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## Greek and Phrygian Interactions in the Neo-Phrygian Inscriptions: a Pragmatic and Sociolinguistic Analysis

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Interactions between Greek and Phrygian are well known, even beyond the phonological, morphological and syntactic isoglosses which show that Phrygian and Greek are genetically connected (De Lamberterie 2013). After many centuries of independent development, as evidenced by the Paleo-Phrygian corpus (9th – 4th centuries BCE, Brixhe & Lejeune 1984), the Macedonian invasion of Anatolia (334–333 BCE) intensified the interactions between Greek and Phrygian to the extent that Phrygians abandoned their epichoric alphabet and started using the Greek one to write in Phrygian (Roller 2018). In the Roman Era, after many centuries of ‘silence’, a new set of inscriptions exhibits the final attested phase of the language, known as Neo-Phrygian (1st – 3rd centuries AD, Haas 1966). This paper aims to demonstrate the status of Neo-Phrygian as a living language in the bilingual Greek/Neo-Phrygian inscriptions from a sociolinguistic perspective.

The formulaic character of the funerary Neo-Phrygian inscriptions containing curses against grave-robbers, usually accompanied by a summary translation in Greek, has led some to question whether Phrygian was actually still spoken in Anatolia during the Roman Era. Matzinger (2006: 191) compares the formulaic structure of these funerary inscriptions to the use of Latin *r(equiescat) i(n) p(ace)* in the Western world. Sowa (2016: 177–178) thinks of the Phrygian *formulae* as a sort of manifesto of local linguistic particularism, introduced in the inscriptions artificially. In a more extreme way, Tzitzilis (2013) seems to come to the conclusion that Neo-Phrygian, as a language itself, does not even exist, being in reality “an archaic Achaean dialect.” Either way, these scholars do not consider Neo-Phrygian a living language in the Roman Era.

In the case of Greek/Neo-Phrygian bilinguals, it is true that catalogs of *formulae* to be copied by the stonecutters existed and that the circumstances in which the stone was prepared must not be underestimated (Adams & Swain 2002: 7): e.g., a pre-existing Phrygian inscription with a later Greek translation. But, as stated by Brixhe (2002: 252), in all the verifiable cases, when the text is bilingual, the part in Greek and the one in Neo-Phrygian are engraved by the same hand. Writing several versions of the same text in different languages at the same time suggests in itself the coexistence of monolingual readers who are not able to understand the same version of the text, or at least the will to virtually reach different audiences. Thus, I argue that the simultaneity of the Greek and Phrygian halves of these inscriptions when both written by the same hand indicates that part of the population of Phrygia spoke only Neo-Phrygian, and therefore that it was a living language.

Inversely, I argue that inscription n° 96 (Haas 1966, mid-2nd century AD), uniquely in the Neo-Phrygian corpus, testifies to the existence of *at least* one bilingual Greek-Phrygian speaker. Indeed, the inscription prominently features code-switching, a notable manifestation of bilingualism in which a bilingual speaker introduces a completely unassimilated word or phrase from another language into his

speech. According to Poplack (1980: 586), above all in the frame of grammatically similar languages, code-switching tends to occur at points in the discourse where the juxtaposition of L<sub>1</sub> and L<sub>2</sub> elements does not violate a syntactic rule of either language. In this inscription, the protasis is in Greek, whereas the apodosis is in Neo-Phrygian:

Ὅς ἂν τούτῳ τῷ μνημείῳ κακῶς προσποιήσῃ ἢ τοῖς  
προγεγραμμένοις ὑπεναντίον τι πράξῃ, ΜΕ ΔΕΩΣ ΚΕ  
ΖΕΜΕΛΩΣ ΚΕ ΤΙ ΤΕΤΙΚΜΕΝΟΣ ΕΙΤΟΥ.

Whoever will damage this monument  
or does anything against previous orders,  
will be cursed / marked with infamy among gods and men.

After losing its prestige and becoming the language of a dominated people, Neo-Phrygian tended to be used almost solely in funerary contexts. It is true, from a pragmatic point of view, that curses against graverobbers pertain to the ritual speech, and so they are governed by strict formulation and/or sequencing rules (Bax 2010: 484–485; Strubbe 1997: XV). The choice to use Neo-Phrygian *formulae* in imprecations was surely due to a sense of Phrygian ethnic identity, as fidelity to ancestral language was perceived as the only way to effectively protect the tombs of the deceased from desecrators. But, unless a certain effect is achieved, a perlocutionary act is not successfully performed. If so, why use a language that could not be understood by the general population, the main target of the curses in the case of imprecations against graverobbers? The ‘magical’ action of the curse was perpetuated by the force of the words written in Neo-Phrygian, which were supposed to be understood in order to be effective.

Finally, one should not forget the ‘urban dimension’ of the distribution of Greek in Anatolia. According to Strabo (12, 8, 12–21), Central Phrygia was mostly a rural area in the 1st century AD. The largest cities were Laodikeia on the Lykos and Apameia. Roman colonies were not numerous and located in the periphery of the region, such as Germa in northern Galatia, Antioch of Pisidia in the south-west and Laodikeia Katakekaumene in the south-east. Throughout the region, there were only small villages, very poorly connected to each other because of an absolutely inadequate road system. If it is true, as reported by Socrates Scholasticus (*Hist. Eccl.*, 5, 23) that Selinas, bishop of Galatia, used to preach in Gothic and Phrygian to allow the peasants to understand his sermons, then the presence of a Phrygian monolingual population in the rural areas of Phrygia is attested still in the 5th century AD, confirming the existence of Phrygian as a living language in the Roman Era.

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