

**Reconstructing sound changes through lexicographers and grammarians:
the case of a post-sibilant aspiration in Greek**

Data coming from lexica, grammarians, and scholia traditionally played a cardinal role in the reconstruction of Greek (including Mycenaean) outcomes of Indo-European roots. Which caveats should be considered when reconstructing sound changes based on these sources?

In this work, I discuss a potential Greek sound change, i.e. the aspiratory effect triggered by a sibilant on a following stop, which was posited during the 19th century almost exclusively on the basis of forms attested by lexicographers of the Imperial and Byzantine Ages.

At first, Kuhn (1854) noted that some Greek roots show a fluctuation between $\sigma\pi/\sigma\phi$ and $\sigma\kappa/\sigma\chi$ (e.g., $\lambda\acute{\iota}\sigma\pi\omicron\varsigma/\lambda\acute{\iota}\sigma\phi\omicron\varsigma$, $\sigma\pi\acute{\omicron}\nu\delta\upsilon\lambda\omicron\varsigma/\sigma\phi\acute{\omicron}\nu\delta\upsilon\lambda\omicron\varsigma$ etc.). As ‘aspirated’ variants are often reputed Atticisms in lexica, Kuhn claimed that the aspiratory effect was mainly confined to this dialect. Against this hypothesis, Bezenberger (1883) believed that no evidence suggested that the aspirated variants were Atticisms, nor that they were any younger. Moreover, Hiersche (1964; 1978) and Elbourne (1998; 2001; 2012), who also considered forms with an Indo-European etymology and no dialectal fluctuations, agreed respectively with Kuhn and Bezenberger. Both these ideas became progressively obsolete and variants in $\sigma\pi/\sigma\phi$ and $\sigma\kappa/\sigma\chi$ were analyzed as different spellings of substrate loanwords (e.g., Furnée 1972: 104-111). A *Third Way* was paved by assuming few allophonic voiceless aspirates already in PIE (e.g., Joseph 1985; *LIV*² s.u. $*(s)k^h\acute{e}id-$ etc.; Hamp 2003). In the last sixty years, evidence in favor of the post-sibilant aspiration never received a holistic consideration. Consequently, fluctuations $\sigma\pi/\sigma\phi$ and $\sigma\kappa/\sigma\chi$ in roots both with and without an Indo-European etymology, as well as outcomes $\sigma\phi$ and $\sigma\chi$ from PIE $*sp$ and $*sk$, still lack a precise explanation.

The majority of fluctuations were deduced from ‘Atticist’ lexica. These works, which aimed at spreading linguistic ‘purism’ drawing from a canon of Classical authors, sometimes included Homer and Herodotus among their models. Consequently, forms they regarded as Attic were indeed not necessarily confined to this dialect. Moreover, hypercorrections and features taken from the contemporary spoken language are documented as well (Vessella 2018: 35). As regards post-sibilant aspiration, John Tzetzes (in sch. Hes. *Op.* 156bis) refers that $\Delta\alpha\sigma\upsilon\nu\tau\alpha\iota$ γὰρ οἱ Ἄττικοὶ ‘Attic people are indeed fond of the aspirates’, which testifies to the scholarly belief that aspirated variants were exclusively Attic. Therefore, I re-assessed the extant documentation and drew conclusions as follows:

a) Some forms, which are referred to as Atticisms by lexicographers, were not so during the Classical Age, e.g., $\sigma\chi\iota\nu\delta\acute{\alpha}\lambda\alpha\mu\omicron\varsigma$ (Hp.+) vs. $\sigma\kappa\iota\nu\delta\acute{\alpha}\lambda\alpha\mu\omicron\varsigma$ (Ar.+). They might be either hypercorrections or resulted from the biases on Attic post-sibilant aspiration.

b) A post-sibilant aspiration took place at an early stage. Word-initially, it only affected PIE $*sp$ (e.g., $\sigma\phi\alpha\lambda\acute{\alpha}\sigma\sigma\epsilon\iota\nu$ ‘cut’ < $*(s)pelh_x-$ ‘split off, separate’) and perhaps $*sk$. Word-internally, it seems to work for PIE $*st$ too (e.g., $\pi\alpha\rho\theta\acute{\epsilon}\nu\omicron\varsigma$ ‘maiden’ < $*pr-st\acute{e}no-$ ‘id.’ and $\iota\sigma\chi\acute{\alpha}\varsigma$ ‘dried fig’ < reduplicated $*sisk-$ of $*sek-$ ‘dry’). Moreover, the rule only applied in pre-accentual position and when a laryngeal was not adjacent to the cluster. This could be reflected in some ‘fluctuations’ (e.g., $\sigma\phi\upsilon\rho\acute{\alpha}\varsigma$ ‘ball of dung’ and $\sigma\pi\acute{\upsilon}\rho\alpha\theta\omicron\varsigma$ ‘id.’ < $*sporh_x-$ ‘id.’).

c) In few cases, dialectal constraints are possible, e.g., $\sigma\phi\acute{\omicron}\gamma\gamma\omicron\varsigma$ ‘sponge’ – confined to Attic inscriptions – for $\sigma\acute{\omicron}\gamma\gamma\omicron\varsigma$. Still, some variants belong exclusively to lexica and are unknown elsewhere (e.g., $\upsilon\sigma\kappa\lambda\omicron\varsigma$ ‘latchet’ for $\upsilon\sigma\chi\lambda\omicron\varsigma$). Finally, some aspirated variants are ‘folk etymologies’ (e.g., $\Lambda\sigma\chi\lambda\alpha\pi\acute{\iota}\omicron\varsigma$ and $\text{A}\iota\sigma\chi\lambda\alpha\beta\acute{\iota}\omicron\varsigma$ for $\Lambda\sigma\kappa\lambda\alpha\pi\acute{\iota}\omicron\varsigma$), and should be ruled out of the evidence.

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