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A HISTORY OF THE AUTOGRAPH MANUSCRIPT OF NICOLAUS COPERNICUS'S *DE REVOLUTIONIBUS*

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ABSTRACT

Nicolaus Copernicus wrote his most important work, *De revolutionibus orbium coelestium*, in stages. The manuscript of this work, published in 1543 in Nuremberg, has survived. Immediately after the death of Copernicus, the manuscript of *De revolutionibus...* was in the possession of Bishop Tiedmann Giese. The next owner of the manuscript was Joachim Retyk, who lived in Cracow in the years 1554–1574. After the death of Rheticus, the manuscript of *De revolutionibus...* was handed over to Valentin Otho, a collaborator of Rheticus and later a professor at Wittenberg and Heidelberg. In Heidelberg, the manuscript was bound and became the property of Professor Jakub Christmann. In 1614, Jan Amos Komensky, as a Heidelberg student, bought the Copernicus's manuscript from the widow of J. Christann. Under unknown circumstances, this manuscript was placed in the library of Otto von Nostitz in Jawor, Silesia, before 1665, and then in the library of his family in Prague. In 1945, it was taken over by the Czechoslovak state and transferred to the Library of the National Museum in Prague. In 1956, the government of Czechoslovakia donated the manuscript of *De revolutionibus...* to Poland. Since that year, it has been the property of the Jagiellonian University, Copernicus's Alma Maer, and is now part of the collections of the Jagiellonian Library.

KEYWORDS: Nicolaus Copernicus, Jagiellonian Library, De revolutionibus, manuscript

In the late Middle Ages and early modern period, the approach to book collections could best be described as utilitarian. Benedykt of Koźmin, as we know from his will and the foundations he set up, recommended that libraries should keep only those books that were useful and currently required.[1] At the end of the Middle Ages, cabinets of curiosities or *Kunstkammer* started to be established housing both authentic and fabricated relics. Initially they were managed and displayed by clerics. Collections belonging to churches included objects made of gold, devotional items, sculptures, paintings and valuable books. These cabinets of curiosities over time developed into museums.[2]

It was not until the beginning of the Renaissance that manuscripts by great writers began to be appreciated. References to ancient authors were drawn from medieval accounts, both those of Byzantine and Western European scribes and those preserved by the Arabs. Actual manuscripts from the ancient period have not survived, however, and there are very few papyrus texts still in existence today.

In the 16th century an appreciation also arose for contemporary works, alongside works by the collector's friends and acquaintances. In the 1540s, for example, students began keeping albums (*libri amicorum*) in which their professors, fellow students, travelling companions and even chance acquaintances would write entries.[3] People also started collecting examples of such notes by

1 A. Lewicka-Kamińska, *Biblioteka Jagiellońska w latach 1492–1655,* in: *Historia Biblioteki Jagiellońskiej,* Vol. 1, *1364–1775*, ed. I. Zarębski, Cracow 1966, p. 180.

2 K. Pomian, *Collectors and curiosities: Paris and Venice, 1500–1800,* Cambridge 1990; M. Mencfel, *Skarbce natury i sztuki. Prywatne gabinety osobliwości, kolekcje sztuki i naturaliów na Śląsku w wiekach XVII i XVIII,* Warsaw 2010; R. Šipek, *Die Jauerer Schlossbibliothek Ottos des Jüngeren von Nostitz,* Part 1, Frankfurt am Main 2014, pp. 62–69.

3 A. Golik-Prus, *Różnorodność formuły „non omnis moriar" w łacińskich wpisach sztambuchowych przełomu XVI i XVII wieku*, Katowice 2004.

well-known individuals, such as in the case of Marcin Ruar, an anti-Trinitarian from Gdańsk, who collected handwritten notes by famous people, including pages from family record books.[4]

Copernicus's contemporaries were probably aware that original documents written by the astronomer would one day be considered extremely valuable items for the history of culture and science, as shown by the actions of Marcin Kromer and later Jan Brożek.[5] Copernicus's theory differed widely from the ideas about the Earth and the universe current at the time, and the importance of his discoveries was underestimated. There were even those such as Wilhelm Gnapheus, a teacher at the grammar school in Elbląg, who in 1541 published a comedy entitled *Morosophus* („The Jester-Sage") containing satirical themes clearly referring to Copernicus and his theory.[6]

As demonstrated by Jerzy Zathey in his analysis of the paper on which *De revolutionibus...*was written, Copernicus wrote his work in stages.[7] By examining the handwriting of Copernicus and the people close to him – including Tiedemann Giese, Bishop of Kulm (Chełmno) – Zathey is able to show that Manuscript 10000 in the Jagiellonian Library in Cracow is indeed an autograph manuscript by Copernicus.[8] Zathey identifies the seven pages of notes as being by Georg Joachim Rheticus. And on pages 107 (verso) and 109

4 K. Ogier, *Dziennik podróży do Polski 1635–1636,* edited and with an introduction by M. Pelczar, I. Fabiani-Madeyska, Part 2, Gdańsk 1953, p. 193.

