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Mile Bogović, Glagoljica: bitna odrednica hrvatskog identiteta (Zagreb: Alfa, 2019.)

prof. dr. sc. Ante Bežen
Učiteljski fakultet Sveučilišta u Zagrebu, Zagreb, Republika Hrvatska

Uvod: Mada je objavljena prije sedam godina i predstavljena javnosti na znatnom broju skupova u organizaciji uglednih ustanova, ova knjiga pokojnog biskupa i povjesničara dr. sc. Mile Bogovića još nije dobila odgovarajući stručni odjek u mjerodavnim znanstvenim krugovima. Taj se odgovor očekuje jer knjiga pobunjenički govori o jednom od temeljnih pitanja naše kulture – postanku glagoljice kao pisma kojim je prvi put zapisan hrvatski jezik i koja je stoga jedna od bitnih odrednica hrvatskoga kulturnog i nacionalnog identiteta. Knjiga naime osporava najprošireniju, ćirilometodsku teoriju o postanku glagoljice i za to nudi uvjerljive argumente te tako ozbiljno dovodi u pitanje znanstvenu i kulturnu sliku o glagoljici koja se u hrvatskoj kulturi ustalila u posljednja dva i pol stoljeća. Zato je potrebno o njoj opetovano govoriti ne samo s uskog stručnog, nego i sa šireg kulturnog i društvenog gledišta.

Ključne riječi: ćirilometodska teorija o postanku glagoljice, Mile Bogović, glagoljica

Mile Bogović, The Glagolitic Script: An Essential Determinant of Croatian Identity (Zagreb: Alfa, 2019).

Introduction: Although published seven years ago and presented to the public at a considerable number of events organised by distinguished institutions, this book by the late Bishop and historian Mile Bogović, PhD, has not yet received an appropriate scholarly response in the relevant academic circles. Such a response is to be expected, since the book takes an openly dissenting stance on the origin of the Glagolitic script, a fundamental question of our culture. This was the first script in which Croatian was committed to writing and is therefore one of the essential determinants of Croatian cultural and national identity. The book disputes the most widespread Cyrillo-Methodian theory of the origin of the Glagolitic script and offers convincing arguments for doing so, thereby seriously calling into question the scholarly and cultural understanding of the Glagolitic script that has become established in Croatian culture over the past two and a half centuries. It is therefore necessary to discuss it

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repeatedly, not only from a narrow specialist perspective, but also from a broader cultural and social standpoint.

Keywords: Cyrillo-Methodian theory of the origin of the Glagolitic script, Mile Bogović, Glagolitic script.

MILE BOGOVIĆ'S THEORY ON THE ORIGIN OF THE GLAGOLITIC SCRIPT

The book is organised into five chapters, in which the author includes some of his earlier writings in support of his views. The first chapter discusses the origin of the Glagolitic script and its development in Croatian lands up to 1248, a period for which there is no reliable evidence. The second considers Senj as the centre of the Glagolitic world and examines the golden age of Croatian Glagolitic culture, including the letter of Pope Innocent IV to Philip, Bishop of Senj, and its consequences. The third describes what is known as Roman Glagolitic printing in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and the Russification of the liturgical books of the Croatian Glagolitic clergy. It discusses Rafael Levaković, the role of the bishops of Zadar, Zmajević and Karaman, and the decline of the Glagolitic script in the nineteenth century. The fourth brings together various articles by the author related to the main topic. They discuss the identity of the Otočac mentioned on the Baška Tablet and the role of the Glagolitic liturgy both as a bridge towards union between the Orthodox and Catholic Churches and in the service of Slavic ideologies. The sixth contains reviews and commentaries on the contributions of Stanislav Škrbec, Branko Fučić and Lujo Margetić to the study of the Glagolitic script. Here we will focus on Bogović's account of the script's origin.

The book's central and original thesis is that the still dominant theory which credits Cyril and Methodius, the educators of the Slavs, with creating the Glagolitic script is mistaken. The script originated considerably earlier, on Croatian soil, and is an essential determinant of Croatian identity specifically, rather than of a broader Slavic identity. It was created by anonymous Byzantine missionaries in an area inhabited by Croats. The Holy Brothers undoubtedly created the Cyrillic script, which spread throughout the Orthodox Slavic East, while the Glagolitic script 'miraculously survived for centuries on the westernmost fringe of Eastern influence'. In the Western Church, unified by the Latin language and script, it was an

unwelcome disruptive presence. Even so, it was accepted because it was so firmly rooted and was even used politically to advance Rome's interests eastwards.

Bishop Bogović is not the first scholar to reject the Cyrillo-Methodian theory of the origin of the Glagolitic script, but he has put forward some new and highly coherent hypotheses in support of that position. We will present them by examining the problems he identifies in the theory.

The first weakness of the Cyrillo-Methodian theory concerns the interval between Cyril and Methodius's departure for Moravia in 863, when they devised the Glagolitic script according to the theory, and the time of King Tomislav and the Council of Split in 925. During the so-called conflict between supporters of Glagolitic and of Latin in the liturgy, Rome sought to eliminate Glagolitic from worship in Croatia. This means that the script was already 'dangerously' widespread in Croatia at the time.

Only about sixty years passed between the Holy Brothers' departure for Moravia and the Council of Split. Given the limited means of communication at the time, this was surely too short a period for Cyril and Methodius's disciples, after the failure of their mission, to bring Glagolitic to Croatia and establish it so firmly that it became a threat to the Latin liturgy and to Rome. It is therefore not unreasonable to argue that the script must have originated in Croatia well before the Holy Brothers appeared, in response to similar Byzantine missionary needs. Bishop Bogović believes that its creators may have been more learned Byzantine missionaries working in Croatian lands. Their names were not recorded because, by the time these events were written down, they remained obscure beside prominent figures such as Cyril and Methodius, whom the Byzantine emperor himself had sent on their mission.

