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GLOTTOGENESIS, THE PRIMORDIAL LANGUAGE AND THE CONFUSION OF TONGUES

FLORENTINA BADALANOVA GELLER

I. DISCOURSE ON "DISCOURSE"

The concept of the faculty of speech as the most essential human feature is profoundly embedded in Biblical anthropology. The breath of life blown into the face[1] of the first man by his Creator who fashions both the macrocosm and the microcosm through His Word[2], is in fact the divine force that installs into Adam's mouth – quite literally – a tongue, thus turning him into a talking being [3]. Man engulfs with his first breath God's energy of discourse and embarks on sharing with his Maker one and the same language[4]. Some apocryphal sources, such as *The Book of Watchers*, a composition surviving as a part of *The First* (*Apocalypse of*) *Enoch* (or *1 Enoch*)[5], sharpen certain otherwise vague formulations of the

[1] Cf. *Gen* 2:7. In the Masoretic text and in the Vulgate, the breath of life is inserted into man's nostrils ("And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul"), whereas in the Septuagint — into his face. According to Flavius Josephus' *Judean Antiquities* (1:59), after having fashioned humanity from dust of the earth, God "injected breath and soul into him" (quoted after Feldman, Mason 2000: 13). Further on the tripartite composition of man, consisting of body, spirit and soul (with reference to Plato's trichotomy), see the discussion in Feldman, Mason 2000: 13, note 59.

[2] Cf. *Gen* 1: 3; 1: 6; 1: 9; 1: 11; 1: 14–15; 1: 20; 1: 22; 1: 24; 1: 26; 1: 28–130.

[3] See also earlier discussion in Badalanova 2008: 207–208; Badalanova Geller 2017b: 272–273; Badalanova Geller 2018a: 437–446.

[4] The same idea is attested in the Slavonic *Folk Bible*. According to some anthropogonic narratives, when God creates Adam in His own "image and likeness" from the soil of the earth, He blows His Spirit into his mouth, thus inserting into man's lifeless body a soul, hence transforming him into a "speaking creature" endowed with cognitive power. See also the earlier discussion in Badalanova Geller 2018a: 440.

[5] Its purported authorship is attributed to the Biblical Patriarch Enoch who, according to *Gen* 5: 21–24, "walked with God: and he was no more; for God took him". Composed in the c. 3rd century BCE, *1 Enoch* survived in full only in Ethiopic, with extant Aramaic fragments from Qumran, along with a number of Greek and Latin excerpts. The earliest English translation of the corpus of *1 Enoch* was published by Charles 1913 (2): 163–277; see also Isaac 1983: 5–90, Knibb 1984: 184–319, Nickelsburg 2001, Nickelsburg, VanderKam 2012. Further on *1 Enoch*, see (in alphabetical order): Annus 2010: 277–320; Annus 2012: 1–43; Bhayro 2005; Boccaccini, Ibba 2009; Collins 1998: 43–84, 177–193; Crone 2013: 16–51; Drawnel 2009: 66–72; Drawnel 2012a: 518–542; Drawnel 2012b: 123–151; Drawnel 2012c: 369–394; Drawnel 2014: 14–38; Drawnel 2019: 101–130; Greenfield, Stone 1979:

Biblical glottogenetic myth, such as the detail concerning the identification of the spot of entrance of God's breath into the hitherto lifeless body of Adam. Declared in *The Book of Watchers* in a rather straightforward, unambiguous manner is the idea that God drove His life-giving Spirit not merely into the direction of man's face, but straight into his mouth, thereby inserting in him the power of cognition through the endowment of speech. Thus "language" is envisaged as a verbal icon of "reason" (widely understood as "intelligence", "logic", "comprehension", "sense", and even "wisdom"). This symbolic equation between tongue and intellect occurs in Enoch's testimony concerning his mystical journey to the Beyond, during which he was granted access to otherworldly lore that he was to convey to his contemporaries, "with the tongue of flesh and with breath which the Great One has given to men in the mouth, that they might speak with it and understand with the heart," since He "has created and appointed men to understand the word of knowledge"[6]. Thus "mouth" (as the abode of speech) and "heart" (as the repository of epistemological dexterity) become embodied markers of acquisition and transmission of knowledge, whilst the ontological nexus between the two would become the hallmark of human existence[7]. According to *Genesis* 2: 19–20, the very first task assigned to Adam is the taxonomy of animals – a truly cosmogonical deed accomplished by means of speech[8]. "Naming" becomes the voiced emblem of "Creation", whilst Adam – designed by God as His human replica – is granted the status of a divine amanuensis. The idea of man as "an icon of the divine image of the Lord" [**ѥкѡна бж҃їаго ѡбраза гн҃ѣ**][9] is zestfully upheld in a number of parabiblical sources. It is vividly manifested, for instance,

89–103; Knibb 2003: 254–262; Kvanvig 2011; Milik 1976; Reed 2004: 47–66; Reed 2005; Reeves, Reed 2018; Sacchi 2008: 9–26; Schäfer 2009: 53–76; Stone 2015: 342–357; Stuckenbruck 2013: 7–40; VanderKam 1978: 229–251; VanderKam 1984; VanderKam 1993: 96–125; VanderKam 1996: 33–101. For a general survey of the literature on Jewish and Christian apocalyptic traditions, see (in alphabetical order): Collins 1983: 531–548; Collins 1998; Collins 2015; Himmelfarb 1983; Himmelfarb 1993; Himmelfarb 2010; Stone 1976: 414–452; Stone 1980; Stuckenbruck 2000: 354–377; Stuckenbruck 2004: 87–118; Stuckenbruck 2014a: 163–176; Stuckenbruck 2014b; Yarbro Collins 2000.

[6] Cf. *1 Enoch* [14: 2–5] (quoted after Knibb 1984: 200).

[7] Under the same token, people suffering from health ailments are perceived as victims of demons and evil/impure spirits specializing in penetrating into human bodies through their mouths; hence the widespread vernacular taboo to drink night-time water ('нощна вода') from uncovered vessels. (For Russian tradition, see the discussion in Khristoforova 2017: 122–141). Characteristically, *compos mentis* is attacked via the faculty of speech. This concept is vividly presented in iconographic renditions of stories of Jesus as healer of those suffering from insanity, in which malevolent demons causing the disease are depicted as winged devilish creatures departing from human bodies – driven away by the power of Christ's Word – via the mouth of their victims. See for instance the miniatures of the London Tetraevangelia of Ivan Alexander (1355–1356) illustrating the following topics: "Jesus heals a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute" (Matthew 12: 22–24) [Fig.1]; "Jesus drives out an impure spirit in Capernaum" (Mark 1: 21–28; Luke 4: 31–37) [Fig.2]; "Jesus restores a demon-possessed man from the region of the Gerasenes" (Luke 8: 26–37) [Fig. 3].

[8] Cf. *Gen* 2: 19–20. In some parabiblical sources (e.g. Flavius Josephus' *Judean Antiquities* [1: 35]), animals are named by God, not by Adam; see Feldman, Mason 2000: 14, note 63.

[9] See the discussion below.

in some Slavonic recensions of the apocryphal *Life of Adam and Eve*[10]. One such case is represented by the 16th century version of the text from the Panagyursky Miscellany[11]. According to this account, when the sick Adam instructs Seth and Eve to go to the Gates of Heaven and pray to the Lord for a remedy for his ailment, and when they set off on this perilous journey, on their way to Paradise they encounter the mysterious "King of the beasts", the huge animal *kotur'* [котоурь][12] that attacks Seth and threatens to devour him. It is at this point when the concept that mankind as a facsimile of the "image of God" [wбразь бж̃и], even after the expulsion of the first people from Paradise, occurs. It is articulated first by Eve herself, when she attempts to counteract the pending assault of the beast, and then by her son Seth, when he successfully reprimands its attack, through the power of his voice:

> And Eve set off with her son to Paradise, and when they approached it, Eve beheld the huge beast (called *kotur'*) chasing her son Seth to devour him. And Eve cried greatly and said: "Woe me! Oh my sweet child! From now up to the Second Coming everybody will curse me, because it was on my account that all evil multiplied." And she cried out with a great voice towards the King of the beasts, saying: "Oh beast! Are you not fearful of the icon of the divine image of the Lord, but want to devour him instead? How dare you open your mouth against man, and bare your teeth to him? Do you remember not how I used to feed you with my own hand?" The beast then said to her: "Oh Eve, you no longer have power to rule over us [beasts], since evil came because of you. How did you dare open your mouth and eat [fruit] from the tree of which God forbade you? This is why I want to kill you and devour your offspring." Then Eve said nothing. Then Seth said to the beast: "May your mouth be shut until the [Last] Judgment on the account of your attempt to destroy the image of God; may you forever dwell in your den!" And so it was forever[13].

