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Topical Issues in Ancient Greek *scholia* and Their Presence in Modern Science¹

The article focuses on scholia – the ancient and early medieval critical-literary genre, whose main purpose was to comment on any given literary work in order to simplify its reception. Critical commentaries were written on the manuscripts of the commented works – on the margins or between the lines.²

Article I. Scholia are one of the most interesting and, at the same time, least analysed collections of ancient texts. They present numerous aspects of commented works and constitute an exceptionally valuable source of knowledge on various issues regarding the ancient and, sometimes, also medieval science and culture.³

Despite their doubtlessly substantial value, so far very few collections of scholia have been translated into modern languages. Thus, scholia are by no means a popular research topic among academics specialising in Classical Philology, mainly due to the difficulty with their translation. A

¹ This article is a part of the research project *Ancient Theatre and Drama in the Works of Scholiasts* founded by the National Science Centre (decision no. DEC-2012/07/B/HS2/01475).

² With regard to their position in the manuscript, there are two types of scholia: *scholia interlinearia* – often called glosses due to their short form, and *scholia marginalia*.

³ The tradition of writing scholia has been proved to date back to the classical period, with the oldest preserved commentaries being the scholia D to *The Iliad* from the 5th and 4th century BC. It is the Hellenistic period, however, which stands out as the most prolific chapter in the work of scholiasts. Due to medieval manuscripts these scholia have survived to our times.

complete understanding of scholiasts' commentaries requires the reading of the commentaries themselves as well as the work to which they refer. Therefore, the information contained in scholia is not fully utilised by researchers from various branches of science.

Now the time has come for a short presentation on the construction of scholia. They usually consist of a *lemma* – the commented phrase or word, and the text of the explanation. *Lemma* corresponds with the English term *headword*, known from lexicographical works.⁴ In the case of scholia, *lemma* is the quotation of the commented piece of the literary work.

In the article I shall attempt to demonstrate the variety of topics in scholia on the example of the commentaries chosen from the Medicean scholia on *The Persians* by Aeschylus.⁵ The collection is relatively extensive and contains commentaries regarding various areas of knowledge, quite representative for the scholiast literature.

The issues discussed in the Medicean collection can be divided into several thematic categories.

The first one consists of historical and social scholia. The Medicean collection is rich in such commentaries as a result of the historical context of the tragedy it refers to.

The great majority of the historical and social commentaries concern the Persian nation,⁶ while the most significant issues commented on are: the characteristics of Persian rulers and the genealogy of royal dynasties

⁴ Short *lemmata* were, at times, written prior to the text of the commentary, although, more often than not, the commented part of the literary work was too extensive to be quoted in full on the pages of the manuscript. In such cases the so called shortened *lemmata* were used, in which the scholiast would only include the initial words of the explained phrase. Another common practice was the omission of the *lemma* prior to the scholion, leaving to the reader the task of finding the commented phrase in the literary work.

In the scholia quoted in the article, for the sake of its purpose, the *lemmata* are provided by the author.

⁵ All the *scholia* discussed in this article are quoted from: *Scholia Medicea in Aeschyli "Persas"*, [in:] Dähnhardt Oscarus (ed.), *Scholia in Aeschyli "Persas" recens., adnotatione critico instruxit, cum praefatione de archetypo codicum Aeschyli scripta* ed. O. Dähnhardt, B. G. Teubner, Lipsiae 1894.

⁶ The Persian aspects in Aeschylus's work were discussed by West in: West M. L., *The East Face of Helicon. West Asiatic Elements in Greek Poetry and Myth*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1997, Chapter XI: *Ajschylos*, 544-585.

