

An International Tale-Type: “The City of Babylon”

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Abstract

The oral narrative about a journey to Babylon to fetch a princely crown has motifs which are found in different cultures and different historical epochs. Variants of this tale are found in the North of Russia (Arkhangel'sk and Olonetsk provinces) Samara province, in Eastern Siberia, the Urals, and the White Sea coast in Karelia, as well as in Ukraine, Belarus, and several Western countries. The plot is extremely stable: the Tsar issues a call for a volunteer to travel to Babylon and bring back the royal purple robe, a crown, and a scepter so that the Tsar can begin his reign. A hero volunteers to get the above mentioned attributes of royal power. The city of Babylon is guarded by a huge Snake encircling it like a wall. Snakes have eaten all the citizens of Babylon and they also exist as the lower half of the Tsar maiden's body who governs Babylon. But snakes can also be signs of good as Nabuchadnezzar uses an asp-snake sword to route his enemies. It is not a Snake that kills, but sin. The role of this tale in Russian history from the 14th century is examined.

This article attempts to use written sources to help analyze the unique plot of an oral narrative about a journey to Babylon to fetch a princely crown. Individual motifs found in this plot belong to different cultures and different historical epochs. The name given to this tale, which is known as tale type SUS 485 = AA^x 485A [Barag et al. 1979] varies and is often different from the title used in this article. The name is typically assigned either according to the purpose of trip as, for example, in “Traveling for the Royal Crown” [Barag 1974: 25-27] or according to the point of destination: “Babylon-City” [Onchukov # 182], “About the State of Babylon” [Potanin # 26], “Babylonian Kingdom [Razumova et al., # 49]. In a number of instances the tale is named after the main character, the one who travels to the City of Babylon to get the royal regalia. Examples here are Fedor Kormakov (Burmakov)” [Onchukov, # 48, 181]; “Kniaz' Borsukov [Duke Borsukov]” [Onchukov, # 282];

“Borma IArzhka” [Sadovnikov, # 3; Onchukov, # 259], among others. The geographical distribution of the variants of this tale is quite broad and includes the North of Russia (Arkhangel’sk and Olonetsk provinces). The tale is also attested in the Samara province, in Eastern Siberia, the Urals, and the White Sea coast in Karelia, as well as in Ukraine, Belarus, and several Western countries.

In all known versions of the tale about the City of Babylon, the plot is extremely stable: the Tsar issues a call for a volunteer to travel to Babylon and bring back the royal purple robe, a crown, and a scepter so that the Tsar can begin his reign. A hero, who is a typically a member of the lower classes, volunteers to get the above mentioned attributes of royal power. After successfully overcoming obstacles, the hero arrives in Babylon and sees that the city is guarded by a huge Snake encircling it like a wall. When the Snake falls asleep, the hero sneaks into the city only to find that it is totally deserted: every living being has been eaten by snakes. A Tsar-Maiden (*tsar’-devitsa*) rules the City of Babylon singlehandedly and completely. She asks the hero to play chess (in some versions the game is checkers or cards) with her. This episode serves to reveal the maiden’s true identity. Something, usually a card, falls and, when the hero bends to pick it up, he notices that the lower half of the maiden’s body is snake-like [Sadovnikov, # 3]. In other variants she has the body of a human and the tail of a snake [Onchukov, # 127] or a human face but hundreds of intertwined snakes instead of legs [Onchukov, # 181]. In other words, she is “ни женщина, ни полженщины” [neither a woman, nor a half-woman] [Razumova et al., # 49].(1) The hero invariably overpowers the Tsar-Maiden and obtains the royal regalia. On his way back to his homeland, he helps the Lion defeat the Snake. In the end, the Tsar acquires the crown, purple robe, and scepter that he had requested.

“The City of Babylon” tale type appears isolated and there is no evidence of it ever blending with other tale types. The striking stability of this tale is demonstrated by the fact that it retains its main plot elements even in the most recent recordings and even in the face of the addition of numerous magic tale motifs. In one example [Onchukov, # 31], the basic structure is retained even though the Kingdom of Babylon becomes the kingdom “ten kingdoms away” and the tale acquires other magic tale elements such as having the hero wear out three pairs of iron boots, break three cast-iron walking sticks, and eat three communion breads before he arrives at his destination [Barag 1974: 25-27]. In the Ural version of the tale, a donor figure in the person of an old woman

presents the hero with a ball of yarn, a silk kerchief, and a candle which enable him to find his way and later save him from the snakes.(2)

The stability of the tale does not facilitate the understanding of its meaning, however. The allusions to the city of Babylon and the royal crown are not clear and neither is the name of tsar to whom the tale refers. The earliest recording of the tale [Sadovnikov 1884] identifies the tsar character as Ivan the Terrible, but he is not a figure who had any connection to Babylon. This article proposes an examination of a combination of historical and folkloric materials as a way to help elucidate the tale, its historical roots, and its meaning.

The oral version of the tale about the City of Babylon parallels Old East Slavic written sources recounting the same plot. Oral and written texts mutually influenced and enriched each other. What is especially intriguing is that folk and literary texts often borrowed trifling details from each other. It is these details that can help us trace the history of the narrative and understand its meaning.

Buslaev was the first to publish the Babylon narrative. His fragments of the “Повесть о посольстве в Вавилон” [Story about an Embassy to Babylon] first appeared in 1854 [Buslaev 1854]. That same year Рупин published “Сказка о Вавилонском царстве” [Tale about the Babylonian Kingdom] using a manuscript from the Rumiantsev Museum (# 374) [Рупин 1854]. Later, Рупин published “Притча о Вавилон-городе” [Legend about the City of Babylon] [Рупин 1858]. The early publications were followed by versions printed by Kostomarov [1860], Tikhonravov [1859 and 1861], Veselovskii [1876: 125-40], and Zhdanov [1891a], among others. Some of the manuscripts used in these publications, such as “Послание от Улева-царя, во крещении нареченного Василья, иже посла в Вавилон испытати” [Epistle from Tsar Leo, Called Basil in Baptism, Who Sent his Envoy to Babylon to Test Him], date to the end of the sixteenth century. Most of the published texts, however, draw on sources that date to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Old Russian written texts such as the “Story about an Embassy to Babylon,” “Legend about the City of Babylon,” and others provide details not found in the folk oral versions. Especially interesting is the information about the Babylonian Tsar Navukhodonosor (Nabuchadnezzar) and his son Basil. The texts also speak about a Great Snake which guards the city of Babylon. There is mention of two crowns, a description of how Babylon became deserted, and information about how the Russian Prince Vladimir inherited the Babylonian crown.