5 In 1581 the Bishop of Warmia, Marcin Kromer, commemorated Copernicus with a marble epitaph plaque in Frombork Cathedral. In the early 17th century Jan Brożek, a professor at the University of Cracow, also kept Copernicus's memory alive – K. Estreicher, *Pamiątki kopernikowskie w Uniwersytecie Jagiellońskim,* Cracow 1973; S. Cynarski, *Znajomość nauki Kopernika w Polsce XVII i XVIII wieku*, Cracow 1973.

6 K. Ławrynowicz, *Albertina. Szkice z dziejów Uniwersytetu Królewieckiego,* Pułtusk–Cracow [2010], pp. 59–60.

7 J. Zathey, *Analiza i historia rękopisu „De revolutionibus",* in: *Rękopis dzieła Mikołaja Kopernika „O obrotach": facsimile,* ed. P. Czartoryski, Warsaw–Cracow 1972, p. 27.

8 „Wyniki badań porównawczych potwierdzają przeto słuszność sądu, że pismo rękopisu dzieła *De revolutionibus* jest pismem Mikołaja Kopernika, a zatem że rękopis ten jest autografem" [The results of comparative research confirm the correctness of the opinion that the handwriting of the manuscript of De revolutionibus is the handwriting of Nicolaus Copernicus, and therefore that the manuscript is his autograph"], ibidem, p. 27.

(recto) there are two words probably written by Jakob Christmann, who owned the manuscript at some point prior to 1613.

Georg Joachim Rheticus became Copernicus's student and companion in the final years of Copernicus's life.[9] Copernicus visited Bishop Tiedemann Giese in Lubawa in 1539 in the company of Rheticus. Together, Rheticus and Giese persuaded him to publish his thoughts and calculations relating to the heliocentric theory. Copernicus decided to make his work available and allow *De revolutionibus...*to be printed. Rheticus, who took charge of organising the printing, sent the manuscript – probably a final draft or copy – to Nuremberg. The original autograph manuscript in the Jagiellonian Library does not show any of the marks used by printers or traces of ink stains so it is unlikely to have been the manuscript used as the basis for printing.

The printing itself was supervised by Andreas Osiander who, as Jan Kepler has shown, changed the title to *De revolutionibus orbium coelestium* and added an anonymous introduction.[10] His intention in writing the introduction was probably to protect Copernicus from any accusation of violating the biblical view of the position of the Earth in the universe. Osiander also removed Copernicus's preface addressed to Pope Paul III. The first sheets of *De revolutionibus...*were printed in 1542 and printing was completed by 1543. According to legend Copernicus received a copy on his deathbed.

Very few original manuscripts by leading creative figures from the 15th and 16th centuries – Erasmus, da Vinci, Galileo and so on – still exist today. How, then, did this autograph manuscript of Copernicus's *De revolutionibus...*come to survive? Who were the various owners of the manuscript?

In the spring of 1543, Bishop Tiedemann Giese attended the wedding of King Sigismund II Augustus and Catherine of Austria in Cracow. On his return to Warmia he familiarised himself with

9 *Georg Joachim Rheticus, Wegbereiter der Neuzeit,* publ. Ph. Schöbi, H. Sonderegger, Hohenems 2014.

10 K. Ławrynowicz, *Albertina...*, pp. 65–66.

the printed version of Copernicus's work, subsequently lodging a complaint with the Nuremberg City Council that the printer Johannes Petreius had made unauthorised changes to the text. Giese planned to publish a second edition of *De revolutionibus*, adding a biography of Copernicus and removing the publisher's interpolations. He presented his plans in a letter to Rheticus, and may also have asked him to carry out the task.[11] After Copernicus's death, Giese was probably the owner of the autograph manuscript on which the Nuremberg edition is likely to have been based. According to Aleksander Birkenmajer, Copernicus's papers went to Giese after his death, and on Giese's death they went to the Chapter of Warmia.[12]

Tiedemann Giese was born in Gdańsk in 1480.[13] From 1492 onwards he lived in Leipzig, studying at the university under the direction of Canon Tomasz Werner of Braniewo, a professor of theology.[14] Upon his return to Poland in 1504 he was appointed to the canonry of Warmia, in which he began to play a leading role thanks to the support of the Ferber family. In 1523 he unsuccessfully competed with Mauritius Ferber, to whom he was related, for the position of Bishop of Lidzbark. Giese was a parish priest in Zblewo and also rector of the Church of St Peter and Paul in Gdańsk. His interest in astronomy brought him close to Copernicus, who he was in contact with from around 1507. Giese was the first person with whom Copernicus shared his observations. During Jan Brożek's lifetime the correspondence between Giese and Copernicus still existed, but unfortunately its later fate is unknown. Like Copernicus, Giese

11 Ph. Schöbi, *Gieses erhellender Brief an Rheticus,* in: *Georg Joachim Rheticus…*, pp. 115–119.

12 A. Birkenmajer, *Z dziejów autografu „De revolutionibus"*, „Nauka Polska" 1953, No. 3, p. 154; A. Białek, Śladami rękopisu. Próba zarysu dziejów *autografu kopernikowskiego „De revolutionibus"*, „Sobótka" 1974, Issue 1, p. 29.

