GLAGOLITIC PRINTER

BLAZ BAROMIC

Born ca. Vrbnik 1450, island of Krk.
Venetian Republic
Died ca 1507 in Senj.
Croatia
The oldest extant glagolitic incunabulum is Missale Romanum printed the year 1483, with type of exquisite esthetic quality.¹ The place of printing of the book as well as the Breviary from the year 1491, is one off the hottest topics of Croatian incunabula research. The type used to print each of the book is of different size and quality which implies different print shops, but beyond that, nothing is certain. In lack of other information, Blaž Baromić, a native of island Krk, is recognized as the first printer on Croatian soil. He was a member of the Croatian Glagolitic clergy (glagoljaš) who was sent to Venice to learn printing, acquire the necessary equipment, and establish a printing workshop (oficina) back home.

The territory of Croatia and the Balkan peninsula, which were colonized by its current inhabitants during the 5th to 7th centuries, was during the Middle Ages the main conflict line between the rapidly diverging theologies of the Orthodox Church, represented by patriarch-ruler (basiley) in Constantinople, and the Western Church, represented by the bishop of Rome (pope). This conflict eventually resulted in the Schism of 1054, when each church excommunicated the other and denied validity to the sacraments of he other side. The Croatian church working on the territory split by this schism, adopted the practice of performing the Roman liturgical ritual in Old-Slavic instead of Latin, particularly in the towns and islands of the Adriatic coast. A century-long use of the glagolitic script and the native language in local church liturgy and literature become one of the historic idiosyncrasies of Croatia. This practice was unusual and unique on the territory under jurisdiction of the Roman Catholic Church. The term Glagolitic (glagoljica) is used to describe three concepts: the script, the Croatian Old Slavic religious liturgy, and the literature written in the Glagolitic script.

¹The Library of Congress has one of 12 preserved copies of this book.
The origin of the script is unclear. The traditional theory is that the script is a variation of the Cyrillic script used in the countries that adhere to the Orthodox rite. In the year 862, Prince Rostislav of Great Moravia (846-870) requested that Constantinople send missionaries to help the Christianization of Slavs. To facilitate that mission, brothers Cyril (827-869) and Methodius (825-884) also known as “apostles of Slavs,” using the Greek script as a model, developed the script for Slavic languages. Marko Japundžić (1998) in his exposition on the Croatian glagolitic heritage presents the various arguments that contradict this theory and asserts that glagolitic script was of Croatian creation, older than the Cyrillic script and the missionary work of Cyril and Methodius. According to this theory, literacy came to the Croatian lands with the Benedictine Gallic monks, which started their missionary work with the 7th century and were coming from Aquilean patriarchate, under whose jurisdiction the peninsula of Istria and the Adriatic coast belonged at that time. They brought with them early Merovingian and Italo-Lombardian cursive script that in time transformed into glagolitic script (Japundžić 1998, p. 3-7). The earliest form the glagolitic letters are round, and only in 14th century script acquired distinct verticals and square appearance, very much with same handwriting ductus as gothic script (Paro 1997, p. 48). Although it is possible to find inscriptions in glagolitic script all the way in Bosnia and Macedonia, the script was mostly limited to the Croatian speaking population of the Adriatic coast and inland plains of Krbava and Lika.

The Glagolitic liturgy is performed in Old Slavic, the base language for all Slavic languages. With time, individual Slavic languages diverged and Old Slavic was used only in its fossilized and formalized form in the church liturgy. However, in the early Middle Ages, it was instrumental in the preservation of a distinct Slavic culture. The relationship between the Croatian Glagolitic clergy and Rome was a rather uneasy one. In the 10th century, the Slavic language and the use of Glagolitic scriptures was officially forbidden. In spite of this, glagolism survived aided by silent support of the local (Croatian) nobility and the political sensitivity of the region.

There are arguments among the Croatian scholars why this situation persisted for centuries, to the point that Pope Innocent IV (d. 1254) gives up and, in the year 1248, gives special dispensation to the Croatian Church for the use of Glagolitic script and language on the territories of Croatia, Dalmatia, and Bosnia (Jakšić 2002, p. 2). Japundžić (1998) is of the opinion that this is
due to early Christianization of the territory, therefore before Latin language become official
liturgical language, and that the Croatian Church simply continued with the older tradition (p. 19).
An other school of historiansemphasized the ignorance and illiteracy of the Glagolitic clergy in
Latin, and that the Church was continuously short on priests, so it preferred any kind of spiritual
guidance to no guidance at all. Furthermore, glagoljasi were present mainly in rural areas, and
churches in the rich and influential coastal cities held their services in Latin. The church council
held in Split, in the year 925, tried to remedy the situation by specifying that knowledge of Latin
was necessary for promotion to the priesthood. It dispensed with this requirement for monks and
lower clerics because it was presumed that do not actively work with the parishioners. This
situation radically changed with arrival of Franciscans of Third Order and Pavlins, but by then,
the precedent was established (Bogović 1994, 9-10). It is also important to note that the Glagolitic
liturgy did not otherwise differ radically from the services of the Catholic (Roman) Church, so
the Glagolitic liturgy was never perceived as a heresy.

