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ANALECTA

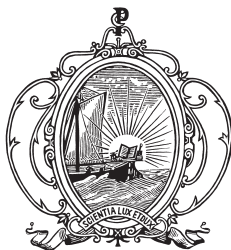
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# OBSERVING THE SCRIBE AT WORK

Scribal Practice in the Ancient World

edited by

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SAVING THE IVORY TOWER FROM OBLIVION:  
THE ROLE OF SCRIBES IN PRESERVING ALEXANDRIAN  
SCHOLARSHIP

Francesca SCHIRONI

This article examines a rather specialised field, ancient scholarship, and discusses how ancient, late antique, and Byzantine scribes played a fundamental role in preserving the work carried out in the Alexandrian Library. The focus is mainly on the work of the most famous Alexandrian scholar, Aristarchus of Samothrace (ca. 216–144 BC), whose impact on Homeric scholarship was enormous, such that scribal practice shows many traces of it. I discuss this theme in a reverse order, that is, I start from the later scribes/scholars and go backwards.

**1. Byzantine scribes and Aristarchus's commentaries**

One of the problems scholars face when working on Aristarchus is that none of his works has reached us by direct tradition – that is, there are no medieval manuscripts that preserve his editions of and commentaries on classical authors. This situation arose because Aristarchus's works were not considered real 'texts' to copy and preserve in the manner of canonical authors, such as Homer or Sophocles. Rather, they were 'open sources' for high-end scholarship, which anyone interested in could copy and add to their own personal commentaries, editions, and monographs. As a result, many fragments of Aristarchus's work have survived thanks to the work of anonymous scribes who copied and excerpted his commentaries and editions over the centuries and incorporated them in their own texts. This re-use of Aristarchus's original works happened especially with Homer. Aristarchus's Homeric studies seem to have been considered in danger of disappearing one generation after his death, so that between the 1st century BC and the 1st century AD two scholars from the Aristarchean school, Didymus and Aristonicus, wrote treatises to 'save' them; Didymus collected Aristarchus's readings in Homer, and Aristonicus explained the meaning of the critical signs that Aristarchus placed in his editions and commentaries to alert readers to problematic points or exegetical issues. Later, in the 2nd century AD, two other scholars, Herodian and Nicanor, engaged with Aristarchus's work: Herodian analyzed Homeric prosody and Nicanor discussed Homeric punctuation and Aristarchus's ideas on it. These works on Aristarchus's scholarship too are lost now, but in the 5th century AD they were collected together in the so-called *Viermännerkommentar*, 'Four-Man Commentary'. This commentary is also lost, but we possess

later works depending on it; the most important of these are the Homeric scholia (i.e., marginal and interlinear annotations in Homeric manuscripts), especially those preserved in the famous Iliadic manuscript Venetus A (10th century AD),<sup>1</sup> the Homeric commentary of Eustathius of Thessalonica, and the Byzantine Etymologica (i.e., etymological dictionaries of the Byzantine period).<sup>2</sup>

While the commentaries of Eustathius, who was archbishop of Thessalonica from ca. 1175 to 1195, are in fact a learned work put together by an individual with intellectual ambitions, the scholia and the Etymologica are the work of anonymous scribes/scholars who read earlier works and excerpted them. Thus, in this specific case, we can compare one author (Eustathius) to two other sources (scholia and Etymologica) written by anonymous scribes. For example, the following notes discuss the accentuation of the noun λῖς, ‘lion’; one is a scholium in the Venetus A, derived from Herodian, and one is a note from Eustathius’s *Commentary on the Iliad*; I have used italic and bold fonts as well as underline to visualise portions of the text which report the same information:

- *Sch. Il. 11.239c<sup>1</sup>* (Hrd.) {ὥστε} λῖς: **ὁ μὲν Ἀρίσταρχος ὄξει, ὁ δὲ Αἰσχρίων περισπᾶ** ὡς γὰρ παρὰ τὸ μῦς μὲν, φησί, καὶ “νοῦς” (κ 240) νοῦν, οὕτως καὶ λῖς, λῖν “ἐπὶ τε λῖν ἤγαγε δαίμων” (Λ 480). καὶ ἔστι συγκατατίθεσθαι τῷ Αἰσχρίωνι ὅτι μᾶλλον ὀφείλει περισπᾶσθαι, εἰ καὶ μηδὲν τῶν εἰς ἰς ληγόντων καὶ ἀρσενικὸν γένος ἔπισχνομένων περιεσπᾶσθαι. καὶ τάχα καθ’ ἕτερον λόγον, ἵνα τὸ ἐπιθετικὸν καὶ σημαῖνον γένος θηλυκὸν καὶ ὄξυνόμενον ἀποφύγη, λέγω δὲ τὸ “λῖς πέτρῃ” (μ 64). τῷ μέντοι χαρακτηρί τοῦ κίς καὶ “θίς” (μ 45) καὶ ρίς, καίτοι γε διαφόρως κλιθεῖσι πρὸς τὸ λῖς, συνεξομοίωσεν αὐτὸ κατὰ τόνον ὁ Ἀρίσταρχος· καὶ οὕτως ἐπέισθη ἡ παράδοσις. Α

λῖς: **Aristarchus reads [λῖς] as oxytone, Aeschrion as a perispomenon**, for, he says, just as from μῦς [there is] μὲν, and [from] νοῦς (*Od.* 10.240) νοῦν, so too [from] λῖς [there is] λῖν: “a god brings [against them] a lion (λῖν)” (*Il.* 11.480). **And we must agree with Aeschrion that it is better to read [λῖς] as perispomenon, even if no [noun] ending in -ις and accepting the masculine gender is perispomenon. But perhaps [Aeschrion read λῖς as perispomenon] according to another reason, to distinguish it from the epithet which is feminine and which is oxytone, I mean “smooth (λῖς) stone” (*Od.* 12.64). But Aristarchus equated [λῖς] to the shape of κίς, θίς (*Od.* 12.45) and ρίς in terms of accent, though [these nouns] decline differently from λῖς. And thus the tradition followed him.**

