

Book Reviews

K. Lindstedt, Lj. Spasov, J. Nuorluoto, eds., *The Konikovo Gospel. Кониковско евангелие. Bibl. Patr. Alex. 268.* Helsinki: Societas Scientarum Fennica, 2008 [Commentationes Humanarum Literarum 125]. lxxxii+440 pp. with illustrations

It is always hard to write reviews on books destined to become classical, and the one being the subject for this review is exactly such an example. This huge volume is a result of collaboration between two academic teams, a Finnish and a Macedonian one. It brings under scrutiny the recently discovered manuscript of the Konikovo Gospel (KG), named after the home village of the publisher of a fragment of the manuscript, Pavel Božigropski (ca. 1800–1871). There are four texts referred to as KG: a Greek vernacular-based original and a South Slavic translation (it uses Greek alphabet and was supposedly written in the end of XVIII or in the beginning of XIX century), the editor's (presumably Pavel's) corrections in the Slavic section of the manuscript and a few printed pages based on the corrected Slavic version. The manuscript kept in the library of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria came to light only in 2003, while the printed pages after being originally published by Pavel Božigropski in 1852 or in 1853 and republished in transcription in 1917, 1922 and 1931 by several Bulgarian researchers were thoroughly studied on the basis of the transcriptions by Jordan Ivanov in 1973.

Even though the exact dialect in which the first hand layer of the text was written cannot be precisely geographically attributed (see pp. 313–323), this dialect certainly belongs to Enidže Vardar group. This attribution (which reads like a true detective story) is an example of fine linguistic analysis.

The book is divided into 7 sections. It is opened by the Introduction and the Description of the Manuscript (in two versions: English and Macedonian). Edition of the Manuscript (Transcription of the Greek Text; Basic Transcription of the Macedonian Text [Latin based]); Dialectal Transcription of the Macedonian Text (according to the first hand and to the second hand layer—Macedonian Cyrillic based), The Printed Pages, Study of the Greek Text, Study of the Macedonian Text on different levels, including Graphemics, Phonology, Morphology, Vocabulary and Onomastics, an article on the Enidže Vardar dialect and an article comparing the language of KG with the dialect of Enidže Vardar, and several other articles I am going to dwell on below. The publication concludes with the Bibliography and the Facsimile of the Manuscript. It is important to say that some of the data are available on-line: the complete Latin transcription of the first hand layer of KG, the index of all the forms used with the possibility of alphabetic and reverse alphabetic ordering, and the watermark [<http://www.helsinki.fi/~jslindst/268/>].

Three of the articles in the volume treat KG in a broader cultural context and are an attempt of synthesis of the usual sections for this kind of book about different linguistic levels of the text that are enlisted above.

The first of the articles is by Victor A. Friedman. He concentrates on the Macedonian identity of the late XVIII and early XIX century and the place KG has with respect to this identity. It can be read as an introduction to the history of modern Balkan identities and is deeply rooted in the cultural context of the epoch. V. A. Friedman describes the Ottoman system of millets, language and religion as the basis of identity. Different

examples of texts in Balkan vernaculars either serve emerging national identities or are conceived as educational material on the way to eliminating such identities and hellenizing the indigenous non-Greek speaking populations of the region (e.g. *Tetraglosson* of Hadži Daniil of Moschopolis). Of crucial importance are the corrections presumably made in the manuscript by Pavel Božigropski: While the original text represents an example of usage of a local dialect (or several regional dialects, as far as none of the dialectal features of the original text is narrow enough to point to a specific village) to translate the Scriptures, the corrections are an example of language policy aimed at creating a koine (“changes specifically aimed away from the original dialectal base” and “changes pointing to a West Central Macedonian model”—p. 390. It is noteworthy that the Enidže Vardar dialects belong to Eastern Macedonian). The applying of the West Central model makes KG the first known precursor of later attempts at taking this model as a basis for Standard Macedonian language (P. Zografski, K. Misirkov and the actual language codification in 1944–1945).

