

# THEMES IN GREEK LINGUISTICS

PAPERS FROM THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL  
CONFERENCE ON GREEK LINGUISTICS,  
READING, SEPTEMBER 1993

Edited by

IRENE PHILIPPAKI-WARBURTON

*University of Reading*

KATERINA NICOLAIDIS

*University of Reading*

MARIA SIFIANOU

*University of Athens*

JOHN BENJAMINS PUBLISHING COMPANY  
AMSTERDAM/PHILADELPHIA



The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of American National Standard for Information Sciences — Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI Z39.48-1984.

### Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

International Conference on Greek Linguistics (1st : 1993 : University of Reading)  
Themes in Greek linguistics : papers from the First International Conference on Greek Linguistics, Reading, September 1993 / [edited by] Irene Philippaki-Warbuton, Katerina Nicolaidis, Maria Sifianou.

p. cm. -- (Amsterdam studies in the theory and history of linguistic science. Series IV, Current issues in linguistic theory, ISSN 0304-0763 ; v. 117)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

1. Greek language, Modern--Grammar--Congresses. I. Philippaki-Warbuton, Irene. II. Nicolaidis, Katerina. III. Sifianou, Maria. IV. Title. V. Series.

PA1057.I58 1993

489'.3--dc20

ISBN 90 272 3620 8 (Eur.) / 1-55619-571-0 (US) (alk. paper)

94-38050

CIP

© Copyright 1994 - John Benjamins B.V.

No part of this book may be reproduced in any form, by print, photoprint, microfilm, or any other means, without written permission from the publisher.

John Benjamins Publishing Co. • P.O.Box 75577 • 1070 AN Amsterdam • The Netherlands  
John Benjamins North America • P.O.Box 27519 • Philadelphia, PA 19118 • USA

# ANCIENT GREEK DIALECTS IN NORTHERN GREECE

ANNA B. PANAYOTOU

*Research Centre for Greek & Roman Antiquity,  
The National Hellenic Research Foundation, Athens  
University of Cyprus*

## 1. Introduction

Studies on dialects in Macedonia, that is to say the region to the East of Epirus and to the North of Thessaly, face two different problems: on the one hand, there is a lack of early epigraphical evidence before the second half of the 6th c. B.C.; on the other hand, there is comparatively little information from the ancient authors.

The poor epigraphical evidence as well as the known political problem, though it only emerged during the 19th c., contributed to the misunderstanding of the linguistic history of the area and had a disproportionately negative effect on the history of the region in antiquity.

The purpose of this paper is, therefore, to: (a) present the epigraphical material earlier than the 4th c. B.C. from this region and attempt a historical interpretation, and (b) propose a final reconstruction of the linguistic history of the whole area.

Inscriptions on coins, where they exist, are given as supplementary material. Cities exclusively represented by this kind of material are not taken into consideration, partly because we can not always check the readings, and partly because in most cases the precise date is still subject to continuous redefinition by the experts.

As far as Chalcidice is concerned, a conscientious effort is being made by the archaeologists, who work in the region, to supplement the little we know from ancient authors about the colonisation of the peninsula with archaeological and epigraphical evidence.

In earlier articles (Panayotou 1990; specifically on Akanthos, 1991) I attempted the following: (1) a description of the alphabets used in Chalcidice; (2) an assessment of attested dialects, and (3) an evaluation of the influence of the Attic Koine on the local dialects. In the present paper, I shall try to examine epigraphical material from other sites also, in order to complete the picture of the use of the script and to sketch the linguistic evolution of Chalcidice up to the end

of the 5th c. B.C.