(scholia 6, 656, 719, 769, 774, 775, and 862), the organisation of the Persian state and army (scholia 1, 950, and 951), the scope of Persian domination and the description of Persian relationships with other nations (scholia 24, 34, and 864), the Persian course of military actions (scholia 812, and 858), and the political system in the state as well as the regulations governing the king's reign (scholion 213). One may also find scholia regarding specific events in the Greco-Persian Wars: the Battles of Salamis and Plataea (scholia 355, 809, and B 923), and the famous construction of the pontoon bridge built upon the order of Xerxes, which allowed the Persian troops to traverse the Hellespont (scholion B 72).

One of the most interesting commentaries in the category is the scholion on line No. 950:

(950) ὀφθαλμὸν] τὸν ὄντα ὀφθαλμὸν. – *eye*⁷] acting as (the official called – K.Ch.) 'the eye'⁸.

This explains the word 'eye' used by Aeschylus, the meaning of which might have been unclear to the readers of the tragedy.⁹ The scholiast clarifies that by using the word 'eye' the poet described an army official responsible for counting troops.

Another scholion which offers interesting information is a commentary on line No. 858. The scholiast refers to the words by Aeschylus regarding the former glory of the Persian army.

⁷ English quotations of *The Persians* by Aeschylus come from: Aeschylus, *Persae*, transl. Herbert W. Smyth, vol. I, Harvard University Press; W. Heinemann, London 1973.

⁸ The information on the royal official called 'the king's eye' can be found, among other sources, in *The Souda s.v. ὀφθαλμὸς βασιλέως*, in *The Histories* of Herodotus (I, 114) and in *The Acharnians* by Aristophanes (v. 92). Xenophon mentions the existence of 'the king's eye' in *The Cyropaedia* (VIII, 2, 9, 6 - 10, 4), and Kazimierz Kaszewski writes about the officials called 'the eye' and 'the ear' (cf. Aeschylus, *Persowie*, transl. K. Kaszewski, preface and annotations by S. Witkowski, Krakowska Spółka Wydawnicza, Kraków 1922, footnote to line No. 987).

⁹ Scholion on line No. 950 comments the following passage of the tragedy:

ΧΟΡΟΣ

ἦ καὶ τὸν Περσῶν αὐτοῦ / τὸν σὸν πιστὸν πάντ' ὀφθαλμὸν / μυρία μυρία πεμπαστῶν (...). (v. 949-951).

Chorus

Did you really lose your trusty eye there, that which counted tens upon tens of thousands of the Persians (...). (v. 980-981).

(858) πρῶτα μὲν εὐδοκίμους στρατιάς ἄπε- / φαινόμεθ', οἱ δὲ νομίματα πύργινα πάντ' ἐπήρθονον] πρῶτον μὲν κατὰ πόλεμον διὰ στρατιάς εὐδοκιμοῦμεν καὶ ὀρμῶμεν κατὰ νενομισμένα ἔθη ταῖς πόλεσι ταῖς πορθουμέναις, οὐ τεμένη θεῶν πορθοῦντες, οὐ τάφους ἀνασπῶντες, ὡς Ξέρξης τολμήσας ἐποίησεν. – *In the first place we showed to the world armies worthy of our fame]* formerly our armies brought us fame and we followed the code of the conquered *poleis*, without destroying sanctuaries and graves, which Xerxes dared to do.

In the commentary the scholiast explains the meaning of the poet's words by paraphrasing the lines of the tragedy.¹⁰ He elucidates that the earlier Persian behaviour is in contradiction with their conduct during the Persian Wars, and draws the reader's attention to the fact that formerly, upon conquering the *polis*, the Persian army acted honourably and in accordance with the generally accepted rules, respecting the rights of the conquered communities. However, under the command of Xerxes the Persians began to break the code of military conduct, e.g. by devastating graves and temples.

The second category in the Medicean collection consists of scholia including geographical data, which discuss the names, locations and specific character of the places mentioned in Aeschylus's tragedy (scholia 2, 16, 17, 38, 39, 130, 131, B 238, 303, 306, 413, 447, 466, 483, 487, A 494, B 494, 497, 572, 738, 870, 864, 872, 876, A 878, and B 878).

