



ANCIENT BULGARIAN CIVILISATION

IDEAS AND BELIEFS - CLOSE OR SIMILAR TO THE PRINCIPLES OF FREEMASONRY

Studies concerning Freemasonry are facing the world. This is natural, because Freemasonry is an universal community and its principles and roots originate from the universal course of civilization and the enlightenment cults and rites.

Spirituality and culture of the European South-East and more specifically - the ancient Bulgarian civilization, which established the Bulgarian State, represent a white page in these studies. This work's objective is to have a look into the philosophy of Orphism and Dengrism as a prerequisite for conceptions and notions, which are close or similar to Freemasonry.

Bulgarian esoterism has carried through the centuries the idea of Tangra, incarnating it into Orphism, Bogomil movement and the White Brotherhood - virtues,

which are Christian in spirit, with a specific Bulgarian value and which have carried over the ages light and enlightenment and becomes an integral part of the Masonic principles.

Being different not only from the Greeks, but from a number of other nations, which currently populate Europe, we, Bulgarians know, that Proto-Bulgarians have worshipped one of the most ancient Gods, who in the various epochs had different names - Tengri, Tangra, Tang-ra, Tanagra. From Herodotis, the father of history, we learn that in the lands of the Balkan Peninsula as early as 480 B.C. there was a town, called Tanagra. Tanagra was named after the Proto-Bulgarian God Katanagra, known as God Tengri from time immemorial.

Its ancient name takes



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us to the Tien Shang Mountain (the Heavenly Mountain), located in the territory of today's China. One of its peaks is also called Tegnri, which proves which part of the world is the Motherland of the forefathers of Proto-Bulgarians and from where the movement of their population has started towards various parts of the globe.

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Ferdinand von Richthoffen (1833-1905) is of the opinion that the Tarim Valley was the seat of the first human cultures. In the area of Pamir Mountain two states, famous in the ancient world, were established - Balgar and Balhara. From there the light of the Bulgarian system of government widely spread around the world, proof of which were three more states, established in the territory of Europe - the States of Bulgaria of Chan Kubrat, the Volga Bulgaria and Bulgaria of Chan Asparouch.

God Tangra is a philosophic trinity of the concepts of Tan (Universe), Nak (Man) and Ra (God). God Tangra is monotheistic. He appears before all nations in that image and under that name which He has chosen Himself. People call Him differently - Savaoth, Christ, Buda, Brahma, Krishna, Yehova, Allah; they have different words for water, bread, fire, but this does not change their essence. Summary leads



The Eternal Calendar of the Bulgarians.

to the universal idea - the Great Architect of the Universe.

Thracian society is bookless, without any literature, but memory-traditional. Its norms, laws and rules were passed on from generation to generation by the noblemen, the High Priests, the chosen ones and the aristocrats. In this respect it has

empathy and common ground with "The Landmarks" - the basic Book of Laws of Freemasonry. The latter were formulated by Robert McCoy in 19 C. A.D., but they have been inherited through the centuries.

"The Landmarks" have no author or spirituality.