Examining the written sources more closely we can extract the following narrative: Artaxerxes, the greatest king of Babylon, dies. A newborn boy is found under a pine tree where he is guarded by an owl and a she-goat. The owl is named Nosor; the goat is named Akha, and the baby is called Navkhod.(3) Because the city of Babylon is without a ruler, a horn is installed above the city gates and it is decreed that, should someone pass through the city gates and cause the horn to sound, said person would become the king of Babylon. When the foundling was carried through the city gates the horn blared forth and thus Navukhodonosor (a name based on a combination of the child's name and those of his guardian owl and goat) was pronounced king. He built up the city of Babylon and greatly enhanced its beauty, reigning there for a long time. He defeated numerous enemies and the means by which he conquered them was a magic asp-snake sword. Before his death, he ordered that the sword to be walled up and kept hidden till the end of the world. His son, Leo, called Basil in baptism, inherited the kingdom. According to the “Сказание о царе Василии сыне Навуходоносора, царя вавилонского” [Story about Tsar Basil, the Son of Navukhodonosor, the King of Babylon] upon hearing about death of the great king, legions of enemies encircled Babylon [Veselovskii 1876: 131-32]. Realizing that he was impossibly outnumbered, Basil broke his father's taboo and ordered his servants to bring him the sword of Navukhodonosor. The sword immediately turned against Basil and beheaded both him and all his soldiers.

As a result, Babylon became a deserted city and what humans were left were eaten by serpents. “А во граде, что было знамя змеи, жен и детей поели и всякий скот; а что был великий Змий около града камень, и тот жив стал, свистая и рыкая. От тех же мест и до ныне царствующий Вавилон-град новый пуст стал” [And in that city, the emblem of which was a snake, snakes devoured women and children and all the cattle; and there was a huge stone (in the shape of a) snake near the city, and it became alive, and started whistling and roaring. Since that time and till the present day the royal City of Babylon has been empty] [Veselovskii 1876: 132].

The explanation that tells how the city of Babylon lost its monarch and became empty is not found in folk versions of the tale. Rather, they begin with the episode in which a tsar sends his messenger to the already ruined Babylon to retrieve royal regalia. Accounts of messengers and ambassadors can be found in Old Russian written texts as well. According to these texts, the envoys were sent to Babylon by the Greek ruler Leo

and their mission was to get him those things that belonged to Navukhodonosor the King. The chivalric “Повесть о Богатыре Булате” [Story about Bulat the Bogatyr] by Levshin belongs to this group of narratives. Here Vladimir, the Prince of the Russian land, inherits from his father lands that were devastated by “rebellious vassals”(4) and an unsuccessful war with the Tsar-Maiden.(5) Upon reaching the age of majority, Vladimir decides to be crowned by the crown of his ancestor, Rous. The Tsar-Maiden has taken this crown and the object must be returned in order to restore the “lost purity of life,” its moral principle. Only by getting the crown back will Prince Vladimir be able to revive his State. The narrative then recounts the various adventures of Prince Vladimir’s ambassador and these resemble the adventures in the Old Russian story. In the end, Prince Vladimir does get the crown and becomes an ideal sovereign, one who upholds the crown’s great legacy. The chivalric tale concludes that, as a result, the “cornelian box” (*serdolikova krabitsa*), was passed from the Babylonian king to the Greek one, and from the latter to the Russian Prince Vladimir. The ancient “crowns” of Navukhodonosor, meanwhile, became the crown, purple robe, and scepter of the Russian monarchy.

In written sources the idea of the autocracy (*edinoderzhavie*) of Moscow was formed only in the sixteenth century. “Эта идея есть не только идея Московского государства, но в то же время идея Русской земли. Таким образом, идеология старой Киевской Руси и новой – Московской сближаются, так как с этого времени самодержавная власть является уже национальной властью. Внешним образом это выразилось в том, что московский государь принимает титул царя” [This is not simply the concept of the Moscovite state, but also the idea of the Russian nation. Therefore, the ideology of old Kievan Rus’ merged with the idea of Moscovite Russia, and from that time on autocratic rule became national rule. This idea found its expression in the fact that the ruler of Moscow adopted the title of tsar] [Speranskii 1914: 409]. The concept of the Russian State developed out of the belief that Moscow was the “third Rome”, namely, “Москва имеет преемственную государственную власть не только от Византии (“второго Рима”), а через нее и от старого Рима, и даже более того, от истинных царей – древних царей Востока” [Moscow has inherited the power to rule not just from Byzantium, which used to be the “second Rome,” and not just through old Rome via Byzantine, but more importantly from the veritable tsars/caesars themselves, that is from the ancient Caesars of the East] [Ibid.].(6)

The idea of Moscow as the Third Rome was advanced by **new** literary texts, especially the chronicle compilations (*letopisnye svody*) called Polichrons (A. A. Shakhmatov's term) [Shakhmatov 1899; Tvorogov 1975; Vodolazkin 2000]. Examples include the "The Vladimir Polikhron" (*Polikhron Vladimirskii*) which begins its account in 1460 and stops in 1520 and the *Book of Generations* (*Stepennaia kniga*) which took up the historical record where the *Kievan Chronicle* left off. At the same time older manuscripts such as "Книга степенная царскаго родословия" [The Book of Generations of the Imperial Line] and the other texts were reinterpreted.

Созданная в 60-е гг. XVI в. Степенная книга представляет собой первую попытку концептуального изложения русской истории. В основу композиционного построения положен образ лестницы с золотыми ступенями, ведущей Россию и ее народ от земли на небо, от язычества к Богу. Каждая ступень этой лестницы – период правления очередного русского "самодержца". Таковыми в Степенной книге представлены русские князья от Владимира Святого до Ивана Грозного, чье правление составляет последнюю, семнадцатую ступень (ступень) золотой "лестницы" русской истории

[Created in the 1560s, the *Book of Generations* is the first attempt to conceptualize Russian history. The image of a staircase with golden steps is at the core of its compositional structure. This staircase leads Russia and her people from the earth to heaven, from paganism to the <Christian> God. Each step of the staircase is the period of rule of a single Russian "autocrat". The *Book of Generations* lists these, starting with St. Vladimir and ending with Ivan the Terrible, whose reign constituted the last, seventeenth, step of the golden "staircase" of Russian history][Sirenov 2007:3].(7)

Thus the Russian chronicle serves as a continuation of history from the fall of Constantinople and the transfer of power to Moscow (Popov 1867). These events are also recounted in the The Old Russian "Повесть о взятии Константинополя" [Tale of the Conquest of Constantinople].

As for the *Book of Generations*, it follows a genealogical scheme which views

«русского правящего "царского" рода, который в глазах составителя является потомками святого князя Владимира и первой христианки св. княгини Ольги. Отсюда становится ясным отношение составителя Степенной книги к источникам, которыми он пользовался: летописные старые источники считались им важными постольку, поскольку подтверждали главенствующую роль предков ныне царствующих князей и царей; но этого одного источника не достаточно, поэтому туда включался ряд новых памятников: легенды, отдельные сказания из других памятников, раз они служили этой заглавной цели, говорили о святых или угодивших Богу создателях Московской державы».