Moreover, the claim that the Holy Brothers created the Glagolitic script has a serious weakness of its own. No record explicitly says so, and the claim stems from later assumptions based on hagiographic texts of a mythical and religious character. In scholarly terms, then, the assumptions of the proponents of the Cyrillo-Methodian theory are no more convincing or certain than Bishop Bogović's, since they too are only assumptions. Bishop Bogović attributes the development of the theory on such uncertain foundations to its narrow methodology. It was derived chiefly from philological evidence, with little regard for the wider historical processes and circumstances in which these events took place. This is precisely the historical context that the book supplies.

The second fundamental question Bishop Bogović raises in the book is also an argument in its own right. On what grounds do proponents of the Cyrillo-Methodian theory assume that the Glagolitic script originated outside Croatia, given that immovable monuments with Glagolitic letters and texts carved in stone are found only in Croatia, chiefly in Istria, Kvarner and Lika? If the script was as widely adopted as the theory assumes, is it plausible that it would have left no trace in its place of origin, unless that place is Croatia, where such traces abound? Glagolitic documents, as distinct from stone monuments, have been found outside Croatia, for example in Czechia, where there are tenth-century examples, as well as in Bulgaria and on Mount Sinai. These are older than the monuments preserved in Croatia, such as the Baška Tablet of 1100.

The author explains this by the migration of monks who left Croatia for lands where there was no pressure to use Latin and took their church books with them. The books were later found in monasteries there, where they had survived because no one used them. In Croatia, by contrast, constant use had ‘worn out’ comparable books, and over a thousand years no trace of them remained. Although this hypothesis lacks concrete corroboration, it is not illogical. It supports Bogović’s contention that no other people in whose lands the script was used can piece together even a century of its own Glagolitic tradition, whereas the Croats have a Glagolitic millennium. During that millennium, the script was used for worship and was also widely used in civic life. The Vinodolski zakonik and the Istarski razvod, among other documents, were written in it.

The bishop supports these views by describing and documenting all the major developments in the history of the Glagolitic script. He follows it from its earliest period, when it was out of favour with the Latin Church hierarchy, through its ‘golden age’, when the pope’s letter of 1248 to the Bishop of Senj raised it to the dignity of the episcopal see at Senj, and on to its role as an instrument of Church policy in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. That period saw the Russification of Croatian Church Slavonic alongside the introduction, in protest, of the vernacular into worship through liturgical texts known as ‘šćavet’. This account of the changing functions of the Glagolitic script and Church Slavonic in the liturgy in the modern era in a sense brings the book’s argument full circle. It returns to the origins of the script and its religious and cultural role among the Croats, thereby justifying the description in the title of the Glagolitic script as ‘an essential determinant of Croatian identity’.

The book also clearly suggests two lines of thought that had not previously been linked so openly to the historical role of the Glagolitic script. The first is that for a time, especially in the seventeenth century, the script became a political instrument for the pope to strengthen the influence of the Catholic Church in the East, that is, in the Orthodox world. As a legacy of earlier Byzantine influence in Catholic Croatia, it was recognised as a bridge to the Orthodox and Slavic East. How far the script succeeded in that role at the time is a subject for separate research. That Croatia still has the potential to serve as a bridge to the East is shown by the recent case concerning the canonisation of Alojzije Stepinac, in which the Serbian Orthodox Church intervened. Pope Francis accepted the challenge and set up a mixed Orthodox–Catholic commission to examine the allegations against Stepinac. Bishop Bogović responded with his book Srpsko pravoslavlje i svetosavlje u Hrvatskoj (2017), in which he welcomed the pope's decision but expressed doubts about whether the commission's work would succeed. Those doubts proved justified.

Bishop Bogović's second line of thought about the influence of the Glagolitic script on Croatian history and culture as a whole suggests that the very existence of the script, as an indigenous legacy of Byzantine influence in Croatia, was one of the main inspirations for the Yugoslav idea that the South Slavs, particularly the Croats and the Serbs, constituted one people. As is well known, the idea was shaped by the leaders of the Illyrian revival under Ljudevit Gaj and was subsequently promoted by Franjo Rački and Bishop J. J. Strossmayer. Its consequences in later history are likewise known from the suffering of Croats in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and the bloodshed in the Independent State of Croatia, in socialist Yugoslavia and during the Croatian War of Independence. The idea lives on today.

In conclusion, Bishop Mile Bogović's book makes a compelling case for accepting the Glagolitic script as the product of an indigenous act of cultural creation on Croatian soil and thus as an originally Croatian script. In doing so, he disputes the claim that the Slavic apostles Cyril and Methodius or their disciples created the Glagolitic script. In his view, only the creation of the Cyrillic script can be attributed to them. This challenge to the Cyrillo-Methodian theory, which has been taught in our schools for at least two centuries, is an important revision of this part of Croatian cultural and linguistic history and will surely meet with objections and resistance. The cultural, historical, scholarly and logical coherence of Bogović's views is, however, beyond doubt. Their clarity and reasoning give them the force of a new theory of the origin of the Glagolitic script, among some forty-three theories

proposed from various starting points, and thus reinforce its status as an essential feature of Croatian identity, with all the cultural, political, educational and other consequences that follow.