Old Slavonic is the first literary language of all the Slavic peoples, which came into existence in the IXth century as a result of translation of Greek Christian books. Thus the very first Slavic literary language was born as a sacred language. The fathers of Old Slavonic are saint brothers Cyril and Methodius. As a result Old Slavonic (OS) was not the language of the living everyday oral communication - it was the language of the liturgy, propagation and preaching and also the language of written communication, of theology, philosophy and hagiography. By the time OS was created there was no longer a general Slavonic language - it had split up into a considerable number of very similar dialects. OS was easily comprehensible in all of them; and being in addition the language of Divine Service and of spiritual culture of all the Slavs it influenced greatly the formation of middle- and modern Slavic languages. Spreading throughout the orthodox Slavic world OS has been influenced by living oral speech, local dialects. Step by step every Slavic folk has been creating its own version of OS - Serbian, Bulgarian and Russian. The latter versions are usually called Church Slavonic and have been developing from the XI to the XVIII centuries in Russia, having their own history.

In 862, Prince Rostislav of Great Moravia asked Constantinople for missionaries, to develop the liturgical practice in Slavic language which was native for Moravians. In that period, the second half of the IXth century, Great Moravia was not only one of the most powerful and large Slavic kingdoms of Southern and Central Europe but also a place where a conflict between Western and Eastern traditions of Christianity (that were about to become Catholic and Orthodox). The difference in their approaches was the
following: the Roman Church, which was represented in that area by Germans (who were invaders), regarded only three languages as sacred and suitable for liturgy and Scriptures - they were Hebrew, Greek and Latin, because only these languages were used for the inscription on the Cross. Such an approach (though a reasonable one) inevitably caused the suppression of national culture and language development. The Church of Constantinople, on the contrary, was trying not only to conquer but also to incorporate neighboring peoples, involving them in Byzantine culture and religion to have them as political allies. Byzantine Emperors did not prevent Slavs from settling throughout the Empire; the Slavs were serving their new 'Great Mother' as soldiers, officers, officials at all levels. The approach was to let local churches have their own liturgical language while they were confessing the supremacy of Constantinople.

Nell'862, il Principe Rostislav della Grande Moravia chiese a Costantinopoli dei missionari alo scopo di promuovere la pratica liturgica in lingua slava, l'idioma nativo per i moravi. A quel tempo, la seconda metà del IX secolo, la Grande Moravia non soltanto era uno dei più potenti e vasti regni slavi dell'Europa centrale e meridionale ma anche terra di conflitto tra le tradizioni orientali e occidentali della Cristianità (che diverranno la tradizione Cattolica e Ortodossa). La differenza nei loro approcci era data dal fatto (qui di seguito espressa) che la Chiesa di Roma, rappresentata in tale area dai tedeschi (gli invasori), considerava soltanto tre lingue come sacre e propriamente idonee alla liturgia e alle Scritture - l'ebreo, il greco e il latino, soltanto queste lingue furono infatti utilizzate per l'iscrizione sulla Croce. Tale approccio (pur apparendo sensato) inevitabilmente causò il soffocamento della cultura nazionale e del conseguente sviluppo della lingua. La Chiesa di Costantinopoli, per contro, cercava non soltanto di conquistare ma anche di incorporare i popoli vicini, coinvolgendoli nella cultura e nella religione bizantina ed averli come propri alleati politici. Gli imperatori bizantini non impedirono agli Slavi di stanziarsi in tutto l'Impero; gli Slavi servivano la loro nuova "Grande Madre" come soldati, ufficiali, e funzionari a tutti i livelli. Il metodo per affrontare la questione fu quello di lasciare che le chiese locali avessero la loro propria lingua liturgica mentre riconoscevano la supremazia di Costantinopoli.

This was possibly the reason why Rostislav applied to the emperor Michael III and the patriarch Photius for missionaries. Cyril, whose name was actually Constantine, and Methodius were chosen for this task. The birth of Old Slavonic as a written language is very much connected with the missionary and enlightening activities of the saint brothers Cyril and Methodius.

