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**"Homeric Accentuation: A Comparative Study of the Bankes Papyrus
and Other Roman Papyri"**

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Homeric Accentuation: A Comparative Study of the Bankes Papyrus and Other Roman Papyri

This paper explores the theory of accentuation in the Homeric papyri recently proposed by Nagy,¹ using evidence from the scholia of the Venetus A manuscript and from the Bankes papyrus (P. Brit. Mus. 114), a sizable roll dated to the second century A.D. According to this model, the *diorthotes* or “corrector”² marked up the papyrus text with a few accents per line that indicated not the accentuation of each separate word as we read in modern texts, but a series of “melodic peaks” arising from the natural melodic contour of the lines and phrases.³ This was based on their original pronunciation with pitch accent, which was no longer natural to Greek speakers at the time of the writing of the Bankes papyrus, as the spoken language had shifted from pitch to stress accentuation by the second century BC.⁴ Furthermore, Nagy shows, this accentuation is not always consistent with the accentuation of the words as we know them in the “modern” Byzantine system. The writing of the lines in *scriptio continua*, without spaces between words, and the accents indicating their melodic contour found in the papyri would thus provide valuable information about the reading and pronunciation of Homeric texts in antiquity, information that is lost in the formatting and accentuation of Byzantine and medieval

1 See Nagy 2008, Nagy 2011; for a systematic study of this theory as applied to the lyric poetry of Bacchylides, see Nagy 2000.

2 See Nagy 2011: 253-254 for a description of the role of the *diorthotes*.

3 For more on accent and melody, see Allen 1987: 131; Probert 2006: 45-48 (including a discussion of papyri).

4 See Horrocks 2010: 160-162, showing that confusion between long and short vowels, indicating this shift from pitch to stress accent, is evident in the papyri at least from the second century BC.

manuscripts and in modern critical editions.

To continue the gathering of evidence regarding Homeric accentuation, I first examined the accents in a sample of twenty lines taken from the Bankes papyrus (24.405-424), after the model of Nagy's investigation of forty sample lines (Nagy 2011). For each line, the first version of the text provided is that of the Bankes papyrus, including only the accents preserved on the text; the second is that of a critical edition (Allen 1931), which leaves spaces between words and uses the Byzantine accent system familiar to modern readers.

τονδ' ημείβετ' έπειταγερωνπριαμοσθεοειδησ (405)
Τὸν δ' ἠμείβετ' ἔπειτα γέρων Πρίαμος θεοειδής·

ειμενδηθεραπωνπηληϊάδεωαχιλλῆος⁵
εἰ μὲν δὴ θεράπων Πηληϊάδεω Ἀχιλλῆος

εἰς⁶ άγεδημοιπα̃canaληθειηκατάλεξαν⁷
εἷς, ἄγε δὴ μοι πα̃σαν ἀληθειην κατάλεξον

ἦετιπαρνηεσσινεμοσπαισῆέμινῆδη⁸
ἦ ἔτι παρ νήεσσιν ἐμὸς πάϊς, ἦέ μιν ἦδη

ἦκυκυσιμελειστι⁹ταμῶνπρούθηκεναχιλλευσ

5 The geminate λ of the papyrus is inconsistent with the meter.

6 Rendering the word εϞς with an acute accent as in the Byzantine system would produce two syllables with rising pitch – two melodic peaks – in a row with no falling of pitch between them, which would not be logical. The *diorthotes* therefore may have marked it with a grave in order to remind the reader that there should be no rising pitch pronounced here, since the melodic peak comes in the second syllable as marked.

7 The scribe has written α for ο; there is no support for this variant.

8 While the Byzantine system has the first with a grave and the second with an acute accent, here three instances of η are marked with a circumflex, indicating a falling pitch after the rising one. The second of these is grammatically inadmissible on the antepenult.

9 The accentuation μελειστι indicates that μελειστί rather than μελειστί (as in critical editions) is to be read here, an instance of Laum's formulation regarding polysyllabic oxytones in phrase-medial position (Laum 1928: 152, 159; see also Nagy 1996: 126-127 note 87), and a notable contradiction of the accentuation reproduced in critical editions. For an explanation on the

ἦσι κυσὶν μελεῖστί ταμῶν προύθηκεν Ἀχιλλεύς.

