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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 Justinian¹: silk was imported from the East. Consequently, silk is designated in European languages by loan-words, neologisms or resemanticisation – in Slavonic, *свилда*, *сирикъ*, *коприна*, *шникъ* / *сикъ*, *шълкъ*, *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 Ἐλληνες μηδικὴν ἐκάλουν, ταῦν δὲ σηρικὴν ὄνομάζουσιν” (*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 filorum; nam meta circuitus”². If something of this sense persisted in the Greek word, then the oldest Slavonic name for 'silk', *свилда*, could be a calque of *μέταξα* in the same way as *свиртъ* is a calque of *εἰλητόν* (Afanasyeva forthcoming).

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

¹ 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.

² *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 въстани) for which no Greek original is known (though it is manifestly a translation): in the oldest manuscript (Moscow, GIM, Syn. 108, f. 209v), **съмотри ѿрви иже исеве свилоу тогитъ**. 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 **шълкъ**, which is a borrowing from Old Norse³. Its first attested use is probably in the *Canonical Responses* of John Prodromus, written during his tenure of the metropolitan see of Kiev (1076/7-1089) and presumably translated into Slavonic immediately⁴. The thirty-third of these begins: **Онѣмъже дѣце подобаетъ иже єогу ѿглѹченъе иерѣїемъ ѿблѹгтица в ризы разлиѹниꙗ [var. add: и въ] шелковыꙗ...**, 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 ἴματίοις ἐκ μετάξης, ἢ ἐκ λίνου εἰργασμένοις...**⁵

The presence of the word **шълковъ** 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, **бояръмъ и оутринъмъ и ѿрвемъ сниманънъ вървьми шълковыми, и лептугъ на глацахъ сребреныхъ**, and 8.15, where there is something of a reprise of the vocabulary of the former verse, **и мардъханъ въинидѣ ѿ лица царева въ свитѣ царстви и въ ѿрви и въ оутринѣ, и вѣньцы златъ велики [на глаца его], и оушъвъ шълковъ лептужънъ**. 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 **шълковъ** was *buts* (גּוֹבֵ), and if Greek, **βύστινος**, neither of which means ‘silk’ but rather ‘fine linen’.

³ 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.

⁴ 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.

⁵ 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.

⁶ As edited in Lunt, Taube 1998: 24, 46.

The Greek word βύσσος (and the corresponding adjective βύστινος) is used in the Septuagint to translate not only *buts*, but also *bad* (τὰ; but this may also be translated as λίνον or left untranslated) and *shesh* (ψῆ; 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 established⁷, 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 material⁸. 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*¹). In Slavonic, βύσσος is translated as висъ or висонъ, suggesting that it was not identified with any known material; evidence of the same confusion is found in East Slavonic where висъ is glossed as шида (Sreznevskij 1893–1912: 1592–1593), another word for ‘silk’, borrowed from German or Swedish⁹.

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 (*Nr* and possibly *Rum*) date from the fourteenth century; the vast majority are East Slavonic¹⁰. 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 passage¹¹, 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:

⁷ The adjective βύστινος is found in the tragedians and in Herodotus.

⁸ 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).

⁹ Similarly, шылкоъ in the Slavonic Esther may suggest an underlying βύστινος, and thus a Greek original.

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

¹¹ 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-

сі́д. И купци земьстии възгрѣдають и въ | сплачуютъ са о hei. яко бремени и | хъ никто-
же купуетъ ктому. бре | мени златна и сребрена. и камен | ыя драга. и бисера. и вусса.
и перфиры. | и шика · и червленни. ^(T) Иже в си | лѣ и въ пици таѣютъ. излиха есть |
всихъ купла и имѣние :: | єл И всакого дрѣва фињна. и всакого | съсуда слонова. и
всакого съсуда | єл камени. и мѣдана и жалѣзна | и мрамора. и корица. и амона. и |
фумиана. и мурда и ливана. и ви | на и влѣка. и сѣменни. и пшеница | и скота и ввець.

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 βύσου καὶ πορφύρας καὶ στηρικοῦ καὶ κοκκίνου. Τῶν γὰρ ἐν δυναστείᾳ καὶ τρυφῇ φειρομένων περιττὴ ἡ τούτων ὥντη καὶ κατάχρησις, καὶ πᾶν ξύλον θύηνον 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 σῖτον καὶ κτήνη καὶ πρόβατα¹².

