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Aristarchus and his Use of Etymology*

The study of etymology, far from belonging exclusively to the scholars of Pergamum and serving as a tool for their allegorical exegesis, was also practised by the Alexandrian grammarians and in particular by Aristarchus. Aristarchus' use of etymology of course differs from that of Crates and his school in Pergamum in many respects. The object of this paper will be to analyse his approach to etymology and to show how different it was from that of Crates and other ancient philologoi. I would also like to show how Aristarchus employed etymology in his scholarly work, especially in his editions of the Homeric poems, and how etymological study is perfectly in keeping with his main principles, which are analogy in the fields of grammar and phonology and Homeric usage ('Ομηρικὴ συνήθεια) in the field of philology. My article will be based on examples illustrating his etymological analysis of the Gods' epithets.

One of the most important aims of Aristarchus' work was to trace the difference between Homeric and post Homeric usage; and etymology could provide an excellent means of doing this. The epithet Argeiphonites is a case in point.¹ The EGud. reports the etymology of Aristarchus, which was also adopted by his pupils Alexion and Archias:

EGud. 185, 8 De Stef. Ἀργειφόντης (B 103), παρά τὸ ἐναργεῖς τὰς φαντασίας ποιεῖν, ὡς φαίνει Ἀλεξίων (fr. 4 B.) καὶ Ἀρχίας καὶ Ἀριστάρχος

Aristarchus thus etymologised the name Ἀργειφόντης saying that it was formed from ἀργός, an adjective signifying 'shining', 'gleaming', and φαίνω, 'to show'; more precisely, he paraphrased this epithet as follows: παρά τὸ ἐναργεῖς τὰς φαντασίας ποιεῖν, i. e. 'making the images clear', referring

¹ I would like to thank John Lundon and Mauro Tulli for their comments and advice.

On this epithet cf. Scherer (1886-1890: 2384-2385); Jessen (1895); Kretschmer (1920: 45-49); Chantraine (1935); Chittenden (1948: in part. 25-28); Carpenter (1950); Davis (1953); Heubeck (1954); Koller (1976); West (1978: 368-369).
to the prerogatives of Hermes as the god of dreams. The same etymology recurs in EGen. 186, 16 De Stef. Ἄργειφόντης: παρά το ἐναργεῖς τὰς 
φαντασίας ποιεῖν οὕτως εύρον ἐν Ὕπομνήματι τοῦ Ἡσιόδου ..., 
where it is expressly said that this etymology was taken from a commentary 
(hypomnema) on Hesiod. We know that Aristarchus wrote an ὑπόμνημα on 
Hesiod2 and there are good reasons to think that the commentary quoted in this 
gloss is that of Aristarchus.3 This supposition is confirmed by Sch. Hes. Op. 
77 d, which analyses the epithet Argeiphontes, and, after providing other 
etymologies, notes: οὶ δὲ νεώτεροι ὅτι Ἄργων ἐφόνευος τὸν πανόπτην. 
Here the name of Aristarchus does not appear, but the use of the expression οὶ 
νεώτεροι, the post-Homeric poets, is a typical Aristarchean expression.4 In 
addition to the reference to the hypomnema on Hesiod in the gloss of the 
EGud., this expression points to Aristarchean authorship. In this case, 
analysing the epithet Argeiphontes in Hesiod, Aristarchus noticed the usage of the 
nεώτεροι, who had interpreted this Homeric epithet as signifying ‘the murderer 
of Argos’. This was the most common etymology in ancient times5 and it 
was based on the well known myth of Io and the killing of Argos, her guard, 
by Hermes,6 who was hence called Argeiphontes for this reason: from Ἄργος 
plus φονεύω, ‘to kill’ (similar to ἀνδρειφόντης and Βελλεροφόντης). But in 
Aristarchus’ opinion this etymology was not correct, as — he argued — the 
myth of Io and Argos was posterior to Homer.7 Despite having no knowledge 
of this myth, Homer nevertheless used this epithet.8 Therefore in Aristarchus’ 
opinion Ἄργειφόντης had to be etymologised in a different way; he derived it 
from τὸ ἐναργεῖς τὰς φαντασίας ποιεῖν. Hermes was in fact the god of 
dreams and this epithet was related to the activity of the god. Aristarchus was 
able to find evidence for his etymology in Homeric poetry. In Ω 4459 and in ω

