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## The New Polish Cyrillic in Independent Belarus

### Abstract

After the fall of communism and the breakup of the Soviet Union, the religious life of the Roman Catholic community revived in independent Belarus. The country's Catholics are concentrated in western Belarus, which prior to World War II was part of Poland. In 1991 in Hrodna (Horadnia, Grodno) Region, the Diocese of Hrodna was established. Slightly over half of the region's population are Catholics and many identify as ethnic Poles. Following the ban on the official use of Polish in postwar Soviet Belarus, the aforementioned region's population gained an education in Belarusian and Russian, as channeled through the Cyrillic alphabet. Hence, following the 1991 independence of Belarus, the population's knowledge of the Latin alphabet was none, or minimal. For the sake of providing the faithful with Polish-language religious material that would be of some practical use, the diocesan authorities decided to publish some Polish-language prayer books, but printed in the Russian-style Cyrillic. This currently widespread use of Cyrillic-based Polish-language publications in Belarus remains unknown outside the country, either in Poland or elsewhere in Europe.

**Keywords:** Belarusian language, Cyrillic, Latin alphabet, Diocese of Hrodna (Horadnia, Grodno), nationalism, Polish language, religion, politics of script, Russian language.

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## Introduction

From the early modern period to this day, a variety of languages and scripts have been employed across the territory which today lies within the Belarusian frontiers. Their use and changes in the employment of such official languages and scripts were dictated by the political and ideological (also religious) needs of a variety of polities in which the Belarusian territory (or its parts) used to be included. While in Western Europe and most of Central Europe, the use and widespread acceptance of the Latin alphabet has been unchallenged since the Middle Ages, in the eastern half of Central Europe two or more scripts have been in official (or semi-official) employment since the late Middle Ages. In the territory of what today is Belarus, Arabic, Cyrillic, Latin and Hebrew letters brushed sides. The Cyrillic and Latin alphabets were the most prominent. After World War II, Soviet Belarus's western frontier with Poland and its administrative border with Soviet Lithuania doubled as the scriptural boundary between the Cyrillic and Latin writing systems.

Following the breakup of the Soviet Union, the western borders of Belarus, Russia and Ukraine with the European Union (i.e. Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Slovakia) constitute the scriptural divide between the official use of Cyrillic and Latin letters. Obviously, this cleavage is not absolute, as evidenced by the widespread – though unofficial – employment of Russian in the public life of the Baltic republics (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania) or in Moldova. This article focuses on the as yet rarely noticed rise and practices of Cyrillic-based Polish for religious purposes among the Roman Catholic faithful in the west of post-communist Belarus. Tens of thousands of copies of Polish-language prayer books and other religious material have been published in Cyrillic in Belarus during the last two and a half decades. Yet, to this day the phenomenon of this Polish Cyrillic has not been consciously noticed, let alone researched, be it in Poland or elsewhere in Europe. Poland's libraries seem not to collect this type of publications in Cyrillic-based Polish, while in Belarus scholars do not pay any attention to them, either

### Russian Cyrillic: Between Russification and Pan-Slavism

Between 1772 and 1795, the Habsburgs, Prussia and Russia partitioned Poland-Lithuania. The shares of the Polish-Lithuanian lands in the three powers' possession changed quite dramatically in the course of the Napoleonic wars. Stabilization came in 1815 with the Treaty of Vienna. On its strength, more than four-fifths of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth

found itself in the Russian Empire. The Russian partition zone of Poland-Lithuania consisted of the autonomous (Congress) Kingdom of Poland and the territories directly incorporated into the Russian Empire. The latter were still endowed with a degree of cultural autonomy, including the use of Polish for administrative and educational purposes. On the other hand, the Congress Kingdom, often dubbed “Russian Poland,” was in personal union with the Russian Empire until 1832. The Russian tsar ruled in this kingdom as the Polish king. The Congress Kingdom was also the first-ever polity in which the position of Polish as the official language was formally enshrined in the constitution (*Charte*, 1815, Art. 28). (Interestingly, the original of this kingdom’s constitution was drawn up in French.)

Following the Polish-Lithuanian nobility’s two uprisings against the tsar in 1830-1831 and 1863-1864, the autonomous provisions were cancelled, respectively, in the directly incorporated territories and the Congress Kingdom. Russian replaced Polish in administration and education, while the Congress Kingdom was also directly incorporated into the Russian Empire. However, after the first uprising, in 1844, it was proposed to replace the Latin alphabet with Cyrillic for writing and publishing in Polish in the Congress Kingdom, and potentially across the entirety of Russia’s partition zone of Poland-Lithuania. The two subsequent projects of a Polish Cyrillic completed in 1845 and 1852 were rejected before the third was accepted in 1852, yielding a Polish-language book of sample Cyrillic-based texts printed in St Petersburg (Strycharska-Brzezina, 2006, pp. 11–27).

This project petered out soon, with no promised Polish-language school textbooks in Cyrillic produced until after the 1863-1864 uprising. Immediately in 1864, the use of the (Polish-style) Latin alphabet for writing and publishing in the Baltic language of Lithuanian was banned, and replaced with Cyrillic. Although such a swift imposition was possible in the case of the fledgling Lithuanian-language book production, replacing the Latin alphabet for publishing in Polish required more planning. In 1865 the first-ever Polish-language primer in Cyrillic for the first grade of elementary school came off the press in St Petersburg. In 1866 another edition of this primer was followed by four other elementary school textbooks in the Cyrillic-based Polish. Apart from the 1865 first edition of the aforementioned primer, all these textbooks were already published in Warsaw. Subsequent editions of two such textbooks appeared in 1867, while in 1869 the third (and last recorded) edition of this primer was published. Subsequently, the idea of Cyrillic-based book production in Polish was dropped in favor of the full replacement of Polish with Russian in all aspects of public life across Russia’s partition zone of former Poland-Lithuania (Strycharska-Brzezina, 2006, pp. 32–38). However, as an intermediary step in this direction, a bilingual

Polish-Russian primer of the Russian language (or rather a textbook of Russian for Polish-speaking schoolchildren) was published in Warsaw in 1873, and the second edition came off the press three years later. A version of Polish Cyrillic was employed in both editions, alongside regular Polish in Latin letters (Strycharska-Brzezina, 2006, pp. 46–47).

The Warsaw-born Russian linguist Aleksandr Gilferding (Alexander Hilferding) was involved in the project of developing Polish Cyrillic during the latter half of the 1860s. At that time, pan-Slavic ideas gained currency across the Russian Empire, and many believed that all the Slavic languages should be written in a single pan-Slavic alphabet. In their view, this pan-Slavic alphabet should be a form of Russian Cyrillic (Grazhdanka), enriched with some diacritical letters. Gilferding even composed a book of sample texts in the Slavic languages printed in such a pan-Slavic Cyrillic alphabet (Gil'ferding, 1871). Three decades later, in the wake of Russia's crushing defeat at the hands of the Japanese in 1905 that triggered the 1905 Revolution, all the restrictions were lifted on publishing in the Russian Empire's languages and their various scripts. Russification and pan-Slavic projects were over for the time being.

## Belarus During the Great War and in the Interwar Period

During World War I, already in 1915, the Central Powers seized and occupied Russia's western borderlands, from Livonia (Latvia) to Bessarabia (Moldova). In what today is Belarus, western Latvia, Lithuania and Poland's region of Białystok (Biełastok), Germany founded the semi-colonial polity of Ober Ost ("Upper East"). The German administration banned Russian and Cyrillic. In their stead, German was made the paramount official language of Ober Ost. In practice, however, Polish was a more readily comprehensible lingua franca in this area, and often had to be employed instead of German. However, Berlin wanted to prevent the incorporation of Ober Ost into any postwar Polish nation-state. Hence, in place of Russian and Polish, the German administration introduced, for the first time ever in history, the official use of Belarusian, Lithuanian, Latvian and Yiddish in local administration and education (cf. Kozhinova, 2017, p. 134). Lithuanian and Latvian were written and employed in their preferred versions of the Latin alphabet, while Yiddish in Hebrew letters. Initially, only the Latin alphabet was employed for writing and publishing in Belarusian, but soon a tradition of the prewar biscriptualism was reintroduced for Belarusian-language publications, namely, Latin letters for Uniates (Greek Catholics) and Roman Catholics, and Cyrillic for the Orthodox faithful (cf. *Das Land Ober Ost*, 1917; *Sieben-Sprachen-Wörterbuch*, 1918).

At the end of World War I, in ethnically Belarusian territory (cf. Karskii, 1903–1922), the Belarusians, Bolsheviks (communists, typically ethnic Russians [*Russkie*]), Germans, Lithuanians and Poles struggled for control of this area (or its parts). With the Treaty of Riga (1921) that concluded the Polish-Bolshevik War (1919–1921), Belarus was sundered between Poland and Bolshevik Russia. The following year, Bolshevik Russia was transformed into the Soviet Union (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics), and Soviet (eastern) Belarus was made into one of this communist polity's constitutive republics (Marková, 2018, p. 29). During all this time, the use of multiple languages in local administration and education, as already introduced in Ober Ost, continued. Obviously, with the coming of the Bolsheviks, Russian was reintroduced to this mix (Traczuk, 1992, pp. 202–203).

