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**GREEK INFLUENCES IN 18TH-CENTURY BULGARIAN
MANUSCRIPT TRADITION: A STUDY OF LEXICAL BORROWING
AND CULTURAL EXCHANGE**

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ABSTRACT: This article examines Greek lexical borrowings in 18th-century Modern Bulgarian manuscript texts, focusing on their semantic, functional, and stylistic integration. The study is based on material drawn from the Berlin Damaskin and the two Odessa Damaskins, which are regarded as representative examples of the Damaskin literary tradition and reflect the complex linguistic situation in the Bulgarian lands during the Ottoman period. The identified Graecisms are subjected to a semantic classification aimed at tracing their distribution across various thematic domains, including religion, social life, administration, and everyday practice. The analysis demonstrates that Greek lexical items perform a range of functions: on the one hand, they act as carriers of learnedness and prestige within religious and didactic discourse; on the other, they appear as well-integrated elements of colloquial and semi-colloquial language.

Particular attention is paid to the interaction between the literary tradition and the vernacular basis of the language. In this context, the study highlights the dual role of Greek-derived vocabulary: it functions both as a marker of elevated style and affiliation with the Orthodox cultural sphere, and as a natural component of the everyday lexical stock. This duality illustrates the dynamic nature of language contact and the permeability between different stylistic registers. The findings contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the mechanisms of lexical borrowing, the dynamics of language contact in the Balkan cultural area, and the processes shaping the development and enrichment of the Bulgarian lexicon during the 18th century.

KEYWORDS: borrowed vocabulary, Graecisms, translations, history of the Bulgarian language, Damaskins

1. Introduction

The study of lexical borrowing constitutes a significant domain within historical and comparative linguistics. The integration of foreign words into a language is a natural and ongoing linguistic process, and Bulgarian is no exception. Borrowing reflects not only language development but also the cultural and historical interactions of a speech community. The dynamics and intensity of lexical borrowing vary across different historical periods, often corresponding to phases of sociopolitical and cultural change.

In the case of Bulgarian, lexical borrowings have occurred over an extended timeframe and from multiple source languages. Understanding the nature and origin of these borrowings is crucial for reconstructing the linguistic history of Bulgarian, particularly in relation to languages with which Bulgarians have shared prolonged and intensive contact.

Such borrowings offer valuable insights into the interplay between the external enrichment of the Bulgarian lexicon and the broader trajectory of Bulgarian national destiny (Иванова-Мирчева, Харалампиев/*Ivanova-Mircheva, Haralampiev*, 1999, p. 331). Within this context, Damaskin literature stands out as a distinctive Bulgarian literary phenomenon spanning nearly three centuries. As established by scholars (Дѣмина/Дюмина, 1968, 1985; Милтенова/*Miltanova*, 1986; Мирчева/*Mircheva*, 1997, 2001, 2014; Велчева/*Velcheva*, 2001, pp. 64-81; Димитрова/*Dimitrova*, 2009, pp. 727-740; Димитрова, Бояджиев/*Dimitrova, Boyadzhiev*, 2009, pp. 238-260; Кочева/*Kocheva*, 2012; 2021, pp. 57-82; Младенова, Велчева/*Mladenova, Velcheva*, 2013; Мичева/*Micheva*, 2015; Брага/*Braga*, 2023b, pp. 20-27; 2025a, pp. 346-364), Damaskin texts uniquely merge inherited Old Bulgarian vocabulary with innovations drawn from spoken language and an array of lexical borrowings – predominantly of Turkish and Greek origin.

Subject, Objectives, and Research Methodology

The principal aim of this study is to investigate Greek lexical borrowings in the texts of 18th-century Modern Bulgarian Damaskins. Through lexicosemantic analysis and thematic classification, the research seeks to identify the specific semantic fields and pragmatic contexts in which Graecisms appear. The study is based on primary linguistic material from three key manuscripts: Odessa Damaskin № 38 (64)¹ and Odessa Damaskin № 39 (65)² from the Odessa National Scientific Library in Ukraine, and the Berlin Damaskin³, in the possession of the Jagiellonian Library in Kraków, Poland.

¹ Odessa Damaskin № 38 (64) is written in a hybrid language including literary strata: mostly Church Slavonic, and elements from the so-called modern Bulgarian damaskins, and elements of everyday speech of Southwestern dialects. It is one of the few monuments resulting from the joint literary activity of the prominent Damaskiners of the Rila literary circle. The prototype of the collection was created in 1756 by Joseph Bradati and transcribed in 1757 in the Rila monastery by Nikifor of Rila and probably Grigori Pop Ilijovich.

² Odessa Damaskin № 39 (65) is a Modern Bulgarian Damaskin from the second half of the 18th century, written in Eastern Bulgarian. It consists of 19 teachings, 7 of which are by Damaskinos Stouditis. In terms of content, we link it with the Berlin Damaskin and the Svishtov Damaskin.

³ The codex, known in scholarship as the Berlin Damaskin (Berl. Slav. Fol. 36), is named after the place where it was kept. It is part of an extensive collection of manuscripts and old printed books from the former Royal Library in Berlin. The manuscript was kept there until 1943. Subsequently, its traces were lost, and it was long believed to have been destroyed during World War II. Only decades later, in 1983, was the codex rediscovered

We turn our attention to this particular manuscript due to its relative obscurity and the limited scholarly interest it has received to date. Preliminary textological and linguistic observations suggest that it originated in Eastern Bulgaria and shares significant textual affinities with the Odessa Damaskin № 39 (65) and the Svishtov Damaskin (Бпара/Braga, 2023a; Бпара/Braga, 2023c, pp. 63-90). Additionally, certain homiletic features appear to echo elements found in manuscript number 26, which is kept at the Center for Slavic-Byzantine Studies. From a palaeographic standpoint, the codex shows notable similarities to the Belene Damaskin (Бпара/Braga, 2025b, pp. 50-67), especially in terms of script and ornamentation. Based on a close reading of marginal annotations, ownership notes, and watermark evidence, the manuscript has been tentatively dated to the late eighteenth or, more plausibly, the early nineteenth century (Страдомски, Брага/Stradomski, Braga, 2025, pp. 103-122).

