

THE RESURRECTION OF CAPPADOCIAN (ASIA MINOR GREEK)

Mark Janse¹
Ghent University

Cappadocia is the name of the ancient region in Asia Minor, which originally included Pontus as well. The geographer Strabo, born in Amaseia, says the Cappadocians and Pontians were ὁμόγλωττοι (1.2.1). Unfortunately, we do not know what the ancient Cappadocian language was like. Basil of Caesarea, a native speaker, affirms that it wasn't Greek. The Cappadocians are also mentioned among the ἔθνη who heard the Apostles preach in their own native language in the (Greek) account of the γλωσσολαλία in Acts (2.8ff.). A possible clue can be found in Herodotus, who says the Cappadocians are called Σύροι by the Greeks, but Καππαδόκες by the Persians (7.72). Elsewhere, he calls them Σύροι Καππαδόκαι (1.72). According to Strabo, these "Cappadocian Syrians" were also called Λευκόσυροι, to distinguish them from the "Dark Syrians" who lived "outside the Taurus" (12.3.9). It is very likely that the Cappadocian "White Syrians" were in fact descendants of the Hittites, who dominated Asia Minor and Syria from their capital Hattusa in Cappadocia from 1700-1200 BC. The last Hittite documents are in fact from Syria, which explains why the Hittites are frequently mentioned among the pre-exilic peoples of Canaan in the Torah (especially in Exodus). If, then, the ancient Cappadocians were descendants of the Hittites, it stands to reason to assume that their language must also have been related to Hittite. Gregory of Nyssa, another native speaker, says the Cappadocian word for οὐρανός was different from its Greek equivalent. Unfortunately, he doesn't inform us what the word actually was. If he had, we might have been able to identify Ancient Cappadocian with Hittite or an Anatolian language closely related to it.

After the fall of the Hittite Empire, Cappadocia was invaded successively by Phrygians, Cimmerians and Medes, before it became a Persian satrapy, called Katpatuka in the so-called Behistun inscription of king Darius I (522-486 BC). The last satrap was Ariarathes, who refused to submit to Alexander the Great and was proclaimed king of Cappadocia in 332. The Ariarathids, even though of Persian descent (*aria-* means "Aryan", i.e. "Persian"), were professed philhellenes, as appears from their surnames. Ariarathes V (163-130 BC), surnamed Εὐσεβῆς Φιλοπάτωρ, was particularly important in the hellenization of Cappadocia. This process was reinforced after the Roman annexation in 17 AD by the emperor Tiberius, who re-baptized its capital Mazaca (a Persian name) as Καισάρεια. According to Strabo, many indigenous peoples of Asia Minor had already lost their native languages as well as their native names in his days (12.4.6). The Jews of the diaspora had long before been hellenized. The Torah was translated into Greek by the Seventy in the third century BC for the sake of the Alexandrian Jews and the apostolic epistles were all written in Greek, including the first epistle of Peter which was addressed to the "diaspora of Cappadocia" (1 Peter 1.1). A typical example was Hyperochides, a late fourth-century Jew from Asia Minor, of whom Clearchus of Soli, a pupil of Aristotle, said: Ἐλληνικὸς ἦν, οὐ τῇ διαλέκτῳ μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ τῇ ψυχῇ (Fragm. 6).

According to the Latin Church Father Jerome, the entire East spoke Greek by 400 AD. But even the Cappadocian Church Fathers, who wrote an impeccable Greek, admit that they were bilingual. As in every case of language contact, the mother tongue leaves its traces on the second language. The Cappadocians were notorious βαρβαρόφωνοι, a term used to refer to people who "speak bad Greek" according to Strabo (14.2.8). Gregory of Nazianzus, another Cappadocian Church Father, asks the conceited clergy of Constantinople: ἀπαιδευσίαν δὲ οὐκ ἐγκαλέσεις ἢ ὅτι τραχύ σοι δοκῶ καὶ ἄγροικος φθέγγεσθαι; This harsh and rustic accent must have been particularly distinctive and a serious disadvantage for orators of Cappadocian origin, witness the following epigram attributed to Lucian (*Anthologia Palatina* 11.436):

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θάπτον ἔην λευκοὺς κόρακας πτηνάς τε χελώνας
εὐρεῖν ἢ δόκιμον ῥήτορα Καππαδόκην.

