HOMER'S PEOPLE

Epic Poetry and Social Formation

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CONTENTS

LAOI IN EARLY GREEK HEXAMETER POETRY[1]

The 'discourse of the Greeks' is a hypothetical construct with limited heuristic value. However, there are good reasons why it should be invoked here. As I have argued above, an uncontrolled proliferation of glosses has made the work of postwar Homeric critics increasingly difficult. Under such circumstances it seemed advisable to reintroduce some semantic clarity.[2] Another reason why this study adopts a decidedly lexical approach is more specific to its task. Who early epic *laoi* are, what they do and suffer, hope and fear, has been lost to us even at the most basic level of understanding. We know so little about these people that every argumentative step needs to be developed carefully and in close contact with the texts. Finally, and most importantly, the word *laos*, in Homer and around Homer, constantly appears as a performed word. It is a deeply un-prosaic notion, endowed with a poetic–ritual force which we find stored in well-defined grammatical, metrical, semantic and social contexts. Here, if anywhere, attention to linguistic detail will be richly rewarded. This is not to suggest that something like the essence of *laos* may be found in a close description of the term alone. Homer's people are more than a sum total of lexical usages. They are dynamic, not static, in contact with neighbouring forms of human interaction as well as with the (unlimited) possibilities of their own existence over time and genre. There is no 'definite'

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[1] The phrase 'early Greek hexameter poetry' is used as in Thalmann (1984) xi–xxi. It implies that the texts of early Greek epic share a number of metrical and linguistic features which reflect a shared overall outlook. Unlike Thalmann I have included the earliest elegiac poets.

[2] As rightly suggested by Taplin (1992) *passim*, esp. 49f. As examples of negligent glossing I quote Ulf (1990) ch. 3 and Raaflaub (1997b), who consistently confuse the two terms δῆμος and λαός. The custom is widespread.

meaning of the word *laos* behind the textual moment. But there are tendencies, traditions, hints of semantic preference which need to be understood and set out in a basic form before we can begin to engage with the texts. This is what the first chapter hopes to achieve.

Let me begin by describing the term *laos* as it was traditionally used and understood in early Greek hexameter poetry. For this I draw on material from the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey*, the early epic fragments, the *Homeric hymns*, Hesiod and the earliest elegiac poets. Special attention is devoted to recurrent themes and motifs and, inevitably, to the use of formulaic language.

The concept of the formula, introduced to Homeric studies by Parry,[3] and further developed by his successors,[4] provides an important tool for the understanding of the Homeric poems, a tool, however, which has often proved difficult to handle. Neither the function nor the form of the formula has been clarified beyond doubt, and this has sometimes prevented it from becoming as fruitful for our understanding of the texts as it might be.

The view of the formula adopted in this study is based on two major assumptions, one positive, one largely negative. With Russo it will be held that Homer's diction forms 'an amalgam of elements covering a spectrum from highly formulaic to non-formulaic'.[5] Frequency of recurrence as well as metrical, semantic, grammatical and phonetic stability are among the criteria with which the traditional character of a phrase will be assessed, but no clear line will be drawn between what is formulaic and what is not. On the positive side, I follow Watkins in supposing that the Indo-European formula is a 'vehicle of themes' and that 'in the totality of those we find the doctrine, ideology and culture of the Indo-

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[3] Parry (1971).
[4] Russo (1997) gives an overview.
[5] Russo (1997) 259; for the formal flexibility of the Homeric formula see also Hainsworth (1968). For its semantic flexibility see Russo (1963) and (1966). Nagler (1967) and (1974) combines the two; more recent discussion in Martin (1989) 162–6.

Europeans'.[6] Of course, not *every* formula is always equally telling. But traditional phrases such as 'shepherd of the people'[7] may, under certain circumstances, carry in themselves the seed of potential texts: 'formulas may also function to encapsulate entire myths and other narratives...'[8] and further: 'There can be no doubt that the formula is the vehicle of the central theme of a proto-text.'[9] What Watkins assumes for the Indo-European formula in general has been argued for the Homeric formula in particular by Nagy.[10] In accordance with his concept of the 'traditional theme' it will be expected that traditional epic narratives are reflected in frequent traditional phrases.[11] Such narratives may in themselves take a highly formulaic shape (e.g. 'he destroyed/lost the people), allowing us to see the surviving epics as realisations of and meditations on the themes inherent in the formulaic language of hexameter poetry.

It follows that the role played by formulae in this study will be both important and uncertain. Important, in that prominent combinations such as 'shepherd of the people' or 'he destroyed the people' are given special attention. Uncertain, because no consistent attempt is made to separate formulae 'proper' from material that can be defined as more loosely traditional. The result is a methodological balancing-act. Particularly clear examples of formulaic expression may give rise to other, more general considerations. Conversely, attention may be drawn to examples of formulaic language as part of an ongoing larger argument. It is hoped that the different aspects may complement and illuminate each other.

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[6] Watkins (1995) 68; cf. Tannen (1982), Bakker (1993) 8f.; Kahane (1997) 111f. stresses the importance of 'sameness' for preserving cultural continuity.

[7] Watkins (1995) 45.

[8] Watkins (1995) 10.

[9] Watkins (1995) 10.

[10] E.g. in the introduction to Nagy (1979); see also Nagy (1990a) 18–35, (1996a) 22ff.; cf. the concept of 'traditional referentiality' as developed in Foley (1991) 7; see also Foley (1999), Kahane (1994) and (1997), esp. 136f.

[11] Cf. Nagy (1979) 78: 'we expect to see in Homeric poetry the automatic distribution of set phraseology appropriate to set themes.'