13 W. Pociecha, *Giese Tiedeman Bartłomiej (1480–1550),* in: *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, Cracow 1948–1958, Vol. 7, pp. 456–458; H. Zins, *W kręgu Mikołaja Kopernika,* Lublin 1966, pp. 250–251; T. Borawska, *Tiedemann Giese (1480–1580) w życiu wewnętrznym Warmii i Prus Królewskich,* Olsztyn 1984.

14 *Die Matrikel der Universität Leipzig,* publ. G. Erler, Leipzig 1895, Vol. 1, p. 393.

remained loyal to King Sigismund I the Old in the conflict between the Polish Kingdom and the Teutonic Order, for which Giese was ennobled by the King. In 1523 he became Custodian of the Chapter of Warmia and Official General of the Diocese of Warmia. In 1525, on the advice of Copernicus, he had a polemical anti-Lutheran paper published by the printer Hieronymus Vietor in Cracow. In 1532 he became Coadjutor Bishop to Mauritius Ferber, now Bishop of Warmia. On behalf of the Chapter of Warmia and Bishop Ferber, Copernicus wrote a long letter to the Prussian Senators presenting the reasons why Giese should be made Bishop of Warmia after Ferber's death. However, King Sigismund I the Old had different plans, and following Ferber's death Johannes Dantiscus was made Bishop of Warmia. Giese became Bishop of Chełmno in 1538 and, after the death of Dantiscus, Bishop of Warmia in 1549. He died on October 23, 1550 in Lidzbark Warmiński.[15]

Another person to have owned the autograph manuscript of *De revolutionibus...*was Georg Joachim Rheticus.[16] Rheticus was born on February 16, 1514 in Feldkirchen. His father was Georg Iserin and his mother Thomasina de Porris, who was of Italian heritage. When Georg Iserin was accused of witchcraft and executed, the family was stripped of its surname. Georg Joachim then took his mother's surname *de Porris*, using its German translation „von Lauchen". He is better known, however, as Georg Joachim Rheticus, from the Roman name for the region that he came from, Rhaetia.

Rheticus was educated in his hometown, then from 1528 to 1531 studied in Zurich. In 1532 he became a student at the University of Wittenberg. He mainly studied mathematics, and after graduating in 1537 began to teach mathematics at the University of Wit-

15 T. Borawska, *Tiedemann Giese (1480–1550) w życiu wewnętrznym Warmii i Prus Królewskich*, Olsztyn 1984 - https://kpbc.umk.pl/publication/36197 [accessed 26.04.2021].

16 L. Hajdukiewicz, *Rheticus Georg Joachim (1514–1574)*, in: *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, Wrocław 1988–1989, Vol. 31, pp. 255–259; Ph. Schöbi, *Rheticus – Wegbereiter der Neuzeit*, in: *Georg Joachim Rheticus...*, pp. 35–92.

tenberg.[17] In 1538 he discussed Copernicus's heliocentric theory, which he had heard talk of, with Johannes Schöner and the printer Johannes Petreius in Nuremberg, and soon decided to travel to Warmia to meet Copernicus himself and study astronomy under him. We know that in the summer of 1539 Rheticus was in Frombork bringing Copernicus a gift of several volumes of the latest literature on mathematical and natural sciences. Three of these books came from the printing house of Johannes Petreius and were intended as an encouragement to have *De revolutionibus…*published by Petreius.

Copernicus went with Rheticus to Lubawa to visit Giese and spent several months there. While in Lubawa, Rheticus worked intensively on the manuscript of *De revolutionibus…*and wrote a summary of Copernicus's theory. In September 1539 Rheticus went to Gdańsk to oversee the printing of this summary, entitled *Narratio Prima*.[18] In it, Rheticus describes, in an accessible way, the ongoing debate about the theory of the movement of the planets around the Sun, arguing that the heliocentric system should be accepted as correct. In 1540 he gave a series of lectures on astronomy in Wittenberg, including the heliocentric theory. In 1541 he again visited Copernicus in Frombork, finally obtaining his consent for *De revolutionibus…*to be published. He then took the manuscript to Nuremberg, quickly returning to Warmia and in August 1541 arriving in Königsberg, where he won the support of Albert, Duke of Prussia, for Copernicus's work. Rheticus also presented his own work on the map of Prussia to Albert and gave him an instrument for measuring the length of the day. He returned to Wittenberg at the end of 1541 and was elected Dean of the Faculty of Liberal Arts. In 1542 he entrusted the printing of *De revolutionibus…*to Petreius, Schöner and Osiander.

