

**A POETIC WITNESS TO EARLY VENERATION OF ST.  
HELENA AND ST. CONSTANTINE THE GREAT  
AMONG THE SLAVS**

It is a paradox of the early Church Slavonic written tradition that available hagiographic sources contain no evidence of the early veneration of the saints whose role in the history of Christianity can hardly be overestimated. According to the most updated scholarly resource which „systemizes hagiographic and homiletic works drawn from the repertory of South Slavic (Bulgarian and Serbian) manuscripts as well as from codices copied in the principalities of Moldavia and Walachia“,<sup>1</sup> the earliest Old Church Slavonic text dedicated to SS. Helena and Constantine is a *Praise* written by the patriarch Euthymios of Tărnovo in the second half of the 14th c.<sup>2</sup> The *Vita* of Constantine and Helena (*sub diem* 21st of May) has been included into the *Great Menologia* compiled by Makarios, metropolitan of Moscow, in the 16th c.<sup>3</sup> The same translation is attested in the East Slavic historical compilation *Greek and Roman Chronicle*<sup>4</sup> of the 15th c. and may go back to the earlier period, however, the proper historical and linguistic investigation of this text has not been yet performed, therefore the time of its origin remains to be defined.

Neither *Vitae* of SS. Helena and Constantine nor *Praises* dedicated to them were considered by the Slavs to be significant enough to be translated and included into Old East Slavic menologia before the 14th–15th cc., so that the historically adequate reflexion of this saints by the Slavs during the first four centuries of Slavic literature seems problematic.

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<sup>1</sup> Kl. Ivanova, *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Balcano-Slavica*, Sofia: Prof. Marin Drinov Academic Publishing House, 2008, 38.

<sup>2</sup> Kl. Ivanova, *Bibliotheca...*, 534–535.

<sup>3</sup> О. В. Творогов, *Переводные жития в русской книжности XI–XV веков. Каталог*, Москва, С-Петербург: Альянс-Архео, 2008, 76–77.

<sup>4</sup> О. В. Творогов, С. А. Давыдова, *Летописец Еллинский и Римский I, С.-Петербург*: Дмитрий Буланин, 271–307.

Hymnography dedicated to SS. Constantine and Helena is included in numerous South and East Slavic office Menaia of the 11th — 16th cc.,<sup>5</sup> however, this testifies to nothing but a passive reception of Byzantine hymnographic heritage as represented by Greek sources. The East Slavic office Menaia contain translation of the canon Μόνε ἐπουράνιε Βασιλεύ,<sup>6</sup> which was translated as a part of a complete set of Byzantine daily office Menaia in the First Bulgarian Kingdom at the middle or the second half of the 10th c. The short version of the *Vita* of SS. Constantine and Helena was included into Slavonic Synaxaria (*Prolog*),<sup>7</sup> the commemoration of these saints is prescribed by Menologia,<sup>8</sup> however, one may consider neither of these texts to be a goal of a hymnographic or liturgical program aimed at a special commemorating of SS. Constantine and Helena.

The hymnographic works of Clement of Ochrid, Constantine of Preslav and Naum of Ochrid (end of the 9th – beginning of the 10th cc.) who were the disciples of SS. Cyrill and Methodius, followed another trend: besides of numerous chants dedicated to the Great Lent and hymns of the Octoechos and the most important Lord's and Theotokos' feasts,<sup>9</sup> they composed several canons for the so called „Western“ saints: SS. Apollinarius of Ravenna, Stephanos the Pope of Rome, Alexius the Man of God (born in Rome).<sup>10</sup> No Greek sources have been uncovered for the Slavonic translations of the canons for St. Erasmus,

<sup>5</sup> Н. А. Нечунаева, *Минея как тип славяно-греческого средневекового текста* (= *Tallinna pedagoogikaülikooli humanitaarteaduste dissertatsioonid*, 3), Tallinn: TPÜ Kirjastus, 2000, с. 27–37.

<sup>6</sup> *Μεναίον τοῦ ἁλίου ἐνιαυτοῦ*, т. V, Ἐν Ῥώμῃ, 1899, σ. 140; *Incipitarium liturgischer Hymnen in ostslavischen Handschriften des 11. bis 13. Jahrhunderts*, besorgt von D. Stern, hrsg. von H. Rothe (= *Abhandlungen der Nordrhein-Westfälischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*. Bd. 118/1–3. *Patristica Slavica*, Bd. 16/1, hrsg. von H. Rothe), Paderborn; München; Wien; Zürich: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2008, Teil I: A–И, S. 587.