One such orator was Pausanias of Caesarea, a student of Herodes Atticus, of whom Flavius Philostratus said: ἀπήγγειλε παχείᾳ τῇ γλώττῃ καὶ ὡς Καππαδόκαις ζύνηθες, ζυγκρούων μὲν τὰ ξύμφωνα τῶν στοιχείων, συστέλλων δὲ τὰ μηκυνόμενα καὶ μηκύνων τὰ βραχέα (*Lives of the Sophists* 2.13). An exception to the rule was Apollonius of Tyana, a θεῖος ἀνὴρ of the first century AD, whose accent is described as follows by Philostratus: ἡ γλώττα Ἀττικῶς εἶχεν οὐδ' ἀπήχθη τὴν φωνὴν ὑπὸ τοῦ ἔθνους (*Life of Apollonius* 1.7).

Cappadocian Greek may have sounded harsh and rustic in the first centuries AD, it was nothing compared to what happened to the language after the Seljuk invasions in the 11th and 12th c. and the Ottoman invasions in the 14th and 15th c. From the 12th c. onwards, Cappadocia is practically cut off from the rest of the Greek-speaking world and subject to a continuous process of language contact, bilingualism, code-mixing and language death. The impact of the Turkish language on the Greek-speaking communities of Cappadocia is disastrous and the process of hellenization started in the 3rd c. BC is now completely reversed by a process of turkicization. In a Latin document written in 1437, sixteen years before the fall of Constantinople, we read how in many parts of Asia Minor, Turkish was being used instead of Greek in church as the language of communication. Sermons were preached in Turkish and Greek was used exclusively for liturgical purposes, viz. singing the Mass (i.e., the Psalms) and quoting the Gospels and Epistles (Νέος Ἑλληνομνήμων 7 (1910), p. 366).

At the beginning of the 20th c., there were only twenty Greek-speaking communities left in Cappadocia, all of them bilingual. When Oxford professor Richard Dawkins, the first and last linguist to do fieldwork in Cappadocia, visited these communities around 1910, he realized that almost all of the Cappadocian dialects were on the verge of extinction, giving way to Turkish, which had replaced Greek as the language of everyday communication, even in entirely Christian villages such as Misti and Axo. What was left of the original Cappadocian Greek had changed significantly due to the massive borrowing of sounds, vocabulary and grammatical structures from Turkish. Dawkins described the state of Cappadocian Greek as follows: “The Turkish has replaced the Greek spirit; the body has remained Greek, but the soul has become Turkish” (*Modern Greek in Asia Minor*, p. 198). An example of Cappadocian Greek is the following text from Ferteke recorded around 1900 by the German linguist Albert Thumb (*Handbuch der neugriechischen Volkssprache*, p. 297f.):

ένα καλό κύριο άτρωπος έν-νε βαρύ αστενάρ. τσιγούρτσε το ναίκατ, και ναίκατ ακόμ ήτον τελίγανλί, και είπεν το: σεβγίλιμ, τρανάς το, ήλτε το σαχάτιμ. έσεται χωρίς και χωρίς να σ' αφήσω και να πάγω. ακόμ τελίγανλί 'σαι, και αν κρέβεις να χατώ ραχάτ, να με πκείς ένα καλό. χωρίς άλλο να πανδρεφτείς, ξέβρω το. πολύ σε γιαλβαρτώ, το κομ-δούμ μή το πάρεις, ογώ μετ' εκείνο γαβγάλι 'μαι. άνδον με κανδίεις, τότε νά το πάρεις dé ναι, να μή χατώ μεραγλίς. και το ναίκα έδεκε καδιλίκ και είπε: ήιτς τα σόν το χάττι-μος ογώ μανί μή 'νω ραχάτ ραχάτ χάτ, άς σε πώ το ορτάτατ. ζάτι εκείνο ογώ νά το πά-ρω dé ναι, τσούνκι ογώ από τρία μήνες όμβρο σ' ένα πασκά άτρωπο έδωκα τσοάπ τον.

“A good gentleman fell seriously ill. He called his wife, and his wife was still young, and he told her: “My love, you see it, my hour has come, it is coming inevitably for me to leave you and to go. You are still young, and if you want me do die peacefully, do me a favour. You will (re)marry for sure, I know that. I beg you, please, don't take my neighbour. I am angry with him. If you are content with me, then don't take him, that I may not die anxiously.” And the woman gave answer and said: “Don't let me be a source for concern at your death at all. Die in peace, I will tell you the truth: That man I will not take him in any case, because three months ago I have given my word to another man.”

