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ANCIENT MACEDONIANS AND GREEKS: BETWEEN THE IDENTITY AND CIVILIZATION ASPIRATIONS

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Who exactly were the ancient Macedonians – Greeks or barbarians, Illyrians, Thracians or mixed people? This is one of the most controversial issues in the historical science which was very popular in the course of the past century and does not cease to be current even today, especially after declaring the independence of the Republic of Macedonia in 1991. Then this question acquired a great political connotation, primarily as a result of the dispute about the name between the Republic of Macedonia and the Republic of Greece¹. Without the intention of interfering with politics, this paper is an attempt to obtain an objective scientific view of the identity of the ancient Macedonians on the basis of the available historical sources and current knowledge of historical research on this issue.

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Ancient sources testify to the uniqueness of the ancient Macedonians to other neighboring ethnic groups – Greeks, Thracians, Illyrians, and this is best reflected in their socio-political structure, the Macedonian customs, rituals, myths, cults and distinct Macedonian language, which are key features for determining ethnicity in the antiquity.

Unlike the Greeks whose feature was a *polis* structure, the ancient Macedonians had a royal structure – monarchy, with a hereditary ruler and state institutions ruled by “Ma-

¹ For the political aspect which is added to this question see П. Х. Илиевски, *Античкиот македонски и името на современиот македонски јазик*, „Предавања на XXV Меѓународен семинар за македонски јазик, литература и култура“, Охрид, 21 VIII–4 IX 1992 година, Скопје 1993, pp. 33–38; L. M. Danfort, *Ancient Macedonia, Alexander the Great and the Star of Vergina: National Symbols and the conflict between Greece and the Republic of Macedonia, A Companion to Ancient Macedonia*, edited by J. Roisman and I. Worthington, Blackwell Publishing, 2010, pp. 572–598.



cedonian laws". The Macedonian citizens had the right to appeal and to speak in front of the king, the right to resolve the most important matters through the authorities, local self-government with authorities that are not testified by the Greek city-states, such as *peliganes*, *politarchos*, *tagonaga*, *skoidos* etc.²

However, as far as the religion of the ancient Macedonians is concerned, any reconstruction is a difficult and complex task, primarily due to the meager and fragmentary data in the historical sources. The current situation with the material resources which will hopefully improve with new archaeological excavations is similar. The task is further complicated by the fact that the ancient Macedonians did not have their own script and everything we learn about them is from the works of Greek and Roman authors written in Greek and Latin. They are complex for reading since they are often copies of the second or third hand. Belonging to different periods, many of them are from later periods than the subsequent events that they describe, hence burdened with chronological and textual anomalies. However, the biggest problem of all is the so-called *interpretatio Graeca* and *interpretatio Romana*, i.e. Greek and Roman interpretation of the source data. In the sources, the names of the Macedonian gods and heroes can rarely be found, as the Greek and Roman authors have turned their equivalents using their proper terminology for Macedonian myths, cults and beliefs that are the subject of their interest³. But Macedonian deities, though hidden behind their Greek or Latin name, according to recent studies, can be recognized among Macedonian glosses, inscriptions, epithets, art displays, etc., pointing to the fact that like all other ethnic groups they had their own peculiarities which consisted their specific religious identity. I would mention only some of them: war goddess *Ma*, not testified among the Greeks, her male counterpart *Xanthos*⁴, healing deities *Bedy*, *Darron*, *Draco* and *Drakaina* etc., as well as the specific practices of marking adulthood with the ritual travesty, ritual games for fertility, custom lustration of the army etc.⁵

There are a variety of data for the language of the ancient Macedonians, but so far not a single sentence or a single text, nor inscription has been discovered. All the material that we have consists of so-called "Macedonian glosses" whose number is estimated between

² For the Macedonian socio-political structure see Н. Пројева, *Историја на Археодите*, Historia Antiqua Macedonica, Кн. 8, Скопје 2004, pp. 318–344.

³ For example, in the ancient authors *Dion* or *Dios* is the equivalent of Zeus, i.e. the name of the Macedonian supreme god is adapted to the Greek. Examples of *interpretatio Graeca* and *interpretatio Romana* are not only for the Macedonian deities, but for the deities of other ethnic groups: Zeus is equivalent to Ammon, Osiris to Dionysus, Isis to Demeter etc. (Н. Пројева, *Религијата на античките Македонци*, Historia Antiqua Macedonica, Кн. 11, Скопје 2014, pp. 40–44).

