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SVEN-TAGE TEODORSSON

THE ORIGIN AND PROGRESS OF THE GREEK DIGLOSSIA

Greek diglossia. When we hear this phrase it is natural to think of the linguistic situation prevalent in the modern Greek nation from the beginning in 1830 when the new state was founded, until today. The marked difference between the official, achaizing written variant called *καθαρεύουσα* on the one hand, and the spoken language, the *δημοτική*, which has developed in the course of the centuries, on the other, is typical of the Greek language.

The background of this Modern Greek situation is well known. The physician and philologist Adamantios Korais (1748-1833) was the leading advocate of the idea that the simple and natural language spoken by the broad mass of the people should not be adopted as the official language of the new state. Instead it should be based on the literary language of the Byzantine and antique tradition, and the vocabulary should be cleared of Turkish words. The language ought to be a pure Greek language, a *καθαρεύουσα γλώσσα*.

This effort to connect the written language of that time with the old tradition was natural after nearly 400 years under Turkish dominance. Korais and his contemporaries wanted to revive and reestablish the culture and language of the Byzantine era. The fact that this aspiration implied that the already existing diglossia which had existed in the Byzantine and Imperial periods was preserved and deepened did not concern these intellectuals.

The aim of this article is to answer two questions:

1. What was the cause of origin of the divergence of the Greek language into two variants that in the course of time became more and more different?
2. How far back in time must we go to find the original factors that started this development?

Did the process begin with the Atticism in the first two centuries of the Imperial period? No, we must go much farther back, immensely much farther, as far as the earliest period from which we have documents in Greek, the Mycenaean period. I will try to show that the diglossia that has been characteristic of the Greek language right down to our time, or, more precisely, to the year 1976, when it was officially abrogated, derives its origin from the transformations of

the consonant system which began in the Mycenaean period and went on during the so-called "dark centuries" down to the eighth century.

We know that five consonants suffered radical changes in certain positions quite early, namely σ , ν , j , f , and h . The change of σ , j and f into $/h/$ in initial position before vowel, for example $*\sigma\acute{\iota}\text{-}\sigma\tau\alpha\text{-}\mu\acute{\iota} > \acute{\iota}\sigma\tau\alpha\mu\acute{\iota} > \acute{\iota}\sigma\tau\eta\mu\acute{\iota}$, or $j\eta\pi\alpha\rho > \eta\pi\alpha\rho$, or $f\epsilon\sigma\tau\acute{\iota}\alpha > \acute{\epsilon}\sigma\tau\acute{\iota}\alpha$, was of no consequence for the evolution of the vowel system. Neither did the loss of $/h/$, called psilosis, which began in East Ionic and spread later to other dialects, affect the development.

The change that did have consequences for the vowel system was the loss of σ , ν , j and f in medial positions. We know that $[s]$ in intervocalic positions changed into $[h]$ already in Mycenaean. Later, when $[h]$ disappears, the result is contraction of the vowels. Generally, the loss of these consonants in medial positions gave rise to important changes and new structures in the vowel system.

Beside contractions of vowels the loss of these consonants caused the well-known compensatory lengthening of the preceding vowel. These processes yielded as a result that two new long vowel phonemes came into existence, namely $/e:/$ and $/o:/$. It is true that in some dialects the results of the lengthenings coincided with the original long vowels $/e:/$ and $/o:/$. What is important is the fact that Attic was among the dialects in which these new close long vowels were established. This was decisive for the subsequent evolution of the Greek language, because the Attic dialect was to survive, in the shape of Koine.

The loss of intervocalic $[s]$ resulted in contraction of the surrounding short vowels. In Attic this produced instances of the new close vowels, $/e:/$ and $/o:/$.¹

The loss of $[s]$, $[n]$, $[j]$ and $[w]$ in consonantal environment implied compensatory lengthening of the preceding vowel, a process that took place in three steps.² The first compensatory lengthening began as early as the Mycenaean

¹ E.g., $*\sigma\alpha\phi\acute{\epsilon}\sigma\text{-}\epsilon\varsigma > \sigma\alpha\phi\acute{\epsilon}\epsilon\varsigma > \sigma\alpha\phi\acute{\epsilon}\acute{\varsigma}$ Att. / $\sigma\alpha\phi\epsilon\acute{\iota}\varsigma$ Ion.
 $*\gamma\acute{\epsilon}\nu\epsilon\sigma\text{-}\omicron\varsigma > \gamma\acute{\epsilon}\nu\epsilon\omicron\varsigma > \gamma\acute{\epsilon}\nu\omicron\delta\varsigma$ Att. / $\gamma\acute{\epsilon}\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ Ion.

