

Bulgaria and the beginning of Slavic literature

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Abstract. The article focuses on the most significant points in the activity of SS Cyril and Methodius, the connection of which to Bulgaria and the Bulgarian language is indisputable in light of the fact that the first Slavic alphabet, the Glagolitic, was based on the Bulgarian dialect spoken in the area of Thessalonika; on the preservation and enrichment of Cyrillo-Methodian literature in the Bulgarian state after Methodius's death in Moravia; on the emergence of the second Slavic alphabet - the Cyrillic - in Preslav; and on the spread of the Old Bulgarian alphabet and literature across the world.

Keywords: Cyril and Methodius, Bulgaria, Bulgarian language, Glagolitic, Cyrillic

The activity of Cyril and Methodius and Slavic literacy have been in the focus of attention of scholars for more than 200 years, i.e., since the beginnings of the discipline of Slavic philology.

The initial stage of Slavic studies was marked by searches and unclarified questions. Manuscripts in Cyrillic were the first ones known to this discipline. The founders of Slavic linguistics long considered the subsequently discovered Glagolitic written monuments to be of a later date than the Cyrillic ones. Josef Dobrovský (Dobrovský 1807) claimed that the Glagolitic was a revised version of the Croatian Cyrillic alphabet. Other 18th century scholars defined the Glagolitic as a Croatian alphabet created by St. Jerome, a Dalmatian-born Christian writer (Ilchev 1985a). The question as to the origin of the first Slavic written language has also been the object of various hypotheses.

Today it is indisputable that the work of Cyril and Methodius, the Slavic alphabets and Slavic literature are one of the great cultural achievements of Europe.

Whose cultural achievements are they? Of the Greeks - because Cyril and Methodius were Byzantines? Of the Czechs and Slovaks - because the two brothers were sent on a mission to Moravia under Knyaz (Prince) Rastisa (Rostislav)? Of the Serbs and Russians - because the Cyrillo-Methodian legacy was preserved mainly in Russian and Serbian manuscripts? Of the present-day citizens of the

Republic of North Macedonia, because Thessalonika is situated in the area of Aegean Macedonia? And what was the role of the Bulgarians, whose historical destiny was to irretrievably lose an enormous part of their cultural, including written, heritage? How true is it that the work of Cyril and Methodius and the Slavic written language are a common Slavic heritage?

The aim of this article is to stress those points, amidst the ocean of facts and hypotheses about the activity of SS Cyril and Methodius, by which we can identify an indisputable Bulgarian connection in the creation, development and dissemination of the Slavic alphabet and literature.

The emergence of Slavic literacy and culture are closely tied to the concrete cultural-historical situation in the Eastern Roman Empire (known as Byzantium since the 16th century), the Frankish Empire, and Bulgaria; and to the invariably strong and influential Papal institution in Rome, which fought with the Patriarchate of Constantinople for religious and political sway over the gradually Christianized population of Central and Southeastern Europe. The scant historical testimonies, the complete silence of the Byzantine sources, for which Cyril and Methodius seem not to exist, the few Latin sources, the Slavic sources, preserved by chance (mainly the *Long Vitae of St. Cyril and St. Methodius*, *On the Letters* by Chernorizets Hrabar, the Greek vitae of St. Clement of Ohrid) open a wide space for various hypotheses and mutually incompatible conclusions (Dobrev 2005).

We can judge about the lives of the brothers Cyril (known as Constantine the Philosopher before entering monkhood) and Methodius primarily from the *Long Vitae*, considered the most authoritative and truthful source. Although the earliest extant copies of these works are from the 15th century (in the case of the *Vita of St. Cyril*) and the 12th century (*Vita of St. Methodius*), they are authentic original works of Old Bulgarian literature of the 9th century, as proven in numerous studies by Bulgarian and foreign Paleo-Slavists (Duychev 1981; Kuev 1961). P. Devos and P. Meyvaert made a decisive discovery of a new copy of the *Italian Legend*, a Latin source for the life of Constantine-Cyril the Philosopher, written by Bishop Gauderich not later than the year 881. In the foreword to this work, the author admits that he used a Slavic literary work (*sclavorum litteris*). This work could only have been the *Long Vita of St. Cyril*, as there is great textual similarity between it and the *Italian Legend* (Meyvaert, Devos 1955). Thus, the *Long Vita of St. Cyril* can be dated as written before the end of 881.

When was the first Slavic alphabet created?

