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Splendor Familiae. The Nesvizh Foundation of the Benedictine Nuns in the Time of Krystyna Eufemia Radziwiłłówna

Dr. hab. Jolanta Gwioździk

University of Silesia in Katowice, Faculty of Humanities, Institute of Culture Studies, Uniwersytecka 4, 40-007, Katowice, Poland
E-mail: jolanta.gwiozdzik@gmail.com

Abstract¹. The first post-Tridentine female foundation in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was the Benedictine convent in Nesvizh, established by Mikołaj Krzysztof Radziwiłł “Sierotka”. This article examines the principles and circumstances underlying the foundation of the convent, outlines its genesis, and discusses the successive stages of its organisation, including the construction of the church and monastic buildings. The community was formed by sisters brought from the Chełmno convent, where abbess Magdalena Mortęska had implemented a significant reform of monastic life inspired by post-Tridentine legislation. The article further characterises the community’s development during the first decades of its existence, particularly under the tenure of abbess Krystyna Eufemia Radziwiłłówna.

Keywords: *Benedictine nuns, Nesvizh, Mikołaj Krzysztof Radziwiłł, Krystyna Eufemia Radziwiłłówna.*

Anotacija. Pirmoji potridentinė moterų vienuolyno fundacija Lietuvos Didžiojoje Kunigaikštystėje buvo benediktinių vienuolynas Nesvyžiuje, funduotas Mikalojaus Kristupo Radvilos Našlaitėlio. Šiame straipsnyje nagrinėjamos vienuolyno fundacijos aplinkybės,

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aptariamais jo įkūrimo etapai, įskaitant bažnyčios ir vienuolyno pastatų statybą. Į Nesvyžiaus benediktinių vienuolyną atsikėlė vienuolės iš Kulmo vienuolyno, kuriame abatė Magdalena Mortėška įgyvendino reikšmingą reformą, įkvėptą Tridento susirinkimo. Straipsnyje taip pat analizuojama vienuolyno raida pirmaisiais jo veiklos dešimtmečiais, ypač vadovaujant abatei Kristinai Eufemijai Radvilaitei.

Esminiai žodžiai: *benediktinės, Nesvyžius, Mikalojus Kristupas Radvila Našlaitėlis, Kristina Eufemija Radvilaite.*

The Foundation of the Benedictine Convent in Nesvizh

In the two-hundred-year history of Christianity in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, “[...] jeszcze do tych czasów nie był żaden pan, co by był Dziewicom Zakonnym, które są jako jeden kwiat najśliczniejszy i jako perła najdroższa w chrześcijaństwie, klasztor aby jeden zbudował i nadał” [*translation*: until these times there had been no lord who would build and endow even a single convent for Religious Virgins, who are like the fairest flower and the most precious pearl in Christianity]² – thus wrote Kasper Wilkowski³, the physician of Prince Mikołaj Krzysztof Radziwiłł (1549–1616)⁴, characterizing the prince’s efforts to establish a female monastery in Nesvizh⁵. The prince’s merit lay not only in founding the institution and providing it with generous endowments – plans for which were underway by at least 1589 (at that time Wilkowski wrote: “im już klasztor budujesz i hojne nadanie czynisz” [*translation*: for you are already building the convent and making a generous endowment]⁶ – but also in securing a place “gdzieby panienki w czystości wiecznej Panu Bogu służyły i inne do tegoż żywota abo do służby Bożej nabożnej choć w stan inny idące ćwiczyły [się]” [*translation*: where the maidens might serve God in perpetual purity, and where others, even if entering a different state of

² *Desiderosus abo ścieszka do miłości Bożej y do doskonałości żywota chrześcijańskiego. Dialog [...] z hiszpańskiego [...] teraz na polski nowo przełożony przez Gaspra Wilkowskiego...* W Krakowie: w drukarni Andrzeja Piotrkowczyka, 1589, f. 4r.

³ On the subject of Kasper Wilkowski see HANUSIEWICZ-LAVALLE, Mirosława. Rozum mój w pojęcie wezmę. Sceptycyzm fideistyczny w świadectwie konwersji Kaspra Wilkowskiego. *Pamiętnik Literacki*, 2018, R. 4, pp. 98–110, see also HANUSIEWICZ-LAVALLE, Mirosława. Staropolskie echa misji jezuickiej w Anglii roku 1580. *Roczniki Humanistyczne*, 2013, R. 61, z. 2, pp. 97–118.

⁴ KEMPA, Tadeusz. *Mikołaj Krzysztof Radziwiłł Sierotka (1549–1616). Wojewoda wileński*. Warszawa: Semper, 2000.

⁵ BORKOWSKA, Małgorzata. Mikołaj Krzysztof Radziwiłł jako fundator benedyktynek. In *Benediktiniškoji tradicija Lietuvoje*. Sudarė L. Jovaiša. Vilnius: Aidai, 2008, pp. 45–56.

⁶ *Desiderosus abo ścieszka...*, k. 4r. In 1589, Radziwiłł discussed the foundation plan with the Bishop of Chełmno, Piotr Kostka (+1595).

life, might be trained for this same way of life or for devout service to God]⁷. It was therefore necessary to choose a suitable convent from which the nuns would establish a new foundation. Radziwiłł chose the first female monastic order reformed in accordance with the decrees of the Council of Trent – that is, he turned to the Benedictine nuns of Chełmno⁸, who at that time were governed by abbess Magdalena Mortęska⁹. The choice was not accidental, for his brother Jerzy Radziwiłł (1556–1600), Bishop of Vilnius (1579–1591) and Cracow (1591–1600), was well acquainted with the situation of female convents. He himself actively implemented post-Tridentine reforms within them; during visitations, for instance, he recommended that legal matters be put in order, that the Divine Office be diligently celebrated (he ordered the purchase of psalters and breviaries), and that the nuns' spiritual lives be cultivated (for this purpose, among other measures, he commissioned the printing of an ascetical compendium).¹⁰

The aim of this article is to examine the principles and circumstances underlying the foundation of the Benedictine convent in Nesvizh and to characterise its development during the first decades of its existence, namely during the tenure of Krystyna Eufemia Radziwiłłówna. Drawing on analyses of normative sources, correspondence, and historiography, the study examines the formation of the community's spiritual life, the activities undertaken by the nuns, and the establishment of new convents during the period of intensive patronage by the founding family.

The Chełmno convent was under episcopal obedience; therefore, Mikołaj Krzysztof first contacted Piotr Kostka (+1595), the Bishop of Chełmno, and subsequently addressed abbess Magdalena Mortęska directly. He was interested in the rule adopted in Chełmno and the act of foundation of the monastery, while the Benedictines, in turn, were interested in guaranteeing the bishop's and, in secular matters, the king's supremacy, establishing the rules of admission to the monastery according to the laws of the

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ The Chełmno monastery was well known in Lithuania: in 1588 Katarzyna Bobrowska from Lithuania entered the novitiate (in 1591), Małgorzata Gostomska from Lithuania (novitiate 1592, professed 1592), in 1595 the maidens Anna and Marianna Sapieżanki from Lithuania (consecration 1601), in 1588 Magdalena Włodkowiczowa brought two daughters "to study" and two to the novitiate: Elżbieta Gostomska (professed 1591) and Katarzyna (died 1617). *Kronika benedyktynek chełmińskich*. Ed. W. Szołdrski. Pelplin: Drukarnia i księgarnia Kurii Biskupiej, 1937, p. 35, 39, 52, 71, 174. Cf. FRANKIDEJSKI, Jakub. *Klasztory żeńskie w diecezji chełmińskiej*. Pelplin: J. N. Roman, 1883.

⁹ GÓRSKI, Karol. *Mortęska Magdalena*. In *Hagiografia Polska. Słownik bio-hagiograficzny*. Ed. R. Gustaw. Poznań: Księgarnia św. Wojciecha, 1972, t. 2, pp. 137–147; *Mortęska Magdalena (1554–1631)*, *Polski Słownik Biograficzny* (later in text PSB). Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1977, t. 22, z. 92, pp. 6–8; BORKOWSKA, Małgorzata. *Mniszki*. Tyniec: Wydawnictwo Benedyktynów, 1980.

¹⁰ MACHAY, Ferdynand. *Działalność duszpasterska kardynała Radziwiłła, biskupa krakowskiego (1591–1600)*. Kraków: s. n. 1936. Jerzy Radziwiłł commissioned the publication of the later popular compendium *Zabawy duchowne, Pannom Zakonu S. Benedykta y wszystkim innym zakonniczkom barzo potrzebne y pożyteczne. Za wolą y rozkazaniem Xiążęcia J. M. Jerzego Radziwiła Biskupa Krak.* Wydane. W Krakowie: u Macieja Andrzejowczyka, 1627.

Council of Trent, relaxing some of the rules of the rule, etc.¹¹ Once the conditions had been accepted, in a letter dated 10 August 1590 addressed to Piotr Kostka and to abbess Magdalena Mortęska, Mikołaj Krzysztof requested “aby mu do Nieświeża posłano panien kilka z klasztoru chełmińskiego do klasztoru, co [...] budować natenczas obmyślał w Nieświeżu” [*translation*: that several maidens from the Chełmno monastery be sent to Nesvizh for the convent he was then planning to build there]¹². At the same time, on 3 December 1590, he made a bequest (approved by King Sigismund III Vasa on 11 November 1591) for the construction of a brick church and monastery in Nesvizh, for which he allocated 7 thousand florins (to be paid in five instalments by 1595)¹³. The appearance of the buildings was to be determined by the abbess. However, she had no experience in preparing such plans, since the monastic structures of the emerging Chełmno congregation had thus far been adapted for religious use rather than erected from the ground up. Mortęska therefore merely listed the necessary premises, such as communal spaces (the refectory, dormitory), the novitiate, a building for schoolgirls¹⁴, and also established the principle of separating the nunnery part from the novitiate and school rooms. On 8 November, she familiarised herself in Nesvizh with the site designated for construction – very likely also with the conceptual plan for the monastic complex – after which she approved the foundation project and promised to send the nuns in August of the following year. She also entrusted the steward Nogacki, who was to take over the endowment properties, 80 florins for his maintenance¹⁵.

