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THE SAINT AS FOOD, THE TORTURE AS MEDICINE: SOME ASPECTS OF CHRISTOPHER OF MYTILENE'S IMAGERY IN HIS DODECASYLLABIC CALENDAR AND ITS SOUTH SLAVONIC TRANSLATIONS*

Abstract. Christopher of Mytilene, a secular poet of the early 11th century, had embarked on a difficult task when creating his dodecasyllabic Christian Calendar, that is two-verse storytelling about saints and, mainly, about the tortures they died of. He accomplished it more than successfully, besides in quite a vivid and spectacular way, by means of various poetic and rhetorical techniques. Food and medicine imagery was just a minute aspect of his mastery, yet a powerful one, acquiring not only artistic and rhetorical, but also mnemonic functions. The poet used such images – just as he used e.g. Biblical allusions – as a way to convey a variety of details in succinct messages; the information thus compressed is unfolded by means of associations in the mind of the perceiver. These associations are related not only to Christianity, but also to many other aspects of the Byzantine cultured life, including certain elements from Antiquity. I will try to reveal this mechanism and to show the attempts of the 14th-century South Slavonic translators to render it as well as their decisions in cases of *realia* unknown to their audience. For this purpose, I have selected certain Greek verse memories (as given in the editions of Eustratiadis and Cresci & Skomorochova Venturini) from the *Verse Synaxarion* for the summer half of the year together with their two South-Slavonic correspondences of the 14th century (according to the two respective early manuscripts of the Slavonic *Verse Prolog*), again only for the months from March to August.

Keywords: medieval Slavonic translations of Byzantine poetry, Christophoros Mitylenaios' Orthodox iambic calendar, verse memories of martyrs, rhetorical figures

A first encounter with the imagery of Christopher of Mytilene's (ca. 1000 – after 1050)¹ dodecasyllabic Calendar is inevitably striking. And the overall puzzle we would mentally assemble while reading the verse memories, reminds

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¹ On Christopher of Mytilene, a professional secular poet and erudite and on his poetry cf. e.g., E. KURTZ, *Die Gedichte des Christophoros Mitylenaios*, Leipzig 1903, p. III–XV. Floris Bernard is

almost of a surrealist work of art². A vivid and bright one, full of colours, flavours, tastes, smells and other sensory details. A picture³ in which the holy martyrs appear before Christ dressed-up in garments made of their own blood or of the water they were drowned in, wear make-up of their gore or jewels of the tools that brought them to death. Other saints stand out as aromatic plants, incense offerings or vessels filled with consecrated oil or oil for lamps, as various types of food or are otherwise accepting medicines in the form of either torture or God's words to relieve their suffering.

The poetic cycle under consideration here is one of the four Orthodox calendars composed by Christopher of Mytilene⁴ – the dodecasyllabic one – which entered the *Verse Synaxarion* and was so translated among the South Slavs twice in the 14th century⁵. One of the translations, known as Bulgarian (or Tărnovo redaction)

perhaps the most prominent recent scholar profoundly studying Christopher's works as part of the 11th-century Byzantine poetry (cf. e.g., *the Poems of Christopher of Mytilene and John Mauropous*, ed. et trans. F. BERNARD, C. LIVANOS, Cambridge 2018 [= DOML, 50]; F. BERNARD, *Rhythm in the Byzantine Dodecasyllable: Practices and Perceptions*, [in:] *Middle and Late Byzantine Poetry. Texts and Contexts*, ed. A. RHOBY, N. ZAGKLAS, Turnhout 2018 [= B.SBHC, 14], p. 13–41; IDEM, *Writing and Reading Byzantine Secular Poetry, 1025–1081*, Oxford 2014; *Poetry and its Contexts in Eleventh-century Byzantium*, ed. F. BERNARD, K. DEMOEN, London–New York 2016, p. 11) but he is not much concerned with his calendars, even though he admits in a recent study that they were one of the two categories of poetry most popular in later Byzantium (F. BERNARD, *the 11th Century: Michael Psellos and Contemporaries*, [in:] *A Companion to Byzantine Poetry*, ed. W. HÖRANDNER, A. RHOBY, N. ZAGKLAS, Leiden–Boston 2019 [= BCBW, 4], p. 229).

