

8. The Peloponnesian War. . . . Pericles : Thuc. ii. 65.
 [Campaign in the north-east]. Brasidas : Thuc. iv. 78-81.
 [The Episode of Sphacteria]. Cleon : Thuc. iv. 27-41.
 [The Sicilian Expedition]. . . Alcibiades : Thuc. vi. 9-18.
9. The Spartan Supremacy . . . Lysander : Plutarch, Selections.
10. The Theban Supremacy . . . Epaminondas, in Plutarch's *Life of Pelopidas*.
11. Philip of Macedon . . . Demosthenes *Philippics*, Selections.
12. Alexander the Great. . . . Arrian vii. 8-11, 24-30.

While claiming that such a scheme satisfies the contentions elaborated above, it is not intended to be exhaustive or inelastic. Does not the teaching of history demand free exercise of individuality as much as or even more than any other subject? Interest on the part of the teacher is the only guarantee for the interest of his pupils: and to display this interest in the most convincing fashion the

teacher must be allowed considerable latitude in the treatment of his subject. The scheme is merely intended to illustrate the practicability of a continuous reading of Greek History based upon the biographical method—an attempt to strike the mean between a cumbersome volume and inadequate treatment of the subject.

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ΣΥΚΟΦΑΝΤΗΣ.

THE origin of the term *συκοφάντης* is one of the small but unsolved problems of classical philology. It was indeed regarded as something of a puzzle even in the fourth century B.C. For Alexis in his comedy *The Poet* wrote:

The name *fig-shower* is not rightly used
 Of scoundrels. No, the first part *fig-* should be
 The mark of a man both innocent and sweet.
 But this sweet innocent is nowadays
 Tacked on to a scoundrel, and we wonder
 why.¹

Three different answers to the riddle were propounded by the learned in ancient times. (1) Istros, the pupil of Kallimachos, who published his *Attika* about the year 200 B.C., stated in it that dried figs were not exported from Attica but retained for home consumption and that, when many smugglers were informed against (*ἐνεφανίζοντο*), those who denounced them to the dikasts were dubbed *συκοφάνται*.² Plutarch *à propos* of a law of Solon, which forbade the exporting of any Attic produce except oil and threatened the offender with the archon's curse, remarks:

¹ Alex. *ap.* Athen. 74 E-F = Meineke *F.C.G.* iii. 468 f.

² Istr. *ap.* Athen. 74 E = Müller *F.H.G.* i. 423.

'Hence we should not dismiss as wholly incredible the view of those who say' what Istros said.³ And the same view is recorded by sundry other grammarians and lexicographers.⁴ (2) Philomnestos in his work *On the Rhodian festival of the Sminthia* advanced a second explanation: 'The word *συκοφάντης* is derived from the fact that in those days fines and taxes took the form of figs, wine, and oil, on the proceeds of which the state conducted its affairs. Those who demanded these payments in kind and handed them over to the state (*εἰσφαίνοντας*) they called, as it appears, *συκοφάντας*, choosing for the purpose the most trustworthy of the citizens.'⁵ (3) Suidas has yet another view: 'When a famine arose in Attica, certain persons plucked the figs that were sacred to the gods. Afterwards, on the return of plenty, others accused them. So this was the origin of the word *συκοφάντης*.'⁶

³ Plut. *v. Sol.* 24.

⁴ *El. mag.* 733, 42 ff. *s.v.* *συκοφαντία*, *El. Gud.* 514, 22 ff. *s.v.* *συκοφαντεῖν*, Suid. *s.v.* *συκοφαντεῖν*, Phot. *lex. s.v.* *συκοφαντεῖν*, Bekk. *anecd.* 304. 30 ff. *s.v.* *συκοφαντεῖν*, schol. Ar. *Plut.* 31, Eust. *Od.* 1495, 16 f.

⁵ Philomn. *ap.* Athen. 74 E = Müller *F.H.G.* iv. 477.

⁶ Suid. *s.v.* *συκοφάντης*.

Suidas' notion appears elsewhere¹ and might be brought into connexion with known religious usage. For figs are associated with a variety of deities and festivals, e.g. Demeter,² Zeus Συκάσιος³ or Μελίχιος,⁴ Dionysos Συκεάτης,⁵ Συκίτης⁶ or Μελίχιος,⁷ Hermes,⁸ Priapos,⁹ the Horai,¹⁰ Helios,¹¹ and again the Plynteria,¹² the Thargelia,¹³ the Brauronia,¹⁴ the Hyakinthia.¹⁵

But the rock on which all these ancient derivations make shipwreck is the analogy of the word *ieroφάντης*, which goes far towards proving that the second element in the compound meant not 'one who shows up or informs against' but simply 'one who shows or exhibits.' The same consideration, among others, will not let us argue from Theokritos' *σύκινου ἄνδρες*¹⁶ or the like to *συκοφάντης* in the sense of 'a worthless informer.' Indeed it is doubtful whether

¹ Schol. Ar. *Plut.* 31, Philemon s.v. *συκᾶς* (cited by Boissonade on Philostr. *her.* p. 320).

