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Geography, History and Dialect: the case of Oropos

1. For all multilingual or polylectal societies some questions must be asked at an early stage: are the speakers aware of the existence of linguistic varieties? How do they distinguish them? How do they use them? How wide is their active or passive knowledge? How do they rate the linguistic variety which they mainly use? And what about the varieties which they do not use, those which belong to different communities? However, to move the attention from the language to the speaker means also to think in terms of the historical events in which the speaker is involved. In its turn this leads us to consider the link between dialect and history and dialect and culture.

I have discussed elsewhere some of the more general problems; here I intend to concentrate on a subset of questions. I shall conclude with an analysis of the evidence offered by the inscriptions of Oropos, but I must first illustrate through other evidence the specific set of problems with which I am concerned. What were the role and status of dialect (one’s own and that of others) in the texture of normal Greek life? Note that I do not ask what is the role of language in Greek society. The latter question would lead us to discuss the art of persuasion, the way in which the eloquent man is or is not valued by his peers, the contrast between λόγος and ἔργον, the various types of speech acts, etc. By contrast my question is geared at a view of Greece as a multilingual or polylectal society. We may reformulate the problem and ask at the beginning at least what difference it made to speak one or the other dialect, to be a speaker of Attic rather than of Boeotian. How were the various dialects rated, how were their differences exploited?

2. Before we plunge into our evidence (or lack of it) we ought to ask what sort of data we need; a look at some evidence from other periods and other cultures (not too exotic) may give us a hint of what we would like to find.

Consider for instance some lines from an obscure poem about silk worms and their cultivation written in 1779 by an equally obscure author, Antonio Pusceddu, both in dialect (Sardinian) and in the literary language (Italian); the text is taken from

the beginning of the 'canto primo', which follows an introductory defence of the author's decision to write in both Sardinian and Italian.2

Sardinian  
Ne s'offendint's is dona, e segnores,  
Poch'in linguazion patru immi cumponga,  
Chi serbo po apicatari a is serbidoras  
Is utili prezettas, chi proponga

Italian  
No s'offendent le dama, e le signori,  
Pech'in patru linguazion io in compongo  
Che serve per apicater al servidore  
Quegli utili prezotti, che propongo

Let not dames and ladies be offended! because I now compose in local language! which is useful to explain to the servant! the useful praecepts that I propose.

Here an erudite data collector deliberately exhibits a mixture of defiance and (mock) humility. It is odd to write in the local dialect but things are made better by adding a translation into the better known Italian language. The dialect will at least be useful for the servants. It is difficult to know how much of this is written tongue in cheek but consider how clear it is that the author sees Sardinian as a language of lower diffusion and less status that Italian; he is already suffering of the inferiority complex of the dialect speaker confronted with a standard language. Classical Greece did not have a standard language but did the speakers think in terms of superior and inferior dialects?

Another example. In 1519 when Charles of Habsburg, the future Charles V, then King of Spain, approached the German electors hoping to be chosen for the German kingship he wrote from Spain in German, though he had been brought up in Belgium speaking French. In his letter to Frederick of Saxony he stated «das wir ain Teutscher von gebuert und gemuet, von gepurt und zuungen seim». Later in on the declaration issued after his election he committed himself (3 July 1519) «in schrift und handlung des reichs kain ander zunge oder sprach gebrauch ten lassen, wenn die Teutsch od er Lateinsch zunge».1

Clearly the decision to put on a 'German speaker' appearance and the commitment to German (in preference to French) was part of a general capitato benevolentiae. German speech stood for German devotion; the declaration that German and Latin were the two acceptable languages was a declaration of patriotism.

We know that for Herodotus (viii 144) the Greek language was part of the definition of being Greek but were the dialects similarly considered? Was the Bocotian dialect, for instance, treated as a) part of the essential characteristics of a Bocotian, b) something which the Bocotian treasured and was proud of?

For my final example I return to Italy and to the small pamphlet de vulgari eloquentia written by Dante in Latin probably in the first years of the fourteenth century (1302-4?) and posthumously published. At some stage in his attempt to define what language poets should use Dante goes through an analysis of the contemporary linguistic varieties in Italy looking among the 'quum multibus varietatibus' of the vulgar language for the most dignified one ('decensorum loquelm'). He starts with the Romans (I xi 2):

Dickims igitur Romanorum - non vulgare, sed potissimur tristiloquium - ytalorum vulgarium omnium esse turpisissimum: nec mirum, cum etiam moram habi-lumque deformatione pro cunctis videastur eteere. Dictum enim: «Messere, quinto dicit».  
I say then that of the Romans - not vulgar speech but blether - is the ugliness of all Italic vulgar languages; no wonder since they seem to sink more than anyone else for the turpitude of their customs and habits. For they say: 'Sir, what do you say?'

Later on, discussing the more acceptable varieties, Dante turns to the Apulians:

Apuli quoque vel a sui acerbitate vel faustitiorum suorum contiguitate, qui Romani et Marchiani sunt, turpiter barbarizant; dicunt enim: «Volterza che eian-giasse lo quatorco» (I xii 7)

The Apulians too horribly barbarize either for their own roughness or for the contact with their neighbours who are Roman and Marchiand; they say: I would like the boy to weep'.

We have here a very impressionistic account of the various dialects with; in all instances, a severe aesthetic judgement of a purely subjective nature. Linguistically this is a very shoddy discussion; ethnolinguistically it is interesting not least because of the classification of dialects that it provides. Do we have something similar for Greek?

3. The reply is simple but diametral. None of these pieces of evidence can be easily matched in Greek. Whatever we say about the problems that I mentioned must be the result of a patient - and speculative - work of reconstruction. Where do we begin?

