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The Genesis of the Modern Bulgarian Literary Language

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Abstract

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Old Bulgarian and New Bulgarian are structurally strikingly different. Although the Bulgarian literary language can be looked upon as continuous since its inception in the late 9th century, this fact nonetheless makes it possible to pinpoint the genesis of the modern Bulgarian literary language (MBLL). In the scholarly literature, several such suggestions have been made. The present thesis analyses two of them in detail: the early damascenes, i.e. the religious and edifying literature of the early 17th century, and Paisij Chilandarski's history book *Istorija slavenobolgarskaja* of 1762.

The analysis is carried out against a broad general background covering the historical and political setting, the general characteristics of literary languages (LLs) and early attempts at a codification of the MBLL.

The general characteristics of LLs are present in fully developed LLs, but are only fragmentarily present at their genesis. In analysing the genesis of the MBLL, the following criteria are, therefore, primarily used: grammatical structure, linguistic norm (grammatical and orthographic), linguistic conception on the part of the authors, break of tradition (linguistic and extralinguistic), and significance for the future development (linguistic and extralinguistic).

It is argued that although connected with extralinguistic circumstances, the formation of an LL is basically a linguistic question. For this reason, the answer to the question when the MBLL has its genesis must be based primarily on linguistic arguments. These may then be supplemented, but not overruled, by arguments of an extralinguistic nature.

The analysis shows that the early 17th century damascenes fulfil all the necessary linguistic requirements, whereas Paisij's book does not. This excludes *Istorija slavenobolgarskaja* as the point of genesis of the MBLL. However, if we prefer to see that point at the early damascenes or later depends on whether we also wish some extralinguistic requirements not present in the damascenes to be fulfilled. As exemplified by some other LLs, there is, in principle, no such need. The conclusion is therefore that any account of the genesis and formation of the MBLL must one way or another begin with the structurally New Bulgarian language of the early damascenes.

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