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MELCHIOR NERING'S BINDINGS OF THREE PRINTS
FROM THE PRIVATE LIBRARY
OF THE ABBOTT OF TRZEMESZNO,
WOJCIECH MIELIŃSKI¹

The former book collection of Wojciech Mieliński, of Wczele coat of arms, abbot of Trzemeszno (d. 1621), like the book collections of many other Polish church dignitaries, has been significantly dispersed over the centuries. What remains of it can be found, among others, in the Kórnik Library of the Polish Academy of Sciences (several works),² in the Archdiocesan Archives of Gniezno (13 volumes)³ and also in the library of the Poznań Society of Friends of Sciences,⁴ University Library in Poznań⁵

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² See J. K o w a l c z y k, *Jak czytał Witruwiusza Wojciech Mieliński opat z Trzemeszna. Uwagi o jego księgozbiórze*, [in:] *Muzeum i twórca. Studia z historii sztuki i kultury ku czci prof. dr. Stanisława Lorentza*, ed. K. M i c h a ł o w s k i, Warszawa 1969, p. 357.

³ The following abbreviations are used in the text: AAG – Archdiocesan Archives of Gniezno; PTPN – Library of the Poznań Society of Friends of Sciences; BR in Poznań – Raczyński Library in Poznań; BJ – Jagiellonian Library; AAG, BK 3; BK 219; BK 314; BK 861; BK 988; BK 1172; BK 1520; BK 1522; BK 1535; BK 1634; BK 1682; BK 3445; BK 9965.

⁴ See [online] <https://ptpn.loccloud.pl/items/browse?collection=3> [accessed on: June 17, 2020], PTPN 20612. I; 22984. I; see: [online] <https://ptpn.loccloud.pl/search?query=20612.+I%3B+22984.+I%3B> [accessed on: June 17, 2020].

⁵ University Library in Poznań, SD 2339 I; SD 41614 I. The author would like to thank Jakub Łukaszewski, MA (University Library in Poznań) for the information about these works.

and the Raczyński Library in Poznań⁶ (two volumes each). The remains of the once-rich collection have not been the subject of extensive research so far. Some comments regarding the Kórnik copies can be found in the article by Jerzy Kowalczyk,⁷ which was then used by the biographer of the Trzemeszno Abbot – Włodzimierz Dworzaczek.⁸

The love of books with beautifully decorated bindings was not a rarity in the Mieliński family. For example, Wojciech's father – Krzysztof (d. around 1606), a Kalisz pantler, had in his collection a Venetian print from 1554, which was bound two years later in an unidentified Poznań bindery.⁹ The upper cover of this volume, marked with the owner's superexlibris, bears a decoration in the then fashionable Aldine type.¹⁰ The uncle of Wojciech – Aleksander (d. 1584), Abbot of Trzemeszno (from 1557) and a bishop nominee for the Wenden (Livonian) diocese, could also boast a rich library.¹¹ Recent studies have revealed that the priest was an owner of books whose covers fit into various decoration formulas characteristic of the 16th century. In addition to works typical for the bookbinding of Greater Poland, modelled on German Renaissance ones, he also owned architectural and Aldine-Grolierian bindings.¹² The passion for books of Wojciech's second uncle – Erasmus (d. 1579), the canon of Gniezno, Kraków, Poznań and Kruszwica, is evidenced by an impressive superexlibris, which was marked with the binding of his Venetian print from 1569.¹³ It is

⁶ BR in Poznań, II.M.c.13; III.J.a.6. The author would like to thank Arkadiusz Wagner, PhD (Mikołaj Kopernik University in Toruń) and Dorota Gołębowska, MA (Raczyński Library in Poznań) for the information about these volumes.

⁷ J. K o w a l c z y k, op. cit., pp. 357–363.

⁸ W. D w o r z a c z e k, *Mieliński (Mieleński) Wojciech h. Wczele*, [in:] *Polski słownik biograficzny*, vol. 20, Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków–Gdańsk 1975, p. 778.

⁹ PTPN 20612. I; see [online] <https://ptpn.loccloud.pl/items/show/4618> [accessed on: June 17, 2020]. The book then was included in Wojciech's collection. On his father's life and activities, see W. D w o r z a c z e k, op. cit., pp. 775–776.

