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**TSVETOMIRA DANOVA, *John of Damascus' Marian Homilies in Mediaeval South Slavonic Literatures*, ed. LORA TASEVA, Peter Lang, Berlin 2020
[= *Studies on Language and Culture in Central and Eastern Europe*, 36], pp. 542**

Tsvetomira Danova's monograph is important and interesting reading for several reasons. The publication originated as a revised and expanded variant of her doctoral dissertation, defended in 2014 at the Cyrillo-Methodian Research Centre at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences in Sofia. Since then, Danova has published several studies on Byzantine-Slavonic textology and Slavonic translations of literature, mainly Byzantine homiletics (by John of Damascus and Andrew of Crete)¹; their themes and nature are related to the present study. In preparing both the dissertation and the monograph, the author benefited from the support of outstanding scholars of Slavonic literary and cultural heritage², to whom we owe

a number of valuable works on the South Slavonic literary tradition, including a catalog of copies of Slavonic translations of Byzantine hagiographic works³ or editions of literary relics fundamental for this circle⁴. Inevitably, the effects of such cooperation influenced the final shape of the text.

Tsvetomira Danova's object of study is a selection from the rich homiletic legacy of John of Damascus. The work is devoted to the reception of four Slavonic translations of three works: two Homilies on the Dormition of the Mother of God and one assigned to the Nativity of the Mother of God; the source material (copies of the texts) comes from nearly forty South Slavonic manuscript codices on hagiographic and homiletic themes. In fact, the very choice of subject matter – Marian homiletics – is linked to the canon of works devoted to images of the Mother of God, such as the study of Byzantine hymnography characteristic for the Church's greatest female cult⁵. *John*

¹ Cf. e.g.: Ц. ДАНОВА, *Южнославянските преводи на словата за Богородица от Йоан Дамаскин по преписи от ръкописните сбирки в Румъния (текстологични наблюдения)*, Pbg 39.2, 2015, p. 3–20; ЕАДЕМ, *Византийският източник на една анонимна старобългарска хомилия*, Pbg 39.4, 2015, p. 17–26; ЕАДЕМ, *Словото за Изсъхналата смоковница и притчата за лозето от Йоан Дамаскин в средновековната славянска книжнина (предварителни наблюдения)*, PSS 14, 2018, p. 65–78; ЕАДЕМ, *Слово на день Воздвижения Креста Андрея Критского в Милешевском панегирике*, SeS 20, 2020, p. 119–136; М. СПАСОВА, Ц. ДАНОВА, *Езикови особености на превода на Исихиевите тълкувания по преписа им в Иван-Александровия Песнивец: към въпроса за времето и мястото на възникване на превода. Част първа [pars 1]*, Pbg 42.2, 2018, p. 38–60; *Част втора [pars 2]*, Pbg 42.3, 2018, p. 33–70.

² Together with Klimentina Ivanova, Tsvetomira Danova has prepared a paper announcing the edition of the *Bibliotheca Homiletica Balcano-Slavonica* cata-

log, which collects data on manuscript copies of homiletic works preserved in the South Slavonic tradition, in panegyric-type codices, according to the calendar of movable feasts, cf. К. ИВАНОВА, Ц. ДАНОВА, *Опит за систематизиране на риторичната традиция в южнославянските календарни сборници (според съдържанието на балканските триодни панегирици)*, Pbg 43.2, 2019, p. 23–46.

³ К. ИВАНОВА, *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Balcano-Slavica*, София 2008.

⁴ *Berlinski Sbornik. Vollständige Studienausgabe im Originalformat (mit Bibliographie)*, ed. H. MIKLAS, L. TASEVA, M. JOVČEVA, Graz 1988.

⁵ J.H. OLKINUORA, *Byzantine Hymnography for the Feast of the Entrance of the Theotokos. An Intermedial Approach*, Helsinki 2015 [= SPF, 4].

of *Damascus' Marian Homilies* combines methodologies inherent in textological and, mainly, linguistic studies. Danova's focus is on questions of textual tradition and the peculiarities of translation strategies of the First and Second Bulgarian Kingdom eras, which for years have been one of the most important topics of Byzantine-Slavonic comparative studies⁶. Although the title of the dissertation promises to look at the Slavonic cultural tradition, the Greek prototypes of the translated texts are an equal part of the study as a constant reference point – both in the critical commentary and in the editing of the source texts.

