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The Road to Konikovo: Thoughts on the Context and Ethics of Philology

Prof. Arto Mustajoki has taught a course on the ethics of research and academic administration and co-authored a book on the subject (Clarkeburn & Mustajoki 2007). Having recently led the study and publication of the Konikovo Gospel, a bilingual Greek and Macedonian manuscript (Lindstedt & al., eds., 2008), I have become aware that even philological practices require critical reflection: how has the academic and social context influenced the work in our research project, and what ethical questions have been involved? How have we actually arrived at the results of our research, and how do we present them?

The discovery

The story begins in Alexandria, Egypt. The Greek-Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria has a library preserving a great number of valuable books and manuscripts. In describing and conserving the manuscripts, the Patriarchate has received significant help from the Academy of Finland's Centre of Excellence, 'Ancient and Medieval Greek Documents, Archives and Libraries', led by Jaakko Frösén (cf. Frösén & Hakkarainen 2005). At the end of 2003, the Finnish historian and philologist Mika Hakkarainen, studying the mainly Greek manuscripts of the library, came across a relatively new evangeliary, perhaps from the end of the 18th century, with the call number *Bibl. Patr. Alex.* 268. The manuscript contained parallel Greek and Slavonic columns, both written in Greek letters. Not being a Slavist himself, Hakkarainen contacted me, asking whether the manuscript might be of interest, and sent me digital photos on a compact disc.

Some years earlier, Hakkarainen and I had participated in an interdisciplinary research project on the Balkans, which is why it was natural for him first to contact me. Later the cooperation between Slavists and Classical

scholars proved several times to be indispensable for the study of this manuscript, as we will see.

At the Department of Slavonic and Baltic Languages and Literatures, we recognised the Slavonic text of Manuscript 268 to be in a Macedonian dialect. Nina Graves, writing her doctoral dissertation on Macedonian grammar, was the first to identify the text as representing a type of Lower Vardar dialect and therefore coming from what is now Northern Greece. The text seemed very interesting in its linguistic details, and its orthographic solutions were admirably suited for writing Slavonic. We knew that some vernacular Macedonian Gospel texts written in Greek letters had existed in the 19th century, but it was not immediately clear whether Manuscript 268 contained a text that was already well-known in scholarship or whether it was a new discovery. Of course, at this stage every philologist hopes to have found something previously unknown. The libraries of Finland are poor in Slavonic manuscripts – especially in South Slavonic manuscripts! – which is why their study does not have a strong tradition among the Finnish Slavists; it was thus not entirely obvious to us what to do next.

Then came the first of those happy coincidences that were to be numerous in this endeavour. Perhaps they come to the well prepared, as they say? I was reading Carlton's book (1991) on the phonological history of Slavonic languages and noticed the short example he gives on p. 383, showing Slavonic written in Greek letters. I immediately recognised a passage from Manuscript 268. It turned out that the passage had originally been published by Jordan Ivanov (1917, 267; 1931, 181–185) a long time ago.¹ Ivanov copied it from a printed book that he called *Konikovsko evangelie*, the Konikovo Gospel, because its translator, Pavel Božigropski, had been born in the village of Konikovo. The book had been published in Solun, Greek Thessaloniki, in 1852.

Now we even had a name for the manuscript: the Konikovo Gospel, a source briefly mentioned in all studies of the history of Modern Macedonian Gospel translations. Nothing really new, therefore, and this was at first a disappointment. But notice that what Ivanov had written about was a printed book, whereas we had a manuscript – perhaps the translator's autograph? Moreover, all the other Macedonian vernacular Gospels from the 19th century had been published, but neither Ivanov nor any later scholar had published the entire text of the Konikovo Gospel, though it was the oldest of

