

Starting from an Unknown Primer

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Abstract

A text unknown so far (*Bucoavnă pentru întrebuințarea junimii moldo-române din Bucovina* – Primer for the Use of the Moldovan-Romanian Youth of Bukovina, printed in Cernăuți “at Edtard [probably: Eduard] Viniarj”, without the year of publication) proves an exciting source for reconstructing a new chapter of local cultural history and of the history of education.

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Despite all the remarkable efforts made so far to identify all the old Romanian prints, some libraries may still hold surprises, revealing unknown copies and, sometimes, – though ever more rarely – the copies of unknown books.

I have had such a surprise in the private library of a former professor, who came as a refugee from Bukovina in 1940. In this good library containing philological and theological writings, I have found a book of 12 x 19 cm, the print space being 9.7 x 15.5 cm, in big octavo format, entitled *Bucoavnă pentru întrebuințarea junimii moldo-române din Bucovina* (Primer for the Use of the Moldovan Romanian Youth of Bukovina), printed in Cernăuți “at Edtard [probably: Eduard] Viniarj”, without the year of publication. The book has 70 pages paginated with Arabic numerals, consisting of 4 signatures of 16 pages, marked also with Arabic numerals, and a 5th signature with only 6 pages. Unmentioned by the *Bibliografia românească veche* (Old Romanian Bibliography) or by its addenda published to the present moment, as well as by *Bibliografia românească modernă* (Modern Romanian Bibliography), this print contains additional data on the cultural life of Bukovina in the first half of the 19th century.

p. 49–69: Short readings. There are 29 lines on a page.

p. 70: “Church, Arabic, and Roman numbers”.¹ (The table presents the numeric values of Cyrillic letters up to 1000 with their Arabic and Latin equivalents. In case of letters the numeric value is marked by using the sign of abbreviation.)

The first 48 pages are printed with majuscule Cyrillic characters, the following 22 with much smaller letters, all of them being metallic typographical characters.

Dating. Since we have known only of Peter Ekhard’s (Petru Ecard) typographical activity in Cernăuți – his first print, *Catehismul mic românesc, slavon și nemțesc* (Little Romanian, Slavonic, and German Catechism), was made in 1805, the last one, T. Racoce’s *Chrestomaticul românesc* (Romanian Chrestomathy) in 1820 –, who was the only typographer licensed to print Romanian text in this town for fifteen years, Edtard Viniarj must have worked before or after this interval. The aspect of the print, the systematic use of Arabic numerals, the Arabic numbers on the signatures, etc. suggest that the book could not have appeared before 1805.

As the print has no date, and the watermark of the paper is only fragmentary, the only estimation regarding the date of printing can be made on the basis of typographical, philological, and historical arguments.

1. Russian Cyrillic letters were borrowed in prints made after 1800.
2. The transitional alphabet was used in the last decades of the old Romanian books (1820–1830) and in the following two decades.

These elements suggest the primer must have been published between 1820 and 1830, or in the immediately following period, but not after 1840.

Observations on the language of the *Primer*: The readership of the publication is specified by the title, the book being dedicated “*to the use of the Moldovan-Romanian youth of Bucovina*”. Evidently, this is also reflected in the language of the text. It is enough to go through the lesson on the units of measurement to get a look at the intercultural region of Bukovina in those times, where the old Romanian cultural

¹ In the original: “Numerul bisericesc, arabesc și râmlesesc”.

tradition is mixed with the innovations of modern culture, and also with Polish influences: “I have learnt at school to count from one, two, three to twenty. The teacher showed us coins, one *dinar*, *dutcă*, *creițar*, *groșiță*, *cinceacă*, *grivna* and *sorocoveț*.¹ A *creițar* has four *dinars* or two half *creițars*, a *cinceacă* has five, a *grivna* ten, and a *sorocoveț* fifty *creițars*. I know therefore to count and to measure. Broadcloth, materials, linen are measured by cubits. A cubit has four quarters called *certuri*.² Two *certuri* make half a cubit. Bread, beans, peas, oats, and maize flour are measured by *corețeș*.³ One *coreț* has four *pătrări* (*banițe*)⁴ or six *demerlis*.⁵ Milk, wine, beer, vinegar are measured by *ocas*.⁶ One *oca* has four litres; one litre – two *sîngeaps*.⁷ Sugar, coffee, and other goods are measured by scales. To this one must take a balancing weight of stone, of lead or of something else. One *oca* has three Polish pounds. One pound has four quarters pounds. Each quarter pound has eight *lots*.”⁸

