THE AORIST INFINITIVES IN -ΕΕΙΝ IN EARLY GREEK HEXAMETER POETRY

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Abstract: This paper examines the distribution of thematic infinitive endings in early Greek epic in the context of the long-standing debate about the transmission and development of Homeric epic diction. There are no aorist infinitives in -έμεν in Homer which would scan as ᴗ ᴗ − before a consonant or caesura (for example *βαλέμεν): instead we find unexplained forms in -έειν (for example βαλέειν). It is argued that this artificially ‘distended’ ending -έειν should be viewed as an actual analogical innovation of the poetic language, resulting from a proportional analogy to the ‘liquid’ futures. The total absence of aoristic -έειν in Hesiod is unlikely to be coincidental: the analogical form must have been the product of a specifically East Ionic Kunstsprache, and so could have been simply unknown in some other Ionian school of epic poetry where Hesiod was trained. Finally, the striking avoidance of anapaestic aorist infinitives in -έμεν is argued to be explained better under the ‘diffusionist’ approach to the Aeolic elements in Homeric diction than under the ‘Aeolic phase’ theory.

Keywords: Homer, Hesiod, epic diction, Aeolic phase, Greek dialects

As is well known, the language of the Homeric epics contains several different infinitival formations in the active voice, such as -ειν, -(έ)μεν, -(έ)μεναι and -έναι. Among them is a robust group of thematic aorist infinitives ending in -έειν: βαλέειν, φαγέειν, θανέειν, ἰδέειν, δακέειν, ἑλέειν, etc., with 102 attestations from 19 verbal roots in total.1 The ‘extra’ -ε- before the familiar ending -ειν in these forms is puzzling: the expected active infinitive form of aor. βαλέ/ό- is βαλεῖν ( < *βαλε(h)εν), not βαλέειν.2 This problem has not yet received the attention it deserves, nor is a satisfactory explanation available.

The reason why these forms are interesting is twofold: firstly, as will be shown below, the infinitives in -έειν are likely to be artificial forms, created by the singers in response to phonological changes that had affected traditional formulae; a proper appreciation of these forms can therefore enhance our understanding of the processes that conspired to produce the Homeric Kunstsprache. Secondly, the peculiar distribution of these forms in early hexameter poetry, in particular their absence from Hesiod, may shed light on the history of epic diction in Archaic Greece.

Let us start by stating two important facts about the distribution of the forms. First, aorist infinitives in -έειν are only made from roots of the structure (C)V ˘ C (βαλ-, φαγ-, ἰδ-, etc.). Secondly, the majority of these forms are found before a consonant, and whenever they stand

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Symbols: ‖ penthemimeral caesura, ‖ tritotrochaic caesura, ˘ hephemimeral caesura, а bucolic dieresis, x|x bridge, # beginning or end of verse. A number (1-6) above a vowel in the princeps indicates the foot. In using ‘princeps’ and ‘biceps’ instead of ‘thesis’ and ‘arisis’ I follow West (1982).

1 -έειν is the predominant thematic aorist ending in Homer: there are 102 ‘second’ aorist infinitives in -έειν vs. 35 forms in -ειν and 55 forms in -έμεν in the Homeric epics (statistics for the Iliad are based on West (1998), who writes τε ἰδεῖν instead of τ’ ἰδέειν).

2 The infinitival suffix *-e hen was used in Proto-Greek with thematic present, future and ‘second’ aorist stems; this state of affairs is continued in Attic-Ionic, west Greek and ‘Achaean’ dialects, cf. Mycenaean e-ke-e (h)ekēhen/ (on the dialectal outcomes of *-e hen, see García Ramón (1977)). By the loss of intervocalic *-h- and vowel contraction *e hen gave Attic-Ionic -ειν (i.e. /-ēn/, with a ‘spurious diphthong’).
before a vowel, they are almost always followed by a caesura.\(^3\) Aorist infinitives in -έειν thus invariably conform to an anapaestic foot \((\cdot \cdot -)\). It appears, therefore, that the forms in -έειν have not only a clearly defined morphological domain (being made exclusively from aorist stems of the type βαλέ/-ο- and never from present stems of the type φέρε/-ο-), but also a very specific metrical profile.

