Fragmenta Comica

Epikrates – Eriphos

Epikrates
Epigenes
Eriphos

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Epikrates – Eriphos

Introduction, Translation and Commentary

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In loving memory of my godmother and aunt, Anna.
Every blue sky carries her reflection.

Content

Preface

Following my earlier contributions to the *Fragmenta Comica* series with the volumes on Amphis (FrC 20, 2016) and Ephippus (FrC 16.3, 2021), it is a rare honour and a cherished privilege to have been invited once again by Professor Dr Bernhard Zimmermann to prepare a third commentary—this time encompassing three poets—within the framework of the internationally acclaimed KomFrag project, conducted under the auspices of the Heidelberg Academy of Sciences. Professor Dr Zimmermann's vision in conceiving and directing the KomFrag project has provided an invaluable platform for the systematic study of fragmentary Comedy, while his scholarly leadership and exemplary academic ethos remain a constant source of inspiration. To contribute once more to this collective endeavour is therefore both a responsibility and a profound satisfaction, as it advances the KomFrag project's mission to interpret and situate the remnants of comic poetry within their wider literary and cultural contexts.

The present volume brings together the fragments of three comic playwrights: Epicrates, Epigenes, and Eriphus. Each poet is introduced separately, with an overview of his identity, career, manuscript tradition, thematic preoccupations, linguistic features, and metrical tendencies, before the commentary turns to the analysis of the surviving material. Methodologically, my approach follows the same principles that have guided my previous work: (i) analysis of each play-title; (ii) discussion of possible dating, wherever the evidence permits; (iii) translation, contextualization, critical discussion, metrical analysis, and interpretation of each fragment; (iv) detailed commentary on noteworthy words, expressions, and usages. At every stage, I have sought to pursue all interpretative possibilities, assessing the fragments in relation to comic and non-comic parallels alike, to earlier literary traditions, and to their later reception, in order to situate them within the broader cultural and intellectual landscape.

As Arnott (2000b) and Olson (2015) have emphasized, the challenges facing scholars who work with fragments are considerable. Reconstructions must remain tentative, and the temptation to impose excessive systematization must be resisted. Yet it does not follow that comic fragments are condemned to be studied in isolation; on the contrary, they acquire meaning only when placed in dialogue with the wider literary and cultural environment and projected against the continuum of the Greek literary tradition. By bringing together three poets in a single volume, this conviction is tested within a more intricate framework, but it also proves more productive. Comparative treatment allows cross-references and thematic resonances to emerge with greater clarity, while divergences and idiosyncrasies sharpen our sense of individual authorial profiles. In this way, the study of Epicrates, Epigenes, and Eriphus side by side not only broadens our understanding of Greek Comedy but also contributes to the broader methodological discussion of how fragmentary texts can be reconstructed, contextualized, and interpreted as part of an integrated cultural history. The work of reconstruction is admittedly precarious, but it is also

indispensable. My conviction is that scholars of fragments must not shrink from the challenge but rather embrace it with methodological rigour, critical caution, and interpretative imagination, ever mindful of the inherently provisional status of their conclusions. Only in this way can fragmentary Comedy be restored to its rightful place within the history of Greek literature, not as peripheral debris but as an integral component of the comic tradition.

Regarding technical matters, as in my earlier KomFrag volumes, abbreviations of authors and works follow *LSJ* (9th ed., with suppl. 1996). Translations of Greek and Latin texts are taken from the *Loeb Classical Library* series, with occasional adaptations. A set of abbreviations for commonly cited works is provided in the relevant section of this volume. The editions of Epicrates, Epigenes, and Eriphus are listed separately and in chronological order at the beginning of the Bibliography and are cited throughout the volume by the editor's name.

None of this would have been possible without Professor Dr Bernhard Zimmermann, to whom I am profoundly grateful for his renewed invitation, his unwavering trust, and his authenticity. I am equally indebted to the Heidelberg Academy of Sciences for the sustained backing of the KomFrag project. I would also like to extend my sincere thanks to Ms Sue Willetts (Senior Assistant Librarian) and Mr Paul Jackson (Deputy Librarian) at the Combined Library of the Institute of Classical Studies and the Hellenic and Roman Societies, London, and to Mrs Maria Tourna (Head Librarian, Blegen Library, Athens), for their invaluable assistance in locating bibliographical material. Much appreciation also goes to Dr Simon Glenn, Curator of Ancient Collections (Money and Medals) at the British Museum, for his insightful guidance in examining the coinage of Pharnabazus during my visit in May 2024 as an ICS Visiting Fellow. Heartfelt thanks are also due, as always, to my husband George, for the constancy of his support, the depth of his love, and the generosity of his spirit. No less heartfelt is my gratitude to my parents, Antonia and Christoforos, philologists by profession and educators by calling, who instilled in me the values of integrity, critical thought, and love of knowledge—my most enduring inheritance.

This volume is dedicated to the eternal memory of my beloved godmother and aunt, Anna Papachrysostomou, who passed away in April 2025. Like a second mother to me, she lives on in the remembrance of her integrity, her boundless compassion, her quiet strength, and the radiance of her smile. A kind soul shaped by artistry and joy, she was ever-present in my life, enveloping me in love and steadfast support, while her example of resilience and generosity continues to guide me. Though her absence is deeply felt, her presence endures indelibly in the memories, values, and light she left behind.

