SOLOMON’S CHALICE, THE LATIN SCRIPTURES
AND THE BOGOMILS

Moshé TAUBE, Jerusalem

The two most significant contributions, in recent years, to a better understanding of the structure and function of 'Solomon’s Chalice Story’ in Vita Constantini (VC) are the studies by Ihor Ševčenko (1967) and Riccardo Picchio (1985).

Ševčenko produced an 11th century Greek fragment containing the equivalent of the inscription found in chapter 13 of VC, or rather of the first and part of the second 'line' or 'verse' of the inscription.¹ His analysis of both texts brought him to the conclusion (with which I agree) that the Chalice Story, available to the Hagiographer in its short Greek version, was inserted by him into the VC, with some additions from an unknown source, the whole as a proof of Constantine’s superior intellectual powers.

Picchio’s merit has been to trace the provenance of some of these additions and to establish their function in VC. He namely pointed out that the third line

¹I reproduce here the Slavic text, as it appears in Vaillant’s 1968 edition, along with the English translation given by Ševčenko (1967), as well as the Greek text published by Ševčenko (1967).

The first line runs as follows: ‘My cup, my cup, prophesy until the star; be unto a draught to the Lord, the first born, keeping vigil at night.’ After that, the second line: ‘created for the Lord’s taste from another wood, drink and be drunken from exultation (in revelry?), and cry out Alleluiyah.’ And after that, the third line: ‘Lo the Prince, and the whole assembly will behold his glory and King David (is) among them.’

’Επίγραμμα εἶς τῷ ποτήρι τοῦ Σολομόντος
Κρατῆτο μου κρατῆτο μου προφήτευσαι ὡς οὐ δαστήρ,
εἰς πόμα ὅσω Κυρίοις πρωτοτόκου ἐγγεγρήθως ἐν νυκτὶ·
πάντα μέδουσον τρωής, ἀναβότον άλληλοια.
of the Slavic text, without Greek equivalent, contained quotations, somewhat corrupted and contaminated, from the Old Testament (Isaiah 35:2 and Ezekiel 34:24), which prophesy the triumph of the Messiah — David. These, according to Picchio, were inserted into the VC so as to convey the message of the triumph of Christianity, which should be seen in the context of Constantine’s imminent mission to the Slavs (chapter 14 of VC).

Quite naturally, when dealing with Biblical quotations in texts pertaining to the ‘Slavia Orthodoxa’ one refers to the Septuagint as source, and that is what Picchio did. However, with respect to the VC which, it is generally agreed, was written shortly after the events (i.e. 9th c.)² one should consider also other possibilities. It is doubtful that the author of VC had at his disposal all the books of the Old Testament in Slavic, especially those which were not of current liturgical use. The possibility of referring directly to the Hebrew original³, or to Judeo-Greek translations different from the Septuagint such as Aquila⁴, which may be justified for quotations assigned to Constantine himself in his discussions with the Khazars, is hardly relevant for the excerpts without Greek equivalent in the inscription which, it is assumed, were added by the Hagiographer. Assuming that the author of VC was a Slav, we are left with one more possibility — Latin.

Thus we read in the beginning of chapter 14 of VC, in the letter of Prince Rostislav to Michael, Emperor of Byzance: ΛΥΟΔΕΛΛΗ ΝΑΘΙΝΗ ΠΟΓΑΝΣΤΑ ΣΑ ΩΓΕΡΑΖΛΗΝΗ Ν ΠΟ ΧΡΙΣΤΙΑΝΕΣΗ ΚΑ ΖΑΚΟΝΖ ΔΡΤΖΑΖΛΗΝΗ ΟΟΖ- ΥΠΤΕΛΑ ΝΕ ΝΗΝΑ ΤΑΧΟΒΑΓΟ ΝΙΖ ΕΝΙ ΒΖ ΒΖΩΝ ΖΑΖΜΚΗ ΧΕ- ΤΟΓΟ ΒΖΡΟ ΧΡΙΣΤΙΑΝΕΣΚΟΤΟ ΣΧΑΖΑΖ ... It may confidently be assumed, even if one does not accept the radical views of O. Kronsteiner 1985, that the Slavs mentioned in the letter, already christianized, possessed the Scriptures in Latin. A. Vaillant, though he was of the view that the VC was originally written in Greek, albeit by Slavs, namely by disciples of Methodius (1968, Ile partie p. 25), made use of the Latin Vulgate to point out Biblical quotations in VC for which he found no equivalent in the Septuagint.⁵ Other scholars, too, found traces of Latin sources in the VC (e. g. M. V. Anastos 1954).

There is much to be gained by adopting a similar approach to the inscription on Solomon’s Chalice, and namely to the parts of it which do not figure in the

²A separate and much debated question is of course where the VC was written. Three locations are proposed: Great-Moravia, Rome and Ohrid. For an extensive, but far from impartial discussion, see Angelov and Kodov 1973:5ff.