¹ In fact the identification with Ivanov's text was not so straightforward. Carlton's immediate source was not Ivanov, but Moszyński (1984: 25–26), who in turn led us to Ivanov. And the greater part of the passage given by Ivanov is on page 4 of the manuscript – the sole page that Mika Hakkarainen had accidentally skipped when photographing the manuscript! One more compact disc from Alexandria was therefore needed before I could be certain of the identification.

them. Had the book been lost? This in fact seemed to be the case: all studies quoted Ivanov, but nobody reported having seen the book itself. This made our discovery important again – the book had been lost before it had been properly studied, but now we had its manuscript! At this stage, we could not, of course, exclude the possibility that the book might turn up somewhere after all, but at least the scholars of Macedonian did not know where it could be located. The original manuscript was therefore a real find.

I wrote a short news item about the discovery for the research news page of the university web site. This required some non-trivial decisions as to how the manuscript should be described and defined. People are interested if something old and unique is found, but Manuscript 268 was not particularly old, and its uniqueness was at first difficult to define. Finally we arrived at a formulation that we later also used on the Konikovo home page: ‘What makes the manuscript unique is its bilinguality, and the fact that both the Greek and the Slavonic texts represent the vernacular, not the church language. The Slavonic part is the oldest known text of greater scope that directly reflects the living dialects of Southern Macedonia. It is also the oldest known Gospel translation in Modern Macedonian.’ The expression ‘oldest ... Modern’ might seem to be rather vague, if not outright circular, because what counts as the ‘Modern’ stage of a given language is only a scholarly convention. But fortunately there had been a clear break in Bible translations into Macedonian: Cyril and Methodius used the living Slavonic dialect of the Thessaloniki region in their translations in the 9th century; thereafter came a hiatus of almost a millennium during which the Bible texts did not directly reflect the spoken language of the region; and then came our manuscript. Whenever the ‘Modern’ period of the Macedonian language began, it certainly was some time in that millennium. And the attempts to write the Macedonian vernacular in the Modern period had been based on more northern dialects, which is obviously why the discovery was so significant for the study of the endangered dialects of Southern (Aegean) Macedonia.

The central question was actually the use of the word ‘Macedonian’ to define the Slavonic language in the manuscript. Most of my Bulgarian colleagues probably say that the manuscript contains a Bulgarian text and that it is somewhat marginal for the history of the Bulgarian language. This is a more complicated question that I will address later in this essay: did we define the manuscript as Macedonian only to enhance its apparent significance?

Later I also had to ponder what counts as a discovery. Since Manuscript 268 had a call number, it had been registered in the catalogues of the library in Alexandria, and it had already been described in a Greek catalogue by Moschonas (1945, 245) as containing text ‘in vernacular Greek with a translation into vernacular Bulgarian’ (‘εις δημῶδη Ἑλληνικὴν μετὰ μεταφράσεως εἰς δημῶδη Βουλγαρικὴν’). But no Slavist had paid any attention to this in-

formation; and even had a Slavist done so and travelled to Alexandria, he or she would probably not have been able to access the manuscript before the Finnish scholars started their work there. Only now were all the pieces in the right place. Perhaps ‘discovery’ is not a misnomer for this kind of happy coincidence – if you do not claim too much personal merit for it.

The research

After this kind of discovery, the moral dilemma is whether to study the find alone, which might require a very long time and exceed your competence, or to share it with your colleagues, even with those from other universities, though it will dilute your personal merit. In our department at the University of Helsinki, there are only a few specialists in South Slavonic languages, and only one of them has Macedonian as her main research interest. We did not have all the historical and dialectological knowledge needed to study the manuscript properly. So it soon became clear that we would need help from our Macedonian colleagues, especially since we wanted to publish the edition and study of the manuscript well before the XIV International Congress of Slavists, which, by coincidence, would take place precisely in Ohrid, Macedonia in 2008.²

The summer after the discovery, in 2004, my then Helsinki colleague Juhani Nuorluoto visited Macedonia and informed scholars there about Manuscript 268. He also wrote the first scholarly articles on it (Nuorluoto 2005a; 2005b; 2006). It became clear that the manuscript made an interesting news item for the general public as well. Nuorluoto had to give several interviews to the Macedonian media, and so did I when I visited the country the next summer.

