

# BROTHERS FIGHTING TOGETHER IN THE ILIAD

## I

We find in the Iliad numerous pairs of brothers (or half-brothers on the father's side, or first cousins on the father's side) fighting together on foot or in the combination of *charioteer-paraibates*<sup>1</sup>). And this is not confined to the men who are said to have taken part in the Trojan war, but it embraces the "mythical world of the past"<sup>2</sup>), that of the demigods<sup>3</sup>), the rivers<sup>4</sup>) and even the gods<sup>5</sup>).

Moreover, if we turn to the leaders of the various groups of Greeks and Trojans, as given in book II, we find that a

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1) Such for example are: Ajax Telamonius and Teucer (the Αἴαντες, cf. p. 291), Mynes and Epistrophus (II 692 f.), Phegeus and Idæus (V 10 f.), Echemon and Chromios (V 159 f.), Krethon and Orsilochus (V 542 f.), Aesepus and Pedasus (VI 21 f.), Hector and Alexander (VI 514 f., cf. VII 1 f.), Ascalaphus and Ialmenus (IX 82 f., cf. II 512), Peisandrus and Hippolochus (XI 122 f.), Hippodamus and Hypeirochus (XI 328 f.), Charops and Socus (XI 426 f.), the Molione (XI 750, 709 f.; XXIII 638 f.), Polybus, Agenor and Akamas (XI 59 f.), Helenos and Deiphobus (XII 94 f.), Archelochus and Akamas (XIV 463 f.), Hector and Cebriones (XII 86 f.), Deiphobus and Polites (XIII 533 f.), Podarces and Iphiclus (XIII 693 f.), Deiphobus and Helenos (XIII 780 f.), Ascanius and Morys (XIII 792 f.), Atymnius and Maris (XVI 317 f.), Antilochus and Thrasymedes (XVI 322; XVII 377 f.; XVII 705), Euphorbus and Polydamas (XVII 1 f.), Chromius and Aretus (XVII 492 f.), Aretus and Hector (XVII 516), Polydorus and Hector (XX 407 f.), Laogonus and Dardanus (XX 460 f.), or Deiphobus and Hector (XXII 226 f.).

2) Otos and Ephialtes (V 385 f.).

3) Castor and Pollux (III 237 f.).

4) Scamander calls out to his 'brother' Simois to help him against Achilles, XXI 308 f.:

„φιλε κασίγνητε, σθένος ἀνέρος ἀμφοτέρω περ σχῶμεν . . .” etc.

5) In VIII 438 f., for example, Poseidon is clearly performing the duties of charioteer for Zeus. In a lighter vein in V 355 f. it is Ares' chariot that carries wounded Aphrodite out of 'battle'. She calls on her κασίγνητος for help.

considerable number of these are stated to be brothers<sup>6</sup>), as indeed the leaders of the whole Greek army, Agamemnon and Menelaus, were brothers.

If an epic motif is so frequently repeated — blood relatives μέχρῃς ἀνεψιότητος fighting together in pairs — it is fair to deduce that some historical truth lies behind it. I suggest that this was part of the early organization of the Achaean armies, based on the solemn duty of the blood relatives to protect, and, failing that, to avenge and to secure a proper burial for the killed kinsman.

For when we first meet the Greeks the true power in their primitive society was the family, even though the family communities were part of a larger community, the *phyle* or tribe. And it was for the family, not for the whole community to deal with the shedder of blood<sup>7</sup>), just as it was for the family to bury its members. Such great religious and moral duties could not be overlooked in wartime, so those members of the family that could carry arms (usually men of the same generation, brothers and cousins) set out together into battle, so as to ensure that retribution and burial would not be overlooked. It is important to bear in mind that not only the man who committed a crime was cast out of the *genos*, but also he who failed to avenge the death of a kinsman<sup>8</sup>). Not till later do we meet with the blood-mony, the *ποινή*, in the place of blood and revenge, and this appears only twice in the Iliad, in what have been rightly considered "later" passages<sup>9</sup>). It is

6) E. g. among the Greeks: Ascalaphus and Ialmenus (II 511 f.), Schedius and Epistrophus (II 517 f.), Pheidippus and Antiphus (II 676 f.), Protesilaus and Podarkes (II 697 f.), Podaleirius and Machaon (II 729 f.); or among the Trojans and their allies: Archelochus and Akamas (II 822 f.), Adrestus and Amphios (II 830 f.), Hippothous and Pylaeus (II 840 f.), Mesthles and Antiphus (II 864 f.), Amphimachus and Nastes (II 870 f.).

