

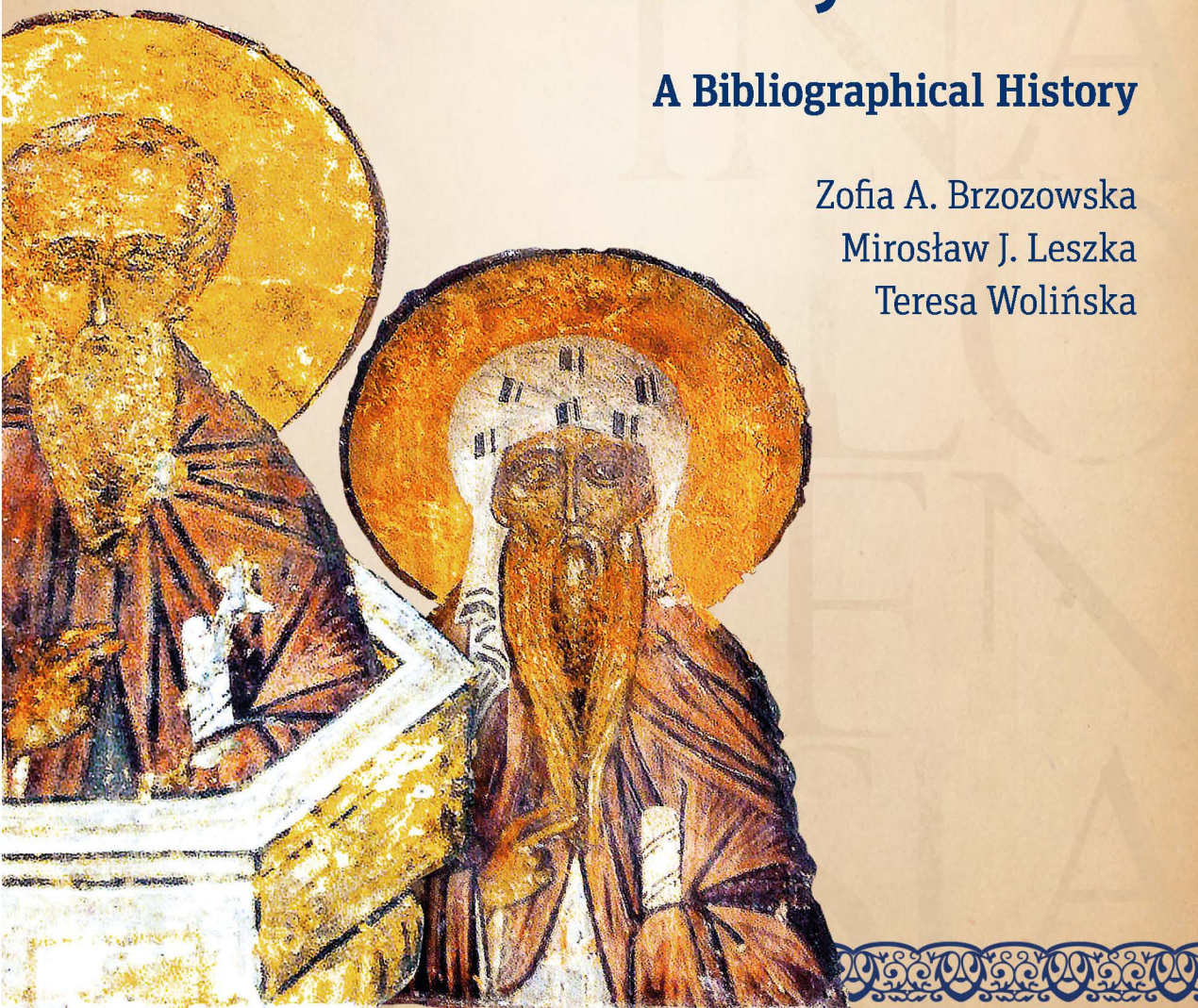
BYZANTINA LODZIENSIA

XLI

Muhammad and the Origin of Islam in the Byzantine-Slavic Literary Context

A Bibliographical History

Zofia A. Brzozowska
Miroslaw J. Leszka
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Teresa Wolińska

