# GREEK POETRY 2000–700 B.C.

## I

THEY used to believe that mankind began in 4004 B.C. and the Greeks in 776. We now know that these last five thousand years during which man has left written record of himself are but a minute fraction of the time he has spent developing his culture. We now understand that the evolution of human society, its laws and customs, its economics, its religious practices, its games, its languages, is a very slow process, to be measured in millennia. In the case of Greek religious usage it is now appreciated that it has its roots not in Mycenaean but in Palaeolithic times.[1] As for Greek poetry, comparative studies have shown that it goes back by a continuous tradition to Indo-European poetry. There are various signs of this continuity, and it may be of service if I briefly indicate the categories into which the evidence falls.[2]

(i) Terminology relating to the poet's craft. Greek shares with Sanskrit, and in part with other IE. languages, the concept that the poet is a builder (*τέκτων ἐπέων*), the use of the verbs 'make' (*ποιεῖν*) and 'weave' for his composing, and the idea that he is divinely inspired and borne along a path in a horse-drawn chariot.[3]

(ii) Metrical technique. Comparison especially with Vedic metres, but also with Slavic and others, shows that most of the commonest cola used in Greek verse, and one or two of the strophe-forms, are developments from IE. prototypes. We must also take into account the virtual agreement of Greek with Sanskrit principles of prosody (Meillet), the occurrence of metrical lengthening or shortening in certain forms (Wackernagel), and the admission of *brevis in longo* at the end of a line.

(iii) Stylistic features. I would pick out: (*a*) omission of the syllabic augment as a poetic licence in Greek and the Vedas and Avesta (Wackernagel); (*b*) disturbance of word-order, for instance inversion of the normal name–patronymic sequence in *Πηληϊάδεω Ἀχιλῆος* (Wackernagel) and Lydian *Sivãmlλ Saroλ*; (*c*) juxtaposition of compounds with the same fore-element, *πολυρρῆνες πολυβοῦται, ἀθάνατος καὶ ἀγήρως* = Vedic *ajárā amṛ́tā*; (*d*) the pattern consisting of three names of which the last is accompanied by an epithet, common to Greek, Indian, and Germanic poetry (H. Hirt, *Indog. Grammatik* i (1927) 126).

[1] This insight, particularly associated with the name of Meuli, forms the basis of W. Burkert's exciting new book *Homo Necans* (1972).

[2] For details see Rüdiger Schmitt's comprehensive *Dichtung und Dichtersprache in indogermanischer Zeit* (Wiesbaden, 1967), and the collection of articles edited by him in *Indogermanische Dichtersprache* (Darmstadt, 1968: Wege der Forschung, 165), especially those of Wackernagel (from *Philol.* xcv [1943], 1–19 = *Kl. Schr.* 186–204) and Durante (from *Rendiconti dell'Accademia nazionale dei Lincei* xiii [1958], 3–14; xv [1960], 231–49; xvii [1962], 25–43). On metre see A. Meillet, *Les Origines indo-européennes des mètres grecs*, 1923 (the essentials may be found in his *Aperçu d'une histoire de la langue grecque*, 7th edn., 1965, pp. 145–52); R. Jakobson, 'Studies in Comparative Slavic Metrics', *Oxford Slavonic Papers* iii (1952), 21–66 = *Selected Writings* iv (1966), pp. 414–63; C. Watkins, 'Indo-European Metrics and Archaic Irish Verse', *Celtica* vi (1963), 194–249; M. L. West, 'Indo-European Metre', *Glotta* li (1973).

[3] See the first and second of Durante's articles.

(iv) Poetic vocabulary. Many instances have been found of semantically identical or etymologically cognate phrases, especially in Greek and Vedic Sanskrit poetry, which must go back to a common original (Durante, Schmitt, and others). They are not all equally significant, for some are phrases that need not have been poetic in the parent language; but there is a sufficient residue of purely ornamental expressions—broad or boundless earth, swift or strong-hoofed horses, shining clothes, the wheel of the sun, and so on—to suggest a shared poetic heritage even apart from other considerations which point in the same direction.[1]

Certain similarities of structure and content between Germanic and Indo-Iranian texts have also been claimed as reflexes of IE. poetry.[2] The parallels are interesting, but contribute little to the question of the continuance of IE. tradition in Greek.

## II

All this does not conspire to give us much of a picture of the poetry that the Greeks brought with them into Greece at the beginning of the Middle Helladic age. But we can at least infer something of its metrical forms. They must have occupied a position not very far advanced along the line of development that led from the simple Common-IE. types to those known from archaic Greece.

In IE. verse the unit of composition was the line, in which the number of syllables was fixed and the ending scanned either ⏑ – ⏑ – (acatalectic) or ⏑ – – (catalectic), the earlier syllables being of unregulated quantity. The primary cola contained from five to eight syllables. These cola could themselves be used as lines; or a longer line could be obtained by adding four extra syllables at the beginning (marked off by caesura) or by duplicating the acatalectic cadence,

$$\times\ \times\ \times\ \times\ ⏑ – ⏑ – \,|\, ⏑ – ⏑ –$$

Lines of different lengths could be mixed in irregular sequence, but it was more usual to use equal lines in series (sometimes with a catalectic verse to conclude), or to have a regular alternation of lines of two sorts, or a three-line strophe of the form AAB.

In Greek the IE. cola assumed various more definite shapes through the stabilizing of the quantities of the syllables preceding the cadences. There were also other important developments:

1. New units were created from the old by expansion, that is, by the doubling or trebling of the rhythmic element – ⏑ ⏑ or – ⏑ ⏑ – in the middle of the colon.

