A Byzantine Poetic Form in a Ninth-Century Bulgarian Poem

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Abstract. The paper measures the extent to which the most characteristic features related to the so-called Byzantine dodecasyllable are applied in one of the earliest Old-Bulgarian poems – *Azbuchna molitva* ('Alphabetic Prayer') noted to be written in dodecasyllabic verses. This alphabetic acrostic is dated back to the very end of the ninth century and is attributed to Constantine of Preslav. In this article its text is given after its earliest copy, MS Syn. 262, as it is the only representative of the version closest to the Glagolitic archetype, now lost. The piece is studied in comparison with St Gregory the Theologian's alphabetic acrostic (as published in PG 37) which Constantine of Preslav quotes just after the end of his poem and which is considered its rhythmical model. The main conclusions are that the Alphabetic Prayer is an early replica of the Byzantine dodecasyllable, follows its rhythmical peculiarities to an extent similar to St Gregory's alphabetic acrostic, all the previously supposed deviations are motivated by genre peculiarities and rhetorical requirements, which reveals Byzantine schooling of the Old-Bulgarian writer. Nevertheless, the content and intention of the poem indubitably target the neophyte Slavonic audience.

Keywords: metrical analysis, medieval Christian poetry, Byzantine iambic trimeter, alphabetic acrostic, Old Bulgarian versification, cultural influence in spiritual literature

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Херовьскоу мн· мꙑсль и оумъ даждь ∶⁓
Ѡ ꙑьстьнаꙗ· прѣсвꙗтаꙗ троице ∶⁓
Cherubic reasoning and mind provide me with,
O, venerable you, most holy Trinity.[1]
(Constantine of Preslav)

In the late ninth century, Constantine of Preslav, one of the most prominent earliest Old-Bulgarian writers, translated a set of catenae (in combination with homilies[2]) related to the liturgical Sunday Gospel readings, added his own introductions and conclusions to each of the orations as well as a whole oration of his own, to form the codex know as Didactic Gospel (*Uchitel'noe Evangelie*)[3]. In his introduction to the whole book, he also inserted a prayer to the Holy Trinity which he wrote in dodecasyllabic verses forming an alphabetic acrostic (thirty-six verses after each Glagolitic letter except for the *jers*[4] plus a final doxology[5]). He named it 'a measured prologue about Christ' (Прологъ о Хѣ оумѣренъ).

The peculiarities of the original Byzantine dodecasyllable – known to its contemporaries as iambs (ἴαμβοι[6]) – according to the scholars who dedicated studies to it, are the exact number of the syllables, caesura after the fifth or the

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[1]   Translation is mine and I tried to keep twelve syllables per verse. In Orthodox Christianity cherubs are awe-inspiring formidable creatures while on the West they usually have gentle and innocent child-like representations. Constantine of Preslav had certainly the first in mind. For an English translation of the whole poem see for example Butler 1999–2022.

[2]   See for instance Gorskij, Nevostruev 1859: 423–424. Kotova (2022) and Petrov (2022) find the previously unknown Greek parallels of parts of orations nineteenth and twentieth, respectively, in St John Christostom's homilies. See also Mitov (2022).

[3]   The monument is dated usually to 889–893 (cf. Arhim. Antonij 1885: 7; Gallucci 2001: 3–4; Spasova 2005; Tihova 2012: XII; Slavova 2017: 3) and the literature cited there.

[4]   These are ъ and ь (Glagolitic Ⱇ and Ⱈ respectively). They were pronounced in the ninth century, but later some of them were not, others transformed into other vocals. (In later times, according to the rules of the Church Slavonic grammar, the *jers* just marked the softness or hardness of the consonant before them).

[5]   On the acrostich in this poem see for instance the recent studies of MacRobert (2019) and Kojčeva (2019) and the literature cited there.

[6]   For the labels of poems given in their headings in Byzantine manuscripts see Rhoby 2015. Paul Maas (1903: 278), in the very first sentence of his famous study, states that the type of verse in his focus is known as Byzantine iambic trimeter.

seventh syllable, particular stress patterns before the clausula and at the end of the verse as well as specific visual prosody.

The purpose of the present article is to check to what extent the metrical principles of the so-called Byzantine dodecasyllable are followed in Constantine of Preslav's Alphabetic Prayer. It begins with a brief review of the previous studies. Then the poem is analysed in juxtaposition to St Gregory the Theologian's alphabetic acrostic which has been considered to be its rhythmical model (even though the latter is much shorter and quite different in its content and intention).

Previous studies on the meter of *Azbuchna molitva*

The meter of *Azbuchna molitva* has interested scholars since the very first study dedicated to the poem in 1900, even though the main focus has been on the acrostich and, initially, also on the authorship of the work. Aleksej Ivanovich Sobolevskij (1900: 314) determined it to be a twelve-syllable "political" verse with caesurae only after the fifth syllable and paroxytone clausulae. Ivan Franko (1914: 162, 163) counted various syllables per verse (from 8 to 12, which is definitely due to the fact he did not count the *jers*, as required by the rules of his contemporaneous Church Slavonic), and defined the meter as ten-syllable trochaic structuring of epic Slavic folk songs. Emil Georgiev (1938: 114–123), in his profound study of the prayer, saw a twelve-syllable meter with specific caesuring but underlined that it did not follow the Greek rhythmical system, that there were no paroxytone verse endings and no iamb in it.[7] Rajko Nahtigal (1942: 51–52) was definite that the work was written in the Byzantine iambic trimeter in twelve-syllable verses with caesura after the fifth or the seventh syllable, but considered its prosody Slavonic.[8] Kujo Kuev (1974: 119,

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[7]   He rised the question of prosody but quickly passed it away since, as, he argued, Byzantine Greek had lost the difference between long and short vowels and there had been no such differences in Slavonic. (And yet, Czech and Serbian languages do keep such differences up to nowadays.)

[8]   Nahtigal's main contribution is the reconstruction of the acrostich; he also corrected the length of some verses and some places of the caesurae. The precise quotation about prosody is, "Vendar starocerkvenoslovanski verzifikator ni ne mene dolžin in kratčin v kvantitativen oziru, ne mesta naglasa v ritmičnem metrično izrabil, to je ustvaril svojo slovansko prozodijo." 'However, the Old Church Slavonic poet did not use metrically neither the alternation of length and shortness in quantitative terms, nor the position of accents in rhythmical terms – he created his Slavonic prosody.'

128, 132), who dedicated a whole monograph to the Alphabetic Prayer, noted its twelve-syllable verses with caesura after the fifth, sixth[9] or seventh syllable, underlined that its structure is related to the Byzantine dodecasyllable and had as its model St Gregory the Theologian's alphabetic acrostic. It is worth mentioning here that all these scholars proposed their own reconstruction of the text to approximate it to their understanding of its meter.

Ivan Bogdanov (1980: 60), as it seems, held rather Sobolevskij's view in his short description of the rhythmical peculiarities of the Alphabetic Prayer as he stated twelve syllables per verse caesured only after the fifth syllable and saw all the deviations as exceptions caused by semantic reasons or copyists. Ivan Dobrev (1993: 239–257) analysed the place of the caesura to demonstrate that this type of dodecasyllable with asymmetric alternation (5+7 or 7+5) differed significantly from the dodecasyllable of the Bulgarian folk songs (6+6); he added to the analysis of his predecessors the count of accents per verse.[10] The most recent scholar – and probably the most profound – of early Old Bulgarian non-liturgical poetry, Krasimir Stanchev (1986: 646, 652), summarised the view accepted in scholarship that the work was composed of twelve-syllable verses with a caesura after the fifth and rarely after the seventh syllable. He emphasised that this rhythmic peculiarity was adopted from Byzantine poetry as "a medieval modification of the ancient iambic trimeter" which meant a twelve-syllable line with a caesura after the fifth, sixth or seventh syllable (with the clarification that neither a different caesuring nor a syllable count of more than twelve syllables was a deviation from it).

