

Andriotis, N. 1960. History of the name “Macedonia”. *Balkan Studies* 1: 143-148.
(Αναδημοσιεύεται στο: Ν. Ανδριώτης, *Αντιχάρισμα*, 1976, 177-182)

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HISTORY OF THE NAME “MACEDONIA”

It is generally accepted today that the ethnic name Μακεδών, from which by adding the ending –ία the geographical term Μακεδονία was formed, derives from the ancient Greek adjective μακεδνός. The latter was formed by the stem of the noun μάκος=μῆκος, with the suffix –δ¹ and the ending –νός: μακε-δ-νός, and already occurs in Homer (Odys. η 106) οἷά τε φύλλα μακεδνῆς αἰγείροιο. The name Μακεδών, plural Μακεδόνες, belongs to the ethnic names denoting a physical characteristic, like the ancient Μακροκέφαλοι (long-heads), Πυγμαῖοι (Pygmies=fist-sized) and the teutonic Langobardi (long-beards), Chauci (tall), Quadi (ugly, bad).² The Macedonians probably distinguished themselves amid the other Greek tribes by their height, as it often happens to highland tribes compared to tribes of the plains.

The Macedonians, as it is accepted by all unbiased ethnologists, historians and linguists, are a Hellenic tribe.³ Their names, those that have been preserved, and almost all their dialectic word-forms coincide with the Greek and differ from the Thraco-illyrian language. They were a part of the Doric tribe, characterized by Herodotus (I, 56. VIII, 43), as «Μακεδνὸν ἔθνος», and had some common dialectic forms with the Aeolians of Thessaly. Their original home was Orestis, the

¹ The suffix –δ– is known from other nouns too, as ἀλγη-δ-ών, λαμπη-δ-ών, χαϊρη-δ-ών, χελι-δ-ών. From this compound ending –δών, derive by alternance the endings –δανός, as in ληθε-δανός, πευκε-δανός, ριγε-δανός, τηκε-δανός, τηλε-δανός, and –δνός, as in γοε-δνός, μακε-δνός, πελι-δνός, όλοφυ-δνός, ψε-δνός. See f.i. G.N. Hatzidakis, *Ακαδημεικὰ ἀναγνώσματα* 1.71 and 2.405 and also E. Schwyzer, *Griechische Grammatik* 1.489.

² Pauly-Wissowa, *Realencyclopädie*, in word *Makedonia*, p. 682².

³ See Ulrich Wilcken, *Griechische Geschichte im Rahmen der Altertumsgeschichte*. 8e Auflage. München 1958, p. 222. «Deutlicher als die recht dürftigen Reste der makedonischen Sprache zeigen es die Staatseinrichtungen, die Religion un Sitten der Makedoner, dass diese nicht, wie mehrfach eingenommen ist, illyrische oder thrakische oder sonstige «Barbaren» waren, sondern einen hellenischen Stamm darstellen». See also J. N. Kalleris, *Les anciens Macédoniens. Étude linguistique et historique*. Athens 1954, 1, 325. The same is remarked by G. Glotz, *Histoire Ancienne*, Deuxieme Partie. Histoire Grecque, vol. III, Paris 1936, p. 210: «Les noms de leurs villes, Argos, Pella, Idoméneia, Gortynia, Atalanté, Európós, Aleoménaí etc., sont des témoignages irrécusables de leur origine. Il en est de même de leur calendrier : avec ses noms de fêtes et de mois, qui sont purement grecs et ne se retrouvent cependant nulle part ailleurs en Grèce, il révèle tout ensemble l'origine achéodorienne des Macédoniens et leur position particulière dans le monde hellénique. See also C. Jireček, *Geschichte der Serben*. Gotha 1911, vol. I, p. 28 : « Eine hellenische grossmacht war das Königreich der Makedonier, welches sich aus einem kleinen Gebiet westlich von Thessalonike durch Eroberungen längst des Weges von Dyrrhachion nach Byzanz zu einem grossen Staate entwickelte».

mountainous region known today as Western Macedonia, through which the Haliacmon river flows. They lived in unwalled villages,⁴ and their stock-breeding and farming practices were considered by the Southern more developed Hellenic tribes as backward. Until the Persian wars, the Macedonians did not follow the fast development of the Southern Hellenic tribes.

Like all others Hellenic tribes, the Macedonians early created a mythical ancestor, Macedon, son of Zeus, to account for their ethnic name, whose connexion with the adjective μακεδνός was forgotten. The prehistoric name of their country, Emathia, sounds prehellenic. The Macedonians called it Μακεδονία and Μακκετία (from μακέτης, a synonym of μακεδνός).⁵ The mediaeval lexicon *Suda* gives the following explanation for the name Macedonia: “Macedonia the country from Macedon, son of Zeus and Thyia, daughter of Deucalion, according to the poet Hesiod” and Eustathius (Per. Dion. 427) “Macedonia was previously called Emathia from Emathion, son of Zeus and Elektra. Then (called) Macedonia from Macedon, son of Aeacus”.

