I. Hajdú: Demosthenis orationes. I. Rec. Dilts


München

István Hajdú


This doctoral dissertation from Lund deals with the Greek used by Jewish and early Christian writers of antiquity. It is an important book which should be read and discussed by philologists, general linguists and Biblical scholars alike.

The use made of the concept of Synagogue has to do with the fact that the investigation has been part of a wider research project at Lund where different aspects of Jewish culture – archeological, liturgical, linguistic etc. – after, or contemporary with, the Second Temple have been examined.

The corpus investigated consists of the Pentateuch, Joshua, Judith, Tobit (both versions), 1 Maccabees, Daniel (LXX and Theodotion), the apocryphal additions to Daniel (i.e. Susanna and Bel et Draco (LXX and Theodotion)), Apocatastasis, Joseph and Asetsen, the Testament of Abraham' (recensions 1-3), the Testament of Job', the

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2 Für die Ergänzung Wolfs hatte sich auch Radicke a.O. 162f ausgesprochen.
4 Da es sich um eine Textedition handelt, seien auch die Druckfehler, die mir aufgefallen sind, erwähnt. Im Demosthenes-Text ist zu lesen 3, 11 άπαντοιπόνται, 4, 49 άναπτοιπόνται, 5, 16 συμμετέχει, 7, 5 υπό τῶν τάντατάσθα, 9, 69 ἐλάκτων ἃ, 10, 13 εάν ποτε, 10, 61 προοπτοιπόνται, 14, 10 ἐπιτρεπόνται, 16, 2 οὕτως ('οὕτως at Dilts ist wohl eine unbeabsichtigte Kontamination aus dem überlieferten ότιπόνται und der von Cobet aus proem. 8 übernommenen – wohl richtigen – Lesart 'οὕτως'), 18, 178 καλεύονται, 18, 234 ώσθενοπόνται. Im kritischen Apparat zu 10, 21 muß es heißen: ὡστεροίοις ΛΥ.
'Testament of the 12 Patriarchs', Gospels, Acts, the 13 letters attributed to Paul, the 'Book of Revelations', the 'Aristeas letter', Philo Judaeus (De migratione Abrahami, De Abrahamo, and De Josepho), Josephus ('Jewish Antiquities' i–2. 174), the 'Yadin papyri'. The dating of some of these texts is, of course, uncertain, but the ambition has been only to include texts written c. 200 BC–200 AD. This primary corpus is compared to Herodotus (book 2), Xenophon (Anabasis i–3), Polybius (book 1), Diodorus Siculus (book 2), Dionysius Halicarnassensis (Roman Antiquities 1), Dio Chrysostom (seventh, 12th and 36th speeches), Plutarch (Life of Alexander), Epictetus (Discourses, book 1–2), and papyri.

The title of the book is misleading. The 'Aristeas letter', Philo, Josephus and the 'Yadin papyri' are investigated in the same way as the Biblical texts. That the results point to the Biblical texts as constituting one group is one thing, but the investigation covers a more extensive material.

In the first of the book's eight chapters (pp. 1–17) aim and background are set forth. Especially notable is the section 1. 4 (5–8), which introduces the statistical methods used, chiefly the so-called chi-square test and the Mann-Whitney U-test. The chapters 2–4 (18–110, 111–122, and 123–142) deal with participles, conjunctival clauses and particles respectively, and, mostly, with questions of word-order. Chapter 5 (143–173) discusses Hebrew influence on Greek. Chapter 6 (14–184) relates the results to linguistic theory, notably to Ferguson’s definition of diglossia. Chapter 7 (185–186) contains a summary. Chapter 8 (187–189) is an appendix.

The arrangement of the book is on the whole satisfactory. It is, however, an inconvenience that some of the information contained in chapter 4 does not appear before chapters 2–4. The inconvenience is particularly felt if one takes a real interest in the principles behind the selection of phenomena to be investigated – a selection governed by peculiarities of the Hebrew. Let us take chapter 3 as an example, where Greek conjunctival clauses are investigated which correspond to a Hebrew preposition plus an infinitive construct. The choice made of prepositions to be included in this investigation is not explained until in 5. 6. 3, on p. 119. There is no reference to 5. 6. 3 in chapter 4.

