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Oral Tradition (<http://journal.oraltradition.org>) seeks to provide a comparative and interdisciplinary focus for studies in oral tradition and related fields by publishing research and scholarship on the creation, transmission, and interpretation of all forms of oral traditional expression. In addition to essays treating certifiably oral traditions, *OT* presents investigations of the relationships between oral and written traditions, as well as brief accounts of important fieldwork, and occasional transcriptions and translations of oral texts. In addition, issues will include the annual Albert Lord and Milman Parry Lecture on Oral Tradition. Submissions should follow the list-of-reference format (http://journal.oraltradition.org/files/misc/oral_tradition_formatting_guide.pdf) and may be sent via e-mail (journal@oraltradition.org); all quotations of primary materials must be made in the original language(s) with following English translations. If appropriate, please describe any supporting materials that could be used to illustrate the article, such as photographs, audio recordings, or video recordings. *Oral Tradition* publishes such materials online in an eCompanion designed to supplement the texts of articles. Most contributions will be reviewed by at least one specialist reader and one generalist reader before a final decision is reached.

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Contents

<i>Editor's Column</i>	1
Gregory Nagy <i>Diachronic Homer and a Cretan Odyssey</i>	3
Jonathan Burgess <i>The Tale of Meleager in the Iliad</i>	51
Emily West <i>The Transformation of Cyavana: A Case Study in Narrative Evolution</i>	77
Venla Sykäre <i>Beginning from the End: Strategies of Composition in Lyrical Improvisation with End Rhyme</i>	123
Gloria Goodwin Raheja <i>"Hear the Tale of the Famine Year": Famine Policy, Oral Traditions, and the Recalcitrant Voice of the Colonized in Nineteenth-Century India</i>	155
<i>About the Authors</i>	199

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Editor's Column

With this issue *Oral Tradition* offers a miscellany of essays that explore Homeric, Sanskrit epic, parallelism in improvisatory versification, and some of the social consequences of colonial ethnography manifest in man's inhumanity to man. Composed in sabbatical mode along the banks of the Ganges river, Rishikesh, Uttarkhand, India, this note's brevity is its sole virtue, unlike the multiple merits of the essays it introduces.

In 2013, Gregory Nagy delivered the the 27th Lord and Parry Lecture, "Diachronic Homer and a Cretan *Odyssey*," delighting his audience with a magisterial lesson that adumbrated the Homeric tradition's awareness of its chronological evolution, especially in the mirror of the "lying tales" of Odysseus, that reveal the existence of a "Cretan *Odyssey*." Next up, Jonathan Burgess offers a revised and expanded version of the 29th Lord and Parry Lecture, "The Tale of Meleager in the *Iliad*," that explores the Meleager tale of Book 9 in the *Iliad* pointing up the significance of its narratological construction in *traditionality* and the epic's characteristic capacity for accommodating narratives drawn from other sources. Working in the Sanskrit branch of Indo-European epic, Emily West proposes a set of diagnostic tools for assessing the degree of relatedness between parallel narratives that are developed through comparative analysis of salient variants in the "Tale of *Cyavana*" and identifies principles of narrative evolution.

We now shift to a study of contemporary poetic traditions. From interviews with practitioners of Finnish "freestyle" rap, Mallorcan singers of *gloses*, and Cretan *mandinadhes*, Venla Sykari characterizes certain principles of end rhyme verse improvisation in her essay "Beginning from the End: Strategies of Composition in Lyrical Improvisation with End Rhyme." In their reflections on poetic techniques of improvisatory compositions, the performers of these poetic forms identify the end point of a structural unit of composition as the apposite location for "strong" arguments. The author underscores how this constitutes a "reversal" of patterns of semantic parallelism.

Finally, with the essay, "'Hear the Tale of the Famine Year': Famine Policy, Oral Traditions, and the Recalcitrant Voice of the Colonized in Nineteenth-Century India," Gloria Goodwin Raheja analyzes eleven Hindi and Punjabi famine songs recorded in British colonial administration documents. She contrasts the illusory *vox populi* consent to British famine policy articulated in some apparently "compliant" songs with other dissenting voices in songs of censure and lamentation that the same authorities intentionally misrepresented to reinforce the illusion of popular approval of British famine relief policies.

This issue of *Oral Tradition* appears in virtual space thanks to the combined efforts of the staff of the Center for Studies in Oral Tradition—Mark Jarvis, Hannah Lenon, Lauren Anderson, Elise Broaddus, Katy Chenoweth, Chris Dobbs (to whom we wish every success in his new endeavors), Emily Horn, and Associate Editor Professor Sean Gurd. In addition, special recognition and *kudos* are due our anonymous colleagues who referee submissions to *Oral Tradition*, whose expert guidance encourages us to continue aspiring to the standards of scholarly

excellence established or the journal by John Miles Foley, its founding editor. Professor Foley worked tirelessly to guarantee a forum for dialogue about humanity's verbal arts, and this initiative, *Oral Tradition*, has offered itself as such a venue for thirty years. The endeavor continues with the generous support of the College of Arts & Sciences and Interim Dean Patricia Okker, of the University of Missouri.

We encourage you to take part in the dialogue and discussion of humanity's oral traditions: share your insights into the world's traditional verbal arts with us and our readers. Submissions are evaluated by double-blind review process, and the reports from specialist and generalist referees are dispositive: accept, accept with revision, or reject. That decision is generally reported to prospective authors within a trimester of receipt. Published online, in open access format, *Oral Tradition* is seen by more than 20,000 readers in 200 countries and territories.

John Zemke
Editor, *Oral Tradition*

Diachronic Homer and a Cretan *Odyssey*

Gregory Nagy

Introduction

I explore here the kaleidoscopic world of Homer and Homeric poetry from a diachronic perspective, combining it with a synchronic perspective. The terms *synchronic* and *diachronic*, as I use them here, come from linguistics.¹ When linguists use the word *synchronic*, they are thinking of a given structure as it exists in a given time and space; when they use *diachronic*, they are thinking of that structure as it evolves through time.² From a diachronic perspective, the structure that we know as Homeric poetry can be viewed, I argue, as *an evolving medium*.

But there is more to it. When you look at Homeric poetry from a diachronic perspective, you will see not only an evolving medium of oral poetry. You will see also a medium that actually views itself diachronically. In other words, Homeric poetry demonstrates aspects of its own evolution.

A case in point is “the Cretan *Odyssey*”—or, better, “a Cretan *Odyssey*”—as reflected in the “lying tales” of Odysseus in the *Odyssey*. These tales, as we will see, give the medium an opportunity to open windows into an *Odyssey* that is otherwise unknown. In the alternative universe of this “Cretan *Odyssey*,” the adventures of Odysseus take place in the exotic context of Minoan-Mycenaean civilization.

Part 1: Minoan-Mycenaean Civilization and Memories of a Sea-Empire³

Introduction

From the start, I say “Minoan-Mycenaean civilization,” not “Minoan” and “Mycenaean” separately. This is because elements of Minoan civilization become eventually infused with elements we find in Mycenaean civilization. And such an infusion has to do with the fact that

¹ See Nagy (2003:1), with reference to Saussure (1916:117).

² On *diachronic* as distinct from *historical* perspectives, see Nagy (2011a).

³ An earlier version of what follows in Part 1 appeared online in Nagy (2015c).

Minoan civilization, which had evolved in the context of a “Minoan Empire,” as archaeologists know it, was eventually taken over by a “Mycenaean Empire.” This takeover, I argue, is reflected not only in the evidence of material culture but also in the evidence of mythological traditions as reflected in visual and verbal narratives. To be more specific, I argue that the takeover from Minoan to Mycenaean civilization resulted in the modification of myths about the Minoan Empire by way of myths about the Mycenaean Empire. And one of these myths, as we will see, is based on an idea that I paraphrase by way of the popular expression “finders keepers.” This same expression, as we will also see, applies also to a ritual that evolved in a historically unrelated context, the sea-empire of Venice in its heyday. In terms of my argument, the mentality of *finders keepers* that comes to life in a myth about the Minoan sea-empire also comes to life in a ritual that evolved in the historical context of the Venetian sea-empire. Proceeding now to the essay, I start by reviewing some essentials first about the Minoan Empire and then about the Mycenaean Empire.

Minoan Empire

The Minoan Empire makes its appearance in the early second millennium BCE in Crete, which is an island situated in the middle of the Aegean Sea, and the power of this empire was sustained by its dominion over the sea (Fig.1.).



Fig. 1. As we will see, this image of sea-bound Crete will help visualize the importance of the sea for conceptualizing the Minoan Empire.

The blue sea surrounding the island seems serene at the moment—no troubled waters. As we will see later, the distinction I am making here between the “serene” and the “troubled” waters of the sea will help visualize the metaphors applied to the good and the bad fortunes experienced by the sea-empire of Venice.

The concept of a Minoan Empire is linked to the name of a mythical figure who was once upon a time the king of Crete. He was *Minōs* or Minos. Even if Minos existed only in myth, archaeological research has shown that there really did exist a sea-empire that evolved in the context of “Minoan” civilization. This Minoan sea-empire flourished in the second millennium BCE, from roughly 1700 till 1450, and it left behind a multitude of after effects in the first millennium BCE, long after it ceased to exist. A good example is a place-name like “Minoa” (*Minōia*), which was the old name of Paros, an island in the Aegean Sea. In this and in other such cases, the name “Minoa” means something like “outpost of Minos.” Archaeologists

have discovered traces of Minoan outposts throughout the Cyclades islands of the Aegean Sea and beyond. The Minoan maritime network extended to places even as far away as Sicily.

A decisive witness to both the myth and the reality of a Minoan sea-empire is Thucydides (1.4.1):

Μίνως γὰρ παλαιάτατος ὧν ἀκοῆ ἴσμεν ναυτικὸν ἐκτίησατο καὶ τῆς νῦν Ἑλληνικῆς θαλάσσης ἐπὶ πλεῖστον ἐκράτησε καὶ τῶν Κυκλάδων νήσων ἤρξέ τε καὶ οἰκιστὴς πρῶτος τῶν πλείστων ἐγένετο. Minos was the earliest of all men we know about from oral traditions who possessed a fleet and seized power over most of the sea that we now know as the Greek sea [= the Aegean] and over the Cyclades Islands [of the Aegean Sea]. He was also the first to establish colonial outposts at most of these islands.

In fact, Thucydides is the primary source for a most apt term for this sea-empire, which is *thalassocracy*, derived from the Greek compound formation *thalasso-krat-* / θαλασσο-κρατ- as used by the historian in the sense of “control over the sea” (as in 7.48.2, 8.30.2, 8.41.1, 8.63.1), and the earlier historian Herodotus uses the same compound formation *thalasso-krat-* / θαλασσο-κρατ- in referring specifically to the sea-empire of Minos (3.122.2).⁴ For both Herodotus and Thucydides, the thalassocracy of Minos was viewed as a prehistoric precedent for the historical thalassocracy of the Athenian Empire in the fifth century BCE.⁵ This “Athenian connection” will figure prominently in my argumentation ahead.

I finish this part of my analysis by noting in general that the concept of a Minoan thalassocracy is well attested in many other classical sources besides Herodotus and Thucydides: going backward in time, I list the following examples: Plutarch, Strabo, Virgil, Catullus, Plato (especially in the *Phaedo*), and, most prominently, the “Homer” of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* as we know those epics.

Mycenaean Empire

The Mycenaean Empire makes its appearance in the middle of the second millennium BCE on the mainland of continental Europe, in the region that we now know as Greece. This empire dominated only a part of that region—especially the part that is still known today as the Peloponnesos. It can be said that the Mycenaean Empire was the first empire that ever existed in continental Europe.

The term *Mycenaean* stems from the place-name *Mukēnai* or Mycenae, an ancient fortified site located in the northeast region of the Peloponnesos. This site, dominated by a walled citadel, was the administrative center of that region, as we see from the evidence of clay tablets that were used for the records of the center. Modern archaeological excavations have recovered some of these tablets, which had been accidentally preserved because they were baked in fires that burned down the center or at least parts of the center. Jan Driessen’s formulation is

⁴Nagy (2009 II§242 = p. 222).

⁵Nagy (2009 II §244 = p. 223, E§§161-64 = pp. 364-66).

most apt: “tablets need a fire catastrophe to be preserved.”⁶ These fires did not necessarily happen all at once, but in any case the final destruction of the administrative center of Mycenae by fire can be dated around the twelfth or eleventh century BCE.⁷ The script that was used for writing on these tablets is known today as Linear B, and the decipherment of this script by Michael Ventris in 1952 showed that the language in which the Linear B texts were written was a form of ancient Greek. This form of Greek resembles most closely the oldest aspects of Homeric language, which is the language of a special kind of oral poetry that shaped the ancient Greek epics that we know as the Homeric *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.⁸

Linguists generally describe as *Mycenaean* the Greek language of the Linear B tablets, even though Mycenae is not the only ancient site in mainland Greece where archaeologists have found such tablets. Excavations at other sites on the mainland have yielded further examples. Most notably, there were tablets found at Pylos and at Thebes; at these sites, the dating of the fires that baked most of the tablets has been estimated at around the early twelfth century BCE in the case of Pylos and at around the second half of the thirteenth century BCE in the case of Thebes.⁹ The Greek Ministry of Culture announced on the 25th of August 2015 that a Mycenaean “palace” near Sparta has been discovered (*The Guardian* 2015).

The language of the Linear B tablets found at these and other sites is remarkably consistent: what we see at work is a kind of *lingua franca* reflecting the bureaucratic agenda of the administrative centers. Given that Mycenae was not the only administrative center that used the *lingua franca* represented by Linear B texts, can we even say that the Mycenaean Empire was controlled from one unified administrative center, which was Mycenae itself? The most likely answer is no. It would be more realistic to view the Mycenaean Empire as a loose federation of multiple administrative centers, small as well as large. Still, from the standpoint of all archaeological findings put together, Mycenae was clearly the most prosperous, powerful, and prestigious of all such centers. For me these three “P”s— *prosperity*, *power*, and *prestige*—sum up the essence of empires in general.

What I just formulated can be backed up by the indirect evidence of archaeological findings at Boğazköy, a small town located in the north central region of the modern state of Turkey. It was here that the great ancient city of Hattusa, capital of the Hittite Empire, was found. And it was here that archaeologists uncovered the archives of this empire. The tablets found in the archives, written in cuneiform script, documented written correspondences between Hittite kings and counterparts who were kings of other empires, including even the pharaohs of Egypt.¹⁰ I focus here on the place-name referring to one of these other empires. That place-name is *Ahhiyawa*, attested in Hittite correspondences dating from an era stretching from the fifteenth

⁶Driessen (2008:71).

⁷Driessen (2008:74).

⁸Nagy (2008a I§§6, 16-18; II§§116-88).

⁹Driessen (2008:73, 74).

¹⁰ On the correspondences of Hittite kings with pharaohs of Egypt, see (Edel 1994).

to the thirteenth centuries BCE.¹¹ During that period the Hittite Empire controlled most of the land-mass of Asia Minor from east to west—all the way west to the coast of the Aegean Sea. And it was along the coastline of the Aegean where conflicts occasionally flared up between the Hittite Empire and a rival empire called Ahhiyawa by the Hittites, as we see from correspondences, recorded in the Hittite language, between the successive kings of the two empires.¹²

From the Ahhiyawa texts of the Hittite archives, we can see that the kings of the Hittite Empire in the land-mass of Asia Minor—an empire that was and always had been land-based—speak about the empire of Ahhiyawa as a seafaring power that is somehow ruled by a king whose own land base is in the west, on the other side of the Aegean Sea, situated somewhere on the land-mass of Europe.¹³ In the ongoing research on the Ahhiyawa texts, the current consensus is that the land base called Ahhiyawa by the Hittites is the Peloponnesos, and that the center point of that land base is Mycenae.¹⁴ So, the evidence of the Hittite archives points to the existence of a Mycenaean empire, whether or not we consider the administrative center at Mycenae to be powerful enough to control all the regions that archaeologists would describe as belonging to the civilization of the Mycenaeans.

And how did the populations of Ahhiyawa refer to themselves in their native Greek language? The form used in the Hittite texts, *Ahhiyawa* (older variant *Ahhiya*), gives the answer. In the Hittite language, this form approximates what the Mycenaeans themselves would have called their empire: “land of the *Akhaiói*.”¹⁵

In terms of the Mycenaean Greek language as spoken in the second millennium BCE and as later reflected in Homeric poetry, *Akhaiói* can be translated as “Achaeans,” which in Homeric Greek was a collective heroic name for the Greek-speaking warriors who fought in the Trojan War.¹⁶

So, the Hittite evidence indicates that the Mycenaean Empire, whether or not it is to be viewed merely as a loose confederation of states, was a formidable sea-based as well as a land-based power, rivaling the land-based power of the Hittite Empire in Asia Minor.

But how did the Mycenaean Empire become a sea-based power in the first place? To explain I return to a term I used earlier when I referred to “the Minoan-Mycenaean civilization.” This compound term Minoan-Mycenaean is meant to reflect the fact that Minoan civilization was ultimately absorbed by Mycenaean civilization. And this fact is correlated with another fact: that the Minoan Empire was eventually taken over by the Mycenaean Empire. Even the original power base of the Minoan Empire, the island of Crete, was eventually occupied by Mycenaeans,

¹¹ The original Hittite correspondences known today as the Ahhiyawa Texts have been published, in transliterated form and with translation and commentary, by Beckman, Bryce, and Cline (2011).

¹² See Nagy (2015b).

¹³ In the same source as indicated in the previous note, I analyze the references in the Ahhiyawa Texts to sea-based activities linked with successive kings of Ahhiyawa.

¹⁴ See again the introduction of Beckman, Bryce, and Cline (2011:3-4).

¹⁵ Again, Nagy (2015b).

¹⁶ Again, Nagy (2015b).

and that is why the administrative centers of the island adopted the same administrative system that we see operating on the Greek mainland. The most distinctive feature of this system was the Linear B script, used for writing Mycenaean Greek, as opposed to the Linear A script, which had been used for writing the pre-Greek language or languages of Minoan civilization on the island of Crete.¹⁷ The clearest attestations of a distinctly Mycenaean administrative system as superimposed on an earlier Minoan administrative system in Crete are the Linear B tablets found at the ancient site of Knossos in the north central region of the island and at Chanià, the ancient name for which was Kydonia, in the northwestern region. The dating of the Linear B tablets found at such Cretan sites even matches for the most part the datings of Linear B tablets found at the mainland Mycenaean sites. At Chanià, for example, the Linear B tablets that have recently been found can be dated around 1250 BCE. At Knossos there are different sets of tablets that had been baked by fire at different phases of destruction during the lengthy existence of that administrative center, and the dates of destruction range from 1400 BCE in the case of the so-called room of the chariot tablets all the way to as late as 1200 in the case of another administrative zone.¹⁸

The datings of Linear B texts attested on the island of Crete are remarkably close to the earliest datings of Linear B texts attested on the Mycenaean mainland, and this fact leaves open the possibility that the writing system of Linear B, which was evidently derived from the writing system of Linear A, had actually been invented on the island of Crete, not on the Mycenaean mainland. And such an invention could have been contemporaneous with the replacement of Minoan rule by Mycenaean rule on the island.

I must add here a general observation about both Linear A and Linear B as media of writing in Minoan and Mycenaean administrative contexts respectively. I think it is possible that the attested practice of writing Linear A and Linear B on clay tablets with a stylus was only a transitional phase of recording information, followed up by a final phase that involved writing on parchment with brush or possibly with pen. The parchment would then be sealed, for instance with a signet ring.

I base this observation on the relevant archaeological evidence found at Minoan administrative centers. I quote here a formulation from an earlier work of mine (Nagy 2008a II§132):

Relevant here is the existing archaeological evidence for the use of parchment by the Linear A scribes in the administrative center at Zakro in Crete.¹⁹ Evidently, the procedure of these scribes was to use parchment for their permanent archival records, as opposed to their use of clay tablets for making temporary records. I infer that the Linear B scribes of the Mycenaean era followed an analogous procedure: they would write their temporary records on clay tablets, and these records would then be transferred at the end of a given fiscal year from clay to parchment (the notion of a

¹⁷ My formulation here does not rule out the possibility that Linear A, in the heyday of the Minoan Empire, could also be used to write Greek, even if Greek was not the standard language of Linear A.

¹⁸ Palaima (2003:164); yet another administrative zone at Knossos can be dated around 1375-1350 BCE. See also Driessen (2008 and 2010).

¹⁹ Weingarten (1983b).

fiscal year is indicated by references in the Linear B tablets to the current year as opposed to the immediately preceding and following years). There is an irony to be noted here: when the administrative centers of the Mycenaean era were destroyed by fires, the temporary records of the Linear B scribes were made permanent for archaeologists because they were baked and thus preserved by the same fires that must have destroyed the permanent records recorded on parchment.

At present I stand by my earlier formulation as I just quoted it here, though I acknowledge that my terminology concerning “scribes” and “archives” may need to be refined.²⁰ Also, I note with interest a relevant observation by Jan Driessen with specific reference to the room of the chariot tablets at Knossos: the clay sealings in this room, found together with the tablets, “are of a type that may have sealed parchment, a practice quite common in earlier Minoan times.”²¹ These clay sealings, I should add, could be sealed by way of a signet ring.

I have a most simple reason to give for having taken up all this space in arguing that the Mycenaean administrations on the island of Crete and on the mainland had retained a Minoan practice of writing documents with brush or pen on parchment—and then sealing the parchment document, as with a signet ring. The reason is this: I find it intuitively appealing to posit such an advanced system of writing for the advanced system of administration that we see it at work in the room of the chariot tablets at Knossos.

Keeping my focus for the moment on the room of the chariot tablets, I note with special interest the Mycenaean cultural agenda reflected in the written records of the Linear B tablets that are linked to that administrative zone at Knossos. I quote from an apt description by Thomas Palaima (2003:164), who notes that the administrative unit responsible for keeping written records there was using these records “mainly for the monitoring and distribution of military equipment (chariots, body armour, horses) to a Greek-dominated military élite.”²² I wager that the Mycenaean Greek name for such a military élite would have been *Akhaioi* “Achaeans.”

I bring this section to a close by coming back full circle to the point I was making at the start about the term Minoan-Mycenaean. As we have just seen in the case of the scripts known as Linear A and Linear B, the transition from Minoan to Mycenaean civilization needs to be viewed in the context of a takeover where an older empire is replaced by a newer one. Accordingly, the surviving traces of the Minoan Empire, including its myths about a Cretan thalassocracy, need to be viewed in the context of the newer Mycenaean Empire, which not only replaced the reality of the older Minoan Empire but also appropriated as its own the myths about the Cretan thalassocracy.

²⁰ For a refining of the terms “scribe” and “archive” as applied by archaeologists to the procedures of writing Linear A and Linear B, see Palaima (2003, especially pp. 169-70). Palaima considers the possible relevance of the Minoan archaeological evidence for the administrative practice of writing on parchment, citing Weingarten (1983a) and Hallager (1997:i, 135-58). I cite also Weingarten (1983b and 1986). But Palaima’s analysis also considers arguments opposed to the idea that Mycenaean administrative centers maintained permanent records written in Linear B on parchment. So the debate is ongoing.

²¹ Driessen (2010:72).

²² Driessen (2008:71) makes a relevant observation with reference to the Linear B tablets found at Chanià in West Crete and dated around 1300 BCE: one of these tablets (Sq 1) concerns chariot wheels.

Intermezzo: a Word about Myth and Ritual

As my argument proceeds, I will eventually reach a point where I have a chance to focus on a myth about the Cretan thalassocracy. Before I can get there, however, I will have to focus on a ritual that displays, I think, the essence of this thalassocracy. This ritual is represented in an elaborate painting known to archaeologists as the “flotilla scene,” which is part of a miniature fresco discovered at the ancient site of Akrotiri on the island of Santorini, the ancient name for which is Thera. The dating of this Theran fresco can be placed at around 1600 BCE or even earlier, and the painting gives a most vivid glimpse of the civilization that evolved in the Aegean Sea already during the earliest phases of the Minoan thalassocracy.

As I will argue later, this “flotilla scene” can be viewed as an illustration of a “ritual moment” reflecting all at once the prosperity, power, and prestige of the Cretan thalassocracy. Already now, however, I need to articulate a principle that I will apply to my reading of the evidence provided by the ancient painting we will consider. The principle is simply this: *myth* cannot be understood without an understanding of the *ritual* that goes with it.

In preparation for analyzing this ritual moment, I will now compare a parallel that is illustrated in the visual arts of another thalassocracy.

A Ritual Moment for the Sea-Empire of Venice

I concentrate here on a ritual that takes place at the *Festa della Sensa*, a spring festival in Venice that is celebrated every year on the feast day known in Venetian dialect as *la Sensa*, meaning “the Ascension.” The ritual is old, attested for a span of time that exceeds a millennium.²³ And, since it evidently kept changing over the many centuries of its existence, this yearly ritual is impossible to describe in any single definitive version. Given the vast variety of versions attested over time, I find it easiest to begin by sketching a synthesis that features some of the most spectacular attestations of this annual event celebrating the prosperity, power, and prestige of the Venetian sea empire in its heyday. I start with a picture.

We are about to see a painting by Francesco Guardi, to be dated somewhere between 1780 and 1790. This picture captures in a timeless sort of way the spectacular moment when the Venetian Ship of State, a magnificently built and decorated galley named *il Bucintoro*, sets off from its station at the San Marco Basin and sails toward the church of San Nicolò at the Lido. The galley is headed for the open sea of the Adriatic, where an all-defining ritual will take place.



Fig. 2. *Il Bucintoro on Ascension Day*, c. 1780–1790, Francesco Guardi [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons.

²³ The earliest attestations of aetiologies concerning this ritual can be dated at around 1000 CE: see Muir (1981:119-20).

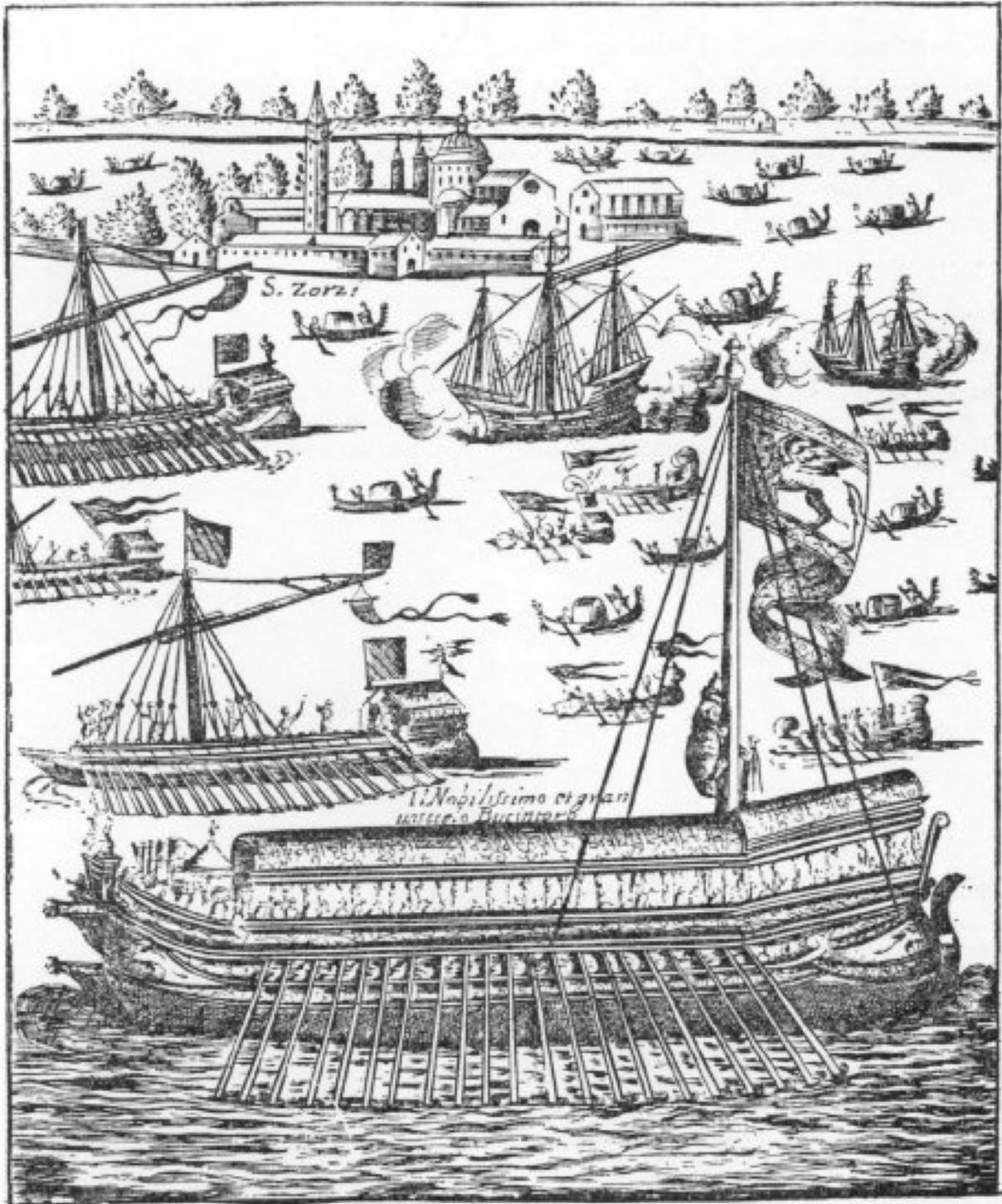
What is the ritual? Its name is *lo Sposalizio del Mare*, meaning “the Wedding of the Sea” in the Venetian dialect, and the two main participants are the *doge* of Venice, representing the bridegroom, and the feminized Adriatic Sea itself, representing the bride. On the day of the yearly feast of *la Sensa*, the *doge* commences the ritual by boarding *il Bucintoro* as his flagship—the painting above shows the most celebrated rebuilt version of this magnificent galley—and sailing off toward San Nicolò, escorted by a flotilla of other boats. As I already noted, the ritual destination of this floating procession is the open sea of the Adriatic, to be reached at a gap in that enormous world-renowned sandbar known as the Lido, separating the Venetian Lagoon from the Adriatic Sea. Situated at that gap is the church of San Nicolò, and our painting shows the ship of state *il Bucintoro* together with its flotilla as it sails toward that church. Once the flotilla reaches the break in the Lido at San Nicolò and heads out into the open sea, the moment arrives for the *doge* to throw into the waves a golden ring, thus notionally “marrying” the Adriatic Sea.

Here is another picture of the same ritual occasion, though at a different moment of the ritual. It is a painting by Canaletto, dated around 1732, showing the flagship *il Bucintoro* in the background, off to the side, and the rest of the flotilla in the foreground (Fig. 3.).



Fig. 3. *Il Bucintoro at the Molo on Ascension Day*, c. 1732. Canaletto [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons.

Here is a still earlier picture, dated around 1609, produced by the engraver Giacomo Franco. Once again we see the flagship of the Venetian *doge*, *il Bucintoro*, accompanied by a flotilla (Fig. 4.).



*Il Doge di Venetia con tutta la sig.^a il giorno dell'Ascensione à spararsi il Mare con questa solennità la quale
 et per dignità et per concerto è la più bella pompa che si ueggia in Venetia*

Fig. 4. Il Bucintoro, the Doge's ship of state, accompanied by a flotilla., c. 1609, Giacomo Franco. [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons.

What I find most remarkable about this particular picture is the high degree of detail lavished on the appearance of the boats. For me two details stand out. The first is the position of the cabins that we see more clearly at the sterns of some of the smaller boats. The word for such a cabin in Venetian dialect is *tièmo*, which means literally “covering.” And the second is the position, with relation to each *tièmo*, of the oarsman who pilots the boat.

These two details are strikingly comparable to what we find in a miniature fresco I already mentioned, which was discovered at the ancient site of Akrotiri on the island of Thera. The dating of this Theran fresco, as I already noted, can be situated around 1600 BCE or even earlier. The part of the fresco that I show here pictures a flotilla of boats that are being rowed in the mode of a floating procession (Fig. 5.).



Fig. 5. Theran fresco at Akrotiri showing flotilla; c. 1600 BCE, panorama by smial; modified by Luxo, via Wikimedia Commons.

In this picture from Thera, dated as it is around 1600 BCE, I isolate for the moment two details that I propose to compare with the two details I highlighted in the picture from Venice, dated around 1609 CE, over three millennia later. First, I note the positioning of the cabins that we see at the sterns of some of the smaller boats. And, second, I note the positioning, with relation to the cabins, of the main oarsmen who pilot the boats. Here is a closeup, showing the stern of one of the boats (Fig. 6.).

Having just compared two sets of details taken from the picturing of floating processions in two historically distinct sea-empires that are chronologically separated from each other by over three millennia, I must emphasize that the comparisons I am making are merely typological, not genealogical. That said, however, I must also emphasize that both of the empires I am comparing with each other had evolved in the overall context of the Mediterranean world writ large, of which the civilizations of the Adriatic Sea and the Aegean Sea are an integral part.

Returning to the topic of floating processions as attested in the heyday of the Venetian Empire, I will now show an anonymous painting, dated to the sixteenth



Fig. 6. Detail from Theran fresco at Akrotiri, c. 1600 BCE, original image via Wikimedia Commons.

century, which depicts a mythologized moment in history when the *doge* Francesco Ziani disembarks from *il Bucintoro*, having docked at the Convento della Carità, in order to pay his

respects to Pope Alexander III, who was then in exile and had taken refuge at the Convento. This meeting between the *doge* and the pope, if we view the event by hindsight, inaugurates a story about a great Venetian victory: in 1177 CE, the Venetian fleet led by Ziani decisively defeated the enemy fleet of the Holy Roman Empire, led by Otho, son of Frederick Barbarossa. In the painting, the imperial galley of the *doge* is represented in a simultaneously idealized and miniaturized way (Fig. 7.). Flanking the flagship *il Bucintoro* here, as we can see, are two smaller ships, one in the foreground and one further behind in the background. The *doge* has already disembarked, and he proceeds to give his respects to the pope.²⁴



Fig. 7. The Doge Sebastiano Ziani disembarking from il Bucintoro at the Convent of Charity. Miniature, 16th Century, [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons.

In celebration of the victory of the Venetian fleet led by the *doge* Ziani over the fleet of the Holy Roman Empire led by Otho, Pope Alexander subsequently gives to the *doge* the original ring to be used in the yearly wedding of Venice with the Adriatic Sea, and the gift is accompanied by these words addressed by Alexander to Ziani, according to one account:²⁵

Ricevi questo ò Ziani, col quale tu, & tuoi suoi successori, userete ogni anno di sposare il mare. Accioche i posteri intendino, che la Signoria d'esso màre, acquistata da voi per antico possesso, & per ragon di guerra è vostra. Et che il mare è sottoposto al vostro Dominio, come la moglie al marito.

Ricevi questo ò Ziani, col quale tu, & tuoi suoi successori, userete ogni anno di sposare il mare. Accioche i posteri intendino, che la Signoria d'esso màre, acquistata da voi per antico possesso, & per ragon di guerra è vostra. Et che il mare è sottoposto al vostro Dominio, come la moglie al marito.

Receive this [ring], O Ziani, with which you and your successors will make it a custom every year to marry the sea, so that posterity may know that the dominion of this sea, acquired by you through ancient possession and through conquest in war, belongs to you, and that the sea is subjected to your domination just as a woman is subject to her husband.

Moving forward in time to the near-present, I refer here to a video recording of a modern re-enactment of the “wedding.” We see here the mayor of Venice in the act of throwing a ring into the sea, thus re-enacting the role of the *doge* as representative of the Venetian Empire (Fig. 8.).

And what happens to the ring after it is thrown into the waves? In modern times, as we read in touristic descriptions, “Hopeful divers are welcome to attempt to retrieve the ring (finders keepers), and the



Fig. 8. A Venezia lo “sposalizio del mare,” video posted June 1, 2014, via la Repubblica: <http://video.repubblica.it/cronaca/a-venezia-lo-sposalizio-del-mare/167766>

²⁴ I thank my friends Albert and Rebecca Ammerman for helping me analyze the details shown in this painting.

²⁵ The words of the pope are quoted this way by Francesco Sansovino (1521-1586), *Venetia Descritta* (printed 1663) p. 501. See also Muir (1981:124).

ring is free of taxes for a year.”²⁶ As I will now argue, the incidental expression that we have just read here, “finders keepers,” captures the original essence of the whole ritual as it evolved through the centuries.

There are other attestations of such a ritual of marrying the community with the sea, such as at Cervia, a small Adriatic coastal town near Ravenna.²⁷ Here too, as in Venice, we find a yearly “Wedding of the Sea,” *lo Sposalizio del Mare*, celebrated at the spring festival of Ascension Day, on which occasion the bishop of Ravenna throws a ring into the Adriatic Sea (Fig. 9).

In this picture we see swimmers in the water surrounding the boat. They are eagerly waiting, ready to compete with each other by diving after the ring once it is thrown into the waves. In the same picture I note a detail: we can just barely see a ribbon attached to the ring that the bishop is about to throw. The small attachment evidently facilitates the finding of the ring by the lucky diver who succeeds in retrieving it. If the ring is not found in any given year, according to touristic accounts, such a failure is considered to be a sign of bad luck, negatively affecting the fortunes of local fishermen and farmers. What is at stake, then, in this version of a wedding between community and sea, is not the good fortune of an empire, as in the Venetian version of the ritual, but simply the prosperity of the locale.



Fig. 9. Bishop of Ravenna throws a ring into the Adriatic Sea as part of *lo Sposalizio del Mare*, via <http://www.romagnaforyou.it>. (Note: at the time of publication this website was compromised by malware. The hyperlink has been disabled.)

The aetiology of this localized version of *lo Sposalizio del Mare* goes back to 1445 CE. At that time Cervia had its own bishop: today the bishop of Ravenna performs the ritual. Back in 1445 the local bishop of Cervia was a man named Pietro Barbo and he was credited with originating the ritual. In the year 1445, according to the aetiological narrative, the bishop was sailing from Venice to Cervia when a violent storm arose, threatening the safety of the ship and its passengers. The bishop reacted by throwing his ring into the turbulent sea, thus miraculously making it serene again. And that is why, according to the aetiology, the ring is thrown into the sea every year at the spring festival of the Ascension.

As we compare this aetiology dating to 1445 in Cervia with the earlier Venetian aetiology dating back to 1177, where we saw the giving of a golden ring by Pope Alexander III to the *doge* Francesco Ziani, we can now see from a different perspective the significance of the ritual act itself, the throwing of the ring into the Adriatic Sea. On the surface, it appears that a transfer of ownership is taking place: the pope owns a ring that he gives to the *doge*, and this gift makes it possible for Venice to dominate the Adriatic Sea just as a bridegroom will have dominion, in the quoted words of the pope, over a bride. But the logic of the aetiology goes deeper. Ultimately, the ring is not for the pope to give away. It does not really belong to him. He merely transmits

²⁶ <http://venicexplorer.com/explore-venice/annual-events/la-sensa.html>

²⁷ Muir (1981:129).

the ring. And this ring does not even belong exclusively to the *doge*. After all, a new *doge* may be in power a year from now, who knows? But the sea will always be the sea, and it will always receive the ring that is its due, year after year. You have to give to the sea a new ring every year. In terms of the aetiology, *this eternally renewed ring belongs to the sea*. Every year, from one year to the next, the sea reclaims the renewable ring from the *doge*. Whoever the *doge* of Venice happens to be in any given year, he has dominion over the Venetian Empire precisely because the sea gives to Venice that empire for yet another year. The prosperity, power, and prestige of the Venetian Empire can be seen as the yearly gift of the Adriatic Sea.

Similarly, on a far smaller scale, the prosperity of the town of Cervia is a yearly gift from the sea. If the sea is serene, both physically and metaphorically, then good fortune prevails. We see a parallel pattern of thinking in the case of Venice: the title of the *doge* is *il Serenissimo*, “the most serene one,” because the serenity of the Adriatic is transferable to the leader or *doge* (*dux* in Latin) of Venice and, by extension, to the Venetian Empire. Without serenity, the troubled waters of the Adriatic would spell trouble for the Venetian Empire.

And just as the feminized sea that gets married to the *doge* gives good fortune to Venice and to its worldwide imperial community, so also a bride who gets married to a bridegroom will give good fortune to the family by bearing progeny. In terms of this sexualized comparison, the generative power of the bride is so fertile that she can pass it on from one generation to the next, making it possible for the family to last forever. So also, again in terms of such a comparison, both the imperial city of Venice and a small town like Cervia may thrive forever, eternally renewed year after year, by way of re-enacting a prototypical marriage that unites the community with the fertile sea.

Here I return once again to the practice, still current in Cervia and in modern post-imperial Venice, of diving after the ring after it is thrown into the sea. I think that the act of diving into the depths of the Adriatic and retrieving the ring is seen as a personal re-enactment of a collective yearly retrieval of the prosperity desired by the whole community. That is why, I also think, the modern practice of diving for the ring is still sanctioned by a mentality of “finders keepers.” This mentality, in terms of my analysis, is also at work in the ancient ritual of throwing the ring away in the first place. If the community at large prospers as a result of this gift to the sea, then the counter-gift of prosperity from the sea will be happily received and kept by the community that finds it. So, the mentality of *finders keepers* is expressed not only in the individual act of a diver who seeks his personal good fortune: it is expressed also in a collective re-enactment by the community that sanctions its own yearly re-marriage to the sea.

A Mythological Moment for the Sea-Empire of Athens

The ritual moment when the *doge* of Venice marries the Adriatic sea on behalf of the Venetian Empire is comparable to a mythological moment when the future king of Athens, the hero Theseus, marries the Aegean Sea on behalf of the Athenian Empire, which claimed to be the successor of the Minoan Empire. As I have argued in the book *Homer the Preclassic*, the symbol of this empire was the Ring of Minos, which the prototypical king of the Minoan thalassocracy throws into the sea—to be recovered by Theseus, the prototypical king of Athens and the

notional founder of the Athenian thalassocracy.²⁸ Here I return to the idea of the Athenian connection, as signaled at the beginning.

In commenting on the representation of this myth as it appears in a painting that covered one full wall of the sanctuary of Theseus in Athens, Pausanias offers a retelling of the myth, which he says is only partially retold through the medium of the painting (1.17.3):

Μίνως ἦνίκα Θησεά και τὸν ἄλλον στόλον τῶν παιδων ἤγεν ἐς Κρήτην, ἐρασθεὶς Περιβοίας, ὡς οἱ Θησεὺς μάλιστα ἠναντιοῦτο, καὶ ἄλλα ὑπὸ ὀργῆς ἀπέρριπεν ἐς αὐτὸν καὶ παῖδα οὐκ ἔφη Ποσειδῶνος εἶναι, ἐπεὶ <οὐ> δύνασθαι τὴν σφραγίδα, ἦν αὐτὸς φέρων ἔτυχεν, ἀφέντι ἐς θάλασσαν ἀνασῶσαι οἱ. Μίνως μὲν λέγεται ταῦτα εἰπὼν ἀφεῖναι τὴν σφραγίδα· Θησεά δὲ σφραγιδά τε ἐκείνην ἔχοντα καὶ στέφανον χρυσοῦν, Ἀμφιτρίτης δῶρον, ἀνελθεῖν λέγουσιν ἐκ τῆς θαλάσσης.

When Minos was taking Theseus and the rest of the delegation of young men and women to Crete he fell in love with Periboia, and when Theseus opposed him by objecting, he [= Minos] insulted him and said that he [= Theseus] was not the son of Poseidon, since he [= Theseus] could not recover [*ana-sōzein*] for him [= Minos] the signet ring [*sphragis*] which he [= Minos] happened to be wearing, if he threw it into the sea. With these words Minos is said to have thrown the signet ring [*sphragis*], but they say that Theseus emerged from the sea holding that ring and also a golden garland [*stephanos*] that Amphitrite gave him.

As a symbol, then, the Ring of Minos links the Minoan Empire to the imperial ideology of Athens as represented by Theseus. The mentality of *finders keepers* applies: Theseus finds the Ring of Minos at the bottom of the sea, where Amphitrite, pictured here as the goddess of the Aegean, freely gives it to him. Here I must add that the Ring of Minos can be seen as a signet ring that seals documents of state written in parchment. As I argued earlier, documents written on parchment and then sealed with a signet ring are a distinctive feature of administrative practices perfected in the era of the Minoan Empire. Accordingly, the signet ring is a visible sign or symbol of empire.

And a visible sign or symbol of the idea that Theseus actually marries the sea is the golden garland that the sea-goddess gives to him when he dives into the depths of the Aegean to retrieve the Ring of Minos. In what follows, I will analyze the relevant symbolism of the garlands pictured on the Theran fresco.

Part 2: Looking through rose-colored glasses while sailing on a sacred journey²⁹

Introduction

At the end of Part 1, I started to argue that the golden garland given to the hero Theseus by the sea-goddess Amphitrite in the myth narrated by Pausanias 1.17.3 was a symbol for the

²⁸ Nagy (2009: E§§162-63 = pp. 364-65).

²⁹ An earlier version of Part 2 appeared online in Nagy (2015d).

ritual of a stylized wedding that links this hero, as future king of Athens, with the Aegean Sea. In another version of the myth as narrated in Song 17 of Bacchylides, we read further details that are in some ways the same and in some ways different: after Theseus dives into the depths of the sea, the sea-goddess Amphitrite welcomes him, enveloping the hero in a purple robe (line 112) and crowning his head of hair with a garland made of roses (line 116: ῥόδοις)—a garland that she herself as a bride of Poseidon the sea-god had received as a wedding present from Aphrodite (lines 113-116). When Theseus finally comes up for air, emerging from the depths of the sea, he is wearing the purple robe and the garland of roses, ready to confront Minos. From here on, it will be Theseus and not Minos who will have dominion over the Aegean Sea, and this dominion is expressed by the symbolism of both the purple robe and the garland of roses. I will now argue further that this kind of symbolism can be traced back genealogically to rituals that existed already in the era of the Minoan Empire. One such ritual, as we will see, is depicted in the “flotilla scene” of the Thera fresco that I had mentioned in Part 1.

When I speak of a genealogy of rituals, I am making a distinction between genealogical and typological approaches. I already used both terms “genealogy” and “typology” in Part 1, but I have waited until now to offer a working definition of these terms. Basically, a *genealogical comparison* involves a study of parallels between structures that can be traced back to a proto-structure. By contrast, a *typological comparison* involves a study of parallels between structures that are not necessarily related to each other. Typological comparison can be applied to parallelisms between structures as structures pure and simple, without any presuppositions about a common origin.³⁰

In what follows, then, I will apply a *genealogical* approach in comparing details we see in the myth concerning the garland that adorns the head of Theseus with details we are about to see in a ritual concerning a sacred voyage of a ship adorned with garlands. And I will also apply a *genealogical* approach in comparing details we see in this ritual with details we are about to see in a ritual depicted in the “flotilla scene” of the Thera fresco that I mentioned in Part 1. In that context I also applied a *typological* approach when I briefly compared the “flotilla scene” with the yearly ritual of a “floating procession” that symbolized the prosperity, power, and prestige—the three “P”s—of the Venetian Empire in dominating the Adriatic Sea. Comparably, as I argued, the “flotilla scene” of the Thera fresco represents a ritual of a *floating procession*. And, in this case, such a ritual likewise symbolizes the prosperity, power, and prestige of the Minoan Empire in dominating the Aegean Sea.

The Sacred Sea-Voyage of Theseus

Returning to the role of the hero Theseus in the myth about his receiving a garland from the sea-goddess of the Aegean, I will now make a genealogical comparison of this role with the role of the same hero in an Athenian ritual noted by Plato with reference to the death of Socrates in 399 BCE. Each and every year, as we see from the description of this ritual in Plato’s *Phaedo* (58a and 58c), the priest of the god Apollo attaches garlands to the stern of the Athenian Ship of

³⁰ Nagy (2006 §4). Typological comparisons are especially useful in fields like linguistics: comparing parallel structures in languages—even if the given languages are unrelated to each other—is a proven way of enhancing one’s overall understanding of the linguistic structures being compared.

State, which is understood to be a replication of the hero's original ship, and this act of garlanding officially launches the ship on an annual *theōria* or "sacred voyage" by sea, crossing over from Athens to Delos, which is the sacred island of Apollo in the Aegean, and then back from Delos to Athens. This *theōria*, as we read in Plato's *Phaedo*, stays the execution of Socrates. For the Athenian State to execute this man while the sacred sea-voyage is in progress would be to pollute the ritual—and to pollute the State. But that is another story, and there is no time here to delve into the deep symbolism of the annual Athenian *theōria* or "sacred voyage" as it applies to Socrates. In the book *The Ancient Greek Hero in 24 Hours*, I have analyzed that kind of symbolism, which helps explain the philosophical meaning of *theōria* as "theory" or "contemplation" in Plato's works.³¹ But here I will stick to the basic meaning of *theōria* as "sacred voyage."

As we learn from the text of Plato's *Phaedo* (58a-c), the two coordinated yearly Athenian rituals: (1) garlanding the stern of the Athenian Ship of State and then (2) sending the ship on a sacred voyage or *theōria* are both linked to an Athenian myth about Theseus: once upon a time, the text of Plato says, this hero saved Athens—and himself—from domination imposed by the sea-empire of Minos. So we see here that the salvation of Athens from the dominion of Minos, *in myth*, is correlated, *in ritual*, with the garlanding of the Athenian Ship of State as it commences its *theōria* or "sacred voyage" to Delos.³²

In the Athenian myth, as we see it retold briefly by Plutarch in his *Life of Theseus* (15.1-2), the dominion of Minoan thalassocracy over Athens took the form of a seasonally recurring human sacrifice of fourteen young Athenians, seven boys and seven girls, offered to the monster son of Minos, called the Minotaur, who was half man and half bull and who dwelled in the Cretan city Knossos inside a maze known as the *laburinthos* or "Labyrinth" (15.2). Joining a prototypical ensemble of seven boys and seven girls destined for human sacrifice, Theseus sails with them to Knossos in Crete. Once he arrives at Knossos, the Athenian hero penetrates the Labyrinth, where he finds the Minotaur and kills him. Then, Theseus escapes from the Labyrinth and thus "saves" both himself and the other young Athenians. This act of "saving" the Athenians is expressed by the verb *sōzein* in the passage I already cited from Plato's *Phaedo* (58a-b), where we learn also that Theseus commemorated his salvation and the salvation of the other young Athenians by sailing together with them every year to Delos, sacred island of Apollo, on a prototypical *theōria* or "sacred journey"; and this yearly ritual, as we are informed in Plato's text, was still being observed in the time of Socrates.³³ Even in that post-mythical time, adds Plutarch in his *Life of Theseus* (23.1), the *triākontoros* or thirty-oar ship that sailed every year on this ritualized journey to Delos and back was believed to be the same ship on which Theseus had sailed to Delos together with the rest of the young Athenians who had been saved from being sacrificed to the Minotaur. Plutarch in the *Life of Theseus* (again, 23.1) says that the ancient traditions about this ship could be traced forward in time from the mythical era of Theseus all the

³¹ Nagy (2013a:23§§13-14).

³² Nagy (2013a:23§§10-11).

³³ Nagy (2013a:23§11).

way to the historical era of Demetrius of Phaleron, a philosopher who dominated Athens both politically and culturally in the late fourth century BCE.

In Plutarch's *Life of Theseus* (21.1-3), we can read further details about that prototypical sacred sea-voyage to and from Delos. Every year when Theseus and the other young Athenians arrived in Delos, they performed as a choral ensemble a ritual re-enactment in song and dance of the hero's victory over the Minotaur inside the Labyrinth of Crete, and the Labyrinth itself was ritually re-enacted by way of the singing and dancing, which is traditionally called the *geranos* or "crane." This song and dance of the crane, as traditionally re-performed in post-mythical times at the festival of Apollo at Delos, literally re-enacts the Cretan Labyrinth, since the dance-steps danced by cranes in the course of these birds' courtship rituals during mating season seem to be re-tracing the patterns of a maze or Labyrinth, as Plutarch says explicitly in his *Life of Theseus* (21.2), following the report of the antiquarian Dicaearchus (F 85 ed. Wehrli).³⁴

Up to now, I have compared an action of garlanding *in a myth*, where Theseus is garlanded by the goddess of the sea, and an action of garlanding *in a ritual*, where a replica of the supposedly original ship of Theseus is being garlanded. In the first case of garlanding, the myth refers to a ritual of crowning Theseus with a garland, but the garlanding is not explicitly represented as a ritual of and by itself. In the second case, on the other hand, we do see the ritual of garlanding the Athenian Ship of State as a ritual, but we do not see the myth that explains the reason for the ritual, which is, that Theseus once upon a time rescued Athens from the thalassocracy of Minos. It seems that there is no explicit reference made by the ritual itself to the myth about the rescue. Only Plato's text, in describing the ritual, refers explicitly to the myth. By contrast, the ritual of the crane dance does refer explicitly to the myth about the rescue, since that myth is re-enacted symbolically by singing and dancing the entrance and the exit of Theseus into and out of the Labyrinth.

Some Thoughts about the Terms Myth and Ritual

I am highlighting here a distinction between what happens in *myth* and what happens in *ritual* because this kind of distinction is not always obvious when we study any interaction between myth and ritual. I can state in general that rituals very seldom refer explicitly to the myths that interact with them, and so the case of the ritual known as the crane dance is quite exceptional in its explicitness with reference to a corresponding myth centering on the salvation of Theseus from the Labyrinth. By contrast, myths often do refer to rituals with which they interact, as we see in the case of the myth about the garlanding of Theseus by the goddess of the sea.

To elaborate on this statement, I move backward one step and offer here a working definition of *myth* and *ritual* as two interacting processes. This definition applies to my use of these terms *myth* and *ritual* not only in Part 2 but also in Part 1. Here, then, is the definition, which I had developed on the basis of analyzing a variety of myths and rituals in the book *The Ancient Greek Hero in 24 Hours*:

³⁴ Calame (1990:239-42).

Ritual is doing things and saying things in a way that is considered *sacred*.

Myth is saying things in a way that is also considered *sacred*.

To say it another way:

Myth is an aspect of ritual, since the act of saying things in myth is understood to be one of many ways of doing things in ritual.

But the act of doing things in ritual does not require the act of saying things in myth.

So, myth is an optional aspect of ritual. And myth operates within the larger framework of ritual.³⁵ Further, as a framework for myth, a ritual can imply a myth even if that myth is not explicitly retold each and every time the ritual is re-performed.

I also offer here a working definition for a related term, *aetiology*, by which I mean a special kind of myth that motivates or explains an institutional reality, especially a ritual.³⁶ Even in the case of an aetiology, the aetiology itself can be an aspect of the ritual it explains, but the aetiology is not necessarily made explicit in each and every re-performance of the ritual. Finally, we need to allow for situations where characters in myth perform a ritual that prefigures the re-performance of that ritual in its own here-and-now.³⁷ A case in point is the performance of the crane dance by Theseus together with his choral ensemble: this performance of the ritual is seen as a prototype for the yearly re-performances of this ritual, extending into the historical era.³⁸

Transition: a Ritual Moment as Represented in a Painting

I am now ready to reconsider in some detail a ritual moment I initially mentioned already in Part 1. This ritual moment, as I noted all too briefly in the context of that initial mention, is represented in an elaborate painting described as a “flotilla scene,” which is part of a miniature fresco discovered at Akrotiri on the island of Santorini, the ancient name for which island was Thera. The dating of this Theran fresco, as I noted already in my initial mention, can be placed at around 1600 BCE or even earlier, and the painting captures, as I argue, a ritual moment as celebrated in the context of an Aegean thalassocracy that evolved into the Minoan Empire. As I also noted in my initial mention, the ritual that is depicted in this Theran fresco painting is remarkably similar to the ritual called “the Wedding of the Sea” as celebrated annually in the context of an Adriatic thalassocracy that evolved into the Venetian Empire. In what follows, I build on my typological comparison of the similarities between the Aegean and the Adriatic rituals. And I use the term “typological” here in the same way as I used it in Part 1.

³⁵ This formulation derives from Nagy (2013a:00§13, repeated at 3§18, 5§28, 8e§2).

³⁶ Nagy (2013a:7a§15, repeated at 8§14, 8b§3, 20§36).

³⁷ See for example Nagy (2013a:8§§53-62) on the mythical event of the chariot-race at the Funeral Games of Patroklos, which is a prefiguration of chariot-racing as a seasonally-recurring ritual event in the post-heroic age.

³⁸ See also Nagy (2013a:8e§4) on *mimēsis* as a “re-enactment” of myth in ritual: what you re-enact is myth, and how you re-enact it is ritual.

As I proceed to analyze the details we find in the Aegean “flotilla scene,” it will become evident that some of these details are not only typologically comparable with details we see in the Adriatic ritual known as the “Wedding of the Sea.” We will also find other details that are genealogically comparable with details of the Aegean ritual involving the ship that sails yearly on a sacred voyage or *theōria* from Athens to Delos and back. One detail stands out: as we will see, the garlanding of the theoric ship is genealogically parallel to the garlanding of the ships sailing in the “flotilla scene.”

The “Flotilla Scene”

As we now proceed to take a closer look at the “flotilla scene,” I offer some further background on the wall painting that pictures the scene. The date for this painting and for all the other wall paintings found at the site of Akrotiri on the island of Thera can be correlated with a prehistoric time when a volcano that once occupied most of this island exploded, sometime around the middle of the second millennium BCE, leaving behind a gigantic caldera that now occupies the space where the mountain once stood. The paintings were preserved by the volcanic ash that buried the site of Akrotiri in the wake of this explosion. Till now, I have referred to the wall painting of the “flotilla scene” as a *fresco*, since it is part of a set of pictures painted on the plastered surface of the inner walls found at the site of Akrotiri, but from here on I will use a term more favored by archaeologists, *miniature frieze*. The term *frieze* is based on the fact that the paintings in this case form a band that lines all four inner walls of “Room 5” in a building known to archaeologists as the West House (there is currently no agreement about what exactly is meant by the term “house” in this instance).³⁹ This miniature frieze has been described as “one of the most important monuments in Aegean art.”⁴⁰

In my book *The Ancient Greek Hero*, I offer this further description (Nagy 2013a:23§18):

The Miniature Frieze occupies the upper third of the inner walls of Room 5, where the doors and the windows would not interrupt the flow of the narrative that was painted on all four of the inner walls. The narrative of the Frieze moves clockwise, beginning and ending at the same point. The point of beginning, situated at the southernmost end of the west wall, shows part of a harbor city or “Town I,” while the point of ending, situated at the westernmost end of the south wall, shows the other part of the same harbor city, “Town I.” So, the narrative comes full circle back to “Town I.”⁴¹ The north wall shows, again, a coastal city, which is “Town II”; as for “Town III,” which overlaps the north and the east walls, this site is yet another coastal city, and, in this case, it is situated at the mouth of a river; the same can be said for “Town IV,” at the eastern side of the south wall, which is once again a coastal city situated at the mouth of a river; actually, “Town IV”

³⁹ Doulas (1999:44-97).