Part and parcel of Bolshevik Russia's effort to attract ethnically non-Russian populations to the revolution was the policy of "struggling against Great Russian chauvinism." Hence, previously suppressed written languages were (re)introduced in the function of media of administration and education, while non-written (oral) languages were speedily endowed with a written form and deployed for the same purposes. Each Soviet republic obtained its own "titular" (national, ethnic) language, while Russian was pushed to a secondary position outside the Soviet Union's largest administrative unit of the Russian (*Rossiiskii*) Soviet Federative Socialist Republic. Over a hundred languages were elevated like this across the length and breadth of the interwar Soviet Union (Alpatov, 2000; Martin, 2001, p. 167), where over 17,000 (this is not an error, yes, *more than seventeen thousand*) autonomous ethnic territorial units were also formed (Martin, 2001, p. 413). The Bolsheviks employed the Latin alphabet for endowing with letters the languages newly reduced to writing, and replaced the Arabic writing system with the Latin script for writing the languages of Muslim ethnic groups in the Caucasus and central Asia (Khansuvarov, 1932; Smith, 1998), i.e. around 260 languages in total between 1922 and 1932 (Martin, 2001, p. 203). There was also a plan to replace Cyrillic with the Latin script for writing Belarusian, Russian and Ukrainian. But it was never implemented, on account of the fact that such a move would have made Czech- and Polish-language publications from "capitalist Czechoslovakia and Poland," respectively, readily available to Slavophone Soviet citizens. This would have been an unwanted ideological influence (cf. Alpatov, 2006; Martin, 2001, pp. 205–206; *Materialy*, 1930). Anyway, in 1936 the policy of Latinization was reversed, and the vast majority of the previously Latinized languages were endowed with Cyrillic alphabets by the early 1940s (Sinitsyn, 2018, p. 14).

As a result, in Soviet Belarus Belarusian-language publications were always produced exclusively in Cyrillic letters. However, the *biscriptual*

production of Belarusian-language publications continued in interwar Poland. Out of almost 500 Belarusian-language books and brochures published in the country during this period, over a fifth (around 120) were printed in Latin letters (Turonek, 2000, pp. 57–79). During the same time, 10,500 Belarusian-language book titles came off the press in Soviet Belarus, or over 500 per annum (Nikałajeŭ, Doŭnar, Łukoŭskaja, & Matulski, 2011, p. 211; Turonek, 2000, p. 13). Hence, in the overall total of 11,000 Belarusian-language books and pamphlets published between the two world wars, those printed in Latin script amounted to a mere 1 percent. The staggering difference in the production of Belarusian-language publications for about the same numbers of inhabitants (about 4 million people) in the Polish and Soviet sections of Belarus was caused by Warsaw’s and Moscow’s starkly different approaches to the phenomenon of ethnicity. In Poland, the aim was to reduce any provisions for ethnic non-Poles and their languages in the quest for an ethnolinguistically homogenous nation-state (Tomaszewski, 1985). On the other hand, in the Soviet Union, the policy of *korenizatsiia* (nativization, indigenization) encouraged the wide public use of numerous languages other than Russian. This Soviet policy lasted from the early 1920s to the turn of the 1930s, and was finally wrapped up in 1938, when Russian became an obligatory school subject across the entire Soviet Union. Likewise the huge number of autonomous ethnic territorial units was rolled back to a mere 51 in 1939 (Martin, 2001, p. 446).

*Korenizatsiia* lasted in Soviet Belarus between 1924 and 1929 (Marková, 2018, p. 26). The majority of monographs devoted to this period focus on Belarusianization, or the policy of turning Belarusian into a full-fledged language of administration, education and public life (cf. Marková, 2012). However, interwar Soviet Belarus was unique among all the Soviet Union’s republics in that it was officially *quadrilingual* between 1924 and 1938. Polish, Russian and Yiddish were the republic’s co-official languages side by side with Belarusian (Kozhinova, 2017, pp. 134, 152). The Bolsheviks declared such official quadrilingualism for Soviet Belarus already in 1920, and formally enshrined it in the 1927 republican constitution of Soviet Belarus (Kozhinova, 2017, p. 133).

After 1938, Belarus was officially *bilingual*, in Belarusian and Russian. Polish and Yiddish made a brief reappearance between 1939 and 1941. In the wake of the German-Soviet pact, Germany and the Soviet Union partitioned Poland in 1939. As a result, Soviet Belarus was enlarged with Poland’s section of ethnographic Belarus, typically known as “Western Belarus.” This move required some use of Polish and Yiddish there prior to Germany’s 1941 attack on the Soviet Union. The area’s Belarusians were mostly literate in Polish rather than in Belarusian (let alone Russian), while some Poles and

numerous Jews lived there, too. After World War II, no official use of Polish or Yiddish was reintroduced in postwar Soviet Belarus, or its western (formerly Polish) half (Dzwonkowski, 2016, pp. 10–12; Grędzik, 2013).

What is not sufficiently emphasized in literature is the fact that, besides being officially quadrilingual, interwar Soviet Belarus was also officially *triscrptual*. Cyrillic was employed for writing and publishing in Belarusian and Russian, the Hebrew script for Yiddish, while Latin letters for Polish. Unfortunately, interwar Soviet Belarus's policies of *korenizatsiia* for Belarusian (Marková, 2012), Polish (Grek-Pabisowa, Ostrówka, & Biesiadowska-Magdziarz, 2008) and Yiddish (Bemporad, 2013) are researched separately in their own right, as if the republic's population was not multilingual, multiscrptual and adept at crossing languages and scripts. To my knowledge, there is just a single article which presents and analyzes interwar Soviet Belarus's official quadrilingualism and triscrptualism in a holistic manner (Kozhinova, 2017). More research is badly needed on the phenomena of multilingualism and multiscrptualism in interwar Soviet Belarus.

## Independent Belarus and the New Polish Cyrillic

Following the breakup of the Soviet Union, Belarus gained independence in 1991. Part and parcel of this process was the revival of the country's minorities, including the Polish community. Although, in line with Polish nationalism which is ethnolinguistic in character, the Polish nation is typically defined as all the native speakers of the Polish language, in western Belarus this definition does not really hold, due to the inherent closeness of Belarusian and Polish. Hence, in reality, religion functions there as the main marker of ethnicity. In a given village or town, the inhabitants speak the same local dialect. However, on a confessional basis, Roman Catholics see their local dialect as part of the Polish language, while their Orthodox (and Uniate) counterparts as part of the Belarusian language. What is more, after the 1995 introduction of Russian as the country's co-official language, the majority of Belarusian citizens use Russian for any official or administrative business. Most Belarusian schools also offer education in the medium of Russian, rather than in that of Belarusian (Engelking, 1999).

The territory of western Belarus was formally included in the interwar Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Wilno/Vilnius during the communist period. In 1991, this archdiocese's Belarusian part was refashioned into the Diocese of Hrodna (Horadnia, Grodno), which is coterminous with Hrodna Region (*Diecezja*, 2011). About 1.4 million Roman Catholics constitute 15 percent of Belarus's population of 9.5 million. Over a third of the country's Catholics, or 590,000, live in the Diocese of Hrodna. In turn, this diocese's

Catholics constitute 55 percent of the population in Hrodna Region (*Dioceses*, 2009). Half of this diocese's Catholics, or about 230,000, identify themselves as Poles. They account for a quarter of the inhabitants of Hrodna Region, and for four-fifths of all members of Belarus's Polish minority of 294,000 persons. However, as many as 171,000 and 100,000 of these self-declared Poles, respectively, give Belarusian and Russian as their first (native) languages. Hence, only 16,000 (5 percent) Belarusian Poles declare Polish as their first (native) language (*Naselenie*, 2009).

However, despite the fact that slightly more than a fifth of Belarus's Roman Catholics are Poles, in 85 percent of cases Catholic liturgy and prayers are conducted in Polish (Dzwonkowski, 2016, p. 13). However, 16,000 Polish-speaking Poles amount to just slightly more than 1 percent of all of the country's Catholics. This has led to a serious disjunction between the faithful's language competence and the preferred language of liturgy and pastoral service. In spite of official statistics' use of the categories of Belarusian, Polish and Russian for describing the relevant population's language use, in reality they speak the same local dialects, all highly influenced by ubiquitous Russian. Orally, Belarus's Slavophone Catholics have no big problems with following Polish-language liturgy, Russian-language television, or Belarusian-language radio programs. But nowadays, in the age of full literacy, the devotional practices of the Roman Catholic Church are strongly connected to printed material.

It turns out that this preference for literacy in day-to-day ecclesiastical life creates a serious barrier for the faithful in the form of the Polish-style Latin alphabet. The already scant knowledge of this alphabet in eastern Belarus largely disappeared in the 1930s and 1940s, and after World War II in western Belarus. The written roles of the Polish and Belarusian Latin scripts were fully taken over by the Cyrillic alphabets of Russian and Belarusian. Eventually, the dominance of Russian and its form of Cyrillic became overwhelming after 1995. As a result, the Diocese of Hrodna developed Polish-language devotional literature printed with the use of the "Russian alphabet," meaning the Russian-style Cyrillic (Dzwonkowski, 2016, p. 17; Rudkouski, 2009, p. 200). Polish activists and priests, especially those originating from Poland, see it as a stopgap measure for ensuring pastoral service in the faithful's preferred language. On the other hand, the young generation see it as an unwanted Polonizing imposition, which is to the detriment of the use of the Belarusian language, already endangered by the dominance of Russian (Dzwonkowski, 2016, pp. 17–18; Rudkouski, 2009, pp. 201–202).