² 1. The first compensatory lengthening, caused by

a) loss of $[s]$ before or after liquid or nasal, e.g.

$*\acute{\epsilon}\text{-}\sigma\tau\epsilon\lambda\text{-}\sigma\alpha > \acute{\epsilon}\sigma\tau\epsilon\lambda\alpha$ Att. / $\acute{\epsilon}\sigma\tau\epsilon\iota\lambda\alpha$ Ion.

$*\acute{\epsilon}\sigma\text{-}\mu\acute{\iota} > \acute{\epsilon}\mu\acute{\iota}$ Att. / $\epsilon\acute{\iota}\mu\acute{\iota}$ Ion.

$*\acute{\epsilon}\text{-}\delta\epsilon\rho\text{-}\sigma\alpha > \acute{\epsilon}\delta\epsilon\rho\alpha$ Att. / $\acute{\epsilon}\delta\epsilon\iota\rho\alpha$ Ion.

b) loss of $[j]$ after $[r]$ or $[n]$, e.g.

$*\phi\theta\acute{\epsilon}\rho\text{-}j\omega > \phi\theta\acute{\epsilon}\rho\omega$ Att. / $\phi\theta\acute{\epsilon}\acute{\iota}\rho\omega$ Ion.

$*\kappa\tau\acute{\epsilon}\nu\text{-}j\omega > \kappa\tau\acute{\epsilon}\nu\omega$ Att. / $\kappa\tau\acute{\epsilon}\acute{\iota}\nu\omega$ Ion.

c) loss of $[n]$ after $[l]$, e.g.

$*\acute{\omicron}\phi\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\text{-}\nu\omega > \acute{\omicron}\phi\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\omega$ Att. / $\acute{\omicron}\phi\acute{\epsilon}\acute{\iota}\lambda\omega$ Ion.

$*\beta\omicron\lambda\text{-}\nu\acute{\alpha} > \beta\omicron\lambda\acute{\alpha}$ Att. / $\beta\omicron\upsilon\lambda\acute{\eta}$ Ion.

2. The second, caused by the loss of $[n]$ before $[s]$, e.g.

$(*\tau\acute{\iota}\text{-}\theta\acute{\epsilon}\nu\tau\text{-}j\alpha > \tau\acute{\iota}\text{-}\theta\acute{\epsilon}\nu\text{-}\sigma\alpha > \tau\acute{\iota}\theta\acute{\epsilon}\sigma\alpha$ Att. / $\tau\acute{\iota}\theta\acute{\epsilon}\acute{\iota}\sigma\alpha$ Ion.

$(*\mu\acute{\omicron}\nu\tau\text{-}j\alpha > \mu\acute{\omicron}\nu\text{-}\sigma\alpha > \mu\acute{\omicron}\delta\sigma\alpha$ Att. / $\mu\omicron\upsilon\delta\alpha$ Ion.

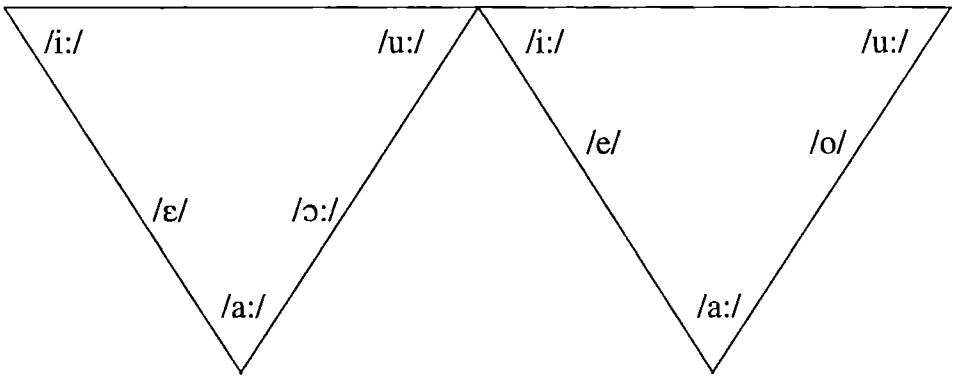
$(*\chi\alpha\rho\acute{\iota}\epsilon\nu\tau\text{-}\varsigma > \chi\alpha\rho\acute{\iota}\epsilon\nu\text{-}\varsigma > \chi\alpha\rho\acute{\iota}\acute{\epsilon}\varsigma$ Att. / $\chi\alpha\rho\acute{\iota}\epsilon\acute{\iota}\varsigma$