² There was at Athens a suburb called Ἱερά Συκῆ, where Demeter first bestowed a fig-tree on the hero Phytalos. The fruit of this tree was believed to be the earliest example of cultivated fruit and was named ἡγητορία (?) or ἡγήτρια (?) or ἡγητρία (σίε), presumably because a cake of it called ἡγητηρία was carried in the procession of the Plynteria (Paus. 1. 37. 2, Philostr. v. *soph.* 2. 20. 3, Athen. 74 D ἡγητορία, *Et. mag.* 418, 49 ff. s.v. ἡγητορία, Eust. *Od.* 1399, 29 ff. ἡγήτρια, *ib.* 1964, 11 ff. ἡγητρία, Hesych. and Phot. *lex.* s.v. ἡγητηρία, Hesych. s.v. *ιερά*, Phot. *lex.* s.v. *ιερά συκῆ*. See also W. Judeich *Topographie von Athen* München 1905 p. 164).

³ Eust. *Od.* 1572, 56 f. Cp. the myth of Zeus and the Titan Συκεύς (Steph. Byz. s.v. Συκαί, Athen. 78 A—B).

⁴ Roscher *Lex. Myth.* ii. 2558 ff., cp. Athen. 78 c *μελίχα* = *σῦκα*.

⁵ Hesych. s.v. Συκεάτης. Dionysos discovered the fig-tree (Sosib. *ap.* Athen. 78 c, *Et. mag.* 455, 30). See further Hesych. s.v. Θουωνίδας· ὁ Διδύσσος παρὰ Ῥοδίοις. τοῦς συκίνους φάλητας.

⁶ Athen. 78 c a Laconian cult, cp. S. Wide *Lakonische Kulte* p. 166 ff.

⁷ Athen. 78 c a Naxian cult.

⁸ Hesych., Phot. and Suid. s.v. *σύκον ἐφ'* Ἑρμῆ.

⁹ Theocr. *ep.* 4. 2, *Anth. Plan.* 240. 1 ff. Philippus, 241. 1 ff. Argentarius, Hor. *Sat.* 1. 8. 1 ff.

¹⁰ Ar. *pax* 1164 ff.

¹¹ Lyd. *de ost.* 45, cp. Plut. *symp.* 4. 2. 1, 5. 9.

¹² *Supra* n. 3.

¹³ A. Mommsen *Feste der Stadt Athen*² Leipzig 1898 p. 468 ff.

¹⁴ Mommsen *ib.* p. 458 f.

¹⁵ M. P. Nilsson *Griechische Feste* Leipzig 1906 p. 129 ff.

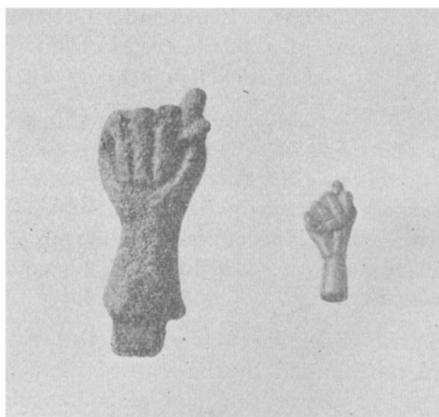
¹⁶ Theocr. 10. 45 with schol. Cp. Zenob. 3. 44, Macar. 7. 82 f., 88.

even the uncompounded *φάντης* was ever used to denote 'an informer.'¹⁷

The view put forward by Mr. Lancelot Shadwell, *viz.* 'that the word properly meant a fig-shower, i.e. one who brings figs to light by shaking the tree . . . and then, metaph. one who makes rich men yield up their fruit by false accusations and other vile arts'¹⁸ gives a more natural sense to *-φάντης*, but seems somewhat fanciful and far-fetched, and is hardly established by the occasional juxtaposition of *σείω* and *συκοφαντώ*.¹⁹

But, failing these explanations, in what direction are we to look? Just a century has gone by since J. F. Boissonade complained *De Sycophantis omnia fere jam sunt occupata*,²⁰ and it may be thought presumptuous at this time of day to hazard another guess about so trite a topic. Still, the key of comparative folk-lore has already fitted so many rusty locks that it seems worth while to give it a turn.

