The Aeolic Optative

FREDDERIK KORTLANDT

1. Despite considerable effort which has been spent on a variety of possible solutions to the problem (cf. especially Thomas 1957 and Forbes 1958, with a survey of the earlier literature), the origin of the so-called Aeolic optative has not been clarified. "Le problème reste posé" (Chantraine 1967: 266). I think that the absence of a convincing solution is the consequence of an imperfect understanding of the original, Proto-Indo-European state of affairs. In the following I intend to discuss a few points which, though relevant to the problem, have not received sufficient attention and to present an alternative solution.

2. Proto-Indo-European verbal paradigms could have either fixed or mobile stress. When the stress was fixed, as in the sigmatic aorist and the thematic flexion, the optative suffix was *-iH₁-, followed by the personal endings with no vowel intervening:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>sg</th>
<th>1st</th>
<th>-stH₁m</th>
<th>-oiH₁m</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>-stH₁s</td>
<td>oH₁s</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>stH₁t</td>
<td>-oiH₁t</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pl</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>-stH₁me</td>
<td>oH₁me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>stH₁te</td>
<td>oH₁te</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>stH₁nt</td>
<td>-oiH₁nt</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Outside these two categories, I find no trace of an original paradigm with fixed stress in Greek. When the stress was mobile, the optative suffix was *-ieH₁- in the singular and *-iH₁- in the plural of the active voice, and *-iH₁- in the middle voice. The stress was on the ending in the 1st and 2nd pl. forms of the mobile paradigms, and evidently also in the sg forms of the middle voice, but not in the 3rd pl. forms, where a number of indications point to original root stress.

First of all, the 3rd pl. active ending of the Vedic optative is -ur, not -an. The ending -ur is found in root presents with fixed stress, e.g. inj. taksur of taksati ‘they fashion’, in reduplicated imperfects, e.g. ádadhur of dádhati ‘they put’; in the sigmatic aorist, which has -sur, and in root aorists of roots in a laryngeal, e.g.

---

1 Cf. Chantraine’s footnote “On mesurera dans ces articles l’extrême complication de toutes les solutions proposées.” Rix’s conception of “-eH₁ umgebildet ( ) zu -eH₁/e- mit den Ind.-Ausgangen und Dissimilation -eH₁ > -eH₁(2), nur als Variante in der 2 3 Sing 3 Pl” (1976 233) stretches the imagination and does not explain the distribution of the e grade. Cf. also Risch (1982 328, fn 29) “Nicht eindeutig geklart ist noch immer die Herkunft des sog. ‘aolischen’ Optativs, z B. deižeĩcov, -eĩ, -eĩxv.”
ádhur 'they put', i.e. in all those athematic forms where the stress is either on the root or on a preceding syllable. It follows that -ur replaces earlier *-at from syllabic *-nt.

Secondly, the agreement between Latin velint, Gothic wileina, and Old Church Slavic veleto, which are all related to English will, suggests that the optative paradigm from which these forms are derived had an e-grade in the root. The oldest paradigm of the Slavic compound stem do-voľje- 'suffice', which has a reduced grade in the root and is evidently based on the 3rd sg. form in *-ieH₁t, has an irregular 3rd pl. form douleto, which must be derived from *-i(H₁)nt. The same alternation is found in xošte- < *-tye- 'want', 3rd pl. xošteš. It points to an original paradigm *uieH₁t, *ueiH₁nt.

Thirdly, the Vedic optative of the type dheyaṃ 'I may put' requires an explanation. This form cannot have replaced *dheya(m) < *dheH₁iH₁m or *dhāyāṃ < *dheH₁ieH₁m because neither of these forms is attested in the material while both are supported by other paradigms and would not therefore easily be lost, cf. gamēyam, gamēs beside gamyās of gam- 'go'. This suggests that the full grade of the root *dheH₁ and the full grade of the suffix *-iH₁ were taken from different forms of the same paradigm, which means that the stress alternated between the root and the suffix. Since the suffix had full grade in the singular, the obvious source of the full grade root vowel is the 3rd pl. form dheyuṛ, which is the expected reflex of *dheH₁iH₁nt. This analysis is supported by the fact that forms of the type dheyaṃ are trisyllabic in the Rgveda.