[... the Russian ruling royal dynasty... as heir to both St. Vladimir and the first Christian female saint, Princess Ol’ga. The attitude of the compiler of the *Genealogical Book* toward his sources is clear: he considered the old manuscripts important only to the degree that they confirm the supremacy of the ancestors of the princes and tsars in power. But a single source was not enough and so *new* ones were added: legends and stories extracted from other manuscripts, anything that advanced the compiler’s purpose and presented saints or showed the founders of the Muscovite State as pleasing to God] [Speranskii 1914: 412].

That idea that Moscow was the third Rome was also presented in narratives of a quasi-historical nature. Among them was a story about the City of Babylon which was based on international tale-type material and contained magic tale elements.(8) As Speranskii suggests, the story originally concluded with the episode where the ambassadors bring the royal regalia to Tsar Leo. This is the ending found in folktales. In the fifteenth century, however, the story acquired a particularly Russian twist: “царь греческий посылает в подарок Владимиру Мономаху, так как он “от крови царской” символы царской власти. Это должно было показать наглядно русским людям того времени, что власть московских царей унаследована с Востока [a Greek ruler sends the symbols of royal power as a gift to Vladimir Monomakh, since Vladimir is ‘of royal blood.’ This (episode) must have been intended as a message to the Russian people that the Russian tsars inherited their power from the East]” [Speranskii 1914: 416].

The transfer of a crown that appears in the tale is likely symbolic of the transfer of state power and royal might. In other words, a power “символически выраженная в образе венца, перенесена с Востока в Византию, которая становится средоточием и источником царского достоинства” [that is symbolically represented by the crown, is transferred from the East to Byzantine and becomes the focus and source of royal legitimacy] [Veselovskii 1876: 163]. The legend thus offers a convenient way of expressing power transfer [Ibid.: 164]. As far as the third element of this chain, namely the power transfer from Byzantine to Rus’, is concerned, it is of a secondary importance.

The “Повесть о князьях Володимерских” [Narrative of the Princes of the Vladimir Dynasty] can help answer another important question, namely, to which Prince Vladimir does the account refer? Is it Vladimir Vsevolodovich Monomakh or is it Vladimir Sviatoslavovich, who also received a royal title from Byzantium, conferred by a Greek ruler and the appropriate patriarchs? It was Vladimir Sviatoslavovich

who became the first person to be crowned tsar of Rus'. In his *History of Russia* Tatishchev wrote:

По сказанию о князьях Владимирских, царь греческий после поражения его войск посылает Владимиру крест, венец, бармы и иные многия дары. Греческие епископы венчают Владимира, как царя <...> Великий князь Владимир Святославич, как крестился сам и землю Русскую крестил, и царь греческий и патриарх венчали его на царство Русское [According to the Account of the Princes of the Vladimir dynasty, a Greek ruler, after the defeat of his own army, sent a cross, crown, collars, and many other gifts to Vladimir. The Greek bishops crowned Vladimir tsar... The Great Prince Vladimir Sviatoslavovich baptized the Russian land when he himself was baptized, and the Greek ruler, along with the patriarch crowned him to reign over Rus'] [Tatishchev 464-65].

It is well-known that the Chersonesos (*Korsun'*) campaign ended with the marriage of Vladimir and Rogneda, a Greek princess called Anna in baptism. Thus, the crowning of the ruler was combined with a wedding ritual.(9) "Such mixture of two types of "crowning" will not seem unusual if we keep in mind that a similar analogy can be found in literary texts such as the speech of Metropolitan Makary addressed to Ivan IV and Anastasia Romanovna after they received their wedding crowns" [Zhdanov 1891b: 350]. What we have, then, is a peculiar "historical duplication where two princes both receive crowns and royal titles from Byzantine"[Ibid.: 328]. This duplication is analogous to the coalescence of wedding "crowning" with the crowning of a ruler.

There are other similarities between the two Vladimirs. Vladimir Monomakh went to war against Caffa and returned victorious. Caffa is also mentioned in the legends about Vladimir Sviatoslavovich, and it is pictured there as a Greek city. This is undoubtedly a contamination of historical data and folk legends where various redactions of the "Tale of the Babylon City" are combined. As Zhdanov states, "in literary texts that predate the sixteenth century there is no information that could be identified as a source of any of the variants of the story in question" [Ibid.: 333]. This leads us to infer an oral source for the story about the coronation of Prince Vladimir and it is notable that oral transmission did not change the story's narrative essence.

Nonetheless, the oral legend is ambiguous and it could be both a kin and a folk legend. Kin, or dynastic, legends are those related to the sacred objects kept by the princely clan and named after the appropriate dynasty, such as the "Monomakh legends (*monomakhovy*)" or those of

the “Vladimir dynasty (*vladimirskie*)”. Folk narratives, on the other hand, exist as epic songs, oral legends, and magic tales.

It is easy to determine which of the two types of legend should be considered the source for the story about Babylon and treasures gained by Prince Vladimir. In his article, “Об утварях, приписываемых Владимиру Мономаху” [On the Regalia Ascribed to Vladimir Monomakh], Prozorovskii, working from the data he “obtained from royal wills and testaments, reached the conclusion that a dynastic or kin legend could not have been the source.” [Ibid.]. Prozorovskii’s conclusions are so well-grounded that there is no need to discuss them further. Thus we are left with the possibility of a folk origin for the stories. Zhdanov showed that:

за вычетом исторических добавок, внесенных в книжные пересказы народного предания о князе Владимире, получается некоторый эпический остаток, общий всем версиям изучаемого сказания. Содержание этого остатка представляется на первый взгляд чрезвычайно скудным: какой-то князь Владимир вел войну с греками, одолел их, получил от побежденных богатые дары. Такой рассказ остался бы загадочным обломком, лишенным исторического и литературного значения, если бы не открывалась возможность указать то эпическое целое, к которому принадлежит этот обломок, если бы не был известен целый круг поэтических сказаний, сосредоточивающихся около имени князя Владимира, - сказаний, сохранившихся и в памятниках письменности, и в произведениях народной словесности [apart from the historical additions inserted into the written retellings of the folk legend about Prince Vladimir, there are some epic elements common to all versions of the story in question. These epic elements appear sparse at first sight. They are as follows: a certain Prince Vladimir fought the Greeks; he defeated them, and received generous gifts from those he vanquished. Such a story would remain an enigmatic fragment without any historical or literary meaning if it were not readily identifiable as part of a major epic cycle, if there was not an entire set of poetic texts linked to the name of Prince Vladimir preserved in both written documents and oral folklore] [Zhdanov 1891c: 340].

Byliny (epic songs) originated in the events of the 10-11th centuries, or rather in the traces of these events which remained in folk imagination. And these events are those related to the deeds of Vladimir Sviatoslavich. Narratives from the Kievan chronicles show that the image of the “old Vladimir” had become the subject of folk epics as early as the beginning of the 12th century. He is also mentioned later, in the chronographs and the *Book of Generations*.

One question remains unanswered: why are the crown and purple robe kept in a church? A folktale [Onchukov, # 48] has it that the Prince's ambassador, Fedor Burmakov goes to a church in deserted Babylon to pray. The Mother of God reveals to him the location of the royal regalia. According other folktales, there is a chapel or church in a deserted city and that is where the desired crown is located [Sadovnikov #3; Razumova # 49].

