

# New Interpretative Approaches to the Study of Slavic Paganism

## The Case of a Pseudo-Chrysostomian Homily in East Slavic\*

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The foundational chronicle of the East Slavs, the *Povest' Vremennykh Let*, under the heading for the year 988, describes how Prince Vladimir, after adopting Christianity in order to be able to marry Anna Porphyrogenita, a Byzantine princess, commands his people, the inhabitants of Kievan Rus', to be baptized in a massive christening ceremony in the river Dnieper.<sup>1</sup> The legacy of the prince, (known later as St Vladimir) was put into question by nineteenth-century German and Russian scholars, maybe

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<sup>1</sup> Vladimir's conversion shares many characteristics with other medieval accounts of conversions to Christianity of barbarian kings in the rest of Europe, as summarised by M. DE JONG, "Religion", in *The Early Middle Ages*, ed. by R. McKITTERICK, Oxford, 2001, p. 131-164. Unfortunately, a detailed comparison is beyond the scope of the present article. Most importantly, the fact that is a decision usually described as collective (Vladimir asks his ambassadors to describe to him what they saw abroad in order to choose between Christianity, Judaism and Islam) and the fact that "The ideal conversion of a barbarian king was both a collective and an entirely voluntary act, leaving the honour and freedom of the ruler and his people unimpaired" (p. 133)

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for different reasons, who argued that his newly adopted religion was never fully embraced by his people and that, despite the best efforts of both Church and civil authorities, the East Slavs, and the Russians in particular, have always remained too close to their pagan practices to have fully accepted Christianity<sup>2</sup>. This modern scholarly position is rooted in modern perceptions of what belief and religious practice really mean, and it responds as well to social and/or political agendas in Russia and abroad.<sup>3</sup>

While it is undisputable that practices of what could be called folk religion (among which, but not exclusively, magic and divination could be included) were and are, to a certain extent, still popular in the three modern states that are heirs to the first East Slavic polity,<sup>4</sup> Kievan Rus', religious practice does not always equate with religious belief: the former might reflect a certain level of heterodoxy or syncretism, and the second a theological dispute. The various forms of religious or pseudo-religious practices that are maintained in various parts of the world where a single religion holds a position of undisputed dominance, most of the time, have to do with the literacy levels of their practitioners rather than with a real choice between one god or another God.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, in most European societies, certain practices linked to magic and divination have been overturned not by a more orthodox approach to the phenomenon of religion, but rather by widespread access to

<sup>2</sup> Although the Chronicle does not specifically depict the use of violence in the massive christening, it certainly records an ominous threat on the part of the Prince to those who would refuse. Of course the Chronicle depicts the people of Kiev willingly embracing Christianity. What was put into question by scholars of the 19th century onwards was their unanimity.

<sup>3</sup> Among Slavists, the term "dvoeverie" (literally, "double belief") has traditionally been popular, particularly among Russian historians. Lately, it has been tentatively revived by some scholars lately to encompass what is usually known as popular religion. See W. RYAN'S, *The Bathhouse at Midnight*, University Park, PA, 1999, p. 14-15.

<sup>4</sup> By far, the more sound study on the various sources of all these practices is W. RYAN'S, *The Bathhouse*, in which textual evidence on various magical practices is analysed.

<sup>5</sup> The classic *Magic in the Middle Ages*, by R. KIECKHEFER, Cambridge, 1989 has yet to be fully valued among Slavists, who pretend to see in a purported long shadow of medieval paganism a resistance to an institutionally imposed religion.

education and information. It is essential to understand the multifaceted social phenomenon of religious syncretism, in all its complexity, in order to evaluate, to the right extent, the use of certain primary sources in studying the medieval past of Kievan Rus'.

The text studied in the present article – a homily of Pseudo-Chrysostom in Slavic version and its related texts – is just one example of a much larger corpus of texts focused on religious instruction translated from Byzantine sources for the purpose of Christianising Kievan Rus'. The fact that these texts were translated in bulk should make us question whether the practices described therein do actually reflect East Slavic practices or are actually a mere translation of Byzantine practices in the Slavic language. If so, they could be really interesting for the study of the process of textual transmission of the Church Fathers in Slavic, but of limited value as a historiography source for the study of paganism among the East Slavs, as traditionally utilised. The aim of the present article is to provide an alternative approach to methodologies previously used in studying East Slavic sources to examine and describe the process of Christianisation in Kievan Rus'.

#### 1. “The sweetness of books”

The same chronicle that describes the legendary conversion of Vladimir to Christianity underlines the fact of how literacy among the East Slavs was deeply linked to their Christianisation process. In one of the first autochthonous literary works, *The Sermon on Law and Grace*, by Metropolitan Ilarion on the occasion of the conversion of Kiev, he clearly states that they (the members of the clergy) do not write for the ignorant (of the faith), but rather for those who have already experienced “the sweetness of books”.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, the great majority of texts known in Early Rus' were functionally linked to the spread of Christianity among the newly converted peoples and dependent on Greek sources.<sup>7</sup> It

<sup>6</sup> A translation of this key text can be found in S. FRANKLIN, *Sermons and Rhetoric of Kievan Rus'*, Cambridge, Mass., 1991, p. 3-30.