Translated by

Katarzyna Gucio

(VI, IX, XII, XIV, XX, XXV, XXVII, XXXV)

Katarzyna Szuster-Tardi

(Introduction, I-V, VII-VIII, X-XI, XIII, XV-XIX, XXI-XXIV, XXVI,
XXVIII-XXXIV, XXXVI-XXXIX)



Łódź 2020

Zofia A. Brzozowska
University of Łódź, Faculty of Philology, Department of Slavic Studies
171/173 Pomorska St., 90-236 Łódź (Poland)
slawistyka@uni.lodz.pl

Mirosław J. Leszka, Teresa Wolińska
University of Łódź, Faculty of Philosophy and History
Institute of History, Department of Byzantine History
27a Kamińskiego St., 90-219 Łódź (Poland)
bizancjum@uni.lodz.pl

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Introduction



Several decades ago, Dmitri S. Lihachev (1906–1999) noted that the culture of the Arabs and the dawn of Islam were issues that did not attract much attention from Old Rus' authors¹. The above-mentioned assessment, expressed by one of the most eminent experts in medieval Rus' literature, probably contributed to the fact that the Muslim theme, although constantly present in sources of East Slavic provenance, rarely drew the interest of researchers and, so far, has been considerably less known than, for example, the polemical works directed against the followers of Judaism or Western (Latin) Christianity, which had been created in this area².

¹ Д.С. Лихачев, *Поэтика древнерусской литературы*, Москва 1979, р. 10–14.

² Among the studies that offer a comprehensive view of the image of Islam in the Old Rus' literature, it is worth mentioning: И.Ю. Крачковский, *Предистория русской арабистики. Киевская и Московская Русь*, [in:] *Избранные сочинения*, vol. V, Москва–Ленинград 1958, р. 13–31; М. Ватуску, *Islam and Russian Mediaeval Culture*, “Die Welt des Islams. New Series” 26.1/4, 1986, р. 1–27; idem, *Muscovy and Islam. Irreconcilable Strategy, Pragmatic Tactics*, “Saeculum. Jahrbuch für Universalgeschichte” 39, 1988, р. 63–81; idem, *Россия и ислам*, vol. I, Москва 2003; Р. Вушкович, *Orthodoxy and Islam in Russia 988–1725*, [in:] *Religion und Integration im Moskau-er Russland. Konzepte und Praktiken, Potentiale und Grenzen 14.–17. Jahrhundert*, ed. L. Steindorff, Wiesbaden 2010, р. 117–143. Another noteworthy example are the works by Yuri Maksimov, which focus primarily on Byzantine anti-Muslim texts, while also referring to the issue of their reception in the writings of Orthodox Slavs in the Middle Ages, *inter alia*: Ю.В. Максимов, *Преподобный Иоанн Дамаскин об исламе*,

Moreover, Church Slavic texts usually constitute a side topic in studies on anti-Muslim polemics in the Middle Ages, conducted mainly on the basis of Greek and Latin sources, or written in the languages of the Christian East, including Syriac, Coptic, Arabic or Armenian. For example, in the multi-volume study *Christian–Muslim Relations. A Bibliographical History*, the Slavic tradition, both in its southern (Balkan) and eastern (Rus') dimensions, has been taken into account only marginally³.

This monograph aims to fill this historiographic gap. Therefore, on its pages, we will present those Old Rus' texts whose authors referred to the issue of the birth of Islam, and presented – or at least, briefly outlined – the profile of its creator, the prophet Muhammad, and the essence of his teachings, or attempted to describe the historical circumstances in which he operated, and the Arabian environment from which he originated. We have decided to include the sources existing in Rus' before the mid-16th century, when, along with the accession of the Kazan and Astrakhan Khanates to the Moscow state, the perception of the followers of Islam by East Slavic authors changed fundamentally, and their interest in Muslim subjects grew, creating a completely new cultural dynamic.