Tsvetomira Danova's monograph is eminently source-based: the author uses nearly forty copies of four translations of the three homilies, collected from manuscript codices held in Bulgarian collections (the SS Cyril and Methodius National Library, Church-Historical and Archival Institute in Sofia, Rila Monastery, Metropolitanate of Vratsa), Serbian collections (National Library of Serbia, Svetozar Marković University Library in Belgrade, Museum of the Serbian Orthodox Church, Library of the Serbian Patriarchate), Russian (National Library of Russia in St. Petersburg), Romanian (Romanian Academy Library in Bucharest, Dragomirna Monastery), Croatian (Archives of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Croatian History Museum in Zagreb), Montenegrin (Cetinje Monastery, Monastery of the Holy Trinity in Pljevlja), and from monasteries on Holy Mount Athos (Hilandar Monastery, Zographou Monastery). Apart from codicologic information (the type of the codex and its content, the time of its creation and the version of the Old Church Slavonic language, sometimes the state of preservation), she also reveals the way in which she worked with

it: using the collections *in situ* (*de visu* analysis), the electronic collections of particular libraries made available on the web, and microfilms or printouts from electronic copies, which allows the reader to get acquainted with the possibilities (or limitations) of this kind of research. It is worth emphasizing the scope of Danova's research on the source material as well as her inquisitiveness.

Tsvetomira Danova's monograph is clearly divided into two parts of a different nature. The first is an extensive description and commentary on the textological and linguistic facts relevant to the discussed texts, captured in the Introduction, two chapters and the Summary and Conclusion. The second part consists of auxiliary and source material: Appendices (Index of Manuscripts as Listed in the BHBS [Bibliotheca Hagiographica Balcano-Slavonica] and Index of Biblical Quotations), list of works cited, editions of Greek and Slavonic texts, and vocabularies – lists of lexemes (Slavonic-Greek and Greek-Slavonic List of Content Words).

The Introduction of the *Marian Homilies...* is divided into three sections: *The Life and Works of John of Damascus*; *The Reception of John of Damascus' Works in Medieval South Slavonic Literatures*; and *The Homilies on the Mother of God in Mediaeval South Slavonic Literatures: Prefatory Remarks*. The life story and literary works of John of Damascus are presented in the context of the turbulent era of the dispute with the iconoclasts and the growing domination of the Umayyads. The author outlines the historical and cultural background of the creation of the analyzed works and the circumstances of their functioning in Byzantine and post-Byzantine cultural circles. An extensive selection from the works of this Father of the Church was known to the Slavs already in the era of Tsar Simeon (893–927) through the translations of John the Exarch, and in the 14th century a set of works on orthodoxy and other treatises (including the already complete *An Exact Composition of the Orthodox Faith*⁷ and

⁶ Here I will point to only two of the titles, most closely related to the monograph by T. DANOVA: *Преводите през XIV столетие на Балканите. Доклади от международната конференция София 26–28 юни 2003*, ed. Л. ТАСЕВА, М. ЙОВЧЕВА, К. ФОС, Т. ПЕНТКОВСКАЯ, София 2004; *Translations of Patristic Literature in South-Eastern Europe. Proceedings of the Session Held at the 12th International Congress of South-East European Studies (Bucharest, 2–6 September 2019)*, ed. L. TASEVA, R. MARTI, Braïla 2020.

⁷ Cf. the bilingual edition: Св. ЙОАН ДАМАСКИН, *Извор на знанието*, trans. А. АТАНАСОВ, vol. I, София 2014; vol. II, София 2019.

Dialectica) were available. The Slavonic translation of the *Third Homily on the Dormition* comes from the former period, while the translation of the *First Homily on the Dormition* and the *Homily on the Nativity of the Mother of God* comes from the latter. Noteworthy is the detailed bibliographical information regarding John's individual works (records in the catalogs CPG and BHG, and editions) as well as the list of translations of his works into classical and modern languages.

The first chapter of the monograph is devoted to the *Third* and *First Homilies on the Dormition*, and the second chapter to the *Homily on the Nativity of the Mother of God* in two translations. Each of them, in turn, is divided into two parts, each of which is devoted to one work, resulting in four subchapters of the same structure. Each subchapter consists of the following units: Sources; Textological Analysis (Comparison of the Slavonic Text with the Greek Tradition; Textual History of the Slavonic Translation); Linguistic Peculiarities and Translation Technique; Lexical Characteristics; Biblical Quotations, and Summary. The internal arrangement of the subsections shows Tsvetomira Danova's research priorities and reflects the way she works on the texts. The symmetry of construction is evidence of a consistent methodology for the study of the works analyzed and makes the monograph exceptionally coherent.

