Slavonic Apocrypha: the main problems with their textual history (a philological perspective)

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- On one hand, Slavonic Apocrypha share the same characteristics with other Old Slavonic Literature. But on the other, they have their own peculiarities in terms of the process of translating, editing and copying the text during its existence in Slavonic version.

- Consequently, while some of the problems of their textual history might be common to the rest of the Slavonic Translated Literature, others are peculiar to themselves alone.

- The first problem we have to tackle when dealing with a Slavonic Old Testament Apocryphon is what we call in Russian *археографическая работа*: we have to discover all the copies we have of the text in question.

- The problem is that the text is normally part of a codex, a collection of texts: those collections may be Chronographs or Collections of Old Testament Texts, or Collections of texts of a different nature. And what is even more difficult, is that we need to find all the fragments of the Apocryphon we are studying. These fragments can be very short and may have been included in different texts, or in manuscripts of a composite nature.

- On the other hand, we can sometimes face another problem: since most of the Medieval Slavonic Texts were compilations, the Apocryphon that we are interested in might itself be of a composite nature. So we have to recognize all the parts of it and possibly the origins (sources) of each one.

- One of the important steps in reconstructing the history of an Apocryphon is to divide all the copies into the corresponding recensions and to define the links between the recensions.

- And here we also have certain problems. First of all: what do we understand by recension?

- Another important question is the origin of the recensions; when we talk about translated texts as Apocrypha: did the recensions appear in Slavonic or did they already exist in other language(s) (Greek, Hebrew, etc.).

- For example, referring to 2 Enoch there is a long-term discussion of this question.

- One of the most complicated areas when attempting to describe the textual history of a Slavonic translation is to determine where, when and into which Slavic dialect the translation was primarily made (and sometimes from which language, as well).

- Another series of questions that can be associated with the textual history of Slavonic Apocrypha has to do with their special nature. Given that they are translations, they prevent us from solving certain problems because of the absence of the original. And this absence of an original has made the Slavonic Apocryphon one of the important (in some cases virtually unique) pieces of evidence for this original.

- To sum up, the philological approach to the textual history of Slavonic Apocrypha seems to ask us to be extremely careful and meticulous with all the information we can glean from the text, and to try to make, as far as possible, a comprehensive/thorough analysis of all the data we have before reconstructing the textual history of the text in question and preparing its editions.