

# **How “post” is Post-Classical? Lessons from the augment throughout the history of Greek**

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## **1. Introduction**

In the announcement for the conference for which this piece was originally prepared, a key question was asked:

(1) a. Is it still meaningful to use the label “Post-Classical” to define a specific stage of Greek?

This question, as important as it is in and of itself, raises various other related questions, specifically:

(1) b. What is a suitable basis for periodization within the historical unfolding of languages:

internal developments (changes in the language itself) or external developments (changes in the social setting for the language), or a combination?

c. How many such developments are needed to warrant drawing a “boundary” between periods?

To attempt some meaningful answers to these questions, and by way of testing these issues, I explore here a single feature of Greek, namely the augment, the important grammatical marker for past tense. Focusing on the augment is quite useful here for while it shows change over the whole history, and even the prehistory, of Greek, there is also a high degree of continuity with it. Thus, the augment can be used for assessing the validity of “Post-Classical-ness” as a construct; even if ultimately just a single feature, it nonetheless allows one to confront the various questions raised in (1).<sup>1</sup>

## **2. Relevant background on the augment**

The “augment” is the grammatical element in Greek occurring at the left edge of a verbal stem that is realized as a prefix *ê-* before consonants—the so-called “syllabic augment”—and as lengthening of an initial vowel—the so-called “temporal augment”—and is used to mark past tense for indicative forms. It thus appears in the imperfect tense, the (imperfective aspect) past tense associated with the present system, in the aorist system for the indicative perfective aspect forms, and, of lesser relevance for matters of continuity and periodization due to the loss of the Classical Greek perfect tense system, also in the perfect system for the pluperfect (past perfect) forms.

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<sup>1</sup> This study is part of a trilogy, of sorts, in that in a previous paper, Joseph 2020, I use similar data from the Greek augment to make a point about predictability of language change in general, thus distinct from the points to be argued for here regarding the identification of the “Post-Classical” as far as Greek is concerned and periodization of a language in general. And, in another paper of mine, forthcoming and based on Joseph 2021, I use the augment data to bring to light issues regarding continuity across time in language and especially in the Greek language.

There are many potentially interesting questions about the augment that cannot be of concern here, for instance having to do with its prehistory. Still, regarding its prehistory, I can say that I am inclined to see it as continuing an element reconstructible for Proto-Indo-European; perhaps originally a free word, maybe a deictic element, or perhaps better, a sentence connective (Watkins 1964) though it perhaps, contra Watkins, is not found in any way in Anatolian (Craig Melchert, p.c.).<sup>2</sup> I also see the augment as having broader scope within the Indo-European family; there are, for instance, indirect traces in Albanian, as discussed in Hamp 2019. Hamp argues that the past tense *dha* ‘he gave’ shows an intervocalic outcome < dh > (phonetically [ð]) of Proto-Indo-European (PIE) \*d that can be explained by assuming the presence prehistorically for Albanian of augment (thus, from a pre-form \*e-də-t);<sup>3</sup> such is also the case with *mora* ‘I took’, where -o- is the outcome of the \*ē that results from contraction in a pre-form \*me-e-H<sub>2</sub>r- (preverb-augment-root) after \*H<sub>2</sub> is lost before vocalic -r-. As noted, the augment is associated with the indicative mood, and thus functions in many ways like the past equivalent of the \*-i suffix found with present tense endings, as in 1<sup>st</sup> singular \*-mi (vs. past \*-m) or 3<sup>rd</sup> singular \*-ti (vs. past \*-t)

For early Greek, that is the language of the Mycenaean Linear B tablets as well as the poetry of Homer, Hesiod, and Pindar, it is hard to talk about the augment without mentioning the apparent “augmentless past tense” forms. The augment occurs in Mycenaean Greek in a couple of forms, most notably < a-pe-do-ke > ‘he gave back’ (standing for what in “alphabetic Greek”

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<sup>2</sup> See Willi 2018: 357-416 for the most recent hypothesis on the origin of the augment.

