

FYROM:

**Searching for a Name, and Problems
with the Expropriation of History**

George C. Papavizas

Eleven years after Josip Broz Tito's communist regime ended with his death in 1980, and following the breakup of Yugoslavia, an unusually disturbing event occurred for the Balkans, especially for Greece.

On 17 September 1991,

Tito's Socialist Republic of Macedonia was converted by Skopje's communist politicians into an independent state with the name "Republic of Macedonia" (Republika Makedonija).

Immediately after its secession from Yugoslavia, the new republic —known as Vardarska Banovina (or Vardar Province) from 1929 to 1944 and Paionia in antiquity — beguiled by the absurdity of age-old historical distortions, revealed its irredentist aspirations in the first draft of its constitution.

Articles

3 and 49 of the constitution's preamble announced that the boundaries of the new republic also included Greek Macedonia (Greece owns 75 percent of King Philip's and Alexander's historic Macedonia). Following Greece's strenuous objections, the new republic moderated its claims somewhat in January 1992 and deleted the reference to Greek Macedonia in the second draft.

The

final draft included an appeal to the “Macedonians” of Greece to continue their ethnic struggle for union with the new “Macedonia,” an addition implying a future threat against Greece's territorial integrity.

The expressions "Macedonia" and "Macedonians" in quotation marks refer to the way FYROM uses the words to connote the ethnic significance of the republic (a concept disputed in this article).

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Half a century earlier, Greece's neighbor had harbored some of the most important military bases and training camps, including one in its capital, Skopje, supporting the Communist Party of Greece's sedition against the Greek government during the deadly Greek Civil War of 1946 — 9. It was obvious

from the beginning of the new state's independence that Hellenic Macedonianism was targeted for a sharp political and diplomatic attack.

The new republic's administration, claiming now that its Slavic inhabitants are "Macedonians," and the only ones in the Balkans, is determined to continue stirring political, demographic, and territorial problems for the foreseeable future, outside of or under a North Atlantic Treaty Organization umbrella.

Because Greece has also maintained that the small state's name of "Macedonia" and its constitution implicitly invoke claims to the Greek part of the historic region of Macedonia, including its capital, Thessaloniki (Salonika), the United Nations Security Council accepted the new state on 7 April 1993 as a member of the UN with the name Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) until a mutually acceptable name could be negotiated between Athens and Skopje.

The negotiations were first mediated by the late Cyrus Vance, and currently they are mediated by his successor, Matthew Nimetz, both appointed by the UN secretary-general.

Since Nimetz believes that the problem can be resolved through "statesmanship" in Athens and Skopje, he has made several recommendations for a permanent name to resolve the lingering problem.

No name acceptable to both Greece and FYROM has been found after seventeen years of negotiations. Greece appears to be willing to accept a name with geographic meaning, such as “Republic of North Macedonia,” or a composite name, such as “Republic of Slavomacedonia,” but the two names are unacceptable to Skopje.

After the Athens-Skopje enmity over the name “Macedonia” smoldered for four acrimonious years, on 13 September 1995 Greece and FYROM, under the UN auspices, signed a so-called Interim Accord. Greece accepted FYROM as an independent and sovereign state and agreed to establish diplomatic relations with Skopje. FYROM removed the Sun of Vergina (an ancient Greek Macedonian symbol found in Vergina, Greece) from its flag and public buildings and agreed that nothing in its constitution can or should be interpreted as constituting, or will ever constitute, the basis of any claim by FYROM to any territory not within its existing borders.

It agreed to not interfere in the internal affairs of another state to protect the status and rights of any persons in other states who are not citizens of FYROM.

The two countries also agreed to take effective measures to prohibit hostile activities or propaganda by state-controlled agencies and public institutions.

Greece fulfilled all its obligations under the agreement. From 1995 to the present (2010), Greece has encouraged investments in FYROM of more than €1 billion by private Greek persons or institutions. (By 2002, 80 percent of the FYROM economy was controlled or sustained by Greek interests.) It

allows FYROM's commerce to move through the Greek port of Thessaloniki. It helped FYROM enter several international organizations, including the all-important Stabilization and Association Agreement with the European Union. It included FYROM in the five-year Greek Plan of Economic Reconstruction of the Balkans and supported its entrance into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's Partnership for Peace. It signed an agreement of military cooperation with FYROM that allowed high-ranking FYROM military leaders to participate in the multiethnic Center of Military Training in the Greek city of Kilkis and granted scholarships to FYROM military personnel to attend a military school in Greece. And it stood politically and financially by the FYROM government during its nationalist clash with the local Albanian minority in 2001. [\[1\]](#)

