

*“Parallel word forms **сѣнове** and **сѣни** in the nominative plural in St. John XII:36”. Author: A-C Gutsjö, doctoral student at the university of Gothenburg. The Old Church Slavonic text in the article has been reproduced using the font Altrussusch version Altsys Fontographer 4.1 0407.1996. The font is enclosed.*



Two observations of St. John XII:36, folio 44v, The Miroslav's Gospel

Parallel word forms **сѣнове and **сѣни** in the nominative plural in St. John XII:36**

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Abstract

In Old Church Slavonic, about 1000 years ago, an important language development took place: the interaction between the ŭ- and o-declensions, an interaction which allegedly is said to have led to the demise of the ŭ-declension. This interaction is described vividly by linguistics “a slowly mutual process”, “joining each other, merging”, “colliding with each other” or as “being at war with each other”. A study of the Biblical verse St. John XII:36 in six well-known aprakos Gospels shows that there are parallel forms of the word **сѣниѣ** in the nominative plural. In this article will 9the interplay between the ŭ-declension and the o-declension be discussed as a possible reason, but also the use of the case accusative, scribes from different geographic areas using different language forms and possible scribal errors.

1. Introduction

Every language changes in spelling, vocabulary and grammar over time. In the period called Old Church Slavonic, about 1000 years ago, an important language development took place: the interaction between the ŭ- and o-declensions, an interaction which generally is said to have led to the demise of the ŭ-declension; it was clearly moving towards this demise already by the time of the OCS (Gasparov 2001:77). This article aims to study a phrase, containing the word **сѣнь** *syn* “son” in the nominative plural in the verse St. John XII:36 in some well-known aprakos Gospels. The phrase is: **дондеже свѣтъ имате· вѣроуите въ свѣтъ· да снове свѣтоу боудете**¹ where the word form **сѣнове** has the parallel **сѣни**. If the reason for these parallel forms is this interplay between the declensions, it would be interesting to find out if this could lead to that we would catch the very moment of such a language change, and reveal not only *when* but also *where* this language change took place. But there are other possible reasons to take into consideration; the use of the case accusative, scribes from different geographic areas using different language forms, or a possible scribal error will also be considered.

2. The sources

The sources chosen for this study are six aprakos Gospels. Aprakos Gospels, or evangelaries, are the Gospels arranged in lessons to be read on Sundays and Feast Days, in contrast to Tetraavangelia, which contain full versions of the Gospels in the New Testament (Lunt 1955:6). There are at least three types of evangelaries. Firstly, there are full evangelaries, which cover Saturday, and Sunday readings for Lent, and all days of the week for the rest of the year. Secondly, there are short evangelaries, which comprise readings for all days from Palm Sunday until Pentecost, and for Saturdays and Sundays for the rest of the year.² Thirdly, according to A.A. Alekseev, there is also a “supershort” or

¹The English version according to *The New Testament – the Authorized or King James Version* is “While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light”.

²The terms „short“ and „full“ evangelaries were found on the web page <http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1G2-3404100967> (20 juli 2014)

celebratory aprakos, which shows a considerable variance in the selection of readings (<http://www.nlr.ru/exib/Gospel/ostr> 11 juli 2014).

A.A. Alekseev claims, that there are only four aprakos Gospels which could be considered as belonging to the first stage of Slavic written language in the IX, X and XI centuries; namely the *Ostromir Gospel Lectionary of 1056-1057* (henceforth abbreviated OGL), the *Codex Assemanius* (CA), the *Sava's Book* (SB), and the *Miroslav's Gospel* (MG) (<http://www.nlr.ru/exib/Gospel/ostr> 11 juli 2014). Therefore, these four were selected for this study. Furthermore, the *Vatican Gospel Lectionary* (VGL), and the *Archangelsk Gospel Lectionary of 1092* (AGL) also were selected. The reason for the choice of VGL and AGL, besides that they are aprakos Gospels and valid for this study, is that I have studied them for other articles, being fascinated by their history.

