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Hellenistic Jewish texts in George the Monk: Slavonic Testimonies

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The role of the Old Slavonic tradition in transmission of Jewish apocrypha and pseudepigrapha is well-known. Suffice it to say that such important texts as *2 Enoch*, *Apocalypse of Abraham*, and the *Ladder of Jacob* are preserved in Church Slavonic only.¹ However, some of the fragments that undoubtedly go back to Hellenistic Judaism through Byzantine intermediaries have so far escaped scholarly attention. This paper deals with some of the material that survives in the South Slavic translation of the famous *Short Chronicle* of George the Monk, one of the most popular chronographic works in Byzantium.

Recent textual studies have shown that the original George the Monk, written around AD 846, underwent a re-working some time between 847 and 875, and then another in the last quarter of the 9th century.² Both refurbishments probably took place in the monastery of Studios in Constantinople.³ The original version survives (incompletely) in the manuscript *Coislinianus* 305, the second is lost in Greek, but a certain manuscript thereof was translated into Church Slavonic in the 14th century on Mt. Athos (the translation is called *Lětovnik*). Finally, the third version, conventionally called *vulgata*, became immensely popular and survives in more than 30 Greek manuscripts, often with further modifications. This text was also translated into Church Slavonic in 11th century Rus' (that translation goes under the name *Vremennik*).

¹ See recently Orlov 2007.

² See Afinogenov 2004.

³ See Afinogenov 2006.

I.

Now to the Jewish fragments. The scribe of that particular Greek codex used by the South Slavic (most likely Bulgarian) translator of the *Lětovnik* made a few additions to his model. All of them are concentrated in the beginning of the chronicle, in the section corresponding to the Old Testament books of Genesis and the beginning of Exodus. It is the very first fragment that actually gives the clue as to the source of the additions.

I. 1.⁴ [4] ... καὶ ὁ Μαθουσάλα τὸν Λάμεχ· ὃς καὶ δύο γυναῖκας ἀγόμενος, Ἐλδάμ καὶ Σελλάν, ἐγέννησε τὸν Ἰωβέλ καὶ τὸν Ἰουβᾶλ καὶ 8, / τὸν Θωβέλ. καὶ ὁ μὲν Ἰωβὴλ ποκαза скотскому паствоу, Ἰουβᾶλ же κατέδειξε ψαλτήριον καὶ κιθάραν, ὁ δὲ Θωβέλ σφυροκοπίαν χαλκοῦ καὶ σιδήρου, καὶ ὁ μὲν вь храмѣхъ жити, скоть пасти и ѱрати, сь же κιθαρωφδίας καὶ τραγωφδίας ἐν τοῖς διαβολικοῖς ἐπιτηδεύμασι προσεπενόησεν, ὁ δὲ {2} ξίφη τε καὶ ὄπλα χορηγεῖν εἰς πολέμους ἐμηχανήσατο.

... and Mathusala begat Lamech, who, having married two wives, Eldam and Sella, begat Jobel and Jubal and Thobel. **Jobel has shown us how to graze cattle**, Jubal has shown us the psalter and cithara, while Thobel – smithery of brass and iron. And the first invented **how to live in houses, to graze cattle and to plough, the second** cithara singing and tragedies, among diabolical pursuits, while the third conjured to supply swords and armor for wars.⁵

Obviously, the phrase as it stood in the prototype, made little sense. There are two series of inventions ascribed to the three sons of Mathusala. In both series the role of Jobel went missing, although Septuagint says unambiguously that *Adah bare Jobel: he was the father of such as dwell in tents, and of such as have cattle* (Gen 4:19). Apparently, the

⁴ The supplementary fragments are edited in full in Afinogenov 2017.

⁵ The Greek text is from Coislin 305, although here it does not differ from vulgata in any significant way. Folio numbers of the Greek MS are in square brackets [5], of *Lětovnik* (George the Monk 1878–1881) in curly brackets {5}, page numbers of de Boor's edition of vulgata (George the Monk 1978) are in italics 5. The translation from Slavonic is highlighted with bold face.

scribe noticed that and corrected, using exactly the same source that was somewhat carelessly excerpted by the original George. Since some of other fragments display literal coincidences with the 10th century chronicle of Symeon Magister,⁶ this lost work can be identified as the unknown source of George and Symeon as defined by Adler.⁷

That it was a Greek, and not Slavic scribe who supplemented the chronicle is apparent from the fragment, where Symeon Magister happens to have preserved the prototype text:

George the Monk	Symeon Magister
<p>[22] ... 52, 2 Сала же ѿт(е)ць вздрастьша книгамъ наказа. И нѣкогда оубо Сала ш(е)дь Апикия посѣтити, приш(е)дь въ Халдѣе, книгы ѿт нѣкоего назнаменованы Петра ѿбрѣтъ, сия прѣписавъ Сала, самъ оубо въ нихъ съгрѣши и инѣхъ {19} такова безмѣстства наказа. Σάλα δὲ γενόμενος ἐτῶν ρλ´ ἐγέννησε τὸν Ἔβερ.</p>	<p>Сар. 26, 2–3; р. 29, 2–9: τοῦτον ὁ πατὴρ αὐξηθέντα γράμμασιν ἐξεπαίδευσε· καὶ δὴ ποτε ὁ Σάλα ἑαυτῷ πορευθεὶς ἀποικίαν κατασκέψασθαι ἐλθὼν κατὰ τὴν Χαλδαίαν γράμματα ἐπὶ τινῶν εὕρισκει διακεχαραγμένα πετρῶν... ταῦτα δὲ ἐγγραψάμενος ὁ Σάλα αὐτὸς τε ἐν αὐτοῖς ἐξημάρτανε καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους τὴν ἐν αὐτοῖς ἀτοπίαν ἐξεπαίδευσε. 4. Σάλα γενόμενος ρλ´ ἐτῶν ἐγέννησε τὸν Ἔβερ.</p>

Salas, when he grew up, was taught to read by his father. And one day Salas went to look for a place to settle and coming to Chaldaea found letters inscribed on certain stones. By copying them he sinned himself, and taught others such indecency. Salas, being 130 years of age, begat Eber.

The Slavonic corresponds to the Greek word-for-word, except that the words ἀποικίαν and πετρῶν have turned into proper names Апикий and

⁶ See Symeon Magister 2006.

⁷ Adler 1989, 196–203.

Перп, which could only have taken place at the hand of the Slavic translator who did not properly understand his original.

Here is the most interesting text of all added by the scribe to George's narrative:

{48} They say that Amram prayed to God not to overlook the perishing Jewish nation, and had apparition in a dream about the valor and force of the child Moses. After he was born and concealed, Pharaoh's daughter, while taking bath on the river, took him out and saved him. And the child Moses was so goodly and beautiful, that those who saw him, stared at him without diversion and wondered. He was brought up in the stead of a son of Pharaoh's daughter.

It is said that when he was still a little child, she took him to her father the Pharaoh, clear-eyed and goodly as he was, and he touched Pharaoh's beard. For that reason Pharaoh ordered him to be killed. By God's providence, however, Pharaoh {48^v} postponed the execution in this way: some of their wise men used a trick to put down on earth glowing charcoals and a heap of gold. And should the child touch the gold and take it, it was by viciousness that he had grabbed Pharaoh's beard; should he touch the glowing charcoals, he did it as artless and simple-minded child, and does not deserve to be killed for nothing. So they made this agreement. So the child left aside the gold, grabbed the charcoals and put one of them to his mouth, as young children often use to do, and as his tongue was burnt, he became slow-tongued and stumbling over his words.

This Hagadic episode probably embarrassed both George and Symeon, but the latter, as distinct from the former, still retained the introductory sentence.⁸ This time the Slavonic exactly renders the part of the prototype as transmitted by Symeon. Two features of the narrative that survives in Slavonic only point at a very archaic Jewish tradition. First, the boy touched Pharaoh's beard, and not his crown, as, e.g., Josephus Flavius puts it.⁹ Second, no divine interference is mentioned. Rather, the baby Moses did "as young children often do". The beard in question is, of course, one of the famous Egyptian royal insignia, the removable beard encrusted with gems, last worn by the Queen Cleopatra.

⁸ Symeon Magister 2006, cap. 35, 3–4; p. 42, 7 – 43, 1.

⁹ *Jewish Antiquities*, II 232–236.

II.