Fu forse questo il motivo per cui Rostislav si rivolse all'Imperatore Michael III e al Patriarca Photius perché gli fossero inviati dei missionari. Cirillo, il cui vero nome era Costantino, e Metodio furono prescelti per questa missione. La nascita dell'antico slavo come lingua scritta è strettamente connessa con l'opera missionaria e illuminante di san Cirillo e del fratello san Metodio.
Saints Methodius and Cyril

The choice was not accidental. They both were from the city of Thessalonica (Solun), Macedonia, where the population was mixed and both Greek and Slavonic were equally spoken. Their father perhaps was Bulgarian and their mother was definitely Greek; thus both languages were native for the brothers. Methodius was born c. 820 and Cyril in 826/7. Little is known about Methodius, the oldest brother. First he was a military man, then even spent some time as a governor of a Slavic principality, and after it he joined the monastery on the mountain Olympus in Asia Minor.

Constantine was the younger brother and since his early childhood was notable for his talent and poor health. As a teenager he is said to have been reading the works by Gregory the Theologian which demand profound intellectual skills. The news about the extraordinary boy reached Constantinople and Constantine was taken to the court to accompany Emperor Michael III's son in his studies. One of his tutors was Photius, one of the most educated churchmen of that time, and the future patriarch. The young man soon became a priest and Photius' private librarian, but tried to escape from the world to the monastery of Olympus where his brother had already been living. After six months he was found and persuaded to return; he was made a teacher of philosophy in Constantinople High School where he had been studying before, and gained that famous nickname, the 'Philosopher'. He was an active participant in disputes against iconoclasts. When the Moslem emir of Millet in 851 asked the Emperor for skilled learned men to
explain the essence of Christianity to him, Constantine was chosen as one of the deputies.

Costantino era il fratello minore e sin dalla prima infanzia si distinse per talento e salute malfiema. Da adolescente si dice abbia letto le opere del teologo Gregory, lettura che richiede grandi capacità intellettuali. Le notizie riguardo allo straordinario ragazzo raggiunsero Costantinopoli e Costantino fu preso a corte per seguire nei suoi studi il figlio dell'Imperatore Michael III. Tra i suoi tutori Photius, uno dei più colti ecclesiastici del tempo e futuro patriarca. Il giovane presto divenne sacerdote e bibliotecario privato di Photius, ma tentò di fuggire dal mondo ritirandosi nel monastero sul monte Olimpo dove già viveva il fratello. Dopo sei mesi fu ritrovato e persuaso a fare ritorno. Fu nominato maestro di filosofia nel Liceo di Costantinopoli dove prima aveva studiato, guadagnandosi il famoso nomignolo "il Filosofo". Partecipò attivamente alle dispute contro gli iconoclasti. E alloquando l'Emiro musulmano di Millet nell'851 chiese all'Imperatore dei grandi dotti che potessero spiegargli l'essenza della cristianesimo Costantino fu uno dei delegati prescelti.

Then he had some reflective time at his brother's Olympus, but in 858 they both were sent to the land of Khazars (mostly Jews and Moslems) northeast of the Black Sea who asked for learned men as well. Their way lay through the Crimea where they were studying Old Hebrew and discovered the relics of St. Clement the Pope, taking a part of these with them. Khazar Khan was friendly enough, and though reluctant to be baptised himself, he let the brothers to baptise those of his subjects that really wanted to accept Christianity. The neighbouring folks were Slavs, so here Constantine and Methodius possibly had their first contact with pagan Slavic tribes. After coming back to Constantinople, Constantine probably started thinking over the Slavic alphabet necessary for Biblical translations for those who had been already converted by that time or just about to be converted. [A predecessor in inventing an alphabet based on the Phoenician alphabet but adapted to a particular language had been the bishop Wulfila, 311-383, for the purpose of translating the Bible into the now-lost Gothic language.]