Вьставъ'ше Євга сь сн̃омь своимь, прихожⱙаше кь раю, видѣ Євга звѣрѣ велика, имене^м котоурь, гонѣше изѣсти сна еи Сита. И вьсплака сѧ Ꙗвга велико и рє^ч: w горѣ м'нѣ, чѧдо мое слаⱙкое, ѿсели до .в̃.-го пришествия клети ми хотѧ вси,

[10] Further on the apocryphal *Life of Adam and Eve* in Old Bulgarian/Church Slavonic literature, see Pypin 1862: 1–7; Tikhonravov 1863 (1): 1–18, 298–304; Porfir'ev 1877: 34–46, 90–96, 208–216; Jagić 1893: 1–104; Ivanov 1925: 207–227; Petkanova 1982: 35–41, 348–49; Kagan–Tarkovskaia 2000. For a survey of Mss. sources, see Iatsimirskiĭ 1909: 288–90; Iatsimirskiĭ 1921:76–81. See also the discussion in Dimitrova-Marinova 1982: 56–66; Anderson, Stone 1994; Anderson, Stone, Tromp 2000; Anderson 1998: 7–32; Anderson 2000a: 3–42; Anderson 2000b: 83–110; Anderson 2000c: 133–147; Tromp 2005; Murdoch 2009.

[11] The text (entitled **Слово w Ꙗдамѣ и w Єв'вѣ ѿ зачела и до съв'ршенїе, ѩказь, w^ч бл҃ви**) is published by Ivanov 1925: 211–221.

[12] In other text witnesses the beast is identified as **горгони**; see Ivanov 1925: 213, note 1.

[13] Author's translation.

мене бо раⱑ в'сѣ злаꙗ оумножишѫ. И вьзьпи къ цр҃оу звѣремь гл҃мь велїемь реч҃: ѡ звѣрю, не боиши ли сѧ иконѫ бж҃іаго ѡбраза гн҃ѣ, нѫ щеши изѣсти его? Како смѣеши оуста своꙗ ѿворити на чл҃овѣка и ѡбьꙗвити зѫби своѭ къ немоу? Како не помѣнеши како тѫ хранѣх рѫкоѭ моеѭ? Тогⱑа з'вѣрь речҁ къ неи: ѡ Евго, ѿ сели не имаши влаҁ наⱑ нами да повелѣваеши наⁱ, ѡти ѿ тебе сѧ ѣ҆ҁ зачело (зло). Како смѣешы ти ѡтъвориⁱ оуста своꙗ и снѣсты ѿ дрѣва, егоже ти не речҁ Гѣ҃, зато и азь хощѫ оубиⁱ тебе и изѣсти хощѫ чѫда твоꙗ. Тогⱑа Евга не ѿвѣщꙗ нич'то. Тогⱑа Сить речҁ къ звѣроу: затвори оуста твоꙗ до сѫда, понеже ѡбразь бж҃и хощеши разориⁱ; в ложи своеⁱ вь вѣки да прѣбиваеⁱ. И тако прѣбиваеⁱ вь вѣкы[14].

Taken for granted in the above quoted passage is the overarching understanding that all the participants in this human-animal affair – Eve, Seth and the beast – were able to converse with each other, since they were sharing one common language. The same view, that in *illo tempore* it was not only humans who were endowed with the faculty of speech but also animals, is tacitly inbuilt into the episode about the discourse in the Garden of Eden between the Serpent and the Woman, as presented in the canonical account (*Gen* 3: 1–5). It was the conversation between the two of them, the *Book of Genesis* states, that triggered the Fall of the first people and their expulsion from Paradise (*Gen* 3: 9–24). But was it a "discourse" that the Serpent and the Woman had, or was it "intercourse"? While the canonical account remains silent on this matter, some parabiblical sources draw upon exegetical traditions[15] maintaining that the Serpent was actually the Devil in disguise, and the discourse between him and Eve was in fact intercourse. It was through this sexual union that Cain was engendered in Paradise by God's adversary as her firstborn son, who was to become the ancestor of all evil people on earth. The tales of his demonic parentage, in turn, were further employed to address the ontology of evil. As acknowledged by a number of scholars[16], the idea that Cain was begotten by the "apostate Angel of the Lord" (= the Devil/Sammael/Serpent) is reflected in some seminal compositions from Late Antiquity onwards; it was treated in rabbinic tradition (e.g. *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* [*Gen* 4: 1][17], *Pirḳê de Rabbi Eliezer*

[14] Quoted after Ivanov 1925: 213.

[15] Occasionally, but not always, they build their arguments in reference to *1 John* 3: 12 ("Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother").

[16] The literature on the topic is vast. See (in chronological order) Emerson 1906: 832–837; Braude 1968: 17–18; Kugel 1998: 147–148; 157; García Martínez 2003: 28–35; Poorthius 2003: 57–64; Scarlata 2012: 27–48; Grypeou, Spurling 2013: 99–104, 133–136. For a general discussion on heresiological interpretations of the lineages of Cain, Abel and Seth, see Luttikhuizen 2003: 203–217; see also Byron 2011.

[17] Cf. Maher 1987.

[*Gen* 4: 1])[18], Patristic writings (e.g. Tertullian's *On Patience* [5: 15]), and Gnostic sources (*The Gospel of Philip* [61: 5–10]), etc.

The concept of Cain's Satanic ancestry, a reference to which is found in Greek and Slavonic redactions of the *Palaea Historica* [7:1–6][19], seems to have functioned as the ideological core of some dualistic religious movements circulating in the Byzantine Commonwealth. Because of this specific claim, the *Phundagiagitae* (also known as *Phundaitae*, Gr. Φουνδαδιτῶν), the adherents of the neo-Manichaean heresy in the Balkans (conventionally identified with the Bogomils)[20], were fiercely condemned by the anonymous compiler of the *Palaea Historica*:

> As for those abominable *Phugdagiagitae*[21] who say that the adversary had been with Eve and she gave birth to Cain – may they be cursed. For [only] after Adam's having known his wife did she conceive and give birth to Cain[22].

> бг҃омьскымь же фоугдагиагитомь г҃лющи ꙗко соупостать сь ев'вою быс и роди каина проклети да боудть. познав' же а҃дамь женоу свою. и зачеть и роди каина[23].

In fact, the anathema of the *Phundaitae* provides the crucial evidence for reconstructing the chronological framework of the earliest Greek edition of *Palaea Historica* and establishing as *terminus ante quem* the 9th century.

The same refutation occurs in the 15th–16th century Serbian redaction of the *Palaea Historica,* the so called *Krušedol Palaea*:

> As for those abominable *Fugdagiagistae*[24] who say that the adversary had been with Eve and she gave birth to Cain – may they be cursed. For [only] after Adam's having known his wife did she conceive and give birth to Cain[25].

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[18] Cf. Friedlander 1970.

[19] Further on Greek and Slavonic versions of *Palaea Historica*, see (in chronological order) Popov 1881; Vassiliev 1893: 188–292; Turdeanu 1964: 195–206; Turdeanu 1981: 392–403; Flusser 1971: 48–79; Stankov 1986a: 55–63; Stankov 1986b: 39–56; Stankov 1989: 91–99; Stankov 1991: 83–91; Stankov 1994; Stankov 2010: 67–80; Stankov 2017: 5–43; Tvorogov 1989: 160–162; Böttrich 2007: 304–313; Adler 2013: 585–672; Adler 2015: 1–39; Skowronek 2013: 131–144; Skowronek 2016a; Skowronek 2016b: 468–489.

[20] Consult *The Letter from Euthymius, Monk of the Monastery of the Periblepton, Sent From Constantinople, From the Monastery Aforesaid, to His Native Land, identifying the Heresies of the Most Godless and Profane Heretics, the Phundagiagitae, or, as They Are Also Called, Bogomils* (a Byzantine polemical work, dated c. 1045); see Hamilton & Hamilton 1998: 143–164 (esp. 143, note 8); for general background on the *Phundagiagitae* (*Phundaitae*), see also Obolensky 1948: 177–183, and Skowronek 2013: 135–144.

[21] That is, *Phundagiagitae* (or *Phundaitae*).

[22] Author's translation; see also Adler 2013: 602–603.

[23] Quoted after Skowronek 2016a: 61.

[24] That is, *Phundagiagitae* (or *Phundaitae*).

[25] Author's translation.

> вѣ҃морьскым же. фоуґдагиıагистомь ѓлющїимь, ıако соупостать сь єввою бы҃ и роди каина проклети да боу҆ть. познав же ддамь женоу свою и зачеть и роди каина[26].

To sum up, the *Palaeic* interpretation of the encounter between the Serpent and the woman in the Garden of Eden appears to be entirely saturated with exegetical presuppositions stemming from the semantics of "discourse" being intertwined with those of "intercourse". These types of hermeneutical vibrations reflect the unfolding of certain metaphorical constructs akin to those attested in the Biblical phrase, "And Adam knew his wife Eve", the allegorical overtones of which allowed its seamless connection with the next clause of canonical narrative: "and she conceived and bore Cain" (*Genesis* 4: 1), thus linking the concept of cognition with that of procreation.

As for the canonical Biblical account of the discourse between the Serpent and the Woman in Paradise, its exegetical inversion became the core of the theological doctrine of Mary as the New/Second Eve[27], originally formulated in patristic tradition. Its earliest delineation belongs to one of the first Christian philosophers, St Justin Martyr (d. 165). In his "Dialogue with Trypho", while reflecting on the symbolic meanings of the Annunciation as a portent of the forthcoming Salvation of mankind, Justin emphasizes that Jesus Christ "has become man by the Virgin in order that by the same way in which the disobedience caused by the serpent took its beginnings, by this way should it also take its destruction"[28]. The following passage is considered to be the initial kernel of the Eve-Mary parallel as a theological issue:

> For Eve, being a virgin and uncorrupt, *conceived* the words spoken of the serpent, and brought forth disobedience and death. But Mary the Virgin receiving faith and grace, when the angel Gabriel brought her the good news that *the Spirit of the Lord should come upon her, and the power of the Highest should overshadow her, wherefore also that Holy Thing that is born*

[26] Quoted after Skowronek 2013: 213. The manuscript is kept in the collection of the Museum of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Belgrade (record number 42, f. 57).