⁴⁰ Doulas (1999:47). For a valuable analysis of the themes that are represented in the Miniature Frieze, I cite the article of Morris (1989). My reference to this article was accidentally omitted in the List of References in the original printed version of Nagy (2013a), but it appears in the online version.

⁴¹ Doulas (1999:47-49).

may be another way of looking at one and the same city, “Town III.”⁴² Then there is the south wall, showing a fleet of ships sailing from the harbor of “Town IV” toward the “home port,” that is, toward the same place that had also served as a point of departure, which was “Town V.”⁴³ The fleet consists of seven large ships, only one of which is under sail;⁴⁴ the other six ships are being rowed by multitudes of oarsmen; further back to our left, in front of “Town IV,” there is also a small boat, equipped with no mast, which is rowed by only five oarsmen.⁴⁵ All seven of the large ships are heading from left to right in the direction of the harbor of “Town V.” Located at the stern of each one of these seven large ships is a structure that looks like a cabin, and there is a male figure seated inside each one of these “cabins.”

In Part 1 I already showed the part of the Miniature Frieze where we can see the fleet of ships that are sailing from left to right, back toward the “home port”—which was also the point of departure. For ease of reference, I show again here the relevant part of the miniature frieze.



Fig. 10. Theran fresco at Akrotiri showing flotilla, via Wikimedia Commons.

We see here what I described in the paragraph I quoted just a moment ago. We see the flotilla of seven ships, only one of which is under sail while the rest are being rowed by “multitudes of oarsmen.” And I repeat my remark that this flotilla is sailing in the mode of a floating procession.

I highlight once again in this picture one particular detail: at the stern of each one of the seven large ships is a structure that looks like a cabin, and there is a male figure seated inside each one of these cabins. Now I show once again the closeup that I had showed in Part 1. In this closeup we can see clearly both a cabin, which as I had previously observed looks like a Venetian *tièmo*, and a passenger sitting inside the cabin (Fig. 11.).



Fig. 11. Detail from Theran fresco at Akrotiri, c. 1600 BCE, original image via Wikimedia Commons.

⁴² Dumas (1999:48).

⁴³ Dumas (1999:47-48).

⁴⁴ Morris (1989:517).

⁴⁵ Dumas (1999:47).

A Ritual Moment for the Aegean Sea-Empire

With this background in place, I am ready to consider in more detail the ritual moment that I think is represented in the “flotilla scene.” As I described the scene already, the flotilla is returning to the home base, and so the floating procession has come full circle. As I argued in *The Ancient Greek Hero in 24 Hours*, such a coming full circle for such a floating procession in



Fig. 12. Detail from a fresco painting in Room 4 of the West House.

the era of Plato would be called a *theōria*. And we have already seen from the account in Plato’s *Phaedo* that such a *theōria* was inaugurated by way of garlanding the stern of the Athenian Ship of State. My point of comparison, then, is the garlanding of the cabin at the stern of the ship that we see in the closeup I just showed from the “flotilla scene.”

And now I show a picture of such a cabin as viewed from a different perspective (Fig. 12.). For

an interpretation of this picture, I repeat, with adjustments to the present argument, what I say in my book *The Ancient Greek Hero in 24 Hours* (Nagy 2013a:23§§19-20):

The middle zone of wall paintings in Room 4, situated to the south of Room 5 in the same “West House,” shows a variety of close-up pictures featuring enlarged views of the same kinds of decorations that we see attached to the “cabins” at the sterns of the seven large ships in the “flotilla scene” as painted in Room 5. Of particular interest are two semi-circular garlands of flowers that decorate the cabin at the stern of the ship, as we just saw in the closeup of one of the ships in the “flotilla scene”: this detail matches most closely the two semi-circular garlands of flowers that decorate the wall of the adjacent Room 4.⁴⁶

What we see painted on the wall of Room 4 shows the same garlanded frame of vision that we see painted in the “flotilla scene” decorating the south wall of Room 5. But there is a big difference. Whereas the man who is seated in the “cabin” positioned at the stern of the ship in the picture painted on the plaster wall of Room 5 can look through the garlanded frame of vision and see the sights to be seen as he sails ahead on his sea voyage, a viewer who looks at the plaster wall of Room 4 and sees a picture of the same garlanded frame of vision could merely imagine the sights to be seen in the course of such a sea voyage. Having noted this difference, however, I must return to what the two painted details have in common: whether the sights to be seen are really seen or only imagined, these sights could be interpreted as a *theōria* or the “seeing of a vision,” and here my translation reflects the oldest reconstructable meaning of this word. What is being represented in both paintings, I argue, is a prototype of a *theōria* in the sense of a “sacred journey” that leads

⁴⁶ Doulas (1999:95).

to the achievement of a mystical vision. And that view of that vision is framed by the two semi-circular garlands through which the viewer views what is seen. To borrow from a modern idiom, the vision is viewed through rose-colored glasses.

When I speak about rose-colored glasses in the formulation as I just repeated it from the book *The Ancient Greek Hero in 24 Hours* there is something missing. I come back here full circle to a detail in Song 17 of Bacchylides. There I now find that missing something. It is the garland of roses (line 116: ῥόδοις) given to Theseus by the sea-goddess Amphitrite when that Athenian hero dove to the bottom of the sea. That same garland had inaugurated, as we saw, the wedding of Amphitrite the sea-goddess to Poseidon the sea-god. And of course Poseidon was the divine father of Theseus. But that is another story, and I have no space here to delve into it. What I need to keep in the forefront of my argumentation as it comes to a close here is the basic meaning of the ritual act of garlanding the stern of a ship. As I see it, such garlanding is a ritual moment of marrying the sea.

Here I recall the wording of Plato's *Phaedo* (58a and 58c) with reference to the ritual moment when the priest of Apollo attaches garlands to the stern of the Athenian Ship of State as the formal act of launching this ship on its sacred voyage or *theōria* to Delos and back. I now focus on the word used in the text of Plato here, *stephein*, which means "to garland, to make garlands for" (again, 58a and 58c). But what does it really mean, to "garland" a theoric ship? In ancient Greek, the noun that derives from this verb *stephein* is *stephanos*, meaning "garland." Both the noun and the verb refer to blossoms or leaves that are strung together and then ritually attached to an object or to a person. In Modern Greek, the noun corresponding to ancient *stephanos* is *stephánē* (*stepháni*), likewise meaning "garland." There is also a neuter plural form of the noun in Modern Greek, *stéphana*, which can mean "wedding garlands": I note with special interest the metonymy embedded in the phrase used to offer best wishes to newlywed couples: *kalá stéphana*, meaning literally "[may you have] good garlands!." This expression can be translated "may you have a quick and happy wedding."⁴⁷

In Greek Christian Orthodox weddings even today, a high point of the ritual is the exchange of garlands between bride and bridegroom (Fig. 13.).



Fig. 13, sent to me by my friend Costas Tzagarakis, shows an assortment of garlands on sale in a marketplace. The flowers that make up the garland in this case are *sempreviva* (in Venetian Italian, it means "eternally alive"; the local Greeks think it is a local Greek word). The locale is Cythera. For more on this flower and on its symbolism, see Tzagarakis (2011).

⁴⁷ This paragraph repeats what I say in Nagy (2013a:23§15).

And here are illustrations of wedding garlands as pictured on votive objects called *tamata* (Figs. 14. and 15.).



Fig. 14. A votive offering or *tama*, showing *stephana* or “wedding garlands.”



Fig. 15. Another votive offering or *tama*, showing *stephana* or “wedding garlands.”

The mindset that corresponds to such a usage in Modern Greek throws light on the fact that the garlanding of objects or of persons is a way of delineating a ritual framework. The attaching of a garland marks the beginning of engagement in a ritual—and a ritual must always have a notionally perfect beginning (By “notionally” I mean that the idea of perfection is in the minds of those who participate in the given ritual). So the attaching of a garland to the stern of the theoric ship is meant to be a perfect *send-off* for the sacred voyage ahead, which must also be notionally perfect and therefore unpolluted. For the Athenian State to execute Socrates while the sacred voyage is in progress, as I noted already, would be to pollute the ritual—and to pollute the State. I should add that the ritual practice of garlanding a ship before a sea voyage survives to this day in the Greek-speaking world, and such rituals of garlanding are linked with important festive occasions—including Easter.⁴⁸

Part 3: From Athens to Crete and Back⁴⁹

Introduction

I now return to the Introduction, where I first mentioned the concept of “the Cretan *Odyssey*”—or, better, “a Cretan *Odyssey*”—as reflected in the “lying tales” of Odysseus in the *Odyssey*. These tales, as I already said there, give the medium of Homeric poetry an opportunity to open windows into an *Odyssey* we do not know. In the alternative universe of a “Cretan *Odyssey*,” the adventures of Odysseus take place in the exotic context of Minoan-Mycenaean civilization as centered on the island of Crete. That is my thesis for Part 3.

⁴⁸ Nagy (2013a:23§16).

⁴⁹ An earlier version of Part 3 appeared online in Nagy (2015e).

From the start, I have argued that the civilization I have described as “Minoan-Mycenaean” needs to be viewed from a diachronic as well as a synchronic perspective. That is because, as I already noted in Part 1, elements of Minoan civilization become eventually infused with elements we find in Mycenaean civilization. And such an infusion has to do with the fact that Minoan civilization, which had evolved in the context of a “Minoan Empire,” was eventually taken over by a “Mycenaean Empire.” This takeover, as I argued, is reflected not only in the evidence of material culture but also in the evidence of mythological traditions as reflected in visual and verbal narratives. More specifically, I argued that the takeover from Minoan to Mycenaean civilization resulted in modifications of myths about the Minoan Empire by way of myths about the Mycenaean Empire.

I will explore here from an evolutionary or diachronic perspective not only the relevant Minoan-Mycenaean myths but also, more specifically, the kaleidoscopic world of Homeric myth-making as a medium that actually conveyed some of these myths.

From a diachronic perspective, the system of myth-making that we know as Homeric poetry can be viewed, I argue, as an *evolving medium*. But there is more to it. When you look at Homeric poetry from a diachronic perspective, you will see not only an evolving medium of oral poetry. You will see also a medium that actually views itself diachronically. In other words, Homeric poetry demonstrates aspects of its own evolution. So, references to Minoan-Mycenaean myths in Homeric poetry can reveal also the evolution of these myths as they existed independently of Homeric poetry.

A Missing Link: the Athenian Connection

In speaking about a Mycenaean “infusion” into Minoan myth-making, I have concentrated in Parts 2 and 3 on Athenian myths and rituals concerning the hero Theseus. But I have not yet made it clear why these myths and rituals concerning Theseus, which are of course Athenian myths, are also Mycenaean myths. Here I return to the concept of an “Athenian connection.”

I introduced this concept in Part 1. As I already argued there, the myth about the ring of Minos, recovered by Theseus from the depths of the Aegean Sea, must have aetiologized the idea of a transition from a Minoan thalassocracy to an Athenian thalassocracy. But such an idea did not start with the likes of Herodotus and Thucydides in the classical period of the late fifth century BCE. The mythical construct of a connection between the Athenian and the Minoan thalassocracies did not originate in the classical period. No, in terms of my argument, *this myth existed already in the Mycenaean period of Crete*. This was the time when the Minoan civilization of that island, which had evolved in the context of a Minoan Empire, was being taken over by Greek-speaking élites of the Mycenaean Empire. These élites came from the mainland of what we call Greece today, yes, but I would be suffering from a “blind spot” if I thought of these Greek-speakers simply as “Mycenaean”—as if they all came from the Mycenaean acropolis of Mycenae. As we will now see, some of these “Mycenaean” came from other places in Greece, and one of those places was the Mycenaean-era acropolis in Athens. That is what I mean when I speak of an *Athenian connection*.

Evidence comes from the Linear B tablets found in the so-called room of the chariot tablets at Knossos in Crete. In Part 1, I have already spoken about the administrative unit that was in charge of the record-keeping as reflected in the contents of the tablets stored in this room, which can be dated at around 1400 BCE. In Part 1, I noted with special interest the “Mycenaean” cultural agenda reflected in the written records of the Linear B tablets that are linked to the administrative zone represented by this particular room in the context of the overall administration in the “palace” at Knossos. I quoted the apt formulation of Thomas Palaima, who notes that the administrative unit responsible for keeping written records at the room of the chariot tablets in Knossos was using these records “mainly for the monitoring and distribution of military equipment (chariots, body armour, horses) to a Greek-dominated military élite.”⁵⁰ I said there that the Mycenaean Greek name for such a military élite would have been *Akhaiói* “Achaeans.” But now I will also say that some of these “Achaeans” were Athenians. To say it another way, at least some of the “Mycenaean” who were running the administration of the labyrinthine “palace” at Knossos around 1400 BCE must have been Athenians.

For me the “smoking gun” that proves the Athenian provenience of at least some of the “Mycenaean” who ran the administration of Knossos around 1400 BCE is the name of one of the divinities listed in one of the Linear B texts found in the so-called room of the chariot tablets. The text is written in the Knossos tablet V 52, and the name of the divinity in line one of that text is *a-ta-na-po-ti-ni-ja*. An article published in 2001 by Joann Gulizio, Kevin Pluta, and Thomas Palaima argues persuasively that the name of this divinity is to be read as *Athānās potnia* and needs to be interpreted as “[our] Lady of Athens,” not as “our Lady [the goddess] Athena.”⁵¹

If it is true that the goddess who is featured so prominently in the pantheon of divinities recorded in Knossos tablet V 52 is “our Lady of Athens,” then we see here a direct reference to the goddess of the acropolis of Athens in mainland Greece, specifically in Attica.

In Homeric poetry, the name in question here is *Athēnē*. This name applies both to the goddess known in English as “Athena,” as at *Odyssey* 7.78, and to the place that is seen as the possession of the goddess—which is the territory of the place known in English as “Athens,” as at *Odyssey* 7.80.⁵² The suffix *-ēnē* is visible also in the name of the nymph *Mukēnē*, who presides over the acropolis of Mycenae.⁵³

The same suffix *-ēnē* is visible also in the place-name *Messēnē*, which means something like “Midland.”⁵⁴ Here I compare the place-name *me-za-na* written on a Linear B tablet from Pylos, Cn 3.1. On the basis of this comparison, I have observed elsewhere: “I suspect that the suffix *-ēnē* is endowed with an elliptic function.”⁵⁵ What I meant there when I made that

⁵⁰ Palaima (2003:164). Dreissen (2008:71) makes a relevant observation with reference to the Linear B tablets found at Chanià in West Crete and dated around 1300 BCE: one of these tablets (Sq 1) concerns chariot wheels.

⁵¹ Gulizio, Pluta, and Palaima (2001, especially pp. 457-58).

⁵² Commentary in Nagy (2004:159-64).

⁵³ See Nagy (2004:163); also Palaiologou (2013:250 n.5).

⁵⁴ Nagy (2004:163 n.17).

⁵⁵ Again, Nagy (2004:163 n.17).

observation is this: a form that is *elliptic* refers not only to X but also to everything that belongs to X, such as X2, X3, X4 (and so on). An elliptic form of X implies X2, X3, X4 (and so on) without naming X2, X3, X4 (and so on) explicitly. In terms of this definition, the name *Athēnē* refers not only to the goddess “Athena” but also to everything that belongs to the goddess. The primary example of that “everything” here is the acropolis of Athens. And we see another level of ellipsis in the plural form *Athēnai*: this elliptic plural refers not only to the acropolis of Athens but also to everything that belongs to the acropolis of Athens, which is the city of Athens, and, by extension, to everything that belongs to the city, which is ultimately the region of Attica.⁵⁶

I see a parallel situation in the use of the form *Aswia* (*/Aswiās*) in the Linear B texts, where *Aswia* is evidently a goddess, as we see from the collocation *po-ti-ni-ja a-si-wi-ja = potnia Aswia* “[Our] Lady *Aswia*” as written on a tablet from Pylos, fr. 1208. In the case of *Aswia*, the name survives into the classical period of recorded texts in the fifth century BCE and later: now the name is pronounced *Asiā*, meaning “Asia,” and the referent here is what we call “Asia Minor” in English. So, from a diachronic perspective, this name applies both to the goddess and to the realm of the goddess. She is “Our Lady of Asia” or “Asia” personified.

I emphasize here that the form *Athēnē* at line 80 of *Odyssey 7* is the only instance, in all surviving texts ever written in the ancient Greek language, where the name of the place “Athens” is found in the singular, not in the plural. Everywhere else in attested Greek, we read the elliptic plural *Athēnai*, which I now interpret to mean “everything that belongs to the acropolis of *Athēnē*.” And there is also a deeper level of ellipsis here: the suffix *-ēnē* of *Athēnē* indicates that the goddess Athena is also a personification of the place of Athena, which is the acropolis of Athens and, by extension, the city of Athens, and by further extension, everything that belongs to the city of Athens.

What is Missing so far in the Big Picture?

At this point in my analysis of an “Athenian connection” between the Minoan and the Mycenaean empires, I have concentrated on the goddess Athena as she was pictured in the second millennium BCE. But there is more to it. Later, I will concentrate on a female character in myth who is another essential element that is needed for reconstructing the “Athenian connection.” As we will see, this character seems to be mortal, not immortal. At this point, I would rather not give away her name. But I show here an image that previews her identity. This image, produced by the brilliant researcher Mark Cameron, shows this female figure as she was represented in Minoan fresco paintings. The image is a reconstruction from fragments, but this reconstruction will give us the big picture that I will need for tracing further my thread of argumentation (Fig. 16.).

⁵⁶ See also Muellner (1976:70), who notes that the singular form of *Athēnē* vs. the plural form *Athēnai* can in fact refer to the place that we know as “Athens.” Muellner also analyzes the elliptic function of the plural form here. On the elliptic plural in general, see Nagy (2004:157-75).



Fig. 16. From a fresco found at Hagia Triadha in Crete. Reconstruction by Mark Cameron, p. 96 of the catalogue *Fresco: A Passport into the Past*, 1999 (for an expanded citation, see the Bibliography below). Reproduced with the permission of the British School at Athens. BSA Archive: Mark Cameron Personal Papers: CAM 1.

Part 4: A Cretan *Odyssey*, Phase I⁵⁷

Introduction

I now return to the Introduction in Part 1, where I first mentioned the concept of “the Cretan *Odyssey*”—or, better, “a Cretan *Odyssey*”—as reflected in the “lying tales” of Odysseus in the *Odyssey*. These tales, as I already said there, give the medium of Homeric poetry an opportunity to open windows into an *Odyssey* we do not know. In the alternative universe of a “Cretan *Odyssey*,” the adventures of Odysseus take place in the exotic context of Minoan-Mycenaean civilization as centered on the island of Crete. That is my thesis for Part 4.

And I must stress here again, as I did from the start, that the civilization I have just described as “Minoan-Mycenaean” needs to be viewed from a diachronic as well as a synchronic perspective.⁵⁸ That is because, as I already noted in Parts 1, 2, and 3, elements of Minoan civilization become eventually infused with elements we find in Mycenaean civilization. And such an infusion has to do with the fact that Minoan civilization, which had evolved in the context of a “Minoan Empire,” was eventually taken over by a “Mycenaean Empire.” This takeover, as I argued, is reflected not only in the evidence of material culture but also in the evidence of mythological traditions as reflected in visual and verbal narratives. More specifically, I argued that the takeover from Minoan to Mycenaean civilization resulted in modifications of myths about the Minoan Empire by way of myths about the Mycenaean Empire.

I will consider here primarily from a diachronic or evolutionary perspective not only the relevant Minoan-Mycenaean myths but also, more specifically, the kaleidoscopic world of Homeric myth-making as a medium that actually conveyed some of these myths.

From a diachronic or evolutionary perspective, the system of myth-making that we know as Homeric poetry can be viewed, I argue, as *an evolving medium*. But there is more to it. When you look at Homeric poetry from a diachronic perspective, you will see not only an evolving medium of oral poetry. You will see also a medium that actually views itself diachronically. In other words, Homeric poetry demonstrates aspects of its own evolution. And I should add that

⁵⁷ An earlier version of Part 4 appeared online in Nagy (2015f).

⁵⁸ I elaborated on these terms *synchronic* and *diachronic* in Part 1, with reference to Saussure (1972 [1916]: 117). See also Nagy (2003:1).

references to Minoan-Mycenaean myths in Homeric poetry can reveal also the evolution of these myths as they existed independently of Homeric poetry.

Minoan-Mycenaean Crete as Viewed in the Odyssey

In the Third Cretan Tale of Odysseus, the hero assumes the “false” identity of a Cretan prince who is a grandson of the king Minos himself. Here is how the Tale gets started (*Odyssey* 19.172-84):

|172 Κρήτη τις γαῖ' ἔστι μέσῳ ἐνὶ οἴνοπι πόντῳ, |173 καλὴ καὶ πείρα, περίρρυτος· ἐν δ' ἄνθρωποι |
|174 πολλοὶ ἀπειρέσιοι, καὶ ἐνήκοντα πόλεις· |175 ἄλλη δ' ἄλλων γλῶσσα μεμιγμένη· ἐν μὲν
Ἀχαιοί, |176 ἐν δ' Ἐτεόκρητες μεγαλήτορες, ἐν δὲ Κύδωνες |177 Δωριεὲς τε τριχάϊκες διοὶ τε
Πελασγοί· |178 τῆσι δ' ἐνὶ Κνωσός, μεγάλη πόλις, ἔνθα τε Μίνως |179 ἐννέωρος βασίλευε Διὸς
μεγάλου ὀαριστῆς, |180 πατρὸς ἐμοῖο πατῆρ, μεγαθύμου Δευκαλίωνος. |181 Δευκαλίων δ' ἐμὲ τίκτε
καὶ Ἰδομενῆα ἄνακτα· |182 ἀλλ' ὁ μὲν ἐν νήεσσι κορωνίσιν Ἴλιον εἶσω |183 ὄχεθ' ἄμ' Ἀτρεΐδῃσιν·
ἐμοὶ δ' ὄνομα κλυτὸν Αἰθῶν, |184 ὀπλότερος γενεῆ· ὁ δ' ἅμα πρότερος καὶ ἀρείων.

|172 There's a land called Crete, in the middle of the sea that looks like wine. |173 It's beautiful and fertile, surrounded by the waves, and the people who live there |174 are so many that you can't count them. They have 90 cities. |175 Different people speak different languages, all mixed together. |176 There are Eteo-Cretans, those great-hearted ones. And Cydonians. |177 There are Dorians, with their three divisions, and luminous Pelasgians. |178 In this land [plural]⁵⁹ is Knossos, a great city. There it was that Minos, |179 who was renewed every nine years [*enneōros*], ruled as king. He was the companion [*oaristēs*] of Zeus the mighty. |180 And he was the father of my father, Deukalion, the one with the big heart. |181 Deukalion was my father, and the father also of Idomeneus the king. |182 That man [= Idomeneus], in curved ships, went off to Ilion [= Troy], |183 yes, he went there together with the sons of Atreus [= Agamemnon and Menelaos]. As for my name, which is famous, it is Aithōn. |184 I'm the younger one by birth. As for the other one [= Idomeneus], he was born before me and is superior to me.

There are many details in this remarkable passage that I cannot analyze right now, and I will return to them in other projects. Here I concentrate simply on the synthesizing of Minoan and Mycenaean “signatures.” A clearly Minoan signature is the detail about Minos as the grandfather of the Cretan speaker Aithōn. And a clearly Mycenaean signature is the detail about Idomeneus as the older brother of the same speaker: this king Idomeneus is of course one of the most prominent Achaean warriors in the Homeric *Iliad* as we know it.

And here, at this confluence of Minoan-Mycenaean signatures, is where the hero of the *Odyssey* enters the stream of myth-making (*Odyssey* 19.185-93):

|185 ἔνθ' Ὀδυσῆα ἐγὼν ιδόμην καὶ ξείνια δῶκα. |186 καὶ γὰρ τὸν Κρήτηνδε κατήγαγεν ἰς ἀνέμοιο |187
ιέμενον Τροίηνδε, παραπλάγξασα Μαλειῶν· |188 στήσε δ' ἐν Ἀμνισῶ, ὅθι τε σπέος Εἰλειθυίης, |189

⁵⁹ The pronoun τῆσι that refers to the land of Crete here in *Odyssey* 19.178 is in the plural, not in the singular, as we might have expected. I will offer an explanation in Part 5.

ἐν λιμέσιν χαλεποῖσι, μόγις δ' ὑπάλυξεν ἀέλλας. |₁₉₀ αὐτίκα δ' Ἰδομενῆα μέταλλα ἄστυδ' ἀνελθών·
 |₁₉₁ ξεῖνον γάρ οἱ ἔφρασκε φίλον τ' ἔμεν αἰδοῖόν τε. |₁₉₂ τῷ δ' ἤδη δεκάτη ἢ ἑνδεκάτη πέλεν ἠώς |₁₉₃
 οἰχομένῳ σὺν νηυσὶ κορωνίσιν Ἴλιον εἶσω.

|₁₈₅ There [in Crete] is where I [= Aithōn] saw Odysseus and gave him gifts of guest-host friendship [*xenia*]. |₁₈₆ You see, he had been forced to land at Crete by the violent power of a wind. |₁₈₇ He was trying to get to Troy, but the wind detoured him as he was sailing past the headlands of Maleiai, |₁₈₈ and he was dropped off [by the violent wind] at Amnisos, exactly where the cave of Eileithuia is situated. |₁₈₉ It was a harsh landing, and he just barely avoided being destroyed by the blasts of the sea-gales. |₁₉₀ Right away he asked to see Idomeneus as soon as he came to the city [= Knossos]. |₁₉₁ You see, he was saying that he was a guest-friend [*xenos*] [of Idomeneus] and that they had a relationship of mutual respect. |₁₉₂ But it was by now already the tenth or eleventh day since he [= Idomeneus] |₁₉₃ had departed, sailing off with a fleet of curved ships on his way to Iliion [Troy].

I highlight here line 188, where we learn about the place in Crete where Odysseus landed. That place is Amnisos, and we also learn that the cave of Eileithuia is located there. As we know from the reportage of Strabo, who flourished in the first century BCE, Amnisos was reputed to be the sea harbor of Minos the king (Strabo 10.4.8 C476):

Μίνω δέ φασιν ἐπιναίῳ χρήσασθαι τῷ Ἀμνισῶ, ὅπου τὸ τῆς Εἰλειθυίας ἱερόν.

They say that Minos used Amnisos as his seaport, and the sacred space of Eileithuia is there.

According to Pausanias 4.20.2, the priestess of Eileithuia at Olympia makes a regular offering to this goddess as also to her cult-hero protégé Sosipolis, and this offering is described as *mazas memagmenas meliti* “barley-cakes [*mazai*] kneaded in honey [*meli*].” In Laconia and Messenia, *Eileithuia* was known as *Eleuthia*, and this form of the name for the goddess is actually attested in a Linear B tablet found at Knossos.⁶⁰ Here is my transcription of the relevant wording in that tablet (Knossos tablet Gg 705 line 1):

a-mi-ni-so / e-re-u-ti-ja ME+RI AMPHORA 1

Amnisos: Eleuthiāi meli [followed by the ideogram for “amphora”] 1

“Amnisos: for Eleuthia, honey, one amphora”

Cherchez la femme

And how should we imagine such a goddess in the era of the Minoan sea-empire, in the middle of the second millennium BCE? One aspect of the answer is this: we should look not only for goddesses but also for human votaries of goddesses. An ideal case in point is Ariadne, who figures in myth as the daughter of Minos the king of Crete.

⁶⁰ I first made this argument, with further documentation, in Nagy (1969). For a brilliant analysis of *Odyssey* 19.185-193, along with a wealth of further documentation, see Levaniouk (2011:93-96).

Here is an essential piece of evidence, to be found in the Alexandrian dictionary attributed to Hesychius, where we read: ἄδνόν· ἄγνόν Κρηῆτες “the Cretans use the word *hadno-* for *hagno-*.” So, since *hagno-* means “holy,” *Ariadnē* means “very holy.”

Elsewhere in the dictionary of Hesychius, we read: Καλλίχορον· ἐν Κνωσσῷ ἐπὶ τῷ τῆς Ἀριάδνης τόπῳ “*Kalli-khoron* was the name of the place of Ariadne in Knossos.” And the meaning of this “place of Ariadne,” *Kalli-khoron*, is “the place that is beautiful.” The word *khoros* here can designate either the “place” where singing and dancing takes place or the group of singers and dancers who perform at that place. Such a beautiful place is made visible by the divine smith Hephaistos when he creates the ultimate masterpiece of visual art, the Shield of Achilles (*Iliad* 18.590-592):

|590 Ἐν δὲ χορὸν ποίκιλλε περικλυτὸς ἀμφιγυῆεις, |591 τῷ ἵκελον οἶόν ποτ’ ἐνὶ Κνωσσῷ εὐρείῃ |592 Δαίδαλος ἤσκησεν καλλιπλοκάμῳ Ἀριάδνῃ.

|590 The renowned one [= the god Hephaistos], the one with the two strong arms, pattern-wove [*poikillein*] in it [= the Shield of Achilles] a *khoros*. |591 It [= the *khoros*] was just like the one that, once upon a time in far-ruling Knossos, |592 Daedalus made for Ariadne, the one with the beautiful tresses [*plokamoi*].

Then at lines 593-606 of *Iliad* 18 we see in action the singing and dancing that happens in the picturing of the divine place. So the ultimate place for the singing and dancing becomes the ultimate event of singing and dancing, the word for which would also be *khoros*—this time, in the sense of a “chorus,” that is, a grouping of singers and dancers. And the prima donna for such singing and dancing can be visualized as the girl Ariadne, for whom Daedalus had made the ultimate place for song and dance.

The Minoan painting that I previewed in Part 3 captures a moment when a girl like Ariadne engages in such song and dance (Fig. 17.).



Fig. 17. Detail from a fresco found at Hagia Triadha in Crete. Reconstruction by Mark Cameron, p. 96 of the catalogue *Fresco: A Passport into the Past*, 1999. Reproduced with the permission of the British School at Athens. BSA Archive: Mark Cameron Personal Papers: CAM 1.

Part 5: A Cretan *Odyssey*, Phase II⁶¹

In what precedes I showed what can be reconstructed as a Minoan-Mycenaean version of Ariadne. In what follows I turn to later versions, as reflected especially in the visual arts of the sixth and fifth centuries BCE. In these later versions, we can see more clearly the connectedness of Ariadne with the idea of thalassocracy—an idea inherited from Minoan-Mycenaean civilization.

Ariadne and Her Garland

I highlight here the myths about Ariadne and her garland.⁶² The mythological foundations of storytelling about the garland of Ariadne and how it was turned into a constellation are most ancient, going all the way back to the Minoan-Mycenaean era.⁶³ From later eras we get a wealth of relevant evidence from the visual as well as the verbal arts.⁶⁴ In the case of the visual evidence, I cite for example the report of Pausanias 5.19.1, describing a scene depicted on the Chest of Kypselos, which is of Corinthian workmanship and dates to the early sixth century BCE: in this scene Ariadne is featured together with Theseus and she is holding a garland while Theseus holds a lyre.⁶⁵ Similarly, in a picture painted on an Attic vase dated to the middle of the sixth century (Munich 2243; ABV 163, 2), we see Theseus fighting the Minotaur while Ariadne stands by, holding a garland in her left hand and a ball of woolen thread in her right hand; the goddess Athena is also standing by, holding in her right hand the lyre of Theseus.⁶⁶ The ball of woolen thread is familiar to us from the existing literary evidence for the myth. It is signaled, for example, in Catullus 64.113 and in Virgil *Aeneid* 6.30. But what about the garland of Ariadne?

According to an epitomized narrative derived from Epimenides of Crete (*FGH* 457 F 19 = *DK* 3 B 25), the garland of Ariadne had been given to her as a gift by the god Dionysus, who intended to destroy (*phtheirai*) her, and she was in fact deceived (*ēpatēthē*) by the gift; but Theseus was saved (*sōthēnai*) by the same gift, since the garland of Ariadne radiated for him a mystical light that helped him escape from the labyrinth; after Theseus and Ariadne eloped to the island of Naxos, the mystical garland was turned into a constellation. By implication, the deception of Ariadne by way of the garland given to her by Dionysus is correlated with the salvation of Theseus by way of that same garland. By further implication, Ariadne must die at Naxos, and it is this death that is compensated by the catasterism of her garland.

⁶¹ An earlier version of Part 5 appeared online in Nagy (2015g).

⁶² Further background in Nagy (2013a:157-58); also Nagy (2015a).

⁶³ Blech (1982:259-62).

⁶⁴ This evidence is surveyed by Blech (1982:262-67).

⁶⁵ Blech (1982:263).

⁶⁶ Blech (1982:264).

More on Ariadne and Theseus

According to another version that we find in the Homeric *Odyssey* (11.321-25), Theseus and Ariadne elope not to Naxos but to an island even closer to Crete, Dia, where Ariadne is killed by the goddess Artemis; the god Dionysus is somehow involved, by way of “witnessing” the things that happened (*marturiēisi* 11.325).⁶⁷

According to yet another version, as recorded in the scholia MV for *Odyssey* 11.322 and attributed to Pherecydes (*FGH* 3 F 148), Ariadne and Theseus elope to the island of Dia and fall asleep on the shore after having made love there. While they sleep, Athena appears in the middle of the night and wakes up Theseus, telling him to proceed to Athens. When Ariadne wakes up in the morning and finds herself all alone on the shore, she laments piteously. Aphrodite comforts her, telling her that Dionysus will make her his woman. Then Dionysus appears in an epiphany and makes love to Ariadne, giving her a golden garland. Then Artemis kills Ariadne. And the garland is turned into a constellation—an event described as gratifying to Dionysus.

This myth about Ariadne and Theseus is distinctly Athenian, going back to the glory days of the Athenian Empire.⁶⁸ The myth is attested in a painting that dates from the early fifth century BCE (Fig. 18.).

This picture captures the moment when Athena appears to Theseus after he has made love with Ariadne. The couple has fallen asleep after the lovemaking, but Athena awakens Theseus, gently gesturing for him to be quiet and not to awaken Ariadne, who is held fast in her sleep by a little figure of Hypnos perched on top of her head. The details have been described this way (Oakley and Sinos 1993:37):



Fig. 18. Painting on a lekythos attributed to the Pan Painter, dated around 470 BCE (Taranto *IG* 4545). The line drawing, presented in rollout mode, is by Tina Ross.

Here we see the couple at the moment of separation. Athena has just wakened Theseus, and as she bends over him he begins to rise, bending one leg and sitting up from the pillow on which he has lain next to Ariadne. Athena tries to quiet him as he stretches out his arm, a gesture of remonstrance or inquiry. In the upper left hand corner is a small female figure flying into the night.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ The Homeric passage leaves it open whether Dionysus instigates the killing of Ariadne, so I cannot follow in its entirety the interpretation of Barrett (1964:223).

⁶⁸ What follows is a recapitulation of what I argued in Nagy (2013b:160-61).

⁶⁹ Their interpretation of this painting differs from mine in some other respects.

I note that the small female figure who is “flying into the night” is disheveled, with her hair flying in the wind and with her clothing in disarray. I interpret this figure as a prefiguring of Ariadne herself at a later moment, the morning after, when she wakes up to find that she has been abandoned by Theseus. I recall here the verse in Catullus 64.63 where the headdress that had held the hair of Ariadne together has now come undone, and she looks like a bacchant, a frenzied devotee of Bacchus, that is, of the god Dionysus. And it is this same Bacchic frenzy, signaled by her disheveled hair, that will now attract Dionysus to her.⁷⁰

In contrast to the morning after, when Ariadne in her Bacchic frenzy will come undone, the picture of Ariadne in the present is eerily peaceful (Oakley and Sinos 1993:37):

Ariadne faces us directly, an unusual pose that points to her oblivion to what is happening behind her as well as allowing us a clear view of the peaceful contentment registered on her face. Her eyes are closed tight, and she will not awaken as Theseus departs, for the figure of Hypnos, Sleep, sits on her head with legs drawn up as he sleeps.

Returning to the picture painted on the lekythos, I draw attention to another figure. Besides the sleeping Ariadne and the little sleeping Hypnos perched on top of her head, we see also the figure of a wakeful boy reclining on the farther side of the bed, to our left, whose head is positioned directly below the miniature figure of the hovering girl with the disheveled hair. In my interpretation, this boy is Eros, who had instigated a night of intense lovemaking between Ariadne and Theseus.⁷¹

Recalling the Blond Hair of Ariadne

In a posting for *Classical Inquiry* 2015.07.15 (Nagy 2015a), I had drawn attention to a detail that now becomes relevant to the interpretation of the painting we have just seen. The detail comes from Poem 64 of Catullus, which mediates earlier Greek sources. Here we will see that Ariadne the Minoan princess has a *vertex*, “head of hair,” that is *flavus*, “blond.” And I highlight in advance the fact that this description is synchronized with the moment when Ariadne discovers that she has been abandoned by her lover Theseus. The poem pictures her standing helplessly on the island shore, looking out toward the sea, when, all of a sudden, her hair comes undone as she sees the ship of her lover sailing away. At this moment, her beautiful head of hair or *vertex* is pointedly described as blond or *flavus* (Catullus 64.60-67):

|₆₀ quem procul ex alga maestis Minois ocellis, |₆₁ saxea ut effigies bacchantis, prospicit, eheu, |₆₂ prospicit et magnis curarum fluctuat undis, |₆₃ non flavo retinens subtilem vertice mitram, |₆₄ non contacta levi velatum pectus amictu, |₆₅ non tereti strophio lactentis vincta papillas, |₆₆ omnia quae toto delapsa e corpore passim |₆₇ ipsius ante pedes fluctus salis alludebant.

|₆₀ She [= Ariadne] sees him [= Theseus] out there at sea from far away, far beyond the shore’s seaweed. The daughter of Minos, with her sad little eyes, |₆₁ is like a stone statue of a Maenad as

⁷⁰ I have much more to say about the poetics of Dionysiac dishevelment and eroticism in Nagy (2007).

⁷¹ Nagy (2013b:161-62).

she stares, oh how sad! |₆₂ Staring she sees him out there, and she is tossed around in huge waves of anxieties. |₆₃ She loses control of the fine-woven headdress on her blond [*flavus*] head of hair [*vertex*]. |₆₄ Her chest is no longer covered by her light shawl. |₆₅ Her milk-white breasts are no longer held back within her smooth bodice. |₆₆ One by one, all her coverings slipped off altogether from her body, some here and some there, |₆₇ while the waves of the salt sea were frolicking in front of her feet.

At the very moment when Ariadne comes emotionally undone here, her hairdo likewise comes undone, and so too all her clothing comes undone. Now she looks like a perfect Maenad, that is, like a woman possessed by the Bacchic frenzy of the god Dionysus. It is the maenadic looks of Ariadne that attract Dionysus to her from afar, and, as we read in Catullus 64.253, the god is inflamed with passion for the princess as he now hastens toward her.

This detail about Ariadne's blond head of hair will help me address two basic questions: why is Theseus prompted by Athena to wake up and secretly leave Ariadne, making his way back to Athens, and why must Ariadne be left behind, pathetically abandoned on the shore of the idyllic place where she has just made love to Theseus? The answer is simple: it is because duty calls Theseus back to Athens.

The blond hair of the Minoan princess Ariadne, viewed in the context of her disheveled Bacchic frenzy, matches the blond hair of the Carthaginian queen Dido in Virgil's *Aeneid* (4.590: *flaventesque abscissa comas*), which is being shorn off at the very moment when she too, like Ariadne, comes emotionally undone. Just as Ariadne was abandoned by Theseus, Dido was abandoned by Aeneas.

At a later point in the *Aeneid*, during his sojourn in Hades, Aeneas encounters the shade of his former lover, the queen Dido, who has committed suicide after he abandoned her in Carthage. Aeneas says to Dido (*Aeneid* 6.456-63):

|₄₅₆ infelix Dido, verus mihi nuntius ergo |₄₅₇ venerat extinctam ferroque extrema secutam? |₄₅₈ funeris heu tibi causa fui? per sidera iuro, |₄₅₉ per superos et si qua fides tellure sub ima est, |₄₆₀ invitus, regina, tuo de litore cessi. |₄₆₁ sed me iussa deum, quae nunc has ire per umbras, |₄₆₂ per loca senta situ cogunt noctemque profundam, |₄₆₃ imperiis egere suis; . . .
 |₄₅₆ Unfortunate Dido! So it was true, then, the news that I got. |₄₅₇ It [= the news] came to me and said that you had perished, that you had followed through on your final moments with a sword. |₄₅₈ So your death, ah, was caused by me? But I swear by the stars, |₄₅₉ and by the powers above—and by anything here that I could swear by, under the earth in its deepest parts: |₄₆₀ Unwillingly, O queen, did I depart from your shore [*litus*]. |₄₆₁ But I was driven by the orders of the gods, which force me even now to pass through the shades, |₄₆₂ passing through places stained with decay, and through the deepest night. |₄₆₃ Yes, I was driven by their projects of empire.

In verse 460 of this passage, the poet is making a reference to a verse in Poem 66 of Catullus, where a lock of hair originating from another queen, Berenice, is speaking (Catullus 66.39):

invita, o regina, tuo de vertice cessi

Unwillingly, O queen, did I depart from the top of your head [*vertex*].

In my posting for *Classical Inquiry* 2015.07.15 (Nagy 2015a), I argued that the lock of hair that gets severed from the head of Queen Berenice of Egypt and becomes a constellation in the sky is parallel to the Garland of Ariadne. But I argued further that the verse “*invitus regina ...*” in *Aeneid* 6.460, referring to the doomed love affair of Dido and Aeneas, refers also to a poetic tradition about the doomed love affair of Ariadne and Theseus; and this additional reference is achieved through the intermediacy of the verse “*invita, o regina ...*” in Catullus 66.39.⁷²

Just as Theseus rejected Ariadne in the Athenian version of the myth, so also Aeneas rejected Dido in the story of their doomed love affair. After all, as Leonard Muellner has noted, the moralistic as well as ritualistic temperament of Aeneas as the future founder of the Roman empire is ultimately incompatible with the *furor* or “frenzy” of Dido. In the narrative about the death of Dido in *Aeneid* 4, as Muellner has also noted, we see a clear sign of this incompatibility (Muellner 2012):

When the self-destructive fire of passionate love within her emerges as the fire of her funeral pyre, she [= Dido] cannot actually die. As a person invested with *furor* by Venus, she is by definition hostile to *fatum*, to Aeneas’ destiny to be sure, but even to her own wished-for death, which should not have happened at this point in her life. So a *dea ex machina*, Iris the rainbow goddess, is sent from heaven by Juno to effectuate the impossible.

Here Muellner cites the actual verses of *Aeneid* 4.696-705, where Iris finally shears off a lock of blond hair from the head of Dido, ending it all for the doomed lover of Aeneas. I quote here only the beginning of the scene (*Aeneid* 696-699):

|⁶⁹⁶ nam quia nec fato merita nec morte peribat |⁶⁹⁷ sed misera ante diem subitoque accensa furore |
|⁶⁹⁸ nondum illi flavum Proserpina vertice crinem |⁶⁹⁹ abstulerat, . . .

|⁶⁹⁶ For, since she was about to die neither by fate nor by a deserved death, |⁶⁹⁷ but before her day, the poor wretch, inflamed as she was by her sudden frenzy [*furor*], |⁶⁹⁸ it had not yet happened to her that the blond [*flavus*] hair on the top of her head [*vertex*], at the hands of the goddess of death, |⁶⁹⁹ was to be taken away from her.

Just as Dido experiences a Bacchic *furor* or “frenzy” in reaction to her abandonment by Aeneas, thus showing her incompatibility with the future founder of the Roman Empire, so also Ariadne in Catullus 64 is *furens* “frenzied” in verse 124, experiencing *furores* “moments of frenzy” in verses 54 and 94. In this reaction, Ariadne shows her own incompatibility with Theseus, that future founder of the Athenian Empire. But this same incompatibility translates into a

⁷² The argument was first presented in Nagy (2013b).

compatibility with Bacchus. More than that, it translates into an attraction, even a fatal attraction, since Ariadne, in her Bacchic frenzy, attracted the attention of Dionysus.⁷³

Just as Aeneas in *Aeneid* 6 is driven by “the orders of the gods” (461), by “their projects of empire” (463), as I have translated it, so also Theseus is driven by the orders of the goddess Athena, whose intervention in the myth of Theseus is an expression of older “projects of empire.” In this case, I mean the Athenian Empire of the fifth century BCE. According to Athenian mythology as it was taking shape in that era, Athens had become a successor to the Minoan Empire that Theseus himself had overcome once upon a time.⁷⁴

The Athenian Connection Revisited

In non-Athenian versions of the myth, as we have already seen, Theseus was saved from the labyrinth primarily by the Minoan princess Ariadne, with the help of her radiant garland and her ball of woolen thread. In the Athenian version, by contrast, Theseus did not really seem to need the help of Ariadne all that much.⁷⁵ And the garland of Ariadne can even be replaced by a garland given to Theseus by the sea nymph Amphitrite, as we see in Song 17 of Bacchylides (109-116): in that version, the garland is made of roses. In other variants of the myth, the garland is made of gold, as we see from the testimony of Pausanias, who describes a painting that covered one full wall of the sanctuary of Theseus in Athens. In the context of his description, Pausanias offers a retelling of the myth, which he says is only partially retold through the medium of the painting (Pausanias 1.17.3):

When Minos was taking Theseus and the rest of the delegation of young men and women to Crete he fell in love with Periboia, and when Theseus opposed him by objecting, he [= Minos] insulted him and said that he [= Theseus] was not the son of Poseidon, since he [= Theseus] could not recover for him [= Minos] the signet ring [*sphragis*] which he [= Minos] happened to be wearing, if he threw it into the sea. With these words Minos is said to have thrown the signet ring [*sphragis*], but they say that Theseus emerged from the sea holding that ring and also a gold garland [*stephanos*] that Amphitrite gave him.⁷⁶

⁷³ This paragraph repeats my argumentation in Nagy (2013b).

⁷⁴ On Theseus as the notional founder of the Athenian Empire, understood to be the notional successor of the Minoan Empire, see Nagy (2009:E§§161-63, 168-69 = pp. 364-65, 368). Such an ideology about an Athenian Empire had a start even before the era of the Athenian Democracy. Already in the era of the Peisistratidai, who dominated Athens in the second half of the sixth century BCE, we see clear signs of what I am calling here “the projects of empire”: see especially Nagy (2009:E§169 = pp. 368). In the same work, I offer a general summary of the imperial ambitions of Athens in the era of the Peisistratidai (2009:I§§7-12 = pp. 6-7). In that era, as we see from the incisive analysis of Frame 2009:323, myths about the love affairs of Theseus with a variety of heroines, including Ariadne, were extensively rethought.

⁷⁵ I first made this argument in Nagy (2013b:162-63).

⁷⁶ For further attestations of the garland of Amphitrite, see Blech (1982:265-66).

The Occlusion of Ariadne

From what we have seen so far, the thalassocratic agenda of Athens are understated in myths about Ariadne and Theseus. Not only does Theseus abandon Ariadne once he is freed from the Labyrinth of Minos, but even more than that, the myth of Theseus no longer really needs Ariadne. Once the thalassocracy of Minos is taken over by Theseus, the role of Ariadne in the achievement of this takeover is occluded. The connection between thalassocracy and Minoan civilization as represented by the Minoan princess Ariadne is now broken.

The Occlusion of Minoan Thalassocracy

But the understating of thalassocracy in Minoan civilization seems to have been already an aspect of Minoan civilization itself. The power of the thalassocracy must have been so great that Minoan rhetoric could afford to downplay it. I see a vestige of this rhetoric in the ancient Greek proverb about Cretans who pretend not even to know what the sea is, thus flaunting all the more their knowledge and expertise in seafaring. Here is the proverb (Proverb I 131 ed. Leutsch-Schneidewin):

ὁ Κρής δὴ τὸν πόντον.

The Cretan, aha ! . . . with reference to the sea.⁷⁷

In the scholia for Aelius Aristides *Oration* 46 (page 138 line 4) we find an explanation for the meaning of this proverb: *παροιμία ἐπὶ τῶν εἰδότεων μὲν, προσποιουμένων δ' ἀγνοεῖν*, “This is a proverb applying to those who know but pretend not to know.”⁷⁸ To say it another way, the subtext is flaunting its status as a text.

The Occlusion of Minoan Thalassocracy in the Odyssey

This kind of rhetoric, where the speaker is flaunting by way of understating, is typical of the “Cretan lies” as told by Odysseus in his rôle as a Minoan prince. There is a salient example in the Second Cretan Tale, told by the disguised Odysseus to Eumaeus the swineherd. The story begins with this detail told by the would-be Cretan about his origins (*Odyssey* 14.199):

ἐκ μὲν Κρητῶν γένος εὔχομαι εὐρειάων

I say solemnly that I was born and raised in Crete, the place that reaches far and wide

In the singular, *Krētē* refers to the island of Crete. But here we see the plural *Krētai*, which cannot mean a multiplicity of islands named Crete. There is no such thing. Rather, we see

⁷⁷ I translate the particle δὴ here as indicating surprise at learning something new. In general, the particle δὴ has an “evidentiary” force, indicating that the speaker has just *seen* something, in other words, that the speaker has achieved an insight just a moment ago (“aha, now I see that . . .”). See Bakker (1997:74-80; 2005:146).

⁷⁸ Aelius Aristides II ed. S. Jebb (1730 [1722]:138, printed in the footnote to line 4).

here an elliptic plural, meaning “Crete and everything that belongs to it.” And of course whatever belongs to Crete are all the Aegean islands and lands controlled by the thalassocracy of Crete.⁷⁹ In *Odyssey* 19.178, we see a pronoun that refers to Crete, and, like the noun *Krêtai* in *Odyssey* 14.199, this pronoun too is not in the singular but in the plural. Here again we see an elliptic plural. I have already noted this pronoun in Part 4. So, even the pronoun signals the imperial power of Crete.

Earlier, in Part 3, we saw a parallel example: it was the elliptic plural *Athēnai* in the sense of “*Athēnē* and everything that belongs to it,” whereas the singular *Athēnē* refers not only to the goddess Athena but also to the place that she personifies. As we saw in *Odyssey* 7 at line 80, analyzed in Part 3, the noun *Athēnē* in the singular can refer not only to the goddess Athena but also to the place that she controls, which was primarily the acropolis of Athens. So, to put that singular form into the plural, which is an elliptic plural, is a way of referring to all the places controlled by the acropolis of Athens. Other such elliptic plurals include *Mukēnai*, “Mycenae,” and *Thēbai*, “Thebes.”⁸⁰

A Spartan Variation on a Minoan-Mycenaean Theme

In our *Odyssey* the Minoan-Mycenaean world is linked more directly to Sparta than to Crete. To make this argument, I start with the beginning of *Odyssey* 15, where the goddess Athena appears in an epiphany to Telemachus at Sparta. As Athena tells Telemachus at lines 1-9, it is time for the young hero to conclude his visit at Sparta and to go back home to Ithaca. I highlight the fact that Sparta here is described at line 1 of *Odyssey* 15 as *euru-khoros* (εἰς εὐρύχορον Λακεδαίμονα), meaning “having a wide dancing-place.”

I see here a Minoan-Mycenaean signature. Relevant is the word *Kalli-khoron*, as I analyzed it in Part 4. As we saw there, *Kalli-khoron* is explained this way in the dictionary of Hesychius: Καλλίχορον· ἐν Κνωσσῶ ἐπὶ τῷ τῆς Ἀριάδνης τόπῳ “*Kalli-khoron* was the name of the place of Ariadne in Knossos.” And the meaning of this “place of Ariadne,” *Kalli-khoron*, is “the dancing-place that is beautiful.” The word *khoro*s here can designate either the “place” where singing and dancing takes place or the group of singers and dancers who perform at that place. Such a beautiful place, as we already saw in Part 4, is made visible by the divine smith Hephaistos when he creates the ultimate masterpiece of visual art, the Shield of Achilles (*Iliad* 18.590-592):

|⁵⁹⁰ Ἐν δὲ χορὸν ποίκιλλε περικλυτὸς ἀμφιγυήεις, |⁵⁹¹ τῷ ἴκελον οἶόν ποτ' ἐνὶ Κνωσσῶ εὐρείῃ |⁵⁹²
Δαίδαλος ἤσκησεν καλλιπλοκάμῳ Ἀριάδνῃ.

|⁵⁹⁰ The renowned one [= the god Hephaistos], the one with the two strong arms, pattern-wove [*poikillein*] in it [= the Shield of Achilles] a *khoro*s. |⁵⁹¹ It [= the *khoro*s] was just like the one that, once upon a time in far-ruling Knossos, |⁵⁹² Daedalus made for Ariadne, the one with the beautiful tresses [*plokamoî*].

⁷⁹ Nagy (2004:163-64), following Muellner (1976:70).

⁸⁰ Again Nagy (2004:163-64), following Muellner (1976:70).

Then, at lines 593-606 of *Iliad* 18, we see in action the singing and dancing that happens in the picturing of the divine place. I repeat here what I said in Part 4, where I argued that the ultimate place for the singing and dancing becomes the ultimate event of singing and dancing, the word for which would also be *choros*—this time, in the sense of a “chorus,” that is, a grouping of singers and dancers. And the prima donna for such singing and dancing can be visualized as the girl Ariadne, for whom Daedalus had made the ultimate place for song and dance.

How the Telling of Cretan Tales Begins only after the Sojourn with the Phaeacians

So far, I have concentrated on a moment at the beginning of *Odyssey* 15 when Telemachus is visiting Sparta. Now I switch to Odysseus at that same moment. He is already in Ithaca, sleeping in the humble dwelling of Eumaeus the swineherd, after having finished telling his most elaborate “lie” in *Odyssey* 14, where he had narrated the Second Cretan Tale. So, when did Odysseus arrive in Ithaca, where he is telling his Cretan Tales? He had arrived already in *Odyssey* 13, which is where he narrated the First Cretan Tale to the goddess Athena herself. And this arrival in Ithaca marks a major transition in the Homeric narrative.

Here I have reached a critical point in my argumentation, which is essentially this: the adventures of Odysseus in the land of the Phaeacians, starting at *Odyssey* 6 and ending at *Odyssey* 13.187, are a substitution for the adventures of Odysseus in Crete. Once he is in Ithaca, Odysseus wakes up from his adventures, as if from a dream.

The Homeric narrative about the Phaeacians breaks off at *Odyssey* 13.187, at the very moment when they are offering sacrifice and praying to Poseidon to forgive them for having offended the god by conveying Odysseus from their island to the hero’s homeland in Ithaca. The narrative break takes place most abruptly, dramatically, and even exceptionally—at mid-verse. In the first part of the verse at *Odyssey* 13.187, the Phaeacians are last seen standing around a sacrificial altar, praying to Poseidon; in the second part of the verse, Odysseus has just woken up in Ithaca. A new phase of the hero’s experiences has just begun in the “real” world of Ithaca. Once Odysseus wakes up in his native land of Ithaca in *Odyssey* 13, he is ready to tell his First Cretan Tale, and he tells it to none other than the goddess Athena, who appears to him in disguise.

In all the tales that Odysseus tells in the second half of the *Odyssey*, there is a strong preoccupation with the island of Crete. And, as we will see, the *Odyssey* makes contact with Crete also by way of his son Telemachus. As we know, Telemachus goes to Pylos and then to Sparta in our version of the *Odyssey*, thus making contact with a center-point of Minoan-Mycenaean civilization. But there is also an alternative version where Telemachus makes contact with the earlier phase of this civilization, which is localized on the island of Crete.

Further, there is still another tradition, where Telemachus travels not to Sparta or to Crete but instead to the land of the Phaeacians. There are traces of this tradition, as reported by Eustathius in his commentary on *Odyssey* 16.118 and as channeled, as it were, by Dictys of Crete 6.6. According to Eustathius, the sources are Hellanicus (*FGH* 4 F 156) and the Aristotelian *Constitution of Ithaca* (F 506 ed. Rose). According to this variant myth, Telemachus has an

encounter with Nausicaa, princess of the Phaeacians, who is of course also encountered by Odysseus in our *Odyssey*. Telemachus and Nausicaa produce a child named Perseptolis.

A Cretan Adventure as an Alternative to a Spartan Adventure

For the moment, however, I will concentrate not on the Phaeacian adventure of Telemachus but on his potential Cretan adventure, to be contrasted with the Spartan adventure that is narrated in our *Odyssey*.

Backtracking from *Odyssey* 15 to *Odyssey* 1, we will now look at verses stemming from two different versions of the *Odyssey*. In both versions, Telemachus first goes to Pylos. That happens in *Odyssey* 3 as we have it. Also, in our version of the Homeric text, Telemachus then goes to Sparta in *Odyssey* 4.

After the adventures of Telemachus in Pylos as narrated in *Odyssey* 3, however, there are two alternative versions for the continuation of his adventures. In one version, as attested in *Odyssey* 4, Telemachus follows up his visit to the palace of Nestor in Pylos with a visit to the palace of Menelaos in Sparta—and he goes there by way of a chariot. That is the version that we read in “our” text of *Odyssey* 4. In another version, however, Telemachus goes not to Sparta but to Crete, and of course he goes there by way of a ship.

Both of these travels of Telemachus are mystical. In one scenario, he travels on a “thought-chariot,” while in another scenario, he travels on a “thought-ship.” In this regard, I await the forthcoming book of Madeleine Goh, who refers to the comparative evidence of Indo-European poetics concerning such shamanistic ideas as “thought-chariots” and “thought-ships.”

But what happens if Telemachus goes to Crete instead of Sparta after Pylos? Then he makes contact not with Menelaos of Sparta, who figures in the Troy Tale of *Odyssey* 4 as we have it, but with Idomeneus of Crete in an earlier Troy Tale of a Cretan *Odyssey* that focuses on a still earlier strand of narrative traditions centering on the *nostoi* or “homecomings” of the Achaeans.

