

Άγκυλομήτης Versus *Μῆτις*: What is Bent *Μῆτις*?

In the Homeric and Hesiodic Corpora, the epithet *ἀγκυλομήτης* is only used to describe two figures: Kronos and Prometheus. The word *ἀγκυλομήτης* is built from two Greek words: the adjective *ἀγκύλος* and the noun *μητις*. The adjective *ἀγκύλος* means “curved” or “bent,” causing *ἀγκυλομήτης* to literally mean “curved/bent *μητις*” (Beekes 2009). However, understanding the meaning of “curved/bent *μητις*” is a much more difficult task because *μητις* is a tricky word with many connotations. Some scholars define *μητις* as “skill or craft,” whereas others define it as “wisdom, prudence, or capability” (Beekes 2009; Montanari 2015). Yet, *μητις* is far more nuanced and does not neatly fit into these rigid, constricting categories; rather, it involves qualities such as wisdom, cunning, forethought, deceit, and resourcefulness, just to name a few (Detienne and Vernant 1978). With the complexity of *μητις* in mind, defining *ἀγκυλομήτης* is certainly no easy task. Nevertheless, scholars have been content to define *ἀγκυλομήτης* as “crooked of counsel” or “wily” (Montanari 2015), failing to dive into the richness of the word; I believe that these definitions only scratch the surface.

The goal of this paper is to distinguish between *ἀγκυλομήτης* and *μητις*, not only asking what it means for someone to have “curved/bent” *μητις*, but also exploring the implications of such a word. For example, how is *μητις* illustrated in the Homeric and Hesiodic Corpora, and why are Kronos and Prometheus the only beings in the Corpora to receive this epithet? In this paper, I will argue that, although *ἀγκυλομήτης* is commonly thought to be defined by immorality or over-reaching, as the common translation “crooked of counsel” insinuates (Verdenius 1985), it actually refers to something altogether different – namely, a person whose *μητις* backfires. Essentially an *ἀγκυλομήτης* person is one who employs *μητις* that, in a sense, shoots forward and

accomplishes its goal before following its curved course and heading straight back towards its author like a boomerang.

To accomplish this task, this paper will examine the etymology of the epithet *ἀγκυλομήτης* as well as its occurrences in the stories of Kronos and Prometheus. In order to provide a wider, more thorough backdrop for such a discussion, this paper will also examine significant occurrences of *μῆτις*, such as its discussion in *Iliad* 23 prior to Antilochus' race and its employment in *Odyssey* 9 when Odysseus meets Polyphemus. It is my hope that this paper will provide another take on the meaning on *ἀγκυλομήτης* – one that actually breaks the surface of a topic that seems to have previously been avoided.

Bibliography

Beekes, Robert. *Etymological Dictionary of Greek*. Translated by Alexander Lubotsky, vol. 1, Brill, 2009.

Beekes, Robert. *Etymological Dictionary of Greek*. Translated by Alexander Lubotsky, vol. 2, Brill, 2009.

Detienne, Marcel and Jean-Pierre Vernant. *Cunning Intelligence in Greek Culture and Society*. Translated by Janet Lloyd, The Harvester Press Limited, 1978.

Montanari, Franco. *The Brill Dictionary of Ancient Greek*. Translated by Rachel Barrit-Costa, et al. Edited by Gregory Nagy and Leonard Muellner, Brill, 2015.

Verdenius, W. J. *A Commentary on Hesiod: Works and Days, vv. 1-382*. Brill, 1985.