



THE USE OF BOOKS IN 16TH-CENTURY VILNIUS

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Abstract

The main goal of the paper is to answer the question of what was unique about the use of books in Vilnius between 1522 and 1610.

The reason to take a closer look at the capital of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania is the fact that it has always been a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and multi-religious city. This observation allows the author to assume that the use of books there could have been different than in other European cities of the time.

To find possible answers to the question posed, the author traces the changes in production, distribution and reading of books in the city. The research is based on several sorts of sources, such as printed books, manuscripts and documents from Vilnius archives (mainly the municipal archive, the Catholic chapter, the castle court etc.). He was supported by contemporary studies about early modern Vilnius scriptoria and printing houses (Kawecka-Gryczowa, Topolska, Nikalaieu), bookbinders (Laucevičius), book writing (Ulčainaitė, Narbutienė, Narbutas) and the history of the city (Frick).

At the beginning of the paper the author recalls the main facts about Vilnius in the 16th century. The city had increasingly grown in importance as a political, economical and cultural centre of the Jagiellonian monarchy.

The central part, divided in four chronologically arranged chapters, focuses on several problems, among them: the beginnings of Cyrillic prints and Skaryna's printing house, languages and alphabets of books (Latin, Ruthenian, Polish, Lithuanian, German, Hebrew, Yiddish and Arabic), book production, dissemination, storage and reading. The author notices that a significant contributing factor to the spreading book culture in Vilnius was the royal court and chancery. He puts emphasis on the significance of humanistic schools that were established in Vilnius in the 2nd half of the 16th century by four different Christian confessions (Calvinist, Catholic, Lutheran and Orthodox). The most influential one was the Jesuit Academy of Vilnius. This process was accompanied by the establishment of no less than 11 printing houses. Having said that, the author argues that books printed in Vilnius, imported to the city and held in its libraries reflect a fruitful competition between main religious communities.

At the end, the author reaches the conclusion that the use of books in Vilnius was similar to other European cities of the time, yet the capital of Lithuania still seems to be a good deal more complex a case. He ventures a hypothesis that the book can be deemed as one of the tools or factors by which religious or ethnic identity in Vilnius was defined.

Key words: history of book, Vilnius, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, early modern print culture, Cyrillic script, Latin script

Vilnius in the 16th century

In 1522 a Belorussian humanist, Dr Fracysk Skaryna (1486?–ca. 1540 or ca. 1551), published in his Vilnian press *A Little Travel Book*, which was the first printed book to appear in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.¹ Because it was targeted at the Orthodox Christians of Lithuania it was printed in Cyrillic in the Church Slavonic language. Not quite 90 years later, in 1610, another outstanding Orthodox humanist, Meletij Smotryč'kyj, published *Threnos* in a Vilnian printing house that belonged to Bratstvo (Orthodox fraternity).² The book was a polemic work that defended the Orthodox Church outlawed in the Commonwealth after the Brest Union (1596). The vast majority of its readers were Orthodox, but it was also read by their opponents: Catholics and Uniates. Unlike Skaryna's books, *Threnos* was printed in the Latin alphabet in Polish. Despite this contrast, both publications, the one from 1522 and the one from 1610, evoked a wide response, although for different reasons.

I would like to treat these two books as emblematic of changes that took place in the culture of Vilnius and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. In general, these changes mirror tendencies that occurred in the use of books in various places around 16th-century Europe. In *Threnos*, unlike the *Little*

¹ Cf. Е.Л. Немировский, *Франциск Скорина. Жизнь и деятельность белорусского просветителя*, Минск 1990, p. 410–418; Z. Jaroszewicz-Pieresławcew, *Druki cyrylickie z oficyn Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego w XVI–XVIII wieku*, Olsztyn 2003, p. 24–32.

² Cf. J. Bardach, *Bractwa cerkiewne na ziemiach ruskich Rzeczypospolitej w XVI i XVII wieku*, „Kwartalnik Historyczny”, LXXIV (1967), 1, p. 78–79; A. Mironowicz, *Bractwa cerkiewne w Rzeczypospolitej*, Białystok 2003, p. 22; Z. Jaroszewicz-Pieresławcew, *op. cit.*, p. 102–104.

Travel Book, we can discern among other things the impact of antique and Italian literature, the use of vernacular instead of ecclesiastical language, treating the book as a weapon in religious polemics and introducing new genres and literary forms etc. In terms of changes in the process of book production Vilnius resembled numerous other European cities. However, the aim of this paper is not to demonstrate the affiliation of Vilnius to the Western ecumene, but rather to make an attempt at presenting what was different and specific about the use of books in this multi-ethnic city.

In the second half of the 15th century Vilnius was not yet an important economic or cultural centre, especially in comparison to other central-European cities as Buda, Danzig, Krakow or Prague. However, from the end of the century it began to grow to be one of the largest and most significant cities in the Jagiellonian monarchy. Its fast development began in the days of Alexander Jagiellon, who became the Grand Duke of Lithuania in 1492, and it then continued under the rule of his brother, Sigismund I the Old, who gave the city a new charter in 1536. During their reign a mint, a foundry, a paper mill, glassworks and a printing house were launched, and the city's defensive walls were built along with waterworks, a stone bridge over Neris and a dozen or so new gothic churches, both Orthodox and Catholic. In 1544 Sigismund II Augustus became the ruler of Lithuania. The Renaissance Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania he built became his favourite residence. In those days Vilnius was booming economically and demographically, representatives of the political and cultural elite settled in the city and a Jewish community began to form there as well. From the mid-16th century Vilnius truly became the capital city of Lithuania and in some periods even of the whole Polish-Lithuanian monarchy.

