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## CAPTIVES AND REFUGEES. THE FORCED MIGRATION OF THE INHABITANTS OF THE BYZANTINE EASTERN FRONTIER DURING THE 5<sup>TH</sup>–7<sup>TH</sup> CENTURIES IN LIGHT OF BYZANTINE-SLAVIC HAGIOGRAPHICAL TEXTS\*

**Abstract.** This article is devoted to the image of a social situation in the eastern parts of the Byzantine Empire during the 5<sup>th</sup>–7<sup>th</sup> century, which is to be found in the East Christian hagiographical texts. They cannot be treated as a completely reliable source of information, due to exaggerations and simplifications typical for the genre. On the other hand, they testify a long-lasting and vital literary tradition – they were circulating in the Byzantine Commonwealth during the Middle Ages, were translated to several languages (*inter alia* to the Church Slavic). They formed the basis for stereotypes – specific for the Medieval European imagination – that the eastern frontier of the Empire was rather dangerous territory, its neighbors (Persians, Arabs) were unpredictable pagans and the Christian inhabitants of the region ought to be called their innocent victims.

**Keywords:** Church Slavic literature, Old Rus' literature, Byzantine hagiography, Arabs, Persians

**In** this article I would like to present an excerpt from our current research carried out as a part of the scholarly project, entitled *Muhammad and the Origin of Islam – Stereotypes, Knowledge and Notions in the Byzantine-Russian Culture*. In this project we are interested not so much in the historical process itself as in the mechanisms of shaping the stereotypical perception of the 'other', 'alien' in the Byzantine-Slavic culture over the centuries. Our research covers not only the image of Muhammad himself, but also the ethnos from which he descended, namely the Arabs. We analyze sources referring to Arabs from the pre-Muslim era, the period in which Islam was born, as well as from the time of the military expansion of its followers in the Mediterranean basin during the rule of the Umayyad

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and early Abbasid dynasties. My own research is not focused on the sources of the Eastern Roman (Byzantine) provenance, which are relatively well known, but on medieval Rus' material, that is texts translated from the Byzantine Greek or originally written in the Church Slavic language between the 10<sup>th</sup> and mid-16<sup>th</sup> centuries, in Bulgaria (and then disseminated in Rus') or in the Eastern Slavic region. Since their authors were already considerably distant in terms of time and space from the events they described (5<sup>th</sup>–7<sup>th</sup> centuries) and based their work on earlier accounts, Old Rus' sources seem to be a very good material for research on the formation of a stereotypical image of the Arabs in cultural narratives. Moreover, unlike other East Christian texts (Byzantine, Syriac, Coptic or Armenian), they are surprisingly poorly explored, and much of them have not been published and are only available to researchers in their original, manuscript form.

Why are hagiographic texts such an important category within the analyzed source material? Their genre characteristics make them extremely susceptible to creating a stereotypical image of reality, based on a rigid division into the spheres of good and evil, which often translates into the opposition of 'ours/Christian/Byzantine' – 'foreign/pagan or Muslim/Arab'. What is more, in the case of Old Rus' literature, they constitute a significant part of the material that we have at our disposal in terms of quantity. It seems that for the inhabitants of medieval Rus' hagiographic works – apart from several Byzantine chronicles known in the Church Slavic translation (*inter alia*, John Malalas and George the Monk/Hamartolus)<sup>1</sup> – were the main source of information about the Arabs in the pre-Muslim period and their place in the Byzantine-Persian conflicts, as well as their impact on the situation of the eastern frontier of the Empire in the 5<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Undoubtedly, a source that is important from the point of view of this research is *Vitae monachorum Palestinensium* (*Lives of the Monks in Palestine*) by Cyril of Scythopolis, who lived in the 6<sup>th</sup> century in monasteries in the Judean desert. His legacy includes the lives of seven anchorites from that area, living in the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries, which are abundant in historical details and, in the opinion of many researchers, quite reliable as far as facts are concerned<sup>2</sup>. Four of them were

<sup>1</sup> Z.A. BRZOWSKA, *Zapożyczona czy własna wizja dziejów powszechnych? Wpływ autorów bizantyńskich na świadomość historyczną Słowian Południowych i Wschodnich (na przykładzie opowieści o Mahomecie i Historii paulicjan Piotra z Sycylii)*, [in:] *Widmo Mahometa, cień Samuela. Cesarstwo Bizantyńskie w relacji z przedstawicielami innych religii i kultur (VII–XV w.)*, ed. Z.A. BRZOWSKA, M.J. LESZKA, K. MARINOW, T. WOLIŃSKA, Łódź 2020 [= BL, 39], p. 13–44.

<sup>2</sup> Edition of the Greek text: KYRILLOS VON SKYTHOPOLIS, *Vitae monachorum Palestinensium*, ed. E. SCHWARTZ, Lipsiae 1939. English translation: CYRIL OF SCYTHOPOLIS, *The Lives of the Monks in Palestine*, ed. R.M. PRICE, J. BINNS, Kalamazoo 1991. See also: C.J. STALLMAN-PACITTI, *Cyril of Scythopolis. A Study in Hagiography as Apology*, Brookline 1991; B. KETTERN, *Kyrillos von Skythopolis*, [in:] *Biographisch-Bibliographisches Kirchenlexikon*, vol. IV, Herzberg 1992, col. 897–899; D. KRUEGER, *Writing as Devotion: Hagiographical Composition and the Cult of the Saints in Theodoret of Cyrrhus and Cyril of Scythopolis*, ChH 66.4, 1997, p. 707–719; B. FLUSIN, *Un hagiographe saisi*

probably known in the Church Slavic tradition: Euthymius (BHG 648), Sabbas (BGH 1608), John the Hesychast (BHG 897) and Cyriacus (BHG 463)<sup>3</sup>. The first three texts are of particular importance for our research.

