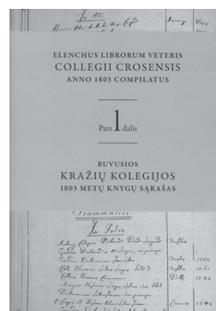


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Cultural Heritage of the Jesuit College in Kražiai: The Library

Dziedzictwo kulturowe jezuickiego kolegium
w Krożach. Biblioteka

*Elenchus librorum veteris Collegii Crosensis anno 1803
compilatus [Buvusios Kražių kolegijos 1803 metų knygu
sąrašas]*, vols. 1–2, ed. D. Antanavičius, Vilnius: Lietuvių
literatūros ir tautosakos institutas, 2017–2018



The Jesuits have been working in Žemaitija since the 17th century. They were brought to Kražiai by bishop Melkeris Giedraitis in 1607. First, there was a missionary station there (1608–1615), then a residence (1615–1618), and finally a college (1618–1773). The schools opened in 1616 included poetry classes and, in 1638, rhetoric for lay students was also introduced. Rhetoric for the Jesuit seminarians was taught for 45 years, with several breaks; philosophy—from 1654 to 1773 (with breaks); and moral theology—from 1633 to 1719 (with breaks). At the time of the suppression of the Jesuits, full secondary schools were operating in Kražiai, as well as a course of philosophy. After the suppression, the school was taken over by the Commission of National Education, which still employed at least nine ex-Jesuits. The Kražiai complex also had a boarding school for poor gentry (from 1635), a boarding school for musicians (from 1625), and a theatre that was in operation from

Recenzje

SPI Vol. 22, 2019/4
ISSN 2450-5358
e-ISSN 2450-5366

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at least 1640. All those institutions were working up to the suppression of the order in 1773.¹

In the 150 years of its educational activity (1616–1773), Kražiai College left a great cultural heritage, which also includes a library. It was created and developed due to the gifts it received from the private libraries of bishop Melkeris Giedraitis and bishop Nicolas Pac (238 books). Then, in 1626, more books were given to the library by two parish priests: Benedict Szwejchowski and Jerzy Stawiński. From 1679, the library was given a fixed amount of money to buy and bind books, which made it possible for the Jesuits to systematically increase the collection. In 1711, the library received a collection of books from Alexander Korff. In the 18th century, the library was cleaned several times, as a result of which destroyed volumes were removed from it.²

One of the key sources on the history of Kražiai College is the list of books prepared in 1803. In 1773, the Society of Jesus was suppressed in Lithuania, and its colleges in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth were taken over by the Commission of National Education, which was established in the same year and specified particular educational regions. Kražiai was a part of the educational region of Žemaitija (Samogitia), with its centre in Kaunas. After the third partition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in 1795, the occupant's government assigned the management of the schools to the bishop of Vilnius. The former Kražiai College was passed over to the Carmelites, who opened a school in Kražiai in the autumn of 1797.

At the beginning of 1803, an educational reform started in the Russian Empire. The whole empire was divided into six educational regions. The Vilnius educational region was established to manage the schools in the annexed territories of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania, and the supervisor of that region was prince Adam Jerzy Czartoryski (1770–1861), who, from his earliest years, was a friend to emperor Alexander I. All the schools of the Vilnius educational region were subject to the Imperial University of Vilnius.

¹ Cf. L. Grzebień (ed.), *Encyklopedia wiedzy o jezuitach na ziemiach Polski i Litwy 1564–1995*, Kraków 1997, p. 332; *Encyklopedia Katolicka*, vol. 9, Lublin 2002, pp. 1328–1329.

² Cf. *ibidem*.

After obtaining instructions from the University of Vilnius, the director of the Kražiai school, the Carmelite Aleksas Smatovicus (1766–?), prepared the required report and sent it to Vilnius on 16 April (4 April) 1803. The report included the “inventory of the library of the Kražiai school.” The document was called an inventory because, apart from the books, it included a list of instruments needed for physics lessons. In fact, it is not a proper library inventory or a catalogue as we understand it today, because it lacks the basic element of the catalogue—the location or signature of the books. That is why the editor of this publication adopted the name “the list of books” as the most adequate one. The list is in the form of a table consisting of four main columns: (1) the author’s name(s), the title of the book and the number of volumes, (2) the place of issue (the place of printing), (3) the year of issue (the time of printing), and (4) the number of copies.

