

**THE ENIGMATIC ATHENS PSALTER
(GREEK NATIONAL LIBRARY, MS 1797)**

MS 1797 in the Greek National Library presents an acknowledged problem to the palaeographer. In their descriptions, both M. Harisijadis (Харисијадис 1978: 206) and K. Stančev and A. Džurova (Станчев, Джуро̀ва 1981: 34) assign this psalter manuscript to the early fourteenth century but draw attention to a range of conservative features: the fine teratological initials for which Harisijadis finds the closest parallels in manuscripts of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the use by the main scribe of some letter forms more typical of the thirteenth than the fourteenth century and the minimal system of diacritics. Stančev and Džurova conclude that the manuscript was copied from a thirteenth-century exemplar, whose characteristics it to some extent reproduces, and that it was probably written in north-west Bulgaria or eastern Serbia. Harisijadis comes to similar conclusions, pointing out that, although the main scribe's practice is for the most part consonant with Serbian spelling habits of the period, his marked preference for ѣ deviates from Raška orthography. She suggests a provenance from some 'peripheral' area, on the Bulgarian border or in northern Greece, Macedonia or the Hilandar monastery on Mount Athos.

B. Jovanović-Stipčević (Јовановић-Стипчевић 1991) takes a different view of the Athens Psalter. She includes it in her study of early fourteenth-century Serbian manuscripts which employ ѣ, as well as ѡ, both in final position and internally in roots and prefixes, and so by implication refers it to Mount Athos, which she sees as the probable starting point for this orthographical development. Comprehensive data on the distribution of ѣ and ѡ would, as she says, be needed to elucidate their pattern of use in the sources which she cites, but it appears from the photographs of the relevant manuscripts published by D. Bogdanović (Богдановић 1978: Album, plates 22 (384), 23 (453), 24 (47), 26 (475), 27 (644), 31 (15), 32 (31), 48 (147), 60 (145)), A.-E. Tachiaos (Tachiaos 1981: № 11) and D. Trifunović (Трифуновић 1978: plates 1–5) that the Athens Psalter differs from them in two ways. Firstly, ѣ predominates and in a large part of the manuscript is used exclusively. The letter ѡ does occur, but infrequently and inconsistently: p. 35, 1.5 вѣсь свѣтъ; p. 36, 1.10 даль; p. 38, 1.15 скръвь; p. 50, 1.3 прѣмльчи but 1.4 прѣмльчиши, 1.5 сннзѣхѡдеши, 1.8 къ, ll. 12–15 ихъ x4, 1.14 дѣломъ, ll. 14–15 имъ x2, 1.15 вѣздаж[д]ь, 1.16 дѣль; p. 58, 1.14 есьмь; p. 59, ll. 4–5 ихъ x2; p. 67, 1.6 свидеть; p. 69, 1.9 порад[д]ють; p. 75, 1.4 заиметь; p. 86, 1.7 нощ[ь]; p. 97, 1.21 концихъ; p. 104, 1.4 грѣхъ моихъ, 1.11

дѹмъ вл[д]чннмъ; p. 126, 1.19 страшнѣ; p. 176, 1.10–11 тѣмѣ; p. 180, 1.1 въ; p.1 95, 1.10 ѡжестѣеть; p. 203, 1.14 близъ; p. 272, 1.10 старьць; p. 355, 1.1 истинна. There are two possible explanations for these occasional instances of ѣ: either they are inherited from the antigraph and have escaped the vigilance of a scribe who, unusually in the early fourteenth century, aimed to use ѣ alone; or they are lapses on the part of a scribe who habitually used ѣ according to the Serbian norm, but when writing the Athens Psalter decided to imitate an earlier exemplar which employed ѣ. Some support for the latter interpretation can be derived from the second peculiarity which sets the Athens Psalter apart from the other manuscripts adduced by Jovanović-Stipčević: ѣ regularly appears as the first component of ѣи. I have noted only three exceptions: p. 40, 1.8 оѣслыша; p. 49, 1.1 оѣслыши; p. 63, 1.6 оѣслышетъ, but 1.13 ѣслыша and at least thirty-five forms of (оѣ)слышати elsewhere, as well as (оѣ)слишати. There are numerous other instances of ѣи, whether with etymological justification, e.g. тѣи, the forms of вѣити, or without, e.g. створи, створи, сѣла *passim*. The distribution of ѣ and ѣи mirrors that of ѣ and ѣ in the manuscript and is consistent with P. A. Lavrov's observation (Лавров 1914: 49) that the choice between ѣ and ѣи in Bulgarian manuscripts of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries depends on their choice between ѣ and ѣ. However it is at variance with his subsequent comment, that manuscripts which employ both ѣ and ѣ usually have ѣи. This rule appears to hold for the fourteenth-century Athonite manuscripts with ѣ and ѣ included in Jovanović-Stipčević's study, but not for the Athens Psalter. Its strong preference for ѣ both on its own and in ѣи seems rather to ally it with the practice of using ѣ alone which has recently been reviewed in Cyrillic manuscripts by A. Vojadžiev (Бояджиев 1995) and in Glagolitic ones by B. Velčeva (Велчева 1999) and which is attested from the early eleventh century onwards, for instance in the Novgorod psalter fragment discovered in 2000 and described by A. A. Zaliznjak and V. L. Janin (Зализняк, Янин 2001: 8).