## 2. *The problem of Macedonia*

The problem of Macedonia proper is more complex. There has been a complete absence of dialect texts from this area until recently, or indeed of any document earlier than the beginning of the 4th c. B.C., with the exception of inscriptions on royal coins of the 5th c. After c. 400 B.C. the texts that do begin to appear, are, as far as we can judge, written in the *Koine*; this fact, taken together with the political problem, has given rise to the question whether the language spoken by the ancient Macedonians was originally a Greek dialect. I believe that part of the problem was created by the modern historiography. When dealing with the various spheres of Macedonian antiquity, most historians examine this region as a self-contained and hermetically sealed entity, hardly related to the surrounding geographical space (with the exception of the presumed, purely gratuitous, linguistic relations with the Illyrians or the Thracians). The same approach is also used in the case of Chalcidice, and of the district near the mouth of the Strymon river. Yet, not only were the Macedonians neighbours of the Chalcidians from as early as at least the end of the 6th c., but together with them they formed part of the Persian Empire in Europe from the end of the 6th c. to the end of the Persian Wars.

In the 6th c. B.C., a period during which all the sites investigated in the Chalcidice provide an abundance of good Corinthian pottery, the texts are written in the Corinthian alphabet. The centre of diffusion of the alphabet of these texts seems to have been Potidaia, a Corinthian colony, which imported and, I believe, exported Corinthian vases to the surrounding area.<sup>1</sup> Texts in the Corinthian alphabet were found in nearby Olynthos,<sup>2</sup> a city of the Bottiaians down to 479 B.C. according to Herodotus (VIII:127); they were also found at the neighbouring sanctuary in modern Sane<sup>3</sup> or further afield at Karabournaki.<sup>4</sup>

It is difficult to assess the geographical distribution of other dialects in the Chalcidice during the 6th c. because of the lack of more or less securely dated texts, with the exception of a graffito from Akanthos,<sup>5</sup> a colony of Andros according to Thucydides (IV. 84. 1) or a joint colony of Andros and Chalcis according to Plutarch (*Greek Questions*, 30); despite the absence of characteristic

<sup>1</sup> Inscription on a helmet, perhaps from Potidaia, dated variously between 575-500 B.C., Jeffery and Johnston (1990:479) no. A.

<sup>2</sup> Funerary monument, 500-480 B.C., Jeffery and Johnston (1990:363-364, 369), no. 12; funerary monument, 500-480 B.C., Jeffery and Johnston (1990:363-364, 369) no. 13, 415, pl. 70/13.

<sup>3</sup> Dedication on a crater, c. 550 B.C., SEG 38, 667A; graffito, 550-525 B.C.(?), SEG 38, 667B.

<sup>4</sup> Graffito on the base of a skyphos, end of the 6th /first quarter of the 5th c. B.C. in my opinion, Vokotopoulou (1993:75) no. 6, ph.

<sup>5</sup> Panayotou (1991:128) no. 1, pl. VIII/4.

letters, this text seems to reflect the mixed alphabet of the colony, with Cycladic and Euboic characters.

A 6th c. B.C. text in the Parian alphabet and dialect from Amphipolis<sup>6</sup> was found in the area of the settlement that existed on this site before the foundation of the Athenian colony. This text appears to be a rather isolated document from the point of view of its dialect, due to the failure of the Parians to establish themselves permanently in this region. Nor does it seem likely, at least in the present state of our knowledge, that Thasos, itself a Parian colony, made any significant contribution to the spread of the script in the western part of its mainland territory.

One of the three documents from the area of modern Therme, if it is indeed a fragment of an inscription and not a trademark, is perhaps to be dated to the second half of the 6th c. B.C.<sup>7</sup>

At this point, we should mention the impact of a major historical problem concerning Macedonia proper, connected again with the views of certain historians on Macedonian history in Archaic period: on the basis of the rich material from the excavations of the cemeteries of the late Archaic period at Aiiane, Pydna, Aigai (modern), Sindos (modern), Therme, Ayia Paraskevi, to mention only those that have been more or less adequately published, the excavators believe that there was a cultural uniformity in matters relating to funerary customs. On the contrary, many of the historians who are concerned with Macedonia ignore the archaeological evidence and refuse stubbornly to see Macedonians and Macedonian centres in these sites before about 450 B.C. In consequence, all epigraphical material from regions outside Chalcidice and Amphipolis prior to the middle of the 5th c. is ignored by many scholars, despite the fact that there is explicit historical evidence to support the presence of Macedonians east of the Axios river (Herodotus V:94), which some historians attempt to argue their way around, unsuccessfully I believe.

