

Early Editions

WE KNOW of ancient editions of the Homeric epics from the Homeric scholia derived from the Alexandrian scholar Didymus, who mentions many early editions of Homer. In these scholia, Didymus divides them into two main categories, the “city editions” (*ekdoseis kata poleis, apo tōn poleōn, or politikai*) and the “individual editions” (*ekdoseis kat’andra*; HOMERIC SCHOLIA). The city editions could be either the “official” texts prepared by specific cities or, more likely, copies coming from such cities; the individual editions, on the other hand, were texts prepared by individual scholars. Didymus mentions both “city editions” in general but also specifically the following texts: the *ekdosis* of Marseilles, of Chios, of Argos, of Cyprus, of Sinope, and of Crete (which is also quoted in a fragment from a *hupomnēma*, i.e. “commentary,” on papyrus: P.Oxy. 2.221, xv, 27, ad *Il.* 21.290), as well as an “Aeolid” one (only in the scholia to the *Odyssey*). In the Didymus scholia, there are many references to individual texts: aside from those of Zenodotus, Aristophanes of Byzantium, and Aristarchus (which are also known through the scholia of Aristonicus), Didymus also mentions the Homeric texts of Rhianus of Crete, of Antimachus (not to be confused with references to Antimachus’s own poetry, quoted or referred to in order to discuss a Homeric passage), of Sosigenes, of Callistratus (not to be confused with references to Callistratus’s other works: *On the Iliad, Against the Athetēseis* [of Aristarchus], and *On Textual Criticism*), and of Philemon. Lastly, Didymus also mentions an anonymous edition containing “plus-lines” (additional verses not included in the later medieval manuscripts), which he calls “*polustikhos*.”

In addition to specifying their origin, the scholia by Didymus also label Homeric manuscripts in terms of quality. There are thus “common” editions (*hai dēmōdeis, hai koinai*), which are sometimes also called “more common” (*hai koinoterai*) or “more ordinary” (*hai eikaoiterai*); *koinai* readings are also mentioned in papyri containing the Homeric text with marginal scholia, such as P.Oxy. 3.445 and P.Oxy. 4.685. These *koinai* texts (or, in the singular, *hē koinē*) should not be confused with our medieval “vulgate.” Finally, Didymus speaks of “the more polished” (*hai khariesterai*) or “the most polished” (*hai khariestatai*) manuscripts of Homer and probably both the city texts and the individual editions belonged to this category.

An ancient *ekdosis* looked very different from what we now consider a “critical edition.” Most scholars now believe that an ancient Homeric editor would choose a specific Homeric text which he considered particularly good for certain reasons and which would become the basis of his “recension” or *diorthōsis*. The *ekdosis*, which was the physical result of the *diorthōsis*, was then an already existing copy where the philologist could add variant readings, his own emendations and perhaps even brief comments in the margin (all of which amounted to his “recension”). He also marked some lines with critical signs which had specific meanings – for example the *obelos*, which marked lines considered spurious (an operation called *athetēsis*). As far as we know, Aristarchus, the last and most famous Alexandrian head librarian (216–144 B.C.), was the first scholar to introduce the use of commentaries (*hupomnēmata*) in connection with his Homeric *ekdosis*, an innovation which provided more space for him to discuss his readings, exegesis, and *athetēseis*. Even with commentaries, Aristarchus’s *ekdosis* was most likely similar to those of his predecessors: a “working” text with marginal annotations (mostly variants) and critical signs. In particular, Aristarchus prepared two successive editions of Homer, as Didymus often reports two readings by Aristarchus or speaks of *hai Aristarkhou*, i.e. *ekdoseis*, “the editions of Aristarchus.” Fragments of these *ekdoseis* with brief annotations and critical signs are indeed attested in Homeric papyri, for example in the so-called Hawara Homer, a papyrus fragment (P.Bodl. Libr. Ms.Gr.class. a.1(P)) containing *Iliad* 2 and dating to the second half of the second century A.D.

