

The Syriac *Aḥiqar*,
Its Slavonic
Version, and the
Relics of the
Three Youths
in Babylon

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Сирийский
“Ахикар”, его
славянская версия
и мощи
трёх Отроков
Вавилонских

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Abstract

The author argues that the earliest recension of the Slavonic *Aḥiqar* (*Povest' ob Akire Premudrom*) was produced in Bulgaria as a direct translation from Syriac, whereas the original Christian (Syriac) recension was created in the Syriac-speaking anti-Chalcedonian milieu within the Sassanid Iranian Empire in the late fifth century; in this latter context, it originated as a hagiographic legend inaugurating a new cult directed against the pro-Chalcedonian Ctesiphon cult of the Three Youths in Babylon. This anti-Chalcedonian and anti-Byzantine work was never accepted in Byzantine culture.

Keywords

Aḥiqar, *Povest' ob Akire Premudrom*, Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, Danielic Pseudepigrapha, Old Church Slavonic translations, Armenian literature of translations, Old Bulgarian translations, Old Russian translations, Slavonic Pseudepigrapha, Syriac Hagiography, Hagiographical Legends, Monophysitism

Резюме

Автор статьи считает, что славянский перевод “Ахикара” — “Повести об Акире Премудром” — был выполнен в Болгарии с сирийского оригинала, тогда как первоначальная христианская (сирийская) версия текста была создана в сирий-

ской антихалкидонской среде в Иранской империи Сасанидов в конце V в. как агиографическая легенда, призванная утвердить новый культ, направленный против халкидонского культа трёх Отроков Вавилонских. Этот антихалкидонский и антивизантийский текст не был воспринят византийской культурой.

Ключевые слова

“Ахикар”, “Повесть об Акире Премудром”, ветхозаветные апокрифы, апокрифы Даниилова цикла, старославянские переводы, армянская переводная книжность, древнеболгарские переводы, древнерусские переводы, славянские апокрифы, сирийская агиография, агиографические легенды, монофизитство

1. Introduction

The *Povest' ob Akire Premudrom* (“The Story of the Sage Aḥiqar”) is the only piece in Slavonic, which as early as in the 1900s was recognised as possibly going back to a Syriac original. Below, I will try to demonstrate that this is, indeed, the case. Then, we will have to discuss why, most probably, this work has never existed in Greek, and where is the *Sitz im Leben* of the Syriac hagiographical romance on Aḥiqar, which is not to be confused with both its Jewish Aramaic ancestors and its non-Christian “siblings”.¹

2. The Syriac Romance among the Non-Christian Aḥiqar Texts

Dealing with the very dense literary network around the *Aḥiqar* romance, it is always important to discern between three sorts of literary connexions: transmission of the sayings only, transmission of the framing narrative (plot), and transmission of the unity of, at least, some part of sayings together with the framing narrative.

Some part of sayings is attested to in many different places, in the same manner as it is habitual for the proverbs.² Thus, the sayings are the components of the romance which are featuring it as a whole in a minimal extent. The most stable component of the hagiographical romance is its rigid literary

¹ The most complete bibliography is now [CONTINI 2005], but it is almost completely untenable for the Slavic part of dossier and is not exact in the matters related to the Armenian version and its derivatives (because of the lack of first-hand knowledge of [MARTIROSSIAN 1969–1972]); for updates, s. [WEIGL 2010; KONSTANTAKOS 2008–2013]. For the standard enumeration of the main recensions and versions see the corresponding entry of CAVT 195 (containing a number of inexactnesses); cf. also, for Syriac/Neo-Aramaic, [BROCK 2009]. For a general scheme of the filiation of the Aḥiqar texts in different languages, s. Fig. 1 in the Appendix.

² The literary history of different sayings included, at least, in some recensions of the *Aḥiqar* romance, could be now figured out from the data collected in the following studies, which, when taken together, would cover the whole previous scholarship: [KONSTANTAKOS 2008–2013; LICHTHEIM 1983; LINDENBERGER 1983; MARTIROSSIAN 1969–1972; WEIGL 2010].

frame, which can be stuffed with the edifying episodes and sayings in an extent varying from one recension to another (cf., e.g., [LOURIÉ 2011]). However, the literary frame itself, without sayings of Aḥiqar, is a conjunction of several folktale motives available worldwide,³ and so, having no specific attachment to the romance of Aḥiqar. Thus, tracing the transmission of the *Aḥiqar* romance is a different task from tracing both transmission of its stuffing material, especially the sayings of Aḥiqar, and its literary frame taken alone. It is only a conjunction of both literary frame and sayings that matters.

There is no ground to suppose that the oldest Aramaic recension of the Aḥiqar story was preceded with some Mesopotamian document in Akkadian,⁴ even in the case if Aḥiqar is a historical person mentioned in a Babylonian tablet (Uruk, W 20030) dated to year 147 of the Seleucid era (165/164 BC). According to this document, “in the days of king Aššur-aḥ-iddina [Esarhaddon] the *ummānu* was Aba-enlil-dari, whom the Aḥlamū [Arameans] call Aḥu-uqar [Aḥiqar].” Taking this notice in its face value, one can conclude that the historical Aḥiqar was an Aramaic-speaking Jew, although taking a high position, *ummānu* (“royal scribe, counsellor”⁵) at the court of king Esarhaddon (681–669 BC) (thus, e.g., [GREENFIELD 1971/2001: 49–50 [93–94]; LINDENBERGER 1985: 483]). However, “[t]he tablet... proves only that the Aḥiqar story was well known in Seleucid Babylonia, not that it has any historical foundations in events half a millennium earlier.”⁶ There is a room, however, for hypothesising some historicity of Aḥiqar as a wise man at the court of Assyrian kings Sennacherib (705–681 BC) and his son Esarhaddon (681–669 BC) [PARPOLA 2005: 109–111].

Be that as it may, one has to start the history of the Aḥiqar romance from the lost archetype written in the Imperial, or Official Aramaic, originated somewhere in Mesopotamia not later than in the fifth century BC, when one its recensions appears in an Aramaic papyrus of the Jewish military colony in Egyptian Elephantine.⁷ Although written in Aramaic and not in Akkadian,

³ Cf., for a review of the motives according to Aarne–Thompson, [CONTINI, GROTTANELLI 2005B: 49–63].

⁴ “It is not necessary to assume that there was an original version of the Proverbs of Aḥiqar in Neo-Assyrian that was later translated into Aramaic; they could easily have circulated in both written form and oral transmission in Aramaic” [GREENFIELD 1990/2001: 50[94], n. 4]. Cf., more recently, [PARPOLA 2005].

⁵ “Craftsman, specialist” in Old Babylonian but “scholar, scribal expert,” (royal) “(chief) scribe” in Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian dialects of Akkadian; s. [CDA: 422, s.v. *ummiānu(m)*] and, with many details, [CAD 20: 108–115, s.v. *ummānu*, esp. 114–115, meaning 2b].

⁶ Found in the winter of 1959/1960, ed. princeps by J. van Dijk, 1962. Cf. already [DU BLOIS 1984: 51, n. 12] and especially [PARPOLA 2005], then, e.g., [NIEHR 2007: 9–10, 28] (with a summary of a vivid discussion); cf. the same conclusion, most recently, with the full quotation of the relevant original texts, [WEIGL 2010: 8–11].

⁷ Found in 1907, ed. princeps by Eduard Sachau in 1911, the most important editions of the whole text are [COWLEY 1923: 204–248; PORTEN, YARDENI 1993: 23–53] (Porten

the story of Aḥiqar is an “...opera *assira* non solo ambientata alla corte neosassira ma anche *scritta* in Assiria e totalmente imbevuta di valori, cultura e tradizioni assira”; indeed, the Aramaic language became in this epoch the lingua franca of the whole Fertile Crescent [PARPOLA 2005: 111].

For the history of the Christian romance of Aḥiqar, it is its pre-Christian history in Egypt that is of special importance. At least, two very short fragments of the story of Aḥiqar are preserved in Demotic Egyptian papyri of the first century BC.⁸ One can see that the Demotic text is not identical with that of the Elephantine papyrus, but the fragments are too short for any detailed comparison of the recensions. However, the very fact of the presence of the Aḥiqar story in the Ptolemaic Egypt sheds a different light on another piece of Egyptian Demotic wisdom literature, the *Instructions of ʿOnchsheshonqy* (datable only very vaguely to the interval from the seventh to the second century BC).⁹ The plot of this story is only remotely recalling that of the Aḥiqar, and it has its own Old Egyptian antecedent, but among the wise sayings of ʿOnchsheshonqy there are several ones overlapping with those of Aḥiqar—but from the Christian recensions, not from the Elephantine papyrus. Thus, Miriam Lichtheim concluded that the later Christian recensions go back to Aramaic recensions of the Aḥiqar romance posterior to that of the Elephantine papyrus but already available in Ptolemaic Egypt [LICHTHEIM 1983: 18]. Of course, however, this is not the only logically acceptable explanation. Both Christian recensions of the Aḥiqar and the ʿOnchsheshonqy could borrow from some common earlier sources previously unconnected to the Aḥiqar tradition.¹⁰

and Yardeni provide important improvements of the reconstruction); the modern editions of the sayings only: [LINDENBERGER 1983; KOTTSIEFER 1990; WEIGL 2010]. This Egyptian papyrus must be much later than the original Assyrian recension. Parpola tentatively dates the latter to the period between ca. 680 and ca. 660, that is, between the murder of Sennacherib and related events (purportedly reflected in the story of Aḥiqar) and the Assyrian occupation of Egypt established in the 660s [PARPOLA 2005: 106–108]; for a detailed chronology of Assyrian invasions to Egypt in the 660s, s. [KAHN 2006]. It is interesting that nearly the same date for the original text was proposed by Alexander Grigoriev, a Slavist, who had no first-hand access to the Assyro-Babylonian texts, but was aware of a general outline of the Assyro-Egyptian relations in the seventh century BC [GRIGORIEV 1913: 94–96].

⁸ One of them was published as a photocopy (without transliteration and translation) by G. P. G. Sobhy in 1930 and was identified almost immediately by Wilhelm Spiegelberg, but Spiegelberg died suddenly on 23 December 1930, several days before his paper containing this identification appeared in press. Thus, the first scholarly publication of this manuscript was performed only in 1976 by Karl Zauzich, who identified another fragment of the same manuscript and put forward several considerations concerning the manuscript tradition of the Demotic Aḥiqar [ZAUZICH 1976]. Cf. further considerations and republication of both identified Demotic fragments in [BETRÒ 2005].

⁹ Cf., for English translations and bibliography, [LICHTHEIM 1980: 159–184; RITNER 2003B].

¹⁰ Cf. [BETRÒ 2005]. Betrò considers the fragmentary Demotic story of the magician Hihor [RITNER 2003A] as inspired by the Aḥiqar story, but this conclusion is less than evident.

It is especially important for us that some of these sayings of Aḥiqar parallel to those of 'Onchsheshonqy are known from the Armenian version only, not from the existing Syriac recensions¹¹ (the Armenian recensions all go back to the unique translation from Syriac¹²). The editor of the Armenian version Arutyun Martirossian, still unaware of the Demotic documents, attributed such "additions" (as compared with the Syriac recensions) to a local Armenian version of the internationally widespread *Sayings of Wise Men* (Խոսք իմաստասիրաց),¹³ which he, unlike previous Armenian scholars, reconsidered as not a work quoting the Armenian Aḥiqar, but as a piece of a different (and genuinely Armenian) origin [MARTIROSSIAN 1969–1972, 2: 35–55]. Martirossian, however, did not realize the real amplitude of the dossier of the *Sayings of Wise Men*, even in those (relatively rare) recensions where Aḥiqar appears. In particular, he did not take into account the Ethiopic recension of the latter containing a section of Aḥiqar (which, in turn, is a translation of the lost Arabic original) [CORNILL 1875].¹⁴ Thus, it is hardly probable that the Armenian sayings of Aḥiqar absent from the extant Syriac versions do not go back to a lost Syriac recension. Moreover, given that some of them are shared with the Demotic sayings of 'Onchsheshonqy, one has to date their inclusion to the Aḥiqar tradition somewhere earlier than the Syriac Aḥiqar romance (thus, in its Aramaic source(s)), whereas not necessarily earlier than the (unknown to us) date of the *Instructions of 'Onchsheshonqy*.

Therefore, without knowing the absolute date of the inclusion of the Armenian *Sondergut* of Aḥiqar's sayings in the Aḥiqar literary tradition, we can evaluate its relative date and suggest for it a pre-Christian and pre-Syriac (thus, Aramaic) stage of the evolution of the Aḥiqar story. The Armenian version of the Christian Aḥiqar romance (in its earliest recensions A and G) is thus a witness of an earlier (at least, in some parts) and lost Syriac recension rather than a compilative work produced out of mixing a translation from Syriac with some locally available material. This conclusion is corroborated with the very early date of the Armenian translation, the fifth century [MARTIROSSIAN 1969–1972, 2: 85–101], that is, the very beginning of the Christian

¹¹ S., e.g., [LICHTHEIM 1983: 20–21, 33, 52].

¹² This is one of the main conclusions of Martirossian's study; s. [MARTIROSSIAN 1969–1972, 2: 101–113] (for the language of original) et passim (for the uniqueness of translation).

¹³ Critical edition of Aḥiqar's sayings (based on 14 MSS) under the title Խոսք իմաստասիրաց եւ խրատք հասարակաց (*Sayings of Wise Men and Public Admonitions*) in [MARTIROSSIAN 1969–1972, 1: 271–298] with a textological study in the same volume.

¹⁴ However, each particular saying attributed to Aḥiqar in this collection is attested to in Arabic; Cornill provides parallels from a Christian Arabic (mostly Karshuni) manuscript of the Aḥiqar romance. The history of the text of the Ethiopic *Sayings of the Wise Men* remains unstudied until now [LUSINI 2005: 256].

Armenian literature. Such a date is quite close to the approximative date of the original of the Syriac Christian romance (established by the actual scholarly consensus as the fourth or fifth century¹⁵) and is by several hundred years earlier than the probable dates of the preserved Syriac recensions.

There is a relatively ample dossier of Aḥiqar in Greek, including translations from Greek. However, taking aside the Slavic dossier (allegedly going back to a hypothetical lost Greek recension—the thesis we have to refute in the present paper) all the remaining materials are pagan and have no specific relation to Aḥiqar of the Christian literatures. The existence of some form of the Aramaic romance in a Greek version is attested to by some ancient authors, and, moreover, such a version in a substantially reworked form subsisted as a part (§§101–123) of the legendary *Life of Aesop* (approximately 1st cent. AD), where Aesop replaced Aḥiqar.¹⁶ This pagan Greek heritage is partly preserved also in Arabic but only in a Muslim tradition under the name of the legendary sage of Arab antiquity Luqmān. However, “[a]ny real relation between the personalities of Luqmān and Aḥiqar comes through Aesop” [HELLER, STILLMAN 1986: 813].