These traditions draw on the world of Minoan-Mycenaean civilization in Crete. Let us consider for a moment the textual evidence. I start with some verses from “our” version of the Homeric *Odyssey*, as transmitted by ancient editors like Aristarchus, head of the Library of Alexandria in the second century BCE (*Odyssey* 1.93, 1.284-286):

πέμψω δ' ἐς Σπάρτην τε καὶ ἐς Πύλον ἡμαθόεντα

I [= Athena] will convey him [= Telemachus] on his way to Sparta and to sandy Pylos

πρῶτα μὲν ἐς Πύλον ἐλθὲ καὶ εἴρεο Νέστορα δῖον,

κεῖθεν δὲ Σπάρτηνδε παρὰ ξανθὸν Μενέλαον·

ὃς γὰρ δεύτατος ἦλθεν Ἀχαιῶν χαλκοχιτώνων.

First you [= Telemachus] go to Pylos and ask radiant Nestor

and then from there to Sparta and to golden-haired Menelaos,

the one who was the last of the Achaeans, wearers of bronze tunics, to come back home.

Next I turn to the corresponding verses as they appeared in a different version of the Homeric *Odyssey*, as we learn from the reportage of Zenodotus, head of the Library of Alexandria in the third century BCE (Scholia for *Odyssey* 3.313):

πέμψω δ' ἐς Κρήτην τε καὶ ἐς Πύλον ἡμαθόεντα
I [= Athena] will convey him [= Telemachus] on his way to Crete and to sandy Pylos

πρῶτα μὲν ἐς Πύλον ἐλθέ, . . .
κεῖθεν δ' ἐς Κρήτην τε παρ' Ἰδομενῆα ἄνακτα,
ὃς γὰρ δεύτατος ἦλθεν Ἀχαιῶν χαλκοχιτώνων.
First go to Pylos . . .
and then from there to Crete and to king Idomeneus
who was the last of the Achaeans, wearers of bronze tunics, to come back home.

Cretan Adventures of Odysseus

What we just saw here is a trace of a “Cretan *Odyssey*,” as represented in our *Odyssey* by the “Cretan lies,” micro-narratives embedded in the epic macro-narrative of the Homeric *Odyssey*.

In “our” *Odyssey*, as Nestor reports at 3.191-192, Idomeneus after the Trojan War returns to Crete with all his men safe and sound. In the “Cretan” *Odyssey*, by contrast, Idomeneus seems to have traveled with Odysseus, even experiencing with him the horrors of the Cave of the Cyclops. I refer here to the brilliant analysis of Olga Levaniouk, who highlights a red-figure stamnos, 480 BCE, featuring ἸΔΑΜΕΝΕΥΣ “Ida-meneus” [*sic*] and ΟΔΥΣΣΥΣ “Odusus” [*sic*], each hanging under a ram’s belly.⁸¹

As we have already seen in Part 4, the Third Cretan Tale portrays Idomeneus as the *philos xenos* “near-and-dear guest-friend” of Odysseus (*Odyssey* 19.172-84):

|172 Κρήτη τις γαῖ' ἔστι μέσφ' ἐνὶ οἴνοπι πόντῳ, |173 καλὴ καὶ πείρα, περίρρυτος· ἐν δ' ἄνθρωποι |
|174 πολλοὶ ἀπειρέσιοι, καὶ ἐνήκοντα πόλεις· |175 ἄλλη δ' ἄλλων γλῶσσα μεμιγμένη· ἐν μὲν
|176 Ἀχαιοί, |176 ἐν δ' Ἐτεόκρητες μεγαλήτορες, ἐν δὲ Κύδωνες |177 Δωριέες τε τριχάϊκες διοὶ τε
|178 Πελασγοί· |178 τῆσι δ' ἐνὶ Κνωσός, μεγάλη πόλις, ἔνθα τε Μίνως |179 ἐννέωρος βασίλευε Διὸς
|180 μεγάλου ὀαριστής, |180 πατὴρ δὲ ἐμοῖο πατήρ, μεγαθύμου Δευκαλίωνος. |181 Δευκαλίων δ' ἐμὲ τίκτε
|182 καὶ Ἰδομενῆα ἄνακτα· |182 ἀλλ' ὁ μὲν ἐν νήεσσι κορωνίσιν Ἴλιον εἶσω |183 ὄχεθ' ἄμ' Ἀτρεΐδῃσιν·
|184 ἐμοὶ δ' ὄνομα κλυτὸν Αἴθων, |184 ὀπλότερος γενεῆ· ὁ δ' ἄμα πρότερος καὶ ἀρείων.

|172 There's a land called Crete, in the middle of the sea that looks like wine. |173 It's beautiful and fertile, surrounded by the waves, and the people who live there |174 are so many that you can't count them. They have 90 cities. |175 Different people speak different languages, all mixed together. |176 There are Eteo-Cretans, those great-hearted ones. And Cydonians. |177 There are

⁸¹ Levaniouk (2011:105).

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The Tale of Meleager in the *Iliad*

Jonathan Burgess

I employ narratology and oral theory in a close reading of Phoenix's tale of the Kalydonian hero Meleager in Book 9 of the *Iliad* to clarify the function of this embedded narrative within the Homeric epic. Phoenix compares Achilles to Meleager, and the crux of the analogy—angry withdrawal from battle—has tempted some in the past to suppose that a pre-Homeric epic about an angry Meleager was the source for the *Iliad's* angry Achilles. But since most ancient narratives about Meleager do not feature withdrawal from battle, today Homerists more commonly conclude that Phoenix invents Meleager's withdrawal in order to pursue this analogy. Though I essentially subscribe to this conclusion, analysis of the poetics of Phoenix's narrative have often been misguided. In this essay I explore the traditionality of Phoenix's story and its narratological construction in the Homeric epic. The main goal is to better calibrate the significance of the *Iliad's* version of the story of Meleager. The issue is relevant to how the *Iliad* employs material from outside its narrative boundaries, including the Epic Cycle.

Though not as famous as the labors of Heracles, the Trojan War, or the return of Odysseus, the myth about Meleager was popular in antiquity. That is not surprising, since his story often featured the hunt of a monstrous animal and intra-family violence. Sometimes there was a love interest, the famous huntress Atalanta. The story could be variously narrated, and some versions of the myth are incompatible. Homerists have long explored how the version told by Phoenix in *Iliad* 9 corresponds to or deviates from alternative versions. Before we address that issue, it would be helpful to examine basic elements of the tale of Meleager in order to explore their causal connections and thematic significance.

Texts and Traditions

The bibliography on the Homeric story of Meleager is extensive.¹ Many have pursued a chronological analysis, speculating about the pre-Homeric development of the myth and its post-

¹Particularly instructive are Kakridis (1949:11-42), Willcock (1964:147-53), Lohmann (1970:254-65), Alden (2000:179-290), and Grossardt (2001, which is most thorough for primary material and bibliography, and includes a helpful graph of motifs in literature at 285-90). For commentary, see Hainsworth (1993:130-40).

Homeric literary history.² Homerists in the Analyst school of thought hypothesized a pre-Homeric epic about an angry, withdrawn Meleager, deemed the “Meleagris.”³ Most current Homerists have concluded that non-Homeric versions of the death of Meleager, whereby his mother Althaia burns a firebrand that represents his life, is the original form of the story.⁴ Since the firebrand version is an example of a widespread folktale type, this conclusion recognizes the possibility of pre-Homeric oral traditions.⁵ But Homerists have tended to celebrate the seeming Homeric suppression of the folktale motif as a victory of invention over tradition and epic realism over folkloric magic. Interpretative studies of the Homeric version accordingly propose complex effects that seem to depend, explicitly or implicitly, on literate composition and reception.

My approach assumes that a strong yet flexible oral tradition about Meleager is essential to the poetics of Phoenix’s story. Instead of creating a literary history by looking for clues of influence and derivation in the surviving evidence, I consider variation to indicate multiforms that were potential in both pre-Homeric and post-Homeric oral traditions about Meleager. The vast majority of ancient tellings of the tale of Meleager were never recorded, and only a minority of poems and images about Meleager have survived. It is therefore impossible to recreate a single, monolithic tradition about Meleager. But I do posit widespread knowledge of essential motifs in traditional narrative about Meleager. Audience knowledge of these would play a role in the potential significance of any manifestation of the myth.

In my view oral traditions were primarily responsible for widespread knowledge of the myth of Meleager, even after textual versions became known. It should not be supposed that once Homer included the tale in the *Iliad* this version became overwhelmingly dominant. In my work I have argued that the influence of Homer has been exaggerated for the Archaic Age.⁶ Though the centrality of Homeric texts for later literature is obvious, non-Homeric traditions

²See, for example, Bethe (1925:5-7), Kraus (1948), Kakridis (1949:13-19), March (1987:27-46), Bremmer (1988:38-51), Grossardt (2001, summary at 245-54 and 2002). For cultic and ritual foundations of the myth, see Rubin and Sale (1983), Bremmer (1988), Honea (1994), Barringer (1996), and Grossardt (2001:261-69).

³Notably, Howald (1924) and Sachs (1933). See Heubeck (1984 [1943]:129) for bibliography and discussion. It is not always noticed that Kakridis (1949:20-21, 25-26) largely follows the Meleagris theory. If in a separate discussion (about Meleager as a model for heroic withdrawal in the *Iliad*) he expresses uncertainty about the priority of wrathful Meleager and Achilles (60 n.22), his analysis of the Homeric tale of Meleager assumes a withdrawn, and so wrathful, Meleager in the pre-Homeric epic tradition.

⁴Pausanias (10.31.4) reports that the firebrand was used in a lost tragedy by Phrynichus, adding that the motif seems to have been well known before the tragedian’s time (see Grossardt 2001:76-79 for discussion). Bethe (1925:6-7), Bremmer (1988:43-46) consider the firebrand version to be post-Homeric; March (1987:43-46) attributes its invention to Stesichorus (see Garner 1994:38 and Grossardt 2001:3-4, 51-59 for the possibility of its presence in a fragment of Stesichorus; see now Davies and Finglass [2015 fr. 187-269, with commentary]).

⁵The tale type is actually entitled “Meleager” in Aarne and Thompson (1987 [1961]) the third edition. Uther (2004) provides recent bibliography in his expansion of the Aarne and Thompson system; see also Brednich (1999). For general methodological concerns about employing comparative folkloristics in Homeric studies, see now Edmunds (2016:10, 30-36). Kakridis (1949:127-48) concluded that modern Greek examples of the tale type (not about Meleager, though Kakridis tends to identify it with Meleager specifically) are survivals of a prehistoric Aitolian tradition (though he argues that a non-folktale epic tradition of Meleager influences the *Iliad*).

⁶See especially Burgess (2001).

modulated the reception of Homer down through antiquity. As it happens, Meleager is an excellent example of my argument: the Homeric suppression of the firebrand motif was rarely followed in subsequent narratives of the myth.⁷ The *Iliad*'s version could certainly be influential otherwise, as in our earliest surviving extended version of the Meleager tale, Bacchylides, *Ode* 5.⁸ And it may be that other poets like Stesichorus, Phrynichus, or Euripides changed the course of the myth's narrative, as some argue—though here the speculation rests on lost works. The extensive scholarship about which author first invented what motif is admirably rigorous, but of limited profit. Acceptance of oral multiforms of equal authenticity provides a different perspective, one that does not implausibly credit a handful of authors with the development of a traditional narrative.

For comprehension of the poetics of the Homeric tale of Meleager, narratological examination is indispensable.⁹ Scholars too often ascribe the tale of Meleager to Homer or conflate Phoenix with Homer, whereas it is the character Phoenix who narrates the story to the character Achilles in Book 9 of the *Iliad*. One needs to distinguish the significance of conversation between characters within the poem from the significance of performances to audiences of the poem. Narratological analysis of the Homeric tale of Meleager is incomplete, however, without consideration of the oral nature of the myth.¹⁰ The Homeric tale of Meleager sometimes displays concise and elliptical narrative that clearly assumes knowledge of tradition. It also seems to modify aspects of the Meleager myth, which characters listening to Phoenix and audiences listening to the *Iliad* would neither condemn nor disregard. I will assume that both tradition and its modulation are essential to the meaning of the Homeric narrative of Meleager.

Essential Elements of the Meleager Tale

Instead of thinking of Homeric manipulation of the story of Meleager as “invention,” as is commonly done,¹¹ we should consider it variation within tradition. This can be demonstrated by exploration of the myth's basic elements and their manifestations in multiforms of the traditional story.¹² For hermeneutic purposes, I use the narratological term *fabula*. Though this term most properly refers to the chronological reconstruction of events by narratees of a particular narrative, in my usage it refers to a sequence of essential actions that would commonly

⁷For a few minor literary versions that follow the Homeric version, and mythographical accounts that include it as an alternative, one can hunt through Grossardt (2001:43-232). Some consider a variant in which Apollo kills Meleager to be influenced by the *Iliad*, as noted below in the essay.

⁸See Maehler (2004:108-09, 121) and Cairns (2010:240).

⁹de Jong (2014) provides a useful explication of narratology for ancient literature.

¹⁰See de Jong (2014:98).

¹¹Willcock (1964) is seminal for this line of thought.

¹²For my use of multiform, see Lord (1960:100) and Nagy (1979:42-43).

be found, or understood, in oral tradition about Meleager.¹³ This *fabula* is a notional construct based on the surviving evidence, but it does not constitute evidence or hypothetical evidence. It is not a pre-Homeric ur-text, or a monolithic oral tradition, but rather a variable narrative pattern. Manifestations of the Meleager *fabula* would vary in detail and scope, and motifs in different versions would often be mutually incompatible, or trigger alternative consequences. The *fabula*'s variability can sometimes be attributed to changing temporal-spatial trends in ancient culture. Genre and media are also important factors in the shaping of a multiform. But since motifs may be vestigial or emergent, their presence in multiforms does not necessarily date them. While I do not discount the importance of local and historical contexts in the development of Meleager traditions, I am wary of employing them to establish a chronology of the myth's variability. It is enough to recognize that spatial and historical contexts would have allowed potential multiforms to arise.

What, then, are the essential elements of the *fabula* of Meleager? I find it possible to reduce them to a few: [A] Meleager leads a hunt against a boar ravaging his homeland Kalydon; [B] Meleager kills a brother (or two) of his mother Althaia in a dispute after the boar is slain; [C] Althaia in anger causes the death of Meleager. The three elements provide three basic actions, which are a series of deaths (boar, uncle[s], Meleager). A sequential causality is apparent—the boar's behavior motivates the hunt, which provides opportunity for Meleager to kill close relatives of his mother, which induces Althaia to take vengeance on Meleager.

My analysis of the essential elements of the myth obviously provides no insight into the aesthetics or ideology of any given multiform. It also has no implications about the prehistoric origins of the *fabula*, or its chronological development. One might guess that the myth of Meleager originated as an epichoric Kalydonian narrative. The story is fundamentally a family affair: his father Oineus is sometimes said to offend Artemis, who then sends the boar, and his mother Althaia is the cause of Meleager's death, in response to Meleager's slaying of his uncles. But for all we know this family drama developed from Aitolian or pan-Hellenic stories. The hunt of the boar requires a number of hunters, who potentially are gathered from Kalydon, from the region of Aitolia, or more widely from the Greek world. In its most expanded form, the Kalydonian boar hunt is a pan-Hellenic heroic enterprise, comparable to the group efforts of heroes in the Theban wars, the Trojan War, or the expedition of the Argo (the last shares many characters with expanded versions of the hunt).¹⁴ Also varying in scope is the nature of the quarrel arising from the hunt. In essence, this involves Meleager and his uncles. But in versions

¹³ See de Jong (2014:38-39, 47). See Edmunds (2016:3, 37-38) on hypothetical tale types in oral folktale as *langue* as opposed specific articulations as *parole* in Saussurian terms. I (2009:27-42) employ "*fabula*" to refer to the sequence of motifs in myth about Achilles.

¹⁴ For (contradictory) lists of the hunters, see Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 1.8.2, Ovid *Metamorphoses* 8.299-317, Hyginus 173, and Pausanias 8.445.6-7. Meleager is listed as an Argonaut at Apollonius *Argonautica* 1.191, Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 1.9.16. Stesichorus grouped the hunters into ethnic categories, including Locrians, Achaians, Boeotians, Dryopes, and Aeotilians (fr. 183 Davies and Winglass).

in which the uncles reside in Pleuron, another Aitolian town, violence can lead to war between Kalydon and Pleuron, and so the narrative becomes a regional one.¹⁵

Most multiforms will of course contain aspects that are functionally superfluous. The anger of Artemis is not essential, for example, however interesting in content. Members of the hunt are unimportant for narrative causality, except for the uncles who quarrel with Meleager afterwards. Some multiforms that we encounter, such as the pan-Hellenic version of the hunt, or the erotic intrigue featuring Atalanta that is its offshoot, have no structural value in the *fabula*. The regional Kalydon-Pleuron war that can follow the hunt is unnecessary as well. Such details may be portrayed as narratologically important—resentment of Atalanta sometimes spurs the quarrel between Meleager and his uncles, for example, and the regional war can provide a setting for Meleager to slay his uncles—but they are not essential for the causality of the *fabula*.

My *fabula* addresses the essential aspects of the surviving evidence, but multiforms readily expanded and contracted the *fabula*. The large-scale pan-Hellenic multiform was popular by the sixth century BCE, but focus continued to revert to epichoric content, or to Meleager as an icon of untimely death or tragic love. Roman art, for example, regularly represented Memnon alone, or as a corpse, or with Atalanta.¹⁶ Multiforms did not need to narrate the potential extent of the *fabula*, and some do not even contain an essential element. Still, I maintain that the traditional *fabula* in its totality is tacitly assumed in all its multiforms.

Three Multiforms

Let us consider how the surviving evidence makes use of the three essential elements.¹⁷ For now I will leave the Homeric version of the tale of Meleager to one side. Of other surviving texts that tell the story, the versions by Bacchylides and Ovid are most complete; in early iconography, the François Vase presents a magnificent and informative representation of the boar hunt. In *Ode 5*, Bacchylides portrays Heracles encountering the shade of Meleager in the underworld. Meleager proceeds to tell his story: his father Oineus was unable to appease Artemis, who was angry with him; she sends a destructive boar, which is killed after a long and difficult hunt by “the best of the Achaeans.”¹⁸ Meleager then states that Artemis caused more

¹⁵ In myth and literature the two towns seem closely associated, sometimes confusingly so. At *Iliad* 14.115-17, Diomedes reports that brothers of Oineus lived “in Pleuron and Kalydon.” Our sources often indicate that Althaia lived in Kalydon, presumably after marriage, and her brothers in Pleuron. Oineus, the father of Meleager, is surprisingly said to rule Pleuron, not Kalydon, at Sophocles *Trachiniae* 7. Note that Pleuron is referenced by the title of the lost play by Phrynichus, *Pleuronian Women* (Pausanias 10.31.4). It remains unclear why the Homeric tale of Meleager deems the Kalydonians Aitolians but (apparently) the Pleuronians Kouretes. For speculation about the role of Pleuron and the Kouretes in the development of the Meleager myth, see Kakridis (1949:35 n.45), March (1987:36-37), and Grossardt (2001:13-15).

¹⁶ For iconography of Meleager, see Woodford and Krauskopf (1992).

¹⁷ See Gantz (1993:328-35) for a survey of the evidence, and Grossardt (2001) for extensive discussion. For mythographical summaries, which typically conflate literary versions. See Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 1.8.2-3, Diodorus Siculus 4.34.2-7, Hyginus 171-74, and Antoninus *Liberalis* 2.

¹⁸ For discussion, see Grossardt (2001:67-72).

trouble: Kalydonians and the Kouretes fought over possession of the hide, and Meleager unintentionally killed two of his uncles in battle. His mother Althaia, described as “fiery-minded” (137) and “fearless” (139),¹⁹ as well as “ill-fated” (138), then burned a firebrand that represented his life span; Meleager immediately dies on the battlefield.

Here we have the three basic elements: the hunt of the boar (Element A), Meleager’s killing of his uncles (Element B), and Althaia causing her son’s death (Element C). Though concise, Meleager’s tale in Bacchylides offers further causalities and details. Artemis’ anger against Oineus (for unspecified reasons) leads her not only to inflict the boar on the Kalydonians but also to instigate a quarrel over the hide of the boar. The hunt would seem to be more than a local affair (the “best of the Achaeans” join it), and the dispute over the hide (apparently for the honor of its possession) somehow becomes a full-scale war between the Kalydonians and the Kouretes of Pleuron. It is on the battlefield that Meleager kills two of his uncles, though unintentionally, he insists. And the battlefield is where he dies when Althaia burns the firebrand that is magically linked to his life. It would seem that he only knows of her action after the fact, and he now angrily disparages her character.

Ovid, whose account in the *Metamorphoses* (8.270-546) is our longest and most dramatic of those surviving, provides more details and more characterization.²⁰ Diana (the Roman Artemis) becomes angry when Oineus slights her in his offerings, and she inflicts Kalydon with a ferocious boar. The hunt includes such illustrious figures as Castor and Pollux, Jason, Theseus, Nestor, Achilles’ father Peleus, and even Phoenix, the narrator of Meleager’s tale in the *Iliad*. Also joining the hunt is Atalanta, with a face “maidenly for a boy, or boyish for a girl” (8.322-23). Immediately Meleager desires her, and when Atalanta wounds the boar before Meleager finishes it off, Meleager awards Atalanta the hide and head of the beast. The uncles of Meleager take it from her, and Meleager in anger cuts them down with his sword. Althaia desires vengeance, and remembers how the three Fates had announced, upon her son’s birth, that his lifespan was equal to that of the burning brand. She retrieves the extinguished and hidden brand and, after much hesitation, throws it on the flames. Elsewhere Meleager is immediately seized with pain and soon dies. Althaia, feeling guilty, kills herself, and—this being the *Metamorphoses*—two of Meleager’s sisters metamorphose into birds.

Like Bacchylides, Ovid provides the pre-element of Artemis’ (Diana’s) anger, and also makes the hunt (Element A) a heroic expedition. The murder of the uncles (Element B), here intentionally committed by an angry Meleager, occurs in the immediate aftermath of the hunt, and so no battle erupts between Aitolian cities. Althaia is portrayed as torn between her loyalties to siblings and son before she causes Meleager’s death (Element C). There is much explanatory material, and occasion for speech-making is not wasted; Althaia expresses her indecision over her shocking deed at length, and Meleager’s fatal symptoms are slow-acting enough to allow for rhetorical speechification.

¹⁹ Artemis is also described as “fiery-minded” (122); on the epithet’s meaning, see Maehler (2004) *ad loc.*, and Cairns (2010:89, 122-23, 238). I follow the translation of Cairns that allows possible allusion to the firebrand, though the meaning can be more metaphorical.

²⁰ See Grossardt (2001:149-55) for discussion.

Extremely valuable as evidence for the hunt itself (Element A) is the François Vase from the early sixth century (Woodford and Krauskopf (1992, #7; Florence 4209). In multiple bands around the vase the painter Kleitias depicts a number of myths, with extensive inscriptions. One band displays the Kalydonian boar hunt—a relatively popular topic in sixth-century vase painting. The hunt on the François Vase is especially detailed, and even the dogs are named. The line of hunters surrounding the boar nicely fills out the band. To the left of the boar we find paired hunters: Meleager (or Meleagros, the ancient Greek form of his name) with Peleus, then Atalanta with Meilanion, along with several figures whose names mean nothing to us. To the right are Polydeukes and Kastor, followed by several other hunters of no heroic repute, excepting Akastus. The corpse is labeled Antaios, apparently equivalent to the Ankaios who elsewhere is said to be killed by the boar.²¹ The unknown hunters may be local Kalydonians, or perhaps the painter is inventing names to fill out the space. The presence of several famous heroes clearly marks this hunt as a pan-Hellenic venture, and exotic dress and/or names extend its geographical reach further (Barringer 2013:157-59).

Does the presence of Atalanta suggest the love story of Meleager and Atalanta, as in Ovid? Since the Meilanion with whom she is paired is known elsewhere as her lover, that may be doubted.²² Most scholars argue that an erotic relationship between Meleager and Atalanta originated in a lost tragedy by Euripides,²³ and iconography first links Atalanta with Meleager in the fourth century BCE.²⁴ Some images focus on the moment when Meleager bestows Atalanta with the head or hide, and this scene is relatively frequent in later art and in post-antiquity. But whatever the origins and popularity of the Atalanta/Meleager narrative, it can be understood as an example of variance in the *fabula*. The presence of Atalanta among the hunters represents one detail of the pan-Hellenic multiform of the hunt, itself non-essential for the killing of the boar (Element A). The multiform in which Meleager is attracted to Atalanta can provide motivation for the hero's murder of his uncles (Element B), though Atalanta is not needed for a dispute to arise over the spoils.²⁵ In some versions, as in the later vase paintings, the romantic intrigue between Meleager and Atalanta becomes the dominant aspect of the story, and for all we know Atalanta could have had a role in the Meleager myth previous to or contemporaneous with our

²¹ Besides other vases, Bacchylides *Ode* 5.117; Ovid *Metamorphoses* 8.401; Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 1.8.1; Pausanias 8.4.10, 45.2. See Gantz (1993:332-33).

²² For the iconography and myth of Atalanta and Meilanion, see Barringer (1996:54, 62-65, 71-73, 75) and Boardman and Arrigoni (1992).

²³ Fr. 515-39 *TrGF*; see Grossardt (2001:88-95, 270-75). Rubin and Sale (1983:154-57, 163 and 1984:214-18), in response to Most (1983:203-11), argue for a pre-Homeric Meleager-Atalanta relationship (also considered possible at Edmunds 1997:429). Potential early evidence of the Meleager-Atalanta story: a sixth-century vase that depicts Atalanta next to either Meleager or Meilanion (Boardman and Arrigoni 1984, #1; Athens Agora P334; only the first two letters survive), another sixth-century vase that shows Peleus wrestling Atalanta at the funeral of Pelias with a boar's head between and a hide behind (Boardman and Arrigoni 1984, #74; Munich 596), and the display of tusks and hide of the boar in the temple at Tegea (Pausanias 8.45.1, 46.2), in Arcadia, often but not exclusively the homeland of Atalanta (also Boeotia—see Gantz [1993:335-38]).

²⁴ See Boardman and Arrigoni (1984) and Woodford and Krauskopf (1992).

²⁵ Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 1.8.2-3, after rehearsing a version featuring Atalanta and the firebrand, gives a second and largely Homeric version in which a dispute over spoils not involving Atalanta leads to war.

first surviving evidence. In my analysis, however, variable choice of emphasis in multiforms does not challenge the prevalence of a relatively stable Meleager *fabula* in Greco-Roman antiquity.

Death of Meleager

The essential element of the death of Meleager (Element C) has excited much attention, especially because it is subject to variability. In our main sources, excepting Homer, Althaia effects her son's death by burning a firebrand that functions as his life-token. As mentioned above, folklorists associate this version of the hero's death with a folktale type. The key motif in the tale type is that of the external soul situated in a material object.²⁶ The general concept, in which objects such as candles, trees, animals, or birds can serve as an external soul, is worldwide. In narratives the motif has both positive and negative aspects. If the life-token is secreted safely away, then the person whose soul it represents is safe from all harm. But whoever obtains the life-token is able to kill the person by destroying the life-token. In the story of Meleager, Althaia is at first her son's protector, but then uses her power over his life destructively.²⁷ By causing the death of her son in anger over the murder of her brothers, Althaia values her family of birth over her family of marriage, a motif found elsewhere in Greek literature.²⁸

As I discuss below, the Homeric version distinctly has Althaia pray to Hades and Persephone for her son's death. By stating that the Furies heard the curses (9.569-72), Phoenix implies that the hero died as a result. Also apparently different from the life-token variant is the multiform in which Meleager is slain by Apollo on the battlefield. This occurs in early epic; Pausanias (10.31.4) provides testimony that this is how Meleager dies in the epic *Minyas* and in the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women*.²⁹ The motif of Apollo killing a warrior is certainly an epic one; in the *Iliad* Apollo helps the Trojans slay Patroclus (16.788ff.), and in the Cyclic *Aethiopis* Apollo helps Paris kill Achilles.³⁰ Epic versions of the myth that included the Aitolian war might well favor this version of the myth.

²⁶ Thompson (1955-1958), E761 ("Life-token"), E765 ("Life dependent on external object or event"). E765.1.2 ("Life bound up with burning brand [torch]") includes the Meleager myth. See also Frazer (1922, ch. 66, "The External Soul in Folk-tales").

²⁷ The protective possibilities of a hidden life token is perhaps indicated by the description of Meleager as *atrotos* in Apollodorus (1.8.2), which means "unwounded" or "invulnerable." Burgess (1995:219 n.6) mentions this passage in a discussion on the motif of invulnerability in Greek hero myth. Hesiodic *Catalogue* fr. 280.1-2 M-W may also suggest Meleager's invulnerability.

²⁸ For favor of birth family over matrimonial family, see Sophocles *Antigone* 905-06, and Herodotus *Histories* 3.119.

²⁹ Pausanias is the source for Hesiodic *Catalogue* fr. 25.12-13 M-W and *Minyas* fr. 5 Bernabé; see also Hesiodic *Catalogue* fr. 280.1-2.

³⁰ See Burgess (2009:38-39, 79-81). Apollo's role in the death is foreshadowed at *Iliad* 19.416-17, 21.275-78, 22.359-60.

Scholars have been most concerned with fitting the seeming variant of Apollo killing Meleager into a literary history of Meleager myth. Some argue that Apollo's slaying of Meleager was in pre-Homeric epic, others that it is an offshoot of the Homeric version, which stresses Meleager's role as a warrior.³¹ My achronic approach is more concerned with how the Apollo slaying fits into my narratological analysis. Apollo as slayer might seem to exclude Althaia as the cause of Meleager's death, and so would be incompatible with essential Element C of the *fabula*. In that case the Apollo variant is an outlier that falls outside the myth's usual structure as I have analyzed it. This may well be possible, and it does not invalidate the hermeneutic usefulness of my notional *fabula*. But it may be that this variant can include the agency of Althaia, as well as of Apollo. Though scholars such as Howald (1924:408) and Kraus (1948:11) have been hesitant to connect the curse of Althaia with the death of Meleager by Apollo, it is plausible that Apollo, the brother of Kalydonians' enemy Artemis, would serve as the instrument of the Furies (who are known to harass offenders but not kill them).³² If so, Althaia starts the process with her prayers to Hades and Persephone.

The location where the hero dies is also variable. As with other aspects of the story, much is consequential to the scale of the story. When the quarrel immediately arises over the head and hide, Meleager dies wherever he happens to be when Althaia hears about the murder of her brothers. When the conflict of the hunt extends to the battlefield, the death of the hero occurs there. In the Homeric version Meleager perhaps dies upon his return to the battlefield.

The Homeric Meleager

We are now ready to turn to the Homeric tale of Meleager. In Book 9 of the *Iliad* the Greeks are demoralized. Achilles in anger at Agamemnon for seizing his concubine Briseis has refused to fight, and the Trojans have gained the upper hand. So the Greeks decide to send an embassy consisting of Odysseus, Phoenix, and Ajax to supplicate Achilles. Odysseus offers lavish gifts promised by Agamemnon, but Achilles still refuses to return to battle. Then it is Phoenix's turn to give it a shot. He first emphasizes his personal relationship with Achilles by telling the story of his self-exile and arrival at the home of Peleus, Achilles' father. He then tells an allegory about listening to supplication that features "Delusion" being followed by "Prayers" (*Litai*), which in turn can inspire further "Delusion" on those who do not listen to the

³¹ Pre-Homeric: Howald (1925:408), Bethe (1925:6-7), Kraus (1948:11), March (1987:40-41), Bremmer (1988:43, 48-49), and Edmunds (1997:431-32). Post-Homeric: Sachs (1933:18), Kakridis (1949:13-14), and Grossardt (2001:45-46 and 2002:429).

³² Willcock (1964:152), Cairns (2010:84 n.18), and Voskos (1997:57-58) consider this possible. Gantz (1993:857 n.33), and Grossardt (2001:4, 15-16, 43-46) reject the agency of Apollo for the Furies. See *Il.* 9.453-57, where Phoenix's father prays to the Furies, and Hades and Persephone enact the curse. Pausanias 10.31.3 may distinguish death through the Furies and death by Apollo, but this simply follows the absence of the death in Phoenix's tale. Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 1.8.3, apparently paraphrasing the Homeric account as an alternative to the firebrand death, reports that Meleager dies on the battlefield (no slayer mentioned) after the curses of Althaia.

Prayers. Finally Phoenix turns to myth of the past to illustrate his argument, the story of Meleager (9.524-605).³³

Phoenix's version contains all three of the essential elements, sometimes elliptically. Achilles is told that the boar is sent by Artemis, angered at Oineus, Meleager's father (as in Bacchylides and Ovid). Phoenix passes over the actual death of the boar, but this first essential element (Element A) is assumed when he mentions its head and hide, over which Artemis inspires a quarrel (9.547-48, as in Bacchylides). Consequential to the dispute is war between the Kouretes and the Aitolians, during which a brother of Althaia is killed, as eventually noted by Patroclus to explain Althaia's curses (9.566-67).³⁴ With the death of Meleager's uncle we have Element B, for it is apparent from Althaia's curses that Meleager is the murderer. As noted above, the fact that the Furies hear Althaia's curses to Hades and Persephone implies that Meleager is sure to die. The third essential element (Element C) is thus included, if indirectly, in the Homeric version of the traditional story.

Phoenix knows and expects knowledge of the three essential motifs of the *fabula*, which apparently explains the allusive nature of his reference to them. A prologue to Element A (death of the boar) is provided, but details of the hunt are not. Element B, the killing of the uncle, is vaguely mentioned, and the connection between the quarrel over spoils and battle between Kalydon and Pleuron is not made explicit. The death of Althaia's brother motivates Althaia to bring about Element C, the death of Meleager, but Phoenix is rather more concerned with the battle between the Kouretes and Kalydon that leads to Meleager's withdrawal. Phoenix actually begins with this war (9.529ff.), as if this is fundamental to the story, and then quickly returns to the battle upon mention of the dispute over the spoils, practically fusing the dispute at the hunt with war between Kalydon and Pleuron. Meleager's withdrawal then becomes central to Phoenix's story; it is his anger over Althaia's curses, not Althaia's anger at the death of her brother, that is important in this telling.

The stories of Meleager and Achilles are independent, and the traditional myth of Meleager has little resemblance to that of Achilles. But Phoenix interjects into the *fabula* of Meleager the motif of heroic withdrawal in anger. Withdrawal is part of a larger typological pattern of withdrawal, devastation, and return. Albert Lord (1960:186-97) famously argued that this pattern underlies both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, and his wife Mary Lord (1967:243, with reference to Meleager) explored its function in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*.³⁵ John Miles Foley (1983) explored variations of this pattern in return tales of South Slavic oral poetry.³⁶

In the *Iliad* Achilles withdraws from battle, devastation results for the Greeks, and then he returns. At first it is a modified form of return, since Achilles allows Patroclus to borrow his armor and play his double in Books 16-17. It is the death of Patroclus that inspires Achilles to

³³ Meleager, whose death was already mentioned in the Catalog of Ships in *Iliad* 2 (639-42), belongs to the generation previous to that of the Greeks at Troy.

³⁴ That Meleager was Kalydon's primary champion in the battle for some time before he withdrew in anger at his mother (550-56) implies that the death of the uncle occurred on the battlefield.

³⁵ A. Lord Heroic withdrawal by itself is a typological motif; glimpses of it are seen in the *Iliad* at 6.21-368 (Paris) and 13.455-69 (Aeneas); see Grossardt (2001:24-36).

³⁶ See also Davies (2005) for the analogy of Coriolanus to Achilles.

return to battle in Book 20. By inserting the typological pattern of withdrawal/devastation/return into the Meleager tale, Phoenix can proceed to make an explicit analogy between the two heroes. As will become apparent, some of the details seem designed to assimilate the correlation more precisely. It will be necessary, however, to wonder whether apparent correspondences are actually significant. Much of the material is generic: divine wrath, heroic squabbles, intra-family violence, curses, and supplication. Typology not only allows analogies to be made explicitly, as Phoenix does with Meleager and Achilles, but it also makes discernment of implicit correlation difficult. Once the correlation is made, we must consider whether it is Phoenix who intends the correlation, or Homer.

Central to Phoenix's telling is the withdrawal of Meleager from battle in anger at his mother's curses. A series of delegates—first priests, sent by elders to offer gifts, then his father Oineus, then his mother and sisters, and then his friends—beg him to return to the battlefield, where the enemy in his absence is threatening Kalydon (9.574-86). He ignores all entreaties until his wife Kleopatra rouses him by listing the dreadful consequences of a city's sack (9.588-95). Meleager then joins the battle and saves the day. It looks like Phoenix has manipulated the traditional tale so that it better correlates to the current situation, the embassy's attempt to persuade Achilles to return to battle. A key part of the modulation is Althaia's curse, for an immediate death following the burning of the firebrand would allow no time for supplication of a sulky, withdrawn warrior. But arguments that stress the inventiveness of Phoenix's version of the tale of Meleager are exaggerated.³⁷ All three essential elements are part of Phoenix's tale; indeed, their importance is underscored by the narrator's very concision about them, as if there were so traditional that he could assume listeners' knowledge of the boar's death (Element A), Meleager's killing of brother(s) of Althaia (Element B), and Althaia's vengeful involvement in her son's eventual death (Element C).

By emphasizing Meleager's role as a warrior, instead of the hunt and the hero's subsequent death, Phoenix modifies a traditional tale in order to suit his immediate rhetorical needs. Homeric characters often employ mythological paradigms, whereby a traditional tale is modified so as to create a greater analogy with current circumstances.³⁸ Though Phoenix seems to begin by citing Meleager as a positive model of heroic flexibility ("Heroes received gifts and were receptive to words," 9.526), he ends by portraying Meleager as a negative model of unprofitable stubbornness. So much becomes explicit at the end of the speech, when Phoenix urges Achilles to return to battle while gifts are still offered. For Phoenix, the ultimate point to stress is that Meleager returned too late to receive the offered gifts ("So go for the gifts," 9.602-03).

To further explore the implications of Phoenix's speech, we will need to employ a narratological method. Homeric scholarship has usually been vague about whether Homer or Phoenix is responsible for the poetics of the Meleager tale in Book 9. In narratological terms,

³⁷ See Edmunds (1997:429-32).

³⁸ See Willcock (1964:147-53, with discussion of Phoenix's story at 147-153), Öhler (1925 [5-30, on Homer; 12-16, on Meleager]), and Greithlin (2006:334-40). On Homeric digressions in general, see Austin (1966), Gaisser (1969), and Alden (2000). Burgess (2001:48-49) cautions that scholarship on *ad hoc* invention sometimes obscures the traditionality of Homeric poetry.

there is a main or primary narrator (Homer, by convention) responsible for all of the *Iliad*, to be distinguished from Phoenix as a secondary or character narrator (de Jong 2014:9, 19-21). This distinction is essential for analysis of the significance of the Homeric Meleager story. Phoenix tells the story to the audience internal to the poem, Achilles. But the main narrator controls how Phoenix tells his tale so as to speak to audiences external to the poem.³⁹ The meaning Phoenix intends for Achilles may differ from the meaning the main narrator may provide for his audience. As Gregory Nagy (1979:102-11) claims, Phoenix delivers a “message” to Achilles, but the poet delivers a “code” to his audience.⁴⁰ And there is another participant in the narratology of the Homeric tale of Meleager. That is the oral traditional myth about Meleager, whose resonance is essential for establishing how any multiform is received, internally and externally.⁴¹ The main narrator and Phoenix as internal narrator would be aware of a longstanding if flexible narrative about Meleager, described here as a *fabula* with three essential motifs. So would the internal audience, Achilles, and the external audience of the *Iliad*.

Messages and Codes

What, then, are the message and the code in Phoenix’s tale of Meleager, and where to draw the line between them? Below I list in narrative chronology the correspondences commonly made between the Homeric story of Meleager and the Homeric depiction of Achilles and the Trojan War:

HOMERIC TALE OF MELEAGER	<i>ILLIAD</i>
war between the Kouretes and the Aitolians	war between Trojans and Greeks
Meleager as best warrior	Achilles as best warrior
Meleager’s anger, withdrawal	Achilles’ anger, withdrawal
supplication of Meleager, with gifts	supplication of Achilles, with gifts
rejection of supplication by Meleager	rejection of supplication by Achilles
walls of Kalydon on fire	ships of Greeks on fire
Meleager persuaded by Kleopatra	Achilles persuaded by Patroclus
Meleager returns to battle	Patroclus returns to battle, as Achilles

³⁹ I use “internal” and “external” in reference to the narrative boundaries of the *Iliad*; de Jong (2014:19) uses these terms differently, with a meaning similar to “homodiegetic” and “heterodiegetic” as employed by Genette (1980:243-59). See de Jong (2014:80) on “external” and “internal” (to the narrative boundary) prolepsis.

⁴⁰ “Argument” and “key” are terms sometimes employed for “message” and “code.” Similar distinctions between internal and external meanings are made at Andersen (1987), Brenk (1986), Nünlist (2009:261-63), and Gwara (2007). Relevant are studies that speculate about the thinking of the characters in the embassy scene, for example, Whitman (1958:191-94), Tarkow (1982), Scodel (1982 and 1989), and Jensen (2005). The insights here are often valuable, but I find the methodology problematic.

⁴¹ Andersen (1998) and Scodel (2002) are rather too skeptical about the role of tradition for audience reception of Homeric poetry, though they add welcome nuance to the issue.

Let us start with correlation that might be plausibly attributable to Phoenix. Most obviously, he explicitly correlates Achilles to Meleager. Phoenix has heard Achilles reject Odysseus' recitation of Agamemnon's offer of gifts, and he begins and ends his tale of Meleager by comparing the two heroes in terms of angry withdrawal and initial rejection of supplication. Are further details in the tale that seemingly correspond to aspects of the *Iliad* part of the internal narrator's rhetorical strategy? It is certainly essential to Phoenix's comparison of the heroes that Meleager be portrayed as the foremost warrior of the Kalydonians, as Achilles is for the Greeks. Phoenix has heard Achilles claim that before his withdrawal Hector would not stay far from the gate of Troy (9.352-54); Phoenix now reports that the Kouretes were unable to remain "outside the wall" (9.551-52) when Meleager fought. Some find the detail puzzling (outside Pleuron? Kalydon?), and so conclude that Phoenix is awkwardly extending his analogy between Meleager and Achilles.

Let us use this hypothesis as a test case of the issues involved with establishing correlation. First, note that the correspondence is not exact: Phoenix states that Meleager's opponents are shut within a city wall, while Achilles claims that his nemesis Hector did not venture far beyond a city gate. One might suppose that the material at hand is too intractable for precise correlation, or that precise correlation is unnecessary for making the point, or that Phoenix is rather clumsy in the construction of his argument. If the correlation is to be accepted and attributed to Phoenix, I would prefer the last of these analyses. But there are reasons to hesitate before attributing any implicit correlation at all to Phoenix. We hardly stand on firm ground when speculating about the undisclosed thoughts of Phoenix, who is a constructed character, not a flesh-and-blood person.⁴² One might also wonder whether we should be expected to attribute such minute correlations to a character portrayed as making a spontaneous argument in response to preceding speeches. Other possible but minor correlations, accordingly, I will reserve for discussion of the purposes of the main narrator, who might well be credited with greater control over the potential significance of the tale.

The possible correlation between the deaths of Meleager and Achilles is certainly not a minor one. Phoenix does not know the future, but he has heard Achilles talk of his two-fold fate, with death assured if he stayed at Troy (9.410-16). It might seem curious, then, that Phoenix's speech seems to ignore this claim (Held 1987:250).⁴³ How could Achilles profit from the gifts if his fate is to die at Troy and not return home? The immediate bestowal of goods and slave women (9.264-67) can serve as material indication of how much the army honors him—something that Phoenix stresses (9.603; as it happens, Achilles does receive the gifts, without enthusiasm, and after a delayed return, in Book 19). But marriage to one of Agamemnon's daughters and rule over multiple cities (9.283-99), not to mention further goods from the sack of Troy (9.277-82), are precluded by the terms of Achilles' destiny. Prophecies can be doubted, of course, and Phoenix cannot be said to have had much time to digest Achilles' claims about his fate. But it is just as illogical for him to state that Meleager blundered by returning too late to

⁴² The theory that Phoenix is a Homeric invention, not a traditional figure, further complicates matters. I (2009:85-86) doubt the hypothesis. See Mühlestein (1987:89-93) and Voskos (1997).

⁴³ Nestor and Patroclus (*Il.* 11.794-95, 16.36-37) later surmise that Thetis' prophecies might explain Achilles' withdrawal.

receive gifts. The value of gifts would be little for one cursed to die, and Phoenix himself intimates that Meleager will die (Kakridis (1949:13). In other words, Phoenix's pro-gifts argumentation fails to address the deaths of both Achilles and Meleager.

One could defend Phoenix, of course: tricky material, tough crowd. But on the basis of the text, and resisting psychological speculation, I would conclude that Phoenix's employment of the tale of Meleager is poorly executed.⁴⁴ His spontaneous remarks strain to make the myth of Meleager correspond to the situation of Achilles, especially if we attribute to him such small yet imprecise correlations as staying inside walls/near gate. The paradigm seems to begin by offering Meleager as a positive example (heroes receive gifts and change their mind; 9.526), but abruptly concludes with Meleager as a negative example (he waited too long and lost the gifts; 9.598-605). The resulting emphasis on the gifts is misplaced, especially when Phoenix acknowledges yet does not include the death of Meleager. Phoenix did not do much better in earlier parts of his speech. The sequence of thought in his allegory of Prayers is obscure, and his "autobiography" of self-exile, though explanatory of his eventual relationship with Achilles, is hardly apposite when addressed to someone who is threatening to leave the Greeks and return home.⁴⁵

But I do not mean to disparage Phoenix, for obscurity and twisted logic are typical of character speech in Homer, especially in mythological paradigms. The embassy scene in particular is a glorious display of intense and extemporaneous conversation. Odysseus' speech to Achilles (9.225-306) is a model of oratorical skill, but the argument noticeably veers from tactic to tactic, initially referencing the advice of his father Peleus, then listing Agamemnon's gifts at length, then asking for pity for the Greek troops, before provocatively referencing a boasting Hector. Achilles in his reply to Odysseus displays convoluted syntax, abstract philosophizing, and a passionate but incoherently expressed intransigence.⁴⁶ Notoriously, later in the epic Achilles even seems to speak as if he had never been approached by the embassy, prompting Analysts to conclude that various authors were responsible for different and inharmonious parts of the poem.⁴⁷ In my view, such inconsistencies are simply part of the Homeric depiction of the human. We are not presented with real humans with secret thoughts for us to explore, but rather with the uncanny Homeric representation of how people express their thoughts in words.

It is Achilles' reaction to Phoenix's tale of Meleager that should next concern us. As the internal audience to Phoenix's character speech, Achilles at first succinctly denies that he requires any honor from Agamemnon's gifts (9.607-10), then neatly flips appeals to friendship by demanding that Phoenix hate his enemy, Agamemnon (9.613-15). Then he invites Phoenix to

⁴⁴ See Brenk (1986:77-78).

⁴⁵ For other sections of Phoenix's speech besides the Meleager tale, see in particular Lohmann (1970:245-53), Rosner (1976), Bannert (1981), Scodel (1982), and Alden (2000:219-26). Various intricate correspondences have been suggested; I do not agree that these parts correlate to the tale of Meleager in more than a general manner.

⁴⁶ See Tarkow (1982).

⁴⁷ See 11.609-10, 16.72-73, 83-86. For an Analyst approach to the issue, see Page (1959:297-315), and for a Unitarian perspective, Tsagarakis (1971), Scodel (1989), and Alden (2000:182-84) (as part of extensive analysis of supplication).

stay with him, stating that they will consider whether to leave or remain in the morning (9.617-19). This is very different from his previous affirmation that he would sail off in his ships in the morning (9.356-63), and later in response to Ajax, Achilles will change his position once again, asking the embassy to report that he will fight when the ships of the Myrmidons are set on fire by Hector (9.649-55).

Some suppose that the detail in Phoenix's story of Meleager returning to battle when Kalydon is aflame (9.589) gives Achilles the idea of changing his mind when the Greek ships are aflame.⁴⁸ The correspondence between the firing of Kalydon in Phoenix's tale of Meleager and the firing of Greek ships by Trojans is imprecise, however. Meleager is not motivated to return by the firing of Kalydon; rather his wife's rehearsal of the consequences of the sack of a city changes his mind. Achilles in Book 9 in fact does not express concern over the potential firing of the Greek fleet. To Odysseus he states that Agamemnon will have to figure out how to ward off fire from the ships without him (9.346-47). To Ajax, he states that only an attack by Hector on the ships of his *Myrmidons* will impel him to action (9.650-53).

In Book 16 it is the battle success of the Trojans in general that inspires Patroclus, following the advice of Nestor, to approach Achilles. Achilles surmises that Patroclus is worried because the Greeks "are dying by the hollow ships" (16.17-19), but in his reply Patroclus does not specify this concern, though he expresses a desire to drive the Trojans "away from the ships and tents" (16.45). When Achilles allows Patroclus to go out in his stead, he recalls his previous promise to return "when the battle cry and war reaches my ships" (16.61-63; see 9.650-55). But the firing of the first Greek ship—not those of the Myrmidons—only happens subsequently to this conversation (16.122-24). When Achilles sees the flare, he does encourage Patroclus to arm swiftly (16.124-29). One might suppose that this reaction (finally) reveals some sense of obligation to his fellow Greeks, or at least recognition that danger to the Greeks cannot be easily separated from danger to the Myrmidons. But Achilles initially expresses concern only for his own ships and never clearly for the Greeks in general. The Greek ships are not set aflame before Achilles changes his mind, and even then he does not agree to return to battle, as Meleager does. On the whole, therefore, any suggestion that Achilles responds to Phoenix by correlating the firing of Kalydon to the firing of Greek ships, and then improvising new terms of his return on this basis, seems unpersuasive.

Codes

One major difference between the main narrator and a character narrator is knowledge of how the story proceeds. Phoenix does not know the future, but the main narrator knows that Achilles will reject the embassy and then lend his armor to Patroclus in Book 16. In Book 20 Achilles finally returns to battle, to avenge Patroclus, whose exploits while wearing Achilles' armor ended with his death in Book 17. The main poet also has control over what is included in character speech. Possible correlations of a minor nature that I was hesitant to attribute to

⁴⁸ See Whitman (1958:190-91), Scodel (1989:93, 96-97), and Rabel (1997:116, 133). See Rabel (1997) more generally for narratological exploration of how Achilles might model his behavior on the narratives of others.

Phoenix might more plausibly be credited to the main narrator. Especially intriguing is the potential correspondence of Kleopatra and Patroclus. Besides the inversion of the roots in their personal names, which reference “father” (*pater*) and “fame” (*kleos*), each is responsible for changing the mind of the withdrawn hero who is close to them.⁴⁹ If this is a significant correlation, it surely is not a message between characters, since it is hard to imagine Phoenix employing the name Kleopatra in the hope that her anagrammic double Patroclus might later influence Achilles. But there is much potential here for a code between main narrator and external audience. The suggestive correspondence in name between Kleopatra and Patroclus might trigger later recognition of their correspondence in deed as the plot unfolds.

Though the correlation of Kleopatra and Patroclus seems attractive, there is reason for caution. Some are underwhelmed by the resemblance of their names. Greek proper names employ a limited number of roots (though *pater* [“father”] as an element is uncommon), so coincidence of names need not be significant.⁵⁰ It may be that the Kleopatra/Patroclus inversion is more striking to us than it was to ancient listeners. That a tangent in Phoenix’s tale indicates a second name for Kleopatra, Alkyone (9.562), raises the question of which one of her names might be traditional and which invented. The doubling of names does not necessarily signal invention, since Homeric characters can have dual names (for example, Alexander/Paris) or a nickname (Astyanax/Skamandrios, 6.402-03). We also do not know if Kleopatra/Alkyone is a traditional character.⁵¹ Though the story of her parents is also found in Pausanias (5.18.12), the spouse of Meleager never has a functional role outside of Homer.⁵² Nonetheless, it is striking that Patroclus as the closest friend of Achilles succeeds in changing Achilles’ mind in Book 16, just as Kleopatra in Phoenix’s story changes her husband’s mind.⁵³ The correlation is imprecise, it is true; Achilles is persuaded only to lend his armor, not to return.⁵⁴ But I am inclined to accept the Kleopatra/Patroclus correspondence as part of the “code” between the main narrator and the external audience, a detail that potentially triggers further recognition of correspondence between the Homeric Meleager tale and the plot of the *Iliad*.

⁴⁹ This was already noticed at Eustathius *ad Iliad* 9.556. The Homeric invention of Kleopatra (or her name) to correlate to Patroclus is widely accepted, notably by Öhler (1925:16), Schadewaldt (1938:140), Heubeck (1984 [1943]:133), Lohmann (1970:260), Ebel (1972:89-90, 93, 95), Nagy (1979:105), Andersen (1987:4-5), Alden (2000:239-40, 248-50, 252), and Grossardt (2001:36-39). Differently, Patroclus invented on the model of Kleopatra: Howald (1924:411). Others are skeptical of the correspondence, notably Kraus (1948:17), Kakridis (1949:28-32), and Willcock (1964:150 n.4). Edmunds (1997:431-32) denies the invention of Kleopatra but argues for the significance of the parallelism.

⁵⁰ See Mühlestein (1987:86-89) and Kavanou (2015:59-62).

⁵¹ On the issue, see Edmunds (1997:430-32).

⁵² At 4.2.7 Pausanias reports a daughter of Meleager and Kleopatra in the *Cypria* (fr. 26 Bernabé); for discussion, see Grossardt (2001:47-50). I have argued (Burgess 2001) that the Cycle poems are independent of Homer; if so, this testimony is evidence for the early presence of Kleopatra in Greek myth. Kleopatra commits suicide after Meleager’s death at Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 1.8.3 and Hyginus 174.7.

⁵³ I assume that a homoerotic relationship is not at play in the *Iliad*, though it certainly became one part of myth about Achilles. See Fantuzzi (2012:187-266).

⁵⁴ Schadewaldt (1938:140) claims inexactitude (“Ungenauigkeit”) is characteristic of Homeric mirroring.

If the narrator knows how the plot unfolds, so does the external audience, since Zeus has prophesized at the end of the previous book (8.470-77) that Achilles would return to battle after the death of Patroclus. And an informed external audience can also be expected to know the traditional story of the Trojan War. Is the *Iliad's* version of one episode of the war—the wrath of Achilles—traditional? In my view it largely is, but with an enlarged role for Patroclus, who serves as a sort of doublet of Achilles in Books 16-17 (Burgess 2001:63, 71-84 and 2009:75-97).⁵⁵ The basic narrative of Achilles withdrawing, only to return after the death of Patroclus, is probably traditional, though I would not hazard a guess about whether this involved Patroclus persuading Achilles to lend him his armor. In any event, informed by Zeus' prediction, and perhaps by tradition, the external audience does not expect Phoenix to succeed in persuading Achilles to return. It might notice a Kleopatra/Patroclus correlation when she takes a decisive role in persuading Meleager to return, and then follow closely the advice given by Nestor to Patroclus in Book 11. For there Nestor urges Patroclus to urge Achilles to fight, with "plan B" a request to borrow his armor (11.792-93). Patroclus' subsequently speaks of asking Achilles to fight, without mentioning a "plan B" (15.402-04), but eventually he employs only "plan B," without asking Achilles to fight (16.38ff.). Perhaps the correlation between Kleopatra and Patroclus only gains significance to the external audience in hindsight, when Patroclus persuades Achilles in Book 16 to let him return in his place (Lohmann 1970:261).

The *Iliad* does not narrate the death of Achilles, but it certainly alludes to it explicitly and implicitly.⁵⁶ It would not be surprising for the main narrator to take the opportunity to foreshadow the death of Achilles through the Meleager tale. As noted above, the topic is a delicate one for Phoenix, since he is asking Achilles to return to battle moments after the hero had announced that he is fated to die at Troy if he stays. I have characterized Phoenix's allusion to Meleager's death as inept, but it well serves the code between the main narrator and his external audience. If Phoenix's message to Achilles is "go for the gifts" (9.602-03), the main narrator's code to the external audience is that Achilles will die—something it knows from tradition, and something that is thematically developed throughout the *Iliad*.⁵⁷

That is as far as I would go for message and code in Phoenix's tale of Meleager, though Homeric scholarship has explored its correlations and significance much further.⁵⁸ Some have

⁵⁵ My approach rejects the theory that Patroclus is a Homeric invention.

⁵⁶ See Burgess (2009:43-55).

⁵⁷ Seminal on Phoenix's tale as foreshadowing the death of Achilles: Welcker (1835:v-vi); Schadewaldt (1939:139-43). Ebel (1972:89-90, 93, 95) is a particularly elegant discussion. On implicit prolepsis, see de Jong (2014:85-86).

⁵⁸ Survey of correlations: Reichel (1994:111), Voskos (1997:26-29), and Grossardt (2001:21-24). For various hypotheses, see Lohmann (1970:245-65), Ebel (1972:87-99), Rosner (1976), Brenk (1986), Held (1987), Alden (2000:219-26), and Gwara (2007).

correlated suppliants to Meleager to the members of the embassy to Achilles,⁵⁹ or shared patterns between Phoenix's autobiographical recollections and his story of Meleager, which in turn reflect elements earlier and later in the *Iliad*. Though there exists thematic repetition between parts of Phoenix's speech, and between his speech and the *Iliad* in general, the search for specific correlations is usually unhelpful. Typology and coincidence are here too easily promoted to intentional correspondence.

If we look closely, we can certainly find repeated motifs (for example, the curse of Phoenix by his father~the curse of Meleager by his mother), but repetition is not necessarily significant. The situation of Book 1 naturally leads to the embassy of Book 9, but its perceived correlation to the speech of Phoenix (for example, Khryseis supplicating Agamemnon~suppliants of Meleager), divine anger (Apollo~Artemis), contested women (Khryseis~concubine shared by Phoenix and his father), and change of heart (Agamemnon relinquishes Khryseis~Meleager returns to battle) need not be more than coincidence of typology. One especially hesitates about the assumptions made about the composer of the *Iliad* and his audience in these arguments. It is hard to imagine the historical listening audience finding these correspondences meaningful, and the intricate patterning hypothesized, as well as the search for Homeric invention, seem to take for granted a literate author and a reading public.