Thus, this study covers six well-know aprakos Gospels from the IX, X and XI centuries from the south-east (Bulgaria and Macedonia), south-west (Serbia) and east European (Russia) Slavonic linguistic areas. The *Archangelsk Gospel Lectionary of 1092* is at least partly considered to be a full aprakos Gospel, since one of the two scribes (the second) incorporated passages from the Bible which are included only in full aprakos Gospels, not in short ones (Žukovskaja, in Mironova 1997:20). The Gospel is one of the seven exactly dated texts of the only twelve texts which are preserved from the XI century (Levočkin, in Mironova 1997:11) . T.G. Vinokur claims that the Gospel was copied³ somewhere in the south of Rus', from its linguistic Old Russian characteristics (Vinokur 2007:12). The *Codex Assemanius* is a Glagolitic manuscript, produced at the end of the tenth or at the beginning of the eleventh century in Macedonia (Kurz 1966:LXII). H. Lunt expresses his more careful views that it *probably* is written in Macedonia (1955:6), and K. Mirčev that it was written *in the Western region of Bulgaria* (Mirčev 2000:17). The *Miroslav's Gospel* is the oldest Cyrillic manuscript written 1180 in the Serbian recension of OCS (Biblioteka Frontistesa, http://ksana-k.ru/?page_id=1414 11 aug 2014). Thus, even if A.A. Alekseev includes this gospel to the group belonging to the first stage of Slavic written language in the IX, X and XI centuries, it was copied in the XII century, which is also pointed out by A.A. Alekseev, when he declares it a full evangeliarie (<http://www.nlr.ru/exib/Gospel/ostr> 11 juli 2014). The *Ostromir Gospel Lectionary of 1056-1057* is considered to be the oldest of the short evangeliaries, and it is famous for its East Slavic dialect features (<http://www.nlr.ru/exib/Gospel/ostr> 11 juli 2014). It was written in Cyrillic in the

³: It is questionable which word would be the most appropriate of copied, written, rewritten; linguists use the all of them to express the action of reproducing texts by hand [My observation, ACG]

XI century in Russia (Kurz 1966: LXXII). T.A. Ivanova expresses the opinion that it was rewritten in Rus’ from an east-Bulgarian original (Ivanova 2005:16) and P.S. Kuznecov identifies Kiev as its probable place of origin (Kuznecov 2004:300). The Gospel is also one of the seven exactly dated texts from the XI century (Levočkin, in Mironova 1997:11). The *Sava’s Book* was written in Cyrillic in the eleventh century in the east of Bulgaria (Kurz 1966:LXII). H. Lunt voices that it reflects Bulgarian dialects (Lunt 1955:6), while K. Mirčev more carefully says it is written with some east-Bulgarian linguistic traits (Mirčev 2000:19). The *Vatican Gospel Lectionary* consists of a short aprakos Gospel which belongs to the oldest translation of the Gospels by Cyril and Methodius, copied in Cyrillic, sometime in the period after the *Codex Suprasliensis*, which was copied in 973, and the *Savva’s Book*, probably copied before 1018, somewhere in South-West Bulgaria (Džurova 2002:12, 82, 84). Excitingly enough, was *Vatican Gospel Lectionary* discovered only 50 years ago in the Vatican Apostolic Library, hidden under a more recent Greek manuscript of a Gospel from the 12th or 13th century in the Palimpsest⁴ Codex Vat.Gr.2502 (Krăstanov et al 1996:17-18).

3. Results

As mentioned earlier, Tetraevangelia comprise, in contrast to aprakos Gospels, the New Testament and thus the Biblical verses only once; in aprakos Gospels one and the same Biblical verse is used several times depending on days of the year and types of service. Since this study includes six aprakoses, it was expected to find observations on more than one day. As a result of the study, the verse St. John XII:36 was found at seven different places in these aprakos Gospels, namely on Wednesday in the Holy Week, on Tuesday in the sixth week after Easter, on Wednesday in the sixth week after Easter, on the day of the martyr Polycarp in July, on the day of the holy prophet Symeon (Simeon) in September, on the day of the Exaltation of the Cross in September and on prophet Nahum’s day in December. (Table 1).

