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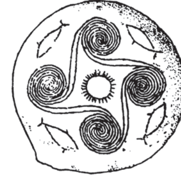

Archaeology and Homeric Epic

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edited by
Susan Sherratt and John Bennet

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Front cover: Reconstruction by Piet de Jong of battle scene in Hall 64 at Pylos (Lang 1969: col. pl. M). Courtesy of The Department of Classics, University of Cincinnati and American School of Classical Studies at Athens, Pylos Archive, Piet de Jong Collection of Watercolors. Photo Jennifer F. Stephens and Arthur E. Stephens.

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Chapter 4

Homeric Epic and Contexts of Bardic Creation

Susan Sherratt

Introduction: Homer's Bards

In this paper, the word 'bard' (with its adjective 'bardic') is used as a convenient translation of the Greek word *aoidos* (ἀοιδός) – a word which is both traditionally identified with Homer himself (e.g., *Homeric Hymn to Delian Apollo* 166–73) and which appears several times in the Homeric epics (e.g. *Iliad* 24.720; *Odyssey* 8.43, 479; 17.385, 518). It comes from the verb *a(w)eido* (ἀ(Ϝ)ειδω), 'I sing', and is sometimes translated as 'singer'; but the rather more archaic English alternatives of 'bard' or 'minstrel' in their original or historical senses probably actually provide the closest translations, particularly as regards the social function of the *aoidos*. Apart from these, Albert Lord's soubriquet for Homer himself – 'the singer of tales' (Lord 1960) – probably offers the most transparent description of the actual practical activities of the Homeric aoidos.

In the Iliad and the Odyssey the word aoidos (along with its related verb and its end-product the *aoidē* (ἀοιδή), the 'song' or 'tale', is applied to a number of different people and in a number of different contexts. By far the best known *aoidoi*, however, are Phemios and Demodokos in the *Odyssey*, the singers associated respectively with Odysseus' court in Ithaca and with Alkinoos' court on Phaeacia, the rather strange island set at the far end of the sea where everything seems perfect, and the gateway through which Odysseus is able to conclude his adventures and return finally to Ithaca. Although I think in the Homeric epics as a whole we have a potentially very complex series of contradictory images of *aoidoi*, and of their social contexts and perceived roles (e.g. Maas and Snyder 1989: 5-6), I shall concentrate for the moment on these two. This is because they seem to me to bring out particularly nicely some of the more important contrasts which we may be able to trace in the archaeological record.

In the *Odyssey* we have relatively coherent pictures of these two bards. Demodokos, who is blind (*Odyssey* 8.64), was identified in some later Greek literature with Homer himself (see Thucydides 3.104; and cf. *Homeric Hymn to Delian Apollo* cited above). Both he and Phemios are professional *aoidoi*, official bards attached to the courts or households of Alkinoos and Odysseus respectively. In the course of the *Odyssey* both

sing tales about the Trojan war, though in Demodokos' case these are only part of a wider repertoire which includes such things as the relationship of the gods Aphrodite and Hephaistos. There, however, the similarity seems to end. In Phemios' case his tales are sung at the Ithacan court near the beginning of the *Odyssey* (1.153–55, 325–27). Ten years after the end of the Trojan war, Odysseus' family are still waiting faithfully for his return. His wife Penelope is besieged by a number of suitors who have made themselves at home in his palace and are trying to persuade her to marry one of them, so that he can take control of Odysseus' kingdom. The song that Phemios sings in this context tells of the 'events' which are part of the general setting of the *Odyssey* – that is, the homecoming of the Greek heroes from Troy. However, it is quite clear, from the upsetting effects of his song on Penelope in *Odyssey* 1.336–44 and from his later terror of Odysseus' anger in 22.330–49, that his song is deliberately angled to further the ambitions of his current patrons, the suitors. We are not specifically told that he actually sings of the death of Odysseus (which the epic's audiences know to be untrue), but there is a strong implication that he does (*Odyssey* 1.350–55). We are, however, quite explicitly told that it is the suitors who coerce him into singing for them (*Odyssey* 1.154; 22.351–53). The implication of this is that Phemios' art is seen by them (and later by the vengeful Odysseus) as a potentially very effective instrument of political manipulation for partisan purposes: in other words, the furthering of the suitors' ambitions to take over Odysseus' kingdom.[1]

Demodokos, on the other hand, when he sings of Troy (*Odyssey* 8.73–82), is praised for singing his tale 'correctly', *kata kosmon* (κατὰ κόσμον), literally what is accepted as true by the world in general (*Odyssey* 8.489). Moreover, it is a tale which not only his immediate listeners (including Odysseus) recognise as true, but one which the epic's audience, through the medium of Odysseus, also know to be 'true'. Another contrast is that, while Phemios' clearly manipulative bardic activity takes place in the real but unstable setting of the crisis-torn Ithacan court, Demodokos' takes place in the well-ordered, established Scherian community, and in the ideal, perfect palace of its ruler.

