Form and Function in Mianžynski's "Romance of Alexander"

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Among the manuscript versions of the *Romance of Alexander* (*Aleksandryja*) compiled by U. V. Aničenka and published in 1962 by the Byelorussian Academy of Sciences¹ one claims our particular interest for the information contained in a postscript which identifies the writer and dates the manuscript.

The writer records the year of his manuscript as 1697, and the day of completion as 30 June. His name was Vasil Haŭryłaŭič Mianžynski. His father was a clergyman of Mazyr and he himself was cantor in the Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Mother of God at Dubrovica.

Although there are a number of East Slavonic localities named Dubrovica the most important of these and the probable place of Mianžynski's ministry seems to have been Dubrovyc'a on the river Horyn in Rovno province, now a provincial centre of the Soviet Ukraine. In the 13th century this had been the principality of Aleksander Vsevolodovič Dubravskij who died in the battle on the river Kalka. Later it was taken over by the Holšanskis, a Lithuanian (Byelorussian) noble family who in the middle of the 15th century adopted the surname Dąbrowiecki. The last heiress of this line, Maria Dąbrowiecka, married three times, first into the Montholt family, later Michael Tyškievič, Castellan of L'vov, and finally Prince Andrej Kurbskij, whose claim to the Dubrovica estate failed when it passed to the Montholt family in 1578.

In the 17th century Dubrovica was in the hands of the Dolski family, the most memorable of whom, Jan Karol Dolski, master of Dolsk, Dąbrowica and Komarno, and Grand Marshal of Lithuania, founded a Piarist college at Dubrovica in 1684.

Meagre as it is, the information contained in Mianžynski's modest postscript enables us to locate him in a geographical and cultural context: 17th-century Polesian Orthodox clergy, exposed to Polish influences but still maintaining the Church-Slavonic tradition. In his culture and in his language elements of East, West and South

1. Barkoŭski, V. I. (ed.) and Aničenka, U. V. (compiler), *Aleksandryja*, AN BSSR, Minsk, 1962, comprising an introduction, reprints of five manuscripts, index of personal names, index of places, glossary and bibliography.

person pronoun. Six examples of this phenomenon have been noted in Mianžynski's *Aleksandryja*: меч у его вырвали 'they snatched his sword from him' (289); на его поити 'to march against him', поити на его 'id.'; о(т)пусти мене на его 'let me get at him' (309); наливши на его вина 'pouring wine into it' (330); посмотривши на их 'after looking at them' (330). It is interesting that three of these phrases occur in a single context — the pleas of Philo to be allowed to do battle with the Indian king Porus. Although it is tempting to look for some stylistic or contextual function the truth probably is that Mianžynski was here unconsciously recording his own vernacular usage.

Of particular interest are those cases where epenthetic *n* is introduced in hypercorrect forms where there is no etymological justification for it. This occurs where the pronoun is possessive in function and the preposition refers to some other word. For example, тягне(т) на него царство 'is marching against his empire' (260); дивячися на него красоту 'marvelling at his beauty' (329).⁴

The absence of spellings indicating affrication of the soft dental plosives *t'* and *d'* need not imply the absence from Mianžynski's speech of these prime consonantal features of Byelorussian. For him *t* or *d* plus front vowel may have been a satisfactory graphic representation of an affricated pronunciation, of which he may not have been aware.

If East Slavonic is the basic and dominating colour in Mianžynski's linguistic spectrum two contrasting bands, the Polish and the Church Slavonic, vie with it and give life to it. The three elements fuse to produce a well-balanced pattern, a lively and readable text.

What part do the various elements play in producing the overall effect? It is easier to recognise and identify the forms than to analyse their diverse functions.

Two examples will suffice to show that at least the Church Slavonic forms had their place in the narrative. The greatest conglomerations of Church-Slavonic forms occur in the episodes describing Alexander's reception at Rome⁵ and in Jerusalem.⁶ It goes without saying that the prophet Jeremiah favours the Church Slavonic style on his numerous apparitions to the dreaming Alexander.⁷

A striking contrast in the use of Church Slavonic and East Slavonic synonyms may be seen in the lament of Darius, fleeing from the battlefield after an ignominious defeat: увы мне ока[я]нному, як ся есми менил б[о]гу н[е]б[е]сному быти раве(н), а н[ы]не земному ч[е]л[о]в[е]ку не рове(н) 'Alas! wretch that I am, I thought myself the equal of God in heaven and now I am not even a match for an earthly man' (296).