Two interesting discrepancies were found. Firstly, there was a difference in how the days were indicated. For example, the sixth week after Easter is indicated with the OCS letter *.s.* or *.з.* in AGL, CA, OGL, VAT, but with the letter *.е.* in MG. L.P. Žukovskaja expresses the thought that there is a need for more research on the subject of the substantial differences between the full and short aprakos Gospels, concerning the calendars and that the contents

⁴ A palimpsest is a text written on an already used parchment, thus leading to different layers of text.

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and the correlation between separate texts for certain days of the astronomical year in the east Slavonic and south Slavonic manuscripts from the X-XIV centuries; they differ significantly and, most importantly, have not yet been studied enough (Mironova 1997:20). Secondly, the verse St. John XII:36 does not have the same length on Wednesday in the sixth week after Easter in the sources. In AGL the wording is:

36.ДОНДѢЖЕ СВѢТЪ ИМАТЕ· ВѢРОУИТЕ ВЪ СВѢТЪ· ДА СНОВЕ СВѢТОУ БОУДЕТЕ (12v)

but in MG it is

36 рѣ(уе) гь пришѣдшимъ к немю иудѣмь. дондѣже свѣтъ имате вѣрюите въ свѣтъ· да снове свѣта бюдете. си гла исъ. и шьдъ скри се ѿ нихъ. (44v)

This difference could most likely be seen in the light of AGL being a short aprakos and MG a long aprakos.

on Wednesday in the Holy Week	AGL (87v), MG (245v)
on Tuesday in the sixth week after Easter	AGL (12v), CA (27 col. b), MG (44v), OGL (43r col.1), VAT (37, fol.14r)
on Wednesday in the sixth week after Easter	AGL (12v), CA (27 col. b-c), MG (44v), OGL (43r col.2), VAT (38, fol.14v)
on the day of the martyr Polycarp in July	OGL (266v col.1)
on the day of the holy prophet Symeon (Simeon) in September	MG (301v)
on the day of the Exaltation of the Cross in September	SB (129a 128a)
on prophet Nahum’s day in December	CA (127 col. b)
Heading unknown due to loss of folios	VAT (154, fol.67v)

Table 1: Locations of St. John XII:36 in the six aprakos Gospels

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In total, 17 observations of the word **сѣнѣ** syn” ‘son’ in the nominative plural were found; 16 of these belonged to the ŭ-declension; the only observation belonging to the o-declension was one found in the VGL⁵ on Tuesday in the sixth week after Easter. (Table 2).

	Source, number of observations	Locations
сѣноуѣ	AGL = 3 observations	12v (twice), 87v.
	CA = 3 observations	27 col.b, 27 col.b-c, 127 col.b.
	MG = 4 observations	44v (twice), 245v, 301v.
	OGL = 3 observations	43r col.1, 43r col.2, 266v.
	SB = 1 observation	129a 128a
	VGL = 2 observations	38 fol.14v, 154 fol. 67v.
сѣни	VGL = 1 observation	37 fol.14r.

*Table 2: Observations of **сѣноуѣ** and **сѣни** in the chosen sources*

Therefore, a closer investigation must be made of the reasons for this interesting observation in the nominative plural. Could this only deviant observation be a sign of the language development, when the ŭ-declension merged with the o-declension in the history of the word **сѣнѣ**? Could it be a signal that other cases than the nominative were used, such as the accusative? Could it be explained by the geographical orientation, i.e. are there other sources from the same area showing the same development? Finally, could this deviation simply be explained by a common scribal error?

4. Possible explanations

4.1 Language development of the word **сѣнѣ** ‘son’ and the ŭ- and o-declensions

Can the history of the word **сѣнѣ** throw a light on the varying word forms? The history is a long and intriguing journey into several parts of the world. It existed already in the Proto-Indo-European (PIE) language⁶ as *sūneus, and was

⁵ For this reason has no statistical analysis of the results been made [My decision, ACG.]

