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## A READING IN CONSENTIUS RECONSIDERED

### A case of palatalization

RAIJA VAINIO

The *ars de barbarismis et metaplasms* of the grammarian Consentius, who lived in Gaul in the fifth century,<sup>1</sup> is the largest discourse on barbarisms written by the Romans—it could even be regarded as a monograph. Usually the treatise on barbarisms and solecisms is part of the chapter *de vitiis et virtutibus* in a Roman *ars grammatica* following the discussion of *partes orationis*. Barbarism, defined by Roman grammarians as 'a mistake made in a single word', involves mistakes in spelling and in pronunciation, and in this way the examples which grammarians use can reflect linguistic changes in these areas. Grammatical texts were particularly prone to changes in the copying tradition which continued through centuries. Their specific language was not automatically understood by the copyists and therefore the possibility of omissions and interpolations is greater than in literary texts. This concerns especially the grammatical examples, which however cannot be revised without difficulty. The following passage<sup>2</sup> of Consentius has not, in my opinion, been correctly edited, although the right proposition regarding the text has been made.

Consentius' text has survived in two manuscripts. The only ms. available to H. Keil (in *Grammatici Latini* 5 of the year 1868) was the *codex Monacensis*, because the other one, the *codex Basileensis*, was not found until the beginning of the 20th century. Therefore only M. Niedermann's edition of the year 1937 is based on both the manuscripts. It is generally acknowledged that *B* is earlier; according to Niedermann it dates back to the

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. R.A. Kaster, *Guardians of language: the grammarian and society in late Antiquity*, 1988, 396-397.

<sup>2</sup> I discussed the passage preliminarily in a seminar organized by Classical Philology at Helsinki University, in Tvärminne in March 1996. I am grateful to all who offered me valuable opinions there. Special thanks are due to Prof. Toivo Viljamaa and Dr.Ph. Anne Helttula.

end of the 8th century or to the beginning of the 9th, whereas *M* is probably from the 9th (being previously dated to the 10th century). Niedermann prefers *B* to *M* because of its obvious superiority in many passages (praef. xiv, xix, xxxiv). Already E.O. Winstedt<sup>3</sup> paid attention to many readings which are better preserved in *B*.

Before the passage in question, Consentius deals with iotacisms, mytacisms and lambdacisms, considering them especially from the point of view of different nations: what kind of iotacisms Gauls commit etc. The following passage seems also to have something to do with the pronunciation of *i* but Consentius does not regard the case as a iotacism. The text runs as follows in *M*. Niedermann's edition (Consent. gramm. 17,1-6):

*sed et in aliis litteris sunt gentilia quaedam quorundam uitia. ecce ut <in t> Itali ita pingue nescio quid sonant, ut cum dicunt 'etiam', nihil de media syllaba infringant. Graeci contra, ubi non debent infringere, de sono eius litterae infringunt, ut, cum dicunt 'optimus', mediam syllabam ita sonent, quasi post t z Graecum admisceant.*

However, we would get a better reading also in this passage if we followed *B* more closely. Niedermann indeed has adopted *Itali* from *B* (*ecce ut itali ita pingue nescio quid sonant ut cum dicit ita etiam*), while *M* reads *ecce ut in tali uerbo ita pingue nescio quid sonat ut dicunt etiam*. Keil emends *ecce in littera t aliqui ita pingue nescio quid sonant, ut dicunt etiam* (GL 5,395,3-7). Consequently, neither of the manuscripts has *in t*, but its omission is easy to understand since it would have been followed by two words with almost identical beginnings. At first I had some doubts whether it would have been better not to add it into the text, because—as I said above—the passage does not concern *t* in general but only in connexion with *i*. Consentius however gives a specification *in aliis litteris* which means other letters than *i*, *l* and *m* because they have already been dealt with. The correction *in t* is defended also by the fact that the succeeding text discusses other letters (*c*, *s*, *u*) which find their expression in respective characters.

One problem here is caused by the verb *infringere* because of its uncommonness in the grammarians;<sup>4</sup> thus as a technical term, as Consentius seems to use it, its specific sense remains uncertain. The two main meanings of *infringere* are 'to break, shatter' and 'to reduce, weaken'. J.B. Hofmann

<sup>3</sup> "A Bâle MS of Consentius", *AJPh* 26 (1905) 22-31.

