

Old Church Slavonic Grammar

Seventh Revised Edition

Horace G. Lunt



Mouton
de Gruyter

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1970

General Slave Ref.
(Slave)

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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.

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 while most variations in grammar and vocabulary are the sorts of stylistic and idiosyncratic differences that are found in the standard or literary language of any single epoch, some important variant details result from different regional dialectal history. It has thus been necessary to include occasional references to historical and comparative linguistics in the first half of this book, although in principle these problems do not fall within the scope of a strictly descriptive, synchronic grammar.

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.

Little 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

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would be required. Excellent work in this field is available, though some scholars tend to forget that even a poor translator is governed by the structure of the language into which he is translating. The "Notes on Syntax" in Chapter Six are offered on the premise that something is better than nothing. It is particularly in this area that translation techniques need to be analyzed.

After forty years of teaching OCS and related topics in the history and structure of modern Slavic languages, my views on the nature of language and the models for describing language have evolved away from the Bloomfieldian structuralism of my training. The data of OCS have not changed importantly from the material described by scholars a century ago, although some details from imprecise editions have been discarded and a few new details must be accounted for. I continue to believe that every language is a coherent structure, and that each language can be described in terms of static and dynamic elements and learned by novices who do not have the slightest knowledge of its history.

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, or II.8k, II.8e, 1k, and I.4a, 2b with Koch. I believe that it is most efficient simply to encourage students to learn the form from which the rest of the paradigm can be generated according to rules (*xvali-ti*, *velě-ti*, but *želěj-otě*) and leave them to study the tables on pp. 114-117 and 136-137 for similarities and differences between paradigms. The present form of description is based on my belief that it is the morpheme that is the basic unit of communication.

A comparison of Old Church Slavonic—a language I believe to be a partially standardized written form of Late Common Slavic—with either its hypothetical ancestors or the descendants or collateral descendants of other forms of LCoS—is not the task of the synchronic description that takes up the first five chapters of this book. In the 1974 edition, I presented an epilogue ("Toward a generative phonology of OCS") that was based on a generative theory that proved to be too ambitious. Chapter Six in this book is an entirely new and relatively traditional sketch of the genesis of OCS (as a representative of Late Common Slavic).

This work was influenced by my teachers of long ago and by the students and colleagues I encountered during my years of teaching. I will not attempt to list them here. I can only express general thanks to the students who asked challenging questions and to their fellow-students and

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