Modern Greek in the 11th century – or what else should we call it?

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For the quarter of a century after 1976 I taught Modern Greek in Sydney, Australia, looking at much of the world through the prism of 20th-century Greek demotic. In 2000 I returned to the UK with a job that involved (among other things) reading everything written in Greek in the 11th century. The latter perspective naturally did not immediately and totally replace the former. I found myself searching the 11th-century material for traces of the present, or rather for signs that 11th-century Greek would develop into the forms visible in the 20th century. As well as the language itself, I was interested in kindred features like onomastics and metrical patterns. The first part of this article reports the results of this quest.

My acculturation as a teacher of Modern Greek also had another result. As I sought to send David Holton a title for the talk, I began to doubt whether it would be seen as a legitimate subject for a Modern Greek series. The material certainly prefigured aspects of modern linguistic usage and metalinguistic patterns. However, most texts I used were far outside any Modern Greek canon. Above all, every title I thought of to describe my subject suggested barriers between it and the modern spoken language, not the simple continuity of use which seemed to me self-evident. Hence the oxymoron you see above ("modern" vs. "11th century"). I felt defensive and apologetic, sensing I was infringing some rule. My solution was to turn problems of terminology into part of the talk, adding to the discussion a simple exploration of the issues which were making me uncomfortable.

We start with 11th-century language. The first category of material is a learned text including surprising vernacular elements. Nikon of the Black Mountain[1] is still a shadowy figure in the history of the 11th century, because much of his work is not yet properly edited. He was born around 1025 in Constantinople, had a military career under Constantine IX Monomachos (before 1054), but then renounced the world and retired to the Black Mountain, a collection of monasteries north of Antioch in Syria. He wrote three works, of which the most important is his *Taktikon*. This is a collection of forty chapters, of which the first two are regulations for different monasteries, one at the Black Mountain itself, the second at Roidion, where Nikon took refuge after the Seljuqs captured Antioch in 1084. Most of the other 38 are Nikon's letters to fellow *hegoumenoi* on monastic subjects. The Greek text is preserved in a 12th-century Sinai manuscript, which probably guarantees that the language is Nikon's, and certainly establishes its importance in linguistic history. It was translated early into Arabic, and later into Slavonic: the latter version became very influential.

A new edition of the Greek and Slavonic texts is being prepared at Würzburg by a team led by Christian Hannick. Early indications are that it will confirm the linguistic evidence of the published monastic typika and the other passages edited by Beneševič in his catalogue of Sinai manuscripts.[2] Though the language is basically learned, there are frequent examples of accusatives in the place of datives with verbs of speaking and occasional relative pronouns in the form resembling the article, even clauses introduced by να, the most reliable single marker of vernacular Greek. Some of these function as imperatives and futures. There are also forms characteristic of high learned levels. Judgement must wait for the new edition, but the first impression is that Nikon took a northern spoken dialect with him to the Black

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[1] *ODB* (1991), vol. 3, pp. 1484-5.
[2] Sinaiticus gr. 436 (441). See Beneševič 1917 (two monastic regulations); Beneševič 1911: 237-46 (manuscript description and contents list), 561-601 (partial editions of some letters).

Mountain. There he wrote seriously for the first time, basing his language and style on his wide reading in canon law. However, geographically insulated from the normative pressures of Byzantine education, he seems to have allowed interference in his writing from his own spoken dialect. Nikon's letters vary in date: some were written in his old age, since they mention the First Crusade, but others belong to the last decades of the 11th century.

The next two examples are isolated passages in works which otherwise give limited evidence of the spoken language. The *Peira*[3] is probably unique anywhere in Europe at the time, a collection of the judgements of a major jurist, Eustathios Romaios, mostly delivered in the first three decades of the 11th century. They were collected by one of Eustathios's students, who often writes himself into his master's story. The language used seems specially adapted for writing legal notes. It is brief, with unexpected rules for omitting the article, for example, which often make it hard to read. It would be worth a linguistic study, since it does not operate by standard Byzantine learned rules, though the influence of the spoken language seems also limited. Again we need to wait for an edition, under preparation in Frankfurt by Ludwig Burgmann. Most of the text survives in one late manuscript, but several passages are attested elsewhere.

In the late 1030s, Eustathios was sitting in his office as *droungarios*, chief of police. Suddenly a subordinate burst in and reported an exchange of insults between magistrates in the nearby hippodrome, which ended with one striking and injuring the other. Eustathios immediately sent officers to ask the crowd about the insults, to see whether the violence could be justified by provocation. The actual words spoken were obviously important for the case, and we seem to have a verbatim account. Some phrases are easier to understand than others, and I will not propose a complete translation. The first insult made by the *kandidatos* to the *protospatharios* may amount to a simple "Damn you", in return for which he is called "cuckold, son of a whore". It requires subtlety

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[3] Ed. Zepos 1931.

to interpret the next phrase so as to motivate the *protospatharios 's* loss of temper. The new edition will probably make all clear.

Ἐν τῷ ἱπποδρομίῳ ἱστάμενός τις κανδιδάτος λόγους ὑβρι-
στικοὺς μέν, οὐ τραχεῖς δέ, οἷον: *ἐξαλειπτὰ ὅς του ἠφά-
νισας τὸν κόσμον,* ἐρρίπτει κατὰ τοῦ πρωτοσπαθαρίου. Ὁ
δὲ ὕβρισε τὸν κανδιδάτον: *κερατᾶν κούρβας υἱόν,* ὁ δὲ
ἀνθυπέφερε: *ὁ λέων εἶσαι,* καὶ ὠργίσθη ὁ πρωτοσπαθάριος
καὶ ἔτυψε τὸν κανδιδάτον καὶ ἐμάδισεν.[4]