It is hard to estimate the population but at the beginning of the century Vilnius may have had around 10 thousand inhabitants, and toward the end of the century this number might have doubled.

The city was multi-ethnic and multi-religious. Its character is well reflected in an excerpt from a letter by a Czech Jesuit Baltazar Hostounský from 1570:

In the city of Vilnius there are ... numerous nationalities, that is: Lithuanians, Ruthenians, Poles, Tatars, Germans, Jews, quite numerous Italians and Armenians. Germans have their own school with a Lutheran church, and Tatars

[= Mahometans] have their temple and school, in which they teach Arabic. On the festive days, there are sermons organised in a school specifically for Italians. Ruthenians [= Orthodox Christians] also have their schools and churches. Lithuanians and Poles [= Catholics] have their churches and schools. Zwinglians [= Calvinists] have a church and a school of their own as well.³

Two languages dominated in Vilnius: Ruthenian (Old Belorussian) and Polish, but there was a significant number of inhabitants who used Lithuanian, German and Tartar. When it comes to religions, the majority of inhabitants belonged to the Orthodox and the Catholic Churches (from the end of the 16th century also to the Uniate Church). Several languages of writing were in use, of which the most important were Latin, Church-Slavonic, Polish, Ruthenian, Lithuanian,⁴ German, Hebrew and Arabic. As a consequence of this, Vilnian texts were compiled in as many as four alphabets: Latin, Cyrillic, Hebrew and Arabic. In this respect Vilnius was unique as the phenomenon of multi-literacy appeared in but few places in contemporary Europe.

1522

The Book of the Church

It can be assumed that at the turn of the 15th and 16th centuries most books that were used in Vilnius were imported. We learn from several sources that there were two scriptoria, one Orthodox at the Holy Virgin Cathedral, and one Catholic in the Observant friars' monastery. We do not have any more information about any other places in Vilnius in which books might have been produced. The two centres copied liturgical and

³ Baltazar Hostounský to superior general Francesco Borgia (12.09.1570), Ms Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu, Germ. 151, f. 286r; after: L. Piechnik, *Początki Akademii Wileńskiej 1570–1599*, Foreword J.W. Woś, Rzym 1984, p. 32.

⁴ The oldest known Lithuanian glosses were probably written in Vilnius, possibly in the scriptorium of the Observant friars; cf. G. Subačius, M. Leńczuk, W. Wydra, *The Earliest Known Lithuanian Glosses (-1520–1530)*, „Archivum Lithuanicum” 12 (2010), p. 33.

devotional books that were intended for Lithuanian churches, probably the Vilnian ones in majority.⁵

From these facts one may conclude that the demand for books in this period was limited chiefly to the ecclesiastical circle and to a small extent also to the elite of power.⁶ The register of the library of the grand dukes listed 71 positions, which was a lot in that time.⁷ Only few monastic and church libraries could have possessed 50–100 volumes, but average collections consisted of just a couple of books.⁸ Books were handled by the clergy of both rites (Catholic and Orthodox) and by clerks of the Lithuanian chancellery. Presumably, book trade did not exist in those days in Vilnius as a separate line of business.

The situation changed in the second decade of the 16th century, a sign of which might be the activity of Francysk Skaryna. In 1517 he launched a printing house in Prague where he published the Church-Slavonic Bible.⁹ The whole edition was probably intended for the Lithuanian market, and was distributed in Vilnius.¹⁰ The result of this activity must have been

⁵ Cf. M.B. Ніколаеў, *Кніжная культура Вялікага Княства Літоўскага*, Мінск 2009, p. 105, 348–351.

⁶ Cf. D. Narbutienė, S. Narbutas, *Foreword*, in: *XV–XVI a. lietuov lotyniškų knygų sąrašas. Index librorum latinorum Lituaniae saeculi quinti decimi et sexti decimi*, ed. D. Narbutienė, S. Narbutas, Vilnius 2002, p. 27.

⁷ Probably the owner of the library was Sigismund I the Old, but some researchers suppose the books belonged to chancellor Olbracht Gasztołd. Cf. J. Lelewel, *Bibliograficznych ksiąg dwoje*, t. 2, Wilno 1826, p. 97; K. Hartleb, *Biblioteka Zygmunta Augusta*, Lwów 1928, p. 135–137; E. Laucevičius, *Knygų įrašimai Lietuvos bibliotekose*, Vilnius 1976, p. 111; A. Kawecka-Gryczowa, *Biblioteka ostatniego Jagiellona. Pomnik kultury renesansowej*, Wrocław 1988, p. 29–30; K. Jablonskis, *1510 m. Albrechto Goštauto biblioteka*, [in:] *Lietuvių kultūra ir jos veikėjai*, Vilnius 1973, p. 353–357; D. Narbutienė, *LDK latynišką knygą asmeninėse XVI–XVII a. bibliotekose*, „Knygotyra” R. 2001, nr 37, p. 2; J. Ochmański, *Najdawniejsze księgozbiory na Litwie od końca XIV do połowy XVI wieku*, [in:] *Europa orientalis. Polska i jej wschodni sąsiedzi od Średniowiecza po współczesność. Studia i materiały ofiarowane Profesorowi Stanisławowi Alexandrowiczowi w 65 rocznicę urodzin*, ed. Z. Karpus, T. Kempa, D. Michaluk, Toruń 1996, p. 79–80.

