

In der Person des Sängers und Sehers und in seinem dichterischen Instrument, dem *ἔπος*, dem Hexameter, liegt der Ausgangspunkt für alle hexametrischen Dichtungsgattungen, dem Prooimion, der theogonischen Dichtung, der Kalenderdichtung und dem heroischen Epos.

KYKLADI SEIRPHI

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ὦς οἱ μὲν φιλότῃτι μεμηλότες ἔμφορονες Ἰνδοί,
 Βακχείην ἀνέμοισιν ἐπιτρέψαντες ἐννῶ,
 ὄμμασιν ἀκλαύτοις ἐταρχύσαντο θανόντας,
 οἷα βίον βροτέον γαίῃα δεσμὰ φνγόντας
 ψυχῆς πεμπομένης, ὅθεν ἤλυθε, κυκλάδι σειρῇ
 νύσσαν ἐς ἀρχαίην

Nonnus xxxvii 1–6

At the beginning of Book xxxvii Nonnus describes a pause in the “Bacchic war” to permit the burial of the dead. The Indians, we are told, carry out the funeral rites with tearless eyes because their belief in the transmigration of the soul enabled them to see in death a release from the earthly chains of mortal life for the soul that could now return whence it came “in the circling course”.

The Hindu doctrine of the transmigration of the soul had been well known to the Greeks for centuries and there is nothing remarkable about this reference to it except the use of the word *σειρῇ* to describe it. The phrase *κυκλάδι σειρῇ* is translated “in the circling course” by W. H. D. Rouse,¹⁾ and the translation is appropriate in the context and represents the Hindu doctrine well enough, but how can *σειρῇ* bear this meaning?

The probable etymology of *σειρά* (Ion. *σειρή*) from IE **t̥xer-ǵā*, with cognates in Lith. *tverìù*, *tvérti*, ‘hold, enclose’,²⁾ suggest an original sense in Greek of “fastening” of some sort, which readily gives the Homeric sense of ‘rope, cord, trace (of a horse)’, as in

¹⁾ Nonnus, *Dionysiaca*, with an English translation by W. H. D. Rouse. Loeb, Classical Library, vol. iii. London 1963.

²⁾ Frisk, *Griech. etym.* Wb. s.v. *σειρά*; Brugmann² 1. i 310.

σειράς τ' ἐνπλέκτους (Ψ 115), σειρήν δὲ πλεκτήν (χ 175) and the compound *σειραφόρος*. From such uses to describe articles of leather or woven material, it is easily transferred to chains of metal, and this must surely be the sense of the famous *σειρή χρυσεῖη* with which Zeus threatens the other gods (Θ 19), not 'cord of gold', as translated by LSJ *s.v.*

The threat of Zeus made a considerable impression on later writers, and so Plato attempts to explain it,³⁾ and Lucian refers to it several times.⁴⁾ This interest may help to account for the survival of the word which appears in the NT.⁵⁾

Moreover, the original use of the word to describe a long line or cord fastened at the end made it an obvious choice to describe a 'lasso' as used by barbarians.⁶⁾

To these basic meanings LSJ adds some metaphorical senses clearly related to them, but there is nothing to suggest that *σειρά* was anything but static and straight. How then can it be used of a 'circling course'?

One might wonder whether Nonnus could be hinting at the Sanskrit technical term in this context *saṃsāra*, but there is unfortunately no evidence anywhere in his long epic of any first-hand knowledge of Indian language or thought. Nor is there much probability of a borrowing from Semitic, since Hebrew שֶׁרֶה 'chain', which has cognates in the other Semitic languages,⁷⁾ apparently has only this literal sense in the early period. However, the widespread distribution of this word in the Semitic languages and the Semitic origins of some early Neoplatonic thinkers may have helped to give fresh currency to the Greek *σειρά*; while the early occurrence of the Semitic word in Accadian, and the undisputed IE origins of *σειρά*, may suggest that perhaps the Semitic word was an early borrowing of some form of the IE root **ser*, which produces among other words the Sanskrit (*saṃsāra*).

