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## Silk in the Slavonic Scriptures

Silk was known in Europe from antiquity, but there was no domestic production until the age of Justinian<sup>1</sup>: silk was imported from the East. Consequently, silk is designated in European languages by loan-words, neologisms or resemantisation – in Slavonic, **СВИЛА**, **СИРИКЪ**, **КОПРИНА**, **ШИКЪ** / **СИКЪ**, **ШЬЛИКЪ**, **ШИДА**, *hodváb*, etc. The present article examines the Slavonic words for 'silk' in the limited context of the Slavonic version of the Bible.

In Greek, the words for 'silk' reflected the sources from which it was obtained: Procopius, writing in the sixth century A.D., refers to "ἡ μέταξα [...] ἦν πάλαι μὲν Ἑλληνες μηδικὴν ἐκάλουσαν, τανῦν δὲ σηρικὴν ὀνομάζουσιν" (*De bello Persico*, 1.20). In other words, they first obtained it from the Persians, and designated it accordingly (μηδικόν); then, as their commercial activities extended further to the East, and they began to deal with silk-traders among the Seres, a people inhabiting the present-day Punjab (Cleminson 2021), they began to call it σηρικόν. It would appear, though, that by Procopius' time the basic designation was ἡ μέταξα. This is a loan-word. It is first attested in Latin in the second century B.C., before silk was known to the Romans (Marx 1904-1905, I: 81; II: 377), and survives in Italian (as *matassa*), meaning a ball or skein of wool (or indeed of anything else that can be wound up). This meaning already existed in antiquity: Isidore of Seville says "Mataxa quasi metaxa, a circuitu scilicet florum; nam meta circuitus"<sup>2</sup>. If something of this sense persisted in the Greek word, then the oldest Slavonic name for 'silk', **СВИЛА**, could be a calque of μέταξα in the same way as **СВИТОНЕ** is a calque of εἰλητόν (Afanasyeva forthcoming).

The first attested use of the word **СВИЛА** is by John the Exarch of Bulgaria in his *Bogslowie*, at the very end of the text, in a section relating to exempla of the resurrection

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<sup>1</sup> By 'silk', here and throughout, we mean the thread produced by the domesticated silkworm, the larva of *Bombyx mori*. Wild silks, produced by the larvae of other moths, were known in Europe much earlier – the *locus classicus* is Aristotle, *Historia animalium* 5.19.6, for an exposition of which see Forbes 1930 – but the two commodities were regarded as distinct from the earliest times.

<sup>2</sup> *Etymologies* 19.29.6. Though worthless as an etymology, this does indicate how the word was understood. Strictly speaking, a *meta* was one of the markers of the circuit, for example in the hippodrome, which had to be gone round. Since both silken cloth and silken thread were imported into the Graeco-Roman world, it may be surmised that the merchants distinguished the latter as ἡ (σηρικὴ) μέταξα, and that the word eventually acquired the meaning of silk as such.

(ПРИКЛАДИ ВО ВЪСТАНИИ) for which no Greek original is known (though it is manifestly a translation): in the oldest manuscript (Moscow, GIM, Syn. 108, f. 209v), СЪМОТРИ ЧРЪВИ ИЖЕ ИСЕБЕ СВИЛОУ ТОЧИТЬ. This manuscript was written at the end of the twelfth or beginning of the thirteenth century in the East Slavonic area, but it is probable that the word СВИЛА in such a context is a South Slavonicism, reflecting the earlier history of the text.

In the East Slavonic area only we find the word ШЬЛКЪ, which is a borrowing from Old Norse<sup>3</sup>. Its first attested use is probably in the *Canonical Responses* of John Prodrumus, written during his tenure of the metropolitan see of Kiev (1076/7-1089) and presumably translated into Slavonic immediately<sup>4</sup>. The thirty-third of these begins: ОНѢМЪЖЕ АЦЕ ПОДОБАЕТЬ ИЖЕ БОГУ ѠТЛУЧЕНЬЕ ИНѢРѢИЕМЪ ѠБЛАЧИТИСА В РИЗЫ РАЗЛИЧНЫА [*var. add:* и вѣ] ШЕЛКОВЪНА..., as the editors say, “место вообще весьма темное”. It is moreover unfortunate that the Greek text survives only in a very late and abbreviated form, in which this passage is not present, but Pavlov (1873: 20) points out a partial correspondence to the beginning of section 10 of the Greek: Καὶ τοὺς ἱερομένους δὲ σπουδάζειν ἱματίους ἐκ μετάξης, ἧ ἐκ λίνου εἰργασμένοις...<sup>5</sup>