'Shepherd of the people'

The epic word *laos* is most often found in the formulaic phrase 'shepherd of the people' (ποιμένα/ποιμένι λαῶν), which occurs 62 times at the end of the hexameter line, 56 of them in Homer. Together with 'shepherd of the people', but less frequently, we find a number of related phrases which cover other cases and metrical positions.[12] Some of these phrases are obscure, but there is little doubt that the all-pervading image of the shepherd helps us to understand less perspicuous formations.

'Shepherd of the people' was regarded a standard example of metaphorical language in classical antiquity.[13] As a metaphor the phrase entails an element of thought-experiment. Leader and group relate to one another *as if* they were shepherd and flock; though, of course, they are not. Among other things, this means that we are offered a model of social interaction which is marked as such. What precisely this model entails will be investigated presently. For the moment we need to add one more qualification: we have a shepherd but no sheep.[14] Our metaphor is made explicit only for the single agent. Accordingly, it is the shepherd with whom I start.

The concept of a 'shepherd of the people' was widespread in the ancient cultures of Mesopotamia and western Asia, and it has been suggested that it was in fact imported into Greece from there.[15] For our purposes we can leave aside this question and concentrate on what the Greeks themselves came to make of it. I shall here concentrate on the testimony of epic

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[12] See Appendix A.1.

[13] Schol. D.T. in *Grammatici Graeci* I.3 p. 458.26–34; cf. X. *Mem.* 3.2.1, Arist. *EN* 1161a12–15, schol. *Il.* 2.85b, Apollon. *s.v.* ποιμήν, Serv. *A.* 11.811; *pace* Benveniste (1973) 373 the title never became a 'cliché'. See also Fränkel (1921) 75f. and 113.

[14] Against Philo *Legatio ad Gaium* 76 and especially Iamb. *VP* 35.260, whose view is developed in Collins (1996) ch. 2.

[15] Pritchard (1969) collects the relevant material; see also Murray (1990) 1–7, Collins (1996) 21–3, West (1997) 226f.

alone. The *Odyssey*, the *Homeric hymns* and Hesiod, together with the pastoral simile of the *Iliad*, tell us a great deal about the role of shepherds in early Greek hexameter poetry.[16]

The first thing to note is the importance of cattle farming in the world of epic. Odysseus wipes out a generation of Ithacans because they eat up his livestock. Achilles thinks an attempt on his flocks a good reason for joining the Trojan war.[17] In Hesiod, finally, the Theban war is presented as being sparked by a quarrel over the sheep of Oedipus, and this – together with the Trojan war – leads on to the extinction of a whole race of heroes.[18] The metaphor of the shepherd is nothing less than central to a genre in which the possession of flocks largely determines a person's wealth and social standing.[19]

My second point is that the shepherd of early Greek epic is not the owner of the animals he farms.[20] Young warriors are often seen herding flocks, but they do so only until they grow up and become cattle-owners themselves.[21] The shepherds of epic typically work for payment.[22] In order to earn a living they survive on the margins of the inhabited world, in the mountains or on river-banks,[23] without a proper house,[24] without human company[25] and without the benefits of human civilisation.[26] While the master of flocks lives in his house, which occupies a central position in the city, the shepherd is

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[16] For the relationship between the 'pastoral analogy' and the world of rural life as described in epic see Collins (1996) ch. 2, esp. 25.

[17] *Il.* 1.153f.

[18] Hes. *Op.* 184–6.

[19] Benveniste (1973) 38, Lonsdale (1990) 118–22, van Wees (1992) 49–53, esp. 51; the different role of cattle farming in Homer and Hesiod is discussed in Athanassakis (1992).

[20] Collins (1996) 22; cf. *Il.* 20.219–22, *Od.* 4.87f., where ἄναξ ('master') and ποιμήν ('shepherd') are clearly distinguished; cf. also *Od.* 14.102, 15.503–5, 16.25–8, 21.83, 188f.; the only exception to the rule is the notoriously uncivilised shepherd–master Polyphemus: *Od.* 9.182–92, 336f.

[21] *Il.* 5.311–13, 14.444f., 15.546–51.

[22] The word for 'payment' is μισθός: *Il.* 21.448f., *Od.* 10.84f.

[23] *Il.* 4.275, 13.571f., 18.575–7, 20.221, 21.448f., *Od.* 9.182–92, *h. Merc.* 286f., 491f., *h. Ven.* 54f.

[24] *Il.* 4.279, *Od.* 9.182–92, 336f., *h. Ven.* 69.

[25] This is implicit in many of the Iliadic similes; for full documentation see Fränkel (1921); see also *Od.* 9.112–15 (of the Cyclopes).

[26] Again this is made explicit in the exaggerated image of the Odyssean Cyclops.

called 'loutish' (ἀγροιώτης) or 'dwelling in the fields' (ἄγραυλος) because of his place at the margins of society.[27]

The shepherd of early Greek epic guarantees stability to his social world and so is of central importance to it. At the same time he is also marginal, sometimes a stranger, in any case remote and therefore difficult to control. Many of the anxieties that surround him stem from this paradox. The one who owns the herd and the one who looks after it do not share the same cultural values and economic interests. Hence the many stories about shepherds failing to do their duty, which culminate in an almost proverbial expression from the *Odyssey*:

. . . αὐτὰρ μῆλα κακοὶ φθείρουσι νομῆες.[28]

. . . but bad herdsmen ruin the flocks.

