

RELIGIOUS TEXT TRANSFER IN THE CONTEXT OF
ORTHODOX INTERCULTURAL EXCHANGE:
ON THE 19TH CENTURY HAGIOGRAPHIC TEXTS
DEDICATED TO SAINT JOHN THE RUSSIAN¹

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the phenomenon of text transfer that followed the transfer of a cult between two different Orthodox cultures and three language traditions. The case of Saint John the Russian and the transfer of his cult from Cappadocia to Greece, and later to Russia, are examined. Special attention is paid to the hagiographic texts composed or translated during each stage of this transfer: from the initial oral tradition, based on which the first text was published in Karamanli Turkish in 1849, up to the texts written in Greek in mid-late 19th century and Russian texts from the late 19th century. The comparison of these text traditions shows the peculiarities in the perception of the same saint in different Orthodox cultures, while the factors that lead to this divergence are also revealed. The process of the gradual formation of the hagiographic text tradition dedicated to St. John the Russian in this trilingual space is analysed.

Saint John the Russian (approx. 1690-1730) is one of the most revered new saints in modern Greece. His incorruptible relics in the village of New Procopi on the island of Evia are among the most popular

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Orthodox pilgrimage destinations (Βερνεζος 1998; Seraïdari 2020)³. The Saint was born in the Russian Empire but was sold at a young age as a prisoner of war into a life of slavery in the village of Procopi near Caesarea, Asia Minor. It was there where he spent the rest of his life. His holy life, his lifetime and afterlife miracles, as well as the veneration towards him are therefore mostly in connection with the Orthodox communities of Asia Minor. Later on — starting during the late 19th century, but mostly after his relics were moved to Greece in 1924 — he also became known in the Greek Orthodox Church. His fast-growing cult in Russia is a far more recent phenomenon that started with his official canonization by the Russian Orthodox Church in 1962 (Э.П.А. 2011: 598-600). The foundation of his veneration, however, alongside the creation of the Russian text tradition about the Saint was established much earlier, in the 8th decade of the 19th century.

Examining the hagiographic text tradition about Saint John the Russian, one can divide it into three separate, yet closely connected traditions, namely:

- the Turkish language tradition, which was the original one and which began its formation during the 18th century as oral stories, memories, and legends;
- the Greek language tradition, which appeared later (in 1885) thanks to the attempts of the Orthodox clergy in Asia Minor to revive the Greek language in the Orthodox communities of the area and to extend the Saint's veneration into Greek territory;
- the Russian language tradition (the first saved text dates from 1888), which started after the donation of the right hand of the Saint to the Russian Monastery of Saint Panteleimon on Athos by the Christian residents of Procopi. This tradition appeared because of the need of establishing the cult of the Saint in the monastery, as well as spreading it to Russia. This second goal was successfully realized only in the second half of the 20th century.

³ The author wishes to thank Katerina Seraïdari for her help with the materials on St. John the Russian and for fruitful discussions.

In regard to the Turkish tradition, only one full text has reached us: the Synaxarion from the first Greek Service to the Saint (hereinafter referred to as T1). This text was published in Athens in 1849 and was written by Joseph Nikolaidou of Caesarea (ΙΩΣΗΦ ΝΙΚΟΛΑΙΔΟΥ ΚΑΙΣΑΡΕΩΣ) as he himself signed it (Ιώσηφ 1849: 6)⁴. In later sources, the same person was mentioned as “Ierodidaskalos Joseph from Kermiris of Cappadocia” (Διονύσιος & Μοδέστος 1897: 3) without any additional information. Even though the Service itself is composed in Greek, the Synaxarion is written in Karamanli Turkish (έν τουρκικῇ φράσει); that is the Turkish language written with the Greek alphabet instead of the Arabic one. This script was commonly employed by Orthodox Turkish-speaking minorities in the Ottoman Empire (Janse 2009: 10-15). This short text (βραχεία λίαν βιογραφία τοῦ Ἁγίου, as it was described later (Διονύσιος & Μοδέστος 1897: 3)), was based on the oral tradition of Procopi, and contains the following information:

- A short reference to John’s Russian origin (“born in some Russian village during the time of Peter the Great”) and his service in the Army (which, according to the author, was due to his desire to fight the Turks).
- John’s capture by the Turks and his imprisonment along with St. Pachomios. This information (about St. Pachomios) probably did not originate from the local tradition and was added by the author, in order to extend the reputation of an already recognized and revered saint to a new one with a similar biography.
- His humble life in the village of Procopi near Caesarea of Cappadocia, complete with poverty, hard work, difficult life conditions, starvation, lack of clothes, life in a stable, suffering mockery and derision. His martyrdom, however, which was a result of his refusal to follow Islam, is not mentioned.
- Steadiness in faith, ascetic life, Holy Communion every week, staged sanctification with reference to the examples of Prophets Elijah and Joseph, son of Jacob, from the Bible.

⁴ The author wants to thank her colleague Katerina Stathi for the translation of this text from Karamanli Turkish.

- Illness and Holy Communion before repose, the priest who performed the Mystery hid the Eucharist inside an apple and brought it to the stable where the Saint lived.
- Repose and Christian burial.
- The Saint's relics, which were still incorruptible three years later producing light and incense, and were preserved after exhumation at the time the text was written in the Church of St. George (Ιώσηφ 1849: 6; Борисова 2021).