⁸ Cf. A.I. Груша, *Белоруская кірылычна палеаграфія. Вучэбны дапаможнік для студэнтаў гістарычнага факультэта*, Мінск 2006, p. 82; M.B. Ніколаеў, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

⁹ Cf. E.J. Немировский, *op. cit.*, p. 200–216.

¹⁰ Cf. M.B. Topolska, *Mecenasi i drukarze ruscy na pograniczu kulturowym XVI–XVII w.*, [in:] *Prawosławne oficyny wydawnicze w Rzeczypospolitej*, ed. A. Mironowicz, U. Pawluczuk, P. Chomiak, Białystok 2004, p. 35.

encouraging enough for Skaryna to decide to move his enterprise to the Lithuanian capital city.

This rise in the interest in books related not only to the clergy but also to the power elite. The Grand Chancellor of Lithuania Olbracht Gasztołd ordered for himself a manuscript book of hours illuminated in Cracow by Stanisław Samostrzelnik. Then, in 1518, the Grand Treasurer of Lithuania Jan Abraham Ezofowicz presented to St. Nicholas Orthodox church lavishly illuminated *Kiev Psalter*.¹¹

Manuscript books were most commonly used in Vilnius at that time and the demand for Latin books was relatively low. In fact, so low that for a long time it would not be profitable to establish a press there which would publish books printed with Latin type. This was why in 1499 Vilnian bishop Wojciech Tabor ordered the print of a new *Agenda* (a textbook on administering sacraments and performing rituals) from a Danzig printer, Konrad Baumgarten.¹²

The interest in Orthodox books must have been greater, which was the reason for the emergence of Skaryna's printing house. It operated in Vilnius for about 4 years (1522–1525), but its publications were used by Vilnians even 100 years later. So what was unique about Vilnius in 1522 in terms of the use of book was the greater presence of Cyrillic books, both manuscript and printed, produced locally or imported. While Vilnius was one of many European cities reached by the invention of print, it was one of very few where a press was used to produce Cyrillic prints – and ones that had features of Renaissance humanism and Renaissance art of printing at that.¹³

¹¹ Cf. Г. Вздорнов, *Исследование о Киевской псалтыри*, Москва 1978, p. 10; *Киевская псалтырь 1397 года из Государственной Публичной библиотеки имени М.Е. Салтыкова-Щедрина в Ленинграде [олдн F 6]*, Москва 1978, f. 1ar–13v.

¹² The *Agenda* written by a Vilnian canon, Marcin of Radom, was printed in two variants. Cf. *Drukarze dawnej Polski od XV do XVIII wieku*, Vol. 4, *Pomorze*, oprac. A. Kawecka-Gryczowa, K. Korotajowa, Wrocław 1962, p. 36–37; Z. Nowak, *Konrad Baumgart i początki sztuki drukarskiej w Gdańsku w XV wieku*, Gdańsk 1998, p. 133–165; D. Narbutienė, *Lietuvos Didžiosios Kunigaikštijos latyniškoji knyga XV–XVII a.*, Vilnius 2004, p. 64.

¹³ Cf. Е.И. Немировский, *op. cit.*, p. 450–452; M.B. Topolska, *Czytelnik i książka w Wielkim Księstwie Litewskim w dobie Renesansu i Baroku*, Wrocław 1984, p. 103–106; A. Наумов, *Wiara i historia. Z dziejów literatury cerkiewnosłowiańskiej na ziemiach polsko-litewskich*, [in:] *Studia slawistyczne krakowsko-wileńskie*, Vol. 1, Kraków

1565

The book for elite

From 1544 on king Sigismund II Augustus often visited Vilnius, and between 1559–1563 he rarely left the city. He was accompanied by his court and chancellery, and in both institutions he employed outstanding humanists educated in Italy.¹⁴ Representatives of humanist culture were present in the chancellery of the Grand Duke and in the cathedral chapter from the end of the 15th century,¹⁵ but in the first half of the next century Vilnius became one of the most important centres of the intellectual elite of the country. The city and the castle were then inhabited by such persons as Augustinus Rotundus (since 1562 the mayor of Vilnius), Pedro Ruiz de Moros, Łukasz Górnicki, Andrzej Wolan, Andrzej Patrycy Nidecki and Jan Kochanowski.¹⁶ These writers introduced on a large scale new models of reading and new ways of using a book.

The first symptom of these changes was the emergence of private humanist libraries in the city. Presumably, every humanist living there owned a collection of books. Unfortunately, the inventories of these libraries have not survived. The only preserved one is a posthumous record of books which belonged to a mayor of Vilnius, Felix Langurga, dated to May 15th 1551. The inventory contains 67 books, including various contemporary and antique works, e.g. eight by Erasmus of Rotterdam. In comparison to other private libraries we know from that period Langurga's collection appears to be quite typical. From the testaments and inventories of the

1996, p. 20, 83; A. Buračas, V. Užtupas, *Senieji Lietuvos spaudmenys. XVI–XVIII amžiaus faksimilės*, Vilnius 2004, p. 25–37.