$\acute{\epsilon}\nu\text{-}\varsigma > \epsilon\acute{\iota}\varsigma$

period. The second took place about 800, whereas the third occurred shortly afterwards. The early date of the first compensatory lengthening is attested by the loss of [n] after [l] in forms of the verb ὀφείλω written *o-pe-ro-te* (ὀφείλοντες) and *o-pe-ro-si* (ὀφείλονσι). The not lengthened forms would have been *o-pe-no-te*, *o-pe-no-si* (of ὀφέλ-νω). Also the loss of [s] after [r] is attested in *a-ke-ra₂-te* of the verb ἀγείρω. The not lengthened form would have been *a-ke-sa-te* (ἀγέρ-σαντες).

In fact, the law of compensatory lengthening can be traced even further back in the development of Greek. It belongs to the prehistory of the language. The Indoeuropean laryngal H disappears after a short vowel while lengthening it.³

The Indoeuropean vowel system was preserved unaltered in prehistoric Greek.⁴ It was a system of five long and five short vowels, where the short e- and o-phonemes were probably more close than the corresponding long vowels:



The new close long vowels arisen through the compensatory lengthenings were intruded between /i:/ and /ε:/, and between /u:/ and /ο:/ respectively:

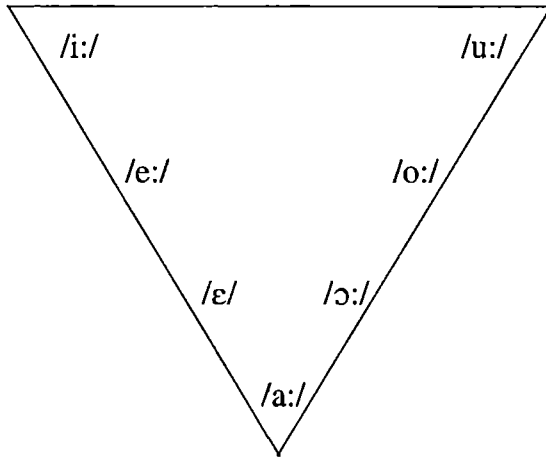
ἐν-ς > εἶς
τόν-ς > τοῦς

3. The third (affected East Ionic but not Attic), caused by the loss of [w] after [n], [r], [l], [s], e.g.

*ξένεφος > ξεινος, μόνεφος > μούνος, κόρεφος > κούρος, καλέεφος > κάλος, φύεφος > ἴσος.

³ The Ieur. laryngal H is lost in prehistoric Greek with compensatory lengthening in the position between vowel and consonant. H₂ colours adjacent vowels to [a]; H₃ colours to [o]. Examples: *ti-dheH₁-mi > τίθημι, *si-steH₂-mi > ἴσταμι > ἴστημι, *jeH₃s-nu-mi > *jōs-nu-mi > ζώννυμι.

⁴ The loss of the laryngal did not cause any phonological change.



As a result of the establishment of these vowels there is now less space in the system, especially on the back axis where the room for articulation is more limited. It should be noted that the new phonemes were very frequent. Even the fact that their phonetic quality was similar to that of the corresponding short vowels /ɛ/ and /ɔ/ may have been of some consequence. These factors add to the probability that this crowded situation, especially on the back axis, made the system prone to some alleviating change. Thus it is reasonable to assume that the known displacement of /u(:)/ to the front position /y(:)/ took place rather early, probably already before the time of Homer.

The empty position /u:/ was then filled by the new phoneme /o:/ which closed to /u:/ and occupied that position.

The two diphthongs /ei/ and /ou/ are known to have coincided with the new long vowels respectively. There is reason to suppose that this change occurred by the same time, around 700. In the East Ionic dialect the orthography <EI>, <OY> was established as a common representation of these monophthongized diphthongs respectively as well as the new vowels /e:/ and /o:/, of which the latter was closing to /u:/.

