LOCATING POWER: SPATIAL SIGNS OF SOCIAL RANKING IN HOMER AND THE TALE OF THE HEIKE

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Abstract. How do Homeric characters ‘position’ themselves spatially and figuratively in relation to each other? By comparing their behaviour and language with those of their counterparts in the Tale of the Heike, the medieval Japanese epic tale of warriors, it is evident that the spatial metaphor of ‘high’ and ‘low’ in ranking, common in Japanese and English, does not appear to be shared by Homer.

Who are the heroes? This question is implicit in virtually every study of Homer and can be and has been tackled in a number of ways.¹ We can look at the use of the word ἤρως (‘hero’) itself, or we may look at those being described as ἀγαθός (‘good’), ἀριστός (‘best’) or as possessing ἀρετή (‘virtue’), which primarily refers to their military excellence and accompanying honour and wealth. They are also called βασιλῆς (‘kings’), whose common epithets are βουληφόροι (‘counsellors’) and διοτρεφεῖς (‘Zeus-nurtured’), which emphasise their responsibility as the leaders of their people and their Zeus-given authority and privilege. Many of them are indeed ‘half-gods’ (cf. Hesiod’s byname for heroes, ἠμίθεοι, at Works and Days 160), having one divine parent or at least some divine blood through their ancestors. Their divine connection often also means that they have noble, god-like features distinguishable from others, both in their physical appearance and in their manners (e.g., Il. 3.166-70, Od. 4.62-64).

The aim of the present study is to examine further Homeric heroes’ relationship with other human beings by looking at the way they are ‘positioned’ in relation to others. I believe that this examination of spatial relationships, both physical and figurative, will reveal a fundamentally egalitarian perception of humanity in Homeric society. I am also using the Tale of the Heike, a medieval Japanese heroic tale of warriors, as an additional resource, to provide an example of more clearly hierarchical society that makes

¹ Earlier versions of this article were read at a Classics Seminar at the Open University in London in 2000 and at the Classical Association Annual Meeting in Manchester in 2001. I would like to thank the members of the audience at both meetings for the discussion which contributed much to the subsequent revision of the paper. Thanks are also due to the editor and the two anonymous referees of Scholia for their helpful comments and suggestions.
a striking contrast. This I hope will help to highlight some remarkable aspects of Homeric—and to some extent later Greek—society.

The choice of the Tale of the Heike as Homer’s ‘foil’ here among many other ‘epic’ traditions around the world may at first appear arbitrary. However, similar characteristics of Japanese and Homeric societies have been implicitly pointed out since E. R. Dodds’ study\(^2\) which famously applied the terms ‘shame-culture’ and ‘guilt-culture’ to Homer (especially the Iliad) and to Hesiod and some other later Greek authors respectively. Those were the terms first used by anthropologists to compare Japanese society to western (especially American) society in early to mid-twentieth century.\(^3\) Despite D. L. Cairns’ more recent and detailed study\(^4\) which criticises the use of the terms, I believe that Dodds’ general observation still stands, that Homeric heroes’ behaviour is largely governed by their concerns for what others think of them, the feelings expressed in such terms as τιμή (‘honour’), αἰδώς (‘shame’) and νέμεσις (‘indignation’). In this respect they are very much comparable to the Japanese in early to mid-twentieth century (as observed by Benedict) and in the twelfth-century Tale of the Heike, especially when we examine where they ‘place’ themselves in relation to others around them.

The choice of the Tale of the Heike rather than any other of the numerous classical Japanese literary works may also need explanation. The Tale of the Heike chronicles the rise and fall of the Heike, a powerful warrior clan who married into the imperial family and virtually ruled Japan for nearly two decades in the latter half of twelfth century (1168-85). They eventually lost the power struggle against the Genji, another warrior clan with the backing of the former emperor’s court, and became a government in exile within their own country. Their rule ended with the sea battle at Dan No Ura in 1185 when the majority of the members of the clan chose to drown themselves rather than to be captured, including the eight-year old emperor, Antoku. The Heike’s dramatic rise and fall deeply touched the nation and before long their tragic story was widely sung as the Tale of the Heike by blind bards with accompanying music played on a type of lute (biwa).\(^5\) Thanks to the popularity

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\(^2\) The Greeks and the Irrational (Berkeley 1951) 18-63.