Athina Papachrysostomou
Patras, September 2025

Epicrates (Ἐπικράτης)

Introduction

1. Name & Identity

Epicrates (Ἐπικράτης, *PAA* 394250) was a playwright of Middle Comedy, who originated from the city of Ambracia (modern-day Arta), a Corinthian colony in Epirus (northwestern Greece); cf. Suda ε 2415 (= test. 1) and Ath. 10.422f (= test. 2).

The name Epicrates was common throughout the Hellenophone world, as evidenced by the one hundred and seventy-six attestations recorded in Traill's *PAA*. The majority of these are from Athens, but the name is also attested in Boeotia, Miletus, Pergamum, Seleucia, and Sidon, among other locations.

Epicrates staged his comedies in Athens, joining the ranks of many non-Athenian comic playwrights who managed "to make their presence felt" (Hartwig 2014: 218) during the fourth century BC, a period marked by both a wave of non-Athenian poets moving to Athens and the increasing internationalization of Attic drama; for further discussion of these cultural phenomena, see Sifakis (1967) 142–145, Handley (1985) 398–399, Kaimio 1999, Olson (2007) 15, Konstantakos (2011) 153–162, Bosher 2012, Hartwig *l.c.*, Olson (2023) 14.

Other non-Athenian playwrights of Middle Comedy include Antiphanes (Olson 2023: 13–14), Anaxandrides (Millis 2015: 13), Dionysius of Sinope (Ath. 6.239a), and probably Amphis (Papachrysostomou 2016: 11). From within New Comedy, see the cases of Alexis (Arnott 1996: 11–13), Apollodorus Carystius, and Philemo (Bruzzese 2011: 16–17), among others.

2. Chronology & Career

Epicrates flourished during the fourth century BC, in the era of Middle Comedy,[1] though the precise dates of his life remain unknown. Although no definitive didascalic evidence survives to inform us of the total number of his victories, Bergk (1879: 329) suggested restoring Epicrates' name in line 17 (ἐπ[ ) of the inscription *IGUR* 218 (= *IG* XIV 1098), which records dramatic victories by comic poets at

[1] On Middle Comedy, see primarily Nesselrath (1990) 1–187 (a synopsis of ancient and modern scholarship about this period), 331–340 (on 'Merkmalkombination' as the period's defining attribute), and Nesselrath 2015 (on the tripartite division tracing back to the Alexandrian scholars); cf. Papachrysostomou (2008) 10–14, Arnott 2010, Papachrysostomou 2011, Hartwig 2014, Shaw (2014) 106–122, Konstantakos 2015. The traditional view of Comedy's tripartite division has been challenged by Fielitz 1866, Csapo 2000, Sidwell 2000, and Sidwell 2014.

both the City Dionysia and the Lenaea; instead, Millis & Olson (*IRDF* 229) refer to an unidentified minor figure.

In the absence of concrete external evidence, clues for dating Epicrates' productive period are drawn from his surviving fragments. Nesselrath (1990: 197–198; 2016: 232) estimates that Epicrates wrote his plays between approximately 380 and 350 BC. Within this timeframe, some educated guesses can be made regarding the dates of specific plays. For instance, *Antilais* can be confidently dated to around 372–370 BC, based on onomastic references to the Persian satrap Pharnabazus and the hetaira Lais, while the play from which fr. 10 originated was probably produced shortly before Plato's death in 347 BC.

3. Tradition & Reception

The surviving dramatic output of Epicrates consists of six play-titles and eleven fragments, three of which are not assigned to specific plays. Nine of the eleven fragments are preserved by Athenaeus in his *Deipnosophistae*, one by Aelian in *De Natura Animalium*, and one by Pollux in his *Onomasticon*.

Regarding Athenaeus' reliability as a source of indirect tradition, it is known that he extensively used compendia, anthologies, and lexicographical sources (cf. comm. on test. 2), notably drawing several excerpts from the *Lexicon* of Pamphilus of Alexandria, which itself was indebted to Didymus' extensive philological research; see Steinhausen (1910) 51–56. Nonetheless, it is widely believed that Athenaeus made significant efforts to ensure the authenticity of his sources and the accuracy of his quotations; cf. Rudolph 1891, Düring 1936, Nesselrath (1990) 65–79, Jacob 2000. The principal witness to the manuscript tradition of Athenaeus is Codex Venetus Marcianus 447 (siglum A), copied in the tenth century AD by John the Calligrapher. It is the only manuscript of independent authority to transmit the unepitomized version of the *Deipnosophistae*. Several apographs of Marcianus survive, but they rarely offer anything of significance; in a rare exception, codex P (Palatinus Heidelbergensis gr. 47) proves useful for Epigenes fr. 4 in this volume. A valuable, though secondary, substitute for Marcianus is provided by the Epitome, preserved in four complete copies, the most important of which are codex C (Parisinus suppl. gr. 841) and codex E (Laurentianus LX.2), which stand in close relationship to one another. The epitomizer not only omitted (or abridged) several citations but also removed nearly all the play-titles of the quoted fragments, leaving us with numerous *incertarum fabularum fragmenta*. For a detailed study of Athenaeus' manuscript tradition, see Arnott 2000a. For Athenaeus' codex E, see Canart 1977–1979. For the sporadic inconsistencies in Athenaeus' text, including the quotation of passages only tangentially related to the topic under discussion, see Oellacher (1916) 152–153; for examples of Athenaeus' lapses, see Papachrysostomou (2008) 173–175, Papachrysostomou (2016) 119–120, 180–181, Papachrysostomou (2021a) 89.