⁶ PIE was a spoken language about 5.000 years ago. There are no written records relating to this period (Crystal 1987:296-297).

inherited by Proto-Slavic (PS), Common Slavic (CS)⁷ and finally Old Church Slavonic (OCS) as ‘**сѣинѣ**’ in Eastern Europa (see e.g. Schenker 1996:123-124 and Eckert 1959:100-102). The form **сѣинѣ** is the result of the loss of the labialisation of the PIE vowel ‘ū’, changing it into the Slavonic ‘ы’, and the loss of the final consonant –s, which took place in all word ending in –t, –d, –n and –s, due to the open syllable sound law (Kondrašov 1962:30, 36) It is also found in Vedic, Greek and Lithuanian (Sihler 1995:322). It spread in some Germanic languages, for example is it found in the Gothic language⁸ (Nilsson and Svensson 1997:39) and in the language of the Vikings, the Old Norse⁹ (Palm 2010:435). However, it is not found in Latin; the Latin word for ‘son’ is filius, –i (*Norstedts Latin-svenska ordbok andra upplagan* 2004:351) which was inherited from the Faliscan language¹⁰ (Sihler 1995:141). Wikander mentions that there were two more words in PIE besides the word *suHnus, namely *putlo-, found in for example Sanskrit as ‘putra-’, and *suyo-, found in for example Greek as ‘hyios’. (2007:171) so evidently there were other ways of expressing this kind of relationship.

The word’s grammatical history regarding to what declension it belonged is quite clear; all specialists agree that the word ‘**сѣинѣ**’ from the PIE period to the OCS, to the Gothic language and Old Norse thousands of years later, belonged to the ū-declension. For example, Eckert expresses that six nouns are universally recognized as ū-stems, one of them being **сѣинѣ** (Eckert 1959:106); Chaburgaev also claims the word ‘**сѣинѣ**’ to be one of only six nouns, that were inherited from PIE by PS, CS and OCS, found in manuscripts (1974:176); Vasmer declares it to be an “Alter u-Stamm” (1958:57), Nilsson and Svensson use the Gothic word *sunus* as an illustration of the masculine u-declension (1997:43-44) and Palm uses the word ‘sonr’ or ‘sunn’ as an pattern of the u-stem paradigm for Old Norse (2010:435).

It should be noted, that the word **сѣинѣ** has a number of meanings, for example as son, male child in both abstract and concrete senses (see e.g. Sreznevskij 1903:872-874), and there is also a homonymy ‘**сѣинѣ**’ ‘tower’. However, according to Lysaght did the homonymy **сѣинѣ** ‘tower’ belong to the o-declension, not the ū-declension, as did the word **сѣинѣ** ‘son’ (1987:402). The interpretation of **сѣинѣ** in St. John XII:36 is “someone having a close connection with something” (Sreznevskij 1903:872-874).

⁷ In the post-PIE-period some scholars believe there was a Baltic-Slavic period before the common Slavic period (Townsend & Janda 1996:39, Sokoljanskij 2004:100).

⁸ See the table in paragraph 313 on page 322 in the book by Nilsson and Svensson

⁹ See the grammatical notes on page 435 in the book by Palm

¹⁰ Paragraph 135a on page 141

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The existence of the parallel ŭ- and o-declensions, leading to their borrowing case endings from each other, is an important factor in the history of the word *сѣинѣ*. Scholars agree that there was an interaction between these declensions before and during the OCS period, but there seems to be a dispute exactly *how* this interplay took place. The process is often described by scholars in peaceful words, as being “a slowly mutual process”, but sometimes in more vivid words, as two declensions “joining each other, merging” (Černych 1962:189), or as “colliding with each other” (Kolesov 2009:171) or even as “being at war with each other” (Kuznecov 2004:72). One possible result of this interplay could be variations in the inflections, leading to the existence of case endings of both the ŭ- and o-declensions for a specific noun, even in the same source.

The case endings in the plural of the word *сѣинѣ*, declined both according to the ŭ- and o-declensions and in Modern Russian, are shown in table 3. The OCS paradigm is taken from the *Grammatika na Starob"lgarskija ezik* (1991:147). The nominative and genitive consist of two parts, the suffix *-ѵѵ* and the case endings¹¹.