In 1057, after a civil war, the new emperor Isaac Komnenos marched on the capital, which the defeated Michael VI still controlled. Negotiations started to prevent another bloodbath, but the situation was resolved by the Patriarch, Michael Keroularios. He gathered the rebels in Hagia Sophia and persuaded Michael to abdicate, allowing Isaac to march in later. The new emperor and patriarch were both strong characters, and a clash was predictable. At the climax, the patriarch is said to have threatened the emperor in a single fifteen-syllable line, which was reported to Isaac, who arrested him and was only prevented by his death from putting him on trial. Most of the story is available in two texts of Psellos, his violent undelivered denunciation for Keroularios's trial, and an encomium, spoken before the patriarch's niece, the new empress, which resembles hagiography.[5] The key decapentasyllable which set things off is found in Skylitzes Continuatus:

τὸ δημῶδες τοῦτο καὶ κατημαξευμένον: Ἐγὼ σὲ ἔκτισα,
φοῦρνε, καὶ ἐγὼ νὰ σὲ χαλάσω.[6]

Manuscripts of the continuator are confused here. It is assumed, reasonably, in the edition that where readings close to 11th-century oral language are found in some manuscripts and conven-

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[4] Zepos 1931: section 61.6.
[5] Dennis 1994: 1-103: Πρὸς τὴν σύνοδον κατηγορία τοῦ ἀρχιερέως.
Sathas 1874: 303-87: Ἐγκωμιαστικὸς εἰς τὸν μακαριώτατον πατρι-
άρχην κῦρ Μιχαὴλ τὸν Κηρουλλάριον.
[6] Ed. Tsolakis 1968.

tional written forms in others, preference should be given to oral forms. Thus the future "νὰ σὲ χαλάσω", is printed in preference to its learned equivalent "σὲ καταλύσω", since the former is un-expected in writing and therefore the *lectio difficilior*. The φοῦϱνος concerned probably needed to be broken to remove its contents, like a pottery kiln; or maybe it conceals another insult which was misunderstood before any surviving manuscript was written.

I mentioned Psellos. The sheer bulk of his writings ensures him a major part in any study of 11th-century language. Most · interest derives not from the *Chronographia*, but the letters (more than 500)[7] and poems (covering more than 400 pages in the Teubner edition edited as *Poemata*).[8] Almost half the letters have as one of their purposes an attempt to get a response from their re-cipients. If they receive perfectly crafted pieces of Atticism, what do they do, if they cannot reply at the same linguistic level? "Don't feel intimidated", Psellos repeatedly says, "write what you can: I much prefer responses straight from the heart. You are a soldier: write like a soldier. You're a landowner: write like a farmer. You're a monk: write simply like the Gospels." It is inter-esting to speculate how informal the language of these answers might be, if and when they came. Unfortunately the only pre-served letters written to Psellos are from those, like Ioannes Mauropous, who have linguistic skills equivalent to his.

I report a phenomenon which I do not fully understand, and for which I am searching for parallels. Psellos suffered serious clerical persecution and unemployment in 1055-56. He blamed the persecution on Michael Keroularios, alleging that he, leader of the populist faction of the church, could have called off the persecutors. Psellos only escaped by becoming a monk. The un-employment he blamed on another old friend, Leon Para-spondylos.[9] Leon contributes to our picture of 11th-century

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[7] Detailed by Papaioannou 1998.

[8] Ed. Westerink 1992.

[9] The correspondence with Leon is well studied by De Vries-Van der Velden 1999.

spoken language the unstable second element to his name, Strabo-spondylos being used as often as Paraspondylos, an easy oral alternative before telephone directories. Whether this was a family name or not is beside the point, as he was a eunuch. Leon was out of favour with Constantine IX, and was patronised in Psellos's letters until Constantine's death in 1055. Suddenly Leon was chosen by the new empress Theodora to head her administration. Psellos sent his friend a c.v. (a surviving letter), and waited for a good job. There was no reply.

Psellos had crucial interviews with Keroularios and Paraspon-dylos within around six months of each other. He failed in both cases, and after each he accused his interlocutor of linguistic bar-barism. With Keroularios the situation is plain: although the patriarch usually employed Attic Greek, he suddenly switched to a barbarous level.[10] We are approaching the time when the same Keroularios called Isaac I an oven. With Paraspondylos the com-plaint is longer and less definite. Leon is accused of several crimes of populism – an intellectual adopting an anti-intellectual stance, a religious thinker using the language of popular piety, and an Atticist denying knowledge of Attic.[11] There are enough co-incidences here to suggest a link, and make one wonder whether our sources hint at a wider attempt by populist leaders to under-mine learned Greek.

Nearly all Psellos's poetry was addressed to the three emperors to whom he was closest, Constantine IX, Constantine X and Michael VII. At first sight, we are here a long way from the spoken word. But in fact few of the poems deserve the name. Most (including the longest) are fifteen-syllable verse intro-ductions to subjects he regards as essential to a Byzantine ruler – religious, legal, grammatical and more general educational points. The word "doggerel" comes to mind. The level of language is not vernacular, but simple, in comparison with that which Psellos adopts in prose treatises on the same subjects. This is the title to

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[10] Maltese 1988: ep. 16, ll. 59-77.
[11] Kurtz and Drexl 1941: ep. 185, pp. 203.17-204.30.

the collected edition of all these little handbooks, requested by Constantine X for his son Michael VII:

Τοῦ αὐτοῦ Ψελλοῦ Σύνοψις διὰ στίχων σαφῶν καὶ πολι-
τικῶν περὶ πασῶν τῶν ἐπιστημῶν, γενομένη πρὸς τὸν
εὐσεβέστατον βασιλέα κῦριν Μιχαὴλ τὸν Δούκαν, ἐκ
προστάξεως τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτοῦ καὶ βασιλέως, ὥστε διὰ τῆς
εὐκολίας καὶ ἡδύτητος ἐνεχθῆναι τοῦτον εἰς τὴν μάθησιν
τῶν ἐπιστημῶν.[12]

The texts are recommended as clear, easy and delightful (in similar introductions they are also praised as memorable). I have argued before that political verse is the simplest language of written communication at court in the 11th and 12th centuries, easier than prose, which followed stricter ancient rules.[13] There must by then have been decapentasyllable songs, circulating probably at a vernacular level, involving memorisation and entertainment. Psellos, teaching half-educated princes, used these connotations to enliven his lesson and make his texts more memorable.[14]

I want finally to speak of names. Eleventh-century Greek personal names followed regular Christian patterns: Ioannes, Konstantinos and Michael are the commonest. But this was the century in which most Greeks came to have a family name. At one level this showed pride among the great aristocratic families, at another, the need for tax officials to distinguish between many persons called Ioannes on their books. Secondary names had existed in a scattered way before, but it was only in the 11th century that one expects everyone to have one. They include nicknames, some satirical, others indicating personal characteristics,

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[12] Westerink 1992: 81.

