Russ Linguist (2020) 44:1–12
https://doi.org/10.1007/s11185-020-09223-0

Semitic inscriptions in the St. Sophia Cathedral in Novgorod: a reply to alternative interpretations

Семитские надписи из Новгородского Софийского собора: ответ на альтернативные трактовки

Alexey A. Gippius[1] · Holger Gzella[2] · Savva M. Mikheev[3,4] · Jos Schaeken[5]

Published online: 30 March 2020

Abstract In the present article, we offer a detailed reply to alternative interpretations of our explanation of two eleventh-century phrases inscribed many times on the walls of the St. Sophia Cathedral in Novgorod: *коуни рони* and *парехъ мари*. According to our previous article in this journal, the phrases have a Semitic origin: Hebrew *qūmī ronnī* and Syriac /barrek̲ mār/, respectively. In both instances new empirical evidence is provided by S. Ju. Temčin. In the case of *коуни рони* we argue that his alternative hypothesis cannot be maintained for a number of compelling reasons; our interpretation stands as it is. In the case of *парехъ мари* we basically agree with Temčin and provide evidence that sheds further light on its path of transmission into Slavic.

Аннотация В настоящей статье дается подробный ответ на альтернативные трактовки выражений *коуни рони* и *парехъ мари*, многократно записанных в XI в. на стенах новгородского Софийского собора. Ранее эти выражения были объяснены нами как семитские: от древнееврейского *qūmī ronnī* и сирийского /barrek̲ mār/. После этого новые факты по обоим вопросам привлек С. Ю. Темчин. В случае с *коуни рони* мы

The contribution of A. A. Gippius and S. M. Mikheev was supported by a grant from the Russian Science Foundation (project no. 19-18-00352).

✉ J. Schaeken
j.schaeken@hum.leidenuniv.nl

A.A. Gippius
agippius@mail.ru

H. Gzella
holger.gzella@lmu.de

S.M. Mikheev
mikheev@gmail.com

1 National Research University Higher School of Economics, Moscow, Russia

2 Katholisch-Theologische Fakultät, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universtität, Munich, Germany

3 Institute of Slavic Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow, Russia

4 The RANEPA School of Advanced Studies in the Humanities, Moscow, Russia

5 Department of Russian and Eurasian Studies, Leiden University, Leiden, The Netherlands

приводим аргументы против альтернативной гипотезы, что позволяет остаться при прежней точке зрения. Между тем, по вопросу о *парехъ мари* мы соглашаемся с трактовкой Темчина и привлекаем данные, которые позволяют уточнить обстоятельства распространения этого выражения на славянской почве.

1 Introduction

Several years ago, the authors of the present article published their interpretation of two phrases inscribed on the walls of the St. Sophia Cathedral in Novgorod: *коуни рони* and *парехъ мари* (Gippius et al. 2012). Both inscriptions can be dated to the earliest period of the existence of the church, between 1050 and 1109.

The first inscription is spelled as *кюни рони*, *куни рони* or *коуни рони* and mostly written by different hands. It is attested more than forty times in a part of the church that was usually restricted to the clergy: the northern wall of the Diaconicon and the western wall of the passageway from the altar to the Diaconicon. We argued that *коуни рони* is a Slavic adaptation of the Hebrew expression *qūmī ronnī* (קוּמִי רנִּי) 'Arise, cry out', which occurs in the Hebrew Bible, verse 2:19 of the Book of Lamentations. There is good reason to assume that the citation can be connected to the seizure of Novgorod and the plundering of St. Sophia by Vseslav Brjačislavič of Polotsk in the year 1066, a dramatic event which in the eyes of the Novgorodians may have had parallels with the conquest of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar II.[1]

The second inscription, *парехъ мари*, occurs twice in the same part of the church as where the many attestations of *коуни рони* are located. The two occurrences are most probably in the same handwriting, which seems to differ from the various handwritings used in the case of *коуни рони*. We proposed that *парехъ мари* could be a Slavic adaptation of Aramaic (Classical Syriac) /barrek̲ mār/ 'Bless, O Lord'. Furthermore, we suggested that the hand that wrote *парехъ мари* also inscribed *ефремъ сѵрин*[ъ], i.e. the monogram *Ефремъ* and the word *сиринъ*, 'Efrem the Syrian', on another wall of the cathedral. It is conceivable that this Efrem was a local citizen, probably a clergyman, who carried the epithet 'the Syrian', either as a nickname or because he was Syrian by descent.[2]

In sum, in our 2012 article we suggested a Semitic origin of the two inscriptions: Hebrew for *коуни рони* and Aramaic for *парехъ мари*. In the case of *коуни рони* we seem to be dealing with the oldest tangible proof of contact with Jews and Hebrew in Rus'. In both cases we argued that the orthographic deviations between the Slavic phrases and their underlying Semitic counterparts result from a *hearer*-based orientation of the scribes. This would explain the *н* (instead of *м*) in *коун̲и* (*рони*) and both the *п-* (instead of *б-*) and the *-х-* (instead of *-к-*) in *п̲арех̲ъ* (*мари*).

In recent times, the well-known linguist and philologist S. Ju. Temčin from the Institute of the Lithuanian language in Vilnius published a number of articles in which he criticizes our interpretation. He offers a totally different explanation for *коуни рони* (Temčin 2013a; cf. 2013b, pp. 101–103, 2015, pp. 260–261) and suggests an alternative scenario for the historical context in which *парехъ мари* appeared on the walls of Novgorod's St. Sophia (id.

[1]The second time Vseslav Brjačislavič went to war against Novgorod was only three years later, in 1069. There is a birchbark document (no. 590) which can be linked to the 1069 campaign (Zaliznjak 2004, p. 244; cf. Schaeken 2019, p. 129 and fn. 9).