Sucessivamente si concede un tempo di raccoglimento nel convento del fratello sul monte Olimpo, ma nell'858 ambedue i dotti uomini furono inviati nella terra dei Khazari (per la maggior parte ebrei e musulmani) a nord-est del Mar Nero corrispondendo alla richiesta così come da essi manifestata. La loro missione li portò a viaggiare per tutta la Crimea dove studiarono l'antico ebraico anche scoprendovi le reliquie del Papa San Clemente. Portando poi con sé parte di queste reliquie. Il Khan del Khazar si mostrò abbastanza amichevole e pur riluttante ad essere egli stesso battezzato permise che i fratelli battezzassero quei sudditi che veramente avessero voluto aderire al cristianesimo. I popoli vicini erano slavi, Costantino e Metodio, forse ebbero qui, dunque, il loro primo contatto con tribù slave pagane. Dopo esser ritornati a Costantinopoli, Costantino presumibilmente iniziò a riflettere sulla necessità di un alfabeto slavo per le traduzioni della Bibbia per coloro i quali erano già stati convertiti o erano sul punto di esserlo. [Loro predecessore nell'aver ideato un alfabeto basato su quello fenicio ma adattato per una lingua particolare fu il vescovo Wulfila (311-383) per la traduzione della Bibbia nella lingua gotica oramai perduta].
In 862, when Prince Rostislav of Great Moravia asked Constantinople for missionaries, and the emperor Michael III and the patriarch Photius chose Constantine and Methodius, according to brothers' *Vita*, the Emperor said to Constantine: 'I know you are weak and have poor health but there is nobody but you to fulfil the thing they are asking for, because you both are from Solun (Thessalonika) and all citizens of Solun can speak Slavonic'. And Constantine replied: 'I'm weak and have poor health, but I'm happy to go naked and barefoot and ready to die for Christian faith'. They started their work among the Slavs in 863, baptising, preaching, confirming, using Slavonic in the liturgy, which required the translation of the Holy Scripture, and gaining more and more literate disciples among the Moravs. It should be mentioned that the translation had been made from the Greek Canon, because the Greek and Slavic (Old Bulgarian) grammar system were quite near to each other, and the usage of the Greek alphabet in creation of Slavonic one (see below) made this propinquity even closer (Slavs had already used some Greek letters for their inscriptions, just as the Celts had done before them). While St. Cyril was still alive the brothers translated the New Testament, the Psalms and possibly Proverbs. Later St. Methodius completed the translation with Old Testaments Books (except the Maccabbean ones).

Nell'862, quando il Principe Rostislav della Grande Moravia chiese a Costantinopoli dei missionari, l'Imperatore Michael III e il Patriarca Photius scelsero Costantino e Metodio. Secondo la *Vita* dei fratelli, l'Imperatore così disse a Costantino: "So che tu sei debole e di salute cagionevole ma nessun altro che voi potrà compiere ciò che essi domandano, ambedue siete nativi di Solun (Tessalonica) e tutti i cittadini di Solun parlano slavo". Costantino replicò: "Io sono debole e di salute cagionevole, ma sono felice di andare nudo e scalzo, pronto a morire per la fede cristiana". La loro missione tra gli slavi ebbe inizio nell'863, battezzarono, predicarono, cresimarono, usando lo slavo nella liturgia, che richiese la traduzione delle Sacre Scritture, sempre più conquistando discepoli colti tra i moravi. Non bisogna dimenticare che la traduzione fu condotta dal Canone greco in quanto i sistemi grammaticali del greco e dello slavo (antico bulgaro) erano abbastanza vicini l'uno all'altro, e l'uso dell'alfabeto greco nella creazione di quello slavo (si veda sotto) rese questa affinità ancora più stretta (gli slavi avevano già usato alcune lettere greche per le loro iscrizioni, proprio come fecero i celti prima di loro). Finché san Cirillo fu ancora in vita i fratelli tradussero il Nuovo Testamento, i Salmi e presumibilmente i Proverbi. Più tardi San Metodio completò la traduzione con i Libri del Vecchio Testamento (ecetto i Libri dei Maccabei).

The liturgical practice in Slavonic caused very strong disapproval among the Latin-German priesthood especially with the new wave of the German Ludovicus' attacks upon Moravia. The brothers accepted Pope St. Nicholas I's invitation to Rome (867) to explain their conflict with the German archbishop of Salzburg and bishop of Passau, who claimed control of the same Slavic territory and who wanted to enforce the exclusive use of the Latin liturgy. The brothers were impeded on their way to Rome because they could not go through Bulgaria which had rejected the supremacy of the Byzantine Church and accepted that of Rome. The reason for it was obviously the murder of Emperor Michael and the overthrow (dethronement) of Patriarch Photius. Constantine and Methodius arrived in Rome in 868, where the new pope, Adrian II, took their side,
formally authorizing the use of the Slavic liturgy. Constantine fell ill and having become a monk under the name of Cyril, died 14 February 869. Before his death he asked his brother to continue their common mission. When Cyril died, Adrian sent Methodius back to the Slavs as his legate and Archbishop of Sirmium.

