Summary

This volume investigates the Old Church Slavonic *Office for Saint Wenceslas*, situating it within the wider framework of medieval Slavic textual tradition and the political-religious transformations that marked the development of Europe between the 9th and 11th centuries. It examines the text's philological, linguistic, cultural and historical significance. Duke Wenceslas is notable as the only West Slavic (Czech) saint included in the East Slavic *Menaion*, a fact that underscores his exceptional cross-cultural veneration. As the first Bohemian ruler to become a vassal of the Holy Roman Emperor in 929, he played a pivotal role in shaping the political and religious landscape of medieval Bohemia. Thus, the book contributes to the study of the Slavic liturgical tradition through philological and linguistic analysis, providing an example of textual criticism applied to the edition of an Old Church Slavonic literary monument, while also addressing broader processes of state and identity formation in medieval Europe.

The text under analysis tackles a West Slavic theme, specifically the cult of the «martyr» Wenceslas, who was treacherously killed by his younger brother, and belongs to the Old Church Slavonic hymnographic tradition of the Greek-Byzantine rite. Preserved exclusively in East Slavic manuscripts from Novgorod, it therefore constitutes a unique monument uniting the three regions of Slavia. The critical edition includes the Old Church Slavonic text, the Greek originals (when identified) of the hymns to the Virgin Mary (*Theotokia*), a modern parallel Church Slavonic version, and, finally, an Italian translation accompanied by a commentary. Together, these materials provide fresh insights into the history and transmission of the work, thereby enabling a thorough philological and linguistic analysis.

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The first chapter (*Around Wenceslas*) presents a historical-hagiographical study of Saint Wenceslas (Václav) of Bohemia, examining his life, historical significance and transformation into a symbolic religious and political figure in medieval Central Europe. Situating Wenceslas within the Christianization of Eastern and Central Europe (9th-11th centuries), the chapter emphasizes the voluntary adoption of Christianity by local elites, the emergence of Christian monarchies, the gradual decline of pagan traditions, and the rise of a new form of sainthood known as dynastic sanctity. Wenceslas exemplifies this latter phenomenon, as a prince who was sanctified not simply for his personal piety, but also because his life and death came to symbolize the union of Christian values with political authority.

Wenceslas, born around 907 to the Přemyslid dynasty, inherited rule under his mother Drahomíra's regency after his father Vratislav I died in 921. The linguistic roots of his name, derived from the compound noun **Vętjeslavъ* meaning «greater glory», carry political and symbolic significance, suggesting his parents' hopes for his future greatness. Wenceslas' early reign was marked by complex political dynamics involving Bohemia, Bavaria, and the German Empire. He eventually became a vassal of Emperor Henry I of Saxony, submitting to imperial authority in 929. Although this submission meant peace, it was politically controversial. Wenceslas did not have vassals of his own and was dependent on imperial support to maintain authority, a decision that may have sowed the seeds for his eventual downfall.

As ruler, Wenceslas promoted Christianization, ecclesiastical reforms, and church foundations, including the Saint Vitus Church in Prague. The dedication of this church, initially intended for Saint Emmeram but changed to Saint Vitus under Saxon influence, marked a shift in political allegiances.

Wenceslas' assassination in 935 by his brother Boleslav and a group of nobles in Stará Boleslav is presented as both a political and symbolic act. While some sources suggest it was a deliberate plot to seize power, others frame it as a spontaneous act triggered by a quarrel. Regardless of the motive, his death quickly became interpreted as martyrdom. His calm acceptance of death and general Christian demeanor led to a Christ-like portrayal in early hagiographies. His refusal to resist and subsequent death became a typological imitation of Christ's Passion, allowing the sources to position him as a model Christian prince and martyr.

Wenceslas' cult grew rapidly after death, with his relics moved to Prague, bolstering the city's Christian stature. Successive Přemyslid rulers invoked his image for dynastic legitimacy, placing his likeness on seals and coins. Over time, his symbolic role grew from a meek martyr to a militant protector of the Bohemian state. He was associated with major military victories, such as the Battle of Chlumec in 1126, where his standard was believed to have ensured divine favor and victory. The most significant expansion of his cult occurred during the reign of Emperor Charles IV (1346-1378), who made Wenceslas the spiritual and symbolic patron of the Czech kingdom. He renamed Prague Castle the 'Castle of Saint Wenceslas,' featured the saint's image on university seals, and created the Crown of Saint Wenceslas, which rested on the saint's skull and was used only for coronations. Under Charles, Wenceslas's figure reached

its apogee in religious and political iconography, merging medieval piety with emerging nationalism.

In the following centuries, Wenceslas remained a central symbol of Czech identity, and his legacy eventually became inseparable from the nation itself. From a humble Christian prince, he became a warrior-protector, and finally a national symbol celebrated not only for his religious devotion but also for his cultural and historical significance. Even during the foundation of Czechoslovakia in the 20th century, he was invoked as a national figure. In 1929, for example, President Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk gave a speech in his honor, interpreting the saint not only as a religious figure but as a moral example and national unifier. Wenceslas was thus transformed into a secular symbol of Czech unity, freedom, and resilience. His figure endured through political upheavals, including the Hussite reformation and modern anti-German resistance, becoming a transconfessional icon.