Epigraphic evidence from Athens indicates the early date of these monophthongizations. The writing EIMI is to be seen on an Attic vase of the geometric style found in the Athenian Agora. It dates from the late eighth century. This example of inversed spelling <EI> in place of the correct <E> for the phoneme /e:/ shows that the writer was confused by the merger of this phoneme with the diphthong /ei/, which was in the process of monophthongization.

A more or less contemporary parallel example, indicating the monophthongization of /ou/, is found on the famous so-called Dipylon vase, dated in 735, where we read TOTO, which may be meant to be τούτο.

The merger of the diphthongs /ei/ and /ou/ respectively with /e:/ and /o:/ (which was on its way of narrowing to /u:/) increased the frequency of these

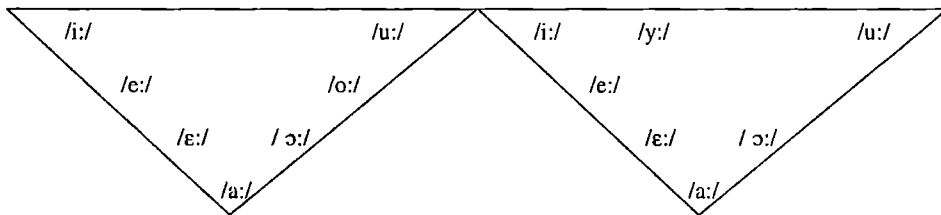
vowels still more. It appears as highly probable that this situation of crowdedness and pressure within the vowel system, arisen as a consequence of the reorganization of the consonant system, initiated the itacistic process, that conspicuous extensive transformation of almost the entire vowel system. As is well known, this reorganization resulted in the merger of a large number of vowels and diphthongs, in the first place /e:/, /ei/, /ε:/, and then /ε:i/, /y(:)/, /yi/, and /oi/. In the course of time all these coincided with /i(:)/ and formed one single phoneme.

The debate on the origin and development of itacism has a long history. It started when Erasmus of Rotterdam as the first gave a clear account of the fact that this transformation had actually taken place. He based his argument on the evidence of orthography: The phoneme /i/ was written – and still is today – in seven ways. The discovery of the itacism provoked that notorious debate, which was initiated by Erasmus' contemporary, Johannes Reuchlin, who opposed his view and maintained that the itacistic pronunciation of their own time was already practically established in the classical period. His partisans were called "itacists", while those of Erasmus got the nickname "etacists". In fact, the conflict between these two parties is still unsettled today. Is it possible at all to arrive at a decision on this problem after 500 years of discord?

Let us return to the time around 700 B.C. and contemplate the long vowel system as it was after the compensatory lengthenings and before the changes /u:/ > /y:/, /o:/ > /u:/, and /ou/ > /o:/ > /u:/, and then compare it with the situation after these changes.⁵ It is easily observed that the area of pressure and crowdedness in the triangle has shifted from the back axis to the front. There is reason to expect that this situation will cause changes. And there is indeed evidence indicating that the narrow vowel /e:/ began early to be even more close, and finally to merger with /i:/ in the pronunciation of several speakers. This process was being realized during the sixth century or probably already in the seventh, as is shown by orthographic evidence. In Attic epigraphic data we find 20-25 instances of <I> written instead of <E>/<EI>, and 5 instances of inversed spelling <E>/<EI> for <I> before the end of the sixth century.⁶

⁵ The system of long vowels
a) about 750

b) about 700



⁶ Teodorsson 1974: 75-78.

Now the question immediately arises: Are these instances really sufficient for the conclusion that numerous Athenians pronounced /i:/ instead of /e:/ as early as that time. Of course one can doubt this, but the one who does ought to present tenable arguments in support of his opinion. This has not hitherto been the case. There are still some who cannot believe that the itacism began so early, in the time of Solon or even earlier. Thus W.S. Allen, in the 3rd edition of his handbook *Vox Graeca* of 1987, still maintains the old, inveterate position, namely that the itacistic process was a post-classical phenomenon and did not start until the fourth century.⁷ This opinion is manifestly erroneous, because it neglects the significant orthographic data of the preceding centuries and leaves them without explanation.

The long vowel triangle as it looks like by the time soon after 700 is conspicuously asymmetric. By that state of things it is *not improbable* that /e:/ tends to close to /i:/, as /o:/ had closed to /u:/ some time before. What is verily improbable is that this asymmetric system should have remained unchanged for 300 years. Anyone who wants to maintain that the itacistic process started in the fourth century will have to indicate a decisive cause explaining why it started *exactly at that time*. The change of pronunciation of <Z> into /z(:)/, which occurred in that century, and the ongoing contemporary fricativization of /g/ (and perhaps beginning fricativization of other stops)⁸ were internal transformations within the consonant system without influence on the vowel system. And no change in this system is indicated as a cause of origin of the itacism by those who doubt the early date of this process.