In Chapter One, entitled *John of Damascus' First and Third Homilies on the Dormition of the Mother of God in the South Slavonic Tradition*, Tsvetomira Danova presents the conclusions of her research on John of Damascus' first and third homilies on the feast of the Dormition of the Mother of God⁸, starting from the history of the first Marian feasts, celebrated in Palestine on August 15, December 26, and January 16, and having a close connection with the Epiphany or Nativity.

⁸ Because of the work's stylistic difference, requiring a different methodology, T. Danova omits the second homily for this feast, which forms a triad, thematically encompassing the entire life of the Mother of God: ...the fragmentary/compilatory character of the text requires research approaches that are somewhat different from those applied to the complete translations (p. 26).

The *Third Homily* is represented by 54 Greek copies (in two main groups) and two Slavonic copies – from the turn of 14th century, and from the 16th century – which suggests that the work was poorly disseminated. Nevertheless, all textological variants are presented here, relating the Slavonic text to the Greek, and providing detailed commentary on the differences. In each section, Tsvetomira Danova closely examines the deviations of the translation from the original, pointing to their possible and probable sources: either errors in transcription or mistakes arising from the similarity of lexemes, or the intended effects of the translator's efforts to avoid redundancy, clarify issues or terms that were (in his opinion) more difficult. It is precisely these remarks on translation strategies, supported by a careful lexical, grammatical, and textological analysis, that are in each case extremely interesting and – proving the author's expertise – provide an intriguing picture of the emergence or formation of the South Slavonic literary tradition of successive places and times. In this case, the Slavonic translator – aware of the ambiguity of the Greek words – was expected to display a “personal interpretation” of the selected passages (p. 52). Nevertheless, the search for the original form of the Slavonic text was based on the analysis of the occurrence and forms of individual lexemes against the Greek background, the *hapax legomenon* forms, the vocabularies proper to the Cyril-Methodian translations, and the Preslav or Târnovo literary schools.

The morpho-syntactic analysis is similarly detailed. The examined categories include: the way of constructing the passive voice, grammatical forms of the aorist, imperative, participles, various categories of pronouns (possessive, indicative, relative), *genetivus possessivus* and *dativus possessivus* constructions, preservation of *dualis* forms, the presence of lexemes with prefixes, compounds and paraphrases of selected phrases.

The juxtaposition of the vocabulary of the *Third Homily on the Dormition* with the lexis of the 10th- and 11th-century Glagolitic and Cyrillic relics (*Old Bulgarian corpus*) as well as the reference to the statistics presenting the

frequency of occurrence of particular lexemes specific to the Preslav literary school lead to the conclusion that the translation of the work probably appeared in the Eastern Bulgarian linguistic conditions; it also shows affinity with the lexis of *The Codex Suprasliensis* (p. 56, 58). In general, the juxtaposition of fragments/lexemes of the Slavonic texts of the homilies with the Greek ones – as well as of lexical Cyril-Methodian, Preslav, and Tǎrnovo equivalents – are an important part of Danova's lecture on the translations of John of Damascus.

The *First Homily*, discussed in the second part of chapter one, is preserved in 77 Greek and 13 South Slavonic copies, from collections of panegyrics and menologia dating from the late 14th to the 17th centuries. A comparison of linguistic variants points to the high variability of the homily's title in the Slavonic relics as well as the translator's creativity at all levels of work with the text (additions and abridgments, transpositions, attempts to avoid a calque of the Greek word order, and avoidance of 'common' lexis, p. 75). The textological research, on the other hand, points to the origin of all the Slavonic copies of the homilies from a common source, although at a later stage one of these copies became the protograph for another group. In this way a revised version can be discerned, probably done without the involvement of the Greek source text, exclusively as a result of stylistic work on the Slavonic material. While the original translation preserves the equivalence to the original Greek and keeps the theological terminology in the spirit of the Mount Athos tradition, the revised version demonstrates the influence of the Tǎrnovo school. In the *First Homily on the Dormition*, 24 biblical quotations are used. Danova argues that, while the translator must have recognized them, he translated them after John of Damascus rather than draw on the already existing translations of the Scripture (although he *took the existing Slavonic tradition into consideration*, p. 104). There are more similar remarks on the translator's work and style in the monograph; they are supported by comparative material: Danova cites a dozen relics of the OCS language, both from the canon and later copies of selected books of the Old and New Testaments.