<sup>7</sup> On the functionality and uses of literacy in Kievan Rus', and also on their link to Christianity, see S. FRANKLIN, *Writing, Society and Culture in Early Rus, c. 950-1300*, Cambridge, 2002.

is estimated that 90% of all the literary output in the centuries following were translations from Greek. Besides the high dependence on Greek originals, scribal practices among East Slavs were respectful to highest degree to the texts received. The intervention of scribes was, more often than not, kept to a minimum, and the idea that what was translated was the true word of God or the Holy Fathers gave a halo of sacredness to the texts that soon turned into stubborn immobility and uncritical reception of the sources.<sup>8</sup> To a certain extent, Kievan Rus' became literary, if not literate, in, and by means of, the Christianisation process, and that fact should make us reluctant to accept purported evidence of social and religious practices among the East Slavs at face value.

The theological tenets with respect to both the reception of Greek texts on the one hand, and, on the other, to the necessary self-imposed silence on behalf of East Slavic copyists, resulted in a myriad of false attributions that are difficult, if not impossible, to elucidate now. In order to hide or keep secret any direct intervention in the texts, contrary to what their peers in the West were already doing, the East Slavs used various specific copying and writing practices. One such possibility was that, instead of writing in their own name, scribes would make use of famous and respected Fathers of the Church, such as John Chrysostom or Gregory of Nazianzus, among others, to *say* what they were afraid of saying in their own name. For example, they might add, at the end or in the middle of a real translation, the expression “togo že”, meaning “from the same one”. By this means, they could attribute to a known and respected author a text or parts of a text that, in other manuscript traditions, might have been added in a gloss, but which, among the East Slavs, could not be

<sup>8</sup> On the scribal practices on the so-called *Slavia Orthodoxa*, which would include Early Rus', see W. VEDER, “Lo Studio delle Traduzione fra *Slavia Latina e Slavia Slavonica*”, in *Lo Spazio letterario del Medioevo*. 3, *Le Culture Circostanti*, ed. by M. CAPALDO, Rome, 2006, p. 715-723, and also P. MATEJÍČ, “New Medieval Slavic Developments and Methodologies in Paper and Watermark Studies”, in *Medieval Slavonic Studies: New Perspectives for Research*, ed. by J. A. ÁLVAREZ-PEDROSA NÚÑEZ and S. TORRES PRIETO, Paris, 2009, p. 67-84.

presented as a gloss out of an excessive humility and a zeal to preserve the sacredness of the word<sup>9</sup>.

Another possibility was the abridgement of parts of the text that were deemed uninteresting or inappropriate, such as elements of romance in the copying of Pseudo-Callisthenes' *Alexander Romance*, for example. This could have been a response to the exclusive monastic milieu where literary transmission took place or simply to a different understanding of the functionality of the texts. This was also combined sometimes with the rearranging of episodes or with the combination of more than one source in "creating" a Slavic version of a given story – for example, the combination of apocryphal and canonical gospels in narrations of the Passion of Jesus for church services on Holy Friday. Finally, the most blatant form of adaptation was the introduction of a new text interspersed with the text from the source, without keeping these interpolations separated from the original source text, and therefore creating genuinely *Slavic* versions of many Greek originals.

Slavic copyists showed no qualms about making any of the above-described alterations, whereas they seemed reluctant to commit to an alteration of the *wording* of the text. This zeal, reinforced by the success of certain orthographic reforms in the late fourteenth century, as well as a scrupulous dependency on the wording, which sometimes implied a thorough disregard for the contents, finally got the upper hand.

## 2. Case Study: A Pseudo-Chrysostomian Homily

In order to illustrate all these possible practices, we have chosen the Slavic version of a Pseudo-Chrysostomian homily, one of the most often quoted texts in early studies of Slavic paganism, the incipit of which reads "Sermon of our Holy Father John Chrysostom, archbishop of Constantinople, about how the first pagans believed in their idols, and they dedicated rites to them

<sup>9</sup> On the particularities on Slavic textual transmission, see my brief survey S. TORRES PRIETO, "Dating in Slavonic: Birch-bark letters and Watermarks", in *Eastern Christians and their Written Heritage. Manuscripts, Scribes and Context*, ed. by J. P. MONFERRER SALA, H. TEULE and S. TORALLAS TOVAR, Leuven, 2012, p. 163-181.

and invoked their names. And even now many do the same despite being Christians and do not know what Christianity is". This text has an interesting history: it has always been included in anthologies on Slavic paganism, and it is still being used nowadays to describe purported pagan practices of East Slavs, or what was called from the beginning of last century *dvoeverie*, or double-faith.<sup>10</sup>

The sermon, needless to say, is not from Chrysostom, or at least from any Chrysostom known to us, either real or spurious. Rather, it seems to be a piece directly composed in Old Russian by an anonymous author who claims to be the respected church father in order to legitimise his own text. As it was mentioned before, this was a not infrequent practice and John Chrysostom eventually became, together with Kirill of Turov, one of the most falsely prolific authors of Kievan literature.