Moreover, three of Epicrates' fragments already preserved by Athenaeus are additionally quoted (in part) by Eustathius in his Commentaries on the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, although the poet's name is always left out (in two out of the three cases Eustathius is merely interested in exemplifying a grammatical phenomenon). Leaving out the poet's name, although it was available to him, is not uncommon for Eustathius.[2] On Eustathius' indebtedness to, and extensive use of, Athenaeus' Epitome, see the discussions (with further bibliography) by Collard (2007: 74–76 = 1969: 164–168), Fowler 2010 (on Maas' hypothesis that Eustathius was the author of the Epitome), and Morelli (1963) 342–346 (on the possibility that the copy of the Epitome owned and used by Eustathius was superior to that preserved in codices C and E); cf. also the useful index compiled by Aldick (1928: 61–72). For further discussion and additional bibliography on both Athenaeus and Eustathius, see Papachrysostomou (2021a) 12–14.

Regarding Aelian, the manuscript tradition of his work *De Natura Animalium* is preserved by numerous late-medieval copies, of which only a handful are textually independent. Modern scholarship (notably De Stefani 1902: 175) identified seven primary manuscripts, including codices V (Parisiensis suppl. gr. 352, formerly Vat. gr. 997; 13th century) and L (Laurentianus 86.7; 13th century), as the only witnesses of real value for reconstructing the text. See further the edition by Valdés, Llera Fueyo, and Rodríguez-Noriega Guillén 2009.

As far as Pollux is concerned, the manuscript tradition of his *Onomasticon* is both complex and problematic. The extant text is an epitome of the original ten-book lexicon, which was already lost by the ninth century and survives only through Byzantine abridgments. Despite its textual corruptions and gaps, the *Onomasticon* is esteemed as a treasure of Greek lexicography, preserving numerous rare words, synonyms, *hapaxes*, and otherwise unattested references to lost works. Although its information must be used critically, since some entries were abridged or altered by later scribes, Pollux is generally regarded as a trustworthy compiler. Any errors in the *Onomasticon* often stem from Pollux's sources rather than his own invention, suggesting he reliably transmitted the material available to him.

The codices of Pollux's *Onomasticon* that are of particular interest here, as they preserve Epicrates fr. 11, belong to three distinct families (II, III, and IV) in Bethe's classification (1900), each deriving from a separate sub-archetype. From sub-archetype II descend the closely related – though not identical – codices F (Falcoburgianus, Parisinus Gr. 2646) and S (Schottianus, Salmanticensis Hispan. I 2.3), which are generally accurate. Codex A (Parisinus Gr. 2670), belonging to fam-

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[2] An example of Eustathius' unsystematic mode of quotation is how he leaves out Ephippus' name replacing it with the vague phrase παρά τινι παλαιῷ (*by some ancient authority*) in his scholia on *Il.* p. 1205,55 (quoting Ephipp. fr. 8.4), but he does mention the poet's name when he quotes the same bit from the same fragment in his scholia on *Il.* p. 1020,63 (τοῦ ἀστείου Ἐφίππου), thereby revealing that the poet's name was available to him but chose to omit it.

ily III, was written and owned by Cardinal Isidore of Kiev; it is the sole complete witness of its branch and the most carefully executed, with faded letters marked and variant readings noted. In family IV, codex C (Palatinus Heidelbergensis 375) is the earliest and most complete representative, a 12th-century copy generally faithful to its exemplar, with lacunae clearly indicated and occasional marginal notes. Codex B (Parisinus Gr. 2647), from the same family, is a far poorer witness, derived from a heavily abridged epitome that omits names, titles, verses, and entire chapters; although it often agrees with C, its omissions and epitomizing origin severely reduce its independent value. Overall, the manuscript tradition of Pollux, though affected by epitomization and occasional scribal intervention, is generally trustworthy, especially where independent branches converge in agreement. See further Bekker 1846, Bethe, vol. I (1900) v–xx; Tosi 2007, Cavarzeran 2024a, Cavarzeran 2024b, Cavarzeran 2025 (new critical edition). For literary, cultural, and historiographical perspectives on Pollux's work, see Bearzot – Landucci Gattinoni – Zecchini (2007).

4. Themes & Motifs

(a) Dining & Symposion It is widely recognized that Middle Comedy recurrently celebrates wine and gastronomy (cf. Wilkins 2000). This theme is evident in four fragments of Epicrates, each highlighting a distinct facet of dining and/or sympotic culture. Fragment 1 captures the pivotal transition from eating to drinking, while fragment 5 presents an outspoken slave lamenting his treatment at symposia. Fragment 6 introduces a grandiloquent cook who boasts of his unmatched culinary expertise, and fragment 9, set against a sympotic backdrop, weaves together intricate imagery involving sympotic, nautical, and sexual themes. The common assumption that Comedy never actually staged a symposion is challenged by Konstantakos 2005. The bibliography on symposion is voluminous; see e.g. Murray 1990, Slater 1991, Pütz ^{2}2007, Hobden 2013, Taufer 2018, Van den Eijnde – Blok – Strootma 2018. See further Papachrysostomou (2021a) 65–66. See also Intro. 4 "Themes & Motifs" for Eriphus ('Wine').

(b) Hetairai Epicrates introduced a pioneering motif into the comic repertoire by being the first playwright to compare hetairai to wild animals—specifically to rapacious birds of prey. In his play *Antilais* (372–370 BC), hetairai are portrayed for the first time as hawks (fr. 2) and eagles (fr. 3). The scholarship on hetairai in Comedy is extensive; see, for example, Hauschild 1933, Keuls (1985) 153–186, 267–273, Henry 1985 and 2006, Konstan 1987, Nesselrath (1990) 318–324, Davidson 1997, Kurke 1997, Henderson 2000 and (2014) 191–193, Suoto Delibes 2002, McClure 2003, Auhagen 2009, Foka 2011, and Llopis 2014. Epicrates also targets procuresses in his work, accusing them of perjury and fraudulence, as seen in fr. 8 from the play *The Chorus*.

