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## Polish primers (textbooks for learning to read) of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries

“The ability to read has never been as useful  
as it is now because everyone learns it  
so that he can read for himself the Word of God  
and its many explanations by the scribes,  
and therefore so that he can judge for himself based on them”  
(Valentin Ickelsamer, 1527)<sup>1</sup>.

**Abstract:** From the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup>, and in parish and village schools until the 19<sup>th</sup> century, reading was taught by the syllabication method known since antiquity, also known as the alphabetic method. Many of all textbooks were catechism teachings – hence their unambiguous confessional character. The two oldest known Polish reading textbooks were intended for followers of the Augsburg Confession. However, it is very likely that the first Polish primers, containing catechism teachings following Catholic doctrine, began to be printed in the 1520s. The article discusses all currently known editions of Polish script reading textbooks published in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries.

**Keywords:** history of Polish printing in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Polish primers of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, learning to read, catechism teachings

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1 V. Ickelsamer, *Die rechte weis aufs kürztzist lesen zu lernen, wie das zum ersten erfunden, und aus der rede vermerckt worde[n] ist, sampt einen gesprech zweyer Kinder, aus dem wort Gottes*, Erfurt, Johann Loersfeld, 1527, f. A2 r: “Lesen koennen hat ynn langer zeyt nie so wol seinen nuetz gefunden, als itzo, dweyls seer ein yeder darumb lernet, das er Gottes Wort, und etlicher Gotgelerte[n] menner außlegung, darueber selbs lesen, und desto das daryn[n] urteylen moege”.

## Introduction

“Wynalazek druku i związane z nim ogromne poszerzenie kręgu potencjalnych użytkowników książki sprawiły, że koniecznością stało się opracowanie i wydawanie podręczników do nauki czytania”<sup>2</sup> [The invention of printing and the enormous expansion of the circle of potential book users made it necessary to develop and publish textbooks for teaching reading]. From the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup>, and in parochial and rural schools until the 19<sup>th</sup> century, reading was taught using the syllabication method, also known as the alphabetic method. Textbooks for learning to read are small booklets, generally 8–16 pages long. The first page is the alphabet (large and small), the following four are a set of two-, three- and four-letter syllables, and the rest are texts for practicing syllabication – only basic catechism teachings and prayers. This catechism section differentiates textbooks for different confessions: Catholic, Augsburg, Reformed, and Orthodox.

Learning to read using the syllabication method was a long and arduous process. Waldemar Osterloff (1858–1925) describes it this way:

*Musiał uczeń przede wszystkim wyuczyć się recytować alfabet, a to nie tylko zwyczajnie, od początku do końca, ale i z dołu do góry a, be, ce itd., zet, wu, u, te itd. Odbywało się to ćwiczenie ustnie przez powtarzanie, a nazywało się abecadłowaniem; ono samo zajmowało często cały rok szkolny. Wyższy stopień nauki stanowiło rozpoznawanie liter z elementarza, najpierw kolejną abecadła, a następnie na wrywki [...]. Nareszcie, często dopiero w trzecim roku nauki następowała chwila uroczysta – uczeń składał sylaby. [...] I te ćwiczenia trwały często rok i dłużej. Nareszcie następowało czytanie wyrazów, zrazu tylko jednosylabowych, następnie i wielozgłoskowych. [...] W końcu uczeń czytał pacierze, artykuły wiary, przykazania, itp., zawsze jednak sylabizując. Tylko zdolniejsi i wytrwalsi uczniowie elementarni lub kształcący się wyżej pozbywali się sylabizowania i czytali biegle. I tylko tacy uczyli się także pisać*<sup>3</sup>

[First and foremost, a student had to learn to recite the alphabet from beginning to end and from bottom to top: a, b, c, and so on, z, w, u, t, and so on. This exercise was done orally by repetition and was called spelling; it alone often occupied an entire school year. A higher level of learning was the recognition of letters from the primer, first by the spelling sequence and then at random [...]. Finally, often only in the third year of schooling came the solemn moment – the student assembled syllables. [...] And these exercises usually lasted a year or more. At last, came the reading of words, at first only monosyllabic, then multisyllabic. [...] Finally, the

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2 F. Pilarczyk, *Elementarze polskie od ich XVI-wiecznych początków do II wojny światowej; Próba monografii księgoznawczej*, Zielona Góra 2003, p. 7.

3 W. Osterloff, *Metodyka języka ojczystego w zakresie elementarnym*, 2nd ed., Warszawa 1924, p. 79. See also B. Trentowski, *Chowanna czyli system pedagogiki narodowej jako umiejętności wychowania, nauki i oświaty, słowem wykształcenia naszej młodzieży*. Vol. 2, Poznań 1842, pp. 369–370.

student reads prayers, articles of faith, commandments, etc., but they are always syllabifying. Only the more capable and persistent elementary students or those educated higher got rid of syllabication and read fluently. Moreover, only those who are so also learned to write].

In other words, most students only learned to syllabify catechism teachings and prayers. Presumably, that was the primary purpose of this study: to consolidate the truths of the Christian faith in students.

In the 1520s, V. Ickelsamer proposed improving the syllabication method by replacing the spelling with sounds. Unfortunately, the phonetic method did not find recognition among contemporaries – only in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century were attempts made to apply it more widely<sup>4</sup>, which did not change the fact that reading was taught using the syllabication method in rural and parochial schools until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The most critical studies on the oldest Polish reading textbooks are articles: Jan Pirożyński *O poznańskim drukarzu Piotrze Sextilisie i o polskich elementarzach XVI w.*<sup>5</sup> [On the Poznan printer Piotr Sextilis and Polish primers of the sixteenth century] Margarita A. Korzo *O tekstach religijnych w XVI-wiecznych elementarzach polskich*<sup>6</sup> [On religious texts in sixteenth-century Polish primers], and Wiesław Wydra's work *O najdawniejszej drukowanej książce w Poznaniu*<sup>7</sup> [On the oldest printed book in Poznan]. Franciszek Pilarczyk, in his monograph *Elementarze polskie od ich XVI-wiecznych początków do II wojny światowej*<sup>8</sup> [Polish Primers from their 16th-century beginnings to World War II], in the chapter *Przemiany struktury i treści elementarzy* [Changes in the Structure and Content of Primers] (pp. 67–85), briefly described the content of individual textbooks, however omitted confessional content. The monograph by F. Pilarczyk also contains an exhaustive bibliography of Polish primers (pp. 287–451).

## Edition overview

### Gdańsk 1538: the so-called *Abecadło polskie* [Polish Alphabet]

Michael Christoph Hanow first mentioned this primer in 1740: “W Gdańsku już w 1538 roku wydrukował on [Franciszek Rhode] w 8ce elementarz polski. Wymieniono go w drugiej części [katalogu] *Bibliothecae Schroederianae*, w 4ce,

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4 J. Zborowski, *Początkowa nauka czytania*, Warszawa 1959, pp. 20–21.

5 J. Pirożyński, *O poznańskim drukarzu Piotrze Sextilisie z Obrzycka i o polskich elementarzach XVI w.*, “*Studia Historyczne*” 1988, vol. 28, no. 1 (108), pp. 3–14.

6 M.A. Korzo, *O tekstach religijnych w XVI-wiecznych elementarzach polskich*, “*Pamiętnik Literacki*” 2015, no. 1, pp. 169–182.

7 Poznań 2003.

8 Zielona Góra 2003.

s. 279 [...]”<sup>9</sup> – In Danzig as early as 1538, he [Francis Rhode] printed a Polish primer in octavo. It is listed in the second part of the [catalog] *Bibliothecae Schroederianae*, in 4, p. 279 [...]. The following year, Christian Friedrich Gessner repeated this news in his work *Der so noethig als nuetzlichen Buchdruckerkunst und Schriftgiesserey, Dritter Theil*<sup>10</sup>. Gessner further speculated that the Danzig primer may have been a translation of Valentin Ickelsamer’s *Lesebuch*, probably having in mind the latter’s *Die rechte weis auff’s kurtzist lesen zu lernen* (Erfurt, Johannes Loersfelt, 1527, 2nd expanded ed: Marburg, Franz Rhode, 1534)<sup>11</sup>.

