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Georges Drettas, *Aspects pontiques*, Association de recherches pluridisciplinaires

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ἔρευνα. Ἄς μοῦ ἐπιτρέψει νὰ προσθέσω καὶ τὸ πάθος. Γιὰ τὸν Βρυώνη ἢ βυζαντινὴ, σελτζουκικὴ καὶ ὀθωμανικὴ Μικρὰ Ἀσία ἦταν ἡ πρώτη ἀγάπη ποὺ ποτὲ δὲν ἔφυγε ἀπὸ κοντὰ του. Τὸ ἐλληνικὸ κοινὸ, πάντα εὐαίσθητο στὶς μνημεις τῆς Μικρᾶς Ἀσίας, ἔχει πλέον τὴ δυνατότητα νὰ διαβάσει στὴ γλώσσα του ἓνα μεγάλο ἱστορικὸ βιβλίο.

ANNA ABPAMEA

Georges Drettas, *Aspects pontiques*, Association de recherches pluridisciplinaires, Παρίσι 1997, σσ. XXVIII + 790.

This peculiarly titled volume is largely a grammar of the Pontic dialect of Greek as it is spoken today in Greece. At last, more than seventy years after their expulsion from their homeland, we have a comprehensive, reliable and systematically presented description of the language of the Pontic Greeks which will enable Pontologist working on particular subdialects to see what distinguishes them from the generality.

Drettas' study is a complement to R.M. Dawkins' study of the Cappadocian dialects, *Modern Greek in Asia Minor* (Cambridge, 1916). Between them, these two books provide a comprehensive description of the chief Greek dialects of Asia Minor. Dawkins carried out his linguistic fieldwork in Cappadocia in 1909-1911, at a crucial juncture shortly before the Orthodox Christians of the region were expelled and scattered in various parts of Greece, where their dialects gradually died out. In 1914 Dawkins began fieldwork in Pontus. «When I was caught up by the outbreak of the war in 1914», he wrote later in an unpublished memoir, «I was beginning what I hoped to be a series of visits to Pontus for the purpose of a similar book on Pontic; it has always been a deep regret to me that this was made impossible». The outbreak of the First World War forced him to leave Turkey, where he was never to return. At the same time the Christians of Pontus, both Orthodox and Armenian, began the ten years of their trials and tribulations which culminated in the Armenian genocide and the forcible removal of the Orthodox Christians to Greece. It is tragically significant that whereas the linguistic material collected by Dawkins, and

on which he based his grammatical and lexical analysis, consisted of fictional texts (chiefly local folk tales), the longest of the texts that Drettas chooses to provide as samples of his corpus is an autobiographical narrative of the experiences of a priest's wife from 1914 to 1924. Drettas has collected his material largely from one village, which he calls Chr., in the province of Almopia (whose chief town is Aridea) in northern Greek Macedonia. Most of his informants originate from a village near Gümüchane (sometimes known in Greek as Argyroupolis) in the old province of Chaldia, in the Pontic Alps.

Pontic and Cypriot are the most important modern Greek dialects in terms of both their distinctive character and the number of their speakers. While Dawkins' treatment of his Cappadocian material is now distinctly old-fashioned from a linguistic point of view, the most modern and comprehensive analysis of a modern Greek dialect up to now has been *Cypriot Greek: its Phonology and Inflections* (The Hague, 1972) by the late Brian Newton. Unlike Dawkins, who was trained as a Classical philologist and archaeologist, Newton was a professional linguist who subjected his Cypriot material to a thorough generative analysis in *Cypriot Greek*. [His other book on Greek, *The Generative Interpretation of Dialect: a Study of Modern Greek Phonology* (Cambridge, 1972), is the only study of the dialects of Greece and Cyprus that manages to make sense of the bewildering and often unreliable material collected over the previous century by various amateur linguists; Newton brilliantly demonstrates that the phonological structures of these dialects—he ignores Tsakonian and the dialects originating from outside Greece and Cyprus—form an intricate but regular pattern that I, at least, find quite beautiful to observe.]

Drettas, unlike Newton, is not a generativist but an adherent of the French school of «functional grammar». This approach analyses linguistic phenomena according to their function in what he calls their «discursive reality» (p. 265). This leads him to base his study chiefly on a corpus of material he has recorded himself and to focus more on the function of linguistic items than on their form, even though he also devotes considerable attention to the study of the sound system and provides a full account of declension and conjugation patterns.

