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## **A Discontinuation or a Preservation of the (Old) Belarusian Writing Tradition in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century? Contributions to the Discussion on the Development of the Literary Belarusian Language as Applied to Publications of the Basilian Printing Offices in Supraśl and Vilnius**

*Przerwanie czy przetrwanie (staro)białoruskiej tradycji piśmienniczej w XVIII wieku?*

*Przyczynki do dyskusji nad rozwojem literackiego języka białoruskiego na materiale wydań bazylińskich drukarni z Supraśla i Wilna*

*Заняпад ці звалюцыя (стара)беларускай пісьмовай традыцыі ў XVIII стагоддзі?*

*Да пытання пра дыскусію вакол развіцця літаратурнай беларускай мовы (на матэрыяле выданняў базыльянскіх тыпаграфій Супрасля і Вільні)*

### **Abstract**

The article presents elements of simple speech, the 18<sup>th</sup> century Ruthenian language, the testaments to which are the religious texts of that period published by the Basilian printing office in Supraśl (Sobranije pripadkov, 1722, Kratkoje soslovije, 1759, Pouczenije o obrjadach, 1788). The analysis of the Supraśl texts is supplemented by an analysis of a text published by the monastic printing office in Vilnius (Ecphonemata Liturgiey Greckiey 1671) in the Church Slavonic language but using the Latin script. Due to a variety of factors: whether political ones or scholarly stereotypes, religious texts were omitted in language research (on simple speech, Ruthenian language) and the Belarusian writing of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The linguistic features recorded therein point to the necessity of revising the axiom, popularised in the 1960s by prominent researchers of the Belarusian language: Arkadz Zhuravskiy and Ivan

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Kramko and upheld by other researchers, regarding the disappearance of the Old Belarusian language in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Their thesis was constructed on the basis of an analysis of the following factors: graphic, grammatical, orthographical, lexical, and those relating to genre. The crowning argument for the break in the continuity of tradition was an enumeration of specific features of the Old Belarusian writing which are absent in modern literary Belarusian. In accordance with the data obtained from the analysed Basilian publications, one ought to speak of an evolutionary character of the development of the literary Belarusian language.

**Keywords:** simple speech, Ruthenian language, Old Belarusian language, the 18<sup>th</sup> century, break in the writing tradition

### Abstrakt

W niniejszym artykule zaprezentowano elementy prostej mowy/ruskiej mowy XVIII wieku, świadectwem której są teksty o charakterze religijnym z tego okresu wydane w bazylińskiej drukarni w Supraślu (Sobranije pripadkov, 1722, Kratkoje soslovije, 1759, Pouczenie o obrjadach, 1788). Analiza języka tekstów supraślskich została uzupełniona analizą tekstu, wydanego w drukarni zakonnej w Wilnie (Ecphonemata Liturgiey Greckiey 1671), w języku cerkiewnosłowiańskim, jednak z zastosowaniem czcionki łacińskiej. Ze względu na różnego rodzaju czynniki: polityczne czy stereotypy naukowe teksty o charakterze religijnym były pomijane w badaniach nad językiem (prostą mową, ruską mową) i piśmiennictwem białoruskim XVIII wieku. Zarejestrowane w nich cechy językowe świadczą o potrzebie rewizji upowszechnionego w latach 60. XX wieku przez wybitnych badaczy języka białoruskiego: Arkadzia Żurauskiego i Iwana Kramko i podtrzymanego przez innych badaczy, aksjomatu na temat zaniku języka starobiałoruskiego w XVIII wieku. Swoją tezę skonstruowali oni na podstawie analizy czynników: graficznego, gramatycznego, ortograficznego, leksykalnego oraz gatunkowego. Koronnym argumentem za zerwaną ciągłością tradycji było wyliczenie specyficznych cech piśmiennictwa starobiałoruskiego, nieobecnych we współczesnym literackim języku białoruskim. Zgodnie z danymi z analizowanych druków bazylińskich należy mówić o ewolucyjności procesu rozwoju białoruskiego języka literackiego.

