

Alexander Lubotsky

Alanic Marginal Notes
in a Greek Liturgical Manuscript

ÖSTERREICHISCHE AKADEMIE DER WISSENSCHAFTEN
PHILOSOPHISCH-HISTORISCHE KLASSE
SITZUNGSBERICHTE, 859. BAND

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ALEXANDER LUBOTSKY

ALANIC MARGINAL NOTES
IN A GREEK LITURGICAL
MANUSCRIPT

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1. PREFACE

“На примере Зеленчукской надписи видно, что аланы-осетины прибегали в отдельных случаях к греческому письму для составления эпитафий на своем языке, быть может и для других целей... Новые находки такого же порядка вполне вероятны.” (АБАЕВ 1949: 43)

(The Zelenčuk inscription demonstrates that the Alans-Ossetians sometimes resorted to the Greek alphabet for writing epitaphs in their own language, and perhaps also for other purposes... New findings of a similar nature are quite likely.)

In 1992, while studying Byzantine liturgical manuscripts in the library of the Academy of Sciences in St. Petersburg, Sysse ENGBERG of the University of Copenhagen discovered a manuscript with some thirty marginal notes. The notes were written in Greek characters, but the language of the majority of them was not Greek. Back in Copenhagen, ENGBERG showed the glosses to her colleagues, who suspected that they were written in an Iranian language, possibly in a pre-stage of Ossetic. The specialists on Ossetic, however, strongly doubted this attribution, and ENGBERG posted some of the notes on “the Linguist-list” with a request to the linguists of the world to help her to identify the language.¹ It is in this way that the marginalia have come to my attention. I wrote to Sysse ENGBERG and confirmed to her the Alanic, or pre-Ossetic, provenance of the notes. Already in 1949, АБАЕВ surmised that Alans must have used the Greek alphabet on some scale for writing their language (his words are used above as an epigraph), and the discovery of the marginal notes has provided a brilliant proof of his point of view.

At the beginning, Sysse ENGBERG and I were planning to prepare a joint edition of the Alanic marginal notes: in 1993 and in 1994 we had two working sessions – one in Leiden and one in Copenhagen – when we discussed the major principles of the edition and started to write the commentary. ENGBERG translated most of the Greek headings, filled in the abbreviations, and started writing the description of the manuscript, while I was responsible for the linguistic analysis. Soon after that, ENGBERG unfortunately had to

¹ This request can still be consulted on the web, <http://linguistlist.org/issues/3/3-596.html>. In 2007, S.M. PEREVALOV published an analysis of these “Linguist-list” notes.

stop working on the edition due to personal circumstances, and I continued to work on the notes alone.

In 2002, the late Vitalij Mixajlovič GUSALOV approached me with a request to write an article about the discovery of the marginal notes for the journal *Nartamongæ*, of which he was editor-in-chief at the time. On the basis of materials which had been prepared for the edition, I then compiled a preliminary report, which appeared in 2004 (ENGBERG – LUBOTSKY 2003 [2004]). In 2011, I published one more marginal note together with my Moscow colleague S.A. IVANOV (IVANOV – LUBOTSKY 2011).

The purpose of the present edition is to finally put a complete collection of the Alanic marginal notes at the disposal of the scholarly community. The interpretation of the notes, given below, is necessarily preliminary and will no doubt be improved in the future.

The edition owes much to Sysse ENGBERG, whose profound knowledge of the Byzantine manuscripts and liturgy was instrumental at the initial stages of working on the edition. I am further indebted to Rüdiger SCHMITT, Velizar SADOVSKY and Michael JANDA for critical remarks on an earlier version of the book and to S.A. IVANOV (Moscow) for sharing with me his photographs of the manuscript Q12.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to the Library of the Academy of Sciences (Библиотека Академии Наук) in St. Petersburg for granting me permission to publish the marginal notes.