The *Odyssey* in particular focuses on the problem that those whose task it is to preserve the social fabric of a cattle-farming society fail to do what they are paid for. The *Iliad* is less damning; but although shepherds are not seen as uncooperative there, the result is equally negative. For example:

ὡς δὲ λύκοι ἄρνεσσιν ἐπέχραον ἢ ἐρίφοισι
σίνται, ὑπὲκ μήλων αἱρεύμενοι, αἵ τ' ἐν ὄρεσσι
ποιμένος ἀφραδίῃσι διέτμαγεν· οἱ δὲ ἰδόντες
αἶψα διαρπάζουσιν ἀνάλκιδα θυμὸν ἐχούσας·   355
ὡς Δαναοὶ Τρώεσσιν ἐπέχραον . . .[29]

As wolves make havoc among young goats in their fury,
catching them out of the flock, when the sheep separate in the mountains
through the thoughtlessness of the shepherd, and the wolves seeing them
suddenly snatch them away, and they have no heart for fighting;
so the Danaans ravaged the Trojans . . .

The shepherd (ποιμήν) loses his flock, because he is not mentally equipped for his task. In other contexts he is seen as too weak:

δὴ τότε μιν τρὶς τόσσον ἕλεν μένος, ὥς τε λέοντα,
ὅν ῥά τε ποιμὴν ἀγρῷ ἐπ' εἰροπόκοις ὀΐεσσι

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[27] *Od.* 11.293, 16.27, Hes. *Th.* 26, *Sc.* 39, *h. Merc.* 286.
[28] *Od.* 17.246; I cannot discover any relevant difference between the two most frequent words Homeric Greek has for 'shepherd' (ποιμήν and νομεύς); cf. Hes. *Th.* 26.
[29] *Il.* 16.352–6; cf. *Il.* 15.630–8, 18.525–9.

χραύσῃ μέν τ' αὐλῆς ὑπεράλμενον οὐδὲ δαμάσσῃ·
τοῦ μέν τε σθένος ὦρσεν, ἔπειτα δέ τ' οὐ προσαμύνει,
ἀλλὰ κατὰ σταθμοὺς δύεται, τὰ δ' ἔρημα φοβεῖται.[30]   140

now the strong rage tripled took hold of him, as of a lion
whom the shepherd among his fleecy flocks in the wild lands
grazed as he leapt the fence of the fold, but has not killed him,
but only stirred up the lion's strength, and can no more fight him
off, but hides in the steading, and the frightened sheep are forsaken.

Failure of the shepherd is the rule, not the exception. If some
passages remind us that without herdsmen things would be
even worse,[31] this can only strengthen our impression that the
shepherd of early Greek epic stands at the centre of a para-
dox: he is indispensable and yet ineffective. There must be
someone who looks after the flocks, but because of the pecu-
liar nature of his task he cannot be successful.[32]

Privilege and obligation

So far I have argued that the shepherd constitutes the domi-
nant model of social interaction in the world of epic *laoi*, and
I have outlined some of the less comfortable implications this
model may have. The negative aspects I have been describing
deserve particular attention, because they may not be obvious
to modern readers, especially those steeped in a Judaeo-
Christian tradition. The shepherd of biblical narrative is a far
more positive figure than the one we find in Homer, and it is
he, rather than his hapless counterpart, who came to domi-
nate the imagination of Europe and its cultural descendants.

Let me then turn to the Homeric 'shepherd of the people'.
I begin by arguing that the leader of people in early Greek

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[30] *Il.* 5.136–40; cf. *Il.* 15.586–8, 17.61–9, 18.161–4, 573–86; cf. also the passages
where the shepherd is confronted with the forces of nature, which he cannot con-
trol: *Il.* 4.275–9, 452–6.

[31] In *Il.* 10.485f. and 15.323–5 the aggressor is successful because the leader
(σημάντωρ) is absent. In other passages we see successful defence: *Il.* 11.548–55,
17.109–12; in *Il.* 12.299–306 the outcome is left open.

[32] This is also understood in later literature – for the 'bad shepherd' see A. fr. 132c8
(Radt) and *A.* 657; an example of the willing but unsuccessful shepherd may be
found in B. 18.8–10.

hexameter poetry is obliged to look after his group in a man-
ner similar to that of the shepherd of flocks. Let us start from
the testimony of ancient readers. I have already mentioned
that some of them focus on the shepherd's responsibility.
Xenophon's Socrates gives perhaps the most memorable ac-
count of this. In his view the shepherd is there exclusively to
satisfy his group:

ἐντυχὼν δέ ποτε στρατηγεῖν ᾑρημένῳ τῳ, "Τοῦ ἕνεκεν", ἔφη, "Ὅμηρον οἴει
τὸν Ἀγαμέμνονα προσαγορεῦσαι ποιμένα λαῶν; ἆρά γε ὅτι, ὥσπερ τὸν
ποιμένα δεῖ ἐπιμελεῖσθαι, ὅπως σῶαί τε ἔσονται αἱ οἶες καὶ τὰ ἐπιτήδεια
ἕξουσι..., οὕτω καὶ τὸν στρατηγὸν ἐπιμελεῖσθαι δεῖ, ὅπως σῶοί τε οἱ
στρατιῶται ἔσονται καὶ τὰ ἐπιτήδεια ἕξουσι καί, οὗ ἕνεκα στρατεύονται,
τοῦτο ἔσται; στρατεύονται δέ, ἵνα κρατοῦντες τῶν πολεμίων εὐδαιμονέστεροι
ὦσιν."[33]

One day Socrates met a man who had just been appointed general. 'Why do
you think Homer called Agamemnon "shepherd of the people"? Was it be-
cause it is the shepherd's duty to see to it that his sheep are safe and have
their food, and that the purpose for which they are kept is achieved, and in
the same way it is the general's duty to see that his soldiers are safe and have
their food and that the purpose for which they are serving is achieved – this
purpose being to improve their fortune by defeating the enemy?'