In the first days of 2005, when Prof. Ljudmil Spasov from the University of Skopje was staying at the Humboldt University of Berlin, I flew there with a disc containing the photos of all the preserved pages of Manuscript 268. Spasov and I drafted a joint research project, and I handed the disc over to him. Although we hardly knew each other before that private meeting in Berlin, our ideas of how the manuscript should be studied and published were remarkably similar, and our cooperation was to run smoothly during the entire project. What I especially appreciated was that Spasov was also ready to include the study and publication of the Greek text of the manuscript in the research plan as one of our essential tasks. Because Greece does

² Usually the discovery of a manuscript is only the beginning of a long story: the sensational Old Church Slavonic manuscripts found in Sinai in 1975 did not receive their first overall description before 1988 (Tarnanidis 1988), and only now are they slowly becoming accessible to scholarship – more than three decades after the original discovery – owing to the steady and persistent work of Heinz Miklas and other scholars from Vienna (Miklas 2007).

not recognise the right of its neighbour to use the name ‘Macedonia’ and relations between the two countries were, and still are, rather strained, I later observed that for some other Macedonians, the bilinguality of the manuscript was something that should preferably be disregarded.

Although the best specialists to help us study the Macedonian text of Manuscript 268 worked in Skopje, Macedonia, the best libraries for studying its background were in Sofia, Bulgaria. Because Bulgaria acquired its independence in 1878 when Macedonia remained part of the Ottoman Empire, many Macedonians fled to Bulgaria at that time, and thus in Sofia there are important archival sources for studying the history of Macedonia.

It was likely that the printed Konikovo Gospel from 1852 could no longer be found in the libraries of Sofia, but there was one problem that I wanted to solve when I arrived in the city in the spring of 2005: all Bulgarian studies I could find described the Gospel as a complete printed book, but the Macedonian scholar Blaže Ristovski (1989) wrote that Pavel Božigropski had only succeeded in having the first few lections of his translations printed. In the St. Cyril and Methodius Library of Sofia I looked for historical sources on Pavel. An important source, Stoilov’s (1917) old article in an obscure periodical, was not accessible as it was being restored, but an anonymous article from 1860 in the Bulgarian-language newspaper *Caregradskij vestnik*, published in Istanbul, as well as a much later article by Šaldev (1931), stated quite clearly that Pavel Božigropski had only succeeded in publishing the first few pages of his Sunday Gospel. These articles were not particularly difficult to find, but most scholars had relied only on Ivanov’s information of a whole printed book, and furthermore, copied the information from each other, without consulting the sources, as Ristovski had done. I was reminded of an important principle: *ad fontes!*

The difficult question that no one has yet asked is: Did Ivanov intentionally deceive his readers? Perhaps he only made a wrong assumption: since he had the title page and the first few pages of the book at his disposal, he assumed that the whole book had existed. But he seems to be intentionally vague: on the one hand, he does not directly state that he has not seen the whole book; on the other hand, he does not tell how many pages the book contains in all. Moreover, at least some of his contemporaries, such as Šaldev, knew the real state of the affairs, and, as a historian, Ivanov could not be ignorant of such a central source as the *Caregradskij vestnik*. It should be remembered that Ivanov’s studies had a clear bias: they were aimed at proving the historical continuity of ‘Bulgarian’ culture in those parts of Macedonia that had been left outside independent Bulgaria. One way or another, he was carried away by this programme, produced bad scholarship, and launched a myth of a whole printed book.