The book is relatively well produced. I have not found any errors or inadvertencies which could cast doubt upon the results of the book or seriously impede its usefulness. I have counted some 15 minor errors of punctuation etc., and there are some instances where the author does not write what he means to say (e.g. p. 43: «all participles [for ‘imperatives’] are in the second person»). In quotations from the Greek I have counted some 10 minor errors (e.g. p. 91, in the quotation from the 'Testament of Abraham', rec. 3: ‘ἐκ τοῦ ὕπερ τοῦ πένθους ’). The statistical tables are usually carefully made and evaluated, and there are only few errors to report (p. 52, in the evaluation of table 2. 3. 7 on p. 42, the ‘Testament of Abraham’, rec. 2, has been left out). However, the tables are not always easy to check, one problem being the frequent habit of not displaying them in direct connection with the discussion, and of not always giving adequate references (see, e.g., p. 40 where table 2. 3. 4, p. 26, must be kept in mind).

The bibliography, p. xiii, contains the claim that Herodotus was published in the 'Sources Chrétiennes', in 1972; it should be the 'Budé series', and either 1932 or 1970. The only item which is used but which is not included in the bibliography is H. G. Meecham, The Letter of Aristeas: a Linguistic Study with Special Reference to the Greek Bible, Manchester 1933.

There are also some minor incongruencies: abbreviations are used which have not been introduced, abbreviations which have been introduced are not used, in the bibliography some items are in the wrong order, and there is a certain variation as to the use of initials, sub-titles, editions etc.
The terminology used is mostly unambiguous. «Indirect speech» should not be used as synonymous with «infinitive construction» (see, e.g., p. 89). The distinction made between prepositional phrases and adverbial constructions is pointless (see, e.g., pp. 93-94 and 97), since some prepositional phrases are adverbial (such as ἐν φωνῇ μεγάλῃ, a functional equivalent of φωνῇ μεγάλῃ), while some are not (such as πρὸς αὐτοῦς, a functional equivalent of αὐτοῦς).

The interpretation of text passages is distinguished by common sense.

The main contention of the book is that there exists a synagogue, or (Septuagintal) Pentateuchal form of Greek, i.e. that Jewish and early Christian texts posterior to the Septuagint translation of the Pentateuch show a common, unique linguistic usage and that this usage is influenced by the Pentateuch. This, of course, is not an entirely new thesis. The originality lies in the manner in which this is connected with the well-known Greek phenomenon of literary dialects. The author describes what he is investigating as something comparable to a literary dialect (see e.g. p. 1; 185). This is problematic. In my opinion the common features of the synagogue texts do not justify speaking of this form of Greek as a literary dialect on a par with the recognised literary dialects. These dialects differ from each other in ways in which this form of Greek does not differ from ordinary Koine, notably in phonology, and this form of Greek is hardly as distinct as that. At the same time I feel that what we have to do with here, is, partly, a rhetorical problem: the author does not express himself very clearly, and I do not quite understand what he means when comparing the Pentateuchal Greek with the recognised dialects.

The chapters 2–4 deal with participles, conjunctive clauses, and particles. The ambition has been to investigate phenomena which do not exist, or are uncommon, in Hebrew, but where the construction used in Greek could reflect a Hebrew ‘Vorlage’.

Thus, in chapter 3, Greek conjunctive clauses are investigated which correspond to the Hebrew preposition with infinitive construct, and the question is whether there is an enhanced tendency to keep the conjunction and the finite form together in the Greek in the way the Hebrew preposition and infinitive are kept together.

On the one hand this method should provide a sufficient amount of Greek instances – since it is a Greek phenomenon which is investigated –, on the other hand it should evidence even an indirect Hebrew background, more precisely so in Greek marked by the way the Pentateuch was translated in the Septuagint. It is hard to say to what extent the author is successful on all these counts, and whether he will convince many of his readers that the post-Pentateuchal texts, of which some are translations, exhibit traits which seem to be hebraizing, because they are dependent on the Pentateuch, and not because they are dependent on the Hebrew from which, in some cases, they were translated. The point that the traits under consideration live on in original Greek and should be explained as being due to the Pentateuch of the Septuagint, could at least have been illustrated more effectively if the author had concentrated on texts which are undoubtedly original Greek; but, of course, the possibility of arranging an investigation according to this principle is restricted by the fact that we often do not know whether a text is a translation or not.
In the word-order investigations the occurrence of words between a participle and the finite verb, or between a conjunction and the finite verb, is examined. It would have been interesting to relate the tendency for words to occur in this position to sentence length generally. Could it be that texts which reduce the number of elements between, e.g., conjunction and finite verb, have shorter sentences?