It is worth looking more closely at the names of these two aoidoi. *Redende Namen* ('meaningful names') have rather fallen out of fashion in Homeric studies (although see Higbie 1995; Kahane 2005: 197), but these names – and the contrast between them – seem altogether too apt to ignore. Phemios is clearly connected with the verb *phēmi* (φημί) ('I declare', 'make known', 'speak'), someone who says or states something (Latacz 1996: 30); and we might perhaps translate him as something like the 'statement maker', with the sense that he has the ability to persuade people that something is true simply because he says so. His patronymic is Terpiades (*Odyssey* 22.330), roughly translatable as 'son of pleasure', and it seems likely that his song gives some pleasure to the suitors, if not to Penelope. Later on, Odysseus calls him *polyphēmos* (πολύφημος) (*Odyssey* 22.376), 'many-voiced', or perhaps in this context 'versatile' or 'all things to all men'.

On the other hand, a plausible translation for Demodokos (from *dēmos* (δῆμος), 'the people', and *dokos* (*δόκος = δόκη*, meaning 'opinion' or 'belief') might be 'popular

consensus' – 'what is believed or agreed by people in general'. We are explicitly told that he was honoured by the population of Alkinoos' kingdom (λαοῖσι τετιμένον: *Odyssey* 8.472) and regarded as a hero (8.483).

Before leaving Homer and turning more explicitly to the archaeological record, there are just a couple more things to which I should like to draw attention. First of all, in *Iliad* 9 (186–89), Achilles acts as his own *aoidos*, accompanying himself on his beautifully decorated lyre with its silver bridge or crossbar (actually a spoil of war) to sing tales of the glory or fame of heroes (the *klea andron* [κλέα ἀνδρῶν] – which is about as good a definition of heroic song as you can get). The other thing is that, in the *Odyssey*, the action-man hero Odysseus also acts as his own storyteller, though in his case as a teller rather than singer of tales. And while the story he tells in Alkinoos' well-ordered and ideally established kingdom is the *true*, but fantastic, story of his wanderings (*Odyssey* 9–12), the ones he tells in the real but unstable setting of Ithaca (*Odyssey* 13.254–86; 14.191-359; 19.165–307) are highly plausible and eminently realistic *lies*. It seems to me that, just taking the contrasting receptions accorded to Phemios and Demodokos, together with the contrasting story-telling behaviour of Odysseus in Ithaca and Phaeacia, we have a potentially very interesting distinction between different perceptions of the role of *aoidoi* in particular, and of epic composition and performance in general, which we may just possibly find reflected in some way – however obliquely – in the archaeological record.

Modes of Heroic Creation and their Contexts

Archaeologically datable elements of material culture contained within the epics seem to produce some interesting patterns, in that they appear to cluster in certain chronological periods more than others. As Oliver Dickinson (1986; also, this volume) argued long ago, the great majority of these can be seen to fall within the approximate limits of the twelfth and early eighth centuries BC. Nevertheless, there are a few elements that are difficult to place any earlier than the later eighth century, and an irreducible minimum of others for which the material correlations are best provided by a much earlier period – in most cases preceding the Mycenaean palatial period of the later fourteenth and thirteenth centuries BC (Dickinson 1986: 28–30; Sherratt 1990: 810–12). This is a curious pattern, which needs some explanation. What it implies is that the prehistory of bardic activity that ultimately fed into the epics was a complex one, determined less by straightforward passage of time than by different modes of creation and use of heroic song in different social or political contexts. That some periods seem to have contributed more material cultural elements than others suggests that these may have been periods in which a great deal of bardic creation was actively focussed on contemporary image and lifestyle and possibly aimed at defining and projecting the ideals and deeds of contemporary or near-contemporary individuals or small groups with social or political aspirations within their particular communities – what might be called a 'statement' mode. These may have been

interspersed by periods in which 'possession' of a commonly agreed past, inherited by a community as a whole, may have been more important, and in which the main concern of bards and their patrons was to preserve the general themes and forms – and already antique settings – of inherited bardic creations (Sherratt 1990: 817–21).

Both of these modes arguably have fairly widespread correlates in the archaeological record, but it is perhaps above all in imagery, and especially representational art, that this sort of contrast between individual or group 'statement' grounded in the present and 'possession' of a shared inherited past can most easily be detected. Before turning to imagery in the Greek archaeological record, let me try to illustrate what I mean with some examples drawn from a study by Bill Rolston (1991) of the changing political role of street murals in Loyalist areas of Belfast during the course of the twentieth century. A favourite theme of the street murals to be found in Loyalist areas, particularly from the establishment of partition in 1922 onwards, was a stylised portrayal of William of Orange (King Billy) on a white horse crossing the Boyne in 1690 (Rolston 1991: 20–29): an icon of the far distant past and a symbol of enormous historical significance to the Loyalist community as a whole (Fig. 4.1). If one were to look closely at some of these images I have no doubt that one could probably find some small detail which was strictly anachronistic, but the overall impression is certainly archaic, firmly set in the late seventeenth century. In the period between the 1920s and the end of

Fig. 4.1: Mural of William of Orange crossing the River Boyne in 1692, Lindsay Street, Belfast 1984 (Rolston 1991: opp. p. 32). Courtesy of Bill Rolston.

the 1960s, it was an image with which, on the whole – and precisely because of its chronological distance – the entire Protestant–Loyalist community could identify to a greater or lesser extent, even though, for many, it was an essentially passive symbol of the shared long-term inheritance of a British Protestant Ulster rather than a focus of contemporary ideological activity.

