Perceptions and social uses of the Ancient Greek dialects

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1. The Ancient Greek dialects as grammatical and socio-anthropological objects of study

Modern research on the dialects of Ancient Greece has mostly focused on two things: the *description* of each local variety based on whatever sources are available—though with a distinct preference for epigraphic documents rather than literary evidence and/or ancillary material such as glosses or statements by ancient and medieval grammarians (cf. below)—and the diachronic and comparative *analysis* of the phonological, morphological, and to a lesser extent syntactic data gathered. Whereas the former task has led to close collaboration with the field of epigraphy, and to a situation where many dialectologists are epigraphists themselves, the latter has been of special appeal to scholars trained in (primarily Indo-European) historical-comparative linguistics. *Mutatis mutandis*, much of the methodology of the latter discipline, including its reliance on the time-tested comparative method, has been brought to bear on the dialectal discrepancies observed "on the ground" and has been used to reconstruct prehistoric dialect groupings or even family trees whose different branches grow out of a common stock labelled "Proto-Greek".[1]

Importantly, of course, such reconstruction was never to be done with too narrow a mindset. The mutual influences of the various dialects were obvious enough to necessitate the ready acceptance of additional notions such as language (and hence also dialect) contact and mixing and thus the application of "wave models" *à la* Schmidt (1872: 27–28) as much as "tree models" *à la* Schleicher (1861: 7). As a consequence, for many decades now Greek dialectology has been characterized by a fairly—if not always entirely—harmonious collaboration of those who paid particular attention to clear-cut diachronic divergences, in line with Neogrammarian doctrine as set out by Brugmann and Osthoff, and those who

[1] Discussions about the exact shape of such genealogical trees continue: see the debate about the antiquity or even (non-)existence of a separate Aeolic branch (García Ramón 1975, Hajnal 2007, Parker 2008, García Ramón 2010, Scarborough 2023; cf. now also van Beek 2022: 185–187, Ringe 2024: 264–271, and, very differently, Woodard 2024). For a recent computational approach to dialectal cladistics see Skelton (2015), who first evaluates competing models—including models that allow for borrowing—but then also proposes a new way of conceiving the relationships within the West Greek dialect group.

intuitively attributed more weight to synchronic commonalities and mutual influences, however "secondary" they might be, and who therefore stood in the tradition of nineteenth-century figures such as Hugo Schuchardt.[2]

The descriptive efforts, meanwhile, were largely unaffected by such differences of perspective. They have culminated and continue to culminate in major dialect grammars for a wide range of different areas, some of which effectively even double up as *editiones minores* or at least collections of the relevant inscriptions.[3] Given the continuous discovery of new evidence, such projects, too, constitute an invaluable service to scholarship.

For all the diversity of the contributions just outlined, one feature that tends to unite them all is their "etic" focus. In cultural anthropology, the distinction between "emic" and "etic" studies of culture, as first set out by Kenneth Pike (1967 [1954]: 37–42), refers to the question whether the observer operates with analytical categories that are applied "from the outside", typically because they are regarded as cross-culturally valid, unbiased, and/or objectively defined, or whether the observer adopts the analytical categories that are used—as it were "subjectively"—by the members of the investigated culture itself. The former is the "etic" approach, the latter the "emic" one (with these labels being inspired by the difference between the phon*etic* study of a language's sounds in universalist terms and the phon*emic* study of the same sounds as part of a language-specific sound system).

[2] The sharpest modern criticism of an excessively diachronic and/or cladistic approach to the Greek dialects was formulated by Bile/Brixhe/Hodot (1984) (criticized in turn by García Ramón 2006; 2018); cf. also Brixhe (2006a; 2006b; 2006c) and, from a different angle, the radical questioning of an entity deserving the label "Proto-Greek" by Garrett (2006: 138–143). However, classic contributions like those of Porzig (1954) and especially Risch (1949; 1955; 1966; 1979) had long managed to strike a healthy balance between trees and waves, and between dialect separatism and dialect grouping; see also the early statistical approach by Coleman (1963) and the methodological considerations by Morpurgo Davies (1992). Morpurgo Davies (1992: 415–419; cf. also Consani 1991: 163–179) further shows how much of 19th-century Greek dialectology was characterized by "a constant tug-of-war between 'classifiers' and 'separatists'"; most prominent among the former was Otto Hoffmann (see Hoffmann 1882–1889; cf. the historicization of the classification in the migration model of Kretschmer 1909), among the latter Richard Meister (cf. Meister 1891–1897; subsequently also Bechtel 1921–1924).

[3] One may think here, for example, of the fundamental treatments of Pamphylian by Brixhe (1976), of Arcadian by Dubois (1986), of Cretan by Bile (1988), of Elean by Minon (2007), or of Cyprian by Egetmeyer (2010). Needless to say, the collections of texts included in such works can only reflect the material known at the time of publication.

Interestingly, however, due to the long history of Greek dialectology, which reaches back at least to the Hellenistic and Roman periods of Greek antiquity itself, alongside the "etic" element there is always also an "emic" component to it. Several of the widely accepted classifications of the Greek dialects do, after all, have ancient roots.[4] Not only do ancient dialectological sources routinely differentiate between "Aeolic", "Doric", "Ionic", and "Attic" in ways which clearly inform the corresponding modern categories (even though the latter are additionally refined and sometimes modified, as when a separate Arcado-Cyprian group is set up, which in antiquity might have been subsumed under Aeolic,[5] or when there is discussion to what extent the label of "Doric" is applicable or not to the dialects of Northwest Greece[6]), but a corresponding "internal" perspective on linguistic identities probably already played a role in how archaic genealogy envisaged the relationship between those who belonged to the "Hellenic" world, by assigning them the mythical ancestors Doros, Aiolos, and Xouthos (the father of Ion), respectively ([Hes.] fr. 9 M.-W.). Note that, if this division was indeed influenced (*inter alia*) by pre-scientific observations of a linguistic nature,[7] it

[4] On these conceptual continuities from antiquity through the Middle Ages right into the 19th century, see Consani (1991) and Van Rooy (2020).

[5] Already Ahrens (1839: 3), who otherwise explicitly follows the authority of Strabo (8.1.2) for his arrangement of the material, classifies Arcadian (as well as Elean) only as "Pseudoaeolic" ("quo melius appareat, optimo jure contra Strabonis auctoritatem ex Aeolicarum numero eas a nobis exemptas esse"). For the legitimacy of an Arcado-Cyprian group (as posited in Smyth 1887), see most recently Rau (2018).

[6] See for example the title of Méndez Dosuna (1985) (*Los dialectos dorios del noroeste*) and Méndez Dosuna (2013) ("Northwest Greek is a subgroup of Doric spoken in a vast area of central Greece") vs. Schmitt (1991: 29) ("In manchem […] steht das Nordwestgriechische dem Thessalischen und Boiotischen näher als dem Dorischen"; cf. also Bartoněk 1972: esp. 176–178, García Ramón 2018: 72–75). Much of this is, however, a question of nomenclature more than real difference of opinion, not least because the Northwestern idioms are so poorly known (cf. Bile 2006).