This Pseudo-Chrysostomian homily has two quite differentiated parts. The first part is actually based on an adaptation of a sermon by St Gregory of Nazianzus made in Slavic in the fourteenth century, and its second part is in fact the Slavic translation of the Pseudo-Chrysostomian homily against the pseudoprophets (*CPG* 4583; *PG* 59, col. 553-563). The first part, the adaptation of the sermon by St Gregory, predates the second. The dating of the two distinct parts is done on the basis of stages of linguistic evolution in a particular key moment when East Slavic becomes Old Russian<sup>11</sup>. The first part, therefore, would be the oldest (from the

<sup>10</sup> Among the classic anthologies of texts focused on Slavic paganism are E. V. ANICHKOV, *Jazychestvo i Drevnjaja Rus'*, Saint Petersburg, 1914 (reimpr. Munich, 1995); V. J. MANSIKKA, *Die Religion der Ostslaven*, I, Helsinki, 1922; M. M. GAL'KOVSKII, *Borba khristianstva s ostalkami jazychestva v Drevnej Rusi, II: Drevne-russkija slova i pouchenija, napravlenija protiv ostalok jazychestva v narode*, Moscow, 1913; and the more general and all-encompassing N. S. TIKHONRAVOV, *Letopisi russoj literatury i drevnostej*, 5 vol., Moscow, 1859-1862. On the tradition of the study of *dvoeverie* among Russian scholars and abroad, see the wonderful *status quaestionis* provided by Eve Levin in her "Dvoeverie and Popular Religion" in *Seeking God: The Recovery of Religious Identity in Russia, Ukraine, and Georgia*, ed. by S. K. BATALDEN, Illinois, 1993, p. 31-52. Also, the lucid analysis of the term *dvoeverie* as a "scholarly construct" made by S. ROCK, "What's in a Word?: A Historical Study of the Concept *Dvoeverie*", *Canadian-American Slavic Studies*, 35 (2001), p. 19-28.

<sup>11</sup> Dating texts in Slavic is particularly difficult because we lack some paratextual elements which constitute an aid in other linguistic traditions and also because linguistic conservative editing in later manuscripts is common.

fourteenth century) and the second, a more recent one, is the one actually based on a later translation of part of the above-mentioned sermon of Chrysostom against the false prophets. This Chrysostomian text, the second part on its own, received the name in Russian miscellanies of the *Sermon of John Chrysostom about Christianity*. Its earliest versions are in later manuscripts (seventeenth century) of the well-known *florilegium Izmaragd*.<sup>12</sup>

The translation into Slavic of Sermon 39, *In Sancta Lumina*, of St Gregory of Nazianzus (329-389), to which some curious interpolations were later added, was probably already abridged, since the Greek text was not translated in full, but only from paragraphs  $\gamma$  to  $\varepsilon$  and these, as it is clear in the text below, not even in full. Here we reproduce the Greek text parallel to the Slavic text: we indicate the first interpolations (fourteenth century) in italics and the later ones (sixteenth century) in boldface. The first interpolations (in italics) were included in the oldest manuscript where we find this text, dating to the fourteenth century (*Sbornik* of Paisii, Ms Kirilo-Belozerski 4/1081), and were later expanded upon in a more recent version from the fifteenth century (maybe sixteenth) from the Novgorod Sohpia scriptorium (Ms Sofiiski Novgorod 1295).<sup>13</sup>

The following excerpts show the process of adaptation, since it can hardly be called translation, made of Nazianzus' text.<sup>14</sup>

Different linguistic states attest undoubtedly that the texts were different in origin, which is what matters most in the present article. Unfortunately, an in-depth discussion of linguistic traits of either text is beyond the scope of the present contribution.

<sup>12</sup> The *Izmaragd* was the Slavic or Russian translation of the Greek *Smaragdus* (Emerald), a compilation of varying length (from 90 to 250 entries) dealing not only with various aspects of household management but also with the rudiments of Christian morals. Its first translation into Slavic is dated to the second half of the fourteenth century, but new successive copies and versions were made well into the seventeenth century.

<sup>13</sup> Although the manuscript is dated to the 16th century, we cannot rule out the possibility that these interpolations were made in the 15th century and then preserved intact in a later manuscript.

<sup>14</sup> Greg. Naz., *Or.* 39, § 3, 1-4, 20; Grégoire De Nazianze, *Discours 38-41*, ed. C. MORESCHINI, transl. P. GALLAY, Paris, 1990 (*SChr*, 358), p. 152-156. The Slavic text follows the text edited by M. M. GAL'KOVSKII, Moscow, 1913, p. 22-25, based on the oldest extant manuscript (Ms.), that of the *Sbornik* of Paisii (= Ms. Kirilo-Belozersky 4/1081). The more modern interpolations (fifteenth-sixteenth century) were also published by Gal'kovskii parallel to the Paisiev text and were taken from Ms. Sofiiski Novgorod 1295.