<sup>7</sup> Р. Павлова, В. Желязкова (изд.), *Станиславов (Лесновски) Пролог от 1330 година*, Велико Търново: Фабер, 1999, с. 246.

<sup>8</sup> О. В. Лосева, *Русские месяцесловы XI–XIV вв.*, Москва: Памятники исторической мысли, 2001, с. 344–345; Е. Дограмаджиева, *Месяцословните четива в славянските ръкописни Евангелия (X–XVII вв.)* (= *Cyrilo-Methodian Studies*, 19), Sofia: Cyrillo-Methodian Research Centre, 2010, с. 290 („Датата е включена във всички ръкописи“), 396.

<sup>9</sup> *La poesia liturgica slava antica. XIII Congresso Internazionale degli Slavisti* (Lubiana, 15–21 Agosto 2003), *Blocco tematico n° 14, relazioni*, a cura di K. Stanchev, M. Yovcheva, Roma, Sofia: Dipartimento di Letterature Comparate dell'Università degli Studi Roma Tre, Centro di Studi Cirilometodiani presso l'Accademia Bulgara delle Scienze, 2003.

<sup>10</sup> М. Йовчева, Новооткрито химнографско произведение на Климент Охридски и проблемът за западните паметни в старобългарския календар, в: *Medieval Christian Europe: East and West. Tradition, Values, Communications*, s.l.: ИК „Гутенберг“, 2002, с. 382–396; М. Йовчева, Старобългарската служба за първомъченик Стефан и Стефан I папа Римски, *Старобългарска литература* 32 (2001) 21–44; М. Йовчева, Старобългарската служба за Аполинарий Равенски от Климент Охридски, *Старобългаристика* = *Palaeobulgarica* 26/1 (2002) 17–32; В. Савова, Непознато химнографско произведение на св. Климент Охридски за св. Алексей Човек Божи (предварителни бележки), *Старобългаристика* = *Palaeobulgarica* 27/2 (2003) 3–12.

St. Vitus<sup>11</sup> and fragments of the canon for Martin of Tours<sup>12</sup> assumed to be the witnesses to the same „Western“ programm, which is also testified by numerous „Western“ commemorations of Menologia.<sup>13</sup>

However there is at least one witness to the opposite Old Bulgarian trend as archaic as the „Western“ one, and it is dated to the beginning of the 10th c.

Two Middle Bulgarian office Menaia (Zograph Monastery, Mt. Athos, Zogr. slav. 54, fol. 176v 13th or 14th cc.; Russian National Library, S.-Petersburg, F. п. I 72, fol. 193v, 13th or 14th c.) contain the corrupted version of the Old Bulgarian translation of the kontakion for the Invention of the Holy Cross. The text critical examination of the South Slavonic sources has been performed by the author of these lines.<sup>14</sup> This made it possible to establish the original text version, the characteristic feature of which is an *isosyllabism*, in other words, the number of syllables of the Old Church Slavonic translation fits that of the Greek original text:<sup>15</sup>

*Елена, желѣѣци	(и?) рѣвнѣици сѣцаго,	16/15 (7+9/8),	gr. 15 (7+8)
прѣславнаго крѣста	знамение гавлаиетъ,	15 (7+8),	gr. 15 (7+8)
вса иудѣа	сѣбираѣци,	11 (6+5),	gr. 13/12 (8/7+5)
едиинъ оубо Июда	сего принесе,	13 (8+5),	gr. 13 (8+5)
на сѣ бо ради гависа			8, gr. 8
знамение велико	вѣѣнаго хрѣста.	13 (7+6),	Gr.

10/11/12(5/4+7/6)<sup>16</sup>

ἦχος γ', πρὸς: Ἡ παρθένος σήμερον.

