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THE MEANING OF OLD BULGARIAN ТРЪЗЪБЪЦЪ

The term ТРЪЗЪБЪЦЪ is attested only once in the Old Bulgarian 'canonical' texts:-

(1a) *ΠΟΡΕΙΛΕΤΕ] ΖΕ Η ΤΡЪЗЪБЪЦА ЖЕΛΕΖΗΖΙ ΠΟΔЪ-
СТЪΛΑΤΗ ΗΜΑ 'Εκέλευσε δὲ καὶ τρίβολους σιδηροῦς
ὑποστρωθῆναι αὐτοῖς* (Supr 181.27-28).

The earliest gloss I have found for this term is the Latin 'tridens' in Miklosich 1875:308. With the exception of an unexplained claim that the term means 'caltrop' in Huntley 1986:235, all other published secondary sources available to me concur with Miklosich that the term means 'trident', for the most recent, see Cejtin 1977:266 'трезубец, вилы с тремя зубьями', and Selimski 1989:43 'жезъл с три зъбеца'.

The gloss 'trident' must be rejected on grounds of translation technique and for pragmatic reasons. The Greek for 'trident' would be not *τρίβολος*, but *τρίαινα*, and given the gloss 'trident' the translation of (1a) would be:

(1b) 'And he also ordered that iron tridents

should be spread out under them'.

The problem with this translation is that the two Christian martyrs whose cell floors were to be covered with these iron instruments could easily have pushed a consignment of tridents to one side, and perhaps have ensured at least some comfort for themselves overnight. There are attested two other translations of *τρίβολος* in the Old Bulgarian canonical texts, *РЪПЪЕ* Mt 7.16 Zo Mar, and *ВЪЛЪВЪЦЪ* Supr 483.29. 484.1. These both mean 'thistles', so one must look for another meaning of the Greek term, namely 'caltrop', an iron ball with four spikes thrown in rows on the ground so that three of the spikes sticking upwards would impede the enemy's cavalry. These balls would have presented a real problem to the martyrs, but not for an English translator of (1a):

(1c) 'And he also ordered that iron caltrops should be spread out under them.'

REFERENCES

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 Selimski, L. За словообразователния строеж на стб. *тръзъбъцъ*.—*Palaeobulgarica*, 1989, No 4, 43—46