² I mean Edgar Endé's *Der gefallene Engel*. The epigram closest to it in its imagery is Γαστήρ Κυρίλλου Λευΐτου διὰ ξίφους, /Ωσει πάχος γῆς, εἶπε Δαυΐδ, ἔρράγη, which is under the date of the 28th of March in the *Verse Synaxarion*.

³ Andreas Rhoby, the most prominent modern specialist in Byzantine epigrams inscribed on religious works of art, who have recently published a detailed series on such monuments (found on mosaics and frescoes, stone, icons and miniatures) has especially examined inscriptions of Christopher of Mytilene's calendar distichs (A. RHOBY, *On the Inscriptional Versions of the Epigrams of Christophoros Mitylenaios*, [in:] *Poetry and its Contexts...*, p. 147–155). He identifies 9 churches located in a large region – from nowadays Bulgaria and Northern Macedonia to Cyprus – proves that the inscribed epigrams (32 of which by Christopher of Mytilene) themselves were taken from the Menaia and analyses the inscriptional variant readings in comparison to the manuscript tradition of these poetic texts. Verse memories accompany depictions of martyrdoms but are also present only as inscriptions (around the saints, often in the scrolls they hold) (p. 149).

⁴ For more details on them cf. E. FOLLIERI, *I calendari in metro innografico di Cristoforo Mitileneo*, vol. I, *Introduzione, testo e traduzione*, Bruxelles 1980 [= SHa, 63], p. 6–15; she is the scholar dedicating most research effort to them together with Lia Raffaella Cresci; cf. also the list of E. Follieri's works on the issue given in L.R. CRESCI, *Διὰ βραχέων ἐπέων (K83.2): Stratégies de composition dans les calendriers métriques de Christophore Mitylenaios*, [in:] *Poetry and Its Contexts...*, p. 115 and F. Bernard's comments on them in F. BERNARD, *the 11th Century...*, p. 224.

⁵ Cf. L.R. CRESCI, L. SKOMOROCHOVA VENTURINI, *I versetti del Prolog stišnoj. Traduzione slava dei distici e dei monastici di Cristoforo di Mitilene. (Mesi: settembre, ottobre, novembre 1–25, dicembre, gennaio 1–11, aprile)*, Torino, 1999, p. 10–13; Г. ПЕТКОВ, *Стишният пролог в старата българска, сръбска и руска литература (XIV–XV в.). Археογραφία, текстология и изд. на проложните*

has been edited three times already⁶. Its earliest copy is MS Zogr. 80 of the time between the years 1345 and 1360. The second translation, referred to as Serbian, has not been edited yet, even though it was first mentioned about a century ago⁷. Its fullest copy for the summer half of the year, which I study, is MS Wuk 29 dated to the late 14th or 15th century⁸.

In this article I am going to focus not only on some crucial examples of the imagery related to food and medicine in the dodecasyllabic distichs⁹ by Christopher of Mytilene which were incorporated into the *Verse Synaxarion* but also on their translations into South Slavonic. I will also study the ways in which they were used in both the source and the target texts for various artistic and rhetorical purposes. Special attention will be given to the mechanism allowing the poet to express much in a few words¹⁰.

The examples of food imagery in the verse memories from March to August are about sixty¹¹ but I am going to focus on just two of them in my attempt to

стихове, Пловдив 2000, p. 17–59; Л. СКОМОРОХОВА-ВЕНТУРИНИ, *Л. Двустийния Стишного Пролога*, ТОДЛ 53, 2003, p. 459–469; Л. ТАСЕВА, *Параллельные южнославянские переводы Стишного пролога и триодных синаксарей*, BSl 64, 2006, p. 170–171 and the literature quoted in all the above studies.

⁶ I. L.R. CRESCI, L. SKOMORCHOVA VENTURINI, *I versetti...*; ЕАЕДЕМ, *I versetti del Prolog stišnoj. Traduzione slava dei distici e dei monastici di Cristoforo di Mitilene*, vol. II, *Mesi: gennaio, febbraio, marzo, maggio, luglio, agosto*, Torino 2002; 2. Г. ПЕТКОВ, *Стишният пролог...*; 3. Г. ПЕТКОВ, М. СПАСОВА, *Търновската редакция на Стишния пролог. Текстовете. Лексикален индекс*, vol. I–XII, Пловдив 2008–2014.

⁷ А.И. ЯЦИМИРСКИЙ, *Мелкие тексты и заметки по старинной славянской и русской литературе*, ИОРЯС 21.1, 1916, p. 42–44. А.И. Yatsimirsky holds the opinion that the two translations are Bulgarian; later scholars suppose Serbian origin of the second one (briefly on this cf. e.g. Л. ТАСЕВА, *Параллельные...*, p. 170–171).