The “city editions” and the “individual editions” mentioned in the Didymus scholia are also important because they offer variants that seem quite old (there is some agreement with quotations from fourth-century authors) and that do not survive in the Homeric medieval tradition (Haslam 2011, 853). An important and thorny question is how and to what extent Alexandrian scholars and especially Aristarchus used these early manuscripts. The problem arises because the Aristonicus scholia, among the most important sources for Aristarchus’s Homeric recension, never mention any city edition and among the individual editions the only ones mentioned are those by Zenodotus (many times) and by Aristophanes. Therefore, while everyone agrees that Aristarchus consulted the editions of Zenodotus (with whom he often disagreed in terms of editorial choices) and of Aristophanes (his teacher – Aristarchus probably wrote his first commentary using Aristophanes’ edition, as Didymus suggests in a scholium to *Iliad* 2 (*Sch. Il.* 2.133a), when he refers to “Aristarchus’s *hupomnēmata* based on Aristophanes’ edition”), scholars disagree about whether he consulted all the Homeric texts mentioned by Didymus.

This doubt arises because, compared to Aristonicus, who seems to have faithfully reported Aristarchus’s views from his commentaries, Didymus did not limit himself to collecting the data regarding Aristarchus’s two Homeric recensions but incorporated additional information which he could find in the Alexandrian Library. For instance, Didymus quotes the opinions and readings of later scholars belonging to the Aristarchean school, such as Apollodorus, Dionysius Thrax, Dionysius Sidonius, Demetrius Ixion, Chaeris, Parmeniscus, and Ammonius. Moreover, Didymus does not simply report Aristarchus’s readings, but sometimes comments on them, for example when he says that Aristarchus’s choices are “bad” (*Sch. Il.* 1.106e; 21.162a²) or “not elegant” (*Sch. Il.* 2.355a²) or that other variants are “better” (*Sch. Il.* 4.334–5a¹) or “more graceful” (*Sch. Il.* 7.428a¹) than the one selected by Aristarchus (cf. also *Sch. Il.* 3.18a; 9.584a^{1–4}). We do not know whether these comments are Didymus’s own or quotations from other scholars; yet they prove that

these notes cannot be simply taken as just reporting verbatim Aristarchus's recension – and this caveat included all the information about ancient Homeric editions as found in the Didymus scholia. These scholia certainly preserve important information about Aristarchus's editorial choices but not everything they say is directly derived from Aristarchus. As a consequence, scholars looking at cases where Didymus quotes Aristarchus and also mentions some city or individual editions (such as *Sch. Il.* 1.423–4, *Sch. Il.* 18.10–11a, and *Sch. Il.* 19.386a.b¹) have come to opposite conclusions. Nagy (2003b, 488–501 = 2004, 87–109; 2009c, 9–14) and Rengakos (2002) following Erbse (1959, 280) and Ludwich (1884–1885, I, 3–8, 43–7) argue that Didymus quotes Aristarchus's words directly; if so, then Aristarchus consulted these ancient Homeric texts and reported their readings in his own edition and/or commentary. On the other hand, West holds that Didymus himself, and not Aristarchus, consulted these manuscripts (West 2001, 36–7, 46–85; West 2004). Most scholars do not take a clearcut position, since the evidence is ambiguous at best.

The uncertainty about whether Aristarchus always bothered to list and discuss readings attested in other manuscripts in his edition or commentary does not, however, mean that he completely disregarded manuscript evidence, as is clear from a scholium to *Iliad* 9 (*Sch. Il.* 9.222b¹), in which Didymus reports that Aristarchus would have preferred another reading “but he did not change anything out of excessive scruple, because he had found this reading in many texts.” The Aristonicus scholia also clearly state that other readings were available “in some editions” (*boti en tisi graphetai/gegraptai*). Therefore van der Valk's hypothesis that the Alexandrians' readings were all conjectures with no basis in manuscript evidence is not tenable (van der Valk 1963–1964); even West, who has revived it recently, embraces it in a milder way and with a better understanding of the sources (West 2001, 36), concluding, for example, that scholion to *Iliad* 9.222b¹ “is not evidence of *systematic* collation of numerous exemplars” (West 2004) – which is very different from saying that the Alexandrians never considered manuscript evidence *at all*. The great majority of scholars thus now believe that Aristarchus and the other Alexandrian philologists chose readings both through conjectures and on the basis of manuscript evidence (cf. Janko 2002, 659; Haslam 1997, 71–4, 76, 85; Montanari 2002, 127–35; Schironi 2018, 63–75). Disagreement arises only when it comes to the extent to which Aristarchus used manuscript evidence – namely, whether he consistently checked manuscripts, or if he did so only for particularly difficult cases, trusting instead his own criteria and reasoning for most of his *diorthōsis*.