[2]This local citizen might be identified as the monk Efrem who is the author of birchbark letter no. 605 (Zaliznjak 2004, pp. 271–272; Gippius et al. 2012, p. 281, fn. 25; cf. Schaeken 2019, p. 46).

2013b, 2015). Let us examine the arguments both for and against this alternative scenario, beginning with *коуни рони* (Sect. 2) and then proceeding with *парехъ мари* (Sect. 3).

2 An alternative interpretation of *коуни рони*

2.1 Arguments against Gippius et al. (2012)

According to Temčin (2013a, pp. 255–256), there are five reasons that make our interpretation of *коуни рони* problematic:

(1) There is no reliable evidence of the presence of a Jewish community in eleventh-century Novgorod or of people who knew Hebrew and could have been a source of information for the pronunciation of the biblical phrase, which hardly attracted the attention of Greek and Latin Church Fathers.
(2) The second consonant of *коуни рони* differs from Hebrew *qūmī ronnī*, which is explained as an assimilation of the *m* of *qūmī* with the *n* of the following *ronnī*. However, none of the authors of the more than forty attestations was able to produce the correct form **kumi* although literate people in Rus' knew the Semitic form with the consonant *m* from the Church Slavonic Gospels (Mark 5:41: *талита коумъ* or *талиѳа коумы* 'Talitha cum', i.e. 'Little girl, get up!').
(3) The Ashkenazi pronunciation of Hebrew in Ukraine, Poland, the western regions of Hungary and the southeastern variant of Yiddish, where etymological /ū/ is realized as [i] or, less frequently [ü], cannot explain the variety in the spelling of the first syllable of *коуни* (*кю-*, *ку-*, *коу-*) in an eleventh-century graffito because the change occurred much later—after the beginning of the resettlement of Ashkenazi Jews from German to Polish lands (in the thirteenth century).
(4) The people who inscribed the phrase did not understand its structure and did not realize that the two Hebrew forms *qūmī* and *ronnī* are imperatives, as evidenced by the use of the accompanying personal names in the nominative (and not vocative) case.
(5) The conjecture that the earliest (albeit distorted) recording of a Hebrew phrase was found in Novgorod, and not in Kiev, where we witness a Jewish community has existed since the tenth century, does not receive an explanation.

Arguments (1) and (5) are merely based on expectations. Admittedly, the presence of Jews predominantly in the southern parts of Rus' may have been more in line with what we know on the basis of small pieces of evidence. However, expectations do not *a priori* prevent or exclude the hypothesis we proposed. Moreover, there is evidence that the presence of Jews in pre-Mongol Rus' was certainly not restricted to Kiev and other southern cities (Franklin 2002, pp. 117–118; Hill 2016, pp. 603–606; cf. also Gruber 2013, pp. 434–435, with reference to Gippius et al. 2012). In our 2012 article (pp. 280–281) we mention the specific case of the word *машиаакъ* for the Jewish messiah, which is attested in an early-thirteenth century manuscript from Novgorod and may also point to a hearer-based orientation of the writer, just like *коуни рони*.[3]

[3] See now also Reinhart, who recently (Rajnxart 2015) discovered the Greek original of the text. However, the passage in which *машиаакъ* (also *машикъ*) occurs does not seem to have a Greek parallel and might be an East Slavic addition (ibid., pp. 291–292 and fn. 6, and 329). According to Rajnxart (ibid., pp. 300–301), the translation originated in Kiev Rus' in the eleventh or twelfth century. Later, in the course of the twelfth or thirteenth century, substantial textual changes were made, including the addition of the part in which we find *машиаакъ*. Apparently, the text does not reveal any specific Novgorodian dialectal features.

Arguments (2) and (4) ignore the fact that we proposed a *hearer*-oriented interpretation of the phrase. This would explain the *н* in *коуни*, which is a clear case of long-distance assimilation. We provide historical evidence that implies that the writers were aware of the content of the meaning. However, our hypothesis does not rely on any specific grammatical knowledge the writers may have had; on the contrary, it is highly unlikely that they had any linguistic understanding of the phrase and would have been able to connect *коуни* with *коумъ* or *коумы* in the Gospels.[4] Also, there is no reason to assume that the Hebrew imperatives—whether they were perceived as such or not—would require vocatives for the accompanying names (such as *Xotěnъ Nosъ* or *Dobrata*)[5] since the exclamation was certainly not directed towards these specific persons who were the writers of the inscriptions themselves.

Finally, in the case of argument (3), pertaining to the first syllable of *коуни*, we never claimed that our explanation was a necessary condition for our hypothesis; the variation in the spelling *кю-*, *ку-*, *коу-* "*can* be explained" (Gippius et al. 2012, p. 273—our emphasis), not *must* be explained, by an Ashkenazi pronunciation of Hebrew. The development of the Ashkenazi pronunciation is not well known, since vocalization is rather inconsistent in the earliest relevant sources (twelfth- and thirteenth-century Hebrew manuscripts from Western Europe). It can be assumed that it was a gradual, long-term and decentralized process and, more specifically, that the pronunciation of /ū/ as [i] could have been common or at least emerging long before the thirteenth century among Jews in the Rhineland and elsewhere in Western Europe. After all, it is commonly accepted that the phonology of the (pre-)Ashkenazi pronunciation tradition is based on an ancient Hebrew reading tradition. Anyway, there is no proof to the contrary (see the summary by Eldar 2013, with further bibliography). Moreover, the variation in spelling reflects a well-known orthographic pattern in the rendition of Greek κυ in the Old Slavic writing culture (Gippius et al. 2012, p. 274). This pattern may also have been applied to the phrase *коуни рони*, which was certainly perceived as a foreign (non-Slavic) expression; perhaps Ashkenazi pronunciation only played a partial role.

