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Did Peter van Selow (1582-1650) have Dutch roots?

New sources about a well-known type founder and printer

Abstract

Previous attempts to describe the life of Peter van Selow, one of the more important type founders and printers in Sweden during the first half of the seventeenth century, have suffered from serious deficiencies: we knew neither the dates of his birth and death, nor was it clear where he was born. Quite consistently he was characterised as a Dutchman. Thanks to a newly discovered funeral sermon that has survived in Stuttgart, many blank spots in Van Selow's biography can now be filled in: Van Selow was born in Grevesmühlen in Mecklenburg, 1582, and he died in Stockholm, 1650. This study combines information from the recently located new source with long-known Swedish scholarship on the hitherto enigmatic type founder and printer. Sources about the Danish astronomer Tycho Brahe, in whose service Van Selow was employed for several years, were also used to fill in some gaps.

Keywords: Seventeenth century; type founder; printer; Peter van Selow; Grevesmühlen; Stockholm

Peter van Selow was one of the more famous type founders and printers in Sweden during the first half of the seventeenth century.¹ He was called to Stockholm in 1618 by King Gustavus Adolphus to cut and cast the Cyrillic type needed to print Lutheran catechisms in the Russian language. During the previous year, Sweden had conquered some territories around the Baltic Sea from Russia, Swedish Ingria and Kexholm County. These regions were mainly inhabited by Orthodox subjects whose mother tongues were either Balto-Fennic languages or Russian. In the multilingual Swedish Empire, new languages were not a problem, but a religious belief other than the Lutheran

¹ I am very grateful to several colleagues and friends who have read a previous version of this study and made valuable suggestions: Lars Bruzelius, Rolf DuRietz, Arthur der Weduwen, Claudia Jensen, Alexander Pereswetoff-Morath, and an anonymous peer reviewer.

was not something the king and the government were ready to accept.² From about 1620 until the middle of the century, Van Selow was the supplier of type to virtually all Swedish printers; thus, although his production was not limited only to Cyrillic type, it is through his production of books printed in Cyrillic script that he entered the history of book printing in the first place.

When and where he was born has been unknown until now, and so was the exact year of his death. Most scholars (including myself) previously supposed that he died in 1648 or 1649. However, no concrete evidence has ever been presented to support this assumption, which has been based on the fact that the last known printed matter from Van Selow's workshop appeared in 1648.³ Almost everybody who has contributed to Van Selow's biography supposed that this printer was of Dutch origin – without any argument or a reference to a document about his birth or baptism in the Netherlands. Some scholars assumed that the printer was living in Germany at the time Gustavus Adolphus invited him to Stockholm.⁴

So how can we explain the peculiar fact that Van Selow was consistently thought to be of Dutch origin, although we were lacking historical evidence, and even without a proposal of a hypothetical home town or village with the name Selow, or Selau, in the Netherlands? Probably it was the printer's use of the preposition *van* in his name that led some twentieth-century scholars to the wrong conclusion: since the word *van* is Dutch – this was apparently their logic – Van Selow must have been a Dutchman.⁵ However, this preposition was not only used in the Netherlands, but in the whole 'Low German region' (cf. the use of the word *Nederduits* in Dutch seventeenth-century texts to refer to the language whose official name nowadays is *Nederlands*), and also in large

2 For a detailed study of the Swedish government's policy concerning the non-Lutheran population in Ingria (Ingermanland) see Alvin Isberg, *Svensk segregations- och konversionspolitik i Ingermanland 1617-1704*. Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 1973 (esp. pp. 27-31).

3 See Gustaf Rudbeck, 'Peter van Selow stilgjutare och boktryckare i Stockholm 1618-1648', in: *Bok- och bibliotekshistoriska studier tillägnade Isak Collijn på hans 50-årsdag* [ed. Axel Nelson], Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1925, 303-334 (here 333f.).

4 See, for instance, idem, 304; Carl-Rudolf Gardberg, *Boktrycket i Finland intill freden i Nystad*. Helsinki: Helsingfors grafiska klubb, 1948, 48; Bengt Bengtsson, *Svenskt stilgjuteri före år 1700: Studier i svensk boktryckerihistoria*. Stockholm: Skolan för bokhantverk, 1956, 158. Isberg, *Svensk segregations- och konversionspolitik*, 30 asserts explicitly that Van Selow was called to Sweden from Holland.

5 Cf., for instance, Bengtsson, *Svenskt stilgjuteri*, 216: 'Peter van Selow represents – in spite of his name, which seems to be Dutch – a German book-printing tradition' (my translation from the Swedish. All subsequent translations from non-English sources were made by me, unless otherwise stated).

parts of the German-speaking territory in the north, where Low German was still widely spoken (although Low German had ceased to function as a written literary language after the decline of the Hanseatic League). Incidentally, despite the fact that ‘van Selow’ is the name form documented on most of the printer’s output, this is not always the case: in several instances his name is spelled ‘Van-Selow’,⁶ in one case ‘Vanselaw’⁷ (as one word); also in at least one publication the impressum has ‘Peter von Selaw’.⁸ In books printed in Latin he used one of the variants ‘à Selow/Selou/Selau’⁹ (later, in 1648, ‘Typis Selovianis’¹⁰). When he moved from Germany to Sweden, his family name was most likely ‘Vanselow’, written as one word, – this is the name form he used in a letter written in 1624 (see below, particularly note 6o).

The first scholar to assert that the ‘Swedish’ printer Van Selow had Dutch roots was Alfred Jensen, in 1912; this was repeated the following year by Isak Collijn, and later on by Gustaf Rudbeck (who added the mitigating word *antagligen* ‘presumably’).¹¹ The ‘Dutch hypothesis’ is still being repeated in Swedish scholarship.¹²

But what about studies from German-speaking countries? Surprisingly enough, German scholars have never been seriously interested in Van Selow’s biography, although it is clear, as will be shown, that he must have been active on the continent – in the Holy Roman Empire and in Poland – for a long period before he came to Stockholm (in 1618). As far as he is mentioned at all, his alleged ‘Dutch roots’ are just repeated, as we can see, for instance, in the

6 See Rudbeck, ‘Peter van Selow’, 321f., 331, 333 (Nos. 10, 12, 32, 33, 37).

7 See Figure 3 below, the first page of the imprint *Alphabetum Rutenorum* (s.a.).

8 Viz. Georg Stiernhielm: *Gambla Swea- och Götha-Måles Fatebvr* (Stockholm 1643); see Rudbeck, ‘Peter van Selow’, 329, No. 28.

9 Cf., for instance, Tobias Lubovinus, *Tabula oeconomica in qua describuntur officia omnium piorum ordinum, & statuum in hoc mundo ...* Holmiæ Svecorvm. Ex officina Petri à Selovv [1640]; see Rudbeck, ‘Peter van Selow’, 321. Also the alphabet table *Alphabetum Russarum* (Stockholm, s.a.) had the impressum ‘Typis Petri a Selav’; see Ingrid Maier, ‘*Alphabetum Russarum*, a previously unknown imprint by Peter van Selow, Stockholm’, forthcoming. The only surviving copy lacks the impressum: the bottom of the first leaf is damaged, about 20% is missing.

10 See Rudbeck, ‘Peter van Selow’, 333-334, Nos. 39 and 40.

11 Alfred Jensen, ‘Die Anfänge der schwedischen Slavistik’, *Archiv für slavische Philologie* 33 (1912), 136–165 (here p. 138); Isak Collijn, ‘Der in Stockholm gedruckte russische Catechismus aus dem Jahre 1628’, *Archiv für slavische Philologie* 34 (1913), 246–251 (here 247); Rudbeck, ‘Peter van Selow’, 303.

12 See Nicolaus Bergius, *A historico-theological exercise on the status of the Muscovite church and religion* [Ed. by U. Birgegård & M. Hedlund], Stockholm: Kungl. Vitterhets Historie och Antikvitets Akademien, 2019, 204, note 7.

standard work *Lexikon des gesamten Buchwesens*: ‘Selow, Peter van, † 1648/1649 in Stockholm, schwed. Buchdrucker und Schriftgießer niederl. Herkunft.’¹³

In retrospect, it seems very strange that nobody ever seriously questioned the long-standing hypothesis about Van Selow’s alleged Dutch roots. A letter written by this printer to the Duke of Mecklenburg in January 1624 (to be discussed in more detail below) would have shown that the consistently repeated narrative about Van Selow being of Dutch origin had been built on shaky ground. However, scholars who were dealing with Van Selow’s life have usually not paid any major attention to this letter from 1624, although it was published more than 125 years ago.¹⁴ (The letter was mentioned – very briefly – in the latest edition of Christoph Reske’s monumental publication.¹⁵)

The assumption of Van Selow’s Dutch roots seems most peculiar, among other things, because *Selow* does not sound like a typical place name in the Netherlands or nearby regions at all – it rather sounds Slavic, as do all the variants of the name used by Van Selow in his imprints. Place names like Selow or Selau can be found in the former (or still) Slavic-speaking regions in the eastern parts of today’s Germany (cf. Güstrow, Gützkow, Pankow, Züssow etc.) or in Poland. Moreover, a German background should have seemed more likely than a Dutch one as it has been known since 1608 that the young ‘Petrus à Selaw’ had helped the philologist and medical doctor Petrus Kirstenius (1577–1640) cut and cast the Arabic types for the latter’s publications on the Arabic language. This information has come down to us in a book written by Kirstenius, *Grammatices arabicae liber I.*,¹⁶ where a whole paragraph of the

13 *Lexikon des gesamten Buchwesens* [2nd edition], vol. 7. Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 2007, 53. The classical edition of Josef Benzing’s work about printers in the German-speaking areas during the seventeenth and eighteenth century does not mention Van Selow at all: Josef Benzing, *Die Buchdrucker des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts im deutschen Sprachgebiet*, 2nd edition. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1982.

