



Homeric Questions

Gregory Nagy

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The "Homeric Question" has vexed Classicists for generations. Was the author of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* a single individual who created the poems at a particular moment in history? Or does the name "Homer" hide the shaping influence of the epic tradition during a long period of oral composition and transmission?

In this innovative investigation, Gregory Nagy applies the insights of comparative linguistics and anthropology to offer a new historical model for understanding how, when, where, and why the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were ultimately preserved as written texts that could be handed down over two millennia. His model draws on the comparative evidence provided by living oral epic traditions, in which each performance of a song often involves a recomposition of the narrative.

This evidence suggests that the written texts emerged from an evolutionary process in which composition, performance, and diffusion interacted to create the epics we know as the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Sure to challenge orthodox views and provoke lively debate, Nagy's book will be essential reading for all students of oral traditions.

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