In accordance with the agreement, on 15 August 1591, Radziwiłł sent four wagons to Chełmno, and on 20 August, ten nuns were ready to depart for the new foundation in Nesvizh. Chosen were the “elder” Anna Świątosławska; the prioress Dorota of Brunsberg (transferred from the convent in Żarnowiec); as well as Agnieszka Wichorska, Anastazja of Poznań, Konstancja Szropska, Katarzyna Bobrowska, Elżbieta Gostomska, Jadwiga of Miłosław, and two lay sisters. The sisters were adequately equipped¹⁶, their outfitting

¹¹ BORKOWSKA, Małgorzata. Mikołaj Krzysztof Radziwiłł jako fundator benedyktynek. In *Benediktiniškoji tradicija Lietuvoje*. Sudarė L. Jovaiša. Vilnius: Aidai, 2008, pp. 46–47.

¹² *Kronika benedyktynek chełmińskich*. Ed. W. Szoldrski. Pelplin: Drukarnia i księgarnia Kurii Biskupiej, 1937, p. 39.

¹³ BORKOWSKA, Małgorzata. Mikołaj Krzysztof Radziwiłł jako fundator benedyktynek. In *Benediktiniškoji tradicija Lietuvoje*. Sudarė L. Jovaiša. Vilnius: Aidai, 2008, p. 51. Akta fundacji klasztoru benedyktynek w Nieświeżu dokonanej przez Mikołaja Krzysztofa Radziwiłła [*translation*: Documents Concerning the Foundation of the Benedictine Convent in Nesvizh by Mikołaj Krzysztof Radziwiłł]. *Archiwum Główne Akt Dawnych* (later in text AGAD), AR, 1/354/0/8/0283.

¹⁴ For more on this subject, see ROZYNKOWSKI, Waldemar. Starania ksieni Magdaleny Morteskiej o rozwój szkolnictwa katolickiego. *Nasza Przyszłość*, 2012, Nr. 117, pp. 137–156.

¹⁵ *Kronika benedyktynek chełmińskich*. Ed. W. Szoldrski. Pelplin: Drukarnia i księgarnia Kurii Biskupiej, 1937, p. 39.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

cost 400 florins (the abbess had requested 300 florins)¹⁷, consisting chiefly of previously used personal garments and bed linen¹⁸.

A description of the journey of the nuns sent to the foundation in Sandomierz has survived, and the expedition to Nesvizh – lasting approximately two weeks – was most likely similar. It began with the bishop's blessing, followed by the daily preparations for travel, participation in Mass, morning meditation, the recitation of the Office, private prayer, the reading of a spiritual book, and occasionally a spiritual conversation; in the inns they had supper, matins, a litany, a meditation theme for the next day, and an examination of conscience¹⁹. In Nesvizh, the sisters found a church prepared for them, along with a temporary wooden convent containing a choir, a refectory, four cells, and a room for the abbess. Apart from the main building, separate auxiliary structures housed the convent's service quarters, including a chamber for the domestic staff and a kitchen²⁰. Their arrival had been planned for 8 September; however, the nuns were detained at the castle in Mir by Elżbieta Eufemia née Wiśniowiecka (1569–1596), the founder's wife²¹, who, by the way, was very fond of the "senior maiden", Anna Świętosławska²².

The construction of the brick monastery took several years, from the laying of the foundations in 1593 to its completion and handover for use on 5 October 1596. In Nesvizh, inherited by Mikołaj Krzysztof in 1577, sacred buildings were the most imposing

¹⁷ BORKOWSKA, Małgorzata. Mikołaj Krzysztof Radziwiłł jako fundator benedyktynek. In *Benediktiniškoji tradicija Lietuvoje*. Sudarė L. Jovaiša. Vilnius: Aidai, 2008, p. 53.

¹⁸ The Chełmno Chronicle lists used 20 cloth caps, 20 walking dresses, 10 summer pants (dresses), 10 lined, 10 kabaciks (kaftans), 15 a fur-lined coats (outer garments, lined with fur), in addition, „as many as are needed“ shirts, caps, caps, ruffs, shawls, towels, aprons, bath sheets, etc., as well as two each of wool, velvet crosses for lace, etc. Bed linen counted „White robes and bedding: top quilts 10, bottom quilts 10“ and 20 pillows, as well as pillowcases for quilts (20 pieces), pillows (40 pieces), 20 sheets, etc. *Kronika benedyktynek chełmińskich*. Ed. W. Szoldrski. Pielplin: Drukarnia i księgarnia Kurii Biskupiej, 1937, p. 41.

¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 163–164.

²⁰ BERNATOWICZ, Tadeusz. Kościół i klasztor benedyktynek w Nieświeżu. In *Sztuka kresów wschodnich*, t. 2. Ed. J. Ostrowski. Kraków: Oficyna Wydawnicza Text, 1996, p. 129.

²¹ Kasper Wilkowski described the actions undertaken by Radziwiłł following his conversion to Catholicism in 1572, and he also regarded as the prince's additional merit the conversion to Catholicism of his brothers – Stanisław, Jerzy, and Albrycht (in 1574) – as well as that of his wife, Elżbieta Eufemia née Wiśniowiecka (in 1586), his mother-in-law, Eufemia née Wierzbicka (in 1589), and the members of his household and domestic staff. For more on this see: GWIOŹDZIK, Jolanta. *Desiderosus*, czyli o pobożnych staraniach księcia Mikołaja Krzysztofa Radziwiłła. *Rocznik Biblioteki Narodowej*, 2011, R. 41, pp. 161–172; BERNATOWICZ, Tadeusz. *Miles christianus et peregrinus. Fundacje Mikołaja Radziwiłła „Sierotki“ w ordynacji nieświejskiej*. Warszawa: Neriton, 1998; WITKOWSKI, Rafał. Rozwój życia zakonnego w Wielkim Księstwie Litewskim od XV do XVIII w. (wzmocnienie czy osłabienie litewskiej tożsamości w ramach Rzeczypospolitej szlacheckiej?) In *Lietuvių–lenkų santykiai amžių tėkmėje. Istorinė atmintis. Stosunki polsko-litewskie na przestrzeni wieków Pamięć historyczna*. Ed. J. Volkonovski, R. Gaidis. Vilnius: Vilniaus universiteto leidykla, 2009, pp. 76–102; SAS, Maksymilian. Nieśwież. In *Miasta wielu religii. Topografia sakralna ziem wschodnich dawnej Rzeczypospolitej*. Ed. M. Jakubowski, M. Sas, F. Walczyńska. Warszawa: Muzeum Historii Polski, 2016, pp. 237–246.

²² BORKOWSKA, Małgorzata. Mikołaj Krzysztof Radziwiłł jako fundator benedyktynek. In *Benediktiniškoji tradicija Lietuvoje*. Sudarė L. Jovaiša. Vilnius: Aidai, 2008, p. 54.

and prominently situated; in accordance with the ideals of Catholic urban planning, they served as visible symbols of Christian piety²³.

The town was designed on an irregular pentagonal plan, which Italian fortifications may have inspired; it was fortified, and its area was further expanded by incorporating the Benedictine monastery within the town's perimeter. The project was prepared by the Jesuit architect Giovanni Maria Bernardoni (1541–1605)²⁴, renowned for designing Baroque churches in Milan, Florence, Naples, and Abruzzo, and above all for the Church of the Most Holy Name of Jesus in Rome. He arrived in Nesvizh in 1583 and worked there for thirteen years under the patronage of Radziwiłł. The Benedictine monastery was founded on a plan resembling the letter E, with the church at its centre. The south-west wing was intended for the convent, housing a refectory, cells, two rooms for the princess, a vestibule, and a library. In contrast, the annexes housed a kitchen, a pantry, and other utility rooms. The northeastern part was occupied by the female students, who had cells, workrooms, a chapel, and other facilities.²⁵

In the church of St. Euphemia, the first Mass was celebrated on 12 June 1597, and the temple was consecrated on 19 July 1598 by Melchior Giedroyc (1536–1608), Bishop of Samogitia. The Benedictine church was a single-nave structure with a slightly projecting transept and a five-sided apse. The monastic choir had its own vaulted ceiling, positioned approximately halfway between the entrance and the transept, and was separated from the church by a carved wooden balustrade. The interior featured Baroque decoration, including a high altar designed in 1635 by the Nesvizh carver Henryk Kuntzan, commissioned by Krystyna Eufemia. The high altar was conceived as a tripartite arch rising on a tall socle. The lower tier was divided by four Corinthian columns; at its centre hung a painting of the *Annunciation*, with the figures of the Archangel and the Virgin veiled by silver robes. Flanking the composition were sculptures of St. Euphemia and St. Sabina, and below them, figures of St. Benedict and St. Scholastica. The second tier contained a statue of the Virgin and Child holding a sceptre, accompanied by representations of

²³ BERNATOWICZ, Tadeusz. Nesvisium metropolis ducatus. Nieznany przykład urbanistyki manierystycznej. In *Artes atque humaniora. Studia Stanisłao Mossakowski sexagenario dicata*. Ed. A. Rottemund. Warszawa: Instytut Sztuki PAN, 1998, pp. 161–167. ЯРАШЭВІЧ, Аляксандр. Нясвіжскі кляштар бенедыкцінак. In *Вялікае княства Літоўскае: Энцыклапедыя. У 3 т. Рэд. Г. П. Пашкоў і інш.* Менск: Беларуская Энцыклапедыя, 2005, p. 375.

²⁴ Bernardoni Jan Maria, PSB, pp. 461–462; BERNATOWICZ, Tadeusz. Kościół i klasztor Benedyktynów w Nieświeżu. In *Sztuka kresów wschodnich*, t. 2. Ed. J. Ostrowski. Kraków: Oficyna Wydawnicza Text, 1996, pp. 127–129. In the *Encomium* of 1673 it was noted: „Nesvisium Metropolis Ducatus ejus quantum est cum lapides muratis basilicis sive templis cum arce mellicam arte munitam, illustrissimi fundatoris opus est. Pietatis christianae et catholicis signis civitas haec signatur. In quatuor cornibus ejus quatuor basilicas et clausura religiosa veluti pro munimine fortissimo posuit.“ *Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu, Polonica*, 75, f. 194, quoted by BERNATOWICZ, Tadeusz. Nesvisium metropolis ducatus. Nieznany przykład urbanistyki manierystycznej. In *Artes atque humaniora. Studia Stanisłao Mossakowski sexagenario dicata*. Ed. A. Rottemund. Warszawa: Instytut Sztuki PAN, 1998, p. 166.