⁴ Xanthos was a Macedonian deity, according to some scholars of light, according to others of war. In his honor the famous festival of the army of the ancient Macedonians *Xanthika* was held. It has been celebrated since ancient times. It was held in spring, in the sixth month of the calendar of the ancient Macedonians *Xandikos* or March according to our modern calendar. It served as a solemn rite of lustration. In its essence it was a kind of magical ritual purification of the army led by the king, in a particularly festive atmosphere, where it passed between two halves of a sacrificed dog. In the parade, during the purification the king was accompanied by the family, the hetairoi and the Macedonian army. An unusual mimetic game of fighting between the two warring sides followed after this. See *Празникот Ксантика кај античките Македонци*, "Филолошки студии", vol. XIV, том II, Скопје–Перм–Љубљана–Загреб, 2016, pp. 1–11 (<http://www.philologicalstudies.org>).

⁵ Detailed analysis of the Macedonian pantheon, cult, customs and religious practice in Н. Пројева, *Религијата на античките Македонци*, pp. 1–330.

100 and 200, but considering that many of them are found on the epigraphic monuments as well, their number is constantly increasing with the latest archaeological research. Most of the glosses with their meaning are recorded by the significant Alexandrian grammarian Amerias, Macedonian by origin, who lived in the 3rd century BC. Unfortunately, the text of Amerias with Macedonian glosses is not preserved. Some of the glosses are undertaken by later grammarians and glossographers as Athenaeus (2nd – 3rd century), Pollux (2nd century) and particularly Hesychius (5th century) who notified 68 words tagged as “Macedonian” or “taken from Amerias”. But because he did not always add the labels whose the glosses are and from whom he copied them, it is considered that the number is even higher, considering the analogy in phonetic peculiarities. Part of the Macedonian words are found in the works of other authors and lexicographers as Plutarch, Clement of Alexandria, Photius, Suidas et al., as well as on the epigraphic monuments.

So, apart from the problem with sparsity of the vocabulary, another problem is that the Macedonian glosses have come to us in copies of the second or third hand. They often contain errors in the main gloss or explanation. Known only in one form, without inflection, without any text stored⁶. All this not only complicates but also disables the reconstruction of the spoken language of the ancient Macedonians, but also gives reason to a number of different, often conflicting, often tendentious opinions of scientists on the question of language and ethnicity of the ancient Macedonians.

Some scholars believe that the ancient Macedonians were separate Indo-European people whose language was different from the Greek, but close to Illyrian, Thracian, Phrygian, “mixed” and so on⁷. Others think that the Macedonians were a Greek tribe and their language very related with the Greek, which during its development displayed some specifics⁸. Thirdly scientists, however, are explicit that the ancient Macedonians were Greeks and their language was a Greek dialect⁹, and this thesis goes to the extent that it is declared as the oldest and purest proto-Greek dialect¹⁰. And of course there is

⁶ П. Х. Илиевски, *Местото на античкиот македонски меѓу другите индо-европски јазици*, „Жива антика“, бр. 44, Скопје, 1994, pp. 73–92.

⁷ K. O. Müller, for example, believes that the language of the ancient Macedonians is a mixed language that evolved from Illyrian substrate mixed with Attic literary language (K. O. Müller, *Über die Wohnsitze, die Abstammung und die ältere Geschichte des Makedonischen Volks. Eine ethnographische Untersuchung*, Berlin 1825, p. 61); I. Pudić, however, concluded that it could be associated with northeastern Bryges who emigrated from Macedonia, as well as with the language of the pre-Greek Indoeuropeans in Greece. (I. Pudić, *Staromakedonski jezik*, „Godišnjak“ ANUBiH IV, Centar za balkanološka ispitivanja 2, Sarajevo 1966, 5–25; „Godišnjak“ ANUBiH V, Centar za balkanološka ispitivanja 3, Sarajevo 1967, 145–150; „Godišnjak“ ANUBiH VIII, Centar za balkanološka ispitivanja 6, Sarajevo 1970, pp. 181–183).

⁸ F. G. Sturz among the first collected and classified the Macedonian glosses and found that they contain a small number of words borrowed from Egyptian, Syrian, Hebrew and other Oriental languages, while the rest belong to the Greek lexical fund (F. G. Sturz, *De Dialecto Macedonica et Alexandrina liber*, Lipsiae 1808, pp. 26–28).