The *Life of St. Euthymius the Great* (ca. 377–473) was translated into the Church Slavic language probably as early as in the 10<sup>th</sup> century in Bulgaria, and then very quickly brought to Rus'. Its reminiscences can already be found in Old Rus' texts from the 11<sup>th</sup> century (e.g. *The Life of St. Theodosius, Abbot of the Crypt Monastery*)<sup>4</sup>. The oldest preserved Slavic manuscripts containing this text can be dated to the 14<sup>th</sup> century. These are mostly the so-called Menaion Reader (*Четьи-Минеи*), i.e. collections of the lives of saints and other texts intended for reading, arranged according to the order of the liturgical year of the Eastern Church and collected in twelve volumes. The work dedicated to St. Euthymius by Cyril of Scythopolis was included on 20 January<sup>5</sup>.

In the years 1488–1508, Nil Sorski (1433–1508), one of the most eminent Old Rus' writers and thinkers of the late 15<sup>th</sup> century, included this text in his collection of saints' lives. His initiative, aimed at organizing the hagiographic material known in Rus' and gathering it in one collection, predated the undertaking of the Metropolitan Macarius (1542–1563), who developed the *Great Menaion Reader* (*Великие Четьи-Минеи*). This volume of Nil Sorski's compilation is currently stored at the Russian State Library in Moscow (РГБ, 113.630, fol. 144–186)<sup>6</sup>. In the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century, this text was also included in the *Great Menaion Reader* by Metropolitan Macarius: it was placed in the January volume, under the date 20.01<sup>7</sup>.

In the 10<sup>th</sup> century, the *Life of St. Sabbas the Sanctified* (438–532), was most probably also translated in Bulgaria. It also became popular in the Old Rus' literature even before the Mongol invasion. The borrowings from it can be found

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*par l'histoire: Cyrille de Scythopolis et la mesure du temps*, [in:] *The Sabaite Heritage in the Orthodox Church from the 5<sup>th</sup> Century to the Present*, ed. J. PATRICH, Louvain 2001, p. 119–126; N.A. KALOGERAS, *The Role of the Audience in the Construction of a Narrative: a Note on Cyril of Scythopolis*, JÖB 52, 2002, p. 149–159; K. TRAMPEDACH, *Reichsmönchtum? Das politische Selbstverständnis der Mönche Palästinas im 6. Jahrhundert und die historische Methode des Kyrill von Skythopolis*, Mil 2, 2005, p. 271–296.

<sup>3</sup> К. ИВАНОВА, *Bibliotheca hagiographica balcano-slavica*, София 2008, p. 337, 447–448, 510; О.В. ТВОРОГОВ, *Переводные жития в русской книжности XI–XV вв. Каталог*, Москва–Санкт-Петербург 2008, p. 53, 61–62, 71–72, 103–104.

<sup>4</sup> А.Б. ВАНЬКОВА, А.А. ТУРИЛОВ, А.А. ЛУКАШЕВИЧ, Н.В. ГЕРАСИМЕНКО, *Евфимий Великий*, [in:] *Православная энциклопедия*, vol. XVII, Москва 2008, p. 445.

<sup>5</sup> I.a. Moscow, Russian State Library, РГБ, 304.I.34, fol. 1–69 (the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century); Moscow, Russian State Library, РГБ, 304.I.745, fol. 1'–59 (the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century); Moscow, Russian State Library, РГБ, 304.I.684, fol. 403–451 (16<sup>th</sup> century); Moscow, Russian State Library, РГБ, 173.I.91, fol. 508'–581' (16<sup>th</sup> century).

<sup>6</sup> Т.П. ЛЕНГРЕН, *Соборник Нила Сорского*, vol. III, Москва 2004, p. 237–306.

<sup>7</sup> Moscow, State Historical Museum, ГИМ, Син. 990, fol. 692с–714d; Moscow, State Historical Museum, ГИМ, Син. 178, fol. 1022а–1050b.

in the aforementioned *Life of St. Theodosius, Abbot of the Crypt Monastery* from the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> century<sup>8</sup>. The oldest, partially preserved copy of the text comes from the 12<sup>th</sup> century, and the complete copy from the 13<sup>th</sup> century<sup>9</sup>. In the later centuries, this work spread in Rus' within the Menaion Reader (under the date of 5 December)<sup>10</sup>, and in the 16<sup>th</sup> century it became part of Nil Sorski's compilation, currently stored at the Russian State Library in Moscow (РГБ, 304.I.684, fol. 199–272)<sup>11</sup> and of the *Great Menaion Reader*<sup>12</sup>.

*The Life of St. John the Hesychast/Silent* (454–558) by Cyril of Scythopolis can also be included in the group of hagiographic works, assimilated into the Church Slavic literature already at its earliest stage, i.e. in the 10<sup>th</sup> century<sup>13</sup>. The text has survived to our days within one of the oldest existing Cyrillic manuscripts: the so-called *Codex Suprasliensis*, a parchment Old Bulgarian manuscript from the late 10<sup>th</sup> century, containing a selection of the lives of saints for the month of March and several writings by the Fathers of the Church<sup>14</sup>. This manuscript was separated in later centuries and is currently held in the collections of three libraries: in Warsaw, Ljubljana and St. Petersburg. *The Life of St. John Hesychast* is included in the part that is held in Warsaw<sup>15</sup>. It can also be found in several Rus' manuscripts from the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries<sup>16</sup>, such as in Nil Sorski's compilation<sup>17</sup> and in the *Great Menaion Reader* of the Metropolitan Macarius (under the date of March 30)<sup>18</sup>.

An important group of sources from the point of view of our research are the lives of ascetes/stylites living in Syria and Palestine in the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centu-

<sup>8</sup> Е.В. ТКАЧЁВ, *Кирилл Скифопольский*, [in:] *Православная энциклопедия*, vol. XXXIV, Москва 2014, p. 616.

<sup>9</sup> Saint Petersburg, Russian National Library, РНБ, ОЛДП. Q.106.

<sup>10</sup> Moscow, Russian State Library, РГБ, 304.I.749, fol. 169–270' (15<sup>th</sup> century); Moscow, Russian State Library, РГБ, 173.I.90, fol. 72'–138' (16<sup>th</sup> century).