\(^5\) Rather like in the case of Homer the authorship of the Tale of the Heike is not certain, but according to the most famous tradition reported in Tsurezuregusa (1330) of Yoshida Kenko, it was first composed by writing but for the purpose of oral performance by a blind
of the story and its oral media, which made it accessible to all social groups, the Tale has achieved the status of national epic and its warrior ethics has had fundamental influence on the Japanese moral codes in much the same way as Homer did in ancient Greece. Because of such similarities as these, I believe that the Tale provides the best comparative example from Japanese literature, a product of another ‘shame-culture’. How, then, did the heroes in each epic world place themselves in relation to others?

In the Tale of the Heike, spatial terms to indicate ranks are very prominent, reflecting the hierarchical society, with the emperor and aristocracy as the ruling class at the top, supported by the increasingly influential warrior class (some of whom are becoming part of the aristocracy) and the rest of the populace below. Many such terms employ the metaphor of ‘high’ and ‘low’ which is familiar in English and other modern languages. For example, the most common word for the emperor in the Tale is ‘shushou’ which literally means the ‘Lord above’. The imperial court is referred to as ‘tenjou’, which literally means the ‘residence above’, some high place, to which only those granted certain ranks may enter. The capital city where the emperor lives naturally has a higher status than the rest of the country, hence if you go there, you ‘go up’ and if you go away from there, you ‘go down’. The underlying ideas behind these expressions are undoubtedly the indigenous myth of the divine ancestry of the imperial family as well as the concept of the emperor as the Heaven’s child imported from China. This is in stark contrast with Greek words ἀναβαίνω and καταβαίνω, which merely refer to physical movement of

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bard. Cf. H. C. McCullough (tr.), The Tale of the Heike (Stanford 1988) 7. In this article, all the quotations from the Tale of the Heike are taken from this translation.


7 Another common term for the emperor, tenshi (a Chinese loan word literally meaning ‘heaven’s child’) points to the same connotation.

8 The most prominent example of this expression is the word that McCollough [5] translates as ‘the flight from the capital’ in a series of sections (e.g., ‘The Emperor’s Flight from the Capital’, ch. 7.13; ‘The Flight of the Heike from the Capital’, ch. 7.19) the original of which is miyako-ochi, literally meaning ‘the fall from the capital’.

9 See ‘The Flight from the Dazaifu’, ch. 8.4 (McCullough [5] 264), where the divine ancestry of the emperor is explicitly stated by Tokitada, a senior member of the Heike: ‘Our master is the direct forty-ninth-generation descendant of the Sun Goddess, and the eighty-first human mikado.’ The audience is reminded of this most poignantly by the young emperor’s final moments when he prepares to die by bidding farewell to the Grand Shrine of Ise, the seat of the Sun Goddess Amaterasu, his mythical ancestor. Cf. ‘The Drowning of the Former Emperor’, ch. 11.9 (McCullough [5] 378).
going up towards higher places, such as the inland, and going down towards lower places, such as the sea, respectively.\footnote{The word καταβάσαμον, however, does take on some symbolic connotation when it means the descent to the underworld. Cf. W. K. C. Guthrie, \textit{The Greeks and Their Gods} (London 1950) 227.}

The comparison with this aspect of the \textit{Tale of the Heike} brings us to the question whether Homer associated height with superior ranks in any way at all, either physically or figuratively. A simple survey of the words meaning high, that is, ὑπατος (‘highest’), ὑπερτατος (‘highest’), ὑπερτερος (‘higher’) and ὑψηλος (‘high’) will give us an overview.