7) Cf. Bury, *History of Greece* (London 1951), p. 53 f.

8) Cf. G. Glotz, *La Solidarité de la famille dans le Droit Criminel en Grèce*, Paris 1904, p. 34. Teucer, for example, was driven away from his home to found a distant colony, because he failed to avenge his brother's death (Eurip. *Helena* 91 f.; Paus. I 28. 11; VIII 15. 7). This danger may also be partly responsible for the excessive fury in the scenes where a brother is avenging a brother's death; cf. e. g. XI 248 f.; XI 427 f.; XVI 320 f. etc., and E. Bethe, *Homer* 3.47, Schmid-Stählin, *Griech. Lit.-Gesch.* I. 1, p. 105 and n. 3.

9) XVIII 497—508 and IX 632—6; cf. H. J. Wolf, *Traditio* 4 (1946) p. 31 f. and J. W. Jones, *Law and Legal Theory of the Greeks*, Oxford 1956, p. 257.

also important to remember that in historical times in Athens too the duty to avenge a killed kinsman and the right of *αἵδεσις* extended to the sons of the father's brothers (*μέχρῃς ἀνεψιότητος*).<sup>10)</sup>

That this practice of brothers fighting together is very old indeed, can be seen from such ancient forms of the dual as *Αἶαντε* and *Μολίονε*, which mean "Ajax and his brother", "Molion and his twin brother"<sup>11)</sup>.

If *Αἶαντε* means "Ajax and his brother", we have one further indication that the principle of brothers fighting together was transferred from fighting on foot (Ajax Telamonius even in our Iliad always fights on foot) to fighting with chariots, when the chariot was introduced into Greek warfare. For the charioteer, as we can see in Homer, was supposed to maintain the closest contact with his *paraibates*<sup>12)</sup>. The warrior ought to be able to rely fully on his charioteer for escape, if wounded, and for burial if mortally struck. In those early days this full reliance could be secured only by the tie and the duties of the blood, and not by any military discipline as later understood. Hence the epic motif, so often repeated in the Iliad, of a charioteer protecting, saving and avenging his *paraibates*, or of securing after a long struggle his body for burial.

There is only one later example in the epics, due no doubt to the shifting nature of the oral tradition<sup>13)</sup>, in which we find a means of recruiting warriors by lot from among men belonging to the same family. In Iliad XXIV 397 f. Hermes with his traditional duplicity tells Priam:

10) Cf. Ditt. Syll.<sup>3</sup> 111. 12; Lipsius, Att. Recht, p. 552 f.; Latte, Hermes 66 (1931) p. 32. It is interesting to note that in modern Greece too, wherever vendetta has survived, the brother is mainly responsible for avenging the death of a kinsman; see J. K. Campell, The social Institutions of a Greek shepherd Community (D. Phil. Oxon., unpublished), 1957, p. 238, just as in Odyssey 3.256 f. it is Menelaus and not Orestes who will kill Aegisthus to avenge the death of Agamemnon.

11) See J. Wackernagel, Kuhns Zeitschrift 23 (1877), p. 302 f.; Kühner-Gerth, Ausf. Grammatik d. gr. Sprache II 1, p. 70; Schwyzer, Griech. Grammatik II, p. 50 f.; D. Page, History and the Homeric Iliad, Univ. of California Press, 1959, p. 236.

12) See H. L. Lorimer, Homer and the Monuments, London 1950, p. 324 f.

