

**δεκνωμι* come forma ionica, e la sillaba *δεκ-* breve per *correptio attica* ¹³⁾!

Il vaso dunque dovrebbe presentare e individuare il miglior danzatore: essere l'attestazione della sua vittoria. Che un oggetto indichi una persona e le sue prerogative è concetto usuale nelle iscrizioni greche; originale è però la forma con cui tale concetto viene qui espresso.

Agamemnon's Intentions, Ἀγών, and the Growth of an Error

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This article contains a semantic analysis of the word *ἀγών* in those examples of post-Homeric authors where *ἀγών* is said to have the 'Homeric' meaning 'assembly, gathering': Aesch. *Ag.* 845; Pind. *Pyth.* 10.30; *SIG* 38.32; *IG* V 2, 113; Alc. 3, fr. 1.8 Page; Aesch. *Sept.* 774. It is shown that (1) scholars have generally disagreed about the meaning of *ἀγών* in these passages, (2) usually the context of the occurrence is deficient in some way (as, e.g., in a papyrus fragment), (3) there has been an escalating tendency to give such occurrences the meaning 'assembly' as a lowest common denominator, (4) in all instances, a contemporary 6–5th century meaning is most appropriate to the context. Conclusion: there is no trustworthy evidence for an archaic meaning of *ἀγών*, 'assembly', occurring in the classical period.

τὰ δ' ἄλλα πρὸς πόλιν τε καὶ θεοὺς
κοινὸς ἀγῶνας θέντες ἐν πανηγύρει
βουλευσόμεσθα·

(Aesch. *Ag.* 844–46)

These words, spoken near the end of Agamemnon's initial homecoming speech (810–54), express his plans for the future. Current scholarly opinion understands *ἀγῶνας* as 'assemblies'.¹⁾ E. Fraenkel,

O. Schroeder (*Aeschyl's cantica*, Lipsiae 1916², p. 21) parla invece "de ithyphallico in catalexi bis quasi conciso". Struttura metrica identica alla nostra clausola in Eschilo, *Persiani* 854, *Coefore* 604 e Sofocle, *Edipo re* 1097 (per il quale si parla anche di ipodocmio).

¹³⁾ Che si verifica però per *πε(ο)δίκνωμι* in un'iscrizione metrica cretese, SGDI 5112,1.

¹⁾ Editors of Aesch. (or *Ag.*) expressing this view include Groeneboom (1966) 255; Denniston-Page (1957) 143; Fraenkel (1950) I, 141 and II, 388; Untersteiner (1946) II, 215; Thomson (1938) 151; Wecklein (1888) 88; Wilamowitz (1885) 55. Cf. G. Italie-S. L. Radt, *Index Aeschyleus* (Leiden 1964³) s.v. *ἀγών* 2, "contio".

for example, translates *κοινὸς ἀγῶνας* as "general meetings", and considers this use of *ἀγών* a "Homerism";²) it is clear from his comment on the line that he conceives the primary purpose of these meetings to be political.³)

Two earlier interpretations of *ἀγῶνας* are no longer in favor. Several 19th century editors understood (*κοινὸς ἀγῶνας* as '(public) debates'.⁴) Another early interpretation was '(communal or public) games'.⁵) While there are cogent reasons for rejecting 'debates',⁶) none have been offered against 'games, contest(s)', one of the most common meanings of *ἀγών* at the time the *Agamemnon* was performed.⁷) Since Agamemnon is removed from the scene before he can accomplish his plans, what he intended is never revealed. This leaves some room for conjecture. Nevertheless, if *ἀγῶνας* has a Homeric or archaic sense, there must be some indication of this in the context, which may be divided into three parts:

(1) The immediate verbal context, *κοινὸς ἀγῶνας θέντες ἐν πανηγύρει. θέντες: τιθέναι ἀγῶνα(ς)* is the customary way of saying 'to institute, celebrate games or contests' throughout the classical period.⁸) For *ἀγῶνας* to mean 'assemblies' of any kind, one would expect a verb meaning 'to cause to sit' (as at Hom. *Il.* 23.258,

²) On the Homeric meaning of *ἀγών*, 'assembly', see H. J. Mette in *Lfgre*, I (Göttingen 1955) s.v. *ἀγών*, 134.71–136.19.