In our opinion the five arguments put forward by Temčin are merely critical observations, which by no means falsify our hypothesis. It should also be mentioned that Temčin does not comment on the historical pragmatic context we provide (Gippius et al. 2012, pp. 278–280). This particular context motivates the many attestations of *коуни рони* in their specific location in the St. Sophia Cathedral and strengthens our case. It would require a compelling alternative explanation to put aside our hypothesis.

2.2 An alternative explanation

It is Temčin's merit (2013a, pp. 256–258; cf. 2013b, pp. 102–103, 2015, p. 261) that immediately after the publication of our article he discovered a word that seems to be another attestation of *коуни рони*, namely *кунирони*. It is written in the margins of a service Menaion for August in a hymn to St. Maximus the Confessor. The manuscript (GIM, Sin. 168) is from the last quarter of the twelfth century and of Novgorodian provenance. The word can be found in a later fourteenth-century addition in the lower margin of fol. 71v: "Дьньсь благоизволь-ною кунирони да похвалимъ Максима . . . " ('Today let us praise Maxim with the honored *кунирони*'); see Figs. 1 and 2:[6]

[4] Incidentally, the Greek expression Ταλιθὰ κούμ in the Gospels is of Aramaic provenance, not Hebrew.

[5] In Gippius et al. (2012, p. 273) the name is spelled as *Dobrjata* but on closer inspection it should be read as *Dobrata*.

[6] For a facsimile of the manuscript, see the electronic catalogue of the State Historical Museum (GIM: *Gosudarstvennyj istoričeskij muzej*) in Moscow (https://catalog.shm.ru/) and search for "Син. 168".

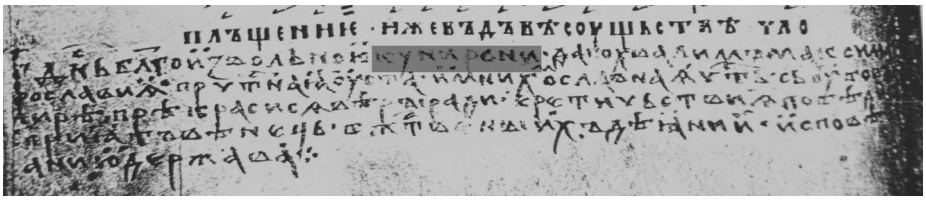
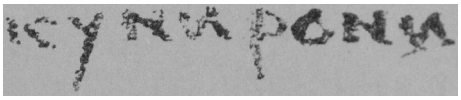


Fig. 1 *кунирони* in the addition in the lower margin of fol. 71v of GIM, Sin. 168

Fig. 2 Close-up of *кунирони*



According to Stern (2008, p. 541, no. 5868), the Greek equivalent of this hymn has not been found ("textus graecus non inventus"), although a parallel text seems to exist in the eleventh-century manuscript Sinai 598 (fol. 138v), which is a service Menaion for January: Σήμερον τῇ εὐήχῳ κινύρᾳ ἐγκωμιάζεται Μά|ξιμος …;[7] see Fig. 3.

Thus, it is clear that we have another attestation of *коуни рони*, at least at first sight. Without doubt the word corresponds with Greek κινύρα 'lyre, harp', viz. the name of an Old Testament stringed instrument. The Greek word is derived from Hebrew *kinnōr* and attested in Slavic as the loanword *kinura*.

However, the Slavic translation of εὐήχῳ κινύρᾳ as *благоизвольною кунирони* is puzzling. First, εὔηχος 'euphonious, melodious' is rendered by the more general word *благоизвольнъ* 'honored; εὔδοξος', whereas a word like *доброгласьнъ* 'well-sounding; εὔηχος'[8] would have been a far more accurate translation. Second, we would have expected a feminine noun in the instrumental singular corresponding with the instrumental *благоизвольною* and the Greek dative endings εὐήχῳ κινύρᾳ. This would have yielded **кинурою*, not *кунирони*. The attested form *кунирони* instead of **кинурою* presupposes two unusual mistakes: (1) the vowel letters *и* and *у* have been swapped (**кіпи-* > *куні-*), and (2) the ending *-ою* (or *-оѭ*) has been distorted to *-они* 'for some reason', as Temčin puts it ("počemu-to"; 2013a, p. 257). It is obvious that **кинурою* was incomprehensible to the copyist, most probably due to the fact that he simply did not understand the meaning of the word *кинура*. Temčin points out that the earliest attestation of *кинура* is from the seventeenth century, found in a source from 1654; in medieval times Greek κινύρα was usually translated by other words such as *бряцало*, *цѣвьница* or *гусли* (2013a, pp. 256–258).

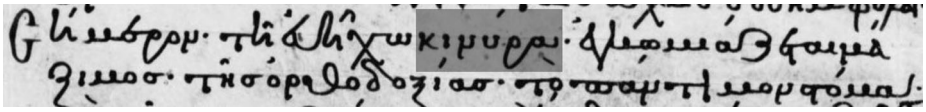


Fig. 3 κινύρᾳ in Sinai 598 (fol. 138v) (The photograph is taken from a microfilm of the Library of Congress Collection of Manuscripts in St. Catherine's Monastery, Mt. Sinai, which is available on their website: https://www.loc.gov/item/00271075170-ms/ (for fol. 138v, go to image 135).)

[7] We would like to thank Dieter Stern, Ghent University, for providing us with further information on the Greek text.

