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**Review**

of the thesis

**Съвременни теории за произхода на глаголицата**

(Recent theories on the origin of the Glagolitic script)

submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

in Philology (2.1), Bulgarian Language,

by

**Inna Vasileva Dimitrova**

under the guidance of

**Prof. Heinz Miklas, PhD**

### **1. Preliminary remarks**

By the order 121 of 12 July, 2019, issued by the director of the Cyrillo-Methodian Research Centre (KMHIЦ) of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences I was designated as a committee member in the context of the defence of the thesis of I. Dimitrova. On 30 July, 2019, KMHIЦ informed me that I had been designated to write a review of said thesis.

The review is based on the following materials submitted to me in electronic form:

- CV (including a list of publications and lectures) of the candidate
- Abstract (автореферат) of the thesis
- Thesis
- Bibliography

The present review is based on these and only these materials.

### **2. Educational background of the candidate**

Inna Vasileva Dimitrova studied English philology at S. Clement of Ohrid University Sofia, obtaining the degree of *magister* in philology with the qualification of “Teacher for English language and literature” in 1994, receiving the diploma in 2007. From 2009 to 2011 she studied Old Bulgarian (OCS) at the same university, obtaining the degree of M.A. in Old Bulgarian (OCS) studies with the qualification of “Specialist in Old Bulgarian (OCS) studies in the context of Byzantine literature”. Since 2015 she has been a doctoral student at the KMHIЦ of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences.

### **3. General remarks regarding the topic of the thesis**

Research on the Glagolitic script is central to several areas of OCS (OCS will be used in the following as this is the generally used term in English). First of all it is important for Slavonic paleography since it is generally accepted today that the Glagolitic script is the script invented by Constantine-Cyril. It is also central for the reconstruction of the phonology of the variety of Slavonic for which the Glagolitic script was created. Another aspect is the development of the Glagolitic script in the context of the development of the Slavonic sound system(s). It is assumed that the script reflects, albeit only partially and with retardation, the development of the language as well as the particularities of regional varieties of Slavonic. The main problem of research is the fact that the sources (the alphabet itself and its structural properties, its use in manuscripts, additional sources such as abecedaria, numeraria, acrostichs, theoretical treatises) provide information that is often unclear and in many cases contradictory. Furthermore new material has been discovered recently and the technical side of analysis has improved greatly. Finally new theories have been put forward that shed new light on facts that have long been known. All of this calls for a re-evaluation of the known facts and theories and the incorporation of new facts and results of analysis. Thus the topic is far from being exhausted and careful philological analysis is still called for.

### **4. Description of the thesis**

The thesis starts with an introduction (I) outlining the topic and the aim of the thesis as well as the tasks to be accomplished in the analysis (I 1), followed by a theoretical and a terminological section. The former (I 2) provides general information on script and writing systems and the history of the development of theories regarding them, the latter (I 3) is devoted to terminological questions. The author then adds two sections concentrating on the Glagolitic script, one on paleography (I 4) and one on the “Glagolitic question” (глаголическа проблематика, I 5).

The second part of the thesis (II) is essentially a review of theories regarding certain aspects of the Glagolitic script. The first section is devoted to theories dealing with structural or functional properties of the script (II 1), i.e. the “phonetic paradigm” (фонетическа парадигма, II 1.1), and the letter names (II 1.2). The second section treats the formal side of the script (II 2), essentially the form of the letters (II 2.1) and their numerical values (II 2.2). The last section (II 3) sums up the results of the review.

The third part (III) singles out one specific problem of the Glagolitic script, viz. the existence of two letters for [x], referred to as X1 and X2 by the author, X2 (the “spidery” or “sunny” x) being the main object. The first section states the problem (III 1), followed by a section (III 2) analysing the many different sources: abecedaria (III 2.1), acrostichic texts (III 2.2), concentrating on the Alphabet prayer and another acrostichic text considered to be especially archaic. Two more sections treat the particularities of X2 in Xrabr’s treatise “On the letters” (III 2.3) and in the two OCS manuscripts where it is used, viz. the codex Assemanianus and the Sinai psalter (III 2.4). As in part two a final section sums up the results (III 3).

The last part (IV) contains the conclusion, followed by additional materials (V), i.e. tables (V 1) and annexes (V 2). The bibliography (VI) is provided as a separate file.

## 5. Critical assessment

The central and undoubtedly most valuable part of the thesis is the analysis of X1/X2 (III). The existence of the two letters is indeed a problem that has to be explained satisfactorily in order to understand one of the specific structural aspects of the Glagolitic script. The questions here are many: why two letters, are they original, what do they represent, if they stand for different sounds, which letter stands for which, what were their respective positions and names in the original alphabet, why was the differentiation given up, and why are there some remnants of them in the OCS manuscripts (cf. the enumeration on pp. 166-167)? Theories trying to give an answer to some or all of these questions abound, they may partly coincide, but they may also exclude or contradict each other. Given this situation the author sets out by clearly stating the problem(s). She then continues by subjecting the sources that might contribute to the solution to a very detailed analysis, evaluating in each case the possible explanations as to their intrinsic worth. In view of the numerous publications dealing with the X1/X2 problem that is not really novel. The fact that she brings together all the possible explanations, however, is new. And particularly new is the analysis of the use of X2 in the OCS manuscripts (III 2.4). Until now it was basically and tacitly assumed that this use was a remnant of the protographs that sloppy copyists had forgotten to replace by X1 in a few cases. At most it was noted that this happened only in the case of the word  $\chi\lambda\psi\omega\psi$ . The author now subjects all the individual uses of X2 to a most careful philological and at the same time theological analysis of these cases, going back not only to the Greek original, from which the texts were translated, but even to the Hebrew texts, additionally taking into consideration the “theological” meaning of the word (pp. 177-195). This is philology at its best. I am not sure whether all the aspects the author presents are really the correct

explanation for the use or non-use of X2, but the subtlety of her approach deserves recognition.