In contrast, FYROM violated basic norms of international behavior and almost every provision of the Interim Accord, paying Greece back for its assistance and generosity with a constant barrage of anti-Hellenic propaganda, provocations in the media and on the Internet, and distortions of history. It accused Greece of unjustifiably using the name "Macedonia" and it printed school books and pseudo-bank notes depicting Greek heroes as FYROM heroes and Greek landmarks as FYROM landmarks. It also circulated maps showing itself as part of a "Greater Macedonia," including Greek Macedonia—with Thessaloniki—down to Mt. Olympus. It used its membership status in the Council of Europe in 1995 to promote its nationalist aims, including "redemption" of the "Macedonian minorities" in Greece.

To provoke Greece, FYROM renamed the airport in Skopje Alexander the Great Airport. It inculcated in young minds the defunct communist expansionist tendencies and the idea to hate Greeks, a violation of Article 7 of the Interim Accord. Worst of all, it violated Article 11 of the accord, which states that FYROM may not use any name other than "FYROM," its temporary name, until an agreement is reached on the name.

Because of its multiethnic structure and proximity to four Balkan countries of diverse ethnological and religious composition, FYROM could have become from the outset a serious link, playing an important constructive and mediating role among its neighbors. Because of several systemic weaknesses past tendencies and habits acquired during fifty years under a dictatorial regime — however, the new state may become a destabilizing force in the Balkans, especially if it continues to pursue the present uncompromising policies in its relations with the neighbors.

In this essay I examine FYROM's relations with Greece, its most important neighbor, the country that assisted FYROM politically and financially from the outset, despite the differences the two countries have on the use of the name "Macedonia."

Historical Perspective

In light of diverse views on FYROM's right to the name "Macedonia," any solution to the ongoing conflict (known historically as the Macedonian Problem) must address historical truth and the historical background, the essence of which has been FYROM's intensive efforts to expropriate a name that Greece has been using for more than three millennia and still uses for one of its largest territories, adjacent to FYROM. Simply stated, the FYROM regime is violating well-established historical tenets by using Macedonian Hellenism's names and symbols. The small country, representing a small part of a larger whole country

less than 20 percent of Philip's historic Macedonia

—
portrays itself as representing the entire Macedonia. Its claims for an exclusive Macedonian identity have intensified since the United States under President George W. Bush recognized FYROM as the “Republic of Macedonia” in 2004, and more so since Greece objected to FYROM's entrance into NATO in April 2008. Greece objects to FYROM's arrogation of the rights of the citizens of Greece, which own the largest part of historic Macedonia, and especially to FYROM's infringement of the rights of Hellenic Macedonians of countless generations, whose Macedonianism has become an integral part of their ethnic identity.

To understand the complexity of the Macedonian problem, we must go back to the year 1862 — the year of appointment of the pro-Bulgarian Count Nikolai Ignatieff as the Russian ambassador to the Ottoman government — to trace the origin and the reasons for the struggle for Macedonia under the Ottomans between two protagonists, Greeks and Bulgarians, not between Greeks and “Macedonians.” During the intensified struggle for Macedonia's liberation from the Ottomans in the late 1800s and early 1900s, Bulgarism represented Slavism, not Macedonianism. The Greeks and the Bulgarians viewed the enslaved land of Philip and Alexander as a region that one day would become part of an enlarged Greece or Bulgaria, respectively. Like wise, the southern Serbs demanded more territory, but they had no particular interest in claiming a Macedonian identity. Macedonianism as an independent and exclusive ethnic concept had not yet been invented by the pre-Tito Slavs. It had to wait for seventy-five years (1870 to 1945) to be propelled by Tito's communist regime.

To put the Slavic “Macedonian” ethnogenesis and the rise of false Slavic Macedonianism into proper perspective, we must also go back to 1862 and trace the origin and sentiments of FYROM's Slav speakers and their ethnic transformations through the years before their final communist-controlled conversion to “Macedonians.” They were Bulgarians from 1862 to 1913 and Serbianized Slavs from 1913 until the German occupation of Yugoslavia in

1941. Bulgarians again proudly brandished Bulgarian and Nazi German flags during the occupation of southern Yugoslavia by the fascist Bulgarian army (a Hitler gift to Bulgaria for joining Nazi Germany during World War II).

They were Yugoslav communist partisans during the occupation and, finally, communist “Macedonians” by 1945, with new roots, history, and a new “Macedonian” language, a modification of the Bulgarian language by Tito's communist regime.