In the *Long Vita of St. Cyril* the creation of the alphabet and the first translations made into the Slavic language are referred to the years 862, 863 and are related to a request, addressed by Knyaz (Prince) Rastitsa (Rostislav) to the Byzantine emperor Michael III, for Christian teachers to be sent to Great Moravia to explain the Word of God in a comprehensible language. Constantine the Philosopher was entrusted with this mission. Following the tradition of vita literature, which seeks a miraculous element and divine inspiration in every thought and act of the celebrated saint, the creation of the alphabet is presented

in the following words: “The philosopher departed and, in keeping with his old custom, devoted himself to prayer together with his other associates. And God, Who hears the prayers of his servants, soon appeared to him and he immediately composed the alphabet and began writing the Gospel words ‘*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*’” (Kliment Ohridski 1973, 136). Clearly, the author of the vita wanted to present the work of Cyril as the work of God, and hence as sacred. But we also learn that in 862, Constantine the Philosopher already had disciples, trained to work with him on the translations into Slavic. We also learn that much earlier, around the year 855, Cyril withdrew from his secular duties to a monastery on Mount Olympus in Asia Minor, joining his brother Methodius there; the two “conversed only with books”. Quite probably, that was precisely when they began to create an alphabet and a written language for the Slavs and to train others in this work. Regarding the date of the first Slavic alphabet, there have ever been two opinions on the question: 863 or 855. The former date is supported by the *Long Vita of St. Cyril*, and the latter, by Chernoriset Hrabar’s treatise *On the Letters*. Numerous convincing arguments have presented. An attempt was even made, to reconcile the two sources by calculating the former date according to the Byzantine calendar and the latter, according to the Alexandrian, thereby obtaining a common result - 863. According to another interpretation, there is a Pannonian-Moravian calendar, according to which the creation of the Slavic alphabet took place in 862 (Dobrev 1976).

From a purely philological viewpoint, the earlier date is more probable, because turning a dialect into a literary language capable of designating complex theological concepts and expressing philosophical and scientific ideas is a matter of long activity requiring time and effort. Actually, the year of the creation does not change the fact of creation. The important thing is that according to all sources, it was Cyril who created the alphabet and Methodius who then spread it among the Slavs.

For whom were the first Slavic alphabet and literature created?

Scholars who accept the year 855 as the true year of the creation of the Slavic alphabet defend the opinion that the alphabet was meant for the Bulgarian Slavs. According to I. Duychev (Duychev 1957) and I. Galabov (Galabov 1963), the alphabet may have been used for their conversion to Christianity within the boundaries of Byzantium, and its creation served the Byzantine policy of drawing these Slavs into Orthodox culture. According to D. Angelov (Angelov 1963) and P. Petrov (Petrov 1958), the Slavs in question were more likely from neighbouring states, where the new alphabet and translations was meant to spread the range of Byzantine influence. Great Moravia was such a state. According to E. Georgiev (Georgiev 1942) and K. Mechev (Mechev 1981), and more recently B. Dimitrov (Dimitrov 2005), Constantine-Cyril was preparing for missionary work among the population of Bulgaria. These scholars support the view regarding Cyril’s so-called mission to Bregalnitsa, in the course of which, according to later historical sources, he converted 54,000 (or less, according to later

transcripts) Bulgarians living along the river Bregalnitsa within the boundaries of the Bulgarian state during the reign of Knyaz (Prince) Boris. This Christianization occurred before the official baptism in 864 and preceded the two brothers' mission to Moravia. These events are mentioned in the Bulgarian works: *Brief Vita of Cyril*, *The Legend of Thessalonica*, *Synaxarion Vitae of St. Cyril and St. Methodius*, *Second Vita of St. Nahum*; in Latin sources: *Moravian Legend*, *Czech Legend*, *Latin Legend*; and in Greek sources: *Long Vita of Clement*, *Brief Vita of Clement*, *Vita of St. Nahum*, *Chronography of Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus* (in which it is written that a Greek monk and icon painter named Methodius christened Knyaz (Prince) Boris).

A decisive argument against the Bregalnitsa mission hypothesis was given by Y. Ivanov and I. Dobrev. They link the reference in the *The Legend of Thessalonica* not to Constantine-Cyril the Philosopher but to Cyril of Cappadocia, who preached in the region of Bregalnitsa in the 7th century and probably brought there the 35 books of the Old Testament, and not the 35 letters of the new alphabet (Grasheva 1985). It may be said definitely that most works testifying to a direct connection between the brothers from Thessalonika and the Bulgarian Slavs in Knyaz (Prince) Boris's state are legendary and cannot compete in reliability with the *Long Vitae of St. Cyril and St. Methodius*. The idea of such a connection is supported by several historical facts: 1. Christianity had penetrated into the southwestern Bulgarian lands before the official baptism of Bulgaria. 2. Methodius was indeed a governor of a Slavic district populated with Bulgarians. 3. The language for which the brothers from Thessalonika created an alphabet and literature was Old Bulgarian. 4. Bulgaria saved and developed the work achieved by Cyril and Methodius after that work had been eradicated in Great Moravia. The last two facts are most significant of all.

In what language were the first translations by Cyril and Methodius written?