Interesting information can be found in the commentaries on lines No. 413 and 487.

(413) ἐν στενωῷ] μεταξὺ Σαλαμῖνος καὶ Αἰγίνης τὸ στενὸν ἦν. – *in the narrows]* the straits was located between Salamis and Aegina.

(487) Σπερχειὸς] ὁ Σπερχειὸς ἐξ Αἰνιάνων ῥέων εἰς τὸν Μηλιακὸν ἐμβάλλει κόλπον. – *Spercheus]* the Spercheus River flows from (the state of – K.Ch.) Ainianians and empties into the Malian Gulf¹¹.

¹⁰ Scholion on line No. 858 comments the following passus of the tragedy:

ΧΟΡΟΣ

πρῶτα μὲν εὐδοκίμους στρατιάς ἄπε- / φαινόμεθ', οἱ δὲ νομίματα πύργινα πάντ' ἐπήρθονον. / νόστοι δ' ἐκ πολέμων ἀπόνους ἀπαθεῖς... εὐ πρᾶσ- / στοντας ἄγον οἴκους. (v. 858-861).

Chorus

In the first place we showed to the world armies worthy of our fame, and civil institutions, like towers in strength, regulated all the state; and our return from war brought back our men, unworn and un suffering, to happy homes. (v. 859-861).

¹¹ Cf. Herodotus, *The Histories* (VII, 198, 9).

In the scholion on line No. 413 the scholiast explains the location of the straits mentioned by Aeschylus in the main text – placing it between two islands, Salamis and Aegina,¹² while in his commentary on line No. 487¹³ he points to the estuary and riverhead of the Spercheus.

The third category includes the scholia containing information on mythology, religion and ethnology, with particular focus on the rituals and ceremonies typical for the described nations. The majority of the commentaries concern Persians (scholia 56, 79, and 666).¹⁴ One of the most interesting ones refers to the Persian origins:

(79) χρυ- / σονόμου γενεᾶς· νῦν τῆς πλουσίας. τινὲς δὲ ἀνέγνωσαν χρυσογόνου, διὰ τὸ τὸν Περσέα ἀπὸ χρυσοῦ γεγενῆσθαι| ὃ καὶ βέλτιον. ἄλλως· τῆς Περσέως γενεᾶς ἀπόγονος· ἢ τῆς τῶν χρυσῶν ἀνθρώπων· ἢ πολυχρύσου. – *sprung from gold*] today (we would say – K.Ch.) ‘rich’. Some (say – K.Ch.) ‘born of gold’, because Persian was born of gold. It is (a) better (explanation – K.Ch.). In other words, ‘descendant of the Persia tribe’, ‘gold people’ or ‘pure gold’.

In the quoted commentary the scholiast refers to the myth of the Greek hero Perseus, who is considered the eponymous hero of the Persian. As the prophecy has it, his mother Danaë, who was the daughter of Acrisius and Eurydice, was supposed to give birth to a son who would one day kill his grandfather. In order to prevent this and keep his daughter childless, Acrisius imprisoned her in a bronze chamber. Nevertheless, Zeus fell in love with Danaë and came to her in the form of a shower of gold, impregnating her. As a result Danaë gave birth to Perseus.

¹² Scholion on line No. 413 comments the following passus of the tragedy:

ὡς δὲ πλήθος ἐν στενωφὶ νεῶν

ἦθροιστ', ἀρωγῇ δ' οὐτις ἀλλήλοις παρήν· (v. 413-414).

When, however, the mass of our ships had been crowded in the narrows, and none could render another aid (...) (v. 414-415).