²⁵ BERNATOWICZ, Tadeusz. Kościół i klasztor Benedyktynów. In *Sztuka kresów wschodnich*, t. 2. Ed. J. Ostrowski. Kraków: Oficyna Wydawnicza Text, 1996, pp. 127–137.

four angels²⁶. The composition was crowned by a scene of the Crucifixion, with the figures of Mary and the Apostle John. The ciborium was adorned with alabaster figures of St. Barbara and St. Catherine²⁷. The six side altars were dedicated to Our Lady of the Scapular²⁸, St. Anthony, St. Christina, St. Anne (the latter executed in alabaster), as well as to St. Euphemia and St. Sabina²⁹ and other saints³⁰. The altar with the image of the Holy Family was complemented by sculptures of St. Benedict, St. Scholastica and St. Placid. At the walls were sculptures of the Passion, the Virgin Mary, images of St. Catherine, St. Onuphrius and St. Barbara.

The decor was complemented by a pulpit (dated 1745³¹), confessional boxes and an organ case (dated 1762)³², and other musical instruments (a positive organ, five violins, a bass viol, and two flutes). Above the entrance to the temple was a plaque with the inscription:

Bogu Wszeczmocnemu w Trójcy Świętej, Stwórcy wszelkiego stworzenia, Królowi nad królami, Panu nad pany i Maryi Pannie Najświętszej, wszystkim duchom niebieskim i świętej Eufemiej patronce najdosłojniejszej Mikołaj Krzysztof Radziwiłł Książę na Ołyce i Nieswizu, Grobu Pańskiego Kawaler i Helżbieta Eufemia z Wiśniowa z fundamentów ze wszystkim wywiedli i pokornie Bogu na chwałę nieustającą ofiarowali Roku Pańskiego 1593.

[translation: To Almighty God in the Holy Trinity, the Creator of all creation, the King of kings, the Lord of lords, and to the Most Holy Virgin Mary, to all the heavenly spirits, and to Saint Euphemia, most exalted patroness – Mikołaj Krzysztof Radziwiłł, Prince of Ołyka and Nesvizh, Knight of the Holy Sepulchre, together with Elżbieta Eufemia née Wiśniowiecka, raised this from the very foundations with all its structures, and humbly dedicated it to God for everlasting glory in the Year of Our Lord 1593]³³.

²⁶ ЯРАШЭВІЧ, Аляксандр. Нясвіжскі касцёл бенедыктынак. Наша вера, 1998, No. 2(5), pp. 2–4. In 1636 Albrycht Stanisław donated 10 thousand florins for the construction of the church.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Her image on canvas was adorned with a silver, gilded robe with crowns set with precious stones and pearls, as well as a flower featuring a large ruby at its center. Ibidem.

²⁹ The last of these was made between 1648 and 1650 and included depictions of St. Casimir and St. John, alluding to King John Casimir (1648–1667). Ibid.

³⁰ They are now in the Transfiguration Church in the village of Novaya Mysh, see photos. <https://polesie.org/498/nowa-mysz-i-jej-mieszkaney/> 1009.2024. The monastery also owned other paintings, such as „St. Ann the Third” and sculptures, see JANONIENĖ, Rūta. Kristinos Eufemijos Radvilaitės atvaizdai su šventųjų „kaukėmis” – identifikacijos bandymas. *Acta Academiae Artium Vilnensis*, 2020, Nr. 96, p. 87–105.

³¹ The pulpit, dating from 1745 and featuring Rococo elements, has been preserved; its canopy was crowned by a figure of the Archangel Michael, and its foundress was abbess Florentyna Chrzanowska. ЯРАШЭВІЧ, Аляксандр. Нясвіжскі касцёл. *Наша Вера*, 1998, No. 2(5).

³² Funded by abbess Eufemia Szaniawska.

³³ Excerpt z tablic marmurowych i kamiennych w kościele wielbnych Panien Benedyktynek Nieświeskich fundacyi Jaśnie Oświeconego Ks[ia]żenia Je[g]o M[is]ci Mikołaja Krzysztopha Radziwiłł[is]a, na Ołyce

The portrait of the duchess was placed in the sacristy, and Mikołaj Krzysztof “najmilszej żonie swojej ustnie i przez testament proszony ze łzami te słowa na pamiątkę wyrazić kazał: chwała jej jako kwiat na polu zostający, jeszcze nie dokończyła życia swego lat dwudziestu siedmiu, zesłała pobożnie z tego świata [...] zostawiwszy pięć synów i trzy córki” [*translation*: at the earnest request of his most beloved wife, expressed in person and in her will, with tears bade these words be inscribed in her memory: her glory is like a flower remaining in the field; she had not yet completed her twenty-seventh year when she departed this world piously [...] leaving behind five sons and three daughters]³⁴. In addition to enumerating the virtues of the deceased, the inscription also guaranteed an annual anniversary Mass.

Separate inscriptions and marble epitaphs commemorated the prince's two deceased daughters – “their father stricken with sorrow, filled with grief”: Krystyna, offered to the convent (“lubo cię nie przyszło w poczet błogosławionego zgromadzenia wielebnych tych sióstr żywej Bogu na usługę oddać”³⁵ [*translation*: though it did not befall you to be given alive into the company of that blessed assembly of these venerable sisters, to serve God]), who died at the age of six (a plaque placed beside the altar of St. Christina); and Katarzyna, to whom her father had said:

napomniał [...] żebym w tym zgromadzeniu świątobliwym WW. Panien Sióstr klasztoru tego bieg życia mego odprawiała, z wielką ochotą pozwoliłam na to i do skutku przywieźć miałam intencyją, ale oto Ojcu Niebieskiemu [...] inaczej się podobało.

[*translation*: I urged [...] that I should pass the course of my life in this holy congregation of the Reverend Ladies, the Sisters of this monastery; I consented to this with great willingness and intended to bring it to fulfilment, yet it pleased the Heavenly Father [...] to ordain otherwise]³⁶.

The girl “fell asleep in the Lord” one year after her twin sister³⁷. Cardinal Jerzy Radziwiłł, the brother of the benefactor, also took steps to secure appropriate indulgences. On 5 September 1598, at the founder's request, Pope Clement VIII granted an indulgence applicable to the soul in purgatory each time Mass was celebrated in the chapel; after the chapel was placed under monastic clausura, this privilege was, “at the

i Nieświeżu etc. z łacińskiego na polski język przetłumaczone, niektóre, a inne, tak jak napisane na kamieniach wyryto [*translation*: Excerpt from the Marble and Stone Tablets in the Church of the Reverend Benedictine Nuns of Nesvizh, Founded by His Most Serene Highness Prince Mikołaj Krzysztof Radziwiłł of Ołyka and Nesvizh, etc.; Some Translated from Latin into Polish, Others Reproduced Exactly as Inscribed on the Stones]. AGAD, AR, 1/354/0/35/91.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ For a description see TAUROGIŃSKI, Bolesław. *Z dziejów Nieświeża*. Warszawa: Archiwum Ordynacji Nieświeskiej, 1937, pp. 241–247.

instance” of the founder, transferred to the altar of St. Christina (19 July 1600). Pope Paul V likewise issued a special *breve* in 1616 concerning the Benedictine foundation in Nesvizh, and already in 1597 a bull had been obtained placing the monastery under the jurisdiction of the local bishop. In addition, “ad instantiam et supplicationem” of the founder, an Office for the feast of St. Euphemia was approved, the text of which was published in Rome in 1605³⁸.

The church was the centre of the community’s prayer life; the Benedictine nuns cared for the liturgical furnishings, including monstrances, four chalices, patens, a crucifix, reliquaries, and numerous vestments. It was here that ceremonies of particular importance to the community took place. On 25 July 1598, the benediction of Anna Świętosławska (1560–1608), the first abbess, was held, and in August the bishop consecrated eleven nuns. Subsequent consecrations occurred in 1601 (ten sisters) and on 15 July 1603 (four sisters). Later, on 8 September 1611, Brądzberska (of Brunsberg, 1597–1630) received the abbatial benediction as the second abbess, and on 22 September 1613, nine sisters were consecrated “in the presence of the founder”³⁹.

Organisation of spiritual life in the Nesvizh convent

In the Chełmno convent, the order of prayers, daily duties, and the manner of conducting ceremonies had been firmly established in accordance with the manuscript Rule of St Benedict. Nevertheless, the nuns sent to establish the foundation in Nesvizh inquired about many matters vital to them, which they carefully noted to guide them in how to conduct themselves in spiritual affairs and in the practical aspects of daily life. They believed, after all, that “with human memory fading, good customs fade as well”⁴⁰. In this situation, abbess Mortęska deemed it advantageous for the sisters to receive texts that were transcribed correctly and approved by the Holy See⁴¹. To this end, in 1603, she addressed herself directly to Pope Clement VIII. One of the essential reasons for seeking the approval of the rule was, therefore, the fact that

³⁸ *Officium In festo S. Euphemiae virginis et Martyris pro templo Niesvicensi Sacrarum Virginum Ordinis S. Benedicti*. Romae: [Apud Aloysium Zanettum?] 1605: „Officium supradictum duplex cum octava pro festo Sanctae Euphemiae... ex ordine... sacra Rituu[m] Congregatio approbavit, et ut a Monialibus monasterii Sanctae Euphemiae... licentiam concessit, ad instantiam et supplicationem... Nicolai Christophori Radzivill... dicti monasterii fundatoris.” See DRUNGILIENĖ, Gita. *Lietuvos Didžiosios Kunigaikštystės katalikiškoji hagiografija: recepcija, sklaida ir šventųjų kulto bruožai XIV a. pabaigoje – XVII a. pradžioje*. Daktaro disertacija. Vilnius, 2016, p. 97.

³⁹ Excerpt z tablic marmurowych...