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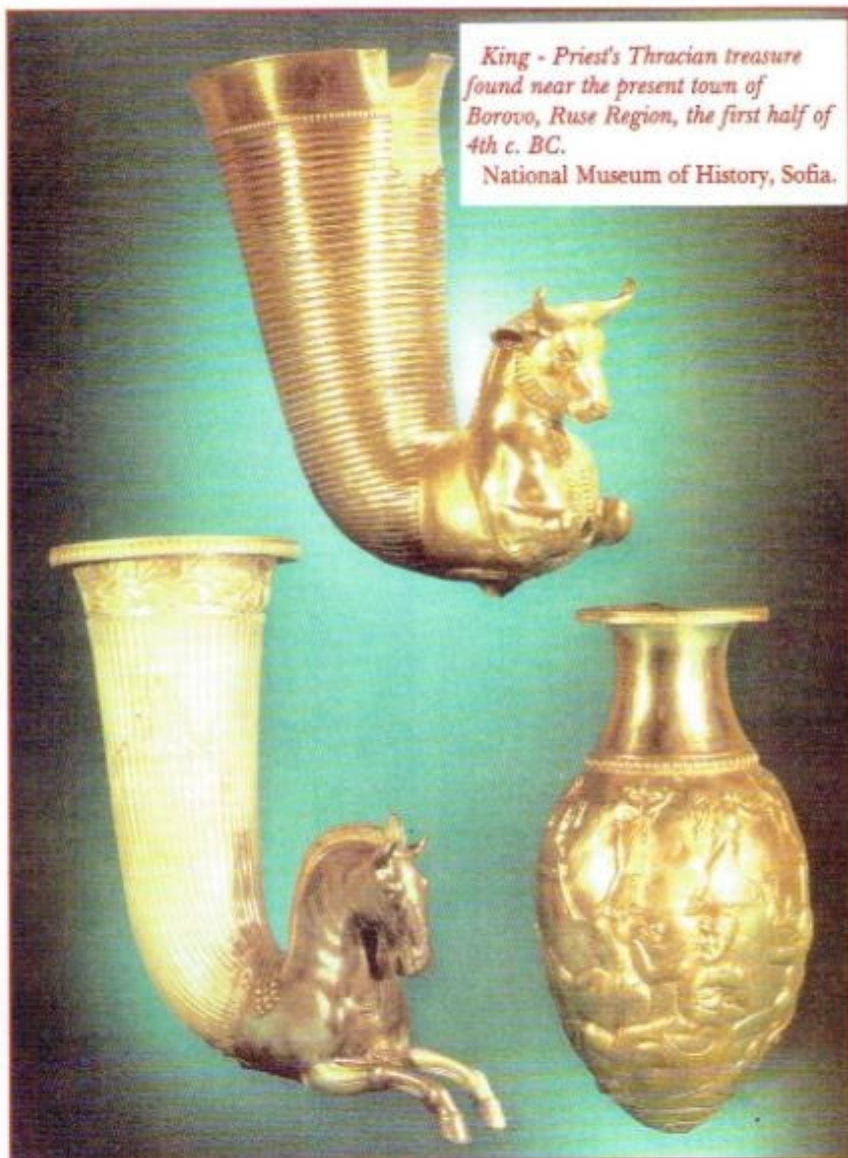
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Their origin is far back in time immemorial. Similar is the situation with Thracians, where notables passed over the verbal memory and tradition.

Along with crafts, jewellers' workmanship of golden utensils and decorations, of supreme importance in the administrative organisation of Thracians, as well as of other nations, were the strata of the High Priests and religion.

The Thracian religion is Orphism, a doctrine of rich content, which embody the concept of Man, the Universe, the Sun and the Underworld. Its personification is Orpheus, a poet, equal to Homer, healer, wonder worker, Prophet and God, whose songs - symbol of the Spirit, Knowledge and Flight towards the Light enchant the living and the dead worlds.

The broadness of concepts, mythological characters and belief in immortality present Orphism as a world phenomenon. In this meaning its doctrine is close to



King - Priest's Thracian treasure found near the present town of Borovo, Ruse Region, the first half of 4th c. BC.
National Museum of History, Sofia.

that of the Jewish and the Biblical contribution to the Masonic science and craft.

Masonic esoterism goes beyond the boundaries of nations and regions, it is universal. It is time to be realised that the ancient civilization in our lands has developed ideas and beliefs, which are close or related to the Masonic

principles. Firstly, the legend of Orpheus contains Divinity and blends with the idea of the Great Architect of the Universe. Secondly, Orphism is based on initiated persons, who acquire enlightenment through trials - something close, if not identical with Freemasonry.

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Thirdly, Orpheus is a Prophet, who preaches enlightenment, harmony and life in conformity with the laws of nature. Fourthly, the love between Orpheus and Euridica is an analogue of human fate, similar to Hiram and Christ; Orpheus is God, while Euridica is an earthly perfection, they get together, but destiny separates them.

Fifthly, Orpheus is torn to pieces by the Vacchantes, his seven-string harp is thrown into the Hebar River (the Maritsa River) and he becomes victim to the evil powers and uncontrolled passions. Sixth, his origin is a symbol, for Orpheus is son of Appolo, i.e. the Sun and his mother, Kaliopa, is a nymph, i.e. Heaven and Earth join together. Seventh, Orpheus' struggle to save Euridica is the struggle of Freemasonry to save the individual and humanity. Eighth, the doctrine of Orpheus was documented by Aristophanus, who wrote:

"Orpheus, above all people, preached the idea of

the Fraternity of Humanity."