⁸ Е. МАТТНЕС, *Katalog der slavischen Handschriften in Bibliotheken der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, Wiesbaden 1990, p. 36–37.

⁹ In the *Verse Synaxarion*, the verses for the first day of each month have three verses of which the last one indicates the date and hardly ever follows the rhythmical pattern of the rest. There are also poetic parts much larger than distichs, but even in them two verses are dedicated to a saint or a group of saints.

¹⁰ Cf. e.g. L.R. CRESCI, *Il calendario giambico di Cristoforo Mitileneo fra artifici retorici e testo scritturale*, BBGG 53, 1999 (= *Ὀπώρα. Studi in onore di mrg. Paul Canart per il LXX Compleanno*, vol. III, ed. S. LUCÀ, L. PERRIA, Grottaferrata 1999), p. 103. L.R. Cresci has pointed out that in his calendars Christopher of Mytilene initiated a new genre – even though it was Georgios Pisides who first wrote iambic distichs on saints – by applying hagiographic and hymnographic peculiarities in the epigrammatic form and, as a result, he obtained expressivity and maximum compression (L.R. CRESCI, *Διὰ βραχέων...*, p. 116). On the same peculiarity – maximum accumulation of information within short phrase – cf. also L.R. CRESCI, *Il calendario giambico...*, p. 103–118; ЕАЕДЕМ, *Esegesi nel testo poetico. Il caso del Calendario giambico di Cristoforo Mitileneo*, RAALBAN 70, 2001, p. 251–267.

¹¹ Here follow the main ones: two holy men are the product of unploughed land, St Sabbas, hanged on a fig tree, bears early fruit, while Anthimos, just like Steironites, bears fruit of virtues; St Theophanes is a ripe grape cluster; Aberkios is a honeycomb to the Saviour and Maurikios finds the bees' stings sweeter than honey; Pionius, Loukios, Kyriakos and Theodoulos are like various types of bread;

reveal the mechanism, the way in which the sensory words work on us and convey condensed information. The first example I have chosen is the distich about St Aberkios whose torture was to be smeared with honey so that a swarm of bees stung him to death:

Βρώσις μελίσσαις Ἀβέρκιος προυτέθη,
᾿Ων βρώσις ὄφθη Κυρίῳ τὸ κηρίον¹².

26 May, III¹³

Zogr. 80

сѢНѢДѢ ПΥΕΛΑΔΗΪ ἈΒΕΡΚΙῚ ΠΡῚΕΛΟΚΗΝΤΪ·
ΗΖΚΕ Ἡ ΠΗΜΑ ΓΑΒΛΪ ΣΔ ΣΛΑΔΚΑ ΓΪΒΗ·

Wuk 29

снѣдѢ пѹеладѢ ἈβερκίѢ προστρѣτѢ βῶσις·
ἰᾰκὸ̅̅̅ снѣдѢ ἰᾰβῆη се̅̅̅ γῆη वोскѢ·

The first thing to notice here is the limitation of poetry that Christopher set to himself. This distich is not just made of two twelve-syllable lines, but the lines are paroxytone and have caesura after the fifth syllable¹⁴. The three features prove to be a rule for the whole cycle.

Here, on the poetic and rhetorical level of the text, phonetic and semantic repetitions emphasise on certain keywords: there is an anthanacsis of βρώσις, the paronomasia Κυρίῳ τὸ κηρίον, various phonetic alternations (Βρῶ-... -βέρ-... -βρῶ-... -ρίο-... -ρίω-). Indeed, every word is related to food, even the polysemic

Laurentios, Philadelphos and Kyprinos are paralleled to fish; several other saints are better than cooked lambs and calves, skewered, grilled or fried meat. The rich Antipatros offers a big korban of virtues, and Pompeios is like a sheep milked by a sword from his neck. Clearly, this group is partly overlapping the agricultural one.

¹² All the Greek verses are according to Σ. ΕΥΣΤΡΑΤΙΑΔΗΣ, *Αγιολόγιον της Ορθοδόξου Εκκλησίας*, [Αθήναι] 1961.

¹³ The Roman numeral in the designations preceding each of the quoted commemorations in this article signifies which one it is for the date; the dates are after MS Wuk 29.

