

The Inventories of the Jesuit College in Nieśwież and its Estates from 1773-1774

Summary

Inventories are often used as sources on social, economic, art and architecture history. However, Polish scholars interested in Jesuit history have only to a small extent relied on this kind of source. This depends on the fact that most extant inventories of Jesuit colleges are currently preserved in Russian and Belorussian archives, which have remained inaccessible until recent years. Because of that, historians have mainly used sources from the Roman Archive of the Society of Jesus. Architecture and art historians have only recently began to use the inventories of Jesuit colleges and churches to analyze the artistic culture of the Society of Jesus. In fact, these sources provide information to specialists of a wider range of disciplines: from musicology to the history of libraries, from the history of religions to medical and pharmaceutical history, from economic to demographic history. State-sponsored inventories issued in the aftermath of the Suppression of the Society of Jesus are extremely valuable for two other reasons. Firstly, they are good substitutes for Jesuit sources dispersed after 1773. Secondly, they allow a deeper insight into everyday life and material culture. These issues have not been thoroughly investigated by former historiography, which focused rather on cultural and religious issues.

Inventories of Jesuit colleges came into existence in the turn of 1773 and 1774 both on the territory left under Polish rule after the partition of 1772, and in Austrian Galicia. This depended on the implementation by Polish and Austrian authorities of Clemens' XIV brief *Dominus ac redemptor*. On the contrary, the Russian tsaritsa Catherine the Great and the Prussian king Frederick the Great did not publish the papal brief and allowed the Jesuits to further operate as a religious congregation. In the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth the suppression of the Jesuit Order led to the creation of the Commission for National Education, whose task was to ensure the existence of former Jesuit schools. Inventories were written by secular inspectors appointed by the General Confederations of Poland and Lithuania. Although the embezzlement of funds and the unregistered sale of goods sometimes took place, inspectors usually behaved loyally, at least until the final decision to lease former Jesuit estates according to their estimated price was made in March

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1774. Therefore, inventories issued before this date can generally be regarded as reliable.

The present source edition includes seven manuscript inventories related to the college in Nieśwież and its estates. All are preserved either in the Russian National Archive for Historical Records in Moscow or in the National Historical Archive of Belarus in Minsk. Manuscript 1 was issued by Józef Obuchowicz and Kazimierz Ignacy Haraburda in December 1773. It describes the Jesuit college and church in Nieśwież along with their related institutions, the St. Isidor's church in Nieśwież suburbs as well as the churches in the college's estates of Krzywoszyn, Lipsk and Tuchowicze. The latter three churches are described in greater detail in Manuscript 2, authored by Joachim Radziwonowicz Kamiński Kmita, Jan Antoni Cywiński and Stanisław Czyż on January 20th 1774. Between December 1773 and January 1774 the same inspectors also wrote the Manuscripts 3-7, concerning the estates of the Jesuit college: Użanka, Rudawka, Grzybowski, Rzepichowo altogether with Tuchowicze and Szczerbinowo, as well as Wereskowo and Pułbrzeg.

The Nieśwież college was the third oldest Jesuit house in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania after the Vilnius Academy and the Połock college. It was founded by the prince Mikołaj Krzysztof Radziwiłł "Sierotka", a convert from Calvinism, in 1584. Nieśwież was a private town of this Lithuanian magnate, who played an important role in the establishment of the Society of Jesus in this region. Radziwiłł endowed the college with large estates in the Nowogródek district and financed the construction of the *Corpus Domini* church according to Giovanni Maria Bernardoni's project. Due to the founder's will the *Corpus Domini* church served not only as a Jesuit church, but also as a parish one. Since the *Constitutions* forbade the Jesuits to directly provide parish ministry, the Jesuit appointed a secular priest, over whom the rector exercised the right of patronage.