<sup>11</sup> Т.П. ЛЁННГРЕН, *Сборник Нила Сорского*, vol. II, Москва 2002, p. 359–483.

<sup>12</sup> Moscow, State Historical Museum, ГИМ, Син. 989, fol. 122a–150a; Moscow, State Historical Museum, ГИМ, Син. 177, fol. 168a–202c. *Великия Минеи Четии. Декабрь. Дни 1–5*, Москва 1901, col. 444–551.

<sup>13</sup> C. Voss, *Zwei albulgarische Übersetzungen der Vita des Johannes Hesychastes. Zur Frage der Archaizität des martyrologischen Textbestands für den Monat März im Codex Suprasliensis und im Uspenskij Spisok der Großen Makarianischen Lesemenäen*, [in:] *Abhandlungen zu den Grossen Lesemenäen des Metropoliten Makarij*, Freiburg 2001 [= *MLSDV*, 44], p. 297–336.

<sup>14</sup> See: *Rediscovery. Bulgarian Codex Suprasliensis of 10<sup>th</sup> Century*, ed. A. MILTENOVA, Sofia 2012.

<sup>15</sup> Central Archives of Historical Records, Zamoyskis' Archive in Warsaw, BOZ 201, fol. 278–302. Edition: Ы. ЗАИМОВ, М. КАПАЛДО, *Супрасълски или Ретков сборник*, vol. II, София 1983, p. 16–65.

<sup>16</sup> Moscow, Russian State Library, РГБ, 113.595, fol. 206'–220' (the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century).

<sup>17</sup> Moscow, Russian State Library, РГБ, 173.I.207, fol. 2–17 (16<sup>th</sup> century). Edition: Т.П. ЛЁННГРЕН, *Сборник...*, vol. II, p. 484–509.

<sup>18</sup> Moscow, State Historical Museum, ГИМ, Син. 992, fol. 824a–831d. Edition: E. WEINER, S.O. ŠMIDT, A.I. ŠKURKO, *Die Grossen Lesemenäen des Metropoliten Makarij. Uspenskij Spisok. 26.–31. März*, Freiburg 2001, p. 1647–1662.

ries. Unfortunately, since the authors from the *Slavia Orthodoxa* area were rather selective in their approach to the Eastern Christian literary tradition, not all of the potentially interesting texts were assimilated by them. For example, among the hagiographic texts dedicated to St. Simeon Stylites the Elder (ca. 390–459), only two versions of his life (BHG 1683c and BHG 1685m) were translated into the Church Slavic language<sup>19</sup>. *Historia religiosa* by Theodoret of Cyrus, on the other hand, which contains a lot of important historical information, most probably was not read at all in Rus'.

The oldest variant of the *Life of St. Daniel Stylites* (BHG 489)<sup>20</sup> was known in the *Slavia Orthodoxa* region. It can be found on the pages of several Slavic manuscripts from the 15<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> century<sup>21</sup>, as well as in the *Great Menaion Reader*, under the date of 11 December<sup>22</sup>. Hagiographic texts dedicated to St. Symeon Stylites the Younger (ca. 520–592; also known as St. Symeon of the Admirable Mountain) also must have enjoyed considerable popularity in Rus'. On the pages of the *Menaion Reader* from the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries we can find both the oldest life of this saint, written soon after his death (BHG 1689)<sup>23</sup>, as well as the version by Nicephorus Uranus (BHG 1690), created in the 10<sup>th</sup> century<sup>24</sup>. The latter, however, underwent significant editorial changes once it came to the Slavic territory, in the course of which, among other things, parts of the text containing an outline

<sup>19</sup> К. ИВАНОВА, *Bibliotheca...*, p. 178–182; О.В. ТВОРОГОВ, *Переводные жития...*, p. 106–107.

<sup>20</sup> Edition of the Greek text: H. DELEHAYE, *Les saints Stylites*, Bruxelles–Paris 1923, p. 1–94. English translation: *Three Byzantine Saints. Contemporary Biographies Translated from the Greek*, trans. E. DAWES, N.H. BAYNES, New York 1977, p. 7–71.

<sup>21</sup> Moscow, Russian State Library, РГБ, 113.593, fol. 58–105' (late 15<sup>th</sup> century or the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century). See: К. ИВАНОВА, *Bibliotheca...*, p. 353–354; О.В. ТВОРОГОВ, *Переводные жития...*, p. 44; F.J. THOMSON, *The December Volume of the Hilandar Menologium*, [in:] *Text, Sprache, Grammatik. Slavisches Schrifttum der Vormoderne. Festschrift für Eckhard Weiher*, Freiburg 2009 [= WS, 39], p. 139–157.

<sup>22</sup> Moscow, State Historical Museum, ГИМ, Син. 989, fol. 227d–245d; Moscow, State Historical Museum, ГИМ, Син. 177, fol. 317a–344c. *Великія Минеи Четіи. Декабрь. Дни 6–17*, Москва 1904, col. 810–875.

<sup>23</sup> Moscow, Russian State Library, РГБ, 304.I.669, fol. 49–124 (1432–1443); Moscow, Russian State Library, РГБ, 113.597, fol. 336a–432d (1494); Moscow, Russian State Library, РГБ, 304.I.685, fol. 143–233' (16<sup>th</sup> century). See: H. DELEHAYE, *Les saints Stylites...*, p. LIX–LXXV; P. VAN DEN VEN, *La vie ancienne de S. Syméon Stylite le Jeune*, В 33.2, 1963, p. 487–492; Г.И. ВЗДОРНОВ, *Роль славянских монастырских мастерских письма Константинополя и Афона в развитии книгописания и художественного оформления русских рукописей на рубеже XIV–XV вв.*, ТОДЛ 23, 1968, p. 171–198; F. MILLAR, *The Image of a Christian Monk in Northern Syria: Symeon Stylites the Younger*, [in:] *Being Christian in Late Antiquity – A Festschrift for Gillian Clark*, ed. C. HARRISON, C. HUMFRESS, I. SANDWELL, Oxford 2014, p. 278–295; L. PARKER, *Symeon Stylites the Younger and his Cult in Context. Hagiography and Society in Sixth to Seventh-Century Byzantium*, Oxford 2017.

