

Civilized and Savage in the Pseudo-Hesiodic *Aspis*
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This paper offers a structuralist analysis of the ephrasid of the Shield of Heracles in the Pseudo-Hesiodic *Aspis* in order to argue that the theme of civilized versus savage is the organizing principle underlying its seemingly random series of vignettes. With some exceptions, the morbid detail, repetition, and excess of figures and imagery which characterize this epic poem of the early 6th century BCE have tended to fuel greater scholarly preoccupation with its cosmetic and stylistic features instead of its themes and overall outlook. I argue that the civilized/savage dichotomy, which is pervasive in Greek poetry and thought, frames the Shield's ephrasid and the structuralist paradigms (or 'codes') comprising the cultural language of the text.

The Shield's opening series of violent encounters involving animals and men establishes a conceptual opposition between the violence of nature, predicated on the use of force, and the 'civilized' character of human life which is exemplified by the fisherman who seems to conclude this initial series of images. In the figure of the fisherman plying his craft, as well as in the diverse activities of the citizens at peace in the poem's latter half, the author emphasizes the human dependence on art and intellect in contrast to a violent animal world which survives solely by speed and strength. From these vignettes one can construct the geographical, dietary, and technological codes which define humanity's 'civilized' social institutions according to structuralist thinking. Passages from other examples of Archaic poetry, especially Homeric epic, confirm the similar alignment of the social institutions in question with this fundamental dichotomy of the 'civilized' and the 'savage.'

Scholars generally agree that the *Aspis* poet's powers of expression are inferior to those of Homer in his corresponding description of the Shield of Achilles in *Iliad* 18, and for some time now, the poem's traditional attribution to Hesiod has been in doubt. But these observations tell us little about how the *Aspis* reflects the thinking of its period; this analysis concludes that the geographical, dietary, and technological codes of the *Aspis*' world reveal a cosmic hierarchy largely consistent with Hesiodic thought as expressed in the *Theogony* and *Works and Days*.