Cases	Word forms according to the ŭ-declension	Word forms according to the o-declension
The Nominative	<i>сѣиноѵѵе</i>	<i>сѣини</i>
The genitive	<i>сѣиноѵѵѣ</i>	<i>сѣинѣ</i>
The dative	<i>сѣинѣѵѵѣ</i>	<i>сѣиноѵѵѣ</i>
The accusative	<i>сѣинѣѵѵы</i>	<i>сѣинѣѵѵы</i>
The instrumental	<i>сѣинѣѵѵми</i>	<i>сѣинѣѵѵы</i>
The locative	<i>сѣинѣѵѵѣхѣ</i>	<i>сѣинѣѵѵѣхѣ</i>
The vocative	<i>сѣиноѵѵе</i>	<i>сѣини</i>

Table 3. The paradigm of the word *сѣинѣ* in the plural

As seen from Table 3, the language development of the the word *сѣинѣ* gave rise to the parallel forms in the nominative plural *сѣиноѵѵе* in the ŭ-declension and *сѣини* in the o-declension. However, there is also a possibility that there was another word form in the nominative plural, namely *сѣинѣѵѵы*, which is the word form in the instrumental and also in the accusative plural. For example, the source *Psaltyr'*

¹¹: See for example Chodzko 1869 pp. 52-53.

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1683 g. denotes the word form *сыны* in psalm *лє:и*, 35:8 *Ѡ бже мои славен еси в мисрдїи сего ради сыны члвчскїя под сѣнїю крилъ твоихъ уповають*¹² as nominative plural on page 594 and the *Grammatika na Starob"lgarskija ezik*, edited by Duridanov, states on page 147 the forms in the plural to be *сынове*, rarely *сыны*, *сынови*. The form *сынови* is according to Nandriş evidence that the ŭ-declension and the o-declension also merged into one when the contamination with the o-declension turned the *-ове* into *-ови*, i.e. *-ov-*from the ŭ-declension and the plural *-и* from the o-declension: “N. pl. *-ове* appears as *-ови*, by contamination with the *-и* of the *-o-* declension: N.pl. *сынови, волови*” (1965:65).

4.2 Language developments with the use of the case accusative

Theoretically, an unexpected change in a word’s case ending could be due to the use of another case, if the case ending is found in the word’s paradigm. Could the different forms *сїни* and *сынове* ‘sons’ in verse St. John XII:36 be a result of the use of the accusative form in the of nominative plural? The different observations have the wording *дондеже свѣтъ имате·вѣрочите въ свѣтъ·да сынове / сїни свѣтоу вждете*, i.e. when you have light, believe in the light, and be the children of light”¹³. It is stated on page 147 in the *Grammatika na starob"lgarskija ezik* edited by Duridanov, the forms in the plural could be *сынове*, rarely *сыны*, which is the expected form in the accusative thus used in the nominative, but spelt with the letter *ize* and not with the expected letter *jery*. Even if an explanation that the accusative case was used but with the letter *ize* instead of the *jery* is possible, the more plausible explanation is the merging of the ŭ-and the o-declensions and the use of both declensions’ case endings.

4.3 Scribes from different geographic areas

When more than one scribe is working with the copying of a text this could lead to different word forms of one and the same noun in one and the same Biblical verse, if the scribes are from different geographic areas and thus used different case endings or spelling when copying. When a scribe copied a foreign text, he sometimes “improved” the text with linguistic traits from his own area (Jakubinskij 1953:330). Could this explain the different word forms in the nominative plural in St. John XII:36?

¹²: the grammatical form here is accusative plural, but the expression is grammatically found in some sources in the nominative plural, e.g. “How hast Thou multiplied thy mercy, O God! The sons of men shall put their hope in the shelter of Thy wings (Asser 2005:38)”

¹³:See note 1 on page 3

As already mentioned, Džurova suggests that the text was copied somewhere in South-West Bulgaria (2002:82 and 84). There is a piece of interesting evidence that the word form **сѣни** was used in another south Slavonic source, namely in *The Zograph Gospel*, a Tetraevangelium from the end of the Xth or the beginning of the XIth century (Ivanova 2005:14). On folio CLVIIIv the verse St. John XII:36 has the wording **дѡньдеже свѣтъ имате·вѣроуите въ свѣтъ· да сѣи свѣтоу бждете**, thus using **сѣни**.

