

## §4. The Ships



Tell me now, ye Muses, who dwell in the halls of Olympus,  
 since ye are goddesses, ever at hand, with a knowledge of all things –  
 we hear only report, we know for a certainty nothing –  
 who were the chieftains leading the Danaans, who their commanders.  
 But of the soldiers, I could not give the numbers, or name them,  
 e'en though ten were my tongues, my mouths so many in number,  
 a voice unwearied mine, and my heart too, bronzen within me,  
 did not the daughters of Zeus who wieldeth the aegis, Olympian  
 Muses, call to my mind how many there came against Troia.  
 Yet the commanders at least, and their warships, all I will mention.

– *Iliad* 2:484-493

There follows a Catalogue o Ships. It lists 29 contingents of Greeks, in geographical order. Here are their most recognizable places and persons:<sup>1</sup>

GREECE N OF THE ISTHMUS. (1, 494f) Boeotia, Leitos and Peneleos;  
 (2, 511f) Minyans, Askalaphos and Ialmenos; (3, 517f) Phocis, Schedios and  
 Epistrophos; (4, 527f) Locris, Aias of Oileus; (5, 536f) Euboia; Elephenor; (6,  
 546f) Athens, Menestheus; (7, 557f) Salamis, [Telemonian] Aias.

THE PELOPONNESE. (8, 559f) Argos and Tiryns, Diomedes; (9, 569f)  
 Mycenae, Agamemnon; (10, 581) Sparta, Menelaos; (11, 591f), Pylos, Nestor;  
 (12, 603f) Arcadia, Argapenor; (13, 615f) Elis etc, Thalpios, Amphimachos,  
 Diores, Polyxeinos.

WEST. (14, 625f) Doulichion, Meges; (15, 631f) Cephallenia and Ithaka,  
 Odysseus; (16, 638f) Aitolians, Thoas.

CRETE AND VICINITY. (17, 645f) Crete, Idomeneus and Meriones; (18,  
 653f) Rhodes, Tlepolemos; (19, 671f) Syme, Nireus; (20, 676f) Cos etc,  
 Pheidippos and Antiphos.

DORIAN THESSALY. (21, 681f) Pelasgian Argos, Phthia, Hellas,  
 Myrmidons and Achilles; (22, 695f) Phylake, Protesilaos; (23, 711f) Pherai,  
 Admetos; (24, 716f) Thaumakia and Meliboia, Philoctetes > Medon; (25,  
 729f) Trikke, Podaleiros and Machaon; (26, 734f) Ormenios, Eurypylos; (27,  
 738f) Argissa, Polypoites and Leonteus; (28, 748f) Perrhaibians, Gouneus;  
 (29, 756f) Magnesians, Prothoös.

Some towns named were abandoned in Mycenaean times; a few unknown  
 ones have been validated by archaeology. This is not an imaginary inventory,  
 but a realistic one,<sup>2</sup> and some details seem to predate the Trojan War.

<sup>1</sup>See Willcock **Companion** 1/24-33, and for detail, Kirk **Commentary** 1/190-237.

<sup>2</sup>For a quick survey, based in part on archaeology, see Huxley **Mycenaean**.

Homer didn't write it. The invocation refers to all the Olympian Muses, not a ne unnamed Muse, as elsewhere in Homer. Also: (1) The first group listed, the Boeotians, play little part in the fighting. (2) The Arcadians, 12th, play *no part* in the fighting. (3) After Achilles' entry in the Catalogue proper (681-685), there is a Homeric note (686-694): Achilles won't fight because of Briseis. After the Catalogue is over, a long passage (761-779) asks who was the best of the Achaians. It names Aias – only because Achilles will not be taking part:

He, however, in wrath with the shepherd of hosts, Agamemnon,  
Atreus' son, at his ships whose curved beaks furrowed the waters,  
now lay idle. His folk, on the seashore sounding with surges,  
found their pleasure in throwing the disk and casting the javelin,  
shooting the bow, the while at the war-wains waited the horses,  
each at his own car, champing the marsh-grown parsley and clover.  
Idle they stood, and the war-chief's cars, all carefully covered,  
lay in the huts. Many yearned for their leader, beloved of Ares,  
wand'ring hither and thither in camp, and aloof from the battle.

