

Ofitika Pontic: A report on the dialect and its people*

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1. THE PRESENT SITUATION

1.1. General overview

1.1.1. Language¹

Ofitika Pontic (OP): Greek dialect of Asia Minor which belongs to the Pontic dialect group and is spoken in Greece and in Turkey.

- Greece: After the Greek-Turkish population exchange in the late 1920s and afterward, it is spoken by refugees of the Ophis/Of area who settled in Nea Trapezounta (Pieria, North Greece) and a few other areas such as in Paranesti Dramas and in Thessaloniki. In Asia Minor, it was spoken in the villages of Chaldi, Zourel, Kurits, Krinita, Kofkia, Giga, Zisino and Lekka. It is closer to the variety of Sourmena than to other Pontic varieties.

OP has shriveled under the unfriendly to all dialectal varieties policy followed by the Greek state and the Greek education system which first imposed the use of a purist form of Greek (*katharevousa*) and much later promoted the use demotic Greek (*dhemotiki*). All Pontic varieties, including OP, were pervasively influenced by demotic Greek and progressively formed an amalgamated form of Pontic, called Koine Pontic (*koini pontiaki*). OP is preserved in a few isolated pockets in the province of Macedonia (Northern Greece) where is it primarily spoken by older generation speakers.

- Turkey (Pontus): It is spoken in thirty or so villages in the provinces of Ophis and Çaykara (Mackridge 1995: 153, 1999: 101). Since the nineteenth century, most speakers in these areas were bilingual (OP and Turkish). It is reported that the OP spoken in Pontus has been eroded by Turkish (Mackridge 1999: 102).

1.1.2. Number of speakers

Population numbers approximately 553 people living in the village. Number of speakers is 99% of village population. In urban areas, it is hardly spoken anymore. In total, we estimate perhaps 20 speakers of varying fluency.

1.1.3. Locations

(a) Primary location: OP speaker population is primarily located in the following villages:

- Nea Trapezounta, Pieria, central Macedonian, northern Greece
- Paranesti Dramas, Philota Amyntaiou, Kria Vrissi, eastern Macedonian, northern Greece

(b) Other areas: OP speaker populations (numbers unknown) may also be found in

- Katerini, Thessaloniki
- Neighboring villages with mixed Pontic population as well as other Greek ethnicities (e.g. Aromounian Vlachs, Northern Greeks, etc.)

* The present report heavily relies on *the Language Contact Questionnaire* made available by John Bowden for the workshop *On Language Contact* (<http://rspas.anu.edu.au/linguistics/projects/Conferences/EastNusantara/ContactQuest.html>) at the 2000 *East Nusantara Linguistics Workshop* organized by the Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University, in Canberra (21-23 July 2000).

¹ We wish to thank Mr. Ioannis Megalopoulos for his help in various points of this research.

1.1.4. Bilingualism/Bidialectism

- Standard Greek (SG): most speakers of OP are fluent speakers of SG
- Koine Pontic (KP): most speakers of OP speak a standardized Pontic dialect, known as *Koine Pontic* (henceforth KP). KP developed in Greece after Pontic people from different areas of Pontus settled in various geographical zones of Greece and primarily in Macedonia in the late 20s and onwards. The need to communicate in their language and, more importantly, the desire to pass on the ancestral language and culture to the new generation, led to the creation of KP. This homogenous form of Pontic preserves many of the characteristics of the independent varieties it originates from, but it also exhibits several characteristics that it inherited from the ambient language, i.e. *dhemotiki*.
- Turkish: A few OP people are bilingual (OP – Turkish). Although they avoid the use of Turkish in everyday communication, they use it as a ‘code’ language when the interlocutors do not wish to disclose the content of their conversation to third parties.

OP and its speakers:

- Older Ophis Pontic people (age range: 70+) tend to be more fluent in OP than in SG.
- Other generations (age range 50-70 and 35-50) are increasingly monolingual in SG but they are also familiar with KP.
- Young OP people (age range 20-35) are monolingual in SG although they seem to have a passive knowledge of KP and/or OP.

