Book Review

Biblical Apocrypha in South-Eastern Europe and Related Areas (Proceedings of the Session held at the 12th International Congress of South-East European Studies [Bucharest, 2–6 September 2019]), edited by Maria Cioată, Anissava Miltenova and Emanuela Timotin. Editura Istros, Brăila (2021)

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This volume gathers contributions on topics in biblical apocrypha and manuscripts of the library archives in Central and Eastern Europe. The eleven essays are preceded by an editors' introduction and followed by a general bibliography, a list of contributors, and biblical and thematic indexes.

The editors propose this volume as "a contribution to recent scholarly debates within the multi-faceted and interdisciplinary study of 'apocrypha.'" They explain that the term "'apocrypha' is used here in a much wider sense than common for example in (Western) biblical studies." It "includes the categories often referred to as 'NT Apocrypha,' 'OT Apocrypha,' 'OT Pseudepigrapha,' partially overlapping with 'Jewish literature of Greco-Roman times,' but is broader." It further comprises "hagiography, liturgical and patristic literature, and folklore" (pp. 5–6). This seems justified as in the Orthodox Church (the predominant church in the east of Europe), the boundary between canonical and non-canonical books is not rigid. The continuous transmission and development of biblical themes in non-canonical books, "folk religion," customs and religious rites of the Orthodox Church are further reasons for this broader understanding of apocrypha.

   The essay "More about Jewish Apocalyptic in the Armenian Tradition" by **Michael Stone** opens this fine volume. It begins by looking into how traumatic events in a nation's history similar to those in Jewish history may have facilitated the presence of certain apocrypha in a particular language. Being included in the Armenian OT, the book of Maccabees is a good example of this phenomenon (as Robert Thompson has previously explained): the resistance and the subsequent battle of Avaryr (451) between the Armenian people and the Persian Yazdegert II (he aimed to convert them to Zoroastrianism) are likened to the Jewish revolt against the Seleucid King Antiochus Epiphanes (pp. 19–21). First, Stone seeks to clarify what "apocalypse" means beyond J. Collins' classic definition (*Semeia* 14, 1979, 9: "a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality"). In the Hebrew, Greek, Syriac and Armenian contexts, the apocalypses (after 500 CE) connected to the Book of Daniel are "political apocalypses" (p. 21) – for Armenian, Stone mentions *The Seventh Vision of Daniel.* The only other sort of apocalypse found in Armenian (besides those related to Daniel) is *4 Ezra*: this "is a translation of a deliberate Greek reworking of the original Hebrew text" (p. 23; here, Stone references his *Textual Commentary on the Armenian Version of IV Ezra,* 1990, ix–xii). He also comments on further apocryphal works in Armenian. *Questions of Ezra* "deals with the fate of the soul after death and describes the steps of its ascent through the heavenly spheres" (p. 24). Life after death is a recurrent topic in one other geographical area (Romania, see below the essays by Dima and Istrate) and it resurfaces in the following Armenian apocrypha: *Questions of St. Gregory and Answers of the Angel concerning the Souls of Men* and *Fifteen Signs of the Judgement.* Stone also discusses the *Vision of Enoch* (composed in Armenian), the *Teaching of St. Gregory* (fifth century, presentation of Enoch but different from the *Book of Enoch* and *Jubilees*) and the material of manuscript M10200 which comprises the "true names that Adam bestowed on the animals" and a version of *Vision of Enoch.* Other biblical characters enjoying an afterlife in the Armenian apocrypha are Gog and Magog, see *The Alexander Romance* ("a fictional retelling of life and campaigns of Alexander"; pp. 22–29). There is a set of works Stone aims to bring to the fore in the last pages of his essay. For example, the *Signs of the Doomsday* interweaves the themes of the end of days and the final Judgement with a "propensity for lists" (of items from biblical history), which is reflective of beliefs in "cosmic order and the structured division of ... history into sequential ages" (p. 30). This side of the Armenian apocrypha is "not very well known in the scholarly world" (p. 33) and the latter parts of the essay serve as orientation for further study.

Anissava Miltenova (Professor, the Institute of Literature, the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences) puts forward a study on the *Holy Tree* motif in the Slavic manuscripts. The specific sources where this is found are: *Series of stories about the Holy Tree* (attributed to Gregory the Theologian, d. 390); *A series of tales about the tree of the Cross of salvation, where to find it and what it is* (the author is said to be Severian of Gabala; died after 408); and *Series about the Holy Tree* (original work by the tenth-century Bulgarian Presbyter Jeremiah). Miltenova provides valuable information about where this motif of the "holy tree" (out of which the Cross was carved) is found in the various Slavic manuscripts (from Bulgaria and Russia).