From a historical perspective, it may be observed that between 1832 and 1991, the imperial Russian and then Soviet authorities employed Cyrillic in what today is the territory of Belarus to lessen the use and influence

of Polish and its Latin alphabet, before they were finally replaced with Russian (and Belarusian) and Cyrillic. After the end of communism, in independent Belarus, Cyrillic is employed to revive the use of Polish in (especially western) Belarus, in an expectation that after some transitional period, the faithful and the Polish minority will start reading and writing this language in its mainstream Latin alphabet. Thus far, the transitional period has extended for almost three decades, with no switch to the Latin alphabet in sight. Perhaps the situation will continue and coalesce as a new norm of monoscriptual multilingualism, meaning the (semi-)official use of Belarusian, Polish and Russian, all written in Cyrillic. The Polish language as the leading language of liturgy and church life will be written and read in Russian Cyrillic, while in other aspects of public and private life the faithful will use mainly Russian, and sometimes Belarusian. Thus, on the printed page the emerging triglossia of Belarusian, Polish and Russian will be masked to an outsider by the uniform employment of Cyrillic.

Strangely, as yet the unexpected rise of book production in the Cyrillic-based Polish language has not been noticed, let alone commented upon, in Poland itself. The country's main Biblioteka Narodowa (National Library) in Warsaw does not even collect such Polish-language publications printed in Cyrillic. However, whatever one may think of this development, for better or worse, both the Latin alphabet and Cyrillic have been employed for writing and publishing in Polish during the last two and a half decades. Since the 1990s Polish has become a de facto biscriptual language. Obviously, Cyrillic-based books in Polish are a minority pursuit, like Belarusian-language publications printed in Latin letters. However, in the latter case, Belarusian activists see the *Łacinka* (Belarusian Latin alphabet) as an important symbol of Belarusianness and an instrument of opposing the spread of the Russian language, entailed by the Kremlin's espousal of the neo-imperial ideology of *Russkii Mir* ("Russian World") (Dubaviec, 2017).

It appears that to the typical Polish patriot's eye the Cyrillic-based Polish language in today's Belarus is something "shameful," better to be concealed (Krysztopik, private communication, 2019). The Polish government seems to be tacitly accepting the situation. The waiting game is the possibility of waiving the visa regime for Belarusian citizens wishing to travel to and work in the European Union. Such a *bezzviz* ("no-visa") travel regime was introduced in Ukraine already in 2017. If this hope is realized in the case of Belarus, subsequently, Belarusian citizens traveling to Poland for employment, education, shopping or holidays are bound to master the Polish-style Latin alphabet swiftly. Afterward, it would not be really necessary to produce Polish-language religious books in Cyrillic any longer.

## Polish Cyrillic: An Overview

It is difficult to ascertain the size and intensity of Polish-language book production in Cyrillic, because library catalogs in Belarus offer confusing bibliographic entries on such publications. Their language is variously classified as “Belarusian,” “Polish,” or “Russian,” the categories of language and script confused and employed inconsistently. In June 2018, in Hrodna, I bought three books of this type, which I use for the provisional description and analysis of Belarus’s Polish Cyrillic, namely:

A

Жельветро, Витольд / *Zhel'vetro, Vitol'd* [=Żelwetro, Witold], ed. 2010. *Спевник костельны* *Spevnik kostel'ny* [=Śpiewnik kościelny] [Hymnal] [3rd edition]. Гродно Hrodno [=Hrodna]: Гродзенская дзяцэзія Рымска-каталіцкага Касцёла ў Рэспубліцы Беларусь Hrodzienskaja dyjacezija Rymaska-katalickaha Kascioła ў Respublicy Biełaruś. ISBN 9789856724704. A5-size, 156 pages.

B

Крыштопik, Тадэвуш / *Kryshstopik, Tadevush* [=Krysztopik, Tadeusz]. 2015. *Pacierz. Katechizm* [Prayers. Catechism] (4th edition). Гродно Hrodno [=Hrodna]: Гродзенская дзяцэзія Рымска-каталіцкага Касцёла ў Рэспубліцы Беларусь Hrodzienskaja dyjacezija Rymaska-katalickaha Kascioła ў Respublicy Biełaruś. ISBN 9789856940760. A5-size, 36 pages.

C

Силиневич, Ирена / *Silinevich, Irena* [=Siliniewicz, Irena] and Верная, Рэната / *Vernaia, Renata* [=Wiernaja, Renata], eds. 2018. *W Tobie nasza nadzieja. Modlitewnik / В тебе наша надежда. Молитвенник V tebe nasha nadezhda. Molitvennik* [You Are Our Hope: A Prayer Book]. Гродно Grodna [=Hrodna]: Гродненская епархия Римско-католической Церкви в Республике Беларусь Grodnenskaia eparkhiia Rymsko-katolicheskoi Tserkvi v Respublike Belarus'. ISBN 9789857132034. B6-size, 560 pages.

According to the catalog of the National Library of Belarus in Minsk, the three editions of the *Hymnal* (A) were published in a total print run of 20,000 copies. The four editions of the *Catechism* (B) were published in a total print run of about 10,000 copies, and the ten editions of the *Prayer Book* (C) in a total print run of about 60,000 copies. Hence, at least 90,000 copies of Polish-language religious books printed in Cyrillic were published during the last two decades for the Catholic faithful in the Diocese of Hrodna. This means that each Catholic family there has at least one copy of such a publication. However, this is a conservative estimate, because a full bibliography of all such book titles in Polish Cyrillic still needs to be compiled.

## ПАДНИЙМЫ НА ТВАЖ

Падниймы на тваж, удэжмы чолэм,  
 Ту хшэсцяяне, зэбрани сполэм  
 З покорон шчэром, плачэм и вярор,  
 Пшэд Збавицеля страшном офярор.

Благамы Цебе, Езу наш дроги!  
 Выслухай модлы, удзель час блогы,  
 Блогослав нашэ домоство цалэ,  
 Уродзай в полю, плёны немалэ.

Блогослав, просим, Край наш докола  
 И цалы наруд, ктуры вцёнж вола  
 До Цебе, Божэ, цо мешкаш в небе,  
 Бысь нас оцалил в каждэй потшэбе.

Дай здравье, милосьць, покуй и згодэн,  
 А душом в чысьцу вечном охлодэн;  
 Нех доброць Твоя вшыстких обдажа  
 Пшэз Тен Офярэн Сьвентом олтажа.

Падниймы на тваж! Тысь милосерны,  
 Езу найслодшы, в хвале незмерны!  
 Пшыим нас в опекаэн, склонь сэрацэ Твое  
 И на страпёных звруць очы свое!

О добры Езу! Благамы Цебе:  
 Удзель нам ласки в каждэй потшэбе,  
 Дай ту на зэми Цебе миловаць,  
 А в небе вечне з Тобом крулёваць.

Fig. 1 *Hymnal* (A): Sample page (Zhel'vetro, 2010)

The *Hymnal* (A) is printed fully in Polish Cyrillic. Its intended function is pretty obvious, namely, to enable the faithful to participate in the mass through singing. The phonetic transcription of the Polish-language texts of church songs does *not* require any formal knowledge of Polish written in its Latin script, nor of the actual meaning of the songs.

## ZNAK KRZYŻA ŚWIĘTEGO

Знак кшыжа Съвентэго

W imię Ojca i Syna, i Ducha Świętego. Amen.

В име Ойца и Сына, и Духа Съвентэго. Амэн.

## MODLITWA PAŃSKA

Модлитва Паньска

Ojczy nasz, któryś jest w niebie, święć się Imię  
Ойчэ наш, ктурысь ест в небе, съвенць се Име

Twoje, przyjdź Królestwo Twoje, bądź wola Twoja, jako  
Твое, пшыйдзь Крулество Твое, боньдзь воля Твоя, яко  
w niebie tak i na ziemi. Chleba naszego powszedniego  
в небе так и на земи. Хлеба нашэго повшэднего дай  
daj nam dzisiaj. I odpuść nam nasze winy, jako i my  
нам дзисяй. И одпусць нам нашэ вины, яко и мы  
odpuszczamy naszym winowajcom. I nie wódź nas na  
одпушчамы нашым виновайцом. И не вудзь нас на  
pokuszenie, ale nas zbaw ode złego. Amen.  
покушэне, але нас збав одэ злэго. Амэн.

## POZDROWIENIE ANIELSKIE

Поздровене Анельске

Zdrowaś Maryjo, łaski pełna, Pan z Tobą.

Здравась Марыё, ласки пэлна, Пан з Тобо.

Błogosławionaś Ty między niewiastami i błogosławiony  
Блогославёнась Ты мендзы невястами и блогославёны  
owoc żywota Twojego, Jezus. Święta Maryjo, Matko  
овоц жывота Твоего, Езус. Съвента Марыё, Матко  
Boża, módl się za nami grzesznymi teraz i w godzinę  
Божа, мудь се за нами гжэшными тэраз и в годзинэ  
śmierci naszej. Amen.  
сьмерци нашэй. Амэн.

Fig. 2 *Catechism* (B): Sample page (Kryshtopik, 2015)

The *Catechism* (B) gives the Polish text in Latin letters with its interlineal phonetic rendition in Cyrillic. The function is to teach the basics of the Roman Catholic religion to children. Perhaps the hope is that on the basis of their school knowledge of the Russian-style Cyrillic, children may progress to mastering the Polish Latin script to the level of fluent reading in this language without the prop of Polish Cyrillic.

