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**THE TEXTUAL TRANSMISSION OF THE PARTICIPLE *BYŠEŠT-/BYŠQŠT-* IN THE  
OLD CHURCH SLAVONIC TRADITION OF THE HOMILIES OF GREGORY OF  
NAZIANZUS\***

**Abstract.** The present paper offers fresh insights into the textual transmission of the occurrences of the participle *byšešt-/byšqšt-* in the Old Church Slavonic (Old Bulgarian) translation of the *Homilies* (λόγοι) of Gregory of Nazianzus the Theologian. The study of this very rare and quite obscure verbal form, deemed to be one of the most challenging issues in the grammatical description of the Old Church Slavonic language, represents an outstanding question in palaeoslavistics. In contrast to the traditional approach, which bases the participle's linguistic analysis solely on examining the oldest extant 11<sup>th</sup>-century Old East Slavic copy, the author explores the entire manuscript tradition, consisting of 18 testimonies dating from the 14<sup>th</sup> up to the 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. The adoption of this methodology leads to innovative results; first, it demonstrates that the participle survives not only in the East Slavic, but also in the South Slavic (Middle Bulgarian) tradition; second, it identifies a paradigm form which had previously escaped the attention of scholars, supporting V. Jagić's reconstruction of the participle's nominative singular. Third, this study considers for the first time the variant readings as a key asset for investigating the participle's original meaning, understanding its description of a dynamic process, an ongoing situation, rather than the expression of a future time reference in the strictest sense. Accordingly, a different view with regard to its significance may confidently be offered: rather than representing a future form of the verb *byti* 'to be,' as had been previously assumed, this participle can be seen to have been used as an expression for a developing process, similar to the verb *byvati* ('to become,' 'to happen,' 'to occur,' 'to be').

**Keywords:** Old Church Slavonic (Old Bulgarian) language; manuscripts; textual criticism; historical linguistics

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