In the 5th c. B.C. most inscribed objects from Chalcidice are written either in the eastern Ionic, in the Euboic, in one of the Cycladic, or in the Attic alphabet. In some cases it seems that alphabets are used indiscriminately, which perhaps indicates familiarity with different cultural trends. Or is it the case that these varied influences reflect the frequent changes of masters or political camps during the course of the turbulent 5th c. B.C.? The use of the Attic alphabet was at some time due (or at least we assume that it was due) to Athenian domination, or to the presence of Athenian cleruchs, but commercial exchanges, or contacts with Athenian soldiers cannot be ruled out; neither can the presence of worshippers at important sanctuaries. In any case, the language of the inscriptions, whether of public character or not, is usually Ionic. As argued elsewhere (Panayotou

<sup>6</sup>SEG 27, 249.

<sup>7</sup>Graffito, Tiverios (1990:72) pl. 3.

1990:225), the influence of the Attic *Koine* on this Ionic dialect becomes evident as early as the second half of the 5th c. B.C.

The inscriptions in the Corinthian alphabet do not, it seems, survive the Persian Wars for a number of historical reasons which are probably related to the decline of Potidaia and, to a lesser degree, of Corinth.

At Amphipolis, the scarcity of inscriptions is responsible for the fragmentary picture that we have of the language and the alphabet(s) used. The two texts dating from the 5th c. are written in the Eastern Ionic alphabet,<sup>8</sup> and one of the two, unfortunately not precisely dated, is also in the Ionic dialect. From the period of almost fifteen years during which Amphipolis was an Athenian colony, there is, so far, no certain epigraphical evidence. The only indirect testimony of the Athenian presence are the public documents of the 4th c. B.C. in which the influence of the Attic *Koine* is clearer than, for example, in the contemporary public documents (in both cases deeds of sale) from Olynthos.

In Macedonia we now have some pieces of the puzzle, where three years ago we knew almost nothing.

With the exception of the graffito on the strigil from Trebeniste which must be war booty (to judge from the Boeotian, in my opinion, unless Thessalian, alphabet and formula used)<sup>9</sup> and of a seal on the strigil from Demir Kapija,<sup>10</sup> most of the other documents from the 5th c. are, strangely, in an eastern Ionic alphabet: at least one of the four texts from Aiane; an owner's graffito which is dated by the excavator to the beginning of the century;<sup>11</sup> the funerary inscription from Pella which is probably dated to the first quarter of the century;<sup>12</sup> the inscribed ring from about 475-440 B.C. from Sindos; and the royal coins which have characteristic letters.<sup>13</sup>

I hesitate to make use of the evidence of the city mints, that of Ichnai for example, because some of these suffer from insecure datings, or rather await a historical framework to which they could be assigned. Dr. K. Liambi (personal communication), a specialist of the region, believes all the coinage issued by the cities or by the tribes of the area are dated to the end of the 6th/beginning of the 5th c., that is, immediately after the Persian expansion into the southern Balkans; the style, iconography and weight standards reveal strong Ionic influence. Distinct Ionic features have also been detected in contemporary Macedonian art, for example, in the clay protomes found at Aigai. If this is considered in

<sup>8</sup>Graffito on a sherd containing a list of names, c. 450 B.C., Vanderpool (1965:46-47) fig. 3, pl. 47; fragment of an inscription written in eastern Ionic alphabet and dialect, SEG 35, 704.

<sup>9</sup>Early 5th c. B.C., SEG 38, 719.

<sup>10</sup>(Late?) 5th c. B.C., SEG 38, 602.

<sup>11</sup>Karametrou-Menteside (1993:78-79) fig. 21.

<sup>12</sup>SEG 38, 647.