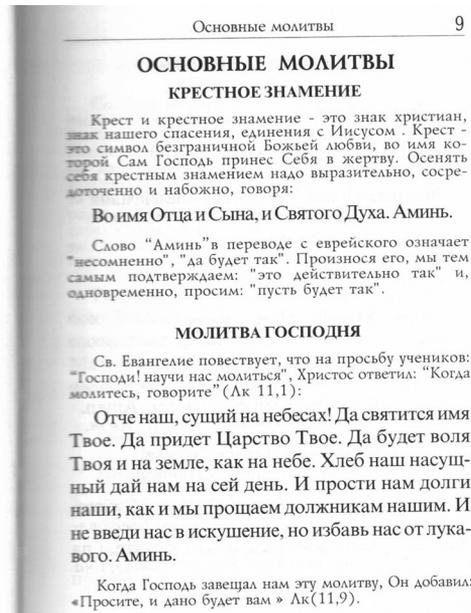
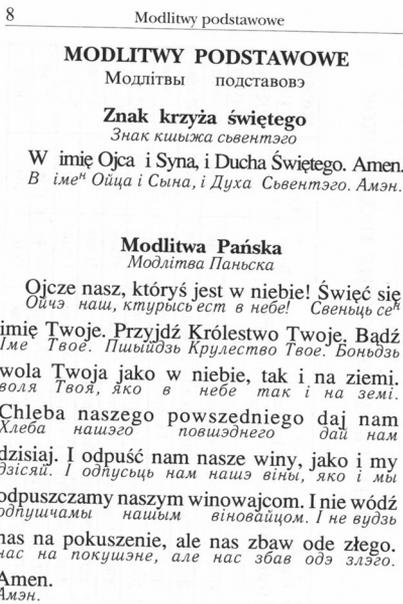


Fig. 3 *Prayer Book* (C): Sample page (Silinevich & Vernaia, 2018)

Like the *Catechism* (B), the *Prayer Book* (C) offers the Polish text in Latin letters with its interlineal phonetic transcription into Cyrillic. In addition, on the right-side page, the Russian-language translation of the text is provided. This *Prayer Book* (C) enables schoolchildren to progress from reading and writing in Polish, as enabled by the *Catechism* (B), to the actual meaning of prayers and religious principles. Likewise, any curious adult may use the *Prayer Book* (C) to go beyond the mere phonetic singing in Polish, as enabled by the *Hymnal* (A), to reading Polish in its Latin alphabet, and to comprehending the songs.

As remarked above, Polish Cyrillic employed in these publications is based on the Russian-style Cyrillic. Obviously, Belarusian being much closer to the Polish language than Russian, it would be easier to employ the Belarusian-style Cyrillic for this purpose. What is more, Belarusian Cyrillic closely corresponds to the Belarusian Latin alphabet, which is related to the Polish alphabet (see the letters [ć, ł, ń, ś, ź]), though with some elements drawn from the Czech Latin script (see the letters [č, š, ž]). Nowadays in Polish there is no distinction in the pronunciation of [ch] and [h], both uttered as /x/. However, in Belarusian, Czech, Slovak and Belarus's eastern Polish, the distinction is maintained, [ch] pronounced as /x/, while [h] as /ɣ/. In Russian this distinction does not exist either, and like in Polish only /x/ is employed in pronunciation, as indicated by the Cyrillic letter [x]. The

Russian letter [r] indicates the consonant /g/, though it is /ɣ/ in the case of Belarusian Cyrillic. In traditional Belarusian spelling the phoneme /g/ may be rendered with the Cyrillic letter [r] for the sake of clarity, or the task is left to the reader, who then must discern when the Cyrillic [r] should be pronounced as /g/ or /ɣ/.

The choice of the Russian-style Cyrillic for Polish Cyrillic may have been dictated by the runaway popularity of Russian across all of Belarus in the wake of the 1995 adoption of Russian as the country's co-official language. However, every Belarusian citizen is taught to and expected to be able to read Belarusian Cyrillic. Hence, another explanation of the aforementioned choice may be a stereotypical Polish disdain for Belarusian, while on the other hand, a grudging respect for the imperial tongue of Russian. In this scheme of thinking about languages and power, Polish is posed as “more equal” with Russian than with “inferior” (*pagan*) Belarusian (Rudkouski, 2009, p. 202). Ironically, in the eyes of proponents of the ideology of *Russkii Mir*, Polish is as “insignificant” as Belarusian.

## Parallels and Antecedents

Historically speaking, the use of the Belarusian Latin alphabet continued after World War II among Belarusian Catholics and Uniates in diaspora, mainly in Western Europe and North America (Fig. 4). In Europe the tradition of prayer and liturgy in the original language of the scripture survives to this day among Jews. This requirement gave rise to the ubiquitous genre of the Jewish prayer book with Hebrew prayers rendered (transcribed) phonetically in a language of a given European country. Sometimes these phonetic renderings of Hebrew prayers are also accompanied by translations into such a European language (Fig. 5). The tradition also continues in the Orthodox Church, where the Church Slavonic translation of the Bible and prayers in this language are seen as canonic. In contemporary Poland, Orthodox Christians avail themselves of prayer books with Church Slavonic prayers printed in Church (Old) Cyrillic, and accompanied by Polish phonetical renderings of these prayers, alongside their Polish translations (Fig. 6). In today's Russia, prayer books of this type most popularly give the Church Slavonic original and its Russian translation in *Grazhdanka* (modern Cyrillic). As a result, the Church Slavonic original is rather a transliteration into Russian (Fig. 7). However, Church Slavonic prayer books entirely in Church Cyrillic (and with no translation) are also produced (Fig. 8).

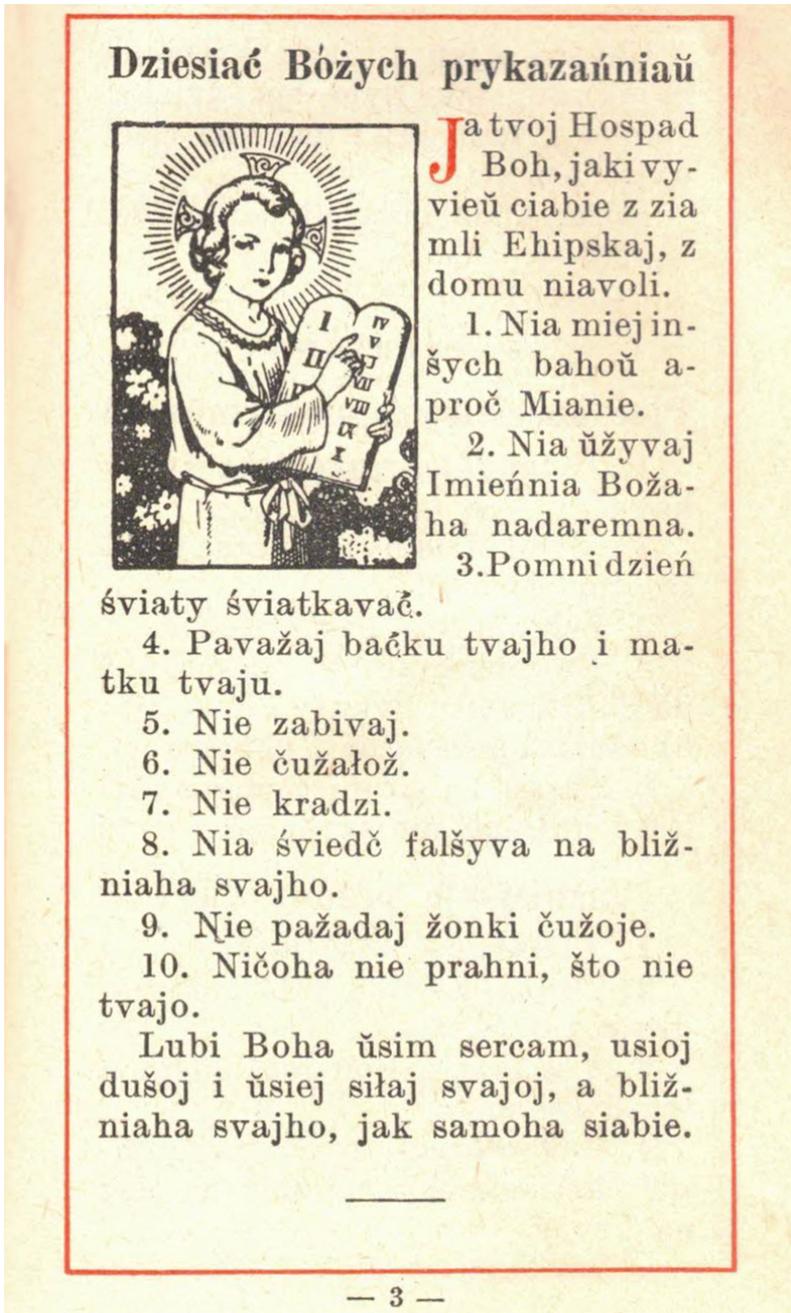


Fig. 4 Sample page from the Latin alphabet-based Belarusian prayer book *Hołas dušy* for the Belarusian diaspora (Stepovič, 1949)