Though this is the only full hagiographic text for the Saint written in Turkish, subsequent Greek texts devoted to him contained small fragments in Turkish – separate words and phrases – which are evidence that they had originated also from the oral Turkish tradition. For example, in his Life written by Dionysios Charalampidis in 1897, one can find: Turkish exclamations of surprise (Αλάχ! Αλάχ!) after the Saint performed a miracle (Διονύσιος & Μοδέστος 1897: 42); a question a small boy addressed to the icon of the Saint in Turkish (Σενίν άτιν νέτιρ; – *What's your name?*) with a Greek translation following it (Διονύσιος & Μοδέστος 1897: 51); the name of a Turkish child devoted to St. John (Κουλέ Γιοβάν όγλοϋ – *Son of John the Prisoner*) again with a translation in Greek (Διονύσιος & Μοδέστος 1897: 55); the nickname of the Saint among the Turkish population (Κουλέ Γιοβάν – *John the Prisoner*); and the appeal of the demon-possessed Turks to him (Κουλέ γιάκμα μπηζί – *Prisoner, don't burn us*) (Διονύσιος & Μοδέστος 1897: 46). These Turkish words and phrases inserted into the Greek text show the natural language environment of the Saint and testify to the authenticity of the information. However, since they were inserted into a text in another language, they became part of next language's tradition, namely the Greek tradition.

The texts that formed part of the Greek tradition in the Saint's hagiography were mainly authored by Dionysios Charalampidis, a hieromonach and priest from Procopi, born in 1846 in that same village and saved among other children thanks to one of St. John's first afterlife miracles during an incident when the roof of the Greek school he attended fell in 1862. He was deeply affected and impressed by this event, and he devoted the rest of his life to the development of the Saint's cult in Procopi as well as its dissemination to other

Orthodox lands and people. His name first appeared in documents about St. John in a letter addressed to Makarios, the hegoumenos of the Russian Monastery of Saint Panteleimon on Athos. The letter was written on the 11th of May 1880 and was signed by thirty Procopi villagers. It was brought to the Monastery along with the right hand of the Saint by “our priest Reverend Dionysios and one of the most distinguished residents of our village Khodja Prodrom Kostanoglou, men who enjoy our confidence and honour”. This same letter, which Russian translation along with others dedicated to St. John the Russian is saved in the Archive of the Russian Monastery of St. Panteleimon on Athos (Register 50, Archive 5, Document A004912, F. 1r -2v) (Ермолай 2015: 407)⁵, states that 8 months earlier the monk Andrew of the Russian Monastery of Saint Panteleimon had visited Procopi with the purpose of taking some of the Saint’s relics, but failed to do so after being refused by the villagers, which caused “a great disappointment of the hegumenous”. However, after the second request for this donation expressed in the letter by the same monk on behalf of the abovementioned hegoumenos, together with an invitation for Dionysios to visit Athos, the villagers changed their minds and decided to send a part of the relicts together with two delegates and the cited above letter.

This event, along with the description of other specific occurrences in subsequent hagiographic texts by Dionysios himself, lead us to believe that it was Dionysios that played the most crucial part in this donation. It was probably that moment when he realized the importance of the Greek hagiographic texts devoted to the Saint for the “promotion” of his cult. A year later, he fully understood the urgency of his mission to compose such texts, when the holiness of the relics was called into question by Church authorities. More specifically, in his letter dated February 12, 1881 sent to hegoumenos Makarios (we only have its Russian translation (Archive of the Russian Monastery of St. Panteleimon on Athos, Register 50, Archive 5, Document A004912, F. 2v. – 4r.)), he refers to the letters of the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople Joachim III addressed to Makarios and John, the Metropolitan of Caesarea, in which the

⁵ The author would like to thank the Hegoumenos and the Librarian of the Russian Monastery of St. Panteleimon on Athos for providing a copy of these documents.

Patriarch “driven by envy... or incaution... wrote some words caused by lack of faith, which, as I heard, weaken your piety towards the Saint”. In that same letter, Dionysios describes the recent visit of the Metropolitan of Caesarea to his village, who conducted an investigation incited by the Patriarch’s letter. He inspected the stable where the Saint had lived and the evidence of his miracles; he spoke to the villagers, and specifically to the Turkish descendants of the Agha, as the Saint was once their servant. He then sent the results of this investigation to the Patriarch. Even though the Metropolitan supported the holiness of the relics (a letter verifying this was sent by him to Makarios on August 31, 1882 (Archive of the Russian Monastery of St. Panteleimon on Athos, Register 50, Archive 5, Document A004912, F. 8r – 9r.) and probably urged the Patriarch to accept this fact, these events clearly showed that without a Greek hagiographic text about the Saint, his cult could no longer be supported. This made Dionysios to immediately start writing. In the abovementioned letter, he states: “Recently my insignificant self composed a text, which contains a short story about the miracles that the Saint has performed to this day through his holy relics, which I am going to send you soon along with my next letter. Let the enemies of truth see how the Lord blesses those who adore Him”. One can assume that this was the first draft of the text published 4 years later in 1885 in the “Church History” by A. Levidis (Λεβίδης 885: 300 - 308) (“βιογραφία τοῦ Ἁγίου ἀρκετὰ ἐκτενῆ” — *A rather extensive biography of the Saint* — as he himself called it later (Διονύσιος & Μοδέστος 1897: 3)).

This text (hereinafter referred to as G1), which was the origin of the Greek hagiographical tradition of St. John, reveals the doubts expressed by the Patriarch in his letters in two different ways. First, the text starts with the statement that “there is no doubt that he (St. John) traces his origin back to the pious and Orthodox Russians” (Λεβίδης 1885: 300). This leads to the conclusion that his Russian origin was called into question. Secondly, it features a large footnote in which the author argues against the materialistic sceptical approach to the supernatural element in Christian mysteries (Λεβίδης 1885: 304).