Attica as usual provides most data. Consider Solon's trimeters reported by Aristotle because they mention the cancellation of debts and the slaves freed by his pente-kjè-flat. Solon (36, 11 West) regrets the plight of those Athenians who through misery are obliged to be sold abroad and no longer use the Attic language because they have wandered too extensively. Here the regret for the forgetfulness of one's own language makes sense only if this is associated with loss of personal identity and, to use anachronism, loss of national identity. Almost two centuries later we find the Old Oligraphy (Ps.Xen., Ath. Pol., ii 7) deploring the changes undergone by Attic through mixture with other dialects and with foreign languages; this linguistic 'contamination'
is obviously felt to endanger the integrity of the country. Also, at the end of the fifth century Thucydides writes some significant words in the speech with which Nicocles addresses the troops before the last desperate battle of the Sicilian expedition. The sailors are told (vii. 63) not to forget how important it had been for them to be taken for Athenians even when they were not and to be the wonder of the whole Greece for their knowledge of the Attic language and their imitation of Attic manners. Conceivably Nicocles may be speaking to foreign mercenaries and may be seen as extolling 'Greek' over the barbaric languages but it is also possible, and indeed more likely, that he is extolling the virtues of Attic to the speakers of other dialects.

In Attica then the dialect was an object of pride. There and elsewhere it was also used—as one might have expected—to identify the geographical origin of individuals (much as local accents are nowadays). In the Chrestus (563-4) Orestes mentions that he will approach the Mycenae palace which was his by right of birth speaking Phocian in order not to be recognized. In the fourth century Demosthenes (xvi. 2) attacks his contenders in one of the political speeches saying that, were it not for the fact that he knew them personally and that they were speaking in Attic (ο γαρ το ια ρη ο κατα ο Αττικη), the content of their speech would have convinced him that they were Arcadians and Laconians respectively. A similar point arises in another Demosthenes speech (vii. 18) where Xuthus's father is accused of being foreigner because he ἔχει γλώσσα, i.e. spoke in the wrong accent or did not speak in Attic.

But should we think that the dialect was also a factor in ethnic identification? Was it something which individual states would have wanted e.g. to export through some form of cultural imperialism? Or at least something which needed to be retained as a necessary counterpart of local autonomy? And, most important, how far can we generalize from one region to the other, from one dialect to the other?

In other words should we assume that for its speakers or writers a dialect, any dialect, could be as important in providing a focus for 'national' identity as German was at the beginning of the nineteenth century? This was the time when in his Reden an die deutschen Nation (1808) Fichte explained (i. 460) (407-9) that the first original and truly natural boundaries of the states are their inner, spiritual boundaries and that whoever speaks the same language is naturally linked together by a number of invisible ties.

Also should we imagine that any of the Greek city-states would have been interested at any stage in deliberately favouring the diffusion of its dialect in the same way in which Britain in the mid-1830's, on Macaulay's advice, decided to withdraw all financial support from the teaching of Indian languages which it had previously encouraged and turned it into support for the teaching of English to the Indians?

5 The verb ἐκλήρω probably implies contact with other Greek dialects rather than with foreign ('barbaric') languages.

The evidence I have just quoted for Attic is ambiguous when we try to distinguish between dialect/language as a cultural focus and dialect/language as simple marker of provenance, though it may favour the first interpretation. We have a clearer text with Thucydides's account of the catalogue of the allies in the Sicilian expedition (vii. 57, 2). The Athenians, we are told, quae lonians were ready to attack Doric Syracuse and came of their own volition; together with them came the Lemnians and the Inbrians, the Argives and the Histiaeans of Euboea all of whom still shared the same language and customs (το ουτο δια και νομίμως ουν είναι θρησκευτ). The reference here is to Athens' colonies and the implication is that to share the same language and customs meant fundamentally to share the same motives and aims. It is difficult to deny that here, as in Herodotus's passage (viii. 144) about Ελλήνων, which is identified by shared language and customs, language is seen in a higher light as a unifying element. But how widespread was this concept?

4. I doubt that we can reach a clear-cut solution but it is worthwhile to turn away from Athens and the literary sources and look at the actual evidence we have for the use of, and attitudes to, dialect in various localities. Here the main evidence that we can use is provided by the inscriptions; hence what we are likely to find concerns the written rather than the spoken language — with the additional difficulty that the question of literacy raises its head.

I start with a short and perhaps trivial account of the linguistic situations of two regions, Laconia and Boeotia, which have been discussed and indeed contrasted before - though perhaps not in this manner. I shall then turn directly to Oropos.