**Słowa kluczowe:** prosta mowa, język ruski, język starobiałoruski, XVIII wiek, przerwanie tradycji piśmienniczej

### Анацыя

У дадзеным артыкуле прадстаўлены элементы старабеларускай мовы XVIII ст., якія выступаюць у рэлігійных тэкстах гэтага перыяду, выдадзеных у базыльянскіх тыпаграфіях Супрасля (Sobranije pripadkov, 1722, Kratkoje soslovije, 1759, Pouczenie o obrjadach, 1788). Аналіз мовы супрасльскіх тэкстаў быў дапоўнены аналізам тэксту, надрукаванага ў манастырскай друкарні ў Вільні (Ecphonemata Liturgiey Greek 1671) на царкоўнаславянскай мове, аднак з выкарыстаннем лацінскага шрыфта. З-за розных фактараў (палітычных і навуковых стэрэатыпаў) творы рэлігійнага характару ігнараваліся пры вывучэнні беларускай мовы і пісьменнасці XVIII ст. Даследаванне пісьмовай спадчыны гэтага перыяду

не былі прадметам актыўнага навуковага зацікаўлення з-за падтрыманага Аркадзем Жураўскім, Іванам Крамко і іншымі мовазнаўцамі тэзіса пра заняпад у XVIII ст. старабеларускай пісьмовай традыцыі. Галоўным аргументам для разрыву пераемнасці традыцыі быў погляд, што спецыфічныя асаблівасці старабеларускай літаратуры (графічныя, граматычныя, арфаграфічныя, лексічныя і жанравыя) адсутнічаюць у сучаснай беларускай літаратурнай мове. Праведзены аналіз мовы старадрукаў вядзе да змены аксіёмы наконт развіцця беларускай літаратурнай мовы. Тэзіс пра разрыў у моўна-пісьмовай традыцыі прапанаўца замяніць тэзісам пра эвалюцыйны характар развіцця беларускай літаратурнай мовы.

**Ключавыя словы:** простая мова, руская мова, старабеларуская мова, XVIII стагоддзе, разрыў пісьмовай традыцыі

The periodisation of the development of the Belarusian language authored by two mavens of Belarusian historical linguistics, Arkadz Zhuravsky and Ivan Kramko (Žuraŭski and Kramko, 1972)<sup>1</sup>, enduringly and regardless of the latter distinct voices in this case (Aničëнка 1961; Aničëнка, 1964; Aničëнка 1972; Bahan'koŭ, 1971) assumes a lack of direct continuation in the historical-linguistic process, and the functioning of separate traditions – the old and the new. Following its golden age in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the writing language (the Ruthenian language, also referred to as simple speech and, in the contemporary Belarusian studies – as Old Belarusian) was to disappear completely in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, giving way to the era of literature written in national languages which was formed on a different (dialectical) basis (Temčinas, 2017, p. 83). The modern literary Belarusian, usually dated from the emergence of the parody of Virgil's *Aeneid*, the poetic exercises of Vincent Dunin-Marcinkevich and others, constitutes from this perspective a new quality, based on the tradition of the folk language, a tradition detached from the old one.

The thesis about a lack of direct continuation between the old and the new periods was constructed by A. Zhuravsky and I. Kramko on the basis of an analysis of the following features: graphic, grammatical, orthographical, lexical, and those related to genre. The crowning argument for the break in the continuity of tradition was an enumeration of specific features of the Old Belarusian writing which are absent in the modern literary Belarusian language.

The aim of the article is to verify the above-described thesis about a lack of continuity of tradition between the Old Belarusian writing and the modern literary Belarusian.

The process of the formation of the literary Belarusian language is, to simplify, a history of the progressively more bold permeation of elements of the living language into the inflexible and initially remote from it written language. It was a continuous

<sup>1</sup> This thesis was proposed by other researchers of the Belarusian language as well, beginning with Yefim Karskiy (e.g. Civanova, 2010).

process, diverse as to the intensity (depending on the internal and external conditions, this process can be slowed down or – just the opposite – accelerated), and sanctioned only at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> – the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Between the successive eras, there are also transitory periods whose cultural relics reflect the tendencies typical both of the old period – the one that passes, and the new – the one to follow. In the literary Belarusian language, one of such epochs combining the old and the new tradition is the 18<sup>th</sup> century. It is a special period – considered to be the time of the disappearance, of the ‘zanyapad’ (‘decline’) of the Belarusian language, a specific ‘black hole’ between the Old Belarusian period and the modern literary Belarusian language.

