

COURTS OF SOLOMON, A JEWISH COLLECTION

In his recent article Anatolij Alekseev¹ has repeated, in a most systematic way, Meščerskij's and his own² thesis that the so-called *Courts of Solomon*, preserved in Slavonic translation within *Palaea Interpretata*, were translated into Slavonic from Hebrew. His arguments are two-fold: Semitisms in the Slavonic text that he takes as Hebraisms and parallels in the Talmud and midrashim, already known for the major part of this cycle of Solomon.

In one instance, Alekseev tries to explain as Aramaic influence a mistranslation from Hebrew (see below). Nevertheless, he certainly does not know that a great part of the Babylonian Talmud, and especially that which he is referring to, is in Aramaic and not in Hebrew: "It seems to be, in the present case, a significant circumstance," Alekseev said, "that all the Hebrew originals used for the cycle of Solomon go back to the Babylonian Talmud or appeared in Babylonia..."³ Indeed, it is a significant circumstance. It reveals that Alekseev is not only unable to differ between Aramaic and Hebrew in the printed text, but has a bit distant knowledge of the allegedly "Hebrew sources" he deals with; his use (or, more exactly, non-use, except the only case) of the exact references to *bGittin* is, moreover, proof that even a translation of the Talmud was inaccessible to him.

Alekseev's methodology in interpretation of the parallels between the Slavonic and Hebrew texts⁴ has been criticised many times, as well

(1) А. А. АЛЕКСЕЕВ, Апокрифы Толковой Палеи, переведенные с еврейских оригиналов [А. А. АЛЕКСЕЕВ, Апокрифа of the *Palaea Interpretata* translated from the Hebrew originals], *ТОДРА* 58 (2007) 41–57, here 47–53.

(2) А. А. АЛЕКСЕЕВ, Русско-еврейские литературные связи до 15 века [А. А. АЛЕКСЕЕВ, Russian-Jewish literary connections up to the 15th century], *Jews and Slavs* 1 (1993) 44–75, esp. 67–70.

(3) «Значимым в данном случае представляется то обстоятельство, что все еврейские оригиналы, использованные для Соломонова цикла, восходят к вавилонскому Талмуду или возникли в Вавилоне...» (p. 53).

(4) Whose main principle is *non sequitur* (using a Francis Thomson's observation; cf. B. LOURIE, Slavonic Texts of Hard Fate: the *Prophecy of Solomon*

as his search of Semitisms.⁵ However, in the case of the *Courts of Solomon*, Alekseev's search of Semitisms has a rational nucleus and needs to be revisited.

In the following notes I avoid any discussion of the question as to how these Semitisms appeared in the Slavonic collection of legends. It is largely admitted that these legends are ultimately Jewish, but the exact means of transmission is highly disputable. My purpose now is to set up some landmarks helping to find out these means.

Šamir and how to find it

The stones for the Temple of Solomon should be treated without iron. The proper instrument is called а шамиръ. This is obviously the tool with a diamond known for such use from the Bible (Jer 17:1). This word has the same form in both Hebrew and Aramaic, including Targums and Syriac (Alekseev *a priori* takes it as Hebrew). This *šamir* must be obtained from the nest of some bird called а кокоць дѣтъскыи ("childish cock" or "non-adult cock", that is, male chick⁶).

and some others, *Scrinium* 5 (2009) 370, n. 24). Thus, in the present paper (p. 52): "First, in Hebrew mediaeval literature, the whole collection of the same kind as we see in the Slavonic cycle of Solomon is not found; consequently [emphasis is mine. — B. L.] one can consider the creation of this cycle to be a work of the translator." Then, Alekseev submerges deeper in fantasies speculating how large would be the Hebrew library of the translator to allow him to produce such a cycle: "Talmud and its accompanying midrashim." Of course, only an "enlightened Jewish scribe" would have had such a library. Then, Alekseev's fantasy makes a further step in supposing two scribes instead of one: one to find out the places to quote from the Talmud, another to translate them into Russian (sic!). However, Alekseev does not insist on the latter possibility.

