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ἔς Ὑπερβορέων ἀγῶνα θαυμαστὰν ὁδὸν

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A FOUNDATION STONE INSCRIPTION FROM THE PETRISCHULE IN ST. PETERSBURG

Dieser Grundstein einer christlich-evangelischen Schule der Augsburgischen Confession verwandten Gemeinde allhier zu St. Petersburg, ist¹ zu Ehren des dreieinigen Gottes, zur Beförderung der Erkenntnis² des Heils, guter Sitten und Wissenschaften unter der glormürdigen, milden und siegreichen Regierung³ Ihro Kaiserl[ichen] Majestät,⁴ Selbstherrscherin aller Reussen Elisabeth⁵ Petrowna im 19ten Jahr,⁶ bei hohem Wohlergehen des Kaiserl[ichen] Hauses, des Großfürsten aller Reussen Peter Feodorowitsch, regierenden Herzogs zu Schleswig-Holstein, des Großfürstin Catharina Alexejewna und des jungen Großfürsten Paul Petrowitsch, kaiserlicher⁷ Hoheiten, durch Veranstaltung und Förderung des damaligen⁸ Kirchen-Convents, der beiden gnädigen Kirchen-Patronen,⁹ des Herrn Reichsgrafen, Hofmarschalls Carl von Sievers und des Freiherrn Nicolaus von Korff, jetzo Kaiserl[ichen] Russischen¹⁰ Gouverneurs zu Königsberg, Excellenz Excellenz, der Pastoren Herrn Ludolf Otto Trefurt und Herrn Joh[ann] Wilh[elm] Zuckmantel, der Kirchenältesten, Herrn Jacob Stelling, Herrn Heinrich Christian Stegelmann, Christoph Richter, Herrn Lorenz Bastian Ritter und der Kirchenvorsteher Herrn Nic[olaus] Grään, Herrn Joh[ann] Rudolf Wackerhagen, Herrn Hermann Nic[olaus] Mollwo, Herrn Levin Böhthling mit Gebet und Glückwünschen vieler Umstehenden im Vertrauen auf Göttliche Hülfe

¹ The text follows A. F. Büsching's edition (1766, 242–244). 'Ist' is missing in Lemmerich 1862, 46.

² Both Lemmerich 1862, 46 and *St. Petri-Gemeinde* 1910, 133 have 'Bekenntnis'.

³ Cf. Lemmerich's version: "<...> guten Wissenschaften und Sitten, unter der glorreichen, milden und segensreichen Regierung <...>" (1862, 46–47).

⁴ There is 'und' after 'Majestät' in Lemmerich 1862, 47.

⁵ Lemmerich 1862, 46 and *St. Petri-Gemeinde* 1910, 133 add figure 'I'.

⁶ Lemmerich 1862, 46 and *St. Petri-Gemeinde* 1910, 133 have "im 19. Jahre".

⁷ Sic in Büsching. Lemmerich and *St. Petri-Gemeinde* 1910, 133 have 'kaiserlichen'.

⁸ 'Dermaligen' in Lemmerich (*ibid.*) and *St. Petri-Gemeinde* 1910, 133.

⁹ 'Patrone' in Lemmerich 1862, 46.

¹⁰ "Russisch Kaiserlicher Gouverneurs" in Lemmerich 1862, 46.

und Segen freudig gelegt worden am Christians Tage den 11. Mai a[lten]
St[iles] im Jahre Christi Jesu 1760. Zacharia 4, v. 7. Glück zu! Glück zu!

Saecula bis octo, plus uno, lustraque bis sex
Tradita per Christum sancta fides numerat.
Fundata schola sacra Deo, felicibus ausis,
Ingenii culturae, artibus atque bonis.
Spes nostras fac Christe ratas, prodire juventam
Hinc auctam studiis et pietate jube.
Serva aedem, pacemque Deus largire, nec ante
Finem orbis lapidem sede moveri sine.

Das Fundament schenkte und führete den Bau Herr Heinrich Christian
Stegelman, Kaiserl[icher] Hoffactor. Architekt war Herr Martin
Ludewig Hoffmann aus Riga.

The metal plate with the text cited above was embedded into the earth under the foundation of the new building of the Petrischule, the oldest school in St. Petersburg, on 11 (22) May 1760. However, the first evidence about this institution dates from much earlier period – vice-admiral of the Imperial Russian Navy C. Cruijs (K. Crøys, 1657–1727) had mentioned it in a letter to Peter the Great already in 1709.¹¹ From the very beginning, it was closely associated with the Petrikirche on the Nevskij Prospect and with the German Evangelical Lutheran community in St. Petersburg, of which Cruijs was the first patron.¹²

The year 1760 became crucial for the history of the school and opened a new page in it: the church council decided to introduce a new curriculum and to construct a larger building instead of the old one, which consisted of only two classrooms.¹³ The then pastor of the Petrikirche, Johann Wilhelm Zuckmantel (1712–1760),¹⁴ acted as protagonist of the reform. Born into a preacher's family, he followed in his father's footsteps and after having graduated from the University of Jena, he became a clergyman in Rentweinsdorf. On his mother's side, he was stepbrother of a celebrated classical scholar, lexicographer, professor of rhetoric in Göttingen, and librarian, Johann Matthias Gesner (1691–1761), who was *inter alia*

¹¹ Uljanov 1998 [Н. П. Ульянов, “Петришуле – старейшая школа Петербурга”], 129; Smirnov 2006 [В. В. Смирнов, *St. Petrischule*. Школа, что на Невском проспекте за кирхой: старейшая школа Санкт-Петербурга. 1709–2005], 10.