Metrical analysis

I have decided to analyse the raw text of the earliest preserved copy (MS Syn. 262, ff. 1–3) in order to avoid the situation of drawing conclusions over a text that does not exist except as a reconstruction. Besides, this manuscript, according to text-critical studies, is the only one closest to the Glagolitic archetype,

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[9]   The structure 6+6 is in the twelfth verse only, according to MS Syn. 262, if one does not accept R. Nahtigal suggestion that instead of ʌєтнть... ('is flying') the line began, as he logically suggested, with ӡ. ʌѣтъ ('thirty years').

[10]   He does not comment on the number of accents per line, but it is clearly visible there that various isocollic patterns alternate together with the alternations of meaning as is the case in rhetorical prose as well.

while the rest of the copies[11] (about fifty in total) have no direct relation to it.[12] I juxtapose this early Bulgarian text to St Gregory the Theologian's alphabetic acrostic (poem I.2.30 after PG 37 col. 908–910)[13] which has been assumed to be the rhythmical model of Constantine's Alphabetic prayer by the majority of the scholars, who dealt with its poetic meter, probably because it is cited[14] straight after the end of the prayer.

I have been wondering whether to include at least some of the reconstructions but have decided not to, as they, even if convincing, remain in the sphere of hypotheses. It is also a matter of personal choice which of the several reconstructions of a verse to accept. One thing is sure – if any of those is indeed true to the archetype, the percentage of the dodecasyllabic peculiarities, given below, would be even greater.

1. Number of syllables

The term *Zwölfsilber* coined by Maas is certainly related to the most obvious peculiarity of this most popular Byzantine meter. And the same peculiarity – prevailing twelve-syllable verses – was noted by almost all the scholars who analysed *Azbuchna molitva*. Here, I count, again after earlier scholars, the number of syllables per verse in Constantine's prayer (according to its text in MS Syn. 262) and compare it with the number of syllables per verse in St Gregory's parenetical alphabet (according to its edition in *Patrologia Graeca*).

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[11]   Only Cyrillic transcriptions came down to us.

[12]   See Kuev's (1974: 168) graphic representation of the text-critical relations between the manuscripts; for the textual evidence which emerged since then and their grouping see Veder (2000: 78–80) whose edition of the poem includes variant readings of the lines according to the respective groups of manuscripts, his reconstruction in Glagolitic and his translation in English (Veder 1999: 61–88).

[13]   There is another alphabetic acrostic, again a paraenetic one, by St Gregroy (though ascribed to Ignatios the Deacon in various manuscripts), and it, together with 32 poetic and 2 more prosaic ascetic-paraenetic alphabets of various times, is proven to be genealogically related to the same St Gregory's acrostic which Constantine quotes. For the similarities in both form and meaning of all those Byzantine acrostics see Anastasijević (1905: 4) who also mentions other Byzantine acrostic prayers (ibid.: 3).

[14]   The exact quotation after MS Syn 262, f. 3r is: Добро ѥсть отъ Ба наꙑннати· и до Ба коньѧавати· ꙗкоже рече етеръ Бословьць и григоръ· 'It is good from God to begin and to God to end as that theologian and Gregory said' (translation is mine; the 'and' in the Old Bulgarian text points at a literary understanding of the name – 'watchful').

The only intervention in the manuscript text I have allowed myself, which is related to the number of syllables, is the addition of ь in square brackets in the places it was occasionally dropped out – three times in the pronoun вьсь (in lines 2, 39, 40), which otherwise is written with the *jer* (it is kept in the root вьс- in lines 6, 13, 22, and 34), and once in the adjective чьстьнъ[15] (compared to чьсть in line 38).

Table 1. Number of syllables in the Old Bulgarian and in the Byzantine acrostic

Прологъ о Х҃ѣ оумѣренъ съкаѕанниа с҃того еваньгелиа· сътворенъ костантинъмь имже и прѣложеннѥ бꙑсть· тогожде съкаѕанниа· ѥвангельскааго∴ (Syn. 262, f. 2r–3r)	No. of syll.	Γρηγόριος ο Θεολόγος, Στίχων ἡ ἀκροστιχὶς τῶν πάντων στοιχείων ἑκάστου ἰάμβου τέλος παραινέσεως ἔχοντος (PG 37.908-910)	No. of syll.
1 Аꙁъ словомь симъ // молю сꙗ Б҃оу ∴—	12	1 ἀρχὴν ἁπάντων / καὶ τέλος ποιοῦ Θεόν.	12
2 Б҃е в[ь]сеꙗ твари // и ꙁиждителю ∴—	12	2 βίου τὸ κέρδος, / ἐκβιοῦν καθ᾽ ἡμέραν.	12
3 Видимꙑимъ / и невидимꙑимъ ∴—	12	3 γίνωσκε πάντα / τῶν καλῶν τὰ δράματα.	12
4 Г҃а Д҃ха / посъли живоущааго ∴—	13	4 δεινὸν πένεσθαι, / χεῖρον δ᾽ εὐπορεῖν κακῶς.	12
5 Да въдъхнеть / въ срьдьце ми слово ∴—	12	5 εὐεργετῶν νόμιζε // μιμεῖσθαι Θεόν.	12
6 Ѥже боудеть / на оуспѣхъ вьсѣмъ ∴—	12	6 ζήτει Θεοῦ σοι / χρηστότητα χρηστὸς ὤν.	12
7 Живоущиимъ / въ ꙁаповѣдьхъ ти ∴—	12	7 ἡ σὰρξ κρατείσθω / καὶ δαμαζέσθω καλῶς.	12

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[15]   I also inserted in square brackets the proper letters at the beginning of the lines, without which letter repetitions are senseless – I did this according to their sequence in the alphabetic acrostich as Nahtigal proposed – and added in square brackets the most reasonable reconstruction of the twelfth verse which is supposed to begin with л, the letter with number value '30'. These insertions do not affect the syllable count but are made just for clarity and in accordance with the accepted hypothesis that the earliest Glagolitic system reflected only non-iotated nasal vowels (Stankovska 2018: 411-414 and the literature cited there). The same applies to є – it was first not iotated – but I promised no other interventions in the manuscript.

8	Ѕѣло бо ѥсть / свѣтильникъ жизни ∴—	12	8	θυμὸν χαλίνου, / μὴ φρενῶν ἔξω πέσῃς.	12	
9	Законъ твои• / и свѣтъ стьзамъ∴—	11	9	ἵστη μὲν ὄμμα, / γλῶσσα δὲ στάθμην ἔχοι.	12	
10	[J]Нже ищеть / еѵⷢ҇гельска слова ∴—	12	10	κλεὶς ὠσὶ κείσθω, / μηδὲ πορνεύοι γέλως.	12	
11	И проситъ / дары твоꙗ приꙗти ∴—	11	11	λύχνος βίου σοι / παντὸς ἡγείσθω λόγος.	12	
12	Летитъ бо нынѣ• / и словѣньско племꙗ ∴— [л. лѣтъ нынѣ / и словѣньско племꙗ]	12	12	μή σοι τὸ εἶναι, / τῷ δοκεῖν ὑπορρέοι.	12	
13	Къ крьщению• / обратиша сꙗ вьси ∴—	12	13	νόει τὰ πάντα, / πρᾶσσε δ' ἃ πράσσειν θέμις.	12	
14	Людиѥ твои• / нарещи сꙗ хотꙗще ∴—	12	14	ξένον σεαυτὸν ἴσθι, // καὶ τίμα ξένους.	12	
15	Милости твоꙗ• / бе просꙗть ѕѣло ∴—	13	15	ὅτ' εὐπλοεῖς, / μάλιστα μέμνησο ζάλης.	12	
16	Нъ мънѣ нынѣ• / простраⷩ҇о слово даждь ∴—	12	16	πάντ' εὐχαρίστως / δεῖ δέχεσθαι τὰκ Θεοῦ.	12	
17	Оче сⷩ҇е• / и прѣⷭ҇тыи дше ∴—	12	17	ῥάβδος δικαίου / πλεῖον ἢ τιμὴ κακοῦ.	12	
18	Просꙗщоумоу• / помощи ѿ тебе ∴—	12	18	σοφῶν θύρας ἔκτριβε, // πλουσίων δὲ μή.	12	
19	Роуцѣ бо свои / горѣ въздѣю присно ∴—	12	19	τὸ μικρὸν οὐ μικρόν, / ὅταν ἐκφέρῃ μέγα.	13	
20	Силоу приꙗти• / и моудрость оу тебе ∴—	12	20	ὕβριν χαλίνου, / καὶ μέγας ἔσῃ σοφός	12	
21	Ты бо даѥши• / достоиномъ силоу ∴—	12	21	φύλασσε σαυτόν, / πτῶμα δ' ἄλλου μὴ γέλα.	12	
22	Ѵпостась же• / вьсакоую цѣлиши ∴—	12	22	χάρις φθονεῖσθαι, / τὸ φθονεῖν δ' αἶσχος μέγα.	12	
23	Фараоша мꙗ• / ѕълобы избави ∴—	11	23	ψυχὴ θύοιτο / μᾶλλον ἢ τὸ πᾶν θεῷ.	12	