Until the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the *Abecadło polskie* was considered the oldest known printed Polish primer. Alodia Kawecka-Gryczowa and Krystyna Korotajowa<sup>12</sup> contested the news reported by Hanow: “Nie ulega wątpliwości, że jest to jakiś błąd, albo zawiniony przez wspomnianą *Bibliotekę*, albo przez złe odczytanie Hanowa” [There is no doubt that this is an error of some kind, either culpable of the said *Biblioteka* or a misreading of Hanow]. The authors did not reach the *Bibliotheca Schroederiana*, which turns out to be a catalog of books put up for public auction on 16 X 1719 in Danzig<sup>13</sup>. Here, on page 279 (*Libri in octavo*), we read what M.C. Hanow quoted: “4059 Eine Polnische Fibel, in Gdansk, [1]538”. Thus, one must accept that the oldest known Polish primer is precisely this print by Franciszek Rhody.

The most important argument against the existence of the *Abecadło polskie* was, according to A. Kawecka-Gryczowa and K. Korotajowa „fakt, że za życia Franciszka nie ukazał się ani jeden druk w naszym języku [...]. Gdyby Rhodowie mieli polskie czcionki, czemuż by ich nie używali? [...]” [the fact that not a single printing in our language appeared during Francis’ lifetime [...]. If the Rhodes had Polish fonts, why wouldn’t they use them?]. In the 1530s, when Polish orthography was still unstable, printing a book in Polish using German fonts was possible. As an example, one can cite *Parvus Catechismus. Maly Catechismus dla pospoliczych plebanow i kaznodzeyow* [Small Catechism] by Martin Luther, translated by Liborius Schadilka, and published in Wittenberg in 1533 or

9 M.C. Hanow, *Denkmahl der Danziger Buchdruckereyen und Buchdrucker, seit dem Jahre 1539 bis 1740. mit einigen Gedanken von künftiger Verbesserung des Druckes begleitet von Michael Christoph. Hanow. Philos. Prof. in Athenaeo Gedan. et Bibliothec*, Danzig 1740, f. E<sub>1</sub> v : “In Danzig hat er [Franciscus Rhodus] schon 1538 [...] auch eine Polnische Fibel in 8vo gedruckt. Sie wird angeführet in dem andern Theil der *Bibliothecae Schroederianae* in 4to p. 279 [...]”.

10 Leipzig 1741, p. 469.

11 J. Pirożyński, op. cit., p. 10.

12 A. Kawecka-Gryczowa, K. Korotajowa, *Drukarze dawnej Polski od XV do XVIII w.* Vol. 4: *Pomorze*, Wrocław 1962, pp. 372–373.

13 G. Tenter, *Bibliothecae Schroederianae Sive Catalogi Librorum, In lingua quavis & facultate extantium, Viri Magnifici quondam & Maxime Strenui, Domini Georgii Schroederi [...] Pars Posterior, quam Auctionem Publicam, Legibus consuetis, In Porta, communiter dicta Viridi (Auffm grünen Thor) MDCCXLIX. d. 16. octobr., Gedani 1719.*

1534<sup>14</sup>. Ignacy Warmiński discussed the content of this catechism in detail, and Lucjan Malinowski discussed its orthography<sup>15</sup>. According to L. Malinowski, the only Polish letter used to print this catechism was “ą”. Unfortunately, neither Warmiński nor Malinowski included any pictures of the pages of the catechism, and the catechism burned down in 1944 along with the Krasieński Library. Thus, we do not know what graphic form the “ą” had in this printing.

The M. Luther’s Catechism in Schadilka’s translation was printed in 300 copies. It was likely that the text for the catechism part of the *Abecadło polskie* was taken from it, imitating the orthography of this catechism as well.

It is worth noting that Rhode had experience as a printer of primers. In Marburg, in 1533, he published (reissued?) a primer compiled by Ickelsamer based on the *Lesebuch* mentioned above (a methodical manual for teachers), the full title of which is *Das Alphabetbuechlin, mit silben und namen. Auch gemein zifer und zal, sampt den text des kleinen Catechismi. Als Zehn gebot. Der glaube. Der Tauff. Vater unser. [Vom Abentmal Christi]*<sup>16</sup>. *Benedicite. Gratias. Ander Gratias. Magnificat. Benedictus. Nunc dimittis. Verheissung Chri[sti]. Pau Ro. 3. Ephe. 2. Johan. 2* (Figs. 1, 2). The catechism part of this primer is based on Martin Luther’s *Small Catechism*. On the other hand, Ickelsamer’s proposed method of learning to read was the phonetic method, an improved syllabication method.

### Königsberg 1547: Jan Seklucjan’s primer

This textbook is the introductory part (f. A<sub>6</sub>r–D<sub>2</sub>r) of the catechism arranged by Seklucjan and published at Jan Weinreich in Königsberg in 1547 under the title: *Catechismvs to iest, nauka naprzedniejsza, y potrzebniejsza, ku zbawyenyu, o wierze krzescianskiey. Przes Iana Seclvciana Nowo wydany*<sup>17</sup> (Fig. 3).

The layout of the primer is as follows: *Argumentum or Summa tich kxiązek* (in verse and prose, f. A<sub>6</sub>r)<sup>18</sup>, syllables (f. A<sub>6</sub>v–B<sub>2</sub>r), *Dziesiecioro przikazanie* [Ten Commandments] (in prose and verse, f. B<sub>2</sub>r–B<sub>3</sub>v), *wszystkiego przykazania Bożego* [All God’s Commandments] (*Przykazanie miłości*, [Commandment of Love] f. B<sub>3</sub>v), *Dwanascie członkow wiari krzescianskiei* (*Credo*, f. B<sub>4</sub>r–B<sub>4</sub>v), *Modlitwa pańska* [Lord’s Prayer] (f. B<sub>4</sub>v–C<sub>1</sub>r), *Zdrowas Maria* [Hail Mary]

14 I. Warmiński, *Andrz. Samuel i Jan Seklucjan*, Poznań 1906, pp. 179–185.

15 L. Malinowski, *Ślady dyjalektyczne w oznaczaniu samogłosek nosowych w kilku zabytkach języka polskiego wieku XV i XVI*, „Rozprawy i Sprawozdania z Posiedzeń Wydziału Filologicznego Akademii Umiejętności” 1880, vol. 7, pp. 319–349.

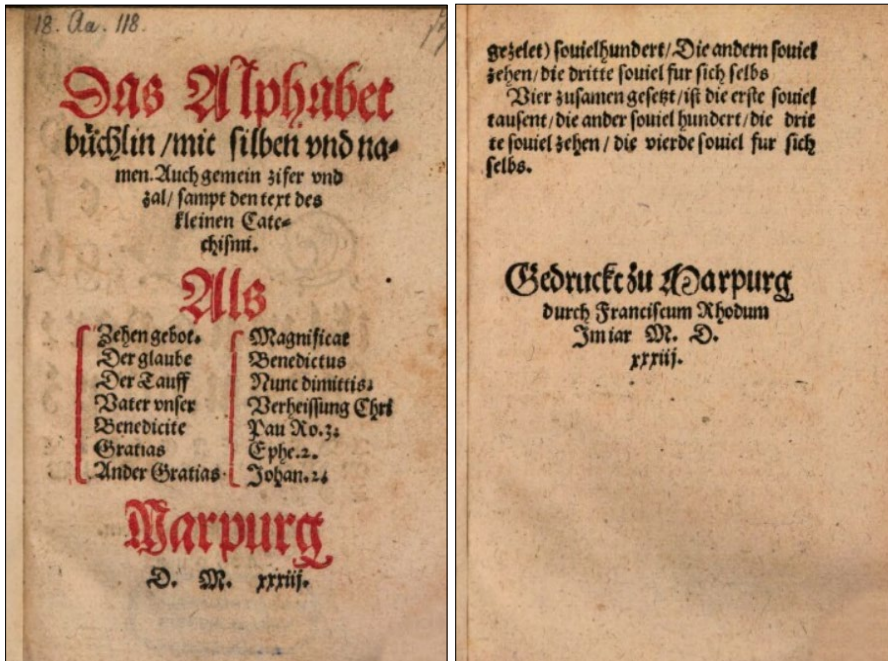
16 Omitted from the title page.