(5) The most rich data are accumulated concerning the Slavonic version of the *Book of Esther* whose Hebrew *Vorlage* is lost. Nevertheless, the lost original of the Slavonic version is Greek. See, for a résumé of the previous discussion and for additional arguments: A. КУЛИК, Judeo-Greek Legacy in Medieval Rus', *Viator* 39 (2008) 51–64, here 58–62. Cf., briefly, А. КУЛИК, Евреи в Древней Руси: источники и историческая реконструкция [A. KULIK, The Jews in Old Rus': Sources and Historical Reconstruction], *Ruthenica* 7 (2008) 52–70, here 68–69.

(6) Cf. *Slovník jazyka staroslověnského. Lexicon linguae palaeoslovenicae* 1 (Praha, 1966) [reprint: *Словарь старославянского языка* 1 (Санкт-Петербург, 2006)] 552, s. v. дѣтъскъ, second meaning is defined as *immaturus*.

The story has a parallel in *bGittin* 68b⁷ where the mysterious bird is called ברַא תְּרַנְגוּל⁸ “cock of prairies”. “In its rendering,” Alekseev concludes, “the Hebrew בר has been interpreted as the Aramaic ‘son’” (p. 48).

Needless to say the parallel text in the Talmud is in Aramaic, and the name of the bird is Aramaic itself.⁹ Historically this bird’s name appeared in Jewish legends as an equivalent of the name of a magic bird זיז שדי,¹⁰ that is, in turn, a reinterpretation of the psalm phrase whose meaning is “all that moves [*scil.*, the beasts. — *B. L.*] in the field” (Ps 49/50:11 NRSV). Its identification with a Hebrew name of an unclean bird, דוֹכִיפֶת (Lev 11:19 etc.), εἶπτοψ in the Greek Bible, is of later nature, but is responsible for the translation of ברַא תְּרַנְגוּל as “hoopoe”. This Semitism is completely Aramaic, with no connection to Hebrew at all.

Alekseev’s explanation is not satisfying even in the supposition of “son” as the wrong meaning substituted by the translator. “Childish” does not mean the same as “son”. In fact, the corresponding word in all dialects of Aramaic has also the meaning of something small¹¹ and even “the young of animals.”¹² This meaning is much closer to the Slavonic дѢТЬСКИИ (“childish”).

(7) Alekseev gives the exact reference for the previous parallel between the Slavonic cycle and *bGittin*, 68a. Then, he refers to *Gittin*, with no folios.

(8) Thus in the Talmud. Alekseev reproduces in a “Hebraised” form, ברַא תְּרַנְגוּל (p. 48).

(9) M. JASTROW, *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature* (London—New York, 1903) 1700 (“the hen of the prairie”); J. LEVY, *Neuhebräisches und chaldäisches Wörterbuch über die Talmudim und Midraschim*, 4 (Leipzig, 1889) 672 (“der Auerhahn”, that is, *Tetrao urogallus*, “wooden grouse”, “cock of the wood”); R. PAYNE SMITH, *Thesaurus Syriacus* (Oxonii, 1879–1901) 4501 (ܒܪܐ ܩܘܒܘܥܐ “upupa” = “hoopoe”).

(10) R. KIPERWASSER, D. SHAPIRA, *Irano-Talmudica II. Leviathan, Behemoth and “Domestication” of Iranian Mythological Creatures in the Eschatological Narratives of the Babylonian Talmud* (in press). I am grateful to the authors for sharing with me a part of their conclusions.

(11) JASTROW, *A Dictionary...*, 188–189 (meaning “son, offspring”). *Comprehensive Aramaic Lexicon* (Cincinnati, <http://call.cn.huc.edu/>), s.v. “br” distinguishes its meaning in compounds “small version of something”.

(12) J. PAYNE SMITH, *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary founded upon the Thesaurus Syriacus of R. Payne Smith, D. D.* (Oxford, 1903) 33; cf. IDEM, *Thesaurus Syriacus...*, 578–579 (“...de prole animalium”).