14 See [Karl] Schröder, ‘Die Anfänge des Buchdrucks in Schwerin’, in: *Jahrbücher des Vereins für mecklenburgische Geschichte und Altertumskunde* 60 (1895), Schwerin: Bärensprungische Hofbuchdruckerei, 111–135.

15 Christoph Reske, *Die Buchdrucker des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts im deutschen Sprachgebiet, auf der Grundlage des gleichnamigen Werks von Josef Benzing* [2nd edition], Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2015, 913, with a reference to Antje Sander-Berke, *Schwarz auf Weiß: Buchdruck in Mecklenburg und Schwerin. Begleitbroschüre zur Ausstellung ‘Schwarz auf Weiß’ des Historischen Museums Schwerin vom 25. November 1994 bis 5. März 1995*. Schwerin: Stadtgeschichts- und Museumsverein, 1994.

16 *Petri Kirstenii Grammatices arabicae liber I., Sive orthographia et prosodia Arabica*, Breslau: Baumann 1608, 13–14. Cf. VD17 No. 12:121116C. A fulltext version is available on line: <https://digital.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/werkansicht/?PPN=PPN728901528>). Sten G. Lindberg mentioned the close collaboration between Kirstenius and the young Van Selow already half a century ago; see his ‘Peter van Selow och Petrus Kirstenius. Deras arabiska stilprov 1608’, in: *Svensk grafisk årsbok* 1971–1972, 22–32.

author's preface, 'Ad lectorem', deals with Van Selow. In almost overwhelming terms Kirstenius here attests that the Arabic types were cut and cast by 'the honorable, talented and diligent young man Petrus à Selaw'. Also in other publications by this scholar, the Arabic types cut by Van Selow were used, for instance in *Tria specimina characterum Arabicorum*.¹⁷

As will be shown below, we no longer have to hypothesise about the printer's alleged birthplace because when Peter van Selow was born, in 1582, his father was already known as Van Selow (or even more likely 'Vanselow'¹⁸). Therefore no identification of the 'correct' Selow or Selau is needed in order to pin our printer to a concrete geographical region – this would mainly be needed in order to determine from which place his direct ancestors originated.¹⁹ On the other hand, there are many reasons to revisit the discussion about Van Selow's birth place, and the question of where he was formed as a type cutter and printer.

A previously unknown source about Peter van Selow

The traditional hypothesis about Van Selow's Dutch roots has now become irrelevant because a very detailed funeral sermon has been located in the Württembergische Landesbibliothek (WLB) in Stuttgart. It was written – and, without any doubt, actually orated at Van Selow's burial – by the printer's German compatriot Johann Christopher Hingher (1604–1678) from Tübingen, at that time pastor of the German Lutheran community in Stockholm: *Leichbegäng- und Ehrengedächtnuß Predigt/ Dem Weyland Ehrnvesten vnd Kunstreichen Herrn/ Peter von Selow* (see Figure 1). The quarto imprint comprises fourteen leaves, the section dealing with personal information is on the last five pages, [24]-[28]. The Stuttgart library houses the only two copies I have been able to document.²⁰ One of the two identical copies is preserved in a volume

17 Fulltext: <http://resolver.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/SBB0000A81400010000>.

18 'Vanselow' is the form used in Van Selow's attempt from 1624 to establish himself as a printer in Schwerin; see [Karl] Schröder, 'Die Anfänge', p. 112. (Van Selow's petition will be discussed in detail below.)

19 There are several candidates, among which the town Seelow, about 90 km east of Berlin, where the famous Battle of the Seelow Heights was fought during World War II (April 1945); moreover, there were also some tiny villages called Selow, and there is even a place actually called 'Vanselow'. Vanselow now belongs to the municipality of Siedenbrünzow, in the district (Landkreis) Mecklenburgische Seenplatte.

20 Two identical copies: Theol.qt.3269 (a volume comprising eighteen Hingher sermons); Fam. Pr.oct.K.16515 (a separate imprint that formerly was part of a bigger volume). Format: 4°. A-C⁴ D² (signed C). I am most grateful to Lars Bruzelius (Uppsala), who drew my attention to the existence

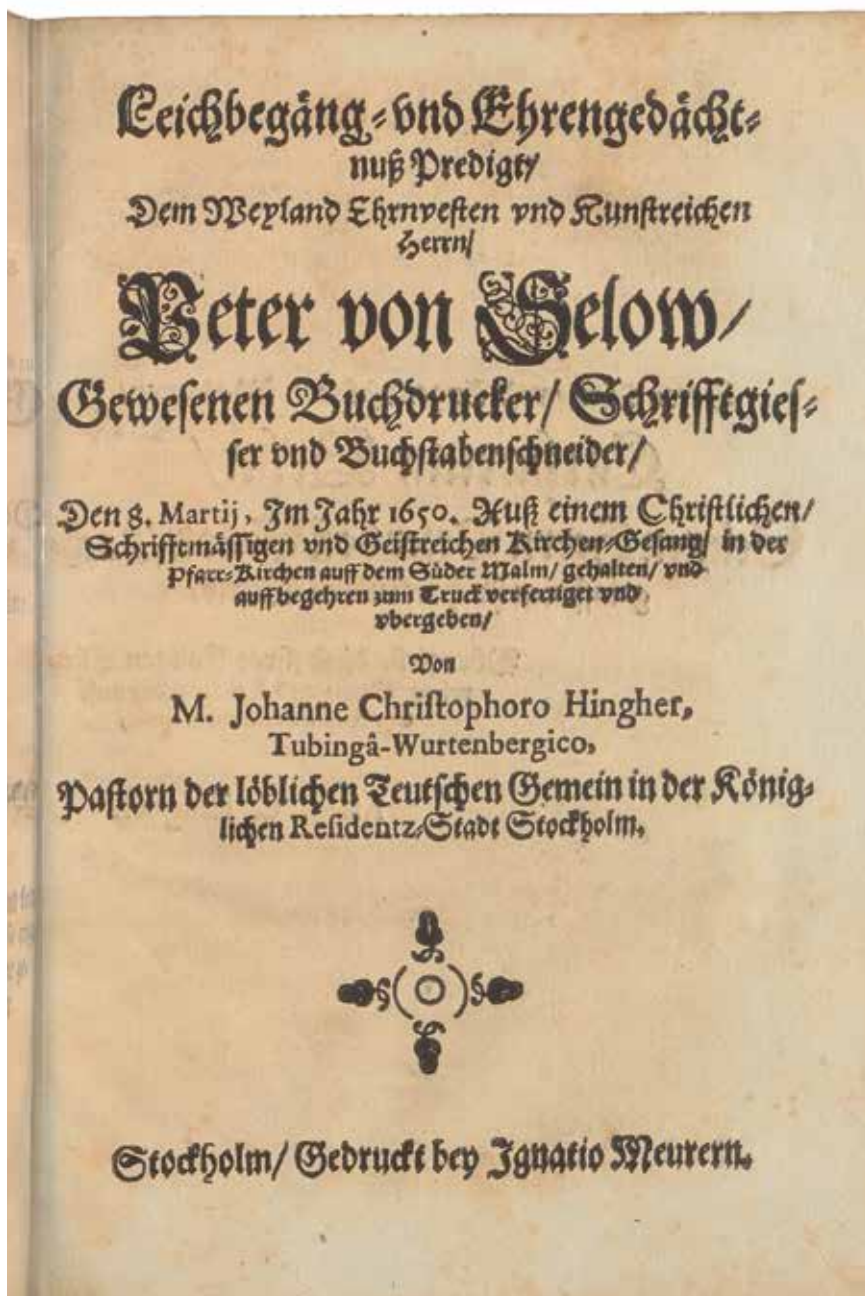


Figure 1. Title page of Johann Christopher Hingher's funeral sermon (Stockholm, 1650).
Württembergische Landesbibliothek, Stuttgart. Sign.: Theol.qt.3269

comprising eighteen sermons, all held by Hingher and printed between 1639 and 1655 in Stockholm: seventeen funeral sermons and his own farewell sermon of 29 July 1655, after nineteen years in Stockholm. Presumably this volume comprises a complete collection of his printed Stockholm sermons. The flyleaf contains a handwritten dedication by Hingher to Duchess Anna Johanna of Württemberg of 4 June 1656. In Scandinavia, the sermon for Peter van Selow is not documented at all. It has never been mentioned in studies about Van Selow, nor is it registered in the German database of seventeenth-century imprints (VD17) or in the USTC.