Chapter Two of the monograph (*The Slavonic Translations of John of Damascus' Homily on the Nativity of the Mother of God in the South Slavonic Manuscript Tradition*) deals entirely with two translations of a single work, the homily on the Nativity of the Mother of God. It opens with remarks on the history of the Nativity of the Mother of God, which also spread from Palestine to Constantinople and then throughout the Empire. The list of names of prominent Byzantine authors who dedicated their works to this day can attest to its importance. These include, among others: Andrew of Crete, Germanos of Constantinople, Patriarch Photios, Gregory Palamas, and Niketas Paphlagon. The *Homily on the Nativity* is one of those works by John of Damascus whose authorship raises questions because of its distinct stylistic features. Nevertheless, several Latin, Georgian and Arabic translations, as well as contemporary translations, testify to its popularity. Suffice it to say that medieval Slavs adopted it twice, which provided Tsvetomira Danova with interesting material for her research.

The first translation is evidenced by 19 Slavonic copies, dating from the 14th to the first half of the 17th centuries, from all of the Southern Slavic area, corresponding to different copies and groups of the Greek text. Danova notes the variability of the title in the Slavonic copies, but also the 'relatively correct' form of this translation (p. 118). Although here, too, one can see the influence of the terminology characteristic of the communities on Mount Athos – mainly in the area of biblical quotations (p. 140) – it is difficult to attribute this translation to any particular center of writing and culture in the 14th century because of the great variety of lexis.

The second Slavonic translation of the *Homily on the Nativity of the Mother of God* is less evidenced or rather preserved – it is represented by 9 copies dated from the mid-14th century to the beginning of the 17th century. Here, in turn, the headings are rather close to the Greek original, while the content is quite different from it: *the identified differences... consist not only in smaller or larger omissions and additions but also in significant deviations in the content and meaning of the text* (p. 145). The translator evidently chose to make the

passages that he believed to be unclear more readable: *Whereas John of Damascus 'seems to take for granted a theologically literate audience' who could understand his synthesis of poetic language and philosophical-theological thought, the Slavonic translator probably has doubts about the theological literacy of his audience* (p. 155). This reveals an awareness that it is necessary to work on the text, but also on the knowledge and experience of the reader. It further suggests that this way of working on the translation cannot be related to the practice typical for the 14th century, and that the Slavonic *Homily on Nativity* remains rather *a marginal translation in comparison with those linked to Mount Athos and Tŕrnovo* (p. 178).

Tsvetomira Danova's monograph – a textological study of related homiletical works – is essentially a fragment of research on the history and practice of Byzantine-Slavonic translation. The following sections – analyses of four texts – show a diverse picture of translations relating to the 14th century, but in fact initiated in different periods and centers of the Southern Slavic area. The author states: *The new evidence on specific problems in the fields of textology, linguistics, and literary history, revealed by this study, complements the overall scientific picture of the more general processes and tendencies in the Byzantine-Slavonic literary and linguistic exchange in the Balkans during the Middle Ages* (p. 183). The work fits naturally into the circle of publications resulting from linguistic and textological work on Slavonic translations of the Byzantine heritage, such as those devoted to the Zlatostruy compilation⁹ – regardless of the fact that the Marian homilies of John of Damascus functioned as separate works and not as a thematically unified collection.

What is interesting is the choice of criteria Danova applies in characterizing the source

⁹ Two important works of the Bulgarian researchers from the last decade: Я. МИЛТЕНОВ, *Златоструй. Старобългарски хомилетичен свод, създаден по инициатива на българския цар Симеон. Текстологическо и извороведско изследване*, София 2013; А. ДИМИТРОВА, *Златоструят в преводаческата дейност на старобългарските книжовници*, София 2016.

material. She takes into account the type of codex as well as the results of textological, morpho-syntactic and, above all, lexical analysis. The latter analyses in particular make it possible to determine the place of origin of some translations. Here I deliberately omit detailed conclusions, not wishing to spoil the pleasure of following the deduction and discovering subsequent gems that make up the mosaic as a whole. The value of the monograph lies in its interdisciplinary approach: linguistic, historical and literary, textological, and especially, in the archaeological and editorial work put into it.

