

Title: Past Tense Usage in the Russian Church Slavonic *Menaion*

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According to grammars of Russian Church Slavonic there are three primary past tenses: the imperfect, the aorist, and the perfect. The imperfect is typically described as the tense that provides backgrounding, the aorist as the tense that sequences events or recounts vivid events, and the perfect as the tense used for retrospective viewpoints of the speaker which result in objectivizing the signified process (Alipi 2001: 335). In this paper services from the 19th century Russian Church Slavonic *Menaion* are examined to determine degrees of correspondence to standard descriptive grammars. This paper shows that designations of tense function have little to do with Church Slavonic as it has developed in the Russian tradition, and instead suggests that tense descriptions have been based largely on Old Church Slavonic descriptive grammars. The alternate description introduced in this work is that, if a service was originally written in Greek and translated into Slavonic, its past tense system will tend to mirror the Greek with its marked use of the gnomic aorist (a special tense used to denote a general truth), regardless of sequencing or vividness.