<sup>1</sup> The Venetus A specifies that the scholia are excerpted from the Four-Man Commentary in a subscription repeated at the end of each book of the *Iliad*; see, e.g., Ven. A, f. 51r: παράκειται τὰ Ἀριστοτικού σημεία καὶ τὰ Διδύμου περὶ τῆς Ἀρισταρχείου διορθώσεως, τινὰ δὲ καὶ ἐκ τῆς Ἰλιακῆς προσφωδίας Ἡρωδιανοῦ καὶ Νικάνωρος περὶ τῆς Ὀμηρικῆς στιγμῆς, “The [work entitled] *Critical Signs* by Aristonicus and the [work] *On the Aristarchean Recension* by Didymus are here added; there are also some [excerpts] from the [treatise entitled] *Iliadic Prosody* by Herodian and [from] *On Homeric Punctuation* by Nicanor.”

<sup>2</sup> On the Aristarchean tradition, see H. ERBSE, *Scholia Graeca in Homeri Iliadem (scholia vetera)*, 7 vols, Berlin, 1969–1988, I, p. xlv–lix; F. SCHIRONI, *The Best of the Grammarians. Aristarchus of Samothrace on the Iliad*, Ann Arbor, 2018, p. 6–14.

- Eust. 841.22 (ad *Il.* 11.239) τὸ δὲ λίς κατὰ μὲν Ἀρίσταρχον, ὡς φασιν οἱ περὶ Ἀπίωνα καὶ Ἡρόδορον, ὀξύνεται, συνεξομοιούμενον τῷ χαρακτῆρι τοῦ κίς κίος, ἔτι δὲ καὶ τῷ τίς καὶ θίς καὶ ρίς, εἰ καὶ διαφόρως ταῦτα κλίνεται πρὸς τὸ λίς, ὁ Αἰσχρίων δέ, φασί, περισπᾶ διὰ τὸ καὶ τὴν αἰτιατικὴν περισπᾶσθαι. ὡς γὰρ μῦς μῦν, δρῦς δρῦν, οὕτω καὶ λίς λῖν. εἰ δὲ μηδὲν τῶν εἰς ἰς περισπᾶται, ἀλλ' ὁ Αἰσχρίων τοῦτο ἐποίει, ἐκφρεύγων θηλυκὸν ἐπίθετον ὀξύτονον τὸ “λίς πέτρη”, ἐν Ὀδυσσεΐα ῥηθέν (μ 64). καὶ οὕτω μὲν ἐκεῖνος τὸ λίς, ὁ λέων, περίεσσα πρὸς διαστολήν τοῦ ἐπιθετικοῦ, ἀλλ' ἡ παράδοσις, φασί, τῷ Ἀριστάρχω πείθεται.

As Apion and Herodorus say, **according to Aristarchus λίς is oxytone, as it is equated to the shape of κίς κίος, and also to τίς, θίς and ρίς, even if these forms decline differently from λίς.** Aeschriion, they say, reads [λίς] as perispomenon because also the accusative is perispomenon. For just as [there is] μῦς μῦν, δρῦς δρῦν, so [there is] also λίς, λῖν. And even if no [noun] ending in -ίς is perispomenon, Aeschriion nevertheless made this one [i.e., λίς as perispomenon], distinguishing it from the feminine epithet [which is] oxytone, “smooth (λίς) stone”, used in the *Odyssey* (*Od.* 12.64). And thus he [i.e., Aeschriion] read λίς, the lion, as perispomenon to differentiate it from the epithet, but the tradition, they say, follows Aristarchus.

Without discussing the specific problem, I will focus on how the information has been transmitted in these two sources. Aristarchus’s opinion is highlighted in bold: he read λίς with an acute accent. The opinion of another grammarian, Aeschriion (otherwise unknown), who gave a different accent to the word, is underlined. Finally, Herodian’s discussion of both solutions, and his preference for Aeschriion’s choice, is in italics. As is clear, these two passages are quite similar, at times even identical. Eustathius and the anonymous scribe of the scholium did not use each other’s work, but they used the same sources. This example shows that the way of working and of excerpting among anonymous scribes, such as those compiling the Homeric scholia, and scholars with a ‘personality’, such as Eustathius, is identical: none of them – neither the scholiast nor the learned Eustathius – has changed the original phrasing. Eustathius simply adds that he read this information in Apion and Herodorus, which is probably an intermediate source.

The scribes of the Homeric scholia are in fact excellent examples of ‘knowledge transfer’ exactly because they are anonymous in the truest sense. Not only do we not often know their names, but – and more importantly – their personality is *in essence* anonymous. Yet even Eustathius, notwithstanding his individuality as intellectual and philologist,<sup>3</sup> does not behave very differently. He offers no personal reworking of the original material but simply a rather faithful copying.<sup>4</sup> Thus, even if the present volume is in fact about personality and traits

<sup>3</sup> Famously, Eustathius was not only a church personality, but also a teacher of rhetoric and a philologist; he wrote commentaries on both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, as well as on Pindar (only the poem is extant) and on Dionysius Periegetes.

<sup>4</sup> For other examples of Eustathius’s rather ‘faithful’ copying of the Four-Man Commentary via Apion and Herodorus as compared to the scholia and the *Etymologica*, see, e.g., Eust. 592.16

of the scribes at work, in the field of scholarship it is indeed the *lack of personality* of scribes or even of notable intellectuals like Eustathius in transferring past knowledge over the centuries that makes them so important for us.