⁴⁰ *Kronika benedyktynek chełmińskich*. Ed. W. Szoldrski. Pelplin: Drukarnia i księgarnia Kurii Biskupiej, 1937, pp. 9–12, 54.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 41.

siostry [które] z woli Bożej do innych klasztorów porządnie są posłane, nie mają spisanych porządków, ani reguły statecznie przełożonej i w żadnej rzeczy nie objaśnionej, ale tylko z obyczajami dobrymi zwyczajem nabytymi, fundatorom klasztorów są oddane, w których acz z łaską Bożą nie bez pożytku trwają, jednak zawistny nieprzyjaciel dusz niewinnych tego dobra zajrzeć [zazdrościć] mógłby za czasem, albo umysł prosty skrzywić i nadwątlić go, albo niepewnością postanowienia swego w zakonnym rządzie sturbować [niepokoić] spokojnych, albo za czasem do szkodliwej wolności przywieść.

[translation: the sisters who, by God's will, are properly sent to other convents have neither written ordinances nor a rule formally established and clarified in any respect, but are entrusted to the founders of the convents solely on the basis of good habits acquired through custom. Although, by God's grace, they persist there not without benefit, the envious enemy of innocent souls might in time cast an evil eye upon this good – either by distorting and weakening a simple mind, or by troubling the peaceful with uncertainty regarding their monastic governance, or even by leading them, eventually, toward harmful permissiveness]⁴².

Another argument was the necessity of establishing common principles for all newly founded convents, as well as the importance of possessing a rule properly explained and adapted to the life of a female religious community in the post-Tridentine era⁴³. It concerned, in particular, uniform principles for the formation of novices, from which arise mutual counsel, prayer, assistance in need, admonition, and the like, as well as the provision of a good example for secular young women entrusted to the convent for their upbringing⁴⁴. Ultimately, in 1605, a reformed rule⁴⁵, together with declarations and the novitiate order, was promulgated, constituting an adaptation of St. Benedict's text to the needs of monastic life following the decrees of the Council of Trent. The text was published in 1606⁴⁶, the title indicates that the Reformed Rule also applies to the Nesvizh convent.

⁴² Ibid., p. 81.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 81. Mortęska, after numerous solicitations, received the previously written customs of the Benedictine Order in Rome, which, however, proved to be unsuitable for Polish conditions. Ibid., p. 42. Other nuns in Europe also sought to develop a feminized version of the Rule of St. Benedict, see ALBAREDA, Anselm. *Bibliografía de la Regla Benedictina*. Montserrat: Monestir de Montserrat, 1933.

⁴⁴ *Kronika benedyktynek chełmińskich*. Ed. W. Szoldrski. Pelplin: Drukarnia i księgarnia Kurii Biskupiej, 1937, p. 86.

⁴⁵ *Reguła świętego Benedicta z łacińskiego przetłumaczona i z reformacją porządków chełmińskiego, toruńskiego, żarnowieckiego, nieświeskiego, y innych [...] klasztorów panieńskich...* (1606, 1635, 1737). For the elaboration see BORKOWSKA, Małgorzata. *Zakony żeńskie w Polsce w epoce nowożytnej*. Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 2010, pp. 139–147.

⁴⁶ BORKOWSKA, Małgorzata. *Potrydencka wersja Reguły św. Benedykta*. In: *Za przewodem Ewangelii. Profesja monastyczna*. Tyniec: Wydawnictwo Benedyktynów, 1986, pp. 249–262; BORKOWSKA, Małgorzata. Two Attempts at Self-Government of Feminine Religious Institutes in Poland. *Studia Monastica*, 1981, vol. 23, pp. 169–179.

The Abbess of Nesvizh

nie mogąc sama do Chełmna przyjechać dla niesposobności zdrowia i niepokojów, które natenczas były w Koronie Polskiej, posłała tu dwu kapłanów swych, żądając, abyśmy ją i ze wszystkim konwentem jej do uczestnictwa tych łask od Ojca św. danych i porządków na reformacji naszej wedle reguły św. Benedykta sporządzonych przypuścili. Co panna ksieni i ze wszystkim zgromadzeniem z wielką ochotą i miłością uczyniła. Naprzód posłała jej regułę św. Benedykta z deklaracjami nowo drukowaną, ćwiczenie do nowicjatu.

[translation: Being unable to come to Chełmno herself because of ill health and the disturbances that were then afflicting the Kingdom of Poland, she sent two of her priests here, requesting that we admit her and her entire convent to participation in the graces granted by the Holy Father and in the ordinances drawn up for our reform according to the Rule of St. Benedict. This the abbess, together with the whole community, carried out with great willingness and charity. First, she sent her the newly printed Rule of St. Benedict with the declarations, and the exercises for the novitiate]⁴⁷.

The reformed rule also applied to the convents that would later join the Chełmno congregation, including the foundations established from Nesvizh, for it was intended to ensure uniform formation and mutual assistance among the individual convents – twenty-two houses were established in the former Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth. Meanwhile, in the Diocese of Vilnius, Bishop Eustachy Wołłowicz (1572–1630) resolved to prepare a new edition for the Benedictine nuns under his jurisdiction – one more consistent with the original text and perhaps also easier for the confessors, who were mainly Benedictines, to accept⁴⁸ (see illus. 1). Ultimately, the text remained in a seventeenth-century manuscript⁴⁹, and a characteristic feature of the Benedictine convents in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was their use of editions of the rule other than the reformed one. This had considerable significance, for monastic life was carried out in accordance with the principles described in the rule and was embedded within the cycle of the liturgical year and the daily choral prayer. Above all, the motherhouse ensured the provision of appropriate liturgical equipment: for the choir nuns, this included Latin breviaries, diurnals, the Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary, as well as “Polish books for reading and prayer,” together with manuscript meditations and spiritual exercises⁵⁰.

⁴⁷ *Kronika benedyktynek chełmińskich*. Ed. W. Szoldrski. Pelplin: Drukarnia i księgarnia Kurii Biskupiej, 1937, p. 91.

⁴⁸ Copies of the manuscript of this version of the rule have survived in the Abbeys of Żarnowiec and Sierpc.

⁴⁹ It was printed in Lviv in 1884, see Drungilienė, Gita. Kauno ir Kražių benediktinių įžadų aktai (XVII a. – XIX a. 2 pusė). In *Benediktiniškoji tradicija Lietuvoje*. Sudarė Liudas Jovaiša. Vilnius: Aidai, 2008, p. 96.

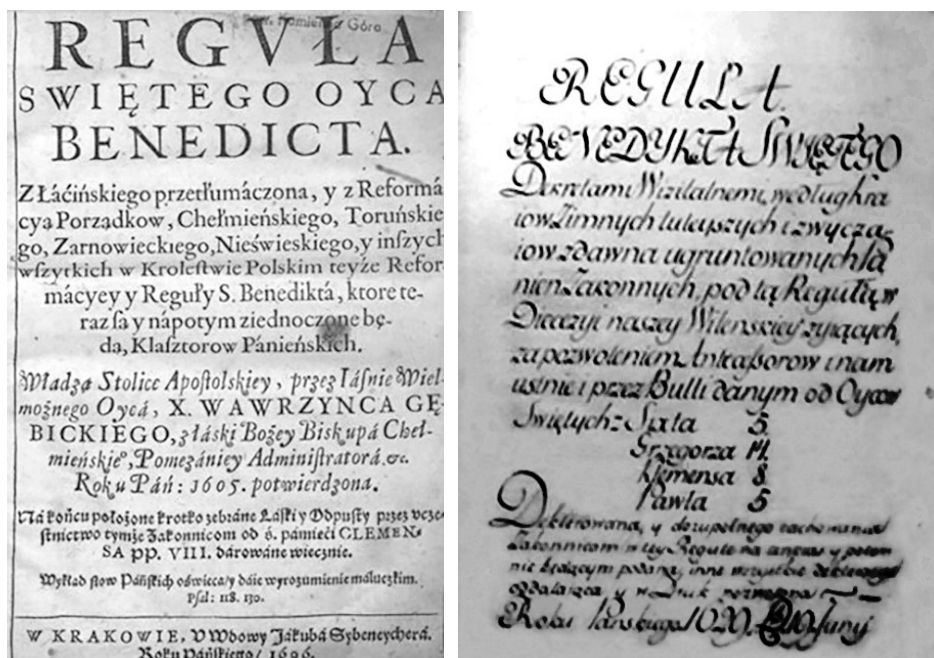
⁵⁰ *Kronika benedyktynek chełmińskich*. Ed. W. Szoldrski. Pelplin: Drukarnia i księgarnia Kurii Biskupiej, 1937, p. 41. The nuns sent to Toruń received similar supplies, which at that time included Polish books such as the Lives of the Saints (e. g. *Zywoty Świętych Stárego y nowego zákonu*, Piotra Skargi, ed. 1612,

From Chełmno, the sisters brought texts “on mortification, on religious vows and many other folios about spiritual exercise”⁵¹. These became the nucleus of the convent library, which, in subsequent years, comprised 225 titles in 437 copies, Polish books, and 79 Latin books⁵². The collection included theological works, polemical, hagiographic and dogmatic literature, as well as legal and medical treatises and historiographical writings. Some books from Nesvizh were sent to other convents, for example, to Vilnius, the passion text *Morze czerwone* (*The Red Sea*) by D. Piatti (Cracow 1615), meditations by Rochowicz and by Luis de la Puente (Vilnius 1647), and St Bonaventure’s *Sześć skrzydeł przełożeńskich* (*Six Wings of Superiority*). There is also evidence of a special collection for chaplains (60 titles in 79 volumes) and six volumes placed in the refectory, where there was “a painted lectern for reading during mealtimes, with a lockable cupboard, bound in iron for the storage of books”.