In our study, we consciously do not distinguish between the so-called translation and original literature – this is justified by the specificity of the source material, for which such a division would be artificial. In the case of the Old Rus' discourse on Islam, we deal with a certain continuum: compilation texts were created in Rus' on the basis of foreign works translated into (Old) Church Slavic, which, in turn, were a source of inspiration for native authors. At this point, it should also be emphasized that in the period of interest to us (11th–mid-16th centuries), it was Greek translations that were dominant in the area of *Slavia Orthodoxa*. The

“Дамаскин” 4(16), 2010, p. 22–31; i d e m, *Византийцы и Коран*, 2011, halkidon2006.orthodoxu.ru/ [24.07.2020]; i d e m, *Византийские сочинения об исламе*, Москва 2012.

³ To the Medieval polemical texts were dedicated the following volumes: *Christian–Muslim Relations. A Bibliographical History*, vol. I, 600–900, eds. D. T h o m a s, B. R o g g e m a, Leiden–Boston 2009; vol. II, 900–1050, eds. D. T h o m a s, A. M a l l e t t, Leiden–Boston 2010; vol. III, 1050–1200, eds. D. T h o m a s, A. M a l l e t t, Leiden–Boston 2011; vol. IV, 1200–1350, eds. D. T h o m a s, A. M a l l e t t, Leiden–Boston 2012; vol. V, 1350–1500, ed. D. T h o m a s, A. M a l l e t t, Leiden–Boston 2013.

way Muhammad and Islam were perceived was, therefore, shaped under the overwhelming influence of Byzantine authors – the works originally written in other languages usually found their way into the writings of Orthodox Slavs through their Greek translations. This applied both to Arabic texts (such as fragments of the *Quran*), Syriac (e.g. *The Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*) and Latin (e.g. Riccoldo da Monte Croce's *Contra legem Sarracenorum*) ones. For this reason, on the pages of this book, we devote so much attention to Byzantine literature: usually, we discuss the place a given work holds in the culture of the Eastern Empire, which is a starting point to reflect on its reception on the Slavic territory. Because a significant part – if not the vast majority – of the texts presented here was translated into (Old) Church Slavic in the Balkans (in Bulgaria, Serbia, on Mount Athos or in Slavic monastic circles in the territory of the empire), only then to arrive in Rus', the narrative on Islam told by Old Rus' authors cannot be studied in isolation from the trends noticeable in the writings of their civilizational brethren from Southeastern Europe (Bulgarians and Serbs).

Although we have included texts representing a number of different literary genres (apart from liturgical poetry) – from historiographic works, through polemical treatises, homiletics, epistolography and itineraries, to hagiography and apocalyptic works – this monograph includes only those relics that were certainly known in Rus', or, more broadly, in the area of *Slavia Orthodoxa*. In the case of sources that exist in different versions, only those redactions that had been translated into (Old) Church Slavic were discussed. A Byzantinist, therefore, may notice a certain fragmentary nature to this selection: the sources we present will not include, for instance, important writings in the Eastern Christian anti-Muslim discourse such as the works by Theodore Abu Qurrah (c. 750–c. 825), Nicetas of Byzantium (9th century) or Bartholomew of Edessa (13th century). However, it should be remembered that the medieval Slavic tradition was characterized by considerable syncretism; not all Byzantine works were translated into (Old) Church Slavic, and the selection criteria and factors determining the dissemination of individual texts are not always entirely clear to the contemporary researcher. On the other hand,

the literature of the *Slavia Orthodoxa* area, although dependent on Byzantine literature, is an important link in the study on numerous phenomena in medieval culture (including the processes of shaping the stereotypical image of Islam and its founder in the minds of Eastern Europeans). There are examples of sources that have survived to this day only in the Slavic language version (the oldest *Apocalypse of Daniel*, written in Sicily between 827–829). The existing Church Slavic copies of some Byzantine works (e.g. the chronicle of George the Monk – Hamartolus) often present a version of a given work that is much closer to a protograph than the preserved Greek manuscripts.