[13] Jeffreys 1974: 156-61.

[14] Jeffreys 1974: 164-8. The first extensive use of unmixed decapenta-syllables in writing was in the *Hymns* of Symeon the New Theologian; see Kambylis 1976. These were written at the beginning of the 11th century. They had little to do with the conventional hymn, but were inspired utterances falling from his lips in whatever shape they may. See Lauxtermann 1999: 39-40.

geographical and racial origins and simple patronymics. There are many coincidences between 11th-century prosopography and the modern telephone directory.

The best source of names is sigillography. Significant Byzantines in the 11th century had seals to authenticate documents – which did not mean that they could write or even read and properly understand them. There are some 70,000 surviving Byzantine seals, 25,000 or more datable to that century.[15] The language of the seals presumably reflects negotiation between the owners and the die-cutters, who engraved letters backwards. Linguistic analysis is impeded because the terminations of many words are abbreviated. But where they are written in full, one finds serious linguistic confusion. Many seals picture a holy person (usually the Theotokos or a saint), and that person or God is begged by the seal-owner for protection by one of a handful of standard learned invocations. The most common formulas are Κύριε βοήθει or Θεοτόκε βοήθει followed by the owner's name in the dative, or a verse form involving σκέποις (optative, "may you protect"), naturally taking the accusative. The seals show every imaginable mistake of misunderstanding, confusion between formulas and hypercorrection (like dative with σκέποις). If one adds plain misspelling, usually by iotacism, perhaps 50% of seals show mistakes, including many belonging to those whose offices suggest high literacy.

Late in the century twelve-syllable verse becomes common, and the counting of syllables may confirm phonological impressions, especially the omission of unstressed initial vowels. I feel considerable sympathy for a family writing its name alternately as Panokomites and Epanokomites; even more striking is a bishop whose verse inscription on his seal includes his title as πίσκοπος with no unstressed epsilon, which would break the metre as a superfluous syllable.[16]

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[15] On seals and the kinds of research which may be done on them, see Oikonomides 1986.
[16] Details are available on the website of the Prosopography of the Byzantine World (http://www.pbw.kcl.ac.uk). Niketas 15002, Niketas

The most interesting innovation in 11th-century names is the first systematic appearance of the -πουλος ending of the surname, surely a prime marker of Modern Greek onomastics and identity.[17] The -πουλος termination comes from Latin, and is first used, it seems, with reference to young birds and animals, e.g. ὀρνιθόπουλο. The first such family name I have found is Gavrielopoulos (first decade of the 10th century), a debauched companion of the Emperor Alexander. The termination might have a dismissive connotation. Later in the 10th century there are the Kometopouloi, Bulgarian princes, and a Sarakenopoulos, a · military man stationed in Bulgaria. For the 11th century I have found the following (note that the list includes -πωλος terminations, which seem to be used interchangeably with -πουλος): Ameropoulos, Argyropoulos (Romanos III, also called Argyros), Chaasanopoulos, Domestikopoulos, Drakontopoulos(?), Iatropolos, Iberopoulos, Kardamopoulos, Lazaropoulos, Longibardopoulos, Maniakopoulos, Marzapoulos, Metretopoulos, Metropoulos, Oumbertopoulos, Pentaïlopoulos, Pharakopoulos, Philippopoulos(?), Phrangopoulos, Politopolos, Rousopoulos, Sagopoulos, Saponopoulos, more Sarakenopouloi, Skleropoulos, Spanopoulos (many examples), Symponopoulos, Syropoulos, Theophilopoulos, Tourkopoulos, Tourmarchopoulos, Xylopoulos.[18] The list contains many names derived from ethnic markers and a smaller group from dignities and offices.

One thinks instinctively of this as a popular form bubbling up from below, but this is not the whole story. There is an important Frankish general in Byzantine service at the end of the 11th cen-

20104, Niketas 20161 and Niketas 20165 all have the surname (E)panokomites. They are currently (1 July 2007) classified as four separate individuals, but it is most unlikely that there are more than two persons involved. See also Anonymus 20197, the Bishop of Alabanda.

[17] I have found no recent study of this onomastic pattern; but as there are many contexts where one could have been published, I may have missed something.

[18] Reference to sources for these names (nearly all seals) may be found at http://www.pbw.kcl.ac.uk by selecting the factoid type "Second name".

tury called by Anna Komnene "Konstantinos Oumbertopoulos" in her impeccably Atticist text.[19] Seals have been published since the 1980s, mainly from Bulgaria, belonging to Konstantinos Oumbertos, who (it was suggested) might be Oumbertopoulos's father, otherwise unknown (presumably Humbert, whatever the spelling and pronunciation appropriate for his origin in western Europe). But each newly published seal pushed Oumbertos later, tying him closer to the dates and career of the son, Oumbertopoulos. Last year two older seals were published belonging to another Oumbertos, without forename, attributed by the editor to a father.[20] Thus the man called Oumbertopoulos by Anna called himself on his seals Konstantinos Oumbertos: his father was Oumbertos, *tout court*, as the single-word name of the original migrant regularly becomes the family name of his descendants. Why did Anna call the son Oumbertopoulos? I am currently testing the theory that the -opoulos ending, despite probable vernacular roots, took on in the learned language the force of the American "Junior", to distinguish between homonyms. Perhaps more seals will be discovered giving names without the -opoulos suffix parallel to names attested in narrative texts which do include the suffix.

