The "ł" glyph
in script typefaces

by Adam Twardoch

𝔄𝔅ℭ𝔇𝔈𝔉𝔊𝔥𝔍𝔎𝔏𝔐𝔑𝔒𝔓𝔔𝔖𝔗𝔘𝔚𝔜ℨ

á á a b c ch é d e ε f g g g ch h ï i j ÿ k l l l' m m̃ n ñ o p r ß s ſ ſk ſt ß

t u v w x y z z z / ' ⁘

Early Polish typeface adapted by
Maciej Wirzbięta, Kraków 1557.

Between the l and the m, two forms of the ł letter are visible. The L, the Ł and the Ł' were three similar but distinct sounds present in Polish language in that time. In later centuries, the differentation between the two Ł forms disappeared.

Mikołaj Rej: "Postylla". Ed. Maciej Wirzbięta. Kraków 1557.
As in: „Polonia Typographica Saeculi Sedecimi, zeszyt IX,
Maciej Wirzbięta Kraków 1557/7-1605". Ossolineum. Wrocław 1974.

Kſięgi piąte

Słożył Krol Alexánder Citewskim

n w Brześćiu Ruſkim / na kthory też ſwymi oſobámi oſo‑
ęćiech Tabor Biſkup Wileńſki / Jan Zabrzezyńſki Woie‑

Early Polish typeface adapted by
Mateusz Siebeneycher, Kraków 1564.

Again, in the word "Słożył", both forms of the Ł are visible.

Marcin Bielski: "Kronika tho iesth Historya Świata". Ed. Mateusz Siebeneycher. Kraków 1564. Reprinted. Wydawnictwa Artystyczne i Filmowe. Warszawa 1976.

Aaáɑbƀcćʒdȸȼȼ̈eéèɛfghchijklłmṁnń oóòppqrʒʃsśßtuvwẃxyʒśź.

Aaɑɑbƀcćȼdȸȼ̈ȼ̈éèɛfghchij kʃlmmnńo òppqrʒʃsóßtʋwẃxyʒśʒ.

Aaáɑbƀcĉɑdåȸđeeɛfgĝhchiklllmm̂nn̂ ouupp̂qrʒsŝʃʃʃtʋʋwẃxyʒŝʒ.

First truly original Polish typeface by
Jan Januszowski, Kraków 1594.
Orthographies by Jan Januszowski,
Jan Kochanowski and Łukasz Górnicki.

In 1594, the Cracow-based printer Jan Januszowski published a milestone work that had great impact on Polish typography and spelling. The book presented three different propositions for a unified Polish orthography, written by Jan Kochanowski, one of Poland's most perfect poets, by Łukasz Gónicki, a highly educated nobleman, and by himself, who was a printer and type caster. As Polish printers at that time were looking for an original typeface suitable for typesetting Polish, Januszowski has cut his first truly original typeface that he named "nowy karakter polski". The book was intended as the specimen for that typeface.

Januszowski's work had great impact on Polish typography. His own spelling rules have been widely adapted as being the simplest and most logical. In fact, today's Polish orthography is not much different from Januszowski's initial proposition.

Jan Januszowski: "Nowy karakter polski z Drukarnie Lazarzowey y orthographia polska: Iana Kochanowskiego, Ie[g]o M.P. Łukasza Górnickie[g]o, &c. &c. Iana Ianuszowskiego". Ed. Jan Januszowski. Kraków 1594.

Polish calligraphy, late 18th century.
Grodno 1790 (next page).

In Polish calligraphy and typography of the 17th–18th century, the form of the letter ł evaluated into two distinct forms. In the typographic form, the crossed stroke moved towards the middle of the letter. In the calligraphic manner, the stroke moved towards the top of the letter and sometimes became curly. Both processes were presumably done to avoid confusion with the letter t.

Next page shows a piece of Polish calligaphy from the late 18th century. Unfortunately, the quality of the reprint is very bad, but with some imagination, one can discover that the stroke of the ł's crosses the letter at the top and is very curly. The last word, "przypłacą", shows an ornament descending from the ł stroke.

Calligraphy from the Stanisław August library, Grodno 1790.
As in: Aleksander Gieysztor „Zarys dziejów pisma łacińskiego".
Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe. Łódź 1973.

Mikołaj Kopernik.
Lwów miasto na Rusi.
Ostrołęka niedaleko Łomży.
Warszawa nad Wisłą.

Script course by M. Brzeziński, Warszawa 1906
Antykwa Półtawskiego, Poland's first "national"
typeface by Adam J. Półtawski, Warszawa 1928.