2. Asymmetrical rhythms were modified into symmetrical ones by regularization, assimilation of the less characteristic part of the movement of the colon to the more characteristic part.

3. Longer and more complex strophes were built up.

None of these three processes operated so consistently as to push the older cola into the background. To a certain extent they represent regional and not Panhellenic developments. This has important chronological implications; for the separate regional traditions of poetry that we find from the beginning of the

[1] By way of a control we may take the lists of noun–epithet formulas in Tamil poetry given by K. Kailasapathy, *Tamil Heroic Poetry*, 1968, pp. 148–70, where no such correspondences appear.

[2] Articles by Kuhn, Specht, Schaeder, and Schröder in the Wege der Forschung volume. Specht goes so far as to reconstruct the noble verse *idém, ĝonōses, úpo klúte,* 'Hearken to this, men!'.

literate period must be to a considerable degree the outcome of the isolationism of the Dark Age.

These regional traditions may be defined initially in terms of dialect. Broadly speaking, the archaic Greek poetry known to us is composed in three dialects: (i) Ionic. With this I include the epic language, in spite of the older Aeolic elements it contains, since it evidently reached its definitive form in Ionia. (ii) Lesbian. There is some influence from the epic dialect on the Lesbian poets, but it is limited and easily identified. (iii) Doric. There are individual variations of dialect among the poets concerned,[1] but they agree in a post-Mycenaean dialect form which does not belong to any of their vernaculars, namely *-οισα* in the feminine participle.[2] Epic influence is again noticeable but definable.

To this threefold division of dialects corresponds a threefold division of metrical practice.

In Ionian poetry down to the first half of the sixth century an important part is taken by stichic verse—hexameters, trochaic tetrameters, and iambic trimeters—which was probably recited, not sung. For sung verse the most popular metre was the elegiac couplet.[3] However, in Archilochus we see nine or ten others being used as well. They are without exception 'epodic': in other words the unit of composition is (just as in the elegiac couplet, which has no less right to be called epodic) a miniature strophe formed by juxtaposing two or at most three simple cola. The cola concerned are the dactylic hexameter, tetrameter, and hemiepes, the iambic trimeter and dimeter, and the ithyphallic.[4] There is no trace of any more complicated metrical structure, and no reason to suppose that the range of metres used by Archilochus was unrepresentative of Ionian song in the seventh century. A hundred years later Hipponax presents a similar picture. He uses trimeters and tetrameters, mostly in the 'limping' form, hexameters, and two of Archilochus' epodic metres; also a catalectic iambic trimeter and tetrameter. Only in a fragment of uncertain attribution do we find a colon of 'aeolic' type (175 *καὶ κνίσῃ τινὰ θυμιήσας*).

Lesbian poetry is very different. The compositional unit is of similar dimensions: the single line, or, more often, the two-, three-, or at most four-line stanza. But the lines can scarcely ever be analysed in terms of dactyls or iambi, or divided into uniform metra. In other words, the cola are essentially of the asymmetric type. Another distinctive feature is that many of them begin with two syllables of unregulated quantity, the so-called aeolic base. Further, a long syllable is never interchangeable with two shorts.

The practice of the Doric poets is different again. They can compose *κατὰ στίχον*,[5] or in a stanza as short as three lines,[6] but more often they build a considerably longer and more varied strophe. From another point of view they

[1] I am considering primarily Eumelus (in his prosodion for the Messenians, *Melici* 696), Alcman, Stesichorus, and Ibycus.

[2] Stesichorus and Ibycus also have *Μοῖσα*, while Alcman has Old Laconian *Μῶσα*; and Ibycus has *-οισι* in the third plural of the indicative, while Alcman has *-οντι* and apparently *-ονσι*.

[3] That it was sung is clear from such passages as Thgn. 241–3 and 939.

[4] The various combinations are tabulated in my *Iambi et Elegi*, i. 1.

[5] So apparently Alcm. 46 (ionics), 26, 77?, 80?, 107? (hexameters), and perhaps 20 (iambic dimeters), 19, 59a (iambic trimeters catalectic).

[6] Alcm. 3 fr. 3 iii; 14(a), which resembles an Ionian epode.

tend to bridge the gap between the Ionian and Aeolic traditions: we find some of the same cola as in the Lesbians,[1] but on the other hand extensive use of dactyls[2] and of the iambic dimeter.[3] Characteristic of these poets is the combination of dactylic with trochaic cola to produce what we call dactylo-epitrite.[4]

It may further be observed that the use of the names Ionian, Aeolian, and Dorian for different musical modes implies the same threefold division of the national tradition.

How old is this division? We may be sure at least that it goes back beyond the eighth century. As early as Eumelus and Hesiod, mainland poets composing in hexameters imitate the dialect of Ionian epic. Not much later Tyrtaeus in Sparta, Theognis in Megara, and Solon in Athens acknowledge Ionic as the proper dialect for elegy. That means that hexameter and elegiac poetry came to the mainland from Ionia, after they were fully developed. In the case of epic we can give an approximate date for the spread. It occurred before Eumelus and Hesiod, but after the completion of the series of sound-changes which Ionic underwent in the Dark Age. The latter consideration suggests that the eighth century is more likely than the ninth. This conclusion receives support from archaeological evidence, which indicates that the second half of the eighth century witnessed a sudden resurgence of interest in the heroic past in many parts of Greece. Mycenaean graves began to be treated with reverence, to be identified as the graves of particular heroes of legend, and to be brought offerings.[5] Relics of Bronze Age architecture, often secular, became the sites of new shrines.[6] Heroic scenes appear in art. The general assumption that these phenomena reflect a major expansion of epic is a sound one. It is mistaken to suppose, however, as some scholars have done, that the fame of a particular poet—Homer!—was responsible, for we have also to account for the parallel spread of elegy. We must postulate a moderate number of Ionian bards at large in the mainland; and in the mid eighth century, at any rate, when writing had barely been heard of, they will not have been reciters of a fixed text.