The presence of the word ШЬЛКОВЪ is part of the evidence for an East Slavonic origin for the *Ausgangstext* of the Slavonic Book of Esther, which was “made most probably by a scribe in the western East Slavic lands in the mid-1300s” (Lunt, Taube 1998: 7). It occurs twice, at 1.6, ВОБРЪМЪ И ОУТРИНЪМЪ И ЧРЪВЕМЪ СНИМАНЪНЪ ВЪРЪВМИ ШЬЛКОВЫМИ, И ЛЕПТУГЪ НА ГЛАВАХЪ СРЕБРЕНЫХЪ, and 8.15, where there is something of a reprise of the vocabulary of the former verse, и МАРДЪХАИ ВЫИДЕ Ѡ ЛИЦА ЦАРЕВА ВЪ СВИТѢ ЦАРСТВИ И ВЪ ЧРЪВИ И ВЪ ОУТРИНѢ, И ВѢНЬЦЪ ЗЛАТЪ ВЕЛИКЪ [НА ГЛАВѢ ЕГО], И ОУШВЪВЪ ШЬЛКОВЪ ЛЕПТУЖЪНЪ<sup>6</sup>. The earlier history of this text is highly problematic. It is uncertain when and where it was originally translated, or even from what language: whether from a lost Greek intermediary (Altbauer, Taube 1984) or directly from Hebrew (Lysén 2001). The question remains open (Pereswetoff-Morath 2002: 71-79), but further arguments in support of a Greek intermediary have been advanced by Kulik (2008: 58-62). If the original was Hebrew, the word here translated as ШЬЛКОВЪ was *buts* (בִּטּוּס), and if Greek, βύσσινος, neither of which means ‘silk’, but rather ‘fine linen’.

<sup>3</sup> Vasmer 1987, IV:423-424. The unfounded conjecture found in some older etymological dictionaries of the Scandinavian languages that the Norse word is a borrowing from Slavonic has evidently been abandoned in more recent scholarship. Whereas *s* > *š* in Slavonic borrowings from Old Norse is well attested (Sobolevskij 1910: 186-187), *š* > *s* in Nordic borrowings from Slavonic is improbable.

<sup>4</sup> Edited in Pavlov 1880: 1-20; the base text is from GIM, Čud. 4 (*Varsonof'evskaja kormčaja*), written at the end of the fourteenth century.

<sup>5</sup> Pavlov 1873: 11. The gist of both passages is the same: that priests must wear the prescribed clothing when performing their priestly duties, but at other times some latitude is permitted in accordance with the customs of the country.

<sup>6</sup> As edited in Lunt, Taube 1998: 24, 46.

The Greek word βύσσος (and the corresponding adjective βύσσινος) is used in the Septuagint to translate not only *buts*, but also *bad* (בד; but this may also be translated as λίνον or left untranslated) and *shesh* (שׁשׁ; particularly frequent in the book of Exodus). All of these words refer to linen of high quality, and this is the correct meaning of βύσσος, which is a Semitic loan-word in Greek. The word itself is well established<sup>7</sup>, but its precise meaning does not seem to have been widely familiar in the Greek-speaking world: it appears to have suggested the quality of the fabric rather than its material<sup>8</sup>. This leads to a confusion with the other luxury fabric of ancient and mediaeval Europe, silk. This confusion, which is endemic to the entire continent, is seen even in the Vulgate, where the distribution of *bys-sus/byssinus* (allowing for the occasional divergences between the texts) is almost the same as in the Septuagint: but at Esther 8.15 the word is *sericum*. Up to early modern times “the word was to English writers often a mere name to which they attached no certain meaning, except that of fineness and value” (*OED*, s.v. *byss*<sup>1</sup>). In Slavonic, βύσσος is translated as БУССЪ or БУССОНЪ, suggesting that it was not identified with any known material; evidence of the same confusion is found in East Slavonic where БУССЪ is glossed as ШИДА (Sreznevskij 1893-1912: 1592-1593), another word for ‘silk’, borrowed from German or Swedish<sup>9</sup>.