But in another detail I had to rely on Ivanov (1931, 184): he claimed that in the library of the Holy Synod of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, there

was a Church Slavonic Apostle handwritten by Pavel Božigropski. I wanted to see it in order to examine the style of the handwriting, although it would, of course, be difficult to compare Greek and Cyrillic scripts. The problem I had to solve was that in Manuscript 268, there seemed to be two different handwriting styles – two distinct hands, as it is expressed in palaeography. The first hand seemed to have made the translation; the second hand had made some corrections. A comparison with the passage published by Ivanov showed that the printed pages were typeset according to these corrections. But if Pavel was the translator, who was the editor? Or were both the same man, perhaps Pavel as a young man and Pavel several decades later? After all, the manuscript had physical traces showing that it had been read and used for a long time, and it also contained several graphic and graphemic features that could not have been typeset in any case, so perhaps Pavel had used it in the liturgy before deciding to publish its Slavonic text.

My colleagues at the University of Sofia provided me with a letter of recommendation, and I set off for the library of the Holy Synod, only to find it closed. The same experience was repeated the next day. ‘They are priests, you know,’ the janitor explained to me, ‘you cannot know when they come and go.’ On the Friday before my departure I decided to try a third time, and, luckily, the library was open. I asked to see the Church Slavonic Apostle written by Pavel. I did not expect much; I only knew what the call number of the manuscript had been more than a century earlier, when Sprostranov’s (1900) catalogue had been published. But the manuscript was found immediately. After all, there are no reasons to change call numbers, are there?

I did not acquire photographs of the Apostle manuscript at that time (I only received them two years later on my second visit to the library). But I copied some of Pavel’s typical letter forms, especially in one place where he had, exceptionally, used Greek script. In the evening I opened my laptop in the sitting room of the old lady in whose flat the University of Sofia had placed me and looked once again at the digital photos from Alexandria. There was no doubt: only the second hand in the manuscript was Pavel’s. The Alexandria manuscript was not his translation: it was an older text. This, of course, explained why the manuscript had been formed and designed as a liturgical book, not as a manuscript for a typesetter. But it also meant that we did not know who the translator had been.

Somehow people find manuscripts more interesting when they can be connected to known historical personalities, and I later found that I was not the only one for whom it was difficult to admit that the Konikovo Gospel had not been translated by Pavel Božigropski, but only edited by him. But then, Pavel never claimed to have been the translator! The facsimile of the printed title page, as reproduced by Ivanov, said quite clearly: PREPISANO I DIORTOSANO OT MENE PAVEL IROMONAH, BOŽIGROPSKI PROTOSINGEL, RODOM

VODENSKA (Eparhija) OT SELO KONIKOVO – ‘*copied and corrected*’ by me, hieromonk Pavel, a protosingel of the Holy Sepulchre, born in (the diocese of) Voden, the village of Konikovo’. Ivanov and others after him either thought that *prepisano* ‘copied’ was a way of saying ‘translated’ (although this action could have been expressed with *tolkuvano*, for instance) or that Pavel must have been the translator because he did not mention anyone else. Now that we know the Alexandria manuscript, it is reasonable to assume that Pavel may not have even known the translator, because the manuscript is perhaps many decades older than the pages printed in 1852.

The main goal of our research was to publish an edited, annotated and linguistically analysed version of the manuscript’s Greek and Macedonian texts, and in this we succeeded, thanks to the help of our Macedonian colleagues (Lindstedt & al., eds., 2008). But we also wanted to publish the printed pages for comparison with the original manuscript. Jordan N. Ivanov, a namesake of the first scholar to study the Konikovo Gospel, wrote that the printed pages that had been kept in the Ethnographic Museum of Sofia had been lost during the Second World War (J. N. Ivanov 1973, 128). Their most extensive publication was Stoilov’s (1917), but during my visit to the National Library of Bulgaria in 2005, I was not able to see the periodical with Stoilov’s article because it was ‘under restoration’. When I visited the next time in 2007, I again asked and again received the same answer. I remarked that I had been patient enough to wait for two years, and after a while I was at last given the publication to read. It was still badly in need of restoration and could not be photocopied, but I succeeded in copying Stoilov’s edition of the printed pages by hand – and became quite convinced that Stoilov was not a philologist and that his edition contained numerous obvious errors. But his seemed to be the best version that could be found.