The second article, by Jouko Lindstedt, applies the classical philological way of analysis and places the text of KG into its historical context. He proves that Pavel Božigropski was not the translator of the text. Then he tries to reconstruct Pavel’s intentions (“It would be anachronistic to assume that Pavel wanted to create a ‘Macedonian’ gospel as distinct from a “Bulgarian” one. For him, there was only one battle line in the Church struggle, and it ran between the Creek clergy and the Slavic-speaking ordinary people”—p. 396). J. Lindstedt also describes a certain tradition of creating translations of the Scriptures into the Balkan vernaculars of the early XIX century (for example, the rules to put down the voiceless affricate [č] using the Greek symbols τζ and not τς, or the use of α for the sound [ǎ] that go far beyond separate language traditions) and it certainly broadens the array of contexts within which KG can be treated.

The third article by Ljudmil Spasov attempts to place KG into Macedonian cultural history. At the very beginning of the article a historical survey of the Macedonian literary language is given. Lj. Spasov dates this literary tradition back to as early as the establishment of the Ohrid Literary School (p. 403). He later dwells upon the life and work of Pavel Božigropski bringing into reader’s attention all that is known about the first publisher and supposed editor of KG. In the last part of the article he argues that while for Bulgarian researchers the vernacular Slavic translations of the gospel in Aegean Macedonia and what is now the Republic of Albania “are only a minor episode in the main cultural stream that corresponds to the Church Slavonic tradition and belongs to the Bulgarian cultural tradition in the strictest sense” (p. 429), it has great significance as the first translation of gospel into Macedonian vernacular and can be viewed in a broader context of translation of the Gospels into modern European languages connected to Protestantism and the activities of the Bible Translation Societies.

The different ways and attempts to describe both the text of KG and its context are either solid by themselves and doubtfully subject to any criticism or reflect a long-going academic discussion (which is the case of Lj. Spasov’s article). Now I would rather concentrate on several points I found troubling while reading this otherwise precise and complete edition.

The fact that there were actually two teams preparing the book is reflected in the alphabet they apply in quoting either KG or the dialectal data. The Finnish team uses a Latin based approach while the Macedonian team applies a Macedonian Cyrillic based approach. It leads to a certain reader’s discomfort: reading a part of the book and en-

countering certain potentially homonymous cases (*cf.* *p* or *u* or *c* that can mean either [p], [u], [ts] or [r], [i], [s]) the reader should either keep in mind the affiliation of the author of this specific part or use the context to understand if these symbols are Cyrillic or Latin. The language of the article is by no means helpful because sometimes inside the English text we see examples of Latin-based characters (*eg.* pp. 257–265) and in some we see examples of Macedonian-Cyrillic based characters (*eg.* pp. 277–310). The fact that inside the Macedonian team there seems to be no unity as to how to place the accent signs (to put them above the letter or right next to it—*cf.* pp. 277–310, 317–323, 325–362 *vs.* and 363–369, 371–384) makes the overall picture even more heterogeneous.

The text of KG is presented in all of its different versions: the Greek original (in the Greek alphabet) and its Slavic translation (in Latin-based transliteration, with second hand remarks in references) (pp. 30–177, parallel text), then one more time in its Slavic translation but this time in Macedonian Cyrillic-based system (applying both transcription and transliteration to get a dialectal reconstruction) (pp. 179–225, parallel texts of the first hand and the second hand), then the printed pages (pp. 238–245, parallel texts in Greek in Greek alphabet and Slavic in Latin-based transliteration, followed by a facsimile) and then the facsimile of the manuscript (in the Appendix). Obviously in spite of the extensive representation of almost all possible versions of KG something is missing—the Slavic original in Greek characters. Having in mind the specific conventions the text pertains to representing the sounds that do not exist in Greek (*cf.* what J. Lindsted says about the tradition of the texts in Balkan vernaculars applying Greek alphabet) it would be more than necessary to have this original text.

I also find unnecessary the full verbal paradigms given on pp. 337–352. It is very much clear that the text of KG cannot contain complete paradigms, so it is unclear why they are represented anyway (*cf.* the section on pluperfect on p. 350—“the pluperfect occurs in only one example in this text” is written after a whole paradigm with 6 forms is provided). It surely is a kind of reconstruction, but in its place, just a set of endings with examples would be more than enough.

“The Konikovo Gospel” represents with almost all possible carefulness both the text under scrutiny and its broad context. It deepens our knowledge of the language situation and language policies in the Balkans in the late XVIII and early XIX century, as well as of the Macedonian dialects of that time.

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