We should now turn from 11th-century language to structures within which it may be viewed.[21]

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Modern Greece has existed for less than two centuries since the Revolution of 1821. However, it is generally agreed inside and

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[19] Ed. Reinsch and Kambylis 2001. References are listed in the index of vol. 2, pp. 44-5 (Konstantinos 14).

[20] All the seals are published together at Jordanov 2006: 312-15, though without a full commentary.

[21] Up to this point, this paper has been giving fairly precise information and supporting it with detailed notes. Its style will now change: it will largely work with well-known facts and patterns of the history of Greek, putting them together to point out terminological difficulties. Full annotation would be inappropriate, but I have tried to give references over controversial issues.

outside the country that the Greeks have a much longer history. That history is notoriously difficult to define: let me briefly rehearse the problems to introduce what follows, while spelling out the details to avoid misapprehensions.[22] Since the middle of the 15th century Greek speakers were a majority in the "Rum millet" of the Ottoman Empire, a population institutionalised as Christian and Roman and who named their spoken language "Romaic". For the millennium before 1453, Greek speakers had dominated another Constantinople-based multicultural empire which was Christian and called itself "Roman", but has since been rechristened "Byzantine". Byzantines rarely accepted a Greek identity: in fact words from the root (H)ellen-, the ethnic marker for Greeks common to Ancient and Modern Greek, usually in Byzantium meant "pre-Christian, pagan". From the modern point of view, this may seem mere terminological confusion; after all, a few educated Byzantines at several periods began to use (H)ellen-words of themselves. But this practice was not consistent till the 18th century, and probably not generalised to the majority of the population till the years around 1821.[23] Whatever sentiment (or nationalism) may say, it cannot be ignored that most Greek speakers from the 4th to the 18th centuries identified with Christianity and name-words from the root Rom-, making occasional use of (H)ellen-based words as signs of a past identity superseded by Christianity.

Other definitions of Greek identity before 1821 are equally problematic. Racial continuity from Ancient to Modern Greece was clearly diluted by barbarian migrations in Late Antiquity, followed later by major influxes of Slavs and Albanians. These points were made in a racist and provocative way by Jakob Philipp Fallmerayer, and caused outrage in Greece. But the case, if put in a restrained and scholarly manner, is unanswerable.[24]

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[22] For this and much of what follows, see Browning 1983, Horrocks 1997.

[23] See Holton 1984-5.

[24] Fallmerayer's attack and the Greek reaction are both put into context by Veloudis 1970 and Veloudis 1982.

Indeed, it is difficult to define what racial continuity could mean anywhere in the world over a period of two millennia, without proof of strong barriers to migration. As well as large migrations there were constant smaller movements: in the 11th century alone numerous military commanders from several non-Greek sources joined the Byzantine and Greek-speaking elite with their retainers (like Oumbertopoulos's father). Eleventh-century Athonite documents, for example, written in Chalkidiki, may include (as well as conventional-sounding Byzantines with Greek names) a cast of first- or second-generation Byzantine landowners and officers of French or Armenian or Georgian descent and mixed populations including peasant families with Slavic names. The information is provided in learned Greek by well-educated officials. The documents involve many identities and languages, and varied genes.[25]

All, of course, would have called themselves Christians, and Orthodoxy is a major link from Byzantium through to Modern Greece. However Orthodoxy is too broad a category to serve as a marker for Greeks. In the first half of the Middle Ages it included all Christendom, before the split into Eastern Orthodox and Catholic western segments, which became definitive in 1204. Later, beside the Greek church, the Slavic orthodox became institutionalised as a parallel flock, united with their Greek co-religionists in nearly everything but the marks of Greek identity we are seeking.[26]

It is also tempting to use geography as a definition of Greekness. Compare maps of the archaic period of Ancient Greece (during its migrations) with the Byzantium of the 12th century (shrunken by Turkish invasions in the 11th) and Greece around 1920 (after the gains of the Balkan Wars and the Treaty of Sèvres but before the losses of the Asia Minor campaign). There are significant differences, but striking similarities. They might lead

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[25] The largest collection of such documents is Lemerle, Guillou and Svoronos 1970, but monasteries like Iviron (primarily for Georgians), give a better sense of the multiculturalism of the area: see Lefort et al. 1985-90.

[26] An accessible introduction to this subject is Obolensky 1971: 237-71.

to the assumption of a Greek heartland which expanded into great empires with Alexander the Great, then shrank to its previous size towards the end of Byzantium and disappeared altogether as an independent state, to be reconstituted at its original size after the first century of Modern Greece. In this scenario, Greece's eventual modern borders might represent contraction to an even more fundamental heartland, perhaps archaic Greece before the migrations.

The geographical similarity of Ancient and Modern Greece has an insidious influence on all thinking on such questions. One must remember that nearly all those involved in setting the boundaries of modern Greece had a map of Ancient Greece on their schoolroom walls. In fact, there may be a good deal of truth in the first hypothesis above, that the shrinking of Byzantium represented (roughly speaking) a retreat to areas where Greek was a secure native language. However it is much more difficult to accept the second stage of the proposal, implying a Hellenic heartland in the Greek peninsula during the Turkish period. The population there appears less homogeneous and acculturated to Hellenism than, say, in areas nearer Constantinople. In fact comparative Turkish weakness is more likely to have determined where Greek independence was declared than comparative strength of Hellenic feeling. The Turkish presence in the Peloponnese was less than further east, leaving more opportunities for revolt. Geographical influences are more likely after the uprising, when revolution gave famous ancient names their full symbolic force.

