

## Carelessness or Conscious Calumny?

### In Regard to the Historical Greek Pronunciation

In case any of my readers happens to read the comments that have been made by members of the B-Greek forum and wonder what to think of them, I hereby give a brief explanation.

Among those who have figured in throwing out such negative comments are Randall Buth, Stephen Carlson, Michael Aubrey, Mark Lightman, Louis L. Sorenson, and Carl W. Conrad. Apart from personal preferences, which is their privilege to entertain, the basic criticism of these persons, that on the surface looks like *sachlich* (material), expressed in Moises Silva's words, is that "Caragounis seldom tells us where the inscriptions [sc. that he quotes] come from; the reader is thus unable to determine whether a particular change reflects a general systemic development in the language or only an isolated phenomenon".

This criticism has been registered again and again.

In my Response to Silva's review in the *WTJ* 67 (2005), pp. 410-11, I showed the groundlessness of this criticism, but these persons continue to reiterate Silva's mistake, refusing to take note of my correction of Silva's mistaken statement. Anyone who would care to read my response and consult the relevant pages in my book, would see that Silva's 'review' was tendentious and his above criticism without ground.

It thus makes one wonder, Are these gentlemen so careless in their reading or are they consciously calumniating a book, whose evidence they do not like?

The criticism that "Caragounis seldom tells us where the inscriptions come from ..." is patently inaccurate. On p. 354 note 32 I wrote:

The following statement is based chiefly on the evidence of the *Inscriptiones Graecae*, particularly on the volumes of the *Corpus Inscriptionum Atticarum* (*CIA* [4 folio volumes!]), the most relevant material for **Athenian pronunciation**, the *Inscriptiones Graecae Antiquissimae* (*IGA*), the *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum* (*SEG*), and the *Corpus Inscriptionum Graecarum* (*CIG*). Of these I have read most B.C. inscriptions in *CIA*, all of the inscriptions in *IGA*, all the **Attic inscriptions** in the 41 volumes of *SEG* (available to me by early 2003) and consulted the rest as well as other publications

The above explanation makes it quite plain that my interest centered on the Athenian pronunciation and that I worked primarily with Attic inscriptions! When the above critics, therefore, accuse me of not indicating where the inscriptions come from, either they have not read me carefully, or they are trying to mud the water. For they could not possibly mean that I fail to indicate from which of the ten Athenian demes (districts of ancient Athens) these inscriptions come! (Such information would be totally worthless). At the same time their ‘grumble’ seems to be only a subterfuge to evade facing the question of pronunciation. This quibble reveals their inability to identify, understand, and work with inscriptions! In the light of this, it is astonishing that such persons should pose as experts on ancient Greek pronunciation! (On occasion, however, I do cite evidence from other localities as well—and I say so—evidence, which indicates that the changes I aver were not limited to Athens. But this is a secondary matter).

The reasons why I concentrated on Athenian pronunciation were—as I pointed out—that Attic was the most important dialect, that the Athenians were the leaders in trend, and that F. Blaß and other Erasmians, against whom I argued, claimed that the Athenians pronounced their language according the

the Erasmian fashion. The whole debate on the pronunciation of Greek from the XIX<sup>th</sup> century on—in which my study belongs—has been concentrated on Athenian pronunciation!

The demand of the above critics that I should have supplied detailed evidence for all parts of the Greek world, in order to show that the changes were universal and thus systemic changes, is both absurd and utterly useless. Even if we suppose that the Greeks who lived in the Krimaia, in what is present-day Afghanistan, or in Spain and Upper Egypt pronounced Greek differently, what would it matter? We are concerned with the most important dialect, the dialect that bore up the classical literature, the dialect that was most developed and set the standards for Greek for all future, the dialect that has continued to the present day!—for Neohellenic (like the so-called *Koine*) is directly descended from Attic!

When they bring into the discussion L. Threatte's work, who recorded various orthographic forms found in inscriptions, and demand that I, too, should have done the same—i.e. just record—they reveal that they have misunderstood the nature of my work. (In my work I pointed out that I considered Threatte to be evading the issue of pronunciation, by trying to explain the orthographic mistakes as the result of the earlier pre-Ionic way of writing). Threatte was interested in recording the form of words in the inscriptions, just like S. T. Teoderson had done before him, and working out a grammar, not drawing conclusions that might impinge on the Erasmian pronunciation. My book, which, I hope, is not a whit less scientific than theirs, was interested in going beyond the mere noting of the forms. A true scientist cannot be content with merely noting various data, he must also draw conclusions from those data: synthesize the evidence, and apply it to correct outmoded or false views. I thus drew the logical conclusions, that the epigraphical changes indicated that the Athenians pronounced

their Attic with a pronunciation that was very different from the Erasmian, in other words, in the Historical Greek Pronunciation, which kept on developing over many centuries, to arrive at what it is now. Thus, my book aimed at both recording the data, i.e. presenting the evidence and in taking that evidence seriously and applying it to the issue of pronunciation. Changing our views and conforming to the assured results of scientific and critical investigation is, I consider, the mark of true scholarship. If something has been proved beyond a shadow of doubt, as in the case of the pronunciation of Greek, to continue in the wrong tradition (sc. Erasmianism), is, I think, not only unscientific, but also lacking in honesty and integrity.

Any true researcher, any genuine scientist would agree that I have presented all the information required for the evidence I supply and for what it proves. I am afraid that the above-named persons are not interested in the hard facts regarding the pronunciation of Greek but are merely quibbling. With such I am not disposed to waste my time and therefore I bid them *χαίρετέσσαν*.