3) Cf. also La Roche (1866: 202).
5) Cf. EGen. 185, 14. 19 De Stef.; EGen. a 1124 L-L = EGen. a 1578 L-L; ESym. a 1326 L-
L; EM a 1741; Sch. D ad B 103 = Sch. A ad B 103 (D); Sch. HMQE ad a 38; Sch. D ad a
6) Io, priestess of Hera at the Heraion of Argos, beloved by Zeus, was transformed into a white 
cow by Hera, who gave her Argos πανόπτης as guard. Hermes killed Argos and released her. 
But Hera inflicted a gadfly upon Io, who, after wandering around the world, finally came to 
Egypt, where she generated Epaphus.
7) The first trace of the myth of Io is in fact to be found in the Hesiodic Catalogue (frr. 124; 125; 
126; and frr. 64, 18, 66. 4) and in the Aigimios, a work attributed to Hesiod or to Kerkopes 
(frr. 294. 296). Cf. Severyns (1928: 179-180). Hyponax (fr. 3a W.) calls Hermes κοινάγχος, 
but the reference to Argos’ myth is not certain.
9) Ω 443-445: ἀλλ᾽ ὅτε δὴ πύργοις τε νεών καὶ τάφροι ῥυοῦτο, / οἱ δὲ νεών περὶ δάρ-
πα φυλακτῆρες πυνέοντο, / τοις δ᾽ ἔρφω ὕπνοι ἔχομε διάκτορος Ἀργειφόντης.
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3-4\textsuperscript{10} Hermes is in fact seen as the god of sleep, and in H. Hy. 14 he is expressly defined as ἡγήτωρ ὀνείρων, the leader of the dreams.\textsuperscript{11}

Even in the field of etymology, Aristarchus analyses words following analogical criteria. He is very attentive to the phonetic and morphological aspects of words and attempts to give the correct etymologies for them. Let us now consider a case in which this attitude is well developed. Aristarchus' arguments about the epithet Ἐλικόνιος applied to Poseidon exhibit a certain methodological precision.\textsuperscript{12} Sch. D ad E 422 (Ξ EM 546, 17) analyses the name Κύρις and other epithets of gods and is taken from the Περὶ Ἡθον τῶν Περιictionaries, the Περὶ ἐτυμολογιῶν.\textsuperscript{13} In the Περὶ Ἡθον he analysed the names of the Greek gods and his main thesis was that the epithets of the gods cannot derive from their cult place, but only from their moral and physical qualities (ibid.: ... καὶ τὰλλα δὲ τῶν ἔπιθετων ἐπιοῦσιν ἡμῖν πάρεστιν ὀρᾷν, οὐκ ἀπό τῶν ἱερῶν τόπων ὄνομασμένα, ἀπὸ δὲ τῶν ἐνεργειῶν τῶν ψυχικῶν, ἡ δὲ συμβεβηκότων τῶν περὶ τό σῶμα). There is only one exception, the name Heliconius, which is derived from a place. Apollodorus goes on to report the opinion of Aristarchus, who preferred to connect the epithet with Helicon, the mountain in Boeotia:

Sch. D ad E 422 (Ξ EM 546, 17) [...] καὶ γὰρ, εἰ σπανίως, "Ἐλικόνιον" τῶν Ποσειδῶν εἴρηκεν (U 404) ἀπὸ Ἐλικόνιος, ως Ἀρισταρχος βουλεύται· ἐπεὶ ἦν Βουστία διὰ εἰρή Ποσειδῶνος, οὐ γὰρ ἄρέσκει απὸ Ἐλίκης, ἐπεὶ φησίν, "οὐ δὲ τοι eἰς Ἐλίκην τε καὶ Αἰγάς δόρα ἀνάγουσιν" (Θ 203). Ἐλικήζον γὰρ ἂν εἴπη, συγχαροῦντος τοῦ μέτρου.