The thesis regarding the mission to Bregalnitsa cannot be considered proven. But this does not change the connection - historical, cultural and civilizational - of the two brothers with Bulgaria. It is quite possible that they had not entered the boundaries of Bulgaria, but had lived among Bulgarian Slavs and knew precisely their language very well. As is written in the *Long Vita of St. Methodius*, the emperor told them, "You are from Thessalonika, and all citizens of Thessalonika speak pure Slavic". We must not forget that in all works of that time the Bulgarian language was designated as "Slavic", while the ethnonym "Bulgarian" [БЪЛГАРИИЪ] and the adjective "Bulgarian" [БЪЛГАРЬСКЫИ] are encountered only in epigraphic sources such as the *Bitolya Inscription of Ivan Vladislav* and the *Preslav Inscription of Georgi, Bulgarian monk and Protosyncellus*. It is also probable that Bulgarian was the native language of Cyril and Methodius, i.e., that at least one of their parents was Bulgarian. There is no settled opinion on this question, because the sources either do not mention their ethnic origin or define it as Greek, mixed or Slavic. But from a linguistic viewpoint, this debate is pointless. It is not important of what ethnicity the mother and fa-

ther of the two brothers were. The important thing is that, in view of the results of their activity, they had a perfect mastery of the Bulgarian language, that they could distinguish each phoneme according to its differentiating traits and could create appropriate letter symbols for it. They could translate and write original works in Bulgarian, including poetical works. They could create new words and new meanings for widely used lexemes. It may definitely be said that this complex philological activity would be easier to achieve if Bulgarian were the native language of Cyril and Methodius.

Constantine-Cyril created the first Slavic alphabet in the Thessalonika dialect, which belongs to the southeastern Bulgarian Rupski dialect group. Hence, the language of the brothers from Thessalonika was Old Bulgarian. The combinations шт, жд (in words like *нощъ, пещъ, гражданинъ, рожденьъ, мѣжда*), the broad pronunciation of the letter ꙗ (in words like *лѣто, вѣлъ, млѣко*), the use of the dative case instead of the genitive possessive (*отъць емоу* instead of *отъць его*; the contemporary Bulgarian *баща му*, corresponding to which in the other Slavic languages are constructions such as *отецъ его* in Russian, *його батько* in Ukrainian, *яго бацька* in Belarusian, *jego ojciec* in Polish, *jeho otec* in Czech and Slovak, etc.) are characteristic for the latter. All these traits reflect specific features of the Old Bulgarian language of the 9th century. The science of philology has long ago established criteria for distinguishing the Slavic languages. The reflexes of *kt', tj > sht* and of *dj > zhd* are characteristic only for Bulgarian, in which we have words like *нощ, мѣжда*, while in the other Slavic languages we have: *noč, meja* in Slovenian; *noć, međa* in Serbian/Croatian; *noc, miedza* in Polish; *noc, meze* in Czech; *noc, medza* in Slovak; *ночь, межа* in Russian; *ноч, межа* in Belarusian and *нич, мегжа* in Ukrainian. In all classical Old Bulgarian literary works created or copied during the 9th - 11th century, we find precisely the words *нощъ* and *мѣжда*.

Philological research has more particularly proven that certain specificities of the Old Bulgarian language are preserved in the region of Thessalonika to this day. The first European scholar to confirm this was the Slovenian Vatroslav Oblak (Oblak 1896) (a student of V. Jagić), who established that in the village of Suho, near Thessalonika, instead of the ordinary [e], from the Old Bulgarian sound ꙗ, is pronounced quite broadly [e], as ꙗ was originally pronounced. The Bulgarian linguist S. Mladenov points out that the nasal pronunciation of vowels, originating from the Old Bulgarian nasal sounds, has been preserved in the region of Thessalonika. Thus, the large nasal in words like *мѣжа, пѣтъ, зѣвъ* is pronounced [un/um] in *мѣнка, пѣнт, зѣмб*, and the small nasal in *вратоуѣдъ, гладати* is pronounced [en] in *братученд, глендам* (Mladenov 1934). The modern achievements of dialect experts from the Institute of Bulgarian Language, as presented in the *Summary Volume of the Bulgarian Dialect Atlas*, have undeniably demonstrated these old features of the Thessalonika region speech and its connection with the Rupski Bulgarian dialects (BDA Obobshtavasht tom 2001).

In the *Old Bulgarian Dictionary*, compiled by linguists from the Institute of Bulgarian Language, we find a very important proof of the Bulgarian nature of the Slavic language of the works created or copied in the 9th - 11th century. Each article in the dictionary ends with data on Modern Bulgarian words corresponding to the entry word, found in 87 sources; this information confirms

that 90% of the Old Bulgarian words have matching words in the Bulgarian dialects, in the contemporary literary language or in the Bulgarian toponymy and anthroponymy (Starobalgarski rechnik 1999, 2009).

All these categorically established linguistic facts have convinced Bulgarian scholars that the only appropriate term for the language of the written or copied 9th - 11th century manuscripts is **Old Bulgarian**. The term **Old Slavonic** traditionally used by foreign Slavists is unscientific, as it does not reflect the ethnic affiliation of the first Slavic written language; moreover, in the 9th century, there was no general Slavic language. The same may be said for the term **Old Macedonian language**, because in that age, the dialects spoken in the region of Macedonia, which was included partially in the Bulgarian state and partially in Byzantium, were dialects of the Bulgarian Slavic language. The Macedonian language emerged in 1945, after the creation of the Republic of Macedonia, as a regional literary norm based on the Bulgarian language. The designation **Old Church Slavonic** is inappropriate, because the Old Bulgarian literary language was used in Bulgaria not only in ecclesiastic books and religious ritual but also in the administrative sphere of public life, in non-canonical literature, and in apocryphal texts. The dissemination of Old Bulgarian works among the other Slavic nations led to the formation of variants of Old Bulgarian language, which in Bulgarian science are called **Moravian version, Croatian version, Russian version and Serbian version** of the **Old Bulgarian language**. According to Bulgarian scholars, **Church Slavonic** is the language of the Eastern Orthodox liturgical books, first printed in Russia in the 17th century and used by Russians, other Eastern Slavs, Bulgarians, Serbs, Wallachians and Moldovans. This language, derived from the Russian version of Old Bulgarian that had taken shape by the 16th century, mirrors the specificities of the Bulgarian literary language and the Russian vernacular.