This text illustrates the intensive language contact between Greek and Turkish, as Cappadocian is a truly mixed language, the result of what linguists call code-mixing. This code-mixing reflects the cultural symbiosis between Christians and Muslims, which is confirmed by many personal testimonies from Cappadocian refugees collected in the imposing series *H Eξ-οδος*, published by the Κέντρο Μικρασιατικών Σπουδών:

Καλά περνούσαμε πριν από τους πολέμους. Και με τους Τούρκους καλά ήμασταν. Πηγαίναμε στα σπίτια τους, μας καλούσαν στις χαρές τους, και τότε τους στέλναμε δώρα ολόκληρα ταψιά κουραμπιέδες και μπακλαβάδες. Στις νύφες χαρίζαμε τζεμπέρια. Τα ίδια μας έκαναν κι αυτοί. Ήρχονταν στις γιορτές μας, στις χαρές μας, έτρωγαν και γλεντούσαν μαζί μας σαν να ήσαν δικοί μας (*Η Έξοδος*, τ. Β΄, σ. 107).

Στις 28 Αυγούστου 1924 βγήκαμε στο δρόμο. Φορτώσαμε τα πράγματά μας, καθίσαμε σε σαράντα κάρα. Οι Τούρκοι μας συνόδεψαν. Μας πρόσφεραν οι γείτονές μας μαγειρεμένα φαγητά και φρούτα. Ο χότζας Χατζή Όμέρ έκανε εκεί δέηση στο Θεό και μας ευχήθηκε να έχουμε καλό ταξίδι και να φτάσουμε καλά στο Γιουνανιστάν. Ύστερα άρχισαν τα κλάματα, τα φιλιά, οι αγκαλιές. Να δείς πως έκλαιγαν οι Τούρκοι μας (*Η Έξοδος*, τ. Β΄, σ. 64).

The latter fragment refers to the Ανταλλαγή Πλυθισμών of 1924 as a result of the Treaty of Lausanne of 1923 following the Μικρασιατική Καταστροφή of 1922. The Cappadocians were dispersed all over the Greek fatherland, a new Cappadocian diaspora. A number of homogeneous communities were settled in Macedonia, which had been only recently, after the Balkan Wars of 1912-1913, been ceded by the Ottomans. The majority of the Cappadocians were monolingual Turkish-speaking, the minority bilingual Cappadocian-Turkish. Cappadocian must have sounded as Turkish as it sounded Greek, witness the following description by the well-known Greek dialectologist Nikolaos Kontosopoulos:

Όποιος ακούει – ή μάλλον διαβάζει, γιατί σήμερα δεν μιλιούνται πια τα ιδιώματα αυτά, αφού όλοι σχεδόν οι φορείς τους, πρόσφυγες του 1922, έχουν πεθάνει – την καππαδοκική διάλεκτο, δεν ξέρει αν έχει να κάνει με τούρκικα σε ελληνικό στόμα ή με ελληνικά σε τούρκικο στόμα (*Διάλεκτοι και ιδιώματα της νέας ελληνικής*, σ. 7).

The refugees were not well received in their new homeland. Their mother tongue, whether Turkish or Cappadocian, will have been one of many reasons. The Ανταλλαγή turned out to be a καταστροφή for Cappadocian as well as other Asia Minor refugees:

Νομίζαμε πως θα πάμε στον παράδεισο και ήρθαμε στην κόλαση (*Η Έξοδος*, τ. Β΄, σ. 65).

Εμείς φύγαμε από τον παράδεισο και πήγαμε στην κόλαση (*Η Έξοδος*, τ. Β΄, σ. 321).

The difficult process of acculturation, combined with feelings of discrimination and even repression, resulted in an acceleration of the process of language attrition and language death which had started a long time ago. Collaborators of the Κέντρο Μικρασιατικών Σπουδών in Athens who interviewed native speakers in the 1940s and 1950s in an ultimate attempt to record some of the Cappadocian dialects while they were still spoken, unanimously lament the fact that even the elder people were gradually forgetting their mother tongue and refused to transmit it to their children and grandchildren. Thanasis Kostakis, one of the most prolific scholars in the field of Asia Minor Greek dialectology and ethnology, conducted fieldwork in the 1960s in Mistiot Cappadocian communities in Thessaly and Macedonia. When his book was finally published in 1977, the list of his informants contained mainly deceased and very old people.