17 *Album Academiae Vitebergensis ab A.Ch. MDII usque ad A. MDCII,* […] Sub auspiciis Bibliothecae Universitatis halensis ex autographo editum […] K. Foerstemann, Leipzig 1841, Vol. 1, p. 146 – *Georgius Ioachimus de Porris Feldkirch.*

18 J. J. Retyk, *Narratio prima. Relacja pierwsza z ksiąg O obrotach Mikołaja Kopernika,* trans. I. Lewndowski, introduction and commentary by J. Włodarczyk, Warsaw 2015.

In 1542 Rheticus was appointed Professor of Mathematics at the University of Leipzig, a post which he held until 1551. Between 1547 and 1548 he studied medicine in Zurich, as he was seriously ill and wanted to cure himself. However, he had to leave Leipzig as he was accused of homosexuality. After a short stay in Chemnitz and then Prague he settled in Cracow in 1554. In Cracow he lived on the Market Square, in the Kaufman townhouse, supporting himself by working as a doctor and earning additional income by writing horoscopes. He also conducted astronomical observations, building a 14-metre-high obelisk as a simple yet original astronomical observatory, most probably in a garden in the district of Wesoła, close to today's Copernicus Street. He used an image of the obelisk in his publications, and from 1557 the Cracow printer Łazarz Andrysowicz used the image as his printer's mark.[19] During his time in Cracow, Rheticus also researched the salt mines of Wieliczka, having been recommended to do so by Copernicus while Rheticus was still living in Warmia.[20]

In 1569, Valentinus Otho (circa 1548 to 4April 1603) came to Cracow with the aim of studying astronomy and trigonometry under Rheticus.[21] Originally from Magdeburg, Otho enrolled at the University of Wittenberg in 1561 and in March 1566 received his Master's degree in liberal arts. He was a pupil of Johannes Praetorius, who was a professor at the University of Wittenberg and an acquaintance of Rheticus. Under Praetorius, Otho studied the question of the number π. In 1573 he travelled with Rheticus to Košice, where Rheticus had two benefactors, the Voivode of Sieradz Olbracht Łaski and the Hungarian magnate Hans Rueber

19 H. Sonderegger, *Rheticus und sein Obelisk in Krakau,* in: *Georg Joachim Rheticus…*, pp. 193–198.

20 Ph. Schöbi, *Rheticus – Wegbereiter der Neuzeit,* in: *Georg Joachim Rheticus…*, pp. 35–92; H. Sonderegger, *Rheticus und sein Obelisk in Krakau,* in: ibidem, pp. 192–198; L. Hajdukiewicz, *Rheticus Georg Joachim…*, pp. 257–258.

21 C. G. Jöcher, *Allgemeines Gelehrten-Lexicon,* Vol. 3, Leipzig 1751, p. 1,136 – https://digitale.bibliothek.uni-halle.de/vd18/content/pageview/9084413 [26.04.2021]; E. Hilfstein, *Was Valentinus Otto a Professor at the University of Heidelberg?* „Organon" 1986–1987, Vol. 22–23, pp. 221–223 – https://polona.pl/item/organon-1986-1987-nr-22-23,NzczOTQ3Mw/222/#item [accessed 26.04.2021].

zu Pixendorf. In November 1574 Otho brought the *De revolutionibus...* manuscript from Cracow to Košice, delivering it to Rheticus on November 28. Rheticus died a few days later on December 4, 1574, and his collection passed to Otho. In 1577 Otho took over the Chair of Mathematics at the University of Wittenberg, but due to a conflict between the Lutherans and the Calvinists he left Wittenberg, which was strictly Lutheran, and moved to Calvinist Heidelberg. In 1596 he published Rheticus's *Opus palatium de triangulis*, having himself edited and prepared it for printing.[22] According to Bartholomaeus Pitiscus, Otho's collection was in great disarray, having been stored carelessly, with manuscripts and books by Otho and those he had inherited from Rheticus lying around in heaps, some of them rotting.[23]

After Otho's death in April 1603, his collection passed to Jakob Christmann (1554–1613), then Dean of the Faculty of Liberal Arts at Heidelberg University.[24] Christmann came from Johannisberg near Mainz and received his education in *artes liberales* at a school in Neuhaus. He became Professor of Oriental Languages at the University of Heidelberg, specialising in Hebrew, and was also an astronomer.[25] While the autograph manuscript of *De revolutionibus...*was owned by Otho it had not been bound and it was probably at this time that the title page was lost. It is likely that Christmann gave Copernicus's work to Simon Petiscus, a professor of mathematics.[26]

It was possibly Simon Sten (or Stenius, 1540–1619), Dean of the Faculty of Philosophy at Heidelberg University, that had the man-

22 D. Roegel, *A Reconstruction of the Tables of Rheticus Opus Palatinum (1596)*, The Loria Collection of Mathematical Tables - http://locomat.loria.fr/rheticus1596/rheticus1596doc.pdf [26.04.2021].