4.1. Any discussion of Sparta must be brief — through empathy and through lack of evidence. The official reputation was, needless to say, one of laconism and illiteracy. Ion of Chios (fr 107 v. Blumenthal) said that "the battlemates of Sparta are not words"; Plato (Leg. 610 E) reported that Sparta was μηδέν αλλ' ανάρξεως as contrasted with Athens φιλολογίας and πολιτισμος. Much later Plutarch gave an example of what λακωνική εὐφορία meant (de garr. 513 A): if someone were to come and ask: 'Is Socrates in? the polite reply would be 'He is not in but he is at the bank' (ουκ εἶναι, αλλ' είτε γαρ δίσταται τραπεζίν); a grudging reply would be 'Not in' (ουκ εἶναι, but if one wanted to λακωνική εὖφορία he could even drop in' and use the simple negative (οὐ). No doubt Xenophon's report of the letter written by the Spartan general Hippocrates to Sparta in 411 (Hell. 1, 1, 23) reflects the same habits: Ἐπειδή τοι οἶδα, Μυθέος ἀπετέλεσα. Πλοῦτός τώρ' δένούμαι. Ἀποκλίασε τ' εἵρη πλοῦς. Ships are lost. Mithridates died. The men are hungry, Do not know what to do. The author of the Dissol Logoi reports (2, 10) that for the Laconians it was a good thing that the children did not learn μαθηματικά και γράμματα while for the Ionians it was a bad thing. In a fit of rhetoric Isocrates in the Panathenaica (209) argued that the Laconians did not even know their letters. In other words the official picture starting with the fifth century is that of a country not interested in eloquence or in learning, the exact opposite of Ionia and Athens. The dialect itself is taken to be the least musical of them all (Paus. 3, 15, 2; ἡ λακωνία παρέχω-
First we must dismiss the charge of total illiteracy; recent studies of the question lead to the conclusion that literacy did exist in Sparta (we would not otherwise have the documents we have) but in the classical period was definitely restricted. The paucity of the actual inscriptions is remarkable. Hansen’s edition of Greek verse inscriptions includes for the period before the fourth century 12 Laconian vs. 272 Attic ones; for the fourth century 4 Laconian and 198 Attic texts. Before the third century there are only two state documents from Sparta both of the fifth or fourth century: a broken list of war contributions and the fifth or fourth century treaty of alliance with the Arcadian (7) published by Peek. Private documents were obviously much more numerous (dedications, muniments etc., list of names) but still very few in comparison with any other region. For the period from the seventh century to the end of the fifth century Boring (op. cit.) lists some 180 items but most of them consist of a single name or a single letter. Bourguet (13), in a book which Meillet thought was the only discussion of Greek dialects which presented the facts in their historical reality, highlighted two features of Laconian documentation: first, a notable lack of interest in the regularization of the spelling both in general terms and for specific words; secondly, a lack of interest in the dialect itself.

We may now look at some of the evidence which illustrates both phenomena. Consider for instance three of the best attested phonological changes:

a) in Laconian at some stage intervocalic [e] of secondary origin was replaced by [i] and then lost: hence forms like μουθας and μουθάς which replace μουθάς;

b) the aspirated dental, normally written <β> in Greek, comes to be written <β> probably to indicate the change from an aspirate to a fricative ("Αρκαδικός, διώκτηρης);

b) initial [w], originally written with a <φ>, probably becomes a laryngeal phonetic and is written <φ> (Βοιωτικός).

It is striking that in our texts there is no clear chronological layering for the various spellings but these seem to coexist for a long period. The standard example is that of the name of Artemis Orthia who had a remarkable sanctuary near Sparta. Woodward (13) collected and dated the forms of the name written on texts (most commonly on votive objects) which he thought belonged to the sixth century and earlier. The relatively dating is likely to be correct even if the terminus ante quem for the stratigraphy must be lowered. We find the same written形式 in the second century: Φοίβας, Φοίβης, Φοίβος, Φοίβα, Φοίβη, Φοίβος, Φοίβης, Φοίβα, Φοίβης. Given the variety of spellings we may well hesitate to take these texts as contemporary but a worse problem arises. Linguistically there can be no doubt that the correct development is Φοίβας / Φοίβης > Φοίβα / Φοίβη. Yet one of the earliest texts or even the earliest, an ivory carving, is dated by L. H. Jeffery (LSAG 198, no. 1) to the late seventh century and carries the name Φοίβης. In other words, secondary intervocalic [α] had already been lost by the seventh century, though much later we find forms with <φ> written. Moreover in the same context but later we find names like Φοίβη (Jeffery LSAG 198, no. 2a) or Χοίμις (ibid., no. 6) which also keep an intervocalic [α]. Still later we have contemporaneously Φοίβης and Φοίβης and we also find forms of the linguistically earlier Φοίβης attested later than Φοίβης.

If we ignored this name, we might think that intervocalic [α] began to be replaced by <φ> in the late fifth century, but Φοίβης (IG V 1: 213), Φοίβης (ibid., 1228), etc. On the other hand some sherds from the sanctuary of Athena Khalkioikos, which according to Boring are dated to ca. 500 and presumably belong to the same dedicatory, have alternative forms such as Φοίβης and Φοίβης. Here too inconsistency reigns.

Exactly the same sort of spelling inconsistency prevents us from establishing when the ex, almost and spread of the other changes occurred. The first Laconian evidence for a <φ> spelling of words for which we would have expected <φ>, appears to belong to the fifth century but <φ> remains in use in the successive centuries. Similarly, <φ> appears for <φ> from the fourth century at least (IG V 1: 255, 1317; ABSA 26, 1923-5, 233 no. 25 (καλύπτεται)) but does not supersede the current use of <φ>.

Here too the name of Artemis Orthia provides, as Bourguet knew, the best evidence for the modus scribendi which we have outlined. From the fourth century onwards we begin to find other ways of spelling it in addition to those already listed: Φοίβης after the adoption of the Ionic alphabet (IG V 1: 255, iv e), Φοίβης with <φ>.

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7. I owe this reference to Alba Cassio who discusses it elsewhere in this volume.
9. Hansen, CEG. The second volume dedicated to the fourth century inscriptions includes an additional list of earlier texts.
10. IG V 1: 1; Jeffery, LSAG 201 nos 55, 56; Meggin-Lewis 67; new fragment to be published by A. P. Matthaiou.
11. SSG 26: 455; 38: 400, 39: 398, 35: 326; scholars cannot agree on the dating and this oscillates from 650 to 670, to 690, in the 390.
17. Arena, op. cit., 67 doubts that Jeffery was right in reading φ for the letter which looks like φ on the actual text, but seems to be dealing with the same name.
18. However, cf. xauv/javv in STR L 26: 464, if correctly read and restored.
19. The date of the Damocles inscription (IG V 1: 213) is disputed; cf. L. H. Jeffery, ABSA 33, 1988, 879-89, who suggests lowering it to the fourth century.
for F, ἀφοδα with α for 6; ἄφοδα with α for et cetera. In general, spelling alternations seem to be present in all documents at a much higher degree than in other regions.