17 Copy in the Czartoryski Library in Kraków, call no. 1160 I Cim., lacking f. B<sub>1</sub>.

18 The rhyming part refers to the whole catechism underneath the text which is a short preface to the primer, inc: “Kazdy to baczy że pysmo polskie iest trudne do czytania [...]”.

(f. C<sub>1</sub>r–C<sub>1</sub>v), *O swiȧtosciach koscielnych* [On the Sacraments of the Church] (*O swiȧtosci chrztu swietego*, *O swiȧtosci oltarza*, [On Baptism, On Sacrament of the Altar] f. C<sub>1</sub>v–C<sub>2</sub>v), *O kluczach koscielnych to iest o rosgrzeszeniu* [On Church's Keys, i.e. on Absolution] (f. C<sub>3</sub>r)<sup>19</sup>.

Figs. 1, 2. *Das Alphabuechlin*, Marburg, Franz Rhode, 1533, title page and f. C<sub>8</sub> recto (Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Wien)



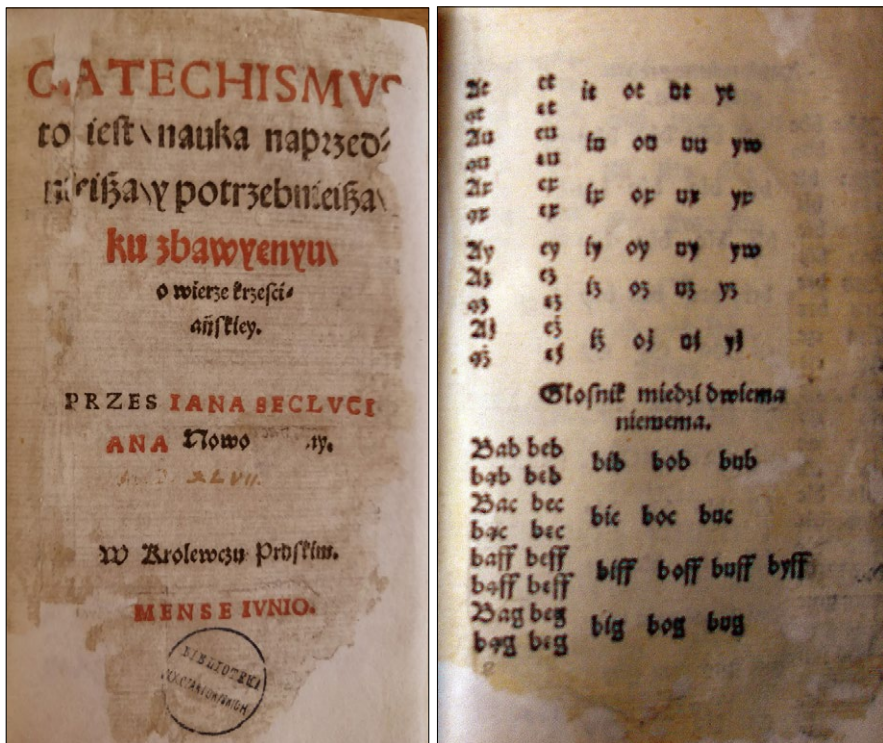
From f. C<sub>3</sub>r–D<sub>2</sub>r follows a section that can be called domestic shepherding (the daily religious duties of the host overseeing the spirituality of the household and servants). In this part, J. Seklucjan included four prayers, the first two of which, *Wstawszy rano* [..., inc.:] “Dziekuian [sic] tobie Boze oicze niebieski przez Christussa syna twego iedine[g]o [...]” and *Idąc spać* [..., inc.:] “Wszchemogąci oicze niebiesky dziekuyem tobie [...]”, are a translation from M. Luther’s *Haustafel*. The following two prayers [*Przed jedzeniem*, inc.:] “Wszchemogąci miłosciwy panie, który z wielkiego myłosierdzya twe[g]o [...]” and [*Po jedzeniu*, inc.:] “Wszchemogący miłosciwy panie Boże. Dziękuiiem [sic] twej swietey miłosci [...]” might have been arranged by Seklucjan himself.

Let us take a closer look at the methodological part of the primer. It differs markedly from later Polish primers: the first four pages (f. A<sub>6</sub>v–A<sub>8</sub>r) contain

19 I. Warmiński, op. cit., pp. 205–206.

vowels and combinations of two-letter syllables (vowel + consonant, consonant + vowel). Half a page (f. A<sub>8</sub>r) is occupied by *Głosnik między dwiema niemema* (i.e., a vowel between two consonants, Fig. 4), and on the next page (f. A<sub>8</sub>v) begin *Two mieme [sic] przed głosnikiem* [two consonants before a vowel]. Unfortunately, the copy of the Czartoryski Library (the only surviving one) lacks page B<sub>1</sub>, which contains the further part of the two consonants before the vowel and begins the part of the three consonants before the vowel, ending on the surviving page B<sub>2</sub>r. Such a presentation of the methodological material indicates that Seklucjan modeled himself on Ickelsamer's primer.

Figs. 3, 4. *Catechismus to iest, nauka naprzędniejsza, y potrzebniejsza, ku zbawienyu, o wierze krzescianskiej. Przes Iana Seclvciana Nowo wydany*, Königsberg, Jan Weinriech, 1547, title page and f. A<sub>8</sub>r (Czartoryski Library in Kraków)



Seklucjan's primer, like the *Abecadło polskie*, was intended for followers of the Augsburg confession. The inclusion in the catechism section of the teachings *O kluczach niebieskich i rozgrzeszeniu* [On the Keys of Heaven and Absolution] indicates that the author's model was Andreas Osiander and his *Ein kurtzer begriff der hauptstueck, so in den Catechismus, das ist in die kinderleer*

*gehoeren*<sup>20</sup>. Seklucjan supplemented the catechism teachings recommended by Osiander with the rhymed *Dekalog, Summę wszystkiego przykazania Bożego* [Decalogue, the Summa of All God's Commandments], and, surprisingly, the *Zdrowaś Maria* [Hail Mary], which Lutherans rejected. I. Warmiński commented on the inclusion of this prayer in the catechism: "Dodał też [Seklucjan], czego wprzód nie uczynił [21] pierwszą połowę [22] *Pozdrowienia anielskiego*; może w nim przemogła dawna polska natura [...]; może też raczej wzgląd na polski lud, z którego zwyczajem, mianowicie mocno się liczone, by go tam łatwiej dla nowego ruchu pozyskać" [He [Seklucjan] also added what he had not done before, the first half of *the Angelic Salutation*; perhaps the old Polish nature was overcome in him [...]; or maybe rather consideration of the Polish people, whose custom, namely, was firmly taken into account, to win them over more efficiently for the new movement there]<sup>23</sup>.

Poznań 1556: *Nauka ku czytaniu Dziatkam małym pisma polskiego*  
[Learning to read Polish script to small children]

J. Pirożyński found this primer (Figs. 5, 6) in the collection of Herzog August Bibliothek in Wolfenbüttel (call no. 63, Grammatica)<sup>24</sup>. This four-card print not only turned out to be the oldest surviving independent Polish primer but also the first (and so far only) known product of the printing house of Piotr Sextilis in Poznań. Wiesław Wydra wrote more extensively about P. Sextilis, his printing house, and the primer in the monograph mentioned earlier, while M.A. Korzo<sup>25</sup> wrote about the catechism texts contained therein.