<sup>4</sup> In addition to this Consentius' passage it occurs only twice (besides Priscian who discusses its conjugation), but the connexion is totally different: in *Char. gramm.* 134,5-8 and *Mar.Victor.* GL 6,94,26.

explains it in this passage as approximately identical to *demere*.<sup>5</sup> But whenever Consentius uses a verb in this meaning, his choice is *subtrahere* (passim) or *detrahere* (e.g. 13,19). Isidore of Seville (at the turn of the 6th c.) may give us further information. He describes different nations and their way of pronunciation:<sup>6</sup> *Omnes mediterraneae gentes in palato sermones ferunt, sicut Graeci et Asiani. Omnes Occidentis gentes verba in dentibus frangunt, sicut Itali et Hispani.* The meaning of *infringere* by Consentius could be roughly the same as *in dentibus frangere*, 'to break, to cause a friction in the teeth'.<sup>7</sup> This sense fits well the subject, which is generally interpreted as the palatalization of *ti*.

The articulation which Consentius seems to consider correct is rather */etʃam/* than */et<sup>s</sup>iam/*.<sup>8</sup> He would then be describing the intermediate stage of this phenomenon; in between */ti/* and */t<sup>s</sup>i/* there is precisely */tʃ/*.<sup>9</sup> It may be that a word like *etiam*, which actually is a compound, preserved the */j/*-sound longer than a word with an original */ti/*-sound. This would explain the reason for Consentius' rather peculiar choice of example. As far as I know, *etiam* is not met with in other grammarians, not even as an example involving the semivowel.<sup>10</sup>

Consentius does not connect the case, which evidently is one of some kind of palatalization, with iotacisms, as Servius and Pompeius do (cf. below). In fact Consentius is the only grammarian who seems to mention

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<sup>5</sup> *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae* s.v. 1494,14. The verb is used of voice in the meaning *abscidere, abrumpere* 'to break, interrupt'.

<sup>6</sup> Isid. orig. 9,1,8. Isidore's characterization is very general, and it does not go into separate sounds.

<sup>7</sup> In glosses both these verbs are explained by κλω, κατεάσσω and other verbs signifying 'breaking' (ThLL s.v.).

<sup>8</sup> To make it more clear, I use two ways in describing the palatalization phonemically. Both */tʃ/* and */t<sup>s</sup>/* refer to an affricated plosive, but the difference lies in the way it has been interpreted by the grammarians. Consequently, if a grammarian speaks about *sibilus*, */t<sup>s</sup>/* is used.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. for instance F. Sommer & R. Pfister, *Handbuch der lateinischen Laut- und Formenlehre I*, 1977<sup>4</sup>, §126c.

<sup>10</sup> Quint. inst. 1,4,10 is in dispute. Grammarians discuss it only as a conjunction.

both the iotacism and the palatalization, but separates them.<sup>11</sup> The mistake made by *Itali*—*cum dicunt 'etiam', nihil de media syllaba infringant*—would be "they do not break anything from/in the middle syllable". This implies the pronunciation /*etiam*/, preserving the /*i*/, or even /*etijam*/, because Consentius obviously alludes to a trisyllabic pronunciation. The *pingue nescio quid* would refer to a too open /*i*/,<sup>12</sup> or—if the sound is attached to /*t*/ (as the emendation *in t* made by Niedermann suggests)—to the impression caused by the close front unrounded /*i*/ which follows: as if the production of an extra syllable made /*t*/ more forceful.<sup>13</sup> In any case the mistake is the preservation of the vowel /*i*/, and the impression of 'too long' a word.

