

## **The Cappadocian Language / Dialect Continuum**

Cappadocian is a Greek-Turkish mixed language spoken in Central Anatolia until the population exchange between Greece and Turkey in the 1920s. It originated as an indigenous Greek dialect during the Byzantine period, but became heavily turkicized after the Turkish conquest of Cappadocia in the 11th century. Many Cappadocians shifted to Turkish. At the time of the exchange 56% of the Cappadocians were monolingual in Turkish as against 44% who were bilingual in Cappadocian and Turkish. Once in Greece, the Cappadocians shifted to Greek due to discrimination and political oppression, until Cappadocian was eventually believed to have died out in the 1960s. In 2005, Mark Janse and Dimitris Papazachariou discovered that there are still native speakers of the Mistiot dialect of Cappadocian in Central and Northern Greece. A preliminary survey conducted in 2006 suggests that there are probably several hundreds of native speakers and possibly another several hundreds of semi-speakers of Mistiot Cappadocian. At the present state of our knowledge it is unclear whether there are still native speakers of other Cappadocian dialects.

The purpose of this paper is not to give a survey of Mistiot Cappadocian, but to discuss the Cappadocian language/dialect continuum. The degree of turkicization varies considerably among the Cappadocian dialects. The Southeast Cappadocian dialects of Ulağaç and Semendere are the most heavily turkicized, whereas the Northeast Cappadocian dialects of Sinasós and Potámja are the most heavily hellenized. From a typological perspective the Northeast Cappadocian dialects can be considered Greek dialects “in the full genetic sense”, whereas the Southeast Cappadocian dialects are “over the border of nongenetic development” (Thomason & Kaufman). Linguistically speaking, Sinasós and Potámja are dialects of the Greek language, whereas Ulağaç and Semendere are dialects of the Cappadocian language. Paradoxically, there is a dialect continuum between Northeast and Southeast Cappadocian, comparable to a (post)creole continuum. Sociolinguistically speaking, there is a language / dialect continuum, not necessarily between Northeast and Southeast Cappadocian, but between any two varieties that are considered either a language or a dialect. The linguistic and cultural revival of Mistiot Cappadocian may be a sign of a (renewed) sense of sociolinguistic autonomy.

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