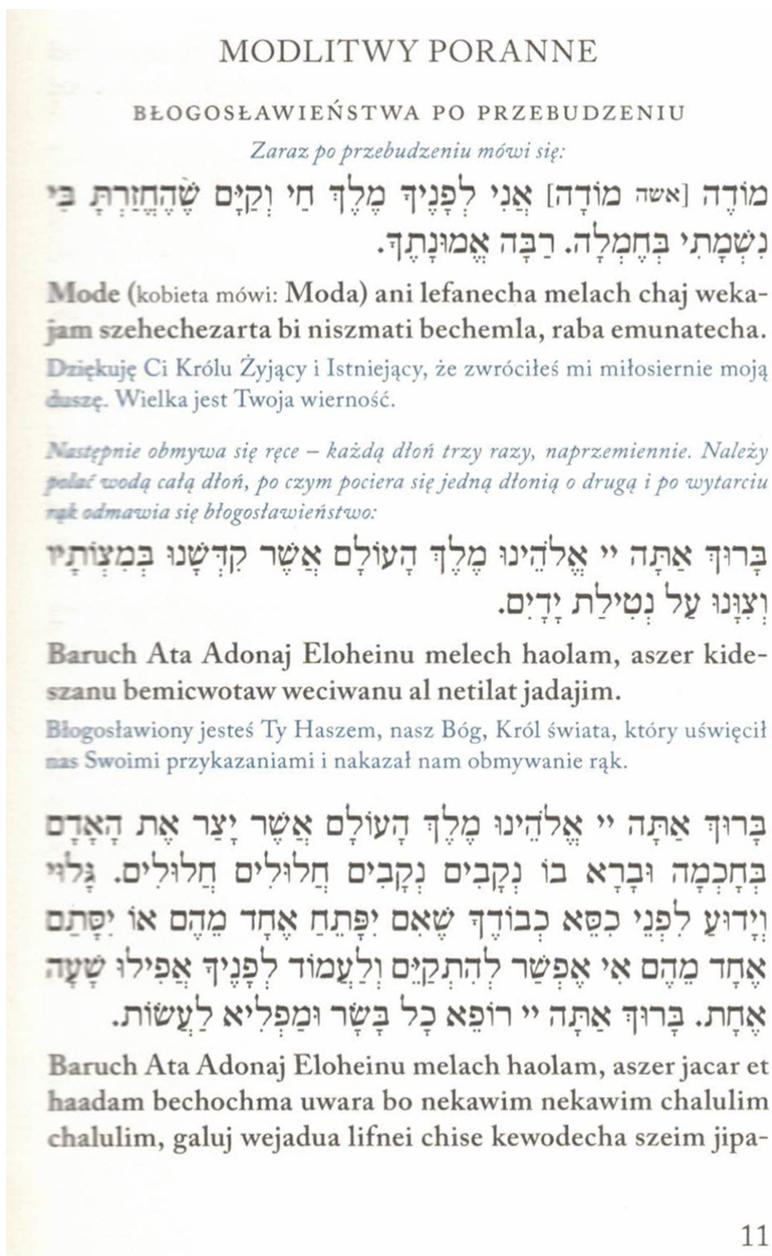


Fig. 5a Sample page from the Jewish prayer book *Błogosławieństwa i krótkie modlitwy* with Hebrew prayers followed by their transcriptions and translations into Polish (Pash, 2007)

سُورَةُ آلِ عِمْرَانَ مَدَنِيَّةٌ وَهِيَ مِائَتَا آيَةٌ

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Bismillâhîr rahmânîr rahîym

**آل-İ İMRÂN SÜRESİ\***  
Medine'de inmiştir. 200 âyettir.  
\*Süresin 33. âyetinde geçen Âl-İmrân, süreye adını vermiştir. İmrân, Hz. Meryem (a.s.)'in babasının adı olup, peygamberlik ve hikmet ocaklarından olan bir ailenin esasidir.

**Bismillâhîrrahmânîrrahîm**  
1. Elif, Lâm, Mîm.  
2. Allah! Başka tanrı yok; ancak O, Hayy O, Kayyum O.  
3-4. O sana kitabı hak ile indirmekte; önündekileri bir doğrulayıcı olmak üzere ki: Onceden insanlara hidayet için Tevrat'ı ve İncil'i indirmişti; bir de ayırt eden furkân'ı indirdi. Allah'ın âyetlerini tanımayanlar (yok mu), şüphesiz onlara şiddetli bir azap var. Öyle ya, Allah'ın izzeti var, intikamı var.  
\*Furkân: Hakki bâttîdan, hayr şerden, doğruyu eğrîden ayıran anlamında olarak Kur'an-ı Kerim'in isimlerinden bindir.  
5. Allah!.. Şüphesiz ki O'na, ne yerde ve ne gökte hiçbir şey gizli kalmaz.  
6. Rahimlerde sizi dilediği keyfiyette tasvir eden O. Başka tanrı yok; ancak O, Azîz O, Hakîm O.  
7. O'dur indiren sana bu muazzam kitabı (ki), bunun bir kısım âyetleri vardır muhkemler\*; -onlar ümmül-kitap / ana kitap- diğer bir takımları da müteşâbihlerdir\*. Ama kalplerinde bir yamukluk bulunanlar, sadece onun müteşâbih olanlarının ardına düşerler; fitne aramak, (kendî arzularına göre) yorumunu aramak için. Halbuki onun (gerçek) yorumunu ancak Allah bilir, lîmede derinleşmiş olanlar da derler ki: "Biz imân ettik, hepsi Rabbinizden." Mâmafih özü temiz olanlardan başkası düşünemez.  
\*Muhkem: Anlamlı açık, kesin, ifade ettiği mânâ tek olup, açıklanması için başka delile ihtiyaç olmayan demektir.  
\*\*Müteşâbih: Birden fazla mânâ ihtimali olduğundan, anlaşılması için başka delile ihtiyaç hissettiren, mânâsı hakkında kesin bir hüküm verilemeyen âyettir.  
8. "Ey Rabbimiz! Bizleri hidâyetine erdirdikten sonra kalplerimizi yamultma da katından bize bir rahmet ihsan eyle! Şüphesiz sensin bütün dielikleri veren Vehhâb sen!"  
9. "Ey Rabbimiz! Muhakkak ki sen insanları geleceğinde hiç şüphe olmayan bir günde toplayacaksın." Şüphesiz ki Allah vaat ettiği günün vaktini şaşırmaz.

اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْحَيُّ الْقَيُّومُ ۚ نَزَّلَ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ

aleykel kitâbe Nezele hüvel hayyül kayyüm illâ lâ ilâhe Allâhü Elif lâm mîm

وَالْحَقِّي مُصَدِّقًا لِمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَأَنْزَلَ التَّوْرَةَ وَالْإِنْجِيلَ ۚ

vel incil ve enzelet tevrâte yedeyhi beyne limâ müsaddikal bil hakk

رَبِّ قَبْلَ هُدَىٰ لِلنَّاسِ وَأَنْزَلَ الْفُرْقَانَ ۖ إِنَّ الْبَلَدَيْنِ لَكَا فِرَاقًا ۗ وَإِلَٰهَاتُ الْغَايِبِ

bi âyâtillâhi keferü innellezîne ve enzelet furkân lin nâsi hüdel kabû Min

لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ ذُو انْتِقَامٍ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَخْفَىٰ

lâ yahfâ innallâhe züntikâm azizün vallâhü şedid azâbün lehüm

عَلَيْهِ شَيْءٌ ۗ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا فِي السَّمَاءِ ۗ هُوَ الَّذِي يُصَوِّرُكُمْ

yûsavvirküm Hüvellezî fis semâ' ve lâ fil arđi şey'un aleyhi

فِي الْأَرْحَامِ خَلْقًا يَشَاءُ ۗ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ۚ

hüvel azizül hakîm illâ lâ ilâhe yeşâ' keyfe fil erhâmi

هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ مِنْهُ آيَاتٌ مُحْكَمَاتٌ هُنَّ

hüne muhkemâtün âyâtüm minhü aleykel kitâbe enzele Hüvellezî

أُمُّ الْكِتَابِ وَأُخْرَىٰ مُتَشَابِهَاتٌ ۗ فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ زَيْغٌ

zeyğün kulûbihim fi fe emmellezîne müteşâbihât ve üharu ümmül kitâbi

فَيَتَّبِعُونَ مَا تَشَابَهَ مِنْهُ ابْتِغَاءَ الْفِتْنَةِ وَابْتِغَاءَ تَأْوِيلِهِ ۗ وَمَا يَعْلَمُ

fe'yemü ve mâ te'vilih vebtigâe minhübtigâel fitneti teşâbehe mâ fe yettebiüne

تَأْوِيلَهُ إِلَّا اللَّهُ ۗ وَالرَّاسِخُونَ فِي الْعِلْمِ يَقُولُونَ إِنَّمَا يُرِيكُمُ شَيْئًا مِنْ عِنْدِ

indi min küllüm bihi âmennâ yekülüne fil ilmi ver râsihüne illallâh te'vilehü

رَبِّكُمْ ۗ وَمَا يَذَّكَّرُ إِلَّا أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ ۗ رَبَّنَا لَا تُزِغْ قُلُوبَنَا بَعْدَ إِذْ

iz ba'de kulûbenâ lâ tuzig Rabbenâ ülû elâb illâ yezzekkeru ve mâ rabbinâ

عَدَدْتَنَا وَهَبْ لَنَا مِنْ لَدُنْكَ رَحْمَةً ۗ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْوَهَّابُ ۗ رَبَّنَا إِنَّكَ

inneke Rabbenâ entel vehhâb inneke rahmeh ledünke mil lenâ ve heb hedeytenâ

جَامِعِ النَّاسِ لِيَوْمٍ لَّا رَيْبَ فِيهِ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُخْلِفُ الْمِعَادَ ۗ

lâ yuħlifül miâd innallâhe fiħ lâ raybe li yevmil câmiün nâsi

Fig. 5b Sample page from the Quran for Turkish-speaking faithful *Kur'an-ı Kerim* ve *açıklamalı meâlî* with the Arabic original, color-coded interlineal transcription into Turkish, and a Turkish translation in the margin (Hamdi Yazır, 2013)

O Dobra Matko Dobrego Króla, Najczystsza i Błogosławiona Bogarodzico Maryjo! Miłosierdzie Syna Swego, i Boga naszego skieruj na pełną pożądlivości duszę moja i Twoimi modlitwami naucz mnie czynić dobro, abym bez grzechu przeżył resztę mego życia i dzięki Tobie dostąpił Raju. Jedyna Czysta i Błogosławiona Bogarodzico Panno.