Among the texts that were left out in the process of general abridgement, which was part of the second re-working of George the Monk, there were large excerpts pieced together from *Contra Julianum* by Cyril of Alexandria and *Contra Graecos*, ascribed by the chronicle to Josephus Flavius in the following way: Ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ Ἰώσηπος ἐν τοῖς Καθ'Ἑλλήνων φησὶν (Coisl. 305, f. 41 sub fine). The following text (ff. 41–43) was published by W.J. Malley as four fragments.¹⁰ Malley postulated a lacuna between his fragments II and III in the following phrase: ἀλλ' ἐπειδὴ πολλοὶ λίαν οἱ παρ'Ἑλλησι περὶ θεοῦ λέγειν ἐπαγγελλόμενοι, θεὸν δὲ τὸ καθ' ὅλου μὴ ἐγνωκότες, οὐχὶ δὲ καὶ ἐξειπόντες, <III> εἷς δὲ ὁ τούτων παρὰ πᾶσι σοφώτερος κριθεὶς νενόμισται Πλάτων, ὃς καὶ περὶ θεοῦ καὶ ψυχῆς καὶ κτίσεως ἐπεχείρησε λέγειν, πρὸς τοῦτον ἡμῖν ἢ ἄμιλλα γινέσθω τῶν λόγων. Actually, I do not see any ground to break up the sentence, which is sufficiently clear despite the seeming anacoluth. Indeed, if πολλοὶ is understood as predicate with the verb εἰσί omitted, the sense becomes apparent with the opposition πολλοὶ — εἷς: since among the Greeks those who pretend to talk about God without either knowing Him or speaking it out are very *numerous*, while Plato is deemed the *one* wisest of all, it is him whom we should refute.

What the editor did not point out is the incomplete form of the last sentence in Fragment III, which has the beginning of a conditional period (*casus irrealis*) but lacks the corresponding clause (*apodosis*). It is here that *Lětovnik* contains a lengthy piece (f. 38^v–39^v), which amounts roughly to a folio of Coislin 305. Let us now look at the stitches between the Greek and the Slavonic.

Οἷς εἰ ἐβούλετο Πλάτων μὴ φιλοδόξως ἀλλὰ θεοσεβῶς... The Slavonic renders: Ихже аще хотѣаше Платѡнь не славолюбнѣ, нѣ богочъстнѣ and continues: выпросити иже о сихъ добрѣ и извѣстно вѣдоущихъ, и боуиствомъ многоглаголивааго гласа побѣждаемыхъ и иноплемннычъскимъ писаниемъ и гласомъ яже о бозѣ повѣдоующихъ, обрѣлъ оубо бы еврее иже въ Егуптѣ живоущихъ... In English (the translation of the extant Greek is by Mal-

¹⁰ Malley 1965.

ley and highlighted with bold face): **If Plato were to have preferred [these truths] not out of a love of fame but in a God-fearing manner** || to inquire those who knew well and for sure and were not overwhelmed by insanity of the loquacious parlance, but explained about God in a foreign script and language, he would have found Hebrews who had lived in Egypt...

I have secluded Malley's addition [these truths], because the Slavonic has infinitive *въпросити* that obviously depends on *ἐβούλετο* (Sl. *хотѣаше*). In its turn, this infinitive has direct objects *въдоущихъ*, *<не> побѣждаемыхъ*, and *повѣдоющихъ*. With necessary correction (the negative particle before *побѣждаемыхъ*) a following reverse translation is possible:

Οἷς εἰ ἐβούλετο Πλάτων μὴ φιλοδόξως ἀλλὰ θεοσεβῶς || ἐρωτῆσαι τοὺς περὶ τούτων καλῶς καὶ ἀκριβῶς εἰδότας καὶ μωρία πολυλαλήτου φωνῆς <μὴ> ἠττωμένους καὶ δι' ἄλλοφύλου γραφῆς καὶ φωνῆς τὰ περὶ τοῦ θεοῦ διεξιόντας, ἦῤυρεν ἂν Ἑβραίους τοὺς ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ διαβιῶντας... The Slavonic construction *одрѣль оубо бы* (= *ἦῤυρεν ἂν*) is the required *apodosis* of the *irrealis* conditional period.

Now the second stitch.

Нъ, якоже речено бысть, от дрѣвныхъ время и от достойновѣрныхъ и священныхъ моужь и богу бывшихъ пророк и тако бога увѣдѣвше {39^v} и того мирное здание, длъжнаа дѣлаемь противу силѣ, егоже промыслника [43] и судию всѣмъ исповѣдуемь праведним же и неправеднымъ, въ настоещим же жити и боудущемъ, въ немже подобаеть и въздание комоуждо по дѣломь его праведно и нелицемѣрно.