The explanation offered by W.M. Lindsay is somewhat inadequate.<sup>14</sup> He too seems to suggest that the mistake made by *Itali* was the non-palatalization of *ti* whereas the correct pronunciation according to Consentius would be a kind of palatalization. This corresponds to my interpretation fairly well, and all the more because Lindsay defines the palatalization as "not necessarily an *s*-sound".<sup>15</sup> But he does not explain what the *pingue nescio quid* is which sounds in *t*. In the case of *optimus* he actually had only one choice because at that time he had no knowledge of

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<sup>11</sup> By iotacism Consentius understands a mispronunciation in which *i* is produced too openly or too closely (15,14). Diomedes seems to connect it with an abnormal extension of this vowel (GL 1,453,6-7). Another typical determination involves the semivowel (Mart.Cap. 33,514; Isid. orig. 1,32,7; Iulian.Tolet. gramm. 1,24 Lindsay). See L. Holtz, Donat et la tradition de l'enseignement grammatical, 1981, 160; M. Niedermann, "Iotacismus, labdacismus, mytacismus", RPh 74 (1948) 5-15.

<sup>12</sup> Quintilian (inst. 1,4,8 and 1,7,22) speaks about a sound which is intermediate between /*i*/ and /*e*/ (*heri*—*here*).—A late commentator of Donatus discusses the pronunciation of the syllables *ti* and *ci*; according to him, *i* has a different sound after *t* (GL 5,327): *per immutationem syllabae, ut pernities pro pernicies. ... ad quod respondendum immutationem esse syllabae veraciter, quia immutatur t cum suo i in locum c et i. alterum namque sonum habet i post t et alterum post c. nam post c habet pinguem sonum, post t gracilem.*

<sup>13</sup> An inscription from northern Italy (CIL V 6205,5 from Milan) presents a reading *ettiam*, which probably reflects the palatalization. On the other hand, Consentius cannot mean a strong reduplication of /*t*/, because he could easily have explained it in this very way, with two characters.—As an example of *adiectio litterae* he gives among others *tottum pro toto, cottidie pro cotidie* (gramm. 11,3-7).

<sup>14</sup> The Latin language: an historical account of Latin sounds, stems, and flexions, 1894, II §90, cf. also II §85.

<sup>15</sup> He describes, however, the palatalization with /*s*/, and he seems to mean pronunciations /*et<sup>s</sup>am*/ or /*et<sup>s</sup>iam*/.

the other manuscript.

I am inclined to think, agreeing with Winstedt, that we get a better reading if we follow *B* also in this latter part of the text: *cum dicunt 'optimus', mediam syllabam ita sonent, quasi post t y Graecum admisceant*. Niedermann does not accept the *psilon*, explaining that Romans themselves pronounced neither /i/ nor /u/ in that position; why would Consentius reproach Greeks for this? What Niedermann is arguing against, is that this passage cannot pertain to the intermediate vowel, the one which is between /i/ and /u/ and which occurs before a labial.<sup>16</sup> It causes confusion in writing, and its stock example (found since Varro) is exactly the one offered here, *optimus—optumus*.<sup>17</sup> It may be of some importance that the example given in *M* is in the form of *optumus*, which would be readily understandable if the text contained *psilon*.

But Niedermann fails to keep in mind that the actual issue is not the intermediate vowel but the pronunciation of *t*. The Greeks "break the sound of *t*" or "diminish the sound of *t* by breaking it", *infringunt de sono eius litterae*. The result is described by Consentius as *optimus*, preserving the /i/; he says that *y* is mixed in after *t*, not that it replaces *i*. This means that the pronunciation would be something like /opt<sup>i</sup>imus/ which is quite near to Consentius' description. For the Greek *psilon* as a close front rounded vowel, together with *i* and pronounced very closely, develops into a sound which is not very far from /j/. It sounds as if /t/ were broken and produced more like /t<sup>i</sup>/; the friction which is naturally produced after a dental stop seems to be somewhat strengthened. There was no written equivalent for /j/, so Consentius' way of describing it is as good as any. So the mistake made by Greeks is the faint palatalization of *ti* in a wrong place, before a consonant, as has been explained by Lindsay and Niedermann and will be seen below, but not such a strong one as a *z* in the text would imply. Respectively, if Consentius had accepted the pronunciation with a sibilant, it would have been easier for him to explain it by *ut 'etiam' sine z sonant* or

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<sup>16</sup> Emperor Claudius introduced for this vowel a symbol (þ) which occurs in inscriptions of the Claudian era but is hardly used afterwards (Suet. Claud. 41; Vel. GL 7,75,17-18 = Claudius frg. 4 Mazzarino).