## 2. Roman scribes and Aristarchus's commentaries

The operation of 'knowledge transfer' through the work of anonymous copyists or educated individuals who refrain from changing their sources is also present in the earlier sources on papyrus, such as the *hypomnemata*, namely, continuous commentaries on a text. In particular, parallels between the scholia in the Venetus A and Homeric commentaries on papyrus are common. An example concerns an athetesis in *Iliad* 21. When he wanted to athetise a line, namely, to mark it as suspicious without deleting it completely from the text, Aristarchus used an *obelos*, a dash in the left margin of the line. From a scholium in the Venetus A we know that l. 290 of Book 21 was athetised because it contained an inconsistency in the narrative:

*Sch. Il.* 21.290a (Ariston.) Ζηνὸς ἐπαινῆσαντος <ἐγὼ καὶ Παλλὰς Ἀθήνη>: ἀθετεῖται, ὅτι ἀπίθανον εἰς ἀνδρὸς μορφήν ὁμοιωμένον λέγειν “ἐγὼ καὶ Παλλὰς Ἀθήνη”· τίς γὰρ ἐστίν, οὐ μὴ νοήσῃ. A

“With the approval of Zeus, I and Pallas Athena [are both such helpers]”: it is athetised because it is not believable that disguised in a mortal shape [Poseidon] says: “I and Pallas Athena”. For [Achilles] will not understand who he is.

When reading this note, we do not have any indication about the identity of the scholar who wanted to reject this line. Yet the content and style of this scholium show that it derives from Aristonicus, the scholar who explained the meaning of Aristarchus's critical signs. In this case, then, Aristonicus explained the meaning of the *obelos*, the sign that Aristarchus used to mark atheteseis, and gave Aristarchus's reason for the rejection. This is, at least, how every modern scholar working on Aristarchus would interpret this note. However, we must be clear that this is an inference, and we can make it exactly because we firmly believe in the *lack of personality* of those scribes who did not change anything since the 1st century BC, thus preserving intact the original note by Aristonicus, a note which in turn – we assume – preserved faithfully Aristarchus's phrasing (or at least its content). Only by assuming that we have been dealing with a series of *intellectually anonymous* scribes from the 1st century BC to the 10th century AD can we thus conclude that this scholium in the Venetus A, which was written in

(ad *Il.* 5.656) compared to *Sch. Il.* 5.656a (Hrd.), *EGen.* a 593 Lasserre-Livadaras, and *EM* a 1025 Lasserre-Livadaras (= 78.20 Gaisford); Eust. 899.53 (ad *Il.* 12.201) compared to *Sch. Il.* 12.201d (Hrd.) and *EM* 786.7 Gaisford; Eust. 1133.10 (ad *Il.* 18.100) and 1139.11 (ad *Il.* 18.213) compared to *Sch. Il.* 18.100d<sup>1</sup> (Did.) and 18.213 (Did.), *EGen.* a 1143 Lasserre-Livadaras, and *EM* a 1756 Lasserre-Livadaras (= 138.2 Gaisford).

the 10th century AD, preserves Aristarchus's opinion, even if it lacks any single indication that these words do indeed go back to him.<sup>5</sup>

Nevertheless, things become more complicated when we deal with a commentary on papyrus such as *P.Oxy.* II 221 (2nd century AD), which is usually known as Ammonius's commentary, because in the margin of the papyrus, between columns x and xi, we read: "I, Ammonius, the grammarian, son of Ammonius, signed it" (Ἀμμώνιος Ἀμμωνίου γραμματικὸς ἐσημειώσαμην). Ammonius is an unknown grammarian; still, he cannot be defined as an 'anonymous scribe', since he signed his work. In his commentary (a rather learned commentary on *Iliad* 21, rich in overlaps with later scholia and quoting many scholars such as Aristarchus, Aristophanes, and Zenodotus) there is a rather long note on the same line:<sup>6</sup>

*P.Oxy.* II 221, xv, ll. 6–27

Ζηνὸς ἐπα[ι-]  
 νήσαντος ἐγὼ καὶ Παλλὰς Ἀθή-  
 νη(·) ἀθετεῖται, ὅτι {ὄνομα} οὐκ εἴ-  
 ρηκεν ὄνομα τοῦ θεοῦ, ἀλλ' ἐγὼ,  
 10 μεταβεβληκῶς τὴν ἰδέαν  
 εἰς ἄνδρα· [κ]αὶ γ[ά]ρ οὐ[κ]α[ ] δὲ κατὰ  
 τὴν ἄφοδον σημείω(ι) ἐπιφανεῖ  
 τὸν Ἀχιλλεῖα ἐθάρσυνεν· "οὐδὲ Σκά-  
 μανδρος ἔληγε τὸ ὄν μένος ἀλλ' ἔ-  
 15 τι μᾶλλον / χόετο Πηλείωνι".  
 πρὸς ταῦτα λέγει Σέλευκος ἐν τῶ(ι) γ'  
 Κατὰ τῶν Ἀριστάρχου σημείων ὅτι  
 ἀνδράσιν ὁμοιωμένοι ὁμῶς κατὰ  
 τ[ὸ] σ[ι]ωπώμενον διὰ τῆς δεξιῶσε-  
 20 ω[ς] ἔχνη τοῦ θεοῦ εἶναι παρέχον-  
 [τ]αί· [ἐ]πει πῶς εἰρήκασι "τ[ο]ῖω γάρ τοι  
 νῶι θεῶν ἐπιταρρόθω [εἰμ]έν";  
 καὶ [ὅ]πὸ Διὸς δὲ κατὰ τὸ σ[ι]ωπώμε-  
 νον ἐπέμφθησαν. ἐν [δ]ὲ τῶ(ι) ε'  
 25 [τ]ῶν Διορθωτικῶν ὁ αὐτὸς [ἀ]θετεῖ  
 σὺν τοῖς ἐξῆς β' ὡς περισσο[ύ]ς, οὐ-  
 κ' εἶναι δὲ οὐδ' ἐν τῆ(ι) Κρητικῆ(ι).