4. These examples show an intermediate stage in the process which is carried through to completion in the South Slavonic languages, where possessive adjectives incorporate the 'epenthetic *n*' as part of their stem, for example Slovene and Serbo-Croat *njegov* 'his'.

5. Barkouški, V. I., *op. cit.*, pp. 271-3.

6. *Ibid.*, pp. 278-80.

7. *Ibid.*, pp. 279, 286, 290.

Very few of the Church Slavonicisms have such a clear motivation. Some, in fact the vast majority, seem to have no discernible stylistic function. The genitive singular masculine and neuter of adjectives occurs in both its Church Slavonic and East Slavonic forms, *-ago* and *-ogo* respectively. In one or two instances the choice of the Church Slavonic variant is determined by the context, for example in the title of Jeremiah the prophet: а(р)хiereй вышнiаго б[о]ра поп 'high-priest of God on high' (278). A case such as чистаго злата (274, 299) is unusual in that it combines two Church Slavonic features, the adjectival ending and the root of the noun. More frequent is the combination of Church Slavonic adjectival ending with East Slavonic root in the noun: силнаго пороку (296), чистаго золота (302, 313).

One of the chief differentiating features between East Slavonic, Church Slavonic and Polish is the development of dental plosives *t*, *d* when followed by *jot*. The reflexes are hush affricates for East Slavonic: *č*, *ž*; hiss affricates for Polish: *c*, *dz*; fricative plus plosive in Old Church Slavonic: *št*, *žd*, the first of which appears in Russian Church Slavonic as *šč*. In each language Common Slavonic *kt* and *gt* plus close front vowel followed the same development as *tj*.

One of the most frequently met words in the narrative is тысяча 'thousand' (295, 305 bis, 307, 309). It occurs in the accounts of battles, of troops taking part, of casualties suffered, prisoners taken. In only one of the more than sixty occurrences of the numeral does it occur in its Church Slavonic form. This is in a letter from Alexander to Archidon of Thessalonika: ты супокоем живи на ца(р)стве своем, а мне три(д)цать тысяще(й) зброинных людей шли 'Live in peace in your kingdom, but send me thirty thousand armed men and one hundred measures of gold' (267).

In the overwhelming majority of cases the East Slavonic form of the present participle active is preferred. The Church Slavonic form occurs in three contexts. First it is met in a description of the magnificence of Alexander's throne, regalia and entourage: около его много витязей можных и рицеров красных перед александром стоящих 'Around him many mighty knights and fair cavaliers standing before Alexander' (264). The second is found in what appears to be a passage from the scriptures quoted by Alexander: слава не о(т) людей може(т) быти, но о(т) б[о]га н[е]б[е]л[е](с)наго, любящи (for любящим?) его 'Glory cannot come from men but only from the God of heaven as a gift for those who love him' (270). Lastly two Church Slavonic participles are met in the opening words of Alexander's speech to his troops before his second battle with Darius: бигающему присумнящи(м) борзый бер е(ст). The syntax is obscure but this appears to mean: 'Everyone who is in doubt is prone to flight' (285). The three contexts which here called for Church Slavonic forms could be classified as royal, scriptural and rhetorical.

Most of the Slavonic languages have formed the word for 'a candle' in the same way, by adding the suffix *-ja* to a root *svět-* meaning 'light', e. g. OCS *свеша*, East Slavonic *свеча*, Pol. *świeca*. Two of these forms appear in our text. Where candles are borne in a religious

procession or at a formal reception of Alexander the Church Slavonic form is felt to be more appropriate. In an account of Alexander's escape from Darius and the subsequent manhunt the East Slavonic form is used: попов ри(м)ски(х) вышло две тысячи, со свещами 'Two thousand Roman priests came forth with candles' (271); трояне... вышли против алекса(н)дра че(ст)но со свещами 'The Trojans respectfully came forth to meet Alexander with candles' (275); сам пр(о)рок во одежди еуреиской выишол против него с кади(л)ницами и со свещами 'The prophet himself came forth in his Jewish attire to meet him with censers and candles' (279); и они свечи великие зажгли алекса(н)дра пошли шука(т) 'And they lit great candles and went to search for Alexander' (294).

