Homer and the Ionian Epic Tradition: Some Phonic and Phonological Evidence against an Aeolic 'Phase'

Review Author[s]:
Brian D. Joseph


Stable URL:
http://links.jstor.org/sici?sid=0097-8507%28198409%2960%3A3%3C657%3AHATIET%3E2.0.CO%3B2-F

Language is currently published by Linguistic Society of America.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR’s Terms and Conditions of Use, available at http://www.jstor.org/about/terms.html. JSTOR’s Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at http://www.jstor.org/journals/lsa.html.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

JSTOR is an independent not-for-profit organization dedicated to creating and preserving a digital archive of scholarly journals. For more information regarding JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.
lated to the central issue, e.g. whether a sequence of postvocalic resonant + laryngeal yielded a double resonant in Germanic and Hittite, and whether a Palaeic graphic $g$ can represent PIE *$H_2$. In fact, though, these latter issues seem only indirectly related, in that they concern the development of the PIE laryngeals.

L's approach is necessarily polemic. He examines the evidence, i.e. the relevant forms in various languages that have been cited and analysed by others with regard to the questions mentioned above; and he attempts to evaluate the success of the particular analyses put forward for these forms. In general, he is able to find questionable features in these analyses, and he offers alternative accounts which are more in line with his hypothesis of a laryngeal merger. Sometimes he is quite successful, and is probably correct in claiming that the quality of the evidence has been overstated, as with the notion that Palaeic $g$ continued PIE *$H_2$ in some words. Often, though, his alternative accounts are less than convincing, and create more problems than they solve.

For example. L relies on a putative dissimilation of *$x^w$ (= *$H_3$) to *$x$ (= *$H_2$) / ... w ... on numerous occasions (e.g., p. 25 re La. auris, Gk. oüs ‘ear’; p. 26 re Skt. avih. La. ovis ‘sheep’; p. 27 re Gk. pōu ‘flock’, Skt. pāyu ‘protector’, and re PIE *ak’-; p. 29 re Arm. aganim ‘I dress’), even though dissimilation is usually a somewhat rare and sporadic process—and in this case makes sense only if *$H_3$, the $a$-coloring laryngeal, really was phonetically something like [$x^w$], a claim which itself requires independent justification. Similarly, L often posits extra morphological steps and unattested forms where a recognition of the triple representation of *$a$ in Greek would simplify matters considerably. A case in point is his discussion of verbs like Gk. eméō ‘vomit’ and parallel forms (including the ane- stem of the isolated noun ánemos ‘wind’). L assumes that Gk. inherited pairs of athematic and thematic present stems, e.g. *wema- (with $a$ from *$a$) vs. *wemH-e- (with prevocalic *$H$ → $H$ eventually), and that the more productive thematic type was re-analysed as athematic, i.e. *wemH-e- → *weme-, replacing the old athematic stem (p. 43); but if we assume that *wemH-e- → *weme- directly, we avoid the need for such a poorly motivated re-analysis.

Frequently also, L falls back on the argument that 'there is nothing to prove definitely' that a particular form is related to another, or derived from a particular pre-form (e.g. p. 45 re Arm. di-k’ ‘gods’ and Gk. théōs). While relatively few etymological connections can ever be viewed as absolutely certain, this line of argumentation becomes extremely weak when over-used.

L has succeeded in demonstrating that it is possible to construct an account of the development of the PIE laryngeals in which *$H_1$, *$H_2$ *$H_3$ all merged in non-Anatolian IE. However, he has not shown that this account is preferable in any significant way to the standard view. L relies too much on ad-hoc explanations of troublesome forms—so that even though he is undoubtedly correct in saying that not all the evidence put forward in support of the standard view is valid, one is still left with a residue that is hard to explain away convincingly (e.g. Gk. ánemos). Nonetheless, this most interesting and thought-provoking book certainly merits the attention of serious Indo-Europeans in general—especially those with an interest in laryngealism, who will find here important challenges to many popularly held views.

[Brian D. Joseph, Ohio State University.]