"With the approval  
 of Zeus, I and Pallas Athena [are both such helpers]":  
**[the line] is athetised because he has not  
 said the name of the god [i.e., 'Poseidon'] but 'I',  
 while now he has adopted human  
 disguise.** And he did not encourage Achilles  
 by giving a clear sign when he leaves; [in fact,  
 the river is not deterred as is clear from]: "and  
 the Scamander did not stay his might, but  
 even more he was angry with the son of Peleus" (*Il.* 21.305-306).  
*With reference to these points in Book 3  
 of his work Against the Signs of Aristarchus Seleucus  
 says that, even when disguised as humans,  
 tacitly they offer hints that  
 they are gods by greeting them;  
 since how can they have said: "for among the gods  
 we are both such helpers" (*Il.* 21.289)?  
 And they were sent by Zeus tacitly.  
 But in Book 5 of the work  
 On Textual Criticism the same [Seleucus] athetises the line  
 with the following two [sc. *Il.* 21.290-292] because they are  
 superfluous and [says that?] they were not in the edition of Crete.*

Ammonius explains the athetesis along the same lines of the Aristonicus scholium (in bold in the translation), but adds another reason (underlined in the

<sup>5</sup> Every scholar of Aristarchus accepts this premise for the Aristonicus scholia; cf. D. LÜHRS, *Untersuchungen zu den Athetesen Aristarchs in der Ilias und zu ihrer Behandlung im Corpus der exegetischen Scholien*, Hildesheim – Zürich, 1992, p. 5; S. ΜΑΤΘΑΪΟΣ, *Untersuchungen zur Grammatik Aristarchs: Texte und Interpretation zur Wortartenlehre (Hypomnemata 126)*, Göttingen, 1999, p. 37, 43–45; SCHIRONI, *The Best of the Grammarians*, p. 16.

<sup>6</sup> I follow the text as edited by ERBSE, *Scholia*, V, p. 78–121, at p. 107–108.



translation). He also records that Seleucus, a grammarian of the Imperial period, argued against this athetesis, but eventually accepted it (in italics in the translation). The latter part is certainly non-Aristarchean for chronological reasons – but what about the first part of the note? Aside from the wealth of information that it gives us, its incipit is significant: ἀθετεῖται, ὅτι. The wording is identical to the incipit of the Aristonicus's scholium (ἀθετεῖται, ὅτι ἀπίθανον...) which, we concluded, is directly derived from Aristarchus. Yet this time the phrase is in Ammonius's commentary. While in technical literature the use of formulae is typical, here the problem is a different one: who wanted to athetise that line? Was Ammonius sharing Aristarchus's view? Or was he simply reporting it? And what about the second reason for the athetesis (underlined in the translation), which is missing from the scholium in the Venetus A? Is this an addition of Ammonius or does it go back to Aristarchus? – These are all questions we cannot answer.

A second set of questions concerns the operation of Ammonius: was he simply the copyist of a commentary written by someone else? Or was he the author? The verb accompanying his name in the papyrus (ἐσημειωσάμην) is ambiguous, as σημειῶ in the middle can mean 'to mark', in the sense of 'countersign' so to identify the work of a copyist rather than of the author of the commentary. But it could also mean 'to annotate', and so suggest that Ammonius, who defines himself as a γραμματικός, made those annotations, i.e., he wrote this commentary on *Iliad* 21.

This example shows that, even when we have a name attached to a commentary (Ammonius in this case), and so a 'personality', in the field of ancient scholarship these 'scholars' tend often to work like 'anonymous scribes': they report others' opinions in detail, but it is often very difficult to identify their own personal ideas, even when, like Ammonius, they sign their product – an operation which, by today's standards, would mark 'intellectual property'. Although this is convenient, because it puts no obstacle to modern scholars in assuming that ancient notes go back to the Hellenistic times, we need to be careful, as things may be more complicated than they appear, as *P.Oxy.* II 221 suggests.

Another commentary on papyrus shows a different aspect of the work carried out by these learned, yet anonymous scribes. *P.Amherst* II 12 is dated on palaeographical grounds to the 3rd century AD and contains Aristarchus's *Commentary on the First Book of Herodotus*, as the preserved colophon makes clear.<sup>7</sup> The first column is much damaged and the lemmata which have been found there are mostly guesswork. The second column, on the other hand, is much more

<sup>7</sup> Re-edited by A. PAAP, *De Herodoti reliquiis in papyris et membranis Aegyptiis servatis*, Leiden, 1948, p. 37–40; cf. also S. WEST, *The Papyri of Herodotus*, in D. OBBINK and R. RUTHERFORD (eds), *Culture in Pieces. Essays on Ancient Texts in Honour of Peter Parsons*, Oxford, 2011, p. 69–83, at p. 77–80; F. MONTANA, *Nuova luce su P.Amh. II 12, col. I (Hypomnema di Aristarco al libro I di Erodoto)*, in *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 180 (2012), p. 72–76.

readable; aside from their content, the lemmata covered by this second column tell an interesting story. The first legible lemma, secure because it is preceded by a dicolon, is taken from chapter 194 of Book 1, whereas the other three are all taken from chapter 215 of Book 1 (and Book 1 ends with chapter 216). This leaves us with a gap of twenty chapters between the first lemma and the other three. Unless we think that Aristarchus did not really find anything to say about those twenty chapters but then was completely absorbed by chapter 215, the only reasonable conclusion is to assume that the text had been excerpted from the original commentary,<sup>8</sup> or that whoever copied this text used an exemplar which had already been excerpted or had missing sections.<sup>9</sup> Yet the anonymous scribe added the title, Ἀριστάρχου ἱερῶδοτου ἁ ὑπόμνημα ('Commentary of Aristarchus on Herodotus I'), as if the excerpting or the damaged original did not matter in the labelling of the final product. Whatever happened in the process of copying this text, most likely *P.Amherst* II 12 provides a *different* text from the original commentary of Aristarchus. This text was created by someone between the middle of the 2nd century BC (the time when Aristarchus composed his commentary to Herodotus) and the 3rd century AD (the dating of the papyrus). This someone either decided what was important and what was not important in Aristarchus's commentary (and so created an excerpt of it) or simply did not have a full copy of the original Aristarchean commentary and copied what he had at his disposal. Even so, despite his important 'editorial' imprint, the scribe decided to remain anonymous and still labelled this new text as the *Commentary of Aristarchus on Herodotus I*, notwithstanding the discrepancies with the original. This is a different operation from that of Ammonius, but similarly shows the special status of technical literature: on the one hand, scribes can act on the sources cutting and pasting them, and on the other, they do not emerge as independent authors and their work is essentially anonymous, whether they sign their work (as in the case of Ammonius in *P.Oxy.* II 221) or not (as in the case of *P.Amherst* II 12).