The Christian Aḥiqar is also known in Arabic. There are three recensions going back to the unique translation. One of them (recension C) is a Muslim reworking of a Christian text (very close to the recension A), which is preserved as an appendix to the *Thousand and One Nights*.¹⁷

It is important to note from the above discussion of the Aḥiqar materials outside the Jewish-Christian tradition, that the Christian Aḥiqar romance is completely unknown in Greek: no trace at all.¹⁸

3. Aḥiqar as a Worshipper of the Jewish God

Turning to the Jewish-Christian tradition, we meet Aḥiqar in the *Book of Tobit* (four times: 1: 21–22;¹⁹ 2: 10; 11: 18; 14: 10), itself of a date and a place of ori-

¹⁵ Cf. Riccardo Contini's introductory notice in [PENNACCHIETTI 2005: 194].

¹⁶ For a detailed study of this Greek dossier s., first of all, the three-volume monograph of Ioannis Konstantakos [KONSTANTAKOS 2008–2013]. Rimicio, or Rinuzio Tessalo translated this *Life of Aesop* into Latin in the middle of the fifteenth century (ed. princeps Mailand, 1474).

¹⁷ Paolo Rostano Giaiero provided a detailed analysis of the three recensions in [GIAIERO 2005]. The claim, often repeated, that the Aḥiqar story became a part of the *Thousand and One Night*, is erroneous, unless one has in mind additions to the latter that appear in some Arabic manuscripts and European translations. For the history of this error in the Russian nineteenth-century scholarship dedicated to Aḥiqar, s. [MOROZOV 2009: 91–93].

¹⁸ For the sake of completeness, we have to mention a third-century AD mosaic in Trier made by a pagan artist Monnus. It was almost the scholarly consensus throughout the twentieth century that the inscription near one of the figures must be restored as [AC] ICAR. However, Hermann Koller in 1973 proposed and Robert Daniel in 1996 confirmed with a detailed study that the correct reading is [EP]ICAR(MUS); s. [DANIEL 1996].

¹⁹ For this place, there is also a Qumranic Aramaic fragment, 4Q196.

gin still under discussion²⁰ but, in its religious contents, certainly Jewish (that is, not Babylonian).²¹ The author of the *Tobit* knew the Aramaic Aḥiqar romance in a recension similar to that of the Elephantine papyrus. Here, Aḥiqar is a nephew (or, at least, another close relative) of Tobit and, therefore, is Jewish himself. It is difficult to say now how exactly the pious audience of the *Tobit* overcame Aḥiqar's polytheistic parlance, but, anyway, this has been done.

Let us recall that the Elephantine papyrus is a witness of circulation of the Aḥiqar story in its full polytheistic apparel among the strictly monotheistic Jews living around their own Temple of Yahweh.²² Thus, the very existence of the Elephantine papyrus is itself a demonstration of the fact that the original polytheistic wording of the story has been somewhat reinterpreted in a monotheistic way. Were this solution syncretistic or not, it is irrelevant to us.²³ The only relevant for the further history of the Aḥiqar romance in the Jewish-Christian milieu is another thing, namely, that the polytheistic imagery of the story certainly became "fossilized" throughout the centuries of its transmission under the authority of Aḥiqar as a righteous Jewish man and became a part of the monotheistic Jewish tradition of Aḥiqar.

This polytheistic by origin but already "fossilized" imagery was inherited by the Iranian Christian Syriac-speaking milieu, where the Christian Aḥiqar romance originated. It is known that the Syrian Christianity in Iran remained, in the fourth and the fifth centuries, much more close to its Jewish matrix than the Christianity of the Roman Empire. The original polytheistic imagery of the story, including the Semitic names of the three Babylonian gods, is preserved quite well in the Armenian branch of the tradition,²⁴ although it is partially

²⁰ S. a discussion of available viewpoints in [FITZMYER 2003: 50–54]; even the date of the Qumranic manuscripts (roughly from 100 BC to 25 AD) is not universally accepted as the terminus ante quem for the subsisting recensions. Original language of the book is also under discussion: the unique Qumran fragment of *Tobit* in Hebrew could be either original or translation from Aramaic (the total number of the Aramaic fragments of *Tobit* in Qumran is four).

²¹ On Aḥiqar and his stepchild and nephew Nadin in *Tobit*, s. [GREENFIELD 1981/2001; FITZMYER 2003: 37–38 et ad loc.; TOLONI 2005].

²² For the religious life of the Jews of Elephantine, s. [PORTEN 1968: 105–186; 1984: 385–393]. Porten argues against the idea that the religious life of the colony was tainted by syncretism. For the opposite view, s., e.g., [VAN DER TOORN 1992].

²³ The story of Aḥiqar is one of the particular cases when some unwritten "rules of transposition" between two theological systems, the Babylonian "henotheism" and the Jewish "monotheism," were at work. The problem of a partial mutual "translatability" between the Mesopotamian and monotheistic Jewish religious systems is still far from being studied in full but, at least, started to be discussed. Cf., first of all, a pioneering monograph, focused, however, on the biblical texts [SMITH 2008].

²⁴ Arutyun Martirosian is certainly right in considering this feature of the Armenian version (and its Kipchak, Turkish Osmanic, and Georgian off-springs) as going back to a lost Syriac archetype. However, one can hardly follow Martirosian in his supposition that the peculiar list of the pagan deities in one of the two earliest Armenian recensions, G, could be genuine (s. [MARTIROSIAN 1969–1972, 2: 118–119]). In the recension

or completely suppressed in other branches (Syriac, Arabic, and Slavonic).²⁵ However, this is not to say (pace Martirossian) that the original of the Armenian version is a work of a non-Christian author. In fact, as we will see, it shares the most important features of the Christian story and appeared within an Iranian Syriac-speaking Christian community.

4. Five Branches of the Christian Tradition of the Romance of Aḥiqar

Taking aside the Aḥiqar tradition within the *Sayings of Wise Men* (which remains so far almost unstudied), we have, for the Christian Aḥiqar romance, five main branches of the text tradition. All of them go to the lost common Syriac archetype, that is, to the original text of the Christian romance. The most of the non-Syriac branches are represented in several languages, namely, Armenian tradition—in Armenian, Kipchak, Osmanic Turkish, and Georgian, Arabic tradition—in Arabic, Ethiopic, and modern Neo-Aramaic dialects (partially influenced by Syriac recensions directly), and Slavonic tradition—in Slavonic (itself in different *izvods*, that is, local versions: Bulgarian, Serbian, and Russian) and Romanian, and only the Sogdian branch is represented in Sogdian alone. Each branch is further subdivided into different recensions. Some late recensions are altered in a great extent but, nevertheless, must be taken into account as having some importance for the reconstruction of the lost archetype, at least, at the stage of comparison of the particular manuscript readings. Only one version presents no interest for any reconstruction, the Georgian one, represented with two different translations from the Ar-

G, the standard list of gods (Belšim, Šimil, and Šamin in Syriac, which became Բելշիմ, Շիմլի, Շահմին /Belšim, Šimel, Šahmin/ in Armenian) is replaced by the four-name list "Belšim, Miršahmin, Ešariše, and Išemišah (Միրշահմին, Էշարիշե, Իշեմիշահ)." Martirossian does not provide any analysis of the three latter unusual names but simply insists on their genuineness (because the names of pagan gods, according to him, would not be included by a Christian editor). However, the three latter names are clearly Iranian. Miršahmin is certainly derived from the name Mihršāh ("Mithras the King") known as the name of the king of Mesene and a brother of the Shahanshah Šābuhr I, who was converted by Mani prior to AD 262 (Parthian text M 47: 1, publ. with a commentary in [Boyce 1975: 37]; in Parthian, *myhrš'h*). In Ešariše, one can discern two Pahlavi components, *asar* "having no beginning, eternal" and *āsāyīšn* "rest, peace," which results in "Eternal Rest." In Išemišah, one can recognize a popular (until now) Iranian proper name Esmisha(h) having an obvious Zoroastrian origin (< Esmišāh, "King of Fuel," from Pahlavi *esm* = *ēzm* "(wood)fuel"). The origin of such names is certainly interesting, but it is clear that they have nothing to do with the mainstream (Semitic) Aḥiqar tradition. As to the "standard" (Semitic) list of gods, it is not completely clear, too, with the only exception of Belšim = Baal Šamaim ("Baal of Heavens"), a well-known god of the Phoenicians; the two other are unknown as such, and their interpretation is somewhat difficult [Nau 1909: 14].

²⁵ In these branches, Aḥiqar either addresses the unique God from the very beginning (and, thus, the polytheism has no place whatsoever) or addresses, at first, three Babylonian gods but with no answer and, then, the Most High Jewish God; in the latter case, Aḥiqar will have no native son as a punishment for his former act of idolatry.

menian printed book of 1708 (Armenian recension Fa) (s. [MARTIROSSIAN 1969–1972, 2: 202–208]).

Dealing with the available witnesses of the Christian Aḥiqar romance, we will take into account the following non-Slavonic recensions.²⁶

Syriac branch: represented by five recensions in classical Syriac, not earlier than the twelfth century, and one translation from Syriac into the Eastern Christian Neo-Aramaic dialect Suret.²⁷ All manuscripts are Eastern Syrian (“Nestorian”).²⁸

SyrA: unique MS; ed. by J. Rendel Harris in [CHL 1913: 37–62 (Syriac pagination)].

SyrB: unique MS; ed. by Smil Grünberg [GRÜNBERG 1917] (sayings) and Markus Hirsch Guzik [GUZIK 1936] (narrative); this recension, as it was shown by Theodor Nöldeke, is mostly a retroversion from Arabic [NÖLDEKE 1913: 51–54]; this is why it is somewhat in between the Syriac and the Arabic branches but closer to the Arabic one.

SyrC: unique MS, fragmentary (only beginning of the story); ed. by J. Rendel Harris in [CHL 1913: 34–36 (Syriac pagination)].

SyrD: unique MS; ed. by François Nau [NAU 1918–1919A]; contains only the first third (approximately) of the text.

SyrE: two MSS; ed. by François Nau [NAU 1918–1919B].

Sogdian branch: the recently discovered fragmentary Sogdian version, although translated from Syriac, does not belong to the Syriac branch in the above sense, because it is based on an earlier recension of the Syriac text than the presently available ones.²⁹

Arabic branch: represented by three recensions in Arabic, one recension in Ethiopic, and two recensions in Neo-Aramaic dialects. The Arabic (Muslim) recension C is depending mostly on the recension AraA and contains no ancient material other than that available through the Christian recensions AraA and AraB (s. below); it will be not taken into account.³⁰ Unlike the manuscript tradition in Syriac, this tradition in Arabic and translations from Arabic is related to the Syrian Christianity with Jacobite affiliation.

AraA: three Karshuni MSS (belonging to the tradition of the Jacobite Syrian Christians), critical ed. by Agnes Smith Lewis [CHL 1913: 1–33 (Arabic pagination)].

AraB: unique MS; ed. by Mark Lidzbarski from a bilingual Turoyo-Arabic Jacobite manuscript where the two texts were put side by side, cf. below: [LIDZBARSKI 1896, 1: 1–76

²⁶ Below I omit the references to the translations (available in [CHL 1913], [NAU 1909], and/or elsewhere); it's implied that the editors of the Oriental versions enumerated below publish them together with translations into an European language, but the Armenian and the Slavonic ones make an exception; most of them are not translated into modern languages (including Russian) at all. The most detailed bibliography of translations into modern languages is contained in [CONTINI 2005].

²⁷ Published at first in 1941 by Muḥattas d-Mār Behiso' and then reprinted several times; unavailable to me.

²⁸ Cf. also [NAU 1914; BROCK 1968/1992] for other Syriac documents related to Aḥiqar texts.

²⁹ Only the first communication of the discovery is still available: [SIMS-WILLIAMS 2012]. The text is represented with “three small folios, [which] are in a very poor state of preservation,” but it is already clear that it contains some material missing from the available Syriac recensions but presented in the Armenian, Arabic, and Slavonic ones, or even the Aramaic papyrus; thus, according to Sims-Williams, it “...must derive from an older form of the Syriac text.” I am grateful to my anonymous reviewer for making me know this discovery.

³⁰ Cf. [GIAIERO 2005]. For a synopsis of the three Arabic recensions in a French translation, s. [NAU 1909: 145–258].

(Arabic pagination; even pages only)]; Arabic version on the even pages, Turoyo version on the odd pages.

Eth: An epitome of the romance translated from Arabic, the Arabic original being unknown; ed. by Roger Schneider in [SCHNEIDER 1978].

Ṭur: unique MS representing a translation of AraB into Turoyo, the most widespread Neo-Aramaic Christian dialect used by Syrian Jacobites; ed. together with AraB by Mark Lidzbarski [LIDZBARSKI 1896, 1: 1–77 (Arabic pagination; odd pages only)].

Mla: a translation into a Western Neo-Aramaic (Christian Jacobite) dialect Mlaḥsō, now extinct, recorded from the last native speaker (who died in 1998 at the age of 101) and published by Shabo Talay [TALAY 2002].

Armenian branch: represented (omitting the Georgian versions) with seven recensions in Armenian, one recension in Kipchak, and one recension in Osmanic Turkish (the two latter are also Christian Armenian, intended to Armenian audiences; both are in Armenian script). [CHL 1913] contains an edition and English translation of two Armenian recensions and the Kipchak version (called there “Old Turkish”) by F. C. Conybeare. The critical editions of all these texts are provided by Arutyun Martirosian. The Kipchak version was published several times independently by different scholars, sometimes without knowing each other’s work. The earliest Armenian recensions are ArmA and ArmG.

ArmA (six MSS) and ArmB (twenty four MSS): edited together in [MARTIROSIAN 1969–1972, 1: 75–132].

ArmC: five MSS, ed. in [MARTIROSIAN 1969–1972, 1: 133–172].

ArmD: six MSS, ed. in [MARTIROSIAN 1969–1972, 1: 173–216].

ArmE (six MSS) and ArmF (Fa five MSS, Fb three MSS; both Fa and Fb are also available in printed books): edited together in [MARTIROSIAN 1969–1972, 1: 217–242].

ArmG: one MS, ed. in [MARTIROSIAN 1969–1972, 1: 243–265].

Kipch: the Kipchak version (epitomized); one MS, ed. in Armenian script in [MARTIROSIAN 1969–1972, 1: 325–336].³¹

Turk: the Osmanic Turkish version (epitomized); one MS, ed. in Armenian script in [MARTIROSIAN 1969–1972, 1: 303–324].

The **Slavonic branch** will be discussed in the next section.