The typological analysis reveals that the first written text of the Synaxarion (T1) was not used for the composition of G1. On the

contrary, it was based on the oral tradition the author had learned from older villagers (he mentions the Turkish descendants of the Agha again, in the family of whom there were legends about “John the Prisoner”, as he was called in the village (Διονύσιος & Μοδέστος 1897: 56, note 2)) and the recent events and miracles that he witnessed with his own eyes. The author practically carried out a “double translation” by first putting an oral text on paper and by then translating it into Greek from the Turkish language, which was the language all the stories had been communicated to him. The main typological features of this text comparing to T1 include:

- The description of the Saint’s torture by the Agha and his martyrdom due to his refusal to convert to Islam, with references to the oral tradition preserved in the Agha family. Along with this hagiographic topos used to support John’s status as a saint, the author also makes him say the words that were later repeated in all the texts devoted to the Saint: “I am Russian and I am faithful to my king on earth as well as my King in Heaven. I will never refuse the true faith of my parents... I was born Christian and I want to die Christian” (Λεβίδης 1885: 301-301).
- The footnote regarding the description of the stable – the place where the Saint had lived – noting that even though the house of the Agha had been destroyed many times, the stable has still remained standing. Moreover, anyone can access it since the descendants of the Agha allow pilgrims to visit this holy place (Λεβίδης 1885: 302).
- The miracle of the transportation of a plate of food to Mecca, where the Agha had gone for his pilgrimage (Λεβίδης 1885: 302-303). While describing this major lifetime miracle, the author parallels it with the biblical story of Habakkuk the Prophet, who, after being instructed by the Lord, transported food from Judea to Babylon to help Daniel the Prophet in the lion’s den (Hab. 14: 33-39).
- His Holy Communion before his death without the story about the apple (Λεβίδης 1885: 304).
- His Christian burial and the donation of an expensive carpet for his coffin by the Agha as a sign of respect for the Saint (Λεβίδης 1885: 305).

- His exhumation and the miracles that accompanied it, such as the appearance of the Saint in the dream of an old priest. Since the priest had hesitated to conduct the exhumation, the Heavenly Light came down illuminating the tomb (Λεβίδης 1885: 305).
- The recent transportation (“a few years ago”) of the relics to the newly built Church of St. Basil without descriptions of any miracles that occurred during the move (Λεβίδης 1885: 305).
- Three other afterlife miracles of the Saint: in 1832, when the Saint prevented the soldiers of Osman-pasha from burning his relics; in 1862, when he saved the children of a Greek school from the roof that had fallen down, complete with the personal experience of the author; and in 1874, when he revealed to the descendants of the Agha who was the murderer of their 12-year-old daughter (Λεβίδης 1885: 305-308).
- The text ends with a description of the donation of the right hand of the Saint to the Monastery of St. Panteleimon which happened “4 years ago”. This was also presented as a miracle: even though nobody had managed to take pieces of the relics before, this time, the Saint himself wanted his hand to be donated to this monastery. Moreover, the villagers, who were against this donation in the beginning, were suddenly miraculously convinced to agree (Λεβίδης 1885: 308-309).

Eight years later the same text (G1) was republished in the supplements (i.e. in the part of the volume devoted to the saints who should be included in the previous volumes according to their commemoration day, but due to the fact that information about them reached the editor later are placed in the certain volume) of the K. Doukakis Collection of the Saints’ lives for the month of June (Δουκάκης 1893: 411-418). The footnote in the beginning of the text states that it was communicated to the editor by the monk Andrew from the Monastery of St. Panteleimon (Δουκάκης 1893: 411), the person we describe below.

One can assume that the Greek text tradition continued in the following years alongside the development of the cult of the Saint. Evidence for this fact can be found in a document saved in the Archive of the Monastery of St. Panteleimon (Ермолай 2015: 421)

dated 1888 (Register 50, Archive 18, Document A005087). It contains the Russian translation of 6 unknown recent miracles of the Saint related to the construction of his church. According to the translator, these were taken from a manuscript sent from Procopi with the entire Service and Life of Saint John the Russian and his miracles. At the end of the text, which, according to the inscription, was to be published in the magazine “Dushepoleznyi sobesednik” (Edificatory Interlocutor) — a periodical monthly magazine, published by the Monastery of Saint Panteleimon in Moscow in 1888-1918 (Андреев 1998: 104-105) — but was eventually rejected by a censor, the translator makes the following remark: “This hand-written story about the life of Venerable John is placed as a Synaxarion in his Service after the 6th ode of the Canon... At the end of the Greek manuscript with the Life and Service of St. John the Russian, there is an inscription that reads: Composed by the Reverend Hieromonach Dionysios, shepherd and priest of the Holy Church devoted to St. Basil the Great in Procopi (Urgup) of Cappadocia in February 1888” (Archive of the Russian Monastery of St. Panteleimon on Athos. (Register 50, Archive 18, Document A005087, F. 2r)). This manuscript was most likely the first draft of a book published in 1897, which will be discussed below. However, this book does not contain the miracles translated in this document, which, to the best of our knowledge, still remain unpublished in both Greek and Russian traditions.

As far as the published sources are concerned, the next landmark in the Greek hagiographical tradition of the Saint was the publication of his extensive Life in 1897 in Athens, along with the Service dedicated to him (hereinafter referred to as G2) (Διονύσιος & Μοδέστος 1897: 33-59). This was authored by Dionysios in cooperation with Modestos Konstamonitou, who was also from Cappadocia. In this text, two text traditions — Turkish and Greek — are united. Dionysios, drawing inspiration from his own text described above (G1) (Λεβίδης 1885: 300-309), inserted facts and images from the first Turkish Synaxarion (T1) into G2, such as: the fact that St. John’s co-prisoner was St. Pachomios; the episode with the Eucharist being brought inside an apple; as well as references to the Biblical examples of Prophet Elijah and Joseph, son of Jacob (Ιώσηφ 1849: 6). He also wrote his story in a typical Christian hagiography fashion,

adding an extensive prologue and epilogue as well as other hagiographic topos (Руди 2005: 78-79), such as a description of his pious parents and his childhood devoted to Our Lord (Διονύσιος & Μοδέστος 1897: 36-37). New Bible parallels were drawn, specifically with Prophet Job and Saint Alexis the Man of God (Διονύσιος & Μοδέστος 1897: 39), both noted because of their humility and patience under very difficult life conditions. In general, many new descriptions were added and some lexical alterations were also made, which changed either the style or the meaning of the text. For example:

- In regard to the Saint's place of birth, the author states that it was some village in Little Russia (instead of Russia in G1 and T1) (Διονύσιος & Μοδέστος 1897: 36).
- The distance between Procopi and Caesarea is not measured in leagues (λεύγα) as in G1, but in hours: "Procopi is at a distance of about 12 hours from Caesarea" (Διονύσιος & Μοδέστος 1897: 37).
- In the description of the Saint's martyrdom in G2, instead of describing a large burning hot spoon (ἀρύταινα) being placed on his hand as a form of torture like in G1 (Λεβίδης 1885: 301), the word λεκανίδα (small plate) (Διονύσιος & Μοδέστος 1897: 38) is used.
- In the description of the miracle of transporting a plate of food to Mecca, instead of the word φαγητόν, the more stylistic word ἔδεσμα (*delicious food*) is used. Moreover, in the footnote, this food is specified as τὸ παρὰ τοῖς Ὀθωμανοῖς προσφιλὲς πλάφιον (*pilaf popular among the Ottomans*) (Διονύσιος & Μοδέστος 1897: 41).
- The time period between the Saint's repose and the exhumation of his relics is not 3 years but 3 and a half years. In addition, in the description of the Heavenly Light over the tomb of the Saint, the following important excerpt is added: καὶ ἑθεωρεῖτο τοῦτο παρὰ πάντων ὡς στῦλος πυρός (*and it was seen by everybody as a column of fire*) (Διονύσιος & Μοδέστος 1897: 44).
- In the miracle about the roof of the school in G1, the woman who saw the vision is called γραῦς (*old woman*) (Λεβίδης 1885: 307), while in G2 she is simply referred to as εὐλαβῆς γυνή (*pious woman*) (Διονύσιος & Μοδέστος 1897: 47).

- Many changes were made in the description of the 1874 miracle regarding the murder of the 12-year girl. In G2, the description of the vision of the girl's mother does not contain the remark that she saw the Saint *ἐν σχήματι καλογήρου* (*in the image of a monk*) like in G1. Furthermore, the gender of the murderer was changed from a man in G1 (ὁ δεῖνα) (Λεβίδης 1885: 307-308) to a woman (ἡ δεῖνα) in G2. Lastly, the place where the murderer hid the body of the girl is no longer the corner of the house, but the chimney of the house (εἰς τὴν καπνοδόχον τῆς οἰκίας της) (Διονύσιος & Μοδέστος 1897: 48-49).
- Many more details were added to the description of the transportation of the Saint's right hand to the Monastery of St. Panteleimon. The long footnote not only describes the miraculous consent of the Saint to give his compatriots a piece of his holy relics, but also the details about Dionysios and his journey to Athos with his partner, their one month stay there, the monastery donations for the construction of a new Church, and the report regarding the progress of said construction. When explaining the purpose of the donation of the Saint's right hand, the author states that through this piece of his relics, "like through a vociferous cornet (ὡς διὰ πολυφώνου σάλπιγγος) the glory of his (the Saint's) holiness will spread all over Russia, his endless homeland" (Διονύσιος & Μοδέστος 1897: 54).

Lastly, many new miracles were added to his Life, which were either taken from the oral tradition, or were witnessed by the author himself (ὅσα ἢ παράδοσις διέσωσεν ἡμῖν, καὶ ὅσα ἰδίως ὀφθαλμοῖς ἡμῶν εἶδομεν) (Διονύσιος & Μοδέστος 1897: 45). These miracles are as follows:

- The miracle that "accompanies" the move of the relics to the new Church of St. Basil. While G1 just talks about the transportation without mentioning any miracles or dates (it just says that it happened recently) (Λεβίδης 1885: 305), in G2, the event is dated 1845 and details of a miracle that occurred during the transportation were added: the shrine with the holy relics of the Saint miraculously returned to the old Church three times during the night, and only after many prayers did the Saint "give his consent" to change the place where they were kept. This topos was probably added in order to demonstrate that these relics behaved just like holy relics.

- The miracle that occurred in 1878, during which the Saint saved the monk Andrew from robbers on his way back from a pilgrimage to his relics.
- The miracle that occurred in 1880, reported again by the monk Andrew, during which the Saint told his name through his icon, to a small child.
- Lastly, there was the miracle narrated to the author by the descendants of the family of the Agha about a boy that was saved by the Saint and was then dedicated to him.

The Life of the Saint ends with a statement about various other miracles performed by him, such as healing the sick as well as people possessed by demons. Emphasis was placed on the fact that these miracles were not only performed in favour of Orthodox Christians, but also for Armenians, Protestants, and Muslims. The author also describes the way the veneration towards the Saint is carried out with processions on his Memorial Day, during the Bright Week, and during certain difficult times.

In regard to the author's subjective reasons for composing this text, one can deduce the arguments he was defending against from two footnotes. The first footnote (Διονύσιος & Μοδέστος 1897: 44) states that incorruptible relics constitute evidence of a person's holiness, referring to the Church Fathers. The second footnote contains the author's arguments in favor of the construction of a new church, going against those who believed that "the residents of Procopi have two cathedrals and don't need to build a third one and spend so much money" (Διονύσιος & Μοδέστος 1897: 54). When explaining the necessity of the new church, the author describes the difficulties faced during its construction and expresses his hopes for donations by all pious Christians, emphasizing donations "by Russian Christians, the Saint's compatriots" (Διονύσιος & Μοδέστος 1897: 55).