¹⁰ See A. W a g n e r, *Oprawy ksiąg Andrzeja Opalińskiego*, [in:] *Księgozbiór wielkopolskiego magnata. Andrzej Opaliński (1540–1593)*, ed. i d e m, Poznań 2011, p. 153; i d e m, *Introligatorstwo poznańskie XVI wieku jako historyczno-artystyczna «terra incognita»*, [in:] *Sztuka w Wielkopolsce*, eds. M. B ł a s z c z y Ń s k a, B. G ó r e c k a, M. G ó r e c k i, A. P a r a d o w s k a, Poznań 2013, p. 73; i d e m, *Włoskie wpływy w polskim introligatorstwie XV–XVI wieku*, [in:] *Tegumentologia polska dzisiaj*, ed. i d e m, Toruń 2015, p. 98.

¹¹ See W. D w o r z a c z e k, op. cit., pp. 774–775; see also J. K o w a l c z y k, op. cit., p. 358.

¹² M. M u r a s z k o, *Oprawy trzech ksiąg opata trzemeszeńskiego Aleksandra Mielińskiego*, [in:] *Introligatorzy i ich klienci*, ed. A. W a g n e r, Toruń 2017, pp. 109–124. It is worth mentioning that at least one volume belonging to Aleksander's collection was then incorporated into Wojciech's library (BR in Poznań, II.Mc13).

¹³ AAG, BK 1198; see P. P o k o r a, M. M u r a s z k o, *Skarby drukarstwa i introligatorstwa ze zbiorów dawnej Biblioteki Katedralnej w Gnieźnie. Katalog wystawy w Bibliotece Raczyńskich, Poznań 5–30 maja 2015*, Poznań–Gniezno 2015, pp. 22–23; A. W a g n e r, *Superekslibris polski. Studium o kulturze bibliofilskiej i sztuce od średniowiecza do połowy XVII wieku*, Toruń 2016, p. 224. On Erasmus

not surprising, then, that Wojciech's collection also contains valuable volumes with richly decorated bindings. It is worth mentioning that Mieliński's foreign studies must have had an impact on shaping his attitude towards books – initially probably at one of German universities, then in Italy.¹⁴

As it has already been noted, at least 13 volumes from the discussed collection of Trzemeszno Abbot are currently kept in the AAG collections.¹⁵ Six of them were re-bound in the 18th and 19th centuries,¹⁶ while the others have preserved their original binding, which was made in the second half of the 16th and the early 17th centuries.¹⁷ It seems that most of the bindings were made in Greater Poland binderies. Three of these books were bound most probably in the workshop of Melchior Nering in Poznań (d. 1587).¹⁸ These works, which are the subject of this study, can belong to a group of several of currently known bindings which are attributed to Nering.¹⁹ Thus, Wojciech Mieliński became another customer of the above mentioned workshop known by name. It is worth mentioning that among others, book lovers such as Erazm Glicznar (d. 1603), Benedykt Herbest (d. 1598), Andrzej Opaliński (d. 1593) and the already mentioned Aleksander Mieliński²⁰ used this workshop to buy books.

The three bindings shown below were made of bevelled beech boards, which were coated with brown leather and fitted with brass and leather fasteners. The books were sewn into three (two double and single) or four (double) bands, their spines were marked with spike lines, creating compartments devoid of decoration. All volumes have headbands embroidered with cream and brown thread.

The first of the bindings covers the Cologne print *Deprobatis sanctorum historii* (vol. 1) from 1570.²¹ Its title page includes an ownership entry, which indicates

Mieliński, see J. Korytkowski, *Prałaci i kanonicy katedry metropolitalnej gnieźnieńskiej od roku 1000 aż do dni naszych. Podług źródeł archiwalnych*, vol. 2, Gniezno 1883, pp. 618–619.

¹⁴ See J. Kowalczyk, op. cit., p. 358.

¹⁵ It is possible that further inventory work carried out in the AAG collections will allow the identification of subsequent books that used to belong to Wojciech Mieliński's library.

¹⁶ AAG, BK 219; BK 988; BK 1520; BK 1535; BK 1634; BK 9965.

¹⁷ AAG, BK 3; BK 314; BK 861; BK 1172; BK 1522; BK 1682; BK 3445.

¹⁸ AAG, BK 3; BK 1522; BK 1682. On the life and activities of Melchior Nering, see for example *Drukarze dawnej Polski od XV do XVIII wieku*, vol. 4: *Pomorze*, ed. A. Kawecka-Gryczowa, K. Korotajowa, Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków 1962, pp. 272–291; Z. Skorupska, *Nering Melchior*, [in:] *Słownik pracowników książki polskiej*, ed. I. Treichel, Warszawa–Łódź 1972, pp. 622–624; J. Sójka, *Nering Melchior*, [in:] *Wielkopolski słownik biograficzny*, eds. A. Gąsiorowski, J. Topolski, Warszawa–Poznań 1981, p. 509; M. Krupa, *Nering Melchior*, [in:] *Encyklopedia katolicka*, vol. 13, Lublin 2009, coll. 930–931.