What we know then is that the Lacoioi wrote very little, wrote very briefly (if at all) and do not seem to have taken the trouble to introduce a standardized spelling; if they did so this may have been limited to a certain type of documents but did not influence e.g. private inscriptions. The Lacoioi also do not seem to have shown the slightest interest in the diffusion of their dialect abroad and the slightest pride in it. Bourguet (op.cit.) pointed out some of the relevant facts. The serpent-column put up at Delphi in 479/8 B.C. to celebrate the victories in the Persian war (Meiggs-Lewis 27, Schwzyzer DGE 11) is written in Phocian letters and in a non-Lacoian form of dialect though the Lacoioi may well have been responsible for the offering and their name appears first in the list before that of the Athenians. More surprisingly the stele which at Delos records the protection offered by the Spartans to the island (IG V 1: 1564), datable between the fifth and fourth century, is written for the first part in Spartan letters and dialect and for the second in Ionic letters and dialect. The second part includes the names of Sparta's ephebi and of the kings, i.e. the most quintessentially Spartan part. We shall probably never know what prompted this odd linguistic and epigraphic split, but the extraordinary thing is that it was tolerated. In a sense it preludes to the very early reception of koine influences in Lacoioi. In the third century the documents that we have preserve very little of the real dialect.

Bourguet did not find it difficult to show that this nonchalant attitude of the Spartans to their dialect changes after 146 B.C.; the newly formed confederation of Euche- theriacoioi, with its purely nominal independence from the Romans, aims at re-membering and restoring the old glory. Hence also a revival of the written dialect which is unique to this extent in Greece. The old traditions are consolidated and the victories in the boys games are celebrated in the most abstruse dialect, based partly on what was actually being said (phoneticism is a new phenomenon), partly perhaps on some erudite work of reconstruction of the past. Even the digamma, which previously did not appear frequently in the inscriptions, is resurrected for the purpose. There is little doubt that this new and complicated old-style revival reveals a pride in the language which is new to Sparta; at the same time some of the old habits are kept and there is a total reluctance to standardize the spelling. Between the second century B.C. and the end of the second century A.D. the same name is written in the dativus ὀρειαῖα, ὀρεῖα, ὀρεῖα, ὀρεῖα, ὀρεῖα, ὀρεῖα, ὀρεῖα, ὀρεῖα, ὀρεῖα, ὀρεῖα; from the Flavian era it serves as an epitheton of Artemis whose name appears indifferently in the form 'Aρτέμια and ὀρεῖα.' Bourguet highlighted this extraordinary revival but did not sufficiently emphasize how limited in scope or subject matter it was. We have nothing in dialect beyond the inscriptions about the boys games. Every other type of document — and at this stage there is a very large number of official documents — is written in koine in or koine mixed with a very few doricisms. In a text such as ABSA 26, 1923-25, 206 no. 3 written on the base of a statue of Augustan times the only Doric feature is the presence of ι where Attic would have η:

Even the boys agon is not immune from the koine; occasionally some of the texts seem to provide us with a sort of word by word translation of the dialect inscriptions into the koine. It is enough to compare IG V 1: 292 (AO 50) and IG V 1: 293 (AO 51) written in the same year (round 150 AD) to see how easily the Lacoioi switched from one to the other form; interestingly enough the dialect text is written in much more cursive and untidy letters while the koine text has a much more formal appearance. On the other hand the dialect text has the name 'Aρτέμια in the koine form, while the koine text has the word μαλακας in the dialect form 22.

On the basis of the evidence available we must conclude that before the second century B.C. the Lacoioi, together with an absence of concern for linguistic facts, showed few or no signs of pride in their dialect and no signs of linguistic imperialism. Their political power did not go together with an increased diffusion of their language or, apparently, a desire for it. Paradoxically it is conceivable that this absence of interest in language and in extended literacy may be responsible for the survival of some features of Lacoian even in modern times. In a period in which the diglossia of local language (dialect) and koine was only potential, an absence of concern for language may have led to a form of linguistic behaviour determined by the principle of least effort, i.e. to a preservation of those linguistic forms which were most familiar and required no intellectual effort. In a situation of minimal literacy and little schooling the influence of the written language was not likely to lead to the adoption of a new language. The early appearance of texts written in koine does not contradict this view; it is a limited subset of the population that is responsible for those texts. But the extraordinary absence of standardization which characterizes Lacoian spelling another manifestation of the Lacoian indifference to language? This is indeed likely, but we ought to be less sanguine than Bourguet in our interpretation of the data, not least because now we have — and Bourguet did not — the fifth or fourth cen-

22 The inscriptions are collected by A. M. Woodward in R. M. Dawkins ed., The Sanctuary of Artemis Orthia at Sparta [AO], London 1929, 285-377; the index (p. 417) gives a list of the various forms and new texts have not changed the picture substantially.

23 Those observations are independent of those of V. Bulcás, Hellenistic and Roman Greece as a Sociolinguistic Area, Amsterdam 1989, 73-75, to whom we can refer, however, for a statistical analysis of the introduction of the koine in the public and private documents of Lacoia.
tury decree published by Peek (SEG 26: 461 etc.); it contains things which we do not understand but the spelling is internally coherent. It may well be—but only more evidence will tell—that the Laconians made a much greater distinction than other regions between formal and informal writing and it is also possible that the few people responsible for formal writing were those who did adopt the written koine at an early stage.