<sup>24</sup> Moscow, Russian State Library, РГБ, 304.I.754, fol. 216–286' (15<sup>th</sup> century). See: К. ИВАНОВА, *Bibliotheca...*, p. 535–536.

of the political situation at the time were removed or abbreviated. The oldest variant of the life was also included in the compilation of Nil Sorski<sup>25</sup> and in the *Great Menaion Reader* (under the date of 24 May)<sup>26</sup>.

What other Eastern Christian hagiographic texts, including references to the Byzantine-Persian struggles and the role that the Arabs played in them, were adapted in the *Slavia Orthodoxa* area? It is most likely that such important works as the *Life of St. Theodore of Amasea* (d. 306) or the *Life of George of Choziba* (d. 625) were not known there at all<sup>27</sup>. On the other hand, it can be assumed that at the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> century the *Life of St. Alexander the Sleepless* (ca. 350–ca. 430), written in its original version shortly after the saint's death<sup>28</sup>, was translated into the Church Slavic language. We find it on the pages of several Rus' manuscripts from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup> century and within the *Great Menaion Reader* (under the date of 19 February)<sup>29</sup>. Manuscripts from the same period also include the *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon* (ca. 550–ca. 613) by George of Sykeon (BHG 1748)<sup>30</sup>. It was also part of the *Great Menaion Reader* (under the date of 22 April)<sup>31</sup>. The *Life of St. Golinduch* (d. 591) is an interesting and at the same time very poorly known work, set against the historical background of Byzantine and Persian relations during the reign of Khosrow I, Hormisdas IV and Khosrow II Parviz. It appears on the pages of the Rus' Menaion Reader from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup> century and in the

<sup>25</sup> State Literary Museum in Moscow, ГЛМ РОФ 8354, № 14, fol. 4–95'. Edition: Т.П. ЛЕННГРЕН, *Сборник Нила Сорского*, vol. I, Москва 2000, p. 39–193. See also: Т.П. ЛЕННГРЕН, *Житие Симеона Столпника в автографе Нила Сорского*, ЛИИКЯ 1, 2000, p. 277–290.

<sup>26</sup> National Library of Russia in St. Petersburg, РНБ, 728.1321, fol. 489a–526c; Moscow, State Historical Museum, ГИМ, Син. 994, fol. 647b–726a; Moscow, State Historical Museum, ГИМ, Син. 180, fol. 1029a–1125d. Edition: E. WEINER, S.O. ŠMIDT, A.I. ŠKURKO, *Die Grossen Lesemenäen des Metropoliten Makarij. Uspenskij Spisok. 24.–31. Mai*, Freiburg 2013, p. 1293–1451. See also: Z.A. BRZOWSKA, M.J. LESZKA, T. WOLIŃSKA, *Muhammad and the Origin of Islam in the Byzantine-Slavic Literary Context. A Bibliographical History*, Łódź–Kraków 2020 [= BL, 41], p. 24–39.

<sup>27</sup> G. GREATREX, S.N.C. LIEU, *The Roman Eastern Frontier and the Persian Wars*, p. 2, AD 363–630, London–New York 2002, p. 192, 207.

<sup>28</sup> Edition of the Greek text: *La vie d'Alexandre Acemete*, ed. E. DE STOOR, [in:] *PO*, vol. VI.5, Paris 1911, p. 658–701.

<sup>29</sup> Moscow, Russian State Library, РГБ, 113.594, fol. 174–196 (Menaion Reader, late 15<sup>th</sup> century). The *Great Menaion Reader*: National Library of Russia in St. Petersburg, РНБ, 728.1320, fol. 343b–350b; Moscow, State Historical Museum, ГИМ, Син. 991, fol. 524c–534c; Moscow, State Historical Museum, ГИМ, Син. 179, fol. 704a–714d. See: О.В. ТВОРОГОВ, *Переводные жития...*, p. 15.

<sup>30</sup> English translation of the Greek text: *Three Byzantine Saints...*, p. 88–185.

<sup>31</sup> Moscow, Russian State Library, РГБ, 113.596, fol. 188–315' (Menaion Reader, late 15<sup>th</sup> century); Moscow, Russian State Library, РГБ, 173.I.93, fol. 269–326 (Menaion Reader, 16<sup>th</sup> century). The compilation of Nil Sorski: Moscow, Russian State Library, РГБ, 113.630, fol. 232–263' – edition: Т.П. ЛЕННГРЕН, *Сборник...*, vol. III, p. 385–442. The *Great Menaion Reader*: Moscow, State Historical Museum, ГИМ, Син. 993, fol. 218a–272b – edition: *Великія Минеи Четіи. Апрель. Дни 22–30*, Москва 1915, col. 644–849. See: О.В. ТВОРОГОВ, *Переводные жития...*, p. 115–116.

*Great Menaion Reader* (under the date of 12 July)<sup>32</sup>. The material may also be supplemented by the *Martyrdom of St. Arethas*, referring to the events in Najran in 523, translated into Church Slavic language no later than in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, preserved in Rus' manuscripts from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup> century and on the pages of the *Great Menaion Reader* (under the date of 24 October)<sup>33</sup>.