¹⁴ In fact, fixed number of syllables and caesura either after the fifth or the seventh syllable are the main syllabic and tonic peculiarities of the Byzantine dodecasyllable in general. The twelve syllables per verse are not just analytically proven by P. MAAS, *Der byzantinische Zwölfsilber*, BZ 12, 1903, p. 278–323, but also reflected in Byzantine treatises (cf. W. HÖRANDNER, *Beobachtungen zur Literarästhetik der Byzantiner. Einige byzantinische Zeugnisse zu Metrik und Rhythmik*, BSl 56.2, 1995, p. 86 and F. BERNARD, *Rhythm...*, p. 17 on the issue); the place of the caesura, i.e. the verse structure of the type 5+7 or 7+5 syllables, is supported by exact statistics (cf. e.g. F. BERNARD, *Rhythm...*, p. 27 and the literature quoted there); the rule for a predominantly paroxytone clausulae is known even before P. Maas (e.g. E. BOUVY, *Poètes et mélodies. Étude sur les origines du rythme tonique dans l'hymnographie de l'église grecque*, Nîmes 1886, p. 155–157 or I. HILBERG, *Über die Accentuation der Versausgänge in den iambischen Trimetern des Georgios Pisides*, [in:] *Festschrift Johannes Vahlen zum siebenzigsten Geburtstag. Gewidmet von Seinen Schülern*, Berlin 1900, p. 149–172) and was actually attested in Byzantine writings (e.g. W. HÖRANDNER, *Beobachtungen...*, p. 288 and F. BERNARD, *Rhythm...*, p. 20, 22 who quote a particular treatise recommending paroxytone endings of dodecasyllabic verses.

verb προτίθημι, fixed also with meanings related to meals – i.e. ‘serving of food’ – and it delicately directs us to particular practices in Byzantium.

We have food not just on the poetic and rhetorical level – food imagery is linked both to the historical meaning (what exactly happened to the saint, how he died) and to many Biblical allusions¹⁵. And precisely to the Biblical allusions is related the riddle of the text¹⁶. I name this *intellectual* level of the work. From all the occurrences of bee-honey imagery in the Bible we have only one key to the proper understanding of this verse. That is the moment when Christ’s disciples offered Him, after His Resurrection, a piece of a broiled fish, and of a honeycomb (Lc 24: 42)¹⁷. It is after the solving of the riddle that perceivers come to the *emotional* level – as it is only then that the text arouses not just compassion to the sufferer but absolute awe of his offering.

Translators of this text needed to consider several semantic layers – at least the poetic, the historical and the Biblical ones – besides, concentrated around certain keywords. Neither of the two manuscripts, witnessing respectively the two Slavonic translators of the 14th century, however, shows the direct counterpart of ‘honeycomb’ – which should be *сѣтъ*, a word which would not destroy the rhythmical structure of the verses. So, the two translators’ choices were obviously prompted by something else. In Wuk 29 the word is metonymically rendered with *воскъ* ‘wax’ while the other manuscript, Zogr. 80, emphasises on the taste qualities of the food – *сладка* ‘sweet’. Yet, even if the entire New Testament meaning is lost in translation, poetic and historical layers are relatively preserved there, especially in Wuk 29.

¹⁵ Special attention to the quotations and allusions from the Holy Scripture in Christopher’s dodecasyllabic calendar is given in L.R. CRESCI, *Il calendario giambico...*, who studies the particular mechanisms in their application (most prominent of which their ‘decontextualisation’) as well as peculiar metaphors of Biblical origin. Cf. also L.R. CRESCI, *Esegesi...*

¹⁶ Setting riddles is something Christopher of Mytilene is extremely fond of. Cf. especially L.R. CRESCI, *Esegesi...*