We can now turn to the origin of the ending -έειν. According to a popular view (going back to G. Curtius \textit{apud} Renner (1868) 34), these aorist infinitives are a product of Attic μεταχαρακτηρισμός, viz. a transposition of ΦΥΓΕΕΝ written in the Old Ionic alphabet (with a metrical structure \(\cdot \cdot \cdot \) before a consonant) into φυγέειν with the ending of Attic φυγεῖν.\(^4\) But if this indeed were the process responsible for the creation of aorist βαλέειν, etc., one would expect that infinitives corresponding to present stems like φέρω (inf. *pherehen, spelled in the Old Ionic alphabet as ΦΕΡΕΕΝ) would show such distension, too. Yet this is precisely not the case: simple thematic present stems never take this ending.

A much more plausible explanation is given by P. Chantraine, who implicitly suggests viewing the suffix -έειν as a product of the following proportional analogy:\(^5\)

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{present stems in -ée/o-} & \quad \text{thematic aorists in -é/ό-} \\
\text{φορεῖν} & : \quad \text{βαλεῖν} \\
\text{φορέειν} & : \quad X, \text{where } X \text{ was resolved as } \text{βαλέειν}
\end{align*}
\]

However, this does not answer one crucial question. It is unclear why thematic aorists should have been modelled precisely on the contract verbs in -έε/ο-; \(^6\) given the lack of any special paradigmatic connection between these two classes of forms. For this reason, I would like to take Chantraine’s idea one step further and suggest that an analogy of the same kind was triggered by the so-called ‘liquid futures’, i.e. the asigmatic forms of the type κερέω, ἐρέω, μενέω, which likewise had active infinitives both in contracted -εῖν and uncontracted -έειν. The reason these forms provide a somewhat likelier starting point for the creation of inf. aor. -έειν is that many asigmatic futures in -é/ο- are specifically associated with thematic aorists (fut. τεμέ/ό- : aor. τεμέε/ο-; fut. κτενέε/ο- : aor. κτανέ/ό-; fut. ἑλέε/ο- : aor. ἑλέ/ό-; etc.). Therefore an aorist infinitive βαλέειν (a nonce form from a historical point of view) could have been created beside expected βαλεῖν (< *gwal-ehen) in order to match the situation in the future of the same verb, where both βαλέειν and βαλέειν (< *g^w^al-eh-ehen)\(^8\) were already available:

\(^3\) They are usually located in the biceps of the third foot and the princeps of the fourth foot or in the biceps of the second foot and the princeps of the fifth foot (in rare cases -έειν fills the princeps of the fifth foot).

\(^4\) Simmerle (1874) 8; Rzach (1875–1876) 441; Hermann (1914) 262; Schwyzer (1939) 807; Wuest (1943) 99; Nicosia (1996) 38, n.32.

\(^5\) Chantraine (1958) 493. Smyth (1894) 499 generally subscribes to Renner’s view, but adds a wise (if confusing) provision, ‘false transcription of ΕΕΕΕ through the analogy of φιλέειν and congeners’.

\(^6\) The group would also include several primary simple thematic verbs of the structure *CRe(h/u̯)e/o-, for example χέω, inf. χέειν ~ χεῖν.

\(^7\) As well as synonymous and likely related fut. κτανέε/ο- : aor. κτανέ/ό-. The future forms from the root κτάν- are in several instances unanimously transmitted with -α- in the root (κατακτάνεσθε II. 6.409; κατακτάνεσθε Il. 14.481; καταναίνεται Il. 18.309, etc.): if fut. κτανέαν / κτανέαν was a real form, the parallelism with aor. κτανέαν is all the more evident.