Of course, Phoenix's tale of Meleager is certainly connected to the *Iliad*. The situation of Book 1 naturally leads to the embassy of Book 9, but its perceived correlations to the speech of Phoenix (for example Khryseis-concubine of Phoenix's father, Khryses supplicating Agamemnon—suppliants of Meleager, anger of Apollo—anger of Artemis, Agamemnon relinquishing Khryseis-Meleager returning to battle) need not be more than coincidence of typology. Phoenix employs the mythological paradigm in order to persuade Achilles to return to battle, and the content seems to foreshadow aspects of Achilles' return beyond what Phoenix intends. For Phoenix, the tale of Meleager is a (somewhat) usable narrative for his argument. He does the best that he can, even if his attempt is a flawed one that fails to convince Achilles. For the external audience, though, including we who study the *Iliad* today, the Homeric tale of Meleager has potential significance beyond its immediate context.

Conclusion

I have indicated the basic structure and causality of the traditional tale of Meleager, surveyed variation between recorded examples of the tale, and explored the narratological poetics of the version found in *Iliad* 9. Phoenix has an explicit message for Achilles, though it is not clear that he suggests further, implicit correlations between the two heroes. What is certain is

⁵⁹ Much of this work is inspired by Kakridis' arguments about Homeric use of an "ascending scale of affection" in supplication (1949:19-34, 49-53, 159-64). The highest place is reserved for a spouse, but parents also have their place. Kakridis argued that this explains Althaia's supplication of Meleager (9.584), which some find surprising after her curse of him. Kakridis further supposes that Phoenix/Homer (the distinction is not clear) has promoted the companions of Meleager as far up the scale as possible to bolster the authority of the embassy to Achilles. I find the scale insufficiently documented and inconsistently fixed or flexible. As well, though scholars tend to view the scale as oral typology, in practice Kakridis strongly identifies it with a hypothetical "Meleagris." For critique of Kakridis' scale, see Lohmann (1970:258-61), Petzhold (1976:156-61), and Swain (1988:273-74).

that Phoenix pursues a correlation between Meleager and Achilles as principal champions in war who withdraw from battle and resist supplication. It is plausible that Phoenix also unwittingly delivers a code from the main narrator to the external audience. But given the oral context of the original performances of the *Iliad*, and also the typological nature of much of the correlation, I urge caution. As often in my previous work, I aim to take a moderate position between an oralist approach that stresses typology and literary criticism that is alert to the undoubted sophistication of Homeric poetics.

Phoenix's tale of Meleager did not exist in a vacuum; it assumes and employs traditional myth about the hero. Since it is impossible to recreate a uniform traditional tale of Meleager, whether before or after Homer, I have isolated three basic elements in the story. Phoenix imposes the typological sequence of withdrawal/devastation/return onto the tale, but Phoenix still adheres to the three basic elements. Both the internal audience and the historical audience would recognize that Phoenix tells a traditional story, with manipulation and suppression of some aspects of it. Phoenix's adjustment of the Meleager myth to refer to the circumstances of the *Iliad* is normal for mythological paradigms in Homer. And the Homeric tale of Meleager essentially constitutes a multiform that is perfectly acceptable within the variation possible for a traditional narrative. What should matter for us is not how Phoenix's tale gives clues about either pre-Homeric epic or Homeric invention, but how this multiform functions within the context of the *Iliad*.

The "Meleagris" theory would have us think that the tale by Phoenix represents a summary of a pre-Homeric epic from which the *Iliad* lifted a plot to apply to Achilles. This hypothesis severely limits the broad oral traditions that inform Homeric poetry and grossly underestimates Homeric poetics. The great Greek scholar Johannes Kakridis may have subscribed to aspects of the "Meleagris" theory, but he argued for some Homeric variation from pre-Homeric epic, notably in the Homeric version's partial modification of an "ascending scale of affection." Over the last half-century, scholarship has increasingly focused more on how the Homeric tale of Meleager transforms the traditional story of Meleager to reflect the circumstances of the *Iliad*.⁶⁰ This sounds like progress, but reading through the bibliography can be dispiriting. The Unitarian impulse, with which I have much sympathy, has tried to rehabilitate Homeric poetics by over-perceiving intricate patterning. Homeric epic does often invite us to react to suggestive elements—explicit yet incomplete correspondences in similes and mythological paradigms, for example, or implicit correlations in metaphor and embedded narratives. But there are methodological problems with current approaches to Phoenix's tale of Meleager: a neglect of narratology, a tendency to celebrate invention over tradition, an impulse to perceive textualist types of composition and reception, and recourse to speculation into the psychology of Homeric characters.

In my previous work, I have employed the school of thought known as neoanalysis in a more oral and intertextual manner to argue for the *Iliad*'s implicit reflection of the cyclic story of

⁶⁰ Bethe (1925), Schadewaldt (1938:137-43), and Heubeck (1984 [1943]) were early models for exploring Homeric manipulation of the Meleager tale. Willcock (1964) has been seminal, and Alden (2000) is the most thorough.

Memnon and Achilles.⁶¹ In particular, I have proposed “intertextuality without text”(2011) that amounts to a “metacyclic” use of mythological narrative by oral Homeric poetry (2009:4).⁶² In a previous publication in *Oral Tradition*, I compared Homeric employment of cyclic myth to mythological paradigms. Both have an essentially comparative nature that I attributed to oral practice, whether in poetic composition or in real life.⁶³ There are, of course, differences between Homeric employment of the Memnon story and the Meleager story. The Memnon story is part of Trojan War myth, whereas the Meleager story is unconnected to it. The *Iliad*’s narrative seems modified so as to reflect the external Memnon story (*this* is like *that*), whereas the embedded Meleager tale seems modified so as to reflect the *Iliad* (*that* is like *this*). The Memnon story seems to be mirrored by the *Iliad*, whereas the embedded Meleager story mirrors the *Iliad*.⁶⁴ The *Iliad*’s use of the Memnon story is implicit, whereas Phoenix/Homer employ the Meleager story in explicit and implicit ways. Yet traditional myth is central to the mechanics of Homeric employment of both the Memnon and Meleager stories. Phoenix respects the traditional story of Meleager as he molds it to his immediate needs, and with greater sophistication the Homeric narrator employs the myth to clarify his epic. The tale of Meleager is just one example of how Homeric epic constructs itself by engaging with traditional Greek myth.

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⁶¹ See Burgess (2009:58-71), where I distinguish my method from a “classic” form of neoanalysis that considers cyclic aspects of Homeric poetry as vestigial, not allusive.

⁶² See Finkelberg (2015:126-38) and Foley and Arft (2015:91-95).

⁶³ Burgess (2006 and 2009:56-71). Kakridis (1949) implicitly includes the *Iliad*’s use of Meleager and Memnon (Chapters 1 and 3, respectively) under neoanalysis, a term he invented (2-10); see now Schein (2016:127-36) on the work of Kakridis. Mühlstein (1987:89-93) discusses both the “Meleagris” and “Memnonis” theories with Analyst methodology; Kullmann (1991) associates the neoanalyst “Memnonis” argument with research on other possible pre-Homeric influences, including the story of Meleager at 9.443.

⁶⁴ On the concept of mirroring or reflection in Homer, see Schadewaldt (1965:190-96), Lohmann (1970:256-57, 262), Andersen (1987:8-10), Alden (2000 *passim*), and de Jong (2014:36). In my work, I have argued that Homeric “mirroring” is allusive. On the various relations of an embedded to to its frame narrative, see Genette (1980: 231-34), Barth (1984), and de Jong (2014:34-36) (with reference to the Homeric Meleager tale).

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The Transformation of Cyavana: A Case Study in Narrative Evolution

Emily West

Ongoing Issues in Comparative Work

Few will argue with the proposition that stories are fluid and continuously evolving; nor are many likely to deny that a successful narrative can spread like wildfire across time and space. Yet in spite of these two well-documented truths, attempts at the identification of borrowings and parallels (though a venerable scholarly pursuit) can be tricky. Few other common scholarly undertakings generate the level of resistance that the proposal of a set of parallels can, and perhaps with some valid reasons. Shared features that make an enormous impression on one scholar will strike others as insignificant or coincidental, and most comparativists have come to accept that many of our colleagues are completely uninterested in the endeavor, particularly when engaging with a borrowed narrative requires transporting their focus beyond the boundaries of their field.

Normally at this point in an academic paper, with the introductory salvo concluded, one would begin grounding the issue within academic debate by quoting from the relevant literature. The state of the methodology for evaluating parallels is, however, such that there is scant literature on it to invoke. Tigay describes the situation facing scholars who work on literary parallels between the Hebrew Bible and other Near Eastern Literature (1993:250-51):

That we have still not reached agreement on how to distinguish borrowed from original elements is clear from two recent statements about the relationship between Biblical and Mesopotamian parallels. Theodore Gaster, Frazer's modern editor, writes in the introduction to his revision of Frazer's *Folklore in the Old Testament* that the Hebrew compiler of Genesis "had . . . a cuneiform original before him." [Gaster 1969:xxvii.] On the other hand, the Assyriologist A. R. Millard says of the flood story, which most consider the outstanding example of a borrowed story in the Bible, that ". . . it has yet to be shown that there was borrowing, even indirectly" [Millard 1967:17].

Recent years have witnessed a new interest in pursuing the study of the genetic relationships between narratives through more scientific methods (for example, Witzel 2012 and Tehrani 2013), primarily in the service of tracing tales back to a common ancestor. The current work seeks to augment those large-scale efforts with a small-scale, close examination of the sorts

of tiny incremental changes that cumulatively transformed the myths and folktales of earliest cultures into the rich diversity of traditional narratives scholars have documented across the globe.

There is no official list of tested criteria for gauging the likelihood of a relationship between a pair of proposed parallel narratives that may be appealed to as the basis for acceptance or rejection of a claim.¹ Instead there exists a sort of commonsensical conventional wisdom on how a set of parallels should look. The following list summarizes a number of these commonly accepted precepts (Tigay 1993):

1. The tales should have multiple shared motifs.
2. The shared motifs should occur in the same sequence.
3. The tales should have specific, peculiar, and significant shared details.
4. Similarities should be heterogeneous, unpredictable, and non-trivial.
5. The two tales should have comparable characters.
6. The two tales should have comparable settings.
7. The two tales should have comparable themes.
8. Alterations must be culturally explicable.
9. There must be a feasible path of transmission between the two tales.

Nothing about these principles is self-evidently unsound, and all of them must surely have their place in the evaluation of parallel narratives. As with all pieces of common knowledge, however, they should be employed with the understanding that they have been assembled largely by perceptions of what narrative evolution “should” look like, rather than formulated by means of systematic testing and observation. I have included them here because they are the closest thing to a starting point we have; below we shall be applying these criteria to our case (a set of tales whose genetic relationship is known), after the other elements of the project have been introduced.

For the sake of comparison, let us transport the discussion into a different arena: diachronic linguistics, for example, would be a very different field if decisions regarding the relationships between different words were simply based on scholars’ feelings about what the various reflexes of different roots “should” look like, rather than on the systematic analysis of earlier forms of a language and the comparison with its reflexes in related tongues. If one accepts the premise that the evolution of traditional narratives, like all evolutionary processes, must be

¹The very elegant Tigay (1993), “On Evaluating Claims of Literary Borrowing,” is one of the few places I have seen these issues addressed. It was the inspiration for this piece, and for the very idea of testing a known example of literary borrowing against a set of criteria. Tigay (1993:251) further discusses the state of the discourse on the evaluation of claims of borrowing: “Not many Biblical scholars ever wrote about this question explicitly enough to formulate criteria. One who did was W. F. Albright. As a rule of thumb in evaluating individual cases, Albright (1957:67) demanded shared complexity or pattern: “Even when story motifs can be found in different contiguous lands, it is not safe to assume original relationship or borrowing except where the motif is complex, forming a pattern.” The same safeguard was advocated by Wellek and Warren (1956 [1949]:258) in their *Theory of Literature*: “[In the study of sources and influences] parallels must be exclusive parallels; that is, there must be reasonable certainty that they cannot be explained by a common source, a certainty attainable only if the investigator has a wide knowledge of literature or if the parallel is a highly intricate pattern rather than an isolated ‘motif’ or word.”

governed by principles that would be observable in an appropriate set of examples, then how would one go about identifying the means to perform the experiment to find a “fossil record” from which observations might be drawn? Lord and Parry were able to find the data repository they required to prove the oral origins of the Homeric epics by recording the songs of the Yugoslav bards; for our purposes, an excellent opportunity presents itself in the form of the literature of ancient India. Providing an abundance of texts whose compositional dates range from 900 BCE with a long tail stretching into or past the tenth century CE, post-Vedic Sanskrit literature is an enormous repository of (very roughly) time-stamped narratives whose iterations are available to be compared alongside one another.²

Narrative in South Asian Culture

The opening of the outermost frame story of Sanskrit *Mahābhārata* epic presents us with an enduring image of narrative in an ancient South Asian context as ritual practitioners welcome a *sūta*, a traveling bard who has just arrived at the site where they are conducting an extended sacrifice:

<i>lomaharṣaṇaputra ugraśravāḥ sūtaḥ paurāṇiko</i>	
<i>naimiṣāranyeśaunakasya kulapater dvādaśavārṣike satre</i>	1
<i>samāsīnān abhyagacchad brahmarṣīn samśitavratān</i>	
<i>vinayāvanato bhūtvā kadā cit sūtanandanah</i>	2
<i>tam āśramam anuprāptaṃ naimiṣāranyavāsinaḥ</i>	
<i>citrāḥ śrotuṃ kathās tatra parivavrus tapasvinaḥ</i>	3
...	
<i>sūta uvāca</i>	
<i>janamejayasya rājarṣeḥ sarpasatre mahātmanaḥ</i>	
<i>samīpe pārthivendrasya samyak pārīkṣitasya ca</i>	8
<i>kṛṣṇadvaipāyana proktāḥ supuṇyā vīvidhāḥ kathāḥ</i>	
<i>kathitāś cāpi vidhivad yā vaiśampāyanena vai</i>	9
<i>śrutvāhaṃ tā vicitrārthā mahābhārata samśritāḥ</i>	
<i>bahūni samparikramya tīrthāny āyatanāni ca</i>	10
<i>samantapañcakam nāma puṇyaṃ dvijaniṣevitam</i>	
<i>gatavān asmi taṃ deśaṃ yuddhaṃ yatrābhavat purā</i>	
<i>pāṇḍavānām kurūṇām ca sarveṣām ca mahīkṣitām</i>	11
...	
<i>bhavanta āsate svasthā bravīmi kim ahaṃ dvijāḥ</i>	13
<i>purāṇasaṃśritāḥ puṇyāḥ kathā vā dharmasaṃśritāḥ</i>	
<i>itivr̥ttaṃ narendrāṇām ṛṣīṇām ca mahātmanām</i>	14

²Works such as the present endeavor are definitely not the only use to be made of this material. A secondary aim of the project is to raise awareness of this under-utilized resource, and potentially to facilitate the work of others in the wide variety of disciplines and theoretical frameworks.

Once, at the 12-year sacrificial session of the family head Śaunaka in the Naimiṣa forest,
Lomahaṛṣana's son, the bard Ugraśravas, versed in ancient legends
Approached the strict-vowed Brahmin-seers sitting together;
The son of the bard bowed modestly.
Him, having arrived at the *āśram*, the ascetics dwelling in the Naimiṣa forest
Surrounded, to hear manifold stories there.

...

The bard said:

[I was] at the snake sacrifice of that great-souled royal sage Janamejaya,
And in the presence of that prince in the lineage of Parikṣit.

The diverse meritorious stories told by Kṛṣṇadvaipāyana
And which were also duly told by Vaisampāyana indeed

Having heard them, of variegated aims joined together as the *Mahābhārata*

And having visited many fords and sanctuaries 10

to holy Samantapañcaka, sought by twice-born,

I went, to that country where formerly the war was,

of the Pāṇḍavas and the Kurūs and all lords of the earth. 11

...

Your honors are seated contentedly; what shall I tell, O Twice-borns? 13

The holy stories of ancient legends concerning *dharma* or
The events of men and great-souled seers?

Though not a depiction of an actual event, it is inconceivable that this charming snapshot describes activity inconsistent with behavior at a ritual site, and it is suggestive of the kind of *milieu* one would expect to produce the abundance of narratives that have been preserved for us. There is no space within the present work to address the sprawling and thorny questions surrounding the language (Sanskrit, or Prakrit), its usage (narrowly restricted to a tiny privileged class, or available more widely in some form or another), mode (oral, literary, or a mix of the two) of narrative in South Asia, or the ways in which all of the above varied according to time and place (and others have done so), but since it is a primary aim of this work to be useful across boundary divisions, the briefest of sketches follows.³ The South Asian literary tradition has several specific features that provided us with this opportunity, and one of these is its unusually strong tendency towards retention: as Pollock (2003:43) points out in regards to literary theory, “The habit of sedimentation (rather than the will to supersession) is demonstrated in Sanskrit intellectual history across all disciplines.” Rather than discard older texts or older versions of texts, the community preserved them and simply expanded the canon as more arose. Over time, as these stories were recited, transmitted, and their different versions sometimes assembled into

³These questions form a complex conversation already well over a hundred years old just in the West. Macdonell (1900:1-39) is a readily available early contribution that gives an easily digestible overview for the non-specialist. Other excellent resources on the question include Deshpande (1993), Houben (1996, espec. section I, “Origins and Creation of the ‘Eternal Language’”), and the eponymous essay in Srinivas (1989). Pollock (2006:37-281, espec. Part One) is an in-depth look at how the situation began to change around the beginning of the first millennium CE. For the development of writing, see Hinüber (1989) and Falk (1993); Salomon (1995) provides an overview of both.

new religious texts, the tales were naturally modified to suit the needs and desires of the new redactors and audiences. Thus was created an immense collection of narratives preserved for us at a wide variety of points in their development, but with more than enough salient features maintained to indicate that the variants were (or were at least intended to be) the same story. However large or small the actual community that maintained and had access to these tales, they were retained actively enough to require periodic updating and alteration, and in a society that valued accurate textual preservation, a record of the changes was laid down and preserved for us. These texts can be mined for the evidence they provide about how narratives change over time, just as Lord and Parry made use of the performances of the Yugoslav bards.

Narrative Structure and Evolution

While South Asian culture possessed unique aspects that left us a record of its collected tales, there is no reason to believe that the formulation or composition of these narratives at the most basic level was not congruent with such processes elsewhere. Although it is not clear whether a bard such as Ugraśravas (in the example above) was working from a fully-memorized text or employing some degree of composition-in-performance, nonetheless many of the same operating principles are observable in the comparisons of the variants discussed below, and suggest that these tales can serve as an acceptable proxy for other narrative traditions. The composers of these tales, like their Greek or Serbo-Croatian counterparts (along with a wide variety of storytellers from all over the world, including raconteurs and stand-up comics down to the present day), worked by means of narrative frameworks—extensive thematic checklists—which gave shape and structure to their material. Just as an epic is made up of a sequence of individual episodes, each episode is itself constructed from a sequence of events. These sequences resemble strands of DNA: not only do they provide the structure and organization of the tale, but their individual genes (those smaller units that we generally term “themes” or “motifs”) are also the *loci* of evolutionary change. As in other oral traditions, a given theme may simply mutate: a gift, for example, might change from a ring to a necklace, or even a hunting dog. Themes also serve as expansion and contraction points: in one version the giving of this gift might occupy one line of text, where a different variant might expand it to 60, with sub-themes and formulaic elements imported from elsewhere or purposefully built for that specific tale.⁴ It is in this protean nature of motifs that we find the usefulness of a data set for providing insight into the ways stories evolve; it is not in terms of the specific details unique to each story that we seek understanding, but in whether those changes fall into types and categories that might be generalized and applied to the alterations seen in other narratives.

⁴For purposes of this study, the working definition of “theme” is “an action or plot development which may be roughly but comprehensively expressed in one sentence.” Some of the texts under consideration will use one verse to express a theme for which another text may utilize 45 or 50 verses, and do so without affecting the course of the plot or adding any salient information to the narrative. The decision to stay with the traditional terminology for work on oral poetry and ancient epic (theme, motif), rather than move to the richer and more nuanced vocabulary of narratology (narrateme, event, function/index, narreme, and so on) was not made without hesitation. Ultimately, however, the simpler terminology seemed adequate to the task, more in keeping with the spirit of the topic, and less likely to generate confusion, as the narratological vocabulary still appears to be evolving.

The objection might reasonably be raised that any principles regarding the evolution of oral narratives that the project formulates may be specific to Sanskrit literature, and this must remain a consideration. Several factors working in combination, however, argue against these concerns: the first of these is that all stories must follow certain rules of cause and effect that allow their readers to feel comfortable engaging with them, and this places natural restrictions on the type of changes a story might undergo. There is also an additional widespread human resistance to stark alterations to a familiar story. While an audience might delight in a surprising twist or addition, too profound a divergence will be swiftly rejected by its hearers; any poet whose work is presented orally would be sensitive to this, and an unwelcome addition would swiftly disappear from his repertoire. There are more than enough variant manuscripts of every major Indian text to confirm for us that they underwent some revision and additions, whether deliberate or inadvertent. Finally, the human brain employs certain strategies for memorization which, though they may be more refined in some traditions, are deeply tied to the nature and structure of human memory.⁵

In these factors (considerations of verisimilitude, human resistance to change, and the neurological underpinnings of the storyteller's art form) we thus find a rough set of natural checks on the mutative powers of narrative. The result is that human interactions with narrative play out in much the same way throughout the world, as the remarkable consistency of types and variations of folkloric literature from around the world can attest. But while folklore gives us a rich sense of the variety and scope of narrative evolution, it lacks the clear, fixed benchmarks of evolution in which we find in the *brāhmanic*, epic and *purāṇic*, literature of ancient India. The aim of this piece is to make use of this data set in the most universal of its aspects, and offer evidence that the multi-version narratives of the Indian subcontinent display a predictable set of evolutionary changes that can be categorized and identified in other narrative traditions. Wherever applicable, comparanda have been provided, cases in which a comparativist has posited a similar change between a pair of narratives. Over time, the narratives of the subcontinent underwent change, and demonstrating **that** they did so, and that **how** they did so can be divorced from the culture of India and applied to other narrative traditions, is the aim of the comparison below; a proposal for the development of a new method for addressing a longstanding methodological issue, using a data set that has been, for some reason, completely overlooked for this purpose.

⁵Another issue that must be considered if the findings of this study are to be put into practice is whether these results will be applicable when parallel narratives are the result of a cross-cultural borrowing. A number of theoretical factors could come into play; in linguistics, certainly, borrowing operates very differently than language change from within one culture. In contrast to the deployment of individual words, however, *every* new version of a tale is re-shaped to suit changing times, values, and tastes; it may well be that the narrative processes involved in cross-cultural borrowing are functionally the same as those involved in the re-telling of a story within one cultural tradition: a storyteller hears a tale, it resonates with him, he works through how he will present it, and eventually begins re-telling it in his own way. In preliminary attempts to test the usefulness of my findings at diagnosing cross-cultural borrowings, I have applied them to others' findings; for example, Larson (2005), which presents a compelling case for a shared relationship between the Homeric *Hymn to Hermes* and the Neo-Sumerian *Lugalbanda* epic. I will refer throughout to examples where my findings support that paper's case for a relationship.

The Tale of Cyavana and Sukanyā

The present study utilizes five variants of a Sanskrit story, *The Tale of Cyavana and Sukanyā*, to analyze the types of narrative variation it underwent, and to extrapolate the principles that governed the deployment of those variations. After an analysis of the tale and the alterations visible in its trajectory, we will return to the set of criteria listed above (omitting #8 and #9) and see how well those criteria perform at diagnosing the (already known) relationship between the five variants.

The earliest references to Cyavana⁶ appear in the *Vedas*,⁷ where his name is given as Cyavāna, and, as is characteristic of Vedic literature, we get only brief and disconnected references to parts of his story in hymns of praise to the gods without any significant portions of narrative. In its barest outlines, *The Tale of Cyavana and Sukanyā*, as we have it, is the story of an ascetic holy man whose single-minded devotion to his career has left him spiritually powerful but physically decrepit and enfeebled.⁸ The Aśvins, a pair of seemingly minor deities with deep Indo-European roots,⁹ rejuvenate the old man, or at least restore his good looks.¹⁰ In the post-Vedic versions, this is bound up in the story of his marriage to the princess Sukanyā and her subsequent encounter with the Aśvins. A second portion of the tale then follows the Aśvins as they attempt to elevate their level of inclusion in the gods' sacrifices. Discussion and analysis of

⁶Cyavana has a fairly wide presence in Sanskrit literature in general. Vedic references will be discussed in n. 11. Cyavana's pre-term birth during his mother's abduction by a *rākṣasa* (demon) is described at *Mahābhārata Mbh.* 1.5-6, and at *Mbh.* 13.141.15-30 and 14.9.31-36, he practices meditation underwater until he is entirely encrusted with marine life (discussed in Leslie 2003:140). *Mbh.* 1.60.43-46 claims he married Manu's daughter, Āruṣī, and the story of his descendant, Ruru, is told at *Mbh.* 3.122-25. He makes an appearance at *Rāmāyaṇa* 1.70.28-36, where he persuades a pregnant queen not to commit *sati*, and his name occurs twice in lists of officiating priests of sacrifices (in *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* 8.21.4 and at *PadmaP.* 1:34:13-17). Sanskrit literature is a vast and interconnected web; nearly every character, motif, and action has a reflex in another text, which has a reflex in another, *ad infinitum*. My objective here has been to trace the developmental stages of this tale, and space will not permit the exploration of every avenue. For those interested in further narrative or ritual ramifications of the tale, Witzel (1987) is the best starting point in the secondary literature, and for comparative purposes, Allen (2015) provides an excellent case for relating Cyavana to Prometheus.

⁷The *Vedas* are the oldest stratum of Sanskrit literature, dating from 1500-1000 BCE, and written in the oldest form of the language.

⁸The story has been treated in a variety of secondary sources, including: Brodbeck (2009:93), Doniger (1985:64-73 and 1999:134-40), and Leslie (2003:126-36). Goldman (1977:166 n.11) asserts that the tale "has every appearance of representing a socioreligious event of some significance."

⁹The Aśvins (or Nāsatyas) are twin gods with associations to horses, cattle, and physicians, who are related to Castor and Pollux and other Indo-European twin deities. They are treated by Dumézil (1994:34-88) who describes them as the divine representation of the Third Function.

¹⁰At *Rg Veda (RV)* 1.117.13, 1.118.6d, 5.74.5c, 7.68.6, 7.71.5a, and 10.39.4, the Aśvins are described as having restored Cyavāna's youth; in two instances, this is apparently accomplished through the removal of Cyavāna's skin: "O Nāsatyas! You removed the skin like a garment from aged Cyavāna," (*jujurūṣo nāsatyotā vavrīm prāmuñcataṃ drāpīm iva cyāvānāt, RV* 1.116.10), and "From aged Cyavāna you removed the skin like a robe," (*prā cyāvānāj jujurūṣo vavrīm ātkam nā muñcatham, RV* 5.74.5). Also relevant to the later versions of the tale that will be our focus, *RV* 1.116.10d says the Aśvins "made him a lord of maidens" (*pātim akṛṇutaṃ kanīnām*).

the way these threads of narrative are woven and re-woven in new versions of the story is the primary focus of this paper.¹¹

Complete renditions of the tale come to us from five different texts, each with their own genres and agendas:¹²

1. The *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa* (*JB*) 3.120-29:¹³ The *Brāhmaṇas* are elaborations and commentaries on the *Vedas*, and the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa*, which dates from roughly 900 BCE, is likely the oldest of the versions.¹⁴ The *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa* uses Cyavana's story to illustrate the power of the otherwise unknown *Brāhmaṇa of Vāstupa*, presenting it as the secret to Cyavana's successful quest to get a wife, regain his youth, and perform an important sacrifice.
2. *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* (*ŚB*) 4.1.5.1-15:¹⁵ The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* dates from roughly the eighth to sixth centuries BCE. *The Tale of Cyavana's* occurrence here is part of the text's larger concern of establishing narrative bases for the parts of the *Soma* ritual.¹⁶ This version begins and ends, as do most stories in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, with the descriptions and ritual significance of sacrificial gestures and vessels related to the *Aśvins*.

¹¹ Witzel (1987:387-91) focuses on the way the salient motifs from the Vedic versions have been combined and re-organized in the *brāhmaṇa* versions.

¹² As with the brief discussion on narrative in ancient India above, I hope to provide non-specialists with enough information to enjoy and appreciate *The Transformation of Cyavana*, but the article is not intended to be *about* the tale, but rather the scope of its metamorphosis. I have tried to walk a line (which will doubtless please no one) of including enough citations and background to the Indic cultural elements that come up in the story to allow interested parties to pursue them further, but not to let cultural factors dominate the exposition; in short, to diminish the particularity of the alterations and expand their universality. As far as the comparanda brought in to support the contention that the phenomena occur in other traditions as well, space does not permit much more than brief citations of where the instances may be found.

¹³ *The Tale of Cyavana* is §186 in Caland (1970:251-53). A translation appears in MacDonald (1979:129-31). The *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa* is not written in verse, but rather in paragraph form. So that the text may be followed closely enough to understand the analysis, every sentence has been numbered, and it is those numbers that appear as the final digits in the citations.

¹⁴ Witzel (1987) offers a complex argument based on verb tense deployment that suggests that though the *JB* is the oldest of the texts discussed here, its Cyavana sections may have been constructed by an embedding process that turned the tale into a frame narrative with inserts, and these may be much younger than the rest of the *JB* and are perhaps even coeval with the *ŚB*.

¹⁵ A translation is available in Eggeling (1885).

¹⁶ The *Soma* sacrifice (the ritual preparation and consumption of a now-extinct plant with intoxicating properties) was one of the most central and ubiquitous features of Vedic religiosity (and of early Iranian religion as well, under its Avestan name *Haoma*). Perhaps the most striking feature of the ceremony is that this is one of a small number of cases in which human and divine activity are mirror images: like the brahmins on earth, the gods routinely conduct their own *Soma* sacrifice, to which access is highly restricted and much sought after by the lesser and excluded deities.

3. The *Mahābhārata* (*Mbh.*) 3.121-25:¹⁷ The *Mahābhārata* is one of the two major epics of India, and was composed over a period extending from roughly 500 BCE to 500 CE. The great epic gives us the first version of Cyavana's story that is more attentive to the narrative itself than to the ritual or theology associated with it. There is a marked increase in character development and description, and descriptions of ritual activity are more cursory.
4. The *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa* (*DevībhP.*) 7.2.30-7.43: As a class of texts, the *purāṇas* began to be composed as the *Mahābhārata* was assuming its final form, and were heavily influenced by it. The *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa* is constructed to follow the *Mahābhārata*'s version, but with far more elaboration and expansion: comparing the two side by side brings to mind Lord's account of the *guslar* Avdo expanding another bard's single theme from 176 lines to 558 (Lord 1960:78-79); in the *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa* every motif from the *Mahābhārata* has been inflated as much as possible, and lavish description has been introduced wherever possible. The text glorifies Devī, the generalized female aspect of divine power in Hinduism, and there is a corresponding emphasis on this version's female characters: Sukanyā's character is developed with particular care and attention, and even the role of the king's wives is increased slightly.
5. The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* (*Bh.*) 9.3.1-28: At just 28 verses, the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* is a tightly abbreviated form of the narrative. It generally conforms to the general outlines of the *Mahābhārata*'s version, but includes one major alteration that leaves some awkward transition points, and provides a compelling example of the storyteller's instinctive conservation of received narrative elements, even when such may be difficult to reconcile with his vision of the tale.

These various versions of the tale most certainly do not represent an unbroken lineage; they are simply particular versions that happened to be committed to fixity at certain points in time, but the existence of every new "canonical" version undoubtedly contributed to the ongoing development of the story. Over the course of this progression, we see the tale transform from a cryptic and impersonal religious text concerned primarily with ritual into a touching tale of romantic love. This evolution tracks with another process as well, as a single tale that links a pair of gods and their rights to the divine *Soma* drink to a mortal girl's *svayamvara*¹⁸ is slowly broken into two: the story of an unconventional *svayamvara*, followed closely by a related story about *Soma* rights. Even more striking are the transformations undergone by the main characters, particularly that of the heroine. The interaction of all these processes provides an illuminating illustration of the way one narrative evolved over time.

¹⁷ An English translation of the *Mbh.*'s story of Cyavana and Sukanyā may be found in van Buitenen (1975:458-62, vol. 2); further discussion of the episode may be found at pp.195-97 of the same volume.

¹⁸ An ancient Indian ritual in which a husband is selected for an eligible young woman, often through contests or tests of skill, but sometimes simply through a selection made by the bride.

Methodology and Notation

In order to best evaluate the divergences, all five versions of *The Tale of Cyavana and Sukanyā* are broken down below into their component themes. Themes naturally arrange themselves into small clusters, and each of the 13 clusters identified here has been given its own small table, which should allow the reader to focus on the changes occurring within each one. The tables are laid out in the order in which they occur in the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa* (likely the oldest of the extant versions), and are formatted according to the following principles:

- ❖ Every theme shared between at least two versions is given a serial Roman numeral and letter designation (for example, “Ic”), and wherever a motif (or portion of one) occurs in an identical expression in at least three versions, it appears in **boldface type**.
- ❖ Items without comparable reflexes in at least three other tales are grouped (where possible) with motifs to which they seem to be affiliated; when they have no close relations, they receive their own line in the chart, but without a numerical designation.
- ❖ When a version includes an out-of-sequence motif, the motif is numbered and positioned along with its reflexes in the other versions, but it appears in italics; its citation, marked with a double dagger (‡), also appears at its actual place in its own sequence, along with an indicator of where it may be found (for example, “listed above at **Ia**”).
- ❖ Motifs that must have occurred in order for the plot to function, but that are not actually narrated or described, appear in SMALL CAPS.
- ❖ Where one version diverges in an extreme or lengthy fashion, the added material is included in a summary, but is listed without a numerical designator and is not treated with the same attention to detail as areas that are closely comparable among the versions.
- ❖ When a version does not contain a particular theme because that theme has not yet been introduced to the tale, the words “-not present-” appear in that theme’s place in the chart. When a version does not contain a particular theme because the theme has been dropped, the words “-omitted-” appear in the chart.
- ❖ Questions or preambles that are part of the frame around the tale have been omitted entirely.
- ❖ Paragraphs beneath each chart analyze and attempt to clarify the nature of the differences exhibited between the versions.

Finally, as part of the attempt to categorize the types of changes that occur, certain distinctive types of alteration have been assigned names to better enable their use in critical settings. The terms will be introduced as the phenomena appear, and then re-capped in a catalogue at the end.

Cluster I: Cyavana Introduced

Several salient phenomena present themselves in the first cluster. One is the way a theme's purpose (the isolation of Cyavana) may be accomplished in different ways in different versions. A second is the relative ease with which a new motif can be incorporated into a tale: the original distinguishing feature of the ascetic Cyavana is his ugliness, but this fades into the background when a new defining characteristic is introduced. Yet a third is that once a defining characteristic becomes well-known, it may actually be dropped from the narrative. Others are discussed below as well.

<i>Jaiminīya Br.</i>	<i>Śatapatha Br.</i>	<i>Mahābhārata</i>	<i>Devībhāgavata P.</i>	<i>Bhāgavata P.</i>
Cyavana knows the <i>vāstupasya brāhmaṇa</i> (3.120.1-2)				
Ia Cyavana demands that his sons abandon him; they leave him on the bank of the Sarasvatī River. He makes wishes and sees a <i>sāman</i> , which he praises (3.120.3-11)	Ia The Bhṛguṣ (or the Aṅgirasas) attain the heavenly world; Cyavana is left behind (4.1.5.1)	Ia Cyavana performs austerities alone by the Narmadā River, using the <i>vīra</i> posture (3.122.1-2)	Ia ↓ Cyavana performs austerities alone by the Mānasarovara Lake using the <i>vīra</i> posture (7.2.33-43)	[Ia.CYAVANA PERFORMS AUSTERITIES]
[Ib CYAVANA IS OLD]	Ib Cyavana is old, “ugly and ghostlike” (4.1.5.1)	Ib Cyavana becomes an anthill. (3.122.3-4) ↓ Cyavana is old (3.122.20)	Ib ↓ Cyavana becomes an anthill (7.2.43-44)	[Ib CYAVANA BECOMES AN ANTHILL.] ↓ Cyavana is an “old, diseased invalid with loose skin, white hair, and visible veins” (9.3.14)

Ia. The tale's first motif is **the physical isolation of Cyavana**, and is accomplished in three different ways: in the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa*, Cyavana instructs his sons to leave him behind in the *vāstu*.¹⁹ Over their protests, the seer insists that because he knows the *vāstupasya brāhmaṇa*,²⁰ the desertion will be to all of their benefit, and that he will be given an opportunity to regain his youth. His sons then leave him on the banks of the Sarasvatī River; presumably this is in fact the *vāstu* he was referring to in his request. His sons obey him and depart, and Cyavana

¹⁹ The meaning of this is not entirely clear. A *vāstu* may be a site, ground, or dwelling place; in this case it is probably a sacrificial site; cf. *ŚB vāstu*, (a site, ground, or dwelling place). Hopkins (1905:61) reads the desertion of the sons as reflecting an ancient custom of leaving the elderly alone in the wilderness to die, but I am not sure the text supports such a grisly conclusion. *ŚB* 1.7.3.1-5, for example, contains a similar story (this time about a god) who is left behind in the *vāstu* and excluded from the sacrifice, and the steps that must be taken to reintegrate him.

²⁰ The identity and significance of the *vāstupasya brāhmaṇa* (literally, “the *brāhmaṇa* of the household-guardian”) are unclear. It is a text or mantra otherwise unknown to us, along with many such others in the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa*; as Whitney (1885:cxliv-cxlv) says: “The *Jaiminīya* is on the whole a dull and uninteresting work, as compared with the others of its class. The most unreasonable share of its immense mass is taken up with telling on what occasion some being ‘saw’ a particular *sāmān* and ‘praised with it’” (*ibid.*:cxliv-cxlv).

uses his solitude to pray for restored youth, a young wife, and the chance to sacrifice with 1,000 cows. He sees a *sāman* (“hymn,” “chant,” or “praise-song”) and praises with it.

In the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, it is briefly noted that Cyavana has been abandoned, but this time by his paternal ancestors the Bṛḡus, who have attained the heavenly world, rather than by his sons.²¹ Neither *brāhmaṇa* specifically notes whether or not he is engaged in *tapas* (the practice of performing physical austerities in order to accrue spiritual powers) or meditation, practices that become essential to Cyavana’s character in the later texts.

The *Mahābhārata* and the *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa* dispense with the idea of abandonment, and merely introduce Cyavana as living alone in the forest to pursue his austerities, which he does with a ferocious commitment more profound and enduring than anything suggested by the *brāhmaṇas*. The changing explanations for Cyavana’s seclusion—from involuntary abandonment, to requested abandonment, to sought-after solitude—are examples of a common phenomenon, and one that is highly illustrative of the processes of literary composition (oral and otherwise): the “aetiology,” a brief explanation of some circumstance or background in a story, often fabricated just for purposes of that tale.²² For the oral poet, remembering a state or condition is easy, but recalling (or choosing to retain) the circumstances that led to it can apparently be difficult, particularly if they are sufficiently divorced from the main action of the narrative. In this case, the actual abandonment (or lack thereof) has no repercussions later in the story, and its loss is of little narrative importance. Thus Cyavana may go from abandoned, to conspiring in his own abandonment, to simply living alone in the forest with little effect on the rest of the story. The *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa* puts this motif out of order, but the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* goes a step further and eliminates the theme altogether, along with any introduction of Cyavana.

Two versions (the *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa* and *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*) have moved the introduction of Cyavana from the outset of the tale to its second motif cluster; a minor change in sequence, presumably motivated by the dual phenomena of the increase in Cyavana’s name-recognition as a mythological figure and by these versions’ shift in emphasis from the seer to the princess he marries. As Cyavana’s persona stabilized into a stock character, the interest in him as a protagonist decreased, and Sukanyā assumed a larger share of the narrative focus. The changes in her role are illustrated very clearly in the next motif cluster.

Note also the changing *locus*: unspecified in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, it becomes the Sarasvatī River in the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa*, a nameless forest in the *Mahābhārata* and *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, while the *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa* describes an exceptionally beautiful sacred

²¹ This text shows an uncharacteristic uncertainty regarding Cyavana’s lineage, calling him “either a Bhargava [descendant of the *ṛsi* Bṛḡu] or an Aṅgīrasa [descendant of the *ṛsi* Aṅgīras],” where the other texts uniformly proclaim him a Bhargava. According to Hopkins (1905:45), this “indicates synonymy” between the two *ṛsis*. For more on the Bṛḡus, see Goldman (1977).

²² Ready examples of aetiologies include the *Gospel of Luke*’s explanation that Jesus’ birth took place in Bethlehem as a consequence of a census ordered by Augustus (Lk. 2.1-3), or *Iliad* 1.393-406, in which Achilles reminds Thetis of her vaunt that she aided Zeus when the rest of the gods were against him and is thus owed a favor.

grove near the shores of the Mānasarovara Lake, the first of many florid stock additions in that text.²³ This will be discussed in more detail in the conclusion of the paper.

Ib. The next theme concerns **Cyavana’s physical appearance**. The *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa* does not bother to report on Cyavana’s age and infirmity, but we can infer Cyavana’s decrepitude from what we have already learned in Ia: he wishes to recover his youth. The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* says he has become “ugly and ghostlike,” rendered so by the natural processes of age. The *Mahābhārata*, *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa*, and *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* all take Cyavana’s old age for granted—the primary point of the tales is that he needs rejuvenation—but the *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa* does not mention that Cyavana is old until 7.3.16, and the *Mahābhārata* and *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* never make an explicit statement about it.

Instead, the *Mahābhārata* and *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa* elaborate upon Cyavana’s situation by explaining that his commitment to meditation has been so profound that he has “become” an anthill, which obscures every part of him but his eyes.²⁴ The addition of the anthill is an example of a common phenomenon I have termed an “improvement:” the substitution of a more interesting explanation or situation for an inherited one.²⁵

Here, the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* makes an even more drastic omission than the failure to mention Cyavana’s age: Cyavana’s entombment within the anthill is now apparently so well-known to the audience that no explanation for how it happened is ever given within the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*’s narrative. Indeed, we learn that even the other characters within the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* are already familiar with Cyavana’s situation as well. The loss of an explicit statement regarding a characteristic that has become so well-known and central to the story that its description is eventually *omitted* from the narrative because it has become unnecessary is visible in other preserved oral tales; I term this sort of omission a “cyclops” in honor of one of the most noticeable examples of the phenomenon.²⁶

²³ Witzel (1987:402) discusses what has been reconstructed about the geography associated with the various texts and their recensions; the current inquiry is concerned less with the specific cultural reasons for alterations, and more with the patterns observable in their deployment.

²⁴ The best known exemplar of the “sage-encased by the anthill” motif is certainly Vālmīki, mythical author of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, whose case is discussed extensively in Leslie (2003). Aśvaghōṣa explicitly compares the two seers at *Buddhacarita* I.48: “The voice of Vālmīki uttered poetry which the great seer Cyavana could not compose.” (Cowell, trans. 1894). In a variant of the anthill motif, Cyavana performs a similar feat of immobility at *Mbh.* 13.50-51, in which he stands immobile at the confluence of the Ganges and Yamuna rivers until he becomes encrusted with mollusks and seaweed.

²⁵ Larson (2005:1) posits that just such an “improvement” took place in the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*: Lugalbanda, an ill adult stranded in a cave in the *Lugalbanda Epic*, is transformed into newborn baby Hermes in the hymn.

²⁶ Nowhere within the *Odyssey* is the cyclops described as having a single eye, but the blinding, as it is carried out, would not serve the necessary function if the monster had two eyes. In another possible example from the same text, the physical appearance of the Sirens is also never described; whether or not this indicates that the composer of the *Odyssey* conceived of them as the familiar bird-women of later Greek art is unclear, but to omit completely the physical description of a significant Homeric obstacle suggests that the appearance of the Sirens was well-known to the audience. See also Gresseth (1970, espec. 210ff), who makes an exhaustive survey of the evidence and concludes that the winged form must have been Homeric.

Cluster II: Conflict Arises

The story advances as a king and his people encamp in Cyavana’s forest. Cyavana is subjected to maltreatment by the interlopers, and retaliates by cursing them. In this cluster we observe the first incidence of a function being taken away from one character and re-assigned to another.

<i>Jaiminīya Br.</i>	<i>Śatapatha Br.</i>	<i>Mahābhārata</i>	<i>Devībhāgavata P.</i>	<i>Bhāgavata P.</i>
			Śaryāti is a king with 4,000 wives and Sukanyā (7.2.30-33) [‡7.2.33-43 listed above at Ia] [‡7.2.43-44 listed above at Ib]	Śaryāti is a learned and pious king
IIa. Śaryāta , the Mānava King comes to the forest with his tribe (3.121.1)	IIa. Śaryāta , the Mānava King comes to the forest with his tribe (4.1.5.2)	IIa. Śaryāti comes to the forest with a retinue of 4,000 women, including Sukanyā (3.122.5-6)	IIa. Śaryāti comes to the forest with a retinue of 4,000 women, including Sukanyā (7.2.45-46)	IIa. Śaryāti comes to the forest [with his royal retinue] and Sukanyā to see Cyavana’s <i>āśrama</i> (“ashram”) (9.3.1-2)
-not present-	-not present-	IIb. Sukanyā , wearing only a single garment, explores the forest, finds Cyavana’s anthill Cyavana falls in love and tries to speak His glowing eyes catch her attention (3.122.7-12)	IIb. Sukanyā explores the forest, finds Cyavana’s anthill -omitted- His glowing eyes catch her attention. She picks up a thorn. Cyavana tries to stop her (7.2.47-53)	IIb. Sukanyā gathers fruit in the forest, finds Cyavana’s anthill (9.3.3) -omitted- -omitted-
IIc. Cowherd boys deliberately smear Cyavana with earth and balls of dung (3.121.2)	IIc. Boys deliberately taunt Cyavana and throw clods of earth at him (4.1.5.2)	IIc. Sukanyā impulsively and misguidedly pokes Cyavana’s eyes with a thorn (3.122.12)	IIc. Sukanyā playfully pokes Cyavana’s eyes with the thorn She wonders “What have I done?” (7.2.54-55)	IIc. Sukanyā , impelled by fate, pokes Cyavana’s eyes with a thorn Blood oozes out (9.3.4)
IIId. Cyavana curses them with discord: “mother did not know son, nor son, mother” (3.121.3-4)	IIId. Cyavana curses them with discord: “father did not know son, nor brother, brother” (4.1.5.3)	IIId. Cyavana curses them with constipation (3.122.13)	IIId. Cyavana curses them , including elephants, horses, and camels, with constipation (7.2.56-58)	IIId. Cyavana curses them with constipation (9.3.5)

The *Devībhāgavata* and *Bhāgavata Purāṇas* introduce King Śaryāta at the very outset of the piece, even before introducing Cyavana. While the old ascetic was indisputably the main

character of the earliest versions, in the last two iterations Cyavana is less the focal point of the narrative and more its most arresting piece of scenery. We are introduced to him through the eyes of the princess rather than meeting him independently at the outset.

IIa. In the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* and *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa*, **the king arrives** with his tribe, the Mānavas; in the *Jaiminīya* the arrival of the king and his people at the site specifically occurs while Cyavana is praising (*taṃ tuṣṭuvānaṃ śaryāto mānavo grāmeṇādhyavāsyāt*). In the *Mahābhārata* and the *purāṇas* the king's name has altered slightly (from Śaryāta to Śaryāti) and, since tribal living is no longer a part of the cultural landscape, the presentation has also shifted: the king's Mānava affiliation is omitted and he is accompanied not by a tribe but by a retinue that includes a company of soldiers, 4,000 women, and his beautiful daughter, Sukanyā.

The two *brāhmaṇas* contain no reference to the heroine at this point, but the *Mahābhārata* and the *purāṇas* immediately place Sukanyā at the center of the narrative. The two *purāṇic* versions have even changed the sequence so that the story begins with the description of the king and Sukanyā rather than with Cyavana, a slight alteration that signals the major re-configuration of her role.

IIb. In a motif not present in the *brāhmaṇas*, the *Mahābhārata*, *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, and *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa*, have **Sukanyā walk alone in the woods**. The *Mahābhārata* immediately introduces an element of romance: as the girl wanders alone in the forest dressed only in a single garment,²⁷ the sight of her beauty distracts Cyavana out of the celestial realms in which his spirit is wandering and he falls in love with her. As he tries to speak to her she sees his eyes inside the anthill.

Though the two *purāṇas* adopt the *Mahābhārata*'s metamorphosis of the tale into a more romantic one, neither explicitly depicts Cyavana as falling in love at this point; indeed, the seer's character is initially quite irascible and unlikable. Whether this is intended to preserve his earlier persona or to heighten the romantic tension in anticipation of the couple's eventual joyous future is unclear, but when Cyavana speaks to Sukanyā in the *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa*, it is only to try to use his creaky voice to beg her to put down the thorn she has just picked up.

IIc. This segment introduces conflict to the tale in the form of an **assault on Cyavana's person**. In the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* boys in the retinue taunt the decrepit Cyavana and throw clods of earth at him because of his ugliness, and in the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa*, cowherd boys smear him with earth and dung-balls for unspecified reasons. These are only slightly different manifestations of deliberate maltreatment; in the subsequent versions, however, we find our first profound alteration. In the *Mahābhārata*, seeing Cyavana's eyes peering out from the mound, Sukanyā pokes at the sparkly objects with a thorn. No hostility is involved; she does it only "from curiosity" and "the compulsion of a confused mind" (*kautūhalāt . . . buddhimohabalāt*, *Mbh.* 3.122.12). The *Devībhāgavata* and *Bhāgavata Purāṇas* retain this innovation,

²⁷ Prior to the ascendancy of the *sari*, women in ancient India typically dressed in a sarong skirt with a shawl around the shoulders; Sukanyā is *ekavastrām*, "one-garmented," that is, "topless." This adjective could be used to indicate that a woman was menstruating (for example, Draupadī is *ekavastrā* [*Mbh.* 2.60.15]) in the famous scene in which she is dragged into the assembly hall). It is difficult to tease out all the possible implications for the mention of her garment here, which could range from merely upping the sexiness quotient, to marking the girl as being in a liminal and vulnerable state, to conjuring a subtle association between Sukanyā and the more famous heroine in the scene in which she famously saves her five husbands, the Pāṇḍavas.

characterizing Sukanyā's actions, respectively, as “intent on play” (*krīḍāsaktā*) or merely impelled by the gods/fate (*daivacoditā*).

This is a pronounced transformation: a hostile act of cruelty is replaced by a girlish mistake, strikingly changing the nature of this part of the tale. Even leaving aside the whimsical charm this change imparts to the epic and *purāṇic* versions, the advantages of the earlier introduction of Sukanyā are very clear: it expands her role and adds substantially to her characterization while tightening the overall narrative structure. The cruel boys of the earlier versions, no longer of any use in the narrative, disappear entirely.

It is interesting to speculate as to whether the “improvement” of motif Ib (decrepitude exchanged for the anthill) inspired the increase in Sukanyā's role, or the reverse; certainly the enlargement of her role and the appearance of the anthill motif are inextricably linked. An intermediate stage in which Sukanyā's role was to intentionally taunt or abuse Cyavana seems unlikely, given the difficulties it would introduce in making her character likeable.

IId. Angered by the abuse, **Cyavana curses his tormentors.**²⁸ The two *brāhmaṇas*' dull and didactic curse of “discord” (*asaṃjñā*) sowed among the tribe (though with variation in the range of family members specified²⁹) is changed to the delightful “he constipated the feces and urine of the retinue;” another “improvement.” This modification takes hold as tightly as the anthill did: both the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* and *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa* retain the new motif, nearly verbatim.³⁰ Not content with inflicting the constipation on Cyavana's human victims, the *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa* extends it to their elephants, horses, and camels as well.

Cluster III: Resolution of the Curse

This cluster is the most intact of the entire story: every version contains a reflex of every motif, though they are by no means identical. A closer examination reveals that the reason for this lies in the nature of the elements it contains: none of these motifs is exciting enough to warrant elaboration, yet their function is critical. Thus, they persist intact and in very similar incarnations. This is an often frustrating feature of oral narrative evolution: nuts-and-bolts “workhorse” motifs are far less likely to mutate than their flashier counterparts. While their low-key appearance and the predictability of their sequencing often leads to the charges that they are the result of coincidence rather than of shared inheritance, the evidence here suggests the opposite: that the presence of such clusters should be taken as good evidence of genetic relationship.

²⁸ The curse of a *r̥ṣi* is a common plot-driver in Sanskrit literature; see, for example, *Mbh.* 1.109, *Mbh.* 1.208.21, and *RV* 7.104. In the *DevīP.*, Cyavana later denies being angry and claims he was merely in pain (*DevīP.* 7.3.13).

²⁹ In the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, “father did not know son, nor brother, brother,” and in the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa*, “mother did not know son, nor son, mother.”

³⁰ *Mbh.* 3.122.13: *śakṛṇ mūtraṃ samāvṛṇot*; *DevīP.* 7.2.56 and *BhagP.* 9.3.5: *śakṛṇ mūtranirodho 'bhūt*. In my taxonomy of indications, this is a “fee-fi-fo-fum:” an evocative or iconic phrase (stolen from Jacobs 1890 “Jack and the Beanstalk”), which is retained in subsequent versions of the story.

<i>Jaiminīya Br.</i>	<i>Śatapatha Br.</i>	<i>Mahābhārata</i>	<i>Devībhāgavata P.</i>	<i>Bhāgavata P.</i>
IIIa. Śaryāta asks his people what they might have seen (3.121.5)	IIIa. Śaryāta fears he has done wrong. He asks the cow and shepherds what they might have done (4.1.5.4-5)	IIIa. Śaryāti asks his soldiers, then his friends, if anyone has angered Cyavana (3.122.14-17)	IIIa. Śaryāti asks his soldiers, then his kinsmen, then friends, if anyone has angered Cyavana (7.2.58-3.1)	IIIa. Śaryāti tells the retinue that he thinks someone must have angered Cyavana (9.3.6)
IIIb. “They” tell Śaryāta what the cowherd boys and shepherds did (3.121.6-8)	IIIb. The cowherds inform on the boys (4.1.5.4-5)	IIIb. Sukanyā confesses to the poking (3.122.18-19)	IIIb. Sukanyā confesses to the poking (7.3.2-6)	IIIb. Sukanyā confesses to the poking (9.3.7)
IIIc. Śaryāta goes to Cyavana and apologizes (3.122.1-5) Sukanyā is introduced (3.122.6)	IIIc. Śaryāta goes to Cyavana in a chariot, taking along Sukanyā, and apologizes (4.1.5.6-7)	IIIc. Śaryāti goes to Cyavana and apologizes (3.122.20-21)	IIIc. Śaryāti goes to Cyavana and apologizes (7.3.7-11)	IIIc. Śaryāti goes to Cyavana and apologizes (9.3.8)

IIIa. Disharmony and constipation are both unpleasant conditions, and **the king’s attempt to understand the source of the common misery** remains intact as a motif and only lightly varied in its expression. In the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa* and *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, the bewildered king must ask if any of his subjects has seen anything that could have caused the curse, but immediately knows who Cyavana is when his people describe the old man who was taunted. In the *Mahābhārata* and *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa*, Śaryāti assumes at the onset of the constipation that the curse must have arisen following a slight to Cyavana, and the interrogation has been inflated and elaborated on with separate inquiries for separate groups.³¹ In the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, that a slight to Cyavana must have been the cause of their discomfort is the king’s immediate conclusion. He conducts no questioning, but rather informs his people that someone’s actions have angered Cyavana.

IIIb. **The discovery of the wrongdoing** was streamlined between the two *brāhmaṇas*: in the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa*, cowherd and shepherd boys (*kumārā gopālā avipālāḥ*) are the wrongdoers, and the informers are only specified by the third plural ending on the verb (*ūcur*). In the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, the anonymous third party has been dropped and it is boys (*kumārāḥ*) who do the taunting and cowherds and shepherds (*gopālās cāvipālāḥ*) who do the informing.

In the three epic and *purāṇic* versions, however, the unwieldy sequences in which other parties must rat out the miscreants have been replaced with Sukanyā’s willing admission to poking at something shiny in the anthill; the cowherds, shepherds, and boys disappear entirely.

IIIc. **The king apologetically approaches the wronged holy man** to remedy the situation. In the two earliest versions, it is at this point in the tale that Sukanyā is introduced; in the later three versions she is, of course, already well-known to us.

³¹ It is worth pointing out here that expansion of this type (the query taken to multiple, similar groups or individuals) is a widespread phenomenon in many forms of oral and written literature, as in the serial questioning of the winds (North, South, East, and West) as it appears in Grimms Fairy Tale no. 88, “The Singing, Springing Lark,” and “East of the Sun and West of the Moon,” as collected by Asbjørnsen and Moe, and in two stories written by Hans Christian Andersen, “The Four Winds” and “The Garden of Paradise.”

Cluster IV. The King Negotiates with Cyavana, and Departs

This cluster offers two more well-preserved motifs. IVa is particularly instructive: it is an excellent illustration of the way the essential features of a given theme and its outcome may be preserved, even as its details are freely revised or rearranged.