The only place in the Bible where silk really is mentioned is in the Apocalypse (18.12). The early history of this book in Slavonic is almost as obscure as that of the Book of Esther. The earliest manuscripts (*NI* and possibly *Rum*) date from the fourteenth century; the vast majority are East Slavonic<sup>10</sup>. All either contain the commentary of Andrew of Caesarea or show signs of being descended from manuscripts which contained it. Obviously the commentated text is not Methodian (since in translating the whole Bible one would not translate a commentary for one book only), but it is uncertain whether it represents an independent, later translation, or the translation by Methodius (which, on the testimony of the *Vita Methodii*, must be assumed to have existed) to which commentary was subsequently added; in the latter case some revision to the text would typically have taken place at the same time.

The relevant passage<sup>11</sup>, as written in an early manuscript, *Rum*, which has often been taken as typical of that redaction found in most Slavonic manuscripts of the Apocalypse (the ‘majority text’) reads:

<sup>7</sup> The adjective βύσσινος is found in the tragedians and in Herodotus.

<sup>8</sup> The modern application of the word *bys-sus* to the threads produced by the mollusc *Pinna nobilis* may be seen as the culmination of this semantic process; they were not so named in antiquity (see Jaroszyński, Kotłowska 2013).

<sup>9</sup> Similarly, ШЬЛКОВЪ in the Slavonic Esther may suggest an underlying βύσσινος, and thus a Greek original.

<sup>10</sup> For the purposes of this article we shall disregard the later manuscripts (after c. 1500), and also the cycles of illustrations which they contain.

<sup>11</sup> The sections are those of the commentated manuscripts, and may be numbered 229-230 or 227-228 in the Slavonic tradition. They do not correspond exactly to the modern division into chap-

сѣдъ И купци земьстни възрзидають и въз | сплациють са о неи. тако времени и | хъ ниство-  
же купцють ктому. вре | мени златна и сребрена. и камен | ѣа драга. и бисера. и вусаа.  
и перфирзи. | и шика · и червлени. (P) Иже в си | лѣ и въз пици тлѣють. излиха кестъ |  
вси хъ купла и имѣние : | ѣа И всакого дрѣва финьна. и всакого | сѣсуда слонова. и  
всакого сѣсуда | ѿ камени. и мѣдана и желѣзна | и мрамора. и корица. и амона. и |  
фгмиана. и мурд и ливана. и ви | на и волѣа. и сѣмени. и пшеница | и ксота и ввель.

The corresponding Greek text reads:

καὶ οἱ ἔμποροι τῆς γῆς κλαύσουσι καὶ πενθήσουσιν ἐπ’ αὐτῇ, ὅτι τὸν γόμον αὐτῶν οὐδεὶς ἀγοράζει οὐκέτι, γόμον χρυσοῦ καὶ ἀργύρου καὶ λίθου τιμίου καὶ μαργαρίτου καὶ βύσσου καὶ πορφύρας καὶ σηρικῆς καὶ κοκκίνου. Τῶν γὰρ ἐν δυναστείᾳ καὶ τρυφῇ φθειρομένων περιττῇ ἢ τούτων ὠνῇ καὶ κατάχρησις, καὶ πᾶν ξύλον θύϊνον καὶ πᾶν σκεῦος ἐλεφάντινον καὶ πᾶν σκεῦος ἐκ λίθου τιμιωτάτου καὶ χαλκοῦ καὶ σιδήρου καὶ μαρμάρου, καὶ κινάμωμον καὶ ἄμωμον καὶ θυμιάματα καὶ μύρον καὶ λίβανον καὶ οἶνον καὶ ἔλαιον καὶ σεμίδαλιν καὶ σίτον καὶ κτήνη καὶ πρόβατα<sup>12</sup>.

There are a number of variants in the Slavonic version of this passage that allow the manuscripts to be grouped – not something that one would normally do on the basis of such a small portion of text, but since the results agree with those of more comprehensive text-critical studies of the book (Alekseev, Lichačeva 1987; Grünberg 1996; Trifonova 2016) they may be taken as valid. In the majority text (corresponding to Grünberg’s families *d* and *e*, which do not differ at this point; for the purposes of the present study, *NI RogII Rum TSL6 TSL120 TSL121 TSL122 Vol*)<sup>13</sup> σηρικῆς is translated, not with any of the known Slavonic words for ‘silk’, but by a *hapax legomenon*. Along with сѣмене дѣла (сѣмене *RogII Rum TSL122*), it is one of the distinctive readings of this text-type, presenting in two forms, шика *Rum TSL120 TSL121 TSL122* and сика *NI TSL6 Vol*).

