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REDAZIONE:

"Sapienza" Università di Roma, Dip. di Scienze dell'Antichità  
piazzale A. Moro 5, I-00185 Roma; tel. ++39-0649913604, fax ++39-064451393  
e-mail robertonicolai@hotmail.com

Università di Roma "Tor Vergata", Dip. di Studi letterari, filosofici e di storia dell'arte,  
via Columbia 1, I-00133 Roma; tel. ++39-0672595066; fax ++39-0672595046  
e-mail emanuele.dettori@uniroma2.it

AMMINISTRAZIONE:

Edizioni Quasar, via Ajaccio 41-43, I-00198 Roma; tel. 0685358444  
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DUCCIO GUASTI

## The Homeric Epithet ἰόμωροι

The formula Ἀργεῖοι ἰόμωροι occurs twice in Homer, the first time during the *epipoleis*, when Agamemnon scolds those soldiers who appear to be unwilling as (*Il.* 4. 242):

Ἀργεῖοι ἰόμωροι ἐλεγχέες οὐ νυ σέβεσθε;

Argives, ἰόμωροι, disgraces, aren't you ashamed?

We find the phrase a second time in the Dardanian leader Acamas' attack against the Argives (*Il.* 14. 479):

Ἀργεῖοι ἰόμωροι ἀπειλάων ἀκόρητοι

Argives, ἰόμωροι, insatiable for threats

The meaning of the epithet ἰόμωροι has been endlessly debated. The second element of the compound is shared with two other words: ὑλακόμωροι, *epitheton ornans* of κύνες in the *Odyssey* (14. 29; 16. 4) and ἐγχεσίμωροι, attribute of various ethnic groups<sup>1</sup>.

Ancient lexicographers and scholia often identify the component -μωρο- with μόρος "fate," "death" and the verb μορῶω "to toil"<sup>2</sup> or with the Cyprian μόρος "acute"<sup>3</sup>. All of these interpretations need to be rejected because of the length of -ο-<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Of the sons of Evenus (*Il.* 2. 692); of the Pelasgians (*Il.* 2. 840); of the Arcadians (*Il.* 7. 134); of the Myrmidons (*Od.* 3. 188).

<sup>2</sup> Orion *Etym.* I 75 Sturz; Eust. *Il.* vol. 1 p. 502 v. d. Valk; *Etym. Magn.* p. 472 Kallierges; *Epimer. Hom.* I 64 Dyck.

<sup>3</sup> The word is identified as Cyprian by the *Etym. Magn.* (p. 776 Kallierges): μόρον γὰρ λέγουσι Κύπριοι τὸ ὄξύ. The explanation goes back to Aristarchus (*Apollon. Lex.* p. 91 Bekker; *Ariston. Od.* 3. 188; 14. 29 Carnuth, Eust. *Od.* vol. 2 p. 59 Stallbaum). Hesychius reports different interpretations (E 339; I 744 Latte; Y 144 Hansen).

<sup>4</sup> The spelling variant μωρός of Hsch. μ 2070 Latte, which also occurs in some *scholia*, is a misspelling due to the mistaken connection of this word with the Homeric compounds we are discussing.

The analogy of ἐγχεσίμωροι with ἐγχε(σ)ίμαργος, “raging with the spear”, reported by lexicographers<sup>5</sup>, as well as with the θυμοπληθής δορίμαργος “heart-filling spear-madness” of Aesch. *Sept.* 686-687 would suggest an identification of this component with μωρός “fool”<sup>6</sup>. If this were the case, ἐγχεσίμωροι would mean “raging with the spears” (an allusion to the *furor bellicus*)<sup>7</sup> and ὑλακόμωροι “ragingly howling,” and ἰόμωροι “raging with” whatever the first element of the compound stands for<sup>8</sup>. However, μωρός and μάργος are not synonyms, and the semantic shift required for this interpretation might be too extreme.

Osthoff connects -μωρο- with the Indo-European \**mēro-/mōro-* meaning “big”, “famous”<sup>9</sup>. This interpretation, followed by a vast majority of scholars<sup>10</sup>, has its inconveniences: for example, in the case of dogs, ὑλακόμωροι would mean “durch Bellen sich bemerklich machend”, which is evidently stretched. The simplest interpretation would probably be to connect -μωρο- with μάρναμαι “to fight”<sup>11</sup>. This interpretation looks weaker for ὑλακόμωροι: do dogs fight (compete?) in (or by) howling? The context of the two attestations of this adjective are not helpful<sup>12</sup>.