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What image of the Eastern Rome-Persian frontier and the fate of its inhabitants in the 5<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> century emerges from the sources mentioned here? Probably the earliest chronological reference to this subject that can be found in the Old Rus' hagiographic material is a fragment from the *Life of St. Alexander the Sleepless* (par. 32–35), referring to the second decade of the 5<sup>th</sup> century<sup>34</sup>. The Osrhoene area was said to enjoy a short time of peace. The saint, accompanied by his disciples and not disturbed by anyone, crossed the river Euphrates and went “to the Persian desert” (в перьскоюу поустыню идоша)<sup>35</sup>. Since our travelers did not take sufficient supplies with them, God sent them “Roman tribunes and soldiers” to

<sup>32</sup> Moscow, Russian State Library, РГБ, 113.598, fol. 72–83' (Menaion Reader, late 15<sup>th</sup> century); Moscow, Russian State Library, РГБ, 173.I.95, fol. 179–191' (Menaion Reader, 16<sup>th</sup> century); Moscow, Russian State Library, РГБ, 304.I.678, fol. 217–231 (Menaion Reader, 15<sup>th</sup>–16<sup>th</sup> century). The *Great Menaion Reader*: National Library of Russia in St. Petersburg, РНБ, 728.1323, fol. 97a–99c; Moscow, State Historical Museum, ГИМ, Син. 996, fol. 145c–155c; Moscow, State Historical Museum, ГИМ, Син. 182, fol. 195a–206c. See: P. PEETERS, *Sainte Golindouch, martyre perse*, АВ 62, 1944, p. 74–125; G. GARITTE, *La Passion géorgienne de Sainte Golindouch*, АВ 74, 1956, p. 405–440; О.Н. АФИНОГЕНОВА, *Голиндуха*, [in:] *Православная энциклопедия*, vol. XI, Москва 2006, p. 694; О.В. ТВОРОГОВ, *Переводные жития...*, p. 39; M. DAL SANTO, *Imperial Power and its Subversion in Eustratius of Constantinople's Life and Martyrdom of Golinduch (c. 602)*, В 81, 2011, p. 138–176.

<sup>33</sup> Moscow, Russian State Library, РГБ, 113.591, fol. 258–272 (the Menaion Reader from the last quarter of the 15<sup>th</sup> century); Moscow, Russian State Library, РГБ, 304.I.755, fol. 347'–357' (a *miscellanea* manuscript from the 15<sup>th</sup> century); Moscow, State Historical Museum, ГИМ, Син. 170, fol. 299'–313' (the Menaion Reader from the 16<sup>th</sup> century); Moscow, Russian State Library, РГБ, 173.I.89, fol. 467'–481' (the Menaion Reader from the third quarter of the 16<sup>th</sup> century). The *Great Menaion Reader*: National Library of Russia in St. Petersburg, РНБ, 728.1318, fol. 406c–409d; Moscow, State Historical Museum, ГИМ, Син. 987, fol. 785b–792d; Moscow, State Historical Museum, ГИМ, Син. 175, fol. 1396a–1403b – edition: *Великий Минеи Четии. Октябрь. Дни 19–31*, Санкт-Петербург 1880, col. 1839–1863. See: М. ДЕТОРАКИ, J. ВЕАУСАМР, *Le martyre de saint Aréthas et de ses compagnons (ВНГ 166)*, Paris 2007; К. ИВАНОВА, *Bibliotheca...*, p. 264–266; О.В. ТВОРОГОВ, *Переводные жития...*, p. 26; Д. АТАНАСОВА, *Българското царство в предсмъртната молитва на мъченик Арета. Наблюдения върху славянската версия на Martyrium S. Arethae et Sociorum*, Pbg 38.1, 2014, p. 32–44; А.М. ТОТОМАНОВА, Д. АТАНАСОВА, *Станиславов Чети-Минеи. Издание на текста*, vol. I, София 2018, p. 687–708; Z.A. BRZOZOWSKA, M.J. LESZKA, T. WOLIŃSKA, *Muhammad...*, p. 71–82.

<sup>34</sup> G. GREATREX, S.N.C. LIEU, *The Roman Eastern Frontier...*, p. 35–36.

<sup>35</sup> Moscow, State Historical Museum, ГИМ, Син. 991, fol. 530a.

help them (триоуны римляны и войны)<sup>36</sup>. The Romans asked them to visit several *castella* (пришедше къ колимагамъ) and bless them. Interestingly, the Slavic version of the work omitted the original information that there were many *castella* on the Roman-Persian border, erected in order to defend the area against barbarians (Arabs?)<sup>37</sup>. In the subsequent part of the narrative the hagiographer informs us about one such attack, mentioning the herds of cattle captured by enemy warriors and houses they plundered (и скоти ихъ плѣнени быша ратники и домове ихъ разграблени быша ратными)<sup>38</sup>. Fleeing from the aggressors, Alexander and a huge number of people came to Palmyra (в поустыни нарицаемѣи Палмиръ)<sup>39</sup>. However, its inhabitants closed the gates to refugees, fearing that they would not be able to feed such a large group.

Several years later, Cyril of Scythopolis mentions the events on the pages of the *Life of St. Euthymius* (par. 10). We read in it about the persecution of Christians that took place in Persia at the end of the reign of Yazdegerd I (420). Its consequence was said to be a mass flight of Christians from the territory of the Sasanid state to the Eastern Roman Empire<sup>40</sup>. The Persians, trying to stop the refugees, ordered – as the hagiographer writes – the Saracen tribe leaders under their command (началники колѣнъ срациньскихъ)<sup>41</sup> to obstruct all roads, so that not a single Christian could escape “to the Greeks”, i.e. to the Empire (ис Персиды ко Грекомъ побѣгнеть). One of them, Aspebetus (descended, according to Irfan Shahîd, from one of the Arab tribes subject to the Lakhmids)<sup>42</sup>, although he himself was a pagan (ѣлинь)<sup>43</sup>, did not stop Christians from escaping. When he was to be punished for this attitude by Yazdegerd, he fled to the empire, taking all his family and possessions with him. The strategos Anatolius (ѣнатонъ стратигъ)<sup>44</sup> took him in and entrusted him with the command of the Saracens from Arabia, who recognized the sovereignty of the empire (старѣишинство колѣнъ сущихъ Срацинь во Яравии подъ Греки)<sup>45</sup>. The Slavic translator of the *Life* offers a unique interpretation of the change in Aspebetus’ position, which is *de facto* a status of an ally (phylarch, *foederatus*)<sup>46</sup>. The Rus’ author states that at first *he paid tribute to the Persians, and later to the Greeks* (подъ Персы дань дая потомъ подъ Греки)<sup>47</sup>. Later, Aspebetus

<sup>36</sup> Moscow, State Historical Museum, ГИМ, Син. 991, fol. 530b.