Mentioning that the *Primer* does not contain references to the Latin origin of the Romanian language and people – a theme which occurs emphatically in the texts of the Transylvanian School (Școala

¹ Russian, Polish, and Austro–Hungarian silver or copper coins of small value used in Bukovina in the 19th century. (The translator’s note.)

² Unit of linear measure. (The translator’s note.)

³ Unit of dry measure mainly for cereals equivalent approx. with 1.25 hl. (The translator’s note.)

⁴ Unit of measure equivalent with approx. 20–30 l. (The translator’s note.)

⁵ Unit of measure of capacity. (The translator’s note.)

⁶ Unit of measure of capacity. (The translator’s note.)

⁷ Unit of measure of capacity. (The translator’s note.)

⁸ The original text: “Eu am învățat la școală a număa de la unul, doi, trei, până la doaăzeci. Domnul învățătoriu au arătat bani, un dinariu, dutcă, creițariu, groșiță, cinceacă, grivnă și sorocoveț. Un creițariu are patru dinari sau două giumătăți, cinceaca are cinci, grivna zece și sorocovețul cincizeci de creițari. Eu știu așijderea cum să măsură și cum să cumpănește. Postavul, materia, pâna să măsură cu cotul. Cotul are patru asemenea părți, care certuri să cheamă. Doău certuri fac o jumătate de cot. Pânea, bobul, mazărea, ovăsul, mălaiul mărunțel să măsură cu corețul. Corețul are patru pătrări (banițe) sau șesă demerli. Laptele, vinul, berea, oțătul să măsură cu oca. O ocă are patru litre; o litră – doaă sîngeapuri. Zaharul, cafeoa și altele marfe să cumpenesc cu cumpăna. La aceasta să ia o cumpănitoeare greutate, piatră, de fier, de plumb sau de altceva. O ocă are trii fonturi leșești. Un font are patru pătrări de font. Fieștecare patrare de font are opt loturi.”

The text is full of archaisms and regionalisms both from the point of view of grammar and vocabulary. (The translator’s note.)

Ardeleană)¹ and of the Transylvanian Latinist School which followed it – , we must observe that the text is full of regional vocabulary and phonetic elements, for example: *degitul* (*degetul* – finger),² *dobăș* (*tobășar* – drummer), *dubălărie* (*tăbăcărie* – tannery), *gădilire* (*gâdilire* – tickling), *gealău* (*rindea* – plane), *giur* (*jur* – I swear), *guzan* (*șobolan* – rat), *ier* (*vier* – wild boar/vine grower), *iermi* (*viermi* – worms), *iertăganul* (*iataganul* – the yatagan), *jâlț* (backed chair), *jig* (brand), *nard* (spikenard), *sămui* (*socoti* – to count), *șaramoiul* (*streășină* – eaves), *șterc* (*murdărie* – filth), *tioc* (*ciob* – crock), *tocmăgi* (*tăiței* – noodles), *zorzori* (*zornăi* – to clank), etc. Otherwise, the *Primer* contains regionalisms which appear nowhere else or appear here for the first time in a Romanian text.

Since the vocabulary is rich in neologisms and regionalisms synonyms are often given, probably because of pedagogical reasons: “*fiincușul* (*coada urechii*)” – earlobe, “*ficatul* (*maiul*)” – the liver, “*soba* (*cuptoriul*)” – the stove, “*fața de masă sau mășariul*” – table-cloth, “*scafa* (*ceașca*)” – cup, “*surtucul* (*dulama*)” – mantle, “*nădragii* (*șalavarii*)” – breeches, “*scarpăii* (*cervișii, păpușii*)” – slippers, “*perina* (*căpătâiul*)” – pillow, or the surprising formulation, “*căciula* (*țâsma de grumazi*, standard Romanian: *guler*)” – cap (collar) etc.