³) E. Fraenkel, *Aeschylus: Agamemnon*, 3 vols. (Oxford 1950) I, 141 (tr.) and II, 388 (comm.).

⁴) Hermann (1859²) II, 439; Conington (1858) 95; Schütz (1811) 265. Cf. the 19th c. lexica by Dindorf (1876) and Wellauer (1830) s.v. *ἀγών*.

⁵) See the eds. of Schneider (1839) IV, 153; Porson (1794) and Stanley (1663) ad loc. Cf. LSJ, s.v. *ἀγών* I. 1, sub-heading "esp.: *assembly met to see games*".

⁶) The meaning 'debates' in the form *ἀγών λόγων* appears first in the second half of the 5th c. (Eur. *Andr.* 234, *Supp.* 427–28, *Phoen.* 588, 930, *Or.* 1342, 1491–92, fr. 189 Nauck; Thuc. 3.67.6; Isoc. 4.45; Pl. *Prt.* 335a4–8), and is associated with the sophistic movement (see W. K. C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy*, III [Cambridge 1969] 43). The absence of *λόγων* and the early date of *Ag.* make it unlikely that this is the meaning of *ἀγῶνας* here.

⁷) See LSJ, s.v. *ἀγών* II, "*assembly of the Greeks at the national games, . . . hence, contest for a prize at the games*", and the special lexica to the individual authors. The story in Hdt. (9.33–36) about Tisamenus, the diviner of the Spartans, shows that *ἀγών* in ambiguous contexts would be understood as 'games, contest(s)' by Greeks of this period.

⁸) For examples, see Raubitschek, *DAA* 326.4, 327.7; *IG* XII 9, 189.5; Pind. fr. 288 Snell; Hdt. 2.91.4, 5, 2.160.1, 5.8, 6.127.3; Eur. *Alc.* 1026–27; Lys. 2.80; Ar. fr. 528.1 Kock; Xen. *An.* 1.2.10; Pl. *Ion* 530a5, *Menex.* 249b 5–6, *Leg.* 657d5, 658a6, 947e5; Dem. 9.32; Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 57.1.

ἴζανεν εὐρὸν ἀγῶνα), or something similar. κοινὸς: κοινός and similar words occur with ἀγών, 'games, contest(s)', with the sense 'open to all'.⁹⁾ ἐν πανηγύρει: Most commonly, πανήγυρις designates an assembly at a festival;¹⁰⁾ this meaning fits well with the usual 5th c. meaning of ἀγών: 'games, contest(s) in a festal assembly'.

(2) The structure of the speech. In this speech, Agamemnon is concerned with two things: (1) paying respect to the gods, and (2) commenting on the puzzling remarks on loyalty just expressed by the Argive elders (783–809). The obligation to the gods occupies the first part of the speech, in which Agamemnon thanks the gods for their help in returning from Troy and his victory there (810–29, cf. 851–54). The second concern is expressed by a discourse on the rare loyal follower free of envy, with an example of such a follower, Odysseus (830–44). At line 844, Agamemnon turns from words to (intended) action; this is marked by τὰ δ' ἄλλα. The next words, πρὸς πόλιν τε καὶ θεοὺς, recapitulate the two topics of the speech, religion and politics, before he tells what he intends to do about them. By understanding ἀγῶνας as 'games, contest(s)', lines 845–46 are seen to conform to the two-fold organization of the speech: (1) after performing the proper actions with respect to the gods, i.e., celebrating games in their honor, κοινὸς ἀγῶνας θέντες ἐν πανηγύρει, (2) he will concern himself with the political situation, βουλευσόμεσθα.

(3) The context of situation. It would be natural, and expected, for a Greek general, after a great victory and safe return home, to celebrate games of thanksgiving in honor of the gods.¹¹⁾

In short, there is nothing in the context of ἀγῶνας which suggests that an archaic 'assemblies' is preferable to the current 'games, contest(s)'; rather, the latter meaning makes better sense in several respects. Since the recipient of a speech act normally chooses an archaic meaning for a word over current meanings only when the current meanings do not make sense in the context, the meaning 'assemblies' may be safely excluded from this occurrence of ἀγών.