There existed no structural factor precisely in the fourth century, which could have initiated that extensive process of reorganization of the vowel system. However, in contrast to the situation in the fourth century, there existed favourable conditions in the seventh century, when the vowel system was unstable, for the continuation of the process of reorganization of the system, which had been initiated by the reorganization of the consonant system during the preceding centuries.

The above-mentioned orthographic variation <I> ~ <E>/<EI> in the sixth century alone indicates that the itacistic process was going on in that century. And what is more, this is demonstrated *a fortiori* by the fact that <H> varies with <I> at that time. There are 10 instances of this variation dated before 500.⁹

The change /y(:)/ > /i(:)/ was part of the itacistic process. The orthographic data indicate that this change also started in the sixth century. There are variations of the types <Y> ~ <I> ~ <YI> ~ <IY> ~ <E> ~ <EI> ~ <H>. The diphthong /yi/ was involved.¹⁰ This is also true of /ai/. We have the following variations: <AI> ~ <A> ~ <AE> ~ <H> ~ <E> ~ <AIH> ~ <AIE> ~ <HI> ~ <I>.¹¹

7 Allen 1987³: 70.

8 Teodorsson 1974: 131–140.

9 Teodorsson 1974: 90–91.

10 Teodorsson 1974: 103–107.

11 Teodorsson 1974: 97–103.

How shall we judge these orthographic variations? To what extent do they have phonetic and phonological relevance? Our difficult problem is to determine whether a given instance of a certain variation is due to a phonetic cause, or not. For example, when someone wrote <I> instead of <EI>, or <H> or <Y>, shall we think that the cause was that he pronounced /i:/, or was there another cause?

It is certainly impossible to identify the cause of a single instance. Thus we have to evaluate the data by means of some sort of probability calculation. First we may state that the probability that orthographic deviations occur is dependent on the type of change involved. For example, orthographic mistakes are obviously more probable, when two or more phonemes have merged, or are on the way to merge, than when only the phonetic quality of a phoneme has changed. Thus, if /ai/ has been monophthongized into /æ:/ or /ɛ:/, it is not very probable that the writer writes <H> or <E> or <EI>, especially not if the phonemes /e:/ and /ɛ:/ have closed and merged with /i:/. He continues to write the digraph <AI> even when it corresponds to a monophthong. This case can be compared with the phonetic change of Latin /u/ into French /y/. There were very few if any alternatives to using the same letter, <U>, to represent this sound, and thus it is very difficult to decide exactly at what time this change occurred.

On the other hand, we may expect that the itacistic changes, which meant the merger of the phonemes /i:/, /e:/, /ɛ:/ and others, will show up in the shape of a number of orthographic variants such as those treated above.

However, we have to put a more general question: In what measure are we exposed to influence by the pronunciation when we are writing? Or more precisely: do we commit phonetically caused orthographic mistakes often or seldom?

In order to answer this question it is necessary to consider the degree of autonomy of the expression forms of language, speech, writing, and the sign language of the deaf. There is a quite common opinion that we go by way of speech more or less regularly when we are writing. Even many linguists have fostered this belief – and still believe – that written language is simply a secondary representation of speech. Still in modern times one can find a definition like this: “Language is speech. Writing is no more than a secondary representation of speech.”¹² If this were true, the systems of signs used by the congenitally deaf, who have never heard a sound, would not be language. But these systems function as language. Thus they *are* language. *Ergo definitio falsa est. Quod erat demonstrandum.*

The systems of writing function automatically in relation to the systems of speech,¹³ and to the systems of signs. Congenitally deaf people, who live in a world without sounds, without the medium of speech, are able to learn to read and write.¹⁴ In hearing people there exist connections between speech and writing, because they possess both systems. These connections may cause inter-

¹² Langacker 1967: 58.

¹³ For an investigation and discussion of the autonomy of writing systems see Smith 1973.