Unfortunately, this positive impression is more than offset by a considerable number of weak points that will now be enumerated.

Aside from the point just mentioned, the thesis consists largely of a collection of results arrived at by other scholars. Thus there are few, if any, new insights, and the main body of the thesis is basically restricted to the reiteration of known positions, adding, at best, the author's opinion in favour of one or the other position. This essentially means that only about ten percent of the thesis present new insights, if one takes the number of pages as a basis.

At the same time the thesis is not coherent. Essentially it consists of two parts: one part reviewing the more recent literature on the Glagolitic script as a whole, and a second part analysing the X1/X2 question. In this second part only a fraction of the literature reviewed in part one is used, and one wonders why the rest of the literature had to be presented at all.

But even if the decision of the author to review the literature on the Glagolitic script as a whole were accepted, new questions arise. Why is it only the more recent theories the author reviews, when does the "more recent" period actually begin, why is it only selected authors, and what guides the selection? (The author claims that the main focus is on the research of "selected authors from the last years of the 20<sup>th</sup> c. until today" (p. 6), but if one looks at the literature quoted it becomes evident that the review starts much earlier.) If the focus of the thesis is on the Glagolitic, it is hard to understand why authors such as Derrida should be named in the text (p. 22, but forgotten in the bibliography), why de Saussure should be reviewed *in extenso* (p. 22-23), why Coulmas should be quoted at length (p. 28-33, sometimes with most elementary truths such as the differences between spoken and written language), and why the quantitative approach by Altmann et al. is presented (p. 33-37), even though they are never taken up in the remainder of the thesis. On the other hand, a solid publication such as the Glagolitic paleography by Vajs (actually still the only Glagolitic paleography available that covers all forms of the script and all of its history) is given short shrift in the section on Glagolitic paleography (pp. 42-47, here p. 46), and the publications by Thorvi Eckhardt are not mentioned at all (they are included in the bibliography, though).

The thesis also has theoretical flaws. This is quite evident in the section on terminology (pp. 38-41). If anything, terminology should be unequivocal, but instead the author in many cases proposes synonyms, the very enemy of terminology. Furthermore there are inconsistencies or contradictions in individual cases. It is not clear to me how the author can claim that a logographic writing system is basically phonographic (p. 39). Equally mysterious is the fact

that the author speaks of phonetic principles at work in the creation of the Glagolitic alphabet, even though Trubeckoj has shown very convincingly that phonology is the guiding principle here (cf., e.g., p. 57, 166). Not even the cases of double letters for g/k/x to render non-palatalised and palatalised variants of these consonants are an argument in favour of a phonetic basis, because they only served to distinguish sounds that did not exist in OCS proper, but only in words of foreign origin. And the author herself seems to adhere to the opinion of H. Miklas that these letters were mainly used as “Klassifikatoren”, indicating the non-Slavonic origin of words. If so, then their primary function would not have been phonetic.

But the main flaw of the thesis is the fact that it is written in a most careless fashion. That begins with the fact that the author is not even in a position to assure a consistent structure of the thesis. She speaks of parts of the thesis, obviously meaning the parts I-VI, but elsewhere they are called chapters; “chapters”, however, is also used for subsections of chapters (cf. pp. 8-9). Even the numbering is mixed up. To give one example: on p. 42 the title reads “1. Glagolitic Paleography” where it actually should be “4”. It seems that the author put together sections from different stages of the elaboration of the thesis without checking for consistency. The same sloppiness mars the bibliographical references in the text. The author seems to prefer the “American system” (indicating author, year of publication and pages in brackets), but quite often the title of the article is quoted in brackets, too). Sometimes she quotes the names of authors in the Latin original, more often in Cyrillic transcription, sometimes in both forms. The bibliography, however, is consistently divided into a Latin and a Cyrillic part. This leads to the situation that the reader is forced to search in both parts of the bibliography, if the reference in the text is in Cyrillic. The bibliography itself teems with mistakes. Often diacritic signs are lacking, titles in foreign languages are quoted incorrectly etc. Thus, e.g., the bibliography contains articles from various authors from the conference volume *Glagoljica i hrvatski glagolizam*, and this title is written in at least five different variants in the bibliography (cf. the entries Темчин, LoMagistro, Marti, Trunte, Veder 2004 in the bibliography). Obviously, the author did not think it necessary to proofread the thesis.

## 6. Conclusion

As will have become obvious from the critical assessment of the thesis leaves a rather ambiguous impression. The section III 2.4 shows that the author is capable of serious philological work. The absence of this and other flaws in the rest of the thesis as well as the lack of coherence and the most unsatisfactory formal aspect of it, however, do not satisfy the

requirements of a thesis. I am therefore forced to suggest to the committee **not to accept the thesis.**

Mykolajiv, 9 october, 2019

Roland Marti