From the metaphor of the 'shepherd of the people' Socrates
derives an obligation (δεῖ) for a military leader to look after
his group and ensure its survival. The point of comparison is
the shepherd, whose task it is (once again δεῖ) to look after his
flock. We need not worry here about the fact that Homer is
singled out as poet and Agamemnon as leader. More impor-
tant is the language Socrates employs. Agamemnon as a
'shepherd of the people' teaches a lesson. The second thing to
note is the nature of that lesson itself. Socrates' narrative is
teleologically stringent. He insists that the single agent has a
task which informs his actions (ὅπως). The shepherd of *laoi*
must ensure that his people be safe. In support of this idea
Socrates abolishes any form of individual purpose. The leader
has no aims of his own.

Xenophon's Socrates makes a strong case for the needs of
the community. His single agent, who is called 'shepherd of

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[33] X. *Mem.* 3.2.1.

the people', is there to save his group. A slightly less extreme version of the same idea is offered by Aristotle. He too sees a task rather than a privilege implied in the metaphor of the shepherd when he defines the good monarch as someone who ensures the well-being of his subjects.[34] Unlike Xenophon's Socrates Aristotle is interested in the more permanent figure of the king. Immediate salvation (σῶον εἶναι) is not the issue here. But his leader, too, is there to ensure someone else's well-being (ἐπιμελεῖται αὐτῶν, ἵν᾽ εὖ πράττωσιν). Individual action is once again directed teleologically (ἵνα) to the advantage of the group. And like Xenophon/Socrates Aristotle sets a norm (εἴπερ ἀγαθὸς ὤν . . .).

Prominent ancient readers see a number of obligations inherent in the metaphor of shepherd and *laoi*, obligations which culminate in the single agent's task of looking after and saving his group.[35] Let us now consider an alternative reading: the group serving its master. This view has often been advocated by modern readers.[36] It has some currency in the ancient debate, too, but there it takes a characteristically different form from what we have seen so far. Never, before Iamblichus, does anyone claim that Homeric shepherds act in their own interest.[37] And where the metaphor of the 'shepherd' is rejected – or embraced – as tyrannical, it is never linked with the term *laos*. A characteristic example of democratic unease may be found in Aeschylus:

Βα.   τίς δὲ ποιμάνωρ ἔπεστι κἀπιδεσπόζει στρατῷ;
Χο.   οὔτινος δοῦλοι κέκληνται φωτὸς οὐδ᾽ ὑπήκοοι.[38]

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[34] Arist. *EN* 1161a12–15.

[35] These readings are not without a context. Early passages which portray the Homeric 'shepherd of the people' as a caring leader tend to come from the tradition of anti-democratic thought associated with Socrates. Democratic readings are on the whole less favourable. For possible reasons see Murray (1990) 6; for appropriations of the word *laos* by and for tyrants see e.g. Simon. ep. 36.4 (Page), Pi. *P.* 3.85 and *passim*. Possible democratic tendencies to suppress the term may be seen as a reaction to such texts; cf. ch. 3, n. 182; see also the epigram found in Olbia and re-published by Lebedev (1996) 264, which turns the language of tyranny against the tyrant himself.

[36] E.g. Jeanmaire (1939) 58, van Effenterre (1977) 49, Collins (1996) ch. 2; *contra* Ulf (1990) 99–105, Taplin (1992) 49f.

[37] Iamb. *VP* 35.260.

[38] A. *Pers.* 241f.

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Queen: Who is the shepherd and master over the army?
Chorus: They are called neither the slaves nor subjects of any single man.

The queen in Aeschylus' *Persians* glosses 'being the shepherd' (ποιμάνορα εἶναι) with 'being the master' (δεσπόζειν), and this is taken up by the chorus when they identify the followers of the shepherd as 'slaves' (δοῦλοι). In the patriotically charged context of the *Persae*, the shepherd becomes a tyrant-figure who owns his group as a master owns his slaves.

Some of the implications of this reading are elaborated in a different context and from a different point of view by Thrasymachus in Plato's *Republic*.[39] Thrasymachus, too, re-defines the metaphor of shepherd and group. In his account the Homeric shepherd becomes an 'anybody' (τις), while the group turns into a veritable 'flock' (πρόβατα). Having thus overturned the epic metaphor, he can go on to see the shepherd (ποιμήν) as a master (the Homeric ἄναξ) who uses his belongings to whatever end suits him. The outcome is plainly anti-Homeric[40] and marked by Plato as 'wrong'; and although it gives us another important glimpse of a debate which goes back at least as far as the fifth century BC, Thrasymachus' reading contributes little to our understanding of Homer's people as depicted in Homer's texts.[41]

A more pertinent – and less violent – attempt to subsume the *laoi* under the needs of their shepherd may be found in a scholion on *Iliad* 10.79a;[42] there the fact that Nestor leads a *laos* is taken as a way of praising him (ἐγκώμιον), the more so the more people he leads:

⟨λαὸν ἄγων:⟩ μεῖζον τὸ ἐγκώμιον τοῦ Νέστορος γένοιτο, εἰ λαόν τις ἀκούοι ⟨τὸν⟩ σύμπαντα, μὴ τὸν τῶν Πυλίων μόνον.[43]

Leading the people: the praise of Nestor would be greater if one takes this to refer to the whole people, not only those of the Pylians.