This may be compared with the text of the Bosnian group of manuscripts (family *a*), the closest of the other types to the majority text and, though without commentary, long recognised as having been extrapolated from the commentated text:

И кѣпци земьлни възрзидають и възплачѣть се о неи, тако време и хъ ниствоже не кѣпитъ къ тому. време злата и сребрна и каменѣ драгаго и бисера и висона и

ters and verses, in the present case including verses 11 and 12 and most of verse 13 of the eighteenth chapter. Here and elsewhere diacritics are not reproduced.

<sup>12</sup> Schmid 1955-1956: I, 197. The reading κλαύσουσι καὶ πενθήσουσιν ἐπ’ αὐτῇ, which underlies the Slavonic, is from the variants in the apparatus, as is λίθου: Schmid’s paradosis reads κλαίουσι καὶ πενθοῦσιν ἐφ’ ἑαυτοῦς and ξύλου respectively. The reading σηρικῆς of many modern editions stems from Westcott and Hort’s editorial preference for ‘unclassical’ spellings (Westcott, Hort 1882: introduction, 302-308, appendix, 151), which in the present instance is, to say the least, arbitrary.

<sup>13</sup> The reader should bear in mind that this article was written in time of pestilence, so that access to sources, both primary and secondary, has been limited.

поръфиры и сирика и чрвлениѣ и всакаго дрѣва тинова и всакаго сьсѣда слонова и всакаго сьсѣда ѿ каменнѣ драга и мѣдена и желѣзна. и корице и дмона и тьмиѣна и хризми и ливана и вина и олѣѣ и семидала и пшенице и скота и овецъ.

Here we find that the word, like some of the other obscurer commodities in this list, remains untranslated. This is also true of another significant group of Russian manuscripts (family *b*, which besides *Q*, the text of which is given here, also includes *Čud TSL710 Und*):

[mg.: сѣз] И коупци земнии вздрьдають | и всплачють по неи. ꙗко бре|мени ихъ никтоже коупоу | етъ не еше времени злата и | сребра. и камени драгаго и | бисера и виса. и перфиры и | сирика и чрвлени. — сѣи. | И всакого дрѣва виннаго. и вса|кого соуда слонова. и всако|го соуда ѿ дрѣва драгаго и мѣ|дана и желѣзна и мраморна | и киннамому и финидама | и моура и ливана. и олѣа. и | семидала. и пшеница. и о|вецъ. и скота.

*Q* is unusual in that the commentary is given separately (on ff. 41v-125) from the text (on ff. 1v-39), but paragraphs are numbered in each, so that the two can be correlated. This is evidently the first step in the extrapolation of the biblical text from the commentated version. The other manuscripts in this group have no commentary. Some of the variants (ѿ дрѣва драгаго, omission of и дмона and и вина, and transposed ОВЕЦЬ и СКОТА) also occur in the Greek tradition, and indicate (as does the hyperliteral не еше, οὐκ ἔτι) that the text of this group has been heavily revised against a Greek text that differed from the original *Vorlage*; it is not, however, an independent translation (Grünberg 1996: 66-71). It has been suggested that the revision was a very early one (Aleksiev, Lichačeva 1987: 14 – “напоминает редактуру [...] проведенную в Болгарии в X в.”), in which case the reading сирика here and in *Bosn* is evidently primary, continuing the text as it was before the appearance of the distinctive variants of the archetype of the majority text (a corollary of this is that the *Čudov* New Testament is not a single translation, and the Apocalypse therein has a different origin from the Gospels and the Apostolos)<sup>14</sup>.

There is some mixing between this text-type and the majority text. *TSL119* is a majority-text manuscript that has been corrected against a text of the *Q* type; *MDA27* again contains basically the majority text, but with the *Q* readings сири | ка, виннаго and семидала; *VMČ* and the closely related *TSL83* have double readings such as корица. и кинидамомѣ. This suggests that the corrector of *TSL119* and the scribe of *MDA27*, at least, regarded the *Q* text as superior.

A further group which evidently arose comparatively early is that represented by *RogI* and *Sol* (both with commentary: family *c*). The manuscripts are Russian, but a South Slavonic origin for the group is implied both by the spellings тѹинна and темьѣна, and by its affinity with *Vid*, which shares some distinctive readings. *Vid* is the only one of the

<sup>14</sup> Grünberg regards *Čud* as the manuscript furthest from the archetype of family *b* (Grünberg 1998: xiv).