<sup>3</sup> I write the pre-form of the augment here and throughout simply as \*e rather than the laryngealistic \*H<sub>1</sub>e, essentially just for typographic ease, though I am not aware of any evidence that directly points to the need to posit an initial laryngeal with this element. As far as Greek is concerned, the presence or absence of a laryngeal seems not to matter.

would be ἀπέδωκε). Mostly, though, in Mycenaean, to the extent that there are true simple past tense forms, there is no augment, as shown by these forms:

(2) *apudoke* (unaugmented form apparently equivalent to *apedoke*)

*wide* ‘he knew’ (corresponding to “alphabetic Greek” *φιδε*)

*teke* ‘he placed’ (corresponding to “alphabetic Greek” *θηκε*)

These forms must bear some relation to the PIE “injunctive”, a mood in PIE that consisted of verb forms with past-tense morphology (specifically person/number endings) but no augment, and which had distinct non-past functions, most notably introducing prohibitions.<sup>4</sup> I take these Mycenaean unaugmented forms, however, as having a simple past value, rather like the preterital value for originally “injunctive” forms in Avestan. Moreover, following de Decker 2016, 2018, it may well be that such unaugmented forms stood in contrast to augmented forms that had a (nonindicative) modal value of some sort in epic and poetic use (e.g., for de Decker, an evidential value); thus even if not modal themselves, they were part of a modal system that depended on the presence or absence of the augment. Thus, the early forms have some relation to the PIE injunctive, but with transformed functions.

Relatedly, it can be noted that the so-called “gnomic aorist” of Classical Greek, that is, the augmented aorist “to express general tendencies, habits, procedures, etc.” (van Emde Boas et al. 2019: §33.31), is not a past-time reference per se. This usage may be based in some way on one of the nonprohibition uses of the PIE injunctive, namely in contexts of tenselessness, as with timeless statements (see Hoffmann 1967 on this use in Vedic, and footnote 4).

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<sup>4</sup> See Kiparsky 1968, 2005 for a discussion of the nature of the injunctive in PIE.

To sum up, for early Greek, the augment is mostly an obligatory marker of indicative past tense (*pace* Mycenaean), that is to say, part of the morphological make-up of the past tenses, both imperfect and aorist, whether realized as a prefix (the “syllabic augment”) or via initial-vowel lengthening (the “temporal augment”).

This situation continues into Classical Greek (mid-5<sup>th</sup> century BC), where, from a purely formal standpoint, the augment is generally obligatory in past tense forms. However, besides the gnomic aorist, which offers a functionally unusual augment, several exceptions can be enumerated to this generalization, in the form of various oddities which constitute anomalies in the augmentation system.

First, there are some legitimate indicative past tense forms that are lacking the augment and yet are “normal” (i.e., prose) Attic forms. For instance, from the verb εὔχομαι ‘wish’, the past tense can be the unaugmented εὔχετο ‘s/he wished’ (as opposed to the augmented ἠὔχετο), and from εὕρισκω ‘find’, the unaugmented εὕρεθην ‘I found’ occurs (as opposed to the augmented ἠὔρεθην). Moreover, there are some verbs that show no variation and have only unaugmented forms, such as οὐτάζω ‘stab’, with an imperfect οὔταζον ‘I was stabbing’ (as opposed to the expected, but nonoccurring, ὠὔταζον). There may be a phonological basis to this, having to do with an aversion to creating long diphthongs by lengthening, but these forms nonetheless still constitute an exception to the otherwise obligatory status of the augment in Classical usage.

Second, there are some forms that have multiple augments,<sup>5</sup> e.g. ἠνείχόμην ‘I endured’, from ἀνέχω, where the initial η- reflects the temporal augment and the internal -ει- reflects the

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<sup>5</sup> I would like to thank Chiara Zanchi of the Università di Pavia for bringing such multiply augmented forms to my attention in March 2017; knowing of their existence has helped to shape my thinking on the relevance of the

syllabic augment (contracted with the root vowel after the loss of intervocalic \*-s-, thus from \*e-seg'h-). Schwyzer 1950: 656 suggests such forms are to be attributed to an “uncertainty as to language sensibility” (*Unsicherheit des Sprachgefühls*). Moreover, there may well be others that have not generally been viewed in this way. For instance, Homeric usage shows both εἶπε and ἔειπε for ‘(s)he said’, which ostensibly appear to be an unaugmented as opposed to an augmented form, respectively. However, if ἔειπε is from \*e-we-wk<sup>w</sup>-e-t,<sup>6</sup> i.e. an augmented reduplicated aorist, based on the parallel with Sanskrit *a-voc-a-t*, then εἶπε is presumably \*we-wk<sup>w</sup>-e-t, i.e. an unaugmented reduplicated aorist; but in principle, it could also be from \*e-wk<sup>w</sup>-e-t, an augmented thematic aorist, formed like ἔ-λιπ-ε ‘(s)he left’, from \*e-lik<sup>w</sup>-e-t. Either way, there could be an augment oddity: if εἶπε is from an augmented thematic aorist, then ἔειπε could be an early (pre-)Homeric case of a double augment, while if εἶπε is from an unaugmented reduplicated aorist, then clearly it was interpreted in later Greek as if it were an augmented form, as it functions as the “normal” aorist to present λέγ-ω and is parallel to the truly augmented thematic aorist εἶδε ‘s/he saw’, from \*e-wid-e-t.

