



## Theognidean Studies

### A Textual Commentary on the First Book of the Sylloge

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#### Introduction: State of the Art

In 1966, in the wake of the 20th-century tradition of commentaries on the *Theognidea*, until then represented by partial textual notes in editions by Hudson-Williams (1910), Carrière (1948) and Garzya (1958), van Groningen published the most comprehensive commentary on the first book of the *Sylloge*. This work was explicitly based on the text provided by several critical editions then available (Edmonds 1931; Carrière 1948; Diehl 1950<sup>3</sup>; Adrados 1959; Young 1961), reflecting the scholar's unwise decision not to personally examine the principal direct witnesses of the tradition. His proclaimed adherence to the manuscript text – consistent with the «“tyrannie” des manuscrits A et O» (Ferreri 2021, 43) characteristic of the 19th and partly the 20th centuries – betrayed an overall 'conservative' approach. This led him, for example, to neglect (or list without any comment) many conjectures by scholars on corrupt passages and to readily forgo textual emendation altogether: the sole aim of the commentary was to «expliquer l'explicable» (van Groningen 1966, 3). While van Groningen's work has certainly served as an important reference for subsequent Theognidean studies, his declared indifference towards issues of composition and compilation of the collection «has impaired the value of his comments on details» (Young 1967, 140). By way of example, consider the case of 'dittographies': within the intense philological debate on the nature of these doublets, van Groningen suggested they were the work of a modest γραμματικός interested in textual form, without conducting a «rigorous and comprehensive analysis of them» (Young, p. 141). Consequently, he did not consider the possibility of interpreting specific elegiac sequences as outcomes of the concrete symposium practice – a factor now deemed fundamental to understanding many features of the *Sylloge*, thanks to the studies initiated by von Geyso (1892), Reitzenstein (1893) and Wendorff (1902), and significantly advanced by Vetta (1980, 1983, 1984), and, more recently, by Colesanti (2001, 2011), Condello (2002, 2015, 2017) and Ferreri (2020).



In the last decades of the 20th century, West's studies (1971<sup>1</sup>, 1989<sup>2</sup>) produced the reference edition of the Theognidean collection, complemented by a section of explanatory notes on selected passages in *Studies in Greek Elegy and Iambus* (1974, 149-167). Furthermore, in recent years, new research into the composition of the *corpus* and the archaic Greek sympotic poetry (cf. e.g. Vetta 1983; Murray 1990; Pernigotti-Maltomini 2002; Nagy 2004) has produced an increasing number of exegetical and critical textual studies on individual passages of the collection, offering essential, though still partial, contributions. A new and comprehensive work that incorporates these philological advances now seems necessary, aiming to provide an updated and detailed textual analysis of the elegies. This endeavor seeks to offer as robust and rigorous answers as possible to the «ignorance due à l'état de la tradition» (van Groningen, *l.c.*) and to what was, until a few decades ago, considered inexplicable because of the lack of alternative exegetical perspectives or partially outdated theories.

### Research Objectives

The idea of a new contribution to the recent works on the text of the *Theognidea* partly originates from studies conducted for my Master's thesis: at that time, the textual and exegetical analysis, centered on nine *crucis*, aimed to shed greater light on passages of the collection that remained 'unresolved.' The parallel examination of multiple cases produced encouraging results through the comparison and analysis of different *loci critici* and the solutions proposed by scholars. The value of these findings and the need for a more extensive study suggested broadening this research to a larger number of passages of the collection. Initially conceived as a series of critical notes addressing only the problematic points of the most challenging and interesting elegies, this project is intended to produce a new overall commentary on the first book of the *Sylloge* with a predominantly textual focus, moving beyond a purely «d'ordre explicatif» (van Groningen, *l.c.*) approach: this new commentary seeks to analyze the elegies verse by verse, employing a philologically rigorous and up-to-date approach to address interpretative and textual gaps left unresolved by 'conservative' attitude and indifference to now-prevalent theories.

### Research Methodology

A new commentary on the *Theognidea*, which must necessarily avoid methodological biases, should be founded upon a complete bibliographical review and a critical study of every textual element. The method can broadly be outlined across three principal and parallel levels, which are not sequential or independent phases of study but rather interconnected methodological criteria that will coexist and interact throughout the research.

1. As any philological work requires, the textual analysis – especially of the *loci critici* – will necessitate a direct examination of the main manuscript witnesses of the *Theognidea* (A, O, X, I,



Ur, D: about the stemmatic position of D, the observations presented in Ferreri 2021 will be carefully considered). Concurrently, all critical editions and prior commentaries on the *Sylloge* will be systematically and consistently consulted. An essential part of this investigation will also draw upon recent monographic studies concerning the origins and composition of the collection, as well as the internal structure and nature of some elegiac sequences.

2. A thorough critical analysis, including linguistic, semantic and metrical aspects, will be conducted on passages affected by corruption (or considered corrupt), along with all related conjectural proposals by scholars. The study conducted for the Master's thesis confirmed – if confirmation were needed – that a (good) conjecture, even if not entirely definitive, contributes to a fuller understanding of the text. Thus, meticulous work on these passages will enable a more precise textual examination and may inspire new conjectures.
3. Particular attention will also be devoted to the so-called 'dittographies': recent studies have re-evaluated their importance and role, releasing them from their previous relegation to mere 'duplicates' by many scholars and the respective theories on the corpus' composition. And precisely regarding literary reuses, for the reception of archaic elegy in the collection has been extensively studied and variously interpreted, this investigation will, instead, focus on highlighting and analyzing the literary echoes of the corpus across various periods and fields of poetic production. The goal is not to explore the spatial and temporal distribution of allusions to Theognis, but to investigate all possible external parallels and reuses of the *Sylloge* material (in the proverbial tradition, classical theater, Hellenistic poetry, and even Latin literature) aiming to read the Theognidean text in a new light: this approach seeks to offer new interpretations and perspectives on 'reused' passages and, in particular, confirm (or refute) conjectures or propose new ones. Essentially, it is about recognizing the importance of intertextuality and employ it as an 'indirect source.'

Thus, based on rigorous textual choices and contextualization of the elegies within the framework of archaic sympotic poetry, the primary focus of the project is on the text and a detailed commentary on each verse of the first book of the *Sylloge*.

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