[39] Pl. *R.* 343b–c; cf. also *Tht.* 174d, *Plt.* 271dff., X. *Cyr.* 1.1 and 8.1.14.
[40] Or Homeric only in so far as it is modelled on the monstrous shepherd–owner Polyphemus; see above nn. 25f.
[41] For a late reflex of Thrasymachus' reading see above n. 37; note that Iamblichus, too, shifts the weight of the epic metaphor.
[42] See also schol. *Il.* 2.579–80a, b; schol. *Il.* 2.579; schol. D.T. in *Grammatici Graeci* 1.3, p. 458.26–34.
[43] The optative is doubtful – Maass inserts ⟨ἄν⟩.

This is still remarkably different from what Xenophon and Aristotle had suggested. The leader is not obliged to help, but profits from the size of the group he leads. I have argued that in Greek epic the size of a flock primarily reflects the social status of its owner, not that of its shepherd. Like Plato's Thrasymachus the scholiast has effectively turned the shepherd into a master. And yet, he does not go nearly as far as Thrasymachus. The scholiast's group does not become a mere commodity. 'Status' (κῦδος) is a highly developed social criterion for the leader's actions. For Nestor to enjoy his fame, the people need to be well.

An epic ideal

In the all-pervasive formula 'shepherd of the people' the model of the epic shepherd becomes crucial for our understanding of the *laos*. This is by and large borne out by the testimony of ancient readers. Self-professedly Homeric readings focus on the single agent's responsibilities. Readers who take a different view avoid the term *laos* (Aeschylus, Plato/Thrasymachus) or imply successful social interaction (the scholiast). I next argue that early Greek hexameter poetry knows of both these approaches, but treats them differently. As we would expect in a genre which has such clear ideas about the tasks of a shepherd but is relatively uninterested in his privileges, the leader's obligation is viewed as being primary.

I start from the scholiast's reading which suggested that Homer's people can sometimes be seen as a token of social recognition. It should be noted from the outset that such cases are relatively rare and tend to attract apologetic glosses.[44] What is more, the leader's privilege is hardly ever made explicit. One of the few examples is Agamemnon's entry in the Iliadic *Catalogue of ships*:

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[44] *Il.* 3.186 with schol. *Il.* 3.186; see also *Il.* 4.47, 165, 6.449, *Od.* 9.263, schol. *Il.* 18.301; at *Il.* 13.489–95 this is elaborated in the image of Aeneas watching his men.

τῶν ἑκατὸν νηῶν ἦρχε κρείων Ἀγαμέμνων
Ἀτρεΐδης· ἅμα τῷ γε πολὺ πλεῖστοι καὶ ἄριστοι
λαοὶ ἕποντ'· ἐν δ' αὐτὸς ἐδύσετο νώροπα χαλκὸν
κυδιόων, πᾶσιν δὲ μετέπρεπεν ἡρώεσσιν,
οὕνεκ' ἄριστος ἔην, πολὺ δὲ πλείστους ἄγε λαούς.[45]   580

of their hundred ships the leader was powerful Agamemnon,
Atreus' son, with whom followed by far the most and best
people; and among them he himself stood armoured in shining
bronze, glorying, conspicuous among the heroes,
since he was greatest and led by far the most people.

Agamemnon's status as a hero among other heroes is here guaranteed by his being 'best' and leading 'by far the most people'.[46] This may seem a clear case of the single agent taking centre stage at the expense of collective interest. *Laoi* enhance Agamemnon's status as they guarantee Nestor's in book 10. However, we shall see later that these lines from the *Catalogue of ships* are part of an ongoing struggle in which Agamemnon tries, but in the end fails, to assert himself against the more fundamental needs of his people.[47] The leader of epic can boost his status by the number of people he leads; but by the same token he cannot lose or kill them without serious consequences.

Even in the more co-operative version of the scholiast on *Il.* 10.79a, then, the leader of *laoi* is rarely allowed take over. More aggressive accounts in the vein of Plato's Thrasymachus are openly rejected. Sarpedon in the *Iliad* is criticised in a characteristic fashion for damaging the people:

σοὶ δὲ κακὸς μὲν θυμός, ἀποφθινύθουσι δὲ λαοί.[48]

but yours is the heart of a coward and the people are perishing.

For our present purposes it does not matter whether Tlepolemus is 'right' in what he says. More importantly, his speech resonates with much of what the *Iliad* tells us. Agamemnon

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[45] *Il.* 2.576–80.
[46] *Il.* 2.579f. with Ulf (1990) 95 and n. 24; cf. *Il.* 2.675, *Od.* 13.61f.; also *Od.* 8.382, 401, 9.2, 11.355, 378, 13.38 (further developed in *Od.* 7.69–72); we may also compare Hes. *Sc.* 27.
[47] See ch. 2, '*Laoi* in the *Iliad*', pp. 55ff.
[48] *Il.* 5.643.

and Achilles weep bitter tears after having destroyed the *laoi*.[49] Hector chooses to die.[50] Earlier in the text the same Hector sharply criticises Paris for letting the people perish.[51] The actions of the already discredited prince can hardly encourage a Thrasymachean reading of the matter. While Paris may prefer the group to die for its leader's caprices,[52] it is made quite clear that such behaviour attracts blame. In this respect, at least, we can trust Hector: his brother misbehaves.

The people of epic are never allowed to be aggressively instrumentalised. One simply cannot 'own' them as a master would own his flock of sheep. *Laoi* can be viewed, under certain circumstances, in terms of their leader's social status, but this is rare and tends to create new responsibilities. There is, of course, some fluctuation across the texts. The *Odyssey*, for example, displays a marked bias in favour of the leader in charge; but even the *Odyssey* shows awareness of a stronger current of individual obligation.[53] It is to this current that I turn next.