The chapter concludes by situating Wenceslas's sainthood within a broader ideological movement that promoted princely martyrs across Christian Europe, particularly in its northern and eastern peripheries, with special attention to the cult of the Russian saints Boris and Gleb, likely inspired by the Bohemian tradition, as evidenced in East Slavic hagiographic sources. Unlike the ancient sacred kingship, where sacredness resided in the kingship itself, the Christian royal saint was venerated for personal holiness and merits acquired after death. Wenceslas fit this model perfectly: a ruler who did not resist his killers, who governed justly, who opposed capital punishment, and who was willing to renounce power for the sake of peace and faith. His canonization also responded to the needs of a new Christian society seeking sacred models of authority that were both spiritually and politically credible.

The second chapter (*The Office for Saint Wenceslas: text, context and manuscript tradition*) examines the Old Church Slavonic *Office for Saint Wenceslas* and explores in depth its origin, transmission, and manuscript tradition. Although the work is thematically considered to have originated in Bohemia or in its cultural orbit, it survives solely in later manuscripts from the East Slavic area (most notably, an 11th-century *Menaion* preserved and two 12th-century codices). The earliest mention of Wenceslas in East Slavic calendars dates to the mid-11th century, and by the end of that century, the complete office appears in a *Menaion* of Southern Slavic origin, copied in Rus'. Notably, this inclusion among East Slavic saints, despite his Western origin, demonstrates his widespread veneration and the interconnectedness of Slavic religious and liturgical traditions in the northern peripheries of Christian Europe. This attests to an active cult of Wenceslas within the Kievan Church and its liturgical tradition.

Thus, while the topic is Bohemian, the text's structure and style are characteristically Byzantine, transmitted through the Old Church Slavonic hymnographic tradition and later adapted and copied in East Slavic territory. This case exemplifies the distinctive phenomenon of textual transmission that is characteristic of *Slavia Christiana*: many texts, originally composed or translated in one Slavic region, survived only thanks to copies made much later and far away, particularly in the Eastern Slavic lands. This applies also to Czech Church Slavonic literature,

which would have almost completely disappeared without the cultural mediation of Croatia and Kievan Rus', especially through the Novgorod tradition. This «two-dimensional relay» of transmission underscores the mobility of Slavic texts and the central role of Eastern Slavic centers in preserving early Bohemian Christian literature. The office, therefore, stands as a powerful example of the inter-Slavic nature of the Old Church Slavonic tradition, born in one cultural sphere, matured in another, and reinterpreted across borders and centuries.

The textual transmission of the *Office for Saint Wenceslas* clearly illustrates how Church Slavonic functioned as a «supra-national» literary language and liturgical *koine*, conserving Greek-Byzantine roots while being adapted regionally. Therefore, attributing a geographic origin to such texts is further complicated by the linguistic and stylistic blend of influences. While some scholars have hypothesized a Bohemian, South Slavic, or East Slavic origin for the office, no definitive conclusion has yet been reached.

The issue of authorship, place of origin, and linguistic identity are further complicated by the conservative nature of the Slavonic written tradition, which often preserved archaic forms and resisted localization. According to some scholars, the text may have been originally composed in Bohemia and transmitted through the monastery of Sázava to the East Slavs, later being adopted and preserved in the Novgorod region. On the other hand, its composition or subsequent development in Kievan Rus' – entailing the conflation of canons for the *dies natalis* and *translatio* – cannot be ruled out, whereas a South Slavonic origin, despite certain lexical and grammatical features, appears unlikely.

The chapter investigates the linguistic features of the *Office for Saint Wenceslas* in order to understand both its original milieu and the dynamics of its later transmission. It highlights the limitations of relying solely on linguistic data to determine a text's provenance. The process of copying, often involving both conscious and unconscious adaptations, created stratified linguistic layers that obscure the text's provenance. This multistratal nature of the manuscripts, combined with the high uniformity of Church Slavonic style, makes it nearly impossible to definitively localize certain works, including the office under investigation.

As already stated, the text survives exclusively in East Slavic manuscripts, and its orthographic and morphological features correspond closely to the East Slavic recension. These traits, however, may reflect the practices of later scribes rather than the linguistic character of the original composition, and therefore offer limited value for localization. A number of possible Bohemian features are examined from both philological (stemmatic) and linguistic perspectives, and the results are quite interesting but somewhat contradictory. For this reason, the subsequent analysis turns to the lexicon, usually considered as the most reliable indicator of a text's historical and geographical background. In this respect, the so-called Moravisms and Pannonisms (West Slavic lexical elements that entered Old Church Slavonic during the Cyrillo-Methodian period) as well as later Bohemisms, whose scarcity in a hymnographic composition is unsurprising, seem to play only a marginal role in the text under analysis, as they cannot be reliably used to determine its geographical or cultural provenance. Overall, the linguistic

evidence indicates that, although the *Office for Saint Wenceslas* may retain faint traces of a West Slavic origin, its present form primarily reflects the features of liturgical Church Slavonic as shaped by the East Slavic context that ensured its transmission and survival.