### 3. Roman scribes and Aristarchus's critical signs

An important feature of Aristarchus's scholarship was the critical signs, which he used in his editorial work on Homer to highlight specific exegetical issues. In addition to the *obelos* for atheteseis, Aristarchus used the *diplē* (>) to mark lines noticeable for various reasons (e.g. linguistic issues, variant readings, explanations of different kind), the *diplē periestigmenē* (⊗) to mark lines where he argued against the philological choices of his predecessor Zenodotus, the *asteriskos* (※)

<sup>8</sup> Cf. R. PFEIFFER, *History of Classical Scholarship*, vol. 1: *From the Beginnings to the End of the Hellenistic Age*, Oxford, 1968, p. 224–225; MONTANA, *Nuova luce*, p. 72 (with further bibliography in footnote 7); WEST, *Papyrus of Herodotus*, p. 80.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. PAAP, *De Herodoti reliquiis*, p. 39–40.

to mark repeated lines, and a combination of *obelos* and *asteriskos* (–✖), for repeated lines which he athetised because in his view they had been wrongly added by an interpolator, who took them from another passage in the Homeric poems (where they fit).

How did Aristarchus use those signs? According to modern scholars, Aristarchus added them in the margin of his Homeric edition as a reference to the commentaries; in the latter he repeated them adding the lemma and the explanation. Critical signs were thus the link between the edition and the commentary and had the function of making it easier for a reader to look for specific notes with specific content.<sup>10</sup> This, however, is a speculative reconstruction, as no fragments have been found of both a Homeric edition and a commentary belonging together, both with critical signs. Yet we do have fragments of Homeric editions and of commentaries that preserve critical signs used by Aristarchus. Without analysing all the evidence,<sup>11</sup> I will focus on two examples. P.Mich. inv. 1206 (MP<sup>3</sup>: 1198.01)<sup>12</sup> preserves remnants of a commentary to *Iliad* 14 with critical signs; there are entries to l. 316, 317, 322, 324, 337, 338, 340, 348, and many of them find a parallel among the scholia of Didymus (*Sch. Il.* 14.316; 14.322a<sup>1,2</sup>; 14.340b) and Aristonicus (*Sch. Il.* 14.317a) or in Eustathius (991.27, ad *Il.* 14.351). For example, we can compare the two notes on *Il.* 14.317:

P.Mich. inv. 1206, ll. 3–5

– οὐδ’ ὀπότ’ ἦρα[σ(ἀμνην)· ἀπό τούτου  
 στί<sup>ζ</sup> ια ἕως [τοῦ “οὐδ’ ὀπότε  
 Λητοῦς ἐρι( )” (l. 327) [ἀθετοῦνται

“Not even when I fell in love”: from here  
 eleven lines until “not even when [I fell in love with]  
 glorious Leto” (*Il.* 14.327) are athetised.

*Sch. Il.* 14.317a (Ariston.) οὐδ’ ὀπότ’ ἦρασάμην: ... ἀπό τούτου δὲ ἕως τοῦ  
 “οὐδ’ ὀπότε Λητοῦς ἐρικυδέος” (*Il.* 14.327) ἀθετοῦνται στίχοι ἕνδεκα, ὅτι  
 ἄκαιρος ἢ ἀπαριθμησις τῶν ὀνομάτων· μᾶλλον γὰρ ἄλλοτριοῖ τὴν Ἥραν ἢ  
 προσάγεται. καὶ ὁ ἐπ(ε)ιγόμενος συγκοιμηθῆναι, διὰ τὴν τοῦ κεστοῦ δύναμιν,  
 πολυλογεῖ.

“Not even when I fell in love”: from here until “not even when [I fell in love  
 with] glorious Leto” (*Il.* 14.327) eleven lines are athetised, because counting the

<sup>10</sup> Cf. PFEIFFER, *History of Classical Scholarship*, 218; SCHIRONI, *The Best of the Grammarians*, p. 49–55.

<sup>11</sup> For example, among Homeric texts with Aristarchean critical signs are *P.Lond.Lit.* 27 (first half of the 1st century AD), *PSI* 1.8 (1st to 2nd century AD), *P.Hawara* (second half of the 2nd century AD), *P.Oxy.* III 445 = *P.Lond.Lit.* 14 (2nd to 3rd century AD) and P.Mich. inv. 6653 (2nd to 3rd century AD). Among ‘commentaries’ (*hypomnemata*) with critical signs and overlap with Aristarchean scholia in the Venetus A there are *P.Oxy.* VIII 1086 (first half of the 1st century BC); *P.Pisa Lit.* 8 (1st century AD), P.Daris inv. 118 (2nd century AD), P.Cairo JE 60566 (2nd century AD), P.Mich. inv. 1206 (3rd to 4th century AD). On these papyri, see SCHIRONI, *The Best of the Grammarians*, p. 56–61.

<sup>12</sup> Edited by W. LUPPE, *Homer-Erläuterungen zu Ξ 316–348*, in *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 93 (1992), p. 163–165.

names [of his lovers] is out of place. For he makes Hera hostile rather than drawing her towards himself. And for one who is urged to sleep with her by the power of [Aphrodite's] girdle he talks too much.

The papyrus's note is much shorter, yet the essential information is preserved: that eleven lines are athetised and that an *obelos* (next to the lemma) was used to mark the athetesis; the comparison with the richer Aristonicus scholium in the Venetus A indicates that this athetesis is due to Aristarchus.

