



The Attic Roots of The Phlakit Brothers

The Phlakit Brothers have received numerous requests to explain the significance of their chosen moniker. What follows is the unfootnoted version of how we came up with the name.

Peter Lupario and Ed Reno were looking for a name for their collaborative effort as erstwhile, post-Cave lovers of wisdom. Peter's iMagination produced an intertextually rich reference out of his background in classical Greek which we were eventually able to shape into The Phlakit Bothers.

It started with Peter's memory of having read a scholarly note about a hapax in an alleged fragment from Aristophanes' *The Clouds*, which fragment contained an additional hapax in a scholium thereto.

The hapax – in bold -- in the context of the fragment reads: *x[-]t[-]jai to[n] prwk[ton]*. Some scholars suggest it is too fragmentary to even be called a hapax. But the specificity of the following words not unreasonably conjectured as *ton prwkton*, obviously has exercised imaginations in the paleographic community.

The hapax in the scholium to the text hapax reads *ph[-]k[-]ei* followed by *[t]on pr[w]kt[on]*, which is obviously a repeat of the conjectured *to[n] prwk[ton]* in the fragment itself. The *ton prwkton* has naturally caused scholars to assume that the meaning of *ph[-]k[-]ei*, and the underlying Aristophanic hapax are both scatological.

Some light was recently thrown on this textual puzzle when a scholium on a highly fragmentary poem of Sappho's was identified in a previously uncatalogued second-century C.E. papyrus from the Egyptian trove found at Oxyrhynchus. That scholium was to a passage from Sappho which some scholars have suggested is contextually similar enough to the Aristophanic fragment to argue that the scholiast, though presumptively different, had in mind the same meaning as the Aristophanic scholiast was suggesting for his passage.

This raises some interesting questions about Aristophanes' awareness of the work of Sappho, seemingly obvious from Aristophanes explicit use of *lezbiazein* and its derivatives, for example in *The Lysistrata*. But that discussion is not material here.

The Sapphic scholium, which is functionally a hapax itself if only because of its fragmentary nature – not uncharacteristic of much of the corpus of Sappho -- reads [--]ll[--]k[--]i, followed, intriguingly, by []n []kto[], which is reasonably conjectured as [to]n [prw]kto[n].

Since the entire puzzle had an Aristophanic center of gravity, The Phlakit Brothers consulted with Jeffrey Henderson on the matter. Henderson is the editor of the Loeb edition of Aristophanes' plays and fragments. Though Jeffrey has actually rejected the initial fragment as Aristophanic, and has therefore not included it in his edition of the *Fragments*, he is also the world's expert, in English at least, on scatological and pornographic terms in Attic, with the largest body of such terms coming, of course, from the Aristophanic corpus.

Jeffrey was not yet aware of the Sapphic fragment and scholium from Oxyrhynchus, but when we brought it to his attention he said it would not be unreasonable to conclude, especially based on the convergence in both texts on *ton prwkton*, that we are probably dealing with a demotic term for dildo, either as a substantive, or possibly in verb form.

The Phlakit Brothers, Castor especially, since he is living in Berlin, intrigued by the possibility of reanimating the hapax into contemporary classical scholarship, initially played with the idea of calling themselves, for fairly obvious reasons based on the paleographic record, The Dildo Brothers™, given in particular the ubiquity – on almost every other street corner in Berlin it seems – of rotating signs advertising for Dildo Kings™.

But a sense of *pudeur* prevailed and they ended up iMaginatively conjecturing Phlakit out of the elements in the various hapaxes which make up this textual puzzle.

The Phlakit Brothers are in the process of logoizing *The Phlakit Brothers* and subsequently making up T-Shirts and other merchandize, including kottabos kits, carrying the logo. They already own the URL **phlakitbrothers.com** for this purpose. Eventually, interested parties will be able to order merchandize from there, though the principal reason for this website will be to post The Phlakit Brothers contributions to the ongoing conversation in philosophy.

The Phlakit Brothers remain open to suggestions for the design of the logo. With the history behind the name, there should be more than enough interesting designs to choose from.

The Phlakit Brothers

Pollux Phlakit

Peter Lupario
North Haverhill, New Hampshire
lupogrigio@myfairpoint.net

Castor Phlakit

Ed Reno
Berlin, Germany
Email: EdReno@cs.com