There are other respects, too, in which the spelling of the Athens Psalter is a blend of old and new. In accordance with Serbian norms of the later thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries the main scribe frequently uses ѣ, ѣ (or ѣ), ю, and attempts, if not with uniform success, to distinguish between ѣ and ѣ, ѣи and и. At the same time there are traces of earlier practice, such as the use of ѣ in initial position, e.g. p. 181, 1.10 ѣви and sporadically ѣко as well as ѣко, interchangeable оѣ/ѣ and ю, e.g. p. 13, 1.11 вѣзвесел се; p. 20, 1.14 некаѣчнми; p. 27, 1.6, p. 151, 1.9, p. 213, 1.15 грѣдиноѣ; p. 72, 1.9 люкавноѣюцимъ but p. 73, 1.18 ѣкавноѣюци; p. 117, 1.5 сѣхраноѣ; p. 151, 1.8 гора сиѣнѣ в ѣоѣже; p. 157, 1.1 ѣемлѣшомѣ; p. 175, 1.6 наплѣноѣ; p. 192, 1.11 ѣскврѣноѣ; p. 193, 1.2 сѣиноѣ; p. 221, 1.9 вѣтрѣноѣ; p. 293, 1.5 глѣвини; p. 304, 1.7 поблоноѣ се.

The differentiated vocalization of ѣ and ѡ survives in a number of places, e. g. p. 39, 1.8 сѣнемѣ; p. 43, 1.11 крѣпокѣ и силенѣ; p. 92, 1.5 вѣсѣ дѣѣ; p. 166, 1.11, p. 229, 1.9 начетоукѣ; p. 185, 1.14 золѣ; p. 215, 1.5 пепелѣ; p. 208, 1.16, p. 264, 1.5, p. 272, 1.15 соудобѣ; p. 337, 1.17 напослѣдоукѣ. That these are traditional spellings is indicated by those instances where ѣ is equated with а, no doubt on the basis of pronunciation: p. 212, 1.2 ва ра[д]стѣ; p. 285, 1.8 нѣипаче; and probably in есѣмѣ / ксѣмѣ *passim*. Another conflict of norms is seen in the treatment of words containing the Greek letter θ, which may be written either as ф, in p. 135, 1.6 кфиѡфиа, p. 146, 1.10 кфиѡпленѣ, p. 153, 11.2–3 кфиѡпѣскимѣ, p. 185, 1.2 кфиѡпѣси, p. 153, 1.5 кфамле; or as т, p. 134, 11.14–15 невѣталимли, p. 97, 1.15 тарѣсниские, p. 146, 1.12 тарѣсниси, p. 189, 1.17 таворѣ, p. 295, 1.6 кфратѣ; or as ѳ, p. 232, 1.9 даѳана. Taken together, these features suggest either a Macedonian exemplar or possibly a Macedonian provenance for the Athens Psalter, though the sources used by K. Bicevska (Бицевска 2001) indicate that ѡ and ѣ predominate in Macedonian manuscripts by the fourteenth century.