Aristarchus was against the derivation from Helice, a city in Achaia, famous for an old cult to Poseidon.\textsuperscript{14} The derivation from Helice was common in antiquity, dating back to Cleitophon from Rhodes, according to whom this ancient cult of Poseidon in Helice was later inherited by the Ionians of Miletus and Caria.\textsuperscript{15} But Aristarchus opposed this etymology on the grounds that it was not

\textsuperscript{10} \(\omega\) 1-4: Ἐρμῆς δὲ ψυχῆς Κοιλήματος ἑξεκαλείτο ἄνθρωπον μυθιστῆρων· ἔχε δὲ ράβδουν μετὰ χεραί / καλῆν χρυσείν, τῇ τῶν ἄνδρων ὄμισθα θέλει, / ἄν ἔθελε, τούς δὲ αὐτὲ καὶ ὑπωνόματα ἐγείρει· Cf. also Athen. I 16 b.

\textsuperscript{11} Cf. Eitrem (1912: 788-789).

\textsuperscript{12} On this epithet cf. Jessen (1912: 9-11); Wilamowitz (1931: 212-13); Schachermeyer (1950: 34. 39. 45); Nilsson (1961: 446-447); Chirassi (1968: 979-982).

\textsuperscript{13} Cf. Pfeiffer (1968: 260-263).

\textsuperscript{14} Cf. also Call., hy. 4, 101. This etymology was also taken over by Pausanias (7, 24. 5) and Strabo (8, 7. 2).

\textsuperscript{15} Sch. D ad Τ 404: ὡς δʼ ἂτε ταύρος Ἐλικόνιον ἀμφὶ ἀνακατα τὸν Ποσειδῶνα, ήτιο ἂτε ἐν Ὑλίκαν ὧν ἐν τῇ Βουστίας τοῦ Ὁμήρου, ἡ ἐν Ἐλίκης μᾶλλον ὧν περὰ τὸν Ἐλίκης θεόν (Ξ EM 547, 15), διαφανείς γὰρ Ἐλίκων καὶ Ἐλίκης, ὅτι Ἐλίκων μὲν Βουστίας ὄρος, Ἐλίκη δὲ νήσους Ἀχαΐας ἰερὰ Ποσειδῶνος. ή δὲ ἱστορία αὕτη.
phonologically correct. In his opinion, if the epithet had derived from Helice, it should have been Ἐλικήνος, which would have been analogically correct (as it would be formed from Ἐλίκη plus the suffix -ος) and would have fitted the metre. On the contrary, the form Ἐλικῶνος could not derive from Ἐλίκη, as the infix -ων- before the adjectival ending -ος would be left unexplained. The epithet was thus formed from Ἐλικῶν plus -ος and therefore had to derive from the mountain Ἐλικῶν in Boeotia, a region sacred to Poseidon.

In this case even the criterion of Homeric usage comes into question. In fact the supporters of the etymology from Helice could quote a passage from Θ 203, where Hera exhorts Poseidon to help the Greeks, “οἱ δὲ τοι εἰς Ἐλίκην τε καὶ Αἰγάς δῶρʼ ἀνάγουσι”. But this passage in the Iliad did not stop Aristarchus from refusing this etymology, which he had already discarded on grammatical grounds. Grammar and correctness in spelling were therefore the main features of his etymological analysis, and only when an etymology could fulfill these criteria, was it acceptable and eventually confirmed through the usus Homericus.¹⁶

A similar case is that of Alalkomencis, epithet of Athena.¹⁷ It was generally derived from Ἀλάλκομένιον, a city founded by a certain Ἀλάλκομενεύς, where there was a temple dedicated to Athena, as Stephanus of Byzanzium states in his dictionary of Ethnīkā:

Steph. Byz. 68, 12: Ἀλάλκομένιον ἄλις Βοιωτίας ἀπὸ τοῦ Ἀλάλκομενεύς, ὡς καὶ ἰδρυσε τὴν Ἀθηνᾶν Ἀλάλκομενήδα, οὐ γὰρ παρὰ τὸ ἄλαλκεῖν, ὡς Ἀρίσταρχος ἤ γὰρ ἀν καὶ Ἀλάλκης.