Some time later, in Helsinki, I was searching Google Scholar for the word ‘Konikovo’ and came across an article by Danova (2005, 120) who in passing mentioned that in the Czech National Museum, in the book collection of Pavel Šafařík, there were four printed pages of the Konikovo Gospel. I now knew that these were all the pages that had ever existed. I wrote an e-mail message to Prague and promptly received digital photos of the four pages on a compact disc. On the basis of the photos, Max Wahlström and I prepared a philological edition of the printed pages. A handwritten text on the first page showed that the copy had originally been bought or received by the Macedonian scholar Konstantin Dimitrievič Petkovič (1826–1897) in Istanbul on 29 January 1853. Petkovič’s life and publications had already been studied by none other than Ljudmil Spasov, our main Macedonian connection, so it seemed that a god of philologists had prepared many happy coincidences for us – if we ignore the fact that I had spent two days in the Sofia library in order to copy Stoilov’s text, which now suddenly was almost

completely useless, owing to the photos we had by courtesy of the Museum Regni Bohemiae.

In January 2007 I visited the Library of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria. There were many interesting details in Manuscript 268 that could not be seen in the photos, but unfortunately nothing revealed the identity of the translator. With some difficulty I found traces of a watermark in the paper, but its precise shape was difficult to discern. Mika Hakkarainen skilfully drew a sketch of it, combining its barely visible parts on two distinct folia. Later I sat long hours poring over watermark albums in the National Library in Helsinki and the Carolina Rediviva of the University of Uppsala, but could not find the watermark of our manuscript. It remains unidentified to this day, although we have consulted several specialists of South Slavonic manuscripts.

As the manuscript does not contain a date and its watermark has not been identified, its dating must be based on indirect evidence. It must be later than 1710, when the vernacular Greek Gospel text whose copy it contains was first published, and earlier than 1852, when Pavel Božigropski had the beginning of its Macedonian text printed. Part of the less certain evidence points to the end of the 18th century, another part to the time after 1810. A scholar is always tempted to say that a manuscript may be a bit older than he or she can really prove, and the general public also thinks that the main virtue of any manuscript is its age. We have written that the Konikovo Gospel *may* be an older document of the Modern Macedonian language than the famous *Lexicon Tetraglosson* by Daniil of Moschopolis (1802), but the Macedonian newspapers like to write that it *is* older.³ Fortunately, we scholars are kept in check by the fact that sooner or later someone may identify the watermark that we have published on the Internet.

The Macedonian name and identity issue

Our research into the Konikovo Gospel could not avoid politically charged issues. This is because neighbouring Bulgaria and Greece still reject Macedonian ethnic and linguistic identity. For the Bulgarians, Macedonian is only a dialect of Bulgarian, falsely declared a language in Tito's Yugoslavia, and all attempts to make a distinction between 'Bulgarian' and 'Macedonian' texts of the 18th or 19th century amount to historical fraud.

The Greeks are less concerned about the possible distinction between Bulgarian and Macedonian, but they insist that the very name 'Macedonian'

³ This comparison is further complicated by the fact that according to several sources, Daniil's *Lexicon* was first published in the second half of the 18th century. As convincingly shown by Ničev (1977, 29–38), there is no evidence of such an earlier edition; it may be a myth somewhat similar to the myth of an entire Gospel printed in Thessaloniki in 1852.

cannot be applied to a Slavonic language and people, because the name has been part of Greek history since the time of Alexander the Great. When the Republic of Macedonia declared its independence in 1991, Greece renamed the Airport of Thessaloniki the Airport of Macedonia⁴ and began adding the adjective ‘Macedonian’ to all kinds of products coming from the region around the city. This part of Greece *is*, of course, part of larger Macedonia, understood as a geographical concept, and comprising besides the Republic of Macedonia and part of Northern Greece also the Pirin region of Bulgaria and a corner of Albania, but the Greeks say this is precisely what they are afraid of: if an independent state called ‘Macedonia’ exists, then it may, the Greeks fear, sooner or later want to occupy all the areas in geographical Macedonia. Needless to say, this could hardly be a real danger for NATO member Greece.