As for why they were abroad, we need only consider the conditions of the time. The regional isolationism of the tenth century had already begun to thaw by 900, and the ninth century showed a higher level of intercommunication both between different areas of Greece and between Greece and the outside world.[7] But in the middle third of the eighth century there was a dramatic increase in these contacts.[8] It was at this period that Delphi became a place of national importance. The register of Olympic victors from 776 onwards, preserved by Eusebius, reveals what is at first a local Elean affair progressively attracting participants from further and further afield. The pressure of population growth, which led to a rash of colonies in the last third of the century, will have driven many individuals to seek their fortune elsewhere even earlier. One we happen to know of is Hesiod's father, who left Asia for mainland Greece because of difficulty in making a living. It is not surprising if more

[1] Glyconic, Alcm. 59b. 3; pherecratean, Alcm. 38; ionics, Alcm. 46, 50; asymmetric cola also Alcm. 1. 37 etc. (choriambic enhoplion A), Ibyc. 282. 4 etc. (the same), 8–9; 286. 1–3, 7/12; Stes. 223. 4, 244. 1, *al.*

[2] Eumelus, Alcm., Stes., Ibyc.; particularly the hemiepes and tetrameter.

[3] Alcm. 2(i). 1, 20, 38. 1?, 59b. 2, Ibyc. 310. 1.

[4] Alcm. 3 fr. 1–3 ii; 39; 89; Stes., see *Zeitschr. f. Pap. u. Epigr.* iv (1969), 143 ff.; Ibyc. 285?, 315.

[5] A. M. Snodgrass, *The Dark Age of Greece*, 1971, pp. 192–4.

[6] Ibid., pp. 397 f.

[7] Ibid., pp. 330 ff.

[8] Ibid., pp. 336 ff.

than one Ionian poet did likewise. A poet can renew his audience more easily than his repertoire.

In the eighth century, it seems, the Greeks of the mainland discovered that the Ionians had developed impressive forms of poetry which they themselves did not have. The most impressive was a brand of narrative epic which stirred in them a new interest in and respect for the glories of the heroic past. Their own poetic traditions were evidently not oriented in that direction. If they had had heroic epic in the Mycenaean period, they had forgotten it.

The period of separate development of Ionian and mainland poetry, then, must be placed prior to the eighth century. On the other hand there is an evident kinship between the Ionian metres and those of the mainland poets. Common to both are such units as the dactylic hemiepes and tetrameter, the iambic dimeter, the catalectic trimeter, the ithyphallic, and the principle of simple juxtaposition of these. For his hexameters Alcman may be indebted to Ionian poetry (their dialect and in part their content suggest it), but the same cannot be said of the rest, which has a greater range and fluency than the corresponding Ionian material. It is altogether more plausible to regard both as going back to a common source antedating the Ionian migrations of the eleventh century.

If we now compare this southern tradition with that represented by the Lesbian poets, we find that again there are signs of a basic affinity (though little remains of them in the Ionic branch); the Lesbian tradition, however, is in some respects more faithful to the original IE. inheritance, in that it has preserved a certain freedom of quantities at the beginning of some cola, resisted the tendency to regularize rhythms, and not adopted the equivalence of ⏑ ⏑ and –. To put it the other way round, the Ionic and Doric branches share several features of secondary origin. It follows that the tradition which they represent had already diverged from that represented by the Lesbian poets well before the Ionian migrations, and therefore before the Aeolic migrations too. The Lesbian tradition, then, goes back to Bronze Age Thessaly.

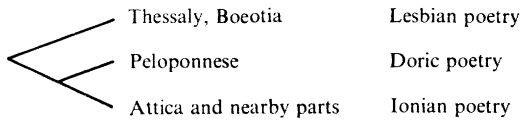
It is natural to suppose that, as the Lesbian tradition goes back to the North Greek poetry of the late Mycenaean age, the Ionic/Doric tradition goes back to the South Greek. This is to assume that what appears as Dorian in historical times was not originally so, but was taken over by Dorians as they made themselves at home in the south. It is with the pre-Dorian Peloponnese, and not with the Dorians, that we should expect to find Ionian tradition in a closer relationship. It is with the southern half of the Mycenaean world that Ionian heroic poetry is mainly concerned: except for Achilles, whose position is unique in many ways, the major heroes of the Trojan War come from nowhere north of the Corinthian gulf, and the other great happenings of the heroic age are situated predominantly in the regions from Thebes southwards. The Ionic dialect itself is more closely related to Arcado-Cypriot and (for those who trust Ventris's decipherment) to Mycenaean than to Aeolic.[1] Ionic was already distinct from this Peloponnesian dialect (in consequence of innovations in the latter rather than in the former) in the Bronze Age;[2] but it remains true that this proto-Ionic was related to Peloponnesian, in other words that historical

[1] E. Risch, *Mus. Helv.* xii (1955), 61–76; J. Chadwick, *G.&R.* N.S. iii (1956), 38–50 (both reprinted in *The Language and Background of Homer*, ed. G. S. Kirk, 1964).

[2] L. R. Palmer in *Fifty Years (and Twelve) of Classical Scholarship*, 1968, p. 44, with literature.