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Looking beyond FYROM's actions — the recent intense campaign by the present nationalist leadership in Skopje, claiming an exclusive “Macedonian” identity; the touting of FYROM's Bulgarian dialect as a “Macedonian” language; the continuing nonsensical propaganda against Greece; the numerous violations of the Interim Accord by FYROM; and history's distortions — who was responsible for the transformation of the southern Slavs into “Macedonians” and the appropriation by the Slavs of the name “Macedonia” and its derivatives used by Greece for three thousand years? How did the political decision emerge for the creation of an exclusive “Macedonian” identity from Vardar Province's Slavs, Bulgarians, Albanians, Serbs, Greeks, and others?

The historical guilt for launching a state with a name that a neighbor has been using for three millennia must first and foremost burden the reformed communist leaders in Skopje who created it in 1991.

They could have written

a constitution friendly to their neighbors, making an auspicious beginning by choosing a neutral name (for example, Republic of Paionia or Republic of Vardar) that would not offend their neighbors. The historical guilt also belongs to the Europeans and Americans who, to expedite Yugoslavia's dissolution, embraced the fledgling country with a historic name from the long past of one of its neighboring countries.

The Europeans and the Americans

did it for expediency, ignoring three thousand years of history.

Documents available now lead to another indisputable conclusion: Tito's ideologically Marxist authoritarian regime, assisted by Joseph Stalin and by two infamous organizations — the Comintern and the Balkan Communist Federation — are also responsible.

The Marxist revolutionary theory on ethnic minorities, cleverly adjusted by Lenin and Stalin to compromise the principles of communist internationalism with their own national aspirations, was also responsible. History knows that the “Macedonianism” of Vardar Province's Slav-speakers is based exclusively on the role played by communism when in the early 1940s the Slavs were transformed by Tito into “Macedonians” for political reasons.

Today, the dispute between Greece and FYROM goes deeper than the use of the name “Macedonia” by FYROM. It is a double-pronged attempt by FYROM to (1) establish kinship between ancient Macedonians and FYROM's southern Slavs and create and propagate a Slav “Macedonian-ism” and a “Macedonian” national consciousness in the small country; and (2) intensify its historical revisionism and propaganda barrage to discredit the Macedonian Hellenism and claim the glorious Macedonian inheritance.

No Kinship

The area north of Mt. Barnous and Mt. Orbelos and south of Kosovo (north of historic Macedonia), known from 1929 to 1944 as Vardar Province and today as FYROM, was known in antiquity as Paionia or Paeonia (Greek: HaLovia) and its people as Paionians.

The Paionians may have been of Hellenic stock, but not much is known about them because, as Irwin L. Merker has stated, “No Paionian Philip ever dominated Greece, and no Paionian Alexander ever

conquered the known world.”

The Paionians were subdued by King Philip II

in 359 BC and fought later with Alexander the Great against the Persians.

Under the Macedonians, they had a degree of autonomy and were eventually assimilated by the Macedonians and Hellenized.

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Vardar Province of Yugoslavia was always an unstable country inhabited by several ideologically quarrelsome groups with ties to Albania, Bulgaria, or Serbia. The 1940 Yugoslavian census recognized only three ethnic groups in Vardar Province: Slavs, at 66 percent; Muslims, at 31 percent; and Greeks, at 3 percent. In 1946, two years after its conversion to the People's Republic of Macedonia by Tito, the Slavs and Greeks disappeared from the census, which suddenly showed 66 percent “Macedonians” and 29 percent Albanians. Was this remarkable transformation process an en masse genetic mutation of the Bulgarians and southern Slavs or a deliberate census falsification? The world, recovering from a long war, did not question the dramatic change.

Historical facts and archaeological findings in Macedonia, Egypt, and Asia reveal no kinship between ancient Macedonians and the FYROM Slavs and Bulgarians of Tito's new republic. (Bulgaria insists that the FYROM Slavs are actually Bulgarians, a claim fueling the present underground quarrel between Sofia and Skopje.)

Likewise, the linguistic trends do not support the "Macedonian" ethnic identity claimed by the Slavic population. To promote the alleged existence of a separate Macedonian ethnicity and build a base for future territorial claims, history revisionists in FYROM and organizations of the Slavic diaspora have propelled the "amalgamation theory" to establish such a connection and to de-Slavisize their ancestral Slavic identity and history.

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The theory attracted a few followers abroad, especially among Slavs in the United States, Australia, and Canada.