¹⁴ Cf. M. Korolko, *Seminarium Rzeczypospolitej Królestwa Polskiego. Humanieści w kancelarii królewskiej Zygmunta Augusta*, Warszawa 1991, p. 17.

¹⁵ Among them were Adam Jakubowicz z Kotry (died 1517) and Erazm Ciołek (1474–1522) – both of them graduated from the University of Kraków and the bishop of Vilnius Jan z Książąt Litewskich (1499–1538) who studied at the University of Bologna.

¹⁶ Augustinus Rotundus Mielecki (ca. 1520–1582; a lawyer and writer), Pedro Ruiz de Moros (ca. 1505–1571; a lawyer and poet), Łukasz Górnicki (1527–1603; a writer and translator), Andrzej Wolan (ca. 1530–1610; a Calvinist activist and polemist, writer), Andrzej Patrycy Nidecki (1522–1587; an editor of Cicero's writings, Catholic polemist), Jan Kochanowski (1530–1584; the most significant Polish Renaissance poet).

members of the Vilnian cathedral chapter from the end of the 16th century we can conclude that they possessed book-collections of a similar size.¹⁷

Comparably big libraries must have been owned by the humanists in the royal chancellery and other Vilnian institutions, although their content was probably different. The model of reading employed by these sort of people involved reading multiple books at the same time, referring to source texts and commentaries, in short, using a wide range of texts.¹⁸ The ultimate aim of this style of reading was production of new texts. Vilnian humanists used books in this way composing letters, translations, legal or historical studies and poetry. Rotundus, for instance, drew up a new code of Lithuanian law (II Statute of Lithuania, 1566), and his friend, Ruiz de Moros, published a treatise containing adjudications of the highest appeal court (*Decisiones*, 1563). Górnicki paraphrased in Polish the famous dialogue by Baldassar Castiglione *Il cortegiano* (*Dworzanin polski*, 1566),¹⁹ Maciej Strubicz translated a treatise on military science by Albrecht Hohenzollern (*Books on knightly things and matters*, 1561), whereas Wolan wrote a treatise on liberty (*De liberate politica sive civili*, 1572).

To create these books other books were necessary – and in large numbers at that. Scholars have listed 50 texts on law and politics that Wolan refers to in his brief treatise.²⁰ We do not know if he was in possession of all of these items, but he might have accessed them in private libraries belonging to other Vilnian humanists.²¹ He could have used books owned by Augustinus Rotundus. We know that the latter's house at the market square was a place where Vilnian humanists would meet to discuss issues such as books. It is also possible that the king's library was a venue for in-

¹⁷ Cf. Ms in The Wroblewski Library of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences (Vilnius) F43-26717; J. Niedźwiedź, *Kultura literacka Wilna 1323–1655. Retoryczna organizacja miasta*, Kraków 2012, p. 96; W. Pawlikowska-Butterwick, *Księgozbiór biblioteki katedralnej w Wilnie*, „Odrodzenie i Reformacja w Polsce” LVI (2012), p. 164.

¹⁸ Cf. A. Grafton, *The Humanist as Reader*, in: *A History of Reading in the West*, ed. G. Cavallo, R. Chartier, transl. L.G. Cochrane, Amherst, University of Massachusetts Press, 1999, p. 206.

¹⁹ Cf. A. Grafton, *The Fortunes of the Courtier: The European Reception of Castiglione's Cortegiano*, Cambridge 1995.

²⁰ Cf. R. Mazurkiewicz, *Wstęp*, [in:] A. Wolan, *De libertate politica sive civili. O wolności Rzeczypospolitej albo ślacheckiej*, ed. M. Eder, R. Mazurkiewicz, Warszawa 2010, p. 44–47.

²¹ Cf. A. Grafton, *The Humanist as Reader...*, p. 209.

tellectual discussions. When the king's secretary Andrzej Patrycy Nidecki was preparing an edition of Cicero's *Fragments*, Łukasz Górnicki, who at that time was the king's librarian, lent him a rare edition of *De civitate Dei* by St. Augustine from the king's collection.²²

Sometimes, however, owning and lending books sadly entails losing them. In 1542, Paweł Holszański, the bishop of Vilnius and an owner of a major humanist library, complained in a letter to archdeacon Józef Jasiński:

As you wrote that you could not have found in our treasury those books containing *vita sancti Adalberti*, and that master Valentine is missing, we are astonished and sorrowful to have lost them.²³

The Vilnian library of Sigismund August, although a private property of the ruler, probably served other people from his circle: courtiers, chaplains and secretaries from the chancellery. The first purchases for the collection were made in 1547.²⁴ It was stored in the palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania in Vilnius, and since 1565 at the castle in Tykocin. The first librarian to work there was Stanisław Koszutski, and upon his death Górnicki assumed the post. The collection was one of the largest in contemporary Europe amounting to nearly 4000 prints and manuscripts towards the end of Sigismund August's life.²⁵ Its significance relied not only upon its magnitude. It was a large humanist and broad collection of books that was also a work of art: all volumes had Renaissance bindings, primarily made in Cracow and then in Vilnius.²⁶

The presence of book binders, who were usually also book dealers²⁷, and the significant demand for books among the Vilnian elite should have

²² Cf. K. Morawski, *Andrzej Petrycy Nidecki. Jego życie i dzieła*, Kraków 1892, p. 99–100.

