

DE GRAECO CODICE BIBLIOTHECAE ACADEMICAE
WRATISLAVIENSIS GERMANICE EXARATO (SIC!)

scripsit

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ABSTRACT: The anonymous manuscript preserved in Wrocław University Library with shelf number Akc.1948/183 is rather beautiful thanks to its neat calligraphy and its illustrations, but it is also very strange. Though described as a Greek codex in the library inventories and indeed written in the Greek alphabet, its text seems to make no sense. Like certain other early modern manuscripts such as the copiale cipher, the Rohonc codex or the famous Voynich manuscript, it is encrypted. However, what distinguishes Akc.1948/183 from these otherwise similar codices is the way it purports to be in Greek, so that the vast majority of readers do not even notice that it is ciphered. Such a strategy was successful. The Pseudo-Greek codex deceived readers for a few centuries, despite the fact that the cipher was relatively simple.

This article is a study of this curious manuscript. Its main goals are to uncover in what language it is written, to decipher its alphabet, and to determine its author, date of composition and content. It also offers some suggestions for interpretations: the Wrocław codex can be viewed as a sophisticated game typical of the baroque period. At the same time, it recalls a little known aspect of the reception of Ancient Greek in the West, namely the way humanists sometimes employed this learned language to avoid being understood by οἱ πολλοί.

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Cum paucis abhinc mensibus munus in sectione manuscriptorum bibliothecae academiae Wratislaviensis accepissemus, brevi ad Graecos codices, qui in ea attinentur, animum adiecimus. Duo et quadraginta esse dicuntur¹. In eo numero codex chartaceus saeculi XVII Akc. 1948/183 signatus, cui secundum inventarium opuscula de rebus divinis conscripta et nescio quae consilia ad usum vitamque communem pertinentia insunt². Ad quae inspicienda cum accessissemus,

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¹ De codicibus Graecis bibliothecae academiae Wratislaviensis egit Constantinus JAŹDŹEWSKI, quondam eorum doctissimus custos, in opusculo bonae frugis pleno, cui titulum fecit *Rekopisy autorów klasycznych w zbiorach Biblioteki Uniwersyteckiej we Wrocławiu i ich opracowanie*, quod invenies in volumine, q.i. *Druga konferencja naukowa Komisji Bibliografii i Bibliotekoznawstwa Wrocławskiego Towarzystwa Naukowego, Wrocław, 3.–5. XI. 1954, Referaty i dyskusja*, Wratislaviae, a. 1957 edito, pp. 195–218. Codex, de quo scribimus, pagina 209 memoratur.

² Haec invenies in albo, in quo additicii codices primum describi consueverunt: “Teksty religijne [sic!] i wskazówki praktyczne w językach greckim i niemieckim. Prow(eniencja) Bibl(iothek)