

= Milo of Croton =

Milo of Croton ( / ˈmaʊloʊ / ; Greek : ????? , Mílōn ; gen . : ??????? , Mílōnos ) was a 6th @-@ century BC wrestler from the Magna Graecian city of Croton , who enjoyed a brilliant wrestling career and won many victories in the most important athletic festivals of ancient Greece . In addition to his athletic victories , Milo is credited by the ancient commentator Diodorus Siculus with leading his fellow citizens to military triumph over neighboring Sybaris in 510 BC .

Milo was said to be an associate of Pythagoras . One story tells of the wrestler saving the philosopher 's life when a roof was about to collapse upon him and another that Milo may have married the philosopher 's daughter Myia . Like other successful athletes of ancient Greece , Milo was the subject of fantastic tales of strength and power , some , perhaps , based upon misinterpretations of his statues . Among other tales , he was said to have carried a bull on his shoulders and to have burst a band about his brow by simply inflating the veins of his temples .

The date of Milo 's death is unknown , but he reportedly was attempting to tear a tree apart when his hands became trapped in a crevice in its trunk , and a pack of wolves surprised and devoured him . Milo has been depicted in works of art by Pierre Puget , Étienne @-@ Maurice Falconet and others . In literature , he has been referenced by Rabelais in Gargantua and Pantagruel , by Shakespeare in Troilus and Cressida , and also by Alexandre Dumas in The Man in the Iron Mask .

= = Athletic career = =

Milo was a six @-@ time Olympic victor . He won the boys ' wrestling ( probably in 540 BC ) , and thereafter five men 's wrestling titles between 536 and 520 BCE . He also won seven crowns at the Pythian Games at Delphi ( one as a boy ) , ten at the Isthmian Games , and nine at the Nemean Games . Milo was a five @-@ time Periodonik?s , a " grand slam " sort of title bestowed on the winner of all four festivals in the same cycle . Milo 's career at the highest level of competition must have spanned 24 years .

Milo was defeated ( or tied ) in his attempt at a seventh Olympic title in 516 BCE by a young wrestler from Croton who practiced the technique of akrocheirismos ? literally , ' highhandedness ' or wrestling at arm 's length ? and by doing so , avoided Milo 's crushing embrace . Simple fatigue took its toll on Milo .

Milo 's hometown had a reputation for producing excellent athletes . In the Olympiad of 576 BC , for example , the first seven finishers in the stade ? a 200 yards ( 180 m ) sprint ? were all men of Croton . After Milo 's career , Croton apparently produced no other athletes of renown .

= = Military experience = =

About 510 BC , hostilities arose between Croton and nearby Sybaris when Telys , a Sybarite tyrant , banished the 500 wealthiest citizens of Sybaris after seizing their property . When the displaced Sybarites sought refuge at Croton and Telys demanded their return , an opportunity for the Crotoniates to destroy a powerful neighbor presented itself . In an account that appeared five hundred years after the event , Diodorus Siculus wrote that the philosopher Pythagoras , who spent much of his life at Croton , urged the Croton assembly to protect the banished citizens of Sybaris . When the decision to do so was made , the dispute between the two cities was aggravated , each took up arms , and Milo led the charge against Sybaris .

According to Diodorus ( XII , 9 ) :

" One hundred thousand men of Croton were stationed with three hundred thousand Sybarite troops ranged against them . Milo the athlete led them and through his tremendous physical strength first turned the troops lined up against him . "

Diodorus indicates Milo led the charge against the Sybarites wearing his Olympic crowns , draped in a lionskin and brandishing a club in a manner similar to the mythic hero Heracles ( see adjacent image ) .

= = Personal life = =

According to Pausanias he was the son of Diotimus . Ancient commentators mention an association between Milo and the philosopher Pythagoras , who lived at or near Croton for many years . Commentators may have confused the philosopher with an athletic trainer , Pythagoras of Samos , but it is also possible the trainer and the philosopher were the same person .

It was said Milo saved Pythagoras 's life when a pillar collapsed in a banquet hall and he supported the roof until Pythagoras could reach safety . He may have married Myia , a Pythagorean herself or possibly Pythagoras ' daughter . Diogenes Laertius ( VIII , 39 ) says Pythagoras died in a fire in Milo 's house , but Dicaearchus ( as cited by Diogenes Laertius , VIII , 40 ) says Pythagoras died in the temple of the Muses at Metapontum of self @-@ imposed starvation . Porphyry ( Vita Pythagorae , 55 ) says Milo 's house at Croton was burned and the Pythagoreans within stoned .

Herodotus ( III , 137 @-@ 38 ) , who lived one hundred years after Milo 's death , says the wrestler accepted a large sum of money from the distinguished physician Democedes for the privilege of marrying Milo 's daughter . If Herodotus is indeed correct , then Milo was probably not a member of Croton 's nobility for such an arrangement with a wage @-@ earning physician would have been beneath the dignity of a Greek noble . Democedes was a native of Croton and enjoyed a successful career as a physician at Croton , Aegina , Athens , and Samos . He was captured by Darius in the defeat of the Samian tyrant Polycrates and taken to the Persian capital of Susa as a slave . There , he carefully tended both the king and queen and was eventually permitted to revisit Croton , but under guard . He escaped his Persian guards and made his way to Croton , where he married Milo 's daughter . The physician sent a message regarding his marriage to Darius , who was an admirer of the wrestler and can only have learned of him through Democedes during his slavery at Susa .

= = Cultural representations = =

= = = Place of champions in Greek culture = = =

Like the tragic protagonists of Greek drama , the Greek athlete had a " larger than life " quality . At Olympia , for example , they were set apart from the general population for lengthy training periods and the observation of a complex series of prohibitions that included abstinence from intercourse . Once training was completed and the athletes were brought before their fellow citizens trim , fit , nude and shimmering with oil , they must have appeared semi @-@ divine .