Xenophon/Socrates and Aristotle agreed that the Homeric metaphor of the 'shepherd of the people' implies certain responsibilities. On their account the group is not there for its shepherd, but the shepherd for his group. If we turn to early hexameter poetry, we find a large array of passages which – more or less explicitly – support this view. For example, the task postulated by Xenophon/Socrates can be developed out of the following lines from the *Iliad*:

οὐ χρὴ παννύχιον εὕδειν βουληφόρον ἄνδρα,
ᾧ λαοί τ' ἐπιτετράφαται καὶ τόσσα μέμηλε.[54]

He should not sleep all night long who is a man burdened with counsels
and responsibility for the people and cares so numerous.

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[49] For discussion see ch. 2, '*Laoi* in the *Iliad*', pp. 68–83 and especially pp. 72f.
[50] For discussion see pp. 92ff.
[51] *Il.* 6.325–9.
[52] Compare σέο δ' εἵνεκ' 'for your sake' with οὗ ἕνεκα στρατεύονται 'for the sake of which they go to war' in X. *Mem.* 3.2.1 .
[53] For examples and discussion see ch. 2, '*Laoi* in the *Odyssey*', pp. 102–26.
[54] *Il.* 2.24f., 61f.

What was implicit in the image of the shepherd is made explicit in these verses. According to Agamemnon's dream, being in charge of the people (λαοί) brings with it an obligation (χρή) to act responsibly. The nature of the task is summed up in language similar to Xenophon's.[55]

Socrates is not the only one who read his Homer carefully. Aristotle's statement discussed above[56] can be compared with the simile of the blameless king from *Odyssey* book 19:

ὦ γύναι, οὐκ ἄν τίς σε βροτῶν ἐπ' ἀπείρονα γαῖαν
νεικέοι· ἦ γάρ σευ κλέος οὐρανὸν εὐρὺν ἱκάνει,
ὥς τέ τευ ἢ βασιλῆος ἀμύμονος, ὅς τε θεουδὴς
ἀνδράσιν ἐν πολλοῖσι καὶ ἰφθίμοισιν ἀνάσσων   110
εὐδικίας ἀνέχησι, φέρησι δὲ γαῖα μέλαινα
πυροὺς καὶ κριθάς, βρίθησι δὲ δένδρεα καρπῷ,
τίκτη δ' ἔμπεδα μῆλα, θάλασσα δὲ παρέχη ἰχθῦς
ἐξ εὐηγεσίης, ἀρετῶσι δὲ λαοὶ ὑπ' αὐτοῦ.[57]

Lady, no mortal man on the endless earth could have cause
to find fault with you; your fame goes up into the wide heaven,
as of some king who, as a blameless man and god-fearing,
and ruling as lord over many powerful men,
upholds the way of good government, and the black earth yields
barley and wheat, the trees are heavy with fruit, the sheepflocks
continue to bear young, the sea gives fish, because of
his good leadership, and the people prosper under him.

In Homer, a normative thrust is less explicit than it is in Aristotle, but it can still be felt. The good king must act as he does so as to avoid blame (νεικεῖν). What his goodness amounts to is elaborated in a long list, at the end of which comes to stand the well-being of the people. This could have been the passage from which Aristotle developed his understanding of a leader's task. In each case he is called 'king' (βασιλεύς), and the Aristotelian glosses 'good' (ἀγαθός) and 'to fare well' (εὖ πράττειν) can easily be translated back into their Homeric counterparts 'blameless' (ἀμύμων) and 'to prosper' (ἀρετᾶν). One more example from Hesiod:

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[55] Compare ἐπιμελεῖσθαι ('to see to it') and καὶ τόσσα μέμηλε ('with … cares so numerous').
[56] Cf. p. 22.
[57] *Od.* 19.107–14.

τοὔνεκα γὰρ βασιλῆες ἐχέφρονες, οὕνεκα λαοῖς
βλαπτομένοις ἀγορῆφι μετάτροπα ἔργα τελεῦσι.[58]

For this is why there are prudent kings: when the people
are wronged in the assembly they make amends for them.

Hesiod once again stresses normative aspects. Line 88 in particular suggests that he, too, sees the leader of people as acting towards an end which is not his ('this is why ... because'). The people must be safe, and their welfare is ensured in an appropriate teleological narrative (μετάτροπα ἔργα τελεῦσι). Throughout the surviving texts of early Greek hexameter, single agents are assigned the task of guaranteeing the well-being of the people. The theme recurs with some insistence,[59] and, as we would expect, it finds expression at the level of formulaic language.[60] It is part of early Greek epic, even at its most traditional, that the single agent has to keep the people safe.

The failed ideal

Xenophon/Socrates and Aristotle were right to assume the guise of the Homeric interpreter. Like a shepherd, the single agent who leads *laoi* in early Greek epic takes on the task of saving the people. Having developed this first implication of the all-pervading formula 'shepherd of the people' at some length, I now turn to the second. The shepherd of epic, as we have seen earlier, is prone to fail. The same holds true for the single agent who leads *laoi*. Epic leaders typically lose or destroy their group,[61] and this is reflected in one of the largest

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[58] Hes. *Th.* 88f.
[59] *Il.* 1.117, 4.184 (negative), 5.643 (negative), 8.246, 9.98f., 424, 681, 10.14–16, 13.47, *Od.* 11.136f., 22.54, 23.283f., Hes. *Th.* 84–7, Panyas. fr. 12.7f. (Davies), Callin. fr. 1.18 (West), Tyrt. fr. 11.13 (West).
[60] Cf. Appendix A.2; see also *Il.* 1.117, 8.246 and Ulf (1990) 99. These phrases occur in the *Iliad* only. For the special importance of the *laoi* in the *Iliad* see ch. 1, ' "The people of the Achaeans" ', and 2, '*Laoi* in the *Iliad*'.
[61] *Il.* 1.10, 117, 382f., 454, 2.115, 4.164f., 5.643, 758, 6.223, 327, 448f., 8.67, 246, 9.22, 118, 593 (as read by Arist. *Rh.* 1365a13), 11.85, 309, 764, 13.349, 675f., 15.319, 16.237, 778, 22.104, 107, *Od.* 3.305, 7.60, 9.265, 11.500, 518, 24.428, 528–30, Hes. *Op.* 243, perhaps fr. 30.16–19 (M–W) with schol. *Od.* 11.235, fr. 33(a).24 (M–W).