Most Slavists outside Bulgaria consider Macedonian to be a language distinct from Bulgarian, although they do not necessarily see an absolute distinction as deep in history as do most Macedonian linguists. At an international congress in Tirana in 2004, I was asked in what sense the Konikovo Gospel is Macedonian. I answered that it is written in a dialect that we would now classify as Macedonian. Of course, we know that in the 19th century many Macedonians, including Pavel Božigropski, called their language Bulgarian. But many Macedonians did not have an ethnic name for their language at all, and this was true, above all, in the 18th century (cf. Friedman 2008). If we keep in mind the historical relativity of such ethnic and linguistic identities, then there is certainly nothing wrong in calling the Konikovo Gospel ‘Macedonian’ or in publishing it in a joint project with Macedonian, rather than Bulgarian, scholars.

There was an ethical pitfall here. The Konikovo Gospel is the oldest-something or a unique-something only if it is defined as Macedonian. In the history of the Bulgarian language the Gospel would not occupy such a central position, except perhaps from the dialectological point of view. Did I identify the manuscript as Macedonian so as to make bigger news? ‘The oldest Gospel in Modern Macedonian’ sounds much better than ‘a curious Bulgarian Gospel in a southwestern dialect’. My answer is that I had regarded the dialects in question as Macedonian long before I knew anything of Manuscript 268. I am certain that if, say, German Slavists had found the text and published it as ‘Macedonian’, I would not have criticised their choice of words. And it is only natural that the significance of the oldest-something is always defined in terms of later history: we would not be very

⁴ In 2006, the Airport of Skopje, the capital of the Republic of Macedonia, was renamed the Skopje ‘Alexander the Great’ Airport. Obviously the Greeks and Macedonians should simply switch the airport names!

interested in Tim Berner-Lee's first plans for the World Wide Web at CERN in 1980 had the Web not acquired its present enormous significance.

By defining the Konikovo Gospel as Macedonian, I thus did not change my earlier position, but I did perhaps jeopardise my relationships to some of my Bulgarian colleagues, whom I had known long before Manuscript 268 was found. I am mainly a scholar of Bulgarian and possess an honorary diploma from the Bulgarian Ministry of Culture, conferred in 1999 for 'developing and popularising Bulgarian culture'. The Bulgarians still consider Macedonian history to be part of Bulgarian history – a view that the Macedonians, of course, vehemently reject. In Skopje, the university is named after St. Cyril and Methodius, and the national library after St. Kliment of Ohrid; in Sofia, it is the other way round. My helpful colleagues in the St. Kliment of Ohrid University in Sofia consider Manuscript 268 part of the history of the Bulgarian language; otherwise they would perhaps be compelled to ask why their university has the name of a famous historical person of another nation, since Ohrid is in Macedonia.

In fact, I twice delivered a guest lecture on the Konikovo Gospel at the University of Sofia, and I am grateful to my Bulgarian colleagues for their help in finding historical sources for my research. The Bulgarian/Macedonian issue was never directly touched upon; it was rather consciously avoided. I could discuss the dialect base of the manuscript without naming the language, although I did not conceal the fact that we were cooperating with the University of Skopje. From the vantage point of most Bulgarian linguists, the colleagues in Skopje speak a dialect of Bulgarian, which is why the Bulgarians could perhaps not directly question our choice.