The present tense of the verb *хотети* 'to want' occurs 27 times. Nearly all of these forms have the East Slavonic reflex of *-tj-*: хочу (278, 288, 304, 320); хочеш (266, 300, 305, 313, 319 bis, 322, 323, 324); хоче(т) (281, 314, 323, 330); всхоче(т) (289); коли б[о]г схоче(т) (290 bis); хочем (267 bis); хотите (261, 278); хочут (265); also the conjunction *хочайбы* based on this stem (278).

On one occasion only does the Church Slavonic form appear. This is in a short speech addressed to Darius by Alexander posing as one of his own envoys: що хоче(т), то мови(т) сорома не мае(т), всех ся не бои(т) 'He fears no man, he has no shame, he says what he wants' (292). The same phrase is repeated in the words of Philo addressed to the Indian king Porus, this time without the Church Slavonicism: що хоче(т) то мови(т) 'He says what he wants' (311). It seems possible that the Church Slavonic form had no stylistic function but was determined by the proximity of *що*.

Infinitives of velar stems **pekti* etc. appear either in their East Slavonic form: утечи (262, 278, 330), or as secondary formations: утекти (262), помогти (330), ректи (311). No stylistic function is involved in the usage of either type.

The three semantically close adjectives *чужий* 'strange = foreign', *чудный* 'strange = wonderful', *цудный* 'strange = beautiful' may not be etymologically related, although the initial consonant of the Polonism *цудный* suggests such a relationship. Of these the first appears only in its East Slavonic form: будучи в чужих сторона(х) далеких 'being in distant foreign parts' (281); в чужих зе(м)ля(х) 'in foreign lands' (302); чужого человека 'a foreigner' (299).

The Polonism *цудный* appears once only. As in the Polish vocabulary from the 16th century to the present day it here denotes outstanding physical beauty: веле(л) отобрати красных и цудны(х) жо(н) двана(д)ца(т) тыся(ч) на потребу македоняном 'He ordered them to select 12,000 fair and beautiful women for the Macedonians' needs' (275). The corresponding East Slavonic *чудный* with which the Church Slavonic form is identical is used of Alexander's reception in Rome: тогда их славно и чудно стретение было 'Their meeting then was a glorious and wonderful one' (271). A devotional usage of the same adjective is seen in one of the various prayers attributed to Alexander in the narrative: алекса(н)де(р)... рече слава тебе

г[о](с)[по]ди, иже еси чудны и непостыжимы и нестерпимы и недовыдомы 'Alexander said, "Praise to Thee, oh Lord!, who art wonderful and incomprehensible, terrible and unknowable", (325). The latter usage is met in Upyr' Lichoj's version of the minor prophets, first written in 1047 and extant in 16th-century manuscript copies: б[ож]е великыи и чудныи 'Oh God, great and terrible' (Daniel IX, 4).

East Slavonic and Church Slavonic forms of the same word are met in the episode which describes Alexander's visit to a haunted cavern. There are 11 examples of the former: пещеры (318, 319 three times, 320); пещери (318, 319 bis, 320 bis, 321). The latter appears twice, in a warning against possible danger and in Alexander's rejection of that warning: хто та(м) далее поступи(т) в сию пещеру то(т) о(т)толя не вы(й)де(т) 'If anyone makes his way further into this cavern he will not get out of there' (319); такова вера твоя ко мне що не кажеш в сию пещеру пойти 'Have you so little confidence in me that you forbid me to go into this cavern?' (319). The warning is repeated, this time with the East Slavonic form, so that it is difficult to determine whether the Church Slavonic forms fulfil any stylistic purpose.