⁹ The most determined representative of this thesis is O. Hoffman who expresses the opinion that the language of the ancient Macedonians is pure Greek dialect closest and the most related to Thessalian. (O. Hoffman, *Die Makedonen, ihre Sprache und ihr Volkstum*, Göttingen 1906, p. 114); G. Hatzidakis is of the same opinion that the language of the ancient Macedonians is pure Greek dialect, which also shows that the ancient Macedonians were Greeks. (G. Hatzidakis, *Zur Abstammung der alten Makedonen*, Athens 1897; *idem, Du caractère hellénique des anciens Macédoniens*, Athens 1896).

¹⁰ I. K. Probonas, *I syngeneia Makedonikis kai Mykinaïkis dialektou kai i prōtoelliniki katagōgi tōn Makedonōn*, Athina 1973.

the thesis that the ancient Macedonians had their own distinct language¹¹, which itself certainly appears on the surface if the question is approached objectively, without prejudice and without political connotation. But let us consider the arguments of the most conflicting opinions.

Plutarch, in the biography of Alexander III of Macedon, testifies to the existence of an individual language of the Macedonians. On the feast in Marakanda in 328 BC, in the quarrel with Cleitus, Alexander, frantic in anger, jumped to his feet and began to call his shield bearers in the Macedonian language, which was a sign that he was very anxious¹². Also, in Plutarch we come across information that the soldiers also greeted the warrior Eumenes¹³, who was born Greek, and Eumenes in the Macedonian language, however, when he had to send a messenger to the Macedonian Neoptolemus in 321 BC, he entrusted the task to a certain Xenia, whose mother tongue was Macedonian¹⁴. Pseudo-Callisthenes wrote that Macedonian soldiers parted Alexander III in the Macedonian language¹⁵. Curtius Rufus, in his *History of Alexander the Great*, writing for the trial of Alexander's friend and commander Philotas says that Alexander addresses Philotas with the following words: "The Macedonians are about to pass judgement upon you; I wish to know whether you will use your native tongue in addressing them", and I ask you, will you talk to them in the mother tongue? Thereupon Philotas replied: "Apart from the Macedonians there are many present who, I think, will more easily understand what I shall say if I use the same language which you have employed, for no other reason, I suppose, so that your speech might be understood by the greater number"¹⁶. Curtius Rufus also mentions that the Macedonians were in need of a translator to understand the Greek language¹⁷. For the residents of Athens, however, Athenaeus states that many of them spoke the Macedonian "because of mixing"¹⁸. So, in ancient sources, there are numerous examples where it can easily be seen that the Macedonians spoke a separate language, different from Greek. But despite the fact that the data sources clearly speak in favor of this thesis, some researchers today do not accept it.

Their arguments against it can best be illustrated by the following corresponding questions: First, if the ancient Macedonians were not Greeks, how did they, as an inde-

¹¹ According to V. Pisani the language of the ancient Macedonians was Indo-European language similar to the other Indo-European languages, but the Greeks perceived it as different not only from their language but also from Illyrian, Thracian and Phrygian. (V. P i s a n i, *La posizione linguistica del macedone*, „Revue Internationale des Études Balkaniques“ I (5), Beograd 1937, p. 31); P. H. Ilievski, based on the analysis of the glosses and personal names of the ancient Macedonians, concluded that their language was an Indo-European language different from Greek, with its own specific features. His assumption that in ancient times there was a Balkan linguistic union, similar to the modern, so as its member the language of the ancient Macedonians could have some lexical and grammatical traits in common with other ancient Balkan languages deserves particular attention. (П. Х. Илиевски, *Местото на античкиот македонски меѓу другите индо- европски јазици*, „Жива антика“, бр. 44, Скопје, 1994, pp. 73–92).

¹² Plut. *Alex.*, 51.

¹³ Plut. *Eum.*, 14.

¹⁴ A. B. Bosworth, *Eumenes, Neoptolemos and PSI XII*, 1284, „Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies“, 19/3, 1978, p. 227–237.

¹⁵ Pseudo-Call. V, 32, 13.

¹⁶ Curt. Ruf. VI, 34–35.

¹⁷ Curt. Ruf. VI, 11, 4.

¹⁸ Athen. III, 121.

pendent and militarily dominant nation, receive the Greek culture and spirit and become the most prominent media of the so called Hellenistic culture?¹⁹ Furthermore, why did Alexander III, after winning the East, accept the mutual Hellenic dialect (called *koine*) as the official language of his country? Why were numerous historical works for Macedonia in ancient times written in the Ionic or Ionic-Attic dialect, even when their authors were Macedonians and they knew the Macedonian? Etc.