[27] For a general survey of theological discussions related to the evolution of the idea of Mary as the "New" or "Second Eve" see Newman 1952; O'Carroll 1982: 139–141. On Eve-Mary parallelism as a subject of patristic teaching, see Graef 1963: 37–100. On the typology of the description of Mary as "the Second Eve" (as an extrapolation from the classic Pauline definition of Christ as the Second Adam), see Pelikan 1996: 14–15, 39–52; Warner 1976: 59–61, 245, 254. On the "Second Eve" theme in the cultural and religious life of Constantinople in Late Antiquity, see Limberis 1994: 90–91, 102–107. On the concept of the "New Eve" in Patristic tradition in the Byzantine period, see Meyendorff 1983: 146–149. On the soteriological dimensions of the biblically based Mariological themes in Byzantine liturgy, with special regard to "Eve-Mary" parallelism, see Samaha 1997: 341. On the parallelism Eve-Mary as a concern for both Christian theology and cultural anthropology, see Benko 1993: 18, 168–169, 195, 229–262; Baring, Cashford 1991: 537–539. See also the discussion in Badalanova 2003: 159–203; Badalanova 2004: 211–260, Badalanova Geller 2016: 314–351.

[28] Trans. Williams 1930: 210.

of her is Son of God, answered, Be it unto me according to Thy word[29].

The narrative of Annunciation to the Theotokos and the immaculate conception of Christ the Logos (*Luke* 1: 26–38) is thus formulated as a reversal of the plot of the Edenic discourse between Eve and the Serpent (*Genesis* 3: 1–20). This idea would reverberate over and over again in New Testament tradition and crystallise with pristine clarity in the incipit of the Gospel of John: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God".

II. THE NARRATIVE OF THE SUSPENDED SPEECH OF ANIMALS IN PARADISE AS A PRECURSOR OF THE BABELIAN LEGEND OF THE CONFUSION OF TONGUES

As briefly mentioned above, the Biblical account of the Fall is built on the conjecture that in *illo tempore* it was not only humans who were endowed with the faculty of speech, but also animals. According to some apocryphal sources, it was because of Original Sin that the speech of animals was suspended, while they were sent out of the Edenic realm[30]. Thus in *The Book of Jubilees* (3: 28–30)[31] it is stated that on the day when Adam and Eve became aware of their transgression,

> on that day the mouths of all wild animals and the cattle and the birds, and of everything that walks or moves, were shut, so that they could no longer speak because all of them used to speak (for up till then they had all spoken with one another in a common tongue [lit. "with one lip and one tongue"]). And he sent out of the Garden of Eden all creatures, that were in it; and they were scattered to the places naturally suited to them, according to their kinds and species[32].

The wording in the above quoted fragment from *The Book of Jubilees* betrays certain similarity with and symmetry to (or a dependence upon) the

[29] Quoted after Williams 1930: 210.

[30] See the discussion in Badalanova Geller 2018a: 441–443, 445–446.

[31] *The Book of Jubilees* was composed c. 3rd century BCE; it survived in full only in Ethiopic. Among the earliest English translations of the Ethiopic version are those produced by Charles 1902; Charles 1913 (2): 1–82; see also Charles, Box 1917, as well as Charles, Rabin 1984: 1–139. For further translations and editions of the *Jubilees* corpus see Wintermute 1985; VanderKam 1989. For the reception history of *The Book of Jubilees* in *Slavia orthodoxa*, see Badalanova Geller 2015: 182–212; Badalanova Geller 2017c: 183–279. For description of extant textual sources, and analysis of parabiblical traditions attested in *Jubilees*, see Albani, Frey, Lange 1997; VanderKam 1977; VanderKam 1978: 229–251; VanderKam 1991: 635–648; VanderKam 1993: 96–125; VanderKam 2001; VanderKam 2009: 3–21; VanderKam, Milik 1991: 243–270; VanderKam, Milik 1992: 62–83; Knibb 2003: 254–262; Stuckenbruck 2009: 294–308; Himmelfarb 2009: 384–394; Segal 2007; Segal 2009: 22–35; Bergsma 2009: 36–51; Najman 2009: 229–243; Schiffman 2009: 99–115; Kugel 2012. For a concise survey of publications on *The Book of Jubilees* see Bachmann, Oliver 2009.

[32] Quoted after Charles, Rabin 1984: 42–43.

Biblical account about the confusion of languages (*Genesis* 11:1–8), an event associated with the erection of the Tower of Babel, prior to which "the whole world had one lip/tongue (χεῖλος) and a common speech (φωνὴ)".

Having moved eastward from the land of Ararat, the offspring of the Flood survivors, all of whom were descendants from the household of Noah, settled "in a plain in Shinar". "The sons of men" decided to build there "a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens", thus "making a name" for themselves, so that the members of their community may not be "scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth." For this purpose, they manufacture bricks and "bake them thoroughly", intending to use them in the building process, and fix them with tar instead of mortar. This ambitious "Post-Flood" project was interrupted, however, by a decisive divine intervention:

> And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the sons of men built. And the Lord said, "Behold, *there is* one people (γένος), and one lip (χεῖλος) of all, and they have begun to do this, and now nothing shall fail from them of all that they may have undertaken to do. Come, and having gone down let us there confound their tongue (γλῶσσα), that they may not understand each the speech (φωνή) of his neighbour". And the Lord scattered them thence over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city and the tower. On this account its name was called Confusion [=Babel/Σύγχυσις], because there the Lord confounded the languages (τὰ χείλη) of all the earth, and thence the Lord scattered them upon the face of all the earth[33].

It is significant that the issue of confusion of tongues – but this time the tongues of humans, and not animals (as in *Jubilees*) – is presented in *Genesis* 11 as a result of yet another transgression committed by mankind, which surfaces as the landmark of the period immediately following the Flood. If in *Genesis* 3 Adam and Eve lose Paradise, in *Genesis* 11 their descendants are deprived of the pristine Edenic tongue. In both cases the loss is a result of trespassing certain epistemic boundaries; in both cases it has to do with the human construal and interpretation of the concept of "knowledge". In the case of *Genesis* 3 – it is the desire to become "like God, knowing good and evil"; in the case of *Genesis* 11 – it is the desire to reach God's abode by erecting "a tower with its top in the heavens" through implementation of technological "know-how" and craftsmanship.

The building of a mighty tower with its top in the sky, for people to ascend to heaven and challenge God as if they were equals, is based, as noted in *Genesis* 11, on the development by mankind of superior technology, since the construction was meant to avoid any similar watery calamity in future. Not

[33] Cf. *Gen* 11:5–9 (according to the *Septuagint*). See also the discussion in Trifunović 1985.

only did the builders follow in the steps of Cain – the demiurge of the urban landscape – who himself is the embodiment of evil (*Genesis* 4:17); they changed the entire technological procedures involved in the manufacturing processes. The construction was erected from oven-fired bricks, instead of the usual building materials – the sun-dried variety, normally employed. It was supposed to be invincible and indestructible. The focal point of the canonical account of *Genesis* 11 is thus the opposition between the two conflicting epistemological paradigms: divine wisdom versus human knowledge, as exemplified by the progress of science and technological innovations implemented by mankind in the Postdiluvian era.

The Book of Jubilees (10: 18–27) interprets the building of the mighty sky-reaching tower as the ultimate manifestation of the sinful desire of the descendants of the Flood-survivors to reclaim and expropriate anew, with fervent zest, the heavenly realm from which their ancestors, Adam and Eve, were evicted after the Fall. Their revengeful descendants were coming back with force, vigor and vengeance, claiming the Edenic homeland of their forefathers. The objective of this postdiluvian – notoriously arrogant in its apostasy – generation of mankind was, in fact, to storm God's abode and conquer it. The temporal characteristics of this retaliation are loaded with dense allegory: they are associated with the generation of the emblematic Peleg/Phaleg [Фелекъ/Фалекъ] (the meaning of whose name in Hebrew is "division")[34]. He, in turn, was the son of the eponymous Eber/Heber (the ancestor of Israelites), and the father of Reu/Ragau (whose name, in turn, is a pun on Hebrew for "evil"). In other words, the epoch of Peleg/Phaleg and Reu/Ragau is metaphorically designated as "the time of evil-bringing division":

> And in the thirty-third jubilee, in the first year, the second week, Peleg took a wife, whose name was Lomna, the daughter of Shinar; and she bore him a son in the fourth year of this week, and he called him Reu, for he said, Behold the sons of men have become evil through their wicked purpose of building a city and a tower in the land of Shinar. (For they had left the land of Ararat and moved eastward to Shinar, and in these days they built a city and a tower, saying, Come, let us go up into heaven by it.) And they began to build; and in the fourth week they baked bricks in the fire, and the bricks served them for stone; and the clay they bonded them with was asphalt, which comes out of the sea and out of the fountains of water in the land of Shinar. And they were forty-three years building it: they built

[34] The same concept is attested in the so-called *Slavonic Version of the Chronicle of George Syncellus*; see Totomanova 2008: 35, fol. 407a, lines 16–17. It is quite intriguing that a similar interpretation of the name of Peleg may be found in some Muslim exegetical writings. Thus in *The History of al-Ṭabarī* it is stated that "in Arabic" it "means Qāsim (one who divides, distributes); he was called that only because it was during his era that the earth was divided up into diverse regions and tongues became diversified" (quoted after Brinner 1987: 15). This type of correspondences between Slavonic versions of Byzantine chronicles and Muslim exegetical writings will be analyzed elsewhere at length.