MODLITWA 6  
DO ŚWIĘTEGO ANIOŁA STRÓŻA

Anhiele Christow, chranitielu moj swiatyj i pokrowitielu duszy i tiela mojeho, wsia mi prosti, jelika sohrieszylch wo dniesznyj dień: i ot wsia-kaho lukawstwija protivnaho mi wraha izbawi mia, da ni w kojemzhe hriesie prohniewaju Boha mojeho: no moli za mia hriesznaho i niedostojnaho raba, jako da dostojna mia pokazesz blahosti i miłosti Wsieswiatyja Troicy, i Matierie Hospoda mojeho Iisusa Christa i wsiech swiatych. Amiin.

14

Англе хрѣтовъ, хранителю мой сѣый, и покровителю души и тѣла моего, всѣ ми прости, ѣлика сохрѣшилхъ ко днешній дѣнь: и ѿ всѣкаго лукавствїа противнаго ми врага избави мѧ: да ни въ коемже грѣсѣ прогнѣванъ бѣа моего, но моли за мѧ грѣшнаго и недостойнаго раба, какъ да достоинъ мѧ покажешъ елѧгости и милости свѣтѣлыхъ тѣцъ, и матрє гда моего ииса хрѣта и свѣтѣхъ сѣиыхъ, аминь.

Fig. 6 Sample page from the Orthodox prayer book *Modlitewnik prawosławny* with Church Slavonic prayers (in Church Slavonic) followed by their transcriptions and translations into Polish (Pietkiewicz, 2009)



МОЛИТВЫ УТРЕННИЕ

*Встав от сна, прежде всякого другого дела, стань благоговейно, представляя себя пред Всевидящим Богом, и, совершая крестное знамение, произнеси\*:*

Во имя Отца, и Сына, и Святаго Духа. Аминь.

*Затем немного подожди, пока все чувства твои не придут в тишину и мысли твои не оставят все земное, и тогда произноси следующие молитвы, без поспешности и со вниманием сердечным:*



МОЛИТВЫ УТРЕННИЕ

*Встав от сна, прежде всякого другого занятия, благоговейно представляя себя пред Всевышним Богом и полагая на себя крестное знамение, говори:*

Во имя Отца, и Сына, и Святого Духа. Аминь\*.

*Потом немного помедли, чтобы все чувства твои пришли в тишину и мысли оставили всё земное, и тогда произноси молитвы без поспешности, с вниманием сердечным.*

\* Мирянин, начиная молитву, осеняет себя крестным знаменем со словами: «Во имя Отца, и Сына, и Святого Духа. Аминь». Вместо же начального возгласа священника говорит: «Молитвами святых отец наших, Господи Иисусе Христе Боже наш, помилуй нас». Тот же возглас заменяет все священнические возгласы. Всё произносимое во время службы священником и диаконом опускается.

Fig. 7 Sample page from the Orthodox prayer book *Pravoslavnyi molitvoslov* with Church Slavonic prayers (in Grazhdanka, i.e. modern Cyrillic, basically transliteration into Russian) followed by their translations into Russian (*Pravoslavnyi*, 2018)



## ЖІТВЫ ОЎТРЕННІА.

Воспранѣвъ безъ лѣности, и  
нестрезвѣвса, воставѣ ѿ сна, рцы  
сїе: Во ѿмѣ оца, и сїа, и сїаго  
дѣа, аминь.

Посѣмъ постой малю молча,  
дѣндеже оутншачса всѣ чвст-  
вїа, и тогда сотвори три  
поклоны, глагола:

Жїтва мытарѣ: Бже, мѣтнвѣ  
вѣди мнѣ грѣшномѣ.

Таже

Fig. 8 Sample page from the Orthodox prayer book *Molitoslov* with Church Slavonic prayers in Church (Old) Cyrillic (*Molitoslov*, 2016)

Hence, it seems that the rise of Polish religious books printed in Cyrillic during the last two and a half decades in western Belarus emulates the tradition of Church Slavonic Orthodox prayer books with transcriptions and translations into the language of a given country. Indirectly, this tradition goes back to similar Hebrew prayer books employed in synagogues, nowadays also emulated in Muslim countries for the Arabic original of the Quran.

The *Hymnal* (A) is similar in its form and aims to the Latin alphabet-based Belarusian prayer book *Hołas duży* for Uniates (Greek Catholics) (Stepovič, 1949), and to a degree also to the Orthodox prayer book *Molitoslov* with Church Slavonic prayers in Church (Old) Cyrillic (*Molitoslov*, 2016). In turn, the *Catechism* (B) is quite similar in its concept to the Jewish prayer book *Błogosławieństwa i krótkie modlitwy* with Hebrew prayers interlineally followed by their transcriptions and translations into Polish (Pash, 2007). Finally, the *Prayer Book* (C) emulates the model employed in the Orthodox prayer book *Modlitewnik prawosławny* with Church Slavonic prayers

(in Church Cyrillic) followed by their transliterations and translations into Polish (Pietkiewicz, 2009), and in the Orthodox prayer book *Pravoslavnyi molitvoslov* with Church Slavonic prayers (in Grazhdanka, i.e. modern Cyrillic, basically transliteration into Russian) followed by their translations into Russian (*Pravoslavnyi*, 2018). In the method and complexity of the presentation of the subject matter, this *Prayer Book* (C) is also similar to the Turkish-language edition of the Quran *Kur'ân-ı Kerîm ve açıklamalı meâli* with the Arabic original, interlineal Turkish transcriptions and a Turkish translation in the margin (Hamdi Yazır, 2013).

### Polish: Between Latin and Cyrillic Letters

Below, in Tables 1a to 1d, I present the correspondence of the Polish Latin letters (including digraphs and special cases) to their counterparts in Polish Cyrillic. And in turn, in Tables 2a to 2c, I give an overview of the correspondence of the Polish Cyrillic letters (including diagraphs and special cases) to their Latin counterparts, alongside their simplified transliterations in the Library of Congress's system of Romanization for Russian Cyrillic.

I do not attempt a comprehensive analysis of Polish Cyrillic, which would require more textual work and interviews with this alphabet's creators and users in western Belarus. But, hopefully, this overview offers a useful glimpse of the all too long neglected but surprisingly durable phenomenon of Polish Cyrillic.

It is interesting to note that some of the solutions adopted in the present-day Polish Cyrillic consciously (or not) follow the implemented (or only proposed) changes for the orthographic system of the Polish language, as employed officially in Soviet Belarus during the interwar period. For instance, in the Polish Latin orthography the pairs [h] and [ch], [ó] and [u], or [ź] and [rz] are pronounced the same, namely, as /x/, /u/ and /z/, respectively. Two different letters (digraphs) are employed for denoting the same phoneme in each pair for the sake of preserving etymological difference, which also allows for reducing the number of homographs. In today's Polish Cyrillic the three pairs are reduced to single letters, that is, [x], [ж] and [y], respectively. The same solution was pushed for the orthography of Soviet Polish written in Latin letters (cf. Grek-Pabisowa et al., 2008, p. 46).

The rationale in interwar Soviet Belarus was to do away with etymological elements in Polish orthography, so that spelling would more closely follow actual pronunciation, in line with the slogan “write as you speak” (Grek-Pabisowa et al., 2008, p. 41). Eventually, these innovations for written Polish were rejected in interwar Soviet Belarus, with the exception of the phoneticized transcription of foreign surnames, in line with the Russian

practice of Cyrillization. For instance, Churchill is Черчилль *Cherchill'* in Russian. Hence, due to this Russian example, the surname Churchill was rendered as *Czerczyl* in Soviet Belarus's Polish-language press between the two world wars (cf. Grek-Pabisowa et al., 2008, p. 95).

In the case of the present-day Polish Cyrillic in Belarus, the phoneticization of spelling seems to be an effect of the adoption of Russian Cyrillic for writing Polish. The creators of Polish Cyrillic consciously (or not) adopted the usual phonetizing principles of Russian Cyrillic for the Cyrillization of Slavic (foreign) words rendered in Latin letters.