¹⁹ A. Wagner, op. cit., p. 159.

²⁰ Ibidem, pp. 155–162; M. Muraszkó, *Wybrane oprawy starodruków ze zbiorów dawnej biblioteki klasztornej cystersów w Wągrowcu* [in print]; i d e m, *Oprawy trzech ksiąg...*

²¹ AAG, BK 1522 (former shelfmark E 158).



Fig. 1. Old-print binding from 1570 (upper cover), Melchior Nering, Poznań, AAG, photo Mikołaj Macioszek.

that the book belongs to the library of the Trzemeszno Abbot: “Albert[i] Mielinski Abbat[is] Tremesn[ensis].”²² The decoration of the upper (fig. 1) and lower cover was based on an uniformly laid out frame composition, almost entirely tooled in blind using a spike, two rolls, and lettering stamps. The outer frame of each cover has a roll impression containing four biblical scenes (Annunciation, Baptism in Jordan, Resurrection, Crucifixion) which are separated by frames with inscriptions (VIRGO MARI[a] // DEI MATER, HIC EST FILI // VS MEVS DI[lectus], MORS ERO // MORS TVAO [!], ECCE AGNVS // DEI QVI TOL[lit peccata mundi]) and a floral decoration. The in-

²² Ownership entries in the three volumes in question, in which Wojciech already appears as an abbot, must have been made at the earliest in 1583/1584, and therefore, as it turns out, at least a few years after the binding was made. It is possible that Melchior Nering made these works for someone else (for example, the above-mentioned Aleksander Mielński), and Wojciech incorporated them into his collection at a later time. It should be emphasized that the books were not provided with provenance notes that could indicate the book owners before Wojciech.

ner frame was decorated with a roll with personifications of four virtues: FIDES [Faith], PACIEN[tia] [Patience], CHARI[tas] [Love], SPES [Hope]. The surface between the figures is filled with frames including captions and an arabesque ornament. In the case of the upper cover, above and below the upper inner border of the frame, a gilded inscription was embossed: DE PROBATIS SAN // [c]TORVM SVRI. Rectangular centerpieces (each in four borders) were decorated with two vertical roll lines, which were embossed with the above tool with the images of the four virtues.

In the literature on the subject, this work is connected with the studio of Melchior Nering.²³ Such attribution is confirmed by a closer analysis of the decoration of its covers. It seems that the above roll with four biblical scenes was also used to decorate the volume binding originally belonging to the collection of Erazm Gliczner, which Arkadiusz Wagner attributes to the workshop of the bookbinder.²⁴ It is also worth adding that the impressions of this tool are also present on the binding of the book that was owned by Aleksander Mielński, which is probably connected with the period of Poznań activity of Nering.²⁵

The second binding covers a valuable Basel print *Novus orbis regionum ac insularum veteribus incognitarum* from 1555.²⁶ The ownership of Wojciech is indicated by one of the provenance notes on the title page: "Albertus [!] Mielinski Abbat[is] Trem[esensis]." The composition of the upper cover of the binding (fig. 2), almost entirely rolled in blind, is based on the outer frame, which was made using a spike and roll with figural decoration. It consists of images of the Risen Christ and St. John the Evangelist with four frames, in which identification inscriptions (SALVA[tor], IOHA[nnes]) and biblical quotes (DATA E//ST MIC[hi!] Omnis potestas], ECCE AG//NVS DE[i]) are placed.²⁷ An arabesque fills the surface between the figures and frames. Rolled straps, integrated into the inner frame of the upper cover, depict two medallions with busts of Ovid (OVIDIVS) and Cicero (M[arcus] T[ullius] CICE-RO) and coat of arms shields with an eagle and crossed keys (the so-called small coat of arms of Poznań) which are separated by a floral decoration. Above and be-

²³ See Z. Mocarski, *Książka w Toruniu do roku 1793. Zarys dziejów*, Toruń 1934, p. 36, f.n. 167.

²⁴ See *Informator o zbiorach i działalności Wojewódzkiej Biblioteki Publicznej Książnicy Kopernikańskiej w Toruniu*, eds. L. Pluta, T. Szymorowska, K. Wyszomirska, Toruń 2008, pp. 47, 50; A. Wagner, op. cit., p. 159, f.n. 30. It is worth adding that also Anna Lewicka-Kamińska connects the discussed roll (including biblical scenes) with Melchior Nering. As it can be seen from her pencil copies, it was used both in the Poznań and Toruń period of the craftsman's activity; see Jagiellonian Library (BJ), MS Przyb. 115/80; MS Przyb. 118/80. Przyb. 115/80; Przyb. 118/80.

