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# COAT OF ARMS BOOKPLATE OF JOHANN PHILIPP BREYNE FROM THE GDAŃSK COLLECTION. COMMUNICATION

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## ABSTRACT

The article examines an unpublished coat of arms bookplate of Johann Philipp Breyne, which appears in three books from the collection of the Naturforschende Gesellschaft in Gdańsk. These books are currently housed in the collections at the Library of the Gdańsk University of Technology. The version of the coat of arms featured on the bookplate was compared with the version known from J. Ph. Breyne's collection of Forschungsbibliothek Gotha.

**KEYWORDS:** Johann Philipp Breyne, coat of arms bookplate, Bibliotheca Breyniana, modern Gdańsk

In a letter to Albrecht Haller dated July 15, 1744, Johann Philipp Breyne (1680-1764) expressed sadness and anxiety about the future of his library: *“Ich weiß also nicht in was vor Händen, die von meinem sel. Vater und von mir so lange Jahre mit grosser Mühe und Kosten gesammlete Biblio-*

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*theck Herbaria viva und andere schöne Naturalia, nach meinem Tode dermalens kommen werden*” [“I do not know in whose hands, after my death, the library, herbaria viva, and other beautiful naturalia, created with great effort and expense by my late father and myself over so many years, will end up”].<sup>1</sup> This pessimism primarily stemmed from the death of both Johann Philippe’s sons, leaving him without heirs to inherit his life’s work. Despite this, Breyne lived another 20 years, during which he consistently expanded the collection, known in accordance with the conventions of the time as the *Musaeum Breynianum*, a legacy initiated by his father, Jacob Breyne (1637-1697). From the perspective of botany and natural science, the library assembled both; Breyne family was remarkably comprehensive,<sup>2</sup> encompassing a wide array of works in these fields. Additionally, it included important materials from disciplines, reflecting the breadth and depth of their intellectual and scientific pursuits.<sup>3</sup>

Thanks to the efforts of Jacob and Johann Philipp Breyne, Gdańsk became a significant center for botanical studies, and, more broadly, for research in natural history in pre-partition Poland. The Breyne family’s wealth enabled them to pursue scientific research, and Johann Philipp was even able to resign from professional work thanks to his inheritance.<sup>4</sup> Both father and son undertook scholarly journeys, actively participated in scientific life, and engaged in exchange networks with European scholars. However, only Johann Philipp, who earned a doctorate in medicine at the University of Leiden in 1702, received a formal university education.

Johann Philipp was a member of two of the most prestigious scientific societies in Western Europe: the Royal Society and Leo-

- 1 *Einiger gelehrter Freunde deutsche Briefe an den Herrn von Haller, Erstes Hundert von 1725 bis 1751*, Typographische Gesellschaft, Bern 1777, pp. 82-83.
- 2 Reyger, ‘Vita Joannis Philippi Breynii’, in: idem, *Tentamen florae Gedanensis methodo sexuali adcommodatae*, vol. 2, Daniel Ludwig Wedel, Dantisci 1766, p. 14.
- 3 K. Pękacka-Falkowska, B. Siek, ‘Czytanie świata - zbieranie świata: Bibliotheca Breyniana jako biblioteka uniwersalna’, in: *Biblioteki-Archiwa-Miasto. Dziedzictwo kultury w zwierciadle cywilizacji*, ed. A. Baliński, PAN Biblioteka Gdańska, Gdańsk 2025 [in press].
- 4 K. Pękacka-Falkowska, ‘Wykład inauguracyjny Johanna Philippa Breyne’a w gdańskiej Societas Litteraria’, *Gdański Notatnik Historyczny*, 2023, vol. 2, p. 105.

poldina, which operated under royal and imperial patronage, respectively. In Gdańsk, the gardens established by the Breynes facilitated their work on acclimatizing plants, through international contacts, imported seeds, tubers and/or onions of exotic plants, while also conducting research on local flora.

To support their publishing efforts, Jacob established a home printing press, and after his father's death, Johann Philipp ensured the publication of some of Jacob's works. The botanical generic name *Breynia* honors Jacob Breyne, while Johann Philipp is recognized as pioneer of paleontology for his groundbreaking studies on fossils found in Poland. Additionally, he was the first to describe the developmental cycle of Polish June beetle.

*Musaeum Breynianum* was one of the most prominent natural history collections established in Gdańsk, alongside the *Musaeum Gottwaldianum* and *Musaeum Kleinianum*. These significant collections were dispersed after the death of their creators, contributing to the collections of European monarchs such as Peter the Great, Augustus III of Poland, and Catherine the Great.<sup>5</sup> Separate auctions were held for individual parts of these collections, including *naturalia*, *artificialia*, and book collections.

