

# CROATIAN NEOGLAGOLITISM – REVIVING THE GLAGOLITIC AS A REALM OF THE COLLECTIVE MEMORY

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**Abstract:** Glagolitism denotes a complex phenomenon in Croatian cultural, spiritual and linguistic history, a phenomenon tied to the use of the Glagolitic script. For a period of thousand years - since the first mention of the Glagolitic and glagolitism with the Croats (The First Church Council in Split in 925), and up until the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, when the Glagolitic was finally abandoned in active church and everyday use, the Glagolitic represented the means of recording Croatian cultural, spiritual, liturgical and social memory. The Glagolitic script is not only a part of Croatian linguistic identity, but also of cultural and spiritual identity. We are witnessing a revival of interest for the Glagolitic heritage, for stone monuments written in the Glagolitic, for Glagolitic manuscripts, for Glagolitic printed books, for the glagolitism in the life of the Church and the community. This revival is specially apparent in Istria, Croatian Littoral and middle Dalmatia - which are traditionally glagolitic regions. Still, one can witness an apparent selective interest towards the Glagolitic script. Zagreb, Croatia's cultural, academic and business center, represents the lead in many activities sprouting from the interest in the Glagolitic. Many modern events and occurrences resulting from that

interest may be named neoglagolitism, or the new glagolitism. This paper will contemplate the phenomenon of the neoglagolitism - the revival of the Glagolitic in the collective memory, and it will be exemplified by an overview of the most important events and occurrences that verify it.

**Keywords:** cultural memory, glagolitism, neoglagolitism, the Glagolitic script

## I INTRODUCTION

The term glagolitism is understood differently by different authors, and Josip Hamm, a prolific author on the issue, defines it as “a movement named by the Glagolitic script, a type of Slavic alphabet, which had an important role in fights led by certain Medieval Slavic people against the foreign clergy and foreign domination. With the Czechs and the Moravians, it was the fight against the Germans and the German clergy, with the Croats, the Romance people and the Latin clergy, with Macedonians, the Greeks and the Greek clergy, and with Bosnian Bogumils, it was a fight between Roman Catholic and Easter Orthodox Churches. The first person to explain Glagolitism in this manner was V. Jagić” (Hamm, 1965).

Perceived as an expression of resistance to the Catholic latinism - which was the expression, the

symbol and the tool of the contemporary liturgical and linguistic universalism and cosmopolitanism (Bratulić, 2005), the glagolitic movement, perceived as the expression, the symbol and the tool of the right to the national, own and special, was extinguished with the constitutions of the Second Vatican Council, which introduced national languages, including Croatian, into the liturgy. As J. Hamm points out, the glagolitism was more than just a movement for linguistic distinctiveness of the liturgy, it was also an expression of the national uniqueness and nationality; in modern terms – of the national identity. These are the reasons it took such strong roots and endured for so long in the Croatian regions, even under the strong cultural, linguistic, national and administrative influences of Venice, Rome, Vienna and Belgrade.

By perceiving the glagolitism in this manner, the neoglagolitism or the new glagolitism can be denoted as a modern occurrence of reviving the interest for the Croatian Glagolitic, the Glagolitic culture and heritage. It is obvious that this interest is occurring during the times of growing globalism and universalism, and also during the increased activities for the inclusion of the independent Croatia into the political community of European peoples. Furthermore, the growing interest for the Glagolitic tradition of the Croatian literacy and culture was induced by the climate of opinion during the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, marked by the questions of identity (personal and national), memory (personal and collective), understanding personal and national heritage as a resistance to the all present globalization processes. The omnipresent globalization actualizes the issue of national identity, the need to preserve national and unique values, but also, the fear that the globalization will lead to the decay of the cultural

identity. The inclusion of a national community into a supranational (i.e. Croatia joining the European Union) brings many questions: Who are we? What do we have? What is our heritage? What will we bring into this community?... However, it also brings fears: the fear of loss, the fear of drowning one's uniqueness in a supranational community. It should also be added that modern men possess an interest for the old and the antique, for collecting antiques, for studying the tradition and the traditional, for recording life stories... This complex base of social, political and cultural movements in the last twenty years sprung a significant interest for the Glagolitic, which boosted the Glagolitic revival.

## II. THE GLAGOLITIC AND GLAGOLITISM AS PHENOMENA OF THE COLLECTIVE MEMORY

The first one to describe memory as a social phenomenon (and not as an individual phenomenon) was Maurice Halbwachs eighty years ago in his work *On collective memory* (as in Brkljačić, Prlenda, 2006:9). The English term *cultural memory* is translated in Croatian as kolektivno pamćenje, kulturno pamćenje, kulturalno pamćenje. A more broad scientific interest for the topics of memory and collective memory was developed during the 1980ies. Thus, the memory is observed as a collective phenomenon and the remembrance as an individual phenomenon of ties with the past.