²³ Cf. J. Kurczewski, *Kościół zamkowy, czyli katedra wileńska w jej dziejowym, liturgicznym, architektonicznym i ekonomicznym rozwoju*, Vol. 2, *Źródła historyczne*, Wilno 1910, p. 113–114.

²⁴ Cf. K. Hartleb, *Biblioteka Zygmunta Augusta*, Lwów 1928, p. 69; A. Kawecką-Gryczową, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

²⁵ Cf. A. Kawecką-Gryczową, *op. cit.*, p. 41–43

²⁶ Cf. E. Laucevičius, *op. cit.*, p. 111–117; M. Krynicka, *Oprawy książkowe z herbami ostatnich Jagiellonów w zbiorach Muzeum Narodowego w Krakowie*, „Rozprawy i Sprawozdania Muzeum Narodowego w Krakowie”, Vol. 12, (1980), p. 39.

²⁷ Cf. E. Laucevičius, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

laid the ground for the development of book trade, but we do not have any sources that would tell us anything about Vilnian book sellers in the mid-16th century. After Skaryna's press there was no other printing house in Vilnius so almost all books used in the city, apart from the manuscript ones, were imported. Vilnius was probably also the place from which all Protestant books were distributed further into Lithuania. In 1563, the whole edition of the Polish Calvinistic translation of the Bible printed in Brześć (Brest) two years before was stored in the Vilnian palace of Mikołaj "the Black" Radziwiłł, the Grand Lithuanian Chancellor and the main patron of Calvinism in Lithuania. The funds from its sale were supposed to finance a school that operated at the Vilnian Calvinistic church.²⁸

The lack of sources makes it impossible for us to establish how common burghers used books. Taking into account the poor literacy of the inhabitants of the city we can assume that in the mid-16th century books were used largely by professionals: clergy of all rites and humanists related directly or indirectly with the royal chancellery.

1579

The book for schools. Printing houses

Institutions that emerged in Vilnius in the last three decades of the 16th century significantly changed cultural relations in the city. In this period several schools were established with libraries attached to them. The number of literate and semi-literate people grew, around a dozen printing houses were launched, and yet we come across records noting major transports of books from Cracow to Vilnius.

Until the 1560s there were a couple of Catholic and Orthodox church schools but only the cathedral school, which provided the pupils with basic knowledge from the scope of humaniora, allowed its graduates to take up further studies at a university.²⁹ The situation changed with the Reformation. From the 1550s Vilnius was the chief centre of Lithuanian Lu-

²⁸ *Testament Mikołaja Radziwiłła „Czarnego”*, [in:] *Testamenty ewangelików reformowanych w Wielkim Księstwie Litewskim*, ed. U. Augustyniak, Warszawa 1992, p. 20.

²⁹ Cf. J. Niedźwiedź, *Kultura literacka Wilna 1323–1655...*, p. 150–155.

therans and Calvinists who launched schools at Vilnian churches. During their heyday in the 1580s and 1590s, there were humanist gymnasiums that offered a five-class educational programme. Sources inform us that the authorities of both congregations assumed responsibility for these schools providing them with well-educated professors.

Alarmed by this situation, a Catholic bishop, Walerian Protasewicz, opened a Jesuit humanist college in 1570 which in 1579 was transformed into the Academy of Vilnius, the first university in Lithuania and at the same time the largest academy in this part of Europe.³⁰ At the end of the century the number of its students reached 900. Protestant schools were much smaller: each of them might have had no more than 100 students.

The Orthodox were the last to establish their own school in Vilnius. In 1592 they launched a school under the authority of the Orthodox fraternity. Like the schools of other Christian denominations it offered a programme of a humanist gymnasium and was probably of a similar size to the Lutheran and Calvinist ones.

The schools drew students whose number at the end of the 16th century amounted to at least 1100, which constituted ca. 5–7% of all inhabitants of the city. Previously, Vilnius had been a political and economic centre. Now it gained the role of the centre of education and science, which was one of the reasons why it became the leading Lithuanian centre of book production and book trade. Students needed textbooks, mainly on grammar, rhetoric, poetics, but also catechisms and school editions of classical literature. The majority of these books were imported, which is mentioned by a Jesuit, Adam Brocus, in his letter to general Aquaviva from the 13th of June, 1594:

(...) students are forced to pay dear for their books printed in Cracow that need to be transported here from a place over a thousand miles away. Meanwhile, we can support them with low prices of both religious and secular books from our typography. Since we do not do sale, we give the books to a book-seller to trade them and pay us what justice orders, so that the printing house does not make loss.³¹

³⁰ Cf. L. Piechnik, *Początki Akademii Wileńskiej...*, p. 113; idem, *Rozkwit Akademii Wileńskiej w latach 1600–1655*, Rzym 1983, p. 87–88.

³¹ *Vilniaus akademijos spaustuvs šaltiniai XVI–XIX a.*, ed. I. Petrauskienė, Vilnius 1992, p. 67.

Schools contributed to the new bloom of manuscript book in the forms of either recorded lectures or *silva rerum* – collections of *loci communes* and school exercises³². An example of such a manuscript is *Prolegomena logicae*, a record of lectures given probably by Marcin Śmiglecki in the 1580s.³³

The development of the educational system was parallel with the development of printing industry in Vilnius. Between 1574 and 1600 there were 11 publishing companies operating in the city. The first was the Mamowicz printing house (ca. 1574–1624), initially in a partnership with Piotr Mściśławiec. But yet in the 1570s there is a little convergence visible between the needs of the humanist schools and the print production: Mamonicz printed Orthodox liturgical or religious texts, they also obtained a Sigismund III Vasas' privilege to publish official prints including the III Statute of Lithuania (1588), whose first version was in Ruthenian³⁴. Like in the Skaryna's times, it was more profitable for printers to publish Cyrillic books in Ruthenian or Church-Slavonic than in Latin or Polish, even though the number of potential buyers, students and teachers, was growing.

