

WRITING SYSTEMS: POLITICAL AND BIBLIOLOGICAL ISSUES

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Writing systems have been investigated in many disciplines of science. The definite majority of the writing research are conducted in the field of linguistics, historical sciences (epigraphy, archeology, paleography, neography, codicology), and psychology (as an introduction to the study of the writing systems the most usefull are [7-9; 11; 12; 15; 26; 31; 33; 34; 39]). The necessity of elaborating the general study of writing – grammatology, has not been widely accepted [14; 48].

Bibliology – the study of the book's culture is also rich in the tradition of writing research. Bibliologists seem to be most concerned with the following issues of writing and writing systems:

- The history of book scripts in relationship with the evolution of their form and contents;
- Free-hand scripts as the prototype of print types;
- Functional and esthetic evolution of the print types;
- The birth and functions of the national print types;
- Writing in the book in comparison with the problem of perception and reception of the text;
- Writing systems in the global book production and the cultural consequences of employment of the various writing systems;
- The conversion of scripts;
- The study of writing as the investigation method applied to the historical bibliography (e.g. M and Q methods in the study of incunabula).

The contemporary concepts of bibliography enabled (and foisted on) the researchers to extend the scope of investigations of writing. Albert Schramm, the head of Book and Print Museum in Leipzig, claimed: "Book carries no importance without script" ("Ohne die Schrift das Buch keine Bedeutung hat") [38, 1], and Máté Kovács from Hungary stated that bibliography is the study of the "culture of writing and reading, of book and

library” (“írás- és olvasás-, könyv- és könyvtárkultúra”) [25]. Bibliology has gradually become the science of written records, written communication (“la science de l’écrit, la science de la communication écrite”), the science of the script and print culture [13]. It has been a long way since bibliology existed within paleography which gives instruments in the hand-written books research [28], and within the study of print types which has been a vital ingredient of the printed book history [23; 42]. “Grammocentric” perspective helps in an in-depth analysis of those bibliological processes which are realized in the social communication with the exploitation of writing.

The theoretical base of the following paper on the political and bibliological problems of the writing systems is the scheme of bibliology by Robert Estivals [13, 100–103]. On the one hand, the writing system (“Le système d’écriture”) is placed by the author on the position 35 in section 3, among other bibliological issues in the part: “the manufacture of the written text” (“La production de l’écrit”). On the other hand, it is political science and law (“La politologie – droit”) which beside geography, demography, history, economy, sociology, psychology are engaged in the study of “écrit”. The application of the political and law conceptions to the study of writing systems in bibliology, facilitates one to isolate from the aforementioned scheme a new course of science (35Af) called: “the political research of writing: the authorities and the writing systems” (“La politologie de l’écriture: les pouvoirs et les systèmes d’écriture”). The article is devoted to this specific field of bibliological studies.

From all the factors which do condition and shape the writings (writing systems), the utmost attention should be drawn to the political actions, the legislative acts, and the regulations implemented by ecclesiastic and secular authorities of a different level, as well as the direct interference of politics on this sphere. The writing systems have always been understood as the tool of social communication, which were highly influenced by the politics. Moreover, writing (a writing system) has also been viewed as a direct device of the state, religious, national, or cultural politics. For the political reasons, writing creates a certain (sometimes an entirely new) type of media reality, that is: billboards, leaflets, newspapers, magazines, and books. This effects in the consequences which are adequate to a state, nation, religious group, and a particular participant of a communication processes. The mutual relationships which shape this process took place in the following sequence:

(politics → writing (a writing system) → book (a book system) →
→ user of the book system.

It seems that out of the political and the bibliological issues which create and shape the writing systems, the following spheres are of the primary significance:

1. The creation of the scripts for languages and ethnic groups whose languages are unlettered;

2. The alternations of the writing systems, which have been introduced by the state, religious authorities, and/or the intellectual elites;
3. The quantity of writings used in one language;
4. The great number of writings used in one state;
5. Writing as the means of upholding the national and religious heritage;
6. The national and the local variants of the “universal” writings – as a form of the political manifestation.