The Old Bulgarian written language emerged initially as based on the Thessalonika dialect, but being a language connected with the vernacular, it continued to develop and expand its dialect base. At the time of the mission to Moravia, certain phonetic and lexical Moravisms entered the literary language (рѡзѡство, рѣсноста, цнрѣкы, ппнежь, the prefix вѣ-), but according to Paleo-Slavists, these elements were few in number and did not affect the nature of the language, as the Western Slavic languages were only a linguistic environment of the Cyrilo-Methodian literary language, and only some elements of that environment entered into the latter. In contrast, the dialects of Thessalonika, and later of Preslav and Ohrid, were the linguistic basis of the Old Bulgarian literary language and influenced its development directly (Dogramadzhieva 1981). A number of particularities entered from the vernacular into the written Old Bulgarian language in the 9th - 11th century: the vocalization of the strong er, primarily in the western Bulgarian manuscripts (дѣждѣ > дождѣ, вѣсь > весь), the hardening of the soft consonants (сѣтворѣж > сътворѣж, ношѣ > ношѣ, нашѣ > нашѣ), the assimilation and tightening of contiguous vowels (глаголаахѣ > глаголахѣ, оумѣахѣ > оумѣхѣ > оумѣхѣ), transformation of declination types (градове instead of гради, вннаре instead of вннари, птнци instead of птнци), the limitation of the simple and first sigmatic aorist (падохѣ instead of падѣ, рекохѣ instead of рѣхѣ), the replacement of past active

participles ending in -ь with those ending in -нвѣ (ходнвѣ instead of ходѣ, хвалнвѣ instead of хвалѣ), replacement of вимь with вѣхѣ (вѣхѣ ходнлѣ instead of вимь ходнлѣ). All these changes prove that the Old Bulgarian literary language was a living language that reflected the linguistic changes taking place in the vernacular and its dialects.

The nature of the work of SS Cyril and Methodius

According to the *Long Vitae of St. Cyril and St. Methodius*, in 863, the two brothers embarked for Great Moravia, taking with them only the essential liturgical literature they would need, translated into the Thessalonika Bulgarian dialect. There they spread the Christian doctrine in a language comprehensible to the local population, because Old Bulgarian was akin to the west Slavic languages spoken in Moravia. Cyril defended the right of every nation to understand God's Word, to have books and an alphabet, in its own language: he defended this right not only by his deeds, but also by his writings. The poem *Proglas [Foreword] to the Gospel*, considered by many scholars to be a work by Cyril, affirmed in poetic form a basic thesis: "all nations are naked without books". To this day, the metaphor referring to the spiritual nakedness of illiterate people is one of the stable images in Christianity, in Bulgarian culture, which preserved and developed the work of Cyril and Methodius, and in European civilization. In the course of his dispute, in Venice, with the adherents of the three-language heresy, Constantine-Cyril the Philosopher succeeded in refuting the dogma that the holy books may be written in only three languages (Hebrew, Latin, Greek). His speech, quoted in the *Long Vita of St. Cyril*, probably repeats an original text by Cyril, which has the qualities both of a scientific treatise and a polemical speech. After Cyril's death in 869, Methodius continued the work they had undertaken together. As bishop of Pannonia and Moravia, he constantly enlarged the scope of Slavic liturgy, and as a learned and talented writer, he translated the whole Bible, except the Books of Maccabees, into Old Bulgarian and wrote works of his own. For his consistent work as Slavic educator, he was persecuted by the German clergy and by Knyaz (Prince) Svetopolk. Supported by Pope Hadrian II and, for a while after 880, by Pope John VIII, punished by Pope John VIII in 872-879 and by Pope Stephan V, Methodius remained true to his duties as pastor and teacher of the Slavic nations.

The idea that all nations have equal right to create their own culture is a personal contribution of the two brothers to European civilization, for it is a democratic idea that, without casting doubt on theocentrism, comes close to contemporary dimensions of ethnocentrism and anthropocentrism. The implementation of this idea in the boundaries of the Slavic world preceded by three centuries the translation of the Bible into the vernacular French and by four centuries its translation into vernacular English.

What was the destiny of the Cyrillo-Methodian work?