5. The Romance of Aḫiqar in the Slavonic-Romanian Tradition

The romance of Aḫiqar was extremely popular in Russian and Romanian traditions. Its popularity in Slavonic (at least, 10 South Slavic MSS and more than 50 Russian MSS, some of them now lost) is comparable with that in Armenian (56 Armenian MSS plus 14 MSS of the *Sayings of the Wise Men*). Its popularity in Romanian was similar: no less than 45 manuscripts of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (the earliest known manuscript was reportedly of the seventeenth century but is now lost). The romance of Aḫiqar is the most popular “people’s book” in Rumania. In both Russian and Romanian traditions the romance was preserved in a living manuscript literary tradition up to the twentieth century.³² Oddly enough, the Romanian recension as a whole remains

³¹ Other editions of the same MS (using transliterations): [CHL 1913: 185–197; DENY, TRYJARSKI 1964; GARKAVETS 2002: 175–179].

³² See the following introductions to the relevant manuscript traditions: [KUZIDOVA 2012] for the South Slavic ones, [TVOROGOV 1987] for the Russian one, [CIUCHINDEL 1976]

unpublished,³³ despite a detailed study of the manuscript tradition provided by Constantin Ciuchindel.

The earliest recension is preserved in Russian and South Slavic (Bulgarian and Serbian) manuscripts. All of them, despite linguistic distinctions, represent the same recension of the text, the so-called “**Oldest recension.**” These two “groups” of manuscripts of the same recension are often improperly called “First Russian” and “First Serbian” *recensions*, but this is simply a manner of speaking without pretending to discern these groups as recensions in the proper sense of the word. I would prefer to call them “subrecensions.” The subrecension called by the first Russian scholars (Grigoriev, Durnovo) “Serbian” is of Bulgarian origin. This is why I will prefer to call it “Bulgarian subrecension,” even when dealing with its Serbian manuscripts.

This recension is the most important to us, and it will be discussed in more details in the next section.

The so-called “**Second Russian recension**” is preserved partially in only one manuscript, published in 1915 in full but now lost.³⁴

The so-called “**Second Serbian recension**” (which I will prefer to call simply “Serbian”) is preserved in two somewhat different manuscripts (moreover, differing in writing systems: one Glagolitic, one Cyrillic) produced by Serbian or Croatian Roman Catholics (published at first by Vatroslav Jagić³⁵).

for the Romanian one. See [CIUCHINDEL 1976: 69–82] for a detailed history of the studies of the Romanian version. Cf. also Fig. 2 in the Appendix. In Romania, a classical Romanian author Anton Pann (Antonie Pantoleon-Petroveanu, 1794/8–1854) published in print his own recension of the romance (1850) under the title *Înțeleptul Archir cu nepotul său Anadam* (*Wise Archir and His Nephew Anadam*), whose popularity led to interruption of the transmission of all other recensions; this recension is continuously reprinted since then: [CARMU 2002: 135–155]. In Russia, a new recension was created by an Old Believer writer Ivan Stepanovich Mjandin (1823–1894), but, of course, it was not very widespread [PIOTROVSKAJA 1976]; s. more on the Ahīqar texts in the Russian Old Believers’ tradition in [VOLKOVA 2011]. Both Pann’s and Mjandin’s recensions are rather short and remote from the older ones, and so, are useless for the study of the origins of the Slavonic version.

³³ Only one very incomplete manuscript was published by Moses Gaster, who was still unaware of the real popularity of the work in Rumanian translation but was impressed by his own achievement—pointing out the source, before him enigmatic, of Anton Pann’s retelling [GASTER 1900/1925].

³⁴ A MS of the monastery on the Solovki Islands (16th–early 17th cent.). This lost manuscript contained a compilation of the “First Russian” recension with the “Second” one which started near to the middle of the text. The manuscript was a convolute whose relevant part was earlier than the late 16th cent. and was, in turn, a copy of an even earlier manuscript; cf. [BOBROV 2007: 41–42]. Piotrovskaja notifies that the origin of this recension remains unknown; she allows a possibility that it resulted from the Oldest rec. and the Russian “Vulgate” (Third Russian rec.): [PIOTROVSKAJA 1978: 324].

³⁵ The oldest manuscript is the Glagolitic Petrisov zbornik (1468), now Zagreb, National Library, R 4001; the younger is a Cyrillic MS (1520) from Dubrovnik (now MS IVa24 of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Zagreb). Both are published in [JAGIĆ 1868: 137–149] (the older manuscript being used for variant readings) and also [REŠETAR 1926: 48–55] (within the publication of the whole Dubrovnik MS); cf.

This recension is severely abbreviated and, sometimes, changed in comparison with the Oldest one. Unfortunately, this is the only Slavonic recension of the romance which became widely known among the non-Slavists in the West. This early Slavonic recension, almost forgotten among the Slavs, turned out to be enormously successful among the Romanians.

According to Ciuchindel,³⁶ the **Romanian** manuscripts, albeit much variable, are classifiable into three “families”/recensions (*famili*) labelled by him A, B, and C. The *familia* A is the most close to the Serbian Slavonic original of the Romanian translation of the seventeenth century. This original was not identical to any of the two manuscripts published by Jagić but was rather compiled from the both. The *familia* B resulted during the eighteenth century from an influence of the Russian Slavonic manuscript tradition on the already existing Romanian translation. The *familia* C occupies a somewhat intermediary position. It is clear that the Romanian version, especially its *familia* A, is an important witness of the Serbian text of the romance. Thus, the Romanian version, *familia* A, is a useful tool for having access to the contents of the Serbian recension of the Slavonic version. Unfortunately, having no edition of the Romanian mediæval *Ahiqar* other than the fragmentary one provided by Gaster, we have to satisfy ourselves with the scarcely data dissipated within Ciuchindel’s monograph.

The so-called “Third Russian recension” (according to the classification of Grigoriev and Durnovo) was studied by O. A. Belobrova and O. V. Tvorogov, who came to conclusion that it must be subdivided further into two different recensions: **Third Russian recension** (36 MSS, not earlier than the 17th cent.) and **Fourth Russian recension** (6 MSS), the latter being a later extension of the former (17th cent.) [BELOBROVA, TVOROGOV 1970: 163–180].³⁷ The Third Russian recension is the Russian “Vulgate.” Elena Piotrovskaja provided argumentation for its dating to the late fifteenth century; at least, in the early sixteenth century it became already influential in Muscovy. She proposed as well a hypothesis that its sources were the Oldest recension and the Serbian (which she calls “Second Serbian”) one [PIOTROVSKAJA 1978];³⁸ this hypothesis is somewhat corroborated by the fact of the popularity of the Serbian recension witnessed by

their translation into German in [JAGIĆ 1892], in turn, translated into English (from German) by Agnes Smith Lewis in [CHL 1913: 1–23]. On the Dubrovnik MS of the *Ahiqar* romance, see esp. [DURNOVO 1931].

³⁶ Below I follow [CIUCHINDEL 1976: 109–127], who confirmed the conclusion of [GRIGORIEV 1913: 551–560] which was based on the study of two random Romanian manuscripts and Gaster’s edition.

³⁷ No critical edition of the “Third” and “Fourth” recensions exists, and even the most important manuscripts remain unpublished. Both recensions are published on the base of one manuscript per each in [KOSTOMAROV 1860: 359–364 (Third) and 364–370 (Fourth)].

³⁸ Piotrovskaja mentions that she studied 45 MSS of the Third Russian recension [PIOTROVSKAJA 1978: 323] but her detailed study has never been published.

the Romanian version (not taken into account by Piotrovskaja). Durnovo criticized Grigoriev for neglecting this recension which could be sometime useful to clarify some difficulties of the Oldest one [DURNOVO 1915B: 290].

6. The Oldest Slavonic Recension: Manuscripts and Editions

6.1. The Russian Subrecension

The Russian subrecension is attested to with five manuscripts, two of them lost.³⁹ The critical edition by Alexander Dmitrievich Grigoriev [GRIGORIEV 1913] is based on the three preserved manuscripts with additional but inconsequent use of the Solovki manuscript. The latter is published in full by Nikolai Nikolaevich Durnovo [DURNOVO 1915A: 20–36]. An eclectic edition of the Russian subrecension with a useful discussion of the difficulties is provided by Oleg Viktorovich Tvorogov [TVOROGOV 1980/1999].

O = Russian State Library, Moscow, Coll. OI DR, no. 189 (15th cent.)—the main MS in Grigoriev's edition;

V = State Historical Museum (GIM), Moscow, coll. Vakhrameev, no. 427 (15th cent.);

Kh = coll. Khludov, no. 246 (17th cent.);

Sol = Solovki manuscript.

From the fifth manuscript, the lost MS 323 from A. I. Musin-Pushkin's library (especially known as the unique manuscript copy of the *Tale of Igor's Campaign*), only the initial part (15 lines of the printed text) is published by a Russian historian Nikolai Karamzin.⁴⁰

6.2. The Bulgarian Subrecension

The Bulgarian subrecension is witnessed with eight manuscripts, one of them lost. No critical edition available. All these manuscripts are described and compared in [KUZIDOVA 2012].

Sav (Serbian) = Savin 29 (Montenegro), ca. 1380; ed. [KUZIDOVA 2010]—this is **the earliest manuscript** of the Slavonic *Aḥiqar*;

B (Serbian) = Belgrade 828 (Pribilov zbornik), 1408–1409, burned in 1941; ed. [DURNOVO 1915A: 37–44];

N (Serbian having Bulgarian protograph) = Nikoljac (Montenegro) no. 82, 1515–1520, unpublished;

Ch (Serbian) = GIM, Moscow, coll. Chertkov, Q 254; ed. [GRIGORIEV 1913: 236–264 (Appendix)];

Sf (Bulgarian) = Sofia, National Library “St. Cyril and St. Methodius,” no. 309 (Beljakovski sbornik), second half of the 16th cent., unpublished;

Pv (Bulgarian) = Plovdiv, National Library, no. 101, second half of the 16th—early 17th cent., variant readings published in [GRIGORIEV 1913: 236–264 (Appendix)];

A (Bulgarian) = Sofia, National Library “St. Cyril and St. Methodius,” no. 326 (Adzharski sbornik), second half of the 17th—early 18th cent., unpublished;

D (Bulgarian) = Sofia, Centre of the Slavic and Byzantine Studies “Ivan Dujčev,” Cod. D Slavo 17, first half of the 18th cent., unpublished.

³⁹ On these two lost manuscripts, s. [BOBROV 2007].

⁴⁰ First published in 1816; cf. [KARAMZIN 1818: 165 (Notes' pagination), n. 272]. On this MS, s. [BOBROV 2007].

Moreover, two relatively long fragments of the romance of Ahiqar are contained in the Serbian manuscript Pc 53 of the National Library of Serbia, Belgrade, third quart of the 16th cent.; this manuscript, too, has a Bulgarian protograph; ed. [STANKOVIĆ 1980].

7. The Language of the Original of the Slavonic Version

7.1. Introduction

Normally, the Old Church Slavonic translations were produced from Greek, but there are some exceptions. Since Alexander Grigoriev, the Ahiqar romance is considered to be likely one of them, even if a possibility of translation from Greek has never been excluded. Be this as it may, the Slavonic text ultimately goes back to a Syriac recension, although not identical to any of the five surviving ones. However, the Syriac manuscripts are not earlier than the twelfth century, which is considered as the latest possible date for the Slavonic translation⁴¹ (s. below). Therefore, no wonder that the Slavonic version reflects some features of a Syriac recension which is now lost. Nikolai Durnovo already noticed such a potential interest of the Slavonic version for recovering an earlier state of the Syriac text [DURNOVO 1931: 222].

Thus, taking aside completely arbitrary suppositions, there are only four a priori acceptable hypotheses: (1) translation from Syriac through a Greek intermediary (the common opinion before Grigoriev and still an authoritative hypothesis now), (2) translation from Syriac directly (a less popular but respected hypothesis by Nau and Grigoriev), (3) translation from Syriac through an Armenian intermediary (an earlier hypothesis considered by Grigoriev among others at the beginning of his research [GRIGORIEV 1900: 113],⁴² then rejected by him but reinforced by Martirossian in the 1960s),⁴³ and (4) translation from Syriac through an Arabic intermediary (one of the hypotheses discussed by Durnovo, together with possibilities of Greek and Syriac original⁴⁴).

Out of hand, we can exclude only the hypothesis of an Armenian intermediary. To begin with, the core of the argumentation by Martirossian is now de-

⁴¹ The terminus ante quem for the Slavonic translation could be established according to the manuscript tradition, the thirteenth century. The popular date established by Durnovo is that of the *Molenie Daniila Zatochnika* ("The Prayer of Daniel the Prisoner"), dated by him to the 1230s [DURNOVO 1915B: 298] but now dated approximately to the late 12th or the early 13th cent.

⁴² Grigoriev's only reason was the peculiar name, in the Slavonic version, of the servant of Ahiqar beheaded in his place, Арапаръ /*Arapar*/, which he put in connexion (but even without providing translation) with the Armenian word անապար /*arapar*/ "stony, rugged, craggy, uneven, rough." One cannot see how this would help to understand the name of the servant (on which s. below, sect. 7.6.2).

⁴³ Definitively in [MARTIROSSIAN 1969–1972, 2: 153–188].

⁴⁴ Especially in [DURNOVO 1915A: 99–103].

stroyed with introducing the Demotic materials into discussion of the Ahiqar tradition (in the 1970s). The Armenian *Sondergut* partially shared with the Slavonic version is no longer Armenian, even though it is attested to in Demotic Egyptian only in a minor part. Thus, fails Martirossian's main argument against the possibility of a common Syriac source for the cases of concordance between Slavonic and Armenian against Syriac. The decisive value has, however, another argument: the cases of misunderstanding of the Syriac original by the translator from Syriac, presented by the Slavonic version (which will be discussed below) have no traces in the Armenian recensions. Thus, this translator from Syriac was translating into other language than Armenian. This is an argument *ex silentio*, but, for the Armenian version, it works, because this version is preserved in a great and representative number of manuscripts. It is hardly possible that a relatively great number of mistranslations would not permeate among the Armenian manuscripts. In fact, the Armenian translation is of a high quality, much better than the translation from Syriac which is represented in the Slavonic version. Therefore, the argumentation against the hypothesis of an Armenian intermediary must be considered as decisive.

The hypothesis of an Arabic intermediary cannot be excluded so easy and so definitively. The same argumentum *ex silentio* is formally applicable to the Arabic version, too (it does not coincide with the Slavonic one in the errors of translation from Syriac), but, here, such an argument does not work. In the Arabic branch, we dispose with only a minor part of the ancient manuscript tradition, and so, our data are not representative enough to allow us to argue *ex silentio*. The hypothesis of an Arabic intermediary is, moreover, acceptable linguistically—even if we take into account the data to be discussed below, in addition to those provided by Durnovo. The most important argument against this hypothesis is I think the Ockham's razor: we don't know any other translation from Arabic into Slavonic in the Slavic literatures of such an early epoch, whereas the two remaining hypotheses, the "Greek" one and even the "Syriac" one, could be inscribed into the known context of the history of texts. Thus, from a logical point of view, the "Arabic" hypothesis is an unjustified complication—at least, until new data will be discovered.