3. Μή τις τοιαύτη  
κάθαρσις νομική καὶ  
σκιώδης, προσκαίροις  
βαντίσμασιν ὠφελοῦσα  
καὶ σποδῶ δαμά-  
λεως βαντίζουσα τοὺς  
κεκοινωμένους; μή τι  
τοιοῦτο μυσταγωγῶ-  
σιν Ἕλληνες; ὧν λῆρος  
ἐμοὶ πᾶσα τελετὴ καὶ  
μυστήριον, δαιμόνων  
εὐρημα σκοτεινὸν καὶ  
διανοίας ἀνάπλασμα  
κακοδαίμονος, χρόνῳ  
βοηθούμενον καὶ μύθῳ  
κλεπτόμενον. Ἄ γὰρ ὡς  
ἀληθῆ προσκυνοῦσιν,  
ὡς μυθικὰ συγκαλύ-  
πτουσιν δέον, εἰ μὲν  
ἀληθῆ, μὴ μύθους ὀνο-  
μάζεσθαι, ἀλλ' ὅτι μὴ  
αἰσχροῦ δείκνυσθαι· εἰ δὲ  
ψευδῆ, μὴ θαυμάζεσθαι,  
μηδ' οὕτως ἰταμῶς ἐνα-  
ντιωτάτας ἔχειν δόξας  
περὶ τοῦ αὐτοῦ πράγ-  
ματος, ὥσπερ ἐν ἀγορᾷ  
μειρακίων παίζοντας ἢ  
ἀνδρῶν κακοδαίμονων  
ὡς ἀληθῶς, ἀλλ' οὐκ  
ἀνδράσι διαλεγομένους  
νοῦν ἔχουσι, καὶ Λόγου  
προσκυνηταῖς, κἄν τὴν  
ἔντεχνον ταύτην καὶ  
ῥυπαρὰν πιθανότητα  
διαπτύωσιν.

4. Οὐ Διὸς ταῦτα  
γοναὶ καὶ κλοπαί, τοῦ  
Κρητῶν τυράννου, κἄν  
Ἕλληνες ἀπαρέσχω-  
νται· οὐδὲ Κουρήτων  
ἤχοι καὶ κρότοι καὶ  
ὄρχησεις ἔνοπλοι, θεοῦ  
κλαίοντος ἠχῆν συγκα-  
λύπτουσαι, ἵνα πατέρα  
λάθῃ μισότεχνον δει-  
νὸν γὰρ ἦν ὡς παιδίον  
κλαυθμυρίζουσαι, τὸν  
ὡς λίθον καταποθέντα·  
οὐδὲ Φρυγῶν ἔκτομαὶ  
καὶ αὐλοὶ καὶ Κορύβα

Видите ὠκάνнию сию  
скверненую сѣужевъ ствар-  
лену ѿ скверныхъ языкъ.  
Ѣлени ѡканини. владивыя  
жертвы оученьѣмъ дѣво-  
лиамъ. ѡвоверѣтено потво-  
ренъѣмъ темнаго вѣса ꙗ  
кощоннаго. злымъ кла-  
домы зловѣрнии мнѡше  
сѣѣтъ истиннию. сѣужаще  
ꙗ кланѡишесѡ ꙗдолѡмъ.

нѣкоѡ оухищренъе твор-  
ать. мы же сихъ чада  
ѡмѣтаемъ нечтивыхъ  
жертвъ.

ꙗ дывѡ сѣуженьѡ. ꙗ  
кладеньѡ тревъ. критъ-  
скаго ѡканнаго оуцѣла.  
ꙗ мамѡда проклѡтаго, сра-  
циньскаго жерца. Ѣлен-  
скиѡ любви. бѣвеннаго пле-  
сканъѡ. свирѣлнаго звѣка.  
плѡсанъѡ сотонина.

Фрѣжъскиѡ слѡнница. ꙗ  
гѣслѡ. мѣсикѣискиѡ. ꙗкѣ  
самара. е вѣсѡтъѡ. жрѣ-  
це мѣри вѣсѡвѣстѣꙗ афро-  
дитѣ вѣциѣ ꙗ корѣнѣ.  
и артемиѣ. [афродитѣ  
вогыни. корѡнѣ. корѡуна  
же воудѣтъ и антихъ ца-  
лти. и артемиѣ].

Heed now this wretched  
sacrilegious cult, made  
by profane pagans,  
those miserable Greeks,  
who used to offer sac-  
rifices learnt from the  
devil, and perform sac-  
rilegious rites thanks to  
some obscure devilish  
invention. And commit  
profanation when they  
worship them in fiend-  
ish rites. And many hold  
all these things as true,  
serving and bowing to  
the idols.