As evidenced by the foregoing, all three manuscripts are currently housed outside the territory of Bulgaria, with the two Odessa manuscripts presently facing the risk of deterioration or destruction. At the same time, these manuscripts serve as representative examples of Bulgarian Damaskin literature from the 18th century and provide a solid foundation for analyzing the presence and function of Greek lexical elements in the vernacular religious discourse of that period. They contain a substantial amount of unexplored source material that is of significant interest for Bulgarian linguistic history, literature, and culture. This constitutes the primary motivation for selecting these particular codices for the present study.

The present study focuses on the examination of Greek lexical borrowings within the texts of the three aforementioned manuscripts. The primary research objectives include an investigation of Graecisms, their mechanisms of integration, and their functional domains within the 18th-century Modern Bulgarian Damaskins, as well as an exploration of their subsequent development and status in the Modern Bulgarian language. Given the breadth and complexity of the subject, a comprehensive treatment cannot be fully encompassed within a brief presentation; therefore, the material is organized schematically and supplemented with pertinent commentary.

Methodologically, the study employs analytical, classificatory, and comparative approaches. In addition, descriptive and historical-comparative methods are utilized to facilitate a detailed comparison of the linguistic features of the manuscripts, enabling the identification and contextualization of lexical units originating from various chronological layers.

in Poland. It became clear that part of the Royal Library was exported during the war to preserve it from bombing. After the war, the state borders were moved, and Polish troops discovered the books in a monastery in Krzyżowice, then already on Polish territory. The collection was later transferred to Kraków but kept secret by the authorities until the 1980s when its existence became known quite by accident (for more on the fate of the Berlin Damaskin, see Stradomski, 2018, pp. 81-91; Бпара/Braga, 2024, pp. 248-267).

2. Exposition

The influence of Greek on Bulgarian became particularly pronounced following the Christianization of Bulgaria, during which Greek clergy introduced essential liturgical texts. This period saw a significant influx of Greek religious terminology into Bulgarian, particularly through literary channels. Among the well-documented Greek loanwords, we can highlight those that entered the Bulgarian language through literary means, especially those related to worship and religious life (Филипова-Байрова/*Filipova-Bayrova*, 1969; Андрейчин/*Andreychin*, 1978). A considerable body of both Bulgarian and international scholarship has examined the phenomenon of Graecisms in the Bulgarian language (e.g., Budziszewska, 1969; Филипова-Байрова, Бояджиев et al./*Filipova-Bayrova, Boyadzhiev et al.*, 1982; Матов/*Matov*, 1893, pp. 21-84; Милев/*Milev*, 1958, pp. 187-196).

It is noteworthy that the full extent of Greek-derived vocabulary in Bulgarian has not yet been comprehensively established. According to M. Fasmer (1907, pp. 197-289), Old Bulgarian contains approximately 650 Greek-origin words. Of these, roughly half are confined to literary usage, while the remaining 350 or so are found in colloquial speech. Additional studies have identified around 850 Greek borrowings in total (Иванова-Мирчева, Харалампиев/*Ivanova-Mircheva, Haralampiev*, 1999, p. 334).

Following the Ottoman conquest of the Balkan Peninsula in the late 14th century, the political and cultural landscape for both the Bulgarian and Greek populations changed dramatically. In regions predominantly inhabited by Bulgarians, the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople retained a dominant position for an extended period. Censorship was imposed on printed materials across the entire Orthodox community, and the activities of churches and monasteries, then the sole centers of book production, were subject to strict oversight (Данова/*Danova*, 1995–1996, pp. 85-99).

Under these altered circumstances, the Greek language, which had already gained a foothold in the Balkans during the Christianization process, became even more widespread. It functioned as the language of liturgy in metropolitan seats and, for a considerable time, served as a cultural conduit between the enlightened West and the peoples of the Balkans. As a result, numerous educated Bulgarians continued to compose texts in Greek well into the first half of the 19th century, as the Bulgarian literary language had yet to be fully standardized (Алексиева/*Aleksieva*, 2010).

Bulgarian-Greek interactions were further reinforced by the active presence of Greek merchants and craftsmen. Both communities engaged in ongoing trade and cultural exchange, particularly in the southern regions of Bulgarian-speaking territories – such as Eastern Thrace and the Rhodope Mountains – where Greek influence remained pronounced until the Balkan Wars (1912–1913). This historical context elucidates the depth and diversity of Greek lexical influence in the Bulgarian language.

An analysis of 18th-century manuscripts reveals that Greek influence, while present, is significantly less prominent than that of Ottoman Turkish (Брага/*Braga*, 2022, pp. 96-111). Unlike Turkisms, which primarily derive from contemporary

spoken vernaculars, Greek borrowings entered Bulgarian through both folk oral traditions and literary transmission. The Greek-influenced literary lexicon began to integrate into Bulgarian during the Old Bulgarian period and continued to shape the language over subsequent centuries. Consequently, Greek-derived vocabulary became embedded in texts such as the Bulgarian Damaskins, forming a part of the literary register that maintained ties with folk culture (Дѣмина/Дyомина, 1968).

The Old Bulgarian model of compound word formation was also shaped by Greek influence. Numerous such lexemes appear in manuscript OD № 38 (64), fols. 7a, 8b, 15a, 18a, 18b, 35b: *БЛАГОВѢСТЕН, БЛАГОДАТЕН, ВИСОКОСЪРДЕЧЕН, ДОБРОДЕТЕЛ, ДОБРОДИТЕЛЕН, ЦЕЛОМУДРЕН*. These lexemes are characteristic of a high literary style. Nevertheless, 18th-century Damaskin compilers continued to use them, despite prevailing contemporary views that prioritized clarity and accessibility in religious preaching.