According to the *Long Vita of St. Clement* by Theophilactus of Ohrid, after the death of Methodius, the German bishop Viching prevailed in Great Moravia and cruelly persecuted the students of Methodius. Some were sold into slavery, others died, and still others were expelled from the country. Thus, within a few months during the winter of 885-886, the work of Cyril and Methodius was eradicated in Great Moravia; but it did not disappear.

It survived thanks to the intervention of the Bulgarian state. The disciples of Cyril and Methodius - Clement, Nahum and Angelarius, expelled from Great Moravia, crossed the Danube and went to the governor of Belgrade (which at that time was within the boundaries of the Bulgarian state), who sent them on to Knyaz (Prince) Boris in the capital city Pliska. In the spring of 886, Clement, Nahum and Angelarius were received with honour in Pliska. Knyaz (Prince) Boris personally provided them with excellent conditions for literary work and teaching. Later they were joined by other disciples of Cyril and Methodius, coming from Constantinople after having been bought off from the slave markets of Europe. Most probably, Constantine of Preslav was among them. Thus, a literary centre arose in Bulgaria, a centre where liturgical books were translated and copied. John Exarch, Constantine of Preslav, Presbyter Gregory, Chernorizets Hrabar, Todor Doxov and Simeon himself, who later became the ruler of the country, created original works in different genres of official liturgical and extra-liturgical literature.

Knyaz (Prince) Boris was well aware of the need to spread the Christian doctrine in the native language of the newly baptized Bulgarian nation. The Bulgarians had not succeeded in becoming true Christians as long as they were preached to in Latin and Greek. The Word of God presented to them in a language they understand would serve not only for the Christianization of the subjects of Knyaz (Prince) Boris but also for the cultural unity of the Slavs and the ancient Bulgarians. That is why Knyaz (Prince) Boris invested large resources for the creation of the necessary liturgical literature and for the education of trained clergymen, replacing thereby the use of Greek language in liturgy with that of Old Bulgarian in order to win autonomy for the Bulgarian Church.

Knyaz (Prince) Boris decided to form a second literary centre in the vast Bulgarian state. He sent Clement to the province of Kutmichevitsa, with main cities Ohrid, Devol and Glavinitsa, and on the basis of administrative decrees, enabled him to found schools there. In the Ohrid school, according to the *Long Vita of St. Clement* by Theophilactus, Clement trained 3,500 students: readers, deacons and priests. He continued the work of his teachers Cyril and Methodius also by writing original instructive and laudatory treatises. In 893, Clement was installed as "first bishop in the Bulgarian language" according to the *Long Vita of St. Clement*. The Bulgarian ruler Simeon sent Nahum to Ohrid to take his place as teacher, preacher, and organizer of the literary activity there.

Thus, the two farseeing Bulgarian rulers - Knyaz (Prince) Boris and Tsar (King) Simeon, saved the work of Cyril and Methodius by means of a consistent state policy and by providing financial and legal support for the disciples of the two brothers and their adherents. Of course, all the writers in Pliska, Preslav and

Ohrid contributed greatly, by their talent and industry, to the flourishing of Old Bulgarian literature. They created rich and varied translated and original works of literature, covering all genres of the medieval Christian tradition. We will mention only the acrostic poetical works of Constantine of Preslav and Clement of Ohrid, discovered by the Bulgarian scholars G. Popov and S. Kozhuharov. One of these poems is the longest extant medieval acrostic, consisting of 440 verses (for the sake of comparison, the longest known Byzantine acrostic consists of 135 verses), as part of a triode that begins with “Good verses by Constantine”.

It was quite natural that when Kievan Russia in the 10th and Serbia in the 9th century were baptized, the works in the Old Bulgarian language were transmitted to those countries and for centuries were used and copied by the Slavic peoples there (Boyadzhiev 1996). The Russian academician D. Lihachov (Lihachov 1970) had good reason to call Old Bulgarian literature “a go-between literature”, while the Italian medievalist R. Picchio described it as “a literature of exemplars” (Picchio 1993). It may be said that Bulgarian culture not only preserved but also further developed the work of the saintly brothers, spreading it across an enormous continuum of space and time, from Mount Sinai to the Urals and the Arctic Ocean, and from the 9th to the 18th century. It is in those boundaries that copies of Old Bulgarian works have been found. That is what we, Bulgarians, have given to the world.

The Glagolitic alphabet: the first Slavic and Bulgarian alphabet

There is no dispute in linguistic science today as to which the first Slavic alphabet was. It was the Glagolitic, created by Cyril, one of the most erudite people in the Byzantine Empire. The two brothers from Thessalonika were certainly raised in the spirit of medieval Greek culture, which had absorbed the achievements of Hellenic civilization. Although the Greek graphic system had a thousand-year-long history in the Greek cultural area, and although the books used by the Church and secular authorities were written in Greek using Greek letters, although the confession and preaching of Christianity in the regions dominated by the Constantinople patriarchate were ever linked to the Greek language and alphabet, Cyril and Methodius focused their efforts on creating a new graphic system and, even more importantly, an Old Bulgarian literary language based on the Bulgarian dialect (Velcheva 1983; Ivanova 2002). In his polemical work *On the Letters*, Chernorizets Hrabar brilliantly argues the need for new letters that would correspond to Slavic speech: “... because how can one write well the word *bog* [God] or *zhivot* [life] or *dzyalo* [very much] or *deyanie* [act] ...” (Kuev 1967).