The *Corpus Domini* church exists until present day. Built on a Latin cross plan, it has three naves, a dome, two lateral chapels as well as two sacristies situated on both sides of the presbytery. Apart from few renovations, among which the most extensive one was carried out in the early 1750s, the *Corpus Domini* church remained almost unchanged until the suppression of the Society of Jesus. According to the 1773 inventory, three altars were located in the presbytery (the main altar including a painting of the Last Supper, and the lateral ones of St. Ignatius Loyola and St. Francis Xavier), two in the transept (Jesus Crucified and the Holy Virgin Mary), two in the lateral chapels (St. Stanislaw Kostka and St. Peter), and two by the first two church pillars (St. Laurence and St. Roch). Under the church there were five vaults, among which the largest was the burial chapel of the Radziwiłł family.

At same the time, Mikołaj Krzysztof Radziwiłł contributed to the construction of the college in the form of a two storey quadrilateral building with a central courtyard. By 1773 this layout was archaic, as evidenced by the fact that both pharmacy and school were not located in separate buildings, but on the college's ground floor. Unlike most Jesuit houses, the Nieśwież college was built in a single phase and did not undergo significant changes until the beginning of 19th century. Behind the college a large garden and utility buildings such as the brewery, stables and barns were located.

The Nieśwież Jesuits developed a close relationship with Radziwiłł family. In particular, they participated to the family's public celebrations and praised the magnates through sermons, theatre plays, panegyrics and printed books. In turn, the Radziwiłłs granted the Jesuits financial support and legal protection, and helped them to develop

various pastoral and educational activities. Thanks to this relationship, the Nieśwież college played an important role in the education of secular youth as well as in the formation of Jesuit scholastics. Three year philosophy courses were held for this group, and a mathematic course was opened in 1770. Moreover, in 1759 Nieśwież became – along with Warsaw – one of the administrative centres of the newly created the Province of Masovia.

The suppression of the Society of Jesus had a serious impact on religious and cultural life in Nieśwież. The *Corpus Domini* church remained active as a parish church, while the college was transformed into a school subject to the Commission for National Education. This school existed until 1797, when following the third partition of Poland (1795), the Russian government moved the school to the Dominican monastery on Nieśwież market square, and converted the former Jesuit college into military barracks. Throughout the 19th century, the college building slowly decayed and was finally demolished.

The inventory of the Nieśwież college provides information not only about Jesuit buildings, but also about their furniture and movable goods. It also describes several institutions related to the college, such as the printing house, the pharmacy, the noblemen boarding school, the pious congregations and the foundation of masses for purgatory souls.

The printing house was created by Michał Kazimierz Radziwiłł “Rybenko” in 1750 and donated to the Jesuits a year later. Despite the initial difficulties, the Jesuits managed to make it profitable. By 1773 the Nieśwież printing house was equipped with two printing presses and a significant amount of fonts. It also possessed a large library used by Jesuit editors. Moreover, the Nieśwież printing house served also as a bookshop, selling books coming not only from its own production, but also from other towns of the Commonwealth. Thus it spread the knowledge of literature and science among the inhabitants of Nieśwież.

The pharmacy was opened by the Jesuits before 1627. At first its purpose was to cure the college’s inhabitants, but later provided also medical care to the local population. Unlike the rest of the manuscripts, the inventory of the Jesuit pharmacy in Nieśwież was issued not by public officials, but by specialists: the pharmacist Samuel Landtgraff and the surgeon Fryderyk Teodor Oehme. The *materia medica* includes 667 raw materials and medicines, coming both from exotic countries and the pharmacy’s garden in Rudawka. These were applied to a wide range of treatments, including children’s, women’s and even venereal diseases. The modern distillation equipment allowed to prepare chemiatic medicines, while the collection of 46 books, regarding not only pharmacology, but also botany, surgery and gynaecology, show the wide medical knowledge of Jesuit pharmacists.

The boarding school for poor nobles was founded by Krzysztof Przewoski and Wojciech Zaleski, who donated the estate of Grzybowski in 1623. According to the 1773 inventory, this institution was located in two storey building on Krzywa Street, not far from the Jesuit church. This was also the seat of the music boarding school.

