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# Chrestomathy of Ancient Greek Dialect Inscriptions

## I. Introduction

With the collapse of Mycenaean centres, the strong unifying tendencies in the social and cultural life came to a halt; in the linguistic field, this brought about the disappearance of various retarding factors which were at work during the Mycenaean period of the development of Ancient Greek. All this, together with great shifts of population through migrations, opened the way to strikingly new changes in the development of the Greek language, which was quickly moving to a considerable dialectal differentiation. As early as at the dawn of the classical Greek civilization in the 8th/7th cent. B. C., we have to do with a rich complex of some twenty five Greek dialects, which were more or less distinctly different from each other.

The degree of recognizing immediately a concrete Greek dialect in the speech of a native speaker depended not only on the quantity of different specific linguistic features of the dialect, mainly the phonological ones, but also on the distinctive relevance of the phenomenon in question (see, for instance, the systemic phonological changes that concerned more than only one phonological item) or on the degree of its phonetic impact (rhotacism, for example, was clearly much more conspicuous within the speech of a native speaker of a dialect than a number of other linguistic peculiarities).

In 1963, R. Coleman published his important study “The Dialect Geography of Ancient Greek”, in the Transactions of the Philological Society 61, 1963, pp. 58–126, where he analyzed the Greek dialectal relations from the geographical point of view. And in 1972, I elaborated, on the basis of his reflections on the Ancient Greek dialect geography, my own methodological approach to this complex of problems in my monograph “Classification of the West Greek Dialects at the time about 350 B. C.”, Prague – Amsterdam 1972. I tried to evaluate here the mutual phonemic relations of the Doric group of Greek dialects by examining their phonological isoglosses from the quantitative point of view, and came, for instance, to the conclusion that Elean and Cretan seem to be Greek dialects of a most distinctive character.

Using similar methodological approach and analyzing now the whole complex of all the Greek dialects in this paper, I should like to characterize the spectrum of the capacity of Attic to differentiate itself from each of the main groups of Greek dialects, and *eo ipso* the degree of ability of recognizing immediately concrete Greek dialects in the speech of native Greek speakers, as perceived by an Attic listener. I should like to do so by evaluating selected sets of dialectal interrelations between Attic and the other groups of Ancient Greek dialects, i.e., for instance, Attic versus Ionic, Attic versus mild Doric, Attic versus strict Doric, Attic versus Aeolic, and Attic versus Arcadian-Cypriot.

## II. Ionic in general in comparison with Attic

1. In contrast to Attic, the Ionic dialects showed a *fully accomplished shift* of long primary  $\alpha$  to  $\eta$ , even after  $\epsilon$ ,  $\iota$ ,  $\rho$  (see, for instance, οἰκίη, φιλήη, χώρη, ἐσχάρη, νεηνίης instead of the Att. οἰκιά, φιλιά, χώρᾱ, ἐσχάρᾱ, νεᾶνιάς); this was a *very early innovation, exclusively Ionic*, and of a *highly contrastive character*.

2. Ionic showed an *occasional preservation* of a short proto-Greek  $u$  (this was an *archaism* in Greek, documented, however, not only in Ionic, but, more or less, also in a number of other dialects, e. g. in Laconian, Corinthian, etc.).

3. Ionic showed documentation of the “third compensatory lengthening” of the ξένφος > ξεῖνος, κόρφος > κοῦρος types (attested, however, also in the South Aegean Doric insular area; see examples of ξῆνος/ξεῖνος on Rhodes, Cos, Thera, Crete, as well as in West Argolic, etc. (with a *relatively early documentation*)).

4. Ionic shows absence of a number of Attic innovations, for instance of the *metathesis quantitatis* (βασιλεύς, -έως instead of -ῆος) or of the so-called “Attic Declension” of the type of λεῶς, λεῶ.

Note: The Attic-Ionic group of dialects showed also an assibilation of the suffix -τι into -σι (esp. in 3rd pers. Pl. Act.), which was a *highly contrastive feature*, but it was *typical* not only of Attic-Ionic, but also of Arcadian-Cypriot (excepting Pamphylian) and of Lesbian (this being influenced by Ionic).

Conclusion: The Ionic early loss of the long primary  $\alpha$  was certainly one of the *most contrastive features* of the Ionic-Attic interrelations, the contrast of ξεῖνος × ξένος being probably *not so conspicuous* at first sight, while the preservation of  $u$  was merely an *occasional archaic phenomenon*, once omnipresent in Greek, but no longer too vivid in classical times.