The name of the Queen of Sheba

The name of the Queen of Sheba in our cycle of Solomon is малкатошва or малкатышка (different readings within the same manuscripts). It is obvious that the latter reading is erroneous (confusion between two similar letters in Cyrillic, *vedi* в and *kako* к). The difference in the vowels (full vowel о and reduced vowel ъ) is of orthographic nature. This name was initially considered as consisting of two words (*малкатышва), and, thus, ъ at the end of the first word was necessary after the consonant. Therefore, it is the reconstructed reading *малкатышва that the modern scholars interpret. Of course, its meaning is transparent, “Queen of Sheba”. The problem is which Semitic language it is in. This problem is irresolvable with linguistic tools because the phrase “Queen of Sheba” is identical in Hebrew and Aramaic: *malkat šba*, to read *malkat šva*. Thus, the Slavonic transcription is perfect. The only difference in vocalism results from the so-called rule of open syllables in Old Slavonic: the consonant at the end of the word should accept a reduced vowel, ъ.

Again, Alekseev does not consider any possibility other than Hebrew. Again, he is not alarmed by the parallels known to him to the corresponding part of the cycle of Solomon in *Targum Sheni* to Esther. In fact, there are parallels in other sources¹³, but Alekseev, once more, does not realise that the only source known to him, *Targum Sheni* to Esther is in Aramaic. And, finally, Alekseev’s own reading of the Hebrew phrase for “Queen of Sheba” is mysterious: *mleket šva* (p. 50).¹⁴ This is not by chance, because in his 1993 paper he provides this impossible phrase in Hebrew script with the vowels,¹⁵ and, since then, it has become accepted by specialists in Russian literature.¹⁶

(13) Cf., for instance, a useful review of a part of the sources with a bibliography covering most of the others in the Appendix “Solomon and the Queen of Sheba” of C. R. A. MORRAY-JONES, *A Transparent Illusion. The Dangerous Vision of Water in Hekhalot Mysticism. A Source-Critical and Tradition-Historical Inquiry* (Leiden—Boston—Köln, 2002) (SJSJ, 59) 230–289.

(14) I am grateful to Sergei Minov for bringing my attention to this fact, as well as for other helpful remarks.

(15) Алексеев, Русско-еврейские литературные связи..., 68.

(16) Cf. G. M. Prokhorov’s commentary to his latest edition of *Courts of Solomon*: Д. С. ЛИХАЧЕВ и др. (ред.), *Библиотека литературы Древней Руси 3* (Санкт-Петербург, 1999), note 9 (quoted according to the electronic publication at <http://www.pushkinskijdom.ru/>): *mleket šva* instead of *malkat šva*.

The Sword prudjan

In the legend whose parallel in Jellinek's *Beth ha-Midrash* has been noticed already by Aleksandr Veselovskij (1880)¹⁷ there is a *hapax*: an adjective прудянь applied to "sword". This is a rare case when the alleged source of the Slavonic cycle is available in Hebrew. In Hebrew, the word used is כֶּדֶיִל "tin" or "plumbum" (the sword is said to be made "from tin," מִן הַכֶּדֶיִל).

The context is the following.¹⁸ Solomon tests a couple enjoying a reputation for virtue. First of all, he tries to persuade the husband to kill his wife as a proof of his loyalty before giving him a high position. After some hesitation, the man refuses and returns to Solomon the sharp sword given him to murder his wife. After thirty days, Solomon promises the wife that he will take her as his first wife if she murders her husband. She agrees and has no hesitation. However, Solomon gives her a sword not of iron, but of tin (or lead), although it looks as if it were iron. Only this makes the murder impossible. This is why, says Solomon, "One man among a thousand I found, but a woman among all these I have not found" (Ecc 7:28 NRSV).

The Slavonic text has the only important difference from the above midrash in Hebrew: the sword given to the wife is *prudjan*. Prokhorov translates this word from the context: if the previous sword was "sharp", then, the second sword must be "blunt" (тупой), without any etymology but with implicit harmonisation with the midrashic account (where the leaden sword was certainly blunt). For lack of other data, this is, probably, the wisest decision. Alekseev, instead, is seeking for a Hebraism (p. 51). I think, that despite his inability to perform such a search,¹⁹ his intuition that there is a Semitism here could be right.

(17) The correct reference is A. JELLINEK, *Bet ha-Midrash: Sammlung kleiner Midraschim und vermischter Abhandlungen aus der altern jüdischen Literatur* 4 (Leipzig, 1857) 147–148.

(18) Cf. an English summary of Jellinek's text in L. GINZBERG, *The Legends of the Jews*, 4 (Philadelphia, 1913) 135–136.