(**c**) **Myth** Despite the widespread use of mythical themes and mythical parody during Middle Comedy (cf. Intro. 4 "Themes & Motifs" for Eriphus in this volume), Epicrates produced only one play with an explicitly mythical subject, namely *The Amazons*. As Nesselrath observes (1990: 198), Epicrates is an exception among comic playwrights of *ca*. 380–350 BC, a period when mythological travesty enjoyed significant popularity.

(**d**) **Outspoken slaves** An outstanding example occurs in Epicr. fr. 5. This figure has roots in Aristophanes (e.g. Xanthias in *Frogs*, who dominates Dionysus for much of the play, cf. Dover 1993: 43–50; and Carion in *Wealth*, esp. lines 23–24), recurs intermittently in Middle Comedy (e.g. Amphis fr. 6 with Papachrysostomou 2016: 49–55, Ephipp. fr. 15 with Papachrysostomou 2021a: 160–170 – esp. 163 with parallels and bibliography, [Alex.] fr. 25 with Arnott 1996: 819–830), and ultimately evolves into the paradigmatic "crafty slave" figure, exemplified by Getas in Menander's *Dyscolus* (esp. lines 183–184). See further Nesselrath (1990) 283–296, MacCary 1969, Krieter-Spiro (1997) 14–43, 83–87, 160–162; cf. the volume edited by Akrigg & Tordoff 2013 (although the ample surviving evidence from Middle Comedy is largely overlooked).

(**e**) **Obscenity** Unlike the explicit and uninhibited obscenity of Old Comedy, Middle Comedy tends toward a more refined and allusive mode of erotic expression. Sexual content is often refracted through metaphor, allegory, or playful euphemism, rather than conveyed in overt terms. Epicrates fr. 9 offers a paradigmatic instance: the speaker's erotic exhortation unfolds through a continuous allegory, blending sympotic and nautical language without ever resorting to explicit sexual vocabulary. This stylistic veiling of obscenity—achieved through an elaborate interplay of registers—is emblematic of Middle Comedy's aesthetic; parallels include Amphis fr. 20 (cf. Papachrysostomou 2016: 132–138), Philetaer. frr. 6 and 9 (cf. Papachrysostomou 2008: 222–224, 228–236), Theophil. fr. 6 (cf. Papachrysostomou 2008: 263–266). For further discussion, including references to New Comedy, see Papachrysostomou (2008) 19.

(**f**) **Plato** In the longest surviving fragment of his output (fr. 10, consisting of thirty-seven lines), Epicrates mocks an elderly Plato overseeing his students at the Academy. Satirical portrayals of philosophers are a major comic topos that permeates the comic genre, exemplified most famously by Aristophanes' caricature of Socrates in *Clouds* (423 BC). Mocking Plato becomes a hallmark of Middle Comedy; however, by the fourth century BC, the tone of such satire grows noticeably less hostile and more benign compared to the scathing attacks of Old Comedy. The relevant bibliography is extensive; see, for example, Weiher 1913, Zimmermann 1993, Imperio 1998, Konstan 2014 (with further bibliography), Marren 2022 (an intertextual dialogue between Plato and Aristophanes). For Plato specifically, see Brock 1990 and Farmer 2017a. Useful bibliography is also collected by Arnott (1996) 50.

(**g**) **Senility** In two substantial fragments, Epicrates portrays renowned historical figures in their old age: fr. 3 presents the hetaira Lais as a decrepit hag, while fr. 10 depicts Plato phlegmatically teaching at the Academy. Senility was a phenomenon as familiar to the ancient Greeks and Romans as to us (cf. Falkner & De Luce 1989), and was probably central in Anaxandrides' *Γεροντομανία* (*Madness for* [or *of*] *Old Men*); cf. Millis (2015) 66–77. For the theme of senility in Comedy, see Oeri 1948, and Hubbard 1989.

5. *Kōmōdoumenoi*

A number of historical figures are mentioned in Epicrates' surviving fragments, though not all are ridiculed. Below, all onomastic references are listed, including the non-satirical ones:

- Cleomenes: fr. 4
- Lais: fr. 3
- Lamynthius: fr. 4
- Menedemus: fr. 10
- Pharnabazus: fr. 3
- Plato: fr. 10
- Sappho: fr. 4
- Speusippus: fr. 10

6. Language

Epicrates' language is outstanding and idiosyncratic in various ways. The following is a categorization of the multiple aspects of his linguistic choices that attract the reader's attention.

Doricisms Epicrates appears to have enjoyed interspersing the Attic dialect with Doricisms. Within the small fraction of his work that we possess, this technique appears in two fragments, fr. 8 and fr. 10. On the presence of dialects and non-Athenian language in Greek Comedy, see Colvin 2000, Zimmermann 2014, Ornaghi 2020.