⁴Aquila is expressly mentioned by Constantine as source of one of his quotations. See Vaillant 1968, II:29, note 17 to chapter 9.

⁵Thus, for instance, note 45 to chapter 10 (1968, II:30).

162
Greek text produced by Ševčenko. Thus, with regard to the third line of the inscription, Picchio (1985:144-146) explains the wording of the quotations as follows:

И се Καιζη και Ουζριτή (Χριτή) Βες σανεμα (Σοφορβ) Σλαβον εγο και Δαβιδ Ζαρ (Σεσαρβ) Πορεδρη ιης.

These words are quotations from: (a) Is. 35:2: »and my people shall see the glory of the Lord« (Septuagint: οἱ λαὸς μου δείσει τὴν δόξαν κυρίου); (b) Ezek. 34:24: »and I, the Lord, will be to them a God and David a prince in the midst of them« (Septuagint: η δωρχων εν μέσω αὐτῶν. Cf. also Ezek. 37:24,25).

It is clear that the Slavonic text contains a mistake. The initial words, И се Καιζη, do not belong to the text of Is. 35:2. They belong, instead, to the text of Ezek. 34:24. If we change their place according to their Biblical equivalence, we obtain the following reading:

(Is. 35:2) И ОУЗРОТЫ БЕСЬ СЯНЕМЬ СЛАБОВ ЕГО
καὶ ὁ λαὸς μου δείσει τὴν δόξαν κυρίου

(Ez. 34:24) И се Καιζη И ДАВИД ΖΑΡ ΠОРΕДΡΗ ИХΣ
καὶ εγὼ κύριος. ...καὶ Δαβίδ δρχων εν μέσω αὐτῶν

As to Is. 35:2, the non-literal rendering of »my people« (ὁ λαὸς μου) with ΒΕΣЬ СЯНЕМЬ may result from some scribe-compiler’s or author’s adapting this citation to a particular context. The Slavonic term СЯНЕМЬ (ΣΟΦΟΡΒ), in any case is an exact conceptual equivalent of »God’s people«. As to ЕГΟ, it is clear that it refers to »the Lord« (κυρίου).

In the Slavonic version of the citation from Ezek. 34:24, the equivalences ΚΗΙΖΗ-ΚΥΡΙΟΣ and ΖΑΡ-ΔΡΧΩΝ appear to be somewhat inaccurate. By inverting the position of these terms we would obtain a clearer reading.» (Picchio 1985:145).

It seems to me, however, that there is a less complex explanation than the one proposed by Picchio for the equivalence ΖΑΡ-ΔΡΧΩΝ. If we refer to the Latin version of the three verses from Ezekiel mentioned by Picchio, we read:

Ez. 34:24 et servus meus David princeps in medio eorum
Ez. 37:24 et servus meus David rex super, eos.
Ez. 37:25 et David servus meus princeps eorum in perpetuum.

Here the Vulgate, like the Hebrew original, has twice prince and once king, while the Septuagint has in all three instances δρχων. As for the first part of the line, И ОУЗРОТЫ БЕСЬ СЯНЕМЬ СЛАБОВ ЕГО, it looks to me much
closer textually to Psalms 96(97):6 than to Is. 35:2. Thus, in the Psalterium Sinaiticum we read:

I ВІДАШИЯ ВБІГАЛІ ПЛОДІЄ Славя Єго.

Even more significant would be the profit drawn from the comparison with the Vulgate, if applied to the part of the second line of the inscription which does not figure in Ševčenko’s Greek text, на въхожение господне сътворена дрѣва много.

The source of на въхожение господне is still unclear to me, but the expression сътворена дрѣва много is, in my view, an allusion to a Biblical verse. This expression has been interpreted (e.g. by Lehr-Spławiński 1959, Grivec and Tomšić 1960, Ševčenko 1967, Vaillant 1968 and Udalcová 1981) as meaning ‘made from another wood’ without further commentary. My proposal is to take мнѣ as ‘one’, which is the primary meaning of this word. It is attested mainly in compounds such as инорогъ, инодъшьно, иномъ, иногда etc. (cf. Slovnik Jazyka Staroslovénskeho, s. v. мнѣ; Vaillant 1950, t. 1:143) but rarely also as a separate word. Thus, in Codex Vilnious # 262,7 in the part of Daniel which, unlike the rest of the codex, contains no: a 15-16th century Jewish translation from the Hebrew into (White?) Ruthenian, but a rather faithful rendering (with some theologically justifiable exceptions) of what I. Evseev considers (1905: XLVII) to be the Methodian8 translation of the Theodotion version of Daniel, we read (Dan. 2:31): и се шврата мнѣ велѣн

