

## Some „Mixed Aorists“ in Homer

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In the Homeric poems there are a number of strange verb forms which grammarians traditionally lump together under the heading of “mixed aorists”, meaning by this that the sigmatic stem of the “first aorist” is mixed with the thematic endings of the “second aorist”. One class of these “mixed aorists” consists of the imperatives *ἄξετε* and *ἄξεσθε*, *οἴσε οἴσετε* and *οἰσέτω*, *ὄψεσθε*; the indicative *ἄξοντο*; and the infinitives *ἄξέμεν* and *ἄξέμεναι*, *οἰσέμεν* and *οἰσέμεναι*. These all have stems which normally serve as futures. The aorist of *ἄγω* is *ἤγαγον*, not *ἤξα*, except in the mouth of a barbarian (Timotheus *Persians* 165). The verbs *φέρω* and *ὄράω* are inherited as suppletive: *οἴσω* and *ὄφομαι* regularly provide their futures, as well as forms like *οἰστός* (the durative root *\*bher-* did not produce an adjective in *\*-to-* in Indo-European<sup>1</sup>). In Homer, the imperatives *οἴσετε*, *οἴσε*, and *ἄξετε* are clearly associated with futures, as at *Il.* 3.103 ff. (*οἴσετε . . . οἴσομεν . . . ἄξετε*) or *Od.* 22.101 ff. (*οἴσω . . . δώσω . . . οἴσε*). Thus it looks as though these Homeric forms ought to be connected with the future system and not with Sanskrit thematic imperatives of the sigmatic aorist (*neṣa* etc.)<sup>2</sup>. To discover the original function of the forms in the Greek epic language, one must analyze their functions in the oldest attested instances. To pick out the oldest instances, one must demonstrate that some of the usages are derivable from others. The secondary types can then be set aside, and the investigation restricted to the basic types.

The first type that can be eliminated is the indicative. Only one example occurs, *Il.* 8.545:

*ἐκ πόλιος δ' ἄξοντο βόας καὶ ἴφια μῆλα.*

If this form were considered by itself, one might call it an “imperfect of the future” and compare it to the conditional in Sanskrit and

<sup>1</sup> A. Meillet, “A propos de 'ΟΙΣΤΟΣ,” *Festschrift P. Kretschmer* (Berlin 1926), pp. 140f.

<sup>2</sup> P. Wahrmann, „Zur Frage des Aoristus mixtus im Griechischen“, *Festschrift P. Kretschmer* (Berlin 1926), p. 312; on the contrary, J. Wackernagel, *Vermischte Beiträge zur Griechischen Sprachkunde* (Basel 1897), p. 49.

tion as the imperatives of ἄγω. Rarely does either the singular or the plural occur alone as an imperative meaning "bring". Usually they occur in combination with another imperative or the equivalent, with a very much weakened meaning. They have been degraded to the status of mere particles. An example typical of many is *Il.* 2.72, with a short-vowel aorist subjunctive:

ἀλλ' ἄγετ' αἶ κέν πως θωρήξομεν νῆας Ἀχαιῶν.

Notice that no serious metrical difficulty was experienced with ἄγετε, contrary to what Wahrmann implies<sup>8</sup>). For the imperative of ἄγω in its primary function, a more strongly marked form has been introduced, namely ἄξετε. The original imperative ἄγε (ἄγετε) survives in the secondary function as an adverb, where its connection with the verb ἄγω can be forgotten<sup>9</sup>). Thus there is a good reason for the spread of ἄξετε, but its origin has not yet been explained.