The humanness of this pagan philosophy sounds even stronger in what Orpheus said:

"Help for the weak, comfort for the suffering, hope for all."

It is apparent that the ancient Bulgarians came into lands, which are the cradle of an ancient civilization. Above all this is the golden nest of Thracians. But here are also the Slavic tribes and the mighty Byzantium (the Eastern Roman Empire).

Based on the oldest source of the Bulgarian system of government, "The List of Bulgarian Khans", some researchers emphasise the fact that the first Bulgarian settlements on the Balkans are dated 165 A.D. They are of the opinion that this is the beginning of their advent to Europe. "Bulgaria - note some researchers - is the only state, created during the Great Migration of Peoples in the territory of the European South-East, which has survived to this date under the same

name." The archaeological treasures, recently discovered by Dr. Georgi Kitov in the tomb near Kazanlak, enrich the idea of the civilization in the Bulgarian lands in the 5th -4th Century B.C.

Is it possible that that civilization and the ancient Bulgarian religion, embodied into God Tangra and the Seven Gods, which correspond to the Solar system, to have failed to touch to universal and all-human ideas, which are actually the ideas of Freemasonry? The answer should be sought in the Stone Book of the Ages. So far 1,500 stone and numismatic signs have been discovered, which represent chronicles of the Bulgarian system of government, as "the most significant of all stone inscriptions is the MADARA CAVALRY-MAN". It was sculptured there at the time when the Capital, Pliska, was being built.

The idea of the Light and its struggle with the dark and evil forces have a central place in the ancient Bulgarian religion.

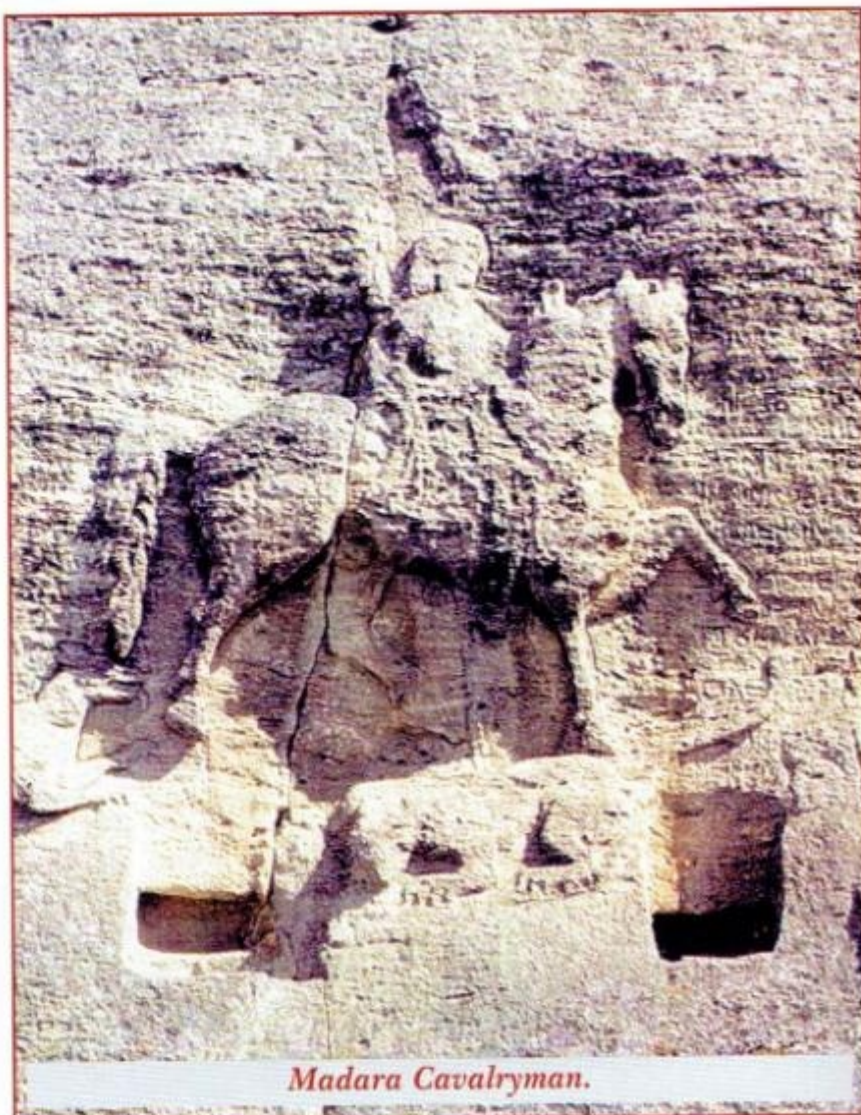
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This is the major similarity of the ancient Bulgarian civilization with the Masonic doctrine. Researchers emphasise that the idea of the Sun and the Seven Planets is the most important idea in the beliefs of the ancient Bulgarians. The impulse towards the Light is a synonym of creating good, mutual respect, tolerance - qualities, which create a tolerant spirituality. This conception of the world, which is central for the ancient religion of the Seven, left an enduring trace in the character of the peoples.

