

***Apokryfy syryjskie. Historia i przysłowia Achikara. Grota skarbów. Apokalipsa Pseudo-Metodego* [Syriac Apocrypha. The Story of Aquihar. The Cave of Treasures. Pseudo-Methodius' Apocalypsis], trans. A. TRONINA, ed. A. TRONINA, M. STAROWIEYSKI, WYDAWNICTWO WAM, Kraków 2011, pp. 264 [= *Pisma apokryficzne*, Series, 6].**

*The Syriac Apocrypha* is the next volume within the monumental series edited by Marek Starowieyski, and the first one entitled *Apocryphal writings*. In this way, in six volumes prepared by over 40 co-workers: authors of translations and commentaries, more than 200 source-texts have been published dating back to different circles of Christianity – both Eastern and Western one<sup>1</sup>. For the first time the title and structure of the anthology renounce the genological factor (among *New Testament* apocrypha, there were: first gospels, then acts of the apostles, letters and revelations) for presentation of writings belonging to the tradition of common language – Syriac. As the

first of *Apocryphal writings*, the volume *Syriac Apocrypha* is a kind of monography – all the translations are performed by Antoni Tronina.

The anthology is a textological one: by presentation of texts' variants, originating from different linguistic cultures in different times, it presents history of particular subjects and development of literary monuments. And although the presented texts *don't belong to the great literature*<sup>2</sup>, they are an interesting phenomenon of religious literature, and particularly – connected to the Old Testament themes circle. The contents of *The Syriac Apocrypha* is (except Foreword and three parts sacrificed to three literal items): List of abbreviations (p. 5), Index of biblical quotations (p. 239–249), Index of names (p. 250–259) and Geographical index (p. 260–262). In the Foreword (p. 7–9), an editorial strategy of particular volumes of the series, the choice of the source texts is explained, and there is announced continuation of works on Polish translations and commentaries to the Syriac pseudo-canonical literary heritage<sup>3</sup>. In

<sup>1</sup> It should be reminded, that the first edition of the *New Testament* apocryphal gospels (*Apokryfy Nowego Testamentu. Ewangelie apokryficzne*, ed. M. STAROWIEYSKI) was published by the Scientific Society to the Catholic University in Lublin in 1980. New edition: *Apokryfy Nowego Testamentu*, vol. I, *Ewangelie apokryficzne*, pars 1, *Fragmenty. Narodzenie i dzieciństwo Maryi i Jezusa*; pars 2, *Św. Józef i św. Jan Chrzciciel. Męka i Zmartwychwstanie Jezusa. Wniebowzięcie Maryi*, Kraków 2003; *Apokryfy Nowego Testamentu*, vol. II, *Apostołowie*, pars 1, *Andrzej. Jan. Paweł. Piotr. Tomasz*; pars 2, *Bartłomiej. Filip. Jakub Mniejszy. Jakub Większy. Judasz. Maciej. Mateusz. Szymon i Juda Tadeusz. Ewangeliiści. Uczniowie Pańscy*, Kraków 2007; *Apokryfy Nowego Testamentu*, vol. III, *Listy i apokalipsy chrześcijańskie*, Kraków 2001.

<sup>2</sup> M. STAROWIEYSKI, A. TRONINA, *Przedmowa*, [in:] *Apokryfy syryjskie...*, p. 9.

<sup>3</sup> A full list of Polish translations from Syriac in: W. STAWISZYŃSKI, *Bibliografia patrystyczna 1901–2004. Polskie tłumaczenia tekstów starochrześcijańskich pierwszego tysiąclecia*, Kraków 2005, p. 543–567. It's worth to mention an attempt to systematize knowledge of taking the Syriac literature and culture in Poland: J. WOŹNIAK, *Polska syrologia w zarysie*, Warszawa

the introduction to each of texts, its origin and historical background have been presented, accompanied by listing its linguistic variants, both editions and translations to contemporary languages, and detailed bibliography.

