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THE ACADEMY WORKING FOR LITURGICAL TRADITION: MAHNIĆ'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE PRESERVATION OF THE OLD SLAVONIC LANGUAGE IN THE DIOCESE OF KRK¹

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Bishop Antun Mahnić (1850-1920) was born in Slovenia and was appointed the Bishop of Krk in 1896. Initially, he thought of himself as an opponent of the Glagolitic script, but through a thorough study of church documents and papal bulls, he recognised the legitimacy of Old Church Slavonic liturgy. In 1902, he founded the Old Church Slavonic Academy (*Academia Palaeoslavica Veglensis*) – the third scientific institution in the South Slavic region. By 1927, the Academy had published twenty-seven titles, educated priests in the Old Church Slavonic language, and preserved the Glagolitic tradition. Mahnić also founded the Kurykta printing house back in 1899 as a media instrument for spreading conservative Catholic values.

His work represents a key contribution to the preservation of the Old Church Slavonic liturgical heritage of the Diocese of Krk and the Republic of Croatia.

Keywords: Old Church Slavonic Academy, Mahnić, Glagolitic script, printing

Introduction

Bishop Antun Mahnić (1850-1920) is one of the most significant figures in the history of the preservation of the Old Church Slavonic liturgical tradition in Croatia. This paper analyses Mahnić's key contribution through the establishment and operation of the Old Church Slavonic Academy in Krk, an institution that played a crucial role in the protection of the Glagolitic heritage at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. Born in the Slovenian village of Kobdilj, Mahnić acquired his intellectual and ecclesiastical experience by editing the influential journal *Rimski katolik (Roman Catholic)*, and then brought it to the Diocese of Krk, where he faced the complex issue of Old Church Slavonic liturgy.

¹ This work is based on a chapter of a doctoral dissertation defended at the University of Zagreb, Faculty of Croatian Studies, in 2022.

The paper focuses on the period from Mahnić's arrival on Krk in 1897 to his founding of the Old Church Slavonic Academy in 1902, as well as its activities until its formal dissolution in 1927. Particular attention is paid to the analysis of Mahnić's transformation from an alleged opponent of the Glagolitic script to its ardent protector, which represents a fascinating example of how a deeper understanding of tradition can change attitudes and direct action. Through the study of church documents and papal bulls, Mahnić recognised the legitimacy of the Old Church Slavonic liturgy and decided upon its active protection despite political pressure from the Austrian authorities.

Mahnić's formative period in Slovenia

The charismatic leader and initiator of the Croatian Catholic Movement (hereinafter: CCM) or the 'Giant of the Adriatic,' as Marica Stanković called him, who had her first encounter with the bishop on his catafalque,² was born in the Slovenian village of Kobdilj on 14th September 1850.

Antun Mahnić's most dedicated work was manifested in creating the content of the *Rimski katolik (Roman Catholic)*, which he launched in 1888. Over time, the influence of the *Roman Catholic* became great and Mahnić himself became better known as a "prolific writer of neo-scholastic and apologetic texts"³ than as a young professor at the faculty.

It is known that Antun Mahnić, in the *Roman Catholic*, was already battling against the liberalism that was increasingly infiltrating the country. This infiltration of liberalism was achieved mostly through the press, philosophy and literature, especially between 1888 and 1896 during Mahnić's independent editing of the paper, when he personally wrote many published articles, up to six hundred pages per year.⁴ His texts were full of criticism directed at public figures in Slovenia, in which he clearly expressed his standpoints, and so he did not hesitate to criticise famous writers such as Prešeren, Stritar, Tavčar and Trdina.⁵ In his critiques, he never entered into the literary value of the work, but commented on the ideological layer, in accordance with his philosophical and religious views.⁶

² This is how Marica Stanković, a prominent believer and laywoman, called Bishop Mahnić in her book *Mladost vedrine*. (M. STANKOVIĆ, 1944, 11-15)

³ A. GOLUBOVIĆ – M. POLIĆ, 2009, 178.

⁴ Cf. A. BOZANIĆ, 2013, 20.

⁵ Cf. A. BOZANIĆ – P. STRČIĆ, 2002, 29-31.

⁶ Cf. A. BOZANIĆ – P. STRČIĆ, 2002, 29-31.

Immediately before he was appointed Bishop of Krk, Mahnić founded a scholarly and publishing institution in Ljubljana, which he named *Leonova družba* (*Leon's Society*), and this was his last major contribution to Slovenian public life.⁷ Namely, only a few days after the founding of *Leonova družba*, on 22nd November 1896, he was appointed Bishop of Krk, and was ordained a bishop in 1897,⁸ which at the same time marked the end of his public work in Slovenia.

"The storm from the Karst" is the description with which Simon Gregorčič portrays Mahnić's fruitful work in Slovenia.⁹ In the short time he was active, Mahnić decisively approached the problems of contemporary society, radically, always starting from the concept of preserving existing, traditional, conservative values.¹⁰

His arrival on Krk and initial period

Upon his arrival as bishop in the Krk Diocese, Antun Mahnić did not immediately begin a fight against opponents, but took time in order to adapt to his new environment, which is confirmed by the fact that he decided to Croatize his surname.¹¹ Namely, upon his arrival on Krk, although he was born as Anton Mahnić, he began to sign his name as Mahnić and did so until his death in 1920.