23 J. Zathey, *Analiza i historia...*, p. 35.

24 G. Drylinger, *Christmann Jakob (1554–1613)*, Heidelberg 2015 - https://archiv.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/volltextserver/20136/1/christmann.pdf [accessed 26.04.2021].

25 J. Zathey , *Analiza i historia...*, pp. 35–36.

26 Ibidem, p. 35; A. Białek, Śladami rękopisu..., p. 30.

uscript bound.[27] The binding is stiffened with pages from the book *De inquisitione Hispanica* by Reginald Consalvus, published in Heidelberg in 1603, to which Sten wrote the preface. Zathey suggests that Sten gave the bookbinder the preface after making corrections. The binding of *De revolutionibus...*is made from a parchment document issued by the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian II on 27 September 1566.[28]

The manuscript of *De revolutionibus...*next became the property of John Amos Comenius (1592–1670), one of the greatest pedagogues in history. Comenius was born on 28March 1592 in Nivnice in Moravia, the son of Martin Komenský, a miller.[29] He received his early education at the Unity of the Brethren school in Strážnice, then from 1608 attended the Latin school in Přerov. In 1611 he became a student at the Herborn Academy and on June 19, 1613 enrolled at the University of Heidelberg. On the back of the second protective sheet of the manuscript of *De revolutionibus*, Comenius wrote that he bought the work for his library, for a good price, from the widow of Jan Christmann on 14January 1614 in Heidelberg. Comenius stayed at the University of Heidelberg for less than a year; in 1614 he was already rector of a school in Přerov. After the defeat of the Czech Protestants at the Battle of White Mountain in 1620, he initially went into hiding. In 1625, after discussions with Rafał Leszczyński, he was involved in bringing a large group of Czech Brethren refugees to Leszno and in 1628 he himself settled in Leszno. He stayed in Leszno from 1628–1642 and 1648–1656, taught at the local grammar school and, as its rector between 1637 and 1641, helped it to flourish. It is thanks to Comenius that a stand-

27 R. Hoche, *Sten, Simon,* „Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie" 1893, Vol. 36, pp. 43–44 - https://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd124623425.html#adbcontent [accessed 26.04.2021]; J. Zathey, *Analiza i historia...,* p. 35.

28 A. Birkenmajer, *Trygonometria Mikołaja Kopernika w autografie głównego jego dzieła,* „Studia Źródłoznawcze" 1971, Vol. 15, p. 32.

29 V.-J. Dietrich, *Jan Amos Comenius. Mit Selbstzeugnissen und Bilddokumenten,* Reinbek 2005; V.-J. Dietrich, *Johann Amos Comenius. Ein Mann der Sehnsucht 1592–1670. Theologische, pädagogische und politische Aspekte seines Lebens und Werkes,* Stuttgart 2003; D. Fauth, *Comenius – im Labyrynth seiner Welt,* Zell am Main, Würzburg 2009.

ardised educational system became part of pedagogical practice. The grammar school in Leszno was at the time a popular place of study for young people from Poland and abroad. Comenius's main work, *Janua linguarum reserata*, a Latin language course dedicated to the Voivode Bogusław Leszczyński, was written and published in Leszno in 1631. In 1657 he published *Orbis sensualium pictus*, an example of the idea that textbooks should be illustrated so that their contents can be assimilated more quickly by pupils. Comenius was also interested in astronomy and wrote the now lost textbook *Astronomia ad lumen physicum reformanda* – probably the reason why he bought Copernicus's manuscript from Christmann's widow.

In his philosophical system Comenius adhered to three principles of cognition: sense, reason and divine revelation. Within these three categories, where the main, decisive principle was revelation, there could be no room for Copernicus. Although Comenius owned the manuscript of *De revolutionibus*...he was against the heliocentric theory, as it was incompatible with Scripture.[30] In the period 1642 to 1648 Comenius lived in Elbląg, where from 1644 to 1645 he taught philosophy. From 1642 he reported to the Lord High Chancellor of Sweden, Axel Oxenstierna, on the religious and political situation in Poland, hoping in this way to contribute to the collapse of the Catholic and Habsburg governments. He was an ardent supporter of the Swedish and Transylvanian invasions of Poland in 1655 and 1656, and even wrote a panegyric in honour of Charles X Gustav. Leszno became a centre of anti-Polish and anti-royal activities, Polish troops burning down the town during the siege in retaliation. Comenius fled the city together with the Swedish army, leaving behind his library and his manuscripts, which were destroyed. He died on 15November 1670 in Amsterdam.