Following the start of the troubles in the late 1960s, images of King Billy in the Loyalist areas began gradually to be supplemented and supplanted by new images (Rolston 1991: 31–32): among them, the foundation of Carson's Ulster Volunteer Force at the time of Asquith's Home Rule Bill in 1912 (Fig. 4.2), and the legitimate and wholly patriotic part the UVF, as the 36th Ulster Division, played in the battles of the Western Front in the First World War (Rolston 1991: 44–45). Such images were often juxtaposed to the paramilitary image and activities of the UVF's murky 'reincarnation' in the late 1960s; and the juxtaposition of these contemporary and near-contemporary images – one strictly contemporary, the other set within the three generations or so which bound historical memory – served the purpose, by association, of legitimising the contemporary UVF and its activities (Rolston 1991: 45). At the same time, these were images with which only a section of the Loyalist community as a whole could identify unambiguously – above all, those who were members or supporters of the activities and ideology of the contemporary paramilitary organisations. A contrast that

Fig. 4.2: Mural of the Motorised Division, Ulster Volunteer Force, 1912. Shankill Road, Belfast 1987 (Rolston 1991: 44). Courtesy of Bill Rolston.

is perhaps worth noting between these images and the William of Orange ones of the 1960s and earlier is that, while the latter were of an identifiable individual and referred to a specific narrative (that of the victory at the Boyne), the contemporary UVF ones were overwhelmingly generic in character. On the whole, they did not represent identifiable individuals or specific, identifiable events or stories: only anonymous gun-toting paramilitaries (Fig. 4.3), stylised encounters with Republican paramilitaries, or emblematic weapons (Rolston 1991: 31, 40–43). Particularly prominent was the representation of contemporary paramilitary weaponry. Indeed, the ability to produce accurate representations of such things as AK-47 assault rifles and rocket-launchers was an acknowledged source of pride among the young – predominantly male – mural artists, in both Loyalist and Republican areas (Rolston 1991: 48–49, 94).

Similar sorts of alternation between generic representations and representations of more specific narrative can, I think, also be seen in Greece in the period between the early Late Bronze Age and the early seventh century BC. The anonymous scenes of chariots, or hunting and fighting which characterise the personal and often portable art of the Shaft Grave period, or the anonymous battle and funerary scenes found on pots associated with individual graves in the eighth century cemeteries at Athens (Ahlberg 1971a; 1971b), can be contrasted, on the one hand, with aspects of the more public art of the frescoes which adorned the Mycenaean palaces in the thirteenth century (to which I shall return below), or, on the other, with some of the scenes

Fig. 4.3: Mural of armed loyalists, Severn Street, Belfast 1987 (Rolston 1991: 42). Courtesy of Bill Rolston.

found on seventh century BC pots – like the scenes of the blinding of the Cyclops on pots from Eleusis, Argos and the central Mediterranean, or the Trojan horse on a relief pithos from Mykonos (Snodgrass 1998: 88–92, figs. 34–37) – which I suspect would be easily recognisable as telling specific stories, even if the stories themselves were unfamiliar. Insofar as it is possible to tell, this kind of alternation seems to form some distinct chronological patterns. What appear to be generic scenes predominate in the early Mycenaean period, in the period immediately following the collapse of the Mycenaean palaces, and again in the period immediately preceding or surrounding the rise of the historical city-states (*poleis*) in the eighth century BC. Art of a specific narrative nature, on the other hand, seems more immediately recognisable in some of the Mycenaean palace frescoes (Davis and Bennet 1999), and again in the early Archaic period of the seventh century BC.

Archaeological Images of Bards

With this in mind, let us turn to the question of archaeological images of bards. What do we know from archaeology of *aoidoi* and their contexts in the centuries before 700 BC? The answer is not a great deal – but just enough to know that they existed, and possibly in just the sorts of contrasting contexts and roles in which we see them in the *Odyssey*. In the absence of other identifying attributes, as it were, we are thrown back on lyres, as associated with Phemios, Demodokos, Odysseus and others in the epics (mainly the *phorminx* [φόρμιγξ], e.g. *Iliad* 1.603; 9.186, 194; 18.569; 24.63; *Odyssey* 8.67, 99, 105, 254, 261, 537; 17.262, 270; 21.406, 430; 22.332, 340; 23.133, 144; and less often the *kitharis* [κίθαρις], e.g. *Odyssey* 1.153, 159; 8.248; *Iliad* 3.54; 13.731), to give us a clue to these aoidoi.[2]