1613, 1615, 1619, 1629), On the Imitation of the Lord Jesus (O nasladowaniu Pana Christusa księ czworo przez wielbego Thomasza z Kempis, w Krakowie 1608), The Guide (Przewodnik Grzesznych Ludzi Ludwika z Grenady, w Krakowie u Matteusza Siebeneychera 1567, 1570, 1579), The Image of the Christian Life (Wizerunk żywota Chrześcijańskiego Jana Wuchalisza, 1581, 1584), The Spiritual Mirror (see Zwierciadło Duchowney łaski Mechtyldy s. We Lwowie, u Sebástyaná Nowogorskiego 1645), Catechism (e.g. Katechizm albo Wizerunk prawéy wiary [Kraków 1567]) and The Spiritual Conversation of St Augustine (see Rozmyślania nabożne, św. Augustyn, W Krakowie, w drukarni Andrzeja Piotrkowczyka 1620), *Kronika benedyktynek chełmińskich*. Ed. W. Szoldrski. Pelplin: Drukarnia i księgarnia Kurii Biskupiej, 1937, p. 20. The Jesuits in Toruń, on the other hand, additionally received Cassian’s books, as well as church and kitchen equipment. *Kronika benedyktynek chełmińskich*. Ed. W. Szoldrski. Pelplin: Drukarnia i księgarnia Kurii Biskupiej, 1937, pp. 56–57. Most likely, therefore, all titles available and desired on the occasion of a new foundation were given each time, for example, in 1603, Bibles, postills, the Guide (Przewodnik Grzesznych Ludzi Ludwika z Grenady, w Krakowie u Matteusza Siebeneychera 1567, 1570, 1579 the Heavenly Wicket (Fortka Niebieska, To iest Dzielne ćwiczenia żywota Duchownego, Drukowano w Wilnie, v Janá Kárcaná. Roku 1588, w Krakowie 1599), On the Four Last Things (see Wyroki Boskie O Czterech Rzeczach Ostatecznych Wojciecha Tylkowskiego, W Poznaniu: w Drukami I.K.M. Coli: Soc: Jesu, 1685), Desiderosus (Desiderosvs Abo Scieszka Do Miłości Bożej, W Krakowie: W Drukami Andrzeia Piotrkowczyka, 1589), the Larder or Cupboard (Szafarnia obroków duchownych Pawła Simpliciana, [Kraków 1602]), Spiritual Goods (Dobra duchowne stanu zakonnego... przez Jeronima Plata opisane, W Kaliszu, w drukamiey Wojciecha Gedeliusza, 1606), The Life of the Virgin Mary (Żywot Panny Mariey Mátki P. Iezusowey Jana Wuchalusza, w Krakowie, w Drukarni Jak. Sibeneychera, Roku Páńskiego 1597), books by Francis Arias (Zdroy wody żywey, w Krakowie: w Drukarni Jana Szarffenbergera, 1611; Traktat Abo Nauka o Różanym Wianku, W Krakowie: w Drukarni Jana Szarffenbergera, 1611) and Rosignolius (O Ćwiczeniu w Chrzescianskiej doskonalosci, Bernardyna Rossignoliusza, W Poznaniu: w Drukamiey Jana Wolraba, 1612), were also given to the Bysławek expedition. *Kronika benedyktynek chełmińskich*. Ed. W. Szoldrski. Pelplin: Drukarnia i księgarnia Kurii Biskupiej, 1937, p. 79. Even more books were sent to the foundation in Poznań, *ibid.*, p. 106.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

⁵² GWIOŹDZIK, Jolanta. Staropolski księgozbiór panien benedyktynek z Nieświeża. Z dziejów fundacji Mikołaja Krzysztofa Radziwiłła Sierotki. In *Badania księgozbiorów Radziwiłłów. Materiały międzynarodowej sesji Olsztyn 6–7 października 1994 r.* Warszawa: Biblioteka Narodowa, 1995, pp. 101–110.



Illus. 1 Title page of the Reformed Rule of 1606 and the Rule as compiled by Bishop Wołłowicz. The collections of the abbey of the Benedictine nuns in Krzeszów and the archives of the Benedictine nuns of Vilnius in Żarnowiec.

There must also have been a separate collection of liturgical texts (see illus. 2), as sources concerning other Nesvizh foundations attest⁵³. The nuns certainly brought with them from their motherhouse the essential books required for the celebration of the liturgy. These comprised the proper texts (the breviary together with its auxiliary volumes – including the psalter, diurnal, martyrology, patronal book, and antiphonary – and the missal with its auxiliary books, e.g., the gradual), as well as works explaining how particular actions were to be performed during the conduct of worship (ceremonials, rubrics, rituals, and processions).

The daily schedule time was allocated for both communal (e.g., in the refectory, the chapter house or during manual labour) and individual reading, and book reading was regarded as the most desirable occupation. However, it was subject to supervision,

⁵³ VARSACKYTĖ, Rasa. XVII–XVIII a. Kauno benediktinių vienuolyno kasdienybės etudai. In *Benediktiniškoji tradicija Lietuvoje*. Sudarė L. Jovaiša. Vilnius: Aidai, 2008, pp. 83–94. The remains of the Vilnius convent library now include 147 titles against 210 in 541 volumes according to 1804 data. GWIOŹDZIK, Jolanta. Dzieje księgozbiorów żeńskich klasztorów kontemplacyjnych wschodnich ziem dawnej Rzeczypospolitej w XIX wieku. In *Kultura książki ziem wschodniego i południowego pogranicza Polski (XVI–XX wiek): paralele i różnice*. Ed. J. Gwioździk, E. Różycki. Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, pp. 444–456.

particularly in the novitiate⁵⁴. At the abbess's request, the founder also undertook the purchase of spiritual books⁵⁵. Some texts were directly addressed to the nuns, e.g. Kasper Wilkowski regarded his translation work of Miguel de Comalada's allegorical devotional treatise *Spill de la vida religiosa*⁵⁶ as an atonement for past sins, and believed it would be especially profitable for religious women, at a time when Radziwiłł was planning the foundation of the Benedictine convent in Nesvizh⁵⁷.



Illus. 2 The Graduale “pro cenobio Niesvisiensi” of 1616 and the Roman Missal from the Nesvizh Convent Archive of the Benedictine nuns of Vilnius in Żarnowiec.

Also, Nesvizh confessor Stanisław Rochowicz considered his translation of the anonymous work *Kąpiel duszna* (*Spiritual Bath*, Vilnius 1609) to be “a book of spiritual delights, a mirror for the servants of Christ, a key to paradise, the fountainhead of all

⁵⁴ GWIOŹDZIK, Jolanta. *Kultura pisma i książki w żeńskich klasztorach kontemplacyjnych dawnej Rzeczypospolitej XVI–XVIII wieku*. Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 2015.

⁵⁵ BORKOWSKA, Małgorzata. Mikołaj Krzysztof Radziwiłł jako fundator benedyktynów. In *Benedyktyni – kości tradycja Lietuvoje*. Sudarė L. Jovaiša. Vilnius: Aidai, 2008, p. 51. Elżbieta Anastazja Radziwiłłówna, daughter of Albrecht Władysław, in a letter to Michał Kazimierz, the sixth Ordynat of Nesvizh, asked to be sent a breviary in the Antverpia edition, a diurnal, the Small Office and the Lives of the Saints. AGAD, AR, 1/354/0/4/652.

⁵⁶ BOVER, August. *Desiderosus albo ścieżka do Miłości Bożej i do doskonałości żywota chrześcijańskiego*. Polski przekład XV-wiecznej anonimowej powieści katalońskiej „Spill de la vida religiosa”. In *Studia iberystyczne. Almanach kataloński*. Ed. T. Kminowicz-Jaśkowska, F. Nawrocka. Kraków: Wydawnictwo UJ, 2005, p. 171–182.

⁵⁷ See HANUSIEWICZ-LAVALLE, Mirosława. Rozum mój w pojęcie wezmę. Sceptycyzm fideistyczny w świadectwie konwersji Kaspra Wilkowskiego. *Pamiętnik Literacki*, 2018, R. 4, pp. 109–110.

spiritual books and exercises, a river of wisdom”⁵⁸. He judged it particularly important for nuns, even though, as he noted, the Nesvizh convent was by no means lacking in learned and devotional books. The dedicatory preface, although written according to the conventions of such texts, nonetheless offers an image of the Nesvizh community that allows us to discern the qualities most highly esteemed in nuns at the time.

Rochowicz concluded that the abbess Dorota Brądzberska, as well as the nuns subordinate to her, were characterized by a life of austerity, mortification, diligent and constant service to God and frequent use of the sacraments:

Wiem ja dobrze, iż do dobrego i porządnego ćwiczenia i życia klasztorowi nieświeżkiemu na niczym nie schodzi, który stąd wielkie i szerokie zalecenie między ludźmi ma.

*[translation: I know myself well that for good and orderly exercise and life to the Nesvizh monastery there is nothing that goes wrong, which hence has a great and wide recommendation among the people]*⁵⁹.

The Nesvizh convent had an average of 40 nuns. However, in the first half of the 17th century, there were 60, and they came not only from magnate and noble families but also from numerous townswomen in Vilnius and Nesvizh, among others⁶⁰. The establishment of the church and convent was directly shaped by Mikołaj Krzysztof Radziwiłł, who took care to ensure both the nuns’ economic security and their spiritual well-being. The abbesses regularly addressed him, typically asking for protection and assistance, relying on the “gracious favour” of their patron, and continually assuring him of their prayers for the entire family⁶¹. After the death of Mikołaj Krzysztof, the founding family continued to extend its patronage to the Benedictine nuns – most visibly and most intensively during the period when Krystyna Eufemia Radziwiłłówna entered the Nesvizh convent. During her time in the convent and later as abbess, the community experienced its most dynamic development; new foundations were established, and the sisters were sent to Vilnius (1620), Kaunas (1624), Minsk (1631), Smolensk (1638), and Orsha (1640)⁶².

⁵⁸ *Kąpiel duszna Albo ćwiczenie żywota duchownego. Księga dawna od iednego zakonnika bogoboynego reguły S. Benedykta we Włoszech napisana, y tu w Polsce Łacińskim ięzykiem wydrukowana... przetłumaczona Przez X. Stanisława Rochowicza.* W Wilnie: u Jana Karcana, 1609, f. 3 r.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ BORKOWSKA, Małgorzata. Leksykon zakonnic polskich epoki przedrozbiorowej. T. 3. *Wielkie Księstwo Litewskie i Ziemie Ruskie Korony Polskiej.* Warszawa: DIG, 2008, pp. 83–107.

⁶¹ This was noted by Abbess Dorota Brądzberska in a letter of 14 June 1626. AGAD, AR, V, No. 1365.

⁶² BORKOWSKA, Małgorzata. Problemy siedemnastowiecznych fundacji benedyktynek na Litwie w świetle korespondencji. *Nasza Przyszłość*, 1993, t. 80, pp. 265–308.