The sermon was printed by another of Van Selow's German compatriots in Stockholm, the royal book printer Ignatius Meurer (1586–1672), in 1650. Incidentally, the author, Hingher – a native of the South-German university town of Tübingen – does *not* use the Low German (and Dutch) form of the preposition *van*, but consistently employs the High German (and literary) form *von* in all occurrences of the printer's name. Nonetheless, I will be using *van*, the form that most frequently appears on Van Selow's books and other imprints. Perhaps a name that would sound 'Dutch' at least in German and Swedish ears might have been considered as an extra bonus for a type founder and printer in Sweden, and moreover, at least in German ears 'van Selow' could also suggest a nobleman's name (cf. von Fersen, von Kochen etc.). The 'Dutch look' of his name might have encouraged some of the many Stockholm citizens with Dutch roots to give their manuscripts to this printer – and indeed, the Stockholm Dutchman and the printer would most likely have understood each other very well, if the former spoke literary Dutch and the latter, Van Selow, used his native Low German dialect from Mecklenburg. In the hypothetical example neither the Dutchman nor the printer would have needed to be fluent in Swedish; German and Dutch were very important languages in Stockholm during the seventeenth century.²¹

Chronological overview of Peter van Selow's life

The following outline of Peter van Selow's life is largely based on Johann Christopher Hingher's funeral sermon. References to Hingher's publication

of this imprint, and to librarian Luitgard Nuß from WLB Stuttgart for her quick response to my copy request.

21 Bo Andersson, 'Tyska', in: *Från Nyens skans till Nya Sverige: språken i det Svenska Riket under 1600-talet* [ed. B. Andersson & R. Raag], Stockholm: Kungl. Vitterhets Historie och Antikvitets Akademien, 2012, 137-162; Ingrid Wikén Bonde, 'Nederländska', *ibid.*, 163-181.

will therefore be given directly in the text (within square brackets, because the publication itself is not paginated). Occasionally this narrative will be complemented by other sources, above all printed sources about the Danish-born astronomer Tycho Brahe, since the lives of these two men were interwoven during a certain period (1597-1599).

The future type founder and printer was born on 13 April 1582 in the town of Grevesmühlen²² (p. [24]), situated 33 km east of Lübeck. At the time his home region belonged to the principality of Mecklenburg, today to the federal state Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, which is a part of the Hamburg Metropolitan Region. His father was Gregorius von Selow, 'Rathsverwandter' (a member of the city council) in Grevesmühlen, his mother's name was Elisabeth Bockin. Until 1593 Peter went to school in his home town. From 1594 he studied for two years in nearby Wismar, then he returned to Grevesmühlen (p. [25]). However, the fourteen-year-old boy could not stay for long in his home town but had to find another place to make his living. He went to Rostock and was accepted into the service of the famous mathematician and astronomer Tycho Brahe (1546–1601).²³ In Hingher's sermon there are no details about the years the boy spent in Brahe's service, but it is clear that the time range would have been from their acquaintance in Rostock (roughly during the summer of 1597) to their arrival in Prague two years later. Fortunately, almost every step in Brahe's life is very well documented and described by several biographers, so we will now make a digression from the funeral sermon and turn to published sources about Tycho Brahe, as a complement to the Hingher source (which only mentions that Van Selow was in Brahe's service during a certain period in his early career). Sources about Brahe can thus be used to inform us about Van Selow's whereabouts, albeit indirectly.

In March 1597 the Danish-born astronomer left his manor house and observatory Uranienborg on the island Hven²⁴ (in the Öresund), where he had been

22 Hingher quite consistently writes *Gröbißmöhlen*, in one instance *Gröbeßmöhlen*, but there cannot be any doubt that Grevesmühlen was meant. Probably Van Selow himself, during the long bedridden period before he finally died, summarized his life for the German-speaking pastor; Hingher may have misheard the name of the town, which he apparently did not know, or he simply tried to translate Van Selow's Low German pronunciation into something that sounded more 'normal' in his South-German ears.

23 In Hingher's words (p. [25]): 'Weiln aber seine Gelegenheit nicht mit geben/ lenger bey seinen Eltern zuverbleiben/ hat er sich nach Rostock begeben/ vnd ist daselbst zu dem weiterberühmten *Astrologo* vnd *Mathematico*, Dem Weiland WolEdlen/ Vesten vnd Hochgelahrten Herrn/ *Tycho Brahe* zu dienst kommen/ demselben eine Zeitlang gedienet vnd auffgewartet/ vnd endlich mit ihm nacher Prag verreisset.'

24 The island (now spelled Ven) has been under Swedish rule since 1658. It belongs to the municipality of Landskrona.

living since the late 1570s²⁵ and where he had established not only a print shop, but also a paper mill and a bookbinder's workshop.²⁶ After a very short sojourn in Copenhagen, he arrived at Rostock in June 1597.²⁷ The astronomer spent only a couple of months in Rostock (he left this city on 8 September²⁸), so it must have been during these few months in Rostock that Brahe recruited the boy Peter, fifteen years old at that time. It is known that Brahe had brought with him his print shop from Hven, and we can hypothesise that he was looking for all kinds of new assistants while in Rostock, among them people who were knowledgeable in the print business. Another possibility is that young Peter was recruited for unspecified tasks and that his interest and inclination towards the art of printing became obvious only later on. In any event, the boy was certainly around when Brahe and his staff moved from Rostock to Holstein (and later to Prague, as we know from Hingher's sermon). Wilhelm Norlind, the author of a monumental biography about Tycho Brahe, gives two reasons why Brahe left the city of Rostock in the autumn of 1597 (where he never had been planning to stay for long, hoping to be able to return to his island in the Öresund): an outbreak of plague in that city, and the fact that he had received an invitation from the Danish governor of Holstein, the nobleman, humanist writer, book collector and astrologer Heinrich Rantzau/Rantzow, to rent one of the nobleman's castles for some time.²⁹

From Rostock, Brahe and his staff moved to Rantzau's castle Wandesborg ('water castle') in Wandsbek (at the time near Hamburg, now a part of that city). Rantzau had bought and restored this castle, which Brahe rented for about one year. In October 1597 he began his astronomical observations at Wandesborg.³⁰ He also installed a print shop and published among other things his own book *Astronomiæ instauratæ Mechanica*, a description of his astronomical instruments that he had written mainly during the months in Rostock.³¹ The first edition was printed in 1598, in Wandsbek, by the Hamburg

25 He had received the island as a fief in 1576. See Eiler Nystrøm, 'Brahe, Tyge', in: *Dansk biografisk lexikon*, vol. 3. Copenhagen: J.H. Schultz forlag, 1934, 584-593 (here 587).

26 Lauritz Nielsen, 'Tycho Brahes bogtrykkeri paa Hveen', in: *Nordisk tidskrift för bok- och biblioteksväsen* 8 (1921), 175-214 (here 175).

27 See Wilhelm Norlind, *Tycho Brahe. En levnadsteckning med nya bidrag belysande hans liv och verk*. Lund: Gleerup, 1970, 255.

28 Idem, 260.

29 Nystrøm, 'Brahe, Tyge', 592; Norlind, *Tycho Brahe*, 437.

30 F.R. Friis, *Tyge Brahe. En historisk fremstilling efter trykte og utrykte kilder*. Copenhagen: Gyldendalske boghandel, 1871, 255.

31 Olaf Pedersen, *Tycho Brahe og astronomiens genfødsel*. Århus: Foreningen Videnskabshistorisk Museums Venner, 1985, 28.

printer Philipp von Ohr.³² Would it be too audacious to hypothesise that this was the place where Van Selow took his first steps as a future printer, presumably as an assistant to Von Ohr?

When it was clear that Brahe would not return to Denmark and continue his observations at Uranienborg, he offered his service to Emperor Rudolf II in Prague.³³ The emperor was happy to invite the astronomer to his court. Brahe left Wandsbek in early October 1598 and started travelling towards Prague, through Magdeburg and Dresden.³⁴ However, since the emperor meanwhile had left Prague because of an outbreak of plague in that city, Brahe and his assistants had to spend the winter in Wittenberg, where he also continued his astronomical observations.³⁵

Brahe – and ostensibly his entourage, including Van Selow – set out from Wittenberg on 14 June 1599.³⁶ They arrived in Prague later in the same month. The astronomer and his staff (among them Johannes Kepler) were eventually installed in the Castle of Benátky, about 40 km from Prague.³⁷

For the period between Van Selow's acquaintance with Brahe – that is, sometime between June and September 1597 – and the astronomer's arrival in Prague in June 1599, we have been following Brahe's biography, assuming that the boy was a member of Brahe's staff from the time they had first met to their arrival in Prague. Starting from the 'Prague period' in Van Selow's life, we can follow Hingher's sermon again. According to this source – which certainly reflects Van Selow's own words – Brahe became interested in the 'laudable art of book printing', since 'he wrote and published a lot of books about

32 Norlind, *Tycho Brahe*, 268. The book contains a long dedication to Emperor Rudolf II. The colophon of Philipp von Ohr's edition, printed in January 1598, reads: 'Impressvm Wandesbvirgi in arce Ranzoviana prope Hamburgum sita, propria authoris typographia opera Philippi de Ohr Chalcographi Hamburgensis. Ineunte anno M. D. IIC.' On line (direct link to the colophon page): <https://www.alvin-portal.org/alvin/imageViewer.jsf?dsId=ATTACHMENT-0088&pid=alvin-record:76521> See also Benzing, *Die Buchdrucker*, 475.