The range of Greek-derived vocabulary in Bulgarian can be broadly divided into two semantic fields: religion and social life. Most borrowings are associated with religious and liturgical contexts, particularly terminology linked to Christian worship – a pattern common to medieval Slavic literature (Тотоманова/Totomanova, 2015, p. 5). The organization of Greek loanwords into lexico-semantic categories has been addressed in early Slavic philology, most notably by Fr. Miklosich (1862 – 1865).

In the following sections, we examine materials from the Berlin and Odessa Damaskins, where Greek lexical borrowings are classified through semantic analysis and thematic categorization⁴.

Greek borrowings from the Christian religion and worship include terms such as *angel, idol, icona, seraphim, cheruvim, anaphora, and apostle*. This group also encompasses words that represent the key concepts of Christianity's religious and ecclesiastical framework, as well as the spiritual understanding of the world order.

The term *magiya*, derived from the Latin *magia* and the Greek *μαγεία*, denotes ‘a set of images, actions, and incantations’ (РБЕ/RBE)⁵. This lexeme, deeply embedded in vernacular tradition for centuries, has persisted in literary usage and has developed a range of figurative meanings across numerous Slavic languages. In the Damaskins, it appears in expressions referring to magical practices, such as *да се прави магия* („to perform magic”), *верүють в магии* („they believe in magic“); *тѣзи, които творятъ магия* („those who practice magic“) (OD № 38 (64), fols. 308b, 311a).

The Modern Bulgarian Damaskins also prominently feature a broader range of lexemes derived from the root *mag-*. In addition to *magic*, forms such as *магьсник* (magician), *магийство* (sorcery), and *магийски* (magical) are attested, all of which are semantically associated with non-Christian practices of divination and healing. These terms delineate a wider semantic field linked to folk belief

⁴ All lexical examples from Greek are italicised and given in modern orthography. All quotations and examples from texts are in Cyrillic/Bulgarian10U.

⁵ <https://ibl.bas.bg/rbe/lang/bg/%D0%BC%D0%B0%D0%B3%D0%B8%D1%8F/>

systems and ritual practices situated outside the boundaries of official Orthodox doctrine: и тамъ в онзи обѣток имаше единъ магїосникъ, същи дїаволовъ слуга („And there, in that monastery/dwelling, there was a sorcerer, a true servant of the devil.“) (BD, fol. 103b); та тїа дїаволу надежѣ иматъ хищници доброзавистници сводници и магесници на добро лѣниви на зло брѣзи. бѣси преслѣшници („For they place their hope in the devil – predators, ill-wishers, seducers and sorcerers: sluggish in good, swift in evil. Servants of the demons“) (OD № 39 (65), fol. 119a); а той стана та ѡтиде при единого магїосника... тогизе му рече магесникъ ако съ ѡречешъ ѡ хѣ твоего мога да ти сторя що искъщъ ... рече му пакъ магесникъ да ти дамъ една книга да ѣтидешъ на еленските гробища ѣ полунощ ... („And he rose and went to a sorcerer... Then the sorcerer said to him: ‘If you deny your Christ, I can grant you whatever you wish.’...And again the sorcerer said to him: ‘I shall give you a book, and you must go to the Yelenski graveyard at midnight.’) (BD, fol. 15a); Помислихъ да седа да пише женски врагощини, кой творѣтъ магїа ... и рече аще кой може да изчететъ, морскїи песокъ онъ можетъ исчести женски врагощини, ради магїи и азъ престахъ писати; некол жена магесница много дѣши преластила ... ѣботахмо се ѡ магесници зацо онїи много незловиви дѣши прелашають („I considered writing about the charms of women, who practice sorcery... yet I said: if one could number the sands of the sea, then he could also reckon women’s enchantments; and so I stopped writing. For a certain sorceress had led many souls astray... we fear sorcerers, for they seduce many guileless souls“) (OD № 38 (64), fols. 323b – 324a).

We will comment on the common lexical item *магѣосница* (sorceress), derived from the Greek *μαγεία* and formed using the Bulgarian derivational suffix *-itsa*. This term has two primary meanings: 1. a woman who practices sorcery or heals through magical means; 2. one who is capable of attracting and enchanting others through her qualities or abilities (БЕР/BER, 1986, 3, p. 605). Examples include: *контѡ бѣхѣ магесници и бродници* („those who were sorceresses and wanderers“) and *идете на край градъ, има жена магесница слѣжитъ бѣгу нашемѣ вѡалѣ* („go to the edge of the town, there is a woman-sorceress serving our god Baal“) (OD № 38 (64), fol. 303b). These two high-frequency lexemes (sorceress and its variants) are also attested in three Damaskins, where in all instances they carry a clearly negative connotation. This reflects the fact that magical practices are condemned both by the Church and in popular belief systems: *и сега има тѣкѣ едни члѣци междѣ насъ едни грешни жени и нечистїи та вѡалѣ. и магїе стрѣватъ и лѣжатъ на* („And now there are some people here among us – some sinful and unclean women, who cast charms, perform magic, and deceive us“) (BD, fol. 259a); *сосъ твоимъ ложнимъ баганиемъ* („by your deceitful enchantment“) (OD № 38 (64), fol. 302b); *идете на край градъ, има жена магесница. слѣжитъ бѣгу нашемѣ вѡалѣ и питайте ѡ да ви каже дали кѣ да оумра, или кѣ да ѡздравеа* („Go

to the outskirts of the city – there is a sorceress. She serves our god Baal; inquire of her whether I am to die, or to recover“) (OD № 38 (64), fol. 303b); *магѣсница же рече, аще естъ ѿ врага баалнїе, егда побаяю ва твои часъ болнїи и исцелетъ* („And the sorceress said: if the incantation is from the enemy, then when I chant, in that very hour the sick man will be healed“) (OD № 38 (64), fol. 308a).

