DIALECT PASSAGES AND TEXT CONSTITUTION
IN ARISTOPHANES' ACHARNIANS*

BY

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1. Introduction

In some of his comedies Aristophanes has staged personages that employ non-Attic Greek. Three dialects are in question here: the Megarian, the Boeotian and the Laconian. The first two dialects are found in the Acharnians; the Laconian dialect occurs in the Lysistrata1). In this article I will try to show that the editions are due for revision as concerns the dialect passages of the Acharnians2). The dialect passages in question are the Megarian and the Boeotian passage (respectively the verses 729-835 and 860-958)3). My

* This article is based upon my unpublished research, entitled Het niet-Atties Grieks bij Aristofanes. Doktoraalskriptie (Nijmegen 1986), which does not only try to give an answer to the question whether Aristophanes has rendered the authentic dialect, but also tries to show his intentions of using certain linguistic features.

1) Also in Knights 1225 and Peace 214 Laconian is spoken. Besides in Peace 47-48 Ionic usage occurs. In all these cases however the words are presented as a quotation by speakers of Attic and are therefore not spoken by a speaker of the relevant dialect itself.

2) The following editions have been used for this research (I refer to them in abbreviated form):

1. CAN — R. Cantarella, Aristofane. Le Commedie (vol. 4) (Milan 1956).
2. COU — V. Coulon, Aristophane. Texte établi par V. Coulon et traduit par H. van Daele (vol. 1) (Paris 1923).

3) With regard to the dialectal features of Megarian and Boeotian I base myself upon C. D. Buck, The Greek dialects (Chicago 1955); the article The Greek dialects in Aristophanes in Elliott, o.c., 207-241; A. Thumb-E. Kieckers, Handbuch der griechischen Dialekte I (Heidelberg 1932); A. Thumb-A. Scherer, Handbuch der griechischen Dialekte II (Heidelberg 1959); F. Bechtel, Die griechischen Dialekte I-II (Berlin 1921-1923).
investigation will consist of two parts: first of all it will be discussed whether the principle of emendation to pure dialectal forms is right; secondly there will be an exposition on the question how the various editors have dealt with it concretely.

2. The principle of emendation

To answer the question whether the principle of emendation to pure dialectal forms is a right one, the reading of the manuscripts must be taken as a starting-point; in other words, the texts of the editions have to be stripped of conjectures, they have to be smoothed as it were. The manuscripts suggest inconsistent use of dialect by Aristophanes: along with features of the dialect in question he also uses features that did not belong to that dialect. This is affirmed by the metre. For, in the two passages, forms occur

4) Pure: that is to say representative of the dialect. The term is a bit misleading, because strictly speaking one cannot speak of the Megarian, Boeotian, Attic, and the like dialect; for language changes, and besides, in a language community there are distinctions in language behaviour between old and young persons, between men and women, between autochthons and allochthons and between social classes (J. K. Chambers and P. Trudgill, Dialectology (Cambridge 1980), chapter 5). For ancient Greece however these distinctions are hard to discover, especially in those cases in which the data are based upon inscriptions. The term 'pure' has been used for want of a better one.

5) Undoubtedly the manuscripts differ from Aristophanes' original text. The difficulty, however, is that nobody knows on what points exactly. Essentially I will restrict myself to those readings upon which all manuscripts agree. In those cases in which the editors' behaviour in relation to the manuscripts is at stake, I will mention any divergent readings of the manuscripts in foot-notes. But to those readings the same applies as to the reading that will be given in the text itself. This however does not apply to the divergent readings of the foot-notes 9 and 15. True, the number of examples I give, is limited because of the said principle, but on the other hand the chance of correctness of the readings is greater as a result of this. Should one want to increase the number of examples, then one should let the relative reliability of the different manuscripts play a role.

6) Indeed, among others K. J. Dover, Linguaggio e caratteri Aristofanei, RCCM 18 (1976), 360 and A. Meillet, Aperçu d'une histoire de la langue grecque (Paris 1965), 216, assert that Aristophanes has rendered the authentic dialect, but Elliott clearly shows in the article mentioned above (cf. note 3) that this is not the case. In this context I also refer to the afore mentioned (note*) research, in which Aristophanes' inconsistency is plainly demonstrated.

7) The starting-point in this is the fact that all verses are metrically correct. The Megarian and the Boeotian dialect passage have been written in the iambic trimeter.