33 Brahe's letter to Emperor Rudolf (datelined Wandsborg, 2 Jan. 1598) is published in F.R. Friis, *Breve og aktstykker angaaende Tyge Brahe og hans slægtninge*. Copenhagen: Andr. Fredr. Høst & søns forlag, 1875, 31-34.

34 Norlind, *Tycho Brahe*, 297f.

35 Idem, 298. Incidentally, during this period, in February 1599, both Tycho Brahe himself and his two sons enrolled at Wittenberg University; see idem, 299; 407 n. 27. Already earlier in his life Brahe had been studying in Wittenberg (and also in Rostock); idem, 21. Thus we see a pattern: later in his life Brahe returns to the places where he had studied as a young man.

36 Idem, 300.

37 Nystrom, 'Brahe, Tyge', 592.

mathematical and astronomical³⁸ issues' (p. [25]). These words corroborate the hypothesis formulated above that the year in Wandsbek probably marked the beginning of Van Selow's own career as a printer.

In Prague, Tycho Brahe – who was himself in the emperor's service – managed to arrange for the boy to be placed as an apprentice in the Imperial print shop in the city, under the auspices of a punch cutter and type founder. The astronomer, who died on 14/24 October 1601,³⁹ did not live to see the end of Van Selow's apprenticeship, and the latter, already nineteen years old, now had to stand on his own two feet.

After his four-year-long apprenticeship, Van Selow set out as a journeyman and visited 'many countries and cities'. (The beginning of this period would have been around 1603.) During these years he also came back to Prague to work there for some time. From Prague he was summoned to Liegnitz in Lower Silesia (today Legnica in Poland), where he stayed for two years (p. [26]). At that point the young craftsman must have drawn the attention of the medical doctor and philologist Petrus Kirstenius, who at that time was still living in his home region Silesia, more specifically in Breslau (now Wrocław, Poland).⁴⁰ Incidentally, although the sermon confirms that Van Selow 'was summoned to Breslau' after having worked in Liegnitz for two years, Hingher does not mention explicitly the cooperation between Kirstenius and Van Selow.⁴¹

The type founder stayed in Breslau for three years, 'cutting and founding Arabic, Greek, Latin, and German typefaces, and the result was a very exquisite print shop'.⁴² However, this shop can hardly have been Van Selow's own because

38 The original has 'in Astrologischen Sachen', but I prefer to translate this term with the word 'astronomical'.

39 Nyström, 'Brahe, Tyge', 584.

40 Later on Kirstenius was invited to Sweden by Axel Oxenstierna, and eventually – in 1636 – he became a personal physician to Queen Christina and a professor of medicine at Uppsala University. He spent the last years of his life in Sweden, where he died in 1640. See Gunnar von Barn, 'Petrus Kirstenius – märklig medicinprofessor i 1600-talets Uppsala', in: *Nordisk medicinhistorisk årsbok: Yearbook of the Museum of Medical History*. Stockholm: Medicinhistoriska museet, 1987, 73-76.

41 Kirstenius and Van Selow could have met again in Sweden, and it seems somehow surprising that the printer would not have mentioned this name in his conversations with Hingher while he was preparing himself for his exit from this world. Is it possible that Van Selow's own memories of his time in the service of Kirstenius were not as positive as Kirstenius' assessment about Van Selow (quoted above)?

42 'Von dannen ist er nach der Hauptstadt Breßlaw vociret worden/ vnd daselbst gantzer 3. Jahr Arabische/ Griechische/ Lateinische vnd Deutsche Schrifften geschnitten vnd gegossen/ worauß endlich eine sehr köstliche Buchdruckerey angerichtet worden' (p. [26]).

he is not mentioned among the printers in Breslau in the standard works about printers in the German-language territories.⁴³

The type founder's odyssey continued in 1608, when he was invited to Kraków. He stayed in the Polish capital for three years, cutting and founding Hebrew, Greek, Latin, and Polish types, and once again he established 'an exquisite print shop'. Whereas he would have had with him the punches cut previously at least for Greek and Latin, he now had to cut Polish typefaces from scratch (and possibly also Hebrew, which had not been mentioned before). In his movements from place to place we can see a pattern: he stayed in all these places for two or three years – probably the time needed to cut and cast the fonts that were needed in that specific city or for a specific printing firm.

The next stop, after three years in Kraków, was Neisse in Upper Silesia (now Nysa in Poland, about 90 km south of Wrocław). This would have been around 1611 (the year is not mentioned explicitly in the sermon, as usual), and Van Selow was invited by a councillor of that city. After having stayed there for a year or two, he moved back to Prague, planning to settle down and stay in the Holy Roman Empire to the end of his days.

The unrest in Bohemia that eventually led to the outbreak of the Thirty Years' War made Van Selow change his plans: he left Prague (after, as it seems, a short sojourn there this time) and returned to his parents in Grevesmühlen, in November 1613, at the latest. His parents persuaded him not to travel around any longer, but rather settle down in his home town and get married. Apparently, the son did not object, because on 15 November 1613 he got married to his first wife, Anna Böyen (p. [27]). For a couple of years, he practiced his craft as a type founder in Grevesmühlen, fulfilling orders 'from different kingdoms and other countries' and making a good – or at least sufficient – income.

But this residence, too, was not to be for long, because Gustavus Adolphus invited the type founder to Sweden. The king's plan was to publish Lutheran catechisms printed in Russian (and Church Slavonic), in order to convert the Russian-speaking subjects in the recently conquered territories to the Lutheran confession: the traditionally multi-ethnic Swedish Empire could not tolerate that most of the new subjects did not embrace Lutheranism, the only Christian confession that was acceptable in Sweden. Hingher tells us that

In 1618 he [Van Selow] was invited and required to come here to this praiseworthy kingdom by the powerful late King Gustavus Adolphus, of glorious and blessed memory. He arrived most obediently and cut and

43 Cf., for instance, Reske, *Die Buchdrucker*, 35–140.

cast all the types for the Bible, and then Runic and Russian letters here in Stockholm. Nevertheless, after two years he returned back to Gröbißmöhlen [Grevesmühlen] and was summoned once more by the late king within one year.... (p. [27])⁴⁴

It is possible that Hingher's chronology here might not be exact. The Bible project was promoted very actively by Gustavus Adolphus in the 1610s: by that time it had become very hard to find copies of the previous edition, the 'Gustavus Vasa Bible' of 1541, and the king was therefore very eager to promote a new edition (which was to be called the 'Gustavus Adolphus Bible'). At first it was not clear whether this edition was to be printed in Uppsala (as the 1541 Bible) or in Stockholm. However, in March 1615 the king ordered that the 'Bible funds' that had been collected over the last five years in the country's bishoprics should be sent to the interest chamber in Stockholm;⁴⁵ on 29 June it was ordered that the funds be sent directly to the curators of the Bible project, Andreas and Johannes Bureus.⁴⁶

The problem is that if Van Selow arrived in Sweden for the first time in the autumn of 1618, this was absolutely too late to 'cut and cast types for the Bible', as the printing of the Bible was finished around that time.⁴⁷ One possible solution of this dilemma is that Van Selow would have been in Sweden already before he was invited in 1618. Bengt Bengtsson, who has studied Van Selow's activities as a type founder in Sweden in great detail, hypothesised that Van

44 'Anno 1618. ist er von dem Großmächtigen König *Gustavo Adolpho*, Glorwürdigster vnd Sel. Gedächtnuß anhero in diß hochl. Königreich verschrieben vnd erfordert worden/ worauff er sich gehorsambst eingestelt/ vn[d] hier in Stockholm alle Schrifften zur Bibel/ vnd denn Runische vnd Russische Buchstaben geschnitten vnd gegossen/ Ist aber gleichwol nach 2. Jahrs verlauff widerumb hinauß nach Gröbißmöhlen verreiset/ vnd drauff innerhalb Jahrs frist zum andern mahl vom Seligen Könige anhero verschrieben.'

45 Hans Cnattingius, *Tillkomsten av Gustav II Adolfs bibel 1618*, Uppsala and Leipzig: Lundequistska bokhandeln/Harrassowitz, 1941, 8.

46 Idem, 14f. (On 10 July 952 talers were paid to these two men; idem, 15, note 3.) The incoming funds as well as the expenses are listed in a fair copy made in 1623, a very important source not only for the Bible funds but also for the documentation of funds used for foreign printers (consistently called 'typographi' in the sources); see Swedish National Archives in Stockholm (Riksarkivet, in the following: RAS), Bibliographica, Biblietrycket 1623. In this source two payments to Van Selow are registered: 150 talers for one Russian 'style' and 280 for another; see Gustaf Edvard Klemming, *Svensk boktryckeri-historia 1483-1883 / med inledande allmän öfversigt af G.E. Klemming och J.G. Nordin*. Stockholm: Norstedt & söner, 1883, 162.

47 According to Cnattingius, *Tillkomsten av Gustav II Adolfs bibel 1618*, 30, the complete Bible could hardly have been printed prior to May 1618; Bengtsson, *Svenskt stilgjuteri*, 231 (note 44) doubts whether it was finished at all in 1618.