Overall, the lexicon related to magic and sorcery is richly represented in the Damaskins and reflects the cultural and ideological concerns of the Early Modern period. Many beliefs associated with magic have Common Slavic origins. In Christian demonology, evil forces are referred to by various names. Among the most frequently encountered is the lexeme *diavol* (Old Bulgarian *дѣволъ*, from Ancient Greek *διάβολος* – “slanderer”), signifying the supreme demon. This term appears in expressions such as: *такови жены нарицаютъ се идолопоклонници и дѣволски слуги* („such women are called idol-worshippers and servants of the devil“) (OD № 38 (64), fol. 71b); *ѿ прелашенаѧ жено ѿ дѣвола: вси людие вѣрнии и невернии исповедаютъ и знаютъ...* („O woman deceived by the devil: all people, both faithful and unfaithful, confess and know...“) (fol. 308a); *и ты жено ослеплена дѣволомъ сама не видишь что чинити* („and you, woman, blinded by the devil, do not see what you doing“) (fol. 308a).

The manuscripts also attest the lexemes of Proto-Slavic origin, such as *bes* and *besovski*: *кои сказа вамъ тия бесовски праздници* („who told you of these demonic festivals“) (fol. 289b); *но аще би исперва призвама бѣдѣши бесовски имена, никое не би прихощдалъ до тебе да интъ, блещь* („But if at first you were to invoke demonic names, no one would come to you for you to cast charms upon“) (fol. 308a).

The lexeme *демонъ* from Ancient Greek *δαίμων*, meaning „evil spirit, devil“ (Fasmer, 1, p. 498; РБЕ/РБЕ) is attested in the texts of the Damaskins. Notably, this term is absent from N. Gerov’s dictionary, in contrast to the lexeme *дьявол* („unclean spirit, demon, enemy, Satan“), which is included therein (Геров/Gerov, 1975, 1, p. 395). All the aforementioned lexemes, associated with religious worldview, entered the written monuments already in the Old Bulgarian period and subsequently filtered into the living Bulgarian vernacular, particularly in its dialects.

Lexical Items Related to Church Hierarchy

Lexemes pertaining to the Church Hierarchy denote various ecclesiastical ranks, positions, and general titles within the structure of the Christian Church. In the examined corpus, we find terms designating members of the highest clergy, such as *bishop* and *archbishop*. For example, in the phrase *иже в сѣыхъ оца нашего ївана архиепископа Златоустаго констандинополскаго слово угласителное* („The Catechetical Homily of our holy father John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople“) (OD № 39 (65), fol. 956) the lexeme *архуенускон* refers to one

of the leading figures of the Eastern Church. Similarly, the lexeme *патриарх* (patriarch), meaning ‘clergyman, head of the Church,’ appears in contexts such as: ... сѣниде съ небесъ въ градъ Іерусалимъ къ патриарху Іерусалимскому... („...he descended from the heavens into the city of Jerusalem to the Patriarch of Jerusalem...“) (OD № 39 (65), fol. 99b).

Among these, however, the most frequently attested ecclesiastical term in the texts is *попъ* (priest). This prevalence reflects the vital role played by local priests in small religious communities, where they were responsible not only for spiritual care but also often for manuscript copying. This is evidenced by marginal notes and colophons in manuscripts, such as: Григоріе синь попъ илиовичъ (Gregory, son of Priest Iliovich) (OD № 38 (64), fols. 108a; 326b); писахъ азъ григоръ попъ илиовичъ ѿ Свисшова града („I, Grigor, Priest Iliovich, from the town of Svishtov, wrote [this]“) (OD № 38 (64), fol. 209a); ась попъ Иванъ много грѣшъ ... (пѣ)сахъ... бѣгу нашemu (слава) („I, priest Ivan, the much-sinful ... (wrote)... to our God – glory“) (OD № 39 (65), fol. 138b). The lexeme *попъ* (pop) has been preserved in Early Modern Bulgarian as a standard ecclesiastical term referring to an Orthodox priest.

The texts of the Modern Bulgarian Damaskins also contain Greek-derived ecclesiastical terms as *игумень*, *иерей*, *калугер*, *инок*, *иподякон* (abbot, priest, the monastery elder, who has specific spiritual functions in the monastic community, monk, inok, and hypodeacon) – the latter referring to a church assistant serving as a reader, singer, or candlestick bearer. These lexemes reflect the strong influence of Greek ecclesiastical and liturgical tradition on Bulgarian religious vocabulary. Additional evidence of such usage is found in manuscript postscripts, which provide valuable linguistic material for the study of Church Slavonic and its interaction with Greek during a period of intense religious and cultural exchange. One notable example reads: Сію кнѣжицу, привѣде Іовсіфъ, іеромонахъ рилскы, вѣщи дѣховникъ, Брадатни, и привѣде ю, ѿ грѣческы книгъ, на българскы просты языкъ; ѿ неговъ же изводъ прописавъ сію азъ, недостойны монахъ, Никифоръ, оу стѣи свителъ, Рилскы, въ лѣто ѿ Адама, 7265; **ѿ свѣ** (7265); **отъ** въплощеніе хѣва **августа** (1757), мѣца августа; преигүмена, Серапиона, іеромонаха; и наместника Никита, іеромонаха; и четүще ѿцы, и братіа, аще что ѿ вѣршете и съгрѣшено исправите гѣда, ради, и нас проститы, акъ невежы, в писаніе („This little book was translated by Joseph, hieromonk of Rila, common confessor, called the Bradatiarded, and he rendered it from Greek books into the simple Bulgarian tongue. From his version I, the unworthy monk Nikifor, copied it in the holy Rila monastery, in the year from Adam 7265 (=1757), in the month of August; under the abbot Serapion, hieromonk, and the deputy Nikita, hieromonk, together with the reading fathers and brethren. And if you should find anything erroneous, correct it for the Lord’s sake, and forgive us, as being ignorant in writing“) (OD № 38 (64), fol. 2b).