<sup>17</sup> Varro frg. 269 Funaioli = Cornutus in Cassiod. GL 7,150,10-17; Quint. inst. 1,4,8 and 1,7,21; Vel. GL 7,49,19-20; Scaur. GL 7,24,14; Don. mai. 604,3 Holtz; Char. gramm. 98,15 Barwick; Serv. GL 4,421,31-33; Serg. GL 4,476,2-6; Diom. GL 1,422,17-19; Cledon. GL 5,27,9-12; Mart.Cap. 3,293; Pomp. GL 5,195,1; Prisc. GL 2,7,15-16; Iulian.Tolet. gramm. 19,4 Lindsay; comm.Eins. GL 8,223,15-18.

*sine sibilo* instead of *nihil infringunt* etc. It may be that in a word like *optimus* this faint palatalization caught special attention, because actually the correct pronunciation was /opt̪imus/, in which /t̪/ represents the intermediate vowel;<sup>18</sup> the contrast to /opt̪imus/ with a clear *i*-sound is even greater.

If we apply Consentius' information about "Italian" pronunciation (*Itali nihil infringunt*) to the other example, we may find /*optimus*/ best preserved in Italian *ottimo*: *t* has not been "broken" but on the contrary strengthened by the assimilation of /*pt*/. Could it be that in cases in which these consonants have not been assimilated (cf. Spanish and Portuguese *óptimo*), this kind of slight friction would have taken effect?

Consentius' description *opt̪imus* brings to mind his characterization of iotacisms, and particularly again the one committed by Greeks. According to him, they pronounce a certain part of *i* in initial position too closely, so that they seem to make a double sound of it (vowel + semivowel instead of a semivowel). As a result a monosyllabic word *ius* /j̄us/ becomes disyllabic /ij̄us/.<sup>19</sup> Apparently the Greeks (whether they are Greeks living in Gaul or newcomers from Greece who try to speak Latin, is not certain) had difficulties with the pronunciation of palatal /j/ in Latin. It is also interesting that Isidore above characterized the articulation of Greeks as palatalizing.

Niedermann (xxxiv) prefers the *zeta* in *M* to the *ypsilon* in *B*, basing his decision on other grammarians. He brings forward primarily Papirianus (GL 7,216):

*Iustitia cum scribitur, tertia syllaba sic sonat, quasi constet ex tribus litteris t z et i, cum habeat duas, t et i. sed notandum quia in his syllabis iste sonus litterae z inmixtus inveniri tantum potest, quae constant ex t et i et eas sequitur vocalis quaelibet, ut Tatius et otia iustitia et talia. excipiuntur quaedam nomina propria, quae peregrina sunt. sed ab his syllabis excluditur sonus z litterae, quas sequitur littera i, ut otii iustitii. item non sonat z, cum syllabam ti antecedit littera s, ut iustius castius.*

It is worth noticing that *optimus*, or any word like it in which *ti* is followed by a consonant, is not discussed in the quotation above. According to Niedermann, the mistake mentioned by Consentius in *optimus* is the addition of a sibilant in a syllable which is not followed by a vowel. But

<sup>18</sup> Cf. W.S. Allen (*Vox Latina: a guide to the pronunciation of classical Latin*, 1965, 56-59) who to my mind is right in interpreting the intermediate vowel as a central one; i.e. not identical to the Greek /ī/, which is a front vowel, although it is by some later grammarians symbolized by the Greek letter *y*.

<sup>19</sup> Consent. gramm. 15,17-19.



would not this kind of wrong use rather occur in a word like *otii*, given as an example by Papirianus? According to him the palatalization should not arise there because *ti* is followed by *i*. Yet the sibilant is pronounced in other forms of the same word (like */ot<sup>s</sup>ium/*). The restriction, which to my knowledge is met with only here, is possibly due to the fact that such a word in the genitive is likely to lose a syllable (*/ōt<sup>s</sup>iī/ > /ōt<sup>s</sup>jī/*), or perhaps even two in the intermediate stage of the palatalization (*/ōt<sup>j</sup>iī/ > /ōt<sup>j</sup>j/*). Gradually, under the pressure from other inflexions the palatalization spread into these forms too.