¹³ Scholion on line No. 487 comments the following passus of the tragedy:

στρατὸς δ' ὁ λοιπὸς ἔν τε Βοιωτῶν χθονὶ / διώλλυθ', οἱ μὲν ἀμφὶ κρηναῖον γάνος / δίψη
πονοῦντες, οἱ δ' ὑπ' ἄσθματος κενοὶ / διεκπερῶμεν ἕς τε Φωκέων χθόνα / καὶ Δωρίδ' ἄ
αν, Μηλιά τε κόλπον, οὗ / Σπερχεῖος ἄρδει πεδίον εὐμενεῖ ποτῶ· (v. 482-487)

As for the survivors of the army, they perished in Boeotian territory, some, faint from thirst, beside a refreshing spring, while some of us, exhausted and panting, [485] made our way to the land of the Phocians, to Doris and the Melian gulf, where the Spercheus waters the plain with kindly stream. (v. 481-487).

¹⁴ The scholia in this category include information not only on Persians, but also on other peoples mentioned in the tragedy (scholia A and B 914, and 1020).

According to the myth, gold is the element constituting Perseus and, therefore, he should be considered the very first Persian. Thus, Perseus – born of gold – defines, *pars pro toto*, the whole nation.¹⁵ The reference to the mythological story in the scholion renders it clear for the reader why Aeschylus calls Persians the race *sprung from gold*.¹⁶

Another interesting phenomenon are the commentaries informing the reader about how rulers are typically seen by eastern civilizations. In scholia on lines No. 157 and 628 the scholiast explains that perceiving Persian rulers as gods was a characteristic feature of Persian culture and religion.¹⁷

(157) θεοῦ] τοὺς βασιλεῖς θεοὺς καλοῦσιν οἱ Πέρσαι. – *god*] Persians call their kings gods.

(628) δαίμονα] ὡς θεὸς γὰρ παρὰ Πέρσαις τιμᾶται. – *divinities*] (Aeschylus says so – K.Ch.) because (Darius – K.Ch.) was worshipped like a god by Persians.

¹⁵ In the alternative version of the myth, Perseus – the son of Andromeda and Perseus – was the Persian progenitor.

¹⁶ Scholion on line No. 79 comments the following passus of the tragedy:
 πολυάνδρου δ' Ἀσίας θού- / ριος ἄρχων ἐπὶ πᾶσαν / χθόνα¹⁶ ποιμανόριον θεῖ- / ον ἐλαύνει διχόθεν, πε- / ζονόμοις τ' ἔκ τε θαλάσσης, / ἐχυροῖσι πεποιθῶς
 στυφελοῖς ἐφέταις, χρυ- / σογόνου γενεᾶς ἴσόμενος φῶς. (v. 73-80).
 The fiery lord of populous Asia is leading his wondrous warrior-flock against the whole earth in two divisions, on foot and by the sea, putting his trust in his stalwart and stern commanders; he himself, a god-like hero whose race is sprung from gold. (v. 74-80).

¹⁷ The following scholia on lines No. 157 and 628 comment the following passus of the tragedy:
 ὦ βασιλεύων ἄνασσα Περσίδων ὑπερτάτη, / μητὴρ ἢ Ξέρξου γεραία, χαίρει, Δαρείου
 γυναῖκα / θεοῦ μὲν ἐνάταίτρα Περσῶν, θεοῦ δὲ καὶ μητὴρ ἔφυς, / εἶ τι μὴ δαίμων
 παλαιῶς νῦν μεθέστηκε στρατῶ. (v. 155-158).

O Queen, most exalted of Persia's deep-girdled women, venerable mother of Xerxes, wife of Darius, all hail! You were the consort of the Persian's god, and of another god the mother, that is, unless its former good fortune has now forsaken our host. (v. 155-158).

and

ἀλλ', ὦ φίλοι, χοαῖσι ταῖσδε νεπτέρων / ὕμνους ἐπευφημεῖτε, τὸν τε δαίμονα / Δαρεῖον
 ἀνακαλεῖσθε. γαπότους δ' ἐγὼ / τιμὰς προπέμψω τάσδε νεπτέροις θεοῖς (v. 627-630).