1.1.5. Contact

Most Ophis Pontic people dwelling in Nea Trapezounta still live quiet lives as tobacco farmers. For the past decade, young children have to transport to neighboring villages for their education where they come in contact with peers of different dialectal background (other Pontic varieties, Aromounian, Northern Greek and of course Standard Greek). Most travel is restricted to Katerini, the capital city of the prefecture, and other neighboring areas. The distance of the village to Katerini is approximately 15 km. Travel to Thessaloniki, the biggest city of Northern Greece, is also regular in the past few years.

OP people are in contact with the following language/dialect groups:

- Other Pontic groups
- Aromounian Vlachs (speaking a Romance dialect profoundly influenced by Greek)
- Northern Greeks (speaking a Greek dialect characterized by dramatic vowel deletion/reduction processes)

1.1.6. Marriage patterns.

Historically, Ophis Pontic people married people of their own ethnic line, but village and ethnolinguistic group exogamy has dramatically increased since they settled in Greece.

1.1.7. Religious affiliation

Ophis Pontic people living in Greece are Christian. The ones dwelling in Turkey are Muslims.

1.2. Language use

Details are given below for the Nea Trapezounta village and the city of Katerini which depict a range of linguistic situations and language fluency and use. The following abbreviations are used:

- OP Ofitika Pontic
- SG Standard Greek
- KP Koine Pontic
- T Turkish
- OP/T switching between Ofitika Pontic and Turkish with preference for Ofitika Pontic

- OP/SG switching between Ofitika Pontic and Standard Greek with preference for Ofitika Pontic
- SG/OP switching between Standard Greek and Ofitika Pontic with preference for Standard Greek

Situation	Nea Trapezounta	Katerini	Ophis (Turkey)
1. At home?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ adults 70+: OP ▪ adults 50-70: OP/SG ▪ adults 35-50: SG/OP ▪ young adults & children: SG 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ adults 70+: KP or SG ▪ adults 50-70: KP or SG ▪ adults 35-50: SG ▪ young adults & children: SG 	unknown
2. Between adult women when working together.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ between OP women: OP/SG (depending on the age group) ▪ between OP when non-OP resident is present: SG or KP (depending on the ethnicity of the interlocutor) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ between OP women: KP or SG (depending on the age group) ▪ between OP when non-OP resident is present: SG or KP (depending on age and the ethnicity of the interlocutor) 	unknown
3. Between adult men when working together.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ between OP men: OP/SG (depending on the age group) ▪ between OP men when non-OP resident is present: SG or Koine Pontic (depending on the ethnicity of the interlocutor) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ between OP men: KP or SG (depending on the age group) ▪ between OP men when non-OP resident is present: SG or KP (depending on the age group and the ethnicity of the interlocutor) 	unknown
4. Between children when playing together.	SG	SG	unknown
5. When buying something at a local store/market.	OP or SG (depending on the age group)	SG or KP (depending on the ethnicity of the interlocutor)	unknown
6. In a classroom, between teacher and student?	SG	SG	unknown
7. Outside school, between teacher and student?	SG	SG	unknown
8. Informally, between a government representative and another local adult.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ OP representative: OP/KP ▪ non-OP representative: SG or KP (depending on the ethnicity of the interlocutor) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ OP representative: SG or KP (older people) ▪ non-OP representative: SG or KP (older people) 	unknown
9. At public meeting, between a government representative and another local adult.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ OP representative: SG/OP ▪ non-OP representative: SG or KP (older people) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ OP representative: SG or KP (older people) ▪ non-OP representative: SG or KP (older people) 	unknown
10. At a public ceremony such as a wedding, in formal speech?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ adults 70+: OP or KP ▪ others: SG/KP or OP or just SG 	SG or KP (older people)	unknown
11. At a public ceremony such as a wedding, informally, between guests?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ adults 70+: OP or KP ▪ others: SG/KP or OP or just SG 	SG or KP (older people)	unknown
12. In church (or at a mosque)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ adults 70+: OP or KP ▪ others: SG/KP or OP or just SG 	SG or KP (older people)	unknown
13. What language do adults typically address young children in when giving them orders?	SG/OP or KP (age range 35-70) OP (age group 70+)	SG or KP (older people)	unknown