There are many historical instances where priests helped secular authorities through their most trying ordeals. This happened when the Rome of the Caesars turned into the Rome of the Medieval Popes. It happened in Jerusalem

when the leaders of Israel wanted to console their people, to reward them for all the humiliations they had endured in the material sphere by elevating them to the highest level of spiritual life... Such tendencies and ideals added more and more of an ecclesiastical character to civic life; they advanced the interests of the church and placed priests into a position of dominance. The king was replaced by a high priest, who even inherited the purple robes and a golden crown of his predecessor [Frazer 1989: 80].

The same tendency occurred in Babylon it was destroyed and the church became the institution on which hopes for a renaissance could be placed. In the tale about Fedor Borma it was the church where Tsar Ivan Vasil'evich sent his messenger to get a scepter and crown. Borma meets Truth, a personal name in the tale, and she tells him about the fate of the Babylonian Kingdom. She recounts that there is only one church left in the destroyed city. The royal purple robe, crown, and scepter are located there and they are guarded by St. George the Dragon Slayer and Demetrius of Thessalonica. The only survivor is a girl who prays to both St. George and St. Demetrius. Fedor Borma pleads with the girl: "Save me from a worthless death and help me to get the royal crown, scepter, and crosiers from the church" [Sadovnikov #3: 251]. The girl gives him a magic carpet so that he can send the treasures to the Orthodox tsar by sea. Borma reaches Constantinople but finds there a "terrible shedding of blood," the Orthodox faith is collapsing and the Orthodox tsar is dead.

Meanwhile, Ivan the Terrible goes to war against Kazan:

И задумал царь под Казань пойти,
И Казаньскóе царьство мимоходом взять,
И Казаньскóго царя со престола снять,
Снять с ёго корону царьскую.
[And the tsar decided to go to Kazan',

And to conquer the Kazan’ Kingdom on the way,
 And to drive the Kazan’ tsar from the throne,
 [And] to take off his royal crown]
 [Putilov et al., #220. See also songs ##232, 233].

Казанское царство мимоходом взял,
 Царя Симеона под мир склонил,
 Снял я с царя порфиру царскую,
 Привёз порфиру в каменну Москву,
 Крестил я порфиру в каменной Москве,
 Эту порфиру на себя наложил,
 После этого стал Грозный царь!
 [[I] conquered the Kazan’ Kingdom along the way,
 [I] forced Tsar Simeon to accept peace,
 [I] took the purple robe off the Tsar
 [I] brought the purple robe to stone Moscow,
 I blessed the purple robe in stone Moscow,
 [I] put that purple robe on myself,
 After that [I] became the Terrible Tsar!]
 [Putilov et al., #236; also #255*].

The event of the conquest of Kazan’ that is glorified in folk songs was the first conquest of Tatar territory and one of the most significant victories in the reign of Ivan the Terrible. It was the most important event in the history of Muscovite Rus’. “История взятия Казани” [The Story of the Conquest of Kazan’] or “История о Казанском царстве” [A Story about the Kazan’ Kingdom] is recorded in the chronicles [Kuntsevich 1905] and it was certainly influenced by an earlier historical event: the conquering of Constantinople by the Turks. A mixing of these two events is evident in folk songs.

Folk songs state that “the reason Ivan the Terrible conquered Kazan’ was to take over the kingdom, that is to secure his legitimate claim to the title of tsar” [Speranskii 1917: 337]:

Порасхвастался прегрозный царь,
 Наш прегрозный сударь царь Иван Васильевич:
 Я повывел-то изменушку из Пскова,
 Ай повынес я царенья из Царяграда,
 А царя-то Перфила я под меч склонил,
 А царицы-то Елены голову срубил,
 Царскую перфила на себя одел,
 Царский костыль да себи в руки взял.
 [Our the most terrible tsar boasted,
 Our the most terrible sir, Tsar Ivan Vasil’evich [boasted]:
 I got rid of the conspiracy in Pskov,
 And I took the sovereignty from Constantinople,

I bent Tsar Perfil's head under the sword,
 And [I] beheaded Tsarina Elena,
 [I] put on the royal purple robe,
 [I] took the royal scepter in my hands]
 [Ibid., #211; see also ##206, 208, 223].

The folk song “makes a causal connection between two events: Ivan the Terrible’s ascension to the throne and his conquering of Kazan” [Speranskii 1917: 340]. It also places the origin of Ivan’s power in Byzantium. This latter fact connects the folk songs about Ivan the Terrible with the “Сказание о Вавилонском царстве” [Legend about the Kingdom of Babylon]. The perspective on a historical event

“преломленной сквозь призму идейных стремлений Московского правительства, причем средством для выражения этого преломления взята народно-поэтическая повесть о Вавилонском царстве с той же тенденцией. Если здесь мы видим некоторое искажение исторической перспективы, зато довольно точно и верно передана самая мысль, самый смысл события”.

[...is thus refracted through the prism of the ideological strivings of the Moscow government, and a poetic folk narrative about the Babylonian Kingdom became the means of accomplishing that refraction. Although we see some distortion of the historical perspective, the very thought, the very essence of the event is conveyed accurately and precisely] [Ibid.].

Tales about the City of Babylon also exhibit the attribution to the Russian Tsar Ivan the Terrible of characteristics which written texts ascribe to Byzantine emperor Leo. Thus the beginning of the tale “occurs on Byzantine soil, [while] the end, or the ending, is transferred to Rus’ and becomes linked to a known historical event, namely the conquest of Kazan” [Zhdanov 1891b: 51]. The impact of analogous “historico-literary texts that combine borrowed legends about Babylon with Russian historical events” is also evident [Ibid.: 50].

The same facts could engender different narratives. Furthermore “each of these narratives was an alloy of folk-poetic legends with assorted details suggested by literary chronicles and historical texts” [Zhdanov 1891b: 136]. The question about the origin of the Russian narratives about Babylon still remains unsolved. The possibility of South Slavic influence has been suggested [Veselovskii 1876: 141]. Such influence is difficult to prove since a Greek original of the texts does not exist and the proposition that the name Nakhod, which in Serbian means “a found person,” indicates South Slavic origin is skimpy evidence.⁽¹⁰⁾ All of this indicates that the supposition about a South Slavic origin of

Russian written texts about the Kingdom of Babylon is a supposition only.