The last landmark during the period under examination in the Greek hagiographic text tradition of St. John the Russian was published only two years after G2 (1899), and, contrary to the two previous ones, it is not attributed to Dionysios Charalampidis. The text authored by Dionysios with some small changes was re-published by the Patriarchal Printing Press of Constantinople (Ασματική Ακολουθία 1899: 31-54). The very fact of the existence of this edition

(hereinafter referred to as G3) is an important indication that the highest Church authority, namely Patriarch Constantine V of Constantinople, had recognized the Saint's cult, following the consecration of the new Church a year before. In the preface, however, only the T1 and G1 editions are mentioned with no reference to G2 (Ασματική Ακολουθία 1899: 3). That same preface states that the text was edited "according to the censor's rules" by Manuel Gedeon, who had the rank of Μέγας Χαρτοφύλαξ τῆς Μεγάλης Ἐκκλησίας (Ασματική Ακολουθία 1899: 4). In general, G3 follows G2 with the following major typological and factual differences:

- The title Ὁμολογητής (Confessor) of the Saint is used more often than in G2.
- The miracle regarding the transportation of a plate of food to Mecca is not mentioned, even though the phrase that prefaced it in G2 (καὶ γεγονός τι μετὰ ταῦτα, ὅλος παράδοξον καὶ ἀπροσδόκητον, ἐβεβαίωσεν) still remains. After this phrase, the editor devoted a few lines to say that the Saint spiritually helped the Agha in his difficult journey "to the holy lands of the Muslims", saving him from illnesses and other dangers (Ασματική Ακολουθία 1899: 38).
- The miracle of the transportation of the Saint's relics to the Church of St. Basil is said to have occurred in 1833 instead of 1845 (Ασματική Ακολουθία 1899: 42). Both dates seem to be incorrect, though T1, which was published in 1849, states that the relicts are still located in the Church of St. George, while according to G1 (1888) they were moved "several years ago" (Λεβίδης 1885: 305).
- The miracle of the salvation of the monk Andrew from robbers is reported to have happened in 1879 instead of 1878, during which year the miracle involving Andrew and a child is also reported (Ασματική Ακολουθία 1899: 45-48). One can assume that the editor thought that Andrew had only gone on one pilgrimage to Procopi and tried to "unite" the miracles connected to it, choosing the "in-between" year 1879. Further information about the dates of these two miracles will be presented below with the analysis of the Russian sources.
- In the footnote about the construction of the new church, there is information added regarding its consecration "on 16th August 1898

by the Reverend Metropolitan of Caesarea John” (Ασματική Ακολουθία 1899: 49-50).

- The name of the descendant of the Agha’s family, who provided evidence for that last miracle, is changed from Ἐσσὲ ἀγάς to Μουσταφᾶ ἀγάς (Ασματική Ακολουθία 1899: 51).

As far as the textological differences are concerned, we will now analyse the corrections made to this edition by presenting a very typical example; namely the paragraph about the captivity of St. John, with the main differences being underlined:

G2:

Ὡς δὲ ἔφθασεν εἰς νόμιμον ἡλικίαν, ἐλήφθη εἰς στρατιωτικὴν ὑπηρεσίαν, καὶ διέμεινεν ἐν αὐτῇ, ἕως οὗ ἠγέρθη ὁ μέγας τότε ρωσσοτουρκικὸς πόλεμος, ὁ ἐπὶ τοῦ Α΄ αὐτοκράτορος πασῶν τῶν Ρωσσιῶν Πέτρου τοῦ Μεγάλου, ὅτε ἐκστρατεύσας καὶ ὁ γενναῖος οὗτος νεανίας Ἰωάννης, μετὰ καὶ ἄλλων συστρατιωτῶν αὐτοῦ, καὶ νικηθέντες ἐν τῷ πολέμῳ ἠχμαλωτίσθησαν παρὰ τῶν γειτνιαζόντων αὐτοῖς Τατάρων, οἵτινες, καὶ ἐπώλησαν αὐτὸν εἰς τινα ὀθωμανόν ἵππαρχον τότε χρηματίσαντα ἐν τῷ πολέμῳ ἐκεῖνῳ ὃς, καὶ συνεπέφερε τοῦτον ἐν τῇ ἑαυτοῦ πατρίδι, ἐν τῇ ἐν τῇ Μικρᾷ Ἀσίᾳ ἡμετέρα κωμοπόλει, καλουμένη Προκοπίον, ἀπεχούση τῆς Καισαρείας δώδεκα περίπου ὥρας (Διονύσιος & Μοδέστος 1897: 36-37).

G3:

Ὡς δὲ ἔφθασεν εἰς νόμιμον ἡλικίαν, ἀνέλαβε στρατιωτικὴν ὑπηρεσίαν, καὶ διέμεινε μετὰ πολλῆς ὑπομονῆς ἐν αὐτῇ, ἕως οὗ ἠγέρθη ὁ μέγας ρωσσοτουρκικὸς πόλεμος, ὁ ἐπὶ τοῦ αὐτοκράτορος πασῶν τῶν Ρωσσιῶν Πέτρου τοῦ Μεγάλου, ὅτε σὺν πολλοῖς ἐκστρατεύσας καὶ ὁ Ἰωάννης, καὶ ἐνίκηθη μετὰ τοῦ ὅλου στρατοῦ ἐν τῷ πολέμῳ καὶ ἠχμαλωτίσθησαν παρὰ τῶν γειτνιαζόντων αὐτοῖς Τατάρων, οἵτινες καὶ ἐπώλησαν αὐτὸν εἰς τινα ἵππαρχον ὃς καὶ συναπήγαγε τοῦτον ἐν τῇ ἑαυτοῦ πατρίδι, ἐν τῇ ἐν Μικρᾷ Ἀσίᾳ ἡμετέρα κωμοπόλει, καλουμένη Προκοπίον (Οὐρκιὸν), ἀπεχούση τῆς Καισαρείας δώδεκα περίπου ὥρας (Ασματική Ακολουθία 1899: 35).