Early the Macedonians, a highland, warlike tribe, proceeding from Western Macedonia conquered the Thracian tribes living in the plains and by either expelling or assimilating them pushed the eastern boundary of Macedonia eastwards to the Strymon first, and later to the Nestos river. Thus the geographical term Macedonia, attributed to the Macedonian realm and originally denoting the western part of the country, was extended to cover what today is Central and Eastern Macedonia. In the time of Philip II Macedonia was bounded by the mountains: Olympus-Kamvounia-Pindus-Boion (Grammos)=the Lake Lychnitis (Ochrida)=the mountain range called today Nidjé Planiná-Demir Kapu-Orbelos and central Rhodope, that is, it extended over an area of 28.000 square kilometers.

From a political and administrative viewpoint Macedonia was divided into the low country (Κάτω or παρὰ θάλασσαν Μακεδονία) which was under the direct rule of the Macedonian kings, and the upper country (Ἄνω Μακεδονία, τὰ ἐπάνωθεν ἔθνη), inhabited by the Lyngestians (in the district of Florina), the Elimiotas (in the district of Kozane)⁶ and others, and divided into small vassal and allied Kingdoms.

⁴ J. Papastavrou, *Ἀρχαία Ἱστορία* II, 127.

⁵ E. Schwyzer, *op. cit.* I, 498.

⁶ *Thucydides*, II, 99: “For the Macedonian race includes also the Lyngestians, Elimiotas, and other tribes of the upper country, which though in alliance with the nearer Macedonians and subject to them have kings of their own”. See also J. N. Kalleris, *op.cit.* p. 2, 1.

Philip extended the eastern boundary of the Macedonian state beyond the Strymon and Nestos river to the Black Sea, but the name “Macedonia” designated only the country west of Nestos.⁷ Under the Roman rule and more precisely in the 2nd century A.D., the province of Macedonia, on the evidence of Ptolemy and Strabo, reached westwards to the Adriatic Sea, which was therefore called by the Romans *Mare Macedonicum*. But its northern boundary remained as it had been fixed by Philip II. The line of demarcation between Macedonia and Dardania to its north had always been the southern range of Mount Skardos, today called Babouna, through which the Axios river cuts, forming the so-called Iron Gates (Demir-Kapu). The city of Stoboi, south of this range, had always belonged to Macedonia, whereas Scupi, today known as Skoplje, had been a city of Dardania until after the time of Justinian I, as we shall presently see. This demarcation line had also been the northern limit of the Greek language, as it was stated by J. Jireček, on the evidence of the inscriptions. The inscriptions found south of this line are in Greek, those found north of it are in Latin.⁸ The anthropological and geographical studies conducted by Jovan Cvijić in the beginning of our century (1918), has also resulted in essentially the same frontier line in regard to the extension of the Greek-byzantine civilization to the north.⁹

Since the division of the Roman Empire to praefectures by Constantine the Great,¹⁰ Macedonia was adjoined to the praefecture of the Illyricum, whose southern part including Macedonia was surrendered at the time of Gratianus and Theodosius

⁷ Ptolemy III, 12, 6: “Beyond the Nestos river, which is the boundary of Thrace”. Strabo Z 323: “Some attribute the lands from the Strymon to the Nestos to Macedonia, because Philip showed so great an interest on these regions that made part of his kingdom. From the mineral wealth and other products of the country he had great resources”. The information contained to the *Fragmenta* of Strabo (Z fr. 10), that the limits of Macedonia reached to the mouth of Hebros and the city of Kypsela is the result of a confusion by the Byzantine epitomists.

⁸ J. Jireček, *op. cit.* vol. I, p. 38, determines the demarcation line more precisely as follows: «Die Grenze zwischen Latin und Griechisch lässt sich nach der Sprache der Inschriften, Meilensteine und Stadtmünzen ziemlich genau feststellen. Sie verliess das Adriatische Meer bei Lissus, ging durch die Berge der Mirediten und der Dibra in da nördliche Makedonien zwischen Scupi und Stobi durch, umging Naissus und Remesiana mit ihren lateinische Bürgern, während Pautalia (Küstendil) und Serdica (Sofia) samt der Landschaft von Pirot in das griechische Gebiet gehörten; zuletzt wendete sie sich längs des Nordabdanges des Hämus zur Pontus-Küste. Das griechische Sprachgebiet stand in unmittelbaren Zusammenhang mit Hellas und Kleinasien, das lateinische, welches von der Nordgrenze Paunoniens bis Stobi die grösste Tiefe hatte, von Satiaria (Arčar) abwärts aber nur wenige Stunden breit war, mit dem romanischen Wiesten».

⁹ J. Cvijić, *La Péninsule Balcanique*, Geographie Humaine, Paris 1918, p. 103 : « Le domaine actuel de l'ancienne civilisation byzantine est à peu près le suivant. Son influence la plus forte se fait sentir au Sud des Balkans et de la Šarplanina, surtout en Thrace, en Macédoine et en Grèce, moins en Épire et dans l'Albanie méridionale. Quoique ses frontières septentrionales soient, en général, les Balkans et la Šarplanina, elle a pénétré par la vallée de la Morava jusqu'à Nič et au delà jusqu'à la Save et le Danube ».