> it entirely of bricks (each brick was thirteen cubits wide, and the height of each a third of its width): its height altogether amounted to five thousand, four hundred, and thirty-three cubits, and two palms, and the extent of one wall was thirteen stades, and of the other thirty stades[35].

The above quoted narrative appears to be ponderously packed with "technical" information concerning the chronotope of the construction process of the mysterious city with a tower in the land of Shinar (Sumer). The logistics are elaborately itemized, with strict information about when the building commenced (i.e. in the thirty-third Jubilee after the Creation of the World), and the length of the period during which the tower was erected (forty-three years). Information about the precise size of the height of the construction is breathtaking, with exact citation of the number of cubits and palms (i.e. hand-widths). The abundance of digits in this account is deliberately overwhelming, while the narrative is totally engulfed by bulky arithmetic details. The human actions are equated with – if not substituted by – mathematical calculations.

According to yet another parabiblical source, *The Apocalypse of Baruch* (also known as *3 Baruch*, an apocryphal text surviving in Greek and Slavonic redactions)[36], the reason behind the erection of the tower/stele [**стльпь**] was purely practical and research-oriented. Those who intended to erect the mighty building were curious to discover of what material the vault of heaven was made – stone, bronze, or glass. They wanted to pierce the firmament with a gimlet, but in order to be able to do so, they had to design a scaffold on which to climb and reach the sky:

> And they built a stele of eighty thousand and two cubits in height, and five hundred in width; and they constructed a gimlet, and sought to pierce the heavens, to see whether the sky is made of clay, or of brass, or of iron[37].

> **Съзѧаше же стльпь сежани шсмьдесеть тисоущь и двѣ сежани оу высоутоу, а вь шириноу петь сътъ, и сковаше свр҃доль, да вьшьѧше проврѣтеть небо и да видеть како юсть небо, или камено, или цьклено, или мѣдѣно**[38].

As manifested in the above quoted fragment, mankind was searching for technical – if not esoteric – knowledge, either to satisfy a curiosity, or to determine the components of heaven, and whether the firmament is constructed from the same raw materials as were known and used on earth. To achieve their audacious objective, they forced multitudes of men and women to make bricks,

[35] Quoted after Charles, Rabin 1984: 42–43.

[36] For a general discussion on the text, see Ivanov 1925: 191–207; Gaylord 653–679; Kulik 2010.

[37] Author's translation.

[38] Quoted after Ivanov 1925: 195; cf. pericope III in the 13th–14th century Serbian recension of the *Apocalypse of Baruch* (entitled **Чѣтѣніе стѣго Варохꙋ, ꙗгда послань бы҃ к немоу анг҃ль Паноуиль оу стѣ́оу городу Сиѡню на рѣцѣ, ꙗгда плака се ѡ плѣнени Ꙗроусалѵ́мьсцѣмь. Гн҃ бл҃ѡсви**) from the *Dragolev Miscellany* (based on an earlier Old Bulgarian protograph).

ceaselessly without rest. Among those was a pregnant woman; not allowed to pause even when the time for her delivery came, she gave birth while continuing to work. Instead of in swaddling clothes, she wrapped the infant in her apron:

> И ти бо сѣгнаше можі и жены в'се вьселеныѥ творити стлъпь; тоу бо бѣше видѣти: wвы дрьва сѣкоуще, и wвы камениѥ жегоуще, wвы тиглы тлькwще, а дроугиѥ же метоуще варь, и ѥже просто рещи, то бѣ тоуга голѣма людемь тѣмь ѿ вьстока до запада, ꙗко ѿрицати се комоужде житиꙗ ихь. И бѣ скрьбь и тоуга многа люѧмь тѣмь. И оуражѧающи дѣтищь и не ѿстоупи ѿкоудоу родити дѣтищь, нь метоужьди варь и роди є, и приѥмьши wкриль свои и wбив'ши дѣтищь, поврьже и на земли, и пакы тожѧє дѣлаше[39].

When God become aware of the cruelness of those masterminding the building works, he clandestinely struck them with an invisible sceptre and confused their languages:

> When God beheld their recklessness and tenaciousness, He did not permit them to do so, but smote them with invisible sceptre and confused their speech into seventy-two tongues. And they departed, each speaking in their own language, whilst beforehand they spoke one and the same language, Syriac, from Adam until the creation of the stele[40].

> И видѣвь Бг҃ боуиство ихь и высокоумиѥ ихь, и порази ѥ палицею невидимою и раздѣли имь ѥзыкы вь .н.в. ѥзыка. И поидоше кьжѧо ихь своимь ѥзыкомь гл҃юще, бѣхоу бо прѣжде єдинѣмь ѥзыкомь гл҃юще, соуриски, ѿ Ѧдама и до сьзѧаниꙗ стлъпа[41].

As a punishment, they were sentenced to dwell in a demonic abode situated on the First and the Second Heavens; furthermore, they were transformed into hybrid creatures with both semi-human and semi-bestial features. Those on the First Heaven (i.e. the subservient builders of the Tower) had faces of oxen, horns of deer, feet of goats, loins of rams:

> И вьзеть ме анг҃ль силы и несе ме идѣже бѣ оутврьжѧениѥ нб҃се. Бѣ же бо пръвоѥ нб҃о. На томь бо нб҃си показа ми дври прѣвеликиѥ и рє҃ ми анг҃ль: вьнидевѣ вь дври сиѥ. И вьнидовѣ, ꙗко шьствиꙗ дн҃и .з҃. и показа ми спсениѥ бж҃иѥ. Видѣхь поле прѣвеликоѥ, и бѣхоу тоу чл҃вци живоуще, имоуще бѣхоу лица волоуꙗ, рози же юлѣни, ноги же козиѥ, чрѣсла же wв'на. И оупросихь азь Ваорхь анг҃ла: скажи ми, ч'то се ѥсть тльстота сиꙗ нб҃се, иже проидовѣ, или что ѥсть поле сиѥ, да и азь скажю сн҃омь чл҃вчским. И рече ми анг҃ль Паноуиль: дври ѥже видѣ, ими же проидовѣ, ѥлико есть ѿ вьстока до запада, толика есть тльстота нб҃се, и ѥлико есть до земле, толико есть широта ѥго двоѥ нб҃си,

[39] Quoted after Ivanov 1925: 194–195.
[40] Author's translation.
[41] Quoted after Ivanov 1925: 195.

поле же идѣже стоивѣ прѣвеликоѥ. И рѣхъ азъ къ анг҃лоу: ги, а сиі иноѡбразни ч'то соуть? И рече анг҃лъ: ти соуть, иже хотѣше стлъпъ съꙁ҆ати, и прѣѡбрази ѥ Бо҃[42].

As for those imprisoned in the Second Heaven (i.e. the proactive ideologists who designed and initiated the building), they had faces of dogs, horns of deer, feet of goats:

И поѥть ме анг҃лъ и веде ме на оутроѥ небо и показа ми дври ѿврьсты прѣвеликиѥ, и рече ми: вънидевѣ вь не. И оунидовѣ летеща, ꙗко шьствиꙗ дни .з҃., и показа ми клѣть прѣвеликоу, и бѣхоу вь неи живоуще иноѡбразьни; имь же лица бѣхоу пьсиꙗ, ногы же ѥлѣне, а рози козиі. И вьпросихъ азъ Барох' анг҃ла: г҃и, ч'то сиі соуть? И ре҃ ми анг҃лъ: сиі соуть, иже съꙁ҆аше стлъпъ, хотеще вьзлѣсти на нб҃о, ти бо зьꙁ҆аше стлъпъ[43].

A similar spatial scheme of heavens (shaped according to the hierarchical chart of sins) is attested in *The Slavonic Apocalypse of Enoch* (*2 Enoch*). According to the latter source, the Watchers who parted from God with their prince *Satanail* were sentenced on the Fifth Heaven, while the fallen angels following them (also described as the heavenly host of wrongdoers and God's apostates) were sentenced on the Second Heaven[44]. The heavier the transgressions, the higher is the heaven to which those committing them were sent. As for the apocryphal *Apocalypse of Baruch*, the narrative about Babelian ambition is contextualized within the meta-narrative of the history of human sin.

Significantly, in a cluster of (albeit fragmentary) parabiblical historiographical narratives, the builders of the Tower of Babel are identified with the giants – that is, the offspring of the fallen angels, the Watchers – who survived the Flood[45]. Thus the antediluvian idea about the origin of the illicit knowledge provides the template for the postdiluvian history of mankind.