One of the commonest prophylactic gestures all round the northern shores of the



a. Egyptian. b. Neapolitan.

FIG. 1 (†).

Mediterranean and the Levant was and is the thrusting of the thumb between the first and second fingers of the closed hand.²¹ The two amulets in the adjoining cut (fig. 1) are from

¹⁷ See Steph. *Thes.* s.v. *φάντης*.

¹⁸ L. and S. s.v. *συκοφάντης*.

¹⁹ *ib.*

²⁰ Boissonade's ed. of Philostr. *her.* Paris 1806 p. 320.

²¹ O. Jahn 'Über den Aberglauben des bösen.

my collection and represent the said gesture, one in blue Egyptian porcelain, the other in Neapolitan coral. Greek and Roman examples in ivory, bronze, silver, glass, coral, and



a. from Tyndaris. b. from Kertsch.

FIG. 2.

precious stone have been elsewhere published, e.g. an ivory hand from Tyndaris (fig. 2a)¹ or a bronze hand from a grave at Kertsch

(fig. 2b).² I add, for purposes of comparison, a series of specimens both ancient and modern now preserved in the British Museum (fig. 3).³ The gesture, as Th. Echtermeyer was the first to point out,⁴ is described by Ovid as a protection against ghosts :

signaque dat digitis medio cum pollice iunctis,
occurrat tacito ne leuis umbra sibi.⁵

The modern Greeks have recourse to it if any one stares too hard at a child.⁶ The modern Italians use it to avert the evil eye.⁷ In Somerset, Yorkshire, etc. it serves as a protection against witchcraft.⁸ And, speaking generally, we may assert that it is apotropaic or prophylactic in character.

Now this gesture is regularly called 'the fig.' The French say *faire la figue* in the sense of 'mépriser, braver, se moquer.'⁹ The Italians say *far le fiche*.¹⁰ The Spaniards,



FIG. 3 (½).

Reading from the left :—

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Small with silver mount (no information). | 4. Silver mount (no information). |
| 2. Xanten (<i>castra vetera</i>), from Houben Collection. | 5. Xanten, as No. 2. |
| 3. Coral (no information). | 6. Openwork (no information). |

Blicks bei den Alten' in the *Berichte über die Verhandlungen der königlich sächsischen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Leipzig*. Philologisch-historische Classe. 1855 p. 80 f., C. Sittl *Die Gebärden der Griechen und Römer* Leipzig 1890 pp. 102 f., 123, F. T. Elworthy *The Evil Eye* London 1895 p. 255 ff.

¹ Reproduced from O. Jahn *op. cit.* pl. 4, 9, p. 81, cp. C. Sittl *op. cit.* p. 123 fig. 7.

² Reproduced from O. Jahn *op. cit.* pl. 5, 2, p. 41 n. 44 c, p. 81 n. 221, cp. Daremberg-Saglio *Dict. ant.* i. 257 fig. 310, Baumeister *Denkm.* i. 76 fig. 76.

³ For the photograph from which this cut is taken

I am indebted to the courtesy of Mr. R. A. Smith.

⁴ Th. Echtermeyer *Proben aus einer Abhandlung über Namen und symbolische Bedeutung der Finger bei den Griechen und Römern* Halle 1835 p. 32 f.

⁵ *Ov. fast.* 5. 433 f.

⁶ C. Sittl *op. cit.* p. 123.

⁷ *Id. ib.*

⁸ F. T. Elworthy *op. cit.* p. 256.

⁹ É. Littré *Dictionnaire de la langue française* Paris 1863 i. 2. 1669a.

¹⁰ Th. Echtermeyer *op. cit.* p. 32, F. T. Elworthy *op. cit.* p. 257 n. 404 ff., G. Körting *Lateinisch-romanisches Wörterbuch* Paderborn 1901 no. 3730.

hacer la higa.¹ The Portuguese, *dar huma figa*.² The German *einem die Feigen weisen* has the same force.³ And similar phrases are cited from Bohemia and Poland.⁴ I suggest, then, that the Greek *συκοφάντης* meant at first 'one who shows the fig,' *i.e.* one who makes with his hand the sign known as 'the fig.' To do this before a person or thing was to imply that he or it was an evil to be averted by superstitious means. Hence *συκοφαντεῖν* with an accusative case would connote an insulting assumption that the object of the verb was bad, and might be rendered 'to slander grossly' or 'to misrepresent in an outrageous fashion'—the sense that it commonly bears in extant literature.

