

Odysseus' stay with the Phaiacians is a pivotal episode whose importance extends far beyond the meeting with Nausicaa, even becoming the setting in which Odysseus narrates all of his adventures up to that point. A number of scholars have argued that earlier versions of Odysseus' encounter with Nausicaa would have contained a marriage between the princess and the hero. Woodhouse (1930, 54-65), for example, points out that the games-scene among the Phaiacians follows the pattern of a marriage-contest, and Vallillee (*Phoenix* 1955, 179) sees the marriage-less episode as a "tragic artistic blunder." Butterworth (1966, 31) reads the avoided wedding as Odysseus' rejection of matrilineality.

This paper compares the Homeric episode with another hero's meeting with a marriageable princess: the encounter between the *Mahabharata's* Arjuna, and Princess Citrangada. The *Mahabharata's* presentation of Arjuna's liaison with Citrangada is in no respect as fully developed as the Homeric encounter, but though the scene occupies only 11 verses, virtually every element in those 22 lines finds a ready analogue in the *Phaiakis*. Both meetings a) occur during a period of solo travel by a married hero separated from his wife against his will, and b) initiate at a river-mouth adapted for human use. Both c) describe unusually high status attributed to women (for the Homeric story see Olson *EMC* 1991, 1; Whittaker *SO* 1999, 140), which is loosely connected to d) a problem with the royal succession. It is also noted that e) the women, though members of the royal family, walk freely about the city (a likely indication of a special situation). The stories f) utilize cognate epithets, references to a male god as the "Husband of ...", and g) culminate in the king's hasty offer of his daughter in marriage. Such aggregations of similar motifs may persist in epic long after the stories themselves have altered (Jamison *CA* 1994, 5; *CA* 1999, 227; Allen *JIES* 2000, 3; Meulder *JIES* 2000, 399), and can point to common genetic inheritance. The evidence suggests that these two tales share a common Indo-European ancestor.

But the most interesting facets of the comparison are the two respects in which the episodes differ: the disparity in their sizes, and the fact that the hero Arjuna, unlike Odysseus, accepts the marriage offer. It is my belief that these two features are a direct result of one another. Wandering heroes marry princesses all the time in folktales; they do so elsewhere in the *Mahabharata*, in scenes even more brief and understated than the one discussed here. The meeting of Arjuna and Citrangada may well have been retained only to avoid a complicated explanation when the son they produce re-appears 14 books later. The *Phaiakis*, however, is a poignant and memorable tale of youthful hopes dashed and a traveler's fidelity in the face of temptation. The removal of the marriage is not an accident or a lapse in judgment, but a masterstroke, and its absence is what gives the episode its potency. Seeing Odysseus' rejection of a marriage with Nausicaa as an example of the evolution of the text gives us valuable insight into the creative power and insight of the Homeric poets, and their superb mastery over their inherited material.