1.3. Code mixing

Factors which variously may trigger code-mixing and/or code-switching include:

- level of fluency of speaker
- level of fluency of interlocutor/s
- knowledge of OP lexicon, phonology and morpho-syntax
- presence of speakers of other dialects
- presence of KP and/or SG speakers
- form of social gathering esp. events in commemoration of the ancestors and the lost countries (e.g. memorial day of the Pontic Greek genocide, Dormition of the Theotokos, etc.)

2. PAST LINGUISTIC CONTACT

2.1. Contact languages

2.1.1. Contact languages

Turkish, Arabic, Armenian, Persian

2.1.2. Bilingual in the lingua franca

d.n.a.

2.1.3. Past use of lingua franca

d.n.a.

3. RESOURCES

A few scattered pieces of information on Ofitika Pontic can be found in several Pontic grammars such as Papadopoulos (1955) and Oikonomides (1958). The researcher Ioannis Parcharidis visited the Ophis area in 1876 and provided a detailed description of the local dialect to M. Deffner. On the basis of this material, several publications on OP were made possible: Deffner (1878, 1880), Parcharidis (1888) and Mackridge (1987). Mackridge (1995, 1999) provides short, yet meticulous reviews of the research on OP spoken in Pontus. Asan (1996, 1998) is an invaluable source for the language and culture of the Ophis area although linguistically not always a reliable one (Mackridge 1999: 101). Under the auspices of the cultural society “Alexandros Ypsilantis” (Nea Trapezounta, Pieria), Dr. Anthi Revithiadou (University of the Aegean) and Dr. Vassilios Spyropoulos (University of the Aegean) and their team started in May 2003 a research project for the collection and analysis of spoken data of OP spoken in the village of Nea Trapezounta. The linguistic material was gathered during several fieldwork trips in the area from May 2003 till September 2006 and was organized into a corpus. The data are based on the speech of 2 monolingual speakers of Ofitika Pontic and 14 speakers who use their dialect in everyday communication but, nevertheless, have an active knowledge of KP and SG as well.

The researcher Maria-Anna Tiliopoulou is currently writing a PhD Thesis on the phonological and morpho-syntactic structure of OP clitics. The project is expected to be completed in January 2008.

4. THE GRAMMATICAL SYSTEM

4.1. Phonology

4.1.1. OP phonology

The information provided here is based on [Vassilis Efrimidis](#)' website

(a) OP consonants

- $\gamma \rightarrow k / \# _ :$

(1)		<u>OP</u>	<u>KP</u>	
	a.	kavál	γavál	'flute, pipe'
	b.	karí	γarí	'spouse'
	c.	konévo	yonévo	'set up'

(b) OP vowels

- absence of unstressed high vowel reduction which is common in other Pontic dialects:

(2)		<u>OP</u>	<u>KP</u>	
	a.	vasílis	vasílts	'Vassilis'
	b.	xamális	xamáltts	'porter, servant'
	c.	γráfis	γráftts	'write-PRES.2SG'
	d.	éyrafunes	éyrafnes	'write-PAST.2SG'

- absence of vowel deletion in determiner + noun/adjective strings which takes place in KP:

(3)		/o aγathoklís	kimáte/	
		the Agathokles	sleep-PRES.3SG	
		'Agathokles is sleeping'		
	a.	[o aγathoklís cimáte]	<i>OP</i>	
	b.	[aγathoklís cimáte]	<i>KP</i>	

- there is no three-syllable window restriction on stress:

(4)	a.	éyrafame	
		write-PAST.1PL	
		'we were writing'	
	b.	épezame	
		play-PAST.1PL	
		'we were playing'	
	c.	ékoftame	
		cut-PAST.1PL	
		'we were cutting'	
	d.	epé(j)iname	
		become of-PAST.1PL	
		'we were becoming of'	

