

## Transliteration of Greek in Lord: *Epic Singers and Oral Tradition* Chapter 5 “Homer as an Oral-Traditional Poet”

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In 1963 M. W. M. Pope stated that Homer uses ὤκυς Ἀχιλλεύς [*ōkus Akhilleus*] (swift Achilles) five times (actually six times) as against πόδας ὤκυς [*podas ōkus*] (swift-footed Achilles) fifty-four times, and that ὤκυς Ἀχιλλεύς [*ōkus Akhilleus*] is the metrical equivalent of δῖος Ἀχιλλεύς [*dios Akhilleus*] (godlike Achilles). [2] I was relieved to find that Homer was not as mechanical as exaggeratedly thought. The author also pointed out that five (that is, six) cases were found only in the last four books of the *Iliad* (actually in five of the last six books—it is used in Book 19 but not in Book 20). Lest it be implied that Homer uses ὤκυς Ἀχιλλεύς [*ōkus Akhilleus*] and only it in those books, I hasten to add that he also uses πόδας ὤκυς Ἀχιλλεύς [*podas ōkus Akhilleus*] in Books 19, 21, 22, 23, and 24.

If one looks at the usage a little differently, one might say that Homer had three ways of saying "swift-footed Achilles"; πόδας ὤκυς Ἀχιλλεύς [*podas ōkus Akhilleus*], ὤκυς Ἀχιλλεύς [*ōkus Akhilleus*], and ποδάρκης δῖος Ἀχιλλεύς [*podarkēs dios Akhilleus*] (swift-footed, godlike Achilles). These noun-epithet combinations around the idea of "swift-footed" may be fraught with meaning from ancient traditional stories of childhood deeds, as Gregory Nagy has pointed out in *The Best of the Achaeans*, on the basis of Pindar's "Nemean 3." [3] In other words, viewed in this way, ὤκυς Ἀχιλλεύς [*ōkus Akhilleus*] is not an alternative for δῖος [*dios*], although metrically equivalent to it, but for πόδας ὤκυς Ἀχιλλεύς [*podas ōkus Akhilleus*] and ποδάρκης δῖος Ἀχιλλεύς [*podarkēs dios Akhilleus*], its equivalent in sense.

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here are instances of repeated couplets in the Homeric poems as in Serbo-Croatian epic.

Take, for example, *Iliad* 8.66-67 and *Iliad* 11.84-85:

ὄφρα μὲν ἠὼς ἦν καὶ ἀέξετο ἱερόν ἦμαρ,  
τόφρα μάλ' ἀμφοτέρων βέλε' ἤπτετο, πίπτε δὲ λαός.  
*ophra men ēōs ēn kai aexeto hieron hēmar,*  
*tophra mal' amphoterōn bele' hēpteto, pipte de laos.*

So long as it was early morning and the sacred daylight increasing, so long the thrown weapons of both took hold and men dropped under them.

[Lattimore translation]

Or compare *Odyssey* 19.600:

19.600 ὥς εἶποῦσ' ἀνέβαιν' ὑπερώϊα σιγαλόεντα,  
19.601 οὐκ οἶη, ἅμα τῆ γε καὶ ἀμφίπολοι κίον ἄλλαι.  
*hōs eipous' anebain' hyperōia sigaloenta,*  
*ouk oiē, hama tē ge kai amphipoloi kion allai.*

So she spoke, and went back up to her shining chamber, not alone, since others, her women, went to attend her.

[Lattimore]

and

18.206 ὥς φαμένη κατέβαιν' ὑπερώϊα σιγαλόεντα,  
18.207 οὐκ οἶη, ἅμα τῆ γε καὶ ἀμφίπολοι δυ' ἔποντο. {75|76}  
*hōs phamenē katebain' hyperōia sigaloenta,*  
*ouk oiē, hama tē ge kai amphipoloi du' heponto.*

So she spoke, and made her descent from her shining chamber, not all alone, since two handmaidens went to attend her.

[Lattimore]

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The arming of Paris begins with lines 3.330-332:

κνημίδας μὲν πρῶτα περὶ κνήμησιν ἔθηκε  
καλάς, ἀργυρέοισιν ἐπισφυρίοις ἀραρυίας  
δεύτερον αὖ θώρηκα περὶ στήθεσσι ἐδυνεν.  
*knēmidas men prōta peri knēmēsi ethēke*  
*kalas, argureoisin episphuriois araruias*  
*deuteron au thōrēka peri stēthessin edunen.*

First he placed along his legs the fair greaves linked with silver fastenings

to hold the greaves at the ankles.  
Afterwards he girt on about his chest the corselet.

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The armings of Agamemnon, Patroclus, and Achilles begin with the same three lines as that of Paris. The first epithet in these lines is καλός [*kalas*], modifying κνημίδας [*knēmidas*] in the preceding line, and I would like to suggest that one of the factors in its choice was that it alliterates with the "k's" of that line. The only other epithet in these lines immediately follows καλός [*kalas*]. It is ἀργυρέοισιν [*argureoisin*], modifying ἐπισφυρίοις [*episphuriois*], and I should like to suggest in this case also that the choice was in part influenced by the fact that it assonates with the last word in its line, ἀραρυίας [*araruias*], even though it does not modify that word.