Paratragic & **elevated language** Epicrates displays a marked penchant for paratragic language and style, with a particular emphasis on Euripidean models. In fr. 5, he explicitly echoes and creatively appropriates distinctive Euripidean traits. Most striking, however, is fr. 6, which showcases a rich amalgam of paratragic, paraepic, dithyrambic, and other forms of elevated diction. The same fragment accommodates the single case in the entire comic output where the adverb οὔτε is followed asyndetically by the particle οὐ (fr. 6.2–4; the speaker is a cook); this pattern is almost entirely confined to serious poetry. Similarly, in fr. 7 Epicrates

employs a conspicuous mixture of dithyrambic and paratragic language (lines 2–4), heavily reminiscent of Euripides. This overwhelming familiarity with the details of Euripidean language suggests that Epicrates had copies of Euripides' plays in his possession.

Figures of speech:
- Enjambment: fr. 3.2–4 (twice, in two consecutive lines), fr. 6.1–2
- Hendiadys: fr. 3.11
- Homoioteleuton: fr. 2.2–4 (the term νόμον occurs in three consecutive lines), fr. 3.9–10 (the term τέρας occurs in two consecutive lines)
- Hyperbaton: fr. 7.3
- Metaphor (innovative): fr. 3.14 (the term δόλιχον is used with reference to old age)
- Para prosdokian: fr. 2.4, fr. 3.21
- Parechesis: fr. 3.14–15 (letters δ, χ, and τ)
- Pars pro toto: fr. 7.4
- Periphrasis: fr. 7.3–4 (three times)
- Simile: fr. 3 (permeating the entire fragment; Lais is assimilated to eagles)

***Hapax* terms**:
- μυωνιά (fr. 8.4): *mousehole*
- πινυτῶς (fr. 10.6): *prudently*
- πρωτόβαθρος (fr. 11): *frontbencher*
- σιδηρότευκτος (fr. 7.3): *iron-wrought* (within a dithyrambic / paratragic context)

***Hapax* concept / expression**: ἐνάλιοι θῆρες (fr. 7.3): *beasts of the sea*, *aquatic beasts*

***Hapax* sense** assigned to terms attested elsewhere:
- ἀκάτιον (fr. 9.1): *small drinking-cup* (resembling a boat)
- ἀνθίζω (fr. 6.5): *to brown* (with reference to the process of roasting meat)
- ἁρμονία (fr. 3.15): *body analogy*
- διαχαλάω (fr. 3.15): *to become physically loosened or slackened* (with reference to the body, suggesting the sagging of skin as a result of old age)

In addition to the *hapaxes*, Epicrates uses several terms that are otherwise unattested in the surviving comic corpus:
- (ἀφ)ορίζω (fr. 10, lines 13, 18, 36)
- διαφροντίζω (fr. 10.22 – the verb is used in an unparalleled syntactical way, in an absolute sense)
- διαχαλάω (fr. 3.15)
- δόλιχος (fr. 3.14)
- ὀρίνω (fr. 10.34)

7. Metre

One of the extant fragments of Epicrates (fr. 10) features the anapaestic dimeter—a metrical form exceedingly rare in Middle Comedy, attested in only twenty surviving fragments (Nesselrath 1990: 267). This particular fragment is especially noteworthy for its metrical diversity, as it combines anapaests (monometers, dimeters – including a couple of paroemiacs – and tetrameters) with iambic trimeters. Such a mixture of metres is highly unusual within the comic corpus of this period and significantly contributes to the fragment's distinctiveness. The presence of the anapaestic dimeter in Middle Comedy is comprehensively examined by Nesselrath (1990) 267–280; cf. also White (1912) 108–138, Dale (^{2}1968) 47–68, and Gentili & Lomiento (2003) 108–119. On the controversy surrounding the metrical validity and theoretical status of anapaestic dimeters and monometers, see Parker (1997) 56, West (1977) 89–94, West (1982) 95.

In his remaining ten fragments, Epicrates employs the iambic trimeter, the metrical form most characteristic of both the genre and the era, yielding the following data:

- middle caesura is attested in fr. 2.2, fr. 3.9, and fr. 5.4;
- trihemimeral caesura appears twice in fr. 5 (lines 2 and 6), as well as in fr. 6.2 and fr. 9.4;
- resolution of the anceps occurs six times in fr. 3, and once each in fr. 6.1 and fr. 8.1;
- resolution of a long element is found in fr. 2.4 (twice in the same line), fr. 3 (ten times), fr. 4 (twice), fr. 5 (four times), fr. 6 (twice), fr. 7 (twice), fr. 8.3, fr. 9.1 (twice in the same line), and fr. 10.18;
- resolution of a short element is observed in fr. 3 (twice), fr. 5.3, fr. 8.1, fr. 9.1, and fr. 10.19;
- violations of Porson's law occur in fr. 3 (three times: lines 10, 11, and 13), fr. 5.2, and fr. 8.1.

8. Epicrates and other comic poets

Of Epicrates' six extant play-titles, four are also attested among the works of other comic poets, spanning earlier, contemporary, and later generations. *The Amazons* and *Antilais* are likewise titles of plays by the Old Comedy poet Cephisodorus, while *The Amazons* is additionally known from the repertoire of the Doric comic playwright Dinolochus. Epicrates' *The Merchant* shares its title with plays by both Diphilus and Philemo, and *The One Difficult to Sell* is a play also produced by Antiphanes.