On the basis of these considerations, I arrive at the following reconstruction of PIE paradigms for the present optative of the root *H₁ei- 'go' and the aorist optative of the root *dheH₁- 'put':

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>sg.</th>
<th>1st</th>
<th>H₁ieH₁m</th>
<th>dhH₁ieH₁m</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td></td>
<td>H₁ieH₁s</td>
<td>dhH₁ieH₁s</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td></td>
<td>H₁ieH₁t</td>
<td>dhH₁ieH₁t</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pl.</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>H₁iiH₁me</td>
<td>dhH₁iiH₁me</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td></td>
<td>H₁iiH₁te</td>
<td>dhH₁iiH₁te</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td></td>
<td>H₁iiH₁nt</td>
<td>dhēH₁iiH₁nt</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the middle voice, which will not be discussed here, I also assume full grade of the root in the 3rd pl. form and zero grade elsewhere (cf. Kortlandt 1987, sections 10 and 15).

3. What is the expected development of the reconstructed paradigms in Greek? This question hinges on the development of the laryngeals. In the position after a vowel and before a consonant, the laryngeals were apparently lost at an early stage with compensatory lengthening of the preceding vowel, cf. especially μeις < *mēns < *meH₁ns 'month', where the accent points to an original monosyllable, and similarly acc. pl. -ẑς, -âvς < *-âns < *-eH₂ns, acc. sg. -ẑv < *-âm < *-eH₂m, also acc. sg. -ûv < *-uHm, acc. pl. -ûς < *-uHns, but acc. sg. -yan on the analogy of nom. sg. -ya < *-iH₂, where the vocalization of the word-final laryngeal
is regular. Thus, I assume that the phonetic reflex of 1st sg *-si* in 3rd pl *-s* should be *sin*.

In the thematic flexion, *-si* yielded *-sy* (or *-osy*) with vocalization of the following nasal in Arc: έξελαύνοια 'I may drive out' and Hom: ἐποίατο 'they may follow'. Before the nonsyllabic consonant of the endings *-s, *-t, *-me, *-te*, the sequence *-sy* was evidently reduced to *-s* (or *-sy*). It is clear from the 3rd sg form in -ot that the assimilation of the laryngeal to the preceding semivowel was anterior to the loss of final *-t* because the laryngeal would otherwise have been vocalized to yield -ε, as it was in δόσε < *H3ekweH1 'pair of eyes'. However, the circumflex ending of κελευωι 'he may order', where the accent was not retracted to the initial syllable, points to a disyllabic ending *-oiy* or *-oy*-.

Thus, we have the following relative chronology: (1) assimilation of a laryngeal before a final consonant (cluster) to a preceding (semi)vowel, (2) vocalization of the syllabic nasals and loss of final *-i, (3) reduction of *-on* to *-m* before a consonant, (4) rise of an opposition between *i* and *y*, (5) loss of the laryngeals in antepenultimate and intervocalic position.

The laryngeals of *H1t* and *dhH1* were lost after the vocalization of the following *s*, cf. especially ἐπιον < *H1t-eH2tom 'I drank'. In intervocalic position, the laryngeals were retained longer than elsewhere, as is clear from the circumflex tone which reflects the original disyllabic character of the resulting long vowels and diphthongs. This leads us to the following reconstruction of Proto-Greek paradigms.

---

2 Prof. Ruijgh draws my attention to γλωχις 'point', which is based on the original acc sg form *glokhvn of γλώσσα < *H4wos 'tongue'.

3 The e grade of δειπνόν 'he seemed' suggests that this form represents an original stative *desiH2, of κείται 'he lies', κρεμαται 'he hangs', 3rd pl *desiH2ento (replacing earlier *-om), of Hittite kitta(r) 'he lies', kuyanta(r) 'they lie'. The 3rd pl ending *ento was regular in the middle root sort, e.g. Skt: kanta 'they made', ranta 'they went' (cf. Kortlandt 1987, 220), also: δειπνόν < *dhH2ento 'they put'.

4 Cf. also *τανος < *H2meH3 *strap' (Ruijgh 1967, 205) and γύνης < *H3weRos *healthy*, βίος < *H3weH3os *life*, ὕπνοι < *H3weH3H2m *H3weH3ym 'I lived' (cf. SCr: Zipeta, OPr: guina), βοσκει < *H3weH3omH2 *w' will live' where the *w* apparently inhibited the palatalization of the preceding labial-velar. The word ζωος < *H3weH3os *'alive' and its derivatives contain a secondary full grade which replaces the original zero grade of *H3weH3os < *H3weH3, Skt: guwas, where the Balto-Slavic and Celtic evidence shows that the laryngeal preceded the *s*, e.g. Latvian dzvas (with broken tone reflecting preservation of final stress), Welsh byw (with a short root vowel), cf. Kortlandt 1975, Appendix C. The verb λούω < *H3weH3 adopted the root vowel of λω < *H3weH3 'I wash', which replaces athematic *H3weH3 < *H3weH3 where the phonetic loss of *H3 before *u in such forms as 3rd pl *H3weH3u < H3weH3u, where the influence of the quasi synonymous root *H3weH3 'pour', as Prof. Ruijgh suggests to me. Note that τανος < *H3weH3os and Πλατανος < *H3weH3omH2 are no counter examples to the loss of a laryngeal before a vocalized semivowel, cf. also Breton: tanao < *tanawos *thin'.
The disyllabic character of *thein is still preserved in τιθείεν < *tithei-en ‘they may put’, where the accent was not retracted to the initial syllable, cf. δύναο, δύνασθε ‘you may be able’, which replace earlier *duniso, *duniste.