(19) Here, Alekseev constructs a long chain. He supposes that прудянь is a corruption of some derivate of the word пруть (in the sense of "wooden stick"). In turn, this пруть could appear as a distortion of the Hebrew word עִפְרָת (*sic!* the correct spelling is עִפְרָת) "lead, plumbum", because the consonants are the same (the initial *ʿayyin* is not counted as a consonant; here Alekseev is right). However, it is useful to recall that the probability of a chain of events is the product of probabilities of the individual events in this chain, that is, in our case, a vanishingly small value.

I see no appropriate word in either Hebrew or Aramaic of Rabbis but I know an interesting possibility in Syriac (however, given that the word is derived from a very productive root, there is no possibility to exclude other Aramaic dialects): ܦܪܝܕܐ (*pridā* “fragile, putrid”).²⁰ Therefore, the second sword would be a perfect counterpart of the first, being not “sharp” but “putrid”, “fragile”, “crumbling”. The wife was trying to jugulate her husband but her sword crumbled. This would make better sense than that of the Hebrew text where, in this case, the recension of the midrash could be secondary.

The everlasting problem of Kitovras

Starting with Veselovskij (1872), the scholarly world has been hypnotised by the Old Russian identification of Kitovras as “centaur”. However, such identification has never been founded. Probably, there was some “popular etymology” behind the Old Russian identification but, in any way, it would be not enough to accept the identification as genuine. Veselovskij realised this quite well, and so, he went deeper into Indo-Iranian parallels. However, none of his parallels turned out to be pertinent to the case.²¹

(20) PAYNE SMITH, *Thesaurus Syriacus*, 3237, in the sense of “putris, friabilis”.

(21) А. Н. ВЕСЕЛОВСКИЙ, *Из истории литературного общения Востока и Запада*. [1.] *Славянские сказания о Соломоне и Китавресе и западные легенды о Морольфе и Мерлине* (Санкт-Петербург, 1872) [*From the history of the literary communion between the East and West*. [1.] *Slavic legends on Solomon and Kitovras and Western legends on Morolf and Merlin* (St. Petersburg, 1872)] 137–141 [reprinted as: А. Н. ВЕСЕЛОВСКИЙ, *Собрание сочинений* <Collected Works>, т. 8, вып. 1 (Петроград, 1921)]. Veselovskij, referring to Vostokov [*Словарь церковно-славянского языка* (*Dictionary of Church Slavonic Language*), 1858–1861], quotes two instances where Kitovras is glossed as “centaur” or “onocentaur” (half-donkey and half-man) and the Novgorod image of 1336 that we will discuss below. Then, he follows Adalbert Kuhn in identification of the Greek “centaur” with the Indo-Iranian monster *gandharva*. Even if Kuhn was right, it is unclear how the corresponding legends do matter in our case. There is no particular proximity in the plots, not to speak of the chronological gap between this alleged Indo-Iranian background and the legends of Talmud. However, Sanskrit *gandharvā-* and Late Avestan *gandərəva-* seem to be independently borrowed loanwords from an unknown substratum, and their hypothetical connection to the Greek κένταυρος has no confirmation in modern studies. Cf. A. LUBOTSKY, *The Indo-Iranian substratum*, in: Chr. CARPELAN, A. PARPOLA, P. KOSKIKALLIO, eds. *Early Contacts between Uralic and Indo-European: Linguistic and Archaeological Considerations. Papers presented at an inter-*

Alekseev adds a new argument for the identification of Kitovras as “centaur” assuming that the Greek word reached the Slavonic text through Hebrew. He quotes two instances where Greek words were borrowed into Hebrew with simplification of the consonant group *nt* to *ṭ* (p. 48). Thus, Alekseev hopes to explain why κένταυρος became *kitovras*. Alekseev says nothing about the actual rendering of the Greek term for “centaur” in either Hebrew or Aramaic. It looks a bit odd given that he speculates about a possible reconstruction of such a term.

I think that Alekseev’s hypothesis is not to be excluded absolutely, but it is not the most plausible. Its obvious advantage, in comparison with that of Veselovskij, is that it could explain the parallel existence, in Old Russian, of two words, *kentaavr* (“centaur”) and *kitovras*:²² the latter is a loanword from Hebrew, the first directly from Greek. If, as Veselovskij thought, *kitovras* is another direct borrowing from Greek, and its meaning is, indeed, “centaur”, one has to explain what the different channels of borrowing were.