Yet with time the situation changed. In 1576, a fervent Catholic, Mikołaj Krzysztof "the Orphan" Radziwiłł, launched a Catholic publishing house in Vilnius. Ten years later he handed it over to the Jesuits who in the next century made it into the largest publishing press in Lithuania. They published books mainly in Latin and Polish, that were targeted to the cultural establishment of the city, but they also focused on new groups of readers from below. For this Lithuanian-speaking audience they printed *Catechism* (1595) and *Postilla* (1599) translated into Lithuanian by a Jesuit Mikalojaus Daukša.³⁵ The Jesuit printing house not only produced religious works and textbooks, but also anti-Protestant pieces, theological works and belles-lettres. Students and professors of the Vilnian Academy were authors of a vast part of these books. The press consolidated actions

³² Cf. A. Moss, *Printed Commonplace-Books and the Structuring of Renaissance Thought*, Oxford 1996, p. 134–185; J. Niedźwiedź, *Sylwa retoryczna. Reprezentacja kultury literackiej XVII i XVIII w.*, [in:] *Staropolskie kompendia wiedzy*, ed. I. Dacka-Górzyńska, J. Partyka, Warszawa 2009, p. 87–89.

³³ Cf. Ms in the Vilnius University Library (VUB), F3-2171.

³⁴ Cf. M.B. Topolska, *Czytelnik i książka...*, p. 107–108.

³⁵ Cf. A. Jovaišas, *Raštai lietuvių kalba*, [in:] E. Ulčinaitė, A. Jovaišas, *Lietuvių literatūros istorija. XIII–XVIII amžiai*, Vilnius 2003, p. 203–210.

of Jesuits' *Respublica litteraria* (the Republic of Letters), which formed in Vilnius in the end of the 16th century.³⁶

Three thriving printing houses, one belonging to Jan Karcan (since 1580), another to Daniel of Łęczycza (since 1582), and yet another of Jakub Markowicz (since 1592), that produced Calvinistic books, had a similar function. They released numerous publications targeted at the Lithuanian Evangelical Reformed Church, such as catechisms, textbooks, theological and polemical works.

Vilnian printing activity was not only multi-religious, but also multi-lingual. Kuźma Mamonicz and the Orthodox Bratstvo's press published Church-Slavonic Orthodox books. Daniel of Łęczycza, Markowicz and Karcan mostly Calvinistic printed books in Polish and Latin. The Jesuit Academic Printing House produced Catholic books in Latin, Polish, Lithuanian and Latvian, while Salomon Sultzer – Lutheran and Calvinistic books in Latin and German. It was common, however, especially at the end of the 16th and the beginning of the 17th centuries, that Catholic printers published books for Protestants, Orthodox printers for Catholics and Protestants, and Protestant ones for Catholics.

It reflected the complex religious and linguistic situation in Vilnius and, wider, in Lithuania. However, if we considered only printed books, we would pass over one important thing: the presence of non-Christian book in Vilnius. In the second half of the 16th century there was a Jewish population and a significant number of Muslims. Both communities used manuscript liturgical books, and Jews probably imported from Cracow prints in Hebrew and Yiddish. Perhaps already then representatives of the community carried Halachic studies, although the earliest reliable sources are several dozen years later.³⁷ Tatars' mother tongue at the end of the 16th century was Belorussian, and they wrote their kitabs in this language but using Arabic alphabet.

Although not everyone had access to books, in those days in Vilnius the book ceased to be a good targeted exclusively at humanist elites and

³⁶ Cf. J. Niedźwiedz, *Kultura literacka Wilna...*, p. 333–337.

³⁷ I. Cohen, *History of the Jews in Vilna*, Philadelphia 1943, p. 187–188; J. Frenkel, *Literatura rabiniczna Żydów w dawnej Rzeczypospolitej*, [in:] *Żydzi w Polsce odrodzonej*, Vol. 1, ed. I. Schiper, A. Tartakower, A. Haftka, Warszawa 1932, p. 222.

the clergy: to commune with texts required a quite advanced level of literacy, which was introduced on growing scale thanks to the large number of schools.

1610

Polemical book

In 1610, the Vilnian Orthodox fraternity's press published *Threnos* by Meletij Smotryc'kyj (ca. 1578–1633). The author, a humanist, a monk at the Holy Spirit's monastery and a lecturer in an Orthodox school, stood up for the Orthodox Church:

There is sure and infallible evidence – a latest deed of anonymous authors. Recently they wrote some manuscripts titled *Some Nalewajka* which are filled with strange and extraordinary shamelessness. They printed *The Relation or Consideration of the Events which Occured in Vilnius in 1609* as well. They put there so many hideous and deceitful tales that everybody who examines it must admit that all those anonymous authors are deprived of the natural virtue of the fear of God and they overstepped every borderline of a human shame.³⁸