(1) Territorial expansion of the civilizations which used written language registers effected in making the written records of those languages which were previously unlettered. After certain modifications to the new language system, the already existing writing became a completely new writing (system). Ideographic writing from China, viewed as a political and cultural instrument which expanded with the stream of Buddhism on Korean, Japanese, and Vietnamese languages, is a perfect example to illustrate this phenomena [10; 15, 394–410]. The Arabic writing became the core of literacy in numerous Indo-Iranian, Turkish and Malayan languages, and in some African languages (Swahili, Hausa, and partially Somali), thanks to the expansion of Islam [44, 111–119]. The presence of Europeans on other continents, their voyages, discoveries, colonization, trade, political affairs, and mission activity of the Church, affected in popularization of Latin writing in native non-European languages. In the 19th and 20th century the catholic and the protestant missionaries invented a number of alphabets for the unlettered languages (e. g. the activity of the British and Foreign Bible Society) [9, 633–762]. When in the Soviet Union in the 20s’ of the previous century alphabets for 16 languages used by peoples of the North have been created, in the consequence a totally innovative systems of books could have appear (since 1928 to 1967, 1404 books have been issued in the edition of 2 495 910 copies) [46].

(2) The political decisions concerning the change of the writing system have diverse nature, motivation, and socio-cultural consequences. In practice, those alternations are either radical, a one-time shift from one system into another, or just a partial, longer-lasting process, or finally the processes which selectively reform orthography. The first ones are interesting from the perspective of the political bibliology (since they create an entirely new world of books!). They are also the components of the modernizing processes of a state, the conscious selection of a certain cultural or ideological orientation, which may have the far-reaching consequences severing traditional ties. The introduction of the civilian typeface into the Russian language (*graždanka*) (1708–1710) by Peter the Great was “a part of his program to westernize Russia” [44, 106], and had the revolutionary consequences. “При Петре не одни бояре и боярыни, – stated Lomonosov, – но и буквы сбросили с себя широкие шубы и нарядились в летние одежды” [51, 391].

The issue of writing has always been the key-element for the adherents of national movements, since writing reflected the national identity and self-identification. As a result, the sharp disputes over the application of modernized Cyrillic alphabet to Serbian done by Vuk Karadžić, took place in 1840 [44, 105–107]. Also, the Latinization of the Rumanian language (approximately 1860) was a sign of diminishing the Orthodox tradition which was represented by the Slavonic alphabet [44, 54]. Bahasa Indonesia, the language of “national unity”, created in the independent Indonesia in 1945 is written with the Latin alphabet, disregarding the local Islamic and Arabic tradition. The similar situation took place in Malaysia in 1963 (Bahasa Malaysia is written in Rumi which is a Latin alphabet) [44, 95–97].

In the contemporary history, the most radical shift of the writing system took place in Turkey (1928). One of the reforms postulated by Kemal Atatürk was to abandon the Arabic alphabet for the Latin one, in order to modernize the Turkey as the state [16; 20; 22, 55–64; 37, 130–141; 40]. According to Leman Çankaya “the adoption of the new form of writing upset the entire cultural [Islamic] heritage” and permanently changed the mentality of the Turkish society to a very great extent (in 1927 only 10 % of the society was literate, in 1955 – 40%, in 1975 – 60%) [1; 4, 224–225].

Much more twisted is the history of languages and writings of the nations of Russia (Soviet Union), mainly the Turkish [2; 5, 1–46; 52]. At the turn of the 20s’ and the 30s’ of the previous century, Bolsheviks ordered the change of Arabic alphabet into the Latin. Indeed, it was clearly an ideological (antireligious) and political move. The characteristics of those times reflect the title of a brochure by a certain I. Khansuvarov *Латинизация – орудие ленинской национальной политики* (Moscow 1932). There was a change of the national policy in the Soviet Union in the late 30s’, in the process of russification, the authorities ordered the official introduction of the civilian typeface (graždanka) on the territory of the Soviet Union. In 1947, when only Lithuanian, Latvian, Estonian with the Latin alphabet, and Armenian and Georgian languages with their native writings were exceptions, the *Great Soviet Encyclopedia* explained the russification in the following way: “All the nations of the Soviet Union feel the strong need of acquiring the Russian language, and reading Stalin and Lenin in original, as well as the classics of the Russian literature. It appears highly difficult to use two different alphabets, and to learn them and learn them”[47].

At the end of the Soviet Union’s presence on the political map the time is ripe for divorce from Cyrillic alphabet. In 1990 Čulpon Publishing House in Tashkent published a book for children written in Arabic entitled (in English translation) *A Spelling Book of Old Uzbek Language in Pictures* (in the edition of 700 000 [seven hundred thousand!] copies) [49]. One year later, a few more books with the Latin alphabet appeared each month on the Moldavian market [50]. The new countries as well some ethnic groups which became independent within the Russian Federation

after the fall of the Soviet Union, have gradually abandoned Cyrillic alphabet. We can observe this process since several years, and it is difficult to estimate its course and the consequences.

