

to the *CEG* made in the chapters 1 and 2, we may turn to a discussion of their greater cultural, sociological, and historical context. The evidence indicates that on the one hand, both localised and inter-regional metrical networks existed in the first 150 years of epigram, and on the other, that there existed sporadic attestations that are best explained as innovative, rather than imitative outliers by nature.

## Archaic Metrical Networks

Classics has for some time been wading into the world of Network Theory, with Malkin the most recent detailed study dedicated to this phenomenon.<sup>365</sup> His claim that “No pan-Mediterranean Greek empire had ever existed in the archaic period . . . and the numerous Greek communities functioned as a decentralized network”, however, is a matter of contention.<sup>366</sup> While it is true that ‘Greece’ as an entity was decentralised at this time, it is equally true that ‘Greece’ as an entity is an anachronistic concept at such an early date. In the consideration of more concrete entities on a more limited scale, such as ‘Corinth and her colonies’, or ‘Crete’, degrees of centralisation in script, trade, laws, and material culture can in fact be found. Everything is a function of scale.

Network theory is a useful way of considering the development and spread of Greek epigram. Barney describes a network as “a structural condition whereby distinct points (‘nodes’) are related to one another by connections (‘ties’) that are typically multiple, intersecting, and often redundant”.<sup>367</sup> The key concept is that of connectivity, the relationship of one discreet area to

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<sup>365</sup> 2011. The title relates to the amount of connectivity between different parts of the ancient Greek world, even if it conjures up an image of what at best would be a very poor Disney ride. Increased connectivity causes a distortion in scale: if two things are well connected, they are ‘closer’ than two other things that are not, even if the actual distance in kilometres is the same. Malkin provides a useful framework for his argument as well as some background to the concept of Network Theory in the Classics. On island networks see Tully (2012), with bibliography.

<sup>366</sup> 2011: 3.

<sup>367</sup> Barney (2004): 2. cf. Malkin (2011): 25. I rely chiefly upon Malkin in discussing the terminology in this section.

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The term Ancient, or Archaic, Greece refers to the time three centuries before the classical age, between 800 B.C. and 500 B.C.—a relatively sophisticated period in world history. Archaic Greece saw advances in art, poetry and technology, but most of all it was the age in which the polis, or city-state, was invented. The polis became the defining feature of Greek political life for hundreds of years.

### **The Birth of the City-State**

During the so-called “Greek Dark Ages” before the Archaic period, people lived scattered throughout Greece in small farming villages. As they grew larger, these villages began to evolve. Some built walls. Most built a marketplace (an agora) and a community meeting place. They developed governments and organized their citizens according to some sort of constitution or set of laws. They raised armies and collected taxes. And every one of these city-states (known as poleis) was said to be protected by a particular god or goddess, to whom the citizens of the polis owed a great deal of reverence, respect and sacrifice. (Athens’s deity was Athena, for example; so was Sparta’s.)

### **Did You Know?**

Greek military leaders trained the heavily armed hoplite soldiers to fight in a massive formation called a phalanx: standing shoulder to shoulder, the men were protected by their neighbor's shield. This intimidating technique played an important role in the Persian Wars and helped the Greeks build their empire.

Though their citizens had in common what [Herodotus](#) called “the same stock and the same speech, our shared temples of the gods and religious rituals, our similar customs,” every Greek city-state was different. The largest, [Sparta](#), controlled about 300 square miles of territory; the smallest had just a few hundred people. However, by the dawn of the Archaic period in the seventh century B.C., the city-states had developed a number of common characteristics. They all had economies that were based on agriculture, not trade: For this reason, land was every city-state’s most valuable resource. Also, most had overthrown their hereditary kings, or basileus, and were ruled by a small number of wealthy aristocrats.

These people monopolized political power. (For example, they refused to let ordinary people serve on councils or assemblies.) They also monopolized the best farmland, and some even claimed to be descended from the gods. Because “the poor with their wives and children were enslaved to the rich and had no political rights,” [Aristotle](#) said, “there was conflict between the nobles and the people for a long time.”

### **Colonization**

Emigration was one way to relieve some of this tension. Land was the most important source of wealth in the city-states; it was also, obviously, in finite supply. The pressure of population growth pushed many men away from their home poleis and into sparsely populated areas around Greece and the Aegean. Between 750 B.C. and 600 B.C., Greek colonies sprang up from the Mediterranean to Asia Minor, from North Africa to the coast of the Black Sea. By the end of the seventh century B.C., there were more than 1,500 colonial poleis.

