Language and Dialect in Ancient Macedonia: General Issues

- Evidence for Language and Dialect in the Macedonian Kingdom:
  - Direct Evidence (i.e. archaeological remains)
    - Coin Legends
    - Epigraphic Documents
  - Indirect Evidence (i.e. via medieval MSS traditions)
    - Mentions of literary authors remarking on the language
    - ~140 glosses and material in the Lexicon of Hesychius
    - Mythological, personal, and local onomastics recorded in literary authors

- Two Important Facts:
  1. All surviving linguistic evidence is written in Greek
  2. The Greek attested already shows a great deal of dialectal diversity within the area controlled by the Macedonian kingdom:
    - West Ionic in Euboean colonies
    - Insular Ionic in Cycladic colonies
    - Attic in former member states of the Delian League
    - Corinthian at Potidaea
E2 — Alexander’s Legacy: Greek as a World Language

New Light On... Lecture – The Language of the Macedonians (MJCS)

- Attic-Ionic *koinê* in Macedonian official inscriptions

Regarding the ‘Greekness’ of the Macedonians and their Language(s)

- Evidence from literary sources is divided on the original ethnic and linguistic identity of the Ancient Macedonians:
  - Hesiod fr. 7: Eponymous ancestor Μακεδῶν born to Zeus and one of Deucalion’s daughters.
  - Herodotus (5.22, 8.137-139) strongly states a belief that Macedonians were Greeks.
  - Thucydides (2.80.5-7, 2.81.6, 4.124.1) *possibly* considers Macedonians to be βάρβαροι.
  - Aristotle (1324b) includes Macedonians in a list of ἔθνη with despotic practices (ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσι πάσι τοῖς δυναμένοις πλενεκτείν), but makes no reference to language.
  - Demosthenes (3rd Olynth. 24, 3rd Philip. 31, False Embassy 308) claimed Philip II was non-Greek.
  - Isocrates (Philip 108, 154) claimed Philip was Greek, but ruled over non-Greeks.

- Demosthenes and Isocrates may have had political reasons to attack or attribute Hellenicity to Philip II because of the political situation at the time.

- Later historical sources mention at points the use of speech ‘in Macedonian’ (μακεδονιστὶ < μακεδονιζεῖν) at particular points of emotional excitement:
  - Diodorus Siculus (90-30 BC): 17.101.2
  - Plutarch (45-123 AD): *Alexander* 51.6, *Eumenes* 14.5
  - Quintus Curtius (ca. 1st c. AD): 6.9.34-36; 6.11.4 relates Macedonian as being unintelligible.
  - On the other hand, Livy (BC 57 – 17 AD) 31.29.15 reports that Macedonians, Aetolians, and Acharnians all spoke the same language.

- Similar verbs in Greek exist meaning ‘to speak in dialect’ (e.g. Βοιωτίζειν, Δωρίζειν), just as ‘to speak in language’ (e.g. Περσιζεῖν, Καρίζειν) with identical in word-formation.

The Issue over the Macedonian Spellings < ΒΔΓ > for Greek < ΦΘΧ >

- Much debate over Macedonian dialect/language has centred around the interpretation of these spellings.
- Greek < φ χ > / plh thh k/h / from PIE voiced-aspirated plosives *bʰ*<i>dʰ</i>*gʰ* (and labiovelar *gʷʰ*)
- Some PNs in Macedonian and Attic:
  - Maced. Βερενίκα ~ Att. Φερενίκη (*bʰer-*)
  - Maced. Βάλακρος ~ Att. Φάλακρος
  - Maced. Βουλομάχα ~ Att. Φυλομάχη (*bʰh₂u-sl-*)
  - Maced. Κεφαλίνος ~ Att. Κεφαλίνος (*gʰebʰ-l-*)
- Some Macedonian glosses in Hesychius:
  - αδῆ· οὐφανός. Μακεδόνες (αἰθήρ < *h₂ejdh*, cf. Lat. aedes)
  - δώραξ· σπλήν υπὸ Μακεδόνων. (θώραξ)
  - βανόν· κακοποιών. Κτείνων (*θανόν = θανατός; Maced. δάνος = θάνατος Plut. *Moralia* 2.22c)
  - γάλα (γάδα ms.)· ἐντερα (possib. Att. χολῇ ’gall’, Hom. χολάδες ’guts’)
  - βροῦτες· οφρύες. Μακεδόνες
Hypothesis 1: Macedonian is not Greek (Non-Greek Hypothesis)

- The devoicing of \(*b^h *d^h *g^h *g^wh\) to Proto-Greek \(*p^h *t^h *k^h\) and \(*k^wh\) is one of the most fundamental early isoglosses of Proto-Greek vis-à-vis Proto-Indo-European. It follows that if the spellings \(<\text{Β Δ Γ}>\) for \(<\Phi \Theta \Χ>\) are to be interpreted as strictly a deaspiration of the voiced-aspirated series, then Macedonian cannot be classified as a Greek dialect.