The writing of the 18<sup>th</sup> century is not a popular subject of research. Due to the general conviction about the disappearance of writing in that period (Žuraŭski, 1967; Žuraŭski and Kramko, 1972), few researchers decide to study the language of that time (Civanova, 2011; Getka, 2018a), while analysis of religious texts, which is proposed herein, is taken up downright occasionally, owing to the alleged conservatism of this type of writing (Budz’ko, 2001; Budz’ko, 2003). Indeed, religious writing is essentially the most ‘reactive’, which, on the one hand, hinders becoming acquainted with the living language, on the other, however – has vital significance in the process of the formation of the norm of the literary language. For one can venture a thesis that even a few features of the living language being represented in religious texts by their editors may be indicative of those very features being recognised as indisputable elements of the norm.

The presented hypotheses demonstrate the necessity of continued research on the language of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

### A Discontinuation of the Tradition?

The point of reference for the considerations in this paper is the conclusions reached by the excellent Belarusian scholars who determined a number of features typical of the Old Belarusian writing, at the same time pointing out that they cannot be regarded as the point of reference for the modern norm of the literary Belarusian language (Žuraŭski and Kramko, 1972, p. 134).

In terms of graphics, the element separating the old and the new traditions is the number of graphemes in the Cyrillic script: the old and the modern Belarusian Cyrillic

scripts differ by ten letters and two digraphs (ѐ, ё, ђ, ѓ, є, ѕ, і, ї, ј, љ, њ, џ) (Žuraŭski and Kramko, 1972, p. 133).

It has also been noted that the new literature of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (works by Jan Barshchevsky, Pauluk Bahrym, Alexander Rypinski, Jan Chechot, Vincent Dunin-Marcinkevich, Konstanty Kalinouski, and others) was, on the one hand, written and published in the Polish variant of the Latin script, on the other, in the Russian Civil

Script, which was characterised by the use of untypical for the modern Belarusian language graphemes и, ъ, ь (Žuraŭski and Kramko, 1972, p. 133).

The Cyrillic orthography of the old period was moreover based on the etymological-morphological principle, which did not allow for the representation of typical Belarusian features, such as akanye, tsekanne, and dzekanne, lengthening of consonants, the l > ŭ transition. In contrast, the orthography of texts published in the Latin script in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was immediately based on the phonetic principle. The phonetic principle is also in use in the modern Belarusian orthography.

The issue of grammar is slightly more complicated: as the cited authors note, the Old Belarusian grammar reflects many features of the modern Belarusian language. An evidence of the lack of connection between the old and the new literary tradition is supposed to be those features of the Old Belarusian language which do not occur in the North-Eastern Belarusian local dialects. Here, the scholars pointed to:

- 1) for nouns: M. pl. ending in -ove/-eve (*воеводове, крале́ве*) and in -у, for nouns whose stem ends in a dorsal consonant (*виетечни́цы, ерети́цы*), reflecting the Polish influence; or Dat. sg. ending in -ovi/-evi (*гетманови, вечарови, покоеви*), reflecting the influence of nouns with the old stem ending in \*ŭ (such as: *сын, вол – сынови, волови*) later on strengthened by the influence of the Ukrainian local dialects (Bulyka, 1979, p. 27; Žuraŭski and Kramko, 1972, pp. 135–136).
- 2) for adjectives: forms of the comparative created with the suffix -ŝ- (*ближши́й, чисти́й*), which are explained by the influence of the South-Western local dialects, as well as forms of the superlative with the prefix pre- (*превели́кий, предивни́й*) (Žuraŭski and Kramko, 1972, p. 136);
- 3) for pronouns: enclitic forms: *ми, ти, мя, тя*, which already in the times of Skaryna were replaced with the more typical of the Belarusian language forms *мнѣ, тобѣ, менѣ, тебѣ* (Žuraŭski and Kramko, 1972, p. 136)
- 4) for verbs: infinitives ending in -ti (*быти, мовити*), 1. pl. forms ending in -мо (*будемо, мовимо*), which in new writing appeared due to the influence of South-Western local dialects and the Ukrainian language (Žuraŭski and Kramko, 1972, p. 137); perfect forms borrowed from the Polish grammar system, created as a result of loaning (*мовилемъ, мовилесь, мовилисьмы, мовилисте*), and past tense forms with -ль (*бегль, несль*).