Inspired and lead by its religion, the ancient Bulgarian did not get into fetishism and obscure ideas, but looked up to the star-filled skies and to the Universe. Light is the landmark in his life and he feels himself as a beam, which has turned its sight towards the Seven Heavenly Planets. This religious rite rose the ancient individual and opposed him to darkness and ignorance. It made him committed to the eternal ideal - to seek



Madara Cavalryman.

Enlightenment and Light.

The belief in the Light, the strive for flying to the skies rose the ancient Bulgarians to the feeling of being a grain of the Universe - the Heavenly Star. This feeling, and we could even say religious rite, which rose the individual and opposed him to darkness, involved him with the great ideas that govern humanity in all

times. Having turned his eyes to the infinity of the skies full of stars, the ancient Bulgarian felt as he was both a beam and a star, called upon to seek and create Light.

Those ideas, sealed in the symbol of God Tangra, called Den Gri, is depicted with the sign - IYI - and perceived as the Heavenly Tree.

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Bronze rosette with Bulgarian runic signs, found in Pliska, IX c., and its symbolic meaning.



Moon

Mars

Mercury



Sun

Venus

Saturn

Jupiter

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Den Gri - IYI - is equal in meaning to the Calvary Cross. Dengrism, or, to be more precise - Tangrism, embodies the meaning of faith through the sign IYI. The right column is the Sun, the left column - the Moon, and the middle is the all-seeing and seeking impulse, symbolised by the Tree of Life. The ritual concept of the ancient Bulgarian is similar to the symbolism of the Lodge, where behind and above the throne of the Worshipful Master are the Sun, the Moon and the All-seeing Eye.

The pre-Christian religion of the ancient Bulgarians, represented by Dengrism (from

Tangra), and embodied in its symbol IYI, is a proof of a high degree of civilization.

Its rituals, beliefs and rites are drawn from the Solar system, i.e. from Nature. Andrew Michael Ramsay, creator of the Supreme Degrees, said the same about Freemasonry.

Many researches point out that the sign IYI is seen 50 times on the rocks in Pliska and Preslav and 157 times on other archaeological discoveries. It is a personification of the idea of the Light. From there comes the name Den Gri, i.e. symbol of Heaven, God and the Sun.

"Bulgarian festive loafs

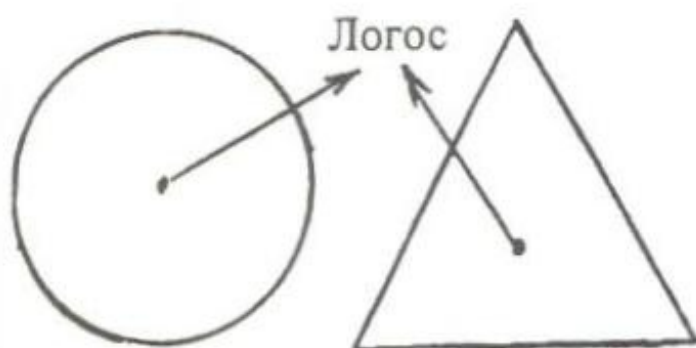
of bread, on which even nowadays the three signs IYI of the word IUI are placed, have brought to us the memory of this very ancient Bulgarian faith. The meaning of this sign on the loafs of bread is "Bless it, Sun!". The idea of the Light is to an equal extent conceptual for both the religion of ancient Bulgarians and for Freemasonry.