‘northern’ group of glagolitic breviaries that contains the relevant passage (Jurić-Kappel 2004: 185). Although compiled on a Latin model, these breviaries used existing Slavonic translations from Greek where available, with hardly any revision; the ‘southern’ group, by contrast, were revised (progressively) against the Latin text (Stankovska 2006: 211-212). That the same translation in different redactions appears in *Vid* and in the cyrillic Apocalypses is further evidence for its antiquity. The passage in *Rogi* and *Vid* reads:

Купци земни възъзрѣдають. и възъсплачють са ѿ неѣ | тако и брѣмѣ ихъ | никтоже не купуѣ | естъ ктому. брѣмѣ ни злата и сребре | на и каменѣа | драга и бисера и ву | са. и порфурѣ. и су | рѣка. и чрвѣнѣна ∷ | сѣказъ ∷ | Иже в силѣ и пици и | тлѣють. излиха | естъ всѣхъ купъ | ли и имѣнѣ ∷ | И всего дрѣва тунѣна. | и всего ссуда слоно | ва. и всего ссуда ѿ | каменѣа драга. и | мѣдана и желѣзъ | на и мраморѣна. | и скорѣца. и амолъ || и темѣана и кри | жмы. и ливана и | вина олѣна ∷ и сѣми | далѣни. и пшеници | и ѿвѣць ∷

I kupci zemaľsci vzridaũt' i vsplačut se o nem' êko brêmene ih' niktože ne kupuet' k tomu. brêmene zlata i srebra i kameniê dragago. i bisera i visina. i por'pori i sirika i čr'vlēna. i vsъkogo drêva tain'na i vsъkogo slonova. i vъkogo sъsuda do kamene draga. i mēdena i želēzna i skorice i amom'. i tьm'ēna i krizmu i livana i vina. i masla. i semidala. i pšenice skota i ovьs'.

The reading *сурѣка* is an error, for *сѣриксъ* is minium (Pb<sub>3</sub>O<sub>4</sub>), perhaps more likely to be part of a scribe's vocabulary than *сѣриксъ*, and a plausible item of Babylonian trade, so not necessarily a reflexion of the *συρικὸν* found in some Greek manuscripts. (It is also found in the majority-text *Rogii*, either spontaneously or by contamination.) The confusion had been prevalent since ancient times: “Aliud est autem sericum, aliud syricum. Nam sericum lana est quam Seres mittunt; syricum vero pigmentum quod Syrii Phoenices in Rubri maris litoribus colligunt” (Isidore of Seville, *Etymologies* 19.17.6). Perhaps more interesting is the reading *крижмы* / *krizmu* (similarly *хризми* *Bosn*). This is the regular translation of *μύρον* in the glagolitic tradition (Šafařík 1858: 35), occurring only sporadically in cyrillic manuscripts, which usually have *μυρο*. More extensive study would be required to determine whether this represents a survival from a very early state of the text or is the result of an interpenetration of traditions in the Western Balkans.

In favour of the latter hypothesis are the similar affinities visible between the un-commentated ‘calendrical redaction’ of the Slavonic Apocalypse, here represented by *Drag*<sup>15</sup>, and *2Ber*:

И коупци | земнѣи възплачѣтса ѿ неѣ. тако еже | носимъ нѣ ктомуъ коупѣж. еже но | сѣ злато и сребро. и каменѣе драго и би | сер. и висъ и багрѣвницѣ. и сѣриксъ. | и кокино. и възсѣво дрѣво лѣпо. и вѣ | сѣсѣ красна дрѣва. и мѣ и желѣзо. и | мармарѣ. и куминь. и димѣань. и | мурѣ. и ливанѣ и вина. и слѣд. и сми | далѣ. и пшеницѣ и ѿвѣца и сѣвѣтъ.