[7] *Pace* Hainsworth (1967: 64–65), followed by Hall (1997: 170–177) and Morpurgo Davies (2002 [1987]: 162–163) ("this classification [sc. of the Greek dialects into Ionic, Attic, Doric and Aeolic] is largely done on ethnic rather than on linguistic bases"); as pointed out in Willi (2002: 136 n. 29), "Hainsworth neglects the fact that the existence of names for local dialects (e.g. Megarian, Corinthian, Laconian) does not exclude another more general classification (e.g. Doric, Aeolic, Ionic), and Hall's reasoning that terms like 'Doric' or 'Ionic' could not be linguistic in character because 'it seems barely credible that the Greeks were capable of using linguistic criteria to assign local dialects to dialect groups' is purely academic" as it forgets that certain dialect features were undoubtedly salient enough to be noticed not just by grammarians (cf. Hainsworth 1967: 70–72 and Cassio 1993a on grammatical sources such as schol. Dion. Thr. p. 3.302.36–303.1 Hilgard, which treat Doric as the "kind" and the local varieties as the "species"), but also by non-linguists (cf. below; note how obvious it is to

would also jeopardize any assumption that the ancient dialect categories reflect *nothing* but the predominantly literary concerns of Hellenistic and later scholars. That much of dialectological research in antiquity was closely linked to textual philology is undeniable, of course—to the extent that even glossographical compilations with an apparent interest in more strictly regional linguistic diversity might often have served, or at least grown out of, literary scholarship[8]—, but this need not mean that its analytical framework must also have been designed with an exclusively literary purpose in mind.

Be that as it may, the gap which separates the literary focus of ancient dialectology from the epigraphic focus of modern dialectology is hard to deny. It is true that the major handbooks (Ahrens 1839–1843, Meister 1882–1889, Hoffmann 1891–1897, Bechtel 1921–1924, Thumb/Kieckers 1932, and Thumb/Scherer 1959) have traditionally considered the literary sources as well, but in many more recent treatises this element has moved very much into the background.[9] In part this is no doubt due to the much increased availability of non-literary evidence, but in part it also reflects more fundamental misgivings. What Buck (1955: 16) writes in a "Note" at the end of the introduction to his invaluable manual is symptomatic (italics added):

> In the following exposition, dialectal forms from literary and grammatical sources are not infrequently quoted, *especially where the inscriptional evidence is slight*, as it is, for example, quite naturally, for the personal pronouns. […] But a detailed treatment of the dialectal peculiarities observed in our literary texts is so bound up with questions of

Sextus Empiricus, *Math*. 1.88, that there are 'numerous' types of Doric [πολλαὶ γὰρ Δωρίδες]). On the contrary, one may well ask in what other ways a person's ethnic identity could manifest itself to others as clearly as through language. The connection of the Hesiodic genealogy with the main dialect groups of Greek is made explicit, in the third century BCE, by Heraclides Criticus fr. 3.2 Müller.

[8] Cf. in general Wackernagel (1896: 1399), Latte (1925), Pfeiffer (1968: 202), Cassio (1993a), Montana (2020: 166), Tribulato/Favi/Prauscello (2024: 369–370).

[9] See, for example, the—generally very useful—grammars by Striano (1989) on the dialect of Laconia, where the Laconian passages in Aristophanes and other literary texts are not considered (contrast Bourguet 1927: 139–159), and Mimbrera Olarte (2012) on Sicilian Doric, where Epicharmus, Sophron, and Archimedes are barely mentioned. The extensive programmatic article by García Ramón (2018) also focuses exclusively on epigraphic material; this *partly* explains the author's conclusion that "the main questions of Greek dialectology today remain basically the same as they were at the beginning of the discipline" (p. 98). In survey treatments of the literary varieties, on the other hand, their relationship with the epichoric idioms tends to feature more prominently (cf. e.g. Miller 2014, Cassio 2016).

> literary tradition and textual criticism that it is best left to the critical editions of the various authors. It would be impracticable in a work of the present scope, and would, moreover, tend to obscure *that more trustworthy picture of the dialects which is gained from inscriptions*, and which is so important as a basis for the critical study of the mixed literary forms.

From this passage, it is clear that literary material is considered, at best, a poor substitute for missing "trustworthy" data. Epigraphic evidence, by contrast, takes on a role which is analogous to the role played in traditional dialectological research on modern languages by informants who are "NORMs", i.e. nonmobile, older, rural males.[10] Such informants

> should be nonmobile simply to guarantee that their speech is characteristic of the region in which they live. They should be older in order to reflect the speech of a bygone era […]. They should be rural presumably because urban communities involve too much mobility and flux. And they should be male because in the western nations women's speech is considered to be more self-conscious and class-conscious than men's […] (Chambers/Trudgill 1998: 30).

Just as in Buck's statement, we can sense here the hope for a maximally genuine and "undiluted" object of dialectological study. There are good reasons for this, again just as in the case of Ancient Greek dialectology. In order to remain falsifiable, and hence informative, scientific work has to operate with objective categories; and categorization itself is impossible unless classificatory boundaries are well-defined.

However, there are also problems with such an attitude. If it is the case that "[t]he classic works of [sc. modern] dialect geography recorded the speech of the NORMs faithfully and in a sense enshrined it, but it is likely that the future of dialect studies will have to be directed towards more representative populations" (Chambers/Trudgill 1998: 30), this also invites reflection on what a similar shift in perspective should look like when it comes to the Ancient Greek dialects. The point is here not just to bring back into the picture the study of literary texts and to re-establish a dialogue between dialectology and literary scholarship, but also—and perhaps even more importantly—to question dominant paradigms that idealize and thereby over-simplify the realities of dialectal variation in the Greek world. More concretely,

[10] See Chambers/Trudgill (1998: 29).

even when dealing with epigraphic documents in any given local dialect we should begin to resist the natural reflex upon encountering an "unexpected" form of dismissing it as "intrusive" or not "dialektecht" instead of accepting that *our* understanding of that local dialect might have to become more nuanced.[11] To be sure, from a purely descriptive point of view it may make little difference if we identify, for example, forms such as τεσσάρων or τετρακόσιαι (next to τετόρων and τριακάτιαι) in the fourth- or third-century BCE text on the Heraclean Tablets (*IG* XIV 645 = *DGE* 62, 63) as Koine influences or if we say that the Heraclean dialect of that period contained both sets of variants; but if we choose to do the former, we should remember that this is a simplistic way of labelling things, which may have nothing to do with how the primary users of the dialect would have thought of such forms themselves at the time.[12]

Now, it might be said with some justification that there is no way we could ever view linguistic reality through the eyes of these primary users. After all, pertinent remarks by ancient sources are so few and far between that they will never allow a complete shift of perspective and the adoption of a fully "emic" approach. But should we therefore dismiss such considerations as entirely irrelevant to our "academic" study of the Greek dialects? Should we not rather ask whether, say, the ancient identification of (literary) model authors for the various dialects—e.g. Alcman for "Doric",[13] Epicharmus for Syracusan (but also "Doric" *tout court*: cf. Theocr. *epigr.* 18.1), or Corinna for Boeotian—might not have something useful to tell us as well? If, for example, Alcman, Epicharmus, and Theocritus could all be thought of as representing "Doric", each in his own way of course (cf. schol. Theocr. F a–c), and in the case of Alcman with full acknowledgment of the fact that not everything in the text was Doric (so that he could even be said to be συνεχῶς αἰολίζων [Ap. Dysc. *Pron.* p. 107.13 Schneider]), it directly follows that in the opinion of the ancient dialectologists the admixture of "untypical" elements was not in itself sufficient to undermine

[11] Cf. the pertinent remarks by Colvin (2004) and López Eire (2007) on the diversity within "Attic" already in the classical period, not just later when it was prominently argued for by Teodorsson (1974; 1978); a *locus classicus* is Ar. fr. 706 K.-A., on which see now Tribulato/Favi/Prauscello (2024: 156–164).