Den-Gri (sign IYI) is the heavenly God the Thunderer. This is a theme of the pre-Christian religion of Bulgarians - abolished during the period of conversion to Christianity (864 A.D.), enforced by Tsar Boris I.

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Runic inscription from Biala, Varna Region.



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"Up till the moment - wrote Alexander Moshev - when Geza Fehar (a Hungarian scholar, who has been doing archaeological excavations in Bulgaria)" has deciphered the word "Tangra" on the small marble column from Madara, very little was known about the ancient Bulgarian religion. As a result of his research Geza Fehar concludes: "That means that Bulgarians have called their God with the name of Tangra". After him, the Bulgarian scholar Vesselin Beshevliev involved himself with these problems. He was "the scholar, who devoted his work on the complete and full publishing of the ancient Bulgarian

inscriptions. His contribution was the detailed description of the small marble column from Madara with the inscription, containing the word "Tangra".

In 1997 Prof. D. Ovcharov published a collection of articles, "Proto-Bulgarian religion, origin and essence".

The summary is focused on "The Madara Cavalryman - Tangra", which is symbol of the Supreme Deity of Bulgarians. From Freemasonic point of view the concept of Tangra is incorporated into the general concept of the Great Architect of the Universe, because Bulgarians made a cult of the mighty astronomic forces, which predetermine human destinies.

Tangra is the Supreme God - God of the Sun, God of Heaven. His gross is IY I, Den Gri, i.e. Heaven. The great Bulgarian scholar Vesselin Beshevliev (who managed to decipher the inscription on the Madara Cavalryman) wrote, that "by its meaning the sign IY I correspond to the Cross", i.e. it is what the Cross is for Christianity. From here comes the name Dengrism, equal to the Heavenly God (i.e. Tangra). Milosh Sidorov points out that "Bulgarian Dengrism was not only a tribal religion, but also universal". This is why he suggests "to call Bulgarian Dengrism Bulgarianism" - something which means "religious belonging".

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Material expressions of God and Light are diverse. One of them is the Golden Candelabra, called Menorah.

According to Roman chronicles, the "Golden Menorah" was brought to Rome from Jerusalem by Emperor Titus, son of Vessacianus, 70 years B.C. This Menorah, i.e. a seven-arm candelabra, is determined as one of the 100 treasures of the world. Later (in 534 A.D.) this trophy was taken to Byzantium (Constantinople). According to one of the versions, crusaders from the Fourth Crusade conquered the city in 1204 and took the Menorah back to Jerusalem. But evidence about this are few and from there on the traces of this miraculous piece of art are lost.

In volume, the Menorah had seven majestic branches with many ornaments, cups for holy oil, candle-wick etc. It was made of pure gold and weighted 40 kg. Jews used to call it the Menorah of Moses. Placed in King Solomon's Temple, its

branches pointer North - South, which symbolized Darkness and Light. The Menorah's symbolic meaning is great. It was an analogue of the Creation of the Universe by God within seven days, while the main (carrying) beam was a symbolic fest of rest.

The Golden Menorah is a personification of the Heavenly Tree of Light. This belief exists in the ancient Bulgarian, too. It is depicted on stone inscriptions, pottery and amulets. "One of the features - wrote Milosh Sidorov - by which the Bulgarian Menorah differs from the Jewish one, is the horizontal line, which separates the Terrestrial (the "second level", "the branches", i.e. "the tribes") from the Celestial world ("the third level", i.e. "the Light").

The interesting thing is that "the Bulgarian Tree of Light", or the Bulgarian Menorah, forms the letter "Self" in its root and stem.