It is not entirely clear, least of all in Homer, what the difference, if any, between a *kitharis* and a *phorminx* consists in (cf. Maas and Snyder 1989: 4–5). In the epics, at least, they seem to be interchangeable, since, although Phemios takes up a κίθαρις in *Odyssey* 1.153, what he does with it in the following lines is 'play the *phorminx*' (*Odyssey* 1.155: ἦ τοι φορμίζων ἀνεβάλλετο καλὸν ἀείδειν ['and playing his lyre, he struck up a fine song']); while, conversely, the youth who 'was playing the *kitharis*' (κιθάριζε) on the shield of Achilles was doing so with a *phorminx* (*Iliad* 18.569-70). The distinction is equally unclear in later Greek literature, where the *kitharis* usually appears in the form *kithara* (κιθάρα). *Phorminx* and *kithara* still often seem interchangeable: according to Strabo (13.2.4), Terpander was the first to use a *phorminx* with seven instead of four strings, while according to Plutarch (*Instituta Laconica* 17) it was the *kithara* to which Terpander was the first to add an extra string; the instrument of Apollo can be a *phorminx*, as it is in the *Iliad* (*Homeric Hymn to Delian Apollo* 179; Pindar, *Pythian* 1; Euripides *Ion* 144; Aristophanes, *Birds* 209; *Thesmophoriazusae* 312; Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae* I 40; cf. *Iliad* 1.603), or it can be a *kithara* (Euripides, *Iphigeneia in Tauris* 1234; Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca* I 4; Plutarch, *Sulla* 12); and Orpheus plays an interchangeable *phorminx* and *kithara* within the space of a few lines in Apollonius

Rhodius, *Argonautica* (512, 540). This has not stopped modern scholars applying these respective terms to ancient representations of different types of lyres, however, and characterising the resulting descriptions as applicable in turn to these two terms (e.g. Younger 1998, 18–28; though cf. Younger 2007, 71–72; Bundrick 2005, 18–21, 25–26). Nevertheless, it seems reasonably clear from the generality of fifth century or later references that the *phorminx*, which figures most frequently in Homer, Hesiod, the Homeric Hymns and literary epic, is regarded primarily as an antique instrument (cf. Pindar, *Isthmian* 2, 1–2). It appears chiefly in references or allusions to Homer or the Homeric Hymns (e.g. Pausanias 9.29; Pseudo-Plutarch, *De Musica* 1145e; Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae* XIV 24), in association with gods (especially Apollo) and mythical figures (e.g. Pindar, *Pythian* 1, 1–2; Euripides, *Ion* 164; *Helen* 172; Aristophanes, *Birds* 219; *Thesmophoriazusae* 327; Theocritus, *Idylls* VII, 101) and in metaphorical aphorisms (Aristotle, *Rhetoric* III 11; Demetrius of Phaleron, *De Elocutione* II 85). As in Homer and the Homeric Hymns, it is associated with singing, including the singing of praises and sacred song, and with dancing (Bacchylides, *Epinicians* XIV, 13–14; Pindar, *Isthmian* 2, 2-3; *Nemean* 4, 4, 44–45; *Pythian* 1, 1–3; Euripides, *Ion* 164–65; Aristophanes, *Birds* 219; Theocritus, *Idylls* VII 100–01; *Anthologia Graeca* VII 612; cf. *Odyssey* 8.73–74). Also as in Homer, where the phrase φόρμιγγα λιγεῖαν occurs seven times in the *Odyssey* as a 'formulaic' line-ending, it is conventionally described as 'clear-toned' (λιγεῖα: *Odyssey* 8.67) or variations thereon, and as 'hollow' (γλαφυρή: *Odyssey* 8.257), which presumably refers to a hollow sound-box. As for other characteristics of the Homeric *phorminx*, all it is possible to glean from the epics is that it is strung, with each string (χορδή) stretched around a peg (κόλλοψ) (*Odyssey* 21.406–07), and that it has a bridge or cross-bar (ζυγόν) (*Iliad* 9.186–87; cf. Maas and Snyder 1989: 6). We do not know, for instance, how many strings it may be supposed to have had, or whether these were plucked with the fingers or with a plectrum, or both (a plectrum is mentioned in connection with a *phorminx* in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* and is depicted in some Aegean Late Bronze Age representations [Younger 1998: pls. 11, 24:1], though no plectrum is mentioned in either the *Iliad* or *Odyssey*). We are thus thrown back on representations of lyres or remains of actual lyres in the archaeological record for information about the instruments which Homeric *aoidoi* and their pre-Homeric predecessors might be supposed to have used.