The thematic axis of this work is the biography of Muhammad and the circumstances of the birth of Islam. Therefore, we have chosen those texts in which the person of the Muslim prophet appears, if only occasionally (or is a symbolic figure, e.g. the embodiment of evil in apocalyptic works). We have taken into account the sources relating to Islam, as well as showing the environment in which this religion was formed. Hence, the pages of this monograph contain the texts describing (or mentioning) the history of the Arabs – both from the inland of the peninsula and the Byzantine–Persian border, at the end of the pre-Muslim era (6th century), during Muhammad's life and in the first decades after his death, when the followers of Islam made significant territorial annexations, also at the expense of the Christian empire (until the beginning of the 8th century). However, what remained outside the scope of our studies are the sources discussing later Arab history (e.g. *The Martyrdom of the Forty-two martyrs of Amorion*, who died in the mid-9th century) or the culture of other Muslim peoples (including the Turks, Volga-Kama Bulgars, and Mongols/Tatars), which probably existed in relatively large numbers, both in Rus' and in the Balkans.

As our book is addressed not only to Palaeoslavists and Byzantine scholars, but also to a wide range of researchers dealing with the issues of the confrontation and coexistence of cultures and the Christian-Muslim dialogue throughout history, we have made every effort to ensure that navigating one's way through the presented material is as simple as possible. Therefore, we have included references to the existing editions of the sources, including their publications within the classic collections:

Patrologia Graeca (PG), *Patrologia Latina* (PL), and *Patrologia Orientalis* (PO). Hagiographic works, characterized by considerable variability, have been organized based on their systematization: *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Graeca*, BHG (the Greek variants)⁴, *Bibliotheca hagiographica balcano-slavica* (the Balkan material)⁵ and the Oleg V. Tvorogov's catalog (the Rus' material)⁶. The Church Slavonic texts that have not been published so far have been identified by us within the manuscripts (for each of them, at least one copy has been found and personally examined), followed by the titles and incipits of the sources in the original version.

* * *

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* * *

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⁴ *Bibliotheca hagiographica graeca*, ed. F. Halckin, vol. I–III, Bruxelles 1957 [=Bruxelles 1986].

⁵ К. Ивановна, *Bibliotheca hagiographica balcano-slavica*, София 2008.

⁶ О.В. Творогов, *Переводные жития в русской книжности XI–XV вв. Каталог*, Москва–Санкт-Петербург 2008.

List of Abbreviations



Angel.	Angelica Library (Biblioteca Angelica) in Rome
BA	Ambrosian Library (Biblioteca Ambrosiana) in Milan
BAR	Romanian Academy Library (Biblioteca Academiei Romane) in Bucharest
BAV	Vatican Apostolic Library (Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana) in Rome
BBB	Burgerbibliothek of Berne
BCF	Biblioteca Comunale Forteguerriana in Pistoia
BLL	British Library in London
BM	Library of Saint Mark (Biblioteca Marciana) in Venice
BML	Laurentian Library (Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana) in Florence
BNCF	National Central Library of Florence (Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze)
BNF	National Library of France (Bibliothèque Nationale de France) in Paris
BNU	National University Library (Biblioteca nazionale universitaria) in Turin
Bod.	Bodleian Library in Oxford
BOZ	Central Archives of Historical Records, Zamoyskis' Archive (Archiwum Główne Akt Dawnych, Biblioteka Ordynacji Zamojskiej) in Warsaw
BSB	Bavarian State Library (Bayerische Staatsbibliothek) in Munich
BU	Belgrade University Library (Univerzitetska biblioteka u Beogradu)
CRL	Cadbury Research Library in Birmingham
Esc.	Library of the Royal Site of San Lorenzo de El Escorial (Real Biblioteca del Monasterio de San Lorenzo de El Escorial)
HAB	Herzog August Library (Herzog August Bibliothek) in Wolfenbüttel
HAZU	Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts (Hrvatska akademija znanosti i umjetnosti) in Zagreb