24	Херовьскоу мн•/ мысль и оумъ даждь ⁝—	12	24	ὦ τίς φυλάξει ταῦτα // καὶ σωθήσεται.	12
25	[Ѡ]О ꙑьст[ь]наꙗ•/ прѣст҃аꙗ троице ⁝—	12			
26	Печаль мою / на радость прѣложи ⁝—	12			
27	Цѣломоудрьно•/ да наꙋьноу пьсати ⁝—	12			
28	Чюдеса твоꙗ•/ прѣдивьнаꙗ ꙃѣло ⁝—	12			
29	Шестькрилатъ•/ силоу въсприимъ ⁝—	11			
30	Шьствоую нꙑинѣ•/ по слѣдоу оуꙋнтелю ⁝—	12			
31	Имени ню•/ и дѣлоу послѣдоуꙗ ⁝—	12			
32	[Ѣ]Ꙗвѣ сътворю•/ еваньгельско слово ⁝—	12			
33	Хвалоу въздаꙗ•/ тр҃ци въ бж҃ьтвѣ ⁝—	12			
34	[Ж]Юже поꙙть / вьсакъи въздрастъ ⁝—	12			
35	Юнъ и старъ•/ своимь разоумомь ⁝—	12			
36	[Ѧ]Ꙗꙃꙑкъ новъ•/ хвалоу въздаꙗ присно ⁝—	12			
37	О̑цоу сноу / и прѣст҃оуꙋмоу дх҃оу ⁝—	13			
38	Ꙉемоуже ꙑьсть / и дрьжава и слава ⁝—	12			
39	Отъ в[ь]сеꙗ // твари и дꙑхании ⁝—	12			
40	Въ в[ь]сꙙ вѣкꙑ•/ и на вѣкꙑ аминъ ⁝—	12			
Total:	33 × **12 syll.** = **82.5%** 4 × 11 syll. = 10% 3 × 13 syll. = 7.5%			23 × **12 syll.** = **95.8%** 1 × 13 syll. = 4.16%	

The numbers speak for themselves. In this non-reconstructed manuscript text, the number of twelve-syllable verses is over 82%. The percentage of thirteen-syllable verses is higher than in the Byzantine poem observed here, but all three such verses would easily become dodecasyllabic if uncontracted forms in them were contracted (живоущааго, твоиѥѩ, прⷮѣстоѵоѵмоⷱоѵ).[16]

Yet the shorter verses – the four which count just eleven syllables – do not have any counterparts in the Greek poem and are not particularly discussed by Maas. This is, probably, why various scholars make various attempts to add "reconstructed" syllables to them. But both – the shorter and the longer verses in the Bulgarian poem – have counterparts in Byzantine poetry. The deviations from the constant number of twelve syllables in it – between 10–11 and 13–14 – are explained as specific combinations of hemistichs of, respectively, 5/6+5/6 and 7/6+7/6.[17]

Here, it should be noted, however, that while verse 9 has two more completely different readings (of fourteen and fifteen syllables) in the other copies of the prayer, verse 11 has just one different reading with и 'and' preceding прнѩтн 'to accept' which certainly makes the twelve syllables. Verse 29 is also highly variable, besides in regard to two words – Шесть́крнлатъ / Шестокрнлъ / Шесть́крнлаⷮтъ / Шесть́крнлатъıхъ 'six-winged' and въспрннⷨмъ / прннⷨмъ 'having accepted' – but in all the variants it counts eleven or even ten syllables and the same numbers apply also to verse 26, i. e. it counts always less than twelve syllables.

Even though there is no way for us to be sure whether the eleven-syllable lines are due to text corruption or were intended by their author, I propose to hypothetically accept the latter and to closely look at the immediate context of the respective lines. To begin with, verses 9 and 11 are part of a tetracolon in which all four cola bear four accents each and the variation in the number of syllables of the two subordinate cola is a way to diversify the otherwise complete symmetry of the cola in this isocolon[18] (the symmetry remains yet

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[16]   Moreover, живоущааго and твоиѥѩ appear contracted – as живѩщаго/живѫщаго and твоѩ respectively – in the other copies of the prayer. In relation to verse 37 (the one containing прⷮѣстоѵоѵмоⷱоѵ), all the variants except for the one in MS Syn. 262 read о̅ц҃ѹ н с҃нѹ н с҃тмѹ д҃хѹ which also counts twelve syllables (for the variant readings see Veder 1999: 64, 68, 78).

[17]   See, for example, Bernard 2018: 36.

[18]   Almost all the characteristic features of the Byzantine dodecasyllable, actually, lead to the construction of *isocolon*, which builds up the rhetorical (and not the metrical) rhythm: not only the semantic completeness of the separate verses/cola but also their equal length (the number of syllables), clausulae, ceasuring and a variety of features characteristic for particular types of writings or authors. On the notion that the isocolic structure relates this meter to the rhetorical

slightly modified by the alternation of cola with the same number of accents but different number of syllables, which could be visualised in the following way: 12 (4), 11 (4), 12 (4), 11 (4)). Next, the other pair of verses counting eleven syllables, namely 23 and 29, are part of parallel isocolic periods (divided by another tricolon) with a similar scheme – 11 (3), 12 (4), 12 (3) […] 11 (3), 12 (4), 12 (3) – so, here, the subtle change in rhythm is intended rather to pair, not to diversify. Nevertheless, it should be emphasised, that, on the one hand, the archetype of this poetic prayer was most probably closer to the Byzantine dodecasyllable than the text which came down to us in MS Syn. 262, and, on the other, the author did not label it *iamboi* (as the majority of the Byzantine alphabetic acrostics (cf. the numerous examples given in Anastasijević 1905), but just *measured prologue*.

2. Internal verse breaks (caesurae)

Maas postulated verse structures of the type 5+7 and 7+5 as most typical for the Byzantine dodecasyllable.[19] And these are the prevailing types in the two alphabetic acrostics in focus. To clearly reveal this in the table below, I followed Nahtigal's manner to mark the pauses after the seventh syllable with a double slash (//) while the ones which come after the fifth syllable – with a single slash (/). All other positions of the caesura I mark with backslash (\). Table 2. presents the same two texts given this time with the number of syllables per hemistich. It is also clearly visible, that in MS Syn. 262, the caesurae are marked by dots in more than half of the verses.

