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Frane Paro, Kako je tiskana prva hrvatska knjiga (Zagreb: Mozaik knjiga, 2025.)

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Uvod: Knjiga Frane Para, umirovljenoga redovitog profesora Grafičkog odsjeka Akademije likovnih umjetnosti u Zagrebu, novo je djelo tog našega eminentnog stručnjaka za rano tiskarstvo. U njoj se donosi dosad neobjavljena grafička analiza mogućega tehničkog načina tiskanja našega Prvotiska, tj. Misala po zakonu rimskoga dvora od 22. veljače 1483. godine. Velika je vrijednost grafičke analize prof. Frane Pare, koja će budućim istraživačima naše inkunabulistike, tiskarstva i glagoljaštva biti od znatne pomoći. Knjiga uz to donosi povijesnu analizu teze o Veneciji kao mogućem mjestu tiskanja našega Prvotiska te opširan prikaz i analizu rada Daniele Fattori, objavljenoga u Italiji 2002. i 2003. godine, u kojemu se iznose nova saznanja o našoj Ispovidi, tj. Izgubljenoj inkunabuli, otisnutoj u Veneciji 1492. godine. Međutim, rad Daniele Fattori problematičan je u tumačenju vjerodostojnih izvora o Ispovidi iz 1492. godine, koje autorica poistovjećuje s Kosinjskim brevijarom iz 1491. godine. Ta pogrješna identifikacija dovodi u pitanje i zaključke o Veneciji kao mjestu tiskanja našega Prvotiska, koje prof. Frane Paro izvodi na temelju toga istraživanja i nekih osobnih promišljanja. Hipoteza o Veneciji kao mogućemu mjestu tiskanja Prvotiska problematična je od svojega nastanka, počevši od njezina promotora Jerneja Kopitara pa do danas, jer za nju u literaturi nikada nisu ponuđeni nepobitni dokazi ni uvjerljivi pokazatelji. Ni najnovija promišljanja prof. Frane Para, iznesena u ovoj knjizi, ne pomažu otkloniti temeljne nedostatke hipoteze o Veneciji kao mogućemu mjestu tiskanja hrvatskoga Prvotiska. Knjigu je uredio Vid Jakša Opačić, a recenzenti su red. prof. art. Jagor Bučan i dr. sc. Vida Vukoja. Knjiga sadrži 175 stranica s literaturom i podijeljena je u dva dijela. Ovdje ćemo se osvrnuti na prvi dio knjige koji se bavi temom iz naslova, dok je drugi dio svojevrsna posveta akademiku Josipu Bratuliću kako navodi i sam autor.

Ključne riječi: Frane Paro, Misal 1483., Kosinjski brevijar 1491., Ispovid 1492., Venecija

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Frane Paro, How Was the First Croatian Book Printed (Zagreb: Mozaik knjiga, 2025)

Introduction: The book by Frane Paro, retired full professor of the Printmaking Department at the Academy of Fine Arts in Zagreb, is a new work by this eminent Croatian specialist in early printing. It presents a hitherto unpublished graphic analysis of the possible technical process used to print our First Printed Croatian Book, namely the Misal po zakonu rimskoga dvora, dated 22 February 1483. Professor Frane Paro's graphic analysis is of great value and will be of considerable assistance to future researchers in Croatian incunabula studies, printing, and Glagolitism. The book also presents a historical analysis of the thesis that Venice may have been the place where our First Printed Croatian Book was printed, as well as an extensive overview and analysis of a work by Daniela Fattori, published in Italy in 2002 and 2003, which sets out new findings concerning our Ispovid, that is, the Lost Incunable, printed in Venice in 1492. However, Daniela Fattori's work is problematic in its interpretation of reliable sources concerning the Ispovid of 1492, which the author identifies with the Kosinj Breviary of 1491. This erroneous identification also calls into question the conclusions concerning Venice as the place of printing of our First Printed Croatian Book, which Professor Frane Paro draws on the basis of that research and some of his personal reflections. The hypothesis of Venice as a possible place where the First Printed Croatian Book was printed has been problematic from its inception, beginning with its promoter Jernej Kopitar and continuing to the present day, since neither incontrovertible evidence nor convincing indications have ever been offered in its support in the literature. Nor do Professor Frane Paro's most recent reflections, set out in this book, help to remedy the fundamental shortcomings of the hypothesis that Venice may have been the place where the First Printed Croatian Book was printed. The book was edited by Vid Jakša Opačić, and its reviewers were Full Professor of Art Jagor Bučan and Vida Vukoja, PhD. It comprises 175 pages, including a bibliography, and is divided into two parts. Here, we shall consider the first part of the book, which addresses the subject indicated by its title, while the second part is a kind of tribute to Academician Josip Bratulić, as the author himself states.

Keywords: Frane Paro, Missal of 1483, Kosinj Breviary of 1491, Ispovid 1492, Venice

NUMEROUS MISINTERPRETATIONS CONCERNING THE FIRST PRINTED CROATIAN BOOK - A CRITICAL REVIEW

We shall analyse the text of the book in the order of the author's exposition.