\(^8\) The Proto-Indo-European suffix of the future tense was *-h₁s-, reflected in Vedic futures (3 sg. fut. act. vaniyati ‘will win’ < *yen-h₁s-ε/ο-) and desideratives (3 sg. desid. act. vívāsati ‘wants to win’ < *y̯u-mp-h₁s-e/o-), Old Irish futures (3 sg. fut. act. céla ‘will hide’ < *kklase/ε/ο- < *ki-k₁-h₁s-e/o-) and the Hittite iterative suffix -šš₂, for example īšša-‘perform’ (see Jasanoff (2003) 134–35). In Proto-Greek the laryngeal was regularly deleted between a stop and the following *s (<sik-h₁s-e/o- > *nik-se/o- > ἵκε/ο-), but was ‘vocalized’ after resonants (*-h₁s- > *es- > *-eh-).
The key then becomes the accentuation of the infinitive: the presents of the type φέρω (inf. φέρειν) never have infinitives of the type *φέρεειν, because they never had a circumflex suffix -εῖν. The next question is whether this -έειν originated in the singers’ own vernacular or within the Homeric Kunstsprache. The second scenario is a priori just as likely as the first, since artificial forms may be generated by the same mechanisms as forms in a natural language. The ending -έειν cannot be of Aeolic provenance, but was it ever a real form, current in one of the Ionic dialects? This question has to be answered in the negative: the aorist infinitive ending -έειν is not found in epichoric Ionic, is absent from iambic and elegiac poetry and has a demonstrably epicizing function in Ionic prose. The grammarians call the ending Ionic (for example EM 465.49–50: <Ἰδέειν>: [...] οἱ Ἴωνες ἐπὶ τῶν εἰς ειν ἀπαρεμφάτων, πλεονάζοντες τὸ ε, διὰ τοῦ εειν προφέρουσι), and yet it is very likely that ‘:Anyes’ here stands for Ionic hexameter poetry and not for any of the spoken dialects. The only place where the aorist ending -έειν exists is the epic Kunstsprache, and based on the facts as we have them the only methodologically correct conclusion would be to view -έειν as a product of the poetic grammar. The aorist infinitives in -έειν therefore stand on par with other artificial Homeric forms that were never used in any spoken dialect of ancient Greek. The closest formal parallel is found in
the cases of diectasis, viz. the distended forms of the type ὁρόωντες, which are likewise artificial creations, brought to life as a compromise between the original metrical value of traditional forms (*ὁρᾰ́οντες) and the singers’ habits of daily speech (ὁρῶντες).15

The parallel case of ὁρόωντες is instructive, since it helps us to see why the infinitive in -έειν had to be created: just like in the case of *ὁρᾰ́οντες, the innovation in the aorist infinitive was necessitated by the sound changes that distorted the original prosodic structure of the form.

Let us illustrate this point with the example of an Old Ionic formula: *balehen de he ἰάμος ἀνόγεν, ‘heart was urging to hit him’ (5 ὴ – ὴ – ὴ – ὴ – ὴ – x #). In this exempli gratia reconstruction of a traditional formula the infinitive *balehen (< *gʷalehen) would have conformed to an anapaestic foot. But by the time the Homeric epics took their final form, the Ionian singers presumably only had contracted *balẹ̄n (βαλεῖν) in their own vernacular, since the loss of *-h- and the vowel contraction *-ese- > *-ehe- > *-ee- > ἃ must have been completed in Ionic by that time.16 Even though the singers were constantly modernizing the epic diction by importing elements of contemporary speech,17 doing so was impossible in this case, because using the form βαλεῖν would have resulted in a defective third foot:

*βῆ δ’ ἰδὸς Τεύκρος, βαλεῖν δὲ ἐ θυμὸς ἀνόγεν − − − − − | ὴ – ὴ – ὴ – ὴ – ὴ – x #

and went straight for Teukros, heart urgent to hit him

Importantly, the Ionian singers in this hypothetical scenario would have been confronted with exactly the same problem if the traditional verse-final formula ‘heart urgent to hit (him)’ was only known to them in its Aeolic shape *balemen de he ἔμμεν (always in the fifth foot before vowel; 1× in the Iliad, 4× in the Odyssey), see Renaud (2005).