The arming of Paris continues with an idea peculiar to that hero's corselet (line 3.333):

οἷο κασιγνήτοιο Λυκάονος ἤρμοσε δ' αὐτιῶ.  
*hoio kasignētoio Lukaonos ērmose d' autō.*

it belonged to his brother Lykaon, but it fitted him also.

This picks up the "k" alliteration again. After the description of the greaves, the donning of the armor is resumed in lines 3.334-338:

ἀμφὶ δ' ἄρ' ὤμοισιν βάλετο ξίφος ἀργυρόηλον  
χάλκεον, αὐτὰρ ἔπειτα σάκος μέγα τε στιβαρόν τε·  
κρατὶ δ' ἐπ' ἰφθίμῳ κυνέην εὐτυκτον ἔθηκεν  
ἵππουριν· δεινὸν δὲ λόφος καθύπερθεν ἔνευεν·  
εἶλετο δ' ἄλκιμον ἔγχος, ὃ οἱ παλάμηφιν ἀρήρει.  
*amphi d' ar' ōmoisin baleto xiphos arguroēlon,*  
*khalkeon, autar epeita sakos mega te stibaron te*  
*krati d' ep' iphthismō kuneēn eutukton ethēken*  
*hippourin deinon de lophos kathuperthen eneuen*  
*heileto d' alkimon egkhos, ho hoi palamēphin arērei.*

Across his shoulders he slung the sword with the nails of silver,  
a bronze sword, and above it the great shield, huge and heavy.  
Over his powerful head he set the well-fashioned helmet

with the horse-hair crest, and the plumes nodded terribly above it.  
He took up a strong-shafted spear that fitted his hand's grip.

The same lines are used in the arming of Patroclus, and there too they are preceded by a line peculiar to that hero, referring to his breastplate, or corselet:

16.134 ποικίλον ἀστερόεντα ποδώκεος Αἰακίδαο.  
*poikilon asteroenta podōkeos Aiakidaο.*

elaborate, and starry, of swift-footed Aiakides.

The last line of the run, which mentions the spears, is changed from one spear taken up by Paris to two taken up by Patroclus. {90|91}

3.338 εἴλετο δ' ἄλκιμον ἔγχος, ὃ οἱ παλάμηφιν ἀρήρει.  
*heileto d' alkimon **egchos**, ho hoi palamēphin arērei.*

He took up **a** powerful spear that fitted his hand's grip.

16.139 εἴλετο δ' ἄλκιμα **δοῦρε**, τά οἱ παλάμηφιν ἀρήρει.  
*heileto d' alkima **doure**, ta hoi palamēphin arērei*

He took up **two** powerful spears that fitted his hand's grip.

The arming of Paris ends with that line, but that of Patroclus continues with what he did *not* take, Achilles' Pelian ash spear. In other words, the basic lines in each case have been adapted to the hero of the moment, Paris or Patroclus.

But the first three lines we considered were used to introduce the arming of Agamemnon and of Achilles as well. In the case of Agamemnon, lines 11.20-28 describe the special corselet Agamemnon put on:

τόν ποτέ οἱ Κινύρης δῶκε ξεινήϊον εἶναι.  
πεύθετο γὰρ Κύπρονδε μέγα κλέος, οὔνεκ' Ἀχαιοὶ  
ἔς Τροίην νήεσσιν ἀναπλεύσεσθαι ἔμελλον·  
τοὔνεκά οἱ τὸν δῶκε χαριζόμενος βασιλῆϊ.  
τοῦ δ' ἦτοι δέκα οἴμοι ἔσαν μέλανος κυάνοιο,  
δῶδεκα δὲ χρυσοῖο καὶ εἴκοσι κασσωιτέροιο·

κυάνεοι δὲ δράκοντες ὀρωρέχατο προτὶ δειρῆν  
τρεῖς ἐκάτερθ', ἴρισσιν ἐοικότες, ἄς τε Κρονίων  
ἐν νέφεϊ στήριξε, τέρας μερόπων ἀνθρώπων.  
*ton pote hoi Kinurēs dōke xeinēion einai.*  
*peutheto gar Kupronde mega kleos, hounek' Akhaioi*  
*es Troiēn nēessin anapleusesthai emellon*  
*touneka hoi ton dōke kharizomenos basilēi.*  
*tou d' ētoi deka oimoi esan melanos kuanoio,*  
*dōdeka de khruasoio kai eikosi kassōiteroio*  
*kuaneoi de drakontes orōrekhato proti deirēn*  
*treis hekaterth', irissin eoikotes, has te Kroniōn*  
*en nepheï stērixē, teras meropōn anthrōpōn.*

that Kinyras had given him once, to be a guest present,  
for the great fame and rumour of war had carried to Kypros  
how the Achaians were to sail against Troy in their vessels.  
Therefore he gave the king as a gift of grace this corselet.  
Now there were ten circles of deep cobalt upon it,  
and twelve of gold and twenty of tin. And toward the opening  
at the throat there were rearing up three serpents of cobalt  
on either side, like rainbows, which the son of Kronos  
has marked upon the clouds, to be a portent to mortals.