Lyres are instruments which are now all but obsolete, at least in modern western musical traditions. They were, in effect, small harps, the main difference being that the strings (all of the same length) passed over a bridge of some form rather than entering the body of the instrument directly and were often plucked with the aid of a plectrum (Scholes 1970: 585 *s.v.* lyre (1)). They had a long history in the ancient Near East as well as in Greek lands, being represented, for instance, in the hands of an Asiatic in the 12th Dynasty tomb of Khnumhotpe at Beni Hasan in Egypt (Evans 1928: 837, fig. 554). In the Aegean, where J.G. Younger (1998) has collected all known Bronze Age examples and others (e.g. Wegner 1968; Maas and Snyder 1989) have collected examples of Early Iron Age date down to c. 700 BC, remains of actual lyres are very rare indeed. Representations

of them are more common, but I shall ignore those with no very helpful context for elucidating early bardic practices, such as the often rather ambiguous lyre or harp signs or representations found on Middle Minoan seals (Evans 1928: 834, figs. 550–51; Younger 1998: 76–78, pls. 23–24), or those representations which seem to be associated primarily with dancing or mixed ensembles (Younger 1998: 66–68 no. 29, 75 no. 54, 78–79 no. 66, pls. 1, 10–12, 18–19, 25:1). Among the very few actual lyres known is an ivory one – possibly one of two, together with a probable plectrum – from the Menidhi tholos in Attica (Younger 1998: 61–62, pls. 5–6, 9). Though these remains are often dated to the thirteenth century, they may well be earlier. The tholos itself was probably first constructed in the late fifteenth or early fourteenth century BC (Galanakis 2008: 238–39), and though the only pottery found in it seems to have been later, fragments of gold leaf (including gold rosettes) and silver vessels also remained - almost certainly belonging to an earlier burial or burials, quite probably of mid-fourteenth century date (I. Galanakis, pers. comm.). If the lyre or lyres (which were found in a very fragmentary state) do belong to such an earlier burial (and fragments of another ivory lyre from Chamber Tomb 81 at Mycenae, possibly of fifteenth century BC date [Kontorli-Papadopoulou 1987: 153; cf. Younger 1998: 61 no. 1, pls. 3–4, 7] might give some support to this), then it was a pretty impressive one. At any rate, only someone of a fairly exalted status (possibly with a lineal connection to the original inmates) is likely to have been buried in the tholos. We may therefore here have something in the nature of an aristocratic lyre-player, reminding us of a passage in *Iliad* 13 (730–31) where Poulydamas, a Trojan noble, compares lyre-playing with the other possible accomplishments of a hero, including skill in warfare; and reminding us too, perhaps, of Achilles himself singing of the *klea andron* accompanied by his prized silver-ornamented lyre.

In the palatial period of the thirteenth century we have the very well-known character of a lyre-player on a fresco, sitting on the wall of the main megaron in the palace at Pylos (Lang 1969: 79–81 nos. 43–44 H6, pls. 27–28, 125–26, col. pl. A; cf. Younger 1998: 69 no. 31, pl. 13). After Mabel Lang's reconstruction suggested that he was flanked by groups of men seated at tables, she suggested that he should be called the 'Bard at the Banquet' (Lang 1969: 194–95, pl. 125) (Fig. 4.4). His long enveloping robe may be some kind of a professional or even priestly dress; at any rate, it seems unlikely that he could do anything very much more active than sit and play a lyre while wearing it. He is perched on top of what looks like a high rock while his head bumps against the clouds. This, and the large bird (or, less likely perhaps, griffin: see Younger 1998: 69) just in front of him, suggests that there is some sort of divine presence or inspiration mixed up in all this. At this point, we might just remember that Demodokos is described as '*theios*' (θεῖος, 'divine' or 'divinely inspired' [*Odyssey* 8.43]) – an adjective which is *not* applied to Phemios, whose main boast is that he is *autodidaktos* (αὐτοδίδακτος, 'self-taught' [*Odyssey* 22.347]), which seems rather at odds with his claim in the same line that a god has implanted songs of every sort in his mind.

Moving away from the inner sanctum of the main megaron at Pylos, we find some particularly interesting frescoes, which, as has often been suggested (e.g. Davis and

Fig. 4.4: Reconstructed scene of the 'Bard at the Banquet' from the main megaron at Pylos. After Wright 2004: fig. 13, drawn by K.E. Leaman after McCallum 1987: pl. 10, based on reconstruction drawing by Piet de Jong (Lang 1969: pl. 125).

Bennet 1999), may have a bearing on part at least of what the 'Bard at the Banquet' might have sung about. These are the frescoes found in Hall 64, which acts as the main entrance to the southwestern complex of the Palace, and was in a more publicly visible position. They include the well-known scene of a battle between warriors in boar's tusk helmets and men dressed in animal skins (Lang 1969: 71 no. 22 H 64, pls. 16, 117, col. pls. A, M), which (as reconstructed by Piet de Jong: Lang 1969: col. pl. M; here Fig. 4.5) seems to have some sort of fairly vivid narrative emphasis, to be telling some particular story, possibly even with the hint of a non-contemporary setting