The manuscript displays an additional graphical peculiarity which Bojadžiev (Бояджиев 1995: 53) lists among the characteristic features of early Cyrillic ‘narodni počerci’: where the scribe has to accommodate verses which cannot easily be fitted into the line, he occasionally takes the licence of ending a line with a consonantal letter, e. g. p. 23, 1.20–21 младенцемѣ| ѣ своимѣ; p. 258, 1.10–11 прѣклоних се| пасти; p. 262, 11.7–8 поглочу| млю се; p. 263, 11.7–8 вѣ| ѣ вправдани твоихѣ; p. 273, 11.15–16 сѣтѣ| мнѣ; p. 282, 11.17–18 сѣ| мною; p. 293, 11.7–8 вѣнем| люци; p. 297, 11.13–14 вѣд| вори хѣ; p. 333, 11.2–3 вѣ| море; p. 335, 11.9–10 вѣз| вестетѣ; p. 356, 11.15–16 вѣск| раи мора. This feature also occurs on p. 27–32, which have been inserted by a later scribe (who employed both ѡ and ѣ and followed a different textual redaction): p. 28, 11.10–11 из| вбра; p. 29, 11.9–10 пѣтѣ| мои, 11.15–16 зац| ищенна. It presumably reflects the practice of the place where the Athens Psalter was produced and used; like the range of unusual or inconsistent patterns of spelling listed above, it points to a locality remote from the strong trends towards standardization reflected both in Raška orthography and in the Bulgarian orthographical norms of the fourteenth century. The scribe of the Athens Psalter seems to have relied as much on his exemplar for a model of correctness as on his own command of Church Slavonic, and with good reason, for marked vernacular interference can be detected in p. 117, 1. 2 тко and in two instances of hypercorrect nominative in place of accusative plural forms: ps. 77:66 врази for врагы, ps. 103:10 источники for источники.

Scrutiny of the text reveals vestigial influence from the exemplar on the correlates of the etymological nasal vowels. For the most part these are rendered in the Serbian fashion, as ѣ and ѡу, but there are two types of divergence from

this rule: confusion between the front nasal and *а/я*, e. g. the unexpected forms of accusative plural in ps. 44:17 *кнеза*, ps. 83:4 *птенца свѣта*, ps. 106:36 *алчюци ала*, ps. 140:6 *соудна*, ps. 145:9 *пришлѣца*, and the consequent reinterpretation which leads to ps. 83:4 *олтара твоего* in place of accusative plural; confusion between front and back nasal resulting in spellings with *ѡ/ю*, e. g. ps. 67:32 & Deut.32:22 *кю* in place of genitive singular feminine, ps. 79:2 *водоѡ* for present participle active nominative singular masculine **водал*. In ps. 118:64 the two types of substitution interact to give accusative for nominative: **земля] *зем-ла] *землѡ] земляю*. It is clear that the Athens Psalter derives from a copying tradition in which confusion of the *jusy* operated, as do several late thirteenth century Serbian psalter manuscripts, Sinai 8, Sinai 7, the Pljevlja and Belgrade Psalters. The mechanical replacement of the back nasal letter by *ѡ* and the front one by *ѡ* leads, as M. Altbauer (Altbauer 1979: XVI) notes, to morphological aberrations in Sinai 8. Similar errors can be detected in Sinai 7: ps. 106:40, 117:9 *кнеза* for accusative plural, ps. 118:20 *дишѡ мою* for nominative singular, ps. 145:7 *алчещимь*. The Pljevlja and Belgrade Psalters, which seem to derive from a common antigraph as argued in C. M. MacRobert (MacRobert 1991), share a number of mistakes prompted by the *jusy*: **ж/ѡ] *а/ѡ] к* gives rise to singular for plural in ps. 9:23 *ѡвезакть, помышлаеть*, ps. 18:14 *ѡдолѣкть; *а/ѡ] *ж/ѡ] ѡ* gives accusative for genitive in ps. 15: 5 *чашѡ мою*, ps. 10:6 *чашѡ* (Plevlja); **а/ѡ] а* gives nominative for genitive in ps. 19:7, 76:4, 79:18 *десница* and ps.10:6 *чаша* (Belgrade); **а/ѡ] к* results in a participle instead of 1st person singular in ps. 15:7, 62:5 *влѣсве* (also ps. 144:1–2 Pljevlja, ps. 25:12 Belgrade). One such error is more widely attested: in ps. 129:6 confusion of the *jusy* leads to reinterpretation of two genitive singular feminine adjectival forms, **ѡтрѣнлѡ*, as present active participles, **ѡтрѣнѡ] ѡтрѣноѡ x2* in the Athens Psalter. This corruption is paralleled in a number of East Slavonic Psalter manuscripts of the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries: in the first versicle I have found **ѡтрѣнѡ] ѡтрѣноѡ* in the manuscripts F.п.І.4, F.п.І.3 and Sof. 64 in the Russian National Library, **ѡтрѣнѡ] ѡтрѣноѡ* in Pogod. 3 in the RNL (РНБ), manuscripts 33 and 34 from the Synodal Typography in the Russian State Archive of Ancient Documents (РГАДА), the Kiev Psalter (РНБ, OLDP. F. 6) published by G. I. Vzdornov (Вздорнов 1978) and the Jaroslavl' 15231 (ЯМЗ) and Bars. 96 (ГИМ) commentated psalters described in C. M. MacRobert (MacRobert 2005b), *ѡтрѣноѡть* in the Luck Psalter of 1384 described by C. Verdiani (Verdiani 1954); in the second versicle **ѡтрѣнѡ] ѡтрѣноѡ* in F.п.І.4, F.п.І.3, Luck, **ѡтрѣнѡ] ѡтрѣноѡ* in Pogod. 3, T33, Kiev, Jar. 15231, Bars. 96.

