

Psalterium in quatuor linguis: Hebraea, Graeca, Chaldaea [i.e. Ethiopic], *Latina* (Cologne, 1518). Baltic Trade and Cultural Connections: Evidence from the Paper

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Introduction

In the first place this note is a celebration of the recent decision by the British Library management to allow carefully controlled use of cameras by readers. In addition it is an example of the way in which the use of backlighting of substrates (watermarks in paper in this instance) provides a productive fresh dimension to research.

This note concerns the three British Library copies of *Psalterium in quatuor linguis: Hebraea, Graeca, Chaldaea* [i.e. Ethiopic], *Latina* (Cologne, 1518) (BL, 2.b.6; G.12093; 686.i.1) by Joannes Soter and Joannes Potken.¹

Potken (c. 1470-c. 1525) was provost of the collegiate church of St Georg in Köln, but his appointment as a papal proto-notary brought him to the Roman curia and there he became acquainted with Ethiopian churchmen. Curious about their worship, he attended services at their church in Rome, the church of Santo Stefano degli Abissini (the Ethiopian community was well established in Rome by the sixteenth century and had been granted a church of their own by Pope Sixtus IV in 1479), and started to learn Ge'ez, the language of the Ethiopian church liturgy. His teacher was an Ethiopian friar, abbas Thomas Walda Samuel, then residing in Rome as the guest of Pope Leo X.

Eventually Potken felt himself competent enough in his command of the language to set about publishing the Psalms and the Song of Solomon in Ge'ez. As no books had been printed in this language before, Potken had to commission the cutting of founts of type in Ge'ez script himself. One of Potken's sources for the text was a manuscript Ge'ez Psalter which still survives in the Vatican Library (Vat. etiop. 20). It is the main sources for his *Psalterium David et cantica aliqua in lingua Chaldea* (Rome, 1513).

Potken's *Psalterium in quatuor linguis: Hebraea, Graeca, Chaldaea Latina* (Cologne, 1518) has the distinction of being the first Polyglot to include Ge'ez,² which he wrongly considered to be the Aramaic or Chaldean language.

¹ A high quality version of *Psalterium* is available on line from Munich: https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=s3vv-g8w3tQC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false

² For the first printed book to include Ge'ez see Bernhard von Breydenbach, *Peregrinatio in terram sanctam* (Mainz, 1486). For the first book printed almost entirely in Ge'ez see Joannes Potken, *Psalterium David et cantica aliqua in lingua Chaldea (the Psalms, followed by Sacred Canticles and the Song of Songs)* (Rome, 1513). These notes courtesy of King's College London as at <http://www.kingscollections.org/exhibitions/specialcollections/psalter1513/>

1. Methodology

All the pages of the three British Library copies of the *Psalterium* were examined by the author for watermarks using the electroluminescent light sheet in the Rare Books Room. The physical description of the book is given as 4, 144 leaves; fol. and 4to. The books are folios bound in sixes. There are twenty-three gatherings: a-i, l-u, x, y, ç and &. Each gathering is of three sheets. So for each gathering one watermark is expected on the first or the sixth page; one watermark is expected on the second or the fifth page; one watermark is expected on the third or the fourth page. There is one exception. Neither sii nor siii on copy 686.i.1 has a watermark.

The image capture method called for the light sheet to be placed under each sheet in turn. A transparent rule was laid on the page and the electroluminescent light was turned on. The image of the watermark and rule were then captured, in two sessions, with a hand-held camera. The book is in four languages so the four languages are in separate columns. Consequently the watermarks, being placed centrally in the pages, were between columns and therefore generally not overprinted.

Images were processed off-site (Photoshop) and integrated into a datafile (Filemaker Pro).

2. The watermarks

The following watermarks are found in much the same order in the three books: Shields (various); Jugs; Star with circle; Gothic P; Crown/shield/sun/letter 'h'; Gothic 'y'; Hand; Bull's head; Dog with trefoil; Dog without trefoil; Wheel; (none); Unicorns (various).

The on-line Memory of Paper datafile has been invaluable not only in allowing all the watermarks to be identified but in allowing the known distribution of those watermarks to be mapped.³ For instance, consider the hand watermark (fig. 1).



Fig. 1. Hand watermark from 686.i.1 gathering 'l' outer sheet.

In copy G.2093 it appears once in each of gatherings l, n, o and p. In copy 2.b.6 it occurs once in each of gatherings l and m, and in copy 686.i.1 once in each of gatherings l, n and p.