This postscript is rich in linguistic features and cultural references. It

illustrates the bilingual competence of Bulgarian monastics of the time, their conscious use of vernacular alongside Church Slavonic and Greek, and their humility in the process of copying and translating sacred texts. Such inscriptions shed light on the dynamics of textual transmission and the role of the monastery as both a religious and linguistic-cultural institution.

It is appropriate here to briefly draw attention to the profile of individuals engaged in the production of manuscripts during this period, as they represented a socially and functionally diverse group. One of the primary sources of information about these individuals are the colophons and postscripts added by the scribes themselves. These often contain details regarding ecclesiastical titles, which reflect both the scribes' positions within the church hierarchy and their level of education. For instance, the hieromonk (e.g., Iosif Bradati; from Greek ἱερομόναχος, *hieromónachos* – ‘monk-priest’) was a cleric capable of independently performing most of the sacraments and religious rites. The title *preigumen* (e.g., Serapion) ‘referred to a monastic office, denoting the deputy abbot’. The term *namestnik* designated ‘a cleric appointed by the metropolitan to oversee a portion of the diocese’. Finally, the title *monach* (from Greek μοναχός, *monachós* – ‘hermit, monk’) signified a member of the black clergy (monastic clergy), typically associated with ascetic life (Радославова/Radoslavova, 2020, p. 148)

Let us briefly consider the figure of Nikifor Rilski: a renowned writer, disciple of Josif Bradati. He was proficient in the Greek language, which earned him the epithet “Nikifor the Greek” – an ethnonym he himself employed when signing his works. In the colophon of manuscript No. 2/4 of the Rila Monastery collection, we find the phrase: ... написа сѧ сѧ книжица...рукою Никифора монаха грѣка („This book was written ... by the hand of Nikifor, a Greek monk“). This is by no means an isolated instance of Hellenophilia among writers of that era. Knowledge of Greek culture and language was generally characteristic of the Bulgarian intelligentsia during the period of the early Renaissance (Бележки/Belezhki, 2004, p. 272).

When discussing ethnonyms, the Damaskins contain the following linguistic units: Ἕλληνας (Hellenes); for example, the phrase законъ имаха еллините („the law had the Hellenes“) appears in OD № 39 (65), fol. 58b. The term ἑβραῖος (‘Jew’, referring to a Semitic people) is attested as *евреинь*; for instance, ꙗкоже евреи поклониша сѧ Дню богу („Just as the Jews worshiped the god Dius“) (OD № 38 (64), fol. 228a). This group also includes terms for certain administrative-territorial units: *епархия* (‘eparchy’, a church district); *монастирь*, as in the example: ...и проучение прѣжде ѡ творение монастырѣ бл҃сви оче („...and a sermon before the concerning founding of the monastery, blessed, oh, father“) (OD № 38 (64), fol. 251a; BD, fol. 123a); and *енориа* (or *нурия*) (‘parish’, a settlement or part of a settlement served by one priest), e.g., дѣховници да даватъ дѣла богу за нѣрїята („the elders shall offer prayers to God for the parish“) (OD №. 39 (65), fol. 165a; BD, fol. 96b).

Professional status of laypersons and their spheres of activity

This group includes the lexeme *даскаль* (teacher), which is well known to the Damaskin writers and is actively used in dialects (БЕР/BER, 1971, 1, p. 322). Its Slavic equivalent is the lexeme *учител* (teacher). In contemporary Bulgarian, the Greek-derived term is used with a stylistically pejorative meaning. Of particular interest is also the lexeme *философъ* (philosopher), which entered the literary language already during the Old Bulgarian period and, as an element of the international cultural lexicon, continues to be present in Early Modern Bulgarian. In Damaskins, for example, we find: *Питаха нѣкого философа от что се наибоишь, а той рече ...* („They asked a certain philosopher what he feared most, and he said...“) (OD № 39 (65), fol. 5a); *заради тѣй и философите...* („because of this, even the philosophers...“) (BD fol. 6b). In one of the sermons, we observe the glossing of the lexeme *философ* in the marginal field of the manuscript: *философите – влъсви; философъть – влъхва* (OD № 39 (65), fols. 7b, 20a). An identical glossing is also encountered in the Svishtov Damaskin of the second half of the 18th century.

This attempt at stylistic editing of the text is a rather intriguing fact that merits more detailed attention. The Greek loanword *философ* (philosopher) belongs to the high literary style, while it is glossed by the lexeme with an as-yet undetermined etymon *влъхва* (БЕР/BER, 1971, 1, p. 166). Apparently, for the authors who left editorial notes in the margins of the manuscripts, their use was considered more appropriate. The word *влъфа*, derived from the living vernacular and related to dialects, requires some clarification. In the text, the lexeme means ‘bandit, criminal’; it appears with the same meaning in the РКЕНО dictionary (2012, с. 90). Its semantic development is interesting: in Old Church Slavonic, it means ‘soothsayer, predictor’ (Codex Assemanianus, Codex Suprasliensis, Стб/StbR, 1999, 1, p. 176). Compare also *влъхвovati* ‘to divine, to practice magic and sorcery’ (ИсТ/IsT).⁶ The modern Bulgarian meaning ‘bandit, thief’ developed through a semantic shift from ‘deceiver, trickster.’ Today, this word appears in various Bulgarian dialects with the meaning ‘bandit’ (Bansko, Tarnovo) (БЕР/BER, 1971, 1, p. 166).

Names of material objects and attributes used in church worship

From this group, we find the following lexemes: *псалтырь* (psalter); for example, *...ами послушайте бл҃вени християне що каже пррокъ Дѣдъ на псалтырь псаломъ* („and now listen, blessed Christians, to what the prophet David says in the Psalter, in the Psalm“) (BD, fol. 48b), and *...такоже и пророкъ Дѣдъ провещаетъ, въ второго псалма* („just as the prophet David prophesies in the second

⁶ https://histdict.uni-sofia.bg/dictionary/show/d_11412

Psalm“) (OD № 38 (64), fol. 261a); *хартия* (paper) ... *ТОГИВА ЦЕ НБЕТО ДА СЕ СВЪЕ КАТО ХАРТИА* („then the sky will fold like paper“) (OD № 39 (65), fol. 116a).