This is a founding symbol of Bulgarians: the first letter of the Glagolitic alphabet, which later passed over to the Cyrillic

alphabet. The "Self" is the man, individuality - the main thing given to the individual. Bulgarian history shows, that the "Self" is their essence - strong and impossible to eradicate. This symbol or the first sacred letter has a graphic depiction + with seven dots. "Bulgarians must become aware of its own identity - to rediscover the "Bulgarian Self", embedded in them and to start living according to their own laws and moral"

It actually concerns human rights and opportunities. This concept is in harmony with equality of men, their sovereignty - the ideas, adopted by Freemasonry. "Every man on Earth represents a certain valuable, part of the Infinite Cosmos and part of the "Big Self" of human civilization".

The "Self" is symbol of Bulgarians along with the flag, the coat of arms, the anthem and other national facts, such as territory, state etc. The "Self" and the Orthodox religion (the Cross), i.e. the script and faith are main points of Bulgarians.

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*Runic sign probably
of God Tangra from Pliska.*



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From here come the greatness of the "Holy Brothers Cyril and Methodius" and the role of May 24 - the day of Bulgarian culture and Slavonic Alphabet. But the "Self" as an emblem of Bulgarians also has international meaning. This is the notion of "human rights". This is the individual and personality in general. This concept is a determining membrane of civilization. The "Self", in its symbolic expression "+" is closer to all-human measurements and symbols, to be more precise, which come from the Bible or have biblical origin, from the Cabala as well (the science of digits) and from numerous other

esoteric (concealed, closed) communities, brought together in the symbol of "the Tree of Life", mentioned above. The analogue, discovered between the "Self" and "the Tree of Life", means one thing: "Live by God's commands!" God created Man, nature, the living creatures and marine life and does not forbid Man to live abiding by the Word of God. Not taking sides on the issue of religious beliefs, the Masonic ideal is a relative to the ideal of "Self". Each and every Brother is equal, everyone is individual, everyone is a beam. The great and unique "Self" is the Great Architect of the Universe. What Bulgarians can be proud of is that they have

had an alphabet in which to read and write since the 9 Century A.D. - this is manifestation of their long history and ancient civilization.

Another proximity (apart for the concept of Light) of the ancient Bulgarian beliefs with Masonic symbolism is the figure Seven, which is equivalent to the Lodge, consisting of Seven Masters - the basic unit of the Masonic institution. Masons are Children of the Widow - term with a tremendous metaphorical charge. In his famous speech in 1837 Ramsey indicated that Masonic principles were not invented, but drawn from experience and from nature.

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The Children of the Widow come not only from the fact that their Great Martyr, Hiram, was the son of a widow. Nor do they come from the fact that the Egyptian God Osiris was killed, but his widow gathered all pieces of his mutilated body ("the Brotherly chain") and restored Him. Free Masons are children of Mother Earth, they obtain their knowledge and wisdom, but she is a widow, because she is alone at night and the fertilizing Sun has set. It is from Her that the figure Seven comes, it also comes for the seven days of the week, from the seven stars in Heaven; the Sun, the Moon, Venus, Mars, Mercury, Saturn, Jupiter.

The Divine sign IYI has seven limbs. The Menorah, symbol of Light, has seven candelabras. Belief in the seven Planets comes second to the belief in the Sun in the religion of ancient Bulgarians. A significant evidence of this is the Bronze Rosette, found in Pliska, whose origin is

dated in the 9th Century A.D.

This relic can be called the stone Bible of Dengrism, i.e. Bulgarianism. This philosophy grows on the grounds of sovereignty, property and closeness of the population to nature. When assessing it we must take into consideration the historic fate of the nation, which is not only tragic (due to the foreign oppression and internal civil wars), but also has some valuable advantages. This is what one author writes about it: "Bulgaria was the first European country, which abolished slavery, which was typical for Rome and even for the ancient Greek republics, but at the same time has not introduced the feudal or semi-feudal forms of dependence, typical for Byzantium of that time." The religion of the Sun and the Seven Stars is a religion of "free men" - something which strengthens freedom and virtues.