Recently, scholars attack this image of illiterate Glagolitic priests, pointing out that there
were a number of highly educated church officials who used Latin for their communication with
Rome or the ruling court. Most of the Glagolitic books were translations from Latin originals,
showing that local translators had quite an adequate knowledge of Latin literature and language. In
addition, these translations were into Old-Slavic, by the 13th century as obsolete and strange as
Latin, therefore requiring extensive scholarship by itself. Thus, persistence in Glagolitic and Old-
Slavic would have more to do with the tradition than the linguistic ignorance or illiteracy of the
clergy.

Monasteries of various orders, dispersed throughout the islands of the Adriatic coast, have
in their libraries a mixture of Latin and Glagolitic books, showing that the Glagolitic clergy was
not as isolated as it appeared. The notary of the Dubrovnik Republic issued legal documents in
Latin as well as in Glagolitic script. The texts of these documents are in vernacular, Latin, or the
local Italian dialect. Therefore, the use of Glagolitic writing was a conscious step toward the
preservation of linguistic and cultural specificum of Croatian ethnicity against laicization, rather than a stubborn persistence in "backward" ways (Damjanović 1993, 94-99).²

Nevertheless, the adherence to the Glagolitic tradition required that all books needed for liturgy must be produced locally. The most common liturgical books in this area are breviaries, prayer book put together by the Franciscans tertiaries and shortened from Benedictine version to suit their missionary purposes. However, all books that could be brought from abroad needed to be first translated and then copied, and that by scribes who were familiar with the glagolitic tradition. Some of the coastal monasteries, especially in Vrbnik (island Krk), Zadar, and Dubrovnik, established well organized and productive scriptoria. However, book production could never really satisfy the demand on the field, and the Glagolitic clergy, by choice or necessity, always performed their services with a minimum of books.

The seriousness of the lack of books among the clergy could be seen from the edict issued by the Glagolitic bishop of Krk in the year 1457, ordering that every Glagolitic priest must possess at least one breviary. They were given two years to obtain one, by copying or through trade. Sometimes the parishes would buy the books for their priests, but very often the books were owned by the parish and only loaned to the priest while in service there (Stipčević 2004, p. 194-195).

² In Croatian historiography, it is often very difficult to distinguish fact from ideology. With the birth of the national movements and pan-slavism in the 19th century, local historians emphasized the historical connection of Croatians with the other Slavs. The newest tendencies are to prove that Croatians are really more part of the European cultural community than one of the little brothers of Russia. This occasionally can reach levels of total absurdity like statements of the late Croatian president—historian by trade—that Croatians are one of the oldest people on the world and that chessboard pattern of white and red squares (Croatian heraldic sign) found on some pottery in the vicinity of Chatal Huyuk (Turkey) is a proof of Croatian ancient origins. To their credit most of the historians just rolled their eyes, but many took the hint and started looking for further evidence. The questions around glagolitic script, liturgy, and literature are particularly prone to ideological interpretations.
There is no definite information about the birth date of Blaž Baromić. In the colophon of the first book printed in Senj, Missal from 1494, he calls himself a "son from Vrbnik." It is estimated that he was born sometime around 1450 (Jakšić 2002, p.4). The first time he appears in documents as žakan (priest in training) at well-known Glagolitic scriptoria in Vrbnik (island Krk) he is mentioned, in the year 1460, as a scribe that copied Glagolitic breviary for the priest Mavro (Bogović 1994, p. 67). In the year 1484, his name is mentioned as one of the canon to the bishopry of Senj, which was governed by the Glagolitic clergy.

Although the Senj of today is a rather small coastal town, it was an important port and ecclesiastical center from the Roman time up to the 19th century. In Croatian history, it is best known for its fortress Nehaj ("fearless") completed in 1558, and for the particular guerilla type tactics of small military units operating in swift boats, known as Uskoci. At the end of 14th century, Senj had three Benedictine monasteries, right to issue their own legal documents and active scriptoria (Jakšić 2002, p. 3). It is also assumed that Baromić moved to Senj because the island Krk, across the straits from Senj, few years previously (1480) come under jurisdiction of Venice and Latin clergy.