15 For this interpretation of diectasis, see Schulze apud Hermann (1914) 245; Wackernagel (1916) 66–70; Parry (1932) 33; for a detailed discussion of Homeric material, see Meister (1921) 62–80. Another similar case is Homeric φόως, ‘light’: it is a distended form of pyrrhic φάος, but φόως is mostly found before a consonant or caesura, thus preserving what would have been the scansion before the vowel contraction. The similarity between the infinitives in -έειν and distended forms of the type -οωντ- and -οῳ- has been noticed before (for example Mangold (1873) 204; Latacz et al. (2009) 2), but no attention has been paid to the details of the very characteristic distribution of the ending or the real mechanisms that may have been responsible for creating this distribution.

16 That the contraction product ἃ was unresolvable at the late stage of the tradition is evident, for instance, from countless cases of contracted infinitival ending -εῖν occupying the princes, or from the augmented forms of ἐπομέν, ἔρχομαι, ἔθεσι, ἐπέστρεψα whose initial /ε̄/ (spelled <εἰ>) is likewise mostly located in the princes. More one telling case is the infinitive εἶναι which goes back to *ehenai with the same suffix *-enai as in inf. pres. ἔχειν or perf. λελυκέναι (see Cowgill (1964) 354–59; Ruijgh (1996) 294–95). Aorist infinitive ἀγαγεμεν from an east Thessalian inscription published in 1980 (SEG 27.226) has put to rest E. Hermann’s theory that in Aeolic dialects thematic aorist infinitives had the ending *-e(h)en ((1914) 262). Further evidence against Hermann’s claim may come from Cretan inf. aor. προϝειπέμεν (IC I.18.1), if the ending -μεν in this form is attributable to an Aeolic substrate (which, however, is not the only possible explanation of the form; see García Ramón (1973) 268–69). (It is harder
Our analysis of the infinitives in -έειν thus does not depend on whether one assumes an ‘Aeolic phase’ of the epic diction that left some residue in the Homeric epics after the tradition had migrated to Ionia, or posits instead an Ionic epic tradition existing side by side with an Aeolic tradition and borrowing from it. either way, artificial forms of the type βαλέειν and ἰδέειν must have been generated in order to remedy situations like those described above, when the forms in singers’ own vernacular no longer had the same metrical value as the traditional forms, whether Ionic or Aeolic. Importantly, both scenarios explain why forms in -έειν are invariably found before a consonant or a caesura: since the only way of using a form like *balehen / *balemen in hexameter was to place its final syllable before a consonant or a pause and use it in princeps, the expectation would be for βαλέειν to be used in the same metrical environment as *balehen / *balemen, which βαλέειν was designed to replace.

One logical consequence of the solution proposed above is that the ending -έειν must have been created rather late in the history of the epic diction, possibly at a time when different traditions of hexameter poetry had already become firmly entrenched on either side of the Aegean. This hypothesis receives additional support from the distribution of the ending in early epic poetry: -έειν is completely absent from the Theogony and the Works and Days, which only have -είν and -εμεν as infinitive endings in the ‘strong’ aorist.

