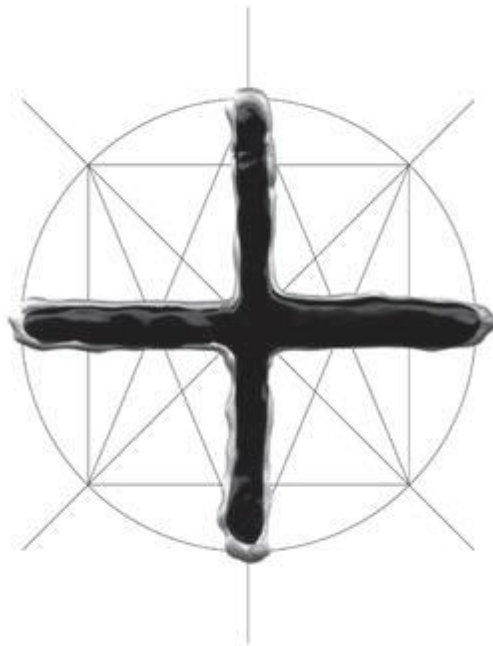


Jasna Horvat

AZ

AZ - Exploring the Ancient Croatian Glagolitic Script



Zagreb, August 2016

Translation by Jadranka Zlomislić and Slaven Lendić

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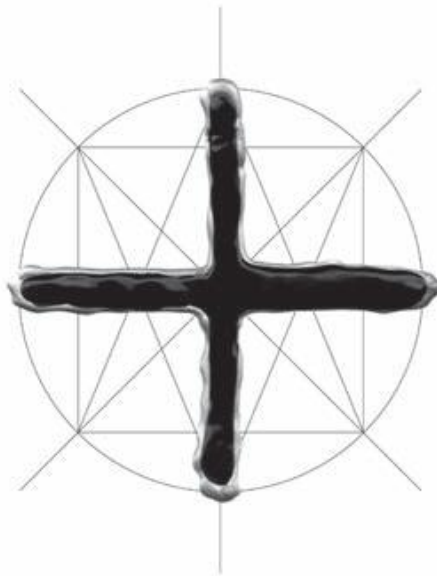
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Jasna Horvat
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Exploring the Ancient Croatian Glagolitic script



For this historical novel, Jasna Horvat received the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts Award for the highest scientific and artistic achievements in the Republic of Croatia in the field of literature in 2010.

*Without tradition, it is impossible
to comprehend the essential reality
that touches the essence of human
life...*

Béla Hamvas
Christianity and Traditions

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FOREWORD

Who am I

The Glagolitic alphabet begins with the symbol: “Az.”

“Az” is a symbol that stands for the letter “A,” the number one and the first person singular – “I.”

“Az” is a symbol, a number, a letter, as well as a question: *Who am I?*

“Az” is the beginning of an ambitious alphabet that requires not only writing, but also questioning. It is eternal, persistent and stubborn, and always equally vigorous.

Is it not natural, then, that precisely because of the way the first letter of the Glagolitic alphabet was conceived, an interest was sparked for its creator? Are you not intrigued by the creator of these new letters, of which the first poses the question:

Who am I?

There are many legends/theories about the origin of the Glagolitic alphabet.

However, it can be said for certain that this alphabet is derived from several sources – the Greek letter F, the Hebrew letter Š/SH and others testify to that. Furthermore Slavists with universities in Toronto and Brno during their research for the first Slavic illustrated etymological dictionary, “Universal Slavic Dictionary”, recently found an unmistakable parallel, both morphological and phonological, between Glagolitic (and Cyrillic) letter Ž/ZH and Ethiopian Amharic Ž/ZH as well as between Glagolitic (and Cyrillic) letter Č/CH and Iranian Avestan Č/CH.

According to the prevailing theory, the creator of the Glagolitic alphabet is Constantine of Thessalonica. This theory was considered valid by George of Slavonia (Georgius de Sclavonia), a Croatian theologian of the XV Century.

George’s knowledge of the Glagolitic alphabet is evident in the skill with which he interpreted its hidden meanings. Within the first nine letters of the Glagolitic alphabet George unraveled Constantine of Thessalonica’s hidden message and answered the question posed by the first letter: *Who am I?*

I, a Christian who knows the letters,

say that it is good to live honorably in this world.

Constantine’s alphabet contains other secret messages. Nevertheless, the first nine letters can serve as a clear guideline when we find ourselves at a loss of answers to the question *who am I*.

This manuscript follows in the footsteps of Constantine’s letters.

It is directed at those who are rested.

Also, it has been written for those who are persistent enough. “Az” addresses the readers who are asking themselves: *Who am I?*

Always.

Forever.

Part I: ONES OF THE DIARY OF METHODIUS

- 1, A – AZЪ – I, a Christian
- 2, B – BUKY – letter
- 3, V – VÊDÊ (vêdêti) – know
- 4, G – GLAGOLJQ (glagolati) – speak
- 5, D – DOBRÊ – good
- 6, E – ESTЪ – is
- 7, Ž – ŽIVÊTI – live
- 8, Ѕ – ЅÊLO – very, honorably
- 9, Z – ZEMLI – Earth

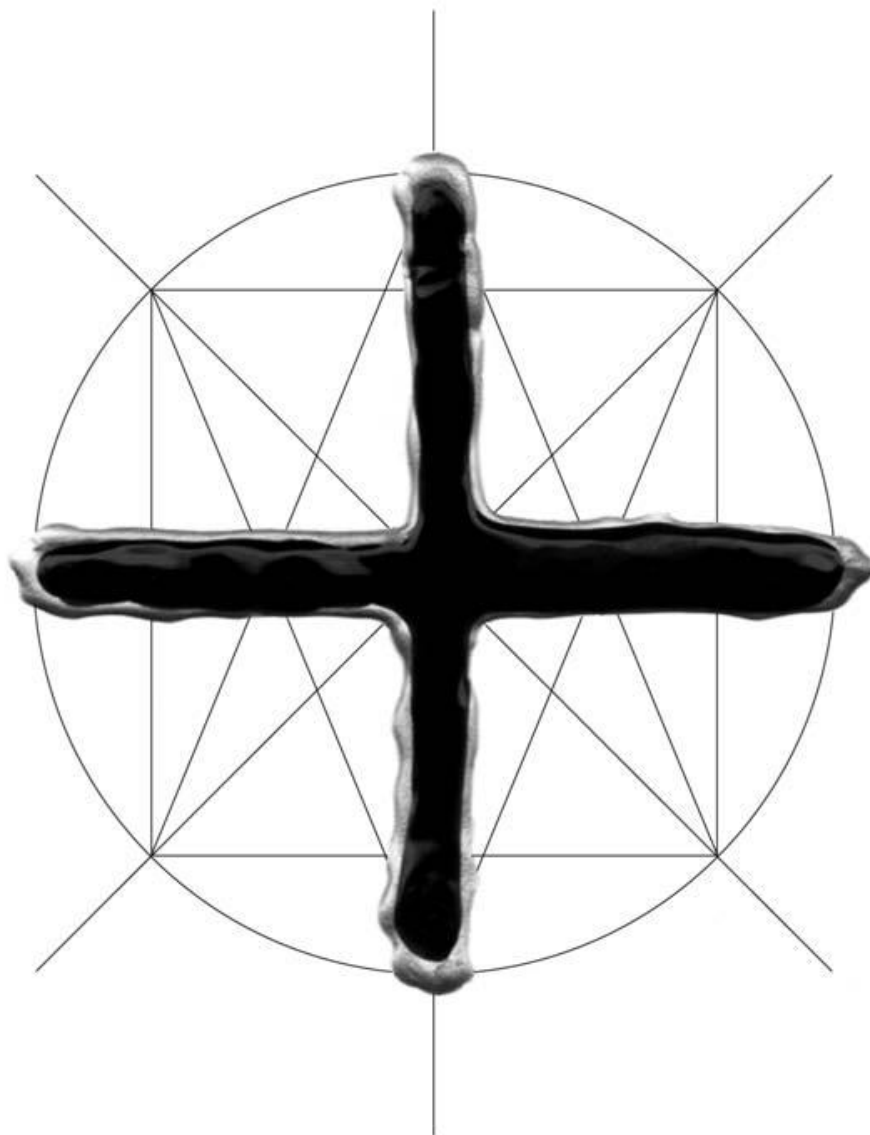
Cyril and Methodius first translated from Greek into Slavic the words from the Gospel of John: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...and the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us” – fittingly enough, as the written word is a kind of incarnation of the spoken one.¹

I, a Christian who knows the letters, say that it is good to live honorably in the world.

According to George of Slavonia (XIV-XV century), the abovementioned is spelled out by the first nine letters of the Glagolitic alphabet.

¹ <http://uss.utoronto.ca>

1, А – AZЪ



*I am the Alpha and the Omega,
the First and the Last,
the Beginning and the End!*

Revelation 22:13

Constantinople, summer of our Lord's year 863

I do not trust myself. Nor do I trust my brother, Constantine of Thessalonica. I trust God, the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.

This diary I dedicate specifically to Him...

I am going to write about my brother.

He is young, and, may God forgive me, he seems to have gone mad...

Last night he created new letters. I found him on the floor of the Church of the Holy Apostles. He was lying on his back, looking up towards the dome, at the picture of Christ Pantocrator, Ruler of All, with his right hand raised in the sign of benediction.

He said: – The thumb and the ring finger of His hand form a circle, the index finger and the middle finger form a cross, and the little finger – extended.

He said: – I have received the script...God is the Father, the Son is the Word, their Union – Life.

I made the sign of the cross and thought to myself: – What I feared the most had come upon me. He had lost his mind!

He had always lived the Gospel. *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*

His sleepless nights have borne fruit. The people were right. Feeble Constantine may not have battled insomnia by burning a heron's beak bound in donkey-hide... Still, he refused sleep by searching for the unattainable in himself.

We were born in Thessalonica, but we live in Constantinople on the Bosphorus Strait. We live in a city that bridges the differences between the two continents. They keep accusing us of preferring Rome to Constantinople, but we would not change either the city or our heritage... We only want to be a part of the whole in which Christ's thoughts reside.

... man proposes, but God disposes.

God intended for me to find my brother motionless on the cold floor of the Church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople. He was lying, gazing upwards at the ceiling and trying to regain consciousness. All around him were scrolls with drawings of nimbuses, rosettes, letters and numbers.

He was adding the dome to the layout of the church and in adding, he got a cruciform nimbus, a halo with an engraved cross... By adding, he also got a hand bestowing a blessing.

Constantine told me: – Last night I was enlightened by the hand of Christ Pantocrator, Ruler of All. First, the letters of His monogram – XP appeared to me. By following their shadows and the Pythagorean principle of analogy, I changed the X to an H and the P to an R. The rest of the letters kept adding by themselves. Am I bemused, or am I tired?

I let him speak. I thought it is better to hear what thoughts were swarming in his head ... Enlightened by Christ, he created letters... I asked him, if his alphabet was like the Slavic alphabet we had seen in Thessalonica.

He did not hear me. He spoke of his hopes: – And now the emperor, Michael III, might send us to Moravia. We have a new alphabet! We have letters filled with Christ!

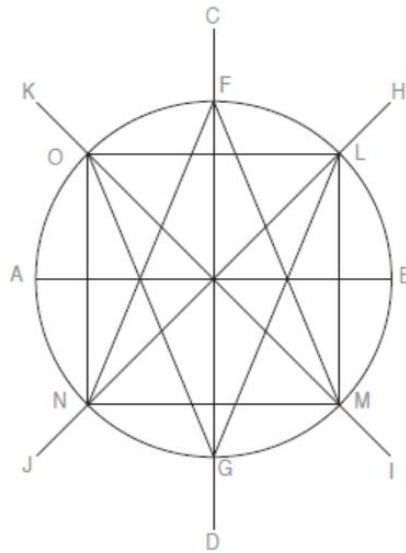
He hoped, if we make the Slavic people literate and introduce worship in their tongue, prayers will no longer be just sounds... They will carry a thought... They will not be spoken in Latin, Greek, or Hebrew... The people will be themselves and God will hear them in their own, mother tongue...

He turned to his writings. He explained the layout of the letters in which the image of the world is reflected. “Az” corresponds to the number one. One represents the absolute Being from which all beings spring... “Az” is A, A is unity. A synthesis of words and numbers... It is in the form of a cross like a man whose self-expression raises him to eternity.

It seemed to me that he was unaware of what he was getting himself into. Since Mesrop the Armenian, no man living has created an alphabet. Mesrop was cunning. His 38 letters combined the Persian and the Greek alphabet... Constantine’s body was cramping due to the vision. He had to convince me that the letters were really his own, and that they sprang out of him as pigeons fly out of the coop. He clarified the differences and similarities of all the other alphabets – the Samaritan, Ethiopian, Hebrew, Greek, Latin and Proto-Indo... He drew the rosette from which his letters emanate....

Forgive me Lord, but he exhausted me...

In the end, I swore that I did see what he, my younger brother, saw. I confirmed it, and saw for myself that he gathered the letters around Christ as the center. I admired the rosette, the square and the nimbus of Christ.



If silence is a lie, then I have lied as well... I did not admit to him that in the letters I also saw all his passions... But I did see... his passion for geometry, as well as his constant passion for esotericism, astrology, magic and alchemy...

I said: – Yes, Constantine. In your alphabet I see Christ...

The Lord himself knows that I did not see anything but fear for my brother.

Still... I confirmed it.

I swore to him on Solomon's knot, the nimbus, the square and the cross, that I saw the One who knew how to love us completely.

I forgot to mention, that at the present my faith is very weak...I do not believe in myself, nor do I believe in what I write...

Every biography is untrue. The living are short-sighted. Today I am blind, without faith in myself, but with firm faith in God.

I believe in God, the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.

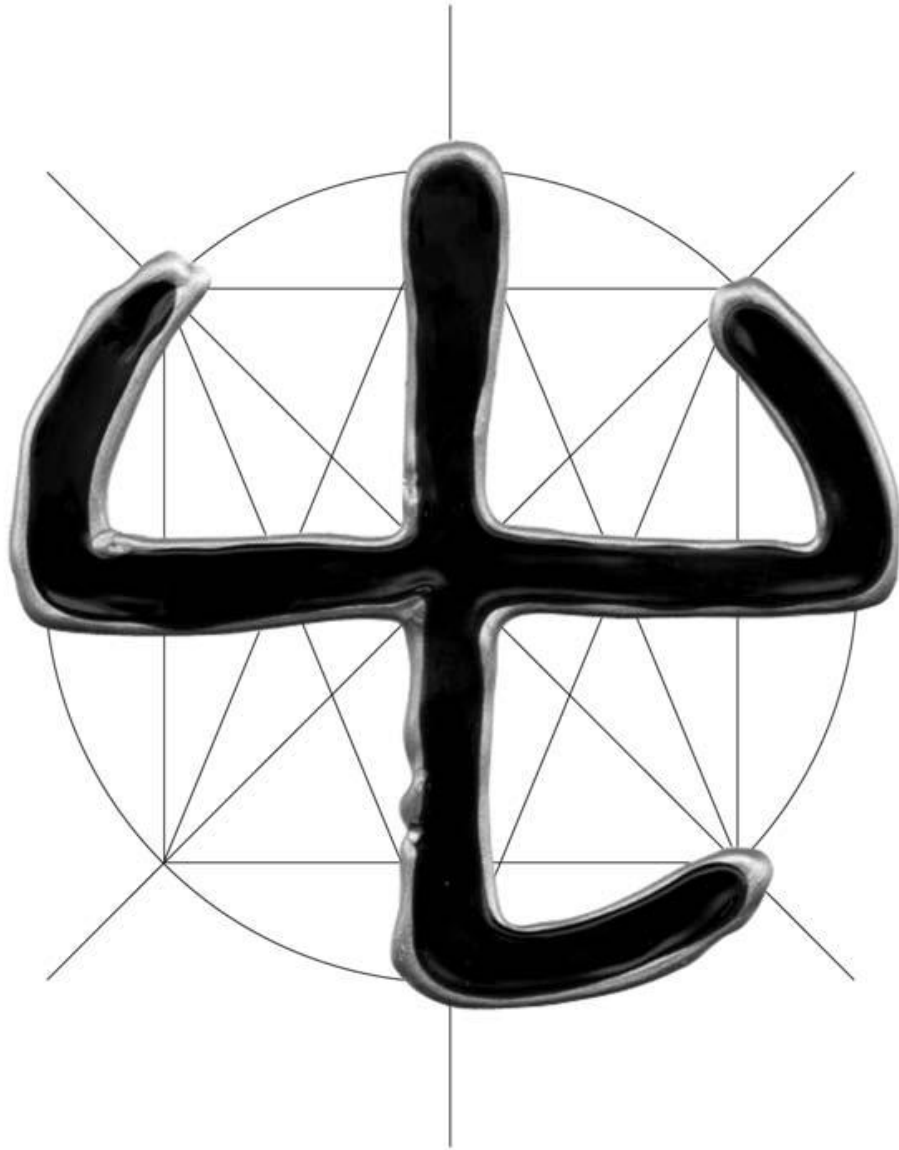
To him, the Beginning and the End, I dedicate this diary...

In addition, I beg Him to forgive my brother, even if he is mistaken.

His intentions are pure. My brother wants to weave Him, God, into the word and the language. I will follow him... Even if he is wrong... The blood tie has been given to me by Him, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last, the Alpha and the Omega...

I, a Christian, believe in God.

2, В – BUKY



We have joined the afternoon gathering with Emperor Michael III.

Patriarch Photius led the *Akathist Hymn to the Virgin Mary*, the hall resounded with: – *Rejoice, O Bride Unwedded!*, the eunuchs formed a circle around the throne of Solomon, and the light shone upon the tree bound by gold and silver. Constantine was especially fond of this throne, a wonder of technology and mechanics, the work of Leo the Mathematician, a teacher from his younger days. When the mechanical birds and lions fell silent, a golden figure appeared on the throne and with a steady chime struck twelve.

The emperor, known as the Drunkard, was lowered by ropes from the very ceiling. He sat on the throne of Solomon in the manner in which we have, sadly, grown accustomed – delirious, with swollen eyelids, unkempt, lumbering. Within these past months he has organized drinking binges to commemorate the sudden return from Asia and the defense of Constantinople against the Moors.

Constantine watched over him with parental concern. Even though he was around ten years older, to the twenty-three-year-old Michael III, he was a companion, a teacher and a role model... Michael's uncle Bardas was also there by his side. Constantinople was still under the impact of the dethronement of Empress Theodora, Michael's mother, Bardas's sister, Constantine's benefactress and protectress. Seven years ago, then sixteen-year-old Michael, switched guardians: instead of his mother, Bardas ruled in his name.

And Constantine?

Constantine fled... Some assumed, out of grief for Theodora... Out of sorrow for the young Michael... He was saddened by the ridicule ... Due to the mocking, Michael the Drunkard was becoming more and more like his grandfather, Michael the Stammerer...

Constantine found his sanctuary on the Olympus of Asia, Kesis Dagi, the Mountain of Monks. He had distanced himself from watching Michael's battles against the Arabs and the Russians, creating imperial ties to the Khazars, hippodrome races, gambling, drinking, debauchery... Time has passed, Constantine is thirty-six years old, he has created letters and has decided that he will present them to the emperor.

As always, he did what he set his mind on. He went before the emperor, they talked about horses, and then Constantine pleaded with him to hear his report on the new letters. Then Photius, Constantine's philosophy teacher, took the floor.

He joined in on the debate about the letters. Photius suspected that Constantine had become an iconoclast, and that he has sided with his former teacher, John VII the Grammarian. He was interested, whether in the meantime Constantine had become an iconoclast, a destroyer of sacred images. He suspected that my brother and I had joined the ones who were destroying icons...

Constantine did not hear him. He was explaining the letters. Photius accused him again. He believed that with these letters, Constantine would create a new, trilingual heresy. Along with the three accepted languages, Latin, Greek and Hebrew, the introduction of a fourth one – Slavic would bring about a division between those who resisted the new alphabet and those who embraced it.

Constantine presented the first translations. He praised the artfulness with which he had written out the two church books using the new letters. Michael III accepted the *Evangelary* and the *Psalter* as a gift and ended the discussion. With visible boredom he turned to Bardas, his uncle, and stuttered, as his grandfather Michael II the Stammerer had stuttered. He demanded that a solution be found. Bardas proved his resourcefulness. He stepped back, wrote out a scroll, and brought it to the emperor to be signed. Michael III, looking green around the gills, dipped the pen in red ink, signed, turned to the side, and accompanied by some loud burping – threw up. Bardas turned to the guests and read out loud the newly signed decree: – Constantine’s mission to Moravia has been approved, as well as his alphabet, escorts, and all that he deems necessary. Constantine went white. Before he collapsed, he called Sophia² by name.

I carried him out for air. We sat under an olive tree. I made him breathe deeply. I told him of his childhood, of how he was born as the last child of our parents, of his frailty and infirmity... I reminded him of how I found him writing indecipherable signs on the walls. Already then, as a child, he was discovering the Word of God within letters... He interrupted me with a question... He wanted to know if I had seen Sophia. When I did not respond, he asked if I had at least felt her presence...

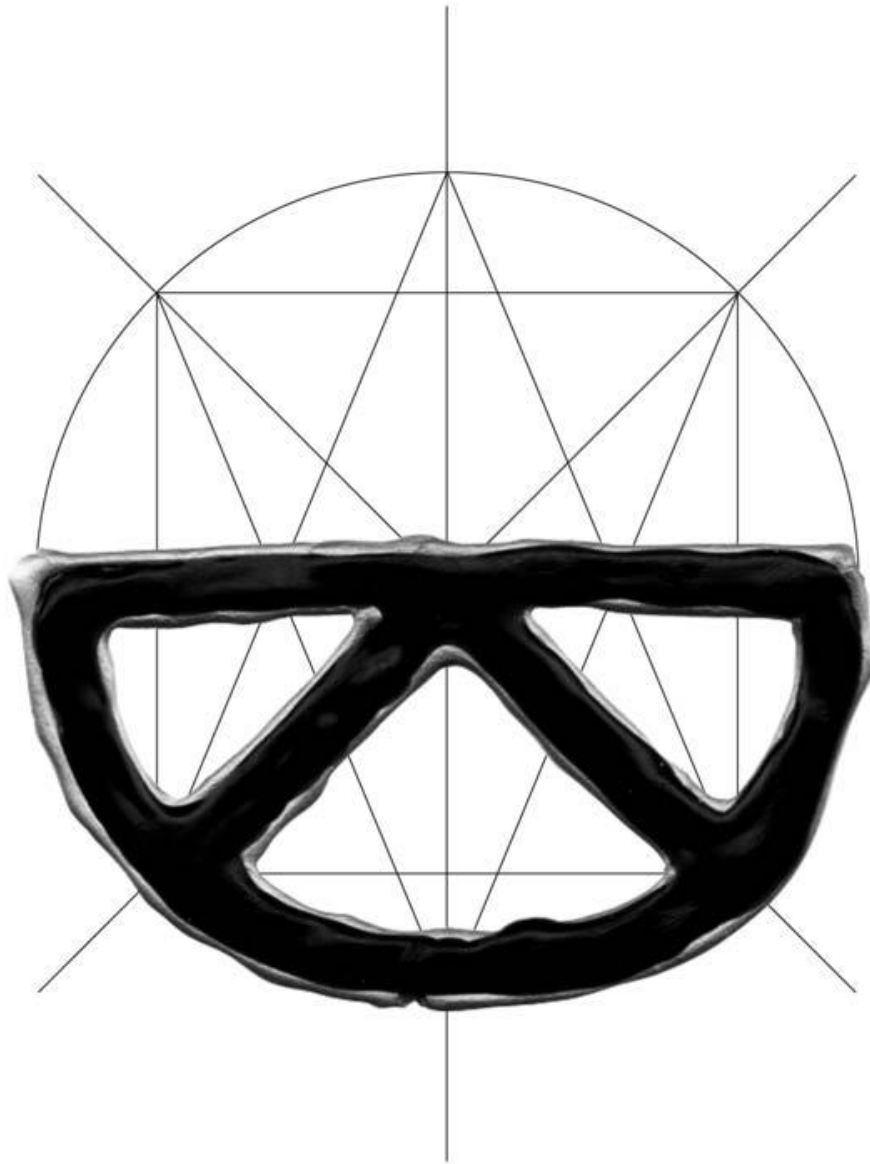
I turned my head and placed a cold compress on his chest.

He asked me one more time: “Methodius, did you feel the presence of Sophia? Did you see how she pointed her finger at me?”

Lord, you know I did not want to hurt him. Frightened by his imaginings and mentions of the non-existent woman, I remained silent once again... I wrapped him in compresses. I believed... I hoped, I prayed to Thee, save him, O Lord...

² Sophia –symbol of wisdom, considered a symbol of God the Son, known according to the lyrics of the hymn “In all Thy wisdom, Father God.”

3, V – VÊDÊ



*For without any explanation,
many symbols look like incredible,
fantastic ravings.*

Theodore the Studite

We are preparing for our departure for Moravia. Constantine is taking his leave of Constantinople, and he has paid a visit to Leo the Mathematician, his elderly teacher, adept in communication by signs.

Back when he studied at the School of Magnaura, Constantine attempted to convince me that Leo was receiving signs from the heavens, stars and people. With those signs, he once defended Constantinople from the Arabs. He invented the language of fire... He taught this language to the guards. Then he deployed them along the border and they signaled each other with fire. Densely arranged alongside the border of the Eastern Empire, they sent messages from one part of Asia Minor to the other. It took less than one hour for the message to cross a line longer than four hundred miles – from Isam to Egile, Mami, Kiriz and Mokil, all the way to Constantinople.

Leo mastered grammar and poetics in Constantinople. He learned rhetoric, philosophy and arithmetic at Andros on the Aegean Sea, while higher knowledge, astrology and Pythagorean religion, were passed on to him by an eccentric wise man whose name was not to be mentioned. He returned to Constantinople during the restoration of the university by Bardas. Soon, al-Mamun heard of Leo. This was during the year 829, or 833.

At that time, al-Mamun, the son of the famous Harun al-Rashid, was the caliph who had taken the people of Abbasids to the highest peaks of knowledge. As his father before him, al-Mamun cherished three virtues in Baghdad: that which is beautiful, that which is difficult, and that which is worthy. He had built an observatory and a library, and by questioning the captives from Thessalonica, indirectly, he became infatuated with antique writers, mysteries of geometry and other knowledge cultivated in Constantinople. He heard of Leo from one of the prisoners, a former student of the University of Constantinople...Intrigued by the prisoner's story, he had him declared a free man, loaded him with gifts and sent him on to Constantinople. In a letter, al-Mamun invited Leo to Baghdad.

Due to this letter, interest in Leo increased. His lecture in the Temple of the Holy Forty Martyrs was personally attended by Emperor Theophilus, Michael's deceased father. Al-Mamun also heard of the lecture. Soon, Leo received a new letter. This time, the caliph informed him that he had made peace with Leo's devotion to the homeland.

Al-Mamun's ministers advised Constantine to stay there where he was born. Let him take his spite out on the citizens of Constantinople. Al-Mamun should challenge him. He has done so in this letter. He cordially asked him to solve unsolvable tasks from the fields of geometry and astrology.

In this instance, vanity did the trick and Leo cast aside everything he was doing. He devoted himself to the given tasks and after some time he found solutions to the dilemmas in question. He made new

ink and set out to write a reply to the caliph. Next to the solutions, he drew maps of stars and their prophecies...Had it been wise to write down the unspeakable? For Leo, wisdom was equal to the courage of madness. And madness... madness was being possessed by an idea... An idea is a passion, and passion is a confirmation of life... Al-Mamun fell silent. Messengers from Baghdad were reporting that from the receipt of Leo's letter, he had spent his days verifying the solutions.

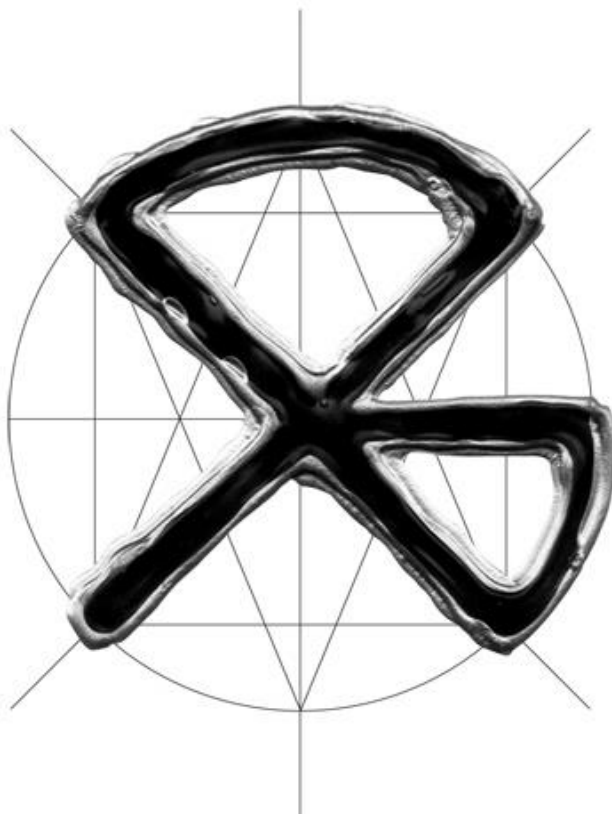
One morning, al-Mamun had come to a decision. He studied the morning prayer, called for the scribe and dictated a letter for the emperor of Constantinople. The greetings, praises and lists of gifts he was sending were followed by the caliph's request for Leo the Mathematician's right to live. In return, he offered twenty chests of gold. If the emperor did not find six hundred kilograms of gold sufficient, maybe a permanent peace offer would satisfy him. There is no record of the reply of emperor Theophilus the Iconoclast. In any case, Leo the Mathematician stayed in Constantinople. The price for his life increased, and he soon became the metropolitan of Thessalonica. This title was given to him by patriarch John VII the Grammarian, a friend, an iconoclast like Leo and a close relative.

Theophilus died, the empire was shaken, the circumstances changed... Emperor Theophilus was succeeded by the underage Michael III, and his mother, the educated and confident Empress Theodora, ruled in his name. Though devoted to the memory of the late emperor, the empress distanced herself from iconoclasm, and took the side of the icon worshippers... Leo was replaced. Theodora did not understand Leo's iconoclasm beliefs. Even his discussions spoke against him, those in which he advocated turning to God in prayer, sublime abstractions that cannot be transferred to an icon.

Constantine paid a visit to Leo today, even though they were both in agreement that persuasion is a mere form of aggression. He took the books of Ptolemy, Archimedes and Plato from Leo's library... They spoke of Pythagoras, the miraculous mystical energy and the divine trinity presented in the triplicity of human nature: the body, the spirit, and the soul. They came to the conclusion that the soul is present in everyone, for without it, there could be no link between the spirit and the body.

In one of the books that Constantine brought along, I found inserted a small piece of parchment on which Leo's predictions were written. He warned Constantine that in three years' time Bardas would be killed by a stableman. I do not know if he has entrusted him with other omens... I hope to learn more during Constantine's and my journey to Moravia...

4, G – GLAGOLJQ



*I put together letters,
I formed words,
I spoke.*

Constantine debated with Leo about the meaning of the number four, and the world's order based on the number four.

Did I record how the stream of words flew from my brother's lips? Wherever he turned, he would see examples of the world divided in fours... fire, water, earth, air... hot, cold, dry, wet... The numbering of the senses reminded him of the four rivers that flow from Heaven... Euphrates, Tigris, Pishon and Gihon, then the four sides of the world, the four spatial dimensions... height, depth, length and width. In the cross of Christ he recognized the four natures of Christ... the Servant, the Man, the Spiritual Warrior and the King... He believed that Christ had been completely understood only by John... Mark, Luke, Matthew and John were different in many ways. Artists saw them differently as well ...Winged lion, winged ox, winged man, and an eagle...

Leo joined in the discussion. Throughout the last few years he claimed that the balance of the four humors – blood, phlegm, yellow bile, and black bile – corresponds to the balance in which we possess the four cardinal virtues... prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance. He also recalled the Pythagorean theorem according to which the sum of the first four numbers ($1 + 2 + 3 + 4$) is equal to the number ten, the principle of the decimal system. There was no doubt, the world is *orbis quadratus*, *mundus quadratus*, and its balance rests on the number four – a symbol of firmness, order and legality.

Constantine returned from his visit to Leo, with a black silk ribbon tied around his neck. Leo had told him that speech was his mission, and that the ribbon would protect his throat. At the mention of the throat and throaty sounds, Constantine became restless... he could call the new letters something similar to *grleno* (throaty), *glasno* (loud), *glatko* (smooth), *glogotavo* (cooing), *glagolasto* (speaking)... Perhaps *glagoljanje* (to speak)? Perhaps *glagoljica* (Glagolitic)?

Constantine's visit to Leo reminded me of his enthusiastic interest in the renowned iconographer Lazarus... Through some friendships, we betray other friendships. Lazarus was an iconographer, Leo the Mathematician – a teacher and an iconoclast....

Constantine remembered Lazarus for his exquisitely painted icons... They had to depict the asceticism of the face, eye depth, and heavenly joy. If these qualities were found, the icon would be complete, if they were not, he would start painting anew...until he found the reverse perspective and an appearance of austere, ascetic peacefulness... For Lazarus, the eyes were the point from which invisible threads convey the experiences of the transcendental world...The icon was a medium for reaching the image of the abstract God... Lazarus created Icons; Leo destroyed them, for him, God was a sacred abstraction...

Constantine loved them both... Opposite, contradictory, similar in their differences...

He asked me, if I remember the day when he destroyed John VII the Grammarian with his rhetoric? How could I not remember? That was a painful day.... Though young, Constantine already held the title Philosopher, passed down from his teacher Photius. He was green, but was still declared a teacher of the School of Magnaura... At the time, he was teaching linguistics, philosophy and mathematics...

Empress Theodora decided to destroy the iconoclasts, and their representative – John VII the Grammarian. She chose Constantine the Philosopher... She assigned him to be John's opponent in a rhetoric duel...

When the clamor fell silent, John VII the Grammarian quoted God's message passed down by Moses. The audience approved. Someone shouted the words of Moses: *"Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image... Thou shalt not bow down to them nor serve them!"* and Constantine rose and replied steadily: – Moses did not say *do not make any images*, but *only not to create them to be worshiped as a god*.

John VII the Grammarian remained silent... Icons are not objects of adoration or worship... God is worshipped, icons are venerated. Iconoclasm was defeated... His student had rejected him... By rejecting him, he denied him, overpowered him, defeated him...

Today I watched him. He forgets that speaking is his mission... The discussion with Leo did not do him well. I condemned him for the rhetoric defeat of John VII the Grammarian. I told him: – Your mission is to speak. You speak rightly... the theme of your life is the unity of those who are united in faith... Forget the icons, Constantine. With them or without them, a soul needs a sanctuary...

Finally he conceded to me. The day when he overpowered John VII the Grammarian, was when he had his first vision of Sophia. She watched him from a corner of the hall... He admitted, Sophia was exclaiming her support to the Grammarian, an aristocrat of Armenian origin... She looked accusingly at Empress Theodora... She betrayed him...

Sophia did not forgive forgetfulness... John VII the Grammarian, the iconoclast, was the teacher of the late Emperor Theophilus... Because of him, Theophilus had become the way we remember him. The Empire had forgotten Theophilus, and along with Theophilus, it had forgotten the Grammarian as well.

Constantine turned to Sophia. He wished to change what had been done... He remembered the Grammarian's brilliant negotiations with the Saracens, his intellect, diligence and strength of spirit. No, he did not believe the high fliers who proclaimed the Grammarian to be a magician, a fortune teller, a sorcerer, the new Valaamon... he was certain that they were lying. Certainly, the Grammarian did not mumble mysterious chants at night while decapitating the bronze snake, a decoration on the hippodrome... neither does he believe that the Grammarian has made a devil's cave in every house in the suburbs of the city. He had no knowledge of fallen women, of uncanny beauty and mindless sensuality who are devoted to the Devil, with whom John VII the Grammarian summons the dead and asks them about the future.

He admitted to me that Sophia doesn't abandon him... They speak... Constantine confesses to her.

Truly, he did not want to be a part of the downfall of John VII the Grammarian. He was sorry that the Grammarian was no longer addressed by the honorable title of patriarch; he was horrified that the Grammarian was cruelly whipped and dragged to a monastery on the Bosphorus where to this day he is destroying icons. He condemns himself. He did not have compassion for John VII the Grammarian.

He was sorry that he adored Empress Theodora. He was deceived about his wisdom, his understanding of the world in its entirety...

Constantine confessed to me, and Sophia still evades him...

He is looking for her and he will continue to look for her...

Because of her we will go on our mission to the Slavic people. We understand them with ease, because we grew up with them, we are familiar with their customs, words and numerous gods... On the journey, we will bring along the new letters, a chest with the relics of St. Clement found at the Khazars and the wish that Christianity should remain undivided.

Constantine will tell them of the world determined by the number four. He will tell them about Adam, the first son of our race, and the four letters of his name that correspond to the four cardinal points: Anatole (East), Dusis (West), Arktos (North), and Mesembria (South).

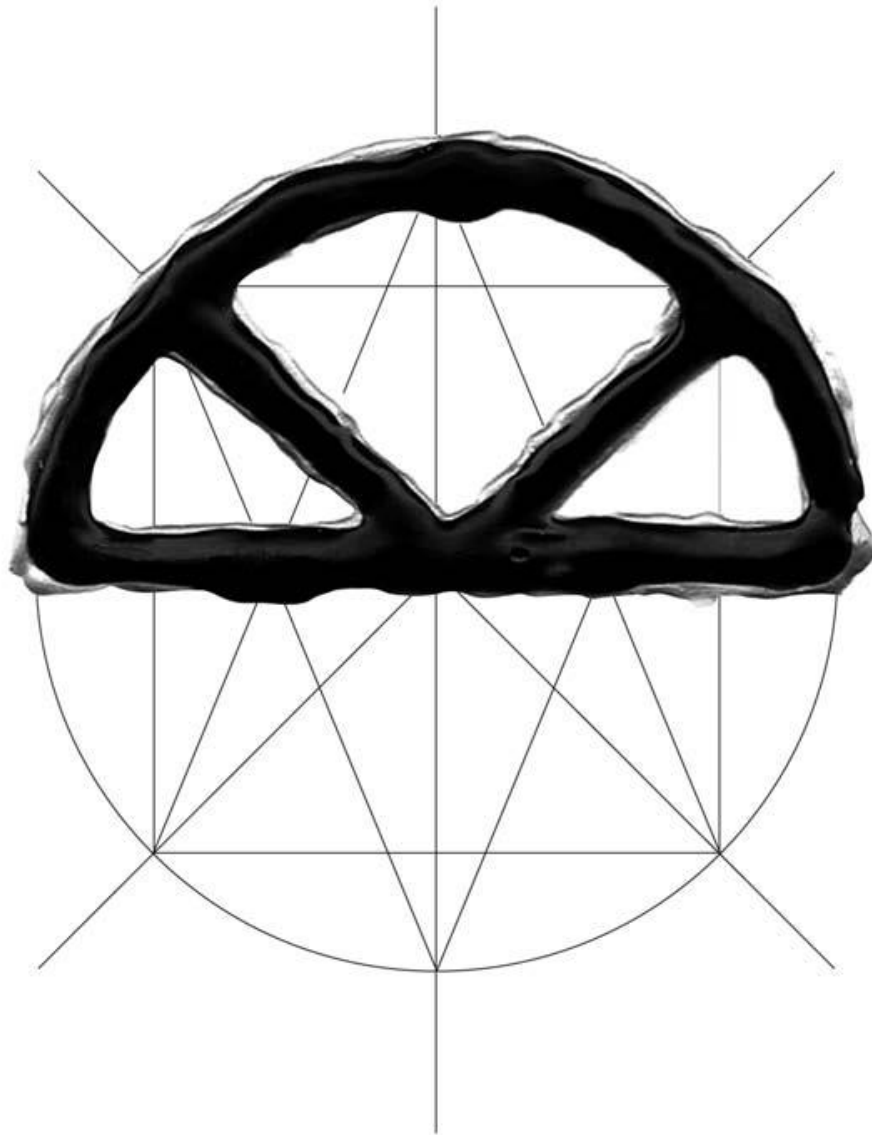
He confessed to me... He worshipped the empress Theodora. He worshipped Leo who does not believe that he has invented new letters... Leo accused him of taking the letters from the Slavs. He also holds him responsible for the persecution of John VII the Grammarian.

Constantine confessed and went on to the Golden Horn. He is collecting branches of hawthorn from which we will make ink together. We will boil them, add wine to them, and place them in parchment bags. We will keep them in the sun until they are completely dried. Into the dried mass we will add soot from the candles, almond oil and ox bile.

We will write his new letters.

He said they sound *glogoljavo* (speakable)...

5, D – DOBRÊ



Our starting points are thought through, reasonable, fixed and predetermined. As Saint Demetrius had to take a stand for the defense of Thessalonica against the Slavs, Constantine and I had to be born in Thessalonica... We had to be Greeks, surrounded by Slavs... the ones because of whom my brother received the divine inspiration... the ones to whom we will take the letters.

Thessalonica.

They call it also Thessalonikhé. In its name, there is a deep sea bay, at the bottom of the Hortach Hill. The name of the Macedonian king Cassander is also present. There are still traces of the third century before Christ, when Cassander named the city after his wife Thessaloniki (Thessalonikhéi), the sister of Alexander the Great.

Constantine referred to our birthplace with the Greek word *spudé*. For him, Thessalonica is a place of courage, a place marked by readiness for noble deeds. It was also seen as courageous and strong by Apostle Paul, its spiritual model and leader. Paul dedicated two of his epistles to the Thessalonians... In the cathedral of St. Demetrius, Constantine prayed to Paul. There he swore an oath to him. Through his life he will reach that what was ours before the Original sin.

One day, Constantine confessed to me that he had wronged Miriam. He said that he was regretful because of the injustice he had done to her. I was seduced by my own self. I did her an injustice with my egotism.

Nine years after he had overpowered John VII the Grammarian in the rhetoric battle, Empress Theodora named him librarian to the patriarch of Hagia Sophia. The title was awarded by the logothete Theoctistus, Theodora's eunuch and advisor.

In the library, Theoctistus presented him a parchment written in red and royal ink. The twenty-five year old Constantine was reading Gregory of Nazianzus... Theoctistus interrupted his reading, and Constantine called him to the best place in the library.

The logothete offered him the hand of his ward Miriam. He was her guardian since her birth. Miriam was to him, an eunuch, what children are to their parents. With her beside him, the eunuch succeeded in living the role of both parents.

Constantine declined. He considered the secular world unworthy. I, his brother, can testify that he always felt invisible.

In reply to Theoctistus's offer, Constantine's boldness, *spudé*, was replaced by *rhathymia* – lack of energy, indifference, laziness (of the spirit), the cause of the Fall of Eden and every sin. He was on the defensive against the role offered to him, but part of him rejoiced. Yes, he rejoiced in himself... He found pleasure in imagining Miriam in pain over the image of his character. He was her icon... Miriam's desire gave him cosmic fulfillment. He confessed... He, who wanted to reach the dignity of the forefather Adam himself, was enraptured with himself.

He repented. Lord, he is only human and my brother. He was vain. In his inner burden there were quite a few dark patches.

He confessed something else. He failed to mention Sofia to the logothete Theoctistus. He found comfort in the fact that in Hebrew the word for the Universe is *olam*. The word *olam* is related to the word *alem* – *hidden*. The Universe made him hide the truth. He kept Sophia a secret in compliance with the Universe...

He repented for the two wrongs he has committed against Theoctistus.

One love he rejected, the other he concealed.

I watched his slender body and recognized the persistence with which he continued to search for Sophia. He pays no heed to her whims, ignores her silences and long absences.

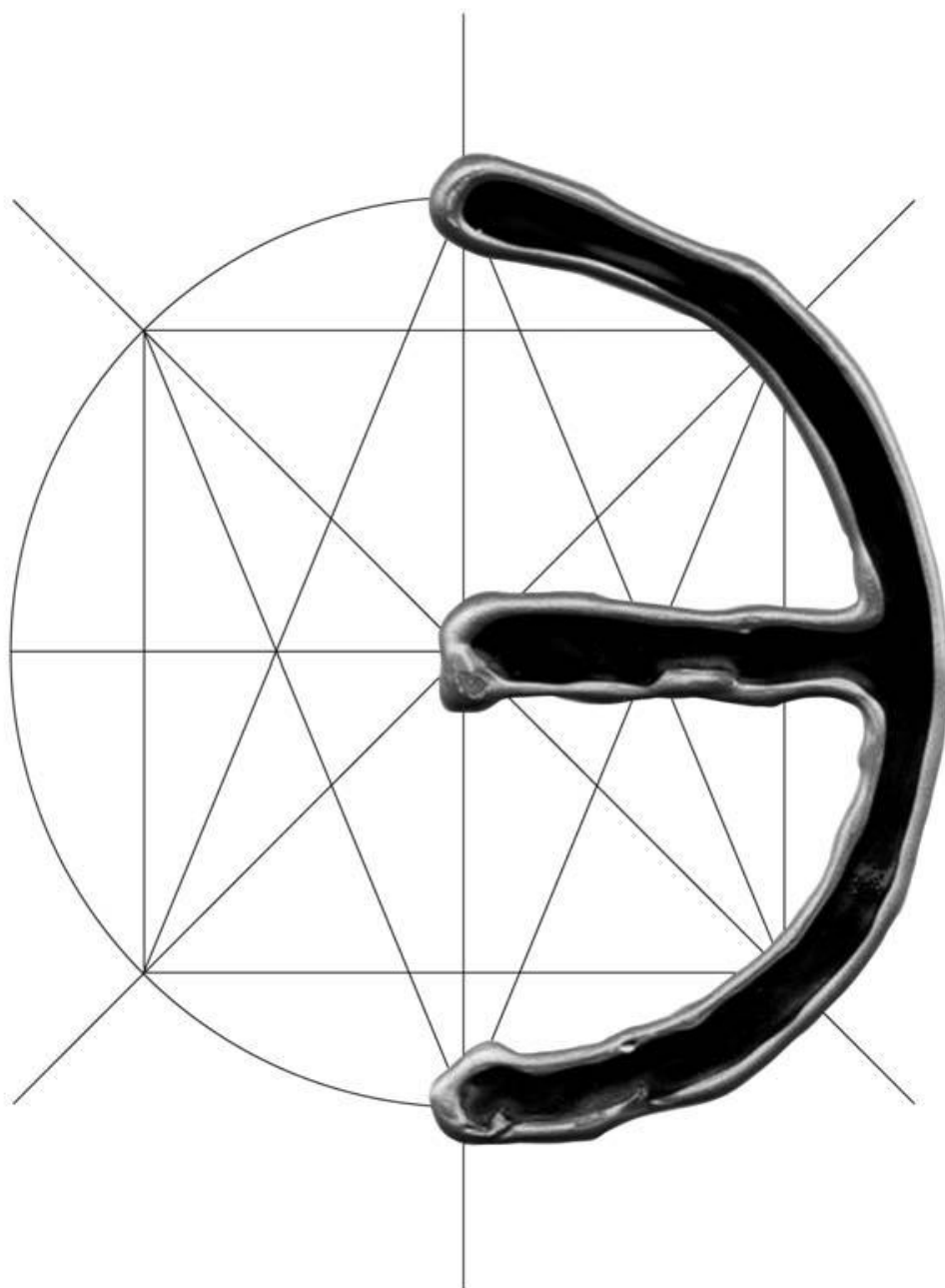
I paid a visit to Miriam. She received me as one receives the brother of a lover. She lives sheltered from the world, withdrawn and quietly. Next to her, there are books and the works of Constantine. She keeps an eye on him. She reads him in his sentences.