[12] Cf. the comments of Brixhe (1993b: 37) on the traditional tendency to simply note Koine features in dialect texts, without further consideration of their implications.

[13] And only in a later period also more specifically for "Laconian": see Cassio (2007) (also on the different situation with Epicharmus and Syracusan). Modern attempts (see esp. Page 1951: 102–163) to identify Alcman's language with archaic *vernacular* Laconian as much as possible are therefore problematic (cf. Risch 1954, Cassio 1993b, Hinge 2006).

a more overarching dialectal classification. In other words, as long as some basic dialectal characteristics are preserved, there seem to be different ways of "doing Doric"; and if that is so, there is no obvious reason why the same should not be true when things are looked at in greater granularity—for instance when it comes to more local varieties such as Syracusan or Boeotian (let alone Attic, of course). To accept that Epicharmus, for instance, wrote in Syracusan would not then mean that *only* Epicharmus' language was Syracusan. Thus, the ancients' very interest in the literary manifestations of the various dialects, which is so different from the modern tendency to dismiss such data, turns into a useful reminder of the fact that dialects must never be thought of as static entities, but as linguistic systems that will be actuated and varied for different purposes in different situations.

2. Questions of indexicality and salience

Once this is acknowledged, it automatically entails a next step. While the *description* of the material will always remain central to the dialectologist's work, such work cannot stop there. Rather, it must be supplemented by its social and historical *interpretation*. As the anthropologist Bronisław Malinowski already stressed in 1935, language is best thought of as a mode of action that is rooted in "contexts of situation": "the situation in which words are uttered can never be passed over as irrelevant to the linguistic expression", since "the main function of language is not to express thought, not to duplicate mental processes, but rather to play an active pragmatic part in human behaviour" (Malinowski 1946 [1923]: 306; 1966 [1935]: 7). This being so, the *form* of an utterance that is chosen in any given situation will also make a contribution to the ultimate meaning, whether that (part of the) meaning is consciously encoded by the individual speaker or not.

At the same time, the more conscious and reflected-upon such formal choices are, the more likely they are also to have an impact on the evolution of entire linguistic systems. As soon as certain associations between a given linguistic form or set of forms and situational contexts in which they are utilized are noticed, they acquire "indexicality". If, for example, a speaker prefers form F_1 to form F_2 because the situation conventionally "demands" it, F_1 will be indexical of the situation in question. On a basic level, such an association will be free of ideology (= "first-order indexicality" in the terminology of Silverstein 2003). However, communal observation of the association and the assignment of certain values to it will then often ensue: "Silverstein's second-order indexicality involves the politically and/or morally loaded cultural construal of the first-order indexical association with an intentional content or meaning" (Woolard 2008: 437).

To illustrate this with Ancient Greek dialectal material, we can take the following little scene from Theocritus' *Idyll XV* (Συρακόσιαι ἢ Ἀδωνιάζουσαι), where two Syracusan women who live in Alexandria, Praxinoa and Gorgo, visit King Ptolemy's palace on the occasion of a festival for Adonis; surrounded by the crowd, they are commenting on the rich tapestries when all of a sudden another visitor interrupts them:

(ἕτερος ξένος:) πάυσασθ᾽ ὦ δύστανοι, ἀνάνυτα κωτίλλοισαι,
τρυγόνες· ἐκκναισεῦντι πλατειάσδοισαι ἅπαντα.
(Πραξινόα:) μᾶ, πόθεν ὥνθρωπος; τί δὲ τίν, εἰ κωτίλαι εἰμές;
πασάμενος ἐπίτασσε· Συρακοσίαις ἐπιτάσσεις.
ὡς εἰδῇς καὶ τοῦτο, Κορίνθιαι εἰμὲς ἄνωθεν,
ὡς καὶ ὁ Βελλεροφῶν. Πελοποννασιστὶ λαλεῦμες,
Δωρίσδειν δ᾽ ἔξεστι, δοκῶ, τοῖς Δωριέεσσι. (Theocr. *Id.* 15.87–93)

(A second man:) My good women, do stop that ceaseless chattering—perfect turtle-doves, they'll bore one to death with all their broad vowels.
(Praxinoa:) Gracious, where does this gentleman come from? And what business is it of yours if we do chatter? Give orders where you're master. It's Syracusans you're ordering about, and let me tell you we're Corinthians by descent like Bellerophon. We talk Peloponnesian, and I suppose Dorians may talk Dorian. (transl. A. S. F. Gow)

Although the entire *Idyll* is written in Theocritus' Doric, we are meant to imagine that the rude stranger speaks, presumably, Alexandrian Koine Greek, and hence a dialect that is noticeably different from Praxinoa and Gorgo's Syracusan Doric. When the two women converse in Syracusan, that is a natural consequence of the situation in which they find themselves: two expats from the same place who are having a good time with each other. Their Syracusan Doric dialect thus has "first-order indexicality": it plainly indicates that they are not locals, but there is nothing more to it than that. However, when the stranger picks up on it and begins to make his disparaging comments, Praxinoa responds by "ideologizing" their linguistic practice and thus assigning it "second-order indexicality": she and Gorgo are speaking Syracusan because they are proud of their descent and, being Dorians, they will certainly not use any other dialect just because someone else does not like their idiom.

Regrettably, we do not know more about dialectal contacts and interactions in third-century Alexandria. But we do know, of course, that Doric was never a prominent non-literary dialect in Ptolemaic Egypt; and so, to the extent that there were *any* ethnocultural clashes like the one hinted at by Theocritus, we can at least surmise that ultimately the cultural ideology promoted by people like Praxinoa lost out against its counterpart, which negatively assessed certain features of Doric (if only because of its "broadness" (πλατειάζειν)). Quite clearly, it would be absurd to assume that ideology alone led to the ultimate demise of Doric—not just in Alexandria, but across the Greek world—when there were undoubtedly so many other factors at play as well. And yet, the Theocritean scene reminds us that the "total linguistic fact" (to use another term coined by Michael Silverstein) consists of *three* elements, which are in continuous dialectical interaction: linguistic forms and structures, linguistic practices, and linguistic ideologies.[14] It is the latter two which are to be foregrounded in the present volume.

