

Hippocratic Legends in the *Pseudepigrapha**

SUNG Young-gon
Kwandong University

Introduction

Hippocrates has been the model of excellence for the medical men of western cultures. They have admired Hippocrates as the ‘father of medicine’ and the massive texts attributed to him, *Hippocratic Corpus* (*Corpus Hippocraticum*) have been sources for inspiration and guidance. But it is uncertain whether any of the texts were, in fact, written by Hippocrates or not.¹ Edelstein defended the belief, which most of modern scholars come to accept, that none of the *Hippocratic Corpus* could be ascribed with any certainty to Hippocrates himself.²

Ancient medical men did not know what genuine texts of Hippocrates are, nor details of his life any more than modern scholars.³ They answered their questions about Hippocrates with narratives and fictional stories. Stories, mixing possible truth with fictional myth,⁴ began to form around the name of Hippocrates in the Hellenistic age.⁵ By the first or the second century A. D., these stories have been given literary form in two kind of texts that have come down to us.⁶

The first kind of texts is called the *Pseudepigrapha*.⁷ A series of letters and speeches, which deals with the life and the legends of Hippocrates, appeared and

Received 31 July 2014; Revised and Accepted 29 August 2014.

* A draft of this paper was read in the title of “*Pseudepigrapha* and the Hippocratic Tradition” at the Tenth Japan-Korea-China Symposium on Ancient European History, held in October 18-21, 2013 in Beijing.

¹ David C. Lindberg, *The Beginnings of Western Science* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 113.

² Ludwig Edelstein, “The Genuine Works of Hippocrates,” Owsei Temkin and C. Lilian Temkin, eds., *Ancient Medicine* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1967), pp. 133-144.

³ cf. G. E. R. Lloyd, “The Hippocratic Question,” *Classical quarterly* 25-2 (1975), 171-192.

⁴ Edelstein, “Hippocrates von kos,” *PW*, suppl. 6 (1935), pp. 1290-1345 is still fundamental contribution to the study of Hippocratic legends.

⁵ Alexandrian scholar Eratosthenes, who have flourished third century B. C., heads the list of those mentioning Hippocrates’ genealogy. *VHSS*, section 1.

⁶ cf. Owsei Temkin, *Hippocrates in a World of Pagans and Christians* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), p. 51.

⁷ For want of a better term, Smith proposed the use of this term, which means ‘writings with false superscription.’ Wesley D. Smith, *The Hippocratic Tradition* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979). p. 216.

became parts of the *Hippocratic Corpus*.⁸ This *Pseudepigrapha* is consisted of twenty-four letters, two speeches, and one official Athenian decree. The second kind of texts are biographies. Three Greek biographies of Hippocrates have survived, they are all similar and quite late.⁹ The earliest and well-known biography is *The Life of Hippocrates according to Soranus (Vita Hippocratis Secundum Soranum: VHSS)*.¹⁰ Whether this Soranus was identical with Soranus of Ephesus, a famous methodist or whether he was an otherwise unknown Soranus of Cos, mentioned in the *VHSS* section 3, is an undecided question.¹¹ The contents of the *Pseudepigrapha* are closely related with *VHSS*. But the exact timeline when *VHSS* has been connected with the *Pseudepigrapha* cannot be determined, since no manuscript of the text is extant earlier than the tenth century. This biography and the *Pseudepigrapha* are the unique sources which provide stories on the life and personality of Hippocrates.

In this paper, I will attempt to reconstruct the narrative synthesis of these legendary stories on Hippocrates according to the *Pseudepigrapha* and *VHSS*. Section 1 surveys with Hippocrates' life mainly according to *VHSS*. The stories related with the plague and Persian king Artaxerxes, which are main theme of *Persian letters*, are dealt in section 2. Section 3 deals with *Democritus letters*. The other themes of the *Pseudepigrapha*, the fate of Cos and good deeds of Hippocrates' family to the Greek world, are dealt in section 4, in the context of political history of the Hellenistic age.

I will complete this paper by rethinking on the Hippocratic tradition. Examining Wootton's inspiring accounts in his *Bad Medicine*, I conclude that the Hippocratic tradition has included not only medical theories and practical remedies, but also the image and the legends in the name of Hippocrates. The legendary stories in the *Pseudepigrapha* are important sources of the Hippocratic tradition.¹²

⁸ The word 'legend' in this paper could be defined as 'an unauthentic story handed down by tradition and popularly regarded as historical.' *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary On Historical Principles* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), p. 1196.