Assuming that мнѣ does indeed mean ‘one’, we come up with an allusion to a part of a Biblical verse which figures in the Vulgate, but is omitted in the Septuagint. Thus we read in Ezekiel 37:19 (quoting from the 1914 edition published in Vienna by the British Bible Society, which is very close to the Hebrew original):

tо скажи им: такъ говорить господь Богъ: вотъ я возъму дерево Йосифово, которое въ руку Ефраима и соединившихся съ нимъ колѣнь израильтевыхъ, и приложу ихъ къ нему, къ дереву Иуды, и сдѣлаю ихъ однимъ деревомъ и они въ руку моей будутъ одно. The underlined words are rendered in the Vulgate

6It is immaterial for the present discussion whether мнѣ ‘one’ and мнѣ ‘other’ are etymologically identical or not. For the different views, see A. Meillet 1902:158-9, 433-4; M. Vasmer, Russisches Etymologisches Worterbuch, s. v. мнѣ; F. Korčeny 1980:313-320.

7An edition of the Five Scrolls from this Codex, by M. Altbauer, is now in press. For previous works on 262, see list of publications of M. Altbauer in Slavica Hierosolymitana 7 (1985).

8However, in the 1905 edition itself, unlike in the introduction Evseev does not use # 262 at all. For verse 2:31, his ‘Methodian’ text reads: це тело едно велиге. Evseev provides the 262 text of Daniel in its totality in a separate study, 1902.
as: et faciam eas in lignum unum, but they do not appear in the Septuagint. The Hebrew word 'esk, signifying ‘tree, wood, stick’ which appears in this verse in the three instances where the Russian has дерево, is rendered in the Vulgate systematically by lignum, whereas in the Septuagint we have φυλή, ἁμβος and once, as said, an omission.

The significance of the words ‘I shall make them into one tree’ fits in nicely with the Biblical allusions in line three of the inscription. Both refer to the prophecy in Ezekiel 37:15–28, about the future unification of God’s congregation in one kingdom, with one king – David – the Messiah. In the context of the VC this should of course be interpreted as a prophecy about the Universal Church under the rule of Christ.

The interpretation of Δρβα Ιηνογ as ‘one tree’ is profitable not only on the level of the canonical text and context of VC, but also on the level of the apocryphal tradition with which ‘Solomon’s Chalice Story’ is linked through exegesis. The ‘Story’ occurs, as it is known, not only in VC but also in a number of manuscripts, most of them East-Slavic, either as separate narratives, or within an anti-Jewish polemical tract called Sayings of the Holy Prophets. Of the two versions, one agrees with chapter thirteen of VC almost verbatim, while the other, and prevailing one is expanded: it appends an exegesis, tolkovanie, to each of the three lines of the inscription (Svechenko 1967:1807-8). The regular exegesis of the expression СТВОРЕНА Δρβα Ιηνογ is that it refers to the Cross. Thus, in Tsar Ivan Aleksander’s 1348 Sbornik (Kiev 1981:385) we read: Δρβο

ИНО ЕСТЪ КРЪСТЬ. А ВЪЗКУШЕНІЕ РАСПАТІЕ.

In my view, the Cross, ‘made of one tree’ is preferable to ‘made of the other tree’ although both interpretations make sense in the context of the apocryphal tradition. Thus, ‘of the other tree’ could be understood in the context of a dualistic approach, such as that of the Bogomils, who believed that the Cross was the handi-

9 Not all of them, as Svechenko would have it. Thus, the ‘Story’ appears, with a tolkovanie, amid a group of ‘Questions and Answers’, some of them apocryphal, on folios 209v. – 210r. of Tsar Ivan Aleksander’s Sbornik (Kiev 1981:380-392).

10 It is not evident what the participle СТВОРЕНА refers to. If we take it for a Nsgf, then it has to refer to ЯША, which is appropriate formally, but not semantically, for the cup was made, as indicated in the beginning of the ‘Story’, not of wood but ОТЪ КАМЕННИА АРАГАР. Dr. Hugh Olmsted, during the discussion which followed the presentation of the present paper at the Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, proposed that СТВОРЕНА be interpreted as Gsgm/n, thus referring to ВЪЗКУШЕНІЕ. This interpretation seems to be supported by a variant in one of the mss. (Picchio 1985:136) which has here СТВОРЕНА-РІО.
work of the Devil and instructed their followers to hate it and not to venerate it. In
priest Cosmas’s *Sermon against the Heretics* (Begunov 1973:306) we read: О
крестъ же господни сице благоначе са глаголотъ: Намо са
емо есть кланати? Сына бо бох’а на немъ распаша жидове,
da вражда есть вого крестъ. Темже ненавидеть его своевъ си огнать, а не кланати са ...
Traces of this tradition are to be found in Slavic versions of the Story about the Cross. The tree from
which it was made is said to stem from seeds planted in Paradise by Satanael (cf.
E. g. Tichonravov 1863:306). The expression ‘made from the other tree’ would
thus reflect a dualistic vision of the Universe, in which everything stems either from
God’s good ‘Tree of Life’ or from that other ‘Tree of Death’ which is the Devil’s
(Cf. V. Arnold-Döben 1978:8ff.)