4. The 3rd pl. ending *-sin, which was homophons with 1st sg. *-sin, was now replaced by *-sein on the analogy of *thein, the ending of which was also found in the passive aorist and in the paradigm of ἵμι ‘let go’. This is the origin of the Aeolic optative.

The ending *-sein was subsequently replaced by *-seiyan on the analogy of the thematic ending *-oiyan. This replacement accounts for the retraction of the accent in λύσαιν ‘they may loosen’ in accordance with the limitation law, as compared with τιθείεν. The ending *-seiyan then gave rise to the 3rd sg. ending *-seiye on the analogy of the indicative, cf. ἔλυσε, ἔλυσαν ‘he, they loosened’, also 2nd sg. *-seiyas. In the 1st and 2nd pl. forms, however, the model of ἔλυσαμεν, ἔλυσατε yielded λύσαιμεν, λύσοατε on the analogy of the thematic endings. The latter analogy did not work in the 3rd sg. form, where the indicative ending was -ε. Thus, the distribution of -αι- and -αι- is ultimately based on the spread of *-ει- from the 3rd pl. form on the one hand and the absence of -α- from the 3rd sg. indicative form on the other.

In the thematic flexion, the isolated 1st sg. ending *-ya was replaced by the usual athematic ending *-mē, e.g. λύομι ‘I may loosen’, which then gave rise to the analogical form λύσαιμ. The substitution of -ν for *-an in the 3rd pl. ending must have taken place at a time when *-en < *-ent had not yet been replaced by -ν, -αν or -σαν in the indicative, as in Hom. ζεύγνυον, ζεύγνυσαν ‘they yoked’, ἤμον ‘they went’, Skt. áyan < *H₁ient.

In the original paradigm with mobile stress, the full grade of the 3rd pl. form spread to the other forms of the paradigm, e.g. τιθείης, τιθείτε < *titheiyes, *tithette ‘you may put’. This development is analogous to the rise of Skt. dheyam. The 3rd pl. ending *-in was replaced by *-iyen on the basis of the indicative paradigm, e.g. τιθείεν < *titheiyen, also Delphi περιεί,εν < *-i-eiye ‘they may go round’, Hom. ιείν < *i-eiye ‘he may go’. Similarly, εἰδεῖν, εἴδειεν < *weideiye, *weideiyen ‘he, they may know’ represent *weidieHi(t (Skt. vidyat), *weidiHi(nt (with original full grade in the root) plus *-ei- from *thein and 3rd pl. -ν < *-ent.

The Cretan forms δικακσιε ‘he may judge’, κοσμησιε ‘he may arrange’ (Dreros), Φερψιεν ‘they may perform’, διαλύσιεν ‘they may dissolve’ (Gortyn) are apparently built on the zero grade of the suffix *-s-iH₁-. It is highly improbable that the singular forms represent *-ye- because there is no trace of the full grade suffix in the sigmatic aorist, which had fixed stress from the outset. These forms rather represent a variety of the Aeolic optative with generalization of the zero grade *-e- instead of the 3rd pl. vocalism *-ει-. The endings -σε, -σαν suggest that
we have to reconstruct a real Aeolic optative (-σείε, -σειαν) with *-i- not yet replaced by -αι- in the 1st and 2nd person forms and subsequently generalized throughout the paradigm. The form ἡρμασιαν adopted -εν from the other optative paradigms, and the eventual substitution of -αι- for *-i- is clear from the forms ἡρμασια ‘he may perform’, ῥησιαν ‘they may break’ (Gortyn). It appears that Cretan lagged behind in a development of the optative which was the same as in the other dialects.

References

Forbes K (1958) The formation of the so-called Aeolic optative, Glotta 37, 165–179
Kortlandt F (1975) Slave accentuation A study in relative chronology (Lisse: Peter de Ridder)
Ruijgh C J (1967) Etudes sur la grammaire et le vocabulaire du grec mycénien (Amsterdam: Hakkert)
Thomas F (1957) Autour de l'optatif grec dit “éohen”, Revue des études anciennes 59, 250–274