The word ὑπατος can literally refer to the highest point, but is applied exclusively to Zeus (six times in \textit{Il.}, four times in \textit{Od.}) when it takes on the figurative meaning. The best example is Zeus as θεων ὑπατος και ὄριος (‘the highest and best of gods’), as in \textit{Iliad} 19.258, 23.43 and \textit{Odyssey} 19.303.\footnote{Other references to Zeus as ὑπατος are \textit{Il.} 5.756, 8.22, 8.31, 17.339; \textit{Od.} 1.45, 81, 24.473. There are two examples of ὑπατος not applied to Zeus but to Hector’s funeral pyre (\textit{Il.} 23.165, 24.787).} The word ὑπερτερος (‘higher’) occurs only once (at \textit{Il.} 11.786) and refers to Achilles’ superior birth in comparison with Patroclus’. Menoitus is telling his son of his role as Achilles’ advisor:

\begin{verbatim}
téknon ἐμὸν, γενεὴ μὲν ὑπερτερος ἐστιν Ἀχιλλεὺς,
πρεσβύτερος δὲ σὺ έσσι . . .
My son, by birth Achilles is higher
but you are the elder . . .
\end{verbatim}

In its context (\textit{Il.} 11.786-89), however, the emphasis is on Patroclus’ superior counsel due to his age, and therefore Achilles’ ‘higher’ status in one respect is counterbalanced by Patroclus’ ‘higher’ status in another. The passage presents the two heroes more as equals than as a master and a servant.

The word ὑπερτερος is applied to the glory of warriors on four occasions in the \textit{Iliad} (ἐυχος, \textit{Il.} 11.290; κῦς, \textit{Il.} 12.437, 15.491, 644).\footnote{Translation of longer passages from the \textit{Iliad} in this article are quoted from R. Lattimore (tr.), \textit{The Iliad of Homer} (Chicago 1951) with occasional modification.}


\begin{verbatim}
οἰχετ’ ἀνὴρ ὄριος, ἐμοὶ δὲ μέγεν ἐυχος ἐδωκε
Ζεὺς Κρονίδης: ἀλλ’ ίδες ἐλακνενε μόνυχας ἵππους
ἱππιμον δαναῶν, ἵν’ ὑπερτερον εὐχος ἄρησε.
\end{verbatim}
Their best man is gone, and Zeus, Kronos’ son, has consented to my great glory; but steer your single-foot horses straight on at the powerful Danaans, so win you the higher glory.

2. II. 12.436-38: the narrator describes Hector’s success.

"δὲ μὲν τῶν ἐπὶ ἵσα μάχη τέτατο πτόλεμός τε,
πρὶν γ’ ὦτε δὴ Ζεὺς κύδος ὑπέρτερον 'Εκτορι δῶκε
Πριαμίδῃ, ὃς πρῶτος ἑσπῆλατο τείχος 'Ἀχαίων.

so the battles fought by both sides were pulled fast and even until that time when Zeus gave the greater glory to Hektor, Priam’s son who was first to break into the wall of the Achaians.

3. II. 15.488-93: Hector calls out to his friends, seeing Teukros’ bow-string snap.

... since I have seen with my own eyes
how by the hand of Zeus their bravest man’s arrows were baffled.
Easily seen is the strength that is given from Zeus to mortals either in those into whose hands he gives the surpassing glory, or those he diminishes and will not defend them as now he diminishes the strength of the Argives, and helps us.

4. II. 15.644: After the description of excellent qualities of Periphetes, soon to fall victim to Hector (Zeus is supporting Hector as in II. 636ff.: 'Ἀχαίοι / θεσπεσίως ἐρῴθην ὅρ' 'Εκτορι καὶ Δί ποτι, ‘the Achaians /fled in unearthly terror before father Zeus and Hektor’).

"ὁς ρα τόθ’ ἐκτορί κύδος ὑπέρτερον ἑγγυάλιζε.

Thereby now higher was the glory he granted to Hektor.