La pratica liturgica in slavo suscitò sentimenti di forte disapprovazione tra il clero latino-tedesco in particolare con la nuova ondata di attacchi di Ludovico il Germano contro la Moravia. I fratelli accettarono l'invito di Papa San Nicola I a Roma (867) per chiarire il loro contrasto con l'Arcivescovo di Salisburgo ed il Vescovo di Passau, che reclamavano il controllo dello stesso territorio slavo e volevano rafforzare l'uso esclusivo della liturgia latina. I fratelli furono ostacolati nel loro viaggio alla volta di Roma, non poterono attraversare la Bulgaria che aveva respinto la supremazia della Chiesa Bizantina accettando quella di Roma. Il motivo fu ovviamente l'assassinio dell'Imperatore Michael e la disfatta (deposizione) del Patriarca Photius. Costantino e Metodio giunsero a Roma nell'868, dove il nuovo Papa, Adriano II, fu dalla loro parte, autorizzando ufficialmente l'uso della liturgia in slavo. Costantino si ammalò e divenuto monaco con il nome di Cirillo muore il 14 febbraio dell'869. Prima della morte supplicò il fratello di continuare la loro missione comune. Alla morte di Cirillo Adriano rimanda Metodio presso gli Slavi come suo legato e Arcivescovo di Sirmium.

Methodius' ecclesiastical province included all of Moravia. When Rostislav's nephew and successor, Svjatopolk, failed to support him, Methodius was tried in 870 by the German clergy, brutally treated, and jailed until liberated by the intervention of Pope John VIII, who considered the imprisonment of such famous and high churchman to be a disgrace for Rome. From 873 to 879 Methodius was biding his time quietly - the use of the Slavic liturgy was temporarily stopped until the case would be investigated by the Pope. But the main rivals of the archbishop had died by that time and the reason for the investigation vanished. In 880, due to the complaints of Latin-German priests concerning the lack of Latin in his Divine Offices Methodius was again summoned to Rome about the Slavic liturgy, and once again obtained papal approval of his use of the vernacular.

La provincia ecclesiastica di Metodio includeva tutta la Moravia. Quando il nipote e successore di Rostislav, Svjatopolk, mancò di sostenerlo, nell'870 Metodio fu processato dal clero tedesco, trattato brutalmente, e imprigionato fino a che ottenne la libertà per intervento di Papa Giovanni VIII, che considerò la prigionia di un così illustre e alto ecclesiastico una vergogna per Roma. Dall'873 all'879 Metodio attese pazientemente il momento opportuno - l'uso della liturgia in lingua slava fu temporaneamente sospeso fino a che il caso non fosse investigato dal Papa. Ma i principali rivali dell'Arcivescovo erano oramai morti e la ragion d'essere dell'inquisizione svanì. Nell'880, a motivo delle lamentele del clero latino-tedesco per quanto concerne la mancanza del latino nel suo Ufficio divino Metodio fu chiamato nuovamente a Roma relativamente alla Liturgia in lingua slava, e ancora una volta ottenne l'approvazione papale nel suo uso del volgare.

When Methodius' suffragan bishop, Wiching, continued to make trouble, Methodius tried to strengthen his position in the Eastern Church by visiting Constantinople in 882. After Methodius' death in 886, Pope Stephen V forbade the use of the Slavic liturgy; and
Wiching, as successor, forced the disciples of Cyril and Methodius into exile, and about 200 of them were sold into slavery. So the fruits of Cyril and Methodius' deeds were lost for the West Slavs, but the posthumous influence of the saints reached distant Kiev in Russia and left traces among the Slavs of Croatia, Bohemia, and Poland. Soon canonized by the Eastern church, they were celebrated by the Roman Catholic church in 1880, and most recently were made co-patrons of Europe with St Benedict; the feast days for both, Western Church February 14; Eastern Church May 11.

Continuing the vescovo suffraganeo di Metodio, Wiching a sollevare difficoltà, Metodio tentò di rafforzare la sua posizione nella Chiesa d'Oriente visitando nell'882 Costantinopoli. Dopo la morte di Metodio nell'886, Papa Stefano V proibì l'uso della liturgia in lingua slava; e Wiching, come suo successore, costrinse i discipoli di Cirillo e Metodio all'esilio, e circa 200 di loro furono venduti come schiavi. Così i frutti delle opere di Cirillo e Metodio andarono perduti per gli slavi occidentali, ma l'influenza postuma dei santi raggiunse la distante Kiev in Russia e lasciò tracce tra gli slavi della Croazia, della Boemia, e della Polonia. Presto canonizzati dalla Chiesa d'Oriente, essi furono celebrati dalla Chiesa cattolica romana nel 1880, e molto recentemente proclamati co-patroni d'Europa insieme a San Benedetto; la Chiesa d'Occidente ne celebra la memoria liturgica il 14 febbraio, l'11 maggio la Chiesa d'Oriente.