According to this theory, a Macedonian is a "completely modern product" of racial amalgamation between the southern Slavic people and a mixture of indigenous descendants of ancient Macedonians and other inhabitants of Macedonia.

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During the Middle Ages, the theory claims, the Slavs annihilated many local people in Macedonia and absorbed the remainder. From the blend of the Slavic element and the descendants of Macedonians, a new "Macedonian" nation emerged related to ancient Macedonia. The theory is part of the regular curriculum in FYROM schools today to indoctrinate students to believe they are descendants of ancient Macedonians.

FYROM historians and Slavic population geneticists have no grounds to support their theory, which is based on serious historical errors.

Even if we temporarily

accept that this theory is correct, precisely who were the local Greek speakers and the Slav-speakers with genuine Hellenic sentiments in Macedonia at the end of the nineteenth century and at the beginning of the twen

tieth, who fought valiantly for Hellenism in Turkish-occupied Macedonia — together with volunteers from free Greece —

gainst the Bulgarians, winning the Macedonian Struggle of 1904-8? What are the people in Greek Macedonia today whose forefathers lived in Macedonia for centuries, surviving the harsh Ottoman occupation?

In the end, the difficulty in accepting the amalgamation model is insurmountable also because the emotional justification provided by FYROM historians to remedy their identity crisis is unconvincing. Unless they are completely isolated, human populations do not survive genetically unaltered for a millennium — and the Macedonians were not isolated.

Under the influence of the common Greek dialect (the *koine*) and the sharing of myths, customs, and religion, the Macedonians were amalgamated with the rest of the Hellenes, and modern Greeks were produced.

We must also add some familiar facts. Alexander the Great died in 323 BC, and the Slavs did not migrate into the Balkan Peninsula until the seventh century AD, almost a millennium later. If we accept the historically unacceptable view that the Macedonians were not Greek, but were Hellenized by the middle of the fifth century,

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then the ancient Macedonians, whatever their ethnicity was, had better chances, a common language, and a thousand-year span to blend with other Greeks, rather than wait all those long years for the Slav-speaking “suitors” from the north.

Given the seriousness of the amalgamation theory dispute, and the inauthentic assertions by its proponents, two important questions must also be answered convincingly if there is even a slim chance for this theory to be considered seriously. Why had the southern Slavs considered themselves “Bulgarians” for seventy-five years (1870 to 1945)? Why did they not claim a Macedonian identity instead of fighting only to incorporate Macedonia into Bulgaria in the likely event of a collapse of the Turkish occupation of Macedonia?

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The answers to the questions given by FYROM historians are rife with obvious shortcomings. They insist that the southern Slavic people, being illiterate during the early years of the Macedonian controversy, did not know what their ethnicity was, an unconvincing explanation, especially because the founders of the Bulgarian Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization in 1893 were not illiterate. Damien Gruff was a schoolmaster and Christo Tatarcheff a doctor.

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FYROM's superficial answer to the second question is that the Slavs affiliated themselves with Bulgaria because of its activist policy and its dynamic handling of the Macedonian Problem. Eventually, they eradicated the Bulgarian sentiments and became “Macedonians.”

Discrediting the Macedonian Hellenism

According to an article in the *Christian Science Monitor*, “Unlike Serbia's Kosovo story, based on centuries of poetry and legend, the Macedonian ideology [of FYROM] is being both invented and presented at the same time. There is no outside scholarly consensus, no textual tradition; the result is a

kind of history-free history.

The top-down, debate-free imposition of the new history is itself seen as illiberal and authoritarian.”

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To crown its proclivity in using unfounded historical information to support exclusive rights to “Macedonianism” and an exclusive “Macedonian” identity, FYROM has intensified its “illiberal and authoritarian” history revisionism to discredit the Macedonian Hellenism. The historically, linguistically, and archaeologically incorrect challenges to Greece, emanating from Skopje and from its supporters around the world, are that ancient Macedonia was never part of Greece and the Macedonians were barbarians who spoke a language incomprehensible to the other Greeks.

It is true that ancient Macedonia was not part of Greece. It is also true that Attica, Lacedaemon, Epirus, Aetolia, Akarnania, Corinth, and all the other Greek city-states did not belong to Greece, because Greece did not exist as a single, united state.

Before the battle of Chaeronea in 338 BC, the Hellenic nation existed as city-states speaking more than two hundred dialects of the Greek language.

Philip II, father of Alexander the Great, was the first who attempted, by conquest or alliances, to unite the city-states into a single country, Greece.