But which is the answer to these questions?

It is generally known that the Greek was an internationally accepted language in ancient times, the language of literature and diplomacy, used in the Balkans, the Mediterranean and the Middle East as well as the Latin in Western Europe, or the English today worldwide. Hence, it is normal that Greek became the official language of the empire of Alexander, in order to facilitate the communication of many diverse nations that entered its composition and for centuries before that language was used. Also, it is known that the Greek tribes always used their own dialect, so if the Macedonians were Greeks, they would use their own rather than the Ionic or Ionic-Attic dialect²⁰.

the fact that in Greek narrative sources the Macedonians were constantly called “barbarians” deserves close attention. The most typical example is the third *Philippic* of the famous Athenian rhetor Demosthenes who in one place for Macedonian king Philip II cites: “... though he is not only not Greek, nor related to the Greeks, but not even a barbarian from any place that can be named with honor, but a pestilent knave from Macedonia, whence it was never yet possible to buy a decent slave”²¹. But Greek scientists are trying to explain that the Macedonians were called “barbarians” because they were of a lower cultural level. But it must be emphasized that the cultural aspect is secondary meaning of the word “barbarians”, because it comes from the linguistic sphere, not the cultural one²². Greeks called those who did not speak Greek but other unintelligible languages barbarians. Persians and Egyptians who were on a lower cultural level of the Greeks were called barbarians, while Dorians, who were really at a lower cultural level than the Achaeans and Ionians were never called barbarians. Or some try to explain the designation barbarians with the political conflict between Macedonia and Athens at the time of Philip II, but there are sources of the time before Philip II, more precisely from the 5th century BC where the Macedonians and their kings are called barbarians and the greatest enemies of Greeks. For example, at that time, the sophist Trasimachus from Chalcedon, in the speech *For the people of Larissa*, wrote the following among other

¹⁹ O. Hoffman formulates the question in this way and so eventually he draws the conclusion that it is simply impossible, the ancient Macedonians were Greeks and their language pure Greek dialect (O. Hoffman, *Die Makedonen, ihre Sprache und ihr Volkstum*, Göttingen 1906, (Vorwort) p. III); A. Daskalakis, however, concludes that "this miracle of the Hellenization of the ancient world would not have come about, had the Macedonians not been Greeks, and had they not spoken Greek". (A. Daskalakis, *The Hellenism of the ancient Macedonians*, Institute for Balkan Studies, Thessaloniki 1965, p. 91).

²⁰ Using the Greek language was a part of acculturation, but as N. Proeva concludes, it meant in no way losing their own characteristics. (Н. Пројева, *Историја на Археологијата*, *Historia Antiqua Macedonica*, Кн. 8, Скопје 2004, p. 79).

²¹ Dem. 9, 31. More on Philip II and Demosthenes see А. Шукарова, *Филип II Македонски и атинските ретори*, Издавачки центар „Три“ и Институт за национална историја, Скопје, 2003, pp. 97–157.

²² The word is known in Sumerian (*barbar*) and the ancient Indian language (*barbara*) where its meaning is "foreigner who speaks an incomprehensible language".

things, about the Macedonian king Archelaus: “Shall we become slaves to Archelaus, Greeks as we are, too a barbarian?”²³.

Finally even from the analysis of the stored Macedonian glosses it can be concluded that the language of the ancient Macedonians had their own specifics by which it can be characterized as a separate Indo-European language different from the Greek. For example, IE vocal *o*, which in Greek is preserved, in the ancient Macedonian turns into *a*: *dáryllos* – *dóry* (spear), *ábeis* – *ópheis* (snakes), *abrou̇tes* – *ophrýs* (eyebrows). Also IE diphthong *ai* in Greek is preserved without change, and the ancient Macedonian converted to the monoftong *a*: gr. *aithér*, mac. *adé* (sky). The classic Greek accent was musical and the syncope of vocals was a rare occurrence, and in the ancient Macedonian the accent was dynamic and expiratory, such as *keblé* for *kebalé* = gr. *kephalé*²⁴.