13) On this see G. S. Kirk, The Songs of Homer, Cambridge 1962, p. 55 f. and C. M. Bowra in A. J. B. Wace — F. H. Stubbings, A Companion to Homer, London 1962, p. 38 f.

Μυρμιδόνων δ' ἔξειμι, πατήρ δέ μοί ἐστι Πολύκτωρ.  
 ἀφνειὸς μὲν ὃ γ' ἐστί, γέρων δὲ δὴ ὡς σύ περ ὦδε,  
 ἔξ δέ οἱ υἱεὺς ἕασιν, ἐγὼ δέ οἱ ἑβδομὸς εἰμι.  
 τῶν μέτα παλλόμενος κλήρω λάχον ἐνθάδ' ἔπρασθαι,  
 νῦν δ' ἤλθον πεδίοι' ἀπὸ νηῶν . . .

Here the duties of the blood have been overlooked. But apart from the fact that the whole of book XXIV has rightly been considered "late" <sup>14</sup>), this particular passage can be proved late on linguistic grounds <sup>15</sup>), and apparently belongs to a period when the *genos* had lost its early solidarity and the common blood its religious and moral significance <sup>16</sup>).

In view of what has been said about the pairs of blood relatives fighting together, the theory that Greek epic poetry originated in short descriptions of single combats (short *aristeiai*) ending with the victory of a famous hero over a significant opponent <sup>17</sup>) is untenable. No doubt epic poetry came to describe single combats, as can be seen from the *aristeiai* of Diomedes (V), Agamemnon (XI), Menelaus (XVII) and the duels between Menelaus and Paris (III) and Hector and Ajax (VII) in the Iliad. But the duel can hardly have been the original form of fighting that gave rise to the epics, since the figure of the avenger is omitted. The appearance of Deiphobus and the role he plays in book XII (226 f., especially 294 f.), in the greatest and only single-combat which is concluded in the Iliad (the fight between Achilles and Hector), betray that no matter how much the whole book was changed or rehandled in the course of the oral tradition, the "brother" was originally there to help Hector and to try to avenge his death.

14) What has not, as far as I know, been observed in dating book XXIV, is that only there in the Homeric epics we find *λύτρα* offered for a dead body. All other epic motives, which appear fully developed in parts of the Iliad, reappear in kernel more than once (e. g. the *menis* motif, the struggle over a dead body etc.). *Λύτρα* for a dead body never recur, and this points to a date of composition after "epic" fighting had stopped. *Λύτρα* for a living man is, of-course, an other matter; cf. e. g. X 378 f.; XI 122 f. etc.

15) τῶν μέτα of line 400 is a construction we find nowhere else in the Iliad; cf. D. B. Monro, Homer, Iliad, on XXIV. 400.

16) On Nestor's isolated and probably "late" advice; κρῖν' ἀνδρας κατὰ φύλα, κατὰ φρήτρας (II 363 f.), see A. Andrews, Phratries in Homer, Hermes 89 (1961), p. 129 f.

17) W. Jaeger, Paideia, Berlin 1936, <sup>2</sup> p. 74.

This is not the place to discuss the single-combat of Paris and Menelaus in book III. There are many problems connected with it and many reasons for which it has been considered "late", confused or deeply interpolated<sup>18)</sup>. One more reason supporting the view that the duel belongs to a "late" date is the fact that neither Agamemnon nor Hector, the brothers of Menelaus and Paris, would ever have agreed to a combat (far less arranged the details) in which the killer of their brother could go unpunished. Only in days after the solidarity of the ancient family had been shaken and the duty attached to the common blood had lost its power is such a duel conceivable<sup>19)</sup>.

## II

Let us now turn to another important phenomenon: the acceptance into a household of a suppliant, who had left his own land because of some crime, especially because of blood he had shed. These men appear to have enjoyed the rights and shared the duties of the new *genos*, under whose roof they came. The head of the family, who was responsible to the gods<sup>20)</sup>, must have seen to that, when accepting those suppliants under his roof.