The recurrence of play-titles across different poets suggests significant intertextual engagement, thematic commonalities, and competitive dynamics within

Greek Comedy. The title *Amazons* points to a sustained comic interest in mythological material, possibly reworking the Amazonomachy theme to suit different comic registers. Similarly, *The Merchant* likely reflects an enduring fascination with trade, travel, and the socioeconomic role of merchants, themes that evolved from Middle to New Comedy. In the case of *The One Difficult to Sell*, Epicrates appears to have imitated not only Antiphanes' title but also parts of his text: Epicrates fr. 5 is largely identical to Antiphanes fr. 89, who was likely the first to treat this theme, if we trust Athenaeus (6.262d-e). If so, *The One Difficult to Sell* may represent a case of direct adaptation or reworking of an earlier comic model, illustrating how Middle Comedy playwrights engaged with – and repurposed – each other's themes, and even the wording of specific scenes. The repetition of *Antilais* by both Epicrates and Cephisodorus further underscores the competitive dynamics of the period, where playwrights engaged with and redefined existing themes to appeal to audience expectations. Whether these shared titles signal direct literary influence, playful rivalry, or independent engagement with popular motifs, their presence across different comic periods reflects both continuity and evolution within the genre.

Notably, the practice of textual recycling was not necessarily considered reproachable and is readily explicable in light of the fact that comic poets not only drew independently on a shared reservoir of traditional material (cf. Hunter 1983: 210) but were also frequently prompted by considerations such as the proven popularity of the original material with audiences. On this 'borrowing' practice, which could *mutatis mutandis* be labeled as 'plagiarism', see Kann 1909, Stemplinger 1912, Ziegler 1950, Roscalla 2006. For several examples, see Papachrysostomou (2021a) 21, 49–50, 76, 126.

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Commentary

Testimonia

test. 1

Suda ε 2415
Ἐπικράτης, κωμικός. τῶν δραμάτων αὐτοῦ *Ἔμπορος* καὶ *Ἀντιλαΐς*.

Epicrates, a comic playwright. His plays include *The Merchant* and *Antilais*.

The information gleaned from this brief Suda entry is remarkably meagre: all it tells us is Epicrates' profession (comic poet) and only two of his play-titles.

The lemma on Epicrates is one of eighty-six biographical entries in the Suda for comic playwrights, all of which feature formulaic phrasing. It is known (cf. Wagner 1905: 30–55) that the Suda's primary sources for these entries were the treatise *Ὀνοματολόγος ἢ Πίναξ τῶν ἐν παιδείᾳ ὀνομαστῶν* (*Anthology of names or Catalogue of those famous for their erudition*) by the biographer Hesychius of Miletus, along with an epitomized version of that work (cf. Sud. η 611 s.v. Ἡσύχιος Μιλήσιος),[3] as well as Athenaeus' *Deipnosophistae* (mostly for play-titles; cf. Lorenzoni 2012: 324–329). Wagner's meticulous analysis of the stereotypical language featuring in these lemmata helps identify – in most cases – the specific source the Suda's compiler used for each entry (Wagner 1905: 50–51). For example, Wagner observes that the phrase δράματα αὐτοῦ indicates that the corresponding lemma derives from the Epitome of Hesychius, whereas the formula τῶν δραμάτων αὐτοῦ ἐστιν points to Athenaeus as the underlying source (as in the case of Epigenes; cf. Epig. test. 1 in this volume). However, the Epicrates lemma lacks ἐστιν, reading only τῶν δραμάτων αὐτοῦ. Only three other comic playwrights (Augeas, Autocrates, and Nicochares) have lemmata that read τῶν δραμάτων αὐτοῦ (i.e. without ἐστίν), and in each of those cases the entry is more substantial (e.g. including a *floruit* or the poet's patronymic). Thus, Epicrates' lemma stands out both for its exceedingly terse content and for its highly unusual wording (τῶν δραμάτων αὐτοῦ without ἐστίν). Wagner (1905: 54), after acknowledging that nothing certain can be said about the source of this entry, tentatively attributes it to the Epitome of Hesychius' work (further noting that listing only two play-titles suggests an epitomized source). Likewise, Nesselrath (1990: 60) finds the omission of Epicrates' *floruit* suspicious and entertains the possibility that the compiler drew on some other source.

[3] In turn, Hesychius' sources trace back to Alexandrian scholarship; see Kaldellis 2005.

test. 2

Ath. 10.422f
Ἐπικράτης ὁ Ἀμβρακιώτης, μέσης δ' ἐστὶ κωμῳδίας ποιητής.
Epicrates from Ambracia, a poet of Middle Comedy.

Athenaeus explicitly informs us that Epicrates hailed from the city of Ambracia and was a poet of Middle Comedy (see also Intro. 1 "Name & Identity", and Intro. 2 "Chronology & Career"). This testimony is the sole surviving evidence for both Epicrates' ethnic origin and his precise categorization as a Middle Comedy playwright. It is striking that Athenaeus does not provide this information when he first quotes Epicrates in the *Deipnosophistae* (at 6.262d, quoting Epicr. fr. 5) but only mentions it on the second occurrence, in Book 10. This peculiarity was probably caused by Athenaeus' habit of consulting and extensively excerpting material from various compendia and anthologies. The note about Epicrates' origin and identity (preserved in Book 10) probably came from such a source and was inserted in the *Deipnosophistae* alongside the respective Epicrates' fragment (fr. 1), explaining why it is absent from the initial quotation in Book 6 (cf. Intro. 3 "Tradition & Reception").

Play-titles & Fragments

Ἀμαζόνες (*Amazones*)
("The Amazons")

Discussion Edmonds 2,348f.; *PCG* 5,153; Nesselrath (1990) 198; Orth (2014a) 310, 312

Title The title is intriguing for two reasons: first, it suggests a mythological parody (cf. Nesselrath 1990: 198); second, it tentatively points to a possible revival of the chorus or, at least, to significant choral involvement in the plot, though the extent remains indeterminable. The Old Comedy playwright Cephisodorus also wrote a play entitled *The Amazons* (see Orth 2014a: 310–315), as did the Doric comic poet Dinolochus; cf. Intro. 8 "Epicrates and other comic poets".

