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THE GREEK AND BILINGUAL WALL-INSCRIPTIONS  
FROM POMPEII:  
EPIGRAPHICAL EDITION, ANALYSIS AND COMMENTARY

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## ENGLISH SUMMARY

This doctoral thesis consists of the compilation and epigraphical edition of Greek and bilingual (Greek-Latin) wall-inscriptions from Pompeii in addition to a systematic study of them from a linguistic and typological point of view. Our main interest is to analyse the use of Greek in this city and its relationship with the Latin language. This work also attempts to provide an overview of Greek and bilingual wall-inscriptions that, until today, has not been unified or globally analysed. We consider that this compilation and update is essential and necessary, so special attention has been given to the criteria in the selection of the inscriptions that should belong to this corpus, being as rigorous as possible. Therefore, the inscriptions that have been included in our corpus are those that display some relationship with the Greek language:

- Those written in Greek language and alphabets.
- Those written in the Greek language, but in Latin alphabet as well as in Latin language, but in Greek alphabet.
- Those that mix both languages and alphabets.

The study is divided into two parts. The first is constituted by the edition of the inscriptions, whose total number amounts to 261 (17 are painted and 244 are scratched). Each inscription consists of a series of sections that try to provide all the information that has been possible to collect from them, starting with the inscriptions that are painted and then those that are scratched (among them, there is a small number of those that are written in charcoal). When possible, an image or drawing of the text has been included, to favor the interpretation. Due to the characteristics of these inscriptions, some difficulties related to their nature have arisen: the poor preservation conditions have caused that many of them are now lost and it is not possible to check them again; others are only partially preserved, while others, although still in the field, are very complicated to locate and identify with certainty. Therefore, on some occasions, we have been obliged to rely on the interpretation made by the first editions.

The second part is the study of the inscriptions, which is further subdivided into three chapters, where the analysis of the texts is dealt with from different points of view: the first one deals with the most notable phonetic and morphological phenomena that we find in the corpus; the second focuses on the use of Greek in the city of Pompeii from its origins to the tragic end of the city and its relationship with the other languages spoken there. A brief comment is also made about other Greek epigraphical testimonies that have been preserved (but that are not wall-inscriptions), besides a final section dedicated to the study of the bilingual inscriptions and the phenomena observed in them; the third and final chapter examines the different themes of the inscriptions and they are grouped according to the type of information that they transmit.

## CONCLUSIONS

### CHAPTER 1 - PHONETICAL AND MORPHOLOGICAL CONCLUSIONS

Following the analysis of these inscriptions and the linguistic processes they reflect, it is possible to draw some relevant conclusions about the phonetics and the transcription equivalences that occur in them:

- First, it is necessary to point out that, even though it is tempting to attribute the different variants found in these inscriptions to phonetics, some caution must be taken when analysing the texts of Pompeii. On some occasions, we are faced with simple spelling mistakes, which are inevitably caused by differences in the degree of literacy that the population would have had, which are also reflected in the different linguistic levels attested in the inscriptions of my corpus. It is not surprising, therefore, that graphic variants arise in writing that differ from standard spelling.
- The data of my corpus are not conclusive in the matter of the Greek phonetic evolution, since practically all of them can be explained by the linguistic interference of Latin over Greek (as seen in the transcription into Greek). For instance, this happens with the closing of *ĕ* into *i* (e.g. *δηρειδιω*, *Θηόμνηστος*), the opening of *ŭ* in *o* in a locked syllable (e.g. *Αὔγοστα* (*ς*) by *Augŭstās*) and an exceptional case in which the initial diphthong *au* of Augustus is written with *o* in Greek (*Ογουστω*). The examples of syncope (e.g. *Φηλίκλα*, *ἄρκλας*, *Πρόκλος*) also reflect the phonetics of Latin. The same applies to consonants, with examples such as *πύπλεικος* by *publicus*, in which a Latin archaic variant of this word is written in Greek characters.
- One of the most controversial points is the possible loss of the opposition of vowel quantity in these languages. In the case of Greek, the most obvious argument in favor of the loss of that opposition could be the frequent exchange of spells *ε* and *η* and *ο* and *ω* in a random manner (especially in the case of *ο* and *ω*). However, it is not an unequivocal evidence, since these variations can be attributed to the imperfect knowledge of a Latin speaker, who tries to write the Greek correctly but with the handicap of not having letters to differentiate long and short vowels in his own language. In addition, the similarity between the letters of both alphabets would have also favored this confusion<sup>1</sup>. In some Latin metrical inscriptions, the vowel quantity is marked with apices<sup>2</sup> and examples of the so-called *l*longa are also preserved in all types of inscriptions such as electoral *programmata*, incised inscriptions, etc., which indicates that the vowel quantity was still relevant at least in some compositions.