The Hesiodic situation in regard to thematic aorist active infinitives is thus in a sharp contrast with the Homeric: 92% of these forms in Hesiod end in -είν, while only 18% do in Homer. The
only aorist infinitive in -έμεν found in Hesiod is πεφραδέμεν, ‘to point out’ (Op. 766). It contrasts with Homeric πεφραδέξειν (Od. 19.477), both forms filling the first foot and the princeps of the second one. Despite the lack of sufficient numbers of attestations to base any statistical analysis on, the distribution of different aorist infinitives of φράζω in principle does support our theory: the simplest account of this discrepancy is that while the poet of the Odyssey was able to employ the form πεφραδέξειν when traditional Ionic *pepʰrađēhen contracted to an unmetrical *pepʰradēn, Hesiod – granted Op. 766 contains the poet’s ipsissima verba – did not have this option available to him and had to use an infinitive in -έμεν instead. Naturally, an argument based on two forms cannot be expected to command immediate acceptance. However, it is but a striking illustration of the larger picture that we see when we look at the entirety of the relevant data: the complete absence of -έειν from the rather sizeable genuinely Hesiodic corpus is very unlikely to be fortuitous, and the contrast with the situation in Homer where infinitives in -έειν abound is almost certainly a reflection of a systematic difference between the language of one poetic tradition and that of the other.

It appears that even though the dialect of Hesiod’s poems is ‘essentially the same as that of Homer’, the former poet did not have access to the poetic tradition where the thematic aorist infinitives in -έειν were available as substitutes for contracted (and therefore unmetrical) Ionic forms in -έμεν. The conclusion that emerges is that infinitives in -έειν must have been a product of one specific east Ionic Kunstsprache; they were unknown in the school of epic poetry where Hesiod may have been trained.  

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25 τραφέμεν printed by Rzach at Th. 480 on the evidence of Laur. 32.16 and accepted by Troxler ((1964) 100) is indefensible: both the paradoss and the following ἑκτελόμεναι τε suggest inf. pres. τραφέμεν (on the value of Laur. 32.16, see West (1966) 56).

26 In the Odyssey we also find inf. πεφραδέμεν (7.49), but it is followed by δήεις, and it is quite likely that πεφραδέξειν δήεσ was avoided for euphonic reasons.

27 While it would have been nice if there were any formulaic connection between the verses in the Odyssey and the Works and Days, that would allow comparing and contrasting the poets’ procedures, the contexts are different, and there is no evidence that parts of either verse come down from the stock of traditional material.

28 On the much vexed question of the (in)authenticity of the ‘Days’ section of Works and Days (vv. 765–825), bracketed, for example, in the OCT, see Ercolani (2010) 412–16, with literature. The Homeric form πεφραδέξειν (Od. 19.477) is also not beyond doubt: it has been argued that the passage containing the form is a later addition to the text (for example Kammer (1873) 650).

29 -έμεν is found as a present infinitive ending 16 times in the Theogony and the Works and Days, in forms made from 15 different verbal stems, in addition to two others.

30 West (1966) 79.

31 This paper is not the place to put forth far-reaching theories concerning the formation and constituent parts of Hesiod’s poetic language; I find myself in substantial agreement with Cassio (2009). It is important to emphasize that Hesiod uses some un-Homeric elements of east Ionic speech: in addition to examples like Ἐρμείης or δίη, discussed by Cassio, this can be seen in the typical east Ionic conjunction ἔστε, ‘as long as, until’, (9× in Herodotus) that appears in Hesiod (Th. 754), but is avoided in Homeric epics (where we only find εἰς ὁ κε(ν)). The Hesiodic text may look more Ionic than Homer’s because the poet had an Ionian audience in mind when he was composing or because the (east) Ionic dialect was at that time associated with a prestigious and popular kind of poetry. Either way, the Hesiodic poetry is just as firmly entrenched in the east Ionic tradition, as it is rooted on the mainland. The absence of artificial aor. -έειν in Hesiod observed above dovetails nicely with this theory: while the Ionic of Hesiod is often more linguistically advanced than the Ionic of the Homeric epics (the amount of vowel contractions and the absence of initial ἐθυ possibly reflecting the situation in vernacular Ionic of the time), the forms in -έειν entered the Homeric tradition late enough to have been unknown in the mainland when the Theogony and the Works and Days were composed. Note that distended forms in -έειν from ‘liquid’ futures and contract verbs are also absent from Hesiod.

