

Homeric Scholia

SCHOLIA ARE marginal and interlinear annotations in manuscripts containing an authorial text and aimed at clarifying that text. Homeric scholia (scholion in the singular) are extremely valuable because even though they generally date to the medieval period and are the result of several stages of excerpting, they ultimately derive from scholarship of the Hellenistic or Imperial periods.

Scholars divide Homeric scholia into two main categories, *scholia minora* and *scholia maiora*. The *scholia minora* are mainly lexicographical notes aimed at translating difficult Homeric words into koine Greek in the order in which they appear in the text (unlike lexica, which present words in alphabetical order). The translation of Homeric words into their classical or koine equivalents was a fundamental step in the study of the poems, as the Homeric language – a mix of different dialects and different chronological strata – represented a challenge for any Greek from the classical period onwards. The scholarship of the *scholia minora* is thus elementary and is partly derived from (but not limited to) school teaching, where the first task was to understand the literal meaning of the Homeric text.

Scholia minora are found both in papyri and in the later medieval corpus of the so-called *D scholia* (shorthand for *scholia Didymi* because they were wrongly believed to derive from Didymus, the Alexandrian scholar of the first century B.C. to early first century A.D.). The medieval *D scholia* are preserved in the margins of famous Homeric manuscripts such as the *Venetus A* (see below) but also simply as single entries (lemmata) followed by explanations in manuscripts without the Homeric text. These latter manuscripts also contain notes discussing mythographical questions (stemming from the so-called *mythographus Homericus*, a lost first-century A.D. commentary on Homeric myths, which is derived from Alexandrian scholarship) as well as plot summaries for each Homeric book. These two additional components in the medieval manuscripts are not technically speaking *scholia minora*; originally they were independent products of Hellenistic scholarship, as is proven by papyri preserving only Homeric *historiai* (i.e. mythographical explanations belonging to the *mythographus Homericus*) and only *hupotheseis* (“summaries”) of Homeric books. Yet glosses (*scholia minora*), mythographical explanations (*historiai*), and summaries of Homeric books (*hupotheseis*) were soon combined, as there are also papyri of the Imperial period with

hypotheses of a Homeric book followed by *scholia minora* to the same book, exactly as happens in the medieval collection of the *D scholia*.

The *scholia maiora*, on the other hand, are preserved mostly in medieval manuscripts and represent the most consistent source for Hellenistic and early Roman scholarship, as they are derived from running commentaries (*hupomnēmata*) and monographs (*suggrammata*) discussing specific Homeric topics, which were written by scholars active during the heyday of Greek scholarship. A fundamental moment for the development of medieval scholia is the change in book format from roll to codex, which occurred in late Antiquity: texts were then laid out in pages with wider margins, which could contain additional and longer explicatory notes. The codex thus allowed scribes to copy large portions of running commentaries into the margins around the very Homeric text to which they referred. These scribes were not directly copying Hellenistic or Roman commentaries into the margins of their codices, but used later works based on the earlier material and often combined more than one commentary into a single scholion. Nevertheless, the comparison between medieval scholia and the corresponding fragments of *hupomnēmata* preserved in papyri of the Hellenistic and Roman periods shows that the degree of precision and faithfulness with which original Hellenistic notes were preserved is quite high: not only is the content of the entries often very similar, but there are also sometimes verbatim correspondences. As has become clear, then, the scholarly products on papyrus corresponding to the medieval *scholia maiora* are the *hupomnēmata*, that is, self-standing running commentaries with lemmata and explanations but without the Homeric poems (e.g. P.Oxy. 2.221, P.Oxy. 8.1086); sometimes, however, papyri with the Homeric text also show marginal annotations which resemble the medieval scholia (e.g. P.Hawara = P.Bodl. Libr. Ms.Gr.class. a.1(P), P.Köln 1.34, and P.Brit.Lib. inv. 271 + P.Rain. inv. 26746 + 26754–60). Although they are older, these papyri containing scholarly notes on Homer are fragmentary. For this reason, as none of the commentaries and monographs on Homer written by the scholars working at Alexandria or Pergamum has reached us, the *scholia maiora* preserved in medieval manuscripts are the most important sources for Hellenistic scholarship on Homer.