Each of these poleis was an independent city-state. In this way, the colonies of the Archaic period were different from other colonies we are familiar with: The people who lived there were not ruled by or bound to the city-states from which they came. The new poleis were self-governing and self-sufficient.

### **The Rise of the Tyrants**

As time passed and their populations grew, many of these agricultural city-states began to produce consumer goods such as pottery, cloth, wine and metalwork. Trade in these goods made some people—usually not members of the old aristocracy—very wealthy. These people resented the unchecked power of the oligarchs and banded together, sometimes with the aid of heavily-armed soldiers called hoplites, to put new leaders in charge.

These leaders were known as tyrants. Some tyrants turned out to be just as autocratic as the oligarchs they replaced, while others proved to be enlightened leaders. (Pheidon of Argos established an orderly system of weights and measures, for instance, while Theagenes of Megara brought running water to his city.) However, their rule did not last: The classical period brought with it a series of political reforms that created the system known as *demokratia*, or “rule by the people.”

another. Greek epigram was without any doubt a product of innovation, diffusion, and imitation. Ideas spread, formulae were adapted, and epigram became a characteristic sub-genre of epigraphy that outlived ancient Greece itself. These represent, however, discrete processes through time and were neither synchronous nor inherent facts from the outset. Where, why, and how this happened, however, are complex questions that require investigation.

I propose three ways of conceptualising pre-600 BCE epigram based upon the evidence at hand: local networks, inter-regional networks, and isolated innovation. A local network forms a discrete unit via artificial, but culturally distinct geographical, social, political, or religious boundaries (or more commonly a mixture of all these elements). In network theory it represents a node. For example, the island of Paros might form a discrete local network due to its clear terrestrial boundaries, whereas the entire region of Perachora would constitute a node due to its natural land boundaries, and its political and religious significance. An inter-regional network, on the other hand, is simply a tie between two local networks - Corinth and her colony Kerkyra, for example. There is an obvious blurring of boundaries between the two definitions. Do, for example, Mytilene and Methymna form a local network due to their situation on the rigidly defined island of Lesbos, or do they form an inter-regional network due their political status as separate Greek poleis? My inclination is towards the former and a victory for geographical regional connectivity over political, as we will see later on, but the argument is largely academic. The main point is the establishment or rejection of relationships and a keen awareness of scale. Finally, isolated innovation is simply a convenient term for those epigrams that appear isolated in their particular context. They are nodes without ties - there are not enough examples to talk about networks, nor can they be easily connected with more or less contemporaneous epigrams from other parts of the Greek world. It is possible that this is due to luck - we simply haven't found other such examples that did once upon a time exist. It is also possible that the composer received the idea of writing verse from elsewhere,

but came up with his or her own poem at the time of composition. It is the two former categories that will form the basis of this chapter, but where possible, examples of isolated innovation will be discussed.

## Poetic Background

The Archaic period was the *floruit* of Greek poetry, judging by the Greeks' assessment of themselves in the Hellenistic and Roman periods, at least, and by a clear bias in surviving poetry (replicated somewhat in the papyri record from Egypt). It is thus no surprise that in such an environment metrical inscriptions are found. What is noteworthy, however, is the lack of connectivity between the literary and epigraphic genres, aside from their poetic status, which we have already explored in the chapter three. Ties (relationships) both exist and are absent between the nodes, the discrete areas of examples represented in Map 1 (see below). Aside from Nestor's Cup, the epigrams are frequently individualistic and share little in the way of vocabulary and formula with their literary counterparts. Thus, if we were to add a different dimension and incorporate the literary corpus into the physical map there would be very little connectivity (few 'ties') between the physical and conceptual nodes, as we saw in chapter three. There are several alternate explanations behind this curious observation, and all impossible to verify. The first is a question of circulation. How many people had access to an Archilochus, a Sappho, or a Hesiod? How many of the people who did have access were of the type to scratch poems on cups or dedicate Apollos on Delos in metrical form? How much literary and/or oral poetry has been lost that might account for the lack of intertexts, and vice-versa? These are all interesting questions, yet all ultimately futile pursuits, on the extant evidence, at least.