32 This would not be the only isogloss separating the language of the Homeric epics from that of Hesiod: for example, consider Hesiodic ἰόμος, ‘sweet’, (< *μαδόμος) vs. Homeric νήδυμος (ὕπνος) which shows a reanalysis of ν-movable, something that would only be possible if a verbal form ending in -ν was followed by an east Ionic psilotic form ἰόμος. (For this type of metanalysis, see recently Reece (2009) 39–56.)
Not unexpectedly, things are different with the Ps.-Hesiodea. The *Shield of Heracles*, likely composed in the beginning of the sixth century, shows the following forms: ἑλέειν (Sc. 337), λιπέειν (Sc. 332; before a consonant), πιέειν (Sc. 252), πραθέειν (Sc. 240; before a consonant) and μαπέειν (Sc. 231, 304). In all instances where -έειν is followed by a vowel, the infinitive ending stands before the main caesura of the third foot. The *Scutum* thus faithfully replicates the Homeric state of affairs. In the *Catalogue of Women* and the *Great Ehoiai* we find three examples of thematic aorist infinitives in -έειν, all of which are found in verses that are either direct borrowings from the Homeric text or have been constructed from Homeric material.

To sum up the proposal made thus far, Homeric aorist infinitives of the type βαλέειν have been argued to be artificial formations which originated through an analogy to ‘liquid futures’ of the type βαλεῖν / βαλέειν in one specific east Ionian poetic tradition.

By way of concluding the paper, I would like to point out the relevance of this small section of Homeric grammar to the larger and much-debated problem of the dialect components of the epic diction. An exempli gratia reconstruction *balehen (*balemen) de he ἑίμοις ἀνόγεν* was used above to argue that forms like *baleē (βαλέειν)* must have been created in response to the sound changes which rendered contracted thematic aorist infinitives in the singers’ own vernacular unusable in traditional formulae:  bα’lēν de he ἑίμοις ἀνόγενθ. Let us now speculate what the singers would do when confronted with an identical aporia involving a present stem instead, for example *(h)ekhēhen / *(h)ekhemen, ‘to have’, or *pherehen / *pheremen, ‘to carry’.

We have already seen above why *ἐχέειν or *φερέειν was not an option, differently from aorists βαλέειν and ἰδέειν. In some cases the singers were probably able to modify the formula by adding a particle or a conjunction, for example *(h)ekhēhen patrōi̯i̯ a panta# → καὶ Ἐχειν πατρώϊα πάντα, ‘and hold his father’s property’, but this solution would not have been applicable in too many cases. What we mostly find are present infinitives with the Aeolic ending -έμεν occupying precisely such metrical slots in which Ionic -ειν would have been metrically inept.

A typical example is *Il. 9.411:

διχθαδίας κήρας | φερέμεν θανάτοι τέλος δέ

I carry two sorts of destiny toward the day of my death.

33 The date of the composition of the *Scutum* is traditionally placed somewhere between 590 and 570 BC (see the references in Hirschberger (2004) 49, n.169; for the terminus post quem, see in particular Janko (1986)).

34 This is not surprising given that the central part of this poem is modelled on the Homeric description of the shield of Achilles (*Il. 18.478–608*).

35 On the authorship and date of both poems, see Hirschberger (2004) 42–51 with rich bibliographical references to which Rutherford (2012) can now be added. On the dialect features in the language of the *Catalogue*, see recently Janko (2012) 41–43.

36 ἰδέειν λεμπρὸν φῶς ἥλιοιο which can be compared to Homeric verse-end formulae ὃρα φῶς ἥλιοιο and ὄψεσθαι λαμπρὸν φῶς ἥλιοιο. Lastly, ἐκφυγέειν καὶ ἀλύξαι (*fr. 150.29 M–W*) may have come directly from *Il. 8.243 = Od. 12.216*, as Meier (1976) 242 notes.