The *scholia maiora* consist of two main groups of scholia: the exegetical scholia and the scholia derived from the so-called *Viermännerkommentar* (Four-Man Commentary). The latter (abbreviated VMK) is a fifth- to sixth-century A.D. compilation which collected the works of four scholars: Aristonicus's treatise on the critical signs used by Aristarchus in his edition of Homer (first century B.C. to early first century A.D.), Didymus's treatise on Aristarchus's Homeric recension (first century B.C. to early first century A.D.), Herodian's treatise on Homeric prosody (second century A.D.), and Nicanor's work on Homeric punctuation (second century A.D.). The VMK was excerpted over the centuries, and is preserved in fragments in medieval scholia, especially those present in the tenth-century manuscript *Venetius A* (*Codex Marcianus Graecus* 454, now 822), which contains a *subscriptio* at the end of each book, proving that the scholia collected there derive from the VMK: "The critical signs [and their explanations] by Aristonicus and the work by Didymus on Aristarchus's recension are here added; there are also some excerpts from the treatise on Iliadic accentuation by Herodian and from that on punctuation by Nicanor." Aristonicus and Didymus in particular are the major sources for Aristarchus of Samothrace (216–144 B.C.), the most important scholar of Alexandria. By scholarly consensus, any scholion by Aristonicus is considered as reporting Aristarchus's views even without any explicit mention of him. As for Didymus, the question is more complex; some scholars consider any Didymus scholion as

reporting Aristarchus's opinions *in toto* exactly as they do with Aristonicus scholia; others, however, think that Didymus collected more material beyond Aristarchus's variants and exclude scholia that do not explicitly mention Aristarchus (see EARLY EDITIONS). Notwithstanding these issues in assessing the material deriving from Didymus, the VMK scholia are of crucial importance for anyone interested in studying Aristarchus's work on Homer as well as Alexandrian scholarship in general. These scholia deal with various technical aspects of Alexandrian "textual criticism" on Homer: they discuss variants, orthography, accentuation and prosody, breathing marks, or grammatical questions, *athetēseis* of lines (i.e. the marking of lines as suspicious), Homeric style (mostly tropes and figures of speech), and the mythical and cultural background of the poems in order to identify what is typical of Homeric poetry.

The exegetical scholia, on the other hand, do not seem to stem from Alexandrian scholarship, but their origin is more difficult to determine. Their content is generally less technical than the VMK scholia and is closer to what we would label as "literary criticism": they discuss the artistic value of Homeric poetry, characterization, plot, and storytelling.

The two categories of *scholia maiora* are generally linked to specific manuscripts: as far as the *Iliad* is concerned, the VMK scholia are mainly found in the *Venetus A*; the exegetical scholia are typical of T (*Cod. Brit. Mus. Burney* 86) and the so-called b family of Iliadic manuscripts (codices BCE³E⁴), all derived from a lost archetype "c," which collected Homeric exegetical commentaries from the Imperial age (among other sources). Yet both the *Venetus A* and the bT family also preserve material coming from other sources: the *Venetus A* contains exegetical and *D scholia* as well as scholia derived from other grammatical sources, while the bT scholia preserve in addition excerpts from the VMK and *D scholia*, as well as from Heraclitus's *Homeric Problems* (first century A.D.), Porphyry's *Homeric Questions* (third century A.D.) and other exegetical and grammatical works. In this very complex situation, another criterion to decide to which group a particular scholion belongs is the content or keywords that signal the origin of the note. For example, discussions of *athetēseis*, notes analyzing what is specifically Homeric in the style, language, and mythological background, or polemical comments against Zenodotus all suggest a note by Aristonicus; similarly, the introductory words *hoti*, "because" (in the sense of: "[the critical sign is placed here] because"), and *pros*, "with reference to" (in the sense of "[the critical sign is placed here] with reference to"), as well as the mention of critical signs all point to Aristonicus. The scholia attributed to Didymus discuss variant readings, often mentioning manuscripts and scholars' choices; they can use the adverbs *houtōs*, "in this way," to introduce a reading found in Aristarchus's editions, or *dikhōs*, "in two ways," when Aristarchus chose two different and concurrent readings in his two, successive editions of Homer. Discussion of accentuation, prosody, or aspiration identify Herodian's notes; scholia dealing with punctuation and articulation of the syntax in terms of pauses and punctuation marks derive instead from Nicanor, while "literary criticism" in the broadest sense suggests an exegetical scholion. However, this neat distinction among different contents and style is valid mostly for the scholia in the *Venetus A*, as those preserved in other manuscripts are much more difficult to assess, because their wording has been manipulated to a greater degree by scribes of later periods. In particular, the scholia present in bT sometimes tend to incorporate more diverse material so that one single scholion can be a mix of VMK and of an exegetical note.