Stephanus of Byzantium rejects the etymology of Aristarchus, who linked the epithet with the verb ἄλαλκειν (epic aorist of ἄλλεξω), ‘to drive back’. He claims that this etymology is not correct in terms of phonetic analysis, arguing that in such a case it should have been Ἀλάλκης and not Ἀλάλκομενης. But we can find something more in Sch. D ad E 422 (≡ EM 546, 17), where the epithet of Athena is also analysed:

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¹⁶ In this case Aristarchus could perhaps find other instances in which Homer refers explicitly to Helicon as a mountain sacred to Poseidon; for example Hy. Hom. 22, 3 to Poseidon: ὡς Ἠθὲ Ἐλικῶνα καὶ εὐρέας ἔχει Αἰγάς and the Hom. Ep. 6, 1-2: ἐκ ποσειδών μεγαλοσθένες ἐννοσίταις, ἐφύροσι μεδέοις ἢδὲ σκέφθη Ἐλικῶνος. Even Pindar, I 8, 57 calls the Muses “Ἐλικῶνας παραθένοι”, with a clear reference to the Helicon.

¹⁷ Cf. Wentzel (1893); Usener (1929: 235-238).
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Sch. D ad E 422 [...] “καὶ Ἀλλακομενηῖς Ἀθήνῃ” (D 8. E 908) παρὰ τοῖς εὖ λογιζομένοις ἀπὸ τῆς ἐνέργειας, ἢ ἀπαλέζουσα τῷ ἵδιῳ μένει τοὺς ἐναντίους, οὐ γὰρ πειθόμεθα τοῖς νεωτέροις, οἱ φασίν ἀπὸ Ἀλλακομενηῖς <τόπου> τινὸς εἰρήσθαι.

Once again the name of Aristarchus is not mentioned, but I would nevertheless attribute this note to him, since the etymology is very similar to the one that Stephanus ascribes to him and the Wortlaut is typically Aristarchean, containing a reference to the νεώτεροι. Aristarchus thus noticed that the νεώτεροι derived the name Alalkomeneis from Ἀλλακομένηον, the etymology which is also accepted by Stephanus of Byzantium.

But if we compare what Stephanus says about the Aristarchean etymology with the gloss in the D scholium, we find that Stephanus’ criticism probably misrepresents Aristarchus’ view. Aristarchus did not derive Ἀλλακομενηῖς only from Ἀλλακεῖν, as Stephanus claims, but he also took into account the last part of the epithet, that is -μενηῖς, deriving the epithet from ἀπαλέξειν + μένος, i.e. ἢ ἀπαλέζουσα τῷ ἵδιῳ μένει τοὺς ἐναντίους, ‘the goddess who drives back the enemies with her force’. This precise analysis of the different parts of a word in order to discover its etymology was also present in the case of Ἑλλακώνιος and is typical of Aristarchus.

The main target of Aristarchus’ criticism was Crates, with whom he also had occasion to disagree in the field of etymology. Crates interpreted Homeric poetry allegorically and used etymology to support his interpretation; whereas Aristarchus used etymological analysis to show how misleading allegory could be and therefore to serve his philological and rational interpretation of Homer. Typical in this sense is the discussion of Apollo’s epithet ἴηος / ἴος in the Iliad scholia and in the EGen.:

Sch. A ad O 365a (Hrd.) {ὡς ῥά σὺ} ἤιε| Αρίσταρχος δασώνει, ἀπὸ τῆς ἔσεως τῶν βελῶν. οἱ δὲ περὶ τὸν Κράτητα (fr. 55 M.) ψελῶς, ἀπὸ τῆς ἰάσεως. [...] 

EGen. AB ἴος: “ὡς ῥά σὺ ἤιε Φοῖβε”. Αρίσταρχος δασώνει, ἐπεὶ παρὰ τὸ ἴημι ἐγένετο· ἀπὸ γὰρ τῆς ἔσεως τῶν βελῶν ἐκλήθη ἴος, οἱ δὲ ψελώσαν ἀπὸ τῆς ἰάσεως. [...]