The particular usage of these imperatives must be examined more closely. When ἄξετε is used, it is addressed to someone nearby, telling him to go and get something from another place and bring it back: *Il.* 3.105 ἄξετε δὲ Πριάμοιο βίην . . . (Menelaus addresses the Trojans on the field; Priam is in the city.) *Il.* 24.778 ἄξετε ῥῶν, Τρῶες, ξύλα ἄστυδε . . . (Priam and the Trojans are in the city; the wood is outside.) In contrast, when rarely ἄγε is used as a real imperative, it involves leading someone who is present away to another place: *Od.* 10.266 μὴ μ' ἄγε κείσ' ἀέκοντα . . . (Eurylochus does not want to go with Odysseus to Circe's house.) *Od.* 15.199 μὴ με παρὲς ἄγε νῆα . . . (Telemachus does not want to go home with Peisistratus.)

Likewise, οἴσετε and οἴσε are used of going to get something and bringing it back, in opposition to φέρετε and φέρε, which tell someone to bring an object which he already has near him. *Il.* 17.718 νεκρὸν ἀείραντες φέρετ' ἐκ πόνου . . . (All those involved are out on the field together.) *Od.* 12.9f. ἐγὼν ἐτάρους προίειν ἐς δώματα Κίρκης | οἰσέμεναι νεκρὸν Ἐλπήνορα τεθνηῶτα. (Odysseus and his companions were on the shore; the body was in Circe's house.) *Od.* 21.369

<sup>8</sup>) *Ibid.*; cf. M. Leumann, „Aoristi mixti' und Imperative vom Futurstamm im Griechischen“, *Glotta* 32 (1953) 205.

<sup>9</sup>) J. Kuryłowicz, "La nature des procès dits 'analogiques'", *Acta Linguistica* 5 (1945–1949) 30; reprinted in J. Kuryłowicz, *Esquisses linguistiques* (Wrocław/Kraków 1960), pp. 66–86; and in *Readings in Linguistics* II, ed. E. P. Hamp, F. W. Householder, R. Austerlitz (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1966), pp. 158–174.

*ἄττα, πρόσω φέρε τόξα . . .* (Eumaeus has the bow with him.) *Od.* 22.106  
*οἶσε θέων* (sc. *τεύχεα*) . . . (Telemachus has to go inside to get the  
 weapons.)

Similarly, *ῥψεσθε* directs the hearers to go somewhere and look  
 at something: *Il.* 24.704 *ῥψεσθε, Τρῶες καὶ Τρωάδες, Ἑκτορ᾽ ἰόντες.*  
 (The Trojans are to come from their homes to look at Hector's body.)  
*Od.* 8.313 *ἀλλ᾽ ῥψεσθ᾽, ἵνα τῷ γε καθεύδεται ἐν φιλότῃτι.* (The gods are  
 to come from their homes to look at Aphrodite and Ares).

So all these peculiar imperatives involve a sense of going in order  
 to do something. Sometimes, indeed, they are accompanied by a  
 participle "going". This is the clue to the solution. Clearly, there is  
 a relation between *ῥψεσθε . . . ἰόντες* and (for example) *Il.* 14.200

*εἴμι γὰρ ὄψομένη πολυφόρβον πείρατα γαίης,*

and between *Od.* 20.154 *οἴσετε θᾶσσον ἰοῦσαι* and *Il.* 13.167f.  
*βῆ δ᾽ ἰέναι . . . | οἰσόμενος δόρυ μακρόν . . .* Cf. also *Od.* 8.254ff.:

*Δημοδόκῳ δέ τις αἶψα κινὼν φόρμιγγα λίγειαν  
 οἰσέτω, ἣ πον κεῖται ἐν ἡμετέροισι δόμοισιν.  
 ὧς ἔφατ᾽ Ἀγκλῖνος θεοεἰκελος, ὦρτο δὲ κῆρυξ  
 οἴσων φόρμιγγα γλαφυρῆν δόμον ἐκ βασιλῆος.*

The same relation exists between *Od.* 7.188

*νῦν μὲν δαισάμενοι κατακείετε οἴκαδ᾽ ἰόντες*

and *Il.* 1.606

*οἱ μὲν κακκείοντες ἔβαν οἰκόνδε ἕκαστος*<sup>10</sup>).

