

Review

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Doctorate thesis in scientific field 2. Humanitarian Studies, professional field 2.1 Philology.

Author: **Inna Vassileva Dimitrova**

Title: **CONTEMPORARY THEORIES ON THE ORIGIN OF THE GLAGOLITIC SCRIPT.**

I take part in the defense procedure of the above doctorate paper according to Order No.121/12.07 of CMRS, art.6 of LDASB (ЗПАСБ) and art.29, ch. 1 and 2 of the Regulation for Application of LDASB. As Director of the institution where Inna Dimitrova developed her thesis I had the opportunity to convince myself of her good capabilities for scientific research, inquisitive mind and enthusiasm – qualities, indispensable to a successful career in science. In addition to the great privilege of having an authoritative scientific advisor and the opportunity to work with the CMRS body of specialists and other institutions in the country and abroad, I. Dimitrova started her research in favorable and well-intentioned environment.

Her topic was designed after careful discussion between her scientific advisor prof.Miklas and the CMRS body, the main prerequisite for this doctorate position being the need for covering a major part of the research paradigm of the institution, brilliantly represented certain years ago by prof. Boriana Velcheva. **The topic is relevant** for palaeoslavic studies as a whole; newly discovered primary sources and their research brought about new issues and interpretations of the Glagolitic, its character and origin.

The dissertation presented here consists of 275 pages, divided as follows: extensive Introduction (I, pp. 4-56); Chapter II (pp. 57-162) – Contemporary aspects of Glagolitic study; III (pp. 163-196) – Study on the double letters X in the Glagolitic alphabet; Conclusion (Chapter IV, pp. 197-201); Appendix (Ch.V, pp. 202-245) and Chapter VI – Bibliography (pp.246-275).

Following the usual division for a doctoral thesis, Inna Dimitrova begins with an **Introduction**, where she gives concise and clear enough explanation of her research goals and objectives, but it is unclear why, it is followed by several completely needless pages, summarizing the content of the paper. The doctoral candidate defends in her thesis statement, that “creating a complete conceptual and typological model of the Glagolitic alphabet is achievable only then, when as many individual features of the letter signs and the alphabet system as possible are duly described, recorded and practically verified” (p.8). From this perspective she consistently introduces the issues, relative to the contemporary study of the Glagolitic script and aims at creating a systematic “frame, defining the characteristic typological features” of this graphic system.

Dimitrova introduces the main part of her research by an **analytic survey** (Introduction Ch.2) of the scientific field and its contemporary development. Despite the chronological approach – a difficult perspective in such a case, where we have variety of research on various writing systems, strongly

influenced by some related fields and developments in other chronological boundaries, the thesis presented here outlines the major models of description and analysis of alphabet signs and systems viewed as an object of scientific research. It is designed to create the “evaluative criterion framework”, stated earlier. In fact, this second part of the Introduction stands for the first part of the study proper which, as required by our scientific tradition, begins with a chapter on present state of research, but here it seems redundant. The same applies to the other parts of the Introduction (Ch. 3-5).

Inna Dimitrova offers a detailed survey of Isaak Tylor’s work - the theoretical background for contemporary study of writing systems, focusing on his ideas of the Slavic scripts which, despite their inconsistency, still remain the main research model in Slavic studies to date. Her survey of the works of Dirringer, Jensen, Gelb gives a good idea of the 20th c. development of the research field and its stages, despite some major omissions like, for example, the contribution of the French school of the 50’s and 60’s, namely R. Marechal (1948 and 1963), Ch. Perrat (1955) and particularly J. Malon (1952, 1961, 1982). From its research perspective the present thesis deems important to review also the late 20th.c. theories, which modernize the research methods of grammatology, similar to the earlier development, influenced by Saussure and his followers. The survey concludes with the newest contributions to graphematics by Kohler, Altmann and Gzhibek, not mentioning though Hathumod Bußmann, who gave the conventional definition to this methodology (Bußmann, H. 1990; 2008). The whole survey demonstrates the candidate’s excellent knowledge of the current state of research in the area, save that she fails to give her own opinion on the reviewed theories, methodologies and terminology. This in lesser degree applies for ch. 4 and 5 of the Introduction, where the contemporary state of research is viewed in connection to the Glagolitic issues, but the attitude of the candidate is also not enough clearly stated.