<sup>15</sup> Four other manuscripts of this group are listed by Ivanova (2016: 494-495), to which should be added a fifth described by Iufu (1963: 456, № 18).

kupe'ci z(e)m(a)lni vsi | vsplačutъ o nei êk(o) eže ni|samъ nestъ kto kupe zla|to ili srebro kamenie drago. | i biser' suk'ne bagrenice i s|uk' i kokin' i vsakoe drevo kr|as'noe. medъ i železo mram|or' i kumiêmъ i tьm'êнь muro | i livanъ vino i olêi smid|alъ i pšenice skotъ

Both have a defective text (*zBer* with a more serious lacuna), with shared omissions, and both have lexical changes, in one case introducing a Greek word (conceivably via Latin, cfr. *kokcina*, 1493), elsewhere apparently updating the vocabulary in line with changing norms (ЕЖЕ НОСИМЪ, suk'ne, БАГРЪНИЦЪ). The latter phenomenon is typical of the development of the glagolitic text, and is taken further (though not on the basis of the text represented by *zBer*) in *Mosk* and 1493, for example *masti* for *muro* and *melkie muki* for *smidalъ*.

It appears, therefore, that the prototype of the Slavonic version of the Apocalypse did not translate the word for 'silk', but retained the Greek word, along with others in this list for wares unfamiliar to the Slavs. Either Methodius could find no Slavonic word for it in Moravia, or a later generation did not recognise the obsolete σηρικόν as a synonym for μέταξα. Nor did copyists realise that СИРИКЪ was the same as СВИЛА or ШЬЛКЪ. The word was not in their active vocabulary, and was thus easily distorted to СИКЪ (by simple omission – cfr. *сѣтъ* [*suk'*] *zBer*), and thence to ШИКЪ. The latter change is due to the neutralisation of /s/ and /š/ in Old Pskov dialects (Zaliznjak 2004: 52, Sobolevskij 1884: 118-143, 149-150)<sup>16</sup>. Its persistence in manuscripts otherwise free of this feature is explained by the fact that scribes copying from such an exemplar could normally correct from their knowledge of the norm – except for a word that occurred nowhere else. Its meaning remained mysterious to readers and copyists of the Slavonic Apocalypse; it is only late in the transmission of the glagolitic version, in 1493, that it is replaced by a contemporary word with the correct meaning: *dubalja*.

There is one partial exception to this, in the oldest Serbian manuscript, *H474*, without commentary but descended from a commentated protograph:

И коупци | зем[л]ни възрыдають и възплачуютсе w ни. ѣко брѣ|мене ихъ никтоже кстоу коупитъ. брѣмене златна | и сребрна. и каменна драгдаго. и бысера. и вусса · и по|рфиры. и чръвалена и жьлта. и всакого дрѣва финна. | и всакого съсуда слонива · и всакого съсуда ѿ каменѣа | и мѣдна. и желѣзна. и мрамора. корыце. и алмѣна | и фумѣна. и мѣра. вина и масла. смидала и пше|нице. и скота и вѣць ·

This is notable for the East Slavonic spellings финна and фумѣна (against which, however, compare on f. 366v ТИДѢР|СКЫЕ 2:18; the remaining spellings are “neutral”, e.g. дѢДТИРѢ 2:24, думѣна 8:3, 4), which suggest that the “македонизми” (i.e. *o < ъ*, *e < ъ*, Grković-Major 2000: 314) might actually be East Slavonic forms too, and raise the

<sup>16</sup> Oller (1993: 579) identifies СИКЪ as a South Slavonic form, but this is due to a misunderstanding. Sobolevskij, whom he cites, does indeed include it in a list of “типичные южнославяннизмы” (Sobolevskij 1910: 184), but this is in the context of the Hilandar Typicon, where silk is not mentioned: it is the pronoun *сикъ* that is meant.

possibility that this redaction belongs to the body of East Slavonic texts copied in fourteenth-century Serbia (Miklas 1988). The translation of κοκκίνου as ЖЪТЪ is inexplicable. It cannot simply be that, ΥΡΒΛΙΕΝΑ having already been used, another colour was required, for at 18:16, where there is no such motivation, περιβεβλημένη βύσσινον καὶ πορφυροῦν καὶ κόκκινον becomes УБЛЪЧЕНІИ ВЪ ПОРФІРОУ || И ВУССОНЪ И ВЪ ЖЪТЪАІА (however, on f. 375, at 17:3, 4 we find the expected ΥΡΒΛΙΕΝЪ).