This is why, in the following, we will limit ourselves to discussing the unique alternative: a Greek intermediary *vs* a direct translation from Syriac.

7.2. Methodology

The major difficulty of our task is to be able to discern between the text translated from some original directly and the text translated from the same original through a translation into some third language. As a similar but not identical case one can refer to the *Apocalypse of Abraham* with its linguistic analysis by Alexander Kulik: only the Slavonic version exists but it reveals many features of the lost Greek original (even of its uncial writing) and, moreover,

some features of the Aramaic original of the Greek version [KULIK 2004]. In the Slavonic *Aḥiqar*, there are no such striking traces of a Greek *Vorlage*, but, theoretically, this might be explained by a good quality of translation from Greek (even in the case of a bad quality of translation from Syriac into Greek).

In the case of the Slavonic *Aḥiqar*, some general rules of the studies of a lost *Vorlage* through the preserved version must be recalled, because they were put aside by the Slavists. For instance, Nikolai Durnovo (following Alexander Grigoriev) wrote: “As well as Grigoriev, me too, I consider to be possible to judge on the language of the original of the Slavonic translation basing on the proper names only.”⁴⁵ Such a restriction is unjustifiable. Another important source of data is the errors of translation. As it is stated by Gérard Garitte, among the translators, the worst ones are for us the best ones, because they are revealing themselves in the greatest extent.⁴⁶ Thus, our observations will be based not only on the proper names but also on the errors of translation in other parts of the text.

Dealing with the question whether a Greek intermediary was involved or not, we have to elaborate another series of rules to be applied to the features of the Syriac original revealed. All of them are proposed in the present situation of the *Aḥiqar* studies, when the quest of the undeniable traces of the Greek original has been already shown to be in vain.

All the features revealing the original in Syriac are classified into four categories:

1. those to whom the Greek linguistic milieu would be perfectly transparent (that is, easily transmissible through Greek⁴⁷);
2. those to whom the Greek linguistic milieu would present a considerable difficulty to pass by (that is, those whose route via a Greek translation is not especially probable);
3. those to whom passing through the Greek linguistic milieu is impossible;
4. other features that find the best explanation out of existence or inexistence of an intermediary between Syriac and Slavonic.

One can see that the features of the category (1) say nothing about the presence or absence of a Greek intermediary. They are, however, useful to grasp the quality of the translation from Syriac, regardless of the language of this translation, or, maybe, to evaluate the work of the editor responsible for the Syriac recension ultimately translated into Slavonic.

⁴⁵ “Подобно Гр[игорье]ву и я нахожу возможным судить о языке оригинала славянского перевода только на основании собственных имен” [DURNOVO 1915A: 100].

⁴⁶ “...vus de notre point de vue particulier, ce sont les moins bons qui sont les meilleurs” [GARITTE 1971/1980: 691].

⁴⁷ And, normally, a fortiori through Armenian and Arabic.

The features of the category (2) are especially important to us, despite the fact that every one of them taken alone would be no more informative than a feature of the category (1). If something which must be considered as having low probability under given circumstances occurs with a perceivable frequency, we have to consider a possibility that the real circumstances are somewhat different. Thus, if some features that are unlikely, even if theoretically possible in Greek occur many times, this is a strong reason contra the hypothesis of a Greek intermediary.

The value of the features belonging to the category (3) is self-evident. The category (4) contains the features corroborating or weakening the conclusion based on the features of the categories (2) and (3).

The cases of preserving /b/ in Slavonic transliterations were considered as belonging to our category (3) (that is, as strong arguments against translation from Greek) by Grigoriev but reconsidered as belonging to our category (2) by DURNOVO [1915B: 296–297]. I agree with the latter: such cases would be peculiar and unusual, would we meet them in a text translated from Greek, but not theoretically excluded. Thus, I will skip their detailed discussion limiting myself to the reference to Durnovo's analysis as sufficient.

Finally, one more methodological consideration. I consider being safer, in the study of the original language of the Slavonic version, to refrain from any judgment concerning the priority of either Bulgarian or Russian subrecension of the work. I would prefer a vice versa approach, namely, to use the conclusion concerning the language of original of the Slavonic translation as an argument in this discussion.

7.3. Category (1): the Marks of Syriac Permeable through Greek

There are, at least, four cases when difficulties of Slavonic manuscripts could be clarified with the help of reconstruction of the lost Syriac original, but all the cases to be discussed in this section are featuring the work of either editor of the Syriac recension translated into Slavonic or translator from Syriac regardless of the language of his translation, either Greek or Slavonic.

7.3.1. “Sore, ulcer” (ܐܬܝܚܐܐ) *pro* “sandals” (ܐܬܝܚܐܐ)

The saying preserved in SyrA “My son, while thou hast shoes on thy feet, tread down the thorns and make a path for thy sons and for thy sons' son” (no. 13) is distorted in Slavonic manuscripts, e.g.: Сыну, ѣдну сущю на нозѣ тво-ей, не велми вѣступаи на ню, и уготовай путь сыномъ и дѣщеремъ своимъ [GRIGORIEV 1913: 27]⁴⁸ (no. 9; “Oh son, if thou hast an ulcer on thy feet, do not tread much on it and prepare a path for thy sons and daughters”). The whole sentence became senseless.

⁴⁸ Уготова (O) corrected to уготовай (V).

One can see that the translator from Syriac has in mind, instead of the correct reading ܡܫܢܐ /*msānē*/ “sandals, shoes,” an adjective ܡܫܝܐ /*masyā*/ understood as a noun with the meaning “sore, ulcer.”⁴⁹ The two dots above *nun* in the correct reading are the mark of plural form, which is not always written properly in the manuscripts, and so, the only important difference in writing is between two similar letters, *nun* and *yud*.

Probably it is an editor (scribe) and not the translator who is responsible for this error.

7.3.2. ܡܫܠܐ /*ḥyālā*/ “Weakness” *pro* /*ḥaylā*/ “Power/Eloquence”

The saying that corresponds to no. 19 in SyrA and is preserved in somewhat different forms in other recensions has a very peculiar wording in Slavonic. Thus, in, e.g., SyrA, we have: “My son, go not after the beauty of a woman and lust not after her in thy heart, because the beauty of a woman is her good sense, and her adornment is the word of her mouth” (no. 19). Other recensions differ in wording but preserve the general sense. The overall picture is the same even in Slavonic but one anomaly occurs: ...и женьстьи красотѣ не жадаи: тоя бо красота слабость язычная⁵⁰ (no. 14b; “...and lust not after the beauty of a woman, because her beauty is the weakness of language”).

Unfortunately, we have not, in the preserved recensions, the correct pattern of the wording of this obviously distorted phrase. It is, however, recoverable. Indeed, in Syriac, there are two complete graphic homonyms, *ḥyālā* and *ḥaylā*, which both are written as ܡܫܠܐ and differ in vocalisation only. The former means “debility, deficiency, weakness,”⁵¹ whereas the latter means literally “power” and, by extension, “sense (of a word),” “eloquence,” and “eloquent sense of speech,” that is, a meaning absolutely adequate to our context. This meaning, however, is not quite literal, and so, an inexperienced translator would have been unaware of it.

This error does not allow defining the language of translation.

7.3.3. An Unapprehended Idiom: ܠܝܬܝܢܐ ܕܡܝܢܐ “Look to Thyself; Beware”

A peculiar *lectio difficilior* of MS O is eliminated from other Slavonic manuscripts and has no exact pattern among the non-Slavonic recensions. In the dialogue between the Pharaoh and Aḥiqar about the next difficult task (twining cables from the sand), the Pharaoh adds to his refuse to hear anything from Aḥiqar: не слушаю твое слова. и виж* [the word is abbreviated] си тако, яко

⁴⁹ Literally “moist, rotten” but also, in the medical usage, cf. the phrase “membra putrida” [PAYNE SMITH 1879–1901: 2176]. Cf. also a similar noun ܡܫܝܐ /*masyu*/ “decay, rottenness, an ulcer” [PAYNE SMITH (MARGOLIOUTH) 1903: 284].

⁵⁰ **Sol** has сласть (lit. “sweetness”) instead of слабость (“weakness”).

⁵¹ [PAYNE SMITH 1879–1901: 1261]: “debilitas, infirmitas.”

ты⁵² есмь рекл [GRIGORIEV 1913: 201] (“I do not hear thy words. And *see* [the general meaning of the abbreviated word is “to see”] thee/ty thus as I have said to thee”).

This is a calque of the Syriac idiom ܐܢܬܐ ܕܢܝܢܐ, literally “see at you(rself),” with the meaning “look after/to thyself” or “beware” (cf. Russian idiom “смотри у меня!”).

Again, this error is committed by the translator from Syriac, but, again, it does not allow defining the language of translation.

7.3.4. “Dale of Egypt” vs “Eagles’ Dale”: “Egypt” (ܡܕܢܚܐ) *pro* “Eagles” (ܢܝܫܪܝܢ)
François Nau, who had an access to the Slavonic version through Jagić’s German translation only, was the first who proposed the hypothesis of a direct translation from Syriac into Slavonic. Among his arguments was the confusion, in Slavonic, between “Egypt” (ܡܕܢܚܐ /*mesren*/) and “Eagles” (ܢܝܫܪܝܢ /*nešrin*/; st. constr. pl.). In all the versions and recensions except the Slavonic ones, the appointed place of the meeting between the army led by Ahiqar and the army of the Pharaoh is called “Eagles’ Dale” (ܢܝܫܪܝܢ ܕܥܝܠܐ). In Slavonic, this toponyme is changed into a hardly convenient “Egyptian Dale” (поле Египетское “Egyptian field”) [NAU 1909: 98].⁵³

Such confusion is possible within the Syriac manuscript tradition, and so, can be attributed to either Syrian editor/scribe or translator from Syriac with an equal probability. Of course, even in the latter case, it says nothing about the language of translation.

7.4. Category (2): the Marks of Syriac Scarcely Permeable through Greek

The Category (2) encompasses the traces of the Syriac original, whose passing through Greek is not forbidden with strong linguistic or other reasons. However, for each of them, the Greek language would be an uncomfortable milieu, and so—what is the most important—for all of them in sum passing through Greek becomes extremely unlikely (because the probability of the sequence of independent events is equal to the product of probabilities of each of them). Thus, even if each one of the following cases is not sufficient to exclude the possibility of a Greek intermediary, taken together, they form a strong argument against it.

⁵² Sic. Obviously instead of the correct *ти* (“to thee”).

⁵³ Nau was the first to suppose that the Slavonic version was translated directly from Syriac, whereas he did not reject the alternative hypothesis of a Greek intermediary. Oddly enough, Paolo Giaiero allows, for an explanation of *Nisrin* in Arabic recensions (which is obviously an inexact transliteration from Syriac), a possibility for the Slavonic reading to be original (“...l’ipotesi più semplice è che *Nisrin* in realtà sia una forma corrotta del sir. class. *Misrin* ‘Egitto’” [GIAIERO 2005: 245]).

To this category belong as well the cases of preserving /b/ in the loan-words, as it was shown by Durnowo (s. above, section 7.2).

7.4.1. “Alon/Alom” *pro* “Elam” (ܐܠܢ)

Among the addressees of the two treacherous letters allegedly written by Aḥīqar was an unnamed “king of Persia and Elam” (ܐܠܢ ܐܠܡ). In Slavonic, he became “king of Persia, whose name is Alon [**Sol** Alom]” (царє-ви перскому, ему же имя Алонъ [**Sol** Аломъ]).⁵⁴

In the Serbian recension, the only one known to Nau, the name of the king of Persia is *Nalon*. This confusion was interpreted by Nau as resulted from reading ʿayyin as *nun*, and so, it became the second and the latter argument provided by Nau for translation from Syriac into Slavonic. One can see, however, that the erroneous initial *n* does not occur in the earliest Slavonic recension.

Without taking into account Nau’s work, Durnovo noticed a corruption of the toponyme Elam and qualified the reading of **Sol** “Alom” as “more genuine” (“более первоначально”) [NAU 1909: 13, n.2; 98; DURNOVO 1915B: 292].

The toponyme “Elam” was quite usual not only to the Syrian audience but to the Greek audience, too. This country was not more exotic than Persia. Thus, ignorance of Elam would be impossible for a Syrian editor and hardly possible for a translator from Syriac into Greek—whereas it would be quite possible for a Slavic scribe.

7.4.2. “Naliv” *pro* “Niniveh” (ܢܠܝܿܿܝܿܿܬܿܐ)

The Assyrian king Sennacherib has, in Syriac, the title “the king of Assyria and Nineveh” (ܡܠܟܐ ܕܐܣܘܪܝܐ ܕܢܝܢܝܿܿܝܿܿܬܿܐ). Both parts of this title, as they are represented in Slavonic, are of interest for us. The toponyme Nineveh (/ninwē/) is represented as if its spelling was without *yod* and with *lamad* instead of *nun*: ܢܠܝ* (Наливская страна “country of Naliv”). Already Grigoriev and, after him, Nikita Aleksandrovich MESHCHERSKIJ [1964: 205–206] (cf. earlier [MESHCHERSKIJ 1958/1995: 251–252]) saw here an argument for a direct translation from Syriac. However, Durnovo answered that here, like in the case of “Egypt vs. Eagles,” “. . . is possible a misspelling already in the Semitic original.”⁵⁵ This is not the case, however.

The cases of an imaginary “Eagles’ Dale” and known to everybody and absolutely real Nineveh are quite different. It is highly improbable that there would

⁵⁴ Here and below the readings of the majority of the manuscripts are given according to the edition [TVOROGOV 1980/1999]. The references to the particular manuscripts imply the editions enumerated above in the section 6.

⁵⁵ “...возможна описка еще в семитском оригинале” [DURNOVO 1915A: 100].

be a Syrian scribe (that is, a literate man!) unable to recognize “Nineveh” when it is spelled correctly and in a place where its appearing is to be expected (a royal title). It is not much more probable even for a Greek (Byzantine) translator. Such an error would most likely occur in a culture quite remote from the realities of Byzantine and Iranian empires. Thus, this is a strong, even if not decisive argument for the direct translation from Syriac.

7.4.3. ܐܕܪܐ Rendered as “Ador”

Another part of the title of Sennacherib is in Slavonic a transliteration from Syriac ܐܕܪܐ /*aḏor*/ (adjective Адоровъ “belonging to Ador”), which differs very much from the names of Assyria in Greek sources (normally Ἀσσυρία but occurring as well in the forms Ἀττούρια, Ἀτυρία, Ἀσσούρ⁵⁶). An important distinction is ου or υ in Greek vs /o/ in Slavonic.