**Homer and the Ionian epic tradition:**


M here presents a discussion of the data bearing on the issue of whether the [Greek] epics were originally composed in Aeneolic and later translated into Ionic' (p. 9), thus going through a so-called ‘Aeneolic phase’ before reaching their now-familiar form. The central problem is thus one of the development of Greek epic—a question properly in the domain of the Classics, some would maintain; but M brings to bear upon it the full resources of the linguist schooled also in the Classics, i.e. a true classical linguist (with equal emphasis on each member of the epithet). As his title indicates, M uses the data to argue against the postulation of a separate Aeneolic phase—though importantly, he does not deny that interaction occurred between concurrently developing Aeneolic and Ionic traditions.

M argues his case in two separate parts. In the first, Chs. 1–3 rehearse commonly held views on formulaicity in Greek epic, the origins
of Greek meter etc., leading up to the impressive and most interesting Ch. 4, ‘Phonic properties of epic formulae’. Here M develops a particularly ingenious argument against an Aeolic phase, based on the phonic properties of Homeric formulae: he shows that many vocalic echoes in phrases, e.g. ë ... ê # ê ... ê in hêgêsant' Athênê 'Athena led' (II. 22.247), or the several involving sêma ‘(burial) mound’, depend on specific innovations found in Ionic but not Aeolic dialects (e.g. *traî → ê in Athênê and sêma).

The second part of the book is a series of studies on ‘the phonological history of some epic forms’ (xiii). Specifically, M examines several of the trickiest problems in Greek historical phonology: the reduction of -ss- to s- in Homer and in Aeolic, and especially the question of dative plurals in -essi (Ch. 5); assimilation of i to s before i (Ch. 6); loss of initial and postconsonantal w (Ch. 7); and quantitative metathesis (Chs. 8–9). The individual discussions are united by the way M uses the data to argue against the hypothesis of an Aeolic phase. Some of his claims are controversial, especially regarding quantitative metathesis, but all are certainly of interest to the classical linguist. M’s discussions are well-documented, and Ch. 8 contains a nice survey of the inscriptive evidence concerning quantitative metathesis from all the Ionic territories.

This book is necessarily addressed to an audience of both linguists and classicists. In general, M succeeds in meeting the needs of both camps, partly through the presentation of alternative explanations of facts; thus, since some readers might take exception to his view of forms like nom. pl. epartēs (Od. 8.151) ‘ready-equipped’ as resulting from the ‘relaxing’ of the contraction rule deriving ‘normal’ epartēs from underlying /epartē-es/ (p. 140). M shows that a more traditional explanation in terms of analogy (stem epartē-, as evident in acc. pl. epartē-as, plus the usual nom. pl. ending -es) produces the same result: he concludes that ‘either way one chooses to describe the facts, [contracted] epartēs is the unmarked form and [uncontracted] epartēeses marked for poeticality’ (141).

The greatest failing of this book is its style. All too often, the major point of a particular section is obscure, and the reader has to wade through some fairly difficult discussion before finding an explicit statement of the problem at hand. A case in point is §§85–93 on Homeric evidence concerning the loss of w and quantitative metathesis), the main point of which is given in §94, after all the data and discussion. This criticism applies to the book over-all, since M’s ultimate goal is stated clearly for the first time only at the end of Ch. 2 (p. 34). As a result, it seems best to read the conclusions to Part One (pp. 70–71) and to Part Two (Ch. 10) before the rest of the book; these are very convincing summaries, and set the stage for the problems to be discussed better than the actual introductory material does. In addition, the numerous references to M’s forthcoming book (Phonological history of Ancient Greek) are a bit annoying, since M often merely summarizes linguistically significant facts and forms, in anticipation of fuller treatment in this yet to be completed work.

All in all, though, M has written a perceptive and provocative book, which classicists and classical linguists alike should read and note. M shows well how a real understanding of linguistics, and of what linguists do, can be of value in the Classics and can contribute much to the analysis and appreciation of Homeric diction. Finally, M’s discussion of the phonic complexities of Homeric formulae will interest all linguists, but especially those interested in matters of linguistic artistry and iconicity in language.

[Brian D. Joseph, Ohio State University.]


Although the Greek grammatical tradition was thoroughly explored by 19th century philologists—who left us, e.g., the outstanding corpus of the Grammatici graeci (Leipzig, 1867–1910)—very little work has been done on the grammatical literature written on papyri. Indeed almost exclusive attention has been given to grammarians like Dionysios Thrax, Apollonios Dyscolos, and Herodians—whose writings constitute the bulk of the three parts of the Grammatici graeci—and to Tryphon, whose work has been edited by A. de Velsen (Try-