On page 9 of the book, in footnote 5, the author mentions the writer Zvonimir Kulundžić[1] and his first book on the Kosinj Printing House.[2] The claim that this book was the last effort to establish the importance of the Kosinj Printing House is incorrect. After that book, Zvonimir Kulundžić published an important discussion of the Kosinj Printing House in the 1971 facsimile edition of the First Printed Croatian Book,[3] followed by a book marking its 500th anniversary in 1983.[4] In addition, Kulundžić published more than 20 scholarly and professional articles on the Kosinj Printing House and several dozen newspaper articles. We shall not list them individually here, but they are available to researchers in Zvonimir Kulundžić's manuscript papers, held at the State Archives in Osijek. Before Zvonimir Kulundžić, numerous authors had considered Kosinj as the location of the first and oldest Croatian printing house, in poems, newspaper and encyclopaedia articles, short stories and novels, folklore material and private letters. In this connection, 44 sources have been found dating from before 1958 and Zvonimir Kulundžić's first public statement about Kosinj.[5][6] The author also disregarded other researchers who wrote in support of the Kosinj Printing House in Kulundžić's lifetime, notably Academician Josip Badalić,[7] Academician Eduard Hercigonja,[8] Julije Derossi[9] and others.[10]

[1]'The last substantial effort to answer the questions of where and by whom the First Printed Croatian Book was produced was made by Zvonimir Kulundžić in 1960, in support of the idea that Kosinj was the actual place where Croatian Glagolitic incunabula were printed. In the 95-page study Kosinj kolijevka štamparstva slavenskoga juga (self-published, Zagreb), he skilfully interwove historical facts, indications and assumptions to substantiate the thesis stated in the book's title.' Paro, 2025.
[2]Kulundžić, 1960.
[3]Frangeš et al., 1971, pp. LXIX–LXXIX.
[4]Kulundžić, 1983.
[5]Krelius, 1958.
[6]Mance, 2023, pp. 242–243.
[7]In that book, Academician Badalić captions the black-and-white reproduction of the final page of the First Printed Croatian Book, containing its colophon, as follows: 'II. Missale Romanum. (Kosinj?) 1483. (Explicit): No 1.' Badalić, 1959.
[8]Academician Hercigonja accepted Kosinj beyond any doubt, at least as regards the printing of the Kosinj Breviary in 1491. 'It should be noted that, as regards Kosinj as the location of the printing workshop, precise comparative textual research has now removed all doubt that the Glagolitic Breviary of 1491 was indeed printed here.' Hercigonja, 1975, p. 213.
[9]Derossi, 1975, and Derossi, 1984.
[10]It would be superfluous to list here all the researchers who accept at least that the Breviary of 1491 was printed in Kosinj, but an extensive list of works and authors can be found in the bibliography of *Kosinjska tiskara*. Mance, 2023.

Ivan Mance has published four books[11] on Kosinj and the Kosinj Printing House, as well as more than 20 newspaper and professional articles. We are therefore not speaking of a single book from 1960, but of several hundred different sources from the period 1695–2025 which, in one way or another, support Kosinj as the first and oldest Croatian printing house. Such incomprehensible neglect of the literature on Paro's part is selective and unscientific. This is also evident in the author's lack of knowledge of the technical and financial activities involved in organising the printing of the *Missal* of 1483.[12] Since 1963, we have known that most of the paper for the First Printed Croatian Book was very probably obtained from German paper mills;[13] today, we know that Ambroz Kacitić worked on its printing because he left material evidence of this in the form of blind press;[14] and we can also identify Anž Frankapan Brinjski as the likely financier of the Kosinj Printing House with considerable confidence, as numerous historical circumstances and sources point to this.[15]

[11]The first book contributes to the historical cartography of Kosinj: before its publication, authors explained Kosinj's importance by its appearance on 'as many as 11 historical maps', whereas Mance presents 84 in that book. Mance, 2013. The second book examines indigenous viticulture in Kosinj. DNA analysis established that the Pršljivka bijela variety exists worldwide only in Kosinj and Ozalj, while Vingor crni originates from an old Austrian variety and is likewise now found only in Kosinj and Ozalj. Historical accounts of Kosinj's vineyards point to Frankopan family connections in the spread of old varieties from the Middle Ages onwards. Mance et al., 2019. The third book is Mance's most important work, developed from a history doctorate defended with the highest grade at the University of Zagreb. To date, it has sold more than 760 copies, has been presented at more than 30 locations in Croatia and abroad, including the Croatian Parliament on 24 February 2025, and is held by more than 150 libraries in Croatia and abroad, notably the National Library of the Czech Republic and the Bibliotheca Alexandrina. *Kosinjska tiskara* changes our understanding of Croatian incunabula and provides clear evidence of the Kosinj Printing House and the work of the first Croatian printer, Ambroz Kacitić. It includes 225 historical maps depicting Kosinj from the sixteenth to the end of the nineteenth century. Mance, 2023. The fourth book describes the life and work of Ambroz Kacitić of the Kolunić clan (Broz žakan), a native of Kosinj and the first Croatian printer, presenting new findings about his life and work, the construction of a Pauline monastery in Kosinj and other subjects. Mance, 2025.

[12]'It is true that we do not know who physically printed the Missal, who engraved the punches for making the matrices, or who cast the type; we do not know where the paper was obtained; and finally, and most importantly, we do not know who paid the considerable sum needed to cover all the unavoidable costs of publishing such a book.' Paro, 2025, p. 10.

[13]'The paper used for the first Glagolitic edition, bearing an ox-head watermark with a line and crown between the horns, on which three quarters of the Missal of 1483 was printed, is most probably of German origin; it could also be French or Swiss, but is very unlikely to be Italian.' Bošnjak et al., 1963, p. 47.

[14]The blind press, or relief printing without ink, was produced during the printing of the First Printed Croatian Book, the only time when this was technically possible. It comprises 340 letter characters in nine positions on five pages of the First Printed Croatian Book, carrying Ambroz Kacitić's message and encoding. Ambroz Kacitić also points to these in Novak's Missal (which served as the exemplar for printing the First Printed Croatian Book), in a handwritten entry dated 15 November 1482, precisely during the intensive work of printing 150–200 copies of the First Printed Croatian Book. Mance, 2023, pp. 268–389.

[15]Zvonimir Kulundžić was the first to propose Anž Frankapan Brinjski as a possible financier of the Kosinj Printing House (Kulundžić, 1960, pp. 37–57). Mance provides stronger corroboration through an analysis of more than 50 historical charters and sources, precisely outlining Anž Frankapan Brinjski's life and work, his stay in the town of Kosinj and, ultimately, his ownership of it. Mance, 2023, pp. 125–157.

