

## DAMASCUS EDUCATION TRANSLATION-COMPILATORY ACTIVITY

Sunchica Trifunovska Janik, page 99-111

### ABSTRACT

For the development of the Macedonian cultural tradition, the damask tradition is of special importance, because it is a facilitator of the Enlightenment idea. The interest in this literary form appeared in the XVI century, and lasted until the XIX century and until our modernity. The Damascenes are named after the modern Greek preacher Damascene Studit, who advocated writing in a language that was simple and understandable to the people. In that way, the vernacular language began to enter the Church Slavonic literary and written expression, and it gained its stronger influence in the contents of the texts that had a more practical preaching and ideological purpose.

**Keywords:** Damascene, Damascus tradition, Damascus literature, Krinian damask, Sokrovishte.

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## INTRODUCTION

The Damascene literary tradition, or more specifically the Damascenes, is identified through the preserved collections dated from the 16th century onwards to the period of the Revival in the 19th century, whose content presents morally instructive compositions in which it was clearly emphasized that they were written in a dialectal speech - close to the simple and massive for communication vernacular. The selected compositions represented are church sermons, teachings, lives, paterical stories, legends and descriptions of events and persons related to Christian belief and living. The work *Treasure* written by the Metropolitan Damascene Studite of Thessaloniki, which was printed in Venice in 1558, served as an example of how anthologized collections should look.

The first Damascene collections represent a translation from Modern Greek into Church Slavonic language with a significant presence of elements from the folk speeches, and with the aim of engaging preaching-teaching compositions that moved in their textual structure to get as close as possible to the people and to make them more understandable even for simpler – uneducated people. In fact, this was also the main enlightening idea of the Thessaloniki preacher Damascene Studite, who tried to write and transcribe such books in a stylistically simple and expressively understandable language. At that time, the level of development of the Church Slavonic language was standardized to be applied in liturgical practice, and at the same time it also served as a written and expressive means for the realization of literary processes that mainly had a religious character. The newly emerging social, spiritual and cultural conditions increasingly imposed the need for the spoken language to be applied in mass communication, because the collective needs for expressions were not satisfied only through the religious ideal, but the new civilizational phenomenon encouraged the necessity to place the human at the center of experiences - when that came to the fore and its freer forms of expression through folk culture and everyday life. That is why the church or religious ideal had to be supported by the new tendencies for the nationalization of spiritual and cultural living. Such new manifestations of enlightenment necessarily motivated the process to gradually begin to see the admixture of the vernacular in church liturgical texts.

These enlightening phenomena from the post-Byzantine period became current in the Macedonian literary and literary tradition, especially if we take into account the fact that it was in its territory that the new forms of such ideological and cultural tendencies began to be animated and affirmed. It is particularly impressive that in Macedonia the new Damascene collections translated into Slavic language began to be translated and compiled - in the basis of which the Macedonian Slavic languages from its central part - the Bitola-Pelaginian region were reflected. This is evidenced by the preserved transcripts or compilations of about 200 Damascenes, and one of the older codices is the so-called Krnina damascene from the 16th century in the structural composition of which 20 Damascene letters are represented. This extremely significant Macedonian manuscript was scientifically prepared and published by Petar Ilievski. Even in the linguistic basis of this written and literary monument, the process of nationalization of the Church Slavonic language characteristics is reflected. With that, the main methodological idea of incorporating folk speech peculiarities into the basis of future literary language standardization began to be actualized. Such historical-developmental practices have become standard for the codifications of the Macedonian literary language by Krste Petkov Misirkov, as well as the most recent experience with the codification of the modern Macedonian language by Blaže Koneski.

### **The Proceedings of the Damascene Studite and its Slavic translation as the basis of the new Enlightenment insight**

The Damascene literary tradition established the basic idea to increase the attraction of a large number of people who are impressed by the religious, creative and written practice, where the way of telling in those contents became much more lively and dramatic, and experienced huge popularity among all peoples. According to more extensive scientific analyses, one of the peculiarities of the Damascene Studite collection is that it tried to combine Christianity with classical Hellenistic antiquity, and this can be seen from the emphasis and reaffirmation of the ideas expressed by classical philosophers and writers. It represented a kind of attempt - in philosophy known as Byzantine eclecticism, which acquired a functional purpose for further explanation or confirmation of the current

views even among the early Christian church fathers and among the medieval Byzantine writers.