Let us comment on one more lexeme – *дамаскинъ*. In the Bulgarian context, this term originates from the name of the compiler of the collection *The Treasury* (*Θησαυρός*), Damaskinos Studites (*Δαμασκηνός Στουδίτης*). It gave rise to the name of a unique genre in medieval Bulgarian literature – the *Damaskins*. The spread of this lexeme is due to the efforts of Bulgarian scribes who produced numerous Damaskin manuscripts. It also appears in colophons, for example, in OD № 39 (65): *ДА СА ЗНАИ КАКО СЕ ПОТРУДИ ЗА СИЮ КНИГУ ГЪЛМИ ДАМАСКИНЪ ПОПЪ ИВАНЪ СИНУ ПЕТРОФЪ ТА ГУ ИСПИСА ТА ГУ ПОСТАВИ НА СЪГО ВРЪХОВНАГО ПЕТРА И ПАВЛА* („Let it be known that priest Ivan, son of Peter, labored for this book, called Damaskin, and copied it, and placed it at the [Metochion] of the St. supreme [apostles] Peter and Paul“).

Terms Related to Financial Relations, Weight, and Monetary Systems

Strong Greek lexical influence is evident in cases where Greek loanwords have entirely displaced older Slavic terms present in early Bulgarian written monuments. As an example, D. Ivanova-Mircheva and I. Haralampiev cite (1999, p. 336) the numeral *тысящи* (thousand), which was completely replaced by the Greek borrowing *хиляда*. The earliest attestation of the word *хиляда* is found in a 14th-century manuscript, in the famous Miscellany of Tsar Ivan-Alexander of 1348. The manuscript is the famous Miscellany of Tsar Ivan-Alexander of 1348. Notably, in Bulgarian dialects, there is no successor to the lexeme *тысяща*, indicating a complete replacement.

The word *хиляда* entered the Bulgarian language through the Greek *χιλιάδα*, derived from Ancient Greek *χιλιάς* (Младенов/Мladenov, 1941, p. 668; Филипова-Байрова/Filipova-Bayrova, 1969, p. 170). The earliest example in which the word *хиляда* is used is from the 14th century (Иванова-Мирчева, Харалампиев/Ivanova-Mircheva, Haralampiev, 1999, p. 336), is attested in the Tikhonravov Damaskin (РКЕНО/RKENO, 2012, p. 1078). The copyists of the later collections from the 18th century also use only the Early Modern Bulgarian numeral of Greek origin, *хиляда*, instead of the older *тысяча*, for example: ...*ДЕТО ГО ПРОРОЧЕВА ФИЛОСОФЪТЪ ПРЕМИНАХА СА ОТ ТОГИЗИ ХИЛЯДАОСЕМСТОТИН И СЕДЕМДЕСЕТ ГОДИНИ...* („...which the philosopher prophesied, passed since then a thousand eight hundred and seventy years...“) (OD № 39 (65), fols. 21a, 78b).

A significant number of lexemes related to financial and economic relations are found in the examined manuscripts. The texts contain various names of monetary units, many of which are Greek loanwords or borrowings mediated through the Greek language. One frequently attested lexeme is *аспра*, used to denote ‘a type of small coin’ (РБЕ/RBE). This term is borrowed from the New Greek *άσπρο* (*áspro*), derived from *άσπρος*, meaning ‘white,’ named after the

color of the coin, which was typically silver (БЕР/BER, 1971, 1, p. 19). The lexeme is also attested in РКЕНО/RKENO (2012, p. 25).

The Greek term *аспра* was evidently adopted by the Bulgarian population, as it appears repeatedly in three 18th-century collections, for example: ...заради аспри продаватъ („to sell for aspra“) (BD, fol. 78a); ...назаемъ безъ каматъ аспры даваху милостина („to lend aspra without interest for alms“) (OD № 38 (64), fol. 6b); мнозина даваха аспри („many gave aspra“) (OD № 39 (65), fol. 224b). During the period of Ottoman rule, alongside the lexeme *аспра*, the Turkish loanword *акче* was also widely used, although it appears much less frequently in the texts under consideration. Manuscripts from this period also feature the native Slavic term *жълтица*, as well as the Romanism *дукато*, which entered the language through Greek mediation.

The native Slavic term *жълтица* appears as a designation for a gold coin that circulated in the Bulgarian lands: хиляди жълтицы („thousands of zhaltitsi“) – as attested in OD № 39 (65) and the apocryphal text Paul’s Vision (BD). The word is of Slavic origin, derived from *жълтъ* (‘yellow’ – the color of lemon or gold), and was likely named so due to the coin’s chemical composition and golden color (БЕР/BER, 1971, 1, pp. 563-564). It is not attested in the РКЕНО (Брага, Стефанов/Braga, Stefanov, 2024, pp. 140-141).

Examples are also found featuring the Romanism *дукато*: ... тѣа дѣто съдѣтъ криво за дукати; немѣстива съмрътъ сас дукат не може да са ѿкупѣ („...those who judge unjustly for ducats; merciless death cannot be ransomed with ducats“). This is a loanword from Greek *δουκάτο* (‘a type of old coin’), itself derived from Italian *ducato*, referring to a Venetian gold coin from the 18th century, and ultimately from *duca* (‘duke’), with the original meaning ‘coin bearing the image of a duke’ (БЕР/BER, 1971, 1, p. 444). Minting of the coin began in Venice after 1284, and it was widely used in commercial transactions throughout Europe until the early 19th century. The term appears in the Tikhonravov Damaskin (РКЕНО/RKENO, 2012).