One can easily see that the corrections are not confined to stylistic changes or the linguocultural text adaptation to the surroundings of Constantinople (such as the Turkish name of the village being placed in brackets); they were also realized in order to reconstruct the correct image of the Saint, with the concept of patience and humility (μετὰ πολλῆς ὑπομονῆς) being emphasized instead of that of courage (ὁ γενναῖος οὗτος νεανίας Ἰωάννης).

That was the last Greek hagiographic text evidence in regard to the Saint in the timeframe of our study. It should be mentioned, however, that the subsequent Greek tradition (Βίος και Ασματική ακολουθία 1938) follows the G2 text tradition, disregarding the changes made by the G3 editor.

We will now examine the last hagiographic tradition (Russian) dedicated to St. John, with all texts within the time period we are studying being authored in the Monastery of St. Panteleimon on Athos. The monks of this monastery became committed to the development of St. John's cult after they received a part of his relics. The first attempts to translate and compose Russian hagiographic and liturgical texts for the Saint probably started when the monastery received his right hand. Their purpose was to establish his veneration in the Russian-speaking community of the Monastery, as well as to present a new unknown saint to Russian pilgrims. However, the Russian hagiographic texts gradually became more ambitious, since they attempted to present St. John to all Russian Christians as a new Russian saint and to extend the Saint's cult to his homeland. These goals become clear when observed in the framework of the exceptionally productive publishing and educational activities of the Monastery during this period, which were directed to Russian readers (Андреев 1998: 104-105). The saved Russian hagiographical texts from the period 1880-1900 are usually translations from the Greek language. The entire corpus of these texts that have been discovered so far include:

- The Russian translation of G1 with the addition of three miracles that will be discussed in detail below (Св. праведный 1888: 40-47) (hereinafter referred to as R1).
- The Russian translation of 7 letters dated 1880-1882 (Archive of the Russian Monastery of St. Panteleimon on Athos (Register 50,

Archive 5, Document A004912)) that were sent to the Monastery from the village of Procopi and which mention the relics of St. John the Russian and the construction of his Church, starting with the letter that was sent along with the right hand of the Saint. The letters were translated by monk Arkadi Liubovikov and copied by monk Vladimir Kolesnikov (Ермолай 2015: 407).

- The Russian translation of G2 (Archive of the Russian Monastery of St. Panteleimon on Athos (Register 50, Archive 13, Document A005026)) that was probably carried out based on the hand-written text before it was published in Greece (the note before the text says “Father Dionysios has a Greek origin”). Approximately half of the entire translation, which was once again copied by monk Vladimir Kolesnikov, is saved (the beginning, the end, and several pages from the body of the text) (Ермолай 2015: 415).
- The Russian translation of an unknown Greek text attributed to Dionysios (Archive of the Russian Monastery of St. Panteleimon on Athos (Register 50, Archive 18, Document A005087)) that includes 6 unknown new miracles of the Saint, as well as a troparion, an oikos, and a kontakion dedicated to him (Ермолай 2015: 421). This document, which is dated 1888, was described above.

All the texts mentioned above were translated with the purpose of being published in the magazine “Dushepoleznyi sobesednik” as the notes about them state. However, to the best of our knowledge, only the first one was actually published in the second issue of the magazine in 1888. The monastery had undoubtedly prepared other publications concerning the life of the Saint – probably an entire book devoted to him – but for reasons unknown to us this project was never completed. The unpublished Russian texts about St. John the Russian will be discussed in detail in our subsequent studies. In the framework of this research, we will analyse the only published Russian hagiographic text about the Saint; namely the translation of G1 called “Св. праведный Иоаннъ Русскій” (Righteous Saint John the Russian) with some additional miracles.

The text consists of two parts with the first part being an anonymous translation of G1 as stated in the first footnote (Св. праведный 1888: 40). This translation, however, is rather free and is sometimes more similar to paraphrasing. Examining the first

paragraph will allow us to analyze the changes the translator made in the text in more detail. The Greek words and phrases omitted by the translator are underlined in the Greek text, and the phrases added by the Russian translator are underlined in the Russian text:

G1:

Τοῦ ὀσίου τούτου ἀγνοεῖται ἡ γενέτειρα καὶ οἱ γεννήσαντες αὐτὸν γονεῖς, ἀλλ' οὐδεμία ἀμφιβολία ὅτι εἶλκε τὸ γένος ἐκ τῶν εὐσεβῶν καὶ ὀρθοδόξων Ρώσων· αἰχμαλωτισθεῖς δὲ ἐν τῷ ἐπὶ τοῦ εὐσεβεστάτου Αὐτοκράτορος Πέτρου τοῦ Μεγάλου συμβάντι ρωσσοτουρκικῷ πολέμῳ ὑπο τινος Προκοπέως ὀθωμανοῦ χρηματίσαντος ἐν τῷ πολέμῳ τούτῳ ἱπάρχου, ἤχθη μετὰ καὶ ἄλλων εἰς κωμόπολιν τῆς Καπποδοκίας καλουμένην Προκόπιον καὶ ἀπέχουσιν τῆς μητροπόλεως Καισαρείας δώδεκα λεύγας (Λεβίδης 1885: 300).