Third, there is analogical spread of the temporal augment, the lengthening of an initial vowel, from vowel-initial verbs to some consonant-initial verbs. Particularly noteworthy in this regard is βούλομαι ‘I want’ (present) as it has an imperfect ἡβουλόμεν ‘I wanted’, in place of the expected, and attested, ἐβουλόμεν; a past with η- is as if the present, contrary to fact, was ἐ-βούλομαι or ἄ-βούλομαι). ἡβουλόμεν probably was analogically affected by (the roughly synonymous) ἡθέλον ‘wanted’, where the temporal augment is regular, based on the actually occurring present ἐθέλω. This unexpected, unetymological temporal augment spread further to

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augment for the development of the Greek language. Such multiple augments would constitute instances of “multiple exponence” (Harris 2017, Koutsoukos & Karantzola 2022).

<sup>6</sup> A dissimilation of -wk<sup>w</sup>- to -jk<sup>w</sup>- is generally assumed to have occurred here, allowing for the outcome -εἰ-.

δύναμαι ‘be able’, giving an imperfect ἠδυνάμην for expected, and actually occurring ἐδυνάμην, and μέλλω ‘must, be about to’, giving an imperfect ἤμελλον for expected, and actually occurring ἔμελλον. For these verbs, the temporal augment most likely reflects an analogical development based on the shared semantics of modality that these verbs show, respectively ‘want’/‘can’/‘must’. It can be noted that ἤμελλον is old, occurring in Hesiod, whereas ἠδυνάμην is said to be Attic-Ionic but inscriptional only after 300BC (LSJ: s.v. δύναμαι).

Fourth, there are misplaced augments, some of which can be interpreted as a kind of double augment. In the usual case, the augment is immediately to the left of the verbal root, and any other adverb-like prefixes, so-called “preverbs”, appear to the left of the augment; moreover, again in the usual case, the accent in past tense forms is retracted to the left but does not move farther left than the augment.

Thus, for καθίζω ‘sit (down)’, where καθ- is a preverb (canonically, κατ-/κατά-) and the root synchronically is ἰζ-, we find the etymologically correct form καθίζον ‘I was sitting’, where the long vowel ῖ reflects the temporal augment (augmentation via lengthening), and there is no accent retraction farther left than the augment. Later, as the result of a reanalysis, the form κάθιζον occurs, with accentuation as if καθ- is part of the root, not a preverb, i.e., to the left of where the augment would be, but with augmentation indicated only via the (presumed) ῖ. Finally, as a result of yet another reanalysis, ἐκάθιζον occurs, showing regularization via the overt occurrence of the syllabic augment, positioned as if καθ- is part of the root, and accentuation following accordingly. To the extent that the -ῖ- reflects an augment, ἐκάθιζον shows double augmentation.

Fifth, in one form, the verbal augment occurs on an original noun. Thus, ἐχρήν ‘it was necessary’ has an overt syllabic augment, whereas it also occurs without the ἐ-, as simply χρήν.

This latter form  $\chi\rho\tilde{\eta}\nu$ , however, is a univerbation, a contraction, of the noun  $\chi\rho\eta$  ‘necessity’ with  $\tilde{\eta}\nu$  ‘was’, where  $\eta$ - derives from  $*e-H_1s-$ , an augmented form of the zero-grade of the root  $*H_1es-$  ‘be’. Thus,  $\chi\rho\tilde{\eta}\nu$  is the older form, with the augment built into the  $\eta$ - of  $\tilde{\eta}\nu$ , and therefore  $\epsilon\chi\rho\tilde{\eta}\nu$  shows the effects of taking the univerbation seriously, with, moreover,  $\chi\rho\eta$ , a noun originally, taken (i.e., (re-)analyzed) as a verb, so that an augment is needed in the past tense; accordingly,  $\epsilon$ - is added, giving what is essentially a doubling of the augment.