In terms of the lexis, pointed to was Old Belarusian vocabulary that does not have roots in local dialects (Žuraŭski and Kramko, 1972, p. 139), among others, verbal nouns ending in -нье (*збиранье, доконанье*), nouns formed from adjectives and ending in -ost' (*теплость, околичность*), nouns ending in -stvo (*мастерство, недбалство*), numerous Polonisms as well as Germanisms and Latinisms which entered the Old Belarusian language through the Polish language and which were then replaced by Belarusian vocabulary in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (*валка – бойка, вайна; обфитый – багаты, шчодры; уфати – давяраць, спадзявацца*).

The old and the new Belarusian literature are also said to differ on the level of style and genre and on the thematic level. Thus, as far as the Old Belarusian writing is represented above all by clerical relics, then religious ones, and finally by literary exercises of a secular nature, it is mainly journalistic texts and literary writing that are characteristic of modern Belarusian literature (Žuraŭski and Kramko, 1972, p. 144).

The last element pointed to by the researchers is the non-linguistic factor: old texts – be it old prints or manuscripts – were not available to a wide audience of readers, therefore they did not take root in the consciousness of the recipients, and consequently – did not have an impact on the development of the literary language.

### A Preservation of the Tradition?

To verify the thesis about a lack of continuity of the historical-linguistic process, a linguistic-cultural analysis was performed on old prints, which came off the presses of the Basilian typography offices in Supraśl and Vilnius. The research will be conducted on 4 sources in particular – 3 of them published in the Cyrillic script in Supraśl (*Sobranije pripadkov*, 1722, *Kratkoje soslovije*, 1759, *Naypospolitsze y naystotnieysze nauki*, 1788) and one – printed in the Polish type of the Latin script in Vilnius (*Ohilewicz*, 1671). All of them – in accordance with the elementary mission of monastic printing offices – are representative of religious literature.

The first of the analysed Supraśl texts: *Собраніе прыпадковъ краткое и дух[o]внымъ особамъ потребное имъщее въ себѣ науку о сакраментaxъ, о десяти Б[ж]їихъ приказаняхъ о приказаняхъ церковныхъ...*, was considered by Arkadz Zhuravsky to be the last publication in the Old Belarusian language (Žuraŭski, 1967, p. 356). From this perspective – in conformity with the thesis about the transitory periods in the development of literary languages adopted in the article – on the one hand, it should meet the *usus* norms of the Old Belarusian language, on the other – show the tendencies of the evolution of this language. However, what is essential is that the successive Supraśl texts analysed in this article – published later on – represent a similar writing tradition, therefore the Old Belarusian tradition does not die off in 1722! The language of the texts in question is full of obvious of the genre borrowings from the Church Slavonic language and – of typical of the literary tradition Polinisms; it also includes numerous features of dialects, the local dialects of Podlasie (Žuraŭski, 1967, p. 357) as well as South-Western dialects, or simply Ukrainisms (Getka, 2018, pp. 49–50). The causes of this fact can, apart from the question the genre the texts belong to, be explained by extralinguistic factors: on the one hand, the linguistic habits of the supposed author – Leu Kishka, associated both with the Belarusian and the Ukrainian lands, as well as more broadly – with the specific Uniate tradition (Bolek, 2016), on the other, by cultural issues and the general tendency to include Church Slavonic elements in texts, which was a sign of attachment to one's own cultural tradition (Labyncev and Šavinskaâ, 2000, p. 128). In the situation in which the Uniate rites were becoming closer to the western rites, the

Church Slavonic language was to be a counterweight, a specific second pillar holding up the tradition of the Rus' culture and hampering the influences of Latinisation (Getka, 2018, p. 65).