2. DESCRIPTION OF THE MANUSCRIPT

2.1. The manuscript St. Petersburg, Library of the Academy of Sciences (Библиотека Академии Наук), Q12 is a Greek Old Testament lectionary, or Prophetologion. The Prophetologion is a book which contains the Old Testament lections in the order in which they are read during the liturgical year. Individual scribes have found different solutions to the problem of the chronological arrangement of the fixed and the movable feasts in relation to each other, a fact that explains why some of the users of the book have had difficulty in finding their way through their manuscript. An arrangement found in many Prophetologion manuscripts begins with Christmas (December 25) and Epiphany (January 6), followed by the movable year, i.e. the readings for the weekdays of Lent from Wednesday before Carnival, up to and including Easter Eve. Then come the readings for the vespers of the Tri-

odion period, i.e. until Sunday after Pentecost (κυριακή τῶν ἁγίων πάντων), and finally the fixed year, from September to August.

Each liturgical day has a heading which tells when the particular feast occurs during the movable or the fixed year. In the Lenten period, the heading will specify the day of the week, and the week within Lent, e.g. Friday of the Third week of Lent (τῆ παρασκευῆ τῆς ἑβδομάδος τῶν νηστειῶν). Each of the feasts in the Triodion period has its particular name, e.g. Sunday of the Holy Fathers (κυριακή τῶν ἁγίων πατέρων). The headings of the fixed feasts normally carry both the date and the Saint of the feast, e.g. November 13, St. John Chrysostom (μηνὶ νοεμβρίῳ γ' τῆ παραμονῆ τοῦ ἁγίου ἰωάννου τοῦ χρυσοστόμου).

This is the arrangement found in the St. Petersburg manuscript, the major part of which was copied in A.D. 1275 by a certain Ἰωάννης ἀναγνωστοδιάκονος (deacon responsible for the recital of the Holy Scripture in church; for the other hands see § 3). He did not copy the manuscript for himself, but for a priest named Χρυσός who commissioned it. Unfortunately, this is all we are told about these two gentlemen by the subscription on the last folio of the manuscript; the scribe has not added particulars about the geographical location, neither of himself, nor of the prospective owner.

We have also no information on the provenance of the manuscript: the inventory of the Library (Index s.a.: f. 4) only states that it was acquired in 1862.² The manuscript itself does not give us any clue as to where it was copied. It is written on paper, with two columns to the page, and the model from which it was copied belonged to the Constantinopolitan, as opposed to the monastic, tradition. It could have been copied almost anywhere within the Byzantine sphere of influence, except in Italy.

The manuscript contains 138 folios, some of which are severely damaged: folio 7 only has one column, folios 126–138 miss part of the margins and some text. In 1964, the manuscript was thoroughly restored.

At one point, the manuscript was owned and used by a non-Greek who had learned to read and write Greek, and who lived in a Greek Orthodox society where Greek served as the liturgical language. This possessor felt the need to identify the feasts in the margin of his manuscript, because he could

² In IVANOV – LUBOTSKY 2011: 7, fn. 3, it is suggested that the manuscript was sold to the Library by a Russian officer (or his family) who had participated in the Caucasus War and brought it among his booty. For a parallel, see MALAXOV 1997: 35–36.

not easily find them by skimming the text, as a native Greek would have done.³

Supposedly, this man was entrusted with the recitation of the Holy Scripture in church and was sufficiently familiar with Greek to recite the readings, once he had located them in the manuscript. For this purpose, he wrote an abbreviated heading of his own in the margin, next to the full heading of the manuscript. The notes are always preceded by a cross. Some notes are in Greek, others in his native language written with Greek characters. Almost all feasts of the Triodion period and of the fixed year have received a marginal note in this way, but in the Lenten period only Monday of each week is marked.

The glossator had a good passive knowledge of Greek, and also of orthodox liturgy. He correctly identified abbreviations like χρ(υσοστόμου), ἀπό(το)μ(ην), etc., often transcribed the Greek heading freely and even sometimes abbreviated it. On the other hand, it is also obvious that the glossator, although he appears to be conversant in Greek, did not have an active knowledge of Greek morphology and syntax.