A senior researcher of the Institute of Linguistics (Romanian Academy), **Emanuela Timotin** writes about an eighteenth-century Romanian *planctus* (lamentation) entitled "Plaint of Eve, when she was going out through the Gates of Paradise." Based on the notes found on the manuscripts, this text in Romanian with Cyrillic script was copied by Nicolaus Gridovits – he is said to be a "cantor" (that is a church chanter as Timotin explains; the other translation, "deacon," does not apply, p. 54). Gridovits is from the Banat region (West of Romania). Other related works also discussed are the *Plaint of Adam* and the Romanian traditions of *Palaea Historica* and the *Life of Adam and Eve.* Timotin describes the manuscripts of the *Plaint of Eve* and proceeds to its Romanian text (language and its content). A comparison is also provided, where relevant, between the *Plaint of Eve* and the parallel texts of the Romanian recension of the *Life of Adam and Eve* (pp. 57–60). Before the conclusion, Timotin steers towards the Christian Orthodox iconographical representations of these texts in Romania (in particular the *Plaint of Adam*): the outdoor church painting of the renowned Suceviţa Monastery (seventeenth century), the Kretzulescu Church (Bucharest) and an icon brought from Jerusalem, currently housed at the Casa Hagi Prodan Museum (Ploieşti, Romania). The appendix (pp. 67–69) contains the Romanian text of the *Plaint of Eve* along with an English translation (MS 284, 94v–96r). A photocopy of these few manuscript folia would have been helpful. I note that "the first Sunday of Lent" is not dedicated to Adam and Eve's casting from Paradise (as stated on p. 51 and in footnote 35) – the Orthodox Church commemorates this on the Sunday before the beginning of Lent or *The Sunday of Forgiveness.* Also, "protoplasts" means "forefathers" (Adam and Eve); "calendric periods" stands for "religious cycles" (the Orthodox Church has three-yearly cycles: Triodion, Pentecostarion and Menaion).

Ljubica Jovanović writes on "The Figure of Joseph in the South Slavonic *Homily about Fasting, and Joseph, and the Priest, and the Prophet David*" – this

is attributed to John Chrysostom. The biblical patriarch Jacob, "the handsome Joseph" (Joseph *Prekrasni*), is thought to have prefigured or have been a "prototype" of Christ. As there are differences in service readings from one Orthodox Church to another, the following claim of Jovanović is relevant to the Slavonic tradition. Jovanović argues that it is this *Homily about Fasting, and Joseph...* that was part of the services held on Monday in the First Week of Lent (not the other two: *On Joseph about Chastity* by the same Chrysostom and *Sermon on Joseph the Most Virtuous* by Ephraim the Syrian); the debate derives from the fact that no homily is read at present. Jovanović brings several arguments for her claim: the topic of the *Homily* is "sin, repentance and fasting," thus matching the religious posture of Lent; in *Codex Suprasliensis* (a lectionary containing homilies for the Easter cycle), the *Homily about Fasting, and Joseph...* "logically fills the place of the Joseph of Holy Monday because it is placed in the codex after the homily on the fig tree that belongs to the service of Holy Monday and before the homily of the ten virgins of Holy Tuesday" (p. 77). Her subsequent notes on the literary structure of the *Homily* (pp. 84–86) begin with a helpful clarification: "In contrast to David, Peter, and Paul as repented sinners, Joseph appears as a prefiguration of Jesus Christ, because he did not sin, but he is the one who forgives sins to his wrongdoers."

Keiko Mitani (professor at the University of Tokyo, research area: literature and language of Slavonic areas) writes the essay "Linguistic Analysis of the Slavonic Translation of the *Testament of Job*" (TJob). Mitani states that she is analysing "grammatical features of the extant copies and comparing the language of Slavonic TJob with the early Slavonic translation of the canonical Book of Job included in the oldest copies of the South Slavonic *Parimeinik*" (p. 89). A *Parimeinik* is a book containing vesperal readings from the Bible for major feasts in the Christian Orthodox calendar. The language of Slavonic TJob "retains a series of features descended from its [Church Slavonic] ancestor but, on the other hand, includes vernacular elements of Serbian Štakovian dialect" (p. 99). After comparing the Slavonic TJob with the Slavonic translation of the biblical Book of Job, Mitani analyses the factors triggering the penetration of these vernacular elements. She lists the following: "scribal competence," "the environmental condition in which a copy was produced," "time of manuscript's production," and "style of narrative," that is "first-person singular style" and "conversations [...] embedded in the narrative" (p. 107). In conclusion, the Slavonic TJob is said to have "appeared after the Slavonic translation of TJob, probably between the late tenth to the early twelfth century" (p. 108).