The world in which the Bucovinan schoolchildren who may have used the *Primer* lived was in a complete renewal. Therefore it is not surprising that a great number of neologisms are present in the text, mainly for illustrating the reading of letters such as ă, v, ø, ψ, and also in other parts of the text: “*brav* (brave), *color* (coloured), *conșcolar* (schoolmate), *costisi* (to cost), *cvitanție* (receipt), *dejun* (luncheon), *fildiș* (ivory), *idropică* (hydropic), *imn* (hymn; written $\nu\mu\mu$ and $\lambda\mu\mu$), *indighenat* (indigenuity), *iparh* (eparch; written $\nu\mu\alpha\rho\chi$), *ipsilon* (epsilon), *irou* (hero), *modest* (modest), *psalodie* (psalmody), *pseudo* (pseudo), *revindicare* (revendication), *saluta* (to salute), *tindinea* (tendon), *xant* (chant), *xenotaful* (cenotaph), *xerex* (xeres), *ximen* (cymene)” etc.

The textbook was written on the basis of a German text, which is proved by the numerous linguistic calques following this language:

¹ General denomination of the Transylvanian Romanian Enlightenment. This movement emphasized the Latin/Roman origin of the Romanian language and people formulating (in the context of a local legislation preserved from the Middle Ages) arguments for the Transylvanian Romanian’s political demands.

² I am going to give in parenthesis the standard Romanian form as well as the English translation of the regionalism, neologism, etc. examples. (The translator’s note.)

“Eu iau samă ce domnul învățător zice” (“eu respect ceea ce spune domnul învățător” – I take into consideration what the teacher says), “eu iau sama la aceea ce el ne povestește” (“eu sunt atent la ceea ce el povestește” – I am attentive to what he is saying), “eu citesc lor ceva” (“eu le citesc lor ceva” – I read them something), “eu pot toate să le numesc” (“Eu pot să le numesc pe toate” – I am able to name everything), “lucrăciosul [sic!] țăran suferă voios greutatea fierbințelii la soare” (“țăranul cel harnic suferă cu bucurie tăria fierbințelii soarelui” – the industrious peasant suffers gladly the hardship of the hotness in the sun), “sora mea trebuie pretutindenea pre lângă maica să fie” (“sora mea trebuie să fie pe lângă mama noastră să fie” – my sister must always be beside our mother), etc. The words borrowed from German also prove this fact: *dant* (*dans* – dance), *țirc* (circ “circus”), *șrub* (*șurub* – screw), *ștraf* (*amendă* – penalty), *ștelt* (*poziție* – position), *șână* (*șină* – rail), etc.

Notes on the content of the *Primer*. As we have mentioned above, this textbook is not connected by any element to the ideas of the Transylvanian School. It rather falls in with the general ideals of the Enlightenment, according to which children are to be educated to respect family ties regulated by firm and explicit norms, and also to become good citizens who fulfil faithfully their duty towards society. These were the educational guiding lines in the Austrian Empire after the Congress of Vienna when the political and reformist ideals were removed from among the official educational principles.

These educative principles are expressed towards the end of the textbook in some distiches arranged in short poetic compositions:

“Nu se bucură un prunc bun la a altora pătimire,
La altora dorere el plânge, la bucurie să bucură din consimțire.
Nu fii nebăgătoriu de samă de săracu pentr-a lui sărăcie,
El este om ca și tu, ce-i trebuie altă pronie^{1,2}”

[Prose translation: A good child does not rejoice at the suffering of others, he cries at the sorrow of others, he rejoices with them in times of joy. Do not ignore the poor because of his poverty; he is a man like you who needs another fate.]

or: “Fiule, nu fă aceia de ce ar trebui să te căiești,
L-amarul cuvânt, o, de n-aș fi făcut să gândești.
Fragedei viorele, ce-ntr-ascuns înflorește
Fii asemenea cucernic, bun, măcar nime te privește”³

¹ Written: protie.

² *Bucoavnă*, p. 62.

³ *Idem*, p. 61.