As far as the *Iliad* is concerned, both the VMK and the exegetical scholia, namely all the *scholia maiora*, have been edited by Erbse (1969–1988). In the margin of his edition the origin of each scholion is indicated with an abbreviation (ex. = exegetical,

Ariston. = Aristonicus, Did. = Didymus, Nic. = Nicanor, Hrd. = Herodian). While he reported *all* the VMK and exegetical scholia regardless of the manuscript they come from because they are true *scholia maiora*, Erbse omitted any other material which does not belong to this category, namely the *D scholia* (which are simply indicated with their lemmata but not reported in full), the excerpts from Porphyry and Heraclitus, as well as the scholia derived from other sources or belonging to the Byzantine period, such as the so-called h-scholia. The *D scholia*, preserved in various manuscripts (including the *Venetus A*), have been published by van Thiel (2014). Heraclitus's *Homeric Allegories* (preserved also by direct tradition) has been edited many times, most recently by Russell and Konstan (2005). The first book of Porphyry's *Homeric Questions* (which has been preserved by direct tradition) is edited by Sodano (1970), while the rest of the *Homeric Questions* (preserved only as marginal scholia in the Homeric manuscripts) can be found in Schrader (1880–1882) and in MacPhail (2010). The Homer Multitext (www.homermultitext.org) provides a digital edition of all the content of the *Venetus A* (and other manuscripts), allowing users access to scholia omitted by Erbse, with links to digital images of the specific folios.

The situation of the scholia to the *Odyssey* is more complicated, as there is no codex like the *Venetus A* with its subscriptions to clarify that its scholia derive from the VMK. Yet the scholia in the *Odyssey* manuscripts present a similar distinction in terms of content as those in the *Iliad* so that scholars assume similar origins (VMK-derived, exegetical and D scholia, as well as excerpts from Porphyry and from Heraclitus) for this poem as well, even though these scholia are less well-defined and more difficult to analyze. A new edition that distinguishes among the types of scholia on the model of Erbse's work on the Iliadic scholia is being prepared by Filippomaria Pontani (2007–; so far, scholia books 1–6 are available). Dindorf's edition (1855) does not distinguish among the different types of scholia, except the *D scholia*, which are labeled as V in his edition (Pontani, too, uses this label for the *D scholia* of the *Odyssey*). The excerpts from Porphyry are published by Schrader (1890).

There are no comprehensive editions of the *scholia minora* or Homeric *hupomnēmata* on papyrus. Erbse has edited some important *hupomnēmata* in his edition of the *scholia maiora* to the *Iliad*; marginalia on papyrus are collected by McNamee 2007; another useful tool for Homeric glosses on papyrus is the list by Lundon 2012. The Leuven Database for Ancient Books (www.trismegistos.org/ldab/) provides a database of literary papyri. In this database one can also search for papyri containing *hupomnēmata*, Homeric glossaries, and Homeric texts with scholia.

Francesca Schironi

Further reading

For an introduction to scholia, see Dickey 2007, 11–16 (on “scholia” as genre) and 18–23 (on Homeric scholia). On the different components of the Homeric scholia and manuscripts containing them, see Erbse 1969–1988, I, xi–lix; for a survey of ancient scholarship on Homer with a discussion of how it was transmitted in the different sources, see Pontani 2005, 42–103. On the content of the exegetical scholia, see Schmidt 1976; Richardson 1980; Nünlist 2009. For a survey of the different topics discussed in scholia and for a comparison between *scholia maiora* and *hupomnēmata* on papyrus, see Schironi 2012. On how to use the scholia of Didymus and Aristonicus to reconstruct Aristarchus's work on Homer, see Schironi 2015.