Nevertheless, the literary context providing the backdrop for our inscriptions needs to be considered. Where intertexts are lacking, regionally attested poetry might still offer some inspiration behind the epigraphic pursuits. First we must acknowledge the well-known problems casting twisted dark shadows over the lives of the poets: apocryphal stories, inter-polis feuds, and later interpolations. The most striking feature to emerge from the lengthy list that follows is in the diversity of cities attested, something that is not commonly acknowledged. Bastions of Greek poetry are not found, excepting perhaps on Lesbos and in Sparta. A comparison between the locations of attested literary poetry and the early metrical inscriptions might be of some benefit to the investigation.<sup>368</sup>

The Archaic period was an exciting time period to exist in. Synoikicisms and evolving political ideas were two factors relating directly to the foundation and rise of the polis. With it came all the warfare, political turmoil, increased trade, and new opportunities afforded by cities, contested regional boundaries, overcrowding and the like. Against this painted backdrop sailed Archilochus from Paros to Thasos in the 7<sup>th</sup> c.<sup>369</sup> Solon pondered pestilent problems in sombre Athens in the early 6<sup>th</sup>. Alcaeus clashed with Pittacus and Sappho entertained her Lesbians.<sup>370</sup> Tyrtaeus and Alcman sat in Sparta.<sup>371</sup> One thousand faceless Homers wandered the landscape. The attested but long lost mythical aetiologies like the *Korinthiaka*, the *Naupactika*, and the *Heraklea*, likely coincided with the rise of the polis in this period. The Homer who was the poet of our *Iliad* possibly derived from the Troad, on one argument, given his favoured treatment of Aeneas and

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<sup>368</sup> Of course, the situation changes if we consider the courts of the tyrants who attracted poets from various places.

<sup>369</sup> Archilochus alludes to Gyges in *IEG* 19. and to an eclipse of the sun in *IEG* 122. These two references argue strongly for the eclipse being that of April 6<sup>th</sup>, 648. If correct, this represents our first fixed date in Greek lit. cf. Jacoby (1941): 97-109; Kivilo (2010): 111-19.

<sup>370</sup> Alcaeus in the time of Pittacus = c. 600 BC. Diogenes Laertius (1.75.79) says Pittacus flourished (this usually means someone was c. 40 years old) in *Ol.* 42 (612-609), then ruled for ten years, was retired for ten, and died in 570. See Lesky, 1996: 131 (still current); Kivilo, 2010: 195-200 (on Sappho, but the two were traditionally said to overlap). Sappho: The *Marmor Parium* (36) says she was exiled to Sicily between 604/3 and 596/5 at the time Critias I was archon in Athens. She was variously synchronised with Psammetichus (I or II), Alyattes, the Seven Sages, Alcaeus, and Amasis. See Kivilo, 2010: 195-200.

<sup>371</sup> See Kivilo (2010) for a discussion of dating problems.

Glaucus; Smyrna has as strong a claim as any other to be his birthplace.<sup>372</sup> Other genres of poetry certainly existed, even if they are not directly attested. The Achaeans placate the wrath of Apollo in a paean (*Il.* 1.372); Artemis is honoured by maidens in song and dance (*Il.* 16.182); the bride hears the hymenaios (*Il.* 18.493). In the shield of Achilles a boy sings the Linus song to accompany work of vintagers. A tiny fragment (Carm. pop. nr. 30D) - a little Lesbian snacktime song - can be dated roughly by its mention of Pittacus.<sup>373</sup> Folk songs such as, e.g., Carm. pop. 32 D. must have been a common part of life but with little impetus ever providing a reason to write them down. Semonides was Samian, but assisted in the colonisation of Amorogos some time in the 7<sup>th</sup> c. Callinus of Ephesus lived in the time of Cimmerian attacks against Greeks in Asia Minor, which we can perhaps place in the first half of the 7<sup>th</sup> c. c. 675.<sup>374</sup> The Messenian Wars are a chronological headache, but Tyrtaeus was apparently active in the second of them midway through the 7<sup>th</sup> c. Terpander of Antissa, on Lesbos, won a victory at the Karneia in the 26<sup>th</sup> Olympiad (676/3). Arion of Methymna, when he wasn't playing with excitable dolphins, was found at the court of Periander some time in the late 7<sup>th</sup> c. Alcman of Sparta was active in the 7<sup>th</sup> c., and Stesichorus of Matalos (later of Himera) around the turn of the 6<sup>th</sup>. The shadowy Aesop, or at least the fables ascribed to him, surely existed in some form at this time.