Regarding the Glagolitic issues of research and their systematization (pp.48-56) it can be pointed out, that the task is well designed, but not so well executed contentwise – the treatment of the Greek and Latin Cyrillo-Methodian sources, at least, save that there are some incorrect conclusions (e.g. that “the Latin sources are mainly documents (diplomatic and correspondence) or chronicles, whose time of creation is close to Cyrillo-Methodian epoch”, or “ there are not known Greek sources, which testify about the creation or the creators of the Slavic alphabet and the translation of the sacred books in Slavic”. This quotation from the Vita of Naum is not the only contradiction: “It [*their work*] consisted initially of using and perfect understanding of vernacular speech, and then the remarkable invention of the writing signs and the most exact recognition of the words with which to render for the native peoples the translation of the Holy Scriptures from Greek into Bulgarian and to spread the New and Old Testaments in order to pave the road to salvation for those, who were earlier driven by unbelief. This they completed indeed and he [*Naum*] went with them. Because the all-pervading Heavenly Wisdom assisted them and strengthened the word with signs, which created through them, they could achieve distinction in the one and the other. They invented letters, suitable for the language of the Bulgarians, as they had decided, and compiled books, equal in number to ours [*Greek*], from the Old and the New grace”. From the text it is not obvious that the candidate is familiar with the list of Cyrillo-Methodian sources and the articles in Cyrillo-Methodian Studies vol.4 (Кирило-Методиевски студии, кн.4, 586–515; Извори за живота и делото на Кирил и Методий. – В: Кирило-Методиевска енциклопедия. Т. 2. И–О. София, 1995, с. 60–88), as well as the collection, published in vol.26 of CMS (кн. 26 на КМС "Езиците на християнската молитва: История и съвременност *Lingue della preghiera cristiana: storia e contemporaneità*. С. 2018). In my opinion, the choice of literature, quoted in the dissertation is quite obscure and somewhat random. Chapter II. CONTEMPORARY ASPECTS IN THE STUDY OF GLAGOLITIC ALPHABET AND ITS ORIGIN, which sets off the actual development of the topic, discusses comprehensively the current state of research and

the new contributions, but here as well, the critical approach is missing and the author avoids giving her opinion. The interesting part II.1.1.2, where the reconstruction of the letter names is discussed, offers the Russian translation (or, rather interpretation) of the traditional names by L. Savelieva, (89-90). Besides the fact that not all traditional names are genuine, the translation shows some obvious mistakes and here the critical remark is missing. For me it is also unclear why Dimitrova treats the number system from the point of view of the form, and not the phonetics – here we could expect rather a “phonetic-phonological” approach.

Chapter III. A COMPREHENSIVE STUDY OF THE LETTERS X1 AND X2 IN THE GLAGOLITIC, in fact comprises **the main contribution of the discussed thesis**. It contains an attempt to implement the thesis idea, basing on the different already discussed and classified approaches, to research a specific Glagolitic issue – the existence of two letters for the sound “h”. Tracking out the different representation of the lexeme *хлъмь* by hand “C” in Psalterium Sinaiticum, I. Dimitrova proves that the so called “sunny x” appears only where the Hebrew text uses the lexeme *ghib-aw* not to represent the general meaning of ‘hill’ (baw-maw), but specifically, when it refers to the sacred hill Geba (Gbal), despite the fact, that Septuaginta makes no difference between the two and translates them both with βουνοϛ. This interesting discovery allows the author to conclude that “one part of the Glagolitic graphemes is functioning on the text-semantic level” and their meaning is “distinguished only in contextual sources”.

Considering the above I could say that before us is **an original study**, which shows the integrity of the systematization, made by the doctoral candidate in the previous chapters of her thesis, the principle classification and analysis of the writing systems, developed by the grafematics in the recent decades. Overall, the thesis **complies with the requirements for a doctoral dissertation**. What spoils the impression is the layout, which is not very carefully carried out (even to such details as the title page, where the scientific area is missing), negligently prepared bibliography, disregard of the formal requirements for “scientific paper” in our research tradition. If the candidate had considered the recommendations given to her during the discussion at CMRS, she could have avoided many of the formal imperfections, as well as some genuine faults in her thesis. Taking this into account when publishing her thesis, she could produce the modern Glagolitic Paleography needed in Cyrillo-Methodian studies.

Basing on the above, I offer the respected scientific jury **to award the educational and scientific degree “doctor” to Inna Vasileva Dimitrova** in higher education field 2. Humanitarian sciences, professional field 2.1. Philology.

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Sofia, 12.10.2019.