Krystyna Eufemia Radziwiłłówna – Her Grace the Princess, the abbess of Nesvizh

Krystyna Euphemia's father was Stanisław Radziwiłł (1559–1599), Mikołaj Krzysztof Radziwiłł's youngest brother, the first Ordynat (holder of an entailed estate) of Ołyka and Grand Marshal of Lithuania, who, after converting from Calvinism in 1574, became renowned for his religious zeal (hence his sobriquet *Pius*, "the Pious"⁶³). In his will he instructed his children:

by miały wychowanie dobre, synowie aby do szkoły byli posłani do Collegium Wileńskie[go] albo [...] gdzie indziej ich na naukę posłać, tylkoż przeć się do Ojców Jezuitów [...], tam mają być na nauce do dwudziestu lat wieku swe[go], a cztery lata w Niemczech i we Włoszech aby na naukach byli dla kontynuowania nauk swoich, Córki zaś, Halzuchna i Kristina, aby byli przy matce⁶⁴ albo gdzie w klasztorze Panieńskim jeśli by się tak matce ich widziało. Przy tem proszę i napominam Dziaćki swe miłe tak i Syny jako i Córki swoje, aby Panu Bogu wszechmogącemu, w wierze Katolickiej Rzymskiej w pobożnym życiu służyli.

[translation: to be given a good upbringing: the sons are to be sent to school at the Vilnius Collegium or [...] elsewhere for their education, but preferably to the Fathers of the Society of Jesus [...], where they are to be educated until the age of twenty, and then to pursue their studies for four years in Germany and Italy, to perfect their learning; and the daughters, Elżbieta and Krystyna, are to remain with their mother or in a convent for maidens, should their mother deem it proper. At the same time, I ask and exhort my beloved children, both sons and daughters, to serve the Lord God Almighty, in the Roman Catholic faith, in a pious life]⁶⁵.

In accordance with his will, his sons Albrycht Stanisław (1593–1656), later the third Ordynat, and Mikołaj Krzysztof (1589–1614), later the second Ordynat, studied first at the Vilnius Academy, and subsequently for several years at the universities of Würzburg, Louvain, and Bologna⁶⁶. Their sister Elżbieta (1592–1627), after completing her monastic education, became the wife of Andrzej Jerzy Sapieha (and later of Mikołaj Zawisza),

⁶³ He made many pilgrimages to popular places of worship in Europe and the Republic, followed strict religious practices, and was the translator of a work on the truths of the faith *Oręż duchowne prawowitego rycerza chrześcijańskiego* (*The Spiritual Arms of the Rightful Christian Knight*), Kraków, 1591.

⁶⁴ Marianna Myszcanka (1563–1600), daughter of Volyn castellan Michał Myszk, died a year after her husband, in 1600.

⁶⁵ Testament Stanisława Radziwiłła, księcia na Ołyce i Nieświeżu, starosty generalnego żmudzkiego, w Ołyce, 8 września 1598 roku [*translation: The Last Will and Testament of Stanisław Radziwiłł, Prince of Ołyka and Nesvizh, General Starosta of Samogitia, Ołyka, 8 September 1598*]. AGAD, AR XI, 68, pp. 58–59; CHOWAŃSKA, Emilia. Testament Stanisława Radziwiłła, księcia na Ołyce i Nieświeżu, starosty generalnego żmudzkiego z 8 września 1598 roku, znajdujący się w zbiorach Archiwum Głównego Akt Dawnych w Warszawie. *Białostockie Teki Historyczne*, 2012, t. 10, p. 257.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 253.

whereas Krystyna Eufemia (1598–1658)⁶⁷, in accordance with the wishes of her guardians, especially her uncle Mikołaj Krzysztof Radziwiłł, was, in 1605, “in the underage years” entrusted to the Benedictine nuns of Nesvizh. The guardians paid the requisite annual fees “for her upbringing and needs appropriate to her station”⁶⁸ (see illus. 3).

Krystyna Eufemia spent her early years in a convent school, whose programme focused on the education and upbringing of lay girls. The daily schedule resembled that prescribed for the novices; instruction lasted from 5 to 6 hours and included reading, writing, arithmetic, singing, and handicrafts (such as embroidery). Musical training was also provided in Nesvizh⁶⁹. The rule further stipulated that lay girls “tak uczyć i szanować w Panu Bogu rozkazujemy, żeby i na świecie po nich znać było, że się w klasztorze chowały i ćwiczyły” [*translation*: are to be taught and nurtured in the Lord God in such a manner that it may be known in the world that they were brought up and trained in the convent]⁷⁰. She began her novitiate on 2 July 1614, after completing one year of probation. This period constituted the principal stage of monastic formation; the ideal nun was to be “obedient to her superiors, useful to everyone. Home sweet, it is not upsetting to anyone. In question prudent, in response, cautious speech wise [...] constantly at work, unfit for idleness, swift in obedience, grateful to the angels, vigilant in prayer, urgent in meditation, constant in worship. [...] In hot perfection, walking in the way of the Lord, willing to serve God”⁷¹.

The next stage of religious life was profession, which Krystyna Eufemia made only in 1621, about which she wrote as follows:

idąc za wolą i powołaniem Pana Boga wszechmogące[go], wzięwszy przed się stan bogomyślny zakonny, za wiadomością, radą i błogosławieństwem księcia Jego Mości Pana stryja i opiekuna mojego, wstąpiłam do Zakonu św. Benedikta klasztoru nieświeskiego, gdzie czas niemam będąc, a już w opiece rodzonego brata mego [...] Albrychta Stanisława Radziwiłła [...] za wiadomością J.Ks.M. a pomocą Bożą, oddawszy się statecznie na chwałę i służbę Jego świętą, uczyniłam profesję w tym Zakonie św. Benedykta.

[translation: Following the will and calling of Almighty God, having resolved upon the devout monastic state, and with the knowledge, counsel, and blessing of His

⁶⁷ Eufemia Radziwiłłówna. PSB, Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1987, t. 30.

⁶⁸ Umowa między Albrychtem Stanisławem Radziwiłłem a Krystyną Eufemią Radziwiłłówną i Dorotą Brądzberką, księżnią klasztoru nieświeskiego [*translation*: Agreement between Albrycht Stanisław Radziwiłł and Krystyna Eufemia Radziwiłłówna and Dorota Brądzberska, abbess of the Nesvizh convent]. AGAD, AR XI, 69, f. 10.

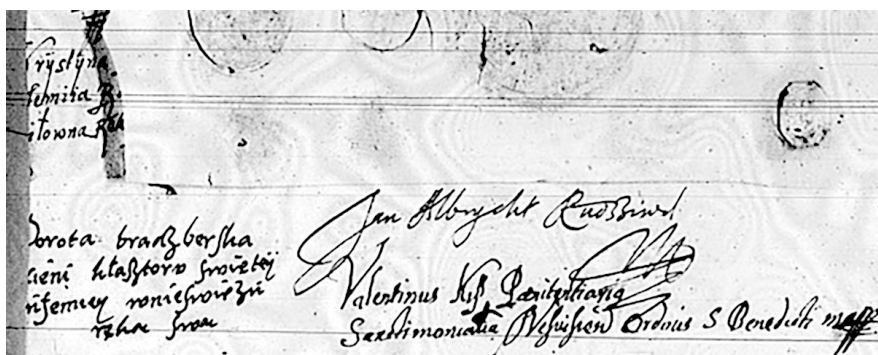
⁶⁹ ЯРАШЭВІЧ, Аляксандр. Нясвіжскі касцёл бенедыктынак. *Наша Вера*, 1998, No. 2(5), pp. 2–4.

⁷⁰ Por. także ROZYNKOWSKI, Waldemar. Starania ksieni Magdaleny Morteskiej o rozwój szkolnictwa katolickiego. *Nasza Przyszłość*, 2012, Nr. 117.

⁷¹ GWIOŹDZIK, Jolanta. Benedyktynka doskonała (Pektoralik duchowny 1681). In *Monastycyzm XV–XVIII wieku. Tradycja średniowieczna wobec wyzwań nowożytnego humanizmu*. Ed. M. T. Gronowski, P. Urbański. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2016, pp. 80–114.

*Grace the Prince, my uncle and guardian, I entered the Order of St Benedict in the convent of Nesvizh. Having spent no small time there, and now under the care of my own brother [...] Albrycht Stanisław Radziwiłł [...], with the knowledge of His Princely Grace and with God's help, having steadfastly dedicated myself to His holy glory and service, I made my profession in this Order of St Benedict*⁷².

Accordingly, the matter of her dowry was settled in 1629⁷³.



Illus. 3 Pre-nuptial agreement between Jan Albrycht Radziwiłł, Krystyna Eufemia Radziwiłłówna and Dorota Brądzberska, Abbess of Nieświeska from 1621. AGAD, AR XI, 69, f. 9

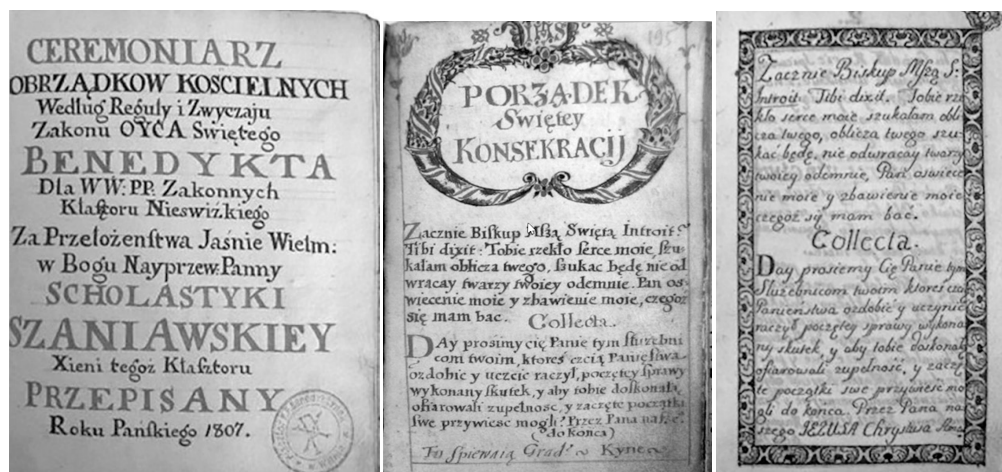
Ceremoniarz obrządków kościelnych, a text so important and so widely used that it was copied in 1807, during the time of abbess Scholastyka Szaniawska (see illus. 4), specified the order for admission to the order, the making of professions, consecrations and benedictions, as well as the procedure for electing superiors. It also established the daily schedule for various days of the liturgical year and the manner of solemnly celebrating feasts, e.g. the Triduum Sacrum was conducted with the participation of a chapel ensemble and incorporated theatrical elements⁷⁴. In addition, occasional prints

⁷² Zapis Doroty Brądzberkiej, ksieni klasztoru nieświeskiego oraz Krystyny Eufemii Radziwiłłówny [translation: The Deed of Dorota Brądzberska, abbess of the Nesvizh convent, and Krystyna Euphemia Radziwiłłówna]. AGAD, AR XI, 69, f. 14.