It is still unclear and unresearched, even a hundred years after Mahnić's death, why such an active and enterprising person with such clearly formed values and ideas was marginalised by being sent to a small and poor diocese. But time has shown that it was a good move for Croatia because, although he is still unknown to the public today, many of the fruits of Mahnić's work have remained in Croatia. It is a logical assumption that a person who, like Mahnić, defended Catholic values, who in his public statements sought to eliminate liberalism and modern political trends, would be welcome in a multi-ethnic empire, that he would be promoted and very influential.

So, some scholars who study the character and work of Antun Mahnić point out that "it is assumed that he was transferred primarily due to the influence of the *Rimski katolik* (*Roman Catholic*), considering that the liberal authorities in Vienna banned his reading in schools in Slovenia. In order to remove him, the

⁷ Cf. A. GOLUBOVIĆ – M. POLIĆ, 2009, 178.

⁸ Cf. A. GOLUBOVIĆ – M. POLIĆ, 2009, 178.

⁹ Cf. A. BOZANIĆ – P. STRČIĆ, 2009, 32.

¹⁰ Cf. A. BOZANIĆ – P. STRČIĆ, 2009, 32.

¹¹ Cf. A. BOZANIĆ – P. STRČIĆ, 2009, 51.

authorities promoted him to the bishop of Krk,¹² and some go even further when they claim that the imperial politicians wanted to get rid of him, and on that small island, the clergy did not enthusiastically accept a foreigner, who was considered an opponent of the Old Slavonic liturgy."¹³ Although this claim sounds rather harsh, it actually reflects Mahnič's position upon arriving on Krk.

If we take into account that this was a poor diocese and a bi-ethnic environment, that there was a division in the carrying out of the liturgy, it is clear that the authorities expected Mahnič to introduce unity into the Church by abolishing the Glagolitic liturgy and introducing only the Latin liturgy, and therefore make life and work easier for themselves. On the basis of the previous attitude of foreign bishops in the diocese, who had a negative or neutral attitude towards Old Church Slavonic as a liturgical language, the public perceived Antun Mahnič as "more Roman than Rome itself."¹⁴ At the same time, Italian-oriented publications congratulated the Diocese of Krk on the appointment of a new, honest bishop, and concluded that he was honest based on his negative attitude towards the Old Church Slavonic liturgy.¹⁵ In fact, "the negative attitude towards Old Church Slavonic liturgy was on the one hand a general assumption, while on the other hand it was confirmed by the situation of one Slovenian parish, Ricmanje, which, when attempting to introduce Old Church Slavonic liturgy, encountered very strong resistance from Antun Mahnič."¹⁶

Studying the issue of the Old Church Slavonic liturgy

In the literature, we also come across information that "for a full six years after his arrival in Krk, the new bishop kept quiet and studied the situation in Croatia, especially in journalism and literature."¹⁷ We could give an affirmative answer to these claims if we were only to look cursorily at Mahnič's behaviour and activities, but, considering that Mahnič arrived on the island of Krk in 1897, the period of six years would mark this bishop's passivity right up to 1903. The facts show, namely, that Mahnič founded a printing house in Krk in 1899, that in 1901 he convened a synod in Krk and gave the order that parishes with a tradition of Glagolitic mass for longer than thirty years be listed, which showed that the main problem of this diocese, the problem that caused the most controversy, was

¹² Cf. A. GOLUBOVIĆ – M. POLIĆ, 2009, 178.

¹³ J. KRIŠTO, 1994, 143.

¹⁴ M. BOLONIĆ, 1980, 33.

¹⁵ F. VELČIĆ, 2010, 5-6.

¹⁶ Cf. A. BOZANIĆ – P. STRČIĆ, 2009, 35.

¹⁷ Cf. A. GOLUBOVIĆ – M. POLIĆ, 2009, 178.

being tackled, then we cannot in any way agree with the claims about Mahnić's passivity and silence in the first six years of his episcopacy. During the time of his so-called silence and inactivity, shortly after his arrival on Krk, some of his publications began to be published.

The role of Bishop Antun Mahnić was important in preserving the Old Church Slavonic liturgy, Glagolitic books and folk traditions, as well as the fact that there was a fear on the island about the new bishop's standpoint towards the Glagolitic mass. Moreover, upon his arrival, indications pointed to the negative attitude about the Old Church Slavonic liturgy.¹⁸ This was certainly one of the causes of fear and distrust on the island of Krk.