5. West Ionic (= Euboean) in comparison with Attic:

a) Euboean showed a *fully accomplished shift* of the primary long  $\alpha$  (see II.1 above).

b) Euboean showed a striking rhotacism in the middle of the word, documented, however, only in the Euboean city of Eretria as well as in Oropos, a community lying on the opposite Boeotian coast. See, for instance, the following material: Eub. παῖρῖν < παῖσῖν (Dat. Pl.) from παῖς; Eub. ἔχουρῖν (3. Pl. Act.) = Att. ἔχουσιν from ἔχω; Eub. σίτηρῖν = Att. σίτησιν (Acc. Sing.); Eub. Ἄρτεμῖρῖαν = Att. Ἄρτεμισίαν (Acc. Sing.); Eub. δημορῖων (Gen. Pl.) = Att. δημοσίων; Eub. ὄπωρ ἄν = Att. ὄπως ἄν (with a documentation after the end of 5th cent. B. C. at the latest). Rhotacism was a *highly contrastive phenomenon*, known – to be true – also from late Elean and Late Laconian, but in contrast to Eretria and Oropos it occurred there at the *end of the word only* (see more sub IV. 6).

Note: Euboean shared several phonological features also with Attic: documentation of -ττ-, -ρρ- against -σσ-, -ρσ- in East and Central Ionic; absence of the third comp. leng. – against E. and C. Ionic again.

Conclusion: The Euboean rhotacism inside the word (restricted, however, only to Eretria and Oropos) was a phenomenon *considerably conclusive* for the identification of the said subdialect in question.

### III. Mild Doric dialects (i.e. the Saronic and the North-West ones, as well as the dialects of Doris media /West Argolic, South-Aegean insular Doric/) in comparison with Attic

1./2. The two most important differences between the mild Doric dialects and Attic consisted

a) in the rather *contrastive* Attic-Ionic assibilation of -ττ to -σσ in the the 3rd pers. Pl. Act. (with a very early documentation), and

b) in the *relatively limited* occurrence of long primary α in Attic (since early centuries).

3. On the other hand, a typical feature of the mild Doric dialects is their *innovative four-grade long-vowel system* with an open and a close long ē-/ō-pair of vowels (ἐθήκε × imper. φίλει; ἔδωκε × imper. βούλου), which, however, was characteristic also of the Attic-Ionic group of Greek dialects (with an early documentation on both sides).

4. At the same time, both the mild Doric and the strict Doric dialects show the typical West Greek (= Doric) -μες in 1st pers. Pl. Act., as well as the Nom. Pl. of definite article in τοί, τὰί (which is in the West Greek area absent only on Crete), but these forms were *pan-Doric*, for the most part, and *eo ipso rather inconclusive* for the identification of a concrete dialect in question.

Conclusions: The import of the two above-mentioned differences (Nos. 1, 2) was considerably reduced by the significant systemic phenomenon of No. 3: The Saronic group of Doric dialects, consequently, represented a group of non-Ionic dialects that may be considered the least distant from Attic.

Note A: The so-called North-West dialects (Phocian, Locrian, Aetolian, etc.) seem to have been a bit more distinct from Attic than the Saronic ones (Megarian, Corinthian, East Argolic); see a number of specific N-W features (though their occurrence was mostly not fully restricted to North-West dialects only), for instance the tendency of shifting -ερ- to -αρ- (see the N-W forms φάρῆν in Phocian and φάρειν in Locrian /instead of the Attic φέρειν/, but it occurred also in Elean /cf. φάργον/ and some other Doric dialects); or cf. the nearly omnipresent Aeolic Dat. Pl. in -εσσι, or its North-West correspondent form -οις, or else the short diphthongs -οι, -αι within the forms of Dat.-Loc. Sg., documented mostly

in the Greek North-West and in Boeotia. These peculiarities are worth mentioning individually, but they are *hardly distinctive* in general.

Note B: A somewhat different spectrum of linguistic particularities was typical also of the dialects of *Doris media*, spoken in West Argolid and the South Aegean insular Doric area of Rhodes, Cos, Cnidus, and Calymna.