Now, whether we are dealing with linguistic practices or linguistic ideologies, one further concept that is encapsulated in the Theocritus passage just cited is of some relevance to both of them: that of "pragmatic salience" (Errington 1985: 294–295).[15] As already noted, what Praxinoa's interlocutor takes exception to, apart from the women's general "babbling", is the broadness of their pronunciation—a feature ascribed to Doric also by Pseudo-Demetrius, who specifically illustrates it with reference to Doric /a:/ where Attic has /ε:/ (before extrapolating from it, against the literary-historical evidence, a perceptual aesthetic reason for why comedy could only be written in the "sharper" Attic dialect):[16]

> τὸ δὲ ὀγκηρὸν ἐν τρισί, πλάτει, μήκει, πλάσματι, οἷον βροντὰ ἀντὶ τοῦ βροντή· καὶ γὰρ τραχύτητα ἐκ τῆς προτέρας συλλαβῆς ἔχει, καὶ ἐκ τῆς δευτέρας μῆκος μὲν διὰ τὴν μακράν, πλατύτητα δὲ διὰ τὸν Δωρισμόν· πλατέα λαλοῦσι γὰρ πάντα οἱ Δωριεῖς, διόπερ οὐδὲ ἐκωμῴδουν δωρίζοντες, ἀλλὰ πικρῶς ἠττίκιζον· ἡ γὰρ Ἀττικὴ γλῶσσα συνεστραμμένον τι ἔχει καὶ δημοτικὸν καὶ ταῖς τοιαύταις εὐτραπελίαις πρέπον. ([Dem.] *Eloc.* 177; cf. also Arist. Quint. 2.13 Winnington-Ingram)

[14] Silverstein (1985: 220) speaks of "an unstable mutual interaction of meaningful sign forms contextualized to situations of interested human use, mediated by the fact of cultural ideology"; cf. Woolard (2008: 436).

[15] For the more general linguistic concept of "salience", which is conditioned by factors such as "stigmatization, linguistic change, phonetic distance, and phonological contrast", see also Trudgill (1986: 11).

[16] On the characterization of more open vowels as more 'broad', see further Marini (2002; 2007: 245–246) and Willi (2012: 276).

> Bombast is based on three things: breadth, length, and modelling. Take the word βροντά ['thunder'] instead of βροντή: this has roughness due its first syllable [i.e. because this imitates or is 'modelled' on thunder], length due to its second syllable (with the long vowel), and broadness because of its Doric colour; for the Dorians pronounce everything broadly, which is also why they did not write comedies in Doric, but rather in sharp Attic—the Attic dialect has something tight about it, and vernacular, and suitable for humour of this sort.[17]

Although it is hardly surprising that the characteristic which is most prominently associated with Doric is the dialect's vocalism, it is still welcome to have such explicit confirmation of the fact that what seems most salient to *us* was also regarded as particularly salient by the speakers of ancient Greek itself.[18] Given the sources cited, we have here precisely the sort of "native speakers' awareness of the social significance of different leveled linguistic alternants, which is manifested both in statements about language and in spontaneous, natural use", for which the concept of "pragmatic salience" was proposed (Errington 1985: 295).

In the case at hand, the main reason why the Doric vowels were highlighted in this way was no doubt a combination of their frequency of occurrence and the conspicuous contrast between them (esp. /a:/) and their "standard" (i.e. Attic/Koine) equivalents. In principle, however, even a less frequent and/or less plainly contrastive feature could acquire pragmatic salience. The contrast between phonological /tt/ (<ττ>) and /ss/ (<σσ>), for example, though less common than the contrast between "Doric" /a:/ and "Attic-Ionic" /ε:/, was nevertheless of great value in distinguishing Attic from nearly all other Greek dialects and therefore acquired particular significance in later stages of the language when "good" Attic was to be set apart from "common" Koine Greek by linguistic purists (cf. Lucian's *Judgment of the*

[17] For the interpretation of πλάσμα as 'modelling', and for the point that the syllable βρον- is being taken as imitative of thunder, see Chiron (1993: 51, 118); the idea that the word βροντή is onomatopoeic is paralleled e.g. at Eustathius, *Il.* 960.60–62 (3.555.19–21 van der Valk). For the interpretation of συνεστραμμένον, see Marini (2002; 2007: 245–6), who argues that Pseudo-Demetrius means to convey the closer pronunciation of (certain) Attic vowels.

[18] In connection with Doric, apart from /a:/ vs. /ε:/, Alexis fr. 146 K.-A. also picks out the contrast of Attic /y/ vs. Doric /u/ (τρύβλιον/τρούβλιον) and of word-initial Attic /t-/ vs. Doric /s-/ (τευτλίον/σεῦτλον); cf. further Pl. *Crat.* 434c and Strabo 10.1.10 showing the phonological salience of Eretrian (and Elean) rhotacism. Apart from such metalinguistic statements and/or comic imitations of specific features, their appearance in hyperdialectal forms may indirectly suggest salience (cf. Lenz 2010: 95–104).

Vowels [Δίκη συμφώνων τοῦ σῖγμα πρὸς τὸ ταῦ ὑπὸ τοῖς ἑπτὰ φωνήεσιν]). Also, it hardly needs stressing that such salience is itself always a contextually determined concept. When, at some point during the Peloponnesian War, the Athenian general Demosthenes attacked the Ambraciots at night and, in order to deceive them, put some Messenian allies at the front of his troops so that they might approach the Ambraciot guardposts while speaking "Doric", and thus avoid arousing suspicion (Thuc. 3.112.4), it will not have mattered much that Messenian and (Northwest Greek) Ambraciot are far from identical idioms: all that mattered under the circumstances was that they were both not Attic and that, to an *outsider*, Messenian and the dialect of Athens's principal enemy Sparta were scarcely distinguishable (cf. Thuc. 4.3.3 and 4.41.2 on the Messenians being ὁμόφωνοι τοῖς Λακεδαιμονίοις).[19] By contrast, the—to us—invisible differentiation of four local varieties of East Ionic, which Herodotus (1.142.3–4) famously talks about, must have been based on much more microscopic characteristics, which were nevertheless salient enough for the primary speakers to "count".[20] It is therefore important, whenever we compare and contrast dialects, or instantiations of dialects, to do so with an appropriately refined sense of their situational conditioning and the specific norms and values that are at play.

3. Section I: Poetic dialects and epigraphic poetry

Throughout **Section I** of the present volume, such matters are of paramount importance. All the contributions assembled in it investigate the relationship between "local" and "literary" dialects, seeking to establish which salient characteristics in a given corpus of generically relatively homogeneous texts act as a baseline—i.e., as linguistic "first-order indices"[21] of belonging to the corpus in question—, and how divergences from that baseline are to be

[19] Certain divergences between the epigraphically attested dialects of Messenia and Laconia (cf. Bechtel 1921–1924: 2.430–433, Thumb/Kieckers 1932: 103–105, Schmitt 1991: 55–56, Lanérès 2014; for an interesting new homology, see Bauslaugh 1990 and del Barrio Vega 2007) suggest that speakers of these dialects themselves might have disagreed with this assessment; according to Katičić (1959), the divergences could thus be the result of politically motivated self-differentiation.

[20] On the Herodotean passage and its background, see especially Erbse (1961: 215–220), Stüber (1996). Note Preston's (1999b: xxxv) general observation that "nonlinguists are surprisingly good at distinguishing voices along a dialect continuum, even at sites where traditional dialect geography has not posited an isogloss".