τονδ' αὐτεπροσέειπεδιάκτοροσαργειφοντης
Τὸν δ' αὖτε προσέειπε διάκτορος Ἀργειφόντης· (410)

ῶγερονούπωτόνγεκυνεσφαγονουδ' οἰωνοί
ῶ γέρον οὔ πω τόν γε κύνες φάγον οὐδ' οἰωνοί,

αλλ' ετικεῖνοσκειταιαχιλληοσπαρηνῆ¹⁰
ἀλλ' ἔτι κεῖνος κεῖται Ἀχιλλῆος παρὰ νῆϊ

αὔ¹¹τωσενκλισίησιδυωδεκατο[[ι]]' η'δέτοηδη¹²
αὔτως ἐν κλισίησι· δυωδεκάτη δέ οἱ ἦώς

κειμενω¹³ ουδ'έτιοἰχρῶς¹⁴χηπεταιιουδέμινευλαῖ¹⁵
κειμένω, οὐδέ τί οἱ χρῶς σήπεται, οὐδέ μιν εὐλαῖ

έσθουσαιράτεφῶτασαρηῖφάτουσκατέδουσι
ἔσθουσ', αἴ ρά τε φῶτας ἀρηῖφάτους κατέδουσιν. (415)

ἦμένμινπερικῆμαέοὔεταροιοφιλοιο
ἦ μέν μιν περὶ σῆμα ἐοὔ ἐτάροιο φίλοιο

έλκειακηδέστωσῆώστέδια¹⁶φανήη
ἔλκει ἀκηδέστωσ ἦώς ὅτε δῖα φανήη,

usage of the grave accent in literary papyri, see Nagy 2008: 143-144.

10 The accentuation νῆϊ indicates νῆϊ rather than νῆῖ; again, see Laum (1928).

11 The circumflex written here is grammatically incorrect, as the vowel of the last syllable is long. Combined with the previous occurrence of circumflex where an acute would be expected (408), this perhaps indicates (as Nagy has suggested to me) that in some situations the scribe may use a circumflex, indicating rising pitch followed by falling pitch, interchangeably with an acute, which only indicates rising pitch.

12 ἦδε is an attested variant, although ηδη is unique to this papyrus. The scribe also seems to have written δυωδεκατοι, which has been corrected.

13 Here, as usual throughout, the *diorthotes* adds iota adscript.

14 This indicates not a grave accent on this syllable, but an acute on the first syllable of the following word; hence it does not contradict Laum's formulation.

15 The grave accent on the final syllable, if it does not simply point to the acute on the first syllable of the next line, could indicate a falling pitch on the first mora of the final vowel and a rising pitch on the second; see Nagy 2011: 261, note 27.

16 The accentuation here indicates δῖα rather than δῖα; perhaps the scribe's mistaken reading of the word as the preposition rather than the adjective. But ι must be long here for the sake of the meter.

ουδέμιναισχυνειθηοῖόκεναυτος[[α]] ἔπελθων
 οὐδέ μιν αἰσχύνει· θηοῖό κεν αὐτὸς ἐπελθῶν

οἶονέ¹⁷ εἰ ῥήεις κείται περιδαιμαῖ νένιπται
 οἶον ἔερσήεις κεῖται, περὶ δ' αἶμα νένιπται,

ουδέποθιμαροσσυνδ' ἔλκεαπανταμέμυκεν (420)
 οὐδέ ποθι μιάρως· σὺν δ' ἔλκεα πάντα μέμυκεν

ὅσσ' ἐτύπηπολεεςγαρεπαντωχαλκονέλασσαν
 ὅσσ' ἐτύπη· πολέες γὰρ ἐν αὐτῷ χαλκὸν ἔλασσαν.

ὥστοικήδονταιμακαρεςθεοὶ υἱὸς ἐῆος
 ὥς τοι κήδονται μάκαρες θεοὶ υἱὸς ἐῆος

καινέκυόςπερεοντοσεπίσφι φίλοςπερικῆρι
 καὶ νέκυός περ ἐόντος, ἐπεὶ σφι φίλος περὶ κῆρι.

