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Kochański and the Jesuits

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KOCHAŃSKI AND THE JESUITS

Adam Kochański belongs to those Polish Jesuits about whom we do not have much information. The works he devoted himself to extend beyond the usual limits of the work undertaken by the Jesuits, they were not very striking, and did not afford the college chroniclers the material they required. Besides, frequent changes of his permanent place of residence did not promote his glorification in domestic annals. The few archival documents were destroyed or scattered as a result of the suppression of the Society of Jesus, wars and national cataclysms. None the less, it is possible today to trace fairly clearly the changes in his life, to present his works, acquaint oneself with his troubles and problems, and finally to become acquainted with his influence upon the environment in which he lived and worked¹.

Kochański was born on the 5th August, 1631² in Dobrzyń district (or in Dobrzyń itself). He completed his secondary education in the Jesuit College in Toruń where in the lower classes he took grammar, syntax, poetics and rhetoric³. The Jesuit College in Toruń was not especially remarkable at that time. But Copernican traditions were strong in Toruń and there was a well established Protestant School there during this period.

On the 24th August, 1652 Kochański entered the noviciate of the Society of Jesus in Wilno⁴. Why was Wilno his choice? The Jesuits had two provinces at this time. The Polish one, to which Toruń belonged, and the Lithuanian with Wilno and Warsaw. The noviciates were only in Wilno and Cracow. Perhaps here Kochański's already crystallized mathematical interests were taken into account.

At this time the Wilno Academy had an outstanding mathematician in person of Osvald Krüger. There were no such distinguished mathematicians in the Polish

¹ The most thorough studies of the life of Kochański were carried out by E. Elter (*Adam Kochański T.J., najwybitniejszy przedstawiciel Polski na europejskim terenie naukowym u schyłku XVII w.* [in:] *Sacrum Poloniae Millenium*, vol. 1, Roma 1954, pp. 209-251).

² Archivum Romanum Societatis Jesu (ARSI) Lith. 19 f. 110.

³ J. E. Olhoff, *Excerpta ex literis Illustr., et Clariss. Virorum*, Gedani, 1683, p. 166; F. K. Kurowski's information (*Wiadomość historyczna o kościele, kolegium i innych gmachach należących dawniej do XX Jezuitów Warszawskich*, Warszawa, 1836, p. 30), that Kochański was also a pupil of Zamoyski Academy is also worthy of thought and consideration.

⁴ ARSI Lith. 19 f. 110.

Province in those years. Stanisław Solski was still working in the mission in Constantinople (1654-1660), and only later became known in the country as a mathematician and technician. Bartłomiej Nataniel Wąsowski came back to the country from his seven-years European expedition only in 1656, and his interest in the fields of mathematics and architecture slowly appeared only then.

There another question arises. Did Kochański really attend only the lower classes in the Jesuit College? At the time of entering the novitiate he was 21 years old. In the Jesuit catalogues there was a note about him: before entering the Society of Jesus he studied up to rhetoric inclusively (*studuit extra Societatem ad rhetoramicam inclusive*)⁵. The pupils usually completed their education in rhetoric when they were 17-19 years old. Thus it is a question, whether Kochański had not studied mathematics before entering the Jesuit novitiate, or whether he had not already had some personal contacts with mathematicians and in this way begun to study the discipline himself.

The Wilno novitiate was situated at the Church of St. Ignatius. The rector and at the same time master of the novitiate was Mateusz Gzowski, a 54 years old Jesuit, who had previously taught philosophy for 3 years⁶. The essential purpose of the novitiate was to become acquainted with and accustomed to Jesuit life, and so the main part of the time was devoted to conferences and ascetic reading matter. Private interests could not be developed here, lack of time did not permit it, the masters of the novitiate themselves did not permit such things. Nevertheless, Kochański must have had the opportunity of personal contact with Osvald Krüger, still living at that time, professor of mathematics at the Wilnian Academy, and with his successor Paweł Laskowski (1653-1654).