From Senj, Baromić was sent to Venice to learn the craft of printing. In the year 1493, in the oficina of Andreas Torresani (1451-1529), he assisted in publishing a glagolitic breviary. The next year, 1494, he went back home and established the print shop in Senj. The same year he published a missal with a completely new set of type, apparently cut exclusively for him. The same type was used for all editions of Senj's print shop.

Baromić was also a well-known jurist, and his name is mentioned in numerous legal documents involving the bishop and bishopry of Senj. For the last time his name appears on the 1503 document where Baromić, together with a representative of the king, examines the complaints against a local count (knez) (Bogović 1995, p. 69). It is presumed that he died around the year 1507.
he print shop in Senj operated between the year 1494 and 1508 and was financed primarily by church funds. There is a gap in printing activity between years 1496 and 1507. It is not known if the reason was temporary suspension of the printing activity or simply none of the editions from that period survived. Most of the seven books printed in Senj were fresh translations of various Latin and Italian texts arranged in completely new compilations and being quite ambitious projects. Five of them are translations in local vernacular (čakavski).

In contrast to the Italian vernacular, the Glagolitic script was used very rarely for Croatian secular literature. The township statutes (Vinodolski zakonik from 1288) or land books (Istarski razvod from 1502) were often written in the cursive glagolitic. However, the coastal notaries used it for their official documentations only with the understanding that this was for the benefit of the less educated. That attitude limited Glagolitic to the middle class of the rural Croatian speaking population and to lesser clergy. However culturally important in retrospective, this association with rural and profane was the reason why Glagolitic never appealed to the Renaissance humanists. They, educated predominantly in Italy, even when writing in the vernacular did so exclusively using Latin script.

Although people involved in the printing enterprise had autonomy in the translation and editing of individual titles, the mission of the print shop was to reduce the drought of glagolitic liturgical books. People working in the print shop—translators, editors, printers—were in various ways members of the Glagolitic church and the income from those positions guaranteed their livelihood.
As far as it is known, Blaž Baromić cooperated in printing or directly printed only three books: a Breviary printed 1493 in Venice, a Missal printed in 1494, and the Spovid općena (Confessionale generale) printed 1496, both in Senj. Although the print shop printed six more books, Baromić's name and his logotype do not appear on any other book.

The print shop had type in two different sizes and an appropriate amount of distinctly designed ligatures. With technique of "fractured ligatures," which Baromić use already in breviary printed in the Torresini's print shop, the individual letter is cast as half character and when added to another letter in the line forms a ligature. This creates unique visual effect, as observed by Nazor (1995): "The split parts of the characters are not in contact with the printout of the neighboring character and there is a little gap between them, so the ligatures appear to be fractured." (p. 14) The technique is unique for Baromić and Senj's print shop, and it was not used up by other Glagolitic printers (Paro 1997, p. 81-84).

There is not much information about quality or origin of the paper used for the books in Senj's print shop. The only study of paper watermarks in Croatian incunabula was done in the year 1963, and its conclusions were rather vague. According to that survey, the paper in Croatian incunabula (including here Missal from 1483 and Breviary from 1491) is probably not of local origins (from some unknown mill on the Croatian territory). The two incunabula of unknown provenance and Baromić's Breviary printed in Venice are almost certainly of the German origin, most probably from Ravennburg paper mills. However, editions printed in Senj are predominantly printed on the paper of the Italian origin (Bošnjak et al. 1963, p. 47-48).
This is the first glagolitic incunabula for which it was possible with certainty to establish where and when it was printed. On the last page of the breviary are two colophons—one in Glagolitic and one in Latin, announcing that it was printed in Venice by “magister Andreas de Thoresanis de Asula” and corrected by Blaž Baromić, the canon of Senj’s church. The printing was finished “die.13.marci 1493.”

The book size is ca. 135x94 mm. Text is printed in two columns on 544 pages, each column 32-33 line high, with many vertical and horizontal ligatures, and in two colors (red and black). The way these ligatures are set is particularly characteristic of the Baromić typesetting. The only exception is the text of the calendar, which is printed across a whole page. There was no title page or information on printing privileges, usually issued by the Venetian signoria. On the last page of the book is printed Torresani’s logotype. The paper of the book has three different watermarks: scale in the circle, scale in the circle with six-point star and a cardinal’s hat. However, it seems that at least some of the edition was printed on parchment.