Among the pious congregations active in Nieśwież on the eve of the suppression of the Society of Jesus, the inspectors devoted much attention to the students’ sodality of the Virgin Mary. This institution was created by the Jesuits after opening the school in the 1580s. The members of the congregation mostly came from the local nobility and prayed before the altar of the Virgin Mary. By 1773 the sodality had cumulated a large amount of silver artefacts and liturgical equipment. On the contrary, the inspectors did not describe the *Corpus Domini* congregation, which was reserved for adults.

Mass foundations for purgatory souls were an important element of both Medieval and Post-Tridentine Church. These institutions were usually created by noble and wealthier burghers, who did not have sufficient means to found their own churches. Due to the missionary character of the Society of Jesus, the *Constitutions* forbade the Jesuit to accept such foundations, since they required the continuous presence of a priest fulfilling the duties imposed by benefactors. However, Lithuanian Jesuit had sometimes to give up to the pressure of the local elite. To avoid violating the *Constitutions*, they usually employed secular priests or the members of other religious orders. By 1773, there were nine such foundations in the *Corpus Domini* church. The inventory provides detailed information about their founders and financial basis.

Against the background of other Jesuit colleges, some omissions in the Njeśwież manuscripts can also be noted. First of all, the inspectors did not describe the equipment of the music ensemble of the Nieśwież music boarding school. They also provided neither a catalogue of the college library, nor a list of the Jesuits living in the college during the inspection.

Besides the college buildings, the inventories provide a description of five Roman-Catholic churches either in the Nieśwież suburbs (St. Isidor's church) or in Jesuit estates (St. John's church in Użanka, the church of the Protection of the Holy Virgin Mary in Krzywoszyn, the parish church of the Virgin Mary in Lipsk, and the St. Peter and Paul church in Tuchowicze). The most magnificent of them was that in Krzywoszyn, now used as an orthodox church. Although the Krzywoszyn church was only subsidiary to the Lipsk parish church, it was built of bricks, and had three naves and two belfries. Such display depended on the existence of a miraculous figure of the Virgin Mary, whose devotion had begun in the 1670s. Although the original figure had been destroyed by a fire in 1707, Krzywoszyn remained a centre of pilgrimage. In 1773 the church was equipped with richly decorated liturgical vestments, a library of 133 books reserved for Jesuit missionaries, and a collection of music instruments, which confirms the existence a local ensemble.

Finally, the inventories provide much information about the financial basis of the college. In the 18th century, money loans granted to nobles or Jewish *qahals* became increasingly popular, since they ensured the college a regular flow of money in the form of annual interests rates. However, real estate continued to represent the largest part of the college's revenue.

The history of Jesuit landed wealth can be reconstructed on the basis of a summary of the college's archive included in Manuscript 1. Most of the estates of the Nieśwież college were donated by Mikołaj Krzyszytof Radziwiłł as part of the original foundation (Użanka, Rudawa, Krzywoszyn, Lipsk and Rzepichowo, as well as Tuchowicze). In the 1620s the Jesuits acquired Szczerbinowo and Grzybowszczyzna. Finally, in 1761 Michał Kazimierz Radziwiłł mortgaged Wereskowo and Pułbrzeg to the Nieśwież college.

The state of Jesuit property in 1773 can be assessed thanks to the Manuscripts 3-7. These provide information on the following topics: 1) the buildings belonging to the landlord together with their equipment, 2) the land plots belonging to the farm, 3) the amount of cereals sowed, 4) the census of each settlement, 5) the obligations fulfilled by the inhabitants, 6) the estimate of the estate income and expenses, 7) suggestions to increase the profitability of the estate, 8) the claims made by neighbours and descendants of the benefactors. Altogether, the 574 peasant families living under Jesuit author-

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ity farmed 380 *włokas* (i.e. 8360 ha) and an unspecified land plot belonging to the *folwark*, a serfdom-based farm and agricultural enterprise, focused on the export of cereals. These lands provided the Nieśwież Jesuits an annual income of about 43.000 zlotys, which allowed them to play a primary role in the social and cultural life of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.