#### IV. Strict Doric dialects in general (esp. Laconian, Cretan, Cyrenaean, in principle also Elean) in comparison with Attic

1. The most important difference that distinguished the strict Doric dialects from Attic was the preservation of the *conservative three-grade long-vowel system* with only one pair of long ē-/ō-vowels in all of them (i.e. with only one long ē-/ō-pair, denoted by the letters η/ω, never by ει/ου).

2. *Highly contrastive*, however, when compared with Attic, was especially the very open long Elean æ-vowel – as a continuation of the original IE. ē –, which was frequently written in the Early Elean inscriptions by the letter α: see El. φράτρα = Att. (φ)ρήτρα, El. φάλειοι = Att. Ἡλείοι, El. πατάρα = Att. πατήρα, El. ἔα = Att. εἴη (opt.), El. μά = Att. μή (negative particle); the phenomenon shows an early documentation, though not a fully exclusive one, whereas after ca. 350 B. C. it remains to be quite rare (within the long-vowel o-section, Elean was a normal strictly Doric dialect).

3. Another *contrastive* feature was the Elean rhotacism, documented after 350 B. C. at the end of the word (see El. Διόρα = Att. Διός, El. πεπολιτευκώρα = Att. πεπολιτευκώς, El. τοῖρα ἄλλοιρα προξένοιρα καὶ εὐεργέταιρα = Att. τοῖς ἄλλοις προξένοις καὶ εὐεργέταις, or El. ἄλλοιρα καὶ πλείονερα /Acc. Pl.!/ = Att. ἄλλους καὶ πλείονας).

4. Of an *occasional* (though from the phonemic point of view rather *important*) character seems to have been the Elean, Laconian and Central Cretan *trend of spirantizing voiced consonants* (Lac. Βαστιάς /from φάστυ/, Cret. ἀβέλιον·ήλιον Hesych, El. ζίκαια = Att. δίκαια) on the one hand (with some analogous traces also in the Corinthian colonies, in Argolic and Rhodian), and, on the other hand, the rather contrary Laconian, Central Cretan (and also Boeotian, and perhaps Megarian and Rhodian) *tendency to geminate* the iotacized *d+j* into the voiced δ(δ) (cf. Lac. Δεύς = Att. Ζεύς, as well as Cret. Ζενί, Δῆνα or Τῆνα = Att. Δί, Δία), after the 4th cent. B. C., for the most part.

5. Whereas the mild Doric dialects, including the area of *Doris media*, *did not surpass the stage of a primitive phase of intra-Doric differentiation*, the main strictly Doric dialects (i.e. Laconian, Elean, Central Cretan, Cyrenaean) *got differentiated from each other very early*, the most distinct among them being perhaps Central Cretan with a very high index of differentiation, according to my “Classification” 1972, p. 172 (coeff. 0.546), followed by Elean (0.520), West

Argolic (0.349) and Laconian (0.317), the differentiation index of the latter, however, growing during the Hellenistic period still more – subsequently to the rapid start of the Late Laconian phonological shifts, accomplished during the Laconian processes of spirantization, weakening of articulation and elimination of *s*, gemination, rhotacism (“junglakonisch”, i.e. “Late Laconian”), as mentioned here sub IV. 5 or 6.

6. After an early period of prevailing phonological conservatism, it was specially the Laconian dialect that witnessed, above all since the 4th cent. B. C., a long phase of continued progress in the phonological development (*weakening* of the intrasyllabic *s* as early as the 6th cent. B. C.: Lac. Ποηοιδάν = Att. Ποσειδών /later full loss of it: Lac. νικάας < νικάηας < νικάσας = Att. νικήσας, or Lac. ποιήαται < ποιήσαται = Att. ποιήσηται/; *spirantization* of the aspirate θ since the 4th cent. B. C. /Lac. ἀνέσηκε = Att. ἀνέθηκε, Lac. σῖα̃ς < θῖα̃ς = Att. θεῖα̃ς/, as well as the *rhotacism* at the end of the word, adopted perhaps on the model of Elean as late as the 2nd cent. A. D. /Lac. νεικάαϝ < νικάσας = Att. νικήσας/).