[8] *доброгласьнъ* is attested in Psalm 150:5 as the (Old) Church Slavonic translation of εὔηχος (cf. Kurz 1965, p. 492, and also Mareš 1997, p. 48).

According to Temčin, the new instance of *кунирони* in the service Menaion is the primary source of the many instances of *коуни рони* on the walls of St. Sophia. It is not derived from Hebrew *qūmī ronnī* 'Arise, cry out' but from Greek κινύρα 'lyre, harp'. The scribes of the graffito knew the word from the service Menaion; they were not so much interested in the hymn itself but more in 'the unfamiliar word' ("neprivyčnoe slovo") denoting an object that was familiar to them—a harp, which in Novgorod was a popular instrument, more than in Kiev (2013a, pp. 257–258).

As already briefly indicated in earlier publications (Gippius and Mixeev 2013, pp. 157–158; Gippius 2018, p. 187, fn. 10), we cannot agree with Temčin's hypothesis. In fact, we argue that the chronological relationship between *кунирони* in the service Menaion and *коуни рони* on the walls of Novgorod's St. Sophia is just the other way around. It is the latter which is the primary source.

First, *кунирони* as some sort of modification of **кинурою* can hardly be explained by simply assuming two unusual scribal errors, especially regarding the ending *-ою* > *-они*. It is much more likely that the distortion of the form must have been triggered by another word that resembled **кинурою*, namely the word *коуни рони* from the St. Sophia inscriptions.

Second, we cannot imagine a historical pragmatic context, which would have triggered the clergy to inscribe repeatedly a distorted word with the meaning 'lyre, harp' on the walls of St. Sophia. Simply because it was a popular instrument among the Novgorodians? The lack of any plausible context weakens Temčin's line of reasoning and stands in contrast to our own interpretation, which provides a detailed reconstruction of the historical pragmatic context of the inscriptions in St. Sophia.

In sum, the arguments both for and against our interpretation clearly speak in favor of the primacy of *коуни рони* as an adaptation of Hebrew *qūmī ronnī* 'Arise, cry out' as attested on the church walls of the St. Sophia Cathedral. As by accident, it later made its way into the service Menaion for August, where the Novgorodian scribe of a marginal addition used it to replace a word that was incomprehensible to him. In our opinion this is the most plausible scenario. A scenario which confirms Temčin's hypothesis (2013a, p. 257; cf. Šul'gina 2007, pp. 109–110) that the fourteenth-century addition reflects a very early stage in the compilation of the service Menaia from the St. Sophia Cathedral in Novgorod, at the end of the eleventh or beginning of the twelfth century, when the inscriptions were still known before they disappeared behind the frescos which were painted in 1109. At that early stage the copyist had already resorted to using *коуни рони*, which was well known to him, to replace the unknown **кинурою*. Whether the clergyman understood the meaning of the writings on the wall of St. Sophia or not is irrelevant; it was part of his lexical stock, it was a word attested many times in a sacred place, in contrast to **кинурою*, which evidently meant nothing to him.

3 An alternative interpretation of *парехъ мари*

On two occasions Temčin discusses our interpretation of *парехъ мари*—in 2013 and 2015. In his 2013 article (2013b) he agrees that *парехъ мари* is possibly a Slavic adaptation of Aramaic /barrek̲ mār/ 'Bless, O Lord'. He also follows our suggestion of identifying *парехъ мари* paleographically with the inscription *ефремъ сѵрин*[ъ] 'Efrem the Syrian'. However, Temčin disagrees with our assumption that this person does not refer to St. Ephrem the Syrian but rather to a local citizen, possibly a clergyman, who carried the epithet 'the Syrian'. He takes an additional inscription into account, which is located below *ефремъ сѵрин*[ъ] and which he reads as *на вечерни* $\overrightarrow{ѱл}$[*мъ*] | $\overrightarrow{бъженъ}$ 'at Vespers the Blessed Psalm'. The words

'Blessed Psalm' most probably point to Psalm 1:1 ("How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked") and suggest a liturgical context in which the famous theologian and liturgical poet St. Ephrem the Syrian is the first candidate to think of in the case of *ефремъ сѵрин*[ъ]. In addition, there are a few letters which are inscribed in between the lines *ефремъ сѵрин*[ъ] and *на вечерни ѱл*[мъ] | *бъженъ*. These letters might be read as *інкъ* and interpreted as *инок* 'monk'. If this reading is correct, the whole set of inscriptions should be interpreted differently; it would carry a non-liturgical meaning but at the same time still indicate that we are dealing with St. Ephrem the Syrian in view of the monastic background later tradition ascribes to him. However, as Temčin points out, we also have to consider the possibility that *ефремъ сѵрин*[ъ] and *інкъ* on the one hand, and *на вечерни ѱл*[мъ] | *бъженъ* on the other, are two separate independent inscriptions, written by two different hands, as Medynceva already concluded a long time ago (1978, p. 92). In that scenario *ефремъ сѵрин*[ъ] and *інкъ* could—at least from a formal point of view—either refer to St. Ephrem the Syrian or to a local clergyman Efrem, who carried the epithet 'the Syrian'. Temčin still prefers the first interpretation because it is 'historically real' ("istoričeski real'na") and 'attested by independent sources' (2013b, p. 106).