The idea about the uniqueness of the Russian kingdom, however, could not have appeared out of nowhere. Speranskii proposed that this idea “evolved under South Slavic influence which provided not only the material for that formulation but also the very method of its adaptation to literary form” [Speranskii 1914: 419]. While elaborating on this idea, Speranskii underscored that “in the Moscovite literature of the fifteenth century, we encounter new literary and linguistic phenomena that cannot be explained as resulting from either internal evolution or the external influence of Western Rationalism. These phenomena are typical of the times and they are new, and they betray – in both form and content – their South Slavic origins” [Ibid.]. Both the second South Slavic Renaissance of the fourteenth century and the literature of the Euthemian Era (*Evfim’evskaia epokha*) “evoked a response in Muscovy only in the fifteenth century and had a significant influence on the political and ideological aspects of Moscovite literature in the fifteenth-sixteenth centuries.”(11)

New South Slavic political influence likely impacted both written texts with a “genealogical” character, including the text about Babylon, and the Russian Chronograph, the first edition of which came out in 1512 [Pypin 1881; Uspenskii 1879; Radchenko 1898; Sobolevskii 1903: 1-38]. The South Slavs thus became an intermediary between Byzantium and the Russian state, transmitting to Russia the elements of eleventh through thirteenth century Byzantine culture, often in inaccurate and truncated form.

The “historical” events of both folk narrative and Old Russian written text about the Kingdom of Babylon are decorated by fantastic, magic tale motifs. The narratives about the ambassadors travelling to Babylon tell that the Babylonian king wants a new and marvelous city built with seven walls, each seven *verst*s (12) long. Furthermore:

И повелел Навуходоносор – царь во всем Вавилоне-граде знамя учинити на платьѣ и на оружии, и на конях, и на уздах, и на седлах, и на хоромех, на всяком бревне, и на дверях, и на окошках, и на сосудах, на ставцах, и на блюдах, и на ложках, и на всяких сосудах, и на всяком скоту. Знамя – все змеи. Полюбися царю то знамя и повелел себе сделать меч-самосек аспид-змий и чтили змея как Бога

[And Navuhodonosor-Tsar ordered that an insignia be put on everything in Babylon-city: on clothes and on armor, and on horses and bridles, and on saddles and houses, on every log, and on doors and windows, and on every vessel, on window shutters, and on plates and spoons, and on all vessels, and

all cattle. The insignia was that of the snake. The tsar liked the insignia and ordered that an asp-snake sword, a sword that would wield its own self, be made for him” and [all] revered the snake as a god].(13)

Leaving aside the question of whether this motif appears first in written sources or in folktales, we can show how well attested it is in both sources. In folktales we see: “Раньше у вавилонского царя было полюблено писать на чашках, на ложках, на всякой вещи змей” [The Babylonian King used to like painting snakes on cups, on spoons, and on every thing] [Onchukov #282. “Duke Borsukov”]; “Царь вавилонский издал указ, чтобы на всем змеи были вырезаны и написаны: на чашках и на ложках, и на монетах. Бог его наказал: все эти змеи ожили” [A Babylonian King issued an order that snakes be carved and painted on everything: on cups and spoons, and coins. God punished him: all those snakes came to life] [Sadovnikov #3. “Borma Iaryzhka”; Potanin #26]. Having the images of snakes on vessels and ceramics, as well as on other objects, is a characteristic trait of early agricultural societies. It is a cult fertility symbol that has been preserved in folk narrative.

According to both oral tale and written story, a huge snake encircles Babylon city: “хобот свой пригнул и с другой стороны, к тем же вратам, где лежит голова” [[he] bent his snout from the other side, to the gates where [his] head rests] [Veselovskii 137].(14) Another typical function of the Snake is connected with fire and the hearth. The Great Snake is often called “the fiery one” in Russian tales “Пошел Фёдор Бурмаков с товарищами на гору, увидели Вавилон-город. Подходят ко городу, обтянулся вокруг городу огненный Змей, хвос-голова в воротах” [Fedor Burmakov with [his] companions went to a mountain; they saw the City of Babylon. They came to the city, and saw that a fiery Snake encircled it, with his both tail and head inside the gates] [Onchukov #48].

In the Old Russian “Повесть о видении во Владимире” [Story about a Vision in the city of Vladimir], which exists in one redaction, a “woman in bright garments... had a miraculous vision.” According to the vision, unless all the Orthodox pray intensely to the “All Beneficent Creator,” “пожар на три дня, и от того, де, пожара невозможно будет укрыться нигде, и будет на них многое множество гадов ползучих” [a great fire lasting three days would befall the city, and there would be no place to hide from that fire, and there would be a plague of creeping reptiles upon them (the people)], while a huge Snake “начнет поедать

людей, и будет срам великий” [will start devouring people, and there would be a great misfortune].(15)

The huge fire-breathing Snake guarding the city falls asleep for an hour, and that is when the tale hero sneaks into the city [Onchukov, #127; Potanin #26]. “Змеи <...> спали между обедней и заутренней в Свято-Христово Воскресенье” [The snakes... were sleeping from the time of the divine liturgy through the matins on Sunday of Christ’s Holy Resurrection] [Sadovnikov, #3: 23]. In the Middle Ages, Sunday as a day of rest was observed everywhere. “Демоны-чудовища, населяющие Вавилон, тоже засыпают в это время и пробуждаются лишь к заходу солнца в воскресенье” [The demons-monsters dwelling in Babylon also fall asleep at this time and wake up only at sunset on Sunday] [Veselovskii 1876: 160].

Writing about the “Kingdom of Babylon” in his review of M. Gaster’s book [1887], Veselovskii mentions an episode about the Great Snake from one of the Slavic redactions of the Lives of Saints Kiriak and Ulita and adds an important element regarding the origin of this story. Veselovskii proposes that, if an episode about the Babylonian Snake was part of the ancient Lives of Kiriak and Ulita and then it belongs to the category of legendary-apocryphal, rather than historical-narrative, motifs. This would imply that, in the “Story about the Kingdom of Babylon” it “appeared at a different, later stage of its development, one where apocryphal elements became tale-like, just as in the Talmud where stories about Solomon became romantic narratives about the abduction of his wife” [Veselovskii 1888: 223, 225]. This implies two possible origins for the image of the Babylonian Snake, one apocryphal and one narrative. Unlike Gaster, Veselovskii considers the “Story about the Kingdom of Babylon” to be a romantic tale, one which came to the Slavs from Greece. It was the Greeks who often transmitted foreign legends and they are the source of Russian tales such as those about Akir the Most Wise, Varlaam and Joasaph, among others. This does not, however, fully explain the problems of the Story of the Kingdom of Babylon.