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<sup>1</sup> The common letter for Latin *e* is *E*. Nevertheless, it usually appears like *II*, both in painted and scratched inscriptions; cf. Zangemeister *CIL* IV tab. I.

<sup>2</sup> *CIL* IV 7698 a, b y c.



Another argument in favor of the possible loss of the vowel quantity distinction in Greek is the use of  $\alpha$  instead  $\epsilon$  and *vice versa*. This exchange can be observed in two examples of this corpus:  $[\acute{\epsilon}\nu\theta\alpha]\delta\alpha$  instead of  $\acute{\epsilon}\nu\theta\acute{\alpha}\delta\epsilon$  and  $\acute{\epsilon}\iota\sigma\epsilon\iota\acute{\alpha}\iota\tau\omega$  instead  $\acute{\epsilon}\iota\sigma\iota\acute{\epsilon}\tau\omega$ . The monophthongization of /ai/ > /aī/ > /ae/ > /ε:/ in Greek (as well as /ae/ > /aē/ > /ε:/ in Latin)<sup>3</sup> affects the long vowel system, so we would not expect the spelling  $\alpha$  for the short vowel /e/. However, the confusion could be originated in the fact that both vowels /ε/ and /ε:/ share the sound [e]<sup>4</sup>. In this case, we can assume that the quality would prevail over the quantity, which would not be so relevant.

The same could be interpreted for the development from /ei/ into /i:/ and the use of the digraph  $\epsilon\iota$ . Nevertheless, while we have a great number of cases in which  $\epsilon\iota$  is used for /i:/, we only have one example in Greek in which  $\epsilon\iota$  could have been written instead of /i/ in antecorsonant position (e.g.  $\epsilon\iota\delta\acute{\iota}\alpha\varsigma$  for  $\acute{\iota}\delta\acute{\iota}\alpha\varsigma$ ). This example should show that  $\epsilon\iota$  would represent a pronunciation [i] regardless of the quantity of the vowel (/i:/ or /i/), but it is important to keep in mind that the example of  $\epsilon\iota\delta\acute{\iota}\alpha\varsigma$  could be caused for a lexical reason, not phonological<sup>5</sup>. The same would happen in the transcription of *pūblīcus* for  $\acute{\pi}\acute{\upsilon}\lambda\epsilon\iota\kappa\omicron\varsigma$ , where the digraph  $\epsilon\iota$  is used in the transcriptions of Latin /i/. Thus, it is possible that these examples, together with the exchange of Greek spellings  $\epsilon - \eta$  (1. 1. 1. a) and  $\omicron - \omega$  (1. 1. 3. a) could be a proof of an incipient loss of opposition of vowel quantity, but they are far from certainty.

- There are two special cases where the same spelling seems to represent different values simultaneously. The letter  $\eta$  H, originally intended for /ε:/, appears to be confused with a sound [i], possibly displaying itacism in  $\text{Κλῆτις}$  for  $\text{Κλῆτις}$ . On the other hand, most of examples show that  $\eta$  is used to transcribe the Latin  $\bar{e}$ . It seems evident that, in the first case, it may reflect a Greek phonetic change while the second is due to a graphic convention in the transcription of the Latin vowel. The temptation is to deduce a similar phenomenon in the use of  $\upsilon$  Y for  $\iota$  as in  $\text{Λουκρῖν}$  and  $\text{ποερῦ}$ , although, as explained above (cf. 1. 1. 4.), these examples are more likely to be due to an ultra-correct spelling of someone whose skills of Greek pronunciation and writing was insufficient. For the same reason,  $\upsilon$  is occasionally used as the equivalent of the Latin *u* ( $\acute{\pi}\acute{\upsilon}\lambda\epsilon\iota\kappa\omicron\varsigma$ ,  $\text{Νυμέριος}$ ).
- Although the examples of Greek voiceless aspirated plosives and their transcription into Latin are not numerous, they are still significant. These inscriptions show several graphical variants, since the contact with Latin and the constant fluctuation between the two alphabets reveal difficulties in the adaptation of these phonemes to another graphical system without specific letters for them. The largest number of examples corresponds to the aspirated

