

# **A GLOSSARY OF GREEK BIRDS**

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A glossary of Greek birds by D'Arcy Wentworth Thompson

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## ILLUSTRATIONS.



FIG. 1. AN ARCHAIC GEM, PROBABLY PARTHIAN (Paris Coll., 1264, 2; cf. *Inhoof-Blumer und Keller*, Pl. xvi, 14).

FIG. 2. TETRADRACHM OF ERETRIA (*B. M. Cat.*, Central Gr., Pl. xxiii, 1).

Both these subjects represent a bird on a bull's (or cow's) back, in my opinion the pleiad in relation to the sign Taurus (*vide infra*, p. 31). In Fig. 2 the bull is turning round, to symbolize the tropic; in Fig. 1 it is in the conventional kneeling attitude of the constellation Taurus, as Aratus describes it (Ph. 517)—

Τάυρον δὲ σκελεῖον ἔσση περιφαίνεται ὀυράξ.

or in Cicero's translation—

'Atque genu flexo Taurus connititur ingens.'

Compare also, among other kindred types, the coins of Paphos, showing a bull with the winged solar disc on or over his back (*Rev. Num.*, 1883, p. 355; Head, *H. Numorum*, p. 614, &c.).

FIGS. 3, 4. A COIN OF AGRIGENTUM, WITH EAGLE AND CRAB (Head, *H. Numorum*, p. 105). Aquila, which is closely associated with Capricorn (cf. Manil. i. 624), sets as Cancer rises: it may figure, therefore, as a solstitial sign.

FIG. 5. COIN OF HIMERA, BEFORE B.C. 842, WITH THE COCK (Head, *H. Numorum*, p. 125; cf. *infra*, p. 26).

FIG. 6. ATHENIAN TETRADRACHM, WITH OWL, OLIVE-TWIG, AND CRESCENT MOON (Head, p. 312; cf. *infra*, p. 46).

FIG. 7 (*on title*). DECADRACHM OF AGRIGENTUM. Cf. Aesch. Agam. 110-120 (*vide infra*, p. 8). The reverse of the coin shows Cancer associated with the solar Quadrîga.

91  
187

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ΤΩΙ ΠΑΤΡΙ

ΧΘΟΝΟΣ ΑΡΓΕΙΑΣ ΑΡΟΤΗΡΙ

ΚΑΡΠΟΝ ΩΝ ΠΟΤΕ ΕΣΠΕΙΡΕ

ΘΑΛΥΣΙΑ ΑΤΤΑ ΘΕΡΙΣΑΣ

ΑΠΟΔΙΔΩΜΙ



RES ARDUA, VETUSTIS NOVITATEM DARE, NOVIS AUCTORITATEM, OBSOLETIS NITOREM, OBSCURIS LUCEM, FASTIDITIS GRATIAM, DUBIIS FIDEM.—PLINY.

ΠΟΛΛῶΝ ΤΕ ΚΑΙ ἄλλων τοιούτων ἔστι ΠΛῆθος ἀναγεγραμμένον ἐν τοῖς ΠΑΛΛΙΟῖς, ὅπερ εἴ τις ΒΟΥΛΗΘΕΪΝ ΣΥΝΑΓΑΓΕΪΝ, εἰς ἄπειρον ἂν Μῆκος ἔκτείνειε τὸν Λόγον.—NEMES., *De Nat. Hom.*

## PREFACE

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THIS book contains materials for research in greater measure than it presents the results of it ; and, accordingly, it is not my purpose to preface it with an extended summary of the many wide generalizations to which the assemblage of fact and legend here recorded may seem to lead. This book indeed includes only a small part of the notes I have gathered together since I began years ago, as an undergraduate, ignorant of the difficulties of the task, to prepare the way for a new edition of the Natural History of the Philosopher. Three points, however, in my treatment of the present subject deserve brief explanation here.

Instead of succeeding in the attempt to identify a greater number of species than other naturalist-commentators, dealing chiefly with the Aristotelian birds, have done, I have on the contrary ventured to identify a great many less. This limitation on my part is chiefly due to the circumstance that I have not ventured to use for purposes of identification a large class of statements on which others have more or less confidently relied. A single instance may serve to indicate the statements to which I allude. In the *Histeria Animalium* (especially in the Ninth Book, great part of which seems to me to differ in character and probably in authorship from all but a few isolated passages of the rest of the work), in the works of such later writers as Pliny, Aelian and Phile, and scattered here and there in earlier literary allusions, we find many instances recorded of supposed hostility or friendship between different animals. When we are told,

for example, that ἄρθος is hostile to ἀκαρθίς and to the Horse, that πῖπῶ is hostile to ποικιλίς, to κορυδαύων, to χλωρεύς and to ἐρωδιός, that one Hawk is hostile to the Raven and another to the Dove, and one Eagle to the Goose or to the Swan, we try at first to use these statements as best we can in unravelling the probable identification of the respective species. But when we find, for instance, among the rest that the Owl is hostile to the Crow, and when we recognize in that statement the ancient Eastern fable of the War of the Owls and Crows, we are tempted to reject the whole mass of such statements and to refuse them entry into the domain of Zoological Science. While former commentators have, with greater or less caution, rejected many fables, they have often rashly accepted many others. And I fear for my part that I in turn, while rejecting a much greater number, have perhaps also erred in ascribing a fabulous or mystical meaning to too few.

For many such statements, and for others equally unintelligible in the terms of Natural History, I offer a novel and, at first sight, a somewhat startling explanation: to wit, that very many of them deserve not a zoological but an astronomical interpretation.

In the spring of 1894 I read to the Royal Society of Edinburgh a paper (which I have not yet printed) on 'Bird and Beast in Ancient Symbolism'. In that essay I sought to demonstrate the astronomic symbolism of certain ancient monuments, especially of the great bas-relief of Cybele in the Hermitage Museum<sup>1</sup>; secondly, of the beast and bird-emblems of classical coinage<sup>2</sup>; and lastly, of certain fables or myths of the philosophers and poets.

<sup>1</sup> This monument, a figure of which is accessible in Miss J. E. Harrison's *Mythology of Ancient Athens*, represents, according to my view, the ancient tropics of Leo and Aquarius, with Taurus and Leo in symbolic combat in the frieze below.

<sup>2</sup> The identical theory, in so far as it applies to numismatic emblems, was promulgated a few months afterwards by M. Jean Svoronos in a learned and scholarly paper, to be found in the *Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique* for 1894; but the theory was not so novel as M. Svoronos and I supposed it to be. In connexion with coins or gems, it is explicitly and admirably stated by Gorins, *De*