⁷³ Zapis (kwitacja) między Dorotą Brądzberką, ksienią klasztoru nieświeskiego, Albrychtem Stanisławem Radziwiłłem a Krystyną Eufemią Radziwiłłówną 1629 [translation: Receipt (Quitclaim) between Dorota Brądzberska, abbess of the Nesvizh convent, Albrycht Stanisław Radziwiłł, and Krystyna Euphemia Radziwiłłówna, 1629]. AGAD, AR XI, sygn. 69, c. 13–16. The document indicates that Radziwiłłówna received her dowry drawn from three portions of the family estates; she was given 12,000 florins and the financial provisions, which had been converted to the benefit of our convent and ourselves, f. 14.

⁷⁴ Manuscript copy in the Abbey of Żarnowiec, f. 12. See BORKOWSKA, Małgorzata. Triduum Sacrum u benedyktynek nieświeskich w XVIII wieku. *Nasza Przyszłość*, 1991, t. 76, pp. 315–328. Prayers to St Euphemia were believed to ward off the threat of wolf attacks. The celebrations were so important to the nuns that on several occasions they asked Jan Jerzy Radziwiłł to lend them the appropriate fabric for the Holy Sepulchre. See: Oświeconemu Książęciu na Ołyce i Nieświeżu Je[go] mci Panu Panu Janowi Jerzemu Radziwiłłowi kasztelanowi trockiemu, memu serdecznie namilszemu Panu Bratu należy. Od Xny Euf. Mci panny z klasztoru [translation: To the Illustrious Prince of Ołyka and Nesvizh,

were attest to the religious ceremonies performed, such as Kazimierz Obryński's sermon *Jasna doskonałości pochodnia przy habicie zakonnym... przy poświęceniu panien zakonnych Nieswizkiego y mińskiego klasztoru* delivered at the consecration of the nuns of the Nesvizh and Minsk convents (Perszaje, 1645).



Illus. 4 Title page of the master of ceremonies of the Nesvizh monastery and the order of consecration. Archive of the Benedictine nuns of Vilnius in Żarnowiec

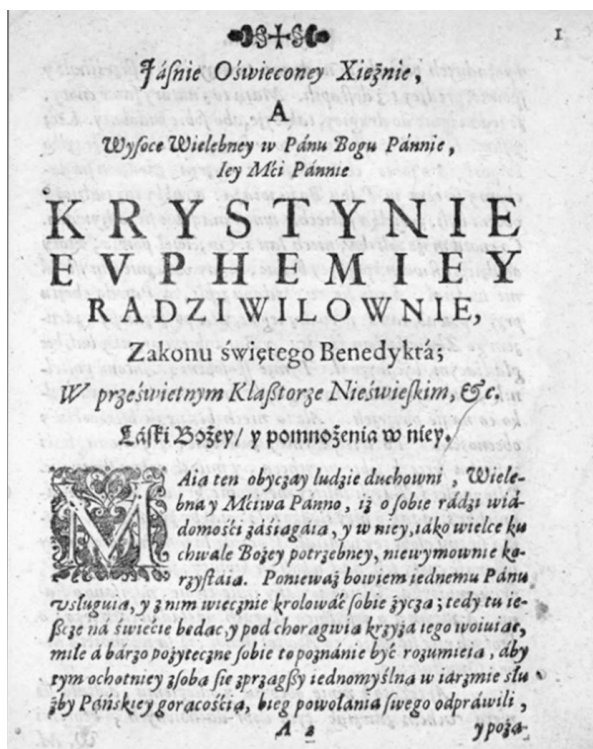
Especially after her profession, as a choir nun, Radziwiłłówna was expected to live as a faithful *militia Christi*: “A constant fighter in every temptation. Obedient without murmuring. Having nothing of her own. Loving God above all with the devotion of the spirit and loving her neighbour as herself. Beneficent to all. Pure from sins. Cautious in speech. Of simple and honest conversation”⁷⁵. Her principal instruments of spiritual practice continued to include meditation and *lectio divina*⁷⁶.

The standing of the Nesvizh nuns in contemporary society is evidenced by a sermon delivered by the Jesuit Adam Makowski (Kraków, 1628) on the occasion of the vow of chastity made by the tertiary Zuzanna Amendówna. The text was dedicated to Krystyna Eufemia, “the most illustrious princess” (see illus. 5).

His Lordship Jan Jerzy Radziwiłł, Castellan of Trakai, my most dearly beloved Lord and Brother From Princess Euphemia, Her Ladyship the maiden from the convent]. AGAD, AR, IV, 354/IV, 697, f. 221.

⁷⁵ Inscription on the painting *Portrait of a Devout Nun*, in the Benedictine Abbey in Krzeszów.

⁷⁶ GWIOŹDZIK, Jolanta. Kultura umysłowa benedyktynek kongregacji chełmińskiej w okresie staropolskim. In *Sanctimoniales. Zakony żeńskie w Polsce i Europie Środkowej (do przełomu XVII i XIX wieku)*. Ed. A. Radziwiński, D. Karczewski, Z. Zygielski. Bydgoszcz-Toruń: Wydawnictwo UMK, 2010, pp. 481–499; GWIOŹDZIK, Jolanta. Benedyktyńska *lectio divina* w żeńskich klasztorach Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego. In *Benediktiniškoji tradicija Lietuvoje*. Sudarė L. Jovaiša. Vilnius: Aidai, 2008, pp. 151–164.



Illus. 5 Dedication to Krystyna Eufemia. Wesele święte y wieczne szlachetnie urodzonej Panny Zuzanny Amendowney, Kraków 1628

“Sister and governess Krystyna Eufemja Radziwiłłówna” took care to maintain contacts with her family, often adding her wishes for health and prosperity to the abbess, whom Radziwiłłówna accompanied on her foundation journey to Kaunas in 1627. Krystyna also frequently acted as an intermediary in the affairs of the convent and in petitions addressed to the ordynat.

In 1630, Krystyna Eufemia was elected the third abbess of the convent (see illus. 6). The ceremony of benediction was typically richly adorned, yet what mattered most to the abbess was the presence of her family.

On this point, she wrote to Krzysztof Radziwiłł several times, asking:

żebyś tu choć na jedną godzinę na ten akt mój zajechał, który nazajutrz po S. Michale będzie, choć tegoż dnia WKsM w drogę wyjedziesz, jeno mi tę miłość pokaż bytnością swą ozdobić ten fest, gdyż jednam z domu naszego wyszła w ten stan i na taki stopień wstępuję pierwsza, ponoć i ostatnia w domu naszym, pociesz mię WKsM utrapioną.

[translation: Come here, I beg you, if only for one hour, for this act of mine, which will take place the day after St Michael. Although you will be departing for the Grand Duchy that day, show me this love by your presence; adorn this celebration,

for I came from our house into this state, and I am the first to ascend to this rank—and evidently the last from our house. Comfort me, Your Grace, for I am distressed]⁷⁷.



Illus. 6 Abbess Krystyna Eufemia Radziwiłłówna with a crozier. Painter Johann Schrötter, Belarusian National Arts Museum

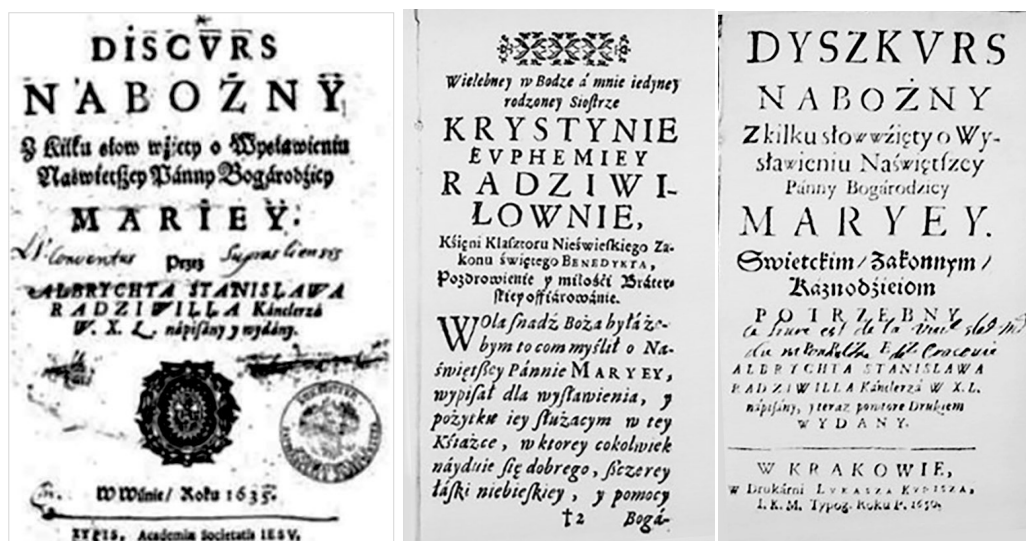
Her brother, Albrycht Stanisław (1593–1656), Grand Chancellor of Lithuania (from 1623), maintained closer ties with Eufemia. He arrived in Kaunas on 10 May 1634. In June, he briefly hosted his sister there, as was obliged to depart for Vilnius, a circumstance he described as follows: “although I had a distinguished guest in Kaunas, my own sister, the abbess of Nesvizh, at public request I had to leave Kaunas on 14 June”⁷⁸. He was most

⁷⁷ Jaśnie Oświeconemu Książęciu Je[go] Mci panu panu Krzysztofowi Radziwił[ł]owi Hetmanowi W[go] X[stw]a L[go] [...] memu Mciwemu panu y namilszemu Bratu a dobrodziejowi należy [translation: To His Illustrious Highness, His Lordship Prince Krzysztof Radziwiłł, Hetman of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, my most gracious Lord, dearest Brother, and benefactor]. AGAD, AR, IV, 354/IV, 654.

