

The Cyrillic Alphabet Meisterin Felicity Flußmüllnerin

Cyrillic is an alphabet developed for the use of the Slavic peoples by the 9th century missionaries from Macedonia, Sts. Cyril and Methodius. It was originally developed to translate the bible and other religious works. Cyril and Methodius based their new Glagolitsa alphabet on their native Macedonian Greek with some changes and additions to accommodate the native Slavic dialects.

Over the course of the 10th century this alphabet evolved into what is known as Cyrillic, named after St Cyril. The Cyrillic alphabet was used to write Old Church Slavonic and was later adapted to write many other languages, including: Old Novgorod, Belarusian, Russian, Ukrainian, Czech, Slovak, Polish, Sorbian, Bulgarian, Macedonian, Bosnian, Serbian, Croatian, Montenegrin, and Slovenian. Each of these languages made slight changes over the years, but the alphabet remained basically the same throughout period, until the time of Peter the Great.

The most common calligraphic use of the Cyrillic alphabet is with an uncial hand. This is common from the 9th c to the 16th c. Letters are formed with the pen nib held at horizontal. The size of the hand varies within a single page from 2 nib widths to 10 nib widths. Slavic calligraphy is found on several mediums including vellum, parchment, paper and wood. Calligraphy is usually prepared with a nibbed pen; however there are several examples of pieces prepared with brushes, especially on icons. The black ink was made with several different recipes including gall, charcoal, and lamp black. The red ink is primarily cinnabar.

The alphabet is set in the Greek order, rather than in the American, Latin-based alphabet. There are several combinations sounds (zh, ch, sh, chsh), as well as several diphthongs (je, ju, ja) that are written in Cyrillic as a single letter. The two examples of “ja” are differentiated as within the word and as a word ending. There are two letters that are not letters in the traditional sense, but are soft and hard stresses written directly after the syllable they affect.

А	Б	В	Г	Д	Е	Ж	З	И	І	К
A	B	V	G	D	E	zh	Z	ee	I	K

Л	М	Н	О	У	П	Р	С	Т	Ф	Х
L	M	N	O	u	P	R	S	T	u	F

Х	Ч	Ш	Щ	Ѡ	Ѣ	Ѥ	Ѧ	Ѩ	Ѭ	Ѯ
x	ch	sh	chsh	th	je	ju	ja	ja	"	'

Bibliography and Resources

Cormack, Robin. ICONS. Harvard University Press. Cambridge, Massachusetts. 2007.

Goffe, Gaynor and Ravenscroft, Anna. Calligraphy School. The Reader's Digest Association, Inc. Pleasantville, New York. 1994.

Archbishop Averky. Liturgika. Holy Trinity Publications. Jordanville, New York. 2010.

A History of Icon Painting. Grand Holdings Press. Jordanville, New York. 2011.

A Monk of St. Tikhon's. These Truths We Hold. St. Tikhon's Seminary Press. South Canaan, Pennsylvania. 1992.

http://orthodoxwiki.org/Cyril_and_Methodius

Extant examples can be found at the following sites:

<http://slovo-aso.cl.bas.bg/index.html>

<http://kodeks.uni-bamberg.de/AKSL/Quellen/AKSL.CdxZographensis.htm>

http://www.biblical-data.org/OCS/Slavonic_samples.htm

<http://www.florin.ms/aleph5.html>

<http://www.nlr.ru/eng/exib/Gospel/drus/list.html>

The complete Gospels of Tzar Ivan the Terrible 1355:

http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=add_ms_39627_fs001r

16th c pages with Greek and Cyrillic on alternate lines as comparison:

http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=harley_ms_5723_f001r

http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=harley_ms_5723_f261r

This is an online engine which transliterates your wording phonetically into the Slavonic alphabet:

<http://www.halfwayproductions.com/slavonic/quizzes/untransliterator.html>

If you are interested in learning translation:

<http://www.halfwayproductions.com/slavonic/>