Other words met in the narrative with Church Slavonic *šč* are *священник*, *позлащенный*, *вещий*. During Alexander's visit to Rome: священники покадили его различными запахи 'Priests burnt fragrant incense of various kinds before him' (272). On his deathbed Alexander says farewell to his faithful steed: о вещи мои коню дучупале 'Oh Bucephalus, my wonderful horse' (331). In each of these cases the context demands high-style Church Slavonic forms. Considerations of prosody may have influenced the choice of the Church Slavonic form of the root *zlašč* in which *позлащенные* шоломы 'gilded helmets' (272, 275 bis) which enables the writer to avoid the undesirable assonance of pleophonic roots in consecutive words.

In the frequent references to night as the time of sleep or preparation for battle or apparitions of the prophet Jeremiah the East Slavonic form is regularly met. There are 16 such forms as against 2 instances of Church Slavonic *нощ*, once with reference to a voyage which lasted 30 days and 30 nights: тридцат(т) дней, и тридцат нощий плавала (271), and once of Alexander who, cured of a sickness and relieved of suspicions of his own doctor: всю нощ со упокое(м) спал 'slept peacefully the whole night through' (281-282). No stylistic function appears to be here involved.

The derivative *полунощ*, with adjective *полунощный* 'north', like the other points of the compass, *полуден* / *полуденный* and *восток* / *восточный*, is Church Slavonic in form. It occurs in Jeremiah's prophecy of Alexander's conquests: на полунощ, и на полуден всех примориш 'You shall subdue all people to the north and the south' (280), and in the Macedonian nobles' plea for relief from their unending exertions: востоку и западу го(с)подари назвалисьмося, и всем полуде(н)ным и полунощны(м) сторона(м) 'We have won the name of masters of the east and the west, of all southern and

northern lands' (302). It also occurs once in the narrative: по(й)де алекса(н)де(р) на полунощные стороны, Alexander marched against the northern lands' (304).

Church Slavonicisms with *žd* as the reflex of Common Slavonic *d + j* are infrequent. Verbal roots ending in *d* regularly show the East Slavonic alternation with *ž*: вижу (288), повеж (301, 321, 326 bis), повежете (277-282, 283), осуже(н) (320), хожувам (263), о(т)хожу (282). A Church Slavonic variant of the last is met in the words of Alexander to his mother and wife: о(т)хожду, о(т)кол вернуться не е(ст) можная реч 'I depart to the earth from whence there is no possible return' (331). The preposition *межи* occurs fairly frequently (261 bis, 270, 274, 278, 283, 326) but never in its Church Slavonic form.

The Church Slavonicism *одежда* occurs twice in the account of Alexander's meeting with and recognition of Jeremiah the prophet in Jerusalem: сам пр(о)рок во одежди еуреиской 'The prophet himself in his Jewish attire' (279); здоправды тоей ночи во сне есми видел в тоей одежде архиерейской тебе 'In truth this very night I saw you in my sleep wearing this priestly attire' (279). In each case the form is determined by the context.

The examples given so far have been of dual forms with Church Slavonicism or Polonism opposed to the East Slavonic native form. There remains a group of words with the Common Slavonic root plus suffix **mogti*. Here the full possibilities of triple opposition are exploited and the choice of variant is stylistically motivated throughout. The root appears in these words either without prefix or prefixed by *po-* and *ne-*.

As we might expect in a tale of war and conquest there are frequent references to assistance. Of frequent occurrence is the phrase 'with the divine assistance' and it not surprising that this has a Church Slavonic form: з божиею помощию (278). This phrase occurs 8 times with slight variations but always keeping the Church Slavonicism. A slightly more elaborate formula occurs three times, once with the East Slavonic form: с помощью великаго б[о]га саваофа 'with the assistance of the great Lord of Hosts' (284); за помощью б[о]га саваофа 'with the assistance of the Lord of Hosts' (290); с помочю б[о]га саваофа 'with the help of the Lord of Hosts' (277). All other references to divine assistance have the Church Slavonic form. These include a short prayer written in at the end of one page of the manuscript in Polish and Church Slavonic: Помос моia od pana Boga... помос моя о(т) г[о](с)[по]да... 'My help is from the Lord' (304).