The Glagolitic is the work of an exceptionally well-trained philologist. It is imbued with Christian fate, symbolism, symmetry, a well-thought-out order, but also with a solid knowledge of the Old Bulgarian vernacular, with its abundance of specific sounds. No matter how different it may outwardly seem from the Greek alphabet, the Glagolitic follows the order of the former’s graphemes, which in turn follow the order of the Phoenician alphabet: it begins with “az” like the Greek begins with “alpha”. Following this order, the graphemes of the

Old Bulgarian consonants and vowels are placed at the end of the alphabet, as they are not part of the Greek phonological system (like the two “ers”, the two nasals, “yat” etc.). Modern philologists are amazed at the particularities of the Glagolitic alphabet. For instance, the Glagolitic letters reflect in graphic form the distinction between voiced and unvoiced consonants; the velar consonants contain a common element; the two er vowels also have common elements. The two nasal vowels are complex phonemes in which a specific element for the nasal sound is added to the basic vocal (Velcheva 2007). By its stylistic specificities and internal systematic relations, the Glagolitic is the product of individual invention and is the work of a single person - Constantine-Cyril the Philosopher. It “has particularities that distinguish it from, and place it higher than, all the alphabets that have ever been used by a human collective from earliest time to the present day” (Ilchev 1985b).

The first Old Bulgarian translations were written in the Glagolitic alphabet. It was the alphabet the Slavic teachers took to Great Moravia and Pannonia (according to some researchers, this refers to Pannonian Moravia in the region of the river Bulgarian Morava (Stankov 2016)). It was the alphabet Cyril, Methodius and their disciples taught to hundreds of students in the Balaton Principality of Knyaz (Prince) Kotsel, where they stayed for a while before continuing to Rome. The Glagolitic alphabet and books written in Glagolitic were those that Pope Hadrian II sanctified in Rome. The Old Bulgarian translations made by Methodius and his students were written in Glagolitic. Glagolitic script and books written in Glagolitic were what the expelled disciples of Cyril and Methodius - Clement, Nahum and Angelarius - brought to Bulgaria under Knyaz (Prince) Boris. Glagolitic was the script used in the Old Bulgarian literary centres Pliska, Preslav and Ohrid. Many of the original Old Bulgarian works of the Golden Age were also written in Glagolitic.

Contrary to the view that opposes *archaic* = *Glagolitic* = *Ohrid* to *new* = *Cyrillic* = *Preslav*, the Glagolitic script spread across the whole territory of Bulgaria. The many Glagolitic inscriptions discovered in Preslav, Ravna, Murfatlar, and the oldest Glagolitic abecedarium in Simeon’s Golden church, prove that Glagolitic was used both in the capital Preslav and in the more remote north-western regions in the first half of the 10th century (Popkonstantinov 1987). In Preslav, Clement of Ohrid and Nahum of Ohrid created a cycle of liturgical songs with acrostic lyrics, in the manuscript copies of which there are clear traces of the Glagolitic original. Two cycles of alphabet stycherons to be sung in the days preceding Christmas and Theophany are also in a Glagolitic order of verses. Constantine of Preslav wrote his famous *Alphabet Prayer* in 893 likewise in Glagolitic letters: the acrostic follows the order of the Glagolitic alphabet. Written in Glagolitic were Chernorizets Hrabar’s treatise *On the Letters*, some of the works of John Exarch and a considerable part of the Byzantine literature translated in Preslav.

Glagolitic script remained - as separate letters, parts of text, or secret writing - on the pages of manuscript codes written in the Slavic literary tradition as late as the 14th - 15th century (Miltenov 2009).

The Glagolitic script had a particularly long history in Dalmatia, Istria, and the Adriatic islands. The letters there were a variant of the Bulgarian rounded

Glagolitic and had characteristic angular forms. The Croatian Glagolitic had a sustained and independent path of development, which was completed in the 19th century, when Pope Leo XIII allowed the printing of Glagolitic books (Ilchev 1985a).

Most probably, the new, unfamiliar, although sanctified (in fact only by the Roman Church, not by Constantinople), letters raised suspicion and disapproval both among the German clergy in the West and the Byzantine clergy in the East. This complete “otherness” of the Glagolitic script determined its fate in the European medieval cultural area: it was replaced by the Cyrillic script, securely based on the Greek alphabet.

The Cyrillic script: the second Bulgarian alphabet

The Old Bulgarian alphabet created second in time was the Cyrillic. Its introduction as a graphic system was one of the longest lasting results of the cultural rise of the First Bulgarian Empire in the late 9th and early 10th century. The alphabet’s prestige was historically established not only in medieval Bulgaria, Serbia and Russia, but more broadly in the Balkans and southeastern Europe, including among non-Slavic ethnicities, through the literary Bulgarian language of the Middle Bulgarian period, which acquired official status in the Wallachian principalities and Moldova for several centuries. The Cyrillic alphabet became a distinguishing cultural code of affiliation to Orthodox Christianity and for the creation of an Orthodox cultural-religious community, but it also accompanied the geopolitical division of the Slavic world into *Slavia Orthodoxa* and *Slavia Romana*.