It is not known under what circumstances the manuscript of *De revolutionibus*...found its way to the Nostitz library in Jawor, Silesia. The third protective sheet of the manuscript bears the signature of

30 Q. Veter, *Sur les destins du manuscrit pragois du Kopernik „De Revolutionibus orbium caelestium (!) libri sex"*, Prague 1931, pp. 2–3.

Otto von Nostitz (1608-1665), but no date.[31] The manuscript was probably not given directly by Comenius to the Nostitz library – Baron Otto von Nostitz was a devout Catholic and any direct contact between him and Comenius seems unlikely, given the latter's attitude towards Catholics, representatives of the Habsburgs and anti-Trinitarians.

Nostitz was Vice-Chancellor of the Holy Roman Empire until 1650 and Governor of the Duchy of Jawor-Świdnica from 1651 until his death. His son Christoph Wenzel von Nostitz (1643–1712), Governor of Legnica from 1662–1685 and Governor of Głogów from 1686–1697, took over the estate of Luboradz in Jawor, including the library and the art collections in the castle. On 5 October 1667, after the death of Otto von Nostitz, an inventory was made of the castle library in Jawor.[32] A manuscript of *De revolutionibus...*was in the Nostitz library prior to 1665 but no information about it was published as far as is known. Indeed it was not until 1788 that Friedrich K. Hirsching, describing the collections of libraries in Prague, made public the fact that the Nostitz library, located in the family's palace in Prague, included this priceless document.[33] It is not known when exactly the manuscript was moved to Prague.[34]

The call number of *De revolutionibus...*in the Nostitz collection changed several times; one of its call numbers – 156 – appears on the lower part of the spine of the manuscript. On the front endpaper, under the bookplate of the Nostitz family, there is an extensive note dated 1854, written by the then owner of *De revolutionibus...*Erwin Nostitz, giving a detailed description of the manuscript. From the 1840s onwards the manuscript was available to researchers in the library, but due to its popularity it was later moved to the Nostitz archive and access to it was restricted. In the second half of the

31 Biblioteka Jagiellońska, MS 10000, protective sheet c. recto; R. Šipek, *Die Jauerer Schlossbibliothek*..., pp. 15–40.

32 Ibidem, p. 37 – call no. „E 343".

33 F. K. G. Hirsching, *Versuch eines Beschreibung sehenswürdiger Bibliotheken Teuschlands nach alphabetischer ordnung der Oerter,* Erlangen 1788, Vol. 3, p. 290; R. Šipek, *Die Jauerer Schlossbibliothek*..., pp. 175–176.

34 A. Białek, *Śladami rękopisu*..., pp. 31–32.

nineteenth century, research was conducted on the manuscript, including comparing its contents with the first published edition. The manuscript was also made available to the German researcher Maximilian Curtz, who prepared the Toruń edition of the work for the 400th anniversary of Copernicus's birth.[35]

In 1896 Ludwik Antoni Birkenmajer was allowed to examine the manuscript in the company of Antoni Czuczyński. Birkenmajer published his findings in his monograph of 1900.[36] The first phototype edition of the manuscript appeared in 1944 in Munich, created by Fritz Kubach and Karl Zeller.[37]

The autograph manuscript of *De revolutionibus*...remained in the hands of the Nostitz family for around 300 years. In 1945 the Nostitz collection was nationalised and moved to the Library of the National Museum in Prague, and from there to the University Library. In 1953 the manuscript was loaned to Warsaw for an exhibition on the occasion of the 410th anniversary of Copernicus's death. A „loan certificate" marked Prague, 14 September1953, states as follows: „The manuscript is lent to the Polish Academy of Arts and Science for inclusion in the exhibition being held in Warsaw on the occasion of the 410th anniversary of the death of Nicolaus Copernicus, for the duration of the exhibition only". This document was signed, for the Polish side, by Stanisław Lorentz and Alodia Kawecka-Gryczowa.[38] The exhibition itself was entitled *Odrodzenie w Polsce* („The Renaissance in Poland").[39] The autograph manuscript was also presented at the Copernicus Session of the Polish Academy of Sciences held on 15–16 September 1956.[40]

35 N. Copernicus, *De revolutionibus*, publ. M. Curtze, Thorn 1873.

36 L. A. Birkenmajer, *Mikołaj Kopernik. Studya nad pracami Kopernika oraz materyały biograficzne*, Cracow 1900.

37 N. Kopernikus, *Opus de revolutionibus caelestibus manu propria. Facsimile-Wiedergabe*, publ. F. Kubach and K. Zeller, Munich–Oldenburg 1944.