³⁾ *Tht.* 153c.

⁴⁾ *D. Deor.* 21.1; *Herm.* 3; *Iup. Conf.* 4; *Dem. enc.* 13; *Iup. Tr.* 45; *Hist.* 8; *Astrol.* 22.

⁵⁾ 2 *Ep. Pet.* 2.4.

⁶⁾ *Hdt.* vii 85; *Paus.* I 21.5.

⁷⁾ Acc. *ṣarṣarratu*; and with the change of *r* to *l*, Aram. *šilšēlēth*, Ar. سَلْسَل: cf. Koehler/Baumgartner, *Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti Libros* s.v. שֶׁרֶה; De L. O'Leary, *Comparative Grammar of the Semitic Languages* § 19(a); H. Wehr, *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic* s.v. سلسل.

The solution must be sought in later Greek usage, although neither LSJ nor the Supplement offer any help in tracing this. However, the word occurs frequently in the Neoplatonic writers, so frequently indeed, as to acquire the status of a technical term.

Thus Proclus states that the point is at the head of the *σειρά* of line, plane and solid,⁸⁾ and later combines the ideas of *κυκλάδι σειρῇ* as follows, *ὁ δὲ τοίνυν ἀριθμοί . . . ὁ μὲν . . . ὁ δὲ πᾶν τὸ θῆλυ καὶ ἄρτιον καὶ τῆς γονίμου σειρᾶς ἀνακαλεῖται πρὸς τὰς οἰκείας ἀρχὰς κατὰ τὴν κυκλικὴν δύναμιν.*⁹⁾ Such usage at least moves from a purely static idea to one that involves a logical or potential progression through different degrees of reality.

The word is thus used by Proclus very frequently of the progression from the One to the Many, at least 29 times in his commentary *in Rem publicam*,¹⁰⁾ and over 60 times in that on the *Timaeus*.¹¹⁾ A selection from these will show his usage of the word:

*καὶ ποτὲ μὲν εἰς τὸ πλῆθος, ποτὲ δὲ εἰς τὴν ἔνωσιν ἀποβλέπων τῆς τῶν Μουσῶν σειρᾶς,*¹²⁾

*ἐν τῇ τρίτῃ σειρᾷ τῶν πάντων οὐσα,*¹³⁾

*σειραὶ γάρ εἰσιν καὶ τούτων, καὶ ἄλλαι ἀπ' ἄλλων δυνάμεις προΐασιν,*¹⁴⁾

*πᾶσα γὰρ ἡ χρονικὴ σειρὰ τοῦ ἐνὸς ἐκείνου θεοῦ ἀνῆπται,*¹⁵⁾

*πάσης ἐνιαίως ἡγεμόνα τῆς δημιουργικῆς σειρᾶς,*¹⁶⁾

*ἡ δὲ ἀπόρροια τῆς οὐσίας ἡ εἰς δευτέραν προΐοῦσα καὶ τρίτην σειρὰν τὸ τῶν ἐκγόνων εἶδος ἐπιδείκνυσιν,*¹⁷⁾

*καὶ γὰρ πᾶσα ἡ δημιουργικὴ σειρὰ μία ἐστί, μετὰ τῆς διακρίσεως ἔχουσα καὶ τὴν ἔνωσιν,*¹⁸⁾

*καὶ καθ' ἓνα δεσμὸν καὶ μίαν σειρὰν ἐξάπτων πάντα τῆς θεοῦ,*¹⁹⁾

*πᾶσα γὰρ ἡ Ἀθηναϊκὴ σειρὰ μία διήκει μέχρι τῶν ἐσχάτων ἄνωθεν ἀπὸ τῶν ὑπερουρανίων ἀρχομένη διακόσμων,*²⁰⁾