Ionic is descended from a 'South Mycenaean' dialect differentiated from Aeolic.[1]

The pattern of relationships between the three regional poetic traditions that we can identify in the period 800–550 B.C. thus corresponds to the pattern of relationships between three dialects of the late Mycenaean age. Represented schematically it is:




## III

It is now possible to assign different features of the evolution of Greek metre to places in a scheme of chronology. Those features which are common to Ionic, Doric, and Lesbian poetry should be of early date, established perhaps before 1500, in part perhaps even before the Greeks reached Greece. Those features of secondary origin which are common to Ionic and Doric and absent from Lesbian should date from a somewhat later period, but not later than about 1050. Those which are peculiar to Ionic or to Doric are not necessarily post-migration, if we assume that the Ionic tradition was already distinct from the Peloponnesian in the last centuries of the Mycenaean period, as the dialect was; but they may date only from 1050–750, and in general this was a time more favourable to divergence.

The oldest phenomenon that concerns us is the stabilization of quantities in the originally free early syllables of the IE. cola. Although certain of these cola generate more than one colon in Greek, the alternatives are Panhellenic (or at least common to the Aeolic and Doric traditions), and appear to have been established before the divergence of North and South Mycenaean poetry.

In selecting from the possible combinations of long and short syllables, the Greeks followed discernible principles. A run of three consecutive shorts was avoided altogether. The two syllables preceding the cadence ⏑ – ⏑ –, therefore, could not both be short; and of the other three possibilities, the two favoured were ⏑ – and – ⏑ Before – ⏑, any further syllables were unregulated. Before ⏑ –, if there was only one syllable it became long; if there were two, one or both had to be long to avoid ⏑ ⏑ ⏑; if there were three, either the second or the third was long (but not both), and the first might be. The results were as follows.

Acatalectic series:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Six-syllable | Dodrans | – ⏑ |
| Seven-syllable | Telesillean | × – ⏑ |
| | Lekythion | – ⏑ – |
| Eight-syllable | Glyconic | × × – ⏑ |
| | | – ⏑ ⏑ – |
| | Iamb. dim. | × – ⏑ – |

(Glyconic and Iamb. dim. ⏑ – ⏑ –)

[1] The Arcado–Cypriot (–Mycenaean) tendency to round back vowels in weak positions (*ἀπύ* for *ἀπό*, *ὀν* for *ἀν(ά)*, *-αυ* for *-αο*, *-τυ*, *-ντυ* for *-το*, *-ντο*, *-τοι* for *-ται*) is in part shared by Aeolic (*ἀπύ*, *ὀν*). This may perhaps be regarded as an innovation which spread from the centre of the Mycenaean world, reaching parts which stood in the cultural mainstream but not the fringe areas occupied by the Dorians and Ionians.

Catalectic series:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Five-syllable | Adonian | $-\cup$ |
| | Penthemimer | $\times -$ |
| Six-syllable | Reizianum | $\times -\cup$ |
| | Ithyphallic | $-\cup -$ |
| Seven-syllable | Pherecratean | $\times \times -\cup$ |
| | Aristophaneum | $-\cup\cup -$ |
| | Iamb. dim. catal. | $\times -\cup -$ |
| Eight-syllable | Choriamb. enhopl. | $\times -\cup\cup -$ |
| | Ionic | $\cup\cup -\begin{cases}-\cup\\ \cup -\end{cases}$ |
| | Ditrochee | $-\cup - \times -$ |

$\Big\}\cup - -$

Another early development was the principle of expansion. In certain cola which contained the sequence $-\cup\cup-$, this might be expanded in either of two ways which may be called disjunct and conjunct. By disjunct expansion it becomes $-\cup\cup--\cup\cup-$ $(-\cup\cup-)$; hence we get choriambic verses such as:

$\times \times -\cup\cup--\cup\cup-(-\cup\cup-)\cup-$ (asclepiad), or
$\times -\cup\cup--\cup\cup--\cup\cup-\cup--$ or
$-\cup\cup--\cup\cup--\cup\cup-\times-\cup-$.

By conjunct expansion it becomes $-\cup\cup-\cup\cup-(\cup\cup-)$; hence e.g. the Sapphic fourteen-syllable $\times \times -\cup\cup-\cup\cup-\cup\cup-\cup-$ or the paroemiac $\times -\cup\cup-\cup\cup--$.

Now we come to the secondary features which developed in the southern tradition, presumably in the second half of the second millennium. Conjunct expansion has already produced something in the nature of dactylic rhythm, but it remains an uneven rhythm so long as we have verses beginning with $\times \times$ or ending with $-\cup-$ or $-\cup--$. In the southern tradition there appears a regularized dactylic movement, expressed primarily in the cola:

| | |
|---|---|
| $-\cup\cup-\cup\cup-\cup\cup-\cup\cup$<br>$-\cup\cup-\cup\cup-\cup\cup--$ | tetrameter |
| $\times -\cup\cup-\cup\cup--$ | paroemiac |
| $-\cup\cup-\cup\cup-$ | hemiepes. |

The third of these can, as indicated above, be derived by simple expansion from the reizianum, and like the second, it retains the catalectic role of cola with the $\cup--$ cadence, being always treated as the close of a period. The first is never so treated, and its last syllable is never long, which suggests that it is not to be derived from any full colon with a cadence but rather regarded as a piece of expansion which has become long enough to be felt as a detached unit but which requires a continuation with a proper clausula. As for the hemiepes, it can serve as a close, and since in Alcman fr. 1, and possibly in Stesichorus,[1] $-\cup\cup-\cup\cup-\cup\cup-$ responds with $-\cup\cup-\cup\cup-\cup--$, its origin is perhaps to be accounted for from a rhythmic regularization of the aristophaneum $-\cup\cup-\cup--$.