The designation of the new graphic system as *Cyrillic* comes from Cyril’s first name. The term was initially thought to refer to the Glagolitic, the alphabet created by Constantine-Cyril the Philosopher. This opinion has some foundation in an addition written by the Russian clergyman Upir Lihiy in 1047, and reproduced in the *Gennadiy Bible* of 1499; there, the writer points out his manuscript comes “from the Cyrillic” [нѣ кѹрилѡцѣ] (Dobrev 1995, 309). This interpretation of the phrase is not universally accepted. As a further development of the view, it was assumed that after the Glagolitic ceased to be actively used, the designation was transferred to the second Slavic alphabet. It has also been suggested that the Cyrillic script was so-called in memory of Constantine-Cyril the Philosopher and as a sign of continuity with his immortal work. The *Old Bulgarian Dictionary* (Starobalgarski rechnik 1999, 2009) however, containing around 10,000 entries, does not contain a single related lexeme with that meaning, nor with the designation *Glagolitic*, but this can be adduced to the fact that Old Bulgarian writers adopted the hypernymic designation “Slavic letters” [писмена словянская] as a general term without pointing out the differences between the two graphic systems, which for them were naturally united, not opposed. At the start of Slavic book printing in the late 15th century, the Cyrillic alphabet was so firmly established as a graphic system, that the Slavic printers did not feel it necessary to especially name it. Only Glagolitic printed books refer - understandably - to “Cyrillic words” [кѹрилѡцѣкѹ словеса].

The new alphabet appeared at the end of the 9th or beginning of the 10th century within the boundaries of the First Bulgarian Empire. It may be called a civilizational phenomenon insofar as the framework for its appearance was the Byzantine cultural-civilizational model from which the Bulgarians' new Christian state sought prestige in order to affirm itself on the map of medieval Europe. The introduction of the Cyrillic script was rooted in the strong and prolonged presence of the Greek alphabet as an official epigraphic and administrative script used for the needs of the Bulgarian state before its Christianization, and arose from the need, under the new historic conditions, to adapt it to the Slavic language so that, in turn, the Old Bulgarian literary language could perfectly fulfil its social functions as the language used in the administration, the Church, liturgy, education, culture and the domestic sphere. We must not seek signs of historical contradiction or tension in the simultaneous use of the Glagolitic and the Cyrillic alphabets or in the gradual substitution of the former with the latter. This was a gradual, evolutionary process, an internal development and practical prevalence of one of the two systems for the sake of utility.

There is undoubtedly graphic continuity between the two scripts. Today it is indisputable that the Cyrillic was based on the Greek majuscule uncial, a strict, symmetrical, official script meant for administrative needs, which uses as basic graphic elements the triangle and straight vertical strokes, which form angles with the other lines. But, out of the total 36, those 12 Cyrillic letters that reflect the particularities of Old Bulgarian speech (sounds like [b], [zh], [z], [ts], [ch], [sh], [sht], the ers, the nasals, the yat vowel) are modeled after the respective Glagolitic signs; and some even coincide fully with them, for instance the letter for the sound [sh]. Some Cyrillic letters do not exist in the Glagolitic, such as the signs for the four iotated vowels: [a], [e] and the two nasals; a possible explanation of this may lie in the particularities of the Bulgarian dialects that served as a matrix for the later script. The graphic appearance of the Cyrillic letters used for specific Old Bulgarian sounds is in most cases marked by isomorphic parallelism, a common principle of delineation, and this is certain proof of the continuity between the two alphabets. Other important common features are the presence of digital values of the letters in both alphabets, as well as the preserved names of the letters, which were part of an old acrostic used as a mnemonic device for easy retention. The first two designations *az* and *buki* [азъ and бѹкы] are respectively the first person singular pronoun and the word for "letter", together they form the word "alphabet" [азбѹка]. After passing through Moravia and Pannonia, the Glagolitic found a base of dissemination in eastern Bulgaria and in the southwestern Bulgarian lands, and was later used as a foundation for the Cyrillic alphabet. Hence, the Cyrillic comprises and embodies the most widespread and prestigious graphic experience of two key letter systems - the Greek alphabet and the first Slavic and Bulgarian alphabet.

There is no lack of material testimony to the claim that the Glagolitic and the Cyrillic were not opposed scripts in medieval Bulgaria. Suffice it to recall that the baptistery in Simeon's Golden church in Preslav has preserved one of the most valuable Glagolitic abecedariums, inscribed on the floor of the church according to a widespread medieval tradition, or that even the famous Preslav ceramics uses both Cyrillic and Glagolitic letters as production signs for artistic

crafts. From the initial stage of the Old Bulgarian writing tradition, the 10th - 11th centuries, 10 Cyrillic manuscripts and many epigraphic sources have come down to us, the earliest of which is the *Tomb Inscription of 920-921*, founded near the village of Krepcha near Targovishte. The most significant Old Bulgarian epigraphs in Cyrillic were found in northeast Bulgaria. For a long period, the literate Old Bulgarian writers were familiar with both graphic systems, until the Cyrillic finally prevailed approximately in the 12th century, during the time of Byzantine domination.