Sixth, there are instances where the augment vowel occurs in nonpast and/or nonindicative forms without a specifically past value.<sup>7</sup> Such forms are found with  $\kappa\alpha\tau\acute{\alpha}\gamma\nu\mu\alpha\iota$  ‘shatter’, specifically the passive infinitive  $\kappa\alpha\tau\acute{\epsilon}\alpha\gamma\nu\eta\nu\alpha\iota$ , and the aorist participle  $\kappa\alpha\tau\acute{\epsilon}\alpha\zeta\alpha\varsigma$ .<sup>8</sup>

Overall, then, despite the relative stability of the augment in Classical Greek, these various anomalies show that deviations from the norms of augmentation were possible. These deviations take on a special significance once the situation with the augment in Post-Classical Greek is considered.

### **3. The Augment through the Millennia: Koine Greek and Medieval Greek**

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<sup>7</sup> This oddity is not to be conflated with the gnomic aorist, even though the augment vowel occurs in a nonpast form, as the augment in the gnomic aorist appears to be a regular feature of Greek morphosyntax.

<sup>8</sup> It was suggested by Daniel Kölligan that these might reflect “poetic” variant  $\kappa\alpha\tau\acute{\alpha}\iota$  for the preverb  $\kappa\alpha\tau\acute{\alpha}$ , and show the effects of the later Greek sound change of  $\alpha\iota > [e]$ , for which spelling with  $< \epsilon >$  would be possible. However, some instances may occur too early to show this sound change (e.g. in Lysias and Plato, unless, of course, they were inserted in later manuscripts. Still, given other anomalies with the augment, it is not unreasonable to see these instances of  $-\epsilon$ - as yet another reflection of disruptions to the Classical system of augmentation.



Greek of the Koine era mostly shows what can be called the “canonical” augment, i.e. the augment as in Classical Greek, though in some contexts the augment is less evident in the Greek of the New Testament. For instance, this is the case with many vowel-initial verbs, so that from ὠθέω ‘push’, an unaugmented aorist passive ὤσθην occurs, contrasting with the earlier augmented form ἐώσθην (Blass & Debrunner 1961: §66). Still, some of the oddities discussed in section 2 that are found in Classical usage are carried over into New Testament Greek (Blass & Debrunner 1961: §66-67).

For example, diphthong-initial verbs do not show the lengthening associated with the temporal augment, as in εἴξαμεν ‘we yielded’ (Galatians 2:5), from εἶκω. Similarly, there is an unwarranted temporal augment with δύναμαι ‘be able’, i.e., ἡδυνάμην for ἐδυνάμην, and so also with μέλλω ‘must; be about to’, i.e., ἡμελλον for ἔμελλον. Finally, there are also “misplaced” augments, that is augments in nonpast forms, as with κατὰγνυμαι ‘shatter’ which has a 3sg future κατεάξει (Matt. 12:20) ‘it will break’.

Moving ahead some 1500 years to Medieval Greek, as documented in Holton et al. 2019:1394–1433, it can be observed that the augment does still occur, but not as regularly as in earlier Greek. That is, it can be absent, as in ἀγόρασεν ‘he bought’ (14<sup>th</sup> century) as compared to Ancient Greek ἡγόρασεν). Moreover, various anomalies occur, including further spread of the temporal augment, e.g. ἡβαλες ‘you did put’ (15<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> centuries), as compared to Ancient Greek ἔβαλες, and double augments occur, e.g. ἐπροέδωσα ‘I gave up’ (14<sup>th</sup> century), compared to Ancient Greek προέδωκα. Furthermore, external augments occur with prefixed verbs, as with ἐπαρακαλέσασιν ‘they invited’ (15<sup>th</sup> century), compared to Ancient Greek παρεκάλεσαν.

Some of the particular anomalous instances have deeper historical roots. The unexpected temporal augment with φέρω ‘carry’, for instance, i.e. ἤφερα ‘I brought’ (Ancient Greek

ἔφερον), occurs as early as the third or fourth century AD, that is, after the Classical period but well before Medieval Greek, but some are medieval innovations. In either case, they demonstrate both continuity with the augment and change in its realization.