Conclusion: The above-mentioned strictly Doric dialects, especially Laconian, Central Cretan and Cyrenaean appear to have been *extremely distinct* ancient Greek dialects, sharing sometimes the same dialectal phenomena with each other, but, unfortunately, not possessing (esp. in the case of Laconian, Central Cretan and Cyrenaean, in spite of their high differentiation index) *any highly contrastive feature* that could be considered *fully conclusive for a clear identification* of the dialect in question. It is only in the case of Elean that we can give a dialectal feature of such a kind, viz. the above-mentioned Elean *extremely open* *ā* in φράτφα, ἔα, μά. – Whereas the Laconian dialect continued on the Peloponnese its rapid development to “junglakonisch”, i. e. “Late Laconian” (and during the Byzantine period to modern Tsakonian), the Laconian of the South Italian colonies Taras and Herakleia has been preserved practically at its stage from the 4th cent. B. C.

## V. Aeolic in comparison with Attic

Even if there are specific pan-Aeolic peculiarities (for instance -ϝ- instead of -ϝα-, labials instead of labiovelars before -ε /Thess. πέμπε, Boeot. πέπταρες, Lesb. πῆσφα/, Dat. Pl. of 3rd decl. in -εσσι, Part. Perf. Act. in -οντ-, patronymica in -ιος), we can divide the Aeolic group of Greek dialects into two sub-groups:

A) Lesbian in comparison with Attic:

The dialect of Lesbos presents two highly specific *contrastive* features:

1. The so-called *barytonesis*, i.e. the shift of the place of verbal accent towards the first syllable of the word (the chronology of this phenomenon is uncertain); in

any case, this brought about a very strange effect on the pronunciation, quite unusual in Greek and documented in Lesbian only. Being a speaker of Czech, a modern language which employs the initial verbal accent without any exception, I think I can have some experience in discerning differences in the place of verbal accent, easily recognizable nowadays in various modern Slavonic languages (Czech: initial accentuation; Polish: accentuation on the penultimate syllable; Russian: free accent on various syllables in the word).

2. This unique specificity of Lesbian was accompanied by another linguistic peculiarity, namely the so-called *psilosis*, i.e. *the absence of initial h-* in an extent highly exceeding that of the same phenomenon in other Greek dialects. As a speaker of Czech, again, I can mention my experience of people speaking modern languages that have practically no *h* [eitsʰ] in their phonetic inventory, such as Modern Greek or Italian.

Notes: A *less reliable identification feature* was the early employment of a “compensatory” diphthong instead of the consonantal cluster *-νσ/-νς* in Lesbian (see e. g. Lesb. *παῖσα* < \**παντσα* or Lesb. *φίλοις* < \**φιλωνς* in Acc. Pl. /in contrast to *φίλοισι* in Dat. Pl./), because *παῖσα* also occurs in Thera and Cyrene (inside the word only) and the analogous Acc. Pl. *τοῖς ἄλλοις* (or even *τοῖς ἄλλοις*) < *τὸνς ἄλλονς* also in Elean (but with the compensatory diphthong in the final syllable).

A similar, somewhat *less reliable identification feature* of Lesbian was the early epichoric gemination of *μμ, νν, λλ, ρρ* (Lesb. *ἔμμεναι, ἔμμι* against Att. *εἶναι, εἰμί* /from \**ἔσμεναι, \*ἔσμι*), since the said Lesbian gemination was also shared by Thessalian (see Thess. *ἔμμί* = Att. *εἰμί*, Thess. *ἄμμε* = Att. *ἡμᾶς*, Thess. *κρεννέμεν* = Att. *κρίνειν*).

Conclusion: The *most reliable contrastive differentiation features* of Lesbian were the barytonesis and a wide-spread *psilosis*.

## B) Thessalian and Boeotian in comparison with Attic:

These two dialects give a legitimate impression of stemming from the same very conservative source, preserving the original *-ti* in the 3rd pers. Pl. Act. Nevertheless, their further development was considerably different:

1. Thessalian remained always a dialect of *archaic character*: no compensatory lengthening at all (*ἔμμί, πάνσα, ξένφος*); a strict three-grade system of long vowels; a strict tendency, however, to close the epichoric long *ē-/ō*-pair (see Thess. *δεῖ* = Att. *δῆ*, Thess. *ἐξείκοντα* = Att. *ἐξήκοντα*, Thess. *ὀνέθεικε* = Att. *ἀνέθηκε* as early as the 5th cent. B. C., but cf. also, from the 4th cent. B. C., Thess. *χούρα* = Att. *χώρα*, Thess. *ἔδουκε* = Att. *ἔδωκε*).

2. See further also the *archaic* “Homeric” Gen. Sing. of *o*-stems in *-οιο, -οι*: Thess. *πολέμοιο* = Att. *πολέμου*, Thess. *περ το(ι) [αρ]γυρροι* = Att. *περι*

του ἄργυρίου (this ending, however, was documented only in the eastern part of Thessaly, the so-called Pelasgiotis /Larissa, Pherai, Krannon/).