The legendary title-figures of Amazons directly establish a solid mythical background for the play. The Amazons were a mythical race of warrior women, imagined as living in northeastern Asia Minor, in an all-female society where men were admitted only as subordinates or for reproduction. Present in Greek literature since the *Iliad* (e.g. at 3.181–190 Nestor mentions the Amazons' attack on Phrygia before the Trojan War), various aspects of the Amazons' legend and specific Amazon figures infiltrated the myths of major Greek heroes, such as Bellerophon (ordered by king Iobates to combat them; cf. [Apollod.] 2.3.2, Gantz 1993: 313–314), Heracles (whose ninth labour was to fetch the girdle of Hippolyte, the Amazon queen; cf. [Apollod.] 2.5.9, Gantz 1993: 224–225, 397–400), and Theseus (who, according to legend, defeated the Amazons in battle on Attic soil; see Plu. *Thes*. 26–28; cf. Gantz 1993: 284–285); see further Tyrrell 1984, Blok 1995, *LIMC* I.1.586–653. Given the pervasiveness of the Amazon myth and its many ramifications, it is practically impossible to pinpoint a single mythological frame of reference for Epicrates' play. Mythical themes are typical of Middle Comedy, and mythological parody – a common ingredient of the comic plot – often intertwines with contemporary reality (cf. Intro. 4 "Themes & Motifs"). Such an amalgamation of myth with reality cannot be ruled out in the present play, since – in addition to the myth-infused title – the sole surviving fragment (fr. 1) captures a sympotic scene (cf. "Interpretation"). Notably, *The Amazons* is Epicrates' only surviving play-title that suggests a mythological parody, a fact that sets him apart from the majority of his colleagues of *ca*. 380–350 BC (cf. Nesselrath 1990: 198).

At the same time, Epicrates' plural title implies that two or more female figures (Amazons) were central to the plot or at least that their presence was so conspicuous that the play was named after them.[4] The plural form of the title hints at a possible reemergence of a functional chorus in Middle Comedy, since a chorus

[4] Cf. e.g. Aristophanes' *Frogs*, where the chorus of frogs have no key role in the plot, but their croaking was exceptionally memorable.

of Amazons might have been featured in Epicrates' play. However, the surviving evidence from the play (a single fragment of barely one and a half lines) is far too scanty to support any firm argument in that direction. The situation is reminiscent of several parallel cases in Middle (and New) Comedy where play-titles invoke groups (often female groups) but give us little certainty about chorus involvement. Apart from the aforementioned *Amazons* by Cephisodorus and Dinolochus, examples include Antiphanes' *Βάκχαι* (*The Bacchants*), Eubulus' *Στεφανοπώλιδες* (*The Garland-Sellers*),[5] Timocles' *Διονυσιάζουσαι* (*Women celebrating the Dionysia*),[6] Alexis' *Διαπλέουσαι* (*Women sailing through / across*), Diphilus' *Δαναΐδες* (*The Danaids*), Philippides' *Ἀδωνιάζουσαι* (*Women celebrating the Adonia*), Posidippus' *Χορεύουσαι* (*The Dancing Women*), Menander's and Phoenicides' *Αὐλητρίδες* (*The Pipe-girls*), etc. Among the many plays across comic eras that feature female groups in their titles, *The Amazons* can specifically be compared – for its allusion to an all-female society – to plays dealing with the myth of the Lemnian women (another legendary all-female polity). Notably, Aristophanes, Nicochares, Antiphanes, and Diphilus each wrote a play called *Λήμνιαι* (*Lemnian Women*). This myth, incidentally, was extensively treated in tragedy as well as comedy; see analytically Orth (2015) 83–95. Interestingly, one of Epicrates' other surviving play-titles is *Χορός* (*The Chorus*), though nothing certain can be said about the title's precise meaning or role in the play (cf. comm. *ad loc.*).

For the broad question of chorus' (dis)continuity and its occasional reemergence as a functional and organic part of the play after the fifth century BC, see Maidment 1935, Webster ([2]1970) 58–63, Hunter 1979 and (1983) 191, Rothwell 1995, Wilson (2000) 267, Revermann (2006) 278–281 (arguing in favour of a fourth century parabasis), Jackson (2020) 113–137.

Date Unknown

fr. 1 (1 K.)

δεδειπνάναι γὰρ ἄνδρες εὐκαίρως πάνυ
δοκοῦσί μοι

1 ἐνδειπνάναι A: corr. Casaubon ἄνδρες A: corr. Meineke

Because the men seem to me to have concluded dining
at exactly the right moment

5 Hunter (1983: 191) claims that "certain indications point to a larger role for the chorus in this play than was normal for Middle Comedy".

6 According to Apostolakis (2019: 60), "the title perhaps indicates a chorus consisting of women celebrating the Dionysia".