This is a patch. If Homer had to *patch* the Catalogue, he didn't *write* it. It is an earlier piece which Homer included. Besides Achilles, other patches were made by Homer to give the fates of Protesilaos (699-706) and Philoctetes (712-728).<sup>3</sup>

### The Trojans

Here too (816-877) we have old material. There is no invocation, and of course no ships; just a list of allies and their leaders:

TROY AND VICINITY. (1, 816f) Trojans, Hector; (2, 819f) Dardanians, Aeneas; (3, 824f) Zeleians, Pandaros; (4, 828f) Adresteians, Adrestos and Amphios; (5, 835f) Percote etc, Asios; (6, 840f) Pelasgians, Hippothoös.

NORTH. (7, 844f) Thracians, Acamas and Piroös; (8, 846f) Kikones, Euphemos; (9, 848f), Paionians, Pyraichmes.

BLACK SEA. (10, 851f) Paphlagones, Pylaimenes. (11, 856f) Halizones, Odios and Epistrophos.

NORTH CENTRAL ASIA MINOR. (12, 858f) Mysians, Chromis; (13, 862f) Phrygians, Phorkys and Ascanios.

WEST COAST OF ASIA MINOR. (14, 864f) Maionians, Mesthles and Antiphos; (15, 867f) Carians etc, [Amphimaches and] Nastes; (16, 876f) Lycians, Sarpedon and Glaucos.

The sequence may have been, first (a) a list of these who had gathered for some expedition, (2) later augmented with divine genealogies. (3) The Dorians smash Mycenaean civilization. (4) The survivors, in the ruins of their cities, cling to that tradition as a collective identity, but (5) lose all knowledge of early warfare (p16). Later, (6) a body of Trojan War songs appears, and includes this valued list. Finally, (7) Homer's Menis is built of that material plus new songs.

<sup>3</sup>Much later, for Panathenaea purposes, lines were added to the Athens entry (perhaps 550-551, on the sacrifices, and 553-555, praising Menestheus).

## Iliad 2

It is only natural to be curious about the stylistic closeness of the rest of Iliad 2. The divisions, and the resulting BIRD table, are as follows:

2a. 1-49 (49)	Zeus sends a misleading dream
2b. 50-441 (392)	Rush for the ships [later addition, see ]
2c. 442-483 (42)	┌The army marches
2d. 484-760 (277)	└Catalogue of ships
2e. 761-785 (25)	┌The Greek leaders
2f. 786-877 (92)	└The Trojans

<i>Iliad</i>	<i>2a</i>	<i>2b</i>	<i>2c</i>	<i>2d</i>	<i>2e</i>	<i>2f</i>
Words:	256	2757	269	1853	171	612
<i>2a</i>	~	0.65	<b>1.02</b>	<b>1.23</b>	0.87	0.80
<i>2b</i>	0.65	~	0.66	0.93	0.82	0.53
<i>2c</i>	<b>1.02</b>	0.66	~	0.69	0.45	0.56
<i>2d</i>	<b>1.23</b>	0.93	0.69	~	0.73	0.57
<i>2e</i>	0.87	0.82	0.45	0.73	~	0.65
<i>2f</i>	0.80	0.53	0.56	0.57	0.65	~

Moving down the diagonal, (1) all relations are in the Normal range; nothing very close or very far apart. (2) Two close segments (2c and 2e) are separated by 2d, the largely pre-Homeric Catalogue of Ships. (3) 2c, the real march of the army, and 2e (identifying Achilles as the Best of the Greeks) are undoubtedly by Homer, and it is natural enough that they should be similar.

The surprise is the strong antipathy between the False Dream piece (2a) and both the March (2c, probably by Homer) and the Catalogue (2d, certainly not). We can only suggest the unusual genre of the False Dream (a divine imposture, unique in the Iliad) as a possible factor is one of the two cases.

## The Dream

Why should Zeus deliberately mislead Agamemnon? It is characteristic of Homer to call his characters fools (*nepioi*), when they are so easily misled. But what was the artistic purpose?

Homer has begun his story (Id 1) in the middle of the tenth year of the war, the programmatic time for its success. But he has drawn his picture wider, with some borrowed scenes from the first year, as though to say, those efforts were doomed to failure; it was too early; and any wise person would have seen that. He flatters us by letting us into the secret, sharing the obvious futility of all these marchings out and one-on-one duels; these useless oaths broken by superfluous treachery. Just wait (he may be saying) until a real warrior appears. *Then* you will see how it is done.

Something more or less like that.