Ivan I. Iliev (Assistant Professor, Faculty of Theology, Sofia University, Bulgaria) aims to answer the question: "How Many Translations are There of the Book of Daniel in Old Church Slavonic?" To date, there are three recognized translations of this biblical book in Slavonic: "Cyril's translation," the "Methodian translation," and the "Symeonic translation." Iliev contends that one should also consider as proper translations those samples of Daniel translated in the commentaries of Church Fathers – one by Hippolytus and two attributed to him – and in books of services of the Orthodox Church – the *Izbornik* of 1073. He comparatively analyses samples of these translations from Daniel 2:2, 2:31, 2:34, 2:44, 3:2, 4:10, 7:4, 7:13, 7:14, 8:8, 9:27 and 12:2. Iliev concludes that "there are *seven* different translations of the *Book of Daniel*" and "the translations are not connected or interchangeable," each of them having "its proper function"; "there is no evidence that they were produced as an act of repetition or revision" (p. 123).

Basil Lourié (Editor-in-Chief of the journal *Scrinium* [Brill] and Leading Research Fellow, the Russian Academy of Science) presents a 92-page article entitled "A Monothelete Syriac Compilation of Pseudo-Apostolic Acts Preserved only in Slavonic and the Entrance of Constans II into Rome in 663." This concerns a collection of texts which bears the name *Narration against the Romans* and includes seven parts. Lourié analyses four of these: (1) the introduction by the Byzantine compiler; (2) the three versions of the apocryphal writing the *Twelve Apostles* (I, II and III; they are versions of the story of the Apostolic Council in Jerusalem); (3) "an alternative account of the same apostolic council in Jerusalem" by Evodius; (4) *The Acts of Peter in Rome* (also known as *Pseudo-Pseudo Clementine*). Several important claims are made in the course of this article regarding the method, history of this collection and its original Syriac source text. Methodologically, this work is following Éric Junod's contention (in disagreement with Wilhelm Schneemelcher) that apocryphal literature cannot be limited to writings that appeared before the fourth century (p. 130; see also Lourié's *Methodological Postscriptum*, pp. 213–217). In terms of history, he argues that

> the Byzantine *Vorlage* of our Slavonic document seems to belong to the monothelete tradition, discovered in some archive after the schism [between the Churches of the East and West] of 1054. The late Byzantine polemicist used an earlier text in Greek composed against Romans by a monothelete author in a different situation – referring to the schism which began in 649 (pp. 133–134; my brackets).

The analysis of Lourié includes sections dedicated to the Syriac background of these texts: for *Twelve Apostles I and II* see pp. 135 and 143–145; for *Evodius*, see p. 148; for *The Acts of Peter in Rome*, see pp. 158–161. There are many moving parts to this rich study of the *Narration against the Romans* and it is hoped that other readers will give the claims of Lourié the attention they deserve.

Cristina-Ioana Dima (Lecturer at the Faculty of Letters, University of Bucharest) writes the essay "*L'Apocalypse de la Vierge Marie*. Versions roumaines du XVIᵉ au XIXᵉ siècle." The article summarizes the results of a monograph published by Dima (in Romanian), "Apocalipsul Maicii Domnului. Versiuni românești din secolele al XVI-lea – al XIX-lea" (2012). The essay begins with a brief overview of the content of this *Apocalypse*. Simon Mimouni and later Richard Bauckham assume a relation of dependency between this *Apocalypse* and the *Apocalypse of Paul*. Stephen Shoemaker believes it is the other way around. The following section examines the three Romanian versions of this *Apocalypse*: version A follows the Slavic version (it presents the journey of the Virgin Mary to hell); version B is influenced by the Greek text (her journey to hell and the heavens); version C might be a Romanian composition (her journey is presented as a vision of a saint called Seraphim) (pp. 222 and 227). The essay is rounded by a discussion of the geographical spread of these versions in Romania – Annex II contains the corresponding maps. For each of the three versions, Dima includes a table focused on the type of sinner (man, woman, priest, scholars or, generally, people) and their corresponding torment in hell (crying, great darkness, fire, etc.) and sins (non-believers in the Trinity, not attending Church, blasphemy, killers, etc.), see Annex I.

Maria Stanciu Istrate (Senior Researcher, Institute of Linguistics of the Romanian Academy) writes the essay "The Road to the Afterlife in *the Life of Saint Basil the Younger* in a Romanian Manuscript of the 17ᵗʰ Century." Considered to be "the most influential composition about the journey of the soul after its separation from the body, passing through several aerial toll houses" (p. 249), the *Life of St Basil the Younger* must date back as early as 944. There are translations of it from Greek to Slavonic, Medieval Bulgarian and Russian. The Romanian translation (about fifty manuscripts of it exist) is hugely influential: the "belief in the aerial toll houses has deep roots in Romanian culture, with echoes both in visual arts and in funeral customs" (p. 254). Being an essential part of the iconographic stock of many medieval monasteries in Romania (including the Voroneț), there are as many as "21 representations of the aerial toll houses, accompanied by their Slavonic names" (p. 254). After listing the names of these

toll houses (it begins with the "toll house of Slander" and finishes with the one of "heartlessness and cruelty"), Istrate discusses the various Romanian burial customs that "visibly reflect belief in the aerial toll houses" (pp. 256–258). The Romanian literature borrows this motif in the poem "Moartea lui Fulger" (Fulger's Death) by George Coşbuc.