ωσφατογήθησενδ' ὀγερωνκαιαμειβετομύθῳ
 Ὡς φάτο, γήθησεν δ' ὁ γέρων, καὶ ἀμείβετο μύθῳ·

As in the sample examined by Nagy, the number of “peaks” marked in the accentuation ranges from one to about five per line. This sample also shows significant discrepancies between what is recorded here and the “modern” accentuation of these lines, meaning that if this papyrus truly records the old method of reading and pronouncing the verse, modern editions are necessarily obscuring it.

Another feature of the accentuation of the Bankes papyrus merits examination. If the accentuation is, as Nagy contends, a record of melodic peaks embedded in Homeric phrases rather than a sporadic and inconsistent attempt to resolve ambiguities, and if these melodic peaks are embedded in the originally natural pronunciation of particular phrases and formulae, then

17 The rough breathing here is perhaps the *diorthotes'* conflation with the alternative form ἔρσήεις.

they should to some extent be consistent where these phrases and formulae are repeated, assuming that the *diorthotes* records them consistently. To test this, I have examined the occurrences in the Bankes papyrus of the formulaic epithet Πρίαμος θεοειδής, which occurs eight times in book 24 of the Iliad, always at the end of a line (lines 217, 299, 372, 386, 405, 552, 634, and 659). Five of those times, it is contained within the line τὸν δ' ἡμείβετ' ἔπειτα γέρων Πρίαμος θεοειδής (lines 372, 386, 405, 552, and 659). I here reproduce the text of the Bankes papyrus at these points:

τηνδ' αὐτεπροσεειπεγερω[]πριαμοςθεοειδης	(217)
τηνδαπαμειβομενοσπροσεφηπριαμοςθεοειδης	(299)
τονδημειβετ' επειταγερωνπριαμοςθεοειδης	(372)
τονδημειβετ' επειταγερωνπριαμοςθεοειδης	(386)
τονδ' ημειβετ' επειταγερωνπριαμοςθεοειδης	(405)
τονδ' ημειβετ' επειταγερωνπριαμοςθεοειδης	(552)
τονπρότεροσπροσεειπεγερωνπρίαμοςθεοειδης	(634)
τονδ' ημειβετ' επειταγερωνπριαμοςθεοειδης	(659)

In six of the eight instances of its appearance, the phrase Πρίαμος θεοειδής is rendered πριαμοςθεοειδης with no accents marked. In line 634, an accent is marked on πρίαμος, and in 659 on θεοειδης (which is equivalent to θεοειδής). In 634, however, the phrase is part of a unique line, and so it is perhaps possible that the melodic contour of the rest of the line has shaped the rendering of this phrase here.

Furthermore, in the instances where the full line τὸν δ' ἡμείβετ' ἔπειτα γέρον Πρίαμος θεοειδής is repeated, the pattern of accentuation is exactly consistent in 372, 386 and 405 (although this is not true for the markings of elision); 552 records no accents at all; and in 659, as already mentioned, the accentuation indicates an additional oxytone at the final syllable of the line. As noted by Nagy, however, the *diorthotes* would likely not “make note of every melodic peak in every hexameter that he marks up,”¹⁸ which would readily explain the complete lack of accents in 552, especially as the line has appeared before and its accentuation has already been indicated to the reader. Thus, this does not present an inconsistency, and does not indicate a different pattern of accentuation here.

The instances of this formula in the Bankes papyrus, then, seem to show a significant degree of consistency in their accentuation, supporting the interpretation that the accents represent a melodic contour embedded within the Homeric formulae. The one apparently true variation occurs in 659, where the grave accent in θεοειδης would indicate a melodic peak at the last syllable of the line that is marked nowhere else. But one inconsistency may be merely a scribal error; alternatively, though perhaps less likely, there could have been a melodic peak in this position that was not recorded in the other instances.