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<sup>3</sup> There are not examples in our corpus of the reverse spelling *ae* for  $\check{e}$ , but there are some in the Latin wall-inscriptions, as in the vocatives *cinedae* (CIL IV 4602), *graphicae* (CIL IV 7650), *vicinae* (CIL IV 7517); cf. Väänänen (1966: 24).

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Allen (1987: 93-94) suggested the same argument, but finally decline this option for the same reason.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. 1. 1. 2. (a).

dental, which in the transcriptions into Latin oscillates between *th* and *t*, being the first one more frequent. There are also three examples of a hyper-correct *th* in terms that do not have an aspirated stop in Greek. We find five examples of an aspirated velar. Two of them correspond to the name of Andromache written in Greek characters, where the  $\chi$  has been replaced by a  $\kappa$ . The other examples are Latin transcriptions, one with *ch* (showing a hyper-correction presenting *ch* for the original  $\kappa$ ) and another with the simple *c*.

The aspirated labial, which presents more variants, is the most interesting from the phonetic point of view, given that Latin had the letter *F* to represent a fricative labial *f/f/*, which is sometimes identified with the Greek  $\varphi$ . The analysis of these inscriptions shows that, despite the efforts being made, the Greek aspirated plosives offered difficulties to an important part of the Latin-speaking population. In the three examples in which it is transcribed with the traditional spellings *ph* or *p*, doubts arise when it comes to locating the *h*, as in *Ephaproditus* for *Epaphroditus*, or when an *h* is added where there should not be an aspiration, as seen in *pyrrice* for *pyrrhiche*. At the same time, it seems that the process of fricativization of the former aspirates, which was taking place in Greek, had a decisive influence in the identification of the Greek  $\varphi$  with the Latin *f*. This is observed in  $\varphi\epsilon\lambda\alpha\{\text{sss}\}$  for *fellas* and  $\varphi\omicron\upsilon\tau\omicron\upsilon\tau\omicron\iota\varsigma$  for *fututrix* and in the anthroponyms  $\Phi\omicron\rho\tau(\omicron\upsilon\nu\tilde{\alpha}\tau\omicron\varsigma)$  for *Fortunatus* and  $\text{Ῥ}\omicron\upsilon\tilde{\omicron}\varphi\omicron\varsigma$  for *Rufus*, as well as in the Greek alphabets where the letter  $\varphi$  moves to the position that occupies the *f* in the Latin alphabet. If we take a look at examples like *Daphne* (CIL IV 680) and *Epafras* (CIL IV 4259), it is clear that it is a phenomenon of adaptation from Greek into Latin with the closest letter value, which would have established the equivalence */f/*  $\varphi$  = */f/* *F*.

- Notably, there is one case of  $\epsilon\iota\sigma\epsilon\iota\alpha\iota\tau\omega$  for  $\epsilon\iota\sigma\iota\epsilon\tau\omega$ , which shows the tendency to regularize athematic verbs as thematic in the Greek verbal system, revealed by the use of the spelling  $\alpha\iota$  for  $\epsilon$ .
- Finally, it should be noted that the two Greek verbs that are adapted to the Latin morphology ( $\lambda\epsilon\iota\chi\omega$  and  $\beta\iota\nu\acute{\epsilon}\omega$ ) belong to the sexual field, which are the most frequent type of inscriptions.