One reason scholars have been able to ignore the contextual evidence is the lack of any description of the κοινὸς ἀγῶνας. A second

⁹⁾ For ἀγών κοινός, see Peek, *GVI* 1494.1–2; Dem. 9.32; and cf. Pl. *Leg.* 950c4, and Th. Magister at Soph. *El.* 681–82. For adjectives of similar meaning, see ἄ. πάξενον, Soph. fr. 348.1 Nauck; ἄ. πάνδημον, Eur. *Alc.* 1026; δημόσιοι ἄ., Xen. *Cyr.* 1.2.12, cf. Pl. *Leg.* 865a3–4, *IG IV*² 1, 51.13–14.

¹⁰⁾ LSJ, s.v. πανήγυρις I.1.

¹¹⁾ See P. J. Meier, "Agones", *RE* 1 (1894) 842.26–43.

reason is the belief that *ἀγών* has an archaic meaning 'assembly' elsewhere in the classical period. Below, I will examine those occurrences of *ἀγών* which are usually given the meaning 'assembly'.

ναυσὶ δ' οὔτε πεζῶς ἰών <κεν> εὖροις
ἐς Ἑπερβορέων ἀγῶνα θαυμαστὰν ὁδόν.

(Pind. *Pyth.* 10.30 Snell⁴)

Fraenkel, in his comment on Aesch. *Ag.* 845, cites this occurrence of *ἀγών* as an example of the meaning 'assembly'; several editors of Pindar concur.¹²) Other editors, including Boeckh, are more specific with 'festal assembly'.¹³) Still other scholars see an agonistic element, as LSJ, s. v. *ἀγών* I. 1, sub-heading "esp. *assembly met to see games*"; and Bowra, who translates *ἀγῶνα* "games".¹⁴)

Why this variety of opinion? Because Pindar gives no description of an *ἀγών* of the Hyperboreans, rather, he goes on to tell of a visit Perseus once made to their land. Since the Hyperboreans are a mythical people, nothing can be ascertained about their *ἀγῶνες*; there is, however, nothing in the verbal context—*ἐς Ἑπερβορέων ἀγῶνα*—to suggest that *ἀγῶνα* means 'assembly' and not 'games, contest(s)', the usual meaning of *ἀγών* in Pindar.¹⁵) Games are a suitable activity for the Hyperboreans, the model of a blessed people.¹⁶) More importantly, the meaning 'games, contest(s)' is supported by the ode itself: Pindar sings here of a man who has won prizes at *ἀγῶνες*, and seen his son win a crown at the Pythian *ἀγών*. This man has reached the pinnacle of human happiness—as far as human *ἀγῶνες* are concerned; he cannot, however, attain the level of happiness which exists in the *ἀγών*, 'games', of the blessed.

καθημέν|ο : τῶγῶνος : Ἀνθεστηρίο|ισιν : καὶ
Ἡρακλέοισιν : | καὶ Δίοισιν

(SIG 38.31–34)

¹²) Fraenkel (above, note 3) II, 388; eds. of Pindar: Gildersleeve (1885) 353, Mezger (1880) 257, Fennell (1863) 263. Cf. W. J. Slater, *Lexicon to Pindar* (Berlin 1969) s. v. *ἀγών* a, "meeting place, gathering". This interpretation appears first in the Schol.: τὸ ἄθροισμα.

¹³) Boeckh (1821) II. 2, 335; Christ (1896) 219; Dissen-Schneidewin (1847) II, 353.

¹⁴) C. M. Bowra, tr., *The Odes of Pindar*, Penguin Books (Baltimore 1969) 22.

¹⁵) See Slater (above, note 12) s. v. *ἀγών* b, "athletic contest, games".

¹⁶) See W. K. C. Guthrie, *The Greeks and Their Gods*, Beacon Press (Boston 1950) 75.