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- 5 Due to the dispersal of these collections and their partial destruction, studies dedicated to them focus on selected parts or related documents. Among recent publications, those concerning the Gottwalds should be mentioned: D. D. Nowgorodowa, 'Musaeum Gottwaldianum i jego losy w Rosji', *Klio*, 2018, vol. 46, no. 3, pp. 109-137 and K. Pękacka-Falkowska, 'Wokół kolekcji przyrodniczych w Rzeczypospolitej Obojga Narodów. Cz. I: Christoph i Johann Christoph Gottwaldowie oraz ich gdańskie muzeum', *Kwartalnik Historii Nauki i Techniki*, 2018, vol. 63, no. 2, pp. 51-97; on the Breyne family: K. Pękacka-Falkowska, 'Flora rodzima w badaniach Jacoba Breyne'a', in: *Kolekcje przyrodnicze i gospodarcze innowacje – tradycja i nowoczesność. Pamięci księżnej Anny z Sapiehów Jabłonowskiej (1728-1800)*, eds. I. Arabas, R. Książkowski, Instytut Historii Nauki im. L. i A. Birkenmajerów PAN; Muzeum Rolnictwa im. ks. K. Kluka, Warszawa-Ciechanowiec 2021, pp. 129-145; eadem, 'Jacob Breyne, jego przyjaciele i rośliny. Uwagi na marginesie Breyne'owskich exsiccatae z kolekcji Jamesa Petivera', *Kwartalnik Historii Kultury Materialnej*, 2022, vol. 70, no. 3, pp. 287-331; on the J. Th. Klein: J. Jakubowski, 'Jacob Theodor Klein (1685-1759) jako kolekcjoner rysunku przyrodniczego oraz współpracownik rysowników i rytowników', *Analecta. Studia i Materiały z Dziejów Nauki*, 2022, vol. 31, no. 1, pp. 59-84, as well as, idem, 'Wkład Jacoba Theodora Kleina (1685-1759) w kolekcję Towarzystwa Przyrodniczego w Gdańsku w świetle inwentarzy i opisów Friedricha Augusta Zorna von Plombsheim (1711-1789)', *Analecta. Studia i Materiały z Dziejów Nauki*, 2022, vol. 31, no. 2, pp. 11-50.

Unfortunately, the auction catalogs detailing the sale of Christoph and Johann Christoph Gottwald's library have not survived. However, two volumes of the Breyne catalog document the *Musaeum Breynianum* library,<sup>6</sup> while a publication entitled *Bibliotheca Kleinio-Gralathiana* provides information about the natural history part of the Johann Theodor Klein's library.<sup>7</sup>

Individual volumes from large natural history collections have been preserved in Gdańsk collections either as gifts from their authors or through purchases and subsequent donations to libraries. These include the Library of the City Council (currently PAN Biblioteka Gdańska, hereinafter referred to as PAN BG) and the book collection of the Natural History Society (*Naturforschende Gesellschaft*, hereinafter referred to as NFG). The portion of the NFG collection that survived World War II is currently housed in the Main Library of the Gdańsk University of Technology, with one volume held in the collection of the University Library in Toruń.

Occasionally, books from the *Bibliotheca Breyniana* appear at antique auctions. For example, during an auction organized by Auktionshaus Reiss & Sohn in 2018, a *Breynian* copy of *Plantarum seu stirpium icones* by Matthias Lobellius, published in 1581, was sold.<sup>8</sup> The identification of such items is possible through ownership marks or distinctive features of individual copies. Jacob Breyne typically placed simple proprietary inscriptions in the books from his collection, whereas Johann Philipp used both a *superexlibris* and

- 6 *Bibliothecae Breynianae pars prior sive catalogus librorum philologico-philosophico-historicorum, itinerariorum, imprimis autem medicorum, botanicorum et historiae naturalis scriptorum etc., rariorum, quam magno studio et sumptu sibi comparavit D. Johan. Philipp Breynius, Gedani 1765* (hereinafter referred to as: BB I) oraz *Bibliothecae Breynianae pars posterior sive catalogus librorum philologico-philosophico-historicorum, itinerariorum, imprimis autem medicorum, botanicorum et historiae naturalis scriptorum etc., rariorum, quam magno studio et sumptu sibi comparavit D. Johan. Philipp Breynius, Gedani 1766* (hereinafter referred to as: BB II).
- 7 *Pars Bibliothecae Kleinio-Gralathianae, quae complectitur apparatus librorum ad historiam naturalem spectantium, philosophicorum et mathematicorum juncta collectione itinerariorum studio historiae naturalis praecipue inservientium, typis Schreiberianis, Gedani 1772.*
- 8 Aus der Bibliothek von Johann Philipp Breyne [auction advertisement] Reiss & Sohn Buch- und Kunstantiquariat [on-line] <https://www.reiss-sohn.de/de/lose/9454-A190-660/> [access: 10.08.2024].

