

THE TWO AJAXES AND THE TWO KRṢṆAS

In 1957 Sir Denys Page revived Jakob Wackernagel's hypothesis¹) that the dual form Αἴαντε (used twenty-two times in the *Iliad*) signifies, not 'Telamonian Ajax and Oilean Ajax', but rather 'Telamonian Ajax and his brother²) Teucer'.

To this argument two different sorts of objections can be raised. First, one could object that it is inherently implausible that two individuals A and B, not sharing the same name, should (even if closely related) be referred to as 'the two A's'. Second, one might waive the question of inherent plausibility but argue that the particular details of the passages in question run counter to this interpretation.

Page addresses himself to the second of these two categories of objection with his usual skill. Yet, since the data are admittedly difficult³), one is unlikely to be convinced unless first persuaded that the first objection has been satisfactorily laid to rest.

Parallel passages would provide satisfactory evidence, but the Homeric poems offer only *Iliad* 11.709 and 750, Μολίονε, which probably means 'Molion and his brother⁴)'. One must look farther afield, to Indian epic.

A reason why Wackernagel's suggestion has met with less than full acceptance⁵) is that the parallels which have been adduced in its support are not the strongest ones available⁶).

1) Wackernagel's hypothesis originally appeared in *Zum homerischen dual*, *Zeitschrift für vergleichende Sprachforschung* 23 (1877) 302–310, reprinted in his *Kleine Schriften*, Göttingen 1953 (²1969), 538–546. Page took up the theory in *History and the Homeric Iliad*, Berkeley and Los Angeles 1959, 235–238. 272 f. n. 48–52; delivered as the Sather Classical lectures at the University of California at Berkeley, Oct./Nov. 1957.

2) Or possibly half-brother: Page 272 n. 49. But see *Iliad* 12.371.

3) E.g. *Iliad* 13.313, Αἴαντές τε δῶυ Τεῦκρός θ' (though here we are dealing with plural rather than dual); 12.335, Αἴαντε δῶυ . . . Τεῦκρόν τε. See Page 272 f. n. 52.

4) Noted by Page 236. C. J. Ruijgh, *Sur le nom de Poséidon et sur les noms en -ᾱ-Φον-, -ἰ-Φον*, *Revue des Études Grecques* 80 (1967) 15, considers that neither of the Μολίονε was named Molion, because we are told (*Iliad* 11. 750) that the Molions were sons of Aktor, and we are also told (*Iliad* 2.621) that Kteatos and Eurytos are sons of Aktor. But Ruijgh's argument requires us to presume that Aktor cannot have had more than two sons; for this presumption there is no evidence.

5) Peter Von der Mühl, for example, is very cautious in his comments on the suggestion in his essay *Der Große Aias* (delivered 1930), reprinted in his *Ausgewählte Kleine Schriften*, Basel 1976, 435–472, esp. 460 f.

6) Wackernagel's principal example in his original paper (above, n. 1), 308, was ruháva Váruṇas ca (RV VII 88.3a), 'we and Varuṇa [i. e., Varuṇa and I] got on

Indian epic provides a clearer parallel. In the *Mahābhārata* the deity Kṛṣṇa and his mortal companion Arjuna are referred to frequently (eighty-five times, according to Sorensen⁷) and unmistakably as 'the two Kṛṣṇas' (= Kṛṣṇau, dual⁸).

There follow a few illustrations of this practice, transliterated into Roman characters and literally translated into English⁹.

1.214.32:

upasr̥ṣṭam tu tam kṛṣṇau bhrājamānam dvijottamam/
arjuno vāsudevaśca tūrṇam utpatya tasthatuḥ//

The two Kṛṣṇas, Arjuna and the son of Vasudeva, quickly rose to greet that shining best of brahmans [as he] approached, and stood there¹⁰).

1.218.19–20:

kṛṣṇābhyāṃ rakṣitam dṛṣṭvā tam ca dāvam ahamkṛtāḥ/
samutpetur athākāśam suparnādyāḥ patatrinah//
garuḍā vajrasadṛśaiḥ pakṣatuṅḍanakhais tathā/
prahartukāmāḥ sampetur ākāśāt kṛṣṇapāṇḍavau//

And seeing that forest fire protected by the two Kṛṣṇas, the proud Garuḍas, best of well-winged birds, then flew up together to the sky; and eager to attack with their thunderbolt-like wings, beaks and claws, they swooped from the sky at Kṛṣṇa and the son of Paṇḍu.

1.219.3:

tam dāvam samudikṣantaḥ kṛṣṇau cābhyudyatāyudhau/
utpātanaḍaśabdena samtrāsītā ivābhavan//

Carefully watching that forest fire and the two Kṛṣṇas with their weapons raised, the [forest-dwellers] were set all a-trembling, so to speak, by the sound of the prodigious noise.

1.225.5:

bhagavān api tigmāmsuḥ samiddham khāṇḍavam vanam/
dadāha saha kṛṣṇābhyāṃ janayaṅ jagato 'bhayam//

And the hot-rayed Lord together with the two Kṛṣṇas burnt the kindled Khaṇḍava Forest, bringing about the peace of the world.

board.' In his *Altindische Grammatik* II 1, Göttingen 1905, 150 f. Wackernagel cited *dyāvā* [i. e., heaven and earth] in this connection. These are not close parallels. E. Schwyzer, *Griechische Grammatik* II (Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft), Munich³1966, 50 f., mentions *Mitrā* for the pair *Mitra* and *Varuṇa*; but Wackernagel (above, n. 1) 309 had dismissed this as „nichts ... als verkürzungen eines *Mitrā* *Varuṇā*“.

7) S. Sorensen, *An Index to the Names in the Mahabharata*, Delhi *et alibi* 1963 (reprint of 1904 edn.), pp. 425, 804. In three instances Sorensen indicates that the dual is found in only one of the major editions used by him; in nine other instances a stigma indicates critical misgivings.

8) This is a clear instance of the sort of divine or heroic *Helperpaare* discussed by Von der Mühl (above, n. 5) 454 ff.

9) The edition used is that by V. A. Sukthankar, Poona: Bhandarkar Research Institute 1933–66, 19 vols. in 20.

10) Cf. 1. 214.27

This evidence dispels the *a priori* objection that it is unreasonable to suppose an epic poet would employ the dual in such a way as Wackernagel suggested. The *a posteriori* objections are another matter. We do not believe we can improve on Page's attempts to meet them¹¹).

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