According to the folktale version, the hero comes to a city that is already dead and where only snakes and snake-like humans live. The tales about Babylon reflect different stages in the development of the Snake image: here the snakes are no different in appearance than real reptiles and they inhabit the destroyed city. We also find a huge Snake encircling the city, an image more like that of the cosmological World Snake attested in ancient Indian and Egyptian mythologies. In different mythological systems the image of the Snake acquires the physical

characteristics of animals that are dramatically different from each other. Thus we see a snake-bird, a creature that unites the opposites of earth and sky and this becomes a flying snake, a dragon, or a creature with the body of a snake, or snakes instead of legs.(16) The figure of a woman who transforms herself into a snake [Potanin #26] or a snake that assumes the appearance of a woman [Gorelov 2001: 322-326] is probably the most recent version of this image.(17) In the latter case the snake represents the unclean force [Potanin #26; Nikiforov #40]. Similarly, a snake-girl is connected with the dark, nether world. The image of the Snake thus acquires a double meaning: it is both a symbol of fertility and a symbol of evil. The snake who tempts humans appears in the Old Testament in the story about Adam and Eve's fall from grace. The ambiguity of the snake image was immanent in archaic mythological systems with the more negative interpretation predominating in Indo-Jewish, Sumerian, and, more recently, in ancient German and Slavic mythologies [Ivanov et al. 1974]. In Russian folklore, the snake is invariably dark and destructive. It is pictured as "*liutoednaia, sorokopegaia*" [a forty-speckled man-eater](18) that kills and devours everything alive [Nikiforov #65, Potanin #26]. Sometimes it is a snake-devil [Gorelov 2001: 327-330]. A proverb warns us not to expect anything good from a snake [Onchukov #182]. From the historical point of view the snake as a treacherous, destructive creature can be traced to the Talmud [Even-Israel et al. 2001: 114, 177, 178] and expressions such as: it is not a Snake that kills, but sin [Aggada 1993: 223].

Veselovskii analyzed the written "Story about the Kingdom of Babylon" on a number of occasions, always trying to identify its historical roots. He saw two hereditary lines: the Iranian-Semitic and the Biblical-Christian. Unfortunately the Greek original on which Slavic scribes likely based their texts has not survived. For this reason the story remains enigmatic.

Several facts indicate Iranian-Semitic influence. When Babylon and Assyria fell to the Iranian Medians, the Babylonian and Assyrian cult of the Snake as the principle God and symbol of divine wisdom and knowledge merged with the Iranian cult of the Snake as symbol of dark and evil forces. However, the religious beliefs of the defeated Babylonians and Assyrians(19) "turned to be the more dominant and the conquerors accepted the folk image of the Snake and deified it" [Veselovskii 1876: 146]. The snakes of Old Russian legend are similarly ambiguous: "they are dark forces and caused the lineage of Navukhodonosor to perish and yet they are part of a superstitious cult

that attributes to them a special role in the building of Babylon” [Veselovskii 1876: 143].

Written sources provide many reasons for seeing Navukhodonosor and the Jewish King Nimrod as similar or even identical. Both are emblematic of hubris, a “legendary (*basnoslovnye*) type of haughtiness.” Both construct pretentious buildings. Nimrod’s hubris is even greater. To him “is ascribed not only the building of the famous Tower of Babel which was supposed to get him closer to the sky, but also a plan to journey up to the sky in a basket tied to either two eagles or four hawks so that he could fight God” [Veselovskii 1876: 144]. Navukhodonosor and Alexander the Great had similar aspirations and their names, along with the names of Babylonian rulers in general, “appear in medieval romantic literature as personifications of self-adoration” [Ibid.: 149].

The other stratum of the story is the Biblical-Christian one. Babylon held a special place in Christian literature which was inspired by apocalyptic ideas and the prophecies of Daniel. “Great Babylon is the mother of whores and earthly abominations”; that is the reason why Babylon has fallen [Apoc. 17.5]. The image of an empty Babylon, inhabited only by reptiles, was common in medieval narrative literature. According to ancient legend, Babylon “was destined to become the birthplace of the Antichrist... the prophecies of Isaiah and Ezekiel were applied to this city and the traits of arrogance were ascribed to Navukhodonosor ...” [Ibid]. These Biblical-Christian ideas explain some of the details in the manuscripts of tales about Babylon, namely the sign of the snake on everything inside the city and the death that these snakes ultimately caused. Snakes have the same meaning and function in Russian oral folktales and in Old Russian written literature.

The oral tale and the written text about traveling to the City of Babylon both end with the motif of a fight between a Lion and Snake.(20) Lion and Snake are equally strong, and Lion wins only because he has the help of the tale hero. Before deciding which creature he should assist, the hero recalls the proverb: “Do not expect anything good from a Snake” [Onchukov #182]. Lion and Snake are both embodiments of power and strength. The noises that they make are terrifying. “The Snake whistled – and the house shook” [Nikiforov #65].(21) The roar of the Lion makes the walls of Hadrian’s capital city fall to the ground and it makes teeth fall out of people’s gums [Aggada 1993: 242].(22)

The reasons that Lion and Snake appear in the story of Babylon can be traced to their roots in mythology and in chivalric romance. In the

folklore and mythology of many peoples, the lion is the symbol of power, bravery, majesty, pride, and strength. The snake, on the other hand, especially the venomous snake, is symbolic of the dark nether world and of evil [Razumova #49]. The Lion is the guardian of sanctuaries (23) and its image was carved on early Christian sarcophagi as a visual representation of future resurrection.(24) The Lion as symbol of stability, strength, and power is the one reflected in the tale under discussion.(25) The battle between Lion and Snake, therefore, is a symbolical expression of the victory of good over evil traditionally found in tales. If we see the battle between the lion and the snake as a reduplication of the basic story line, then it makes sense and no longer seems extraneous to the plot. In the end, Lion, a symbol of good, brings the hero back from darkness; he returns him from the other world to his native land.

An almost identical battle between Lion and Dragon-Snake can be found in “The Legend of Bruntsvik,” a narrative translated in the second half of the sixteenth century. It also appears in Medieval Germanic poems about a “knight with a lion” which were translated into Russian. One example is the following story with a long title: “Ис кронника сказание о Брунцвике и о его силе, како дабы Лва, и прыткости и силе великой сына Штылфридова” [From the Chronicle Narrative about Bruntsvik and his Strength, How [He] Met a Lion, and about the Speed and Great Strength of the Son of Shtilfreed] [Biblioteka 2006]. In the second half of the fourteenth century, “in an epoch of growing national and state awareness, when Charles University was founded in Prague, the then capital of the Holy Rome Empire, the fund of Czech literary texts was enriched by a prose diptych. It united the story about Shtilfreed, the only surviving copy of which was evidently composed in blank verse or rhymed prose, with a legend about Bruntsvik” [Panchenko 510-11]. The “Legend of Bruntsvik” became known across Russia in the eighteenth century. The earliest translations of it date to the third quarter of the seventeenth century. Currently thirty five variants are attested [Panchenko 511]. All the main motifs of the story, including the fight between a Lion and Dragon, are preserved in the Russian version of the “Tale about Bruntsvik the Son of a King” [Staraiia pogudka #27].

According to the “Legend of Bruntsvik,” after the victory of Lion over Snake or Dragon, the hero and the Lion arrive in an unknown country where a beastly-looking King reigns: “и спереди и сзади были глаза, на руках и на ногах по осьмнадцати острых когтей” [he had eyes front and back, [and] eighteen sharp claws on [his] hands and feet]

[Staraiia pogudka 227]. The courtiers around him “были собою зверообразны и страшны: иной с рогами, другой о многих головах, у иного собачья голова” [were beastly-looking and frightening: one had horns, another had several heads, and yet another had a dog’s head] [Ibid.]. The King asks Bruntsvik to bring back his favorite daughter, Africa, who was kidnapped by a Dragon. Bruntsvik and Lion go to the city of the Dragon and, at its gates, they see guards, “two quite terrible beasts” called Menendryses. As soon as they spot the approaching Bruntsvik, the guards rush to tear him apart and “от сильного же их движения потрясся весь город” [the city has shaken by their strong movements] [p. 228].