Yet *сътворена дръва мног* makes even more sense in the context
of the apocryphal tradition if interpreted ‘made from one tree’. In fact many of
the stories about the Cross contain a motif of three seeds, or rods, being miraculously
*united and growing into a single tree*, the tree of which eventually the Cross
was made. This motif appears in Slavic legends about the Cross, as well as in Cathar legends, some of them in books known to have been imported from Bulgaria

To conclude, the interpretation of *сътворена дръва мног* as ‘made
of one tree’ gives us a better understanding of the inscription in chapter 13 of
the VC, in that it offers a common source for the two lines without Greek equivalent,
namely Ezekiel’s prophecy about the unification of God’s assembly under a
single ruler — David — the Messiah. This interpretation also provides some thematic
clues which point to the affinity of the ‘Chalice Story’ in VC to apocryphal literature
of dualistic nature, although the principal questions of the chronology, geography,
direction and motivation of this affinity still remain unclear. Finally, this
interpretation once again reminds us, linguists and philologists, of the necessity to
take Latin language and texts into consideration when dealing with the earliest
layers of Slavic literacy.

---

11 For another possible, though remote link of ‘other’ with Hebr. *a‘her* and the Sethian
term ἀλλογενής, see Stroumsa 1981.

12 See, e. g. Tichonravov 1863:309

*Παραστατε δρύο ἡς έν θανα. Η έλιν έλικο κεγοτος. Η προβανοσ δασος. Να τρι
ρασπε η κε γείνη στόματε.*

See also Porf’r’ev 1877:96, 102; Gaster 1887:36-7; Quinn 1962:51-56.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Begunov, Ju.: 1973, Kozma Presviter v slavjanskih literaturach, Sofíja.


Gaster, Moses: 1887, Ilchester Lectures on Greek[,] Slavonic Literature and its Relation to the Folk-lore of Europe during the Middle Ages, London.


Lehr-Sptawiński, T. (ed.): 1959, Żywoty Konstantyna i Metodego (obszerne), Poznań.


Nelli, René: 1957, »La légende médiévale du Bois de la Croix«, Folklore (20e année, n° 4, hiver), 3-12.


Porfir’ev, I.: 1877, Apokrifčeskie skazanija o vetchozavetnych licach i sobytijach po rukopisam Soloveckoj biblioteki, Sankt peterburg.

Quinn, Esther C.: 1962, The Quest of Seth for the Oil of Life, Chicago.


Summary

The paper proposes a new interpretation for the second line of the inscription on Solomon's Chalice, mentioned in chapter 13 of the Vita Constantini. The interpretation of сътворена древа много as 'made from one tree', instead of 'made of another wood' hints at Ezekiel 37, i.e. the prophecy suggested by R. Picchio as source of the quotations in line 3 of the inscription. However, this linkage requires that the source of the quotations is not the Septuagint but the Vulgate, since the corresponding expression in Ez. 37:19 et faciam eas in lignum unum is missing from the LXX.

On the non-canonical level, the 'Chalice Story' is shown to contain elements of dualistic (Bogomil) origin, or, at least, elements which were in time interpreted as such.

The possibility of Latin and of Bogomil sources in the 'Chalice Story' makes it desirable to reconsider the time and place of the composition (and translation?) of the VC, and in particular: whether the 'Chalice Story' was an integral part of it from the beginning.
Sažetak

SALAMUNOV KALEŽ, LATINSKA BIBLIJA I BOGUMILI

U ovom članku autor predlaže novu interpretaciju drugog retka natpisa na Salamunovu kaležu koji se spominje u trinaestom poglavlju Vita Constantini. Interpretacija сътворена дръвка много kao "načinjen od jednog stabla", umjesto "načinjen od drugog drveta", upućuje na 37. glavu proroka Ezekiela, tj. na proročanstvo koje R. Picchio smatra izvorom citata u trećem retku natpisa. To, međutim, znači da izvor tog teksta nije Septuaginta, već Vulgata budući da odgovarajući tekst iz Ez 37,19 et faciam eas in lignum unum u LXX nedostaje.

Autor pokazuje da priča o kaležu na nekanonskom nivou sadrži elemente dualističkog (bogumilskog) podrijetla, ili bar elemente koji su s vremenom bili interpretirani kao takvi.

Zbog mogućnosti latinskih i bogumilskih izvora u Priči o kaležu, trebalo bi preispitati vrijeme i mjesto nastanka (i prijevoda?) VC, a posebno je pitanje da li je priča o kaležu od početka bila njezin sastavni dio.