Such was the atmosphere Mahnić found after his arrival on Krk in 1897. The pressing issue of Old Church Slavonic liturgy came upon him at his ordination, which took place in Gorica on 7th February 1897, when the emissaries of Krk presented him with a recently printed, bound copy of the Glagolitic missal by Dragutin Antun Parčić. Upon Mahnić's arrival on Krk on 25th March 1897, one of the local contenders for the episcopal position, the Krk vicar Franjo Volarić, warned the new bishop in very blunt and somewhat frightening words: "We know about the instructions you have regarding the Glagolitic script, but these plans can only be realised through our bodies."¹⁹ Franciscan brother Ignacije Radić, otherwise Mahnić's confessor, wrote that the bishop understood the gesture of the representatives of the Krk clergy, so upon receiving the gift, and in order to appease them, he promised to carefully study the issue and resolve it fairly, as far as he was concerned.²⁰ He responded likewise to the Trieste governor, Baron Rinaldini, who came to Krk six months later to remind him about the work of abolishing the Glagolitic script. Mahnić did not promise him anything, but during Rinaldini's return to Krk, Bishop Mahnić told him: "I have not yet had time, Your Excellency, to study the issue of the Glagolitic script, but I can already tell you openly that I am studying the issue of the Glagolitic script thoroughly, and if I find that it legally exists, not only will I not abolish it, but I will defend it with my soul. When the Trieste governor hears this, he will pack up and never come to Krk again."²¹

And as he had promised, the bishop became better acquainted with the Old Church Slavonic liturgy on Krk. "At that time, the Old Church Slavonic liturgical language was increasingly valued on a social level as folk heritage, and

¹⁸ Cf. A. BOZANIĆ – P. STRČIĆ, 2009, 35.

¹⁹ A. BOZANIĆ – P. STRČIĆ, 2009, 36.

²⁰ Cf. I. RADIĆ, 1940, 130.

²¹ HRVATSKA STRAŽA, 1920, 244.

not so much as an ecclesiastical reality."²² This is why the public was interested in the Glagolitic heritage and what position the new "bishop would take on this extremely sensitive cultural-national issue."²³ Given that he was always thorough, and it could be said that in this case he had to be careful, Mahnić himself searched through and investigated church documents and other historical sources related to this issue.²⁴ In conversation, he confided in Pastor Brenčec, admitting that studying the status of the Old Church Slavonic liturgy was more difficult for him than all the examinations and that this question "I had to study terribly, no exam was as difficult for me as this job; I had to look for everything myself, find and study all the documents myself. It was really difficult."²⁵ Everything points to the seriousness of the understanding of the task, but also to the fact that Mahnić was not satisfied with the conclusions made in advance.

It can be stated with certainty that, having studied all the deeds and documents, Bishop Mahnić realised that this issue was not a rebellion in just one of the many Croatian dioceses in which the Latin liturgy dominated.²⁶ The legitimacy of the Old Church Slavonic language in church rites was supported by the permission for Glagolitic mass by Pope Innocent IV to the Benedictines in Omišalj in 1252, as well as its confirmation by the later bull of Pope Benedict XIV in 1754, although the bull does not specify which parishes it referred to.²⁷ The pontificate of Pope Leo XIII and his preference for the Slavs, which led to the proclamation of Cyril and Methodius as saints, as well as the printing of the Parčić Missal, also had a significant role and importance.²⁸

However, the problem was not only the liturgical language, but there were also political connotations connected, which were also used by the revivalists during the revolutionary events of 1848,²⁹ as an element of proving Croatian national identity and continuity. This caused additional negative reactions to the Glagolitic tradition, so the aforementioned papal bull received two explanations.³⁰ "The first explanation approved the use of the Old Church Slavonic language and the Glagolitic script in the liturgy, but excluded the possibility of using the Croatian language and the Latin script of the time, which were used in

²² A. BOZANIĆ, 2010, 513.

²³ A. BOZANIĆ, 2010, 513.

²⁴ A. BOZANIĆ, 2004, 20.

²⁵ Cf. I. RADIĆ, 1940, 130.

²⁶ Cf. A. BOZANIĆ, 2013, 52-53.

²⁷ Cf. A. BOZANIĆ, 2013, 52-53.

²⁸ Cf. A. BOZANIĆ, 2004, 19.

²⁹ Cf. A. BOZANIĆ, 2004, 18-19.

³⁰ Cf. A. BOZANIĆ, 2004, 19.

the *ščavet* (church books written in the Chakavian dialect) out of necessity or preference of the people and priests."³¹ Since this was still not precise enough for the opponents of the Glagolitic script and the Old Church Slavonic liturgy, the Pope narrowed the privilege of using the Glagolitic script and the Old Church Slavonic language to only those parishes that had a tradition of the Glagolitic mass for more than thirty years.³² In other dioceses, where the liturgy was once held in the Old Church Slavonic language, the custom of the Glagolitic mass was forgotten or abolished, and their bishops could fearlessly and freely report to the Congregation for Rites that they did not have parishes with the right to use the Glagolitic mass, in the Diocese of Krk, it was largely preserved, which is what also caused such violent reactions to the indications of its abolition.³³ The privilege of Old Church Slavonic liturgy was initially understood as the privilege of certain peoples, and accordingly, others began to seek it, but in this period, the Glagolitic mass was considered a privilege of individual churches or chapels.³⁴ "Opponents of the Glagolitic script wanted to further narrow this privilege to the privilege of individual priests, but the Holy See refuted this interpretation. The general confusion also caused the third papal explanation, which stated that the right to use the Glagolitic mass has not been extinguished if in a parish, due to a shortage of Glagolitic books and an unfamiliarity with the language, Old Slavonic liturgy has ceased during the last thirty years."³⁵ This partially reduced the damage caused to the Glagolitic mass by the use of the *ščavet*.³⁶

³¹ Cf. A. BOZANIĆ, 2004, 19.