This excerpt touches several important issues relating to the use of book in Vilnius in those days. First, the capital city of Lithuania was an arena for major events connected to putting into effect the provisions of the Union of Brest (1596), so authors of polemics often gave an account of what took place in the city. The natural consequence was that their opponents were inspired to write subsequent polemical texts. Therefore, books would become an impulse to write more books. This was also the case before, during the contention between Catholics and Protestants, and within the Protestant congregation. The arguments involved such writers as the chancellor of the Vilnian Academy Piotr Skarga and a Vilnian canon, Andrzej Jurgiewicz having a few years' dispute with a Calvinistic activist, Andrzej Wolan.³⁹

³⁸ M. Smotrycki, ΘΠΕΝΟΣ, *To jest lament jedynej świętej powszechnej apostołskiej wschodniej Cerkwie z objaśnieniem dogmat wiary. Pierwej z greckiego na słowieński, a teraz z słowieńskiego na polski przełożony*. Przez Theophila Orthologa, też świętej wschodniej Cerkwie Syna, Wilno 1610, p. ()()iiiv.

³⁹ The most prominent Vilnian polemicists were Piotr Skarga, Marcin Śmiglecki, Jakub Wujek, Stanisław Warszawicki, Stanisław Grodzicki, Andrzej Jurgiewicz, Andrzej Wolan,

Secondly, books were written and published fast – subsequent publications appeared in intervals of several months, like *Threnos* which was, among other things, a response to *Relatia* from 1609. It intensified the development of the Vilnian publishing market. The printing houses of Karcan, Radziwiłł, the Bratsvo or the Academy released several dozens of volumes that were involved in the Vilnian “bibliomachia”, and we should also add manuscript publications to that.

Another thing is the common ground of contention, or the set of weapons used in the conflict, that is above all the language and the form of discourse, hammered out by all participants of the argument. As I mentioned before, there were a few languages of writing used in Vilnius, but only two of them, Polish and Latin, became the leading languages of local debates. Orthodox, Catholics and Uniates printed polemics in Polish, while Vilnian Catholic-Protestant polemics were printed either in Polish or in Latin.

In both languages, authors used a number of genres and literary forms: dialogue, monologue (in case of *Threnos* it was prosopopeia of the Orthodox Mother-Church), treatise, pasquil and various poetic forms. All these texts, both Polish and Latin, were formed by the use of the matrix of Latin rhetoric and Roman literature. Because of this rhetoric discourse, polemical book published in Vilnius would become part of the pan-European ecumene of texts.

When it comes to Orthodox polemicists, the use of humanistic Polish language was a compromise. If they had written only for their coreligionists, it would have been enough to use Church-Slavonic or Ruthenian. But since their voice was to be heard also by their Catholic opponents, they had to use a language and an alphabet the latter knew. Latin was out of the question because most Orthodox readers did not know it, and therefore Polish was the only alternative, being the other language of *Latinitas* (Latin culture) in this part of Europe. At the same time, however, it is possible to

Hipacy Pocięj, Jozafat Kuncewicz, Józef Welamin Rutski, Leon Kreuz-Rzewuski, Leontyj Karpowicz, Meletij Smotryc'kyj and Józef Bobrykowicz. However, writers from other parts of the Polish-Lituanian Commonwealth, as Faust Socyn, Grzegorz z Żarnowca, Hiob Borecki, Zachariasz Kopysteński and Marcin Broniewski, were also engaged in the Vilnius polemics. Cf. J. N i e d Ź w i e d Ź, *Kultura literacka Wilna...*, p. 274.

discern, at least in case of Smotryc'kyj's writings, such a use of Polish that is recognizably different from the Polish of Catholics or Protestants.⁴⁰

Similar attempts to create an autonomous language of writing are visible in texts of contemporary Lithuanian Tatars, particularly in books called *kitab*s. They were manuscript collections of parables, prayers, commentaries to rites etc. written in Ruthenian (Old-Belorussian), but using the Arabic alphabet.⁴¹ The language, however, was not identical with the kind of Ruthenian used by Orthodox, and the alphabet was not the only difference. Its specificity was due to loanwords from Arabic and Tatar, and to the way of conducting discourse, which was characteristic for Muslim texts. For these reasons we can describe it as a written Ruthenian-Muslim language (later also Polish-Muslim). A similar phenomenon occurred in contemporary Spain, where in the 16th century Moriscos created literature in their "kind" of Romance language.⁴² In both these literatures people wrote polemical texts that debunked the truthfulness of Christian and Jewish dogmas.

Printed polemical texts had a diverse audience and the levels of literacy among their recipients differed. Due to this reason the complexity of these texts must have been adjusted in accordance to their targeted readers. Some of them were highly abstract Latin treatises: we come across such works in book inventories of Vilnian canons, Ambroży Bejnart and Jan Ryszkowski from 1603 and 1606, or in church libraries.⁴³ More popular were polemical sermons or accounts of public disputes between representatives of different religions.

One of the best-known disputes of the kind took place on the 2nd of June, 1599. The Catholic side was represented by a Jesuit, Marcin Śmiglecki, the Calvinists by a humanist Daniel Mikołajewski.⁴⁴ Several

⁴⁰ Cf. D.A. Frick, *Meletij Smotryc'kyj*, Cambridge, Massachusetts 1995, p. 181–182.