The Slavonic has the construction that corresponds to Greek double accusative: *εгоже промыслника* (*~ὄν προνοητήν*) for which the continuation survives in Greek as Malley's Fragment IV, including the verb on which this construction depends: *καὶ κριτὴν πάντων ἴσμεν δικαίων τε καὶ ἀδίκων ἐν τε τῷ παρόντι βίῳ καὶ ἐν τῷ μέλλοντι, ἐν ᾧ δὴ καὶ ἀποδώσει ἐκάστῳ κατὰ τὰ ἔργα αὐτοῦ δικαίως καὶ ἀπροσωπολήπτως· δίκαιος γάρ ἐστιν καὶ δικαιοσύνας ἠγάπησεν*. We know (him) a judge of all the just and unjust in this life and the next. Then it is that he will render to each one according to his works (Rom 2:6) with justice and impartiality.

For he is righteous and cherishes righteousness (Ps 10:7) (translation by Malley). Taking into account the Slavonic version, we get the following: “We know him as a supervisor and a judge etc.” Accusative of the relative pronoun *εροже* obviously pertains to the same person as the genitive *τορο*, namely the same as the object in *δορα υβѣдѣвшε* (=θεὸν ἐγνωκότες). A possible retroversion would look something like this:

ἀλλ', ὡς εἴρηται, ἐκ παλαιῶν χρόνων <...>¹¹ καὶ ἐκ ἀξιοπίστων καὶ ἱερῶν ἀνδρῶν καὶ τοῦ θεοῦ γεγονότων προφητῶν καὶ οὕτω τὸν θεὸν ἐγνωκότες καὶ τούτου τοῦ κόσμου δημιουργίαν, τὰ δέοντα πράττομεν κατὰ δύναμιν, ὃν προνοητὴν ἢ καὶ κριτὴν πάντων ἴσμεν δικαίων τε καὶ ἀδίκων ἐν τε τῷ παρόντι βίῳ καὶ ἐν τῷ μέλλοντι, ἐν ᾧ δὴ καὶ ἀποδώσει ἐκάστῳ κατὰ τὰ ἔργα αὐτοῦ δικαίως καὶ ἀπροσωπολήπτως.

Yet, as has been said, having <learned> from old times and trustworthy and sacred men who were prophets of God, we gained knowledge of God in this way and of the creation of his (or this) world and perform our duties as far as lies in us, etc.

Thus seamless and accurate joints can be observed between the end of Malley's Fragment III, the Slavonic text, and Malley's Fragment IV. It means that a folio was lost in Coislin 305, the contents of which we now have solely in Church Slavonic. By some occasion the entire text pertains to just one extensive excerpt from *Contra Graecos* by Pseudo-Josephus.

What information can be gathered from the Slavonic text? First of all, it is now possible to identify the excerpted work as Jewish, and not Christian, as Malley attempted to do. The primary argument here is the strong emphasis the author puts on the Hebrew language. He says right away that the Hebrew sages expound their knowledge of God in a foreign (ἀλλόφυλος) tongue and writ. Многоглаголивый гласъ (~πολυλάλητος φωνή) certainly alludes to the Greek language and philosophy written in it, which is the object of refutation here. A couple of paragraphs further the writer goes on: варварьскимъ нашимъ языкомъ отеческимъ и дрѣвнѣшимъ и прьвымъ от прьваго челоуѣка не срамляющесе

¹¹ Something is missing here, for example a participle μαθόντες or διδασκόμενοι.

сказати (“we are not ashamed to speak our paternal barbarian language, the most ancient and the primordial one from the first man”). There is also a well-known synchronism: Moses led the Jews out of Egypt “upon the end of Inachos’ reign” (по кончинѣ оубо царства Инахова, якоже рѣхомъ, изведение евреомъ изъ Егупта бысть Моўсеомъ).¹² The Slavonic text requires a further thorough study after a proper edition, which is, unfortunately, beyond the scope of this paper. However, the above data is sufficient to invalidate the main conception of Malley, who argues for the identity of this work of Pseudo-Josephus with various other tracts of clearly Christian provenance.

The two cases presented here amply illustrate the idea that Slavonic translations of Byzantine literary works sometimes preserve texts from quite unexpected corners, which happened to have been excerpted by Byzantine compilers. The nature of the Church Slavonic literary language frequently makes a rather reliable reconstruction possible, so careful study of Slavonic texts translated from Greek may still bring important discoveries not just for byzantinists, but also for researchers in other fields, such as Jewish studies.

¹² Cf. Tatian, 38, 1. Tatian also names the Pharaoh, under whom the Exodus took place — Ἀμοσις. In Slavonic it is Амосъ. If the source used here by George the Monk pre-dates Tatian, this may well be the earliest testimony for the synchronism Inachos–Amosis–Moses.

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