¹⁷ I have to open a bracket here because the modern Greek and English Bibles lack the part with the honeycomb in this particular reference. But I checked several Byzantine manuscripts and the phrase is still there. For example, in Paris Gr. 70, a Gospel Book of the 10th century, on f. 302v we see not only *ἰχθύος ὀπτοῦ μέρος* (as in the modern versions) but also *καὶ ἀπὸ μελισσίου κηρίον...* the same is the situation also in the 14th-century Bulgarian Book of Gospels – the one of Tsar Ivan Alexander (Add MS 39627) – where we can read *ѿ пчелъ сѣтъ*. This addition is mentioned in the critical apparatus of *Novum Testamentum Graece*, ed. B. ALAND, K. ALAND, J. KARAVIDOPOULOS, C.M. MARTINI, B.M. METZGER, [27Stuttgart] 2001, p. 245. I would like to thank my colleagues in the project entitled *the Vocabulary of Constantine of Preslav’s Uchitel’noe evangelie* (‘Didactic Gospel’): *Old Bulgarian-Greek and Greek-Old Bulgarian Word Indices* and especially to Dobriela Kotova for helping me find the exact place in the Greek manuscripts. The reason this martyr is so delicately related to the Holy Apostles in our text is the belief he was the son of Apostle Alpheos, as clearly stated also in the heading of the text – *въ тѣхъ дѣнь сѣтъ аверкіѣ апла алфеа сѣтъ*.

Let us turn to the other example I have chosen of a martyr paralleled to food – one of the several including fish. As fish by itself has loads of additional meanings in Christianity.

Τὸν **Λαυρέντιον λαύρακα** [Cr λάβρακα] Χριστοῦ λέγω,
Ἐπ’ ἐσχάρας ἄνθραξιν ἐξωπτημένον.

10 Aug, I

Zogr. 80

ΛΑΥΡΕΝΤΊΑ ρΑΚΚ ΧΕΒ ΓΛΑ•
НА СΚΟΒΡΔΛѢ ЖГЛѢМЪ НСПЕВЕНДАГО.

Wuk 29

ΛΑΥΡΕΝΤΊΑ, ρΟΥΨ ΧΕΟΥ ΓΛΙΟ•:
НА СΚΟΒΡΔΛѢ ЖГННѢН НСПЕВЕНА•:

This is one of the numerous examples of adnominatio in the Calendar – that is phonetic, semantic or etymological wordplay including proper names¹⁸. This rhetorical device is based here only on phonetic similarity of the name Λαυρέντιον to the noun λαύρακα. The image kernel in this verse – λάβραξ, -ἄκος, ὄ – known in modern Greece as λαβράκι, the sea bass, seems lost in translation together with the adnominatio, but the presence of -ρακ- in the Zograf copy makes it compulsory to consider a probable reconstruction of an initial *ΛΑΥΡΑΚΑ, which might well be rethought as ράκα – ‘coffin; treasury box’ later; or it may be speculated that the sememe of ‘tree, wood’ is present in both the name derived from the Latin *laurus* and in ράκα as those boxes were usually made of wood.

In Wuk 29 the counterpart ρούψον designates ‘hand, arm’ and the image it results in – a grilled human upper limb – seems odd and would be easily related to a copyist’s error. Yet, another explanation is possible – that the naming of the saint “a hand of Christ” (ρΟΥΨ ΧΕΟΥ ΓΛΙΟ) has its grounds in both the Vita of Laurentios and in the Gospels as hand alludes to charity in both. We read in Laurentios’ short Life coming after his verse memory in the Synaxarion that he was responsible for the Church treasury and, when requested to submit it to the emperor, he gave it away to the poor and the handicapped whom he then brought to the court. So, both hand and treasury box may be not translator’s or copyist’s error but a successful translator’s decision activating the historical and Biblical semantic layers of the text to compensate for the deliberately omitted sea food imagery foreign to the

¹⁸ Adnominatio is a very characteristic feature of the synaxar verses and, even under different designations, was studied in them first by H. HUNGER, *Byzantinische Namensdeutungen in iambischen Synaxarversen*, Buč 13.1, 1985, p. 1–26 and then by L.R. CRESCI, *Il calendario giambico...*, who names it “λογοπαίγνιον sul nome” and who analyses two punned place names as well. Further examples are given in L.R. CRESCI, *Esegesi...* In their South Slavonic translation, the figurae related to proper names, is examined by e.g. L.R. CRESCI, L. SKOMOROCHOVA VENTURINI, *I versetti...*, p. 63–73 and L. TASEVA, *Da predadesh nepredavaemoto: Igrosliviya i aliteracii vav vizantijski kalendarni stihove i v tehните balgarski i srabski prevodi*, [in:] *Glasovi i slike. Oblici komunikacije na sredњovekovnom Balkanu (IV–XVI vek)*, ed. S. BOJANIN, L. MILANOVICH, M. TSVETKOVICH, Beograd 2020, p. 457–486.

Slavonic realm. The other translation, proposing the image of a treasury box, also alludes, to some extent, to the Vita of the saint.

