This edition represents a part of the efforts of one of the authors (Robert Romanchuk) to produce a critical edition of the Slavic version of the 12th-c. Byzantine "romantic epic" *Digenis Akritis*, reliable enough for Slavists interested in the work's life and reception from the 14th c. to the 18th, but also of use to Byzantinists. If in 1978 Michael Jeffreys, "in despair about the difficulty of progress" on questions around the Slavic text, proposed that it be treated with the same caution as "Akritic" folksongs collected in the 19th c., and if twenty years later its continued "problematic" status allowed it to be "left out of account" in Elizabeth Jeffreys's magisterial edition of the two oldest Greek versions — the failed romance in MS Grottaferrata (or G) and the approximated epic in Escorial (or E) — then today these questions are well on their way to being resolved.

We have known for some time that Henri Grégoire was in error by aligning the Slavic *Digenis* (in its earliest form, Erich Trapp's version ρ) with the prototype of the work. Yet neither is the Slavic version ρ the transcription of an oral epic, as some Byzantinists still imagine, nor is it a reflex of the 16th-c. omnibus version Z, as John Mavrogordato supposed. Rather, it is a distant cousin of G, as Trapp showed in his synoptic edition of the Greek versions. Moreover, and against the majority opinion in the Slavic field, ρ is almost certainly not Rusian (East Slavic), but was most probably produced in bilingual and bicultural 14th-c. Macedonia — as André Vaillant proposed — in the era of Stefan Dušan. In places ρ shadows G line-for-line and word-for-word, reflecting Trapp's hyparchetype ξ, shared ancestor of G and ρ, better than does G: e.g., ρ lacks the gnomic interpolations of G, as does Z; ρ also preserves certain oral-traditional formulas of the prototype in their original form, as Trapp demonstrated. But in many places ρ has been reworked from ξ in an oral-formulaic mode, far more radically than E has been.

What is more, half of ρ — including the opening "Lay of the Emir," the episode treated by this site — is extant only in the 17th-c. Muscovite (Russian) epitome ψ (Kuz'mina's "second redaction") that reorders entire sections of plot, deletes descriptive passages, and further "folklorizes" the text. The Slavic "Lay" is something of a narrative chaos in the epitome, at least from the point of view of the Greek versions that preserve the original ordering. When an episode is extant in both the 14th-c. ρ (in the form of MS Тх) and the 17th-c. epitome ψ, plot material from the former may be freely reordered in the latter: thus, in the education and hunt scenes that open the "Romance of Digenis" episode, the epitomizer moves the dove-white horse that the hero gains at the end of his investiture to the very beginning; inverts the order of killing the bears and the deer (in Slav, a moose), forgetting about the he-bear in the meantime; and eliminates a great deal of description and dialogue besides.

In 2015, making use of Roderick Beaton's 1993 reconstruction of the "common core" of the "Lay of the Emir" (which he based on his close comparison of MSS E and G), Robert Romanchuk and his FSU Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program assistant Thuy-Linh Pham recovered the probable original (Greek) ordering of the Slavic material of the "Lay" preserved in the epitome ψ. The present site shows the ordering of Beaton's "core"; Romanchuk and Pham's reconstructed (hypothesized) ordering of the "Lay" in ρ, which follows the "core"; and the Muscovite epitomizer's "shuffling" of narrative passages in ψ, in a holistic visualization of their interrelationships known as a *plectogram* (the invention of Hugh Olmstead).

[More technical material can go here.]

Large parts of the ρ narrative have been reordered in the Muscovite epitome ψ. First, most of passages i bis to 9bis (the youngest brother's combat with the Emir, his defeat and his lies to the brothers — which motivate the scenes that follow) have been swapped with passages 10 to 21 (the brothers' interrogation of the Saracen at the tents of the Emir's army, their discovery of the slaughtered Christian maidens and angry return to the Emir). Thus in the epitome, the brothers meet their informant at the tents even before encountering the Emir himself. Characteristically for Slav, this Saracen is hypertrophied into an army of 3000 — quickly cut down to three who, in the epitome, lead them to the Emir instead of the girls. At passage 8 in ψ, a bout of folkloric boasting (Stith Thompson's motif W117) is interpolated: "Tell us, Emir, have you no guards posted on the way? We reached the tent without any resistance" (MS Тт, f. 173v). The duplicated "but now tell us" bears witness to the motif papering over the seam.

At a finer level of detail, passages 23 (the brothers' final threat) and 25-26 (the Emir's offer to convert and marry the girl) have inexplicably been inverted from the ordering of the Greek "core." To help the Muscovite reordering cohere, the motif of association of equals and unequals (J410) enters passage 23: "How can we give our sister to a slave?" (f. 175v). This passage is generally supposed to belong to the epitomizer, as it makes use of the East Slavic vernacular form *kholop*.

The second large-scale reordering of the narrative is an exchange of passages 63 to 70, the Emir's intent to visit Syria (in ρ, his trip to "Arabia"), with most of passages 35 to 52, his mother's threatening letter — which motivates the Emir's journey in the first place! And the birth of Digenis (33bis-34), which in the original ordering follows the Emir's conversion and wedding to the girl, has been postponed to the end of the epitome's "Lay." In these cases too, folkloric material (motifs P678; M301.4, M311[.0.2.1]) are employed to stitch the narrative back together.

The Muscovite reworking of the plot of the "Lay of the Emir" has a marvelous basis. Its logic appears to be that of Vladimir Propp's morphology of the folk wondertale: all tests of the heroes (e.g., finding the dead girls) are now grouped *before* the struggle with the villain (single combat with the Emir) — in Propp's "algebra," sequences DEF precede sequence HI; while the mother's letter, rather than motivating the Emir's visit, is here treated as a villainous pursuit of the hero *in response to* his completing the difficult task of his journey — that is, Propp's sequence PrRs follows sequence MN. And the hero's reward W, the birth of his son, is at the end of the tale, where the wondertale demands it.