³ http://www.memoryofpaper.eu:8080/BernsteinPortal/appl_start_disp#

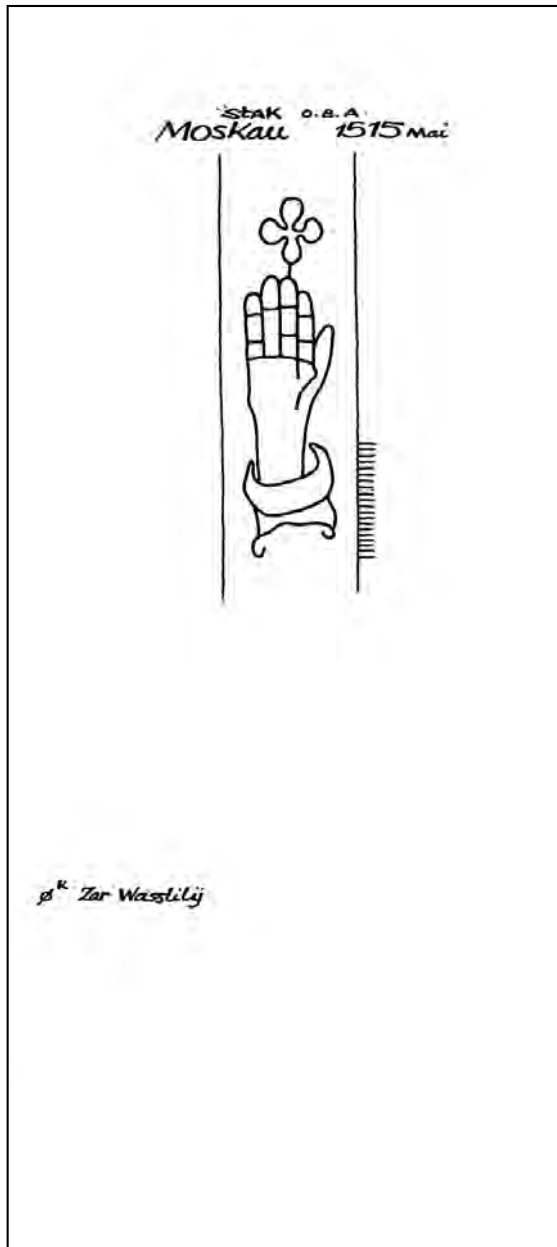
Psalterium in quatuor linguis: Hebraea, Graeca, Chaldaea [i.e. Ethiopic], Latina (Cologne, 1518).
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A search for ‘quadrefoil’ and ‘hand’ for the years 1515-1521 allowed that hand watermark to be identified. By way of example the Bernstein datafile pdf about the 1515 Moscow watermark is fig. 2.

Wasserzeichen-Informationssystem

DFG

www.wasserzeichen-
online.de



Referenznummer DE4620-
PO-155312

Wasserzeichen-Informationssystem



www.wasserzeichen-online.de

Referenznummer	DE4620-PO-155312
Permalink	http://www.wasserzeichen-online.de/wzis/?ref=DE4620-PO-155312
Motivgruppe	Figuren, anthropomorphe - Hand/Handschuh - mit Beizeichen - Blume/Blatt/Stern - vierblättrig - ohne weiteres Beizeichen - Manschette dreidimensional - mit Fingerglieder - Manschette zweiteilig
Quelle	Deutschland, Königsberg, Staatsarchiv (jetzt in: Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz Berlin), Königsberg, O.B.A. 1515, Moskau Aussteller: Zar Wassilij Papier
Abmessungen	23 mm, Breite 16 mm, Höhe 61 mm
Piccard-Online	http://www.piccard-online.de/?nr=155312
Piccard-Findbücher Online	http://www.ksbm.oeaw.ac.at/_scripts/php/loadRepWmark.php?rep=PPO&refnr=17-3-758 (Band 17, Abteilung 3, Nr. 758)

Fig. 2. Entries from Bernstein Memory of Paper site.

Further use of the datafile allows the distribution to be mapped, as in fig. 3.