Ath. 10.422f
καὶ Ἐπικράτης ὁ Ἀμβρακιώτης – μέσης δ᾽ ἐστὶ κωμῳδίας ποιητής – ἐν *Ἀμαζόσιν*· δεδει-πνάναι—μοι

And Epicrates of Ambracia – he is a poet of Middle Comedy – in *The Amazons*: "Because—moment"

Metre Iambic trimeter
1. ∪–∪– ∪–∪|– ––∪– (hephthemimeral caesura; Porson's law observed)
2. ∪–∪–

Discussion Meineke 3,365; Meineke *ed.min*. 2,680; Bothe 510; Kock 2,282; Edmonds 2,348f.; *PCG* 5,153; Llopis – Gómez – Asensio 497f.; Orth (2014a) 312

Citation Context The fragment is preserved in Athenaeus' *Deipnosophistae* Book 10, where it is quoted by Ulpian (10.422f) within a swaggering display of his learnedness. Wishing to signal the end of dining and prompt the banqueters to move on from eating to drinking, Ulpian begins his speech with a temporal clause, which features the 'second' perfect form δεδείπναμεν (10.422e): ἐπεὶ δεδείπναμεν (*since we have concluded our dinner*). However, before proceeding to the main clause (423a εὐχόμενοι κεραννύωμεν: *let us mix some wine in prayer*), Ulpian makes a conspicuously lengthy digression (422e–423a), wherein he quotes a total of twelve comic fragments featuring 'second' perfect forms (and perhaps colloquial ones) of both the verb δειπνέω (first person plural indicative δεδείπναμεν and infinitive δεδειπνάναι) and the synonymous ἀριστάω (first person plural indicative ἠρίσταμεν and infinitive ἠριστάναι), in order to sanction his own use of δεδείπναμεν (immediately after he utters the verb, he says εἴρηκε δὲ οὕτως: *this is the form used by* … ; and there follows the list of comic quotations). Yet the last item in Ulpian's catalogue, Amphis fr. 30, is a tangential example, since it features the form παραδεδειπνημένος (perfect participle of the verb παραδειπνέομαι: *to dine next to someone and off him*, *to be a parasite*; see Papachrysostomou 2016: 204–206, arguing against the interpretation supplied by *LSJ*[9] s.v.).[7]

Constitution of Text The textual issues in this small fragment are minimal. In line 1, codex A reads ἐνδειπνάναι (as if the verb were ἐνδειπνέω), which is in clear contradiction to the argument that Athenaeus/Ulpian currently attempts to establish, i.e. the usage of 'second' perfect forms of the verb δειπνέω (cf. "Citation Context"). To resolve this inconsistency and restore the fragment's intended meaning, Casaubon, in his edition of Athenaeus, astutely corrected ἐνδειπνάναι to δεδειπνάναι (cf. s.v. below), thereby ensuring that Ulpian's purpose (i.e. providing parallels for this verb/form) remains intact. In the same line, codex A preserves

[7] On Athenaeus' occasional quotation of material only peripheral to the topic under discussion, see Intro. 3 "Tradition & Reception".

the reading ἄνδρες (with a smooth breathing), which Meineke corrected to ἅνδρες (with a rough breathing), allowing for a crasis of the necessary article οἱ and the noun ἄνδρες. Interestingly, Pl.Com. fr. 71, which presents striking similarities with Epicrates' present fragment (cf. "Interpretation"), features the same crasis: ἅνδρες δεδειπνήκασιν ἤδη; (line 1).

Interpretation The context is sympotic. The speaker acknowledges (whilst delivering a soliloquy or addressing another character) that a dinner of a group of men has now reached a well-timed conclusion (cf. the perfect tense δεδειπνάναι). The setting / occasion of the dinner-party is beyond recover. Regarding the speaker's identity, all that can be said with certainty is that he is *not* one of the men who just dined, since he refers to them using the third person plural δοκοῦσί μοι ("*they* seem to me"), assuming for himself the role of an outside onlooker and especially of someone who seems to have responsibility for the smooth and orderly running of the dinner. His mindfulness over καιρός tells in favour of him being a cook (cf. comm. s.v. εὐκαίρως), as does the fragment's resemblance to Pl.Com. fr. 71 and Philyll. fr. 3 (see below). Alternatively, he could be the cook's assistant, a τραπεζοποιός (*a person setting out the tables*), the master / symposiarch, an outspoken slave, some other member of the household or even a latecomer to the party. It is also conceivable that the speaker is a female character (e.g. a hetaira, an Amazon; cf. the play's title), assessing and overseeing the dining process of a group of men.

Although we can establish neither the fragment's context nor the identity of the speaker, the fragment itself is an example (albeit a tiny one) of a vast and polymorphic comic topos, which permeates all eras of Greek Comedy and consists of all kinds of reports / descriptions / narrations / visualizations of past, present, future or even imaginary dinner parties and symposia: from vigorous feasting preparations (archetypically featuring in Ar. *Ach*. 1085–end; cf. Amphis fr. 27 with Papachrysostomou 2016: 170–176) to exhaustive listings of food, wine, and symposion accoutrements (e.g. Mnesim. fr. 4; see Papachrysostomou 2008: 186–209, Mastellari 2020: 372–440). See Intro. 4 "Themes & Motifs".

Epicrates' fragment breaks off rather abruptly (since Athenaeus' interest rests solely on the occurrence of δεδειπνάναι; cf. "Citation Context"), and the reader is left with the strong impression that something else is pending and is about to happen now that dining has been aptly concluded. Luckily, we can get a particularly good idea of what possibly followed next by comparing the conspicuously parallel situation reported in every detail in two other comic fragments, Pl.Com. fr. 71 and Philyll. fr. 3.[8] Strikingly, both fragments are heavily reminiscent of Epicrates' present fragment, since they feature (already in the first line, just like in Epicrates' case) the perfect tense of δειπνέω (albeit the 'first', standard form δεδειπνήκασιν), capturing the precise moment when a group of banqueters has just finished din-

8 Cf. also Dromo fr. 2 (with Orth 2020: 443–449).