The main problem with Temčin's reasoning is his interpretation of the lines *інкъ* and *на вечерни ѱл*[мъ] | *бъженъ*. The reading *інкъ* is very doubtful; it was suggested by Ščepkin (1902, p. 33)[9] but Medynceva (1978, p. 92) already mentioned that the letters (?) are unclear ("neskol'ko nejasnyx znakov") and that the meaning is inconclusive.[10] The whole reconstruction of *на вечерни ѱл*[мъ] | *бъженъ* is also troublesome.[11] Instead of Temčin's *ѱл*[мъ] Medynceva proposed the more common reading *ѱл*[ъ], viz. *пьсалъ* 'wrote'. In conjunction with *б*(ъ)*женъ*, as reconstructed by Medynceva (*на вечерни ѱл*[ъ] | *б*(ъ)*женъ*), this would yield the plausible alternative 'at Vespers Božen wrote [this]'. The possible contextual relationships between the lines, including *ефремъ сѵрин*[ъ], therefore remain highly hypothetical.

Finally, Temčin contests our argumentation that all other monograms discovered so far in the St. Sophia Cathedral are autographs of the bearers of inscribed names (cf. Gippius and Mixeev 2013, pp. 154–156): *Лазорь*, *Стефанъ*, *Лука*, *Поутъка*, etc. It therefore makes sense to treat the monogram for Efrem in the same way and recognize Efrem as the author of the inscription. Temčin's concern is that in the Byzantine tradition monograms were not exclusively reserved for autographs; therefore, we cannot exclude the possibility that in the early period of Rus' monograms were also used in the case of names of traditional theologians like St. Ephrem the Syrian. This general conjecture might be true, but in this particular case we still have to formulate a hypothesis primarily based on the available data that come as close as possible to the monogram *ефремъ* followed by *сѵрин*[ъ]: except for *ефремъ*, fifteen monograms have been identified in the cathedral so far (Gippius and Mixeev 2013, p. 154) and for all of them we have to assume that they reflect the autographs of the people who inscribed their names.[12]

[9] Ščepkin also provides a photograph of the set of inscriptions under discussion (1902, Table III, No. 15).

[10] A recent inspection of the inscription by Gippius and Mikheev yields a different reading, viz. [*пов*]ь, which may be the beginning of an unfinished text.

[11] Gippius and Mikheev read *на ве*[*ч*]*ерни* (. . .) | *бъжен*[ъ]; the letter *ѱ* is doubtful.

[12] It should be borne in mind that the names of saints and their accompanying designations could also be used as nicknames. A vivid example is provided by the Novgorod charter of 1293–1304 (Valk 1949, pp. 141–142), which mentions a person called Ondřej Kritckyj. This Ondřej, who was the head of a fishermen's artel ('vatamman'), carried the name of the eighth-century Byzantine theologian and hymnographer St. Andrew of Crete.

So far, we see no reason to deviate from our interpretation in view of Temčin's objections from 2013a, 2013b. But there is more: in an article from 2015, Temčin returns to the question of *парехъ мари*. Strangely enough, the lines *інкъ* and *на вечерни ѱ҃л*[*мъ*] | *б҃ъженъ*, which played a crucial role in his previous considerations, are not mentioned anymore. Instead, he presents important new evidence. It turns out that the phrase *парехъ мари* is attested in almost the same form elsewhere, namely as a greeting formula in the Church Slavonic translation of the Life of St. Hilarion the Great, which appears in the Menaia under 21 October:

> "Услышаша же, яко святый Иларионъ мимо градъ идеть (...), събраша же ся вси и, съ женами и съ дѣтьми излѣзъше изъ града, и срѣтоша и видѣвше его, и поклониша главы своя и возопиша вси вкупѣ, сирьскы глаголюще: парехъ мара, еже есть сказаемо, благословестви, господи!" (VMČ 1880, p. 1698)

The original text of St. Hilarion's Life is in Latin,[13] where we read in the last sentence of the quote: "BARECH, id est, *benedic*" (Migne 1845, p. 42; Bastiaensen and Smit 1975, p. 110). The Church Slavonic text is a translation of one of the three different Greek versions of the Life (Strout 1943), which not only renders *Barech* as in the Latin, but also the following word μαρί: " 'Βάρεχ, μαρί'· ὅ ἐστι μεθερμηνευόμενον· 'Εὐλόγει, κύριε' " (Papadopoulos-Kerameus 1898, p. 114; Strout 1943, p. 371). The underlying Greek version was apparently called into existence, more or less in its known form, by the eighth century at the latest, perhaps even by the seventh (Strout 1943, p. 308), but its textual transmission is complicated (ibid., pp. 339–347). In other witnesses to the Greek text we encounter the variant spellings Βαρέχ instead of Βάρεχ and μαρεῖ instead of μαρί (Strout 1943, p. 371, textual note *ad* (13); Temčin 2015, p. 262). There is no direct evidence for a Latin text with the longer expression **Barech mari* either in the survey of diagnostically significant variants by McNeil (1943) or in the apparatus of the most recent edition by Bastiaensen and Smit (1975). However, it has to be emphasized that the latter is essentially based on a few earlier printed editions, not on a rigorous and comprehensive examination of the numerous manuscripts themselves and of the ancient versions (Bastiaensen and Smit 1975, pp. 70–71). A second, more literal, Greek translation of unknown date that survives in a single manuscript has Βαράχ, ὅ ἐστιν εὐλόγησον (Strout 1943, p. 322), which exactly corresponds to the received text of the Latin. In this translation both μαρί and the expansion μεθερμηνευόμενον are omitted. The third Greek translation, by contrast, is only indirectly attested in a fragmentary Coptic version and offers no further clues in this matter.

