

Topics in Lydian Verse: Accentuation and Syllabification

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A new analysis of the metrical structure of the so-called poetic inscriptions of the Lydian corpus is undertaken, using a stress-counting analysis instead of a syllable-counting analysis. Previous attempts are briefly surveyed and put into the context of the diachronic study of IE versification. The syllable structure of Lydian is then examined, based on a postulated sonority hierarchy, as a preliminary to a critique of Eichner's (1986a; 1993) attempt at a syllable-counting versification. Tables of relevant data drawn from inscriptions #10, #11, and #54 are presented to demonstrate the validity of the accent-counting hypothesis, which utilizes the insights of metrical phonology.

1.0 Introduction

Only the barest remnants of the Lydian poetic tradition, so well known to the ancient Greeks, have been preserved for us. Some eight Lydian inscriptions with consistent end rhyme have been classified as poetic (Gusmani 1964:22). Most of these date to the 4th century BC and are dedicatory or funerary in nature. However, attempts at a syllable-counting metrical analysis have not solved the verse structure of all the poetic inscriptions. Furthermore, Lydian has a stress accent strong enough to cause near-systematic apocope in unstressed syllables in final position and syncope in light syllables in penult, post-tonic position, as long as the resulting cluster doesn't violate phonotactic constraints (Melchert 1992:38-39; 1994:373-374; West 1974:133); and short *a* lengthens in stressed syllables (Melchert 1994:369-370). Accent-counting versification would seem more natural for a language with this sort of prosody. In this article, I present an accent-counting analysis, showing that Lydian verse is made up of five strong positions, split after the second strong position (sometimes after the third) by the caesura. This analysis fits all of the poetic inscriptions, not only the more "regular" inscriptions, #11 and #12 in Gusmani's 1964 collection, but also #10, #13 and #54. These poetic inscriptions