But who was the notorious architect of the Tower of Babel?

In his *Judean Antiquities* (c. 94 CE) Flavius Josephus states that the tyrant who started the building programme was the proverbial villain *Nebrodes* (i.e. Nimrod); there would be no better candidate for the image of the ultimate malefactor in the Tower of Babel scenario, since, according to the canonical text, Nimrod was a descendant of Noah's cursed son Ham, the one who mocked his father's nakedness when he found him drunk (cf. *Gn*. 10: 6–8). Josephus emphasises that it was also *Nebrodes* who "kept on threatening that he would take revenge on God if He wished to flood the earth again. For he would build a

[42] Quoted after Ivanov 1925: 194.
[43] Quoted after Ivanov 1925: 194.
[44] Cf. Badalanova Geller 2012: 208–209, 214.
[45] See the discussion in Kulik 2010: 46, 138–149.

tower higher than the water could reach and he would execute vengeance also for the destruction of his forefathers"[46].

In the Greek redactions of the *Palaea Historica*, the most substantial compendium of Old Testament parabiblical traditions of medieval Byzantium, the name of Nimrod is only glossed; he is portrayed as a founder of Babylon, but not as an initiator of the building of the Tower. The account concerning his life comes after the episode of its construction. This is not the case, however, with the *Palaea Interpretata*[47] (which on this occasion follows the template of the story-line of *Judean Antiquities*). The name of the ruler who intended to erect the building, according to the *Palaeic* tradition, was *Nevrot* [*Невротъ*] (i.e. Nimrod)[48]. At that time, the source maintains, there were seventy-two lineages of Noah's descendants, and each lineage had its leader. All of them surrendered to Nimrod's will, except for one. The man who refused to collaborate with the tyrant and did not agree to participate in his "insane undertaking" was the righteous Ever/Aver [*Евєръ/Авєръ*], the eponymous forefather of the Hebrews[49]. This is why, as the compilers of the *Palaea Interpretata* argue, when God confused the common tongue of Noah's descendants, Hebrew – the original Adamic tongue – was not altered, but retained its pristine status as a *lingua sacra*[50]. This is also the reason that there are seventy-two languages spoken on earth (i.e. as many as the lineages of Noah's descendants).

In parabiblical sources "seventy-two" functions as one of the allegorical

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[46] Quoted after Feldman, Mason 2000: 40–41.

[47] For a general discussion on the *Palaea Interpretata,* see Istrin 1897a (2: 1): 175–209; Istrin 1897a (2: 4): 845–905; Istrin 1898 (3: 2): 472–531; Istrin 1905 (10: 4): 135–203; Istrin 1906 (11: 1): 1–43; Istrin 1906 (11: 2): 20–61; Istrin 1906 (11: 3): 418–450; Shakhmatov 1904: 199–272; Istomin 1905 (10: 1): 147–184; Istomin 1906 (11: 1): 337–374]; Tvorogov 1987: 285–288, Slavova 1991: 57–69; Slavova 2002.

[48] In the present article references are made to the Russian redaction of the *Palaea Interpretata* (based on the 1406 copy produced in Kolomna), the text of which was edited by the disciples of N. S. Tikhonravov and published by them in 1892 (hereafter *Festschrift Tikhonravov* 1892); the passage concerning the erection of the stele/tower [столпъ] and the confusion of tongues is on pp. 114–116 (columns 228–231); see also Kamchatnov 2002: 156.

[49] The same theme unfolds in the Slavonic redaction of *The Chronicle of George Hamartolos* (Book 2, Chapter 4), except that the figure of Nimrod is entirely omitted from the narrative. According to this source, in the time of Ever/Eber, when everybody was speaking one and the same language, people gathered in the land of Sennar (i.e. Shinar/Sumer), and conceived the futile idea of building a stele up to the sky, that was supposed to be surrounded by the city of Babylon, the meaning of the name of which was "confusion". Mankind's initiative of building the tall construction, however, did not succeed, since it was ill-conceived. When people gathered to build the stele and the city, they were administered by seventy-two elders, with Ever/Eber being the one who refused to join forces with them. This is why, when the congregation was dispersed as a result of divine rage, and the languages of those gathered there were divided into seventy two-parts, only the tongue of the subjects of Ever/Eber was not disturbed, while their language was called after the name of their leader Ever/Eber, that is, "Hebrew." See Istrin 1920: 57–58; Matveenko, Shchegoleva 2000: 60–61. See also the discussion in Bobrik 1986: 32–34.

[50] Cf. *Festschrift Tikhonravov* 1892: 115–116 (columns 229–230); see also Kamchatnov 2002: 157.

formulaic numbers, since it is a quantitative marker of the esoteric lists of "the names of God," or of "the names of Christ," or of "the names of the Theotokos". For medieval Slavonic historiographer, the idea of the seventy-two languages originating from "the holy Hebrew tongue", as spoken by the righteous Ever/Eber, remains the focal point of the narrative about the Tower of Babel. Thus, according to the Russian Primary Chronicle (most frequently designated as *The Tale of Bygone Years*), with the earliest surviving witnesses dated to the 14th century, the descendants of Noah, who spoke "but one language",

> said to one another: "Let us build a tower as high as heaven." They even began to build it with Nimrod as their chief. But God said, "Men have multiplied, and their devices are vain." Then God descended and divided the nations in seventy-two peoples. But the tongue of Adam was not taken away from Eber, for he alone had not joined in their vanity, saying: "If God Had bidden men to build a tower as high as heaven, he would have ordained it with a word, even as he created the heavens, the earth, the sea, and all things visible and invisible." Therefore Eber's language was unaltered, and from him are descended the Hebrews. The human race was thus divided into seventy-two nations and scattered throughout the world, each one having its own customs[51].

It is rather puzzling that the legend about the righteous Ever/Eber, the ancestor of Hebrew people, is missing not only from the Greek redactions of the *Palaea Historica,* but also from all major historiographic compositions (including *The Judean Antiquities*) circulating in the Byzantine commonwealth in the Middle ages. Yet a similar narrative is attested in some Islamic exegetical writings; one such case is presented in *The Concise History of Humanity*, which was composed in the period between 1315 and 1329 by the Damascus born Kurdish chronographer Abu'l-Fida; according to him, the eponymous forefather of the Hebrews, Eber, who was also the direct ancestor of Abraham, was the only one who refused to participate in the erecting of the Tower; that is why the Hebrew people is the only one among nations endowed with the knowledge of the uncorrupted Adamic language. The concept about the supremacy of Hebrew was likewise attested in *Targum Neophity* (or *Targum Neofiti*)[52], Midrash Tanhuma, as well as Augustine's City of God (16: 11).

On the other hand, there exists a cluster of Judaeo-Christian extracanonical narratives in which Nimrod is portrayed as the main agent in the Tower of Babel plot. Among them, apart from the *Jewish Antiquities* of Flavius Josephus, the following compositions should be mentioned: *Targum Neophyti* (on *Genesis* 10: 9), *Pirḳê de Rabbi Eliezer* (24)[53], Pseudo-Philo's *Biblical Antiquities* (4:7,

[51] Quoted after Cross, Sherbowitz-Wetzor 1953: 100–101.

[52] Cf. McNamara 1992.

[53] Cf. Friedlander 1970.

6: 13) and indeed Jerome's *Hebrew Questions in Genesis* (10: 8), along with Augustine's *City of God* (16: 4) and *Tractates on the Gospel of John* (6.10.2), Ephrem the Syrian's *Commentary on Genesis* (8: 1–2) and last but not least John Chrysostom's *Homilies on Genesis* (21; 29: 29). These latter sources must have profoundly influenced the iconographic tradition of medieval Christian Europe; indeed, the numerous visual interpretations of the tale of the erection of the Tower of Babel, with Nimrod shown in front of the construction, functioned as pictorial renditions of the Scriptural and para-Scriptural corpus.

The tradition of portraying Nimrod as the ultimate villain has parallel attestations not only in Jewish and Christian parabiblical literature and iconography, but also in a number of Muslim exegetical writings, as well as in related iconography. Thus, according to *The History of Prophets and Kings* by Al-Tabarī, the tyrant who had built a city in the land of Babylon (whose name was Al-Ḍaḥḥāk, but whom the chronicler identifies as Nimrod)[54], was the first "to mint dirhams" (i.e. coins); he was also the first to enact the punishment of mutilation[55]. While it is true that in Al-Tabarī's chronicle the tale about the erection of the "tall edifice" is not explicitly connected with the name of Nimrod[56], the Islamic exegete portrays the latter as the antagonist of Abraham[57], who, in turn, is envisaged as an epitome of monotheism.

However, parallel with the tradition of Hebrew being the language of Adam, there existed another mythopoeic template – that the primordial language was Syriac. This type of narrative is steadily attested in both Christian and Islamic sources[58], among the earliest of which are the fourth century Syriac *Cave of Treasures* (transmitted under the name of Ephrem the Syrian)[59] and the apocryphal *Apocalypse of Methodius of Patara*[60]. While it seems logical that

[54] Quoted after Brinner 1987: 50.

[55] Quoted after Brinner 1987: 3–4.

[56] Consult Brinner 1987: 22.

[57] Consult Brinner 1987: 50–51, 56–61.