After this special passage the lines in the two other armings (those of Paris and Patroclus)  
reappear in that of Agamemnon slightly changed in 11.29-31:

ἀμφὶ δ' ἄρ' ὤμοισιν βάλετο ξίφος· ἐν δέ οἱ ἦλοι  
χρύσειοι πάμφαινον, ἀτὰρ περὶ κουλεὸν ἦεν  
ἀργύρεον, χρυσείοισιν ἀορτήρεσσιν ἀρηρός. {91|92}  
*amphi d' ar' ōmoisin baleto xiphos en de hoi hēloi*  
*khruiseioi pamphainon, atar peri kouleon ēen*  
*argueron, khruiseoisin aortēressin arēros.*

Across his shoulders he slung the sword, and the nails upon it  
were golden and glittered, and closing about it the scabbard  
was silver, and gold was upon the swordstraps that held it.

Before the first line has ended, the sword's description (29-31) has begun. That description is followed by that of the shield, a special and ornate passage that is unparalleled in the other passages (11.32-40).

ἄν δ' ἔλετ' ἀμφιβρότην πολυδαίδαλον ἀσπίδα θοῦριν,  
καλήν, ἣν πέρι μὲν κύκλοι δέκα χάλκεοι ἦσαν,  
ἐν δὲ οἱ ὀμφαλοὶ ἦσαν ἐείκοσι κασσιτέροιο  
λευκοί, ἐν δὲ μέσοισιν ἔην μέλανος κυάνοιο.  
τῇ δ' ἐπὶ μὲν Γοργῷ Βλοσυρῶπις ἐστεφάνωτο  
δεινὸν δερκομένη, περὶ δὲ Δεῖμός τε Φόβος τε.  
τῆς δ' ἐξ ἀργύρεος τελαμῶν ἦν· αὐτὰρ ἐπ' αὐτοῦ  
κυάνεος ἐλέλικτο δράκων, κεφαλαὶ δὲ οἱ ἦσαν  
τρεῖς ἀμφιστρεφέες, ἐνὸς αὐχένος ἐκπεφυυῖαι.  
*an d' helet' amphibrotēn poludaidalon aspida thourin,*  
*kalēn, hēn peri men kukloi deka khalkeoi ēsan,*  
*en de hoi omphaloi ēsan eeikosi kassiteroio,*  
*leukoī, en de mesoisin eēn melanos kuanoio.*  
*tē d' epi men Gorgō Blosurōpis estephanōto*  
*deinon derkomenē, peri de Deimos te Phobos te.*  
*tēs d' ex argureos telamōn ēn autar ep' autou*  
*kuaneos elelikto drakōn, kephalai de hoi ēsan*  
*treis amphistrephees, henos aukhenos ekpephuuiai.*

And he took up the man-enclosing elaborate stark shield,  
a thing of splendour. There were ten circles of bronze upon it,  
and set about it were twenty knobs of tin, pale-shining,  
and in the very centre another knob of dark cobalt.

And circled in the midst of all was the blank-eyed face of the Gorgon  
with her stare of horror, and Fear was inscribed upon it, and Terror.  
The strap of the shield had silver upon it, and there also on it  
was coiled a cobalt snake, and there were three heads upon him  
twisted to look backward and grown from a single neck, all three.

The basic lines then reappear for another brief spell, also somewhat modified in lines 11.41-45:

κρατὶ δ' ἐπ' ἀμφίφαλον κυνέην θέτο τετραφάληρον

ἵππουριν δεινὸν δὲ λόφος καθύπερθεν ἔνευεν.

εἶλετο δ' ἄλκιμα δοῦρε δύω, κεκορυθμένα χαλκῶ

ὄξέα τῆλε δὲ χαλκὸς ἀπ' αὐτόφιν οὐρανὸν εἶσω

λάμπει·

*krati d' ep **amphiphalon** kuneēn **theto tetraphalēron***

*hippourin deinon de lophos kathuperthen eneuen.*

*heileto d' alkima doure **duō kekoruthmena khalkō***

*oxea tēle de khalkos ap' autophin ouranon eisō*

*lamp,*

Upon his head he set the helmet, two-horned, four-sheeted,  
with the horse-hair crest, and the plumes nodded terribly above it.  
Then he caught up two strong spears edged with sharp bronze  
and the brazen heads flashed from him deep into heaven. {92|93}

In the last passage I have underlined the changes from the “basic lines” of the theme, although one should also note that line 43 has the ἄλκιμα δοῦρε [*alkima doure*] found in the arming of Patroclus in 16.139...

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