

Translations of Patristic Literature in South-Eastern Europe

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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)

Edited by

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FOREWORD

For more than two centuries the reception of patristic texts has been an important area of philological research on South-East European culture in the Middle Ages. There are many reasons for the lasting scholarly interest in this topic. To name but a few: a) translation is the main means of transferring ideas and spiritual as well as literary values in the Byzantine commonwealth; b) translations account for close to ninety percent of the literary production in the Balkans from the ninth century to the modern period, and a considerable part of them is made up of translations of patristic texts; c) patristic texts rank very highly in the hierarchy of medieval genres, immediately below biblical and liturgical texts, and therefore the tradition of translations begins already at the dawn of the Slavonic written tradition, and in the course of many centuries it is constantly enriched with new texts and authors or with new versions of already known works; d) translated literature and patristic texts in particular play an important role in the development and the codification of written languages in the course of a millennium; e) the analysis of the reception and the textual tradition of translated works often disclose little known aspects of cultural contacts from the Mediterranean to the Baltic Sea.

Considerations based on the factors enumerated above led to the initiative to propose a congress session devoted to *Les traductions de la littérature patristique dans le Sud-Est européen / Translations of Patristic Literature in South-East Europe* to be included in the programme of the Twelfth Congress of South-East European Studies in Bucharest (2-6 September 2019). The initial impulse came from Prof. Zamfira Mihail, the doyenne of Romanian palaeoslavistics. The panel originally aimed at presenting research results from the field of translations into Slavonic, with a thematic focus on patristic writings (from the end of the second to the eighth century AD). The extended area of interest included into the final programme covered works of writers, among them also those of Christian teachers, up to the beginning of the eighteenth century. The two sessions of the section, hosted by the Library of the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church, found a positive resonance. On the suggestion of Dr. Andrei Timotin, the president of the organising committee of the congress, it was decided to publish the papers.

The present volume includes articles that are extended versions of the papers read at the congress, but also contributions by invited authors who could not be present at the scholarly meeting in Bucharest. The publication, just like

the section underlying it, does not and cannot pretend to deal with the topic in all its complexity, because the wealth of objects of research and of scholarly approaches clearly makes such an endeavour impossible, even if it were to be treated in a multi-volume series. The twelve papers published in this volume instead present a mosaic of the many and variegated aspects of the influence of patristic literature on the literary development in this region of the Byzantine commonwealth, an influence that lasted many centuries.

Seen from the receiving side of this influence the papers fall into two groups, concentrating on the reception of the patristic heritage in the (South-)Slavonic and the Romanian literatures, respectively, the first one not only starting earlier and being much longer, but also being the topic of the majority of the papers. On the basis of specific patristic texts or text corpora the twelve papers discuss a wide range of scholarly topics referring to works of John Chrysostom, Origen, Gregory of Nazianzus, Ephrem the Syrian, Proclus of Constantinople, Pseudo-Athanasius and other known or anonymous Church authors. Particular attention is being paid to the establishment of the Greek source for the Slavonic translations; to the reception of specific texts in Bulgarian, Croatian, and Romanian culture; to questions of translation technique and text tradition; to the incorporation and interpretation of patristic fragments in later texts; to problems of textual criticism and of the edition of South Slavonic translations. The publication of some patristic texts that appear as appendices to some papers show various forms of scholarly editions of medieval Slavonic translations and enrich the textual basis of today's palaeoslavistic studies. The reception in Romanian literature is represented in a survey study of the first translations into Romanian of patristic texts and their language and in a paper dealing with the prehistory of miscellanies compiled from texts of the Church Fathers and showing a stable structure and stable contents.

The textology and exegesis of the texts, the perspective of comparative philology and the skilful integration of results obtained from the auxiliary sciences led to notable results in this field. Each new publication following this path is a step forward towards an ever more complete version of the global image of the universe of the patristic writings in South-Eastern Europe and their history. The contributions gathered in this volume will, it is hoped, enrich and deepen our understanding of the reception and the circulation of the texts analysed and their accumulation, and will thus emphasise the impact these writings had, as a constitutive element, on the culture of this region of the Old Continent.

Z. Mihail, R. Marti and L. Taseva

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