



PONTIC GREEK

Pontic Greek, is a form of the Greek language originally spoken in the Pontus area on the southern shores of the Black Sea, northeastern Anatolia, Eastern Turkish/Caucasus province of Kars, southern Georgia, and today mainly in northern Greece. Its speakers are referred to as Pontic Greeks or Pontian Greeks, although many Greeks mistakenly refer to some Pontic Greek speakers from Georgia as Russo-Ponti. The linguistic lineage of Pontic Greek stems from Ionic Greek via Koine and Byzantine Greek and contains influences from Georgian, Russian, Turkish and to a lesser extent, Persian (via Ottoman Turkish) and various Caucasian languages. Pontic is most closely related to Cappadocian Greek, and the Greek spoken in Mariupolis (and formerly in Crimea, Ukraine) (see Mariupolitan Greek).

NAME OF THE LANGUAGE
Historically the speakers of Pontic Greek called it Romeyka (Romeika), which, in a more general sense, is also a historical and colloquial term for the modern Greek language as a whole. When they wished to differentiate it from other forms of Greek, they called it Lazika. The term «Pontic» originated in scholarly usage, but has been adopted as a mark of identity by Pontic Greeks living in Greece.

Speakers of Chaldiot were the most numerous. In phonology, some varieties of Pontic are reported to demonstrate vowel harmony, a well-known feature of Turkish (Mirambel 1965).

Northern group (Crimea) now Mariupol where most Pontic Greeks of Crimea live now, who are of the Rumaic subgroup (Other Pontic Greeks speak Crimean Tatar as mother tongues are classified as «[Urums]»). There are approximately half a dozen dialects of Crimean (Mariupolitan) Pontic Greek spoken. Soviet Rumaic, a sovietized variant of the Pontic Greek language spoken by the Pontic Greek population of Soviet Union. The Bolsheviks under Vladimir Lenin and his followers formed and created a «Soviet» variant of the Pontic dialect against the modern Demotic Greek language of Greece as it was viewed as a «capitalist variant» of Greek language. This was also designed to make the Pontic Greeks at the time and as majority of the Greek population, a unique Greek subgroup.

In the classroom for Pontic dialect lessons

A pilot operation of private lessons in the pontic dialect begins in Thessaloniki and four other municipalities in Northern Greece. If all goes well, relative courses will be available in Attica as well, from this October. The school year will begin in October and be completed in May, with two hourly lessons per week.

By the end of the century the linguistic map of the world will be completely different: the coming decades about 2,000 dialects are expected to disappear worldwide, and experts estimate that in one hundred years, 90% of the languages spoken today will not exist anymore. The «problem», according to experts, is that people think in words. Thus, if you lose 50% of the languages of humanity, then half of cognitive skills will be lost as well. In Greece most dialects, such as Cretan, have largely assimilated into the dominant language, while others, although strong in the past-with the Tsakonic example, have almost disappeared.

A serious intervention in the struggle for the protection of endangered dialects and an original attempt in a time of economic crisis is the initiative of the Hellenic Association of Pontian Teachers to organize Pontian language courses in almost all of Greece.

FIVE SECTIONS

In February the pilot operation is expected to begin, consisting of five sections in the Municipality of Thessaloniki, followed soon by planned courses in four other municipalities in Northern Greece: Drama, Drama Prosotsani, Paionia Kilkis, Katerini.

From October, if the expected approval is given, the habitants of Attica you will also be able to sit in a classroom and learn Pontic. The City of Athens, Melissa, Elliniko and Kallithea have already expressed keen interest in the subject.

According to Mr. Antonis Pavlidis, teacher and president of the association, the cycle of study will last three years and after completion, students will receive special acknowledgment for their attendance.



PROSPECTS

«Learning the Pontic dialect is an extremely interesting experience and the response of the public is great. It's most exciting is for people who have no connection with the Pontian Greeks but having taken a trip to those places have been enchanted by the sights and people of the area. I believe that only half of the students will originate from Pontos» Pavlidis says. By removing the bureaucratic difficulties, Mr. Pavlidis believes that next year's course will employ 30 teachers, while not excluding the possibility of even more being hired.

For the purpose of teaching, the scientific committee of the association led by Mr Pavlidis drafted a full manual upon which the lessons will be based. The preparation took around three years to be completed. Meanwhile, teachers trained in special workshops and learned to build theater, music, song and literature into their teaching.

«What most interests us is not to pass on to future generations just some linguistic phenomena of the Pontic dialect, but to pass on the cultural wealth of ideas and values that we inherited from the older generations. This constitutes a substantial contribution in modern society. The issue

is primarily cultural. Besides, experts emphasize that language is not just words and grammar, but a network of stories that connect people who for centuries have used this language.

And if these particular dialects are not rescued, it will leave only four cultures in the world. In other words, those four with most widely spoken languages: English, Spanish, Chinese and Arabic ...

A LANGUAGE WITH THOUSANDS OF «BELIEVERS»

According to Mr. Pavlidis, The most spoken dialect in Greece today is Pontic, a living language, which displays many elements borrowed from ancient Greek.

«Working for the first time so systematically with the dialect, the sense gained by the scientific committee was that 70% of the words of the dialect derived from the ancient Greek and 30% from Turkish, Persian and Arabic words. «Kemnetzes» for example, the term for the Pontic lyra is a Persian word. However, 70% is a big percentage.

«The use of Pontic, «he says,» had languished until the '90s, when refugees came to Greece from the Soviet Union, most of whom were native speakers. Today the dialect is spoken extensively where masses of Pontians reside, such as in the historic Pontic Turkey, but also in Greece, as well as in areas such as Ioannina. «

It's worth noting that the Pontic dialect is spoken in northeastern Asia Minor by the Greek-speaking inhabitants of the Black Sea and specifically in the eastern part of the coast. The area included 800 villages and covered an area of 400 km from Inebolu to Colchis, where Turkish settlements also existed. The dialect was also used in the mainland. The dialect is considered to have been formed during the 7th or 8th century, but written texts appeared for the first time in the 19th century.

About 70% of the words of the Pontic dialect derive from the ancient Greek