Another innovation particularly associated with dactylic verse is the equation of $-$ and $\cup\cup$. The equation is by no means absolute: in dactyls, $-$ may in

[1] See *Zeitschr. f. Pap. u. Epigr.* vii (1971), 264; criticized by R. Führer, ibid. viii (1971), 252.

certain circumstances stand for ⏑ ⏑, but not vice versa, while in verse of iambic/trochaic movement ⏑ ⏑ may sometimes replace – preceding a short or anceps position. One way in which this might have come about can be seen if we posit × × – ⏑ ⏑ – ⏑ ⏑ – – (expanded pherecratean) developing by regularization into – ⏑ ⏑ – ⏑ ⏑ – ⏑ ⏑ – –. Of the possible forms which the two initial syllables of the earlier colon could take, – – was nearly equal in weight to the following dactyl. It might therefore have continued being admitted as an alternative to – ⏑ ⏑ in the regularized form of the verse after – ⏑, ⏑ –, and ⏑ ⏑ had been eliminated, and then the same alternation accepted in other positions.

In the Ionian tradition, the preference for symmetrical and regularized rhythms was such that the asymmetrical cola, containing the sequences – ⏑ ⏑ – ⏑ – and – ⏑ – ⏑ ⏑ –, fell into neglect. In the Peloponnesian tradition this did not happen, but there was all the same a bias towards the symmetrical rhythms, dactylic and iambic/trochaic.[1] The chief difference was that while the Ionians kept to the short strophe of not more than four cola, the Peloponnesian tradition gave rein to the instinct which had modified the inherited cola by expansion: it developed extended strophes of several times the length of any to be found in the Ionian or Aeolic sphere. These often contained sequences of identical cola in even rhythm. For instance, in Alcman's Partheneia (frr. 1 and 3) we find such sequences as:

– ⏑ – × – ⏑ – × – ⏑ – –
– ⏑ – × – ⏑ – × – ⏑ – –
– ⏑ – × – ⏑ – –
– ⏑ – × – ⏑ – –,

or two acatalectic dactylic tetrameters, and again in Stesichorus (222, cf. Führer, *Hermes* 97 [1969], 115; *P. Oxy.* 2617, cf. Page, *Lyrica Graeca Selecta*, p. 263) and in Ibycus (282, 286) two or three dactylic tetrameters. The rhythm may be carried on by the next colon even though it has a different ending:

– ⏑ – × – ⏑ – –
– ⏑ – × – ⏑ –,

Or

– ⏑ ⏑ – ⏑ ⏑ – ⏑ ⏑ – ⏑ ⏑
– ⏑ ⏑ – ⏑ ⏑ – ⏑ – –.

In such circumstances it is not surprising if the feeling for the colon as a self-contained unit is weakened, and if we get instead the sense of a rhythmic flow which can be dispensed to any amount required. This is indeed the principle on which dactyls come to be used by the time of Stesichorus and Ibycus. The line may begin – ⏑ ⏑ . . . or ⏑ ⏑ – ⏑ ⏑ . . . , it may end . . . ⏑ ⏑ – – or . . . ⏑ ⏑ – (or turn into a different rhythm).

It is also the principle assumed in the Greek system of metrical terminology which analyses a verse in terms of the two coordinates, rhythm and amount, the system which we still follow when we speak of a dactylic hexameter or an iambic dimeter. The convenience and prevalence of this system, however, should not mislead us into thinking that it reflects the process by which standard verses were created. The iambic trimeter, for instance, is not the result of somebody turning on a tap marked Iambic and waiting for three metra to emerge. When

[1] It was apparently in the Peloponnese that anapaests made their appearance, to judge from their occurrence in Spartan songs, Sicilian comedy (Aristoxenus, Epicharmus), and the Doricizing parts of Attic drama.

we take account of the fact that it has a caesura which usually comes after the fifth syllable, and of what we know of the IE. background of Greek metre, we see that in origin it is a combination of two primary cola, $\times - \overset{(-\cup)}{\cup} - -$ and the lekythion, which we also find separately. The division into three four-syllable metra does not correspond to its real structure and sound. Likewise the 'trochaic tetrameter' must be derived from a combination of ditrochee with lekythion.[1] Whenever we would try to analyse a Greek metrical structure in terms of its antecedents—and that is surely the most worthwhile kind of analysis—we shall do well to remember that beyond, ultimately, lie the IE. prototypes; and often they will not be far to seek.

To sum up what has been concluded about the direction taken by the regional traditions: the northern tradition was the most conservative, at least in the technical aspects we have been considering, while the southern was marked by a tendency to regularize and simplify, which showed itself in the elimination of the 'aeolic base' and in the preference given to symmetrical cola. The Ionians carried this further, till they were using only very simple cola of stereotyped form. Perhaps this facilitated the fluent and brilliant composition *in extenso* for which they became distinguished. Meanwhile the Dorians elaborated the strophic form, and developed dactylic verse in a free way that tended to run cola together into longer periods.

After the Dark Age the regional traditions did not blend, for they had grown too far apart, but the Ionic and to a much lesser extent the Doric gained currency beyond the borders in which they had matured. Only the Doric was flexible enough to be capable of metrical development; it is from this source that the elevated lyric verse of the fifth century flows. Here complexity and periodic structure are common and analysis into cola often problematic. But this was an exceptional era; once it is past, simplicity prevails and composition is in short, recognizable cola.

## IV

I want to conclude by considering a particular genre whose development in preliterate times can to some extent be profitably discussed: heroic epic. It is generally agreed that the archaic and formulaic character of the epic language and the historical memories enshrined in the Homeric poems presuppose a tradition of hexameter poetry reaching back generations before Homer. But how far back does it go, and how much in it goes back to its earliest phases?