R1:

Родина Иоанна – Россія, а частное мѣсто, гдѣ онъ родился и воспитался, неизвѣстно; безъ всякаго сомнѣнія, онъ имѣлъ православныхъ и благочестивыхъ родителей – Россовъ. Взятый въ плѣнъ во время войны, при Петрѣ Великомъ турецкимъ начальникомъ конницы, Иоанн отведенъ въ каппадокійское мѣстечко Прокопіонъ, въ 12-ти часахъ разстоянія отъ Кесаріи. Прокопіонъ теперь по турецки носитъ названіе Ур(к)юбъ (Св. праведный 1888: 40).

One can easily notice both the translation and the conscious editing efforts within the text. While attempting to interpret the Greek text for Russian readers, the translator proceeded with the following changes:

1. adapting a text written for Greeks to a Russian audience. For this purpose, apart from the changes underlined above, there are also several footnotes added to the further text, explaining some culture-specific elements of life in Asia Minor, which Russian readers were not familiar with. For example, there is a footnote explaining why the roof of the Greek school was so heavy (Св. праведный 1888: 43);
2. adapting a text published as part of historical study to fit into the hagiographical framework. For this purpose, in the narration of

the miracle of the transportation of food, the footnote of G1 discussing the supernatural elements in the lives of the Saints was omitted, and the Psalm citation: “He (the Lord) will fulfil the wishes of those who fear Him” (Ps. 144:19) is inserted into the prayer to the Saint, in order to give this miracle Biblical dimensions (Св. праведный 1888: 42). Similarly, the translator changes the large burning hot spoon (ἀρύταινα) in the description of the martyrdom of the Saint in G1 (see also λεκανίδα (small plate) - G2) to a helmet (шлемъ = περικεφαλαία) in R1, in order to place the Saint’s torture in the context of Christian martyrdom, which is a familiar concept for the Russian audience (see the footnote with the description of the very similar torture of St. Clement of Ancyra) (Св. праведный 1888: 40-41).

The combination of both types of changes helped the translator create a new image of the Russian Saint based on the existing Greek text. There is also another example that showcases how the translator managed to achieve this, i.e. the Saint’s statement about his faith mentioned above: Ἐγώ εἰμι Ρῶσσοσ, πιστὸс τοσοῦτον εἰс τὸν ἐπίγειον βασιλέα μου ὅσον καὶ εἰс τὸν οὐράνιον. (*I am Russian and I am faithful to my king on earth as well as my King in Heaven*) (Λεβίδης 1885: 301).

This Greek G1 text cited above is a bit ambiguous as far as the king on earth is concerned. It is not quite clear which king the Saint is referring to, the Russian (tsar) or the Turkish one (sultan).

This ambiguity is re-stated in the changes made to this sentence in G3 as seen underlined below, in such a way that the reader is made to believe that the Saint talked about his humility and obedience to his new ruler on earth, the Turkish sultan: Ἐγώ εἰμι, Ρῶσσοс τὸ γένος, δοῦλος μὲν σοс, καὶ πιστὸс τοσοῦτον εἰс σέ, καὶ εἰс τὸν ἐφ’ ἡμᾶс τεταγμένον βασιλέα, ἀλλὰ πιστὸс καὶ εἰс τὸν ἐπουράνιον μου Κύριον Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν. (*I am Russian by birth, though I am your slave, and I am faithful to you and to the king put over us, but also faithful to my Heavenly Lord Jesus Christ*) (Аσματική Ακολουθία 1899: 36).

On the contrary, the tone of this same phrase is changed in the Russian translation so that it appears as though the Saint declares fidelity to the Russian king: Я Русскіи, вѣрныи слуга земнаго царя моего, хотя и плѣнень тобою; но небесному Царю истиннаго служенія... никогда не отрекусь (*I am Russian and I am a faithful*

servant of my king on earth, though I have been enslaved by you, but I will never deny true service to the King in Heaven) (Св. праведный 1888: 41). It should be stressed that this exact phrase is used in the hagiographic tradition of the Saint to this day (Святой праведный Иоанн Русский 2010: 8).

From a textological perspective, R1 contains some details which lead us to believe that G1 was not the only Greek source used for its composition. In the paragraph discussed above, the substitution of the measurement of distance (δώδεκα λεύγας) with a measurement of time (въ 12-ти часахъ) (Св. праведный 1888: 40) seems quite reasonable, taking into account that the league was a unit of measurement unknown in Russia. However, it was probably not a coincidence that the same substitution will also occur later in G2 (Διονύσιος & Μοδέστος 1897: 37). Another example can be seen in the 1874 miracle regarding the murder of the 12-year-old girl. Although the translation generally follows the G1 version, the gender of the murderer is changed from a man to a woman just as it was in G2 (Св. праведный 1888: 44). Taking into account that G2 was published almost 10 years after R1, it is easy to assume that the translator used a manuscript that was most likely authored by Dionysios Charalampidis as a source.

The use of other sources is quite evident in the second part of R1; namely in the additions that do not correspond with G1. Among the additions, only the last one — that “St. John was a friend and co-prisoner of the venerable monk and martyr Pachomios” (Св. праведный 1888: 47) — was taken from the published source, i.e. from T1. The other additions make no reference to any source and do not correspond to any text published until then, neither Greek nor Turkish. Nevertheless, one can easily see that these are the same events that were later added to G2, namely:

- The miracle during which the monk Andrew was saved from robbers.
- The miracle during which the Saint told his name to a small child, through his icon.
- The miracle that was narrated by a descendant of the family of the Agha, about his boy being saved by the Saint and then dedicated to him.

- General information about the Saint's reputation among the Orthodox population, the Armenians, and the Turks of Asia Minor with emphasis on the fact that he had healed people possessed by demons. The Saint's Turkish nickname Куле Юванъ — *John the Prisoner* and the appeal of the demon-possessed Turks for him (Куле ялма базе — *Prisoner, don't burn us*) are also mentioned here.
- Information on his cult in Procopi and the church processions dedicated to him (Св. праведный 1888: 45-47).