<sup>37</sup> G. GREATREX, S.N.C. LIEU, *The Roman Eastern Frontier...*, p. 36.

<sup>38</sup> Moscow, State Historical Museum, ГИМ, Син. 991, fol. 530d.

<sup>39</sup> Moscow, State Historical Museum, ГИМ, Син. 991, fol. 531a.

<sup>40</sup> G. GREATREX, S.N.C. LIEU, *The Roman Eastern Frontier...*, p. 37.

<sup>41</sup> Moscow, Russian State Library, РГБ, 304.1.34, fol. 12’.

<sup>42</sup> I. SHAHÎD, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Fifth Century*, Washington 1989, p. 42–43.

<sup>43</sup> Moscow, Russian State Library, РГБ, 304.1.34, fol. 12.

<sup>44</sup> Moscow, Russian State Library, РГБ, 304.1.34, fol. 12’.

<sup>45</sup> Moscow, Russian State Library, РГБ, 304.1.34, fol. 12’–13.

<sup>46</sup> I. SHAHÎD, *Byzantium...*, p. 40–42.

<sup>47</sup> Moscow, Russian State Library, РГБ, 304.1.34, fol. 12.



and his relatives went to St. Euthymius, asking him to cure his son. The saint later baptized him.

An episode of the Eastern Roman and Persian relations that occurred several decades later is also reported by the author of the *Life of St. Daniel Stylites*. He notes the following event, which probably took place around 466<sup>48</sup>: an Isaurian named Zeno came to the emperor, bringing with him letters from Ardaburius, *magister militum per Orientem* (стратилатъ восточный именовъ Ардавоурѣи)<sup>49</sup>, in which the dignitary called on the Persians to raise their arms against the “Greek” government, i.e. the Roman (позывая Персы на вѣстаніе греческоу оустроеніа) and promised them his help. The emperor immediately dismissed him from his post and called him to the empire. In this *passus*, however, we will not find any information about the situation of people from the frontier region.

Several interesting fragments on the situation of the inhabitants of the frontier between Eastern Rome and Persia at the turn of the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries can be found in the texts by the aforementioned Cyril of Scythopolis. In the *Life of St. Euthymius* (par. 46) he notes that during the reign of Emperor Anastasius (according to Irfan Shahid, c. 500) camps of Saracens baptized by the saint were ravaged by barbarians<sup>50</sup>. The barbarian pagans – as the Slavic translator adds (В лѣто же Анастаса цѣра села Грациньска съставленая великииъ Соуфимьемъ варвари погании опустѣша)<sup>51</sup>. Some of the Christian Arabs were killed, while others were taken captive. Most of them, escaping from attackers, scattered all over the area, causing considerable confusion there. According to expert on the subject, the barbarians mentioned by Cyril were also Arabs, most probably affiliated with the Lakhmids<sup>52</sup>. In the *Life of St. Sabbas* (par. 14), Cyril of Scythopolis describes a failed attempt of an attack by six barbarians “Saracen by nature” (in an old Rus’ version: “six Saracens of cruel nature” – ѿ. Грацинь нравомъ лютоственомъ)<sup>53</sup>. The author assumes that the aim of the attackers was to take the monks into captivity.

In the *Life of St. John the Hesychast/Silent* (par. 13) by Cyril of Scythopolis we can find one of the earliest references to Al-Mundhir III (503/505–554), the ruler of the Lakhmids, allied with Persia, whose invasions would complicate the lives of the inhabitants of the eastern frontiers of the empire for several decades<sup>54</sup>. In this

<sup>48</sup> G. GREATREX, S.N.C. LIEU, *The Roman Eastern Frontier...*, p. 46–47.

<sup>49</sup> Moscow, Russian State Library, РГБ, 113.593, fol. 81.

<sup>50</sup> I. ШАХІД, *Byzantium...*, p. 203.

<sup>51</sup> Moscow, Russian State Library, РГБ, 304.I.34, fol. 54.

<sup>52</sup> I. ШАХІД, *Byzantium...*, p. 203–204.

<sup>53</sup> National Library of Russia in St. Petersburg, РНБ, ОЛДЦП, Q. 106 – edition: И. Помяловский, *Житіе св. Савы Освященнаго составленное св. Кирилломъ Скифопольскимъ въ древне-рускомъ переводѣ*, Санкт-Петербург 1890, p. 63.

<sup>54</sup> N. LENSKI, *Captivity and Slavery among the Saracens in Late Antiquity (ca. 250–630)*, *Ata* 19, 2011, p. 245–246; T. WOLIŃSKA, *Difficult Neighbours. Enemies, Partners, Allies*, [in:] *Byzantium and*

fragment, most probably referring to the end of 503<sup>55</sup>, we read that Alamundar, *who had acquired the dignity of king over the Saracens subject to the Persians* (in the Slavic version: *After receiving the imperial status among those who gave tribute to the Persians – царьскии санъ възьмъ иже Персомъ дань даяхъ*)<sup>56</sup>, invaded Palestine and conquered Amida. He was extremely cruel to the Romans (in Slavic: Greeks), ravaged the frontier, and took enormous numbers of captives. The desert guardians (старѣишинамъ же и хранителемъ тоа поустыниа) – probably the Arab phylarchs allied with the Empire – informed the surrounding monasteries of the imminent danger and recommended their dwellers to prepare themselves for defense. The hermits were advised to move into the walls of the monastery, but not all of them complied with the request of their confreres<sup>57</sup>. Sometimes the inhabitants of the frontier were also failed by their Arab allies. One such case is mentioned by Cyril of Scythopolis in the *Life of St. Euthymius* (par. 51): two Saracen phylarchs and allies of Rome (in the Slavic version: “Leaders of Saracen tribes under the Greek rule”), i.e. Ghassānid Arethas<sup>58</sup> and a certain Asouades, who is difficult to identify, fought among themselves, forgetting their function and allowing the barbarians (i.e. the Lakhmids of Al-Mundhir III) to desolate the area with impunity<sup>59</sup>. The threat from the Lakhmid ruler had to be very serious indeed: Cyril of Scythopolis in the *Life of St. Sabbas* (par. 72) notes that the saint wrote to Emperor Justinian I circa 530 asking him to build a fortress in the desert in the area where the monasteries were located in order to protect monks from Saracens’ invasions<sup>60</sup>.

