

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

Summary

Inventories are a reliable source for the history of early modern religious orders. Their content applies to different disciplines, such as art and architecture history, religion and library studies, economic and demographic history, musicology, as well as the history of pharmacy and medicine. Moreover, inventories extend the scope of former research on Jesuit history, which in the case of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth has mainly focused on the Jesuit cultural activity and its contribution to the development of sciences, art and national languages. Against this historiographical background, inventories provide an insight not only into education and religious formation, but also the economy and everyday life of Jesuit houses. Within a local framework, they also show the relationship between the Jesuits and other social layers, such as the nobility, burghers, as well as religious and ethnic minorities. Among the primary sources for Jesuit history, inventories are complementary to the manuscripts from Roman Archive of the Society of Jesus and substitute the provincial and college archives that have been dispersed in the aftermath of the suppression of the Jesuit Order.

The present edition includes five original manuscript inventories from the National Historical Archive of Belarus in Minsk and the Russian State Archive of Old Records in Moscow. Manuscript 1 describes the church and the college buildings, altogether with its belongings, library and archive. Manuscript 2 concerns the college pharmacy. Manuscript 3 focuses on the landed estates, while Manuscript 4 includes the noblemens claims regarding them. Finally, Manuscript 5 concerns the mission in Worończa, which was formally subject to the Nowogródek College. All these manuscripts were issued between late 1773 and early 1774 by the inspectors appointed among the local nobility by the General Confederation of Lithuania. Manuscript 1 to 4 were written by Kazimierz z Samsonów Jabłoński and Kazimierz Ignacy Korsak, whereas Manuscript 5 was authored by Józef Obuchowicz and Kazimierz Ignacy Haraburda. The inventories were issues as a result of

the nationalization of Jesuit houses and estates following the promulgation of Clement's XIV brief *Dominus ac redemptor*. In the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the former Jesuit schools were put under the control of the Commission of National Education and had to be financed through the lease of Jesuit estates.

The royal town of Nowogródek belonged to the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and constituted the capital of the homonymous voivodeship. Although its importance was enhanced by the activity of the Supreme Tribunal of Lithuania between 1581 and 1775, the economic and demographic potential of Nowogródek remained modest. Its estimated population of about 2500 inhabitants can be considered small even for the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Despite the existence of a Catholic parish church, a Calvinist Reformed church and an Antitrinitarian church, until the late 16th century the town remained under the predominant influence of the Orthodox Church. Non-Christian communities included Hebrews and Tatars. The influence of Western Christianity grew only after the establishment of the Greek-Catholic (Uniate) Church by the Union of Brest (1596). At the beginning of the 17th century, all former Orthodox churches in Nowogródek passed into Uniate hands thanks to the King's protection. An important role was played by the Basilian monks, who opened a school in the 1630ies. Another element of Counterreformation policy was the establishment of the first Roman-Catholic monasteries in the 1620ies. The first orders to arrive in Nowogródek were the Dominican friars and the Jesuits, later followed by the Dominican nuns, the Franciscan Friars and the Brothers Hospitallers of St John of God.

At first the Jesuits were invited from nearby Nieśwież by the local parson Marcin Gradowski to preach and hold disputes with the local supporters of Reformation. Thanks to the donations of the nobles Jerzy Hołownia and Jan Moszyński, the Jesuits opened a mission in 1626 and transformed into a residence five years later. However, the development of the Jesuit house was hindered by the wars of the mid 17th century. In 1655 the wooden residence was burnt by the Cossacks during the Polish-Russian War (1654-1667). Two years later the Swedes captured the archive and precious items which had been secured in the Łomża College in Masovia. Due to the lack of funds, reconstruction occurred slowly. Only in 1687, the Jesuits began to build the brick church described in the inventory, thanks to the support of Bogusław Aleksander Uniechowski and his wife Barbara nee Dunin. The church was finished in 1702 and consecrated to the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary and St Stanislaus Kostka in 1716. After Uniechowski's death, his wife encouraged her new husband Michał Potocki to further support the residence. Another benefactor was Jan Bakanowski, whose donation was confirmed by his relative Aleksander Bakanowski SJ in 1712. Thanks to these foundations, the residence was elevated to college status in 1714. The construction of the brick residential building began in 1709 and continued, albeit with pauses, until 1745. Six years later a fire destroyed a large part of the city and damaged both the church and the college. Its consequences were still visible in 1773.

The Jesuits developed a variety of initiatives in the educational, religious and social field. A grammar school for secular youth was opened in 1649. Since 1679, the teaching programme included the whole five-class humanistic course (*infima, grammatica, syntaxis, poesis* and *rhetorica*). In 1712 the Jesuits added a two-year philosophy course. Mathematics, German and French language were also taught. The Nowogródek College played an important role in the formation of Jesuit scholastics: a three-year philosophy course served to this purpose between 1728 and 1773. Moreover, on the turn of the 17th and 18th

century, the Jesuits run a boarding school for poor nobles. In the same period, they created also a music boarding school. In the religious field, congregations such as the sodality of the Blessed Virgin Mary played an important role. In the surrounding area, the Jesuits developed a network of missions, including the towns of Słonim, Lubcz, Horodyszczce and Woróńcza. In the social field, besides the already mentioned boarding schools, the college pharmacy deserves particular attention, since this institution provided medical care not only to the college inhabitants, but also to the local population.