²⁵ AAG, BK 5932; M. Muraśko, *Oprawy trzech ksiąg...*

²⁶ AAG, BK 1682.

²⁷ It is worth noting that the copies of the binding cover preserved in the legacy of Anna Lewicka-Kamińska indicate that this roll was also taken by Melchior Nering to Toruń; BJ, Przyb. 118/80; see A. Wagner, op. cit., p. 159 and f.n. 28; see also E. Laučevičius, *XV–XVIII a. knyg įrisimai Lietuvos bibliotekose*, Vilnius 1976, no. 323.



Fig. 2. Old-print binding from 1555 (upper cover), Melchior Nering, Poznań, AAG, photo Mikołaj Macioszek.

low the frame, there are horizontal borders. In the upper one there is a gilded abbreviation for the title of the bound print: NOVVS ORBIS.²⁸ The centerpiece, surrounded by four borders, is decorated with two vertical roll stripes, which were pressed with a tool depicting Christ and St. John the Evangelist. An additional vertical border runs through the very centre of the piece. The volume's lower cover was decorated in an almost identical manner.

The use of rolls with representations of Christ and St. John, Ovid and Cicero indicates that the work was probably made in the studio of Melchior Nering. Impressions of this tool with the images of the Saviour and the Evangelist appear on the frame prepared for Benedykt Herbest in 1564.²⁹ They are accompanied with stripes of decoration, which were made with the "Neringian" roll with the four Bible scenes

²⁸ The line ends with two overlapping impressions of the letter "S."

²⁹ AAG, BK 1599; M. Muraszko, *Wybrane oprawy starodruków...*

mentioned above. The interior of the centerpiece of the upper cover of the binding is decorated with a rectangular plaque representing the Resurrection. The imprint of this plaque, as well as impressions of the rolls with images of Christ and St. John the Evangelist, Ovid and Cicero are on the binding of a Paris print from 1562, which also used to belong to the collection of Benedict Herbst.³⁰



Fig. 3. Old-print binding from 1570 (upper cover), Melchior Nering, Poznań, AAG, photo Michał Muraszko.

The last of the bindings belongs to an Antwerp print *Officium missae* from 1570.³¹ On the title page, there is a provenance entry indicating the belonging of the book to the Wojciech Mielński library: “Albert[i] Mielinskij Abb[atis] Tremesnen[sis].” The decoration of the upper cover of the binding (fig. 3) is tooled in gold. It consists of two concentric, double, linear spike frames. In the upper zone of the cover, there is an ab-

³⁰ AAG, BK 1547.

³¹ AAG, BK 3.

abbreviation of the title of the bound print: OFFICIVM MIS[sae]. The centre of the mirror is decorated with a rectangular plaque with a scene of the temptation of Adam and Eve, below which there is a frame with a biblical quote: INOBEDIENOIA[!] VNI[us]. The whole is completed by six stamp impressions with a floral motif. Decorations of the lower cover of the binding are tooled in blind. They are based on a frame decorated with a roll with four bust medallions, separated by an arabesque (fig. 4).³² Three vertical stripes with a braided ornament are incorporated into the rectangular centerpiece.

The creation of this bookbinding work in the workshop of Melchior Nering is indicated by impressions of the roll with bust medallions. Decorations made with this tool are also found on the above-mentioned Poznań binding of the book that belonged to Aleksander Mieliński.³³

Capturing the moment of creation of the above-mentioned bindings presents some difficulties. Wojciech Mieliński lived and kept his book collection in Poznań.³⁴ Therefore, it seems that it is mainly in this city one should look for bookbinders whose services he used. The activity of Melchior Nering can be divided into three periods – when he worked in Poznań (1559–1579), Grodzisk (1579–1581), and Toruń (1581–1587). It is known that he used certain tools both at the beginning and at the end of his bookbinding activity. It is assumed in the literature that the binding of the Cologne print from 1570 discussed above was made in Toruń in 1568–1578/1579.³⁵ The second of the works presented here was probably also created in Poznań, covering the Basel print from 1555. The above conclusion is supported by the paper of Poznań origin (marked with a filigree depicting a coat of arms with an eagle and crossed keys) which the flyleaves of the volume were made of.³⁶ It is worth mentioning that Melchior Nering's Toruń prints were mainly pressed on paper of local provenance.³⁷ When he left Poznań at the end of the 1570s, he undoubtedly associated with the reformist community. Therefore, the question arises whether Wojciech Mieliński (from 1584 an abbot in Trzemeszno) would continue to use the services of

³² This knurl and plaque with the temptation of Adam and Eve were also used to decorate the binding of Cologne prints from 1573 – the volume was purchased in 1575 in Toruń (AAG, BK 81).