## CHAPTER 2 - USE OF GREEK AND BILIGUAL INSCRIPTIONS CONCLUSIONS

It is worth highlighting some points of what has been studied in this chapter:

- According to the epigraphic study and the (scarce) literary testimonies about the history of the city, it is possible to deduced that Greek was not the official language of Pompeii at any time, despite being a city that, due to its situation in the Gulf of Naples, was surrounded by Greek colonies. This region was clearly marked by the Greek presence and, with the arrival of Hellenism, the influence of Greek culture in the area left traces in everyday life at all levels of population.
- Although there are examples of other epigraphical texts written in Greek in this city, the bigger number are wall-inscriptions. If these inscriptions had not been preserved, the Greek textual presence in Pompeii would have been minimal.
- It can be observed in these inscriptions that Greek language maintains a double linguistic and social status (diglossia). It is true that it is not a prototypical division between high level and low level, since Greek did not occupy an official language position in the administration nor was the first language of the majority of the population, but it is true that there was a clear difference between Greek as a language of culture and literary prestige (painted inscriptions that decorate patrician dwellings, literary texts and incised inscriptions that mimic the high language of these texts) and the use of Greek language and alphabet in lower contexts, such as the inscriptions of the Lupanar, the basilica and other places that belong to the private sphere (dwellings, inns, palestra). Therefore, we can conclude that Greek occupied a special place next to Latin as a high language and that it would have been one of the languages used by common people due to the expansion of Greek Koine as *lingua franca* in the Mediterranean associated with merchants, prostitutes, slaves and travelers.
- It cannot be confirmed by the documents of this corpus that Greek was the first language (or mother tongue) of the inhabitants of Pompeii. The only thing we can say is that it was probably the second language of the most educated members of the population and of a small group of slaves, merchants or prostitutes who could have come from the Eastern part of the Empire. It is important to keep in mind that knowing how to write in an ancient society implies a certain degree of culture (or a great deal of culture, if we consider the ones who would not have known how to do it at all), so having the knowledge how to write in a second language, Greek in this case, implies a more advanced degree.
- There are examples of bilingual inscriptions that show that those who knew Greek had important skills of this language:
  - a) Inscriptions where code-switching takes place, especially those that imply an improvised change of both language and alphabet.
  - b) Examples of Greek loanwords adapted into Latin. They may or may not be included in the standard Latin language: it is important, though, that these loanwords were part of the Latin of these people.

- c) Inscriptions where morphological adaptations occur from Latin into Greek and *vice versa*, since they reveal a deep knowledge of the morphology of the other language.
- d) Finally, cases in which the inscription is written in Greek language, but in Latin alphabet, since they denote an oral learning of this language that does not correspond (necessarily) to the learning of the Greek alphabet.
- Other examples reveal the opposite side, a very basic knowledge of Greek:
    - a) Simple transcriptions of Latin texts into Greek alphabet, without morphological adaptation. They show some knowledge of the alphabets and their correspondences, but do not provide information about the spoken skills in the Greek language.
    - b) The use of fixed terms or expressions which are not yet inserted in the host language, but which do not imply a greater knowledge of it than the use of these fixed terms. The texts in which *calos* or *nica* are included belong to this group. Furthermore, they often appear in Latin alphabet.

### CHAPTER 3 - USE OF GREEK AND BILIGUAL INSCRIPTIONS CONCLUSIONS

In this section, we present some key points about the kind of Greek inscriptions found in my corpus and their use as implied from them:

- There are two essential questions we need to ask ourselves. The first one is what type of inscriptions are written in Greek in the corpus. We have seen that the texts include a wide range of themes. Most of them consist of one or several personal names, usually isolated, but sometimes accompanied by a verb or by a very short phrase. The second question assesses whether Greek was preferred for certain domains and, for that reason, people who could express themselves in this language did so. This does not mean that Greek would have been exclusively used for these themes (like loving and sexual inscriptions, prone to use the Greek language or alphabet), since Latin is also used in similar contents. However, it is true that certain types of inscriptions, either due to the epigraphic tradition (ἐμνήσθη inscriptions or those requesting protection from Greek divinities), or to the prestige of the Greek language or culture (literary epigrams or signatures with the verb ποιέω), or to the linguistic necessity (inscriptions with isopsephy), are preferably written in Greek. These cases also exhibit a great mastery of the Greek language. In other examples, however, even if the phrase has a Greek origin, it will be inserted in Latin inscriptions as an ankylosed form and, normally, in the Latin alphabet: a paradigmatic example of this is the acclamations with *calos* and *nica* terms.
- The owners of the richest and most opulent houses decorated some rooms with epigrams and Greek mythological scenes. The most emblematic is the example of the House of Epigrams, which supports the undeniable expansion and taste for Hellenism that many patricians felt at that moment.
- The remarkable number of examples of Greek alphabets (or fragments of them) are a clear indication that some people were proud of knowing how to write in this alphabet. Their appearance should be taken as memory practices rather than school exercises.
- It can be deduced that there was a percentage (impossible to specify) of Pompeians who knew and understood Greek: non-normative graphical variants are attributable to the different pronunciations of Greek (as in Latin) or to interferences from the other language.
- Finally, the presence of Greek personal names is very frequent, as in other regions of Italy. It is true that the preservation of these names as *cognomina* by slaves or *liberti* could be interpreted either for imposition or for the will to maintain an identity sign. Other times, specially with female names, the presence of Greek names could also respond to what has come to be called *noms de guerre*, used by prostitutes to hide their real names and to offer suggestive names to the clients, besides the fact that some of them could be of Greek origin and may still understand Greek.

## FINAL CONCLUSIONS

The use of the Greek language that it is possible to analyse through these inscriptions does not allow us to confirm that there was a Greek community in Pompeii, but rather sporadic cases of people with different levels and domains of Greek. Neither do we have any conclusive evidence to demonstrate that the Greek wall-inscriptions were necessarily written by Greeks from the Eastern part of the Empire, as Solin (2012: 104) had already advanced. It is true that some examples reflect a great knowledge of Greek and there are contexts that invite us to think in a deeply Hellenized environment, as it could be the case of the commemorative inscriptions, which stand out among all the other inscriptions for being written in a very correct Greek with a well-known and widespread *formulae* used throughout the Mediterranean. The same view applies to the inscriptions with the practice of *isopsephy*. Pompeii, as the main port of its geographical zone, would have received many foreigners, travelers and merchants from the most diverse places in the ancient world, so the visitors exchange would have favored the frequent use of Greek among the city population.

Moreover, we find some examples that could be attributed to a Greek native speaker according to certain linguistic patterns: this is the case of POMP G183, in which the use of the Greek numerical system alternates with the Roman unit of measure (*modium*) and currency (*asses*). This leads us to think that this improvised use of Greek numbers is expected from a person who has acquired this practice from their own mother language. The fact that the inscription is written in Greek alphabet, even adapting the personal name to the Greek morphology (Φηλεικίων), also allow us to consider this option. Even though, the question of the origin remains unclear, it could be a city dweller, maybe a slave or a freedman, or maybe a person who was in Pompeii for many different reasons. A single isolated example is not enough to affirm or deny this question. In addition, the fact that the Greek inscriptions of the city are completely dispersed and written in all kind of buildings help us to support the idea that it was a widespread variety of Greek employed by the population, typical of a city with a high cultural contact located in a strongly Hellenized area.

The next question to consider is: who really learned Greek in Roman society? Is it not true that a basic education is required to learn how to write your own language, and even a more advanced education to do it in a second language? Now it is time to come back to the apparent (and peculiar) diglossic situation that we analysed in the bilingualism chapter. Once it has been concluded that it is very complicated (and unproductive) to determine the origin of the people who wrote these inscriptions in Greek, it is necessary to analyse what type of inscriptions are written in Greek and which could be the motivations behind this use: is it possible that they are an erudition sample of a Roman elite who would have known Greek from their careful education? Do these inscriptions belong to a slang that can involve both the lower social status population and the same elite we were talking about? Are both options possible and, therefore, these inscriptions reflect the double conception that the Greek language had in the Roman world as language of culture and prestige, on the one hand, and as the

language of slaves, merchants and the lower strata of society? After studying our corpus, we can determine that we have examples of all of these:

- The most obvious case of the employment of Greek as a cultural language are the Greek epigrams that decorate one of the rooms of the House of Epigrams (POMP P11-P14). They are not the only example, since we must also make due mention of the labels with names of Greek literary and mythological characters that appear in the frescoes of other houses (POMP P1, P4, P6 and P7). At the same time, some incised inscriptions (POMP G7, G53, G175 and G185) present a reminiscence of the Greek epic-literary language. Other texts, such as the palindrome of POMP G197, could be included as a sample of this kind of language -that has nothing to do with the rest of the inscriptions we have in the corpus. The people who wrote these inscriptions probably had a high level of scholarship, not only for their knowing how to read and write, but also for their knowledge of Greek literature.
- On a less literary level, we find typical formulas that are prevalent throughout the Mediterranean. For instance, the ἐμνήσθη inscriptions -which have also been preserved in nearby cities such as Pozzuoli or Naples- and the ἐμνήσθη ἐπ' ἀγαθῶ type, in which the personal names are also Greek and oriental deities, like Isis, are mentioned. Several inscriptions of love and of erotic theme are also written in Greek, which are particularly remarkable for the reasons we have explained in section 3. 8. We should also take into account the inscriptions with the practice of isopsephy and the ones with the *theta nigrum* in this section, because they must have been written in Greek, or at least partly. The necessity to write the Greek numbers in the isopsephic texts supports this practice to be done in this language (the examples of our corpus also have the rest of the inscription in Greek).
- The inscriptions POMP G202, G203, G204 and G205 deserve special mention for their explicit reference to a κύριος - δοῦλος relation: these four inscriptions (edited separately in the *CIL*, but that, given that they are in the same porch of the house, we have edited jointly) mention several times a master Θράσων, κύριος Ἡλίου and a slave ὁ δοῦλος Ἡλίου. The beginning of the message is the same in all of them, being only (b) the inscription that continues the sentence. They are all written in Greek, which points (besides the appearance of Greek names, both the master and the slave) at another case where it is possible to understand that the proficiency of Greek is very high or even that the mother tongue of the person who wrote it was Greek. In this case, Greek language is used in a slavery context.
- Other examples reveal that the skills in this language could have been limited to some expressions linked to the context in which they are employed, such as the cases of acclamations: the inscriptions with *calos* and with *nica* as well as the praise found in the amphitheater.

The linguistic analysis does not help us to solve the intricacy of the origins of the people who wrote in Greek, since practically all the phenomena that occur can be explained by contact with Latin. It is possible to go deeper, though, on the matter of knowing a second language orally but not necessarily in a written form, as shown in the examples written in Greek language, but in Latin alphabet. Whereas a Latin speaker is more likely to write in Greek alphabet if he has learned it as part of his education (either writing in Greek language or Latin in Greek alphabet), it is more surprising if a Greek native person does not write Greek in Greek alphabet. In the analysis of bilingual inscriptions, we have seen cases such as POMP G89, G166, G189 or G235, where the Latin alphabet is used to write in Greek, and in all of them there are interference from Latin.

Therefore, we have examples of:

- Latin speakers who know the Greek alphabet and write in the Greek alphabet, but who employ Latin.
- Latin speakers who know some Greek (or, sometimes, quite a lot) and write in this language, although sometimes it is noted, for some expressions or phonetic-morphological issues, that they are Latin speakers. The examples in which Greek is not written in the Greek alphabet could also indicate that they know the Greek language but only in an oral way.
- Some traces of a possible Greek native speaker who tries to write in a Latin environment.

Finally, it should be noted that the Greek and bilingual wall-inscriptions found in Pompeii are scattered throughout the city. Although Greek was never the official language of the city, in the years preceding its destruction and until that fateful moment, the inhabitants, travelers and passers-by used this language with different levels proficiency and in different contexts. Thanks to the unexpected preservation of the plaster of the walls, which has kept on its surface the thoughts, desires and concerns of their residents, we can get a little closer to that population through the messages they left in the places they inhabited. The wall-inscriptions are unique documents that show different sociolinguistic registers that otherwise would not have reached us. The information that they transmit has an incalculable value and, notably, allows us to approach the population of this city at a specific moment in its history: the year 79 A.D.