No Jesuit building in Nowogródek has survived until the present day. After the Jesuit suppression, the church gradually fell into ruin and was demolished in the early 19th century. The college was used as a school building during the period of the Commission of National Education (1773-1795). The pharmacy, located in the south-west wing of the college building, was sold in 1774 to Fryderyk Teodor Oehme, a surgeon of the Radziwiłł family in Nieśwież. After the Third Partition of Poland-Lithuania and the annexation of Nowogródek to the Russian Empire, the school was moved in 1797 to the Dominican monastery. The former college buildings were handed over to public authorities and partially demolished during the 19th century. Only the south-eastern wing lasted into the 20th century. Due to combat damage during Operation Barbarossa, it was demolished by Soviet authorities shortly after the end of the Second World War.

The inventory of the Nowogródek College includes a detailed description of the church of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary and St Stanislaus Kostka. However, unlike other Jesuit inventories, it does not allow to reconstruct the exact location of altars. Manuscript 5 describes the St Anne church in Woróńcza, a filial church of the Roman Catholic parish in Horodyszczce. According to Manuscript 3, chapels were located in several Jesuit farms, while Uniate churches were mentioned in Ostrów and Poczapów.

Regarding the two-storey college building, Manuscript 1 describes the purpose and condition of each room. In 1773 the building was still being repaired, as shown by the unfinished rooms on the first floor. At the same time, the Jesuits were extending the college westwards, by enclosing the courtyard between the residential building and the church. The classrooms that had to be arranged in the new bricked wing should replace the old wooden school building on the northern side of the college. It is also worth noting that the inspectors began their description from the farmyard located in the rear of the college, and not from the monastery gate, as it was usual.

Among the belongings of the Jesuit house, the instruments and music sheets of the Jesuit music ensemble deserve particular attention. These included respectively 24 and 117 entries. Some of the compositions played by the Jesuit ensemble in Nowogródek were written by monks from southern Germany, such as Gregor Rösler (1715-1774), Marianus Königspurger (1708-1769) and Lambert Kraus (1728-1790).

The library catalogue is one of the most valuable parts of Manuscript 1. Compared to other Jesuit houses of similar importance, the library of the Nowogródek College was relatively small, including only 1006 entries. This depended on the fact that the Jesuits had to rebuild their library from scratch after the fire from 1751. Although the library was arranged according to the *Ratio studiorum* and Antonio Possevino's *Bibliotheca selecta*, its content was rather modern and reflected the mid-18th-century reform of the Jesuit school system. Among other things, this consisted in the introduction of history as an autonomous subject and the attempt to reconcile the discoveries of experimental science with Aristotelian natural philosophy. To teach experimental physics to their scholastics,

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the Jesuits from Nowogródek created a large collection of scientific instruments, including an electric machine and a Nollet's air pump.

Manuscript 2 includes a description of the pharmacy rooms, technical equipment and books, and provides general information concerning its financial situation. Unlike other inventories of Jesuit pharmacies, the lack of a list of raw materials and medicaments reduces the value of the published manuscript. Despite this omission, the level of the Nowogródek pharmacy appears to have been alike similar Jesuits institutions in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

Landed estates provided the financial basis to all Jesuit colleges of Poland-Lithuania. According to Manuscript 3, in 1773 the Nowogródek College had six estates, all located in the Nowogródek district: Ostrów-Bakanów, Poczapów-Burdykowszczyzna, Mołodów, Bryciana, Zaberdów and Pucewicze. Altogether these included nine serfdom-based farms producing grain for export via Königsberg. The Jesuit subjects were settled in 31 villages and two towns, including altogether 476 hearths and 261 *włókas* of arable land (i.e. 4700 ha). The mentioned estates provided an annual revenue of almost 40 thousand zlotys, most of which was generated by Ostrów-Bakanów and Poczapów-Burdykowszczyzna. These included also more than 80% of the hearths and a similar percentage of arable land. For each estate, the inventories provide information on the following issues: 1) the farm buildings and belongings, including working tools, seed and cattle; 2) the settlements and their inhabitants, with particular emphasis on their duties towards the landlord; 3) the estate revenues and expenses. The claims of the nobility were separately registered by the inspectors in Manuscript 4. Although the Jesuits made some investments in the years prior to suppression, the condition of their estates was far from ideal. According to the inspectors, the subjects needed the landlord's financial help, since they lacked cattle and seed. The scarcity of workforce required also the employment of daily labourers.

An additional source of income was provided by some small Jesuit urban possessions in Nowogródek, which have been described in Manuscript 1. These had been significantly reduced by a decree of the royal judicial court from 1739, according to which some contested possessions had been handed over to the town jurisdiction.

Among all Jesuit missions subject to the Nowogródek College, the published inventories present only those in Lubcz (Manuscript 1) and Worończa (Manuscript 5). The first was founded in 1719 by the Sienna parson Stanisław Kuczycki. In the 17th century, Lubcz, a small town on the Niemen River, belonged to the Calvinist branch of the Radziwiłł family and was inhabited only by a few Catholics. The Jesuit presence in Lubcz was mainly related to the export of grain. Instead of building a chapel, they privately celebrated liturgy. The Worończa mission was founded in 1749 by the local owners Kazimierz Ignacy Niesiołowski and his wife Teofila neé de Raëss, who donated the farm Boboniówka. The Jesuits used the pre-existing wooden St Anne church, which in 1773 was considered to be in rather poor shape. The mission had also a library including 95 book titles.

The published inventories show that the Society of Jesus played an important cultural and social role in Nowogródek and its surroundings. The Jesuits settled in this town relatively late and only after a long preparation were able to elevate their residence to college status. Due to limited funding, their building initiatives were diluted over time. However, the Nowogródek College acted as a channel of cultural transfer, contributing to the spread of scientific knowledge among the local community.