He succeeded to a major extent, but the unity was short lived.

Differing perceptions of the Macedonians’ Hellenism are inevitable, and so is the significance attributed by some historians to the accusations by other Greeks of antiquity that the

Macedonians were “barbarians.”

Political fabri-

cations in Athens based not on ethnicity or language but on the Macedonian way of life were the reasons for the name calling — and also because Philip and his son, Alexander, provoked the enmity of the Athenians, especially Demosthenes, the orator who shamelessly assailed the Macedonians.

Even

doubters of the Macedonian Hellenism concluded that name calling “might have been no more than invective by angry orators unrelated to historical facts”

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or “oratory designed to sway public opinion at Athens and thereby to formulate public policy.”

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Not all the Athenian orators and writers were against Philip and the Macedonians. The conservative educator Isocrates insisted that the Greek city

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states must unite.

For four decades he urged the Greeks to abandon their petty quarrels, advocating a pan-Hellenic crusade against Greece's archenemy, the Persian Empire.

When his pleas fell on deaf ears, he turned his

attention to a strong leader, Philip of Macedon, urging him repeatedly to unite the city-states and guide them against the Persians. Would a renowned Athenian educator like Isocrates, then the most famous, successful, and influential Athenian, favor Philip to unite the Greeks if the Macedonians were non-Greek?

No one accused Isocrates of lacking patriotism.

More than anything else the language of the Macedonians — a characteristic of ethnicity — became the subject of disagreements among scholars.

The important fact, relative to the ancient Greek world, intricately related to linguistics and the ancient Macedonians' ethnicity, is the existence of hundreds of Hellenic tribes, subtribes, and families of the Hellenic nation.

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The fragmented nation spoke about two hundred dialects and idioms, often indicated by names describing the manner of speaking: atticisti, doristi, ionisti, laconisti, makedonisti, and so forth.

[12]

The structure of each dialect and the manner of speaking reflected the level of civilization of each tribe or state.

The nomad inhabitants of a monarchical regime like ancient Macedonia could hardly be expected to speak the refined dialect of Athens. The Macedonian dialect was incomprehensible to the Athenians, but not to the Aetolians and Akarnania.

The lack of linguistic homogeneity in the ancient Greek world has been a source of perplexity to some doubting scholars, and also the reason for suggesting that the Macedonian dialect was incomprehensible to the other Greeks. Eugene Borza wrote that the language of the Macedonian elite was standard Greek dialect since the middle of the fifth century BC, but the common people spoke an unknown dialect beyond recovery. He also speculated that the common peoples' dialect declined with time and was replaced by the standard *koine*.

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If the Macedonian dialect is beyond recovery, how do we know it was not Hellenic? There is no evidence it was not Hellenic, but there is abundant evidence it was Hellenic.

It is also more logical to assume that the Macedonian dialect had many similarities with the official Greek dialect than to believe that the Macedonian officials spoke Greek and the remainder of the population — with Greek names, living in cities with Greek names, and using Greek-inscribed coins, statues, gravestones, and frescoes — spoke an incomprehensible, alien dialect.

Hellenization of the upper Macedonian class by the middle of the fifth century BC, as suggested by Borza, may never have occurred in the basic sense of the term. After all, the Macedonians were one of the Hellenic tribes

to begin with, and therefore, only evolution of the archaic Macedonian dialect (Doric Hellenic of the western type) occurred.

The evolutionary process of the proto-glossic (first) Hellenic elements took place successfully, simply because the Macedonians were prone to gradually embracing the sophisticated linguistic elements that brought their dialect close to the Attic, culminating with the formation of the final product, the

koine,

in Philip's and Alexander's time.

Nothing like that occurred with the non-Greek Illyrians, despite their proximity to the Greek world, simply because their tongue had no linguistic affinity to Hellenic dialects.

Knowledge of the ancient Macedonian dialect is limited because there are no surviving texts written in the dialect. But

authentic words have been

assembled and documented, mainly from inscriptions on coins, statues, gravestones, lead, and papyrus plates, and from the fifth-century lexicon of

Haesychius of Alexandria, amounting to 176 words and more than 200 proper names. The majority of these words have been identified as Greek.

Proving that the common Macedonians spoke a Hellenic dialect before the middle of the fifth century BC, the proposed date of the Macedonians' Hellenization, will be the decisive key to clinching the proof that the Macedonians were Greek all the way back to the Dark Ages (the five centuries following the collapse of the Mycenaean civilization, 1100 –700 BC) and beyond.