And why is σηρικῶν translated as ΥΡΒΛΙΕΝΑ? This at least is not wholly isolated. Silk is not often mentioned in the earliest Slavonic texts, but there are two passages of Byzantine canon law which refer to it and which were translated very early. These are Canon 45 of the Council in Trullo and Canon 16 of the Second Council of Nicaea. Both are quoted in the *Sylloge of XIV Titles*, which was translated in the First Bulgarian Kingdom (Naydenova 2005-2006: 240 and the literature cited there) and is represented in the oldest Slavonic legal text, the *Efremovskaja Kormčaja* (GIM, Syn. 227). The latter is also quoted in chapter 37 of the *Pandects* of Nikon of the Black Mount, of which there were two translations, the first made in the eleventh/twelfth century and the second, of which there is also a 'Euthymian' redaction, in the thirteenth/fourteenth (Bogdanova, Lukanova 2009: 358)<sup>17</sup>. It also mentions silk in chapter 23, in what is evidently Nikon's own text. The origin of the first translation is a matter of unresolved debate, but it is undisputed that the earliest witnesses belong to an East Slavonic recension; among the evidence cited for this is the lexeme ШЪЛКЪ in ch. 23 (Sreznevskij 1874: 296)<sup>18</sup>. The relevant phrases<sup>19</sup> are:

- Trull. 45      σηρικαῖς καὶ ἑτέραις παντοίαις στολαῖς  
 ВЪ ΥΡΒΛΙΕΝΑХЪ И ИНѢХЪ ВСАУБСКЪИИХЪ РИΖΑХЪ
- II Nic. 16      οὐδὲ ἐκ σηρικῶν ὑφασμάτων πεποικιλμένην ἐσθήτα ἐνεδέδυτό τις  
 ИИ Ѡ ΥΡΒΛΙΕΝΑΔΑГО СВИЛНИА ПОПЪСТРЕНОЮ РИΖОЮ ДА НЕ ОДЪВАЮТЪ СЯ КЪТО  
 (= Pand. 37)    ИИ Ѡ СВИЛНА ТКАНЫА ОБЛАЧАШЕ СЯ КЪТО
- Pand. 23      εἶτε ἀργυροῦν, ἢ χρυσοῦν, ἢ ἐν σηρικοῖς ὑφάσμασι κατασκευασμένον  
 ЛИ СРЪВРЪЗМЪ ЛИ ЗЛАТЪЗМЪ СЪ ШЕЛКЪЗМЪ<sup>20</sup> ТЪКАНОІЕ ОУСТРОІЕНО

Elsewhere the old confusion of fabrics recurs, for βύσσος too is sporadically translated as ΥΡΒΕΝΑ/ΥΡΒΕΝИЦА in early texts (Jagić 1913: 305). The reading of H474 is thus not a chance aberration, but a regular, if uncommon, rendering of σηρικός. The clue to the mys-

<sup>17</sup> The second translation need not be considered here, as it consistently reads сурьскъ, implying that the original read (or was read as) συρικός.

<sup>18</sup> Sreznevskij also finds the word in ch. 49, quoting St John Chrysostom's Homily 72 on Matthew, but here it appears to translate κρόκη. At this point the Euthymian redaction reads СВИЛЪНЪ.

<sup>19</sup> Quoted from Benešević 1906: 175, 222 and Maksimovič 1998: 217, 308.

<sup>20</sup> The Serbian manuscripts RNB, F.п.І.121 and Q.п.І.27 read висерѡмъ, but the readings of the Serbian redaction are generally inferior (Pičhadze 2006: 60).

tery is probably to be found in II Nic. 16: a scribe unacquainted with the origin of silk could easily copy \*УРЪВИНА СВИЛА as УРЪВЕНА СВИЛА, thus inadvertently creating a new synonym.

It appears from the above that for the translators, copyists and readers of the Slavonic Bible there was a general lack of comprehension where silk was concerned. In the book of Esther, and in glosses elsewhere, we observe a confusion with βύσσοϛ / ВУССЪ / ВУССОНЪ that extends beyond the Slavonic Scriptures and indeed far beyond the Slavonic cultural sphere. In the Apocalypse silk is equally unrecognised. For the Slavonic translators the word presented a problem either in understanding the sources or in finding an adequate translation. The Greek word was thus left untranslated, as СИРИКЪ, and as such it does not seem to have conveyed very much to the reader, particularly at its one scriptural occurrence in a list including a number of obscure and untranslatable commodities. This left it open to textual corruption, and indeed it is the corrupt form ШИКА that is found in the majority of manuscripts. Though only the most highly educated readers could have had any idea of what it meant, it proved highly resilient, persisting in the Ostrog Bible and in the 1663 Moscow edition; only in the Elizabethan Bible of 1751 does the vernacular (but comprehensible) ШЕЛКА finally triumph.