The gesture in question had undoubtedly a phallic significance.⁵ And so had the whole group of words denoting figs: *cp. ficus*,⁶ *ficoides*,⁷ *ficetum*,⁸ *marisca*,⁹ *σῦκον*,¹⁰ *συκῆ*,¹¹ *σύκινος*, *συκάζειν*,¹² *συκώδης*,¹³ and

¹ G. Körting *ib.*, *cp. V. A. Huber Skizzen aus Spanien* Göttingen 1828-1833 p. 263.

² C. Sittl *op. cit.* p. 103.

³ Th. Echtermeyer *op. cit.* p. 32, F. Flügel *Deutsches Wörterbuch* Brunswick 1894 *s.v.* 'Feige.'

⁴ C. Sittl *op. cit.* p. 103 n. 6.

⁵ See O. Jahn *op. cit.* p. 80 f., C. Sittl *op. cit.* p. 102 f., E. Littré *op. cit.* p. 1669a, G. Körting *op. cit.* no. 3730.

⁶ Mart. *ep.* 1. 65. 4, 4. 52. 2, *C.I.L.* iv. 1820.

⁷ Mart. *ep.* 7. 71. 1 ff., *carm. Priap.* 41. 4, 50. 2.

⁸ Mart. *ep.* 12. 33. 2.

⁹ Juv. 2. 13, Mart. *ep.* 12. 96. 10.

¹⁰ Ar. *rax* 1350 with schol., *Anth. Plan.* 240. 7 f. Philippos, 241. 5 Argentarius.

¹¹ Archil. *ap.* Athen. 594 D, Ar. *eccl.* 707 ff.

¹² Stratt. *ap.* Athen. 592 D, Hesych. *s.v.* *συκάζει*.

lastly *συκοφαντεῖν*¹⁴ itself. One is disposed to ejaculate with Demosthenes¹⁵ *πονηρόν, ἄνδρες Ἀθηναῖοι, πονηρόν ὁ συκοφάντης καὶ πανταχόθεν βᾶσκανον καὶ φιλαίτιον*.¹⁶

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P.S.—I regret that I have not been able to consult S. Reinach 'Sycophantes' in the *Revue des Études grecques* xix. 335 ff. The brief summary in the *Berliner philologische Wochenschrift* April 27, 1907, says: 'Führt nach Zurückweisung der früheren Erklärungen das Wort nach Analogie von *ιεροφάντης* auf den alten Kult der Phyaliden in der *ιερά συκῆ* zurück. Der Sykophant hatte auch, gleich dem Hierophantem in Eleusis, alle Frevler und Verdächtigen von der Kultfeier auszuschliessen und wurde so im Laufe der Zeit zum Typus des böswilligen Anklägers.'—A. B. C.

¹³ Schol. Theocr. 5. 114, where Ahrens reads *συκάδα φησίν* for the vulg. *συκάδη φύσιν*: schol. Ambros. 222 (k.) has *συκάδη φησίν*.

¹⁴ Plat. *com.* and Menand. *ap.* Suid. *s.v.* *συκοφαντεῖν* and *ap. Et. mag.* 733, 48 ff. *s.v.* *συκοφαντία*.

¹⁵ Dem. *de or.* 242.

¹⁶ Since the foregoing article was completed I have seen that C. Sittl, after indicating the phallic character of *die Feige*, remarks in a foot-note (*op. cit.* p. 103 n. 1): 'Es müsste denn sein, dass *συκοφάντης* eigentlich *ύβριστής* bedeutete.' This in part anticipates my conclusions.

Parallels, more or less close, to the history of the word *συκοφαντεῖν* might be made out in the case of *καταδακτυλίσειν*, *σκιμαλίσειν*, *σκινθαρίσειν*, and the like.

SOPH. *ELECTR.* 724.

ἔπειτα δ' Αἰνῖανος ἀνδρὸς ἄστομοι
πᾶλοι βία φέρουσι, ἐκ δ' ὑποστροφῆς,
τελοῦντες ἔκτον ἔβδομόν τ' ἦδη δρόμον,
μέτωπα συμπαίονσι Βαρκαίους ὄχοις.

The explanation given of the accident in Jebb's edition is as follows. 'Just as he (the Aenian) was passing the goal, his horses bolted. Hence he could not work them quite round into the track. They turned out of the left-ward curve (ἐξ

ὑποστροφῆς), and ran straight on. Meanwhile, one of the two Libyan chariots had swept round the goal in a wider circle, on the Aenian's right. The Aenian's horses dashed head-foremost into the Libyan's team, striking it on the left side.' This explanation is open to several objections. To begin with, it would have been almost, if not quite, impossible for the second chariot to have gained so much during the turn as to present its left side to the bolting team.