37 ἀγέμεν (*Il. 1.323, 443, 7.418, 420, 471, 19.195, Od. 14.274); ἐχέμεν (*Il. 4.302, 5.492, 9.708, 13.2, 17.476, 19.148, Od. 4.419, 7.313, 8.529); ἐσθί έμεν (*Od. 2.305, 21.69); μενέμεν (*Il. 5.234, 9.411, 24.119 = 147, 176, 196); μελέμεν (*Od. 18.421). The count would of course depend on the edition used: in particular, the mss evidence for -ειν vs. -έμεν in the biceps of the fourth and the fifth foot is foggy. My figures are based on West’s edition (cross-checked against Ludwich’s apparatus), since West, as a rule, does not change all instances of -ειν at the bucolic diaeresis before vowel to -έμεν (see West (1998) xxx–xxxi).
Present infinitives of the type φερέμεν with an Aeolic ending may be plausibly viewed as borrowings from the parallel poetic tradition, necessitated by the absence of Ionic forms that could fill the slot ᴗ ᴗ – 4 in traditional formulae, or, no less plausibly, as remnants from an earlier stage of the epic diction, retained because there were no metrically equivalent forms in contemporary Ionic. Neither approach would be easy to refute.

Anapaestic present infinitives like φερέμεν in the example above cannot be viewed separately from an even larger group of dactylic infinitives in -έμεν, such as inf. pres. ἑλκέμεν or inf. aor. ἐλθέμεν, the suffix of which for the most part occupies the biceps of the fourth or the fifth foot. The use of these forms is governed by very similar demands of the meter: Ionic ἑλκεῖν and ἐλθεῖν would have resulted in an undesirable spondee, while Aeolic ἑλκέμεν and ἐλθέμεν conformed to the well-known preference for a dactylic word-end before the bucolic dieresis and before the sixth foot. Just like φερέμεν above, the forms like ἑλκέμεν and ἐλθέμεν can be plausibly accounted for either as old Aeolisms or as products of a more recent ‘Aeolicization’.

So far, so good – but the problem with this neat picture becomes clear once we recapitulate what we have learned about Aeolic infinitives in -έμεν: in Homer we find present infinitives of the type ἑλκέμεν that scan as dactyls and present infinitives of the type φερέμεν that scan as anapaestis; we also find dactylic aorist infinitives of the type ἐλθέμεν, but – and this is quite striking – we do not find anapaestic aorist infinitives of the type *βαλέμεν. Instead, we find artificial forms of the type βαλέμεν.

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The ending -έμεν as such has long become part and parcel of discussions about the dialectal components of the Homeric epics; however, the interesting discrepancy in the attestation of the actual infinitival forms (schematically presented in the table above) seems to have been overlooked by previous researchers, and its relevance for the study of the history of the epic diction has not been duly appreciated. If one wants to understand the processes that have conspired to produce the Homeric epic diction, one would do well to consider the problem of *βαλέμεν: specifically, the proponents of the ‘‘Aeolic phase’’ theory would need a scenario that would explain why *βαλέμεν was superseded by metrically equivalent and arguably artificial βαλέειν, while the ‘‘diffusionists’’ would be expected to be able to explain adequately the avoidance of *βαλέμεν as a replacement for the metrically inept Ionic *βαλέν in traditional formulæ.

38 That is, the avoidance of the bucolic and Meister’s bridges (² – 5 and ² – 5, respectively). See Bekker (1863) 144–48; Meister (1921) 7–9, 12–22; Witte (1972) 88–90; Nagy (1974) 74–75.

