

The inventory of the Jesuit College in Minsk and its Estates from 1773–1774

Summary

Inventories issued after the suppression of the Society of Jesus (1773) provide valuable information about the Jesuit cultural, social, and economic impact in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. This source edition focuses on the Minsk College. Two original manuscript inventories of this Jesuit house still exist. One belongs to the National Historical Archive of Belarus in Minsk, and the other to the Volodymyr Vernadskyj's National Library of Ukraine in Kyiv. These manuscripts differ by content: while the first one describes the college building and its archive, the latter also includes a library catalogue, a pharmacy inventory and a description of the land estates. For this reason, the present edition relies on the Kyiv manuscript.

By the standards of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, early-modern Minsk was a populous city with about five thousand inhabitants. Before the Union of Brest (1596), most of them were Ruthenian Orthodox. By the early 17th century, the Uniate Church had stably set foot in the city. In reaction to that, the Orthodox faithful founded St Peter and Paul church and monastery. Additionally, there were substantial Jewish, Polish Catholic, Protestant (Calvinist) and Tatar Muslim minorities. The city was the administrative centre of the Minsk voivodeship and one of the seats of the Supreme Tribunal of Lithuania.

The Jesuits arrived in Minsk in 1654, just before the outbreak of the Polish-Russian War of 1654–1667, thanks to a foundation made by Hieronim Władysław Sanguszko, suffragan bishop of Vilnius. They aimed to strengthen the Catholic faith and educate the local nobility. Although Sanguszko's legal successors questioned his last will, the Jesuits remained in the city as missionaries. Only in the 1680s, did their number grow thanks to Cyprian Paweł Brzostowski's, Marcján Aleksander Ogiński's and Dadzibóg Łukomski's donations. Thus, the Jesuits turned their mission into a residence in 1686 and later into a college in 1714. From its creation in 1654 until 1759, the Minsk College belonged to the Lithuanian Province of the Society of Jesus. From that year until the Society's suppression, Minsk became part of the Masovian Province.

The college played a marginal role within both provinces since no Jesuit scholastics usually attended philosophic or theological courses there. Nevertheless, it became one

of the most prominent religious institutions in the city, where eight further male and three female Roman Catholic monasteries opened between 1605 and 1771. During their 120-year-long presence in Minsk, the Jesuit fathers developed various initiatives. In the 1680s, they opened a five-class grammar and rhetoric school. Moreover, between 1729 and 1771, they held a biennial philosophical course for external students. To satisfy the need for liturgical music, a boarding school was created. Besides education, the Jesuits also took on pastoral duties, carrying out missions in the estates of the nobility.

Among the original Jesuit buildings, only the church and a former workshop still exist. After the second partition of Poland (1793), the school building became the residence of the Russian governor, while the college was assigned to the municipality. After being heavily damaged in 1944, both civil buildings were rebuilt in Soviet style after the Second World War. In 1798, the former Jesuit church became the cathedral of the newly created Minsk Bishopric. Although the diocese was suppressed in 1869, the church remained in Catholic hands, serving as a parish until the Soviet authorities closed it in the 1920s. It was subsequently converted into a car workshop and, after the Second World War, into a sports club. Only after the fall of the Soviet Union the church was returned to the faithful and restored to its early 19th-century state. Today, it serves as the cathedral of the Minsk and Mohylew Diocese.

The inventories contain a detailed description of the college buildings and church, whose original interiors have been destroyed by a fire in 1797. The church, dedicated to the Name of Jesus, the Virgin Mary, and St Barbara, was built between 1700 and 1721. Its imposing façade, framed by two towers, was adjacent to the market square. Besides the main altar, the church had eight side altars in the nave and two additional ones in the lateral chapels. The lefthand chapel was assigned to the Sodality of the Virgin Mary, while the righthand chapel preserved St Felician's relics and served as the burial place of the Zawisza family. The rectangular, two-storey school building stood to the left of the church. The L-shaped, two-storey college building rose on the right, with its gate surmounted by a clock tower adjacent to the market square. The building extended beyond the corner of Kojdanowska Street (now Revolution Street). From this street, a gate led to a courtyard around which were located stables, a coach house, the musical boarding school, and a brewery.