The layout of the primer is as follows: the alphabet and syllables, followed by the catechism section: *Modlitwa Páńska, Pozdrowienie Mariey, Wiará Krzescziańska (Credo), Dziesięćoro Boże Przikázanie, Summa Zakonu (Przykazanie miłości), Uczinki miłobierdne, Siedem grzechow smiertedlných, Grzechy ktore pomstý zawždy od Boga żadaia, Sziedm darow Ducha świetego, Osmioro blogosławieństwo, Modlithwa o swietým Duchu, Druga Modlithwá [o świetým Duchu], Magnificat, Psalm Dawidow [130, De profundis]* [The Lord's Prayer, The Salutation of Maria, The Christian Faith (Creed), The Ten Commandments of God, The Summa of the Law (The Commandment of Love), Acts of mercy, The

20 Nürnberg, [Johann Petreius], 1531.

21 We are referring here to the first catechism of Seklucjan, published in 1545 in Königsberg; for more on this catechism, see I. Warmiński, op. cit., pp. 185–187.

22 I. Warmiński did not take into account that Pope Pius VI did not introduce the second part of the *Angelic Salutation* until 1566.

23 I. Warmiński, op. cit., p. 206.

24 J. Pirożyński, op. cit., p. 3.

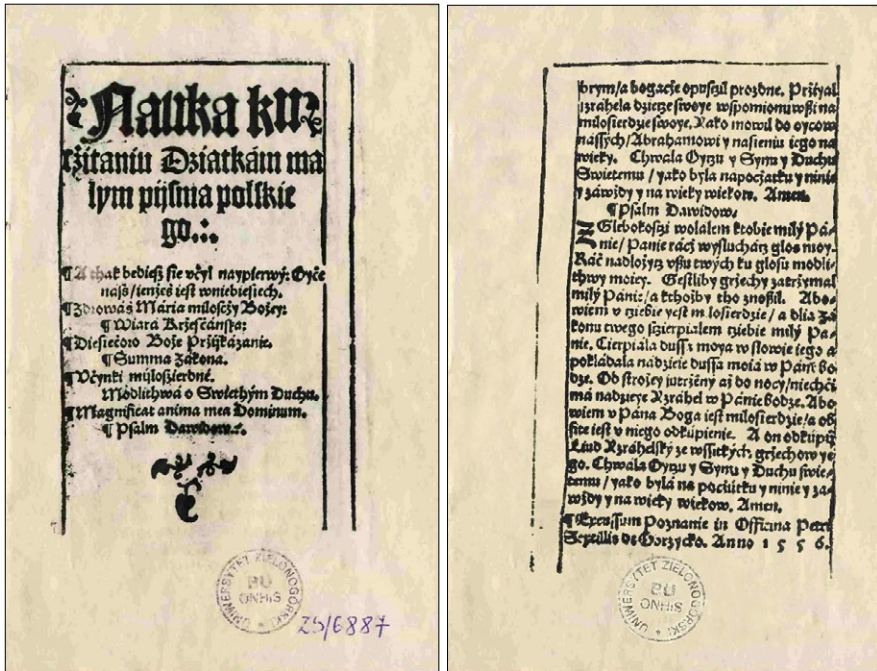
25 M.A. Korzo, op. cit., p. 172.



seven deadly sins, Sins that always demand God's vengeance, The seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, The eight blessings, The Prayer on the Holy Spirit, Another prayer [on the Holy Spirit], Magnificat, Psalm of David [130, De profundis]].

One has to agree with W. Wydra's opinion that the textbook was intended for teaching Czech children, perhaps also German<sup>26</sup>. Due to its specific orthography, which does not consider nasals, it is difficult to imagine its usefulness for Polish children.

Figs. 5, 6. *Nauka ku czitaniu Dziatkam malym pisma polskiego*, Poznań, Piotr Sextilis, 1556, title page and f. A<sub>4</sub>v (Herzog August Bibliothek, Wolfenbüttel)



Wrocław c. 1570: *Nauka krótka ku czytaniu pisma Polskiego*  
[Short lesson on reading Polish script]

A damaged proof copy of this primer (Fig. 7) was excavated in the Jagiellonian Library from an unknown binding by Żegota Pauli. Karol Estreicher described this primer: “Druk z XVI w., kolumny Łazarza w ramach” [Print from the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Lazarus columns in a frame]. And so it has remained. J. Pirożyński wrote: “wydrukowany w drugiej połowie XVI w. in octavo w Krakowie w Drukarni Łazarzowej Jana Januszowskiego” [printed in the second half of the sixteenth

26 W. Wydra, op. cit., p. 21.

century in octavo in Cracow in the Lazarus Printing House of Jan Januszowski], and further, “Data tego druku nie jest na razie znana i dopiero bliższe badania nad zasobem typograficznym tłoczni Januszowskiego mogłyby pozwolić na określenie czasu wydania tego podręcznika”<sup>27</sup> [The date of this printing has yet to be discovered, and only closer research into the typographic stock of Januszowski’s printing house could allow us to determine the time of publication of this manual]. *Katalog poloników XVI wieku Biblioteki Jagiellońskiej*<sup>28</sup> describes the printer similarly. However, in the resource of the Drukarnia Łazarzowa [Lazarus Printing House], neither such frames nor fonts of the typeface were used to print the primer. Marta Burbianka’s monograph, *Produkcja typograficzna Scharffenbergów we Wrocławiu*<sup>29</sup>, leads to the right trail. Here, in the illustration section, there is a reproduction of the title page of the prayer book *Feuerzeug christlicher Andacht*, printed in Krysipin Scharffenberg’s printing house in 1564 (Fig. 8). This is undoubtedly an identical frame as in the primer from the Jagiellonian Library. The printing year of this primer can be cautiously determined to be around 1565–1570<sup>30</sup>.

A small fragment of the last page – a woodcut depicting feathers from a rooster’s tail – allows inclusion of this primer among the so-called Hahnenfibel (primers with a rooster), which were very popular in the German language area. If the dating of the Breslau primer is correct, it is the oldest known primer from this group<sup>31</sup>.

The primer’s textual part is based on A. Osiander’s *Kurtzer Begriff* (which considers the doctrine of the church keys) and M. Luther’s *Haustafel* (which is translated as *Pasterstwo domowe* [Home Shepherding]). Thus, the manual was intended to serve followers of the Augsburg Confession<sup>32</sup>. The surviving part of the *Pasterstwo domowe* includes a prayer before bed, two prayers before meals (the first is verses 15 and 16 from Psalm 144)<sup>33</sup>, and two after meals<sup>34</sup> (the last three prayers are preserved in fragments).

The fact that the methodological part of the primer begins with the alphabet leads us to assume that this textbook used syllabication, thus breaking with

27 J. Pirożyński, op. cit., p. 11.

28 Vol. 2: *M–Z*, Kraków 1994, item 1708.

29 Wrocław 1968.

30 M. Burbianka, *Produkcja typograficzna Scharffenbergów we Wrocławiu*, Wrocław 1968 points out on p. 96 another printing by Krysipin Scharffenberg, which used an identical frame, Donat’s Grammar, published in 1565.

31 According to Josef Benzing, the oldest known Hahnenfibel was printed in Frankfurt-on-Oder around 1575 at Johann Eichorn’s printing (J. Benzing, *Zur Entstehung der Hahnenfibel*, “Philobiblon” 1959, vol 3, p. 14). At the same time, let us add that the only copy of this primer, once located in the Library of the Marienkirche in Frankfurt n/O, has disappeared.

32 M.A. Korzo, op. cit., pp. 172–173.

33 In *Haustafel: Das Benedicite*.

34 In *Haustafel: Das Gratias*.

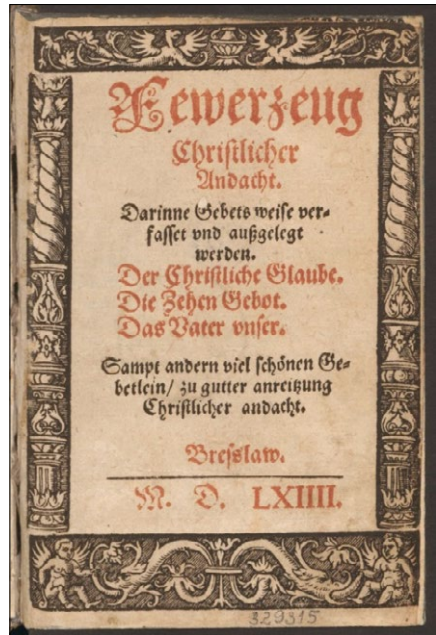
Ickelsamer's phonetic method, which was used by earlier Protestant primers: the so-called *Abecadlo polskie* (1538) and Jan Seklucjan's primer (1547).