4.2. We now move on to a very different region. If the Laconians were laconic and cared not for words, the Boeotians were pigs. That was well-known from the time of Findar (Ol. vi 89-9) and obviously much earlier. Plutarch (De sua carnis 995 E) reported many centuries later that the Athenians called the Boeotians dense and stupid and witless (παρειχε καὶ ἀναστρέφετος καὶ ἀθάνατος), mainly because of their immense appetite; indeed jokes about the Boeotians and food are frequent. We have for them dialect imitations in Aristophanes and a fragment by Euboules (12 Hunter, Ath. 10, 417) again insists on the insatiable desire for food and drink which characterized the Boeotians and contrasts it with the excessive talking and small appetite of the Athenians. A fragment by Stratois (PGG 49) reported by Athenaeus (14, 621 F) makes fun of the impossible vocabulary that the dialect used. We are also informed that the voice (or dialect?) of women was pleasant while that of men was the opposite (...καὶ ἡ φωνή ἡ αὐτῶν ἐστιν ἐπίλαρος· τῶν ἐπὶ ἀνθρώπων ἐπε γενεῖ θὰ βαρύτας)20.

This is the official image but no Greek dialectologist can help being attracted by Boeotian. We have evidence for the dialect in a much larger number of inscriptions than for Laconia; they go from the early seventh century to the end of the first century B.C. though the dialect is abandoned in official documents after 171. Before that the dialect is used at all stages for formal and informal documents; there are differences between the various cities but they are not very substantial in spite of the frequent attrition and the numerous rifts between them. The most remarkable feature, however, of the Boeotian texts is the constant attention given by the writers to the need to modernize the orthography and to keep in tune with the changes in pronunciation. No other region shows similar attention to its way of writing or is equally ready to alter its spelling in a coherent manner or is equally capable of imposing a certain standard over a relatively wide area. The result is that the reader is left with the impression of an immensely intricate system of vocalic changes, while the truth is that in Boeotian and Boeotian only we have documentation of the changes which, at different times,

24 Some of the evidence for the image of the Boeotians among the other Greeks is collected in an old monograph still useful as a collection of data: W. Rhys Roberts, The Ancient Boeotians: their character and culture and their reputation, Cambridge 1895.

25 The statement appears in an ethnological description which used to be attributed to Dinarchus (GOM I 97-98 / PFG II 254 ff. ) and is now ascribed to Heraclides Creteus (or Kritios); cf. P. Fillor, ‘Die Reisebilder des Heraclides’, SB Wien, Ak. Wiss., Phil.-Hist. Kl., 227, 2 (1951), who argues (44 f.) that the text was written between 275 and 200 B.C.

also happened in most forms of Greek. The best way to illustrate this is to look, however briefly, at a number of texts in a rough chronological sequence.26

The earliest inscriptions such as a) and b) show features common to a number of archaic Greek texts. The only ‘novelty’ in b) is 88 which no doubt renders the correct pronunciation of the sound corresponding to Attic ζ.

a) Theban rim of a lebes, 700-676 B.C. (IG III 4: 402, Schwzyter DGE 440, LSAG 94 no. 2)

b) Base for Delphic dedication 475-50 B.C. (Schwzyter DGE 443, LSAG 95 no. 17, Marcad 18)

In the fifth century (and even earlier) innovations begin to appear. We first find a new letter and some new spellings. Where previously the Boeotians would have written ε or ι for a short (or long?) [ε] before another vowel or for an [ie] diphthong they now occasionally use (at Thespiae at least) i, i.e. a letter which is half way between E and I, and is normally taken to indicate iconically [ie] or [ei]. i.e. a sound which is half way between [ε] and [ι].27 In addition the spelling of αι and αι changes to indicate a more open pronunciation of the second element of the diphthong. Hence αι, αι in d).

c) Rim of a bronze hydria, 475-50 B.C. (SEG 30: 541= BCH 99, 1975, 749-54)

In d) Selection of names from the Stele for the Tanagraeans fallen in battle, 424 B.C.? (IG VII 1585, Schwzyter DGE 451, Venenice, BCH 84, 1960, 611 ff.)

The adoption of the Ionic alphabet in ca. 395 B.C. leads the Boeotians to a serious work of reanalysis (again no other region does the same). We can follow the oscillations but the first problem is that Attic- Ionic ιου corresponds to [io] and [yi] while the Boeotians had only [io] and [yi] and the final decision was to write αυ for the Boeotian vowel but for a while αυ, αυ were also tried out as in e). On the other hand since in

26 What follows makes no attempt at originality. The history of Boeotian vocabulary has been repeatedly studied even in recent times, starting with a masterly article by M. S. Kriken (Word 12, 1956, 67-81) reprinted in Opera Philia, Imbush (1989, 69-81); cf. also A. Bausch, Development of the long-vowel system in Ancient Greek dialects, Phara 1966 and more recently W. Buhler, Die Attischen Dialekte, Göttingen 1982 with earlier bibliography. However, this type of work mainly aims at establishing a pattern and chronology of development. By contrast in this context the discussion is not linguistic but orthographic.

27 In this volume J. Martinez Dowra argues convincingly that in Boeotian and elsewhere [ei] clusters (where V = [ae], [ei] j) underwent synizesis [ει] > [ιο] followed by nasalising (ιοι > ιοι). However, where our sign is used for the continuation of an interseconal [ει] diphthong presumably this referred to [ει] or the like.
the Ionic alphabet ϊον, ϊον etc. indicated [au], [ευ] etc. this spelling was retained for the Boeotian diphthongs.

e) Inventory of sacred objects: Thespiae, ca. 390 (Platon & Feyer BCH 62, 1938, 149-66; Taillardat & Roesch, RPh 40, 1966, 70-87)

By the middle of the fourth century things begin to settle and the Boeotians change their spelling because of the monophthongization of two of their diphthongs, [ai] and [ai]. The original [ai] first monophthongized into [e] and then merged with [i]. Hence the new spelling with [e] as in γενέ as for earlier γενε. As a result the di-graph ςιε becomes available to express the Boeotian long closed [e]. At the same time the change of [ai] to [e] allows the Ionic letter ςιε to be used for the new low e-sound. Hence σωτηρ (Attic σωτηρ) but κη (Attic κατ). Hesitations of course still exist as in I.