⁷⁸ *Pamiętniki Albrychta Stanisława X. Radziwiłła Kanclerza W. Litewskiego*. Ed. E. Raczyński. Poznań: u braci Scherków, 1839, t. 1, p. 319. The presence of nuns in the Memoirs of Albrycht Stanisław was not

likely accompanied on his journey by the abbess, for on the same day, “In Rumšiškės I had three abbesses at dinner – from Nesvizh, the one from Vilnius, and the one from Kaunas”⁷⁹. The following day, 15 June, Albrycht Stanisław set out for Vilnius “having escorted the nuns to the convent” and arrived home “almost at midnight”⁸⁰. Eufemia most probably remained in the Vilnius convent, as she left Vilnius only on 1 July⁸¹. Her brother also visited Krystyna Eufemia in Nesvizh, for instance, in February 1638⁸².

Albrycht Stanisław was engaged in translating religious works, such as the well-known treatise by Jerome Drexelius, *The Sunflower, or the Comparison of Human Will with the Will of God* (Drukarnia Pawła Konrada, 1630). A clear expression of his concern for the spiritual life of the Nesvizh convent was a work dedicated to his sister on 5 August 1635, in which he included “certain discourses in honour of the Most Holy Mother of God, which have appeared in print under my name”⁸³. The popularity of the text is evidenced by editions in 1635, 1636, and 1650 (illus. 7).



Illus. 7 Title pages of the 1635 and 1650 editions, dedication to Krystyna Eufemia

noticed by KOSSAKOWSKI, Krzysztof. Postaci kobiece w pamiętnikach Albrychta Radziwiłła. *Czasopismo Naukowe Instytutu Studiów Kobięcych* 2023, t. 2, pp. 9–34.

⁷⁹ Rumšiškės is located about 20 km from Kaunas, on the Nemunas River. It originally belonged to the royal table estates, then it was the Kaunas estate. In 1629, Albrycht Stanisław founded a church there, see Rumszyski. In *Słownik geograficzny Królestwa Polskiego i innych krajów słowiańskich*, t. 10, pp. 11–12. Priega per internetą: http://dir.icm.edu.pl/Słownik_geograficzny

⁸⁰ *Pamiętniki Albrychta Stanisława X. Radziwiłła Kanclerza W. Litewskiego*. Ed. E. Raczynski. Poznań: u braci Scherków, 1839, t. 1, p. 318.

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 319.

⁸² Ibid., p. 367.

⁸³ Ibid., p. 226.

Text of meditations *Devotional discourse taken from a few words on the praise of the Most Holy Virgin Mary*, written at the end of 1634, referred to the revelations of 14 August 1608, 8 May 1610 and 15 August 1617 of the Italian Jesuit Julius Mancinelli, whom Albrycht Stanisław had met in Naples. According to them, when asked “by what title” he might fittingly honour her, Mary answered “call me the Queen of Poland” (a title later invoked by King John Casimir in Lviv in 1656). In dedicating the abbess of Nesvizh, Albrycht recalled the devotion shown by the Nesvizh nuns to Mary, entrusted the convent to Her protection, and requested their prayers.

Krystyna Eufemia herself was known above all for her careful management of the community’s economic affairs; she pursued – and won – numerous legal cases, in which she was assisted by the influence and support of her family. This familial assistance took the form of direct visits and correspondence. The Radziwiłł patronage was also reflected in the decoration of the convent church and in the legal and material support provided to the nuns. She could likewise rely on her relatives during recurrent military conflicts of the seventeenth century: the community was granted shelter in the Nesvizh castle, and the abbess, together with the nuns, also resided in a townhouse in Gdańsk, rented on her behalf by her brother, where she died in 1658.

Several mutually influencing factors evidence the specificity of the foundation of the Benedictine nuns of Nesvizh. For the Benedictines themselves, the protection afforded by the founding family ensured both economic security and stable living conditions, allowing the peaceful fulfilment of their monastic vocation. The convent was among the wealthiest in the region, which enabled it to admit numerous candidates and establish further daughter houses – second only in activity to the Chełmno community. The monasteries maintained close ties, sending sisters to assume various offices; in this respect, the primacy of the Nesvizh abbess (especially Krystyna Eufemia) as *foundress-superior* was acknowledged:

niechaj będzie zdrowa, wówczas sama niech dysponuje osobami zakonnymi wedle swojej woli i jak się Panu Bogu najlepiej zda. Jeśli zechce jedne zatrzymać przy sobie, a inne posłać do Smoleńska, wolno jej to uczynić.

[translation: may she be in good health, and then let her herself dispose of the religious persons according to her will and as seems best to the Lord God. If she should wish to retain some with herself and send others to Smolensk, she is permitted to do so]⁸⁴.

It was also easier to assist in legal or financial matters, pay for renovations, send food, etc.⁸⁵ Additionally, the Nesvizh convent was regarded as a place of safety: it was there that the Benedictine nuns of Smolensk hoped to seek refuge, or at least deposit their

⁸⁴ BORKOWSKA, Małgorzata. *Mniszki*. Tyniec: Wydawnictwo Benedyktynów, 2 ed. 2019, pp. 261–262.

⁸⁵ See BORKOWSKA, Małgorzata. Rachunki benedyktynek kowieńskich. *Nasza Przyszłość*, 2006, t. 106, pp. 261–278.

valuables, and the sisters from Kaunas were likewise received⁸⁶. However, the religious dimension remained the most essential: the Nesvizh nuns adopted – and transmitted to subsequent foundations – the ideal of monastic life developed in the Chełmno convent, reformed in the spirit of post-Tridentine fervour. They also preserved a sense of belonging to this – albeit informal – congregation, maintaining the standard formation as well as the full richness of monastic observance⁸⁷.

For Mikołaj Krzysztof Radziwiłł, the foundation of the Nesvizh convent represented an expression of his Counter-Reformation commitment, furthered by the introduction of Jesuits and Benedictines into Nesvizh – those orders most deeply engaged in implementing post-Tridentine reforms in the Commonwealth. At the same time, his personal religious motivations cannot be dismissed, for the prince treated the monastery as a locus of prayer for his family and as a memorial to persons important to him. The foundation also testified to the prestige of the Radziwiłł family, especially when a Radziwiłłówna held the office of abbess. For succeeding ordinates, the institution constituted a specific obligation, yet one entirely consistent with their distinctive understanding of the family's role and its position within the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

In the ethnically and religiously diverse society of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, the establishment of a women's convent – the first in this territory – became a model for other magnate families, who likewise began to perceive the founding of monasteries as an expression of piety and as a familial “reservoir” of prayer. For the broader community, the Nesvizh convent and its daughter foundations provided women with religious education and upbringing, enabled them to pursue their monastic vocation, and functioned as important centres of religious and cultural life. This is evidenced, among other things, by the significant participation of the faithful in liturgical celebrations – for example, on Good Friday in Nesvizh, attendance was so excellent that the Benedictines were compelled to divide worshippers into groups. Editorial activity in subsequent years, especially by the Vilnius Benedictines, likewise broadened access to important texts on the interior life in Polish.

Consequently, the foundation in Nesvizh became an active centre of religious renewal, in a sense setting the pattern for relations with other convents and shaping the Radziwiłłs' patronage of female monastic communities.

⁸⁶ BORKOWSKA, Małgorzata. *Mniszki*. Tyniec: Wydawnictwo Benedyktynów, 2 ed. 2019, pp. 261–262; BORKOWSKA, Małgorzata. Rachunki benedyktynek kowieńskich. *Nasza Przyszłość*, 2006, t. 106, pp. 261–278.

⁸⁷ Rochowicz in the dedication of book *Kąpiel duszna* to Radziwiłłówna, mentioned other Benedictine monasteries of the Chełmno congregation.

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***Splendor Familiae*. Nesvyžiaus benediktinių vienuolyno fundacija ir abatė Kristina Eufemija Radvilaite**

Hab. dr. Jolanta Gwioździk

Katowicų Silezijos universitetas, Humanitarinių mokslų fakultetas, Kultūros studijų institutas, Uniwersytecka 4, 40-007 Katowica, Lenkija
El. p. jolanta.gwiozdzik@gmail.com

Santrauka

Pirmoji potridentinė moterų vienuolyno fundacija Lietuvos Didžiojoje Kunigaikštystėje buvo benediktinių vienuolynas Nesvyžiuje, funduotas Mikalojaus Kristupo Radvilos Našlaitėlio. Šiame straipsnyje nagrinėjami vienuolyno fundacijos principai ir aplinkybės, aptariami jo įkūrimo etapai, įskaitant bažnyčios ir vienuolyno pastatų statybą. Į Nesvyžiaus benediktinių vienuolyną atsikėlė vienuolės iš Kulmo vienuolyno, kuriame abatė Magdalena Mortęska įgyvendino reikšmingą reformą, įkvėptą Tridento susirinkimo. Ši reforma atsispindėjo atnaujintoje regulos redakcijoje, apibrėžusioje dvasinio ugdymo principus ir kasdienio gyvenimo normas. Straipsnyje taip pat analizuojama vienuolyno raida pirmaisiais jo veiklos dešimtmečiais, ypač vadovaujant abatei Kristinai Eufemijai Radvilaitei. Remiantis vienuolyno veiklą reglamentavusių dokumentų, korespondencijos ir istoriografijos analize, straipsnyje aptariamas vienuolyno dvasinio gyvenimo formavimasis ir vienuolių veikla, įskaitant naujų vienuolynų steigimą. Tyrimas parodė, kad vadovaujant abatei Kristinai Eufemijai Radvilaitei Nesvyžiaus benediktinių vienuolynas tapo aktyviu ir įtakingu religinio atsinaujinimo centru, dariusiu reikšmingą poveikį kitiems Lietuvos Didžiosios Kunigaikštystės vienuolynams. Prie to daugiausia prisidėjo fundatorių globa, tapusi modeliu Radvilų giminei globojant moterų vienuolynus.

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