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The Bamberg Cyrillic Alphabet — a Colour Facsimile

Sebastian Kempgen

Abstract: The so-called Bamberg Cyrillic Alphabet (ca. 13th c.) is one of the oldest and most reliable xenographic Slavic alphabets, i.e. a Cyrillic alphabet added to a Latin manuscript of non-related content. It has been published and edited before in black-and-white, and it is presented here for the first time in a high-quality colour photograph, accompanied by a slightly revised tabular representation.

Key words: Cyrillic Script, Historic Alphabets, Facsimile

The simple purpose of this paper is to present a colour facsimile of the so-called Bamberg Cyrillic Alphabet. This alphabet was first edited by Mathiesen in 1985, and then included by Marti as no. 3 in his overview of xenographic Slavic alphabets, i.e. Slavic alphabets in non-Slavic (Latin) contexts (see Marti 1991a: 148–164). His paper included a black-and-white picture of fols. 104v and 105r, which present four alphabets side by side: Hebraicum, Grecum Chaldaicum, Ruthenicum. In a separate paper, Marti (1991b) presented the two parts of the Mss. themselves in much more detail. Again, a black-and-white picture of the same two manuscript pages was included. In the context of the present volume, it may be noted that Marti thanks William Veder for pointing out Mathiesen’s work to him (1991a: 148, fn. 41).

The alphabet stems from the 13th century and is of considerable importance to the study of Slavic alphabets because it is reliable and informative, seeing that the alphabet itself is accompanied by a list of (lowercase) Latin or, in two cases, Greek equivalents of the Cyrillic letters (written as capital letters), by the Slavic letter names (in a mixture of initial capital letters and lowercase letters), and a few (two) additional notes. To quote Roland Marti:

“Qualitativ liegt hier ein für slavisches Material ganz neuer Typus von xenographischem Alphabet vor. Er zeugt von ernsthafter Beschäftigung mit dem Material, und seine Informationen dürfen als zuverlässig gelten. Dieser neue, philologische Typus findet in der Folgezeit seine Nachahmer.” (Marti 1991a: 149)

The manuscript containing the four alphabets is included in a catalogue of 12th. c. manuscripts kept at the Bavarian State Library, with the text of the second part of the volume thought to be written in 1280–1290s (Suckale-Redlefsen 1995: 68).

Below, we present the alphabet in tabular form and, for the first time, as a colour facsimile. The photograph of the Ms. page was kindly supplied by the Bavarian State Library at Bamberg. Our transliteration of the letter names is slightly closer to the original than the one found in Marti (1991b: 59 f.) in that it uses the ‘dotless-i’ everywhere and also the ‘long s’, where appropriate, and also adds one more accent which is clearly visible in the facsimile (sīwéte). Also, we think that the name ‘Hlahol’ should be represented here with a capital initial letter, if compared with the fourth letter in the same word which is a lowercase character.

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The Bamberg Cyrillic Alphabet (13th c.)

		Alphabetū Ruthenicū.	
a	А	Az	
b	Б	Bukı	
w	В	wede	
h	Г	Hlahol	
d	Д	Dobro	
e	Е	iezth	

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f	Ж	sıwéte	
z	З	zelo.	
	З	zemle	ısta lıtt[e] ^r a ponıt ^{ur} ĩ num[e] ^r o
ı	И	ıfe	
ı	І	ı.	ısta &.
k	К	kaco	
l	Л	Lıvdie	
m	М	Mızléte	
n	Н	Nas	
o	О	on.	
p	П	Pocoj.	
r	Р	ırcı	
s	С	zlowo	
t	Т	tverdo	
y	У	ık	
f	Ф	fert	
che	Х	cher	
ω	Ѡ	oth	
c	Ц	cı	
	Ч	sherıw	
	Ш	sche	
	Щ	ıftıfe	
	Ъ	ıor	
	Ь	ıorı) [letters switched places,] names in correct order]
	ЪІ	ıær.	
	Ѣ	ıeth	
u	Ю	ıv	
	Ѧ	ıvz	
	Ѧ	ıa.	

105
104
Alph

Alfabetū chaldaicū.		Alfabetū ruthemicū.	
a	𐤀 Afo.	a	А аз
b	𐤁 Berith.	b	Б Буки
c	𐤂 Chen.	w	В Wede
d	𐤃 Thron.	h	Г Blahol
e	𐤄 Ech.	d	Д Dobro
f	𐤅 fech.	e	Е Ielth
g	𐤆 cidv.	f	Ж Siwere
h	𐤇 hagale.	z	З zelo.
i	𐤈 is.	ʒ	Ж zemle
k	𐤉 kale.	h	И ise
l	𐤊 Laga.	i	І I.
m	𐤋 oan.	k	К kaco
n	𐤌 not.	l	Л Lydie
o	𐤍 othel.	m	М onllete
p	𐤎 Pert.	n	Н Has
q	𐤏 chan.	o	О on.
r	𐤐 seht.	p	П POCOJ
s	𐤑 subil.	r	Р rci.
t	𐤒 tachur.	o	О zlowo
	𐤓 D	r	Р twerdo
	𐤔 helach.	y	У ik
	𐤕 hu.	f	Ф fert
	𐤖 hm.	che	Х cher
		u	У orh
		e	Е ci
		y	У shery
		w	В sche
		ʒ	Ж isse
		ʒ	Ж ior
		h	Г ior
		h	Г ier.
		h	Г ieth
		v	В iv
		ʒ	Ж ivz
		ʒ	Ж ia.

Ista lita pomē i nūto
Ista j.

The Bamberg Cyrillic Alphabet (Msc.Patr.130-2, fol. 105r)

About the author...

Prof. Dr. Sebastian Kempgen has held the chair for Slavic Linguistics at the University of Bamberg, Germany, until 2018, where he is now professor emeritus. His interests range from epigraphy, phonology and morphology of the Slavic languages to language typology, Unicode and Digital Humanities. His research includes synchronic as well as diachronic studies, and at his university, he was a founding member of the Center for Medieval Studies. He is the main editor of the *German Contributions* to the International Congress of Slavists (Ohrid, Minsk and Belgrade) as well as the main editor of the two-volume handbook *The Slavic Languages* (Berlin 2009 and 2014). He has led more than a dozen excursions with his students to the Balkans. For five years, he has been chairman of the German Association of Slavists (2006–2010). He was appointed *professor honoris causa* at the University of Bitola, Northern Macedonia in 2013, and in 2016 he was awarded the German *Federal Cross of Merit*.