The second set of gates was guarded by the beasts called Kgliata: “каждый зверь на себе имеет два рога долга на два локти, а остры яко бритва” [each beast has two horns, each two cubits long and as sharp as a razor] [p. 333]. Near the third gates they “узреша еще страшных два зверя, и великих, тем имя Липфораве. Бѣ же на них шерсть яко на медведех, да роги яко дияволи имели, а зубы черны яко конские, а уста у них велики, иже человека может проглотити” [saw yet two more terrible and big beasts called Lipforave. They had fur like bears and horns like devils, teeth as black as horses’ teeth, and mouths so big that they could swallow a human] [p. 334]. Bruntsvik and Lion found no people in the city, and only the maiden Africa was dwelling there, and she “красна бо зело лицом, а руце имея только до пояса, имея два хвоста, сиирѣчь хоботы два вместо ног” [was very beautiful, but had arms reaching only to her waist, and two tails, and two trunks instead of legs] [Ibid.]. In the kingdom of the maiden Africa “there came numerous great serpents and lizards and other poisonous monsters from all sides trying to kill Bruntsvik” [p. 335]. Bruntsvik fights the serpents, and when he is wounded, Lion and Africa heal him. After numerous adventures, Bruntsvik returns to King Ambris his snake-like daughter Africa and then marries her. The story ends with a motif that is traditional for this plot, namely the return of the hero from strange lands and Bruntsvik and Lion return to their native Czech Kingdom.

The Czech “Legend of Bruntsvik” and its translations contain what Sipovskii calls “a ‘florid mass’ of magical and chivalric elements, elements probably derived from the magic tale” [Staraiia pogudka 358]. In his comments to the “Legend of Bruntsvik,” Panchenko stated that, prior to the appearance of this, “there were no Russian literary texts which were built exclusively around the adventures of a man travelling in fantastic, imagined lands. While seventeenth century translated

chivalric belles lettres presented relations between humans, and humans were the main characters, this story describes a grandiose and timeless conflict, the conflict between man the nature. The use of names such as Europe and Africa underscores this idea, as does the fact that the hero travels not only along the earth, but also into the underworld (the onomastics of the story unequivocally point to the unclean force). Indeed Bruntsvik's ruminations, his uncertainty and fear, are not typical of chivalric texts" [Panchenko 511].

Of the many theories (26) of the origin of chivalric romance two stand out. According to the first, the Byzantine romance was the intermediary between Classic and Western European fiction. The second theory proposes the spontaneous generation of the fantastic plot and assumes that it grew out of a dualistic worldview, one that opposes good and evil, light and darkness, and so on. In regards to the plot under discussion, perhaps the most interesting is the so-called "folktale" (27) version of the chivalric romance known in Russian printed literature since the 1760s. Members of literary circles did not take this "folktale" version seriously. Chulkov, writing in *Пересмешник* (The Mocker, 1789)(28) called this genre "a bagatelle" (*bezdelitsa*). The genre of the literary folktale started being taken seriously by the beginning of the nineteenth century, but even then it was valued as a historical source rather than a work of art.

A collection of literary "Russian Tales"(29) by Levshin (1780-1783) display an attitude that differed from Chulkov's. Levshin strove to "russify" his material. He introduced epic language, using *byliny* (epics) as his source and he even drew on *bylina* plots for his "tales." In his introduction Levshin stated that *byliny* were indeed the source of some of the items in his collection and that he considered the *bogatyri* of Russian *byliny* to be on a par with the heroes of Western chivalric romance [Sipovskii 85].

Thematically speaking, Levshin's "Russian Tales" are closer to the Old Russian manuscript romances than they are to oral tales. Thus, "The Story about Bulat the Bogatyr" contains the same motifs as the "The Story about Travel to Babylon." These include Prince Vladimir's attempts to secure a crown, the kingdom of a Tsar-Maiden, a fight with the monsters and snakes, and a fight between a Lion and Snake, among others. Levshin was the first writer to create a "new romantic type" of Russian literature: a russified chivalric romance. His attempt to "cross breed folk epic with artistic literature, i.e. to put together those spheres of Russian creativity that were separated and even mutually hostile due to a

split in Russian society” made his creative work both innovative and distinctive. “The ‘*narodnik*’ (Populist) movement evolved from this gradual blending of literary spheres and, by the reign of Katherine the Great, engulfed all kinds of literature, including the novel, drama, and lyric poetry” [Ibid.: 236]. The literary “Story about Bulat” by Levshin united quasi-historical material with fantastic elements drawn from folktales about Babylon. Levshin’s work is like the finishing stroke on a painting, only it is a narrative rather than a pictorial work, one created by combining oral, written, and translated sources.

Research into the historical roots of the “wandering” tale plot about the city of Babylon unites two topics that Mark Azadovskii considered immanent, namely Russian folklore and Russian literature. Examining the complex interplay between oral and written traditions helps us better understand a narrative that may, at first, appear strange. It also yields information about the dynamics through which oral folklore and written literature fed off each other, exerting mutual influence. It teaches us that orality and literacy are not two separate and mutually exclusive spheres. Rather, they are parallel phenomena which should be studied in tandem.

NOTES

1 In other variants he discovers the maiden’s nature straight away for she is a maiden with a dog’s head [Onchukov # 48]. Elsewhere this is a maiden-unclean force [Nikiforov, # 40]. In one case and one case only the antagonist is male. Here Sen’ka Barabokin play cards with a Snake that has “a man’s face” [Onchukov # 182].

2 Obstacles along the hero’s way include a one-eyed old giant (crooked Luka-Bogatyr, Saitan Saitanovich) whose one healthy eye the hero “doctors” with either lead or tin. The motif where the hero escapes by dressed in the skin of a goat or by tying himself to the belly of a sheep or by getting his antagonist drunk has mythological roots. Examining these is beyond the scope of this article.

3 Compare to the legend about a wolf and woodpecker guarding Romulus and Remus.

4 Here the reference is to the revolt of the Finnic peoples.

5 In his notes to this story, V. A. Levshin explains: “Царь-Девница не есть собственное имя. Древние россы придавали оное вообще всем владеющим монархиням [Tsar-Maiden is not a personal name. The ancient Rus’ians used this title for all the female monarchs]” [see: Sipovskii 1910].

6 See also [Malinin 1901].

7 See also [Vasenko 1904].

8 Its original is unknown.

9 (Translator's note) In Russian tradition, a wedding ritual involves holding crowns over the head of the bride and groom. They are considered analogous to royalty in the sense that they are taboo to everyone except each other. Because crowns were regularly used in wedding rites, "crowning" has come to be used as a term signifying marriage. This is the meaning used here.