Some assume that the Mycenaeans, even the early Mycenaeans, must have been composing narrative poetry in hexameters. The epic tradition certainly preserves more from Mycenaean times than can readily be accounted for without continuity of conservative, backward-looking poetry. Perhaps the Greeks had always had the habit of celebrating heroic exploits in verse. The existence of such a continuous tradition from IE. times has indeed been inferred from the agreement of Greek with Vedic poetry in the use of certain phrases that concern fame or celebrity: κλέος ἄφθιτον = *śrávaḥ ákṣitam*, μέγα κλέος = *máhi śrávaḥ*, κλέος εὐρύ = *pṛthú śrávaḥ*.[2] The argument is not conclusive; but there is nothing inherently unlikely in the idea that the Greeks had heroic

[1] Cf. Alcm. 3. 65–7, 2 ditr.+lek.; Anacr. 347, *al.*, 3 ditr.+lek.

[2] P. Thieme in the Wege der Forschung volume (above, p. 179 n. 2), pp. 59, 229–31; R. Schmitt, ibid., pp. 342 f., and *Dichtung und Dichtersprache*, pp. 61–102.

poetry of some sort in the first half of the second millennium. However, it would not have been in hexameters. We have seen that dactylic verse was a South Mycenaean development dating probably from the second half of the millennium, while the stereotyped stichic hexameter represents a further development in the Ionian branch of the tradition, perhaps late Mycenaean, perhaps post-migration. If there was epic or heroic balladry in (say) 1600, its characteristic verse was most likely the glyconic, whose cognates are used in Sanskrit and Slavic epic.

By 1100 it may have existed in south Greece in something like hexameters, though I imagine that they might be rather looser in technique than what we are used to; even Homer's lines do not always 'scan', i.e. fit the scheme we abstract from his normal practice. The origin of the verse, not as a sausage-string of dactyls but from hemiepes + paroemiac, betrays itself in rhythmic irregularities at the caesura in lines such as

*Il.* 4. 517: ἔνθ' Ἀμαρυγκείδην Δῖώρεα μοῖρα πέδησεν,
9. 506: πολλὸν ὑπεκπροθέει, φθάνει δέ τε πᾶσαν ἐπ' αἶαν,
11. 697: εἵλετο κρινάμενος τριηκόσι' ἠδὲ νομῆας,
*Od.* 7. 89: ἀργύρεοι δὲ σταθμοὶ ἐν χαλκέῳ ἕστασαν οὐδῷ.

In oral performance such irregularities will have been more common; and five centuries before Homer they may have been so common as to be regular. In Stesichorus, where we see the southern tradition in a luxuriating but less regularized form, such quasi-hexameters are quite common:

187. 3: καὶ ῥοδίνους στεφάνους ἴων τε κορωνίδας οὔλας.
209. 11: – ∪ ∪ Παν]ελόπᾳ σ' ἰδοῖσα φίλου πατ[ρ]ὸς υἱόν.

Of the deeds described in epic of the classical period, one at least corresponds to a historical event which took place before 1300, probably before 1350: the destruction of Thebes. Hesiod specifies the conflicts at Thebes and Troy as the two great wars which killed off the race of Heroes (*Op.* 161–5), and epics about Thebes and Troy seem to have made up the greater part of the Epic Cycle. As for Troy, we have two historical sacks to choose from: that of Troy VIIa not long after 1250, and that of Troy VIIb in about 1100. The second is usually ignored by scholars, apparently because the ancient datings for the fall of Troy are scattered about the year 1200, but we shall see that in some ways it fits the tradition better than the first. In any case an actual event of centuries before Homer's time has been remembered in heroic poetry.

On the other hand it is clear that great distortions have taken place. Thebes fell earlier than Troy: Homer is right about that, but he makes Diomedes take part in both wars, whereas even the earlier sack of Troy really came more than a century after that of Thebes. It is probable that the tradition has brought together at Troy heroes who lived at different periods and belonged to different sagas;[1] it is certain that it has vastly exaggerated the scale of the war. Whoever sacked Troy (whether VIIa or VIIb), it was not a Panhellenic force filling 1186 ships, nor was Troy supported by a confederacy of allies sprawling across

[1] Nilsson, *Homer and Mycenae*, pp. 251–66.

two continents from Lycia to inner Thrace. Nor was the dispute caused by the abduction of Helen, since Helen was originally not a mortal queen but a tree-goddess. Evidently we have to do with an amalgam of myth, fiction, and historical traditions of diverse origin.

The analysis of this amalgam concerns us here in so far as it throws light on the general history of epic poetry. What different regional traditions have we got to postulate at particular periods?

In the first place we have seen that the hexameter, the invariable metre of Ionian epic, has South Mycenaean antecedents. The Ionian colonists issued mainly from Attica, which seems in the twelfth century to have absorbed some of the population that was disappearing from most parts of the Peloponnese. So here we have an obvious route for heroic tales relating to Mycenae, Tiryns, Pylos, Thebes, to come down into the archaizing poetry of eighth-century Ionia. 'Ionia' as distinguished from Attica, we should remember, does not just mean the towns of the Asiatic coast: it embraces islands all across the Aegean to Euboea. The island area seems to have played an important part in the formation of the epic language, for if it had evolved primarily among the East Ionians it would have used forms like κῶς, κου, κοτε, κοῖος, whereas in fact it uses only the forms with π. This contrasts with the situation in iambic and elegiac poetry, where poets from the eastern towns (Callinus, Mimnermus, Semonides, Hipponax) do use forms with κ. We might suspect that the practice of epic poets too varied according to where they came from, except that Mimnermus sometimes has π, apparently under epic influence, and Hipponax, who normally uses κ, has π when he is parodying epic (128. 3; 129). The constant use of π-forms cannot plausibly be ascribed to Aeolic influence on epic, for why should this particular feature of Aeolic phonology be adopted when so many others were not? The true explanation seems to be that it was in the central Ionic area that epic particularly flourished during the period when the labio-velar was assimilating itself to other phonemes, so that the π-forms became established as the epic norm.