[58] See, for instance, *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, according to which Syriac was the language spoken by all the people on earth up until the era of Nimrod:

> Thamūd and Judays were the sons of Eber b. Aram b. Shem b. Noah, while ʿĀd and Ubayl were sons of Uz b. Aram b. Shem b. Noah. The Byzantines are descendants of Lanṭā b. Javan b. Japhet b. Noah while Nimrod was the son of Cush b. Canaan b. Ham b. Noah. He was the lord of Babylon and of Abraham, the Friend of the Merciful. In that era ʿĀd was called "ʿĀd of Iram", and when ʿĀd was destroyed, Thamūd was called Iram. When Thamūd in turn was destroyed, the remaining sons of Iram were called Armān – they are Nabateans. All of them were of Islam while they lived in Babylon, until Nimrod b. Cush b. Canaan b. Ham b. Noah ruled over them and called on them to worship idols, which they did. Whereas one evening their speech was Syriac, the next morning God had confused their tongues, and thus became unable to understand each other. As a result, the descendants of Shem came to have eighteen languages. The descendants of Ham also came to have eighteen languages, while the descendants of Japheth had thirty-six languages.

Quoted after Brinner's translation of *The History of al-Ṭabarī*; see Brinner 1987: 18.

[59] For overview of traditions attested in *The Cave of Treasures,* see Minov 2015: 244–257.

[60] For the Slavonic redactions of the apocryphal *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius of Patara*, see

these two sources identify Syriac as the primordial Adamic language, since both of them were composed in Syriac, the attestation of the same tendency in Slavonic sources needs further clarification. As already mentioned, according to the Slavonic redactions of *The Apocalypse of Baruch* (i.e. *3 Baruch*), the language spoken before the construction of the notorious stele/tower [стльпь] was believed to be Syriac, and not Hebrew: **бѣхоу бо прѣжде єдинѣмь єзыкомь глю҃ще, соурискы, ѿ Ѧдама и до създаниꙗ стльпа**[61].

A similar tradition occurs in the apocryphal erotapocritic (that is, *Questions and Answers*) genre, which enjoyed vast popularity in the Slavonic realm of the Byzantine commonwealth[62]. What might be the reason for this overwhelming adoption and adaptation of the idea of Syriac being the language of Adam by Slavonic scribes? Actually, this question leads us to the climax of the present discussion.

The answer to the Syriac puzzle may be found in the socio-political and religious landscape of the last *lingua sacra* of Europe, Old Church Slavonic; it is closely bound with the polemics related to the trilingual dogma according to which the Bible should be transmitted only in Hebrew, Latin and Greek. The latter concept stems from the accounts of Luke and John, stating that the inscription on the Cross of Jesus was written in three languages: Greek, Latin and Hebrew.

In the 9th century, one brilliant philologist from the city of Thessalonica, St Cyril, invented a new alphabet, intended to be used for the translation of the Scriptural text (that is, the Septuagint, the Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles and the Revelation of John) for the newly converted Slavonic-speaking Christians of the Byzantine Commonwealth. This purely linguistic undertaking was met with fierce resistance on behalf of Western ecclesiastical circles, since it was interpreted as an heretical gesture denying the supremacy of the three holy languages, namely Hebrew, Latin and Greek, in which the notorious "superscription" above the head of the crucified Christ, stating "This is the King of the Jews" (var. "Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews"), was written (Luke 23: 38; John 19: 19–20); Old Church Slavonic was thus denied the status of *lingua sacra*. The highly polemical *Treatise about Letters*, composed by a certain *Chernorizets Khrabr* [*О писменехь Чрънориза Храбра*][63], argued against such a conjecture:

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the general discussion in Veselovskiĭ 1875 (I): 283–331, 1875 (II): 48–130]; Istrin 1897b; Thomson 1985: 143–173; Yovcheva, Taseva 1995: 22–45; Skowronek 2011: 74–115.

[61] Quoted after Ivanov 1925: 195.

[62] See for instance the following fragment from the *Разумникъ* erotapocritic exegetical composition from 16th century Lovchansky Miscellany:

> **В. да кожь рѣчь наи прѣжѣ҃е проговори Ѧдамь? – ѾѺ.: аллилѵїа. то є҆ сиріанска рѣчь. хвалите гд҃а съ нєб҃съ** (Ivanov 1925: 261).

[63] The literature on the subject is significant; see the contributions of Snegarov 1963: 305–319; Kuev 1967; Mathiesen 1971: 317–320; Giambelluca-Kossova, Dogramadzhieva 1980; Veder 1996a: 221–254; Veder 1996b: 7–29; Trendafilov 2001: 230–242.

Дроузии же г҃лать. чесомоу же сѫть словѣнꙑскы книгы. ни того бо есть бг҃ сътвориль, ни то агг҃ли, ни сѫть ижᴬеконни, ꙗко жидовьскы и римꙑскы и еллинꙑскы, ижде ѿкона сѫть, и прижты сѫᵀ бм҃ъ. а дроузии мнать ꙗко бг҃ намъ есть створилъ писмена. и не вѣдат сѧ что г҃лаще ѡкаании. и ꙗко трими жзыкы есть бг҃ повелѣлъ книгамъ быти. ꙗкоже въ ев҃ли пишеть. и бѣ дъска написана жидовьскы и римꙑскы и еллинꙑскы. а словѣнꙑскы нѣ҃ тоу. тѣм же нѣ сѫть словѣнꙑскыѫ книгы ѿ ба҃. Къ тѣмь что г҃лемь. или р҃емь къ тацѣмь безоумиемь. ѡбаче речемъ ѿ ст҃ѣхъ книгъ ꙗкоже наꙋчихѡм сѧ, ꙗко вꙑсѣ по рѧдоу бываѫть ѿ ба҃ а не иногдоѫ. нѣсть бо бг҃ъ створилъ жидовьска жзыка прежᴬе ни римꙑска ни еллиньска, нѫ сирꙑскы, имже и Ѧдамъ г҃ла. и ѿ Ѧдама до потопа. и ѿ потопа дондеже бг҃ъ раздѣли жзыкы при стльпотворенїи ꙗкоже пишеть. размѣшеном же бывшемь жзыкѡмъ. и ꙗкоже сѧ жзыци размѣсишѫ, тако и нрави и обычае и оустави и закони и хꙋтрости на жзыкы[64].

Thus, by disputing the identification of the Adamic tongue as Hebrew and suggesting that it was Syriac[65] instead, the author of the Treatise was aiming at the very heart of the trilingual dogma, thus shattering its very foundation. By challenging the status of Hebrew as primordial "holy tongue", it constructed a totally new argument: if Syriac was not listed among the three holy tongues but qualified as a *lingua sacra*, so should Old Church Slavonic. This is a perfect example of how the linguistic discourse can shift to a political one, and how the language of politics may also be the politics of language.

III. THE TOWER OF BABEL IN VERNACULAR TRADITIONS OF *SLAVIA ORTHODOXA*

The final point of the present article has to do with a topic which is hardly ever included in academic discussion about the glotogenetic myth[66]; it is concerned with some vernacular versions of the Biblical narrative about the Tower of Babel (cf. *Gn*. 11: 1–9), as attested in contemporary oral traditions of the former Byzantine Commonwealth. In this type of vernacular narratives, it is generally held that originally all nations on Earth spoke one and the same language, which was identical with that of the storytellers[67]. However, this state of affairs came to an end when people, inspired by an evil ruler or on their own accord, undertook the sinful and ambitious task of reaching God's heavenly abode, as a result of which they were deprived of their common tongue[68].

[64] Quoted after Dinekov, Kuev, Petkanova 1967: 96–97.

[65] On the conceptualization (within the intellectual landscape of *Slavia orthodoxa*) of Syriac as the primordial Adamic language, see Jakobson 1985: 157, Uspenskiĭ 1994: 49–50.

[66] Cf. Sherman 2013, Smelik 2013.

[67] See the discussion in Badalanova Geller 2018b: 125–126, 128–130, 132–134.

[68] Consult Thompson 1955–1958: A1333 (Confusion of tongues); A 1333.1 (Confusion of tongues partly due to lack of understanding of difference between the word for "stick" and the word for "stone"); F941.3.1 (Unfinished Tower of Babel sinks into earth), както и F772.1 (Tower of Babel:

Thus, in Serbian folklore, the narrative about the primordial language is presented as a vernacular chronography about the Sovereign of the Romani (Gypsy) Kingdom, a certain *Veraun*, who contested the existence of God and built a Tower to reach Heaven in order to prove whether He resides there or not. The prophet Elijah informs God about *Veraun*'s plans, and twice He destroys the Tower, after which he confuses the tongues of the builders: one asks for water, but the other brings sand, etc., and since that time the languages of the "other people" are unintelligible[69].

According to some Bulgarian folk legends[70], the reason why the audacious king decided to build the Tower was a reaction to the Flood, since he did not want to be exposed ever again to God's whims; once the Tower was built, no deluge would present a threat to his subjects. Hence the earthly ruler declared a war against the Lord, and the erection of the Tower was the first battle. Yet the manner of building was as long as it was woeful for those involved in the process, and they tried to abandon the construction. Then the king ordered special iron lances to be made, which were distributed among his subordinates to assault and torture those among his subjects who would try to escape from the building site, or would fail to cope with the work. This is how the first weapons came to be used for people to kill each other, and also how metalwork was invented along with other crafts. In addition, the king ordered coins to be minted with his name imprinted on them, so that he could pay for deliveries of building materials for the Tower. The tyrant's efforts, however, had virtually no effect and after many years of hard labour, the people prayed to God to relieve them of the travail caused by the heavy construction work. Answering their prayer, God confused their tongues, so that they could no longer converse and work together; thus the number of languages spoken on earth became seventy-seven.