Upon my taking leave, Miriam spoke Constantine's name five times. She had to know, that the number five is androgynous, but it also represents a man with his five senses, five ways of comprehending, and five fingers on each hand.

The number five unites number two, the first even number and the number three, the first odd number and the number of the woman's principle. Five is also the number of Aphrodite, the number of love. There are five ways of comprehending – thought, will, decision, promise and endeavor; five is also virtue – good deeds, fierce deliberation, holy reading, dedicated prayer and contemplation; there are five books in which God reveals himself, there are five bridges that connect different worlds...

I took leave of Miriam, but I continued to feel her thoughts... Constantine would say, "Methodius, do not be surprised that you feel thoughts. You have to feel thoughts; they are more powerful than words." Even now, after having left, I still sense Miriam is contemplating Constantine...

6, E – ESTЪ



It is six o'clock. It is neither day nor night. The Golden Horn shimmers greeted by the Sun from the west. Constantine believes that at this time we are surrounded by angels. At sunset he himself is part of the transformation of the visible into the invisible. While the sun is setting, it is as if Constantine becomes a seraph, a six-winged angel. Two wings cover the face of God, two wings cover His feet, and with the remaining two he flies. He goes around the world and sets the stars in motion. While he is six-winged, physical creations move around him, the same ones with which God created man on the sixth day. He falls only when he remembers that the flight was not enough...

After falling, he would comfort himself with the story... of Buddha and Pythagoras, two mystical forces from the sixth century before Christ... Lao Tzu came to life in both of them. They transcribed speeches from this famous work – *Tao Te Ching*. They ruled themselves by the idea which reached them through books. They read and absorbed the *Tao Te Ching*....

Constantine also lived by the *Tao Te Ching*... In it, all three were found. Buddha, Pythagoras and Lao Tzu... Whenever he would stop being the six-winged angel, Lao Tzu would speak from him... When he dreamt of the edge of the world, he would reach Buddha's *Nirvana*. When he examined Pythagoras's theorems, he entered all four stages of the Pythagorean initiation. Along with Photius, John VII the Grammarian and Leo the Mathematician, his teachers were Christ, Buddha, Pythagoras and Lao Tzu. He spoke to his students about them. Once he even mentioned his teachers to Emperor Michael III. It was when he was teaching mathematics to Michael III...

My brother has never grown tired of defiance... I do not know if he has experienced *visio beatifica*, the beatific vision, and if it is possible for it to happen in dreams. He wants to find the divine memory... It is a blessing that he managed to survive after resigning as the emperor's teacher.

We will leave Constantinople, the capital of the Eastern Empire...

As with each of his loves, Constantine desired to change its parts and accommodate them to himself, but still, he loved it in its entirety. Perhaps the suburbs the most, Pera, *Peran en Sykais* – *The Fig Field on the Other Side*, though he still had not gotten used to its new name: *Galata*. He loved the Galatian fort – the Tower of Christ, chained to the city of Constantinople, embellished by a row of ships, merchants and languages of the newly arrived foreigners. Regularly he visited the forum of Constantinople – with the emperor's gardens on the one side, the Hagia Sophia encircled in jasmine flowers on the other, and the hippodrome on the southwest. He wrote poems about the Theodosian Walls and the Golden Horn, by which the peninsula was separated from land ever since the times of the emperor Justinian. He loved these cobbled streets, squares, parks, gold-covered domes, the obelisk of Theodosius, four glittering horses of molten brass, and the cheers of the crowd from the hippodrome... He went to the races because of Michael III. There he rested in the colorful simplicity

and mixture of blue and green uniforms. The colors lost their strength at the hippodrome; the blue color of the Sebastokrator was no longer superior to the green tones of the clothing of the lower emperor's officials.

He said that again today he will look for Michael III at the hippodrome. He will not come near him. Next to Michael III, will be Basil, who was until recently a groom and today is the Grand Chamberlain and the scandal of Constantinople. Constantine will recognize Michael by his purple clothing. In this empire, purplish red is the color of the emperor. Constantine had naively believed for years that purple became the royal color because of its beauty. Later he found out that it was made from a predator, the sea slug that survived by preying on seashells... The hippodrome will cheer at every Michael's win, and Constantine will retreat. He could never understand the crowd... It is as if they never understood the sixth day of their lives. As if they had forgotten the crucifixion of Christ, who was sent to all mankind at the age of six, at six o'clock on the sixth day. As if they did not hear the words of Moses: *On the sixth day they shall prepare that which they bring in; and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily....* As if they did not realize that the sixth day is the time of our lives, the time within which through our good deeds we have collected food for the future... As if they had forgotten the harmony of the number six, as if they overlooked its arithmetic perfection, as if they did not know that the number six is both the sum and the product of its divisors, as if they had not sworn that they would strive in their lives for the harmonious complete equilibrium...

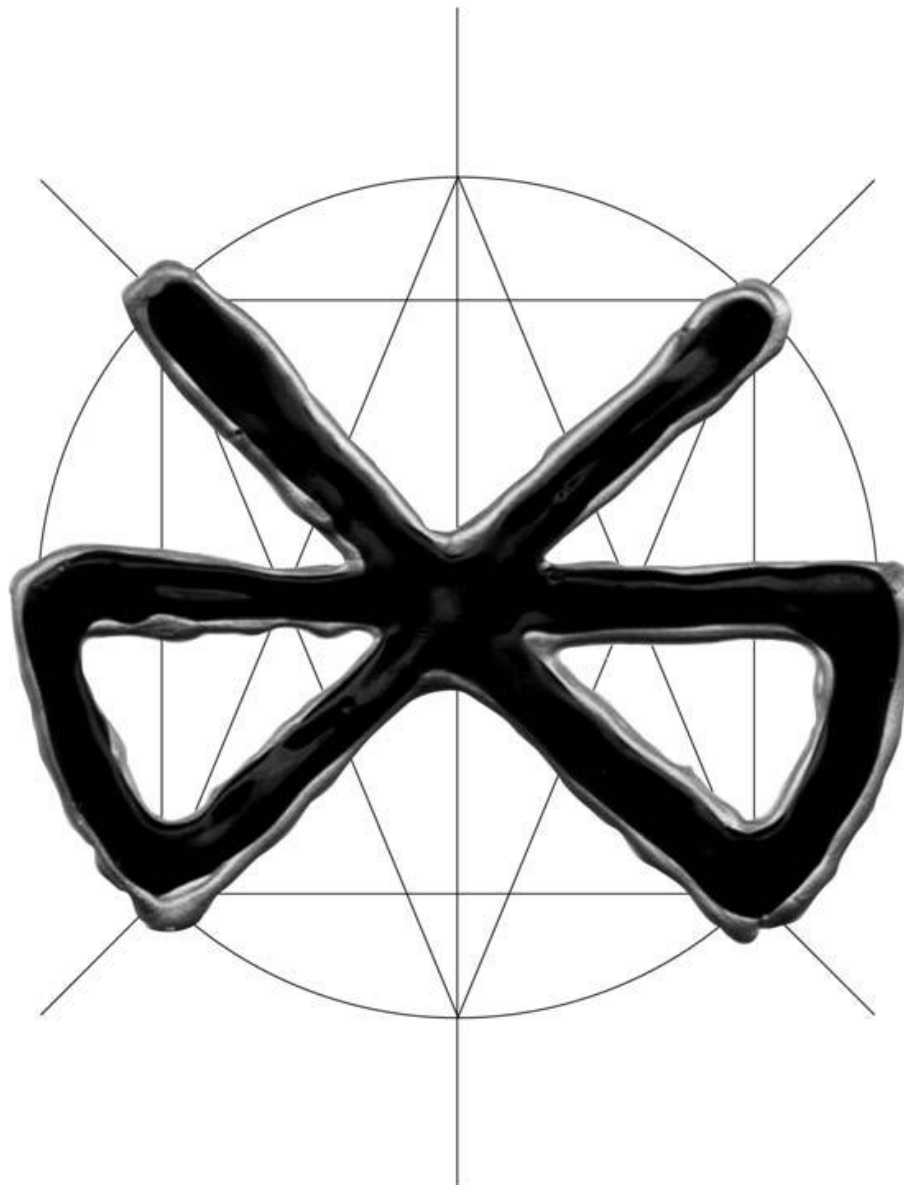
Where is he?

The sixth hour passes, I have lit the kindling wood, and Constantine is still not here. When he returns, he will notice the food that Miriam brought... We mentioned him, as always, through silence... she is like brass... Experiences change her into green... Lord, does this child know the meaning of her sackcloth?

Even though ten years have passed since the murder of the logothete Theoctistus, Miriam still mourns him, as on the first day... She wanted to know about our departure. She asked me what we were taking with us. I explained to her about Constantine's letters, the relics of St. Clement found in Kherson while on a mission to the Khazars.... She listened attentively. As all who are in love, she consumed my words so that she could accommodate them to her own vision... Infatuation is also a kind of stubbornness.

As we parted we said our farewells, and she asked if we were going to come back. She left, and I lit a candle for her stubborn ways and false hopes.

7, Ž – ŽIVĚTI



*One holiday is great and hard –
that is the very life of a man.*

Theodore the Studite

My brother is marked by the number seven. He was born in the seventh month of the year 827, as the youngest of seven children. After his birth, our parents gave up married life, and he refused to be breast-fed by the wet nurse. He also refused to live like the rest. When he was seven, he had taken a vow to the Word of God, and seven years later, when he was fourteen, our father left the harmony of this world and Constantine immersed himself into thoughts incomprehensible for a child. He read the works of Gregory of Nazianzus, the *Theologian*, and desperately searched for a teacher. At the age of seventeen, the logothete Theoctistus found him, tested his knowledge and decided that he would be a good companion for the three-year-old Michael III. Theoctistus found teachers for Constantine in all seven liberal arts. The companion of Emperor Michael III had to be well versed in *trivium* (grammar, rhetoric, dialectic), as well as *quadrivium* (arithmetic, geometry, astronomy and music).

Constantine had no love for the earthly life. He had no love for death either. He practiced the power of will, leaving the present plane of consciousness, and ascending towards the unspeakable.

In Constantinople, at the royal court, as companion to Michael III he found teachers on his own. Leo the Mathematician had foretold him that he would live for forty-two years. Constantine understood the prediction to mean: – Six times seven is forty-two.

Today is the year 863 and my brother Constantine has a little more than five years left. If Leo's mathematics is correct, both of them will die in the year 869 – the aged mathematician Leo and my brother, tired, and yet young.

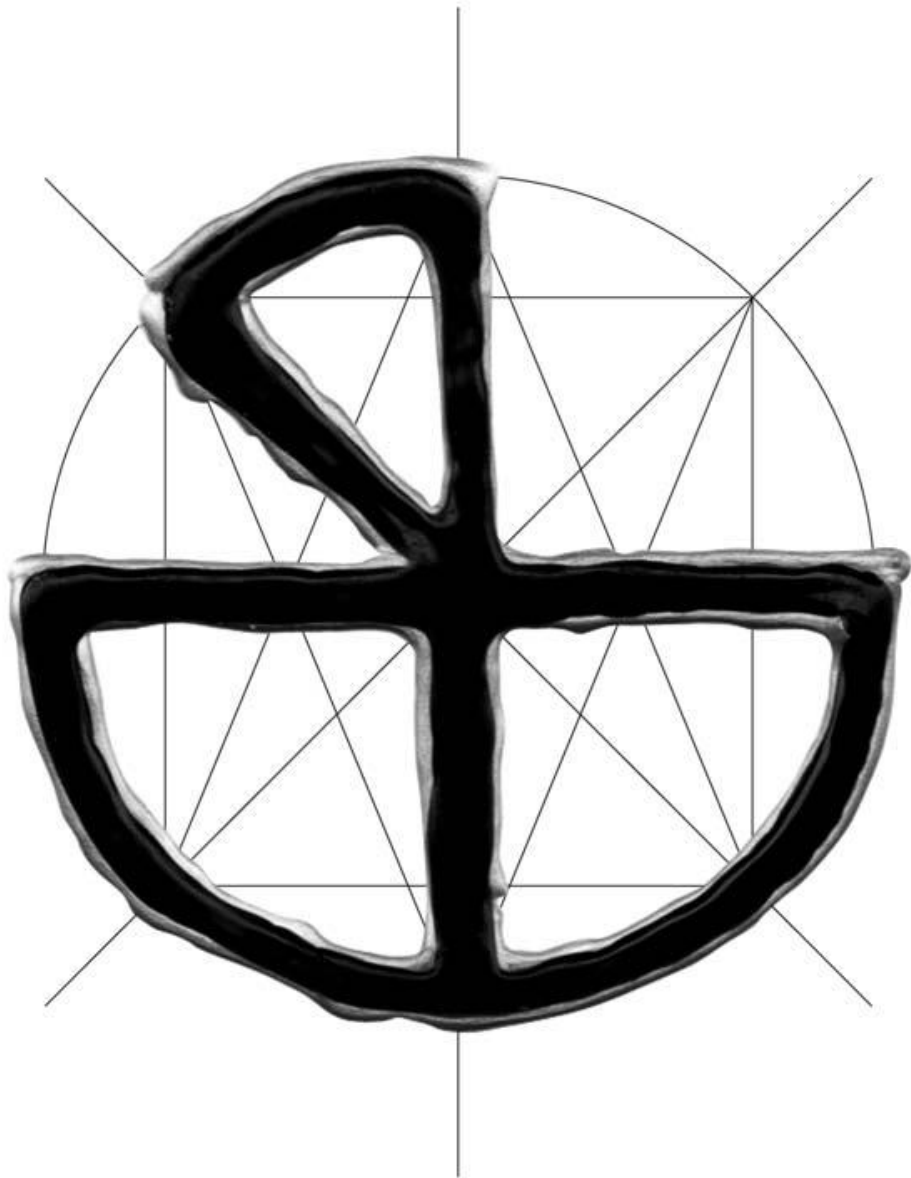
Should we learn what will happen in our lives before it unfolds in its own time? I do not know. The truth sounds worse than it is. Miriam wanted to know if Constantine would come back, and I made his leaving bearable to her, by staying silent about the prophecy. At the age of fifty it is hard for me to take leave of my beloved city... I will go to Hagia Sophia. I will walk around the seventy meters of her width and 75 meters of her length, the square and the water cistern. I will let myself be enticed by the jasmine scent, I will touch her bronze gate and washbasin made of Abraham's stone, the same one at which, as tradition tells, three angels were nourished, three destroyers of Sodom and Gomorrah. I will gaze at her colorful statues and sense each of her three levels, the one underground, the one above ground, and the third above the previously mentioned. Then I will want to touch the sacred relics: the dress of Jesus, the tip of the spear that pierced him and the sponge with which they quenched his thirst. I will think: If only I had one of three keys that keep sacred relics hidden from the world... But I am neither an emperor, nor the patriarch of Constantinople, nor a church elder. My mission is of another nature and I do not have access to the keys.

I will say farewell to Constantinople thinking of Anthemius of Tralles, the architect of Hagia

Sophia. Constantine returned and then left again... He did not even look at his supper... On leaving, he called me Michael, the name given to me by our parents. It has been a long time since anyone has called me that ... Ever since I entered the priesthood, people have addressed me as Methodius.

He went to Pere bastion. He will cross the Golden Horn, set his path to the north and climb up the Tower of Christ, the fortress and the bastion. He will watch the lights of the Bucoleon and Mangana Palace, the Seraglio lighthouse and the Bukeleon harbor. He will recognize the silhouettes of the hippodrome, the Church of St. Anastasia and St. Euphemia, the Harbor of Sophia, Gates of Triumph, Basilica Cistern and Hagia Sophia – The Great Church. He will gaze at the Bosphorus, Sea of Marmara, and ports of Constantinople – Sophia, Theodosius, Kontoskalion. Heptaskalon. He will let his solitude be disturbed by the centuries which he does not remember... Parting is harder than when he was leaving for the missions in the Saracens or the Khazars. From Constantinople he will bring Christianity to the West. They will leave an imprint on each other. Constantinople on Constantine, Constantine on Constantinople... They will become a memory to one another...

8,3 – 3ÊLO



*Is knowledge a virtue,
or is virtue knowledge?*

While standing at the Pere bastion, Constantine wondered why God has planted seeds of misunderstanding among us... He gazed at the sea and imagined an island with a monastery on which the empress Theodora and her four daughters were exiled.

Theodora always demanded more of Constantine... In his life, she had taken the place that should have belonged to our mother Mary and our father Leo, a soldier, drungar and strategist... Even though she had taken Constantine for herself, Theodora allowed me to take part in his life... She invited me, played hostess, and waited to hear what I would say. She listened carefully for every memory of his childhood.

I withstood this woman... I did not speak to her about the very things she had wanted to know. I acted well... She still does not know many things, how Constantine rejected being breast-fed by the wet nurse, or how our mother returned him to her own bosom. My brother had a silent understanding with our mother... He would drink from her and her love moderately, and during the days of fasting, he would reject our mother's breasts as well... Theodora wanted to know stories about Constantine... I had always known this woman wanted to own an empire, to return lost influence for her son Michael III and to subordinate my youngest brother Constantine.

Perhaps I should have told her of our family vows? Perhaps she should have known how I swore to our father that I would watch over Constantine as a parent, and that one day, we would both lie beside their bodies at the graveyard in Thessalonica... If I had explained Constantine's growing up alongside the Book of Wisdom, Theodora might have been able to understand Constantine's Sophia... Divine love or a vision? I do not know... He does not know either, my little one and my brother...

Constantine was spared, and me, Michael, they made me strong. They accustomed me to the root of dead nettle, dug out forty days after Easter time, washed with water, and then wine. They prepared me for army duty, sent me down the river Struma, and I did not suffer in sleep at night because I was losing my Greek gentility among the half-savage Slavs.

Unlike Constantine, I was raised by our parents, Maria and Leo, still impulsive and young enough at that time... Constantine was embraced by the empress Theodora. In him she recognized her firstborn son Constantine, drowned in the cistern of Constantinople... Was it a murder, or mere negligence? Who knows... Constantine was just the way she imagined her son would be. She controlled his temper, molded his nature, worked on him as if he was a valuable metal. As with Michael III, she had chosen teachers for Constantine... She and high official Theoctistus watched over him during his young years. They had given him plenty and taught him how he was deceptively valuable. He was a son to them, and still... He must have seen in them more than parents...

Tonight he wrote to Empress Theodora.

He is still gone and I am taking the liberty to read what he has written. He begins the letter by the mention of me, Michael – Methodius, for whom he had to, before the journey, make new ink. He assumes that the empress is wondering where we are headed... Even though she would have heard from others, Constantine informs her how he has invented a new script, the reason for our departure. We will make the Slavs literate... First the ones from Moravia, then the others who live across the Slavic lands... On the journey he will bring the relics of St. Clement, found in Kherson, during the mission with the Khazars. Along with the relics, he will bring the letter given to him by the Khazar Khan, addressed to Gebalim, the ruler of the Croats... He intends to find Gebalim at all costs. Perhaps this ruler will want to receive the new letters, the Glagolitic script, as a gift which he will want to share with his Croatian people.

The following few sentences he crossed out. He was choosing his words and they were evading him. He had changed the pen and wrote down how he fondly remembers the high official Theoctistus, Theodora's favorite... Still he remembered Theoctistus's overweight figure, voice that sounded like the song of a goldfinch, laughter and tendency towards fine food delights. Theoctistus respected the Pythagorean philosophy, but also the teachings of Zarathustra, Heraclitus, and St. Paul. He enjoyed debating over the soul of the world that the breath of the Spirit of Creation controls at will.

Theoctistus had sometimes taken him to choose silk for the empress; together they conjured her favorite perfume, and inoculated the rose which Theoctistus named after her.

After the chapter regarding Theoctistus, Constantine started writing about Constantinople, how it looks today, and what it was like during the times of her rule... Theodora, as an empress, had succeeded in keeping the Christian church unified and in bringing peace between the iconoclasts and their opponents. Today, when she is a nun, the Empire has forgotten her.

The letter starts to be messy... Once again he has crossed out a few sentences. Now he begs her to see a son in him. He persuades her that not all sons are mindless, and that Michael III did not become wayward because of her, nor because of the grandfathers, nor Michael II the Stammerer, but because of the court and the courtiers. He justifies him. He believes that it was not easy to determine who he is. What is this? He asks the empress to see him as a son, and one day he will fulfill the role he was chosen for – a spiritual father to her son, Michael III, the current emperor...

This statement was crossed out by me... Be silent, Constantine! Not all hopes are suitable to be said out loud... He wrote some more on the mixed roles... Poor soul, he got confused over who he is and who Theodora is. I crossed out everything up to the very end of the parchment. I unfolded the other parchment. Here, he has returned seven years into the past. He has described the time of the empress's downfall, her abandonment of Constantinople and her departure to the monastery to which she had given a hundred pieces of gold and three slaves... Reading, I feel the joy of leaving on a mission and leaving behind us the gladiator arena of a once great empire. Still, my brother does not state the truth in its fullness... He does not mention how he had, that very same year, 856, escaped to the desert by choice. He remained silent about how he looked for himself in the true desert outside of the *city desert*... It was then that my brother abandoned all but the belief in the One who had fed the Israelis in

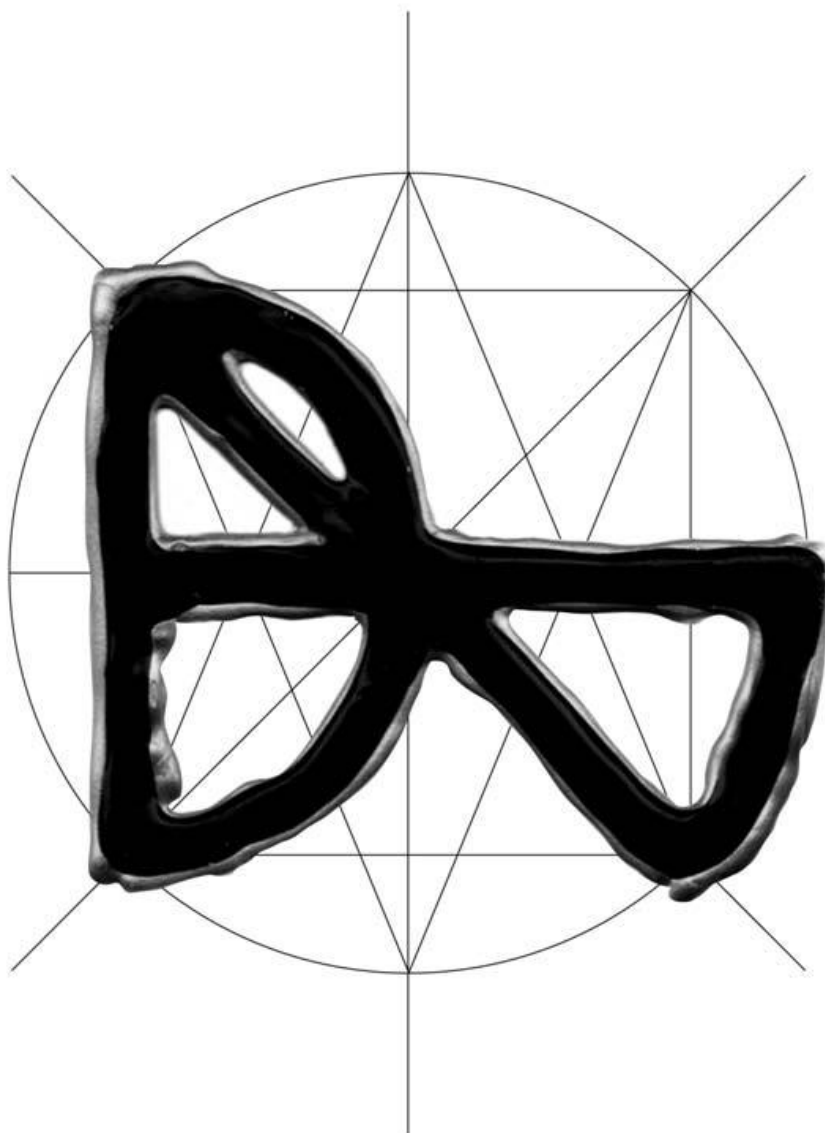
the desert... Has he finished the letter already? He left the parchment completely unwritten. There is only a greeting at the bottom.

Beloved empress, I feel I am your son.

Constantine the Philosopher

The only thing that I am sure of is that we are mysteries to others, as much as to ourselves.

9, Z – ZEMLI

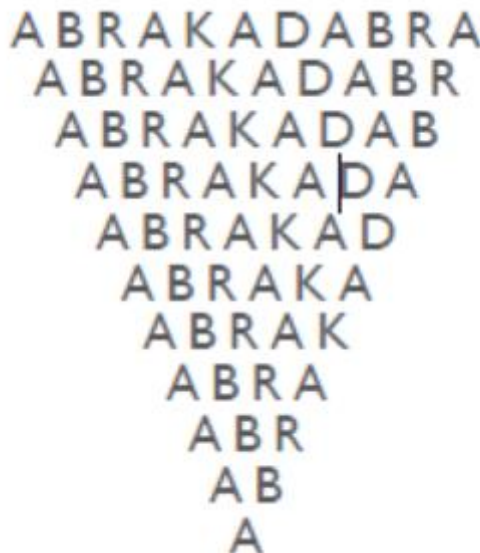


A lifetime is a child playing at draughts.

Heracitus, FRAGMENT 52

I am shrouded in darkness. Around me the sky filled with stars glitters while I stir the water in the barrel. I repeat this test when I am alone. By spinning the water in rhythm I create a whirlpool, I imitate the Cosmos and the third day in which God created the Earth. Three times three is nine. All is in motion. Nothing appears and nothing disappears. We are the form of the previous and the root of the future. Constantine is the change. I myself am that way, too. All is in motion.

I say repeatedly: abrakadabra, abrakadabra... I stress the syllables how the Hebrews taught us to say these nine letters – *abreg âd habra, strike dead with thy lightning*. The symbol A, aleph, from the left side of the triangle appears nine times.



I say *abreg ad habra* and I feel, I truly believed it. This word is magical. I see it in its three dimensions. Once it is a left-handed person, once a powerful whirlwind, and once an abyss from which nothing ever returns to the world above. Letters shaped to form a funnel push upper layers downwards.

My hands are torpid; I have stopped the circling of the water. The circular motion of water continues for a brief time, then their circular harmony disappears and Chaos occurs.

We were raised in joyful child's play. I played with water, Constantine's game is written in a square. When he was nine, he started playing the ancient Egyptian game of Nine Men's Morris with our father. Father has, as for every one of us, made a square in the sand, then made two smaller squares and linked them with a horizontal and vertical line – the sign of the cross. He took nine marbles for himself and he gave nine marbles to him.

Constantine wanted to beat him. As every one of us, he wanted to be better than our father, Leo, our creator. He tried to form his nine stones at crossing points of the horizontal and vertical lines. He came

up with the most diverse ways how to make an unbroken sequence of three stones. Later on, he played this game everywhere... On the benches in the courtyards of monasteries, on the stone tablets next to churches, in the sand, on the ground...

Is this game a message of Constantine's life?

In the square field of the game he has found the ground mirror of the circular plan of the heavenly sphere. Through play, he was becoming aware of the *crux gemmata* – the sign of Christ, and he created the letters of the Glagolitic script, and turned the trinitarian game into a tetragonic one. He had made the Glagolitic script, a game of four gospels in which the symbol of Christ's name is placed. The Glagolitic is his game with three marbles – one for each of the messengers of the good news.

I am restless and my brother feels this... I would remind him of the messenger who brought the news from Rome. Pope Nicholas anathemised Photius the Patriarch. This anathema will bring the division of East and West. The Church will separate from the Church. The seed of schism and wars has been planted, and we are going straight towards it in Moravia. As in my barrel, circles are losing their axis of proper expansion. I admit it, I am afraid of my brother's elation and his frequent escapes from the rigidity of the real world. Still, Constantine had always known how to lift my tired spirits and to renew my weary strength with his faith in the beauty of creation.

Today, as always, I am both a critical and caring brother.

I have tried to depict my brother.

Because of my brotherly love, my story about Constantine cannot be any different than the way I have written it down.

Part II: TENS OF THEODORA, THE EMPRESS

*Soon he received a message from God, the One who listens to the prayers of His servants,
and the Philosopher conceived the script, and began to write the words of the Gospel:
“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”*

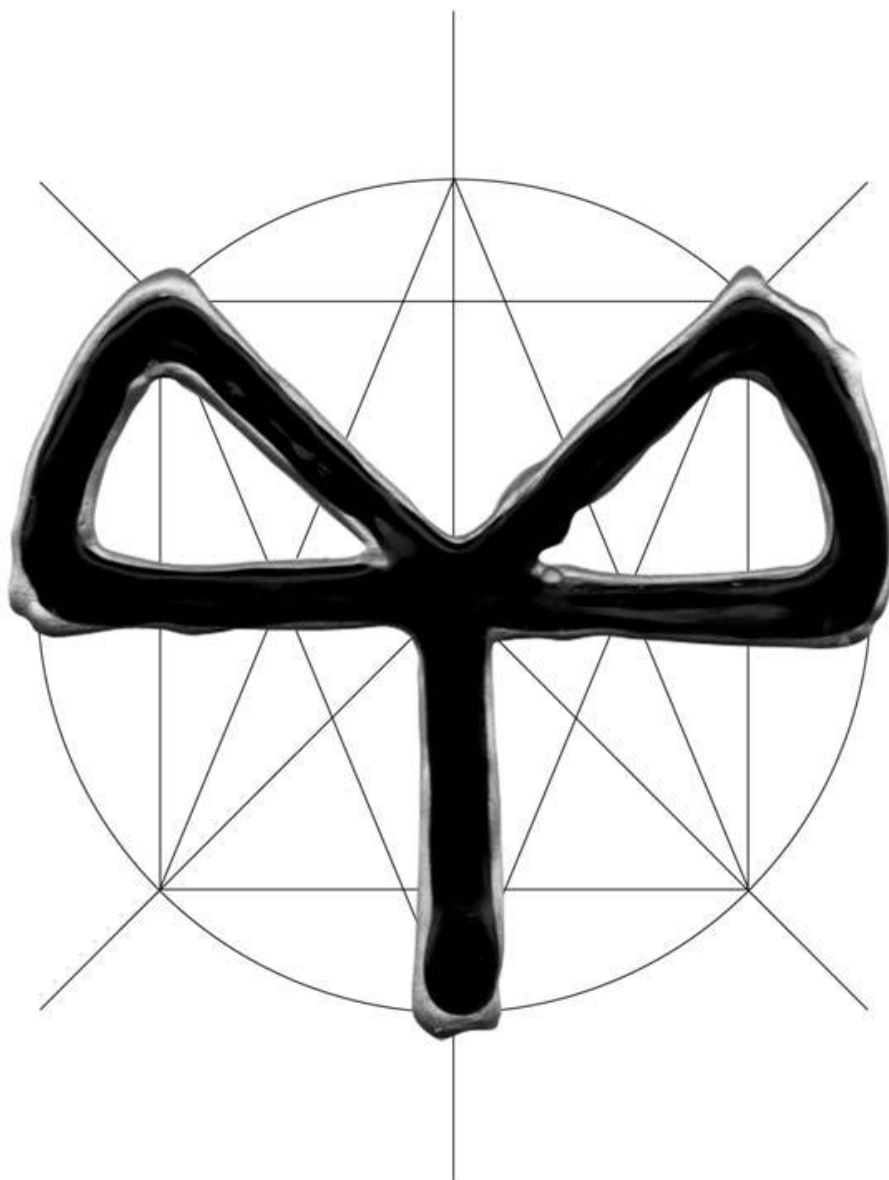
Chronicle of St. Cyril, Book XIV

10, Ī – ĪŽE	
20, I – I	and
30, Ĵ/Ĝ – ĐERV	
40, K – KAKO	how
50, L – LJUDIE	people
60, M – MYSLITE (mysliti)	think
70, N – NAŠĚ	our
80, O – ONĚ (онѣ)	he
90, P – POKOI – mir	peace

*Then follow iže (the letter “I”, which is the first letter of the name of Jesus / Lat. Iesus / Gr. Ièsous)
and đerv (a rare letter, found in the words of the Gospel). The acrostic continues: kako ljudie myslite
našě oně pokoi rĕci slovo tvrdo...*

How do you people mean, He is our peace?

10, Ĩ – ĨŽE



*There was He,
there was She,
they become It.*

I used to be an empress. When they want to offend me, they ask if I grieve for those days. I remain composed, I hear them well. I withdraw and ask myself: do I have regrets?

For one's past life, one does not grieve. Those days have flown by, just as these days are flying by, while I was orchestrating plans and dreaming of the future...

I have been forty-eight years on this earth, seven of them as a nun, the morning is rosy, purple and blue. As if it was the first from the origin of the world and would never lose its freshness... God is mighty... In this year of 863, he has once again adorned me with the morning dew.

My daughters tell me I'm withering away. I may have lost my petals, but not my agility. I am not yet an eunuch... I still have my regular monthly flow of blood, and I could bear a child if I wanted to... I don't pine for men that I hardly ever see, nor do I lament over the blackness of my clothing, nor for being half woman, half turned to stone... I weep over the fate of my son...

We were exiled to the monastery by Michael III and Bardas. Oh, the shame, horror and humiliation... I was deposed by my own beloved son, and my brother... Unfortunately, Michael was never rational, neither then, when he was sixteen, nor now, when he is twenty-three... He came unexpectedly in the tenth year of our marriage... the youngest, seventh child, and heir to the Amorian line. We protected him even by name. We named him after the father of Theophilus, the founder of the Amorian dynasty, Michael II the Stammerer...

Michael was not even three years old when Theophilus died... I remained alone, in the midst of the Empire... I did not lament. I summoned the courtiers, my courage and primeval female instincts. At the assembly in Constantinople I throned myself and our son, Michael the Amorian...

Theophilus spoke of how Michael would be cultivated ..., but despite all the attention that he received, he managed to go wild. Our other children went wild, as well. They were estranged and degenerated into weed... Five of them are living, and of no use to themselves or to the world... Michael, Thekla, Anna, Anastasia, and Pulcheria.

Michael has banished us all... His four sisters and me... When they ask how many of us are here, on this island, in this monastery, I say there are ten of us... True, if they count us by name, they will count five. If they count our imprisoned lives, then there are ten of us. Five secular lives that we remember,

and five monastic lives that we are living... Who we were before is nothing like who we have become.

Alongside Theophilus, I have learned to say *I refuse*. I was an empress...

He lived a short life... He died young, before he was thirty... Maybe he fared better. I look at myself in the mirror and all I notice on my face is a forehead with traces of the old glory that I carry, as an ox carries its horns.

I have been deceived, but that is the way it should be. I myself have deceived... myself, the Empire, and God. I lied about the will of Theophilus, standing next to his deathbed... He died suddenly... By dying he deceived me as well... It should not have been this way. He betrayed me...

Theophilus abandoned me after Michael's second birthday celebration... He was gone only a day after the celebration and debauchery... He burst like the swimbladder of a fish forgotten in the sun. He died at the age of twenty-nine, handsome, sturdy and strong... I had hoped for so long, that Michael would become the mirror image of his father. Now he is twenty-three, and he is as fatuous as he can be. He lives like a heathen, anarchically and godlessly, as if his candle will never go out.... Someone had told me, it is so because he never remembered his father, living or on the catafalque...

When Theophilus died, I loved him more than myself. From my androgyny, he had made a woman, a mother and an empress... I cherished every part of him... The pores of his skin, his nails, hair, eyebrows, and the still eyeballs... I stood over him, holding his son in my arms, and I knew that instead of pouring out tears, I had to pour out lies...

I lied cautiously as well as intuitively... lead by instincts I was saving Michael and the future memory of Theophilus the Amorian. I lied about his last act. I said: – Before he drew his final breath, he kissed an icon!

I pronounced an iconoclast an icon worshipper. Had I changed anything? Nothing... Theophilus died, and Michael went wild... I remember Theophilus's last breath. He was dying surrounded by the Emperor's entourage, yet lonely, excluded as an abstraction. He appeared so distant, immersed in the fabric of the Cosmos. I stood beside him and held his hand... Michael nestled in my arms... I was doing what I would confess only to God – I was making up lies to bring before the Empire..., for among the icon worshippers, were my confidants and allies.

He died and I lied that he had kissed an icon.

Anyone who knew him had to know that Theophilus would have never kissed an icon. He hated images, multiplications of reality, mirrors and illusions that distance us from the truth.

Still, I believed I was doing the right thing. I thought that by lying about his kissing an icon, I was saving Theophilus's remembrance in history. I thought I was saving our children – Michael, Thekla, Anna, Anastasia, Pulcheria and those who died – Constantine and Mary. Only the dead were saved. Mary and our firstborn son Constantine...

I am the one who chose to lie. I lied for all seven of them... I thought, God will judge me one day, but I will save them, my line, the fruit of my womb, my sweet fruit.

Who would have thought that by lying and protecting them, I made them kin to pests...weeds and vines.

Or were they born with a flaw? Maybe I loved Theophilus too much? With the greatest love I worshipped my dead Constantine, and then my Michael. I wonder if my love has brought any good to anyone...

The Empire had gotten to know me too late, and I had become its most vital part too soon...

For a long time all that was known about me was that I was the Asian girl who was married at fifteen to the seventeen-year-old Theophilus...

Not many people knew me, Theodora, descended from the revered Armenian aristocratic family of the Mamikonean dynasty.

I was born in Paphlagonia... My origin is the Black Sea coast. Alongside its dark color I had become dark, shapely, passionate and learned. Even though I drew sighs of admiration, mother was always telling me that I was not beautiful. Back then I wondered if she loved me. Today I know she was simply striving to keep me away from the delusions of the times... She was trying to convince me that beauty is an impression, and that the impression I make will depend on my empathy for the person with whom I am speaking. If I do not recognize his temperament and subtlety, I will make the wrong impression... I realized, I needed to conform without losing myself.

Two brothers, Bardas and Petronas, along with three sisters, Kalomaria, Sophia and Irene, kept me wild and uninhibited. We competed in everything... I handled weapons, rode a horse, painted, played music, and won games of Nine Men's Morris... I managed to outplay them and to be better...

I was wild towards everyone except God. Wild, but cautious ... I nurtured my skin as well as my soul. My baths contained gifts that Gaspar, Melchior and Balthasar bore to Christ. The smell of frankincense helped me to attain humility, gold bravery, and myrrh to listen to my heart. After bathing, before bedtime, I prayed before the icons. I gazed into their eyes. I became an icon worshipper. Images are a part of my most intimate reality...

Thekla, my eldest daughter, was most interested in the story of how I got married. She besought me to tell the story over and over again. When I asked her, for the hundredth time, haven't I told you the story already, Thekla would always reply calmly: – No you have not, mother.

Sometimes, I see a strange light in Thekla's eyes, as if she is hoping that she will be freer after I am gone... I pay no heed. Actually, I do not know what kind of advice would be fitting for me to give her. I take her hand and sit her next to me. I tell her about Theophilus; that is the most I can give her now.

I always begin the same way: – Your father had a stepmother, Eufrosine, a very peculiar woman... After the death of your grandfather, Emperor Michael II, Eufrosine dedicated herself to life beyond life, memories, additions and subtractions. Everything in this world has a cause that puts it in motion. When Michael II died, Eufrosine lost her pillar of strength and causes. She withdrew to a place not far from Constantinople, to the monastery on one of the Prince's islands.

When I would tell her that Eufrosine was filled with solitude, Thekla would look at me with her eyes wide open. In her eyes I read the fear of old age. I thought: – Maybe you won't grow old. By the way this chain of events had started to unfold, we will all be strangled by Michael, our bad seed...

I did not explain these thoughts to her, since I would have to tell her that because of her brother, she

herself had become a pest... Poor Thekla, my poor child... She and her sisters, the Amorians, are truly condemned and banished. Only Eufrosine had chosen the monastic life of her own free will.

As if she sensed my thoughts, Thekla would become agitated.

– Mother, I do not want to be a prisoner...

– I know, it is hard being a nun against your own will, but for now, we have no other choice...

– I will escape... I will find him, poison him...

I would calm her down. I would try to persuade her that Michael is not doing well either.

Bardas and Basil are with him, both rotten and sick with hunger for power.

– Do not mention his name. Besides, it is entirely your fault! I would have raised him better, and myself as well!

– Silence, Thekla, silence...

– I can be silent. But I still hate him.

I would let her cry, and then I would continue with the story of my love for Theophilus, and our first meeting in the Hall of Pearls.

The Empire needed heirs, and Eufrosine had decided to help select a wife who would bear Theophilus's heirs.

I had left Asia even before the summons was spread across the Empire that called all girls to gather for a competition in the Hall of Pearls. My father had been expecting such a call since the day emperor Michael II died. He took me to Constantinople and settled me near the royal palace, right next to the Hall of Pearls. I felt punished. Isolated and lonely. When we parted my mother seemed very stern. She warned me not to forget that I was not beautiful, and whenever I felt lost, I should always ask myself who I was...

I grew tired of Constantinople very soon. I felt like a prisoner. Instead of strolls through the city, I preferred spending time in the watermelon fields next to the Hall of Pearls. While thinking about who I was, I carved my name into the growing watermelons with a pin. When I had carved all the watermelons, I went on to carve my name into the melons. The only thing I knew was that I did not know the answer to the question of who I was...

One day father brought an entire entourage of various women. Some of them bathed me, others massaged me, and the rest dressed me and combed my hair. Before going out, I spied at the mirror. I couldn't believe that the face staring back at me in the mirror belonged to me... No, that was not me...because my mother had told me I must not forget that I was not beautiful...

Theophilus and Eufrosine were waiting for me in the Hall of Pearls. I did not understand exactly what was going to happen after the two of them had talked with us, but it was perfectly clear to me, that in the competition they had organized – I had to win. There were more than a hundred of us... All of the ones around me were beautiful... It was up to me to take note of their temperament, and adapt myself to Theophilus's subtlety...

As time passed, I was beginning to feel uncertain. Theophilus had the longest conversation with Kassia, the poet. He told her that he feared her beauty. She swung her hair, and he stepped back...

Kassia looked him straight in the eyes. She did not pander to him... She challenged him... According to her opinion, everything that existed in the world came from women. Every good, every evil...

Kassia was different from the rest of us. She intrigued, instilled fear, and conquered... She left an indelible impression on me.

Suddenly, Theophilus turned toward me. He asked me who I was... I got scared. I was raised to be wild and not to lose battles... My voice had abandoned me. I looked out the window and saw the field of growing watermelons, with my name carved in them thousands of times... Eufrosine had joined in the question. She wanted to know my opinion about which one of us will be chosen as the future empress.

The view of the field with growing watermelons induced me to give a completely irrational answer: – The one whose name is carved into a ripe watermelon.

A month after the audience, my father received a letter from which one could deduce that Theophilus had chosen me. He heard that my name was carved into the ripe watermelons in the field next to the Hall of Pearls.

What had captivated Theophilus? Had he enjoyed my game that showed I was used to spending time alone? Or had he sensed my growing and wild desire for him, the man I was conquering...

Theophilus... I loved him from the first moment... not only for himself... I also fell in love with the disquietude he instilled in me. I imagined him saying: – I choose the Asian...

Even though I felt stupid, almost as a picked ripe watermelon in the field, he claimed I was different... Living with him, every day I became more and more Theodora...

We were married on June fifth in the year 830.

Theophilus had succumbed to most of my whims. He had the streets of Constantinople paved with sand of the Black Sea, fragranced with rose oil and decorated with beds of blooming lilies. He let me wear my traditional clothing, and to ride a horse that I had personally trained.

The emperor's bedroom was a surprise for me. I had never imagined that there could be such a wonder of beauty... Under a high ceiling sprinkled with stars, there was a green painted mosaic, with a golden cross on it, the symbol of salvation... The floors were made from the most expensive marble and had strange images in the center. I was especially impressed by a peacock with bright red feathers, and in the corners of the room were eagles, imperial birds, made of green marble... At the bottom of the walls there were painted tiles with scenery of meadows filled with flowers...

Already then, my room was in the Chamber of Pearls. Our summer bedroom was redone especially for my arrival. It had a golden archway held up by four marble columns and panels decorated with hunting scenes that opened towards the gallery facing the gardens. Within the first three days I had tried to memorize the names of the rooms... Karianos is the hall made of Carian marble, the winter bedroom shielded from the strong winds of the Sea of Marmara; my wardrobe is covered with images from the Holy Scriptures, the Chamber of Harmony is tiled with white marble, the Chamber of Love is right next to our bedroom, the Purple Chamber is intended for the birth of our children, and for that they will be called *purple-borns*...

Wherever I turned, there would be a door covered in silver or ivory, purple curtains that slid along silver poles, carpets woven with gold, canopies and exquisite items decorated with nacre and precious gemstones. It did not surprise me that I was never alone and that I was surrounded only by *people who had no beard* – women and eunuchs... On the third day, Theophilus had tried to explain to me who my numerous servants were. At the head of the household was the chief officer, the chief commander of ceremonial masters, doorkeepers, spearmen and all others who were in my personal service. The chief household officer was carefully selected among the eunuchs of the court... For table service I had my chief attendant at the table, as well as my chief cup-bearer. The Ladies-in-Waiting were supervised by the Court Mistress, awarded the high honor of the Patrician Belt... She supervised my wardrobe, ruled over entire legions of Ladies-in-Waiting, women of the bedchamber and companions... I never managed to remember their names. It seemed there was never any reason; Theophilus selected each of them personally...