The first part of the anthology is sacrificed to *The Story and proverbs of Ahikar* (*Historia i przysłowia Achikara*, p. 11–83), adviser and secretary of Syrian rulers Sennakherib and Esarhaddon (7<sup>th</sup> cent. B.C.). The text itself is presented in translations from three variants: Aramaic, Syriac and Old-Church-Slavonic one.

It should be emphasized, that usually marginalized literary production of the *Slavia Orthodoxa* circle is included to the anthology. The authors of the volume have decided to chose the *Slavic Tale of Akir the Wise* from a 15<sup>th</sup> cent. Russian manuscript. Now we should complete the data referring to the Slavic version or rather versions of the story. The information about editions of the source text is not completely current. Apart from the Russian copies, there are other eight copies both Southern- and Eastern-Slavic<sup>4</sup>.

2010 (selection of studies sacrificed to Syrian language, archaeology and Christian culture with registers of Polish Syriac bibliography, as well as three newly made literary translations: BARDESANES, *The Book of nations' rights/laws; Martyrdom of Symeon Bar Sabbae*; fragments of *Our Lord Jesus Christ's Testament*). Just after *The Syriac Apocrypha* have been published, another Syrian text has been edited: *Księga pszczoły – oryginalny tekst w języku syryjskim przełożony z manuskryptów znajdujących się w Londynie, Oksfordzie oraz Monachium*, trans. J. ZACHWIEJA, Sandomierz 2011 [= *Święte księgi, święte teksty*, 14]; English version: *The Book of the Bee. The Syriac text edited from the manuscripts in London, Oxford, and Munich...*, ed. E.A. WALLIS BUDGE, Oxford 1886.

<sup>4</sup> A full list in one of the newest studies devoted to the text: И. КУЗИДОВА, *Преписъм на Повестта на Акир Премъдри в ръкопис № 29*

The first edition of the *Slavic Tale of Akir the Wise* presented a version acknowledged then as an oldest one<sup>5</sup>. Meanwhile, in 2010 another text of the first Slavic version was published – coming from the oldest Southern-Slavic copy preserved at the Savina monastery in Montenegro (14<sup>th</sup> cent., number 29)<sup>6</sup>. This translation, performed in the First Bulgarian Tsardom's times (10<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> cent.), seems to be primary to the Russian versions<sup>7</sup>.

The second part of the anthology refers to *The Cave of Treasures*, attributed to St. Efrem the Syrian (*Grota skrabów*, p. 84–199)<sup>8</sup>. This most extended (in the whole anthology) text is accompanied by a very detailed commentary, whose authors explain reasons of including this source, devoid of artistic values, and being a compilation of genealogies and Biblical commentaries, some chronographical and apologetical writings, as well as Jewish and Christians legends (p. 84–85). That's why the authors set in order plots and subjects, explain point

*от манастира Савина (около 1380 г.), [in:] Пъние мало Георгию. Сборник в чест на 65-годишнината на проф. дфн Г. Попов, София 2010, p. 492–509, with up-to-date bibliography. To the list of contemporary translations, a Bulgarian one (unfortunately, only partial) should be added, in: Й. ИВАНОВ, *Старобългарски разкази*, София 1935, p. 95–102; П. ДИНЕКОВ, К. КУЕВ, Д. ПЕТКАНОВА, *Христоматия по старобългарска литература*, <sup>3</sup>София 1974.*

<sup>5</sup> А. ГРИГОРЬЕВ, *Повесть об Акире Премудром*, Москва 1913.

<sup>6</sup> И. КУЗИДОВА, *op. cit.*, p. 499–506.

<sup>7</sup> See: М. ЙОНОВА, *Разпространение и развитие на повестта за Акир Премъдри в средновековните литератури на южните и източните славяни*, Pbg 1, 1987, s. 104–109.

<sup>8</sup> This text might be compared with another translation edited at the same time: św. EFREM SYRYJCZYK, *Księga Jaskini Skarbów*, trans. M. URAM, Sandomierz 2011 [= *Święte księgi, święte teksty*, 12].

of view of its supposed authors, and different circumstances of place and time of its origin. Information referring to prevalence and popularity of the text, as well as a theological commentary and analysis of the literary monument, takes a special place.