There is yet another type of Slavonic vernacular narrative interpreting the motif of building a gigantic Tower aiming at reaching God's abode. This time it unfolds as a demonological tale about a confrontation between God and the Devil (whose name is *Zerzevul*)[71] resulting in building an inversed Heaven, which subsequently becomes a Satanic habitat. Thus, when God expelled his adversary from Paradise, He cursed him and his minions with being "black" and "dark" and condemned them to the "eternal sorrow", thus arousing great

remarkably tall tower designed to reach sky). See further the material presented by Chubinskiĭ 1872: 191; Boganeva 2010: 51–53 (texts № 47 A, № 47 B, № 47 C, № 48 A, № 48 B, № 49); Vaniakina 2002: 9; Kuznetsova 2019: 9–17; Badalanova Geller 2017a: 104–106 (texts № 40–41). For Hebrew folk narratives on the Tower of Babel and the confusion of tongues, see Yassif 1999: 10, 14, 34.

[69] See Čajkanović 1927: 396, text 152, "How the languages are divided" (*Како су се разделили језици)*.

[70] See, for instance, Tsepenkov 2006 (4): 46–47, text № 34, "When the Tower of Babel was built" (*Кога се правили кулата Вавилонска*).

[71] The name is most probably a corruption of Hebrew *bel-zevouv* (or *bel-zevoul*), related to the Babylonian *bel dababi* ("adversary").

sadness among them. To appease his followers, *Zerzevul* devised a plan to create a second Eden duplicating the first, planted with the same trees and flowers, but this time with no restrictions; the devils were allowed unbridled consumption of all foods and all manner of pleasures. However, *Zerzevul*'s companions now encountered a new problem, that because of the proximity of both "Edens", they could hear the angelic hymns of praise being sung to God, and this disturbed them greatly.

Their ruler came up with a remarkable solution: he instructed his followers to construct a Tower which would reach the original Paradise, on which *Zerzevul* could ascend to slay God and thus put an end to the hymns; the cohort of devils agreed with their master; hence they all grow horns like him. However, things did not work out as planned, since although the Tower was completed in three days, it collapsed as soon as *Zerzevul* tried to mount it; the Tower was rebuilt three more times with the same unsuccessful results. Finally, God allowed *Zerzevul* to complete his Tower but when he arrived and aimed an arrow at his target, the arrow was turned back on the shooter, thus decapitating him, while the other devils broke their own legs in commiseration. Finally, God hurled the Tower with all his adversaries into the Abyss, where it became a cauldron to boil *Zerzevul* and his host. The "other Eden" was converted into their eternal abode of thorns, thistles, and stones, far from God's Heaven. This is how the Tower of Babel came to be Hell[72].

Regrettably, the vernacular counterparts of *Genesis* 11 remain understudied, and this is a pending task yet to be accomplished by specialists. The Appendix below is just the first step in facing this challenge.

APPENDIX

Text № 1

Зерзевулот, коа го истерал Госпот од раіот

Госпот го истерал Зерзевулот со негоите ангели од раіот и и проколнал, да бидат цѫрни и темни, а седењето да им биди во вечна мука. Зерзевуло од вечна мука го гледал раіот и му беше многу мака. Мака му беше и на негоите ангели, и многу пати му велеа: ,,ах што стори ти, Зерзевуле, што му греши на Госпот и не истера от раіот, та не тури во вечна ва мука". Многу му било мака, дека така му велеле ангелите на Зерзевула.

Думал, шестал, како да праи да и скроти, и издумал, та и натерал гьаолите да напраат и тие еден раі. Го напраиіа, го соградиіа, се како што беше раіот отъ Госпот. Зедоа от сите дѫрвьа и цвекиньа што имаше во раіот од Госпот и тие изнасадиіа. От кога го битисаа, му се опули Зерзевул от сите порти и много го бендиса. ,,Е дружино, видофте оти и ние можиме да напра-

[72] See the Appendix, text 1.

име раі, како што можи и Госпот; аі сега влегуіте внатре, іадете, пиіте от се што има внатре; от ништо не ви забрануам, како Господ што му забрануаше на чоекот, што го кладе внатре да живеит со жената си: іас ви даам слобода, што ке ви текнит тоа да праите. Така кажуіте на лугето: коі што сака, нека си праи и нека повели. Во раіот моі іаденье, пиіанье, кеф теранье, колку да ми сакаат".

Поминаа неколку дни и чуіа едни гласои од ангелите, што беа во раіо, кога му пееа на Госпот. „Ах, бре маісторе Зерзевуле", му рекле гьаолите, голема мака имаме, кога да слушаме онака да му пеат на Госпот ангелите. Заошто го напраи раіов толку близу до раіот от Госпот? Бараі некое чаре, да не слушаме овие убаи песни, што и пеат. Аман, бараі чаре, како да му се праит".

Кога му слушал Зерзевул жалбите на гьаолите, голема мака му падна и веднаш и собра пред него сите. „Слушаіте вамо, му рекол, вие мои ангели; ако сте ми верни слуги, сакам да ме послушате што ке ви речам. Заповед имате от мене, Зерзевул, ваш главатар, и ве преколнувам во името мое и во коруната от двата рога, што ми се на глаава, сега да напраите една кула висока до небото, за да се качам и да го убиіам Господа, за да нема кому да пеат ангелите". – „Поклонети сме на твоето име и чест ти дааме на твоіте рогои". – „Честта чест носи, им рекол Зерзевул; и вам да ви никнат рогои, тие ви се венец на глаите". И веднаш му никнале рогои.

Во три дни іа созидаа кулата и за утрото ке се качеше Зерзевул, за да го бие Господа. Се раздени утрото и по заповед божа, кулата се свиткала како обрач и не можел Зерзевул да влези внатре. Заповет дал да іа препраат. Іа препраиле до три пати и се така се праела. На четвѫртио пат му іа остаил Госпот и тоі се фкачил со сите гьаоли и зел стрелата да вѫрли на Бога. Едно іа вѫрлил и се вратила, та го удрила по глаа и му іа откинала. Спискал, сврескал. На сите му паднало жал, и ватиле та сите си скѫршиле по една нога и от тогаі останало да се вели у лугето: *едноногио*.

От кога видоа оти не можеа што да му напраат на Госпот, ватиіа да слегуаат от кулата. Заповедал Госпот и кулата со се ниф пропаднала на дно в земи и се сторила вечна мука, како голем казан полн со катран и писа, да вриет Зерзевул со негоите сите. Завреле внатре и ит тогаі и до ден денеска вриеле. А раіо, што беіа го насадиле со секакви дѫрвьа и цвекиньа, сите се престориле на тѫрнье и глогье и бесплодни каменье. И се отворила една пропаст, помегьу раіот Господоф и помегьу тѫрнливио раі од Зерзевула (или вечната гьаолцка), што да летат да не можи да преиди ни од едната страна, ни од другата.

The text was recorded in the city of Prilep [Прилѣпъ] by Marko K. Tsepenkov [Марко К. Цѣпенковъ]; it was published in Сборник за Народни Умотворения, Наука и Книжнина, Кн. 1, 1889: 97–98.

Text № 2

Нѣкога хората правили кула, за да стигнатъ до Бога

Нѣкога хората правили кула, за да стигнатъ до Бога. Понеже кулата се строила безъ Божие позволение, то, когато вече била готова, Богъ събралъ всичката вода отъ моретата и потопилъ кулата. Като оттекла обратно водата, тя занела съ себе си лекия материалъ (пръстьта отъ кулата) и го наслала по низкитѣ мѣста и така се образували полетата; а камънитѣ останали да стърчатъ тукъ-тамъ, и това сѫ днешнитѣ планини.

The text was recorded at the beginning the 20th cent. in the village of Brankovtsi, near the city of Bosilegrad [с. Бранковци, Околия Босилеград] by the local teacher Ios. Stoĭkov [Иос. Стойковъ], in response to an initiative launched by Yordan D. Kovachev, the aim of which was to collect data on Bulgarian ethnoastronomy and ethnometeorology. Kovachev designed a questionnaire which was distributed in 1906 among teachers in small towns and villages by the Ministry of Education (with a special accompanying letter signed by Prof. Ivan Shishmanov). Ios. Stoikov was one of them. The legend recorded by him in the village of Brankovtsi was subsequently published, in 1914, by Kovachev, in his study „Народна астрономия и метеорология“ in Сборник за Народни Умотворения и Народопис, Кн. 30, pp. 54–5. Five years after Kovachev's publication, the village of Brankovtsi was no longer part of Bulgarian territories. After the end of World War I, following the Treaty of Neuilly-sur-Seine (signed on November 27, 1919), the region of Bosilegrad (along with that of Dimitrovgrad, the former Tsaribrod) was ceded to the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes; after the collapse of the former Yugoslavia, it remained within Serbia. In Bulgarian historical and ethnographic sources the territories of the municipalities of Bosilegrad and Tsaribrod are referred to as "The Western Bulgarian Outlands" („Западни български покрайнини“).