To this day, the most debated questions regarding the history of the Cyrillic script are the following: who created it, was it the work of a single person or of collective authorship, and was there an evolutionary change of the Greek script in the pre-Glagolitic period? The cultural-historical and graphic relationship between the two alphabets warrants the admission that, as the existence of a systematic alphabet prior to the work of Constantine-Cyril the Philosopher and the Glagolitic has not been categorically proven, the hypothesis of the existence of a “proto-Cyrillic” or “pre-Cyrillic” alphabet (whatever the various national biases of the Bulgarian Slavs or of the Eastern Slavs regarding its localization) seems improbable and remains unproven.

There are two theories on the emergence of the Cyrillic script. The less popular one considers it to be the individual work of Clement of Ohrid, one of the most fervent disciples of the two brothers from Thessalonika, and a loyal follower of Archbishop Methodius. First stated by P. J. Šafárik in 1857 (Laleva 1985, 8), this thesis had some later supporters. Clement, the founder of the Ohrid literary school, who pursued his activity in the respective region of the First Bulgarian Empire, was one of the spiritual pillars of the cultural-religious and educational upsurge of his time, and assisted the Bulgarian rulers Knyaz (Prince) Boris (852-889) and the latter’s son Tsar (King) Simeon (893-927) in imposing the policy of these baptized and civilized Christian sovereigns who sought legitimation of their power not only through military victories and conquests but also by the dissemination of literature and liturgy in the vernacular language. A basic argument for this hypothesis is drawn from two agiographic sources: the *Long Greek Vita of St. Clement* by Theophilactus of Ohrid (1084-1107) and the *Brief Vita of St. Clement* by Demetrios Chomatenos (1216-1234), which is extant both in the original Greek and in a Slavic translation. According to these sources, Clement was sent at the order of Knyaz (Prince) Boris, called “the first Bulgarian tsar”, to the province of Kutmichevitsa, with main cities Ohrid, Devol and Glavinitsa, to pursue his apostolic work for the creation of a church organization and literature in the *Bulgarian language*. The sources refer to the invention of “other forms, images of the letters, clearer than those devised by the wise Cyril” (Ivanov 1970, 320-321; Boyadzhiev 2000). However, a precise analysis shows that this interpretation of the passage is incorrect and is due to the erroneously understood, contaminated information found in the *Vita* written by Theophilactus (Stanchev 1995, 321). The information, contained in the same sources, that in the southwestern Bulgarian lands Clement saw that many priests were finding it hard to understand writings in Greek, serves as yet another testimony to the strong presence of the Greek script, and hence leads to the conclusion that the Greek script served as a basis for the creation of an independent Slavic alphabet.

Supporters of this hypothesis fail to give a precise answer to the question as to where Clement could have created the Cyrillic alphabet: at the ruler's court in Pliska, where the expelled disciples of Cyril and Methodius - including Clement - found shelter, or in the southwestern Bulgarian lands around Devol and Ohrid, where he was sent by the Bulgarian ruler on a mission?

The most probable "birthplace" of the Cyrillic script were the centres of rule in Christian Bulgaria - the first capital, Pliska, or, after 893-894, the second capital, Preslav (Nikolov 2013; Nikolov 2014). It cannot be categorically asserted that the Cyrillic script existed at the time of the national council of 893, or that one of the decisions of the council concerned the official institutionalization of the script - because early works of Old Bulgarian literature, such as the *Didactic Gospels* and the *Alphabet Prayer* by Constantine of Preslav are proven to have been originally written in Glagolitic. The Cyrillic script was more probably created at the Preslav literary centre under the literary and cultural patronage of Tsar (King) Simeon at the beginning of the 10th century. It was a collective invention of the writers in Preslav and was supported by the Bulgarian ruler's institution to further unity, consolidate values, and as a powerful tool for maintaining national identity through spiritual culture. The Cyrillic script was an element of the Christian spiritual paradigm, and, as all alphabets in the Middle Ages, was thought to embody divine providence; it was a material basis for the development of the Old Bulgarian literary language, which in turn led to the flourishing of literature in the Golden Age under Tsar (King) Simeon. It is such an enduring component of the triad *language - alphabet - literature*, that today, in the 21st century, it continues to shape identity.

Amidst a variety of ideological attacks against the stated connection of the work of Cyril and Methodius to Bulgaria, and against the role of Bulgaria for the preservation and development of the material and spiritual value of the Slavic alphabets and literature in the Bulgarian Middle Ages, we find a logical and well-merited rehabilitation in the fact that, owing to Bulgaria's membership in the European Union, the Cyrillic script has become the third official graphic system of the EU. The motherland and the alphabet it gave birth to stand together, as only the opponents of objective truth would not wish to see them. Here we have told the truthful story once again; in the words of the anonymous medieval writer: "We have written so that it be known".

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