Furthermore, the author gives a historically accurate account of the protection of proprietary, technical and publishing rights in the incunabula period.[16] Perhaps the most important of these was permission or official confirmation of the right to print, which subsequently had to be stated in the colophons of the books printed. Thus every Croatian book printed in Venice between 1483 and 1597, irrespective of its script (Glagolitic, Latin or Gothic Latin), author, purpose, artistic quality or provenance, contains a clear statement in Latin (less frequently Italian) in its colophon or on its title page that it was printed in Venice, or at least a date in Latin accompanied by a Venetian printer's device.[17] Why, if it was printed in Venice, does the First Printed Croatian Book alone lack a Latin indication of this kind? The author entirely disregards this question, although it is a very important indication.

On the following pages, the author describes Gutenberg's invention very precisely. Perhaps uniquely in Croatian literature, he provides accurate information about Gutenberg's printing workshop, explaining that the printing press was the last and technically least important stage. The main role was played by Gutenberg's other inventions, such as the hand mould for casting type, the artistic process of cutting punches, casting type to a uniform height,[18] the mixture of inks, and so on. The author then describes a possible method of printing an incunable, using the First Printed Croatian Book as his example. In the chapter *Slagar*, pp. 25–27, he describes the compositor's work very precisely, emphasising its most important aspect: the compositor's education. This part of the book provides the reader with information of a very high quality about the possible methods and technology used to print incunabula.

In the chapter *Tisak dvije boje*, pp. 28–30, the author further develops his earlier reflections,[19] interpreting the occurrence of blind press in the First Printed Croatian Book in terms of the printing technique of red followed by black. According to this interpretation, wooden or metal

[16] 'Every possible means was used to protect the substantial investment (in the printing house—IM). First, confirmation protecting the right to print and sell the book was sought from the city authorities (and this came at a price).' Paro, 2025, p. 13.
[17] To date, 24 Croatian-language books printed in Venice between the late fifteenth and late sixteenth centuries have been identified: Glagolitic and Latin-script, secular and ecclesiastical. All these known Croatian editions explicitly identify the printing workshop and/or Venice as the place of printing, in Latin or Italian. The absence of such an indication in the Missal of 1483 therefore substantially weakens the Venetian attribution, because in this respect the Missal alone departs from the established pattern of other Croatian editions printed in Venice. Mance, 2023. https://kosinj.com/istrazivanja-kosinja/je-li-utemeljeno-predlagati-tiskanje-hrvatskog-misala-iz-1483-u-veneciji/ (accessed 9 August 2026).
[18] Type was cast not from pure lead but from an alloy of lead, tin and antimony, which melted at very low temperatures (in a wood-fired furnace), cooled and hardened very rapidly and, according to some sources, took Gutenberg years to perfect. Kosinj, 2025. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VK07Ucy3GvQ (accessed 10 August 2026).
[19] Paro, 1984.

packing pieces (non-printing material) were inserted during the printing of the First Printed Croatian Book because black had to be printed after red and the letters already printed in red had to be protected. With this interpretation of blind press, the author sought to explain Kulundžić's instance of blind press, GBDKG BROZ Ž.[20] This instance of blind press cannot be explained by the technical difficulty of printing in black and red either, because it carries a kind of message: the signature and self-identification of Ambroz Kacitić of Kosinj. The other instances of blind press, which the author does not address in the book at all, cannot possibly be explained solely in terms of printing technique while their meaning, significance or message is ignored.[21]

The author begins the chapter *Tiskarsko slovo*, pp. 31–34, by discussing Vjekoslav Štefanić and his 1951 paper, which he calls a 'masterly study'.[22] On the following pages of the same chapter, he quotes several eminent specialists on the First Printed Croatian Book, once again passing over all those researchers who supported or support the Kosinj Printing House, and arrives at Vjekoslav Štefanić, who takes its printing in Venice as an established fact.[23] Today, we know that the originator and promoter of the thesis that Venice was the place where the *Missal* of 1483 was printed—a thesis unsupported by any evidence or serious research in the literature—was Jernej Kopitar. It is worth remembering that this Slovenian philologist, who denied the existence of the Croats as a people and of the Croatian language, also collaborated with the Austrian secret service and was Vuk Stefanović Karadžić's mentor.[24]

[20]Kulundžić correctly identifies Ambroz Kacitić's signature in this instance of blind press. Somewhat later, Kacitić also signs himself Broz žakan (BROZ Ž) in his manuscript Kolunićev zbornik, in Glagolitic and Bosančica. However, Kulundžić incorrectly interprets the preceding blind-pressed letters GBDKG as '*Gospodinu Bogu Dika i Kraljevstvo Grišni* BROZ Žakan'. Kulundžić, 1983, p. 25. This interpretation of GBDKG is arbitrary and has no foundation in the literature. The uncertainty concerning the interpretation of this part of the blind press has recently been resolved. It will be presented in a new study of all the instances of blind press in the *Missal* of 1483, to be published in 2027.

[21]We now know of nine positions containing instances of blind press, on five pages of the First Printed Croatian Book, comprising a total of 340 letter characters. Interpretations invoking any accidental occurrence arising from the technical work of printing are therefore simply untenable. See note 14.

[22]When describing the *Kosinj Breviary* in that paper, Štefanić knew nothing of the analysis of the same breviary published by Emilio Teza 55 years earlier. The Italian specialists Cronia and Cini politely but ironically reproached him for this, taking issue with his incorrect interpretation of the incunable in question as an office rather than a breviary. The paper caused considerable embarrassment both to Štefanić and to Croatian incunabula studies generally, so it is unclear what is masterly about it. Štefanić, 1951. For the subsequent response by the Italian specialists, see Cronia and Cini, 1955.

[23]Paro, 2025, p. 32.

