

PREFACE

This description of the structure of Old Church Slavonic is intended to present fully the important data about the language, without citing all the minutiae of attested variant spellings. The facts have been treated from the point of view of structural linguistics, but pedagogical clarity has taken precedence over the conciseness required for elegant formal description; for most students lack the thorough knowledge of linguistic theory that would enable them to profit from a rigorously economic presentation. Cross-references are used freely, but no effort has been made to avoid the repetition of points which are of particular importance. Selected bibliographical information, both specific and general, will guide the reader who wishes to pursue further any particular point.

Old Church Slavonic was used over a period of some two hundred years and in various geographical parts of the Slavic world precisely at the time when the Slavic languages were undergoing rapid, fundamental, divergent changes. Some of these changes are doubtless reflected in the variant spellings in the few texts which have survived from this period, so that the variants are not only the stylistic and idiosyncratic differences that are found in the literary language of any single epoch, but also of historical and regional significance. It has thus been necessary to include occasional references to historical and comparative linguistics in this book, although in principle these problems do not fall within the scope of a strictly descriptive, synchronic grammar. Historical data have also been utilized in certain instances in order to clarify ambiguous or skimpy information from the manuscripts.

It is necessary to normalize forms to present the grammatical structure as a consistent whole, and the normalization inevitably obscures the differences in the language of the various manuscripts. A clear picture of the different combinations of linguistic elements making up each of the texts is not to be achieved by lists of spelling variants or tables of percentages, but it is worth while to point out some of the striking variations. First-hand acquaintance with the texts and constant comparison of variant readings is the only way to arrive at an understanding both of the underlying unity of the texts as a whole and of the major and

minor differences between them. An OCS reader, which will serve at least as an introduction to these problems, is in preparation and will appear as a sequel to this grammar.

Almost no mention is made here of another type of comparison – the relationship of the OCS translated texts to the Greek originals. And yet it is in the Greek and in the translation technique that the explanations of hundreds of tiny problems (especially of syntax) are to be found, and certain major structural problems need to be posed in terms of the influence of Greek on OCS. However, so few students have enough Greek to profit by such comparisons that it did not seem worth the considerable space that would be required. Excellent work in this field has been published, principally by scholars of older generations who had thorough classical training, but some of them tended to forget that even a poor translator is governed primarily by the structure of the language into which he is translating.

The last chapter, “Notes on Syntax”, is offered on the premise that something is better than nothing and with the hope that its very incompleteness will call attention to the need for detailed and up-to-date study of nearly every syntactical question. The rest of the book has been used by two groups of students in the classroom and has therefore been twice revised in the light of practical experience. Moreover it could be based on the results of investigations on phonology and morphology published by several generations of scholars. In the original plan for publication, I had intended to parrot the pious and traditional apology, “The syntax will appear later.” However, the need for at least a few guide-posts seemed, on the basis of classroom experience, to be so pressing that these notes were added at the last moment. In the sections on phonology and morphology I have presented all the details which I believe essential, regardless of the readers’ preparation, and I have organized the material in accordance with what appear to me to be the internal rules of the language. But the notes on the use of the forms are intended chiefly to deal with the difficulties which I have observed to be experienced by students coming to OCS fortified with a fair knowledge of modern Russian structure. Because of the incompleteness of the syntactical notes, no attempt has been made to organize this fragmentary material according to modern structural principles. Astonishingly little aid could be gained from published studies of OCS syntactical problems, for they proved to be largely impressionistic and often quite inferior in quality.

In Chapter Five, cyrillic is used only in citing the cyrillic manuscripts, while glagolitic, in accordance with Prague-Vienna tradition, is trans-

literated into roman. This principle was unfortunately not followed in §10.8, and the oversight was not noticed until the last minute. Further, in citing the Gospels in the last chapter, I have normalized the spelling unless quoting the specific manuscript: the aim is to illustrate the typical use of certain forms, not the variant orthographical minutiae. The King James translation is used except where it might obscure the precise significance of the point under discussion.

My thanks are due to many who have helped directly and indirectly in the production of this book. Without the stimulating teachings and encouragement of Roman Jakobson I should very likely have been content merely with translating one of the extant European textbooks, rather than attempting my own analyses. Detailed criticism from Morris Halle and Pavle Ivić has enabled me to improve many sections. I should like here to record my thanks to the Committee for the Promotion of Advanced Slavic Cultural Studies and its chairman, R. Gordon Wasson, for their financial support in establishing a card catalogue of OCS lexical references, which substantially speeded up the labor of classifying my own materials and of checking on work published by others. And finally, I must express my gratitude to the many students whose explicit suggestions, major and minor, have been valuable, and also to the other students whose reactions have implicitly pointed out errors and gaps.

I am dedicating this book to the memory of two of my teachers, Professor S. H. Cross of Harvard, who introduced me to the study of Slavic, and to Professor G. R. Noyes of the University of California, who gave me my first lessons in Old Church Slavonic.

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PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

The new printing of this book has given me a chance to correct misprints, to reformulate certain statements, to add a few details – in short, to make nearly all of the changes I consider necessary and desirable for a textbook of this scope. I should like to thank Prof. James Ferrell for a detailed list of suggestions, and Prof. G. Y. Shevelov and Dr. Fr. Mareš for helpful remarks. Most of all I have profited from the comments of the four groups of Harvard students who had to work with the first edition. My larger debt to Trubetzkoy, which I inadvertently failed to mention in my earlier preface, is

recorded in detail, along with my criticisms of his work, in a review of his OCS *Grammatik* (in *Language* 31.117–124).

