Linguistic Contact in Ancient Greece: Diachrony and Synchrony
(CoLIGA)
International Conference
October 14-16, 2020 – Université Lumière Lyon 2
Introduction

From the earliest written documents, Ancient Greek attests to a rich diversity. A plethora of dialectal varieties spread all over the Aegean and the vast Greek colonial network. The study of inscriptions of the 1st millennium BC, which particularly witness to this linguistic expansion and variation, show that throughout its history two antithetical processes shape and modify the dialectal geography of Ancient Greek: divergence, which, due to the inexorability and unpredictability of linguistic change, increases the differences among speakers living in separate geographical areas, and convergence, which, through dialectal contact, reduces dissimilarities.

Contact phenomena between the dialects of Ancient Greek emerge on multiple linguistic levels and in heterogeneous communicative contexts. Putting aside exceptional cases, in which two different dialectal versions of a text are recorded side by side in the same inscription, frequent signs of dialect contact are, among others, the diffusion of morphological innovations, the spreading of personal, god and month names, and the borrowing of institutional words and expressions. Some particular communicative environments favour interdialectal contacts, like the consecration of objects, that are often accompanied by an inscription, in sanctuaries frequented by people arriving from all corners of the Hellenic world; or the international relations established by Greek poleis and states, which produce different kinds of texts (decrees, treaties, official letters, etc.). Furthermore, the role of dialect contact is most notable in the dialectal mixture characteristic of literary genres like epic, iambic, elegiac and lyric poetry, and Attic drama.

The ties established by Greeks, from the end of Bronze Age, with several non-Greek populations of the Mediterranean basin, the Black Sea and Asia also characterize the history of Ancient Greece. Demonstrably, the dynamics of linguistic contact lie at the heart of social, economic and cultural relations ensuing from the fortunes of commerce and war. Significantly, in Ancient Greek, like in other languages, exonyms often pivot on terms associated with verbal communication. Along with the famous example of βάρβαρος, which originates from an onomatopoeic root (cf. Sanskrit balbalā ‘to stammer’ and barbarāh ‘non-Arians’) and designates a ‘foreigner’, other cases are noteworthy, e.g., the Κηφῆνες, i.e. ‘Persians’, a name connected with the adjective κωφός ‘speechless’, or the Παφλαγόνες – name of the people in Northern Anatolia –, associated by Greeks via folk-etymology to παφλάζο, an imitative verb meaning ‘to bluster’ (e.g., the sea) and metaphorically ‘to splutter’; cf. λοπᾶς παφλάζει βαρβάρω λαλήματι “a plate splutters in a foreign babble” (Euboulos, fr. 108.2 CGF Kassel & Austin).

In bilingual and multilingual contexts, communicative strategies often vary from one region and period to another, and so does the role that “Barbarians” attribute to Greek vis-à-vis their own languages. Written sources of all kinds (inscriptions, papyrus, coins, graffiti)
attest to the polymorphism of linguistic contact, something that some ancient writers also observed.

Unsurprisingly, contact phenomena have attracted the attention of linguists over the years, who try to establish, from different perspectives and various theoretical frameworks, the principles governing the influence of different languages on Greek and vice versa.

The conference *Linguistic Contact in Ancient Greece: Diachrony and Synchrony* will bring together specialists in different ancient languages and in Ancient Greek dialectology, with a view to combining the analysis of language contact between Ancient Greek and other languages and the study of the interrelations of Greek dialectal varieties. The organizers of this event are confident that a complementary regard will broaden the horizon of both research fields, and will also open unexplored paths in the study of two fundamentally parallel phenomena.

This conference is part of the research project “Interdialectal contact in Ancient Greek III” founded by the Spanish Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities (FFI2017-82590-C2). This team integrates linguists and epigraphists from France, Germany, Spain and the United Kingdom.

### Keynote speakers

Dan Dana (CNRS / ANHIMA)
Philippa Steele (University of Cambridge)
Olga Tribulato (University “Ca’ Foscari” Venice)
Lucien C. van Beek (Leiden University)

### Organizing committee

Alcorac Alonso Déniz (CNRS / HiSoMA)
María Luisa del Barrio Vega (Complutense University of Madrid)
Julián V. Méndez Dosuna (University of Salamanca)
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Catherine Dobias-Lalou (University of Burgundy and French archaeological mission in Libya)
Panagiotis Filos (University of Ioannina)
Claire Le Feuvre (University Paris-Sorbonne)
Call for papers

The conference welcomes contributions dealing with any of the subjects outlined in the introduction above: inter-dialectal contact in Ancient Greek and linguistic contact between Greek and other Ancient languages. Those wishing to participate with a paper (20 minutes followed by 10 minutes of discussion) are invited to submit their proposals before Friday, 31 January 2020 at the conference website (https://coliga.sciencesconf.org).

Proposals should be presented in one of the languages of the conference (French, English or Spanish), and sent in two anonymized files (.DOCX and .PDF) with a maximum extension of 3000 characters, spaces and bibliographic references included. Only Unicode fonts should be used.

The authors of the selected proposals will be notified by Friday, 14 March 2020 and will be invited to send a final abstract of their papers by Monday, 15 May 2020.

Practical information

Venue: Laboratoire HiSoMA – Maison de l’Orient et de la Méditerranée 7 rue Raulin, Lyon France

Dates of conference: Wednesday, 14 – Friday, 16 October 2020

Languages of conference: French, English, Spanish

Type of presentation: 20 minutes paper followed by 10 minutes discussion

Subjects of papers: inter-dialectal contact in Ancient Greek

Linguistic contact between Greek and other Ancient languages

Deadline for proposals: Friday, 31 January 2020

Notification of acceptance: Before Friday, 14 March 2020

Deadline for final abstracts: Before Monday, 15 May 2020

Contact: coliga@sciencesconf.org

Website: https://coliga.sciencesconf.org/