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ΥΡΖΤΖΙ Η ΡΨΖΙ

For students of the beginnings of Slavonic literacy, the intellectual climate in which the *Treatise on the Letters* was written has been a natural focus of attention. Only one direct source for this text has been established, a Byzantine grammatical treatise variously identified as the *Grammatica* of (Pseudo-)Theodosius of Alexandria or as commentary on the *Ars grammatica* ascribed to Dionysius Thrax¹. This was first pointed out by Jagić, whose comprehensive analysis has since been further refined by Dostál and Ziffer (Ягич 1896: 311–315; Dostál 1963; Ziffer 1995). At the same time Jagić identified certain elements of the treatise which, although not taken from identifiable sources, were current in Byzantine thought of the time, and could be found expressed by Byzantine writers from whom they might indirectly have been derived. Specifically, he mentions the *Praeparatio evangelica* of Eusebius of Caesarea, Suidas, the *Quaestiones in Genesim* and *Graecorum affectionum curatio* of Theodoret of Cyrillus, the *Stromata* of Clement of Alexandria and the Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitiones*. The list has since been expanded to include Epiphanius of Salamis, George Hamartolus, Gregory Nazianzen (Иванова 1983) and the Apocalypse of Baruch (Петканова 1981: 7). However, although Chrabrŭ was familiar with the ideas, there is no evidence of anything other than Theodosius/Dionysius as a direct influence on his work (Дуйчев 1943: 203–207). After an extensive survey of this background (Кувев 1967: 56–71), Kuev concludes that the questions discussed were „достояние на широк кръг просветени хора“, so that it is not surprising that they are reflected in Chrabrŭ’s treatise. Like other leading figures in the generation immediately following SS Cyril and Methodius, Chrabrŭ was bicultural, and wrote in Slavonic within the tradition of Byzantine literature. Though he had clearly made good use of his monastery’s library, the precise composition of his

¹ “Si è continuato a identificare la fonte greca perlopiù nello Pseudo-Teodosio, quando più corretto sarebbe stato parlare di scoli alla *Grammatica* di Dionisio Trace” (Ziffer 1995: 561).

reading, perhaps for this very reason, has proved resistant to the considerable investigation of which it has been the object².

This Byzantine background has further been brought to bear on the famous opening sentence of the treatise, Πρῆξδε οὐβω σωβῆνε νε ἡμῆχῶ κνη|γῶ · η̄π γρῶταμη ἡ ρῆζαμη γῶτῆ|χῶ ἡ γατααχῶ πογανη σῶμῆ³, by juxtaposing it with a passage from Dionysius Thrax: γράμματα δὲ λέγεται διὰ τὸ γραμμαῖς καὶ ξυσμαῖς τυποῦσθαι. γράψαι γὰρ τὸ ξῦσαι παρὰ τοῖς παλαιοῖς (Ziffer 2001: 708). This was a commonplace of Greek grammatical or lexicographical literature, sometimes, as here, with a reference to the *Iliad*, XI.388, νῦν δέ μ' ἐπιγράψας ταρσὸν ποδὸς εὔχεαι αὐτῶς⁴. While the parallel is indubitable, it seems paradoxical that Chrabrū should utilise a definition of letters when his point, in referring to these marks, is that they were not letters. If, however, we divorce the idea from this particular passage of Dionysius, we find that the connexion between writing and incising was indeed very well established in the Greek mind, though the verb is less often ξύω than its near-synonym γλύφω.

This association goes back at least as far as Herodotus (*Histories*, 2.46.2): γράφουσι τε δὴ καὶ γλύφουσι οἱ ζωγράφοι καὶ οἱ ἀγαλματοποιοὶ τοῦ Πανὸς τῶγαλμα κατὰ περ Ἑλληνες αἰγοπρόσωπον καὶ τραγοσκελέα⁵. The distinction here is between painting and carving, and this is, indeed, by far the most frequent usage, persisting well into the Byzantine period. Hypatius of Ephesus (died c. 541) uses the words similarly: παρακινεῖν δὲ αὐθις φῆς τὴν θείαν παράδοσιν τοὺς ὁμοίως τὰ σεπτὰ καὶ προσκυνητὰ γραφαῖς καὶ γλυφαῖς ἐπὶ τῶν ἱερῶν ἀνατιθέντας⁶. The words do not always refer to images, however, nor is there always a contrast between media. Thus Clement of Alexandria (*Stromata* 5.4.21) writes: τοὺς γοῦν τῶν βασιλέων ἐπαίνους, θεολογουμένοις μύθοις παραδιδόντες, ἀναγράφουσι διὰ τῶν ἀναγλύφων ([The Egyptians] write down the praises of their kings by means of carved inscriptions, transmitting them in myths about the gods). The two roots seem almost equivalent in Planudes' translation of Boethius (*De consolatione philosophiae*, lib. 5, metr. 4), ut quondam celeri stilo | mos

² “Maggiore attenzione si è rivolta invece alla ricerca di altri testi greci che Chrabr avrebbe potuto conoscere e utilizzare, senza tuttavia scoprire nulla più di passi paralleli che più o meno somigliano al testo slavo, ma che non provano alcuna relazione con esso” (Ziffer 1995: 561–562).

