

GREEK GRAMMARIANS IN THE LIGHT OF EPIGRAPHIC EVIDENCE*

by

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ABSTRACT: This article offers the most complete and up-to-date catalogue of Greek inscriptions attesting grammarians (“Annex”). It includes several inscriptions more than the otherwise excellent collection by S. AGUSTA-BOULAROT. The first part of this contribution consists of a commentary on the collected sources: epigraphic evidence confirms the picture of grammarians as experts on poetry and teachers at different levels of education in gymnasia and schools. The inscriptions depict grammarians as people of low social status and their virtual absence from the public life of the *poleis* (none of them held any important municipal or Imperial office), in contrast to rhetors and sophists.

The Greek grammatical art as practiced by scholars and teachers known under the name of grammarians (*grammatikoi*) is an intellectual discipline that included both grammar and philology as it concerned itself with the study of both language and literature¹. The scholarly discipline was born in Alexandria in the third century BCE. Eratosthenes of Kyrene, who headed the Library under Ptolemy III Eurgetes (after arriving in Alexandria c. 245) and authored the lost treatise *Ta Grammatika*, was the first to give a definition of the field, surviving in the scholia to the treatise by Dionysios Thrax (2nd cent. BCE): Γραμματική ἐστὶν ἕξις παντελής ἐν γράμμασι (“Grammar is a system of study based on written texts”, with *grammata* according to Eratosthenes being synonymous with *syngrammata*). According to the definition of the famous Dionysios Thrax, on the other hand, grammar is the empirical study (*empeireia*) of what poets and writers are used to saying. This would include reading texts out loud to students (*anagnosis*), the exegesis of poetical texts (*poetikoï tropoi*), *glossai* – that is the explanation of difficult words, *historiai* – the study of the context and historical realities of the text, as well as the etymology of the words, of analogies and

* The following article was prepared thanks to a grant from the De Brzezie Lanckoroński Foundation. I would like to thank the anonymous reviewers for their valuable suggestions, especially for turning my attention to a funerary epigram from Africa.

¹ On detailed aspects of grammar, see MATTHAIOS, MONTANARI, RENGAKOS 2011; MONTANARI, PAGANI 2011; MATTHAIOS 2009; articles collected in MATTHAIOS, MONTANARI, RENGAKOS 2015.