

Dialectal variation and the Second Sophistic: evidence from the Atticist lexica.

The Atticist lexica contain what their authors believed to be Classical Attic forms next to their alleged Koiné Greek equivalents, and provide the historical linguist with a useful insight into second century CE Greek speakers' perceptions on the Ancient Greek dialects. The lexica showcase the attempt by the educated Greek-speaking elite under the Second Sophistic to provide some sort of Greek standard by rejecting forms from every Greek dialect other than Classical Attic. While their authors often make errors in deciding what constitutes, and does not constitute, Classical Attic, these lexica are nevertheless of great use for the sociolinguist and dialectologist alike, as they demonstrate how Greek speakers of the Postclassical Period perceived, explained and categorised Greek dialectal variation.

The lexicographers show awareness of the Ancient Greek dialects, as they reject the use, in formal written Greek, of all features that they believe are not Attic. This is a topic of considerable concern to these scholars: rejected Ionic forms account for approximately 10% of glosses in Phrynicus' *Ecloga*, and they are all keen to display their knowledge of the dialects, rejecting forms used by 'the Ionic speaker' (e.g. Phrynicus *Ecl.* 156: "οἱ Ἰωνοί"), explaining that certain forms are typical of the Aeolic dialect (e.g. Antiatticist ε79: "Αἰολικῶς") or talking of the common language of Doric, Ionic and Attic speakers (e.g. Moeris δ6: "κοινὸν Δωριέων Ιόνων Ἀττικῶν"). However, their understanding and interpretation differs to our own modern delineation of the Ancient Greek dialects. Most significantly, they occasionally accept Homer, in addition to the canonised Attic orators and tragedians, as a model for the budding Atticising writer to follow (e.g. Moeris η9; Antiatticist β14).¹ It appears that the concept of dialect in this period is not geographic, but cultural, more akin to register.² For example, Ionic forms are often described as 'poetic',³ which suggests that the forms were linked, in the minds of the lexicographers, to the types of texts in which they were used, rather than to the language of a geographical region of Greece. When they discuss the dialects, they discuss the literary dialects, not how their contemporaries in Ionia and other parts of Greece spoke. Literary and linguistic preferences are subjective, and can often trigger strong feelings, and for this reason the lexicographers, and Phrynicus in particular, writes in a very unsubstantiated way about words he considers to be ἀνάττικον, claiming to be 'unable to endure' ("δυσχεραίνω" (*Ecl.* 32.)) and 'disgusted' ("ἐναντίασσα" (*Ecl.* 172)) by certain 'greatly distasteful' ("ἀηδὲς πάνυ" (*Ecl.* 339; *Ecl.* 332.)) forms, some of which are 'so wrong that not even Menander uses [them]' ("οὕτως ἀδόκιμον ὡς μηδὲ Μένανδρον αὐτῷ χρήσασθαι" (*Ecl.* 307)). The latter statement shows that Phrynicus was explicitly aware that certain authors used certain dialects: the presupposition here is that Menander does *not* write in Classical Attic.⁴ Despite these differences, the lexicographers also hold themselves to certain criteria and rules that are familiar to historical linguists when it comes to evaluating dialect usages. For example, they consistently reject uncontracted vowels in favour of their contracted Attic equivalents (e.g. Moeris χ28), geminate -σσ- in favour of Attic -ττ-, (e.g. Moeris β25), and cluster -ρσ- in favour of Attic -ρρ- (e.g. Moeris ο20). This raises the question of what similarities and differences we can find between modern day understanding of the dialects, and the perspective of a second century CE grammarian.

This paper therefore proposes to examine the Ancient Greek dialects by investigating evidence of dialectal variation from second century CE users of the language, and exploring what aspects of variation were meaningful to them. The paper will discuss the evidence for attitudes about dialectal variation in Phrynicus' *Ecloga*, Moeris' Lexicon, and the Lexicon of the 'Antiatticist', three lexica which survive to us in a more or less complete form. It will examine how their authors discussed the relationship between the literary dialects, with which they would have been familiar from school, and their own Koiné Greek, and show that the dialect that one used could and did invoke significant paralinguistic associations, notably that of social status, education, and background, a fact that is evident from the very practice and prescription of grammatical Atticism under the Second Sophistic.

¹ This contradicts Swain's (1996: 53) observation that 'all other dialects, including Homeric Greek, are firmly rejected.'

² This was also the case in the Classical Period: cf. Aristophanes (fr. 706), who talks of the διάλεκτος of the πόλις, using this term to refer to what scholars today would call a register, not a dialect.

³ This idea is also found in Strabo 1.2.6 and Hermogenes *On Style* 2. 319f.

⁴ In a similar vein, he (correctly) accuses Herodotus of writing in Ionic ("ἴαζων") in *Ecloga* 101, and Hecataeus of using a particular verb 'because he is an Ionian' ("Ιων ὄν") in *Ecloga* 198.

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