³² Cf. A. BOZANIĆ, 2004, 19.

³³ Cf. A. BOZANIĆ, 2004, 20.

³⁴ Cf. A. BOZANIĆ, 2004, 20.

³⁵ A. BOZANIĆ, 2004, 20.

³⁶ ŠČAVET (Italian: *schiavetto*: Slavic, i.e. Croatian), a church book written in Latin, a lectionary in the Chakavian dialect. In it are printed the epistles and gospels that are read at masses throughout the year. Also printed in our lectionaries are those parts of the mass that are spoken aloud (prefaces, prayers). *Lekcionar Bernardina Spliciánina* (Venice, 1495) and *Pištrole i Evandolja priko svega godišta novo istomačena po razlogu Misala Dvora rimskoga* by Ivan Bandulavić (Venice, 1613), were extremely popular and influential. The latter spread throughout the entire Croatian area, as well as among Glagolitic speakers. Bernardin of Split (died in Pula, 1499) prepared his *Lekcionar*, which was the first Croatian Latin incunabula, according to the Glagolitic model, and contains the gospels and epistles. It was a model for many lectionaries, including the extremely popular work of I. Bandulavić, the first Bosnian Franciscan to publish in Latin. Š. spread especially thanks to the publications of the Karletzky, the Rijeka printers of Czech origin. Glagolitic writers called the Latin letters "ščavetanski," as the Glagolitic writer Anton Depope wrote in 1630 ("skopiah iz ščaveta"), and in 1724, Fra Marko Kuzmić was convinced that "in our Croatian or Slavonic language" it is easier and better to write in Slavonic letters. (J. BRATULIĆ, *ščavet, Istarska enciklopedija*, URL: <https://istra.lzmk.hr/clanak/scavet> (2025-07-07))

At the local level, all of these provisions and dangers led to greater caution and stricter adherence to the papal decrees on the basis of which the use of the *ščavet* was prohibited, but it was stipulated that priests use the Parčić Missal. All of this was contained in the decree of Vicar Volarić issued on 30th September 1893.³⁷

The beginning of the pontificate of Pius X marked a change in the climate and a renewed unfavourable attitude towards the Old Church Slavonic liturgy and the Glagolitic script. Pius X himself stated that the spread of the Glagolitic script "beyond the limits of acquired rights should be prevented,"³⁸ and therefore it was necessary to approach the issue with even greater caution.

"The understanding of privileges for Old Church Slavonic liturgy was drastically narrowed, from the privilege of the people to the privilege of individual churches; in the Diocese of Krk, it was a matter of fulfilling previously granted rights, but a large number of churches also met the new criteria. Therefore, it is a language that has legitimacy within the Church. Mahnić decidedly ignored the instructions given to him and the official position of the authorities and adhered to what he alone considered fair, as he had admittedly done before, in other issues that he touched upon."³⁹

For him, it was clearly "political instrumentalisation,"⁴⁰ so he approached the problem cautiously and decisively. The aforementioned Vicar General Volarić, an ardent defender of the Glagolitic tradition on the island, helped him in this.⁴¹ Mahnić had known Volarić since his studies. He knew that he was a great expert in the Old Church Slavonic liturgy, so it can therefore be said that Mahnić's decision was wisely considered.

"The pressure from both sides, for and against the Glagolitic script, provoked the Roman *Congregatio de cultu divino*⁴² (Congregation for Divine Worship) to order a church-law revision of local privileges."⁴³ Therefore, in order to determine the situation with the rights of the Glagolitic mass as much as possible, a certain cataloguing was carried out on the island, in which Glagolitic and Latin parishes were listed in accordance with the conditions set by the Pope. "Mahnić was the first bishop to present a list of privileged

³⁷ Cf. A. BOZANIĆ, 2004, 20.

³⁸ Cf. A. BOZANIĆ, 2013, 50.

³⁹ I. MILOVČIĆ, 2006, 64.

⁴⁰ I. MILOVČIĆ, 2006, 64.

⁴¹ A. BOZANIĆ, 1991, 50.

⁴² The Sacred Congregation for Rites established by Pope Sixtus V in January 1588.

⁴³ T. SLAVICKÝ, 2013, 260.

churches,"⁴⁴ and the other bishops concluded that their churches did not have or had lost this privilege. For the purpose of determining these rights, a synod was convened in Krk in 1901.