And likewise they do  
craftiness. We reject  
the dishonourable sac-  
rifices of these people

And those who serve  
Zeus and worship him  
and the wretched mas-  
ter from Crete, and  
bow before the damned  
Muhammed, offering sac-  
rifices and their Hel-  
lenic love. And we also  
reject the tapping of the  
tamburine and the  
sounds of the flageo-  
let inspired by Satan.

And the Phrygian horns,  
and the musicians play-  
ing the gusli, and the  
other impure or diabolic  
things performed by the  
priests of the mother of  
the shameless goddess  
Aphrodite and Korun  
and Artemis [*and the  
goddess Aphrodite  
and Korun, that Ko-  
run who will be also  
the mother of the  
Antichrist, and Arte-  
mis*"].

ντες και ὅσα περι τῆν  
 Ῥέαν ἀνθρωποι μαί-  
 νονται, τελοῦντες τῆ  
 μητρὶ τῶν θεῶν και  
 τελούμενοι ὅσα τῆ  
 μητρὶ τῶν τοιούτων  
 εἰκός· οὐδὲ κόρη τις ἡμῖν  
 ἀρπάζεται και Δημήτηρ  
 πλανᾶται και Κελεοῦς  
 τινὰς ἐπεισάγει και Τρι-  
 πολέμους και δράκο-  
 ντας και τὰ μὲν ποιεῖ,  
 τὰ δὲ πάσχει. Αἰσχύνο-  
 μαι γὰρ ἡμέρα δοῦναι  
 τῆν νυκτὸς τελετήν,  
 και ποιεῖν τῆν ἀσχημο-  
 σύνην μυστήριον. Οἶδεν  
 Ἐλευσίς ταῦτα και οἱ  
 τῶν σιωπωμένων και  
 σιωπῆς ὄντως ἀξίων  
 ἐπόπται. Οὐδὲ Διονυ-  
 σος ταῦτα και μηρὸς,  
 ὠδίνων ἀτελεὲς κύημα,  
 ὥσπερ ἄλλο τι κεφαλὴ  
 πρότερον· και θεὸς  
 ἀνδρόγυνος και χορὸς  
 μεθυόντων και στρατὸς  
 ἐκλυτος και Θηβαίων  
 ἀνοια τοῦτον τιμῶσα  
 και Σεμέλης κεραυνὸς  
 προσκυνούμενος. Οὐδὲ  
 Ἄφροδίτης πορνικὰ  
 μυστήρια, τῆς αἰσχρῶς,  
 ὡς αὐτοὶ λέγουσι, και  
 γενομένης και τιμωμέ-  
 νης.

проклатѣ дѣвннссѣ. и  
 недоношеннн породѣ. ꙗ  
 финѣіскоѣ безвнннѣ пыл-  
 ннство почитают. іако вѣ.  
 и семелнно. тревокладеннѣ  
 грѣмѣ. ꙗ моланьгалнѣ. ꙗ  
 вилѣ [вгбѣ вавилоньскому.  
 его же развн даннло прѣкѣ.  
 тѣмнѣ же вгмнѣ тревѣу  
 кладѣуть и творатѣ. ꙗ  
 словеньскнн ызыкѣ. вил-  
 амнѣ. и мокошн. днвѣ.  
 перѣоуѣ. хѣрѣу. рѣдоу.  
 ꙗ рожанннн. оупиремнѣ. и  
 верегынлмнѣ. и переплѣтуѣ.  
 и верѣтачѣса пьютѣ емоу  
 вѣ розѣхѣ. ꙗ ꙗгннвн св-  
 арожннцѣ молатѣ. и нав-  
 ьмнѣ. мѣвѣ творатѣ. и вѣ  
 тѣстѣ мосты дѣлаютѣ.  
 ꙗ колодѣѣ. ꙗ ꙗнн мно-  
 гаѣ же оутѣхѣ.] ꙗже естѣ  
 вылѣ іѣролѣ. нарнцѣемнн  
 вилѣ. ꙗгоже погѣвн дан-  
 нлѣ прѣкѣ в вавилонѣ.

And to the damned  
 Dionysus, the one of  
 uncompleted birth,  
 and the drunkenness and  
 stupidity of the The-  
 bans like God. And to  
 Semele, and the sacrifi-  
 ce to the thunder and  
 lightening and to Vil,  
 [a *Babylonian god*,  
*whom the prophet*  
*Daniel destroyed the*  
*Slavic people also*  
*offers sacrifices to the*  
*same gods, to Vil, to*  
*Mokoš, to Div, Perún,*  
*Khroš, the rod, and*  
*the rožanicu, to the*  
*vampires and the*  
*naiids and to Pereplut,*  
*and they drink twirl-*  
*ing to honour her and*  
*they pray to the fire of*  
*Svarožit and prepare*  
*a bath for the dead*  
*and make bridges*  
*and make wells of dough*  
*and they have fun in*  
*many other ways".]*  
 And there was an idol  
 called Vil, who was  
 killed by the prophet  
 Daniel in Babylon.