But let us move to the imagery, related to medicine. It is not as rich as the food imagery, yet it seems similarly striking: St Benjamin receives spiritual relief by means of an enema through a stake, Athanasios the healer's painful soul is cured by beheading and the physician Thalelaios is healed by the herb of decapitation; St Iustinos is made to drink Conium (poison hemlock) and he is about to heal those who made him drink it; St Ibistion is sent, by means of hyssop, to the place of no tears and St Styrakios, after being cut down by a sword, lets out mind-acquirable aroma¹⁹. Another aspect I have not mentioned – present also in the food imagery – is Christ's interference as support and cure. His Word is the remedy to the lepper and the antidote to temptation; the dew of Scripture heals the 27 martyrs burnt to death.

It is quite interesting how the Slavonic translators rendered the epigram on St Athanasios the Magician. *Zogr. 80* tried to preserve the etymological emphasis on *φαρμακός* – *φάρμακον* but created quite a different image: 'the beheading, the herb (*βυλίε*) for Athanasios,/ found a strange herb for the crippled soul, while *Wuk 29* remained closer to the original but lost the pun – 'Athanasios the sorcerer through beheading/ found a strange medicine for the ill soul'.

Ἀθανάσιος **φαρμακός** τομὴν κάρας
Ψυχῆς νοσοῦσης εὖρε **φάρμακον** ξένον.

23 Apr, V

ἀθανασίῳ **βυλίε** главнын посѣкѣ •
Дшн неΔ, жрѡбавшн ѡбрѣте **βυλίε** странно •

ἀθανασίε ὡβεβανηίνικη οὐρεκκνοβενίενη γλάβνήνια, •
Дшн болешн ѡбрѣте л'ενεвоу странноу: •—

The verse memory of Benjamin, who died after stake was thrust into his bowels, offers a parallel of this deadly torture to some healing cleansing procedure, even though in a purely spiritual sense:

Ἀθλητικῷ κλυστήρι, τῷ πάλῳ λέγω.
Πάν Βενιαμίν ψυχικόν κενοῖ βάρος.

In the South Slavonic version, in one of the manuscripts we have a rare occurrence of multiple translations within the same codex (*Wuk 29*): the memory of St Benjamin is present under both 11th of March and 10th of June²⁰.

¹⁹ Besides, some parallels of saints to scents and plants in these verses may also be added to this imagery.

²⁰ St Benjamin the Deacon of Persia is celebrated mainly on the 31st of March according to both the Orthodox and the Catholic calendar (see the mention of this and other dates e.g. in Σ. ΕΥΣΤΡΑΤΙΑΔΗΣ,

11 Mar, VI

στράλινυρскою ѿζ'βοю конѣцъ глаю•
 прѣне венѣаминнѣ дшоу нозѣннѣ ѿпоуцаѣеть•

The first rendering is quite far from the supposed original: 'Through martyr's wound, I say, the end/ accepting Benjamin violently let out his soul'. In it κλυστήρι corresponds to ѿζ'βοю '[through] wound' and τῷ πάλω to конѣцъ 'end'. This discrepancy may signal for a different Greek source but the visual (orthographic) similarity between конѣцъ and κόλινъ, found in the distich for the 10th of June in the same manuscript, suggests rather an illegible primary text.

10 Jun, V

στράλινυρское орѣдїе колъ нарича•
 понѣ венѣаминнѣ дшевенжа ѿспѣци тѣготѣ•

στράλινυρскоеи вранѣваннѣ колѣцъ глаю:—
 всакоу венѣаминнѣ дшевноюю ѿспѣцаемѣ
 теготѣ:•—

It may seem strange at first glance that both interpreters opted for 'stake' (κόλινъ/ κόλινъ) for πάλος 'lot; short straw', but they probably comprehended it as πᾶλος 'stake' as suggested also by the Vita of this martyr. As far as κλυστήρι is concerned, Wuk 29 emphasises the semantics of medicine and cure (βρανѣваннѣ), while Zogr. 80 renders it vaguely with орѣдїе 'thing' with later meaning 'tool', even though it also keeps the analogy. The second verse in the distich quite closely corresponds to the original in both translations as in either of them it states that Benjamin let out his spiritual burden. This epigram is not elaborate in terms of poetic devices and there is no apparent Biblical key for it.

