Note on the transcription of Xr.'s texts

Xr.'s dialect belongs to a group of languages spoken in the central area of Macedonian Greek, in the north east, in the Kilkis region, and in the south west, in the Edhessa region, to the south of the Kajmakčalan mountain range.

The southern Bulgarian-Macedonian dialects were studied in part in the beginning of the 20th century. The materials presented were transcribed, with varying degrees of precision, using several different systems: Bulgarian Cyrillic, phonetic notation based on Bulgarian Cyrillic (D. Ivanov, 1932; B. Šklifov, 2003) or Yugoslavian (St. Boykovska, 2006). A Latin character phonetic system was used by A. Vaillant and A. Mazon (1936). I have personally put forward a brief phonetic and phonological description using the IPA (G. Drettas, 1981/1985, 1990(1991)). Mrs. Bojkovska has also brought out a phonological description.

All of the languages have two or three degrees in the phonetic realization of syllabic nuclei, which renders phonetic transcription highly complex. This also entails, among other phenomena, that phonological notation erases, in writing, a non negligible part of the phonic reality.

Here we have chosen a phonological notation. This makes it possible to present morpho-phonological phenomena in a relatively economical manner. The morpho-phonological phenomena well illustrate the difficulty in establishing the theoretical limits between phonology and morphology in this language.

The northern Greek Bulgarian and Macedonian language cluster has never had the status of educational or administrative language, and has no traditional writing system. Thus the phonological notation used here also serves to actually write the language.

Writing a language implies making practical choices, and I believe it important to present the essential aspects of the choices made.

1. Consonants

The glide [j] may be pronounced in several ways. It is transcribed /j/ in all positions. In CCj___, CCj# sequences, /j/ quite strongly palatalizes the preceding consonant. In all cases the notation **C+j** is used.

Thus: [ɲ] = /nj/, [k^j] =/kj/; [ɟ] = /gj/, etc.

The velar pronunciation of the phoneme /l/ is not transcribed.

2. Syllabic nuclei, vowels

Each phonological word or phrase head has a tonic vowel which dominates the syllabic sequence. This strong syllable can only be foreseen by using a language lexicon or thesaurus, it is therefore necessary to transcribe it in the form of word stress.

Vowel inventory:

i, e, a, ə, o, u

Stressed vowels are noticeably longer than others; in syllables noted CV́, V́C or CV́C, /e/ has a tendency to become diphthongized: /'e/ = [^{j}ẹ:]; in the same position, the phoneme /'o/ has a labial-velar pronunciation: [$'^{w}$ọ:].

Unstressed vowels are short and tend to become centralized, with the exception of /ə/.

In the strings CV́CV and VCV́C___, _V_ is pronounced ultra short. Two possibilities follow:

a) the vowel's timbre is retained;
b) the centralization tendency leads to the pronunciation [^{ə}]; since this is not a case of neutralization, we have chosen not to transcribe this unpredictable pronunciation as /ə/.

In VCVCV́ strings, V_1 and V_2 are ultra-short, to such an extent that at times they are deleted. In the sequence (V) CV́CVCV___ $V_2$is pronounced ultra short. In rapid speech, the vowel can all but disappear. This phenomenon can produce consonant clusters that are not licensed by the language's syllable structures. It therefore becomes necessary to note the existence of an underlying syllable nucleus, which we represent by a period: C.C.