⁹ The second brief biography about Hippocrates has been included in tenth century encyclopedia *Suda*, and thirdly Joannes Tzetzes wrote forty-eight verses about Hippocrates in the twelfth century. All the main contents of these Greek biographies have been found in the anonymous Latin biography of twelfth century manuscript. *Brussels Ms.* No. 1342-1350. Even if they were written for too long after his time to establish historical facts about Hippocrates, all these biographies have preserved the material from the Hellenistic pseudepigraphic documents, most of which were canonized into the *Pseudepigrapha*. cf. Jody Rubin Pinault, *Hippocratic Lives and Legends* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1992), p. 5.

¹⁰ Pinault provides modern English translation and Greek text of *VHSS*. Ibid., pp. 7-8, 127-128.

¹¹ cf. Temkin, *Hippocrates in a World of Pagans and Christians*, p. 52. Scholars presume *VHSS* has been written sometime between the second and sixth centuries A. D.

¹² Smith has already pointed out that modern readers in the nineteenth century have thought Hippocrates not an aloof scientific physician but a practical organizer, self-conscious about ethical aspects of medicine and questions of human existence. Smith, *Hippocrates: Pseudepigraphic Writings* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1990), p. 20.

1. The Life of Hippocrates: Legends

We actually know very little about Hippocrates. The only contemporary reference is some passages in two dialogues of Plato, *Protagoras* and *Phaedrus*. From these passages, we may learn that ‘Hippocrates the Asclepiad,’ a native of Cos, was a teacher of medicine who accepted student upon payment of a tuition fee, and he was a well-known physician in Athens.¹³

But according to *VHSS*, Hippocrates was the son of Heracleidas and Phainarete.¹⁴ “Tracing his family back to Heracles and Asclepius, Hippocrates was the twentieth in line of descent from the former and the nineteenth from the latter.”¹⁵ Hippocrates is known to have flourished during the period of the Peloponnesian Wars. “Specifically as Ischomachus says in the first book of his *On the Sect of Hippocrates*, Hippocrates was born in the first year of the eightieth Olympiad [460/459 B. C.].”¹⁶ Hippocrates’ first teacher was his father, then “he studied with Herodicus, and according to some, with the orator Gorgias of Leontini, and also with the Abderite philosopher, Democritus.”¹⁷

With regard to his excellence, successive three anecdotes which are connected with Perdiccas, the plague, and Artaxerxes, illustrate respectively Hippocrates’ skill in diagnosis, his skill in protection and remedy of the epidemics, and his patriotism.¹⁸ The fifth section of *VHSS* tells how Hippocrates diagnosed and cured Perdiccas’ lovesickness, who was the king of Macedonia. This anecdote is not included in the *Pseudepigrapha*, but does head a series of stories, that show his excellent diagnostic skill and his moral superiority, each of which illustrates virtues of an ideal physician.¹⁹ The eighth section of *VHSS* contains the third anecdote which has been related with Artaxerxes. Hippocrates turned down the Persian king’s appeal that he should come and fight the epidemic which occurred in Persian army.²⁰

¹³ cf. Henry E. Sigerist, *A History of Medicine*, vol. 2 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), pp. 260-262.

¹⁴ In the *Letter*, No. 2 of the *Pseudepigrapha*, Hippocrates’ mother is Praxithea, daughter of Phainarete, who were descended from Heracles.

¹⁵ *VHSS*, section 1.

¹⁶ *VHSS*, section 3.

¹⁷ *VHSS*, section 2. Through Herodicus, Hippocrates was taught with the dietetic medicine. This section also explained Hippocrates’ fluent style via Gorgias, and associated him with Democritus. cf. Temkin, *Hippocrates in a World of Pagans and Christians*, p. 52.

¹⁸ Pinault, *Hippocratic Lives and Legends*, p. 13.

¹⁹ According to Fairweather, ancient biographers preferred to illustrate their character’s virtues with specific anecdotes rather than generalized statements. J. Fairweather, “Fiction in Biographies of Ancient Writers,” *Ancient Society* 5 (1974), 235. cf. Pinault, *Hippocratic Lives and Legends*, p. 13 note 34.

²⁰ This anecdote and more detailed stories have been told in the nine Persian letters of the *Pseudepigrapha*. Not only does Hippocrates have resisted to the king, but so do the Coans, who refused to hand over Hippocrates even after their city has been threatened with destruction.

