

Sailing through Practice in Elementary Greek: How to Use Pseudo-Skylax's *Periplous*

Teachers of ancient Greek are increasingly utilizing a more diverse array of texts to inspire and train students new to the language. Georgia Irby's use of Hanno's *Periplous* in *Beginning Greek* shows how this genre can benefit students and teachers alike (CAMWS 2014). Another *Periplous* but with different advantages is that of Pseudo-Skylax. This 4th century BCE text is a clockwise catalog, primarily of nautical features and sailing times, of communities all around the Mediterranean, Aegean and Black Seas. It runs more than 10,000 words, but its simple language and repetitive form make it quite accessible to very early learners of Greek. This presentation highlights two ways to focus the benefits of this text in a beginning Greek course.

First, the text uses a full range of cases and declensions but with minimal variation in verb forms. Verbs are overwhelmingly third person present active indicative and most often simply ἔσται or εἶσι, so novice learners can navigate the grammar of the sentences. The nouns, adjectives and occasional pronouns run the gamut of declensions and cases but in very simple, clear ways, with a handful of prepositions. This provides an extensive, yet authentic ancient text that works the variations in a fairly narrow range of morphology (declensional endings).

Second, the vocabulary is repetitive and small, consisting primarily of easily understood physical terms (rivers, harbors, mountains, lengths, etc). The text consists of entries for various areas in a formula of inhabitants, physical features, and distances, so after reading a page or so, students and teachers can read most of the text with ease. Most of the text, of course, consists of place names, which pose little to no vocabulary (i.e., semantic) difficulty. As such, students and teachers can focus on matching these words to their places on maps (e.g., via Google Earth; maps tailored to this text are also found in a convenient edition by Graham Shipley [ISBN 978-1904675839] along with text, translation and commentary), allowing for visual comprehension

as well as verbal. A full vocabulary for the text will be available in conjunction with the presentation.

As such, rather than rote translation, the text is amenable to comprehension questions. Teachers can then have students read sections independently or use them as sight passages. Comprehension exercises on an entry can include, just for a few examples, asking which cities have harbors, what people live in a given city mentioned, how long it takes to travel from one location to another, and matching locations to a map. Exercises like these and the work as a whole also contribute to readers' cultural literacy, as they learn an ancient view of the cultural and physical landscapes where Greek was spoken.