f) Decree of the Theban league, ca. 365 (P. Ro敷ch, REG 97, 1984, 45-60)

At the end of the third century the Boeotian spelling seems to have reached a more stable form but its disappearance is near. Military catalogues like the two from Hyetos in g) written at distance of some forty years from each other and manuscript decrees like that in h) reveal the impetus of the development; Βουκωτας in the first catalogue but Βουκωτας in the second after the ςιε letter was redeployed to indicate the treatment of the original [ai] diphthong in preconsonantal position. In h) the typical Boeotian change of [ai] after dental to [ai] is dutifully indicated (τιοναν etc.).

g) Military catalogues from Hyetos, ca. 250-45 and ca. 210-200 (R. Étienne, D. Knoepfler, Hyetos de Béotie, 1976, 72 and 77)

h) Chaeronea Manumission, first quarter second century (?) (P. Ro敷ch, J. M. Fossey, ZPE 29, 1978, 126 no. 4)

What do we learn from this brief survey? At least three points emerge:

i) Through a period of at least three or four centuries we find Boeotians with a fine phonetic sense for which reason some were interested in rendering their pronunciation in writing and in putting on record the changes which were taking place in their language. Why this is so and how can this habit or this ability be transmitted from generation to generation remains obscure but that the interest existed at all is significant.

ii) There was a deliberate attempt (otherwise the facts would be unexplainable) to standardize the spelling throughout the whole region. Where this did start from, Thebes or any other town, quite simply we do not know. Bocotia did not have political unity all through this period (it is sufficient to remember the different behaviour of the pro-Persian Thespae and the pro-Athenian Plataea during the Persian wars), yet apparently linguistic and spelling developments seem to follow similar paths in the various towns.

iii) There was a political decision that in most circumstances all the acts of the Boeotian konon had to be written in the local dialect. This is striking because from the third century onwards we find documents of less importance in the konon in some form of Attic. There are also a few exceptions to the general rule and we ought to be able to explain them —but we are not. The dialect disappears from official/political documents with the end of Boeotian independence in 171. In other words the Boeotians were very different from the Spartans. They kept the written version of the local language for official purposes as long as they had independence and then they gave it up. In private inscriptions a form of dialect much mixed with the koiné is still found as late as the first century but is the exception rather than the rule. Learning and erudition are not missing from late Bocotia (it is enough to think of Plutarch) but they do not lead to a restoration of the written dialect.

That the Boeotians (or a subset of them) were interested in their dialect is clear from the superhuman efforts at phonological analysis which they made and which put them miles ahead of every other Greek writing community. That the political leaders saw the language as linked to political autonomy is clear from their linguistic history. We have no definite evidence for linguistic pride, but some form of pride there must have been. Yet pride does not necessarily lead to linguistic imperialism or, as one may say with a less loaded term, to linguistic diffusionism; as we shall see, it can be proved that this was a sin of which the Boeotians were not guilty.

4.3. We now turn to the most difficult case of them all, the linguistic history of Oropos. Oropos is a small coastal district situated between Boeotia and Attica exactly opposite Eleusis; its importance was mainly strategic and commercial; traffic between Attica and East Boeotia had to pass through it and its two harbours were used for the transport of corn and other food stuff between Eleusis and Attica. It made money...

28 For some statistics about the use of koiné or dialect in public and private documents from Boeotia cf. Buddens, op. cit., 139-142.
Oropos was probably a colony of Eretria, but the early history is obscure. We know that the Athenians took power over it some time in the early fifth century (ca. 470 rather than ca. 490 according to Knoepfler). There is no evidence for an earlier Boeotian conquest. Probably at the end of the sixth century (ca. 430–410) Oropos established an important sanctuary, the Amphiarion, which became a centre of pilgrimage thanks to its oracleic properties. Afterwards Oropos’ history is infinitely complicated; the city oscillates between periods of independence or semi-independence, periods of subjection to Athens and periods of subjection to Boeotia. Eretrian intervention is very frequent and the links with Eretria persist, to the point that if Knoepfler is right, Eretria found it impossible to be at peace with Athens when she dominated Oropos. How desirable Oropos’ conquest was is shown by Demosthenes’ statement in 353/2 (Dem. xvi 18). In very rough terms it looks as if in the first part of the fifth century Oropos was loosely annexed to Attica, in 411 Eretria got hold of it with the help of the Boeotians but it preserved some independence until in 402 the Thebans intervened into internal struggles and kept Oropos under their power (having moved the population away from the sea); in ca. 395 Oropos was annexed to the Boeotian confederation but after Antalcidas’ peace in 387/6 when the confederation was dissolved it reobtained its independence. A few years later it put itself under the protection of Athens, just in time to be the object of a coup by the tyrants of Eretria (in 366) who then ended having to ask for the help of the Thebans and giving Oropos to them, while waiting for a settlement. In 338 Thebes lost Oropos again but it is disputed whether it was then given to Athens by Philip or was restored to complete autonomy. By 325 the city had certainly been handed over to Athens but in 322 it reacquired its independence. Once again this did not last; in 312 Oropos first fell under