Fraenkel cites ἀγῶνος in this inscription from Teos (V B.C.) as evidence that ἀγών = 'assembly' outside the Attic dialect.¹⁷⁾ To be sure, καθημέριον indicates that ἀγῶνος designates people gathered together. The question is, for what purpose are they gathered? The inscription limits ἀγῶνος to the Anthesteria, Heracleia, and Dia; very little is known about these festivals.¹⁸⁾ When one considers that at this time (1) religious festivals and athletic contests were closely associated,¹⁹⁾ and (2) one of the most common meanings of ἀγών was 'games, contest(s)', it is reasonable to conclude that these festivals included contests. Most commentators hold this opinion, e.g., Tod: "Ἀγών here = the people assembled to witness a contest."²⁰⁾ This occurrence, then, represents a transitional use between the Homeric meaning 'assembly' and the classical 'games, contest(s)'. It may be little more than the employment of a Homeric verbal collocation (see above, p. 2) for the sake of intensity or profundity, 'when the games sit down (= take place)'.

ἔρα[ται] δέ μο[ι]
γλῶσσα μέλιτος ἄγον γλυκὴν [υυ--
ἀγῶνα Λοξία{ι} καταβάντ' εὐρὸν
ἐν θεῶν ξενία.

(Pind. *Pae.* 6.58–61 Snell⁴⁾)

S. L. Radt, in his edition of *Paean* 6, interprets ἀγῶνα in line 60 as "versammelte Menge, Versammlungsplatz"; W. J. Slater adopts this meaning in his *Lexicon to Pindar*.²¹⁾ Previous scholars, however, understood ἀγῶνα as 'place of contest, lists, arena'.²²⁾

¹⁷⁾ Fraenkel (above, note 3) II, 388, cites it according to Tod's collection, *A Selection of Greek Historical Inscriptions*, I (Oxford 1946²⁾ No. 23, and "L-S Addenda, p. 2044" (now LSJ *Suppl.*, s.v. ἀγών), which adds two new citations, SIG 38.32 and IG V 2, 113, to LSJ, s.v. ἀγών I. 1, end, "esp. *assembly met to see games*". IG V 2, 113 (Tegea, V B.C.) awards *prohedria* to a certain family ἐπὶ τῷ ἐτέρῳ ἀγῶνι. Here the verbal context does not require 'assembly (met to see games)', and scholars who have discussed this occurrence consistently give ἀγῶνι the meaning 'games, contest(s)' (R. Meister, *SDAW* [1910] 163; W. Wilhelm, *MDAI(A)* 31 [1906] 229; G. Mendel, *BCH* 27 [1901] 267).

¹⁸⁾ See M. P. Nilsson, *Griechische Feste* (Leipzig 1906) 267–68, 453.

¹⁹⁾ See E. N. Gardiner, *Athletics of the Ancient World* (Oxford 1930) 32–33.

²⁰⁾ Tod (above, note 17) 30; Boeckh in *CIG*, II, 631, who is quoted by Schwyzer, *DGE*, 347, and Dittenberger, *SIG*, I, 42. Cf. also note 17 above.

²¹⁾ S. L. Radt, *Pindars zweiter und sechster Paian* (Amsterdam 1958) 130; W. J. Slater (above, note 12) s.v. ἀγών a, "meeting place, gathering".

²²⁾ Eds. of Pindar: Farnell (1930–32) II, 403–04; Puech (1922–23) IV, 121; Sandys (1912²⁾ 537; cf. Grenfell and Hunt in *P.Oxy.* 5 (1908) No. 841.

Although *Paeon* 6 exists only in fragmentary form (on a papyrus published in 1908), the general context is clear: it was written for the Theoxenia at Delphi, a festival about which little is known. There was a leek show in which the person who brought the largest leek was awarded a place at the table during the ritual meal.²³⁾ No doubt there were other contests, so one of the current meanings of *ἀγών*, either 'games, contest(s)', or 'place of contest, lists, arena', seems appropriate.²⁴⁾ Radt, however, thinks that there is evidence in the paeon itself that *ἀγῶνα* means 'assembly'.²⁵⁾ This evidence consists of his interpretation of lines 7–10, which, he argues, prove that the chorus singing the paeon is not going to compete. Besides the fact that the meaning of lines 7–10 is disputed,²⁶⁾ Radt fails to see that this issue is only partially relevant to the meaning of *ἀγῶνα*; there may be other contests at the festival, which would then be properly termed 'games' as a whole; or the chorus may enter the place normally designated 'arena', whether it actually contests there or not. His interpretation of lines 7–10—even if correct—would rule out only the meaning '(single) contest, event', a meaning already unlikely because of the adjective *εὐρόν*.