It is striking to note that in each case above it is emphasised that glory, or indeed the ‘higher’ glory, is something to be granted by Zeus. Our example (1) above in particular makes it clear that anyone, with Zeus’ support, can achieve greater glory than that Hector has just achieved. There may be a hint of ‘higher’ rank here for those who receive the god’s favour, but the emphasis on Zeus as the dispenser of glory reminds the reader that such glory is only temporary and limits the prestige enjoyed by the heroes concerned.\textsuperscript{13} The words ὑπέρτερος

\textsuperscript{13} The remaining examples of the use of ὑπέρτερος in Homer are all in the expression κρέα(α) ὑπέρτερα (Od. 3.65, 470, 20.279), referring to the outer layer of meat, which is not necessarily the most ‘highly’ rated portion.
and ὑψηλός, on the other hand, can only apply to physical height of places or objects, most frequently fortifications, walls and parts of buildings, including palaces of kings such as Priam, Alcinous, Nestor and Odysseus. It may be argued that there is some association of high ceilings with the prestige of the dwellers of the building in some examples. However, that is not likely to be the case regarding the use of ὑψηλός for the Cyclops’ cave (Od. 9.183, 304) or Eumaeus’ enclosure for his pigs (Od. 14.6).

As far as this quick overview goes, there appears to be no one except Zeus to whom the ‘highest’ rank is attributed, and no human being is placed ‘higher’ than others in absolute terms. It is true that kings are often said to be respected ‘like the gods’ (e.g., Il. 12.312, 24. 258f.), and Zeus as the ultimate source of their superiority is inherent in the epithets διογενής (‘Zeus-born’) or διοτρεφής (‘Zeus-nurtured’) applied to them. However, their association with Zeus does not seem to place them any ‘higher’ than the others. This is in stark contrast with the effect that the myth of divine origin has had on the language to describe the emperor and the imperial family in the Japanese tradition.

There are, however, some other spatial signs that mark out prominent heroes. In the battle, the most obvious action to assert one’s superiority is to be the first to get to the battlefield and fight at the front. We have also seen in our example

\[14\] ὑπέρτατος: Il. 12.381, 23.451 (both referring to the top of a structure as location); ὑψηλός (applied to dwellings and parts of dwellings, e.g., pillars, gates, stairways): Paris: Il. 6.503; Hector’s: Il. 22.440; Priam’s: Il. 24.281; Achilles’ hut: Il. 12.131, 455, 24.449; Odysseus: Od. 1.126, 426, 18.32, 21.5, 22.176, 193; Nestor’s: Od. 3.402, 407, 17.110; Menelaus: Od. 4.304; Alcinous: Od. 7.131, 346; Eurytos: Od. 21.33; the Cyclops’ cave: Od. 9.183, 185 (fence of his yard), 304 (door). The adjective is also applied in a simile to a mountain compared to the Cyclops himself (Od. 9.192). Other examples include the descriptions of defensive walls and towers (Troy’s: Il. 3.384, 16.702, 21.540; Achaeans: Il. 7.338, 437, 12.386, 388, 16.397, 512, 18.275; Phaeacians: Od. 6.263, 7.45) and mountains, especially as the seat of Zeus (Il. 12.282, 16.297).

\[15\] Greek cosmology, Homer’s included, does have a very clear spatial division between those who live above (ὁφράνων), those who live on the earth (ἐπικόνων) and those who live below (χθόνων or κοινοχθόνων). Whilst the superiority of the heavenly gods to the earthly mortals is undoubted, the fact that some divinities who are as powerful as the Olympians dwell below the earth must have prevented the automatic association of high and low with superior and inferior in a hierarchical sense. For the distinction between humans and gods, and that between heavenly and chthonic gods, cf. Guthrie [10] 205-23 and C. G. Yavis, Greek Altars: Origins and Typology (Saint Louis 1949) 92f. Another important axis in Greek cosmology can be formulated as gods-humans-beasts, which can be applied to illustrate such cases as Pelops and Bellerophon who became very close with the Olympian gods but later fell to bestiality. Cf. C. Segal, Tragedy and Civilisation: An Interpretation of Sophocles (Cambridge, Mass. 1981) 3.
(2) of ὑπέρτερος above (Il. 12.436-38) that Hector achieved his greater glory by being the first to breach the Achaean wall.

