Molossus + Bacchius in the New Stesichorus Fragment (*P.Lille 76abc*)

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HE NEW POEM by Stesichorus in dactylo-epitrites presents in
the epodic clausula a metrical sequence $-\,-\,-\,\smile\,-\,-$, which
I have called molossus + bacchius,[1] a terminology which I
subsequently sought to confirm and elucidate in my recent paper on
the prehistory and formation of the hexameter:[2] "Resta infine la
stretta concordanza con l'*Erifile* nel nesso $-\,-\,-\,\smile\,-\,-$ (in clausola
epodica) che io ho descritto come *mol+ba*, lasciando aperto il pro-
blema della sua valenza temporale con ritmi trocaici e giambici.
Non credo all'ipotesi avanzata da Haslam, di ravvisarvi un aristo-
fanio con *longum* in luogo del *biceps* $-\,\overset{\smile\smile}{}\,-\,\smile\,-\,-$: proprio nello stesso
Stesicoro, fr.223,4 P., l'aristofanio ricorre nella forma consueta
coriambo baccheo $-\,\smile\smile\,-\,\smile\,-\,-$, in combinazione con l'enoplio e non
in clausola strofica:

> χολωcαμένα διγάμουc τε καὶ τριγάμουc τίθηcι."

Now M. Haslam in a recent article in this journal writes:[3]
"I certainly cannot accept Gentili's molossus + bacchiac (*ap. ed.pr.*
350) as a meaningful analysis—does Stesichorus deal in such enti-
ties?" Such a judgement appears inconsistent with Mr Haslam's
description (p.36) of the structure $-\,-\,-\,\smile\,-\,-$ in terms of the usual
Maasian symbols $-\,-\,e\,-$, spondee + cretic + long syllable, which
seem to me devoid of meaning. Furthermore he writes (pp.37–38):
"Supposing that the second long syllable could not be true *longum*,
I suggested that it was contracted biceps, though I expressed unease
over its failure to take the lighter, disyllabic form ["Stesichorean
Metre," *QuadUrbCC* 17 (1974) 37f]. Now that we have two or three
more examples (210, 231, 294 Θηβαι.[), the second syllable being
every time long, this suggestion loses whatever plausibility it may

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[1] *Ap. ed.pr.* (*CRIPEL* 4 [1976] 287ff) 350.
[2] *QuadUrbCC* 26 (1977) 12.
[3] "The Versification of the New Stesichorus (*P.Lille* 76abc)," *GRBS* 19 (1978) 37 n.17.

have had. The verse is just — — — ᵕ — —, scarcely to be 'analysed' at all. It is a peculiarly dragging line, I daresay devised by Stesichorus himself for its weightiness: an authentic Stesichorean curiosity."

Therefore if the second long syllable of the structure in question is a true long (and what else could it be?), since it occurs again at vv. 210, 231 and 294 of the new poem, the hypothesis that the whole sequence is an aristophanean (— ᵕᵕ — ᵕ — —), as Haslam suggested, must be abandoned. As a result, no other possibility of analyzing the structure under discussion would exist: we would have to surmise that we are faced with a 'dragging' verse,[4] whose slow heavy rhythm had somehow stimulated the fancy of the poet. Leaving aside such un-grounded hypotheses, however, one must point out that on p.37 n.16 Haslam has indeed suggested a line of interpretation by correctly comparing Pindar, *Pyth.* 1 str. 3, which is composed in dactylo-epitrites, — — — ᵕ — — — ᵕ —. This he describes with the usual symbols propounded by Maas as — — e — e; but in fact it is nothing other than molossus + bacchius + cretic, a metrico-rhythmic figure which, with respect to the Stesichorean dimeter,[5] has been increased by one metron, the cretic.