And so, the Bronze Rosette, with its seven beams (each one dedicat-

ed to a planet) and the sacred symbol IYI gather the religious philosophy is a nucleus. The belief in seven Gods, taken as a symbols, has a point of contact with the Masonic attitude towards the sacred figure, together with the Trinity. It originates from drawing the orbital 28-day lunar cycle, i.e. it evolves from the laws of nature. From here come the universal character of the seven beams of the Bronze Rosette. God created the world within seven days. The most ancient people worshipped seven "Immortal Lights" :

- good intentions;
- supreme righteousness;
- desired Kingdom of God;
- pious humbleness;
- superb health;
- rejuvenated immortality;
- vigilant obedience.

It is obvious that the said dicta are part of the Masonic view of life, preaching care for one's health, too. Also known are seven deadly sins, seven arts, seven rites.

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The Bulgarian religious fest "St. Cyril and St. Methodius and their Five Disciples" is a fest and figure of the creators of the Bulgarian alphabet and their disciples.

"The Bronze Seven-beam Rosette" - concludes Milosh Sidorov - substantially supports the thesis that identification of the cosmic tree with Seven Branches, Seven Heavenly Stars and Seven Heavens, is one of the foundations of the religious system, which in our lands has remained a strong state religion till the forced conversion to Christianity."

Every religious and super religious community seeks support in the positive principle. For Freemasonry this is the processing of the rough Ashlars, i.e. perfecting what nature has provided us with.

Although there is a certain remoteness from the concepts of Freemasonry, it is interesting to know is what forces and characters the ancient Bulgarian religion sought support. If acacia is such symbol fro

A two-headed eagle on the stone sarcophagus of Tsar Ivan Alexander (1371).



Freemasonry, for the ancient Bulgarians this was the super mythical creature - Gryphon. It unites the power of the Lion and the Eagle, which have become personification, might and invincibility. "In the ancient eastern states" - wrote Prof. L. Doncheva-Petkova - "the Gryphon has become guardian of the deified King and a "supreme" state symbol." The Gryphon in the Bulgarian religion was the most

widely spread mythical symbol of power - sometimes an evil genius, but in most cases - patron of the official authority, the Tsar, the altar and order. As far as meaning is concerned, there are some parallel aspirations, because in its functions Freemasonry (although on some occasions it has a negative attitude towards a particular system of government) in most cases is a creative institution.

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There is one more thing: centuries go by, but Freemasonry remains, and the idea of the Gryphon is the same - "it always wins". Its image in the available stone, written, monetary and pottery items is diversified.

More important in this case is something else - the source or power that is sought. Added to the combination "Lion - Eagle" is also the Eagle's vigilant eye. "Initially presented as Satan, catching the souls, later (after Dante) - in view of its power over the Earth and the Air - the Gryphon became symbol of the two principles of Jesus Christ - the divine and the human. The Solar symbolism of the two beasts (lion and eagle) also strengthens this positive giving new meaning to it. Thus the Gryphon became both destructor of snakes and Vassilises, considered as incarnation of Devil's Demons. Even Christ's Ascension was symbolically connected to the Gryphon. In the arts and crafts the Gryphon was depicted on fabrics, golden jewellery etc. to no less-

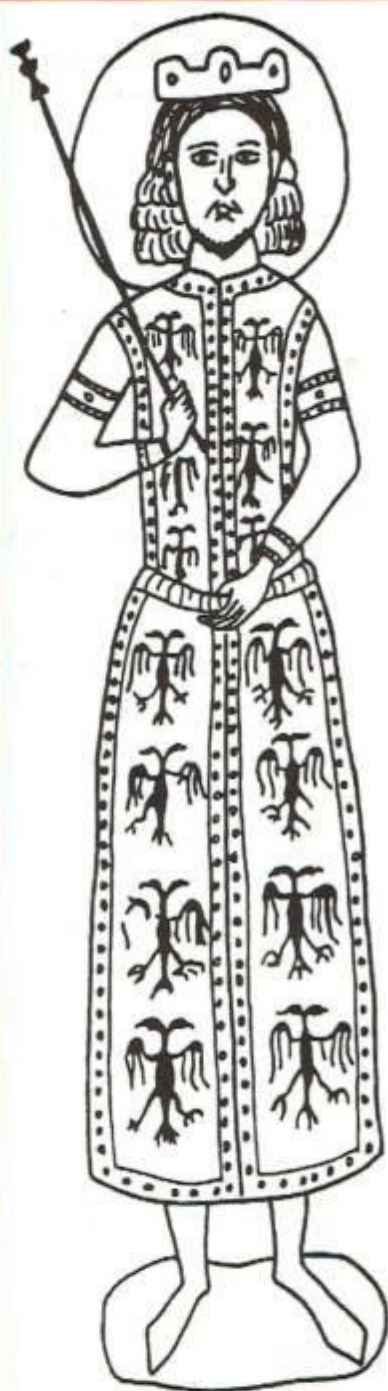
er extent that in heraldry." Having undergone evolution in all of its variants, it is symbol of power and rule, it span the weal of destiny. Through its mythology and human mind seek an image which can clearly present the mighty forces of the earth and Heavens, which are independent of humans. Its graphic expression and metal treatment is an evidence of a high level of crafts.