Slavonic *Ador* is closer to Syriac *Aḏor* than to the Greek forms but /d/ instead of /t/ needs to be explained. I think it is explainable with the phonetics of the Syriac dialect known to the translator. Now, there are, on the territory of the ancient Iranian empire, Neo-Aramaic dialects where, in the intervocalic position, etymological *t > d; there are some other dialects, where such processes took place earlier but now the resulting d > l. The only problem is that all these modern Aramaic dialects are Jewish [MUTZAFI 2004: 37; KHAN 2004: 29–30].⁵⁷ However, the geography of the corresponding phonological processes in the Jewish Aramaic dialects covers a large part of the historical Iranian empire.

Moreover, in another Slavonic pseudepigraphon, *2 Enoch* 48:2 (long recension only), translated from the lost Greek original, the Hebrew name of the month Tēbēt appears as *Theveda* (MS J) or *Thivitha* (MS R) or *Thevada* (MS P) [ANDERSEN 1983: 175, n. e], with alternation between *th* and *d* at the end of the word. These forms, even if they were transliterated from Greek, render some Aramaic pronunciation (traditional Greek rendering being τηβηθ in both Hellenistic Jewish and Byzantine texts; cf. Esther 2:16 *cod. Sinaiticus*, gloss, rendered as теβεфъ /*tevef*’/ in the Slavonic translation [LUNT, TAUBE 1998: 68, 306]); the transition *b* > v is common to all Aramaic dialects, whereas *t* > t (*th*) becomes possible in the Eastern (Iranian) dialects where the emphatic consonants became plain. The final *d*, however (alternating with *th*), is inexplicable without recourse to an unknown Aramaic dialect which may be similar to the dialect underlying the Slavonic *Aḥiqar* text. It is possible that both *2 Enoch*’s translation from Greek and *Aḥiqar*’s translation from Syriac go back to the same milieu.

⁵⁶ This list is provided by [DURNOVO 1915B: 295] but I have checked it with the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*.

⁵⁷ Khan mentions the same process (*t > d > l) in the Jewish dialects of Iran (Urmia, Ruwanduz, and Rustaq). I am very grateful to Alexei Lyavdansky for his consultation.

Appearance of *Ador* in a Greek translation is phonologically possible but very unlikely. In the Greek language, there were a number of place names for Assyria, the country known to the every educated person. In the Slavonic world, the situation was different, especially if the translation is to be dated to the earliest period of the Slavonic letters (as now Bulgarian scholars think, s. below). Therefore, *Ador* is also an important reason in favour of the direct translation form Syriac.

7.4.4. Aḥiqar's Title in the MSS Pv and B: съвалаторъ = ܐܕܪܐ ܠܐܬܐ "Elder for Assyria"

Nadan, when writing to the king of Persia in the name of Aḥiqar, introduced him to king with the following *lectio difficilior* preserved in two South Slavic manuscripts only: съвалаторъ /s'valator'/ (**Pv**) / съ оулаторъ /s' ulator'/ (**B**). The first of them could be read immediately as ܐܕܪܐ ܠܐܬܐ /sabā l-ātor/ "Elder for/in Assyria". This title has no correspondence among the Syriac and other Christian recensions but goes back to the Elephantine papyrus (although, of course, through the lost Syriac archetype of the Christian romance). In the papyrus, Aḥiqar is regularly and officially called not only "scribe" but also "elder" (ܫܒܐ). In the preserved Syriac recensions, the word "elder" occurs only in the mouth of Nadan, as a mockery. The meaning of "elder" as a high state position in Assyria was beyond the Christian scribes, even if it was, at first, retained from the Aramaic *Vorlage*.

The translator did not recognise the toponyme *ātor* "Assyria" within the phrase which he did not understand. Nevertheless, he used the Slavonic letter *tverdo* corresponding to the voiceless consonant /t/ for rendering the phoneme designated with Syriac *tet* in an intervocalic position. However, the same toponyme when recognised is rendered with the voiced consonant /d/ throughout the text ("Ador"). I do not know how to explain this fact.

Needless to say that an untranslated phrase in Syriac written down with Slavonic letters has, perhaps, some chance to be obtained through a Greek intermediary, but this is hardly the best hypothesis.

7.4.5. One More Untranslated Phrase?

In the earliest of the manuscripts, **Sav**, there is the following difficult place.⁵⁸ Aḥiqar asks Sennacherib why he wants to kill him without hearing his explanation: како хочешы погубити менѣ сили имамаль ѿ мене реч(у)—"why thou wilt me to perish *sili imamal* '<?!> from me a speech/word?"

There is no corresponding phrase in the preserved non-Slavonic recensions. In the Slavonic manuscripts, the text runs as follows:

⁵⁸[KUZIDOVA 2010: 503] for the text of **Sav** and the variants.

не слыша от уст моих ответа (**Ch**) “without hearing an answer from my mouth,”
 не слышавъ (**Sf**) “without hearing,”
 не слышавъ ответъ (**Pv = O**) “without hearing an answer,”
 не слышавъ от мене речи (**B**) “without hearing from me a speech/word.”

The mysterious phrase *sili imamal'* sounds similar to two Syriac roots, *sly* /*salli*/ (intensive stem of the verb *sl'* “to reject” marked as “rare” in a dictionary [PAYNE SMITH (MARGOLIOUTH) 1903: 378]) and ܡܠܠܐ /*mamlē*/, also a “rarer” form of the noun ܡܠܠܐ /*mamlilā*/ “speech; talk, discourse.”⁵⁹ The verb *sly* is normally followed with the preposition *l-* [PAYNE SMITH 1879–1901: 2638], and so, it seems, that the initial *i-* in *imamal'* is a trace of ܠܐ /*salli li*/ “(he) rejected me,” corrupted due to the haplography.

Without venturing into conjectural retroversion back into Syriac, I would conclude that the fragment under consideration is a remnant of a subordinate clause whose general meaning is “(thou wilt me to perish) after having rejected me with my speech,” that is, “without leaving me to speak.” This phrase turned out to be difficult because of its usage of two rare words, but the translator understood its general meaning from the context, and so, he added the phrase “from me a speech” as a partial translation of the difficult place. Probably the translation was left unfinished.

There is no formal reason to exclude a possibility that this semi-translation was performed into Greek, but it is not very plausible. Each editorial stage makes the text smoother, and so, such senseless inclusions have a minor chance to permeate into the translation.

7.5. Category (3): Marks of Syriac Incompatible with a Greek Intermediary

Three features of the Slavonic texts must be interpreted as even theoretically incompatible with the possibility of a Greek intermediary. Only one of them has been discussed earlier but not in an exhaustive way.

7.5.1. ܣܢܗܪܝܒ *snhryb* “Sennacherib” as “Сенагрипъ /*Senagrip*/”

One of the most striking “Syriac” features of the Slavonic texts is their rendering of the Syriac form of the name of Sennacherib, ܣܢܗܪܝܒ *snhryb*, in a very exact way, Сенагрипъ /*Senagrip*/. The final /*p*/ instead of the etymological /**b*/ is a common feature of the mediaeval Aramaic, not only Syriac (//**b*/ becomes voiceless at the end of the syllable), which is not specific to any dialect (cf. [LIPINŃSKI 1997: 104]).

The Slavonic form is an exact transliteration of the Syriac one and differs very much for the traditional Greek forms such as Σαναχάρριβος (Herodotus),

⁵⁹ [PAYNE SMITH (MARGOLIOUTH) 1903: 279]: “ܡܠܠܐ rarely ܡܠܠܐ.”

Σεναχρήριβος (Flavius Josephus), Σεπναχρήριμ (Septuagint). Durnovo quotes this variety of forms to show that there would be some another Greek form which was transliterated into Slavonic. Thus, he quotes also the form Σενερίφ taken from a Greek recension of the *Apocalypse* of Pseudo-Methodius. Durnovo thought that the Greek prototype of the Slavonic *Senagrip* would look like “something of the kind of *Σιναρίφ or *Σιναγρίφ” [DURNOVO 1915B: 295–296].

There are two serious flaws in this Durnovo’s reasoning. At first, he does not take into account that the Slavonic form is not in any extent an arbitrary one but an exact transliteration of the Syriac prototype, whereas the Syriac prototype is the normative Syriac form used without variants throughout the Syriac Bible and the Syriac original of Pseudo-Methodius [REININK 1993: 11–12]⁶⁰ (Durnovo still did not know that the Pseudo-Methodius is a Syriac work of the 690s, whose Greek text is a translation of the early ninth century). The renderings of the name of Sennacherib in different manuscripts of the earliest Greek recension of Pseudo-Methodius is especially revealing on the ways of rendering Syriac ܣܢܚܪܝܒ in Greek: Σενερήβ, Σενερήν, Σουερήν, Σενερήθ, Σενεριβέχ [AERTS, KORTEKAAS 1998: 102].

In the Greek forms, there is only the following alternative for rendering Semitic *het*: either χ or /ø/, but never γ (at the beginning of words, *het* could be rendered as well with *spiritus asper* or *spiritus lenis*). In Slavonic, there is /g/, and so, its Greek prototype would have γ. But the latter is phonologically forbidden in Greek transcriptions of Semitic words (and ignorance of this fact is the second and the greatest flaw in Durnovo’s reasoning). Thus, Slavonic /g/ in Сенагрипъ is a direct rendering of Syriac *het*. This conclusion is corroborated with the very fact of such accuracy in rendering of the Syriac form of the name.

7.5.2. ܢܒܘܗܝܠ *nbwḥyl* “Nabuḥail” as “*Набугаиль /*Nabugail*”

The recension of Aḥiqar translated into Slavonic had some peculiarities of the plot which make it closer to the recension SyrE but, nevertheless, not identical to any of the known recensions. In Slavonic, the friend and colleague of Aḥiqar Nabusumiskun (= Nabū-šum-iškun “Nabu has effected a son” [TALLQVIST 1914: 160]) loses his name and acquires, instead, the name of another character, Nabuḥail (ܢܒܘܗܝܠ *nbwḥyl*) (= Nabū-ḥa’ilu “Power of Nabu”⁶¹). According to

⁶⁰ There is, in the Pseudo-Methodius, only a minor variation of spelling (implying the same pronunciation): ܣܢܚܪܝܒ.

⁶¹ Cf. [CAD 6: 31], sv. **ḥa’ilu*: “meaning uncertain, occurs only in personal names. . . , perhaps an Aramaic loanword.” However, Nau was certainly right when interpreting this name as related to Aramaic *hyl* “power”: “Nabū est puissant” or “Nabū est (ma) force” [NAU 1909: 12].

SyrE, Nabuḥail is the name of one of the two young servants of Aḥiqar who were taming the eagles⁶² and, at the end, were also the guards of imprisoned Nadan.⁶³ In Slavonic, these servants are unnamed. Normally, in Slavonic, even Nabusumiskun passes unnamed, too, called only with his title (which will be discussed below). Only at the end, Aḥiqar mentions him with the name (in Dative case), whose spelling is, of course, instable from manuscript to manuscript.

The Dative forms of the Slavonic names are the following: Набугинау (O, main scribe), Набугилу (O, correction above the line) [GRIGORIEV 1913: 207].⁶⁴ Durnovo quotes other manuscripts, especially **Ch** (Нагубыль) and **Kh** (Анабугиль), to make his point that the name is hardly recoverable, and so, is of minimal help in discussion of the original language [DURNOVO 1915B: 296–297]. However, this name turns out to be perfectly recoverable with the help of the Syriac recension E (to 1915 unpublished but accessible, in the relevant part, through the 1909 Nau’s monograph). One can see that two among the Slavonic forms, namely, Набугинау and Набугилу allow to recover the original Slavonic rendering as *Набугаилъ /*Nabugail*/.

I refrain from discussion of /b/ in all the preserved forms but, once more, refer to /g/, also preserved in all these forms and representing Semitic /h/, as a proof of phonological impossibility of a Greek intermediary in the case of this name.

7.5.3. Nabuḥail’s Title: Намукъ /*namuk*/ = ܢܡܝܩܐ /*namiqā*/ = νομικός

The title of Nabusumiskun (Nabuḥail in Slavonic) presents a problem because the earliest Syriac recension contained a rendering of his title known from the Elephantine papyrus in the Official Aramaic of the Assyrian empire. In the papyrus, it is ܠܒܝܐ. This word is known in the Aramaic language of Jews only with the meaning of “youth.”⁶⁵ However, in the Official Aramaic it was a form of an Akkadian loanword *rabū* “officer” [KAUFMAN 1975: 87]. The literal sense

⁶² At this place, his name could go back to the archetype of the Syriac romance, because SyrA has here ܘܒܝܠ *wb’yl* “Ubail,” which may be a corruption of “Nabuḥail” [NAU 1909: 12].

⁶³ His name is spelled correctly ܢܒܘܫܡܝܫܟܘܢ at the second instance [NAU 1918–1919B: 366] and not quite correctly at the first [NAU 1918–1919B: 357] (ܢܒܘܫܡܝܫܟܘܢ *nbwilhl*).

⁶⁴ Grigoriev (followed by [TVOROGOV 1980/1999]) is right in considering the next word “намуку” as a separate word and not as a part of the name, s. below; Durnovo’s criticism and his reading Набунамуку are unjustified; cf. [DURNOVO 1915B: 296]. There are other possibilities to read the correction. Actually, it contains the following letters inscribed above the letters of the word Набугинау: г above и, и above н, л above а (the second one), and y above y. Tvorogov reads Набугинаиу.

⁶⁵ Yardeni and Porten translate even in the Elephantine papyrus (into English and into Hebrew): “the young man” and ܠܒܝܐ [PORTEN, YARDENI 1993: 31, 33, 35], but Cowley translated “the officer” [COWLEY 1923: 221–222].

of the word became inaccessible to the Christian and Jewish audience long before the date of the composition of the Syriac romance. Thus, in SyrA appears, as the constant and repeating epithet of Nabusumiskun, the phrase ܐܒܝ ܡܫܟܝܢ, which Harris refused to translate [CHL 1913: 112–113] and Nau was trying to explain but with no much success [NAU 1918–1919B: 303]. It can be translated literally as “the Humble/Lowly, my fellow.” This wording sounds a bit Christian, but, for the Christians, the word “humble” /*meskin*/ after the name would be appropriated only in first person speech. In fact, this epithet is nothing but an attempt of understanding רביא in the Aramaic *Vorlage*.

No wonder, that the later editor introduced some clarifications and simplifications. Thus, in the earliest Armenian recensions (going back to the late fifth cent.), constantly appears “Abusmak’, my comrade” (Աբուսմաք ընկերն իմ), and, in Slavonic, he is simply другъ (“friend”). Nevertheless, a wish to designate his title in a more comprehensible way persisted. Thus, in Slavonic, we meet *Набугаилу намуку “to Nabuḥail *namuk*” [GRIGORIEV 1913: 207]. In Syriac, the original word is obvious: ܡܫܩܝܐ /*namiqā*/ or ܡܢܩܝܐ /*numiqā*/ (both spellings are acceptable) “notary”, which, in turn, are transliterations of Greek νομικός “lawyer, official.”