Furthermore, the analysis of the discovered personal names by now from literary and epigraphic sources, shows that they can be classified into three groups: the first group, which is the most numerous, almost 60% of the known names are well known Greek names: *Aléxandros*, *Diogénes*, *Eúdamos*, *Krátipos*, *Philíppos* and others. And just this onomastic material is one of the main arguments of the representatives of the thesis of Greek origin of the ancient Macedonians. But here the continual Greek cultural influence, as well as their interactions through Greek colonies on the Macedonian coast, Greek settlement of political refugees in Macedonia, the conquests of Alexander III etc. must be pointed to. Furthermore it is known that any change of culture or religion brings changes in the anthroponomy of an ethnic group. The second group of names are those that can be explained by means of the Greek, and are documented only on Macedonian territory: *Kraténas*, *Lágos*, *Perdikas* and others. And the third group, those are names that are authentic Macedonian, such as: *Byrginos*, *Gauanas*, *Dabreas* etc. Many of them suggest Brygian origin, and this is another confirmation that Bryges consisted of the older layer in Macedonia and were the major component in the ethnogenesis of the ancient Macedonians²⁵.

The pro-Greek policy of the Macedonian kings is also used as one of the main arguments of the supporters of the thesis of the Greek origin of the ancient Macedonians. But it should be taken into consideration that in the rivalry for prestige, the Macedonian kings used all the traditional Macedonian experience while unreservedly supported the pro-Greek propaganda not to assimilate their people, but to give the royal court new civilization glow, and with the pro-Greek propaganda to win over the Greek world and to impose Macedonian political hegemony. The Greek language was used in the Macedonian court for pragmatic reasons, to facilitate trade, political and cultural communication between the peoples of the ancient world. So, the pro-Greek policy of the Macedonian kings was a means to impose the Macedonian political hegemony over Greeks and a way to enter the cultural world at that time.

²³ E. Meyer, *Theopomps Hellenica*, Halle 1909, p. 265. This just confirms the efforts why King Archelaus so persistently implemented the long-term policy of Hellenization of his Kingdom, to come closer to the Greek world that distanced from him with ignorance.

²⁴ П. Хр. Илиевски, *Јазичите на почвата на Македонија во античкиот и рановизантискиот период*, „Јазичите на почвата на Македонија. Прилози за истражувањето на културата на почвата на Македонија“, Макропроект „Историја на културата на Македонија“, кн. 3, МАНУ, Скопје 1995, p. 23.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, pp. 23–25.

This policy on the Macedonian court goes back to the reign of Alexander I, who is thus known as *Philhellene*²⁶. He proved to be a very adept statesman and diplomat. Being at the crossroads between Persian and Greek antagonism, he chose the ambivalent role, mediating on both sides, which allowed him to preserve peace in the country and to expand territorially. During the Persian wars, he repeatedly mediated negotiations between Persian and Greek sides, but also secretly reporting Greeks for the intentions and plans of the Persian army²⁷. Therefore, he enjoyed great honors in Athens, earning the titles *proxenos* and *euergetes*. After the Persian withdrawal from the Balkans he displayed an ambition to take a leading role in the Greek world and started an open pro-Greek policy. For this purpose he used the residence of the Greek historian Herodotus on the Macedonian court and developed a strong pro-Greek propaganda. Within this propaganda the data recorded by Herodotus in his *History* perfectly fitted: the story for the origin of the Macedonian royal house²⁸, Alexander's participation in the Olympic Games²⁹, as well as the beautified story for the Persian envoys which emphasized his heroic image³⁰. In order the fictional story for the participation in the Olympic Games to sound convincing, an invented genealogy tale for the Greek origin was needed.

Pro-Greek policy continued during the reign of King Perdiccas II, who invited the famous Greek historian Thucydides, the most famous physician of antiquity Hippocrates

²⁶ As a result of its pro-Greek policy, Alexander I is known as *Philhellene* in history, but the use of this epithet is later. There is no evidence of any of his contemporaries (such as Herodotus) that he had the epithet during his reign. In this connection Hammond states: "I am inclined to think that it came into use to distinguish Alexander from his greater successor of the same name; it was in fact a characteristic of the Hellenistic period to add an epithet to the homonymous kings". (N. G. L. Hammond and G. T. Griffith, *A History of Macedonia*, vol. II, Oxford, 1978, 101, n. 3). Some modern authors consider the epithet *Philhellene* as synonymous for *Hellen* and use this to prove the Greek origin of the Macedonian royal house. Quite superfluous is to comment on this senseless argument because it is normal to give the epithet *Philhellene* to someone who is not *Hellen*. Contrary, this epithet is another argument in rejecting the thesis of the Greek origin of the Macedonian royal house.