¹⁴ For an informative study of the function of sign language and the linguistic capacity of deaf people see Stokoe 1960.

ferences and influences between the systems. But these are optional and occasional. When we are writing we need not all the time recall what grapheme or graphemes correspond to each single phoneme. This fact is especially obvious when we use such graphemic systems as the English, French, or Swedish, where many graphemes or combinations of graphemes often correspond to one and the same phoneme. For example, the Swedish phoneme /j/ corresponds to more than thirty graphemic variants. Nevertheless, these writing systems function without great problems. When we write words in English, which contain the phoneme /i(:)/, we do not commit grotesque spellings like *easee* (easy), *hea* (he), *yeeld* (yield), *heym* (him), *monea* (money), *si* (see), *hy* (he), *hym* (him), etc., etc. If we had to recall the graphic correspondence of each phoneme when writing English, or any language with irregular writing systems, it would be impossible to write a text within reasonable limits of time.

Consequently, we should not expect to find large numbers of orthographic mistakes as a result of a change of pronunciation, not even in the case of merger or when the writer is less competent in orthography. This is a fact that many, especially German, linguists realized more than hundred years ago.¹⁵ They express their clear understanding of the relation of writing and speech: writing systems are unchanging by nature and are only sporadically affected by changes in the corresponding speech system. Spelling errors are by nature exceptional.

It is strange, then, that the advocates of the late origin of the itacistic development succeeded in establishing their opinion very effectively. The etacistic position was codified in the handbook of K. Meisterhans, third edition by E. Schwyzer 1900, and has remained unshaken and never really called in question during more than seven decades. Not even numerous new finds of Attic inscriptions on different kinds of material made during the twentieth century has caused any reconsideration of the situation with respect to the development of Attic.

When we evaluate the orthographic deviations it is necessary to keep in mind that non-phonetic factors can have been the cause of several instances. On the other hand it is not permissible to neglect and explain away the existing evidence. It is only natural that the number of instances from the earliest centuries of alphabetic writing is quite limited. Very few documents from that time are extant. This is also entirely natural. The quantity of texts written on preservable

¹⁵ Hatzidakis 1892: 305 "Da die altgriechische Orthographie immer beibehalten worden ist, bleiben die wichtigsten Sprachveränderungen für das unaufmerksame Auge verborgen." Schmitt 1898: 10 "Kommt in einem und demselben Texte z.B. zehnmal κλέπτης und nur einmal κλέφτης vor, dann wissen wir, daß die Tenuis vor einer Tenuis zum Spiranten geworden ist; denn das eine Beispiel beweist es ja, und wir ersehen zu gleicher Zeit aus dem anderen, daß der Schreiber trotzdem unverdrossen fortfährt, in der herkömmlichen Weise κλέπτης zu schreiben." Larfeld 1914: 171 "Eine Geschichte der griechischen Sprache würde sich daher nur im engsten Anschlusse an die orthographischen Eigentümlichkeiten der Inschriften entwerfen lassen." P. 172 "Aus diesen Andeutungen geht hervor, daß die Orthographie der Inschriften sich von einer streng einheitlichen Durchführung des phonetischen Prinzipes weit entfernt ... Völlig verfehlt würde die Annahme sein, daß mit dem beginnenden oder selbst durchgeführten Wandel der Aussprache auch alsbald die herkömmliche Schreibweise entsprechend geändert worden wäre."

material during the archaic period was certainly very limited, and only few specimens of these that have come down to us.

As a consequence we are entitled, on the basis of the orthographic data we *do* possess, to conclude that the itacistic development was in progress in the sixth century and advanced further during the fifth and fourth. Thus, in Plato's time it had been going on for about 200 years. How, then, was the Attic of his time pronounced? Did Socrates and Plato speak itacistically? Were Homer and other poets recited with itacistic pronunciation? And the actors, did they speak in this way in the theatre? To imagine this has always been repulsive to erudite classical scholars, actually since the very epoch of Erasmus.

It can safely be stated that this problem is not real. It is due to the false premise that the structure of any language is basically uniform, without variants constituting a more or less distinct diglossia. There are numerous examples to the contrary.¹⁶ The existence of the changed pronunciation of Attic does not imply that everybody used it. Plato, Aristotle, the rhetors and actors, and generally the cultivated part of the population maintained the old, traditional pronunciation, that which was current in the eighth century, when the alphabet was introduced, and which was codified a short time afterwards in the epics of Homer and Hesiod. This means that from that epoch down to Plato's time a phonological diglossia had developed in the Attic dialect. The common people used the itacistic pronunciation, and they had also begun to monophthongize not only the short diphthongs /ai/, /yi/ and /oi/, but also the long ones, /a:i/, /ε:i/ and /ο:i/.¹⁷ In addition they had begun to neglect length, of vowels as well as consonants.¹⁸ The large quantity of orthographic evidence indicating these changes and foreshadowing tendencies of other ones shows that there was a broad process of change going on in the Attic dialect during the classical time. It was not confined to itacism.