Similar is the case of the Homeric editions (*ekdoseis*) with critical signs. For example, *P.Oxy.* III 445 (= *P.Lond.Lit.* 14, 2nd to 3rd century AD) contains portions of *Iliad* 6 and has *diplai* at l. 174, 176, 178, 181, 186, 194, 199, 507, 510, 518, and *asteriskoi* at 490–492.<sup>13</sup> All the *diplai* but one (i.e., the *diple* at l. 186) correspond to the same critical signs in the Venetus A (f. 83v, 84r, 90v).<sup>14</sup> Most of them (all except two, those at l. 186 and 518) find specific scholia of Aristonicus explaining their reasons (*Sch. Il.* 6.174a; 6.176a; 6.178; 6.181a; 6.194b; 6.199; 6.507b<sup>1,2</sup>; 6.510a). Similarly, the *asteriskoi* at ll. 490–492 have parallels in the Venetus A, f. 90r (which has also another *asteriskos* at l. 493) and also correspond to a scholium by Aristonicus in the same manuscript (*Sch. Il.* 6.490–493) explaining that these lines were correctly placed here but they were wrongly repeated in the *Odyssey* in two places where they occurred (*Od.* 1.356–359 and 21.350–353). While the Venetus A has more critical signs (and scholia) than the papyrus, it has omitted the siglum to line 186, transmitted rather by *P.Oxy.* III 445. These discrepancies are easily explicable by the odds of transmission; still the similarities are striking, especially when we realise that the papyrus and the Venetus A are separated by at least some 600 years and that the Venetus A most likely is not a copy of the Iliadic text preserved in *P.Oxy.* III 445.

These examples (and many others can be shown) suggest that these critical signs as well as Aristarchus's explanations for them were transmitted very carefully by anonymous scribes for many centuries and that the reconstruction of the system *ekdosis-hypomnema* outlined above is most likely correct. Again, the evidence is given by anonymous scribes who copied and excerpted those commentaries over the centuries. Yet each of these examples on papyrus does not fully correspond to the wealth of signs and Aristonicus scholia in the Venetus A. In other words, in all these editions and commentaries going back to the Roman period, scribes made a selection when recopying the Aristarchean signs or his commentaries. In luxury editions such as the Hawara Homer (2nd century AD), Aristarchean critical signs might be copied for intellectual 'showing-off', as

<sup>13</sup> Cf. K. McNamee, *Annotations in Greek and Latin Texts from Egypt* (*American Studies in Papyrology* 45), New Haven Conn., 2007, p. 272–273. The papyrus has also what looks like an *antisigma* at ll. 6.174; yet the sign does not go back to Aristarchus since at l. 174 Aristonicus clearly says that there was a *diple*: *Sch. Il.* 6.174a ἐννημαρ: ἡ διπλή, ὅτι ἐπίφορός ἐστι πρὸς τὸν ἐννέα ἀριθμὸν; cf. F. Schironi, *Tautologies and Transpositions: Aristarchus' Less Known Critical Signs*, in *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 57 (2017), p. 607–630, at p. 626.

<sup>14</sup> Digital images of the Venetus A are available online through the Homer Multitext Project (<http://www.homermultitext.org/facsimile/index.html>, accessed December 8, 2018).

McNamee has rightly pointed out.<sup>15</sup> Yet less refined editions or commentaries with critical signs and excerpts of Aristarchus's commentary, such as the Michigan papyrus discussed above, were probably 'study' texts of scholars or teachers, proving that Aristarchus's work was recopied also for 'scientific interests' even later on into the Roman period.

#### 4. Ptolemaic scribes and Aristarchus's critical signs

With the works of Didymus and Aristonicus between the 1st century BC and the early 1st century AD, Aristarchus became the 'star' of Homeric scholarship. Therefore it is not surprising that in the Roman period scribes recopied bits and pieces of Aristarchus's scholarship as well as his critical signs into their own Homeric editions and commentaries.

What about the previous period, before Didymus and Aristonicus popularised Aristarchean scholarship? We can rely on a manuscript that another anonymous scholar left us: *P.Tebt.* I 4. This papyrus, originally including fragments of five columns covering portions of *Iliad* 2 (many of which are now lost), dates back to the 2nd century BC, that is, it predates the work of Didymus and Aristonicus, and it is almost contemporary with Aristarchus's lifetime (Aristarchus died in 144 BC). The first editors noted several Aristarchean signs: *obeloi* at *Il.* 2.124, 133, and 197, a *diplē periestigmenē* at *Il.* 2.156, and an *asteriskos* with an *obelos* on the right of *Il.* 2.141. My personal inspection of the papyrus has shown that only the *obeloi* at *Il.* 124 and 197 are visible, while the other signs are lost together with fragments of the original manuscripts.<sup>16</sup> However, if we follow the original edition, these signs correspond to the same critical signs used by Aristarchus in his edition, as is clear from the Aristonicus scholia referring to the same lines in the Venetus A. Thus, all three *obeloi* in *P.Tebt.* I 4 mark atheteseis which go back to Aristarchus (*Sch. Il.* 2.124a; 2.130–3; 2.193a<sup>1-2</sup>). Similarly, the *diplē periestigmenē* at l. 156 corresponds to a scholium in which Aristarchus criticises Zenodotus for having ruined the passage with his readings (*Sch. Il.* 2.156–69). Finally, the *asteriskos* with an *obelos*, which was legible in the right margin of *Il.* 1.141 in the papyrus, probably referred to *Il.* 2.164 (which must have been in the next column to the right, now lost); indeed Aristarchus athetised the line because it was repeated from *Il.* 2.180, where it was in the right place (*Sch. Il.* 2.164a<sup>1</sup>). The critical signs in the papyrus thus match the Aristonicus scholia reporting Aristarchus's choices.<sup>17</sup> This agreement is indeed striking as

<sup>15</sup> K. McNAMEE, *Aristarchus and 'Everyman's' Homer*, in *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 22 (1981), p. 247–255, at p. 253.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. also I. BONATI, *Note testuali a P.Tebt. I 4 (Hom. B 95–201)*, in *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 176 (2011), p. 1–5. In the papyrus there is also an *antisigma* (a less common Aristarchean sign) at *Il.* 2.204; see SCHIRONI, *Tautologies and Transpositions*, p. 626–628.