Given this information, the logical next step is to examine Homeric papyri of the imperial period other than the Bankes papyrus. If the accentuation of such papyri truly records the melodic contour of the lines, originally natural and afterwards passed down in this way, as argued by Nagy, it seems reasonable to examine the degree of consistency in the accentuation by a *diorthotes* of the same lines found in different papyri. Accordingly, I here provide a sample of 20 lines from the second book of the *Iliad* (2.745-764) preserved in two imperial-period papyri:

18 Nagy 2011: 264.

the famous “Hawara Homer” (Bodl. MS Gr. Class. a.I (P) = Pack 616), dated to the second century A.D.; and P.Oxy. I 21, an Oxyrhynchus papyrus dated to the first or second century. Both show accents, breathings, marks of elision, and punctuation. In P.Oxy. I 21, the apostrophes marking elision have been written by the original scribe of the text, but the accents, breathings and punctuation seem to be the work of a second writer, a *diorthotes* who has also added some corrections in a cursive hand;¹⁹ similarly, the accents in the Hawara Homer also appear to have been added later by a second scribe's pen.

Presented here are three different versions of the lines in question, as follows: firstly, the text as given in the Hawara Homer, with accentuation; secondly, the text as given in P.Oxy. I 21; thirdly, the text as printed in Allen's edition (Allen 1931).

ουκ' οἶος· ἅμα τῷ γε Λεοντεύς ὄζος Ἄρηος (745)
 ουκοιοαματωιγελεοντευ[
 οὐκ οἶος, ἅμα τῷ γε Λεοντεύς ὄζος Ἄρηος

υιοϋπερθμοιοκορώνουκαινειδαο·
 υιοϋπερθμοιοκορωνουκ[
 υἱὸς ὑπερθύμοιο Κορώνου Καινεΐδαο·

τοιδ' αματεσσαρακονταμελαιναινηεεποντο
 τοιδαματεσσαρακονταμελα[
 τοῖς δ' ἅμα τεσσαράκοντα μέλαιναί νῆες ἔποντο.

γουνευδ' εκκύφουῆγεδωκαιεικοσινῆαϛ
 γουνευδ'εκκύφουηγεδω[
 Γουνεὺς δ' ἐκ Κύφου ἦγε δὺω καὶ εἴκοσι νῆας·

τω' ἰ δαί²¹ νειῆνεεποντομενεπτολεμοιτεπερρ²²αιβοι

19 See description in the *editio princeps* (P.Oxy. I, p. 47).

20 Indicates λεοντεύς, another instance of Laum's formulation.

21 Both papyri record αι for ε here – a scribal hypercorrection arising from the shift in pronunciation of koine Greek that monophthongized /ai/ to /ε:/, and the loss of distinction between long and short vowels that accompanied the shift from pitch to stress accent

τωιδαιν[[ε]]τηνεσεποντομενεπ[
τῷ δ' Ἐνιῆνες ἔποντο μενεπτόλεμοί τε Περαιβοί

οἰπεριδωδώνηνδυσχείμερονουκίεθεντο (750)
]ιπεριδωδωνηδυσχ'έ'ιμερονο[
οἱ περὶ Δωδώνην δυσχείμερον οἰκί' ἔθεντο,

οἷτ' ἀμφῖμερτοντιταρήσιονεργ' ἐνεμοντο²³
]ιταμφιμερτοντιταρήσιονέργ[
οἷ τ' ἀμφ' ἴμερτὸν Τιταρησσὸν ἔργα νέμοντο

ὄσρ' ἐσπηνειονπροῖεκαλλίροονῦδωρ□
ό]σρ' ἐσπηνειονπροῖέ²⁴καλλίροο[
ὄς ρ' ἐς Πηνειὸν προῖει καλλίροον ὕδωρ,

ουδ' ὄγεπηνειῶ ἰ' κυμμισγεταιιαργυροδ□νη
]υδογεπηνειῶικυμμίσγεταιια[
οὐδ' ὄ γε Πηνειῶ συμμίσγεται ἀργυροδίνη,

]αθυπερ[]ενε[]ον
]λάτεμινκαθύπερθενεπιρέε[
ἀλλά τέ μιν καθύπερθεν ἐπιρρέει ἡῦτ' ἔλαιον·

]νουστυγοσυ[]ωξ
]κουγαρδεινουστῦγοσυδατος[(755)
ὄρκου γὰρ δεινοῦ Στυγὸς ὕδατός ἐστιν ἀπορρώξ.