[21] Or "markers" according to the tripartite categorization of sociolinguistic features by Labov (1972: 237, 248): according to Labov, "indicators" are subconsciously applied linguistic characteristics of a given variety, "markers" are consciously applied ones, and "stereotypes" are characteristics that are moreover metapragmatically talked about (and as such suitable for Silversteinian "second-order indexicality").

assessed: to what extent are such divergences best explained as endowed with "second-order indexicality", through which an additional layer of meaning is opened up?

The aforementioned omnipresent /a:/ vs. /ɛ:/ shibboleth is central to the article by **Kaczko**, who demonstrates, with a case-study centring around the name of the goddess Athena, how in a range of poetic genres in which Attic phonology and morphology traditionally predominate, instances of both non-Attic /a:/ and non-Attic /ɛ:/ (in environments where conventional Attic would have "α *purum*") are introduced as stylistic avoidance strategies when the use of the standard epichoric form would have entailed an undesirable lowering of tone. Since each of the available alternatives came with its own associations, the selections we observe enable us to make inferences about generic preference patterns which, in their turn, tell us something about the poets' own perceptions of these forms.

Guijarro Ruano, meanwhile, concentrates on a single poetic genre—archaic and classical epigram—, but casts the net more widely in terms of dialectally "irregular" features attested there. Where generic convention might have prompted the use of either epic-Ionic (Homeric) or epichoric forms,[22] occasional appearances of forms that are neither do not, in her view, point to an additional long-standing tradition of continental poetry, but should rather be understood as due to cross-fertilization from contemporary choral lyric practice; this might then even make us reassess the connotations of *seemingly* Homeric features (such as genitives in -οιο), which could well have been viewed differently—as simple "high-style" markers—by primary audiences.

The interaction of choral lyric language with local dialects is also considered by **Alonso Déniz**, whose piece—together with that of Pratali Maffei— takes us into the Hellenistic period, when intensified dialect levelling profoundly altered the entire linguistic landscape of Greece. As Alonso Déniz shows, the degree to which epigraphically transmitted hymns adhere to an emerging literary "standard", or else integrate local dialect features, is directly related to the geographical reach of the sanctuary to which they belong, with the situation in internationalized Delphi being different from that in more regional cult centres like Erythrai or Epidaurus. At the same time, the gradual spread of the Koine left its mark on these compositions, suggesting that there was never complete fossilization, but a constant renewal of the religious heritage.

[22] For an especially important earlier discussion of these matters, see Mickey (1981); but her conclusion that both local dialect forms and epic-Ionic forms tended to be avoided, at least in the classical period, remains controversial (cf. e.g. Alonso Déniz/Nieto Izquierdo 2009, Dell'Oro 2019 with further literature).

Mutatis mutandis, similar conclusions are reached by **Pratali Maffei** in her study of the interaction between local features and pan-Hellenic trends in the language of epigrammatic poetry: on the island of Cos, which serves as a test case here, the Koine interspersed with some traditional epic-Ionic features seems to act as the default dialect in stone epigrams of the Hellenistic period, but certain "Doric" features can then be superimposed on it in response to specific situational preferences and a wish to reference the Coan environment. Thus, real-life language change led to a reshuffling of the cards, through which a regional variety, precisely because it was on the retreat, was able to acquire new emblematic values that had previously been unavailable to it.

4. Section II: Regional histories of dialect use and variation

In order to acknowledge such changes in *status* of local and regional dialects as they became increasingly marginalized over time, we must of course consider the *longue durée* separately in each case. While the ultimate outcome—the triumph of the Koine—is the same everywhere, not only the timescale, but also the political and social mechanisms that bring it about can be very different. Accordingly, there is a need for social as much as grammatical histories of individual dialects. In these, the perspective cannot be even just tentatively "emic". Ancient sources that talk about major shifts in dialectal evolution from an insider's[23] point of view are all but non-existent, the most notable exception probably being the so-

[23] Additionally, there are occasional ethnographic (i.e., outsider) statements such as Paus. 1.39.5, 2.29.5, and 4.34.8 on the Doricization of Megara, Aegina, and Colonides in Messenia (cf. Dobias-Lalou 2007: 55–56), Thuc. 6.5.1 on the dialect mixture in Sicilian Himera (Chalcidic + Doric), or Thuc. 2.68.5 on the genesis of the dialect of Amphilochian Argos; in the latter case, however, a "barbarian" element is involved (cf. similarly Hdt. 4.108.2 on the half-Greek Gelonians, and also Hdt. 1.57.3 on the prehistoric Athenians becoming Greek by acquiring the language; Harrison 1998: 19, 24–25).

called "Old Oligarch's" lament (*if* lament it is[24]) about the disappearance of unadulterated old Attic:[25]

> ἔπειτα φωνὴν πᾶσαν ἀκούοντες ἐξελέξαντο τοῦτο μὲν ἐκ τῆς, τοῦτο δὲ ἐκ τῆς· καὶ οἱ μὲν Ἕλληνες ἰδίᾳ μᾶλλον καὶ φωνῇ καὶ διαίτῃ καὶ σχήματι χρῶνται, Ἀθηναῖοι δὲ κεκραμένῃ ἐξ ἁπάντων τῶν Ἑλλήνων καὶ βαρβάρων. ([Xen.] *Ath. Pol.* 2.8)
> Furthermore, they [= the Athenians] heard all kinds of idioms and therefore selected one element from here, another from there. Hence, the Greeks at large tend to all have their specific dialects, ways of life, and fashion styles, whereas the Athenians have one that is mixed from the various Greek and non-Greek ones.

Despite the scarcity of perceptual primary sources of this kind, however, for many areas the dialectal data themselves are rich enough to offer some compensation. **Section II** of the present volume offers a selection of pertinent surveys, from which both parallelisms and regional idiosyncracies can be gleaned.

In her contribution on the linguistic situation in Arcadia, **Striano** argues that the gradual transition, via a regional koina, from purely dialectal texts towards texts written in the pan-Greek Koine is in some respects reminiscent of processes of linguistic standardization in modern societies. While there is a period in which there are competing "standards" even in one and the same functional domain (e.g. in proxeny decrees), over time we notice a

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[24] It is often taken as such (cf. e.g. Cassio 1981: 79–80, Morpurgo Davies 2002 [1987]: 160, Horrocks 2010: 77, Mosconi 2022; for a recent balanced discussion see Tribulato/Favi/Prauscello 2024: 164–172), but no matter how dissatisfied the author of the treatise is with the general thrust of the Athenian constitution (as he says himself: [Xen.] *Ath. Pol.* 1.1), the immediate context of his remarks here does not actually suggest pointed criticism: the "mixed" language is rather presented alongside arguable *benefits* from Athenian thalassocracy. A more ostensibly negative take on the loss of "proper" Attic is seen in Solon fr. 36.10–12 West, but there the point is not so much about the dialect of Athens as a whole, as about the dialect of individual Athenians who were forced by personal circumstances to live abroad (τοὺς δ᾽ ἀναγκαίης ὑπὸ | χρειοῦς φυγόντας, γλῶσσαν οὐκέτ᾽ Ἀττικὴν | ἱέντας, ὡς δὴ πολλαχῇ πλανωμένους; Dem. 57.18–19 speaks of a fourth-century Athenian who found himself in such a situation). Diog. Laert. 1.51, meanwhile, again reflects nothing but *external* ideas about the degenerate nature of the Attic-based dialect of Soloi in Cilicia (cf. Strabo 14.2.28).