Selected for analysis was also a text from Vilnius from 1671 which, admittedly, was not published in the Old Belarusian language, but – because of the content (it describes the successive parts of the holy mass) – in the Church Slavonic language. This text, however, was published in Latin script in Polish editing. The Church Slavonic language of the text was subject to numerous influences of the living language. It was precisely the reference to the Polish writing system that enabled them to be reflected. Regardless of the language of the text, the publication constitutes an excellent example of an attempt to use the Polish type of the Latin script in the Old Belarusian cultural area already in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

Importantly – all of the mentioned texts had a wide reach; in accordance with the resolutions of the Zamość Council, they were to be distributed in all the parishes for a small price (Sobranije, 1722, [nlb] Wstęp do czytelnika, Synod Prowincjalny, 1785, p. 45). Additionally, their use during the liturgy and mass made them recognisable texts of culture.

### **The Graphic and Orthographic System**

The universal tendency of the development of the graphic and orthographic system of the Belarusian language (as well as those of the majority of languages) is the pursuit of simplification, in order to be better understood by the receivers. On the level of graphics, this manifests itself in the removal of needless (typical of, for instance, the Ancient Greek) or duplicated graphemes and in seeking the best means to reflect the features of the living language.

In the course of this process, it is natural to reach for the experiences of other languages. In the case of the Belarusian language, visible became the strong connections with the Polish language, and later on – with the Russian language. Additionally, in the context of the orthography of the Old Belarusian language, it is worth pointing out that it has always been subject to the influences of two systems: the Church Slavonic system, based on the etymological-morphological principle, and the spoken language system (Žuraŭski and Kramko, 1972, p. 134). This tendency was clearly visible, although its reflection depended on the genre (Karskij, 1908, pp. 346–347). In the words of Uladzimir Svyazhynsky:

the orthography of the religious Church Slavonic works was characterised by the greatest departure from the norms of the living speech, for their copyists knew the orthographic rules of the Church Slavonic language well and endeavoured to use them in their writing practice (Svâžynski, 1974, p. 106).





The Latin script used by the 19<sup>th</sup>-century writers was not a new phenomenon. Already in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Vilnius Basilians were making attempts at printing texts using this alphabet, the effect of which is the text *Ecphonemata Liturgiey Greckiey to iest: To co przy Liturgiey Kapłan, Dyakon, y Chor w głos tylko spiewáią: Ze Mszey S. Bazylego Wielkiego y S. Janá Chryzostoma wyięte: y ięzykiem Słowieńskim, a charakterem polskim, z nowym wykładem na ięzyk polski na przeciwnych painach położonym: do tego, z sumą rubryk teyże Liturgiey, sporządzone, y do druku podane: Tudziesz, Harmonia albo krotkie pogodzenie różnic w obrzędach między Mszą S. Rzymską a Liturgiá Grecká: z Obiasnieniem obrzędow, y dolożeniem sposobu nabożnego, á pożytecznego słuchania Mszy S. tak Rzymskiey iako y Greckiey: napisane y do druku także podane* edited by Pachomiusz Ohilewicz (Ohilewicz, 1671), a Basilianin, doctor of theology, born in Minsk, and associated with the Basilian monasteries in Byeń, Vilnius, and Supraśl (Ozorowski, 1982, p. 241).

The text, although written in the Church Slavonic language, is, however paradoxical it may seem, an excellent source for contemporary research on, among others, the Belarusian phonetics, due to the use of the Latin script in the publication. What is important in the context of research on the development of the Belarusian language is that this text illustrated for the contemporary printers the possibilities offered by the Latin script. This was first noticed by the Vilnius Basilians, then the Pochayiv Basilians who even more boldly than their colleagues from Vilnius adapted the language of the text printed in the Latin script to their own pronunciation – in the case of the Pochayiv print, it was the Ukrainian pronunciation (Ohilewicz, 1781). This experience (printing using the Latin script) soon brought other results in the form of the bilingual publication *Kniżyca dla gospodarstwa* (Poczajów, 1788). Here, the same graphic treatment was used, but this time for another language code (not for the Church Slavonic language but for simple speech – the Ukrainian language of the 18<sup>th</sup> century). This, in turn, could have encouraged later printers to make analogical attempts, which were carried out already in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The Latin script was also used in numerous manuscripts in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, which confirms the thesis about certain attempts and explorations in the field of graphics (Civanova, 2011, pp. 94–98) made already in that period as well, and, thanks to that, confirms the continuity of the development of the language.