The analysis of the first element ἰο- gives more interesting results: ancient grammarians read it as meaning “arrow”<sup>13</sup>, which would make the compound analogous to ἐγχεσίμωροι, but *in malam partem*<sup>14</sup>. This interpretation, which we occasionally still see in translations of Homer, has been rejected by scholars because of the long *ī* of ἰός, “arrow”. Leaf (1900-1902, *ad Il.* 4. 242) still defends this reading, adducing the short *ι* of ἰοχέαιρα in Pindar (*Pyth* 2. 9):

ἐπὶ γὰρ ἰοχέαιρα παρθένος χερὶ διδύμα

<sup>5</sup> ἐγχεσίμαργος is reported by Hsch. E 88 Latte = Photius E 338 Theodoridis ≈ *Etym. Magn.* p. 313 Kallierges). ἐγχείμαργος by Hdn. Gr. 2. 495, Eust. *Il.* vol. 1 p. 728 v. d. Valk, *Etym. Magn. ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> This possibility is mentioned by Ruijgh 1957, p. 93 n. 7, who quotes as a parallel ἤλιθα “excessively” (in Homer only in the *clausula* ἤλιθα πολλή) vs. ἡλίθιος “fool”.

<sup>7</sup> Ares himself is repeatedly called μαινόμενος (*Il.* 5. 831; *Il.* 15. 128).

<sup>8</sup> I will give my answer to this question below, at the end of my analysis.

<sup>9</sup> Osthoff 1888, p. 431. Vd. Pokorny, p. 704.

<sup>10</sup> Including Risch 1974, p. 213. For bibliography see Frisk and Beekes *s.v.* ἐγχεσίμωρος; Chantraine *s.v.* ἔγχος.

<sup>11</sup> So Wathélet 1970, p. 125.

<sup>12</sup> Frisk, Chantraine, and Beekes (see above, n. 10) classify ὑλακόμωροι as a secondary formation, analogical on the other two.

<sup>13</sup> Aristarchus (*ap.* Apollon. *Lex.* p. 91 Bekker); Hdn, *Part.* p. 42 Boissonade; Orion, *Etym.* I 75 Sturz; Hsch. I 744 Latte; Eust. *Il.* vol. 1 p. 739 v. d. Valk *al.*; *Et. Gud.* I 279 Sturz.

<sup>14</sup> Kirk 1990, p. 256, objection that ἐγχεσίμωροι is «plainly laudatory», while ἰόμωροι is overtly abusive does not hold, since there is evidence that Homeric heroes judged it honorable for the aristocrat to fight with the spear, not with the bow. Hainsworth 1993, p. 268, identifies this aversion as a sign «of the aristocratic spearman’s contempt for those who fight at distance (and often anonymously) with the bow».



For with both hands the arrow-holding<sup>15</sup> virgin

This isolated attestation, however, seems insufficient to justify a  $\omega\omega$  prosody for *io-* in an epic context. Therefore, the alternative *ιά*, “scream,” “outcry,” proposed by Bechtel<sup>16</sup>, is now almost universally accepted. In this case, *ἰόωροι* would be more similar to *ύλακόμωροι* than to *έγγεσίμωροι*: the Argives, like Odysseus’ dogs, would be accused of yelling foolishly or excessively, but without obtaining any results.

Nonetheless, this interpretation creates more problems than it would solve: *ιά* is attested for the first time in a lyric song of Aeschylus’ *Persians* (937) and recurs in an oracle cited by Herodotus (1. 85) as well as in the pseudo-Euripidean *Rhesus* (553). As for its origin, the word sounds like a nominalized interjection<sup>17</sup>.

The resulting meanings “raging with (war) cry” or “famous for yelling” (depending on what *-μωροι* means) do not suit the context well. Bechtel justifies his interpretation with the fact that the Argives are exaggerated with their mouths would be evident from the *άπειλάων άκόρητοι* said by Acamas (but not by Agamemnon) in the same verse<sup>18</sup>. Yet *άπειλάων άκόρητοι*, like the similar *άπειλητήρης* of *Il.* 7. 96, indicates “professional threateners”, denoting those who are always ready to threaten, without ever enacting those threats<sup>19</sup>. On the other hand, tumult in war is expected<sup>20</sup>. ‘Loud’ is not a likely insult for an ancient army, especially from a warrior whose brother is famous to be *βοήν άγαθός*.

If, on the contrary, Agamemnon and Acamas called the Argives “archers”, that would resonate with Diomedes employing the insult *τοξότα* against Paris (*Il.* 11. 385). For this reason, the whole ancient grammatical tradition insists on connecting *ἰόωροι* with bows and arrows<sup>21</sup>.

What has eluded modern scholars, is that the unjustified *correptio* prevents us to derive *ἰόωροι* from *ἰός*, “arrow”, only if we look at the Homeric text synchronically. An analysis of the pre-history of the word through modern

<sup>15</sup> This meaning was convincingly demonstrated by Heubeck 1956.

<sup>16</sup> Bechtel 1914, pp. 178-179. See Frisk, *s.v.* for further bibliography.