³³ AAG, BK 5932; M. Muraszko, *Oprawy trzech ksiąg...*

³⁴ See J. Kowalczyk, op. cit., p. 358.

³⁵ AAG, BK 1522 (former shelfmark E 158); Z. Mocarski, op. cit., p. 36, f.n. 167.

³⁶ See the drawings of similar filigrees: C. M. Briquet, *Les Filigranes. Dictionnaire historique des marques du papier des leur apparition vers 1282 jusqu'en 1600*, vol. 1, Geneve 1907, no. 1154; *Papiernie w Polsce XVI wieku. Works of Franciszek Piekosiński, Jan Ptaśnik, and Kazimierz Piekarski. Republished and supplemented by Włodzimierz Budka*, Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków–Gdańsk 1971, no. 247; See also J. Siniarska-Czaplicka, *Filigrany papierni położonych na obszarze Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej od początku XVI do połowy XVIII wieku*, Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków 1969, pp. 17–18.

³⁷ J. Siniarska-Czaplicka, *Papier druków oficyn gdańskich i toruńskich XVI i XVII w.*, "Roczniki Biblioteczne" 18, 1974, book 1–2, p. 279, chart 2.



Fig. 4. Roll impression on 1570 old print binding (lower cover),
Melchior Nering, Poznań, AAG, photo by Michał Muraszko.

a craftsman associated with such circles. Examining all the preserved binding of the priest's books would perhaps help to solve this issue.

In conclusion, it should be assumed that the three bindings presented above were made at the end of the 1570s at the latest in Melchior Nering's workshop in Poznań. It is worth noting that the compositions of the upper and lower cover of two of them, consisting of concentric frames with rolled decoration and empty borders, resemble patterns pop-

ular in the German Renaissance bookbinding.³⁸ Such a compositional pattern was, moreover, typical of works executed during the Poznań period of our craftsman's activity.³⁹

Translated by Anna Sekułowicz

SUMMARY

This article describes the bindings of three 16th century prints that used to belong to the rich collection of Wojciech Mielniński, who was the Abbot of Trzemeszno and who died in 1621. The decoration of these bindings indicates that they most probably came from Melchior Nering's bookbinding workshop while this craftsman was still connected with Poznań. The three volumes in question are currently kept in the Archdiocesan Archives in Gniezno.

KEYWORDS:

Wojciech Mielniński, Trzemeszno, Melchior Nering, Poznań, bookbinding, tegumentology

NERINGOWSKIE OPRAWY TRZECH DRUKÓW Z KSIĘGOZBIORU OPATA TRZEMESZEŃSKIEGO WOJCIECHA MIELIŃSKIEGO

STRESZCZENIE

Artykuł przedstawia trzy oprawy, które zabezpieczają szesnastowieczne druki należące niegdyś do bogatej kolekcji opata trzemeszeńskiego Wojciecha Mielnińskiego (zm. 1621). Jak się okazuje, zostały one sporządzone najprawdopodobniej w introligatorni Melchiora Neringa, w okresie, gdy rzemieślnik ten był jeszcze związany z Poznaniem. Na wymienioną atrybucję przedstawianych dzieł wskazuje dekoracja ich okładek. Trzy omawiane woluminy przechowywane są obecnie w zbiorach Archiwum Archidiecezjalnego w Gnieźnie.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE:

Wojciech Mielniński, Trzemeszno, Melchior Nering, Poznań, introligatorstwo, tegumentologia

³⁸ See K. Piekarski, *Książka w Polsce XV i XVI wieku*, [in:] *Kultura staropolska*, Kraków 1932, p. 366; M. Krynicka, *Oprawy książkowe z herbami ostatnich Jagiellonów w zbiorach Muzeum Narodowego w Krakowie*, "Rozprawy i Sprawozdania Muzeum Narodowego w Krakowie" 12, 1980, pp. 33–34; see also A. Wagner, *Wolumin z księgozbioru Mikołaja Korycińskiego z rękopiśmiennym fragmentem tekstu Filipa Melanchtona*, "Odrodzenie i Reformacja w Polsce" 58, 2014, pp. 130–132.

³⁹ See A. Wagner, op. cit., pp. 159–161.