The second anecdote which may have been related with ‘Athenian plague’ needs to be treated more carefully. Three sections (6-8) of *VHSS* deal with this anecdote. When summoned by Abderites to cure Democritus, Hippocrates saved ‘their whole city from the plague.’²¹ But “when the plague attacked the territory of the barbarians,” the kings of Illyrians and Paeonians begged him for help, Hippocrates refused to do so. Meanwhile “learning from their ambassadors what the predominant winds were there,” Hippocrates concluded that “the plague would come to Attica and foretelling what would happen,” and he took care of the cities and his pupils.²²

Thucydides’ account of the ‘Athenian plague’ in 430 B. C. has been well-known to us.²³ Thucydides clearly stated that “physicians were helpless against the epidemic and were often themselves the first victims.”²⁴ But Pliny, Galen and Aetius described that Hippocrates and his followers fought the epidemic by setting huge fires, which corrected the unhealthy atmosphere that caused the outbreak of the plague.²⁵ Thucydides’ silence about this remarkable activity and the late date of the writers provide strong counterevidence to its historicity. However this legendary story itself had a long history, outlasting antiquity to spring up into the modern age.²⁶

What was the relationship between these later descriptions and Thucydides’ account? Answering this question, Pinault examines how the later story grew out of the *Pseudepigrapha*, which did not mention fire and was vague about Hippocrates’ preventive and therapeutic measures. In conclusion, Pinault sums up that the story deserve our attention, both for the information it yields about the processes of ancient biographical fiction and for the ideas it preserve about the causes and remedy of the plague.²⁷ I think Pinault’ examination is important for the understanding of the Hippocratic tradition in the later antiquity.

²¹ *VHSS*, section 6.

²² *VHSS*, section 7.

²³ Thucydides, *The History of the Peloponnesian War*, vol. 2, pp. 47-54.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 47:4. Recently this plague has been identified as Typhoid Fever. Papagrigorakis, M. C. et al., “DNA Examination of Ancient Dental Pulp Incriminates Typhoid Fever as Probable Cause of the Plague of Athens,” *IJID* 10 (2006), 206-214. cf. Robin Mitchell-Boyask, *Plague and the Athenian Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. viii, 200.

²⁵ Pinault, *Hippocratic Lives and Legends*, p. 36.

²⁶ For example, in the plague year of 1665, the College of Physicians in London recommended that fires should be lit in the streets to correct the infectious air. And the July 13 issue of the *Newes* carried the advertisement, “wherewith Hippocrates, the Prince of all Physicians, preserved the whole land of Greece.” W. G. Bell, *The Great Plague in London in 1665* (London, 1924; reprint New York, 1979), p. 97. cf. Pinault, *Hippocratic Lives and Legends*, p. 35.

²⁷ Pinault, *Hippocratic Lives and Legends*, pp. 36-60.

2. The Plague and the Patriot: *Persian letters*

The *Pseudepigrapha* deals with two main stories, which are also touched upon in *VHSS*. The invitation by Persian king Artaxerxes is the first story told in *Letter* 1-9, ‘*Persian letters*.’ The second story is the invitation from the Abderites, leading to the acquaintance with Democritus, which is told in *Letter* 10-23, ‘*Democritus letters*.’ The third story in the *Pseudepigrapha* is the fate and politics of Cos as related to Hippocrates.²⁸

‘The disease called plague’ in the Persian army caused ‘King of kings, great Artaxerxes’ to send a letter to certain medical man Paitus, urgently asking him for appropriate remedies, or ‘an explanation by some other man who can cure it.’²⁹ Paitus’ reply was in praise of Hippocrates, the physician (*iatros*) who had already cured this malady. “By family he is Dorian, of the city Cos, son of Heracleidas.” “He has a divine nature, and he has brought forth the healing science from minor, idiosyncratic activities to great scientific ones.” Paitus proposed to invite Hippocrates, and to suggest that he should be given all the gold and silver that he wants. “For he knows not just a single manner of healing the affection, he is the father of health, savior, soother of pain.”³⁰ Thereupon the king, in a letter to Hystanes who was governor of the Hellespont, expressed the wish to have Hippocrates in his service, promising to give all the gold he wanted and ‘honor comparable with Persian nobles.’³¹

After Hystanes’ letter have transmitted to him,³² Hippocrates sent the following letter.

Hippocrates the physician to Hystanes, governor of the Hellespont. Greetings.
Send back to the king as quickly as possible that I have enough food, clothing, shelter and all substance sufficient for life, and I am unwilling to enjoy Persian opulence or to save Persians from disease, since they are enemies of the Greeks. Be well!³³

Soon after, Hippocrates wrote to his acquaintances about this affair.³⁴

²⁸ The modern English translation and Greek text of the *Pseudepigrapha* are provided in Smith, *Hippocrates: Pseudepigraphic Writings*, pp. 47-125.

²⁹ *Letter*; No. 1.

³⁰ *Letter*; No. 2.

³¹ *Letter*; No. 3.

³² *Letter*; No. 4.

³³ *Letter*; No. 5. There is another version of this letter.

5a. Hippocrates the physician to Hystanes, governor of the Hellespont.

“Greetings. In response to the letter you sent which you said came from the king, write to the king and send him as quickly as possible what I say: I have enough food, clothing, shelter and all substance sufficient for life. It is not proper that I should enjoy Persian opulence or save Persians from disease, since they are enemies of the Greeks. Be well!”