ML	Malatestiana Library (Biblioteca Malatestiana) in Cesena
MSPC	Museum of the Serbian Orthodox Church (Muzej Srpske pravoslavne crkve) in Belgrade
NBS	National Library of Serbia (Narodna biblioteka Srbije) in Belgrade
NLG	National Library of Greece (Εθνική Βιβλιοθήκη) in Athens
ÖNB	Austrian National Library (Österreichische Nationalbibliothek) in Vienna
PBS	Library of Serbian Patriarchate (Biblioteka Srpske patrijaršije) in Belgrade
SBB	Berlin State Library (Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin)
SLUB	Saxon State and University Library (Sächsische Landesbibliothek – Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek) in Dresden
Vallic.	Vallicellian Library (Biblioteca Vallicelliana) in Rome
WLB	State Library of Württemberg (Württembergische Landesbibliothek) in Stuttgart

* * *

БАН	Library of the Russian Academy of Sciences (Библиотека Российской академии наук) in St. Petersburg
ГИМ	State Historical Museum (Государственный исторический музей) in Moscow
ИРАИ РАН	Institute of Russian Literature, Russian Academy of Sciences (Институт русской литературы Российской академии наук) in St. Petersburg
НБКМ	‘S.S. Cyril and Methodius’ National Library (Национална библиотека “Св. Св. Кирил и Методий”) in Sofia
ОГНБ	Odessa National Scientific Library (Одеська національна наукова бібліотека)
РГБ	Russian State Library (Российская государственная библиотека) in Moscow
РГАДА	Russian State Archive of Ancient Acts (Российский государственный архив древних актов) in Moscow
РНБ	National Library of Russia (Российская национальная библиотека) in St. Petersburg



I

Ammonius, *Relatio on the Slaughter of the Monks of Sinai and Rhaithou*



(BHG 1300)

Date: between the 4th and 6th centuries

Original language: Coptic (?) or Greek

Slavic Translation: before the 14th century, Balkans (?)

Nothing is known about the author of *Relatio*. It is uncertain whether his name was Ammonius. In *Relatio*, he describes himself as a monk from Egypt, who visits Mount Sinai as a pilgrim. His native community was Canobus (cap. 41), but after returning from Sinai, he settled in a small community near Memphis (cap. 41). There, he made notes of events that he had experienced and had been relayed to him. The final fragments of his text, known as *Relatio*, were supposedly added by another person. They indicate that the notes in Coptic were in the possession of an anchorite from Naukratis [now Kum Ga'if, approx. 83 km south-east of Alexandria], where they were found by a priest named John, who translated them into Greek (cap. 42). The Coptic version has not been preserved (if it existed at all). *Relatio* has been translated into many languages, including Syrian, Aramaic, Arabic and Georgian (from Arabic). There is also a Church Slavic translation.

Ammonius' *Relatio* is a hagiographic text. Its dating is problematic. Researchers are divided into the proponents of its early dating (according to them, *Relatio* is an authentic document created at the end of the 4th or

beginning of the 5th century) and the supporters of a thesis that it was produced in the mid-6th century. What lends weight to the first view are the details consistent with the information provided by other sources (the persecution of the Alexandrian bishop named Peter, a monk named Moses who converted a number of Pharanites or the Saracen invasion of Sinai after the death of their *phylarch*). However, other elements match more the realities of the 6th century (the precision of monastic terms, “fortifications” or “forts” on Mount Sinai and in Rhaithou, 600 archers in Pharan). There are reasons to suspect that Ammonius’ *Relatio* contains two different martyr traditions, collected in one narrative by a pilgrim traveling in peace named Ammonius. Numerous scholars believe that this text was fabricated by monks on Mount Sinai in the 6th century.