Ἡ Ἑλένη πόθῳ νῦν	Χριστοῦ τὸ ξύλον ἐμφαίνει
καὶ αὐτὸ τὸ ἔνδοξον	τὸ τοῦ σταυροῦ νῦν σημείον

<sup>11</sup> D. Stern, Der heilige Erasmus in der slavischen und byzantinischen Hymnographie, in: *Liturgische Hymnen nach byzantinischem Ritus bei den Slaven in ältester Zeit. Beiträge einer internationalen Tagung. Bonn, 7.-10. Juni 2005*, hrsg. von H. Rothe, D. Christians, Paderborn; München; Wien; Zürich: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2007, S. 352-381; М. Ф. Мурьянов, Старославянские метаморфозы западного агиологического сюжета, в: *Духовная культура славянских народов: Литература. Фольклор. История*, Ленинград: Наука, 1983, с. 74-87.

<sup>12</sup> И. Христова-Шомова, Един западен светец в православния свят – Св. Мартин от Тур в църковния календар през Средновековието, *Старобългарска литература* 41-42 (2009) 87-104 (the article contains the most comprehensive list of related references, too).

<sup>13</sup> M. Schnitter, H. Miklas, Kyrillo-Methodiansiche Miscellen. Westliche Einträge in den ältesten kirchenslavischen Kalendarien, in: E. Hansack, W. Koschmal, N. Nübler, R. Večerka (Hrsg.), *Festschrift für Klaus Trost zum 65. Geburtstag* (= Die Welt der Slaven. Sammelbände, 5), München: Otto Sagner, 1999, S. 259-288.

<sup>14</sup> P. H. Кривко, Перевод, парафраз и метр в древних славянских кондаках. II: Критика и реконструкция текстов, *Revue des études slaves* 82/3 (2011) 715-744.

<sup>15</sup> On metric features of the earliest Church Slavonic poetry and its relations to Byzantine patterns, see the critical review: P. H. Кривко, Перевод, парафраз и метр в древних славянских кондаках. I: Метрика древней церковнославянской поэзии в исследованиях XIX-XXI вв., *Revue des études slaves* 82/2 (2011) 169-202.

<sup>16</sup> On metric variety in the hymns patterned on the model Παρθένος σήμερον, see: J. Grosdidier-de-Matons (ed., intr., trad.), *Romanos le Mélode, Hymnes*, vol. II: *Nouveau Testament* (IX-XX) (= Sources chrétiennes, n° 110), Paris: Cerf, 1965, p. 46.

ἀπαντας τοὺς Ἰουδαίους συναγαγοῦσα·  
 μόνος γὰρ ὁ Ἰούδας τοῦτο προσάγει·  
 δι' ἡμᾶς γὰρ ἀνεδείχθη·  
 |: σημεῖον μέγα τοῦ πρὸ αἰώνων Θεοῦ. : |<sup>17</sup>

Besides the metric features, the translation has several grammatic peculiarities. The Greek noun πόθῳ „with the love“ was rendered by two Slavonic present active participles желѣшици and рѣвнѣннѣшици, while the Greek word combination πόθῳ νῦν Χριστοῦ τὸ ξύλον ἐμφαίνει „with the love to Christ she shows the Wood“ was split into three sections so that the *genitivus objectivus* Χριστοῦ related to πόθῳ had been rendered as an object of the participles желѣшици and рѣвнѣннѣшици and substituted with the present participle сѣмѣно. The genitive case of the participle ѡи (сѣмѣно) can be translated either as „(the one who is) existing (i. e. the God)“ or simply „the truth“. The word τὸ ξύλον remained untranslated, so that only one object of the verb ѡбѣяѣтъ (ἐμφαίνει) „shows“ has been remained in the Slavonic version: the крѣста знаменїе „the image of the Cross“ is definitely the Cross itself.

As a result of such periphrastic translation the hagiographic background of the original text has been simplified. As opposite to the Slavonic translation the phrase καὶ αὐτὸ τὸ ἔνδοξον τὸ τοῦ σταυροῦ νῦν σημεῖον „and that glorious sign of the Cross“ does not designate the Cross, but the table attached to the Cross, on which the words *Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews* had been written and which according to some sources was discovered by Helena together with the Cross. Elimination of the notion of the table in the Slavonic translation is by all means aimed to simplify the text and to adapt it to the educational level of the Slavonic *publicum*.