<sup>17</sup> So Frisk, *s.v.* *ιά*; Chantraine, *s.v.* *ιήιος*; Beekes, *s.v.* *ια* (unaccented). Heubeck 1987, pp. 161-162, connects this element with *ῥίς*, “sinew”, “strength”. The Argives would then be “famous for their strength”, and the fact that both the surviving occurrences of this epithet are in an insulting context would be a coincidence. An original short *ι* for *ις* is far from being demonstrated (see Frisk and Chantraine, *s.v.* for the etymologies proposed).

<sup>18</sup> So Bechtel 1914, p. 179.

<sup>19</sup> So Benveniste 1948, p. 37: «Menaceurs (de métier)! = vous qui ne savez que menacer et n’osez pas attaquer». For the semantic field of *άπειλή* see Adkins 1969.

<sup>20</sup> For examples, see *Lfgre s.vv.* *άυτή* 1a, *βοή* 1b, *ένοπή*, *ιαχή* 1; vd. Trümper 1950, pp. 153-156, Kaimio 1977, pp. 80-83.

<sup>21</sup> According to Schwyzler 1939, p. 426, *ἰόωροι* would be synchronically more opaque than *έγγεσίμωροι*. Scholia and lexica do not confirm this impression.

linguistic methods reveals the problem to be non-existent. Indo-European comparison allows us to reconstruct a u-stem *\*isu-*, “arrow”<sup>22</sup>, which should have given a Pre-Greek *\*ihu*, which would have led to a Proto-Greek *\*iv*-<sup>23</sup>. This noun had a Pre-Greek collective form *\*iswa*, which in Greek results in a neuter plural *ιά*<sup>24</sup>, attested once in the *Iliad* (20. 68):

ἴστατ' Ἀπόλλων Φοῖβος ἔχων ἰὰ πτερόεντα

(There) stood Phoebus Apollo, holding his winged arrows

The *ī* in this form is justified by compensatory lengthening from the disappearance of the consonant group *\*-σϝ-*<sup>25</sup>. From this plural, the heteroclite singular *ἴος* (*ī*) was formed, by analogy with the many thematic masculine nouns which correspond to a neuter plural with collective meaning (*κύκλος*: *κύκλα*, *κέλευθος*: *κέλευθα*, etc.)<sup>26</sup>.

Once we reconstructed the history of *ἴος*, we can shed light on the origin of *ἰόμωροι*. The first member of the compound could have been only *\*iv-*, which, when the most ancient *stratum* of what would become epic formulaic language originated, probably existed as a noun and was pronounced with the original *ī*. Thus, the form *ἰόμωροι* in the manuscripts hides an archaic *\*ἰύμωροι*<sup>27</sup>. A now odd-sounding *\*ἰύμωροι* would have been redetermined as *ἰόμωροι*, after every memory of the athematic *\*iv-* was gone, a transformation which is favored by the role that *-o-* plays in Greek as a connecting vowel. The vocalism was adapted to the thematic *ἴος*, but the prosody could not be changed, since the compound was fixed in the formula *Ἀργεῖοι ἰόμωροι*, which requires an *ī*.

This explanation also accounts for the prosody of *ἰοχέαιρα* in Pindar. The initial *iota* of this adjective was naturally short, for the same reason the first syllable of *ἰόμωροι* is<sup>28</sup>. But, like the initial syllable of all words starting with a tribrach, it functions as long in epic meter<sup>29</sup>. However, in the tradition of choral lyric it could maintain its original prosody, as we can see from this isolated attestation.

<sup>22</sup> Avestic *išu-*; Indian *iṣu-*, “arrow”; vd. Pokorny, p. 301.

<sup>23</sup> Presumably resulting in a masculine *ἴος*, like *νύς* from *\*suHyu-*, which, not surprisingly, was redetermined as thematic as well.

<sup>24</sup> The theory that neuter plurals in *\*-h<sub>2</sub>* (> *-ā* in Greek) were originally a ‘collective’ number – in addition to the singular, the dual, and the plural preserved by the daughter languages – goes back to Schmidt 1889. For a discussion of more recent bibliography, see Meier-Brügger 2000, pp. 179–180, par. F 304. 2.

<sup>25</sup> Lejeune 1972, pp. 135–136, par. 130.

<sup>26</sup> So Meier-Brügger 1988.

<sup>27</sup> The latter would correspond to the model of *συ-βώτης* (Debrunner 1917, p. 65, par. 126).

<sup>28</sup> In this case we have the comparison with the similar Vedic *iṣu-hasta*, “arrow-holding”, which attests to the antiquity of the image; see Heubeck 1956, p. 279.

<sup>29</sup> See the long list of examples in West 2018, p. 364.

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duccio.guasti@ugent.be

ABSTRACT: In this paper I re-evaluate the etymology of the Homeric epithet *ἰόμωροι*, adducing new evidence for the identification of the first element of the compound with *ἰός*, "arrow", from the comparison with the corresponding Indo-Iranic words.

Estratto