Petar Hr. Ilievski
(1920-2013)

A Modest Man of Outstanding Scientific Achievements

A brief glance at the bibliography of academician Prof. Dr Petar Hr. Ilievski is enough for one to grasp the magnitude and diversity of his scientific interests. Their breadth impedes attempts to give an accurate portrayal, for even a mere illustration of his research demands knowledge in various fields that can sometimes be quite unrelated. Those who do understand his work adopt the probably most preferable approach and try to organise it thematically, identifying three main areas. The first and most obvious is Classical philology, with a strong emphasis on Mycenaeanology; the second is Balkan linguistic studies with regard to the history and development of the Macedonian language; and the third focuses upon Byzantine-Slav relations, where the Cyrillo-Methodian studies make up the very core of his scientific research.

With his numerous investigations into Mycenaeanology, beginning in the years when this discipline still struggled along an overgrown path to obtain its scientific distinction, Ilievski quickly emerged as one of the world's leading experts in the field. His doctoral dissertation of 1960, *The Ablative, Instrumental and Locative in the Oldest Greek Texts* is among the first in this area and thus imposed itself as a mandatory read with a high citation count in scientific circles. Forty years later he published *The Life of the Mycenaeans from Their Own Records* that is actually a synthesis of research across four decades and provides conclusive research in a plethora

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of areas: geography, economy, religion, toponymy, anthroponymy, etc. The comparative approach that Ilievski adopted while interpreting personal names in the Mycenaean, Homeric, Classical Greek, and Slavonic worlds is of great importance here because it contributes greatly to the actualisation of the problem. A detailed comparison of Balkan experiences through history proves the presence of continuity and established relationships in those spaces that convey the interlacing and mutual influence of the various cultures.

As a classical philologist with broad interests, Ilievski plunges into investigation of issues in areas such as poetics, literature, and philosophy. Here I would like to note his work entitled *On Antique Prosody in Macedonian Poetry Translations* which deals with language and metrics in the Macedonian translations of ancient epic poetry, where the main focus is on the translations made by acad. Mihail Petruševski. The intent of the author was to point to the specifics of our language that, due to its speech rhythm, allows for the classical hexameter, but at the same time, is exposed to the danger of the overwhelming presence of the dactylic hexameter which does not resemble the original. In his subtle analysis, the texts are presented as a document of a meaningful, poetic translational endeavour, and at the same time, as a handbook and guide for everyone who wants to try their hand at translating ancient epic texts themselves.

Here I would also like to mention a series of texts that deal with the meaning of the term harmony in the Ancient Greek language, literature and philosophy. Beginning with the shaping and the development of the term *harmonia* in the Mycenaean and Homeric Greek, this research reveals the many semantic nuances of the word in order to demonstrate the depth and the key meaning of this term in ancient culture in general.

The research of the Mycenaean and the classical world enabled acad. Ilievski to form a broad basis for Balkan linguistic studies that also encompass the development of the Macedonian language.

His work *Balkan Linguistic Studies*, dealing with the reasons for the linguistic changes and the mutual approximation of the languages spoken in a given territory, such as the Balkan Peninsula, is of special importance in this context. The work analyzes the morphosyntactical characteristics, vocabulary and word formation. For example, let us look at the problem of the origin of the *-issa* suffixes in the Greek and Slavic languages. The author shows that the influence between these two linguistic environments in the Balkan Peninsula did not necessarily extend in the Greek>Slavic direction, but it was rather a two-way communication.

A huge contribution to the resolution of the same problem was the publication of the *Krnino Damaskin*. Working studiously in the manuscript

departments of the libraries of several Balkan centres, and later in Kiev and Moscow, academician Ilievski manages to complete a work which shows the peculiarities in the various developmental stages of the Macedonian language through many centuries before it is established as a separate modern standard language.

This will be followed by his pivotal work titled *Tradition and Innovations in the Macedonian Church Slavonic Literary Monuments from the Turkish Period*.

As a response to a public debate in Macedonia regarding the origins and development of the Slavonic script, he produces *Origin and Development of Writing with Special Regard to the Beginnings of Slavonic Literacy*. In it, Ilievski approaches the problem of Slavonic literacy using extensive analogy to older scripts. Bearing in mind that the Slavs have adopted the trends of the Byzantine and Mediterranean cultures, and indirectly of the Near Eastern culture, the research touches upon the very beginnings of writing.

In the second part of this work special attention is paid to the Glagolitsa, which was the official script of the Ohrid Literary Centre in the earliest periods of Slavonic literacy. The author calls the Glagolitic alphabet an “iconic script”, created right after the defeat of Iconoclasm, which was also to allow for a visual evangelical preaching.

His *Beacons Imperishable. The Slavic Apostles and Their Disciples* is an especially distinguished publication in the area of Cyrillo-Methodian studies. This work analyses the main benefits from the missions of the holy brothers Cyril and Methodius, the creation of the Slavonic script, the codification of the literary, i.e. liturgical language, and the first translation of the most important biblical and liturgical books, all the while emphasizing St. Cyril’s idea of equality among all languages, which seen from today’s perspective was a defence of the cultural principles of modern Europe.

Not trying to be an evaluator of the scientific attainments of academician Ilievski, I shall allow myself to express solely my personal impressions. The thematically versatile opus he left behind bears testament to a remarkably fruitful scientist who, due to his varied education, managed to create a unique synthetic scientific insight into the problems he was trying to tackle. Besides, I feel free to claim that we are not yet in a position to have a full grasp of his scientific achievements. That remains to be done by the generations to come.

If one aims to understand at least partially the activity of acad. Ilievski, it is necessary to briefly point to his engagement in areas transcending the limits of classical philology.

Here, above all, I allude to his lengthy work on the affirmation of Orthodoxy in Macedonia. A theologian according to his first university

diploma, he strived to promote our religion both practically and theoretically ever since the early post-war years, despite the unfavourable political circumstances after 1945. Initially he worked as a teacher of religious education, and then he became a member of the Primary Commission for Establishing the First Faculty of Theology in Skopje. After that he wrote a series of papers on Orthodoxy for the Yugoslavian Encyclopaedia. Still, his participation in the first ever Macedonian translation of the *Gospel* is the most meaningful contribution in this area.

While on the subject of meaningful contributions I shall mention the naming of the Macedonian currency – the denar, which was his role in the creation of independent Macedonia. He performed this task acting competently, deliberately, and as a true visionary.

I would need vast space if I were to list all the professional and public engagements of academician Ilievski. For example, he was the organizer of many high-level national and international scientific conferences, such as the Eighth International Colloquium on Mycenaean Studies in Ohrid, 1985. With equal sense of responsibility, he participated in and took care of the work conducted in the Research Centre for Areal Linguistics in the Macedonian Academy of Sciences and Arts.

He was a long-time editor of the international scientific journal *Živa Antika*, making sure everything went as planned almost literally with his last breath.

As a professor he remained in contact with his ex-students regardless of the fact he was long retired. Many young classical philologists have him to thank for their M.A. and Ph.D. titles, and some even for their participation in scientific conferences and the opportunities for academic mobility.

And all of this never obscured the everyday simplicity, openness and kind-heartedness of a man always ready for an honest communication.

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