The essay of **Matija Ogrin** (Research Fellow, the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts) discusses the "Slovenian Manuscripts on the Antichrist and the Modes of the Manuscript Tradition." This essay is focused on a manuscript copying a printed book, *Leben Antichristi* (*The Life of Antichrist*) by Dionysius of Luxemburg. After several editions in German, the book was banned by the Austrian authorities in 1774 but continued to be translated into languages like Czech and Slovenian and to circulate via manuscripts – the first attested manuscript copy is dated in 1767: "the *Life of Antichrist* indeed became a kind of Slovenian folk book during the late Baroque period and even well into the nineteenth century" (p. 261). Ogrin finds the original German book "an exceptionally interesting piece of Baroque literature" because "it is a synthesis of several medieval and early modern genres" (chronologies, legendary accounts and theological arguments). Dionysius of Luxemburg

> collected and … systematised the standard early-Christian and medieval propositions about Antichrist: his descent from the tribe of Dan (contrary to the descent of Jesus from the tribe of Juda), his advent and life, his false miracles and ruling, supported by demons, his cruelties and persecution of Christians, the intervention and martyrdom of the holy prophets Enoch and Elias, and the Antichrist's final defeat and damnation (pp. 263–264).

The following is another reason for its status in Slovenian society. *Leben Antichristi* contains *signa temporis* (events which precede the end of days: the fall of the Roman Empire, all nations have access to the Gospel, the interest of Christian peoples in practising their faith starts to dwindle; pp. 266–267). As Ogrin explains, there are translations of *Leben Antichristi* in Slovenian which address both the lower and the upper levels of society. The so-called *bukovniki* – see the translation types A to E – translate for people who are "far away from the sphere of learned, elite culture." The translation type G is completed by "a more educated translator" (p. 275) who is probably targeting a different audience.

Maria (Haralambakis) Cioată (Research Fellow, University of Manchester) has contributed extensively to our understanding of Moses Gaster's life and work – he was a prominent Jewish scholar born in Romania in 1856. Thus, she is best placed to examine "The Collection of Dr. Gaster at

the Library of the Romanian Academy in Bucharest." At the time of his arrival in England, Gaster was an expert in Romanian language and (folklore) culture, having published two prominent anthologies of Romanian texts, *Chrestomatie română* and *Literatura populară română* (p. 280). An avid collector, Gaster acquired an important number of manuscripts concerning Romanian and Jewish cultures which he resolved to sell as coherent collections to appropriate buyers. In 1936, he managed to sell his Romanian collection to the Library of the Romanian Academy (abbreviated BAR) and Cioată explains the saga of this transaction (pp. 281–284). Since its acquisition, there has been a reorganization of this special collection by Gabriel Ştrempel (1950–57) and a "reassignment of manuscripts and other items over the different categories," sometimes without complete consistency (p. 288). Thus, after checking the BAR archive with the original Gaster Collection (there is a list of it at BAR and one at the UCL Gaster Papers), Cioată says that nineteen Gaster manuscripts were still missing; after intense efforts, she manages to locate most of them, with six manuscripts still to be found (pp. 291–294). Very useful is Cioată's *Inventory of the Gaster Collection at BAR* which she puts together from her extensive knowledge of Gaster's way of working with manuscripts and their subsequent history (pp. 299–312). The inventory is testimony to the variety of texts in which Gaster chooses to take interest while researching the Romanian language and culture: Christian service books; Christian prayers (*Octoih* for eight voices [voices stands for types of Byzantine singing], Psalters, *Paraclises* to the Mother of God, and *Acatists*); Romanian and Latin grammars; works with theological content (Patericon, teachings by Dimitry, Archbishop of Rostov; lives of saints); history books; gospel and apocryphal texts (Gospel of Nicodim); and proper literary texts (Anton Pann, D. Bolintineanu and V. Alecsandri).

The editors deserve praise for making this wealth of information regarding the biblical and apocryphal manuscript collections of Central and South Europe available to the public in English. Especially notable are the reflections of some authors on how the content of manuscripts shapes the lives of people in these areas of the world – see the essays of **Istrate** (the Romanian burial customs) and **Dima** (the popular/folklore understanding of the life after death in Romania). **Cioată**'s careful research on the Romanian Gaster Collection should be very useful for further study. The collection mirrors the areas in which Romanian folklore and culture were mostly interested: religion, history, natural sciences, good government, modern and ancient languages (Romanian but also Latin and Greek), and the use of devotional texts for reading and chanting in the Orthodox Church.