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prose, including in the Byzantine theory, and for specific examples revealing that the Byzantines ignored the difference between poetry and prose see Lauxtermann 1998: 21–22. The short cola and the regular alternation of consonants brings about the energetic style of the dodecasyllable (Bernard 2018: 22) and they both, according to three Byzantine rhetors, are inseparable part of its versification system (Lauxtermann 1998: 28). The structuring in cola – according to the complete thoughts they convey – is characteristic also for the rhetorical prose (ibid.: 21).

[19]   Cf. the exact statistics in Bernard 2018: 27 and concerning other variants of hemistichs, see note 16.

Table 2. The internal verse breaks in the two poems

	Прологъ о Х҃ѣ оүмѣренъ…	Cae-sura		Στίχων ἡ ἀκροστιχὶς…	Cae-sura
1	Ꙗзъ словомь симъ // молю сꙗ Боү ∴‒	7+5	1	ἀρχὴν ἁπάντων / καὶ τέλος ποιοῦ Θεόν.	5+7
2	Б҃е в[ь]сеꙗ твари // и зиждителю ∴‒	7+5	2	βίου τὸ κέρδος, / ἐκβιοῦν καθ᾽ ἡμέραν.	5+7
3	Видимꙑимъ / и невидимꙑимъ ∴‒	5+7	3	γίνωσκε πάντα / τῶν καλῶν τὰ δράματα.	5+7
4	Г҃а Д҃ха \ посълⷩ живоүщааго ∴‒	5+8	4	δεινὸν πένεσθαι, / χεῖρον δ᾽ εὐπορεῖν κακῶς.	5+7
5	Да въдъхнеть / въ срьдьце ми слово ∴‒	5+7	5	εὐεργετῶν νόμιζε // μιμεῖσθαι Θεόν.	7+5
6	Ѥже боүдеть / на оүспѣхъ вьсѣмъ ∴‒	5+7	6	ζήτει Θεοῦ σοι / χρηστότητα χρηστὸς ὤν.	5+7
7	Живоүщиимъ / въ заповѣдьхъ ти ∴‒	5+7	7	ἡ σὰρξ κρατείσθω / καὶ δαμαζέσθω καλῶς.	5+7
8	Ѕѣло бо ѥсть / свѣтильникъ жизни ‒	5+7	8	θυμὸν χαλίνου, / μὴ φρενῶν ἔξω πέσῃς.	5+7
9	Законъ твои•/ и свѣтъ стьзамъ∴‒	5+6	9	ἴστη μὲν ὄμμα, / γλῶσσα δὲ στάθμην ἔχοι.	5+7
10	[J]Иже ищеть / е҃ꙋнгельска слова ∴‒	5+7	10	κλεὶς ὠσὶ κείσθω, / μηδὲ πορνεύοι γέλως.	5+7
11	И проѕрить \ дарꙑ твоꙗ приꙗти ∴‒	4+7	11	λύχνος βίου σοι / παντὸς ἡγείσθω λόγος.	5+7
12	Летить бо нꙑнѣ• \ и словѣньско племꙗ ∴‒ [л. лѣтъ нꙑнѣ / и словѣньско племꙗ]	6+6/ [5+7]	12	μή σοι τὸ εἶναι / τῷ δοκεῖν ὑπορρέοι.	5+7
13	Къ крьщению•/ обратиша сꙗ вьси ∴‒	5+7	13	νόει τὰ πάντα, / πρᾶσσε δ᾽ ἃ πράσσειν θέμις.	5+7
14	Людиѥ твои•/ нарещи сꙗ хотꙗще ∴‒	5+7	14	ξένον σεαυτὸν ἴσθι, // καὶ τίμα ξένους.	7+5
15	Милости твоеꙗ•\ Б҃е просꙗть ѕѣло ∴‒	6+7	15	ὅτ᾽ εὐπλοεῖς, \ μάλιστα μέμνησο ζάλης.	4+8

16 Нъ мънѣ нꙑнѣ•/ пространо слово даждь ∴—	5+7	16 πάντ' εὐχαρίστως / δεῖ δέχεσθαι τὰκ Θεοῦ.	5+7
17 Оу͗е с͂не•/ н прѣс͂тꙑн д͂ше ∴—	5+7	17 ῥάβδος δικαίου / πλεῖον ἢ τιμὴ κακοῦ.	5+7
18 Просꙗмогоумоу•/ помощн ѿ тебе ∴—	5+7	18 σοφῶν θύρας ἔκτριβε, // πλουσίων δὲ μή.	7+5
19 Роуцѣ бо свон / горѣ въздѣю прнсно ∴—	5+7	19 τὸ μικρὸν οὐ μικρόν, / ὅταν ἐκφέρη μέγα.	6+7
20 Снлоу прнꙗтн•/ н моудрость оу тебе ∴—	5+7	20 ὕβριν χαλίνου, / καὶ μέγας ἔση σοφός	5+7
21 Тꙑ бо даꙗшн•/ достоннома снлоу ∴—	5+7	21 φύλασσε σαυτόν, / πτῶμα δ' ἄλλου μὴ γέλα.	5+7
22 Ѵпостась же•/ вьсакоую цѣлншн ∴—	5+7	22 χάρις φθονεῖσθαι, / τὸ φθονεῖν δ' αἶσχος μέγα.	5+7
23 Фараоша мꙗ•\ ѕълобꙑ нзбавн ∴—	5+6	23 ψυχὴ θύοιτο / μᾶλλον ἢ τὸ πᾶν θεῷ.	5+7
24 Херовьскоу мн•/ мꙑсль н оума даждь ∴—	5+7	24 ὦ τίς φυλάξει ταῦτα // καὶ σωθήσεται.	7+5
25 [Ѡ]О ꙋьст[ь]наꙗ•/ прѣс͂таꙗ тронце ∴—	5+7		
26 Пеꙗль мою / на радость прѣложн ∴—	5+7		
27 Цѣломоудрьно•/ да наоуьноу пьсатн ∴—	5+7		
28 Ꙋюдеса твоꙗ•/ прѣднвьнаꙗ ѕѣло ∴—	5+7		
29 Шестькрнлата•\ снлоу въсирннма ∴—	5+6		
30 Шьствоую нꙑнѣ•/ по слѣдоу оуꙋнтелю ∴—	5+7		
31 Нменн кю•/ н дѣлоу послѣдоуꙗ ∴—	5+7		
32 [Ꙉ]Ꙗвѣ сатворю•/ еваньгельско слово ∴—	5+7		

33 Хвалоу въздаıа•/ трцн въ бжьтвѣ ∴⤙	5+7		
34 [Ж]Юже поютъ / вьсакън въздрастъ ∴⤙	5+7		
35 Юнъ н старъ•/ свонмь разоумомь ∴⤙	5+7		
36 [ѫ]ІАзъıкъ новъ•/ хвалоу въздаıа прнсно ∴⤙	5+7		
37 Оцоу сноу \ н прѣстоуоумоу дхоу ∴⤙	5+7		
38 ІЄмоуже ѥсть / н дрьжава н слава ∴⤙	5+7		
39 Отъ в[ь]сеıа // тварн н дъıханнıа ∴⤙	7+5		
40 Въ в[ь]сѩ вѣкъı•/ н на вѣкъı амннъ ∴⤙	5+7		
Total:	30 × (5+7) = 75% 3 × (7+5) = 7.5% others × 5 = 12.5% = **82.5**%(5+7/7+5)		(5+7) × 18 = 75% (7+5) × 4 = 16.7% others × 2 = 8.3% = **91.6**%(5+7/7+5)

Statistics shows that, in terms of the internal verse breaks, the two poetic works are a bit closer to one another than in relation to the first metrical feature observed, and that the total percentage of the structuring, which is characteristic for the Byzantine dodecasyllable (that is either 5+7 or 7+5) is 82.5% in the Bulgarian and 91.6% in the Greek acrostic. The deviations account to 12.5% and 8.3% respectively, so they might be related to the specific genre of the alphabetic acrostics, since the significance of the sequence of letters prevails over the importance of adhering to other poetic principles. Once again, the Glagolitic archetype of the Bulgarian work would have probably shown slightly different percentages.

