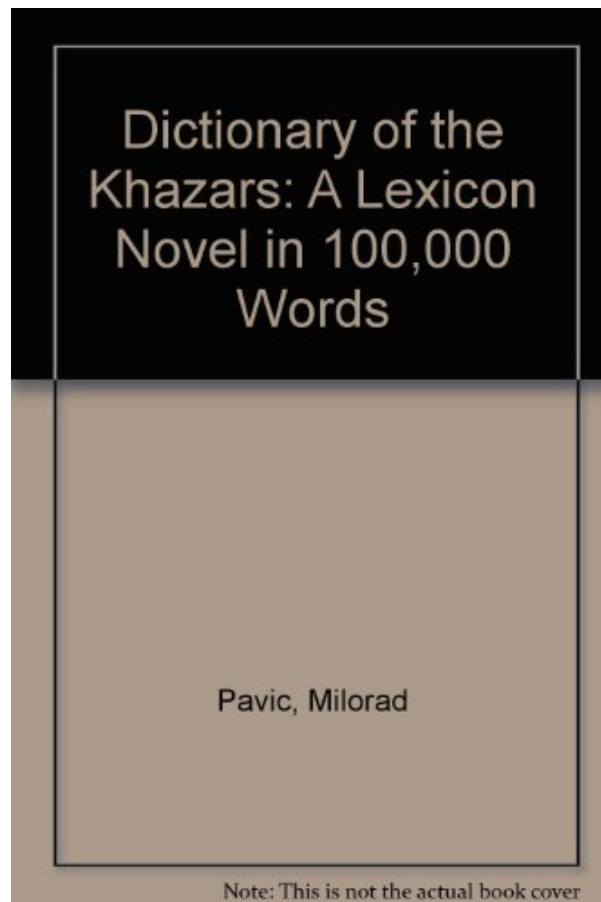


**DICTIONARY OF THE KHAZARS: A
LEXICON NOVEL IN 100,000 WORDS BY
MILORAD PAVIC**



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Dictionary of the
Khazars: A Lexicon
Novel in 100,000
Words

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From Publishers Weekly

Available in slightly differing "male" and "female" editions, the narrative purports to be the historical record of the Khazars, a fictional Indo-European tribe that vanished in the 10th century. "Pavic is a 20th-century Scheherazade," acknowledged PW . "Readers who are intrigued by literary conundrums will enjoy entering this magical world with Pavic as their guide."

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Review

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DICTIONARY OF THE KHAZARS: A LEXICON NOVEL IN 100,000 WORDS BY MILORAD PAVIC PDF

A novel despite its title, this book spans five centuries and is a mixture of fable, fiction and history. This is the male edition which differs slightly but significantly from the accompanying female edition.

- Sales Rank: #13283182 in Books
- Published on: 1988-10
- Original language: English
- Dimensions: 8.75" h x 5.25" w x 1.00" l,
- Binding: Hardcover
- 342 pages

From Publishers Weekly

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Most helpful customer reviews

63 of 68 people found the following review helpful.

Between total fantasy and magical realism

By J. Angus Macdonald

I saw this book in a store and saw that there were two editions. This intrigued me -- why "Male" & "Female". It was only several years later on the Internet that I was finally able to find the differing sections -- and different they are, although not necessary for the enjoyment of the book. Choose either edition; you will find the same pleasure.

The Khazars were a real people, holding wide areas of modern-day Russian. They did convert, eventually to Judaism, although you would never learn this from Pavic in particular. No, Pavic is not worried about the reality of the Khazars, but in the melding of cultures of the Balkans, the state of Man and God and their relationships to each other, and odd connections that a literate reader makes between multiple books.

This is not a book with a plot. This is not a book with a single or simple way to read it. I believe that I have read the whole book twice, but the only way I could say that for certain would be like Hansel and Gretzel and leave marks on the pages that I have actually finished. Like swimming through a dictionary or encyclopedia, this book invites you to read sections in no particular order, or, more realistically, in the order YOU see fit to choose.

The three sections (Christina, Muslim, Jewish) are separated, yet intermingled due to cross references (many of them contradictory). They are colour-coded, yet this only provides one level of delineation. Each section is set up like an encyclopedia in its own right. The unifying figure of Princess Ateh is sure to intrigue any sagacious reader; the whimsical nature of the book may seem superficial at first, but you will be drawn deeper into the mystery of "What is this all about?"

Prepare to lose yourself in a magical world of words and inter-relations. I have noted that previous reviewers have compared the writing to Marquez and Calvino -- this is not far off the mark, especially if one could only spin the two together.

19 of 19 people found the following review helpful.

The book that took the place of a people

By A Customer

This book was written by a Serbian professor of literature, but might have been written by a former Argentinian librarian: Jorge Luis Borges. Both the authors share a love for combinatorics, puzzling coincidences, catalogues, and bizarre stories. Their style is rational and dramatic at the same time, like the facade of a baroque church. Also, this book was published in 1986, the year of Borges' death, and is maybe the epitaph that Borges would have liked.

This is a book about the truth. The king of a mysterious people (the Khazars) summons three sages (a Christian, a Muslim and a Jew), because he wants to convert to the true God. Centuries later, three literati write their own accounts of that conversion (each one is different). And this century, three researchers investigate again on what happened.

Finally, there is not a single truth. The book is organized as a dictionary, or better, three dictionaries (one for each religion). Every word inspires a different story and explanation, but all are filled with magic events and mysterious characters. The reader is the ultimate investigator -- and creator -- of the Khazar empire. It's up to him to discover the truth.

A final (and personal) note. This "dictionary" may seem an extremely sophisticated literary game, similar to those of Calvino and Perec. This is true, but there is more. When the book was out, the civil war (apparently motivated by secular religious intolerance) had not begun yet. To me, this book seems also a passionate attempt to show how difficult it is to attain the truth, and an invitation to tolerance.

21 of 22 people found the following review helpful.

A world of its own, superb

By Antonio Acuna

This book has taken me years to read, not because it reads badly, or because it lacks hooks, au contraire, the problem is that there is so much to take in, such richness, that I spend my time re-reading and cross-reading all the time.

The book is basically a dictionary of the imaginary Khazar people (this one happens to be the male version, the female version differs in only one word, but THAT makes all the difference), you read it as you would any other dictionary, you pick an entry and you read, that entry is also filled with cross references to other entries, where pertinent. It is at that point that the fun begins. By navigating in seemingly random fashion, a world begins to emerge, one as mystical and strange as it is real and solid.

Pavic has an unusual command of the absurdity of meaning; his juxtaposition of the normal with the bizarre as if there was nothing to it makes reading him exciting, new. The book will probably appeal to the historian inside us, as well as to the meddler, the gossiper and the prude in us. That juxtaposition creates a desire to know 'what next then?'

We meet princesses with deadly eyelids, slow mirrors and fast mirrors, poisonous books and killer winks...

Read it, but you will never be done with it!

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