<i>Jaiminīya Br.</i>	<i>Śatapatha Br.</i>	<i>Mahābhārata</i>	<i>Devībhāgavata P.</i>	<i>Bhāgavata P.</i>
IVa. Cyavana demands Sukanyā in recompense. Śaryāta refuses (3.122.7)	IVa. Śaryāta offers Sukanyā in recompense. Cyavana accepts her (4.1.5.7)	IVa. Cyavana asks for Sukanyā in recompense. Śaryāti gives her to him (3.122.22-24)	IVa. Cyavana asks for Sukanyā in recompense so she can care for him in his injured state (7.3.12-22)	IVa. Śaryāti offers Sukanyā in recompense. Cyavana accepts her (9.3.9)
Śaryāta and Cyavana argue. The tribe debates the matter and decides to leave, telling Sukanyā to follow them secretly later (3.122.8-18)	-omitted-	-omitted-	Śaryāti anguishes and consults his ministers. Sukanyā volunteers to marry Cyavana, and is given to him; the constipation ends. Sukanyā dons ascetic garb; everyone weeps (7.3.23-63)	-omitted-
IVb. Śaryāta and the clan depart. Sukanyā tries to follow (3.122.19)	IVb. Śaryāta departs so as not to offend Cyavana again (4.1.5.7)	IVb. Śaryāti departs, forgiven (3.122.25)	IVb. Śaryāti departs, forgiven (7.3.64)	IVb. Śaryāti departs, forgiven (9.3.9)
Cyavana becomes aware of Sukanyā's intention to desert him. Cyavana commands a black snake to detain her and she stays (3.122.20-123.2)		IVc. Sukanyā is an excellent wife (3.122.26-27)	IVc. Sukanyā is an excellent wife. (7.4.1-25)	IVc. Sukanyā is an excellent wife even though Cyavana is irritable (9.3.10)

IVa. Every text offers a different version of **the initiation of the marriage.** The narrative's flow requires that the king apologize and Sukanyā be given to Cyavana; beyond this, as is clear from the chart, only two versions are in close agreement as to the particulars. The *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa* contains a complex and unusual variation with no reflex in any other versions: the seer demands the girl in recompense, ordering the rest of the tribe to depart immediately. Śaryāta refuses and tries to buy Cyavana off with treasure; Cyavana counters that he knows the *vāstupasya brāhmaṇa*. The tribe holds a conference, and they decide to attempt to trick Cyavana by leaving the girl with instructions to run away from the feeble old man and rejoin them later.

The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* and *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* (which rarely correspond) have the king take the initiative and offer his daughter in recompense to the wronged Cyavana.³² The

³² One variant of the *Mahābhārata* has the king offer the girl first: after 3.122.21, D₃ inserts: "O you-who-are very-strict-in-your-vows, to you I will give this girl / Take her and be satisfied, O Descendant of Bhrgu!" (*imāmeva ca te kanyāṃ dadāmi sudr̥ḍhavrata / bhāryārthī tvam̐ grhāṇemāṃ prasīdasva ca bhārgava*).

other three versions depict Cyavana as the initiator of the arrangement: in the *Mahābhārata*, Cyavana simply asks for Sukanyā's hand and the king agrees in order to end the constipation. In the *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa*, the negotiations over the betrothal have been considerably expanded: more than 50 verses are devoted to Cyavana's request that the girl become his caretaker and the retinue's subsequent hand-wringing and lamentation. The king agonizes over the decision, for he particularly fears that Sukanyā will be tempted into adultery with such an old and unattractive husband, citing the story of Indra seducing the young and beautiful Ahalyā, the wife of the aged ascetic Gautama. He discusses the matter with his councilors, and is on the point of refusing when Sukanyā nobly steps forward, expressing admiration for the ascetic's powers and self-control. In a bathetic 11-verse coda to this section, Sukanyā asks for ascetic garb, abandoning her ornaments and soft garments. This is the only version that explicitly notes the ending of the constipation (*DevībhP.* 7.3.53).

This disparate assemblage of expressions of the "arrangement of the marriage" motif with no evolutionary arc represents a phenomenon we will see again below at VIIa and IXa: varied actions leading to the same outcome. At this point in the story, Sukanyā must be given to Cyavana, and as long as that outcome is generated, the specific mechanism by which it is carried out is unimportant.

IVb. The departure of the rest of the group is an afterthought in the other four versions, but the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa*'s description of the attempt to trick Cyavana continues. The tribe's plan to have Sukanyā abandon Cyavana is foiled when Cyavana discerns the girl's intentions through his ascetic powers.³³ A black snake rises up before the girl, frightening her into staying. It is an evocative and enigmatic illustration of Cyavana's power, but it disappears entirely outside of this version.³⁴ Such "elisions" of entire motif-clusters are a common occurrence.³⁵

IVc. The *Mahābhārata* and the *purāṇas* insert the detail that **Sukanyā proves to be a devoted and loving wife** (the *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa* devotes 25 verses to describing her solicitousness for Cyavana's comfort and her thoughtfulness at readying his ritual paraphernalia), whereas the earlier *brāhmaṇa* versions lack any interest in the domestic compatibility of the pair.

³³ This display of his power is quite possibly a motif transplanted or duplicated from VIa below.

³⁴ Shulman (1978:122) points out an interesting affinity between the Vedic mentions of Cyavana, the *Mbh.*'s choice of the anthill motif, and the appearance of the black serpent here: in India, snakes frequently inhabit ant- and termite-mounds, and Cyavana "has certain ophidian traits himself: the Aśvins remove his sheath (*vavri*) like an old cloak [at *RV* 1.116.10 and 5.74.5], just as the serpent loses his skin; and in later myths Cyavana epitomizes the aged ascetic who is sexually rejuvenated. One early version of the myth of Cyavana actually uses the serpent to symbolize the transformation of the old sage to youthful husband."

³⁵ Larson (2005) notes a number of parts of the Lugalbanda story that were not adopted into the Hymn to Hermes: he prays, eats lifesaving plants, bakes cakes, captures a wild bull and two goats, and has a prophetic dream. The correspondence between the numerous shared motifs are clear, but not every element in *Lugalbanda in the Mountain Cave* found its way into the *Hymn*.

Cluster V. The Aśvins Court Sukanyā

With the marriage accomplished, the focus shifts abruptly as we learn that the Aśvins are passing through the area; it is their interest in the beautiful young princess that drives the rest of the plot in most of the versions. After the anthill, this is perhaps the most central facet of the story, yet the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* eliminates it entirely, in the most striking transformation observable in the tale.

<i>Jaiminīya Br.</i>	<i>Śatapatha Br.</i>	<i>Mahābhārata</i>	<i>Devībhāgavata P.</i>	<i>Bhāgavata P.</i>
Va. The Aśvins wander about performing cures, and don't share in the <i>Soma</i> (3.123.3)	Va. The Aśvins wander about performing cures (4.1.5.8)	-omitted-	Va. The Aśvins frolic in the woods (7.4.26)	Va. The Aśvins come to visit Cyavana (9.3.11) They don't share in the <i>Soma</i> (9.3.12)
Vb. The Aśvins approach Sukanyā. (3.123.4)	Vb. The Aśvins see Sukanyā and “try to win her love.” (4:1:5:8) Sukanyā refuses them (4.1.5.8)	Vb. The Aśvins see Sukanyā returning from her bath naked and question her (3.123.1-3) Sukanyā gets dressed and identifies herself (3.123.4)	Vb. The Aśvins see Sukanyā returning from her bath and question her (7.4.27-38) Sukanyā identifies herself (7.4.39-42)	-omitted-
Vc. The Aśvins denigrate Cyavana. They ask Sukanyā to marry them (3.123.4)	Vc. The Aśvins denigrate Cyavana. They ask Sukanyā to go with them (4.1.5.9)	Vc. The Aśvins praise Sukanyā's beauty and denigrate Cyavana. They ask Sukanyā to marry one of them (3.123. 5-9)	Vc. The Aśvins praise Sukanyā's beauty and denigrate Cyavana. They ask Sukanyā to marry one of them (7.4.43-56)	-omitted-
Vd. Sukanyā declares her fidelity to her husband (3.123.5-6)	Vd. Sukanyā declares her fidelity to her husband (4.1.5.9)	Vd. Sukanyā declares her fidelity to her husband (3.123.10)	Vd. Sukanyā declares her fidelity to her husband. She even threatens to curse the Aśvins (7.5.1-6)	-omitted-
Cyavana hears them talking (3.123.7)	Cyavana is aware of the Aśvins' attention (4.1.5.9)	-omitted-	-omitted-	-omitted-

Va. The Aśvins Enter the Narrative. In both *brāhmaṇas*, the Aśvins are wandering among mortals “performing cures,” foreshadowing the other gods' later objection that as physicians they are unclean and therefore ineligible to receive the *Soma*.³⁶ In the *Mahābhārata*, the Aśvins simply appear with no explanation and no introduction, and in the *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa*, they are merely frolicking in the woods. This suggests that either (as with Cyavana) their role in the tale has become better-known over time, or that as the emphasis in the tale has shifted to the romance between Cyavana and Sukanyā, there is less need to craft the story around the Aśvins and their situation.

³⁶ The status of physicians in ancient India was surprisingly low, for example (*Mbh.* 13.135.14): “He who accepts food from a physician accepts excrement.”

In the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, however, (as noted above) in an alteration perhaps designed to guard against a perceived impiety of depicting the Aśvins as lecherous would-be adulterers, the deities enter the narrative only to visit Cyavana. Though the gods' desire for Sukanyā is arguably the second-most fundamental aspect of the original narrative, the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* entirely omits the gods' attempts to seduce the girl; they have come to the ashram only to pay their respects to her famous husband. This is arguably the starkest modification made in any of the texts.

Vb. The Aśvins See and Approach Sukanyā. In every text besides the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, the twin gods see Sukanyā and become besotted with her, and make initial romantic advances. In the two *brāhmaṇas*, the Aśvins simply see and approach the girl, whereas in the *Mahābhārata*, a minor “improvement”—Sukanyā's nudity—makes the tale a little racier, just as her partial nudity did in motif IIb. The *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa*, with its greater emphasis on Sukanyā as the heroine of the piece takes greater pains to preserve her dignity: she is returning from her bath, but fully clothed when she encounters the gods. In the *Mahābhārata*, Sukanyā identifies herself to the gods briefly,³⁷ and in the *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa*, Sukanyā gives them a 4- *śloka précis*³⁸ of her life and circumstances that covers all the high points.

Vc. After their respective initial questions, the texts proceed to **the Aśvins' denigration of Cyavana**, and his unfitness to be the husband of a young and beautiful woman; the *Mahābhārata* and *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa* also include extensive praise for Sukanyā's beauty at this point.

In every version except the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, the gods then make romantic overtures to the girl. While some shared motifs (especially ones central to the story) retain a consistent wording, this one is expressed differently in each: “be our wife” (*jāyaidhi*, *JB* 3.123.4); “follow us” (*āvām anuprehi*, *ŚB* 4.1.5.9), “choose one of us” (*varayasvaikam āvayoḥ*, *Mbh.* 3.123.9); “choose . . . one of [us] both” (*bhaja . . . ubhayos tvam ekam*, *DevībhP.* 7.4.54); “choose . . . one of [us] two for your happiness” (*bhajasva . . . ekam dvayos tava sukhāya*, *DevībhP.* 7.4.51). The *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa*'s use of two proposals is consonant with its practice of inflating and expanding the *Mahābhārata*'s version.

Vd. In all versions, **Sukanyā rejects the Aśvins' advances.** The *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa* takes the extra step of having Sukanyā threaten to curse the gods if they do not leave (*gacchatam devau śāpam dāsyāmi vā*, “Go, Gods, or I will you give you a curse!” *DevībhP.* 7.5.6.), and the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* doubles the motif, adding an additional rejection of the gods' overtures between Vb and Vc.

In the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa* Cyavana overhears the Aśvins' advances, while in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* Cyavana was aware of (*ājajñau*) the Aśvins' interaction with his wife and her response.

³⁷ Some manuscripts expand this slightly with a rather striking statement: G₁, M₁, M₂, T₁, and S all insert some variation of “I am Sukanyā by name; dwelling in this world of men / I am she who is eternally serving my husband with my whole soul.” (*nāmnā cāham sukanyeti nṛloke'smin pratiṣṭhitā / sāham sarvātmanā nityam bhartaram anuvartinī*).

³⁸ A *śloka* is the basic verse unit in Sanskrit, equivalent to a sentence, and the heroine here is allotted four of them (a noteworthy and substantial speaking role for a female character) to narrate a condensed version of her life and marriage to the gods.

Cluster VI: Cyavana's Plan

The next major event in the evolution of the tale is the three later versions' elimination of Cyavana's machinations to exploit the Aśvins' interest in his wife for his own gain. This is consistent with the alterations in Cyavana's character we observed over the course of the evolution of the negotiations with the Mānavas in Cluster III: Cyavana changes from the aggressive schemer of the *Śatapatha* and *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa*, to the grumpy-but-honorable holy man of the later tales. Similarly profound changes occur in Sukanyā's character as well.

<i>Jaiminīya Br.</i>	<i>Śatapatha Br.</i>	<i>Mahābhārata</i>	<i>Devībhāgavata P.</i>	<i>Bhāgavata P.</i>
The Aśvins depart (3.123.8)	THE AŚVINS DEPART	-omitted-	-omitted-	-omitted-
VIa. Cyavana demands to hear all that was said, and Sukanyā reports it (3.123.9-14)	VIa. Cyavana demands to hear all that was said, and Sukanyā reports it (4.1.5.10)	VIa. The Aśvins order Sukanyā to tell Cyavana about the plan they have devised; she does so (↓3.123.12-13)	VIa. Sukanyā goes to Cyavana to tell him about the plan the Aśvins have suggested (↓7.5.7-11)	-omitted-
VIb. Cyavana tells Sukanyā that when the Aśvins return, she is to respond to them that her husband shares in the <i>Soma</i> while they do not, but that he could include them (3.124.1-8)	VIb. Cyavana tells Sukanyā that if the Aśvins return, she is to respond to them with a riddle that she will not answer until they agree to rejuvenate him (4.1.5.10-11)	VIb. Cyavana consents to be rejuvenated. Sukanyā herself consents (↓3.123.13-14)	VIb. Cyavana consents to the plan to rejuvenate him. Sukanyā conveys their acceptance to the Aśvins (↓7.5.12-20)	-omitted-
VIc. The Aśvins return. Sukanyā responds as ordered. The Aśvins are enticed by the prospect of <i>Soma</i> rights (3.124.9-125.1)	VIc. The Aśvins return. Sukanyā responds as ordered. The Aśvins are anxious to learn what their imperfection is (4.1.5.10-11)	-omitted-	-omitted-	-omitted-

In the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa* and *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* the Aśvins depart, creating the opportunity for a conversation between the couple (in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, the departure may be presumed, but is not explicitly stated). In the later versions, the attempted seduction goes on uninterrupted, resulting in a shift in the autonomy of Sukanyā's character and an accompanying sequence change. In the later version, the conversation merely secures Cyavana's consent to the plan the gods have made with his wife, whereas as we will see below, in the earlier narratives it allows Cyavana to actively steer events.

VIa. Sukanyā Reports to Cyavana. In the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa* and *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, Cyavana uses the private conversation with his wife to assume control of the situation. He demands to hear a recounting of the Aśvins' visit, and Sukanyā tells him everything that happened, setting the stage for Cyavana's demand (which will be described at VIIa) that the Aśvins rejuvenate him.

In the *Mahābhārata* and *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa*, with no departure by the Aśvins, this motif occurs out of sequence (as indicated by italics).

Vib. Cyavana responds. In the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa* and *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, Cyavana coaches Sukanyā with a response for the Aśvins. The texts diverge slightly in the execution of the motif: in the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa*, the aged seer dangles the possibility of *Soma* rights before the twin gods to induce them to rejuvenate him, while the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* sets up a story of manipulation via riddle. In the *Śatapatha*, Sukanyā is told, “you should say, ‘indeed, you are not entirely whole or perfect, but you blame my husband thusly?’” (*sā tvāṃ brūtān ná vai súsarvāv iva stho ná súsamṛddhāv ivātha me pátiṃ nindatha íti*). Then she is to refuse to explain their imperfection until they have transformed Cyavana into a young man.

In the *Mahābhārata* and *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa*, motif VIb, like VIa, has been inverted from the *brāhmaṇas*’ version: Cyavana is not preparing Sukanyā’s response for the Aśvins, but consenting to the plan that she and the gods have formulated together.

VIc. In the two *brāhmaṇas*, **the Aśvins return** to continue their persuasion:³⁹ in the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa*, Sukanyā tempts the Aśvins with the information that her husband could include them in the *Soma*; they immediately ask him for this, the earliest mention of the *Soma*-rights issue in any of the texts. In the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, Sukanyā responds to the Aśvins with the riddle concerning their imperfection. Their interest is piqued, and they ask her for the answer. In the *Mahābhārata* and *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa*, the Aśvins never left, so do not need to return.

Sukanyā conducts all the negotiations at VIIa and VIIb without receiving instructions from her husband, another instance (as in IIc) where a function is stripped from a male character and given to a female. The motif of the conference between Cyavana and Sukanyā is thereby inverted: in the *Mahābhārata* and *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa*, the Aśvins tell Sukanyā to consult Cyavana after they have formulated the plan to rejuvenate him and hold a *svayamvara*; he merely agrees to the arrangement. Coming as it does *after* the making of the arrangements, rather than before, this conference can no longer occur at the original place in the sequence. That the motif of the conference was re-located seems more likely than that the original was abandoned and a new one created, though there can be no certain proof of this. As in IIc, the effect of the changes is a tightening of the structure of the story and an expansion of the size and dimensionality of Sukanyā’s role.

³⁹ This presents a very nice example of mild variation in the expression of a motif, akin to the phenomenon Lord describes of bards frequently using different verbal expressions of the same themes yet claiming they are “exactly alike,” (see, for example, Lord 1960:27-29). Both *brāhmaṇas* essentially say “they returned and said the same thing,” but using different wording: “*tāṃ púnar úpeyatus tāṃ haitád évocatuh*” (*SBr.* 4.1.5.10); “*tau haināṃ śvo bhūta etyaitad evocatuh*” (*JB* 3.124.9).

Cluster VII: An Agreement is Reached

<i>Jaiminīya Br.</i>	<i>Śatapatha Br.</i>	<i>Mahābhārata</i>	<i>Devībhāgavata P.</i>	<i>Bhāgavata P.</i>
VIIa. Cyavana demands that the Aśvins transform him into a young man (3.125.2-3)	VIIa. Sukanyā tells the Aśvins that if they transform Cyavana into a young man she will reveal their imperfection (4.1.5.11)	VIIa. The Aśvins offer to transform Cyavana into a young man . . . (3.123.11-12)	VIIa. The Aśvins offer to transform Cyavana into a young man . . . (7.5.7-10)	VIIa. Cyavana asks the Aśvins to transform him into a young man (9.3.11-12)
The Aśvins take Cyavana to the <i>śaiśava</i> of the Sarasvatī (3.125.4)	-omitted-	-omitted-	-omitted-	-omitted-
VIIb. Cyavana warns Sukanyā that he and the Aśvins will be identical, and tells her how to recognize him (3.125.5)	-omitted-	VIIb. . . . as handsome as they are, so that Sukanyā may choose a husband from the three (3.123.12-13) [‡ 3. 123.13-14 listed at VIa-b]	VIIb. . . . as handsome as they are, so that Sukanyā may choose a husband from the three (7.5.8-10) [‡ 7.5.11-20 listed at VIa-b]	-omitted-

This cluster provides an excellent illustration of narrative fluidity. Three critical elements of the story are in play here: the idea of Cyavana’s transformation, the identity of Cyavana and the Aśvins, and the arrangement of the impromptu *svayamvara*. All are critical hallmarks of the tale, but there is surprisingly little accord on the sequence of their deployment, or on who suggests the transformation and who drives the bargaining.

VIIa. This motif—the **rejuvenation proposal**—remains intact in every re-telling, but the directionality and intent of the proposition vary widely. In the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa*, Cyavana himself demands the transformation as a response to the request for *Soma* rights made by the Aśvins’ in motif Vc, while in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, Sukanyā repeats Cyavana’s demand to the gods in accordance with Cyavana’s coaching. The *Mahābhārata* and *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa*, in keeping with their less self-seeking Cyavana, have the Aśvins suggest the transformation. In the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, since the Aśvins’ romantic interest in Sukanyā is absent, Cyavana simply proposes the idea as a friendly trade to which the gods eagerly agree: youth for him and *Soma* for them.

The *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa* includes a unique element here: the Aśvins take Cyavana to the *śaiśava* (lit. “childish” or “relating to the child”) of the Sarasvatī, presumably a site on the river with youth-restoring capabilities.⁴⁰

VIIb. **Cyavana’s transformation into a young man** identical to the Aśvins and the concomitant need for Sukanyā to identify her husband occurs in every variant except the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*. Within the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa*, the motif is nascent and its expression is

⁴⁰ Hopkins (1905) is particularly concerned with this section, and see Witzel (1987:382 n.10) for a more detailed analysis of the place and the term.

abrupt: as he is ordered to enter the river, Cyavana warns Sukanyā that he and the Aśvins will be identical after the rejuvenation, and instructs her in how to identify him.

In the *Mahābhārata* and *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa*, the identity device has become central to the storyline: the Aśvins' suggestion that they transform Cyavana into a young man as handsome as they are so that Sukanyā may choose a husband from the three is allowed to arise organically within the wooing scene, where the gods employ it as a device to counter the girl's declarations of fidelity. By transforming Cyavana, the Aśvins' argument goes, they will have leveled the playing field, thus creating a legitimate opportunity for a *svayamvara*.⁴¹ In the *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa*, they do so in a panicked response to Sukanyā's threat of a curse as well as a counter to her protestations regarding her fidelity.

In the *Mahābhārata* and *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa*, the Aśvins order Sukanyā to consult Cyavana about the plan, and she does so; as was discussed above under VIa, this appears to be a transplantation of the earlier conference between Cyavana and Sukanyā.

Cluster VIII: The Transformation and *Svayamvara*

This cluster's highlight is "the indistinguishable divinities at the *svayamvara*." This bears some similarity to the *svayamvara* in the tale of Nala and Damayanti (*Mbh.* 3.54), though in reverse: in the tale of Nala and Damayanti, the gods have all made themselves resemble Nala in the hopes of winning Damayanti's hand, whereas here Cyavana is made to resemble the gods.

<i>Jaiminīya Br.</i>	<i>Śatapatha Br.</i>	<i>Mahābhārata</i>	<i>Devībhāgavata P.</i>	<i>Bhāgavata P.</i>
VIIIa. THE AŚVINS AND CYAVANA GO INTO THE SARASVATĪ RIVER	VIIIa. The Aśvins order Sukanyā to take Cyavana into a lake; she does so (4.1.5.12)	VIIIa. The Aśvins order Cyavana into a lake on the Narmada River, and enter it themselves (3.123.15-16)	VIII. The Aśvins and Cyavana go into the Mānasarovara Lake (7.5.20-22)	VIII. The Aśvins take Cyavana with them into a lake (9.3.13-14)
VIIIb. Cyavana and Aśvins emerge young and identical (3.125.6)	VIIIb. Cyavana emerges young. (4.1.5.12)	VIIIb. Cyavana and Aśvins emerge young and identical. (3.123.17-18)	VIIIb. Cyavana and Aśvins emerge young and identical (7.5.22-24)	VIIIb. Cyavana and Aśvins emerge young and identical (9.3.15)
VIIIc. Sukanyā recognizes Cyavana. (3.125.7)	[Sukanyā does not need to make a choice]	VIIIc. Sukanyā chooses Cyavana, using mind and intellect (3.123.19)	VIIIc. Sukanyā cannot recognize Cyavana; she calls on the goddess, who reveals him. (7.5.26-41) The Aśvins reward her fidelity and prepare to leave (7.5.41-42)	VIIIc. Sukanyā cannot recognize Cyavana, so she throws herself under the protection of the Aśvins. (9.3.16) They reward her fidelity and reveal the true Cyavana (9.3.17)

⁴¹ For a detailed and accessible discussion of the nuances of Indic marriage types and rituals, see Jamison (1994).

VIIIa. The rejuvenation is carried out by immersion in water. The *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa* omits any mention of the entry of the three into the water, but that they did so may be assumed from the description of their emergence. The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* forgoes the gods' entry into the water and Sukanyā's *svayamvara*; their romantic interest in Sukanyā forgotten, the Aśvins are interested only in learning about their "imperfection." The other versions send the three male characters into the water together: the Sarasvatī River in the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa*, a lake on the Narmadā River in the *Mahābhārata*, the Mānasarovara Lake in the *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa*, nameless lakes in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* and *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*.⁴²

VIIIb. Cyavana and the Aśvins emerge from the water identical in appearance. This is a hallmark of the tale, but as this cluster demonstrates, sometimes even a hallmark is not present in every version: it does not occur in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*. Mystifyingly, it does, however, appear in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, where the omission of the Aśvins' romantic interest in Sukanyā renders it manifestly anachronistic. That version, alone among those containing a *svayamvara*, gives us no forewarning about the fact that Sukanyā will be required to identify her husband; indeed, nothing in the earlier part of the tale renders it comprehensible. The persistence of a feature or element, when the reason for its inclusion is no longer there, surely deserves study; there are unquestionably other examples of this phenomenon in literature, both recognized and unrecognized.⁴³

Another intriguing feature of this motif is the fact that it represents a reversal of one of the Vedic references to Cyavana: as noted above, *RV* 1.116.10d indicates that the Aśvins "made him a lord of maidens" (*pātim akṛṇutaṃ kanīṅām*).⁴⁴ Is the presentation of three suitors for Sukanyā an inversion of an earlier plot element that gave Cyavana three wives?

VIIIc. In every version that contains a *svayamvara*, Sukanyā chooses Cyavana. The particulars, however, play out differently in each, and with vastly different consequences to the construction of the narrative and of Sukanyā's character. In the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa*, Sukanyā recognizes Cyavana without fanfare, having been coached in advance about the signs for which she must look. There is little indication in the presentation of the theme (beyond the Aśvins' earlier romantic interest in her) that the occasion is intended to be read as a *svayamvara*; the Aśvins appear to consider the rejuvenation to have been performed only to convince Cyavana to give them information about being included in the *Soma* ritual. In the *Mahābhārata*, confronted with a set of radiantly handsome and identical (*tulyarūpadhāras*, literally "bearing equivalent forms") young men, Sukanyā gladly remains faithful to Cyavana, choosing him "with her mind

⁴² It should be noted that all three versions stand in sharp contrast to the Vedic allusions to the story, where, as noted above, references to the transformation at *RV* 1.116.10 and *RV* 5.74.5 indicate that it involved the removal of Cyavana's skin.

⁴³ The famous duals of the "Embassy Scene" in *Iliad* IX are often presumed to reflect an earlier version in which the embassy had only two members. Roessel (1989) speculates, for example, that Odysseus' killing of the monstrous stag on Circe's island may be a similar vestige of an abandoned plot point involving inadvertent cannibalism by Odysseus and his companions.

⁴⁴ Sanskrit *pati* in compounds can mean either "spouse" or "lord," and because Sanskrit contains dual forms as well as singulars and plurals, use of the plural *kanīṅām* indicates there were at least three maidens involved.

and intellect” (*niścītya manasā buddhyā*), giving Sukanyā’s character an agency and centrality far beyond anything seen in the earlier versions.⁴⁵

The *Devībhāgavata* and *Bhāgavata Purāṇas* retain the increased authority and importance of Sukanyā’s character, but they introduce a new element: although Sukanyā has every intention of choosing Cyavana, she is initially unable to ascertain which one of the three he is. In the *Devī Purāṇa*, Sukanyā expresses her doubts and resolves to place her trust in the Devī. She sings a hymn of praise, and is rewarded with the ability to discern her legitimate spouse. The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* adopts the innovation, but has Sukanyā instead place her trust in the Aśvins themselves, thus (somewhat awkwardly) re-casting the *svayamvara* as a spontaneous test of her piety and chastity.

Cluster IX: The Aśvins Pursue *Soma* Rights

With the *svayamvara* concluded, the tale turns to the Aśvins and their *Soma* rights. As with motif IVa (Sukanyā’s betrothal to Cyavana), a motif may assume many different forms while still accomplishing the same narrative outcome. This cluster is also the site of a struggle between the oldest and the later versions over the inclusion of the mysterious figure of Dadhyañc. Called in as an outside consultant on the workings of the sacrifice in the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa*, his role in advancing the twin gods’ quest for *Soma* rights is first relocated to the end of the tale in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, and then taken over by Cyavana in the last three variants.

<i>Jaiminīya Br.</i>	<i>Śatapatha Br.</i>	<i>Mahābhārata</i>	<i>Devībhāgavata P.</i>	<i>Bhāgavata P.</i>
IXa. The Aśvins demand to know how to be included in the <i>Soma</i> sacrifice (3.125.8-9) Cyavana tells the Aśvins that the gods are trying to sacrifice, but failing. He directs them to Dadhyañc (3.126.1-8)	IXa. The Aśvins ask Sukanyā why they are not perfect (4.1.5.13) Cyavana tells the Aśvins that they are excluded from the <i>Soma</i> sacrifice, and therefore incomplete (4.1.5.13)	IXa. Cyavana promises <i>Soma</i> rights to the Aśvins, who return to the heavens. Cyavana and Sukanyā disport themselves in the forest (3.123.20-24)	IXa. Cyavana offers the Aśvins a boon. The Aśvins ask for rights to the <i>Soma</i> . Overjoyed about his transformation, Cyavana begins to truly enjoy life with his wife (7.5.43-6.5)	IXa. ↑ Cyavana offers to include the Aśvins in the <i>Soma</i> in return for his rejuvenation; they accept (9.3.11-13)

⁴⁵ Indeed, two MS (K₄ and D₂) go so far as to insert an additional line: “Since I, with my mind, wish for no other husband except my own / by this truth may the two gods give me my husband” (*yadyahaṃ manasā nānyam patimicche svakaṃ vinā / tena satyena me devau prayacchetām patiṃ mama*), a verse that powerfully recalls the words of other heroines of the *Mahābhārata*, most notably Damayantī (in the other famous *svayamvara*-by-recognition scene at *Mbh.* 3.54.17-19) who declares that she has never strayed in thought (*manasā*) and thrice repeats the *tena satyena* formula known as the *satyakriyā* or “Act of Truth” (see also, Lüders 1959:486-509 or Brown 1972). The venerable heroine Kuntī also invokes the *satyakriyā* in her speech to Kṛṣṇa at 5.88.60 regarding the rights of her sons. Additionally, the *manasā* employed here by Sukanyā calls to mind *Mbh.* 3.278.27 where the heroine Savitrī defends her choice of husband with the words, “The decision was made with my mind . . .” (*manasā niścayaṃ kṛtvā*).

<p>IXb. They go to Dadhyañc, who has been threatened by Indra with decapitation if he shares his knowledge, but he teaches the Aśvins after they temporarily replace his head with a horse's head (3.126.8-21)</p> <p>[‡ 3.127.1-3 listed below at XIa]</p>	<p>IXb. Dadhyañc has been threatened by Indra with decapitation if he shares his knowledge, but he teaches the Aśvins after they temporarily replace his head with a horse's head (14.1.1.18-24)</p>			
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IXa. The Issue of *Soma* Rights. The *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa* has the Aśvins point out that they have granted Cyavana's wish and he must now tell them how to be included in the *Soma* ritual. Cyavana tells them that the other gods are currently performing a "headless" sacrifice at Kurukṣetra, but that it is failing because "the head of the sacrifice was cut off, and that which Dadhyañc the Atharvan saw, you two go to him for that" (*tad yajñasya śiro 'chidyata. tad yad dadhyañ ātharvaṇo 'nvapaśyat tam tad gacchatam*, JB 3.126.3-4).⁴⁶

In the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, the disgruntled Aśvins ask Sukanyā why they are not perfect, but it is Cyavana who replies, telling them that it is because they are excluded from the *Soma* ritual in which the other gods take part; upon receipt of this information they go to join the other gods at the sacrifice.

The three post-*brāhmaṇic* versions omit Dadhyañc entirely.⁴⁷ In the *Mahābhārata*, the grateful Cyavana simply gives the Aśvins the *Soma* boon himself, unsolicited. In the *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa*, Cyavana offers the Aśvins a boon to thank them for the restoration of his health, which accompanied the transformation. Though the question of their access to the *Soma* has not been previously mentioned in the text, they ask for the right to consume it at the sacrifice. In the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, of course, the offer of *Soma* rights was extended simultaneously with the Cyavana's request to be rejuvenated, so no motif intrudes between the Aśvins' revealing of Cyavana to Sukanyā and the return of her father in motif IXb.

⁴⁶ The background to this is given at *ŚB* 14.1.1-25. In brief: the "head of the sacrifice" is Viṣṇu's head, and it was cut off (by termites who chew his bow-string and make it snap) during a divine sacrifice in Kurukṣetra. Indra somehow merges with the glory of the headless body of Viṣṇu, and does not wish this state of affairs to be discontinued. Dadhyañc knows how to restore the head, so Indra threatens him in an attempt to ensure his silence. Dadhyañc is sometimes conflated with the better-known Dādhīci (as at *RV* 1.117.22), and the *Tāṇḍya Brāhmaṇa* of the *Sāma Veda*, 14.6.10, claims Cyavana is the son of Dadhīci: *Cyavano vāi Dādhīco 'śvinoḥ priya āsīt, so 'jīryat; tam etena sāmṇā 'psu vyaiṅkayatām, tam punar yuvānam akurutām* ("Cyavana, the son of Dādhīci, was dear to the Aśvins. He grew old, with this *Vīṅka* chant they threw him in the water, they made him young again," discussed at Hopkins 1905:45).

⁴⁷ It is not surprising to see one seer substituted for another; though many have defining characteristics, they are a relatively homogeneous class of being. The phenomenon of one character being replaced by or conflated with another of the same type is noted by Lord (1960:121) in the context of heroes: "The fact that the same song occurs attached to different heroes would seem to indicate that the story is more important than the historical hero to which it is attached. There is a close relationship between hero and tale, but with some tales at least the *type* of hero is more significant than the *specific* hero."

IXb. The Aśvins go to Dadhyañc and ask him to teach them, but he protests that he has been threatened by Indra with decapitation if he shares his knowledge. The Aśvins suggest that he allow them to replace his own head temporarily with that of a horse, and then teach them with this surrogate head; he agrees to this and teaches them.⁴⁸

In the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, though Dadhyañc does not appear in the narration of *The tale of Cyavana* in *kāṇḍa* 3, ten *kāṇḍas* (“chapters”) later, at 14.1.1.18-24, we find a scene of Dadhyañc teaching the Aśvins how to remedy the headlessness of the sacrifice while wearing the head of a horse. The scene is in no way presented as having an association with Cyavana or his story. Whether this may suggest that the *Jaiminīya* combined two stories that usually existed separately, or the *Śatapatha* split the *Jaiminīya*’s tale, is unclear.

Cluster X: The King Re-enters the Narrative

All five narratives now begin to set the stage for a sacrifice at which the twin gods will exercise their rights to *Soma*. In the first two versions, the Aśvins’ first consumption of *Soma* takes place without Cyavana’s participation, but as the narrative evolves from an explication of ritual practice into a fully-realized story, its structure is altered to tighten the focus by expanding Cyavana’s role and eliminating extraneous elements. This requires that in the three later versions Śaryāti must return to the ashram and collaborate with Cyavana to stage the sacrifice, and this addition gives us the chance to see a new theme created and then embroidered on and expanded by the poet.

<i>Jaiminīya Br.</i>	<i>Śatapatha Br.</i>	<i>Mahābhārata</i>	<i>Devībhāgavata P.</i>	<i>Bhāgavata P.</i>
(↓)Xa. Cyavana goes to Śaryāta (3.128.1)	-omitted-	Xa. Hearing that Cyavana’s youth was restored, Śaryāti returns (1.124.1-3)	Xa. Śaryāti returns at the request of his wife (7.6.6-13)	Xa. Śaryāti returns in order to sacrifice (9.3.18)
-not present-	-not present-	Xb. Śaryāti is delighted at the couple’s happiness (1.124.1-3)	Xb. Seeing Sukanyā with the rejuvenated Cyavana, Śaryāti berates her for infidelity, but she reveals Cyavana is her husband (7.6.14-45)	Xb. Seeing Sukanyā with the rejuvenated Cyavana, Śaryāti berates her for infidelity, but she reveals Cyavana is her husband (9.3.18-23)

Xa. The King and Cyavana Re-unite. In the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa*, at a much later point in the narrative Cyavana pays a visit to Śaryāta after the conclusion of his dealings with the Aśvins, a surprising thing for him to do, given that Śaryāta tried to trick him by having Sukanyā flee. In the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, King Śaryāta and his tribe make no re-appearance, but in the epic and post-epic versions Śaryāti returns to Cyavana’s ashram. The *Mahābhārata* has Śaryāti return when he hears about the rejuvenation, while the *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa* explains that he

⁴⁸ This part of the tale is alluded to in hymns to the Aśvins at *Rg Veda* 1.116.12 and 1.117.22.

has come back at the request of his wife to check on Sukanyā. The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* takes a more direct route and has Śaryāti return in order to request that Cyavana perform a sacrifice for him.

Xb. Upon the king's return, the *Mahābhārata* merely records his delight upon seeing the happy couple, but the *Bhāgavata* and *Devībhāgavata Purāṇas* introduce a twist: **Śaryāti mistakes the rejuvenated Cyavana for Sukanyā's illicit lover**. The king flies into a rage at his daughter's apparent unchastity, an addition that ties in nicely with the concerns he expressed at *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa* 3.23-31, regarding the risk of adultery inherent in a physically mismatched marriage. Eventually, of course, the situation is sorted out, and Śaryāti is delighted to discover the change in his daughter's marital fortunes.

XI. The Sacrifice

At Cluster XI in the *Brāhmaṇa* versions, the Aśvins attend the gods' sacrifice, where they attempt to receive access to *Soma*. The *Jaiminīya* then goes on to include a second sacrifice, this one officiated by Cyavana on Śaryāta's behalf. As the tale evolves, however, the divine and royal sacrifices are consolidated, tidying up the narrative structure, and allowing the royal sacrifice to become the site of the tale's climax, an attack by the god Indra.

<i>Jaiminīya Br.</i>	<i>Śatapatha Br.</i>	<i>Mahābhārata</i>	<i>Devībhāgavata P.</i>	<i>Bhāgavata P.</i>
XIa. The Aśvins arrive at the gods' sacrifice (3.127.4)	XIa. The Aśvins arrive at the gods' sacrifice and ask to be admitted (4.1.5.13-14)	-omitted-	-omitted-	-omitted-
XIb. (↓) Cyavana holds a sacrifice on Śaryāta's behalf (3.128.2-4) XIb. (↓) The seers hold a sacrifice on Śaryāta's behalf; this is the last time gods and men drink <i>Soma</i> together (3.159.2-3)	-omitted-	XIb. Cyavana and Śaryāti assemble a sacrifice (1.124.4-7)	XIb. Cyavana and Śaryāti assemble a sacrifice (7.6.46-50) Indra becomes agitated (7.6.51-52)	XIb. Cyavana caused Śaryāti to perform a sacrifice (9.3.24)
XIc. (↓) Cyavana prepares to offer <i>Soma</i> to the Aśvins (3.159.4)	-not present-	XIc. Cyavana offers the <i>Soma</i> cup to the Aśvins (1.124.8)	XIc. Cyavana begins to offer the <i>Soma</i> cup to the Aśvins (7.6.53)	XIc. Cyavana offers the <i>Soma</i> cup to the Aśvins (9.3.24)
XId. (↓) Indra seizes the cup (3.159.5)	XId. The gods refuse to let the Aśvins in because they are physicians (4.1.5.14)	XId. Indra expresses doubts about the Aśvins' fitness for <i>Soma</i> , and argues with Cyavana (1.124.9-13)	XId. Indra expresses doubts about the Aśvins' fitness for <i>Soma</i> , and argues with Cyavana (7.6.53)	-omitted-
		Cyavana again offers the <i>Soma</i> cup to the Aśvins (1.124.8)	Cyavana argues with Indra, and again offers <i>Soma</i> to the Aśvins (7.6.54-7.1)	

XIa. The Divine Sacrifice. In the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa* and *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, the events that transpire at the first (divine) sacrifice are unconnected to Cyavana: the Aśvins go to join the sacrificing gods, leaving the seer and his wife behind.

XIb. The Royal Sacrifice is Assembled. As noted above, the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa* contains two descriptions of additional sacrifices held by Śaryāta. The first of these appears at the end of the main Cyavana story at 3.128.2-4, and ties up the remaining loose end in the tale: it allows Cyavana to fulfill the third of the wishes he made at motif Ia in the *Jaiminīya* (to sacrifice with 1,000 cows), proving the effectiveness of the *sāman* to which that version is a testimony.⁴⁹ At *JB* 3.159.2-3, the text, however, contains yet a third sacrifice, this one conducted by the *ṛṣis*⁵⁰ on Śaryāta's behalf; this was, the text claims, the last time gods and men drink *Soma* together (*JB* 3.159.3), and the tale is intended to explain the origin of the three Vāidanvata chants, whose eponymous *ṛṣi*, Vidanvat, plays a significant role in this version.⁵¹

The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* does not include either version of Śaryāta's sacrifice, but it is Śaryāta's sacrifice that the three later texts pick up and expand while the divine sacrifice vanishes.

Though it is the climax of the tale, the overall treatment of Śaryāti's sacrifice (aside from the upcoming conflict) is surprisingly minimal. There are none of the florid descriptions that some of the versions have used so heavily elsewhere: the most elaboration given is that "on a good auspicious day he, possessed of enormous wealth and prosperity, prepared an excellent place for the performance of a sacrifice" (*DevībhP.* 7.6.51) or "the king built a splendid sacrificial platform built and filled it with every kind of desirable object" (*Mbh.* 3.124.6).

The *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa* foreshadows the upcoming scene of conflict by noting that Indra becomes nervous upon catching sight of the Aśvins, and asks the other gods what the twin gods are doing at the sacrifice (*DevībhP.* 7.6.48).

⁴⁹ The *Jaiminīya* is not the only *brahmaṇa* to include a sacrifice performed by Cyavana for Śaryāta; the *Aitareya* 8.4:21 reports that Cyavana conducts an *aindreṇa mahābhiṣeka* (a special coronation ritual sacred to Indra) for the king.

⁵⁰ The *ṛṣis* are the "sages" or "seers," a select class of mortals of a near-divine status, which they generally acquire through lineage, the composition of hymns to the gods, ascetic practices, or some combination of the three. The theme of the *ṛṣi* who accrues so much power that he is able to combat or impose his will on gods or other immortal beings is a frequent centerpiece of Sanskrit tales.

⁵¹ The duplication of a section of narrative framework so that new twists may be added to it is a phenomenon observable in numerous other Sanskrit narratives. I term this phenomenon the "Paper Doll," after the child's game in which a string of figures is cut from the same template and then each one is decorated individually. The phenomenon is certainly not confined to Indic examples, however. A straightforward Homeric example is the parallel assaults by suitors in the *Odyssey* (Eurymachus at 18.494ff and Ctesippus at 19.370ff): words are exchanged / the suitor grabs and throws an item (stool, hoof) / Odysseus ducks / the item hits someone/thing else / Telemachus admonishes them / the suitors are stunned / one man (Agelaus/Amphinomus) speaks up in support of Telemachus. In Book 18, everyone feasts happily then goes home to bed, where in 20, Athena sends a madness upon them. Another example may be found in the events on Pharos and Thrinacia at *Od.* 4.360-70 and 12.325-28: The men are trapped on an island, and the winds won't blow; they fruitlessly attempt to fish, the hero wanders off alone, and a divine intervention takes place. On a slightly larger scale, Wilamowitz (1884:116-21) felt that Circe and Calypso were "folk" and "epic" versions of the same tale.

XIc. *Soma* Proffered. In the *Jaiminīya*'s third sacrifice, and in the epic and *purāṇic* versions, Cyavana, in accordance with his vow, offers the *Soma* cup to the Aśvins in the presence of the other deities, including Indra.

XId. Rejection of the Aśvins rights to *Soma*. The *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa* contains neither an explanation of the Aśvins' prior exclusion nor any attempt to prevent them from joining in the *Soma* at the first two sacrifices. In the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, however, the gods at the divine sacrifice say they will not let the Aśvins in because of their inherent uncleanness as physicians. Their objection is mild, however, and as we shall see at motif XIIc, the Aśvins are quite easily able to talk them out of it by means of the same verbal ploys Cyavana used upon them.

In the *Mahābhārata* and the *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa*, while it is only Indra who intervenes as the cup is offered, his objections are far more strenuous and profound. He expresses his concerns to the other gods, and argues with Cyavana; Cyavana, undeterred, offers the cup a second time. The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* does not include Indra's initial objections, jumping instead straight to Indra's attack on Cyavana, the subject of the next cluster.

XII. The Fight

Here we see the culmination of the story's evolutionary arc. What began as a disorganized and rambling paean to a particular *sāman* in the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa*, and turned into an elliptical narrative explication of a part of the *Soma* ritual in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, becomes, in the epic and *purāṇic* versions, a tale that essentially uses characters with the same names and the same general narrative events to tell a rather different story. Clusters IV through VIII saw the emergence of a love story between Cyavana and Sukanyā, and in Cluster XII the tale assimilates itself to another widespread Indic story pattern, namely: the god Indra's numerous conflicts with ascetics.⁵²

Cluster XII is also particularly valuable to us for the opportunity it gives to observe a particular issue: when one scene disappears and a similar one takes its place, how should we understand the relationship between the two and the nature of the changes that led to one replacing the other? In the first two versions, Indra attacks the seer Dadhyañc, but in the latter three, his hostilities shift to Cyavana.

⁵² In the *Vedas*, Indra stands among the most important of the gods, presiding as king and war-leader over the rest, but over time his importance dwindles. While Vedic allusions to the god largely concern his victories and feats of daring, by the period of the *Mahābhārata*'s composition, his power has been eclipsed by the rise of Brahma, Viṣṇu and Śiva. By the epics, and most dramatically in the *Purāṇas*, Indra has become the silliest and most fallible of the deities, desperately jealous of his powers and obsessed with disrupting the *tejas*-building (*tejas* is a form of accrued spiritual capital which gives its possessor what are essentially magical powers) meditative work of powerful ascetics. Winternitz (1972:392) states: "The characteristic of this later brahmanical poetry, however, is exaggeration, lack of moderation in general, and especially immoderate exaltation of the saints—Brahmins and ascetics—over the gods. Even in the actual *Indra-myths* connected with the Vedic legends of the gods, Indra is no longer the mighty champion and conqueror of demons."

<i>Jaiminīya Br.</i>	<i>Śatapatha Br.</i>	<i>Mahābhārata</i>	<i>Devībhāgavata P.</i>	<i>Bhāgavata P.</i>
XIIa. Indra attacks Dadhyañc and cuts the horse's head from Dadhyañc's shoulders. The Aśvins re-attach Dadyanc's real head (3.127.1-3)↑	XIIa. Indra attacks Dadhyañc and cuts the horse's head from Dadhyañc's shoulders. The Aśvins re-attach Dadhyañc's real head (14.1.1.24)↓	XIIa. Indra attacks Cyavana with his thunderbolt; Cyavana paralyzes Indra's arm (1.124.14-16)	XIIa. Indra attacks Cyavana with his thunderbolt; Cyavana paralyzes Indra's thunderbolt (7.7.1-11)	XIIa. Indra attacks Cyavana with his thunderbolt; Cyavana paralyzes Indra's arm (9.3.25)
Vidanvat attacks Indra and a fight ensues between gods and <i>ṛṣis</i> (3.159.6-160.2) XIIb. (↓) Together, the <i>ṛṣis</i> create an <i>asura</i> who charges at Indra (3.160.3-5) The gods decide to flee; their absence saddens the <i>ṛṣis</i> ; Vidanvat performs the <i>Vaidanvata</i> chants and repairs the situation (3.60.6-19)		XIIb. Cyavana creates an <i>asura</i> who charges at Indra (1.124.18-24)	XIIb. Cyavana creates a pair of <i>asuras</i> who intimidate Indra and menace the other devas (7.7.12-24) Indra thinks of Br̥haspati, who comes and advises him not to fight Cyavana (7.7.24-29)	
XIIc. The gods ask for someone to put the head of the sacrifice in its place; the Aśvins do so. The gods give the Aśvins the right to be included in the <i>Soma</i> ritual and make them priests (3.127.5-15)	XIIc. The Aśvins tell the other gods that the sacrifice is headless, and that if they are invited in they will explain it. The gods give the Aśvins the right to be included in the <i>Soma</i> ritual and make them priests (4.1.5.14-16)	XIIc. Indra surrenders and grants the Aśvins <i>Soma</i> (1.125.1-3)	XIIc. Indra surrenders and grants the Aśvins <i>Soma</i> (7.7.30-34) (↓) Cyavana orders the Aśvins to drink the <i>Soma</i> (7.7.40-41)	XIIc. The gods give the Aśvins the right to be included in the <i>Soma</i> ritual (9.3.26)

XIIa. Indra attacks. In the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa*, when Indra sees Dadhyañc teaching the Aśvins, he carries out his threat to decapitate him for sharing the arcane knowledge. Thanks to the forethought of the Aśvins, Indra cuts off only the surrogate head and the Aśvins easily reattach Dadhyañc's own head. Indra takes no further action, and the Aśvins are free to move on to the divine sacrifice. In the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa*'s later *Vāidanvata* scene (3.159-60), it is Vidanvat who attacks Indra and a fight ensues between gods and *ṛṣis*.

The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* does contain Dadhyañc's teaching of the Aśvins and his decapitation, but not as a part of *The Tale of Cyavana*. Rather, Dadhyañc's instruction of the twin gods occurs as a freestanding episode in *Kāṇḍa* 14, and in a more simplified form than that in which it appears in the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa*.

In the epic and the *purāṇas*, however, Dadhyañc's character has vanished and Indra's attack is made instead upon Cyavana himself. When Indra's verbal attempt to dissuade Cyavana from sharing *Soma* with the Aśvins fails at XIc, Indra attacks Cyavana with his *vajra*

(“thunderbolt”). Cyavana responds to the assault by paralyzing Indra’s arm in the *Mahābhārata* and *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*; in the *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa*, he paralyzes the thunderbolt.⁵³

At issue here is whether the Indra-Cyavana version of the fight should be conceptualized as a re-located and re-worked variation of the Indra-Dadhyañc hostilities (as I have done here), or if the loss of Dadhyañc and the creation of the fight between Cyavana should be seen as separate developments. As we have seen with other motifs in the tale, such as IIIc (The harassment of Cyavana), or VIc (The negotiations with the Aśvins), it is quite common for a story to retain an action but re-assign it to another character. Also supporting the conclusion that the Indra-Cyavana feud is, in fact, the genetic descendant of the Indra-Dadhyañc feud, at 7.7.5 in the *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa* Indra threatens to sever Cyavana’s head (as he does to Dadhyañc in the *brāhmaṇas*).

XIIb. Cyavana Fights back. In the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa*, Dadhyañc (content to escape with his life) offers no resistance to Indra, but in the *Vaidanvata* scene the *ṛṣis* join together to create an *asura* who charges at Indra. The gods flee *en masse*, and the fear of their permanent loss saddens the *ṛṣis*; Vidanvat performs the *Vaidanvata* chants and repairs the situation, ending that version of the tale.

In the *Mahābhārata* and *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa*, it is Cyavana who fights back against the overbearing god. In the *Mahābhārata* it is he who conjures up an *asura*, Mada⁵⁴ the demon of “Intoxication,” from the sacrificial fire, and Mada attacks Indra on Cyavana’s behalf. The *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa* tracks the *Mahābhārata*’s version, but in its typical fashion it expands the motif: Cyavana first creates a female *asura*, Krityā, who then brings forth Mada from her own body. Both texts’ descriptions of Mada focus on his gaping mouth as the demon rushes at Indra to swallow him.

In the *Mahābhārata*, faced with such a foe, the already-paralyzed Indra admits defeat, but in the *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa*, Indra first mentally summons Bṛhaspati, the teacher of the gods. When Bṛhaspati informs him that the situation is hopeless, Indra relents and surrenders. Winternitz (1981:392 n.1) notes the striking difference in the way this conflict is expressed at *JB* 3.159-60 (the Cyavana-less account of the gods’ sacrifice) and in the *Mahābhārata*:

In the *Jaim. Br.* however it results already in a test of strength between the *Ṛṣis* and the gods, and the *Ṛṣis* create Mada to help them. But as Indra and the gods flee from the monster, the sacrifice threatens to become an Indra-less and a god-less one, and the *Ṛṣi* requests Indra with prayers and invocations very politely to come back. Only in the description of the *Mahābhārata* is the god Indra totally humiliated by the holy man.

XIIc. The Aśvins Take Part in the Soma. In the *brāhmaṇas*, no hostilities take place at the sacrifice. In the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa*, the Aśvins join the rest of the gods at their sacrifice in

⁵³ *Mahābhārata* 13.141-42 contains a second, and much abbreviated, version of this part of the tale whose only significant deviation is that Indra attacks Cyavana with both his *vajra* and a mountain; Cyavana must therefore paralyze the mountain as well.

⁵⁴ Dumézil (1948:101-05) compares Mada to the Germanic Kvasir.

Kurukṣetra and the gods ask whether anyone can put the head of the sacrifice in its place. The Aśvins step up to do so, and are rewarded with inclusion in the *Soma* ritual.

In the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, to counter the gods’ objections that as physicians they are unfit for *Soma*, the Aśvins come in to explain and remedy the headlessness of the sacrifice⁵⁵ and are given the *Soma* cup by the other gods. They become the *adhvaryu* priests of the ritual and restore the “head” of the sacrifice.⁵⁶ In the *Mahābhārata* and *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa*, the official awarding of the *Soma* rights is done by the defeated Indra as part of his surrender to Cyavana; the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* reverts to the motif as it occurred in the *brāhmaṇas*, and the Aśvins are awarded *Soma* rights by all the gods.

XIII. Resolution

<i>Jaiminīya Br.</i>	<i>Śatapatha Br.</i>	<i>Mahābhārata</i>	<i>Devībhāgavata P.</i>	<i>Bhāgavata P.</i>
		XIIIa. Indra tells Cyavana he only resisted to allow Cyavana and Sukanyā to achieve glory and renown (3.125.4-6)	XIIIa. Indra tells Cyavana he only resisted so he could test Cyavana’s powerful <i>tapas</i> and begs him to take back Mada (7.7.34-36)	
XIIIb. (↓) Mada begs to be made useful and is incorporated into alcohol (3.160.20-23)		XIIIb. Indra is freed, and Mada is incorporated into women, drinking, gambling and hunting (3.125.7-9)	XIIIb. Mada is decommissioned and incorporated into women, drinking, gambling and hunting. This calms the devas (7.7.37-39)	
[‡3.128.1-4 listed at IXc] The virtues of the <i>sāman</i> Cyavana meditated with at the onset of the tale are extolled (3.128.5-11)	The text continues with an explanation of the various parts and accoutrements of the Vedic <i>Soma</i> ritual and how story relates to them. (4.1.5.16-18ff)	Having accomplished these things, Cyavana disports himself in the forest with Sukanyā (3.125.10)	[‡7.7.40-41 listed at XIIc] The site of the story becomes famous. Śaryāti is happy and returns to his city; the tale turns to his descendant’ deeds (7.7.42-52)	Śaryāti’s descendants and their deeds are listed (9.3.27-28)

⁵⁵ *ŚB* 4.1.5.15 informs us that the process by which they do so is described elsewhere in the text, *divākīrtiānām brāhmaṇe* (“in the section on the verses to be sung in the day”). Eggeling (1885:276 n.1) suggests that this refers to *ŚB* 14.1.1.8.

⁵⁶ Versions of this motif crop up in a number of places: for example, the *Taittirīya Saṃhitā* (*Taitt. S.*) 6.4.9.1 gives a similar version of this story, though unconnected to a tale of Cyavana: the other gods seek help from the Aśvins after the head of the sacrifice is cut off. The Aśvins agree to replace it, but only if they are included in the *Soma* rite. Because the Aśvins are physicians, the other gods must first purify them, but after that the twin gods are allowed to participate.

XIIIa. In the *Mahābhārata* and *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa*, **Indra makes face-saving excuses for his behavior**: he claims that he resisted in order to give Cyavana a chance to achieve glory (*Mahābhārata* 3.125.4-6), or as a test of Cyavana’s spiritual might (*Devībhāgavata Purāṇa* 7.7.34-36).

XIIIb. The *Mahābhārata* and *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa* must dispense with the savage Mada once his purpose has been served: he is incorporated into women, drinking, gambling and hunting.⁵⁷

The **Final Resolutions** of each story are listed in the last line of the chart. Each version ends in a different way as the text segues to its next tale:⁵⁸

- ❖ The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* gives an explanation of how variant elements in the story relate to the various parts of the Vedic *Soma* ritual.
- ❖ The *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa* extols the virtues of the *saman* with which Cyavana prayed at the beginning of the text after making his wishes in the *vastu*.
- ❖ Always the most romantic, the *Mahābhārata* returns to the hero and heroine and reports that Cyavana and Sukanyā disport themselves happily in the forest.
- ❖ The *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa*, though also generally romantic in its approach, ends with Cyavana definitively forcing the Aśvins and Indra to drink the *Soma* together, before turning to Śaryāti’s return to his city, and a description of his descendants and their deeds. No further mention of Cyavana and Sukanyā arises.
- ❖ The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* segues into a discussion of Śaryāti and his descendants; this text never offers a specific conclusion to Cyavana and Sukanyā’s story either.

Evaluation of the Diagnostic Criteria

Though all five versions are certainly intended to be “faithful” re-tellings of the tale, nearly all of our criteria for evaluating parallels have, to varying degrees, been challenged. How substantial are these changes in a larger context? The following paragraphs analyze each criterion’s performance individually:

1. The tales should have multiple shared motifs: Out of the roughly 35 elements shared widely enough to receive a Roman numeral designation above, not even a simple majority is shared intact by all five. In fact we can identify even near-identical occurrences of only 12

⁵⁷ The “divided and distributed sin” motif occurs in other situations, for example, a *puranic* version of the story of Indra and Vṛtra at *BhāgP.* 6.9.1-19, in which Indra commits the sin of Brahmin murder and distributes the guilt equally among earth, water, trees, and women.

⁵⁸ As Lord (1960:119) notes (regarding examples given on pp.114, 117, and 118), endings are particularly susceptible to alteration: “the endings of songs are less stable, more open to variation than their beginnings.”

elements (35%) in every version, and even most of those require some manipulation and vague wording to accommodate the variation in their expression in the tales:

- Ia. The King and his people come to Cyavana's area
- IId. Cyavana curses them (though the nature of the curse varies)
- IIIa. The King questions his people (though the groups specified vary)
- IIIc. The King goes to Cyavana and apologizes
- IVa. Sukanyā is given to Cyavana (though the nature of the arrangement varies)
- IVb. The king and his people depart (in one instance they intend for Sukanyā to follow)
- VIIa. The request/offer/decision to transform Cyavana.
- VIIIa. Cyavana enters the water (sometimes with the Aśvins)
- VIIIb. Cyavana emerges young and handsome
- XIa. A sacrifice is held, whether divine, human, or mixed.
- XIIa. Indra attacks someone
- XIIc. The Aśvins receive inclusion in the *Soma* ritual

The skeleton of motifs shared in all five versions reduces the story to four interwoven basic components: a wronged ascetic's curse upon a king and his people, a young woman dealing with unwanted divine attention, the restoration of an old man's lost youth, and an aetiological myth about a pair of gods' participation in a divine ritual. All four of these occur in numerous other Indic tales, and are not even expressed identically here.