The verb *κατακείω* is properly called a desiderative in the Homeric  
 state of the language, whereas the future had lost its original  
 desiderative character in its finite forms. The future participle  
 (like the infinitive) continued to have a desiderative sense, and was  
 frequently used to express intent, often with a verb of going; e.g.  
*Il.* 1.12f.

*ὁ γὰρ ἦλθε . . . | λυσόμενός τε θύγατρα . . .*

Here the future participle clearly expresses an intent rather than a  
 future fact: the ransoming did not take place. The construction of a  
 verb of going with a future participle is common in Homeric and  
 later Greek. There is nothing specially poetic about it. A second  
 kind of construction involving "to go" and another verb does seem  
 to be poetic: the combination of an imperative with a participle

<sup>10</sup>) V. Magnien, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

“going”. Homeric examples are reasonably frequent; e.g. *Il.* 3.406 ἦσο παρ’ αὐτὸν ἰούσα . . . , *Il.* 6.490 ἀλλ’ εἰς οἶκον ἰούσα τὰ σ’ αὐτῆς ἔργα κόμιζε, *Il.* 9.421f. ἀλλ’ ὑμεῖς μὲν ἰόντες . . . | ἀγγελίην ἀπόφασθε . . . Cf. also Sophocles *Antigone* 768

δράτω, φρονεῖτω μεῖζον ἢ κατ’ ἄνδρ’ ἰών

and *Oedipus at Colonus* 1393

καὶ ταῦτ’ ἀκούσας στεῖχε, κἀξάγγελ’ ἰών.

The natural (unmarked) way of saying such things seems to be with two imperatives; e.g. *Il.* 3.432 ἀλλ’ ἴθι νῦν προκάλεσσαι ἀρηίφιλον Μενέλαον, *Il.* 23.646 ἀλλ’ ἴθι καὶ σὸν ἑταῖρον ἀέθλοισι κτερεῖζε. In opposition to this ordinary kind of expression, the type ἦσο ἰούσα is stylistically marked. People did not talk that way. At bottom, however, it means the same as if one said ἴθι (καὶ) ἦσο. An optional transformation subordinates the verb of going by making it a participle. In fact, the phenomenon is a kind of enallage of verb endings comparable to the well-known poetic device of interchanging adjective endings (the “transferred epithet”). With a desiderative verb, the situation is a little different. The unmarked construction consists of the finite verb of going plus the desiderative participle (*κακκείοντες ἔβαν*, like ἦλθε λυσόμενος). The desire to lie down is not really parallel to the act of going, but rather indicates a state of the subject who goes; so the natural construction involves subordination rather than parallelism. One might compare the constructions with *λανθάνω*. Properly, *λανθάνειν* expresses a circumstance attending the accomplishment of another verbal idea, so that the unmarked construction was probably the participle *λαθών* with a finite verb (e.g. Thucydides 1.65 *ἐκπλοὺν ποιεῖται λαθὼν τὴν φυλακὴν*). The common reversal of this construction (e.g. Thucydides 2.2 *ἔλαθον ἐσελθόντες*) would originally have been the stylistically marked member of this opposition. Accordingly, the ordinary imperative of *κακκείοντες ἔβαν* should be something like \*ἴτε κατακείοντες, as ἴτω θύσων is of εἰσι θύσων (Plato *Laws* 909d). Instead one finds *κατακείετε ἰόντες*, with the verbs reversed (cf. *ἔλαθον ἐσελθόντες*). Evidently a stylistic transformation (enallage), like that which produces ἦσο ἰούσα, operates on the imperative “go” plus desiderative participle to produce a desiderative imperative plus a participle “going”. The remarkable fact is that this same enallage is applied to “go” plus a future participle, even though future imperatives do not normally exist in Greek. Thus instead of \*ἴτε ὀφόμενοι Homer says *ὄψεσθε . . . ἰόντες*. The basic meaning remains the same, so that