However, the major problem with Alekseev’s explanation is the fact that there was, in Rabbinic Hebrew, a proper word for “centaur”, while attested to only in the plural: קִנְטוֹרִים (*qīnṭōrīm*),²³ or, according to the critical edition of the main source (two verbatim identical passages of *Bereshit Rabbah* 23:6 and 24:6), קִנְטוֹרִים (*qīnṭōrīm*) with the manuscript variant קִנְטוֹרִיִּים.²⁴ Here, as well as in most similar cases, the Greek consonant group *nt* is preserved intact in Hebrew (that is, rendered as *nṭ*).

national symposium held at the Toivärminne Research Station of the University of Helsinki 8–10 January 1999 (Helsinki, 2001) (Mémoires de la Société Finno-ougrienne, 242) 301–317. So, Veselovskij’s additional argumentation is of no help even for understanding the centaurs in Greece, not to speak of their possible connection to Kitovras.

(22) See И. И. СРЕЗНЕВСКИЙ, *Материалы для словаря древнерусского языка по письменным памятникам* [I. I. SREZNEVSKIJ, *Materials for the Dictionary of Old Russian, According to the Literary Monuments*] 3 vols. (St Petersburg, 1893–1912) [reprint: Moscow, 2003] Vol. 1, col. 1210, s.v. КИТОВРАСЬ.

(23) Thus in S. KRAUSS, *Griechische und lateinische Lehnwörter im Talmud, Midrasch und Targum*. 2 Teile (Berlin, 1898–1899) Teil 2, 532, and M. JASTROW, *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature* (New York, 1903) 1363, with the main reference to the *Bereshit Rabbah* (see below). Modern Hebrew קִנְטוֹר and צִנְטוֹר are neologisms.

(24) J. THEODOR, Ch. ALBECK, *Midrash Bereshit Rabba: critical edition with notes and commentary* (Jerusalem, 1996) 227 and 235, correspondingly. I am very grateful to Michael Ryzhik from the Academy of the Hebrew Language

The singular form קִינְטוֹר (**qīnṭōr*) is unattested to because the word itself is very rare in both Rabbinic languages. Normally, the Jewish sources prefer to substitute another notion or to explain the same meaning indirectly, even in the case of the name of the constellation Centaurus.²⁵ In Syriac, though, the word ܩܝܢܬܘܪ (exact transliteration of κένταυρος) is known quite well.²⁶

We have to conclude that the identification of *kitovras* as “centaur” is highly problematic from a linguistic viewpoint. And not only linguistic.

The “centaurs” of the midrashim have little to do with our *Kitovras*. The corresponding passage of the *Bereshit Rabbah* (great midrash collection on Genesis) runs as follows: “AND TO SETH, TO HIM ALSO THERE WAS BORN A SON; AND HE CALLED HIS NAME ENOSH (Gen 4:26). Abba Cohen Bardela was asked: ‘[Why does Scripture enumerate] Adam, Seth, Enosh, and then become silent?’ ‘Hitherto they were created in the likeness and image [of God],’ he replied, ‘but from then onward Centaurs were created’.”²⁷ Here, “centaurs” are men that have lost their likeness and image of God.

Kitovras of the Slavonic Solomonic cycle, as it is well known, is a creature analogous to Asmodeus (Hebrew and Aramaic אַשְׁמֹדַי *Ashmedai*, Greek Ἀσμοδαῖος) of Talmudic legends and of the late Jewish or early Christian *Testament of Solomon* available in the Byzantine Greek tradition only. The Indo-Iranian etymology of this name, **aēšma-daēva* “demon of wrath”, is compatible, more or less, with the function of *Kitovras* and his Hebrew prototype, Asmodeus (cf. also Tob 3:8, 17), but certainly is not responsible for the very name of *Kitovras*.

The situation with *Kitovras* is additionally complicated by the fact that we do not know the earliest legends where he appears. Apart from our cycle of Solomon, there were the legends where *Kitovras* is another son of David, a brother of Solomon. A Russian scribe of the late 15th century, Efosin (Euphrosynos) informs us about such a

(Ha-Aqademia le-lashon ha-ivrit) who has pointed out the relevant source and checked the critical edition which was unavailable to me.