The third text from *The Syriac apocrypha* is Pseudo-Methodius' (of Patara) *Apocalypsis* (*Apokalipsa Pseudo-Metodego*, p. 200–238). Text dating back the 7<sup>th</sup> cent., known from Syriac, Greek, Latin and Slavic copies, used to be appreciated particularly in the monastic circles. The peak of its popularity is time of Turkish march through the Balkans (14<sup>th</sup>–15<sup>th</sup> cent.). Introduction to this specific homily comprises problems of authorship and genres of the text, its theology and textological sketch of its redactions and translations. The translation from Syriac is completed with commentaries to other known translations.

A strong point of the anthology is presenting a great diversity of text originating usually from the same source. However, we could ask of principles of choice of the later, non-Syriac variants, and, e.g., lack of a commentary on a few South- and East-Slavonic redactions of the Pseudo-Methodius *Apocalypsis*. Presenting the Slavic variants, differing from the Syriac and Greek ones (like the type known from the 13<sup>th</sup> cent. so-called *Priest Dragol's codex*<sup>9</sup>) or extremely interesting

<sup>9</sup> See editions: П.С. СРЕБКОВИЧ, *Зборник пона Драгоља. Садржина и пророштва, Спом 5, 1890, p. 17–20; Откровение на Методий Патарски*, [in:] В. ТЪПКОВА-ЗАИМОВА, А. МИЛТЕНОВА, *Историко-апокалиптичната книжнина във Византия и в средновековна България*, София 1996, p. 161–182, text on p. 167–172. See also re-edition of the *Revelation of Methodius Patavensis*: А. МИЛТЕНОВА, *Sources*, [in:] В. ТЪПКОВА-ЗАИМОВА, А. МИЛТЕНОВА, *Historical and apocalyptic literature in Byzantium and medieval Bulgaria*, trans. М. ПАНЕВА,

fragment about Bulgarians (from the 16<sup>th</sup> cent. Serbian copy<sup>10</sup>) would emphasize their originality, and thanks to that – enrich the textological description of the literary monument.

Translations presented in *The Syriac apocrypha* deserves to be read against a background of some earlier ones. In 2011 r., two titles were edited by the Armoryka Publishing House: *Historia i mądrość Achikara Asyryjczyka* [*The Story and Wisdom of Ahikar the Assyrian*]<sup>11</sup> and *Księga Jaskini Skarbów* [*The Cave of Treasures*]<sup>12</sup>. These ones, however, were made on basis of modern, 19<sup>th</sup> cent. English translations, and don't include both bibliography and critical commentaries.

*The Syriac apocrypha* possesses a great number of values: exquisite language of the Polish translation, exhaustive theological and historical-literary commentary, and very detailed bibliography, which comprises Polish, English, French, German, Italian and Russian titles (more than 100 titles for three texts, apart from editions and translations). But first of all – they make the unknown world of the Christian Syriac literature closer to non-Syriac-speakers (Syriac studies scholars). Let's hope the authors of *The Syriac apocrypha* don't make the audience wait a long tome for the next volume of the series.

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М. LILOVA, Sophia 2011, p. 218–256 (text on p. 227–239, English translation on p. 247–253).

<sup>10</sup> See description of the manuscript: Љ. ШТАВЪАНИН-ЂОРЂЕВИЧ, М. ГРОЗДАНОВИЧ-ПАЈИЧ, Л. ЦЕРНИЧ, *Опис ћирилских рукописа Народне Библиотеке Србије. Књига прва*, Београд 1986, p. 355–361. The edition of the fragment dedicated to Bulgarians in: В. ТЪПКОВА-ЗАИМОВА, А. МИЛТЕНОВА, *op. cit.*, p. 165; В. ТЪПКОВА-ЗАИМОВА, А. МИЛТЕНОВА, *op. cit.*, p. 225.

<sup>11</sup> *Historia i mądrość Achikara Asyryjczyka*, trans. М. ОБИДЗИНСКА, Sandomierz 2011 [= *Święte księgi, święte teksty*, 13].

<sup>12</sup> Św. EFREM SYRYJCZYK, *op. cit.*