The subsequent Byzantine-Persian struggles and the role that Al-Mundhir III, the ruler of the Lakhmids, played in them, is also mentioned by the author of the oldest *Life of St. Symeon Stylites the Younger*, which, as we remember, was known in the Old Rus’ literature. Thus, in this work (par. 57) we find an extensive description of the conquest of Antioch by the troops of the “Persian Tsar” Khosrow I (Хозроя перьскаго цѣа)<sup>61</sup> in June 540<sup>62</sup>. The fate of the inhabitants of the city was unenviable: many were killed, others found themselves in captivity, others yet – saved

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*the Arabs. The Encounter of Civilizations from Sixth to Mid-Eighth Century*, ed. T. WOLIŃSKA, P. FILIPCZAK, Łódź 2015 [=BL, 22], p. 152.

<sup>55</sup> I. SHAHĪD, *Byzantium...*, p. 204; G. GREATREX, S.N.C. LIEU, *The Roman Eastern Frontier...*, p. 71.

<sup>56</sup> Central Archives of Historical Records, Zamoyskis’ Archive in Warsaw, BOZ 201, fol. 12.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. A.A. EGER, *The Islamic-Byzantine Frontier. Interaction and Exchange among the Muslim and Christian Communities*, London–New York 2015, p. 94–95.

<sup>58</sup> P. MAYERSON, *Monks, Martyrs, Soldiers and Saracens. Papers on the Near East in Late Antiquity (1962–1993)*, Jerusalem 1994, p. 86.

<sup>59</sup> T. WOLIŃSKA, *Difficult Neighbours...*, p. 183.

<sup>60</sup> G. GREATREX, S.N.C. LIEU, *The Roman Eastern Frontier...*, p. 79; T. WOLIŃSKA, *Difficult Neighbours...*, p. 153.

<sup>61</sup> Moscow, Russian State Library, РГБ, 304.I.669, fol. 66.

<sup>62</sup> G. GREATREX, S.N.C. LIEU, *The Roman Eastern Frontier...*, p. 104–105.

themselves by fleeing. There were also two monks among the refugees: one of them was murdered and the other was taken prisoner.

Al-Mundhir III reappears in the subsequent part of the narrative (par. 186–187). The Slavic hagiographer characterizes him as the leader of the Saracens subject to the Persian Empire (вѣ нѣкто старѣшина Срациномъ. подлежащѣмъ персѣскомоу црѣтвюу. именемъ Яламоундаростъ)<sup>63</sup>. He also stresses that he was a pagan (елинъ слоужбою) and calls him by a significant epithet “man of blood” (моужь крови). Al-Mundhir was said to be a fierce persecutor of Christians for many years: unstoppable by anyone, he captured many inhabitants of the Byzantine frontier, whom he then imprisoned and starved, inflicting horrific torture on them and even – shaming them by forcing them to participate in the cult of devil (слоужбамъ вѣсовьскимъ приобщатиса). The question arises as to the character of that participation: as we know from other sources (e.g. the account of Procopius of Caesarea or the continuation of Zacharias Rhetor’s chronicle) he used to sacrifice captured prisoners to the goddess Al-‘Uzzā<sup>64</sup>. From the *Life of St. Symeon Stylites the Younger* we learn that a Byzantine envoy came to the court of Khosrow (in the Slavic version: a Greek old man) to ask him for peace (вѣпросити яже в мирѣ). Most likely, it was a *de facto* resolution of the conflict between Al-Mundhir III and the ruler of the Ghassānids allied with Byzantium, Arethas (Al-Hārith) II<sup>65</sup>. The mission ended in failure, and Al-Mundhir III announced another attack on the empire, boasting that he would ravage all homes and kill their inhabitants. Soon (in June 554) he attacked the Byzantine frontier with enormous forces<sup>66</sup>. All those who lived in the east, as the hagiographer reports, were overcome with panic (вси иже на вѣстоцѣ живюущи сматюшася зѣло)<sup>67</sup>. Then the author of the life outlines the vision that St. Symeon was said to experience. In this vision he was on a hill, in the frontier area, between the land of Saracens, Persians and Greeks (влизь предѣлъ Срациньскыхъ Персѣ же и Грекѣ). And he saw two enemy armies marching against each other: Arabs allied with Byzantines under the command

<sup>63</sup> Moscow, Russian State Library, РГБ, 304.I.669, fol. 103’.

<sup>64</sup> PROCOPIUS OF CAESAREA, *History of Wars*, II, 28, vol. I, ed. H.B. DEWING, London–New York 1914 [= LCL, 48], p. 518; PSEUDO-ZACHARIAS, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, VIII, 5, ed. G. GREATREX, trans. R.R. PHENIX, C.B. HORN, Liverpool 2011 [= TTH, 55], p. 298; T. FAHD, *Le Panthéon de l’Arabie Centrale a la veille de l’hégire*, Paris 1968 [= IFAB.BAH, 88], p. 93–94, 169; R.G. HOYLAND, *Arabia and the Arabs. From the Bronze Age to the Coming of Islam*, London–New York 2002 [= PAW], p. 252; T. HAINTHALER, *Christliche Araber vor dem Islam*, Leuven–Paris–Dudley 2007, p. 78, 89; G. FISHER, *Between Empires. Arabs, Romans and Sasanians in Late Antiquity*, Oxford–New York 2011 [= OCM], p. 68; Z.A. BRZOZOWSKA, *Female Deities of Pre-Islamic Arabia in the Byzantine and Old Russian Sources*, ARAM 30.2, 2018, p. 502.