Thus the voices of the Cappadocian people gradually vanished, until they were officially declared dead, not just in Greek sources, but also in other authoritative scholarly references like *Ethnologue* and the *Linguist List*. My own work on Cappadocian started as a spinoff of my PhD research on the evolution of word order in the history of the Greek language. When I was commissioned by Prof. Chr. Tzitzilis of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki to contribute the chapter on Cappadocian to his monumental handbook of Modern Greek dialects, I was convinced that I was working on another dead language which, as a philologist, I was used to doing. A preliminary draft of the chapter, which I actually considered to be the prefinal version, was finished in 2004. In May 2005, my friend and colleague Dr Dimitris Papazachariou of the University of Patras sent me a DVD with recordings from the village of Σήμαντρα in Macedonia. Σήμαντρα is the Greek name of the Cappadocian village of Semendere whose dialect was considered to be the most “corrupt” (i.e., turkicized) of all by Dawkins. The language of the recordings was Greek, with a Northern accent, interspersed with Turkish whenever the speakers didn’t want my colleague to listen in. Then, all of sudden, one of the speak-

ers uttered four words, a minimal sentence, in Cappadocian:

πατέραμ δώεκα φσέα έπκι “ο πατέρας μου έκανε δώδεκα παιδιά”

The utterance was authentic Simandriotika in every respect, except for the word πατέρα(ς), which is κοινή δημοτική - the Cappadocian word being βαβά(ς). During preliminary field-work in Thessaly in June 2005, we discovered to our great and pleasant surprise that there are in fact still speakers of Cappadocian left, not just very old people, but second- and third-generation speakers, including young middle-agers. The following is one of the very first recordings we made of the speech of Elly, a fifty-year-old female speaker of Mistiot Cappadocian (Misiotika):

γιαβρούμ, da κλάτσα μας σκόλια δέν da σάλδαναμ πολύ. ε, δάσκαλο είχαμ, τεμέρ δάσκαλος τσόουν. ε, δέ παινίζαν σκόλια γιαί δουλίβαν. ούλ-λα τρέγσαν να βγάλνι δου ψωμί τνι. σερνιτσοί φέγνιζαν, παίνιζαν να δουλέψνι. μακρά πολύ μακρά, γιαβρούμ. φτάνιζαν - τσάχ Ρωσσίας σύφταναν. ε, da κλάτσα μας, γιάρϊ παίνιζαν σκόλια, γιάρϊ δέ παινίζαν. εκείνα που παίνιζαν συνέχεια ξέριζαν γράμμαδα, τ' άλλα δέ μαηαινίζαν. da κορίτσα μας δέν da σάλδαναν σκόλια. φοβόνταν μήν da σαλδίσνι όξου, πάθουν 'να σέ. ένεξ δέ παθαινίζαν για, δέν da σάλδαναν. da κλάτσα μας μάηαινίζαν λία γράμμαδα. διάβιζαν παίνιζαν ψάλιζαν ζ νεκκλησά μας. ζ νεκκλησά ψάιζαν d' άϊ Βασίλ, γιαβρούμ. πολύ d' αγάπαναν. ούλ-λ' αγάπαναν δου.

“My child, our children, we didn't send them to school much. Eh, we had a teacher, he was our teacher. Eh, they didn't go to school, because they were working. They were all working very hard to earn their bread. The men left, they went away to work. Away far away, my child. They went to - as far as Russia they came. Eh, our children, half of the time they went to school, half of the time they didn't go. Those who went all the time were literate, the others didn't learn. Our girls they didn't send to school. They were afraid to let them go out, that they would suffer anything. They didn't suffer anything, of course, but still they wouldn't let them go. Our children didn't learn much. They read, they went, they read in our church. In church they read St. Basil, my child. They loved him very much, they all loved him.”

This is just one example of the oral traditions that are being kept alive among the Cappadocians. Many other traditions, such as dancing, have been kept alive for a long time by the many local cultural organisations and foundations. Once a year, the Mistiotes and other Cappadocians meet during a cultural festival called Γαβούστημα “reunion” (from Turkish *kavuşmak* “meet again”). At the 2006 Γαβούστημα on the archaeological site of Philippi, Misiotika was for the first time in many years again heard in public, a sure sign of cultural and linguistic revival. During the festival, all the attendants were given a lighter with the following text emphasizing the shifting identities of the Mistiotes:

Είμαι περήφανος που είμαι Έλληνας Ορθόδοξος Μιστιώτης Καππαδόκης Μικρασιάτης

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