In view of Greek phonology and misspellings with S or Z in Latin inscriptions */opt<sup>s</sup>imus/* or */opt<sup>s</sup>mus/* hardly finds support.<sup>20</sup> The inscriptions show the palatalized *ti* usually after a vowel or N or R, less commonly after a plosive (CIL XII 2086 *sepsies*), and even after S, which is forbidden by grammarians (CIL IX 4028 *Ametyssianus* beside *Ametyste*), but not once before a consonant. Although both the examples, *etiam* and *optimus*, do not have to concern exactly the same sound, the way in which Consentius poses the problem (e.g. use of verb *infringere*) would rather suggest it. Because the alternative */opt<sup>s</sup>imus/* hardly is probable, this too would speak on behalf of excluding */et<sup>s</sup>iam/*, and of the variation between */tj/*—*/ti/* being discussed.

It seems that the main error, which scholars tend to make as they try to interpret Consentius' passage, is the presumption that the grammarians must always explain the phenomena in exactly the same way. Papirianus describes the palatalization of *ti* with help of *z* but presumably he, as well as other grammarians who use it, are later than Consentius.<sup>21</sup> Servius (before Consentius) and Pompeius only speak about *sibilus*; this word is not even used by Consentius.

Servius, who in the late fourth century commented on Donatus, still tries to stick to the grammatical tradition defining the palatalization as incorrect; he specifies it as an instance of iotacism. His explanation is not very convincing but fairly transparently reveals the actual pronunciation of his time (GL 4,445,8-12):

*iotacismi sunt, quotiens post ti vel di syllabam sequitur vocalis, et plerumque*

<sup>20</sup> As I have been informed by Finnish experts on Greek.—For material see V. Väänänen (Introduction au latin vulgaire, 1967, §95-99), Sommer & Pfister (§126b) and M. Leumann (Lateinische Laut- und Formenlehre I, 1977, §139b and §161b).

<sup>21</sup> Kaster (421-422) dates Papirianus in the late 5th century or in the early 6th, or after the mid 4th century. The first estimate appears to be more plausible.—Prisc. GL 2,24,5-7; Isid. orig. 1,27,28 and 20,9,4.

*supra dictae syllabae in sibilum transeunt, tunc scilicet, quando medium locum tenent, ut merities. quando autem primum locum tenent, etiam sic positae, sicut dicuntur, ita etiam sonandae sunt, ut dies tiaras.*

But in the commentary on Virgil's *Georgica* (2,126) he inadvertently gives the impression as if the palatalized pronunciation were generally acceptable: '*Media fert tristes sucos*'. '*di sine sibilo proferenda est: graecum enim nomen est, et Media provincia est.*' This implies that the Latin adjective '*media*' should be pronounced *cum sibilo*. Accordingly, Servius is the first to approve of a sibilant in general, which had through the ages been a despised sound both in Greek and Latin.<sup>22</sup>

As seen above, Consentius seems to find the palatalization acceptable, but Pompeius<sup>23</sup> is the first grammarian who explicitly declares it correct; he considers the missing palatalization as a case of iotacism. The main information we get from his text is: whenever the syllable *ti* or *di* is in medial position followed by a vowel, this syllable must turn into a sibilant; it is incorrect to pronounce these syllables as they are written. The only exception is when there already is a sibilant at the beginning of the syllable (*ca-sti-us*). This specification makes it clear that in Pompeius the *sibilus* refers to a sibilant, but at first sight the reader may be confused by the fact that the examples are written in exactly the same form, without any *s* or *z*. I quote only a few sentences from his thorough explanation:<sup>24</sup>

*iotacismi sunt, qui fiunt per i litteram, siqui ita dicat, Titius pro eo quod est Titius, Aventius pro eo quod est Aventius, Amantius pro eo quod est Amantius. [...] fit hoc vitium, quotiens post ti vel di syllabam sequitur vocalis, si non sibilus sit. quotienscumque enim post ti vel di syllabam sequitur vocalis, illud ti vel di in sibilum vertendum est. [...] si autem prima fuerit [...], etiamsi sequatur vocalis, non illam vertit in sibilum. ecce dies habet post se vocalem; debemus dicere dies, sed non dicimus. [...] sed hoc servare debemus, etiam quando praecedunt duae consonantes, castius. [...] ubi s littera est, ibi non possumus sibilum in ipsa i littera facere, quoniam ipsa syllaba a litteris accepit sibilum.*