<sup>13</sup>Brixhe and Panayotou (1988:248) attribute the eastern Ionic *xi* on Alexander's I issues to the influence of Akanthos which can now be explained in this context.

combination with the emerging picture of the dissemination of the Ionic alphabet (and to some degree of the Ionic dialect), we perhaps have an explanation for the presence of the eastern Ionic alphabet in the Persian Empire, which appears to have respected (or have been indifferent to) the linguistic variety of its subjects. It should not be forgotten, moreover, that of the Greek-speaking subjects of the Persian Empire the Ionians occupied a dominant cultural position. The Ionic dialect found fertile ground in one part of the area under examination, Chalcidice, because it was overlaid on an Ionic speaking substratum; yet it did not decisively change the dialect map of the region, nor could it have done so, for the 'imported' eastern and the 'local' central and western Ionic dialects were branches of the same tree. This was also true of the alphabet: eastern Ionic, differed from the dominant Euboic, but it appears that literacy was not very widespread through the Greek-speaking North and so there was room for the development of an imported code; the Chalcidians, of course, would have been familiar with this on account of the close commercial relations between Chalcidice and Ionia. At Amphipolis, where apparently there were no Greek speakers before the end of the 6th c. B.C., the influence of the eastern Ionic alphabet and dialect appears to have been more permanent. This historical framework can also explain the scattered elements of eastern Ionic in the language of the inscriptions of Olynthos, which survive through the 4th c. B.C.

The thirty years of the Persian rule were succeeded from 477 B.C. onwards by at least fifty years of strong Athenian presence under the guise of the first Athenian League, which, as far as we can judge, left traces varying in intensity from city to city. We cannot follow these traces in the alphabet for very long: after 403 Athens itself adopted the Milesian alphabet and in the 4th c. the rest of the Greek world made the same choice. As for the local dialects, to the extent that they were still being used by that date, they continued to be written in the Milesian alphabet until about the middle of the 4th c. B.C.

In Macedonia the Ionic influence on the language and the script was less permanent. The local dialect, which is related to the north-west dialects, was hardly written down at all before the adoption of the Attic Koine as an official written language, sometime during the first forty years of the 4th c. B.C.

### 3. *Conclusion*

In this paper I tried to achieve a synthesis of the data of the epigraphical material and to propose an interpretation for the existence of various alphabets and dialects in the area under examination.

The scanty documents from the 6th c. B.C. are mainly in the Corinthian alphabet and refer to the commercial strength of Potidaia. From the beginning of the 5th c. B.C. we have evidence in Macedonia proper and in Chalcidice, both under Persian control, of a fairly significant spread of the eastern Ionic alphabet, which, I believe, was the result of the prominence of the eastern Greeks within

the Persian Empire.

## REFERENCES

- Brixhe, Claude & Panayotou, Anna. 1988. "L'atticisation de la Macédoine: l'une des sources de la koiné". *Verbum* 11:3-4. 245-260.
- Jeffery, Lilian & Alan Johnston. 1990. *The Local Scripts of Archaic Greece*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Karametrou-Menteside, Georgia. 1993. "Excavation at Aiani". *To Archaialogiko Ergo sti Makedonia ke Thraki* 4. 75-92.
- Panayotou, Anna. 1990. "Des dialectes à la koiné: l'exemple de la Chalcidique". *Poikila Meletimata* 10. 191-228.
- , 1991. "Textes d'Acanthos d'époques archaïque et classique". *Helenika Symmikta: Histoire, Archéologie, Epigraphie* ed. by Paul Goukowsky & Claude Brixhe, 127-132, pl. VIII. Nancy: Presses Universitaires.
- SEG Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum*.
- Tiverios, Michel. 1990. "Restes dun sanctuaire prehellenique au bord du golfe thermaïque". *Mneme D. Lazaridi. Praktika Archaialogikou Synedriou* 1986. Thessaloniki.
- Vanderpool, Eugene. 1965. "Appendix". *Studies in Ancient Greek Topography I* ed. by Kendrick W. Pritchett. Berkeley: University of California Publications.
- Vokotopoulou, Julia. 1993. *La civilisation grecque: Macédoine, royaume d'Alexandre le Grand*. Athènes.