To be among the first and foremost is an important article in the heroic code in Homer, as is stated clearly in Sarpedon’s famous address to his cousin Glaucus:

Γλαῦκε τις δὴ νωΐ τετιμήμεσθα μᾶλιστα ἐδρη τε κρέασιν τε ἰδεῖ πλείον δεπάσσαν ἐν λυκίη, πάντες δὲ θεοὶ ὡς εἰσφόροισι, καὶ τέμενος νεμόμεσθα μέγα Ξάνθου παρ’ ὀχθας καλὸν φυταλιῆς καὶ ὠροῦρης πυρρόφοροι; τῶν νῦν χρῆ λυκίοις μετὰ πρῶτοις ἕοντας εστάς ώδὲ μάχης καυστερῆς αντιβολήσαι, ὁφαρὰ τις ὡδ’ εἰπ’ λυκίων πῦκα θερηκτάνον οὐ μᾶν ἀκλέες λυκίην κάτα κοιρανέουσιν ἡμέτεροι βασιλῆς, ἐδοσὶ τε πίνα μῆλα οἶνὸν τ’ ἐξαίτον μελιτέα: ἀλλ’ ἰρα καὶ ὕεσθη, ἐπεὶ λυκίοις μετὰ πρῶτοις μάχονται.

(Il. 12.310-21)\textsuperscript{16}

Glaucus, why are you and I honoured before others with pride of place, the choice meats and the filled wine cups in Lycia, and all men look on us as if we were gods, and we are appointed a great piece of land by the banks of Xanthos, good land, orchard and vineyard, and ploughland for the planting of wheat? Therefore it is our duty now in the forefront of the Lycians to take our stand, and bear our part of the blazing of battle, so that a man of the close-armoured Lycians may say of us: ‘Indeed these are no ignoble men who are lords of Lycia, our kings, who feed upon the fat sheep appointed and drink the exquisite sweet wine, but indeed there is strength of valour in them, since they fight in the forefront of the Lycians. . . .

However, we see Sarpedon in a rather different situation shortly after this passage:

κέκλετο δ’ ἀντίθεοις ἐλιξάμενος λυκίοις: ὦ λύκιοι, τί τ’ ἄρ’ ὥδε μεθίετε θοῦριδος ἀλκής; ἀργαλέον δὲ μοι ἐστι καὶ ἱρὴμωρ περ’ ἑντι μοῦνος ὑξιομένος θέσαι παρὰ νησί κέλευθον: ἀλλ’ ἐφοιματίτε: πλεύνων δὲ τε ἱρηνὶ ἀμειον. ἦμεν ἐφοθ’, καὶ δὲ ἀνακτος ὑποδέισαντας ὁμοκλήν μᾶλλον ἐπέβρισαν βουληφόρον ἀμφὶ ἀνακτά. (Il. 12.408-14)

\textsuperscript{16} See also the same sentiment in Hector’s words at Il. 6.441-46, especially the phrase πρῶτοις: metá at 445.
He whirled about and called aloud to the godlike Lycians:
‘Lycians, why do you thus let go of your furious valour?
It is hard for me, strong as I am, to break down
the wall, single-handed, and open a path to the ships.
But come with me. The work is better if many do it.’
So he spoke, and they, awed at their lord’s command,
put on the pressure of more weight around their lord of the counsels.

This passage effectively places the leader in the middle, which seems to contradict or at least compliment Sarpedon’s earlier comment that his position should be ‘in front of’ or ‘ahead of’ all the others. The remark seems to emphasise the importance of teamwork rather than the valour of the champion in isolation. This may well be a reflection of the spirit of the age in which Homer was composing, when a more democratic social structure based on hoplite warfare was emerging.17

‘The First Man Across the Uji River’ (ch. 9.2) is possibly the best example of ‘to be the first is to be the best’ in the Tale of the Heike. Earlier in the episode, a young warrior named Sasaki Takatsuna is given the best horse of the army by Yoritomo, the general of the Genji. He is so honoured by this gift that he vows to be the first to cross the river to engage with the enemy. Now that so much of his honour is at stake on this pledge that he is resolved to kill himself if he does not manage to be the first. Here is the same sort of pressure of honour and shame at work as forced Hector to face Achilles outside the city wall when it almost certainly meant his death (cf. Il. 22. 99-110). Fortunately Sasaki does manage to be the first man to cross the river thanks to the superiority of his mount:

Takatsuna stood in his stirrups and announced his name in a mighty voice.
‘Sasaki Shiro Takatsuna, the fourth son of Sasaki Saburo Hideyoshi and a ninth-generation descendant of Emperor Uda, is the first man across the Uji

17 Cf. O. Murray, Early Greece (London 1980) 131f; H. Bowden, ‘Hoplites and Homer: Warfare, Hero Cult, and the Ideology of the Polis’, in J. Rich and G. Shipley (edd.), War and Society in the Greek World (London 1993) 45-63. H. van Wees, ‘Kings in Combat: Battles and Heroes in the Iliad’, CQ 38 (1988) 1-24, takes a different view on Homeric warfare in which the difference of the ‘champions’ from the ‘mass’ is that they spend more time engaging with the enemy in the front rank and less time in the relative safety of the ‘crowd’ at the back. In my view van Wees’ reading of Homeric warfare is a convincing one (as a picture in the poet’s mind’s eye at any rate, whether or not such warfare actually worked), but he also observes the importance of co-operation in fighting (p. 6) and that the champions are not fighting alone (p. 17, citing Il. 12.410-13). Significantly, he also highlights the tension between the importance of the mass and the importance of ‘champions’ in Homer’s presentation of warfare (p. 17).
River! If any here consider themselves my equals, let them grapple with me!’
He charged ahead, yelling.

(‘The First Man Across the Uji River’, ch. 9.2)\(^{18}\)

Combined in this episode are the importance of one’s good name and noble birth as well as the demonstration of superiority by being the one ‘in the forefront’. It also shows the importance of being true to one’s words. What is not found in Homer (not very explicitly at any rate) is the utmost importance of loyalty to one’s overlord, which ultimately is what is tested in Sasaki’s case here. This can be contrasted with loyalty to one’s people such as we see in Sarpedon’s or Hector’s obligation towards the people of Lykia or Troy respectively.

Another set of prominent spatial signs in Homer is the location of the ships of the Achaeanas. As Caullandré has pointed out, the arrangement of the ships reflects the arrangement of the army as they face the Trojan opposition.\(^{19}\) The most explicit example of this is found in Iliad 11.5-9, which places Achilles’ and Ajax’ ships on the ends and Odysseus’ in the middle. This highlights the military might of Achilles and Ajax and the relative weakness of Odysseus, but that is not all. The central position that Odysseus occupies has a special significance as is evident in Iliad 11.806-08, that is, his ships are near the assembly place where sacrifices to the gods are also made.\(^{20}\) Similarly, Nestor’s ships are said to be near the place of the counsel of the kings (βουλη ... γερόντων, Il. 2.53f.), hence near Odysseus, appropriately for his prominent role as the wise counsellor and master orator of the army, just as Odysseus.

The impression these passages give is again a sense of teamwork, the equal weight given to individual contributions. Achilles and Ajax undoubtedly stand out as the strongest who are prepared to be exposed to the enemy’s attack, but the central position of the meeting-place and its proximity to Odysseus’ and Nestor’s ships also place them in the centre of power. The army cannot function


without both types of the champions. There seems no sense of 'ranking' between the physical and intellectual prowess that the two pairs of heroes embody.\(^{21}\)

Finally, we turn to one’s home as one’s power base. In the *Tale of the Heike*, this is made most apparent when the entire Heike clan go into exile following the eight-year-old emperor. The emperor in exile without his palace and capital city becomes utterly helpless, and cannot command any authority even over local lords in the remotest western province (‘The Flight from the Dazaifu’, ch. 8.4). After a series of military defeats, the Heike with their emperor perish at the sea battle at Dan No Ura, on the western edge of the main island, hundreds of kilometres away from the capital Kyoto. When it becomes clear that the battle has been lost, Tokiko (‘the Nun of the Second Rank’ in the text, the matriarch of the Heike), tells the emperor, her grandson, what they must now do: she shall take him away to a happy realm called Paradise.

His majesty was wearing an olive-grey robe, and his hair was done up in a boy’s loops at the sides. With tears swimming in his eyes, he joined his tiny hands, knelt toward the east, and bade farewell to the Grand Shrine. Then he turned toward the west and recited the sacred name of Amida. The Nun snatched him up, said in a comforting voice, ‘There is a capital under the waves, too,’ and entered the boundless sea.