Some orthographic peculiarities characterize this edition. One concern is the nasal *q*, often reinforced in endings by the notation *qm*. Here are some examples: *piszqm*, *zemnqm*, *sqm*. Perhaps these peculiarities have been removed in the correction.

Fig. 7. *Nauka krotka ku czytaniu pisma Polskiego*, Wrocław, Kryspin Scharffenberg, ca. 1570?, title page and fragment of the last page verso (Jagiellonian Library)



Fig. 8. *Fewerzeug Christlicher Andacht*, Wrocław, Kryspin Scharffenberg, 1564, title page (Wrocław University Library)



Königsberg c. 1578: *Nauka krotka ku czytaniu pisma polska*<sup>35</sup>  
[Short lesson on reading Polish script]

The layout and text of this primer printed at Jerzy Osterberger's (Fig. 9) is very similar to the Sextilis primer. The prayers are arranged in the same order; the whole closes with the *Magnificat* and *Psalm 130* in the translation

35 A copy of this primer is in Trinity College, Cambridge. It was found there in 1934 by Stanisław Kot, see L. Tomanek, *Tajemnice Biblioteki Bodleyańskiej. Wywiad z prof. drem Stanisławem Kotem*, "Kuryer Literacko-Naukowy" 1934, vol. 11, no. 36, pp. I-II; the printer (Jerzy Osterberger) was identified by A. Kawecka-Gryczowa, the probable year of printing (ca. 1578) according to J. Benzing, see E.P. Tyrrell, J.S.G. Simmons, *Slavonic books before 1700 in Cambridge libraries*, "Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society" 1963, vol. 3, no. 5, pp. 395–396.



of Walenty Wróbel, with the blessing for St. Anne omitted from the *Angelic Salutation*. The only significant difference between the *Sextilis* primer and the Königsberg primer is in the latter: the *Decalogue* is quoted after *Exodus* 20. 1–17 (with the translation of the *Decalogue* being different from both the Leopoldan Bible and Brest Bible). The Old Testament *Decalogue* indicates that the manual was intended to serve followers of the Swiss (Evangelical-Reformed) or Bohemian confessions.

Figs. 9, 10. *Nauka krotka ku czytaniu pisma polska*, Königsberg, Georg Osterberger, ca. 1578, title page and f. A<sub>8</sub> verso (Cambridge, Trinity College)



*The Magnificat* and *Psalm 130* are the exact translations found in *Sextilis*' primer. However, there are minor differences between the two editions. In the *Magnificat* in *Sextilis*' "Iż mi uczynił wiele który mocny jest", "Przyjął Izrahela dziecię swoje", "Jako mówił do ojców naszych" [And that He has done unto me many things which are mighty, He accepted Israhel His child, As He spoke unto our fathers], in the King's primer respectively: "Iż mi uczynił rzeczy wielkie który możny jest", "Przyjął Izraela dzieciątko swoje", "Jako mówił jest do ojców naszych" [That he hath done great things unto me which is mighty, He hath accepted Israel his child, As he spake unto our fathers]. In *Psalm 130* in *Sextilis* (according to the translation of W. Wróbel): "Jestliby

grzechy zatrzymał miły Panie, a któżby to znosił” [If sins halt the kind Lord, and who will bear it] in the King’s primer: “Jeśli będziesz raczył do nas baczyć występki nasze miły Panie, i któż wytrwa?” [If Thou wilt deign to baulk our transgressions dear Lord, and who will endure?]. There are two more differences from *Sextilis*: in the Königsberg primer, only one *Prayer to the Holy Spirit* is included. Moreover, on the back of the last page of the primer, there is a full-page woodcut depicting a rooster on a hexagonal footstool (Fig. 10). Thus, this is the second Polish primer of the *Hahnenfibel* genus.

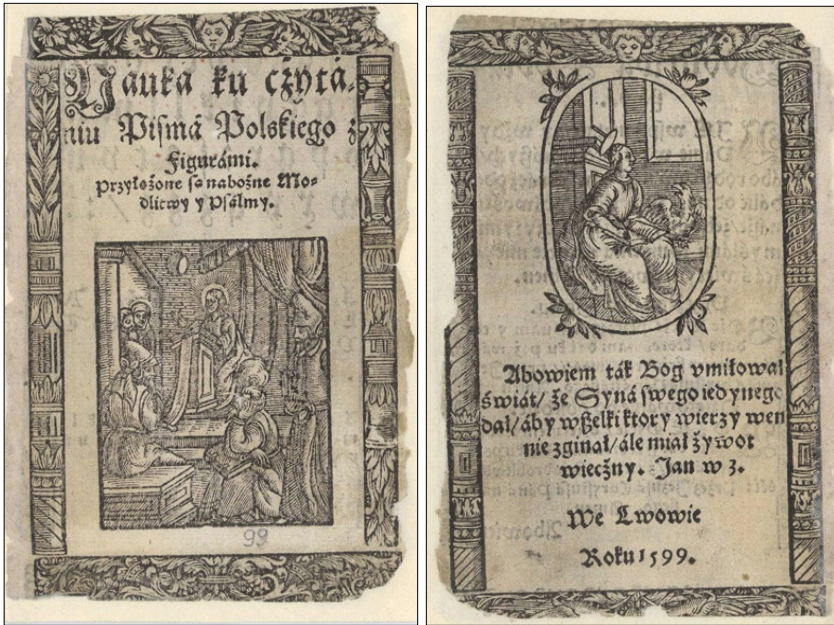
Lviv 1599: *Nauka ku czytaniu Pisma Polskiego z figurami. Przyłożone są nabożne Modlitwy y Psalmy* [Teaching Towards Read Polish Script with Figures. Appended are Devotional Prayers and Psalms]

A copy of this primer printed at Matthias Bernat (Fig. 11) is maintained in the National Library of St. Cyril and Methodius in Sofia (call no. Rπ 599.1). It counts ten unnumbered pages in 12°. Originally, this primer had 12 pages – the Sofia copy lacks f. A<sub>6</sub> and A<sub>7</sub>. The cards A<sub>1</sub>–A<sub>5</sub> and A<sub>8</sub> and A<sub>9</sub> are identical (except for the titles of two prayers<sup>36</sup>) to the *Sextilis* primer, i.e., we can assume that the text on the missing cards A<sub>6</sub> and A<sub>7</sub> was also identical. The last three cards are new texts: *Psalm L.* (of unknown translation), *Modlitwa do Pana Boga za wszystkie lud*, *Modlitwa Tobiaszowa*, *Przeżegnanie Stołu*, *Dziękowanie po obiedzie* [Prayer to the Lord God for All the People; Tobit’s Prayer; Crossing the Table; Thanksgiving After Dinner]; on the back of the last card is an oval woodcut depicting St. John the Evangelist, with a quote from his Gospel (3.16) below it: “Abowiem tak Bóg umiłował świat, że syna swego jedynego dał [...]” [For God so loved the world that he gave his only son [...]], under this colophon: In Lviv of the year 1599 (Fig. 12). The only difference between the Lviv primer and the *Sextilis* (aside from the additions mentioned above) concerns the *Angelic Salutation*: the line “Święta Maryjo, Matko Boża [...]” [Holy Mary, Mother of God] was added to the Lviv text, incorporated into the prayer in 1566 by order of Pius V. Also new are the illustrations in the catechism section of the primer (five woodcuts, including one on the title page).

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36 At *Sextilis*: *Pozdrowienie Mariej*, *Wiará Krześcijańska*, in the Lviv edition: *Pozdrowienie Panny Máryey*, *Dwánaście członkow Wiáry Chrześcijańskiej*.

