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HOMERIC SOCIETY

*A Sociological Study of the Iliad
and Odyssey*

BY

ALBERT GALLOWAY KELLER, PH.D.

INSTRUCTOR IN SOCIAL SCIENCE IN
YALE UNIVERSITY

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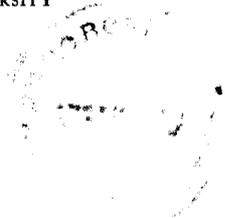
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INTRODUCTION

THE following study starts out from two main working-hypotheses; first, that the evidence of Homer concerning the "Homeric Age" is direct and accurate, and second, that this evidence has to do with a single culture-epoch and, in the main, with a single people. Primarily, the Iliad and Odyssey give the impression of spontaneity and an entire freedom from artificiality or historical "reconstruction"; there also appear to be no striking incongruities between the two epics or between parts of the same epic. In the course of this study, it is hoped that further grounds for these hypotheses may appear, and that the position taken, in regarding the Iliad and Odyssey as direct documentary evidence, may be further justified.

The treatment of Homeric social factors and tendencies has been, first of all, systematic; based upon sociological categories which owe their formulation to a comparative study of human societies and their development.¹ Arrangement has been dictated entirely by considerations of systematic classification

¹ Several standard authors have been followed, as the references will show, but the whole treatment of the essay is modelled on the as yet unpublished system of Professor Sumner. Only occasional reference can be given this system under the title of Unpublished Lectures.

and sequence. The same considerations have prevented the citation of a multiplicity of instances in the text; those regarded as most characteristic and suggestive have been quoted, and corroborative and slightly variant instances have been referred to in the notes.¹ For the sake of perspective, unessential detail has been sacrificed, and the full content of passages selected for citation has not always been developed. In cases of variation of evidence, that testimony has been accepted which appeared most in consonance with the general social setting of the age and people.

For reasons that would appeal to any student of ethnography or culture-history, the writer has been led to emphasise the importance of Eastern influences upon Homeric society. It is scarcely conceivable that later Greek civilisation was a suddenly evolved, indigenous product; the development of a high civilisation from semi-barbarism, like that of a superior variety of fruit or grain from a wild variety, is a matter of long ages and tedious selection. On the other hand, however, there is nothing to prevent the rapid increase of transplanted fruit of the highest grade, or of transferred civilisation, if the ground is good.

There is no evidence in Homer to disprove the presence of strong Eastern influence upon the Greek society of his time; rather is such influence

¹ A single note will often include references to several allied points in the text, the order of the references or groups of references corresponding to the sequence of the argument on the page above.

emphasised and set forth. And what is more likely on general principles than the speedy dissemination and increase of civilisation in Greece and toward the West, given two centres of advanced culture such as Chaldæa and Egypt, and a nation of alert and adroit traders such as the Phœnicians? Until archæological finds shall be proved contemporary with Homeric evidence,¹ and clearly subversive of it, the hypothesis of Eastern influence upon early Greece, put forth by some of the older writers such as Movers, can scarcely be overthrown. The presumption is always in favour of normal versus catastrophic evolution; upon those who assert the latter rests the burden of proof until the existence of the irregular can be convincingly established. In any case, the final solution of these vexed questions of origins and development, if it ever comes, will not be entirely clear of indebtedness to those preceding hypotheses to whose inadequacy it gives the *coup de grâce*.

The Teubner text (Lipsiæ, MDCCCXC) has been used; references to the several books are given by number, the large Roman numerals referring to the Iliad and the small ones to the Odyssey.

¹ " . . . If we apply our minds calmly to compare the series of facts obtained from Mycenean sites on the one hand, and from the Homeric poems on the other, we shall find that many of the discrepancies are not trivial, but are really such as those on which we base wide distinctions in race and time, as we study the history of other peoples and other regions of Europe and Asia." Ridgeway, I, 82.