Hypothesis 2: Borrowings/Interference Hypothesis

- Macedonian words and onomastics (attested in Greek) are borrowed from an (otherwise undocumented) Indo-European sub- or adstrate language related to Thracian or Phrygian where the sound change \(*b^h *d^h *g^h *g^wh > b d g\) takes place.
- Herod. 7.73 relates a tribe of Phrygians called Βρύγες that did not travel to Asia Minor: ώς Μακεδόνες λέγουσι, ἐκαλέσαντο Βρίγες χρόνον ὅσον Εὐρωπηίοι έόντες Σύνοικοι ήσαν Μακεδόσι, μεταβάντες δὲ ἐς τὴν Αἰγιν ἄμα τῇ χώρῃ καὶ τὸ σύνομα μετέβαλον ἐς Φρύγας. “As the Macedonians say, these Phrygians were called Briges as long as they dwelt in Europe, where they were neighbors of the Macedonians; but when they changed their home to Asia, they changed their name also and were called Phrygians.”
  - Cf. Neo-Phrygian written in Greek script exhibits the sound-shift \(*b^h > b\) in ἀββετ and ἀββετορ derived from PIE \(*b^her-\).
- Under such a hypothesis there would be two or more languages present in the Macedonian kingdom: Local Greek dialects and at least one non-Greek Indo-European language as a linguistic adstrate, accounting for the characteristic “non-Greek” features such as the reflexes of the voiced-aspirates.
- The borrowings/interference hypothesis is one plausible way of looking at the evidence, but since we have no direct remains of the hypothesized Thraco-Phrygian language in the Macedonian homeland, this is, at least in part, a hypothetical solution.

Hypothesis 3: The Greek Hypothesis

- Argues that the spellings \(<\text{Β Δ Γ}>\) for \(<\Phi \Theta \Χ>\) is the result of a secondary voicing lenition of original Greek \(*p^h *t^h *k^h\) to \([\nu \delta \gamma]\) (via intermediary fricativization /\(f^\theta x\)/).
- The Greek Hypothesis attempts to explain Macedonian entirely as a dialect of Greek, eliminating the need to postulate a ‘Thraco-Phrygian’ substrate language advocated by the Borrowings-Interference Hypothesis.
- Arguments in favour of this hypothesis
  - Ancient Sources that state that the Macedonians were Greek and spoke a dialect similar to that of Aetolia and Epirus.
  - Macedonian Glosses can be interpreted as Greek with distinctive phonetics.
  - Most Macedonians (from the earliest recorded historical period) had Greek names or names interpretable as Greek, e.g. Φίλιππος, Ἀλέξανδρος, Περδίκκας (πέρδιξ?), Ἀμύντας (Ἀμύνω), etc.
  - Some short texts attest a variety of Greek close to Doric.
The Question of the PIE Plosives in Macedonian

- The Greek hypothesis holds that the interpretation by contrast holds that the interpretation of the voiced-aspirated series as voiced stops is a misconception.
  - NB: It is assumed on the basis of γενέσται (Pella tablet), the voiceless-aspirates had passed through an intermediary stage as fricatives (as probably in Northwest Greek i.e. *-stʰ- > -st(ʰ)- where < Φ Θ X > = / f θ x /). Cf. Méndez Dosuna 1985:333-94
- This hypothesis, built up from earlier hypotheses by Hatzidakis in the late 19th century and more recently by Babinotis (1992), has been elaborated most fully by Hatzopoulos (2007).
  - Simple deaspiration of the voiced-aspirated stops does not fully account for all the attested data:
    - In certain contexts *p *t and *k also appear to undergo voicing in contexts V_V, R_V, and V_R, found in some epigraphic documents from Macedonia:
      - ἐν βλάχανοις Ἀρτέμιδι Δειγμαία (= ἐν βλάχανοις Ἀρτέμιδι Διακία)
      - Βάλαχρος ~ Φάλαχρος
      - Βορβίνος ~ Πορτίνος
      - Δρεβέλαος ~ Τρεφέλεως
  - Certain words cannot be explained by assuming simple deaspiration of voiced-aspirates: The case of the gloss κεβαλή for κεφαλή < PIE *gʰebʰal- (cf. OHG gebal 'skull')
    - Βέροια: Πόλεις Μακεδόνων, ἦν φασιν ἀπὸ Φέρητος τινὸς κτισθέατα, Φέροια, καὶ κατὰ Μακεδόνας, Βέροια, τροπὴ τοῦ φ εἰς β, ὡς Φερενίκη, Βερενίκη, ἡ γυνὴ τοῦ πατρὸς Πτολεμαίου- τοῦ φ τραπέντος εἰς β. Καὶ τὴν κεφαλήν, κεβαλήν λέγουσι. (Etymologicum Magnum 195.36-40, cf. LS s.v. κεβλή)
    - Also PN Κεβαλίνος = Att. Κεφαλίνος
    - If a simple deaspiration of voiced aspirates was what happened we would expect ἄΓεβαλίνος