¹² Tatsenko 1999 [Т. Н. Таценко, “Немецкие Евангелическо-Лютеранские общины Санкт-Петербурге в XVIII–XX вв.”], 248.

¹³ Smirnov 2006, 21.

¹⁴ On him see: Büsching 1766, 189–193; Lemmerich 1862, 123–124; *Die St. Petri-Gemeinde* 1910, 287–288.

a friend of J. S. Bach.¹⁵ In 1747, as a preacher to the hereditary prince of Ausbach, Zuckmantel made a journey to Italy and Switzerland, and then travelled on his own to France and England. He held preacher's position at the Principality of Asbach in 1752–1755, and one year later Zuckmantel made a longer tour of Europe, which included Bohemia, Poland, Prussia, Livonia, Estonia, Finland, Sweden, and Denmark. During this trip, he visited St. Petersburg, to which he returned as an assistant pastor¹⁶ of the Petrikirche in 1758. According to C. Lemmerich,¹⁷ his relationship with Gesner was a contributing factor to this appointment; but Zuckmantel's library in St. Petersburg¹⁸ also shows a deep personal interest in Classics, history, and numismatics.

On 23 December 1759, Zuckmantel addressed the church council on the question of renovation of the school building and the construction of a boarding house; he also made suggestions for the improvement of the school curriculum.¹⁹ The languages to be learned at school were German, French, and Latin. As regards Ancient Greek and Hebrew, they could be taught on a private basis by pastors at home once a week.²⁰ Classes in Mathematics, Physics, and natural sciences were totally missing from Zuckmantel's plan – a trait which was not typical of the curriculum of good contemporary schools in Germany. The Petrischule accepted not only German-speaking children but also pupils from Russian-native families. At the same time, while there was a strong emphasis on religious education among Protestants, the school did not give Orthodox pupils any instruction in religious matters – this was introduced only by Zuckmantel's successors. On the other hand, the new plan had a number of advantages: it proposed, for example, to increase not only the number of teachers (up to four) but their salary as well.²¹

Practical steps for implementing the school renovation were taken by Count Carl von Sievers²² (1710–1774) who, since 1746, together with Baron Nicolaus von Korff (1710–1766) was the patron of the Petrikirche.

¹⁵ Bach dedicated to Gesner his *Canon a 2 perpetuus* BWV 1075.

¹⁶ His senior colleague was Otto Ludolf Trefurt (1700–1766).

¹⁷ Lemmerich 1862, 123.

¹⁸ The catalogue was compiled after his death in 1760 (Lemmerich 1862, 45).

¹⁹ This report was repeated on 9 May 1760 (Büsching 1766, 240).

²⁰ Lemmerich 1862, 44.

²¹ Lemmerich 1862, 45.

²² Despite the fact that the foundation stone clearly mentions Carl von Sievers' participation in the ceremony, he was mistaken by V. V. Smirnov for his nephew – Jacob Johann Sievers (1731–1818) (Smirnov 2006, 21). This point was first put forward in: Zakharov, Nikolajeva 2010 [A. С. Захаров, В. В. Николаева, “Дядя или племянник? Кто заложил первый камень в фундамент Петришule?”], 11–13.

Several years later a famous geographer, theologian, and Professor of the Göttingen University, Anton-Friedrich Büsching described the foundation ceremony, which took place on 11 May 1760, in his “Geschichte der evangelisch-lutherischen Gemeinen in Rußischen Reich”.²³ He was not an eyewitness of the event because he came to St. Petersburg only in 1761²⁴ to succeed Zuckmantel, so he must have used archival records that no longer survive for his account. According to him, the text of the inscription written by Zuckmantel was read aloud by the author and received with acclamation. Thereafter, the metal plate with the text, the foundation stone itself, and a number of commemorative coins of the Augsburg Confession together with contemporary Russian coins were laid into the ground; Count von Sievers was the one who started the immurement.²⁵ It took more than two years to construct the new Petrischule building, which was opened in October 1762. Zuckmantel did not live to see it, or to implement his new curriculum plan because of his sudden death of bilial fever in July 1760. He was buried at the cemetery of St. Sampson’s Cathedral in St. Petersburg: it was built to honor Sampson the Hospitable, and in the eighteenth century its graveyard became the final resting place for many foreigners. In 1765 Büsching who mentions his high respect for Zuckmantel, initiated the installment of the gravestone there and proposed to commemorate the memory of his predecessor with portraits at school and the Petrikirche.²⁶

Büsching’s description is the only evidence of the foundation ceremony. In spite of the fact that the names of the royal family are listed on the plate, none of them in realty participated in the event, so it was not mentioned in the city’s only Russian language newspaper of the period “The St. Petersburg Bulletin”. By chance, one can find Zuckmantel’s name there but not in connection with the Petrischule or Petrikirche. This record dates from his first visit to St. Petersburg in 1758: he was about to return to Europe (“to go beyond the sea”)²⁷ in August and was supposed to publish a leaving notification.