### Literature

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*H474* was consulted in a digital copy supplied by the Hilandar Research Library at The Ohio State University by kind permission of the monks of the holy Monastery of Hilandar. *Drag* was consulted in a digital copy kindly provided by Professor Anissava Miltenova. Otherwise, where no edition is indicated, the manuscripts were consulted online at the websites of their respective libraries. The point in the source where the relevant passage occurs is indicated in each case.

<i>Bosn</i>	Reconstructed archetype in Grünberg 1999: 128, 130
<i>Čud</i>	Čudov NT, f. 156v (edited in Leontij 1892)
<i>Drag</i>	Dragomirna, MS 1828, f.73v
<i>H474</i>	Hilandar, MS 474, f. 376
<i>MDA27</i>	RGB, f. 173/I (sobr. MDA), № 27, f. 393
<i>Mosk</i>	RGB, f. 270/II (sobr. P.I. Sevast'janova), № 51a, f. 132a-b
<i>NI</i>	BAN, Nikol'sk. 1, f. 82 (edited in Oller 1993: 235)
<i>Q</i>	RNB, Q.п.1.6, f. 30
<i>RogI</i>	RGB, f. 247 (sobr. Rogožskogo kladbišča), № 1, f. 127c-d
<i>RogII</i>	RGB, f. 247 (sobr. Rogožskogo kladbišča), № 11, ff. 111v–112
<i>Rum</i>	RGB, f. 256 (sobr. gr. Rumjanceva), № 8, f. 75v

<i>Sol</i>	RNB, Sol. 1049/1158, f. 68
<i>TSL6</i>	RGB, f. 304/1 (sobr. Troice-Sergievoj Lavry), № 6, f. 87
<i>TSL83</i>	RGB, f. 304/1 (sobr. Troice-Sergievoj Lavry), № 83, f. 41v
<i>TSL119</i>	RGB, f. 304/1 (sobr. Troice-Sergievoj Lavry), № 119, f. 63c
<i>TSL120</i>	RGB, f. 304/1 (sobr. Troice-Sergievoj Lavry), № 120, f. 57v
<i>TSL121</i>	RGB, f. 304/1 (sobr. Troice-Sergievoj Lavry), № 121, f. 64v
<i>TSL122</i>	RGB, f. 304/1 (sobr. Troice-Sergievoj Lavry), № 122, f. 82v
<i>TSL710</i>	RGB, f. 304/1 (sobr. Troice-Sergievoj Lavry), № 710, f. 164
<i>Und</i>	RGB, f. 310 (sobr. Undol'skogo), № 1, f. 439
<i>Vid</i>	ÖNB, Cod. slav. 3 ( <i>Brevijar Vida Omišljanina</i> , 1396, edited in Berčić 1866: 131)
<i>VMČ</i>	<i>Velikie Minei Četii, sobrannye userossijskim mitropolitom Makariem: sentjabr', dni 25-30</i> , Sankt-Peterburg 1883, col. 1770
<i>Vol</i>	RGB, f. 113 (sobr. Iosifo-Volockogo monastyrja), № 641, f. 103
<i>1493</i>	Blaž Baromić, <i>Breviary</i> , 1493, f. 217b-c
<i>2Ber</i>	Ljubljana, Narodne in univerzitetne knjižnice, MS 163, f. 178c (from the facsimile edition: Mihaljević 2018)

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### *Abstract*

Ralph Cleminson  
*Silk in the Slavonic Scriptures*

Silk, as an imported commodity in Europe, is designated either by loan-words or neologisms in European languages. There are several of these in Slavonic languages, notably *свила* in South Slavonic and *шѣлкѣ* in East Slavonic. The use of the latter on two occasions in the Slavonic Book of Esther is part of the evidence for the East Slavonic origin of the *Ausgangstext* of this book. However, the word that it renders, either *לָבַן* or *βύσσος*, does not mean 'silk', but 'linen' (although confusion between *βύσσος* and silk appears to be endemic throughout mediaeval Europe). On the one occasion on which silk really is mentioned in the Bible (Revelation 18:12), none of the established Slavonic words for silk is used, but, in most manuscripts, the *hapaχ legomenon* *шикѣ* or *сикѣ*, evidently a corruption of *сирикѣ* for *σηρικόν*, left untranslated. The occasional substitution of *чръвлень* further complicates the picture of how the word was, or was not, understood.

### *Keywords*

Silk; Church Slavonic; Book of Esther; Revelation.