(3) The quantity of writings applied within one language should be investigated from the historical or/and spatial perspective. Different writing systems of a certain language lay at the foundation of the diversity of book cultures which appear in the sequences one after another (the case of the Turkish languages of the Central Asia) [18, 371–420]. They may also exist simultaneously, separately, being divided with ethnic, religious, or political borders. Here, the examples are Serbo-Croatian with Cyrillic and Latin alphabets [36; 41]; the Hindustani language which remained after the division of the British India in 1947 as the Hindi in the *devanagari* writing system (Republic of India) and the Urdu in the Arabian writing (Islamic Republic of Pakistan). The Kurdish exists in few writings, and Pali, the language of Buddhist cannons, is to be found in the numerous local writings.

(4) The application of different writing systems in one country (state) has direct consequences for the organization of the book system in respect of the equipment of the printing-offices, the rules of bibliographing and cataloging, book and press distribution networks, the structure and the work of the libraries, etc. We may find plenty of examples: Soviet Union [53], the Republic of India, the Maghreb countries.

(5) Writing is an instrument applied to preserve the national and religious traditions which are strongly connected with each other: Cyrillic alphabet and the (Russian, Serbian, and Bulgarian) Orthodox Church, the Arabic alphabet and Islam, the Hebrew alphabet in all Jewish languages and Judaism [32]. For 1600 years the Armenian and Georgian writings have been the symbols of the Christian national cultures, as well as the Greek writing of the new-Greek is the transmitter of tradition and the symbol of self-identification of the contemporary Greek nation. The most convincing example of the function that the writing plays in tradition, is the political decision of Israel about adopting the Hebrew language in Hebrew script as the first official language of the state. Apart from symbols and religious values, it is Hebrew which a distinguishing element for Jews around the world [27, 125–129 “Die hebräische Schrift als Werkzeug der Selbstbeerdigung eines Volkes”; 43].

(6) The “universal” Latin and Arabian writings have their national and local variants which are also the products and the tools of politics. Fraktur is a good example which illustrates this problem here. Fraktur has been viewed as the German writing which is the closest to the German nature of language and culture. Alfred Petrau claims that Fraktur is an essential tool which helps in distinguishing, and integration, as well as it prevents from the denationalization (“die deutsche Schrift als ein wichtiges Unterscheidungs-, Binde- und Schutzmittel gegen Entdeutschungsversuche”) [35, 553]. Fraktur was promoted at first by Nazis, since it touched the issue of the national-

political importance of the writing (“volkspolitische Bedeutung der Schrift”) [21, 57–77]. In 1941 Fraktur became unexpectedly prohibited. On behalf of Führer, Martin Bormann wrote in a secret circular: “Treating and understanding the so-called gothic type as the German type is wrong. In fact, the so-called gothic type comes from Schwabach Jewish Letters” (“Die sogenannte gotische Schrift als eine deutsche Schrift anzusehen oder zu bezeichnen ist falsch. In Wirklichkeit besteht die sogenannte gotische Schrift aus Schwabacher Judenlettern”) [17, 405]. Never again in the history Fraktur has become so popular and important on the German book and press market [24].

Next, on the basis of the Arabic alphabet, the national writings in the non-Arabic Muslim countries have been formulated (i.e. *ta'lik* in Persia, *divani*, *rika* and other in Turkey, etc.). Throughout time, they played a crucial political and cultural role, and their presence was an alternative for the Arabisation of those non-Arabic countries [30; 45].

Taking into consideration the importance of written language register for (the creation of) the book culture, and the political perspective may, in an essential way, enrich our bibliological knowledge either from the theoretical and the historical, or the practical and the contemporary perspective. Investigating the presence of the particular writing systems in the free-hand-written and the printed texts brings new interpretable data. We may now rise a series of intriguing questions: What was (is) the number of texts created in the separate writings [types]? What characteristic types of books have been formed? What is their essence and the civilization importance?, etc. It enables people to find the relationship between the writing systems and the historical and the contemporary typology of the book [44, 243–245].

Nevertheless, it seems essential to gain reliable evidences which will prove (or refute) the presences of psychological, social, cultural, religious, and political consequences that are connected with the application of a certain writing system [6]. Some questions appear naturally:

What are the results of the global expansion of the Latin and Arabic writing systems?