In the second place we have to postulate the existence of a northern, Aeolic tradition, on the evidence both of legend and of language. The stories of Pelias, of Jason and the Argo, of Peleus and Achilles, look back to Thessaly and to the late Mycenaean period. The Aeolian colonists who settled around Lesbos were the obvious people to transmit this Thessalian mythology to the Ionians. And it is notorious that the epic dialect contains an Old Aeolic element; its extent has often been exaggerated, but it has resisted attempts to dispose of it.[1] One Aeolism, φήρ for θήρ, is specifically associated with Thessalian myth.

As in the case of Thebes, archaeology provides a date on which to spike the drifting clouds of legend. Iolcus was destroyed about the middle of the twelfth century. Legend ascribes its destruction to Peleus, the father of Achilles;[2] Achilles himself lives at a time when the centre of power in Thessaly is no longer Iolcus but Phthia. This would imply that he belongs to a period at least a century later than the fall of Troy VIIa. If he was really involved in a successful assault on Troy, then VIIb is likely to be the one. But before we conclude that VIIb is the Troy whose sack was celebrated in Greek saga, we must examine

[1] Cf. Chantraine, *Grammaire homérique*, i. 509–12; Risch, *Gnomon* xxx (1958), 90–4.

[2] [Hes.] frr. 211. 2–5, 212(b). 7, Pind. *Nem.* 4. 55 with schol.; cf. schol. Ap. Rhod. 1. 224–6a.

Achilles' position in that saga, for here, clearly, we have to do not with a pure and unified tradition but with a mixture of northern and southern legend.

Achilles is differentiated from the other great heroes who went against Troy firstly by the *Märchen* atmosphere that accompanies him from his semi-divine birth onward.[1] Secondly, whereas the other leaders were there because they had been suitors of Helen, and had been made to swear that if she were ever seduced they would band together to punish the sinner, Achilles had been too young to compete with them for her hand ([Hes.] fr. 204. 78–93). He was fetched in from Scyros after Calchas prophesied that Troy could not be taken without him. The *Iliad* itself contains an indication that he was not among those who gathered at Aulis, for in the catalogue of ships, which I take to be Homer's adaptation to the battlefield setting of what he was accustomed to recite as an account of the embarkation, he only comes to Achilles and the rest of the northern contingents after he has been round Greece once and then out to Crete and the other Dorian islands. These accounts imply that Achilles was felt to belong to a later epoch than the rest, and also that he was only worked in with them at a comparatively late stage of the tradition. Equally significant is the fact that Achilles, alone of the major heroes, is killed at Troy, in other words he does not take part in the actual sack. On the other hand he does sack no less than twenty-three other towns in north-west Asia Minor (*Il.* 9. 328–9). One of these is Lesbos (ibid. 129), where later one of the main Aeolic settlements was. Is it not natural to see in these raids by a fabulous hero of the time after the fall of Iolcus a memory of historical attacks launched from Thessaly against the Troad and the regions to the south of it, perhaps over a considerable period, before the establishment of the colonies?

The end of Troy VIIb might well belong in that context. Two other features of Homer's Troy also seem to suit VIIb. Firstly, the sack which is the main centre of attention is the second of two: there was an earlier sack by Heracles (*Il.* 5. 640 ff., cf. 20. 145–8, [Hes]. fr. 43(a). 63 f.). Historically, two successive sacks of Troy would have to be identified as those of VIIa and VIIb. Secondly, there is Aeneas, whose only significant achievement is that he survives the sack and becomes the progenitor of a new royal dynasty which is represented as lasting indefinitely (*Il.* 20. 307–8, *hymn. Aphr.* 196–7). His name and connexions are Thracian. Apparently there existed in Troy in the time of Homer (sc. Troy VIII, a Hellenic settlement dating from *c.* 700; the site was uninhabited between 1100 and 700) a dynasty which claimed descent from an ancient king of Troy who was of Thracian race. Such a king would have belonged to the latter phase of Troy VIIb, when the city did come under Thracian domination.

On the other hand, it is not Aeneas but Priam and his sons who rule Homer's Troy and are most firmly bound up with it. We might argue from this that it is essentially a different Troy from the one ruled by Thracians, and that can only mean an earlier one. Nor can Agamemnon well be associated with the fall of VIIb, seeing that Mycenae and apparently also Argos were destroyed first. All the indications are that the story of the Great Armada, whatever its historical nucleus, is something that should be referred to the heyday of the Mycenaean empire. If its sack of Troy is part of its historical nucleus, then we must stick to the thirteenth-century sack of Troy VIIa.[2] It seems, then, that we

[1] See R. Carpenter, *Folk Tale, Fiction and Saga in the Homeric Epics*, pp. 71–6.

[2] If Alexandros-Paris is Alaksandus of Wilusa, he lived in the **first half** of the thirteenth century.

have to do with a mixture of earlier and later Troys remembered in different traditions.

