

Reconsideration of the Homeric Seer  
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Seers in Greek literature provide leaders and communities with esoteric knowledge not limited by time, geography, or subject matter. Because they generally stand in opposition to their political counterparts (i.e. characters who request divine advice but subsequently reject them), many scholars view them as stock characters whose sole purpose is to underline the personality of protagonists. This paper reevaluates the way in which we understand these religious figures, and especially the way they relate to others in society. It argues that seers are not static, as generally believed, and emphasizes the need to consider them in context, as their personalities constantly vary from seer to seer. I take a more anthropological perspective on these characters, one that accords with Geertz's method of conceptualizing different groups and their practices into larger frameworks. This moves away from sociology's (and especially Weber's) systematic, highly polarized approach with which classicists have become so familiar.

The paper begins with a reading of *Iliad* Book 1 where Calchas interacts with Agamemnon. Since language seems to be central in deciphering social relationships, it pays particular attention to directive speech: imperatives, emphatic pronouns and vocatives,  $\chi\rho\eta$  constructions, optatives, comparatives and so forth. Spatial movements are also crucial. How do seers speak to and physically carry themselves around their leaders, and how do the latter react in speech and in movement?

The second part of the paper traces Trojan seers and their relationship with Hektor. Are there differences from their Greek counterparts, and if so, is context responsible for them? Most fascinating is the relationship between Polydamas and Hector; though the former professes in fact to be no seer, he acts and speaks as if he were one; Hector, too, asks him for advice as if he possessed prophetic abilities. How does this affect our traditional view of seers and prophetic figures generally?

In providing an analysis of nuanced social relationships through speech patterns, I hope to show that each seer in Homer is unique and cannot be lumped into a single category, which has been the prevailing mode in classical scholarship. I suggest that while Weber's precise compartmentalization of different powers may be useful in many cases, it lacks the flexible methodology that anthropology provides in evaluating complex characters whose status change with context and circumstance.