Of course, Damascene Studite did not create his collection "from memory", but having already gained experience as a preacher in the Thessaloniki Church, he was also familiar with the works from the classical, i.e. from the golden period of the Church. That is why his collection "Θησαυρός" (Treasure), mainly drew from the rich source of the Holy Tradition of the Orthodox Church.



Fragment of a Damascene manuscript

The protograph of this popular work was written in the modern Greek language in the Studion monastery near Constantinople by an author born in the city of Thessaloniki on the territory of Macedonia, and it was usual that soon between 1560 and 1580 its Slavic translation was realized again in the Macedonian area. In scientific studies, it is also known exactly about the person who realized the Slavic translation, and that was the bishop of Pelagonia and Prilep, Gregory. Gregory's translation had a strong impact among the Macedonian church officials who copied and affirmed it and was considered as a basic source of the future development of women's literature written in the vernacular. He made the translation based on one of the first three Venetian editions published between 1558 and 1562. The Slavic text was presented in the then current Church Slavonic language and script, with admixtures from the West Macedonian Prilep-Bitola vernacular. The translation was accurate and complete, without additions or major cuts.

In science, several transcripts are recorded that can be connected with the original Macedonian translation of the Damascenes, and they are dated from the period between the end of the 16th and 17th centuries. Unfortunately, three of these manuscripts, known to science, have not been preserved until today, because they were burned during the bombing of Belgrade in 1941, together with the majority of the manuscript collection of the national library there. Among other preserved transcripts from the first Slavic translation edition of the Damascene collection, the following are also mentioned:

1. The Krynian damascene, from the end of the 16th century, found by Petar Ilievski in 1956, which is kept in the Macedonian Language Institute "Krstе Misirkov" in Skopje. His transcription variant contains the first twenty Damascene words.
2. Kiev damascene, from the end of the 16th century, which is kept in the Library of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences. This transcript contains the last sixteen words of the Damascene Studite, as well as part of the Krynian Damascene.
3. Belgrade Patriarchal Damascene, from the XVII century, which is kept in the manuscript collection of the Serbian Patriarchal Library. This transcript contains the first sixteen words of the Damascene Studite.
4. 4. Sevastjanov damask, from the 17th century, which is kept in the State Library "V.I. Lenin" in Moscow in the Collection of Sevastyan. This transcript contains two Damascene words - one of which is a translation of the Pelagonian bishop Gregory (Pop-Atanasov, 1985: 5-6)

The oldest and perhaps the most significant copy in the Macedonian literary environment is by the bishop of Pelagonia and Prilep Gregory in the 16th century. This Gregorian translation represents the Damascene of Krnina, which was found in 1956 by Petar Hr. Ilievski in the monastery Prechista - Kichevsko. The manuscript was previously owned by the Toplic monastery "St. Nikola" (Demirhisarsko), where it is assumed that it could have been written (composed). With the kind of attempt to reconstruct the Macedonian translation of the Damascene, it would be indirectly possible to carry out a more systematic study of this specifically typologized literary and written monument, which contains

many more elements of the Macedonian spoken language than any other previously preserved manuscript of Macedonian provenance. . Today, the Damascene of Krnin is kept in the Institute of the Macedonian Language in Skopje, and a part of it is also in the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences in Kyiv (Velev, Marijoska, Cvetanoska, 2008). It is interesting that Grigorij Pelagoniski, worshipping in a diocese with a large number of then active literary centers and scriptoriums (Slepchenski, Zrzeski, Treskavec, etc.), had the opportunity to research and browse in the monastery's spiritual-literary treasures. This translation of his was one of the first, because as a bishop of the mentioned area he was a neighbor of the Polian (Kukushko - Dojran) diocese, where Damascene was proedros. It was probably executed from the first, second or possibly from the third edition of the Damascene collection. According to the linguistic analysis, it was concluded that several translators worked on it, and this is especially noticeable in the existing translation errors. In any case, Gregory of Pelagoni was the main leader in the translation, because every letter bears his marks. The people who helped him knew his principles and worked according to them, but they did not always manage to give an accurate and clear translation.

