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*ILIAD* 14. 306C DISCOVERED IN THE SYRIAC PALIMPSEST

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## *ILIAD* 14. 306C DISCOVERED IN THE SYRIAC PALIMPSEST

At *Il.* 14. 197 ff. Hera, as part of her plan to seduce Zeus, asks Aphrodite for φιλότητα καὶ ἕμερον (198), giving a false reason for the request. The lines most relevant to our present purpose are the following:

|  |        |
|--|--------|
| τὴν δὲ δολοφρονέουσα προσηύδα πότνια Ἥρη·          | 197... |
| εἶμι γὰρ ὀψομένη πολυφόρβου πείρατα γαίης,         | 200    |
| Ἰκεανόν τε θεῶν γένεσιν καὶ μητέρα Τηθύν,          | 201    |
| οἷ μ' ἐν σφοῖσι δόμοισιν εὐὲ τρέφον ἠδ' ἀτίταλλον· | 202... |
| τοὺς εἶμ' ὀψομένη, καὶ σφ' ἄκριτα νείκεα λύσω·     | 205    |
| ἤδη γὰρ δηρὸν χρόνον ἀλλήλων ἀπέχονται             | 206    |
| εὐνής καὶ φιλότητος, ἐπεὶ χόλος ἔμπεσε θυμῷ.       | 207    |
| εἰ κείνῳ γ' ἐπέεσσι παραιπεπιθοῦσα φίλον κῆρ       | 208    |
| εἰς εὐνήν ἀνέσαιμι ὁμωθῆναι φιλότητι,              | 209    |
| αἰεὶ κέ σφι φίλη τε καὶ αἰδοίη καλεοίμην.          | 210    |

When Zeus catches sight of Hera he is overcome with desire; she replies to his opening gambit as follows (14. 300-306):

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| τὸν δὲ δολοφρονέουσα προσηύδα πότνια Ἥρη·          | 300 |
| ἔρχομαι ὀψομένη πολυφόρβου πείρατα γαίης           |     |
| Ἰκεανόν τε θεῶν γένεσιν καὶ μητέρα Τηθύν,          |     |
| οἷ μ' ἐν σφοῖσι δόμοισιν εὐὲ τρέφον ἠδ' ἀτίταλλον· |     |
| τοὺς εἶμ' ὀψομένη, καὶ σφ' ἄκριτα νείκεα λύσω·     |     |
| ἤδη γὰρ δηρὸν χρόνον ἀλλήλων ἀπέχονται             | 305 |
| εὐνής καὶ φιλότητος, ἐπεὶ χόλος ἔμπεσε θυμῷ.       |     |

The similarities between the two passages are striking: 197 = 300 except for the change of τὴν to τόν; 200 = 301 except for the change from εἶμι γὰρ to ἔρχομαι; 201-2 = 302-3; 205-7 = 304-6.<sup>1</sup> But the last three lines of the first passage (208-10) find no echo in the second passage. This is fertile ground for concordance interpolation: it would not be surprising if we were to find these three lines 208-10 repeated as an interpolation after 306 in one or two MSS.

As it happens, the editor of the Syriac Palimpsest (saec. vi p.C., and hereinafter “Syr.”), W. Cureton, does report an addition after line 306, but, astonishingly, of only *two* lines, 306ab = 208-9.<sup>2</sup> I say “astonishingly” because without 306c (= 210) the addition does not yield grammatical sense, leaving a two-line conditional clause without its one-line apodosis. Or rather we could, I suppose, construe 306ab as a self-contained exclamatory wish for the future, with εἰ + the optative in the sense of “If only ...!”, but since εἰ in the parallel passage (208) has to be conditional this would be extremely awkward. Most scholars who have taken note of this insertion at all, from Immanuel Bekker in 1852<sup>3</sup> to Richard Janko in 1992,<sup>4</sup> have been content to record its presence without commenting on its grammatical and semantic difficulties. However,

<sup>1</sup> See further K. Nickau, *Untersuchungen zur textkritischen Methode des Zenodotos von Ephesos* (Berlin and New York 1977) pp. 93-6.

<sup>2</sup> *Fragments of the Iliad of Homer from a Syriac Palimpsest* (London 1851) pp. xviii, 23, 121. In the standard lists of Homeric uncials Syr. = Pap. 9. It is Brit. Mus. Add. MS. 17210.

<sup>3</sup> *Homerische Blätter* Vol. I (Bonn 1863) pp. 114-22, esp. p. 117; first publ. in *Monatsbericht Berl. Akad.* 1852 pp. 433 ff.

<sup>4</sup> *The Iliad: A Commentary* Vol. IV (Cambridge 1992) p. 200.

in 1929 R. Cantarella,<sup>5</sup> after reporting that Syr. contained *Il.* 14. 306ab, argued that 306c (= 210) was necessary to complete the sense and that the text of Syr. needed supplementing with this line (though he did not go so far as to suggest that Syr. might actually contain it); and in 1977 K. Nickau<sup>6</sup> argued that Syr. contained, in the form of 14. 306ab, an “Echointerpolation ... die für diese Fehlergattung wegen ihrer Sinnlosigkeit besonders lehrreich ist; hier sind die Verse  $\Xi$  208-9 (als 306 a-b) wiederholt, wodurch nicht nur die ausgewogene Gesamtstruktur der zweiten Rede Schaden nimmt, sondern auch – da die Apodosis des  $\epsilon\iota$ -Satzes (210) fehlt – die Syntax in die Brüche geht”. If Cureton’s report of Syr.’s text were accurate, Nickau’s comment might at first seem a sensible enough verdict on a particularly senseless interpolation, but his elegant rhetoric should not blind us to a paradox, perhaps even an illogicality, in his position: while many concordance or “echo” interpolations are indeed silly enough, the intention of this genre (in so far as there *is* any intention) seems to be to round off or complete a passage felt to be incomplete, and the extraordinary incompleteness which would result if 306b were the end of the interpolation would *not* be characteristic of the genre.