Figs. 11, 12. *Nauka ku czytaniu Pisma Polskiego z figurami*, Lviv, Maciej Bernat, 1599, title page and f. A<sub>12</sub>v (National Library of Sts. Cyril and Methodius in Sofia)



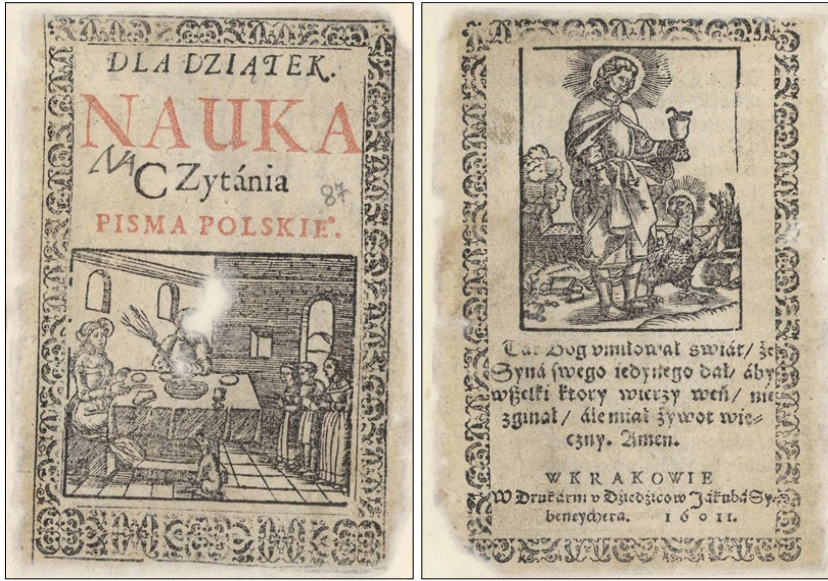
Kraków 1611: *Dla Dzieciak. Nauka Czytania Pisma Polskie[g]o*  
[For the Little Children. Learning to Read the Polish Script]

The only copy of this primer printed at Dziedzice Kakuba Siebeneichera [Jacob Siebeneicher's Heirs] (Fig. 13, 14) is also in the National Library of St. Cyril and Methodius in Sofia (call no. Rπ 611.1), in a single block with the Lviv primer. The first catechism part of this primer from the *Lord's Prayer* to *Psalm 130* coincides with the Sextilis edition (except for the titles of two prayers<sup>37</sup>). In contrast, the second part includes *Psalm 50*, *Przeżegnanie Stołu*, *Dziękowanie po obiedzie*, *Modlitwa Tobiaszowa* [Psalm 50, Crossing the Table, Thanksgiving After Dinner, and the Tobit's Prayer]. The text of the second part is consistent with the Lviv 1599 edition, including the quotation from the Gospel of St. John on the verso of the last page. The catechism part of the primer is decorated with five woodcuts.

37 At Sextilis: *Pozdrowienie Maryey, Wiara Krzesczianska* in the Kraków edition: *Pozdrowienie p. Maryey, Credo Apostolskie*.



Figs. 13, 14. *Dla Dzieatek. Nauka Czytania Pisma Polskie[go]*, Kraków, Dziedzice Jakuba Siebeneichera, 1611, title page and f. A<sub>12</sub>v (National Library of Sts. Cyril and Methodius in Sofia)



Unknown printer from the early 17<sup>th</sup> century: *Nauka ku czytaniu Pisma Polskiego z figurami. Przyłożone są Nabożne Modlitwy y Psalmi* [Teaching Towards Reading the Polish Script with Figures. Appended are Devotional Prayers and Psalms].

A damaged proof copy of this primer is in the Diocesan Museum in Sandomierz. The circumstances of its acquisition are unknown. Cards A<sub>1-4</sub> and A<sub>6-8</sub> have survived; card A<sub>5</sub> is missing, while f. A<sub>9</sub> (the last one) is preserved in a faint fragment. On this fragment of f. A<sub>9</sub> v, one can see the digit 6 with a dot (Fig. 15), perhaps the end of the manual's publication date. Unfortunately, it was not possible to determine the printer who embossed this primer. Some clues to dating are provided by the ornate initial Q (the inverted Q was used instead of the O in the first word of the *Lord's Prayer*, Fig. 16). The initial is distinctive: an image of a monkey occupies the middle field of the letter. A similar but not identical initial was used in the Kraków printing houses of Maciej Jędrzejowczyk<sup>38</sup> and

38 For example, in Maciej Blosius, *Academica Deifica Trias* [...], 1619, f. A<sub>2</sub>r; Aleksander Kośliński, *Conclusiones Theologicae* [...], 1626, f. A<sub>2</sub>r; Gabriel Ochocki, *Quaestio de Phrenitide* [...], 1629, f. A<sub>2</sub>r. The author thanks Ms. Ewa Kosmowska of the University of Warsaw Library for pointing out the prints in which the mentioned initial appears.

Franciszek Cezary<sup>39</sup> in 1619–1626. It may have been used by Jan Szeliga in his printing houses, successively in Dobromil, Jarosław, and Lviv.

Figs. 15, 16. *Nauka ku czytaniu Pisma Polskiego z figurami*, s. l. & a. (Kraków? 1616? 1626?), title page, a fragment of last page verso, f. A<sub>3</sub>v (Diocesan Museum in Sandomierz)



The catechism section includes *Modlitwa Pańska*, *Pozdrowienie Panny Mary[ey]*, *Dwanaście członków [wiary chrześcijańskiej]*<sup>40</sup> (f. A<sub>3</sub>v do A<sub>4</sub>v), *Magnificat*, *Psalm Dawidow 130*, *Psalm 50*, *Przeżegnanie Stolu* (f. A<sub>6</sub>r do A<sub>8</sub>v) [The Lord's Prayer, The Salutation of the Virgin Mary, The Twelve Members [of the Christian Faith], The Magnificat, Psalm of David 130, Psalm 50, Crossing the Table].

There are some differences between the catechism texts of this edition and the *Sextilis* editions, Lviv 1599 and Krakow 1611. The blessing for St. Anne has been removed from the *Angelic Salutation*, and the text of the *Magnificat* and the psalms *Miserere mei Deus* (Ps 50) and *De Profundis* (Ps 130) have been replaced with translations by Jakub Wujek<sup>41</sup>. *Przeżegnanie stołu* consists

<sup>39</sup> For example, in: John Fox, *Oratio Gratulatoria In Adventum [...] Martini Szyskowski*, 1617, f. A<sub>r</sub><sub>2</sub>.

<sup>40</sup> Only the title has been preserved.

<sup>41</sup> *Magnificat* according to the text in *Nowy Testament* (1593, p. 191, mistakenly labeled 192), *Miserere mei Deus* and *De Profundis* according to the text in *Psalterz Dawidów* (1594, pp. 94 and 235, respectively). Remarkably, these translations differ slightly from the texts in the revised 1599 edition of Wujek's *Bible*. Surprisingly, all later primers contain the original 16<sup>th</sup>-century translations of the *Magnificat* and *Psalms*. The only exception is *Psalm 50* in the 1633 Vilnius primer.