In Polish Cyrillic, the Russian Cyrillic letter [ш] is avoided. In Russian it represents the following two phonemes /ʃ/ and /tʃ/, pronounced together as a cluster. However, when in Polish Cyrillic the need arises to represent the corresponding Polish consonantal cluster, as rendered with the two Latin diagraphs [sz] and [cz], the Belarusian orthographic solution is followed, yielding [шч]. The underlying normative principle of Belarusian spelling (also adopted in Polish Cyrillic) is that no letter (grapheme, diagraph or trigraph) should denote more than a single phoneme. Another recent Belarusianizing change in Polish Cyrillic may be observed in the *Prayer Book* (C), published in 2018. The Russian letter [и] for representing the Polish Latin letter [i] is fully replaced with the Belarusian Cyrillic (or pre-revolutionary Russian Cyrillic) letter [і].

Obviously, elements of etymological spelling are also present in today's Russian Cyrillic. Yet, they are different than those observed in the Polish Latin spelling system. Hence, there is no one-to-one correspondence between the letters of the Polish Latin alphabet and Polish Cyrillic. The customs of the Polish Latin-script spelling (be they etymological or phonemic) were abandoned, and on the level of pronunciation the Polish language was fitted directly (transcribed) into the somewhat customized Cyrillic-based spelling system of the Russian language (Fig. 9).

Polish Latin alphabet and its spelling customs (etymological and phonemic)	Polish pronunciation	Polish Cyrillic and the spelling customs of Russian Cyrillic (etymological and phonemic)
For instance: bądz	/bɔɲtɕ/	боньдзь

Fig. 9 Schematic representation of the two heuristic steps taken in the creation of Polish Cyrillic from the Polish Latin alphabet to Polish Cyrillic

Obviously, some Polish phonemes that do not exist in Russian are denoted in Polish Cyrillic with Belarusian Cyrillic letters, for instance, [дзь] for

Polish [dź]. As I said above, the phonemic and structural closeness between Belarusian and Polish, alongside the existence of the official Belarusian Cyrillic and Latin alphabets, which correspond well and intimately to one another, would allow for a simpler and less ambiguous fitting of Polish into Belarusian Cyrillic than the current one into Russian Cyrillic. This is exemplified by the recent replacement of the Russian Cyrillic letter [и] with the Belarusian Cyrillic [і] for representing the Polish Latin letter [i].

On the other hand, Polish Cyrillic as employed in the late 1860s school textbooks for the (Congress) Kingdom of Poland quite closely followed the etymological and other orthographic specificities of the Polish Latin-script spelling. For instance, the Polish Latin letter [ą] was rendered as the very same [ą] in Cyrillic, [ę] as [ə] with the diacritic [˙] below, [h] as [x] with the diacritic [˙] above, [ó] as [ô], or [rz] as [p] with the diacritic [˘] above. Furthermore, following the logic of Cyrillic, the diacritic [˙] was attached below the letters [e] and [я] for rendering the Polish nasal groups [jɛ̃] and [jɔ̃], respectively. In addition, the Russian Cyrillic letter [щ] was retained for rendering the Polish consonantal cluster [szcz] (Gil'ferding, 1871, pp. 9–10; Strycharska-Brzezina, 2006, pp. 86–87).

It is also interesting to observe that the Polish diacritic *ogonek* [˙] for marking the nasalization of vowels seems to stem from two Cyrillic letters employed in Church Slavonic, namely, [Ѣ] and [Ѧ]. Most probably they denoted the nasal vowels [ĕ̃] and [ǫ̃], respectively. The graphic similarity of the former letter (that is, [Ѣ], including its upper case form [Ѣ]) to the Latin upper case letter [A], perhaps, yielded the Polish letter [Ą, ą] for denoting the nasal vowel [ɔ̃]; the “middle leg” of [Ѣ] transformed into the diacritic *ogonek* [˙]. This graphic similarity offers an explanation why the Latin letter [ą] came to be employed – quite confusingly – for denoting the nasal vowel [ɔ̃] in Polish. Logically, the letter should be [q], while [ą] ought to represent the nasal vowel /ã/. However, as it is often the case, accidents, personal likes and dislikes of scribes and literati, mistaken beliefs regarding the historical development of writing systems, and arbitrary political decisions (be they secular or ecclesiastical) have time and again shaped the scripts we use for writing and publishing today.

Polish Cyrillic used for publishing religious literature in today's Belarus is no different in this respect. As shown in the tables, there are 43 Polish Latin-script letters (graphemes) and multigraphs, which are rendered differently into Cyrillic. On the other hand, I have identified 42 Polish Cyrillic letters, multigraphs, and special letters employed for writing Polish in Cyrillic. This means that on the pragmatic level both writing systems of Polish, Cyrillic and Latin, represent the same level of complicatedness. Hence, both are equally easy (or difficult, depending on how one may want to argue) for representing

spoken Polish. Obviously, to a certain degree the Polish Latin and Cyrillic scripts map the Polish language differently, due to the differing internal logic of these two scripts. Having said that, it appears that Polish Cyrillic is better attuned to the actual dialectal speech in today's western Belarus, and across the frontier in eastern Poland. Hence, a local reader of religious literature in Polish Cyrillic, with no formal knowledge of standard Polish and its Latin alphabet, tends to pronounce such Polish-language texts in a Belarusianized or Russianized manner. This pronunciation is closer to their own dialectal speech. As a result, it allows for the successful domestication of Polish as the "Catholic (church) language" of today's Belarus by the Belarusian- and Russian-speaking faithful with no formal knowledge of the Polish language.

### Conclusion: The Future

The original intention for creating this Polish Cyrillic was the hope that it would serve as a transitional stopgap measure for the non-Polish-speaking faithful on the way to mastering standard Polish, as written in Latin letters. Yet, unsurprisingly, this goal has not been achieved after a quarter of a century. The faithful have successfully mastered reading Polish devotional texts in Cyrillic. However, switching to reading in Polish rendered in Latin letters would require mastering another alphabet and its orthographic system. It appears that at present the vast majority of the faithful have no interest in doing so, because in everyday life they use exclusively Cyrillic for reading and writing in Russian and/or Belarusian, and for reading Polish-language religious literature. (It remains to be checked whether any number of persons might use Polish Cyrillic for writing.) Certainly, waiving the visa requirement for Belarusian citizens wishing to visit Poland and the European Union may be a game-changer, especially for the young generation. They may experience an existential need to learn how to read (and write) Polish in Latin letters, or for that matter, Slovak, Czech or German. However, the middle-aged and older generations of Catholics in western Belarus are bound to stick to Polish Cyrillic for religious purposes.

Hence, having been quite firmly established during the last 25 years, Polish Cyrillic is bound to remain in western Belarus, unless the Diocese of Hrodna discontinues the by now robust tradition of publishing religious material in this script. Such a move would risk alienating numerous middle-aged and older Catholics, so most probably it will not be made in the near future. The imposition of Polish Cyrillic in the (Congress) Kingdom of Poland lasted for one decade, between the mid-1860s and mid-1870s. This kingdom's Catholic population at large opposed this imposition of the "Russian and Orthodox alphabet," widely considered to be "alien and anti-Catholic." Yet,

in today's western Belarus the Catholic hierarchy and faithful have fully embraced Polish Cyrillic. It is not considered either "anti-Catholic," "anti-Polish," or let alone "foreign" (i.e. anti-Belarusian). This explains the success and durability of the experiment which permanently introduced Cyrillic as the established and accepted second alphabet of the Polish language.

Nowadays, Polish is a de facto biscriptual language, written in both Latin and Cyrillic letters. However, neither scholars nor other observers have consciously noticed this fact, let alone devoted any research to it. I am sure that Slavacists, historians of language politics, or sociolinguists will find this neglected Polish biscriptuality a rich and fascinating field of investigation. I look forward to a comprehensive annotated bibliography of book and press titles published in Polish Cyrillic, alongside ephemera. On this basis, perhaps a biscriptual orthographic Latin alphabet-Cyrillic dictionary of the Polish language could be attempted. What is more, such biscriptual (Latin and Cyrillic) Polish could be usefully paired in a dictionary with Belarusian words, as written in this language's Cyrillic and Latin alphabets. Perhaps great help to this end would be a republication (or an online searchable scan) of the unduly forgotten extensive *Słownik polsko-białoruski / Польска-беларускі слоўнік* (Polish-Belarusian Dictionary), published in Soviet Belarus in 1932. Only some ten copies of this dictionary survive, since it was the end of *korenizatsiia*, so the Soviet authorities destroyed the published run of this work (Grek-Pabisowa et al., 2008, pp. 23, 291).