From the second half of 1654 Kochański moved to the Academic College and in the school-year 1654-1655 began his studies in philosophy starting with logic⁷. Probably Eliasz Downarowicz was professor of this subject. He had come back from his studies in Rome not long before⁸. The rector of the Wilno Academy from the 30th August 1653 was Wojciech Kojałowicz, a historian, heraldist and polemicist, and earlier also professor of philosophy at this Academy (1641-1643). The professors of mathematics there were: Paweł Laskowski with 6 years of teaching experience in this subject and Walenty Skowid. Kochański had thus many opportunities to develop his mathematical abilities and interests.

At the end of the year he obtained a mark worth mentioning "able in philosophical studies and competent to teach exact of mathematics" (*valet ad audiendam philosophiam, et ad discendam exakte mathematicam*)⁹. If he was at that time already competent to teach mathematics, it means that he had given evidence of this knowledge

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ ARSI Germ. 132 f. 221, Lith. 11 f. 67.

⁷ ARSI Lith. 11 f. 60v.

⁸ The Jesuit catalogue of June 1655 notes that E. Downarowicz taught only for one year, and since he came from Rome in 1654 after completing theological studies he must have taught philosophy in the school-year 1654-1655. The professors of philosophy began their lectures with logic.

⁹ ARSI Lith. 11 f. 60v.

either during lectures, or at social gatherings with mathematicians of the Academy.

The Moscow troops invaded Wilno on the 8th August 1655. The Academy was closed, the professors moved to various other colleges, the valuable collection of books was taken away. The Jesuit seminarists, among them Kochański, left Wilno for the West. In the company of 8 other seminarists provided with a letter of recommendation, dated August 28th, 1655 in Pułtusk, addressed to the Austrian Provincial and signed by the secretary of the Lituonian Province, Andrzej Gużewski, Kochański went through Hungary to Austria, and from there to Germany¹⁰.

The Molsheim College in the Province of the Upper Rhine (*provincia Rheni Superioris*) was chosen as the place of study for Kochański and his 3 other fellow-students. On his way there at the end of 1655 he stopped in Würzburg (Herbipolis), where there took place the meeting with the Jesuit polyhistorian Gaspar Schott, so important in the life of our mathematician¹¹. The initiator of this meeting was certainly Kochański, who looked for the opportunity of sharing his considerations in the field of mathematics with him. Gaspar Schott noticed Kochański's unusual gift for the mathematical and physical sciences and immediately drew him into cooperation by asking him to draw the figures for his work *Magia Universalis naturae et artis*, then in preparation for publication. At the Academy in Molsheim Kochański studied physics (1655-1656) and metaphysics (1656-1657) under professor Philip Brösamer¹².

While studying philosophy, Kochański had time to deepen his knowledge of mathematics and to make contacts with the world of science. On the 2nd of February he wrote his first letter to Athanasius Kircher SJ, professor of the Gregorian University in Rome, with whom he wished to correspond, because as he pointed out, he might in view of the lack of a mathematician on the spot, be guided by Kircher in his research and investigations in Molsheim¹³.

After taking his degree in philosophy and obtaining the diploma of Master of Arts and Philosophy (*Magister Artium Litterarum et Philosophiae*) Kochański began to teach mathematics at the University in Mainz in 1657 and continued lecturing up to 1664. At the same time, from 1660 to 1664, he studied theology in private and in 1664 he took the holy orders¹⁴. His stay in Mainz was filled with mathematical investigations. At the end of 1660 he sent Gaspar Schott his dissertation which the latter placed as an appendix to his work *Cursus mathematicus* (Herbipolis 1661). He also shared his experiences in research with Athanasius Kircher¹⁵.

From the moment he graduated in theology and took the holy orders, Kochański was afraid of being called back to his country and being burdened with lectures

¹⁰ Bayer. Hauptstaatsarchiv München (BayHstA), Jesuiten 265 f. 31.