## Grammar and Phonetics

While commenting on the development of the Belarusian language in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, worth emphasising is the severe lack of norms of this language in the form of a grammar. The first grammars appeared only in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, while the process of codification was finalised essentially in the 1930s, although, after all, even now some milieus do not acknowledge the so-called narkamaŭka.

Texts from the transitory period feature some elements, which, on the one hand, have their basis in the writing tradition developing in the conditions of close contact between the Polish and the Belarusian language (hence forms typical of the Polish grammar system [*мовилемь, мовилесь, мовилисьмы, мовилисте*] and past tense forms ending in -ль [*бегль, несль*]), on the other, elements, which are the results of the explorations of editors introducing features of local dialects. Regarded as such forms should be the occurring in the Supraśl text forms ending in -ove/-eve, comparative forms created with the suffix -š- infinitives ending in -ti, 1.pl. forms ending in -mo: *не чинятыя полотну или паньрови* (Sobranije, 1722, p. 102L), *жидове* (Sobranije, 1722, p. 2L), *докторове и цыруликове* (Sobranije, 1722, p. 77v), *въ наименшоу частиць, въ наименшоу кроплѣ вина* (Sobranije, 1722, p. 22L).

The final decision to choose the North-Eastern Belarusian local dialects as the basis of the modern literary language does not undo the significance of the earlier tendencies visible in the process of the formation of the norm, when, depending on the cultural centre, this or that linguistic feature was represented. It is not, then, a denial of the tradition but a reflection of the explorations. Here, it should be emphasised that the indicated forms still appear in the work of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century writers and disappear only later, and gradually at that (Žuraŭski and Kramko, 1972, pp. 135–136). It is therefore an evidence that the 19<sup>th</sup>-century writers were referring to the old tradition and continued the evolutionary changes.

For this reason, the argument about a lack of connection between the old and the modern Belarusian language due to selected features not occurring in the dialects which underlie the modern Belarusian language is – it seems – inaccurate. In the analysis of the development process of the literary Belarusian language, one additionally must take into consideration a research ‘trap’: the multilingualism of the Eastern borders of the Commonwealth (Danylenko, 2017; Temčinas, 2017). In a situation where we regard the features of the South-Western dialectical area not to be typical of the Belarusian writing, we assent to recognising those texts as belonging to the Ukrainian cultural tradition – for those features are typical of the dialects that underlie the modern Ukrainian language.

The enclitic forms occurring in the text, such as: *ми, ти, мя, тя*, are obvious archaisms, they serve to show the differences between a text in the Old Belarusian language (Ruthenian) and the biblical language. They are often printed in a different script. Therefore, in the 18<sup>th</sup>-century texts, they do not represent the Old Belarusian language system but a stylisation as a Church Slavonic text or simply a citation in that language.

At the same time, tendencies typical of the later language are reflected in the analysed texts (Getka, 2018).

- a) the evolution of the old yat into [e], which is suggested by cases of using the letter e in place of the expected yat, cf. *покармь телесный* (Sobranije, 1722, p. 21) – *пожадливість тѣлесная* (Sobranije, 1722, p. 24v), *кони в потребе ковати* (Sobranije, 1722, p. 109),

- b) the hardness of [p]: *прысланы́й* (Sobranije, 1722, p. 16v), *вѣрыти* (Краткое сословіе, 1759, p. 4, 5, 6, etc.), *дарь* (Поученіе, 1788, p. 12v),
- c) the hardness of [ц]: *лыскавѣцы* (Sobranije, 1722, p. 96), *служебницы* (Поученіе, 1788, p. 68v),
- d) the hardness of [š, ž, č]: *нашы* (Краткое сословіе, 1759, p. 12), (Поученіе, 1788, p. 10v), *шашь* (Поученіе, 1788, p. 12v), *сторожь* (Sobranije, 1722, p. 113v).
- e) the transition [e] > [o]: *змочоны́й* (Sobranije, 1722, p. 31), *бичованы́й* (Поученіе, 1788, p. 39v).
- f) the presence of the affricate [ʒ], despite the lack of appropriate graphic means, cf. *дрождзистое* (Sobranije, 1722, p. 19).
- g) the elimination of the hiatus by means of [v] in the middle of a word: *павукъ* (Sobranije, 1722, p. 28v).
- h) attempts at representing tsekane, which was mentioned above: *слнце которое зацмилося* (Sobranije, 1722, p. 31).