²⁷ Hdt. VII, 173; VIII, 136; IX, 45–46.

²⁸ Previous scientific research generally accepted the oldest mythological legend about the origin of the first Macedonian royal dynasty first recorded by Herodotus. According to him, three brothers from Argos, descendants of Temenus, thus known as *Temenidae* came from Upper Macedonia and imposed their authority over other Macedonians and united them, founding their own royal dynasty known as *Argeades*. But this tradition was reshaped according to the own interest and the pro-Greek political commitments of Alexander I, who wanted to raise his reputation in the Macedonian society and to provide support and prestige in the world. The Macedonian royal dynasty was associated with the Temenides or with the mythical hero Heracles from pro-Greek political reasons, in order the Macedonian kings to display their cultural and divine origin and as imaginary *Hellenes* more directly to engage in the Greek political struggles for dominance. Herodotus do not specify the location of the city of Argos, and in ancient times there were even seven cities and districts with the same naming. Because of the unsustainable hypothesis of many researchers that the Macedonians were of Doric origin, it is usually identified with the Argos in the Peloponnese, which leads to the logical conclusion that the Macedonian royal dynasty is of Greek origin. This has been uncritically used or misused for centuries in historiography, especially when it gives favor to the Greek origin of the ancient Macedonians. But all dilemmas for locating the city of Argos as the place of origin of the Macedonian royal dynasty are eliminated by the historical sources which state that they were from Argos in Orestis in Upper Macedonia. (B. K. Младеновска-Ристовска, *Преданието за основањето на Македонското Кралство*, „Филолошки студии“, vol. X, том I, Скопје–Перм–Љубљана–Зарреб, 2016, pp. 1–11 (<http://www.philologicalstudies.org>).

²⁹ In the preserved lists of the winners of the Olympic Games there is not his name, although seemingly he won as Herodotus reports (Hdt. V, 22).

³⁰ See Н. Пројева, *Историја на Аргеадите*, pp. 148–151.

and the Greek dithyrambic poet Melanipides to his court. But in the time of King Archelaus it received especially broad intensity, with great support from the king and the royal court. Following the example of their predecessors in order to achieve its hegemonic aspirations towards the Greek world, he oriented the Macedonian court to accelerated Hellenization with well-organized and financed pro-Greek cultural policy. It was systematically directed towards the reshaping of the oral history. In the oral history mythical actualization of the Macedonian history occurred and rapid reshaping of the myths about the origin of the Macedonian royal dynasty, especially the myths about the origin of Macedon as an eponym for Macedonia and Macedonians, myths about Caranus and Temenus. The reshaping of the myths was earnestly intensified by the literary activity on the Macedonian court, where within the cultural reforms Archelaus on his court invited many writers and other cultural figures of the Greek world. As a cultural center, prominent Greek authors such as the dithyrambic poet Melanipides, tragedians Euripides and Agathon, dithyrambic poet and musician Timotheus and the epic poet Choerilus resided and worked on the Macedonian court. If we also mention the stay of the painter Zeuxis on the Macedonian court, who was the founder of the Macedonian art school, the famous physician Hippocrates and his son Thessalus as a court physician, the philosopher Gorgias and the historian Thucydides, it can be concluded that as wealthy patron, King Archelaus has raised the Macedonian court in the most important cultural center or some sort of throne academy of arts and sciences of his time.

Moreover, Archelaus established religious celebrations in the sacred city of Dion and enriched them with festive drama competitions and a sort of Macedonian Olympic Games with athletic competitions. Since the Macedonians were not entitled to participate in the Greek Olympic games, for the affirmation of the Macedonian identity, statehood and sovereignty, Dion and the Macedonian Olympic games were the counterpart of the Greek Olympia and the Greek Olympic Games.

The goal of Archelaus' pro-Greek policy was not assimilation of his own people, but gaining the Greek world and the imposition of the Macedonian political hegemony. The military and politically worn and torn Greek city-states during the Peloponnesian War additionally contributed to this the general situation. Of course, the citation of such hegemonic ambitions would not look scientific and unserious, if it was not successfully verified by the later successors to the Macedonian throne – Philip II and Alexander III. They owe the vital moving core of their state power and vision to the reform genius of King Archelaus³¹.