Conclusion: It is especially the closing pronunciation of long  $\bar{e}/\bar{o}$  in Thessalian that may have been felt as characteristic enough for recognizing, above all, the dialect of Thessalotis in the western part of Thessaly (from Pharsalos and Kierion, for the most part). – The “Homeric” Gen. Sing. in -οι(ο), documented in Pelasgiotis, was certainly perceived as archaic and in a prosaic context also as typically Thessalian.

3. Whereas Thessalian remained rather conservative in the early phases of its development, Boeotian was, on the other hand, a dialect that experienced in a relatively early period of its history a rapid transformation of its vocalic subsystem (and in particular a gradual elimination of all the diphthongs), which foreshadowed the later phonological development of Attic on its path towards the Hellenistic Koine (cf. Boeot. Θειβῆρος = Att. Θηβαῖος, Boeot. ἔχι = ἔχει, Boeot. φυκία = οἰκία, Boeot. ὑσεται = οἴσεται, Boeot. τῦς θιῦς = τοῖς θεοῖς); among the consonants, the frequent Boeotian -ττ- is *often reminiscent* of Attic, occurring, in fact, on a much larger scale.

Conclusion: The above-mentioned pronunciation was certainly regarded as *specifically* Boeotian during the advanced pre-Hellenistic period.

## VI. Arcadian-Cypriot dialects in comparison with Attic

1. Arcadian and Cypriot were *conservative* dialects, preserving the suffix -(ν)τοι in 3rd Sg./Pl. Med. and lacking the compensatory lengthening before -νσ/-νς, but exhibiting, at the same time, the innovative suffix -σι- in 3rd Pl. Act. In both of them, besides, we can find traces of old labiovelars; Arcadian used a special sign ι [= δ] for one of it (see Arc. νίς = Att. τίς, Arc. εῖνε = Att. εἶτε, Arc. ὀνειοι = Att. ὄτω), or also the Greek letters ζ/τζ (see Arc. ὄζις = Att. ὄσ/τις, Arc. ζέρεθρα /Strabon/ = Att. βάραθρα, Arc. ζέλλειν· βάλλειν Hesych, Arc. (?) τζετρακάται = τετρα-), while Cypriot employed a syllabic letter denoting *si* in such a case (see Cypr. si-se/σις, cf. Hesych’s Cypriot gloss σί βόλε· τί θέλεις· Κύπριου).

2. Both Arcadian and Cypriot had the tendency to close ε into ι as well as ο into υ (see ἶν instead of ἐν, -μινος instead of -μενος), but this occurred occasionally in Cretan and in some other Greek dialects, too.

3. A typically Cypriot feature – and, at the same time, a *contrastive* one – was the strange Cypriot Gen. Sing. of o-stems, ending in -ο-ne = -ων/-ον; cf., for example, Cypr. a-ne-u mi-si-to-ne ἄνευ μισθῶν/-ον = Att. ἄνευ μισθοῦ. This unique Gen. Singularis with the final -ν in the speech of a native speaker (which was, however, a little confusing, when compared with a similar Gen. Pluralis) *may have characterized* the Cypriot origin of the speaker *quite distinctly*.



Conclusion: Within the area of the Arcadian-Cypriot dialects, it is only the Cypriot Gen. Sing. in  $-\omega v/-ov$  that may have been considered *quite distinctive* for the dialect in question.

## VII. Final Conclusion

My analysis, which was made with full respect for the differences in the chronological development of various Greek dialects and also for the integration tendencies embodied in various types of the pre-Hellenistic forms of Aetolian, Achaean, or Sicilian Koine, has shown that a number of ancient non-Attic Greek dialects possessed linguistic features that may have been in ancient Athens considered contrastive enough for identifying the concrete ancient Greek dialect in question.

I was able to characterize in this way, for instance, West Ionic and especially Euboean Ionic, and, above all, Laconian, Elean, Lesbian, Boeotian and Cypriot as quite easily recognizable dialects, when perceived by a native speaker of Attic – on a chronological level of ca. 350 B. C., for the most part (with the proviso of scaling down the chronology in Laconian to the beginning of the Christian Era).

Note: The above accentuation in the non-Attic dialects is not fully guaranteed.