The problematic relationship between the Republic of Macedonia and Greece was indirectly involved in the research, too. The Patriarchate of Alexandria is still oriented to the Greek world, although the great majority of African Orthodox believers do not speak Greek at all; French and English are the main vehicular languages in this huge diocese. It was clear that most Greek scholars would not accept calling the language in the right column of Manuscript 268 'Macedonian'. I was thinking of this in January 2007 when His Beatitude Theodoros II, Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa, granted an audience to Mika Hakkarainen and me, and we asked the Patriarch's permission to publish the manuscript in the series of the Finnish Society of Sciences and Letters. Was it right to ask for the permission without saying that the manuscript would be published as a bilingual Greek and Macedonian manuscript, not Greek and Bulgarian as the old catalogue of the library classified it? On the one hand, I concealed a fact that I knew could influence the Patriarch's decision. Yet on the other hand, his collaboration with Finnish scholars in studying and conserving the manuscripts of the Patriarchate's library would not have been on a sound basis if he had claimed the right to decide what the results of scholarly study were allowed

to be, and he has never done so. From the point of view of the autonomy of scholarship I could not ask for anything other than an unconditional publication permit, and that is what we acquired.

Actually, the most principled behaviour was manifested by Prof. Frösén and other Finnish Classical scholars working in the Patriarchal library. They knew that many Greek scholars were jealous of the Finns' close cooperation with the Patriarchate in studying the valuable mediaeval manuscripts in Alexandria, and they knew that the publication of a Slavonic text as a 'Macedonian' document could easily be used as an argument for ousting them from the Patriarchal library. Manuscript 268 was much newer than those the Classical scholars were primarily interested in, and its Greek column is not as important for the study of the history of the Greek language as the Slavonic column is for the history and dialectology of Macedonian. The Classical scholars from Helsinki thus risked a great deal for an issue that was in no way crucial to their own scholarship. I shall always remember this as a fine example of scholarly solidarity across disciplines.

The Macedonians as stakeholders

One ethical principle in linguistics should be that a language, including its historical tradition, primarily belongs to its speakers, especially the native speakers. This was the main reason for calling the language of the Konikovo Gospel Macedonian. It was also a reason for publishing the study and edition of the manuscript in a joint project with Macedonian scholars. It could even have been a reason for publishing the work *in* Macedonia because the project was of national interest for the Macedonians, and the price of the book, if published in Skopje, would also have been more affordable for the Macedonians themselves. However, it was clear that it would be politically much more difficult to obtain a publication permit for Skopje than for Helsinki, and that is why Helsinki was chosen without much discussion. This choice, of course, could also have been motivated by the privilege of the finder. Fortunately, the Finnish Society of Sciences and Letters priced the book so favourably that even Macedonian libraries can afford it.

Because the Macedonian text of the Konikovo Gospel represents the Lower Vardar dialects, spoken in what is now Northern Greece, it can be argued that the Macedonian minority in Greece has been a central stakeholder in this project. In the autumn of 2006, when there was a workshop of Finnish and Macedonian scholars on the Konikovo Gospel in Ohrid, four of the participants visited the Greek towns and villages across the border in order to meet the Macedonians living there and to hear the present-day dialects. Because Greece officially denies the very existence of a Macedonian minority in the country and there has been oppression of this minority in the not very distant past, sensitivity was needed during the trip. We were helped

by Macedonians from Florina (Mac. Lerin) and Edessa (Mac. Voden) who knew the linguistic situation in the villages.

It goes without saying that we also wanted to visit the village of Konikovo, although we now knew that its relationship to our manuscript was rather indirect and that in the village itself, now called Dytiko, there were no Slavonic speakers left. We did not stop there for a long time. We were warned that when the locals see a car with a Macedonian number plate, they think that the Macedonians have come to plan how to get back their houses and fields: the Greeks in these villages are mostly descendants of Greek refugees from Asia Minor, and the descendants of the original Slavonic population now live as refugees in Macedonia, Bulgaria and other countries. At that time reclaiming property sounded a bit far-fetched – but in 2008 the government of Macedonia actually raised the property issue in a public letter to the Greek government, which is bound to cause further deterioration of the relations between the two countries and is, in my opinion, unwise diplomacy motivated by short-term profits in Macedonian domestic politics.