After this, the Slavic version of St Gregory's *In Sancta Lumina* continues with a staunch denunciation of all sort of non-Christian rites, mixing together Hellenic pagan uses, Islam rites and pagan deities.

As mentioned before, this text, reworked from part of Gregory's Sermon, seems to be the inspiration of the first part of the Slavic Pseudo-Chrysostomian homily commencing as "Sermon of our Holy Father St John Chrysostom about how the first pagans believed in their idols", which is, in fact, a combination of the abridged Gregory plus a Slavic translation of the Greek Pseudo-Chrysostomian *Sermon against the Pseudoprophets*. So the Slavic seems to be a *spuria* of a *spuria*, or a Pseudo-Chrysostom squared.

It is indeed interesting that the codex from Sophia Novgorod 1295, containing one of the earliest versions of this Slavic Pseudo-Chrysostomian text, was in the same library/scriptorium that contained the extended version (with added interpolations) of Gregory's *In Sancta Lumina*, namely, manuscript Sofiiski Novgorod 1262.<sup>15</sup>

While this Chrysostom text does not contain any specific information about religious practices amongst the Slavs, the present text is clearly an attempt of adaptation and appropriation of the pen name of Chrysostom to denounce un-orthodox and pagan practices amongst Slavs. And this adaptation of the Greek Pseudo-Chrysostom *Sermon against the Pseudoprophets* was clearly made in view, or having access to, the text by Gregory of Nazianzus presented above. Clearly, the scribe, wanting to describe autochthonous pagan practices, and probably little familiar with Greek pagan religion, ends up mixing up all sorts of gods and practices in a blurred confused attempt to define Christianity. The influ-

<sup>15</sup> As is usually the case with manuscripts in Russia, the references to shelf marks and collections as provided in total or partial editions of texts before the October Revolution of 1917 are now worthless, as most public and private collections were relocated, sometimes without a trace. Manuscript 1295 belonged to the library of the church of St Sophia in Novgorod. The church's collection was split into two and transported to the St Petersburg Theological Academy and what is now the Russian National Library (RNB) in St Petersburg (formerly, the Saltykov-Shchedrin). It became part of the latter in 1919, and it is in the RNB now. It is a miscellany of texts dated by Gal'kovskii to the fifteenth century, but more recently to the sixteenth. It consists of 467 folia and is a collection of various edificatory texts, some attributed and some not, among which are the texts by Gregory of Nazianzus and John Chrysostom. Although the description is incomplete, and the foliation not very reliable, it is probable that the texts of these two authors follow immediately one after another in the codex. Sadly, the lack of available incipits and titles leaves us with some doubt. Whether this is reason enough for textual contamination, supposing that it contained also the text by Chrysostom presented below, is another matter. If not actually in the same codex, the text below is taken from a manuscript once in the same library, and perhaps produced in the same scriptorium. This is a possibility yet to be fully explored, since faithful descriptions of these miscellanies are still not available. I would like to thank M. A. "Pasha" Johnson, Curator of Slavic Early Printed Books & Manuscripts at the Hilandar Research Library of The Ohio State University (Columbus, Ohio), and her colleagues for providing me with all the relevant available information about this manuscript.

ence of Gregory's text on the Slavic Pseudo-Chrysostom is clear, and the fact that both texts were maybe present consecutively in the same codex, and most certainly in the same library, should not be neglected.

The Pseudo-Pseudo-Chrysostom starts with an exhortation, theoretically by Saint Paul, to Orthodox life, in which it is explained that pagans carry out condemnable actions without knowing it and therefore are oblivious of what awaits them.<sup>16</sup>

<p>Словъ ст҃го оца нашего ѿ ѿ злато- обстаго. Архипепѣ а константина града. о толь како първое поганинѣ вѣроваху въ идолы. И тревѣгы имѣху клади. И имена имѣху нарекали. аже и нынѣ мнози тако творять. и въ крѣтъяньствѣ. соудѣ. а не вѣдають что есть крѣтъяньство.</p>	<p><i>Sermon of our Holy Father John Chrysostom, archbishop of Constan- tinople, about how the first pagans believed in idols, and dedicated rites to them and invoked their name. And even now many still do so despite being Christian since they do not know what Christianity is [...].</i></p>
<p>1. члѣбчи забывше страха бѣаху небре- женнѣмъ и крѣтъниа ѿвѣргоша. и при- стѣпиша къ идоломѣ. и начаша жрети молнии и грому. и солнѣцу и лунѣ. Я дръзѣни перуну. хорсу. вѣламу и мокоши оупиремѣ и берегынамѣ. иже нарицають три сестриница. а ини въ сварожица вѣроуютъ. и въ арте- миду. иже невелиганы члѣбчи молотѣ. и кѣры имѣху режють.</p>	<p>People, having forgotten their fear and abandoned God and renounced Christianity, bow before their idols. And start to offer sacri- fices to the lightning and the thun- der, to the sun and the moon. And others to Perun, Xorš, Vil and Mokoš,<sup>17</sup> to vampires and water nymphs, which they call thrice-nine sisters, and others even believe in Svarožic and in Artemis, and these are adored by unlearned people and sacrifice cocks to them.</p>
<p>О шѣвогана коурѣта. ѿже не на чѣтъ въ стѣлимѣху породѣша. ни на чѣтъ въ вѣрнымѣху члѣбкомѣ. Но на жертвѣху идоломѣху режютьсѣ. и то блѣ- уднѣше сами гадѣть. И инѣми въ водѣху потаплѣны соудѣ. Я дръзѣни къ кладѣзѣмѣху приходѣше молотѣ. и въ водѣху мечють веледу жертвѣху при-</p>	<p>Oh, unfortunate chickens that have not been born to honour neither the altar of the saints nor the one of believers, but are slaughtered as an offering to the idols. And after offer- ing these sacrifices, they eat them. And others are drowned into the</p>