II

There are two candidates to contend for the right to be the alphabet St Cyril-Constantine invented - Glagolitic, and Cyrillic (which is, in its reformed aspect, still in use in Russia, Belorusssia, Ukraine, Bulgaria and Serbia). Linguists have been arguing for years and are still arguing about it. In Russia, Cyrillic is considered St Cyril-Constantine's invention, in the West instead it is argued that Cyril invented Glagolitic and that the second alphabet developed later and was given his name. Early surviving texts were made in X-XI centuries using this or that script. Let's look at them more carefully.

Due sono gli alfabeti candidati a contendersi il diritto di essere l'alfabeto ideato da San Cirillo-Costantino - il glagolitico, e il cirillico (che, nel suo aspetto riformato, è ancora in uso in Russia, Bielorussia, Ucraina, Bulgaria e Serbia). Tuttora e per anni questione dibattuta tra i linguisti. In Russia, il cirillico è ritenuto invenzione di San Cirillo-Costantino, in Occidente invece si sostiene che Cirillo ideò il glagolitico e che il secondo alfabeto si sviluppò più tardi e ad esso fu dato il suo nome. Antichi testi superstiti furono realizzati nel X e nell'XI secolo utilizzando questa o quella scrittura. Esaminiamo ora i due alfabeti più da vicino.

The Glagolitic alphabet is closely related to the Cyrillic alphabet and the earliest literature in which it was used was nearly the same (excluding the so-called Missal of Kiev - a part of the Mass, the only Roman Catholic text). Although dissimilar to Cyrillic in letter form, Glagolitic had approximately the same number of letters as Cyrillic (40) and identical sound values for the letters; this implies a common origin for the two systems. The oldest extant secular materials in Glagolitic date from 1309. The script flourished locally in the 16th and 17th centuries but since then has been displaced by
Cyrillic in Greek or Russian Orthodox areas and by the Latin alphabet elsewhere. It is still used, however, in the Slavonic liturgy in some Dalmatian and Montenegrin communities.

L'alfabeto glagolitico è strettamente connesso con l'alfabeto cirillico e la letteratura più antica nella quale fu utilizzato fu quasi la medesima (escludendo il cosiddetto Messale di Kiev - una parte della messa, ed unico testo cattolico romano). Sebbene dissimile rispetto al cirillico nella forma delle lettere, il glagolitico aveva approssimativamente lo stesso numero di lettere del cirillico (40) ed identiche qualità di suono per le lettere; questo implica un'origine comune per i due sistemi. I più antichi materiali secolari in glagolitico superstiti risalgono al 1309. I caratteri glagolitici fiorirono localmente nel XVI e XVII secolo ma fin d'allora sono stati sostituiti dall'alfabeto cirillico nelle aree greche o russe ortodosse e dall'alfabeto latino altrove. Sono ancora utilizzati, tuttavia, in alcune comunità dalmate e montenegrine.

If this is the place to draw some conclusion, one can see that 25 of 40 Glagolitic letters might be explained by imitation of Cyrillic alphabet letters, or vice versa, while 6 are imitation of Latin letters, 3 - symbolic signs, 4 - phonetic ligatures and 2 - independent graphical compositions. It was possibly made after Cyril and Methodius' death when the Slavonic liturgy was prohibited and brothers' disciples were trying to save Slavic missals and other liturgical books from destruction. To do it perhaps they invented a secret
alphabet to be used by those who were initiated only. This is possibly an extra explanation why Glagolitic was in use by south-western Slavs for such a long time, although this point of view fails to express the entire complexity of the situation.