Selow might have been in Sweden already in 1616-1617, notably as a member of a group of ‘typographi’ (that is, men involved in the printing business: type cutters, type founders and printers), who had been brought to Stockholm from Germany in June 1616,⁴⁸ thus long before Van Selow was recruited in 1618. On that occasion he would have brought with him material, for instance matrices, for the Bible project: Bengtsson has observed that the Gustavus Adolphus Bible was printed using some of Van Selow’s typefaces, something that otherwise would be hard to explain.⁴⁹ When the curators for the Bible project, Andreas and Jonas Bureus, were authorised to employ Van Selow in 1618, they would have known him already, likewise the Bible printer Olof Olofsson Helsing, who was tasked with contacting the type founder in Germany. Bengtsson’s arguments are convincing, and participation in the Bible project at an earlier stage, in 1616-1617, would explain why Van Selow says (in his account for Pastor Hingher) that he had been producing types *for the Bible*, and also Runic type, *before* cutting and casting Cyrillic type – the only reason mentioned in Chancellor Axel Oxenstierna’s invitation of July 1618 (for which, see below).

The further we go in Van Selow’s chronology, the less important the Hingher source becomes for our picture of the printer’s life. Instead, the Swedish sources become more and more detailed and informative, and with one exception all of the known Van Selow imprints have survived in Sweden.⁵⁰ For the period from the 1620s to Van Selow’s serious illness in 1649, the sermon says mainly that he ‘established a complete Russian print shop, printed a couple of Russian books, and practiced his art and craftsmanship diligently until the end of his life’ (p. [27]). We also learn about some important events in the printer’s personal life during the early 1630s: Van Selow’s first wife died on 13 February 1630, seventeen years after the couple had been married (one of the three daughters from their first marriage was still alive when he died). Exactly one year after his first wife’s death, on 13 February 1631, he married again, one “Catharina Behn” (p. [28]; in the Swedish sources her name is consistently spelled *Brom*⁵¹). With his second wife he had a son and a daughter. The son had already died by 1650, but the daughter was still alive. Hingher underscores that Van Selow dedicated himself to his craft up to the end of his life, taking care of his wife and children. However, from September 1649 he was bedridden most of the time,

48 Bengtsson, *Svenskt stilgjuteri*, 148.

49 Idem, 147.

50 The only known exception is the small *Alphabetum Russarum*, without a year but certainly issued in the late 1630s or in the first half of the 1640s. See Maier, ‘*Alphabetum Russarum*, a previously unknown imprint by Peter van Selow, Stockholm’ (forthcoming).

51 See, for instance, Bengtsson, *Svenskt stilgjuteri*, 119.

and his illness finally ended the printer's life on Saturday, 5 March 1650, at the age of almost 68 years. Van Selow was a good Christian, Hingher emphasises, who went to church regularly and took Holy Communion.

Swedish sources about Peter van Selow

From the year 1618 onwards, quite a number of documents regarding Van Selow have survived in the Swedish National Archives in Stockholm. They are like pieces of a puzzle where large chunks are missing; it has therefore been impossible to compose a comprehensible narrative on the basis of these sources only. Happily, however, the Swedish puzzle pieces fit very well into the overall narrative provided by the funeral sermon and can help us to complete the picture Hingher drew in 1650.⁵²

The oldest Swedish source mentioning van Selow – although as ‘Petter N.’ (apparently the scribe did not know the type founder’s family name) – is from 28 February 1618.⁵³ It is a short entry in the state registry (riksregistraturet): ‘Authorisation for Petter N. to create Russian types. Andreas and Jonas Bureus are to give him [amount not stated] talers from the Bible funds, and the rest he will receive when the types are ready’.⁵⁴ The fact that Bible funds were to be used for the ‘Russian project’ means that a connection between the ‘Bible project’ and the ‘Russian project’ had been made by this date. Could it be the case that the funding system to finance the Bible had raised more money than necessary and that these funds now, towards the end of the Bible project, could be used for a *related* project, notably the publication of a Lutheran catechism in (Slaveno-)Russian, and possibly for other ‘Russian’ projects?

In a later Swedish archival document, a letter from Chancellor Axel Oxenstierna to the type founder of 22 July 1618, the Bureus brothers are also mentioned. From this letter it appears that the brothers had actually been in contact with Van Selow, and he had accepted the invitation to Stockholm.⁵⁵ Van Selow is now asked to come to Sweden as soon as possible, ‘to prepare

52 Gustaf Rudbeck, ‘Peter van Selow’, gives an overview of the Swedish sources, and in some cases I will just refer to his study. Only occasionally I will quote directly from archival documents, particularly when my transcription differs from that of my predecessors.

53 Rudbeck, ‘Peter van Selow’, 303 erroneously indicates the year 1617, but the register is for 1618 (RAS, Riksregistratur, 28 February 1618, fol. 66). Rudbeck’s mistake was observed and corrected by Bengtsson, *Svenskt stilgjuteri*, 230.

54 Rudbeck, ‘Peter van Selow’, 303.

55 Oxenstierna’s original has not survived, but a contemporary copy made for Queen Christina in the 1630s is kept in RAS, Bibliographica, Boktryckerier i Stockholm 1500-talet –1800-talet. A (not very exact) transcription is in the edition *Rikskansleren Axel Oxenstiernas skrifter och brefvexling*.

Russian types and a print shop' ('zuverfertigung der Reußischen Schrifften und druckerey'). He was promised some payment from the crown, and also 50 talers to cover his travel costs; these funds were to be handed over to him by 'Olaus the book printer' (i.e., the printer of the Bible Olof Olofsson Helsing, printer in Stockholm 1617–1621⁵⁶). Van Selow was expected to come to Sweden with Helsing, who was on a journey to the continent at that time.

The king's order of February 1618 states explicitly that the Bible funds should be used to bring Van Selow to Sweden. It is not likely that the printer would have been recruited for the Bible project in 1618, when the project was in its final stage: the Bible had been in the process of being printed since late June or early July 1616.

If we accept Bengtsson's hypothesis about Van Selow being one of the foreign 'typographi' who were in Sweden in 1616–1617, this would mean that his first 'Swedish episode' would not have been mentioned explicitly in Hingher's sermon. The explanation may be that the first contract with Van Selow was not made with the king, but with the Bible curators, the Bureus brothers, whereas the 'second invitation' (of 1618) would have been the *first* one signed by the king.

It is generally presumed that Van Selow arrived in Stockholm during the autumn of 1618, but no concrete evidence is available. In any event, as Bengtsson says, he could hardly have arrived before August 1618, since Oxenstierna's invitation was from 22 July.⁵⁷ Incidentally, according to a document signed by Gustavus Adolphus on 27 July 1619, the type founder still had not received the 50 talers he had been promised in July 1618: the king now ordered that the amount that had been promised to Van Selow 'the previous winter' be paid to him immediately.⁵⁸

On 28 February 1623 a new document regarding Van Selow was issued by the Swedish king.⁵⁹ Gustavus Adolphus repeated once more the need for Russian types ('ett Ryske Tryck') with both upper- and lower-case 'styles'. He had been negotiating with Peter van Selow, who was to receive 150 talers for this task at once, with the remainder to be paid when the styles were completed. This might have been the king's 'second invitation' mentioned in the Hingher source, to induce Van Selow to come to Sweden once more, after he had returned to

Afd. 1. Bd. 2. Bref 1606-1624 [ed. C.G. Styffe]. Stockholm: Kungl. Vitterhets Historie och Antikvitets Akademien, 1896, 321.

⁵⁶ Klemming, *Svensk boktryckeri-historia*, 162.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*; see also Rudbeck, 'Peter van Selow', 304.

⁵⁹ Only a contemporary copy is available in the archive, not the original letter (RAS, Bibliographica, Boktryckerier i Stockholm).

Mecklenburg. However, it is unclear whether Van Selow was in Stockholm or in Grevesmühlen when the king's order was issued, and it seems that some puzzle pieces are still lacking.

From January 1624 there is hard evidence again: at this point the type founder was actually in Mecklenburg. Of course, this might have been a different trip to his home town than the one reported by Hingher; it is not really astonishing that the sermon does not mention every single movement in Van Selow's life. Certainly the printer focused on the facts he considered to be relevant when he told Pastor Hingher his life's story, preparing himself for eternity. The important 1624 letter is datelined 'Grevißmühl on the day of the Conversion of [St.] Paul' (which is 25 January) and addressed to Duke Adolf Frederick I of Mecklenburg. It was published – in a somewhat shortened version – already in 1895 by a regional Mecklenburg historian.⁶⁰ Van Selow here confirms that he

has learned the art of cutting and casting different refined letter types for Latin, German, Greek, Hebrew and other kinds of good scripts abroad, investing a lot of efforts and costs...⁶¹ And because starting from that time, unfortunately, in the Roman Empire of the German Nation all sorts of inconveniences and different wars and conflicts have been arising and growing stronger from day to day, leading to high prices and increasing lack of necessary nutrition..., I am compelled and forced to ask Your Princely Grace subserviently to grant me a small maintenance in connection with the art I have learned; a task which cannot be done by everybody and at the same time serves the maintenance of good order.

