



ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ

Εθνικόν και Καποδιστριακόν  
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ΦΙΛΟΣΟΦΙΚΗ ΣΧΟΛΗ

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Review on the PhD thesis of Konstantinos BALAMOSEV

The language of early Byzantine epistolography in the light of unpublished letters from the Vienna papyrus collection (IV–VII cent. A.D.).

The Doctoral Thesis of Konstantinos Balamosev is an excellent and meticulous piece of papyrological work, an edition of the twenty-five unpublished papyrus texts (mostly letters and petitions) from the collection of the National Library of Austria. It is indeed a welcome addition to scholarship on late antique Epistolography and will undoubtedly benefit scholars from various fields, such as Papyrology, Philology, Linguistics, and History. The broad chronological span (4th-7th century A.D.) allows us to witness the diversity of letters concerning their structure, stylistics, language and the education of their writer. The selected documents are representative of various periods and styles. Although Balamosev places special emphasis on the linguistic aspects of his texts, he nevertheless provides the reader with comments

and information on many other facets of the texts, whether these relate to financial issues or prosopography, being sometimes decisive for the text provenance and date.

The papyri chosen by the editor admittedly constitute a challenge to any researcher. Most of them are fragmentary and full of lacunas. The ink is often faded, and, as a result, entire sentences have been lost. Balamosev confronted these obstacles skillfully and boldly, by offering high-quality transcriptions with reliable readings, a task not so obvious when one deals with papyrological documents written in cursive scripts

The doctoral dissertation of K. Balamosev aims at presenting the language and stylistics of early-Byzantine epistolography, as well as the ideas and emotions that the texts convey, seen through the prism of hitherto unpublished material from the collection of the Austrian National Library in Vienna. The dissertation's starting point is the analysis of private letters written on papyrus, dated from the 4th up to the 7th century of our era. It processes "unrefined" material, thanks to which one may obtain a direct insight into stylistic variation, language evolution, the social networks that develop in the Byzantine province of Egypt, the everyday people and their emotions.

The thesis consists of the following parts: A. Introductory part, divided into three sections: 1) Review of the literature discussing the history of Ancient Greek epistolography, and the hitherto published monographs, key articles and researches; 2) Detailed description of the working methodology; 3) Linguistic aspects and stylistics. The latter section discusses the most interesting discoveries with regard to language.

B. The New Texts, containing: the edition of the twenty-five new papyrus texts completed according to the papyrological standards; a painstaking transcription; an *apparatus criticus*; a regularized text, offering an interpretation of a much misspelled or ambiguous text; a translation; a line-by-line commentary (analysis of form and content) involving: grammar, phonetics, syntax, prosopographic data, socio-historical data, paleographical comparisons to other texts.

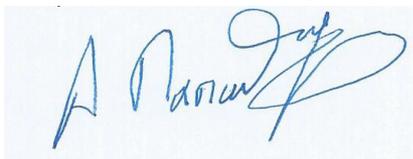
C. Conclusions: a summary of the research results.

Next, in the form of appendices, there appear complete indices of dates, names, professions and official titles, terms related to religion and the Church, as well as a very useful general index of Greek words. One of the appendices, containing photo illustrations, is dedicated to the abbreviations appearing in the texts, while another one contains a list of *nomina sacra*.

The final part is reserved for high-quality color images of the papyri which offer the reader the possibility to check the readings of the editor.

The new material furnishes several new words, as well as much additional information that helps enrich our knowledge of prominent individuals such as Flavius Petterios (no. 4). It attests words that can be considered as standard in Modern Greek (ἔρθωμεν, ἀμμή, ἐσέναν), phenomena -perhaps peculiar to Egypt- such as the conjuring of the well-being of the addressee. Text no. 13 is a significant addition to attestations of the first years of the Arab rule in Egypt, and a preliminary examination suggests that it belongs to the archive of Senouthios *anystes*. From a purely linguistic point of view, the almost complete text no. 1 exhibits many difficulties, but K. Balamosev has managed to tame the oddities and the interpretational hazards by offering a solid text, which he enhances with his commentary.

There is no doubt that K. Balamosev has the experience necessary to manage the scale and complexity of such an endeavor, and the results of his work meet the highest requirements of a comprehensive papyrological analysis. His thesis is a work which clearly shows expertise in the field of papyrology. The new information his study has supplied us with is significant for our knowledge of the Late Antique Epistolography and, in a broader framework, for our knowledge of Byzantine and Early Arabic Egypt. It is, therefore, my pleasure to recommend Konstantinos Balamosev's doctoral thesis for approval by the committee.



(Prof. Amphilochos Papathomas)