Of course, these poets must represent but the tip of the iceberg, though there is no reason why we shouldn't accept that the names of the Archaic poets preserved were largely the most famous ones. An interesting case study in lost poets is pseudo-Plutarch's *Περὶ Μουσικῆς* (*Mor.* 1131-1147), which recounts a *deipnosophistes*-type event starring ἄνδρας μουσικῆς ἐπιστήμονας, 'experts knowledgeable about music'.<sup>375</sup> The host, a certain Onesikrates, appeals to his guests to relate the

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<sup>372</sup> West (2011).

<sup>373</sup> Lesky (1996).

<sup>374</sup> Lesky (1996): 118.

<sup>375</sup> There is doubt whether this is an authentic work of Plutarch. See Weil and Reinach (1900); Barker (1984): 205-48. A. Ford points out to me that ἄνδρας in this type of context suggests something short of professionalism, but still with a high level of dedication to the subject.

history of music and its most famous practitioners. A document at Sicyon is mentioned that Heracleides consulted for his lost *Συναγωγή*, since it correlated the Priestesses at Argos with the poets - a chronological framework that would be of high value to us today. A dizzying number of names is provided - Linos of Euboea, Anthes of Anthedon, Demodocus of Kerkyra (likely to be our Demodocus from the *Odyssey*, if Phaecia is identified with Kerkyra), Klonas of either Tegea or Thebes, Sakadas of Argos, Thaletas of Crete.<sup>376</sup> At Sparta, Terpander of Antissa was said to have first organised music, which was followed [shortly?] after by the establishment of the *Γυμνοπαιδία* at Sparta, the *Ἀποδείξεις* in Arkadia, and the *Ἐνδυμάτια* at Argos by Thaletas of Gortyn, Xenodamos of Kythera, Xenokritos of Lokri, Polymnestos of Kolophon, and Sakadas of Argos (1134B-C; all these festivals presumably involved a strong element of music). To the mercurial Archilochus was assigned no less than the invention of the trimeter, the epode, the tetrameter, the cretic, and the augmented hexameter, among other things (1140F-1141A). Such lofty attributions are not doubt due to Archilochus' status as the earliest preserved lyric poet, but in reality mix together truth and legend; an analogous case can be seen with the Athenians, whose adulation of the lawgiver Solon was such that in later centuries it was not uncommon to find many laws ascribed him, including paradoxically those that dealt with inventions subsequent to his lifetime, such as coinage. Archilochus may have invented some of these modes, but we are safer viewing him as a poet who may have popularised them and provided the stimulus for their dissemination throughout the Greek world.

While it is futile (but enjoyable) to lust after lost poets, it is worth pointing out that in the *Περὶ Μουσικῆς* of Plutarch none of these poets are themselves quoted, but instead other works concerning music such as Heracleides' *Συναγωγή* 'Collection', Glaukos' *Περὶ τῶν ἀρχαίων ποιητῶν τε καὶ μουσικῶν* 'On Archaic Poets and Musical Matters', and Aristoxenos' *Περὶ*

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<sup>376</sup> All mentioned as being either around the time of Terpander or Archilochus, or the point of contention being whether they preceded or succeeded either of these poets. Thus they are presumably all 7<sup>th</sup> c., at latest.



Μουσικῆς ‘On Music’.<sup>377</sup> It is entirely probable that the traditions of many of the ancient poets had outlived their poetry, even by Plutarch’s time.<sup>378</sup> This brief survey presents an idyllic poetic landscape into which may be inserted the metrical inscriptions of the same period. Sicily, southern Italy, the Greek mainland, the Aegean islands, and Asia Minor are all represented, indicating a poetic koine that must have permeated all Greek cities and ethne. Whether it touched upon all levels of society is difficult to prove, but common sense dictates that orally disseminated poetry, at least, was available to all such strata. Inscribed epigram, however, is found only in specific locations pre-600 BCE. In short, poetry was everywhere in Archaic Greece, though metrical inscriptions were not. Why was this the case?

### Localised Metrical Networks

In the introduction I highlighted the most characteristic feature of pre-600 BCE epigram, its individualism. Meters, content, and purpose are diverse and, in the period that we are dealing with, highly original. However, relationships do exist, and these primarily relate to context. Four of the inscriptions are from Kerkyra, and all are sepulchral. Four are from Delos and three are from Perachora; all are dedicatory. Three are from Thera, and all erotic graffiti. Fourteen of the 41 inscriptions, some 34%, therefore derive from four local contexts, and within each of these four nodes many ties may be found.

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<sup>377</sup> For editions of these texts, see Barker (1984-1989).

<sup>378</sup> Homer, Pherekrates (the comic poet), and Aristophanes are the poets who are most frequently quoted.

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