Ammonius’ *Relatio* has been preserved in six languages: Greek, Aramaic (in the Christian-Palestinian variant), Syrian, Arabic, Georgian and Church Slavic. The source was circulated in two different redactions. The first is represented by the *Christian Palestinian Aramaic* (CPA) palimpsest manuscript, the second by Greek manuscripts, in particular, Sinaiticus Graecus 519 (10th century, fragmentary). These two different redactions are also reflected in the Arabic tradition. Another Greek manuscripts: Sinaiticus Graecus 267 (14th century); Sinaiticus Graecus 534. Syriac manuscripts: BAV, Syr. 623 (9th century); BL, Add. 14 645 (dated 936). Arabic manuscripts: BLL, Or. 5019 (11th century); Sinaiticus Arabicus 542 (9th century); Sinaiticus Arabicus 557 (13th century); Sinaiticus Arabicus, NF Parchment 1 (9th century); Sinaiticus Arabicus, NF Parchment 35, 6; Sinaiticus Arabicus 400 (13th century); Sinaiticus Arabicus 401 (13th century); Sinaiticus Arabicus 423 (dated 1623). Georgian manuscripts: *Sinai Polykephalon*, copied at Mar Sabas in 864; Ath. 57 (10th–11th centuries); Ath. 8 (10th century).

There is no complete edition yet that would include all versions. Until recently, the most famous version of Ammonius’ *Relatio* was the *Christian Palestinian Aramaic* (CPA) redaction, preserved in a palimpsest manuscript, which Agnes Smith Lewis edited and translated into English in 1912. Although Sinaiticus Graecus 519 is longer, more detailed and more terminologically precise than *Christian Palestinian Aramaic*, some

discrepancies suggest not only that these manuscripts represent different redactions, but also that *Christian Palestinian Aramaic* is earlier than Sinaiticus Graecus 519 (although Pierre-Louis Gatier thinks differently). Nevertheless, Sinaiticus Graecus 519 remains vital in complementing Ammonius' story, because the CPA manuscript misses several pages. Apart from the above-mentioned edition of Agnes Smith Lewis, the *Christian Palestinian Aramaic* redaction has been published in a new edition developed by C. Müller-Kessler and M. Sokoloff.

The Greek redaction, known thanks to the 17th-century edition of F. Combefis, is currently available in Modern Greek translation, in the edition of D.G. Tsames and K.G. Katsanes. One of the Arabic manuscripts and the Georgian version derived from it were published by R.G. Gvaramia. An edition of two Syrian manuscripts, studied by M.-J. Pierre, is in preparation. The Church Slavic version was published by I. Pomjalovskij as early as 1890, based on the manuscript of РГБ, 173.І.45. It included a list of differences (omissions of the Slavic translator) in relation to the Greek text. Although we have editions of individual versions of *Relatio*, there is not one that would include both redactions and most manuscripts. Daniel F. Caner pointed out the significant discrepancies between the edition of Tsames–Katsanes and the CPA as well as Syrian and Arab redactions. Fortunately, the storyline remains essentially intact.

Slavic Translation

There is a comprehensive translation of Ammonius' *Relatio* into Church Slavic (Повѣсть Яммонна мниха о оубиенныхъ стхъ ѿца въ Синаи и Райѡу). It must have been produced before the 14th century, because the oldest preserved copies of the discussed text come from this century. Its publisher, I. Pomjalovskij, considered the manuscript РГБ, 173.І.45, fol. 79d–90d (currently stored in the Russian State Library in Moscow) as the most representative of them. On its pages, Ammonius' account was placed adjacent to another hagiographic work, which centers on Byzantine-Arab contacts, i.e. *The Life of St. Theodore of Edessa* (XXVIII).

It appears that the author of the manuscript intentionally combined these two texts as both exhibit the motif of a threat to the Eastern Christians on the part of the Saracens.

The translation was probably based on the Greek text and is relatively faithful to its original. The translator employed only slight shortcuts, leaving out individual phrases, sometimes longer, one or two-sentence fragments, usually containing information that was either illegible or irrelevant for a reader unfamiliar with the specifics of the eastern borderland of the Byzantine Empire – the later Slavic recipient. For example: quite consistently, he eliminated the names of Arab tribes in the text, replacing such terms as the *Blemmyes* or *Moors* with the term barbarians (ВАРВАРИ).