If race, religion and geography all give uncertain results, how has a consensus arisen for the acceptance of a long history for the Modern Greeks? The answer is obvious, and has already been implied several times here by the use of "Greek-speakers" for the blunter but more problematic term "Greeks". The only secure index of past Greeks and a Greek past is the Greek language. Greek is a distinct member of the Indo-European language group, not easily confused with others. Its characteristic script has also helped it stay separate. Though some dialects show considerable

variation from majority norms, Greek has never looked like being divided politically like Romance in Western Europe, where differences between several descendants of Latin are now used against each other to reinforce national borders. The relationship of Cyprus to the Greek centre has always been different.

Languages may be used to attempt a historical trace of their users, providing a more acceptable and modern variant of racial descent. Greek carries in itself references to the history and culture of its speakers. Much of Greek food involves Turkish and Middle Eastern vocabulary (and taste), stressing linguistic influences around half a millennium old. On another level the disappearance of the Greek infinitive marks links between Greek and the Slavic languages to its north a millennium or so ago. Other linguistic changes show their importance by covering all elements of Greek. The best example is aphaeresis (the disappearance of unstressed initial vowels), which in Greek had results ranging from the omission of the unstressed augment in verbs through many vocabulary items to the conflation of the preposition εἰς with the article to form στό(v), στή(v) etc. The pervasiveness of this change throughout the language makes a suggestive link between contemporary Greek-speakers and past Greek linguistic communities in which aphaeresis developed. It is prominent in Egyptian papyri and remained so during the Byzantine period (witness [E]panokomites). However this feature is not of automatic significance for our purposes as it is not exclusive to Greek.

In trying to use linguistic history as a real part of the identity of a contemporary Greek, I suggest that there are three main patterns worth emphasis. Two have already been pursued in Greece with special vigour at different times for varying national purposes, and both have been well studied. The third, so far comparatively ignored, needs more prominence. That would make it easier to find a title for this talk.

The first of the three is the attempt to establish direct descent of the Modern Greeks from the revered ancients. As discussed above, this was not self-evident even for most Greek-speakers

before the 18th century. However in the years around 1821 it became essential to link the cause of Greek independence with Classical Studies, then a primary academic discipline in all the world's universities. This might lead to much-needed loans for the war, and also to the acceptance of a Greek state formed by revolution in the strongly anti-revolutionary climate of post-Napoleonic Europe. This story, told many times, includes a prominent place for folklore and archaeology in 19th-century Greek education, both in truncated forms stressing links between the 5th century B.C. and the 19th A.D., disregarding stages in between. In fact the initial historiography of the Modern Greek state ignored Byzantium. However, those demanding links to Ancient Greece had to postulate some level of Greek continuity during the Byzantine period: this concept was suggested by Zambelios (1859) and fully worked out by Konstantinos Paparrigopoulos (1860-77), making a triptych of Greek periods, Ancient, Byzantine and Modern, a pattern which has dominated Modern Greek historiography.[27] Linguistic policies too tried to bridge the gap to the ancients: there was an obsession with teaching Ancient Greek subjects and the use of archaic forms of language as the medium of education, reaching as far as the establishment of the artificial learned language *katharevousa* as the national language of Modern Greece. The self-projection of Greeks as descendants of the great ancestors is quite successful internationally to this day: it probably contributed, for example, to early entry of Greece into the European Community. The policy was naturally prominent at the Athens Olympic Games of 2004.

However, the results of the equivalent policy inside Greece were crippling, especially in education. Ancient subjects were allotted more hours than in Western Europe, where they already had privileged status: other subjects suffered. But the greatest problem was the failure to develop a Greek language fit for a nation in the modern world. The multilayered and informal status of Greek under Ottoman rule needed to be regularised when it

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[27] Again Veloudis 1970 or 1982 gives a nuanced guide.

resumed the full status of a national language. The foundation of
the new state increased both the need for a national language and
the means to standardise and impose it. Demotic, based on the
spoken language, was rather underdeveloped, but it is easy now to
see that it was the only possible basis for education towards a
national language. Yet it was systematically sidelined in favour of
katharevousa, which came to have no consistency in any dimen-
sion of language apart from a determination to avoid taboos of
spoken demotic. The Language Question developed into a major
national debate, politicising language education and the discipline
of linguistics. It became almost impossible to write a Greek
sentence without taking a political stance, and unusual to bother
describing how Greeks used their language before beginning nor-
mative correction.

Criticisms of the obsession with antiquity were made at every
level by the demoticist movement in the hundred years before the
solution of 1976. That century saw a series of linguistic events
that meshed unpredictably with other forces in Greek history.[28]
There were deaths in riots called by conservative academics
against demotic translations of important texts from the past.
Katharevousa was established as the national language by the left-
of-centre Venizelos, while Triantafyllidis (1938), the prime
demotic grammar, was produced under the semi-fascist Metaxas.
Right-wing governments with foreign support after the Second
World War promoted *katharevousa*, and later, just when it seemed
about to be set aside, it was reimposed by the Junta of 1967-1974.
Most developments since Metaxas tended to radicalise Greek aca-
demics and non-Greek students of Modern Greece (like myself) as
demoticists. Demotic was established after the Junta as the
national language and language of education, and has hardly been
challenged since. There are still passionate disputes over Greek
linguistic politics, mainly with a demoticist agenda, but within a
similar range to disputes in other language communities.

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[28] The complex story is told by Dimaras (1973-4), with a fascinating col-
lection of relevant documents.