What do we know about the dialect in this confused situation? We have relevant epigraphical data only from a late period, i.e. at the earliest from the fifth century, but the first substantial inscription probably dates from the first part of the fourth century after the foundation of the sanctuary. If we simply flip through all the texts (which is not easy because there is no up-to-date corpus) we find in turn inscriptions written in a form of Ionic which closely resembles that of Eretria, inscriptions written in Boeotian and inscriptions written in what is normally called koine, though I cannot find any difference from standard Attic. If we try to link the various linguistic forms with the historical position of Oropos at the time in which they were inscribed we do of course end in a vicious circle; all too often scholars have tended to argue that the dialect was determined by the political situation and consequently have imposed a date on the texts on the basis of the dialect in which they were written, while then dating the main periods of conquest on the basis of these texts. This is obviously unsatisfactory — should we confess defeat? We need not be unduly pessimistic; there are some points of reference and we ought to start with them. Possibly the earliest local text (on letter forms) really belongs to the fifth century but hipoj hadē (SEG 31:492), though not meaningless, is not very significant for the determination of the dialect. Then we have a small fragment of a lex sacra which, according to Petroupolou, the most recent editor, must be dated at the very end of the fifth century or the very

29 The two lines (Miltiades GGM 1 [10] 1) come from the geographical text by Hesychides Creticus (or Krinax) quoted above.

30 For Oropos as a colony of Eretria see the fragment by Nicoclides in FGH 376, fr. 1. In general our account of the political history of Oropos follows closely V. Petroukos, "O Οροπός τῆς Αθήνας Ερετρίας," in Dideschronia et archeologica, 54, 1985, 50-55. Cf. also D. Knoepfler, Chiron 16, 1986, 71-98. A number (or even most) of the dates mentioned are disputed but the general picture is likely to be correct; for our purposes it seemed useless to enter into some of the historical controversies, since, whatever view one adopts, it is not likely to change the general conclusions about the use of the dialect.

31 Knoepfler, Chiron 16, 1986, 58 makes a case for ca. 374 as the date at which this happened.

32 The first view is the standard one; cf. e.g. L. Robbe, Hellasica 11-12, 1960, 155; Petroukos, op. cit., 286; M.S. Langdon, Hermes 66, 1987, 41-58; Knoepfler, on the other hand, argues for a first period of autonomy, but does not spell out his reasons: cf. Chiron 16, 1986, 74 note 8.

33 I am grateful to D. M. Lewis who has drawn my attention to a broken dedication found at Skála Oropou and datable probably to ca. 559 B.C. Petroukos, 'Ερετρίας της Αθήνας, Ελληνικά 1, 1981, 1-2. However, the dedication is in Attic letters and may well have been put up by an Athenian even if it were not, the text ( ... Ἀθηναῖοι ἐν ᾿Οροπω ὕψι...) could hardly be used as evidence for the local dialect.

34 The original edition of the Oropos inscriptions in SEG VII is completely out of date since it does not even include the accessible publications of texts by V. Petroukos in Att (cf. SEG 1:100), Petroukos, op. cit. (in note 24), offers a more recent list. I have not been able to see V. Petroukos, 'Ερετρίας της Αθήνας, Athens 1980, but the texts are reproduced in SEG 31:479-492.
beginning of the fourth. It is written in quasi-stoicheidion in Ionic letters and seems to be in Ionic though the evidence is very limited. Boeotian is excluded, though one word (ἐλεξές) must be due to Boeotian influence and though the sanctuary must have been under Boeotian dominance as shown by the fact that contributions are defined in terms of Boeotian coinage. A more substantial lex sacra which gives rules for the management of the sanctuary is written stoicheidion in the Ionic alphabet and is normally dated between 388 and 377 during the brief period of independence of Oropos. It shares most of the specific features of the dialect of Eleutherai: datives in -ει (for -ντι), infinitives like ἐλεξέφας (for -έφας), τορέα, forms like χρυσόβατον with rhetoric. Other features have occasionally been called Boeotian (e.g. by Petrankas, op. cit.: ἐν τοῖς ἑορτάσαι, ἐντόθι, ἐντάγμα, χρυσόβατον) but, with the exception of ἀπολογίζων, which may well be a mistake (we would expect η or οι instead of the first ε), they are all Euboean.

Round the middle of the century (ca. 350) we find twoproxenies for Amyntas son of Perdiccas, the Macedonian king, and for one of his friends (IG VII: 4251, 4250). Here the dialect is West Ionic (ὁδέες) with some of the peculiarities of Eretia (ἑνάρις ἐλεξές, τόχεις) but not all: there is no rhetoric, the verb used is the Boeotian ἑλεξές, and we have ἀπολογίζων and ἀπολογίζον in Eretia we would expect ἀπελεφίνθη and ἀπολυτήριον (cf. Schwyzer DGE 804). After this period we start finding in Oropos decrees which are Attic from all points of view, in both dialect and formulation. They belong to the period of Attic domination (338-322) and include both building inscriptions (IG VII: 4255, Petrankas, no. 40) and honorary decrees (IG VII: 3499 = Petrankas, no. 41; 4253 etc.). With freedom from Athens there comes a new formulation e.g. of proxy decrees but these are nevertheless in Attic (cf. IG VII: 4256, 4257; SEG 15: 264 in honour of Philip Macedonian) though the ἑλεξέφας which we met in the 350's reappears in place of Attic (and Eretian) ἑρείπες. After Antigonus' general obliged Oropos to join the Boeotian koinon in 312 the city dedicated, again in Attic, a statue to Ptolos, a Thespian who had favoured this move. From now on the inscriptions of Oropos are in Attic including the text SEG 16: 295 to be dated either after 322 or after the end of the relatively brief period of Attic power started in 303 BC. This makes financial arrangements for the rebuilding of the walls which probably had been destroyed by the Athenians.

35 For the text see Lazenidis, AP 1925/6, 43 no. 155; A. Petrankos, GRBS 22, 1981, 39-63 at p. 40.
37 This demonstration made as early as 1886 by Wilmanns in a brilliant article (Hermes 21, 1886, 91-115) is still fundamental for the study of the dialect of Oropos.
38 Schwyzer DGE 812 (Lazenidis, AP 1917, 256 ff), an Oropos proxeny for a Carian, apparently has ἀνακρίνον together with ἐμπρόσθην, the hybrid ἑλεξέφας and the Attic ἑλεξές.