#### **4. The Augment in Modern Greek**

Skipping ahead another several hundred years to Modern Greek, we find that the augment is still hanging on productively and robustly in the language. Everywhere it occurs, it is still a prefix and (mostly) still ε-. In Standard Modern Greek (SMG), it is phonologically determined, occurring only when stressed, e.g. ἐ-φέρα ‘I was carrying’ with the augment, stressed, but φέραμε ‘we were carrying’ with no augment, as the stress is on the root syllable; these forms continue, in slightly altered form, then, Ancient Greek ἔφερον / ἐφέρομεν.

There is greater realization for the augment in regional dialects where it occurs even when unstressed, as in Ancient Greek. For instance, in the Greek of southern Albania<sup>9</sup> (and elsewhere) forms such as εσκέφτηκε ‘he thought’ (cf. SMG σκέφτηκε), εδούλευε ‘he was working’ (cf. SMG δούλευε), and εσπουδάζανε ‘they were studying’ (cf. SMG σπούδαζαν/σπουδάζανε). Similarly, in Cypriot Greek one finds εφιλούσαμεν ‘we were kissing’ (cf. SMG φιλούσαμε).

However, there are also various irregularities and oddities with the augment, as in Ancient Greek but even more so; many of these are parallel to those seen in earlier Greek. These are listed in no particular order.

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<sup>9</sup> The citations from southern Albania are based on my own fieldwork in various Greek-speaking villages and towns in the region.

First, in various regional dialects but even in the standard language, we find the spread of original temporal augment ἦ- (now pronounced [i]) into contexts where the syllabic augment ε- (not still pronounced [ε]) previously was called for and actually occurred. For instance, in the Greek of southern Albania, ἦφεραν ‘they carried’ is found, as opposed to έφεραν in the standard language.<sup>10</sup> But even in the modern standard language, with the verb πίνω ‘drink’, the aorist is ήπια ([ίρσα]) as opposed to earlier Greek έπιον.

Second, interaction with preverbs can be found involving reanalysis and subsequent etymologically “misplaced” augments. That is, a preverbal prefix plus a root are treated together as a new root, with an augment then placed outside (i.e., to the left) of the etymological preverb, unlike Ancient Greek, where the augment was inside (i.e. to the right of) the preverb. An example, admittedly a καθαρεύουσα—that is, high-style—form, but widely used colloquially and thus relevant here, is επρόκειτο ‘it was a matter of’ (where the etymological analysis is ε-πρό-κει-το, augment-preverb-root-ending), as opposed to Ancient Greek προύκειτο (a contraction of προ-έ-κει-το, consisting of the same elements but in the order preverb-augment-root-ending).

Third, there is the phenomenon of nonaugment, i.e. semantically and morphologically empty, etymological augment vowels, giving a situation in which original augments are now embedded in verb forms as if part of the root. For instance, we find κατεβάζω ‘download’, where the usual form of preverb is κατά- and the usual form of root verb is βάζω; -ε- thus comes from the augment in past tense forms such as κατέβαζα ‘I was downloading’. Similarly, in ανεβαίνω

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<sup>10</sup> Eleni Papadamou (p.c., 20 May 2022) has drawn my attention to similar forms such as ήπριπι ‘had to’ (SMG έπρεπε) in northern Greek, and George Giannakis (p.c., 24 May 2020) brought to my attention similar eastern Cretan forms, e.g. ήκαμα ‘I made’ (SMG έκανα) occur (see Chairetakis 2020). I am grateful to these colleagues for their help in expanding my dialect scope here. Such forms specifically of φέρω occurred earlier, as noted in §3.

‘go up’, where the usual form of preverb is ανα- and usual form of root verb is βαίνω, the -ε- comes from the augment in past tense forms such as ανέβηκα ‘I went up’.