The demoticists' view of the Greek linguistic past is the second of the patterns I wish to discuss. It was a combination of opposites: on the one hand, they emphasised long continuity in the written use of demotic within the otherwise learned framework of Byzantine Greek, to establish demotic as the natural consummation of Greek linguistic history, countering parallel claims for the status of *katharevousa*.[29] But at crucial moments later, the emphasis was on exclusion of anything learned. A major (and far from unjustified) motivation was the need to develop a canon of texts to be read in support of a demotic national language. This led to the dating of the beginnings of Modern Greek literature early in the 16th century, with implications, not always explicit, that this should also mark a major point in the periodisation of the language. Much of the opposition to demotic came from Phanariots from Constantinople, many of whom supported the use of learned Greek. It was easy to stigmatise the Byzantines as their direct predecessors, and to despise the vernacular texts of the Byzantine period, many of which included a mixture of learned forms.

An interesting set of papers defining the beginnings of Modern Greek literature and culture is published in the first session of the proceedings of the conference on that subject organised in Venice in 1991 and edited by Nikos Panagiotakis.[30] After Nikos's own introduction, discussion is continued by Giorgos Savvidis, Mario Vitti, Hans Eideneier, Stylianos Alexiou and Eratosthenes Kapsomenos. Despite the prominence of the occasion and the distinguished list of speakers, the results are rather disappointing. All agree in setting the beginning of Modern Greek literature around 1500. The major dating criterion, suggested by Savvidis (1993), is the first printing of demotic texts (*Apokopos* in 1509), though this rather arbitrary date is not supported with confidence. Another general motivation is to parallel Western European literatures in their division into medieval and modern

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[29] This is a major strand in demoticist publication, from early scholarly texts like Psichari 1886-9 through to late controversial works like Mesevrinos 1974.
[30] Panayotakis 1993.

phases, discussed especially by Alexiou. I shall return to this later. Only Eideneier, without disagreeing over the dating of the beginning of Modern Greek literature, points out at length that this literary periodisation does not correspond to linguistic criteria: he observes that a millennium or more before 1500 a form of Greek had emerged with close ties to modern demotic in morphology, syntax and vocabulary – not to mention phonology.

The remarks of Eideneier (1993) lead to the third of the frameworks for studying Greek linguistic history, that which I think is underused. It is interesting that Eideneier is the only one of the group to use language to discuss periodisation of literature. The literatures listed by Alexiou (1993) as Western European comparators are French, German, English, Spanish and Italian. All these names, as he says, are single words, allowing the use of a temporal adjective to add details of periodisation (*ancien français*, Middle English etc.). Modern Greek includes one temporal adjective (or, more usually, prefix) as an integral part of its name, making the use of a second very difficult. "Old Modern Greek" and "παλαιά νεοελληνικά" are impossible, and even "Early Modern Greek" and "πρώιμα νεοελληνικά" are problematic, especially when users less familiar with the articulation of the phrase give the adjective or prefix independent weight. This terminological problem is discussed by Alexiou and mentioned by others of the Venice speakers. But in my view it is much less serious than another, arising from the same cause.

Alexiou's five comparative languages are all regularly said to have origins before or around the middle of the first millennium A.D., or later for English, if Old English (Anglo-Saxon) is classified as a separate language. The Greek language spoken today also developed out of the Koine around the 3rd century A.D., as Eideneier remarked and I shall discuss in a minute. But the parallel is rarely made. When naming a modern language, it is surely appropriate to define it backwards, from the present back to the last linguistic event marking a break, before which the language might deserve a different name. This definition, I submit, should be based on the history of the spoken language, disregard-

ing written texts except as evidence for speech. On this basis let me propose a periodisation of the history of the Greek language, in the same schematic style as the rest of this discussion. The argument can only lead to relative judgements, because objectivity is impossible in the definition of a break between one language or linguistic phase and another.

If one looks at the sweep of the Greek language from Homer to 2007, two moments of change in its spoken form stand out, making three periods, Greek A, Greek B and Greek C (this nomenclature is used because of the difficulties in terminology we are trying to address).[31] Greek A (Ancient Greek) was a language with strong cantonal divisions into different dialects, which were slowly breaking down in the 5th and 4th centuries under the influence of population mixture, especially in Athens. Greek B (shifting structures of Koine or common languages) has a sudden beginning at the conquests of Alexander. The slow breakdown seen in Greek A was suddenly and massively increased, as a language of small city-states had to be adapted to administer a vast empire, first as a whole and then in parts. By migration and other forms of linguistic imperialism, the numbers of speakers of Greek and then the number of native speakers was massively increased, and their geographical spread became much wider. The natural effects of this were the disappearance of dialects (hence Koine), and a number of sharp linguistic simplifications of Greek, which it is unnecessary to describe here. The 3rd century B.C. marks for Greek a linguistic revolution, a change in the history of Greek which, under other circumstances, could easily have caused a division into different languages. However, no political pressures for division appeared.

Greek B began as an imperialistic and victorious language, but gradually lost both these characteristics. The states following Alexander were picked off one by one by the Romans, and the Koine became the victim of imperialism, the language by which the Romans administered the numerically larger eastern half of the

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[31] Much of what follows is indebted to the ideas of Kapsomenos (1958).

empire's population. Yet the unity of Roman administration did not bring stability in spoken Greek. Evidence is not of the kind to permit precise dating, but it is clear that after the revolution in the decades following Alexander, deep structural change continued more slowly but persistently, probably faster in the new, eastern, extensions of Greek speech than in Old Greece: the changes were eventually completed there too. Before the foundation of Constantinople in the early 4th century A.D., the verb was fundamentally reconstructed in Greek speech and there were major changes in nouns, involving the fatal weakening of the dative case. There was considerable influence from Latin. At the same time there were radical alterations in pronunciation and other tidyings and simplifications, less easy to categorise. It was during this period that formal Greek diglossia was introduced, probably through a nervous sense of linguistic change felt as disintegration, mirroring consciousness of political subjection. The Atticist movement of the 1st century B.C. insisted on a return in writing to the Attic of Greek freedom and cultural success in the 5th century B.C. It was very effective, completely dominating many surviving texts and leaving a firm imprint on most others.