But come, my friends, [620] chant solemn songs as I make these libations to the dead, and summon forth the divine spirit of Darius, while I convey, in honor of the gods, these offerings for the earth to drink. (v. 619-622).

The Medicean scholia also contain information on typically Persian items of clothing. In the commentary on line No. 666 the scholiast explains that the word 'tiara' means a Persian headgear.¹⁸

(666) τιάρας| τῆς κυρβάσιας.¹⁹ – *tiara*] Persian headgear.

Only the synonym of the word used by Aeschylus was given in the text of the scholion, which probably means that the synonym given by the scholiast was, at that time, easier to understand for the reader.

The largest category of the Medicean scholia on *The Persians* are commentaries regarding the field of philology. They include remarks on practically every single aspect of the language Aeschylus uses in the text, and are meant to make the reading much easier and more unambiguous. They explain the non-Greek terms and phrases used in the tragedy (scholia 22, 34, 312, and 318), discuss metric issues (scholia 21, and 331), and even punctuation (scholia 737, 984, and 992).

The scholiast also indicates the places where Aeschylus used forms that could be obscure for the reader, e.g. the fragments of the text where the poet used less popular variants of words or changed their tone (scholia 292, 574, 875, and A 913). The commentary on line No. 63 is a perfect illustration, as the scholiast explains there the etymology and usage of the Greek adverb ἡμερολεγδόν (they count the days).²⁰ It may be generally

¹⁸ Scholion on line No. 666 comments the following passus of the tragedy:

βαλῆν, ἀρχαίος βαλῆν, ἴθ' ἴθ', ἰκοῦ, / ἔλθ' ἐπ' ἄκρον κόρυμβον ὄχθου, / κροκόβαπτον ποδὸς εὐμαριν ἀείρων, / βασιλείου τήρας φάλαρον πιφάυσκων (v. 663-666).

King, our king of old, come forth, draw near! Rise to the barrow's topmost point, lift your saffron-dyed sandal, display the crest of your royal tiara! Come forth, O blameless father Darius. (v. 660-663).

¹⁹ The scholion on line No. 666 is an example of gloss. The Greek term *glossa* or *glossema* means a rarely used or foreign word, which is unclear or requires explanation. Scholiasts often provided readers with synonyms that were easier to understand than the words originally used in the literary work. In time the meaning of *glossa* was extended to explanations written by commentators. The synonyms offered by scholiasts were usually of the same grammatical and inflectional form as the original word, which made it easier to insert them into the original text. This type of scholia did not require the *lemmata*, because, in the manuscript, the glosses were most often placed directly over the explained word. Such scholia also triggered the development of lexicographic works, as philologists would collect synonyms written in manuscripts and create glossaries.

²⁰ Scholion on line No. 63 comments the following passus of the tragedy:

assumed that at the time when the scholia were created this adverb was not commonly used, and its appropriate interpretation may have been problematic.

B (63) ἡμερολεγδὸν μακραῖς ἡμέραις λεγόμενον – *the lengthening delay*] you say so when time is dragging.

Numerous scholia refer to rhetorical devices, tropes and figures,²¹ used by Aeschylus in *The Persians*. In the Medicean collection there are commentaries discussing, among other things, ellipsis (scholia 4, 122, 248, 292, 330, 338, 428, 586, and 984), euphemism (scholion B 319) and synecdoche or the Latin *pars pro toto* (scholia 38, B 49, and 494). A large number of commentaries also refer to Aeschylus's metaphors – the scholiast presents the fashion in which the poet created them or explains their meaning (scholia B 90, 167, 252, 277, 300, 310, 365, 400, A 419, 433, 465, 885, and 989).

Article II. Several Medicean commentaries also regard phonetic phenomena such as synalepha (scholion 862), syncopes (scholia 1, and 2) and tmesis (scholion 501).