³⁴ *Letter*; No. 6. Hippocrates to Demetrius.

A famous proverb from the *Hippocratic Corpus* says “where there is ‘love of man’ (*philanthropy*), there is also ‘love of the art’ (*philotechne*).”³⁵ So the ethics of *philanthropy* seems already to have been established in the age of Hippocrates. But a physician’s professional duty is one thing, the respected hero’s obligation is quite another. Moreover, Hippocrates’ philhellenism was not a universal one. His patriotism was combined with particular cities.³⁶

Receiving Hippocrates’ reply through Hystanes’ letter,³⁷ the king felt insulted and demanded Coans to extradite Hippocrates. “If you do not, you will learn that you will pay the penalty for initiating the wrongdoing. I will destroy your city, drag the island into the sea, and make it so that it will not even be known in time to come that there was an island or city of Cos in that spot.”³⁸ Having voted on the king’s demand, Coans resisted. “The citizens all together will not give up Hippocrates, not even if they should be going to die the worst of deaths. Indeed, when Darius and Xerxes wrote letters demanding ‘earth and water’ from our fathers, the people did not give it.” “Now the people give the same answer. Depart from the Coans because they are not going to deliver up Hippocrates.”³⁹

Modern scholars have inferred that at least some materials about Hippocratic legends came from Cos, since their authors seem to be acquainted with Coan geography and history, and have been related with notions of saving Cos from more powerful states.⁴⁰ As already mentioned, according to Ischomachus, Hippocrates was born in 460/459 B. C. “Soranus the Coan adds after research in the Coan archives, when Abriadas was presiding as *monarchus*, on the twenty seventh day of the month of Agrianus.” For this reason, Soranus says, the Coans have honored Hippocrates with sacrifices on that very same day, even up to his age.⁴¹

“Health. The king of the Persians has summoned me, in ignorance that for me wisdom’s message is more powerful than gold. Be well!”

Letter, No. 6a. Hippocrates to his dearest Gorgias.

“Best of greetings and health. The king of the Persians wanted to summon me on condition of abundant gold and silver, in his ignorance that my reasoning which deals in wisdom has more power than gold.”

³⁵ *Precepts*, vol. 4.

³⁶ *VHSS*, section 8 begins that “He was such a Philhellene,” “Hippocrates refused” to help the Persians and Artaxerxes. In addition, *VHSS*, section 10 says that “For this he won brilliant honors from the Coans and also from the Thessalians and Argives and Athenians.” “The Athenians also initiated at public expense in the Eleusinian Mysteries, the next after Heracles, and enrolled him as a citizen and granted him and his descendants the right to dine free in *Prytaneia*.”

³⁷ *Letter*, No. 7.

³⁸ *Letter*, No. 8.

³⁹ *Letter*, No. 9.

⁴⁰ cf. Edelstein, “Hippocrates von kos,” p. 1301.

⁴¹ *VHSS*, section 3.

3. The Physician and the Philosopher: *Democritus letters*

The second story told in the *Democritus letters* needs some historical premises. That is, Hippocrates and Democritus were contemporaries and have known one another. *VHSS* comments their lives' common features, one of which is Hippocrates "ended his days in Larissa, at the same age that Democritus is said to have died."⁴²

Democritus of Abdera was one of the famous pre-Socratic natural philosophers, and the founder of atomism. His methods of scientific research and certain embryological doctrine seem to have influenced some Hippocratic texts. Lloyd presumes the opinion that the seed is drawn from every part of the body and contains each of the substances in it, which is implied or assumed in several Hippocratic treatises, was put forward first by Democritus, the atomist.⁴³ Democritus was also a believer in the plurality of worlds. Abderites report that "He claims that he goes off sometimes into the boundless and that there are numberless Democrituses like himself."⁴⁴

Yet there was another side of Democritus. He was a forerunner of Cynicism, which accounted much of virtue and held contempt for everything that went beyond the bare necessities of life. Also, he was regarded as an expert on laughter. He was well-known 'laughing philosopher.' *Democritus letters* tell about both sides of the dual faces of him.

Resources for the story with Democritus have been provided by Cynic-stoic philosophy, which dramatizes the superior, cultivated wise man in the relations to society.⁴⁵ With Hippocrates, resources for the story have been provided by the contemporary sense of the profession, which creates a personality suitable for the competent physician.

Democritus letters begin with an invitation by the senate and the people of Abdera, asking Hippocrates to come to cure Democritus and save the city. Democritus who has laughed at everything "has been made ill by the great learning that weighs him down." "If Democritus has lost his reason, the city of us Abderites will be, in truth, left empty."⁴⁶

The Abderites were the object of ridicule in antiquity and they had a reputation

⁴² *VHSS*, section 11.