Does the confluence of Aeolic with Ionic tradition, together with the evidence of Aeolic influence on the Ionic epic language, presuppose the existence of some sort of Aeolic epic? It has often been thought so; and I believe it is proved by a little-regarded linguistic fact. Priam appears in the Lesbian poets as *Πέρραμος* (Alc. 42. 2) or *Πέραμος* (Sappho 44. 16). Now the existence of separate dialect forms of the name is in itself a proof that for a long and continuous period the Asiatic Aeolians had been talking about Priam independently of the Ionians; but that is not all. *Πέρραμος* results from the regular sound-change in Lesbian by which *ρι* preceded by a consonant and followed by a vowel became *ερρ*: *Ἀγερράνιος*, *ἀλλότερρος*, *κόπερρα*, *μέτερρος*, the stages being *ρι*>*ρι̯*>*ερι̯*>*ερρ*. Sappho's *Πέραμος* appears to be a compromise between the sound of the secondary form *Πέρραμος* and the metrical value of the original *Πρίαμος*—a compromise necessitated by a poetic tradition which made extensive use of fixed formulas. A formula containing *Πρίαμος*, provided that the *Πρ* was not making position, could change its sound in the direction of *Πέρραμος*, but the metre prevented the first syllable from becoming long. Thus *Πέραμος* as well as *Πέρραμος* became established in the Aeolic poetic language.

The reality of the often-posited Aeolic epic, or perhaps epic balladry would be the better description, is thus confirmed. It was presumably composed in an Aeolic metre, not in hexameters. From before the time of the sound-change, whenever that was, it told of Troy, the city of Priam, as well as of legends from the Thessalian homeland. There was certainly interaction between it and the Ionian tradition, and after the eighth century, when Ionian epic had its great flowering, it must have been very much overshadowed. But it may have survived down to the time of Sappho, and in her fr. 44, the poem on the wedding of Hector and Andromache, with all its 'epic' morphology, style, and prosody, we may have a specimen or at least an echo of it. No doubt she knew the *Iliad* and other Ionian epic, as Alcaeus did, and several of her epicisms are of Ionian origin. Nevertheless the Aeolic form she has chosen must have seemed suitable for the enterprise. The metre, × × – ∪ ∪ – ∪ ∪ – ∪ ∪ – ∪ – (expanded glyconic, used *κατὰ στίχον*), is plausible for an Aeolic descendant of Middle Helladic epic (cf. p. 188 above). At the same time it is, among Aeolic metres, the one which most resembles the dactylic hexameter in its effect. This might be fortuitous, or it might reflect the influence of one tradition on the development of the other.

The picture of the evolution of epic which I have sketched in the foregoing paragraphs leaves little room for a tradition of hexameter epic on the mainland going further back than the eighth century, when Ionian epic became widely known and aroused an interest in the heroic past which had apparently been dormant. My account is thus in conflict with the fashionable opinion that the catalogue of ships is substantially a piece of Mycenaean poetry preserved by the Boeotians, a people supposedly addicted to catalogues beyond other Greeks. The Boeotian character of the catalogue of ships is inferred from three considerations: the initial position of the Boeotian section; the relatively full treatment which this section receives; and the association of catalogue poetry with the name of Hesiod. As to the last, it is to be remarked that the only poems of the Hesiodic corpus known to come from Boeotia are the two known to be by Hesiod; that none of them is a catalogue in anything like the same sense as the

catalogue of ships; and that in any case they are all Ionic in language and metre. As to the second consideration, the fullness of the Boeotian section, it is simply the consequence of the first, its initial position.[1] As to the first, well, Homer had to start somewhere, and the fact that the fleet gathered at Aulis may have been the reason for starting from Boeotia.[2]

The antiquity of the catalogue is inferred from the fact that many of the places named are known to be Mycenaean sites, and none are known to be post-Mycenaean foundations; some were apparently unoccupied in the Dark Age; and some could not be identified by Hellenistic writers. But a Mycenaean site can only be tied to a Homeric name with any certainty where the name survived locally, whether or not there was continued occupation; in which case it was available to a poet of any period. There was little risk of a post-Mycenaean foundation being included even by a late poet, for the number of such places was small, and their recent origin would be well remembered. The Greeks were always aware, for instance, that the Asiatic colonies were post-Trojan. Moreover, if the catalogue dated from the Mycenaean age, ought we not to be able to find in it such a major Mycenaean site as Dendra? Certainly the lines which give the numbers of ships in each contingent are not early, for many of them use the relatively late Ionic form *νέες*.[3] This is sufficient to undermine the romantic notion that the catalogue preserves the actual muster of those who sailed against Troy—as if a Panhellenic expedition were credible. Yet no one can tell us what the list was designed for if not as a list of those who sailed against Troy; and if it was designed for that, then it dates from a time when the Trojan legend had snowballed into an affair involving most of Greece (though not yet Thessaly, if we may argue from Achilles' exclusion from the confederacy of suitors). That is to say, from a late period.

How does it stand with Hesiod? Of course he had many predecessors both in his theogonic and in his ethical–didactic composition, and perhaps his poems contain elements of Mycenaean tradition. But it must be repeated that the poetic form in which he writes is one that comes from Ionia, and it seems likely that in the tenth or ninth century poems foreshadowing his would have had to be sought in Ionia rather than in Boeotia. Even in his own time poems like his may have been composed in Ionia, Cyprus, or wherever you like. We have not the least reason to suppose that they were more common in Boeotia than anywhere else.

*University College, Oxford* M. L. WEST

[1] The first items in series are commonly dealt with at the greatest length; the poet hurries up as he proceeds. Cf. for example *Il.* 16. 171–97; 18. 478–613; 23. 262–897; Hes. *Op.* 414–617.

[2] R. Hope Simpson and J. F. Lazenby, *The Catalogue of the Ships in Homer's Iliad*, 1970, p. 168.

[3] Cf. D. L. Page, *History and the Homeric Iliad*, p. 153.