[24]Kulundžić also wrote about the problem of Venice, which many Croatian authors presented without supporting evidence as a 'proven scholarly fact', unquestioningly trusting Jernej Kopitar. Kulundžić, 1960, pp. 14–20. Only Mario Grčević's extensive research shed new light on the full extent of Jernej Kopitar's political, linguistic and scholarly bias. Not only did he deny the Croats' existence as a people, but he also largely devised Karadžić's

The author begins the chapter *Slovorezac*, pp. 35–43, by describing type production in the incunabula period, and then claims that all these tasks were performed by one man when the First Printed Croatian Book was printed.[25] He cites no source for this claim, which is, moreover, highly problematic if we consider that punches were made by hand by goldsmiths and other craftsmen, at a rate of approximately one a day.[26] Once the punches had been made, anyone could strike matrices anywhere, just as a partially trained craftsman could cast type from the struck matrices if he had a wood-fired furnace, Gutenberg's hand mould and a sufficient quantity of lead alloy. On this subject, it is worth watching the approximately ten-minute video on the production of punches, matrices and type using Gutenberg's technology, prepared by Mark Barbour, curator of the International Printing Museum.[27] Later in this chapter, the author gives a precise and knowledgeable account of matrix production and hand-casting type, the foundations for establishing a printing business.

In the chapter *Slova u Prvotisku*, pp. 44–54, and subsequently in the book, the author introduces Daniela Fattori's research,[28] which he treats as unquestionably authoritative. On its basis, he goes on to argue in several places that Venice is, in his view too, the most likely location where the *Missal* of 1483 was printed. From this research, we now know that the punchcutter for the *Ispovid* of 1492 was Francesco Griffo da Bologna (who moved from Bologna to Venice in 1480), yet the author proposes the same man as the most likely punchcutter for our First Printed Croatian Book, without any further evidence. His suggestion that Griffo[29] cut the punches for the type of the *Missal* of 1483 is entirely unfounded and

language reform, which the latter could never have accomplished independently without him as a mentor. In doing so, he drew words from older Croatian dictionaries. All this was undertaken as a collaborator with the Austrian secret services, in unsuccessful attempts to draw the Serbs towards the West linguistically, in secular affairs and religiously. Grčević, 2009. In light of these findings, it is difficult to believe in Jernej Kopitar's scholarly objectivity in analysing Croatian incunabula, particularly since his conclusions too rest on pure assumptions without any evidence.

[25]Paro, 2025, p. 36.

[26]According to Dr Riccardo Olocco, one of the leading specialists in the analysis of punchcutting and type production in Venice during the incunabula period, it is impossible to establish precisely how long the production of a punch took on average. The few surviving documents may suggest an average of one to two punches a day. Mance, 2025, pp. 177–179.

[27]Kosinj, 2025. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VK07Ucy3GvQ (accessed 10 August 2026).

[28]This work was published as the same text in two different publications in 2002 and 2003. Fattori, 2002, and Fattori, 2003.

[29]Here we quote some of the author's reflections on Griffo. 'As a possible maker of the punches for our First Printed Croatian Book, Griffo has a slight advantage over the other three Venetian punchcutters because he was married to Chiara (Klara), a woman from Split…' Paro, 2025, p. 47. 'The fact that Griffo designed the type for the first edition of the Glagolitic breviary in 1491 opens up and charts a brilliant path for Glagolitic palaeotypography.' Paro, 2025, p. 48. 'At the time when the Missal was printed, four punchcutters were active in Venice… and the best-known among them was Griffo ("Split's son-in-law"), who engraved the punches for the

therefore academically untenable. The fact that Griffo was married to a woman from Split or cut type for the *Ispovid* of 1492 is not sufficient to make him the most likely punchcutter for the First Printed Croatian Book. It is important to note that here the author repeatedly names Venice[30] as the place where the Missal of 1483 was printed, relying on the same research, although at this level of analysis the two matters are entirely unrelated. Below, we shall show where Daniela Fattori's research is methodologically deficient and factually incorrect. Consequently, all the author's analyses and conclusions in the book that rest on that research also become questionable.

In this study, Daniela Fattori writes that she has found documentation concerning the commissioning of a Croatian Glagolitic incunable from 1492. This is our *Ispovid* of 1492, or the so-called *Lost Incunable*. Thanks precisely to this research, we now know almost all its technical details, as well as the unfortunate fate that justifies its designation as the *Lost Incunable*. However, deliberately or otherwise, Fattori makes a serious error when, through a series of constructed arguments, she brings the *Kosinj Breviary* of 1491 into this enterprise and identifies it with the incunable in question, rather than the *Ispovid*, which was set in type by Friar Matej Mastilić Bošnjak and Friar Stjepan. In this way, without firm grounds, Fattori removes one incunable from the Croatian corpus, reducing the total number of Croatian incunabula from nine to eight by identifying the *Kosinj Breviary* of 1491 with the Ispovid of 1492. Further discussion can be found in Appendix 11 of *Kosinjska tiskara*.[31] The author is evidently unfamiliar with that analysis, published three years ago, so below we shall contrast some of his arguments and quotations with it.

'From Fattori's study, we learn many details about the unfortunate fate of this first edition of the breviary (meaning the *Kosinj Breviary* of 1491), of which only one copy survives

Croatian Glagolitic breviary of 1491.' Paro, 2025, p. 93. The insistence on Griffo's marriage to a woman from Split is unclear; for the author, this seems to legitimise him as the unproven punchcutter for the *Missal* of 1483.

[30]Here we present the author's reflections on Daniela Fattori and Venice as the place of printing of the *Missal* of 1483: 'If asked why I brought the second printed Glagolitic book into the story of the First Printed Croatian Book, I might reply with a counter-question: "Why has Daniela Fattori's discovery been passed over in silence in Croatian Slavic studies?" (or reverse it: "Why did Fattori do nothing to have her work published in Croatia?")' Paro, 2025, p. 119. The author speaks as though it were proven that the *Kosinj Breviary* of 1491 and the *Ispovid* of 1492 were one and the same book, thus referring to them without justification as 'the second printed Glagolitic book'. Nevertheless, Croatian scholars of Slavic studies may legitimately be asked why certain research has been passed over in silence (and this concerns more than Daniela Fattori's research alone), since such a practice is incompatible with the principles of scholarly work. The same question can also be put to Frane Paro, as his work on this book leaves a similar impression.