and most flexible formulaic clusters of the type *laos* + verb: 'he destroyed the people'. The following short list gives a sample of some relevant phrases:[62]

[−∪∪−∪∪−∪∪−∪∪] ὤλεσα λαόν	I destroyed the people (*Il.* 2.115, 9.22)
[−∪∪−∪∪−∪∪−∪∪] ὤλεσε λαόν	he destroyed the people (*Il.* 22.107)
[−∪∪−∪∪−∪∪−] ἀπὸ δ' ὤλεσε λαούς	and he destroyed the people[a] (*Od.* 24.428)
[−∪∪−∪∪−∪∪−] καὶ ἀπώλεσε λαούς	and he destroyed the people[b] (*Od.* 9.265)
[−∪∪−∪∪−∪∪−] ὀλέκοντο δὲ λαοί	and the people perished[a] (*Il.* 1.10)
[−∪∪−∪∪−∪∪−] ὤλλυντο δὲ λαοί	and the people perished[b] (Hes. fr. 33a.24 (M–W))
[−∪∪−∪∪−∪] ἀποφθινύθουσι δὲ λαοί	and the people perish (*Il.* 5.643, Hes. *Op.* 243)

These phrases are evidently closely related. As indicated by the metrical patterns in square brackets, they occupy roughly the same metrical space at the end of a hexameter line; the translation is designed to highlight parallel phrasing.[63]

The list given here is by no means complete; there are many more ways of 'destroying the people' in early Greek hexameter poetry. Most of the relevant phrases are strongly standardised. As is shown by the examples quoted above, they tend to involve forms of the verbs ὄλλυμι, 'to lose/destroy' and ἀποφθινύθω, 'to perish',[64] characteristically found at line endings; but they may also be formed with different verbs and/or in different positions in the verse.[65] The detrimental role played by single leader figures is almost always clear from the context, if not from the phrases themselves: the people do not

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[62] For full documentation of the Greek material see Appendix A.3.

[63] Letters are used where the differences between Greek phrases cannot easily be imitated in English.

[64] Forms of Greek ὄλλυμι are used both in the sense 'to destroy' and 'to perish'; for the inherently reciprocal nature of the word see Pazdernik (1995) and pp. 37–40 below; for (ἀπο)φθινύθω ('to perish') and plant growth see ch. 1, 'Society and the stone', n. 127.

[65] See Appendix A.3.

perish of their own accord; when they die, someone failed to save them. What exactly the individual involved actually did or intended to do in such cases is of little interest. Confronted with the needs of the people he simply has to function. As Agamemnon puts it in the *Iliad*, it is ἄμεινον, 'better', to save the people.[66]

I have argued for a close relationship between single agent and group in phrases of the type 'he destroyed the people', but this is not the only conclusion that can be drawn from what has been said. There is also a marked trend for such phrases to occur in direct speech only. This tendency is especially prominent in Homer.[67] Moreover, the people also tend to 'be destroyed' at important junctures in the texts. Again, this is particularly noteworthy in Homer. The fact that the *laoi* are almost always said to perish in direct speech would suggest that this is seen as a problem by the protagonists. Time and again Homeric characters feel the need to comment on what is happening around them. That phrases such as 'he destroyed the people' mark crucial points especially in Homeric narrative also suggests that they are of special interest to the Homeric narrator. Both points will be elaborated in chapter 2.[68]

No one in early Greek hexameter poetry ever doubts that the destruction of *laoi* is a terrible catastrophe and that those who cause it are to be blamed accordingly. Early epic as a genre carries in itself a strong and constant bias in favour of the people (*laos*), a bias which neither the Homeric narrator nor his characters ever question. Destroying the *laos* is unjustifiable, and even though disapproval is not always made equally explicit, there are enough passages for us to be quite certain. For instance, we hear in the *Iliad* that Apollo 'sent a bad plague, and the people were being destroyed'.[69] At the beginning of the narrative and in the words of the Homeric

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[66] *Il.* 1.116f., already quoted and discussed by Taplin (1992) 50, Raaflaub (1997b) 17f.
[67] Hesiodic poetry seems to have no such restrictions.
[68] E.g. pp. 61f., 72f., 92–5, 107f.
[69] *Il.* 1.10; cf. *Il.* 1.382 (κακὸν βέλος, 'a bad missile') and 5.643 (κακός ... θυμός, 'bad spirit').

narrator himself the plague is 'bad' first and foremost because it destroys the *laoi*.[70] We note again the detrimental influence of the single agent in charge. The catastrophe happens, we are told, 'because the son of Atreus had dishonoured Chryses'.[71] Ironically, Agamemnon and Menelaus will be called 'marshals of the people' (κοσμήτορε λαῶν) shortly after.[72] There can be no doubt about how we are to view their failure.