A noticeable peculiarity here is, however, the fact that Constantine of Preslav used the caesuring 7+5, this subtle alternation of rhythm, to mark both the opening (the first two verses) and the conclusion of his poem (its penultimate verse), which reveals his profound knowledge – and well-crafted skill – not only in the most used Byzantine poetic measure but also in Byzantine rhetoric.

3. Clausulae

Specialists in Byzantine poetry accept the prevailing paroxytone clausulae – that is an accent on the penultimate syllable at the end of the verse [20] – as one of the characteristic features of the meter.[21] But when it comes to accentuation in Old Slavonic texts, extreme attentiveness is needed, first, because accents are systematically reflected in the graphics only after the fourteenth century (often with variations within the same manuscripts), second, because of its instability – it moves to various syllables in the forms of the same words and takes different positions in different dialects including within the same language. It is not by chance that accentuation theories related to Old Slavonic are far from being unshakable.[22]

I have nevertheless decided, as a kind of experiment, to underline only those last words which seem irrefutably paroxytone. These are mainly two-syllable words like бо́у, сло́во, пле́мѧ, да́ждь even the vocative дш҃е, and certain three-syllable words like вьсѣ́мъ, хотѧ́ще. I take the risk of making some mistakes in order to get at least some approximate idea of the extent to which this peculiarity accords with the respective characteristic feature of the Byzantine dodecasyllable. Below, I mark paroxytone words not only at the verse ends, as Sobolevskij and Georgiev did, but also the words at the ends of hemistichs because the latter are not less important than the first for the specialists in Byzantine poetry.

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[20]   Bernard, for instance, turns our attention to the fact that a particular poem belonging to the genre of *iambs on iambs* quotes only paroxytone examples as final verse words (Bernard 2018: 18).

[21]   The actual scheme that Maas (1903: 290) derives is that the paroxytone verse endings are the rule, proparoxytone – rareness and the oxytone ones – exception. A later Byzantine rhetor (Joseph Rhacendytes) points out that for the iambic verses it is best to end with a penultimate accent as noted by Hörandner (1995: 288), and Bernard (2018: 22) comments that this same recommendation for a paroxytone on the sixth feet is a uniquely clear and explicit medieval recognition of this crucial feature of the most used meter. The rule is known even before Maas (cf. Bouvy 1886: 155–157).

[22]   In fact, there is only one hypothetic reconstruction particularly related to the Old Bulgarian accent. It tackles it in relation to a later period, to the fourteenth century, besides on the basis of even later monuments and does not exactly determine the distribution of accents (see the profound studies by the best specialist in comparative historical accentology related to Slavonic – Dybo 1971: 194; 1977: 93–114). (My personal opinion is that accents are not marked in the earlier manuscripts namely because of the different Slavonic accentuation and with the view to providing freedom for any local pronunciations related to word stress.)

Table 3. Words bearing penultimate accents before internal and final pauses of verses.

Прологъ о Х҃ѣ оумѣренъ...		Стíχων ἡ ἀκροστιχὶς...	
1	Аꙁъ словомь симъ[23] // молю сѧ Бо҃у ∵—	1	ἀρχὴν ἁπάντων / καὶ τέλος ποιοῦ Θεόν.
2	Бе҃ в[ь]сеꙗ твари // и ꙁиждителю ∵—	2	βίου τὸ κέρδος, / ἐκβιοῦν καθ᾽ ἡμέραν.
3	Видимꙑимъ / и невидимꙑимъ ∵—	3	γίνωσκε πάντα / τῶν καλῶν τὰ δράματα.
4	Г҃а Д҃ха / посъли живоущааго ∵—	4	δεινὸν πένεσθαι, / χεῖρον δ᾽ εὐπορεῖν κακῶς.
5	Да въдъхнеть / въ срьдьце ми слово ∵—	5	εὐεργετῶν νόμιζε // μιμεῖσθαι Θεόν.
6	Ѥже боудеть / на оуспѣхъ вьсѣмъ ∵—	6	ζήτει Θεοῦ σοι / χρηστότητα χρηστὸς ὤν.
7	Живоущиимъ / въ ꙁаповѣдьхъ ти ∵—	7	ἡ σὰρξ κρατείσθω / καὶ δαμαζέσθω καλῶς.
8	Ꙃѣло бо ѥсть / свѣтильникъ жиꙁни ∵—	8	θυμὸν χαλίνου, / μὴ φρενῶν ἔξω πέσῃς.
9	Ꙁаконъ твои•/ и свѣтъ стьꙁамъ ∵—	9	ἴστη μὲν ὄμμα, / γλῶσσα δὲ στάθμην ἔχοι.
10	[Ј]Ꙗже ищеть / еѵ҃нгельска слова ∵—	10	κλεὶς ὠσὶ κείσθω, / μηδὲ πορνεύοι γέλως.
11	И просить / дарꙑ твоꙗ приꙗти ∵—	11	λύχνος βίου σοι / παντὸς ἡγείσθω λόγος.
12	л. лѣтъ нꙑнѣ / и словѣньско племѧ ∵—	12	μή σοι τὸ εἶναι / τῷ δοκεῖν ὑπορρέοι.
13	Къ крьщению•/ обратиша сѧ вьси ∵—	13	νόει τὰ πάντα, / πρᾶσσε δ᾽ ἃ πράσσειν θέμις.
14	Людие твои•/ нарещи сѧ хотѧще ∵—	14	ξένον σεαυτὸν ἴσθι, // καὶ τίμα ξένους.

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[23]   It is quite tempting to enlist симъ among the paroxytone words, but here it is more likely an enclitic as suggested also by the count of accents in Dobrev (1993: 241).

15 Милостн твоꙗ•/ Бе просꙑть ꙃѣло ⁘—	15 ὅτ᾽ εὐπλοεῖς, / μάλιστα μέμνησο **ζάλης**.
16 Нъ мънѣ нꙑнѣ•/ пространо слово **даждь** ⁘—	16 πάντ᾽ **εὐχαρίστως** / δεῖ δέχεσθαι τὰκ Θεοῦ.
17 Оуе сне•/ н прѣстꙑн Дше ⁘—	17 ῥάβδος **δικαίου** / πλεῖον ἢ τιμὴ κακοῦ.
18 Просꙑмоуоумоу•/ помощн ѿ тебе ⁘—	18 σοφῶν θύρας ἔκτριβε, // πλουσίων δὲ μή.
19 Роуцѣ бо свон / горѣ въꙁдѣю прнсно ⁘—	19 τὸ μικρὸν οὐ μικρόν, / ὅταν ἐκφέρῃ **μέγα**.
20 Снлоу **прнꙗтн**•/ н моудрость оу тебе ⁘—	20 ὕβριν **χαλίνου**, / καὶ μέγας ἔσῃ σοφός
21 Тꙑ бо **дакшн**•/ достоннѡмъ **снлоу** ⁘—	21 φύλασσε σαυτόν, / πτῶμα δ᾽ ἄλλου μὴ **γέλα**.
22 Ѵпостась же•/ вьсакоую цѣлншн ⁘—	22 χάρις **φθονεῖσθαι**, / τὸ φθονεῖν δ᾽ αῖσχος **μέγα**.
23 Фараоша мꙗ•/ ꙁълобꙑ нꙁбавн⁘—	23 ψυχὴ θύοιτο / μᾶλλον ἢ τὸ πᾶν θεῷ.
24 Херовьскоу мн•/ мꙑсль н оумъ **даждь** ⁘—	24 ὦ τίς φυλάξει **ταῦτα** // καὶ σωθήσεται.
25 [Ѡ]О уьст[ь]наꙗ•/ прѣстаꙗ тронце ⁘—	
26 Печаль мою / на радость прѣложн ⁘—	
27 Цѣломоудрьно•/ да наоукноу пьсатн ⁘—	
28 Ꙋюдеса твоꙗ•/ прѣднвьнаꙗ ꙃѣло ⁘—	
29 Шестькрнлатъ•/ снлоу въспрннмъ ⁘—	
30 Шьствоую нꙑнѣ•/ по слѣдоу оуунтелю ⁘—	