39 Aorists of the type *βαλέμεν are exceptionally rare in Homer, and each occurrence can be independently motivated: πιέμεν (Od. 15.378) is surely analogical to its metrically lengthened dactylic doublet πιέμεν (II. 16.825; Od. 16.143, 18.3); φαγέμεν is followed by πιέμεν in three out of its five occurrences (Od. 10.386, 15.378, 16.143, 17.404, 18.3); πορραθέμεν δῆμος (Od. 7.49) could be viewed as a substitute for cacophonous *πορραθέειν δῆμος (see above n.26). Finally, τραφέμεν (II. 7.199, 18.436; Od. 3.28, always in VE formula γενέσθαι τε τραφέμεν τε) is a special case: aor. τραφέ- has a passive meaning and is exceedingly rare (in post-Homeric times it is only found once in Callimachus). If intr. aor. τραφέ- was on its way out in east Ionic, giving way to aor. pass. τράφη-, it is not unreasonable to speculate that at some point *τραφεῖν was no longer a real form for the poets who only had τραφῆναι in their vernacular, and therefore artificial *τραφέειν could not have been coined easily. This particular situation would warrant the use of Aeolic τραφέμεν.
This problem can only be discussed adequately in the larger context of Aeolic elements in epic diction and their treatment in the Ionian epic tradition; space limitations prevent such discussion in the present study, the main objective of which has been to clarify the origin of aorist infinitives in -έειν. Nevertheless, a brief statement to this effect may seem warranted. All things being equal, it appears to the present author that in this particular case the ‘diffusionist’ approach offers a better explanation of the facts: when *-ehen contracted to -ẹ̄n, a repair strategy was necessary in such cases as our exempli gratia reconstruction ἱ ballehen de he ἕνως ἀνόγετον; the artificial form -έειν, with its unmistakably Ionic make-up, was preferred to the foreign -έμεν. Now under the ‘Aeolic phase’ theory it remains unclear why in the process of Ionicization an Ionian bard would replace a foreign form in -έμεν by a form in -έειν which, according to the explanation presented above, likewise did not belong to his own vernacular; such verses as ἱ balemen de he ἕνως ἀνόγετον were not in any immediate danger of becoming unmeterical, and the singer could simply keep the Aeolic form. It is noteworthy that while artificial forms generated by the preference for dactylic word-end or other metrical factors abound, there are no cases in Homer where the proponents of an Aeolic phase can suspect an Aeolic form to have been replaced by a metrically equivalent artificial form. Seen in this perspective, the infinitive in -έειν would support the diffusionists’ view of the Aeolisms in the Homeric dialect. It may not be the most important argument in favour of this view, but it cannot be ignored.

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40 It has been argued that perfect participles in -ότος, -ότι, -ότα (for example -τεθηνήτοτες, -βεβαίατα, -μεμιμωιτα) represent an attempt to reconcile ‘original’ Aeolic forms in -ντος, -ντη, etc. (for example Boeotian ἀντεθεοντες, Lesbian κετελιθοθόντος, Thessalian ἐπεστακοντα) with the Ionic declension in -(κ)ότος, -(κ)ότη, etc., thus illustrating an Aeolic form being replaced by an artificial one (for example Meillet (1918) 293; Wathelet (1970) 329; Janko (1992) 17). However, there is no need to invoke Aeolic in this case at all: the expected Old Ionic forms like *μεμαήτα (ᴗ ᴗ ᴗ ᴗ) and *κατατεθηνήτατες (ᴗ ᴗ − − ᴗ ᴗ) had to be accommodated to the hexameter, and Homeric -(κ)μεμιμωιτα and -(κ)τεθηνήτατες can be explained as instances of metrical lengthening, or, rather, as metrically lengthened forms produced by allomorphic remodelling, that is, by substituting for the suffix allomorphic of the original stem the suffix allomorphic of the nominative (*-ός); the analogy was additionally supported by the declensional pattern of nominal stems in -οτ-, for example Ἦδος, Ἦδοτος. (While it may seem unconventional to use the term ‘metrical lengthening’ for morphological analogy, there is in fact little difference between the two, as long as one adopts a view of metrical lengthening and shortening according to which these are not random processes of adjusting the vowel quantity in accordance with the demands of the meter, but rather an actual analogical innovation: see Wyatt (1969); Nussbaum (1998) 155; Rau (2009) 180).
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