In the last sentence Van Selow alludes to the fact that print shops could help rulers spread laws and regulations among the population. The letter corroborates Hingher's sermon, which also says that Van Selow returned to his home town on different occasions. The type founder underlines the fact that he has already assembled a good number of types. He also asked for some

60 Schröder, 'Die Anfänge', 112f. The spelling of the printer's family name is *Vanselow* (twice), as one word; most likely this was the name of the family at the time. There is no doubt that Schröder has transcribed Van Selow's petition more or less correctly, albeit with some omissions (we do not know how much was left out). Schröder indicates that he has studied the letter 'in the Great Duke's Secret and Main Archive' ('Akten des Großherzoglichen Geheimen und Haupt-Archivs'; p. 112, note 1). The letter could not be located in the Landeshauptarchiv Schwerin in July 2021. (E-mail from Dr Antje Koolman, 14 July 2021, where she also states that the family name Vanselow still exists in the region.)

61 This ellipsis, and also the following one, are Schröder's.

additional benefits: an advance payment, somewhere to live, and some kind of minor paid appointment in Schwerin ('eine geringe Bestallung'),

because this craft will contribute to increase in particular the fame of Your Princely Grace, Your excellent duchy and countries, and also to the further dissemination and propagation of the Pure Instruction [*'der Reinen Lehr'*, that is, Luther's instruction] among the esteemed young people and in schools. Moreover, I will diligently prepare and print whatever mandates, policies, etc. that Your Princely Grace will want to publish every year, until I have brought in and paid back Your Princely Grace's money.⁶²

Schröder ends his report about the printer's request with the words: 'Vanselow's petition was not granted; we do not know why.'⁶³ Had the request been granted, this would have been the first print shop in Schwerin. I would hypothesise that the reason for not allowing Van Selow to establish himself as a printer in Schwerin might have been the duke's respect for the Swedish king's plans; that is, the duke did not want to risk a conflict with Gustavus Adolphus. Otherwise Van Selow's proposal seems to have been beneficial for the duke and the city where, as a consequence, the first printer established himself only almost sixty years later, in 1683.⁶⁴ It is not clear for how long Van Selow had been in his home town when he wrote his letter to Duke Adolf Frederick, nor how long he might have stayed there after 25 January.

Van Selow would not have asked the duke to accept him as a printer in Schwerin if he had been planning to stay permanently in Swedish service. The cited document proves beyond any doubt that Van Selow in 1624 was still dissatisfied with his working conditions in Sweden – probably with his payment, in the first place – and was ready to spurn Gustavus Adolphus' plans. Had the petition been granted, the king would not have seen any imprints with Cyrillic type 'made in Stockholm'. Through Van Selow's petition we thus get some relevant information about the printer's whereabouts in January 1624. This important letter has never been seriously discussed by scholars interested in Van Selow's biography, although German historians have known about its existence.⁶⁵ Incidentally, the 'Schwerin episode' of early 1624 is absent from Hingher's sermon. The reason for the printer not to mention this attempt to

62 Schröder, 'Die Anfänge', 112f.

63 Idem, 113.

64 Idem, 111.

65 Reske, *Die Buchdrucker*, 913.

leave Sweden, hoping for a future in his native Mecklenburg, seems evident: Van Selow was certainly eager to give his pastor the picture of having consistently been a faithful and loyal Swedish citizen, one who always eagerly fulfilled the king's orders. Of course, it cannot be excluded that Van Selow *did* tell Hingher about this event in his life, and the author of the sermon himself found it appropriate to leave out this detail.

Just over a year after Van Selow's unsuccessful attempt to establish a print shop in Schwerin, he finally received official status as a 'Russian book printer' in Sweden. Gustavus Adolphus' document about Van Selow's 'installation' as a 'Russian book printer' is from 14 April 1625. A remuneration from the crown in kind was promised (wheat, half a barrel of salmon, and one barrel of herring are mentioned), in addition to free housing, including a workshop, and 100 talers in cash for shipping his belongings from Germany to Sweden.⁶⁶

As we have seen above, Van Selow was in some way involved in the production of the 'Gustavus Adolphus Bible' early in his Swedish career. In the 1630s he embarked on another – albeit ultimately unsuccessful – Bible project: now there were plans to print a Finnish Bible in the eastern part of the Swedish realm, in Åbo/Turku, where a new university was to be established, the third in the empire after Uppsala and Dorpat/Tartu (1632). Van Selow, who was already employed by the Swedish Crown, was appointed to print the Finnish Bible and lead the academic print shop in Åbo.⁶⁷ According to a recommendation for Van Selow by Per Brahe, governor-general of Finland, on 22 August 1639 the printer had actually been in Åbo to discuss the conditions for this work.⁶⁸ He then returned to Stockholm in order to bring his wife and belongings, which he was expected to do as quickly as possible. So the idea was to move to Finland, if not forever, then at least for a while. Brahe's letter contains an appendix, where he summarises Van Selow's requirements: a suitable apartment free of charge; a certain yearly salary; an exclusive privilege to print prayer books, psalm books, and 'other school books' in Finnish; lead, brass, and copper was to be shipped over so new Greek and Hebrew typefaces could be cast, and last but not least a hundred talers. Finally, the last item in the list is that his pending salaries are to be paid to him.⁶⁹ Van Selow also turned directly to Axel Oxenstierna,

66 RAS, Riksregistraturet 1625, 14 April (fol. 162v–163r); direct link: https://sok.riksarkivet.se/bildvisning/A0038643_00173. A transcription is in Klemming, *Svensk boktryckeri-historia*, 162f.

67 Gardberg, *Boktrycket i Finland*, 57.

68 Idem, 58.

69 Most probably he received this amount later on because in 1648 Van Selow asked that his pending salaries *for two years* be paid to him; see Rudbeck, 'Peter van Selow', 306.

informing the chancellor that he had not received any salary after 1631.⁷⁰ The government's reaction is not known, so it is not clear why nothing came from the plans of printing the Finnish Bible in Åbo. In any event, it was decided that the Bible was to be printed in Stockholm by Henrik (or Heinrich) Keyser.⁷¹

Peter van Selow as a type founder and printer

It is clear from both Hingher's sermon and the Swedish sources that Van Selow's main income was from cutting and casting type, not from printing books, particularly before he came to Sweden, but also during his time in Sweden. His first printed book – the Lutheran catechism in Russian (Fig. 2 below) – appeared from his Stockholm workshop only in 1628, whereas we do have sources documenting that, already in 1622, Van Selow had made a contract with bishop Johannes Rudbeckius about the delivery of type to the recently established print shop in Västerås, and the following year he began delivering typefaces to Strängnäs.⁷² During his first decade in Sweden, Van Selow must have made his living exclusively as a type founder. B. Bengtsson writes in the English summary of his monograph about Swedish type founding prior to 1700: 'Thus Peter van Selow can be described as the supplier of type to practically speaking every printer in Sweden during this period' (from 1620 until his death).⁷³

Van Selow's output as a printer is less impressive, with a total known oeuvre of some forty imprints during the period 1628–1648,⁷⁴ which means about two imprints per year on average. Prior to 1636 only two imprints signed by him are known: the catechism of 1628 (Figure 2) and one more octavo imprint of only 16 pages.⁷⁵

70 Both Brahe's recommendation and Van Selow's (undated; a note in pencil has been added by an archivist: '1639') letter are in RAS, Bibliographica, vol. 9, Finska böcker. According to Van Selow's letter, the yearly salary that he had been promised in 1625 had been paid only until 1631; during the following years he had not received his salary, although he had fulfilled all requirements. See also Gardberg, *Boktrycket i Finland*, 58–60.

71 Idem, 60–61.

72 Bengtsson, *Svenskt stilgjuteri*, 118.

73 Idem, 246.

74 Rudbeck, 'Peter van Selow', lists 40 items, the USTC 42 (9 July 2021). The previously unknown *Alphabetum Russarum* (n.d.; [1638–1646]) can now be added. The only surviving copy is in the Herzogin Anna Amalia Bibliothek (HAAB) in Weimar. See Maier, 'Alphabetum Russarum', a previously unknown imprint by Peter van Selow, Stockholm' (forthcoming).