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, *N1 Rogii Rum TSL6 TSL120 TSL121 TSL122 Vol*)¹³ στηρικοῦ 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* *N1 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 кѣпьци земльни възридають и въсплачуть се о hei, щико брѣмене ихъ никътоже не
кѣпитъ къ томѣ. брѣмене злата и съребрна и каменихъ драгаго и бисъра 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.

¹² 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’ ἑαυτούς and ξύλου respectively. The reading στηρικοῦ 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.

¹³ 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.

поръфири и сирика и ѹръвленїи въсакаго дрѣва тинова и въсакаго съсѣда слонова и въсакаго съсѣда ѩ камениї драга и мѣдена и жалѣзна. и корицѣ и амона и тѣмиꙗна и хризми и ливана и вина и олѣв и съмидала и пышенице и скота и овьць.

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 земни вѣдрѣдають | и вспадаютъ по нен. яко бре|мени ихъ никостоже коупоу| есть не еще времени златы и | сребра. и камени драгаго и | бисера и висса. и перфири и | сирика и ѹръвлении. — сѣи. | И всакого древа виннаго. и вса | кого съсѣда слонова. и всако|го съсѣда ѩ древа драгаго и мѣ|дана и жалѣзна и мраморна | и киннамомоу и финнамама | и моуря и ливана. и олѣвя. и | съмидала. и пышеница. и О|вець. и скота.

Q is unusual in that the commentary is given separately (on ff. 41v-125) from the text (on ff. 4v-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 (ѩ Древа драгаго, omission of и амона and и вина, and transposed Овѣць и скота) also occur in the Greek tradition, and indicate (as does the hyperliteral не еще, оук єт) 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 (Alekseev, 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)¹⁴.

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 съмидала; *VMČ* and the closely related *TSL83* have double readings such as корица. и киннамомъ. 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 *Rogr* 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 түинна and тѣмыана, and by its affinity with *Vid*, which shares some distinctive readings. *Vid* is the only one of the

¹⁴ 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 *Rogr* and *Vid* reads:

Купъци земни въ | зръдають. и въ | сплачуютъ са въ нен | яко и бреме^н ихъ | никто же не купу | ють ктому. бреме | ни злата и сребре | на и камениа | драга и бисера и ву | са. и порфуръ. и су | рика. и чревленна ∙ | съказъ ∙ | Иже въ силѣ и пици и | таъютъ. излиха | ють всиихъ купъ | ли и имѣни ∙ | И всего дрѣва туинна. | и всего сеуда слоно | ва. и всего сеуда ѿ | камени драга. и | мѣдана и желѣзъ | на и мраморена. | и скорица. и амолъ || и темъана и кри | жмѣ. и ливана и | вина олѣя · и сѣми | далии. и пшеници | и ѿвѣцъ:

I kupci zemal'sci vzridaût' i vsplachut se o nem' éko brémene ih' niktože ne kupuet' k tomu. brémene zlata i srebra i kameniê dragago. i bisera i visina. i por'pori i sirika i čr'vlena. i všekogo drêva tain'na i všekogo slonova. i všekogo sъsuda do kamene draga. i m dena i žel zna i skorice i amom'. i t m na i krizmu i livana i vina. i masla. i semidala. i p enice skota i ov c'.

The reading *суріка* is an error, for *соурікъ* is minium (Pb_3O_4), perhaps more likely to be part of a scribe's vocabulary than *сирікъ*, and a plausible item of Babylonian trade, so not necessarily a reflexion of the *συρίκοῦ* found in some Greek manuscripts. (It is also found in the majority-text *Rogr*, 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 *крижмъ* / krizmu (similarly *хризмъ Bosn*). This is the regular translation of *μῦρον* in the glagolitic tradition (Šafařík 1858: 35), occurring only sporadically in cyrillic manuscripts, which usually have *муро*. 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*¹⁵, and *zBer*:

И коупци | земнїй въсплачутса о нен. яко єже | носимъ нѣ ктому^н коупъ. єже но | си
злато и сребро. и камене драго и би | сер. и висъ и багрѣницъ. и сирікъ. | и коокино. и
въсѣко дрѣво лѣпо. и вѣ | съскъ красна дрѣва. и мѣ и желѣзо. и | мармарь. и куминъ. и
димѣанъ. и | муро. и ливано и вина. и елед. и сми | далии. и пшеницъ и ѿвѣцъ.