[25] Even more elusively, Pl. *Crat.* 418b–d thinks of Athenian women as linguistically more conservative than men, at least in terms of (dialectal) phonology; but the interpretation of the passage is difficult, in part because the examples given may actually suggest the opposite (cf. Duhoux 1987, Sommerstein 2009 [1995]: 35–36, Willi 2003: 159–162, also on Ar. fr. 706 K.-A., Colvin 2020: 81–83).

crystallization whereby the local dialect becomes restricted to the religious sphere; moreover, the dialect may have acquired a "second-order indexical" value in texts written outside Arcadia, by speakers whose adoption of hyperdialectal forms suggests that they were no longer fluent in it.

In Crete, meanwhile, which **Bile** shows to have been a particularly conservative area in many respects—notably as far as its peculiar social and institutional lexicon is concerned—, the choice between more or less distinctly dialectal forms of expression seems to be primarily influenced by practical considerations, such as the target audience of any given document: dialectal texts can still be found in the first century BCE when they are dealing with affairs within Crete itself, but there is no reluctance to adopt the Koine (or, where surrounding Doric-speaking territories are concerned, again an intermediate koina) in communication with political entities outside the island. Whereas trade relations will certainly have contributed to the spread of the Koine here just as much as elsewhere, Bile further suggests that two additional, more locally specific factors may equally have played a role in the linguistic opening-up of the island: Cretan piracy on the one hand and Cretan mercenarism on the other.

Turning to Boeotia, studied by **Vottéro**, things are different again. Although this centrally located region has a strong history of political unification under Theban hegemony, its dialect at first seems to give way to the Koine rather more readily than is the case elsewhere, even in religious contexts. For some time, however, the existence of the Boeotian Confederation then stems the tide, and it is only the advent of Roman rule that changes the picture again, as the pro-Roman élites favour the use of the Koine; at that point, only very occasional uses of the dialect still evoke a by now distant glorious past.

However, the fact that Boeotian had never acquired supra-regional prestige meant that the scope for such nostalgic instrumentalization was much more limited here than at the other end of the Aeolic-speaking world, on Lesbos, where **Hodot** takes us. On Lesbos, too, Koine texts already appear in the fourth century, soon after the epigraphic documentation sets in, but the dialect nevertheless continues to be well-represented in official inscriptions for another two centuries. Yet, as a contrastive comparison with the aforementioned situation in Boeotia indicates, this fact alone would hardly account for the way in which dialectal traits also feature very prominently in honorific inscriptions of the Roman era. Instead, we witness here a positive cultural revaluation which has its roots in the close association of this particular local dialect with the literary tradition of Alcaeus and, especially, Sappho—and

which, therefore, illustrates again the importance of conceptualizing epichoric and literary dialects as parts of the same linguistic universe.

5. Section III: When and how to switch to Koine Greek

It lies in the nature of things that sweeping overviews like the ones just summarized must still leave open many questions relating to the practical actuation of the transition from local dialects to supra-regional varieties and, eventually, the pan-Greek Koine.[26] To what extent did individual speakers really have the option of making choices? The elderly woman, for instance, whom Dio Chrystostom (1st/2nd cent. CE) met when walking through the Elean countryside and who told him at length about the place and its connection with Heracles did so 'in Doric dialect' (Dio Chrys., *Or.* 1.54, δωρίζουσα τῇ φωνῇ), after she had no doubt been addressed in Koine Greek: so she must have understood the latter, but may well have been unable to speak it herself. And how many of the Messenians who, according to the still later Pausanias, 'retained the purest Doric dialect of all the Peloponnesians until the present day' (Paus. 4.27.11, καὶ ἐς ἡμᾶς ἔτι τὸ ἀκριβὲς αὐτῆς [sc. τῆς διαλέκτου τῆς Δωρίδος] Πελοποννησίων μάλιστα ἐφύλασσον) were either similarly monolectal or functionally multilectal depending on the social situation in which they found themselves?[27]

Once again, we cannot really provide definitive answers here. But we can at least zoom in on specific domains where there is much scope for small-scale choices to be significant and

[26] Both the formation of different regional *koinai* and the spread of the Koine have received much attention in recent decades: see for example Consani (1986), Dobias-Lalou (1987), Bubenik (1989; 1993; 2018), Brixhe (1993b), Minon (1999), Teodorsson (1989; 2007), Crespo (2007), and the various contributions in Brixhe (1993a; 1996a; 1998), Hodot (2001; 2004), and Minon (2014); among the latter, Brixhe/Vottéro (2004) are especially interested in questions of deliberate dialect choice. Modern dialect studies have also looked in detail at the processes involved in koineization: see e.g. Siegel (1985), Trudgill (1986: 83–126), Hinskens/Auer/Kerswill (2005), Kerswill (2013).

[27] Even in internationally well-connected Rhodes, the ongoing use in everyday situations of a linguistic variety characterized as "Doric" is suggested for the first and second centuries CE by (i) the anecdote in Suet. *Tib.* 56 about Tiberius' touchy reaction to someone making an elaborate speech in Doric (which, the emperor felt, was designed to taunt him because of his own earlier stay in Rhodes) and (ii) a remark about Rhodian dialectal conservatism in Aelius Aristides' speech Ῥοδίοις περὶ ὁμονοίας (*or.* 24.57, οὐδὲν ἦν εὑρεῖν ὡς ἔπος εἰπεῖν παρ' ὑμῖν ὄνομα ὅ τι μὴ Δώριον). The correct characterization of the linguistic variety (or varieties) in question from an "etic" perspective would be a further question, and the same holds for the varieties perceived by Dio Chrysostom and Pausanias, but for Rhodes the inscriptions appear to point in a similar direction to the literary sources just mentioned (cf. Bubenik 1989: 94–95, Schmitt 1991: 46, Striano 2013).

endowed with social meaning. This is likely the case whenever a text type centres around individuals and their place in a clearly-defined sociocultural setting or community—as with honorific inscriptions or pragmatically similar genres; and also, *a fortiori*, whenever individuals are named in the first place. **Section III** groups together three pieces which all carry out more microscopically oriented investigations of this kind.

In the first of these, the linguistic profile of proxeny decrees is reconsidered by **Garré**. Going beyond previous studies that had simply asked to what extent the language of such decrees reflects the dialect of the issuing community or that of the *proxenos* who is awarded a special status, Garré points out that even where there is apparent homogeneity—as in Boeotia, where we standardly find the local idiom employed in these documents—minor changes like those affecting a system of established formulas still allow us better to appreciate the dynamics of dialect competition. Whether or not such unobtrusive adjustments are consciously made, the very fact that they occur warns us not to rashly assume that dialect maintenance is always a static and therefore sociolinguistically less interesting phenomenon than dialect shift.