31	Нменн кю•/ н дѣлоу послѣдоуіа ⁙‿	
32	[Ѣ]Ꙗвѣ сътворю•/ еваньгельско слово ⁙‿	
33	Хвалоу въздаіа•/ трцн въ бжьтвѣ ⁙‿	
34	[Ж]Юже покть / вьсакън възДрастъ ⁙‿	
35	Юнъ н старъ•/ свонмь разоумомь ⁙‿	
36	[Ꙁ]Ꙗзыкъ новъ•/ хвалоу въздаіа прнсно ⁙‿	
37	Оцоу сноу / н прѣстоуоумоу дхоу ⁙‿	
38	Кмоуже чьсть / н дрьжава н слава ⁙‿	
39	Отъ в[ь]сеіа // тварн н дыханніа ⁙‿	
40	Въ в[ь]са вѣкы•/ н на вѣкы амннъ ⁙‿	
	...× ´ ˘/ – 17 = **42.5%** / ...× ´ ˘ – 18 = **45%**	...× ´ ˘/ – 13 = **54%** / ...× ´ ˘ – 13 = **54%**

The statistical results of the analysis reveal, before all, that Sobolevskij and Georgiev were both right and not right – there are female clausulae in *Azbuchna molitva*, but their percentage is neither 100, nor 0, but rather around 50, which is also the case in the Greek acrostic. Besides, even though not entirely sure, the supposed lexemes in the Bulgarian poem are probably not the only paroxytone ones and the actual situation in the archetype might have been different. Quite similar is the distribution of paroxytone words just before the clausalae in the two writings. If we turn to Maas postulates, we might suppose some diachronic conditioning, because he calculated that the most serious deviation of the rule was in earlier works and authors, and because some recent investigations in early dodecasyllables – of the third to fourth

century – prove that paroxytone endings are even the exception in them.[24] So, is this just an imitation of the earlier tradition? The data in the Byzantine paraenetic alphabets reveal that the peculiarity is rather characteristic for their whole genre, no matter the time of origin (Anastasijević 1905: 20, 24, 34, 38–39, 41, 47, 48, 56, 58). It seems that Constantine of Preslav was not only fluent in iambic trends but much aware of the subtle peculiarities of the sub-genre of alphabetic acrostics or, at least, attentive enough to be able to apply all his knowledge for high poetic purposes in his own language.

4. Prosody

Simply put, prosody is kept on the strong positions of the iambic trimeter (that is, on the even syllables) – the even syllables seem to be graphically long even in the latest poems labeled as ἴαμβοι. Specialists in Byzantine poetry underline the visuality of this feature and call it *Augenpoesie* (Rhoby 2011: 137) and *Sheinprosodie* (Bernard 2010: 16).[25] The presence of visual prosody is accepted axiomatically by all the experts in the field[26] but Lauxtermann is most specific in determining it: the iambic trimeter is a dodecasyllabic verse without resolution[27] with anceps on the odd positions (their length does not matter), long even syllables and *brevis in longo* at the end of the verse (which

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[24]   Another point in this respect is considered by Rhoby (2011: 140, note 134) who quotes the scholarly opinion that about 48% of the lexemes in the late Greek thesaurus were paroxytone by default. In addition, a linguistic factor that should be taken into consideration when observing the development of paroxytone verse endings is that in the late Greek language, the enclitics transfer their accent on the last syllable of their preceding word (Bernard 2018: 33).

[25]   See also Maas (1903: 301–303) who names it "historische Ortographie der Versifikation". Lauxtermann (1998: 24, 33) emphasises that even though prosody might have been understood by the Byzantines, the ancient metrics remains abstract for them. How much more this must be true for the Old Bulgarian men of letters.

[26]   Special attention is paid to "mistakes in prosody" in certain works by George of Pisidia by Romano (1985: 4–6).

[27]   Probably because resolutions would break isosillabicity. And yet, some of the verses of 13 and 14 syllables may well be explained by the substitution of a visually long syllable with two short ones. The exceptional verse 19 of St Gregory's poem observed here is most probably of this kind. Moreover, St Gregory the Theologian is one of the most cited earlier authors when it comes to verses with resolutions (see for example Zagklas (2019: 4 and the literature given in note 13 there)).

means that even a short final syllable counts like a long one).[28] One last necessary clarification is that the dichrona – α, ι, υ – are counted long or short depending on the syllable they belong to.[29]

So, how do the two alphabetic acrostics accord with these principles? St Gregory's poem shows that 94 (83%) of its even syllables counted[30] are visually long (marked in bold below) and 19 (16.9%) of them (underlined below) are not.

Table 4. Visual prosody in St Gregory's poem

	Γρηγόριος ο Θεολόγος, **Στίχων ἡ ἀκροστιχὶς...**
1	ἀρχ**ὴν** ἀπ**άν**των / κ**αὶ** τέλ<u>ος</u> ποι**οῦ** Θεόν.
2	βί**ου** τὸ κ<u>έ</u>ρδος, / ἐκβιο**ῦν** καθ᾽ **ἡ**μέραν.
3	γίν**ω**σκε π**άν**τα / τ**ῶν** καλ**ῶν** τὰ δρ**ά**ματα.
4	δειν<u>ὸν</u> πέν<u>ε</u>σθαι, / χε**ῖ**ρον δ᾽ **εὐ**πορε**ῖν** κακῶς.
5	εὐ<u>ε</u>ργετ**ῶν** νόμιζε // μιμε**ῖσθαι** Θεόν.
6	ζ**ή**τ**ει** Θε**οῦ** σοι / χρηστότ**η**τα χρηστὸς ὤν.
7	ἡ σ**ὰ**ρξ κρατ**είσθω** / κ**αὶ** δαμ**α**ζ**έσθω** καλῶς.
8	θυμ<u>ὸν</u> χαλ**ί**νου, / μ**ὴ** φρεν**ῶν** ἔξω πέσῃς.
9	ἵστ**η** μὲν <u>ὄ</u>μμα, / γλ**ῶ**σσα δ<u>ὲ</u> στ**ά**θμ**ην** ἔχοι.
10	κλεὶς **ὠ**σὶ κ**είσθω**, / μηδὲ π<u>ο</u>ρνεύ**οι** γέλως.

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[28] Here follows the exact quotation: "The pure form, so we are told, consists of iambs in the second and the fourth positions, iambs or spondaics in the first, the third and the fifth positions, and iambs or pyrrhics in the sixth position. In other words, the pure form is the iambic verse of twelve syllables with anceps in the uneven positions and *brevis in longo* at the verse end" (Lauxtermann 1998: 17). To be even more precise, the compulsory short positions are just the third, the seventh and the eleventh, since, from the prosodical aspect, the iamb consists of a short and a long syllable, the spondee – of two long ones and the pyrrhic of two shorts but in this case, its second could be also long (because the sixth position could be also iamb), so such a verse has the following schematic representation: Ū – U – Ū/ – U// – Ū – U –. The same excerpt from the poem on iambs, attributed most often to Michael Psellos, is referred to also in Hörandner (1995: 286 including note 28) and Bernard (2018: 17).

[29] Lauxtermann convincingly proves that the pure iambs (καθαροὶ στιχοὶ) in Byzantine metrics is a term referring to verses without resolution and that the Byzantines used it to designate their dodecasyllable in order to distinguish it, on the one hand, from the ancient iambic trimeter, and, on the other, to emphasise the genetic connection between the two (Lauxtermann 1998: 7–19).