No catalogues of the Kražiai College books are available from the years 1616–1773, although—according to the Institute of the Society—they had to be prepared. The catalogue for the books of 1773/1774, which had to be created by the inspectors who visited the college, has not survived until now either.³

The list of books of 1803 has been known in historiography for more than fifty years, but—as the author of the reviewed book indicates—no one has tried to publish it *in extenso*. Publishing such a source is not easy for many reasons: its text is difficult to understand even for authors familiar with the source. The editor of the

³ On the one hand, the suppression of the Jesuit order resulted in scattering significant archival and library resources that belonged to the order; on the other hand—because the government took over this property—it inspired people to create new kinds of documents that, today, may somehow replace the missing materials that belonged to the order. Post-suppression inventories play the most important role in this respect. They resulted from the creation of the inventories of post-Jesuit properties, which were the financial basis for the schooling system of the Commission of National Education. Cf. A. Mariani, “Inwentarze kolegiów jezuickich jako źródło do badań nad szkolnictwem staropolskim,” in K. Puchowski, J. Orzeł (eds.), *Spoleczne i kulturowe uwarunkowania edukacji Rzeczypospolitej XVI–XVIII wieku. Materiały z badań, część pierwsza*, Warszawa 2017, pp. 13–14; A. Mariani, “Inwentarze kolegiów Towarzystwa Jezusowego jako źródło do badań nad jezuicką kulturą muzyczną,” in B. Bohdanowicz, T. Jeż (eds.), *Universalialia et particularia. Ars et praxis Societatis Jesu in Polonia*, Warszawa 2018, p. 335.

publication encountered a lot of difficulties while preparing the list for publishing: authors' surnames are confused; the translators of the works into Latin or other languages are indicated as the authors; the titles of the books are often written in an incomplete manner with only two or three main words, the order of which was not necessarily the same as in the correct title; and there are mistakes in the places and (especially) years of issue. In many cases, the place and year of issue are not indicated at all because of the defects of a given copy (e.g. the lack of the title page).

At present, the task of publishing the source is supported by digital technologies which make it easier to find and recognise data, but not everything can be identified. In order to do this, the author had to verify most of the books on the list in a physical manner. Darius Antanavičius took up a very ambitious and complicated task in trying to locate the books from the list that are kept in Lithuanian and overseas libraries. He managed to do it because of the fact that the majority of the books from the Kražiai College library have not left Lithuania, and, at the moment, they are kept in the three most important Lithuanian libraries: the Public Library of the Kaunas Region, the Martynas Mažvydas National Library, and the Library of Vilnius University. Within less than a half a year, Antanavičius managed to identify over 1,100 copies of books that belonged to Kražiai College located in the Martynas Mažvydas National Library. This constitutes around a third of the books on the list. Let us hope that the editor of the reviewed publication continues working on the identification of that list, especially because of the fact that he intends to describe the history of the Kražiai College library. Second to the list, the preserved copies of the books are the most important source on the history of the Kražiai College library.

The list has been published in the original languages, i.e. in Latin and Polish. The author tried to maintain as many original features as possible in the transcription (e.g. mistakes in the proper names), but not all of them. The second part of the publication, which is very important for bibliographers, consists of a LISA database. Five separate indicators have been worked out: (1) an alphabetical index—mainly of the authors; (2) a (chronological) index of book inflows; (3) a title index; (4) a topographical index; and (5) a short list of book owners.

At the end of the second volume of the publication, there are photos of the books (title pages and cover fronts).

The list of books makes it possible to recreate the micro-history of Kražiai College, especially its aspect of intellectual culture. As the editor indicates, it shall be particularly useful for historians of books who analyse the non-existent libraries of Lithuania, as well as experts dealing with old books and bibliographers who identify and copy old books. For example, if a scholar describes a defective book (without the title page or introductory pages), the presence of the book on the list may prove its origin or at least constitute a reference to it. There is no doubt that the list shall be useful to all those who conduct research into Kražiai College and its heritage.

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