It is commonplace for Russian, Serbian and Ukrainian manuscripts of the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries to stand in copying traditions that can be traced back to a stage characterized by confusion of the nasals. The reason why such a descent is worth remarking in the Athens Psalter is that, as shown in C. M. MacRobert (MacRobert 2005a), this manuscript follows Redaction II of the Church Slavonic psalter translation, which is found in East Slavonic manuscripts from the eleventh century onwards and in the thirteenth-century Serbian psalter manuscripts mentioned above, but is not directly attested in early sources of Bulgarian or Macedonian provenance. That the manuscript tradition of Redaction II did extend to the area where the *jusy* were confused is demonstrated by the consequential errors seen clearly in the Athens, Pljevlja and Belgrade Psalters, and vestigially in East Slavonic witnesses to this redaction.

Moreover, the Athens Psalter contains a handful of unusual readings which it has in common with the Pljevlja and Belgrade Psalters. They occur sporadically in other early South Slavonic sources, such as the Sinai Glagolitic Psalter published by S. Sever'janov (Северьянов 1922), M. Altbauer (Altbauer 1971) and I. C. Tarnanides (Tarnanides 1988), the thirteenth-century MS 1 in the Library of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, the Dečani Psalter published by Lj. Mitrevski (Митревски 2000), and also in early Serbian Church Slavonic compositions which contain quotations from the Psalter, discussed in C. M. MacRobert (MacRobert 1997) and D. Trifunović (Трифуновић 2001), but they are more frequently attested in East Slavonic manuscripts which follow Redaction II, such as some of those mentioned above, plus the thirteenth-century manuscript 27 and fourteenth-century 28 from the Synodal Typography in РГАДА, Ф.п.І.1, Ф.п.І.2, Pogod. 2 and Sof. 60 in the РНБ, Troickij (ТСЛ) 862 in the РГБ and Jaroslavl' 15482. The most striking are:

ps. 55:14 **въ странѣ** Ath, Sin, Deč, S8, Plj, Bel, T27, Ф.п.І.1; **въ свѣтѣ** I+II+III;

ps. 108:23 **прѣтни конци** Ath(orig), Ban, Plj; **прѣзи** Ath(corr) I; **аврѣднѣ** II; **прѣжнѣ** III;

ps. 118:94 **съпасе съпаси** Ath(orig), Ban, Deč, S7, Plj, Jar. 15482, Ф.п.І.1, Pogod.3, Sof. 60, Ф.п.І.4, T28, T33, 8662, Luck;

ps. 150:5 **звонѣхъ** Ath, Plj, Bel, Jar. 15231. Bars. 96; **кѣмалѣхъ** I+II+III (but 149:3 **звонѣ** Plj, Bel; **тѣмланѣ** Ath, Jar. 15231, Bars. 96, I+II+III).

In this last instance a reading in the Athens Psalter constitutes precious evidence for a distinctive early South Slavonic textual variant which, though infrequently attested, apparently survived long enough to spread in the late fourteenth century to the East Slavs.