The method has led to a concentration on problems concerning word-order. The other investigations, chiefly of vocabulary, are not always convincing. E.g., in 2, 3, 6, p. 7ff, predicative aorist participles in the nominative case are investigated with regard to vocabulary. The purpose is to establish to what extent the same word-stems as in the Pentateuch occur when these participles are used. But does not vocabulary depend on the subject matter? Likewise, on p. 9ff, agreement is investigated, but only to what extent a participle has the expected form as to number and gender. Surely agreement is a much wider issue. Generally speaking, it seems that the overall concept of the study works better with regard to word-order than in other respects. One has the feeling that some of the other questions are put mainly to provide an opportunity to show that the Greek which the study deals with differs from Koine on as many points as possible.

Something should also be said about the use made of statistics which is a striking characteristic of this book. First, it may be noted that there has recently been at least one voice raised against the kind of wholesale statistics used in this book (A. Aejmelaeus). Here, however, I will concentrate on other points, one practical, and one methodological. A greater explicitness would have been desirable in the use of statistical method. Information on the statistical methods is either provided in footnotes or lacking. No computations are carried out, so to speak, before the reader’s eyes, so that he can see clearly how the methods are used. To what extent this will be felt as a problem is, of course, a question of the reader’s expectations. It may be that linguists will not miss the formulas nor bother about the fact that they are not given the information which would enable them readily to check the statistics. But for classical and Biblical scholars greater explicitness would have been helpful.

E.g., in order to check the so-called LXX-index on p. 24 it would have helped to have the formula, which should be used, in the text, not only referred to in n. 130. But to make that calculation you also need, as a starting-point, the mean value in the non-synagogal texts (of the frequency, in 1000 words, of predicative aorist participles in the nominative case). This value you have to calculate on your own (from the left column on p. 24), and after that you have to use the formula given on p. 7, n. 20 (which is where n. 130 leads to) – all the time keeping in mind, not only what is said in n. 20, but also the proviso of n. 17 (to which no reference is given), viz. that only authors providing ten examples or more are taken into account.

A different matter is what statistics can and cannot tell. The statistical methods used have led to the confirmation of the hypothesis that there is a tendency for texts which can be associated with the synagogue to form a group of distinct linguistic usage. But the relevance of the concept of synagogue is not discussed at all. At least two other factors should have been taken into account, viz. chronology and competence.\footnote{It is also surprising that concepts such as classicism and atticism are totally absent. The same applies to important studies with bearing on the subject: never mentioned are, e.g., L.}
An attempt should have been made to arrange the synagogal texts according to their time of composition. This is difficult, but it should have been attempted. Aristeas is an example of a synagogal text which does not always follow the synagogal pattern. Could this have to do with the early date of that text, i.e. that the canonical status of the Pentateuch had not yet been established? An alternative explanation, which I would like to suggest, is that Aristeas is actually concealing his Jewishness. This is an attractive explanation in the light of what is said in the letter. It would support the thesis of this book.

This tendency to disregard diachrony I would like to connect with the author’s belief that what we have to do with here is comparable to a dialect: he remarks, p. 3, that the literary dialects tend to be stable over time, and he seems to conclude from this that, therefore, there is no point in investigating diachrony in this case. But this is hardly an acceptable way of reasoning. We should not overrate the homogeneity of, e.g., the epic dialect from Homer to Nonnus. There certainly are features which seem to be very stable, such as some elements of phonology. But we must admit that, in the case of any literary dialect, we simply do not know how far the stability reaches, and if ever there is stability in such matters as those investigated here.

Further, competence is not discussed. Epictetus and the pagan papyri sometimes agree with the synagogal texts. Could not this be due to a common level of competence? And Philo, who mostly does not agree with the synagogal pattern, could not he achieve what he does thanks to his unusual competence in pagan Greek?

The choice of texts included in the investigation also requires comment. The author claims that the synagogal texts follow the Pentateuchal pattern if there is not a good reason for them not to do so, as there is in the case of Josephus, where the form is explained by reference to his Roman readership, or in the case of Philo. Now, are there any texts which have not been investigated, but which might be revealing in this connection? Let us have a look at the New Testament. The thirteen supposedly genuine Pauline letters are investigated. But not the letter to the Hebrews. This text, however, is different from Paul. It fulfills external criteria of synagogal texts but is, as it seems, not Pentateuchal in language, and it is, perhaps, less easy to explain away this fact than in the case of Josephus or Philo. Is the author of the letter to the Hebrews successful in doing what Paul would have done if he had been able to?

To conclude, this book is a successful attempt at revisiting an old field of inquiry without drowning in the scholarly literature. On the points where one may feel inclined to disagree with the author, one nevertheless has to admit that his exposition stimulates further discussion. It forces us to think more about what can be done at the crossroads of classical philology, linguistics and Biblical studies.

Trondheim

Staffan Wahlgren


1 p. 3: »The epic poetry for instance was written in the same variety of language from Homer to Nonnus.«