4.1.2. Phonological contact

☒ SG
to be filled in

☒ T
to be filled in

☒ Other dialects/languages
to be filled in

4.2. Morphology

4.2.1. OP Morphology

The information provided here is based on [Vassilis Efrimidis](#)' website

▪ the nominative and accusative singular of nouns ending in *-os* (masc) and *-o* (neuter) do not take the final /n/ like other pontic dialects and KP:

(5)		<u>OP</u>	<u>KP</u>	
	a.	o ðéskalo	o ðéskalon	'the teacher'
	b.	to moró	to morón	'the baby'

▪ the genitive singular form is /-í(u)/ and causes often stress shifts:

(6)		NOM.SG	GEN.SG	
	a.	ánthropo	anθropí	'man'
	b.	zímetro	zimetrí	'wooden basin for kneading the dough'

▪ the form for genitive plural is lacking and the functions associated with genitive are expressed analytically:

(7)	a.	to tertíp	ndo	éxune	i	anθróp	<i>OP</i>
		the system-NOM.SG	PRN-ACC.SG	have-PRES.3PL		the people-PL	
		'The system that people have'					
	b.	t anθropíon	to tertíp				<i>KP</i>
		the people-GEN.PL	the system-NOM.SG				
		'people's system'					

▪ diminutives are formed with the ending /-ika/ (fem) in singular and /-íkas/ (neuter) in plural:

(8)		<u>base</u>	<u>dim.singular</u>	<u>dim.plural</u>	
	a.	o γájðaro (masc)	i γajðuríka (fem)	ta γajðuríkas (neut)	'the donkey'
	b.	to trapéz (neut)	i trapezíka	ta trapezíkas	'the table'
	c.	i patsí (fem)	i patsíka	ta patsíðjas	'the girl'

4.2.2. Morphological contact

☒ SG
to be filled in

☒ T
to be filled in

☒ Other dialects/languages
to be filled in

4.3. Syntax

4.3.1. OP Syntax

▪ weak pronominal forms are enclitics. The following examples are drawn from Tiliopoulou and Revithiadou's corpus of Ofitika Pontic.

- (9) a. *xánanatá* /xánane ata/ PXII29
lose-PRES.3PL=cl.3PL.ACC
'they were losing them'
- b. *lésmasé* /lés (e)mas/ PEI32
tell-PRES.2SG=cl.1PL.ACC
'you tell us'
- c. *thélisme* /thélis (e)me/ TEI18
want-PRES.2SG=cl.1SG.ACC
'you want me'
- d. *azléosasé* /as léo (e)sas/ KEFSII31
SUBJ tell-1SG=cl.2PL.ACC
'let me tell you'

Note: *e*-epenthesis and final stress in some enclitics, e.g. (9b-c) usually develops when the verb+clitic construction is in phrase final position.

▪ NEGATION: *ucéna* (ουκενά), *cená* instead of *kiθá* in other Pontic dialects (This information is based on [Vassilis Efrimidis](#)' website):

- (10) a. (u)céna trós
NEG eat-2SG
'you don't/ won't eat'
- b. céna yráfo
NEG write-1SG
'I don't/won't write'

4.3.2. Syntactic contact

☒ SG

▪ Under the influence of SG, weak pronominal forms as proclitics are often common in the speech of some at least OP speakers:

- (11) a. θα *ta* anakatépsis /θα ta anakatépsis/ EAI7
 FUT cl.3PL.ACC stir-2SG
 ‘you will stir them up’
- b. *tus* ένγυλαν /tus ένγυλαν/ MAII4
 cl.3PL.ACC take out-PAST.3PL
 ‘they took them out’

☒ Turkish

▪ yes/no questions are formed with the question particle *mi* (This information is based on [Vassilis Efraimidis](#)’ website):

- (12) a. (u)céna trós mi
 NEG eat-2SG Q-PART
 ‘don’t you eat?’
- b. céna devájs mi
 NEG read-2SG Q-PART
 ‘don’t you read?’

☒ Other dialects/languages
to be filled in

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Website: Vassilis Efraimidis, <http://www.ofis.gr/Glossa.htm>

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