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## **About an evidence of Chernorisez Chrabar on the linguistic culture of the Slavs during the pre-Cyrillic epoch**

There is no doubt that Chernorisez Chrabar is one of the most talented Old Bulgarian authors. His work "For the letters" is the most significant defence of the Slavic alphabet after the actions of Konstantin-Cyril. It has been put into consideration in many articles<sup>1</sup> but there are still numerous unsolved questions. One of them is related to this part of Chrabar's work, which content gives some facts about the linguistic practice of the Slavs during their Pagan time. According to the author they used some symbols of their own. After adoption of Christian faith in unofficial way, they were forced to write in Slavic with Greek and Latin letters. It was almost impossible to write some special words such as Cod, life etc. with the letters mentioned above.<sup>2</sup>

Commenting these data, given by Chrabar, Ivan Dujcev point out that they are very clear, and presumes that probably related with the Western Slavs and the Western influence on them. He reminds also that the Byzantins considered themselves as inhabitants of the old Roman Empire and used the name "ROMEI" (=Romans).<sup>3</sup>

On the other side Professor D. Petkanova says that Chrabar had in view not the official Christianisation of Bulgarians (=Slavs) in 864, but the spreading of the Christianity among the Balkan Slaves.<sup>4</sup> She suggests also the link between Chrabar's story and the Moravian Slaves and the situation in Mora before Cyril's mission, when there were preaching at the same time Italian (Latin), Greek and German missionaries.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The work of Chernorisez Chrabar is published by Iordan Ivanov, Bulgarian ancient relics of Macedonia, Sofia, 1931(1971), pp.440-446; K. Kouev, Chernorisez Chrabar, Sofia, 1967; On the personality of the author and his work look also Iv. Snegarov, Chernorisez Chrabar – In: One Thousand and hundred years Slavic alphabet, Sofia, 1963; M. Damianova, On an interesting moment in a variant of the work of Chernorisez Chrabar "For the letters", Palaeobulgarica, 3,1978, pp.80-86; St. Gechev, On the question about the co-authorship of the Chrabar's apology, Literary thought, 4, 1975, pp.87-102; A. Kosova, Chernorisez Chrabar "For the letters", Sofia, 1980; D. Petkanova, Chernorisez Chrabar, Sofia, 1984.

<sup>2</sup> D. Petkanova, Chernorisez Chrabar, p.38.

<sup>3</sup> Iv. Dujcev, Traditions and institutions of the Medieval Bulgarian culture, - In: Bulgaria 1300, Institutions and State tradition, 1, Sofia, 1981, p.193; On the term "romei" look G. Bakalov, Byzantium, Sofia, 1993, p.193.

<sup>4</sup> D. Petkanova, Old Bulgarian Literature, part 1, (IX-XII c.), Sofia, 1986, p.93.

<sup>5</sup> Old Bulgarian Literature, Ed., Kl. Ivanova, 4, Sofia, 1986, p.72.

These declarations are quite unacceptable because Chrabar's work as it is known was a reflection of the Preslav council's decisions for the replacement of the Greek alphabet and clergy with Slavic (893). The Byzantine Empire's answer to this was quick and drastic, and the market for Bulgarian goods was moved from Constantinople to Thessalonica, the second town of the Empire. These measures caused to Bulgaria not only more expenses for the export to the Byzantine Empire but also damaged its international image. These were the reasons for the war between Bulgaria and Byzantium in 894.<sup>6</sup>

It seems that besides the economical actions of Byzantium against Bulgaria there was also an ideological pressure in order to minimize the importance of the Slavic alphabet and to present the replacement of the Greek alphabet with it as useless. The answer to this was the emergence of "For the letters" of Chrabar (after 893).<sup>7</sup> In the light of these facts the term "slavs", used from Chrabar naturally had in view the Bulgarians, who were already Slavs, and had to respond to Byzantine attacks and defend achievements of Cyril and Methode. In relation to this it is obvious that the Chrabar's evidence on the linguistic culture of the Slavs during the pre-Cyrillic period has to be considered as a very reliable summary on the experience of the Slavs and Old Bulgarian in the linguistic area before foundation of the Bulgarian state.

According to the investigations on the Balkan Peninsula Slavs become familiar with different official language – Latin on the Nord of Hemus (Stara planina) and Greek on the South of the mountain.<sup>8</sup> When among them the Christian faith was spread unofficially they used the language mentioned before as a language of the liturgy. This means that Chrabar's data were to be trusted.

After the foundation of the Bulgarian State the Greek was used as an official language in the administration and the international relations.<sup>9</sup> It was probably a tradition from the Koubrat's time.<sup>10</sup> It is not possible to say if the Latin was continuing to be in use, because the numerous stone inscriptions were engraved in Greek.<sup>11</sup> But there were times suitable for the Latin to be used, especially the reign of khan Kroum and khan Omourtag when the common border between Bulgaria and Frank's Empire<sup>12</sup> was built and the time of khan Boris when the relations with Germans were very active and a Latin mission worked in Bulgaria.<sup>13</sup> In this way the importance of Chrabar's information on the linguistic culture of the Slaves (=Bulgarians) before invention of the Slavic alphabet enriches our knowledge with some additional interesting facts.

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<sup>6</sup> M. Vojnov, The change of the Bulgarian-Byzantine relations during the reign of Tsar Symeon, *Revue of the History Institute*, 18, 1967, pp.147-200; G. Zankova-Petkova, The first war between Bulgaria and Byzantium during the reign of Tsar Symeon and the restoration of the Bulgarian commerce with Zarigrad, *Revue of the History Institute*, 20, 1968, pp.167-198.

<sup>7</sup> D. Petkanova, *Old Bulgarian Literature*, part 1, p.222.

<sup>8</sup> V. Tapkova-Zaimova, *Invasions and ethnic changes on the Balkans during VI-VIII c.*, Sofia, 1966, pp.52-56.

<sup>9</sup> Iv. Dujcev, *there again*; D. Angelov, *Byzantium, Spiritual Culture*, Sofia, 1994, p.110.

<sup>10</sup> G. Bakalov, *the quoted work*, p.216; D. Angelov, *the quoted work*, p.110

<sup>11</sup> V. Beshevliev, *Old Bulgarian Inscriptions*, Sofia, 1992.

<sup>12</sup> Iv. Venedikov, *Old Bulgarians and Christianity*, Sofia, 1995, pp.128-129.

<sup>13</sup> V. Gjuzelev, *Prince Boris I, Bulgaria during the second half of the IX-th century*, Sofia, 1969