This Greek loanword in Syriac is a powerful argument against a Greek intermediary. It is extremely unlikely that a Greek scribe would not understand in Syriac a Greek loanword whose meaning in Greek was quite common.

7.6. Category (4): Other Linguistically Problematic Points

The Slavonic translation poses several other problems which must be discussed, at least, to know whether they put under suspicion our conclusion about translation from Syriac.

7.6.1. Aḥiqar Named *Akir*

In Syriac, the name of Aḥiqar is always ܐܚܝܩܪ, with the unique exception of SyrD where it is ܐܚܝܩܪ *Ḥiqar*. The Armenian version has Իսիկար *Khikar* in all recensions, and the Arabic version has ܚܝܩܐ *Ḥiqār*. Only the Slavonic version has *Akir* (Акиръ), with *Akirie* in the Serbian recension (a vocative form which became also nominative) and, from the latter, *Archirie* in the Romanian version.⁶⁶

As Nau pointed out, the loss of /*h*/ in Slavonic does not require a Greek intermediary [NAU 1909: 98]. However, he did not refer to any precise phono-

⁶⁶ Ciuchindel considers *r* in *Archirie* as inserted by analogy with other Romanian names of Greek origin, such as *Arghirie*, *Arghir*, *Arhir*: [CIUCHINDEL 1976: 97–98]; cf. *ibid.* other forms of the name derived in the Romanian manuscripts from the genuine *Archirie*.

logical reason for this change. In fact, this problem is not so easy, because we have, in Slavonic, the regular correspondence of *glagol'* /g/ to Syriac /ḡ/, both at the end of the syllable (*Senagrip*) and in an intervocalic position (**Nabugail*).

In the Syriac version of the *Tobit*, the name is spelled as ܐܚܝܗܘܪ *Aḥiāḥōr*, but in the Vulgate (translated from some unknown “Chaldean” original) it becomes *Achior*.

Thus, it is most probably, I think, that the Slavonic form *Akir* goes back to the Syriac form of SyrD, *Ḥiqār*, whose early origin must be assumed due to the Armenian version. At the beginning of the word, /ḡ/ would be, probably, rendered with /ø/ plus the vowel /a/, as it was normally in Greek transliterations of the Semitic names (much more often than its rendering with χ).⁶⁷ The resulting actual form *Akir* looks as a simplification (instead of such forms as **Aikar* or **Ajkar*, which would contain the diphthong /aj/ impossible in Old Slavonic; the normal, for Old Slavonic, change /aj/ > /e/ would be forbidden because of necessity to preserve /a/ as a rendering of /ḡ/).

7.6.2. Arapar

The name of the bad servant decapitated instead of the Aḥiqar is, in the Slavonic version, quite specific but not changed according to the manuscripts, Арапаръ *Arapar*. His name is often absent from other versions, but is presented in some of the Syriac ones as either *Manzipar* or *Mediapar* and, in Armenian, as *Sēnip'ar* (and some similar variants).⁶⁸ Nau proposed to understand the ending *-apar* as a corruption of the Akkadian very common ending of personal names *-apal* (status constructus of *aplu(m)* “son”).

If *Arapar* is an Akkadian name, its initial part would go back to a late Akkadian loanword *ārā* “earth, land” [CDA: 21] (from Aramaic ܐܪܥܐ). Thus, this symbolic name has the meaning “son of the earth,” and so, has something to do with his death, when his corpse and his head, separated, were thrown and left on the surface of the earth with some specified, by the order of Sennacherib, distance from each other. Arapar’s execution was certainly a ritual, already inapprehensible to the Christian audience, and such a name would fit perfectly with it. Thus, this name could be an archaic feature going back, through the archetype of the Syriac Christian romance, to its Aramaic substrate.

⁶⁷ S., for the conclusions based on the most comprehensive collection of data, [ILAN 2002–2012, I: 19; II: 10].

⁶⁸ Cf. a discussion of these names in [NAU 1909: 13; DURNOVO 1915A: 78]. As it seems to me, all these names were assimilated to Iranian names with ending *-bar*. Here and elsewhere [DURNOVO 1915B: 289], Durnovo repeats his erroneous conviction that the name *Arapar* is mentioned, in the form *ʿArāfar-purijus*, in the *Thesaurus Syriacus* by Payne Smith (with no column number provided). Most probably, this is a misunderstood reference provided to him by his friend and authority in Semitic matters academian Fedor Korsch, who died in 1915. I am unable to establish the real source referred to (apparently, it is not the lexicon of Bar Bahlul, either).

7.6.3. Nadan Named *Anadan*

The name of Aḫiqar's stepson, Nadan is preserved in Armenian, Նադան,⁶⁹ and Arabic, نادان. The Syriac consonant writing *ndn* implies the same reading, because the two /a/ instead of /a/ and /i/ in Akkadian *Nadin* are attested to with the whole Greek manuscript tradition of the *Book of Tobit*.⁷⁰ This name, however, becomes *Anadan* in the whole Slavonic tradition, including its Romanian part.

Joseph Halévy proposed to derive *Nadan* from (Neo-) Persian نادان *nādān* "fool" [HALÉVY 1900: 57, n. 3], but this word is too late to contribute to our romance. Even in Middle Persian, the corresponding word is *adān* (transliteration *d'n*) "ignorant" [MACKENZIE 1971/1986: 5], which is not very similar to *Nadan*.

However, the name *Anadan*, known from Slavonic, could be read as Middle Persian *anādān* (transliteration *n't'n*) "insolvent," from *ādān* (*t'n*) "wealthy; solvent" [MACKENZIE 1971/1986: 5, 8]. This meaning would be perfectly fitting with the role of Nadan whose wealth turned out to be ephemeral.

Halévy's reasoning, whereas unacceptable in its original form, could be useful when applied to a later form of the name, *Anadan*, rather than to the original form *Nadan*, and with the Middle Persian (Pahlavi) language instead of the Neo-Persian (Farsi). It was the Pahlavi language that dominated in the Sassanid Iran.

Thus, I think that the best available hypothesis on the name *Anadan* consists in placing its origin within the Syriac textual tradition already in the Iranian empire.

7.7. A Proof by Contradiction

The very idea of a translation into Slavonic directly from Syriac still remains a delicate matter among the Slavists. Thus, taken aside our conclusion that the Slavonic *Aḫiqar* ultimately goes back to a Syriac recension of the romance (which is in conformity with the generally accepted opinion), let us concentrate ourselves on the cases from the categories (2) and (3), that is, those that indicate towards the lack of a Greek intermediary. Namely, let us re-examine them with a proof by contradiction.

⁶⁹ In Armenian, the form Nathan (Նաթան, the only one known to the Western scholars) appears in the later recensions and, even there, not in all the manuscripts. Sometimes occurs even the form Նաթդան *Nat'dan* (in ArmG, where, normally, this name is Nadan; [MARTIROSIAN 1969–1972, 1: 248.24]).

⁷⁰ S., for the details, [NAU 1909: 8–9]. Thus, [GIAIERO 2005: 243] is wrong when he tries to explain the form *Nādān* as a peculiarity of the Arabic version.

Thus, let us accept that a Greek intermediary did exist. We have to describe it⁷¹ (as always, without discussing rendering of /b/). The following features are the most peculiar:

- (1) Semitic /h/ is *systematically* (not occasionally, but in two different proper names) rendered with γ both at the end of the syllable and in an intervocalic position, whereas rendered with a vowel (/a/) at the beginning of the word;
- (2) a very common Greek word νομικός in a very fitting context passed unrecognised from the Syriac text to the Greek translation;
- (3) the *majority* of the geographic markers (excepting only “Egypt” and “Persia”) passed unrecognised from Syriac to Greek (“Assyria,” “Elam,” “Nineveh”).

This list can be modified by changing its point (1) with the point (1a): Semitic /h/ was rendered, in Greek, with χ (that is, in one of usual ways), but this χ became ʒ (*glagol*) in Slavonic *via* an interchange between the Slavonic letters *xěr* and *glagol*.⁷²

The point (1) could be considered, according to the presently available data (which include plenty of texts created, among others, by native speakers of Semitic languages),⁷³ as phonologically forbidden. Given that the phenomenon must occur systematically, it cannot be explained with a graphic error either. I see no possibility at all, for such a feature, to exist.

Thus, let us resort to the point (1a). It requires that the early Slavonic manuscript tradition at the stage preceding its ramification between the Bulgarian and Russian branches changed *xěr* with *glagol*, not occasionally (e.g., only in one word occurring one time), whereas also not systematically, but strictly limiting the area of change to the Akkadian names. One of these names, *Nabugail, occurs only once, but another one, Senagrip, occurs continuously with no variant with /x/ instead of /g/. Thus, a scribal error must be excluded. However, in the manuscripts of the Slavonic *Aḥiqar*, there is no trace of other systematic changes of /x/ to /g/, which would not affect the Akkadian names. Therefore, recourse to (1a) is of no help.

⁷¹ In the following, including the very idea to give a proof by the contradiction, I owe very much to Evgenij Vodolazkin and other participants of the discussion of my paper delivered at the session of the Section of the Old Russian Literature of the Institute of the Russian Literature of the Russian Academy of Sciences on May 29, 2013. I am grateful especially to my opponents Evgenij Vodolazkin, Dmitri Bulanin, Natalia Ponyrko, and others who refused to recognise my proofs of a direct translation from Syriac.

⁷² This is one of the guesses proposed by Evgenij Vodolazkin.

⁷³ See especially [ILAN 2002–2012, I: 19; II: 10]. The database of [ILAN 2002–2012] covers the whole corpus of Greek transliterations from Hebrew and Aramaic up to AD 650. We have no so exhaustive database for the later period, but both my opponents and I are unable to point out any exception from the same rules for /h/.

Let us modify our initial conditions and accept that Semitic /*h*/ was rendered with *γ* due to some absolutely unknown to us reasons. Nevertheless, even in this purely imaginary case, we would obtain a rather strange Greek text. Its hypothetic author would have lack of knowledge of some elementary things, such as “lawyer” and “Assyria”—otherwise they would be translated into Greek in some usual way and, then, would be either correctly translated or transliterated by the Slavic translator. Therefore, it is highly unlikely that such a text would ever exist.—This reasoning is not decisive per se, but it is important to check our previous conclusion based on the phonological impossibility for such text to exist. One has to preview that such an imaginary Greek text would contain, beside phonologically impossible features, some other oddities resulting from the fact that it would be unfitting with the cultural context of Byzantium.

Here, the proof by contradiction could be considered completed. However, there are some less rational arguments that resist to the above demonstration, especially two, normally but not necessarily connected to each other. They are the following:⁷⁴

- (1) the cumulative argument is not an argument at all,
- (2) the proper names and other special designations of foreign realities are easily and randomly changeable, and so, must be excluded from the study of the original language of a given translated text.

Answer to (1). I consider the cumulative argumentation as an important scholarly tool. Its demonstrative power results directly from the probability theory, namely, from the formulae for the probability of the simultaneous occurrence of several independent events (which is equal to the product of the probabilities of each one of them, that is, a much lesser number than the probabilities of these individual events). Thus, if several different rare events take place simultaneously, the probability of such a situation is very little, and so, this situation, very probably, is created not by an accident. This means that these events are rather not mutually independent, and so, their probabilities are to be described with Bayesian formulae for the conditional probabilities.

Unfortunately, in some discussions in humanities people argue as if the probability of the simultaneous occurrence of different rare events is equal to the probability of one or other of them. Of course, such reasoning leads to discarding the cases described in the section 7.4 and, then, apparently increases the probability that the cases described in the section 7.5 must have some different explanation, whereas still unknown to us.

Answer to (2). The second argument presents another methodological error. A glance on the proper names throughout the versions, recensions, and

⁷⁴ These arguments were shared by most, if not all, of my opponents at the session in the Section of the Old Russian Literature but mostly articulated by Evgenij Vodolazkin.

manuscripts of the *Aḥiqar* romance demonstrates, that the Slavonic names are not always unfluctuating enough in the Slavonic manuscript tradition itself but also easily recognisable in other traditions in different languages. Moreover, the proper names are unchanged even in the Mlḥasō recension despite the fact that it is available through the oral tradition exclusively. Thus, we have no chaotic changes in Slavonic proper names in neither available part of the Slavonic manuscript tradition nor its lost earliest part, the latter being demonstrated with the fact of conformity between the Slavonic and Syriac forms.

Therefore, the arguments provided so far for possibility of a Greek intermediary are inconclusive.

8. Hagiographical Analysis

8.1. Hagiographical Coordinates and Some Trivia

Now, we have to reread the text of the Christian romance as a hagiographical document. Indeed, *Aḥiqar* became one of the “Old Testament saints” already in the *Book of Tobit*, and so, for a Christian reader, the story of his life is a work of hagiography—at least, on the same level as, say, the *Vitae Prophetarum*. However, the Christian romance contains more specific features of hagiographical legend, those that are described by Hippolyte Delehaye as “hagiographical coordinates” of place and of time.⁷⁵

The coordinate of place is self-evident: the capital of “Assyria,” that is, *mutatis mutandis*, of the Sassanid Iranian Empire, which is Ctesiphon.

The coordinate of time is preserved quite well in the manuscripts of the earliest Slavonic recension (and some other recensions of the Slavonic branch, too): August 25. This is the date of the unaccomplished martyrdom of *Aḥiqar*. It was appointed by Nadan in his false letters on behalf of *Aḥiqar* to foreign kings as the date of *Aḥiqar*’s treachery (appointed meeting with foreign armies at the Plain of Eagles), then, it became the date of *Aḥiqar*’s “unmasking” before Sennacherib and, with this, also the date of Sennacherib’s sentence upon *Aḥiqar* and the pretended “death” of *Aḥiqar*. There is no other date in the text, and so, this one is the only “coordinate of time” in the Christian hagiographical legend on *Aḥiqar*. It must have something to do with the cult of *Aḥiqar* as a saint.

This date completely disappeared only from the Arabic branch but is preserved quite well in the earliest Syriac recensions (where the month is called ‘*Ab*’).⁷⁶ In the Armenian recensions (where the month is called ‘*Hrotic*’⁷⁷),

⁷⁵ [DELEHAYE 1934], especially *Leçon I*. For a larger context, s. [LOURIÉ 2009].

⁷⁶ SyrA and SyrE. The fragmentary recensions SyrC and SyrD do not preserve the passages where the date occurs.

the situation is a bit more complicated, because the date “25” is preserved only in the recensions ArmCEF, which are not the oldest and the best ones; other recensions of the Armenian branch have either “August (*Hrotic*) 15” or no date at all.⁷⁸ Nevertheless, the accord among the Syriac, Slavonic, and Armenian recensions is enough to conclude that the date August 25 is genuine.