The corrections in the Athens Psalter speak for its continued use in a provincial area. The manuscript has been corrected at least twice. Some corrections simply make good the main scribe's omissions, in a hand similar to, perhaps imitative of his, though the fact that they employ ѡ rather than ѣ suggests that they were carried out by someone else. Others, which are written in large, irregular letters over partial erasures, introduce textual emendations. One might expect that these alterations would be motivated by a desire to update the text, bringing it in line with Redaction III, identified by E. V. Češko (Чешко 1982) and more fully characterized by I. Karačorova (Карачорова 1989), which undoubtedly enjoyed some popularity in the South Slav lands during the fourteenth century. In fact, however, the variants introduced by the corrector go back for the most part to Redaction I, which originated in the ninth century. Some of them can indeed be found in Redaction III as well:

- ps. 28:5 кѣдри Ath(corr), I+II+III; дѡбрави Ath(orig);
- ps. 75:9 ѡвоѣ се Ath(corr), I+II+III; потресе се Ath(orig);
- ps. 34:6 пльзѣкъ Ath(corr), I+III; сѣблазнь Ath(orig), II;
- ps. 39:5 неистовства Ath(corr), I+III; гнѣвы Ath(orig), II;
- ps. 68:3 тимѣни Ath(corr), I+III; тинахъ Ath(orig), II;
- ps. 130:2 на дѣшю Ath(corr), I+III; къ дѣши Ath(orig), II;
- ps. 132:2 ометие Ath(corr), I+III; подолѣкъ Ath(orig), II.

Others are peculiar to Redaction I and reflect lexical choices which were already unacceptable to the compilers of the tenth-century Redaction II:

- ps. 47:4 варехъ Ath(corr), I; тежестехъ Ath(orig), II+III;
- ps. 121:6 ѡмолите Ath(corr), I; въспросите Ath(orig), II+III;
- ps. 138:20 речете Ath(corr), I; речете воудетъ Ath(orig), II; ревниви есте III;
- ps. 139:12 ѡстатъ Ath(corr), I; къзыченъ Ath(orig), II+III;
- ps. 143:14 цѣстахъ Ath(corr), I; пространствахъ Ath(orig), II; стьгнахъ III.

Where the emendations diverge from Redaction I, they do not follow the fourteenth-century revisions but apparently reflect earlier traditions for which, once again, parallels can be found in a minority of early South Slavonic manuscripts, including the Radomir Psalter published by L. Makarijoska (Макаријоска 1997) and the Glagolitic "Psalter of Dimitrij" found on Mt Sinai, from which an extract is supplied by Tarnanides (1988: 192) and B. Velčeva (Велчева 1999: 93), and also in the version of Redaction II handed down in East Slavonic manuscripts of the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, e.g.:

- ps. 19:8 ѡроужихъ Ath(add), Sin, T27, Jar. 15482, F.п.1.2; колесницахъ I+II+III;
- ps. 70:19 чѡдеса Ath(corr), S7, Plj, Bel, T27, Pogod. 3; величиа / величествиа Ath(orig), I+II+III;

ps. 77:28 κ8ϣ Ath(corr), T27, Pogod. 2, Pogod. 3, Sof. 60; 0чрѣца Ath(orig), I+II+III;

ps. 119:5 тѣмьнаѣ Ath(corr), Sin, Dim, Ban, Rad, S8, Plj, Pogod. 3; κεδαρ-ска Ath(orig), I+II+III.

Thus it appears that the conservative orientation which prompted the copying of Athens 1797 persisted among those who used the manuscript and led to corrections of a type which evidence from other sources would not lead us to expect in the fourteenth century or later.

The Athens Psalter is a manuscript of good quality: it was produced with some care (witness several versos left blank because ink had seeped through) and with fine illuminations by an experienced scribe who knew how to manage the layout of the page. His curiously inconsistent lettering could represent either a compromise between his own fourteenth-century hand and the letter forms of a thirteenth-century exemplar, or perhaps the outcome of a long scribal career, combining habits formed in the thirteenth century with later stylistic developments, especially those which an experienced scribe might adopt as embellishment or to fill space; the dittographies and variations in spacing and evenness suggest an ageing scribe whose short-term memory was impaired and who was liable to get tired. *Pace* Jovanović-Stipčević, the use of ѣ seems to set the Athens Psalter apart from the other manuscripts included in her study, which employ ѣ frequently alongside ѣ. The overwhelming predominance of ѣ in this manuscript probably reflects an exemplar which employed ѣ only. Both this feature and certain other orthographical inconsistencies, the character of the illuminations, and the peculiarities of the text contained in the manuscript can plausibly be attributed to the influence of an earlier Bulgarian or Macedonian antigraph. The outstanding problem is where and why such conservative orthographical and textual traditions were maintained not only by the copyist, but also by subsequent users of the manuscript, in preference to the orthographical practices and revised versions of the psalter text which came into circulation in the course of the fourteenth century.

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