(25) I owe the latter example and the evaluation of the rarity of the word for “centaur” to Alexander Gordin (Bar Ilan University, Israel), to whom I express my warmest gratitude.

(26) PAYNE SMITH, *Thesaurus Syriacus*, 3663.

(27) *Midrash Rabbah Translated into English with Notes, Glossary and Indices*. Vols. 1–2. *Genesis*. Translated by H. Freedman and R. Simon, vol. 1 (London, ³1961) 196 and 203.

legend(s).²⁸ It is this tradition that is attested to in the earliest Russian document concerning Kitovras, the Vasilij gates of the St Sophia cathedral in Novgorod constructed in 1335–1336 by the archbishop of Novgorod, Vasilij (Basil) Kalika (the gates were taken as war booty in 1570 by Ivan the Terrible and placed in his residence, Aleksandrovs-kaja Sloboda, now Aleksandrov).

According to a recent study, these doors were the main gates of the cathedral.²⁹ Their iconographic program covered the whole important topic of the cathedral cult. The picture on one plate presents a winged centaur with a crown, taking in hand a figure of Solomon and preparing to throw him over his shoulder to a city in the background; the city is on fire. The inscription states: *(Ки)товрасъ меце братомъ своимъ Сол(о)монъ на обетованую землю за словъ...* “Kitovras throws his brother Solomon to the promised land because of the word...” (a lacuna at the end prevents an exact translation of the words *за словъ*; my translation is conjectural). We do not know a legend where Kitovras throws Solomon *to* Jerusalem or *to* the Holy Land from elsewhere; instead, in the known legends, he throws Solomon *from* Jerusalem. Moreover, we do not know what the meaning is of the city (Jerusalem?) on fire. However, the general meaning of the picture of Solomon and Kitovras on the main gates of St Sophia of Novgorod is clear: this is a reference to the Temple of Solomon (constructed by Solomon with the help of Kitovras) whose new avatar is the Novgorod cathedral (after St Sophia of Kiev and their common pattern, St Sophia of Constantinople³⁰).

The picture on the Vasilij gates proves that our present set of written legends on Kitovras is not representative. Certainly, there were some others, accepted as a part of Holy Tradition of the Church, and so, transmitted by other channels than secular literature and folklore. This is why it seems to me very unlikely that the earliest Slavonic texts on Kitovras were translated otherwise than within some Church collection from an authoritative Church source.

(28) J. LURIA [= YA. S. LUR'Е], Une légende inconnue de Salomon et Kitovras dans un manuscrit du XVe siècle, *Revue des études slaves* 48 (1964) 7–11.

(29) В. В. КАВЕЛЬМАХЕР, К истории Васильевских дверей Софии Новгородской [V. V. KAVEL'MANER, Toward the History of the Vasilij Doors of the Sophia of Novgorod], in: *Зубовские чтения*, вып. 2 (Струнино, 2004) 139–152.

(30) See now: K. KOVALCHUK, *Celebrating the Encaenia of St Sophia in Constantinople: Liturgical Context, Literary Associations, and Ideological Significance of the Byzantine Diegesis*. Doctoral dissertation, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven. Promotor: P. Van Deun (Leuven, 2008).

Given that the previous and not especially helpful attempts to explain the word *kitovras* were presuming that the known form is a corruption of some other, it is reasonable to evaluate another possibility, namely, that it is an exact transliteration (except the regular omission of the Greek ending in Slavonic) of a Greek composite word that is not attested to in the preserved texts but is grammatically correct. Its first part could be κῆτος “sea monster”. The second component seems to be a derivate of the verb βράσσω (or Middle Greek βράζω) having different meanings with the basic values of “to throw”, “to boil”, and “to be hot”. In the late Jewish *Vitae Prophetarum*³¹ and in many Christian texts this verb (in the form of the passive participle ἐκβρασθείς) is regularly applied to Jonah, who was “thrown up” by the sea monster, κῆτος.³² Moreover, Lampe gives an example from Gregory of Nazianze where βράσις in the sense of “throwing up” is applied to “Jonah’s ejection from great fish”.³³

In Gregory Nazianzen, βράσις is enumerated within the list of means used by God to make Jonah go to Nineveh: “tempest, lot, beast, womb, throwing up”. The result of such throwing up could be named either βράσις or βραστός. The agent of this throwing up could be named βραστής. All these words are attested in either Ancient or

(31) I agree with Anna Marie SCHWEMER, *Studien zu den frühjüdischen Prophetenlegenden. Vitae Prophetarum*, 2 Bde (Tübingen, 1995–1996) (TSAJ, 49–50), and disagree with David SATRAN, *Biblical Prophets in Byzantine Palestine. Reassessing the Lives of Prophets* (Leiden, 1995) (SVTP, 11) (the latter believes that the *Vitae Prophetarum* are a 4th century Christian work).