¹¹ A. Kochański to A. Kircher, Molsheim, 2 II 1675—Arch. Pont. Univ. Gregorianae (AUG), Epp. Kirch. IX f. 203.

¹² ARSI Rhen. Sup. 26 I f. 89v.

¹³ AUG, Epp. Kirch. IX f. 203.

¹⁴ ARSI Rhen. Sup. 26 I f. 98, 119, 127; 7 f. 129.

¹⁵ Kochański sent in his dissertation during his theological studies, that is at the earliest in September 1660.

in Jesuit Colleges from which any contact with the world of science was much more difficult than from Germany. And so in his letter of April 14th, 1664 he asked Kircher to speak with the Jesuit Vicar General Paolo Oliva on his behalf so as he would be able to stay in the West and more freely devote himself to his research¹⁶. Though Fr. Oliva, the Vicar General from 1661 and General from 1664, supported Kochański, he nevertheless did not agree to Kochański's staying permanently or to the official registration of his person as a member of the German province. Neither was he sent back to Poland.

For the time being he was told to go through the so called third probation (*tertia probatio*), that is to carry out studies on the Jesuit Institute, to deepen his ascetic life. This every Jesuit had to undergo after graduating from the intellectual formation. The house of Probation was in Etlingen, and Kochański stayed there during the academic year 1664-1665, with no interruption in his scientific research, as is shown in a letter to Fr. Kircher dated October 1664¹⁷. In the following year 1665-1666 he taught mathematics at the Jesuit Academy in Bamberg¹⁸.

In the letter of July 10th, 1666 Kochański was called by the Jesuit General Fr. Oliva to Florence¹⁹, to the service of the Dukes Ferdinand II and his brother cardinal Leopold, who was the President of the *Accademia del Cimento*. Kochański proceeded to Florence at the earliest by the end of August 1666 and took up residence at the local Jesuit College. There is a plan of the already existing College of this period, made by Kochański in which he marked the room where he lived and the place where he expected to perform his scientific experiments. Kochański presented this plan to the General of Society of Jesus to obtain these quarters for himself²⁰. Kochański divided his time between the court of the Dukes and experiments in the College, among others on the humidity of the air. His stay in Florence which was undoubtedly very profitable for Kochański lasted till 1670. Though then Kochański left the capital of the Dukedom of Tuscany, he remained the main link between Florence and the North of Europe.

It is not known what was the reason for calling Kochański from Florence to Prague at the end of 1669. Kochański himself was loath to go North, in spite of the General's insistent demand to hurry his departure. He probably came to Prague only in the beginning of 1670. The Jesuit College in Prague—*Clementinum* was united in 1622 with the University of Charles IV—*Carolineum* into one establishment under the name *Universitas Carolo-Ferdinandea*, and played a fairly important role. It was there in the first half of 1670 that Kochański took up lectures one mathematics and maybe ethics²¹. He took part in the scientific life of the College and passed on to Leibniz news about the college publications. He kept in touch with

¹⁶ AUG, Epp. Kirch. IX f. 79.

¹⁷ ARSI Rhen. Sup. 26 I f. 147; AUG Epp. Kirch. IX f. 163.

¹⁸ BayHstA Jesuiten 265, f. 30.

¹⁹ ARSI Rhen. Sup. 3 f. 682.

²⁰ J. Vallery-Radot, *Le Recueil de plans d'édifices de la Compagnie de Jésus conservé à Bibliothèque nationale de Paris*, Rome 1960, p. 29, 15.

²¹ ARSI Lith. 19 f. 110 (*Aliud officium non gessit praeter lecturam matheseos et interdum simul philosophiae moralis*).

the state officials. But a misunderstanding developed between him and his superiors especially the rector of the Prague College.

