

Three ancient Church Slavonic Homilies (Tomáš Mikulka)

Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to offer an in-depth analysis of three ancient Old Church Slavonic (further only OCS) homilies which have not been appropriately recognised yet. These are three anonymous homilies on the Nativity of the Lord (25th December), on the Baptism of the Lord (6th January) and on the Annunciation (25th March). The first two aforementioned homilies were studied by A. N. Popov in 1880, whereas the homily on the Annunciation is in this study presented to the public for the very first time. The thesis objective is to characterize these texts by their linguistic features, then to offer their approximate dating and geographic localisation, as well as to address the question of their genuineness, mutual affinity and the relation to other OCS texts, in particular to the oldest OCS homilies. Each homily is analysed separately using the identical method so that the results can be finally compared. The conclusion is that these three homilies might have been written by the same author who cannot be simply identified with any already-known person.

Before the linguistic analysis was carried out, all surviving manuscripts of each homily had been gathered. On the basis of this material, critical editions including indexes of biblical and patristic quotations were produced. It is notable that all homilies are preserved in south Slavic manuscripts, whereas the Slavic east preserved only the homily on the Baptism of the Lord.

The focal point of the thesis is the linguistic (lexical and syntactic) analysis of each homily. The lexicon is exceptionally archaic involving primary loan-words from Greek (e.g. *υποστας* “hypostasis, the person of the Holy Trinity“, *милоть* “a woolen coat worn by prophets“) and in some places also archaisms typical of OCS texts of western origin (e.g. *вожи рѣбъ* “servant of God, priest“). Apparently, certain archaisms are replaced with innovative forms (e.g. *чъврѣстѣи камъи* “a hard stone“ replaces the elder grecism from Psalter). On syntactic level, ancient prepositionless phrases with locative, wide usage of infinitives and participles are noticeable. On the other side, the decline of supin constructions can be considered as a feature of innovative tendency. It can be observed that a frequent usage of *да* + conditional in final-consecutive clauses is characteristic of the author’s style compared to the usual form which is *да* + indicative. The discovery of Greek parallels helped to establish some typical procedures of the author’s translation technique. It was observed that the author often translated Greek participles using an OCS relative clause, even in case of the indirect

grammatical case of the Greek participle. This strategy is quite rare and some traces of it can be observed only in the OCS Gospel translation. There is some evidence that the language of the studied homilies was exposed to the influence of Greek, especially in the field of semantics (e.g. *пакъзвѣтънѣ* “eternity, renewed world“ and its derivatives) and syntax (e.g. relative clause with coordinative-adjunctive function) of the adopted lexis.

Another focus of the analysis was to elucidate the formation of each homily from the textological point of view. The analysis was aimed at biblical and patristic quotations. It is probable that an ancient OCS translation of the Bible was known to the author although the text of Gospel already had some features of slight revision and lexical innovation. This biblical OCS text was subsequently revised by the author with regard to the Greek parallels. Moreover, the homilies are compiled from numerous extra-biblical quotations drawn from various patristic authors like Gregory of Nazianzus, Dionysius the Areopagite, Severian of Gabala etc., and from liturgical tradition. In the case of the *Protoevangelium of James* and the *Great Blessing of Water on Epiphany*, the author of the homilies might have known the already-existing OCS translation.

Even though the analysed homilies show quite specific language features, out of all known OCS literary pieces, these homilies bear the most resemblance to the language properties of the Glagolita Clozianus, particularly the homily on Palm Sunday *Ἐκ θαυμάτων* and Athanasius' Good Friday sermon. Among the texts composed originally in OCS, there are striking parallels between the homilies and OCS Lives detectable, particularly the first chapter of the Life of Methodius.

When the analyses were being carried out, other five sermons containing the same or very similar linguistic characteristics were discovered. They could be attributed to the same author. This assumption requires further analyses which are, unfortunately, beyond the scope of this thesis.

The results of the linguistic analysis corroborated by several extralinguistic hints (e.g. refusal of the Filioque doctrine or loyalty to Rome) suggest locating these homilies, whose inner properties are byzantine, on the western periphery of the Slavic area where there was a vivid interaction with Frankish clergy. Some quotations of the aforementioned homilies were discovered in the sermons of Clement of Ochrid. It can be concluded that they were composed at the turn of the 9th and 10th centuries, surely before his death in 916. Based on the reconstruction of the damaged dating in the homily on Annunciation, it is possible to determine a proper dating that the homilies were composed around the year 6400 Anno Mundi which

corresponds to the year 892 CE. The exact identity of their author, perhaps a hieromonk with good byzantine education, remains still unanswered.

Keywords

Textology, Church Fathers, Church Slavonic Homiletics, Church Slavonic Translation from Greek