2. The shared motifs should occur in the same sequence: Though the sequence could have been altered by a number of the substantive changes observed, sequence is by far the most durable of the criteria. There were only five places where major elements changed sequence:

- Ia, Ib.** Cyavana is introduced after the King and his retinue in the *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa*.
- Ib.** The description of Cyavana's age is moved to slightly later in the text in the *Mahābhārata* and *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*.
- VIa, VIb.** The conference between Cyavana and Sukanyā occurs after she has negotiated with the Aśvins in the *Mahābhārata* and *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa*.
- IXb, XIIa.** In the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* the Dadhyañc episode is in a different story that occurs 14 books later.
- Xa, XIa.** Cyavana goes to Śaryāta to hold a sacrifice at the end of the tale in the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa*, as well as later in the same text, but the *Mahābhārata*, *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa*, and *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* have Śaryāti come back to Cyavana as soon as Cyavana has been rejuvenated, and the sacrifice is held shortly after that.

The conclusion drawn from the evaluation of this set of narratives is that the shared sequence of a set of similar motifs may well be more important than their number in making a determination of genetic relationship. This issue will be discussed further under Criterion #4.

3. The tales should have specific, peculiar, and significant shared details: Many, if not all, of the most specific and peculiar details are among the following:

- a. Cyavana's requested abandonment by his sons
- b. Sukanyā's toplessness
- c. Cyavana falling in love with Sukanyā
- d. The black snake that prevents Sukanyā's departure
- e. The tribe's attempt to trick Cyavana
- f. Sukanyā's assumption of ascetic garb
- g. Sukanyā's nudity when she is first seen by the Aśvins
- h. Cyavana's riddle for the Aśvins
- i. The Devī's intervention when Sukanyā cannot discern the real Cyavana
- j. The creation of Kṛtyā
- k. Indra attacks Cyavana with a mountain, as well as with his *vajra*
- l. The summoning of Bṛhaspati

All of these, however, occur in only one version, and are thus not shared. Other distinctive motifs are shared only by two or three versions:

- a. The anthill (3 versions)
- b. The pelting with dung balls (2 versions)
- c. Dadhyañc and his temporary head (2 versions)
- d. The creation of the demon Mada (3 versions)
- e. Cyavana's glowing eyes (3 versions)
- f. The constipation of the tribe (3 versions)
- g. The piercing of Cyavana's eye (3 versions)

In fact, the anthill, one of the most striking details of the whole story, is not even peculiar to this tale: the same motif occurs with the sage Vālmīki (see Note 24); one tale may have borrowed from the other, or both may have taken the motif from some common source.⁵⁹ The *svayamvara* with three identical bridegrooms is problematic in the same way, since a similar scene occurs in the *Tale of Nala and Damayanti* (*Mbh.* 3.54).

Several other striking features (the *svayamvara* with three identical suitors, the Aśvins' love for Sukanyā, the denigration of Cyavana by the Aśvins, and Sukanyā's declaration of fidelity to her husband) are absent from the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*; if all versions but that one and the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa* were to be lost, the similarities between the tales would be little more than the character's names and the highly predictable "workhorse" motifs laid out above.

The conclusion here must be that peculiar details are eye-catching, but (at least according to the evidence of this tale) they have a strong propensity to be innovations.

4. Similarities should be heterogeneous, unpredictable, and non-trivial: Reviewing again the list of shared motifs, we see immediately that most are clearly vulnerable to charges of being homogeneous, predictable, and/or trivial. So many sequences with a straightforward and

⁵⁹ See Goldman (1976:97-101).

predictably logical progression were retained that it should probably be assumed that predictability in sequence is a contributing factor to retention.⁶⁰

- Ila. The King and his people come to Cyavana's area
- IId. Cyavana curses them (though the curse varies)
- IIIa. The King questions his people
- IIIc. The King goes to Cyavana and apologizes
- IVa. Sukanyā is given to Cyavana
- IVb. The King and his people depart
- VIIa. The request/offer to transform Cyavana
- VIIIa. Cyavana enters the water
- VIIIb. Cyavana emerges young
- XIa. A sacrifice is held
- XIIa. Indra attacks [someone]
- XIIc. The Aśvins receive inclusion in the *Soma* ritual

The only elements in the narrative that are both truly distinctive and shared across all versions are the rejuvenation of Cyavana and the Aśvins' claiming of rights to the *Soma*. In this case the conclusion must be that sequences of predictable, functional motifs are actually more likely to be retained throughout the evolutionary process than are flashier ones. This finding is therefore actually quite problematic: if the sharing of homogenous and predictable portions of narrative is a good indicator of shared heritage, how are we to distinguish similarities that are the product of shared lineage from similarities that are the product of chance?⁶¹

5. The two tales should have comparable characters: The primary characters may retain their names, but they present very different incarnations: the greedy, repulsive, and irascible Cyavana of the *brāhmaṇas* bears little resemblance to the single-minded but uxorious Cyavana of the *Mahābhārata* who dares to take on Indra single-handedly, or to the powerful, but oddly querulous Cyavana of the *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa*, or the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*'s well-known seer who receives respectful visits from gods.

Sukanyā, too, is transformed: a passive cipher in the *brāhmaṇas*, she becomes the clever, curious, and loyal young woman who brings such good fortune to her unconventional husband in the *Mahābhārata*; in the *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa* she essentially eclipses the importance of her husband.

The secondary characters change even more radically, with the transference of the hostile act from the boys to the otherwise benign Sukanyā, rendering them superfluous to the narrative,

⁶⁰ Perhaps even in cases of borrowing, per the evidence of Larson (2005); see note 61 below.

⁶¹ Larson (2005:13), for example, notes that *Lugalbanda in the Mountain Cave* and the *Hymn to Hermes* share a number of features that are more or less in the same order, but at a certain point the sequence is directly shared: "The banquet scenes in the *Hymn* and LB I are by no means identical, but they share a sequence of details that I have been unable to find in other Greek descriptions of animal slaughter: (1) the action takes place at a pit; (2) the animal is subdued without a weapon; (3) the meat is cut up; (4) parts of the carcass are roasted; (5) a meal is served; (6) the savor of the meat is mentioned." This is exactly the sort of predictable sequence *The Tale of Cyavana*'s evidence indicates is likely to be preserved.

along with the cowherds whose job it was to expose the boys' crime. Not only do these minor male characters completely disappear, but even Cyavana's active role is reduced to allow Sukanyā to carry out the negotiations with the Aśvins in cluster VII. Indra's role changes from a hit-and-run decapitation to a fully-realized speaking part and actor in the story (in the *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa* he even summons his guru Br̥haspati to ask a question at one point), while Dadhyañc vanishes completely. From the evidence of this story, a character's repertoire of basic actions is more persistent than persona, and those actions may be re-cast, re-interpreted, or given back-stories as new composers pull new meanings out of inherited texts.⁶²

6. The tales should have comparable settings: The settings are certainly comparable, given the narrative's requirement of adjacency to a water source, but the versions do not share an identical *locus*. The *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa* places the scene on the Sarasvatī River, the *Mahābhārata* utilizes the Narmadā River, the *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa* locates Cyavana's ashram on the Mānasarovara Lake, and the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* and *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* offer no name or location whatsoever. By far the most famous and important of these locations is the Sarasvatī (and the one provided by the oldest version), but even the prestige and profound mythological underpinnings of the Sarasvatī were not enough to guarantee its retention in subsequent generations of the tale. For this story, at least, the criterion is accurate when phrased that the setting must be "comparable," as long as that does not include sharing the same exact geographic location.⁶³

7. The tales should have comparable themes: This is probably the most unsuccessful of the criteria, for the larger themes are not even easily compared. With each version we see a particular agenda shaping the tale: the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa* is deeply tied to extolling the power of the *vāstupasya brāhmaṇa*, and the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* is an explication of the ritual (though direct mention of ritual objects and gestures is confined to the verses on the beginning and end of the story proper). The *Mahābhārata* turns the tale into a lively heroine-focused story (one of several in the epic), and then shifts into equally familiar territory in the second half of the tale as it describes Cyavana's defeat of Indra. The two *purāṇic* versions go on to adopt the *Mahābhārata*'s basic outline, but the *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa* embellishes and expands the tale as it shapes it into a hymn to the goddess, and the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* is a short and targeted effort to remove the Aśvins' divine misbehavior. Theme, like Persona, has a high degree of fluidity. If a poet or bard wanted to convey the same theme with the same story, they would simply tell the original version of the story rather than re-write it. A poet is far more likely to create a new

⁶² To return again to Larson's (2005) comparison of *Lugalbanda in the Mountain Cave* and the *Hymn to Hermes*, for example, both Hermes and Lugalbanda are youngest children struggling to gain the respect of their elders, both create fire, both perform a sacrifice, both possess the power of swift travel, and both act as messengers for the gods, but in terms of character development/personality, there can be no real comparison between the two; their personalities are utterly dissimilar.

⁶³ This result has significance for other studies: Larson (2005:6) found that the *Hymn to Hermes* almost certainly adopted the cave *locus* from *Lugalbanda in the Mountain Cave*, but the Greek tradition changed it to a Greek cave. Numerous scholars have posited a connection between the Homeric epics and the *Mahābhārata*; the easy changing of the *locus* here supports the idea that tales about the happenings related to a great war could have easily accommodated the shifting of the location of that war from an unknown Indo-European location to Troy and to Kurukṣetra, respectively (see, for example, Garbutt 2006 and West 2006).

version of a tale when he sees an “opening” in a text that will allow him do it, inspired by the belief that he can refine and reinterpret it in ways that will please his audience.⁶⁴

Catalogue of the Types of Changes Seen in the Narrative

Though each of the shifts between the five versions of *The Tale of Cyavana* may only be baby steps in narrative terms, they provide evidence that the process of change is not chaotic, but methodical and programmatic. When these changes are evaluated according to the criteria, it becomes clear that simple common sense and conventional wisdom are not adequate tools for evaluating the likelihood that two tales share a common ancestor.

The value of the criteria, however, is only one part of the value of this undertaking; even more valuable, perhaps, is the chance to see some of the processes of narrative evolution in action. As these phenomena appeared above, they were noted, along with possible comparanda, and assigned terminology where necessary:

- ❖ **Elision:** The simple removal of an element. The Aśvins’ desire for Sukanyā is dropped from the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, for example. At Ia, Cyavana went from being abandoned to simply living alone in the forest. After IVb in the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa*, the tribe tries to avoid giving Sukanyā to Cyavana, Sukanyā attempts to run away, Cyavana calls upon a black snake to intervene; all of these are dropped by later versions.
- ❖ **“Improvement”:** The substitution of a more interesting explanation or situation for a less-striking inherited one. Cyavana’s initial condition went from being old and ugly to being covered by an anthill, “Discord” among the retinue was changed to “Constipation,” and Sukanyā went from being seen by the Aśvins, to being seen *naked* by the Aśvins.
- ❖ **“Cyclops”:** a salient feature that becomes so well-known that its description ceases to be included in the narrative: Cyavana’s entombment in the anthill became so well known that the narrator of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* did not need to introduce or explain it, and the Aśvins receive less and less introduction upon their arrival in the story as time goes by.
- ❖ **Role Transference:** Roles or actions are taken away from one character and given to another character, dramatically increasing the second character’s importance, and resulting in the loss of the first character. The boys’ attack on Cyavana is transferred to Sukanyā, expanding her role, and then Cyavana’s negotiations with the gods are transferred completely to Sukanya, giving her more authority in the narrative. Dadhyañc’s function as the victim of Indra’s attack is transferred to Cyavana, making Cyavana a hero when he successfully fights back.

⁶⁴ As noted above, the final two criteria, “There must be a feasible path of transmission between the two tales,” and “Alterations must be culturally explicable,” may be taken as given since the relationship between these tales is known.

- ❖ **“Fee-fi-fo-fum”**: an evocative phrase that is retained intact in subsequent versions of a story, named in honor of the chant of the Giant in “Jack and the Beanstalk.”⁶⁵ In the “Tale of Cyavana,” the phrase “the feces and urine of the retinue were constipated” from the *Mahābhārata* is repeated nearly verbatim in the *Bhāgavata* and *Devībhāgavata purānas*.
- ❖ **Duplication**: the expansion of a motif through the duplication of its existing elements. At IIIa-b, the King’s inquiry has been inflated and elaborated on, with separate inquiries for separate groups. In the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa*, Śaryāta asks “people” about what might have happened; in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, he asks cow-herds and shepherds; in the *Mahābhārata*, it is soldiers, then friends; in the *Devībhāgavata purāna*, it is soldiers, then kin, and then friends.
- ❖ **Functional Persistence**: Purely functional motifs are less likely to be lost or to change their sequence; however, when a certain result is required but the specific mechanism by which it is carried out is unimportant, poets may employ different paths to achieve the same outcome. IVa, for example, requires only that Sukanyā be given to Cyavana, and the poet is free to elaborate on the circumstances, directionality, and tone of the betrothal. At VIIa, the decision to transform Cyavana also takes many different forms, though all lead to the same result.⁶⁶
- ❖ **Element Persistence**: A feature or element may be retained even when the reason for its inclusion has been changed, as when the *Bhāgavata Purāna* retains the Aśvins’ immersion into the lake along with Sukanyā’s task of choosing her husband from the three identical men on the shore, even though the text has eliminated the gods’ romantic interest in her entirely.
- ❖ **“Paper Dolls”**: a framework that is duplicated and re-fitted with a new twist, resulting in the creation of a new section of narrative. The older version may be left intact alongside it, or abandoned. The *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa* has a divine sacrifice, and then a sacrifice performed by mortals, where all the later episodes drop one of the two sacrifices. As Lord (1960:119) observes: “The substitution of one multiform of a theme for another, one kind of recognition scene for another, one kind of disguise for another, is not uncommon.”

Conclusions based on the example of one narrative can be little more than the start of a new line of conversation, but Sanskrit literature is a nigh-inexhaustible reserve of such sets. Perhaps, someday, a comprehensive, data-based exposition of the principles that govern the evolution of narrative will provide us all with more accurate diagnostic tools.

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⁶⁵ This first appears as part of the tale as collected in Jacobs (1890); the earliest print of the phrase is in a quotation that forms the last line of Act III, Scene IV of *King Lear*.

⁶⁶ Lord (1960:121) notes this phenomenon in at least one context: “. . . there is a group of songs beginning with a tale of capture and shouting that does *not* lead to release and return, but to refusal of release and to rescue of the hero by someone else. In other words, songs beginning with the first two elements can lead in two directions, either to release or to rescue.”

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Beginning from the End: Strategies of Composition in Lyrical Improvisation with End Rhyme

Venla Sykäri

Having studied why rhyming couplets are such an effective vehicle of lyrical communication in contemporary Cretan tradition for over a decade, the first time I attended a freestyle rap battle in Helsinki the expression seemed profoundly familiar to me. At first sight differences between the two oral poetic cultures might seem striking: language, style, communicative contexts, and social implantation—in two socially and linguistically distinct corners of Europe. Nevertheless, the major argumentative images developed within the improvised flow of rapping tended to be verbalized in a couplet form very similar to that in Crete. In addition to the structural similarity of these core units, both traditions share the role of end rhyme as a primary parameter in composition, as well as the argumentative ambition. These qualifiers also characterize the rhetorical structure of several other traditional forms of contest poetry, which I have recently been able to verify in the performance of improvised *gloses* in Mallorca.

The target of this paper is to analyze the structural and rhetorical principles that seem to be emblematic of extempore composition in all three of these rhymed forms of oral poetry.¹ The analysis focuses on the methods that improvisers employ in the construction of end rhyme patterns and in structuring the semantic hierarchy of verse units in the spontaneous composition of verses in these traditions.

End rhyme is a poetic device that ties verses together with parallel sound patterns situated at the ends of the lines. Although Richard Bauman (1977:18-19) specifically states that “the structural principles underlying the parallel constructions may serve as mnemonic aids to the performer of a fixed traditional text, or enhance the fluency of the improvisational or

¹The research presented in this article was completed within the framework of the postdoctoral Academy of Finland project “*Rhymed Registers, Oral Composition, and the Aesthetics of Improvisation: End Rhyme and Stanzaic Form in the Finnish and European Oral Poetry*.” I wish to thank and express my profound respect to all the verbal artists who have so far enabled me to grasp something of their art. I thank all the discussants of the Seminar-Workshop *Parallelism in Verbal Art and Performance*, May 26th-27th 2014, Helsinki, Finland, where a preliminary version of this paper was presented (Sykäri 2014d). I am grateful to Frog, the editor of the pre-print papers of the Seminar-Workshop, who helped me to develop my arguments in the English language in this paper as well. Jaume Guiscafrè Danús has assisted my research of *gloses* in indispensable ways and he also kindly reviewed my interpretations of the *glosada* referred to here. Joan Mut and Kasper Salonen have provided their skills for transcribing and translating examples. Finally, my warmest thanks extend to the three anonymous peer-reviewers, whose insightful comments crucially improved the final paper.

spontaneous performance,” the role of rhyme is often acknowledged only as a mnemotechnic device that is utilized to help the memory in the performance of an existing, pre-composed text. In this paper, by contrast, I will speak of end rhyme’s role as a creative and cognitive device in the improvised oral composition of verses. The methods of structuring the poetic discourse by situating sound patterns at the ends of the lines are the very heart of the cognitive practice, skill, and art of lyrical improvisation with end rhyme. These methods further relate to a model of semantic hierarchy, in which semantic weight, the argument, is also at the end of a structural unit of composition. The fact that the improviser has to command a technique of structuring the verses in a manner that is often the reverse to what the audience perceives is largely unknown outside the communities of improvisers. I also address a type of orally composed poetry, rhymed poetry with an argumentative core, which, in spite of the historical depth of its roots and nearly universal distribution, has so far received little attention in English language research.

In what follows I focus on the poetic traditions of the Cretan rhyming couplets called *mandinadhes*, Mallorcan *gloses*, and Finnish improvised rap, freestyle. These poetic idioms all have end rhyme but they differ in their culture-specific conventions of performance and also in how the utterance as a whole is structured and composed. *Mandinadhes* represent a short, compact couplet form that states a desired point within its two lines. Improvised *gloses* are one example of the contest poetry stanzas of approximately eight to ten lines with a fixed rhyme pattern typical of the Southern European and Ibero-American areas. In Finnish improvised rap the length of the strophe can be either free or regularized by a time limit, but utterances often contain 16-24 lines. In addition to the length of utterances, the speed of rapping is very rapid. Both of these factors contribute to a greater variety in structuring the utterance as a whole. Each section of this essay will introduce the basic characteristics of the poetic idioms addressed, give one or several textualized examples of utterances in the tradition, analyze the rhyming and placement of semantic weight in these utterances, and then look at how individual improvisers explain their method. Following this I draw some conclusions concerning the similarities and differences between these traditions.

The research presented here is based on the ethnographic cross-cultural study of these contemporary traditions. The technique of oral composition first started to intrigue me during my field study of the Cretan *mandinadhes* in 1997.² Working on the same tradition earlier on the island of Karpathos, Samuel Baud-Bovy (1936) had already studied in great detail the formulaic expressions, syntactic structures allowing formulaic substitutions, as well as the principles of balancing units with parallel structures. Beyond such structural approaches, the research literature was not of much help in understanding the actual cognitive action or the method of composition. Because automatization plays such a central role in skillful oral composition (see below), many oral composers in Crete also found it difficult to explain just how they create their lines.³ Some interlocutors whom I came to know better, however, elaborated on their method with detailed examples (Sykäri 2011:168-71). Based on that knowledge, I have more recently discussed these processes with improvisers of freestyle rap in Finland. This research was complemented by a stay (January 2015) in Mallorca, where I was able to interview two young

²See Sykäri (2011 and 2009).

³See also Liu et al. (2012).

improvisers, the *glosadors* Mateu Matas “Xuri” and Maribel Servera.⁴ This opportunity allowed me to discuss the methods of improvised oral composition with professionals who are not only experienced performers, but also teachers and analytical developers of a method for learning improvisation.⁵

Lyrical improvisation has long remained out of the topics of mainstream research. In the 1980s and the 1990s, however, several oral traditions with lyrical improvisation in the Mediterranean area were rendered visible particularly in anthropological and musicological research.⁶ In the 1990s the theme of improvisation surfaced in studies of music and performance arts.⁷ In the new millennium it also has received broader interest in cultural studies,⁸ and the practices of lyrical improvisation in the Mediterranean area, just as the Basque *bertsolaritza* tradition, has also now been documented in more detail in English.⁹ This need to conceptualize and research improvisation has obviously resulted from the urge to tackle this neglected theme, but the interest also reflects what increasingly takes place in the field: in the arts and popular culture, improvised music and theater have gained ground, and in oral cultures, traditional forms of improvisation, just as the new lyrical idiom of freestyle rap, are intensively being embraced by younger generations.

On the other hand, improvised verbal cultures with their specific poetic idioms, performative registers and practices, and in-group related subject matter, represent local or subcultural capital, which does not easily translate. The identical forms and techniques and the very existence of similar traditions over regional and national borders were recognized even in Spanish language improvisation only at the beginning of the 1990s.¹⁰ Much local knowledge and local research still remain behind linguistic barriers, and many of the contemporary traditions

⁴My contact with the *gloses* tradition in Mallorca was initiated by an interview with Pedro Bisbal Mayol in Søller in September 2013. Pedro kindly advised me to speak with his teacher, Mateu Matas. I am greatly indebted to Jaume Guiscafrè Danús, lecturer at the department of Catalan philology, University of the Balearic Islands in Palma, for his devoted collegial help in organizing this visit, accompanying me to events, as well as translating during the interview between Catalan and English.

⁵These three traditions differ vastly in how they are learned and conceptualized by the practitioners: while improvisation in both the Cretan tradition and the Finnish rap culture is learned by individuals mainly alone and with little verbalized analysis of the method, contemporary Mallorcan improvisers, like their Basque peers, have dedicated courses and schools. For Basque verse schools, see, for example, Agirreazaldegi and Goikoetxea (2007).

⁶See, for example, Caraveli (1982 and 1985), Caton (1990), Herndon and McLeod (1980), Herzfeld (1981 and 1985), Kezich (1982), and *Arabic Oral Traditions* (1989).

⁷See, for example, Berliner (1994), Sawyer (1997), and Nettl and Russell (1998).

⁸See Hallam and Ingold (2007).

⁹For Palestine, see Yaqub (2007), and in Sardinia, Zedda (2009). For the Basque *bertsolaritza* tradition, see, for example, Garzia, Sarasua, et al. (2001), Armistead and Zulaika (2005), and *Basque Special Issue* (2007).

¹⁰Trapero (2008:8).

continue to be unknown outside of their linguistic and cultural areas.¹¹ This, in turn, emphasizes the significance of lyrical improvisation as an arena for creating local, in-group identities, defying the globalizing and hegemonic trajectories of culture even today.

Of the sources available on the method of improvised composition, Andoni Egaña's (2007) detailed analyses of the rhetorical elaboration and patterns of interaction in the improvised composition of *bertsolaritza* have provided a comparative source for understanding the actual process of composition.¹² The major Spanish language reference, Alexis Díaz-Pimienta's *Teoría de la Improvisación Poética* (2014), significantly widens this comparative scope on the method of lyrical improvisation.¹³ In addition to an inclusive introduction to the forms and traditions of improvisation in the Ibero-American area, where improvisation is specifically prominent even today, Díaz-Pimienta's theory focuses comprehensively on the compositional and performative structures, methods, and ideals connected to the ten-line stanza form *décima*. Egaña's and Díaz-Pimienta's contributions are particularly noteworthy, as both are also forefront performers.¹⁴

In this paper I will relate to the discussion on lyrical improvisation by focusing on the technique and the method, and by introducing three less well-known contemporary European traditions. What is not elaborated here is the diversity in each tradition: examples are cited for the purpose of structural analysis and do not illustrate the large variety of styles, aesthetics, and forms of expression that these traditions exhibit.¹⁵ A closer analysis of the unfolding of interaction and strategies through which it is structured, so emblematic of improvisation, remains outside the scope of this essay.

The Concept of Improvised Oral Poetry and Terminology Used

To begin with, I shortly note the kind of poetry to which this analysis is relevant. End rhyme has become a distinguished feature in most Western oral and written poetry and song

¹¹ Much is written in the Romance languages about the Italian *ottava rima*, Sardinian traditions, Basque *bertsolaritza*, several local traditions in different parts of Spain and Portugal, and those of Latin America. For bibliography in languages other than English, consult, for example, Armistead and Zulaika (2005), Bravi (2010), Caocci and Macchiarella (2011), Díaz-Pimienta (2014), Trapero (2008), and Zedda (2009). The countries at the eastern and southern shores of the Mediterranean also host lively improvised oral traditions; see, for example, *Oral Tradition* (1989 vol. 4.1-2), and Yaqub (2007) (my concern is limited to areas discussed here, but improvised oral poetry has been and is practiced worldwide).

¹² See also Garzia, Sarasua, et al. (2001:81-133).

¹³ My own command of Spanish is yet elementary, but Díaz-Pimienta's volume was specifically declared as an improviser's "bible" by the Mallorcan informants and researchers.

¹⁴ See also Zedda (2009).

¹⁵ I have elsewhere analyzed the Cretan tradition in more detail (Sykäri 2009 and 2011). See also Baud-Bovy (1936), Herzfeld (1981 and 1985), Caraveli (1982 and 1985), and Kavouras (1991). Manuscripts on the Finnish battle scene and on the performative strategies and registers of Finnish freestyle are being prepared in English. In Finnish, see Palonen (2008) and Sykäri (2014a and 2014b). For *gloses* in Catalan, see Serrà Campins (2012), Ginard (1960), Moll (1966), and Sbert i Garau (2008).

lyrics since early medieval times.¹⁶ Throughout this period of time and many cultures, a variety of oral and literary techniques of composition has been employed, with a major division normally made between longer, narrative genres, and shorter, lyric poetry. In the rhymed poetry of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries' oral communities, with respect to the aesthetics and techniques of composition, the divide is also evident between the short, argumentative, dialogic poetic registers, on the one hand, and the longer, narrative historical and topical registers on the other. In Crete,¹⁷ Mallorca (see below), and Finland, for example, the same metrical mold has been employed as an independent single-stanza unit (couplet/quaternion) for communicative contexts, and then as a stanza form for longer narrative compositions.¹⁸ The internal, semantic structure of the stanza can nevertheless be quite different when the unit holds the position of a self-dependent, argumentative poetic utterance, and when it is used for advancing a story or creating context for a narrative, like in historical or ideological topical compositions, or tradition-oriented genres such as ballads. Both argumentative and narrative registers, as well as single-stanza forms and several-stanzas-long forms, normally co-exist in a speech community, but they are employed for very different purposes. In this essay, I only address the argumentative registers that consist of relatively short units of utterance, and that characteristically include situation-specific, personalized statements and comments.

Improvisation as a form of oral composition is another issue that needs specification. In the interview in Palma with Mateu Matas "Xuri" and Maribel Servera (Sykäri 2015b), we discussed the talent and skills needed for one to become an improvising poet. They framed the requirements in terms of the following three points: 1) learning the melodic phrases and how to insert the syllables of textual phrases into them (how to sing/perform), 2) automatization of rhyming and of the construction of sentences, and 3) the ability to find and create "principal ideas."

The first two points describe the technical basis on which all oral composition in performance leans. An oral poet practices and must master these first. Nevertheless, according to Mateu and Maribel, learning the technique of oral composition in performance does not yet make one an improviser, because the final target and talent lie in the capacity to create those "principal ideas," that is, situation-specific arguments that emerge from and reflect the on-going dialogue and the immanent performative context. Both improvisers underlined that this is the focal point of improvisation and similar perception of verbal improvisation is expressed in many other communities (Sykäri 2014c). This scope differs, for example, from tradition-oriented narrative oral composition, in which the performer must master the storyline, schemes, and acts of the

¹⁶ Gasparov, Smith, et al. (1996:96-102).

¹⁷ Sykäri (2011:26-27, 132-37).

¹⁸ Although this aspect has not been specifically researched, the metrical models in Finnish rhymed tradition are described and analyzed, for example, in Asplund (1994, 1997, and 2006), Asplund and Hako (1981), Laitinen (2003), and Laurila (1956).

narrative.¹⁹ On the other hand, all oral composition relies on language, and just how formulaic the poetic language used is, or how spontaneous a certain individual's certain performance is, depends on the performer's competence, energy, and contextual preferences, as well as the conventions of the tradition and register.²⁰ In brief, what I refer to as improvised oral poetry or lyrical improvisation is a form of oral composition in which, in addition to being composed on the spot by employing a shared poetic idiom, the aesthetics of performance rely on context-sensitive referents and arguments invented extemporaneously by the performer.

To gloss the concepts and descriptions employed by different people in different traditions, it is important first of all to pay attention to the length of the verse line. As discussed in detail in the next section on *mandinadhes*, line lengths vary and have varied through history and across cultures. One of the major differences between the poetic idioms analyzed here is between the "long" line of fifteen syllables (exactly or approximately) and the "short" line of seven or eight syllables.²¹ In this regard, a *couplet* of two long lines is semantically equivalent to a *quatrain* of four short lines (see also below).

Another important point to pay attention to is the length and organization of the utterance. To analyze the semantic and structural parts of an utterance, I use the following terms: "statement" or "principal idea" to refer to the main ideas or messages that the improviser introduces in his or her utterance, regardless of their length, in terms of the number of verse lines. An improvised utterance can thus be conceptualized as one statement (couplet or quatrain), or, following to the meta-discourse on *glosa* composition, the utterance can be conceptualized as ideally concluding in a major statement. Rather than focusing only on a final statement (but with the possibility of including one), an improvised utterance can also aim at delivering several punchlines that rhetorically develop the issue at hand or reason for the performative speech act (freestyle).

At the level of *compositional units* and verse lines within an utterance, the improviser creates verbal *images*, which often contain two parts: I refer to the first, introductory, or leading part of this image as "priming,"²² and the second part that contains the explicit argument as the "argument." A couplet often has one priming line and one argument line and a quatrain may

¹⁹ For example, Albert Lord (1975, 1989, and 2001) and John Miles Foley (1995 and 2002) have discussed at length the epic singers' own inclination toward the tradition and singing the story "word by word." This is an aesthetic statement and does not mean that some or all of them would not be able to improvise. John Miles Foley (2002:213-14) cited an example of a situation where his informant improvised a rhyming quatrain in the local epic meter. Because I was used to exactly this type of commentary in the Cretan poetic tradition, Foley's remark of this epic singer doing something *rare* had astonished me. I had the opportunity to discuss this with Foley in October 2006. He verified that the people present had affirmed to him that the singer had never done so before.

²⁰ Experienced Finnish freestylists speak, for example, of switching on or off the method of anticipation described in this paper: in a battle, anticipation is essential for the creation of startling and funny retorts and punchlines, whereas in other contexts the freestylist can opt for extreme spontaneity and free flow of mind. The level of spontaneity in improvisation is also discussed in detail by Egaña (2007) and Díaz-Pimienta (2014).

²¹ Another currently popular metrical form is that of eleven syllables. This meter of the Italian *ottava rima*, for example, positions itself between those examined here.

²² The term "priming" is a translation of the Finnish word *pohjustus* that was used in this sense by MC Kajo in a detailed discussion of the theme (Sykäri 2013).

correspondingly have two priming lines and two argument lines.²³ Longer improvised utterances such as freestyle can be constructed of regular couplets of one priming line and one argument line, but a compositional unit of freestyle may also be larger, for example, four lines with three priming lines and one argument line. The identity of some lines or units of lines can be easily identifiable, but this is not a mechanical model explaining each and every verse line—the focus is on discerning the main principles of composing units of utterance.

Cretan *Mandinadhes*: Composition in Self-Dependent Couplets

The Cretan rhyming couplets represent a typical “priming + argument” couplet structure that has the above-mentioned two parts: 1) an introduction or leading part, and 2) a closing argument. In Greece the Medieval Greek decapentasyllable (a line of eight + seven syllables) with iambic rhythm remained as such up to the present day, whereas in Romantic and Slavonic languages, the Medieval Latin decapentasyllable with trochaic rhythm was split into two lines corresponding to its hemistichs, lines of eight or seven syllables.²⁴ In Cretan *mandinadhes* rhyme then occurs at the ends of these two long lines, and the two parts of the couplet are formed of one line each.

After the split of the long line, in several linguistic areas this same couplet structure became accommodated by a *quatrain*, where consequently the first part (priming) often includes the first two lines and the last part (argument) includes the last two lines. In these quatrains, rhyme may occur—following the decapentasyllabic line—on the second and the fourth lines only (abcb), or all four lines may carry a rhyme, often with the patterns abab or abba. Whether written in two long or four short lines, the semantic information that can be expressed is the same, and many Cretans conceptualize the *mandinadha* as having four parts (four hemistichs), and write it in four lines.²⁵

As already noted, such self-dependent short stanzas with this structure are widespread and employed in several registers of oral communication, sung and spoken. These include dance and ritual songs, verbal duels, proverbial commentary, spoken insinuation (erotic, romantic, and so on), mocking songs, and humor, just to mention some modes and contexts of these poetic discourses.²⁶ The compact size and form of expression makes the mold practical for personalized, situational utterances, which one can compose extempore or draw from a reserve of memorized units. The memorized poems also provide a plentitude of generative formulaic

²³ Compare with the Persian quatrain rhymed aaba, where the first two lines give the priming, the third line introduces a contradiction, and the final line offers a resolution. This form can also be conceptualized as a couplet, reflecting an interpretation of the lines as hemistichs (Hämeen-Anttila 2008:185-209). The quatrain rhymed aaba is very common in wide areas of Turkey, the Near East, and Asia. See, for example, Laurila (1956:67-70) and Bartók (1976).

²⁴ Gasparov, Smith, et al. (1996:105-08).

²⁵ See also Herzfeld (1981).

²⁶ Sykäri (2011:26-34).

structures that can be easily modified. People who learn the technique of oral composition and practice the creation of ideas can easily start by using such formulaic substitution systems.

In contemporary Crete the island's emblematic oral culture of the *mandinadhes* has entered modern media through a 30 years' period of literarization, and written oral utterances in the form of a *mandinadha*, such as SMS messages, are very popular today. The oral composition and performance cultures are fertile as well, but surface only in more secluded contexts. Couplets can be memorized, composed orally or with pen and paper, or, in rare occasions, they can still be improvised on the spot, although this skill is not particularly cultivated anymore. Unlike in other Mediterranean islands such as Cyprus, Sardinia, Corsica, Balearic Islands, and Malta, the widely established practice of organized, public verbal duels has never occurred in Crete. The typical context for oral exchange as well as improvisation is the informal singing event with musical accompaniment. These events, where a group of friends or relatives gather to sing, used to be one of the main pastimes for male Cretans until the 1970s. Some singers and musicians continue this practice to the present day and also female performers sometimes now take part in the singing.

In a Cretan singing event, the major principle is that of thematic coherence between consecutive strings of utterances.²⁷ Rather than a dialogue between two singers (which can also emerge in the course of an event), the singing is primarily collective and proceeds as an interaction between singers taking their turns and a choir repeating the verses. A singer presents the first verse of a couplet and the others repeat it. Singing and repetitions can also proceed in hemistichs first and then in full lines. After the singer has sung the second full verse, however, there is never repetition, and the next performer immediately takes up his or her turn. This resonates with the improvisatory practices and the fact that the singer's statement is unfolded or wrapped up by the argument made in the second verse, and it is then time for the next performer to develop or challenge it. As the following examples show, couplets can also be improvised in spoken communication.

Cretan interlocutors agreed that in a rhyming couplet, the second verse should always be semantically stronger than the first.²⁸ The Rethymniot composer, tavern-owner, and local radio-program host Georgos Sifakis is one of the Cretan poets who analyzed with me his own experience in versification in different compositional contexts, including improvisation. He likened improvisation to making a satirical cartoon (Sykäri 2011:183): the creation of an image that is made by quick, sparse strokes and that by itself evokes the context; an image that is immediately intelligible to the viewer but that at the same time discloses a new, surprising viewpoint. Contrary to the visual image, in lyrical improvisation (just as when joking), the image is constructed in layers: the punchline arrives at the end.

The couplet structure and the semantic weight of the second verse become particularly pointed in the concretely argumentative utterances, such as the following two mocking poems,

²⁷ For this principle in the singing event, see Sykäri (2011:104-15), and for an audio example, see Sykäri (2009).

²⁸ This holds for all kinds of self-dependent *mandinadhes* and all types of composition processes, although in the lyrical end of the continuum, just as in written contributions, the structure may lose its argumentative organization.

which were recited to me by Sifakis as an example of the outspoken style of eastern Crete, Sitia (Sykari 2011:156-57):²⁹

Ta portokália tou horioú / yemízoune vapóri
O,ti skatá' ne o próedros / íne ke i psifofóri

The oranges of the village / fill up a motor boat
 The same shit as the president / are the ones who vote

Stin páno bándá tsi koprés / fitrónoun i domátes
O,ti skatá' ne o kafetzís / íne ke i pelátes

Up above the dung / sprout up the tomatoes
 The same shit as the café owner / are also the customers

In the first couplet, the singer's statement is to claim that the voters are not better than the village president, who has been elected by the voters. To accommodate his claim, the singer employs a formulaic pattern in the argument line. The phrase about oranges used to prime his argument is semantically irrelevant. The second couplet uses the same formulaic pattern in the same metrical positions (*O,ti skatá' ne X / íne ke Y*), this time to mock the customers of a café-bar and the café owner as being at the same (low) level. In this case, the priming produces a loose metaphorical analogue to the second line, yet neither of these priming lines is semantically attached to the argument line. Instead, the major reason for the choice in using them is the construction of the rhyme pattern: the wish to end the second line with the word *psifofóri* ("voters") determines the ending of the first line, for which is chosen the word *vapóri* ("boat"); in the second couplet, the word *pelátes* ("customers") determines the preceding rhyme word *domátes* ("tomatoes"). The Greek decapentasyllable's line end and rhyme are always feminine, and because word stress in Greek is meaning-bearing, only words that have stress on the penultimate syllable can be placed in this position. These priming lines are examples of "nature images" that are commonly employed in the first part of the couplet structure. In situations where time is very limited and the urge for a comment is demanding, the choice of the specific verse or words may primarily be motivated by the creation of rhyme, which reflects the phonetic sounds of the rhyme word in the argument line.³⁰

Although words carrying end-rhyme can affect or even determine the syntactic and semantic structure of the poem in the context of quick extemporized argumentation, experienced improvisers are not restricted to the use of formulaic expressions, structures, or lines. Their skill lies particularly in the syntactic creativity in the construction of logical phrases after they have

²⁹ Crete is not culturally uniform. In addition to the poetic forms, dance forms, and the use or lack of musical instruments, the styles in public singing and self-expression can vary greatly between areas. Until the modernization in the 1970s and 1980s, Sitia was the center of violinists and had a very lively male singing culture with openly obscene, bawdy, and mocking tones that would not have been publicly performed in most other areas. I have discussed these examples and their formulaic patterns in more detail elsewhere (Sykari 2011:156-57).

³⁰ See also Dundes, Leach, et. al (1970).

chosen—or when in the process of choosing—the rhyme words. In the next example, recited to me by Sifakis, he wanted to disperse the participants in a singing event taking place at his tavern, because it was already late, and thus, improvised in that situation (Sykäri 2011:115):

*‘Omorfi íne i vradía / ma piós tha dayiandísi
Ohtó i óra to proí / aúrio na ksipnisi*

Beautiful is the night / but who’s the one capable
At eight o’ clock the morning / tomorrow to wake up?

He realized the statement that it was time to leave by creating an image describing how things would be next morning. Here, the first and the second lines together create this image: the priming line begins with a short opening (beautiful is the night) and starts the sentence that is completed in the argument line. Most probably the second rhyme word, the verb form *ksipnisi* (“to wake up”), is the leading rhyme word that first emanated from the emerging statement. It was then rhymed with another suitable verb form, *dayiandisi* (“to grasp,” here in the meaning of “being capable of”), which could be chosen from among a large group of verb forms conjugated in this verb category, and the lines were built to end with these words.

An example of a conversational exchange of improvised couplets illustrates how each participant continues the dialogue by framing a new optical angle with regard to the theme. This exchange took place in July 2004 at Sifakis’ tavern, where Papanikolis and Papadoyannis, two priests working then in the church around the corner, had come for a coffee (Sykäri 2011:179):³¹

Georgos Sifakis:
*Se tsánta ítan to psomí / stin pórtá kremasméni
fénete mou to klépsane / pendéxi pinasméni*

The bread was in a bag, hanging in the door
It seems that it was stolen from me, by five-six hungry men

Papadoyannis:
*Eklépsane sou to psomí / ma sí epíres állo
prin na gení to próvlima / apó mikró meghálo*

They stole your bread, but you provided other one
Before the problem to become, from small to a big one

Papanikolis:
*Eklépsane sou to psomí / ma léo den pirázi
áma the klépsoun to faí / tha íne to marázi*

³¹ The incident was related to me by Papanikolis [Nikolaos Nikiforos].

They stole your bread, but I say it does not matter
 If they'll steal the food, that will be a disaster

Sifakis opens the dialogue with his statement, depicting the peculiar incident that had arrived to him earlier that day. The poem consists of a layout of the setting in the priming line, and the report of the event in the argument line. Papadoyiannis continues by shortly summarizing the event in his first half-line and by noting that Sifakis had replaced the stolen bread, and then by evaluating this act as a reasonable one in his argument line. Papanikolis repeats Papadoyiannis' summary and closes the line with his evaluation of the event, and then turns to a new viewpoint in his argument line. The specific ideas expressed in this playful poetic dialogue create an image that, after the quick discovery of what to point out, seem to have been formulated effortlessly by rhyming every day expressions and words. Greek is an inflected language, which allows variance in word order, as the examples make explicit.

Indeed, Sifakis, like many other Cretan composers, referred to the following process as being the most typical for improvising a couplet: a principal idea emerges and the poet picks up a pair of rhyme words; he or she then constitutes the verses so that they logically end with the rhyme words. In other words, a draft of the image by which the message is communicated is created more or less simultaneously with the choice of the rhyme words, and the realization of the clauses is more or less simultaneous with the performance.

Although the situation of having *both* rhyme words chosen before realizing the sentences in performance was asserted by improvising Cretan composers as the most common and effective solution in situational improvisation, in many cases of spontaneous composition, composers also reported that ready-made lines, normally the second (the argument line), appear in their mind, and they then compose the other line to fit with it. Yet another possibility was cited especially for those communicative cases in which one has to react very quickly: starting with only the first line's rhyme word in mind. Here, the improviser would quickly figure out the second line's rhyme while already performing the first verse. This leads to the extraction of the image in even less time from the associations brought by the choice of the second rhyme word. This image may contain an argument of which the improviser was not aware when beginning the couplet; the phonetic patterning, the creation of the rhyme, then becomes the generator of the final statement.

The formation of improvised couplets as compact, dialogic utterances takes place in a wide range of communicative contexts. Correspondingly, the rationale for the poetic act varies from passing an intentional message to a spontaneous comment, from acting within the frames of a playful communicative event to a concentrated, ritual singing event. In addition to the significance of the ritual extents of the tradition,³² many casual improvised couplets disclose the inherent value of the practice of exposing verbal skill in structuring statements by using the shared poetic idiom and in the ability of making references to in-group knowledge.

³² See Caraveli (1985) and Kavouras (1991).

Mallorcan Improvised *Glosat*: Contest Poetry with a Fixed Rhyme Pattern

The Mallorcan *glosat* tradition is an example of the contest poetry traditions typical of the southern European and Ibero-American areas. Whereas the dialogic, compact couplet and quatrain traditions are often multifunctional in the communities (also in Mallorca), these contest poetry traditions, in which the utterance is normally of eight to ten lines, are specifically used for improvised poetic confrontations in front of an audience.³³ With this example, I discuss the construction and order of composition of such stanzas that have, in addition to one major statement, the “principal idea,” an opening and elaboration within the communicative unit of utterance. All these stanzas also have a fixed rhyme pattern. For a novice, the practice therefore starts from learning to think in “families” of word endings, that is, the groups of words that can be rhymed together.³⁴

A Mallorcan *combat* or *combat de picat* (“a battle”) is a cooperative event in which normally two poets called *glosadors* confront each other in front of an audience.³⁵ The confrontation is structured by each *glosador* composing and singing their utterances in turns. Verses are performed with a melodic formula consisting of one ascending and one descending melodic phrase, each phrase corresponding to one metrical line. This is done without musical accompaniment. Although performers tease each other and take opposing roles during their interchange, performances do not contain direct insults, nor are they competitive by arrangement: there is no jury or other kind of official assessment of relative skill. The purpose of the event is to offer entertainment to the audience, in the form of a clever, humorous poetic exchange of utterances that may also extend to highly critical and political tones.

The traditional form of the Mallorcan *glosa* is a quatrain containing four heptasyllabic lines, and thus equivalent to the Cretan *mandinadha* in length. Rhyme can be masculine or feminine and the rhyme pattern may be either abab or abba. This basic quatrain can be extended to up to five or six lines. In improvised verbal dueling, the stanza is lengthened so that an utterance is normally double in length, traditionally eight, and today from eight to about twelve lines. A few decades ago, the improvised *glosat* tradition was still a live oral tradition, but it was practiced mainly by elderly women and men who mastered the oral improvisation of this poetry, which is still today associated with singing at bonfires during the feast of Sant Antoni (January 16th). In the 1990s some local people started working to revitalize the oral improvisation tradition. Among them were the teacher and researcher Felip Munar i Munar and the young performer Mateu Matas “Xurí.”³⁶ As explained to me by Mateu, he and some other local performers cooperated with Basque *bertsolaritza* performers and with the Cuban improviser Alexis Díaz-Pimienta in this process. They were influenced by the Basque stanzas that vary

³³ For a definition of poetic contest, see Miner (1993), Pagliai (2009), and Sykäri (2014b).

³⁴ A more detailed discussion is available in Garzia, Sarasua, et al. (2001) and also Munar i Munar (2008).

³⁵ A *glosador* is technically anyone composing *gloses*, although in the performance contexts discussed here, the composers of *gloses* are improvisers. *Glosat* is the word that refers to the exchange of *gloses*, and a *glosada* is the event of exchange of *gloses*. The word *glosada* can also refer to any long and usually narrative oral poem constituted by heptasyllabic (sometimes pentasyllabic) lines. See further Ginard (1960) and Serrà Campins (2012).

³⁶ See, for example, Munar i Munar (2008).

between eight and ten lines and by the pan-Hispanic ten-line stanza form known as the *décima* (*décima espineliana* or *espinela*; rhymed abba ac cddc). This regulated the role of stanzas with a free number of verses in Mallorca. The variability of the lines in the stanza reflects the liberty to use two rhymes (a, b) in a number of ways in the rhyming patterns, and the augmentation of lines takes place *inside* the stanza, forming further elaboration between the opening and the statement.

The following example is from an event in which three *glosadors*, Mateu “Xurí,” Maribel Servera, and Blai Salom performed in Mallorca, January 23, 2015.³⁷ The following exchange took place between Mateu “Xurí” and Blai Salom in a late portion of the event, when certain themes had already been introduced and addressed among the participants. One central theme was opened by Mateu, who addressed the fact that Blai Salom was performing with his hat and coat on. Mateu had earlier proposed that his opponent was wearing these in order that he could leave quickly (due to the shame of not performing well). Another theme was developed around the idea of pregnancy, reflecting that Blai was a new father. References to these themes and other ideas verbalized earlier are plenty, and the images rely heavily on poetic language, metaphors, and the double meanings of words. Here, three consecutive turns from the middle of this dialogue are taken to explicate the main structural organization of these utterances (Sykari 2015a):



Fig. 1. The *glosadors* Mateu Matas “Xurí,” Maribel Servera, and Blai Salom performing at a *glosada*-event in Mallorca, January 23, 2015.

A. Mateu:

1. *Thas d'aixecar, alcavot*, (x2³⁸)
2. *si vols fer aquei[x] glosat.*
3. *Ja ho he dit i ho he explicat:*
4. *l'he de fer partir an es trot.*
5. *Es capell no l'hi he llevat,*
6. *perquè és un poquet burot.*
7. *Però ara m'he demanat,*
8. *ell que està embarassat:*
9. *si quan comanares s'al·lot,*
10. *duies es capell posat?*

B. Blai:

1. *Resposta te vull donar* (x2)

³⁷ Transcription from audio recording and initial translation into English was made by Joan Mut; the translation was then finalized in collaboration with the present author and reviewed by Jaume Guiscafrè Danús.

³⁸ The first line is conventionally sung twice.

2. *i ho faré just un ocell,*
3. *resposta la tendrà ell,*
4. *i ben clar la vull deixar.*
5. *Es... Me vaig llevar es capell*
6. *i així bé ja va passar.*
7. *El me vaig llevar de s'ocell*
8. *per poder-la embarassar.*

C. Mateu:

1. *Ja sentiü es bergantell (x2)*
2. *no va a jornal, va a escarada,*
3. *es puta fa una feinada,*
4. *o l'hi fa fer a s'ocell.*
5. *Només dic lo que diu ell,*
6. *avui a dins sa glosada:*
7. *només va penjar es capell*
8. *i va quedar embarassada.*

A. Mateu:

1. You must stand up, dude,
2. if you want to make this *glosat*.
3. I've already said it, and explained it:
4. I have to make him leave rushing off.
5. I haven't taken his hat off,
6. because he's a bit madcap.
7. But now I've wondered,
8. about him, who is pregnant:³⁹
9. if when you conceived the child,
10. you were wearing the hat?

B. Blai:

1. Answer to you I want to give (x2)
2. and I'll make it like a bird,
3. an answer will he [Mateu] get,
4. and I want it to be very clear.
5. The . . . I took the "hat" off,
6. and it went in well that way.
7. I took it off from the "bird"
8. to be able to make her pregnant.

³⁹ *Embarassat* ("pregnant") can also refer to somebody who has difficulty moving or acting normally, and Mateu may be playing with this double meaning to refer to Blai's hesitation and slowness to start improvising.

C. Mateu:

1. You heard the dude (x2)
2. he doesn't work on time wage, but on piecework rate,⁴⁰
3. the guy makes a lot of work,
4. or makes the "bird" to do it.
5. I only say what he says,
6. today, in the *glosada*:
7. he barely hanged the hat
8. and she became pregnant.

In the two opening lines of his first *glosa* (A) Mateu answers to a comment by Blai at the end of his previous turn. He then completes his opening quatrain by referring to an idea he has presented earlier (lines 3-4). After this Mateu wraps up another idea from earlier in the dialogue (5-6), appearing as a bridge leading towards his final quatrain. In the first two lines of this final quatrain (7-8), he introduces a new subject that culminates in a question on lines 9-10. The rhyme pattern is abba babbab. In the second *glosa* (B) Blai starts his turn somewhat more formulaically by introducing his desire to give an answer in the first two lines. He further elaborates on this theme on the next two lines (3-4) before proceeding to answer Mateu's question. His answer first contains priming verses (lines 5-6), anticipating the statement that he makes on lines 7-8. The rhyme pattern is abba baba. In his next turn (C) Mateu presents an interpretation of Blai's preceding verses: he turns to mock Blai for being very quick in his marital responsibilities. The first two verses introduce this theme with an image presenting a metaphor related to work, and the next two lines elaborate this idea further. He presents his comment more directly in the last four lines (5-8), first by priming his argument as something uttered by his opponent himself (5-6), and then ending with the argument, which concludes his final statement, in the last two lines. The rhyme pattern is abba abab.

Returning to the earlier discussion on verse length, it is also visible here that although each verse line is grammatically a clause and ends with a rhyme word, the two short lines of seven syllables together make a semantic entity, and often a sentence. In these three turns the argumentation proceeds mainly in units of four lines (in quatrains). In the middle of his first utterance (A), Mateu also presents a unit of two lines, which here structurally and semantically corresponds to the "bridge" found in the *dècima*.⁴¹ At the beginning of the utterances the semantic hierarchy of the units of four lines is less evident, or slightly toward the last lines. At the end of each utterance, this moves exclusively towards highlighting the last two lines (the statement). Blai composed in regular eight line stanzas throughout the entire performance, while there was a great deal of variety in the length and organization of stanzas by Mateu (and by Maribel). The melody line used by Blai was also different. According to the researcher Miquel

⁴⁰ *Anar a jornal* means to work based on an amount of time, while *anar a escarada* means not only to work based on the amount of work or reaching certain objectives, but also to proceed without distractions, and in a relatively quick manner.

⁴¹ The Spanish accentuation of the word is *décima*, but the Catalan accentuation is *dècima*. A *dècima/décima* is comprised of two quatrains having different rhymes (abba and cddc), which are bridged by two lines rhyming ac (all together forming the final pattern abba ac cddc).

Sbert i Garau (Sykäri 2015c), this corresponds to different “schools,” to the difference in how these performers have learned the tradition. Blai has learned the art from certain older local masters, whereas, as noted above, Mateu, who has improvised from his early childhood, has also experimented with the form in collaboration with poets from other contest poetry traditions.

As explained by Mateu and Maribel, their method of improvised composition and performance is in its basic form the following: a performer listens attentively to his or her partner, and when the partner arrives at his or her closing lines, the performer quickly creates, or, if thought up already while the other performs, finalizes the principal idea that will conclude his or her own utterance.⁴² This idea is allocated to the two last lines of the utterance-to-be, and at this moment appears in the improviser’s mind in an approximate linguistic form, but already decided to the extent that the rhyme words a and b are fixed. If we conceive that the composer’s final two lines end with the two rhymes ab, he or she can start composing in either ab or ba order. The improviser sings the first, opening line twice to an ascending melody, and the second line once to a descending melody.⁴³ He or she then proceeds with a rhetorical elaboration on the theme, holding to the melodic couplet of ascending and descending lines and the alternation of the two rhymes in the forms abab, or abba. If willing to insert an unpaired number of lines, he or she may sing a verse line to the ascending melody twice or several times and then complete the elaboration with the descending melody line. The two final lines, disclosing the premeditated principal idea in a finalized form, consist again of one ascending and one descending melodic line. The performer advances from an opening of two lines to the elaboration of the idea(s) in a fixed or free number of verses, leading to the final disclosure of his or her principal idea in the final two-line statement. The audience, which has listened attentively, bursts into laughter and applause at the end.

The improviser composes first a draft of the last two lines, and he or she keeps this draft containing his or her argument in mind during the performance. Sometimes the performer forgets this principal idea in the moment, being forced to create a new one during the course of the performance. Other times he or she discards the initial principle idea in favor of a better one, to which the associations have led him or her during the rhetorical elaboration. As a very experienced performer, Mateu approximated that he would forget his drafted principal idea lines perhaps once in every 30 utterances, but that he would also discard them for better ones more often during the performance process.

Both performers said that they prefer either abba or abab as the main form of rhyming, although they said that after composing the principal idea, they do not take much notice of how and in which order the rest of the rhymes are formed. The transcription of these three utterances, however, points to the fact that the argumentation and composition can advance quite regularly in units of four, with the possibility to add units of other length, here of two lines. The semantic hierarchy of the utterance is very clear: as stated by the improvisers, the last two lines always receive the primary semantic stress. Although the patterning of rhymes is characteristically

⁴² See also Egaña (2007); compare with Díaz-Pimienta (2014:508-09, 516-17).

⁴³ One can become familiar with the singing style, as exemplified in the following YouTube video, where Mateu and Maribel perform (Matas and Servera 2012): *Combat de glosadors entre Mateu Matas “Xuri” i Maribel Servera al V Curs de Cultura Popular (1/2)* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7zYJ1YkUxEo>.

carried on at the level of the short lines, a comparison of the semantic contents equates the units of four short lines with the Cretan couplets of two long lines. A typical improvised *glosa* of eight short lines would thus be equivalent to two Cretan *mandinadhes*, but as the stanza as a whole is longer, additional pairs of lines are possible in the middle.

Improvised Rap in Finland

Whereas the two traditions discussed so far have been practiced in the given communities from medieval times, improvised rap in the Finnish language is a new, developing poetic idiom. Nonetheless, the metrical roots of American English rap lyrics stem from the same medieval models that have also reigned in Anglo-Saxon popular verse and oral poetry since at least the thirteenth century. According to Adam Bradley (2009:18-22), the early American rappers employed the English ballad meter (or common measure), the accentual rhyming quatrain with four-line stanzas of alternating four- and three-stress lines and rhyming abcb (or abab), a style of rapping that is today referred to as “old school.” Rappers have later developed more personal and complicated rhythm, stress, and rhyme patterns in their written lyrics,⁴⁴ but metrically the accentual four-stress meter, the dominant form of English oral and popular poetry, still characterizes rap.⁴⁵ In Finnish rap the distinction between improvised and written rap lyrics is very clear. While the social contexts of freestyle rap in the United States have been researched to a degree, the history, composition, and strategies of improvisation have so far received little attention.⁴⁶

Today in Finland freestyle is performed among several performative frames. This tradition has emerged under direct influences from the United States and there are no living, local cultural models for the improvised oral production of lyrics. Young boys influenced by rap music and lyrics and the underground hip-hop culture started composing freestyle rap in Finnish in the 1990s, with an accelerating momentum toward the end of the decade. This was already some years before the final breakthrough of the Finnish language into the local rap scene, which took place at the turn of the century. Freestyle rap battle events were introduced in Finland in

⁴⁴ See, for example, Alim (2006), Bradley (2009), and Krims (2000).

⁴⁵ Bradley (2009:24-26).

⁴⁶ Erik Pihel’s (1966) contribution finely exemplifies several facets of freestyle’s aesthetics, but unfortunately the author lacks knowledge about rhymed oral poetry and is not able to fully appreciate the information on strategies of composition given by MC Supernatural. Supernatural clearly states that he thinks “about the next three lines before the first is even finished” (Destiny 1994:55, quoted in Pihel 1996:262), but Pihel, when discussing the role of rhyme, says that freestylers “know they must rhyme with a word they have already said” (255, n. 11).