GEOGRAPHY, HISTORY AND DIALECT: THE CASE OF OROPOS

During most of the third century and the first part of the second century Oropos was annexed to the Boeotian koinon which was at that stage a far more liberal and democratic institution than in the previous period. At this point the first impression is that documentation increases considerably and oscillates between Boeotian and Attic koinon, but it is not normally stated that the line of demarcation is absolutely clear. Every inscription found at Oropos and originating from the city is in Attic (no traces of Euboean); the Boeotian inscriptions all emanate from the Boeotian koinon, i.e. they are official decrees of the koinon, set up in stone in the Amphiaratia. The typical example is provided by the proxy decrees. The formulae used at any given time are practically identical; the date is established both in the 'Boeotian' decrees and in the 'Attic' decrees through reference to the Boeotian archon, the verb used for the proposer of a motion is in both cases ἑλεξέφας, that for the president of the assembly is ἐπείρησις in the Boeotian texts, ἐπείρησις in the Attic ones. In no case an Oropos decree is compiled in Boeotian; in one case and one case only a decree of the Boeotian koinon is compiled in Attic (SEG 15: 262: between 263 and 255). To what we owe this one exception to the rules of the confederacy is not clear but it may be partly due to the fact that the proposer was from Oropos.

How firm Oropos was in its decision not to use Boeotian emerges from a piece of clever reconstruction produced by Michel Feyel. Between 228 and 226 (probably) Oropos received an invitation from Boeotian Akraiaphia to take part in one of the traditional Boeotian festivals, that of the Poion. It replied passing a decree (IG VII: 351, Petrankos, no. 43) which accepted the invitation and established what should be done. The decree needless to say is in Attic (to the point of using ἐμπρόσθην instead of the ἑλεξέφας of the earlier proxy decrees). Feyel spotted a version of this decree in a small fragment found at the Poion (IG VII: 4143) which clearly represents a cumulative summary of all the replies received by Akraiaphia to the many invitations issued. The first part of the fragment in Attic summarizes Oropos' decree; this is followed by a part in Boeotian which contains the reply of the Haliartoi. In other words Akraiaphia had received a reply from Boeotian from the other members of the koinon but a reply in Attic from Oropos; suitably it reproduced this dialect distinction in its own official document.

At this stage we may summarize Oropos' linguistic development. Presumably the original dialect of the city was Eretian and this was still used in writing in the first part of the fourth century even though the city had experienced Attic dominance. Further periods of Attic power seem to have changed the situation. Under Attic power in 338-322 only Attic was used and afterwards Attic remained as the official (written) language with Eretian being forgotten (whether it survived, as is likely to have done,
as spoken language, we cannot know. By contrast Boeotian power had no deep influence on the (written) language of Oropos, though borrowings did occur. The koion, whose documents were in Boeotian, did not prevent Oropos from writing in Attic and a city like Akrasia did not object to receiving official documents from Oropos written in that dialect. In one instance Attic or koine were also used, exceptionally, for a decree of the koion set up in the Amphitheatrum.

5. Let us now return to some of our starting points. Was the dialect something which could be exported through cultural diffusionism? Was it something which could be associated with a state’s or city’s autonomy, a symbol of independence? Oropos did not stick to its own dialect when confronted with what looks like Attic linguistic imperialism; in Nicom’s terms it realized how privileged the position was of those who had mastered Attic and abandoned its own written dialect in favour of a written version of Attic. Two facts may be relevant: first Attic and Eubrian are structurally very close; secondly the change happened in the late fourth century and not earlier, though Oropos had ‘enjoyed’ subscription to Attica at an earlier period. It would be possible to say that as many other cities Oropos abandoned its own dialect only in favour of the koine. However we want to put it, the fact remains that in the late fourth century when Oropos was restored to independence after a period of Attic power, it naturally changed some of the formulations of its official decrees, but still did not return to the old linguistic forms. On the other hand even when it was a full member of the Boeotian koion, it kept its linguistic independence nor was this attitude rejected by the Boeotians. By contrast the Boeotian decision to set up in the Piraeus a summary of an Oropos decree in the original linguistic forms, which were in such blatant contrast with the official Boeotian used by other cities, reveals that there was in Boeotia a form of linguistic liberalism which probably was not matched in Attica.

It is a moot question whether we can generalize from a limited set of examples or whether in this field any generalization is possible. Yet in positive terms we can now state that in some Greek regions, at one time or the other, dialect and national pride, dialect and autonomy came to be linked and that this happened even when the dialect, as in the case of late third century Oropos, was not the epicoric one. In negative terms we have found little evidence, outside Attica, for any form of linguistic diffusionism. The main lesson is one of diversity. As Ann Jeffery put it (with the help of Saks), the record of Archaic Greece is basically a set of separate parts, even if these could most easily fuse at times when a city produced more history than could be consumed locally. When political independence was lost, Boeotia gave up the written dialect as a lost cause, Laconia to a certain extent restored it, Oropos first abandoned its linguistic autonomy and then preserved the newly acquired dialect of its old masters even under a new regime. The three regions reacted differently but in all of them at some point the use of the dialect (or, more exactly, of the written dialect) answered needs which were not merely those of communication.

INTERVENCIONES: Cl. Brixhe, A. C. Cassio, J. L. García Ramón, A. López Eire, G. Vottero.

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43 A word of caution is necessary: the evidence we have been using (the only one available) is mostly composed of public-documented. We cannot exclude, therefore, that in private acrobatics (as much as in speech) the Eubrian-type dialect was preserved for a longer period than indicated above.