What are (were) the positive and the negative effects of the compulsory and several changes of the writing systems in a given language?

- What is the role of the amateur initiative in terms of shaping the writing systems of small language or ethnic groups?

What is the future of the ideographic and syllabic writings (Chinese, Korean, Japanese, and Indian) in the contemporary world?

In what way Hebrew script (the traditional Jewish writing) functions in the modern Israeli society?, etc.

The writing system is characteristic to the language and the society which uses the language. On the one hand, it is also a bridging element between this particular society

and other societies applying the same system. On the other hand, one writing system works as an isolating factor of the society from the users of other systems. We will probably never estimate the profits and costs which go together with the process of exploring the world, hence, we have no precise instruments and scientific methods to fulfill this task. Inclusion of the Lithuanian culture into the circle of the Cyrillic alphabet within the years 1864–1904, was indeed unfortunate [3; 29]. More problematic, however, must be the estimation of the influence of writing on the existence of the Albanian language and culture: Armin Hetzer views Albanians as “the world champions in making up new alphabets” (“Weltmeister im Erfinden von Alphabeten”) [19, 76–77] – they had by turns three alphabets – Latin, Greek, and Arabic, and at least ten different orthographic systems), as well as the multiple changes in the numerous languages of the former Soviet Union (Moldavian, Tartarian, Uzbek, Kazakh, Kirghiz, Turkmen, Tadjhik).

Summing up. A political perspective is an all-too-useful scientific category as far as the study of the writing systems and book within bibliology is concerned. Its application(s) enrich(es) our knowledge of the culture of book from the global and the national (ethnic) perspective. It may also play an important role in the contemporary book policy for the local or the international scale.

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Abstract

Bibliology – the study of the book's culture is rich in the tradition of writing research. The theoretical base of the paper is the scheme of bibliology by Robert Estivals, who proposed a new course of this science called: "the political research of writing: the authorities and the writing systems". The writing systems have always been understood as the tool of social communication, which were highly influenced by the politics. For the political reasons, writing creates a certain (sometimes an entirely new) type of media reality. The mutual relationships which shape this process took place in the following sequence: politics – writing (a writing system) – book (a book system) – user of the book system. The following spheres are of the primary significance: (1) The creation of the scripts for languages and ethnic groups whose languages are unlettered; (2) The alternations of the writing systems, which have been introduced by the state, religious authorities, and/or the intellectual elites; (3) The quantity of writings used in one language; (4) The great number of writings used in one state; (5) Writing as the means of upholding the national and religious heritage; (6) The national and the local variants of the "universal" writings – as a form of the political manifestation.

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RAŠTO SISTEMOS: POLITIKOS IR KNYGOTYROS PROBLEMAS

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Santrauka

Knygotyra – knygos kultūros tyrimas – pasižymi gausiomis rašto tyrimo tradicijomis. Teorinis šio straipsnio pagrindas – Roberto Estvals'o, pasiūliusio naują šio mokslo kursą, knygotyros modelis. Kursas pavadintas „Politinis rašto tyrimas: valdžia ir rašto sistemos“. Rašto sistemos visada buvo suvokiamos kaip socialinės komunikacijos įrankiai, kuriems politika darė didelę įtaką. Dėl politinių priežasčių raštas sukuria tam tikrą (kartais visiškai naują) medijos realybės tipą. Abipusiai santykiai, lemiantys šį procesą, veikia tokia sėka: politika – raštas (rašto sistema) – knyga (knygos sistema) – knygos sistemos vartotojas. Esminę reikšmę turi šios sferos: 1) rašto kūrimas kalboms ir etninėms grupėms, kurios neturi rašto; 2) rašto sistemų pakeitimai, daromi valstybės, religinės valdžios ir (ar) intelektualų; 3) raštų skaičius vienoje kalboje; 4) didelis vienoje valstybėje vartojamų raštų skaičius; 5) raštas kaip nacionalinio ir religinio paveldo išlaikymo priemonė; 6) „universalų“ rašto sistemų nacionalinės ir vietinės versijos kaip politinės raiškos forma.

Politinė perspektyva yra labai naudinga mokslo kategorija studijuojant rašto sistemas ir knygą. Jos taikymas praturtina knygos kultūros žinias globaliais ir nacionaliniais (etniniais) aspektais. Ji taip pat gali atlikti svarbų vaidmenį formuojant šiuolaikinę nacionalinę ir tarptautinę politiką.