

The datives in -εσσι: contact or *drift*? The evidence from Sicily and Pamphylia*

The origin and diffusion of the datives in -εσσι is a well-known problem of Greek linguistics that has given rise to a long debate among scholars (famously starting from BOPP 1833 and WACKERNAGEL 1905). These datives have traditionally been considered ‘Aeolic’ (and therefore relevant for dialectal classification), but today we know that they are also well attested in other areas of the Greek-speaking world, both in epigraphic and literary sources. Contact has often been proposed as an explanation for the diffusion of the datives in -εσσι, but recent studies have shown that this might not be the only possibility (cf. CASSIO 2017 and VAN BEEK 2018).

In this paper, we will approach the question of the diffusion of this trait by focussing on the inscriptions of two areas which, despite being deeply affected by language contact, have received comparatively less attention in the literature: Sicily and Pamphylia. Using the data from (1.) a newly-established corpus of Sicilian inscriptions (CAPANO 2020), (2.) the entire corpus of extant Pamphylian inscriptions, which has increased since Brixhe’s *DGP* (1976), we will re-examine the issue from a new angle. We will take into account contact between different dialects and different registers and, in the end, suggest that the diffusion of the datives in -εσσι might be explained as a case of *drift*, at least in some areas.

This re-assessment of the datives in -εσσι in light of both the new epigraphic data and the recent applications of the concept of *drift* (cf. e.g. TRUDGILL & GORDON 2000) will allow us to argue that there is no need to look for a unified explanation for the origin and diffusion of this trait and, instead, that there are valid reasons to suppose independent innovations in the Greek dialects. Finally, we will ask the more general question as to whether the datives in -εσσι should be considered a valid diachronic isogloss.

*(We would like to be considered for the "Typology of Contact-Induced Changes in Morphosyntax" workshop)

Bibliography

- VAN BEEK, L. 2018, *Dialect borrowing versus internal developments in epic Greek: Reconsidering the dative plural in -εσσι*. Paper presented at the conference “Variation and Contact in the Ancient IE Languages” (Oxford).
- BOPP, F. 1833, *Vergleichende Grammatik, des Sanskrit, Zend, Griechischen, Lateinischen, Litthauischen, Gothischen und Deutschen*, vol. I, Berlin.
- CAPANO, M. 2020, *Il greco di Sicilia fra età ellenistica e tarda antichità. Risultati dall’analisi di un corpus epigrafico*. Unpublished PhD Thesis.
- CASSIO, A.C. 2017, Notes on the Origin and Diffusion of the -εσσι Datives. In: G.K. Giannakis *et al.* (edd.), *Studies in Ancient Greek Dialects: from Central Greece to the Black Sea*, 189-96. Berlin.
- GARCÍA RAMÓN, J.L. 1990, *Proportionale Analogie im Griechischen: der Dativ Pluralis der 3. Deklination in den aiolischen und westgriechischen Dialekten*, «Glotta» 68: 133-156.
- TRUDGILL, P. & GORDON, E. 2000, *The role of drift in the formation of native-speaker southern hemisphere Englishes: Some New Zealand evidence*, «Diachronica» 17: 111-138.
- WACKERNAGEL, J. 1905. “Zur griechischen Nominalflexion: (2) Der Dativ Pluralis auf -εσσι.” «IF» 14: 373-5.