Text № 3

Разбръкал им езиците

А стария народ ни го разправяха на нас така. Имало е некогаш циганско царство. През кой век е било – не мога да те излъжа, но сичките го разправаха. И те са карали денонощно да [се работи]... Не [само] денно време! Строили са кула. Искали са – кат сега що одат самолетите – а тогава кулата да я направат, за да стигнат Дедо Господ горе. Денно време я правят, вечер падне. Денно време я правят, вечер падне... И Исус Христос чудил се веке какво да направи на тия хора, да не мъчат така хората [които работели на строежа]. И взел, та има разбъркал езиците... Разбръкал им езиците. Не знам – сякните ги викат, че са седемдесе и седем. Не са седемдесе и седем, тва може да са сто и седемдесе и седем, или па иляда и седемдесе и седем... Колко езици има по света – кой ги знае? Кат им разбръкал езиците, отиват

утрето на работа – те не можат да се разберат. Един [от работниците] търси кофа – той [другия] му носи или мотика, или друго нещо... Нищо [не могат да разберат]!

На грък ке разбереш ли? Една дума не мож да разбереме на гръчки... Било на секакви [други езици]... И американски, на германски – една дума не мож да разбереш. И се махнали кулата да я градят. Ем пада, ем не им дал Бог веке да се мъчат.

Стария народ така го знаеха. А по книжовно какво е описано – тва не съм го чела.

The text was recorded in February 1994 г. in the village of Krupnik [Крупник], Simitli county, Blagoevgrad region, South-Western Bulgaria. The account was given by the local storyteller Zoitsa Todorova Spasova [Зоица Тодорова Спасова], known among her fellow-villagers as "Granny Zona" [баба Зона]; born in 1912 in the same village, 4 years schooling, church-warden. The text was recorded by the author, with the assistance of Kiril Badalanov. Unpublished.

Text № 4

Щом сакат да напраат кула да Ме уловат – обърквам ин ги езиците!

Почнали се – като станало вече живот – почнали [хората] да праат една кула, да дират Господ да Го ловат! От цел свет [се събрали]; праат кула голема и продължават нагоре – да Го стигнат да Го фанат! Тоа го разбрали къде е! И Он тогава рекъл:

– Чекай да ве оправим Я вазе!

Понеже свички са знаяли езици – един и същ език е тагава имало. Сега можеш ли да ми кажеш ти на мене тия езици кой ги раздели, та толко много езици има по света? Те къде е тука Сърбия, те къде е тука Румъния, те къде е Гърция... Ние сме тука комшии, а езиците ни – различни...

И Он казал така:

– Щом сакат да напраат кула да Ме уловат – обърквам ин ги езиците! Да не моа се разберат!

Тоя вика: „Дай вар!", а онова е камик... Оня вика: „Дай вода!", а тоа му дава дърво. И се объркали и не могли да стигнат горе да Го фанат. Не моа праат кулата вечек! Край! И оттогава свето Го объркал, та ин ги разделил езиците. Ся говорат на разни езици по цел свет... И това е било верно.

Много пъти съм си казвал на простия акъл: Кой па раздели тия езици? Та сега учат за чужд език, за преводач, за тва си, за онова си. Кой направи това нящо? Сайбията. Това си е Божа работа. Сайбия Го викаме. Сайбия. Сайбия и Бог... Само като си помислиш това... Има нещо! Има нещо!

Его е! Ся едно дете се роди, тука ако си е покрай назе – си говори български. Ей тука циганчетата, къде седеа у Котеновци – говорат български!

The text was recorded 29 November 1989 in the village of Kotenovtsi [Котеновци], Berkovitsa county, North-Western Bulgaria by the author. The account was given by Dimitŭr Filipov Ivanov [Димитър Филипов Иванов], born 1920 in the same village, primary school education [обр. I клас], farmer [земеделец].

Text № 5

Хората решили да строят една голяма стълба – да стигнат до Господь и да станат също такива както Господь

Хората решили да строят една голяма стълба – да стигнат до Господь и да станат също такива както Господь, да имат такава сила, както Той. И строили, строили – и много добре съ разбирали, защото всички говорели на един език. А пък Господь съ разсърдил и им объркал езиците – напраил така, че наченали да приказват на разни езици. И зели да ни съ отбират. И строежа съ прекратил. И сетне още Господь кво да ги накаже – казал да вали сорок деня и сорок нощи, да вали дъжд. И тоа дъжд наченал да вали. Валяло, валяло, валяло – и сичките ора съ издавили. И останал сал един чуляк, със своята семья – той съ спасил. Господь му казал да си направи един кораб – и той напраил тоя кораб и съ спасил със неговата семья. И там сбрал от каквито животни: и птици, и насекоми е имало – сбрал на тоа кораб и много, много дни плували със тоя кораб и тоя чуляк все е пускал гълъбчето, да види шъ кацне ли някде, де има суша. Един ден вече дъжда като престанал да вали, един път гълъбчето съ върнало, втория път гълъбчато съ върнало, третия път съ върнало, ама държало в калвуня си, да речем, едно листо. И те разбрали вече, че има някъде близко суша. И отишли – и имало само върха на една гора – Арарат. И те там съ спряли. И [после] когато водата спаднала, сичките жувотни излезли и тъй [светът отново бил създаден]...

The text was recorded by the author in June 1984 in the Bulgarian village of Cheishii [Чеишии], Bessarabia Province, Bolgrad county [Болградски район], Odessa district [Одеска област], at the time part of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic [Украинската съветска социалистическа република], now the Republic of Ukraine [Украйна]. The account was given by Elena Dauldzhieva [Елена Даулджиева], born in 1970 in the same village, at the time a pupil in the local school. She was told this legend by her grandparents.

Text № 6

Жъ им дам млогу изици – сякой такова да знай по своя изик

Аз си имах идно вряме [Библия]... На моя такована, на мъж ми брат му донесе еднъ такова, Библия... И той не ми даде да га чета – га зе и га скри... И всьо. Аз мънинко прочетох – кък Адам и Ева, от кво съ сътворили, кък съ станали, кък зели да жувеят... Кък Исус Христос дал колкуз государства

и колкуз такова [хора] и все [говорели] на идин изик. Сетне рекъл: „Не! Аз няма да давам [да говорят] на идин изик. То няма да бъди хубаву. Ами жъ им дам млогу изици. Сякой такова да знай по своя изик!“...

Ми ни мужах да гу [дочета]. Той ми га даде [тая Библия], аз там петшест листенца пручетах...

The text was recorded by the present author in 1989 in the Bulgarian village of Zelenovka [Зеленовка], Taurida Province, Primorsk county [Приморски район], Zaporozhe district [Запорожска област], at the time part of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic [Украинската съветска социалистическа република], now the Republic of Ukraine [Украйна]. The account was given by Elena Aleksandrovna Dzhundzhurova [Елена Александровна Джунджурова], born in 1921 in the neighbouring village of Giunevka [Гюневка], married in Zelenovka [Зеленовка]; sixth grade, a farmer.

Text № 7

Едно време хората решили да построят една стълба голема-голема

Едно време хората решили да построят една стълба голема-голема и да стигнат Господа и да станат могъщи и силни като Него. Но по едно време Господ погледнал от небето и видял какво правят и решил да ги спре. Затова Му хрумнало, че всички се разбират, понеже говорят един и същи език и по тази причина, за да ги спре да строят тази стълба Той им е разделил езиците, за да не може да се разбират един другия. Така станали различните езици на света.

The text was recorded in June 1994 in Lom, North-Western Bulgaria by Tsveta Badalanova, who was keeping a diary containing stories narrated by her granddaughter Tsveta Dmitrieva Pokrovska [Цвета Дмитриева Покровска], born 1985 in Sofia.

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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Fig. 1: Jesus heals a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute [Matthew 12:22–24]; after B. Filov [1934], Plate 20 (Fol. 37).
Credit: Bibliothèque de l'Institut National d'Histoire de l'Art, Collections Jacques Doucet, 4 C 544 (3). Supplied courtesy of the Institute for Advanced Study, Paris.

Fig. 2: Jesus drives out an impure spirit from a man in the synagogue of Capernaum on Sabbath [Mark 1:21–28; Luke 4:31–37]; after B. Filov [1934], Plate 43, 2 (Fol. 90).
Credit: Bibliothèque de l'Institut National d'Histoire de l'Art, Collections Jacques Doucet, 4 C 544 (3). Supplied courtesy of the Institute for Advanced Study, Paris.

Fig. 3: Jesus Restores a Demon-Possessed Man of the region of the Gerasenes" (with the demons coming out of the man and entering into the pigs, and the herd rushing down the steep bank into the lake and drowning) [Luke 8:26–37]; after B. Filov [1934], Plate 79 (Fol. 162v).
Credit: Bibliothèque de l'Institut National d'Histoire de l'Art, Collections Jacques Doucet, 4 C 544 (3). Supplied courtesy of the Institute for Advanced Study, Paris.

Флорентина Бадаланова Геллер
The Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland
University College London
fbadalanovageller@therai.org.uk; f.geller@ucl.ac.uk



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