The need to proceed in a circumspect manner is also underlined in the two following articles, which deal with onomastic material. By a process of "iconization" (Irvine and Gal 2000: 37–38), *any* linguistic sign may in principle be turned into a presumed indicator of the nature of the speaker(s) who use(s) it; the speaker(s) is/are then thought of as *being* the way they (are taken to) *sound*. The establishment of such iconic associations with certain dialects is well-attested in the ancient world: for instance, "l'armonia e il dialetto eolico venivano percepiti come un terreno di mezzo tra la severità e la virilità del dorico e la rilassatezza e l'effeminatezza dello ionico" (Tribulato 2019: 382).[28] Accordingly, one may reasonably expect that the dialectal imprint of personal names, which are after all predestined to attribute certain qualities to their bearers, will be chosen with particular care and with due regard to their iconic potential.

Now, in his analysis of a specific set of names from Northwest Greece, which involve elements such as Κλεο-/Κλευ-, **Filos** does find that there was a period in the third and second centuries BCE during which variants with localized phonology became more common,

[28] Cassio (1984), Tribulato (2019: 372–383), Van Rooy (2020: 99–101), and Tribulato/Favi/Prauscello (2024: 127–139) assemble and discuss the rich material for such associations in the sources; these typically also involve musical harmony (see esp. Arist. Quint. 2.13 Winnington-Ingram, schol. Dion. Thr. p. 3.117.18–27 Hilgard; cf. also Heraclides Ponticus fr. 163 Wehrli = 114 Schütrumpf from Athen. 14.19.624c–20.625e).

thereby intimating an assertion of regional identity; but he also stresses that the alternative variants, which must have been felt to be less marked, never lost traction completely. Hence, whatever "iconic" significance the local type may have acquired in early Hellenistic times, this was never strong enough to overcome entirely the forces of convention that counterbalanced it.

Moreover, the subsequent contribution by **Minon** reminds us of the dangers of looking at names through nothing but a dialectological lens, merely because it is (relatively) easy and convenient to do so. Based on a detailed classification of a vast range of onomastic material from archaic, classical, Hellenistic, and Roman-era Argos, she argues that, at least in this region, the primary determinant in name-giving was sociocultural rather than dialectological in the narrow sense. Although we do over the centuries observe a kind of "koineization" of names as much as of other linguistic elements, the emerging "onomastic koine" is one in which conceptual and semantic homogenization is of greater relevance than any phonological or morphological divergences and adjustments.

6. Section IV: Perceptions and classifications of the Greek dialects in antiquity and beyond

As already noted, ancient writers are not very forthcoming about their own or other people's *perceptions* of dialectal variation. Even the passages that have just been referred to in connection with the concept of iconization are nothing but a drop in the ocean of Greek literature. To a large extent, our knowledge about these matters is therefore inferential only: it is the social uses, which we can observe, that indirectly (if we are lucky) tell us something about the perceptions informing them.[29] In that sense, most of what modern "perceptual dialectology" does—according to the comprehensive "five-point method" summarized by Preston (1999b: xxxiv)—cannot be replicated for the ancient world: we cannot ask speakers to (i) draw maps indicating where they believe important dialect borders are, or (ii) rate degrees of difference between their own and other dialects, or (iii) assign evaluative labels to them ("correct/incorrect", "pleasant/unpleasant"), and we cannot (iv) check how accurately

[29] See the beautiful study by Morpurgo Davies (1993) inferring different attitudes towards the local dialect in Sparta, Boeotia, and the border district of Oropos between Attica and Boeotia; cf. the similarly oriented interpretation of hyperdialectalisms in Consani (2004).

they manage to identify dialects from other places.[30] The best we usually can do is (v) assemble the extremely sparse qualitative data our sources do provide and try to account for them by second-guessing what sociocultural factors have influenced them.[31] When, for example, Thucydides says that the Eurytanian Aetolians are 'most incomprehensible in their language' (Thuc. 3.94.5, ἀγνωστότατοι τὴν γλῶσσαν), this evaluation will certainly reflect to some extent the objective distance between Attic and Eurytanian Greek and hence the real practical difficulty a normal Athenian would have had in understanding a local dialect of the rural northwest; but it is probably biased by a certain feeling of cultural superiority (not least because it is accompanied by the side remark that the Eurytanians are even said to be eaters of raw meat). And similarly, when Pausanias observes, with apparent surprise, that 'the Laconian dialect did not spoil the charm of Alcman's songs, although it generally does not sound nice at all' (Paus. 3.15.2, …Ἀλκμᾶνος, ᾧ ποιήσαντι ᾄσματα οὐδὲν ἐς ἡδονὴν αὐτῶν ἐλυμήνατο τῶν Λακώνων ἡ γλῶσσα, ἥκιστα παρεχομένη τὸ εὔφωννον), this is by no stretch of the imagination an objective judgment on Laconian, nor is it likely to be free of preconceptions based on whether a linguistic variety did or did not have a recognised (living) literary tradition.[32]

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[30] The handbook edited by Preston (1999a) reproduces some classic contributions in the field, including those by Rensink (1955) and Mase (1964) on the classification and mapping by lay informants of Dutch and Japanese dialects, respectively; cf. also Preston (1989) and for some empirical studies of evaluative dialect rating e.g. Fridland/Bartlett (2006) (on Southern U.S. English) and Eichinger *et al.* (2009) (on German). Perceptual dialectology thus forms part of the wider domain of "folk linguistics" (on which see e.g. Niedzielski/Preston 2002, and for ancient Greece Gera 2003).

[31] From a general point of view, one may compare the study of Slovak historical perceptual dialectology by Maxwell (2006); but the statements by professional and amateur linguists considered by Maxwell were infinitely more informative than ancient—or equally limited medieval and early modern (cf. Jakob 2010 on German)—remarks tend to be. A relatively clear case is, however, discussed by Cassio (1984: 128–131): Iambl. *VP* 241–243 (based on earlier sources) regards Doric as the "best" dialect because of its presumed "antiquity" and specific approval in the Pythagorean tradition (cf. the language of the pseudo-Pythagorean treatises: Thesleff 1956).

[32] Again, modern studies can measure the "effect of social variation on the perception of sociolinguistic variables": up to a point one hears what one wants to hear (Niedzielski 1999). Does something similar influence the statement of Heraclides Criticus fr. 1.20, according to which the φωνή (perhaps referring to intonation as much as just vocalic timbre, *pace* Pfister 1951: 164) of Theban women is 'charming' (ἐπίχαρις), but that of Theban men 'unpleasant and heavy/deep' (ἀτερπὴς καὶ βαρεῖα)? After all, the most prominent use of Boeotian as a literary dialect was to be found in the works of the female poet Corinna (cf. Cassio 1984: 118). Whether Pl. *Prot.* 341c really implies that Lesbian was similarly devalued by Simonides, is even less clear.

The reason why statements like these are so rare is obvious. They belong to contexts where the real concern lies elsewhere and where there is no deeper interest in language as such. Our best chance of finding a more favourable environment is if we turn to texts with a stronger linguistic focus or background. This is what **Section IV** proposes to do.