<sup>65</sup> G. GREATREX, S.N.C. LIEU, *The Roman Eastern Frontier...*, p. 129.

<sup>66</sup> I. SHAHĪD, *Byzantium...*, p. 33; G. GREATREX, S.N.C. LIEU, *The Roman Eastern Frontier...*, p. 129–130; T. WOLIŃSKA, *Difficult Neighbours...*, p. 179.

<sup>67</sup> Moscow, Russian State Library, РГБ, 304.I.669, fol. 104.

of Arethas (воиномъ и Грациномъ. идеже Ярефа старѣшина) and hosts under the command of the “tormentor Alamundar” (съ Яланундаромъ мѣтлемъ). In the confrontation the scales of victory were said to tip to the latter’s side, but then the Christians received assistance from the highest power: God’s angel appeared with a sword and chopped off Al-Mundhir’s head. This vision believed to anticipate real events, i.e. the defeat of the Lakhmids by the ruler of Ghassānids, Arethas II<sup>68</sup>.

Relations between Byzantium and Persia from the second half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century provide the historical background for the *Life of St. Golinduch*. According to the author of this work, during the reign of Khosrow I and Hormisdas IV Christians were subject to certain repressions in the territory of Persia, e.g. they were forced to leave larger urban centers and settle in remote, deserted places. Their fate was said to be radically improved during the reign of Khosrow II Parviz, who, having reclaimed the throne with the help of the Emperor Maurice, sought to maintain friendly relations with the empire and supported the spread of Christianity<sup>69</sup>. However, this source makes no mention the situation of people living in the Byzantine-Persian frontier.

Reminiscences of events from the first decades of the 7<sup>th</sup> century can be found in the text of the *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon*, written by his disciple George. Thus, from this source we learn (par. 120) that one of the first deeds of Phocas after the murder of Maurice and the assumption of imperial power was to send troops against the Persians, invading and plundering “our”, i.e. Byzantine estates<sup>70</sup>. Interestingly, the Slavic translator of *Life* preserved this perspective (плѣнующимъ наша веси)<sup>71</sup>. The hagiographer also describes the Persians’ attacks on Cappadocia in 610–612 (par. 153–154)<sup>72</sup>. He recalls that the invaders approached the vicinity of Caesarea, terrifying the local population and the monks living in the area, who even contemplated abandoning their homes and moving to a safer place (в манастирихъ и въ весехъ ѿшихъ в боязни велицѣхъ същи, еда како доидѣтъ и насъ). In the subsequent part of the narrative, George of Sykeon also refers to the military action taken against the Persians by the new Emperor Heraclius in 613 (par. 166).

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<sup>68</sup> I. SHAHĪD, *Byzantium...*, p. 33; T. WOLIŃSKA, *Difficult Neighbours...*, p. 179; Z.A. BRZOWSKA, M.J. LESZKA, T. WOLIŃSKA, *Muhammad...*, p. 31–33.

<sup>69</sup> P. SINISCALCO, *Kościół Asyryjski lub Wschodniosyryjski*, [in:] P. SINISCALCO, M. VAN ESBROECK, R. LAVENANT, P. MARRASSINI, T. ORLANDI, *Starożytne Kościoły Wschodnie. Historia i literatura*, trans. K. PIEKARZ, Kraków 2013, p. 206.

<sup>70</sup> G. GREATREX, S.N.C. LIEU, *The Roman Eastern Frontier...*, p. 184–185.

<sup>71</sup> Moscow, State Historical Museum, ГИМ, Син. 993, fol. 250d.

<sup>72</sup> G. GREATREX, S.N.C. LIEU, *The Roman Eastern Frontier...*, p. 187–189.

To sum up, the hagiographic texts contain a number of information on the fate of the inhabitants of the Byzantine-Persian frontier in the 5<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> century. The image of this region, captured in the sources analyzed here, is quite homogeneous: regardless of the specific historical moment, it was a dangerous area, and its population was exposed to constant invasions and armed actions. An interesting issue is the inclusion of this region in the imaginarium of a medieval Slav, inhabitant of Rus'. In many texts one can find signs that the author of the Slavic version identified himself with the Christian, Greek, i.e. the Byzantine side of the conflict.

The image of the Arabs is unexpectedly complex. Although all tribes mentioned in our sources are referred to by the same name (Saracens), the palette of its semantic shades is very broad indeed. It can be applied to the Ghassānids, allied with the Empire, Arabs converted to Christianity, desert nomads, supposedly attacking the frontier, as well as dangerous enemies of Byzantium and persecutors of Christian people, such as the Lakhmids. Our authors correctly identify the political orientation of individual tribes and their leaders, but often show it in a way more in line with the realities of medieval Rus' than the era described in the sources discussed here (e.g. the status of *foederati* was reinterpreted, as it was probably incomprehensible for Old Rus' readers). Alamundar – Al-Mundhir III, ruler of the Lakhmids, is an unambiguously negative figure. His character is demonized in the analyzed texts to such an extent that he becomes almost an archetype of a cruel barbarian and a pagan persecutor of Christians. Interestingly, his name was sometimes given in hagiographic texts to other characters who played such a role, for example the Persian ruler is called that in the passion of three saints from Chalcedon: Manuel, Sabel and Ishmael, who died during the reign of Julian the Apostate<sup>73</sup>. Quite consistently, our authors also demonstrate the difference in the status of the persons described: Arab rulers (both Ghassānids and Lakhmids) are called leaders or chiefs, while the rulers Sassanid Persia, similarly to the Roman emperors, are referred to as the emperor (tzar).

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<sup>73</sup> A.V. MURAVIEV, *Three Martyrs of Chalcedon and the Persian Campaign of the Emperor Julian*, [in:] SP 29, 1997, p. 94–100.

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