As for the Church Slavonic text, we not only find *парехъ мара* (with an erroneous final -*а* of *мара*, apparently under the influence of the vowel in the preceding syllable) but also *пархъ марїи* and *пархъ марии* in other copies. The oldest witnesses are from the late fourteenth century and of South or East Slavic provenance. Kuzidova-Karadzhinova (2012) has demonstrated in detail that the Church Slavonic translation from the Greek text has a long history and must have originated in the Old Bulgarian (Old Church Slavonic) Preslav literary school. According to Temčin (2015, p. 263), Βάρεχ μαρί as attested in the Life of St. Hilarion the Great is the source for our *парехъ мари*; the clergyman who inscribed the words on the walls of the St. Sophia Cathedral in Novgorod in the second half of the eleventh century was apparently already familiar with the Church Slavonic version of the Greek text.

We believe that Temčin's (2015) interpretation on the basis of the new empirical data is plausible: *парехъ мари* is a Slavic adaptation of Aramaic /barreḵ mārī/ 'Bless, O Lord'

[13] The English translation of the Latin original reads: "When it was heard that St. Hilarion was passing through (...), the men swarmed out with their wives and children to meet him and, with their heads reverently bowed, cried out in Syriac: 'Barech,' that is, 'Bless us!' " (Ewald 1952, p. 264).

and may have a textual rather than a hearer-oriented origin that goes back to Greek Βάρεχ μαρί. The Slavic words coincide with the Greek version, except for the Greek and eventually also Aramaic *b-* versus Slavic *p-* in *napexъ*. Temčin calls this change 'unusual' (2015, p. 263), although we pointed out earlier that it has many typological phonetic parallels elsewhere (Gippius et al. 2012, pp. 276–277). Alternatively, *napexъ* may derive from a hypothetical Greek *Vorlage* that graphically represented *b-* (which would have shifted to *v-* in native Greek words) with π- (cf. Griščenko 2015, p. 305, 2018, p. 200). This would correspond to a reasonably common Byzantine Greek spelling convention attested from the eleventh century onwards in documentary and literary texts from Athos and Southern Italy (Holton et al. 2019, pp. 114, 157), even though *Πάρεχ is not recorded among the textual variants known to Strout (1943). Such an explanation would, at any rate, presuppose some knowledge of the plosive pronunciation of *b-* in the original Aramaic word. In addition, we also cannot exclude the possibility that Slavic *p-* in *napexъ* arose because Βάρεχ (μαρί) was simply perceived as a non-transparent 'foreign' oral expression, at least something which was definitely *not* Greek. Therefore, instead of applying the standard mechanism Greek β- > Slavic *v-*, the translator removed β- and replaced it with the plosive *p-* as an alternative ad hoc solution.

Temčin's discovery also furnishes a compelling explanation of two peculiarities of the various transcriptions, that is, the single *r* in Latin *Barech*, Greek Βαρέχ and Slavic *napexъ* as well as the final *-i* in Greek μαρί and Slavic *мари* respectively. In light of the Christian context, we previously argued in favor of a Syriac (i.e., Eastern Aramaic) origin, which may account for *napexъ* due to an inexact rendering of underlying /barrek̲/, but the expected form of the following word would, at any rate, have to be /mār/, from which *мари* can only be derived with the help of additional hypotheses. However, St. Jerome seems to have written the Life of St. Hilarion during his early years in Bethlehem, where he settled in 386 (Mohrmann in Bastiaensen and Smit 1975, p. xl). Composing an account of a local saint from Gaza, whom tradition identified as the founder of anchorite life in Syria-Palestine, he added considerable *couleur locale* (cf. ibid., pp. xlvii–xlviii). Another Aramaic lexeme, *gubba* 'well, cistern' (from */gobb/), occurs in the Life of St. Paul the First Hermit by the same author (Migne 1845, p. 22). Likewise, the wording of some references to St. Hilarion in Sozomen's Ecclesiastical History reminds one of the Greek translations of the Life and may therefore imply that versions similar to, though not necessarily identical with, the ones known from later manuscripts were in circulation as early as the fifth century in Palestine (see the balanced assessment of the ambiguous evidence in Strout 1943, pp. 308–311), where they, in all likelihood, were first produced.

So regardless whether Greek μαρί points to an original *mari* that has later been omitted in the Latin text by a scribe who no longer understood its meaning, or was added to the less literal of the Greek versions by a translator who worked in fifth-century Palestine and thus was exposed to Aramaic (in the absence of a full critical edition of the Life, a clear-cut decision seems impossible), a Palestinian (i.e., Western) Aramaic source is now much more plausible than a Syriac one. Aramaic, after all, was still widely used both as a vernacular and a literary language by Jews, Christians, and others in fourth- and fifth-century Palestine (Gzella 2015, pp. 281–296). According to the Life, too, St. Hilarion regularly expressed himself in this idiom in ordinary conversation, here labeled *sermone Syro* or *voce Syra*. Note that the term 'Syriac' often appears for 'Aramaic' at large in ancient writers, contrary to its more specific employ in modern scholarly nomenclature for the Eastern Aramaic dialect of Edessa that came to be adopted as a supra-regional Christian literary language (cf. Gzella 2019, p. 206). Particularly significant are the narrator's vivid remarks about the 'genuine' pronunciation of vernacular Aramaic (Migne 1845, p. 41; Bastiaensen and Smit 1975, p. 104) with its fricatives (if that is what *stridor* means), gutturals (*aspiratio*) and typical expressions (*idioma*

aliquod Palaestini eloquii). Since this latter passage is rendered considerably less precisely and vividly in the Greek (see the passages in question in Strout 1943, p. 367), one may suppose that the translator did not exhibit the same interest in the distinctive features of Palestinian Aramaic as the subtle philologist Jerome himself. As a consequence, it seems a bit more likely that the original Latin text already read **Barech mari* instead of *Barech*, but that question chiefly pertains to the transmission of the Greek and the Latin text and goes beyond the scope of the present article. For our purposes it is sufficient to conclude that the Aramaic elements in Jerome's Life of St. Hilarion clearly derive from Palestinian Aramaic.