According to Aristarchus the epithets ἴηος / ἴος have to be pronounced with rough breathing as they derive from the verb ἴημι and refer to the activity of

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19) Cf. also EGen α 395 L-L. = ESym. α 463 L-L. = EM α 758 L-L. Sch. D ad А 8; Ap. Soph. 22, 7; Hsch. α 2755; Ep. Hom. α 317; Eust. 439, 33; Corn. 38, 10; Paus. 9, 33, 5; Strab. 9, 2, 36, C 413; Sch E ad δ 766; Sch. T ad Ψ 783 b (ex.). Porph., ad II. 316, 11.
20) On the different interpretations of this epithet, cf. Meyer (1914).
Apollo as an archer. In giving this etymology Aristarchus probably referred to Callimachus, who in his Hymn to Apollo told the story of the killing of Python at Delphi;\(^{21}\) Apollo was exhorted to kill the snake Python by the people who cried: ἐς ἐς βέλος, 'hurl, hurl the dart'.\(^{22}\) Instead Crates read ἵμος / ἤμος with a smooth breathing and took the words from λάμπει, on the ground that Apollo was also a beneficent god, able to cure the sick and injured.\(^{23}\) Aristarchus opposed this etymology because in his opinion Apollo was not a ἱατρός but rather this was an invention of the neōtēres, who identified Apollo with Paean. Some scholia assigned to the follower of Aristarchus Aristonicus insist on the fact that in Homer it was Paean and not Apollo who was the physician among the gods:

Sch. A ad F 899 (Ariston.) ὡς φάτο καὶ Παιήνην’ ὅτι ἱατρόν τῶν θεῶν ἔτερον παρὰ τὸν Ἀπόλλωνα παραδίδωσι τοῦτον.

Sch. MTV ad δ 232 (Ariston.) Παιήνην Ιατρόν θεῶν, οὐχ ὁ αὐτὸς τῷ Ἀπόλλωνι, ἀλλὰ κεχωρισμένος, παρὰ μέντοι τοὺς νεωτέρους ὁ αὐτός νομίζεται εἶναι, καὶ Ἡσίοδος (fr. 307 M.-W.) δὲ μάρτυς ἐστὶ τοῦ ἔτερον εἶναι τὸν Παιήνην τοῦ Ἀπόλλωνος, λέγων "εἰ μὴ Ἀπόλλων Φοῖβος ὑπὲρ Θανάτου σαῦσαι, ἦ καὶ Παιήνης, ὡς ἄπαντων φάρμακα οἴδεν."

In Homer and in Hesiod Apollo and Paean are clearly distinguished. Only the neōtēres identified them as one and the same.\(^{24}\)

The different aspiration of the epithet, written by Aristarchus with rough breathing, was thus also conceived as a means to point out the difference between Homeric and later poetry and, above all, to argue against Crates. In this respect we can perhaps go even further. In his allegorical reading of Homer Crates identified Apollo with the sun (cf. Sch. A ad Σ 240 b (Porph.): ... Κράτης (fr. 29a M.) μὲν τὸν αὐτὸν Ἀπόλλωνα εἶναι καὶ ἦλιον). Crates’

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\(^{21}\) Call., Hy. 2, 97-104: ἴτι ἣ παιήνον ἀκοῦομεν, οὖνεκα τούτῳ / Δελφός τοῦ πρώτιστον ἐφύμωντο εὔφετο λαὸς, / ἤμος ἐκηρύκτην χρυσῶν ἐπεδέκτικον τόξον. / Πνεῦμο τοῦ κατιόντο συνήντησα θαυμών πόρον, / αἰνίς ἄριστος, τὸν μὲν κατήναρξα ἄλλον ἐπὶ ἄλλο / βάλλον ὡς ὑπὸ διστὸν, ἐπηρέησε δὲ λαὸς: / "ἐν ἴτι παιήνον, ἤπι βέλος, εὐθὺ σε μήτρα / γείνατι ἁσσηστὴρα"—τὸ δὲ ἐξετει κείθεν ἁσσηστήρα, μήτρησ / γείνατι ἁσσηστήρα; τὸ δὲ ἐξετει κείθεν ἁσσηστήρα. Cf. also Call. Aet. 4, fr. 88. This aition was taken over by Apollonius Rhodius; cf. Schreiber (1879: 17-18); Radermacher (1901: 500-501); Hunter (1986: 59-60).