The reverential awe in which athletes were held in Greece led to exaggeration in the tales surrounding their lives . In Milo 's case , Aristotle ( *Ethica Nichomachea* , II , 6 = 1106b ) began the myth @-@ making process with reports likening Milo unto Heracles in his enormous appetite , and Athenaeus ( X , 412e @-@ f ) continued the process with the story of Milo carrying a bull ? a feat also associated with Heracles . It is Milo 's sudden death which makes him most akin to the heroes : there is a hint of hubris in his attempt to rend the tree asunder , and striking contrast between his glorious athletic achievements and his sudden ignoble death .

= = = Feats of strength = = =

Anecdotes about Milo 's almost superhuman strength and lifestyle abound . His daily diet allegedly consisted of 20 lb of meat , 20 lb of bread , and eighteen pints of wine . Pliny the Elder ( XXXVII , 54 = 144 ) and Solinus ( *De mirabilibus mundi* , 77 ) both attribute Milo 's invincibility in competition to the wrestler 's consumption of alectoriae , the gizzard stones of roosters . Legends say he carried his own bronze statue to its place at Olympia , and once carried a four @-@ year @-@ old bull on his shoulders before slaughtering , roasting , and devouring it in one day . He was said to have achieved the feat of lifting the bull by starting in childhood , lifting and carrying a newborn calf and repeating the feat daily as it grew to maturity .

One report says the wrestler was able to hold a pomegranate without damaging it while challengers

tried to pry his fingers from it , and another report says he could burst a band fastened around his brow by inhaling air and causing the temple veins to swell . He was said to maintain his footing on an oiled discus while others tried to push him from it . These feats have been attributed to misinterpretations of statues depicting Milo with his head bound in victor 's ribbons , his hand holding the apple of victory , and his feet positioned on a round disc that would have been fitted into a pedestal or base .

When he participated in the Olympics for the seventh time and collided against a fellow , the eighteen year Timasiteo , who admired him as a child and where he also learned many moves , the final , his opponent bowed without even start fighting , in a sign of respect . This was the only case in the history of Greece when we remember the name of the man who finished second in a race / competition . For his exploits as a supporter of the Dameas erected a statue in the stadium of Olympia , where he was represented standing on a disc with their feet united .

While one report says Milo held his arm outstretched and challengers were unable to bend his fingers , another anecdote recorded by Claudius Aelianus ( *Varia historia* , XII , 12 ) disputes Milo 's reputation for enormous strength . Apparently , Milo challenged a peasant named Titormus to a trial of strength . Titormus proclaimed he had little strength , but lifted a boulder to his shoulders , carried it several meters and dropped it . Milo was unable to lift it .

= = = Death = = =

The Ancient Greeks typically attributed remarkable deaths to famous persons in keeping with their characters . The date of Milo 's death is unknown , but according to Strabo ( VI , 1 , 12 ) and Pausanias ( VI , 14 , 8 ) , Milo was walking in a forest when he came upon a tree @-@ trunk split with wedges . In what was probably intended as a display of strength , Milo inserted his hands into the cleft to rend the tree . The wedges fell from the cleft , and the tree closed upon his hands , trapping him . Unable to free himself , the wrestler was devoured by wolves . A modern historian has suggested it is more likely that Milo was traveling alone when attacked by wolves . Unable to escape , he was devoured and his remains found at the foot of a tree .

= = = Modern art and literature = = =

Milo 's legendary strength and death have become the subjects of modern art and literature . His death was a popular subject in 18th @-@ century art . In many images of this period his killer is portrayed as a lion rather than wolves . In Pierre Puget 's sculpture *Milo of Croton* ( 1682 ) , the work 's themes are the loss of strength with age , and the ephemerality of glory as symbolized by an Olympic trophy lying in the dust .

Étienne @-@ Maurice Falconet 's marble *Milo of Croton* ( 1754 ) secured his admission to the Académie des beaux @-@ arts , but was later criticized for lack of nobility . The work clashed with the classical ideal requiring a dying hero to express stoic restraint .

Milo was the subject of a bronze by Alessandro Vittoria circa 1590 , and another bronze now standing in Holland Park , London by an unknown nineteenth @-@ century artist . A sculpture was made by John Graham Lough and exhibited at the Royal Academy . It was depicted by Ralph Hedley in a painting of the artist in his studio , and a bronze cast of it stands in the grounds of Blagdon Hall , Northumberland .

His death is also depicted in paintings . It is the subject of an eighteenth @-@ century oil on canvas by Joseph @-@ Benoît Suvée and a work by the eighteenth @-@ century Irish painter James Barry .

In literature , François Rabelais compares Gargantua 's strength to that of Milo 's in *Gargantua and Pantagruel* , and Shakespeare refers anachronistically to " bull @-@ bearing Milo " in Act 2 of *Troilus and Cressida* . In Emily Brontë 's *Wuthering Heights* , character Catherine Earnshaw refers to the circumstances of Milo 's demise when she says , " Who is to separate us , pray ? They 'll meet the fate of Milo ! " In Johann Wyss ' novel *Swiss Family Robinson* , the youngest son Franz is entrusted with a bull buffalo to raise , and from which gains comparison to Milo . Alexandre Dumas

has the strongest of the Three Musketeers , Porthos , mention " Milo of Crotona " saying that he had replicated a list of his feats of strength - all except breaking a cord tied around the head , whereupon d 'Artagnan tells Porthos that it is because his strength is not in his head ( a joke about Porthos being a bit dim @-@ witted ) .