Phoenix, the trusted *δπάων* of Peleus<sup>21)</sup>, is one of those outcasts who, having insulted his father's concubine, came, as he tells us, to Achilles' father,

ὁ δέ με πρόφρων ὑπέδεκτο,  
καί μ' ἐφίλησ', ὡς εἶτε πατήρ ὃν παῖδα φιλήσῃ  
μοῦνον τηλύγετον πολλοῖσιν ἐπὶ κτεάτεσσιν,  
καί μ' ἀφνειὸν ἔθηκε, πολὺν δέ μοι ὠπασε λαόν.<sup>22)</sup>

18) See G. S. Kirk, *The Songs of Homer*, Cambridge 1962, p. 191; F. K. Ameis, *Anhang zu Homers Ilias*, Leipzig 1896, I p. 156f.; H. L. Lorimer, *Homer and the Monuments*, p. 188 f.

19) The Schol. Genav. on Iliad III 69, feeling how ungreeks all that was said: βαρβαρικὸν τὸ μονομαχεῖν; cf. Herod. V 1. 8; VII 104; IX 4. 8; Diod. V 28. 5; 29. 2; 39. 6.

20) See G. Busolt, *Griech. Staatskunde* (Handb. d. Altertumswiss. IV. I. 1), p. 954 f.

21) XXIII 360.

22) IX 480f. At some stage of the epic tradition Phoenix must have appeared as the charioteer of Peleus (an office entrusted only to men of the same *genos*, as we saw), hence the epithet *ἱππηλάτα Φοῖνιξ* (XIX 311), and possibly the fact that he was asked to watch the *τέρματα* at the chariot-race (XXIII 360).

Epeigeus is another example, who having killed his cousin in Boudeion came as a suppliant to Peleus and Thetis (ἐκέτευσσε), was made a member of their household, and then sent to Troy with Achilles<sup>23</sup>). A third example is Lycophron, the son of Mastor, who killed a man at Cythera and then took refuge in the house of Telamon. At his death Ajax cried out to Teucer:

„Τεῦκρε πέπον, δὴ νῶν ἀπέκτατο πιστὸς ἑταῖρος  
Μαστορίδης, ὃν νῶι Κυθηρόθεν ἔνδον ἐόντα  
ἶσα φίλοισι τοκεῦσιν ἐτίομεν ἐν μεγάρουσιν.”<sup>24</sup>)

A further instance is Medon, the νόθος son of Oileus, the half-brother of Ajax, who:

ἔβαιεν  
ἐν Φυλάκῃ γαίης ἀπο πατρίδος, ἄνδρα κατακτὰς  
γνωτὸν μητρυιῆς Ἐριώπιδος, ἣν ἔχ' Ὀιλεύς.<sup>25</sup>)

In XIII 693, at the battle of the ships, Medon is fighting together with Podarkes (the son of Iphiclus and brother of Protesilaus), chief of the contingent from Phylace (cf. II 704), therefore together with a man of the same genus under whose roof he had taken refuge. Protesilaus, the elder brother of Medon, had already been killed when disembarking from his ship (II 698), so the man who shared the obligations of Medon's genus takes the place of the brother and fights beside the surviving leader<sup>26</sup>). In the *Odyssey* too we meet with several such instances<sup>27</sup>).

23) XVI 570 f. It is significant that when he was killed Patroclus, another outcast member of the same household, was the man who avenged his death (XVI 581 f.). The primitive weapons, the *χερμάδια*, which are used show how old the origin of the whole passage is.

24) XV 437 f.

25) XV 334 f., cf. XIII 695 f.

26) What a usual thing the arrival and acceptance of an outcast must have been in Mycenaean times can be seen by the fact that the scene ended in becoming an epic simile. Cf. XXIV 480 f.

ὡς δ' ὅτ' ἂν ἄνδρ' ἄτη πυκινὴ λάβῃ, ὅς τ' ἐνὶ πάτρῃ  
φῶτα κατακτείνας ἄλλων ἐξέικετο δῆμον,  
ἄνδρὸς ἐς ἀφνειοῦ, θάμβος δ' ἔχει εἰσορόωντας,  
ὡς Ἀχιλεὺς θάμβησεν ἰδὼν Πηραμον θεοειδῆ etc.