	Polish Latin vowel letter	Polish Cyrillic Counterpart
1	a	<b>а</b>
2	ą	<b>оН</b>
		<i>or</i> <b>о<sup>н</sup></b> in (C)
		<i>also</i> <b>ë</b> <i>for Polish [jɔ]</i>
		<i>or</i> <b>ë<sup>н</sup></b> in (C)
		<i>also</i> <b>о</b> <i>as for instance in tobą / тобо</i>
		<i>also</i> <b>оНЬ</b> <i>as for instance in bądz / боНЬдзь</i>

3	e	э
4	ę	ЭН
		<i>or</i> э <sup>n</sup> in (C)
		<i>but also</i> ЕН <i>after vowels</i>
		<i>or</i> е <sup>n</sup> in (C)
5	i	И <i>or</i> i in (C) <i>or</i> ë <i>for Polish [ie]</i>
6	o	О
		<i>or</i> ö <i>when after Polish [l] realized in Cyrillic with [л], for instance, królowo / крупёво</i>
7	ó	У
8	u	У
		<i>or</i> Ю <i>when after Polish [l] realized in Cyrillic with [л], for instance, ludzka / людзка</i>
9	y	Ы

Table 1a Polish Latin vowel letters and their counterparts in Polish Cyrillic

	Polish Latin consonant letter	Polish Cyrillic Counterpart
10	b	Б
11	c	Ц
12	ć	ЦЬ
13	d	Д
14	f	Ф
15	g	Г

16	h	х
17	j	й
		<i>or</i> е <i>for Polish [je]</i>
		<i>or</i> ë <i>for Polish [jo]</i>
	<i>or</i> я <i>for Polish [ja]</i>	
18	l	ль or л <i>when followed by a Cyrillic vowel letter [е, и, у, э, ю, я]</i>
19	ł	л
20	m	м
21	n	н
22	ń	нь
23	p	п
24	r	р
25	s	с
26	ś	сь
27	t	т
28	w	в
29	z	з
30	ź	зь
31	ż	ж

Table 1b Polish Latin consonant letters and their counterparts in Polish Cyrillic

	Polish Latin consonant digraph	Polish Cyrillic Counterpart
32	ch	х
33	cz	ч
34	dz	дз

35	dź	<b>ДЗЬ</b>
36	dż	<b>ДЖ</b>
37	rz	<b>Ж</b>
		<i>or</i> <b>Ш</b> <i>when following a voiceless consonant, for instance, krzyż / КШЫЖ</i>
38	sz	<b>Ш</b>

Table 1c Polish Latin consonant digraphs and their counterparts in Polish Cyrillic

	Polish Latin consonant digraph or trigraph with palatalization marked with the letter [i]	Polish Cyrillic Counterpart
39	ci	<b>ЦИ</b>
		<i>Or</i> <b>ци</b> <i>in (C)</i>
		<i>but also</i> <b>це</b> <i>for Polish [-cie]</i>
40	dzi	<b>ДЗИ</b>
		<b>дзи</b> <i>in (C)</i>
41	ni	<b>НИ</b>
		<b>ні</b> <i>in (C)</i>
		<b>не</b> <i>for Polish [nie]</i>
42	si	<b>СИ</b>
		<b>сі</b> <i>in (C)</i>
		<i>but also</i> <b>ся</b> <i>for Polish [-sia]</i>
43	zi	<b>ЗИ</b>
		<b>зі</b> <i>in (C)</i>

Table 1d Polish Latin consonant digraphs and trigraph with palatalization marked with the letter [i] and their counterparts in Polish Cyrillic

	Polish Cyrillic vowel letter or vowel-style letter designating a vowel in combination with the semi-vowel /j/	Polish Latin Counterpart	Library of Congress transliteration
1	а	<b>a</b>	a
2	е	<b>je</b>	e
3	ѐ	<b>jo</b>	e
4	о	<b>o</b>	o
5	у	<b>ó</b>	u
		<b>u</b>	
6	э	<b>e</b>	e
7	ю	<b>ju</b>	iu
8	я	<b>ja</b>	ia

Table 2a Polish Cyrillic vowel letters or vowel-style letters designating a vowel in combination with the semi-vowel /j/; alongside their Polish Latin counterparts and Romanizations

	Polish Cyrillic consonant letter	Polish Latin Counterpart	Library of Congress transliteration
9	б	<b>b</b>	b
10	в	<b>w</b>	v
11	г	<b>g</b>	g
12	д	<b>d</b>	d
13	ж	<b>rz</b>	zh
		<b>ż</b>	
14	з	<b>z</b>	z
15	к	<b>k</b>	k
16	л	<b>ł</b>	l
17	м	<b>m</b>	m
18	н	<b>n</b>	n
19	р	<b>r</b>	r
20	с	<b>s</b>	s
21	т	<b>t</b>	t

22	ф	<b>f</b>	F
23	x	<b>ch</b>	kh
		<b>h</b>	
24	ц	<b>c</b>	ts
25	ч	<b>cz</b>	ch
26	ш	<b>sz</b>	sh
		<b>rz</b>	
NA	шч <i>not</i> used, always rendered as шч	<b>szcz</b>	shch
27	ь	<p>ó</p> <p>marks palatalization in the Polish Latin letters [ć, ń, ś, ź]</p>	'
		<p>modifies the Cyrillic letter [л] into [лъ], which corresponds to the Polish letter [l]</p>	

Table 2b Polish Cyrillic consonant letters (including ь), alongside their Polish Latin counterparts and Romanizations

	Polish Cyrillic consonant digraph or trigraph	Polish Latin Counterpart	Library of Congress transliteration
28	дж	<b>dż</b>	dzh
29	дз	<b>dz</b>	dz
30	дзи	<b>dzi</b>	dzi
30a	dzi in (C)		
31	дзь	<b>dź</b>	dz'
32	зи	<b>zi</b>	Zi
32a	zi in (C)		
33	зь	<b>ź</b>	z'
34	ль	<b>l</b>	l'
35	не	<b>nie</b>	ne

36	ни	<b>ni</b>	ni
36a	ni in (C)		
37	нь	<b>ń</b>	n'
38	си	<b>si</b>	si
38a	ci in (C)		
39	Ся	<b>sia</b>	sia
40	ць	<b>ć</b>	ts'
41	це	<b>cie</b>	tse
42	ци	<b>ci</b>	tsi
42a	ci in (C)		

Table 2c Polish Cyrillic consonant digraphs and trigraphs, alongside their Polish Latin counterparts and Romanizations

## Sample Text Lord's Prayer (Pater Noster)

### *Polish translation*

Ojczy nasz, któryś jest w niebie, święć się Imię Twoje, przyjdź Królestwo Twoje, bądź wola Twoja, jako w niebie tak i na ziemi. Chleba naszego powszedniego daj nam dzisiaj. I odpuść nam nasze winy, jako i my odpuszczamy naszym winowajcom. I nie wódz nas na pokuszenie, ale nas zbaw ode złego. Amen

(*Catechism* (B), Kryshtopik, 2015, p. 3)

### *In Polish Cyrillic (old version)*

Ойчэ наш, ктuryсь ест в небе, съвенць се Име Твое, пшыйдзь Крулество Твое, боньдзь воля Твоя, яко в небе так и на зєми. Хлеба нашэго повшэднего дай нам дзисай. И одпусць нам нашэ вины, яко и мы одпушчамы нашым виновайцом. И не вудзь нас на рокушэне, але нас збав одэ злэго. Амэн.

(*Catechism* (B), Kryshtopik, 2015, p. 3)

### *Romanization*

Oiche nash, kturyś est v nebe, s'vents' se Ime Tvoe, pshyidz' Krulestvo Tvoe, bon'dz' volia Tvoia, iako v nebe tak i na zemi. Khleba nashego povshednego dai nam dzisiai. I odpus'ts' nam nashi viny, iako i my odpushchamy nashym vinovaitSom. I ne vudz' nas na pokushene, ale nas zbav ode zlego. Amen.

*In Polish Cyrillic (new version)*

Ойчэ наш, ктурысь ест в небе, съвенць се<sup>а</sup> Име Твое, пшыйдзь Крулество Твое, боньдзь воля Твоя, яко в небе так і на зemi. Хлеба нашэго повшэднего дай нам дзисяй. І одпусць нам нашэ вины, яко і мы одпушчамы нашым виновайцом. І не вудзь нас на рокушэне, але нас збав одэ злэго. Амэн.

(*Prayer Book* (C), Silinevich & Vernaia, 2018, p. 8)

*English translation*

Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, in earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil ... . Amen.

King James Bible, 1611

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## Nowa polska cyrylica w niepodległej Białorusi

Po upadku komunizmu i rozpadzie Związku Sowieckiego życie religijne wspólnoty rzymskokatolickiej przeżyło odrodzenie w niepodległej Białorusi. Katolicy tego kraju koncentrują się w zachodniej Białorusi, która przed II wojną światową była włączona w skład Polski. W 1991 r. w obwodzie hrodzieńskim (horadnieńskim/grodzieńskim) powstała Diecezja Hrodzieńska. Nieco ponad połowa ludności obwodu to katolicy, a wielu identyfikuje się jako etniczni Polacy. Zgodnie z zakazem oficjalnego używania języka polskiego w powojennej Białorusi sowieckiej ludność wspomnianego regionu zdobywała wykształcenie w językach białoruskim i rosyjskim, oczywiście zapisywanych cyrylicą. Stąd po odzyskaniu niepodległości przez Białoruś w 1991 r. znajomość alfabetu łacińskiego wśród tej ludności była nikła. W trosce o zapewnienie wiernym polskojęzycznych wydawnictw religijnych, które potrafiliby czytać i z nich korzystać w kościele i podczas osobistej modlitwy, władze diecezjalne postanowiły opublikować kilka książek w języku polskim, ale wydrukować je rosyjską cyrylicą. To zjawisko powszechnego korzystania z książek religijnych w języku polskim drukowanych cyrylicą na zachodzie dzisiejszej Białorusi pozostaje nieznane poza granicami tego kraju, w tym w Polsce.

**Słowa kluczowe:** alfabet łaciński, cyrylica, Diecezja Hrodzieńska (Horadniańska, Grodzieńska), język białoruski, język polski, język rosyjski, nacjonalizm, religia, polityka użycia różnych pism.

### Note

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