the imperative *ῥψεσθε* keeps the desiderative sense characteristic of the future participle but not of the future indicative. This “future imperative” still does not exist in the verbal system of the language; such existence as it has in the epic poetry depends on the sense of its derivation from the type *εἶμι ὀψόμενος*. In much the same way a “transferred epithet” construction is understood with reference to the normal construction. If one can say *Θήρωνος Ὀλυμπιονίκαν ἕμνον* (Pindar Ol. 3.3), knowing that it will be understood as *Θήρωνος Ὀλυμπιονίκου ἕμνον*, it does not follow that *Ὀλυμπιονίκας ἕμνος* is an expression possible in the language.

Something more can be said about the conditions influencing the creation of these “future imperatives”. The regular imperatives *ἴθι* and *ἴτε*, like *ἄγε* and *ἄγετε*, tend to have very little meaning of their own when combined, as they often are, with other imperatives. There would have been some motivation to create a stronger kind of imperative, as there was to replace *ἄγετε* with *ἄξετε*. In particular there would have been an inclination to place in the emphatic initial position of the verse some word which carried more meaning than (*ἀλλ’*) *ἴτε*. The transformation that produces *ῥψεσθε . . . ἰόντες* has the effect of putting the marked grammatical category (the imperative) and the marked lexical item (the looking, as opposed to the going) into the same word and in the most strongly marked position in the verse. Generally speaking, doubly (or multiply) marked structures tend to replace the simpler structures which get weakened by frequent use<sup>11</sup>). Furthermore, if *ἴτε* had little lexical value, at least it still had the syntactic function of expressing the imperative. When it is transformed to a participle, it loses even that function. In *ῥψεσθε . . . ἰόντες*, *ῥψεσθε* carries all the meaning that matters. Consequently, the participle can be omitted at will. The participle is omitted also in many of the instances of *οἴσατε* (*οἴσε*) and all of those with *ἄξετε*. Yet in each case the notion of “going” is preserved, because it is only the derivation from the compound structure which makes the use of the simple imperative possible<sup>12</sup>). It may indeed be that *ἄξετε* was formed by analogy with *οἴσατε*, rather than independently from a transformation of *\*ἴτε ἄξοντες*. The verbs *φέρω* and *ἄγω* are commonly associated, as in the idiom *ἄγειν καὶ φέρειν*; and *ἄξετε* in *Il.* 3.105 follows closely upon *οἴσατε* (103). Since *ἄγω* is more regularly used with animate, *φέρω* with inanimate objects, an expression like *ἄξετε . . . ξύλα* (*Il.* 24.778) is

<sup>11</sup>) J. Kuryłowicz, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

<sup>12</sup>) *Ibid.*, p. 25.

likely to be secondary to the expressions with *οἴστε*. But that makes no essential difference. The explanation of the structure is the same whether *ἄξετε* belonged to it from the beginning or was a later accretion.

Once the forms have entered the epic tradition, they can survive in a limited way even if the sense of derivation is lost. Antimachus of Colophon uses *οἰσόρων* in a passage reminiscent of *Od.* 8.254ff. (fr. 19 Wyss); Pindar uses *οἴσειν* as present with no apparent special sense (*Pythian* 4.102); and Aristophanes puts *οἴσει* in the mouth of Lamachus as parody of the grand style (*Ach.* 1099, 1101, 1122; cf. *Frogs* 482). For these poets *οἴσει* is opposed to *φέρε* not because it has any different meaning but simply because it helps to characterize the style as that of high poetry. It is meant to be recognized as a Homeric word; it is no longer part of a living poetic language.