The frequency of features consistent with the everyday language consolidated the new quality // norm of the modern Belarusian language.

### Lexis

Religious texts are not the best source for research on the lexis of local dialects which is a constitutive part of the modern Belarusian language. That is because their specific character is different, moreover, the language of liturgy is in principle a language that is fossilised, is not subject to change. Regardless of that, in the 18<sup>th</sup> century Supraśl texts, one can find vocabulary, related to everyday life, which lends itself to being classified according to various subject areas.

Easily isolated is vocabulary related to the rural life, to noble traditions, to economic and mercantile order, judiciary and administration, defence, and other areas of life: *шкло*, *желѣзо*, *цеглу*, *ванно палити* (Sobranije, 1722, p. 109), *збоже молоти въ млынахъ* (Sobranije, 1722, p. 109), *орати* (Sobranije, 1722, p. 109v), *сѣяти* (Sobranije, 1722, p. 109v), *жати* (Sobranije, 1722, p. 109v), *кони в потребе ковати* (Sobranije, 1722, p. 109), *косити* (Sobranije, 1722, p. 111v), *трунки продавати* (Sobranije, 1722, p. 109), *возы ладовати на ярмаркъ* (Sobranije, 1722, p. 109), *неповинень кони и людей лѣчити* (Sobranije, 1722, p. 111v), *поединковати для показаня невинности* (Sobranije, 1722, p. 107), *крадѣжь* (Sobranije, 1722, p. 105v), *кристаловую скляницу* (Sobranije, 1722, p. 52), *хлѣбъ може бути ячмѣнный, пшанный, овсяный, житный, цукровый* (Sobranije, 1722, p. 22L), *съ виномъ* (Sobranije, 1722, p. 16), *съ водкою рожовою* (Sobranije, 1722, p. 16), *челядь* (Sobranije, 1722, p. 64v), *жолнѣрь* (Sobranije, 1722, p. 115v), *кугляры* (Sobranije, 1722, p. 55v), *ворожьбѣтови* (Sobranije, 1722, p. 106v).

Well represented is the lexis related to the human being, their physical condition: *на челѣ, на очесехъ, на ноздрѣхъ, на оустахъ, на обоихъ оушесехъ, на рукахъ, по плецію, на пяткахъ ножныхъ, на персехъ* (Sobranije, 1722, p. 18v), *въ оуста* (Sobranije, 1722, p. 10v) and their psychological condition: the flaws of the human being: *нѣмый, безрукій* (Sobranije, 1722, p. 10), *не мѣль проказы, повѣтра, шаленства, лѣхой хоробы названной кадукъ* (Sobranije, 1722, p. 55v), as well as the immediate and extended family *кумъ и кума* (Sobranije, 1722, p. 12), *дается дорослымъ а не дѣтятемъ* (Sobranije, 1722, p. 51v), *матки* (Sobranije, 1722, p. 10v), *Отца своего, Матерь, Дѣда, прадѣда, Ціотку, вая, стрыя* (Sobranije, 1722, p. 109v).

Many of the lexemes recorded in the 18<sup>th</sup>-century texts remained in the Belarusian lexicon. The continuity of tradition should therefore be evidenced above all by words, which, regardless of how they appeared in the language and of their genesis, remained in it permanently and function to this day. It is obvious that language does not resist various sorts of fashions, and its lexis reflects the stratifying cultural influences of the successive eras. Hence the numerous Polonisms in the modern Belarusian language, and – taking into account the policy of Russification beginning in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the experience of the Belarusian union state as part of the USSR – also the Russicisms, which phenomenon is expressed for example in the doublets: *лядоўка – халадзільнік, торба – кайстра – пакет, адчынена – адкрыта, зачынена – закрыта*, and others. Those kinds of phenomena are natural signs of the development of language.