About a quarter of the volume of the monograph consists of editions of the analyzed texts, in the order corresponding to the deduction of the commentary. Thus, the *Third Homily on the Dormition of the Mother of God*, the *First Homily* on the same feast, two translations of the *Homily on the Nativity of the Mother of God*: Translation A and Translation B – the Slavonic texts are presented in relation to the parallel Greek variants, which gives the impression of equivalence between the Slavonic and Greek material. Using available editions of Byzantine sources, Tsvetomira Danova introduces hitherto secondary variants into scholarly circulation: what previously comprised lessons (after B. Kotter) have become the basis for the *editio maior*. The four Slavonic texts are based on copies from various codices: the *First Homily on the Dormition* comes from the collection of the Rila Monastery (ms 4/11(83), 14th century), the *Third* – from a 16th-century codex from the Museum of the Serbian Orthodox Church (ms 140, 14th and 16th centuries), Translation A of the homily on the Nativity – from the Zograf Monastery (ms 107, 14th century), while Translation B of the same work – from the SS Cyril and Methodius National Library in Sofia (ms 307, 14th century). The author has chosen to present the copies in a diplomatic edition (page for page and line for line), which – in the absence of illustrations in the monograph – offers some idea of the layout of the folios of the codices.

The vocabularies for the homilies (Slavonic-Greek and Greek-Slavonic List of Content Words) are the next material part of the monograph after the text editions, taking about

a quarter of the total volume. The record structure includes the basic Slavonic form, the corresponding form in the Greek text, an indication where the lexeme can be found and on which folio of the manuscript constituting the basis for the edition. The indices also include lexemes that have no Greek equivalents, as well as clear errors and recorded reconstructions. The Greek and Slavonic sections are parallel in structure. The construction of the vocabularies shows a continuation of the best traditions of historical linguistics, organizing vocabularies of particular works or authors of great importance, such as the vocabularies of John the Exarch¹⁰, Cosmas the Presbyter¹¹, Patriarch Euthymius¹², the *Synodikon of Tsar Boril*¹³ – to mention the Bulgarian authors and relics – and from the bilingual editions and vocabularies of Patriarch Philotheus¹⁴. The vocabulary of Marian homilies of ‘Slavonic’ John of Damascus fully belongs there. The literature cited in the monograph includes over 360 items – editions of texts, vocabularies, studies and critical commentaries.

In the Introduction the author outlines the purpose of her work: *to lay the beginning of systematic research into the reception of John of Damascus’ homiletic works in the Slavonic Middle Ages* (p. 25). The book as a whole proves that she has succeeded in achieving it through a factual, detailed, and in-depth reading of the source texts against the background of numerous

literary relics of the Middle Ages from the 9th to the 14th centuries. Let us conclude our discussion of Tsvetomira Danova’s book by recalling the fact that in 2020 she was honored by the Scientific Council of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences with an award for a monograph of exceptional importance.

Translated by Katarzyna Szuster-Tardi

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¹⁰ *Терминологичен речник на Йоан Екзарх*, ed. А. ТОТОМАНОВА, И. ХРИСТОВ, София 2019.

¹¹ А. ДАВИДОВ, *Речник-индекс на презвигер Козма*, София 1976.

¹² Т. СЛАВОВА, Р. СТАНКОВ, А. ДИМИТРОВА, *Речник на езика на патриарх Евтимий. I. А–Н*, София 2019. https://histdict.uni-sofia.bg/evtdict/evt_intro; Т. СЛАВОВА, А.-М. ТОТОМАНОВА, А. ДИМИТРОВА, Г. ГАНЕВА, В. ШАЛАГИН, М. ТОТОМАНОВА-ПАНЕВА, М. ДИМИТРОВА, *Речник на езика на патриарх Евтимий. II. О–А*, София 2020.

¹³ *Речник-индекс на словоформите в Бориловия синодик и придружаващите го текстове в НБКМ 289*, coll. А.-М. ТОТОМАНОВА, И. ХРИСТОВ, София 2015.

¹⁴ Патриарх Филотей (Кокин), *Слово в Неделята на Всички светии. Editio princeps*, ed. М. СПАСОВА (textus bulgaricus), И. ХРИСТОВ (textus graecus), София 2020.

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Małgorzata Skowronek (Łódź)*

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9101-3573>

* University of Lodz, Faculty of Philology, Department of Slavic Philology