[31]Mance, 2023, pp. 729–744.

(Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana in Venice, shelfmark: Incunaboli 1235).'[32] What the study tells us is the fate of the *Ispovid* of 1492, not that of the *Kosinj Breviary* of 1491, of which two copies, rather than one, have in fact survived.[33]

'Although it is nowhere recorded, Torresani of course knew that Griffo had made the Glagolitic type for Cimalarca's and Friar Matej's breviary. Torresani well remembers the circumstances of that edition. Although he knew that Griffo's, Cimalarca's and Friar Matej's

[32]Paro, 2025, p. 47.

[33]For this paper, Daniela Fattori's original work was used; it can be downloaded here: https://kosinj.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/08/Fattori-Daniela_Venezia-e-la-stampa-Glagolitica-I-Cimalarca.pdf The Croatian translation was prepared with the assistance of OpenAI Codex, under a ChatGPT Pro subscription and using Goal mode. Codex was used to transcribe and translate the text, including footnotes and quotations; the final translation was subsequently reviewed and editorially harmonised. In the sources found and published by Fattori, the first contract states the following (in translation): *'Jesus. 1491 (=1492), on the eighth day of February in Venice… Let it be known to anyone who sees this instrument that on this day I, Dionysio Bertocho of Bologna, a printer in the district of San Samuel, have agreed with Mr Zuane Zimalarcha and Mr Andrea Zimalarcha, his nephew, as follows: I, the said Dionysio, promise to print for them certain books on medium-format paper, making eight leaves from each sheet, in columns and in the form of a breviary, printed in black and red… except that the said Mr Zuane and Mr Andrea are obliged to provide me with all the paper needed for this work, in a quantity of at least one thousand… I also declare that, as soon as I begin printing the said books, I, Dionysio, am obliged to set aside one press specifically for them and for the said work, and not to remove it until the books are completed…'* The second contract reads: *'Thanks be to God. In the year 1491, on 8 February in Venice. …we have concluded an agreement with master Dionixe of Bologna, a printer, who is obliged to print for us one thousand books and as many more as we may wish, in the Slavonic script…'* Fattori, 2003, pp. 215–216. The printing of this same book, which Friar Matej Mastilić Bošnjak calls *Ispovid*, not a breviary, was completed on 16 July 1492, as we learn from the account of this work he left in *Tkonski zbornik*. Mance, 2023, pp. 58–59. He surely knew whether he had printed the *Ispovid*—probably similar to the Senj *Spovid općena*, at around 40 leaves—or a breviary for Glagolitic priests, at around 400 leaves. The *Kosinj Breviary* survives on paper and on parchment. Frane Paro correctly mentions the paper copy, but appears deliberately to omit the parchment copy, even though Fattori discusses it in detail too. The parchment calendar of that breviary, bound into *Brozić's Breviary*, is held at the Vatican Library (shelfmark Borg. Ill. 19.). Breviarium Romanum glagoliticum, 1491. https://digi.vatlib.it/view/Borg.ill.19 (accessed 10 August 2026). The contract provides for printing a book in the form of a breviary, meaning its dimensions and the folding of the sheet. The book's contents are not specified in the contract. Printing exclusively on paper was agreed, which raises the question of the parchment copy of the *Kosinj Breviary*. Frane Paro does not address this at all, while Daniela Fattori's interpretation of that copy is simply unserious: 'There also remain six parchment leaves of the Calendar from the Vatican Library, which probably came from a "presentation" copy intended for Giovanni and Andrea Cimalarca, the initiators and financiers of the enterprise.' Fattori, 2003, p. 227. How did precisely this 'presentation' parchment copy survive, reach northern Croatia by 1527 or earlier (perhaps the Paulines in Ozalj), see extensive use accompanied by various incidental Kajkavian notes, and then have its calendar preserved, now in the Vatican Library? Putanec, 1988, p. 8. There can therefore be no question of objective scholarly research if indications that do not support the proposed hypothesis are suppressed or disregarded.
Perhaps most importantly, if printing 150–200 copies of the Missal of 1483 took six months or more, how was it possible, in just over five months between the agreement and completion, to obtain the paper—which was the Grimalarkas' obligation—establish the printing operation and print 1000 copies of a breviary of 400 leaves or 800 pages on a single press? Under those conditions, considering the typesetting and printing work, subsequent binding and illumination, this would have been a job that could take up to two years, not five months. Mance, 2023, pp. 739–742. There is also a whole series of financial, organisational and other problems that rule out the possibility of printing 1000 copies of the *Kosinj Breviary* in the undertaking agreed between the Grimalarkas and the printer Dionysio. We again refer readers to Appendix 11 of *Kosinjska tiskara*, which explains in detail Daniela Fattori's incorrect, and perhaps even malicious, attempt to identify the *Ispovid* of 1492 with the *Kosinj Breviary* of 1491.

breviary had already been printed in as many as 1000 copies, Toresani decided to embark with Baromić on printing "Baromić's Breviary". We have no indication of what could have prompted the cautious and calculating Toresani, averse to risky ventures, to make this incautious publishing move.'[34] Griffo made the type for the *Ispovid*, not the *Kosinj Breviary*. It is quite clear that the otherwise cautious and well-known Torresani would not have undertaken a smaller print run of *Baromić's Breviary* in 1492/93 if the Grimalarkas were simultaneously completing 1000 copies of the same kind of breviary. That would indeed have been irrational business practice.[35]

