdress κορδύλη with Pheidippides, Strepsidades underlines his son’s extravagant, debt-ridden nature; elsewhere, Aristophanes similarly uses foreign articles of clothing as a tool for negative characterization, from the effeminate μίτρα worn by the cross-dressing Mnesilochus (*Thesm.* 257, 941) to the undemocratic Perso-Spartan attire forced onto Philocleon by his son Bdelycleon (*Vesp.* 1122-68; see Compton-Engle 70-71).

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