I should like to take this opportunity briefly to set forth my general point of view, my approach to the material, and my aims, which some reviewers misunderstood in a curious variety of ways.

Every language is a coherent structure. Linguistic structures vary in complexity and in the number and degree of anomalies they admit. As it has been observed that all languages change in the course of time, so it has been noted that there are always dynamic and static components in a given language at a given moment in time; the elements of history are always present. But the language itself can be described and learned without the slightest knowledge of its history. The task I set myself in this book was to describe OCS as though we knew nothing about what came before it or after it, although of course I did use smuggled-in information to clarify certain points.

Let me outline some of my major assumptions. OCS was a literary elaboration of a spoken Macedono-Bulgarian dialect of Proto-Slavic. Although differing in numerous details, particularly in lexicon, from Moravian and other 9th-century dialects, it was readily comprehensible to all Slavs. The Cyrillo-Methodian teachings that have come down to us strongly emphasize the need to understand Scriptures, and it is wrong to think of OCS as a semi-intelligible liturgical language like modern CS. The Gospel stories and the simple prayers were couched in the vernacular, and more complex ideas, although expressed by means of neologisms and complicated syntactical constructions, were accessible to people with sufficient intelligence to grasp new concepts. For us now to reach this language it is necessary to strip away a veneer of scribal errors and emendations. Every literary language has been abused by poor writers, and the bad OCS translations are just another set of examples of bad writing. They testify to the translators' lack of ingenuity in handling their native tongue and their naive reverence for the letter of the original Greek. But while this makes our task of analysis more complex, it does not force us to view OCS as such a hopelessly artificial hodge-podge that we must abandon our original assumption.

Departures from tradition in classifying the data in no way change the facts themselves. The OCS verb, for example, is complicated, and classification will not make it less so. *xvaliti*, *velěti*, and *želěti* do belong to different paradigms, whether one labels them IV A, IV B, and III 2 with Leskien, or IV, III 1, and III 2 with Diels. I believe that it is most efficient simply to encourage the student to learn the form from which the rest of the paradigm can be generated according to rules (*xvali-ti*, *velě-ti*, but *želěj-qtъ*), and to leave him to study the table on p. 73 for similarities and differences between paradigms.

A comparison of OCS with other languages lies completely beyond the scope of my book, despite the obvious fact that comparison and history are surely the major reasons for studying this dead language. It is my firm belief that a study of the history of any linguistic system can be meaningful only after careful descriptions of two or more different stages. Only then can it become clear what has changed, for only then is it possible to see how each individual element has evolved in all its relationships to other units in the changing system. My aim is to provide one, and only one, term of comparison. It is a valuable term, for it is – in my opinion, I repeat – a dialect form of Proto-Slavic; most OCS words serve very nicely as formulas for PSI words, and the majority of those which do not can easily be converted to PSI formulas on the basis of a small number of regular correspondences. I am not holding that PSI was entirely homogeneous – merely that the dialect differences were relatively few and, in the 9th century, not structurally of great importance. Their study belongs, in my opinion, in a different book, as it belongs in a different university course.

PREFACE TO THE SIXTH EDITION

Corrections and revisions for this edition have been minimal in the first 125 pages, for an effort was made to retain approximately the same pagination. Numerous details have been changed in the light of recent scholarship, and references have been up-dated. The comments of a dozen groups of students who used the second through fifth editions (which were identical) have led me to re-formulate a number of statements, particularly the rules for aorist and imperative, and to clarify a number of points that caused difficulty. Examples have been added, particularly in the syntax, where whole paragraphs are new. The new subject index is based on work done at the University of Washington in 1965 by Jack E. Prestrud and Nina Filonov Gove. I am grateful to them and to the many others who have given me specific comments which helped me make revisions. Donald Cooper in particular offered detailed lists.

This book was written in Cambridge in the early 1950's, in an atmosphere of intense linguistic activity dominated by Roman Jakobson and his particular blend of European, especially Prague, views with the American descriptivist approach. In revising this book, I have tried to keep that point of view intact. The data of course are unchanging, but the modes of classification and the approaches to explanation of the phenomena have changed and will continue to change. This book contains, I believe, the major data that any grammar must endeavor to account for, and that every student of Slavic linguistics or medieval literature must master.

However, the view of the nature of language and the models for linguistics have changed radically since 1955, and no one working in linguistics in Cambridge could fail to be affected by the challenges to old assumptions and the impressive success of new models. It is not yet time, I believe, to write a full generative grammar of OCS, but I have appended a sketch of major points. The influence of Morris Halle and Theodore Lightner will be readily apparent here, and my thinking has also been guided by recent Harvard dissertations on contemporary Slavic languages (Ernest Scatton on Bulgarian, Richard Steele on Polish, and Mark Elson on Macedonian). I hope at an early date to publish a fuller and deeper account, with historical and comparative commentary.

The re-setting of the whole book has doubtless resulted in some new typographical errors, and some substantive mistakes may very well remain. I should be grateful to have them pointed out, and to receive constructive comments on any portion of this work.

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