Now if we turn to Cureton’s transcription of p. 23 of Syr., i.e. the page containing *Il.* 14. 291-320, we find that he prints 32 lines. However, on p. xi he states, “The number of lines in each page, except those on which a Book begins or ends, is thirty-three.” This statement is more or less accurate, though there are actually fewer exceptions than Cureton alleges: while every extant page containing *both* the end of one Book *and* the beginning of the next contains only 28 lines,<sup>7</sup> and p. 68, which includes the end of Book 20 but *not* the beginning of Book 21, contains 29 lines, there are also two Book-ending/beginning pages which *do* contain the normal number of 33 lines, viz. p. 6, which contains the last 33 lines of Book 12, and p. 69, which starts at the beginning of Book 21. Thus excluding p. 23 (to which we shall return in a moment), there are, among the extant pages of Syr., 110 normal pages each containing exactly 33 lines<sup>8</sup> and two Book-ending/beginning pages also containing 33 lines; and it remains true that the only pages containing fewer than 33 lines are pages which include the end of a Book. If Cureton were right in printing only 32 lines on p. 23, this would be the *only* normal (i.e. non-Book-ending) page to contain fewer than 33 lines – a surprising and suspicious anomaly.

I am grateful to the British Library for sending me photographs of six pages of Syr., including, in the Library’s numeration, folio 12 recto, which corresponds to p. 23 of Cureton’s edition and covers *Il.* 14. 291-320, and folio 12 verso, which corresponds to p. 24 of Cureton and covers *Il.* 14. 321-53.

It will be best to start with folio 12 verso. The photograph reveals that the top half of this page contains the 18 lines *Il.* 14. 321-38. Below line 338, along the middle of line 339 and exactly halfway down the page, the large leaf of the original Greek MS. was folded to form two small leaves of the Syriac theological tract, the Syriac text being written at right angles to the partly erased Greek. Calculations based on the information supplied by Cureton (pp. x-xi) and on the British Museum’s pagination of the Syriac text reveal that this leaf, i.e. folio 12, formed the

<sup>5</sup> *L’edizione polistica di Omero* (Salerno 1929) p. 142.

<sup>6</sup> *Op. cit.* (above, n. 1) p. 95.

<sup>7</sup> Viz. p. 18, end of Book 13 and beginning of Book 14; p. 57, end of Book 19 and beginning of Book 20; p. 85, end of Book 21 and beginning of Book 22; p. 112, end of Book 23 and beginning of Book 24.

<sup>8</sup> An apparent exception, at first glance, is p. 40, which according to Cureton’s numeration at the foot of the page contains “xvi. 831-862”, i.e. 32 lines. This, however, is an error and should read “xvi. 830-862”, i.e. 33 lines: the scribe has accidentally repeated the last line of p. 39 (16. 830) at the top of p. 40, as Cureton’s own transcription shows.

outer sheet of one of the quires of the Syriac text.<sup>9</sup> In this position it was particularly liable to abrasion, damage and decay over the centuries at the point of the fold, and indeed the photograph of folio 12 verso reveals that not only has the leaf split along parts of the fold but, more seriously, the surface has suffered such severe darkening and damage along and around the fold that very little of line 339 is now visible; but traces of a few letters remain, for example the  $\Phi$  of  $\text{H}\Phi\text{AICTOC}$  (overlooked by Cureton) and the Y of  $\text{PIYKINAC}$  (correctly printed by Cureton). Then, on the lower half of the page, follow the 14 lines 340-53. Thus the verso contains 33 lines altogether:  $18 + 1 + 14$ .

Let us now turn to the recto of the same leaf, covering the immediately preceding lines, *ll.* 14. 291-320. The top half of the page contains lines 291-306 and 306ab, and these 18 lines occupy exactly the same space on the recto as the 18 lines 321-38 on the verso. Then, across the middle of the page, follows the opposite side of the horizontal black hole just described: on this side of the leaf the damage is similar but even worse, and no individual letters are clearly discernible, but the spacing proves that a line was written here, at exactly the same level on the recto as the mangled line 339 on the verso. There cannot be the slightest doubt that this line was 306c (= 210): *ratio et res ipsa* absolutely demand it. Cureton should have printed here a line composed entirely of dots, as he did often enough elsewhere. It was a strange oversight to print an almost complete lacuna at line 339 on the verso and to ignore totally the total lacuna after line 306b at the corresponding place on the recto.

After 306c there follow the 14 lines 307-20, occupying the same area of the recto as the 14 lines 340-53 of the verso. This brings the tally of lines on the recto up to the normal figure of 33.

So: a 144-year-old minor scholarly mystery is at last cleared up. What follows? Cantarella's intuition has turned out to be correct, and Nickau's argument now needs some adjustment in the light of the facts. Of course I cannot claim to have discovered a lost line by Homer himself; and it is debatable whether it is reassuring or disconcerting to discover that even interpolators can sometimes prove capable of a modicum of coherence. But the most significant consequence is that *every* extant page of Syr. not including a Book-ending has now been shown to have *exactly* 33 lines. This will have important implications for my attempt, in my next article, to establish the contents of the missing leaves of Syr. and by this means to shed some light on the *numerus versuum* of the Homeric *Iliad* itself.

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<sup>9</sup> I should like to thank my colleague Professor Michael Lattke, whose knowledge of Syriac codicology made these calculations possible.