[Prose translation: My son, do not do that which you ought to refrain from; think of the bitter word, ‘oh, only if I had not done it’. Be similar to the tender violet, which flowers in concealment, be pious, good, though nobody observes you.]

or: “Copil tu-n veci nu-i rămâne,
Ei era ce tu ești și tu vei fi ce ei sânt.
Fătul meu, eu te iubesc, dară rău nu mi-i ține
Că cele ce ți-s primejdioase nu le binecuvânt.
Dară părinții nu-ți pozvolesc oarece;
Ascultă și nu-ntreba pentru ce?
Cu frați, sorori în pace se [sic!] trăiești,
Din cele ce ai, dac-ai trebui, să li-mpărtășești.
Pre fratele pentru tot nimic nu pârî,
Lasă-i vreme ca doară s-ar pocăi.
Îndărătnicirea să-ți fie, dară, de ură și ocară,
Că prin ea ne facem noao și lumii povară”. etc.

[Prose translation: You will not remain a child forever, they were what you are, and you will be what they are. My child, I love you, but do not misconstrue if I do not bless what is dangerous for you. For parents give you council, don't they? Listen to them and do not ask why. Be in peace with your brothers and sisters; share with them everything you have. Do not denounce your brother for every tiny matter; give him time for he may repent. Consider obstinacy hateful and shameful, for we become a burden to the world and ourselves by it.]

Conclusions. Unconnected with the political region of Transylvania, the present *Primer* expresses the mentality of another cultural environment, that of Bukovina, where the Austrian administration succeeded in creating for a short time a cosmopolitan environment, less sensible to the national factor. It illustrates, however, an important moment in the cultural life of Bukovinian Romanians, being, as far as we know, the first proper schoolbook written here.¹ It grants us a new glimpse on the institutionalization of the Romanian language elementary education in this region.

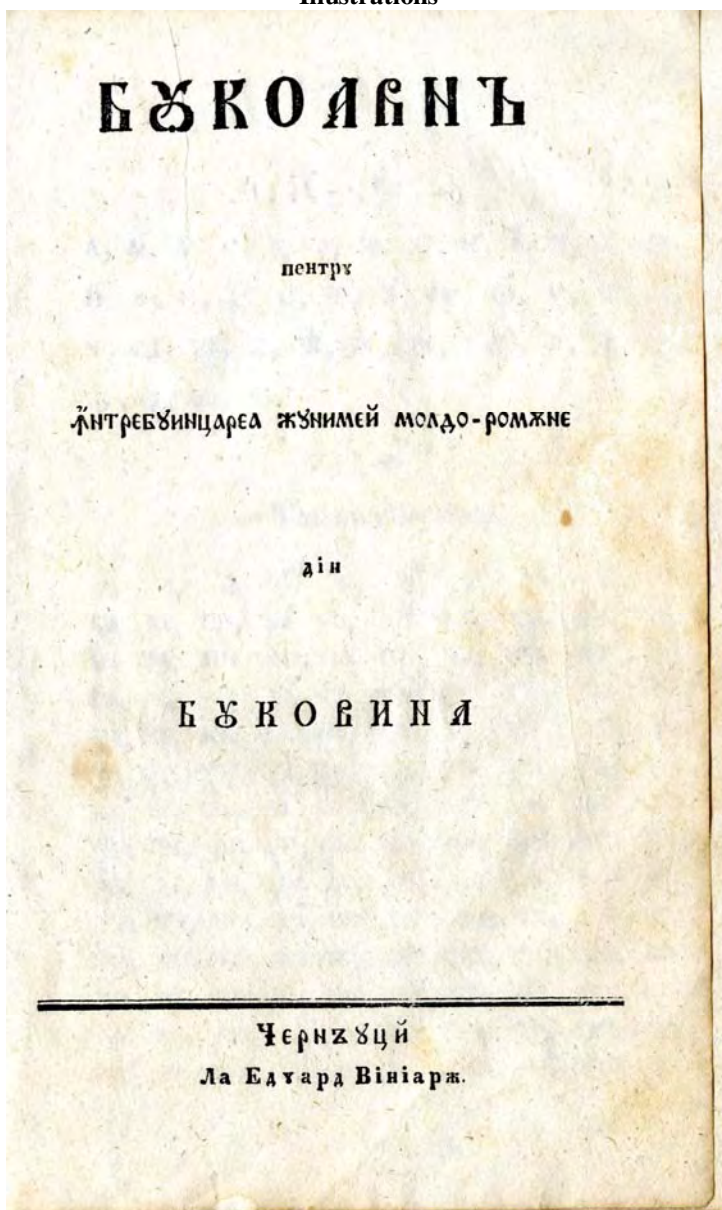
¹ The *Little Catechism* published in Cernăuți in 1804 can be interpreted both as a religious book and as a textbook in religion, and Anton de Marki's *Extract* entitled *Ausüg aus der für Normale- und Hauptsculen vorgeschriebenen deutschen Sprachlehre in deutscher und wallachischer Sprache enthaltend der utschen und wallachischen Sprache...*, Cernăuți, 1810 is rather a textbook for German schools.