Thus, we have, in our romance, a hagiographical legend of St Aḥiqar commemorated on 25 August. However, we have nothing similar to the commemoration of Aḥiqar in all known to us calendars, including all the published calendrical documents in Syriac.⁷⁹

The very fact that this date is appointed according to the Julian calendar would prevent it from having the “Nestorian” tradition as its origin. In the corresponding (Eastern Syrian) rite, the commemorations are normally appointed to some specific weekdays (normally, Fridays) of some specific weeks, and such early exceptions from this rule as the Christmas and the Theophany correspond only to the most important festivities common to (almost) the whole Christian world. Thus, such an appointment for the commemoration of Aḥiqar, in the fourth or the fifth century, must be considered, for the Eastern Syrian rite, as not simply unlikely but rather impossible.

Another Syriac-speaking community of the Iranian Empire was that of the anti-Chalcedonians, having split itself (in the 520s) into two major factions between the followers of Severus of Antioch and Julian of Halicarnassus. The followers of the latter were backing the leaders of the Armenian Church at the Second Council of Dwin (555), which accepted their doctrine and anathematized Severus. The liturgical rite of the Syriac-speaking followers of Severus in the Iranian Empire (known to us as the Syrian rite of Tikrit) extinguished in the eighteenth century, and so, is preserved only in a very limited number of

⁷⁷ The equivalence August to *Hrotic* excludes that it is the Armenian Old Calendar with wandering year that is meant. In the Old Armenian calendar ca. 500, the month *Hrotic* was roughly corresponding to July and shifting (with the speed one day per four years) to June. 1 *Hrotic* = 1 August would require 1 *Navasard* = 5 September, which corresponds to AD 328. S. the Table A in [DULAURIER 1859: 384]. Given that our text is a translation, one has to expect that it preserves the Julian calendar of its original.

⁷⁸ ArmABD have “August 15,” ArmG and the epitomized recensions have no date at all. The recension ArmA is an early thoroughly polished revision of the original translation; its terminus post quem is ca. 500. To this epoch, the date August 15 became the culmination of the Palestinian Dormition cycle, which was adopted also by the Armenian Church (before this, there were other—different—Marian feasts on August 15, also in Palestine). Thus, according to the revision going back to ArmA, the commemoration of Aḥiqar in the Armenian rite became concealed under the feast of Dormition.

⁷⁹ I refrain from providing here the full bibliography of these documents, although, unfortunately, there is no an exhaustive bibliography of Syrian ecclesiastical calendars (in Syriac and Arabic).

manuscripts. The liturgical traditions of the Julianists disappeared almost completely much earlier. Thus, we have no calendrical documents which would be representative for the Syriac anti-Chalcedonian tradition of Iran.

The total absence of the commemoration of *Aḥiqar* from the subsisting calendrical documents of the Western Syrian rite is a ponderous argument *ex silentio*, because the Jacobite Syrian calendrical tradition is represented in the available documents not in the worst way. However, the *Aḥiqar* romance originated in Iran, and so, its commemoration date of *Aḥiqar* does not necessarily penetrated into the Western Syrian rite.

The fact of a very early translation from Syriac into Armenian is fitting perfectly with the Church history of the fifth and sixth centuries, presuming that the Syriac piece was, in this early epoch, important for the anti-Chalcedonian camp (and especially for those with an Iranian background).

Given that its original affiliation to the Church of the East (“Nestorian”) must be excluded,⁸⁰ the Christian romance of *Aḥiqar* must originate in some Syrian milieu whose rite used the Julian calendar for the commemorations of saints. In the cases if this milieu would be pre-Chalcedonian or post-Chalcedonian but Melkite, one has to expect some Melkite mediaeval tradition of the romance, especially in such languages as Greek, Arabic, and Georgian. Instead, we have no Greek and Georgian translations at all (the late translations into Georgian from Armenian are not counting), whereas the Arabic (Karshuni) tradition is clearly Jacobite and not Melkite.

This is a typical picture of diffusion of the anti-Chalcedonian texts—unless we presume that the Slavonic version goes back to a lost Greek Byzantine original. But we do not.

8.2. The Three Young Men in Babylon on August 25

Having found nothing in the subsisting calendars of the anti-Chalcedonian traditions, we can switch our attention to the Chalcedonian calendars. Given that our cult of *Aḥiqar* was not shared by the Chalcedonians, it is possible that they had had another cult, which was either polemically pointed at the cult of *Aḥiqar* or vice versa (the cult of *Aḥiqar* was polemically pointed at this hypothetical cult). Thus, we have to check the Chalcedonian calendars for the same hagiographical “axis set”: August 25, Ctesiphon.

The answer follows immediately from Palestine and, as it is normally for the Palestinian liturgical documents corresponding to the Palestinian rite of the second half of the first Christian millennium, in the Georgian language:

⁸⁰ Despite the fact that all known Syriac manuscripts are “Nestorian,” whereas the Syrian anti-Chalcedonian tradition of the *Aḥiqar* is preserved in Arabic. Throughout the centuries, these two Syrian confessions were normally sharing the works produced by each one of them, excepting only the works of mutual polemics.

commemoration of the Three Young Men Ananias, Azariah, and Misael and Daniel the Prophet.⁸¹

The hagiographical dossier of the Three Young Men as Christian saints contains three groups of documents: (1) extra-biblical documents concerning their martyrdom (the only group represented in Greek and Slavonic, that is, in the preserved Byzantine traditions⁸²), (2) account of discovering of the relics on 25 August in “Babylon” (Ctesiphon) available in Armenian and Georgian only, (3) Coptic accounts related to their shrine in Alexandria and explaining, why their relics could not leave Babylon.⁸³

To these documents, several historical data should be added. In 454/455, the Chalcedonian Patriarch of Jerusalem Juvenal deposited parts of the relics of the Three Young Men in two shrines in Jerusalem. These events took place almost immediately after the re-establishing of Juvenal on the Jerusalem See with the help of the military power. Juvenal was among the supporters of Dioscorus at the Second Council of Ephesus in 449 but changed his mind at the Council of Chalcedon (451) and, because of this, was refused to return to his See by the Palestinian flock. For about twenty months, since November 451 to June or July 453, the See of Jerusalem was occupied by the anti-Chalcedonian Patriarch Theodosius [HONIGMANN 1950]. After having been re-established on his former See, Juvenal created several new shrines with the purpose of attracting the flock, among them the two shrines with the relics brought from Babylon. No wonder that, from the anti-Chalcedonian side, this new cult of the Three Young Men met a fervent opposition. The anti-Chalcedonians were trying to demonstrate that the Chalcedonian relics in Jerusalem are false, whereas the true relics will have never left Babylon. From the Coptic anti-Chalcedonian side, several legends were elaborated for this purpose. All of them demonstrate that the only shrine established by the will of the Three Youths is their martyrdom in Alexandria created by Patriarch Theophilus (385–412), although their relics are absent even from this shrine and have to remain in Babylon forever [DE VIS 1929: 58–202 ; TILL 1938; ZANETTI 2004]. In all these Coptic legends, as well as in the liturgical calendar of the Coptic Church (until present), the main festival of the Three Youths is the day of the dedication of Theophilus’ church, Pashons 10 (May 6 of the Julian calendar).

However, this Coptic dossier is featuring the troop positions of the anti-Chalcedonians in the only one seat of war, that of Egypt, whereas our main

⁸¹ Mostly on August 25, although in some Georgian documents on August 24: [GARITTE 1959A: 312, cf. 311 and 86].

⁸² The Greek legends *BHG* 484z and *BHG* 484* making the Three Youths buried by angels on the Mount Gebal, are, pace [GARITTE 1959B: 71], published by [ISTRIN 1901]; they are available in the Slavonic version, too. For the Slavonic dossier, s. [IVANOVA 2008: 362–365].

⁸³ See [VAN ESBROECK 1991; ZANETTI 2004] with further references.

interest is located at the opposite end of the Christian world, Iran. Here, the legends about the coffins of the Young Men in the completely desolated and inaccessible city of Babylon were not of much help, because the relics were quite accessible, and Babylon was transformed into the most prosperous capital city of the Sassanid Empire, Ctesiphon. Therefore, the Syriac dossier of the relics is not so easy to understand. To start with, there is no document preserved in Syriac, which would explicitly mention the relics—whereas their Syriac dossier is, nevertheless, traceable.

The discovering of the relics in Ctesiphon was earlier than the Council of Chalcedon and the following Church divisions. The Armenian/Georgian account⁸⁴ allows dating it to about 422. The story of discovering is explicitly dated to the rule of the Sassanid King of Persia Bahram V (421–438). The relics of the Three Youths were preserved in the home of a Jew built on the ruins of the palace of Nebuchadnezzar, which became famous with the wondrous healings whose cause nobody knew except the Jew himself. A court official (I will discuss his title below, section 8.3), who was a Christian and a friend of the king, asked his disciple, himself a convert from Judaism, to gain confidence of his former coreligionist and to make known the cause of these healings. The disciple presented himself to the owner of the relics as a Jew, made him drunk and wormed a secret out of the Jew. Then, the Christian official asked the head of a monastery named Anthony to help him to steal the relics. Anthony with some of his brethren visited the Jew under the guise of sick people, once more made him drunk, and managed to know that he regularly leave his home on the Sabbaths. Then, in the night to the next Saturday, the Christians intruded the home of the Jew and, not without a miracle, found the relics and stolen them. When the loss became revealed, the Jews made turmoil, and the story became known to the king. Thus, the Christian official was arrested and tortured for seven months but remained silent about the place where the relics are preserved. After this, he was released and re-established in his rights and became anew a friend of the king. The only motivation of this is a reference to the “will of God”: “. . .and then he was released from bonds by the will of God (կամարն Աստուածայ / ნებოთა ღმრთისადთა)” [GARITTE 1959B: 95; GARITTE 1961: 100]. Then, he together with Anthony and his monastery constructed a martyrion for the relics which produced new miraculous healings.

In the background of this story, as Garitte pointed out, there is a collision between Iran and Byzantium in 421, when a new Byzantino-Iranian war started as a reaction of Byzantium to a new persecution of the Christians in Iran. Bahram stopped the persecution, and the peace was concluded. Thus, the shrine of the Three Youths in Ctesiphon was constructed (ca. 422) as a monu-

⁸⁴ Published in [GARITTE 1959B; GARITTE 1961].

ment of this peace and a sign of the Byzantine protection over the Christians of the Iranian Empire. "The will of God" in our story, which released the Christian official from his jail, turned out to undercover the military force of the emperor of Byzantium.

In the epoch of the quarrels over the Council of Chalcedon, this shrine continued to be under Byzantine Emperor's protection, and so, its relics were available to the Chalcedonians (and unavailable to their adversaries) for removing parts of them.

This cult of deposition of the holy relics of the Three Youths in Ctesiphon on 25 August is preserved exclusively in the Chalcedonian traditions, but it certainly predates the Church divisions caused by the Council of Chalcedon. In the anti-Chalcedonian traditions, there is a number of traces of the same cult. The very story of the finding of the relics is available, beside Georgian, in Armenian; moreover, the Georgian text is translated from Armenian, and the language of this translation reveals a very early period of the Georgian literature⁸⁵ and is to be dated to the epoch of Church unity between the Georgians and the Armenians (before ca. 611), when both Churches were anti-Chalcedonian. Thus, both Armenian and Georgian legends are witnesses of the continuity of the cult of the Ctesiphon martyrism in anti-Chalcedonian traditions.

Moreover, the original language of this legend is Syriac, as Garitte demonstrated having access to the Georgian text alone, still without knowing that the Armenian version is survived. Thus, the legend of the martyrism of the Three Youths in Ctesiphon is an Iranian Christian legend written in Syriac but, then, suppressed from the Syriac tradition.

Another trace of the same legend in Syriac is preserved in one of the Jacobite Syriac calendars which mentions a feast of the Three Youths and prophet Daniel on August 22.⁸⁶

The only possible conclusion from the above data is that the commemoration of the discovery of the relics of the Three Youths was inherited by the anti-Chalcedonian Syrian rites from the pre-Chalcedonian epoch but, then, suppressed. This conclusion is in a perfect accord with the fact that the martyrism of the Three Youths in Ctesiphon was under control of the Chalcedonians.

8.3. Aḥiqar and Malpana

A more close analysis of the legend on finding the relics of the Three Youths reveals important similarities with the legend of Aḥiqar. Its main character

⁸⁵ "...la langue elle-même a une allure extrêmement archaïque" [GARITTE 1959B: 76].

⁸⁶ The calendar Nau III, ninth cent. [NAU 1915: 44]. The discrepancy between the dates August 22 and August 25 remains unexplained but, nevertheless, such a particular (for the Syrian tradition) commemoration of the Three Youths could hardly be unrelated to that of August 25.

bears the Syriac name ܡܫܬܘܬܐ (*Maxtut'a*) in Armenian [GARITTE 1961: 93] and different but not less Syriac name ܡܠܦܐ (*Malp'a*) in Georgian [GARITTE 1959B: 86]. The meaning of the latter name is obvious: *Malpānā* (ܡܠܦܢܐ) “teacher; doctor,” either read as **malpā* (ܡܠܦܐ) or having lost its last syllable during transmission from Syriac to Armenian or from Armenian to Georgian.

The name in the Armenian text seems to be replaced with a common name. Indeed, the structure of the whole sentence is very similar in both Georgian and Armenian [GARITTE 1959B: 86; GARITTE 1961: 93]:

Georgian	Armenian
მას ჟამსა შინა იყო სოფელსა მას კაცი ერთი კარანი მეფისაჲ, და სახელი მისი მალფა, და იყო კაცი იგი ქრისტეანე.	Ապա յերկրին յայնմիկ բնակեալ էր այր մի արքունիս անուն էր նորա Մախտութա և էր այր քրիստոնեայ.
In this time, in this land ⁸⁷ there was some [lit. one] man, a royal official, ⁸⁸ and his name (was) Malp'a, and that man was a Christian.	Then, there was some [lit. one] royal man living in this land, and his name was Maxtut'a, and (he) was a Christian man.

The phrase “one royal man,” in Armenian, sounds not smooth enough, especially in contrast with the phrase “one man, royal official,” in Georgian. But the name Maxtut'a could be a corruption of *Malkutāyā* (ܡܠܟܘܬܐ) “royal” especially probable in Armenian. Indeed, in Armenian, the word “royal” արքունի is a derivate of արքայ “king,” which is a loanword from Syriac (ܐܪܟܘܢܐ /*ārkunā*/), which is, in turn, a loanword from Greek (ἄρχων) [AČAREAN 1926–1935/1971–1979, 1: 345–347]. In Syriac, the meaning of the Greek word is preserved (“prince, ruler, governor,” but not specifically “king”), whereas, in Armenian, the word changed its sense. As it seems, the Armenian text resulted from a distortion of the Syriac phrase ܡܠܟܘܬܐ ܐܪܟܘܢܐ “royal governor/official” due to mistranslation of ܐܪܟܘܢܐ into Armenian as “(belonging to) king” (ܐܪܟܘܢܐ /*ārkunā*/ > արքունի /*ark'uni*/). Then, the word ܡܠܟܘܬܐ “royal” became superfluous, and so, in the course of further corruption, replaced the name of the character.