There is now evidence to suggest that the Macedonians spoke a proto-Hellenic dialect before the fifth century BC. During the Dark Ages, before the reign of the Macedonian King Perdikkas I (circa 650 BC), Macedonia had several Greek names.

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The first known name was Emathia, after its leader Emathion. Later it became Maketia or Makessa, and finally Macedonia.

The words Makedonia and makedvos (tall) are derived from the very ancient word *macos* (in Attic, *mecos* means length), a word used today in Greece, found for the first time in the Homeric poems as

“ **could not find characters in symbols**

”
(look at the leaves of tall poplars).
If the Macedonians were not Greek, would they have used a Greek name for their country?

The Macedonian dialect maintained the characteristics and peculiarities of the Homeric times that distinguished it from the Greek dialect spoken in Athens. It also preserved features that had disappeared from other Hellenic dialects, demonstrated by the fact that Roman and Byzantine lexicographers and grammarians used examples from the Macedonian dialect to interpret difficult features of the Homeric poems. Common characters also existed in the Macedonian that had been differentiated from before Homer, suggesting again that the Macedonians were speaking a proto-Hellenic dialect at about 1200-800 BC.

Borza, the scholar who expressed doubts on the Hellenic identity of the common Macedonians,

admitted that “the ‘Macedones’ or ‘highlanders’ of mountainous western Macedonia have been derived from a northwestern Greek stock. That is, northwestern Greece provided a pool of Indo-European speakers of proto-Greek from which emerged the tribes which later became known by different names as they established their regional identities in separate parts of the country.”

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That the Macedonians spoke a Hellenic dialect before the middle of the fifth century BC is also shown by the fact that the Macedonian dialect contained Greek words not found in other Greek dialects. Since the Macedonians were using these words before the fifth century BC, where did they come from?

The following words did not exist in other Greek dialects, yet they were used by the Macedonians before and after the middle of the fifth century BC: Alexander, Alketas, Philippos, Orestis, Makedon, Ptolemy, Antigonos, Amyntas, Perdikkas, Krateros, Parmenion, Makedonia, Emathia, Pieria, Dion, Aliakmon, Almopia, Lyncestis, Elimeia, and others. Also, Ulrich Kohler wrote about cities in central Macedonia built with Greek names not found in other Greek dialects before the fifth century BC: Atalanti, Eidomenai, Europos, Aeane, and Aegae.

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In 1987 a remarkable inscription on a lead tablet dating to the fourth century BC was excavated in Pella (capital of ancient Macedonia) forty miles west of Thessaloniki, Greece.

Known as the Pella Katadesmos, the tablet is a curse or magic spell written by a woman of low social status as evidenced by her vocabulary and belief in magic.

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Written on lead, stone, or baked clay, the Katadesmoi were spells secretly buried to ensure the writer's physical integrity and guarantee the accomplishment of the intended spell or curse.

The language on the tablet is harsh, but it is a distinctly recognizable

form of Doric Greek, suggesting that the common people of Macedonia were speaking a Doric Greek dialect of the northwestern type.

The French scholar

Olivier Masson, who examined the tablet, wrote in the third edition of the classical

Oxford Classical Dictionary:

“We may conclude that the Macedo

nian is a dialect related to North-Western Greek. This view is supported by

the recent discovery of a curse tablet which may well be the first ‘Macedonian’ text attested.”

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I spent two years studying the language of ancient Macedonians. Of eleven scholars I studied, only two expressed doubts on the Macedonians' language being Greek: K.O. Muller suggested it was Illyrian mixed with Greek words,

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and Gustav Weigand believed that it was a sibling language to all of the Greek dialects, but not a genuine Greek dialect.

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Antoine Meil

let was neutral, suggesting that the Macedonian dialect was an independent Indo-European language close to Greek.

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Von Otto Hoffman concluded that

Macedonian was a northern dialect related to Aeolic Greek and Thessalian, with the great majority of Macedonian words recovered being Greek.

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The

remaining seven scholars, including Nicholas Hammond and Masson, wrote

that the Macedonian was either a northwestern Greek dialect (part of the Doric dialects) or Aeolic (part of the western Greek dialects).

Conclusion

After all the historical, linguistic, and archaeological facts amassed through the years, is it really possible that the ancient Macedonians — bearing Greek names and living in cities with Greek names, spoke a Doric Hellenic dialect of the western type, shared myths and customs with other Greeks, served as pillars to protect Greece from the barbarians, inscribed the Greek names of their deceased relatives and friends on gravestones, prayed and sacrificed to the Olympian gods placed by the other Greeks on Mt. Olympus in Macedonia, brought the Hellenic civilization to the depths of Asia, and participated in the Olympic games in which only Greeks were allowed to participate — were not Greek?