Fosse questa la sede per trarre delle conclusioni, si osserverebbe che 25 delle 40 lettere dell'alphabeto glagolitico si potrebbero spiegare come imitazione delle lettere dell'alphabeto cirillico, o viceversa, mentre 6 sono imitazioni delle lettere latine, 3 sono segni simbolici, 4 sono legature fonetiche e 2 sono composizioni grafiche indipendenti. Esso fu forse ideato dopo la morte di Cirillo e Metodio quando la liturgia slava fu proibita ed i discepoli dei fratelli cercavano di salvare i messali slavi ed altri libri liturgici dalla distruzione. Per far questo forse essi inventarono un alfabeto segreto per essere usato soltanto dagli iniziati. Questa è forse un'altra spiegazione del perché il glagolitico fu usato dagli slavi del sud-ovest per così lungo tempo, anche se questo modo di considerare le cose non riesce a spiegare a fondo la complessità della situazione.

The Cyrillic alphabet is based on the medieval Greek uncial script, but as the Slavic languages were richer in sounds than Greek, 42 (43) letters were originally provided to represent them; the added letters were modifications or combinations of Greek letters, or (in the case of the Cyrillic letters for ts, sh, and ch) they were based on Hebrew. The earliest literature written in Cyrillic was a translation of the Bible (of the New Testament to be precise) and various church texts.
The modern Cyrillic alphabets—Russian, Ukrainian, Bulgarian, and Serbian—have been modified somewhat from the original, generally by the loss of some superfluous letters. Modern Russian has 33 letters (with inclusion of the soft sign and the hard sign - not strictly a letter), Bulgarian 30, Serbian 30, and Ukrainian 32 (33). Modern Russian Cyrillic has also been adapted to many non-Slavic languages, sometimes with the addition of special letters.

Sulla base dell'alfabeto greco unciale medievale si è sviluppato l'alfabeto cirillico, ma giacché le lingue slave erano più ricche di suoni rispetto al greco, 42 (43) lettere furono in origine date per rappresentarle; le lettere aggiunte erano modificazioni o combinazioni di lettere greche, o (nel caso dei grafemi in caratteri cirillici per ts, sh, e ch) si basavano sull'ebraico. Il più antico corpus letterario in cirillico fu una traduzione della Bibbia (precisamente del Nuovo Testamento) e diversi testi liturgici.

I moderni alfabeti cirilllici - il russo, l'ucraino, il bulgaro e il serbo sono stati in parte modificati dall'originale, in genere a causa della perdita di alcune lettere superflue. Il russo moderno ha 33 lettere (includendo il segno dolce e il segno duro - non strettamente una lettera), il bulgaro ne ha 30, il serbo 30, e l'ucraino 32 (33). L'alfabeto cirillico moderno del russo è stato anche adattato a numerose lingue non slave, talora con l'aggiunta di alcune lettere speciali.
The question is still debated - which was the first and why did they need two similar alphabets? Let's examine them a bit more closely (Plate I). The artificial character of Glagolitic is obvious, as the shapes of its letters cannot be traced back to any of the alphabets existing at that time. Its artificial character can also be seen in some letters: A, the first letter, has the form of the Cross, which might mean the blessing for the ABC; the letters I and S, the first and the last letter of the name of Our Lord (the usual abbreviation for this name is IS) turned out to be symmetric, and so on. Glagolitic 'bouky', the second letter, has nothing to do with 'vedi', the third one which goes after. So why was it placed after 'bouky'? Because, as in Cyrillic, they are connected with their common source - Greek β. Some of Glagolitic letters show their dependence on Greek or Latin ABC's (Plate II).

Su quale fu il primo e perché furono necessari due alfabeti affini, resta questione dibattuta. Esaminiamoli ora un po' più da vicino (Tavola I). Il carattere artificiale del glagolitico è evidente, giacché le forme dei caratteri non possono essere fatte risalire ad alcun alfabeto allora esistente. La natura artificiale propria si può anche osservare in alcune lettere: A, la prima lettera, ha la forma della croce, che potrebbe stare a significare la benedizione per l'alfabeto; le lettere I e S, prima e ultima lettera del nome di Nostro Signore (l'abbreviazione usuale per tale nome è IS) risultarono essere simmetriche, e così via. Il glagolitico "bouky", la seconda lettera, non ha nulla a che fare con "vedi", la terza che segue. Perché fu posta, dunque, dopo "bouky"? Poiché, come nel cirillico, esse sono connesse con la loro fonte comune - la lettera greca beta (β). Alcune delle lettere rivelano la derivazione dall'alfabeto greco e latino (Tavola II).