Consideration of peculiar forms like these leads to the question, what might the concept of "grammaticality" mean in reference to the epic language? Is *οἴστε* grammatical? Or *ἄξετε*? Or *ἄξοντο*? In a natural language the native speaker's command of the grammar enables him to create new sentences and to judge the grammaticality of given sentences. But the epic language contains a mixture of phenomena that could never have existed in a natural language. The misinterpretations of old formulae show that a large part of the epic language was not synchronically generated by any ordinary sort of grammar. Granted that natural languages contain some traditional expressions without synchronic motivation, in the epic such inherited formulae are the basis of the whole language. The first principle of Homeric grammar was that if something had been said before it might be said again. Any established formula was permissible. In order to say something new, one could create new expressions by analogy with those that already existed, using the rules of the natural language. In a few cases, like that of enallage, there were special rules operating in the poetic but not in the natural language. Still, it must be emphasized that analogical processes did not operate arbitrarily in the epic language any more than they do in natural languages. "*Metri gratia*" is not a sufficient explanation of Homeric abnormalities. What is peculiar about the epic language is that it was no one's native speech, but always a language to be imitated<sup>13</sup>). If a poet knew, for example, that he could say *ἄξετε* in his poems in a context where he would say *ἄγετε* in his natural

<sup>13</sup>) *Ibid.*, p. 36.

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speech, he might well assume that he could say *ἄξοιτο* in a poem for *ἤγοιτο* in the natural language. There would be no native speaker to correct him. Analogical development might progress slowly and gradually, but it was not subject to any definite limit. Each accepted innovation could form the basis for a new innovation; and the result could be something as bizarre, from the standpoint of the natural language, as a future imperative.

Sprachliche Kriterien für eine innerhomerische Chronologie?

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1965 hat Ernst Heitsch in seinem Buch „Aphroditehymnos, Aeneas und Homer“<sup>1)</sup> den Versuch unternommen, den großen Aphroditehymnos und einen Teil der Aineiaspartie des 20. Buches der Ilias (Y 75–289) mit Hilfe sprachlicher Beobachtungen nach (der übrigen) Ilias, Odyssee und Hesiod in die Spätphase epischer Dichtung, die 2. Hälfte des 7. Jahrhunderts, zu datieren<sup>2)</sup>. Indem er der von Manu Leumann in seinem Buch „Homerische Wörter“<sup>3)</sup> angewendeten Methode folgt, erklärt er Besonderheiten und Neuerungen in Gebrauch und Bedeutung von Wörtern und Wortverbindungen aus der Übernahme und Kombination vorhandener epischer Formeln und Ausdruckstypen. Dieser Versuch stieß auf Zustimmung, aber auch auf Ablehnung<sup>4)</sup>. J. A. Davison erhob Einspruch gegen einige Beobachtungen zum Aphroditehymnos; H. Erbse

<sup>1)</sup> Hypomnemata Heft 15, Göttingen 1965. Im folgenden zitiert als „AAH“.

<sup>2)</sup> Genauer: den Aphroditehymnos nach Il., Od., Hesiod, (dem ersten Teil des homerischen) Apollonhymnos und vor den homerischen Demeterhymnos; Y 156–289 nach Il., Od., Hesiod; Y 75–155 nach Il., Od., Hesiod, Aphroditehymnos, Demeterhymnos und (dem zweiten Teil des homerischen) Apollonhymnos.

<sup>3)</sup> Basel 1950 (= Schweizerische Beiträge zur Altertumswissenschaft Heft 3).

<sup>4)</sup> Zustimmend: H. J. Mette, GGA 219, 1967, 8–11, der jedoch die chronologischen Folgerungen ablehnt; F. Wehrli, Mus. Helv. 24, 1967, 236. Ablehnend: J. A. Davison, Gnomon 38, 1966, 645–649; M. M. Willcock, Cl. Rev. 81, 1967, 138–140; G. Scheibner, DLZ 88, 1967, 790–793; H. Erbse, Rhein. Mus. 110, 1967, 1–25, im folgenden zitiert als „Erbse“; A. Lesky, Art. Homeros, RE Suppl. XI, 1968, 775f.; E. Dönt, AAHG 21, 1968, 134f.