⁴³ Lloyd, *Early Greek Science: Thales to Aristotle* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1970), pp. 63-64.

⁴⁴ *Letter*, No. 10.1.

⁴⁵ Because of uncertain chronology, it would be difficult to decide how far the *Pseudepigrapha* inspired legends about Democritus and how far the latter reflected the former. At any rate, Democritean legends entered into the *Pseudepigrapha*, together with some opinions of Democritus seen from the perspective of the Abderites. cf. Temkin, *Hippocrates in a World of Pagans and Christians*, p. 63.

⁴⁶ *Letter*, No. 10.1.

for doing foolish things.⁴⁷ The invitation letter by Abderites thus carries promise of inherent silliness and flatteries to Hippocrates. “Come not as a doctor, but as a founder of all Ionia.” “You will heal a city, not just a man, and you will open a senate that is sick and in danger of being closed up.” “You yourself will come as lawgiver, yourself as judge, yourself as ruler, yourself as savior and craftsman of these things.”⁴⁸

In his responding letter to the Abderites,⁴⁹ and in subsequent letters to his friends,⁵⁰ Hippocrates seemed to be a great and wise physician who expressed opinions on medical and nonmedical subjects. Especially he elaborated on the greed for money as some kind of madness. If only the greed could be cut off at its root, the other vices would disappear.⁵¹ The Abderites proposed Hippocrates money and honor, though they were aware of the fact that curing a famous man would count more for him. Hippocrates accepted the invitation, not in the incentive they proposed. But he accepted in obedience to the gods, to whose favor medicine owes its existence, and to Nature which wishes him to care for humankind. Hippocrates deeply resented Abderites’ offer of money, and rejected to being treated as if he were a hired man rather than an independent physician. He insisted that medicine must remain free, and condemned the greed for money which makes life miserable.⁵²

However, his opinions about money matter are not strictly relevant to the main question confronting Hippocrates. “Is Democritus insane and in need of medical remedy,” or “Is his madness a baseless conjecture of the Abderites, who are incapable of comprehending the sage?”⁵³ In spite of inclining to the latter view, Hippocrates was not sure, and he has remained reserved until his visit to Abdera and meeting with Democritus. Even preparation of *hellebore*⁵⁴ and Hippocrates’ reservation of the final decision till having interview with Democritus would have fitted the feature of a conscientious physician. The Abderites had especially complained about Democritus’ immoderate laughter at everything. Hippocrates thought this kind of laughter is not just insane, rather morally reprehensible to take delight in sickness.

When his ship was ‘near the gates of Abdera,’ Hippocrates was anxious about Democritus and could not sleep late on the very night. “Falling asleep towards the break of dawn,” Hippocrates had a dream, after which he believed that nothing dangerous would happen.⁵⁵ In the dream, the god Asclepius himself appeared with

⁴⁷ Temkin, *Hippocrates in a World of Pagans and Christians*, p. 62.

⁴⁸ *Letter*; No. 10.2.

⁴⁹ *Letter*; No. 11.

⁵⁰ *Letter*; Nos. 12-17.

⁵¹ Temkin, *Hippocrates in a World of Pagans and Christians*, p. 66.

⁵² cf. *Ibid.*, p. 64.

⁵³ cf. *Ibid.*, p. 66.

⁵⁴ A strong cathartic that has been used for insanity.

⁵⁵ *Letter*; No. 15. Hippocrates wrote to Philopomen about this dream.

snakes and companions, and introduced a 'large beautiful woman' to Hippocrates. Her name was Truth (*aletheia*), and she promised to join him at Democritus' house. Another woman whom he saw appearing was Opinion (*doxa*), who has lived with the Abderites.

In the long letter that concludes the story, Hippocrates told his friend Damagetus what have happened between him and Democritus after the ship had reached Abdera.⁵⁶ Hippocrates went on and found Democritus was sitting on a stone seat. "He had a papyrus roll on his knees," and some other book rolls were laid out on both sides. And scattered around were 'large number of animals, generally cut up.' Democritus sometimes bent and applied himself intensely to writing, sometimes he sat attentive quietly, pondering within himself. Then he stood up and walked around and "examined the entrails of the animals."⁵⁷ Asked what he was writing, Democritus said 'a treatise on madness.'⁵⁸ Democritus was investigating the nature of madness, its origin and therapy. Democritus dissected the animals not because he hated the divine creatures, but because he was pursuing the nature and location of *gall*.⁵⁹

Hippocrates said, "By Zeus, Democritus, you speak truly and wisely." There was no longer any question of Democritus' madness. Then Hippocrates considered Democritus has been blessed to enjoy his leisure, meanwhile it has not fallen to himself to share in it. Being asked "Why has it not so fallen?", Hippocrates replied because of 'traveling, children, debts, disease, death, servants, marriages.'⁶⁰ Such daily things have intervened his leisure.