The Cyrillic alphabet is historical, which means it was created on the base of another language. This is how most of the ABC's where created - Phoenician on the base of Old Egyptian, Old Hebrew and Old Greek on the base of Phoenician, Latin on the base of Greek. While Glagolitic is based on cursive Greek script, Cyrillic uses uncial capitals. It is thought by Western scholars that this script was revised from Glagolitic in Bulgaria and then named after the saint who invented that alphabet for it to win acceptance.

L'alfabeto cirillico è storico, vale a dire che fu creato sulla base di un'altra lingua. Questo è il modo in cui furono ideati la maggior parte degli alfabeti - il fenicio sulla base dell'egiziano antico, l'ebraico antico e il greco antico sulla base del fenicio, il latino sulla base del greco. Mentre il glagolitico si è sviluppato sulla base della scrittura greca in una forma corsiva, il cirillico utilizza le maiuscole onciali. Gli studiosi occidentali ritengono che questa scrittura risultava dalla revisione del glagolitico in Bulgaria e che prese, dunque, il nome dal santo che per essa inventò tale alfabeto perché fosse accoltò.

What is not debated is St Cyril-Constantine's translation of the Gospels. One cannot overestimate the significance of this Slavonic translation for the future of Slavic Orthodoxy. Few events have been so important in the missionary history of the Church. From the very beginning the Slav Christian enjoyed a privilege, such as none of the peoples of western Europe shared at that time - they could hear the Gospel and the service of the Church in a language they were able to understand. But from being a
privilege at the start, it became an obstacle later, when through the centuries the living language changed and the language of the Slavic Bible was perverted by generations of scribes, copying old mistakes. And as a result by the time all the main European peoples had Bibles in their vernaculars, Russians, for example, had to listen to the spoiled and incomplete Scriptures in the language which sounded almost totally foreign to them. Any attempts to improve the situation were regarded by the traditionally-minded majority to be tantamount to blasphemy and this caused disputes and even schisms. But this started only in the XIV century and went on till the XIX.

Una questione non ancora dibattuta è la traduzione dei Vangeli di Cirillo-Costantino. Non si può sopravvalutare il significato di tale traduzione per il futuro dell'Ortodossia slava. Pochi eventi sono stati così importanti nella storia missionaria della Chiesa. Fin dall'inizio i cristiani slavi godettero di un privilegio che allora nessuno dei popoli dell'Europa occidentale condivise - essi potevano ascoltare il Vangelo e le funzioni religiose in una lingua che erano in grado di comprendere. Ma dall'essere in principio un privilegio, divenne più tardi un ostacolo, allorquando con il passare dei secoli la lingua viva mutò e la lingua della Bibbia slava fu corrotta da generazioni di scribi che ricopiavano vecchi errori. Di conseguenza al tempo in cui tutti i principali popoli europei possedevano la Bibbia nel loro volgare, i russi, ad esempio, dovevano ascoltare le Scritture incomplete e mutilate nella lingua che suonava loro quasi del tutto estranea. Tutti i tentativi compiuti per migliorare la situazione furono considerati dalla maggioranza tradizionalista praticamente come qualcosa di blasfemo sino a provocare dispute e persino scismi. Ma questo ebbe inizio soltanto nel XIV secolo continuando fino al XIX.


In this elegant book, Simon Franklin examines the function, significance and impact of writing and written culture in Kievan Rus' between the mid-tenth and the late thirteenth century. The subtext is the reception of Christian culture in Rus', particularly the written version of it. Franklin explores "the origins and early uses of writing" in Rus', but at the same time his book serves "as a case study for those with a broader interest either in medieval uses of writing or still more broadly in the cultural history of information technology" (3). While other historians have explored the former more generally (Rosamond McKitterick, Michael Clanchy, D. H. Green, Charles F. Briggs) this is the first such study for medieval Russia. The introduction and the conclusion offer an excellent overview of the central issues surrounding the social and cultural dynamics of writing in Rus'. Franklin is a distinguished scholar in Slavonic Studies from the University of Cambridge, with a keen eye for the social structuring of cultural practices in medieval Rus'. In this book, he addresses a fundamental omission of more or less recent studies of medieval Rus': the degree to which a Christian culture developed in the aftermath of Vladimir's conversion has been the subject of much discussion in literature in both Russian and other languages, but regardless of which position one takes, the role
of writing is often over-estimated. Indeed, beginning with ca. 1050, writing seems to have proliferated in Rus' society, but "in terms of types of usage, and in terms of contexts of usage, the basic patterns were set by the end of the eleventh century and remained remarkably stable over the next couple of centuries" (275). Two fundamental problems result from this tendency. The first lies in the failure of previous research (the "technocentric approach," p. 279) to provide social and political context for the use of writing in the culture of medieval Rus'. The second, which Franklin addresses in the second part of his book, is the role of the Church and of trade, respectively, as catalysts for the spread of writing in Rus'.