Linguistic genesis is less easy to document than change and disintegration. During the 2nd and 3rd centuries A.D., the informal levels of the language found in Egyptian papyri show increasing signs of a spoken language structured like modern demotic in morphology, syntax, vocabulary and phonology. The evidence is not consistent, with many older forms still surviving, and Atticist influence clouds the picture. Linguistic historians are helped in tracing what is happening by knowledge of later developments. There was a marked slowing of the pace of linguistic change. This is the beginning of Greek C. Even as spoken around 400 A.D. it was very much closer to Greek of the 21st century, 1600 years later, than to that of, say, Aristotle, at the end of Greek A, some 700 years before. The development of the language slowly continued. There were still many changes to consolidate, new developments to absorb, and influences to be undergone from west and east. But these alterations may be

characterised as normal linguistic evolution, rather than the revo-
lutionary movements seen since the end of Greek A. In reading
F. T. Gignac's careful and comprehensive studies of the Greek of
the Egyptian papyri, I feel I am watching the birth of the Modern
Greek spoken language.[32] It is a pity that papyrus grew and
papyrus records were preserved in the valley of the Nile, rather
than, say, the Vardar. In the latter case, the history of Modern
Greek might have been written differently.

It is worth making two comments at this point, one looking
back, one forward. First, the change from Greek A to Greek C is
sharp, but less dramatic, for example, than that from Latin to
French. Greek remained an inflected language operating with
noun and verb terminations, while French has changed its lin-
guistic type from Latin, losing many terminations and depending
on word order, like English. Second, the beginning of Greek C
coincided roughly in time with three other developments which
have appeared in these pages: the foundation of the first
Constantinople-based multicultural empire, institutionalised
adoption of Christianity and the shift in identification of Greek-
speakers from (H)ellen-based names to Rom-based names. Only
in an impressionistic survey like this could it be hinted that the
language change might have any link to the other three.

Greek C was from the start dominated by diglossia. The Atti-
cists of the 1st century B.C. had tried to turn back the linguistic
clock to the 5th. This motivation was just as strong for learned
classicists of the 1st to 4th centuries A.D.,[33] especially the
Christians, who had now inherited a second level of even more
privileged text in the Greek translation of the Old Testament and
the original of the New, written in the Koine. Though biblical lan-
guage was simple, spoken Greek C slowly distanced itself from it.
Learned 4th-century theologians, the greatest in the history of
Orthodoxy, combined their two past linguistic heritages by writing
exemplary Attic, whilst quoting the Bible verbatim in its non-

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[32] Gignac 1976 and 1981.
[33] See, e.g., Bowie 1970.

current but less learned Greek. The chance of maintaining Christian texts at the near-vernacular level of the Bible was rejected, and the elites of ecclesiastical and secular learning were thus united in support of Atticism. The apparatus of Roman/Byzantine government was then moving from Latin to Greek. Predictably, it followed the example of other elite groups and set the administrative language level in the Atticist range. A major characteristic of Greek C, from the beginning to 1975, was its inability to win over ruling elites. One could say that it always came with a large superstructure of denial, one or more learned languages which controlled the written word and excluded the spoken language from surviving evidence. Did this at the beginning imply repression of some part of Byzantine society by another, or is it better to use the model of spoken and written languages existing harmoniously in parallel, each for its own purposes? Increased investigation of evidence for the spoken language will bring interesting answers.

Greek C has now lasted around sixteen centuries. In my view there are no signs of dramatic changes in oral language significant enough to provide robust periodisation within this time. But since linguistic history abhors so long a continuum, I will discuss two possibilities which may be of use in a subsidiary way. Both probably involve more changes in secondary dimensions, like written Greek and the general political and social context of the language, than in speech. The more prominent of the two involves the 19th- and 20th-century development of Greek as the national language of the modern state. Like all linguistic developments of the last two centuries, this must be viewed within an international framework involving issues like the spread of universal education, large-scale urbanisation and the introduction of mass media. All these factors serve to iron out differences within language communities, but are global phenomena which need special care in application to individual languages. However, the intensity of the Greek Language Question, especially its insistence on education in archaic forms, had specifically Greek results, even allowing for the international factors mentioned. Details have been given

above. The spoken language was not immune. One of my earliest Greek memories, for example, is listening to a televised oration of the 1967 Junta strongman Georgios Papadopoulos. I was in a room with democratic university students who delighted in correcting his mistakes in *katharevousa* and general linguistic incompetence. I was left in no doubt how completely 20th-century Greek education could fail, even at the oral level.

The second and less plausible break in the oral course of Greek C is in 1453 at the end of Byzantium, or some time in the next century, as suggested by several of those speaking at the Venice conference. This change represents the uncoupling of the language from government at the fall of Constantinople, just as the example discussed above begins with a recoupling to a fresh state with Greek independence in 1821. The surviving evidence on the earlier break is only a fraction of that available on the later, though a major Cambridge research project is doing all it can to remedy the situation. I shall concentrate a little on this earlier break, as one of the purposes of this paper is to cast doubt on the significance often implied for it.

Let us begin by summing up the information and comments already provided here about the ideological aspects of this proposed division. Nearly all views of the past current in 19th-century Greece traced Greek history in a full sense back to around 1500, and assumed a degree of further continuity back to antiquity. But different emphasis was given to different parts of this continuum. Adherents of the learned language stressed the ancient end, and found Byzantium an inconvenient (though unavoidable) interruption that strained their arguments. Demoticists gave weight to the modern language. Ancient and Byzantine Greek were an important introduction to the main linguistic narrative which climaxed in modern demotic: but the Byzantine phase was suspect because of the mixed nature of the vernacular texts it produced, the learned environment, dominated by the language of Byzantine intellectuals, and the obvious similarities of the latter to their geographical successors, the Phanariots. No text from the Byzantine period has made it into the full demoticist canon. Both

sides in the Language Question thus were lukewarm about Byzantium. Equally, Byzantines did not help their cause by calling themselves Romans, regarding Christian religious identification as more important than any nationalism, and failing to avoid the adjective "medieval", the one epithet to rival "Byzantine" in negative connotations. The vernacular of the Byzantine period and its literature came thus to be separated from Modern Greece by more than one ideological framework, despite little evidence of change in spoken language. The superstructure has had much more influence on terminology than underlying popular speech.

