

Slavova, Mirena: 'ΕΛΛΗΝΙΖΕΙΝ. A textbook of Ancient Greek' (Sophia: SamIzdat, 2013, 328 pp.)

Alexey Stambolov [✉]

University of Sophia "St. Climent Ohridski", Sophia/
University of Plovdiv "Paisij Hilendaski", Plovdiv

a_stambolov@abv.bg

A new textbook of Ancient Greek entitled 'ΕΛΛΗΝΙΖΕΙΝ' has been published in our midst, to the joy of those who wish to study this classical language. The author of the textbook is Professor Mirena Slavova, a long-time professor of Ancient Greek in the Department of Classical Philology at the University of Sophia "St. Climent Ohridski". As the author herself mentions in the preface, the textbook "presents a combination of the traditions and modern approaches in studying Ancient Greek".

'ΕΛΛΗΝΙΖΕΙΝ' is a modern textbook, as is visible from the very beginning in its presentation. In comparison with the older Ancient Greek textbooks available, being more similar to grammars than to textbooks, it is modern and pleasant to use. The presentation of the contents is not less important to us, especially bearing in mind that most students studying Ancient Greek in Bulgaria are young (students in the National Gymnasium of Ancient Languages, as well as in the two theological seminaries). From a methodological point of view, it is extremely important that the studying material should be presented clearly, to be acceptable and readable, and last but not least – interesting and not dull to read. The author has successfully fulfilled this scope of a modern textbook.

Among the advantages of 'ΕΛΛΗΝΙΖΕΙΝ' is the fact that Professor Slaveva has consulted many modern textbooks for foreign languages, as well as online resources, e.g. *Navicula Bacchi*, *Voci dal mondo antico* and *Classical Greek Online*.

This textbook comprises an introduction, 30 methodical units, a table of chronology and a bibliography. An Ancient Greek-Bulgarian / Bulgarian-Ancient Greek dictionary (32 pp.) is added to the textbook, published as a separate book body. It contains the basic meanings of the Ancient Greek words used in the textbook. To further help students and of teachers, the edition also includes maps, photographs and illustrations. Owing to the 30 methodic units to which the teaching material is divided, this manual is also helpful in teaching Ancient Greek at universities, as well as in preparing university syllabi (the academic year comprises 30 weeks of studying too).

In the introduction the basic periods of the development of Ancient Greek are presented, as well as its importance and the traditions of study in Bulgaria. In this short historical material, however, a well-known fact is missing – that Ancient Greek is the original language of the New Testament and of a much of Ancient Christian Literature (i.e. Eastern Church Fathers). We are convinced that adding this data to the introduction in the next edition of the textbook would improve the understanding of the importance of Ancient Greek, taking into consideration the

impact of the Holy Bible and of Christian Literature in general on modern European (and not only European) Civilization.

The methodic units (we deliberately do not call them 'lessons' because they are extensive and consist of material which cannot be considered merely as 'lessons') comprise grammar, three headings, exercises and a test. The grammar consists of records on the morphology of Ancient Greek names and verbs, illustrated by 108 tables and short practical syntactic rules.

The first heading, 'Secrets of words', is devoted to questions of Greek word formation and the role of Ancient Greek in forming many modern words and terms. The second heading, 'In Modern Greek', gives an overview of tradition and change in the diachronic development of the Greek language. This comparison to Modern Greek will help those who study Modern Greek to learn the roots of the language while enabling students to understand what these two different historical stadia of the same language have in common and how they differ from one another. The third heading, 'Φιλομαθέσι τε καὶ φιλιστοροῦσι' ('To those with love for studying and to the curious ones'), proposes new translations of Ancient Greek and Byzantine texts undertaken by the author. The students will thus widen their knowledge of history and will be introduced to original texts by Ancient Greek authors.

The exercises at the end of each methodic unit enable students to improve their knowledge of grammar and to gain skills in translating original Greek texts. Depending on their complexity and the interests of the students, the exercises are divided into three groups. Some exercises involve translation from Bulgarian into Ancient Greek.

After the exercises an exemplary test is added. Well-selected questions will make the work easier for the lecturer, as well as for those who study Ancient Greek by themselves and would like to check their progress.

This textbook can be used by theology students too, under condition that examples and sentences from the New Testament are offered (mainly from St. John's Gospel). It would be good for the author to include biblical texts (e.g. the Gospel of John 1, Epistles by Paul, Genesis, and Psalms) in any new revised edition of the textbook. In our view this is necessary because there are two theological seminaries in Bulgaria and four universities at which theology and Ancient Greek/Biblical language are part of the compulsory program. (We omit here the protestant high schools, where studying Ancient Greek also is included.)

We are convinced that this new textbook will completely satisfy the needs of modern readers who wish to study Ancient Greek. We hope and wish for Professor Mirena Slavova's textbook 'ΕΛΛΗΝΙΖΕΙΝ' to become an established textbook, similar to the already well-known Ancient Greek textbooks in our country.

[*] The author of the review is attending doctoral studies in Medieval Greek at the Department of Classical Philology at the University "St. Kilment Ohridski" in Sophia and is a part time lecturer at the Department of Theology at Plovdiv University "Paisij Hilendarski".