Importantly, while several of the contributions in this last part of the volume concentrate on the work of linguistic specialists in the strict sense—ancient, medieval, and modern grammarians—not all of them do. The first two rather deal with evidence that merely *reflects*, but thereby also engages with, linguistic thought. In her exploration of how Athenian comedy thematizes dialectal diversity,[33] **Novokhatko** underlines, firstly, to what extent the talking about, and staging of, dialects created a multilayered perceptual experience; and she suggests, secondly, that this theatrical phenomenon, though prompted by a growing awareness of linguistic variation and its social significance in the intellectual culture of fifth- and fourth-century Athens, then also contributed much to a wider *prise de conscience* as it promulgated pertinent ideas and ideologies.

One of the notions whose emergence we thus witness through its comic refraction is that of the Attic dialect being something special.[34] The ways in which this conviction took root in the Hellenistic period and then asserted itself, as fully-fledged "Atticism", in Roman times have generated renewed scholarly interest in recent years.[35] How literary authors responded to it, by either implementing or dissenting from the Atticists' guiding principles, has also been studied intensely. But the contribution by **Tribulato** now adds a further perspective as she asks to what extent the dogmas of Atticism also left a mark on the inscriptional record. Questioning claims that a conservative form of the local Attic dialect might have survived in rural or even non-rural Attica right into the imperial period, and might thus have become an ethnolinguistic source of inspiration for the Atticists, she underlines that there is exceedingly little evidence to back this up. Instead, a closer inspection of epigraphic texts dating to the heyday of Atticism reveals that one of the features which we know to have been a marker endowed with especially strong "second-order indexicality"—namely the aforementioned use

[33] As described and analysed most fully by Colvin (1999); cf. also Colvin (2000), Kloss (2001: 34–54), Willi (2002: 132–141), and on Ionic already Cassio (1981: 90–92).

[34] In this connection it is also worth noting that "perhaps as early as 449 B.C., and in any case before 414 B.C., the Athenian state implemented a policy of using the Attic dialect for documents published in the Delian-Attic league's member cities" (Crespo 2006: 99).

[35] Note especially Tribulato/Favi/Prauscello (2024); on the cultural framework of imperial Atticism see also the important contributions by Swain (1996), Schmitz (1997), and Whitmarsh (2005).

of Attic /tt/ where Koine Greek had /ss/ (cf. Section 2 above)—all but disappears in Roman times, *except* in a small handful of texts whose Atticist leanings transpire also in other respects. To judge by this evidence, the idealizing perception of traditional Attic as normative did have an impact beyond the self-contained domain of literary expression; and yet, we can also see that its practical application never turned into a blind imitation of the past, but kept its appeal because it managed to remain an art of socioculturally exclusive allusion.

This flexibility and adaptability of real-life Atticism is probably one of the main reasons for its long-term success. The debates among the grammarians and lexicographers of the time as to what may or may not be linguistically acceptable are well-known. Canon building is never an easy task, and it usually takes a long time until a reasonable equilibrium between theoretical principles and actual implementability is established. In this process, the dual role of grammarians as describers and prescribers is paramount. With the paper by **Favi**, we enter this world. In his outline history of the concept of "Alexandrian Greek", Favi offers a prime illustration of how a descriptive category can mutate over time into a prescriptive (or rather: proscriptive) one when the surrounding social parameters change. What started off, in the Hellenistic period, as a label for usages which, though not found in classical texts, were nevertheless considered to be legitimate from the theorist's point of view eventually became a derogatory way of referring to things that contrasted with the emerging Atticist norms. This revaluation of grammatical terminology cannot be separated from the changing perception of the place to which it relates, Alexandria itself. In an age of classicism, the Egyptian city was no longer conceptualized as a dynamic centre of culture in its own right, but only as the epitome of a multiculturalism that posed a threat to "pure" Greekness.

To the other dialects ancient grammarians were interested in, their equal antiquity with Attic Greek provided better protection from criticism. But once Attic had won out in the fight for cultural supremacy, how exactly specialists should look at these varieties was also an open question. Because they had (more or less) disappeared from spoken discourse, one obvious possibility was to keep them out of any ideological debates: as an exotic "Other" they could still engage the descriptive grammarian's mind, but more like objects in a linguistic museum. Even then, however, their scholarly reception may be guided by certain classificatory assumptions whose "objective" basis need not be obvious. One prominent example is the notion that the major *non*-Attic-Ionic literary dialects, Doric and Aeolic, somehow belong more closely together in the same way as Attic and Ionic do. Whatever the background to this idea may have been—once again one suspects that the synchronically distinctive contrast of Doric and Aeolic /a:/ vs. Attic and Ionic /ɛ:/ was of some relevance—,

it is most clearly expressed in antiquity by Strabo (8.1.2); and, as **Schoubben** shows, it also made its way from there into the Byzantine grammatical tradition, including, he argues, the so-called *Grammaticus Leidensis*, one of the most fascinating compilations of earlier dialectological research.[36] In this first of two contributions in the present volume which deal with the *Nachleben* of ancient dialect perceptions, Schoubben further underscores how such continuities of thought are sometimes obscured by the textual transmission, so that careful textual-critical work is needed to recover them; once this is done, we gain additional, though indirect, sources of information on ancient ways of looking at dialects.

Even more remarkably, meanwhile, just as the Graeco-Roman period saw movements promoting the *practical* revival of *dialects* (for instance with Lesbian and Attic Greek, as noted before, but also in Laconia where there was less literary prestige at stake[37]), the piece by **Monaco** concludes this collection by recounting how the continuities just mentioned at a still later point in time led to what was effectively an *ideological* revival of *dialect perceptions*. Building again on the concept of a close relationship between Aeolic and Doric, the poet and scholar Athanasios Christopoulos developed a theory, set out in his *Aeolodoric Grammar* of 1805, according to which vernacular Modern Greek was not a descendant of the Koine (and hence ultimately of Attic(-Ionic)), but rather the legitimate heir to these other two main branches of the ancient Greek language. As such, Christopoulos thought, it should not only have as much prestige as the Koine-based literary standard with which it competed, but it should also acquire new social uses: as a literary language in its own right. Perceptions and social uses of dialects, we see, do not just matter when they first arise: they may also have long-lasting and renewable impact.

Abbreviations

DGE = Schwyzer, E. (1923), *Dialectorum Graecarum exempla epigraphica potiora*, Leipzig.

[36] On this text, see now Schoubben/Koning/van Velthoven/Probert (2023).

[37] The question whether the use of late Laconian in the 2nd and 3rd centuries CE was an "artificial" revival of a nearly-lost rural idiom (cf. Thumb 1913–1914, Bourguet 1927: 20–29), or simply the emergence in written use of a previously invisible but still widespread sociolinguistic variety coexisting with the Koine in a situation of diglossia (cf. Hermann 1913 and 1913–1914, Brixhe 1996b, Lazzeroni 2006) remains debated: see Alonso Déniz (2014) with a recent endorsement of Thumb's point of view. On the rather different situation in Lesbos, where there was an eminent literary tradition, but probably some dialectal continuity as well, see also Cassio (1986).

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