The first Synod of Krk and the definition of the right to the Glagolitic mass

Bishop Antun Mahnić spent a long time in discussions with priests preparing the diocesan synod in Krk. How involved he was in the life of the community is also shown by the fact that during his stay on Krk, he convened two synods, yet at that time synods "were not that common in the Croatian region."⁴⁵ The synods were held in 1901 and 1911, and the one planned for 1921 was not held because the bishop died in 1920.⁴⁶

Even before the holding of the First Krk Synod, there were objections and stormy reactions to the Synod. On 24th August 1901, the Provincial Assembly of Poreč sent a "Memorandum to the Holy Congregation for Rites in Rome in which it accuses the Synod, stating that its goal is not religious discipline, nor a discussion about religion and morality, but only to proclaim the 'Slavicisation' of the churches."⁴⁷ Along with the Memorandum of the Provincial Assembly, other appeals addressed to the Vatican followed the Synod, which had not yet been held. These complaints were mostly political, without any religious weight. Calling Old Church Slavonic liturgy an *innovation* and a danger for the *Latinity of the Istrian islands*, i.e. the islands of the Krk Diocese, the Congregation for Rites was called upon to veto in advance the adoption of any decision in favour of the Glagolitic mass.⁴⁸ Regardless of mutual accusations, the Vatican did not make any decisions against the convening of the Synod and its decisions.

The Synod was held for three days, from 1st to 4th September 1901, in the town of Krk.⁴⁹ In discussing the liturgical language, Mahnić and the priests were guided by the logic that faith should not only be experienced within oneself but also outwardly, which is why one attends liturgical ceremonies, and for a person to be able to express their faith there, the elements of communication and the language in which the liturgy is performed are important.⁵⁰ Given that Mahnić

⁴⁴ T. SLAVICKÝ, 2013, 260.

⁴⁵ A. BOZANIĆ, 2006, 51.

⁴⁶ Cf. A. BOZANIĆ, 2002, 51.

⁴⁷ F. VELČIĆ, 2010, 6.

⁴⁸ Cf. F. VELČIĆ, 2010, 7.

⁴⁹ Cf. I. MILOVČIĆ, 2006, 17.

⁵⁰ Cf. I. MILOVČIĆ, 2006, 66

himself was collecting data in order to investigate the position of the Old Church Slavonic language, this issue was not unknown to him. "He found confirmation of the liturgical use of Greek, Latin, Ethiopian, Coptic, Armenian and Arabic, in addition to the Slavic language."⁵¹ By applying his findings to the liturgical-legal problem of the diocese, Mahnić concluded that "along with the Greek language, the use of the Old Church Slavonic language continued in the area of the then Krk Diocese, which is confirmed by the aforementioned papal bulls, although in some churches Latin also coexists as the language of the liturgy."⁵² Therefore, the conclusion was made that the Old Church Slavonic liturgy was only a translation of the Roman rite into the Old Church Slavonic language.

Mahnić's acumen and readiness for the independent study of the documents led to his sound preparation and thus to the acceptance of all decisions, among which were also the provisions concerning the language of the liturgy. In connection with this issue, Bishop Mahnić took a small step forward and announced his inclination for the introduction of languages outside the group of the three sacred languages,⁵³ which would appear in a broader context somewhat later.⁵⁴ Namely, from everything it can be deduced that the liturgical-legal conclusion of the Krk Synod was the approval of the Glagolitic mass in those parishes in which this has been done for more than thirty years,⁵⁵ and a "list of churches and chapels with the privilege of Old Church Slavonic liturgy, as well as a list of those where mass should be celebrated in Latin, because they have lost the privilege or have never had it at all" was also compiled.⁵⁶

The issue of the *ščavet* was also an issue that the synod fathers discussed. Mahnić recalled the decision of Vicar Volarić, which "determines that the use

⁵¹ Cf. I. MILOVČIĆ, 2006, 64.

⁵² Cf. I. MILOVČIĆ, 2006, 66.

⁵³ "The three sacred languages were considered Hebrew, Greek and Latin, and the official position of the Church was that only they could be used for worship. The question of the legitimacy of other languages in the Church, including Old Church Slavonic, was a stumbling block that Cyril and Methodius encountered. They advocated the thesis of the trilingual heresy – i.e. they opposed the elitism of these three languages and the discrimination of the others." "Hence Cyril's metaphor of God's love as the sun that warms equally, the rain that falls equally for all people, therefore all people have the right to hear and understand the word of God in their own language." (D. ŽUBRINIĆ, 1996, 31)

⁵⁴ The issue of the language of the liturgy was only resolved by the Second Vatican Council, when the introduction of the vernacular into worship was permitted. In the Diocese of Krk, this was officially resolved during the time of Bishop Karmelo Zazinović on 5th February 1965. Cf. M. BOLONIĆ, 1980, 34.

⁵⁵ A. BOZANIĆ, 2004, 21.