There were many grounds for misunderstanding and friction between Kochański and his superiors. First of all Kochański, as a member of the community, was obliged to live on the premises of the Jesuit College, where almost every one was burdened with the many occupations of the pastoral office. Kochański, busy with his research, avoided these tasks; secondly, he needed suitable rooms for his investigation, he employed people from outside the Jesuit house, owned private, unsupervised funds from his benefactors for scientific purposes, did not bring the College any evident profit; and, finally, from the moment he left Lithuania Kochański was a sick, weak man, who certainly required a suitable diet and doctor's care²². All these facts were the cause, that apart from many Jesuits—friends, he also had Jesuits—enemies, who wanted to rid the College of him. However, Kochański had the patronage above all of Fr. Oliva, the General of the Society of Jesus, who comforted the mathematician in his troubles and, when needed, admonished him in a paternal manner.

It appears from the preserved correspondence of the Czech provincial, Simon Schürer, to the Jesuit General, that the Czech superiors tried to send Kochański back to his province, that is to Lithuania, as early as in 1671. On the other hand, efforts began to bring Kochański back to Poland, which were initiated by Polish and Lithuanian Jesuits and also by Polish magnates. Kochański, however, fought determinedly against being sent back to his country, it was extremely difficult for him to decide to go back voluntarily, so he moved from college to college in the Czech province.

In the middle of 1672 he moved to Olmütz (*collegium Olomucense*) and took up lectures on mathematics at the local Jesuit Academy. Kochański did not feel well there, the unhealthy climate made his state of mind worse, the lack of a laboratory and well stocked library emitteder him more and more. In spite of all the conflicts between him and his superiors he was allowed to make the professions of 4 vows, which was a not unimportant honour. Yet Kochański undoubtedly felt that the road to his career would not follow the line of the Jesuit hierarchy but that of science. He preferred to have the grade of 3 simple vows which were less binding on him to live according to the Jesuit way of life, that is to be ready to carry out all instructions given him by his superiors. Finally, he took the profession of 3 vows on the 15th August 1673²³.

Meanwhile — on January 18, 1672, Alexander Janusz Ostrogski (d. 1682), lord of Ostróg Manor, son of Władysław Dominik Ostrogski and Katarzyna Sobieska, sister of Jan III Sobieski, made the acquaintance of Kochański during his voyages in Italy and asked Fr. Oliva, the General of Society of Jesus, to allocate the mathe-

²² Already in 1655 the opinion was held that he was of poor health. Kochański wrote in his letter to the king on the 19th October 1687, that he would surely not survive his 59th year as nobody in his family had lived to this age. Archiwum Główne Akt Dawnych, Warsaw (AGAD), Arch. Radz. V.

²³ ARSI Lith. 19 f. 110.

matician to his service²⁴. Unfortunately, Kochański had no thought of going back to Poland, and the General did not want to force him to do it.

In the middle of 1675 the Lithuanian Jesuit province took official steps to call Kochański to the Wilno Academy. They were probably well aware that there were then only two outstanding mathematicians and scientists in the Polish province in the persons of Stanisław Solski and Nataniel Bartłomiej Wąsowski. It was known that Wąsowski planned the foundation of the School of Knights in Jarosław on the base of the Mathematical College existing there since 1673, and he unfolded before Jan III Sobieski's plans for the development of this school²⁵. The Lithuanian province had no outstanding mathematician and Wojciech Tylkowski, hitherto professor, was burdened with too many occupations. Hence, the Lithuanian Jesuits gathered at the provincial congregation in July 1675, asked the General to appoint Kochański in the place of Tylkowski, and to add one more year to mathematical studies for those who distinguished themselves by the knowledge of the subject during their study of these sciences, and to give the rest of the pupiles the chance of attending lectures of a wider scope²⁶.

Kochański was well aware of the Polish efforts concerning his person. Also he understood surely the Lithuanian Jesuits' reason—that is their care to raise the level of mathematical studies in Poland and Lithuania. He was not able, however, to overcome his prejudice as to the possibilities of scientific work in Poland, and of course he was anxious about the state of his health which was getting worse and worse. The General, knowing Kochański well, did not want to force him to set out on the journey back to his country, he tried rather to arouse his ambition and overcome his prejudices against the motherland.