¹⁵ 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).

kup'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 su|uk' i kokin' i vsakoe drevo kr|as' noe. medъ i žezezo mram|or' i kumiêmъ i tъm'ěnъ muro | i livanъ vino i olëi smid|alb 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, *багрѣници*). 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 *smidalb*.

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 *сирисъ* was the same as *свилл* or *шълкъ*. The word was not in their active vocabulary, and was thus easily distorted to *сикъ* (by simple omission – cfr. *сук'* [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)¹⁶. 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 photograph:

И коупци | зем[ль]ни възръдають и въсплачуютсе в нии. яко брѣ | мене их никтоже иктомоу коупить. брѣмене златна | и сребрьна. и каменина драгааго. и бысерда. и вусса · и по | рфири. и чуръблена и жълта. и всакого дрѣва финна. | и всакого съсоуда слониша · и всакого съсоуда ѿ каменія | и мѣдна. и жељезна. и мраморда. корыце. и амвна | и фумїана. и мурда. вина и масла. смидала и пшє | нице. и скота и швцъ :

This is notable for the East Slavonic spellings *финна* and *фумїана* (against which, however, compare on f. 366v *тиадїр* | *съкъе* 2:18; the remaining spellings are "neutral", e.g. *дїатирѣ* 2:24, *думїана* 8:3, 4), which suggest that the "македонизми" (i.e. *o* < *ø*, *e* < *ø*, Grković-Major 2000: 314) might actually be East Slavonic forms too, and raise the

¹⁶ 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 "тичные южнославянизмы" (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 κόκκινον as **жълтъ** is inexplicable. It cannot simply be that, ψρύβλιενа having already been used, another colour was required, for at 18:16, where there is no such motivation, περιβεβλημένη βύστινον καὶ πορφυροῦν καὶ κόκκινον becomes **швальченій въ порфіроу || и вуссонъ и въ жълтада** (however, on f. 375, at 17:3, 4 we find the expected ψρýбліенъ).

And why is σηρικοῦ translated as **ψрýбліенъ**? 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 Nicon 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)¹⁷. It also mentions silk in chapter 23, in what is evidently Nicon’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)¹⁸. The relevant phrases¹⁹ are:

- | | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Trull. 45 | σηρικαῖς καὶ ἑτέραις παντοίαις στολαῖς
βζ ψρýбліенахъ и инѣхъ всѧческихъ риzechъ |
| II Nic. 16
(= Pand. 37) | οὐδὲ ἐκ σηρικῶν ὑφασμάτων πεποικιλμένην ἐσθῆτα ἐνεδέδυτό τις
ни ѿψ ψрýбліенадаго свилия попъстреного риzechо да не одѣваєть са къто
ни ѿψ свилия ткања облажаше са кто |
| Pand. 23 | εἴτε ἀργυροῦν, ἢ χρυσοῦν, ἢ ἐν σηρικοῖς ὑφάσμασι κατασκευασμένον
ли срѣбръмъ ли златъмъ съ шелкъмъ ²⁰ тъканое оустроено |

Elsewhere the old confusion of fabrics recurs, for βύσσος too is sporadically translated as **ψрýбенъ/ψрýбеница** 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-

¹⁷ The second translation need not be considered here, as it consistently reads **суръкъ**, implying that the original read (or was read as) σηρικός.

¹⁸ 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 **свиатинъ**.

¹⁹ Quoted from Benešević 1906: 175, 222 and Maksimović 1998: 217, 308.

²⁰ The Serbian manuscripts RNB, F.П.1.121 and Q.П.1.27 read **бисеромъ**, but the readings of the Serbian redaction are generally inferior (Pičchadze 2006: 60).

tery is probably to be found in 11 Nic. 16: a scribe unacquainted with the origin of silk could easily copy *υρβινα σβιλα as υρβενα σβιλα, 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 βύστος / βνεεζ / βνεенъ 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

PRIMARY SOURCES

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. 173/1 (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>Rogr</i>	RGB, f. 247 (sobr. Rogožskogo kladbišča), № 1, f. 127c-d
<i>RogrI</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 vserossijskim 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 *швакъ* 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 γνέ 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 *hapax legomenon* *шукъ* or *сукъ*, evidently a corruption of *сирукъ* for *σηρικόν*, left untranslated. The occasional substitution of *чръвленъ* further complicates the picture of how the word was, or was not, understood.

Keywords

Silk; Church Slavonic; Book of Esther; Revelation.