As is well known, the molossus is at home among the bacchii and cretics, and by reason of its 'temporal' value (six *tempora*) is often associated with iambic, trochaic, ionic and choriambic metra:

Simon. fr.521.4 P.   οὕτως ἁ μετάστασις
                     — — — ᵕ — ᵕ —   *mol ia*

Timoth. *Pers.* 103 (791 P.)   γόηται θρηνώδει κατείχοντ' ὀδυρμῷ
                     ᵕ — — | — — — — | ᵕ — — ᵕ — —   *ba mol ba ba*

preceded by *ba ia ia ia*, followed by *glyc* (ᵕᵕᵕ — ᵕᵕ — ᵕ Ꙩ).[6]

Aesch. *PV* 581 ∼ 600   δειλαίαν παράκοπον ὧδε τείρεις
                     — — — | ᵕ Ꙩ ᵕ — ᵕ — —   *mol ia ba* (*dim ia*ʌ)

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[4] For the benefit of non-specialists I may indicate that the term is usual in the metrical studies of Miss A. M. Dale.

[5] See in Pindar also the following equivalent structures: trimeter ᵕᵕ — — ᵕ — — — ᵕ — (*Ol.* 13 ep. 6), and dimeters ᵕᵕ — — ᵕ — —, — ᵕ — — ᵕ — — (*Isthm.* 3/4 str. 5; *Nem.* 11 ep. 6). In place of the molossus these have in the first metron the ionic a min. and the trochaic epitrite.

[6] For the colometry cf. Wilamowitz, *Timotheos, Die Perser* (Leipzig 1903) p.31; Diehl, *Anth.lyr.Gr.* II² p.185. Page's colometry is implausible.

Aesch. *Sept.* 321 ~ 333   οἰκτρὸν γὰρ πόλιν ὧδ' ὠγυγίαν

— — — ◡ ◡ — — ◡ ◡ —   *mol ion ion*ᴧ

Aesch. *Sept.* 120   'Ἀργεῖοι γὰρ πόλισμα Κάδμου

— — — | — ◡ — ◡ — —   *mol cr ba (ithyph)*

123   μινύρονται φόνον χαλινοί

◡ — — — ◡ — | ◡ — —   *ba cr ba (ithyph)*

126   προσίστανται πάλῳ λαχόντες

◡ — — — ◡ — | ◡ — —   *ba cr ba (ithyph)*

Dochmiac series are inserted between the three verses.

Soph. *OC* 513 ~ 525   τᾶς δειλαίας ἀπόρου φανείσας

× — — — ◡ ◡ — | ◡ — —   *mol cho ba (aristoph)*

Note the alternation *mol* ~ *ba* in responsion.

Soph. *El.* 482–485 ~ 497–500   οὐ γάρ ποτ' ἀμναστεῖ ς' ὁ φύσας Ἑλλάνων ἄναξ,

οὐδ' ἁ παλαιὰ χαλκόπλακτος ἀμφάκης γένυς

— — ◡ — — — ◡ —   *ia ia*

— — — — — ◡ — | *mol cr*

— — ◡ — — — ◡ —   *ia ia*

× — — — ◡ ᵒᵤ ‖   *ba (~ mol) cr*

Here *mol cr* and *ba cr* are obviously the contracted or syncopated forms of the iambic dimeter acatalectic and have been unanimously interpreted as such by W. Kraus[7] and H. A. Pohlsander.[8] It is in fact an instance of two iambic tetrameters:

Soph. *Trach.* 523f   ἁ δ' εὐῶπις ἀβρά

τηλαυγεῖ παρ' ὄχθῳ

— — — ◡ — — | *mol ba*

— — — ◡ — — ‖ᴴ   *mol ba*

The two lines conclude a dactylo-epitrite period:

◡ — ◡ ◡ — ◡ — — | *enh*

◡ ◡ — — — — ◡ ◡ — ◡ ◡ — — | *ion enh*

— ◡ — — — — ◡ ◡ — ◡ ◡ — — | *epitr enh*

◡ ◡ — — — ◡ ◡ — ◡ ◡ — — | *ion hem f*

The second of these two schemes appears already in Pindar, *Pyth.* 9, str. 1 and 3. In this case also *mol ba* is unanimously interpreted as a syncopated form of the iambic dimeter catalectic.[9]

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[7] *Strophengestaltung in der griechischen Tragödie* (*SitzWien* 231.4, 1957) 152.