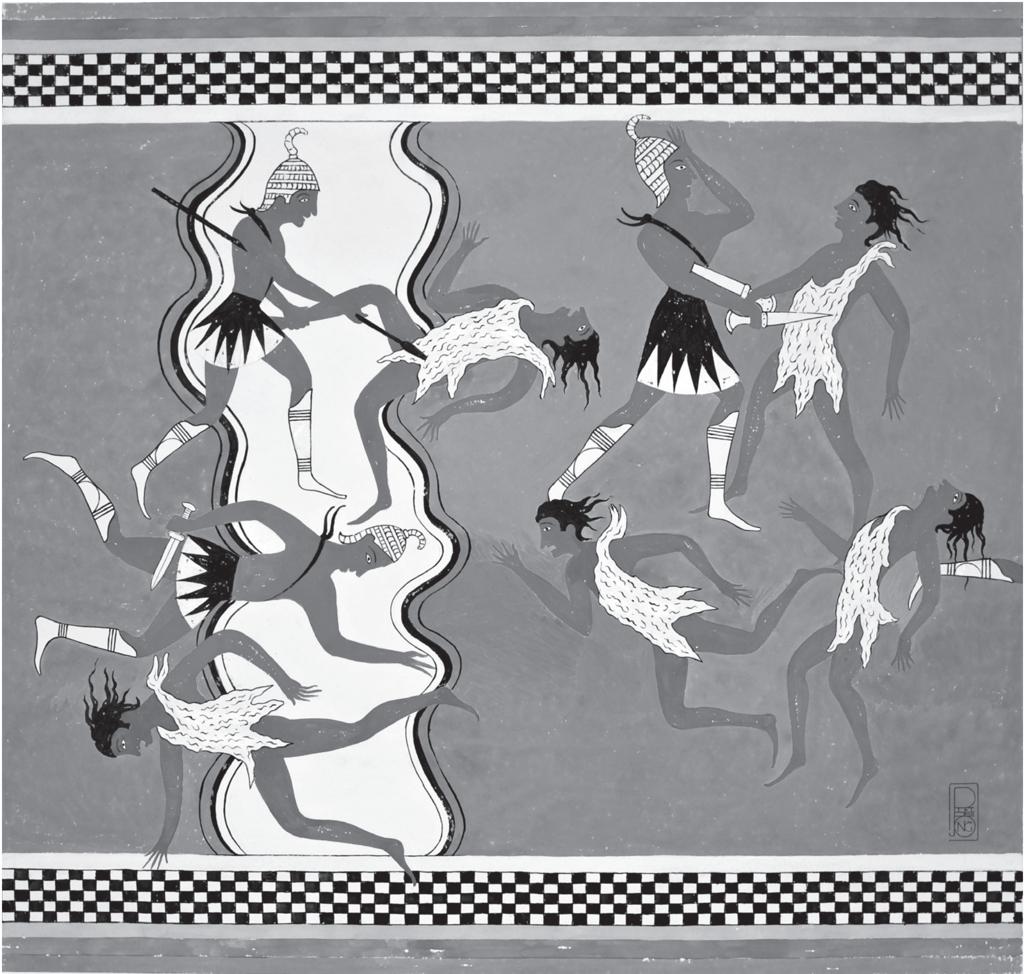

Fig. 4.5: Reconstruction by Piet de Jong of battle scene in Hall 64 at Pylos (Lang 1969: col. pl. M). Courtesy of The Department of Classics, University of Cincinnati and American School of Classical Studies at Athens, Pylos Archive, Piet de Jong Collection of Watercolors. Photo Jennifer F. Stephens and Arthur E. Stephens.

(Shelmerdine 1996: 474–77). These warriors with boar's tusk helmets, for instance, were painted at a time when bronze body armour is recorded on the Pylos Linear B tablets, but for some reason they are shown semi-naked, just like the warriors on early Mycenaean representations. Is this therefore a representation – in a fairly visible area of the palace – of some event or story which was important in the 'history' of the Pylos palace rulers, and which was consciously set in some notion of the past (cf. Bennet 2007: 15–17)? And might we suggest, for instance, that the 'Bard at the Banquet' could, among other things, have sung about just such stories? Signs of the deliberate incorporation of 'history' into the fabric of palaces, as it were, appear

even more unambiguously at Mycenae, where Circle A of the Shaft Graves, which had fallen out of use by the early fifteenth century BC, was refurbished sometime around 1300 BC and included inside the newly redesigned citadel walls right by the monumental Lion Gate (see also Panagiotopoulos, this volume).