(‘The Drowning of the Former Emperor’, ch. 9.11)\(^ {22}\)

This tragic scene of the child emperor’s suicide is made all the more poignant by the words his grandmother utters a moment before they jump into the sea, ‘There is a capital under the waves, too.’ Nothing symbolises the Heike’s fall

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\(^{21}\) For the importance of excellence in counsel (*euboulia*) as a heroic virtue, cf. M. Schofield *Euboulia in the Iliad*, *CQ* 36 (1986) 6-31. Cuillandre [19] 22-24 has worked out that Achilles occupies the right end and Ajax the left which can also be supported by Sophocles’ *Ajax* (cf. Cuillandre 24) and Euripides’ *Iphigenia at Aulis* (289f.; cf. D. Wiles, *Tragedy in Athens* (Cambridge 1997) 108). This arrangement seems to reflect the superiority of the right hand to the left hand prominent in Greek thought (cf. G. E. R. Lloyd, *Methods and Problems in Greek Science* (Cambridge 1991) 27-48). However, I think that it is significant that Homer does not state explicitly which end is occupied by which of the two heroes. At least in this context he appears to be presenting them as equals. The Japanese in the time of the Heike, on the other hand, followed the Chinese model and made the left hand side superior to the right. This is explicit in a number of titles of officials, e.g., the Minister of the Left (Sa-daijin) being senior to the Minister of the Right (U-daijin).

more clearly than the distance between Dan No Ura and the capital city to which they belong.\footnote{23}

The same spatial symbolism would apply to Priam’s night visit to Achilles’ hut (II. 24.485-506). He has left his city, his palace and all the power and protection that usually surround him. With Hector’s death he has all but lost his city. Only in this position of vulnerability, in this temporary ‘exile’, is he able to ransom his son’s body, by approaching Achilles as a suppliant (ικέτης, II. 24.158, 187, 570) who can claim divine protection from Zeus\footnote{24} on the one hand and appeal to Achilles’ humanity on the other.

Those who have home and hearth have a degree of power and those who are away from home do not, and in Homer the latter group are called ξεινοι. However, those most vulnerable, that is, strangers, beggars and suppliants, like the kings, have divine patronage, especially of Zeus which elevates their status.\footnote{25} Spatial differentiation according to the distance from home is not a ground for placing one group of human beings above another in the world of Homer.

We have seen that Homer does have the association of power with ‘height’, but only prominently in the case of Zeus. Homeric heroes are very much aware that their glory is something to be granted only temporarily by Zeus. Kings can claim Zeus’ patronage, but so can wanderers, strangers and suppliants, the most powerless members of Homeric society. This perspective appears to place no human being ‘above’ another. This is in clear contrast with the intricate hierarchy of medieval Japan, the world of the Heike, where the myth of divine descent of the imperial family ensured their ‘high’ status. This difference may be regarded merely as a matter of expression, whether or not they use the metaphor of ‘high’ and ‘low’. After all, as in the Priam-Achilles scene in Iliad 24 and in the final episodes of the Heike’s fall, the underlying message of the both epic worlds is ultimately that all humans are equal in their mortality and no human glory lasts forever. However, it is also possible that this difference in perspective is rooted in the difference in mentality, one more egalitarian then the other. If so this may have something to do with the fact that the Greeks went on to invent democracy and that the Japanese still talk about going ‘up’ to or ‘down’ from their capital city Tokyo.

\footnote{23} Contrast this with the way the Regent Motomichi keeps his status by choosing not to follow the emperor into exile and remaining in the capital, his power base (‘The Emperor’s Flight from the Capital’, ch. 7.13 [McCullough [5] 243]).

\footnote{24} For Zeus as the ικέτης (‘patron of suppliants’), see Od. 13.213.

\footnote{25} For Zeus as the god of hospitality cf., e.g., Od. 6.207f. = 14.57f.: πρὸς γὰρ Δίως εἶσιν ἄπαντες / ξεινοί τε πτωχοί τε (‘for all visitors and beggars are under the protection of Zeus’).