ἔπνον ἀ]πὸ γλεφάρων σκεδ[α]σεῖ γλυκύν
]ς δέ μ' ἄγει πεδ' ἀγῶν' ἴμεν
ἄχι μάλιστα κόμ[αν ξ]ανθὰν τινάξω·
].σχ[ἀπ]αλοὶ πόδες
(Alcm. 3, fr. 1.7–10 Page)

Scholars differ about the meaning of *ἀγῶνα* in line 8: some understand it as 'gathering, assembly', others as 'contest'.²⁷⁾ The problem here is the same as in the previous example: the text is fragmentary (papyrus publ. 1957), and the event it refers to is obscure. The poem is a maiden song, probably sung at a Spartan festival in

²³⁾ See Nilsson (above, note 18) 160–62; there was a contest at the Theoxenia at Pellene (Paus. 7.24.4).

²⁴⁾ See Slater (above, note 12) s.v. *ἀγών* b, "athletic contest, games", and c, "place of contest".

²⁵⁾ Radt (above, note 21) 109–11.

²⁶⁾ For a recent discussion, see A. Hoekstra, "The Absence of the Aeginetans: On the Interpretation of Pindar's Sixth Paeon", *Mnemosyne* 4th Ser., 15 (1962) 8–9.

²⁷⁾ For 'assembly', see B. Marzullo, *Philologus* 108 (1964) 198, n. 3; W. Peek, *Philologus* 104 (1960) 167; Lobel in *P.Oxy.* 24 (1957) 13; for 'contest', see T. G. Rosenmeyer, *GRBS* 7 (1966) 336; A. Garzya, *Maia* 14 (1962) 209, n. 2; C. M. Bowra, *Greek Lyric Poetry* (Oxford 1961²) 33; W. S. Barrett, *Gnomon* 33 (1961) 683; A. Gianni, *RIL* 93 (1959) 191.

honor of Hera.²⁸⁾ One of the classical meanings of *ἀγών*, 'games', 'place of contest', etc., is the natural choice, but the question of whether or not the chorus itself competes seems to have had some influence.²⁹⁾ This, as in the above example, affects only the meaning 'contest, event'; it is irrelevant as far as the meaning 'assembly' is concerned.

All the above occurrences of *ἀγών* have a number of things in common. All have a deficiency in context, in as much as the events they refer to are obscure for one reason or other: either the events are fictional, or there is a lack of historical knowledge about them, or they are mentioned in fragmentary texts. Consequently, scholars have disagreed about the meaning to be assigned to *ἀγών* in each instance, although there seems to be a tendency in recent scholarship to prefer the archaic 'assembly'. Nevertheless, in each instance, a meaning of *ἀγών* current at the time of the occurrence is appropriate to the context as it is (*SIG* 38.32 is only a partial exception). Considering that there is not one example of *ἀγών* meaning 'assembly' in general, or designating any kind of assembly other than one at which contests would normally be expected, one must conclude that *ἀγών* was never used in the classical period with an archaic sense, 'assembly'.

Epilog. Once an error becomes established, it has a tendency to generate new errors: the opinion that *ἀγών* = 'assembly' has not only produced misinterpretations of newly discovered texts, but has even produced a new text:

τιν' ἀνδρῶν γὰρ τοσόνδ' ἐθαύμασαν
θεοὶ καὶ ξυνέστιοι †πόλεως†
πολύβατός τ' ἀγὼν βροτῶν,
ἴσον τότε Ὀιδίπουν τίον
τὰν ἀρπαξάνδραν
κῆρ' ἀφελόντα χώρας;

(Aesch. *Sept.* 772–77 Page)

The words *πολύβατός* and *ἀγὼν* in line 774 are emendations of the manuscript reading. In 1823, Blomfield suggested *πολύβατός* for *πολύβοτός*, and in 1863, Weil suggested *ἀγὼν* for *αἰὼν*, commenting: "Iunge πόλεος ἀγὼν, i. e. ἀγορά, locus ubi homines conveniunt."³⁰⁾

²⁸⁾ See Bowra (above, note 27) 34; on this festival, see Nilsson (above, note 18) 46.