27) E. g. 14.379 f.; 15.223 f.; 15.272 f. etc. Others, who are not outcasts, but who are treated as true blood-relatives, because they lived under the same roof, are Imbrios (XIII 170 f.), Alcahoos (XIII 436 f.) and Dolope (XV 550 f.). The epic expressions ἔνδον ἐόντα (XV 438), ἐν μεγά-

But the most important case in the whole epic tradition is undoubtedly Patroclus. As a child he had accidentally killed the son of Amphidamas, and this obliged him to leave his homeland and to come to Phthia, where Peleus accepted him into his household and brought him up ἐνδοικῶς<sup>28)</sup>.

Patroclus must have appeared at some stage of the epic tradition as the charioteer of Achilles, a function which, as we saw, was entrusted to men of the same "family". The unique epithets ἱππεῦ and ἱπποκέλευθε, both confined to Patroclus and found nowhere else in the Greek language<sup>29)</sup>, point in that direction. Moreover XVII 475 f.:

τίς γάρ τοι Ἀχαιῶν ἄλλος ὁμοῖος  
ἱππων ἀθανάτων ἐχέμεν δμῆσιν τε μένος τε,  
εἰ μὴ Πάτροκλος, θεόσφιν μῆστωρ ἀτάλαντος,  
ζῶδς ἐών· νῦν αὖ θάνατος καὶ μοῖρα κίχάνει . . . ,

XXIII 280 f.

τοῖου γὰρ σθένος ἐσθλὸν ἀπώλεσαν (sc. Achill. horses)  
ἠπίου, ὃ σφωιν μάλα πολλάκις ὑγρὸν ἔλαιον  
χαιτῶν κατέχευε, λοέσσας ὕδατι λευκῆ·  
τὸν τῷ γ' ἔσταότες πενθειέτον, οὐδεὶ δέ σφιν  
καῖται ἐρηρέδαται, τῷ δ' ἔστατον ἀχτυμένω κῆρ,  
ἠνιόχοιο,

and the celebrated lines XVII 426 f. cannot be otherwise explained<sup>30)</sup>. But what is of even greater significance as regards the status of Patroclus in the household of Peleus, is the reference to a common burial with Achilles (XXIII 92 f.; XXIII 243 f., Odyssey 24,77 f.). In the early Greek world this was inconceivable for men belonging to a different *genos*<sup>31)</sup>, no

ροισιν (XV 439), δόμοις ἐνι (XIII 466) etc. are significant as indicating the "common roof" under which the "extended family" lived, and which seems to have brought about the rights and the duties of the blood.

28) XXIII 82 f.

29) See D. Page, *History and the Homeric Iliad*, p. 286 n. 90.

30) The "later" elements found there (cf. Wilamowitz, *Ilias und Homer*, p. 146) are certainly due to the nature of the oral tradition. That Patroclus was Achilles' charioteer, has been, of-course, already suggested; cf. Ebeling, *Lex. Homericum* s. v. Πάτροκλος: Patroclus solebat Achillis ἠνιόχος esse.

31) This should not be confused with the exceptional cases we know from historical times, when warriors were buried on the battlefield together in a *polyandreion* (e. g. at Marathon).

matter how many "later" or how many "romantic" elements may have been introduced or read into the relevant passages.

These important facts — that Patroclus, having come as a suppliant to Peleus, was received by him in his household and brought up there, that he was made charioteer to Achilles, and that a common burial with Achilles was considered possible — indicate that Patroclus shared the rights and the duties of Achilles' *genos*, and first of all the right of support against any physical assault. For the duty of 'active solidarity'<sup>32</sup>, i. e. "to 'retrieve' the blood" of a kinsman from the person of his violator and to secure an honourable burial for the body, was as we saw the most solemn duty of the family, and had a direct bearing on the honour of the member on whom this duty was laid<sup>33</sup>. And this is clearly the kernel of Achilles' fury for revenge at Patroclus' death, a grave religious duty with direct reflection on the honour of the hero and his whole house, the one thing powerful enough to move him to abandon his bitter *menis*.