⁵⁶ Cf. I. MILOVČIĆ, 2006, 66.

of the *ščavet* is prohibited, as well as the mixing of spoken language with the language of the liturgy,⁵⁷ and that the *ščavet* should be replaced with the recently published Parčić Missal. As for the *ščavet*, it concluded that it was mostly a matter of necessity.⁵⁸ It also called for respect for the decisions and confirmed the ban on the use of the *ščavet*, so as not to endanger the survival of Old Church Slavonic liturgy and compromise this phenomenon in the eyes of the Vatican.⁵⁹ The acts of the First Synod of Krk authoritatively state that "the Glagolitic script has existed and been used in church services in Krk and the dioceses of Rab and Osor, which are affiliated with it, since the time of the holy brothers Cyril and Methodius, certainly from the 12th century onwards. Only due to the lack of liturgical books – the last Old Church Slavonic missal was printed in 1741, the breviary in 1791, the ritual in 1640 – did it happen that somewhere Latin was introduced into the liturgy instead of the Old Church Slavonic language, and here and there, especially in rural parishes, the living Croatian language was also introduced, especially in those parts of the mass that the people sang, while the priest recited quiet prayers in Latin."⁶⁰

Then it continued verbatim: "In order to eliminate the above-mentioned abuses in the sacred rites – some voluntary changes and mixing of languages – relying on the old custom, which prevails in this diocese and on papal permissions, adopting the provisions of the Holy Council of 5th August 1898 and 1900, having previously proposed to the Holy See everything about the liturgical language, we command and determine the following: a) in this diocese of ours, as it now exists, the custom is to use Latin and Old Church Slavonic, with the Roman rite, b) in order to remove any doubt in the future as to which churches enjoy the privilege of the Old Church Slavonic language, we have compiled a list of churches, which list we hereby proclaim.⁶¹ With this, the issue of the Glagolitic script is, in fact, legally and definitively resolved in the Diocese of Krk. For the implementation of this provision, Bishop Mahnić ordered: "All priests in the diocese must have a perfect knowledge of both liturgical languages, so that they can hold the Holy Mass in either language. No young man will be admitted to the holy orders, nor will he be assigned to the diocesan clergy, unless he passes the examination in both languages."⁶² In order to carry all this out, the

⁵⁷ I. MILOVČIĆ, 2006, 66.

⁵⁸ Cf. I. MILOVČIĆ, 2006, 66.

⁵⁹ Cf. M. BOLONIĆ, 1980, 42.

⁶⁰ I. RADIĆ, 1940, 130.

⁶¹ I. RADIĆ, 1940, 131.

⁶² I. RADIĆ, 1940, 131-132.

Ordinary appointed a special examiner for the Old Church Slavonic language, which was also the final answer to the governor Rinaldini and all of those who came after him.

After this decision, there were stormy reactions on other islands of the Diocese, which did not dissuade Mahnić from implementing the decisions about sanctioning the use of *ščavet*.

Despite all the problems that he encountered on the island, as well as the lack of understanding of his decision about *ščavet*, Mahnić did not give up and saw the necessity of an institution in the diocese that would have the task of preserving the tradition of the Glagolitic mass. The already rather poor state of liturgical books suggests that the diocese does not have a sufficient number of Parčić's Missals available to satisfy the needs of the diocese. The ignorance of the Old Church Slavonic language of young priests, who were mainly educated in Zadar and Gorica, where the Old Church Slavonic language was not given any attention, was also one of the problems that the bishop encountered. Therefore, he considered the establishment of the Old Church Slavonic Academy.

The establishment and activity of the Old Church Slavonic Academy

Mahnić wrote: "The Old Church Slavonic language is a sacred language, although it died long ago. It has remained for us, like Latin, as a sacred thing in sacred rites. In this language, the Holy Mass is celebrated and the sacred mysteries are shared. It is a sacred language. Priests need to adopt it completely, like Latin. And the little that is taught in some grammar schools is not enough for that, all of that is easily forgotten, but the priest *linguam, in qua sanctissima religionis Mysteria obit, semper memoria tenere oporteat, ne orans sit velut aes sonans, aut cymbalum tinniens*⁶³ (*I. Cor. 13: 1*)."⁶⁴ The direction of the Academy's activities was determined at the First Synod of Krk,⁶⁵ and it was conceived as "a gathering or society of men skilled in the Old Church Slavonic language, who will devote themselves with all their care to the improvement and, according to the apostolic decrees, the preservation in sacred use of the Old Church Slavonic language."⁶⁶ Nothing was left to chance, and it was carefully determined that

⁶³ *The Hymn of Love – Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am become as a sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.* (1 Corinthians 13:1)

⁶⁴ I. RADIĆ, 1940, 134.

⁶⁵ Cf. V. ŠTEFANIĆ, 1944, 17.

⁶⁶ I. MILOVČIĆ, 2006, 72.

one of the goals of the future Academy was to diligently study the Old Church Slavonic language,⁶⁷ out of a clear awareness that this was the only way to preserve this tradition from attacks coming from outside. In this direction, "the goal of sending younger priests to academic study of this language was also looked at, as well as testing the knowledge of the Old Church Slavonic language of those priests who come to Glagolitic churches."⁶⁸ All of this is also identified in Mahnič's understanding and purpose of the Academy: "The diligent study of the Old Church Slavonic language; therefore, it will, within its means, strive: 1) to have one or two priests professionally trained for this, 2) to have priests assigned to Glagolitic parishes familiar with the Old Church Slavonic language, and therefore to have Glagolitic lettering procured, so that the Academy can publish such works, 4) to publish liturgical books and other Old Church Slavonic sources of liturgical books and other Old Church Slavonic sources."⁶⁹

The Old Church Slavonic Academy is still known today for what was one of its basic goals, which was to be the one whose activity was to publish books and other writings necessary or useful for the study and preservation of the Old Church Slavonic language and to establish a printing house that would serve this purpose.⁷⁰ This goal was rightly one of the most important, given that a shortage had been warned of on several occasions.