Particularly problematic for dating the *Kosinj Breviary* is the interpretation of a date given *more veneto*,[36] which Fattori correctly converts to 1492. However, under the Julian calendar, the only calendar system then in use, that year was undoubtedly a leap year. Easter in 1492 fell on 22 April,[37] creating problems that are very difficult to overcome if the *Kosinj Breviary*

[34]This assertion is not supported by scholarly argument. The author first acknowledges that there is no written record of it and then presents what Torresani knew more than 500 years ago as certain. Paro, 2025, p. 100.
[35]Fattori too rightly raises this problem: 'By then, however, it was already too late: as early as March 1493, a new edition of the Glagolitic Breviary had been placed on the market, printed by Andrea Torresani and prepared by Blaž Baromić, a canon of Senj Cathedral, so demand must already have fallen considerably. It would be interesting to know what circumstances led Torresani to publish a second edition of the Breviary, with new type, immediately after the appearance of the first, less than a year later. This is rather unusual considering that the market did not look promising at all, as texts of this kind had limited sales.' Fattori, 2003, pp. 226–227. According to Fattori and Paro, the supposed printing of the *Kosinj Breviary* was completed on 16 July 1492. Although we do not know exactly how long binding took, we now know that until the end of the fifteenth century, bookbinders in Italy and the Netherlands used time-consuming medieval binding techniques. Anderson, 1999, p. 8. How long, then, might it have taken to bind at least part of a print run of 1000 copies of a 400-leaf breviary? *Baromić's Breviary* was printed on 13 March 1493, as its colophon states in Latin and Croatian. This means that printing may have begun in autumn 1492, while punchcutting and typecasting must have begun even earlier. We may therefore suppose that, under these circumstances, one Glagolitic breviary was being bound while punches were being cut, type was being cast and printing was being prepared for another, simultaneously in the same city during 1492. Such a sequence would imply a kind of competition, as Fattori indeed argues, but she offers no arguments in support of it. Fattori, 2003, p. 228. Printing books was not merely a cultural activity but also a business expected to make a profit. It is therefore difficult to imagine someone embarking on the demanding and costly preparation of a new edition, knowing that another edition with the same kind of content was just being completed in the same city, both intended exclusively for the small market of the Croatian Glagolitic area. In business terms, printing a Roman breviary in the Latin script for the market of the whole of Europe was therefore not equivalent to printing a Croatian Glagolitic breviary intended exclusively for the territory of present-day Istria, Lika, the Littoral and Dalmatia with its islands. Such an undertaking would have been utterly irrational commercially.
[36]'A chronological system of reckoning corresponding to the use of the earliest Roman calendar, in which the year of the Christian era began on 1 March. It was used in Venice until 1797 and is also attested in early medieval France, from the sixth to the ninth centuries.'
More veneto, 2026. https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/more-veneto/ (accessed 11 August 2026). Accordingly, when converting dates given *more veneto*, one year must be added to dates in January and February.
[37]We established the date of Easter and the leap-year status of 1492 under the Julian calendar using the application *Calendar Magic*. Calendar Magic, 2017. https://www.softpedia.com/get/Office-tools/Diary-Organizers-Calendar/Calendar-Magic.shtml (accessed 11 August 2026). The reliability of its calculation was repeatedly confirmed when determining the date on which Easter fell in 1483. Mance, 2023, pp. 315–319.

is dated to that year. First, why does the calendar of the *Kosinj Breviary* record the commemoration 'Jeonija m(u)č(enika)' under 22 April, the date on which Easter fell that year? This most probably refers to St Leonius, or Leonidas of Alexandria. Such an entry is entirely unusual because, in the calendars of Croatian Glagolitic books down to Šimun Kožičić Benja's *Misal hruacki*, the dates of Holy Week, especially Easter, were left blank.[38] Second, why is the leap year not marked at 23/24 February in the *Kosinj Breviary*, as was customary in Roman and occasionally Croatian Glagolitic books?[39] The following images show the February calendar of the *Kosinj Breviary*, followed by the corresponding position in the calendar of *Borislavićev zbornik*, which Grgur Borislavić, son of Martin from Modruš, from Gorice, wrote on 2 March 1375. The calendar of *Borislavićev zbornik* was evidently intended for the following leap year, 1376, since the entry at 24 February clearly reads: Tu počene prestup.

'Before the publication of Daniela Fattori's research in 2002, the history of the printed Glagolitic book recorded two breviary editions: one without a colophon, and another whose colophon is known, but for which the book to which that colophon should belong is missing. All the hypotheses (indeed, assertions) concerning the "breviary of 1491/1492" put forward in the works of Zvonimir Kulundžić and his followers have collapsed. This is a great lesson in exercising restraint when interpreting documents and constructing conclusions.'[40] Until the publication of this research on the history of the *Ispovid*, or the *Lost Incunable* of 1492, we knew only what Friar Matej Mastilić Bošnjak had recorded about it in *Tkonski zbornik*. Thanks to the documentation that has been found, we now know incomparably more about its production and fate. However, identifying its fate with that of the *Kosinj Breviary*, printed in the town of Kosinj in 1491, as explicitly stated in the *Opis Like i Krbave* of 1695,[41] constitutes an unfounded interference with the corpus of Croatian incunabula. This procedure is particularly problematic when adopted by certain Croatian specialists, because a second

[38] See Table 10, 'Raspored Uskrsa i zastupljenost Velikog tjedna u kalendarima hrvatskih tiskanih knjiga'. Mance, 2023, p. 335.
[39] Leap-year indications in February are relatively rare in Croatian Glagolitic books for a simple reason: only a small number of books written or printed in leap years have survived.
[40] Paro, 2025, p. 119.
[41] The Opis Like i Krbave of 1695, which had previously been unjustifiably challenged, was first comprehensively examined from historical, geographical and content-related perspectives in *Kosinjska tiskara*. Paro completely disregards this historical source of primary importance, although it clearly testifies that, as late as 1695, Glagolitic priests in the newly liberated Lika and Krbava used a Glagolitic breviary in their daily prayers whose colophon stated that it had been printed in the town of Kosinj. Mance, 2023, pp. 184–194 and Appendix 5.

incorrect assumption—that the First Printed Croatian Book was also printed in Venice—is built upon the first. Everything stated so far clearly indicates that the *Kosinj Breviary* was printed in 1491, not 1492, as most Croatian scholarly literature also records.