All printing is done with type of the same size. As in many other granolithic printed books, the breviary has mixed Glagolitic and Latin initials, two line high. Only other bigger initial is a Latin capital B with portrait of King David, eight lines high, printed with black. This initial was used on the beginning of Psalter and beginning of Temporal. This practice of mixing the Latin and Glagolitic initials could be seen also in glagolitic manuscript examples. The Second Vrbnik Missal kept in parish offices in town of Vrbnik is written in late square glagolitic script. The first 44 folios are decorated with Glagolitic initials while the rest of the book (242 folios) uses Latin initials. This comes from the practice to use Latin exemplars for translation and compilation of the missals and breviaries. Sometimes Latin initials are not simply the substitute for equivalent glagolitic letter but are actually initial letter of the Latin word. For example in the glagolitic text “Otroce rodi se nam” (Baby be born) the word starts with initial P corresponding the Latin text “Peur natus est nobis” (Japundžić 1998, p. 16).

It is unclear what, if any, breviary was used as a model for this edition. None of the existing manuscripts or printed examples quite matches the text and calendar. Baromić’s text

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includes many elements of Franciscan rituals and holidays celebrated around the coastal town of Zadar (south from Senj). The breviary also has additional ritual and missal texts, which is quite rare and there are only three other breviaries (manuscripts) with such a text structure. The research indicates that Baromić probably compiled this breviary from some Latin source, presumably incunabula, with Franciscan characteristic (proprij) and supplemented that with different texts from older Glagolitic manuscripts.

There are only five surviving books from this edition. The best-preserved one is in town of Sibiu (Romania). This book has the original binding of wooden boards covered with a blind-tooled leader. The other four books are in München (Germany), Schwarzau (Austria), and Zagreb (Croatia, two books).
1494 MISSAL. The missal has extensive colophon that notes the date of printing (August 7, 1494) and place of printing (Senj). The colophon also lists all cooperating in the printing process: Blaž Baromić, Silvestar Bedričić and Gašpar Turčić. The size of the book is 140x200 mm, and consists of 27 quaternion, i.e., 216 pages. The text is printed in two columns, 37 lines each, in two colors (red and black). Two sizes of type were used. The bigger type was used for prayers and readings, and the smaller type was used for antiphonal parts. The printers used two types of initials. The smaller initials, a mixture of Latin and Glagolitic script, are two lines size and are very common throughout the text. The bigger initials are three Glagolitic big initials (B, S, and V) and one Latin (V). They appear only a few times and are five to six lines in height. Some of the spaces left for the initials are unprinted. The bigger initials were probably carved individually from the wood and they are made of traditional elements often seen in the Glagolitic manuscripts: interlace, palmetto leafs, elements tied together with rings and knots.

The text is typeset with Baromić’s idiosyncratic ligatures, the same way as they were in the Venetian Breviary from the year 1493. All known examples of this missal are printed on paper. An example of the book preserved in Budapest has similar watermarks as the Venetian breviary—scale in the circle, cardinal’s hat and bull’s head. The text of the Missal contains standard elements (calendar, temporal, rule of the mass, communal, sanctoral and ritual texts), however it seems that it was a compilation of different texts without a direct exemplar.

For a long time, this missal was known only in fragments. The typographic analysis immediately indicated that the book was printed in the Senj’s print shop, however until 1894, when the complete book with colophon surfaced in an antiquary of Ludwig Rosenthal in München, the date of the printing could not be determined. This was the only complete book of this missal ever found and today it is in Budapest. There are three other fragments of the book scattered in different depositories. The earliest fragments found in 1849 (half page) and 1854 (two pages) are now in St. Petersburg (Russia). In the year 1982, an incomplete and damaged book was found in a Franciscan monastery in the town of Cres (Croatia) where it remains today, and in the year 1983, two pages were discovered in the State Scientific library in Odessa (Russia). Of all the examples, this fragment is the only one that has the print of a woodcut illustration of the Canonical crucifixion.
1496 SPOVID OPCENA *(Confessionale generale).* This is the Croatian translation from Italian translation of the Latin original *Confessionale generale* written by Franciscan priest Michael de Carcano. This edition is preserved in only one example, and was found bound together with a manuscript chronicle *(Ivančićev zbornik).* Today it is separated from the manuscript and preserved in the Franciscan monastery in Zagreb (Croatia). The example is missing one page.

The book size is 134x94 mm, in five quaternions. The text is printed in black, across the page, 25 lines a page. The colophon of the book states Blaž Baromić as printer, Jakov Blažilović as translator of the text, and date of printing—April 25, 1496. The place of the printing is not specifically mentioned, however all typographical characteristics—type, ligatures, signs for new paragraphs, initials—are identical to all books printed in Senj’s oficina. The most significant feature of the booklets is the image of Senj’s print shop logotype.
THE PRINT SHOP IN SENJ PRINTED ALSO:

- *Naručnik plebanušev*, 1507. Translation of *Manipulum curatorium seu opusculum de instructione nephitarum curatorium* by Guido de Monte Rocheri. 130x184 mm, 116 folios.