To some parts of the *Primer* from Cernăuți an unknown hand had added the German translation of different words, and translated a part of the text, which prove that one owner of the book used it as a textbook for learning Romanian.

With some problems still unsolved (the exact date of the text's publication and the fact that it was published by an unknown typographer and not by the Ekhard family, which, with this exception, owned the only printing house publishing Romanian texts in this period) we conclude this short train of thoughts on an unknown primer with the conviction that this textbook reveals to us some new aspects of the Bukovinan Romanian cultural life at the beginning of the 19th century.

Translated by Ágnes Korondi

Illustrations



14.

А, Б, В, Г, Д, Е, Ж, З, И, Ї, К,
 Л, М, Н, О, П, Р, С, Т, У, ОУ,
 Ф, Х, Ѡ, Ц, Ч, Ш, Щ, Ю, Я, Л,
 Ц, ѣ, ѱ, Ѡ, Ү.

15.

Аю, Арк, Арм, Ак, Бан, Болд, Бот,
 БѠмк, Бржд, Вар, Віере, Влад, Вртек,
 Гард, Гем, ГѠст, Гржд, Данц, Диск,
 Дкл, Джме, Ед, ЕрѠ, Ерм, Жгіак,
 Ждер, ЖѠнгю, Жлц, Зї, Зїд, Заск,
 ЗѠр, Из, Ин, Ик, Іад, Іаз, Кал, Крак,
 Корт, Кжлцї, Кржнг, Лак, Лемн, ЛѠт,
 ЛѠх, Марцн, Міел, Мерс, МѠр, МѠст,
 Нард, Нод, НѠм, НѠк, Паю, ПѠр, ПѠдн,
 ПѠднї, ПѠжнз, Рам, Рост, Ржт, Ржнд,
 РѠю, Семн, СлѠю, СтѠг, СѠрѠ, ТорѠ,
 ТѠск, ТѠднїю, ТѠрш, ОҮам, ОҮлїю,

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82.

А, Б, В, Г, Д, Е, Ж, З, І, К, Л, М, Н, О, П,
а, в, в, г, д, е, ж, з, (з), і, к, л, м, н, (й), о,
Р, С, Т, У, Ф, Х, Ц, Ч, Ш, Щ, Ъ, Ї.
п, р, е, т, (т), у, ф, х, ц, ч, ш, щ, ъ, ї, ц.

83.

Татъ л сау Маїка їм псволѣск вѣте одать съ
мъ жокъ, дакъ еї їндестуаці ку міне сѣнт. Еу мъ
зъвьвѣск ку феліуріте жокурі. Днсь ну мъ бѣкуръ,
кѣнд мъ жок сѣнгур. Еу бѣкурос мъ зъвьвѣск ку
фраціі ші сороріде меле, сау ку коншколеріі (това-
рѣшій) меї, сау ку копій а вечінулуї ностру. Еу ку
ачеа бѣкурос мъ жокъ, ку че еї вор съ се жоаче.
Днсь ної не жокъм нѣмаї ачеле жокурі, каре пѣрїн-
ціі нї позволѣск.

Одате не жокъм ку вѣгле, даръ ну їн касъ, чї
їн тїнаъ, їн оградъ, дар ші маї бѣкурос їн грѣдїнъ.
Ла пуга куглелор не скїмъъм дѣпъ олатъ. Алтъ