Drettas' study has entailed a radical rethinking of Pontic grammar (and modern Greek grammar in general) in which nothing is taken for granted; for example, he rightly dismisses Anthimos Papadoulos' categorization of

eastern Pontic among the «semi-northern» dialects of modern Greek, and he challenges the categorial claim by earlier authors concerning the obligatory omission of the definite article before a vowel. Every phenomenon is subjected to ruthless scrutiny, re-theorization and re-interpretation, with a concomitant challenge to the views of earlier authors. This means that there is a certain amount of «re-inventing the wheel» and much highly technical discussion of the complexities of linguistic theory (almost entirely based on French schools of linguistics) involving fussy details that apply equally to the description of all languages in general. Oddly, in his attempt to analyse Pontic as a linguistic system, Drettas usually ignores Common Modern Greek; Pontic presents a huge number of features that coincide with standard Greek, and it would have been kinder to his readers to have made more comparisons and contrasts with the standard language with which they are likely to be more familiar.

Some readers will be shocked that Drettas does not use the Greek alphabet in his analysis of his Pontic material. In fact, though, his transcription system (which uses the Latin alphabet with the addition of a few symbols from the International Phonetic Alphabet to represent sounds that cannot be otherwise represented by a single letter) allows a meticulous attention to phonetic detail that has been obscured by the use of the Greek alphabet (with a number of special diacritics) in older studies. Nevertheless, there is some inconsistency in the system of transcription, which is neither fully phonetic nor fully phonemic. Thus he always transcribes [nd] as *nt* (e.g. *panta* – I am omitting the symbol for stress, which is not needed in this review), yet he provides no explicit rule stating that *nt* is pronounced *nd*). Conversely, [sm] is always transcribed as *zm* (as in *pinazmenos*), whereas there is no explicit statement that /s/ is voiced to [z] before a voiced consonant. This inconsistency appears to be the result of a capricious determination to avoid any contact with generative grammar.

Even though Drettas' analysis is hardly user-friendly, it is well worth persevering with for the wealth of his material and the subtlety of the linguistic insights that he brings to it. Unlike previous scholars, Drettas is acutely aware that the geographical position of Pontic makes it incumbent on the Pontologist to search for traces of the possible influence of other languages spoken in the region before the arrival of Turkish, including Armenian and the south Caucasian (Kartvelian) languages (Laz, Georgian and Mingrelian). He notes that the Pontic suffix *-ava*, used to denote the wife

of the man to whose name it is attached, is probably from Mingrelian. Yet he also points out some of the basic differences: for example, that Pontic preserves the Greek case and gender system (albeit significantly altered) whereas none of the neighbouring languages has a system of genders and cases.

In a work of this size there is ample space for the generous treatment of the remarkable complexities of Pontic, which differentiate it from the other Greek dialects and also make it very difficult for non-native-speakers to learn. One of these is the extraordinary and bewildering variety of relative forms; whereas demotic Greek has a single relative (*pou*), Pontic possesses about ten, which are treated in full on pp. 347-368. Another area in which Pontic is markedly different from other Greek dialects, both ancient and modern, is in the expression of spatial relations. Here Drettas excels himself, devoting no fewer than 65 pages (pp. 449-513) to this complex phenomenon, which he characteristically relates to Pontic topography, with its complex reliefs of mountains and valleys (although, equally characteristically, he stops short of using the environmental factor as an *explanation* of the linguistic phenomenon). Pontic uses about fifty items that have traditionally been classified as adverbs of place, both simple and compound, the latter allowing the complex, concise and very precise expression of spatial relations. Writing about the postposition *kjan*, Drettas writes that:

l'élément /kjan/ spécifie un mouvement ou une situation s'appliquant à des *volumes creux* en tant qu'il existe entre eux un rapport spatial qui se déroule dans un univers sans plans. Indépendamment de la position objective, c'est le *rapport de deux corps* (susceptibles de se pénétrer ou non) qui est marqué par le spécificateur /kjan/ (p. 499; his emphasis).

/Kjan/ does not mark a certain direction or orientation of the «up/down» type, he claims; rather,

il dessine des rapports d'enfoncement, de station ou d'émergence de corps évoluant dans un espace mou, non euclidien, où le trou ne représente que l'un des aspects possibles du volume (p. 500).