Franklin explores the ways in which writing was used in administration, learning, multimedia graphic environments (such as church paintings), and, finally, magic. He also looks at a wide variety of media (the "written remains" of part I of his book) from parchment manuscripts to birch-bark letters, seals, zmeeviki, spindle whorls, and church walls. He draws a careful and much useful distinction between primary (artifacts "prepared for the specific purpose of being written on"), secondary (in which "writing is integral to, but not the main purpose of," an artifact's production), and tertiary writing (later addition to artifacts already existing for other purposes, e.g., graffiti). Despite claims to contrary (21), sometimes his discussion of the media looks much like a catalogue raisonné (e.g., on page 62, with the list of frescoes in various churches built in Rus' before ca. 1300). However, Franklin's classification of writing is instrumental for his analysis of the social and cultural implications of writing practices. For example, he notes that although primary writing spread rapidly among city dwellers, secondary writing did not involve artifacts produced locally, but almost always objects originally imported (usually from Byzantium). There are many more examples of Greek (both language and script) in secondary, than in either primary or tertiary forms of writing. Franklin also notes that secondary message-inscriptions are predominantly Greek beginning with ca. 1050, and that this coincides with Yaroslav the Wise's intensive program of public works "ostentatiously reminiscent of Constantinople" (104). The middle and second half of the eleventh century is also the period with the largest involvement with Greek primary writing by bookmen in Kiev. Despite the replacement of Greek with Slavonic secondary writing between 1100 and 1200, "caption" inscriptions, especially saint names or abbreviations (such as those for Christ -- ICXC -- and the Mother of God), remained Greek until the present day. Since it would be absurd to conclude that in Russia there is still a widespread knowledge of Greek among church-going Orthodox Christians, the author suggests that these caption inscriptions "have become ideograms, rather than specimens of alphabetic script." They ceased to be purely "writing" and became part of the iconography.

Franklin veers away from linking language and community. Although he follows Alexander Isachenko in postulating the existence of a diglossia in medieval Rus', with Church Slavonic as the "bookish" and East Slavonic as the "practical" register of language, Franklin judiciously concludes that "any given specimen of writing primary, secondary or tertiary might include a hybrid of registers." As a consequence, "the language of early Rus" written culture occupies a space between two poles, but the registers of the language were not always consistently polarized" (88). Both registers of
language were thus defined by, rather than defining, the community. Despite the claim of the twelfth-century author of the Russian Primary Chronicle ("The Slavonic tongue is one"), both Church Slavonic and East Slavonic (as rendered, for instance, by the birch-bark letters) were what sociolinguists now call "associated languages" (see Carol M. Eastman and Thomas C. Reese, "Associated language: how language and ethnic identity are related," General Linguistics 21 (1981), 109-116). Franklin's survey (89-119) of scripts in use in medieval Rus' (Glagolitic, Cyrillic, Greek, Latin, and runes) is, to my knowledge, the fullest and most specific to date. The author follows more closely earlier scholarly discussions than it might at first appear, but he also brings to them new insight and challenging questions. An example of the former is his discussion of the Turkic runes appended to a Hebrew letter of recommendation written in the late ninth or early tenth century by the Jewish community in Kiev on behalf of one of its members. Here Franklin uncritically follows Moshe Gil's old idea that the "land of the Slavs" through which the Jewish merchants known as Rhadanites traveled to China was Rus'. In fact, the Arabic source refers to East Central European lands such as Poland and Bohemia. On the other hand, Franklin notes that Cyrillic inscriptions on sword blades are imitative of 'Latin' equivalents such as the famous Ulfberht swords (110). Drawing on a long list of runic inscriptions (from which he should have removed the stone club-head found in Latvia, which has nothing to do with Kievan Rus') on a variety of artifacts from coins in tenth-century hoards to the late eleventh-century Suzdal pendant-mold or the spindle whorl from Zvenigorod, the author suggests that "pockets of fairly mundane, practical rune-script literacy existed in Rus both before and after the spread of Slavonic writing" (115). . .