From this point on, Democritus turned from a natural philosopher to the Cynic. "He burst out laughing. He scoffed and then remain silent." Being asked why he laughed, Democritus explained the reason for his laughter and converted Hippocrates into Cynicism.⁶¹ As the story tells about the dialogues lengthily, the meeting with Democritus was a triumph of Cynicism and a defeat for Hippocrates.⁶² Whoever invented this letter, he was not much interested in medicine. This story ends with, in fact, the letter from Democritus to Hippocrates, which briefly outlines the meeting.⁶³ In this letter, Democritus seemed to return to

⁵⁶ *Letter*; No. 17. Hippocrates has sent back the ship to Damagetus. The latter may have lent the ship for Hippocrates.

⁵⁷ *Letter*; No. 17.2.

⁵⁸ *Letter*; No. 17.3.

⁵⁹ It corresponds to *bile* in man. Hippocratic physicians asserted that the increase of *bile* caused insanity.

⁶⁰ Some of the Hippocrates' statue has been pictured with his head covered by the cloak. "Of those who say about these pictures, some says the gesture is a sign of his love of travel." *VHSS*, section 12.

⁶¹ *Letter*; No. 17.4-9.

⁶² Temkin asserts that this story should be read and interpreted as it stands. Temkin, *Hippocrates in a World of Pagans and Christians*, p. 70.

⁶³ Democritus wrote to Hippocrates that "You came to me to administer *hellebore*, on the assumption that I was mad, persuaded by mindless men in whose judgment my labor was

the initial natural philosopher from whom Hippocrates has learned some practical knowledge.⁶⁴

One of the theme of Democritus letters is that diseases must not be judged merely on the basis of how they appear to the eyes of layman. Democritus accepted that medicine is a beautiful and useful art (*techne*) with which every man should be acquainted. At the same time, this second story tells that “wisdom is the sister of medicine.” One rescues the mind from passions, the other remedies the diseases of the body.

4. Hippocrates and Cos

The third story of the *Pseudepigrapha* tells about the fate of Cos and good deeds of Hippocrates and his family, which are described in two speeches and an imaginary Athenian decree.

Speech from the Alter (Epibomios) and *Ambassadorial Speech of Thessalus (Presbeutikos Thesslou)* tell us of Athenian plan to attack Cos, which was suspended by appeals of Hippocrates and his son Thessalus.⁶⁵ According to *Presbeutikos*, Thessalus has come to Athenian assembly because his father sent him to remind four tales which explain some benefits done by Hippocrates’ family to Athens and all the Greece.

The first tale tells mythologically about Hippocrates’ ancestors, Fawn and Gold. During the Amphictyonian war, Fawn (*Nebros*) the Asclepiad was summoned from Cos with his youngest son Gold (*Chrysos*) by Delphic oracle, and poisoned the water supply of the besieged town of Crisean race. The second tale tells about Cos’ self-sacrificing resistance to the Persians in the lead of Cadmus and Hippelochus, who were forebears of Hippocrates. This tale seems to be historical, but scarcely have been demonstrated by another sources. Especially it modifies Herodotus’ *History*, by describing Coan resistance to Artemisia, daughter of Lygdamis.⁶⁶ The third tale tells of the plague, which does not seem to be based on a historical event. Smith says this tale appears to become a history, in other words, to become a favorite faction firstly by the author of *Presbeutikos* himself, though it could actually be a traditional story in Cos.⁶⁷ Fourthly, Thessalus tells of his own service to the Athenian army at the expedition of Syracuse and of the marvelous activities of himself in the plague. In addition Thessalus tells of a gold crown and other

madness. As it happened, I was writing about the disposition of the cosmos, about the heavens and about the stars.” *Letter*; No. 18.

⁶⁴ *Letter*; No. 19 deals with the discourse on madness in the *Sacred Disease* shortly, which is one of the most important text of *Hippocratic Corpus*.

⁶⁵ *VHSS* tells of another story that Hippocrates saved his homeland by begging help from the Thessalians when the Athenians were about to attack Cos. *VHSS*, section 9.

⁶⁶ Smith, *Hippocrates: Pseudepigraphic Writings*, p. 3.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

honors given to Hippocrates and himself by Athens. *Athenian decree* also records the same rewards.