75 Bengtsson, *Svenskt stilgjuteri*, 123.

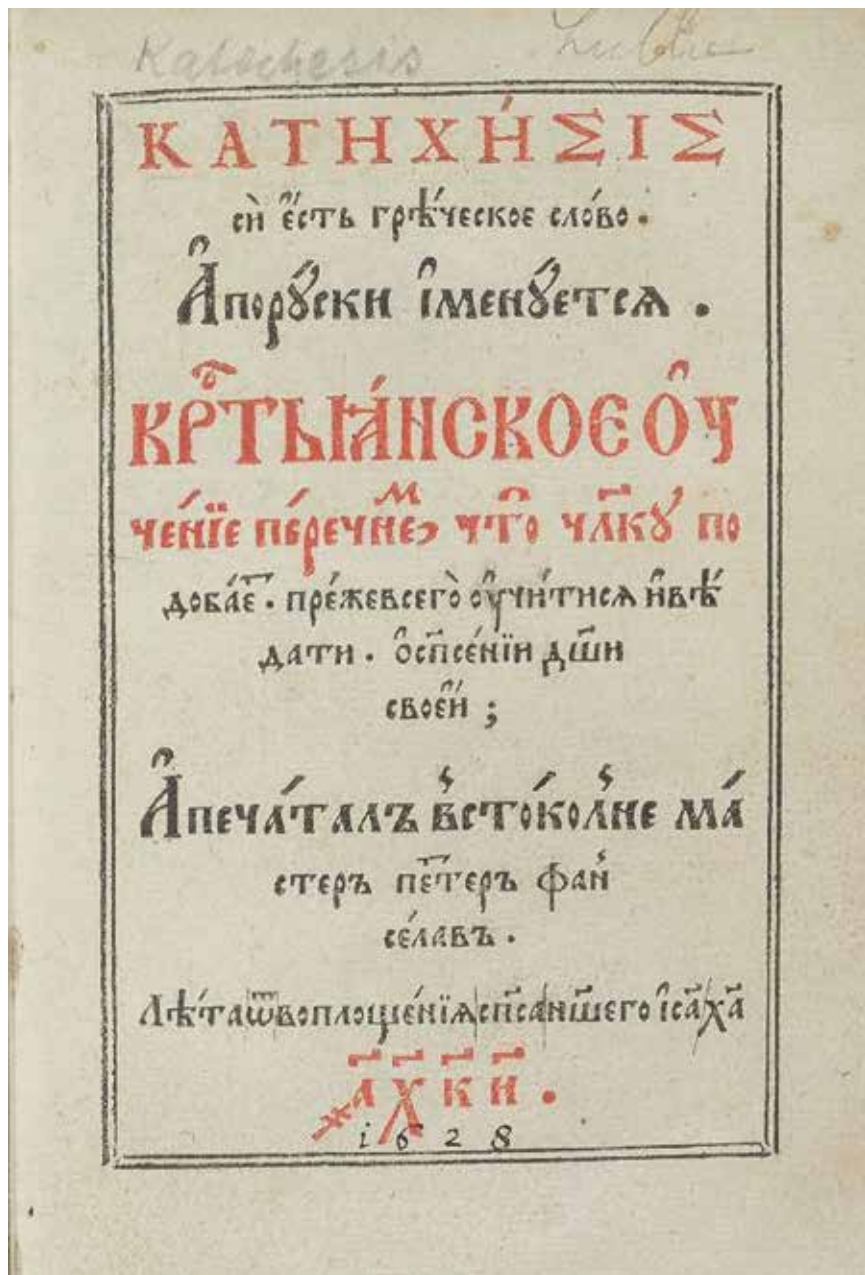


Figure 2. Title page of Van Selow's first book printed in Stockholm, Κατηχίσις [sic] сѣ есть грѣческоє слово (...) / 'Κατηχίσις this is a Greek word (...)', 1628. Weimar, HAAB

Some ordinances (issued with no indication of place of printing) can certainly be added to his output. Most of his signed imprints are very short (4-16 pages). An example of the latter is the hitherto unknown Russian alphabet table *Alphabetum Russarum* on two leaves, with pronunciation rules in Latin (see Figure 3, left). Whereas the edition in Swedish, *Alfabetum Rutenorum* (right), was intended for use within Sweden, or Scandinavia, the Latin-language publication *Alphabetum Russarum* was certainly aimed at a non-Swedish public, which is indirectly reflected by the fact that copies of the former are preserved only in Sweden and Denmark, whereas not a single copy of the *Alphabetum Russarum* has been documented in Scandinavia.⁷⁶

Among Van Selow's other 'exotic' print production is a Lutheran catechism in Finnish, printed in Cyrillic script (Figure 4).⁷⁷

One of Van Selow's more voluminous books is the *Stockholmisch Koch-Gesprächs Vortrab* by Dietlev Majus (1644), comprising 290 pages (republished in 1647 with a slightly different title and the words 'zum andern mahl Gedruckt, vnd verleget Durch Peter Van Selow', 296 pages).⁷⁸ Swedish scholars agree that although Van Selow's print production was of high quality, he should be regarded first and foremost as a type founder.⁷⁹

The fate of Van Selow's print shop during his illness and after his death

From Hingher's funeral sermon we know Van Selow's exact date of death, 5 March 1650, and we also know that he died after a long period of illness. Already in 1649, while Van Selow was still alive (albeit ill and bedridden), his wife sold the type foundry to Zackarias Brockenius, printer in Strängnäs, for 300 talers.⁸⁰

76 The *Alphabetum Russarum* is kept at the HAAB, Weimar (see the previous note); the copy of the *Alfabetum Rutenorum* belongs to Uppsala University Library (Sv. språkvet. slav.).

77 Copy at Uppsala University Library, Rar. 10:368. (The year '1644' has been added in ink.)

78 Idem, 330-333 (Nos 32, 36). The alleged edition of 1649 at Gothenburg's university library (RAR-Saml. 12:0 49; see <http://libris.kb.se/bib/10158198>) belongs to a variant of the 1647 edition with some words on the title page printed in red; the year is changed in red ink from 1647 to 1649 (see also idem, 333). The variant is otherwise identical with the copy in Wolfenbüttel (VD17 23:270796B; fulltext version available via VD17). I am grateful to Antoaaneta Granberg from Gothenburg for sending me plenty of photographs.

79 Rudbeck, 'Peter van Selow', 316; Bengtsson, *Svenskt stilgjuteri*, 123.

80 Karl Karlsson Leijonhufvud, 'Domkyrko-boktryckeriet i Strängnäs och dess boktryckare', in: *Bidrag till Södermanlands äldre kulturhistoria* 18 (1923), 7-66 (here 18). Leijonhufvud says it was Van



Figure 3. On the left, the Russian alphabet table *Alphabetum Russarum* (n.d.), on the right the *Alfabetum Rutenorum* (n.d.), an alphabet table including some elements from a Lutheran catechism (in Swedish and Russian)

In the 1690s, when the Swedish scholar Johan Gabriel Sparwenfeld was eager to print his own magnum opus, a Slaveno-Russian lexicon and a grammar, no Cyrillic fonts were available in Sweden. However, Sparwenfeld knew that Van Selow's fonts had been sold to someone in Amsterdam. In 1695, he was informed by Joan Blaeu junior that Dirk Voskens' widow, in whose possession the Cyrillic fonts were at the time (including matrices and punches), was willing to sell them for one hundred talers.⁸¹ The fonts had probably been bought, some decades earlier, from the Blaeu company, perhaps even through the mediation of Joan Blaeu jr, in an auction after the fire that had destroyed the publishing house of Joan Blaeu senior (son of the famous cartographer Willem Blaeu) in 1673,⁸² so Joan Blaeu jr would have known where to find the current

Selow's widow who sold the type foundry to Brockenius; maybe she pretended that her husband had died? In any event, it was certainly clear in 1649 that he would not need the type foundry anymore, and undoubtedly the wife was in need of money.

81 The letter of Joan Blaeu jun. to Sparwenfeld, datelined Amsterdam 30 April 1695 (N.S.), is published in M.M. Kleerkooper and W.P. van Stockum Jr., *De boekhandel te Amsterdam voornamelijk in de 17e eeuw*, Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, 1914-1916, 50-51, together with six other letters by Blaeu to Sparwenfeld. The original letters are kept in Linköping (Diocesan Library, Br. 33).

82 The auction that seems most relevant in this context is the one of 20 April 1677, announced in the *Haerlemsche Courant* of 6 and 15 April 1677 and quoted in Ch. Enschedé, *Fonderies de caractères et leur matériel dans les Pays-Bas du XVe au XIXe siècle*. Haarlem: De erven F. Bohn, 1908, 101f. The auction comprised unbound books as well as 'Matrysen, Pençoenen en Letteren'. In another auction (26 April) only books were to be sold. In an advertisement in the Haarlem newspaper of 7 May 1678