⁴¹ Cf. J. Szykiewicz, *Literatura religijna Tatarów litewskich i jej pochodzenie*, „Rocznik Tatarski”, Vol. 2 (1932), p. 139; S. Kryczyński, *Tatarzy litewscy. Próba monografii historyczno-etnograficznej*, Warszawa 1938, p. 217–218; Cz. Łapicz, *Trzy redakcje językowe muzulmańskiej legendy w piśmiennictwie Tatarów litewsko-polskich*, „Acta Baltico-Slavica”, Vol. XX (1991), p. 155; idem, *Zawartość treściowa kitabów Tatarów litewsko-polskich*, „Acta Baltico-Slavica”, Vol. XX (1991), p. 169–191; G. Miškinienė, *Seniausii lietuvos totoriu rankraščiai. Grafika, transliteracija, vertimas, teksto struktura ir turinys*, Vilnius 2001, p. 16.

⁴² Cf. L.P. Harvey, *Muslims in Spain, 1500 to 1614*, Chicago, London 2005, p. 126–167.

⁴³ Cf. Ms VUB F4-35808 (A-2472), p. 86–89.

⁴⁴ Cf. B. Natóński, *Humanizm jezuicki i teologia pozytywno-kontrowersyjna od XVI do XVIII wieku. Nauka i piśmiennictwo*, Kraków 2003, p. 103–107.

different accounts of this event were published in Vilnius and in other cities.⁴⁵ Each of them was meant to support different side of the conflict. To facilitate the reading for poorly educated readers, Śmiglecki concluded his account with a short summary: “learn also, how to answer a Calvinist’s question, if they ask you in which way a Calvinist priest beat a Jesuit.”

This final piece from Śmiglecki’s book resembles to an extent contemporary catechisms that consisted of questions concerning the articles of faith and answers to them. Catechisms, prayers and hymnals were the most popular books in Vilnius at the turn of the 16th and 17th centuries. Each of the leading Christian denominations in the city distributed these sort of books. As the *Vilnian Dispute* by Śmiglecki suggests, these popular books might also have been used in the polemics between denominations. *Kitabs* and *chamails* had an analogous function for Muslims. Thus book contributed to the maintenance of religious identity of different groups living in Vilnius.

Book and identity

At the beginning of the 16th century book in Vilnius had a relatively narrow scope of application. It was limited mainly to liturgical and religious purposes, which was characteristic for the local use of book in the previous centuries. Yet the situation changed within under a century. It was anticipated by the establishment of the printing house of Francysk Skaryna, whose attitude combined elements taken from the Eastern Christianity and modern humanist culture.

Presses that emerged in Vilnius in the second half of the 16th century were not a immediate continuation of Skarynas activity, but in some ways they headed in the same direction. Books published in Vilnius at the same time reflected and confirmed religious divisions in the city. Every denomi-

⁴⁵ Cf. M. Śmiglecki, *Dysputacja wileńska, którą miał ks. Marcin Śmiglecki Societatis Iesu z ministrami ewangelickimi 2 Iunii w r. 1599 o jednej widomej głowie Kościoła Bożego*, Wilno 1599; D. Mikołajewski, *Dysputacja wileńska, którą miał ks. Marcin Śmiglecki Societatis Iesu z ks. Danielem Mikołajewskim*, [Toruń 1599]; M.G. Gertich, *Protęsta-cja przeciwko niesłusznej chlubie tych, co za przyczyną distputacji ks. Marcina Śmigleckiego z ks. Danielem Mikołajewskim*, Wilno 1599.

nation (particularly Christian ones) was able to produce or import books, and all of them would eagerly make use of this.

The scope of users of most of these books was limited. Despite the rapid growth in the literacy of Vilnians, only some of them were predestined to use other books than catechisms or prayers. And so this circle included almost exclusively male members of higher social classes: clergy, gentry, wealthy merchants, plus teachers and students. Due to the needs of the latter, libraries at churches and schools were lauded, and private libraries developed as well. Most institutional libraries had a religious character. While at the beginning of the 16th century there might have been a few hundred books in the city, at the beginning of the subsequent century they amounted to dozens of thousands.

What we find in other parts of 16th-century Europe, is also apparent in Vilnius: books became an indicator of religious identity, its material evidence. So followers of a given religion treated books of their denomination as a benefit, and considered books published by other Christian rites a threat. Hence during anti-Calvinist riots in September 1581 Protestant books, taken from the press of Daniel of Łęczycza, were burnt in front of St. John's church.

At the same time books of different rites mirrored and formed not only religious identity but also early-modern national identity which was emerging at that time. These books, written and printed in a variety of languages and alphabets, and even with various types of writings and fonts, created a sense of difference. It was pretty easy to distinguish between a Ruthenian and a Polish book, or a Jewish and a Latin one and to divide people according to the kind of book they used. Thus books constituted a criterion of identity, but being a source of knowledge about the Other, it might have also been an impulse to transgress one's identity. Inventories of libraries owned by 17th-century Vilnian merchants testify that volumes printed with Cyrillic or Latin font, in Ruthenian, Church-Slavonic, Polish or Latin were stored all together.⁴⁶

London, July 2013

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Proofread by Greg Nieuwsma

⁴⁶ Ms in Lithuanian State Historical Archive in Vilnius, F23, ap. 1, nr 5096, f. 441r–441v; *Wilnianie. Żywoty siedemnastowieczne*, ed. D.A. Frick, Warszawa 2008, p. 185–186 and 189–192; J. Niedźwiedź, *Kultura literacka Wilna...*, p. 114.