Chronologically, the earliest known manuscript dates to 1095/1096, roughly contemporaneous with the purported suppression of the Slavonic books at the Sázava monastery in Bohemia (1097), whose very existence as a liturgical practice remains a matter of scholarly doubt. This coincidence invites speculation about a possible link between Sázava's expulsion of Slavonic monks and the eastward transmission of their texts. Sázava is often portrayed as a last bastion of Cyrillo-Methodian heritage in western Slavia, though its actual role has been questioned due to limited evidence. Thus, the chapter considers the continuity – or lack thereof – of the Slavonic liturgy from Great Moravia to Bohemia, with the Benedictine monastery of Sázava once again serving as the primary preserver and transmitter of the Cyrillo-Methodian spiritual and linguistic heritage. In this respect, the *Office for Saint Wenceslas* has been indeed considered evidence of this direct link. The existence of a Bohemian redaction of Church Slavonic directly derived from the Moravian tradition has yet to be established. The discussion is often framed within the context of national philologies and historical narratives of cultural self-identity, which, in some cases – such as in the case of Cyril and Methodius – reflect the influence of cultural or political ideologies on interpretations of limited evidence.

The chapter also reviews the theoretical and methodological approaches employed in modern philology for the evaluation of medieval Church Slavonic texts, while acknowledging the challenges posed by gaps in manuscript transmission and the occasional ideological assumptions embedded in scholarly narratives. The traditional categories of «author» and «original version» are questioned, especially for composite texts like hymnographic offices, which often evolved through collective and anonymous textual transmission. The specific problem of the text's composition and its intertextual relationships is further analysed.

The central and most important part of the volume offers the first comprehensive critical edition of the *Office for Saint Wenceslas*, based on all extant manuscript witnesses (three East Slavic manuscripts from the Novgorod region), currently held in Moscow and Saint Petersburg: **T**, the oldest (end of the 11th century), **Sin**, characterized by the presence of the neumatic notation (12th century), and **Sof** (also 12th century).

The third and final chapter, *Prolegomena to the Edition of the Office for Saint Wenceslas*, precedes the edition itself and introduces the editorial principles that guided the work. Although the text has been known for over 150 years and edited several times – sometimes also translated into Czech, Russian, and English – previous editions were largely diplomatic. They did not engage in proper critical examination of the manuscript tradition, lacking a true *recensio* and *examinatio*. For instance, Vatroslav Jagić's 1886 edition, whose pioneering editorial activity mainly focused on linguistic documentation of the oldest monuments, remained the most authoritative, though still semi-diplomatic. His work, framed within an ambitious project to publish early East Slavic monuments, aimed primarily to repro-

duce texts faithfully rather than reconstruct an original *Urtext*, although he did not refrain from offering some interesting conjectures and text-critical observations.

The *Office for Saint Wenceslas* is considered an original Slavic composition, though modeled on Byzantine hymnographic forms and stylistic patterns. The textual structure is analyzed, and the independence of the three manuscripts is established through examples of conjunctive and separative errors, showing that all derive from a common archetype. Variations in rubrics and the arrangement of hymns for Saint Chariton and Saint Wenceslas, together with the distribution of common and singular errors, confirm the existence of two distinct transmission branches: one represented by **T** (independent branch) and the other by the pair **Sin**-**Sof** (derived from a shared subarchetype). Stemmatically, when two witnesses from different branches agree, their reading is almost invariably regarded as authoritative; otherwise, the editor exercises critical judgment (*iudicium*).

The edition adopts **Sin** as its base manuscript due to its musical notation (neumes), which aids in reconstructing metrical divisions. Some examples are presented to illustrate how conjectural emendations are applied cautiously to restore probable original forms, with a clear distinction between stemma-based corrections and purely conjectural restorations: errors are corrected stemmatically when **T** and **Sof** concur (*em.*); apparatus notes record all orthographic and textual variants, while conjectures are explicitly marked (*coni.*). Where available, the edition includes the Greek originals of some hymns dedicated to the Virgin Mary (*Theotokia*). Principles of punctuation, verse division, and musical cues are also addressed. The chapter concludes with abbreviations and technical notes.

The resulting critical edition, accompanied by a critical apparatus documenting all significant and orthographic variants and clearly explaining editorial decisions, provides a literal and explanatory Italian service translation. A comparison with the texts of two modern printed editions of the *Menaion for September* (editions of 1978 and 2003), also presented prior to the Italian translation, reveals both continuity and minor updates in grammar and vocabulary, confirming their (in)direct derivation from **T** (or rather its printed edition). The appendices offer the Greek and Slavic texts of the model hymns (*heirmoi*) alongside Italian translations.

A rich selection of bibliographical references and an index conclude the volume. The sources employed and cited in this repertoire, together with the edition's critical apparatus and comprehensive commentary, are intended to offer a foundation for future research that may address the many unresolved questions surrounding this seminal liturgical text and its historical, philological, linguistic, and cultural significance.

Olga Kalashnikova