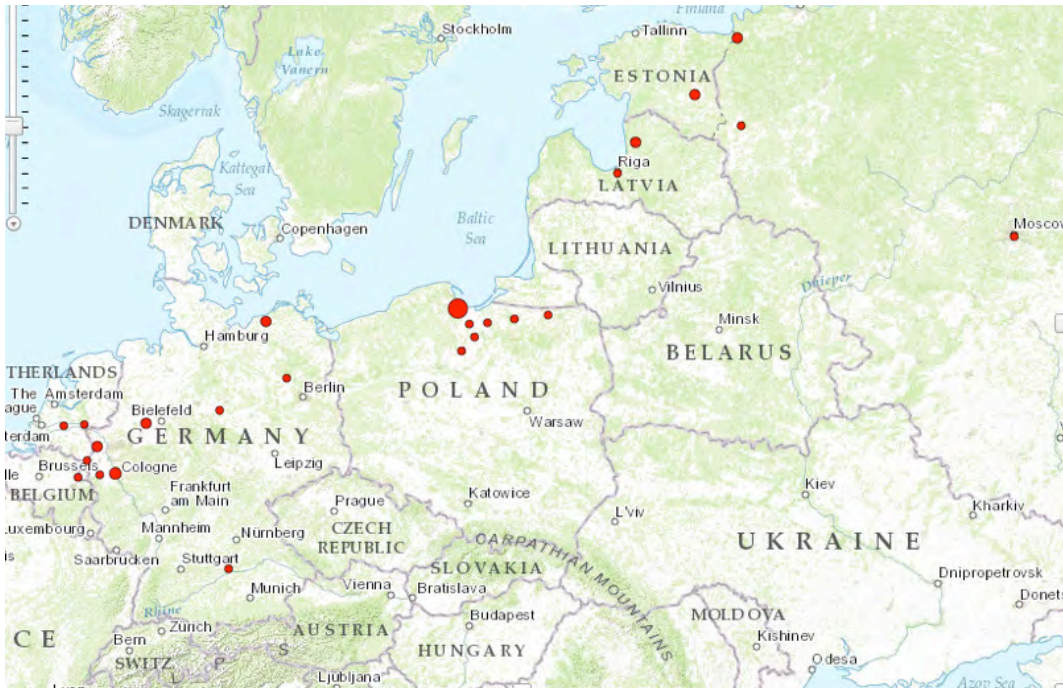


Fig. 3. Distribution of quadrefoil hand watermark 1515-1521.

The distribution is similar to the posts of the Hanseatic League as in fig. 4.



Fig. 4. Hanseatic League posts.

This coincidence is even more evident when all the watermarks in the three books are mapped as in fig. 5.

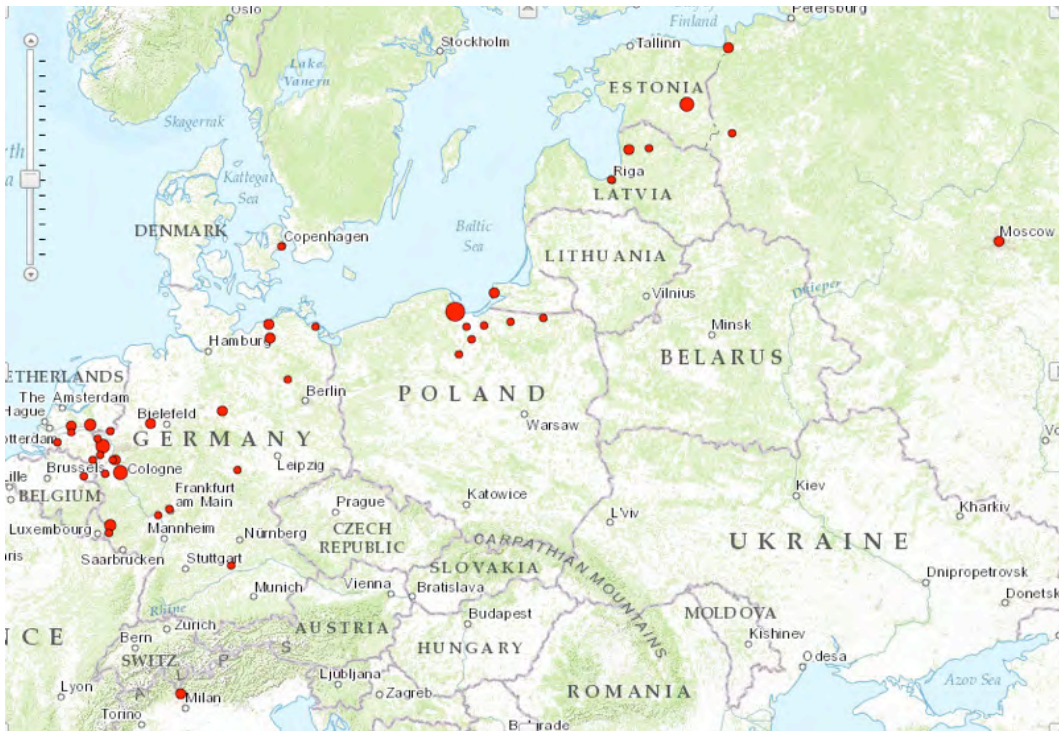


Fig. 5. Map of all watermarks from *Psalterium*.

In the main the paper has been distributed and come to rest in the area of the Hanseatic League posts. Noteworthy escapees are in Milan and Moscow. Cologne, the place of printing of *Psalterium*, is favourably placed. This highlights the geographical advantage of Cologne for cultural and commercial purposes.