εἰς ταύτην γὰρ ἀποπερατοῦται τῶν γνωστικῶν δυνάμεων ἡ σειρά, ἥς ἡγεῖται μὲν ἡ νόησις, ὑπὲρ λόγον οὐσα καὶ ἀμετάβατος, δευτέραν δὲ ἔχει τάξιν ὁ λόγος, ὅς ἐστι τῆς ψυχῆς ἡμῶν νόησις μεταβατικῶς

⁸⁾ Procl. *in Euc.* 89.11 (ed. Friedlein), and cf. 132.6, 148.7. All references to Proclus and Olympiodorus are to the Teubner editions.

⁹⁾ Procl. *in Euc.* 151.6–12.

¹⁰⁾ See the Teubner edition by W. Kroll, *Index verborum* s.v. *σειρά*, which omits some instances.

¹¹⁾ See the Teubner edition by E. Diehl, *Index verborum* s.v. *σειρά*.

¹²⁾ Procl. *in R.* i 184.28–9.

¹³⁾ *Ibid.* 239.20–1.

¹⁴⁾ *Ibid.* 239.22–3.

¹⁵⁾ *Ibid.* ii 20.3–4.

¹⁶⁾ *Ibid.* 217.8.

¹⁷⁾ Procl. *in Ti.* i 49.10–2.

¹⁸⁾ *Ibid.* 63.4–6.

¹⁹⁾ *Ibid.* 135.25–6.

²⁰⁾ *Ibid.* 170.23–4.

ἐφαπτομένης τῶν ὄντων, τρίτην δὲ ἡ δόξα, κατὰ λόγον οὕσα γινώσις
τῶν αἰσθητῶν, τετάρτην δὲ ἡ αἰσθησις, ἄλογος ὑπάρχουσα τῶν
αὐτῶν γινώσις,²¹⁾
συνέχεια γάρ ἐστι καὶ σειρὰ καὶ τάξις τῶν ἀπὸ τοῦ ἐνὸς προεληλυθό-
των,²²⁾
τὰς σειρὰς ἄνωθεν καθήκειν . . . μέχρι τῶν ἐσχάτων.²³⁾

References to Homer's golden chain would appear to be inevitable, and they duly appear.²⁴⁾

The great frequency of the word *σειρά* and its meaning for Proclus is apparent. The idea of progression may have been helped also by the late use of the verb *σύρω*, which is formed from the zero-grade of the same root, **tūr-īō*.²⁵⁾ The verb means originally 'to draw along', and then in the passive 'to be drawn along', and hence 'to creep, crawl' as a snake. All these meanings are illustrated in LSJ s. v. *σύρω*. Perhaps even Porphyrius' phrase τῷ σύροντι ποταμῷ τῶν πραγμάτων of the *Strom der Dinge*, as translated by Pötscher, although it is there active, contributed something to the vigour of these words in Neoplatonic circles.²⁶⁾

It is thus clear that at least for Neoplatonists of the 5th century *σειρά* was not a mere epic survival but a word very much alive in a technical sense, and it continued to flourish in the 6th century in the writings of Olympiodorus.²⁷⁾

Moreover, the transmigration of souls was a familiar Neoplatonic doctrine, and may be illustrated by the following passage:

Ἐπειθ' ὅτι καὶ εἰς τὰ ἄλλα ζῶα μετὰβασίς ἐστι τῶν ψυχῶν τῶν ἀνθρω-
πίνων, καὶ τοῦτο διαρρήδην Ὀρφεὺς (fr. 223) ἀναδιδάσκει, ὁπηνίκα
ἂν διορίζηται·

οὐνεκ' ἀμειβομένη ψυχὴ κατὰ κύκλα χρόνοις
ἀνθρώπων ζώοισι μετέρχεται ἄλλοθεν ἄλλοις·
ἄλλοτε μὲν θ' ἵππος, τότε γίνεται . . .
ἄλλοτε δὲ πρόβατον, τότε δ' ὄρνειον αἰνὸν ιδέσθαι,
ἄλλοτε δ' αὖ κύνειον τε δέμας φωνή τε βαρεῖα,
καὶ ψυχρῶν ὀφίων ἔρπει γένος ἐν χθονὶ δίῃ.²⁸⁾

²¹⁾ *Ibid.* 248.29–249.4.