- To account for the voicing of the voiced stops as well as the etymological voiced-aspirated series the Greek hypothesis postulates a secondary sound shift in Macedonian:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PIE</th>
<th>General Greek</th>
<th>Macedonian*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>*p *t *k</td>
<td>/p t k / &lt; ΠΤΚ &gt;</td>
<td>/p t k / &lt; ΠΓΚ &gt; - [ b d g ] &lt; ΒΔΓ &gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*bʰ *dʰ *gʰ</td>
<td>/pbʰ kbʰ / &lt; ΦΘΧ &gt;</td>
<td>/ф θ х / &lt; ФΘΧ &gt; - [ v ɣ ι ] &lt; ΒΔΓ &gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*b *d *g</td>
<td>/bd d γ / &lt; ΒΔΓ &gt;</td>
<td>/bd d γ / &lt; ΒΔΓ &gt; - [ v ɣ γ ] &lt; ΒΔΓ &gt;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*contexts for allophonic voicing/fricativization lenition: V_V, R_V, V_R (Schematization after Méndez Dosuna 2012)

- Typologically this is not entirely an unusual allophonic distribution and similar conditioning and secondary waves of voicing are found in Modern Spanish dialects, for example.
- Thus under this explanation problematic gloss κεβαλά and PN Κεβαλίνος can be explained:
  - PIE *gʰebʰ-l- > Proto-Greek *kʰepʰ-l- > Post-Proto-Greek *kepʰ-al- > Maced. κεβαλ-
The charge that this only occurs in onomastics is refuted from lexical glosses δώραξ ~ θώραξ, etc.

Word-initial voicing must be generalized through sandhi phenomena:
  o  ἀ Φερενίκα > ἀ Βερενίκα, τὰ Φερενίκα > τὰ Βερενίκα, ὦ Φερενίκα > ὦ Βερενίκα (etc.)

Additionally the Pella tablet (below) may show features consistent with this analysis.

NB: The Greek Hypothesis also deduces evidence from Modern Greek dialects of Upper Pieria collected and evaluated by Tzitzilis (2008), this is beyond the immediate scope of the lecture to discuss, but cf. Méndez Dosuna (2012:138-139).

Final Thoughts:

• Only the Greek Hypothesis can explain data like κεβαλά = κεφαλή (and etymologically derived derivatives). The operation of Grassmann’s Law guarantees -β- must be secondary from original *pʰ in this example.

• Further direct data for the voicing lenition is frustratingly scarce. The chronology of the proposed Macedonian sound-shift is unclear. If the Pella text is Macedonian, it is only attested through the problematic ΔΑΙΝΑ = δαπινά (?) (and nowhere else). Frustratingly the feature we want to see is only found in an unclear part of the inscription.

• One important point: There is no good reason not to suppose that the Greek Hypothesis and the Borrowings/Interference Hypothesis need be mutually exclusive.

• It may be possible that the Macedonian elites were ethnically ‘Greek’ in origin and originally speaking a dialect related to Northwest Doric, but ruled over a number of Non-Greek peoples. In bilingual situations we should not exclude the possibility that some Macedonian glosses or references to ‘Macedonian’ in literature may refer to either a local variety of Greek, or a non-Greek language of subject peoples.
Two Possible Macedonian Texts:


[Θετίμας καὶ Διονυσόφωντος τὸ τέλος καὶ τὸν γάμου καταγράφω καὶ τὸν ἀλλόν πασάν γυναῖκῶν καὶ χηρῶν καὶ παρθένων, ἀλλάζω δὲ Θετίμας, καὶ παρκαττίθεμαι Μάκρων καὶ τοὺς δαῖμος καὶ ὅποια ἔγ cuffs τοῦτο διελέξαμι καὶ ἀναγνώριζαν πάλιν ἀνορόξασαον.] γάμαι Διονυσοφώντα, πρότερον δὲ μὴ γάρ λάβοι ἄλλον γυναῖκα ἀλλήλῃ ἐμὲ, ἐμὲ δὲ συνκαταγράσαι Διονυσοφώνται καὶ μιθεύμαν ἄλλαν· ἰκέτες ὑμῶν· γίνω· (5) μαν . . . ἄλλοι διanoiạ μου̣ς εὖ̣ [Θετί̣μας] ΔΑΓΙΝΑΓΑΡΙΜΕ φύλον πάντων καὶ ἐρήμων· ἀλλὰ διατεταμένη ἐμῇ ὅπως μὴ γίνηται ταῦτα καὶ κακὰ κακῶς Θετίμας απόληται· [ . . .] ΑΛ [5 / 6] ΥΝΜ . ΕΣΠΙΛΗΝ ἐμὸς, ἐμὲ δὲ εὐδαιμονία καὶ μακριαν̣ γενέσται·

