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SEMANTIC HIERARCHY AND THE OLD BULGARIAN GENITIVE-ACCUSATIVE

The thesis of the present paper is that the distribution of the genitive-accusative singular of old Bulgarian (according to author's terminology 'Old Church Slavonic' — editors' note) masculine nouns with genitive in *-a* was governed by a semantic hierarchy such that the higher the position of a noun in this hierarchy, the more likely was the accusative to be homonymous with the genitive, whereas the lower the position, the more likely was the accusative to be homonymous with the nominative.[1] This hierarchy, at the time of the earliest translations, was valid for such nouns under prepositional as well as direct object rection. The nouns сънъ 'son' and господь 'lord' originally with genitive in *-u* and *-i*, respectively, were gradually drawn into this hierarchy, acquiring a genitive-accusative in *-a*.

It the language of the earliest translators this hierarchy encompassed three lexical classes of noun, giving the following order of ranks: —

(I) Proper personal nouns, including богъ 'God'.

(II) Common human nouns denoting males other than infants.

(III) Inanimate masculine nouns.

Nouns denoting animals, supernatural beings (other than God), and infants raise special problems which will be discussed at the end of this paper.

Proper personal nouns and the noun богъ are attested in the accusative singular masculine much more frequently than are common human nouns. Amongst the very large number of examples attested for this rank, only the following examples are attested in the nominative-accusative: —

(1) J 8.57 Zo авраамъ ли есн видѣлъ. (Mar Ass авраама) 'Have you seen Abraham?'

(2) Supr 222.24—5 аште ли да вѣроуѣшн въ господь нашъ Іс Хс '.. if you believe in our Lord Jesus Christ ...'

(3) Cloz 10b.26 гъ хъ водатъ '... they are leading the Lord Christ ..

(4) Cloz 12b.20—21 потъкж са въ акроугонне і камень хъ (Supr 448.17 хса) '... they struck against the cornerstone, Christ ...'

[1] For some references to the literature on linguistic hierarchy in general, see the literature cited in Huntley (in press). See also, Timberlake (1975). In a previous article on genitive-accusative in Slavic in general, Huntley (1980) I failed to recognize the role played by hierarchy at various times in various Slavic dialects.

(5) Lk 12.21 Zo Mar Ass не въ бъ богатѣıа (Sav ба) '... not becoming rich

(6) Supr 84.18 обешть бо оць имѫтъ богъ 'for they have God as their common father ...'

Of these examples, the first is the least significant, since the *Marianus* and the *Assemanianus* may represent the original reading, while the *Zographensis* text may be simply a secondary scribal error. With respect to Examples (2) — (4), Meillet (1897:45, 68) states that the unusual proper noun nominative-accusatives arise from the influence of господь and камень. Indeed, it is most likely that the distribution of the two types of accusative singular was at least partially governed by various syntactic and semantic constraints. However, no such constraints would appear to operate in Examples (5) and (6). In view of the fact that within the lexical items assigned here to rank (I), those attested in Examples (2) — (6) are the most frequently attested with many examples in the genitive-accusative, it is clear that within this rank genitive-accusative singular was the norm, while nominative-accusative was marginally permissible.

Common human masculine nouns are much more rarely attested in the accusative singular than are proper personal nouns. In the four Old Bulgarian Gospel manuscripts which give us the best attested evidence concerning the language of the original translators, for common human nouns there are only twenty-nine lexical items attested in the accusative singular, mostly in only one or two examples. Nineteen lexical items out of this small corpus are attested only with the genitive-accusatives: — воина 'soldier', дѣлателѣ 'worker', жениха 'bridegroom', кръстителѣ 'Baptist', мытарѣ 'tax-gatherer', отрока 'boy', отьца 'father' (but in probably younger translations there occurs nominative-accusative in Example (6) above and in Supr 81.17—18 вѣрующштнімъ въ оцъ и сна и стъıн духа '... of those believing in the Father and Son and Holy Spirit...' probably triggered by сънъ and by духъ, a spirit noun), подруга neighbour', правьдьника 'just man', пришьлыца 'proselyte', пророка 'prophet', слѣпыца 'blind man', спекулатора 'executioner', съвѣдѣтелѣ 'witness', съвазьнѣ prisoner', сътьника 'centurion', оученика 'disciple', оучителѣ 'teacher', цѣсарѣ 'king',