The Medicean scholia also include several categories which focus on the technical and formal surface of the text or on the poetics of the tragedy. One of the most interesting commentaries are those identifying the character who is saying something. As the ancient manuscripts lack annotations on *dramatis personae*, such information may have been invaluable for the first modern readers. In the commentary on line No. 364, upon quoting the line of the text, the scholiast added a note saying: ὡς

τοιόνδ' ἄνθος Περσίδος αἶας / οἴχεται ἀνδρῶν / οὖς πέρι πάσα χθὼν Ἀσιήτις / θρέψασα πόθῳ στένεται μαλερῶ, / τοκέες τ' ἄλοχοί θ' ἡμερολεγδὸν / τείνοντα²⁰ χρόνον τρομέονται (v. 59-64).

Such are the warriors, the flower of the Persian land, [60] who have departed, and in fierce longing for them the whole land of Asia, their foster-nurse, laments, while parents and wives, as they count the days, shudder at the lengthening delay (v. 59-62).

²¹ Tropes are usually defined as semantic transformations of single words, while figures are defined as syntax transformations which affect whole phrases or sentences. More information on rhetoric can be found in: H.h Lausberg, David E. Orton, R. Dean Anderson, *Handbook of Literary Rhetoric*, transl. M. T. Bliss, A. Jansen, R. D. Anderson, Brill, Leiden 1998; W. Jost, W. Olmsted (ed.), *A Companion to Rhetoric and Rhetorical Criticism*, Wiley-Blackwell, Oxford 2008.

ἀπὸ Ξέρξου ὁ λόγος – “Xerxes’s speech”, while in the commentary on line No. 683: ὑποκρίνεται ὁ Δαρεῖος – “says Darius”.

Another interesting piece of information is included in the scholion to the very first line of the tragedy, where the scholiast informs the reader that the prologue is delivered by Persian elders.²²

(1) τὰδε μ ν Περσῶν τῶν οἰχομένων (et sqq.) διὰ γερόντων προλογίζει. – Here we are, the faithful Council of the Persians (et sqq.) the Prologue is delivered by the elders (...)

It is worth remembering that, according to the poetry rules of classical tragedy, *Prologos* – the opening song in the tragedy – was performed by an actor. The Chorus would enter the Orchestra later, and the ode it would sing or recite was called *Parodos*. It is known this structure was used in *Phoenissae* (*The Phoenician Women*) by Phrynichus, the work published prior to *The Persians*.²³

The text of the Medicean scholia also contains numerous references to ancient Greek authors, and most commonly to Homer (*The Iliad* – 8 times, *The Odyssey* – 3 times). The main purpose of these references is to demonstrate the similarities between the language of Aeschylus’s work and Homer’s epic poems. The comparison of the tragedian to the author of *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*, who is an unquestionable authority in the realm of poetry, was undoubtedly meant to emphasise the artistry of *The Persians* (scholia 8, A 87, A 93, B 112, 309, A 345, 570, 610, 868, and 959).

²² The same information can be found in *The Hypothesis of The Persians* (cf. *Argumentum fabulae e codice M editum*, [in:] *Scholia in Aeschyli “Persas”*, recens., apparatu critico instruxit, cum praefatione de archetypo codicum Aeschyli scripta ed. O. Dähnhardt, B. G. Teubner, Lipsiae 1894, v. 8).

²³ Cf. lines 6 – 8 in *The Hypothesis of The Persians* by Aeschylus: πλὴν ἐκεῖ εὐνοῦχος ἔστιν ἀγγέλλων ἐν ἀρχῇ τὴν Ξέρξου ἦτταν [...]. ἐνταῦθα δὲπρολογίζει χορὸς πρεσβυτῶν (*Ibidem*, v. 6 – 8).

“First, however, there (in Phrynichus’s work – K.Ch.) was a eunuch telling a story of the Xerxes’s defeat [...], and here (in Aeschylus’s work – K.Ch.) the prologue was delivered by a chorus of elders” (transl. K.Ch.).