\(^{22}\) The same story is found in EGen. AB s.v. ἰήτε οὐ EM 469, 41, which also reports another tradition supported by the historians Douris (FGHist 76, 79); he claimed that it was his mother Leto who urged Apollo to kill Python (ibid.: ... ἵτις δὲ καὶ ὁ Ἀπόλλων λέγεται, ὡς μὲν Δοῦρις, ὅτι ἐν ἀγάλαιας βαστάσασα τὸν Ἀπόλλωνα ἥ Λητῷ ἐνεκελεύσατο εἰποῦσα, ἰήτε παιήνον).

\(^{23}\) Cf. also EGen. AB s.v. ἰήτε οὐ EM 469, 41: ... τενές δὲ ψυλοῦσιν· ἐπεὶ ἱάσεως αἰτίως ὁ θεός.

\(^{24}\) The first poet we know to have done so is Sophocles, OT. 154, who referring to Apollo, invokes him as ἰήτε Δάλις Παιήν. Cf. Severyns (1928: 197-198); Usener (1929: 152-155).
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etymology, Ἱῆμος / ἰῶς from ἱάομαι, could support this allegorical interpretation: the sun in fact is a beneficent star, which favours human life with its heat. Therefore, by opposing Crates’ etymology from ἱάομαι, Aristarchus is also signalling his stand against allegorical interpretation.²⁵

In conclusion, this brief analysis of some Aristarchean etymologies has shown that the Alexandrian scholar follows his main criteria in this field too: analogy in analysing the structure of words and Homeric usage to confirm his etymologies. The first consideration is always grammatical correctness (ὁφροθο-πτης). Other occurrences in Homeric poetry and the Ὀμηροική συνήθεια can only confirm an etymology, but are not a secure means of determining it.

Etymologies are phenomena related to grammar and sound, which cannot be investigated by a purely semantic or philosophical approach. As we have seen in the previous examples, Aristarchus is very attentive to phonetic rules in order to give the most accurate analysis of a word. In so doing, however, he seems to have no awareness of the theory of the παθολογία in Latin) aims to explain the present form of a word through a series of phonetic developments undergone by the original form. The analysis of the παθολογία is already present in Plato’s Cratylus²⁶ and will be developed later, in the 1st century BC, by Trypho, in his Περὶ παθολογίαν,²⁷ and, in the second century AD, by Herodian. While the latter subjects etymology to grammatical rules as the only criteria able to determine the orthography of a word, Aristarchus is not interested in explaining all the changes in letters and syllables, but aims just to connect a word, or in the cases we have considered an epithet, with another, more common word, which is phonetically close to the first and which clearly pertains to the same semantic field. He uses etymology to confirm the coherence and the specificity of Homeric usage as opposed to that of later poets, carefully noticing the differences between these two distinct worlds. He also turns etymology away from Crates and allegorical interpretation. Etymology, in his opinion, does not seek to discover the intimate, intrinsic essence of reality, as Stoic philosophers, and Crates, thought. And we have seen that Aristarchus prefers to interpret god’s epithets as referring to a quality or to a particular activity of the divinities. He excludes any etymology that

²⁵ Both interpretations are present to Macrobius 1, 17, 19. The source of EGen., s.vv. ηῖος and ἱῆμι is Herodian. He probably agreed with Aristarchus’ etymology (cf. EGen., s.v. ηῖος; . . . ἵος δὲ λέγεται ὁ τοξικός, παρὰ τὴν ἄφεσιν τῶν βελῶν). Nevertheless, according to Herodian (cf. Sch. A ad O 365a), the epithets ἵημος/ ἰῶς have in any case to be written with a smooth breathing as the letter η before a vowel is always pronounced with a smooth breathing, as the case of ἤδως, ἰέα and others prove. The etymology therefore has nothing to do with orthography, which is subject to other grammatical rules.


²⁷ Cf. Wackernagel (1876).
goes beyond analogy in grammatical and phonetic rules, or goes outside the
textual data, leaving allegorical and extra Homeric interpretation to others.