If we assume that the sign of a Mason is the Two-headed Eagle - symbolising the two-sided nature of Man, then we will discover the analogue of the highest merit of 33°. This image is symbol of nobility, royalty, power and of the chosen ones. This is in harmony with the mission of Freemasonry to prepare the enlightened ones, who will lead the Children of God. At the same time the Two-headed Eagle is symbol of elite, courtiers, loftiness. Since time immemorial this symbol is an insignia, worn on the clothes. This tradition, born in centuries back, was adopted by Free Masons. The Two-headed

Eagle is the coat of arms of the Istanbul Patriarchy and is widely spread in Bulgaria.

The first images of Two-headed Eagle in Bulgarian history appear in the 11th Century A.D. There are stone inscriptions, pottery, fabrics. It is deemed that the earliest monument is a stone slab, discovered in Stara Zagora - two heads with vigilant eyes. Another image was found in Tsaravets - Veliko Turnovo - symmetrical heads, spread wings. Various hypotheses were voiced about it, but recently has been prevailing the opinion that it was the heraldic symbol of the Bulgarian Tsar Mihail Shishman. Other images of Two-headed Eagle were also found in Tsaravets. The famous Bulgarian scholar Prof. Krastyu Miyatev is of the opinion that one of the Two-headed Eagle images was placed on the sarcophagus of Tsar Ivan Alexander. An additional proof of this is that the symbol was depicted in the Tetraevangelia of Ivan Alexander. L. Doncheva-Petkova wrote:

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A detail from a miniature of the London Tetraevangelia with the image of Constantine - Tsar Ivan Alexander's son-in-law with a garment decorated with two-headed eagles (1356).

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"The number of monuments with a Two-headed Eagle depicted and related to the name of Tsar Ivan Alexander constantly increases."

Taking into consideration that the Eagle is the "King of Birds" and that it is an insignia of Free Masons, its appearance in our lands so many centuries ago is an evidence for a culture, because the Eagle is symbol of heights, it looks at the Sun and in many respects (according to some legends) it was worshiped as God of the Sun. Because with its eagle's eye it sees snakes, reptiles and dragons and grabs them in its talons, the Eagle is also treated as carrier of Light. Bulgarian people's psychology also accepts it as such - symbol of the heights, i.e. the Sun, Light and Strength. This is why the Two-headed Eagle with a crown, covering both heads and a sword, held horizontally in its talons, is symbol of the highest 33°. At the same time it is accompanied by the by the motto:

"Deus meumque ins", meaning "God and my right". Our highly esteemed Brethren can be proud that more than 1,000 years ago, when Freemasonry (as a modern institution) is not present, the Bulgarian rulers and nobilities wore the "Two-headed Eagle" sign on their clothes. This discovery is sufficient to suggest to us traditions, ideas and characters, which have existed in Bulgarian culture in the ancient times. As a heraldic sign the Eagle is a coat of arms. In this function it plays the role of Guardian, because it is King among birds, capable of rejuvenating itself - and this is the symbol of Victory. It may roam the skies and dash like an arrow towards the earth's bosom.

The King of birds, which adorns the lapels of Free Masons, has been inhabiting Bulgarian spirituality for five centuries before modern Freemasonry has come to existence.

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