Given certain goals, Antun Mahnič selected people with good knowledge and familiarity with the Old Church Slavonic heritage as collaborators for the realisation of this project. He invited the author of the last Glagolitic missal, Dragutin Antun Parčić, from Rome, as "the most prepared expert in Glagolitic liturgical literature"⁷¹ to take over the helm of the Academy.

Academia Palaeoslavica Veglensis – the Old Church Slavonic Academy was founded on 13th June 1902,⁷² and the founding assembly was held on 18th November 1902.⁷³ The Academy began its work in December of the same year.⁷⁴ The opening of the Academy was announced after a mass in the church of the Tertiaries in Krk, and not in the cathedral, because the cathedral was of a distinctly

⁶⁷ Cf. I. MILOVČIĆ, 2006, 72.

⁶⁸ Cf. I. MILOVČIĆ, 2006, 72.

⁶⁹ I. RADIĆ, 1940, 134.

⁷⁰ Cf. I. MILOVČIĆ, 2006, 72.

⁷¹ A. BOZANIĆ – P. STRČIĆ, 2009, 57.

⁷² Namely, the draft rules of the future academy were confirmed by "the copy of the Royal Governorship in Trieste No. 1280 of 13th June 1902." Cf. V. ŠTEFANIĆ, 1944, 17.

⁷³ Cf. V. ŠTEFANIĆ, 1944, 18.

⁷⁴ T. SLAVICKÝ, 2013, 261.

Latin orientation, unlike the Tertiaries, who were Glagolitic practitioners.⁷⁵ Twenty-one people participated in the founding assembly in the bishop's court.⁷⁶

The founders, honorary and regular members and supporting members made up the leadership of the Academy.⁷⁷ Their status was determined according to the financial support they provided upon the establishment of the Academy. Bishop Josip Juraj Strossmayer of Đakovo and Bishop Juraj Posilović of Senj were honorary members⁷⁸ who donated the largest financial contribution to the Academy. It is quite clear that the founders are considered to be Bishop Dr Antun Mahnić, and with him Dr Dinko Vitezić, a former member of the Vienna parliament and provincial financial advisor. They were also joined by supporting members: Dr Franjo Volarić and the dean and parish priest of Vrbnik, Jakov Dminić, curate Franjo P. Volarić from Kornić, and the Czech Josip Vajs.⁷⁹

The Academy was supported unconditionally by bishops Strossmayer and Mahnić, while the Austrian and later Yugoslav authorities seldom financed it.⁸⁰ Although founded by a few enthusiasts, the Old Church Slavonic Academy was "the third highest scientific and cultural institution in the entire South Slavic area, the third one to be established."⁸¹ Its importance and role in the growth of the interest of folk traditions, the awakening of national consciousness and revival events are great, and with that the interest of Slavists in the remains of the Old Church Slavonic language, monuments and Glagolitic singing increased. The expansion of the Academy, which its conceptual initiator Antun Mahnić had hoped for, was nevertheless not possible given its separation from the rest of the country.

From the revised list, it is evident that from its foundation in 1902 until its dissolution in 1927, the Academy published twenty-seven titles in Latin and Croatian, and the most frequent author and editor of these titles was Josip Vajs.⁸²

The publishing activity and scholarly work of the Academy

The Academy published two annuals: *Vjesnik Staroslavenske Akademije* (*The Herald of the Old Church Slavonic Academy*) in Krk for 1912 and 1913,

⁷⁵ Cf. A. BOZANIĆ – P. STRČIĆ, 2009, 57.

⁷⁶ Cf. V. ŠTEFANIĆ, 1944, 18.

⁷⁷ Cf. V. ŠTEFANIĆ, 1944, 18.

⁷⁸ Cf. V. ŠTEFANIĆ, 1944, 18.

⁷⁹ Cf. A. BOZANIĆ – P. STRČIĆ, 2009, 59.

⁸⁰ Cf. A. BOZANIĆ – P. STRČIĆ, 2009, 61.

⁸¹ A. BOZANIĆ – P. STRČIĆ, 2009, 52.