³ Transcribed from the Laurentian miscellany, written in 1348 (РНБ, F. I. 376, f. 101v), as reproduced in Киев 1967: 421, and taken as the base text for the critical edition by Alda Giambelluca Kossova (Джамбелука-Коссова 1980). Veder argues for ρῆζαημη as the better reading (Veder 1999: 90), but this makes no difference to the present study.

⁴ “But now, having marked my foot, you boast for no reason.” Diomedes is making light of a wound from an arrow which has in fact not merely grazed, but transfixed his foot. Dionysius' argument seems rather strained.

⁵ This refers to two activities, not two means of representation: the statue, as was the custom of the ancient Greeks (or, in this case, the Egyptians) was first carved and then painted.

⁶ *Σύμμικτα ζητήματα*, 1.5. Greek text in Thümmel 1992: 320–321; English translation in Alexander 1952: “You say that those who set up in the sanctuaries what is revered and worshipped, in the form of paintings and carvings alike, are once again disturbing the divine tradition.”

est aequare paginae | quae nullas habeat notas | pressas figure litteras, which he renders as ὡς που και τροχαλή γραφίς | εἴθισται σελίσιν βίβλου, | ἀγράπτοις ἐτ' ἔοντεσι, | μορφοῦν εὐγλυφα γράμματα. It should, however, be noted that the image is one of a stylus, which forms the letters by pressing them into the page rather than by leaving marks on its surface (even though the word for it, γραφίς, is from the same root as the word denoting the latter action, γράφω). A like similarity of meaning is seen in the astrological treatise *De duodecim signorum decanis*⁷: Τρίτος δεκανὸς καλεῖται· Ἀμπάναν Τζένγγιχ· γράφεται δὲ ἐπὶ ἀρότρῳ ἢ γλύφεται ἐπὶ τοῖς τῶν βοῶν κέρασι καὶ ποιεῖ εὐφορεῖν τὰ σπέρματα. Here it is not even clear that there was any difference in the means by which the name was inscribed. Perhaps the clearest example of their verbal association, though, is that in which the actual meaning of the words is irrelevant, that is, their use by the grammarians as examples, such as that by George Choeroboscus: ἀναδιπλασιάζεται ὁ παρακείμενος, οἷον ἔγραφον γέγραφα, ἔγλυφον γέγλυφα...⁸

It seems most probable, therefore, than in writing ϣϣϣϣ Η Η ϣϣϣϣ, Chrabrŭ was doing no more than Slavonicising the vague and commonplace Greek expression γραφαῖς καὶ γλυφαῖς, and that no more specific meaning should be read into it. His immediate audience, at a time when there were still people living who had seen Cyril and Methodius, were certainly aware of the various marks (or perhaps drawings) that the pagan Slavs had used for reckoning and divination. These practices would not have died out immediately after their conversion (and indeed there was no reason for Christians to disapprove of the former, and tally sticks were used for centuries all over Europe). It was reasonable, therefore, for Chrabrŭ to state at the outset that these familiar marks did not amount to writing.

This has not prevented scholars over the years from interpreting the expression in a wide variety of ways⁹ as indicative of some sort of Slavonic writing-system existing before St Cyril's invention of an alphabet for the Slavs, a quest largely fuelled by the Soviet régime's irritation that Slavonic literacy should have originated in a Christian mission, and chiefly remarkable for its total failure, despite considerable effort, to discover any evidence in support of its thesis. The one peg on which all these theories were hung were the ϣϣϣϣ Η Η ϣϣϣϣ mentioned by Chrabrŭ; and if this is no more than an everyday Byzantine expression covering a wide variety of visual material, it becomes increasingly hard to see them as referring to a specific, still less a systematic practice of the early Slavs. No longer "circondati da un' aura di mistero" (Ziffer 2001: 707), they may be seen as no more than a passing reference by Chrabrŭ to the pre-literate background to the subject of his treatise.

⁷ Printed in Kroll 1903: 73–78. A *decan* is one of the three divisions of 10° of each sign of the Zodiac – in this case Scorpio – the name of which can be used, as here, for magical purposes.

⁸ *Prolegomena et scholia in Theodosii Alexandrini canones* – see Hilgard 1894: third pagination, 75.

⁹ Surveyed in Ziffer 2001: 707–708.

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(Summary)

The article revisits the famous expression $\Upsilon\rho\zeta\tau\zeta\iota$ η $\rho\iota\kappa\kappa\iota$, suggesting that it is simply a Slavonicisation of a commonplace Greek collocation $\gamma\rho\alpha\phi\alpha\iota$ και $\gamma\lambda\upsilon\phi\alpha\iota$ (examples are given from Greek writings) with no specific meaning, and that no special significance should be attached to it.

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