3. Current locations of *Psalterium*

A search of known locations of *Psalterium* gives numerous locations in Europe, one in Israel and three in the USA (fig. 6).



Fig. 6. Map of known copies of *Psalterium*.

4. Comparison of layout of *Psalterium* with the *Complutensian Polyglot*

Comparison of the layout of the *Psalterium* with its very much grander but contemporary multi-language religious work, the *Complutensian Polyglot Bible*, is indicative of different world views.

The Complutensian Polyglot Bible, under the direction of the Spanish Cardinal Francisco Jiménez de Cisneros (1436–1517), was published in 600 large six-volume sets. Only 123 are known to have survived. It was probably not widely distributed before 1522. Figure 7 shows the layout of versions of one of the Psalms.



Fig. 7. Complutensian Polyglot - Psalm.

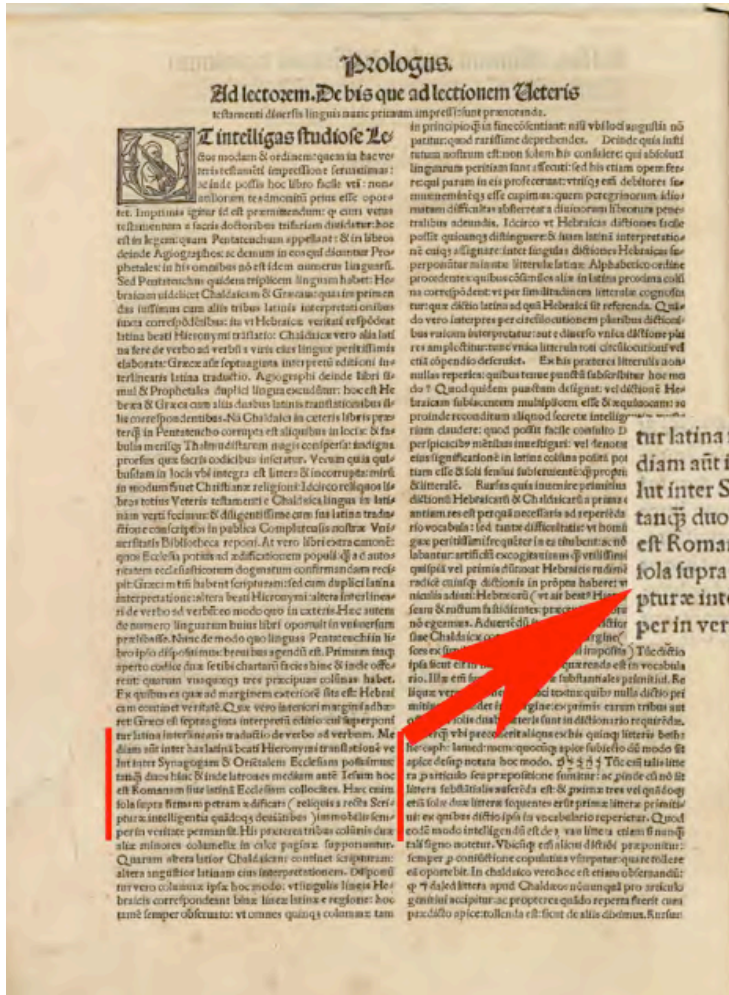


Fig. 8. Complutensian Polyglot - Prologue.

The Latin is placed prominently in the centre of the page, as is explained in the Prologue:

Mediam autem inter has latinam beati Hieronymi translationem velut inter Synagoram & Orientalem Ecclesiam posuimus: tanquam duos hinc & inde latrones medium autem Iesum hoc est Romanam siue latinam Ecclesiam collocantes. [We have placed the Latin translation of the blessed Jerome between that of the Synagogue and that of the Oriental Church, just as the thieves were hung, one on each side of Jesus, that is, the Roman, or Latin, Church.]

Psalterium, in contrast, gives no such prominence to Latin. All four languages are given equal prominence. It is suggested that this openness is indicative of the more welcoming attitude to scholarship of the age of Erasmus.

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Conclusions

The research in this note has only been possible because of the recent British Library management decision to allow the personal use of cameras together with access to an electroluminescent light sheet. The author hopes that, in addition to adding to the store of knowledge about the 1518 *Psalterium in quatuor linguis: Hebraea, Graeca, Chaldaea* [i.e. Ethiopic], *Latina*, a convincing case has been made for the practical use of backlighting e.g. for watermark research. The concluding comparison of the layouts of *Psalterium* and of its contemporary the *Complutensian Polyglot*, together with revelations about the trade patterns linked to *Psalterium*, contribute to our understanding of the European Reformation.