(32) A wildcard search κητ* AND βρασ* (within 3 lines) on the data base of the TLG results in, apart from four different recensions of the *Vitae Prophetarum*, their fifth recension known as *De prophetarum vita et obitu* under the name of Epiphanius, and the sixth recension of the *Life* of Jonah within the *Synaxarium* of Constantinople (on September 21), the following authors: Josephus (*Ant* 9:213), Claudius Aelianus (2nd–3rd cent. AD), *De natura animalium* (with no connection to Jonah), anonymous (7th cen.) *Chronicon paschale*, George Cedrenus (*Compendium historiarum*, 11th–12th cent.), George Tornices (12th cent., letters), Gregory Palamas (14th cent., homily).

(33) G. W. H. LAMPE, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford, 1961) 304. Gregory Nazianzen, *Carmina de se ipso*, PG 37, 1414 A: Οὐκ ἠγγνόουν Ἰωνᾶν, ὃς Θεοῦ λόγον Ἐφευγεν, ἀλλ’ ἐλήφθη Κλύδωνι, κλήρω, θηρίω, γαστρὶ, βράσει, Ἐξ ὧν ὁ κήρυξ, κήρυξ (“I do know Jonah, who fled from the word of God, but was picked up by the tempest, by lot, by the beast, by the womb, by throwing up, because of whom the preacher (became) preacher”).

Middle Greek or both, while with other meanings, not connected to “throwing up”.³⁴

Therefore, we can suppose the Greek prototype of *kitovras* as a composite word like *κητόβρασις, *κητόβραστος or *κητοβράστης (the latter two cases would presuppose **kitovrast* as the genuine Slavonic form).

From a linguistic viewpoint, and taking into account the real usage of Greek Christian literature, it would be tempting to suppose that *Kitovras* means either the prophet Jonah himself or the sea monster who threw him up, but according to an unknown tradition about Jonah.

The existence of some unknown tradition juxtaposing Jonah and Solomon is without question. This tradition reveals itself in the common background of Jesus’ words in Mt 12:39–42 // Lk 11:29–32 and a prayer in *mTaanit* II, 4. Unfortunately, we largely ignore its contents.³⁵ The gospel data allow, however, noting that Jonah is mentioned in the context of his three-day journey within the sea monster, and Solomon is mentioned in the context of his wisdom and the visit of the Queen of Sheba. All of this perfectly fits the context of our present *Courts of Solomon*.

Thus, without rejecting definitively the hypothesis that *kitovras* means “centaur”, we have to consider alternative hypotheses that it is either a nickname of the prophet Jonah or that of the sea monster that swallowed him from some legend connecting Jonah and Solomon. Of course, other possibilities are not to be excluded as well.

(34) Cf. the corresponding lemmas in H. G. LIDDELL, R. SCOTT, H. S. JONES, with the assistance of R. MCKENZIE, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford, 1940) [electronic edition at <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/>] and N. ΚΑΖΑΖΗΣ, Τ. Α. ΚΑΡΑΝΑΣΤΑΣΗΣ (επιμ.), *Επιτομή του Λεξικού της Μεσαιωνικής Ελληνικής Δημόδου Γραμματείας (1100–1669) του Εμμανουήλ Κριαρά, τόμ. Α', Β'* (Θεσσαλονίκη, 2001–2003) [electronic edition at http://www.greek-language.gr/greekLang/medieval_greek/kriaras/index.html].

(35) D. CORRENS, Jona und Salomo, in: W. HAUBECK, M. BACHMANN (Hrsg.), *Wort in der Zeit: neutestamentliche Studien. Festgabe für Karl Heinrich Rengstorf zum 75. Geburtstag* (Leiden, 1980) 86–94.