<sup>17</sup> On the other hand, the critical signs in the Venetus A only partially match those in the Ptolemaic papyrus: the former has the *obeloi* at *Il.* 2.124 and 133 (f. 26v) and the *obelos* at *Il.* 2.197

these two texts are more than 1000 years apart. We cannot find any better proof than this for the role of scribes in ‘knowledge transfer’.

*P.Tebt.* I 4 thus proves that already in the 2nd century BC some scribe recopied Aristarchus’s edition and so made it available outside the Alexandrian Library. This does not mean that Aristarchus’s Homeric text accompanied by critical signs (i.e., his critical edition of Homer) became a bestseller. *P.Tebt.* I 4 might be an exception, a unique copy of a learned reader who once visited the Royal Library and recopied Aristarchus’s edition for his personal library, with no influence on the overall history of Homeric scholarship in the Ptolemaic period. Even so, the papyrus testifies to the diffusion of Aristarchus’s most technical work outside the Alexandrian Library very soon after its completion.

### 5. Ptolemaic scribes and Aristarchus’s Homeric text

If we leave aside the more high-end learned products, such as commentaries and editions with critical signs, the many other anonymous copies of the Homeric text had another important function in spreading Aristarchus’s scholarship beyond the ivory tower of the Royal Library. As is well known, Homer papyri before 150 BC present a very erratic text, such that scholars call them ‘wild papyri’.<sup>18</sup> Their text has additional and omitted lines, as well as many more variant readings than our Homeric vulgate, which, despite its variants, is generally quite homogenous. From around 150 BC onwards the text preserved in papyri is similar to our vulgate in terms of lines; it has also much fewer variant readings than before.<sup>19</sup> This fact has been correctly connected with the work of the Alexandrians and particularly of Aristarchus. Some scholars suggested that this was a market choice operated by scribes, who eliminated from the books destined for the market the lines which Aristarchus had considered spurious and removed from his own edition, though they did not copy the variants and emendations which he suggested.<sup>20</sup> A more plausible solution, however, is to think that what circulated outside the Library and was so vastly copied for the book

(f. 28r) but it does not have the *diple periastigmenē* at *Il.* 2.156 (f. 27r) and has only the *asteriskos* but not the *obelos* at *Il.* 2.164, (f. 27v). Yet the overlap between the Aristonicus scholia and the signs in *P.Tebt.* I 4 is more significant, as the Venetus A sometimes omits critical signs corresponding to Aristonicus scholia discussing them (cf. SCHIRONI, *The Best of the Grammarians*, p. 449–450).

<sup>18</sup> See S. WEST, *The Ptolemaic Papyri of Homer (Papyrologica Coloniensia 3)*, Cologne, 1967, for a comprehensive study of these papyri.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. G.M. BOLLING, *Vulgate Homeric Papyri*, in *American Journal of Philology* 42 (1921), p. 253–259; P. COLLART, *Les papyrus de l’Iliade (1<sup>er</sup> article)*, in *Revue de philologie, de littérature et d’histoire anciennes* 6 (1932), p. 315–349, at p. 338–349, and P. COLLART, *Les papyrus de l’Iliade (2<sup>e</sup> article)*, in *Revue de philologie, de littérature et d’histoire anciennes* 7 (1933), p. 33–61, at p. 33–51; M. HASLAM, *Homeric Papyri and Transmission of the Text*, in I. MORRIS and B. POWELL (eds), *A New Companion to Homer*, Leiden – New York, 1997, p. 55–100, at p. 55–56, 63–69.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. COLLART, *Les papyrus de l’Iliade (2<sup>e</sup> article)*, p. 52–54; WEST, *Ptolemaic Papyri of Homer*, p. 11–17.



market was not Aristarchus's critical edition, with critical signs and (perhaps) variant readings in the margins, but a preparatory text. In fact, Aristarchus's recension, which consisted of atheteseis of suspicious lines and specific readings, was mostly contained in the commentaries (where readings and atheteseis were proposed and discussed); before embarking on this editorial work, however, Aristarchus must have prepared a working text, which consisted of the ancient vulgate purged of securely spurious lines.<sup>21</sup> This preparatory text, which was the Hellenistic vulgate deprived of scarcely attested lines, circulated outside the Library and became the new authoritative Homeric text because scribes adopted it as the 'gold standard' for the book market.<sup>22</sup>

Whichever reconstruction one chooses, these scribes clearly were not 'intellectuals' excerpting and recopying Aristarchus's technical notes, as seen above. Rather, they recopied (probably for others) the text of Homer. And yet their role in knowledge transfer cannot be underestimated. In fact, these anonymous scribes who copied Aristarchus's (preliminary) edition are those who made it authoritative. Aristarchus's important choices for the Homeric text could have simply remained locked in the Royal Library as a purely intellectual exercise had it not been for the scribal practice.

## 6. Ptolemaic and Roman scribes: Book layout changes

Finally, the layout of ancient Homeric editions tells us something more about the role of scribes in popularising Alexandrian editorial practices. Ptolemaic papyri tend to present one Homeric book after another in the same column, in a continuum. Some of them do not even mark the end of one book and the beginning of the next, as happens with P.Gen. inv. 90 (second half of the 3rd century BC). Others, on the other hand, have a separation marker, but it is a very tiny one: a simple short *paragraphos* in the margin as in P.Sorb. inv. 2245, col. K (second half of the 3rd century BC), or a short *paragraphos* with a *coronis*, as in P.Berol. inv. 16985 (1st century BC). However, one characteristic that all the Ptolemaic papyri share is the lack of colophons, that is, end-titles.