a bookplate (*exlibris*), sometimes combining the two. While the *superexlibris* has been described and reproduced in the literature,<sup>9</sup> the *Breynian* bookplate from the Gdańsk collections has not yet been widely presented.<sup>10</sup> The bookplate from the Toruń collection, however, was already mentioned in 1999 by Maria Strutyńska<sup>11</sup> and was reproduced in 2024 by Katarzyna Pękacka-Falkowska.<sup>12</sup>

The collection of PAN BG contains four volumes bearing the inscription “*Jacobi Breynii*” on the title page or beneath the front page, as well as five volumes featuring the *superexlibris* of Johann Philipp Breyne.<sup>13</sup> Within the NFG collection, 10 titles in 15 volumes originating from the Breyne’s collections have been identified. These include seven volumes with *superexlibris*es, three with bookplates (two of which also feature *superexlibris*es), one volume with an author’s dedication to Jacob Breyne, and one containing a handwritten note by Johann Philip Breyne.<sup>14</sup>

Both ownership marks used by Johann Philipp Breyne incorporate the motif of the family coat of arms. The coat of arms is embossed in

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- 9 H. Dzieńis, *Książkowe znaki własnościowe XV-XVIII wieku: katalog wystawy ze zbiorów Biblioteki Gdańskiej Polskiej Akademii Nauk*, Muzeum Zamkowe, Malbork 1998; eadem, ‘Superekslibrisy heraldyczne gdańszczan w XVI-XVIII wieku’, *Libri Gedanenses*, 2017, vol. 34, pp. 23-55.
  - 10 All catalogues of Gdańsk bookplates remain silent about Breyne family’s coat of arms: K. Reychman, *Ex-librisy gdańskie*, nakładem autora, Warszawa 1929; A. Kurkowa, *Gdański ekslibris XV-XVIII wieku: katalog wystawy*, Wojewódzka Biblioteka Publiczna w Gdańsku, Gdańsk 1978; H. Dzieńis, *Książkowe znaki...;* E. Bojaruniec, *Herby mieszczań gdańskich od XV do XVIII wieku. [Katalog wystawy: Dom Uphagena (Gdańsk), 25 września – 15 października 2014 r.]*, Towarzystwo „Dom Uphagena”, Gdańsk 2014.
  - 11 M. Strutyńska, *Struktura proweniencyjna zbioru starych druków Biblioteki Uniwersyteckiej w Toruniu: przewodnik po zespołach: problemy badawcze i metodologiczne*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika, Toruń 1999, p. 51; the information is subsequently repeated in the article: eadem, ‘Stare druki proweniencji gdańskiej w zbiorach Biblioteki UMK w Toruniu (Komunikat)’, *Libri Gedanenses*, 1995/1996, vol. 13/14, p. 221.
  - 12 K. Pękacka-Falkowska, ‘Z dziejów kolekcji bursztynu w Polsce przedrozbiorowej. Cz. I: Okazy bursztynu z kolekcji Nathanaela Sendela w zbiorach dreźnieńskich Augusta II Mocnego – edycja źródłowa elbląskiego inwentarza ofertowego z 1724 r.’, *Kwartalnik Historii Kultury Materialnej*, 2024, vol. 72, no. 1, p. 82.
  - 13 A. Kurkowa, *Jakub i Jan Filip Breynowie. Studium z dziejów kultury książki XVII i XVIII wieku*, Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, Wrocław 1989, pp. 94-96.
  - 14 B. Siek, K. Pękacka-Falkowska, ‘*Breyniana* z biblioteki Towarzystwa Przyrodniczego w Gdańsku (Naturforschende Gesellschaft) w zbiorach Biblioteki Głównej Politechniki Gdańskiej’, *Libri Gedanenses*, 2025, vol. 42 [in press].