⁸² Cf. A. BOZANIĆ – P. STRČIĆ, 2009, 71-75.

whose editor was Nikola Žic.⁸³ In addition to liturgical books, the Academy published scholarly publications such as Jelić's and Vajs's works about the history of the Krk Diocese, as well as handbooks about learning the Old Church Slavonic language.⁸⁴ The users of the Academy's publications were helped by the *Azbukvar*, which was printed as an aid to learning and perfecting the Glagolitic script.⁸⁵

The basis of the Academy's publishing was the Kurykta printing house, where periodicals for the clergy and educational materials were printed, with Mahnić's contribution to the publishing. The time of the First World War did not leave the Academy's activity untouched, nor did the post-war period, when the number of members dropped.⁸⁶ Together with the Kurykta printing house, which was destroyed by the Arditi in 1920, the Academy's publishing activity was also brought to an end.⁸⁷

However, after 1920, the Old Church Slavonic Academy continued to operate until 22nd June 1927, when its formal dissolution was voted for and it was "joined to the then Croatian Theological Academy in Zagreb through the Old Church Slavonic (Philological) Department, and it was headed by Monsignor Svetozar Rittig and Josip Dujmović."⁸⁸

The Academy was moved from the environment to which it belonged, with regard to the Glagolitic mass and Old Church Slavonic liturgy, to the Zagreb Department located in an environment where neither the clergy nor the laity had any feeling for the Academy, the Glagolitic script, or Old Church Slavonic liturgy. Although it formally operated until 1939, the Department never truly came to life.⁸⁹ Zagreb lacked the enthusiasm that had existed on Krk.

Today, the Old Church Slavonic Institute in Zagreb is the bearer of the tradition of the Old Church Slavonic Academy.⁹⁰

⁸³ A. BOZANIĆ – P. STRČIĆ, 2009, 75.

⁸⁴ Cf. V. ŠTEFANIĆ, 1944, 34-40.

⁸⁵ Cf. A. BOZANIĆ – P. STRČIĆ, 2009, 75-77.

⁸⁶ A. BOZANIĆ, 2013, 55.

⁸⁷ Cf. A. BOZANIĆ – P. STRČIĆ, 2009, 64.

⁸⁸ Cf. A. BOZANIĆ – P. STRČIĆ, 2009, 64.

⁸⁹ Cf. V. ŠTEFANIĆ, 1944, 32-33.

⁹⁰ More about the activities of this very important institution today and throughout history can be found on the Institute's website: www.stin.hr, where an archive of previously published works is also available.

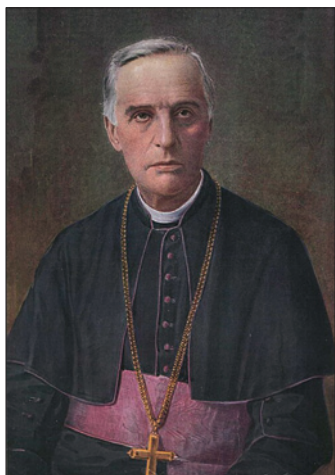


Fig. 1. Antun Mahnić as a bishop on the island of Krk (around 1900)⁹¹

Conclusion

In history, Antun Mahnić has remained a key figure who, at a critical moment, saved the Old Church Slavonic liturgical tradition from possible disappearance. His vision and practical work through the establishment of the Old Church Slavonic Academy and the Kurykta printing house represent a comprehensive approach to the preservation of cultural heritage that encompasses scholarly work, education, publishing and practical application.

During its existence, the Academy published twenty-seven titles, enabled the education of young priests in the Old Church Slavonic language and provided an institutional framework for the systematic study of the Glagolitic tradition. As the third scholarly institution to be established in the South Slavic region, the Academy played a key role in the national revival and the awakening of awareness of the value of indigenous traditions.

Mahnić's approach is characterised by deep scholarly foundation, courage in the face of political pressures and a clear vision of the long-term preservation of tradition. His work shows how an individual, equipped with knowledge and determination, can leave a lasting mark on the history of his community. Although the Old Church Slavonic Academy on Krk ceased to operate in 1927, its legacy lives on through the Old Church Slavonic Institute in Zagreb, which continues its mission to this day.

⁹¹ https://hr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antun_Mahni%C4%87#/media/Datoteka:Anton-Mahnic_Krk.jpg (2025-05-16)

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AKADEMIJA U SLUŽBI LITURGIJSKE TRADICIJE: MAHNIĆEV DOPRINOS OČUVANJU STAROSLAVENSKOGA JEZIKA U KRČKOJ BISKUPIJI

Sažetak

Biskup Antun Mahnić (1850. – 1920.), rođen u Sloveniji, imenovan je krčkim biskupom 1896. godine. Početno se smatrao protivnikom glagoljice, no temeljitim proučavanjem crkvenih dokumenata i papinskih bula prepoznao je legitimitet staroslavenskog bogoslužja. *Staroslavensku akademiju (Academia Palaeoslavica Veglensis)* - treću znanstvenu instituciju na južnoslavenskom prostoru osnovao je 1902. Akademija je do 1927. objavila dvadeset sedam naslova, obrazovala svećenike u staroslavenskom jeziku i očuvala glagoljašku tradiciju. Mahnić je također osnovao tiskaru Kurykta 1899. kao medijski instrument za širenje konzervativnih katoličkih vrijednosti.

Njegov rad predstavlja ključni doprinos očuvanju staroslavenske liturgijske baštine Krčke biskupije i Republike Hrvatske.

Ključne riječi: Staroslavenska akademija, Mahnić, glagoljica, tisak