Marcyliena Morgan (2009) provides a detailed sociocultural analysis of the Project Blowed (and its predecessor Good Life) open mic, battle, and cypher scene in 1990s Los Angeles. Jooyoung Lee (2009a, 2009b, 2009c, and 2016) further elaborates on the values, practices, and lives of the protagonists of this scene. Several sociolinguistic contributions address the linguistic strategies related to creating racial and topical identities in verbal duels. See Alim, Lee, et al. (2010 and 2011), Cutler (2007 and 2009), and regarding South Africa, see Williams and Stroud (2010 and 2014). A recent article by Flynn and Mitchell (2014) analyzes Older Scots flyting with reference to freestyle battle aesthetics.

2000 in the form of the Finnish Rap Championships. This brought about a venue for a fast-growing contest poetry activity that today consists of the annual Championships as well as other less formal annual and occasional battle events organized by the practitioners.⁴⁷ A number of experienced, long-term freestylists have recently also brought rap improvisation into the frame of interactive entertainment in different venues, including clubs and radio programs. At these events MCs improvise about themes suggested by the audience or about items given to them, and they create sketches in the style of improvised theater with a cast proposed by the audience.

Finnish freestyle follows the general conventions of American rap in delivery, poetics, and versification. Major differences are in the adaptations of these practices to the particularities of the Finnish language, language-related poetics, and culturally relevant thematic contents. Significantly, the Finnish language has much longer words than English, and the main stress is always on the first syllable of the word. In words longer than three syllables, a secondary stress appears on the third syllable (or sometimes on the fourth in still longer words), and the first syllable of each word in compound words receives a stress as well. Although Finnish authors of written rap lyrics often play with breaking these linguistic stress patterns, freestyle almost invariably holds to the natural word stresses, which facilitates immediate intelligibility. Finnish is also a heavily inflected language, which allows a great freedom in word order.

In addition to the language-specific stressing, and perhaps to balance the length of the rhyme section, Finnish freestyle is characterized by systematic *vowel rhyme*—in the phonetic section constituting the rhyme, all vowels are of the same quality and appear in the same order, but consonants can vary (for example, *suo-raan-vuok-raan*; *kiin-nos-taa-hiil-los-taa*; *läp-pä-ni-äs-säm-mis-bäk-kä-riil*).⁴⁸ Multi-rhymes, which in Finnish means rhymes longer than four syllables (for example, *jät-kä vie-lä-bät-läät siel-lä*; *ti-pu-tus-ta-vi-tut sus-ta-ki-du-tus-ta*), are considered a technical mastery. Vowel rhyme of this type is also common in the pre-Modern Finnish quatrain tradition, *rekilaulu*.⁴⁹ Most freestylists are, however, not even aware of the existence of this rhymed tradition, which was popular in the oral culture of the nineteenth century.⁵⁰

Finnish freestyle customarily proceeds in regular pairs of verse lines with end rhyme (aabbcc . . .). Rhymes within a line and rhyme clusters of three or four verses are also common.

⁴⁷ The local battle rap scene continues to be dominated by improvised freestyle battles. In 2012 two long-term improvisers, MC Kajo and MC S-Molli, founded in Finland the written battle league *Skriivaa ku Riivaa*, a format that now dominates the organized battle performances in the United States (The Ultimate Rap League or URL), Canada (King of the Dot), and Great Britain (Don't Flop battles), where performers know their rival about a month before the battle and prepare their lyrics in advance.

⁴⁸ Vowel rhyme is in this case a more accurate term than assonance, which can mean different things in different poetic cultures, but normally that the verse's last stressed vocal is the same, but other phonemes, also vowels, appearing after that can vary (see Vilén 1997:38-42). Assonance, which Adam Bradley (2009:66) describes as “the replication of unaccented vowel sounds,” is very common in American rap, just as other types of partial rhymes (see also Edwards 2009:81-91). Vowel length bears meaning in Finnish, but vowel rhyme allows substitutions between single and double vowels. A diphthong can also be split into two syllables.

⁴⁹ See especially Asplund (1997).

⁵⁰ Lack of awareness of *rekilaulu* in contrast to *runo* song (or “kalevala-meter”) poetry can be largely attributed to the fact that *rekilaulu* never received equal academic attention to epic and incantations, and, therefore, it was never valorized and mediated into the modern milieu as tradition.

When rapping “on the beat” (with instrumental music), the textual line mainly coincides with the four-beat musical bar, but minor bar-crossings as well as beginning on the up-beat are within normal variance. The number of syllables per line varies according to the personal or situational style, but an average is between 12 and 16 syllables. The number of lines in an utterance is not fixed, but tends to conform to the four and eight bar division of the musical structure. In battle performances the number of lines is regulated by a time limit. This is normally from 40 seconds to one minute and equates to about 16 to 24 lines on an average beat. In other performances, the MCs are either free to perform as long as they wish or collaborate on agreed terms of shorter stanzas, for example, of four or eight bars.

The following example illustrates the composition of freestyle in a Finnish organized verbal duel, a battle. The example is from the final battle of the 2015 Finnish Rap Championship, won by MC Kajo. This excerpt is Kajo’s first utterance, in which he answers to MC Rivo’s opening challenge. Kajo has won the competition earlier in 2009 and 2011, and returned this year to show that he is not afraid to lose, a blame commonly charged upon the long-timers who have won and do not participate thereafter. Turns in the final battle are longer than usual, one minute and 30 seconds. This is to test the finalists’ stamina that is part of the performative prowess, which together with the verbal skills create the grounds for assessment of relative skill. MC Rivo opens this final battle with the claim that with regard to the audience response (which he accuses has been paid for by Kajo), it’s not hard to guess who is the frontrunner. Among his other specific claims, he states that Kajo just came to puff his own battle league (Kajo wears the *Skriivaa ku Riivaa* league’s shirt; see Note 46); that he’s so poor that he doesn’t have money to pay his rent; and, reflecting claims presented earlier by Kajo about arrangements made in the back stage, that Kajo had himself asked in the back stage for a “bank note” from the 1000 euros award (anticipating that Rivo will win it) for his rent.

With this rather long utterance, I want to illustrate how both principles discussed so far, the composition in couplets and the placement of major statements that are invented and pre-formulated during the rival’s performance, can occur within a longer, continuous utterance. In the example, the rhyme sections in the original Finnish text are bolded. As the words are so long, syllables in the rhyme sections are also separated with hyphens. I have used capital letters at the beginning of a new semantic entity (Sykäri 2016):⁵¹

1. *Sanotaan tää suo-raan*
2. *todellaki ne mun massit tulee menemään vuok-raan*
3. *mut se et sä sanot sillee se ei tarkota et sä oot näp-pä-rä*
4. *sehä meinaa vaa et mä oon ainut joka elättää oikeest ittes räp-pää-mäl*
5. *Jos näit jäbii täällä tsii-gaa*
6. *ja Rivo tulee dissaa myöski tätä Skriivaa ku Riivaa lii-gaa*
7. *nii mitä ny jät-kä vie-lä*
8. *hyvä dissaa ku ens tapahtumassa säki räp-päät siel-lä*
9. *No onkse ihme et sä haluut siellä bät-lä-tä*

⁵¹ This is a transcription of MC Kajo's first turn in the Finnish Rap Championship 2015 (2.07-3.37) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T-0gxPMWtcA>. The English translation below was realized with end rhymes by the bilingual Finnish Spoken Word artist Kasper Salonen.

10. *no kai ny vittu ku näis ässämmis sä et pysty pär-jä-tä*
11. *tän homman MC Kajo hoi-ti to*
12. *ku kuulin et Rivo o vastas nii kelasin et jes, mä voi-tin jo*
13. *Siis heitän tässä läp-pä-ni*
14. *räpin äs-säm-mis, kysy vaik räppäreilt bäk-kä-ri!*
15. *ni MC Kajo tekee sen huo-lel-la*
16. *koska noi yleisö ja myös bakkäri-räppärit on mun puo-lel-la*
17. *Ja ihan vitu varma nakki*
18. *mut seuraavaki homma on iha varma nakki*
19. *Mä voin kertoa sulle yhen tarinan jos sua kiin-nos-taa*
20. *koska sä kävit mun kaverin kaa juttelee bakkäri!*
21. *ja aloit sitä hiillostaa, sanoit sillee*
22. *et mä en sais varmaa kertoa sulle tällasii tarinoi-ta*
23. *koska mä osallistun tähä ite*
24. *mut sanotaan silti suoraan et mustaki tuntuu et tänään Kajo voit-taa*
25. *Se oli iha vitu true story*
26. *ja äläkä väitä että se on boring*
27. *Jee, eli tää on MC Kajon kos-to*
28. *sä näytät silt et haluut hirttäät ittes toho mikkijoh-toon*
29. *Jee, sä tiedät it-se-ki sulle tulee mig-ree-ni*
30. *et voita Kajoo vaikka äsken sä voitit Kris-te-rin*
31. *Jee eli sä et voi Kajoo tääl es-tää*
32. *ku sä räppäsit mä mietin vaa kui kauan tää kes-tää*
33. *MC Kajo sua naamaa vaik pol-vel tint-taa*
34. *mä vedän näit rundei vaik se kestäis kol-me min-saa*
35. *ja se on silkkää suoraa vitu ti-pu-tus-ta*
36. *mut vi-tut sus-ta, sun verse oli yhtä ki-du-tus-ta*

1. I'll say this to you straight so you don't get it bent
2. you're damn right my money's gonna be spent on rent
3. you can say it but it doesn't make you witty
4. it just means that I'm the only one making a living by spitting
5. Check out these rappers, they're hard to miss
6. and it's weird that it's the Skriivaa league that Rivo was tryin' to diss
7. so just so you're aware
8. it's weird for you to diss it 'cause you're gonna be rapping there
9. It's no wonder you wanna battle on that ship
10. 'cause there's no fucking way you're winning this championship
11. MC Kajo's got this victory locked down, son
12. when I heard I'm against Rivo I was like "I've already won!"
13. So I'll lay down my bars
14. at this national seminar, just ask the backstage all-stars
15. they'll tell you MC Kajo brings the thunder with pride

16. 'cause the whole audience and the backstageers are on my side
17. And it's a piece of cake, dude
18. but this next bit of business is a piece of cake, too
19. I can tell you a little story here while I'm killin'
20. 'cause you went backstage to talk to a friend of mine
21. and you started to grill him, you were like
22. I probably shouldn't tell you this tale
23. because I'm a participant
24. but I can tell you straight I think Kajo will prevail
25. And that's a true fuckin' story
26. so don't try to tell me it's untrue or boring
27. Yeah, this is the vengeance of MC Kajo the lord
28. and you look like you wanna hang yourself on that mic cord
29. Yeah, you know it mister you're gonna get a migraine
30. you may've won against Krister but you'll never beat me at my game
31. If you think you can win me you've made a mistake
32. while you were rappin' I was thinking how long can this shit take
33. My words'll make you blind so you'll be dreamin' in sounds
34. I'll dominate you easy even in three-minute rounds
35. my rhymes are so dope they're endangered
36. but fuck you stranger, hearing you rap is like being stuck in a torture chamber

Within the first four lines Kajo answers to his opponent's claim regarding his rent with the implied argument that he will win the award, and by "flipping the script" (Lee 2016:110, 113-15) or turning the point to his favor, he infers that paying his rent with his awards means that he is a professional. In the next four lines he takes up the claim about presenting his own battle league by turning the point to the fact that his rival will in fact also participate in the near future. This in turn gives him the reason to continue in the next four lines with the accusation of the rival only being able to battle with written lines. The next four lines answer to the lines about him being a frontrunner, confirming that this is indeed so, and with reason. The associations that reflect the mentioned back stage arrangements further establish that in fact the rival has himself agreed with Kajo's superiority. In his first 24 lines Kajo takes up his rival's claims one by one and turns the edge of these claims back toward the rival. In the final 12 lines, he elaborates and closes his turn with thematically typical yet contextually shaped charges, belittling the opponent's skill and endurance and praising his own.

Kajo's freestyle proceeds here mainly in regular rhyming couplets of one priming line and one argument line. Rhymes within line occur at lines 6, 14, 29, and 36, creating a common pattern of three rhymes, of which two are final and one internal. The first unpaired priming lines are normally much shorter than the argument lines. There is not always such a difference in length between the priming and argument lines, but as stated by Kajo, his conscious style is also to leave a short pause after the argument so that the audience has time to react to it. In terms of meaning, many priming lines are straightforwardly more general (especially lines 5, 7, 11, 13, 15, 31, and 35) when compared with the second paired argument lines. Lines 17-26 are an

exception to the rigorous model of one priming line and one argument line. In these lines, he changes the style, and after framing the change in two lines (17 and 18) resorts to a narrative in a more conversational flow. The rhymes of this section of six lines (19-24) are timed to occur only at the ends of every second line, and once (21) the rhyme falls in the middle of the line (ends of lines 21 and 23 also rhyme, but this is most probably not deliberate). This scheme brings variation to the long utterance, and shows the flexibility of freestyle in the hands of a very experienced improviser.

MC Kajo has been practicing freestyle since 1999 at the age of ten. In my interviews with him in 2013, he made explicit that he had developed his method of composition to the point that he nowadays only pays attention to the argument lines, while the rhymes and the priming lines are created in performance without conscious mental effort. Thus, while performing an argument-line, he invents his next argument. He then primes that argument by creating a line that rhymes with it at the time of performance. Although his basic model of versification contains one priming line and one argument line, the process is not fixed. As explained by Kajo, it often happens that one adds argument-lines to a rhyme unit on the go. As to the major statements, he later also confirmed that it is relatively easy to shape several retorts during the contestant's performance, organize and keep these in mind, and then prime the statements in performance by larger semantic units. In addition to the tight thematic units of four lines (1-4, 5-8, and 13-16), this seems to have been structurally the case in lines 19-24. Long, semantically coherent compositional units thus emerge particularly in the opening and middle sections of the utterance, and in lines where the performer directs his repartee to cap his opponent's arguments.

In addition to the method of pre-formulating the second or concluding line of a series in advance, two other basic strategies have been indicated in my interviews with the Finnish freestylists. Some performers express their own perception that they start the composition of a couplet by having the first line's rhyme in mind. He or she then invents the second rhyme while creating and performing the first line. Another possibility expressed is that the improviser acknowledges in advance two or several rhymes that he or she then uses for composing that compositional unit. During a lengthy performance, it is most likely that all of these possibilities are employed even by experienced improvisers due to quick associations, a drop of energy levels, and the need to proceed without "freezing" (without remaining out of words and rhymes).

These strategies of composing a unit of two long lines that rhyme are equivalent to those expressed above for the composition of the *mandinadhes*. A difference in how often individuals perceive the process of composition in a certain way may be evident because, with *mandinadhes*, a composer composes only one couplet at the time, but in freestyle a long series of consecutive couplets is composed and performed with much higher speed.

The delivery of long utterances in rapping style is indeed quick (about twice the speed of the melodic singing of *gloses* or *bertsos*). It is also not broken by instrumental interludes or by the repetition of lines by the singer or a chorus. Consecutively, the composition of improvised text relies on very quick and spontaneous associations, which leaves less time to structure the overall utterance. Nonetheless, a skillful freestylist can repeatedly employ in his performance semantic units of four (or more) lines with a pre-formulated final line. This is closely equivalent to a *glosa* of eight seven-syllable lines, altogether 56 syllables. In the example, Kajo's first two thematic units of four lines contain 62 (lines 1-4) and 53 (5-8) syllables and the unit of six lines

(19-24) contains 95 syllables. Long, semantically coherent units are commonly situated at the beginning of the utterance, which seems to reflect a natural presumption that the cognitive capacity is highest at the beginning of the turn. Freestylers also try to end their utterances with a weighty statement. Performers have not, however, reported that they would seek to determine a final statement before beginning one's turn. The greater number of verses in an utterance together with the rate of articulation may present difficulties for this. Overall, in contrast to *gloses* and *mandinadhes*, long freestyle utterances such as those in a battle do not focus on delivering one clearly structured statement. Answering the rival's claims is crucial, but utterances are more inclined toward accumulating several arguments reflecting the subject at hand, and there is also an underlined stress on the ideal of being able to keep the performative flow of discourse. This does not diminish the fact that in interactive, competitive contexts, just as when *gloses* and other forms of contest poetry are performed, the final lines are decisive for the jury's and the audience's evaluation of the utterance.

Beginning from the End

This discussion of three different oral cultures has had the aim of examining the basic principles of constructing improvised verses with end rhyme. In all these cultures the patterning of end rhymes is the chief determinant in relation to which method of composition is developed. This remains true even if the conventional length of utterances in each tradition varies, and the contexts and conventions of performance place different constraints on the rate of utterances and how rapidly they follow on one another. The determinant of end rhymes can be described as producing a "reversed" method with regard to the experience of the audience. End rhyme occurs at the end of the line, but it is not arrived at in a linear progression of composition: the improviser has to figure out the end rhyme before creating the phrase preceding it. Improvisers of rhymed poetry thus begin each verse from the end, with the rhyme word.

The main issue of the present study has been to examine the organization of the utterance and its compositional units with regard to the semantic hierarchy of rhymed verses. It explored how poets of different poetic idioms structure improvised verses that end in rhyme. It was shown that the unit of two lines is a common compositional unit even outside of traditions where the primary unit of utterance is the couplet itself. Textual analysis corroborates what informants say in interviews: when the poet conceptualizes a couplet (of two long lines) as a compositional unit, whether that is a standalone couplet (the *mandinadha*) or one in a chain of couplets (freestyle), the second verse will be semantically stronger than the first. Similarly, within a longer stanza of regular length and rhyme pattern (*glosa*), the semantic weight is on the last two (short) lines, which constitute the main statement of that unit of utterance. The improviser therefore puts more impetus on creating the last line(s), and it was stated explicitly in interviews that the argument line(s) was/were composed before the priming line(s) or the opening of the utterance.

The possibilities cited for improvised composition of a couplet were introduced above as follows:

- a. The performer formulates the second line in advance and adds the first line while performing.
- b. The performer selects two (or several) rhyme words and formulates the clauses (or a series of clauses) that end with those words.
- c. The performer selects the first rhyme word, starts creating a clause ending with that word, and when performing the verse line, he or she determines the second rhyme and then creates the second line.

In all cases the selection of rhyme words occurs in relation to an emerging idea, whether that is a statement that organizes the whole utterance or only the idea for a single statement or argument within the context of a larger utterance. Of course this process becomes automatized as a function of developing fluency in the poetic idiom. As a consequence, it becomes impossible to acquire results that would verify each detail in the subjective processes of composition. Nonetheless, improvisers' accounts together with patterns observed in the data are quite consistent. A competent improviser predominantly first selects the rhyme word for the last, semantically more important line of a couplet (a) or has chosen both rhyme words of a pair of lines before composing the clauses (b). This principle of "end first" is made particularly evident with the improvisation of longer, rhetorically constructed stanzas illustrated through the *glosa* tradition, where the improviser's aim is to disclose the main point of the utterance at the end: the improviser will, whenever possible, pre-formulate the last two lines before starting his utterance.

In the equally common case that the performer starts his or her compositional unit only with the first rhyme (c), the aim of placing the semantic weight on the last line or lines of this unit requires constructing the argument in a very short time. The performer may thus not have an idea for an argument when he or she begins the unit, but has to invent such at the same time he or she chooses the second end rhyme. This extreme rapidity may fail to conclude in a coherent image, but often enough it brings along unconscious messages very creatively.

The primacy of metrically or formally required rhyme words in composition is an outcome of the primacy of parallel phonic patterns at the ends of the lines for identifying the poetic text as well-formed. For the improviser, this primacy also stands for the basic level of practice: he or she has to be able to create verses that end with the rhyme words. The creation of verbal images that can poetically communicate a message occurs in parallel with rhyme word selection. The mind of competent improvisers becomes masterful at the art of finding new images to deploy in the rapid course of performance, and the poetry's constraints on lexical selection are in an ongoing dialogue with the images communicated. In the traditions reviewed here, rhyme patterns finalize an intended message, but they also, through their active role in this verbal play, suggest and create new messages.

As suggested in the beginning of this essay, end rhyme is a significant device for keying the poetic word by parallel phonic structures. In the traditions examined here, the reversed method of versification—beginning from the end—coincides with a model of semantic hierarchy, in which semantic weight is also at the end of a unit of composition as or within an utterance. End rhyme, when conceptualized as a poetic device, therefore also structures an utterance in a way that is opposed to semantic parallelism, another significant poetic device that characterizes many unrhymed traditions, for example, the Finnish *runo* song tradition (Saarinen

2014), Karelian laments (Stepanova 2014), or the Rotenese ritual discourse (Fox 2014).⁵² In these traditions semantic weight is often on the first line, or it is distributed among the members of a parallel group, but it never falls on the final member of a parallel group. In the traditions of improvised oral poetry with end rhyme examined here, on the contrary, strong arguments are always situated at the end of the poetic units. The argument-lines are, consequently, preceded by one or several more general priming lines. The main statement can be preceded by a number of verses that lead to the final closure. The priming line may be wholly formal in function and semantically light or even void relative to the argument. In this type of argumentative, improvised rhymed oral poetry, the relationship between the order of lines and the semantic distribution of elements is the reverse of the tendency in semantic parallelism.

It is important to see that end rhyme as a poetic device is not only a stylistic or metrical feature in a poetic idiom, but also a constitutive functional determinant on the organization of discourse. In oral composition, these poetic devices are profoundly connected to methods of composition: the methods of composition emerge in dialectic with the formal requirements of versification. We have to focus on the process of composition in order to understand how poetic languages work.⁵³ Here, I wish to extend this discussion to include a perspective on improvisation and on rhymed poetic idioms. Neither of these has so far received much academic attention, although both present cognitive challenges and idiosyncratic processes of production that also certainly deserve recognition outside of the communities practicing these forms of verbal arts. Understanding these technical, cognitive constraints and challenges solely does not, of course, yet enlighten the social and cultural significance of improvised, rhymed argumentation, but it lays better ground for understanding its aesthetics, goals, and intrinsic value, as well as systems of assessment of skill.

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⁵² By coincidence, in the original workshop leading to this article, Jonathan Roper also took up this idea based on the recent remark made by the Estonian paremiologist Arvo Krikmann that "alliteration is the friend, and rhyme the enemy, of parallelism" (Roper 2014:180).

⁵³ See Foley (1996) and Frog (2014).

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“Hear the Tale of the Famine Year”: Famine Policy, Oral Traditions, and the Recalcitrant Voice of the Colonized in Nineteenth-Century India¹

Gloria Goodwin Raheja

We desire to place special emphasis on the immense importance of “moral strategy.” There is no greater evil than the depression of the people. . . . A main trait in Oriental character is proneness to succumb to difficulties and to accept them as inevitable. But, if given heart at an early stage, the Oriental will fight upon the side of the Government, which is his own; for his belief in the power of Government is of a kind which to Western ideas is almost profane. The fullest advantage should be taken of this belief at all stages, but especially at the outset, for the moral impetus given should last through the first period of the famine.

Report of the Indian Famine Commission, 1901

Jihre lok is raj ich vasde

Kai ronde kai hasde.

Niaun na kita koi Sarkar.

Of the people who live under this government’s rule,

Some weep, some laugh.

The Government has done no justice.

Lines from a song sung by Lalu, a tenant of Dabwali Dhab, quoted in J. Wilson’s 1884

Final report on the revision of settlement of the Sirsá District in the Punjáb, 1879-83

Introduction: “Tell Us Why We Are Here”

In “Sly Civility” Homi Bhabha writes about the paranoia of colonial power in India and its ambivalence about its own authority, an ambivalence that produced a demand for native authorization of colonial rule, a demand that the colonial subject “tell us why we are here” (Bhabha 1994:142). Similarly, Sara Suleri (1992:108) has written about how colonial administrators were uncertain about the validity of the knowledge they produced about Indian

¹I am grateful to the many historians, anthropologists, and other scholars who provided comments on this paper during its long gestation period. I especially wish to thank Shahid Amin, Deepali Dewan, Ann Grodzins Gold, McKim Marriott, Peter Pels, and audiences at the University of Chicago, Cornell University, and a long-ago meeting of the Association for Asian Studies for their encouragement and insights.

society. Colonial ethnographic commentary, for example, in Watson and Kaye's *The People of India*, "hysterically insists on the static readability of physicality" and thus betrays a radical ambivalence about the categories of colonial knowledge of Indian society, and a striking awareness of their inadequacy. Watson and Kaye's 1868-75 work, she suggests, focuses on the supposed fixities of caste-based racial categories and bodily types "as a means to stave off its hidden admission of cultural ignorance" (Suleri 1992:104). In this essay I suggest that these two profound anxieties, coupled with a need to explain away the countless revolts against colonial rule that had occurred in India since the late eighteenth century, prompted an explosion in the collection and entextualization² of Indian speech in colonial documents, at the very moment in the nineteenth century when the triumph of scientific knowledge of Indian bodies had been uneasily declared. Particular varieties of Indian speech, often characterized as "the voice of the people," were inserted into colonial texts to serve as authorizing narrative, to create an illusion of consent to colonial rule, while other voices, the voices of critique or rebellion, were erased, marginalized, or criminalized. And more generally, as Sharma (2001:38) has argued, famine policy and colonial writing about famine were closely intertwined with the British need "to legitimize its authority in the eyes of its subject people and to itself."

The fact that "ethnographic occasions" (Pels and Saleminck 1999) for the collection of native speech often unfolded in disciplinary spaces such as famine relief kitchens, prisons, and court rooms, or involved primarily high caste assistants and informants that also shaped the interaction, was not acknowledged by colonial ethnographers. Words spoken in prisons and relief kitchens and other colonial spaces were taken as exhibiting the invariable "mind of the people," although, as both Homi Bhabha and Partha Chatterjee have reminded us in different ways, native assertions of "tradition" and "claims of conscience" in such spaces might in fact have arisen from the "yeast of modernity" (Bhabha 1994:211), and the possibility must be recognized that they might therefore be local responses to colonial power that "opened to question some of the very procedures in the practice of modernity" (Chatterjee 1995:8). It is certain that peasants had come to know by the latter part of the nineteenth century that the surest way to forestall the progress of a colonial project was to raise the cry of religion or custom defiled, given the British notion that revolt was fomented only when a violation of religion occurred, and that such violations should therefore be avoided.³

Bauman and Briggs (1990 and 2003) have written about how oral narratives and other stretches of speech are transformed as they are decontextualized and excised from the situation in which they are produced, and entextualized in various kinds of ethnographic documents. They are interested, for example, in the question of how the apparent meanings of such speech may

²Bauman and Briggs define "entextualization" this way (1990:73): "In simple terms, though it is far from simple, [entextualization] is the process of rendering discourse extractable, of making a stretch of linguistic production into a unit—a text—that can be lifted out of its interactional setting." My use of the term here is intended to draw attention to the fact that when British administrators extract the songs from the contexts in which they were sung and insert the texts into administrative documents, the texts are subject to radical reinterpretation and are often used in attempts to justify colonial policy and the colonial presence in India.

³For an example of native appropriation of the language of "tradition" and "religion" to oppose the operations of the Survey of India, which was then interpreted as peasant subservience to custom, see Raheja (1999b).

appear radically different when the interactional context in which they were uttered is hidden from view. Expanding upon the questions raised by Bauman and Briggs, I ask how and why colonial administrators performed such decontextualizations, as they ignored the fact that the Indian speech about “tradition” that they recorded was in fact produced in colonial spaces and therefore must be read, in some respects, in relation to colonial disciplinary procedures there and in relation to modernity’s yeast. We should ask how colonial ethnographers erased these aspects of the ethnographic occasion in which the speech was written down, and to ask about the uses to which the erasures were put, in the project of fabricating the illusion of consent, an authorizing narrative, and an authenticating signature for colonial rule.⁴

The devastating famines that occurred in India throughout the nineteenth century set the scene for the exercise of an unprecedented degree of colonial surveillance over the lives, bodies, and social practices of ordinary Indian cultivators and laborers, for a new array of “ethnographic occasions,” and for new attempts to create this illusion of consent. Famine reports consistently spoke of the “prejudices” and unshakeable “customs” that, in the view of administrators, could be used in the fixing of “tests” that would limit relief expenditures. There were constant, though contradictory, observations concerning “caste prejudices” that might prevent people from eating in relief kitchens, repeated discussions about the masses of “respectable women” who were so addicted to “*purdah*”⁵ that they would not venture out of their homes to procure food, preferring death to the supposedly unthinkable rupture of norms of seclusion, and a simultaneous denial of the possibility that avoiding relief kitchens may have been an act of defiance against the colonial disciplines imposed upon the people who entered them.

In the first half of this essay, I consider the relationship between such representations of “custom” on the one hand, and pragmatic calculations of famine relief policies on the other, as an instance of the relationship between colonial knowledge of Indian society and forms of disciplinary control. I examine how representations of caste, gender, and supposed compliance with colonial rule figure in famine documents, and I ask what kind of speech was produced, as Indian men and women remembered those calamitous encounters with famine, hunger, and colonial discipline and surveillance of relief works and in famine kitchens. In the second half of the paper, I address this last question by considering Hindi and Punjabi poetic speech that addressed itself in tones of interrogation or “sly civility” (Bhabha 1994:99) to those encounters and to issues of famine, “tradition,” and the state, in eleven narrative songs in north Indian languages that were recorded in colonial texts: in notes published in the *Indian Antiquary*, in manuscript collections compiled by colonial administrators, in language texts, and in a land

⁴Stoler (1992:166) has also commented on the use of Malay language entries in late nineteenth-century colonial documents from Sumatra as an authentication of colonial narrative. I have elsewhere written (Raheja 1999a and 2010) on the relevance of Bernard Cohn’s (1985) work on “the command of language and the language of command” in colonial India for this project, but because of space considerations I cannot review it here.

⁵In many north Indian languages, the word *purdah* simply means “curtain.” As Ann Gold explained (Raheja and Gold 1994:168), observing *purdah* typically involves a constellation of behavioral components “adhered to with highly varying degrees of strictness: in her marital village [a woman] doesn’t leave the house, and she veils her face in front of all strangers and certain categories of male kin. Husband’s father, husband’s elder brothers, and, in public, husband himself are the figures before whom a woman most strictly observes *purdah*.”

settlement report from the Punjab.⁶ The singers of these songs occupied various locations within local hierarchies and with respect to the colonial state, and their words must be read in terms of these varied positionings. Without assuming that these are “representative” specimens of cultivators’ or laborers’ or bards’ speech about famine, I examine these narratives as reminders that there were more articulate and more particularly *positioned* signs of subaltern memory and critique than one might imagine from the descriptions of “obscure, enigmatic symbols [and] manic repetition of rumour” that Homi Bhabha (1994:199-200) sees as constituting the “intersubjective realm of revolt and resistance” in the nineteenth century; these songs are not enigmatic or obscure, they are highly articulate and compelling poetic critiques of both “custom” and the colonial state. I also look at these songs as reminders of the inadequacy of representations of peasant “tradition” simply as “conventional wisdom” (Arnold 1984:85), as “unquestioning obedience to authority” or as “traditionalism” (Guha 1983:36); such characterizations have often figured in even the most sophisticated interpretations of nineteenth-century Indian peasant consciousness and action that stops short of overt rebellion.

I view these sung narratives then, patterned as they are in terms of conventional genres of Indian oral tradition, as sites where “tradition” reveals itself not as homogeneous, unchanging, or unquestioned “custom,” but as historically situated, reflective, heterogeneous, and diversely positioned critique and memory. As Lalu’s song reminds us, some people weep and some people laugh in the face of “tradition” and in the face of the colonial state.

Famine Envisioned in the Colonial Archive

William Simpson’s 1866 ink and sepia wash sketch entitled “The Famine in India” (Fig. 1) depicts a scene along the Ganges River in Varanasi, of figures making supplication to an immense image of Nandi, Shiva’s bull, and in the background, to an image of Ganesh the elephant-headed god.⁷ A woman holds her infant child aloft before the bull, another figure huddles at its feet, and an emaciated bearded man approaches the bull with outstretched arms as the less clearly differentiated figures in the distance make obeisance to Ganesh. Only a pair of herons standing at the river’s edge seem oblivious of the gods, in what the artist clearly intended as a scene of superstitious Hindu idolatry, enacted as a customary response to famine.

After I had written these observations, I discovered that the central portion of this sketch had been the basis for an engraving on the cover of the *Illustrated London News* of February 21, 1874, at the beginning of the famine of that year. And there is a short accompanying article that in effect instructs readers in precisely this aspect of colonialist discourse about famine. The first half chronicles the irrigation projects and relief efforts put into motion by the colonial government, and the second half describes the “idols” being worshipped by the natives at the time of famine, complete with stretches of the imagined speech of the colonized. And here the

⁶In this essay I have restricted my analyses of famine songs to those from northern and central India and the Punjab, and to those languages and dialects in which I am reasonably fluent or at least have some reading knowledge.

⁷This sketch is reproduced in Pal and Dehejia (1986:123).

reader is also advised that while native faith in the gods is folly, faith in the benevolence of the empire is not (“The Famine in India” 1874:167):

The scene delineated in our front page Engraving is an illustration of the mode in which the Hindoo people may be seen, upon any occasion of great prevailing distress, to implore the aid of one of their deities. . . . In the scene our Artist has drawn we see people, young and old, before this idol in agonies of prayer. The mother, in despair, holds up her bucha or child to Nandi, and begs for kana—that is, food. She exclaims “Hum burra bhoohka hai!” (We are very hungry!) “Humara bucha burra bhookha hai!” (My child is very hungry!) “Hum log morghia hai!” (Our people are dead!) Such are the cries of lamentation that may too soon be heard in India. The bull Nandi may be deaf to them, but not the English John Bull.



Fig. 1. Engraving from *Illustrated London News* of February 21, 1874, based on William Simpson's 1866 ink and sepia wash sketch entitled "The Famine in India." Courtesy of Digital Library Services, University of Minnesota.

During the same sojourn in India, Simpson depicted the British administrators' response to such crises in a watercolor entitled "The Ganges Canal, Roorkee, Saharanpur District" (Fig. 2). The painting suggests to the viewer that colonial administrators did not implore the gods at times of famine, but instead built the Ganges Canal, an irrigation project explicitly authorized by official cognizance of the fact that the famine of 1837-38 had cost the Government about two million pounds in famine relief and lost revenue (Stone 1984:239). It depicts another assemblage of massive animal statuary, not a sacred bull and an elephant-headed god, but a pair of imperial lions erected on either side of the Canal in Roorkee; they stand guard over the Canal that would supposedly prevent the loss of revenue occasioned by another devastating famine.⁸ And thus the sketch and the watercolor exactly mirror the suggestions made in the *Illustrated London News* article about the contrast between British and Indian responses to famine, a purported contrast between economic and technological rationality on the one hand and "superstition" on the other.



Fig. 2. William Simpson, "The Ganges Canal, Roorkee, Saharanpur District." Courtesy of British Library Board (WD1012/manuscript).

⁸Although they had been moved upstream to a different location, the imperial lions themselves were still standing guard alongside the Canal in Roorkee when I first visited the town in the late 1970s, and they remain there to this day.

Hunger, “Tradition,” and the Politics of Famine Relief: Disciplinary Uses of “Custom” in the Nineteenth Century

Simpson’s depictions of Indian and British responses to famine manifest several commonplace colonial assumptions about “tradition” and famine in India. The ubiquity of these assumptions, however, did not mean that questions about famine policy were completely settled in nineteenth-century India. On the contrary, each famine prompted debate on procedures for the administration of famine relief. Representations of “custom” and “tradition” were central to many of these discussions however, and provided a discursive frame for them. On the one hand, colonial administrators frequently asserted that famine relief policy was congruent with “native custom” and that certain features of the relief efforts were in place so as to “accommodate” those customs and traditions. On the other hand, colonial understandings of customs relating to caste and gender were often invoked explicitly in the formulation of disciplinary routines designed to limit the amount of relief to be provided. Regardless of how the policies shifted, however, colonial discourse and colonial procedure revolved around assumptions about Indian subservience to “custom” and Indian consent to colonial rule, often in contradictory ways.

David Arnold (1984) has critiqued the views, found in both colonial administrative reports and scholarly writing, that Indians evince only attitudes of fatalism and passivity in response to famine. He launches his critique by noting the absence of peasant perspectives on famine in colonial documents and later research. His essay “Famine in Peasant Consciousness and Peasant Action: Madras 1876-8” has two objectives: to “determine how peasants perceived and responded to the crisis created by drought, dearth and famine” (63) and to “use the crisis of the famine as a window onto subaltern consciousness and action” (64). Arnold posits two phases in peasants’ response to the famine. He suggests that in the initial phases of famine peasants responded in terms of village collectivity: they attributed the famine to divine action, they performed collective rituals of placation and rain-making ceremonies in whose efficacy they had implicit belief, and they heeded prognostications about the rains and the course of famine on the basis of shared and indisputable proverbial wisdom. Arnold (1984:107-09) uncritically reproduces colonial characterizations of the supposed “cultural resistance” exhibited by the peasantry to government food relief distributions, founded on a hesitation about “accepting food prepared by cooks from ritually inferior castes. He similarly reports without question a missionary observation concerning the “bewilderment” (74) of villagers at the failure of their rites to elicit divine aid in the face of the severe famine. And he relates uncritically the statement emanating from the Madras Board of Revenue that peasants are “reluctant to break through custom” (defined by proverbial sayings) concerning the timing of agricultural operations (84-85). Thus in every instance Arnold adopts a view of “tradition” as un-positioned and homogeneous, and as generally unreflected upon and unchallengeable. Without entirely denying the power of peasant convictions on caste and ritual and gender, we may wish to pay particular attention to the positionality of such convictions, to the possibility that “tradition” is already at its origin a site of ambivalence and skepticism as well as “belief,” a site of negotiated and contested social realities as well as consensus. We may wish to call into question both the colonial texts and more recent historical writing that speaks only of unambiguous capitulation to the weight of tradition.

In the later stages of famine, according to Arnold, village solidarity began to break down, an enhanced peasant awareness of exploitation by the wealthy developed, and looting of the grain stores of village elites and of traders commenced. But in Arnold's view, insofar as "tradition" addressed itself to famine and drought, it did so collectively and in terms of implicit faith in the power of ritual and of custom. By entirely separating the moment of "tradition" and "solidarity" from the moment of violent revolt and seeing the former only in terms of a homogeneous collectivity, Arnold thus reproduced colonial ideas about Indian "tradition." But it is these representations of "tradition" that nineteenth-century famine songs permit us to critique.

Famine, "Tradition," and "Moral Improvement"

Famine was often said to be exacerbated by the "traditions" of the masses, as when William Crooke wrote that (1897:173-74):

There is, perhaps, no more pathetic situation in the whole range of human history than to watch these dull, patient masses stumbling in their traditional way along a path which can lead only to suffering, most of them careless of the future, marrying and giving in marriage, fresh generations ever encroaching on the narrow margin which separates them from destitution.

Indians were said to have little ability to cope with even one year of scarcity, because of their "improvident habits, and . . . the system of borrowing and receiving money in advance on the credit of their coming crops" (Colvin 1870:159); famine reports speak repeatedly of the "wasteful expenditures" on weddings and rituals that supposedly make crisis inevitable when scarcity strikes. And Indians were supposedly unable to respond aggressively to famine because "a main trait in Oriental character is proneness to succumb to difficulties and to accept them as inevitable" (*Report* 1902:11).

Colonial administrators occasionally expressed the opinion, however, that the experience of famine might provide an opportunity for the state to encourage peasants to break through "traditional" constraints and thus acquire "habits of work" that would ultimately put more revenue into the government's coffers. J. C. Colvin, for example, wrote of the constriction of the agricultural labor market in the 1868-69 famine in the North-Western Provinces, not in terms of the desperate situation of the laborers who were left without means of subsistence, but in terms of a possible inculcation of state-approved "habits" among the landholders (Colvin 1870:168):

The agricultural population were too poor to hire labour; many hundreds of farmers, who in ordinary years never touched a plough or handled a hoe, were now hard at work with their own hands. . . . Men who last year sat at rest, giving two or three annas a day to labourers, were this year working away like common coolies. It is to be hoped that a habit of work may thus be contracted, and so out of the vast amount of misery a little good may be reaped.

John Strachey, who as Collector of Moradabad administered famine relief there in the 1860s and provided an influential model for much of the second half of the nineteenth century, summed up

the colonial perspective on the dangers of supplying too much relief with an allusion to J. S. Mill (Strachey 1862:4-5):

The evils of indiscriminate private charity are universally admitted. . . . Under the pressure of extreme famine, it is true that the difficulty of discrimination may become too great to be contended with, and it is possible that in some districts this may have occurred already. But such cases must be extremely rare, and until distress becomes altogether unmanageable, there can be no reason for the disregard of the obvious principles upon which public charity ought to be administered.

The problem, as Mr. J. S. Mill has said, is, “how to give the greatest amount of needful help, with the smallest encouragement to undue reliance upon it.” This is equally true, whether relief be given to the infirm in the shape of simple charity, or to the able-bodied in return for labor performed.

Thus it was the general view that Indian habits and “custom” rendered the danger of “demoralization”—laziness and a reliance on relief—greater than it would have been in Britain, and that measures had to be taken to ensure that “discrimination” could be maintained as famine relief was administered, so as to provide relief only to those who were deemed to be truly starving because of the famine, and in such amounts as would discourage reliance on relief. And as Veena Das (1995:97) has pointed out, colonial administrators also frequently demonstrated a disinclination to provide for the maintenance of unproductive populations, such as vagrants and paupers. Thus famine reports throughout the nineteenth century insist upon the need to separate those made destitute by famine from such “professional mendicants,” ordinary beggars, and vagrants, and aggressive measures were taken to exclude the latter from famine relief, through the use of tests. Greenough (1982:60), for example, points out that in the official report on the famine of 1866 in Bengal and Orissa, famine commissioners lament the fact that Bengali *zamindars* (“landlords”) and other native dispensers of relief show no interest in discriminating between the “really destitute immigrants [into Calcutta] and the ordinary vagrant beggars of the town” and their “strong repugnance to apply very strict tests.” Greenough (1982:59) also comments that such tests were not popular with the hungry poor; the tests were partly devised to ensure that relief was funneled to the “respectable classes” who were affected by the famine, and away from those who had been suffering from poverty and hunger prior to the famine.

Famine, Caste, and “Tests” for Destitution: Contradictions of Colonial Representations of Caste

Colonial representations of native capitulation to “custom” and “tradition” are evident in far more specific ways as well in discussions of famine-relief measures. Famine-stricken Indians may refuse to eat from colonial workhouses and relief kitchens, we are told over and over, because of caste prejudices concerning who can eat with whom, and because *purdah-nashins*, women under the sway of *purdah* restrictions, would rather die of starvation in their homes than break the hold of custom. These ubiquitous observations on “custom” and its hold on the Indian mind were based on four ideas: first, that Indians were strictly observant of rules concerning caste hierarchy; second, that women were equally observant of norms for female behavior vis-à-

vis veiling and seclusion; third, that the behaviors exhibited at government labor camps and poorhouses were equivalent to behaviors and attitudes exhibited in ordinary times and places, away from the surveillant gaze and disciplinary power of the colonial government; and fourth, that the “respectable classes,” which typically meant people of higher caste, were more deserving of relief than the chronically hungry poor.

In writing of “caste prejudices” supposedly exhibited in the poorhouses, what was ignored was the disciplinary context, the fact that a poorhouse is, as it was defined in the 1898 *Famine Code* for the North-Western Provinces and Oudh, “an institution where cooked food is distributed gratuitously to the inmates on the condition of their residing therein and conforming to the rules of discipline and order.”⁹ But what is the precise connection between the colonial concern with such decontextualized “custom” and the administration of government relief according to these rules?

Beginning with the famine of 1837-38 in northern India, and gaining momentum with the famine reports of the 1860s, there was a preoccupation with caste and food restrictions, and how these could be utilized to minimize relief expenditures during periods of famine to control the number of people seeking relief, which would at once minimize the cost of relief and also, in the colonial view, minimize the chances of “demoralization.”

Knowledge of caste and caste identity was seen by colonial administrators as critical to the distribution of famine relief, despite the varied interpretations they encountered and despite their often contradictory understandings of practices related to caste. The *Famine Code* for the N.-W. Provinces and Oudh contains, for example, a sample ticket of admission to a poorhouse; on it was to have been recorded an admission number, the name of the ticket-holder, age, sex, caste, village, and occupation. A note is appended to this, stating that “Inhabitants of different villages and members of different castes must never be included in the same ticket.” Thus, here and in the *Famine Code* pronouncement (1898:179) that “Great care should be taken that the persons employed in the cooking and handling of the food are of such castes as shall not offend the prejudices of the inmates” and that “[cooks] must be Brahmans” we see moves toward the colonial institutionalization of caste ideology in an arena in which we might expect it to be generally of marginal concern to the segments of the population—generally low-caste laborers—who were most hard-hit by famine and who would have appeared most frequently in the famine kitchens. More frequently however the colonial preoccupation with caste and commensality had more to do with curbing expenditures and preventing “demoralization” than with accommodating caste customs.

In the *Report of the Commissioners Appointed to Inquire into the Famine in Bengal and Orissa in 1866*, there is a lengthy section devoted to statements taken from local elites, both Indian and European, regarding the efficiency and efficacy of various relief measures in relation to caste. Members of the colonial and native elites frequently asserted that many people refused to accept food from the relief kitchens because they feared that in so doing they would jeopardize their caste status. Dr. N. Jackson, the Civil Surgeon at Balasore, stated, for example, that “Sheds were erected from nearly the beginning of this state of things in which the homeless might have found shelter if they had chosen; but the paupers had a strong objection to going into them. I

⁹This definition is set forth in p. 23, Chapter VII of this *Famine Code*, titled “The Poorhouse.”

believe the objection was founded on considerations of caste” (*Report* 1867:lxv). A Mr. J. W. Lacey told the commissioners that “I have been engaged in establishing centres and superintending them. We commenced with uncooked rice and afterwards gave cooked rice. . . . Many died because they would not come to the . . . centres for fear of losing their caste” (*Report* 1867: vii). Baboo Poorosotum Patnaik of Puri testified that “The better castes of people who were fed at the *unnochatros* [famine kitchens] will not be re-admitted to the privileges of caste; but those belonging to lower castes will be able to get theirs back by giving feasts” (*Report* 1867: xvii). And Baboo Radhsham Nurinder, a *zamindar*, reported that “The Deputy Magistrate began to distribute cooked rice to the poor. . . . He asked me to belong to the Committee, but I refused, because he would not, as I suggested, give relief in the shape of raw rice instead of cooked food. I objected to the latter arrangement, because it deprives people of their caste, and high caste people could not therefore benefit by it. The result of distributing only cooked food over the Cuttack district was that respectable people preferred dying in their houses to accepting relief” (*Report* 1867: lxxii).

Some members of the local elite who responded to the questions of the commissioners were unconvinced that people would rather die of hunger than eat food prepared at the famine kitchens. Moulvie Mahomed Abdoolla, the Deputy Magistrate and Collector in Balasore District, testified, for example, to the lack of caste scruples in this regard, and he also provided insight into other reasons for any observed disinclination to eat or be confined in the relief facilities (*Report* 1867: cxlix):

From the first the paupers used to lodge in the *dhurmsalah*, but that did not afford sufficient accommodation to all; so the [Relief] Committee erected a number of sheds. . . . These sheds would have accommodated all, but very few availed themselves of the shelter. The cause of this was that the food supplied to them at the *dhurmsalah* was insufficient, and therefore the paupers used to supplement it by begging from door to door; and at night, they lay down by the sides of the road and in the verandah of houses, wherever they happened to be. I do not believe that those who took food at the *dhurmsalah* had any objections to congregating in the sheds with other castes; all such scruples were given up when they came to the *dhurmsalah* for food.

Here we are given an intimation that, despite the claims of some members of the elite, the paupers’ reluctance to accept relief may have had to do with the insufficiency of the food that was provided in the relief kitchens and the imposed confinement in the sheds rather than a reluctance to infringe upon caste-related commensal restrictions. For many people the reluctance to eat at the kitchens had more to do with colonial disciplinary practices than with a possible violation of caste traditions.

As Paul Greenough (1982:188-89) has pointed out, this particular famine report caught the attention of Max Weber and he took notice in *The Religion of India* of the purported necessity of providing high-caste cooks in the relief kitchens and marking “symbolic *chambre séparée*” by means of chalk lines drawn in the eating places, as evidence of the tenacity of Hindu notions of “magical defilement” (Weber 1958:36-37). When we listen to Abdoolla remark upon the insufficiency of the food relief dispensed in these same relief kitchens, Weber’s interpretation seems compromised by the failure to consider colonial disciplinary power as well as the local

relations between the elite and the paupers in which the discourse about caste and food restrictions took shape. “Magical defilement” does not seem to be the whole of the story. As Baboo Radhsham Nurinder’s account suggests, such “defilement” may have been a matter of great concern only to the high caste elite who spoke to the famine commissioners and it certainly seems to have been far less salient to the paupers described by Abdoolla than the surveillance, confinement and labor requirements imposed at the colonial relief operations. In thus eliding positionality and politics from his account, and in producing the evidence of the chalk lines as a token of an essentialized Hindu “tenacity,” Weber’s interpretive strategy conforms with colonial erasures of politics from accounts of “tradition” and it also prefigures later anthropological reifications of caste and “tradition” as well.

The opinions of Brahmin *pandits* were sought after the Bengal famine of 1866 and recorded in colonial documentation as evidence of generalized Hindu “custom.” A Mr. Kirkwood submitted a report entitled “Recovery of Caste After Partaking of Cooked Food at a Poor House” (1874:173):

The matter was one full of anxiety. There were crowds of women and children daily leaving our *Unnochutters* [*annachatras*], but to go where? To go to their homes, there probably to be refused all intercourse with their kindred? In such case it would be no difficult task to cast their horoscope. Their future could be foretold with tolerable certainty; beggary and plundering, every degree of turpitude, and every form of loathsome disease; in short, a course of life that might go far to undermine the moral and physical well-being of the province for years to come. Such a prospect was not one before which to sit down quietly and contemplate. Many influential resident and non-resident Bengali gentlemen, *zemindars*, began to agitate for the restoration of caste; but the Central Relief Committee [a semi-official organization] declined to move in the matter, thinking that any interference that might partake of the nature of a policy would not only place Government in a false position, but rather retard than hasten the desired solution of the difficulty. But meanwhile, influential natives of Calcutta and Cuttack had consulted the pundits [scholarly Brahmins] of Pooree, Cuttack and Calcutta on the subject. The pundits gave their opinions in language as clear as it is decisive. These opinions all set forth that no act committed in order to save life occasions loss of caste; but the Cuttack pundits enjoined the payment of a few annas [coins] and certain ceremonies, not because the *Shastras* [sacred texts] so directed, but because they deemed it expedient. The others stated that no penance whatsoever was necessary. The authoritative ruling thus obtained has been made widely known and, I believe, with considerable effect, for now I frequently hear of those who have eaten of the cooked food being re-admitted to their castes.

Despite Kirkwood’s assumption that it took this “authoritative ruling” from the *pandits* to dislodge the hold of “custom,” Kirkwood himself noted that an insistence on the commensal restrictions was found only among Brahmins, and that he frequently heard of people who had eaten in the kitchens and returned to their castes; one doubts whether this effect would have followed so rapidly upon the *pandits*’ pronouncements if there had in fact been such uniformly strong “traditional” scruples. It is not at all clear that the actual relief recipients were themselves preoccupied with this issue, before or after the local elites called in the *pandits*.

During the famine of 1876-78, when Sir Richard Temple (1874) was asked to devise policies that would accomplish the goal of minimizing famine relief expenditures, he was instructed that “it is essential, in the present state of finances, that the most severe economy should be practiced,” and that if the government pursued a policy of attempting to save as many lives as possible in the face of famine, such action would “go far to render the future government of India impossible.” Temple was also told that “the task of saving life, irrespective of the cost, is one which it is beyond [the power of the government] to undertake.”¹⁰

Beginning with the famine of 1837-38, a principal means of effecting such economies had been arrangements for “test” relief. The means through which relief recipients could be “tested” as to their actual destitution and the direness of their need for relief were constantly under discussion. “Tests” that were implemented included compulsory residence and confinement in enclosed workhouses, and providing relief work for wages at a distance from the homes of those who needed it, so as to eliminate those who were not in entirely desperate straits. Recipients were also “tested” through the manipulation of wage levels to very low and extraordinarily precise levels, far below market rates for labor and minutely calculated so as to provide the barest minimum for survival. The result was that in some famines, laborers in relief camps were paid wages (in cash or in grain) that were in fact inadequate (Bhatia 1991 [1963]: 115-18). The dire consequences of the stringent enforcement of these tests have also been documented. Klein (1984:200) points out, for example, that in the famine of 1876-78 in south India, “People perished in the greatest numbers where local officials were most suspicious about distress and most restrictive in offering relief, or villagers were least able or willing to take relief at large, distant works.”¹¹

The Report of the Indian Famine Commission, 1901 sets forth the principle that the tests that are decided upon in any instance “should be stringent though not repellent” (1902:5). It is within the colonial endeavor to devise such tests as a means of curbing expenditure that we locate the incessant discussions of caste, “caste prejudices,” and commensality in the famine documents.

In taking note of local practices concerning caste and commensal restrictions, colonial administrators seized upon them, generally viewing them as incontestable and of universal Indian concern even when there was much evidence to the contrary, and they made attempts to codify them in the famine deliberations.¹² It was thought that, as cooked food is more subject to caste restrictions than raw foodstuffs, the distribution of cooked food would serve as a test of desperation.

Colonial administrators sometimes saw distributions of cooked food as imposing a too “repellent” test, but here too the argument was based on an assumption of unquestioned

¹⁰ Letter from the Government of India to Richard Temple, dated January 1877, quoted in Bhatia (1991 [1963]:90, 111).

¹¹ Hall-Matthews (2008) reviews the debates among colonial administrators about the level of wages that should be provided to laborers on the relief works, and takes stock of the hundreds of thousands of deaths that occurred when the tests were strict, as in the famine of 1876-1878.

¹² The variability (by caste and by region) and indeed the contestability and transformability of such commensal restrictions have been documented. See, for example, Marriott (1965 [1960] and 1976) and Raheja (1988:239-44).

submission to the dictates of caste. Thus, the 1898 *Famine Code, N.-W. Provinces and Oudh* set forth its instruction that “[cooks] must be Brahmans” (179), and a report on the famine of 1868-70 in the North-West Provinces asserted that “the food so distributed shall be cooked by persons to be engaged for the purpose, care of course being taken that these persons shall be such as that none may object on the ground of caste prejudices to receive food from their hands” (Henley 1871:lxvii). There is in these famine reports an insistence on the necessity of providing relief to the “respectable classes” of high caste people who were most likely to exhibit scruples about accepting cooked food. The effort was not simply to make accommodations for purported native sensibilities, but to devise such precisely calibrated “stringent but not repellent” tests that would discourage applicants while at the same time providing some relief, especially to those of the “respectable” classes who would in non-famine years provide revenue to the colonial government.

But there were continual vacillations on this issue of providing cooked or uncooked food, and employing Brahmin cooks. At times of heightened concern that providing raw foodstuffs would provide no disincentive to applicants for government relief, distributing cooked food was deemed to serve as a useful “test.” We find in these famine documents only occasional concern with questions such as the nutritional levels of the gruel that was provided in the kitchens, or whether those people stricken by famine had access to fuel and cooking hearths and other means to prepare the raw foodstuffs that might be provided, or whether the rules about “confinement” were too harsh. Rather, the primary consideration was whether caste sensibilities were such that providing cooked food either as wage on the test works or in the kitchens set up for gratuitous relief would deter unworthy relief applicants, while at the same time allowing “respectable” people to avail themselves of aid.

It was remarked in the 1901 *Famine Report* that “the conditions which we lay down are hard, and they will not be long endured by the people; but it is of the essence of test works that the lesson which they are intended to teach should be quickly learned and unhesitatingly applied” (*Report* 1902:18). Later in the report, the serving of cooked food as a “test” is commented upon (48-49):

The word “kitchen” appears to have been adopted into the vernacular; and certainly in no previous famine were kitchens employed in anything like the same degree. They rose into favour as importing a test of distress; and when in the Central Provinces the test completely failed, they remained in favour, or at least in prominence, by stress of the inexorable law of famine administration that a fundamental error, once made, can never be retrieved. . . . At first, indeed, there was some small reluctance on the part of some people to take cooked food, but it did not last long; and, when it broke down, every barrier simultaneously gave way. It is now generally admitted by the officers of the Central Provinces that personal selection is as necessary for kitchens as it is for village relief. This conclusion deprives the kitchens of the principal advantage expected from them, namely, the enforcement of an automatic test of distress.

The authors of the *Report* admit that distributions of cooked food rather than grain were not effective as a general test primarily because the eating of cooked food in a common kitchen had not been viewed by most of the famine-stricken as an insurmountable barrier or as unacceptably

damaging to caste status.¹³ In a number of famines in the nineteenth century, distributing cooked food as a “test” was abandoned as this fact became clear, and local officers were instead instructed to inquire into the circumstances of individuals who appeared at the kitchens, in order to devise strategies of “personal selection” that would replace other ineffective tests.¹⁴ But despite the fact that the 1901 *Report* discouraged the distribution of cooked food as a general test, it nonetheless recommended that it be used in certain circumstances (*Report* 1902:18):

Experience . . . shows that women and children in need of relief are apt to flock in numbers to test works from the neighbouring villages. If their numbers are excessive, it may be desirable, as a temporary measure, to give the women and children cooked food as a wage, with a view to ascertaining the reality and extent of the pressure.

The famine of 1873-74 was the only one in which the use of “tests” was substantially relaxed, and the only one in which the saving of all life was held out as the goal of famine policy. This policy was repudiated in the famine of 1878-79, and despite a great increase in famine mortality, the 1880 *Report of the Indian Famine Commission* (33) emphasized the necessity of the tests, asserting that “we cannot doubt that the measures taken in the famine of 1873-74,—though they must be recognized as successful so far as the absence of mortality can be perceived as a test,—exceeded the necessities of the case.” As the severity of the tests was increased in 1878-79, and as the wages provided at the relief works declined dramatically, there was an apparent increase in those years in the reluctance of people in Bihar and other areas of northern India to come forward for famine relief, and an increase in reports of caste scruples being cited as the reason for this. There were in fact so many such reports in 1878-79 that the phenomenon, for those years at least, would appear not to be simply a figment of the colonial imagination. Perhaps we come closest to the truth if we take seriously an interpretation put forward, and then discounted in Part III (*Famine Histories*) of the *Report of the Indian Famine Commission*, issued in 1885 (200): “possibly the rumour of the lavishness of relief in Behar in 1874 may have spread over the country, and led the people to expect the repetition of that great blunder,” and when that level of relief was not forthcoming, they hesitated to submit to confinement. The report goes on to insist that the only satisfactory interpretation for this is that the people were not “sufficiently starved” to come forward for relief, in the form of lowered famine wages or cooked food. Yet there was the beginning of an insight in this 1885 report that the talk of “caste scruples” may have been a screen behind which people were critical of the government efforts and thus refusing not the cooked food but the confinement in the kitchens, especially when the level of relief was so low.