Over time, during reproduction, the translated collection of the Damascene Studite lost its original title "Skrovishte", where the Slavic written and literary collections were renamed "Damaskini". But what was important is that mainly in literacy, the folk foundation of the language in which such anthologies were written, and thus the local (for modern conditions, national) linguistic differentiation in relation to other Slavic linguistic environments was more experimentally affirmed. (Velev, 2009: 28)



Fragment of the Krnin damascene

### **The Damascene tradition in Macedonian literary-historical and literary development**

From the second half of the 16th to the end of the 18th century, accelerated development processes took place in Macedonia, which highlighted the manifestations of new enlightenment ideas, as harbingers of the renaissance of the 19th century. Enlightenment manifestations that resulted from the emergence of Damascene literature later developed as harbingers of the popular awakening in the Renaissance. But despite the fact that the Damaskini are not original literary manifestations, they played a significant role in the enlightenment of the people in the period from the 16th to the 19th century, where elements of the Macedonian vernacular began to enter the Church Slavonic language.

In the 16th century, the initial impulse to introduce the vernacular into the written tradition was accepted by medieval writers from a specific person who served the Patriarchate of Constantinople, affirming the tendency to gradually apply the vernacular in liturgical sermons, teaching and literary literacy. We are talking about the modern Greek writer Damascene Studite, originally from the Macedonian city of Thessaloniki, and his outstanding work "Θησαυρός" - "Treasure". The aforementioned work of his, with 36 religious-instructional words dedicated to major Christian holidays, general Christian saints, various teachings, etc., is a typological collection with a preaching-moralizing content layer, the texts

of which were written in modern Greek vernacular. At the very beginning, these texts represented in the Sokroviste collection were intended for reading only in church-monastery environments, and soon their enlightening idea recruited the wider reader's attention and gradually these contents acquired the status of popular (popular) literary compositions. It resulted in already certain Damascene ones collections to be present more widely and in private homes, as a kind of favorite "home reading".

In the Damascene collection itself, 36 lives and festive words with religious and moral-instructive content are represented. The lyrics were mainly dedicated to the great Christian holidays associated with Jesus Christ and the Mother of God. The following four editions during his lifetime testify to the rapid popularity of the work Sokroviste, and immediately after his death in 1577 two more editions were published. It is assumed that until the end of the 19th century, this collection experienced more than 50 editions. In the written tradition and in the scientific study itself, such collections began to be identified under the name Damaskini, and immediately after its original creation, the Collection was translated into the Church Slavonic language by the Pelagonian bishop Gregory, which testifies that the original Slavic translation of the Damascene collection was performed in Macedonian terrain from a Macedonian spiritual and literary protagonist.

In further literary activity, all mixed anthologized collections were called that, among which there were those that did not have any of the words of the Damascene Studite. But all of them mainly contained texts of a religious and instructive character. In the later transcripts, in addition to Damascene's words, in this type of collections, words and lessons from other authors, apocryphal texts, stories with religious and secular themes, etc. found a place. Many researchers in science called the new collections from the Damascene tradition with the simpler terminology "mixed collections". The interesting content, as well as the available vernacular language in which the compositions were written, became the main reasons for the great popularity of damascenes in the Macedonian "late Middle Ages" - that is, in the period of enlightenment between the 16th and 18th centuries, and especially in the 19th century. Several copies of Damascene collections have been preserved on the territory of Macedonia, and the more famous of them are the Krnina Damascene and the



Damascene collections of the Macedonian writer from the 18th century Josif Bradati.

It is inevitable to note that the new period in the development of the Macedonian literary-historical and written tradition begins with the appearance of the Macedonian translation of the Damascene, where it raised the Macedonian vernacular to the level of a literary language. In that way, literary processes gradually began to emerge from the basic canonical cliché and to animate the contents closer to the wider reading public, and with such popular literary and written utterances to stimulate the tendency to penetrate and develop enlightened ideas in spiritual and cultural life. During the 17th century, the Damascene collections began to suffer new structural and textological re-editing, where their contents began to give way to new original or compilation compositions, which no longer served for liturgical purposes, but they acquired a new function of reading texts . However, despite the forced spirit of an enlightening charge, their basic textual characteristic remained in the domain of moral-educational messages proclaimed by Christian ideology - but enriched with a more liberated impression during the reader's experience. In this development period, from the Damascene literary profile, the content structures began to be enriched with biographical compositions, or also with instructive works of distinguished church fathers and early Christian writers, such as "The Teachings of Chrysostom", "Words selected by ancient philosophers", etc.