The derived nomen agentis *помощник* appears only in its Church Slavonic form and always with reference to divine aid, as when Jeremiah says to Alexander: мы помощника б[о]га саваофа часто призывати будем 'We shall constantly invoke our helper, the God of Hosts' (280) or when Alexander prays to the one true God to help him to extirpate idols or to defeat the heathen Indian king Porus:

помощник ми буди балваны побити (299), помощник мне буди дне(с) на сего . . . пора (312).

One would not expect to meet Church Slavonicisms in military contexts but they occur beside East Slavonic forms and inspection suggests that they may be stylistically motivated. Of the 11 Church Slavonicisms 5 occur in terms dictated to conquered peoples by Alexander, e. g. во(и)ско мне шлете на помощ 'Send me troops as reinforcements' (268), with similar examples at pp. 271, 273, 274, 275.

The Church Slavonic form also occurs in the title and the text of the episode describing the treachery of Naxachors, the Pelagian king, who came ostensibly to the aid of Philip, with the secret intention of eloping with Olympias, Philip's wife: о здрядливо(й) помощи (261); рекучи на помо(щ) (262); приишол есми на помо(щ) к тебе (262). Although the general tone of the episode is one of moral disapproval it is doubtful whether this determined the use of Church Slavonic forms.

The remaining three examples occur in a letter from Alexander to the people of Jerusalem: сарачи(н)стии . . . воиска дали на помощ 'The Saracens provided us with troops' (278); in a speech to his nobles by Porus: поидете на помо(щ) к дарию 'Go to the aid of Darius' (295); and in the action which followed these words: во(й)ска порова к дарию на помощ при(й)шло 'Porus's forces came to the aid of Darius' (295). Of these the first seems motivated by the epistolary style, while the others may be without stylistic function.

Of the seven examples of the East Slavonic form one has already been noted above as an irregular occurrence in a context referring to divine aid. There would seem to be no inconsistency in the preference for this form where heathen gods are invoked, as when the Babylonians offer sacrifices and prayers to Apollo: просячи его о помоч 'begging him for help' (286).

The remaining examples refer to military assistance but occur in contexts where for one reason or another the lower style seemed appropriate. The pygmies evade military service for obvious reasons: помочи некоторо(й) з на(с) тебе немаш 'You will get no help from us' they tell Alexander (315) and he repeats this himself: не маю о(т) них помочи бо калеки су(т) 'I have no help from them for they are cripples' (315). Philo tells the Indian troops who have submitted that they may return home but they are to pass on a message to their king: макидоняном помочи не давай 'Give no help to the Macedonians' (297) — there is something wrong here, and the text should read першаном 'to the Persians'. The context is conversational and possibly even contemptuous. Engaged in single combat with Porus Alexander stoops to a mean trick to distract his powerful adversary: 'Why is your army advancing to help you?', he asks — чему воиско твое приступае(т) на помоч (312). Lastly the East Slavonic form is met in a letter from Darius to Porus: дай ми помочи на него 'Provide me with some help against him' (295).

The Polish form *помоц* (*ротос*) does not appear in the text.

East Slavonic *немоч* occurs 4 times as the regular form in narrative

while the Church Slavonic *немощ* is twice preferred to it, once clearly for stylistic reasons. *филип в немоч великую впа(л)* 'Philip fell severely ill' (260); *впаде(т) александе(р) в немо(ч) великую* 'Alexander fell seriously ill' (280). The pygmies explain why they have taken refuge in the mountains: *для велико(й) нашо(й) немочи уселилисмося в сии пустыи горы* 'because of our great weakness we moved to these deserted hills' (315). Both forms are seen together in the prophecy of Jeremiah after Alexander's capture of Jerusalem: *по(д) египтом будеш, и там в немоч впадеш але тебе б[о]г саваоф защити(т) о(т) немощи тоей* 'You shall be near Egypt and there you shall fall sick, but the God of Hosts will defend you from that disease' (280). Here the Church Slavonicism occurs as the expected form in a reference to the divine power, while the mere statement of the fact that Alexander will fall ill does not demand the higher style, so that the vernacular *немоч* is stylistically adequate. The Church Slavonicism appears in one other context: *египтяне слышавшы немощ александрову и возрадовался велми* 'The Egyptians hearing of Alexander's sickness rejoiced greatly' (281). The whole of this sentence is cast in the high style without any obvious motivation.