In the middle of 1676 Kochański left Olmütz and moved to Wrocław (*Collegium Wratislaviense*). But he did not find favourable conditions there. The schools in Wrocław were full of pupils: there were over 700 pupils in all of them in the year 1676-1677. The living conditions, in result of the building and renovations of the college, were not of the best; neither did Kochański find there a suitable library. There were continual misunderstandings, the reason for which was the individual style of Kochański's life, and undoubtedly his health. And so there was always talking of the need of sending him to Lithuania or Gdańsk. Kochański himself was already tired of these insistent demands.

At this moment he got news that the king, Jan III Sobieski, in a letter dated Lwów, 25th June, 1678 asked General Fr. Oliva to send Kochański to Warsaw as he wished to entrust him with the upbringing of his son Jakub who wanted to acquire a knowledge of the different sciences (*ad curiosa sua sponte aspirat*)²⁷. This time, not only the General was of the opinion that he should force Kochański to carry out the king's will, but also Kochański himself began to get used to the idea of going

²⁴ ARSI Pol. 78 f. 4-5.

²⁵ J. Baranowski, *Bartłomiej Nataniel Wąsowski jako teoretyk i architekt XVII wieku*, Wrocław 1975, pp. 19-21.

²⁶ ARSI Congr. Lith. 79 f. 271-272.

²⁷ ARSI Epp. Princ. 36 f. 26.

back, which would be the best way out of the conflict with the superiors in which he had been involved for years.

Kochański's return to Poland, this time to Warsaw, was already definitely decided in autumn 1678. Kochański agreed to his return, but wanted first to undergo some medical treatment in Cieplice. This lasted for several months. Then he prepared for the journey, but it was obvious he was not in any great hurry, since the General himself thought fit to urge him to depart.

Kochański arrived in Warsaw in autumn 1680. The catalogue of the Lithuanian province²⁸, made in October 1680, notes among the professors of the Warsaw College (*Collegium Varsaviense*) "*Pater Joannes Kochański, professor matheseos*"—Fr. Jan Kochański, professor of mathematics. So he must have been in the country for only a short time, if the Jesuit who wrote the catalogue did not know Kochański's Christian name exactly. Kochański resided in the Warsaw College and immediately took up lectures on mathematics, and continued them till 1686. Undoubtedly he was also busy at the king's court and also went frequently to Gdańsk, as there was another professor of mathematics, Fr. Jan Warzkielt (or Warscheit), teaching besides himself at the Warsaw college in the years 1683–1685.

In the years 1686–1691, Kochański is inscribed in the catalogues as *missionarius aulicus*—missionary at the king's court; from the year 1691 as *mathematicus regius*—the king's mathematician. Apart from his scientific investigations, he undoubtedly devoted his time entirely to his occupations at the king's court. The mathematical courses were conducted by Fr. Tomasz Spott in 1686–1688, Marcin Przeradowski in 1688–1689, and Jakub Hoffman in the years 1689–1690.

The affairs of the Warsaw College were certainly not unfamiliar to Kochański. From the existing catalogues and the handwritten history of the college it may be supposed that Kochański made several suggestions in connection with the Jesuit school and the Jesuit house in Warsaw. First of all, he was most likely the initiator of the two-year mathematical course, which existed in the Warsaw College in 1690–1692. The lecturer was the mathematician Stefan Korney, the students were the Jesuit seminarist Aleksander Sokołowski and Jakub Bartsch, who would in future take up teaching mathematics in the Warsaw College and the Vilnian Academy²⁹.

Another of Kochański's ideas was probably the calling of the apothecary Jakub Capet, well known by the Jesuits from the Czech province, to Warsaw in the year 1691. He stayed at Warsaw College till 1693, and probably took part in raising from its decline the once well known Jesuit pharmacy³⁰. Capet undoubtedly gave Kochański medical advice during his stay in the Czech province, and in Warsaw our mathematician was also in his care. From the year 1693 the young Jesuit Paweł Kasner was in charge of the pharmacy.