Aristarchus thus probably inspected many different Homeric manuscripts, which we know were collected in the Alexandrian Library not only through the testimony of the Didymus scholia discussed above but also from Galen's description of Ptolemy III Euergetes' policy of book acquisition (*In Hipp. Epidem. iii*, 17a 606.5 K = *CMG* 5.10.2.1, p. 79.7). From those Homeric copies, Aristarchus most likely selected a “working” text to use as a starting point for his *diorthōsis*. Because the Athenian edition is never mentioned by Didymus, it has been suggested that Aristarchus chose it as his working text (Jensen 1980, 109–10), a likely hypothesis, as he considered Homer to be Athenian (cf. Schironi 2018, 620–2). In addition, Aristarchus probably checked the text he selected against other editions in the Library and eliminated from it lines which were badly attested in other manuscripts. Aristarchus's working text was thus a selected Homeric copy (possibly the Athenian one), purged of scarcely attested lines. (This text is the one which Nagy calls *koinē*; cf. Nagy 1996a, 187–90; 2004, 21–3; 2009c, 66–72.) This would also explain why the so-called “wild papyri” (i.e. Homeric papyri with many additional lines absent from the

later manuscript tradition) disappear around 150 B.C. and at the same time a relatively uniform text emerges, which is similar to the one preserved in medieval manuscripts. This turning point for the evolution of the Homeric text thus could be connected to Aristarchus's edition of Homer. Different scenarios have been proposed to explain the influence of Aristarchus on the relatively uniform text which emerges after 150 B.C. and lasts until the medieval period (i.e. the vulgate). According to Collart (1933, 52–4), S. West (1967, 11–17), and others, this relatively uniform text is the result of book trade: copyists adopted Aristarchus's edition of Homer as their model for the book market but they were interested only in the lines considered genuine by the great scholar rather than in his specific readings. Thus they eliminated from the books destined for the market the lines which Aristarchus had already removed (not only athetized) from his Homeric text because he did not find them much attested in the manuscript tradition. This choice would explain why the readings chosen by Aristarchus are generally not preserved in the medieval manuscripts. On the other hand, Haslam (1997, 63–9, 84–7) has suggested that only “the received text as determined by Aristarchus,” that is, his working text purged of securely spurious lines, but not his final *diorthōsis* (preserved in the *hupomnēmata*, where readings, discussion of variants, and *athetēseis* were treated) circulated outside the Library. This text became the “standard” Homeric text, which corresponds to Aristarchus's edition *only* in terms of line count but his readings were not included since they were mostly recorded in his *hupomnēmata*, which were not meant to reach a wide audience but rather to remain within the tight circle of the Alexandrian scholars. The latter scenario seems the most plausible (Schironi 2018, 41–3).

To conclude, when working on his *diorthōsis* Aristarchus certainly consulted the editions of his predecessors, those of Zenodotus and Aristophanes, as well as other Homeric manuscripts, as the reference to readings “in some copies” in the scholia of Aristonicus proves. Perhaps these copies were also the same ones specifically mentioned by Didymus. But which specific editions Aristarchus consulted and whether he always checked manuscript evidence or only for particularly difficult cases remain open questions.

Francesca Schironi

Further Reading

On Didymus and the Homeric editions he consulted, see West 2001, 50–73. On the “city editions,” see Citti 1966 and West 2001, 67–72 (with bibliography). On the meaning of *ekdosis* in antiquity see van Groningen 1963. For a survey of what an ancient Alexandrian edition looked like, see Montanari 2002, 120–27; Schironi 2018, 49–62.