[30] I excluded from counting the last syllables of each verse as they are long by position as well as the second hemistich of verse 19 (the only one of thirteen syllables) since I am not sure how to count syllables if indeed a resolution is applied.

11	λύχνος βί**ου** σοι / **παντὸς ἡ**γείσθ**ω** λόγος.
12	μή σ**οι** τὸ **εἶ**ναι / τ**ῷ** δοκ**εῖ**ν ὑπ<u>ο</u>ρρέοι.
13	νό**ει** τὰ π**ά**ντα, / πρ**ᾶ**σσε δ᾽ **ἃ** πράσσειν θέμις.
14	ξέν<u>ο</u>ν σε**αυ**τὸν **ἴ**σθι, // **καὶ** τίμ**α** ξέν**ους**.
15	ὅτ᾽ **εὐ**πλο**εῖ**ς, /μάλιστα μέμνησ<u>ο</u> ζάλης.
16	πάντ᾽ **εὐ**χαρίστως / δ**εῖ** δέχεσθαι τ**ὰκ** Θεοῦ.
17	ῥάβδ<u>ο</u>ς δικ**αί**ου / πλ**εῖ**ον **ἢ** τιμ**ὴ** κακοῦ.
18	σοφ**ῶ**ν θύρ**ας** ἔκτριβε, // πλ**ου**σί**ων** δὲ μή.
19	τὸ μικρὸν **οὐ** μικρ<u>ό</u>ν, / ὅταν ἐκφέρῃ μέγα.
20	ὕβριν χαλίνου, / **καὶ** μέγας ἔσ**ῃ** σοφός
21	φύλ**ασ**σε σ**αυ**τόν, / πτ**ῶ**μα δ᾽ **ἄ**λλ**ου** μ**ὴ** γέλα.
22	χάρις φθον**εῖ**σθαι, / τ<u>ὸ</u> φθον**εῖ**ν δ᾽ αἶσχ<u>ο</u>ς μέγα.
23	ψυχ**ὴ** θύ**οι**το / μ**ᾶ**λλον **ἢ** τὸ π**ᾶ**ν θεῷ.
24	ὦ τίς φυλ**ά**ξει τ**αῦ**τα // **καὶ** σωθ**ή**σεται.

The analysis of the Slavonic piece runs into two obstacles. First, the manu-script text has only one of the letters for *o* and *i* – the pairs ѻ/ѡ and н/ι (and the respective Glagolitic Ⰳ/Ⱉ and Ⰺ/Ⱌ) are not preserved in it.[31] Second, the Old Bulgarian language just emerged as a literary one in the ninth century and did not have the long tradition of the Greek including in poetry. Could those obstacles be possibly overcome?

I have checked a later and shorter translated poetic text first – a random Synaxarion verse unit[32] – with the hope that it would suggest what to look for in the alphabetic prayer. Here, the *jers* should not be counted as they no longer sounded in the fourteenth century.

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[31]   Even if they were present in the original, the manuscript copying procedure, especially if combined with dictation, would quickly erase the difference between the members of the opposition.

[32]   The Synaxarion verses are in fact Christopher of Mytilene's dodecasyllabic calendar (of the eleventh century) which is a model for all the peculiarities of the Byzantine dodecasyllable (cf. Eftymiadis 2014: 163–165). They have two South Slavonic translations dated to the fourteenth century (cf. Taseva 2006: 170–171).

Table 5. Visual prosody in Synaxar verses

Christopher of Mytilene's dodeca-syllabic calendar (eleventh century) Eustratiades 154	Bulgarian translation, MS Zogr 80, f. 2v (fourteenth century)
Ὁ χρηστὸς ἡμῖν **Εὐ**τρόπιος τ**οὺ**ς τρόπους,	хо̑ вашїнмъ нравомъ бл҃г**ын** нравъ• 4–5, 9–10
Ἐφ**εῦ**ρε Χριστὸν κ**αὶ** τέλ**ους** διὰ ξίφους.	обрѣте х҃а н меунѭ конуннѭ• 8–9
Καὶ Κλ<u>ε</u>όνικος **εὐ**κλε**ᾶ** νίκην ἔχει,	н клео̀нннкъ бл҃гославнѭѭ побѣдѫ нма̑• 2–3, 8–9
Σταυρ**ῷ** κρεμ**ασ**θείς, **ὡ**ς Χριστ<u>ό</u>ς μου π**ά**λαι. (11 syll.)	на крⷮѣ повѣшенъ ιако же х҃с моѝ древле• 12–13
Εἰρκτὴν τὸ σ**ῷ**μα κ**αὶ** πρὸ τῆς εἰρκτῆς ἔχων,	тъмннцѫ тⷮѣло н прѣжѐ тъмннцѫ нмѣѫ•
Εἰρκτ**ῶ**ν λυτρ**οῦ**ται Β**α**σιλ<u>ί</u>σκος <u>ἐ</u>κ δύο.	тъмннца н̑збавн сѧ васнлнскъ обоихъ• 12–13

The Greek source text shows a slightly lower percentage of deviations (the underlined vowels in Κλ<u>ε</u>όνικος, Χριστ<u>ό</u>ς, Β<u>α</u>σιλ<u>ί</u>σκος <u>ἐ</u>κ) – just four visually short syllables on even positions, besides, three of them in personal names. The Bulgarian text, again, does not show the desired pairs о/ѡ and н/ı, but what stands out even at first glance is that all, but one (бл҃г**ын**),[33] adjacent vowels appear on the borders between even and odd syllables. Could this peculiarity – the exclusive use of adjacent vowels on the borders between even and odd syllables – be some graphic imitation of the Byzantine visual prosody?

The analysis of *Azbuchna molitva* does not give a definite answer in this respect, as the percentage of the adjacent vowels beginning with an even syllable there is 57.1% (20 uses out of 35) while the ones with initial odd syllable account to 42.8%. In addition, the positions of the first, fifth and nineth syllables is considered anceps for the Byzantine dodecasyllable (see note 28 above), so it is more accurate to count 20 out of 29 uses on even positions (68.9%) and 9 appearances starting on the odd positions which definitely need to be short (31%).

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33   The exceptional one falls on an anceps position (see note 28).

Table 6. Visual prosody in Constantine's poem

№	Text	Syllables
1	Аꙁъ словомь симъ // молю сѧ боу ⁖⁓	
2	Бѣ в[ь]сеꙗ твари // и ꙁиждителю ⁖⁓	4–5
3	Видимыимъ / и невидимыимъ ⁖⁓	3–4, 10–11
4	Га дꙋха / посъли живоущаго ⁖⁓	
5	Да въдъхнеть / въ срьдьце ми слово ⁖⁓	
6	Ѥже боудеть / на оуспѣхъ вьсѣмъ ⁓	
7	Живоущиимъ / въ ꙁаповѣдьхъ ти ⁖⁓	3–4
8	Ѕѣло бо ѥсть / свѣтильникъ жиꙁни ⁖⁓	
9	Ꙁаконъ твои·/ и свѣтъ стьꙁамъ ⁖⁓	
10	[Ꙇ]же ищеть / ѥѵнгельска слова ⁓	
11	И просить / дарꙑ твоꙗ приѧти ⁖⁓	7–8, 9–10 (11 syll.)
12	[ꙃ. лѣтъ нꙑнѣ / и словѣньско племѧ]	
13	Къ крьщению·/ обратиша сѧ вьси ⁖⁓	4–5
14	Людиѥ твои·/ нарещи сѧ хотѧще ⁖⁓	2–3, 4–5
15	Милости твоꙗ·/ бе просѧть ꙃѣло ⁖⁓	4–5
16	Нъ мънѣ нꙑнѣ·/ пространо слово даждь ⁖⁓	
17	Оуе сне·/ и прѣстꙑи дꙋше ⁖⁓	8–9
18	Просѧщоуоумоу·/ помощи ѿ тебе ⁖⁓	3–4
19	Роуцѣ бо свои / горѣ въꙁдѣю присно ⁖⁓	4–5, 9–10
20	Силоу приѧти·/ и моудрость оу тебе ⁖⁓	3–4
21	Тꙑ бо даѥши / достоиномъ силоу ⁖⁓	3–4
22	Упостась же·/ вьсакоую цѣлиши ⁖⁓	8–9
23	Фараоша мѧ·/ ꙁълобꙑ иꙁбави ⁖⁓	
24	Херовьскоу ми·/ мꙑсль и оумъ даждь ⁖⁓	
25	[Ѡ]О ѵьст[ь]наꙗ·/ прѣстаꙗ троице ⁖⁓	4–5, 8–9, 10–11
26	Печаль мою / на радость прѣложи ⁖⁓	4–5
27	Цѣломоудрьно·/ да наоучоу пьсати ⁖⁓	
28	Чюдеса твоꙗ·/ прѣдивьнаꙗ ꙃѣло ⁖⁓	4–5, 9–10
29	Шестькрилатъ·/ силоу въсприимъ ⁖⁓	9–10 (11 syll.)