He concludes that (unlike, say, standard Greek or English) «the space verbalized in Pontic» cannot be represented visually in the form of diagrams (p. 503). I am not sure that I fully understand the intricacies of Drettas' explanation, but it is certainly suggestive, and it is quite unlike any

other explanation that has been offered before for these Pontic adverbs of place. The Pontic system of «markers of localization», as Drettas calls them, is quite unlike any other modern Greek dialect, and there is no intermediate dialect between Pontic and the rest in terms of the expression of spatial relations. Drettas suggests that in this respect too there may have been a convergence between Pontic and the Kartvelian languages, namely Laz and Georgian. [It is also extraordinary that the precise etymology of even certain adverbs whose senses are simple to explain, such as *ada* («here») and *ka* («down») is problematic, although it is obvious that they are of Greek origin.]

One remarkable aspect of Pontic is the reliance on loanwords from Turkish for the expression of logical relations (Pontic is similar to Laz and Kurdish in this respect), for which Pontic resorts to such terms as *ya... ya...* («either... or...»), *yahud* («or else»), *yoksa* («if not»), *çünkü* («because») and *mademki* («since, given that»). (Drettas seems to confuse expressions of cause, such as the last two just mentioned, with expressions of result, which are expressed by *aso* and are treated erroneously as expressions of cause on p. 426. He gives, for instance, the example *as-entoken entoken eskotosenaton* «He beat him so much that he killed him».) Turkish loans are also employed as what Drettas calls «particules logotaxiques», to call attention to some element in the speaker's discourse (these are very difficult to translate into, say, standard Greek or French or English), such as *barem* (Tk. *bari* «for once; at least», or, especially in Pontic, «it's as though»), *işte* («you see»), *zati* («as a matter of fact»), *demek* («that is to say»). These «logotaxic particles» have tended to drop out of the speech of the Pontians in Greece.

Finally, Drettas is also particularly good at dealing with the use of the postposed particle *pa* (as in *Ekints pa efayan i turk* «The Turks killed them»), which earlier scholars have had difficulty in explaining, particularly because there is no equivalent in standard Greek. He does so in terms of thematization (topicalization), which is a comparatively recent concept in linguistics.

But the title of Drettas' book is perhaps to be explained by the fact that he presents other aspects of Pontic culture besides grammar. The Introduction contains much information about Pontus, the Pontians, and the Pontic identity in Greece, including details about the inhabitants of the village where he collected most of his material. The texts which, with their

commentaries, cover 180 pages of the volume, have been chosen for the interest of their content as well as for the linguistic phenomena that they illustrate. The longest of these texts, which I have already alluded to, is the memory narrative of a *ποπαδία* who recalls her experiences of the years 1914-1924 in Pontus and her expulsion to Greece. The speaker, who is of course competent in standard Greek, was specifically asked to relate her reminiscences in Pontic, and despite the occasional use of words and phrases from standard Greek she was clearly able both to speak perfectly naturally and to keep her mother tongue separate from the standard language that she had learned on her arrival in Greece. Drettas' commentaries on the texts are aimed at providing the geographical, historical, social, economic, political and strategic context of the experiences related by his informants, and in general at making explicit the informants' oblique references to events. Thus, even though each word is accompanied by a linguistic analysis, in his commentaries Drettas treats the narratives as documents of oral history rather than of language. The longest narrative by the *ποπαδία* consists almost entirely of her eye-witness accounts of disease, famine, plunder and violence (including rape and murder) stretching over a period of ten years. These oral texts certainly present language being used in a living social context rather than an inert body being impassively dissected by the grammarian.

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Κωνσταντίνος Ε. Φωτιάδης, *Πηγές της ιστορίας του κρυπτοχριστιανικού προβλήματος*, Θεσσαλονίκη 1997.

Ὁ συγγραφέας, πανεπιστημιακὸς καθηγητῆς, στὴν πολυσέλιδη (σσ. 717) διδακτορικὴ του διατριβή (*Die Islamisierung Kleinasiens und die Kryptochristen des Pontos*, Dissertation, Τύμπινγκεν 1985), πού ὑπέβαλε στὸ Πανεπιστήμιο τοῦ Τύμπινγκεν, ἐρεῦνησε καὶ ἐξιστόρησε τὴ γένεση τοῦ κρυπτοχριστιανισμοῦ στὸν Πόντο, τὴν