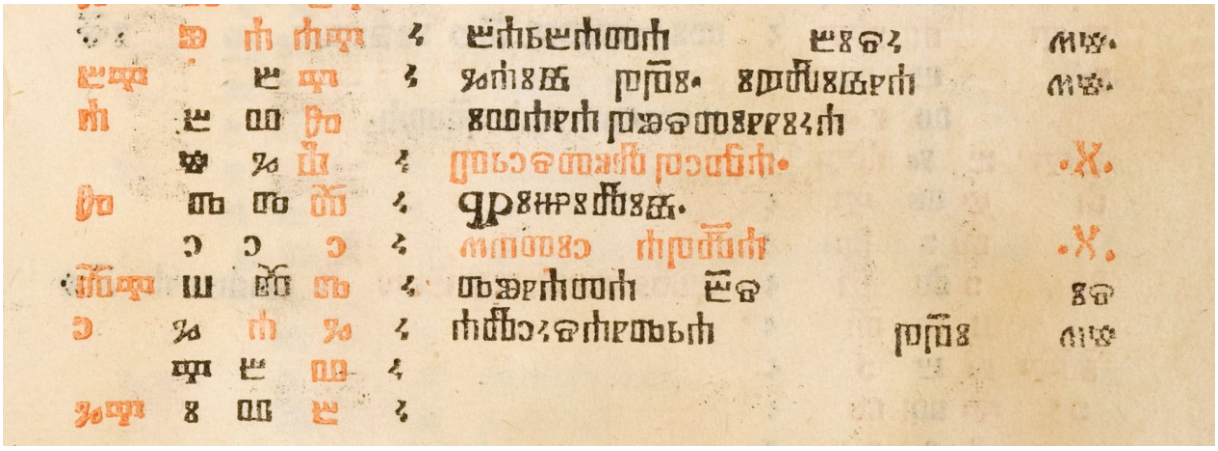

Figure 1. Kosinj Breviary, February calendar: 22 February *Prestol Petra*; 23 February *Vijilije;* 24 February *Matie ap(osto)la.*

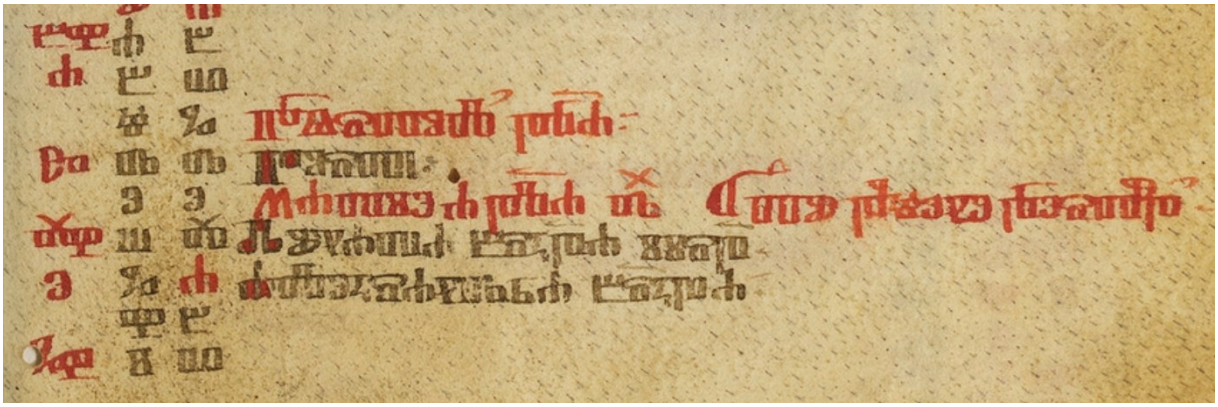

Figure 2. Borislavićev zbornik, February calendar: 22 February *Pr(i)jestol P(e)tra*; 23 February *Post*; 24 February *Mati(j)e ap(osto)la d(upleks).* Then, on the left: *Tu počene prestup.*

In 1492, the Grimalarkas, Friar Matej and Friar Stjepan printed the *Ispovid*, as Friar Matej himself calls it. A work of 40 rather than 400 leaves could indeed have been completed in five months, on a single press, in a print run of 1000 copies. The *Ispovid* of 1492 is today rightly called the *Lost Incunable*, given the circumstances of its fate revealed by Fattori's research. On the basis of all the arguments presented, it is also reasonable to conclude that there was no competition between Dionysio and Torresani, as Frane Paro claims,[42] because they were simply not printing books of the same kind of content at the same time.

[42] 'It is impossible to escape the impression of competition between two teams, or two investors rushing to reach the "market"—an exciting contest between two highly educated priests *de littera sclava*.' Paro, 2025, p. 102.

'Some of our historians have opted for Kosinj as the cradle of Croatian Glagolitic printing. They base this idea on historiographical indications and completely disregard the typographical indications—the only real and incontrovertible, tangible and measurable indications that we have "in our hands" when turning the pages of the First Printed Croatian Book.'[43] Here, the author should be referred to the aforementioned blind press in the *Missal* of 1483, which constitutes typographical evidence of the first importance. It is particularly telling that, despite his expertise in the typography of Croatian incunabula, he does not consider this evidence at all in the book. This suggests that he is unfamiliar with recent research on blind press.