A passage from Hesiod is even more explicit; here the fact that the single agent is 'bad' (κακός) and 'contrives evil' (ἀτάσθαλα μηχανάαται) is glossed – among other things – by the damage he does to the people:

> πολλάκι καὶ ξύμπασα πόλις κακοῦ ἀνδρὸς ἀπηύρα,
> ὅστις ἀλιτραίνῃ καὶ ἀτάσθαλα μηχανάαται.
> τοῖσιν δ' οὐρανόθεν μέγ' ἐπήγαγε πῆμα Κρονίων,
> λιμὸν ὁμοῦ καὶ λοιμόν, ἀποφθινύθουσι δὲ λαοί.[73]

> Often a whole city together suffers in consequence of a bad man
> who does wrong and contrives evil.
> From heaven Cronus' son brings disaster upon them,
> famine and with it plague, and the people perish.

There can be no doubt that the people of early Greek hexameter have the sympathy of texts and characters on their side. At the same time they do not usually survive for long, and, as in the case of the shepherd of flocks, this is felt to create a constant problem of leadership. The resulting tensions can be exploited at various levels. Speakers may use traditional phrases such as 'he destroyed the people' as a weapon against each other.[74] At the level of narration, the problem of a perishing *laos* can become a driving force in the making of the story. For example, in the *Iliad* the change of fortune in book 8 is introduced by a verse which later in the poem marks Agamemnon's *aristeia* and defeat (book 11),

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[70] For the precise meaning of κακός ('bad', 'detrimental' etc.) see *LfgrE s.v.* with further literature.
[71] *Il.* 1.11f.
[72] *Il.* 1.16.
[73] Hes. *Op.* 240–3.
[74] See ch. 2 *passim*, esp. pp. 92–5, 107f.

Hector's break-through (book 15) and Patroclus' death (book 16):

τόφρα μάλ' ἀμφοτέρων βέλε' ἥπτετο, πῖπτε δὲ λαός.[75]

so long thrown weapons of both took hold and the people fell.

At four points in the Iliadic narrative the people are said to be falling on both sides. The narrative stagnates and progress is enforced, among other things, by the thematic scandal of a perishing *laos*.

I have argued that the metaphor of shepherd and people entails a potential narrative of individual obligation and communal salvation. However, failure of the leader and the destruction of the people are part of the same image. Unsuccessful shepherds populate the pastoral world of the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey*, Hesiod and the *Homeric hymns*. Similarly, death and destruction characterise life among the *laoi*. Drawing on and elaborating the paradigm of pastoral, the texts highlight the inherent weakness of the social model they describe. The shepherd is a failed ideal, exposing to scrutiny a social world without effective social structures. In the following section more will be said about what structures we find in early epic, how co-operation between leader and people is enacted and/or enforced, and why it fails so often.

Social structures

The metaphor of the 'shepherd of the people' suggested a model of social life which is fundamentally flawed. Shepherds are marginal to the epic world, and they cannot guarantee the permanent well-being of the flocks. If we ask what this tells us about the institutional organisation of life among the people, the metaphor of the shepherd can once again help our understanding. Like the flock of pastoral, the people of epic exist without institutional continuity. Institutions such as the

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[75] *Il.* 8.67, 11.85, 15.319, 16.778.

assembly do exist, and I shall argue that the term *laos* has particularly close links with them.[76] However, such social formation is not on the whole depicted as successful. More importantly, it is not *permanent*, and this will prove a decisive point when we compare the results of chapter 1 with what we learn from non-hexameter texts.[77]

One of the most basic facts of social life in early Greek hexameter poetry is that the people need to be 'gathered'.[78] They do not assemble regularly or of their own accord. The well-known scandal of the Ithacan assembly is only one case among many:[79] without an individual taking the initiative, life among the *laoi* breaks down.[80] Once again an extensive formulaic system attests to the traditional nature of this idea. I quote some examples:[81]

[$-\cup\cup-\cup\cup-\cup\cup-\cup\cup$] λαὸν ἀγείρων	gathering the people (*Il.* 4.377)
[$-\cup\cup-\cup\cup-\cup\cup-\cup\cup$] λαὸν ἀγείρας	having gathered the people (*Il.* 2.664)
[$-\cup\cup-\cup\cup-\cup\cup-\cup\cup$] λαὸν ἄγειρεν	he gathered the people (*Il.* 11.716)
[$-\cup\cup-\cup\cup-\cup\cup-\cup\cup$] λαὸν ἀγείρω	I gather the people (*Il.* 16.129)
[$-\cup\cup-\cup\cup-\cup\cup-\cup\cup$] λαὸν ἄγειραν	they gathered the people (*Od.* 3.140, Hes. *Op.* 652)

The relationship between single agent and dependent group which is inherent in the formula 'shepherd of the people' re-

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[76] As compared to, say, the concept of the 'hero' (ἥρως), for which see above Introduction, 'Between the omnipresent hero and the absent *polis*'.

[77] See ch. 3 *passim*, especially 'The founding people'.

[78] For this and the following I am indebted to Casewitz (1992) 194f. and Wyatt (1994–5); Martin (1997) discusses formulae of the type 'he gathered the people' (λαὸν ἄγειρεν).

[79] *Od.* 2.26f.

[80] See, for example, *Il.* 1.54, 313, 2.25, 62, 191, 280, 578, 580, 675, 708f., 817f., 4.90f., 201f., 287, 407, 430, 5.485f., 6.80, 433, 7.342, 9.338, 708, 10.79, 11.189, 204, 758, 796, 13.492, 495, 710, 833f., 14.93, 15.311 475, 506, 695, 723, 16.368f., 501, 551, 714, 17.250f, 19.139, 234, 23.156f., 258, 24.658, *Od.* 3.140, 155, 6.164, 24.530, *h.Cer.* 296f., Panyas. fr. 12.8 (Davies); *Il.* 24.788f. is only an apparent exception to the rule; see p. 97.

[81] For a fuller list of the Greek phrases see Appendix A.4.