Of particular interest is the lexeme *талант* (from Latin *talentum*, Ancient Greek *τάλαντον* – ‘measure, balance’). In antiquity, the term denoted a monetary unit equivalent to a specific weight of gold or silver, as attested in Codex Zographensis, Codex Marianus, and Codex Ostromir – approximately 23 to 46 kilograms. The Old Church Slavonic form *талантъ* appears in the Codex Zographensis, Codex Marianus, and Codex Ostromir. The lexeme references the New Testament, specifically, the parable of the three servants to whom the master entrusted coins called *talents*. The term also came to signify ‘a great gift or human ability’ (БЕР/BER, 2010, 7, p. 777). Both polysemantic meanings of *talent* – as ‘a monetary unit’ and ‘a natural ability’ – are attested in the РКЕНО/RKENO (Мирчева/Mircheva, 2014, p. 116). The examples cited below show that this polysemy is also present in the texts of the Damaskins: ...щото мѣ даде богъ талантъ (coin) да тръгѣва, а той го съкри ѱ земята и не придоби нищо със него

(„...for God gave him a talent [coin] to trade with, but he hid it in the ground and acquired nothing with it“⁷). Also in the same collection: ...ДЕТУ МҮ ДАЛЪ Б҃ГЪ ТАЛАНТЬ СЕРМИА („... where God gave him a talent of silver“) (OD № 39 (65), fol. 136a). Further: ...ДЕТО ЦЕ ГО ИЗПИТУВА БОГЪ НА СТРАШНО СЪДОВИЩЕ, ЧТО ТАЛАНАТЬ ЕТО ДА СЕ ПРИЖИТЕ ЗА ДѢШИТЕ ВАШИ („...where God will judge him at the Last Judgment, for the talent here is to care for your souls.“). In this instance, the Greek-derived word *талантъ* carries the meaning of ‘a spiritual gift or ability.’

From these examples, we may conclude that by the 18th century, in the language of the Early Modern Bulgarian Damaskins, the word *талантъ* denoted not only ‘a unit of weight’ but also ‘a capacity for spiritual or intellectual activity’. In contemporary Bulgarian, two homonyms remain: *талант*, originally ‘an ancient unit of gold or silver’, and *талант*, meaning ‘an aptitude for creative or intellectual activity; a gift or talent’.

Alongside literary vocabulary, we observe a particular stratum of borrowings that entered the Bulgarian language from colloquial Greek. Some of these borrowings are still in use in contemporary Bulgarian, for example: *хорѡ* (traditional dance), *хорѡ* (people), *лунса* (lack, absence), as in the phrase: *защо ѡ лифало слѣнце...* (OD № 39 (65), fol. 57a). As further illustration, we may refer to the lexemes *ела!*/*елате!* (come): *Ѣлате сега да намерите градъ бѣ бога и сѣса нашего; ела Павле да ти кажа мъките на грѣшниците* („Come now to find the city of the Lord God and our Savior; Come, Paul, that I may tell you of the torments of the sinners.“) (OD № 39 (65), fols. 125a, 128b).

Of particular interest is the lexical unit *харизвам* (from Greek *χαρίζω* ‘to give, to bestow’). In the texts, we encounter: *амы да створимъ добро и да створим милостиня да харижеме ѡт цю имаме ѡт малка малко ѡт много много ...* („Let us do good and give alms, to offer from what we have – from the little, a little, and from the much, much...“) (OD № 39 (65), fol. 156b). Moreover, it will be good to add that the borrowed verb *харижам* is attested in the 17th-century Abagar of Filip Stanislavov in his colophon (Цибранска-Костова/Tsibranska-Kostova, 2023; Цибранска-Костова, Абаджиева/Tsibranska-Kostova, Abadzhieva 2016, pp. 7-47). The lexeme *харижеме* survives today in colloquial Bulgarian in the form *харизвам*, *харижам* (‘I give, I bestow’) (РБЕ / RBE), as well as in the noun *харизма* (‘gift, donation, wedding present’) in Northern Bulgaria.

⁷ This is a paraphrase of the Gospel verse and therefore, the old loanword is expected to be used. The meaning here is not to ‘extract’ profit from an already available property, but to acquire new property by it, which is itself considered a profit. As seen in the New Testament parable, the ruler accused the servant of not even putting the talent in a bank to receive interest (or *луква* in Slavonic), which would be the smallest possible profit and the smallest positive action in the situation. The ruler, instead, expected a much better result, and because of the total dissatisfaction with the servant, the latter was punished.

This Greek borrowing carries a profound religious connotation, as it evolves from one of the core values of Christianity – the practice of charity. In Old Bulgarian written tradition, the Greek verb *χαρίζω* is attested with the meanings ‘to grant, to bestow’, while *χαρίζομαι* appears with meanings such as ‘to give, to donate, to bestow, to offer’ (СтбР / StbR).⁸ The contemporary Bulgarian word *благодаря* (‘to thank; thank you’) is a calque of the Greek verb *εὐχαριστέω*, composed of *εὐ* (good, well, pleasant) + *χαρίζω* (‘to give, to bestow’), thus reflecting the semantic structure of ‘I give thanks’ or ‘I express gratitude by offering a gift’.

The lexeme *хóра* – from Greek *χώρα* meaning ‘country, land, state’ – is etymologically linked to the verb *χωράω*, which conveys the notion of ‘occupying space’. The term is attested in the Dubrovnik Charter of the Bulgarian Tsar Ivan Asen II (1230): ...*Дава цѣсарство ми врнзмио си хворѣ джеврвништѣти любевными и всевѣрными гвостемъ цѣсарство ми...* („My kingdom grants from its grace to the people of Dubrovnik, loyal and faithful guests of my kingdom...“). In it, the word occurs a total of 8 times and in modern Bulgarian it is translated as both *country* and *land*, as well as *region* (Цибранска-Костова/Tsibranska-Kostova, 2025, p. 47). Another example may be drawn from the apocryphal text *Interpretations of Daniel*, where we read: ...*въцѣрнѣтъ се въ Капернаоуѣмѣ горѣ тебѣ хóра рекъше землѣ* (Даскалова, Райкова/Daskalova, Raykova, 2005). In both instances, the word *хóра* is used in the sense of ‘land’ or ‘state’.