Apart from сънъ and господь, there are ten common human masculine nouns attested in the four Gospel manuscripts with both nominative-accusative and genitive-accusative. Thus over one-third of the lexical items of rank (II) attested in the Gospels have at least one example of the nominative-accusative, so that within this rank nominative-accusative is more permissible than for rank (I): — братъ 'brother' Mt 18.15 Mar (брата Ass Sav, братра Zo(b)), господинъ 'master' Mt 20.11 Mar (господина Ass Zo(b)), длъжьникъ 'debtor' Mt 18.24 Mar Ass Zo(b), другъ 'friend' L 11.5 Zo Mar (друга Ass Sav), пастъıрь 'shepherd' Mt 26.31 Mar (пастъıрѣ Zo Ass), мѫжь 'husband' J 4. Mar (мѫжа Zo Ass), приставьникъ 'steward' L 16.1 Zo Mar, рабъ 'slave' Mk 12.2 Zo Mar, Mk 12.4 Zo Mar, L 20.10 Zo Mar, 20.11 Zo Mar, L 17.7 Zo Mar Sav (раба Ass), L 7.3 Zo (раба Mar Ass Sav), L 14.17 Mar (раба Ass, рабъı Zo Sav), раз-

воинникъ 'robber' L 22.52 Mar (разбоинника Zo), человѣкъ 'man' Mt 9.32 Zo Mar (человѣка Ass Sav).[2]

Meillet (56—61), with special reference to the nominative-accusative рабъ, points out that there is a tendency for the optional nominative-accusative to be used when the noun is indefinite. There is a small amount of evidence, not only from Old Bulgarian, but also from Old East Slavic that the distinction definite : indefinite was one of the semantic features triggering the choice between genitive-accusative and nominative-accusative.[3]

Meillet (25—30) discounts the significance of certain inanimate genitive-accusative singular masculine nouns attested in Old Bulgarian. On the other hand, Vaillant (1964 : 176—80) and Lépissier (1964: *passim*) have produced convincing arguments showing that even inanimate nouns could have an optional genitive-accusative at the time of the earliest translations. There is, indeed, at least one example that would lead one to argue in favour of such a conclusion: —

(7) J 3.16 Mar Ass Sav (Zo abest) Тако бо бъ възлюбн мира ѣко сна своего нноужддаго дастъ 'For so God loved the world that he gave his only son ...'

There is no reason to suppose that мира is genitive, rather than genitive-accusative in Example (7), since a few lines later the same verb възлюбнти unambiguously governs two nouns in the accusative: — J 3.19 Mar і възлюбнша человцн паче тъмж неже свѣтъ '... and men loved the darkness rather than the light ...'. Now from Examples (5) and (6) above it is highly likely that at the time of the first translations the form богъ could be accusative, with бога only as the highly preferred form. In this case an accusative миръ in Example (7) would have made it unclear as to whether the meaning ought to be 'God loved the world' or whether it ought to be 'it was God that the world loved'. Since nominative-accusative is still an optional form for human nouns, it is the genitive-accusative мира which makes the translation in Example (7) unambiguous. Inanimate nouns are attested in the Gospels far more frequently in the accusative singular masculine than are personal or human nouns, but nearly always in the nominative-accusative and only rarely in the genitive-accusative. For this reason, inanimate nouns must be placed at the bottom of the hierarchy proposed here.

There is not a single example in the Gospels for nouns denoting supernatural beings, infants and animals where the genitive-accusative is clearly a primary reading. Indeed amongst these types of noun there is only one example where the genitive-accusative might be the primary reading: —

(8) J 10.12 Zo Mar Sav виднтъ влька градящта (Ass влъкъ градштъ) '... he sees the wolf coming ...'

Altogether in the Gospels there are only ten examples attested of animal nouns, and Example (8) is the only instance where any of the four manuscripts has a genitive-accusative. Meillet (63) may well be correct in claiming accusative in (8) is a secondary reading. The only conclusion one may draw

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[2] For these items, the account given in Vaillant (1964 : 178) is preferable to that given in Meillet (45—6, 51—61).

[3] For an Old East Slavic example, see Huntley (1980 : 206—7), and Klenin (1983 : 94—5).

from the poorly attested corpus of supernatural, infant and animal nouns in the masculine accusative singular in the Gospel manuscripts, is that there is no clear evidence that these types of noun occured in the genitive-accusative in the language of the earliest translators.

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