10 On the Balkan peninsular, beginning in the XI-XIV centuries, the struggle with Byzantium was colored by Serbian (Serbian Nemaniči – XI-XII centuries) and Bulgarian concepts.

11 I omit here the reasons for such a late echo of this Bulgarian movement on Russia.

12 A *versta*, or Russian 'mile' was about 3,500 ft – Translator's note.

13 See the text (d) of an Old Russian story in Veselovskii 1876, p. 127.

14 The same can be found in: Onchukov #48, Potanin #26. The Cosmic function of the World Snake as a Snake encircling the Earth is typical for ancient Indian, Scandinavian, and Egyptian mythology.

15 The story is preserved in a single version (РИБ. Эрмитажное собр. № 358. fol. 10-10 verso). It was first published by S. F. Platonov (РИБ. Vol. 13. Col. 240-242).

16 "В городе остались одна царевна: туловище человечье, а хвост змеиный; она царствовала на престоле, где была корона" [Only a daughter of a tsar was left in the city. She had a human body and a snake's tail; she reigned on a throne where the crown was] [Onchukov #127].

17 The epic, or bylina "Лука, змея и Настасья [Luka, the Snake, and Nastas'ia]" contains a mixture of the epic and magic tale motifs.

18 The epic "Лука, змея и Настасья" is a recent creation as it clearly influenced by magic tales.

19 "С глубокой древности восточные семиты – аккадцы, занимавшие северную часть нижнего Двуречья, были соседями шумерцев и находились под сильным шумерским влиянием. Во второй пол. 3-его тыс. до н. э. аккидцы утверждают и на юге Двуречья <...> Позднее, с возвышением Вавилона, эта территория стала называться Вавилонией. История Двуречья во 2-ом тыс. до н. э. – это история семитских народов" [Since the earliest times the

Eastern Semites, i.e. Akkadians inhabiting the northern part of lower Mesopotamia, lived next to Sumerians and were under strong Sumerian influence. In the second half of the third millennium B.C. the Akkadians spread to the south of Mesopotamia... Later, after Babylon became prominent, that land was called Babylonia. The history of Mesopotamia in the second millennium B.C. is the history of the Semitic peoples] [Tokarev 1980, I: 647]. See also Averintsev, Sergei. 1971. Греческая литература и ближневосточная словесность [Greek Literature and the Lore of the Near East]. Москва: Главная редакция восточной литературы издательства “Наука”; Averintsev, Sergeiю 1989. Древние цивилизации [Ancient Civilizations]. Москва: Главная редакция восточной литературы издательства “Наука”.

20 See also Onchukov #48, 182; Razumova #49; Sadovnikov #3; Barag 1974 27; Potanin #26.

21 Compare to the whistling of Nightingale the Robber (Solovei-razboinik) from a bylina (epic):

А завистел Соловьёшко ровно полсвиста –

Еще старые строеньчики посыпались,

Все богатыри с крыльца свалились.

[Gorelov 2003 341].

22 Compare this to the Biblical image of a tsar’s rage pictured as a lion’s roar.

23 Compare this to the description of Solomon’s throne. On its first step there is a lion sitting. “Впоследствии престол этот был взят, вместе с другой добычей, фараоном Нехо и отвезен в Египет. В ту минуту, когда фараон ступил на первую ступень, поднял лев лапу и так сильно ударил его в бедро, что он на всю жизнь остался хромоногим. <...> Из Египта престол был увезен нечестивым Навуходоносором в Вавилон, и при первой попытке взойти на престол Лев ударом лапы поверг Навуходоносора на землю. После разрушения Вавилона престол был взят Дарием и увезен в Мидию, но садиться на него Дарий и не пытался” [Later on, pharaoh Necho took that throne along with other trophies to Egypt. The moment pharaoh stepped on the first step, a lion lifted its paw and hit the pharaoh’s thigh so hard that he remained lame to the end of his days... From Egypt, that throne was transferred to Babylon by the dishonorable Navukhodonosor; at the first attempt to ascend the throne, the Lion threw Navukhodonosor to the ground by a slap of his paw. After Babylon was destroyed, Darius took the throne to Media, but he never even tried to ascend the throne] [Aggada 119].

24 Compare this to the stone images of a Lion in the churches of the cities of Vladimir and Suzdal' and those of the Romanesque churches.

25 In world mythology, the image of the Lion is not equivocal: winged lions depicted on Babylonian headstones represented demonic forces, evil, and death. The Sumerian and Babylonian lions-demons Ugamu and Uridimmu belong to this category. “Вплоть до XVII века распространены такие изображения Льва в качестве атрибута гордыни, гнева... и неведомой земли вообще. В искусстве нового и новейшего времени Лев иногда трактуется как воплощение стихийного буйства природы (“Львиные охоты” П. Рубенса), но чаще – в традиционном “апотропеическом” значении (“Стерегиущие Львы” - в монументально-декоративной пластике” [Till the 18th century the image of the Lion served as a symbol of vanity, anger... and unknown terrains as a whole. In the arts of the modern and most recent times, a Lion is sometimes deciphered as an embodiment of the chaotic raging of the nature like in Peter Paul Rubens' “Lion Hunt” but more often it is used in its traditional, ‘apotropeic’ meaning like the “Guarding Lions” in monumental-decorative carving] [Sokolov 1982].

26 Theories of the origin of the chivalric romance include: 1) it was created using magic tale elements taken from Northern skalds; 2) it arose under Saracens influence, which makes it especially prevalent in Spain; 3) it grew out of the cult around Oriental fantastic poetry; 4) it was inherited from Antiquity heritage, and so on. Proof of each of these theories can be found somewhere in the history of World literature. However, the actual life history of the chivalric romance varied from place to place.

27 “Примерно до середины XIX века термин “сказка” употреблялся во многих значениях. Сказками назывались различного рода документы (например, письменные списки населения или “ревизские сказки”, показания на следствии или на суде. Статьи о происшествиях и т. п.), некоторые чисто литературные произведения – прозаические и стихотворные, отдельные произведения фольклора (например, былины) и, наконец, то, что действительно является сказкой в современном значении этого слова” [Until approximately the middle of the 19th century, the term “tale” was used in many meanings. Various documents used to be called tales, including written tallies of the population, or “census lists.” The term was used for testimonies for court, for articles about accidents and so on. It also applied to some purely literary creations, both in prose and verse. It referred to certain folklore items like *byliny*; and finally it

was used for what is called the folktale in contemporary terminology] [Novikov 1971, 3].

28 See also: Славянские древности или приключения славянских князей. Соч. М. Попова [Slavic Antiquities, or the Adventures of the Slavic Princes. Works of M. Popov], Ч. I-III. СПб: publisher not indicated. 1770-1771; Third edition was called Старинные диковинки [Ancient Wonders]. Ст. Петербург, 1794 г.

29 Prior to the research by Shklovskii (1933), the authorship of the “Russian Tales” was mistakenly ascribed to Chulkov. The similarity between Levshin’s collection and epic narrative, in terms of both style and subject matter stimulated the publication of Russian folktales.

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