The Georgian text is translated from Armenian but, as Garitte pointed out, not from the subsisting Armenian text. As it seems, the Armenian origi-

⁸⁷ The word სოფელი, whose later meaning is “world,” still has an archaic meaning “land, region”; s. [GARITTE 1959B: 76].

⁸⁸ On the rare word კარანი, see [Garitte 1959b: 81]. It is a loanword from Armenian, where կարան is derived from կարեն “je peux” in the same manner as իշխան “ishkhan” (“ruler, prince”) is derived from իշխեն “je domine.” This means that this word is ultimately a calque from Greek δυνάστης “(court) official” (cf. Act 8: 27, where the Syriac correspondence is ܡܠܟܘܬܐ).

nal of the Georgian version represented a different Armenian translation from Syriac.

The only thing we have to retain from the above analysis is that Malpa(na) is the original name of our personage.

Now, we are in position to compare the two stories, that of Malpana and that of Aḫiqar.

Both stories have the same framing plot: an official close to the king becomes jailed without any guilt but rather for his good deeds (in the case of Malpana, these deeds could be not so good from the viewpoint of Jews, of course). Then, it becomes released and re-established in his former status. Some additional details are similar, too. The name Malpana (which, of course, could be originally a common name; we have to take into account that our legend in Armenian/Georgian could be an epitomised recension, where some details could be lost) indicates that its bearer is, like Aḫiqar, a wise man. Malpana, like Aḫiqar, was released after a war threat (although this motive does not appear explicitly; again, it could be lost if the available recension is an epitomised one). The competition between the two world's principal powers, Assyria and Egypt, corresponds, in Malpana's situation, to the competition between their successors, Sassanid Iran and Byzantium (while the latter included Egypt as its province).

The framing story about the fall and re-establishing of a high official and a friend of the king was especially popular in the Iranian territory (so-called motive of the "wise vizier")—at least, from the Sumerian epoch, when it was attested to for the first time in the world.⁸⁹ This motive remained quite productive in Iran up to the fall of the Empire: its latest Iranian incorporation is described in the *Shahnamah* by Firdowsi (written in the tenth century but based on Middle Persian sources), in the story of the Shahanshah Khusraw I Anushirwan (531–579) and his vizier Wuzurgmihr (Būzurjmihr in Firdowsi's Farsi); this story has been referred to as a parallel to the romance of Aḫiqar by NÖLDEKE [1913: 27]. Wuzurgmihr is a historical personage especially known by his charging a Persian court physician Burzōy with the mission to India for bringing the *Pañcatantra* [DU BLOIS 1990]. Another motive of the Aḫiqar romance, that of the admonitions of a high court official to his son is known, in Middle Persian, under the name of Ādurbād, whose sayings have a number of textual coincidences with those of Aḫiqar.⁹⁰

Thus, in Iran, the legend of Malpana was somewhat fitting literature fashion. One has to repeat the same about the romance of Aḫiqar, which was composed in the same vein but much richer.

⁸⁹ In the so-called *Bilingual Proverbs* (in Sumerian and Akkadian), ii, 50–63; ed. [LAMBERT 1960: 239–246, here 241], cf. [REINER 1961: 7–9].

⁹⁰ The historical Ādurbād was an important figure and a Zoroastrian theologian at the court of Šābūr (Shapur) II (309–379). See [DU BLOIS 1984].

9. The *Sitz im Leben* of the Christian Aḥiqar Romance

The two hagiographical legends, that of Malpana and that of Aḥiqar, are connected with both common commemoration date, August 25, and structural similarities. This means that one of them was composed for replacing another, as it occurs normally when there are competing cults. It is impossible to eliminate an undesirable cult of a saint or relics, unless you create another cult able to conceal it.⁹¹

The cult of the relics of the Three Youths became undesirable for the anti-Chalcedonians throughout the world, but they were in different external conditions. In Iran, unlike Egypt, the feast on 25 August in Ctesiphon was a reality, and so, one had to retain, in the concealing legend, its hagiographical coordinates.

There is a little doubt that it is the Aḥiqar legend which is the later one. Indeed, we see, that the Aḥiqar romance became popular exclusively in the anti-Chalcedonian camp, whereas the old and formerly common to both Chalcedonians and anti-Chalcedonians commemoration of the discovery of the relics of the Three Youths was preserved by the Chalcedonians exclusively.

The Aḥiqar romance was written by an anti-Chalcedonian Syrian faction in Iran, which was connected more closely to the Middle Persian culture than the Byzantine one and did not share the Greek-Syriac bilingualism common in the Western Syria. This is the explanation why the Christian romance of Aḥiqar is unknown in Greek: its Greek version has never existed.

The *Sitz im Leben* of the Syriac Aḥiqar romance is an anti-Chalcedonian Syrian community in Iran between 451 (the date of the Council of Chalcedon) and the late fifth century (the date of the Armenian version).

10. The *Sitz im Leben* of the Slavonic Version

There is, presently, a consensus of Russian scholars that the Slavonic translation (from whatever language) was made in the Kievan Rus'.⁹² This consensus

⁹¹ As it is formulated by Michel van Esbroeck in relation to the hagiographical documents, "[r]ien n'élimine mieux un document que la création d'un parallèle destiné à le remplacer" [VAN ESBRÖECK 1989: 283].

⁹² See, for a review of literature, [THOMSON 1993/1999: 346–347] and *Addenda* [THOMSON 1999: 44], and, most recently, [TURILOV 2010: 10–11]. Thomson concludes that "...in view of equally early South Slav manuscript tradition, there is no need to posit an East Slav provenance and the East Slavisms can be explained as the result of revision" [THOMSON 1993/1999: 346–347]. Anna Pichkhadze in her recent monograph considers a number of variant readings of the Russian and Serbian manuscripts of the *Aḥiqar*. Her conclusion is that the Serbian readings, unlike the Russian ones, are varying, and so, secondary; therefore, she concludes, the Russian readings are original, and, then, the translation is made in Russia [PICHKHADZE 2011:

still did not exist before the revolution, when Durnovo wrote that the “nationality” of the translator is unclear.⁹³ However, to 1925, Durnovo changed his mind without providing any additional reasons: he enumerated the *Aḥiqar* within “...the series of translations, whose Russian origin one can consider as proved.”⁹⁴

This Russian consensus has never become so unanimous among the Bulgarian scholars. The finding of the manuscript of the Savina monastery allowed to Anisava Miltenova substantiating the claim that the Slavonic translation of the *Aḥiqar* belongs to the earliest layer of the Slavonic translations made in Bulgaria, when this text was translated within a collection of various Old Testament pseudepigrapha [BOGDANOVIĆ, MILTENOVA 1987] (cf. [KUZIDOVA 2010; KUZIDOVA 2012]).

The same manuscript of the Savina monastery contains as well *The Twelve Dreams of Shahaisha* and the Eleutherius recension of the *Twelve Fridays*. I argued elsewhere that these works are also of Syro-Iranian origin and are translated into Slavonic from Syriac directly (for the Eleutherius recension of the *Twelve Fridays*, I consider the direct translation as the most likely option; anyway, this is a work written in Syriac and unknown in Greek)[LOURIÉ 2012; LOURIÉ 2013]. Such a literary convoy of the *Aḥiqar* in its earliest Slavonic manuscript is a powerful argument for the Bulgarian and not Russian origin of the Slavonic translation.⁹⁵

12, 47–50 et passim]. However, the fact that the Serbian readings are secondary does not prove that the translation is Russian. Pichkhadze says no word about the Bulgarian manuscripts and the traces of Bulgarian protographs in the Serbian manuscripts. Thus, her study is in fact not an argument against the Bulgarian origin of the translation.

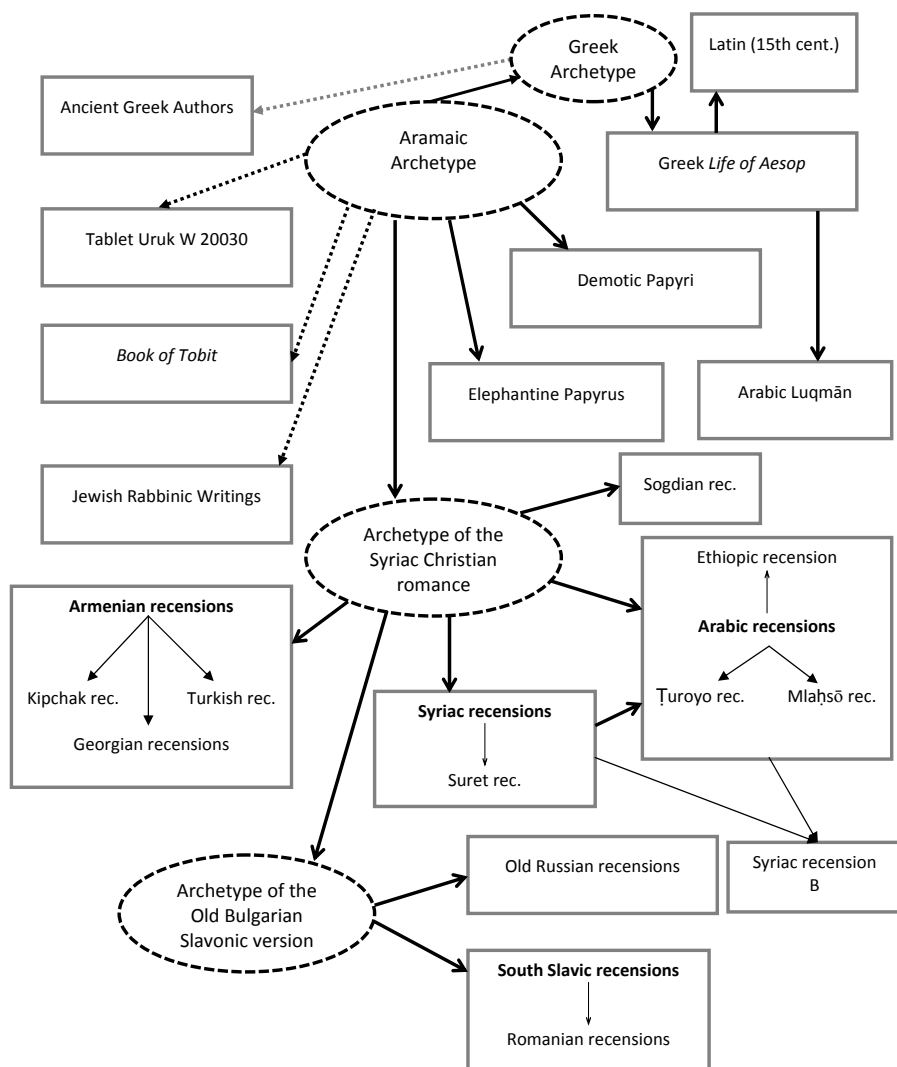
⁹³ Cf. [DURNOVO 1915A: I]: “The question about the nationality of the Slavic translator is not resolved with the necessary completeness and clearness, namely, whether this translator was a South Slav or a Russian, and, in the latter case, whether he originated from Southern or Northern Rus’...” [“не решенным с той полнотой и ясностью, с какой это требовалось... вопрос о национальности славянского переводчика повести (т. е. был ли этот переводчик южным славянином или русским, а в последнем случае южанином или северянином)”].

⁹⁴ [DURNOVO 1925/2000: 375]: “...в ряде переводов, русское происхождение которых можно считать доказанным”.

⁹⁵ I am very grateful to all those who supported me in this study, and especially to Eugen Barsky, Elena Bormotova, Ioannis Konstantakos, Irina Kuzidova, Elena Ludilova, Alexei Lyavdansky, Nikolai Seleznyov, as well as my dear opponents from the Section of the Old Russian Literature of the Institute of the Russian Literature, St. Petersburg, and my anonymous reviewer.

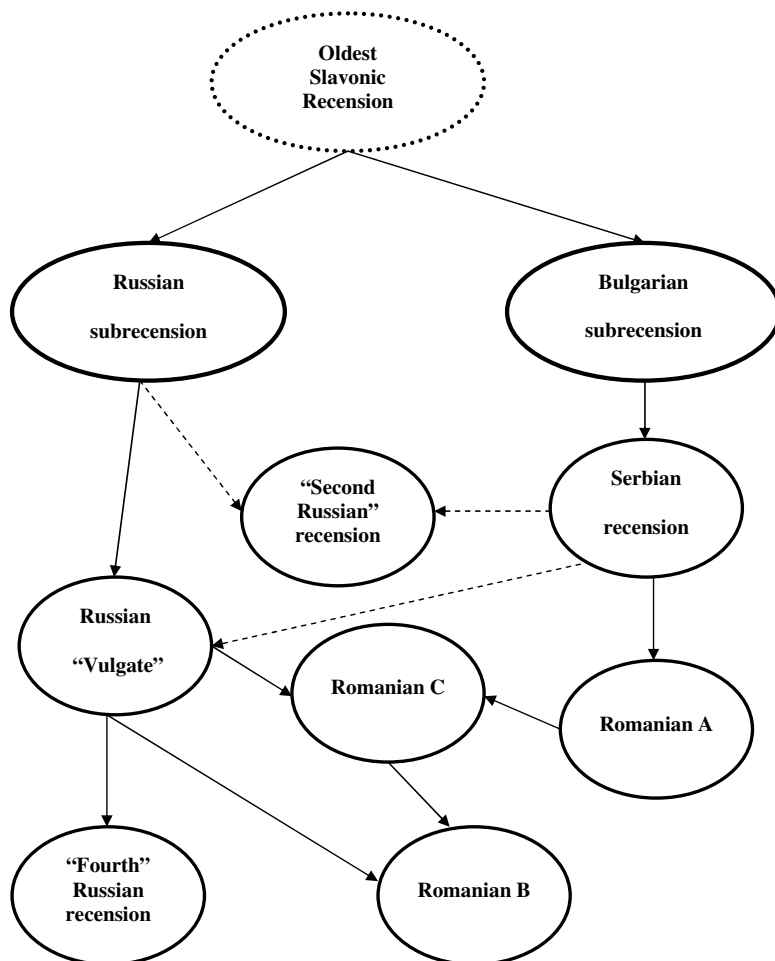
Appendix 1

Filiation of the Aḥiqar Texts (Together with References to Them in Antiquity)



Appendix 2

The Structure of the Slavonic Branch of the Aḥiqar Texts (in Slavonic and Romanian)



Notes:

1. The Russian recensions which appeared in the eighteenth century and later and the Romanian recensions which appeared in the nineteenth century are not taken into account.

2. The so-called "Second Russian recension" is localised hypothetically according to [PIOTROVSKAJA 1978].

3. "Russian 'Vulgate'" = "Third Russian recension" according to [BELOBROVA, TVOROGOV 1970].

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