In view of the overwhelming evidence supporting the Macedonians' Hellenism, negating the contention that the Macedonians were barbarians speaking a language incomprehensible to the other Greeks, it is sad that history has reached the absurd and untenable point when a small country calling itself "Republic of Macedonia" demands — by the power of an apprehended name — not only to be recognized as Macedonia but also to be propelled as the only Macedonia, and its Slavic people not only demand — by the power granted to them by a powerful dictator — to be "some Macedonians," but audaciously claim recognition as the only Macedonians. It is also sad that manipulations in politics, foreign or domestic, weigh heavier than the glorious pages of Macedonian history and Hellenic Macedonianism.

The insistence of the FYROM Slavs to be called "Macedonians," a name dictatorially established and supported by communism's brutal force and the ideological base sixty six years ago, clashes now with the age-old freedom of others (Hellenic Macedonians) to be called "Macedonians." If FYROM considers itself Macedonia, it is a false and an audaciously daring step that brings the origin of its Slavic people close to Philip and Alexander the Great.

Individuals, nongovernmental organizations, and several countries around the world, including the United States, disregarded the overwhelming historical evidence, the unjustified projection of a false “Macedonianism” by FYROM, and the UN's 1993 decision about a temporary name and rushed to recognize the small state as “Republic of Macedonia” and its people as “Macedonians.” The irony of US policy is that it assisted Greece in protecting its territory in the 1940s and then, forgetting the blood spilled by the Greek people to thwart communism’s advance to the Mediterranean Sea from its extensive Balkan bases in the Iron Curtain, including Vardar Province, turned around and recognized as “Macedonians” the people against whom Greece was fighting with America’s help to preserve its territorial integrity and freedom during the Greek Civil War.

The irresponsible decision by the United States to recognize FYROM in 2004 as “Republic of Macedonia” contributed greatly to FYROM's increasing intransigence and helped to facilitate other countries to follow the path.

Emboldened by the rush of thoughtless or politically and financially motivated recognitions, FYROM displayed naked intransigence during the fifteen years of the Interim Accord in its dealings with Greece and the UN representative attempting to negotiate the country's name with Greece.

Opting for propaganda over dialogue, FYROM also mounted a well-prepared, calculated smear campaign against Greece.

Its leaders are now striving hard to systematically obliterate Macedonian Hellenism and undermine Greece’s name and reputation, uttering, directly or indirectly, harsh accusations against it. A good example of this is the Seventh Macedonian-North American Conference on Macedonian Studies, held at the University of Utah, 5-9 November 2009, during which distorted “facts” about Greece's history and anti-Hellenic hate and disparagement were exhibited.

Sadly, that is not all. A new, deceptive, nonmilitary but a highly dangerous threat to Greece and Macedonian Hellenism is now on the surface, aiming at destroying the Hellenic Macedonian identity and its historical heritage. In order to confiscate the patrimony of ancient Macedonians, FYROM's new

dogma is now pushing the origin of the modern Slavic “Macedonian” nation not to the seventh century AD, when the Slavs migrated to the Balkans, but to the fifth century BC, more than a millennium earlier.

To redefine the myth of the “Macedonian” nation's identity and confiscate the Macedonian patrimony

and the archaeological inheritance, FYROM is now frantically using heroes and other important people considered until now as Greeks or Bulgarians. FYROM is also rushing to erect monuments (for example, a giant statue of Alexander the Great in Skopje) and rename streets and airports with names of ancient Greek and Bulgarian personalities and events.

Aware of FYROM's attempts to confiscate Macedonian history, more than 346 scholars of Greco-Roman antiquity from all over the world wrote to President Barack Obama on 18 May 2009, requesting that he “clean up some of the historical debris left by the Bush administration” in the Balkans.

[\[23\]](#)

The

debris was President Bush's decision to unilaterally recognize FYROM as the “Republic of Macedonia” in 2004, violating the 1993 UN decision about a temporary name and indirectly supporting the subversion of history. FYROM's use of the historic name “Macedonia” is “clearly not a force for historical accuracy or for stability in the Balkans” but a brazen act provoking Greece and raises future claims on Greek Macedonia, wrote the scholars. They also suggested that the FYROM Slavs would be justified if they adopted the traditions and the name of ancient Paionians, whose land they occupy today.

FYROM must abandon the mentality of its communist past, an era that produced hostile irredentist dogma toward its neighbors.

