Part I

Phonology

1 Introduction

1.1 Theoretical preliminaries

The analysis of the phonetics and phonology of a "dead" language presents greater difficulties than that of its morphology or syntax, since, by definition, it requires access to the sounds of the language, which are irrecoverable from the written record. The written record does not permit any conclusions concerning the "real", phonetic, realization of the sounds under investigation. Furthermore, the conservativeness inherent in all writing/orthographic systems allows sound changes to remain hidden for centuries, sometimes even millennia. (To take a random example, the change /ai/ > /e/ in Greek, dated to the first centuries AD, is still not reflected in standard MG orthography.) Additionally, alphabetical systems (such as the MedG and EMG one) are phonological and only rarely offer insights into allophonic realizations. As a further complicating factor, scribal/copying errors are more liable to be interpreted as "true" phenomena in the domain of phonology than in other domains.

Finally, it is only for sound changes, and not for changes in the morphology or the syntax, that theoretical historical linguistics makes an assumption of regularity: sound changes are expected to apply in a specific phonetic context, all extralinguistic factors being equal, across the board and without exceptions. Therefore, the persistent variation exhibited by medieval texts (and in particular by MedG and EMG ones) in the application of sound changes, which is confirmed by the variation exhibited even in the modern form of the Greek language and its dialects, is in more urgent need of explanation, and the presence/absence of a feature or phenomenon in a specific text in greater need of verification/corroboration from alternative sources.[1]

To counteract these problems, historical phonological research (and, as a result, Part I of this Grammar) attaches particular importance to: (a) graphematics (diplomatic versions of texts, texts written in other alphabets, the apparatus criticus of critical editions); (b) comparative/corroborating evidence from earlier and later forms of the language; and (c) general theoretical analyses of linguistic phenomena. However, "peripheral" information on a phenomenon is here kept to a minimum, used in order to assist its dating, localization and interpretation, and the reader is directed to the relevant secondary literature for further details. The aim is to provide a short historical overview of each sound change, from its earliest attestations up to and including the Early Modern period, detailed information as to the linguistic and extralinguistic factors affecting its distribution, and, where possible, an interpretation.

[1] On these issues cf. Manolessou 2008a, Manolessou/Toufexis 2009.

The adoption of a specific theoretical viewpoint for the presentation of the phonology of MedG and EMG was deemed impractical. Phonology by definition refers to a specific phonological system, which in turn implies a specific linguistic community at a specific time. On the contrary, the description provided here is diachronic and diatopic: it encompasses a variety of local phonological systems evolving over several centuries, which may be very similar but cannot be viewed as identical. An additional difficulty is the fact that modern linguistic research on the historical phonology of later Greek (from EMedG onwards) is seriously lagging behind in comparison to the solid work done for other languages, and thus in most cases there is no secondary literature to rely on for the analysis of the data.

The issue is further complicated by the fact that the major controversial issues of MedG phonology, which are very similar (frequently identical) to those of MG and its dialects, are by no means resolved by modern theory,[2] despite the additional advantages that a spoken language with living native speakers can offer (the possibility of experimental phonetic analysis, elicitation tests, comprehensive and representative data coverage etc.); therefore it can hardly be expected for them to be settled for MedG, which presents all the difficulties (discussed above) inherent in a language transmitted only through the written medium.

Finally, since much of the data presented here is made available to the scholarly community for the first time, an effort has been made to couch them in an, as far as possible, theory-neutral framework, so that they may be usable by as many scholars as possible, whatever their linguistic or philological background.

1.2 Presentation

In the first sections of Chapters 2 and 3 the sounds constituting the MedG and EMG system are described, by articulatory class. For each class, information is provided as to (a) the historical origin of the sounds comprised in it, (b) the allophonic variants of these sounds, (c) where necessary, their graphematic representation and (d) the regular changes affecting them, with cross-references to the subsections where each change is discussed. In the next sections, the major sound changes of MedG and EMG are described. As discussed above, and as will become evident from the presentation of the data, few of the sound changes discussed display regularity. It was therefore indispensable to provide a larger number of examples than is strictly necessary for the illustration of each change as a linguistic phenomenon per se; the aim was to provide comprehensive documentation pertaining to the spread and distribution of the phenomenon according to period, area and register.

The list of examples for each change is arranged first by phonetic environment and secondarily in chronological order. There is an important exception to this practice: all "affected" attestations of a lexical item are presented together, irrespective of chronological order, and inserted in the sequence of examples on the basis of the earliest attestation of the "changed" form. This is because it is crucial to verify whether an early change appearing in a certain lexical item is indeed a true instantiation of this change, and not a one-off

[2] For recent and easily accessible overviews of the major issues in MG phonetics and phonology and the various alternative proposals see Malikouti-Drachman 2001 and Arvaniti 2007.

performance error which accidentally corresponds in form to it. This corroboration can be provided only by the consistent presence of the "changed" form in other areas and periods.

In the case of major changes of Panhellenic spread no attempt is made to provide examples from *all* areas where the phenomenon is attested; instead, the list of examples aims to cover the various phonetic environments and gives emphasis to the earliest attestations. By contrast, in the case of sound changes of regional or dialectal status, an effort is made to provide examples from all the areas where the change is attested.