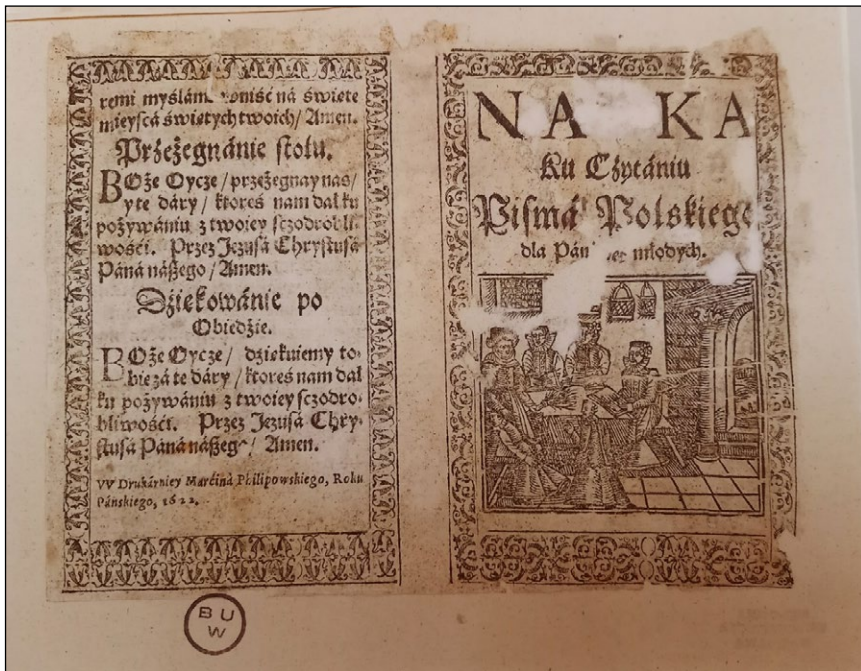
of verses 15–16 of *Psalm 144* (an unknown translation) and a short prayer with a text similar to earlier editions. One can guess that on card A<sub>9r</sub>, there was a *Dziękowanie po obiedzie* and some other unidentified prayer.

On the verso of that card, there is some illustration and colophon.

Kraków 1622: *Nauka Ku Czytaniu Pismo Polskiego dla Pánienek młodych*<sup>42</sup> [Teaching Towards Reading Polish Script for Young Ladies]

Four cards from this primer printed at Marcin Filipowski's (Fig. 17) are stored in the collection of the University of Warsaw Library (call no. SD 712.175). The primer probably originally consisted of 12 cards, of which A<sub>1</sub> (title card), A<sub>4</sub>, A<sub>9</sub>, and A<sub>12</sub> (the last one) have survived.

Fig. 17. *Nauka Ku Czytaniu Pisma Polskiego dla Pánienek młodych*, Kraków, Marcin Filipowski, 1622, verso of last card and title page (University of Warsaw Library)



A<sub>1v</sub> card prints the alphabet, A<sub>4r</sub>-A<sub>4v</sub> *Modlitwa Pańska* [the Lord's Prayer], A<sub>9r</sub>-A<sub>9v</sub> *the Magnificat*, and the beginning of Psalm 130. On A<sub>12</sub>, there are: *Modlitwa do Pana Boga za wszytek lud*, *Modlitwa Tobiaszowa*, *Przeżegnanie Stołu*, *Dziękowanie po obiedzie* [Prayer to the Lord God for All the People,

42 F. Pilarczyk, op. cit., does not note.

Tobit's Prayer, Crossing the Table, and Thanksgiving After Dinner]. As one can see, the last card repeats precisely the text of the 1599 primer; perhaps the rest was identical to it as well.

Vilnius 1633: *Dla Dziełek Nauka Czytania Pismá Polskiego*  
[For Little Children Learning to Read Polish Scripture]<sup>43</sup>

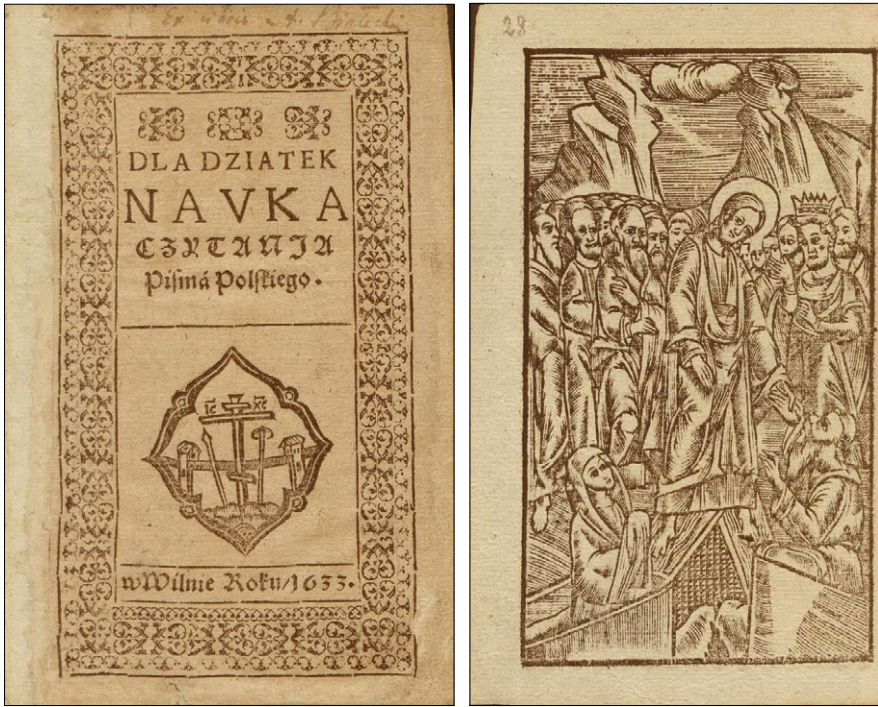
Drukarnia Bractwa Św. Ducha [Brotherhood of the Holy Spirit Printing House] pressed this textbook (Figs. 18, 19) for Orthodox believers. Hence, it differs in form (11 full-page illustrations on verso pages) and content from the textbooks discussed earlier. Common elements with previous editions are the alphabet and a set of syllables for learning to read, as well as *Modlitwa Pańska*, *Dziesięcioro Boże Przykazanie*, *Summa Zakonu*, *Uczynki miłosierne*, *Siedem grzechów śmiertelnych*, *Grzechy które zawsze pomsty od Boga żądają*, *Siedm darów Ducha świętego*, *Ośmioro błogosławieństwa* [the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments of God, the Summa of the Law, the Works of Mercy, the Seven Deadly Sins, the Sins Which Always Demand Vengeance of God, the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit, the Eight Blessings], and finally *Psalm 50* in Jakub Wujek's translation (as in the Kraków edition of 1611). The text of the *Modlitwa do P. Mariey* (*Angelic Salutation*) follows the wording adopted in Orthodox catechisms<sup>44</sup> *Wyznanie Prawosławney Wiary, pierwszego y wtorego powszechnego Concilium* [the Confession of the Orthodox Faith, the First's and Second's Universal Concilium] is the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Symbol, without the filioque, of course. Added to these catechism teachings are more than a dozen other prayers, such as *Modlitwa do S. Troyce*, two *Modlitwy poranne S. Makaryusza*, *Modlitwy, gdy się spać masz położyć* [the Prayer to St. Trinity, two Morning Prayers of S. Macarius, and Prayers When You Should Go to Bed].

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43 Copies of this print can be found in the Jagiellonian Library (call no. 51965 I) and in Stefanyk National Scientific Library in Lviv (call no. CT-74868); a facsimile of it was published in Kraków by Pruszyński in 1880 in 16 copies.

44 Boża Porodzicielka Panno bądź pozdrowiona y uweselona Maria, Pan Bog z tobą, Błogosławionaś ty między niewiastami, y błogosławiony owoc żywota twojego, abowiem urodziłaś Zbawiciela duszom naszym [Blessed art thou among women, blessed art thou among women, blessed is the fruit of thy womb, for thou hast given birth to a Savior for our souls].

Figs. 18, 19. *Dla Dziełek Nauka Czytania Pismá Polskiego*, Wilno, Druk. Bractwa św. Ducha, 1633, title page and f. B,v (Jagiellonian Library in Krakow)



Kraków 1657: *Nauka Ku Czytaniu Pismá Polskiego dla młodych Pánienek* [Teaching Towards Reading Polish Script for Young Ladies]<sup>45</sup>

This primer significantly expanded the catechism part (Fig. 20); the print runs to 16 pages in octavo. First of all, *Siedm Sakramentów Kościelnych* and *Pięć Przykazań Kościelnych* [the Seven Sacraments of the Church and the Five Commandments of the Church] were included in the catechism part, as well as several new prayers; the primer ends with *Litania o Naświętszej Pannie Mariety Loretańskiej, Dla szczęśliwej śmierci otrzymania* [the Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Loretto, For Receiving a Happy Death]. This primer pattern persisted until the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Such content is, for example, *Nauka Czytania Pismá Polskiego, dla málých Dziełek* (Kraków 1710, copy in the Russian State Library in Moscow, Fig. 21), an untitled primer published in Gdańsk in the printing house of Jan Frederick Bartels, active in 1761–1771

<sup>45</sup> A copy is in the Russian State Archives of Ancient Documents in Moscow (call no. 2843) from the collection of the Synodal Printing House Library in Moscow.