The next image is a fragmentary one, on a fragment of a collar-necked jar from Tiryns which probably dates from the twelfth century BC, immediately following the collapse of the palaces (Fig. 4.6: Slenczka 1974: 69 no. 159, 166, fig. 24:7, pl. 9:1d; Maas and Snyder 1989: 18 fig. 3b). Although I would not want to put too much stress on the details of what is after all a fairly rough and ready type of representation, it is perhaps worth pointing out that, unlike the 'Bard at the Banquet's' lyre, which seems to have had five strings (cf. Younger 1998: 69, pl. 13), or other Aegean representations of lyres which seem frequently to have had seven strings (Maas and Snyder 1989: 2–3, 7; Younger 1998: 20), this one has only 3 strings – a type of lyre (with only three or four strings) which, it has been suggested, may have been particularly suitable for providing relatively simple accompaniments to the tonal accentuation of sung or chanted hexameter verse (Deubner 1929; West 1981; cf. Franklin 2004: 247). Although nothing more remains of this particular representation, we can, I think, put this lyre player in a more general context by considering the types of representational scenes frequently found on contemporary twelfth-century BC pottery: a renewed interest (at least compared with fourteenth- and thirteenth-century scenes) in military representation of an apparently generic nature, with new types of up-to-date equipment, including new forms of sword, shields and helmets (Popham and Sackett 1968: figs. 38–44; Buchholz and Karageorghis 1973: nos. 999–1001, 1025, 1071; Crouwel 1981: 140–41; cf. Sherratt 1990: 816). The frescoes associated with the palaces have gone, and instead representational art is again found almost exclusively on more portable personal types of objects.

Fig. 4.6: Sherd from shoulder of collar-necked jar from Tiryns, showing part of lyre player (Slenczka 1974: pl. 9:1d). Negative: D-DAI-ATH 1971/767, photographer: Tsimas. Courtesy of the German Archaeological Institute.

My next representation (Fig. 4.7) seems to encapsulate quite neatly both the Tiryns lyre player and the sort of contemporary representational context in which he is found. It is not actually from Greece, but from eleventh century Cyprus (Iacovou 1988: 26 no. 29, fig. 70:29; Maas and Snyder 1989: 19, fig. 4; Karageorghis 2006: 78–79). I would not want to draw any conclusions about this representation necessarily having anything to do with Greek epic, but what is possibly more important is that, for various reasons, social conditions in Cyprus in the mid-eleventh century BC were possibly comparable in several significant ways to those in post-palatial Greece.

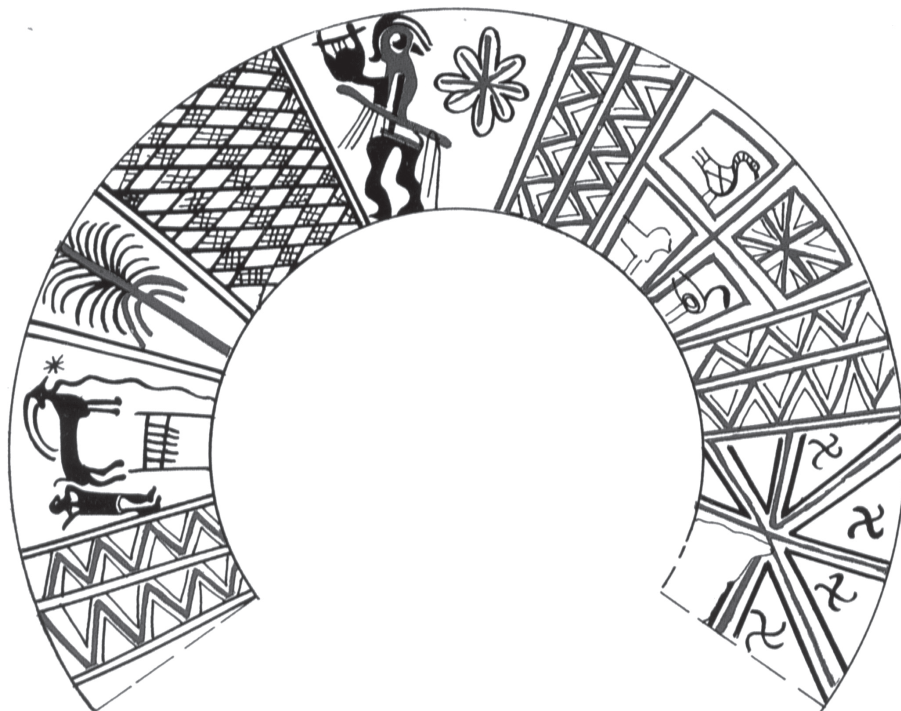

Fig. 4.7: Armed lyre player on Proto-White-Painted kalathos from tomb at Palaepaphos-Xerolimni, Cyprus. From Karageorghis 2006: fig. 64b.

This lyre-player is very visibly armed with contemporary weaponry, and he strides out purposefully. What he clearly appears to do is combine both warrior and *aoidos* in one image. What he suggests, in fact, is a close association between the image of the contemporary warrior hero himself, and the means of actively defining and propagating that image through song.