The derived adjective appears twice in its Church Slavonic form: *силный препояшуся силою, а немощный с[е]р(д)це направи(т)* 'The mighty hath girded himself with strength and the weak will raise his spirits' (273); *которые и немощные били все поздоровели* 'those who had been ill were all restored to health' (301). This form would be popular because of its frequent occurrence in prayer. It is met in East Slavonic texts relatively free from Church Slavonicisms, such as the Pskov Law Code.⁸

There is also one example of the Polonism *моцный* preceded by the prefix *не-*, which is written as a separate word. Porus surveying the rout of his troops complains in tears: *чему силныи пали а не моцныи силу взяли* 'Wherefore have the strong succumbed and the weak acquired strength?' (310).

Where the root or its derivatives have a positive meaning Polish forms regularly appear. It may denote physical strength: *видел есми александра... моци своей спытуваючи* 'I have seen Alexander testing his strength' (268). It may refer to armed might: *надеитесь которы(й) з ва(с) таково(й) моци на македоняны поити и побити их* 'Let each of you rely on such power as shall enable you to march against the Macedonians and defeat them' (291). It is also used of the magical powers of the ring given him by Cleopatra: *в том пе(р)сни каме(н) такую моц мел кому вкаже(т) у вочи то(т) жаде(н) не види(т) еро* 'In that ring a stone had the power of making him invisible to anyone at whose eyes he pointed it' (292).

In this last sense the Church Slavonic *моци* is also met. In Rome Alexander is presented with Solomon's golden crown in which there are set gems, each of which possessed twelve magical powers: *три*

8. T. Lehr-Spławiński and W. Witkowski, *Wybór tekstów do historii języka rosyjskiego*, Warsaw, 1965, p. 158, line 18.

камени... по двана(д)цат мощей мели в себе во(л)фовны(х) (271-272). This merely extends the meaning of *мощи* 'miraculous relics' from a Christian to a pagan context.

No East Slavonic or Church Slavonic forms of the root appear to challenge the established function of the Polonisms *моцный*, *велемоцный*. Alexander is described as strong and mighty, adorned with earthly glory: *силный и моцный александе(р) славою земною украшен* (268). Porus, his worthy rival, is great and mighty: *велики и моцный* (311); even Alexander admits that he is mightier: *по(р) моцнейшы(й) е(ст)* (312). Queen Kandakia reports the source of Alexander's power: *о(т) него алекса(н)де(р) моцный е(ст)* (323).

Describing the action of the miraculous lake the writer uses in close proximity a Polonism and a Church Slavonicism: *все моцны крепки и здоровы стали о(т) того озера, которые и немощные били все поздоровели* 'All the mighty became strong and healthy after a bathe in that lake, while those people who had been ill were cured' (301). The contrast here is most striking.

There are five examples of the compound adjective *велемоцный* apparently a coinage on East Slavonic ground which makes use of the Polish form of the root. The text has no Church Slavonic or East Slavonic variants of this word. On four occasions it is put in the mouth of Alexander as he addresses his troops or his nobles: *о друзи и братия, все(л)ныи и велемоцныи македоняне* 'Oh my friends and brothers, my all-powerful and mighty Macedonians' (284); *о велемоцныи мои военникове* 'Oh my mighty warriors, (285, 302); *о мои мылыи велемоцныи витязи* 'Oh my dear mighty knights' (308). It is also used once by the Persians, trying to console Darius with promise of a victory: *завтре мы его поразимо немало еще, коли ся поруша(т) велемоцные першане о(т) все(х) о(т)чиз(н)* 'We will inflict a great defeat on him to-morrow when the mighty Persians from all our homelands go into action' (288).

Finally the adverb *моцно* appears once: *Александе(р) плака(л) моцно* 'Alexander wept mightily' (325).

The examples given show that Mianžynski differentiated the stylistic functions of phonologically divergent forms. No doubt many further instances have here gone unnoticed and without comment. This article represents a preliminary account of some of the more obvious points of style in a work which still awaits the exhaustive analysis it undoubtedly deserves.