It is generally understood that the three examples given by Pompeius should be pronounced /*tit*<sup>s</sup>*ius*, /*avent*<sup>s</sup>*ius*, /*amant*<sup>s</sup>*ius*/.<sup>25</sup> Yet Pompeius' explanation

<sup>22</sup> "The ban on /s/ was finally lifted", to quote Prof. Viljamaa's words.

<sup>23</sup> See Kaster 139 and 343-344: Pompeius is to be placed in the late fifth or perhaps early sixth century.

<sup>24</sup> Pomp. GL 5,286,7-33. Keil says in his critical apparatus: *grammaticus sibilum, qui fit pronuntiatione, scribendo non videtur expressisse.*

<sup>25</sup> Lately e.g. Kaster 157-158.

does not exclude the pronunciation without /i/: /tit<sup>s</sup>us/ etc. respectively.<sup>26</sup> Unfortunately he does not use as examples words like *pretium*, *medius*, which would make the latter interpretation more probable (cf. Italian *prezzo*, *mezzo*).<sup>27</sup> But in another passage, which concerns vowels, he seems to make it more clear (Pomp. GL 5,104,5-7): *similiter [sc. atque u] et i sic patitur. itur, ecce tenuius sonat; si dicas Titius, pinguius sonat et perdit sonum suum et accipit sibilum*. Lindsay suggests the same, relying also on the evidence of inscriptions,<sup>28</sup> in which the *i* is often missing.<sup>29</sup>

If the information given by Pompeius is to be interpreted as I have stated above, i.e. *Titius* was pronounced /tit<sup>s</sup>us/, it would perhaps at first appear to support the alternative that Consentius would find /et<sup>s</sup>am/ as the correct pronunciation (instead of /et<sup>i</sup>am/ which I prefer). But according to Pompeius /etiam/ would then be a iotacism which it is not by Consentius. Consentius too finds it incorrect; he does not however connect the issue with *i*, but instead with the whole syllable *ti* and more closely with *t*. These two grammarians are probably speaking about the same situation but from a different point of view, and therefore it is quite natural that Consentius describes it in a different way.

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<sup>26</sup> Similarly Lindsay 1894, II §48, and K. Mras, "Assibilierung und Palatalisierung im späteren Latein", WS 63 (1948) 86-101.

<sup>27</sup> I have had long discussions upon this subject with Prof. Viljamaa.—It only makes one wonder whether the original manuscript contained an *i longa* or similar (i.e. *Titius pro eo quod est Titlus*), which was later copied as *i*. As a matter of fact, *il* is sometimes, at least in later half-uncial script, used to represent the palatalized *ti* (cf. E.A. Lowe 1910, "Studia palaeographica: a contribution to the history of early Latin minuscule and to the dating of Visigothic manuscripts" in: Palaeographical papers 1907-1965, I 2-65, Oxford 1972). According to B. Bischoff this script was of African origin, and it is attested from roughly the early fifth century (Paläographie des römischen Altertums und des abendländischen Mittelalters, 1986<sup>2</sup>, 105 and 238; the English translation of 1990, Latin palaeography: Antiquity and the Middle Ages, 76 and 183, with plates). Since Pompeius lived in Africa, he could have used this kind of script.

<sup>28</sup> Handbook of Latin inscriptions: illustrating the history of the language, 1897, 116. He gives as examples *nuntius* and *uncia* which have been pronounced as disyllables.

<sup>29</sup> E.g. VINCENTZVS (Audollent, *Defixionum tabellae* 253); CIL VIII 16208 VINCENTZA, 9927 TERENSVS, 9942 MARSALIS; 8424 OZE (= *hodie*), XIV 1137 ZEBVS (= *diebus*). All these are from Africa except the last one which is from Ostia.—For further material see e.g. Väänänen and other references given in footnote 20.