It must abolish Article

6 on the Law of Scientific Research Activity, published in the *Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia*

(no. 13/1996 and no. 29/2002) that

proscribes the initiation and promotion of scientific research on the national identity of FYROM inhabitants in the twenty-first century.

It must also

abandon the new FYROM dogma, recently promoted by the prime minister, portraying its Slav-speaking population and the “Macedonian” brethren in Greece and Bulgaria as non-Slavs, including impressions of racial superiority and obsessions with genetic purity.

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If FYROM wants to succeed in its so-far misguided journey to integration with NATO and the EU, it must, first and foremost, discontinue its procrastination in finding a name acceptable to Greece.

FYROM must also discon

tinue portraying itself as Macedonia, stretching from Tetovo to the Bulgarian capital in the north, down to Mt. Olympus in the south. If FYROM's leaders desire to integrate their landlocked, poor country with Europe, they must reject, once and for all, their claims to the “Macedonian” identity.

And as a

democracy in the twenty-first century, FYROM must base its foreign policy on mutual respect and an understanding of its neighbors' rights and historical tenets.

[1] Evangelos Kofos and Vlasias Vlasides, eds., *Athens-Skopje: Seven Years of Symbiosis (1995-2002)* (Athens: Papazisi, 2003.)

[2] Thousands of FYROM Slavs, including Ljupko Georgijevski, former prime minister and president of the Bulgarian Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization, rushed to acquire Bulgarian citizenship during the past few years.

[3] Irwin L. Merker, “The Ancient Kingdom of Paionia,” *Balkan Studies* 6 (1965): 35-54.

[4] M. Nystazopoulos-Pelekidou, *The Macedonian Problem* (Athens: Association of National Studies of Southern Europe, 1988), 10-5.

[5] George C. Papavizas, *Claiming Macedonia: The Struggle for the Heritage, Territory, and Name of the Historical Hellenic Land, 1862-2004* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2006), 159-61.

[6] Eugene N. Borza, *In the Shadow of Olympus* (Princeton University Press, 1990).

[7] Douglas Dakin, *The Greek Struggle in Macedonia: 1897-1913* (Thessaloniki: Museum of the Macedonian Struggle, Institute for Balkan Studies, 1966).

[8] Robert Marquand, "Twenty-three Hundred Years Later, 'Alexander-Mania' Grips Macedonia," *Christian Science Monitor*, 20 March 2009.

[9] Ernst Badian, "Greeks and Macedonians," in *Macedonia and Greece in Late Classical and Early Hellenic Times: Studies in the History of Art*, vol. 10, ed. B. Barr-Sharrar and E.N. Borza (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 1982), 33-51.

[10] Borza.

[11] Marcus Templar, "Fallacies and Facts on the Macedonian Issue," Pan-Macedonian Association USA, 2003, www.panmacedonian.info/FALLACIESANDFACTS.htm .

[12] Nicholas G. L. Hammond, *The Macedonian State: The Origins, Institutions, and History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

[13] Borza.

[14] Templar, "Fallacies and Facts."

[15] Borza, 78.

[16] Ulrich Kohler, "Minutes, Berlin Academy: 1897," 270, cited in George Hadjidakis, *About the Hellenism of Ancient Macedonians* (Thessaloniki: Pyromanos, 1994), 72, 199, 236, 237.

[17] Marcus Templar, "Hellenic Migrations and Katadesmos" (paper presented at the Ninth Biennial Conference on Greek Linguistics, University of Chicago, 30 October 2009).

[18] Oliver Masson, *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 3rd edition (London: Oxford University Press, 1996), 905, 906, 1,996.

[19] K.O. Müller, *Über die Wohnsitz, die Abstammung und die ältere Geschichte des makedonischen Volks* (About the residence, descent, and other characteristics of the Macedonian people), cited in Hadkidakis, 24, 25, 1,994.

[20] Gustav Weigand, *Ethnographic von Makedonien* (Leipzig: F. Branstetter, 1924), cited in Hadjidakis, 197, 204-7, 219-23, 1,994.

[21] Antoine Meillet, *Aperçu d'une histoire de la langue grecque* (Overview of the history of Greek) (Paris: Libraire Klincksieck, 1930), 58, 250.

[22] Otto Hoffman, *Die Makedonen: Ihre Sprache and ihr Volkstum* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1906).

[23] “Letter to President Barack Obama by More Than 340 Classicists,” 18 May 2009, macedonia-evidence.org/obama-letter.html.