Thus, it does not seem possible for the vocabulary occurring in the Old Belarusian texts to be utterly forgotten and, in connection with that – as is claimed by A. Zhurasky and I. Kramko – for the modern Belarusian language to be once again undergoing the same process of forming its resources and absorbing new words that was undergone earlier by the Old Belarusian language (Žuraŭski and Kramko, 1972, p. 140). Such thesis, formulated on the basis of the words of Jan Chechot regarding the leanness of the peasant lexicon: *Our peasant does not know the words: feeling, concept, humanity, charity, hospitality, gratefulness; he will say: czuju (a to znaczy i slyszą), rozumieju, dobry czalawiek, treba biednemu dać, treba hościa czastować, dziakuj, and his each idea he explains not with a noun but most commonly with a word* (Czeczot, 1844, p. 9; Žuraŭski and Kramko, 1972, p. 140), does not take into account many factors related to the formation of the literary language. For if the simplest peasant lexicon constituted the sole basis of the new literary Belarusian language created supposedly in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, this system would not be able to express for instance abstract concepts or concepts that are concrete but unrelated to the rural life. The folk language, with all its richness of folklore, is not able to express abstract concepts related to the exercise of power, specialist terminology, etc. By agreeing with the thesis about the solely folk roots of the language, we also assent to the impoverishment of its functions, and in the case of the Belarusian language this does not take place. It is a rightful literary language: already at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, both the author of *Aeneid* and Vincent Dunin-Marcinkevich in

his translation of *Pan Tadeusz* proved the functional possibilities of the Belarusian language.

### Genre and the Awareness of the Continuity of Tradition

Writing develops through long-term processes and responds to the current social demand, at the same time externalising the creative abilities of authors. On the level of the genre, the legacy of the old and the new literary traditions should not be investigated at all. For it may turn out that the analysed literary tradition does not offer a direct continuation of the selected genres, since that it related to the changeability of the cultural needs of the recipients. In the context of the continuity of the Belarusian writing tradition, it can be observed that the polemic around the union can be regarded as a prototype of the modern journalism, the translations of chivalric romances, in the same degree as religious hagiographic literature, are a model for later longer and shorter prose forms.

The continuity and evolutionary character of the development of the literary Belarusian language is additionally evidenced by extralinguistic factors. One must remember that literary texts are created by educated individuals, usually ones informed both in terms of the current tendencies and in the native cultural tradition, which is confirmed by the words of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century authors, among them Francishak Bahushevich: ‘Čytaŭ ja ci mała starych papieraŭ po dźwieście, pa trysta hadou tamu pisanych u našaj ziamli i pisanych wielikimi panami a našaj mowaj čyściusieŭkaj, jak by nawat ciapier pisałasia’ (Bahušewič, 1930, p. 3, Žuraŭski and Kramko, 1972, p. 145), who, at the same time, pointed to a knowledge of the old writing, as well as to the connection between the old and the new literary traditions.

As an effect, the only possible to indicate difference between the old and the new Belarusian literary tradition is the audience. For together with the expansion of the availability of literature, the means of literary expression had to be adjusted to the unprepared recipient. The process of the crystallisation of the ‘new’ Belarusian literature was, therefore, connected to the education of its audience. However, we are still talking about a process, an evolutionary change.

### Conclusions

The aim of the analysis performed in this article was the verification of the assumption, functioning to this day in Belarusian language research, of the break in the continuity between the old and the new writing traditions.

From this perspective, the old writing tradition was supposed to disappear by the 18<sup>th</sup> century and be replaced by the new tradition which is usually dated from the appearance of the parody of Virgil’s *Aeneid*, the poetic exercises of Vincent Dunin-Marcinkevich and others.

That publications printed in the Cyrillic script can be a source for research – we already know. Importantly – in Vilnius, printed was also a text in the Latin script, which constitutes a new element in the research on the old writing of the Old Belarusian cultural area.

The analysed 18<sup>th</sup>-century material shows the necessity of further research consisting in source explorations. An extension of our knowledge will expand and provide arguments for discussions with nearly a century-old perspectives proposed in terms of research on the development of the Belarusian language. Conclusions arrived at by prominent authorities in the field of Belarusian studies on the basis of the state of knowledge of that time, today may prove to be unfounded, disputable, and in need of verification. This task is important in so far as the circulating in the scholarly field axioms about the ‘emergence’ of the new 19<sup>th</sup>-century literary language are plainly harmful in the context of understanding the evolutionary character of the development of Belarusian culture.

*Translated into English by Lingua Lab s.c.*

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