The real surprise occurred on the third day after the ceremony... The eunuchs came for me to take me from the sleeping chambers to the bath in the Magnaura palace... Along the path I had to follow, alongside the gardens and parks, there stood courtiers and citizens, and following in my wake, was the whole royal entourage. Servants followed carrying sheets, boxes with scents, small chests, vessels, and right behind me, there were three ladies-in-waiting keeping pace... In their hands, each held an apple decorated with pearls. They would raise them from time to time, and at each raising of the apples, the mechanical organs would play, the people would cheer and clap, and royal entertainers would begin performing tricks.... I was escorted by the royal dignitaries right to the bath...

I had hoped that the return to the sleeping chambers would be less conspicuous... After I had dressed and perfumed myself properly, I waited a bit and listened. The gardens seemed quiet. Carefully I had peeked and stepped back in disappointment. The people who followed me were still waiting in front of the bath... Our journey back to the sleeping chambers was slower, more tedious and accompanied by even more noise... But, this was my life now, and I had to try to adapt.

Theophilus loved to plan surprises. He enjoyed seeing me confused or blushing. He loved it when he could read out of my confusion all the love that my Asian nature could give him.

Though, he loved me the most when I gave birth to Constantine...

Three years following our wedding, and eight days following the birth, he had sent the entire court to greet me... In the bedroom, covered in carpets woven with gold, I laid like an apparition from the moon... My skin was white, my hair black, and my clothes glistening. Constantine slept in a cradle next to me. Due to the great loss of blood, I felt weightless. Then, for the first time, I had no body. My body in its entirety was my son – Constantine.

Theophilus opened the door, came to us, and kissed us both on the forehead. The chief officer bowed and lit up the room. Beside me passed names and faces of courtiers, statesmen, dignitaries, wives of great courtiers, widows of decorated soldiers, aristocrats, senators, patricians, consuls, dungars... Gifts mounted by my bedside, and my mind was lunar... I really believed that no one in the world had ever given birth, other than me... I paid no attention to the visitors...

Constantine and Theophilus were my Empire.

At this part of the story, Thekla would start to protest. The last time I told her about the Hall of Pearls, watermelons, the wedding and the birth of Constantine, Thekla started to cry.

– You always tell the same story. You are lost in that past of yours, and because of it, you take away my life as well...

– I do not take away your life, only wantonness.

– You are evil.

– I am your mother, Thekla.

– You are my tomb.

– Thekla, I have given you life...

– You, and Theophilus, and Constantine and Michael III...All of you are my darkness!

– Thekla, do not despair without a good reason, it does not become a princess.

– I am not a princess anymore! You are my darkness and my abyss.

If I carry anyone in my heart, it is my children. I see that Thekla is the most miserable; she is the one I think about the most.

She has always lied to me... Both about important, and not so important things. Her lies have become a matter of habit for me. Frequently her lies are offensive, pitiful almost...particularly the ones in which she concealed the nights spent with Michael's stable master Basil... I wonder, is Basil her choice or is Thekla the prey of Michael and Basil? An innocent victim caught up in their arrogant lust to rule?

Michael has made us all inferior to his stable master...

Sometimes I am happy that Theophilus is not among us, so he cannot see what came of our harmonious cosmic journey.

I told her to remember her first night with Basil, the stable master... I offended her... because from one Christmas to the next she has not succeeded in cutting the tail of a fish in equal parts, and thus become a virgin again...

Maybe she is right. I have become evil... There is no one in my midst, not even Theophilus whom I sense from time to time... Thekla and I have driven him away again. I would love to ask him, on that day in the Hall of Pearls, did he really choose me himself... Maybe he was truly frightened of the poetess Kassia. Kassia was too strong, and he did not know love... I was wild, but trained to recognize the subtlety of others. He noticed that I could sense his inner being. He or Eufrosine, one of them made the choice... I would give anything if I could know had he simply succumbed to Eufrosine's wishes, or was I his choice? Did you love me, Theophilus, equally, unconditionally, as I loved you?

Peace is what I am trying to get back to. Peace, faith, and an occasional happy thought. I will believe in the truthfulness of Pythagoras' teachings of the human trinity. I will believe that in the unity of the Father, the Mother, and the Child are contained the Soul, the Spirit and the Body of the living Universe.

I will believe that Theophilus was my *essence*; I will believe that I had been his *substance*; I will

believe that our children had composed the word *life*.

Our family was large. It had ten members. Us, our children, and Eufrosine.

Year after year, I had become more skillful in conducting the imperial ceremonies. I had a particular inclination towards the one on Easter... With the memory of the resurrected Christ, Theophilus would receive kisses from the dignitaries in Holy Sophia, and I would watch him from the galleries of the Great Church, from a place specially assigned for women. I would sit on the throne surrounded by guards and my courtiers, and the wives of the dignitaries would approach me in the same order as their men approached Theophilus. The ceremony would last until the very last of the women had kissed me, the Empress.

In November, we celebrated the Brumalia festival, an ancient pagan holiday. During the day I would receive women of the court in the Purple Chamber. I would give them ornaments and silk, and they would be meeker than usual due to the gifts. Human beings are strange; we love to receive and thereby we are convinced that we have been righteously rewarded... The Brumalia festival reached its peak at nightfall, during the feasts in the great ceremonial halls. Singers from the Holy Sophia and the Holy Apostles would sing songs in my honor and the court would approve...

I received foreign rulers, as well. The audiences were remembered by the satisfied women from their entourage... My success was evident in their satisfied faces, the tiny secrets I would reveal to them about the unfamiliar dishes they tasted, the carefully selected gifts and my ability with which I managed to seemingly and cleverly adjust to their nature.

With my growth, my family grew as well. I was forgetting Asia... The family from which I came I was seeing less and less... My sister Irene married Sergios, the brother of Photius. No matter how close we were, our marriages had separated us. I have just realized that Bardas was the only one who was always by my side... I let him do as he pleased. Seven years after the death of Theophilus, Bardas founded the first university in Europe... Truly, in the year of 849, no one had anything like our Magnurian University...

Bardas was my weakness of sorts, my brother, and my fatal thoughtlessness...

I remember the ten members of my family by our multiplicity. We were rounded, all-consuming and eternal. At one sun-filled moment, the ten of us made up the measure according to which the world was arranged. We were the Ten Commandments of God, the ten strings of King David's harp, we were *one* – developed and multiplied in many, in each of us.

Wake up, Asian woman.

Wake up, Theodora of the Mamikonean tribe.

You are present and you have no right to surrender. Do what you can. Call your youngest daughter. What am I saying? My youngest daughter was buried a long time ago...

Think, Theodora, think! Call yourself to reality. Call Anna, Anastasia, or Pulcheria. Call any one of them, but the weeping Thekla...

Hurry, time is running out, and Michael III is drinking more with each passing day. They call him the wine drinker. They mock him: – Drunkard!

They are his sisters; let them carry him the amethyst, the stone of temperance and the barrier against drunkenness. If he asks them why the Sun and the Moon are inscribed on it, let them explain that through the inscription I am sending him peaceful dreams and my motherly love.

They have to tell him to be careful, to renounce that wicked stable master, Basil, an androcephalous, neither a man nor a horse.

Take care, my son. It is not your fault and I forgive you the mess with which you poisoned your days, and mine. Bardas is the one who made the overthrow the moment he realized that he could not control me.

If I could get my hands on Bardas, there is a chance I might be able to explain it to him... The empire was not worth to me as much you two savages of mine.

You and Michael are my scars, you are my wrinkles, my restless nights... Like the most dangerous conspirator, Bardas has imprisoned me in this monastery. Seven years have passed, I have forgotten that I was called an Empress; I have forgotten the joy and the sorrow.

– Anna, call you sisters.

– Thekla, too?

– Leave her in peace. Call the others. I want you to go and search for Michael. You will take the amethyst to him and tell him to keep it always close to him.

– Bardas will send us away.

– He is my concern. You will give him this letter. He will let you see Michael.

– I do not want to see him.

– Make sure he understands you, he is your brother. I am sending him medication for the weaknesses of the body and the soul.

I watched my daughters who were disappointed, down in spirits over the injustice that was done to them, and their sorrow has overwhelmed me so that I cannot find words of comfort.

I am fulfilling my vow. I do what I can, I do not give up, and when I feel that I am growing tired, I remember the ten of us who were a family, I muster up courage, or I go to the Basilica and surrender to prayer.

Today I ask God if I was truly blind with my eyes intact.

Theophilus was overjoyed with the birth of our first born... He proclaimed him an emperor, and he had not even seen him properly... Did we do wrong?

We let our first born Constantine be lost to us. He did not live to see his third birthday, and already he was gone from the face of this earth. The malicious ones were mocking. Who ever heard of an emperor's child drowned in a cistern?

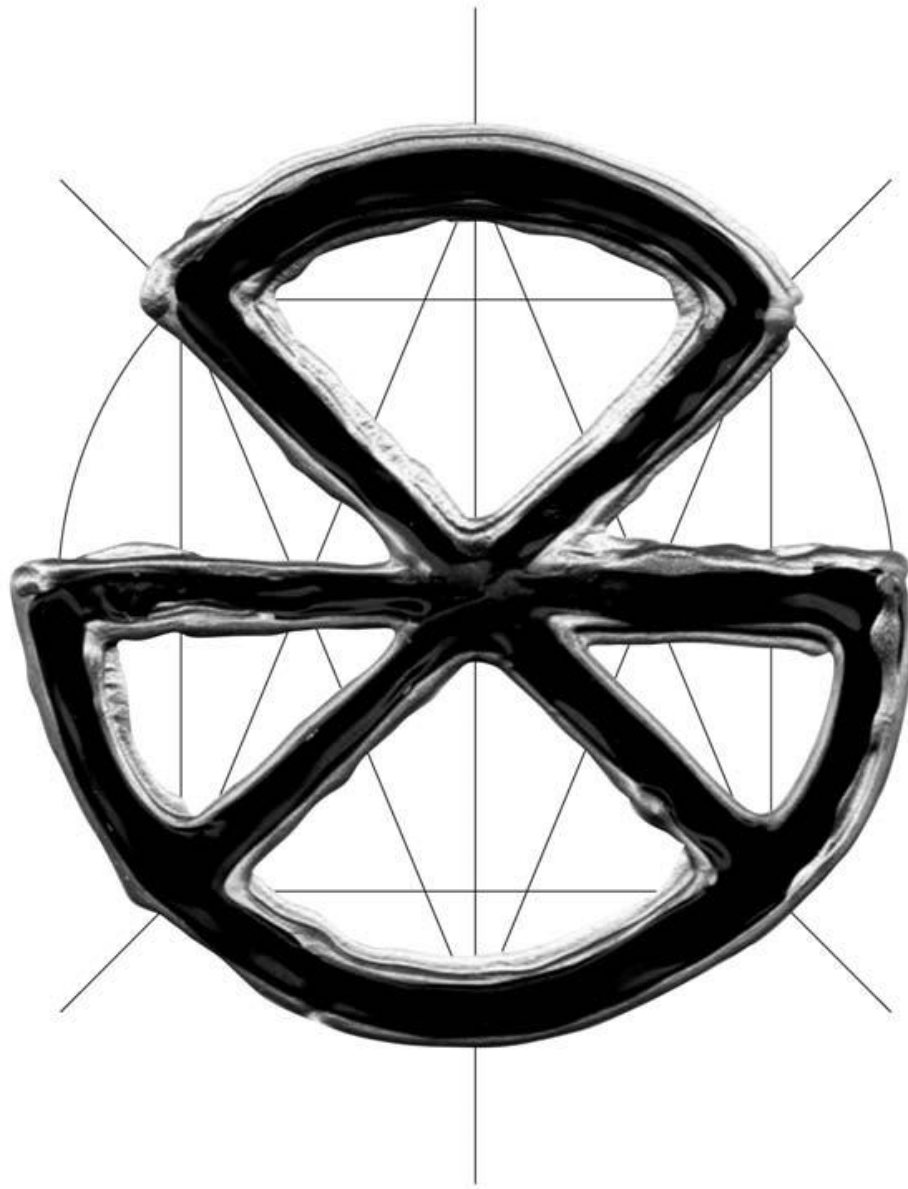
We should have known, God had sent us a sign. But, no. We did not read the messages from Heaven.

I kept giving birth until we had a son. We loved one another fiercely, but it was as if we could not understand each other...

Theophilus was expecting from him an extension of himself, a new emperor, a god on earth.

Perhaps he died of happiness? I wondered for a long time, had not Michael's birth exhausted him with happiness? God sees all and knows all, and He made the children like us, the way our love was...

Our children are strong, passionate and irrational...



*Meditating is a form
of creative buoyancy.*

Leo the Mathematician wrote down dates of birth. From his rich collection he deduced omens... When I turned twenty, Leo the Mathematician said that it was necessary to free me from curses. Within the twenty years of life there were fevers, powerful headaches, stench without any visible cause, stiffening of the body, anxieties and wishes for death... Curse lifting? Me, who had even more than I could wish for..., I agreed, even though I had doubts regarding the justification of this ritual.

My family needed me.

When visiting Leo's house I took Constantine with me. The wet nurse warned me about the curses that she recognized in the salty sweet taste of the skin between Constantine's eyebrows and the top of his nose... I did not believe in curses, and still, I feared what Leo knew about our futures.

He received us in his library. In one hand he held a bottle of olive oil, and in the other parchments with star maps. He was drinking oil from the bottle. He explained that olive oil strengthens his potency and concentration. He sent me to the adjacent room and asked me to bring mine and Constantine's urine. I came back with two small jars and he placed them by the window, closer to the light. I watched them and it was as if we were there in the jars. Yellow, discharged, each by one's self, and yet coming from one another...

Leo rolled up my sleeve and skillfully drew some blood... He took another vial and started towards Constantine... I was faster than he was. How, I have no idea... In an instant Constantine was in my arms. One of my hands was still bleeding and left a purple trail on his diapers... Leo was saying something, trying to assure me, to calm me down... I agreed to everything he said, with the exception of the bloodletting to be performed on Constantine.

I do not remember what he has done with our excretions... At midnight, I waited for him prepared. The servants closed the windows carefully and placed a steaming cauldron in the middle of our bedroom... Leo boiled our excretions, first Constantine's, then mine... The ritual took time, I was afraid, Constantine was crying...

Leo left us at daybreak. He did not seem fully content... Some of the curses had remained, he would have to get rid of them with a new, better way... He took the jars, promising that he would burn their contents where neither man nor beast would find them. Our excretions would not be dispersed... They will burn, and the curses along with them.

I felt drained after Leo's departure. Today I know it was due to fear. My imagination was fabricating each of Leo's unspoken thoughts. I exhausted myself with horrible images... I slept for more than a week. Then I took part in the imperial ceremony, during which I was at peace. I believed that we were safe, that Leo had freed us from curses. I held Constantine by his hand, his hand was

warm.

How did he end up in the cistern? No one knows... The next time I touched my son, his clothes were wet and his hand was cold....

Leo had warned me, but perhaps not of things that he should have. I was afraid, but not of what I should have feared. We stumble over what we cannot see, for it is right under our feet...

The monastery's timetable helps me find my bearings, to do the right thing at the right time. I wake at four and pray until eight. At noon I am on the church kneeler and I pray until four, and when the evening turns into night, I do not leave the church until midnight. How do I do it? What do I think about?

I meditate with all of my five senses over the teachings of the four Gospels. I multiply my five senses with the four ways of speaking to God. Five times four is twenty. Twenty is a multiplicity, and I am expressed as a multiplicity.

I am tied to the world by labor and prayer. *Ora et labora, Deus adest sine mora*. God is here, and helps instantly, without delay...

My Asian nature has become something else.

I have resisted for thirteen years. I withstood as much as Theophilus did. For thirteen years I was his wife, and he ruled. Then I was left alone and took over the Empire. For the next thirteen years I was exposed to scrutiny... The Empire declared me powerful, the one who rules, and all I wanted was to be a caring mother. Due to the court's intrigues, I was everything but that. They say, I left an impression of one who knows how to punish...

Michael and Bardas had conspired against me. So, I was strong after all. The weak do not break down...The weak are bothered by the strong; and precisely because they are weak, they join forces to overpower those who are strong...

I indulged Michael in nearly everything... his love of horses, the hippodrome races and betting... I allowed his drunkenness.... hoping that it would pass....

He substituted curiosity with hangovers, impudence, lust... All because of Basil, the former stable master...

I was warned by many about Basil the Macedonian. Leo had foretold: Basil the Macedonian will kill Michael, sit on his throne, and declare himself emperor. He also foretold that within a year of Michael's death, I would die of sorrow... Back then, all these warnings seemed to me a mere prattle. I wanted to allow all the possible joys to my son.

Now is the year 863 and until February 11th and the year 867 there is still plenty of time... Maybe I will succeed in stopping Basil...Or maybe God has truly intended for me to lose another son...

Basil and Michael competed in everything – drunkenness, gambling, vice and spite... Basil came to Michael hungry, and a hungry man follows his stomach ...

I inquired about Basil... He is of Armenian descent, although his family had moved to Macedonia. He has learned to abandon... He separated from his family to search for happiness in Constantinople. He lived by various means, most often from a benefactress... The rich Greek woman Danelida was one

his first...

Michael met him after a lunch, during a wrestling match, when Basil had defeated the challenger from Bulgaria. They named him Kefalas – strong head...

He took him into his service after they met for the second time, when Basil tamed a new horse for him...

My suspicions grew when I saw them together, but it was already too late. He banished me and his sisters, and named Basil *the great armor-bearer*. Last year he awarded him the title of the *Grand Chamberlain*.

Michael does not know hunger because the emperor's children are always full. He does not recognize the eyes that hunt for the pot... Michael is the pot that Basil feasts on...

I had hoped that he would mature, come to his senses, that the seed would bear fruit... But my Michael matured only in one sense. He strengthened his sexuality, and believed that it would help him to achieve manliness...

All sorts of things came to my mind... I should have made Michael into an eunuch, and taken away his passions...

Passion runneth over. Her name is Eudokia Ingerina.

I suspected that Michael and Basil were preparing something big only when Basil drove away his wife, Maria the Macedonian. There was talk that he had done this in agreement with Michael, but I did not believe it, for it seemed that this story was not substantiated...

Then Basil the Coxcomb married again, and I calmed down. Even when I found out that the name of Basil's new wife was Eudokia Ingerina, I did not suspect a thing... I knew that Eudochia Ingerina was Michael's great love, but I believed, naively... he married his lover off to his friend, the passion had passed, he didn't love her anymore... The whole court bestowed him with perfidious praise and loud cheers, and the people were hopeful..... Michael had changed...

We celebrated the wedding of Basil and Ingerina as the rebirth of the Emperor. Constantinople cheered: – Our Emperor has returned to us, long live the Emperor!

The people are stupid, I am stupid as well.

And the Emperor? The Emperor was laughing in a drunken and rowdy manner. Basil was gloating. Ingerina was indifferent. The wedding smartly obscured the truth. Michael's passion for Ingerina was greater than ever, she met with Basil only at drinking get-togethers. How would they even have time for each other, when the Coxcomb was preoccupied by his new mistress – our Thekla!

I did what I could to save my son. I sent him women carrying hidden small bags with love amulets comprising thrice scraped earth from the crossroads. This charm proved ineffective so I sent Eudokia Dekapolita. To their first meeting she brought along a puppet in the form of a bird, wrapped in red silk...

Michael met with Dekapolita while he was drunk, but I took advantage of his drunkenness. He signed a wedding agreement.... Since then seven years have passed. I planned to first distance Michael from Ingerina, and then to deal with Thekla and Basil...

Michael found out about my conjuring. He had been informed by one of the courtiers or the servants... He removed the love spells on the day of the wedding. He took off his right shoe, poured in some wine, and downed it in one swallow. The next day he repeated something similar, but simpler... He went out into the garden, stood under my windows, and spat through the right sleeve of Dekapolita's sleeping gown. Then he removed the wedding band from the third finger of his left hand and threw it in the nearest bushes. He knew I was watching. He was aware that I knew that with this action he demonstrated the breaking of ties between the heart and the vein...

All of a sudden, we were all miserable.

Dekapolita, who had not managed to keep her husband, not even with the wedding cake under her pillow, Thekla who Michael pimped out to Basil, and I, who added to everyone's food a donkey's ear boiled in oil, with hopes that my donkeys would finally see me as their mistress, whom it is their duty to obey.

That was the first time that I did not worthily take the place of Theophilus. I kept his ministers, repeated his phrases, pretended to have his strength, followed in his footsteps. I simply did not succeed in being an Empress and a mother. I wonder, if I had ever been anything other than what I had been at the very beginning – an Asian woman...

Today I rose early enough, I calculate and despair over numbers. Theophilus has been gone for over twenty years. His legacy to me were the children, solitude, the Empire, the ministers, and the logothete Theoctistus.

He had been wise; he knew the logothete Theoctistus well. Even though Theoctistus was an eunuch, I believe that he loved me in a particular way. With time, Theoctistus had become a part of me, almost like my shadow.

I speak wrongly; he was more to me than a shadow. In time, eunuch Theoctistus had become my most trusted advisor. Along with advice he gave to me, he dressed me in silk, ordered *lampas* for me, equally beautiful on both sides. He was that way himself, the same on the inside, as well as on the outside.

He chose scents, jewelry, and ornaments for me. Perhaps he even loved me, the way a man loved a woman. I do not know. I had hoped that an eunuch does not remember that kind of love.

I loved his plumpness. I was soothed by the jiggling of the saggy fat under his robes. He seemed as large as the sea and trembling like the Cosmos.

Theoctistus knew many things... He was familiar with Michael's nature and all its layers.

Then, during the overturn seven years ago, Theoctistus was the first one to fall. It was torturous.

Theoctistus was murdered before Michael's eyes... He was dying, and Bardas was calling for the Senate... The rest has been recorded in history. The Senate declared Michael an absolute ruler, an autocrat. The Empire was listless. The governors went back to their lands.

Upon return from Strymon, the archon Methodius, brother of Constantine the Philosopher, asked for dismissal from all his duties. He retreated to a monastery.

Methodius had retreated, the Empire had retreated, I had disappeared as well, the Empress.

I should not have given birth to a seventh child.

For the sake of the Empire, Theophilus, we should have stopped loving each other. After great loves, as after great heat waves, floods, storms and catastrophes are inevitable. Retribution. You turned into cinder, and I was left to deal with what was born out of our passion.

Theoctistus had discerning tastes. He showed me how to pick out fruit, how to combine colors, how to dress when I am accompanied by others, and how when no one is around. With him I was learning anew about music, philosophy and painting. I myself painted. I learned how to combine colors and how to disappear in their layers. I know that you are against pictures, Theophilus. I will not talk to you about them.

I will tell you about a boy that Theoctistus brought from Thessalonica. I loved that boy... Today I wonder, had Constantine of Thessalonica been sent to me by God as solace...

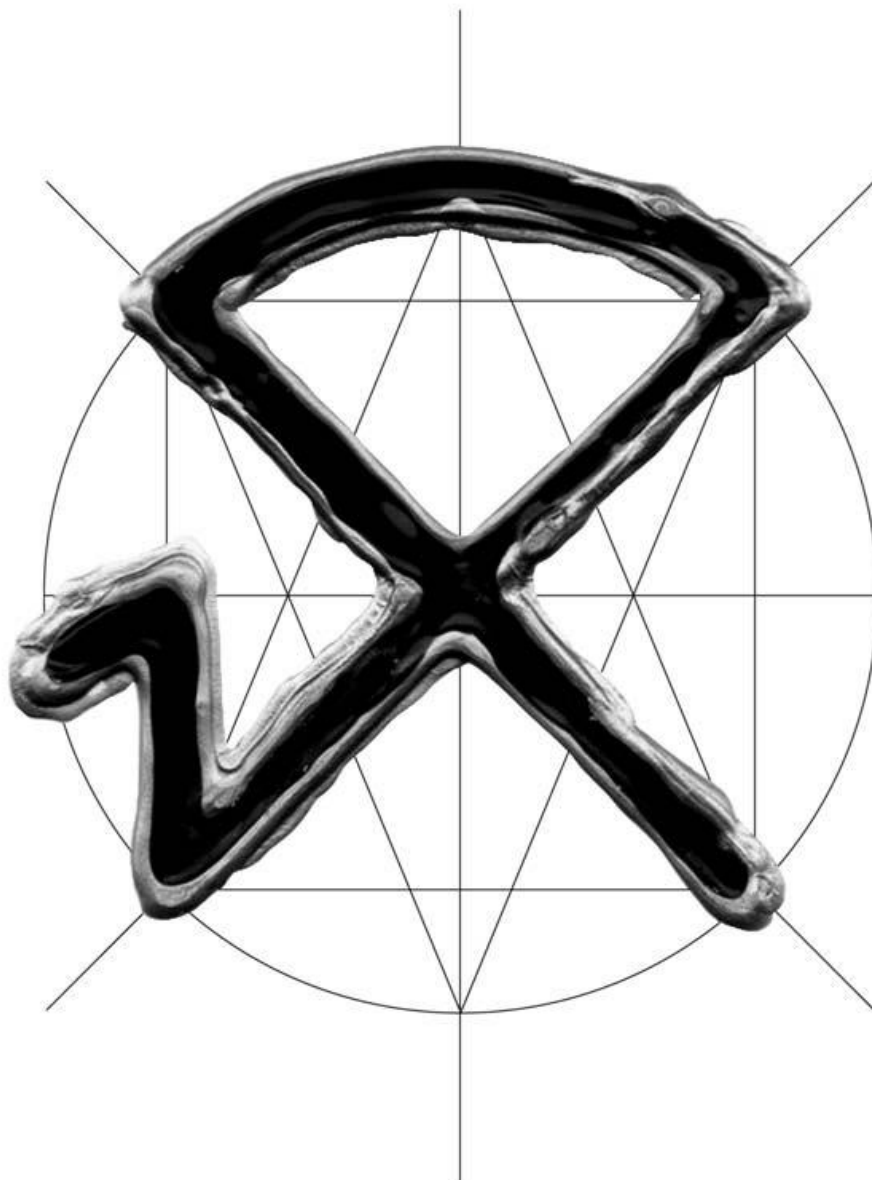
You have qualms about the name... It reminds you too much of our firstborn son, of our Constantine?

He reminded me too, Theophilus. He reminded me with his figure, his movements, and his age.

As I watched him, I was hoping that our Constantine might be just the way he is... He entertained Michael for hours, and I saw them interact in a brotherly fashion while playing *Nine Men's Morris*. I trembled in sweet delight... it was as ... as if I had swallowed all my desire, chewed it up, and digested it.

Theoctistus understood these moods of mine. He had made a secret compartment, so I could watch their game from a distance, all by myself and not afraid. I had listened as Constantine taught Michael, so tiny and serious, and I believed that my happiness was truly of this world. I believed that you were also in the midst, Theophilus; I believed that our Constantine never came near that cistern; I believed that Michael had a brother... Do you still remember what joy is? That is how I felt. I was happy, moved and ready for anything.

I personally chose teachers for Constantine of Thessalonica. With the help of teachers I prompted him and created him... I told them to be strict. In equal measure they needed to be capable to combine knowledge and beliefs. Even today I remember their names... Leo the Mathematician, John VII the Grammarian, Photius...



*Let no man deceive himself.
If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world,
let him become a fool, that he may be wise.*

1 Cor 3:18

I can see them both, as if it were yesterday, as if it were happening today. Theoctistus brought him in, short and slouched. He introduced him to me as Constantine of Thessalonica, then he stepped away, left the boy standing to the side, came towards me and whispered confidentially.

– Take him in, Empress. This boy has a distinct mission.

I did not understand him. Standing there, all alone in the great hall, the boy seemed smaller to me than he really was. What kind of mission could he have? I wondered what Theoctistus was speaking of, what did he mean by that?

Today I know... We were not born by accident; we were not coincidentally drawn to one another. We were created to mold ourselves through experience. Even though our tasks are shrouded in mist and doubt, we are sent with a goal that has been determined. Constantine's stubborn tendency regarding the gaining and spreading of knowledge made his mission clear, unmistakable... He would say, there is no advice, there are no quick solutions. The secret of commitment is in endless listening and discovering. Through a lifetime of learning we will become closer to God.

Theoctistus was convinced that Constantine's life mission was to stay with me. I was angry. If anything, his mission was to be with Michael!

Due to his exquisite taste, Theoctistus deduced and concluded more clearly.

Constantine of Thessalonica was needed by me and my washed-out inner self. Michael was beyond help anyway.

What had the arrival of Constantine of Thessalonica changed?

Everything, but most of all me.

With that boy I showed curiosity. We debated about everything, philosophy, religion, his parents and brothers. On one occasion I met one of his brothers. He introduced himself as Methodius, but later I found out that the name Methodius was given to him by the Church and that his parents had christened him Michael.

Constantine of Thessalonica was a substitute for our Constantine the Amorian. We talked about everything, and when he would mention his brother, we both spoke of Michael – he was thinking of Methodius, Michael of Thessalonica, and I was thinking of my son, Michael III the Amorian.

The boy from Thessalonica came to us underfed, with a strange fever in his eyes. I asked him what illness he suffered from, and he said that his illness was ignorance. Later, when the finest foods were presented to him, he seemed restless. Theoctistus convinced me that the boy's temperament found the enjoyment in food boring.

Some believed that Constantine's mother was of Slavic origin. He did not mention her.

In the beginning, he spoke very little, steady with pauses. He concealed thoughts that he could not completely formulate. Sentences were living beings for him. If he did not know what to do with them, he would not express them. Silence was a manner of speech for him.

He had read Plato to me, interpreted Pythagoras, and quoted Plutarch. He tried to convince me that the soul is the instrument used by God, and its imperfection is the consequence of the revelation of God's thought in the form that does not belong to it. He interpreted the stirrings I felt within and the states they were creating in me. We spoke of passions, illusions that we become entangled in, and visions which we give up.

From him I found out about many ancient wisdoms. I learned that one type of lily is named Solomon's seal and that it is used in lifting curses, but also how the eagle wings of the Sphinx were witness of the divine seed that we carry in us. I found out that my consciousness was undeveloped. We played *Nine Men's Morris*. My rationality was directed at combinations...

I was maturing alongside a boy of twelve.

In front of others I called him the boy from Thessalonica. I referred to him as the Philosopher much later, when Photius was named the Patriarch of Constantinople and Constantine took his place in teaching philosophy.

I was not tired of politics yet... of the pot in which human bodies and twisted ideas boil.

At that time it was easy for me to withstand Photius's promotion, the coquetry with iconoclasm, the renewed interest for the Stichometry of Nicephorus and the list of forbidden and heretical books... Until I found out that the Philosopher of Thessalonica was also planning to leave. I had grown used to him. Constantine of Thessalonica had become one of my worries, inexplicable passions, and one of my good intentions.

It was a time of war. We were defending the borders of our Empire, and lived in quiet fear of the Saracens. We knew them as wild, dedicated to their religion and unable to understand Christians.

The Empire seemed lethargic, almost sedated. There was also a debate over the matter whether the conflicts at our borders were really necessary... The solution presented itself: emissaries should be chosen to go to the Saracens, and, by skilled rhetoric, reason with them, and bring them closer to our way of thinking. There was a lengthy discussion on who should lead this mission... I did everything in my power to keep them from thinking of Constantine of Thessalonica. But ever since his rhetoric victory over John VII the Grammarian, Constantine's eloquence has become well known.

He seemed a good choice. He was young, just over twenty years old, possessed eloquence, knew how to think for himself, and was a devoted believer. It was quickly decided – Constantine of Thessalonica will lead the mission.

I concluded the debate by snapping my fingers. With this sound I drove away evil spirits... Insomnia was troubling me... I had put a vase with poppies in my sleeping chamber and an axe underneath my mattress. For breakfast I ate a black spider placed between two slices of bread, but it did not improve my strength...

The farewell distressed me in advance. When he was leaving, he put his shirt on backwards, and safeguarded himself from yearning for the homeland. We did not say goodbye in private. I gave him my blessings. I tied a leather band around his arm. It was supposed to bring him strength.

I wished him luck.

I prayed the hourly prayer.

I turned to God.

I thought of the cistern.

I hated the water.

News that was coming reported that he is all right. Along the way he was giving courage to missionaries, he was comparing God to the surface of the sea on which all of us sail, and the strong ones, through His help, receive the wealth of reason. When the missionaries would want some joys of this world, Constantine would call for his friend, Georg Polatius... People need to be helped; one needs to explain to them the reasons why God created man's likeness so that he was neither angel nor beast. Polatius agreed with him; he accepted that our speech and reason separates us from animals, and wrath and lust from angels. Still, Polatius did not enter into debates with the missionaries. He let Constantine persuade them of the necessity to side with the angelic side of our being.

I could almost picture him in my mind... Lonely in his white, inside-out shirt...

First they arrived at Caliph Mutavakil's court at Sammarra, a city to the north of Baghdad. While going around the city of Samarra, they came upon houses of Christians with demons painted on the facades. The Caliph told him to go past the Christian houses... Constantine was familiar with this detail from before. Who would not notice that they were in the neighborhood of the Christians?! From the Christian houses the devils always run away and jump out in fear, if not further, then at least to the facade wall.

This answer got him respect, but also deepened the caliph's dislike.

...He spoke to Saracens about what he had learned from Leo the Mathematician... They were in love with abstract thought, ornaments, and storytelling, and they listened to him for hours...

Then Constantine listened to the passages from *Lilavati* and *Bijaganite*, the renowned works of the even more renowned Indian geometer, Bhaskara the Teacher. He wanted to know about the chapters from *Sulbasutra*, of brahmin Apastamba, made under the influence of the theory of Pythagoras. Within him, the times, experiences and messages were merging. Samarra no longer resounded with emptiness. Samarra, *serre men rea – brings joy to whoever sees it*, was becoming less of a necessary riddle.

He did not forget about his mission. When they were not talking about philosophy, linguistics or mathematics, he was sharing mysteries of the Gospel. One night, being used to sitting in a lowered position, almost on the ground itself, he was illuminated by the light of the torches. The Saracens were no longer foreign to him; in them he recognized the humanity that we all possess. He called them *brothers* and *friends*. Finally, they broke bread and ate together, exchanged thoughts and knowledge. Somehow it happened, during dinner he was taken over by inspiration. He tried to subdue himself, but the words simply came out of their own accord. He kept pushing away the food, which increased in

quantity as the evening drew on, and devoted himself to explaining that Christ sacrificed himself for all people, the Saracens included. He taught them about God who brought consolation to the people. While carried away, rejecting food and downing water, he had not noticed the moment when he had drunk the glass of poison.

It was his entrancement that saved him. He had drunk the glass in one draft, wiped a drop of bitterness from his lips with his sleeve, thanked them for the hospitality extended to him, said his prayers, calmly slept through the night, and the following morning, when his body should have been cold and stiff, he had shown himself to be as alive and ardent as usual. For protection from nostalgia he wore his white shirt inside out and wore it through the streets of Samarra. In this city of Caliph Mutavakil he was greeting people, both known and unknown, asking about their fates, and then he kept on walking and speaking in the manner of people whose body leaves no shadow behind...

Still, he returned to Constantinople with a change in his face. He seemed weary, sickly, and weak. Theoctistus was trying to soothe me; he said how every travel changes a person, and upon return, the balance has to be restored.

What balance, I asked Theoctistus, can't you see that his bones are convulsing from sickness and fatigue. I know his soul, he did not become ill because of the journey and the strain, but because of the human need for planting poison.

I did not pay heed to the advice of doctors and ministers. I isolated Constantine in the special chambers of the Imperial palace, supplied him with ten exquisite chefs, steaming hot baths and many other rejuvenations. I myself was feverish because of my concern for him. I took a dozen eggs and boiled them in Constantine's urine. I buried them in an anthill, and then observed as the ants carried them away... When they were all carried away, Constantine's illnesses would have to be gone...

Five times I have buried a freshly nested egg at the crossroads, exactly at midnight... I had boiled a green elder twig in milk and made him drink this tincture... Three times a day I brought him a spoon of powder, made from crushed eggshells. I soaked the bark of a cherry tree in brandy, and he drank it before and after hop tea... It seems, that he got better only after he had brandy in which I dropped three drops of a severed cat's ear... Or perhaps it was the compress of salted and chopped garlic?

As he got better, he became more like his usual self. Curiosity visited him more often, and when I asked if he was feeling better, he would start telling tales about Baghdad, the city whose name means *gift of God*, and in which Pythagoras was imprisoned. He wanted to teach me the mystical power of numbers and the miraculous bird *anqa, si murgh*, the phoenix...

That was a good time. Theophilus, a time when I still had a sanctuary. I sheltered myself within the thoughts of Constantine of Thessalonica and my nature was different. It seemed as if I myself travelled by listening to Constantine's thoughts.

On the thirtieth day of Constantine's bed rest, I concluded that his illness was completely gone. Even though Constantine was recuperating, I would check to see whether there was still a pail of water under his bed...

– Give me your forehead, Philosopher... Does it still burn... You are thin, and that is not good.

– I am emaciated because of dreams, I run all night, lay foundations, build, my hands are full with work... I always have the same dream... Again I am in Baghdad, and listening to the same story.

– Of the journey of the thirty birds?

– Correct, Empress. In a dream I had once again observed *si murgh* – thirty birds...creatures that travel... I saw how they come before God, and as they arrive the close proximity of the sun envelops them in sunlight, and makes their souls shine completely.

– Like my pearls, Philosopher?

– Shinier, Empress. Like the shimmering of sunlit water... In the reflection of their faces all the thirty birds, *si murgh*, observed the face of the spiritual *simurgh*.

– They were looking at the face of God?

– Yes, Empress.

– And what did they see?

– Themselves.

– They were convinced that there was a God, *simurgh*.

– And that they themselves were God.

– What does that mean Constantine?

– It means that the moment we deny our *I am*, we become creatures without a shadow, the ones who are merged with the great One.

– And all of the thirty birds managed to do that, Philosopher?

– Yes, they did, Empress.

– Have you managed to do that, Constantine?

– I am managing, it seems...

– How are you progressing?

– Slowly, Empress.

– How slowly?

– Every day I am closer.

– To Simurg?

– To Simurg, Empress.

– And what do you see, Philosopher?

– I see myself. Perfectly clearly... clearer and clearer...

Did I say he was in his bed for thirty days? Leo the Mathematician had to know the hidden meanings of the number thirty, the symbol of completeness, maturity, wholeness, perfection and happiness. Noah's ark was thirty cubits high and with its height it announced Christ, who began to spread the faith, like Moses, when he was in his thirties... David became king of Israel when he was thirty; Joseph became the ruler of Egypt at that age...

Solomon's Sea of Bronze was thirty cubits in circumference, and has been tied to the baptizing of Christ at the age of thirty. Five times six is thirty... there are five senses, the *Pentateuch* refers to five books, and the number six is associated with the six days of the creation of the world, and the six

works of mercy...

For me, the number thirty meant something entirely different – work, the left hand, health and lunacy which turns thoughts into reality...

I exclaimed: – So, all is well!

Leo, as always, found the other side of the coin. He had warned me of the thirty pieces of silver which Judas received for the betrayal of Christ...

I asked him what it meant when Constantine mentions the birds *simurghs*, phoenixes... Leo pointed towards the window... His gesture indicated: – He will fly away...

My ears were ringing with words of *betrayal* and *flight*, and I tied them to Constantine... I was confused, as I always was when I was running towards fate...

By asking about Constantine, I was forgetting about Michael, Basil and Thekla... the antagonism between a mother and daughter, the Empire that allows them everything, and bars them from everything.

Thekla and Michael found a father in Basil...they were treating their illnesses, each in their own way... Thekla had imagined Kassia to be her mother, Michael did the same, but in his imagination and his arms he had his lover, the wife of Basil – Ingerina...

Is it possible that I was no good at anything?

What was it that Leo said, the number thirty means betrayal... And still I had betrayed as well... Who?... My children... For what? For the Empire...

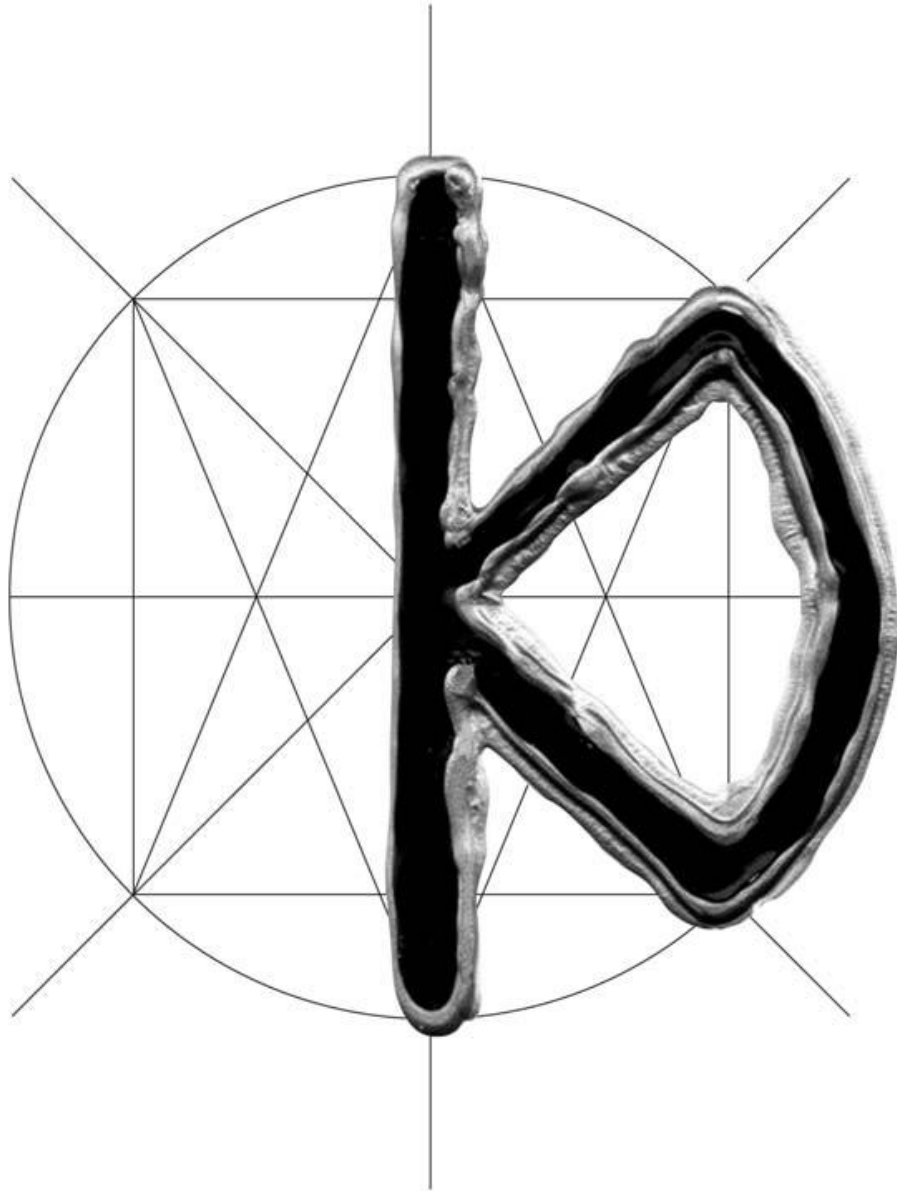
No, I did not ask myself these type of questions then... Ignorance is bliss. In Thekla's eyes I had seen the shine of a woman in love. I should have concerned myself with this shine... I should have warned her... Thekla was a princess in the imperial court for whom the freedom to choose her lovers was not foreseen...

We did not discuss it. I watched over my children and believed that was enough...

Thekla imagined Kassia in my place. She wanted her mother to be a poet, not an empress... I was not aware of her wishes, and it did not pain me... More precisely, it did pain me, but I could not name what it was... Later, when I found out, I consoled myself; each one of us was intrigued by something that was forbidden... The Empire did not need Kassia, but me, the Asian woman... Was it necessary to explain this to a child who did not feel loved?

I overheard Leo... He said Michael will have a son with Ingerina. He will name him Leo VI. Basil will declare him his son and Leo VI will continue the Amorian line. It will change its name. The world will see him as the son of Basil... They will call him Leo the Macedonian...

40, K – KAKO (HOW)



*How with him, how with her, how with us?
Diversely and appropriately.*

Here she comes. Thekla has returned to my chamber and asks me:

– How did you become an empress?

– ...

– How were you better than Kassia?

Perhaps I was chosen precisely because I was worse, not better...

I know for certain that I was not meek, and Kassia professed her beauty with her name that comes from the aromatic flower *Cinnamomum cassia*, cinnamon, that is used in religious ceremonies... That is the name of one of the daughters of Job. It is marked by holiness, nobility, honor, and spiritual immortality...

I was chosen over Kassia and I had not inquired about her fate, until Thekla started to draw comparisons.

While I was preparing myself for the crowning ceremony in the Church of St. Stephen, within the Daphne Palace, Kassia was founding a monastery... During the time of my rule, Kassia wrote poems. Constantinople read her religious poems and worldly epigrams... Some of them found their way to me... They loved her in a way they will never love me and because of them I often felt the bitter sting of jealousy.

My family took part in my ascension to the throne. My mother Theokiste accepted the high honor of the *Patrician Belt*, three of my sisters were married to dignitaries, my brothers Petronas and Bardas quickly advanced to high honors.

The signs were indicating that my life was destined for success, greatness and doing good deeds...

Who would think that defeat hid greater chasms that would overshadow my victories?

Who knows if our intentions are equal to the results of our actions...

I also felt guilty for Constantine of Thessalonica...

While tending him, I saw more than a son in him... He returned from the Saracens, and captivated me with his restrained manhood. I sought my beauty in his eyes. I was twelve years younger then, he was twenty-four, I was thirty six, and I wanted to be a woman... Logothete Theoctistus noticed what was going on inside of me... He turned my thoughts in a different direction. He reminded me, Constantine is listening to Sophia... She led him to the Saracens... He did not manage to answer me who Sophia was. He thought that Constantine's earlier decisions were important. Of all the people in my life, was Constantine the only constant?

His steadiness was incompatible with my temperament.