More specifically, the Western Aramaic dialects, to which the Palestinian vernaculars belong, shortened word-medial /rr/ as in the factitive-stem imperative /barre̱k/ 'bless!' to /r/ some time between 150 BC and 120 AD (Beyer 1984, p. 122, 2004, p. 56), just as in Babylonian Aramaic, but contrary to the early pronunciation of Classical Syriac. At the same time, they consistently preserved the etymological */-ī/ in the first-person singular possessive suffix 'mine', lost in Syriac, due to a secondary stress-shift (Beyer 1984, p. 144, with the addition in id. 2004, p. 63; Gzella 2015, p. 288). The Greek translation of the Life thus adequately reproduces /mārī/ 'my lord', which, as opposed to its Syriac counterpart /mār/, is completely normal in Palestinian Aramaic, Jewish and Christian alike, and is also amply attested in everyday usage as well as in religious discourse (see the survey of the evidence in Beyer 1984, p. 630, 2004, p. 235). With this slight modification, the Aramaic origin of *нарехъ мари* has been established beyond any reasonable doubt: it is based on transparent and historically plausible Aramaic forms, it fully corresponds to the known sociolinguistic context in which the underlying original wording was coined, and its path of transmission into Slavic can be traced throughout its various stages, from Latin via Greek into Church Slavonic. Since both *нарехъ* and, especially, *мари* reflect Palestinian Aramaic and are thus affiliated with a dialect cluster that was marginalized fairly quickly after the eighth century, a connection with the Life is ultimately the most convincing explanation.[14]

Finally, in view of the new findings we would like to emphasize that we already indicated that it is "most probable" that the handwriting of the two instances of *нарехъ мари* is the same as *ефремъ сѵрин*[ъ] (Gippius et al. 2012, p. 281). There was no hard evidence to substantiate our claim, which merely remained a hypothesis based on the available data. However, we now have more data and it seems that an identification of both handwritings has become less plausible.

[14] Alternatively, one might argue that the attestation of *нарехъ мари* on the walls of Novgorod's St. Sophia is an independent instance of the greeting formula without any connection to the Life of St. Hilarion. Note that the inscription is located near another greeting formula, viz. Cyrillic *о херетис*[*мос*], which is Greek ὁ χερετισμός (instead of χαιρετισμός) 'greeting' (Vinogradov 2013, pp. 101–102). This might suggest that *нарехъ мари* was also a fixed 'foreign' phrase that was known to the scribe solely from hearsay, i.e. on the basis of some vague and inaccurate linguistic knowledge. This scenario seems less plausible, especially because there is no evidence that *нарехъ мари* in its Palestinian Aramaic form was ever used as some sort of liturgical or otherwise common formula.

References

Bastiaensen, A. A. R., & Smit, J. W. (Eds.) (1975). *Vita di Martino. Vita di Ilarione. In memoria di Paola* (Vite dei Santi, *4*). Milano.

Beyer, K. (1984–2004). *Die aramäischen Texte vom Toten Meer* (Vols. 1–3). Göttingen.

Eldar, I. (2013). Ashkenazi Pronunciation Tradition: Medieval. In G. Kahn (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Hebrew language and linguistics. Vol. 1: A–F* (pp. 185–192). Leiden, Boston.

Ewald, M. L. (1952). Life of St. Hilarion by St. Jerome. In R. J. Ferrari (Ed.), *Early christian biographies* (The fathers of the church. A new translation, *15*, pp. 239–280). Washington, D.C.

Franklin, S. (2002). *Writing, society and culture in Early Rus, c. 950–1300*. Cambridge.

Gippius, A. A. (2018). An eleventh-century poetic divination from St. Sophia's, Novgorod. *The Russian Review*, *77*, 183–199.

Gippius, A. A., Gzella, H., Mikheev, S. M., & Schaeken, J. (2012). The oldest traces of Semitic (Hebrew and Syriac) in early Rus': two inscriptions in the St. Sophia Cathedral in Novgorod. *Russian Linguistics*, *36*(3), 271–284.

Gippius, A. A., & Mixeev, S. M. (2013). O podgotovke Svoda nadpisej-graffiti Novgorodskogo Sofijskogo sobora. In A. M. Moldovan (Ed.), *Pis'mennost', literatura, fol'klor slavjanskix narodov. Istorija slavistiki. XV Meždunarodnyj s"ezd slavistov. Minsk, 20–27 avgusta 2013 g. Doklady Rossijskoj delegacii* (pp. 152–179). Moskva.

Griščenko, A. I. (2015). S lista ili na slux? (Zametki o dvux bibleizmax-gapaksax v slavjano-russkoj knižnosti). *Palaeoslavica*, *23*(2), 303–313.

Griščenko, A. I. (2018). Nazvanija evrejskix mesjacev v srednevekovoj slavjano-russkoj knižnosti: perevody s grečeskogo i neposredstvennye zaimstvovanija iz semitskix istočnikov. *Die Welt der Slaven*, *63*(2), 189–214.

Gruber, Y. (2013). Russia. In G. Kahn (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Hebrew language and linguistics. Vol. 3: P–Z* (pp. 434–441). Leiden, Boston.

Gzella, H. (2015). *A cultural history of Aramaic. From the beginnings to the advent of Islam* (Handbook of Oriental Studies. Handbuch der Orientalistik. Section 1. The Near and Middle East, *3*). Leiden, Boston.

Gzella, H. (2019). The Syriac language in the context of the Semitic languages. In D. King (Ed.), *The Syriac world* (pp. 205–221). London, New York.