With the Roman era things change: now bookends are clearly marked with an end-title and with a space underneath (often the next book starts in the next column). PSI inv. 1914 (1st century BC to 1st century AD) is the first Homeric papyrus to show a colophon. Afterwards, colophons become the norm and there

<sup>21</sup> This preparatory text was the basis of Aristarchus's *ekdosis*, i.e., his critical edition, which was the same preparatory text with the addition of critical signs (referring to the commentary, where readings and atheteseis were discussed) and perhaps with variant readings in the margins. This was Aristarchus's 'critical edition' whose spread has been analyzed in the previous sections (§§ 3 and 4). Here instead the focus is on the spread of this preparatory text, before Aristarchus used it as a basis for his recension.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. H. ERBSE, *Über Aristarchs Iliasausgaben*, in *Hermes* 87 (1959), p. 275–303, at p. 301–303; HASLAM, *Homeric Papyri*, p. 84–87; SCHIRONI, *The Best of the Grammarians*, p. 41–43.

is no exception to them. Moreover, Homeric end-titles also always have the same ‘shape’: the name of the poem followed by the Greek letter corresponding to the Homeric book that has just finished. The appearance of end-titles using the letter to name Homeric books is thus a dramatic change in the book layout, which scribes seem to adopt consistently.<sup>23</sup> This empirical observation of scribal practice too finds an explanation in the learned activity at Alexandria. Pseudo-Plutarch attributes the division into 24 books corresponding to the letters of the Greek alphabet to Aristarchus and his circle (*De Homero* 2, 4.1). We cannot prove the basis of such information. However, a title tag on a papyrus mentioning Apollodorus’s grammatical treatise on Book 14 of the *Iliad* (Ζητήματ[α] | γραμματικ[ὰ] | εἰς τὴν Ξ | τῆς Ἰλιάδ[ος] in *P.Mil.Vogl.* I 19)<sup>24</sup> proves that in the 2nd century BC, when Apollodorus (a pupil of Aristarchus) was active, this system was already in use, at least among grammarians and philologists.

The book market, however, seems to have adopted this system a little bit later, in the 1st century BC. The evidence thus suggests that the system was invented in the Library of Alexandria and was first adopted by the grammarians working there, such as Apollodorus. Some scribes might have marked their edition of Homer with a letter end-title, exactly as they marked it with the Aristarchean critical signs. However, whereas the critical signs remained appealing only to the restricted pool of learned scribes, end-titles appealed to a larger number of readers because they were very practical. Thus, scribes beyond the intellectual circles readily adopted them as they adopted the preparatory Homeric text selected by Aristarchus.

## 7. Conclusions

To conclude, manuscript evidence shows that anonymous scribes from the Ptolemaic to the Byzantine periods had two distinct and fundamental roles in knowledge transfer. First, the more learned scribes preserved the most technical aspects of Aristarchean scholarship. As we have seen, many fragments from Aristarchus’s commentaries, which include both his notes and his critical signs, have been preserved in manuscripts from the 2nd century BC up to the 10th century AD. The precision with which these scribes preserved the original notes over the centuries is astonishing, especially when we realise that commentaries and scholia are by default not a fixed text. Rather, they are ‘open sources’ that can be excerpted, enlarged, and cut when useful. In fact, exactly because they are used (and re-used) by later scholars, they can be indefinitely enriched. Even so, exegetical notes and critical signs were rather well preserved over the centuries, because they are technical texts, which scribes, even the more learned

<sup>23</sup> Cf. F. SCHIRONI, *Tò μέγα βιβλίον: Book-ends, End-titles, and Coronides in Papyri with Hexametric Poetry* (*American Studies in Papyrology* 48), Durham NC, 2010.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. ERBSE, *Scholia*, III, p. 557–558 (Pap. IX).



ones, hardly change. Both the overlaps and the discrepancies among these manuscripts belonging to different periods thus prove the ambiguous nature of scholarly literature: on the one hand, commentaries are open texts, subject to cuts and endless recombination; on the other, they are technical enough to be left fundamentally unchanged. This is also due to the fact that commentaries in antiquity were often authority-dependent, especially in the case of Greek scholarship. The acme of Hellenistic Alexandria was embodied in the work of Aristarchus; hence in later periods the best a scholar could do was to preserve what Aristarchus, the grammarian *par excellence*, had said.<sup>25</sup> Later scribes, even those with intellectual ambitions, copied the content of the Aristarchean notes, sometimes even their wording, as they considered the preservation of the best of Hellenistic scholarship as a virtue (and a duty?) – to the point that they often did not even add their own views, even when, as in the case of Eustathius, they were respected scholars of their own.

Second, and more importantly, scribes also disseminated the more practical innovations of the Alexandrian scholarship, such as naming Homer's books after the letters of the alphabet. They also popularised the preparatory Homeric text that Aristarchus had selected by deleting poorly attested or spurious lines. This choice on the part of anonymous scribes had an enormous impact, because it ultimately determined the Homeric text we still read. Thus, we can even say that although the Homeric text we read is essentially Aristarchus's selection, it is not on his account that we have it.

In sum, these scribes were, on the one hand, *independent enough* to select and excerpt the original sources and, on the other, *anonymous enough* not to change the content of what they were copying very much, even when they cut and excerpted it. From the Ptolemaic to the Byzantine periods copyists, scribes, and learned yet subservient scholars thus played a fundamental role in ensuring that Aristarchus's scholarship on Homer did not remain a dry intellectual product locked in the Library with no future, but circulated it in and beyond Egypt, and ultimately informed our reception of the Homeric texts.

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<sup>25</sup> Indeed Aristarchus is defined as 'the best grammarian' by a scholiast (*Sch. D II. 2.316* van Thiel: ... ἀλλ' ἐπειδὴ οὕτως δοκεῖ στίζειν τῷ Ἀριστάρχῳ, πειθόμεθα αὐτῷ, ὡς πάνυ ἀρίστῳ γραμματικῷ) and as 'the ultimate grammarian' in Athenaeus (15.671f: Ἀρίσταρχος ὁ γραμματικώτατος, ἑταῖρε, ἐξηγούμενος τὸ χωρίον ἔφη ὅτι, ...).

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