30	Шьствоую нꙑнѣ·/ по слѣдоу оучнтелю ⁙‿	2–3
31	Нменн ею·/ н дѣлоу послѣдоуꙗ ⁙‿	4–5, <u>11–12</u>
32	[Ѣ]Ꙗвѣ сътворю·/ еваньгельско слово ⁙‿	
33	Хвалоу въздаꙗ·/ трцн въ бжьствѣ ⁙‿	4–5, 6–7
34	[Ж]Юже поꙙть / вьсакън въздрастъ ⁙‿	<u>3–4</u>, 8–9
35	Юнъ н старъ·/ своꙗмь разоумомь ⁙‿	<u>5–6</u>
36	[Ѫ]Ꙗзꙑкъ новъ·/ хвалоу въздаꙗ прнсно ⁙‿	<u>9–10</u>
37	Оцоу сноу / н прѣстоумоу дхоу ⁙‿	
38	Ѥмоуже ꙗьсть / н дрьжава н слава ⁙‿	
39	Отъ в[ь]сеꙗ // творн н дꙑханнꙗ ⁙‿	4–5, <u>11–12</u>
40	Въ в[ь]са вѣкꙑ·/ н на вѣкꙑ амннъ ⁙‿	

In addition, 6 of the odd-syllable positions (further 20% of the whole) are between syllables 3–4, while there is none positioned between syllables 2–3. Are the cases 3–4 compensating for the lack of cases 2–3? Indubitably, it is difficult to compose such a combination from the very second syllable when the poet's main concern is to select a word beginning with a particular letter to convey particular thought in the coherent text of a prayer. As already demonstrated above, the importance of the acrostich prevails over the iambic peculiarities. The modern translations of *Azbuchna molitva* further exemplify that either meter or acrostich are easily lost in translation in the attempt to convey the message of the source text.[34]

We should also bear in mind that the proper prosodic versification was considered the most difficult part for the poets in Byzantium and they (at least the better-educated ones) strived at keeping it according to their knowledge

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[34] There are three translations in modern Bulgarian. The earlier one, by Kyril Hristov of 1922 alternates ten-syllable and eleven-syllable rhymed verses with caesura after the fourth syllable from the beginning, or before the fourth from the end, has no acrostich but is the best in conveying the emotion of the original poem. The second one, of Emanuil Popdimitrov of 1933, offers isosyllabic ten-syllable verses without attention to caesuring but with acrostich, and the last one of 1997, by Stojan Shishkov, is pretty much the same. And all this is for translations to the same language yet of different time. In the English translation mentioned at the beginning, both isosyllabicity and ceasuring are lost together with the very acrostich of the poem for the sake of conveying the message of the source text.

and skills.[35] How much more difficult would it be to imitate prosody in a young literary language which knows nothing of poetic alternation between long and short vowels? And if we could only hypothesise on the possibility that Constantine of Preslav was searching for a way to imitate the visual prosody of the Byzantine iamb – and perhaps that some of this imitation, like the alternation of о/ѡ and н/ı, were lost in the transliteration and manuscript copying process – his other achievements are out of doubt.

First and foremost, his prayer accords with the principles of both Byzantine poetry and rhetoric, besides to a degree that not only makes him able to preserve their requirements in his target language, but also allows him to invent new ways to respect them – even by exceeding models and breaking rules. I mean that Constantine allowed adjacent vowels in his poem which are otherwise prohibited by the rhetorical principles, all the rest of which he strictly follows, particularly the principles related to the rhythm of the dodecasyllable – apart from the hiatus, these are: compact structuring of verses/cola, avoidance of pleonasm, of tautology, and of enjambment as well as an isocolic arrangement.[36]

Conclusions

The results from the statistic study presented in this article prove that all the Byzantine metrical requirements are met, as far as possible, which is visible even in the transliterated text of MS Syn. 262, which has most probably lost many of the features of its archetype (not only because of the transliteration from Glagolitic to Cyrillic script, but also in the process of multiple manuscript

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[35]   See Bernard (2010: 108) as well as Hilberg (1900) who distinguish among Byzantine iambographers classic representatives (as George of Pisidia), epigones (as Theodore Prodromos), and amateurs (as the author of Χριστὸς πάσχων) – this division is mentioned numerous times by many modern scholars.

[36]   These rhetorical principles, contributing to the specific rhythm of the Byzantine dodecasyllable, are related to the ideas of εὐρυθμία and γοργότης. They are not characteristic just for this type of poetry (and are applied also in non-poetic genres) but are part of the complex of peculiar triggers of rhythm in it according to the Byzantine rhetors – mainly, yet not exclusively, in the Synopsis of Joseph Racendytes in the chapter dedicated to iambic verses (Walz 1832: 559–562). This specific peculiarity – rhetorical principles related to εὐρυθμία and γοργότης in the Byzantine dodecasyllable – is studied in detail by Hörandner (1995: 287–290) and Lauxtermann (1998: 19–33).

copying, besides in a foreign Slavonic land where local language features have indubitably left traces).

Azbuchna molitva convincingly fits the tradition of the Byzantine dodecasyllable and more precisely in its branch of paraenetic alphabets. What has been previously seen as deviation in this poem actually accords with its genre. The conclusion to be drawn here is that Maas's postulates should be better not taken as a fixed system for all the Byzantine iambographers (and their non-Byzantine followers[37]) but rather as a stable basis requiring further elaborations in relation to material explored after him. Systematisation of specific features needs to continue, besides, not just from the chronological aspect (not just seen in their development) but also from the perspective of the genre (some specifics might be peculiar for a genre, apart from personal styles).

The Bulgarian poem, like the Byzantine paraenetic dodecasyllabic alphabets, aims at presenting the sequence of the letters in an attractive memorisable way. But it is also a kind of micro catechesis as it teaches neophytes to the basic notions of the Christian faith, besides, to the extent of subtle philological details like, for instance, in verse 22, the proper pronunciation of the realia ѵпостась (hypostasis)[38] and its literal meaning (which would ensure a better understanding of the notion by the neophytes at a later stage).

The most specific feature of the Byzantine dodecasyllable – its visual prosody – is probably impossible to fully reproduce in a Bulgarian versification. And, perhaps, for this reason, or just with the idea that it would uselessly burden his perceivers, Constantine of Preslav named his poem not *iambs*, but just *measured prologue*. There is certainly much more about this ninth-century masterpiece that we could not possibly notice or understand. It should, however, never fall in oblivion – because of its mastery and because of its deep meaning.[39]

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[37] On "*iambico*" in the earlier Georgian poetry see Lomidze 2021: 46 and the literature quoted there.

[38] On the reconstruction of a mid-eleventh-century pronunciation of *hypsilon* in Byzantium see Lauritzen (2009).

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