On the Origin of the
Addresses to a Jew on the Incarnation of the Son of God:
A Reply to Alexander Pereswetoff-Morath

The thirteenth-century Old Russian manuscript preserved in the National Library of Russia in St. Petersburg (hereafter RNB), Q.n.l.18, contains the only extant copy of the Addresses to a Jew on the Incarnation of the Son of God (рчни къ Жиросивному о къ чьщений
ни илъ йнна), fols. 180r-196v; the codex lacks its last two folios. The manuscript was edited by Halina Wątróbska in 1987. While the edition, unfortunately, abounds in mistakes, Wątróbska has recently corrected some of them and included her corrections into the Dictionary of the Florilegium.

The Addresses is, inter alia, famous for containing the first example of the Slavonic Hebraism [а] Akh, ‘Judaic Messiah’ (f. 194v) derived from the Hebrew [а] אָשִׁי or, perhaps, from the corresponding Aramaic אָשִׁי. It later occurs, mainly in the Palaea Interpretata, in the form [а] Akh. The phonetic differences of these two Slavonic Hebraisms put forward the problem of ascertaining the geographic area and/or linguistic environment in which the word was borrowed and the text created. Having considered these questions, we will be better equipped to discuss the question of Judeo-Slavic contact during the Middle Ages.

The study of the text comprises a significant part of both of Alexander Pereswetoff-Morath’s recent books dedicated to Judeo-Slavic medieval contacts. It is not surprising that the author—whose doubts concerning Jewish presence in Old Russia are well known—does not accept the East Slavonic provenance of the Addresses. His arguments, however, are hardly well-founded and do not withstand criticism. Thus he writes:

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1 For a description of the manuscript, see Svodnyi katalog slaviano-russkikh rukopisnykh knig, khraniaschikhsia v SSSR: XI-XIII vv. (Moscow, 1984), no. 309, pp. 278-279.
2 See Polata knigopis'nata, no. 19/20 (Nijmegen, 1987).
3 I am grateful to the Fellows of the Old Russian Language Department of the V.V. Vinogradov Russian Language Institute for providing me with images of the Florilegium made in 1982. Unfortunately, the images lack several pages of the Addresses.
4 See Halina Wątróbska, Słownik Staro-Cerkiewno-Russko-Polski (Kraków: Wydawnictwo WAM, 2010).
5 See also my preliminary study "O gebraizme MASH'AKH «Messias» v Palee Tolkovoi", Vestnik Literaturnogo instituta im. A.M. Gor'kogo, no. 1 (Moscow, 2012 = Hermeneumata: Sbornik nauchnykh trudov k 60-letiiu Prof. A.M. Kamchatnov), pp. 15-22. Unfortunately, in the article I omitted mention of some corresponding forms of the Florilegium. I wish to thank Prof. Aleksii A. Gippius for drawing my attention to this text and for his helpful advice.
6 See his A Grin without a Cat, v. i: Adversus Judaecos texts in the literature of medieval Russia (988-1504) (Lund, 2002) and 'Whereby we know that it is the last time': Musings on Anti-Messiahs and Anti-christs in a Ruthenial Textual Community (Lund, 2006).
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"Some phonetic details may be interpreted as pointing towards a South Slavonic origin, such as «асты» pro «есты»; the treatment of \( j + j \) (long form of the past p.a., sg. n. «явлен сла» pro Е<ast> Sl<avonic> «явлен сла») (Q.p.i.18 fol. 183v), etc.\(^7\)

This footnote is the only linguistic evidence Pereswetoff-Morath drew in order to argue for the Addresses' South Slavic origin. The forms \( асту \) and \( явлйн сла \) are, however, common variants in the East Slavic redaction of Church Slavonic along with the forms \( ести \) and \( явлйн сла \). Pereswetoff-Morath does not take into account the orthographic variety of Old Russian texts. Moreover, he tends to ignore the numerous, not only orthographic, but also morphological and lexical Russianisms found in the Addresses.

Pereswetoff-Morath unaccountably believes that the Addresses are a "no doubt South Slavonic translation of untraced Greek original,"\(^8\) even though he has expressed a more reasonable opinion earlier:

"The Addresses to a Jew on the Incarnation of the Son of God is probably a translation of an as yet untraced Greek disputation. Although we cannot know this for sure we should consider that the work belongs to a tradition common in Byzantium, whereas no Slavonic speciment is testified to this early with the sole exception of the much more rudimental, newly-identified Prênija [The Philosopher's Disputation with the Jew — A.G.]. The fact that it conforms neatly to the general rules of the Byzantine tradition and its use of standard arguments would be improbable had not the author been familiar with the tradition and its texts. An early East Slavonic translation is intrinsically improbable, and the work, if a translation, should be presumed to be Balkan."\(^9\)

What Byzantine tradition does Pereswetoff-Morath have in mind? With what Greek text can he compare the Addresses? Why does he suppose translation when no trace of the original is known?

Pereswetoff-Morath’s doubts as to the “intrinsically improbable” East Slavic provenance of the Addresses possibly originated from Francis J. Thomson’s views on the translation activity in Old Rus. Yet even as he doubts the Old Russian origin of an overwhelming majority of translations made from Greek into Old Slavonic, Thomson has never denied a possibility of East Slavonic compilations. Thus, for instance, he acknowledges the Old Russian origin of such compilations as the Palaea Interpretata, and Pereswetoff-Morath shares Thomson’s views.