Given the fact that the discussed work appears both in numerous South Slavic manuscripts (Zograph Monastery, Athos, № 107, fol. 396'–408; BAR, № 150, fol. 129–140'; BAR, № 305, fol. 89'–101'; Rila Monastery, Bulgaria, № 2/22, fol. 345–358'; Dragomirna Monastery, Romania, № 684, fol. 185–198; PBS, № 282, fol. 122–136; MSPC, № 139, fol. 252'–267'; Hilandar Monastery, Athos, № 443, fol. 251–267; Pljevlja Monastery in Montenegro, № 71, fol. 69–90) as well as Rus' manuscripts, it can be assumed that it was first produced in the Balkans, and then – as a result of a lively cultural exchange in the area of *Slavia Orthodoxa* in the 14th century – it came to Rus'.

The Old Rus' manuscript tradition of Ammonius' *Relatio* was very diverse. This text appeared both within the *miscellanea* type manuscripts (РГБ, 304.I.758, fol. 213–232' – from the beginning of the 15th century; РГБ, 304.I.777, fol. 160–183' – from the beginning of the 16th century), as well as in the Patericons (РГБ, 304.I.701, fol. 430'–444' – 1469; РНБ, 728.1366, fol. 351'–361' – 15th century; РНБ, 728.1367, fol. 392–407 – 16th century) and in the so-called Torzhestvenniki (*Торжественники*: РНБ, Сол. Анз. 83/1448, fol. 130–143 – from the end of the 15th century; РГБ, 37.411, fol. 176–187' – from the 15th–16th centuries). It can also be found on the pages of the Old Rus' Menaion Reader (*Четьи-Минеи*) from the 15th–16th centuries – the books containing a selection of hagiographic texts, intended for personal reading and arranged according to the order of the liturgical year of the Eastern Church – in the January volume,

on 14.03 (РГБ, 173.I.91, fol. 348^v–363 – from 1480–1520; РГБ, 299.712, fol. 163^v–181 – from the end of the 15th century / the third quarter of the 16th century). In the mid-16th century, the discussed work was also included in the so-called Great Menaion Reader (*Великие Четвы-Минеи*) by metropolitan Macarius (1542–1563): it was placed in the January volume, on 14.01 (ГИМ, Син. 990, fol. 501^v–507^v; ГИМ, Син. 178, fol. 622–629^v).

The Arabs

During Ammonius' pilgrimage, barbarians supposedly raided two different monastic groups, which he described in his *Relatio*. The first was a "Saracen" attack on the monks on Mount Sinai, the second, the "Blemmyes" assaulting the monks in Rhaithou. Both allegedly happened on the same day and the same number of monks (40) were killed.

Ammonius claims that he had witnessed the first attack and was told about the latter. It is surprising, therefore, that the part of the story describing the Saracen invasion of Mount Sinai is much shorter and far less detailed than the part describing the raid on Rhaithou. It would have been logical if Ammonius' *Relatio* had been written not by an external visitor on Mount Sinai, but by a resident of Rhaithou. The story of the attack on Sinai appears to be drawn from another, short documentary source – perhaps from a "list" of holy fathers tortured on Mount Sinai, included in *Relatio*.

According to the testimony of Ammonius, the Saracens, who assaulted the Sinai monastery in large numbers, killed everyone they found in nearby houses. They performed similar slaughters in Getrambe as well as in Horeb, Kodar and other places near the Holy Mountain. The attackers slew everyone within their reach. The others were saved by a miracle in the form of a great fire on the mountain top, which terrified the barbarians. The ascetics living in Rhaithou, on the other hand, perished at the hands of Black People (*Μαύροι*), the Blemmyes. It is possible that the author somehow confused the Saracens with Blemmyes, although the inhabitants of Sinai easily distinguished between the two groups.

The attack was made with the intention to loot the monastery. The Blemmyes counted on finding rich spoils there. The monks were defended against the invaders by the “Ishmaelites” (Ἰσμαηλίται). Ammonius used this term in reference to the Pharaites due to their conversion to Christianity.

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