¹⁰ Zosimus, ed. Bonn 98, 13. See also: Stilpon Kyriakides, *Βυζαντινὰ Μελέται* II-V. Thessalonike 1937, p. 102 et seq.

(379 A.D.) to the Eastern Empire, i.e. Byzantium. During the reign of Justinian I, Macedonia was a province of the Illyricum and extended over the same areas as Philip's Macedonia. It was divided into two parts, the first and the second Macedonia: the first, having Thessalonike for its capital, extended over the Western, Central and Eastern Macedonia, and the second extended northwards over Pelagonia as far as Stoboi.¹¹ Scupi however did not belong to Macedonia but to its northern neighbor Dardania.¹²

The *status quo* of the region remained unchanged until the old administrative system was substituted by the Byzantine organization of *themes*, which was gradually established. Until 796 A.D. Thessalonike was the seat of a prefect (*praefectus praetorio*) but we do not know whether he was called prefect of Macedonia or of Illyricum (*praefectus praetorio Macedoniae* or *Illyrici*). A little later (about 800 A.D.) the theme of Macedonia designated Thracian territory, and with Adrinople for its capital extended over most of Thrace. About the same time (796-828 A.D.) Macedonia proper constitutes a separate theme, the theme of Thessalonike. This transference of the name *Macedonia* to Thrace has caused much confusion both to the Byzantine writers and to the modern historians based on them, who cannot always be sure whether the sources speak about their contemporary Macedonia, i.e. the theme of Macedonia, or of ancient Macedonia. The transference of the name of Macedonia to the theme of Adrinople caused in turn the transference of the name of Thessaly to the theme of Thessalonike, and consequently the archbishop of Thessalonike bore the title of the "Exarch of Thessaly" (ἑξάρχος πάσης Θεσσαλίας).

Things remained such as long as the original organization of themes persisted. But the latter was gradually declining and after the capture of Constantinople by the Franks it was entirely broken up. Georgios Akropolites still uses the name Macedonia to denote the *theme of Macedonia*, but the writers of the next century (14th) Gregoras and Kantakouzenus attribute the name of Macedonia to the original country, the Kingdom of Philip II. Since then, both the learned writers and the Greek people have used the name Macedonia with its original connotation.

¹¹ Hierocles, *Synecdemos*, ed. Bonn 391. To the information given by Hierocles, Procopius also agrees (*De Aedificiis*, ed. Havry III 2, p. 119) because he also distinguishes Macedonia from Dardania. See also Stilpon Kyriakides, *op. cit.* p. 180 seq.

¹² Hierocles, *op. cit.* p. 393, 13: "The eparchate of Dardania, under a ruler, three cities, Scupi the bishop seat, Merion, Ulpianna".

During the time of the Ottoman rule the name Macedonia survived in the Greek lands and was used by the people to designate the well-known Greek country. It also occurs in chronicles of this time in the dialectic form Μακιδονία¹³ a fact which testifies to its purely popular use. It occurs as well in folk-songs of this period and of the period of the Macedonian Struggle (1903-1908). The name Macedonia, after the liberation of the country from the Ottoman yoke, became again the official, geographical and administrative name of the Greek country extending from Mt. Pindus and Mt. Olympus to the Nestos river. Thus the words of the ancient geographer Strabo (ed. Meineke 2, 455) that “Macedonia too is Greece” regained their true meaning.

On the contrary the name Macedonia was completely unknown to our neighboring Slavic peoples. It was due to the panslavic propaganda of the end of the last and the beginning of the present century that they were informed of its existence. And yet this was enough to become the cause of a very strange adventure that the ancient, historical and glorious name of Macedonia had to undergo in our days. The political leaders of Southern Serbia, which is inhabited by Slavs, Albanians, Greeks, Turks and Gypsies, let their old ethnic name of “Bugari” become obsolete, called themselves *Macedonians* and their federal State, which was first founded on August 2, 1944, *Macedonia*. Moreover they even raised claims on Greek Macedonia, with no regard whatsoever to historical truth. And yet the Greek Macedonia, which the *Bugari*, now calling themselves Macedonians, have named “Macedonia of the Aegean”, was the cradle of the ancient Macedonians, the land of Philip and Alexander the Great, the land which made the ancient Greek civilization accessible to all peoples, and which is today inhabited by 1.700.000 purely Greek population.¹⁴

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¹³ *Χρονικὸν περὶ τῶν Τούρκων Σουλτάνων*, ed. G. Zoras, Athens 1958, p. 34-35, 37, 10, 48, 7, 123.8.

¹⁴ With this irresponsible use of the name “Macedonia” for political reasons, I have dealt *in extenso* in my book *The Confederate State of Skopje and its Language*, Athens 1957, pp. 60. The book has been also published in Greek, *Το ομόσπονδο κράτος των Σκοπίων και η γλώσσα του*, Thessalonike 1960.