It is at a later stage of Greek history that we meet with the formation of the *hetaireiai*, those groups of men of the same social standing and age bound by oath or other religious obligations to promote common social interests and especially to secure mutual assistance in peacetime or in battle<sup>34</sup>. The *hetaireiai* are to a great extent responsible for the weakening, indeed the breaking down of the ancient powers of the *genos*<sup>35</sup>.

When at a time apparently far removed from its origins the *hetairoi*<sup>36</sup> were drawn into the epic tradition they must

32) See G. Glotz, *La Solidarité de la Famille dans le Droit Criminel en Grèce*, chap. vi.

33) In all probability the *ἔται* of the Homeric epics are the members of the "extended family". They pursued murderers (e. g. IX 464; 15.273), performed burials, attended weddings and gathered round the head of the family in a crisis; cf. A. Andrews, *Hermes* 89 (1961) p. 135. The *ἔται* seem to have been later confused with the *ἑταῖροι* (see Andrews, l. c. p. 134). It is interesting to see how the good epic formula *κασίγνητοί τε ἔται τε* (VI 456 f. etc.) degenerated into *κασίγνητοί θ' ἑταῖροι τε* (XXIV. 793).

34) See Latte, *Hermes* 66 (1931), p. 32 f.

35) See Latte, l. c.

36) The word *e qe ta* found on a Linear B tablet, and which has been explained as *ἑταῖρος* (cf. L. R. Palmer, *Achaean and Indo-Europeans*, Oxford 1955 p. 20 f.) is far too uncertain and controversial to affect the older arguments. The form *ἑταῖρος* is certainly post-Mycenaean; cf. G. S. Kirk, *The Songs of Homer*, p. 149.



have overlapped with, and often supplanted, a number of the older combinations of fighting brothers, or of pairs of warriors joined together by the bond of a common *genos* or household. These pairs it appears came then to be seen mainly, and later exclusively, as *betairoi*, especially if they were not real *kasi-gnetoi*, as was the case of Achilles and Patroclus. For the ancient bond of the "greater family" became obsolete when the power of the state was consolidated, cities with a large population emerged, the ancient religious beliefs lost their power and the character of Greek law shifted from religious to civil.

It appears that the pair Achilles-Patroclus was one of those, which were also drawn into the orbit of the *betairoi*, and later, when the heroic fighting qualities of the *betaireiai* diminished, their bond was interpreted as that of warm friendship between men who grew up together, or even as that of lovers<sup>37</sup>), because later ages read into the great devotion and self-sacrifice of Achilles their own modes of thought and feeling.

But is not the kernel of another proverbial friendship in Greek mythology, that of Orestes and Pylades, the same as that of Achilles and Patroclus? Was not Orestes also an outcast, received and brought up "under the same roof" as Pylades? The religious rights and the duties of the house of Strophius bound them together for mutual support in danger, and this religious duty was later forgotten and their bond seen simply as great friendship.

So, if we are to grasp the full fury of Achilles in avenging the death of Patroclus and in securing an honourable burial for his body, we must delve deep into the primitive, fierce duty of the blood, or the "house"<sup>38</sup>), to avenge the death of a kinsman, the only force powerful enough to sway a hero of the magnitude of Achilles to abandon his *menis* (the wounded *arete* that meant so much to the heroic nobility) and to rejoin battle. If later generations refashioned that so as to fit their own conceptions of a *betairos*, a friend or a lover, this is due to the shifting nature of the oral tradition, which shaped the Iliad and the Odyssey.

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37) That is how Aeschylus interpreted the friendship of Achilles and Patroclus in the *Μυρμιδόνες* (cf. Schmid-Stählin, Griech. Lit.Gesch. I. i. p. 63 n. 8). See also Theocr. 29. 3: Ἀχιλλεῖοι φίλοι.

38) Cf. Od. 15. 273 πολλοὶ δὲ κασίγνητοὶ τε ἔται τε, etc.