38 BJ, MS 10000a, f. 1r.

39 *Odrodzenie w Polsce. Wystawa w Muzeum Narodowym w Warszawie 1953–1954*, Warsaw 1953.

40 A. Birkenmajer, *Głos w dyskusji*, in: *Sesja Kopernikowska, 15–16 IX 1953*, ed. J. Witkowski, Warsaw 1955, p. 453.

From that time onwards, efforts were made for Poland to acquire the priceless manuscript. As early as 1953, Ambassador Wiktor Grosz started negotiations about exchanging it for certain items of value to Czechoslovakia. In a letter dated 21December 1953 the Polish Foreign Minister Stanisław Skrzeszewski informed Professor Stefan Żółkiewski of the Polish Academy of Sciences that „the government of the Czechoslovak People's Republic expects that, in return, the government of the People's Republic of Poland would donate items of historical and cultural value to the Czech nation".[41] The management of the National Library of Poland and the former Director of the Jagiellonian Library, Aleksander Birkenmajer, were involved in this undertaking. Seven objects were selected from the National Library of Poland, the Jagiellonian Library, the Municipal Library in Toruń, the University Library in Wrocław, Father Stanisław Jasiński's private collection and the Raczyński Library in Poznań. A possible decision about the library of Father Leopold Szersznik, located in Cieszyn, was also considered but the details of this are today unknown. The Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs was aware of the difficulty of finding a suitable equivalent for the priceless manuscript.[42] Ultimately, the Polish side gave Czechoslovakia a parchment manuscript of the Czech Bible from the beginning of the 15th century containing 24 figurative initials and eight decorative initials, with the call number „Biblioteka Narodowa – Biblioteka Ordynacji Zamoyskich nr 7 (BN BOZ 7)".[43]

41 BJ, MS przyb. 300/75 – letter from Stanisław Skrzeszewski, Minister of Foreign Affairs, to Professor Stefan Żółkiewski, President of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw, 21 December 1953.

42 BN BOZ 7; BJ, MS 441; Książnica Miejska w Toruniu im. M. Kopernika – MS KMgz (R.fol.5); Biblioteka Uniwersytecka we Wrocławiu MS 1452; Rękopis owned by Rev. Stanisław Jasiński in Cracow (Wawel), Czech Antifonary from the 15th c.; Biblioteka Miejska im. Raczyńskich w Poznaniu call no. IV Kg 23 – hymnal in Czech; „Załączając notatkę o Bibliotece im. Leopolda Szersznika w Cieszynie, uprzejmie proszę o rozważenie i tej sprawy..." [I attach a note about the Leopold Szersznik Library in Cieszyn, and ask you to consider this matter as well...] – ibidem.

43 The manuscript is in Prague: Narodni Knihovna call number XVII.C.56. On the same subject, see also: T. Makowski, *Biblioteka Ordynacji Zamojskiej. Od Jana do Jana. Przewodnik po wystawie*. Warsaw 2005, p. 297.

Under an act of 5 July, 1956 the government of Czechoslovakia offered the Polish nation Copernicus's manuscript as a gift. The Act states as follows: „Vláda Československé Republiky [...] daruje vládě Polské lidové republiky rukopis slavného syna polského národa Mikuláše Kopernika *De revolutionibus...orbium coelestium*" („The Government of the Czechoslovak Republic [...] presents to the Government of the Polish People's Republic the manuscript of the famous son of the Polish nation Nicolaus Copernicus *De revolutionibus...orbium coelestium*"). The deed of donation was signed by the Czechoslovak Prime Minister Vilim Široky and the Minister of Foreign Affairs Václav David.[44] The ceremonial presentation of the manuscript took place in Warsaw at the Chancellery of the Prime Minister, with the participation of Prime Minister of Poland Józef Cyrankiewicz.[45]

The negotiations over which institution in Poland should house Copernicus's manuscript lasted several months. In late July 1956 the Rector of the Jagiellonian University, Teodor Marchlewski, requested that it be given to the Jagiellonian Library. Professor Karol Estreicher made efforts to have the manuscript transferred to the Jagiellonian University Museum, together with the globes then stored in the Jagiellonian Library, as he wanted to create a museum of science devoted to Copernicus in one of its rooms. Finally, on 25September 1956 the autograph manuscript of *De revolutionibus...* was presented to the Jagiellonian University by Stanisław Lorentz, acting on behalf of the National Museum in Warsaw, where the manuscript had been kept from 1953–1956. The gift was accepted on behalf of the Jagiellonian University by the Vice-Chancellor Kazimierz Lepszy and the Deputy Director of the Jagiellonian Library Władysław Pociecha. They were accompanied by the cura-