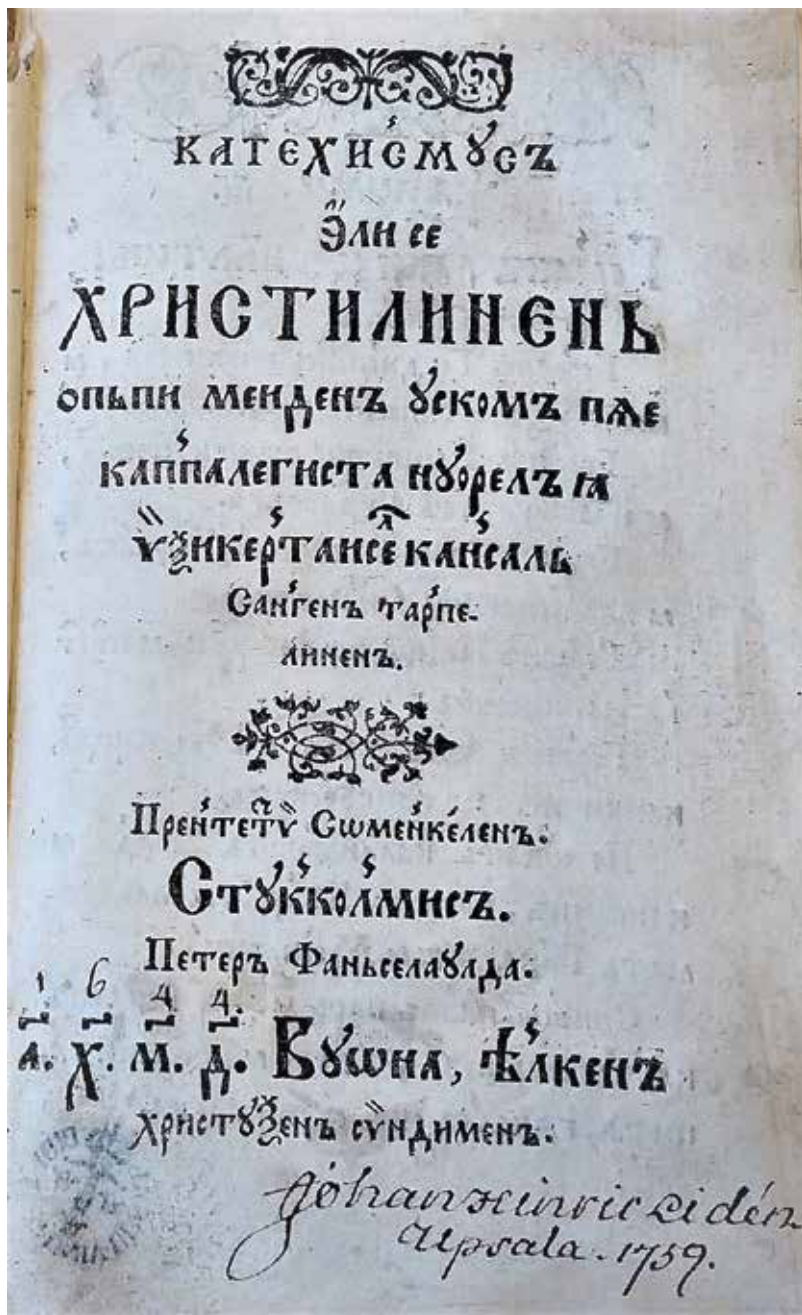


Figure 4. Peter van Selow's Finnish catechism, Катехисмусъ Эли се Христилиненъ оoppi ... / Katechismus Eli se Christilinen oppi ..., printed in Cyrillic script (Stockholm, 1644)

owner. Blaeu had also seen a typeface sample ('proef van letteren') issued by the widow, and apparently he forwarded it to Sparwenfeld; in Blaeu's letter of 10 June 1695 to the Swedish scholar we read: 'Voicy l'épreuve des matrices & poinçons de la Vefve Voskens...'.⁸³ From this letter it becomes clear that the deal was now no longer about matrices and punches, but about ready-cast type, because the widow now asked which quantity of each individual character is needed. She also informed Blaeu that the set of matrices was not complete. This would pose some problems: certain letters would have to be cut anew, and she would need their designs ('les figures des lettres qui manquent'), as we know from another of Blaeu's letters to Sparwenfeld.⁸⁴

In 1695 (there is no exact date), Sparwenfeld wrote a memorandum to the Swedish government about many different issues.⁸⁵ Among other things he mentions his contacts with Joan Blaeu, and he asks that the government purchase Van Selow's Cyrillic type that had been sold to Holland by Van Selow's heirs. With these types, not only his lexicon and grammar could be printed, he writes, but also Lutheran catechisms to be spread among the Russian-speaking Swedish citizens in the border regions. Ultimately, nothing came from the negotiations between Sparwenfeld, Blaeu and the widow Voskens. The incomplete set of matrices might have been the reason, or maybe Sparwenfeld could not persuade his government to buy the Russian types. The Swedish rulers might have learned a lesson from the experiment with the Russian catechism of 1628 and understood that it took more than a catechism to convert Russian Orthodox believers to the Lutheran confession. As a result, Sparwenfeld's lexicon finally appeared in print only three hundred years later, in our own time.⁸⁶

the reader is informed that Dirck Voskens and Johannes Adams are now continuing to cast letters with the material from the former Blaeu foundry (*ibid.*, 102).

83 Björkbom, 'Några anteckningar', 123. This would have been the type specimen of 'Weduwe van Dirck Voskens en Zonen, Lettergieters' (n.d.), mentioned in *Catalogus van de typographische verzameling van Joh. Enschedé en Zonen*, Haarlem: [Enschedé], 1916, 120, where beyond Greek, Hebrew, 'Samaritan', Arabic, and Coptic also Russian and Runic types are mentioned: 'c. Proef van Letteren. Z.j. Bevat Grieksche, Hebreuwsche, Samaritaansche, Arabische, Coptische, Russische, Angelsaksische en Runenschriften.' Nowhere is it stated that these fonts were the ones that had been cast by Van Selow, but neither Russian nor Runic type was widespread, and at least Sparwenfeld was sure that these were the Selow fonts (Björkbom, 'Några anteckningar', 122).

84 Björkbom, 'Några anteckningar', 122f.

85 A transcription of the complete memorandum is in Carl Wilhelm Jacobowsky, *J.G. Sparwenfeld: bidrag till en biografi*. Stockholm: Kurt Lindberg boktryckeriaktiebolag, 1932, 369-372.

86 *Lexicon Slavonicum / Johan Gabriel Sparwenfeld* [ed. Ulla Birgegård], 5 vols. Uppsala: Univ.-bibl., 1987-1992.

Conclusion

Although there are still some blank spots in Van Selow's life story, the combination of Hingher's funeral sermon, the printer's own letter to the duke of Mecklenburg of 1624, and the long-known Swedish archival sources has made it possible to present a more-or-less comprehensive narrative about Peter van Selow, the alleged Dutchman who was born in Mecklenburg. Beyond the alleged 'Dutch connection' there is also a real one, notably the sale of Van Selow's Cyrillic typefaces to Holland.

Hingher's funeral sermon – arguably the most important individual surviving source about Van Selow – has contributed a great deal of new information, for instance many concrete dates: his birth, his two marriages, and his death. Hingher's narrative complements nicely the piecemeal information from the Swedish archival sources. The Hingher source has proved to be reliable in most cases, although some names have been garbled (Grevesmühlen, and the family name of Van Selow's second wife). The dates of his birth and first marriage could not be verified in the church books of Grevesmühlen because these books have not survived.⁸⁷

Unfortunately, Hingher's sermon rarely gives concrete years for the printer's movements from place to place. This shortcoming could be counterbalanced to a certain degree by sources about Tycho Brahe's biography. In one case where a concrete year actually is given by Hingher, for Van Selow's invitation to Stockholm in 1618, there are some doubts about whether this was really the type founder's first sojourn in Sweden: had he perhaps been in Sweden earlier in connection with the printing of the 'Gustavus Adolphus Bible', in 1616-1617? Hingher reports that Van Selow was invited twice, but this source rather suggests that the first invitation was in 1618 and the second around 1623. Perhaps he came on three different occasions, but did not count the first stay in Sweden because no royal invitation was involved.

In 1624, Van Selow still had not given up his dreams about a future in his native Grevesmühlen in Mecklenburg: with his petition of 25 January, he asked for the right to establish a print shop in Schwerin. The fact that the Swedish king issued a privilege for Van Selow as a 'Russian bookprinter' in 1625 can now be seen in the light of Van Selow's 'escapes' back to his native Mecklenburg on one or more occasions: the Swedish crown had to act so that the printer would not leave Sweden yet again, before the required imprints

87 The books have been preserved from 1688 onwards; they are digitised and can be accessed on line (for a fee) via <https://www.archion.de/de/das-portal/>.

in Cyrillic type were published. The escape (or escapes) may thus have triggered the official royal privilege for Van Selow, issued in 1625.

The fact that Van Selow had not really settled down in Stockholm prior to 1625 may help explain why it took so many years before he printed his first book in Stockholm: Luther's catechism in (Slaveno-)Russian (1628; Figure 2). As we have seen, in other places where he had been working prior to his 'Swedish period', he had always managed to cut and cast the necessary fonts within two or three years, whereas in Stockholm the time range between his first arrival and the first print product was ten years.

Hingher's chronology presumably was not exact in all details, particularly when considering that the events were in the distant past when Van Selow related his life story to the pastor: the narrator himself would hardly have remembered the exact chronology in all cases. Another possibility is that Hingher might have misunderstood some details – something that Van Selow could not correct because he certainly was not given the chance to see the proofs for the sermon.

The final question is: how successful was Gustavus Adolphus' strategy to convert the Russian-speaking subjects in the newly conquered territories by means of a printed Lutheran catechism in their own language, Van Selow's first book of 1628? Most probably not successful at all.⁸⁸ For instance, of the ten copies I managed to study *de visu* over the last fifteen years, there was not a single one that showed any indication of having been used according to the original purpose (e.g., notes in the copies): to convert Russian-speaking Swedish subjects to the Lutheran confession. Of course, it is possible that any copies used for religious instruction simply have not survived today. Based on the extant copies, though, it appears that the book was considered as a valuable item on the shelves of book collectors, as we understand from inscriptions in some copies. Incidentally, at least two copies seem to have been spread from Moscow (not from Sweden) in the 1660s and 1670s, notably the one in WLB Stuttgart (containing a parallel text in German) and the one in HAAB Weimar (with a parallel text in Latin). These copies were spread, as it seems, by the first Russian dramaturgs, both of Saxon birth, Johann Gottfried Gregorii and Laurentius Rinhuber, apparently as gifts to their sponsors in Germany, as will be shown in another study.⁸⁹

88 Actually, the Swedish policy aimed at converting the Orthodox subjects in Ingria to the Lutheran confession did not meet with success as a whole: the Orthodox believers fled to the Russian side of the border rather than accepting a new belief. See Isberg, *Svensk segregations- och konversionspolitik*, 37f.

89 Claudia Jensen & Ingrid Maier [in preparation], *The Origins of the Russian Court Play on the Biblical Story of Esther* (1672).

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