The music boarding school opened around 1709 and remained under the supervision of a lay brother since 1725. In 1773, it hosted eight musicians (either professionals or trainees) who performed a diverse repertoire (including 221 compositions) on various string and wind instruments. According to multiple sources, Jesuit-trained musicians were appreciated in the city, playing not only for their masters but also during various religious and public ceremonies outside the Jesuit church.

The library provided the college's intellectual background and consisted of 963 books according to the 1773 inventory. Additionally, the missionary had a 126-book collection at his disposal. The origins of this library date back to the opening of the Jesuit house in Minsk. Benefactors played a crucial role in enhancing the Jesuit library. For instance, Krzysztof Zawisza donated 200 volumes in 1713. The library was divided into sections dedicated to various disciplines, according to the *Ratio studiorum* and Antonio Possevino's *Bibliotheca selecta*. Besides theological publications and pious books, the main library included large sections dedicated to rhetoric, poetry, and history, used by the Jesuits in their educational work.

Whereas the library catalogue reflects the Jesuits' intellectual and spiritual formation, the archive inventory provides insights into their day-to-day management. Similarly to the archives of other Jesuit houses, the documents of the Minsk College were arranged

according to their provenance. The archive registry begins with royal privileges and donation records issued by various benefactors. Subsequently, it describes the documents concerning urban and rural possessions. Finally, it records the financial obligations towards the college, highlighting the relationships between the Society, the nobility, and the Jews.

Being the only institution of this kind in Minsk, the Jesuit pharmacy provided medical treatment to the members of the religious community and outsiders between 1749 and 1773. In doing so, the Jesuits violated the privilege granted by King Augustus III to Dawid Szeyba in 1748. According to this document, Szeyba was the only person allowed to own a pharmacy in Minsk. Unlike other cities, where lay brothers run Jesuit pharmacies, the one in Minsk was entrusted to a non-Jesuit, probably to avoid the legal consequences of violating the royal privilege. The Minsk pharmacy possessed a chemical laboratory and a garden in the Trojczany suburb on the left bank of the Svislach River. According to the 1773 inventory, the Jesuit pharmacy was well-equipped. Besides alembics and other technical equipment, it had a library of 45 medical books representing various disciplines and approaches, ranging from Galenic medicine to iatrochemistry and from case studies to medical treatises. The list of medicaments and raw materials includes 892 entries.

The last part of the published inventory focuses on the land estates, providing an insight into the following issues: 1) the farm buildings and their equipment (tools, seed, and cattle), 2) the villages and their inhabitants, with particular emphasis on their duties towards the landlord, 3) the estate revenues and expenses; 4) the neighbours' complaints. The Minsk College had five farms: Ślepianka, Hlewin, Hać, Prusewicze and Nieżyce, mainly located east and northeast of Minsk along the Berezyna River. In total, these estates included 367 peasant families living in 24 villages and farming 210 *włókas* (i.e., 3780 ha) of arable land. Overall, the land estates of the Minsk College provided a yearly income of about 16 thousand zlotys. Almost half of that income originated from Hlewin, the largest estate, including eight villages and 202 peasant families. The smallest one was Ślepianka, with only one village inhabited by 11 families. Since Ślepianka was very close to Minsk, the Jesuits built a villa for their leisure. Compared to other Jesuit houses like Navahrudak, the estates of the Minsk College were less profitable, mainly due to their location in the Dnipro hydrographic basin. Since transporting agricultural products to the Baltic ports was more expensive, the corvee system did not fully develop and much of the Jesuit economy remained based on tenant farming.

Unlike their confreres in other Polish-Lithuanian cities, the Minsk Jesuits did not have significant urban possessions besides the land on which they built their church and college. The only exception was a brick house close to the Jewish school acquired in 1731 after Dawid Pejsachowicz's death. Three years later, the Jesuits purchased a land plot in the Trojczany suburb, where they set up an apothecary garden and built a two-story arbour.

The edition's critical apparatus is modelled after the inventories of the Njasvizh and Navahrudak Colleges, published in 2020. In the introduction, the editor sketches the genesis and development of the Jesuit college against the city's historical background. The critical apparatus identifies people, places, and events mentioned in the source. Latin interpolations are translated within the main text, whereas the meaning of Old Polish words is explained in the footnotes. The editor also provides a virtual reconstruction of the Jesuit library based on various bibliographic repertoires. In the pharmacy inventory, the editor identifies each entry, solves alchemical signs, and provides information about the usage of each product relying on the pharmacopoeias used by Jesuit pharmacists.