In the remainder of the book, the author analyses the letterforms of the First Printed Croatian Book from a graphic perspective, doing so very successfully and presenting new and useful findings. We shall not discuss this graphic and technical part of the book in greater detail here, as the author's expertise in this field is not in question. We shall draw attention only to one detail that we consider important to this book review.

WHAT ABOUT NOVAK'S MISSAL OF 1368?

As noted above, in the chapters on pages 44–92, the author focuses on a typographical analysis of the letterforms of the First Printed Croatian Book. He compares them with those of other Glagolitic editions, considers their proportions using eight letters as examples, and analyses the format of the First Printed Croatian Book and the positioning of the printed letters within it. This is a very good and expert graphic analysis, although we do not consider ourselves qualified to judge the author's conclusions in this part of the book, since we approach it from a historical perspective. Nevertheless, we consider it necessary to draw attention to one important omission on the author's part.

He does not devote a single word in the entire book to *Novak's Missal*.[44] It is therefore legitimate to ask why he did not direct some of his research effort towards a typographical analysis, measurement of proportions and other forms of comparative analysis of the letterforms of *Novak's Missal* and those of the First Printed Croatian Book. For more than a

[43] Paro, 2025, p. 93.
[44] Leksikografski zavod Miroslav Krleža, 2013. https://www.enciklopedija.hr/clanak/misal-kneza-novaka (accessed 13 August 2026).

hundred years, it has been suggested that *Novak's Missal* served as the model for the type of the First Printed Croatian Book and also as its textual exemplar.[45] It would therefore be important to conduct a thorough graphic analysis of the letterforms of *Novak's Missal* and compare them with those of the First Printed Croatian Book, in order to confirm or refute the assumption that the type for the latter was cut after the letterforms of *Novak's Missal*. This most important piece of graphic and technical work has still not been undertaken, although it could contribute significantly to clarifying the printing history of the First Printed Croatian Book. In our view, precisely such an analysis would have been the most valuable chapter of this book, whose very title promises new insights into 'how the first Croatian book was printed'.

A computer-based comparative analysis of this kind has already been conducted.[46] Using the words 'Početie misala', the letterforms of nine manuscript missals were compared with those of the First Printed Croatian Book. The conclusion was that, among all the codices analysed, the letterforms of *Novak's Missal* correspond most closely in shape and dimensions to those of the First Printed Croatian Book. A thorough graphic analysis could settle this question conclusively. If it confirmed the more than century-old assumption that the letterforms of *Novak's Missal* did indeed serve as the artistic model for cutting the punches for the type of the First Printed Croatian Book, this would—for a whole range of reasons that we shall not explain in detail here[47]—further weaken the already unfounded hypothesis that the First Printed Croatian Book was printed in Venice. The reverse would, of course, also hold: results refuting that assumption could strengthen the case for the Venetian hypothesis. It is therefore legitimate to ask why this analysis was not carried out in this book by an author who has spent decades studying typography and Croatian Glagolitic printing, and why it is absent from a book whose title certainly led one to expect it.

[45]In 1896, the Hungarian Slavist Oszkár Asbóth was the first to observe the similarity in content and letterforms between the First Printed Croatian Book and Novak's Missal. Szentesi-Žagar, 1996, p. 59. He was followed in this view by Breyer, 1940, p. 53; Tandarić, 1964, pp. 119–120; Zvonimir Kulundžić in several of his papers and books, for example Kulundžić, 1959, p. 27; and a number of other authors.
[46]Mance, 2025, pp. 188–195.
[47]Mance, 2025, pp. 175–188.

CONCLUSION

The chapter *Umjesto zaključka*, p. 177, presents a quotation from Academician Eduard Hercigonja whose powerful words speak of the high achievements of Croatian culture in the incunabula period and point directly to the great importance of Croatian printing at that time. It is an impressive quotation from a great Croatian scholar, but unfortunately it has no real connection with the conclusion of this book.

The author closes the book with the chapters *Dodatak*, pp. 108–117, and *Nakon svega*, pp. 118–120. In *Dodatak*, he analyses the printers' devices of Pelegrino Pasquali, Domenico Bertoch and Andrea Toresani. However, information about the devices of Venetian masters and their printing houses does not enable the identification of the printing house or printer of the First Printed Croatian Book, which was probably what the author intended by this analysis. The analysis in no way supports or further clarifies his views and conclusions in the book. We have already discussed the chapter *Nakon svega* and its poor conclusions in this review.

We may conclude that it is unfortunate that the author did not adhere to the book's original conception,[48] but instead rounded off a well-executed typographical analysis with an interpretation of Daniela Fattori's research and ventured into historical analyses that are in part inexpert and historically unfounded. It is difficult to escape the impression that Professor Frane Paro's book is essentially an extended presentation of Daniela Fattori's research. It is as though one of his key intentions was to present its conclusions as forcefully as possible and convince the Croatian public of the supposed misconceptions of Zvonimir Kulundžić, Josip Badalić, Julije Derossi, Helmut Presser, Eduard Hercigonja and numerous other authors who wrote in support of the Kosinj Printing House. Paro's book provides no new insights into the history of our First Printed Croatian Book, remaining instead an unsuccessful attempt to consolidate the hypothesis that the First Printed Croatian Book and the Kosinj Breviary were printed in Venice—a hypothesis that has never, including in this book, been supported by sufficient evidence and scholarly argument. To paraphrase the author, this is an important lesson for linguists, specialists in the graphic arts and all others who venture into historical analysis: all available historical sources must be taken into account, and the selective use of

[48]Paro, 2025, p. 118.

literature and sources that confirm only one's own preconceived hypotheses and views must be avoided.

The real contribution of Paro's book lies in its valuable graphic analyses of the possible technical process used to print the First Printed Croatian Book, the production of punches, matrices and type, the analysis of the devices of printers and their workshops, and printing technology in the incunabula period in general. This is certainly a contribution deserving attention and of scholarly value to future researchers.

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