The pro-Greek policy of the Macedonian kings was a way to the cultural world in that time. The Macedonians tried to prove their Greek origin and everything else indicates that they were a separate ethnic group which the Greeks perceived as barbarian. So Heracles imposed himself on the Macedonian royal list as a founder of a dynasty of the Macedonians and the Macedonian royal house. Alexander I was not allowed to participate on the Olympic games, but he was allegedly allowed once he proved to be Greek. Since the Macedonians were not allowed to participate on the Olympic games, Archelaus established the Macedonian Olympic games in the sacred city of Dion, imitating the es-

³¹ See K. Младеновска-Ристовска, *Македонскиот крал Архелај*, Bibliotheca Macedonica, Скопје 2014, pp. 1–186.

tablished Greek unique cultural matrices. The pro-Greek policy of the Macedonian kings went so far that in the end the Macedonian identity would remain as a sediment at the bottom of the new conventionally called *Hellenistic* culture that will go to the extreme to show up as dominant *Hellenic* (Greek) with the terminological determination itself. The term *Hellenism* in the contemporary science for the first time was used by the German historian J. G. Droyzen to mark a new era in the history of the eastern Mediterranean that began with the conquests of Alexander III. He singled out this period as an individual, but in its very naming gave it ethnic characteristic, totally unjustified, because carriers of this new civilization were the Macedonian rulers. The term is derived at a time when the history of ancient Macedonia is mostly taught as part of Greek history, burdened by the understanding that the ancient Macedonians were Greeks. Taken into consideration that the latest research shows that the Macedonians were a separate ethnic group with its own distinct language, religion and customs and socio-political structure quite different from the Greek, this term requires a new approach. The terminology is not a static category, it changes, but not according to any political matrix, which in this case, considering the politicization of the issue of the ethnicity of the ancient Macedonians in world science is evident, but in accordance with the tools of scientific methodology.

Alexander III created a huge kingdom, with a new social order of equal and united peoples, with respect for all traditions, religions and cultures, which stretched from the western coast of the Balkan Peninsula, to India in the east, the Danube and the Black Sea to the north, as far as Egypt and Libya to the south. Uniting the Macedonian people and the Greek world with the East and creating a basis for discernment and mixing their cultures, Alexander became the creator of a new world order, which is the wish and aspiration of modern and progressive world movements. He animated the Macedonian kingdom in the strongest and best known, was an outstanding cultural cosmopolite strategist, but permitted the new Macedonian Kingdom to overflow the Greek culture, disregarding that it carried symbiosis to the authentic ancient Macedonian spiritual and cultural experiences. But even in that case it could not be said that it was a complete Hellenization of the Macedonian culture and tradition, but mainly its models of presentation fitted to the popular Greek culture³². It still could not fully drive out the authentic Macedonian notions about the world and life. This cultural model was politically motivated and served Alexander and his predecessors just as a kind of prestige and blurring the inferiority to call them barbarians.

Macedonia left space at the historiographical interpretations of its authentic identity and contribution to overall world cultural heritage often to remain unnoticed. Insufficient research on her separate identity development in science today causes faulty misconceptions. Considering that this is largely due to the political connotation that is attributed to this topic, it gives hope that historians will be given help by the new findings of the archaeological research, which will speak up, if we can say, *sine ira et studio*.

³² Илија Велев, *Византиско-македонски книжевни врски*, Скопје 2005, pp. 7–13.

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Ancient Macedonians and Greeks: between the Identity and Civilization Aspirations

Summary

Who exactly were the ancient Macedonians – Greeks, barbarians, Illyrians, Thracians or mixed people? This is one of the most controversial issues in historical science which was very popular in the course of the past century and does not cease to be current even today. Although the ancient sources clearly attest to the uniqueness of the ancient Macedonians in comparison to other neighboring ethnic groups, some researchers still believe that the ancient Macedonians were Greeks. Their arguments can be best illustrated by the following questions: First, if the ancient Macedonians were not Greeks, how did they as an independent, militarily dominant people, receive Greek culture and become its most prominent representatives? Furthermore, why did Alexander III, after conquering the East, accept the Hellenic dialect (*koine*) as the official language of his country? Why have numerous inscriptions in Greek been found in Macedonia? Why were numerous historical works from Macedonia in ancient times written in Ionic or the Ionic-Attic dialect, even when their authors were Macedonians and knew Macedonian? These issues are the subject of study in the proposed work.

Keywords: ancient Macedonians, pro-Greek policy, Alexander I Philhellene, Archelaus.