

A. HOEKSTRA, *Epic Verse before Homer. Three Studies.*
(Verh. der Kon. Ned. Akad. van Wet., Afd. Letterkunde,
N.R. 108). Amsterdam, North Holland Publ. Cy. 1981.
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The first part studies χ 322 Κίρρη ἐπήϊξα ὥς τε κτάμεναι μενεαίνων, where the length of the -α is commonly explained by assuming that the verse is a variation of χ 295 Κ. ἐπαίξαι ὥς τε κτ. μ. This seems to give a traditional verse with hiatus at P (the penthemimeres). H. shows that this is not a necessary conclusion. His conclusion is that χ 295 is not a traditional verse, and that hiatus at P was avoided in traditional epic verse.

His evidence is that τε is misplaced in this verse, as no 'permanent fact' is expressed. He points to verses with κατακτάμεναι μενεαίνων, to formulaic ὥς τε λῆς etc. and shows that ἀίσσω mostly provided participles before the caesura. He concludes that the

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verses in χ are a combination of the first formula ($\chi\alpha\tau\alpha\chi\tau.$ $\mu.$) with a formula participle of $\acute{\alpha}\acute{\iota}\sigma\sigma\omega + \acute{\omega}\varsigma \tau\epsilon$ (as in P 460). He further points out that many old participles are found before the caesura, which end in a consonant at P (- $\alpha\varsigma$, - $\omega\nu$) or a vowel at T (the trochaic caesura; - $\alpha\nu\tau\alpha$, - $\omicron\nu\tau\alpha$) and that almost all P₂ and T₂ noun-epithet formulae (i.e. formulae following P or T) begin with a consonant, thus giving a long syllable at P and a short one at T. This means that in a large system of formulae there was no hiatus at P or T. The strength of the study is that it *shows* that a 'basic' line (χ 295) may be a contamination of older material, and that this line cannot be used as evidence for old hiatus at P.

The second part discusses the theory that the hexameter originated from two smaller lines, a theory recently defended again by West. West thought that some irregularities in Homer are traces of the coalescence of two such lines. There are only four of them, and H. has little difficulty in showing that they are not old. He concludes that there is no *evidence* that these irregularities were ever regular. "The hypothesis of an increasing regularity is not supported by ascertainable facts." (p. 35). The author stresses that we must use the oldest parts of the Homeric diction (for which he gives criteria, p. 43), the best being formulae with pre-Ionic morphology or vocabulary belonging to a system of formulae). He then points out that many formulae run up to or start from P or T, and that many have variants to fit both P and T. This would mean that you need *two* different lines as the ancestor of the first part of the hexameter (and so for the second). Other formulae cross P or T (Πριάμοιο T πάϊς, σύεσσιν T έοικότε) and cannot possibly have belonged to two half verses. It is also pointed out that very many formulae (fitting P or T) are too short to have been separate verses, e.g. $\eta\mu\omicron\varsigma \delta' \eta\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\iota\omicron\varsigma$. As far as the coalescence hypothesis started from the idea that Homeric verses are long, it is stressed that the oldest verses have little 'content', e.g. $\kappa\lambda\eta\acute{\iota}\sigma\sigma\alpha\iota \mu\epsilon\gamma\acute{\alpha}\rho\omicron\iota\theta \theta\acute{\upsilon}\rho\alpha\varsigma \pi\upsilon\kappa\iota\nu\acute{\omega}\varsigma \acute{\alpha}\rho\alpha\rho\upsilon\acute{\iota}\alpha\varsigma$. I don't think this is relevant. In determining the length of a metrical structure only the number of its own units counts. And a line of $15\frac{2}{3}$ syllable is a rather long one.

Hoekstra's conclusion is that "All of them (the oldest formulae) have been found incompatible with the coalescence-hypothesis." (53). That is, Homer provides no *evidence* for the theory. It could be right, but it is a mere guess. And it is improbable that there would be nothing left of the 'original' formulae and features of composition. Here one could think that, if we put the creation of the

hexameter at, say, 1500 BC (1700? 1900?), it is possible that the formulae found in Homer don't go back farther than 1200.