44 BJ, MS 10000b.

45 *Dar rządu Czechosłowacji. Przekazanie rękopisu dzieła Kopernika „De revoliutionibus orbium coelestium"*, „Dziennik Polski" 1956, No. 163; BJ, MS 10000b, sheet 3 – printed invitation to Aleksander Birkenmajer to take part in the ceremony of the presentation of Copernicus manuscript by the Czechoslovak government delegation.

tors of the Jagiellonian Library Irena Barowa and Jerzy Zathey.[46] Władysław Pociecha delivered a speech on behalf of the Jagiellonian University.[47]

Owen Gingerich, a leading researcher of Copernicus's legacy, who only had access to the propaganda put out by the Communist governments of Central and Eastern Europe, wrote as follows:

After World War II, this treasure was lent by Czechoslovakia to Poland, at which time the Poles simply appropriated it for themselves and deposited in the Jagiellonian Library of Copernicus' alma mater. It would have been unseemly for one communist society to object too strenuously to a bordering brother society, so the precious document has remained in Poland.[48]

What actually took place was a kind of exchange of cultural goods between countries. In this exchange what mattered above all was the emotional attitude of the parties towards the items being swapped, not their objective value. For the Czechs, the manuscript of *De revolutionibus*...had no emotional value, while for Poland it was vital evidence of how the Polish state had participated in the development of global science and culture. Just how emotional the librarians were about Copernicus's manuscript can be seen from the telegram sent by Zofia Ameisenova to Aleksander Birkenmajer in Rome on September 25, 1956: „WE HAVE THE COPERNICUS MANUSCRIPT".[49] The Jagiellonian Library today considers the manuscript the most valuable item in its collection and has given it the call number „10 000".[50]

In 1969, in connection with the approaching 500th anniversary of Copernicus's birth, research on the autograph manuscript

46 BJ, MS 10000b, f. 4.

47 BJ, MS 10000b, f. 6–8.

48 O. Gingerich, *The Book Nobody Read: Chasing the Revolutions of Nicolaus Copernicus*, New York 2004, p. 37–38.

49 BJ, MS 553/75. Professor Birkenmajer was closely involved in the acquisition of the autograph manuscript of *De revolutionibus*; his papers, held at the Jagiellonian Library, include several dozen folders relating to research on Copernicus: BJ, MS przyb. 261–316/75.

50 *Inwentarz rękopisów Biblioteki Jagiellońskiej, Nr 9001–10000, Część 3, Nr 9801–10000*, ed. J. Grzybowska, Cracow 1986, pp. 717–719.

began at the Manuscripts Division of the Jagiellonian Library, led by the eminent early manuscript specialist Jerzy Zathey, then Head of the Manuscripts Division. Zathey carried out a detailed study of the paper on which the text was written, the handwriting, the way the manuscript was put together and its binding. The back cover was taken apart, allowing Zathey to thoroughly examine the material it was made of and establish previously unknown details of the manuscript's binding.[51] A facsimile edition of the autograph manuscript was made, as the first volume in the planned *Mikołaj Kopernik Dzieła wszystkie* („Complete works of Nicolaus Copernicus"). This first volume, entitled *Rękopis dzieła Mikołaja Kopernika „O obrotach": facsimile* („The manuscript of Nicolaus Copernicus's work 'On the Revolutions': facsimile"), with an introduction by Jerzy Zathey entitled *Analiza i historia rękopisu „De revolutionibus"* („Analysis and history of the manuscript 'De revolutionibus'") was published in 1972. This volume also appeared in English in 1972 and in Latin, French and Russian in 1973.

The next facsimile edition was published in Hildesheim in 1974. Another facsimile was produced in 1976 in Cracow, using better-quality paper and with more subtle differentiation between the various colours of the paper and ink. This version drew on the experience gained from the publication of the first volume of the complete works. Its overall dimensions are the same as the original manuscript and individual pages are cut to the same size as the originals.

In 1996 Neurosoft published the first electronic reprint of the manuscript of *De revolutionibus*. This was done by making digital copies of slides of the original. The publication was initially available only on CD-ROM. Later a digital version was made available via the website of the Jagiellonian Library.[52] Currently anyone interested can consult this digital copy.

51 Z. Zathey, *Analiza i historia...*, pp. 1–39.

52 Jagiellońska Biblioteka Cyfrowa, *De revolutionibus libri sex* – https://www.jbc.bj.uj.edu.pl/publication/1494 [accessed 26.04.2021].

In 1999 the manuscript of *De revolutionibus…*was inscribed on the UNESCO Memory of the World Register, one of seven Polish items on the list. In 2016 the publisher Tadeusz Serocki in Pelplin produced another facsimile edition of the manuscript.

The manuscript of Copernicus's *De revolutionibus…*is a document of inestimable value for global cultural heritage. As such, it is treated with the utmost care by the librarians of the Jagiellonian Library.

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