Neither were the affairs of the Jesuit library in Warsaw unfamiliar to Kochański. The college library was not very big, but in the time of Kochański it already contained

²⁸ Catalogues for the years 1680–1700 in ARSI Lith. 56–57 and in the Library of Catholic University in Lublin (206).

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ ARSI Lith. 43 f. 160.

valuable collections presented by primate Stefan Wydżga (1686). The Warsaw collection was enriched by the splendid globe bequeathed by Marcin Bernicz, royal mathematician and friend of Kochański³¹. Through order was made in the library in 1692 and over 200 volumes were freshly and splendidly bound. The books of Wojciech Tylkowski enriched the library in the year 1695. And eventually the collections of Kochański himself were to be given to this library too³².

As far as is known Kochański left Warsaw only when he went to Gdańsk. Some of his letters of 1683-1689 were addressed to Gdańsk. He was certainly there in 1689 (27th May) and from there he corresponded with Konrad Terpiłowski³³. He certainly debated on interesting mathematical and astronomical subjects with Hevelius in his lifetime, and after his death (18th January 1687) he was interested in his scientific works. As the letters of Kochański preserved in AGAD (*Arch. Radz.*)³⁴ show he was certainly in Gdańsk on December 1687, that is after the death of the famous astronomer. He certainly visited nearby Oliva, where one of Kircher's correspondents, Michał Antoni Hacki, was the prior from 1660, and he stayed at the Jesuit College in the suburbs of Gdańsk, where Jan Fr. Hacki, the brother of Antoni was rector from the middle of the year 1686.

With the king's approval Kochański, troubled by his illness, left for Cieplice in the second half of 1695, and had to stay there for several years. He took with him from Poland a technician, who constructed instruments he needed for mathematical-physical experiments. In Cieplice he stayed with the Emperor's councillor Count John Mark Clarialdringen, his friend of Prague times. Here also he met his death on the 19th of May, 1700.

Kochański is one of the figures in Polish science, who tried to find among the Jesuits the possibility of developing of their scientific abilities and interests. On one hand the Jesuit house gave them the opportunity of making contact with the world of scientists, of having at hand fairly well stocked collections of books, it freed them from the constant troubles of their own maintenance, but on the other hand they were forced to take part in a wide range of occupations: in work in the church, school and in the province. Those for whom their own aims and plans, sometimes far reaching and right, were very important, and who developed them at the cost of performing all the duties undertaken by the Jesuits, had no easy life. Jakub Wujek, the translator of the Bible into Polish, Grzegorz Cnapius, the author of the comprehensive Latin-Polish Dictionary were Polish Jesuits of this type, and our mathematician, Adam Kochański, met the same fate. But Kochański accepted his fate with all the awareness of the scientist and did not drift from the scientific course he had once chosen. He understood that his studies and his work required effort and self-denial, which he expressed best saying "*nulli de coelis cessa columba venit*"—no pigeons fall into the mouth by themselves, which may be translated by the English proverb "there is no bread without flour".

³¹ *Ibid.* 159v.

³² F. X. Kurowski, *op. cit.*, pp. 29-31.

³³ The letters to A. Kochański (Biblioteka Narodowa, Warszawa, IV-3280 and Bibl. PAN, Kraków, 3576).

³⁴ AGAD, Arch. Radz. V (6948)—3 letters from the year 1687 to the King.

The tragedy was mainly this that he published so little of his marvellous achievement; wandering from college to college he did not secure his manuscripts, correspondence, and all his records. We sincerely hope that the recent concerned interest in the person of this distinguished mathematician will initiate a large-scale research on his scientific works and archival records. The archives and libraries remaining after the Jesuits in Czechoslovakia, both German States and even Poland surely contain many traces of his work and achievements.