It is apparent that the contradictory and constantly vacillating colonial assertions about the inclination or disinclination of relief recipients to accept cooked food because of “caste

¹³ During the Bengal famine of 1943-44, Tarakchandra Das carried out a survey of the destitute population in Calcutta. In a section of his report entitled “Observance of Social Restrictions on Food,” he (1949:87-89) argued that such restrictions are normally observed at the top as well as the bottom of the social hierarchy, but that his survey revealed that “during the critical period of the famine these socio-religious restrictions practically disappeared from the vast majority of the destitutes.”

¹⁴ See, for example, Bhatia’s (1991:114) descriptions of procedures in the 1874 famine in Bengal and Orissa.

prejudices” must at least in part be interpreted in light of the connection between colonial knowledge about castes and shifting modes of colonial disciplinary control. Such knowledge was constructed and deployed in attempts to arrive at that precarious balance between “stringent” tests on the one hand, and on the other, those “repellent” measures that would have had such dire effects upon the population that agricultural operations (and revenue collection) in the following year would be disrupted. The location of each assertion about caste restrictions, the particular administrative context in which it is situated, makes it possible for us to discern the disciplinary intent. Ethnographic observations in these famine reports thus cannot be regarded as transparent windows onto subaltern subjectivity or as inquiries into Indian “tradition” whose object was the “accommodation” of Indian custom. Such observations were located in projects of control and discipline and take their character from these projects, and colonial assertions about the observance of caste commensal restrictions often obscured the fact that hungry people avoided the relief works because of insufficient wages or because people resented confinement at the works, and not just because of caste traditions.¹⁵

Famine, Gender, and the “Stringency” of Tests

Just as a contradictory colonial discourse about caste traditions took shape under the impetus of administrative and economic imperatives, so too are contradictory assertions about gender, hunger, and “tradition” evident in these famine reports.

Colonial administrators frequently expressed concern about the large numbers of women who appeared at the test works. In the *Report of the Indian Famine Commission, 1901* quoted above, for example, so many women were seen on the works that famine officers strove to limit the number who received such aid. And there was also much deliberation as to the wages to be paid to men on the one hand and women on the other. Wages for women became an important issue because in many cases famine codes discouraged administrators from providing an allowance for the dependents of laborers on the famine works. Famine commissioners argued, for example, that if village works were established and “distance tests” eliminated, “undue popularity” of the works would be the result, and so some other “test” would have to be mandated to limit the numbers of people receiving relief. So, the commissioners recommended that a policy of “no relief to dependents” be imposed in these instances, to serve as such a test. Thus women were frequently obliged to labor at the works if they needed relief, but wage levels too were used to discourage them. Women were paid less than men for their labor in the attempt to devise “stringent” tests; arguing that it was a “physiological fact” that women required less food than men and pointing out that such a measure was deemed necessary for “economy” and for “control and discipline,” famine officers recommended that a “sex distinction” in the matter of wages be maintained (*Report* 1902:38-39). In the *Report*, the commissioners weighed the arguments for and against this distinction; the main argument in favor of abolishing the differential wage scale was that a uniform wage would be easier to administer. But the conclusion was that “In so far . . . as the question is resolved into a balance of a certain

¹⁵ For examples of other colonial uses of knowledge of Indian caste “customs,” see Dirks (2001), Freitag (1991), and Raheja (1999a).

convenience against financial and disciplinary interests, we are of the opinion that the latter ought to prevail” (39).

Colonial assessments of “custom” were brought into play in this respect as well. Despite their insistence in other situations on the colonial mission of “reform” in the matter of Hindu treatment of women, administrators here cite “the universal custom of the country, which allots a much lower wage to women than to men” as a justification for the wage policy, averring that “no unavoidable step should be taken, which conflicts with the custom of the country” (*Report* 1902:39).¹⁶

Colonial administrators thus deplored the fact that so many women appeared at the relief works and that so many appeared at poorhouses along with their children (Henley 1871:31), and they cite “the custom of the country” as a means of legitimizing the use of a lower wage for women as a “test” to discourage this. They also report on the large numbers of women seen begging for a piece of bread for their children (*ibid.*) and, during the 1866 famine in Orissa, on the large numbers of women “wandering about the marshy bottoms, picking a kind of salt herb, which . . . form[s] the main article of subsistence at present, but the supply of which must soon be exhausted.”¹⁷ Yet they also speak of the large numbers of *purdah-nusheens*, women who are said to submit blindly to norms of seclusion and veiling, and who would supposedly prefer starvation to breaking such norms and appearing in public for relief. The 1898 *Famine Code, N.-W.Provinces and Oudh* (20), for example, comments on the “respectable women, who, being debarred by national custom from appearing in public and deprived of male guardians, are in danger of starvation, shall be regarded as entitled to gratuitous relief” to be distributed at their homes. And Henley’s famine narrative (1871:133) speaks of the “*purdah-nusheens* . . . who either never go abroad in public, or would feel themselves degraded by the receipt of alms in a poorhouse.” By constantly publicizing the connection between “respectability” and the maintenance of seclusion, and speaking of it as a “national custom,” it is likely that the colonial administration heightened local awareness of this practice as a demonstration of status, just as the practice of disallowing widow remarriage became more prevalent when the administration came to view it as a mark of respectability and high caste status (Carroll 1989).

In the many references to the problem of the *purdah-nashins*, there is an evident recourse to representations of “tradition” and of women’s submission to it. Yet, in one instance, we are provided with a terse report that makes it apparent that even women of the “respectable classes” were not perhaps so blindly submissive to “tradition” and to colonial authority as we are otherwise given to believe, and that they were in fact challenging colonial disciplinary practices. In Frederick Henley’s 1871 *Narrative of the Drought and Famine Which Prevailed in the North-*

¹⁶ The “custom of the country” did not serve as a hindrance in other matters that in fact exacerbated the effects of famine. This same report provides an account of land revenue policy in the Bombay Presidency, under which it was deemed “an obvious advantage to get land out of the hands of cultivators unable to pay their way and to transfer it to cultivators with more capital. . . . As the customs and native revenue systems of India are adverse to land transfers, it is therefore all the more necessary to adopt measures for giving them effect” (*Report* 1902:107). The famine commissioners writing in 1902 discerned that this earlier colonial policy had made it difficult for cultivators to withstand the pressures of famine.

¹⁷ This statement is found in a report submitted by W. C. Lacey, the District Superintendent in Puri, and published in an Appendix to the 1867 *Report of the Commissioners Appointed to Inquire into the Famine in Bengal and Orissa in 1866*.

West Provinces During the Years 1868, 1869, and the Beginning of 1870, the following brief notice concerning famine relief to women of the “respectable classes” in Ajmer appears (92):

Relief was . . . given to women of the respectable classes, but it was found necessary to take precautions against imposition. As the recipients were veiled, they were able occasionally to obtain alms in the evening as *purdah-nusheens*, when they had already received wages as famine labourers during the day. This trick was defeated by a re-arrangement of the hours for the distribution of the food.

In this warning to other administrators about the women’s deception, we find a crack opening up in the colonial discursive edifice concerning “tradition” and women’s submission to it. Just as women’s songs from all across northern India nowadays speak of women’s subversive uses of the veil (Raheja and Gold 1994:47-52, 127), here too we are provided with a vision of women actively appropriating *purdah* veiling “tradition,” feigning submission to it, and using it for their own subversive purposes. Perhaps women appeared reluctant to be seen in the relief kitchens not so much because of their submission to the dictates of “tradition,” but because of colonial attempts to confine, discipline, and control them there, and perhaps because they had learned, in some cases at least, how to mimic the colonial caricatures of their social practices and turn them to their own advantage.¹⁸

Positioned Critiques and “Sly Civilities”: Songs of Famine in the Nineteenth Century

At the margins of this set of official records and reports there are a few vivid reminders of the heterogeneity of “tradition,” and reminders of the fact that in India as elsewhere, eloquent and diverse critiques of hierarchy, power, and domination are often lodged in poetic speech genres.¹⁹ I have been able to locate eleven nineteenth-century songs about famine, scarcity, and the consequences of colonial responses to them from northern India, entextualized in colonial documents. The words of many of these songs go against the grain of the official characterizations of “tradition” and compliance with colonial rule. These songs were sung by people who were differently positioned with respect to local systems of domination and with respect to the colonial state, and they articulate a diverse set of perspectives on famine and its consequences. Within the bounds of these “traditional” speech genres we hear, if we listen closely to them, not the echoes of a monolithic and conventionalized “tradition,” but rather, poetic readings of the politics of famine from several different vantage points.

¹⁸ See Hodges (2005:379) for a discussion of how destitute women confined in “lock hospitals” in Madras during the 1870s “incorporated the lock hospitals into their strategies for survival and transformed these institutions into (albeit grim) asylums of relief” during the Madras famine of 1876-78.

¹⁹ On the uses of song and “traditional” narrative in the articulation of critiques of gender ideologies and the hierarchical ideologies of caste in India, see, for example, Flueckiger (1987 and 1996), Prakash (1991), Ramanujan (1997), Raheja (1999a), Raheja and Gold (1994), and Trawick (1988).

Famine Years: the Poetic Use of Time and Historical Specificity

In these songs from northern India, the particular *time* of a famine, the year in which it made itself felt, figures prominently in the poetic representation of famine and its effects. The famine of 1783-84, for example, was popularly termed the *chalisa* or “fortieth” because it occurred in the *samvat*²⁰ year 1840 (Crooke 1897:169). The famine of 1837-38 was remembered as *chauranve*, from the Hindi term for ninety-four, a reference to the famine’s occurrence in the *samvat* year 1894 (170). A Maithili song composed after the famine of 1873-74 begins with the line referring to the *fasli*²¹ year: *sal ekasik varanan suno, chaudas paral akal* (“Hear the tale of the famine year 1281, on every side a famine fell”) (Grierson 1882:24). In writing of conditions in Gwalior state in central India, Charles Eckford Luard (1908a:87) reported in 1908 that “Malwa has not yet recovered from the famine of 1899-1900, and the numerous empty houses to be seen in every village [are] referred to as the results of ‘*chhappan-ka-sal*,’” a reference to the *samvat* year 1956.²²

The poetic possibilities of this linguistic resource are utilized particularly effectively in a song about the famine of 1899-1900, from Ratlam state in western Malwa, that Luard (1908c) published in the *Indian Antiquary*. In this song the famine itself is addressed as *chhapania* in the refrain, “O cursed Chhapania, return no more to this innocent land.”²³ And, as Luard himself points out in a footnote (1908c:329 n.5), the word *chhapania* is used in the song to refer as well to a person stricken by famine, as in the ironic line “the famine-stricken (child’s) mother has found and cooked a morsel of *dal*,” and to the year itself, as in “Now in 1956 [*chhapaniyan*] half [of us] are already dead, by 1962 we shall all be gone.”

The monthly course of events during a famine is sometimes charted in these songs. In Luard’s manuscript collection, Devanagari and English texts are provided for a *powada*, another song about the *chhappan* famine. The song was sung two years after the famine by two bards, Nunna Khan and Amir Uddin, in central India. The song tracks the sequence of the famine events, describing the encouraging rains in the month of *jeth* and the anticipated price of grain; the failure of the rains in *shravan* and the rise in prices that followed; the starvation and migrations of people from Marwar to Malwa in the month of *bhadon*; the fact that beggars of higher castes quarreled with people of the untouchable Sweeper caste over the food leavings on discarded leaf-plates, foods that higher castes would normally disdain; the grain-dealers’ profiteering; the rising prices of wheat and millet in the month of *kartik* and the looting and bloodshed that resulted; the gratitude felt by the recipients of cooked food distributed by local rulers, and so forth. The singers go on to say that people of different castes and different faiths all ate together in a single line at these food distributions. This is the only song in which caste (*jat*)

²⁰ Years in the Vikram *samvat* calendar, a calendar used in India, are calculated beginning in 57 BCE.

²¹ *Fasli*, from the word for harvest, refers to another Indian calendrical system.

²² Luard (1908b:58-59) makes a similar observation about local perspectives on the effects of the famine in Bhopal state.

²³ For all eleven songs I discuss here, the Hindi or Punjabi text as well as an English translation is provided in the source. Unless otherwise noted, I quote from the original translation.

is mentioned in connection with famine foods; it remarks not on people's reluctance to eat in famine kitchens in which cooked food was served, but on the fame of local rulers who provided "three pieces of bread and a spoonful of curry" to the famine-stricken of all castes. The line that immediately follows this one seems also to suggest that people of many ranks may have taken such food: *chote mote sabi jae ku chappan ki malum pari* (literally "the knowledge of the famine of the *samvat* year 1956 came to everyone, low and high"). The song's account of the relief provided in the form of cooked food, and the remark about higher caste people fighting for food leavings thus go against the grain of colonial descriptions of Indians' unthinking adherence to caste "custom" even in times of distress.²⁴

Like the bards, Luard (1908d) also provides a month-by-month recounting of the course of the famine in the various states of Malwa, in the *Western States (Malwa) Gazetteer*. It closely follows the bards' chronicle, documenting the same monthly patterns of rainfall, migrations from Marwar, grain prices, looting, selling of jewelry and metal ware, and cattle deaths.

In a Maithili song of the famine of 1873-74 that begins by announcing itself as a tale of the year 1281, the six couplets that follow describe the levels of rainfall with reference to a temporal sequence of lunar asterisms: the unfulfilled expectation of rains in *rohani*, a meager rainfall in *mrigsirās*, the saving of but a few seedlings in *aslekha* when only a few drops of rain fell, the terrible drought in *utra* and *chitra*. Grierson (1885:285) quotes these six couplets three years later, in his *Bihar Peasant Life*, in a chapter called "Agricultural Times and Seasons" that consists primarily of proverbs about the weather and the months of the year. He adds marginal notations, as to the actual recorded rainfalls in these periods of time, to illustrate the accuracy of the song's descriptions.

Just as famine is represented in its temporal specificity in these songs, so too is the positional specificity of the singer clearly evident in them, as will become clear as we listen to the words with which singers recall the famine years. The overwhelming effect of these poetic narratives is one of particularly situated narrators speaking critically and often ironically about historically specific events, about the "traditions" that may exacerbate famine's effects, and about the famine policies of the colonial state. This poetically created effect stands in sharp contrast to representations of the fixity and unquestionability of "tradition" in colonial writing about famine, representations of the belief of the "Oriental" in the inevitability of disaster, and his "almost profane" belief in "the power of Government," as it they were set forth in the *Report of the Indian Famine Commission, 1901* (1902:11). But how did the colonial administration interpret these songs about famine when they came to their attention, and how were the songs entextualized in colonial documents?

Famine Songs Framed by the Colonial State

"The colonialist demand for narrative carries, within it, its threatening reversal: *Tell us why we are here*" (Bhabha 1994:100). This colonial desire for authorization, as Homi Bhabha

²⁴ This song was written in the traditional form of a *barahmasa* (a "song of the twelve months"). In central and northern India, this is almost entirely a male performance genre, and such songs tend to be sung mostly by people of lower castes (Susan S. Wadley, personal communication). As noted above, the *barahmasa* song genre is often used for political commentary and critique.

has characterized it, is particularly evident in famine reports. The occurrence of famine is described as “beyond the control of the Government” (East India 1901:17) and not in any way a result of Government policy, and the relief efforts are always, in the colonial view, met with gratitude and approval. One of the very few instances in which the speech of ordinary farmers and laborers has been inserted into official famine documentation is at the conclusion of the “Statement of Famine” in the *Proceedings of the Governor General of India* for 1900, in which the “homely and touching phrases” in which this gratitude is expressed are reproduced: “If the English had not sent us this money, the thread of our lives would have been broken.” And the text goes on (East India 1901:267-68):

“We have *heard* of the generosity of Hatim Bai, but we have *tasted* that of the Great Queen.” How timely was the arrival of this charity, and how much it meant, is seen in scores of affecting incidents. “Now I have got through to the other side,” said a poor cultivator with tears in his eyes, to the English officer who had given him a few rupees to buy fodder for his famished bullocks. There is ample evidence that this gratitude is of an enduring nature. Some of the happiest memories of Famine-officers are those of unexpected visits from men who had been helped back to their old life by grants of seed and bullocks, and who returned after many days to again acknowledge the value of the gift. . . . It is these incidents which lead us to hope that this great national charity has not been misplaced, but has been received in the spirit in which it has been offered.

The narrative repetitiveness in this instance is striking: I have come across these identical anecdotes elsewhere in administrative reports, repeated over and over without attribution as if each author himself had heard and recorded this speech.

In other ways, outside of famine commission reports, poetic speech was entextualized in particular ways to create the illusion of consent to colonial rule. In the long Maithili/Braj famine song reproduced in George Grierson’s *Maithili Chrestomathy* (1882:24-34), the poet Phaturi Lal describes the onset of drought conditions, the failure of the spring crop, the laments of men and women, and the sale of cooking pots and women’s ornaments to buy a bit of food: “Men’s bodies were all shriveled up,” he sang, “and their very speech was halting.” He is highly critical of the Indian merchants who hoarded grain and profited from the famine, but the poet appreciatively describes the efforts of the colonial government to distribute famine relief, and to organize relief works. He alludes to the numbers of people working for relief, “on embankments, towns and roads,” and describes in critical terms attempts that were made by local elites to “rob the

Government of money” on the relief works.²⁵ Most importantly, the climax of the song comes when Sir Richard Temple, the Lieutenant-Governor of India, is described as visiting Darbhanga and a committee of the relations of the Maharaja of Darbhanga was assembled to welcome him. The twenty stanzas that follow praise in unmeasured terms the relief operations, the men of the Sappers and Miners, and the other army regiments who were sent to stop the looting and who “leveled mounds and groves, and made roads and bridges.”²⁶ The song concludes “Bless the noble Englishman, for everyone’s limbs became fat” (*dhanya dhanya angrej, sabh ke jutal gat*).

The song is clearly a panegyric, sung in the presence of an officer of the colonial government who wrote it down and communicated it to other such officials; at the time Grierson published this song, he was serving as assistant magistrate and collector in Patna. Yet the possibility of Phaturi Lal’s strategic use of speech is entirely denied by Grierson, who introduces the song thus (1882:24):

It is a description of the Famine of the Fasli year 1281 . . . and it was written by a man of the people. It is worth noting this fact, for it praises both the English and the Maharaja of Darbhanga in no measured terms, and speaks of native speculation in tones of grim and unsparing satire. I can certainly say that the Maharaja of Darbhanga had never seen it, and that certainly no Government official had ever heard of it, till I brought it to notice. Hence, it cannot have been written in a tone of false flattery, but must be a really and truly sincere production; that it chimes with the feelings of the people is shown by its immense popularity with the lower orders, and I may take it as proving that a lively gratitude is felt in the hearts of the natives of Tirhut for the efforts of Government and of the Darbhanga Raj in the disastrous year 1874.

In disregarding the performative and pragmatic aspects of the speech, and insisting on the authenticity and universality of the praises of British famine policy and of Sir Richard Temple found in the song Phaturi Lal performed in his presence, Grierson elides the positionality of the singer as well as the strategic use of speech; his own presence as a colonial official in the interactional context is thus effaced. Grierson can read the song only as a generalized Indian expression of gratitude, sung by “a man of the people.”

²⁵ Phaturi Lal’s song opens in the manner of a *barahmasa* song, a North Indian poetic form that took shape as a vernacular genre as early as the fifteenth century (Zbavitel 1976:137). The form of its composition, like other nineteenth-century politically relevant famine songs, was partly inspired by an ancient oral tradition. Before moving on to his assessment of the praise and blame to be meted out to those responsible for the famine conditions, Phaturi Lal begins by describing in general the weather, farming, and famine conditions in the famine months, exactly as *barahmasa* (“twelve month”) songs in general describe relationships between month-by-month climatic conditions, human emotion, and distress and suffering (Wadley 1983:58). We know from British records of published books that *barahmasa* songs sometimes articulated political critiques in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Wadley 1983:55), and we know that *barahmasa* songs frequently give voice to an agrarian view of the world. In writing of Bengali *barahmasa* songs, for example, Zbavitel (1961:583-84) has this to say: “Most of the Baromasis that have come down to us do not describe the beauties of nature . . . but rather its other aspects, such as the troubles it brings, the work in the fields, the fruits of different months, and so on; in short they describe nature as seen through a countryman’s eyes, more precisely through a farmer’s eyes. Nor was this basic character commonly lost, even in those Baromasis which have very little in common with the farmer’s life.” Phaturi Lal is thus participating, in his song, in a centuries old oral tradition, even as he adapts and reshapes it in his encounters with the colonial state.

²⁶ Companies of sappers and miners, and regular troops as well, were deployed to establish transportation routes for rice imported from Burma, for distribution to famine areas (Klein 1984:193).

In his insistence that this song truly “chimes with the feelings of the people,” Grierson (1882:24) in effect creates an authorizing narrative for colonial rule and the illusion of universal consent. Yet, we can occasionally see what aspects of the communicative event have been occluded when speech such as this is written down and inserted into colonial texts. During the same famine tour as the one described in Phaturi Lal’s song, Sir Richard Temple also made a stop at Cuttack in Orissa. John Beames was posted at Cuttack at the time, and he intensely disliked Temple and disapproved of various aspects of his famine policies (Hill 1991:267-68). His description of the visit to Cuttack provides an interesting counterweight to Grierson’s commentary. Despite the tone of bemused sarcasm that Beames adopts as he describes the Indian participants in the events, he was also capable of discerning their “sly civility” as they welcomed Temple. In his *Memoirs of a Bengal Civilian*, Beames (1961:236) describes Temple’s arrival in Cuttack, in which members of the local elite read out addresses to him, in which they spoke of their “speechless admiration” for the brilliance of the Lieutenant-Governor’s management of the famine. Beames (236) comments then that “Your Bengali Babu can reel out this stuff by the fathom from morn to dewy eve and then begin again,” and goes on to ridicule Temple: “He believed it all!” One can imagine the likelihood that songs such as Phaturi Lal’s were commissioned and sung specifically for Temple, as panegyrics with a purpose. Yet, in Grierson’s account, no such contextualizing occurs. Because of his own dislike for Temple, Beames has provided us with a glimpse of the positionality of the Bengali orators, a reading of the possible projects that the flattering speeches conceal, and a description of a probable context for songs like Phaturi Lal’s. Grierson, on the other hand, in explicitly denying the existence of such a context for the song, reads it at face value.

We might, however, also want to contextualize this panegyric more broadly in relation to famine relief policies implemented in the famine of 1873-74, and those in effect a few years later when Grierson published the song. The famine of 1873-74 in Bengal and Bihar was the only famine during which the colonial government had as a goal the saving of all lives, and the only one in which a policy of liberal gratuitous relief, with much relaxed “tests” and labor requirements, was set forth.²⁷ But the expense incurred was so great, and the policy later so criticized for its excessive liberality, that in the next famine, of 1878-79, Richard Temple was called upon to formulate the strictest possible “tests,” primarily in the form of “wages” on relief works that could barely maintain the laborers above starvation levels, and he was, as we have already noted, instructed in 1877 by the Government of India to practice “the most severe economy” with respect to famine relief measures. By the time Grierson had published the song of the 1873-74 famine, there had been a turnabout in famine relief policy, a reversion to the policies implemented in the famine of 1837-38 and 1867. If Phaturi Lal and his listeners admired colonial famine policy at all, it was the relief measures of 1873-74 in which “tests” were greatly diminished in severity, and not those relief measures that were otherwise implemented

²⁷ In a Minute dated October 31, 1874, Temple (1874:8) himself quoted from a resolution issued by the Government of India on the preceding March 6: “Active operations for the relief of distress having now commenced, the Governor-General in Council reminds local officers that it is their duty to see that the arrangements for the relief of distress are adequate within the area under their charge, and that they will be responsible that no deaths from starvation should occur which could have been avoided by any exertion or arrangements within their power, and the means placed at their command.” Hall-Matthews (2008) discusses some of the correspondence between Temple and Strachey, concerning the shift away from this policy in the famine of 1876-77.

throughout the course of the nineteenth century.²⁸ In fact, there were so many native critiques of the far stricter “tests” during the famine of 1876-1878 that the colonial administration passed the Vernacular Press Act of 1878, explicitly banning criticism of the government (Hall-Matthews 2008:1204).

There were, in fact, songs that provided a different and far more defiant answer to that colonial demand for authorization. Songs that are forthrightly critical of colonial policies that exacerbated scarcities or widened the chasm between rich and poor can be found in a few colonial texts, but they are entextualized by administrators in such a way as to marginalize and discount and, indeed, criminalize the critiques apparent in them. In 1882, R. C. Temple (the elder son of Sir Richard Temple) commented upon and published in *The Indian Antiquary* two songs from the Punjab, collected by Flora Annie Steel, that concern food scarcities and the irrigation works that were built in the Punjab by the colonial government partly as insurance against famine. In the very different ways that Temple frames the two songs, the contrast between colonial attempts to contain and nullify the effect of such critical songs, while conferring authority and authenticity on the panegyric verses, is vividly drawn.²⁹

One of the songs Temple presents to the reader is a panegyric, praising the colonial administrators who built the canal and describing the enthusiasm of the villagers, who are made to say, collectively, “the canal water has come and the thorns have become flowers.” Temple introduces the song by assuring us that the song was written “by one of the people,” and he does not further describe the origin or provenance of the song.³⁰ The signature line at the end of the text tells us though that “Ghulam Ahmed asked me to tell the story of the canal, / So I have joined together some ten or twenty verses about it. / I live in Ferozpur and my name is Fettehu’d-din.” A footnote informs us that Ghulam Ahmed is a bookseller of Ferozpur. We cannot from this information discern very much about the origin of the song or about Ghulam Ahmed’s motives in commissioning it, though it seems likely that Ghulam Ahmed planned to print a broadside containing the lyrics. But since the song begins with sixteen lines in praise of Major Grey, who constructed the Ferozpur canals, I suspect that it may also have been commissioned for performance in his presence and the bookseller who commissioned it may have imagined that he would sell more copies if the song were to be sung publicly. We can take note, however, that Temple does not describe the commission or the occasion on which the song was sung, nor does he characterize the author in any specific way: he is content to say that it was written by “one of the people,” just as Grierson assured his readers of the authenticity and typicality of the earlier famine panegyric.

The other song that Temple puts before the reader is very different, and Temple himself acknowledges the critique that it contains. In several quite perceptive notes to the song (1882:163), he draws the reader’s attention to the song’s “sarcasm in making the first fruits of the

²⁸ For a more detailed account of this shift in colonial policy, see Klein (1984:193-95).

²⁹ A brief discussion of these two songs appears also in Raheja (2010).

³⁰ Temple (1882:166) does, however, tell us that the song “is written in very smooth verse, and the author shows his education by the frequent interlarding of Arabic and Persian words.”

canal to be the profits of the watchmen and the contractor, and the presence of vegetables, and so on, a secondary result”:

Where the canal goes there are the profits of the watchmen and the contractors
Also there are cucumbers, onions, and vegetables on the canal banks

Just after this verse, two more tell us that:

Where the canal goes there the people eat wheat and pulse
Where the Jats take the canal cuts there grow wheat and cotton

Temple observes that these verses too are sarcastic, since wheat and lentils are foods that are far beyond the reach of the poor and landless Sansis, and that only Jats, the relatively prosperous farmers of the Punjab, can engage in the remunerative planting of wheat and cotton, a new cash crop. A later verse describes the burden of the canal tax that must be paid to the government, and the lesser amount that must be paid at the village level for the use of the water: “A rupee an acre to the Government and an anna to the Lambardar.” The verse that follows describes the collection of cash fines from people who make a cut in the canal to draw water for their use without paying the tax:

The Magistrate demands silver in payment of fines for cutting the canal.
The Magistrate takes good silver for five feet of water.

Here Temple notes that the fine exacted in silver falls unequally on the rich and poor; both may draw water illegally from the canals but it is the poor who can ill afford the fines. And the next verse describes the punishment for this: those caught making cuts in the canal must, as Temple notes, “use their own labour and the straw from their fields, which consequently have to be neglected while the work of repair goes on.” This order emanating from colonial administrators is parodied in the song: “Drive in the pegs! Give up your straw; and then your field will go to the bad.”

This song is far more critical of the canal operations, on the grounds that the benefits fall to the government and to the high caste landholders and merchant moneylenders, while the burdens fall most heavily upon the poor who may go hungry because of the fees and fines to be paid in cash.³¹ There is at work in this song a critical apperception of the several interconnected systems of power and intertwined hierarchies in which Sansis live their lives; as in nineteenth century Meo bandit narratives from Rajasthan analyzed by Shail Mayaram, there is a targeting here of “the triumvirate of *sarkar*, *zamindar*, and *sahukar*, or state, gentry, and merchant usurer” (Mayaram 2003a:326, 2003b) that so controls the lives of the rural poor. This much was

³¹ Though government policy stressed the importance of canal irrigation as insurance against famine, there is compelling evidence that it failed to provide such insurance, partly because cash crops such as sugarcane were most frequently grown in canal tracts and because other consequences of canal irrigation adversely affect food grain yields (Whitcombe 1972:79-81), but more importantly because the most pernicious effects of famine derived from colonial *laissez faire* policies with respect to the market distribution of food grains and not simply production levels.

at least somewhat evident even to Temple. His entextualization of this critical or at least ironic view of the benefits of canal irrigation is far different from his entextualization of the panegyric. While the panegyric is described as “of the people,” we are told that this song is sung by the Sansis, which Temple tells us in the very first sentence of the article, is one of the so-called “criminal tribes” of the Punjab. Temple describes their wandering habits, tells us that they are “great thieves,” and relates the collection of the song to Gottlieb William Leitner’s publications concerning the supposedly distinctive languages of such “criminal tribes.”³² Temple (1882:163-64) suggests to the reader that this song is “rough and homely in the extreme,” its meter “exceedingly rough and its rhythm uncertain,” and that it “exhibits in a most interesting manner the popular (illiterate) history and notions regarding the canals of Ferozpur.” Thus, the provenance of the song that is critical of the colonial state is set apart; unlike other folklore specimens Temple comments upon, this particular song is not viewed as speech that reveals “the mind of the people,” but as the marginalized and highly specific speech of a criminal caste. We are encouraged, by contrast, to imagine that the panegyric is the undifferentiated speech of the colonized, the “voice of the people” that authenticates colonial claims to authority and truth.

J. Wilson’s *Final Report on the Settlement of the Sirsá District in the Punjab* was published in 1884. Because he opposed certain Punjab Government policies concerning the management of tenurial systems, Wilson included in his report several songs by a man named Lalu, a tenant of the village of Dabwali Dhab. These songs are critical of government policies in the Punjab that permitted the “ejectment” of tenants from the land they had been cultivating, after being encouraged by the government to migrate to the canal irrigation tracts in times of famine and scarcity. Had Wilson himself not been critical of these particular colonial policies, we can be sure that the songs would not have been included in his report or, like Temple, he might have included it while devising a textual strategy for taming its recalcitrant speech.

The longest song that Wilson includes in the report comments upon the migrations in times of famine. The transliterated Punjabi text of the song is given along with an English translation (Wilson 1884:x-xv of Appendix II), which I have revised very slightly to clarify the meaning:

People who are dying of hunger and thirst,
Go to Ropar and work on the canal.
They go back with all their savings, and pay up all their rents,
But live always in a state of fear.

What is the source of this fear? Sirsa District had been particularly hard hit by famine in the years before Lalu sang his song, especially in 1860 and 1868 (*Report* 1885:97), and hit by scarcities in the latter years of the 1870s. Wilson writes critically of the “system of average cash rents payable for good and bad years alike” especially as it is applied in a district whose produce is so precarious; rents were to be paid even in years of crop failure, and so there had been, as he

³² I have elsewhere characterized Leitner’s work in relation to colonial discipline and control of the supposed “criminal castes and tribes” (Raheja 1999a). Considerable efforts were made in the nineteenth century to characterize these supposedly distinctive caste-based “criminal” languages and dialects, as a further means of identifying “criminals by birth.”

observed, a rapid rise in the profits of the *lambardars* (“proprietor,” “landlords”) at the expense of the tenants and a rapid rise in the money value of the proprietorships. Wilson suggested that a return to earlier systems of collecting rents and revenue in kind would mitigate the effects on the tenants of crop failure and famine.³³

Wilson is most concerned, however, with policies of the colonial government that favored the *lambardars* and allowed proprietors to evict tenants who had settled on lands brought under cultivation with the development of the irrigation works, in the years following the Regular Settlement of revenue in the Punjab. To illustrate the magnitude of this problem, he pointed out that between 1878 and 1882, nearly one-fourth of the tenants-at-will in the Sirsa District received notices of ejection.

In 1880 Wilson (1884:345) submitted a report “urging that some step should be taken to protect the tenants from arbitrary ejection. . . . I urged that the legislature should be moved to pass a special Act for the Sirsa district, granting rights of occupancy to all tenants who had broken up land and held it continuously for more than ten years, provided they agree to pay on it a rent equal to three times the land-revenue assessed on the land.”

The Settlement Commission’s response to his report is reminiscent of the situation described in George Orwell’s “Shooting an Elephant” in which a colonial officer realizes that he has made a grievous error in judgment but is reluctant to reverse a stance he has taken because of his unwillingness to jeopardize the authority of the colonizer by appearing inconsistent in the eyes of the colonized. Wilson (1884:346) tells us that Colonel Wall of the Settlement Commission thought the tenants’ expectations were reasonable, but “he thought that such a measure as I had proposed would appear to both proprietors and tenants to be a second reversal of policy, and the tenants would feel that they had gained a victory over the law, while the proprietors would feel that they had relied on it and that it had failed them.” He proposed other less definitive measures and the issue was further debated, but as Wilson says, the relative status of proprietor and tenant was, despite his advice, left to be regulated by the Punjab Tenancy Act of 1868, as in the rest of the Province.

Wilson thus provides the Punjabi texts of songs composed at this time by Lalu, a tenant of the village of Dabwali Dhab in Sirsa District. The songs, comprising five full pages of the Settlement Report, are critical of the policy that encouraged tenants, in times of scarcity, to settle on land brought under cultivation by the building of the irrigation canals, critical of the government policy of permitting ejection, critical of government legal procedures that favor the wealthy and make it difficult for the poor to present their cases, and critical of the *lambardars*, the wealthy hereditary landowners who with Government approval control the tenants and serve

³³ Reluctance to suspend land revenue demands during times of famine in British India stemmed from several considerations. First, of course, was the cost to the Government that would be incurred; the economic “needs of the State” were to be of paramount consideration. Second, there was a concern on the part of the colonial government that if suspensions were to be granted, cultivators would expect them in future years, and fail to exert themselves in extending cultivation and in making agricultural improvements (*Report* 1885:17, Part III). Third, there was a concern that suspensions of revenue demands in times of famine would discourage cultivators from “prudent” efforts to save from one year to the next. During the famine of 1877-78, Sir George Couper explained this reasoning in a report to the Government of India: “Our revenue theory is, that the people should meet the losses of a bad year from the gains of a good one. But, as a matter of fact, these prudential considerations are unknown to them. They never save. When they have a good harvest, they spend the proceeds on marriages and in other ways.” Suspension was seen as “a direct encouragement of the unthrift” (*Report* 1885:197-98).

as mediator with the colonial government. The song is critical of British rule because it has, according to the singer, made it possible for the *lambardar* to “devour the profits,” while the tenant is ejected. I provide six of the twenty-two verses of Wilson’s translation of Lalu’s longest song (1884:x-xv of Appendix II):

God peopled the desert:
 People came from all corners of the land.
 The *lambardars* settled them there,
 And coaxed them to break up the land.
 Now they have thrown away their good faith,
 And brought claims against their tenants.
 The ruler has taken the land from the tenants.
 We knew nothing of this law
 Which the Government put in force.
 Ejectment is not right.

The tenants who gathered together,
 They worked very hard.
 They cleared away the bushes and cultivated the land.
 They took out the roots and made field boundaries.
 Yet the *lambardars* had them declared tenants-at-will.
 The ruler took away their land.
 The government has done no justice.
 Ejectment is not right.

The tenants do the *begar* [forced labor] work,
 The *lambardar* devours the profits
 And is ready to eject.
 Sarkar itself ejects.
 The people settled the desert under hardships;
 The brackish water distresses them;
 Let anyone think of this.
 Ejectment is not right.

Of the people who live under this Raj,
 Some weep, some laugh,
 The tenants are ejected from the land and flee to another place.
 The *lambardars* do not tell the truth;
 Nothing is believed without written evidence.
 Ejectment is not right.

What law is this our rulers have imposed
 In giving the order for ejection?
 They have made it a means of gain,
 Exacted stamps and process fees
 That thousands in profit may come in.
 Ejection is not right.

The English have taken this country
 That they might dig canals and irrigate it.
 No one stands by his word.
 Whoever practices deceit,
 On him fall a curse.
 Ejection is not right.

The poet Lalu discerned with great clarity the manner in which the colonial government favored the wealthy and disadvantaged the poor in the Punjab, and Lalu curses the government for it. An even more finely honed poetic sense of the ironies attendant upon a consideration of famine and its unequal effects on the poor and on the wealthy and on men and women and on a consideration of the efficacy of religious rites is evident in a famine song from central India collected by Charles Eckford Luard during the famine of 1899-1900.

Ironic Apperceptions of "Tradition" and the Gendered Effects of Famine

Of the eleven songs about famine and scarcity that I found in colonial documents, male singers or authors are identified by name in six. The authors or singers of two others are not named but are identified as male. One song from central India is identified by the caste of the singers but not otherwise, for one it has been noted that the song was "recorded by a schoolmaster of the district," but for only one song is the singer or singers entirely unidentified.

Charles Eckford Luard (1908c:329), who published this last song in the *Indian Antiquary* as part of his "Gazetteer Gleanings in Central India" series in 1908, noted only that the song "was composed in Western Malwa in the great famine of *Samvat* 1956 or 1899-1900" and that it was sung in the "rough rustic form of the *garba*." He does not attempt to frame it using the commonly used colonial entextualizing methods of taming recalcitrant Indian speech that I describe above. He tells us though that he is "indebted to Mr. Vakil, Gazetteer Officer of the Ratlam State, for writing down the vernacular version." I was not able to locate a manuscript version of this song or any notes about it in Luard's manuscript collections in the British Library and thus I can offer no further details of its composition or performance or transcription. There is however among Luard's papers a large manuscript collection of women's songs, written down in Devanagari script, and Mr. Vakil had contributed some of these. For this famine song in the *Indian Antiquary*, Luard provides the Hindi text as well as an English translation, and I feel entirely confident that this too is a women's song: because of the recurring pattern of ironic juxtaposition that is so characteristic of women's songs in northern India (Raheja and Gold 1994:73-106); because of its insistent focus on the gendered effects of famine and scarcity that is

entirely unlike any of the other songs whose singers are identified as male; and finally because *garba* was traditionally a female song/dance genre. In nearly all the verses of the song, we hear the story of famine from a woman's point of view. Throughout the song the famine is referred to as Chhapania, "the fifty-sixth," for the year in which it occurred.

The song is composed of fifty-six lines arranged in twenty-eight rhymed couplets, nearly all of which follow a pattern of ironic juxtaposition, constructing an implicit critique of the role of grain merchants and the grain market in exacerbating famine conditions, and of the social practices that result in women suffering the worst effects of famine. What follows is a selection of the song's couplets (in the translations that Luard provided), with some commentary on the ironies exhibited therein. The refrain that was apparently sung after each couplet is "O cursed Chhapania, return no more to this innocent land" (1908c:329):

In every (city) home a goat is found, and (in many even) a camel.
The Chhapania has traveled into the remotest corners of the land.

As Luard himself remarks in a footnote, this couplet ironically observes that because people in the countryside were suffering from famine, they had been forced to sell their goats and camels to merchants in the cities, who had grain to feed them and money to buy them. The merchants profited from this and from their sales of grain (1908c:331):

The balance of the merchant broke and the weights were scattered,
But he is rolling in wealthy splendour.

Luard notes that the allusion here is to the brisk market trade in grain in times of famine that has worn out the weights and balances of the merchants but has allowed them to profit from the famine, a situation exacerbated by the official Government *laissez-faire* economic policies that benefited Baniya grain merchants and moneylenders, policies that were upheld by the British even in famine years. The song thus critiques the grain merchants who created artificial shortages and high prices, and who were, as David Arnold (1979:112) has pointed out, the nearest and most accessible link in a chain of responsibility for food shortages.³⁴ While the song does not directly critique government famine policy, it is critical of those who profited from it.³⁵

Hardiman (1996) has described how peasants at the Rajasthan and Gujarat border understood Baniya grain merchants and moneylenders to be responsible for much of their suffering during times of scarcity and famine, and he has analyzed peasant imaginings of rituals they believed Baniyas performed in order to hold back the rains and bring about food scarcities so that they may profit from them, and he writes (154) that "popular belief in Baniya sorcery

³⁴ The *powada* discussed above contains a similar stanza: "The rich were shutting their doors against beggars. The grain dealers were feeling exultant at the profits they made in the market" (Luard n.d.:255-61).

³⁵ David Arnold (1979) has documented the occurrence of looting as a form of popular protest against such traders and their participation in the speculative grain trade, at the time of an anticipated famine in 1918 in Madras. Famine distress also led to the occurrence of looting in the Central Provinces during the famines of 1896-97 and 1899-1900, during which "the grain-dealing classes were the object of the greatest clamour," according to an 1898 government report (quoted in Baker 1993:329).

would appear to have persisted there because it has provided a focus for continuing resistance of peasants” to the forms of usury that exacerbate hunger. He describes a ballad (but does not provide the lyrics for it) current in that area that tells a tale of a terrible famine (149):

The people requested the goddess whom they worshipped to tell them the cause of the failure of the rain. She agreed to help them and led them to the house of their Baniya, where they found huge stocks of grain, which they seized and redistributed. As soon as they did this his spells were broken and there was a cloudburst, with the heaviest fall of rain for a whole century. Seizing the Baniya, the goddess took him to a river, where she held him by his topknot and ducked him in and out until he begged to be killed. She told him that she would agree to this if he sacrificed a buffalo. He said as he was a Jain who practiced non-violence he could not comply; she replied that she would respect his religion and that he could sacrifice a grass buffalo instead. He made the creature and cut its throat with a knife. Torrents of blood flowed out, making all the floodwater red. The goddess then cut off the Baniya’s head.

Hardiman (118) suggests that this song indicates that the poor knew that the rich often profited from famine while they suffered grievously from it, and that “they sought to oppose what they assumed was divine support for the rich by appealing to the gods . . . using their own prayers and rituals.” What’s more, the goddess rewards their own efforts at seizing and redistributing the merchant’s hoarded grain. Thus we have an instance in which peasant imaginings of a recourse to religion and ritual indicate not helpless obeisance to gods, but a challenge to the networks of power in which they led their lives. Since these same peasants also rioted against what they regarded as the immoral tactics of the Baniyas who profited from the *laissez-faire* economic policies advocated by the colonial state, the religious imagination clearly did not render them fatalistic in their experience of famine or passive in the face of elite exploitation.

The song Luard collected is particularly poignant in its depiction of gender inequalities during a famine (1908c:329):

No millet bread, no lentils,
And so the husband has deserted the wife.

This couplet alludes to the well-known phenomenon of familial disintegration at times of famine. Such allusions are found in other famine songs as well, but the disintegration is described differently in songs sung by men. Despite the fact that during times of famine the numbers of abandoned women testify to a pervasive tendency for men to abandon women or give priority to feeding male rather than female members of the family during the time of a famine (Greenough 1982), and despite the fact that women were often the first casualties of a famine (Chowdhry 1989:306), in the songs sung by men the effects of famine and familial disintegration on men and women are not distinguished. In a song that tells of the famine of 1770 and the subsequent Rangpur revolt against agents of the East India Company in Bengal, for example, familial disintegration is described as caused by the desertions of both men and women (Kaviraj 1972:103):

There is no straw on the roof, no rice in the stores.
 The mother goes away, the father disappears, so does the wife
 and without caring for anybody go away the son and the daughter.

The male bards who sang of the 1899-1900 famine in the manuscript *powada* in Luard's collection sang that "Wives left their husbands and joined with others. Fathers left their children whether boys or girls grown up or otherwise" (Luard n.d.). Among all the famine songs that I have found, only this one song speaks directly of the historically documented gendered pattern of abandonment: it is indeed more often husbands who abandon their spouses in times of famine (Luard 1908c:330):

The famine-stricken mother has found and cooked a few lentils,
 And in his joy her son leaps nine cubits off the ground.

In this couplet the irony lies in the observation that during a famine a child could feel joy at the prospect of having just a spoonful of *dal*. We see in these words the contrast between a husband who abandons his wife because she has no lentils to cook for him, and the mother who gives her last bit of food to her son (Luard 1908c:329):

Black, black clouds are overhead, but only a small drop falls.
 The once well-nourished women are now grown thin and weak.

The irony in this couplet is worked out at several levels. At the simplest level, there are rain clouds overhead, and yet there is no rain. But the reference to black, black clouds, *kali kali badli*, introduces a more complex ironic apperception. In both literary and folkloric South Asian poetic traditions, black clouds in the rainy season figure as signs of sexual intimacy, the rainy season being a time when husbands and lovers return home from distant places, to be reunited with the women who wait at home for them.³⁶ In this famine season, however, when black clouds appear but no rain falls, the women's bodies are thin and weak and the husbands have deserted their wives. Only in this song do we hear such ironies of desire and abandonment (Luard 1908c:330):

Go fetch the quilted saddle and bring the camel's pack.
 The Chhapania has penetrated into every corner of the land (and we must fly).

The irony of this verse concerns the fact that Malwa, one of the hardest hit regions during the famine of 1899-1900, had always been regarded as a land of plenty (Habib 1963:109), as a verse from the *Prithviraj Raso* reminds us (Growse 1870:57): "Rich and deep is the Malwa plain, / At every step water, at every foot grain." Proverbs from Bihar also speak of Malwa as a place to go at times of drought (Grierson 1885:277-78). Malwa had in fact been a destination for people fleeing distressed areas in prior famines, as during the famine of 1877 in the Lower Doab

³⁶ This association is particularly common in the poetic tradition of the *barahmasa* songs of the "twelve months" (Wadley 1983).

and Bundelkhand (Whitcombe 1972:197). And now, even this proverbially fertile and luxuriant land is famine stricken, and the people of Malwa themselves must flee (Luard 1908c:330):

Bring *bajra* bread and curds of buffalo's milk:
So shall the Chhapania be driven out by the back way.

Luard notes here that this verse refers to the “well-known custom of driving out any disease, such as cholera, and so on, by placing some curd and a *bajra* [millet] cake at the back of the house.”³⁷ Because every other verse of the song is structured around an ironic apperception, this verse too can only be read as an ironic evaluation of the efficacy of ritual rather than an unthinking reliance on “tradition”; the singers seem to be mocking “custom,” not stating their unequivocal faith in the ritual. This ironic view of ritual efficacy runs against the grain of Simpson’s sketch “The Famine in India” that depicts an abject obeisance to the gods as a universal response to famine in India, and also against the grain of colonial representations of the universally suasive power of “tradition.”³⁸

The last verses of Luard’s song return to the theme of the gendered effects of famine (1908c:331):

The mother’s brother has tied up a turban and decorated its folds.
He’s eaten his fill, but he’s sold his sister’s daughter.³⁹

A particularly poignant ironic stance is given voice in this verse. Throughout northern India a mother’s brother is expected to provide lavish gifts on the occasion of the marriage of his sister’s daughter, and he is expected to welcome her and give her gifts whenever she might come to visit him; the mother’s brother is more than anything else a bestower of gifts, affection, and hospitality. Yet, during famine, the song seems to say, such familial bonds and responsibilities

³⁷ The removal of misfortune and disease by passing bread or other food items beyond the boundary of the house or village is a familiar ritual in nineteenth and twentieth century rural India (Raheja 1988:171-72 and Arnold (1986:133-34). I do not mean to dispute the idea that people can sometimes take this very seriously, indeed. In fact, in Pahansu (the north Indian village in which I have conducted most of my ethnographic fieldwork) in 1978, a serious fight broke out between people of two villages when a goat was driven over the boundaries from one village to the other, in order to remove and transfer a cattle disease. I acknowledge, though, the fact that such rituals are never a matter of unthinking submission to “tradition.” They are always subject to debate and disagreement, as Gold (1988) has so eloquently shown.

³⁸ There are, however, songs that are less ironic about ritual efficacy and the help of the gods in time of famine. In 1911, a song of the famine in Saharanpur in 1877, collected by William Crooke, was published in *The Indian Antiquary*. The song, recorded by “a schoolmaster of the District,” describes the selling of cooking pots and women’s jewelry for food, and appeals to the god Ram to protect the world from the famine (Crooke 1911). And there are other seemingly reliable colonial reports of ritual actions undertaken to ward off the worst of the effects of famine: the giving of *dan* and the banishing of a scapegoat beyond the boundaries of a village, goat sacrifices, the posting of verses of the Koran above house doors, and so on. Thus, again I do not argue that the occurrence of famine inevitably brought with it a skeptical attitude towards religion and ritual; I intend, rather, to highlight here the heterogeneity of attitudes towards “tradition” and “custom.”

³⁹ I have revised Luard’s translation of this verse, replacing his terms “uncle” and “niece” with the specific English equivalents of the Hindi kinship terms for mother’s brother and sister’s daughter occurring in the text.

might just be abandoned. Here, too, it is the gendered effects of famine that are dwelt upon: in the earlier verse, wives are abandoned by their husbands; and here, a woman comes to see that she cannot rely even upon her mother's natal kin. And if a mother's brother is not generous and if indeed he even turns upon his sister's daughter, then how, the song seems to ask, could a woman expect anyone at all to stand by her? All expectations are dashed: the expectation that the plain of Malwa will be fertile, the expectation that a ritual will move ill fortune out of the house, the expectation that husbands will be loyal to their wives, and the expectation that mothers' brothers will protect and nourish their sisters' children.

And the final verse of the song asserts that a married woman will suffer the effects of famine even as her husband's male kin are protected from them (Luard 1908c:331):

The mother-in-law bakes bread, the father-in-law eats it:

(While) the "dutiful" daughter-in-law counts (minutely each mouthful swallowed).

The song's irony is very sharp, and so obvious that even Luard remarked, in a footnote, on the irony of the use of the word "dutiful" (*saputi*) here. It explicitly describes the familial hierarchies that structure food distribution in ordinary times as well as in famine. Although women's songs in northern India do sometimes allude to and critique gendered inequalities in household food allocation (Jassal 2012:76-84), such a reference to domestic hierarchies and unequal distributions of food within families is not found in any of the other famine songs I found in the colonial archive. Several verses in this song ironically contrast ordinary kinship expectations with the collapse or reversal of kinship solidarities during the famine, as in the verse about the mother's brother and his sister's daughter. But in this final verse, the reference to unequal food distributions and domestic hierarchy seems to speak to inequities in ordinary times as well as in famine. There is, for example, a common Hindi proverb that explicitly endorses this hierarchy of food distributions: *nar sulakkhni kutumb chhakave, ap tale ki khurchan khave* ("a proper wife feeds the household first, and saves only the pot-scrapings for herself"). This proverb plays upon several prominent conceptions of familial well-being and familial hierarchy to reinforce the subordinate position of women within the kinship group. *Sulakkhni* is an adjective that means literally "having propitious signs" or "auspicious." The auspicious wife, one who brings well-being to her husband's family, is one who eats only the food remaining after the men have eaten; this is a common expectation for proper wifely behavior in north and central India. In the proverb the woman who accepts her subordinate position in the everyday distribution of food and other matters, and who is ready to sacrifice her own well-being for that of others, causes her husband's family to prosper.

In ordinary speech women sometimes use other proverbs to comment ironically on the gendered hierarchies of hunger. One such ironic proverb, in circulation in the nineteenth century (Fallon 1886:218) as well as today, is *saram ki bahu nit bhukhi mare* ("a wife who is modest always goes hungry").⁴⁰ In much of the discourse of north Indian kinship, the possession of

⁴⁰ R. C. Temple (1886:218), the editor of Fallon's collection, provides a different and problematic explication for this proverb. He translates *saram* as "bashfulness" and does not appear to view it as a demeanor that is *required* of a woman in her conjugal place, and the illusion is created that the hunger is the woman's own fault, a result simply of this "bashfulness," and not a result of a set of power relationships in which women's lives are led.

saram (“reticence,” “modesty,” “deference”) is perhaps the most highly valued feminine attribute; one of the most damaging criticisms of a woman is that she is *besaram* (“without *saram*”). And yet when they use this proverb women cast a skeptical eye on the value of modesty and deference, and focus only on the deprivation that is often a consequence of the cultivation of *saram*.

The gendered effects of famine, the daughter-in-law being deprived of food while her father-in-law eats bread, are perhaps seen by the singer as part of the everyday consequences of domestic hierarchies in her husband’s place; women’s subordination, and their possible deprivation in ordinary times, make inevitable their more serious deprivation during a famine. Paul Greenough (1982) has described the moral dilemmas created by famine and suggested that the Bengali value of preserving the patriline and its male members took precedence over other values such as kinship reciprocity during the Bengal famine of 1943-44, with the result that many women were abandoned during the famine.⁴¹ The singers of this song seem to be critically aware of the existence of a similar moral dilemma occasioned by the Chhapania, and how it was resolved.

An analogous poetic equation, between famine priorities on the one hand and everyday domestic hierarchies and food priorities in a woman’s conjugal place on the other, in fact occurs in contemporary women’s songs from central India. Joyce Flueckiger (1987) has written of variants of a women’s “parrot dance” song in central India in which the *sasural*, the conjugal home, is spoken of by the singer as a “land of famine,” in contrast to the natal home, where her brother lives in a “land of plenty.” Famine becomes, poetically in those songs, like everyday life in the conjugal place. In the Chhapania famine song from Malwa, the ironically characterized “dutiful” *bahu* experiences hunger in her husband’s house, while her father-in-law eats the bread.

Thus, far from passively and unthinkingly submitting to the dictates of *purdah* and gender hierarchies, women speak throughout the Chhapania song of the disadvantages of “tradition” and of the disappointments occasioned by it. The colonial rhetoric of the *purdah-nashin*, and of women willing to die of hunger to preserve the custom of *purdah* and the gender hierarchy it supports, seems far removed from this poetic speech of Malwa women. That Luard includes this text in his ethnographic reporting, without the kinds of entextualizing strategies that normally frame such critical speech when it appears in administrative documents, is perhaps an indication of his own ambivalence about the colonial ethnographic project, an ambivalence that, as I have suggested elsewhere (Raheja 1999a) led to an unusual awareness on his part of the limits of colonial ethnographic classifications and typifications.

Taken together and juxtaposed with colonial representations of “tradition” in times of famine, these songs can be read as running against the grain of such typifications. In their commentaries on colonial famine management, in their aversion to hoarding and grain profiteering on the part of wealthy merchants and money lenders, in their critiques of the power of the local landed magnates to profit from famine policy, and how the colonial state favored the wealthy and shifted the burden of famine to the poor, in their ironic view of ritual and the powers

⁴¹ While I draw upon several of Greenough’s observations about such dilemmas here, I am obviously not in agreement with his argument that the caste system legitimized an idea that prosperity flows from deities and high caste patrons, and, thus, peasants were fatalistically silent in times of famine. See Hardiman (1996:117-18) for a brief summary of critical evaluations of this argument.

of the gods, in their relative inattention to caste restrictions at times of crisis, and in women's ironic perspectives on everyday kinship hierarchies and the gendered effects of famine, these songs challenge those typifications that speak of peasants' capitulation to "custom" or of a gap between tradition and revolt. In their positionality and heterogeneity, they challenge attempts by colonial administrators, historians and anthropologists to contain them within the boundaries of a unitary "tradition" or unitary and supposedly unquestioned caste and gender ideologies. The singers of these songs use "traditional" song genres to comment critically and variously on the workings of the colonial state and on local hierarchies and traditions that advantage some and disadvantage others. Because such songs, and other forms of oral tradition as well, were in fact occasionally recorded and printed in these nineteenth-century colonial documents, we have the opportunity to read the far more common ethnographic typifications found in the famine reports against the grain, and to discern more clearly the entextualizing strategies that were so often used to tame this recalcitrant speech and to create the illusion of peasant acquiescence to "tradition" and to colonial famine policy.

Conclusion: Colonial Textuality and the Production of Ethnographic Knowledge

In the face of their authors' ambivalence, anxiety, and uncertainty about the claims of ethnographic and scientific projects (Suleri 1992; Prakash 1999) and about Indian consent to colonial rule that intensified after the revolt of 1857, famine commission reports and other administrative documents and reports on folklore came to be shot through with many contradictions and hesitations, and also with a constant demand that the native provide reassuring authorizing narratives. It is in relation to this demand for an authenticating narrative of consent to colonial rule that the production of ethnographic and folkloric knowledge in colonial India must be understood. Entextualization processes had as a primary aim the taming of any recalcitrant speech and oral traditions and any notes of critique that might have been found in them. The creation of this illusion of consent, and the illusion that colonial policies were in congruence with Indian "custom" had been, since the late eighteenth century, of central importance in the administration of colonial rule. I have not been able, in this essay, to describe how entextualization processes underwent a transformation as those uncertainties mounted, and as that illusion became more and more difficult to sustain after the momentous rebellion of 1857.⁴² But it should be clear that administrators and ethnographers working in India in the second half of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century struggled to find ways to tame recalcitrant speech and to claim that "the voice of the people" was the voice of a homogeneous "tradition" and the voice of consent to colonial rule. Colonial textuality itself, whether in administrative documents or more overtly ethnographic writing, consistently exhibited this demand for an authorizing narrative even as translations of disruptive and unruly oral traditions were often preserved in them.

University of Minnesota

⁴² On the issue of the important differences in how folklore and Indian speech were entextualized before and after the revolt of 1857, see Raheja (1999a).

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