gold on the *superexlibris* and printed and then painted on the *exlibris*. The use of coats of arms by bourgeois families stemmed from various reasons, including instances where some families attained nobility. However, it should be noted that many bourgeois coats of arms were created independently of traditional heraldic rules.<sup>15</sup>

Previous descriptions of the Breyne coat of arms were based on monochromatic versions, such as those found on the *superexlibris* or the family tombstone.<sup>16</sup> As a result, earlier accounts did not include details about the colors or specify the number of wings in the crest.<sup>17</sup> It was not until 2022 that a detailed depiction of the coat of arms, as seen on Breyne's *album amicorum* preserved in Gotha, was published.<sup>18</sup>

The method of placing the bookplate in books known from the NFG collections is unusual. Rather than being affixed to the typical location inside the cover, the bookplate is attached to an additional leaf inserted during the bookbinding process. In the traditional position, some books from the *Bibliotheca Breyniana* instead feature the *exlibris* of later owners.

Johann Philipp's bookplates are carefully applied and printed on paper that closely matches the texture and color of the leaf they are mounted on, making them appear seamlessly integrated at first glance. However, in three Gdańsk copies,<sup>19</sup> variations in the shade

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- 15 E. Lichnerowicz, 'Podstawowe materiały rękopiśmienne Z XVI-XX wieku dotyczące genealogii rodzin gdańskich w zbiorach PAN Biblioteki Gdańskiej', *Miscellanea Historico-Archivistica*, 2016, vol. 23, pp. 55-72.
  - 16 Reprinted, for example, in: J. Ph. Breynius, *Prace o czerwcu polskim: 1731-1733-1750, życiorysem J. F. Breyne'a i komentarzem opatrzyli Z. Kawecki, H. Wernerówna, Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, Wrocław 1970*, pp. 9 & 29.
  - 17 M. Gizowski, *Herby patrycjatu gdańskiego*, Gdańska Fundacja Książki, Gdańsk 1999/2000, p. 102.
  - 18 D. Hakelberg, 'Das Stammbuch und die Reisetagebuecher von Johann Philipp Breyne', in: *Bücher bewegen. 375 Jahre Forschungsbibliothek Gotha*, ed. K. Paasch, *Forschungsbibliothek Gotha*, Gotha 2022, p. 48. The book available also on-line: [https://www.db-thueringen.de/servlets/MCRFileNodeServlet/dbt\\_derivate\\_00059698/B%C3%BCher%20bewegen%20Final%20pdfA.pdf](https://www.db-thueringen.de/servlets/MCRFileNodeServlet/dbt_derivate_00059698/B%C3%BCher%20bewegen%20Final%20pdfA.pdf) [dostęp: 10.08.2024].
  - 19 All three books are available on-line in the Pomeranian Digital Library (the numbers of the items in the PDL are provided in parentheses after the bibliographic descriptions): Eleazar Albin, *A natural history of spiders, and other curious insects*, John Tilly, London 1736 (PBC: BG BR 503027-00-00/01); Niccolo Gualtieri, *Index testarum conchyliorum quae adservantur in museo Nicolai Gualtieri [...] et methodice distrib-*

and intensity of the colors are noticeable. The differences are likely due to changes in the dyeing substances used, which may have altered over time (Fig. 1-3).



**Fig. 1.** A colorful coat of arms bookplate of the Breyne family, affixed to the reverse of the first leaf of the volume: Eleazar Albin, *A natural history of spiders, and other curious insects*, John Tilly, London 1736. This copy originated from the Breyne family's book collection (*BB II quarto 617*), later became part of the Rosenberg Library, and subsequently entered the collection of the *Naturforschende Gesellschaft* Library. It is now housed in the Library of the Gdańsk University of Technology, cataloged under reference number III 503027  
(photo by Tytus Caban)

The extent of these changes seems to have been influenced by the amount of coloring substance applied. For instance, the bookplate from van Sterbeek's work (Fig. 3), shows red coloring on the odd-numbered fields of the shield and the upper wing in the crest,

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*utae exhibentur tabulis CX*, typographia Caietani Albizzini, Florentiae 1742 (PBC: BG BR 503064-00-00/01); Franciscus van Sterbeek: *Theatrum fungorum oft het tooneel der campernoelien*, Ioseph Jacobs, T'Antwerpen 1675 (PBC: BG TP 500011-00-00/01).