<sup>16</sup> The Slavic text follows the edition prepared by M. M. GAL'KOVSKII, Moscow, 1913, p. 59-60, upon the manuscript Sofiiski Belozerski 1262.

<sup>17</sup> All these are deities from the purported Slavic pagan pantheon, Perun being a figure similar to the Greek Zeus; the other gods and goddesses each had different attributes, all similar to any other Indo-European pantheon. The spelling of the gods' names has been unified for clarification purposes.

носѣще. Я друзѣни огньѣи и каменню и рѣкамъ. И источникъ. и верегыняль. и въ дрова. не токможе преже в поганьствѣ. Но мнози и нынѣ то творѣтъ. Я крѣтъ кланъ сѣ наричающе.

мосты. и просвѣты. и вѣдканисты. и чересъ огнь скачють мнѣщѣ крѣтъ кланъ а поганьскаѣ дѣла творѣтъ. навѣмъ мовь творѣтъ. и попель посреде съпляютъ. и проповѣдающе мѣлѣ и молоко. и масла и гайца. и всѣ потребнаѣ весомъ. и на пецъ и льюще въ бани. мытисѣ илѣ велѣтъ. Чехолъ и оуброуеъ вѣшляюще въ молвици. Беси же злооумню ихъ смѣюще сѣ. поропръщюте сѣ в попель томъ. и следъ свои показаютъ на прощениѣ илѣ. Униже видѣвше то ѡходѣтъ. повѣдающе другъ другоу. и то все проповѣданье сами ѡдѣтъ и пню. ихже не достоиѣ ни псоѣ пасти.

У злаѣ дивабоѣ прельеть. иже ни поганинѣ того не творѣтъ. Я друзѣни вѣрчють въ стривѣ дажьбѣ. и переплоута. иже вѣртѣчесѣ емѣ пнютъ в розѣхъ. забывше кѣ створившаго нѣка и землю. моря и рекъ и источникы. и тако веселѣчесѣ ѡ идолѣхъ своихъ.

water, and those come to prostrate themselves in adoration and throw themselves into the water carrying offerings to Beelzebub. And yet others adore the fire and the stones and rivers and the springs and the shores and even the trees. And not only they did this in ancient times, when they were pagan, but many do it still today, and they even call themselves Christians.

And they [make] bridges and wakes and jump over fire, thinking they are Christians, and make, nevertheless, Pagan deeds. They prepare a bath for the dead and spread ashes in the middle and sacrifice in it meat and milk and butter and eggs and everything requested for the demons and pour water over the embers of the bath<sup>18</sup> begging to be purified and they hang their underwear and a towel in the bath. But the demons, laughing about their stupidity, spin around the ashes and show their prints to deceive [them] After seeing this, however, they return and tell each other about it and eat and drink each of them the whole sacrifice. It is not even fit for them to eat like dogs.

Oh, evil and devilish temptation that not even pagans do something like that! Others, however, believe in Stribog, Dažbog and Pereplut,<sup>19</sup> and drink in their honour until they drop, forgetting God, heaven and earth, the sea and the rivers and the springs and the whole Creation. And so their idols rejoice.



<sup>18</sup> It probably refers to a steam bath or a sauna.

<sup>19</sup> A Slavic goddess of drinking and changing fortune, she is usually depicted drinking from a cornucopia.

What we have in this brief example is a collection of the above-mentioned techniques of adaptation and re-appropriation of texts received from Greek sources, in which titles, authors, and, most importantly, the unity of the text received is irrelevant, not only because the concept of authorship was non-existent, and this has probably something to do with Orthodox theological tenets of the re-enactment of the mystical experience of the faith, but also because, in the typical zeal of the newly converted, the scribes blend and mix pagan, unorthodox Christian, and Muslim practices together in a clear attempt to define 'us', the New Christians, by all those things we are not.