But in another distich the saint's name is again interwoven in adnominatio:²¹

Ἀνήκε τμηθεῖς ὁ **Στυράκιος** ξίφει
 Ὅσμην νοητὴν ὡς νοητός τις **στύραξ**.

7 Aug, X²¹

вѣзиде посѣвенѣ стѣракіе мевеннѣ•
 ѡханїе ѡгннѣе іакоже нѣкѣоторын мыслѣнын
 тѣсѣкѣ•

ἄψε ἢ οὔσ'εκκνοβενѣ ѱен **СТΥΡΑΚΙΕ** мѣвенѣ:—
 вѣню **УЮВѢСТѢННЮ** оую ѿпоуцаемѣш іако
УЮВѢСТѢННН нѣкїн **СТΥΡΑΚѢ**:•—

Αγιολόγιον..., p. 79 where also 10 June is given, but not 11 March). The peculiarities related to the dates of the commemorations, including all the discrepancies, may well be a subject to a separate study which would probably answer whether in this case the manuscript reflects a particular stage in the establishment of the dates or whether it just resulted from an attempt to compensate for mechanical loss in the original.

²¹ The feast should be on the 8th of August, cf. e.g. Σ. ΕΥΣΤΡΑΤΙΑΔΗΣ, *Αγιολόγιον...*, p. 435, but here I follow the dates as given in MS Wuk 29.

I will not elaborate on the way the poetic, historical, Biblical, intellectual and emotional levels interact here. Rather I will concentrate on the purely Christian layer signified by the two derivatives of νοῦς²² – this notion so distinctive for the mystical discourse after Dionysius the Areopagite. The same mechanism for compressing information – as in the other verses – unfolds here a whole mystical dimension, which is even more strengthened by the olfactory sensation. The key word σῦραξ is rendered as *realia* (σῦρακῆ) by one of the translators to preserve the pun, besides interweaving it with another repetition – of ὑφωβεστέβηη (‘perceivable; sensible’). In the other manuscript, however, we come across the relatively rare word τῦεσῆκῆ which could hardly be a name of a plant – as it derives from a root for ‘pressing’ – and which stays in other texts, including New Testament ones, for either ὑπολήγιον or ληνός²³. The whole imagery changes from therapeutically aromatic to the one of the vessels here (besides, a mental vessel – μυσαλῆνῆη τῦεσῆκῆ) and so activates the respective New Testament allusions, some of them related to wine production. This translator’s experiment seems to be successful and this is only to demonstrate that he had fully comprehended the mechanism and applied it according to the worldview of his addressees.

In conclusion, the food and medicine imagery in the verse memories for the months from March to August proves to be, on the one hand, part of the mechanism for compressing information, for expressing much in single epigrams, and, on the other, respectively, some of the keys for unlocking whole stories and associations in the mind of the perceiver. The examples observed showed the extent to which this mechanism was transmitted from the source into the target texts, usually successfully. What is lost in translation is on the basic semantic levels – e.g. certain everyday practices, the usual types of food²⁴ – any part of the casual life and knowledge which is not related to Christianity, or, exceptionally, as in the first example given, not entirely recognised as the exact Biblical reference meant in the original (St Aberkios as a honeycomb to God), but even then the overall spiritual meaning is preserved.

Indeed, the Christian understanding is the leading principle for the two South Slavonic translators and the heaviest semantic layer. Besides, the one they and their audience know best from all the aspects of the Byzantine life. Everything else is seen, so to say, through this prism – from the perspective of Paradise.

²² On the metaphors including νοητός in the Calendar, cf. L.R. CRESCI, *Esegesi...*, p. 261–262.

²³ Cf. e.g. <http://gorazd.org/gulliver/?recordId=35449> [30 V 2021].

²⁴ Some examples of food imagery not transmitted to the target text have been given above, yet there are others when the food imagery in it does not have the exact counterpart in the source text. I have come across just two examples of the kind – St Anthusa, paralleled to rose in the original, is seen as an apple or rosehip by the translators, while the stones killing the holy martyrs Rhodopianos and Diodoros appear as roses in the source but apples – in the target text. This, obviously, is related rather to the everyday aspect than to the Christian symbolics.

As far as food imagery is concerned, there is one main message – the eternal feast in Paradise. But it should be also studied whether similes and metaphors related to meals are more frequent in the periods of fasting, as it seems at a first glance, or whether there are other triggers to it. One thing is sure – the study of the issue should continue and should be put in a broader, also statistical, frame.

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