“The collective memory, similar to the *language*, may be described as a system of signs, symbols and practices (memorial dates, names of places, monuments and triumphal arches, museums and texts, customs and ways, stereotypes, embodied in f.e. the parlance), or even as a language itself (in de Saussure sense). The individual memory, or the act

of remembrance, is an instantaneous realization of these symbols, analogue to *speech* – there aren't two identical acts of remembrances" (Amos Funkenstein, as in Brkljačić, Prlenda 2006:12).

Thus, the memory cannot be understood as a feature of an individual consciousness, but as a variable collection of material remains and social practices.

Modern Croatian culture inherits glagolitic and the Glagolitic from it's past – it remembers them. The processes in which an individual and the community remember the past and identify themselves with it are complex, and are based on the understandings of the differences and similarities, and on the different meanings we assign to these differences and similarities. The base is always the process of identity building. Therefore, by discussing the collective memory, we also discuss the collective identity. By remembering the past, we form an image and a notion of ourselves. The memory forms our connections with the past, and the way we remember forms our identity. As individuals and as societies, we need the past in order to construct and strengthen our tradition, to form our present identities and to create the vision of the future (Huysen, 1995).

Nurturing the Glagolitic segment of the Croatian culture may also be understood as a phenomenon of the collective memory. As such, it functions as a mean of understanding cultural and national uniqueness and a mean of building an identity image of Croatian language, literature, history, culture, religion – in one word – the Croatian identity. "We try to understand what we are through what we aren't anymore" (Nora, 2006:35).

#### A. *The Glagolitic Script – the Issue of Memory and Identity*

Both memory and identity are two terms present in modern humanities literature, but their meanings are oft foggy. Both are dynamic phenomena, in constant change, and constructions of the reality, more subjective than objective.

Modern social sciences and humanities perceive the identity, not as a static and homogeneous term, but as a dynamic and variable occurrence, as a set of historical, political, religious and customary forces all forming one very complex structure. The identity (lat. *id* – the same, *entity* – a being) is sameness with oneself, the equality to that which makes someone or something be; or – the answer to the questions: who are we and why are we what we are, where or to whom do we belong (individually and collectively) (Skledar, 2012:139). The cultural identity represents a synthesis of all material and religious and spiritual creations and activities of a certain socio-cultural region, that make it unique, own, indigenous and authentic. The national cultural identity is a synthesis (a structure, not a sum) of all the material and spiritual creations and activities, the entirety of the answers to important questions and basic needs of a certain national region. Regardless of fellowships with others, of globalization and postmodern interweaving, this distinguishes it culturally, socially, symbolically and temporally from other national and cultural identities and makes it authentic (Skledar, 2012:139).

Memory and identity are joined because they are dependent on each other. The identity lies on the memory and is kept by memory. On the other hand, memory is formed from the position of identity. Memory as a mental phenomenon is determined by identity features of a subject which is remembering.

B. *The Glagolitic and Glagolitism – a Historical Aspect*

A brief reflection on the Glagolitic in the Croatian culture is needed, so that its connection with the identity becomes more apparent.

From its beginnings, the Croatian language was written in the Glagolitic script. The squared variant of the Glagolitic was used in the Croatian lands, instead of the Bulgarian-Macedonian version, the round Glagolitic. Although trilateracy was practiced in the medieval Croatian culture (Glagolitic, Cyrillic and Latin alphabet were in use), the most important part in Croatian medieval literature belongs to the Glagolitic: not only is it being used throughout the entire Middle Ages, not only are the texts written in it most numerous and most extensive, but many Croatian texts in Cyrillic and Latin alphabet were transcribed from older Glagolitic matrices (Bratulić, Damjanović, 2005). Historical documents attest to the existence of the Glagolitic on the Croatian soil in the 10<sup>th</sup> Century (constitutions of the First Church Council in Split in 925, and letters from pope John X to the Croatian king Tomislav and to the prince of Zahumlje Mihovil Višević), although the first surviving texts date to the 11<sup>th</sup> Century. Glagolitism started in the Dalmatian cities ruled by the Byzantium, and later it expanded to most of the Croatian ethnic regions (islands in the Gulf of Kvarner, Istria, Dalmatia, Lika, Krbava, Pokuplje, Pounje).

The Glagolitic script served for centuries as a mean of writing the entirety of the Croatian language. Written in it were liturgical books: missals, breviaries, rites and anthologies of spiritual texts; it is the script of literary and artistic texts, songs, legends and novels. Administrative and legal texts

were written in it. It is also a secular script: prince Novak wrote in it, families Frankopan and Zrinski used it as a script for business needs; it is a script of lessons and fun, of songs and novels, of apocrypha and miracles. The oldest Croatian legal monuments were written in it: Vinodol and Krk statutes, Istrian contract and all sorts of legal documents.