### 3. Conclusion

Nineteenth-century ideas of the *dvoeverie* (double faith), the main sources of which were homilies and canonical responses that circulated in the Kievan Rus' wherein pagan practices were described, were mainly coined and described by German scholars (Mansikka and others), who took at face value the literal wording of the texts they found in Slavic. To a large extent, the origin of the "double faith" myth lies within the literal translations of homilies by church fathers such as Pseudo-Chrysostom, in which the majority of the practices described reflect pagan practices of fourth-century Constantinople, peppered with occasional glosses on Slavic pagan practices. These interpolated texts were cut, repeated, extracted and reorganised, as if they were building blocks in the construction process of new texts, as in our case study. They were moved from one manuscript to another without aiming to be taken as an anthropological survey. Additionally, scholars have confused Paganism, on the one hand, and lack of orthodoxy in practising Christianity, on the other. Such lack could certainly lead to a religious syncretism difficult for Protestant scholars to understand, but actually it does not necessarily imply a lack of faith or a double faith, but rather a more popular, relaxed approach to a religious experience, for social and cultural reasons.

As has often been the case with other pieces of literature, the intention of using homiletics as a piece of historiographic evidence carries the serious risk of confusing the intentionality and the

functionality of the texts. While denouncing irregular practices was most certainly on the agenda of the monastic communities that produced the texts (an aim for which the “firm ground” of Chrysostomian homiletics was greatly relevant) a too literal interpretation of the sources can only lead us to ill-conceived conclusions about pre-conceived links between Slavic and other Indo-European religious traditions, which might have been the agenda of those German Indo-European scholars more than a century ago. This is a case in which the search for comparative material did completely conceal the more relevant information about textual transmission in East Slavic. By their incorrect understanding that the practices described corresponded to actual East Slavic practices, they opened the door to a myriad of comparisons between purported Slavic pagan practices and pagan practices from Antiquity, claiming a common Indo-European origin for both, whereas in fact they were mere translations into Slavic of Greek Byzantine. The scribes’ confusion of names and places, their abrupt interruption of the text where they could not understand its content, their random mixing of Hellenic paganism, Muslim rites and folk religion are all characteristics that should at least makes us reconsider the value of the content of the text as historiography. The main value of studying Pseudo-Chrysostomian texts, or Pseudo-Pseudo Chrysostomian texts in East Slavic, is that they give us a glimpse of how East Slavs understood the radical challenge of providing a newly established people with a vehicle of knowledge transmission that went beyond orality and individual memory.

#### ABSTRACT – RÉSUMÉ

The Slavic tradition was rich in translating and adapting the homilies of John Chrysostom, and his name was used to endow newly-composed texts with authority. On the homilies addressing the problem of pagan practices, Slavic monks, while refraining from changing or expurgating the received texts, eventually added descriptions of local practices to be condemned in the same terms that Chrysostom condemned the practices in Constantinople. This particular way of ‘composing’ (by adding or changing the order of textual units to a given text) had two main consequences in Slavic medieval letters. On the one hand, Chrysostom was probably the most popular Church Father in Slavic due to

the extensive copying, albeit hardly ever faithfully, of his homilies; on the other, studies on Slavic paganism tended to take at face value the whole content of such homilies without discerning which parts were truly Chrysostomian, i.e., describing Constantinopolitan practices, and which were solely Slavic, thus attributing certain rituals to Slavic paganism that were probably never practiced among the Slavs. The present article aims, firstly, at describing the adaptation process of Chrysostomian homiletics in Slavic by using a case-study, and, secondly, at evaluating the role such adaptations played in the definition of Early Christianity, as well as in the study and misinterpretation of Slavic paganism from the nineteenth century onwards.

La tradition slave est riche de nombreuses traductions et adaptations des homélies de Jean Chrysostome, et son nom a été utilisé pour revêtir des textes nouvellement rédigés de son autorité. En ce qui concerne les homélies traitant du problème des pratiques païennes, les moines slaves, tout en s'abstenant de changer ou d'expurger les textes reçus, ont ajouté des descriptions de pratiques locales, qui devraient être condamnées dans les mêmes termes selon lesquels Chrysostome a condamné les pratiques de Constantinople. Cette manière particulière de 'composer' (par addition, ou en changeant l'ordre des unités textuelles dans un texte donné) a eu deux conséquences principales sur la littérature médiévale en slavon. D'une part, Chrysostome a été probablement le Père de l'Église le plus populaire en slavon, étant donné que ses homélies ont été intensivement copiées, pas toujours fidèlement cependant. D'autre part, les études sur le paganisme slave ont eu tendance à prendre pour argent comptant le contenu global de ces homélies, sans différencier quelles parties étaient vraiment Chrysostomiennes, c'est-à-dire décrivant les pratiques de Constantinople, et lesquelles étaient seulement slaves, et ont donc attribué au paganisme slave certains rituels qui n'ont probablement jamais été pratiqués chez les Slaves. Le présent article a pour but, premièrement de décrire le processus d'adaptation de l'homilétique Chrysostomique en slavon et, deuxièmement d'évaluer le rôle que de telles adaptations a pu jouer dans la définition du christianisme ancien, ainsi que dans l'étude et l'interprétation, parfois erronée, du paganisme slave du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle jusqu'à aujourd'hui.