Given the existence of an Indo-European poetical language it is probable that the Greek epic verse is based on IE verse. Meillet had already shown that the Aeolic measures are of IE origin. Recent research has confirmed that IE had an eight syllable line, with a catalectic variant. On this basis Nils Berg has explained the origin of the hexameter (MSS 37 (1978), 11-36). He too thinks it originated from two verses but, as the P/T caesura could be secondary (because of its aesthetic function), and as the trithemimeres and the bucolic diaeresis leave too short elements, he thinks the hepthemimeres was the old dividing point. He then derives the second part from (a pherecratean) $\times\times-\cup\cup--$ (from the IE catalectic $\times\times\times\cup--$), and the first part from the eight syllable (choriambic dimeter II) $\times\times\times-\cup\cup-$. (These lines, as well as their combination, still occur in Greek poetry.) I think Berg's explanation (all steps are accounted for) is so simple and convincing as to be almost self-evident. He thinks there are some traces of its origin, notably the *stichoi akephaloi*, but even if they would prove unreliable, his explanation would stand. Apparently Hoekstra has not yet seen this explanation; we would like to have his opinion on it.

In III 1 it is suggested that pre-Doric survivals from the mainland can be found in passing mentions, and that they must have reached Homer via a poetical tradition. As examples H. discusses a few inconspicuous heroes, e.g. Apisaon son of Hippasos. In III 2 he adds Ortilochos and the three sons of Portheus by reconstructing older forms of the verses. Thus it is made probable that *παῖδα* etc. often replaces *υἰόν* etc., and that sometimes a middle (*κεράσσατο*) was used instead of the active or vice versa. The conclusion is that the reconstructed lines show that the hexameter itself is also of Mycenaean date.

Here I have some objections. One is that we cannot be sure that *in a given verse*, e.g. γ 489, *τέχε παῖδα* replaced *τέχεθ' υἰόν*. This assumption is based again on the name (Ortilochos) and what we know about him; so it is no independent evidence. Then, in the forms reconstructed, *τέχεθ' υἰόν* and **τρέες υἷες*, the *h-* is neglected, which shows, I think, that these forms cannot be of Mycenaean date. (One could posit *τέχε υἰόν* instead of *τέχεθ'*. **υἷφόν* p. 80 is a mistake for **υἰόν*.)

In III 3, as an answer to Kirk, the view is expressed that the Dark Ages were not “likely to have engendered a new type of poetry composed in a new style—and ... in a new verse (... the elaborate dactylic measure ...)” p. 84. This is illustrated with recent excavations (Lefkandi). On the other hand “the variegated but fundamentally stable conceptions of the Minoan-Mycenaean civilisation, ..., are perfectly compatible with the existence of a poetry characterised by plentiful but rather stereotyped ornamentation.” p. 85 f. Though H.’s view seems the more probable, here, of course, we come into questions where scientific discussion is hardly possible (what do we *know* about such correlations?). This becomes clear when it is said that in the Dark Ages “primitive formulae such as γυναικῶν θηλυτεράων might have originated, but not much more”. More concrete is the statement that such formulae as βοῶπις πότνια Ἥρη (with characteristic *amplitudo*) must be of Mycenaean date, and that they belong to the normal formulaic systems, so that these systems too must be of Mycenaean date (p. 82 f.). One might ask, however, whether the system(s) of variants cannot be later elaborations. (The question why these formulae must be Mycenaean is not discussed here.)

The argumentation of the book could be presented as follows: the evidence we have, is that the oldest formulae for different reasons (of both form and content) must be of Mycenaean date, and that they exactly fit the formulaic systems we know; and as these systems exactly fit the hexameter, it follows that these systems and the hexameter must be of Mycenaean date. And “after the scattered remnants of the old population had gained a stable foothold on the foreign coasts (of Ionia) and had settled down to more or less peaceful conditions, the memories of a splendid and distant past led to a revival of the mainland epic.” Here I would ask whether perhaps our definition of formula does *imply* that it fits the hexameter. So perhaps we disregard old elements that do not fit, as being problematic. I don’t think so, but it may be good to formulate the question.

The conclusion is, I think, that we have to show how probable it is that certain elements are of Mycenaean date. This study adduces more evidence, but primarily sketches the conclusions to be drawn from them. It becomes time for something like a systematic commentary on the (oldest) formulae, bringing together the evidence in a handbook. (In this book one misses an index of the words and formulae studied.) I may add that no special knowledge of formulae is

required to read the book. Though sometimes I found it difficult to follow the exact line of reasoning (but these are rare moments), I can most warmly recommend reading. (The author announces a commentary on *Od.* ν - π , p. 14 n. 22, which we await impatiently.)

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