2.2. The native language of the glossator can be positively identified as a pre-stage of Ossetic, suffice it to mention the days of the week χουτζῶου πᾶν ‘Sunday’ (~ Oss. *x^wycawbon / xucawbon* ‘id.’) or ἄντεσηρ ‘Monday’ (~ Oss. Dig. *avdisær* ‘id.’). Instead of calling the language of the marginal notes Old Ossetic or Palaeo-Ossetic, I have decided to use the name Alanic, the name by which the language was known in Byzantium (cf. ABAEV 1949: 41ff. and passim; on Tzetzes see § 11).

The fact that we find Alanic notes in a Greek Prophetologion confirms the testimony of the Flemish Franciscan monk William of Rubruck (Wilhelm van Ruysbroeck), who was sent by the French king Louis IX as ambassador to the Mongol empire. Rubruck reports that when he was in the city of Orna near Don in A.D. 1253, a group of Alans (called there Aas) came to see him on Whitsunday; they were Christian according to the Greek rite, used the Greek alphabet and had Greek priests.⁴

³ A similar phenomenon appears in Prophetologia used in Arabic speaking countries.



























⁴ “In vigilia pentecostes venerunt ad nos quidam Alani qui ibi dicuntur Aas, christiani secundum ritum Grecorum et habentes litteras graecas et sacerdotes graecos” (cited after ALEMANY 2000: 154).

2.3. The exact date of the notes is difficult to determine. Since the glossator closely followed the paleographic habits of the original manuscript (see § 3), dating based on paleography is hardly feasible. On historical grounds, it is unlikely that the Alans would hold services in Greek after 1453, the fall of Constantinople, so that the marginal notes must have been written some time between A.D. 1275, the date of the manuscript, and A.D. 1453. The 13th or 14th century, before the slaughter of the Alans by Tamerlane's army at the end of 14th century, seems the most probable date.⁵






















































































3. PALEOGRAPHY

3.1. The manuscript is written by four different hands (cf. LEBEDEVA 1973: 49): the first scribe wrote folios 1-35v; the second wrote folios 36-42v; the third wrote folios 43-45v. The remainder (45v-138) was written by the same Ἰωάννης who also added the colophone (see § 2.1). The headings and the initials are generally (except for folios 36-42, the second hand) applied in vermilion.

The form of the letters in the Alanic notes and the paleographic habits of the glossator are quite reminiscent of the handwriting of the Greek scribe Ἰωάννης who has copied the larger part of the manuscript. In the table below, single letters and ligatures used in the notes are compared with those of the main text. With one exception (υρ on f. 120r), all letters from the Greek text are taken from folio 107r.

	Alanic notes	Greek text
A	(connected)  10r,  109v, (free)  113v,  130r  100r, (μα)  107r, (πα)  10r,  120r (ά)  21r,  107r,  128v (αμ)  116v (αν)  109v,  126v, (παν)  100r,  113v (αυ)  21r	  —    
B	 109v,  124v	

⁵ For the Latin and Byzantine sources on Christianisation of Alans, see ALEMANY 2000.

	Alanic notes	Greek text
Γ	 138r  109v	 
Ε	 21r,  45v,  107r	
Η	 21r,  37v,  45v,  69r,  100r,  113v,  116v,  130r	
Ζ	 116v,  108v (for τζ see s.v. τ)	 
Ι	 10r,  100r	
Κ	 10r,  100r,  107r,  116v,  137r	 
Λ	 113v,  128v,  130r	
Μ	 107r,  111v	
Ν	 10r,  100r,  116v,  124v	
Ο	 128v,  138r (ou)  109v,  100r	  
Π	 100r,  111v  10r,  100r,  128v	 
Ρ	 45v,  69r	
Σ	 10r,  45v (στ)  55v,  69r,  128v, but also  104r and  10r	  
Τ	 45v,  126v (τη)  10r,  111v,  111v',  124v (τζ)  100r,  100r',  108v,  109v	  —
Υ	(υρ)  69r,  109v	
Φ	 10r,  126v	
Χ	 100r,  113v	

It is obvious that the two systems are very similar, and here I would only like to discuss the differences between them.

(1) The distinction between a connected and a free alpha is the same in both systems, but the typical alpha in the Alanic notes with a long oblique