In this period of literary development, such anthologies were written in a more accessible vernacular, while the preserved transcripts represent sources with a variety of vernacular dialects. Churches and monasteries continued to have the role of main literary and scriptorial centers in which the new enlightenment ideas and other types of development and ideological tendencies were developed. The revived enlightening manifestations announced by the public proclamations of Theophanes Eleavulks, as well as of his student Damascene Studite, were already put into a more direct function of modernizing the ecclesiastical sermons to get a stronger rhetorical impression and to be pronounced in a language closer to the mass popular understanding. It was also necessary to take into account that the contents of the new preaching compositions should be expanded with topics related to their daily preoccupations and the popular reasoning. With such enlightening nuances, the religious

content about the exploits of the martyrs for the faith under the pressures of infidel Islamic behavior was experienced more impressively towards the Christian population. That is why the messages from the lives of the new martyrs who suffered because of the refusal to accept Islam became a general popular philosophy to accept suffering as spiritual food. Compositions from other social and humanistic areas of general interest, such as topics from the fields of psychology, philosophy, linguistics, history, geography, medicine, astrology and other related fields, began to be added to the already profiled content structure of the Damascene anthologies.

### **Establishing the continuity of the Macedonian literary language**

Damascene literature began to become more and more relevant and as an already established written practice in the period after the abolition of the Ohrid archbishopric in 1767, because with that act the center of the development of spirituality among the people, which simultaneously supported Slavic education, was destroyed. In the cities, as well as in some villages, through the churches and schools, during that period the Greek language was introduced and the strong Phanariot assimilation influence took place. At that time, the Damascene oral and written preaching spread mainly through the monasteries. Only a small number of collections written and compiled in this spirit are preserved in the treasuries of our country, while most of them, in the 19th century, were taken to other mainly neighboring and Slavic countries, especially to Bulgaria, Serbia, Montenegro, Croatia or Russia . So, for example, a Damascene from the 18th century and the Damascene from Tetovo from the 19th century were taken to Bulgaria, and the Damascene from Brzhdan from the 19th century, written in the Mijak vernacular, was taken to the University Library in Belgrade. The case is identical with many other collections and texts, created on the soil of Macedonia. The idea of these collections, to write in a language understandable to the people, led to an even greater weakening of the authority of the old spelling tradition. In the 18th and 19th centuries, every Damascene wrote in his native dialect with a touch of church - Slavicisms, Russianisms (from the printed books that came from Russia), Serbianisms, Bulgarianisms or Turkishisms. It depended on the education, on the social environment from which the author came, on the template he used, etc. In particular, we should take

into account the fact that the long-term Turkish slavery left sensitive traces (in terms of language) in the works of our revivalists Kiril Pejčinović and Joakim Krčovski, so that in their texts written in the Damascene spirit, one can notice the gradual penetration of Turkishisms and other linguistic influences (Mironska-Hristovska, 2005).

These Damascene words, alone or together with others of the holy fathers, were reworked in the following period in an older or newer language, in abbreviated form, as a reading for the people. But in any case, each damascener played a role on the next writer and scribe, thereby contributing to the very process of creating a new tradition of writing in the vernacular. The development line of the Damascene language from the 16th to the 19th century presupposes several mediators. But there is no question of a more precise transmission of this enlightening phenomenon, because damascening itself shared the fate of the entire literary and written heritage to be destroyed, blown up or alienated.

The need to nurture writing in the vernacular proved to be necessary to later serve as a basis for the creation of the Macedonian standardized literary language. We perceive and prove the continuity of this process not only through the Damascene tradition, but also through various records in the preserved manuscript heritage and in numerous inscriptions on churches and monasteries. Among the first printed texts in the Macedonian language is the dictionary "Quitrelakhnik" by Danail of Moscow, for the printing of which the Bitola Metropolitan Nektarios gave material assistance. There are several assumptions about the exact date of publication of this dictionary (Georgievski, 1972).

It should be noted that the spread of the vernacular language expression in literacy occurred spontaneously. In the dominant spiritual and cultural environment, the Church Slavonic typologized language expression preserved its primacy, but in the wider proclaimed spiritual or cultural movements and teachings, the folk language expression began to become a functional means for the realization of the new enlightenment ideas.

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