Steadiness is, I suppose, always incompatible with motion... Constantine looked at me with respect, admiration, but not how I secretly wanted.

He had left Thessalonica in search of knowledge. He rejected Theoctistus's Miriam for Sophia, the

one that others could not see. He was walking above the ground, he downed poison as if it was water, and I wanted, at all costs, for him to see a woman in me...

Did I have the right to favor anyone over you, Theophilus?

I pay informants well to find out how the Empire remembers you.

Here, listen to what the people think about you... During the rule of Theophilus, the imperial palace glistened with a new shine... Theophilus had lavishly expanded the old residences of Constantine and Justinian... fascinated by Arabian architecture, he opened the imperial terraces towards the Sea of Marmara. He conducted a choir and performed hymns he had composed himself... He loved art, he inspired in artists the best of the best, and they made a Pentapyrgion for him, a golden cupboard with an organ, mechanical birds which fly and sing, golden lions and griffins.

I will tell you what they say about us... Besides literature, art and every form of knowledge, Theophilus adored Empress Theodora... He dressed her in purple, the imperial color, so that even her clothes would leave an impression of nobility, before God and the people. His passion originated from fire and flames. He burned, just like Theodora's trading ship that he ordered to be burned. The Empress went into the trading business, which was according to Theophilus an unworthy task for an Empress... He emphasized that her nature was different from that of other women... half wild, half tamed. They touched each other in their contrariness. They joined together in them, as well. They wound themselves around their differences, and tamed each other.

But, they also remember that you had the famous iconic painter Lazarus's right hand cut off, they remember that you had Theodor Graptos's forehead branded with four derogatory verses, they remember you also as the father of our drunken son... oh, I will not bother you anymore...

I will read to you what our Michael is like...

Reports claim that he is surrounded by buffoons, debauchers and court jesters. They say that he offends the court with joking remarks, without respect to faith, family, or the Empire... Recently he had worn the patriarch's robes and asked to have a meal at some poor woman's house, sent her over the edge with shame and discomfort by having a high dignitary at her poor table. Before this, he had patriarch Ignatius listen to a performance of a caterwaul; accompanied by tambourines and kettledrums, he sang foul songs in the patriarch's ear...

But all this that you have heard is nothing compared to what he did to me.

In the middle of the night he had sent me a message that patriarch Ignatius awaited me in the Golden Triclinium, on one of the three ottomans placed around the table. I ran there as fast as I could, breathless, my hair and clothes a mess. Kneeling I apologized and begged for forgiveness until the patriarch jumped to his feet, turned his back and passed wind in my face. Then he took off his shroud and instead of patriarch's face, I saw the grinning face of Michael's favorite jester... Michael was laughing his head off.

You wonder why I let him do all this. Why I did not control his madness?

I looked after him the best way I knew how. I did my best to prevent his head from becoming a hippodrome of madness, or to prevent others from killing him because of it. I watched that he didn't

eat the head of a fish, fed him with laurel's leaves, gave him water from the church bell, and stitched sapphires in his clothes, a proven medicine against the sickness of the body and the soul.

To his inadequacy I responded inadequately.

I will not speak to you any more about Michael. Thinking about Michael, I become ignorant myself...

I will tell you about the time when Constantine of Thessalonica started imagining Sophia. I would not know what was happening to him if I hadn't found him speaking to himself and saying things to someone who was not there.

That year Constantinople had become too loud for him. He complained that it was a desert city, filled with noises that prevented answers from being heard. His long walks had become more frequent, he made up frequent searches for hornbeam, and withdrew into himself in every way he could. If I noticed, so did the others. Constantine was becoming a loner and he spoke to himself.

One day, Theoctistus proposed a solution. According to him, the right woman could banish Constantine's vision. Constantine had rejected Miriam and her liveliness because he devoted himself to learning, achieving cognition and gaining ancestral honors. He said: - I am a grandson of Adam!

Arrogance or blindness? We were trying to save him from madness, and he was interpreting the time before Adam, the purity of the first man...

Theoctistus had tried to calm himself down. He was convinced that nothing can be done about the one who does not love this world.

I wondered if youth was at all a normal state of the spirit and the body... Was it given to this world, so that the harmonious rotations of the Cosmos would become Chaos?

For six months there was no news about Constantine. When I had given up on the thought that he was alive, they found him hidden near the Narrow Sea, right in front of my nose, in a monastery on the Bosphorus.

I was tired then, and it seems to me that I was always tired.

Theoctistus had the strength that I lacked. He was making decisions for which I did not possess enough reason.

He was the one who found Constantine. He approached him without judgment and condemnation; they spoke for a long time, without accusations and insults. He managed to persuade him to return. He offered him the position of a librarian of Hagia Sophia, and the offer seemed appropriate, the Philosopher's being already belonged to books.

When he returned, Constantine seemed more at peace than before. I do not remember the exact order of events, but I clearly remember Constantine of Thessalonica as the librarian, philosopher and teacher of our School of Magnaura. I remember the days I tended him, I remember how he silenced John VII the Grammarian with rhetoric, I remember his knowledgeable eye and the hand that drew icons and letters.

His return and a peaceful life brought hope that circumstances can change for the better. Because of him I saw in myself the one who knows and can do good deeds. With some will, I could have been the

one who can endure.

I had hopes, I would refrain from brushing my hair and I would be strong again.

Wine was flowing, and Michael was casting away his imperial robes and replacing them with coachman's livery. The *Coachman – Emperor* was living at the racing tracks. He had turned the Palace of St. Mamas into a hippodrome. There he built a hippodrome for races with imperial dignitaries clothed in circus colors.

For a long time I thought that he was playing like a foolish puppy, but today I know, he was competing.

He was competing like those who do not know their limits. Immoderate, he had matched his strength against everything and everybody... He assessed his own value by the abilities of others.

He matched himself against me, as well.

I do not know if he was looking for my final limit, but he found it when he executed Theoctistus.

Michael and Bardas executed Theoctistus...

One night they stopped him in the Lauziakos gallery, on his way to my chambers. Michael had ordered him to report on the daily affairs to him, the future Self-ruler, Autocrat. Theoctistus tried to be reasonable. He refused to give him the reports that were meant for me, he seemed determined... The real truth is that Theoctistus was confused when confronted with the *emperor – madman*.

The insecurity of my advisor was stimulating for Michael's passion for competing. He wanted to know the final limit of Theoctistus. First he flaunted and argued, and then he ordered the guards to take Theoctistus towards the Skyla vestibule, where they would learn what to do next.

It was then that I came running from my chambers. With uncombed flowing hair and disheveled clothes. I ordered them to release him. No one stood down. They were standing there, pointing weapons at my minister and my friend. I ordered that Michael return to his horses and horse grooms.

A mistake, Theophilus.

I had stirred the worst of the worst in Michael... Theophilus, I admit to you, my orders brought death to Theoctistus!

In the chaos and confusion of soldiers divided between mine and Michael's command, Theoctistus was struck by a sword. The poor soul wanted to tell me something, but his last breath stood in his way... That night he was stopped in everything he intended.

Strange, he was my pillar of strength, but I remember him as insecure, eyes wide open and his body slashed through the middle. They say that I cast a curse on Michael and Bardas...

Our daughters were screaming when they were taken to the monastery. I remember the dreariness I lived in until I joined them. We were struck by a catastrophe whose reasons I cannot unfold... Our daughters are isolated, with their hair cut, exiled, humiliated.

I remember and wonder, is everything experienced truly possible?

Much like Theoctistus, the Empire had been split in two by a sword.

The Empire broke down, I, the Empress, broke down, and Constantine of Thessalonica also was broken down by sadness. After Theoctistus's death, Constantine the Philosopher had vanished. I

thought to myself that this additional grief was all I needed. In my thoughts I was angry with him... I accused him for having to show his gentle nature just now...

On his desk, instead of a farewell letter, there was the following sentence:

It rained for forty days and through rain, God cleansed the four parts of the world; Moses spent forty days waiting on Mount Sinai, after his baptism, Christ went to the desert and forty days after his sacrifice he went to His Father in Heaven.

With this sentence, Constantine told me where he was.

He informed me about his journey to the desert... With the very same sentence, he instructed me not to look for him. He needed the suffering of the body, stirring up – living on bread and water, fasting, prayer and the temptations of desert hardships.

I was being broken, the Empire was crumbling, my mind was melting like a burned out candle, and Constantine had presented his body to suffering of his own free will. Did he remove himself to protect me? Theoctistus would say, he sensed hatred...

Perhaps he was not atoning for my failure, but for the failure of his messages aimed at Michael. He did not succeed in being as persuasive and merciful as he wanted. He was betrayed by a thought, a quick and capricious intention.

Without Theoctistus I had to try and think completely on my own. I took a bath in a hot water pool; then they washed my face in the morning dew and applied rose oil to my skin. I attempted to convince myself – you are strong, Theodora, you are still the Empress and you can do anything! Decide what you want! Will you do what you want or what you think is your duty...

I decided – I will stay, and bring order to the imperial treasury, finish what I had begun. I will stay. I will take vengeance. I will execute Bardas. I will form a conspiracy, and if it doesn't work, I will slash his throat myself. My kin has betrayed me, my flesh... They had forgotten that I was raised on the blood of oxen – I, an Asian woman, was and still am an Empress...

Yes, Theophilus, the murder of Theoctistus brought me fulfillment. I pined after you, but for Theoctistus I was so blind with hatred and malevolence that I wanted to kill.

Bathed and fragrant, I wrote my daughters a letter. I promised them that I would come. I described myself as stronger than I really was. I presented Constantine's trip to the desert to be as important as my remaining for the present at the court. I did not write to them that Constantinople became for me what the desert was for him.

Some sentences I still remember...

You will not wait for me long, I am an Empress, and empresses leave order behind them and go when they will... Constantinople is in fear, people are staying away from the streets, the squares are not thronged as before. The city is empty, for it has lost you, the daughters of Theophilus.

I will fast and pray with you... We will attain mercy. We will learn how to forgive...

For you, Thekla, I am sending these verses of Kassia, the poet...

Monastic life is filled with serenity.

Monastic life is perfectly untroubled.

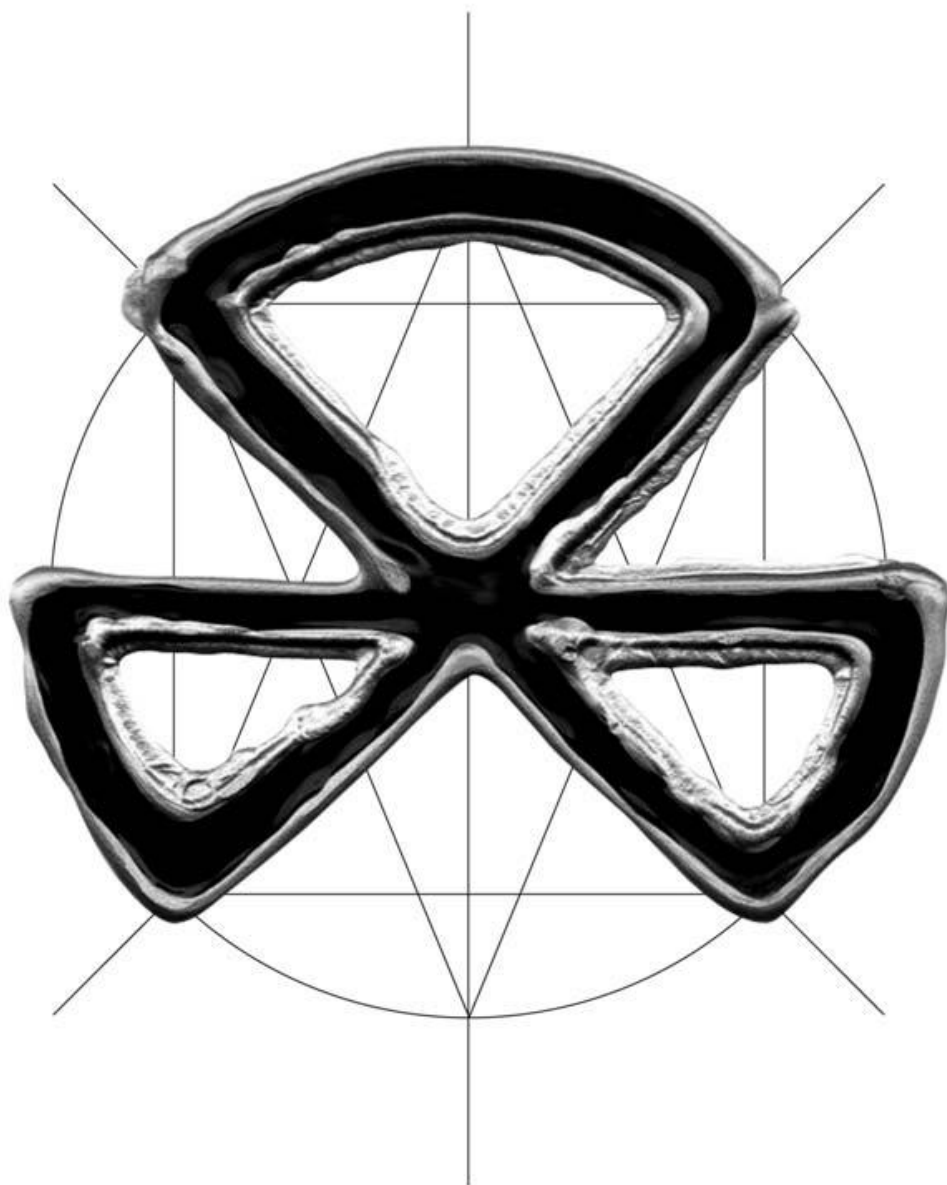
A nun should cast down her eyes..

A nun should be a pillar of strength to the weak.

Monastic life is the lighthouse of the world.

Back then, I did not wish to accept that I too would soon be an exile, in my own kingdom.

50, L – LJUDIE (PEOPLE)



*Each person within himself or herself has a primeval image of God's empire.
That is why Jesus says nothing about the Kingdom of God,
other than that it is already "in you." Everyone knows what that is.
There is no isolated truth, beauty, sanctity, joy, measure, light, peace.
In a man's soul it is all one and the same mixture and each soul carries a trace of that mixture.
The world of beginnings is the world that was spoiled by man,
but it is a world that needs to be restored, and it will be restored again.*

*Béla Hamvas
Christianity
Scientia Sacra II
Gospels and letters*

I have described the morning with pink, purple and blue colors. Now, after the sun in the monastery garden is at the zenith, I myself am descending... I am going down... My eyes are heavy, I would like to rest, I would like to lie in the shadow, turn into a blade of grass.

The stone tiles in the courtyard are glowing with heat. They were hot that day in the year 860, when Constantine of Thessalonica came looking for me.

I did not expect him... Seeing him, I felt a weakness, just like before falling asleep. We sat on the porch, nature was singing, heat was sizzling and skipping over the roofs and stone tiles, melting everything, clothes, skin, and nails. I was weary. I was melting with joy.

Constantine was thirty-three years of age; he was the same age as our Savior, Jesus Christ... I was also three years younger than I am today...

He seemed refreshed and renewed. Or has it been a long time since we last saw each other? My eyes were basking in his presence. In him, I saw a man, for whom I wish offspring. May God forgive me, I wondered what our sons would be like...

Then I remembered Sophia... I wanted to find out if they were seeing each other? Were they close? He was smiling. Sophia meant more to him than he was willing to admit to me. She was directing his steps, she had brought him to me.

I decided to make it easy for him. If Sophia was his weakness, through her I confirmed that he was human... There is no human being without weaknesses... Because of our weakness we became humans, and not angels...

I showed him the monastery. I revealed to him our hidden sacred objects: the tree that grows from nothing, water that flows and exists without a wellspring, human hair that grows out from stubble in spring... I called my daughters... They will ask him everything that I could not. I will hear what it was like in the desert, I will hear about his Sophia...

Oh, how I rejoiced. That day I was neither heavy nor humid. I was melting away everything underfoot, as the purest ray of the Sun.

The girls were competing in who was going to talk to him first. He singled out Thekla, and

answered all of her questions without hesitation... I felt that he pitied us both. Thekla more than me... I was betrayed only by my brother and my son. Thekla had fared even worse... She never stepped out of my shadow... Maybe she was born that way, in the center of my darkness... I let her be devoured by her uncle, brother and lover... as spiders would do to a fly... I betrayed her as well; her own mother... because of the resemblance that I refused to believe existed. Thekla, the only one of my daughters who was willing to die for passion.

Constantine talked about the desert. Occupied by my worrying thoughts, I did not manage to hear him. I joined in the conversation when he was speaking of his return from the desert, and his visit to his brother Methodius in the Polihron monastery.

He knew how jealous I was of Methodius. He quickly changed the topic...

For some reason, I quoted Kassia's saying: *Better to suffer defeat, than to achieve a dishonorable victory.*

Did he understand me? In the silence that followed, he was rummaging through his robe in search of something that would turn the conversation in another direction. After a pause, he pulled out a golden coin with Thekla's and Michael's likeness engraved on the reverse side... He boasted of always having it near him, this golden coin was a kind of a charm for him...

Thekla's face was deformed by a grimace... She turned the coin to the other side... Empress Theodora was staring at me... I had forgotten that part of me. I had forgotten myself, the Empress. The memories were washed away... I wondered – did I remember what was truly important, or was I biased even within my memories...?

– Put it away, Constantine. Or throw it away, it makes no difference...



– But, Empress, the mere touch of the metal is like meeting you...

– Do not call me that...

Our daughters interrupted my raised tones. I realized they were ashamed of me when I was being authoritative. They were questioning Constantine about the desert. They wanted to know if there was life in the desert, if the nights truly cold, did he see the blue people and is it true that their women have no breasts...

Constantine of Thessalonica related his story; the color of his voice soothed me, I was becoming meek again... a nun.

Then we ate... The ones I love I feed with great care.

We served Constantine with baked mushrooms, pogacha (flatbread) and cheeses that we make

ourselves... I urged him using the words of Hippocrates: *Let food be thy medicine and medicine be thy food.*

I broke off pieces of the pogacha, and soaked them in sour milk and garlic. The Philosopher changed his shoes before sitting at the table, and said a prayer. He chewed slowly. He was stabbing the bites of his food with my golden prongs that seemed to entertain him. Between bites, he was laughing at everything, his clumsiness and the table, that was, unlike the one in Constantinople, not perpetually buried under too many plates and glasses. Suddenly, I did not see a man in him, I recognized the scrawny little boy, scared by the Great Palace, the exquisite Halki Hall, and by me. On his shoulder I noticed the trace of Theoctistus's hand, its encouragement and protection.

Theoctistus loved him, Photius respected him, Leo the Mathematician nearly adopted him. He also had felt the need to mention them... A long time ago, Leo had foretold that he would undertake three missions... The first one to the Saracens, the second one to the Khazars, and the third one to the Slavs – *el Sakalabs*, as the Saracens call them...

Will of God. I protested. I did not let him take away the importance that I had during my time as empress.

He made jokes, teased me, and my thoughts became lighter. We laughed and laughed. I appreciated his unusual joviality. We laughed until our troubles had begun to flee.

Leo has foretold that he would not return from his third mission... From *el Sakalabs* he would carry a disease and fever that will torment him for fifty days in some remote capital. I thought, if he dies, his soul would be on its way to Heaven. Fifty is the number of Heaven. Five times ten is fifty. Fifty is the number towards which a worshipper aspires; in it lie the five senses in the service of the Ten Commandments. I calculated further, fifty is seven times seven, with one added. Fifty would have to be an eternal reward for those who fulfilled the seven-day week with gifts from the sevenfold Holy Spirit... Gifts of the Holy Ghost and faith in one God.

I refused to think about Constantine's death. Instead I started talking about Michael. I could only save the Empire by hurting my son.

– You have sensed what I tried to do?

– I have heard. I prayed that it would not happen.

My conspiracy failed because that is what I decided. I am a mother, Michael is my son, and his life is more valuable than the Empire. Constantine hoped that his prayer had brought about the failure of the conspiracy... Maybe it did, maybe it didn't... Because of Bardas's greed, I did not mourn his death... Basil the Macedonian conspired and killed Bardas, and in the same merciless manner, he will do the same to Michael.

Suddenly, Constantine looked down. Leo the Mathematician had foretold something from which he wanted to protect me. The Stars had indicated something which made him look down...

– Did he mention Michael?

– Yes, very briefly.

– Did he say...

- No.
- You are not telling me the truth, Constantine.
- All right, yes, he did.
- How many years does he have left?
- ...
- Are you listening to me? How many years does Michael have left?
- Seven, Empress.
- ...
- I will outlive him?
- Yes, you will, Empress.
- Will I see his death?
- You will see it, Empress.
- He will die by the hand of Basil the Macedonian? Will he be strangled by the intrusive weed he has planted in his midst?
- He will, Empress.
- And God will take another son from me right before my eyes?
- Do not blaspheme, Empress.
- Quiet, Constantine! Quiet... And don't call me – Empress!

I am alone as the pearl is alone in its shell. I have withdrawn into myself, but the sea – life hits me and forces me to open. It opens my womb, takes out my round pearl – soul, and strings it on a necklace. I cannot breathe under its weight. It holds all my dear, lost pearls...

My insides are like an empty shell.

White and washed out.

Restless and scared.

I am insane.

I am alone.

I am nobody's.

My pearls are scattered.

The necklace is only a string.

A noose around my neck.

Theophilus, my dear, can you hear me...

Speak to me.

Give me a sign of your presence.

Tell me I am alive and intoxicating!

Comfort me, Theophilus.

Do something, and change the course of fate.

Thekla came to my aid. She brought me water from the spring and poured it over the pulse side of my wrists. She splashed some water on the back of my neck, rubbed my forehead and temples. While I

was coming around, I saw Constantine's eyes watching me. I am certain I saw tenderness in them. In my subsequent sleepless nights, I wondered whether his stare advised me to stay in the monastery's sanctuary. Did that look have any other meaning?

Later on, our daughters listened to Constantine's tales. And he, eloquent as he was, barely even took the time to breathe. He told story after story, stringing them one after another... He mentioned St. Clement I, a worshipper, pope, and disciple of St. Peter, who was banished to Kherson and drowned in the Black Sea. He had overheard, when St. Clement was drowned, a dog came along, drank the spray of the sea, and went rabid from sorrow...

He spoke to them of Polihron, the monastery in which he lived since his return from the desert, of Methodius's skill in taking care of fifty monks, of his childhood memories that are becoming clearer and closer to him, of himself as a ten-year-old boy playing *Nine Men's Morris*, of the memory of his farewell with Methodius and their renewed meeting, of their resemblances, of the asceticism of Pythagoras, of the battle against idleness – the sickness of the dormant soul, of the insomniacs in the Studion monastery, of the letters he was sending to Anastasius the Librarian in Rome, of his new mission that he would undertake with Methodius...

I wondered, did I hear him right? Was he leaving again? If he had come just to tell us this, he needn't have bothered to come... Goodbyes are unnecessary... I frown on them and do not want to think about them. I was startled as from a deep sleep.

– I hope I did not understand you properly... that, about the new mission...

– We set out in a month or two, at the latest by the end of September.

– For goodness' sake, on whose orders?

– Michael's. He invited us personally.

–You?

–Methodius and me.

– I hope, you were wise and turned down the invitation.

– ...

– You accepted?

– We are going to the land of the Khazars.

– To those savages?

– We will preach the Gospel to them.

– But, what about Leo's warnings?

– Empress, life itself is a warning...

– Stop calling me Empress...

I caught sight of the dog from the monastery. He was squirming all around, digging at the earth, and howling from time to time. He started eating the grass and in doing that, he prompted me to look at the sky. The sun was still strong, although heavy clouds were approaching. I warned Constantine that the weather would turn for the worse. If he intends to return during daylight, maybe he should leave now.

I asked him to take off his shoes. Under his soles I placed some wormwood... Thekla explained –

wormwood will protect him from fatigue.

Turmoil of opposing thoughts was brewing inside me. I felt sorrow, as if Constantine had betrayed me, me and my last hopes to save the Empire and my son. Only his miraculous preaching ability could save Michael. Still, I could not stifle my love for Constantine the Philosopher. His words, visions and prayers were enlightenment for my tortured inner being.

I saw him off with moderation and dignity, as befits an Empress. And as he was leaving, no one could tell that the most beautiful part of my soul would accompany him on his unknown mission.

60, M – MYSLITE (THINK)



*Watch your thoughts;
they become actions.*

Lao Tsu

I thought life was over. I had become a nun and the outside world will not concern me. By putting on the habit, I will tame my passions and achieve righteousness. I will be made rich by fulfillment with God and the loss of honors... I will be devout... I will aspire for Heaven, and the Earth will leave me aside... Constantine's words will be with me, with them I will not be alone...

I thought... I do not want new experiences and they will not happen...

On the sixtieth day after Constantine's visit, the mission was underway to the land of the Khazars. As always, Thekla was asking questions... Is the distance of sixty days from the last meeting with the Philosopher – Constantine's hidden thought, did he bespeak once again that the number sixty is the ancient measure of the Cosmos and the basis of counting down of Earth's time...

I do not know, Thekla, my child I do not know. I do not know if he is certain... Certainty is impossible... I do not possess certainty even in my own free will. Too frequently, I am faced with emotions, prejudices, and sudden turns.

I have tried to govern my thoughts and to implement the teachings of the emissaries from Tibet and India. I concentrated on my forehead and imagined a luminous egg... The egg was volatile, it fled from the forehead and returned in the form of worldly topics... It was going away... I burned incense, breathed in the metaphysical vapors, the vision of the egg was returning, it was floating in the middle of my forehead, and then it would spin around the corners of the room, and disappear into the shadows.

I do not know, Thekla, what Constantine meant by his leaving, and his new mission. As he was leaving, his coat got stuck in the doorway, the fabric ripped, and I concluded – he will be back.

I will do what I would have done as an Empress. I will reach for the remnants of the imperial power, I will send informants and guardians after them, I will hope that he is well, I will comfort myself that I did everything I could, that the cloth from the doorway is a guarantee of Constantine's return.

I will return to the womb of the world, I will tell you about the mission to the Khazars, in the story I will turn into the sea.

The first news about Constantine's mission to the Khazars arrived in the spring of the year 861, two and a half years after I had sent out the informants...

Constantine was alive, somewhere in the Khazar wilderness that stretched from Crimea to Caucasus, and from the Caspian Sea up to the Urals. The journey to the Khagan was prolonged, primarily because of the long wait for the escort from Constantinople, and then the emissary of the Khazars. He spent the winter in the trade city of Kherson on the Crimea, a place from which Christians

had been previously persecuted. Kherson was known as a city on the outskirts of the Empire, the city at the end of the world and the destination of convicts.

A part of me was gloating. I had been right when I warned him that Kherson would be the first obstacle in his mission... Besides, it had been inappropriate to choose to begin spreading Christian thought from such a place, a place of convicts...

I asked what the Kherson winter is like. I found out that it is strong, among the strongest, as is the case when in the fall nettles grow too high, and flies attack in swarms.

Constantine waited for the escort from Constantinople and the emissary of the Khazars... Time passed and the fall became winter. On the twenty-third of November, on Saint Clement's Day, Constantine wrote a hymn in praise of this saint.

The winter passed, and those he had waited for were not coming... Waiting grew into doubt, doubt into idleness. Constantine became despondent. He cocooned himself. Then, Sophia appeared. With her appearance, she brought, as her name says, Wisdom. She cleared away the idleness, and along with it Zofos – Darkness. She engaged Constantine in discussions. She gave him the first volume of the Hebrew grammar. Later on, she brought him other books, each in a different language, and chosen with a specific intent.

Constantine's mind had become dormant, and Sophia intended to sharpen it. In the capital of the land of the Khazars, he will have to match wits with both the Saracens and the Jews. Three faiths will confront one another, and each faith will try to gain as many followers as possible. He will need the knowledge of new languages and the speed of thought for translation of a sentence into three languages.

God wanted the mission in Kherson to wait until spring and a time that is better for sailing on the Black Sea. While waiting, Constantine found a sense of sublimity in Kherson. He convinced himself that it was because of Clement's shadow over which he often stumbled. Clement was truly the son of *Clementia* (Sublimity) and his shadow, like the shadows of all her sons, lingered in eternity.

Occasionally, Constantine would leave the fort of Kherson and watch the ebb and flow. He was getting to know the power of water, the people who listen to the sea, as well as those who had an axe to grind with the water. Some of them, by spitting in the river, set sail to their health, some, while grinning at the tide, remained simpering and deformed in face. He also met those who asked from the tide to fertilize the wombs of their women with male offspring...

He was learning about the sea, but also about languages – Hebrew, Samaritan and Khazar. He translated eight parts of the Hebrew grammar book into Greek. He studied the Gospel and the Book of Psalms, written in the Gothic language, as well as the biography of St. Clement, the fourth bishop of Rome and the writer of Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians... God had given him an acquaintance of a Samaritan, who was so impressed by Constantine's being inspired by the Holy Ghost, that he and all those under his roof were baptized.

I had taught my informants how to be invisible. I personally made small satchels in which I placed dried owl eyes...

Upon their return, I learned the story of Constantine's discovery of the body of Saint Clement.

On the thirtieth of January in the year 861, Constantine was awoken by a dream. In his dream, the sea was at its lowest level, it had retreated and the grave of Clement was clearly visible. He decided to get up and wash his face with the rainwater collected during the previous storm. He tried to continue studying the Hebrew grammar book. He lit a fire, poured water into the cauldron, and as the water started to boil, Clement's calls became louder than before.

He gathered a few believers, Methodius and the baptized Samaritan. They set sail some time before noon. The day was passing. Methodius and the priests were singing, and Constantine was still listening. Clement's voice seemed to grow closer... Constantine was annoyed. The sea was distracting him... It was silent and stretched to all sides equally. Did he also wonder: Am I alone and abandoned?

Methodius had approved this attempt. The boat sailed, and soon an island appeared before their eyes. In prayer, Constantine neared the shore. In the end, he started singing. He cast a light with his candle on the mound made of rocks, and started clearing the rocks away. First a rib appeared, then a torso, and finally, the entire body of Clement the martyr.

In Kherson, they were greeted with songs and shouts. It was said that their arrival had been foretold by a foreign woman, Sophia. The body of Clement was placed in the Temple of St. Sozont, and a few days later, after deliberation and consideration, it was transferred within the Kherson's city walls, to the Temple of Saint Leontius. Constantine stopped going out. He was praying and translating... He mastered the Hebrew grammar completely, and like the locals predicted, his stay on Crimea was coming to an end...

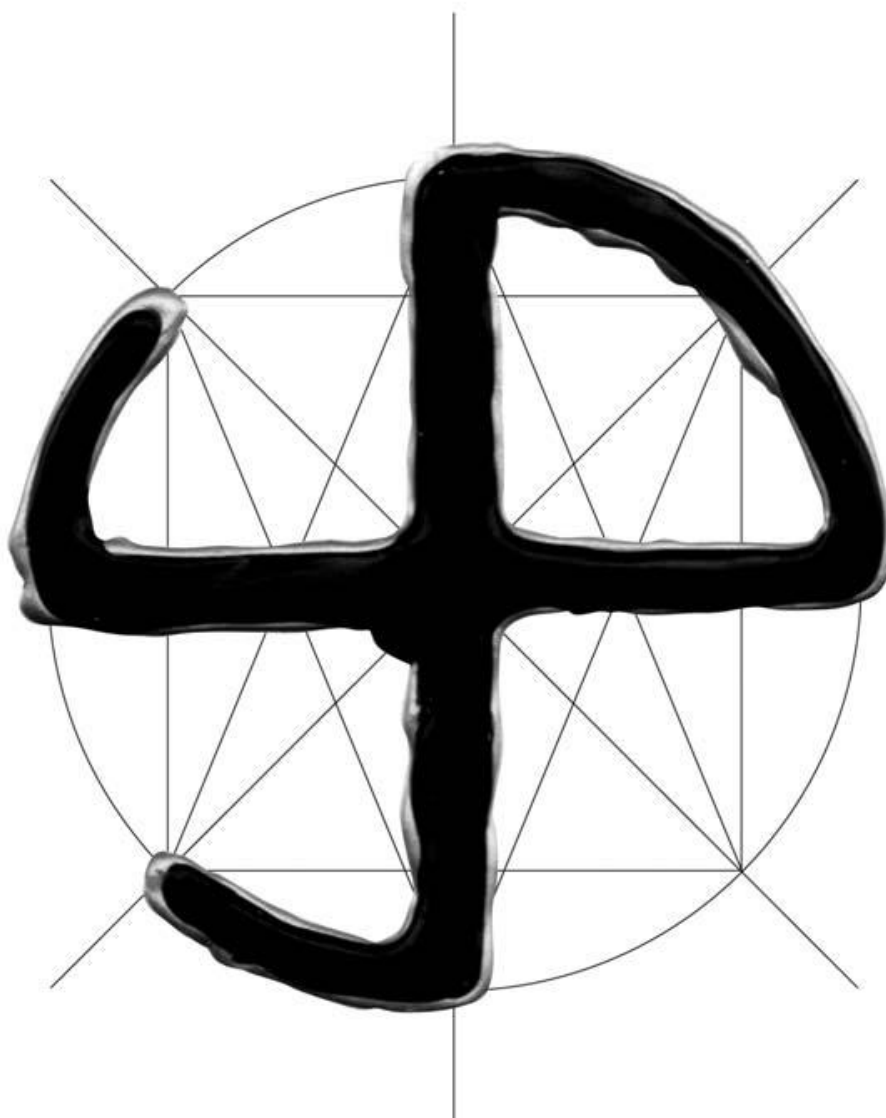
What I had not found out from the informants, Leo had foretold to me, others will read as a book: the Roman librarian Anastasius will describe Constantine's stay in Kherson in his *letter of commendation – Sermo Declamatorius*.

For a long time I have no wishes. Dreams wake me, even though I put the mixture of oils from roses and green walnut shells on my temples, neck, nostrils, wrists and feet. When I sleep, I do not turn my face towards the east, for then I am plagued by my conscience...

Tomorrow I will extinguish coals, and ask if someone has placed a curse on me... At daybreak I will take out holy water, and then very slowly, with the tip of the knife, I will put into the water nine sizzling pieces of wooden coal from a linden tree. With a knife I will make the sign of the cross over the water and imagine those who threaten my family. The coal will sink at the mention of the dark name, and I will find out whether Bardas is a threat to us, Basil, or both... Constantine had warned me to quit wizardry and witchcraft... Still, I will take the candle in which I had mixed the blood from Constantine's vein with wine and wax... I will light it and watch to see how quickly it burns down to the end...

I will return to the books... Constantine is right; books are more merciful towards each other than people... I will read them in the hope that one day I will have in my hands the *Legend of Kherson*... I will master my thoughts. I will read, write, paint... I will be an Empress that has mastered her waiting.

70, N – NAŠĚ (OUR)



*In addition, we are sending with them our brother
who has often proved to us in many ways that he is zealous,
and now even more so because of his great confidence in you.*

2 Cor 8:22

What would I wish for the one who is mine? I would wish him a good, knowledgeable sense, a resilient gut, and the capability for survival. Wrong... it is not enough just to survive... To the one who is mine, I would also wish faith that will renew and heal him from the pains of existence.

I wished for all of that... I wish for it today...

I sense the smells of colors and the sounds of moving scaffolds. Artists usually come at this time, and paint the basilica walls. I observe them while they paint. I study the state of rapture as they are no longer aware of themselves. Are they the only ones who can see?

They feel the architecture of this world. I will approach them. I will ask for their colors. I will paint... I will forget, Theophilus, you and our children, the bodies that will in their physical form always be – the two of us.

The painter, John, speaks in the same manner as he paints – he densely smears the depictions with multiple layers of paint on top of each other... He tells how Constantine the Philosopher freed the Christian city that was surrounded by the Khazars. It sounds like a true miracle. Perhaps he is making it up... Images and stories are kept alive by the imagination... He tells how Constantine of Thessalonica tamed the duke of the Khazars with words. And not just him. He tamed the Ugrians, who howl like wolves. I laugh... John says that Constantine soothed them by repeating *Kyrie eleison, Lord, have mercy*... They were as calm as children before they go to sleep...

I ask John how the Khazars greeted them... John looks at me, bewildered. I should have known, the Khazars do not greet, they ambush. They zeroed in on the missionaries, caught them in their nets, as if they were wild animals, tied them to the trees and left them that way until the arrival of a man – serpent, who they call the Pitmaster. John swore that his body was covered in snake skin... That is how he appeared, as a serpent. He jumped out of a crevice between two cliffs, and spoke to the Khazars with hissing sounds, and they stepped back... The Pitmaster stuck out his tongue, which was split in two and threatening, just like his two narrow, pointed canine teeth. He was asking questions... He wanted to know about our Empire and our son Michael... He asked questions about you, Theophilus, about the state of our Empire, as well as my dethronement as the Empress... He was mocking our dynasty, it was evident by his splatters of spit that he shot all over... I do not hold grudges against ridicule anymore, I find myself ridiculous... The Pitmaster proved to be envious of our knowledge that we keep in books. He said, we the Khazars keep our wisdom in our bosom, and you, Christians, do not even know the ones who have written it down for you...

Constantine asked to be untied. The Pitmaster allowed it, he thought, Constantine would perform magic... He was surprised when the Philosopher raised both hands up, and prepared his fingers for counting. He put forth a mathematics challenge. He said, if the Pitmaster can name all the

generations up to Moses, and their duration, he will accept the greatness of the Khazar wisdom that is kept in the bosom, and not in books.

The Pitmaster marked a circle with venomous spitting. He had spit all over the face of the translator, ordered that they take the Christians to the Khagan, and then jumped back into the narrow crevice from which he had come. On their way to Itil they made their way through a dense forest. As they were drawing closer to this city, the journey progressed more slowly. Messengers of the Khagan warned them of freshly laid traps. Through the forest there were hanging dead boars, and human corpses, without limbs or heads...

The guards at the entrance to the city of Itil hinted that their prospects appeared to be poor. The Khagan had expected them to arrive three months earlier, and the waiting has humbled him in his own eyes, and in the eyes of his subjects. He was bored with the ignorance regarding religions... The Saracens and Jews have been staying in his city for months now... All that's missing is the Christians, so he could make a decision on whose God is more just and which God he will favor... Let the Khazars choose according to their convictions... But his age had become heavier than the ice that engulfs rivers during winter... If he is to leave this world, he must know the name of the God whom he will serve in Eternity.

That night he had bad dreams. His shouts filled the palace halls. He wanted to know if someone had placed a ram's horn under his pillow... Only such a spell could bring such fears and dreams that besieged him last night...

He summoned the Christians during the meal. The Pitmaster singled out Constantine and pushed him towards where the Khagan was. Constantine coughed... He was suffocated by the smell of freshly molten tallow and sweet fumes... Somewhere, in this room, blood was being cooked...

The Khagan had taken a bite of raw fish and waved to the translator... let the foreigner explain the dignity of his race. Constantine made the sign of the cross and replied in the language of the Khazars. He gave Michael's regards to the Khagan, and then refused the place that was offered to him. He concluded that it did not belong to him anymore than to any of the other Christian missionaries. All he could tell about himself was that he is one of Adam's grandsons and that he differs from the rest of the world by the zeal with which he means to regain the honor of his great grandfather.

The Khagan invited the Christians to the feast, and kept Constantine near to himself... He downed a glass filled with boar blood sweetened with honey, and then other food started to arrive – barbecued snakes, birds, turtles, various game, and along with them spreads, cheeses, spices and boiled plants.

Constantine started his profession of faith and the competition with the Jews and the Saracens... To each of them he replied in their own language, and he translated to the Khagan the parts of the conversation as the Khagan wished... He refused the food, saying how his hunger is always satisfied when he explains to a non-Christian ear why it is more fitting to praise three, instead of one God. The Khagan did not understand him completely, but he encouraged such a zealous spirit... He asked

for another cup of boar's blood. He was listening, drinking, and blood was steaming... Constantine claimed that one cannot honor someone without at the same time honoring his word and spirit. The Khagan agreed... He himself would rather embrace the one who respects all three. The Khazars complied with the Khagan's words... They admired the religion that insists on honoring one Christian God made of the Holy Trinity, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit...

At the back of the hall there was a commotion, then a silence. The Khagan's wife was also following the discussion.

I wanted to know if she was beautiful... The icon-painter John remembers her more beautiful than the most beautiful icon. She was strong as well, stronger than the Khagan. She lashed a whip made of raw skin, and Constantine's untouched piece of meat shot to the floor. She stood in the middle of the hall, and with seventy whiplashes she scattered around the leftovers and bones. The slave girls were wiping every inch of wherever the whip had struck, and in a short time, there was order again.

She stood before Constantine and asked him what was the confirmation of love... Constantine was pale, more pale than he was when he drank the boar blood mixed with honey. He was silent in Hebrew, Greek, and Khazar...

I wanted to know whether he had fallen in love... John tried explaining to me that men and women do not fall in love in the same way, and I went insane... I bore seven children during a ten-year period... No one had to explain to me the differences or similarities of falling in love...

Constantine's enchantment with the Khagan's wife could mean only one thing for me... He was attracted to her wildness in the way that those existing in pairs in this world are attracted to each other...

The Khagan's wife continued to lash her whip and continued with questions... If the Philosopher does not know what the confirmation of love is, can he know how the woman's womb could have received God if that very same woman cannot look in His face...

Constantine knew much about his faith, but next to nothing about a woman's nature. He mumbled a counter question... Does the Khagan's wife know what is the most honorable among visible things?

The Christians and Khazars replied in unison: the most honorable is man, for he is the only one created in the image of God...

John thanked God for giving back Constantine his gift of speech... While looking at the Khagan's wife straight in the eyes, he named in order... God is everywhere, in the blackberry, in the cloud, in the wind, in the smoke when he spoke to Moses and Job... The human race started to rot and God knew that no one else can restore its health, except Him, the Creator. Those who were worth something, suspected what was in store for us. They turned to the Creator and asked him to heal us. Did not Moses ask him not to call on us in thundering rocks and clarion sounds, but to move into our wombs and take away our sins...

The Khagan's wife approached the Khagan. She raised her whip high as a warning to those who would intrude on their conversation. She was whispering to him, and he was confirming, and

towards the end of the conversation he said something, too. By their motions it seemed that both of them were going to leave... Instead of a goodbye, the Khagan's wife struck her whip on all four sides. She seemed impatient. In a hurry, the Khagan gave out orders... He turned to Constantine: – You spoke well, Christian! Who wishes to join your faith, let him be baptized today...

Then he called for his chiefs and ordered them to offer boar's blood to the guests. Let them show good hospitality to Constantine and his Christians...

Envy...

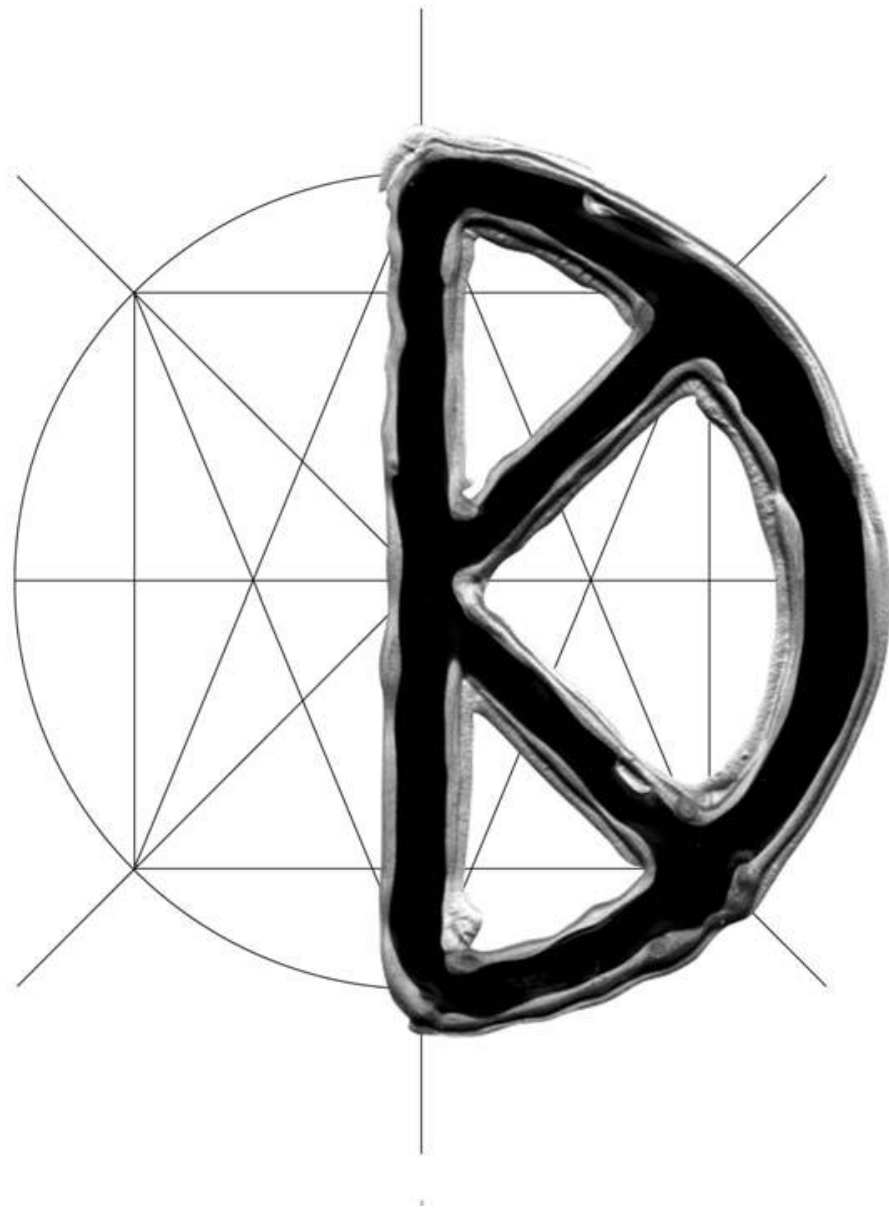
I am not an eunuch yet, and I am imagining that in the Khagan's wife Constantine had seen a woman. During those nights he dreamt about her hair, he imagined her hunting after birds in flight, and ripping the flesh off bones with her teeth... He had said her name seventy times, and she brought him close to the life he had given up willingly.

John had seen them in conversation. He could not testify to what they had spoken about... They hid their words from others like snakes hide their eggs... What was obvious was what their bodies were saying. Constantine grew larger, his beard got stronger... The Khagan's wife possessed rule over everyone who was near her. In addition to ruling over the Khagan and the Land of Khazars, she ruled over Constantine. The differences had recognized each other as One.