As the inscription was buried in the school’s foundation, just the printed version of the text is available to us today. The first publication of 1766 belongs to A. F. Büsching,²⁸ the second was undertaken by C. Lemmerich in 1862,²⁹ the third appeared in 1910 in a volume dedicated

²³ Büsching 1766, 242–245.

²⁴ Brikner 1886 [A. Г. Брикнер, “Антон-Фридрих Бюшинг”], 9.

²⁵ Büsching 1766, 244.

²⁶ Büsching 1766, 192.

²⁷ *S.-Peterburgskije vedomosti* 1756 [С.-Петербургские ведомости], 8, 27, 7/2.

²⁸ Büsching 1766, 242–244.

²⁹ Lemmerich 1862, 46–47.

to the bicentenary of the St. Peter's Evangelical Lutheran community in St. Petersburg.³⁰ All three versions have minor differences, stated above, and the two later ones do not seem to follow Büsching's edition exactly. For example, there is no line division in the prose part of the text in the *editio princeps*, while both Lemmerich and the jubilee edition introduce it but in different ways.

The German section of the inscription is clear except for the date of the event. The text identifies the foundation day as “am Christians Tage den 11. Mai” – the date is given according to the “old style” because Russian civil calendar was Julian at that time. However, the closest day associated with this particular saint is 14 May in Catholic tradition: Christian was a legendary youth who suffered martyrdom under the Emperor Diocletian at the beginning of the fourth century.³¹

Could these inconsistencies be explained by a mistake in Büsching's edition, which was simply repeated in the later ones? On the one hand, it is easy, of course, to take number ‘4’ for ‘1’, on the other, Büsching refers to the foundation date as 11 May several times.³² However there are slight variations in the later editions of the text (which means that they might depend on other sources than Büsching) they preserve the same date. If one assumes that ‘11 May’ is correct, there is still a question whether it was admissible for a Lutheran pastor to follow Catholic tradition and to refer to its saint. I have found an example that proves that this was possible at least in the seventeenth century. The journal “Theatrum Europaeum” tells a story about one hundred families who in May 1667 left their homes in Northern Germany (Schlensburg in Schleswig-Holstein) and swore allegiance to a new landlord Christian Abrecht, a Duke of Holstein Gottorp, who settled them on the island of Arnis. According to the text, this happened “den 14. dieses <sc. Mai – OB> als am Christians Tage”.³³ Therefore, if there was really no text corruption I would propose to take the indication to the St. Christian's day not literally but to understand it rather as “next to St. Christian's day” because it was the closest church holiday to 11 May at that time.³⁴

Let us turn to the Latin section of the inscription. This is a poem composed by Zuckmantel in elegiac meters. The text shows that he was

³⁰ *St. Petri-Gemeinde* 1910, 133–134.

³¹ Ökumenisches Heiligenlexikon (<https://www.heiligenlexikon.de/BiographienC/Christian.htm>).

³² Büsching 1766, 242 (twice) and 243.

³³ *Theatrum Europaeum* 1667, 753.

³⁴ Now the Lutheran church commemorates St. Cyril and St. Methodius on that day.

not a very skillful and experienced poet, and having faced a number of difficulties, he could not always cope with them. At the very beginning, he intends to express in Latin the year 1760 (which is not very easy, of course). He exercises his wit, and the line reads as follows:

Saecula bis octo, plus uno, lustraque bis sex.

The vowel ‘i’ in ‘bis’ is short which makes the hexameter impossible. A similar fault occurs in the last line:

Finem orbis lapidem sede moveri sine.

The syllable ‘ri’ in ‘moveri’ is long but, according to the author, it should be scanned short. Another grave weakness of the poem is elision over the caesura in the pentameter that is to be avoided:

Ingenii cultur(ae), artibus atque bonis.

One can also mark not a very happy usage of ‘cultura’ in the sense of ‘culture’ in the same line. To sum up, the text does not meet the highest standards of versification; nevertheless, it deserves consideration as the earliest known Neo-Latin building inscription in St. Petersburg.

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The article deals with the foundation stone inscription from the Petrischule, the oldest school in St. Petersburg. Text of the inscription in German and Latin was written by pastor of the Petrikerche J. W. Zuckmantel for the ceremony of laying of the foundation of the new school building on 11 May 1760. The Latin part is the earliest known Neo-Latin building inscription in St. Petersburg.

В статье идет речь о надписи на закладном камне Петришуле, старейшей школе С.-Петербурга. Ее текст на немецком и латинском языках был составлен пастором Петрикерхе И.-В. Цукмантелем для церемонии основания нового здания школы 11 мая 1760 г. Латинская часть представляет собой самую раннюю из известных неолатинских надписей на зданиях в Санкт-Петербурге.