The Old Russian provenance of the Florilegium was suggested by Anatolii A. Alekseev on the basis of the Florilegium’s use of East Slavic versions of certain biblical texts.\(^10\) Alekseev was not alone. Years before Alekseev found in the Florilegium fragments of Ecclesiastes with commentary, Nikolai K. Nikol’skii similarly discovered that the Florilegium also contains passages from the Slavonic—probably Old Russian—

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7 Alexander Pereswetoff-Morath, A Grin without a Cat, p. 139.
8 Alexander I. Pereswetoff-Morath, ‘Whereby we know that it is the last time’, p. 31.
9 Pereswetoff-Morath, A Grin without a Cat, pp. 138-139.
You can order the full version of the paper on the website: http://palaeoslavica.com/.
doubts that the East Slavic translator (or the compiler) of the Addresses used Mt 1:23 for the first part of his quotation. East Slavic rendering пада для соколов (cf. Church Slavonic equivalents падей, падаминие) corresponds with the Explanatory version of the Prophets, since the Liturgical version renders Greek соколов as "корьстъ."  

The relationship between Greek and Slavonic lexical systems did not have a one-to-one correspondence. The same text translated and then copied at different times on different soil by different bookmen could provide a Slavonic reader with a variety of synonyms. This was a result of the long duration of complex Slavonic translating activity. As a rule, however, each individual Slavonic bookman had a tendency to simplify his work and preferred to use one Slavonic word for a variety of Greek ones. I have found, however, an interesting (and very uncommon) situation in the Addresses where the author did precisely the opposite: he used a variety of Slavonic words in order to render one Greek word соколов (λέοντος) ‘lion’s whelp’ (Gen 49:9):

7. Judah’s nickname: цыплятъ львовъ [соколовъ львовъ] Иоу|да. ὁ λέωνας ἤμας ἵππος λοιπ. το | ὁ λέωνας ἤμας Ἰεολα. καθαρής ποσα ἢλκ ἢλκ [ὡς λέουν], ἤ ἢκο σκομμάνθη [ὡς σκύμνος] (190v17-20); καθαρής ποσα ἢλκ ἢλκ [ὡς λέουν], ἤ ἢκο λαβη/θεμπ [ὡς σκύμνος]. κτο καθαράτη ἢ (191v9-10).

Finally, it is worth mentioning one more source for the Addresses. The source is unidentified: it might be some secular chronicle, quite possibly some reworking of Josephus’ Jewish War, cf.:

8. On Herod the Great (192v10-13): Ἰορδαν, Ἀντιπατρος ὁ οὗ οἴρκανα, ὁ Ἀριστοκράτης. σομμίν. Ἡ προ παλαύ Ἰορδαν. ὁ Ὁντίμικεγκκο ρακμαντα Ἅργουστα (“Herod, Antipater’s son, killed Hyrcanus and Aristobulus who was from Jews. And Herod took power from Roman Caesar Augustus”). The name Ὁρκανάκ (Hyrcanus II) is attested in this spelling in the Old Russian translation of Josephus’ Jewish War (no later than the end of the twelfth century)  

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Pereswetoff-Morath’s proposition that the Addresses is a “no doubt South Slavonic translation of untraced Greek original” has been tested against data at our disposal. We have been able to show that:

(a) the Addresses do not seem to be a translation. It (1) uses the word мешика / мешинакъ which could not be borrowed via Greek but must be borrowed directly from Semitic; (2) uses passages from already existing Slavonic Bible translations; 3) uses various Slavonic synonyms to render single Greek lexemes; 4) uses the theologically impossible term оцина with respect to Son of God. Some of the text's quotations contain idiosyncratic readings that are likely the result of the author's citation from memory.

77 Ibid., p. 109.
78 I suggest an emendation соммин.
79 See Index to “Istorija Iudeiskoi voiny” Iosifa Flavii: Dreverusskii perevod, v. II (Moscow, 2004), pp. 440-441. Wątrobksa did not recognize Hyrcanus II in Ὁρκανακ and provided its name in Polish as Urkan instead of the correct Hirkan; cf. Słownik, p. 227.
Such a free treatment of a sacred text is characteristic of East Slavic compilers (e.g., the compiler of the *Palaea Interpretata*) and of chroniclers,⁸⁰

(b) the South Slavic provenance of the *Addresses* is doubtful: the text does not preserve any trace of specific South Slavic orthographical, morphological and/or lexical features; on the contrary, the text contains numerous orthographical and morphological features characteristic of texts created on East Slavic soil; in addition, I have been able to find a few lexemes attested only in East Slavic manuscripts;

(c) finally, Constantine-Cyril the Philosopher could not be the author of the *Addresses*, for the text contains some textual parallels with the Reading version of the *Octateuch* and the Explanatory version of *Prophets* which were translated in the tenth-eleventh centuries by bookmen of the Preslav literary school. Textual parallels of the *Addresses*, however, continue to require further thorough study.

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