Was the Khagan suspicious? As much as all those suspect who are under someone's rule. He did what he could. He kept his wife as close to himself as possible, and during the moments when she was away, he sent the Pitmaster to watch over her.

At every step, Constantine met up with some snakes... The Pitmaster's reptilian nature was on the lookout for him all over – at the pastures, as well as in Itil. My Constantine was melting. Life took hold of him when he least expected it... I heard him in my dreams. He was stirring unrest in the heart of the Khagan's wife. Something that was *theirs* he would call *ours*. A new body... He stopped being ours, he had become hers... She fed him. She kept Constantine's womb just for herself. She personally hunted for him, and made his food. She had said, my womb is yours, yours is mine... I understood her... I used to feed those for whom I had felt responsible for... Their link through their wombs lasted for a full seventy days, until the appearance of Sophia.

Sophia was radiant. Her appearance dispersed the magic of the ink of the Khagan's wife. They battled, and Sophia won.



*That number, which is the sum of ten eights
or eight tens
means that those who fight armed
with the Ten Commandments of God
gain the eight blessings.*

Honorius Augustodunensis

John! I call to him, and he, because of colors, cannot hear. He does not respond to his own, or any other names by which I distract him. He paints and dreams. Dreams and paints. Paints and does not hear. By painting he stops being John and becomes Hyperion, the son of heights.

I counted eighty different ways in which he applies colors. The time of John the painter in those eighty moves becomes comparable to an era of eighty years of the rule of Joseph in the land of Egypt... He encompassed the ten from the Decalogue and eight from the resurrection. I am exaggerating ... Who can say with certainty how in eighty layers he had not enlarged the number forty exactly two times and in that way, multiplied the motive of this earthly world... No matter how much he wanted to paint God, John with his eighty moves, doubles the illusions...

I will not let him paint, I will call to him... I will ask of him to speak of Itil, the city on the river Volga and the capital of the Land of the Khazars where two kinds of people live: the Khazars, born *under the wind*, and the rest, foreigners born *above the wind*.

- John, which religion did they accept?
- Who, mother?
- the Khazars, born *below the wind*...
- To all, and none.
- But, how?
- The Khazars do not hold on to anything.
- Didn't Constantine persuade them of the rightness of the Christian belief?
- They were persuaded by the Hebrews, as much as the Saracens. They switched to every religion they found appealing... They adapted the religions to themselves...
- ...
- They are different from us, but I myself adopted something from them, too.
- Oh?
- If you know too much, they will hang you, if you are too modest, they will trample on you...
- Sounds right...
- In the Land of the Khazars I was shocked at every step.

- Have you visited their houses?
- They are nomads and their houses are deserted... They stay briefly in one place, they prefer to move around. They worship freedom, and still, they call their chiefs masters.
- What are their women like?
- Shameless, yet chaste.
- ...
- They reveal their intimate parts and scratch them before strangers...
- In front of you, too?
- They were scratching in front of me, too.
- And you. What did you do?
- I covered my face with a scarf.
- That was how you saved your neck?
- No, that was how I saved my dignity in my own eyes. One of the husbands laughed at my act of covering up. He said, I show you my wife so I can enjoy in you trying to control yourself...
- What was the worst of it?
- Winter, mother... My beard was so frozen that it was covered with ice and snow, and my face... One night, my face got frozen on the pillow...
- Tell me, for the most part have they turned to the Hebrews, Saracens, or us, Christians?
- the Khazars turn only to the winds...

I stop being cautious, as if I do not know that during life there is no freedom. From all sides I am besieged by wasps, the evil demons that nest in people's heads. The wasps are to blame... They were swarming in my head, and due to them I am careless and hungry for news of Constantine.

- You were saying something, mother, sister?
- Yes, John, I was saying something.
- About the Land of the Khazars?
- About Constantine. I want to know, how he left them?
- He left them when he baptized those who joined him and when Khagan stopped dictating the letter...
- The letter for my Michael?
- As far as I know, the letter which Constantine will take to Gebalim.
- Gebalim? Who is Gebalim... Maybe a Khazar?
- I do not know if he is a Khazar. He lives on the shore...
- Of which sea?
- The Adriatic...
- I do not know; Constantine did not mention him...

- He told me that the people are mentioned in the Bible... Geba, Gebalim, Gebim?
- That is the name of their land?
- Yes, but the name of their land is Croatia...
- ... The ones who wage wars?
- They wage wars, or are under rule of others...
- John, do you know if Gebalim was also born *below the wind*?
- Gebalim is their chief, mother.
- Constantine will take the letter to him?
- He gave his word, he will give the Khagan's letter to Gebalim.
- You mean, Constantine is heading towards a new mission.
- Across Croatia into Moravia.
- ...
-
- John?
- Do not resent me, mother, I should...
- Paint? Go, my son... Go, leave me.

He returned to his paintings. I myself will paint... I will fill my desolation with colors. I will paint the fire. I will paint the light. I will paint closure.

Through my informants from Constantinople, Constantine sent me a present, a seashell and sable fur... I will thank him, he traded solely to please me. He made me cheerful and not forgotten... In his letter he mentioned Photius the Patriarch... He said how he feels indebted to the Patriarch; he still remembers how he inherited the title of Philosopher from Photius. He transcribed to me parts of Leo's letters that he had received in the Land of the Khazars. Leo asked Constantine to show him how one can express tens through four fours. He found the answer and wishes to show it to me.

Why was this example so important to him? He believed that he was getting close to Leo and was starting to recognize the signs... Leo's perception of the Cosmos was becoming clear to him. He was reaching his master's level.

$$10 = \frac{44 - 4}{4}$$

$$20 = \left(\frac{4}{4} + 4 \right) \cdot 4$$

$$30 = 4! + 4 + 4 - \sqrt{4}$$

$$40 = (4! - 4) + (4! - 4)$$

$$50 = 44 + \frac{4!}{4}$$

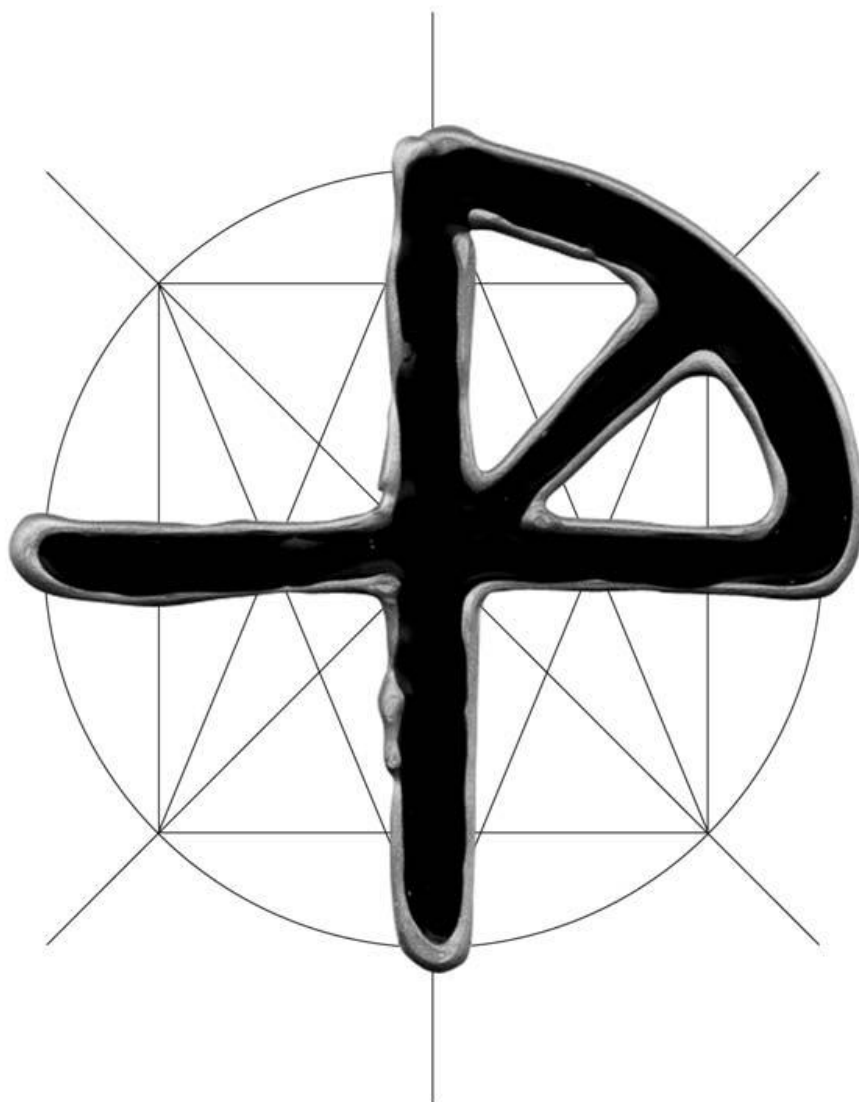
$$60 = (4 \cdot 4 \cdot 4) - 4$$

$$70 = \frac{(4 + 4)!}{4! \cdot 4!}$$

$$80 = (4 \cdot 4 + 4) \cdot 4$$

$$90 = 4 \cdot 4! - 4 - \sqrt{4}$$

90, P – POKOI – PEACE



*Nine goes well with nine choruses of angels,
ten with the laborers chosen to work
in Christ's vineyard for a denar of life...*

Honorius Augustodunensis

It is the time of rest. The sun is setting, turning red, tumbling into twilight. It does not resist. It sinks.

I open Constantine's letter. I received it this morning, read it, and put it away. He wrote that I was his mother. An archetype of a woman. A nest and a wing.

The bird has flown. The treetop has stirred. The evening is approaching.

He wrote he weighs around ninety kilograms. He tried to convince me that he is more resilient than ever. I have known every ounce of his weight, as well as his stubborn neglect for his body. By mentioning his weight, he had given me absolution. Ninety is three times thrice ten, it comprises the wisdom of nine, the excellence of ten and the glory of the Holy Trinity.

Melancholy... People whose eyebrows are joined together are prone to it. Today, to fend off melancholy I'm wearing opal, beryl, sapphire, garnet, jacinth and lapis. I eat walnuts, corals grounded into dust, and roots of bile.

The letter has disturbed me. He went on missions before, but he used to come to bid farewell to me, the empress, the mother, and the woman.

Constantine, you have disturbed me. You have made me wistful. For a long time now, there has been talk of your leaving for Moravia... You have played *Nine Men's Morris* and with the languages of ancient times... You have combined them within yourself and made new letters... You, a man, created a new script... You are leaving on yet another mission. Our time is slipping away.

John left me some powder with which I will make ninety white colors. He told me that the white color is the one from which all other colors come from. It may become everything, but it can be lost in the greyness, too. I will ask him, what makes icons different.

– Tell me, John, are icons sublime?

– They are.

– All of them?

– Sublime are the ones that are miraculous.

– Because of their miraculous portrayal of characters?

– Archetypes, mother.

– ...

– Sublime icons lead a man's mind towards a concept, a judgment and a conclusion. They are above reality. As is mathematics... Reality is the one that resists...

– Resists the depth...

– The symmetry, rhythmic, abstraction and depth. Infinite, but also finite space.

– When is the icon completed?

– It is completed when the invisible world is reflected in it. He responds with ease. He is convinced and he does not have any doubts. With my questions I am making him doubt... What am I doing to him? Do I wish to shake him in his belief...

– Do you fear your icons?

– Why would I fear them?

– They will outlive you.

– ...

– Faces on your icons are ugly.

– I do not paint the bodies, but the souls.

– Still, you will put aside the icons that are completed. You will not modify them further or their ugly faces.

– Mother, I am ephemeral.

Am I evil? I am casting doubt on him. Making him suffer. Nothing is good enough and can always be better.

- Maybe you will want to modify the icons that have been completed.
- That which is completed is not modified. I am completed, as well.
- You are transient.
- Transient and completed in transience.

The painter John is transient, and I too, a former empress, so are Michael and Thekla... I am no longer a woman, I am not yet an eunuch either. Still I could have done so much... I gave up... The Empire could have been a game set up according to my rules... And it would have been so, if it hadn't been for Michael... The advisors had persuaded me: – Do it... kill him, get rid of the wicked son...

I forged plans... I pictured my banished daughters, their shaved heads and black habits. I heard Thekla's hysteria. They were accusing me, each one of them...

I decided, for my four daughters' sake, I will kill their brother... I will kill my own brother, Bardas. I will bring order, and God will not hold it against me, for my decision is just.

I made the decision, and then I broke down...

I threatened death to anyone who touched Michael. He is my son. Blood did not flow from his veins even when I had to protect him from curses...

I have cut off my hair, burned my crown, torn my dresses apart...

No good, Theodora... Rage is an expression of outer discord and desperation is discord within...

I have cleansed myself, and I will keep cleansing myself by penance and prayer...

In your last letter, Constantine, you did not write about yourself. You drew me your

Glagolitic script, your play with the cross, circle, triangle and square – your vision of the Universe's wholeness and appearance of the world. The cross is salvation, and Jesus. The circle is the Sun, it warms us, and it is like the God that gives life. The triangle unifies the sky, earth and man. The triangle is the Holy Trinity. The square is the Earth. Within the square, there are four parts of the Breviary, the four seasons of the year and the four elements – water, fire, air and earth. I was made familiar with the tens expressed by four fours.

You began the letter with the form of the cross, and the sound “A,” a symbol of a man and a Christian. With the first nine letters you said that it is good to live honorably in this world.

Your signs are letters. Your letters are numbers. Your letters are also symbols.

With symbols you have connected the two worlds, the visible and the invisible.

Your letters are birds. Caught in your net, stirred from their flight... Their wings are our written down speech. Landing and takeoff is conducted according to the rules. The rules you call grammar, but it is nothing other than geometry.

I have immersed myself in your script. Through the letters and the tens expressed by four fours, I have touched you in spirit. The tens are my measure. Something of yours that is completely mine. You have burned out from your overzealousness, Constantine. I received the news of your death with an ostensible calmness, but I knew that deep within me, all the roots of my earthly existence were dying.

I know that my story about you, Constantine the Philosopher, is not entirely accurate. I have always been too wild and irrational. And, I, being an unworthy servant of God, could not have told it any other way. May I be forgiven.

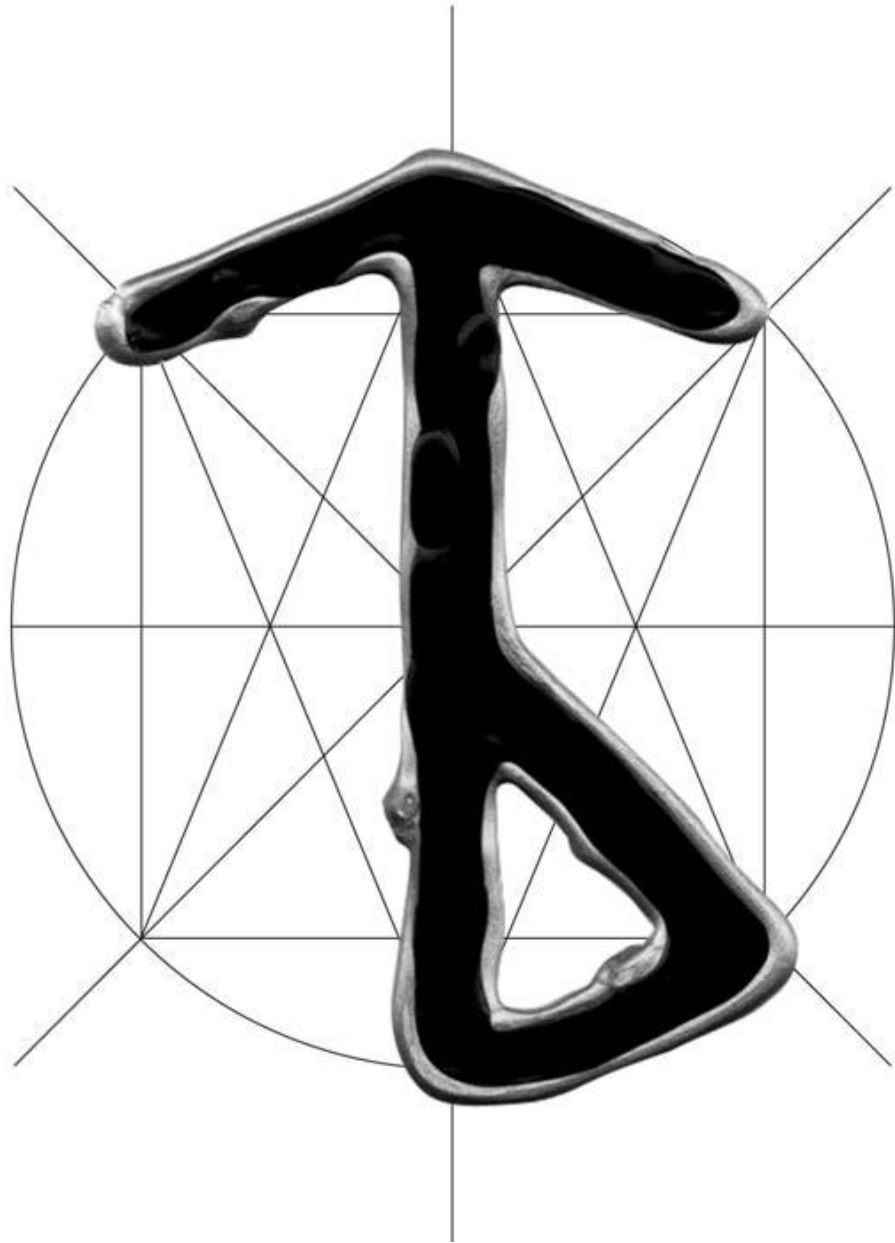
Part III: HUNDREDS OF ANASTASIUS THE LIBRARIAN

100, R – RЪCI	
200, S – SLOVO	letter, word
300, T – TVRЪDO	hard, firm
400, U – UKЪ	
500, F – FRЪTЪ	
600, H – HÊRЪ	
700, ѿ – OTЪ	
800, Ć – ŠTA	
900, C – CI	

Be firm in your faith.

J. Bratulić

100, R – RbCl (SAY)



*I circle around God, around the primordial tower.
I've been circling for thousands of years
and I still don't know: am I a falcon,
a storm, or a great song?*

Rainer Maria Rilke

I, Anastasius the Librarian, have dreamt of a square made up of ten tens. I dreamt hundreds of reasons and hundreds of deeds of my sixty-six years. It is June, I have suffered the night in sweat, lulled the darkness to sleep and remained awake... deprived of an undreamt dream of the number one hundred, the square of the number ten, and the symbol of constancy in eternity.

Ailouros Acute claws my feet. I am tied to this stubborn, vagarious and nimble tomcat. Acute wants my company. Now he is washing behind his ears. There will be rain, he will ramble about the streets of Rome, and I, despite my craving for fresh air, will remain a prisoner of this room.

– Come Acute! Come here, Sharp-eyed! It is not daytime yet, but you will get by in the Roman murkiness. Feel free to go out. I am not angry with you... It is a good thing that you have woken me. You have shortened both of our nights. Time is fleeting, and the less there is, the more quickly it passes.

I will put the date on the letter to Bishop Gauderich... Thursday, June of 876.

I will translate Constantine's Glagolitic notes for him. I will put them in chronological order and add what Constantine told me in this very room, in the year 869...

Sharp-eyed, leave me be. You want to sit in my lap? Here, get settled... Are you interested in what I am writing? I am trying to keep my word, and write out Constantine's life in Latin... I translate and sentences keep pulling at me with their metaphors... You are sniffing... You like the new ink? Come on, you do not have to be obliging... You are the only one, Sharp-eyed, who is still interested in my chronicles... Go out, catch some air for the both of us.

Constantine's script is both beautiful and difficult.

He left me notes about himself, but only a little of it is in Greek. During the last years he wrote in Glagolitic, his new script. In one lifetime, I have been run over by many letters, even these new ones...

He scrawled notes about his childhood... He was born in Thessalonica as the youngest of seven children of aged parents. They anguished over him, due to their old age as well as his frailty. They protected him from evil spirits and never called him by name. When he sneezed during his baptism, they concluded that Constantine would become a wise man.

He loved birds. A wild hawk was his first friend. They understood each other in their loneliness. They went hunting for other, smaller birds, and Constantine discovered the importance of endurance... Up until the day when, in the middle of the hunt, the hawk went missing in an air current that drew the world into an invisible whirlwind...

He lost the visible in the invisible. The indirect experience of observing the whirlwind became an absolute experience of a partaker in a loss... He acquainted himself with new

feelings... He nourished his sorrow with starvation, and misunderstanding by staring at the Sun...

He made a vow... He will escape the whirlwind. He said, I believe in God and know of him. I have been warned. The dual world advises modesty. The hawk made me happy. God took him to Himself.... I have been warned about the path I should choose. I accept the sacrifice that is recorded in eternity.

He loved words. He called them *Logos*. He believed they were his way to God.

He created a script, the Glagolitic. He tested it in translating the *Prologue* to John's Gospel *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*

With letters he spelled out the essence of the world.

He had taken them to Slavic people.

He had sent them through the whirlpool of the Cosmos.

As I edit his notes I am thinking about a powerful mill... Within himself Constantine was grinding... civilizations, traditions, knowledge, symbols, signs and numbers... He crumbled them, mixed them, and made new letters...

He wrote and spoke in several languages... I collect his notes, sift them in my sieve... On one side goes the waste, on the other, that which is important.

He had described a visit to Gauderich, the Bishop of Velletri....

If the sun's mission is to rise, my mission is to spread the Glagolitic and free its letters. Life is a path, the path is a mission, and the mission is life. If I have flown everywhere like a hawk, from east to west, and from north to south, among the Khazars, Saracens, Moravian Slavs and Croats, that does not mean I was aimless. I followed a path, found St. Clement, the Glagolitic, and my own self. I did not write my book, and still, I have succeeded in my intentions. I have translated the Liturgy into Slavic languages and through the Glagolitic spread the Word of Christ.

I am not writing my biography. None of us is important individually... What is important is the bread that we are all partakers of, each of us with their own grain and choice.

I will describe you, Constantine, and you will have your book. We will not manage to explain you, but we will nevertheless bring you to life...

We started to write the book at Gauderich's suggestion.

In December of the year 867, upon return from his mission to the Slavs, Constantine spoke to Pope Adrian II about the Christian ideology and his arrival in Rome. Unlike the Pope, Bishop Gauderich was not enraptured by Constantine's speech.

He listened with indifference to the story of the long journey to Moravia, the forty months spent passing on literacy to the people, the Moravian prince Rastislav, the Pannonian prince Kocelj, travel through Croatia, the delivery of the letter to Gebalim, the crossing of the Alps, the arrival in Venice, as well as the Glagolitic masses held in front of the Doge's Palace... Bishop Gauderich, in a way, approved of the idea that both the people of Rome and

Constantinople, each for their own reasons recognized in the Glagolitic a challenge directed to both God and the Devil...

Constantine won over Gauderich by finding the body of St. Clement in Kherson... Because of the relics of St. Clement that he had brought to Rome, Bishop Gauderich recognized a miraculous energy in Constantine.

Constantine disagreed with him... He tried to convince Gauderich that there is no real truth about him, Constantine the Philosopher... He explained that three people live in each of us: the one we always wanted to be, the one who represents how we see ourselves, and the one who we truly are but do not know.

Constantine did not want a book about himself. He asked of Gauderich to number the reasons for granting such benevolence. Besides, biographies are distorted images of reality. They are rife with vanity, and vanity begets despair – the highest form of self-worship.

Curiosity induced me to get involved in writing a book about Constantine the Philosopher... I was interested in the truth... Especially when I found out that Constantine impressed Gauderich by finding the remains of St. Clement.

He retrieved Clement from the sea, and he took away Constantinople's right to claim his relics. Instead of to Constantinople, Constantine had taken Clement's remains across Thessalonica, Moravia and Croatia to Rome.

This act of madness drew me to him... A man loyal to the empire would have returned the relics to Constantinople, deepened the schism between the Eastern and Western bodies of churches and ensured a promotion for Methodius and himself.

I would like to know what he believed his mission to be... the Glagolitic, the unity of the Catholic Church, spreading literacy, something else, or all of this together? He did not answer these kinds of questions. It is as if he had been blinded by the Glagolitic... Nothing strange... He wasn't the first who nurtured the spirit and neglected the body.

Methodius used his own sobriety to try to revive Constantine.

Gauderich blessed them both. That day, at the mass in Rome, he had secretly whispered to me:

– This Constantine has sunlight in his eyes. I will write his chronicle.

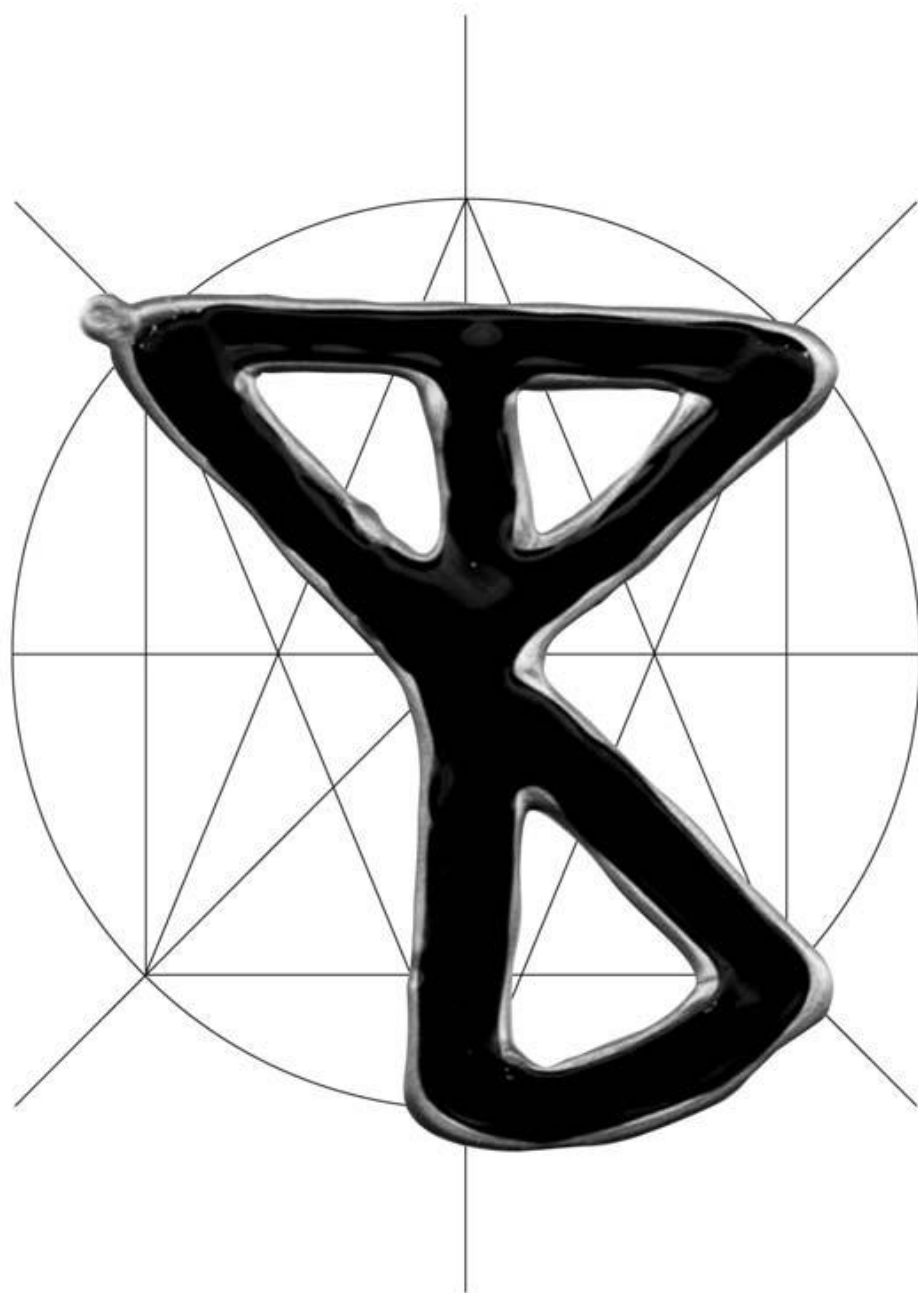
For days I've been translating sentences from your parchments. I am getting to know you, Constantine. I have learned that your father was a Drungary and strategist. He raised the two of you according to military doctrines. But, ever since a game appeared, some kind of chess, your father began forsaking the marriage bed. After you were born, they spent their next fourteen years living as brother and sister. Your father relaxed his military discipline; he was convinced that everything is a game –war, living and dying... He told you, the Almighty is playing with us. He guides us in the search for Knowledge.

Play is a word by which I define you and your father. You played *Nine Men's Morris*. When you were fourteen years old, your father died while playing and you were raised by strangers.

In Constantinople, at the court, you adopted new habits. Like the Tatars, you learned not to eat with your hands... Due to the influence of Theodora from Asia, you learned how to eat by using a two-pronged fork.

When your illness got worse in Rome, sometimes you would call out for the Empress who raised you. Delirious, feverish, you called her mother.

200, S – SLOVO (LETTER)



*All things are in pairs, each the opposite of the other,
but nothing the Lord made is incomplete.
Everything completes the goodness of something else.
Could anyone ever see enough of this splendor?*

Sir 42: 24 – 25

Felis Acute, Felis, you vagrant, you are back?... Eat, Acute! Eat... You are wiser than I am. I have resisted taming.

My greatest gift was an aptitude for foreign languages. East Roman monks were the first to ask me where I was lacking. I remember, I answered them without giving too much thought: in the knowledge of languages. They decided to improve my imperfection by convincing me that the mastering of languages is a gift of God...

I learned Greek, accepted that the languages are a gift of God, but because of my wagging tongue I was excommunicated only a few years later.

I am a born Roman, just like you, Acute. In the beginning I had nothing against Rome... I found it impressive: *Urbe* –the City, *Caput mundi* – the capital of the World, *la Citta Eterna* – the Eternal City, *Limen Apostolorum* – the Doorstep of the Apostles.

I was bothered when I would hear the ridicule behind my back: – He is the nephew of Bishop Arsenius of Orte... He will go far, bishop of Orte has become the Papal legate, and there will surely be a place for his nephew, the young Anastasius... About twenty years ago they named me the Cardinal of St. Marcel's Church. Only a few considered that this promotion was due to my knowledge of Greek, and most thought that the bishop of Orte was responsible for the honor.

I let my tongue loose, offended many, disgusted myself and others... In the end, I fled. I had had enough of Rome, the power of influence, rumors and speculations. Three years after my excommunication I still hadn't returned to Rome, so I was anathematized. They made me an outcast, Acute... They took away my honors, claiming it was because of my political activities.

And all I wanted was to be free... Did I say that freedom is an illusion?

I had given up believing in freedom when I was forty-five years old. I returned to Rome. Forsaken and ostracized, I had my freedom, but now I had nothing more to struggle against. I stooped my head low like those who have digested their illusions with disgust. From an owl, I turned into a mouse... Today I am a blind mouse... A bat... My weighed-down nature has started to sleep during daytime and to languish during the night. At night I read, and during the day I translate in the stuffy sanctuaries of warm rooms, a hotbed of languid worlds of ideas...

Titles.

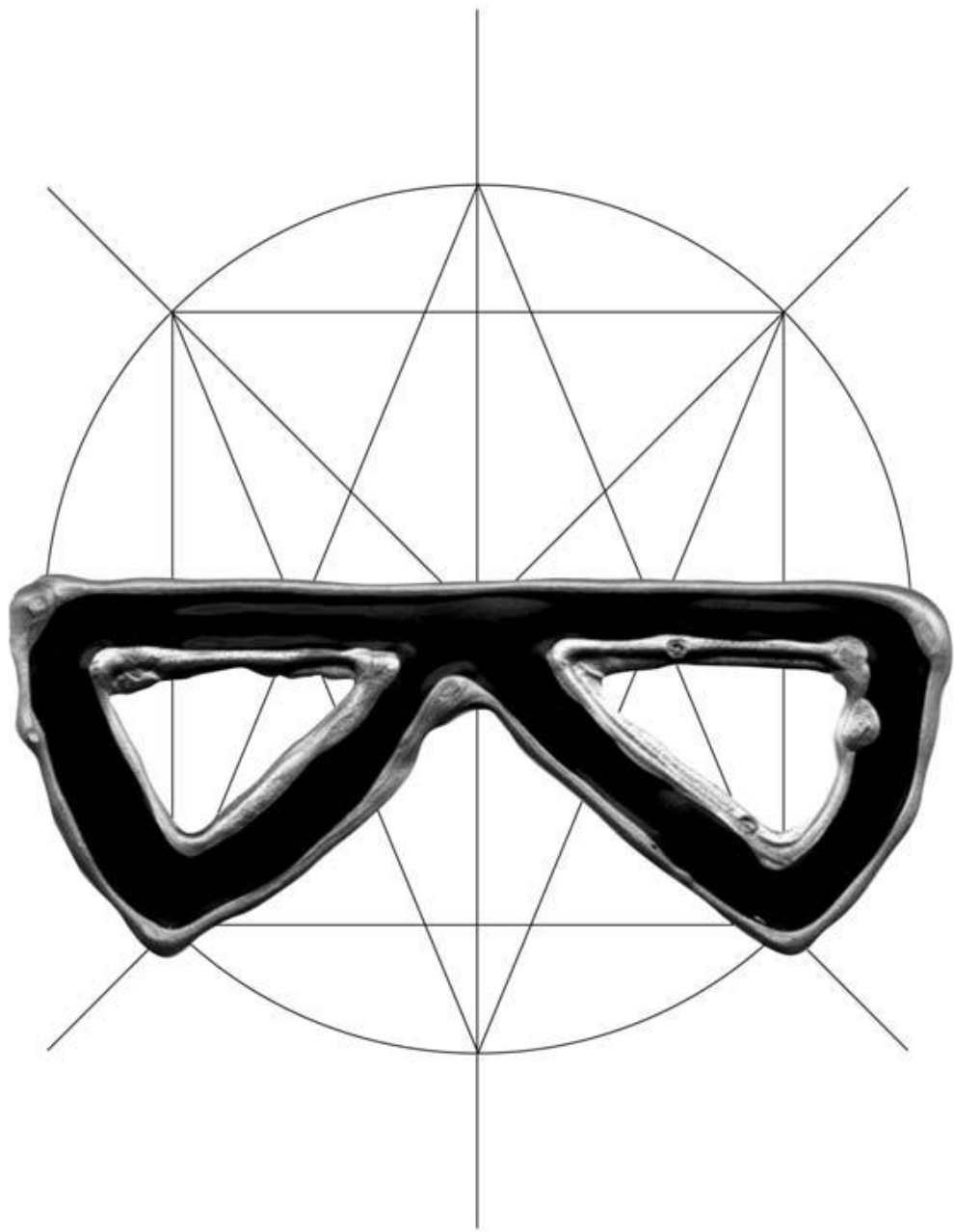
When I repented and settled down, I collected them with great ease. Already, during the papacy of Benedict III, I had become a librarian and chancellor. I initiated a discussion with Photius through a long-term correspondence.

From the letters of Photius I first found out about Constantine the Philosopher, Photius' favorite pupil... Photius wanted to know if Constantine was in Rome. He disappeared after Theoctistus's murder and all of Constantinople was looking for him. Between the lines, I detected a strange kind of bond between Photius and Constantine. As far as I could piece together, despite the stubbornness of intellect of this young man, Photius respected him. Sometimes they would spend their time playing *Nine Men's Morris*, the game played with pebbles that does not end in one hundred and thirty-six combinations.

I myself was passionate about games and contests... I wanted to be the first in translation, wandering and writing. I translated hagiographies and acts of Parliaments, wrote a biography of Nicholas I and St. John the Merciful. I competed when I contended with evident futility for the papacy. Perhaps I would have competed with Gauderich in writing Constantine's biography, but somehow, as years go by, I am running out of reasons for having to prove myself. Gauderich will dedicate Constantine's new biography to Pope John VIII. Others will approve, and I will retreat.

The sun has dispelled the darkness of Rome. I will say a prayer. I will not measure time, but will surrender to it.

300, T – TVRĚDO (HARD)



The higher in the sky, the harder to the ground.

Folk proverb

The sky has cleared up. It will be a hot day. The stone tiles are emanating yesterday's sweltering June heat in Rome, and I am sorting out Constantine's notes. Later on, when the sun is high in the sky, I will feel drowsy and leaden. Get to it, Anastasius. Bring order to this chronicle. Begin with the notes on Constantine's departure from Moravia.

Some of it was recorded by Methodius. He is wordy and difficult to follow. He speaks of Constantine's decision to gain approval in Rome for the Glagolitic script. They had hoped that the Pope would be approving because of the relics of St. Clement, which they have found and were bringing to him as a gift. Constantine was firm in his decision to find Gebalim and deliver the Khagan's letter. He had given his word, and a word is meaningless if not followed by action.

They left Moravia in good spirits: Constantine, Methodius, students and some of the prisoners released because of Constantine's plea.

In Pannonia, they were met and heartily welcomed by prince Kocelj... Just as in Rastislav's Moravia, they were spreading Christianity, the Glagolitic script, and translating books. They could not linger for too long. Constantine had to find Gebalim in Croatia, and deliver the letter... He was coughing from time to time. Methodius was concerned...

Just like previously in the Land of the Khazars, and later in Moravia, Constantine asked that prisoners be released as a reward. Kocelj granted him his wish and the brothers blessed him and headed for the Pannonian and coastal Croatia.

Methodius describes in detail the customs of the Croats. He mentions the craggy mountain of Velebit, the sharpness of the mountain peaks, the smell of highland grass, and the quietness from which God's presence speaks.

The sharp mountain air and asceticism of life on Velebit suited Constantine well. His was a lean diet, and his hosts, without his knowledge, were adding a few oysters to his meals. Methodius watched them with displeasure, but they explained to him that oysters will increase the strength and firmness of the lean dishes.

It appeared that Constantine was getting better. His walk was more upright and his face regained color. He played *Nine Men's Morris*. One of the games lasted up to three hundred moves.

Frequently he felt the scratching of the letter he was carrying to Gebalim in his robe. The letter, the robe and the stories that spread throughout Velebit, indicated that Gebalim was not

far...

The mountain – Gebalim or gebim, he saw before him daily... Until they reached Velebit, he thought Gebalim must be a man akin to the mountain. Upon arrival on Velebit he learned that the Croats have changed the word *gebim* into two words – *hara* and *hora*. Besides *mountain*, Gebalim meant a friend in their language, but also the ruler of all Croats.

They believed that the very name Croat comes from the word *mountain* (*gora*)... They were competing in the reading of the Bible and the chapters in which their name was mentioned: Isa 10, 29; Isa 10, 31; Ezek 27, 9; Ps 83, 8.

Constantine accepted – they are Gebalim – the mountain people, Gebalim is their ruler. The letter tracked him, Gebalim the ruler.

Constantine was supposed to find Domagoj, prince of the Neretvians, the prince of Liburnia, Dalmatia and Paganja – areas near the Neretva River.

Methodius had set a date of departure and the continuation of the voyage. They were supposed to stay on Velebit a few days more, a week or two at most.

On the second day before their departure one of their Velebit hosts passed away. Constantine thought to himself, it has come to pass, man proposes, God disposes.

He decided to delay the journey and to mourn with the family.

Three days passed according to custom: prayers were said from morning until evening, and at sunset, gatherings began during which the deeds of the deceased were mentioned.

When the third day was over, at sunrise, there was a funeral procession, and in it were Constantine, Methodius and the students. The walk went on until they reached an inaccessible mountain gorge.

Methodius wondered what could be the reason of such a sudden stop. He thought that either someone from the procession had died or was ill.

The procession silenced him in his questions. They were erecting the “*mirilo* or measures” – the resting place of the deceased.

With the head towards the sun, the deceased was laid on stone tablets of the length and width of his body. On the headstone, two men carved in symbols, as signs to which the soul of the deceased was powerfully attached.

Constantine was unnerved by the thought that the body marked by the *mirilo* could remain unburied and a prey to vultures. The village chief calmed him. He said that every one of us has his own measure, but as long as the road is beneath our feet, we have neither the will nor a reason to find out what our measure is. The round stones of the *mirilo*, placed at the head and the feet of the body, are not only the final measure and *mirilo*, they are also the transitory resting place of the soul.

In what sense *transitory*, Constantine inquired.

Well, in what sense. In every sense, said the village chief. For the soul to be able to soar up high, it must have something hard to leap from. There, where the deceased was given his

measure, a rock is laid so the soul can spring up with ease, when it decides to soar up high in the sky.

Constantine stepped to the side. He said to Methodius: – To these people, the importance of the world is solidified into rock.

Four highlanders lifted the body from the *mirilo*. They placed him on a stretcher, and carried him away towards the church and the Christian cemetery.

The prayers started, and then the funeral. It took a long time to dig the grave, the sun rose high, the surrounding soil was hard and heavy from the rocks.

Constantine prayed.

Methodius watched him utter Glagolitic under an open sky. Constantine was in one of his particular, different states. His eyes were entranced by the hand of the Creator, who has left His mark on the cliffs of Velebit.

They continued their journey.

Sounds of hardness reverberated in their wake.

The mountain echoed.

The brothers and students differentiated rocks by their smell and taste.

Constantine walked on his own, as the last one in the procession.

While walking, he was speaking with Sophia.

He wanted to leave a vowel behind him. Just a sound. A... Az...

Methodius wrote about their journey to Gebalim.

As we travel, history comes to meet us at every step of the way. At the beginning of this century, rule over the former Roman province Dalmatia was divided between the Franks and Constantinople – Constantinople ruled the cities, and the Franks the Croatian territories.

Constantine has no interest in politics. When I point out to him the extent to which the Croats – Gebalims have become independent during the past years, he does not listen.

Thank God, his eating is well. A few days ago, we were treated to a mangold pita. He was curious about how the dough was made. The oldest woman in the house rolled it out in a wide circle. She dusted the fireplace, then placed the dough filled with mangold, and finally, covered it all with embers and ashes. She left Constantine to watch over the dough, and she went on about sharpening the blades.

Tonight there will be a full moon, so the children will have their nails cut and their hair shortened. She returned to the dough at the right moment. She took the pita bread off the fire, cleared the embers, and smeared the food with garlic and olive oil.

Constantine seated himself closer to the fireplace. With one hand he was tearing off chunks of the crusty pita bread, while he roasted snails on the fire with the other. He drinks bikla, wine with milk. He likes to stay near the fireplace and play Nine Men's Morris.

This part of the Mediterranean agrees with me as well. I will remember it for the dish kvrguša – chicken or other poultry baked in dough, collard with dry mutton, plums and

almonds.

It does not say where they met Domagoj – Gebalim. Methodius mentions only that they recognized him. I find only a few passages.

I do not know how wise it was to reside in the court of Domagoj. This Gebalim is very successful in his war against the Venetians, and Venice belongs to us, to Constantinople. The Emperor will not be pleased when he finds out that we have befriended the usurper of our westernmost territory. Besides, ever since Rome refuses to acknowledge Photius as a patriarch of Constantinople, Michael and Basil have formed their own church.

We have split, but Constantine is not aware of this. He speaks of unity, speaks in Glagolitic and prays for God to enlighten those who cannot see...

Constantine has stopped eating. His illness has returned, maybe it is the excitement, maybe his inner turmoil.

Domagoj treats us lavishly. Yesterday he served us olives, ham and shrimp, baked octopus with pogacha bread, sauerkraut with figs, kid meat boiled in wine, boiled bream, and baked almonds in honey.

The two of them have long discussions behind closed doors. I heard some of their verbal dueling. They were mentioning courage, truth and justice. Domagoj became loud when he said words like independence, people, and homeland. They played Nine Men's Morris... After three hundred games, Constantine's fever returned.

I fear whether he will have the strength to get to Rome.

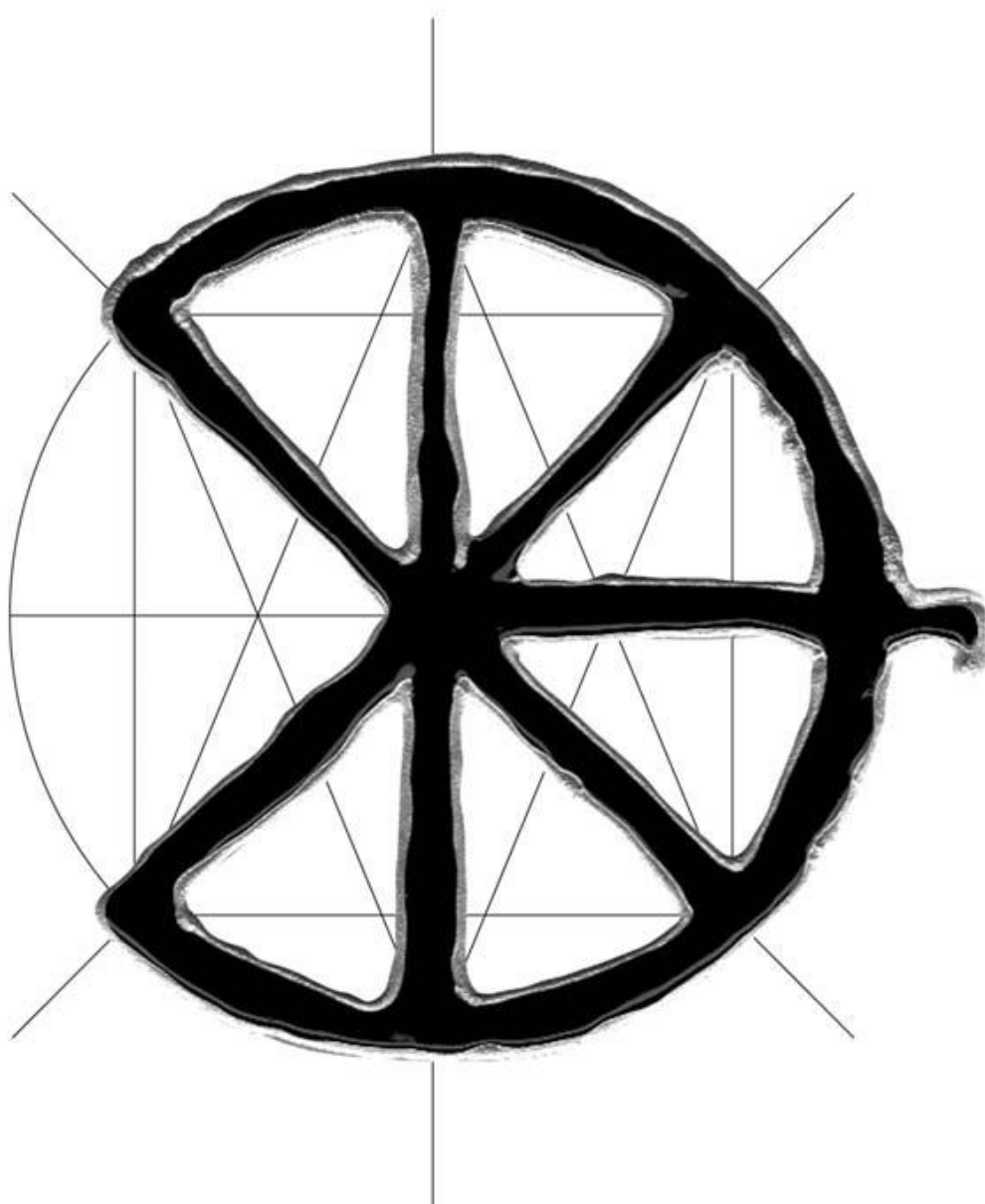
It is hot. The Neretva River has spilled into the delta in this area.