²²⁾ *Ibid.* 299.6–8.

²³⁾ *Ibid.* ii 269.2.

²⁴⁾ *Ibid.* i 262.23–4; 314.17–9; ii 24.24–9; 112.5–6.

²⁵⁾ Frisk s. v. 1. *σαίρω*.

²⁶⁾ Porph. *Marc.* v 16. Cf. W. Pötscher *ad loc.*

²⁷⁾ Olymp. *in Phaed.*, ed. W. Norvin, *Index verborum* s. v. *σειρά*.

²⁸⁾ Procl. *in R.* ii 339.1–9.

But *σειρά* seems not to be used in this sort of context, and *περίοδος*, which one might expect, is used to express 'periods' of time, in which sense it is common enough.²⁹⁾

Elsewhere,³⁰⁾ Proclus writes: *πάντα γὰρ αἰεὶ ἔστι διὰ τὸν κύκλον τῆς γενέσεως*, but he makes clear that for him the *σειρά* is rectilinear by writing, *τὸ εὐθὺν προόδου σύμβολόν ἐστι*,³¹⁾ for here he uses the Plotinian word *πρόδος* for what he usually expresses by *σειρά*.

It seems then that Nonnus in referring to the Hindu doctrine of the transmigration of souls turned naturally enough to the corresponding doctrine in Greek thought and took from the Neoplatonists their technical term *σειρά*, but failed to notice or wilfully disregarded the significant difference that for the Neoplatonics "the way up and down", *αἱ ψυχικαὶ κάθοδοι καὶ ἀνοδοι*,³²⁾ involved oscillation rather than circling.

Zwei Vermutungen zu Sappho

Von VITTORE PISANI, Mailand

1. Noch einmal Sappho 1. D., 1. L.-P., v. 18–19

Die Lektüre des anregenden Aufsatzes von Z. Stirnimann, MSS. 27, 111ff., hat in mir einen tollkühnen Gedanken aufkommen lassen, den ich den Lesern zu ihrer Belustigung mitteilen möchte.

Stirnimann bekämpft, wohl mit Recht, Wilamowitzens *πειθῶ / μαῖσ'* und kehrt zu Blassens Vermutung *πείθω - / μαί σ' ἄγην* zurück, die auf Kod. P fußt und von ihm überzeugend erklärt wird; nur ist das *σ'* (*σοι*) m. E. wenig verständlich. Deswegen scheint mir besser bei *πείθω* (Konjunktiv) . . . ἄγην 'soll ich führen' (nämlich. *ἐς σὰν φιλότατα*) zu bleiben. Was hat dann das unbequeme *μαῖς* darin zu schaffen?

Es ist nun mein Verdacht, daß sich unter diesem *μαῖς* ein altes, bei den Äoliern von Lesbos noch lebendes Wort versteckt, nämlich **mais*, das im Germanischen (got. *mais*, dt. *mehr* usw.) und im Oskischen (o. *mais*) wiederkehrt; oft habe ich auf die Zusammenhänge gerade von Griechisch, besonders Äolisch und Oskisch-Umbrisch

²⁹⁾ *Ibid. Index verborum* s. v. *περίοδος*; in *Ti. Index verborum* s. v. *περίοδος*.

³⁰⁾ In *Euc.* 149. 17–8, and cf. the whole passage 149. 5–150. 12.

³¹⁾ *Ibid.* 164. 8.

³²⁾ Cf. Procl. in *R.* i 108. 18–9.