[8] *Metrical Studies in the Lyrics of Sophocles* (Leiden 1964) 53.

[9] *Cf.* O. Schroeder, *Sophoclis cantica* (Leipzig 1907) 46: "dimetra duo iambica (molosso-bacchea)"; Pohlsander, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.8) 137.

From this rapid and basic list of examples, which could be extended to include also Pindar's dactylo-epitrites (I shall discuss this elsewhere), two factors emerge with indisputable clarity: the rhythmical ambivalence of the molossus and the function of the dimeter *mol + ba ∼ dim ia*ʌ.

Now if we take into account the structure of the strophic clausula in the poem on the Lille papyrus: × — ◡ — ◡ — ◡ — × *ia + reiz* (∼ *dim ia hypercat*),[10] we are justified in maintaining that in the epodic clausula the molossus must be understood as a contracted form of the iambic epitrite and that the whole verse is the equivalent of the iambic dimeter catalectic—a structure which fulfils the function of the clausula suited to a dactylo-epitrite context, just as in Sophocles' *Trachiniae*.

Many years ago I was of the opinion that molossus + bacchius and molossus + iambic monometer[11] were to be identified as forms of the ithyphallic and of the lecythian with a long syllable in the second *sedes* in place of the short — × — ◡ — —, — × — ◡ — ◡ —.[12] Such identification was already maintained by O. Schroeder,[13] at least for the molossus + iambic monometer. Haslam seems to assent to this thesis, though his formulation is not clear.[14] I am no longer confident as to the correctness of this hypothesis. Certainly the verse in Alcman fr.14 P. × — ◡ — ◡ | — × — ◡ — —, which appears to have the scheme *reiz + ithyph*, would be a strong argument in favour of the identity of *mol ba* with the ithyphallic if there were not other equally persuasive solutions possible.[15]

I believe that I have demonstrated that the nexus molossus + bacchius is not just a Stesichorean curiosity but a rhythmic figure well attested in Greek poetry—and a very ancient one, as is proved by the new poems of Stesichorus.

It is significant that it is precisely in a Sicilian ode, *Pythian* 1, written for Hiero and in dactylo-epitrites, that Pindar has introduced

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[10] *Cf.* Gentili, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.2) 10, 14, 16.

[11] *Cf.* Simon. fr.521.4, quoted above.

[12] B. Gentili, *Metrica dei Greci* (Messina 1950, repr. 1958) 101, 158; *idem, Polinnia. Poesia greca arcaica*² (Messina/Firenze 1965) 325.

[13] *Grundriss der griechischen Versgeschichte* (Heidelberg 1930) 83.

[14] *Art.cit.* (*supra* n.3) 37 n.16: "the verse [*mol + ba*] is *reminiscent* [italics mine] of the ithyphallic..., which often serves as a dactylo-epitrite clausula in tragedy (and *cf.* Simonides *PMG* 76.7)."

[15] R. Pretagostini, *QuadUrbCC* 26 (1977) 72.

two elements typical of the metrical style of Stesichorus, who lived
and worked at Himera: the so-called disyllabic *anceps* (str. 6
— ◡◡ — ◡◡ — ◡◡ — ◡◡ — ◡◡ — — ◡ — —)[16]   and   the   trimeter   — — —
◡ — —   — ◡ —   (str. 3), which in its first two metra repeats the very
scheme of Stesichorus' dimeter.

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[16] *Cf.* B. Gentili, in *Problemi di metrica classica* (Genova 1978) 22ff, and *op.cit.* (*supra* n.2)
17.