²⁹⁾ Cf. Rosenmeyer (above, note 27) 336; Gianni (above, note 27) 191.

³⁰⁾ C. J. Blomfield, *Aeschyli Septem contra Thebas* (Leipzig 1823) 71; H. Weil, *Aeschyli quae supersunt tragoediae*, II.1.: *Septem contra Thebas* (Gießen 1862) 83.

Many editors accept these emendations, including the interpretation of *ἀγών* as *ἀγορά*, 'assembly',³¹⁾ although some keep the MS reading.³²⁾ If the conclusion offered above is correct, that no sound evidence exists for *ἀγών* = 'assembly' in the classical period, then Weil's emendation must be rejected, in so far as it is based on a misconception about the meaning of *ἀγών*.

One may, however, find the reading *πολύβατός τ' ἀγών* attractive on grounds other than the meaning of *ἀγών*, 'assembly'.³³⁾ If one does, current meanings of *ἀγών*, 'games, contests' or 'place of contest, lists, arena' make good sense: after Oedipus conquered the Sphinx, victory games were held in his honor! Curiously, an emendation based on an error has something in its favor, when considered in light of current 5th c. meanings of *ἀγών*.

ἐμπεδολεκαρύταινα (Com. adesp. fr. 55 Dem.)

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August Nauck hatte in seinen berühmten „Bemerkungen zu Kock Comicorum Atticorum Fragm(enta)“ ein neues Wort für die Komödie aus Eustathios eruiert, welches er wohl wegen seiner ungewöhnlichen Form mit einem Fragezeichen versehen hat¹⁾: „Von Wörtern die aus der Werkstatt der Komödie hervorgegangen zu sein scheinen, möchte ich nachtragen: . . . ἐμπεδολεκαρύταινα (?) Eust. Od. p. 1599, 51“.

Eustathios bespricht aus Anlaß der Form *θείαινα* (θ 341) eine Reihe von Nomina auf -*αινα* und schließt mit der Bemerkung (p. 1599, 50): *ἀπέουκε δὲ αὐτῆς τῷ τῆς παραγωγῆς τρόπῳ καὶ ἡ παρὰ τῷ κωμικῷ* (Ar. Equ. 1091) *ἀρύταινα, ἐκ τοῦ ἀρύτω ἤγουν ἀρύω γινόμενη. ἔστι δ' αὐτῆ λεκανίδος εἰδός τι, ὡς δηλοῖ ὁ κατὰ γυναικὸς κωμι-*

³¹⁾ Page (1972) 75; Italie (1950) 107; Groeneboom (1938) 60, 216; Wecklein (1902) 77. Cf. Italie-Radt (above, note 1) s.v. *ἀγών* 1, "contio".

³²⁾ Murray (1955²) 186; Untersteiner (1946) II, 82; Wilamowitz (1914) 112. Cf. E. Degani, *Aión da Omero ad Aristotle*, Univ. di Padova, Pubbl. della Fac. di Lett. e Filosof. 37 (Padua 1961) 60.

³³⁾ E.g., (1) the comment in the Schol. Pal., *ὁ ὑπὸ πολλῶν ἐμβατενόμενος ἀνδρῶν* (but see E. Degani, *RCCM* 5 [1963] 288–89), (2) the difficulty of understanding *πολύβοτός τ' αἰών* (see Groeneboom's ed. [1938] 216), (3) possible confusion of *ΑΓΩΝ* and *ΑΙΩΝ* (cf. the opposite confusion at Aesch. *Ag.* 1148).

¹⁾ *Mélanges Gréco-Romains* 6 (1892) 180.