]προθοο[]οο
]αγνητωνδηρχεπρόθοοσεν[
Μαγνήτων δ' ἦρχε Πρόθοος Τενθηρηδόνος υἱός,

]ειονκαιπη[]λον
]περιπηνειονκαιπηλιονεινο[
οἱ περὶ Πηνειὸν καὶ Πήλιον εἰνοσίφυλλον

]ωνμενπρόθο[]εμονευε
]αιεσκοντωνμενπρόθοοσθοοση[

(Horrocks 2010: 160-162).

22 The doubled ρ does not fit the meter here.

23 The readings of the papyri here are well-attested, and the line is printed thus in West's Teubner edition (West 1998).

24 The acute accent here may have been intended for the previous syllable; its placement is unclear.

ναίεσκον· τῶν μὲν Πρόθοος θεὸς ἡγεμόνευε,

]ατεσσερακονταμε[]νηεε̄ποντο□²⁵
]ωιδαματεσσερακονταμέλαιναι[
 τῷ δ' ἅμα τεσσαράκοντα μέλαιναι νῆες ἔποντο.

ο[]αρηγεμονεσδαναῶν[]οιρανοιησαν□ (760)
]υτοιαρηγεμονεσδαναωνκαικο[
 Οὔτοι ἄρ' ἡγεμόνες Δαναῶν καὶ κοίρανοι ἦσαν·

τ[]ρτῶνόχ' αριτοσεηνκυμοιεννεπεμουσα
 τί]στάρ²⁶τωνόχ' αριτοσέηνκυμοιέν[
 τίς τὰρ τῶν ὄχ' ἄριστος ἔην σύ μοι ἔννεπε Μοῦσα

αυτωνήδ' ἵπωνοῖάμ' ατρειδη`ί`ενε̄ποντο
]υτωνηδιπωνοιάμ' ατρειδησιγ[
 αὐτῶν ἡδ' ἵπων, οἱ ἅμ' Ἀτρεΐδησιν ἔποντο.

ἵπιομενγαρ²⁷ αριταιέσανφηρητιαδαο
]πιομενμεγ' αριταιεσανφηρητι[
 Ἴπποι μὲν μέγ' ἄρισται ἔσαν Φηρητιάδαο,

τασεύμηλοσέλαυνεποδωκεασορνιασῶσ²⁸
 τασευμηλοσέλαυνεποδωκεασορν[
 τὰς Εὐμηλος ἔλαυνε ποδώκεας ὄρνιασ ὦσ

The two papyri examined here show a significant degree of variation in their accentuation, which would seem to go against the idea of a natural melodic contour in the lines.

25 Note that the accentuation recorded here in the Hawara Homer is the same as that for line 747, which ends with the same phrase.

26 Here the *diorthotes* of P.Oxy. I 21 has written an acute accent, rather than the grave found in the Byzantine system. The accentuation as recorded here, however, would leave two “peaks” adjacent to each other with no falling pitch in between; it also seems to conflict with the accentuation of the Hawara papyrus. If this reading of the papyrus is correct, the second acute accent may be superfluous. The fact that this line contains more accents than usual may corroborate this.

27 No other texts corroborate the reading γαρ here, and this may be a scribal slip (perhaps the scribe's eye moved ahead to γ'αρ).

28 As before, the grave accent on the final syllable could indicate a falling pitch on the first mora of the final vowel and a rising pitch on the second (Nagy 2011: 261, note 27). Alternatively, it could simply indicate an acute at the beginning of the next line (which is also marked).

With little exception, however, they do not directly contradict each other's accentuation, and often do record the same “peaks” in a line. In general, although the partial preservation of the lines on the papyri makes the exact discrepancy uncertain, the Hawara Homer seems to record more accents per line, with a frequency comparable to that of the Bankes papyrus – from one to three “peaks” in each line. The Oxyrhynchus papyrus is less comprehensive in its accentuation, but still records patterns consistent with the idea of melodic contour on the level of phrases and lines. The accentuation recorded, moreover, contradicts the critical edition's accentuation of the text in ways similar to what we have already seen in the Bankes papyrus.

The study of accentuation in the Homeric papyri with an eye to the melodic contour of the verse shows how much information about the reading and pronunciation of the text can be lost by relying only on the accentuation system that we use today. Much work remains to create a comprehensive work on the subject, but I hope this short study might suggest some directions in which to take the investigation.

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