Taking into account that the description of the above facts is quite similar in both R1 and G2, one can assume that this information was taken from the manuscript that contained the Service and Life of the Saint written by Dionysios and mentioned in the document described above. This was possibly the first draft of G2. However, there are some important differences between these two texts that contradict this theory, namely:

- The miracle regarding the salvation of Andrew from robbers is reported to have happened in 1885 (with the note "recently") (Св. праведный 1888: 45) and not in 1878. Taking into account that the event described happened to a member of the same community only 3 years before the text was written, we are inclined to believe that the evidence provided in R1 is correct. On the contrary, the incorrect dating of the event by Dionysios (note that this miracle was not mentioned in G1, despite the fact that the events that followed it according to Dionysios are mentioned, i.e. the donation of his relics to the Monastery of St. Panteleimon) was done consciously with the purpose of explaining the desire of the monastery to obtain a piece of the relics. The next miracle during which the Saint told his name to a boy is not dated (Св. праведный 1888: 46-47). It is likely that the date provided in G2 (1880) is correct, seeing as the visit of monk Andrew to the monastery that same year is stated in the 1881 letter written by the Procopi villagers (Archive of the Russian Monastery of St. Panteleimon on Athos, (Register 50, Archive 5, Document A004912, F. 1r)).
- One detail of the miracle — the armed Turk whom Andrew met when he tried to escape the robbers (На возвратномъ пути о.

Андрей съ извощикомъ встрѣтили и остальную повозку съ вооруженнымъ съ головы до ногъ туркомъ и стали ему кричать о произошедшемъ, но онъ или не разслушалъ, или вѣрнѣе, понадѣясь на свои доспѣхи, понесся впередъ (*On his way back Farther Andrew with his carriage driver met the carriage that followed them with the armed from top to toe Turk, and tried to tell him what happened, but he either hadn't heard them or rather hoped that his arms would save him and rode ahead at full speed*) (Св. праведный 1888: 46)) — is not mentioned neither in G2 nor in G3. Therefore, in the Greek sources the fate of those who followed Andrew's carriage is unknown.

- The boy to whom the Saint told his name is “about 4 years old” (Св. праведный 1888: 46), and not 6 years old as G2 and G3 state.
- The Memorial Day of the Saint is said to be on 22nd May (Св. праведный 1888: 47) instead of 27th May.

It should also be mentioned that two of these facts were undoubtedly reported by the monk Andrew, with the rest also possibly being narrated by him, as he had visited Procopi several times during the years 1880-1885. He also played the most significant role in the development of the Saint's cult both in Procopi and the Monastery of St. Panteleimon. Some indirect proof that this information was reported by Andrew can be found in the descriptions of the way the Saint told his name to the boy in both R1 and G2, i.e. “with a Russian pronunciation like *Ioan*, while the Turks pronounce it *Giuvan* and the Greeks *Gianis* or *Ioannis*” (Св. праведный 1888: 47; Διονύσιος & Μοδέστος 1897: 51-52). Monk Andrew lived in a trilingual environment with Turkish being his native language, and Greek and Russian the languages of his monastic community. He therefore definitely possessed the necessary background and was surely interested in finding “linguistic evidence” in favour of the Saint's Russian origin. All these facts combined lead us to the conclusion that the additions to R1 were based on a text written directly by monk Andrew or on the oral evidence he had provided as a member of the same community. One can assume that this text was later used by Dionysios Charalampidis when he authored G2. At the same time, the

miracles that were first reported by Dionysios and were then rejected by a Russian censor were later excluded from the Greek text as well.

To sum up the main results of our research, the comparative analysis of the early trilingual hagiographic tradition on St. John the Russian reveals how the different images of the same Saint were created in the context of different cultures and spiritualities, by making small changes in specific facts and their formulation. The Turkish language tradition, followed by the Constantinople edition (G3), presents the Saint as a humble slave, obedient to his master but firm and unshakable when it came to his Christian faith. He is described as being Russian only in origin. This tradition, which stresses the Saint's humility, mentions no supernatural events that occurred during his lifetime, disregarding the miracle of the transportation of the plate of food to Mecca. On the contrary, the Russian tradition presents St. John as a Russian military saint, brave and devoted to his Russian roots. He is commended for being able to preserve his Russian identity intact while being held in a Turkish prison, and is shown to be a man of confidence and boldness, asking the Lord for mercy and performing miracles. The Greek tradition, which was the most productive during that period, creates a "balance" between the previous two, keeping closer to the Russian one.

Even though the veneration of the Saint and the legends about his life and afterlife miracles originated from the Turkish language oral traditions, when it comes to his written hagiography, it is the Greek language tradition that should be mentioned first. It was as part of this tradition — from G1 to G3 — that the text about the Life of the Saint we know today was gradually composed, based on memories of real facts, hagiographical topos, and folk legends. However, the gap in the publishing activities of the Greek tradition from 1885 (G1) to 1897 (G2) forces us to direct our attention to the Russian tradition of this period. The reason for this is that it was derived from the Greek tradition, as it was based on translations of Greek texts. Some unpublished and probably unsaved Greek sources from the mentioned gap period can be reconstructed through the Russian tradition. In particular, these sources include a hypothetical text authored by monk Andrew describing the miracles of the Saint during the period 1880-1888, and providing a more verifiable date of the miracle with the robbers (1885).

Hopefully, new unpublished sources will be discovered in the future that will help us better understand the gradual process of the formation of the cult of St. John the Russian. The comparative analysis of the three text traditions that played a crucial part in this process can reveal many interesting facts concerning the differences in the perception of the same Saint in the context of different cultures, as well as the characteristics of the Saint's cult in general.

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