- *Transit Svetoga Erolima*, 1508. Translation from Italian of *Vita et Transitus s. Hieronymi*. 65x103 mm, approximately 162 folios. All extant copies are incomplete.

- *Mirakuli slavne deve Marije*, 1508. Translation from Italian of *Miracoli della glorisa Vergine Maria*. Most extensive Compendium of Maria's miracles (61 legends) in the Croatian literature. 65x103 mm, 80 folios.

- *Korizmenjak*, 1508. Translation from Italian of *Quadragesimale perutilissimum: quod de penitentia dictum* by Franciscan friar Robert Caracciolo (1425-1495) from Lecca. 104x144 mm, 104 folios.

- *Meštrića od dobra umritja s ritualom*, 1507/1508. Translation of *Ars bene moriendi* but it is compilation of various texts. The two extant copies are incomplete.

In the year 1493, the Croatian nobility lost the battle against the Ottoman Turks at the fields of Krbava, which enabled the advancement of the Ottoman Empire throughout most of continental Croatia. Although these territories never came under permanent Ottoman control, this region became *krajna*—the borderland of constant skirmishes and raids—that induced numerous population shifts, destroyed the economic base, and stalled all cultural flows. The town of Senj is situated on the end of the passageway through the mountain chain of Velebit, and thus was directly exposed to Ottoman raids. All printing activities therefore moved northward, up the coast. The print shop in Rijeka (Fiume) organized 1530 by bishop Šimun Kožiĉić Benja, printed five more glagolitic books. But already next year, it ceased its operation (Orešković 1969, p. 238).
After disbanding of the print shop in Rijeka, the sporadic printing of Glagolitic books continued in Venice, which produced some of the most beautiful examples of Glagolitic books (primer Introductorium from 1517). However, the printing in obscure print and language is always associated with large complication and additional costs (special fonts, editors, and proofreaders, problem with distribution). The new technology of printing proffered standardization, and the market as well as the political interest in Glagolitic script was too small to justify the costs.

During the 16th century, there were only two other print shops in Croatia, both in the north, at the border with Austria, in towns of Nedelišće (1574) and Varaždin (1586), associated with the protestant movement. These workshops printed books in the Croatian language (northern dialect) and Latin script. Until the 18th century, all books in Croatian were printed in foreign printing houses (Pelc 2002, p. 249). On the territories controlled by Venice (islands and the Istrian peninsula) any establishment of printing workshops was discouraged if not outright forbidden, so they would not compete with the Venetian printing industry (Pelc 2002, p. 241). In the Republic of Dubrovnik, where an Italian-style renaissance flourished, they found out that it is much more economic to order printing abroad than organize the whole enterprise at home (Peddie 1927, p. 276).

We could only speculate what would happen if glagolitic print shops managed to operate for any significant length of the time or if other print shop like that were to develop in Croatian mainland. Maybe the saturation of very small market of Glagolitic readers in religious and devotional literature would force its printers to print some secular titles in Glagolitic script, thus opening the window for development of vernacular literature in this script. Would such indulgence in national idiosyncrasy have hindered or enhanced the assimilation in a wider European culture of later times?
BIBLIOGRAPHY


"Blaž Baromić: founder of the Glagolitic print shop in Senj in the year 1494." A short article about life and printing activates of Baromić.


Watermarks of the Croatian incunabula. Detailed description and drawings of watermarks found in the Croatian incunabula. In spite of my knowledge of papermaking, I had trouble making sense of their information.


Senj's incunabula and Senj's print shop. Graduation theses. Overview of history of printing with particular attention to Senj's print shop and Baromić.


Croatian glagolitic incunabula. Very detailed information about incunabula and Baromić and print shop in Senj.


Article is printed bilingual Croatian/English and review in short all known information about Baromić and printing output of Senj's workshop and is slightly edited version of 1993 article.


"The Glagolitic Printing Houses of the 15th century". The appearance of the print in 15th century had its echo in Croatia where important theological literature was printed in glagolitic letters. The author cites the places where the printing houses existed at that time, studies the time when first books were printed and gives a full account of all the church literature printed in the glagolitic letters in these printing houses (article summary).


The book is collection of articles dealing predominantly with typography and printing of glagolitic books, as author described in one interview (on internet), from the point of view of the printer. I find his typographical analysis of types of 1483 glagolitic incunabula very informative. He is otherwise accomplished printer himself, predominantly in the technique of the aquatint.