In late 19th century, the industry brought the first writing pens made in mass-production. Calligraphic courses intended for self-education became popular. One of most succesful courses of that kind was M. Brzeziński's, shown here.

The same text is set in Antykwa Półtawskiego, Poland's first "national" typeface, designed by Adam Jerzy Półtawski in 1928 and first cast 1931 in Warsaw. This typeface became quite popular in Poland after 1945, and was also licensed by Monotype (as "Poltawski series 394/398").
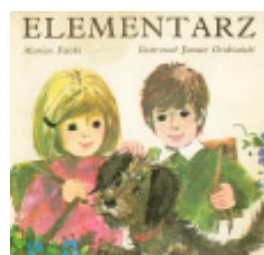
The samples above clearly illustrate the differences between the calligraphic and the typographic style of ł.

M. Brzeziński: "Wzory przenośne dla nauki ładnego pisania dla samouków". Ed. Księgarnia polska. Warszawa 1906.

Adam Jerzy Półtawski: Antykwa Półtawskiego. Samples shown here are set from a digital font created 1999–2000 by Janusz Nowacki, Bogusław Jackowski and Piotr Strzelczyk, and published 2001 by GUST, the Polish TeX Users' Group.

Aa Ąą Bb Cc Ćć
Cz cz Dd Dz dz Dż dż
Dź dź Ee Ęę Ff Gg Hh
Ch ch Ii Jj Kk Ll Łł
Mm Nn Ńń Oo Óó
Pp Rr Rz rz Ss Śś
Sz sz Szcz szcz Tt Uu
Ww Yy Zz Źź Żż

Godło Polski.
Godło Polski.

żółty-pożółkły

żółty-pożółkły

gęga-gęgają

gęga — gęgają

Tłomaczył
i uwagami uzupełnił
KAROL HOMOLACS,
*

Władysław Jagiełło

Władysław Jagiełło

Polish handwriting, 19th–20th century (also next page).

In Polish handwriting of the 19th and 20th century, the differentation trend is clearly visible. Next page shows the handwriting of the most excellent Polish romantic poet, Cyprian Kamil Norwid. Third line includes the word "pełnienia", where the ł is an l with a pronounced horizontal stroke above the letter. This is, in fact, today's preferred way of writing.

Above, handwriting samples from the 20th century are shown.

First sample: Karol Homolacs, the cover page of a manuscript of the translation of a lecture given by Paul Renner in Kraków on January 15th, 1928. Homolacs has translated Renner's lecture, typed the text on a typewriter and sketched a cover page. Sample kindly provided by Andrzej Tomaszewski.

Second sample: contemporary handwriting of a 45-year Polish woman

Third sample: Adam Twardoch's handwriting

kty dłuto fałda

kty dłuto fałda

kty dłuto fałda

Computer fonts, localized by Andrzej Tomaszewski and Adam Twardoch (also next).

As most of the computer fonts available on the market don't include Polish diacritics, or the diacritics included are not best suitable for Polish readers, fonts are often being "localized" by Polish typographers.

(atom) Andrzej Tomaszewski (Roman's son) used to localize fonts from the Linotype Library and from other vendors. Those fonts were distributed in Poland by Publishing Institute, a Warsaw-based company who was one of Polish Linotype distributors. Currently, Andrzej works as a freelance typographer.

(atw) Adam Twardoch modifies and extends fonts for his personal use and for custom clients. He also adivses and assists typographers throughout the world at adding Polish diacritics.

Samples above: Brush Script (atom), Caflisch Pro (atw), Charme (atom).

Samples next page: JustLeftHand (atom), Mistral (atom), Storm Excelsior (atw), Pepita (atom), Shelley Allegro (atom).

kly dluto falda

kly dluto falda

kly dluto falda

kly dluto falda

kly dluto fatdal

Lytdetto

Lytdetto

A new ligature candidate?

The typographic form of the ł glyph is not greatly acceptable for Polish readers if found in a script typeface, like in Monotype Script shown above, first sample. But if we design this glyph in a calligraphic way, the łł combination may cause severe optical problems. Adding a łł ligature solves the problem. As OpenType allows very flexible ligatures, we hope to soon see some script fonts with that ligature included.

In fact, in contemporary handwriting, the horizontal element of the łł combination is usually witten as single stroke (see samples of 20th century handwriting).

The diacritics in the second sample were designed by Andrzej Tomaszewski. The ligature was designed by Adam Twardoch.