This river changes its color. It is blue in the morning. Last night they caught three hundred eels and five hundred frogs. After that, the Neretva became restless and lost its blueness. Waves appeared, the weather turned stormy. I watch it, and incredibly, it is still green...

We will set off. Domagoj Gebalim offers us escort, guards and protection. His wild blood resembles that which we got to know in the land of the Khazars. Are the Croats Khazars, or are Khazars Croats, I truly do not know. Constantine is familiar with the passion with which they throw themselves into the sea and into the green waters of the Neretva. Passion... only passion will bring him to Rome.

We are still in Croatia. We are headed towards the west. It is August, and gourds are ripening. Women dry them, cut them in tiny and long strips that twist in the sun. All over long gourd strips hanging from sticks are fluttering like women's hair. In a few days, the gourds will be dried in the August sun. Women will store them away and take them out on Christmas Eve. Will we get to Rome?

400, U – UKЪ



*Being becomes perfect
if the sky and the earth,
the spirits and nature,
creative and receptive being are permeated,
for then the eternal order of the universe is realized.*

Confucius, Commentary by Ji King

*Bela Hamvas
Christianity: Scientia Sacra II*

– Good morning. Am I early? – says John the deacon, while humbly entering my room.

– Come in. I am more awake than ever before.

He is watching me. Wonders what the intention of my ambiguity is. Perhaps I sound ironic?
Oh, old age, even in joking you are serious, even tragic, for you do not want to be that way...

I will offer John refreshments, we will play *Nine Men's Morris*, his tension will ease and we will understand each other better.

John hands me a sealed letter... Gauderich writes to me in confidence.

Anastasius, I am in need of your advice... I have concluded that Michael was deserving for Constantine's finding the relics of St. Clement. The young emperor had complete trust in the brothers from Thessalonica... Had there been another emperor in his place, Constantine would not have gotten to Kherson, he would not have found the relics, and even if he had, another ruler would not have allowed him to take them to Rome.

Without the cruel, arrogant and miserable Michael, there would not be the Glagolitic script, Constantine's mission to Moravia, the trilingual heresy... I am in need of advice... This portrayal of Michael will be disputed by both Rome and Constantinople. The life of Michael III was so disorderly that even in mentioning his virtues there is an emphasis on his countless faults.

You are aware that the three of us are writing history... I am losing sense of what the history that we are creating should be like...

Do you know what you will pass along to the bishop, John?

– ...

– Tell him not to mention Michael.

– To omit him from the entire chronicle?

– History is like that, young man.

– ...

– Tell him that he should also think about the name of the chronicle.

– The bishop has already given thought to that. The first name he had in mind was *The*

Legend of Kherson.

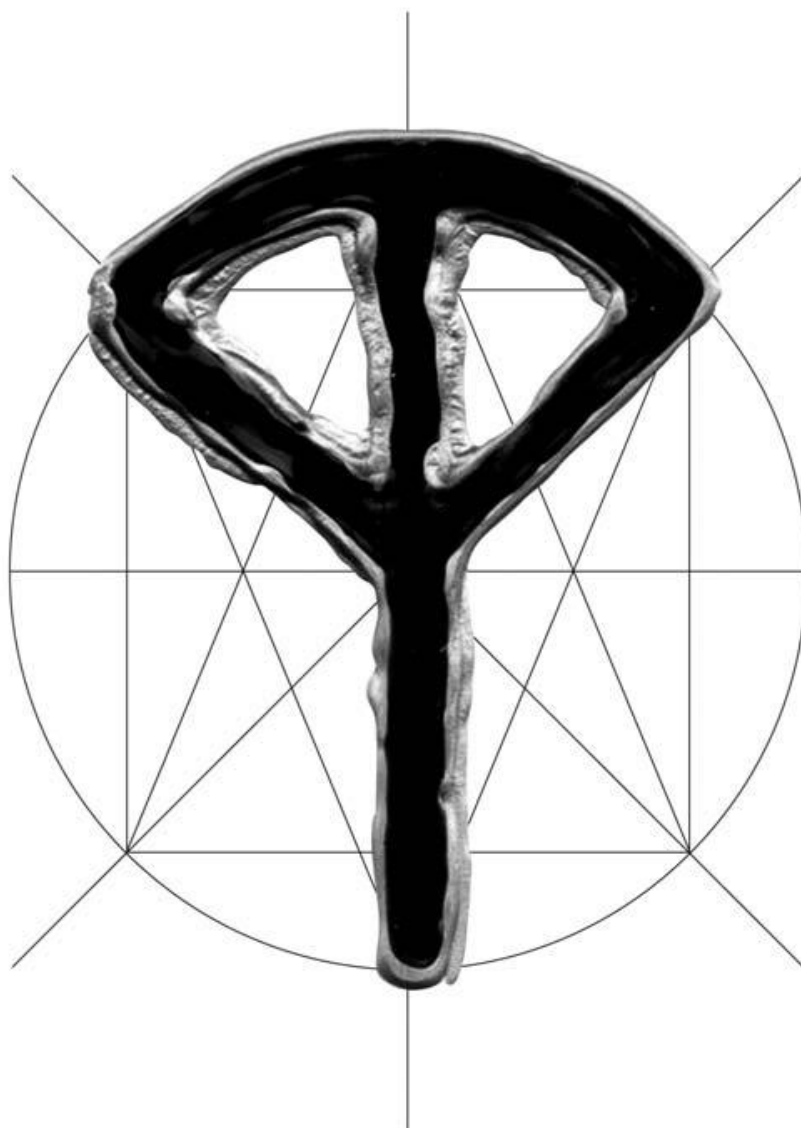
- Sounds good.
- But... Bishop Gauderich has changed his mind.
- ...
- He thought that the legend should be named after Italy, the land in which the relics of St.

Clement are buried.

- What's the name then?
- *Italian legend...*

I observe this young man, and ask myself whether it is better for me now that I am rich in knowledge, and poor in illusions.

500, F – FRЪТЪ



Cave canem.
(*Beware the dog.*)

*Latin proverb*³

- Would you like to rest, Anastasius?
- ...
- I will go for a walk and take care of some matters.
- ...
- I will be back in a few hours. You should rest till then...
- Rest?
- Sleep.
- ...
- Give yourself a moment of respite, I mean. It is past noon.

What kind of respite? There is no respite or rest for me. All that I have done is being already repeated in my dreams, and after I am dead, I will be repeating it in Hell. There is no respite; the inexperienced do not know that.

Wild animals, that is what we are, John. You believe in man and his laws, and laws would not be necessary if we were not wild animals. Look at my cat, he does not attack you, even though you have desecrated his territory. We men, we are wild. Rabid and petulant... In a rabid dog too, one can see only – a short life.

For what reason were they attacking me?

Funny, for my liking of poetry, simple compositions, descriptions of nature and funeral epigrams. They said that I was raised on the traditions of Constantinople and Alexandria, but I simply liked poems.

The literature of Constantinople is pagan in form, but Christian in its inspiration. They did not understand me. In the dark, all cats are black... They said that I tended towards Kabbalah, mysticism and gnosticism.

- Well, John, do you know anything about Kabbalah?
- Plenty... It was created in the first or the second century...By Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai, a student of Rabbi Akiva.
- You have heard of Rabbi Akiva?
- Who hasn't?
- ...
- Fearing his teachings of Kabbalah, the Romans skinned him, and scraped his bones with a brush for grooming horses. His student, Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai, fared better...
- They banished him to the desert in Galilee.

³ A common sign on Roman houses. Today it is used as a proverb to signify caution.

- I could not survive twelve years in the desert...
- ...
- Why are you silent, Anastasius...?
- I am thinking, son, of that what you said... You skipped a part of it...
- ...
- Kabbalah was conceived in ancient Babylon, with the first interpretations of number and letter mysticism.
- Mysticism?
- Mysticism of signs with which people recognize wisdom...
- Why should I know such details?
- Because with Gauderich you are describing Constantine's life.
- Constantine knew Kabbalah?
- He knew the allegory that sees the sublime secret in words... But, I'm being a bother to you and myself.
- You are no bother, Anastasius. I thought that there were none of them in Constantine's Constantinople...
- Who?
- Kabbalists...
- And who even today still roam across Constantinople, watching if there is a Messiah?
- Kabbalists?
- Who else?
- ...
- They call the emperor Buz – Uz, the scorned oppressor.
- Did they call Michael the same?
- It is the way they call every emperor... They called Michael, they call Basil as well...
- Michael adopted Basil?
- You did not know?
- Michael adopted Basil ten years ago.

It is a good thing that Michael the Stammerer could not see them... After Theophilus, there was a double mockery occupying the throne – Michael the Drunkard and Basil the Coxcomb.

Even though each of Michael's advisors was against this duo, the first one, Bardas, lost his head. Because Bardas was beloved in Constantinople, Basil organized a military conquest to Crete. In escort were both of the emperors.

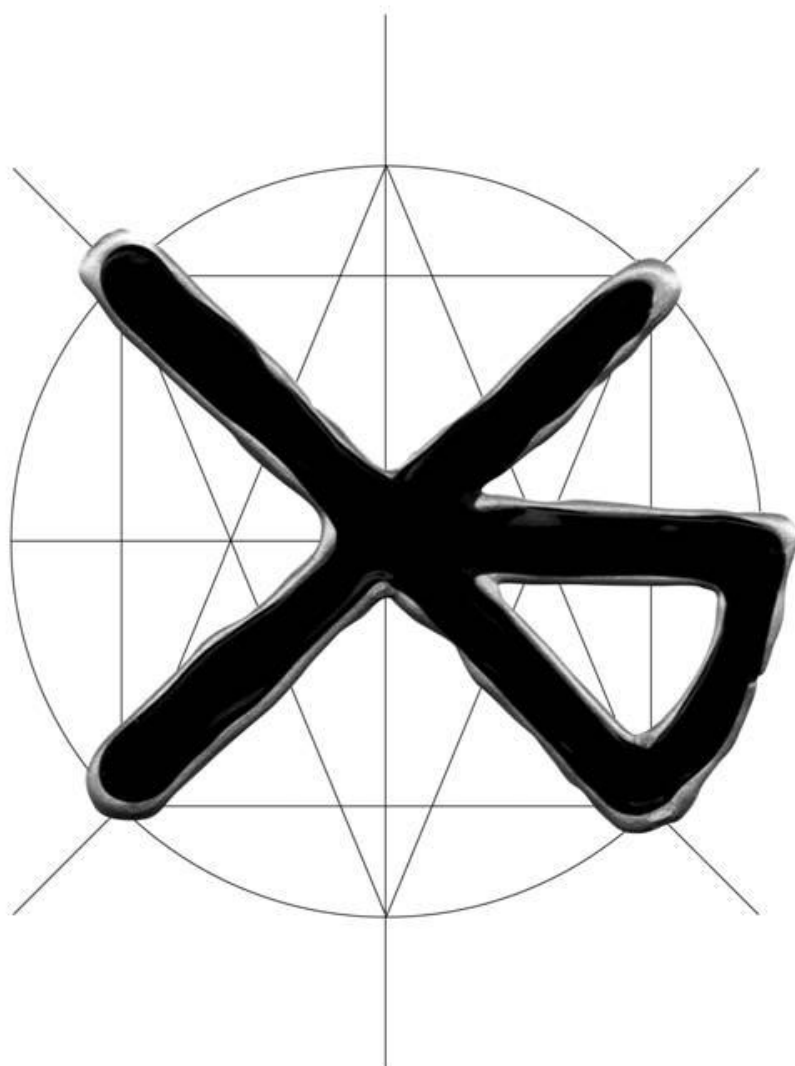
Before departure, Bardas demanded a communal prayer in the church of St. Maria Chalkoprateia. In the presence of Patriarch Photius he asked for Basil to take the oath of allegiance. This was not the first perjury that Basil had committed... They crossed into Asia, and Basil called Michael and Bardas to his tent... Before Michael's eyes, the conspirators cut Bardas down, and tore him to the tiniest shreds. If I am not mistaken, Basil sent the remains of

Bardas to Theodora, and she had him buried...

John observes me. He is suspicious.

I am being unjust towards this lad. It is not his fault that Gauderich sends him to my darkness. He calls him an assistant, and lets me teach him... I have had enough of gossipy scuttlebutt. I would rather say to him: – Dig in, boy... Dig into yourself as if you were a mine, do not hold back and all will be known to you.

600, Н – HÊRЪ



For who sees anything different in you?
What do you have that you did not receive?
If then you received it,
why do you boast as if you did not receive it?

1 Cor 4:7

- Anastasius, you are exchanging letters with Photius the patriarch?
- We are old acquaintances...
- Photius was in charge of the Magnaura School?
- Leo the Mathematician and his student Photius ran it, and both of them were called by the highest title – *philosopher*.
- How do you remember Bardas?

Good question... I remember Bardas by that which I had never achieved on his level... He loved poetry and rhetoric, protected Leo the Mathematician and Photius, waged wars, was victorious, repelled Russian attacks on Constantinople, was a proponent of Christianization, approved Constantine's mission... Every man has a good as well as dark side.

We men are blind, Acute. Did I already admit this? I haven't? It must have slipped my mind. Women are much more like you, catlike. They clearly sense the people who are a threat to them... Theodora had misgivings about Basil... She claimed that he will bring harm to her lineage... Eleven years after her premonitions, on the Day of the Pentecost in the year 866, Basil was crowned emperor...

...on the Day of Pentecost two imperial thrones were erected in Hagia Sophia. The procession was led by Michael, and behind him, carrying the sword of the Grand Chamberlain, there was Basil. Michael climbed to the highest step of the iconostasis, expressed gratitude to Basil for his protection from uncle Bardas and gave a command to the people to hail and accept them both as emperors. The people shouted in response according to law: – Long live the emperors, Michael and Basil!

Photius described what happened later on.

In the Palace of Saint Mamas, Michael commanded Basil to take off his red boots and give them to his new apprentice. He was mocking him... Michael was mocking Basil the Coxcomb in the manner they both mocked others.

The air was ripe with the sweat of expectation. Eudokia Ingerina tried to be entertaining... She wept, threatened, and tried to control Michael in all ways possible. In vain... Michael listened to his advisor, Theodora the nun... In the time of deepest sleep, Basil had started his takeover.

With the help of eight conspirators Basil overpowered Michael's chambermen... John

Chaldos approached Michael's bed. Two swipes of Chaldos's sword were heard and the half-asleep emperor was left without both of his arms. Drenched in blood, Michael interchanged moans of agony with threats and curses, until John Chaldos took a second swing... Then he approached Basil and proudly presented the sword with parts of Michael's guts...

Theodora lived to see the fulfillment of her fears. She became the empress who awaits eternity.

700, ω – ОТЪ



*Diem perdidit.
I have lost a day.*

*Saying by the Roman emperor
Titus Flavius Vespasianus for a day
in which he had done no good deed.*

Suetonius, Titus, VIII.

John, you as one of the future chroniclers should bear this in mind: we do not exist as good or bad. We humans are much like the Moon, for not all parts of our existence are illuminated.

– I understand esteemed Anastasius.

– What do we need to find for Gauderich in my parchments?

– Details of Constantine's arrival in Venice.

– Then write as I speak: Accompanied by missionaries, the brothers arrived in Venice before the winter in the year 867 of our Lord.

– ... right around the time when Basil murdered Michael and deposed Photius the Patriarch?

– Yes, you remember well, my boy.

– ...

– ...

– Anastasius, do you believe that Constantine knew of the turmoil in Constantinople?

– He had to know. Even today Venice is under the jurisdiction of Constantinople.

– I know, I know! I was just transcribing the discussion of Venetian markings...

He tells me of the doge's horn that comes from *skiadion*, the traditional ceremonial headgear of the dignitaries of Constantinople.

– You remembered this nicely.

– I know much more... You have probably heard that men from Venice prefer to marry women from Constantinople?

I laugh, and John the Deacon is more at ease.

– Write, son, what I read to you...

*When he was in Venice, bishops, priests and monks circled in on him like crows on a hawk, and raised the question of the trilingual heresy saying: – Man, tell us how you have created the books for the Slavs and have taught them, when no one else had done that before: neither the Apostles, nor the Pope of Rome, nor Gregory the Divine, nor Jerome, nor Augustine? We know of only three languages in which it was lawful to praise God: Hebrew, Greek and Latin.*⁴

– These attacks must have distressed Constantine...

– They hurt Methodius more.

– Why him?

– He resented the contention. He thought that by contending Constantine was humiliating

⁴ Life of Constantine Cyril and Methodius, pp. 76 – 77

himself.

– Constantine knew of at least twelve peoples who serve the liturgy in their own language. That day in Venice, I remember well, he numbered the Armenians, Khazars, Persians, Abazgians, Iberians, Sugdi, Goth, Obri, Tursi, Arabians, Egyptians, Syrians, and many others.

– How did he manage to remember that many of them?

– He also quoted the fourteenth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, and then, also without looking at the books, the writings of Pseudo-Dionysius The Areopagite.

– Impromptu?

– Impromptu. – That is why they named him *vir magnus et apostolicae sedis praeceptor*...

– Listen, write down for Gauderich Constantine's message to all who have power in their hands...

– That same day in Venice?

– Yes. Write as I say...

Alas, book readers, for you have taken the keys to knowledge, yet you yourself do not enter and you forbid those who would.

– ... it is written...

Gauderich met the brothers in Rome... Their meeting was rescheduled from December 867 to June of the following year... At the beginning of November, Pope Nicholas I died. Rome was shaken by the overthrow, many were banished, and Bishop Gauderich ended up in the dungeon. He was freed by the newly elected Pope Adrian II, because he was a worshipper of St. Clement.

– You were there Anastasius, at the consecration of the brothers?

– I witnessed their consecration... We were singing like angels...

– ...

– ... in Saint Peter's Basilica.

– You were speaking in Glagolitic?

– We were speaking in Glagolitic...

John admires my ability to survive... He wants to know, how is it that I am still here, with certain esteem and honors... He begs me to tell him, what Eleutherius had done, the son of my uncle, Bishop of Orte, born in a marriage that happened prior to the bishop's being ordained to the priesthood...

The story is trivial, even borders on poor taste... Despite the fact that he had been rejected, Eleutherius kidnapped the granddaughter of Pope Adrian II, who was already engaged... John is amused... He asks about where he had taken his prisoner... His expression changes... I describe the moors where Eleutherius took her life ... hers and her mother's...

We tried to save Eleutherius, the two of us: his father, bishop of Orte, and me, Anastasius the Librarian. We were both punished. The bishop was executed, and I, Anastasius the Librarian, was excommunicated.

Just like that, they excommunicated me for the second time. There are not many who can boast about that...

A man, like a donkey, can be gotten accustomed to anything. I was excommunicated, so what? They rehabilitated me the first time and I believed they would do it for the second time as well. Whether they liked it or not, in the Roman Curia no one besides me knew Greek well or the situation of the Church in the East. Besides, *krisis* is not a time for self-pity. I was questioning myself... Both of my excommunications were the place of my meeting... with myself...

800, Ć – ŠTA



*The silence of the spirit (hesychia)
is an endless celebration of God.*

Ivan Klimak

- Pardon me, Anastasius, are you tired?
- Sit down, young man. Write... Gauderich will be interested in what I will say to you, and what has been told to me by Constantine of Thessalonica, after he heard from Gebalim Domagoj.
- From who?
- From the Croatian prince to whom Constantine had given the Khagan's letter.
- I have heard that the Venetians call him the fiendish prince – *pessismus Sclavorum dux*... and his people, what was it...
- *Sclavorum pessimae gentis, et Dalmacianorum*..., but leave the Venetians, they know only of their own interests, the Pope called him *a glorious prince*.

Constantine heard about oak's leaves in Salona, a town situated on the Dalmatian coast. There, the people collect oak leaves for protection from all troubles, especially against spells and witchcraft. Before his departure for Rome, Prince Domagoj Gebalim bandaged his feet... He wrapped his feet in oak leaves. He did this as a sign of friendship. The leaves were supposed to alleviate the wounds that the Alps would inflict upon his feet...

The Croats respected and loved Constantine. In his Glagolitic transcripts and translations of the sacred texts they had seen the confirmation of their independence. His students had spread throughout the entire Adriatic coast. But many notables of Latin script did not approve of Constantine's mission. Everyone has his own truth and it is not simple to write a chronicle.

Thalassios the Libyan said it well: "*Seal your senses with stillness and sit in judgment upon the thoughts that attack your heart.*"

The present day has distanced me from *observing* (Greek – *theoría*), spiritual observation and the practice of asceticism... I will recall that the diverse forms of God's mercy restore our paths and give at times peace, and at times restlessness.

- Anastasius?
- ...
- You were with Constantine?
- ...
- I mean, you were with him during his last days?

Should I speak of Constantine's *silence* to this young man, or maybe better not. I hold intimate and confidential how Constantine received the news of the death of Leo the Mathematician. He was tortured by his conscience for the betrayal of his teacher. He thought his betrayal was his condemnation of Leo's paganism, polytheism, and the tendency to worship Greek gods. And not only that, he had renounced him in public, in front of everyone, and in front of me. He stated that Socrates,

Plato, Aristotle and Epicure together with Leo would be cast into Hell.

Perhaps this was his last effort of bringing Leo to Christianity? I do not know... He suspended everything after he heard the news of Leo's death. The year of 869 went on, not according to Constantine's plan, but on its own...Not long after that, Constantine simply stopped...

He fell into illness like a haughty man steps into a tub of honey. He remained silent... He observed silence. He directed his internal attention on silencing the spirit, achieving a passionless state, and every other connection to the worldly. I would find him sitting in silence of his cell, head pressed on his chest and his countenance, as well as his whole mind, fixated on the middle of the stomach, where the navel is found. His breathing was slow, he was breathing in through the nose, and his mind was focused completely within himself, I suppose totally in his heart, the place which is the core of all spiritual strengths.

– What do you want to know, young man?

– Why was he ordained?

– In one of his periods of *silence* he saw a vision of God.

– On that day he put on the clothes of a monk?

– He changed his clothes and his name. They started to call him Cyril⁵. The only trace of old Constantine was the first letter of his name.

– You say, he was ill for some time?

– Cyril was with us for a full fifty days, then he had went into eternal sleep, at the age of forty two, on the 14th day of the month of February, second induction from the creation of the world 6377⁶, and from the birth of Christ, 869 years.

– And there was no cure for him?

– We tried doing everything that was humanly possible. We gave him pogacha bread with butter and a mixture of oatmeal, honey, salt, and balsamic vinegar. Methodius frequently changed his bandages with yarrow, to strengthen his heart and legs... The fever was relentless, and Cyril did not return from his *silence* back to those present...

Did he say anything?

– He said: only a sound.. a vowel, a..., az...

– the last time you said that his last words were *Kyrie eleison*...

– ...

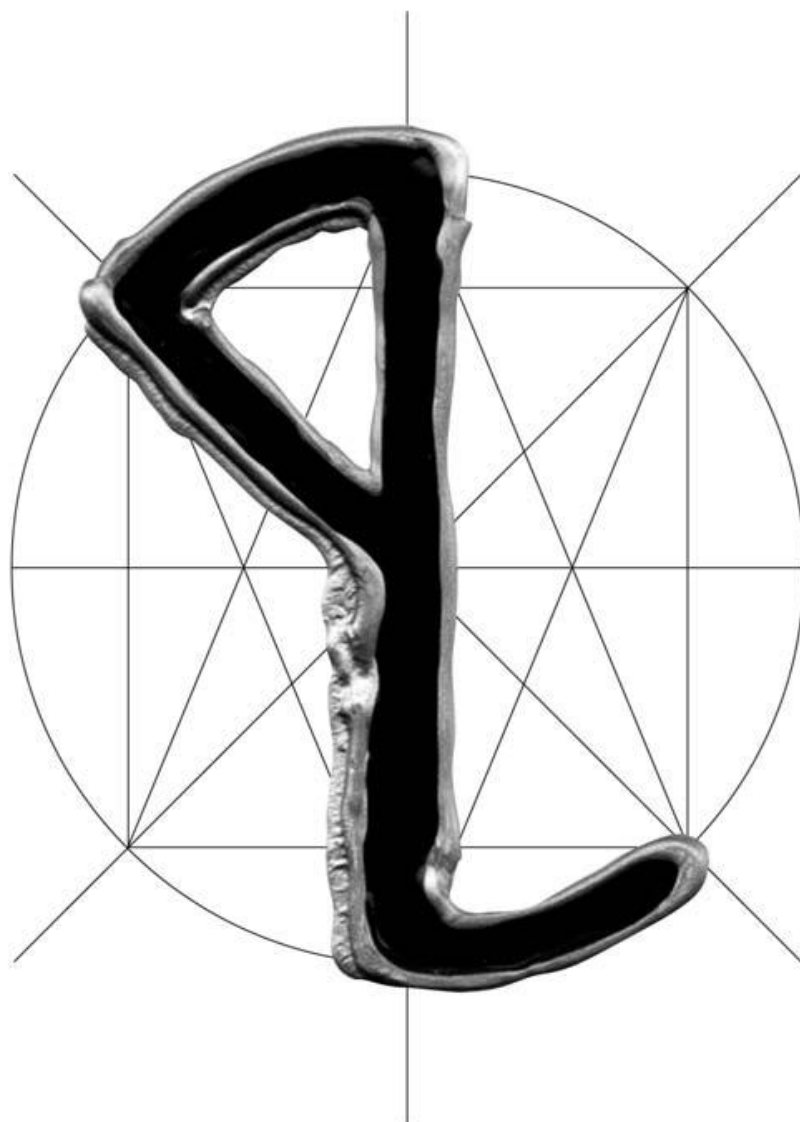
He frequently explained that Christ is the embodiment of Logos, the eternal Word of God, by which all things were created, and which enlightens man. Because of Constantine I had believed that every creature is an embodiment of one particular logos contained in Logos. He observed and matured spiritually. Before he was ordained, he uttered only nine words.

I wasn't, I became, and I remain forever. Amen!

⁵ In Greek, "kýrios" stands for "sir," or "gentleman."

⁶ According to Byzantine calculations, from the creation of the world up to the birth of Jesus Christ 5508 years have passed.

900, C – CI



Then I was by him, as a master workman;
And I was daily his delight,
Rejoicing always before him,
Rejoicing in his habitable earth;
And my delight was with the sons of men.

Proverbs 8:30-31
Speech of the Creator's Wisdom

- I have only one more question, esteemed Anastasius.
- ...
- Why is not Cyril buried in the Church of St. Peter the Apostle?
- Methodius asked for Cyril's wish, and the wish of his mother to be respected. He wanted to bury the body of his brother near the house where they were born.
- ...
- The bishops believed that God decided to bring Cyril to Rome and there, to take him to Himself. They proposed precisely what you have said, John.

The deliberation lasted a full seven days. Methodius was resolute... If not in Thessalonica, Cyril should be buried next to Saint Clement, due to whom he has made it to Rome. They carried him over to the Church of Saint Clement, together with his coffin. They placed him on the right side of the altar, and miracles began to occur... They burned lights for him, during night and day...

While we were burying Cyril, Methodius turned to me. He wanted to know if I knew of any letter of Glagolitic script that has the shape of a hook. I did not understand what he was asking. I thought that he must be distraught due to the circumstances.

The last hundred is written with the sign C, and it is in the shape of a hook. We were hooked. Methodius reminded me of a sentence by Jesus: *Come here and go with me and I will make you fishers of men!*

John the Deacon wanted to know how Methodius could bear Constantine's passing.

He bore it. We all bear the things that we cannot change... A year after his brother died, Methodius was named to be the bishop of the Diocese of Syrmia and consecrated on the chair of Saint Andronicus – the Syrmian (Pannonian) archbishop... He had withstood the humiliation when they had beaten him and sentenced him to imprisonment in the monastery in Ellwangen.

And while prince Domagoj was liberating Bari, and Basil was defeating Paulicians, rare individuals started to advocate for the release of Methodius. At the beginning of 873, Pope John VIII managed to secure the release of Methodius.

Methodius had forgotten how to laugh. He spoke less frequently than before. During his imprisonment in Ellwangen, he had had enough of speech and extortions of truth. He wanted to forget

the taste of tadpoles which were fed to suspects until they would admit to the charges. From some confessions were extorted with tadpoles, others were forced to eat their own eye, so as to open their eyes.

Two and a half years of prison made Methodius tougher and denser. His hairiness and utterance dense and every vein swollen. His soul became harder than the mirila⁷ of Velebit.

John has left, and I am not certain that I was successful in presenting Constantine's nature.

I do not know whether he will understand why Constantine wanted to gain back the dignity of the forefather Adam before the fall. Jesus Christ renewed this same dignity in the form of man praised as holy Sophia, the embodiment of the Word, Logos, Wisdom, God.

Constantine returned the dignity of the forefather Adam through letters...

I find no hierarchy in them.

They are playable as a game of *Nine Men's Morris*.

Each one is a part of the whole.

Ones end with the number 9 – Z, *zemlja*, or earth; tens with the number 90, P – *pokoi*, or eternal rest, birds in flight, and hundreds with 900, with the letter C – a hook.

Did he impart that when we become what we were – earth and ashes, peace is given to those who fly with birds to a familiar hook?

The Lord is the Fisher of men.

My game of discovery of Constantine's symbols has only begun.

I will be silent.

I will listen to the voice of the one whom I have been hearing since long ago.

Sophia is speaking to me.

I will watch my heart.

I will fill myself with the voice of Sophia.

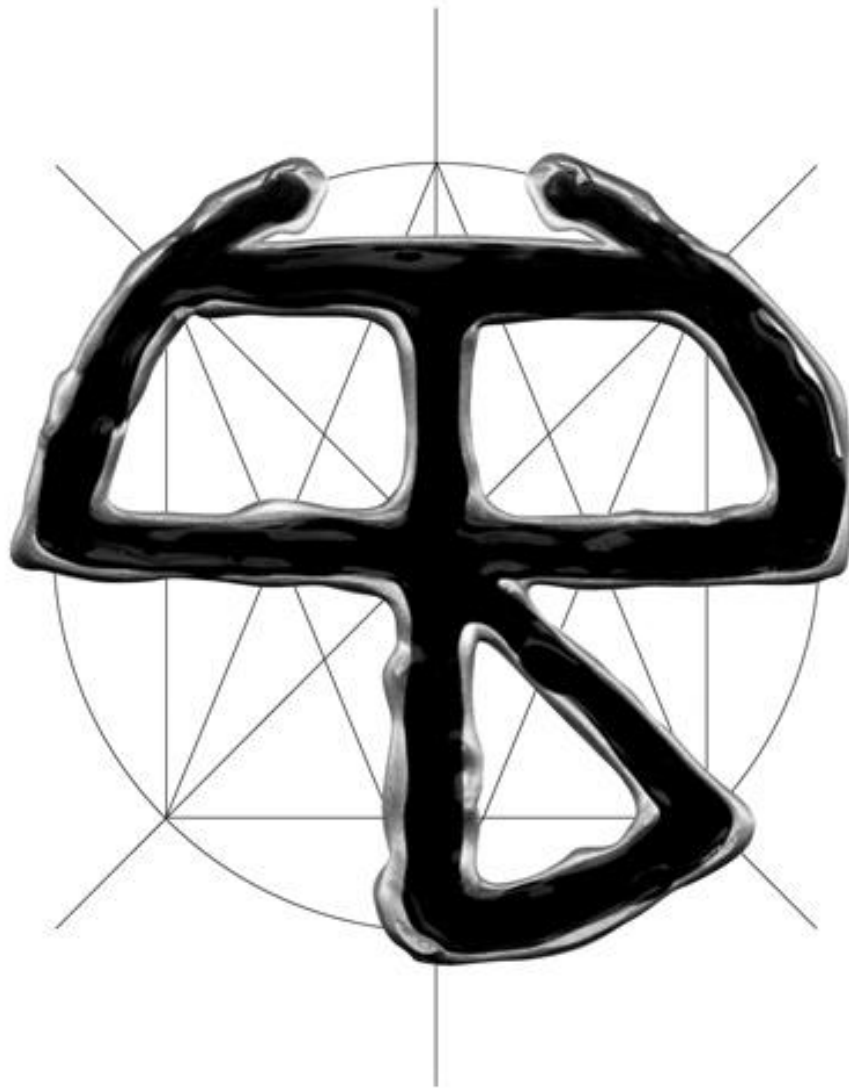
⁷ burial stones

Part IV: THOUSANDS OF A GEBALIM

... Thursday of year 895. One day of Gebalim
Mutimir (Muncimir) spent in Uzdolje,
a village at the bottom of Kosovo field near Knin...

1000, Č – ČRĽVĽ
2000, Š – ŠA

1000, Ć – ĆRVŦ



*It is hard for Klis⁸ to be on a rock,
and for the rock to have Klis on it.*

Croatian folk saying

I am building a church in Uzdolje. The altar separations, four-sided ciborium and apses are to my satisfaction. The inscription etched in stone is also pleasing to me. The sun is powerful, the letters are attracting the sunlight and are barely readable: *...hoc bene composuit opus princeps namque Muncimir... nonaginta et quinque... annorum domini...*⁹

My father, the Croatian prince Trpimir, built churches. He bestowed them, I am bestowing them, and my sons, Tomislav and Trpimir, will also bestow them. We, the line of Trpimirović, will be the bestowers and the leaders; we will be the power to which, as to the sun, the weak express their gratitude.

They say that I am not my own, that I am completely imitating the Frankish rulers. They say, he is proud to sit on his father's throne (*residente paterno solio*) and as the Croatian ban¹⁰ and prince (*Croatorum dux*) rule blessed by Divine right (*divino munere iuvatus*)... They accuse me for the exuberance of my palace Bijaća¹¹ on the coast, for the design of my signet ring (*anulo nostro*), and also, for the great number of my royal servants.

They do not like the court prefect Budimir, the stable master Prvan, the mace-bearer Prusna, the cup-bearer Želided, the shield-bearer Tugina, the chambermen Boledrag, Kresamislav and Stjepan...

They mock in secret my wife, her Ladies-in-Waiting, but also the mace-bearer Želidrag, the court prefect Budimir, and others who are at her service.

Let them talk. It is good while they are loud and while their voices can be heard. It is a sign that we are enveloped by silence. We are not at war with our neighbors, so that there remains enough willingness for skirmishes among ourselves. That's what we're like. We do not let anyone ahead of us...

I too am disobedient and of my own will. I was younger than Petar and Zdeslav, but I still remember how father taught me – be of your own mind. I do not acknowledge those from Constantinople, or the Frankish emperor, and yet, I go to the one and the other. We feast and look each other in the eye. They sense that we are the way God had said – equal. They wondered when I named myself *by the Grace of God, the Prince of Croats (divino munere iuvatus Croatorum dux)*, but they remained silent when I explained my reasons to them. To be able to look in the eye, that is important.

They say, Mutimir¹² is in contradiction with himself. His name is noisy – by name, he was

⁸ Klis is a settlement in Dalmatia, a littoral rocky part of Croatia.

⁹ In the year of Our Lord eight hundred ninety five ... Prince Muncimir (had) this piece made.

¹⁰ *ban* (viceroy)

¹¹ Bijaći (Biaci, Byaci, Biaki, Biachi) an old Croatian settlement located in Dalmatia

¹² The name Mutimir combines the words disturb and peace

bestowed to the world to disturb the peace.

Let them say what they will. Due to the silence that reigns, the quietest statement is heard.

It is peaceful, we live without blood spilling, and I can still look everyone in the eye.

This morning, Tomislav asked me about solemnity in life. I thought to myself, he is no longer a child. I wanted to teach him, to tell him about the experience of the ceremonial. He did not have the patience to listen. He is still a child...

God willing, he will become a man.

The ceremony is progressing. It is time to enter the church.

I will pray, and then I will address the congregation.

I will tell them that the eyes are more expressive than words, and that my word is always a vow. I will tell them that I have sworn to a life of peace, and then I will stop speaking.

I will step aside. Call others to speak.

We humans are strange. Sensitive to words, but what is worth knowing is expressed by the face and eyes without a sound.

I asked Žitelj to rise, the supervisor of all monasteries – *superposito monasteriis*. He will eagerly speak to the people. He is sure of himself.

He raises part of his robe and takes out a scroll. He wavers no longer. He points to the letters with which my name has been etched into the stone, and introduces a story about new letters. He coughs, clears his throat, and unfolds a parchment titled *Italian Legend* and reads three names. He explains that the *Italian (Kherson) Legend* was created by three men – Bishop Gauderich, Anastasius the Librarian and John the Deacon. The people have settled down and are waiting. It is hot. He has decided, he will not mention the exile of the ex-patriarch Photius and the news of his death in Armenia. There is sweat sparkling on foreheads, as Žitelj draws a breath, and reads.

In the time when Michael, the Emperor of New Rome, ruled the Eastern Empire, lived a man of noble birth born in the city of Thessalonica, by the name of Constantine. Because of his miraculous intellect that distinguished him since his childhood, Constantine had early and righteously been awarded the title Philosopher...

He read emphatically.

I was taken with the story myself. While listening to Žitelj, in my thoughts I had travelled to Crimea, learned Hebrew, took part in the search for the remains of Saint Clement, was present during the talks with the Khagan in the presence of the Khazars...

And then, from the sun and the story, it was as if I wilted.

I wanted to distance myself from the people, and the crowd.

I remembered my property to which I had never devoted myself. Wasn't there a letter there, in the chest of prince Branimir? I remember it clearly, the Khagan's letter to Gebalim is in Branimir's chest. It also contains the contracts according to which both the Byzantines and the Venetians have to pay a tax to the Croat princes for passage through our coastline.

I will announce our departure. I will say farewell and turn my back to Uzdolje.

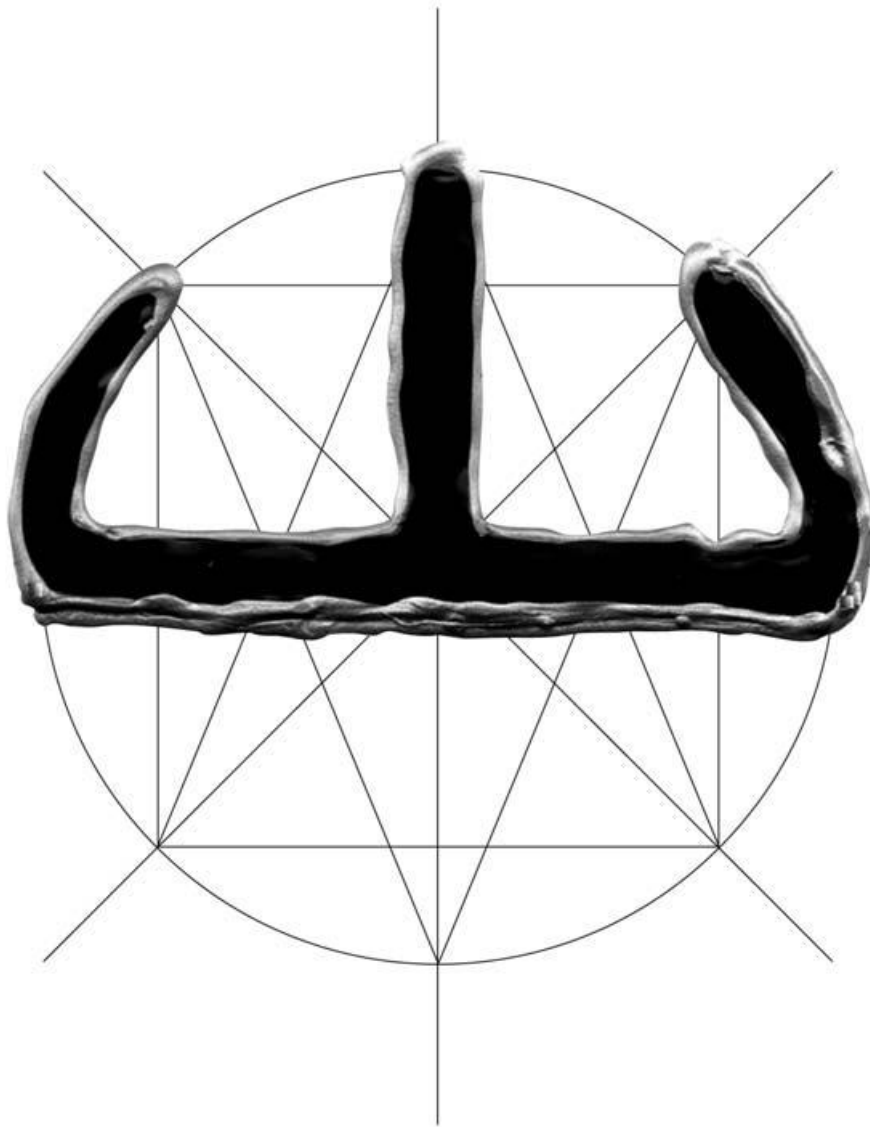
I will return home.

Whenever I remember prince Branimir, I become nauseous. I know, everyone would say, it is because I took over the rule after Branimir, and with the rule, everything that belonged to him. But Branimir's rule was ours! We, the line of Trpimirović, are the ones who were deposed...

It makes no difference now... I will subdue my ardor.

I have made a vow; anger is a state I will not nurture. I will tame my thoughts.

2000, Š – ŠA



*And what are you, earth
Az monk Držiha ask the earth
Az monk Držiha, az poet, az human*

*Josip Pupačić
Earth and I*

The procession stopped approaching Bijać, they wait for my command. I wave to them, telling them to proceed to the palace. I need to be alone for some time and find my true self in the Church of Saint Marta.

I dismounted. I opened the door and sank into the shadows of the church.

I give thanks to God for enthroning at this altar all us Trpimirovićs, as princes of the Croats. I will mention my father, Trpimir, who is, as I am, *dux Chroatorum iuvates munero divino...* Prince of the Croats by the Grace of God.

I will pray for my predecessor, prince Branimir. I will pray to God to be merciful to the one He will name to take my place after me.

I was given the power to rule and it changed me.

Power made me untouchable, distant from people. Sometimes it seems to me, ever since I became *dux Croatorum*, the entire Adriatic has created a gulf between me and the ones whom I watch over.

I am distanced, but not lonely. I am my own, perhaps because I am excluded, and can therefore see clearly.

I will thank You, God, because by distancing You have humbled me. You have returned me to myself. You have let me take a look at my original primordial state.

You have shown me how to recognize in the people and the missionaries the tasks with which they are directed at me in particular. With my eyes open wide I am reading out Your letter.

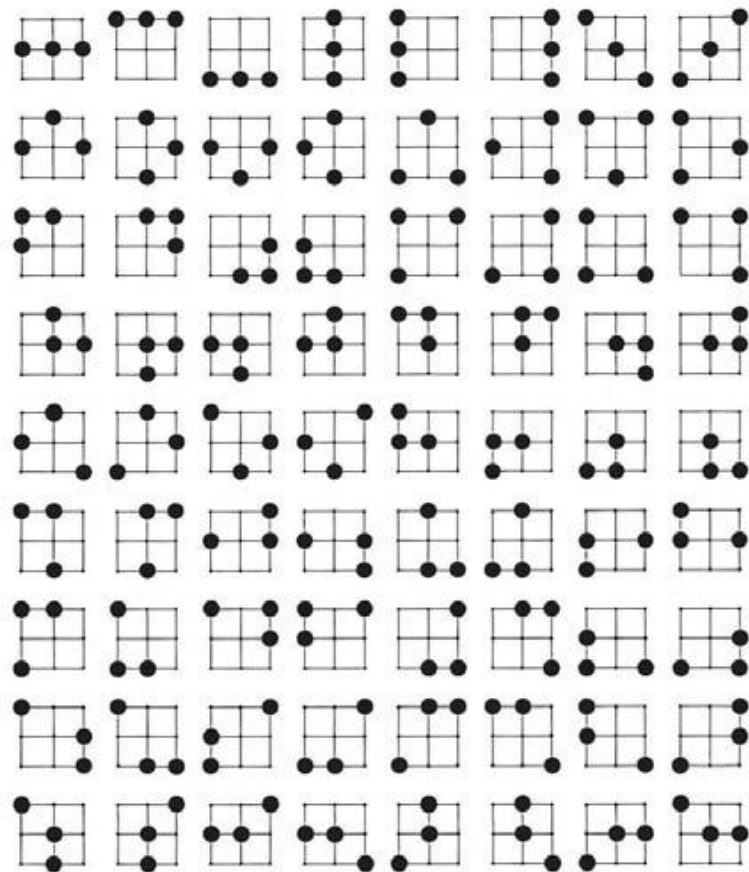
I hear him sneaking about. I will let him think that I do not know that he is watching me in secret. My son, Tomislav, is looking for his resemblance in me.

He will want to spend time in play. He will show me the letters he has learned. He will commend himself for the skill with which he writes them. He will expect praise. He knows full well my abhorrence towards laziness and bad taste. He will read and write in the Glagolitic script. Then he will repeat his wish to play.