Fourth, in regional dialects, forms with double augments occur. A commonly occurring example is επήγα ‘I went’, the past of πάω ‘go’, with an extra augment compared to the standard form, πήγα. The present πάω is from earlier υπάγω, from the preverb υπ(ο)- and the verb ἄγω, so that the the past tense form was υπ-ῆγα, where the -η- contains the (temporal) augment. Thus, from an etymological standpoint, επήγα has both a syllabic augment (to the left of an original preverb) and a temporal augment.<sup>11</sup> Most likely, the same sort of analysis holds for επήρα ‘I took’, but as it is from earlier Greek ἐπ-αίρω, attested (nonstandard) forms like επήρα could in principle be showing ε- from the preverb and not from the augment,

Especially interesting and telling are the productive multiple augments with compound verbs in Cypriot, discussed by Pavlou 2018:57-88. For instance, with the compound of μισο- ‘half’ and ψήνω ‘cook’, gives a verb μισοψήνω ‘I half-cook’ for which the past tense ‘I half-cooked’ is not only ε-μισόψησα, with the augment on the left periphery of the composite root, but also ε-μισο-έ-ψησα, with each piece augmented.<sup>12</sup> And, with two prefix-like elements, e.g. ξανα- ‘again’ and παρα- ‘over-, to excess’, three augments are possible: ε-ξανα-ε-παρα-έ-ψησα ‘I over-cooked it again’).

## 5. Conclusion

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<sup>11</sup> Admittedly, in πήγ-, the preverb has been reanalyzed as part of the root, as shown by the placement of the ε- of επήγα (and note the innovative present stem based on the aorist, πηγáινω). However, since the present tense has -α- (πάω), the vowel change in the aorist, to -η-, is an alternation that even synchronically can be related to augmentation, parallel to ήλπιζα ‘I was hoping’, a somewhat learned/literary but quite common variant of έλπιζα.

<sup>12</sup> Note that a form with a single “internal” augment is not grammatical: \*μισο-έ-ψησα.

Given all these facts about augments across the full chronological span of the Greek language, what does the augment tell us about “post-Classical-ness” and about periodization of the language, and, for that matter, of any language, more generally? By way of conclusion, such questions are explored here.

To start first with the general question of the exercise of periodizing the history of a language, it should be noted that historical linguistics and historical linguists love to label different periods in the historical unfolding of a language. Periodization is done almost to the point of fetishizing such labeling. For instance, it is not always enough to have just the labels “Modern” or “Old”, so that one sees such finer distinctions as “Early Modern English” or “Late Modern English”. And it is not just usage by linguists working on English; Ralph 1975, for instance, distinguishes between an Early Old Swedish period (*äldre fornsvenska*) and a Late Old Swedish period (*yngre fornsvenska*). Such labels are convenient and useful up to a point, but one has to wonder if we could have a “Late Early Modern English” or an “Early Late Modern English”? In principle, the answer is “Why not?”

More generally, to address the related question noted in the introduction, namely what a suitable basis is for periodization within the historical unfolding of a language, it is clear from the story of the augment in Greek that even this key grammatical feature that does indeed show change over time does not provide a solid basis for dividing all of Greek chronology into discrete periods. For one thing, there is continuity with the augment, not just in general terms — its function as a marker associated with past time is constant —but in matters of detail regarding all the persistent irregularities, oddities, and anomalies discussed in previous sections. For another,

it must be admitted that it is just one feature, and thus it might be asking too much of it, so to speak, to expect it to offer clear dividing lines in the development of the language.

In this way, the augment vis-à-vis “Post-Classical-ness” is like another pervasive feature of Greek grammar, namely accentuation.

As Waanders 2010 observes in his review of Probert 2006, her Chapter 3 “studies the amount of continuity of accentuation from Indo-European down to Modern Greek, and changes that occurred in between”. And, what we see with accentuation is a mix, not unlike that seen with the augment, of continuity and change. In particular, the three-syllable “window”, counting from the end of the word, within which the acute accent in a word must fall — an old innovation that dates to the pre-Greek stage between Proto-Indo-European and Proto-Greek — has persisted throughout most of the history of the language; still, there are modern dialects, such as the Greek of southern Albania, but also Pontic (Drettas 1997: 48-49) that allow accent on the fourth and even the fifth syllable from the end of the word, in violation of the tri-syllabic rule of limitation.

Going beyond the tri-syllabic restriction, Greek from early on has allowed expansion of the prosodic domain when an enclitic particle or pronoun is attached to a lexical word, along with addition of an extra accent, as in these Classical Greek examples:

- (3) ἄνθρωπος ‘(a) man’ ~ ἄνθρωπός τε ‘and a man’  
λέαινα ‘(a) lioness’ ~ λέαινά τις ‘a certain lioness’

And this feature has persisted throughout most of Greek, so that Modern Greek allows an extended prosodic domain with an extra accent, as in η προτίμηση ‘the preference’ with one accent but also η προτίμησή μου ‘my preference’, with two accents along with the addition of a

possessive pronoun. Still, there are differences in detail; for instance, some Modern Greek dialects have double accent even in forms without enclitic elements, e.g. northern Greek ἐρχομάστι ‘we come’ (Newton 1972: 198-199), as compared with SMG ἐρχόμαστε. Also, the occurrence of recessive accent in finite verb forms is another old innovation that has lasted throughout most of Greek, though again there are differences in detail to reckon with.