Hill, B. S. (2016). Judeo-Slavic. In L. Kahn & A. D. Rubin (Eds.), *Handbook of Jewish languages* (Brill's Handbooks in Linguistics, *2*, pp. 599–617). Leiden, Boston.

Holton, D., Horrocks, G., Janssen, M., Lendari, T., Manolessou, I., & Toufexis, N. (2019). *The Cambridge grammar of medieval and early modern Greek. Vol. 1: General introduction and phonology*. Cambridge. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781316632840.

Kurz, J. (Ed.) (1965). *Slovník jazyka staroslověnského*. Praha.

Kuzidova-Karadzhinova, I. (2012). Observations on the Old Bulgarian translation of the Vita Sancti Hilarionis by Jerome the Blessed. *Slavia*, *81*(2), 167–178.

Mareš, F. V. (Ed.) (1997). *Psalterii Sinaitici pars nova (monasterii s. Catharinae codex slav. 2/N)*. Wien.

McNeil, M. D. (1943). The Latin manuscript tradition of the *Vita Sancti Hilarionis*. In W. A. Oldfather (Ed.), *Studies in the text tradition of St. Jerome's* Vitae patrum (pp. 251–305). Urbana.

Medynceva, A. A. (1978). *Drevnerusskie nadpisi novgorodskogo Sofijskogo sobora XI–XIV veka*. Moskva.

Migne, J.-P. (1845). *Patrologiae cursus completus. Series prima. Patrologiae tomus XXIII*. Parisiis.

Papadopoulos-Kerameus, A. (1898). *Analekta hierosolymitikēs stachyologias, 5*. Petroupolis.

Rajnxart, J. (2015). Drevnerusskij antiiudejskij traktat, ego grečeskij original i problema ego proisxoždenija. In A. M. Moldovan & P. V. Petruxin (Eds.), *Trudy Instituta russkogo jazyka im. V. V. Vinogradova. Vypusk 5: Lingvističeskoe istočnikovedenie i istorija russkogo jazyka* (pp. 289–332). Moskva.

Ščepkin, V. N. (1902). Novgorodskija nadpisi Graffiti, s 9 fototipičeskimi tablicami. In V. K. Trutovskij (Ed.), *Drevnosti. Trudy Imperatorskago moskovskago arxeologičeskago obščestva 19/3* (pp. 26–46). Moskva.

Schaeken, J. (2019). *Voices on birchbark. Everyday communication in medieval Russia* (Studies in Slavic and General Linguistics, *43*). Leiden, Boston.

Stern, D. (2008). *Incipitarium liturgischer Hymnen in ostslavischen Handschriften des 11. bis 13. Jahrhunderts. Teil I* (Patristica Slavica, *16*, 1). Paderborn.

Strout, R. F. (1943). The Greek Versions of Jerome's *Vita Sancti Hilarionis*. In W. A. Oldfather (Ed.), *Studies in the text tradition of St. Jerome's* Vitae patrum (pp. 306–448). Urbana.

Šul'gina, Ė. V. (2007). Kodikologičeskoe i paleografičeskoe opisanie novgorodskix služebnyx pevčeskix Minej. In H. Rothe & D. Christians (Eds.), *Liturgische Hymnen nach byzantinischem Ritus bei den Slaven in ältester Zeit. Beiträge einer internationalen Tagung. Bonn 7.–10. Juni 2005* (pp. 104–115). Paderborn.

Temčin, S. Ju. (2013a). Grečeskij gebraizm 'kunironi' v graffito XI v. novgorodskoj Sofii i cerkovnoslavjanskaja gimnografija. In E. A. Mel'nikova (Ed.), *Vostočnaja Evropa v drevnosti i srednevekov'e. Ėkonomičeskie osnovy formirovanija gosudarstva v drevnosti i srednevekov'e. XXV Čtenija pamjati člena-korrespondenta AN SSSR V. T. Pašuto i člena-korrespondenta AN SSSR A. P. Novosel'ceva. Moskva, 17–19 aprelja 2013 z.: Materialy konferencii* (pp. 254–259). Moskva.

Temčin, S. Ju. (2013b). Upominanie Efrema Sirina v graffito XI veka novgorodskoj Sofii. In A. D. Duličenko (Ed.), *Slavistika v Estonii i za ee predelami* (Acta Slavica Estonica, *III*. Slavica Tartuensia, *X*, pp. 101–108). Tartu.

Temčin, S. Ju. (2015). Sirijskaja fraza 'parexъ mari' v graffito XI v. novgorodskoj Sofii i cerkovnoslavjanskij perevod Ieronimova Žitija Ilariona Velikogo. In E. A. Mel'nikova (Ed.), *Vostočnaja Evropa v drevnosti i srednevekov'e. Gosudarstvennaja territorija kak faktor politogeneza. XXVII Čtenija pamjati člena-korrespondenta AN SSSR Vladimira Terent'eviča Pašuto. Moskva, 15–17 aprelja 2015 g. Materialy konferencii* (pp. 259–264). Moskva.

Valk, S. N. (Ed.) (1949). *Gramoty Velikogo Novgoroda i Pskova*. Moskva, Leningrad.

Vinogradov, A. Ju. (2013). Zametki o grečeskix graffiti v drevnerusskix xramax. *Voprosy ėpigrafiki*, *7*(2), 89–105.

VMČ: *Velikija Minei Četii, sobrannye vserossijskim mitropolitom Makariem. Oktjabr'. Dni 19–31*. Sankt-peterburg 1880.

Zaliznjak, A. A. (2004). *Drevnenovgorodskij dialekt. Vtoroe izdanie, pererabotannoe s učetom materiala naxodok 1995–2003 gg*. Moskva.