The translation of the kontakion for the Exaltation of the Holy Cross is dated on the base of its stylistic features. The metric poetry patterned on the Byzantine meter is a well known peculiarity of the early period of the Old Church Slavonic literature. The metric *and* periphrastic translations of Byzantine chants were composed by Constantine of Preslav and anonymous Slavonic poets who translated the canons for the Christmas, the Theophany and the Pentecost. Periphrastic metrically arranged versions were replaced by word-by-word translations probably yet in Bulgarian Kingdom, while the Old Russian version of the hymnographic books compiled at the second half of the 11th c. comprises only the second type of translations.<sup>18</sup> The second, word-by-word translation of the kontakion for the Exaltation of the Holy Cross is preserved in Old Russian Kontakaria compiled not later than in the middle of the 11th c. Consequently the metric periphrastic version of the kontakion described above is to be dated to the much earlier period of the first decades of the emergence of Slavonic writing in Old Bulgaria, to the end of the 9th — beginning of the 10th cc. Hence we have a rare hymnographic, poetic evidence of the particular attitude of Slavs to the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross and to St. Helena.

<sup>17</sup> The critical edition of the text: S. Gassisi, *Innologia greca in onore dei ss. Costantino ed Elena* (= Studi liturgici, fasc. VI), Grottaferrata: Tipografia Italo-Orientalie «S. Nilo», 1913, p. 15.

<sup>18</sup> P. Кривко, *Перевод, парафраз и метр*. I... (critical review and evaluation of the state of issue)

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**ПОЕТСКО СВЕДОЧЕЊЕ РАНОГ ПОШТОВАЊА СВ. ЈЕЛЕНЕ И СВ.  
КОНСТАНТИНА МЕЂУ СЛОВЕНИМА**

Парадокс старословенске црквене писане традиције је да расположиви хагиографски извори сведоче непостојање доказа о раном поштовању светаца чија улога у историји хришћанства тешко да може бити прецењена. Ни *Vitae* Свете Јелене и Константина ни Похвале њима посвећене Словени нису сматрали довољно важним да би били преведени и укључени у старословенску менологију пре XIV – XV века, тако да се историјски адекватна рефлексја ових светаца код Словена у току прва четири века словенске књижевности, чини проблематичном. Химнографија посвећена Св. Константину и Јелени укључена је у бројне црквене обреде Менаиа јужних и источних словена од XI – XVI в., међутим, то је само пасивна рецепција византијског химнографског наслеђа доступна од стране грчких извора. Кратка верзија *Vita* Константина и Јелене била је укључена у словенски синаксар, комеморација ових светаца одређена је црквеним календарима, међутим, не постоји разлог да се било који од ових текстова сматра химнографским или литургијским програмом чији је циљ посебна комеморација Св. Константина и Јелене. Химнографски радови ученика св. Ђирила и Методија (крај IX – почетак X в.) имали су другачији програм: поред бројних појања посвећених Великом посту, Пентекостариону, Октоиху, и најважнијим празницима везаним за Бога и Богородицу, написали су неколико канона за такозване „западне“ светце, и „западни“ програм је такође посведочен бројним комеморацијама у Менологију.

Поред метричких особина превод има неколико граматичких парафраза, а сем тога, хагиографска позадина оригиналног текста је поједностављена. Супротно словенском преводу фразе  $\kappa\alpha\iota\ \alpha\upsilon\tau\omicron\ \tau\omicron\ \acute{\epsilon}\nu\delta\omicron\zeta\omicron\nu\ \tau\omicron\ \tau\omicron\upsilon\ \sigma\tau\alpha\upsilon\tau\omicron\upsilon\ \nu\upsilon\nu\ \sigma\eta\mu\acute{\epsilon}\iota\omicron\nu$  не значи Крст већ табу која је прикачена на Крст на којој су биле исписане речи Исус из Назарета, Краљ Јевреја и коју је пронашла Јелена заједно са Крстом. Елиминацијом хагиографског садржаја из словенског превода има за циљ да се текст прилагоди образовном нивоу словенског publicum-a. Стилистичке особине омогућавају да се превод кондака датира у крај IX – почетак X в. јер метрика и перифрастична поезија по узору на византијске моделе представља добро познату карактеристику најранијег периода старословенске црквене књижевности. Стога имамо ретки химнографски, поетски доказ посебног става Словена према празнику Обретење часног крста и према Светој Јелени.