However, all this accentual persistence throughout the millennia of the development of Greek must be viewed against the backdrop of a significant shift in the phonetic realization of accent, from a pitch accent in Ancient Greek to an intensity (stress) accent in later times. This situation leads naturally to the question of whether the shift in realization is significant enough to counteract any continuity in other aspects of accent placement. Unfortunately, the answer is a solid “Maybe ... maybe not”.

Perhaps, then, a single feature is not enough for establishing periodization, but if that is the case, how many are needed, and must they all show “clean” breaks, without the mix of continuity with change that the augment and some of the accentuation developments show? And with regard to accentuation, does the accent realization change count as just one change or is it more significant because it is so pervasive, essentially affecting every utterance, every word in the language? These are difficult questions to answer, and the concerns raised here are not given in order to say that periodization is not meaningful; rather it is hoped that it is valuable at least to draw attention to the issues that periodization summons up for historical linguists and historical linguistics more generally. The issues with the use of language-internal criteria for periodization might suggest that external factors, such as the spread of Greek across most of the eastern Mediterranean and beyond after Alexander’s conquests, could be a more reliable index for periodization, or perhaps what is needed is a combination of such internal and external factors.

In this way, the issue of periodization is rather like the always vexing question of distinguishing language and dialect. A single feature, an isogloss, can be suggestive, but several differences, a bundle of isoglosses, is more compelling. And this becomes all the more so when combined with external, social and political factors such as the existence of a standardized form and/or a nation-state or well-defined region associated with a given speech form. But again, definitive answers are not always readily forthcoming.

Relatedly, the issues with periodization intersect with the matter of the ideology of “Greek as one language”, as seen in the point and counterpoint between Browning and Hamp discussed in Joseph 2009:

the question [arises] of whether Greek indeed is “one” language across its entire history. We must ask at this point what it means to talk about Greek as “one” language throughout all of its history; some have done just this, e.g. Browning (1983:vii; my emphasis/ BDJ)”:

The Homeric poems were first written down in more or less their present form in the seventh century B.C. Since then Greek has enjoyed a continuous tradition down to the present day. Change there has certainly been. But there has been no break like that between Latin and the Romance languages. Ancient Greek is not a foreign language to the Greek of today as Anglo-Saxon is to the modern Englishman. The only other language which enjoys comparable continuity of tradition is Chinese. ...



*It cannot be too much emphasised that Greek is one language,  
and not a series of distinct languages.*

Joseph 2009 continues:

To some extent, talking about unity of a language over time is a misrepresentation (as the comments of Hamp 2003 on this very quote of Browning's suggest), since all languages show some continuity with their past and some deviation from that past; that is, all languages are a mix at any one time of old features carried over from earlier stages of the language and new innovative features that are supplanting older ones.

Such considerations lead back to the question that we started with, namely that of how post-Classical post-Classical Greek is based on the augment. The safest answer probably is "Somewhat, but maybe not very much so", especially in light of the continuity with augment that is seen in latter (i.e., Medieval and Modern) Greek. The augment in itself, then, does not figure prominently in a consideration of what makes for Post-Classical Greek. As far as the augment is concerned, there are not really any significant differences between Classical Greek and Post-Classical Greek; perhaps there are differences of degree but not differences of kind as to use and realization in a broad sense.

Thus, it must be recognized that with the augment, while there is change in the face of continuity, there is also considerable continuity in the face of change, so that talking about "Post-Classical-ness" is not warranted, at least as far as the augment is concerned, i.e. based just on the

augment alone and on nothing else. This is not to say that “Post-Classical” is not motivated in other ways, by (groups of) other features, as perhaps with accentuation—and verbal complementation would be another large grammatical domain to consider<sup>13</sup>—and/or by external events, but the augment alone does not do it.

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<sup>13</sup> See Bentein 2017 and note also Joseph 1978/1990, 1983.

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