

Petar Hr. Ilievski  
Macedonian Academy of Sciences and  
Arts

**PROFESSOR MIHAIL D. PETRUŠEVSKI,  
A DISTINGUISHED CLASSICAL SCHOLAR,  
AN EMINENT ORGANIZER OF THE UNIVERSITY  
EDUCATIONAL PROCESS  
AND A BRILLIANT POPULARISER  
OF THE CLASSICAL GREEK AND ROMAN CULTURE**

As it was already mentioned Professor Petruševski acted as a distinguished classical scholar, an eminent organizer of the University teaching departments and a brilliant populariser of the Greek and Roman culture.

**I**

The Hermeneutic and comparative linguistic studies were the most favourite topics of his scientific investigations. Of his large number of studies in this field especially valuable are those on the text of Aristotle's treatise on *Poetics*. Professor Petruševski made about 50 emendations to the text of this precious Aristotle's work. The most important of all concerns the definition of tragedy, chapter VI, introducing the Aristotelian technical term *pragmaton systasin* instead of the problematic interpolation *pathematon* (or *mathematon*) *katharsin*. In the Commentary where Aristotle analyses every word of the definition, most attention is paid to the form of the term *pragmaton systasin* as the most important thing in order tragedy to be well done. Professor Petruševski simply took this term from the commentary and put it into the damaged place at the end of the definition.

With this ingenious discovery he solved the problem which had sown dissension among the scholars through several centuries and refuted numerous theories on the so called “tragic catharsis”.

In his studies on historical and comparative linguistics he left lucid interpretation of rare words of uncertain etymology in the works of Homer, Hesychius, and especially in the Mycenaean Greek.

He was one of the first classical philologists who immediately accepted Michael Ventris' *Decipherment of the Linear B*, publishing a fairly sizeable article entitled *The Big Discovery of Michael Ventris* in *Živa Antika* and drew parallels between the Mycenaean and the Classical Greek in his lectures on Greek Historical Grammar. In his lectures on Greek and Latin Historical Grammar he always used to suggest his original solution to some controversial linguistic problems to his students.

His main principle was that investigation should always precede teaching.

## II

In 1945, at the age of 30, already a distinguished sage (erudit), he was invited by the Macedonian Government to return from Belgrade (where he had begun his academic career), and to take part in organising the Macedonian University in Skopje. Within the framework of the Faculty of Philosophy program were included not only the Humanitarian scientific disciplines, but the natural sciences as well (Mathematics, Physics, Biology, Chemistry etc. – that represented the nucleus of the University).

In 1946 chosen to be Dean of the First Macedonian Faculty of Philosophy he took care of several departments, including the departments of natural sciences.

Professor Petruševski organized them guided by his main principle that *scientific investigation should precede teaching*. Along with the election of a qualified teaching staff he insisted on equipping the departments with the corresponding means for scientific investigations (such as libraries, laboratories, resources, etc.), without which a scientific work is impossible. He personally used to apply this approach to nearly every single one of his tasks.

At the same time he organized the Faculty (later University) Press for publishing the results of the scientific research by the teaching staff.

## III

Mihail D. Petruševski even as a populariser of the Classical Greek and Roman culture still bases his activity on the same principle – the scientific investigation has to precede the translation of classical texts (one of the most frequent means serving this purpose).

In the printed editions of the classical texts there are contentious issues regarding the various reading of certain words.

The manuscripts are not original autographs. They have survived numerous transcriptions, where errors are an inevitable reality. Therefore, the translator, like the editor, first has to reconstruct the author's text. This calls for scientific investigation, extracting from the whole author's opus, like in the case with Aristotle's *Poetics* I mentioned above. In the commentaries of the translations of Homer's poems *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, Grigor Prlichev's *Skenderbey*, *O Armatolos* etc. in original rhythm Petruševski gave a large number of such conjectures.

Within the frames of the domain for popularising the ancient Greek and Roman science, arts and culture of professor Petruševski the periodical *Živa Antika* cannot be avoided.

Professor Petruševski revealed most intense activity editing the classical periodical *Živa Antika*.

In the days after the Second World War some people begun to speak and write that the antiquity had already been dead. Petruševski, along with his professor Milan Budimir from Belgrade, gave the initiative for founding the Yugoslav classical periodical under the name *Živa Antika* (*Antiquitas Viva*).

Shortly after it was established, *Živa Antika*, became a symbol of Skopje and our university. This was evident after the Skopje disastrous earthquake. The aid packages sent from abroad by our colleagues and institutions were addressed to *Živa Antika*, not only to the Department of Classical Philology, but also to other institutes and faculties.

Institutions are more lasting than the human life. The periodical *Živa Antika*, founded in 1950 as a Yugoslav classical journal, continues to live. As a matter of fact it was founded as a wise answer and reaction of Professor Petruševski against one campaign beginning immediately after the end of the Second World War. According to this campaign, as we have already mentioned, the antiquity had been dead, and in this era of technology there was no place for the "bourgeois classical education". Attempts were even made to close down the Department of Classical Philology at the newly opened Faculty of Philosophy in Skopje because of a very small number of students.

However, as we have already mentioned, *Antiquité Vivante* is alive. It continues to appear as an international classical journal with a European Editorial Board. Sixty annuals have been published till now and 9 numbers of the edition *Monographies* of *Živa Antika* have also been published along with the regular series. The number 10 of this series will contain the papers presented at our Conference.