In Plato's *Cratylus* there is a passage where Socrates discusses pronunciation.¹⁹ It is very difficult to interpret and has been much discussed. How shall we understand the statement of Socrates that the i-pronunciation is the old one and is still practised by the women, whereas the e-pronunciation is an innovation? The passage has remained unexplained.

Now a possible explanation is offered through a group of 16 slates with short inscriptions found in the area of the Academy and probably dating from the end of the fifth century. They offer a large number of striking itacistic spellings: 7 cer-

¹⁶ An obvious example of diglossia is to be seen in Arabic. Another one is found in the Germanic-speaking part of Switzerland. And the different social dialects of British English are especially illustrative of the Attic situation.

¹⁷ Teodorsson 1974: 92-94, 96-97, 121-124.

¹⁸ Teodorsson 1974: 87-89, 91-93, 117-120, 145-153, 218-219, 231-235.

¹⁹ Plat. *Crat.* 418 b-c ΣΩ. Ἐγὼ σοι ἐρῶ. οἶσθα ὅτι οἱ παλαιοὶ οἱ ἡμέτεροι τῷ ἰῶτα καὶ τῷ δέλτα εὖ μάλα ἐχρῶντο, καὶ οὐχ ἥκιστα αἱ γυναῖκες, αἵπερ μάλιστα τὴν ἀρχαίαν φωνὴν σῶζουσι. νῦν δὲ ἀντὶ μὲν τοῦ ἰῶτα ἢ εἰ ἢ ἦτα μεταστρέφουσιν, ἀντὶ δὲ τοῦ δέλτα ζῆτα, ὡς δὴ μεγαλοπρεπέστερα ὄντα. ΕΡΜ. Πῶς δῆ; ΣΩ. Οἶον οἱ μὲν ἀρχαιότατοι "ἡμέραν" τὴν ἡμέραν ἐκάλουν, οἱ δὲ "ἐμέραν", οἱ δὲ νῦν "ἡμέραν". ΕΡΜ. Ἔστι ταῦτα.

tain, and 4 less certain instances of <I> written for <H>, one instance of <I> for <EI>, one possible instance of <E> for <AI>, and one possible instance of <Y> for <H>.²⁰

It seems that it was schoolboys that produced these inscriptions, or better, graffiti. When they carelessly scratched the words they revealed their deficient knowledge of orthography and showed their itacistic pronunciation. What conclusion shall we draw from these data? I propose that we relate them to the passage in Plato's *Cratylus*: When the boys came to the elementary school they spoke itacistically. That was what they had learnt at home from their mothers and servants. But in school they had to learn the "correct" pronunciation, which meant reading Homer and other texts with the traditional vocalization and with observance of the length of vowels and consonants, etc. This was how educated people spoke.

This interpretation may be correct or not, one thing is certain: Socrates (Plato) had no good idea of the history of the Greek language. We simply cannot believe him when he affirms that "the ancient" spoke itacistically, whereas at his time the pronunciation had changed so as to be etacistic. In any case, this passage in *Cratylus* shows that there existed a phonological diglossia and that this phenomenon was subject to discussion, an important and interesting fact in itself.

The late fourth century is the time of the birth of the *Koine*. It is known that Attic had been introduced in Macedonia and adopted as the official language of administration around 400. Later, when this language was propagated throughout the countries of the East Mediterranean as a consequence of the conquest of Alexander, it received the position of a common language, a *Koine*, for all peoples of the region. Investigations of this Greek language of the Hellenistic period show that its development was very similar throughout the area. We observe that the itacism and other changes are found everywhere and thus must have been part of the language in the time of Alexander. The innovative processes were propagated together with the conservative, official language. The popular, itacistic pronunciation was probably regular among the less cultivated classes, workers, commercials, soldiers, seamen, fishermen and colonizing farmers.