Glagolitic is the script of the oldest complete inscription in the Croatian language (*The Baška Tablet*, 12<sup>th</sup> Century), the first Croatian printed book (*Missal according to the Law of the Roman Court*, 22. of February 1483), the first primer (1527), the first verses (*Missal of the Prince Novak*, 1368).

Glagolitism flourished in the 14<sup>th</sup> and the 15<sup>th</sup> Century. Active use of the Glagolitic lasted up to the 19<sup>th</sup> Century (Bratulić and sur., 2009). The use of the Glagolitic for a millennium resulted in numerous and extraordinary literary, religious and administrative works. The Glagolitic corpus in Croatian yielded and popularized literary and everyday stylization of the Croatian language as a unity of čakavski, kajkavski and štokavski dialects.

Today, the Glagolitic is considered a historic Croatian script.

C. *The Glagolitic and Glagolitism – From History to Memory*

The language and the script possess a very clear socio-cultural role in a society. The script plays a role in sorting of the collective memory. “The language which originally manifests exclusively in a verbal form, during the course of human history, objectifies in written documents that, allowing a more thorough sorting of the collective memory and strengthening of the tradition, affect the written language” (Crespi, 2006:82).

The Glagolitic as a script is a tool that fixes a certain period in Croatian cultural and linguistic history, and as such, is today considered to be a historical phenomenon. It was used to write the Croatian language up until the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, and today it is considered a historic Croatian script. The history, as a comprehension of the past, perceives things and occurrences as bygone, it tries to reconstruct them and represent them. "The history is an incomplete reconstruction of that which is no more. The history is a representation of the past" (Nora, 2006:24).

The concept of the history can be understood such in opposition to the memory, because "memory is life, in constant change, subject to the needs and manipulations, long eras of latency and sudden revivals" (Nora, 2006:24). By abandoning the Glagolitic in active use, the Glagolitic and everything written in it becomes history. The historical distance obliges us that we approach events in the past in an analytic, scientific manner and that they become a subject in a historical critique. Thus, the Glagolitic is placed in the museums, archives and libraries (f.e. Croatian Museum of History, Academy's Rarities Collection, National and University Library's Rarities Collection...), vaults of rectories, scientific institutes (Old Church Slavonic Institute), faculties (Faculty of Philosophy, Department of Old Church Slavonic and Croatian Glagolitic)... Today, it is a subject of historical scientific studies. However, it seems that today, the Glagolitic and the Croatian Glagolitic tradition are making a shift from the history to the memory, and that they are revived after an era of latency.

### III. NEOGLAGOLITISM - REVIVING THE GLAGOLITIC AS A REALM OF THE COLLECTIVE MEMORY

A strong interest in the Glagolitic is apparent ever since the 1990ies. The Glagolitic is becoming a popular subject. The interest for the Glagolitic fits in with the modern trends of increased interest for the tradition and past, for recording of memories and life stories, for returning to the lost habits and ways of life. Pierre Nora concludes that the modern perception of the history is "a violent appropriation of that which is no longer ours" (Nora, 2006:35). In doing so we direct our attention to certain parts, we selectively dive into the past and we take representative samples. One can observe a curiosity towards the occurrences that crystallize the memory, as Pierre Nora calls them – realms of memory. These realms contain clear traces of continuity, a clear connection to the past. The Glagolitic today is apparent as such realm of the collective memory. The Glagolitic is an occurrence that crystallizes national memory, because it was the script for the millennium of the Croatian history, it was the script of the cultural and national beginning – the first text in the Croatian language, the first manuscript, the first printed book, the first statute, the first Biblical text. The Croatian Redaction of Church Slavonic and conserved books, texts and excerpts remain history and a subject of scientific studies, but the Glagolitic is being revived. The Glagolitic is recognized as a realm of memory, torn out of the historical context and motivated by some new roles, and we can safely say that today it is alive.

The Glagolitic – the script, the alphabet, is torn out of the Croatian glagolitic tradition and historical period of Croatian glagolitic as a realm of memory. Even though there is an interest towards the literary,

religious and cultural aspect of the Croatian glagolitic tradition, the interest towards the script itself is emphasized. Computer fonts were created for the needs of transliteration of texts in Latin alphabet into the Glagolitic script. The Glagolitic letters are an inspiration for numerous works of art – sculptures, paintings, decorations and fashion creations. The Glagolitic letters as exterior sculptures are becoming signs of local cultural identity. Artistic interpretations of the Glagolitic letters often become souvenirs. Numerous classes in Glagolitic are being held. The Glagolitic is used to write modern Croatian words and names. The Glagolitic is used in the creation of logos... The occurrences of the revived Glagolitic in modern Croatian society are numerous.