In short, *Presbeutikos* emphasized family of Hippocrates' royalty to Greece. In a Democritus letter, Hippocrates boasts himself to the senate and people of Abdera that his refusal to free the Persian army from the plague was equal to "fighting my naval battle against the barbarian in the way available to me."⁶⁸

It is not surprising that Coan admired Hippocrates, but it is striking that this heroic activities of Hippocrates has not been known widely in the Hellenistic age. But Erotian, who was a Greek lexicographer in the rule of the Emperor Nero, listed the speeches, *Presbeutikos* and *Epibomios*, presenting Hippocrates more as a patriot (*philopatris*) than as a physician.⁶⁹ Sometime after Erotian, the *Pseudepigrapha* was included in the *Hippocratic Corpus*.⁷⁰ Also with the *Pseudepigrapha*, circulation of the legends of idealized Hippocrates has been accelerated, which Galen took for granted. But unfortunately the *Pseudepigrapha* have gained only selective credits, such as in conjectures about authorship of the specific Hippocratic texts, or in Galen's case the worship of Hippocrates as an ideally unselfish doctor, or even in Celsus' repetition of Hippocrates' apostleship to Democritus.⁷¹ Celsus believed that before Hippocrates, medicine had been part of philosophy.⁷²

Smith presumes *Presbeutikos* was the earliest in the *Pseudepigrapha*, and suggests speeches were composed between 350 and 250 B. C. in the political upheaval of Cos.⁷³ Smith concludes that *Presbeutikos* and *Epibomios* are species of propaganda for the Asclepiads and Cos.⁷⁴ Both the epistolary genre, *Letters* and the imaginative *Speeches* which were arranged into the historical setting have been used for political purpose. But it is disappointing that they are virtually all that we have, that there are not even poor historical accounts to give us clues about their historical reality.

⁶⁸ Letter, No. 11.

⁶⁹ Erotian, *Erotiani Vocum Hippocraticum collectio*, ed. Ernst Nachmanson (Uppsala, 1918), p. 9. cf. Smith, *The Hippocratic Tradition*, pp. 222, 247.

⁷⁰ cf. Temkin, *Hippocrates in a World of Pagans and Christians*, p. 40.

⁷¹ Smith, *The Hippocratic Tradition*, p. 222.

⁷² Celsus wrote *On Medicine* in the rule of the Emperor Tiberius, which was part of an encyclopedic work. Its lost portions have been guessed to include agriculture, rhetoric and military science. This treatise gives sensible educated man's view of medicine in early Roman Empire. Celsus, *De Medicina*, with an English Translation by W. G. Spencer, 3 vols. (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1935-1938).

⁷³ cf. Smith, *Hippocrates: Pseudepigraphic Writings*, pp. 5, 7-12.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 17. The Asclepiad clan had been instrumental in supporting for *Asclepion* which carried on temple medicine, then it transformed from the *koinon* to the medical profession.

Conclusion: Rethinking on the Hippocratic Tradition

Modern intellectual historian Wootton proposes unique thesis on the Hippocratic tradition. According to him, Hippocrates founded a tradition of medical education that continues uninterrupted to the present day. Yet the striking thing about the tradition is that the therapies it relied on must have done more harm than good. For example, bloodletting has weakened and even killed patients for some two thousand years, and infection during the childbirth have killed mothers and infants.⁷⁵

Wootton argues that until the invention of antibiotics in the 1940's, Hippocratic doctors, in general, could not cure their patients effectively. His thesis is directly concerned with the progress in medicine, standing by 'evidence-based medicine.' Wootton insists his book is the first history of medicine properly to acknowledge that most medicine has not been evidence-based, and indeed that it did not work.⁷⁶ He uses the terms 'Hippocratic medicine' and 'traditional medicine' to cover the whole period through to the rise of the modern germ theory of disease.⁷⁷ And he says if modern medicine is effective and Hippocratic medicine was not, it follows that the very idea that there is continuity between the two is profoundly misleading.⁷⁸

Of course, modern medicine is more effective in curing patients than Hippocratic medicine, and there are lots of discontinuity in theory of disease between the two. Moreover, the Hippocratic tradition has never been a homogeneous one. During more than two thousand years, Hippocratic tradition already has experienced discontinuities and varieties. His admirers have found in him properties reflecting their own ideals, consequently, there have been diversities in the interpretation of the Hippocratic tradition.⁷⁹

I think Wootton's interpretation of the tradition focuses mainly on the practical sides of medicine. Theories of diseases and technologies of cures have been developed, and many of the Hippocratic teachings were proved false in the progress of medicine. But western medical men have never discarded the name of Hippocrates itself. To be called a 'second Hippocrates' or the 'Hippocrates of his time' has been the highest title of honor that could possibly be bestowed on a western physician, and whenever something went wrong in medicine, when theory and practice did not harmonize, the cry 'Back to Hippocrates' was heard.⁸⁰ So

⁷⁵ David Wootton, *Bad Medicine: Doctors doing harm since Hippocrates* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 2.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

⁷⁹ On the concept and the history of the Hippocratic tradition, confer Smith, *The Hippocratic Tradition*. Smith says that his book is concerned with thought about medicine, not with medical practice. *Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁸⁰ Sigerist, *A History of Medicine*, vol. 2, p. 260.

