

FOLLOWING THE TRACES OF CONSTANTINES GLAGOLICA

(Summary)

The article contains the authors most relevant results concerning the development and the character of Constantine-Cyril's writing system, together with some unpublished ideas and material:

Although based on Greek scriptural thinking (according to which each alphabetical unit has two major functions – phonological and numerical, and the direction of writing is from left to right) and influenced by other writing traditions (e.g., <Ѡ> for /š/, cf. Hebraic ש), the Glagolica nevertheless represents a new, genuine system that was formally conceived of as a so-called *distance-script* (like the Caucasian systems, but contrary to Cyrillic as an *extended script* – cf. plate 1) for politicocultural reasons. In accordance with this, it also contains theological elements meant to foster the catechetical and didactic aims of its inventor.

Two general features are reminiscent of the contemporary Greek minuscule – the hanging position of the letters and the predominance of rounded forms. Due to the numerical function of the characters the Glagolitic alphabet comprised originally, like the Old Armenian and the Old Georgian alphabet, 36 (=4x9) units. Seven units that are superfluous from the point of view of Slavic phonology were used by Constantine as classifiers for proper names and words of Greek origin – the homophonous equivalents of Greek Iota <Ѣ>, Ypsilon <Ѥ> and Omega <Ѧ> (as opponents of unmarked <Ѣ, Ѥ/ѥ, Ѧ>), the correlates of the Greek palatal consonants [k] <Ѣ>, [g] <Ѥ>, [ch] <Ѧ> (as opponents of the unmarked units <Ѣ, Ѥ, Ѧ>), and the equivalent of Greek Phi <Ѧ>. Paradigmatically the Glagolitic characters are composed of 7 basic elements (graphic features), which often yield three complex, iconic units (cross, triangle, circle – cf. plates 2-3). The symbolic concept of the Glagolica can also be detected syntagmatically, especially in abbreviations of *nomina sacra*. Thus, the abbreviation for the name of Jesus, ѢѦѢ- (corresponding to Greek ΙΗϞ), represents a kind of staurogramme depicting the crucifixion on Mt. Golgotha. From the very beginning the Glagolitic system disposed of a large amount of grapheme classes and combination rules (cf. plate 4), making it a highly efficient book script.

Heinz Miklas
Institute for Slavic Studies, University of Vienna