All of these occurrences share a common reinterpretation, reconstruction, reincarnation of the Glagolitic. Artistically formed, graphically designed on the computers, used as a script of modern Croatian language – the Glagolitic is being revived in new roles, new attire, with new purpose.

A. Some of the activities of the Glagolitic revivals

Numerous activities of Glagolitic revival and interest inciting towards the Glagolitic heritage are the result of *The Society of Friends of the Glagolitic*, an association formed in 1993. The Society gathers both experts and amateurs and is continually conducting classes in the Glagolitic, debates on the topics tied with the Glagolitic and Croatian cultural heritage. The Society also publishes a magazine *Baščina*, a yearbook, 13 so far published.

Since 2013, *Slovo rogovsko*, a magazine for the Glagolitic, is being published by *The Association of Glagolits Zadar*.

Many schools have school groups which offer the Glagolitic as an extracurricular activity: *The Glagoliat centre "Frankopan"* in ES Fran Krsto Frankopan in Zagreb,

active since 1993, *Historical-glagoliat group* in ES Ivan Goran Kovačić in Zagreb, *Small glagolits* in ES Ivanska, *Young glagolits* in ES Silvije Strahimir Kranjčević in Senj, *Young glagolits* in ES Sv. Filip i Jakov, *Small glagolits* in ES Vukovina, *Small glagolits* in ES Ljudevit Modec in Križevci and many others.

There are also many summer Glagolitic schools, in Puntat, Vrbnik, Kornić, Bogovići (Malinska) and Krk. The most famous are the *Little glagoliat academy "Juri Žakan"* in Roč, active since 1993, and the *Little school of the Glagolitic* in Kornić, Krk, active since the end of the 1990ies.

There are annual and periodic gatherings of Glagolitic school groups. Since 2010 in Sv. Filip i Jakov and in Biograd the annual *Assembly of young glagolits "Ajmo dico glagoljati"* is being held, and in Senj there are annual *Days of the Glagolitic* since the 1998.

The Glagolitic is becoming a part of the visual spatial identity. Artistic sculptures of the Glagolitic letters, erected in an outdoor area, is a part of the *Alley of the Glagolits* (1985), from Hum to Roč in Istria. However, it is a monument that involves more than Glagolitic itself. There are two monuments of a newer date, both in honour of the Glagolitic letters, both on the island Krk – *The Glagolitic Path of Baška* (2009), a series of thirty five stone sculptures from the Treskavac pass to the Old promenade in the port of Baška, and *The Glagolitic Park* (2010), consisting of 15 monuments in Gabonjin.

The Glagolitic letters are an inspiration and a decorative element in numerous works of applied art. Thus, the Glagolitic is present on the lamps created by studio Rogić, shown at the exhibit *The light of the Glagolitic*; on souvenirs and artworks by Bruno Paladino and "Mića mala", on works by ethno boutique "Mara", on works by multimedia project *Fabula croatica*, and many others.

The Glagolitic computer fonts are the strongest factor in popularization of the Glagolitic script. Every text written in modern Croatian language can be transcribed in any of the numerous computer fonts of the cursive and regular Glagolitic. Numerous fonts are available online, for free. Some of them are: fonts *Brevijar* and *Misal* (by Frane Paro), fonts *Glagolica misal* and *Croatica* (by Nenad Hančić-Matejić), Glagolitic cursive fonts: *Krčka glagoljička kurziva* (Eugen Divjak), *Privlačka parokijanska glagoljička kurziva* (Ivica Glavan). Some of the fonts of *Fabula croatica* were made by Filip Cvitić, and Darko Žubrinić created LaTeX fonts – *Croatian Fonts for Users of LaTeX*.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Modern Croatian reality yielded a Glagolitic revitalization and an increase of interest towards the Glagolitic heritage and culture. This phenomenon may be observed in a context of strengthened interest for the cultural and national identity symbols as indicators of value of own and unique in a society marked by strong globalization processes. Special interest towards the handwritten Glagolitic and computer fonts is observable – a Glagolitic literacy process. Thus, the Glagolitic is shown to be a realm of remembrance in the collective memory and a factor in the creation of the Croatian national and cultural identity.

Modern Croatian society uses numerous educational activities to show that the symbols of cultural and national identity are being acknowledged as important elements of national culture, history and own uniqueness.

The survival and the development of national cultural identities, especially of those smaller ones,

like the Croatian, is based on constant rethinking of own identity while the global surroundings are in constant change. Croatian cultural identity, historically based, among others, on the Glagolitic, finds its place in a more broad socio-cultural framework, in which uniqueness and value contribute to survival. For this process to continue, there must be a clearly thought national cultural vision and economy, and also, communication with the world. This doesn't mean closing oneself to the world or drowning in it, but a gathering. A gathering that will enrich both home and the world.

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