On Bulgarian soil, the borrowing undergoes semantic evolution, acquiring, through metonymy, the meaning ‘people, humans’. In Early Modern Bulgarian, this borrowed form has replaced the Proto-Slavic *лѣднѣ* (*ljudьje), which today appears primarily in dialectal usage, poetic contexts, or elevated literary style (РБЕ/RBE⁹) and the plural of *чловѣкъ* – *чловѣци*. The method of statistical linguistics employed in this study reveals that the lexeme *лѣднѣ* appears only sporadically in eighteenth-century texts. At the same time, in the apocryphal text the *Vision of Saint Apostle Paul*, attested in three manuscripts, there is a passage in which all three relevant lexemes are present: *чүхте ли бл’авени християне колко ли любви бѣ нашъ члѣците... ами заради това на сѣки час да бл’гославѣме ꙗ ами пакъ знанте людие коги заходи слнцето тогива сички дгли щото слүгүватъ на хóрата та идатъ бѣ на поклонение и молнат са немү* („Have you heard, blessed Christians, how greatly our God loves mankind? Therefore, we must bless the Lord at every hour. And know, people, that when the sun sets, all the angels who serve men go to worship God and pray to Him.“) (OD № 39 (65), fol. 121a).

⁸ https://histdict.uni-sofia.bg/oldbgdict/oldbg_search/

⁹ <https://ibl.bas.bg/rbe/lang/bg/%D0%BB%D1%8E%D0%B4%D0%B5/>

The text also contains a well-known colloquial, partially Bulgarianized expression of Greek origin: *доотсвам* ‘to arrive quickly, unexpectedly’. This lexeme entered the Bulgarian language orally and underwent modification through the addition of the native prefix *do-*, following a specific word-formation model. It is attested in the dictionary of N. Gerov (Геров/Gerov, 1975, 1, p. 358), but is not present in standard literary Bulgarian, being used exclusively in colloquial speech.

In the language of the Damaskins, we find the Hellenism *ὄτι* (AGr. *ὄτι*) meaning ‘why, because’, which is also well known in spoken vernacular. As noted by D. Ivanova-Mircheva and I. Haralampiev cite (1999, p. 334), certain common Greek words, although they entered spoken Bulgarian early and acquired a distinctly popular character, were not admitted into Old or Middle Bulgarian written texts. One example she provides is the conjunction *ὄτι*, which appears as a rare exception in medieval Bulgarian manuscripts and in a few colophons. The earliest known occurrence of *ὄτι* appears in an Early Modern Bulgarian manuscript from the 11th–12th centuries: *ὄτι χάριζα ми ἀπέ εἷ λικτῆ πλατῆνα ...* („because she gave me another seven cubits of cloth“). In the Damaskin texts, the conjunction *ὄτι*, having entered from the vernacular, is frequently used, e.g., ...*ὄτι κοῖτο πιτῆκε да се бори..* („because he wanted to fight...“) (OD № 39 (65), fol. 168a). It is an interesting fact that in a number of cases, *ὄτι* is involved in the process of glossing, and Bulgarian lexemes are explained in the margins of the manuscript by it: *ѣче > ὄти; както стѣ > ὄти; защото > оти; защо > ὄти* (OD № 39 (65)).

It is also worth noting several lexical items that entered the Bulgarian language through Greek mediation. One such example is the lexeme *μαῖστορ* (from Latin *magister* ‘teacher’, via Greek *μάιστορας*). Passing into the Bulgarian vernacular through Greek, the word gained currency in spoken language, subsequently appearing in the language of the Damaskins and later becoming firmly established in the literary Bulgarian lexicon.

3. Conclusion

Our observations and the results of the analysis conducted allow us to draw several specific conclusions that are of relevance to the study of lexical borrowing and linguistic contact:

- Greek loanwords are a stable and enduring component of the Bulgarian language. A significant number of Graecisms have become integrated into the Bulgarian lexical system, having undergone adaptation over time. Some of these words are now fully assimilated and are no longer perceived as borrowings by native speakers.

- The analysis of lexical material from the 18th-century Modern Bulgarian manuscripts indicates that a portion of the Greek loanwords entered the Bulgarian language as early as the Old Bulgarian period through written transmission, particularly in the domains of religion and social life. Many of these lexical items – such as *φιλοσοφ*, *ἐπαρχία*, *non*, *πατριάρχ* (*philosopher*, *eparchy*,

priest, patriarch) – have retained their status as part of the standard literary lexicon to this day.

- In addition to the written influence, Greek exerted lexical impact through direct contact with the spoken vernacular. The subsequent fate of the Greek borrowings that found their way into the Damaskins from the living speech of that time varies. One group of lexemes, such as *лунса, хора*, has become established in the literary language, while another group – including *даскал* and *довмасам* – remains limited to colloquial usage. The Modern Bulgarian Damaskins also contain a number of other loanwords – including Latinisms and Hebraisms – that entered the Bulgarian language via Greek mediation, reflecting the role of Greek as a linguistic conduit in the broader context of cultural and religious exchange.

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Codex Assemanianus, 11th-century Old Bulgarian, Glagolitic.

[<http://titus.uni-frankfurt.de/texte/etcs/slav/aksl/asseman/assem.htm>]

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Codex Zographensis, the late 10th or early 11th century, Old Bulgarian, Glagolitic.

Codex Suprasliensis, 10-11th c., Old Bulgarian, Cyrillic.

[<http://suprasliensis.obdurodon.org/>]

BD - Berlin Damaskin from the late 18th to the early 19th century

OD № 38 (64) - Odessa Damaskin № 38 (64) from the mid-18th century

OD № 39 (65) - Odessa Damaskin № 39 (65) from the second half of the 18th century

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