After the short visit to Konikovo/Dytiko, we and our friends from Voden/Edessa found ourselves sitting around a table outside a café in another small village. We knew that the old men inside the poorly lit café were probably speaking Macedonian among themselves, but we did not know any of them, and by going inside and speaking Macedonian to them directly, we would certainly have scared them silent. Two ladies from our company who spoke Greek, one from Edessa and the other from Helsinki, went into the café first and explained our mission in that language. The discussion inside, at times rather loud, continued for some time. Then the ladies came out and said: ‘Now Jouko can come’. Those who were still left waiting outside said that when I entered the café, some clients immediately left, and the owner remained standing at the door.

Inside the café I introduced myself to the old men sitting there, speaking Macedonian to them and explaining why I was there. Nobody replied to anything I said; rather, there was a long silence. ‘This does not seem to work,’ I said in Finnish to my colleague. Then, suddenly, a man sitting alone in the corner said in Macedonian: ‘So you want to hear how we speak here?’ I sat down beside him and we started to talk. I dared not take any notes, but I tried to remember all the interesting words and forms he used. Soon the situation grew more relaxed: the remaining members of our company were able to join us, and the local Macedonians started to speak with them. They told us that earlier they had suffered a great deal for speaking an oppressed language.

The Macedonians living in towns did not seem to be so afraid of speaking their language publicly. They were very interested in the photos of the Konikovo Gospel we showed them. A lady from Edessa who was born in one of the villages in the region said: ‘It sounds very much as my mother

used to speak. But, of course, if a priest wrote it, he wrote it in such a fashion that they could understand it even in the neighbouring villages. Perhaps it was written in Nisja, because a monastery used to be there.’ As regards the ancient monastery that had disappeared in *Nisjiskoto blato*, the Nisja Marsh, the lady was echoing an old belief first recorded at the end of the 19th century (Lážev 1890). But her layman’s understanding of what a priest would have done was very sound.

Actually, as early as 1999 I met an old gardener in Thessaloniki who spoke Macedonian. He did not know the Macedonian standard language at all; for most modern societal concepts, such as buses or pensions, he knew only the Greek words. He was certainly not infected by any artificial nationalistic propaganda from Tito’s Yugoslavia, as many Bulgarians would like to contend. But he said that he was speaking Macedonian, not Bulgarian, and remarked that ‘the Bulgarians speak more thickly’. And he came from the town of Yannitsa, which the Slavonic Macedonians call Pazar or Enidže Vardar and which is the centre for the dialect in which the Konikovo Gospel was mainly written (Karanfilovski 2008; Karanfilovski & al. 2008). So for me the question of what to call the Slavonic dialect of Manuscript 268 had been solved well before the manuscript was found.

And perhaps I owe the most to the anonymous scribe and translator of the manuscript. I do not know who he was or what he called his language,⁵ but sitting before his beautiful creation in the chilly library of Alexandria, I began to appreciate his work and to wish that our study and publication of the manuscript would prove to be as good as he deserved, and free of those later national prejudices and scholarly rivalries of which he could not have known anything.

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⁵ As Friedman (2008, 387) notes, he ‘may have called it *našinski* [‘our language’ – JL] or some variant thereof’. Calling a language simply ‘ours’ is common among speakers of different minority languages; for a modern parallel in Greek Macedonia, see Adamou (2006). A more distant parallel is *meänkieli*, lit. ‘our language’, a language variety close to Finnish, spoken in Northern Sweden and now having the official status of a minority language.

- Daniil 1802 = Δανιήλ τοῦ ἐκ Μοσχολέως: *Εἰσαγωγικὴ διδασκαλία περιέχουσα λεξικὸν τετραγλωσσον...*
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