Fig. 2. A colorful coat of arms bookplate of the Breyne family, affixed to the reverse of the first leaf of the volume: Niccolo Gualtieri, *Index testarum conchyliorum quae adservantur in museo Nicolai Gualtieri [...] et methodice distributae exhibentur tabulis CX*, Typographia Caietani Albizzini, Florentiae 1742. This copy originated from the Breyne family's book collection (BB I folio 26), later became part of the *Naturforschende Gesellschaft* Library, and is housed in the Library of the Gdańsk University of Technology, cataloged under reference number IV 503064 (photo by Tytus Caban)

while the *labra* (mantling) are pink. Upon closer examination, traces of the pink shade from the *labra* can also be seen on the edges of the wing's feathers in the crest. It is likely that the *labra* were coated with a thinner layer of paint compared to other parts of the design, such as the crest.

The dimensions of the bookplates are nearly identical: in the work of: E. Albin 56×79 mm, in the work of N. Gualtieri 57×78 mm, in the work of F. van Steerbeck 57×79 mm. The section beneath the coat of arms containing the ownership inscription varies slightly in height: 11 mm, 10 mm, and 13 mm, respectively.





**Fig. 3.** A colorful coat of arms bookplate of the Breyne family, affixed to the reverse of the first leaf of the volume: Franciscus van Sterbeeck: *Theatrum fungorum oft het tooneel dercampernoelien*, Joseph Jacobs, T'Antwerpen 1675. This copy originated from the Breyne family's book collection (BB I folio 26), later entered the *Naturforschende Gesellschaft* Library, and is housed in the Library of the Gdańsk University of Technology, cataloged under reference number II 500011 (photo by Tytus Caban)

The layout of the bookplates is consistent. The coat of arms is framed within a rectangular border, and beneath it, in a pale green background styled to resemble a decorative plaque, is the inscription: *Ex Bibliotheca // Io. Phil. Breynii.*

The coat of arms features a shield with oblique fields arranged in alternating colors. The odd-numbered fields (first, third, fifth, seventh, and ninth) are red or pink and contain three blue crosses, while the even-numbered fields (second, fourth, sixth, eighth, and tenth) are gold and empty. Above the silver helmet, two folded wings are depicted: the lower wing is gold, while the upper wing is red (or pink) with feathers facing left and adorned with three blue

crosses, matching the design of the odd-numbered shield fields. The *labra* (mantling) are red (or pink) with gold highlights.

There are several minor differences between the version of the coat of arms depicted on the bookplate and the one known from the *album amicorum*. First, the helmet in the *album amicorum* version is not directly resting on the shield. Second, it is depicted *en trois quarts* and turned to the right, unlike the frontal orientation on the bookplate. Third, the *album amicorum* version is rendered with greater detail. Fourth, it is painted in gold and silver, whereas the bookplate features only silver. Fifth, the *labra* are gold with red highlights, differing from the bookplate version.

Ownership marks not only serve as invaluable tools for identifying documents from the *Bibliotheca Breyniana*, but they also provide inspiration and a foundation for further research. The quantitative disparity between *superexlibris* and *exlibris* in the Gdańsk collections raises intriguing questions. Of the 24 volumes attributed to the Breynes in the PAN BG and NFG collections, the *exlibris* appears on only three, whereas the *superexlibris* is present on 12, including two volumes that also feature an *exlibris*. The *Torun* copy is likely marked with both types of ownership marks.<sup>20</sup> This discrepancy is notable since the use of a *superexlibris* was significantly more expensive than affixing an *exlibris*.

Due to the limited number of known copies, it is difficult to determine the criteria for assigning ownership marks. It is unclear whether the choice was influenced by the material value of the book (the illustrated volumes were often expensive) or its scientific significance (e.g., the fungi discussed in F. van Sterbeeck's work were a research interest of both Jacob and Johann Philipp Breynne). The described bookplates not only reinforce Johann Philipp's bibliophilic passion, evident in his willingness to invest significantly in his library, but they also contribute to our understanding of variations in the Breynne coat of arms.

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20 M. Strutyńska, op. cit., p. 51-52.

The different publication dates of the books featuring the bookplate (1736, 1742, 1675) do not allow for conclusive insights into changes in the coat of arms' coloring over time, as it remains uncertain when the bookplate was affixed to each volume. Notably, the *album amicorum* version of the coat of arms is dated to 1702, corresponding to Johann Philipp's early youth.

Further research into the dyes used in these bookplates is hindered by the invasive nature of such studies, which would require sampling from the artifacts, and the necessity of collaboration with experts from various fields. Despite these challenges, the ownership marks offer a wealth of potential for advancing our understanding of bibliophilic practices and heraldic variations in the Breyne family legacy.

*Translated by Katarzyna Widlas/e-Corrector*