Robert Chodkowski also comments on the measure taken by Aeschylus: ‘The opening of *The Persians* with *Parodos*, and not *Prologue*, is a clear reference to old technique, even though, at that time, the former had already been known, and for many years’. (Chodkowski R. R., *Ajschylos i jego tragedie*, Towarzystwo Naukowe Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego, Lublin 1994, 36).

Apart from Homer, the scholia also refer to Herodotus (3 times), Hellanicus and Sophocles (both twice), and once each to Alcaeus, Anacreon, Andron of Halicarnassus, Euphorion, Eupolis, Euripides, Ion, Callistratus, Mnaseas, Pindar, and Timoxenos. All the quotations from Greek poets included in the Medicean collection to *The Persians* enrich the commentaries and play the critical-literary role, so typical of the scholia genre.

The author of the Medicean scholia also included the quotations from historical and geographic works, and the role of such references is to confirm and develop the information mentioned by Aeschylus in his tragedy. The quotations from Herodotus or Hellanicus of Mytilene are a perfect illustration of this.

The most interesting remark seems to be the scholion informing the reader on the genealogy and the name of the Persian queen, the name which Aeschylus fails to mention in the tragedy.

Ἄτοσσα, θυγάτηρ Κύρου, γυνὴ Δαρείου, μήτηρ Ξέρξου κατὰ Ἡρόδοτον (III, 68). – Atossa, according to Herodotus, the daughter of Cyrus, the wife of Darius, the mother of Xerxes (*inter alia* III, 88, 8 *et* *sqq.*; III, 133, 2 *et* *sqq.*; VII, 2, 12 *et* *sqq.*, *et alia*).²⁴

Scholia Medicea in Aeschyli "Persas" include over 500 remarks on different subjects. Despite the thematic diversity, however, there are two aspects that determine the information demonstrated by the scholiast. The first one is the contents of the commented work, which is confirmed by a large number of notes on Persia and Persians in the Medicean scholia. The second one is the literary form of the commented text, as exemplified by the scholia regarding broadly defined philology.

The collection of Medicean commentaries contains notes which not only facilitate the reading of the tragedy, but also provide researchers from various branches of modern science, who may not be interested in the literary work itself, with a tremendous amount of useful information. The knowledge derived from the scholia may be particularly beneficial in our times to the representatives of the auxiliary sciences of classical philology, e.g. experts in culture and religious studies, historians, anthropologists, archaeologists, and ethnologists.

²⁴ The fragments of Herodotus' work that the scholiast refers to are quoted from: Hérodote, *Histoires*, ed. P.-E. Legrand, vol. 1-9, Les Belles Lettres, Paris 1970-1983.

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- › Martin W. L., *The East Face of Helicon. West Asiatic Elements in Greek Poetry and Myth*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1997, Chapter XI: *Aeschylus*, 544- 585.

Abstract

The paper concerns scholia – the least developed, but a very important genre of ancient literature. Scholia were regarded in Antiquity and the early Middle Ages as critical literary genre, which task was to comment on the literary text, and thus to facilitate its reading and comprehension. Scholiasts were often also ancient scholars and therefore the notes written in the margins of manuscripts were of high scientific value.

Numerous themes and issues addressed by the scholiasts were firstly acknowledged and studied by scientists from previous era, but since then they continued their presence in scientific research and have become also the matter of discussion of contemporary researchers.

In this paper I aim to demonstrate the presence of scholia in different fields of knowledge such as: philology (etymology, grammar, punctuation, metrics, rhetoric, poetics of tragedy), ethnology, geography, history, mythology, religion, etc. The paper also examines the relations of scholia with other fields of knowledge.

Every separate thematic group is defined with a set of examples from the ancient commentaries on the *Persians* by Aeschylus.

The still little interest of researchers in this kind of critical literary genre has become a reason for making the ancient commentaries the main theme of my paper. Despite the undoubted value of scholia there are only few translations of them in modern languages, so all the precious information contained in the collection of comments are not sufficiently used by scientists from different fields of science.