(copy in the Jagiellonian Library, call no. 586064 I), *Nauka Czytania Pismo Polskiego. Teraz z przydatkiem nowego Katechizmu dla Małych Dziełek Zebrana* (Kraków 1791, print. Anna Dziedzicka and successors, copy in the Jagiellonian Library, call no. 51594 I)<sup>46</sup>.

Fig. 20. *Nauka Ku Czytaniu Pismá Polskiego dla młodych Pánienek*, Kraków, 1657, title page (Russian State Archive of Historical Records in Moscow)

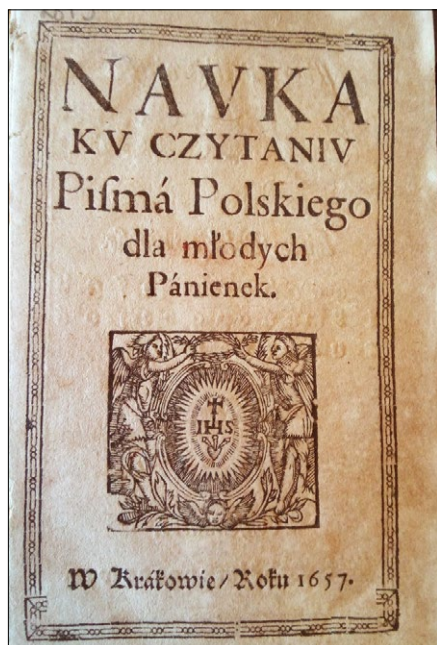
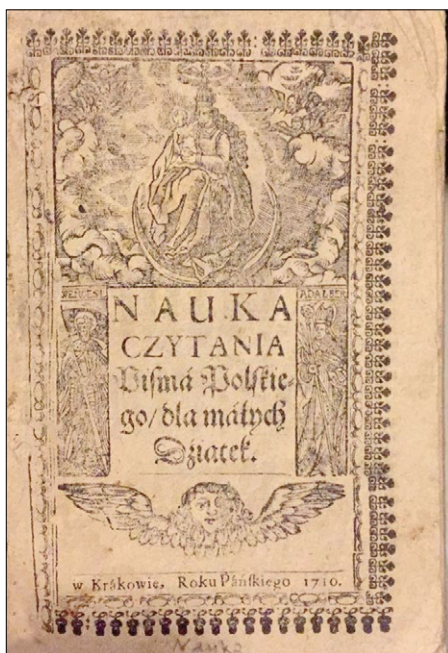


Fig. 21. *Nauka Czytania Pismá Polskiego, dla málých Dziełek*, Kraków, 1710, title page (Russian State Library in Moscow)



## Conclusions

The striking similarity, almost sameness, of the Poznań (1556), Königsberg (circa 1578), Lviv (1599), and later primers points to their single common source. It is not easy to assume that it was the Sextilis primer, a print from an ephemeral niche printing house. It should be considered that this primer is a reprint of an earlier, now unknown Polish edition, most likely from Kraków.

<sup>46</sup> The first known edition of *Nauki czytania* with the appendage of the *Katechizm dla málých dzieci* was published in 1769 in Kraków in the printing house of Kazimierz Jakowski. Unfortunately, only two pages, the first and last, have survived from this printing (Ossolineum Library, call no. 13653 II).

This assumption is the only way to explain the similarity (sameness) mentioned above in the primer texts.

The first verse of the *Lord's Prayer*; "Oyče nass, **ienżeś** iest w niebiesiech" [Our Father, **Thou are** in the heavens], quoted on the title page of the Poznań primer<sup>47</sup>, indicates the original of the early sixteenth-century used by Sextilis. On the other hand, the presence in the primer of *Psalms 130 (129) De Profundis*, translated by W. Wróbel, shifts the date of Sextilis' original printing to the 1640s.<sup>48</sup> This does not, however, rule out earlier dating of the first primers, as they may have included a different translation of *Psalms 130* or none at all. One should agree with M.A. Korzo's suggestion that the bare scion of catechism teachings contained in the oldest primers shows a great deal of convergence with the opinion of Stanisław Zaborowski (d. 1529) in his *Orthographia* (Kraków, printed by Florian Ungler, 1515). Here on card C<sub>3</sub>r (under the Polish text of several prayers), we read:

To mi się za przykład umieścić zdało jako wzór, tym bardziej, że w niektórych drukach są one bardzo zniekształcone, wreszcie aby je upowszechnić. Bo szczególnie każdemu chrześcijaninowi przystoi, aby umiał Modlitwę pańską, Pozdrowienie błogosławionej Maryi zawsze dziewicy, Symbol wiary, Przykazania Boże, grzechy śmiertelne, również różne modlitwy, Ewangelie i listy kanoniczne apostołów, dary Ducha św., uczynki miłosierdzia<sup>49</sup>

[This seemed to me to be placed as an example as a model, mainly since some prints are very distorted, finally to spread them, for it is especially befitting for every Christian to know the Lord's Prayer; the Salutation of the blessed Mary, Always Virgin; the Symbol of Faith; the Commandments of God; mortal sins; various prayers; the Gospels and canonical letters of the apostles; the gifts of the Holy Spirit; and the works of mercy].

47 The full text of the prayer has been modernized: "Oycze nass, któryś w niebiesiech" (f. A<sub>2</sub>r). The content of the catechism's teachings was modernized without noticing the inconsistency with the title page.

48 The ending of *Psalms 130* (verse 8) indicates that the basis of the text in the Sextilis primer was the 1540 edition of the *Zoltarz* or any of the slightly later editions (in the first edition of the *Zoltarz* of 1539, the ending of the *Psalms* reads "A on odkupi lud izraelski, ze wszystkich grzechów jego, Lud Izraelski, to jest lud wierny" [And he will redeem the people of Israel, from all their sins, The people of Israel, that is, the faithful people]; the text of this verse "A on odkupi lud izraelski, ze wszystkich grzechów jego" [And he will redeem the people of Israel, from all their sins] was mistakenly combined with W. Wróbel's commentary "Lud Izraelski, to jest lud wierny" [The people of Israel, that is, the faithful people].

49 *Die altpolnischen Orthographien des 16. Jahrhunderts. Stanisław Zaborowski Jan Seklucjan – Stanisław Murzynowski Jan Januszowski*, einged. und hrsg. von S. Urbańczyk, unter Mitw. von R. Olesch, Köln-Wien 1983, p. 113: "Haec pro exemplo ponere placuit, tum quia in quibusdam impressis sunt corrupta, tum ut sint communia. Nam imprimis quemlibet Cristianum decet Domini scire orationem, Salutationem Beatae Mariae semper Virginis, Simbolum fidei, Praecepta Dei, mortalia peccata, orationes quoque plures, Euangelia, epistolas canonicasque apostolorum, Spiritus Sancti dona, opera Misericordiae".

The prayers indicated by Zaborowski significantly resemble the selections included in the oldest primers, starting with Sextilis. Zaborowski could also have been the right person to arrange a set of syllables, which is a model for the practice of spelling. In other words, Zaborowski could have been the author of the first *Nauki czytania pisma polskiego*. Under this assumption, the first Polish primer could have been printed before 1530.

As mentioned earlier, J. Seklucjan's 1547 primer and most likely the 1538 *Abecadło polskie* were modeled on V. Ickelsamer, in which the author used the phonetic learning method to read. It remains an open question whether this meant the actual use of this method or merely a formal resemblance to the original, with no impact on the traditional teaching practice by the syllabication method.

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### Elaborations

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*Translation Małgorzata Kisilowska-Szurmińska*