Let us now take a long step forward in the history of the language, to the beginning of Atticism, that retrospective, nostalgic movement that started in the early Imperial period. It aimed at the straightening of the literary language into conformity with the Attic of the classical epoch. It had no concern with the language of the common people; Atticism was limited to the literary elite. Now the question arises, if this conservative aspiration concerned even the pronunciation. The answer is certain: no doubt it did. The Hellenistic grammarians, for example Dionysius Thrax, describe the phonology of Greek in the traditional way, and Dionysius of Halicarnassus who counts as a pioneer of Atticism provides unambiguous prescriptive instructions on the pronunciation of *eta*: "*Eta* presses its sound down by the base of the tongue, and not to the top, while the mouth is

²⁰ See Balatsos 1991: 145–154; cf. Teodorsson 1974: 90, Variation 17.16–19.

held moderately open.”²¹ Dionysius also declares that the *iota* of the long diphthongs *is* pronounced.²² This is a striking statement, indeed, and very elucidating. Dionysius was anxious to prevent the tendency of the common pronunciation to invade even the literary upper classes, and thus he contrasted the “correct” pronunciation with that of the common people. As regards the *iota* of long diphthongs we observe, on inscriptions of the Hellenistic period, that even the orthography was about to change: the *iota* is very often omitted.²³ Of course it was not pronounced outside the literary circles.

Thus, we may conclude that during the epoch of Atticism there existed a general diglossia in the Greek language: in phonology, morphology, syntax and vocabulary. However, a small part of the population still used the conservative pronunciation.

Not much later than the Atticistic period, at some point of time during the late Imperial epoch, the popular pronunciation was accepted generally even in the upper classes. In the Byzantine era everybody spoke in the popular manner. What was then the cause of this defeat of the “correct” pronunciation? We do not know, but we may suppose that it was due to the political convulsions of late antiquity, and perhaps also to the change of religion.

Though the diglossia had disappeared within phonology, it was still preserved in all other respects throughout the centuries of the Byzantine era. The popular grammatical form of the language appears only sporadically, for example in the poetry of Ptochoprodromos at the beginning of the twelfth century. Otherwise this language of the common people led a humble life unperceived by the upper classes, in the shadow of the official language of the authorities and the literary men.

As we observed initially, that conservative, archaic language was preserved and survived even during the long period of Turkish rule, and then experienced a renaissance, when the new Greek state was founded. The increasing preponderance of the *καθαρεύουσα* throughout the nineteenth century, and its hegemony during three quarters of the twentieth may well be called a second Atticism.

To sum up, it seems reasonable to state that the situation of diglossia, which has existed in the Greek language as far as the 1970’s, derives its origin from the Mycenaean period – or perhaps we should go even farther back, to the pre-historic time when the laryngals were lost in Greek, seeing that that loss testifies the existence of the mechanism of compensatory lengthening in the language, which was to be of decisive importance during the subsequent period of loss of consonants. During these distant centuries the consonant system changed gradually, provoking large transformations within the vowel system. But, because the

21 Dion. Hal. *Comp. verb.* 75. p. 51.13 Raderm. τὸ η κάτω τε περὶ τὴν βᾶσιν τῆς γλώττης ἐρείδει τὸν ἦχον, ἀλλ’ οὐκ ἄνω, καὶ μετρίως ἀνοιγομένου τοῦ στόματος.

22 Dion. Hal. *Comp. verb.* 162. p. 106.12 Raderm. (παράκειται) τῷ “σὺν ἀγλαίᾳ” εἰς τὸ ι λήγοντι τὸ “ἴδετε πορευθένθ’ αὐιδᾶν” ἀρχόμενον ἀπὸ τοῦ ι.

23 Teodorsson 1978: 28–34, 44–47, 79.

Greek language was, so to say, codified very rapidly and effectively in the Homeric songs soon after the introduction of the alphabetic writing, the phonological system of the time about 700 was preserved in the shape it had when this sacrosanct literature was created. Thus the old pronunciation received a high prestige and was preserved throughout the centuries. It was probably due to this fact that the morphology could remain relatively little changed even in the variants used by the common people. They were always exposed to the influence of the official literary language, and anyone who wanted to read and write had to learn it to some extent and try to use it in writing. During the vast space of centuries and millennia the language of the broad classes was practically never written, not until the late nineteenth century. But because of the prestige and influence of the literary language the Modern Greek δημοτική has retained a relatively little changed morphology. And in our days the two formerly distinct variants of the Greek language are finally involved in a process of coalition, after 2700 years of divergence and more or less antagonistic coexistence.

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