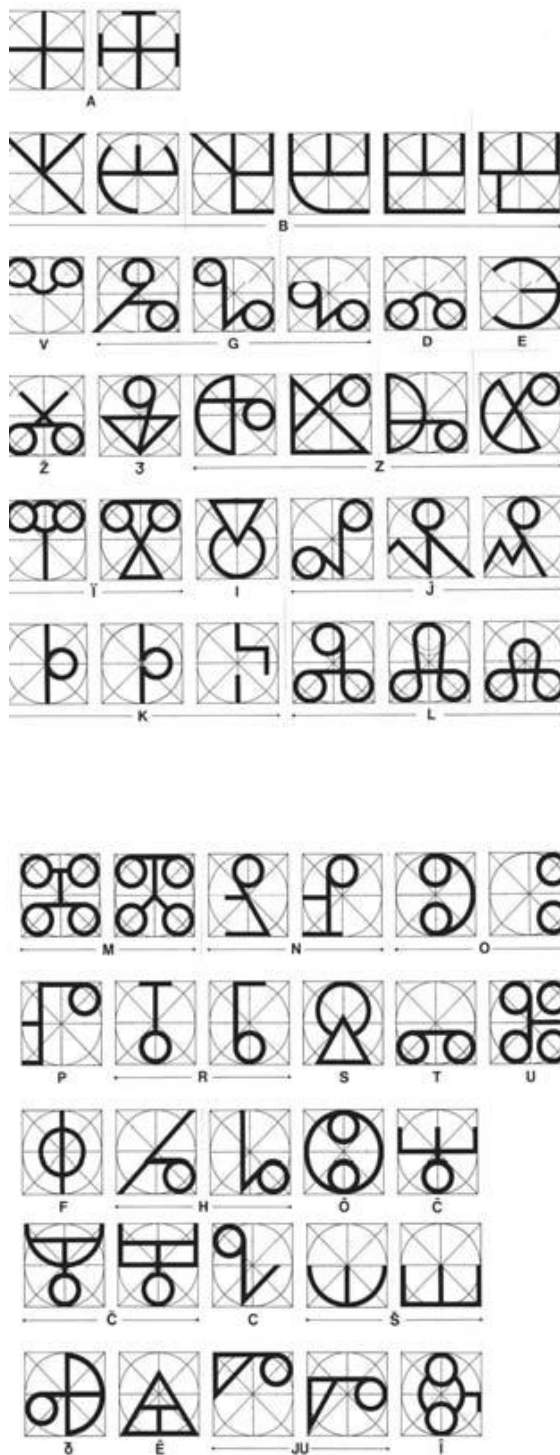
We will move away from courtiers and Tomislav will set up the board for *Nine Men's Morris*. He will become serious. He will compete with me. When he beats me, I will point out the similarities between *Nine Men's Morris* and the Glagolitic script.

I will draw squares divided by the holy sign of the cross. I will show him how three dots may be placed at the crossings of the lines, three stones in the game of *Nine Men's Morris*. With drawings I

will explain to him all the ways the three dots can be placed in the nine spots.



Then I will connect the crosses with the dots and show him that the placing of three dots in nine places repeats itself in the forms of the Glagolitic letters.



Tomislav will write out rosettes, and in them he will place dots, he will write the letters... Silence will cast itself over us. We will be engrossed in play, and each one of us will follow his own thought.

I will stop. I will look at the letters. For a moment it will seem like I recognize the four gospels in the letters. The design of Constantine's rosette will distract my attention; it will seem complicated, it will intimidate with the many lines and shapes. How deep is the symbolism of this script of ours? How well do I, as a ruler, know the hidden meanings of the script that defines our spiritual essence¹³... I will think, I must not forget to tell Tomislav that the solemnity is silence.

¹³ Schemes taken from: Frane Paro, *Četiri glasnika radosne vijesti Konstantina Filozofa (Four Heralds of the Good News of Constantine the Philosopher)*, Slovo, Vols. 56-57, Zagreb, 2008, pp. 421-438.

INTERMEZZO

Osijek, February 14, 2009

Yesterday I finished the writing of Az, the reason for my visit today to Đakovo and Strossmayer's cathedral of conciliation between the East and the West. During the time of its building, seven million baked bricks were prepared, and above the entrance, a dedicatory inscription still stands even today: "To the glory of God, the unity of churches, harmony and love of our people."

I have spent the last year collecting historical material and unveiling the figures of Cyril's time. I am still not certain if I have fully grasped the depth of the messages of Cyril's script that has marked our cultural path throughout history.

On my visit to the Cathedral, I looked first for the figures of the holy brothers Cyril and Methodius on the altar, and then in the Memorial Museum, on a picture that portrays their mission.

I returned to Osijek and the manuscript without concrete answers.

I just made a decision, I will look for answers once more, this time in the Glagolitic script – the legacy that has survived the centuries and the people.

I will write the Glagolitic signs and try to rethink the background of their grammatical, numerical and symbolic meaning.

In the last chapter I will present how much I have managed to find about the mystical symbolism of the Glagolitic script.

Part V: SYLLABARY

In the year 1629, the Roman Congregation *De Propaganda Fide*, published under the title *AZBUKIVIDNEK SLOVINSKIJ*, a spelling book for learning the Glagolitic script, authored by Rafael Levaković.

The letters are written on the basis of the proto-Glagolitic, triangular script.

1, A – AZЪ



A is the first letter of the Latin script.

Its development is tied to an Egyptian hieroglyph



(), as well as a related pictogram ()



from a North – Semitic linear alphabet (around 1600 years B. C.). In both cases, the sign that is the predecessor of the letter A represents a stylized head of cattle, that is, of an ox.

ALEF is present as the first letter in the Phoenician and Hebrew alphabet, and is equivalent to the Arabic letter *ALIF*.

The Greeks took over the sign-letter *ALEF* used by the Phoenicians in the 8-9th century B. C., and gave it the sound value of the vowel A. They named it *ALPHA* and placed it at the beginning of the alphabet. The letter A was taken over from the Greeks by the Etruscans and Romans. Its signifying of the beginning was described by Jesus himself: “*I am the Alpha and the Omega,*” says the Lord God, “*who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty*” (Rev 1:8).

According to Frane Paro, *Constantine Cyril had decided to begin the Glagolitic alphabet sequence with a cross – the central symbol of Christianity, the symbol of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ... He formed the letters as a whole between A and O, between the cross †, a sign of Christ, and the circle o, a sign of God's completeness and perfection.*

The letter A – AZ in Glagolitic represents the *cross*, the fundamental symbol of salvation and redemption, and in a wider context, the pronoun of the first person singular, *I, a Christian*. The sign that has the numerical value of one and the sound characteristics of the vowel A.

Since the letter A has a leading position in the order of letters, the number *one* also has a special importance in the order of numbers. In the Ancient and Middle Ages, the number *one* was not only a number, but also the source of all numbers. According to Germ, the number one is the symbol of the primordial principle, of elemental cosmic energy, God and his infinite power of creation. The symbolical value of *one* in geometry is identified with the *circle* and *sphere* and in architecture with the transfer of the symbolic content of *one* on parts of buildings. Sacred architecture of most religions highlights a dome structure and central ground plan, making their symbolic reference to a concise message: *circle – one – God*.

In the Croatian language, A is one of the contrasting conjunctions.

2, B – BUKY



It is presumed that Buky originates from a Semitic sign that was first taken over by the Hebrews, and then the Greeks. Therefore, it is related to the Greek letter *BETA* and the Hebrew *BET* – *house* or *labyrinth*.

Greeks took over the letter *B* with its sound value, but changed its visual form, and in time, its sound value as well, so today they pronounce it as *V*. The Latin pronunciation was given to it by the Romans in the VII Century B. C.

In Glagolitic *B* is a sign that has the numerical value of two and the sound characteristics of the letter *B*. It symbolizes a *letter* as a sign, but also *God*.


In Glagolitic alphabet books the letters were learned by the spelling of rhymes (consonants followed by vowels). The teacher would write out rhymes on the blackboard, and the pupils would learn by heart (*bubati*): ba, be, bi, bo, bu..., by saying them out loud, they memorized them. The term *bubati* is present in the Croatian language today, and it means to cram, to *blindly memorize*. The meaning of the *letter* (*BUKY* – letter) exists today in the idiomatic expression *to bawl someone out*.

The symbolical value of the number *two* opposes the meaning of the number one. *Two* marks duality, deviation from one, splitting and bipolarity. Even though the number *two* symbolizes the material, negative, earthly, transient and dark, in the Christian iconography of numbers, negative meanings of number two are very rare. Two can symbolically represent the dual nature of Christ, man and God, but also the simultaneous love that a Christian shows to God and to his neighbor.

The letter B is the second letter of the Croatian alphabet.

3, V – VÊDÊ (vêdêti)



The letter V comes from the Semitic letter *WÂW* whose form was originally represented by a *hook* (). In Greek script, the letter Y was first transformed from the Semitic letter *WÂW* so it would represent the vowel *U*. During the late Middle Ages, this letter evolved in two forms – V and U.

In Glagolitic, the sign V – *VÊDÊTI* symbolizes knowledge (*vedas* is the name for ancient Indian books of knowledge), but also *eternity*. Its shape follows the circle in which alpha and omega are written. Since it takes up the lower half of the rosette, the letter V also symbolizes *water* that God separated from the heavens at the beginning of world's creation.

If the first three letters of Glagolitic are written into the rosette (A, B, V), one gains an entire rosette with the meaning: *I believe in the eternal God*.

The numerical value of the sign V – *VÊDÊTI*, corresponds to the number *three*, with a very wide range of symbolic meanings. *Three* is often interpreted as a *sacred number* characterized by perfection, roundness, fertility, growth and progress. It was particularly denoted and glorified as a creator's number by Pythagoreans, because of their belief that the universe was created according to mathematical principles (three points determine a triangle – a starting point for all other geometric shapes). In Christianity, the number *three* is particularly tied to the motif of the resurrection of Christ on the third day, as well as the motif of the Holy Trinity, and the procreative capacity of the three sons of Noah who restored the entire human race after the flood.

The word *vêde*, *vidi*, *vjedje* (knowing) is of Indo-European origin and is widespread in many languages. Today it also exists in the Czech language, and it is tied to the word *vem* (know) in the Kajkavian dialect in the Croatian mountain region, as well as with the words *vidjeti*¹⁴, *vješt*¹⁵, *vještica*¹⁶. It is closely related to the expression *vidjeti* (the difference between *vêdêti* – *vidêti* is in the apophony, that is, the change of vowels in the root of the word /ê : i/ that brings about the change of the grammatical category and/or lexical meaning). The well-known phrase “*Tko dobro vidi – dobro zna*.”¹⁷ also points out to the relationship between knowledge and the ability to see.

The letter V is the twenty-eighth letter of the Croatian alphabet, and it is a labiodental approximant vowel.

¹⁴ In Croatian *vidjeti* means to see.

¹⁵ In Croatian *vješt* means skillful.

¹⁶ In Croatian *vještica* means witch.

¹⁷ In Croatian “*Tko dobro vidi – dobro zna*” means “The one who sees, knows.”

4, G – GLAGOLJQ (glagolati)



Like the letter *C*, the letter *G* also has its origin in the Hebrew letter *GIMEL*, and it is related to the Armenian letter *GHAD*, and the Samaritan *GHIMEL*. It appeared in the Latin alphabet in the third century B.C. It was used by Spurius Carvilius Ruga, the founder of the first public school of the city of Rome (around 230 B. C.) that charged tuition. Spurius Carvilius Ruga replaced the sixth letter of Greek alphabet *Z* with today's letter *G*. Basically, Spurius Carvilius Ruga made a modification of the letter *C* by the addition of a small vertical stroke to the tail end of the semicircle.

In Croatian, the letter *G* was used as a part of the digraph *GJ*. The digraph *GJ* was introduced into the Croatian language as the sign for the sound *Đ* and, for writing of the words of Greek origin (*anĝel*, *evanĝelie*).

The Glagolitic sign *G* – *glagolati* presumed speech. The letter *G* – *glagoljq* was a numerical sign for the number four, and was spelled *glagolju*. Its symbolical meaning was not exhausted by *govorenjem* (speaking). The letter *G* also marked the term according to which *letter is (part) of the word(s)*. On the other hand, due to its two closed units that remind of a field with holes in it, it also symbolized the reptiles, creatures that hide in the holes.

The letter *G* has meaning in the Christian *blessing for the family*. In the blessing of the family, the gathered family receives the priest and his escorts: altar servers and one adult parishioner. On the door to the room, the priest's escort would write the following sign: *20 + G + M + B + 09*, in which the numbers mark the year of the blessing, and three letters symbolize the beginning letters of the names of the Three Wise Men (Caspar, Melchior, and Balthasar). According to another interpretation, the letters *G*, *M*, and *B* are an abbreviation of the Latin phrase *Christus mansionem, benedicat* – let Christ bless this house. According to this interpretation, one must be aware of the initial of the name Gaspar, which is the letter *C* in Latin. (Gaspar Lat. Caspar)




The numerical meaning of the number *four* is associated with the balance and harmony of the world, with its temporal and spatial organization, but also with firmness, law and order that rule the world. The number *four* is at the same time a symbol of man in whom the cosmic structure is reflected, and this structure is based on – *four*.

In the Croatian alphabet, the letter *G* is in the eleventh position, and is a voiced velar plosive consonant. The word *glagol* even today is related to the meaning *glagoljq*. Glagol (Eng. verb) is the

most important word in a sentence, it carries the action of the sentence, and without it, sentences are not complete, even the ones that are verbless.

5, D – DOBRÊ



The letter *D* has been known ever since the Egyptian hieroglyphs, where the sign  represented a *door*. It is related to the Semitic sign *DALETH* ( or ), which in Hebrew transliteration was signified by an expression for *ruler* or *door*, and was pronounced as *D*. The Greeks took over the Semitic pronunciation and the sign, but they also reshaped the name *DALETH* into *DELTA*. *DELTA* is related to the meaning of the Greek word *spudé* (heartiness, readiness for good deeds), which is in opposition to the word *rathimia* (weakness, carelessness, laziness, cause of the first fall and every sin). *D* signified the Roman numeral 500, and the Greek numeral 4.


In Glagolitic, *D* has the numerical value of five, and the symbolical value of *good*, but also of *spirit*. It comprises an arch and two rounded loops, and its triangular and round shapes take up the upper half of the rosette, the upper half of the circle. With its position and shape, the letter *D* symbolizes the Holy Spirit who hovered over the surface of the waters during the creation.

Number *five* was often considered an androgynous number in which the first even number (number two) and the first odd number (number three) are paired, that is, the female and the male principle. It was also considered the number of *man* (due to man's five senses, five ways of comprehending, and five fingers on a hand). Pythagoreans declared it a symbol of *divine marriage* and a holy sign that testifies to the relation between a man and the Divine. In Christianity, there are five Pentateuch, and according to Honorius Augustodunensis (mentioned in Germ's *Symbolism of Numbers*), *On the fifth day the Lord created birds in heaven and fish in water, and in the fifth era of the world, after the Babylonian slavery, the Lord came to the world and saved the birds, that is the wise ones, and the fish, the foolish ones, from misfortune and delusion.*

In Croatian the letter *D* appears as the basis for writing two more sounds: *Đ* (when a diacritic is added to it – a horizontal line), and *Dž*, when *D* and *Ž* create a digraph. It is in the sixth place in the alphabetical order and it signifies a voiced alveolar plosive consonant.

6, E – ESTЪ



The letter *E* comes from the Semitic sign *HE* () that probably represented a *tree* or a *branch*. *HE* was pronounced as a consonant *H* in Semitic alphabets, and when the Greeks took it over they reassigned it into a sign for the vowel *E* (Εψιλον, *Epsilon*) without changing its visual form. There was long-term experimentation on the direction of writing, so at one time, one of the lines was written from right to left, the next from left to right, and then again from right to left. It got its name for its similarity with the direction of plowing in the field. In the Greek alphabet, today's orientation became consistent by the end of the second and the beginning of first Century A.D. The Latin *E* was taken over from the Greek alphabet without any changes, even though the Romans had written it before the Greeks in the way in which it is written today.

For the Pythagoreans, the number *six* was the number of completeness, harmony, balance and accord, and at the same time a symbol of love, beauty, fertility and creativity. It is, at the same time, a sum of all its divisors ($1 + 2 + 3 = 6 = 1 \times 2 \times 3$).

The Glagolitic was true to the Bible in many things, and that is the case with the letter *E*. According to the Bible, God created the world in *six* days: in the first days the sky and the earth, sea and land, then plants, and then animals. On the sixth day he created a man, and on the seventh day he rested. The letter *E* symbolizes *the sixth day of creation*, the day on which *man* was created.

In the *Symbolism of Numbers*, Germ states the importance of the sixth day from the Second Book of Moses: *And it came to pass, that on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for one man...* (Ex 16:5), as well as Origen's commentary on the mentioned quote by Moses: *the sixth day is the time of our lives... And the more good deeds you collect, that will be your food for the future.*

The group of symbols of the Glagolitic letters, by order and symbolical meaning tell the tale of the creation of the world in *six days*. When we add the first six letters, their shapes cover the whole rosette, from which they were created.

The letter *E* symbolizes the morning, sunrise, because the sunlight comes, warms and shines on a part of the Earth through a small opening in the sky. It was said in those days that morning is the change from night to day.

In the Croatian alphabet, *E* is in the ninth place and it is a medium-high front vowel.

7, Ž – ŽIVĚTI



In Glagolitic, the letter Ž represents beings inspired with life. In Glagolitic, there is great symbolism in the numerical value of the seventh letter. As Germ states, the number seven is, much like the number three, a favorite fairy tale number that is very rich in symbolic meanings. Even though the symbolism of seven is diverse, in most of the cultures it is interpreted as a motif of completeness, perfection, wholeness of the cosmos and rounded harmony of time and space. Seven was acclaimed since astral symbolism and the mythology of Babylon; it is present in the teaching of the seven planets, the seven main gods of heaven, and the seven divisions of Heaven. To Pythagoreans, the number seven was a symbol of the universe (with seven planetary spheres and seven planets) where motion, according to the analogy of the seven-tone musical scale, must create divine music of the harmony of the heavenly spheres. Alongside this, Pythagoreans believed that seven represents a wholeness of merging of the earth (number four) and the sky (number three).

The number seven also symbolizes the measure of the earthly, passing time that is always counted down anew by living through the seven days of the week. On the seventh day God blessed his work and rested. Germ instructs that seven is a number in which man's merging of the spiritual (three strengths of the soul mark the spirituality of a man) and physical (the physical nature of a man is stated by four, the sum of elements of which man's physical nature is made). Above all, the number seven expresses the wisdom of the sevenfold Holy Spirit.

The letter Ž is the thirtieth, and final letter of the Croatian alphabet. It signifies a voiced postalveolar fricative consonant. It was introduced from the Czech language into the Croatian language by Ljudevit Gaj. Slovenians and Bosnians have also adopted the letter.

8, 3 – 3ÊLO

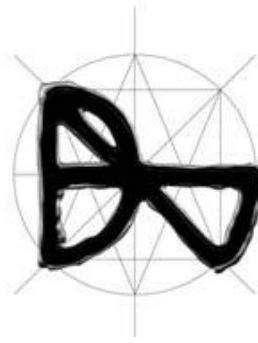


The Glagolitic letter 3 – 3ÊLO is interpreted in the sense of virtue. The sound that signifies the letter 3 emerged as a result of the second palatalization, *G* before *ê* > 3: non-Indo-European: *gailă* > *gělă* > 3êlo. It is often replaced by the sound *Z*.

Also, it represents the stars that seemed to be attached to heaven's arch, and in accordance, do not go out of the rosette circle.

From the numerical point of view, eight is a happy and harmonious number, a symbol of balance and stability. After seven with which a man's life is measured in *weeks*, eight symbolizes the eternity which follows after the variability of earthly time. It is the number of a new beginning, a revival, heaven, resurrection and eternal life.

9, Z – ZEMLI



Today's letter *Z* has its origin in the Semitic *ZAI*. In Greek the sign was named *ZETA* and was used for writing the sound *Z*. The images of the sign *ZAI*, that is, *ZETA*, were in a way crossing with the images of the sign *JOD*, or *JOTA*. In a way, the letter *JOD* lent its picture to the Greek *ZETA*, and *ZAIN* to the Greek *JOTA*. Transitional forms of these letters became permanent with their acceptance in the Latin script, where the way they are written and pronounced was defined.

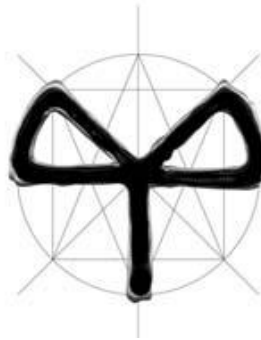
In Glagolitic, the letter *Z* signifies the earth, takes up half of the rosette (half of the world), and suggests a half of the world. The letter *Z* possesses an additional element which goes beyond the initial circle of the rosette. With the outer – extending appendage, the Earth is signified, as an astronomical body.

With its shape the letter *Z* takes part in telling the tale of the creation of the world: of the four elements - air (spirit), water, fire and earth, the first three elements were created on the first day of creation. On the third day, God created the fourth element, earth in the sense of dry land.

Nine is a number that symbolizes the strength of spirit, wisdom, knowledge and spiritual maturity. In Christianity, St. Paul had written about the number nine to the Corinthians (1 Cor 12:7-11) where he mentioned the nine gifts of the spirit, and also St. Gregory the Great, when he discussed the symbolic meaning of the lost drachma (Lk 15:8).

The letter *Z* is in the twenty-ninth position in the Croatian alphabet. It signifies a voiced alveolar fricative consonant. In mathematics, it signifies the third unknown factor (alongside *X* and *Y*).

10, Ĩ – ĨŽE



In the Glagolitic script the letter Ĩ – ĨŽE resembled a yoke for a pair of oxen. It symbolized farm animals. It was used as an initial and as an uppercase ligature.

In the more recent texts it exclusively represented a numerical value.

Its numerical value combines all of the above mentioned symbols. The number ten represents a self-enclosed multiplicity, roundedness, completeness and eternity. In the decimal system, ten is a measure of everything that is counted and measured, and, therefore, is also the symbol of the order of the physical world. Pythagoreans called it *the sacred Tetraktys*, because the sum of the first four numbers is equal to its geometrical value ($1 + 2 + 3 + 4 = 10$).

According to Germ, ten can also stand for a symbol of true faith, because the Roman numeral *X* corresponds to the number ten, and it is the symbol of the cross – the sign of Christ and his teachings. The life of a believer is determined by the Ten Commandments of God.

20, I – I



The letter *I* stems from the Semitic *IODH*, *YOD*, *YUD*, which means *hand with a fist*. The original pronunciation was probably similar to the letter *J*, but the Greeks applied it for the vowel *I* and gave it the name *IOTA*. From *IOTA*, the Latin *I* developed without any changes.

The Glagolitic letter *I* symbolizes motion, movement and it completes the rosette of the second day of the creation of the world. It can be interpreted as a letter that *induces*, as well as creates buoyancy, that is, a swing and a movement that follows inspiration.

Germ interprets the symbolic meaning of ten in Christian iconography as the perfection of God's creation. He finds the teachings of the Scriptures and faith to be based on two mathematical operations: on the doubled number ten ($2 \times 10 = 20$), and the product of the number five and the number four ($5 \times 4 = 20$).

By doubling the number ten ($2 \times 10 = 20$), the meaning of ten is given additional layers of meaning as the completion of creation and the perfection of true faith. The same product is the symbol of the law of the Old Testament; it keeps the Decalogue and the mercy of the New Testament, and pertains especially to the commandment on the duality of Christian love. Rupert of Deutz adds to this that the twenty stands for the double grace of God, for Jesus came to save the Jews and the pagans.

The motif of harmony of the Old and the New Testament comes from the product of the numbers five and four, where the number five is by analogy tied to the Pentateuch – the Old Testament, while the number four brings the four Gospels to mind, which is its connection to the New Testament.

The letter *I* is in the thirteenth position in the Croatian alphabet, it is a coordinating conjunction and a symbol for a front high vowel. In the Croatian language, *I* is found as a part of the triphthong *IJE* and the diphthong *JE*. Alongside other symbols, the letter *I* is one of the logical composites, the symbol of the Roman numeral one, and the Greek numeral ten.

30, Ĵ/Ģ – ĐERV



The usual way of writing of the letter Ĵ/Ģ – ĐERV is đ and it is in the shape of the rounded Glagolitic script. The letter ĵ was used when writing foreign words, such as angel (Greek: ἄγγελος, messenger, herald) – anĵelъ; then it appeared in the place of the Stokavian đ – *meja*, and later it begins to signify every *J*.

In the beginning *J* was just a variation of the symbol *I*, while its present look became common in the XVI Century. The first to describe the difference between these two symbols (and sounds) was Petrus Ramus.

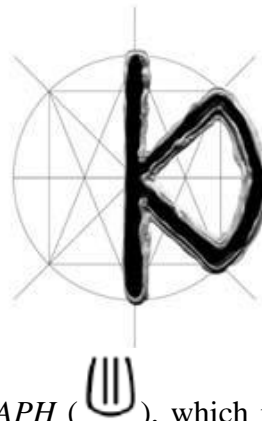
In the Hebrew tradition it refers to the sign *YOD* linked to the *virgo* (virgin), the sign for work, left hand, health, madness, but also to turning ideas into reality.


Tine Germ states that thirty is a famous number that combines within itself the symbolism of three and ten, and as such, symbolizes completeness, maturity, wholeness, perfection, and happiness. The equation $5 \times 6 = 30$ points to the Pentateuch (as well as the five senses) multiplied by the number six, the number of the creation of the world, but also a number that invokes the six works of mercy. Moses and Jesus started public work in their thirties, David was thirty when he became the king of Israel, at the same age Joseph was appointed to rule Egypt. Noah's ark, with its height of thirty cubits, had foreshadowed Christ, the savior of men, who was baptized in his thirties. The negative meaning of thirty is associated with the thirty pieces of silver which Judas received when he betrayed Christ.

The letter *J*, alongside letters *L* and *N*, creates the diphthongs *LJ* and *NJ*. The letter *J* has more sound values, but the most interesting is the one in the Spanish language – *H*.

The letter *J* is the fourteenth letter of the Croatian alphabet, which marks a palatal approximant sonant consonant. The letter Đ is the eighth letter of the Croatian alphabet, which marks a palatal approximant sonant consonant.

40, K – KAKO



The letter *K* stems from the Semitic *KAPH* (), which means *hand, open fist, palm*. The Greeks took it over for the sound value of the sound *K* and call it *KAPPA*. The Romans used the letter *C* when writing the same sound value. The Roman use of the letter *C* for the *K* sound has been transferred to some other languages, i.e. the English language, although many languages have kept the letter *K*. The Hebrew tradition, most notably Kabbalah, associated it with life and death, Venus, the left eye, and the hand.


In the Glagolitic script, the letter *K* has a shape that resembles a root, germ, seed, or a blade of grass.

In the number forty, Tine Germ stresses the ancient symbolism of the world in its four in tens place, and in Christianity – earthly salvation, as well as a time of penance or punishment. Forty days is associated with Moses waiting on Mount Sinai, Jesus' stay in the desert, and the duration of rainfall during the flood. In this number we can see the positive meaning of the addition of the mercy of the Gospels (four gospels) to God's law (Ten Commandments). King David and Solomon the Wise both ruled for forty years each, and the Israelis also spent forty years wandering through the deserts before setting their eyes on the Promised Land, which means that the number forty may be read as the rich fulfillment of earthly life.

The letter *K* is the fifteenth letter of the Croatian alphabet and it signifies a voiceless velar plosive consonant. In the Greek language it is the tenth letter of the alphabet, and the symbol of the number 20.

50, L – LJUDIE (people)



The letter L comes from the Phoenician sign *LAMED* (), for which it is assumed that it signified *a hook* or more probably *a year*. *LAMED* is a sign that does not have a pictogramic origin. The Greeks took it over from the Phoenicians, in both its symbolic and articulatory form. In the Greek alphabet its name is *LAMBDA* and it is a symbol for the number 30.

The Romans used it in its unaltered form, where it had the numerical value of the number 50. The Hebrew tradition associates it with *Lybra* (scales), connection, gall, action and sacrifice, necessary component of any action.

According to Marica Čunčić, the Glagolitic script used the letter *L* as the symbol of *Luna* (*the Moon*) and *light*. Its look reminds of moonbeams: the Moon is showed first as larger (the upper part), then as smaller (the lower part), and then it equalizes in size. As in Roman symbols, the letter *L* in Glagolitic had the numerical value of the number fifty.


Germ states that in contrast to the number forty, the number fifty is a symbol of release, mercy and reward for an exemplary life. In the Scriptures, the year fifty is the year of jubilee, celebration, time of conciliation, release and joy. It is also the motif of the spirits, of the great Christian holiday with which the Church celebrates the arrival of the Holy Spirit that descended upon the disciples fifty days after Jesus' resurrection.

If we break up the number fifty into the number forty with the number ten added to it ($40 + 10 = 50$), forty means earthly life and ten is the reward for the keeping of the laws of the Decalogue. If the number fifty is seen as the product ($5 \times 10 = 50$), five represents the five senses in the service of the Ten Commandments of God. In both cases, the number fifty is the symbol of paradise. When fifty is calculated as $7 \times 7 + 1 = 50$, it means an eternal reward for those who have spent their earthly life in the sign of the seven days of the week, filled with the sevenfold gifts of the Holy Spirit, and faith in one God.

In the Croatian alphabet, the letter *L* is in the sixteenth position and it signifies an alveolar lateral approximant. When used together with the letter *J*, it creates a new letter – the digraph LJ (the seventeenth letter of the Croatian alphabet and palatal lateral approximant).

60, M – MYSLITE (mysliti)



The symbol *MEM* in Hebrew carries the meaning of *water*, and its pronunciation did not change in any alphabet, from the Semitic scripts to the modern Latin scripts. It is assumed that Semites used to signify it with the symbol  that they took over from the Egyptians. The Greeks first named it *MU*, and then *MI*, and attributed the numerical value 40 to it.

It was written with various modifications of a wavy and zigzag line, until the present form became common in the Latin and Greek alphabet in the 4th Century B.C. Hebrew teaching associates it with motherhood, water, stomach, liquid flow, coldness, winter and human fate. In the Roman script it signified the number 1000.

In the Glagolitic script, the letter *M* covers three-fourths of the rosette and marks three-fourths of the Earth's surface that is covered by sea. Its numerical value is equal to the number sixty, and it symbolizes the completeness of the cosmos.

According to Frane Paro,¹⁸ Constantine's systematic series of signs/symbols is opened by the sign of the cross – *signum absolutus*, and it is closed by *signum totus* – the four member character *M* (*mir* = world); which Constantine places in the middle of the azbuka sequence, in the position of the number sixty – a symbol of great cosmic completeness. (The letter *X* /*Chi*/ is located in the same place in the Greek alphabet – within the culture of Constantine's time the monogram of the name *Christos*.)


Germ decomposes the number sixty by using two equations. In the first, $6 \times 10 = 60$ means the perfection of true faith that is stated in supplementing the Ten Commandments of God with the six works of mercy. In the second, the number sixty is decomposed as the product $5 \times 12 = 60$, which represents the five senses contained in the efforts to fulfill the teaching of the twelve apostles. The number sixty can be interpreted as a harmony of the Old and New Testament (the Decalogue and the six works of mercy). It also hints to its great importance in the sexagesimal system of the ancient Sumerians, which has been preserved up to the present day in timekeeping.

In the Croatian alphabet, *M* is in the 18th position, and it signifies a bilabial nasal consonant.

¹⁸ Frane Paro: *Četiri glasnika radosne vijesti Konstantina Filozofa (Four Heralds of the Good News of Constantine the Philosopher)*, Slovo, Vols. 56-57, Zagreb 2008, pp. 42-438.

70, N – NAŠb



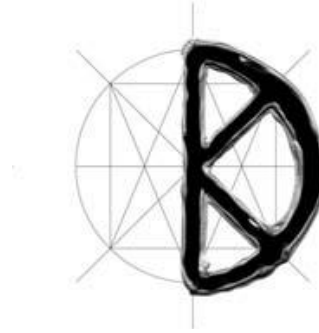
The letter *N* originates from the Egyptian hieroglyph , a symbol of *a snake*. The Phoenician, Hebrew and Arabian name for this sign is *NUN*, and in most cases it denotes *a fish*. In many alphabets, the letter *N* is visually connected to the letter *M*. It is the Greek numeral for 50.


The Romans took it over from the Greeks in its original form. Hebrews associate it with the scorpion, the sense of smell, bowels, dying, fish, the ability to survive and renew.

In the Glagolitic script, the letter *N* represented sea beasts, and mammals like whales and dolphins. Its numerical value is 70. Germ finds symbolism in the number seventy, as in most bigger numbers, in absolution, heavenly reward for a good earthly life, and righteous faith in which the teachings of the New Testament supplements the commandments of the Old Testament. If we decompose the number 70 into 5×14 , the seventy is then presented as the symbol of absolution which worshippers are trying to achieve through their five senses, by fulfilling the Ten Commandments of God, and the teachings of the Four Gospels. Seventy is also the symbol of wisdom, and the exemplary number of the Council of Elders.

N is the nineteenth letter of the Croatian alphabet, and it signifies an alveolar nasal consonant. In the Croatian language, together with the letter *J* it creates the digraph *NJ* (the twentieth letter of the alphabet).

80, O – ONЪ (онъ)



The origin of the letter *O* is associated with the Egyptian hieroglyph  (*ir*) that was taken over by the Semites who made minor modifications and gave it the meaning *AYIN* – *eye*. The symbol of the Greek vowel *O* was created from it, a vowel which the Greeks differentiated as the long (*OMEGA*) or *large O* and short (*OMICRON*) or *small o*, with the numerical value of 70.

The Hebrew tradition ties it to the *Capricorn* (billy goat), anger, liver, rule, perception, and power of metaphysical vision that enables the foreseeing of events.

In the Glagolitic script, the symbol *O* signified the letter *O*, the number 80, as well as the sign for one of the third-person singulars – *he*. According to Čunčić, it symbolized fire or light and occupied the right half of the rosette. By overlapping (adding) the visual properties of the three letters (*D* – *duh/spirit*, *V* – *voda/water*, and *O* – *oganj/fire*) a rosette would ensue with the left side blank. According to the common beliefs present during the emergence of the Glagolitic script, darkness marked the absence (non-existence) of beings.

The blank part of the left side of the rosette was left precisely because the darkness signifies the lack of beings, emptiness, and desolateness. The rest of the rosette is filled completely and it bespeaks, according to the Bible, of the fullness of creation, but also of perfection and completion of the first day of Creation.

Germ points to how in the equation $8 \times 10 = 80$, Biblical exegetes saw the eternal reward (the Ten Commandments of God) which is gained by those who believe in the resurrection of Christ (present in the meaning of the number eight). In the spirit of the Old and the New Testament, they also understood the eighty years of Joseph's rule that were supported by the ten of the Decalogue and the eight of the Resurrection. The negative meaning of this number is attributed to its decomposition into $2 \times 4 \times 10 = 80$, where the motif of the earthly world is doubled.

In the Croatian alphabet, the *O* is the twenty-first letter and it marks the back, medium high vowel. Also, in the Croatian language it is a preposition that alongside the locative marks an object, a topic, and with the accusative and locative a place next to the outside surface of something or hanging on to something.

90, P – POKOI – mir (peace)



The letter *P* originates from the Semitic *PE*, a symbol for *the mouth*. Unlike the Roman alphabet that retained it in its original form, the Greeks had taken it over under the name *PI* (Π ili π), but have combined its original form to the letter *RO*. The first version of the letter *RO* was different from its later Latin version. The Latin *R* is probably only one variation of the letter *PI*. For the Romans, it signified the number 4000.


In the Glagolitic script, the letter *P* represents birds in flight, as its shape indicates.

Germ decomposes the number ninety into $9 \times 10 = 90$ and from this equation reads out the symbolism of absolution. He adds that in the number ninety, there is a triple number ten that appears three times ($3 \times 3 \times 10 = 90$) which encompasses the glory of the Holy Trinity, the wisdom of nine, and the prominence of ten.

The letter *P* is the twenty-second letter of the Croatian alphabet and it signifies a voiceless bilabial plosive consonant.

100, R – RbCI



It is assumed that the original Semitic symbol *R* () was inspired by the Egyptian hieroglyph *REŠ* (pronounced: *T – P*) which signified *the head*. In Semitic, the head was called *REŠ* and its name has remained associated with the taken over and modified symbol – the letter *R*. In the Greek language, this letter developed into *P* (*RHŌ*), and in Latin into *R*. It is highly probable that some Etruscan and west Greek forms of this letter were given a small stroke to the right of it to distinguish it from the letter *P*.

In the Glagolitic script, the letter *R* had the numerical value of the number 100. Symbolically, it represented a fish. Čunčić speaks of the fish as the first symbol of Christianity, and recalls the biblical division of living creatures and distinguishes them into those that live in water, those that live on land, those that fly in the air, the water mammals and the fish in the end. She points out the symbolic importance of the four letters: the letter *Ž* (*žive duše/living souls*), the letter *P* (*ptice/birds*), the letter *N* (*morske nemani/sea monsters*), and the letter *R* (*ribe/fish*), which make up the content of the creation on the fifth day.

Germ calls the number hundred one of the perfect numbers: *A special perfection, a roundedness of time and space, wholeness, firmness and steadfastness are meanings that Christian iconography sums up from ancient tradition, and adds numerous contents that are associated with the sublimity of God, completeness of his work of creating, purity of faith, hope of salvation and the beauty of life in heaven.* Germ quotes St. Hieronymus, who concludes his pondering on the number one hundred with these words: *Of the glory of this number let us only say that ten tens has the firmness of a square, and because of that, it is the symbol of steadfastness and eternity.*

The letter *R* is the twenty-third letter of the Croatian alphabet and it signifies the alveolar vibrant sonant (a consonant and a vowel).

200, S – SLOVO



The letter S has a complex history, because its origin is based on multiple symbols, above all on the Semitic symbol ω (*ŠÎN* or *teeth*). *ŠÎN* was useful to the Greeks in creating their symbol *SIGMA*, which was reshaped and used to replace the sound *S* (*sigma* probably comes from the Arabic word *samak* – *fish, spine*). Before the Greek *SIGMA*, *ŠÎN* was used in the Phoenician alphabet as a symbol for *Š*, a letter that the Greeks did not need and they only took over its shape, but not its pronunciation.

For the needs of the Latin language, the letter *S* was used, but not in the shape of sigma, but as a sign with two curved lines. The Romans used that sign for writing the sound *S*, and its duality has remained in some later languages. It was used as the symbol for the number 90.

In the Glagolitic script, the letter *S* signified *the word* (*iskoni bê slovo* – in the beginning was the Word). At that time the word *jezik/language* had two simultaneous meanings – *language and people*. In addition to symbolizing *words*, the letter *S* also symbolized *the sun*. The letter *S* (like the letter *Z*) extends beyond the circle of the rosette precisely because it stands for an astronomical body.

In the Glagolitic script, the letter *S* has the numerical value of 200. In his work *De humilitate et gloria Christi*, Marko Marulić has interpreted it in the following way: *Moreover, two hundred cubits marks the perfection of the saints who not only try to fulfill the commandments of the Decalogue, but also strive to fulfill the evangelical advice. For to the one who said that he abides by the commandments of the Law, and asked what he is lacking, the Savior replied: If you wish to be perfect, sell all you have and give to the poor, and then follow me! And, given that this kind of perfection strongly outweighs the merit of the imperfect ones, it is not valued by the number one hundred as it is for them, but by the number two hundred, as the double of those who are being saved.*

S is the twenty-fourth letter in the Croatian alphabet. It marks a voiceless alveolar fricative consonant. In the Croatian language *S* and *Š* are clearly distinct, but in some other languages that distinction is not as apparent or so well explained.

300, T – TVRĬDO



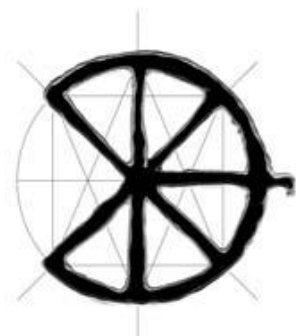
The letter T as we know it today comes from the Phoenician *TAU*, a letter very similar to a cross, which signified *a sign*. The Greeks took it over, and made minor modifications to it. By taking away the *top of the cross*, from the previous *TAU*, they made today's letter *T*.

This symbol was taken over by the Romans, and they have been using it in an almost unchanged form up to the present. The letter does not have any variants, and in its pure form is present in nearly all known languages.

The Glagolitic letter *T* visually appears to be a rotated copy of the letter *V* (letter *VĚDĚ*). It is found in the middle of the rosette and symbolizes the hardness of the heavenly arch, by which the waters of the sky are separated from waters on earth. It was believed that this space is hard because water turns into rain, hail, snow and ice to keep the land moist. The illusionary *heavenly arch* was imagined by the old Semites to be like a dome that restrained the waters from above, for these waters could break through to the earth and cause a flood. Saint Ambrose also states that waters are separated from waters by the arch as a boundary.

Along with the hardness of the boundary, the letter T signified the numerical value of the number 300. The number three hundred is associated with Gideon described in the *Book of Judges*, and his opposition to the ruling class at God's call. With God's help, with his 300 men Gideon managed to defeat the manifoldly more powerful Midian army and earn 40 years of peace.

In the Croatian language, the letter *T* is the twenty-sixth letter of the Croatian alphabet and it signifies a voiceless alveolar plosive consonant.



The letter U comes from the Semitic letter *WĀW* whose form was originally represented by *a hook* (Y). From the same Semitic symbol, several other letters have developed – *F*, *V*, *W*, *Y*, and *U*.


From the middle to late Middle Ages, two forms of the letter *V* or *U* were developed, and both were later used as their modern shapes of *V* and *U*. *V* had its ending in the dot and was written at the beginning of the word, while its round shape – *U*, was used in the middle or at the end of a word. In the XVIII century, these two symbols finally split into the consonant *V* and the vowel *U*.

To the Croats, the letter *U* as a horseshoe is a symbol of good luck. In the Glagolitic script, it has the numerical value of the number 400, a number that can be expressed as the product of the number 8 and the number 50. The number eight is often interpreted as a new beginning (every following week begins with the eighth day), and the number fifty as the symbol of the reward for an exemplary life. In number four hundred, their properties are multiplied.

U is the twenty-seventh letter of the Croatian alphabet, it is a back high vowel, and as a preposition it denotes places (in locative) and the goal (accusative).

500, F – FRĬTŦ



As well as the previous letter *U*, the letter *F* was also associated with the Semitic letter *WĀW*, whose form was originally represented by a hook (), and from which the following letters developed – *V*, *W*, *Y*. The original Semitic symbol of *the hook* could have also been interpreted as *the pitchfork* or as *the horned staff* (the shepherd's staff). It was distinguished by the three vocal characteristics: the consonant *V*, but also the vowel *O*, i.e. *U*. Its original name would probably have been *FAU*. Today its original Greek pronunciation is not known, but its numerical value of 6 has remained. It was also used as a mathematical symbol. Along with 20 other symbols from the Greek alphabet, in the 7th Century B. C. the Romans took over this Greek sign, which was used in southern Italy, and they gave it the sound value *F*.

In the Hebrew tradition, *WAU* is associated with *Taurus*, thought, the right kidney, ownership.

The Glagolitic letter *F* takes up the space between the two upper parts of the letter *D*. It is assumed that this is because the letter *F* represents animals that are not farm animals, but wild animals. Its numerical value is associated with the number 500 which can be decomposed in several ways ($5 \times 100 = 500$), ($20 \times 5 \times 5 = 500$) or ($5 \times 10 \times 10 = 500$). In every one of these equations, the five human senses are multiplied either by the perfection of time and space (the number 100), or by the perfection of God's creation (the number 20) or the Decalogue multiplied by ten (the number 10).

F is the tenth letter of the Croatian alphabet. It signifies the voiceless labiodental fricative consonant.

600, H – HÊRĬ



The letter *H* comes from the Semitic symbol *HÊT* (**III**) which stands for *a fence* or *a field*. After it was taken over by the Greeks, *ETA* was probably pronounced as the sound *H*, but later began to be used in the Greek language as the long vowel *E* and a symbol for the number 8.

According to Hebrew teachings, it is associated with *Aries* (a ram), speech, the right foot, life, a connection between the inner world and the outer world. In various languages which use the Latin script, it is often used in digraphs *SH*, *SCH*, *TSCH*, etc. Its multiple sound values are also known.

In the Glagolitic script the circular part or the triangle of the letter *H* is found in front of the horizontal line or the horizon. According to Čunčić, because of its shape, the letter *H* is a symbol of the evening, when the day is nearing its end and the sun is going down beyond the horizon. In those days it was believed that the evening was the general borderline between night and day.

H is the twelfth letter of the Croatian alphabet and it signifies the voiceless velar fricative consonant.

700, ѿ – ОѢ



In the Glagolitic script, this letter has the numerical value of the number 700. It is used as an initial.

800, Ć – ŠTA



In the Glagolitic script, the letter Ć – ŠTA has the shape of a fruitful tree with a wide treetop. It represents woody plants, trees, *a rod that blossoms*. It has the numerical value of the number 800.

The letter Ć is the fifth letter of the Croatian alphabet and it signifies the voiceless palatal affricate consonant. It is also used in the Polish alphabet, from which it was taken over. Bosnians also use it in their orthography.



The letter *C* has the same origin as the letter *G*, which the Semites named *GIMEL*. The symbol is probably an adapted version of the Egyptian hieroglyph for a *personal belt* (a particular type of slingshot, a rope tied to a long tree). Another possibility indicates that the symbol portrayed a camel, for which the Semitic word was *GAMAL*.

During the third century B. C. the use of the letter *C* (as well as its variant *G*) as a substitute for the letters *K* and *Q* was becoming more and more frequent. In the classical period, as well as after it, *G* is treated as the phonetic representative of the letter *GAMMA*, and *C* as the equivalent of *KAPPA*. When transliterating the Greek words into Latin, for example, ΚΑΔΜΟΣ, ΚΥΠΙΟΣ, ΦΩΚΙΣ, their Latin written form would be CADMVS, CYRVVS, PHOCIS.

The letter *C* was sometimes called a sigma of the crescent moon, due to its similarity with one of the forms of the Greek letter *SIGMA*, as well as the resemblance to the crescent moon. It signified the Roman number 100.

In the Glagolitic script it has the numerical value equal to the number 900, in whose meaning the squared value of the number three is found (a symbol of the Holy Trinity), multiplied by 100 (perfection of time and space).

C is the third letter of the Croatian alphabet. It signifies a voiceless alveolar affricate consonant.