1.6 ΔΑΓΙΝΑΓΑΡΙΜΕ: DUBOIS δεσποτικῇ γὰρ ἔμε

Translation (after VOUTIRAS 1998:15-16):

Of Thetima and Dionysophon the ritual wedding and the marriage I bind by a written spell, as well as (the marriage) of all other women (to him), both widows and maidsens, but above all of Thetima; and I entrust (this spell) to Macron and to the daimones. And were I ever to unfold and read these words again after digging (the tablet) up, only then should Dionysophon marry, not before; may he indeed not take another woman than myself; but let me alone grow old by the side of Dionysophon and no one else. I implore you: have pity for [Philae ?], dear daimones, [for I am indeed bereft ?] of all my dear ones and abandoned. But please keep this (piece of writing) for my sake so that these events do not happen and wretched Thetima perishes miserably. [ - - -] but let me become happy and blessed. [ - - -]

Dialectal Features of the Pella Text:

1. /á/ for Att.-Ion. H
   a. Θετίμας (2)
   b. γάμαι (4)
   c. ἀλλάν (4,6)
2. -άν as 1° decl G.pl.
   a. τάν ἀλλάν πασάν (1)
Two important features of the Macedonian text:

1. 1st Compensatory Lengthening (e.g. 2.pl. pron. *usme- Pella ὑµῶ<ν> vs. Aeol. ὑµµῶν) completed (unlike neighbouring Thessalian)
2. Athematic D.pl. δαίµοσι not Thessalian (exp. δαιµόνεσσι) nor NW Koiná δαιµόνοις (cf. Phokian, Lokrian πάντοις etc.)
3. We may add an additional feature if Dubois’ conjecture δαιµ∇α γάρ ἵμι ‘for I am indeed bereft’? = Att. ταπεινά γάρ ἵμι showing the Maced. tendency to voice voiceless stops in certain contexts.
   a. The meaning of the restoration makes sense in context, however it is unfortunate that the feature we want to see is in the conjectural reading.

Summary of the importance of the Pella text:

- The Greek hypothesis is first formulated on the evidence of the glosses and onomastics known from the tradition of indirect transmission, the Pella text gives us the first potential direct epigraphic attestation of a Macedonian Greek dialect.
- The features of the Pella text do not match up to any single previously known Greek dialect precisely as they are, but appears to be closest to Northwest Greek.
- It may provide evidence that the Macedonians did originally speak a dialect of Greek, similar but not identical to known Northwest Doric dialects (i.e. Phokian, Lokrian, Aitolian, etc.).
Zeus and Diona, shall Kebalios have children from the wife he has now, and shall they survive?

Dialectal features of the Dodona Text:

Text cannot be Attic-Ionic on account of:

1. Retention of original *ā in Διώνα, τάς
2. Retention of geminate -ss- in ἐσσονται
3. Article as relative in τάς νῦν ἔχει

Text cannot be Boeotian on account of:

4. Spellings ΑΙ in ἐσσονται, γυναικός, κ[α]ί, and ΕΙ in ἔχει (Boeot. ἐσσοντη, γυνηκός, κή, ἔχι)
5. Earlier *di, *gά > <Z> in Zeū, ζώσοντι (Boeot. Δεῦ, δώσονθι)
6. ἔξ > ἐξ before a consonant in ἐξ τάς (Boeot. ἐς τάς)
7. Unaspirated stops in third plural endings ἐσσονται, ζώσοντι (Boeot. –νη, –νθι)
8. Thematic dative singular –ωι in Κεβαλίωι (Boeot. –οι)

Text cannot be Thessalian on account of:

9. Spellings <H> and <Ω> in ή, Διώνα, Κεβαλίωι, ζώσοντι (Thess. should normally have <EI>, <OY>)
10. ἔξ > ἐξ before a consonant in ἐξ τάς (Thess. ἐς τάς)
11. Thematic dative singular –ωι in Κεβαλίωι (Thess. –ου or –οι)
12. Unaspirated stops in third plural endings ἐσσονται, ζώσοντι (Thess. –νθαι, –νθι)

Further Reading:


E2 — ALEXANDER’S LEGACY: GREEK AS A WORLD LANGUAGE
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