Thomas Sydenham, whom Wootton praises as one of the first to have a modern concept of disease, was revered as the 'English Hippocrates.'⁸¹

In some time after Hippocrates, medical profession have divided into the sects (*aïreseis*). Three mayor sects were dogmatists, empiricists and methodists. The views and the importance of Hippocrates became main subject of discussion in their doctrinal disputes.⁸² Methodist, I think this sect was a forerunner of 'evidence-based medicine,' believed that medicine should rest on direct diagnosis on the basis of symptoms, so they did not think of Hippocrates as the head of their sect. But other two main sects have been formed among his followers. For the dogmatists, Hippocrates was the founder of a scientific medicine based on hidden causes which natural philosophy has pursued. The empiricists thought of Hippocrates as himself an empiricist, and they held that medicine had to do with knowledge of obvious causes.⁸³

Galen offered some fierce controversies of sect versus sect in various texts. Moreover Galen claimed that he himself followed the teachings of Hippocrates, and that he understood *Hippocratic Corpus* entirely, knowing which texts were genuine and which were spurious. According to Galen, the essence of Hippocratic medicine is a scientific one.⁸⁴ In retrospect, the rejection of sects in favor of a single medical science, guided exclusively by the search for what reason and experience proved to be true, was one of Galen's main historical contribution.⁸⁵

But other parts of ancient men were interested in medicine as a cultural phenomenon.⁸⁶ Laymen have tasted in Hippocrates not because of medical writings and theories, but because of character and activities of a great man.⁸⁷ Hippocrates was an expression of Greek genius and Greek ethics, and he was proof of the humaneness and superiority of Greek ethos to political forces.⁸⁸

Because of its crucial effects on human lives, medicine offered scope for mystification and for self-enrichment of the medical men. And potentially medicine's effects were as great as battles won and cities conquered.⁸⁹ Therefore,

⁸¹ cf. Wootton, *Bad Medicine*, pp. 10, 24.

⁸² Smith, *The Hippocratic Tradition*, pp. 204-205.

⁸³ Temkin, *Hippocrates in a World of Pagans and Christians*, p. 6.

⁸⁴ But, after Littré produced modern edition and translation of the *Hippocratic Corpus*, entirely different assumptions have been appearing. Emile Littré, ed., *Oeuvres Complètes d'Hippocrate* 10 vols. (Paris, 1839-1861). Littré considered the spirit of Hippocrates is quite different from Galen's, and the medical texts on which Galen's interpretation of Hippocrates rested are different ones from those on which his scientific medicine have been based. In result, Galen's reputation as the authoritative medical historian had sunken dramatically, and with it his credibility as a reliable guide to scholars in Hippocratic studies. cf. Smith, *The Hippocratic Tradition*, pp. 13-14.

⁸⁵ Temkin, *Hippocrates in a World of Pagans and Christians*, p. 6.

⁸⁶ cf. Smith, *Hippocrates: Pseudepigraphic Writings*, p. 1.

⁸⁷ cf. Temkin, *Hippocrates in a World of Pagans and Christians*, p. 57.

⁸⁸ cf. Smith, *Hippocrates: Pseudepigraphic Writings*, p. 1.

⁸⁹ cf. *Ibid.*, p. 1.

as Smith says, we could read the *Pseudepigrapha* as literary interpretations of history and status of Greek medicine.⁹⁰ Hippocratic legends remain as important parts of the Hippocratic tradition.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 2.

Abstract

A series of documents that became parts of the *Hippocratic Corpus*, relates the life and legends of Hippocrates. This collection has been called the *Pseudepigrapha*, consisted of twenty-four letters (these letters are divided into two groups, *Persian letters* and *Democritus letters*), two speeches, and one official Athenian decree. The contents of the *Pseudepigrapha* are closely related with a short biography written by Soranus (*Vita Hippocratis Secundum Soranum: VHSS*).

In this paper, I attempt a narrative and synthetic account of these legendary stories about Hippocrates. The stories of plague and Persian king Artaxerxes are explained analyzing *Persian letters*, and meeting with Democritus is explained analyzing *Democritus letters*. The other stories of the *Pseudepigrapha*, the fate of Cos and good deeds of Hippocrates to the Greek world, are analyzed in the context of political history of the Hellenistic age.

I conclude this paper by rethinking on the Hippocratic tradition. This tradition has included not only medical theories and practical remedies, which could be proved false in the progress of medicine, but the image and legends of Hippocrates. So we could read the legends in the *Pseudepigrapha* as interpretations of the history of Greek medicine. Hippocratic legends are important parts of the Hippocratic tradition.

Key Words: *Hippocratic Corpus*, *Pseudepigrapha*, *VHSS*, legendary stories, Hippocratic tradition