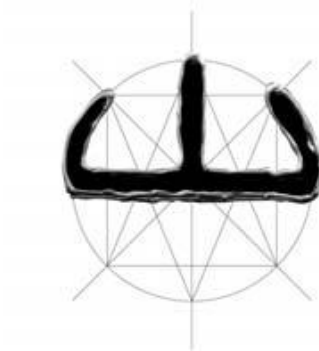
1000, Č – ČRBVB



In the Glagolitic script, the letter Č symbolizes man, who, unlike everything created during the first six days of the world's creation, is imbued with speech. Due to man's power to speak, the upper part of the letter Č is *open* and it points to a man's open mouth. The Glagolitic letter Č symbolically contains the man and the woman and represents the numerical value of the number 1000 whose symbolic meaning is associated with *innumerable multitudes*.

Č is the fourth letter of the Croatian alphabet. It signifies the voiceless postalveolar affricate consonant. It was introduced into the alphabet by Ljudevit Gaj from the Czech language, and it is also used in alphabets of the Slovenian, Slovakian, Lithuanian, Latvian, Serbian and Bosnian languages.

2000, Š – ŠA



The Glagolitic letter Š symbolizes the width of space. It takes up the upper half of the rosette, and its middle stanchion reaches to heaven. Čunčić explains that the border parts of the letter (the two side stanchions) by following the half – circle of the rosette, mark the borders of everything that is visible. From the letter Š we can read that the universe is the space that seems endless, but even the Universe has its limits, compared to God. As such, with limitations, it finds its place in God who is larger even than the endless Universe He has created.

Š is the twenty-fifth letter of the Croatian alphabet. It marks the voiceless postalveolar fricative consonant. It was introduced into the Croatian alphabet from the Czech language by Ljudevit Gaj, and it is also used in the alphabets of the following languages: Slovenian, Slovakian, Lithuanian, Latvian, Estonian, Serbian and Bosnian.

AFTERWORD

In her new novel *Az – Exploring the Ancient Croatian Glagolitic Script*, novelist Jasna Horvat made an attempt to bring to light the lives and characters of the apostles of the Old Slavic language liturgy and literacy – Saint Cyril (Constantine of Thessalonica) and Saint Methodius, as well as the process of shaping the Glagolitic script. In addition, during the course of the novel, and especially in the last chapter, the author (who is by profession a professor of statistics) has undertaken the deciphering of the constructional and symbolic-semantic structure of the Glagolitic script itself. The initiative for her own construction of the symbolic meaning of the letters of the Glagolitic script was a book by Marica Čunčić, *Sources of the Croatian Written Word*, Školska knjiga, Zagreb, 2003, pp. 93-108. The connection between the scheme of the Glagolitic symbols and their connection to the game of *Nine Men's Morris* was taken from the works of Frane Paro *The Glagolitic Primer*, Naklada Benja, Rijeka, 1995, and *Four Heralds of the Good News of Constantine the Philosopher*, Slovo, Vols. 56-57, Zagreb, 2008, pp. 421-438.

According to its genre affiliation, the novel can be placed in the sphere of the historical novel, and the author has studied extensive historical and hagiographic literature in order to portray authentically the lives of Saint Cyril and Methodius, as well as the whole historical era from the second half of the 9th Century. In the list of books from which the historical material for the novel was collected, the author points out the following titles in particular:

- Badiou, Alain: *Sveti Pavao, utemeljenje univerzalizma (Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism)*, Ljevak, Zagreb, 2006.
- Badurina, Anđelko: *Leksikon ikonografije liturgike i simbolike zapadnog kršćanstva (Lexicon of the Iconography, Liturgy and Symbolism of Western Christianity)*, Kršćanska sadašnjost, Zagreb, 2000, 226.
- Botica, Stipe: *Biblija i hrvatska kulturna tradicija (The Bible and the Croatian Traditional Culture)*, Zagreb, 1995.
- Bratulić, Josip: *Žitja Konstantina Ćirila i Metodija i druga vrela / preveo i protumačio Josip Bratulić (The Life of Constantine and the Life of Methodius and Other Sources / translated and interpreted by Josip Bratulić)*, Zagreb, Kršćanska sadašnjost, 1998.
- Crnković, Nikola: *Hrvati za narodnih vladara (History of the Croats in the Age of the Croat Rulers)* Matica hrvatska – Novalja, Novalja, 2007.
- Damjanović, Stjepan: *Slovo iskona (The Letter of Origin)*, Matica hrvatska, Zagreb, 2004, p. 94.
- Deželić, Velimir Sin: *Sofiju odabra (The Choice of Sophia)*, Izdanje hrv. Književ.

Društva sv. Jeronima u Zagrebu, Zagreb, 1927.

- Germ, Tine: *Simbolika brojeva (Symbolism of Numbers)*, Mozaik knjiga, Zagreb, 2004.
- Grivec, Franc: *Sveti Ćiril i Metod, slavenski blagovjesnici (Saints Cyril and Methodius, Slavic Promulgators)*, Kršćanska sadašnjost, Zagreb, 1985.
- Hamm, Josip: *Čitanka starocrkvenoslavenskog jezika s rječnikom (A Reader of Early Liturgical Slavic Language with Glossary)*, Zagreb, 1947.
- Hall, James: *Rječnik tema i simbola u umjetnosti (Dictionary of Subjects and Symbols in Art)*, Školska knjiga, Zagreb, 1998.
- Hamvas, Bela: *Kršćanstvo, Scientia Sacra II (Scientia Sacra II, Christianity)*. Naklada Jesenski i Turk, Zagreb, 2003.
- Jurišić, Blaž: *Nacrt hrvatske slovnice (An Outline of Croatian Grammar)*, Matica hrvatska, 1992 (Reprint of 1944 Edition).
- Koestler Arthur: *Kazari – 13. židovsko pleme? (The Khazars: the Thirteenth Jewish Tribe)*, MISL, Zagreb, 2000.
- Nazor, Anica: *Knjiga o hrvatskoj glagoljici „Ja slovo znajući govorim“ (Croatian Glagolitic book “Knowing the Letter I Speak”)*, Erasmus, Zagreb, 2008.
- Ostrogorski, Georgije: *Povijest Bizanta 324–1453 (History of the Byzantine State 324–1453)*; Golden marketing, Tehnička knjiga, Zagreb, 2006.
- Radić, Radivoj: *Carigrad, priče sa Bosfora (Constantinople - Stories from Bosphorus)*, Beograd, 2007.
- Runje, Petar: *O knjigama hrvatskih glagoljaša (On the Books of the Croatian Glagolites)*, Kršćanska sadašnjost, Zagreb, 1998.
- Sambunjak, Slavomir: *Gramatofila Konstantina Filozofa Solunskoga, hipoteza o postanku i značenju glagoljice (Gramatosophy of Constantine the Philosopher of Thessalonica, Hypothesis on the Origin and Meaning of the Glagolitic)*, Demetra, Zagreb, 1998.
- Shure, Eduard: *Veliki posvećenici (The Great Initiates)*, CID–NOVA, ZAGREB, 2001.
- Sveti Teodor Studit: *Pisma monahinjama (Letters of St Theodore the Studite)*, Symposium, Split, 1991.
- Tandarić, Josip Leonard: *Hrvatsko glagoljska liturgijska književnost, raprave i prinosi (Croatian Glagolitic liturgical literature, discussions and contributions)*, Kršćanska sadašnjost, Zagreb, 1993.
- Tenšek, Tomislav Zdenko: *Asketsko–monaška duhovnost otačkog razdoblja, Počeci i razvoj kršćanskog ascetism and monachs to St. Benedict, (The Ascetic-monastic spirituality of the Patristic Period, from the Origin and Development of Ascetism and Monachs to St. Benedict)*, Kršćanska sadašnjost, Zagreb, 2003.

- Žubrinić, Darko: *Hrvatska glagoljica, biti pismen – biti svoj*, (*Croatian Glagolitic Script, Be Literate, Be Yourself*), Hrvatsko književno društvo sv. Jeronima, Zagreb, 1996.

However, to give the novel its essential, intriguing and appealing belletristic aura, Jasna Horvat entered into the open area of the novelistic imagination, and through the development of the plot, broken down into narrative stories of the characters and their psychological portrayal, tried to envision and portray the possible human emotional interrelationships, and consequences that ensue from their actions, feelings and aspirations.

It is always a difficult, complicated and risky decision to write a book with saints as the main protagonists. Moreover, in our cultural history, the holy brothers are originators of a long series of Old Slavic and Old Croatian Middle-age literature, which developed in Croatia a trilaterality and a specific polyphonic cultural space, open to the literary currents of transliteration and transmission at the crossroads of the East and the West. Faced with such a complex task, there is always the danger of the main characters being characterized in the manner of hagiographic praise and remaining distant and flat within their idealization. Besides, every historic-hagiographic or literary-legendary representation, even that which is formed factographically, is always just a selection, an individual writer's vision and the author's reflection of an exceptional, honorable and to man unforeseeable fate of a saint. As opposed to that, there is the literary challenge to try and to comprehend, come to know and understand such persons who are exceptional, talented and completely enthralled by God's inspiration.

In the novel, the character of Saint Cyril is portrayed in his individuality, his dedication to the world of science and spirituality, his rapture and transcending of priorities of earthly life. However, he is also portrayed in situations in which the author has used the strength of her seasoned perception and imagination to depict the individual contradictory moments of the saint's life, which are familiar and recognizable within an ordinary human life. Nonetheless, in order to emphasize the impossibility of a definite reconstruction of the life of the saint, Jasna Horvat has structured a particular compositional division of the novel.

The storytelling within the novel flows in several different, separate, and yet mutually connected stories that are told through the prism of a first-person narrator and portray the path of the lives of the Saints Cyril and Methodius. The final chapter tells the story through static and analytic narrative, and it deals with the shapes and meanings of the letters in Glagolitic script. It is intended for the most demanding groups of readers who possess the motivation to immerse themselves in analysis of mathematical-geometrical combinations and symbolic-mythical analysis of letters. Although free of a plot, the final chapter aims in an abstract mystical manner to penetrate the secret of St. Cyril's thinking. It explores the conceptual understanding of Cyril's editing of the letters of the Glagolitic script and presents

where the polysemantic locus of the Glagolitic expressiveness is met, explained and implied.

The first story of the life and times of Saint Cyril we see through the eyes of his brother, Saint Methodius, who follows Cyril in his growing up, his maturing, his missions, and for whom we could say with justification that he knows and understands Cyril the best. Still, Methodius' realistically formulated account begins with the expression of doubt in the credibility of the portrayal to the nature of the human spirit: "I do not trust myself. Nor do I trust my brother, Constantine of Thessalonica." Despite his loyalty toward his brother, Methodius' story shows their difference in character: Cyril is portrayed as an unmitigated zealot, completely engrossed in faith, science and philosophical inquiry of the transcendental. His vision of the imaginary character of Sophia (withal a symbol of the wisdom of the Father – Christ) is his life guide. The character of Methodius also shows loyalty to his priestly calling, but his reasoning begins from life's realities, and he tends towards a sharp and rational observation of reality and has a more powerful gift of aligning the facts of reality with carrying out of his goals as a missionary. His realistically critical narrating position gives the story credibility, an impression of objectivity with which Cyril's virtues, as well as his unexplainable peculiarities are portrayed, and above all, always encompassing a powerful self-critical consciousness of the narrator: "Every biography is untrue. The living are short-sighted."

In terms of plot, the most challenging and interesting story comes from the mouth of the character Empress Theodora, who was dethroned after 856, and imprisoned with her daughters in the monastery Gastria. This story, told through subjective reflection and emotional memories, narrates the dreadful fate of a fascinating, educated, dominant and intelligent woman – Empress Theodora, and her passion breaks not infrequently with contradictory feelings concerning the role of Saint Cyril in her rise, turnabout and dismal fate. Under the auspices of emotions, in this story we find the most unconstrained imaginings of Jasna Horvat, her immersion and bringing to life of Theodora's plight, and at the same time observe an open depiction of the brutality of court life, and the hidden side of the uncompromising fight for power in the amorality and twilight of the Byzantine Empire. In the story of Theodora, we find a discourse of a retrospective memoir, but also the internal dialogue through which we get to know her inner dilemmas regarding the regaining of her position, of saving her banished daughters and her fallen son. In this subjectively colored account of the narrating character, the character of Cyril stands out as Theodora's spiritual verticality, and at the same time, in an uncontrolled outburst of passion: the empress sees Constantine Cyril as her dead son of the same name, as her spiritual child whom she molded and raised, and at the same time experiences him in an erotic fashion, as the last love of her unfulfilled womanhood. The character of Theodora is psychologically convincing within the scale of various reactions; is shown to be in a rationally focused state, then in desperation and emotional instability, and subsequently in memories and dialogues with her deceased husband. Through this type of narrative process, we get a fictional, yet an authentically

plausible depiction of the character of Empress Theodora, as well as her human passions and struggle for survival during the restless times of the governing conflicts in Constantinople.

After Theodora's tale, the figures of Saint Cyril and Methodius are explored in the story of the aged Roman scholar Anastasius the Librarian and the young chronicler Deacon John – the secretary of Bishop Gauderich whose unified historical-research work will result in a historical-legendary manuscript known as *The Italian Legend (The Legend of Kherson)*. In this story, historical data are supplemented with fragments from letters written by Methodius. However, through skillful and cautious comments on historical data, by which Anastasius the Librarian teaches Deacon John about viewing and interpreting history, we observe a new component. The storytelling of Anastasius reveals in a discreet way how social and church positions, as well as ideological and political views of the chroniclers themselves, to a great extent determine the perception and interpretation of Cyril's mission, and any historical period in general. While the Croatian rulers accept the mission of Cyril and Methodius with enthusiasm, because it contributes to their cultural significance and political specificity and independence, certain supporters of the liturgical language of the Latin Church do not approve of the mission; additionally the Venetian representatives do not approve of the mission or the strengthening of Croatian statehood. The entirety of the author's storytelling vision intends to raise awareness to the notion that history is not infrequently a fluctuating mass of data open to interpretation, that is written by the victorious, and to a greater or lesser extent depends on the political and ideological convictions of those who write it. For that reason, alongside the information about the mission of Cyril and Methodius, biographical data on the historians themselves has been included, whereby supplementing the turbulent and in effect one-sided uninterpretable raciness of the historical image of the 9th Century. Such knowledge of the simplification of the complex and disharmonious historical scene is passed on to John by Anastasius the Librarian: "We humans are much like the Moon, for not all parts of our existence are illuminated."

Immediately after the ending of the tale of Anastasius, we enter the fourth, brief but for our region quite important story, about the spreading of the aforementioned *Italian Legend*, that is, *The Legend of Kherson*, which is read in the year 895, in the region of Uzdolj, near the town of Knin by the Croatian Glagolite priest Žitelj in the presence of the Croatian prince Mutimir. With this episode, Jasna Horvat highlights the importance and the vitality of the entire mission of Cyril and Methodius, and the Glagolitic script on our soil, on which the foundations were set for the specific development of the Croatian culture and literature through centuries. Alongside this, the question remains open whether the letters of the Glagolitic script existed on our soil before the mission of Cyril and Methodius, and whether Constantine Cyril made only their definitive modifications.

Even though we can conclude that the traditional belletristic storyline of the novel ends

with the characters of Mutimir and his son – the future Croatian king Tomislav, in the book we find another guideline. The final part of the chapter, as well as the storyteller's *intermezzo* (which includes an appearance of the author's persona within the novel), shifts the attention of the reader to the final, fifth chapter, which goes beyond the frames of fiction, and introduces us to a different type of discursive account which interweaves a geometrical-arithmetic interpretation of the construction form of the Glagolitic script with the symbolic-mystic consideration of the multiple meanings of the letters. With such an unusual manner to conclude the novel, the author wishes to embark on a higher level of shaping and deciphering the multiple meanings and purposes of the Glagolitic script, as a code in which ancient wisdom teachings, particular higher laws of existence and the secret essence of our culture, are hidden.

We can conclude that Jasna Horvat has structured an original confrontation and supplementation of a historical novel, provocative belletristic story, inserted doubts on the simple reading of historical and personal destiny and an expert-symbolic systematic exposition which allows a postmodernist penetration of the microstructure of the language itself – the structure of the letters – and thereby, she has created an interesting work with multiple storylines.

With its multiple layers of meaning, the novel will appeal to various groups of readers: students for educational purposes, history enthusiasts, but also to those who are keen on analyzing the human passions, and on the fifth level, it is meant for philosophers, arithmeticians, semanticists, mystics, and all lovers of the ancient Croatian alphabet – the Glagolitic script.

Hrvojka Mihanović – Salopek, Phd

CITATIONS AND NOTES

GLAGOLITIC

The oldest Slavic script originates from around the middle of the 9th century. It is thought to have been devised by Constantine – Cyril, brother of Methodius (died in 867), who modeled the letters after the Greek cursive script, and used it for his translation of the fundamental church books into the Old Slavic language. The script has two main variants, the round and the square, which, however, were as such shaped much later. In this script, many early Croatian monuments are preserved.

Solar, Milivoj: Književni leksikon (Literary Lexicon), Matica hrvatska, Zagreb, 2008, p 132.

THE TRIANGULAR GLAGOLITIC SCRIPT

The triangular Glagolitic script is considered to be the oldest form of the Glagolitic script, whose letter elements have the shape of circular sectors, that is, triangles, unlike the younger round type, with elements of letters that are of a circular shape. Remains of the triangular Glagolitic are preserved in some Croatian, Moravian, and Macedonian monuments from the 10th and the 11th Century.

Čunčić, Marica; Burić, Maša: „Jasnoća i učenje trokutaste i okrugle glagoljice“ (“Distinctness and learning of the triangular and the rounded Glagolitic script”), FILOLOGIJA 44, Zagreb 2005.

NUMERICAL VALUES OF THE GLAGOLITIC LETTERS¹⁹

Numbers in Glagolitic prologues were marked with a letter, the so called – SLOVČANE BROJKE (letters with numerical values). The first nine letters of the Glagolitic alphabet (from A to Z) correspond to the numerical values from 1 to 9, the next nine letters (from Ī to P) the numerical values are from 10 to 90, with intervals of 10. The letters from R to C (nine of them) have values from 100 to 1000, with intervals of 100. The remaining letters mark the thousands.

Žubrinić, Darko: Hrvatska glagoljica – biti pismen biti svoj (Croatian Glagolitic Script, Be Literate, Be Yourself), Element, Zagreb, 1996.

MONOLITHIC SYSTEM OF LETTERS

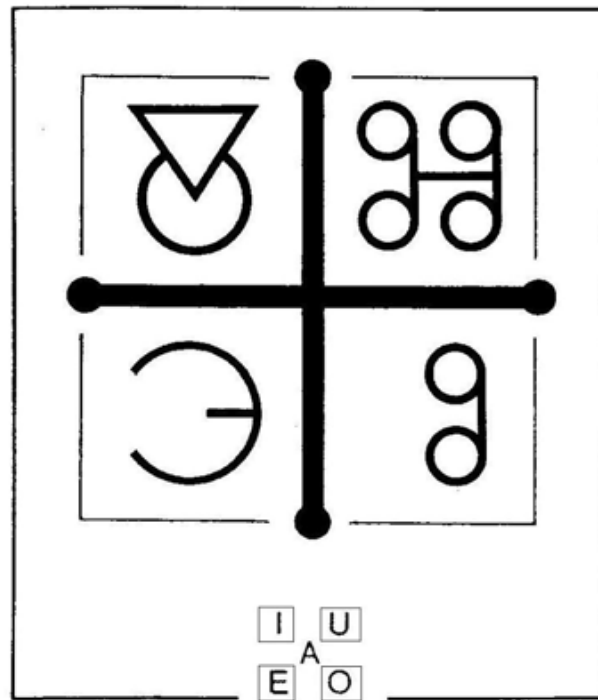
Given the fact that the alphabetic sequence opens with the sign of the cross – a letter symbol

¹⁹ It is slightly different when writing down numbers from 11 to 19. These numbers (and only these) were written down by putting the digits of ones first, and then the digits of tens. The reason for this is the pronunciation of these numbers: eleven (in Croatian, *jedanaest*), which is made of digits one and ten (in Croatian, *jedan* and *deset*), twelve (in Croatian, *dvanaest*), which is made of digits two and ten (in Croatian, *dva* and *deset*), and so on up to the number 19. The remaining numbers are written in the standard order. All numbers are written with a dot before and after the number.

for the open vowel A, Constantine will draw an additional four open vowels into the four spaces created by the drawing of the cross. These vowels are: E, O, U, I.

This group consisting of five vowels written inside the square represents the visualization of Constantine's idea. With this he presents his "artistically theological" formation program – by showing an inventory of elements with which he will create a coherent and monolithic system of letters. Only later (in the 19th century), was the script named as Glagolitic.

Paro, Frane: Glagoljska početnica (The Glagolitic Primer), Naklada Benja, Rijeka, 1995.



A LETTER WITH THE POPE'S APPROVAL

In the year 1248, the Bishop Philip of Senj received written permission of the Pope Innocent IV to serve the Glagolitic Mass in the cathedral of Senj, as in all other areas where this custom was present. The same permission was given to the Benedictines in the year 1252, in the great monastery of Saint Nicholas near Omišalj, on the island of Krk. Those privileges were important for the flourishing of the Croatian Glagolitic culture. The decision of Pope Innocent IV had an ecumenical significance.

Žubrinić, Darko: Hrvatska glagoljska baščina povezana s Likom, Krbavom, Gackom, Modrušom i Senjom (Croatian Glagolitic Heritage Related to Lika, Krbava, Gatska, Modruš and Senj), 2001.

ON THE NAME OF GEBALIM

Etymology of the name Gebalim is associated with the Semitic word *džebel*, *geba*, which in the Arabic and Hebrew language means – mountain. Thus the name Gebalim was used to signify some highlanders... Hazdaj himself states in his letter that they are Slavs... It was primarily associated with Croats. We know that for the name of Croat, there is an ancient

etymological interpretation, which brings Croats in association with the root: chrb, hora, gora (mountain). The etymological interpretation tells us that it is possible for the term Gebalim to be understood as Croat. However, the name Gebalim might also come from the fact that the land of Croats is mountainous.

Mažuranić, Vladimir: Gebalim, Kolo, Matica hrvatska , 1927, p 4.

LAND OF GEBALIM

Who would ignore the testimonies regarding the political geography of Dukljanin, a learned priest from the second half of the 12th century? Who would deny the value of maps made by the Arab Drisi, which came about during the same time, on which all of the eastern shores of our Adriatic are marked by the name of "Gurasije" (=Horvacija / Croatia)? And the ally of Abdurrahman, Byzantine Caesar Constantine also praises Tomislav, and the land and naval forces of the Croats during the rule of Tomislav... With all of the above, and the clear testimonial of Hazdaj's letter, the land of the Gebalims can only be the maritime state in the Adriatic, Croatia.

Mažuranić, Vladimir: Gebalim, Kolo, Matica hrvatska, 1927, pp. 13-14.

LAND OF THE KHAZARS

The land of the Khazars stretched between the Black and the Caspian Seas. From the land of Bulgaria, the Volga was the natural and the easiest way towards the capitol of the Khazars, Itil, which was located along the Volga delta, where the present-day city of Astrakhan is situated.

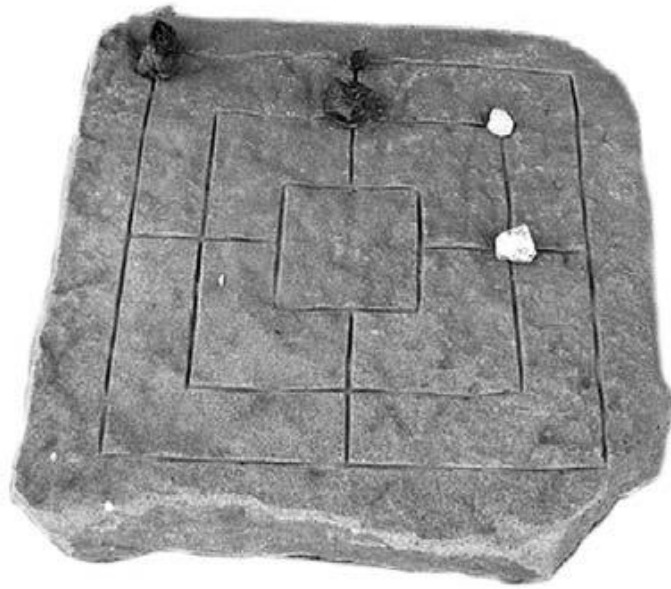
Mažuranić, Vladimir: Gebalim, Kolo, Matica hrvatska, 1927, p 4.

THE GAME OF MLIN/NINE MEN'S MORRIS, MILL, MILLS

The game of *mlin* emerged back in the 14th Century A. D. It is played by two players on the ground, paper, or a board. Each of the players has nine pieces of different colors in the form of round counters (the playing pieces can also be corn kernels, beans or pebbles...).

The game has three levels.

The board used to play the game of Nine Men's Morris/*Mlin*



Rules of the game:

Level 1

The playing pieces are introduced into the game, one by one. The players aim to make “mills”– a *mlin* sequence – form a row of three pieces of the same color in a horizontal or vertical line. The player who first makes a *mlin* sequence removes from the board one piece belonging to the opponent (any piece but the one that is in a *mlin* sequence of the other player). If two mills are formed by a move, then two opponent pieces may be removed.

Level 2

When all pieces are on the board, the game continues by players alternately moving one of their pieces to an adjacent point (a piece can be moved horizontally or vertically). The aim is to make a *mlin* sequence and take the opponents’ piece. A *mlin* sequence that was created can be tampered with, and built again during the next moves to take away the opponent’s piece.

Level 3

The game’s third level begins when one of the players is left with only three pieces. This player can put a piece on any field, and not just on the neighboring one. The player who is left with two pieces or the one who cannot make any further moves loses. If both players are left with a few pieces (for example three), neither of the players can create a *mlin* sequence and the game is considered a tie.



GLOSSARY

Ailouros – ancient name for a *cat that moves*. Roman name for a cat is *felis*.

Anathema – (Greek. *anáthema*), translated literally would mean something that is put aside, something that is excluded from usual use, ousted. In church terminology, this is a person or an object that is condemned by the Church for the apostasy from the faith, for heresy or a particularly great sin. The apostle Saint Paul used this expression to denounce all teachings that he considered incompatible with the true teachings of the first Church, which is explained in the Epistle to the Galatians (Gal 1:9). This expression was used by Church Fathers to condemn heretics. During the later period, the expression *anathema* had become a *terminus technicus* – a technical term which was used to denounce heretics in doctrinal decrees of church councils. Anathema meant exclusion in absolute sense, therefore, complete banishment from the Church. The usual formula, as the General Religious Lexicon states, was the Greek – Latin *anathema sit* – let him be excommunicated, and it was the saying by which dogmatic decisions were concluded, as well as by which the heretics were sanctioned. Who was opposed, was excluded or banished from the Church. Exclusion, excommunication or anathema – can be temporary or final, and its cause is a heavy breach of teachings or morals. Therefore, being excluded is not the same as being damned.

Book of Hours (or Breviary) – a prayer book which consists of four volumes, arranged according to the liturgical seasons of the Church year. Two volumes are for Lent and Advent and two for the rest of the weeks of the Church year. When someone prays from a Book of Hours Breviary, then it is presumed that he/she is holding a prayer book in his/her hands, hardcover edition. The Book of Hours Breviary consists of multiple segments that are prayed during the day: Reading Service, Morning Prayer, Daytime Prayer (mid-morning, noon and afternoon), Evening Prayer and Night Prayer.

Digraph – a combination of two letters representing one sound.

Drungar – a military commander.

Gebalim – a Semitic word *džebel*, *gebel*, which in Arabic and Hebrew signifies a mountain. According to a historian Dr. L Glessinger, the word *gebalim*, *geba* or *gebim* has the same meaning as the word *hora*, *hara* in Zend, an ancient Iranian language. In Hebrew and Arabic, *gebal*, *gebalim*, mean *defender*, *friend*, the same as *hara* or *hora* from which the Croatian name originates. This name for Croats is mentioned in Ex 10:29; Ex 10:31; Eze 27:9; Ps 83:8.

Hyperion – Hyperion’s name means “watcher from above” or “he who goes above” from the Greek words *hyper* and *iôn*. In Greek mythology Hyperion was the Titan god of light, but also an agnomen for the Sun god, Helios.

Hymn to the Virgin Mary, Akathist – (Greek, “not seated”): Hymn sung while standing.

The game of *Nine Men’s Morris/Mlin* – because of the rules according to which the three threes (nine playing pieces) in a row conquer the space and win in the honor and glory of the Trinity, in the Christian world this game has gained the status of a protected and, moreover, a recommended game. Therefore, the characteristic *rosette* with three concentric squares is often found engraved in places where gambling games were forbidden – on the stone benches of the monastery courtyards or in stone tablets of pen (lat. *cimiterium*, from greek. *κοιμητήριον* – “sleeping place” on consecrated church ground).

Itil – today’s Astrakhan, a city located on the confluence of the Volga, near the Caspian Sea.

John VII the Grammarian - John VII Grammaticus – Slavic sources remember him mostly as Janus the Patriarch.

Khagan– Mongolian: *khakhān*– Khan of Khans, a title of a high prince among Mongolians.

Kýrios – Greek: lord, master

Lake Maeotis – today’s Sea of Azov. Connected by the Kerch Strait with the Black Sea in the south. The sea itself stretches over 340 kilometers in length, and 135 kilometers in width. The Don and Kuban are the major rivers that flow into it, which contribute to lower levels of salinity. The Sea of Azov is the shallowest sea in the world, with its average depth being 13 meters, and its largest depth being 15, 3 meters. In places where there are large layers of river sludge, the average depth is less than a meter. The prevailing current is a counterclockwise swirl due to the westerly and south-westerly winds.

Nimbus – Latin: cloud, or a halo.

Psalter – a collection of 150 texts from the *Old Testament* which Christian tradition ascribes to Israeli king David. The word *psalter* comes from the Greek word *psalterion* – a string instrument, and the word *psalm* responds to the Latin word *psalmus* and Greek word *psalmos* – praise. Initially, these songs were sung with a musical string instrument. Psalms

play a large part in Christian worship. They are present in missals and breviaries (Book of Hours). Book of Hours contain a special part – *psalter* – which contains psalms, arranged by days of the week. Priests and monks had (and still have) an obligation of daily prayers from Book of Hours breviaries, so the psalms are also scheduled every day. The most important Christian liturgical service, *mass*, begins with a psalm²⁰.

Sophia – the symbol of wisdom, considered also a symbolic sign of the Son of God, known by the text of the hymn *In all Thy wisdom, Father God*.

Tradition of Saint Clement and his cult – originated in Rome at the end of the 4th century. The Roman Church gave Pope Clement the epithet of holly and included his name in the canon of the mass. He is celebrated on the 23rd of November.

Triclinium - Latin, *triclinium*, from Greek triklinion, from tri- ‘three’ + klinē ‘couch.’ A dining table with couches along three sides used in ancient Rome (Romans ate in a reclined position).

KEY SOURCES

The shape of the triangular Glagolitic script, as well as the symbolic meaning of the letters of the Glagolitic, are taken from Čunčić, Marica: *Izvori hrvatske pisane riječi (Sources of the Croatian Written Word)*, Školska knjiga, Zagreb, 2003, pp. 93-108.

Schematics of correlation between the letters of the Glagolitic and the game of *Nine Men's Morris* have been taken from a scientific paper whose author is Paro, Frane: *Četiri glasnika radosne vijesti Konstantina Filozofa (Four Heralds of the Good News of Constantine the Philosopher)*, Slovo, Vols. 56-57, Zagreb, 2008, pp. 421-438.

From the same author I have consulted the remaining works, and above all, Paro, Frane: *Glagoljska početnica (The Glagolitic Primer)*, Naklada Benja, Rijeka, 1995.

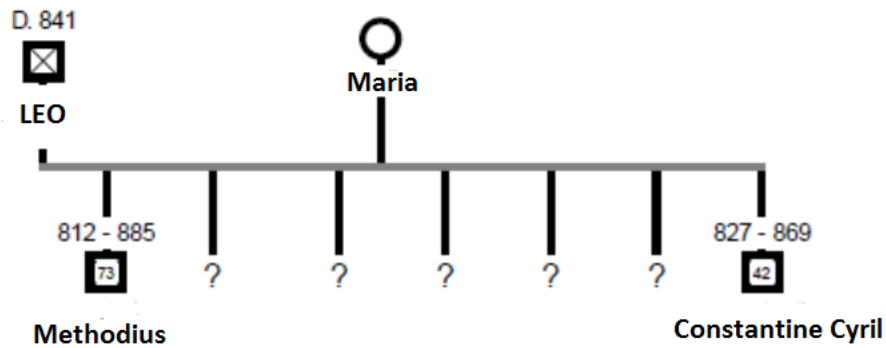
The Symbolic meanings of numbers are taken from Germ, Tina: *Simbolika brojeva (Symbolism of Numbers)*, Mozaik knjiga, Zagreb, 2004.

The rosette on page 15 was taken from the work Sambunjak, Slavomir: *Gramatofija Konstantina Filozofa Solunskoga, hipoteza o postanku i značenju glagoljice (Gramatosophy of Constantine the Philosopher of Thessalonica, Hypothesis on the Origin and Meaning of the Glagolitic)*, Demetra, Zagreb, 1998, p. 221.

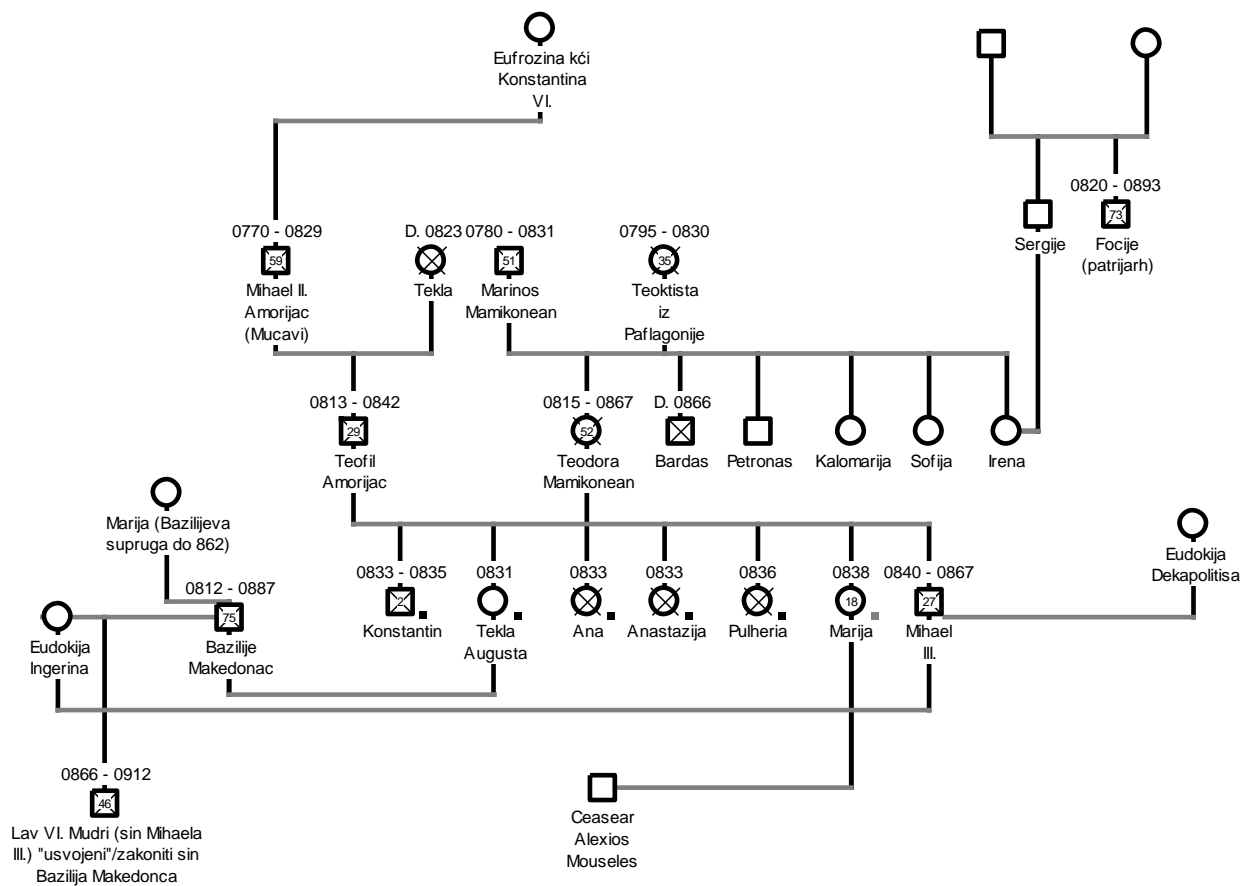
²⁰ Damjanović, Stjepan: *Slovo iskona (The Letter of Origin)*, Matica hrvatska, Zagreb, 2004, p. 94.

GENEALOGY

Genealogy of the Holy brothers

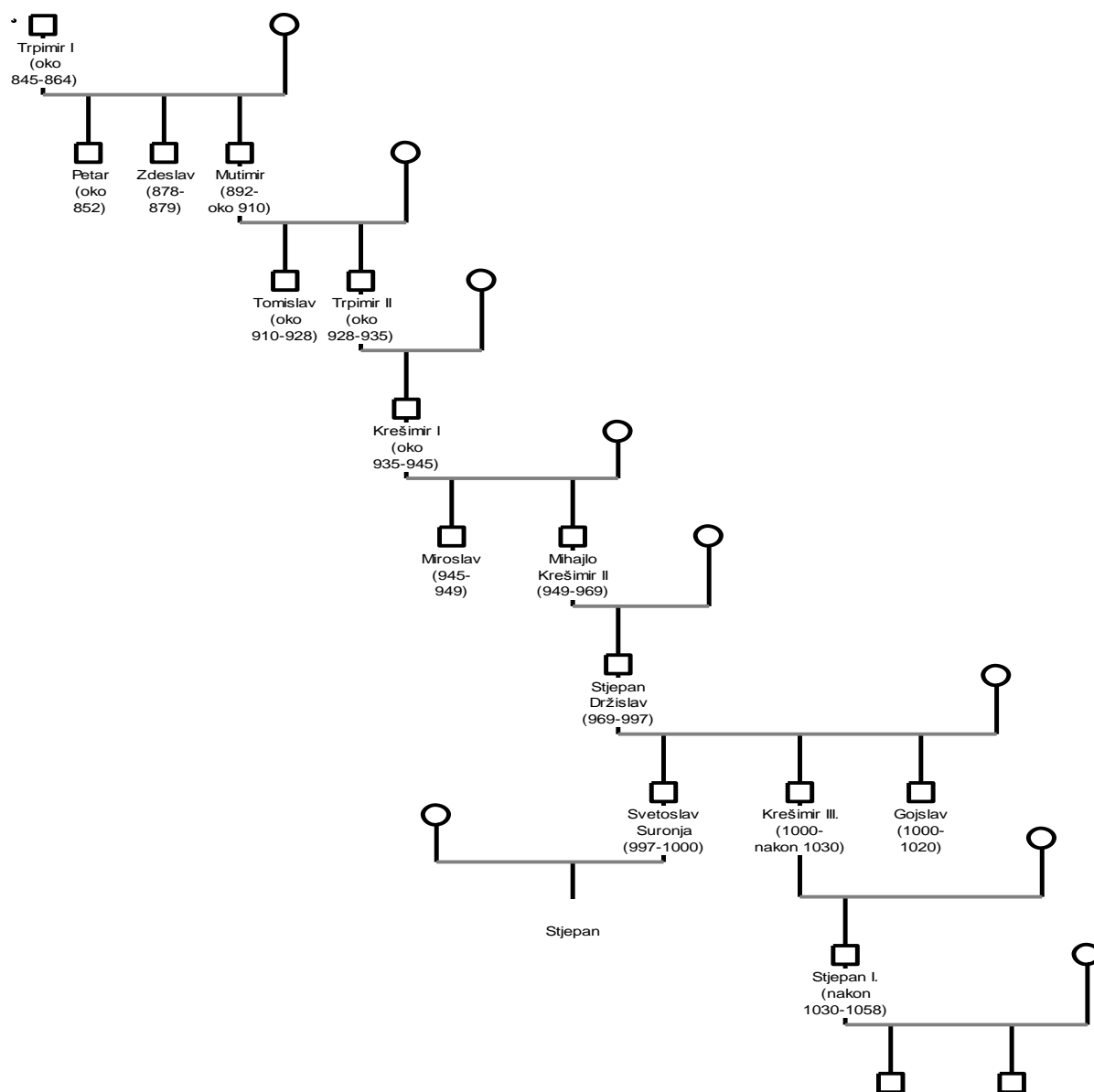


Genealogy of Empress Theodora^[J1]



Genealogy of the Trpimirović dynasty

Šišić, Ferdo: *Pregled povijesti hrvatskog naroda* (A Survey of the History of the Croatian People), Zagreb, 1920.



Note on the Author



Jasna Horvat (1966) began to write children's literature during the late nineties, while she was working in collaboration with the children's theater *Branko Mihaljević* in Osijek. As a result of this cooperation she published a book with two dramatized texts *The Lost Fairy* (Matica hrvatska, 2002), and then *Gemfeather's Sayings* (Ljevak Publishing, 2005). The book of letters to Irena Vrkljan, *A Letter in a Letter* (Ljevak Publishing, 2009), is a confirmation of the author's universality, and the novels *AZ* (Ljevak Publishing, 2009), *Bizarrium* (Ljevak Publishing, 2009), *The Bonfires* (Algoritam, 2009), *Auron* (Ljevak Publishing, 2011), *Fairycon* (Ljevak Publishing, 2012), *Aliquot* (Algoritam, 2014) and *Fairylion* (Ljevak Publishing, 2016) confirm her penchant for the Croatian heritage. The novel *Az* was awarded the prestigious Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts Award in the year 2010.

Jasna Horvat highlights the age of the Internet with its spatial and temporal designation. It allows her to merge various professions, and she is active as a writer, cultural theorist and scientist/researcher. She questions literature with narrative experiments in which she sets new rules and *limitations* by following and implementing the doctrine of the *Oulipo*. With her novels she creates unique toy books, collections of knowledge with various reading possibilities.

Books:

Vilijun (Fairylion), Naklada Ljevak, Zagreb, 2016

Antiatlas (Anti Atlas), Naklada Ljevak, Zagreb, 2014

Alikvot (Aliquot), Algoritam, Zagreb, 2014

Nevidljivo nakladništvo (Invisible publishing – co-author Nives Tomašević), Naklada Ljevak, Zagreb, 2012

Vilikon (Fairycon), Naklada Ljevak, Zagreb, 2012

Auron (Auron), Naklada Ljevak, Zagreb, 2011

Bizarij (The Bizarrium), Naklada Ljevak, Zagreb, 2009

Krijesnici (The Bonfires), Algoritam, Zagreb, 2009

Az (Az – Exploring the Ancient Croatian Glagolitic Script), Naklada Ljevak, Zagreb, 2009

Pismo u pismu (A Letter in a Letter – co-author Irena Vrkljan), Naklada Ljevak, Zagreb, 2008

Alemperkina kazivanja (Gemfeather's Sayings), Naklada Ljevak, Zagreb, 2005

Izgubljena vila (Lost Fairy), Biblioteka Plavokrila ptica, Matica hrvatska, Osijek, 2002



The Glagolitic script, as well as Glagolitic tradition, is a Croatian cultural phenomenon unique for its linguistic, graphic, ethnological, anthropological and semiotic characteristics. In 2014, following the decision of the Ministry of Culture, the Glagolitic script was inscribed into the list of intangible cultural heritage of the Republic of Croatia.

Creation of murals brings Glagolitic script closer to digital age. Jasna Horvat is the creator of glagolitic murals design and the author of *Az – Exploring the Ancient Croatian Glagolitic Script*, a historical novel which directly influences further research into cultural heritage. The Faculty walls covered by Glagolitic script became a canvas for inscribing messages in this old Croatian script. Therewith, the Faculty interior became the biggest institutional space depicting Glagolitic script next to the Zagreb Cathedral. This focuses the audience's attention on philosophy and symbols of Croatian traditional script. It is a demonstration that Glagolitic script can be used for communication (in space) and that it can be implemented in non-linguistic professions successfully. The Faculty murals are an example indicating that lost parts of Croatian identity can create new cultural and creative products.

Note on the Translators

Jadranka Zlomislić grew up in the United States where she received her elementary and high school education. After returning to Croatia, she earned her BA in English and German language and literature at the Faculty of Humanities and

Social Sciences at the Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek. She went on to postgraduate studies in English literature, earning her MA from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb and her PhD from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Osijek, where she now teaches British and American Culture and Civilization as well as English language courses as an assistant professor. In addition to her own research in American and British cultural studies, American academic fiction and cultural studies in language teaching, she translates and edits articles and scientific papers across a wide range of scientific fields. She has actively participated in local and international conferences and workshops, and her publications are concerned mostly with research of English language and culture.

Slaven Lendić (1989) earned his MA in English language and literature and Philosophy at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at the Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek. He is a translator and. Alongside his reviews in Croatian philosophy journals such as *Filozofska istraživanja* (*Philosophical Researches*), scientific journals such as *Libellarium* and anthologies like *Imaginacije prostora* (*Spatial Imaginations*), he actively translates various texts that deal with philosophy, history, sociology, and science in general.

His more significant scientific papers include “European Metropolises: Postmaterialism” and “Cultural Creativity and Marketing Semiotics by Constantine Cyril the Philosopher: Glagolitic Presentation of Christianity as a Forerunner of Contemporary Marketing Semiotics.”

Acknowledgement to Dr. Myrl G. Jones

Professor Myrl G. Jones joined the Radford University faculty in 1970 after having taught at West Texas State University, Lamar University and the University of Houston. His B.A. is from Texas Christian University, his M.A. from West Texas State, and his Ph.D. from the University of Houston. After retirement from full-time teaching at RU in 1995, he worked for 3 years as Assistant Director of the Faculty Development Center. He received the Donald N. Dedmon Award for Professorial Excellence in 1979 and has taught on several Fulbright grants: Kassel University, Kassel, Germany, 1989-90; the University of Zagreb, Croatia, 1994-95; the University of Zagreb, 2000-2001; Osijek University, Osijek, Croatia, 2001-02; the University of Zagreb, 2002-03. He served as a Fulbright Senior Specialist at the University of Osijek, spring 2005.