I have recently turned against application of the word "medieval" to Byzantium, despite being organiser of a conference in the *Neograeca Medii Aevi* series, contributing Byzantine articles to Dictionaries of the Middle Ages and advising the Grammar of Medieval Greek project. The concept of the Middle Ages is known to all and provides easy chronological reference. But the Italian humanists like Petrarch in the fourteenth century and Leonardo Bruni in the fifteenth who developed the idea, and Bruni's contemporary Flavio Biondo who coined the phrase, were speaking about the Latin West. Petrarch felt himself to be in the Dark Ages, while his successors were conscious of living at the dawn of a new era of intellectual vitality, and called the period from the end of Rome to their day the Middle Age. One of the most important of the reasons for this change of attitudes was the arrival in Italy of Manuel Chrysoloras and other Byzantine exiles, bringing knowledge of Plato, Aristotle and other ancient Greek writers, whom Bruni himself did much to translate and popularise.[34] The Fall of Constantinople has often been used to date the

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[34] Bruni and Biondi together form a vital stage in the development of modern historiography. From my limited reading on this huge subject I will recommend two articles. Ferguson (1939) describes the change from the preliminary collection of references to rebirth and words implying "middle" to more subtle methods. Ianziti (1998) shows Bruni learning to be a historian by translating Plutarch, then rejecting Plutarch's *Cicero* and writing his own version. Later he was able to amend the historical details of other Italian periods and his historiographical approach to them by reading Polybius against Livy and Procopius against Latin histories of

end of the Middle Ages, not because of parallels between Greek and Latin developments, but because collapse in the East added vitality to the West. It is possible to disparage the actual historical results of the arrival of Byzantine envoys and migrants, but not to deny the importance, real and psychological, of the skills and knowledge they brought to Italian humanism.

In historiographical practice, the western Middle Ages show several tendencies opposite to those of the Byzantine East. In the broadest terms, the western narrative began with immediate political fragmentation, collapse of cities and decline of learning, industry and trade. Later, the tendency in many areas was to develop centralised nation-states, drawing many modern lines on the map of Europe. Latin preserved a learned linguistic form for scholarship and international communication, but vernacular Latin divided into separate spoken dialects, which became indices of nationality. Once vernacular literatures eventually appeared they were abundant and successful. In the East, this narrative is reversed. The same period began with a powerful centralised state, much more resilient than in the west. Though it lost territory to the Arabs and its cities declined for a time, it never lost its bureaucratic strength. But in the 11th century Turkish invasions began in the east, followed by attacks from the west, culminating in the loss of its capital in the Fourth Crusade. After a brief revival, the 14th and 15th centuries showed steady decline till 1453. The Balkans and Asia Minor became an undifferentiated and multicultural empire under Ottoman control. Learned Greek was the foundation of Byzantine bureaucracy. Written vernacular Greek appeared later than in the west, probably because Byzantine centralism limited the need for localised and competitive cultural production. When vernacular levels appeared, they showed few dialect features, and remained in constant relation to more learned literature.

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the wars of Justinian. Both Ferguson and Ianziti stress the key role played by the rediscovery of Greek, which showed that there were dimensions beyond the medieval Latin tradition.

In view of these differences, to label Greek written in Byzantine times "medieval" seems to me rather like calling 19th-century architecture in Greece "Victorian". The label conveys a convenient chronological meaning, but its implications are wrong. If they were ever taken seriously, they could cause real confusion. It is only a little less serious (and probably less historically excusable) than the attachment of the unqualified adjective "Greek" exclusively to the ancient language, which is the source of the problem discussed in this paper. To this we must now return.

If my subject were a western European language, I could have used the title "French (or whatever) in the 11th century" with no trace of discomfort. It would be immediately understood that reference was to the spoken language of the area concerned in that century, together with the writing based on it and giving evidence of it. Since my subject is Greek, I have more choices, but none is satisfactory. "Greek" and "Byzantine Greek" would reference the learned language, and the former in many circumstances would imply a framework overbalanced towards Thucydides and Homer, which I do not want. "Medieval Greek", aside from other problems I have raised, would be tautological in this title, since its reference is largely chronological, and would form a less precise duplicate of "in the 11th century". "Modern Greek" at that date, as I have said, is rather an oxymoron and raises uncomfortable ideological hackles (exploited in this paper). "Romaic" has superficial attractions, until one realises that it lacks the most important element of continuity, the period from 1821 to the present. Perhaps the most satisfactory available title would use "Vernacular Greek", but the adjective sends out confused messages to the linguist, while giving the learned language the primacy in definition, implying that the spoken language is a secondary variant rather than the other way round.

The second part of this paper has been an exploration of the terminological impasse in which I find myself, hung on the hook provided by the first part. I hope I am not alone in thinking this a problem for Neohellenists and Byzantinists alike. I have discussed some of the prejudices causing the confusion and argued against

some of the solutions suggested, whilst trying to offend nobody. Maybe the discipline of linguistics already has a solution which I have yet to hear – perhaps the careful extension of one of the terms used here, or a good new label for "Greek C" that will catch on, hopefully, outside academia as well as inside it. It happens that my interest in the subject I profess, apart from teaching the post-1976 national language of Greece, centres round the relationship of speakers of Greek C at different dates with what I have called its superstructure. For half of the language's history so far, there seems to have been little desire to write it, and so study is limited to indirect evidence, scraps and influences of the sort described in the first part of this paper. This is an extreme case of a characteristic which rather reduces the excitement of studying most of the oldest continuously spoken languages of Europe. I hope that future students of Greek in this phase will have an easier time with their terminology than I have.

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