But if we compare the forms in the nominative plural today in some of the Slavonic languages, it becomes clear that it is not a question of geographical area or language; the plural form –ove and –i are common in all of the Slavonic areas. As an illustration, three modern Slavonic languages have been chosen, firstly Bulgarian, as a south Slavonic language, secondly Czech, as a west Slavonic language, and thirdly Russian, as an east Slavonic language. In all of these languages both plural forms exist. In Bulgarian the two primary endings forming the plural of the masculine nouns are –ове and –и (Leafgren 2011:27). In Russian the form in the nominative plural of the masculine nouns are –ы or –и, but there are a few words formed by a remnant of the –ove together with the endings of the collective nouns –ja as the form in the nominative plural, e.g. **сыновья** (Jakubinskij 1953:160). In Czech, for nouns denoting masculine persons, the endings –i, –ové and –é are used (Nilsson 2005:15-16).

Taking this into consideration, it is not possible to explain the deviation of the forms in the nominative plural by dividing the languages into geographical groups. Instead, the explanation might be the meaning, use or the structure of the word. The latter is seen in the Bulgarian, where the ending is –ove if the noun stem is monosyllabic (e.g. **син, синове**), and –i if the stem is polysyllabic. In Czech the plural ending –ové is used for short masculine nouns denoting people’s profession, relation or nationality, e.g. **synové** (Nilsson 2005:15-16). In Russian there is a difference in interpretation; if the meaning is a relative, born son of somebody, the plural form used is the **сыновья**, but if it is a metonymy, e.g. the sons of the country etc., the plural form **сыны** is used (Rozenal’ 1968:116).

Thus, the different word forms **сѣнове** and **сѣни** cannot be explained in terms of several scribes from different geographical areas, and since the exact same wording is used in the sources, it is not possible to discuss them in terms of the words’ structure or meaning; the more plausible explanation is still the merging of the ũ-and the o-declensions and the use of both declensions’ case endings.

4.4 Scribal errors

Could a common scribal error explain the different word forms **сѣини** and **сѣиноѵе** ‘sons’ in the verse St. John XII:36, if the scribe had misread or misspelt the word? There is no reason believing this to be the case; instead the interplay between the the ŭ- and the o-declensions and the use of both declensions’ case endings must be preferred.

5 Conclusions

The reasons for the two parallel forms **сѣини** and **сѣиноѵе** ‘sons’ in the nominative plural in verse St. John XII:36 have been studied from four different points of view. *Firstly*, the language development and the ŭ- and o-declensions was studied, and found to be a possible reason for the difference word forms. *Secondly*, the possibility of the use of different cases was considered, and found not possible due to the fact that the two forms belong to two different declensions and thus showing the correct forms in the nominative plural of these declensions. *Thirdly*, a possible reason for different word forms which could be due to scribes coming from different geographic areas, and thus using different case endings or spelling when copying, was investigated. But even today some of the south, west and east Slavonic languages still have both plural forms in the nominative and therefore it is clear that it is not a question of geographical area or language. This being the reason was thus dismissed. *Fourthly*, the two different word forms could just be a result of careless scribal errors, i.e. when scribes read or wrote incorrectly. Also this possible reason was found not acceptable in this case.

Thus, the conclusion must be that the most plausible reason for the two parallel forms **сѣини** and **сѣиноѵе** ‘sons’ in the nominative plural in verse St. John XII:36 is the language development in the interaction between the ŭ- and o-declensions before and during the OCS period, whether this interaction took place as “a slowly mutual process”, or as “joining each other, merging” (Černych 1962:189), “colliding with each other” (Kolesov 2009:171) or as “being at war with each other” (Kuznecov 2004:72). The parallel word forms are pieces of interesting evidence of the language development which took place in the OCS period, when case endings from both the ŭ- and o-declensions were used even in the same source. It is electrifying to reflect on the possibility that the interaction between the ŭ- and o-declensions had progressed so much that the scribes might have had the view that both forms were equally correct in use; that this very moment when this happened has been caught in the *Vatican Gospel*

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Lectionary, the only aprakos Gospel showing parallel forms in the nominative plural of the six studied.

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