Finally, we have a series of Late Geometric images of lyres (cf., e.g. Maas and Snyder 1989: 20–23, figs. 6–7a, 8–13). These include one on a Late Geometric jug from Athens (Fig. 4.8; NM 17497: Wegner 1968: 73 no. 45, pl. II:a; Hahland 1954: 179 no. 8; Karouzou 1954: 9–10, pl. 12), dating to somewhere around the end of the eighth century BC. A seated figure playing a four-stringed lyre sits opposite another seated figure. The figure opposite the lyre-player also has a footstool, a sign of exalted status. Between them, and behind the lyre-player, are some pedestalled objects, which could be cauldrons for purificatory washing, or possibly braziers. Each of the figures on either side of the lyre-player holds a couple of enigmatic objects, which have variously been interpreted as sprinklers or as rattles or clappers for waking – or keeping at bay – the spirits of the dead (Cook 1946: 101; Hahland 1954: 187–92; Boardman 1966: 5). This scene belongs to a series of related scenes on jugs which some have interpreted as depictions of ceremonies – perhaps commemorative feasts – related to ancestor cult

Fig. 4.8: Late Geometric jug (Athens, National Museum 17497). From Wegner 1968: pl. II:a.

(Cook 1946; Hahland 1954; Karouzou 1954: 10; Wegner 1968: 38–40; McNally 1969: 462–64). On some, what appears to be a table is shown between the figures, and on several of them shields are shown hanging on the wall, some show helmeted figures and some are combined with scenes of warriors (Hahland 1954:178 nos. 1–4, 179 nos. 6–7, pls. VII–XI, XIII–XVII), suggesting some sort of military or warrior reference, but one which is implicitly in the past rather than the active present. Problematic though its interpretation is, I suggest that with this and other similar scenes we are perhaps back again with something a bit closer to the professional 'bard at the banquet' that we saw on the walls of the Pylos megaron, rather than the active warrior *aoidos* we met in eleventh-century BC Cyprus. The one is concerned with self-definition and active propagation of a contemporary image; the other, perhaps, with the commemoration of inherited 'history' as an integral part of an emerging religious and social fabric.

I propose to end there, because it brings us back full circle to where we started, with Phemios the active 'statement maker' or divisive propagandist, and Demodokos the purveyor of 'popular consensus' or generally accepted 'true' histories. These, I suggest, embody two modes of creation and transmission of what we might call heroic or pre-epic song, which tended to dominate alternately over a long period, and together contributed to the generation and maintenance of long-lived oral traditions which formed part of the 'prehistory' which fed into Homeric epic: phases of active generation and reinterpretation of inherited songs based on 'statement' grounded in

the ideals and lifestyles of the present or near-present, and particularly aimed at the definition and image projection of individuals and small groups with social or political aspirations; and, on the other hand, phases in which 'possession' of a commonly agreed, inherited past are more important to societies as a whole. It is these alternating modes of active generation and more passive maintenance which, I think, account for the odd chronological pattern of material cultural references in the Homeric epics, dominated by the last phase of active generation based on contemporary 'statement' (the 'Dark Age' Homer of Finley [1956] and Dickinson [1986]), but with relics of much earlier phases of active generation of heroic song (the early Mycenaean period) left fossilised in the structure, for instance in the language of some traditional formulae or as structural elements of certain traditional story patterns.

It is my belief that the Homeric epics of around 700 BC, or, at least, the phase of development or 'crystallisation' they embarked on around then (see Nagy 1996: 42; 2003: 2; and cf. Snodgrass, this volume), were quite deliberately and consciously designed to encourage a notion of collective Greek identity. In several aspects they are deliberately inclusive in nature, and they appear in several ways to be concerned with reconciling historical tensions (Nagy 1979; cf. Sherratt 1990: 820). And it is in this sense that they need both Phemios and Demodokos. Phemios is there as an acknowledgement of how 'history' is created and manipulated in the real world, particularly at times of crisis or social and political disintegration or fluidity. With all its imperfections, this is part of the Greek past (particularly the near-contemporary past), and can be understood and forgiven, just as Odysseus forgives Phemios in *Odyssey* 22.371–77. Demodokos, on the other hand, represents the acceptance of this imperfectly created past within a growing sense of the linear progression of history, and its transformation into an ideal of a universally acknowledged 'history' that can be possessed by everyone, and that is 'true' precisely because everyone accepts it. It seems to me no coincidence that it was with Demodokos rather than Phemios that the Greeks themselves identified Homer, traditionally one of the last and greatest of the *aoidoi* (Kirk 1962: 312–14) and at the head of a line of rhapsodes whose ideal purpose was to ensure that a commonly possessed 'history' was henceforth preserved and transmitted to future generations.

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Notes

1. Another possible illustration of the manipulative political/partisan power of the court *aoidos* lies in the mention of the (unnamed) *aoidos* whom Agamemnon left to protect Clytemnestra when he went to Troy, particularly since Aegisthus felt it necessary in pursuit of his purpose of seducing her, not just to sideline or even kill him, but to maroon him on a deserted island, thus removing him as far from audiences at Mycenae (and elsewhere) as he possibly could. Aegisthus was so relieved that he then gave thanks to the gods for the unexpected success of his mission (*Odyssey* 3.267–75).
2. The word λύρα (*lyra*), which first appears in the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* 423, does not occur in Homer. For a possible hint of its presence in the form ru-ra-ta-e (λυραστής [dual]? – 'lyre-players'?) on one of the Linear B tablets from Thebes, see Aravantinos, Godart and Sacconi 2001: 176–78; Killen 2001: 443.

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