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THE VICISSITUDES OF ST PETER AND PAUL'S CHURCH IN BYCHAWA AT THE TURN OF THE 16TH AND 17TH CENTURIES BASED ON CHURCH SOURCES

Abstract

This article aimed to correct erroneous or imprecise information about the parish in Bychawa, present in the literature on the subject so far, which is, nota bene, not very extensive. The discussions in this article, based mainly on church sources (which have not been often used so far by others), enabled the Author to shed new light, at least in part, on the time of individual stages in the history of the Bychawa church at the turn of the 16th and 17th centuries.

The Calvinist movement must have begun in the last years of the fifteenth decade of the sixteenth century and is related to the activities of Mikołaj Pilecki. Andrzej Myszkowski strengthened the Protestant milieu here in the early 1650s, establishing a Calvinist school and perhaps bringing in permanent Calvinist ministers. It is incorrect, however, to link the origins of Calvinism in Bychawa only to Andrzej Myszkowski. The repossession of the church in Bychawa was related to Stanisław Myszkowski, the Lublin deputy cup-bearer, son of Andrzej. After the divisions in the Calvinist movement and the weakening of their community in Bychawa, he turned his attention to the old faith, as did other magnates of that period, and probably brought a Catholic priest around 1582. The church was also returned to the Catholics, which enabled the archdeacon of Lublin to make the first visitation after the Calvinist times in 1595. The building, however, was largely ruined. Attempts were made to maintain it until the 1620s by making the necessary repairs. The construction of a new masonry church probably began in the mid-1620s, when the parish priest, Sebastian Piątkowski, won the lawsuit over the church property with Zofia Wierzbicka. Shift-

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ing the date of the church construction to an earlier period is not well-founded. St. John the Baptist's church has survived to our times and still serves the Catholic community of Bychawa.

Keywords: Bychawa; Myszkowski Family; Mikołaj Pilecki; Andrzej Myszkowski; Stanisław Myszkowski; Joachim of Borzęcin

Introduction

The origins of the Parish of St Peter and Paul are unknown. It is a well-known fact, which is often mentioned in the literature on the subject, that the first time it appeared in sources of 1325, namely in the oldest register of Peter's Pence. It had likely been already dedicated to the patronage of these saint apostles at the time. The patrociniun of the church in the Middle Ages is confirmed by Liber beneficiorum of Jan Długosz.¹ The wooden church survived until the 1630s, when it was replaced with a masonry one dedicated to St John the Baptist. In the 16th century, the church was taken over by Calvinists. In the current literature on the subject, there is disagreement as to the time and circumstances of the changes in functioning and faith affiliation of the Bychawa church. Contentious issues are as follows: the moment of the transition of the church to Calvinist administration, the time of its return to the Catholic Church and the circumstances of the construction of the new church. The most comprehensive study on the history of Bychawa is a collective work edited by Ryszard Szczygieł entitled *Dzieje Bychawy* (The History of Bychawa), published in Bychawa in 1994.² Chapters from two to four cover the issues of interest to us.³ The Bychawa church was mentioned in *Katalog Zabytków Sztuki w Polsce* (The Catalogue of the Monuments in Poland)⁴ and in *Słownik Geograficzny Królestwa Polskiego* (The Geographical Dictionary of the Kingdom of Poland).⁵ In all these studies church sources were almost completely ignored and the information they contain on the Bychawa church is divergent and sometimes even misleading. We have to refer to historical sources held in the Archives of the Metropolitan Curia in Kraków and Archdiocesan Archives in Lublin.

The aim of this article is therefore to correct questionable information and pinpoint, as precisely as possible, the dates of specific significant events from the history of the parish in the first half of the 16th century and the first half of the 17th

¹ „Villa habens in se parochialem ecclesiam ligneam, Sanctis Petro et Paulo dictam” (*Joannis Długosz senioris canonici Cracoviensis Liber beneficiorum dioecesis Cracoviensis nunc primum e codice autographo editus*, vol. 2, in: *Joannis Długosz senioris canonici Cracoviensis Opera omnia*, ed. A. Przedziecki, vol. 7, p. 544).

² *Dzieje Bychawy*, ed. R. Szczygieł, Bychawa 1994.

³ A. Sochacka, *Bychawa i okolice w średniowieczu*, in: *Dzieje Bychawy*, ed. R. Szczygieł, Lublin 1994, pp. 11-22; R. Szczygieł, *Lokacja miasta i jego rozwój do końca XVI wieku*, pp. 39-54; H. Gmiterek, *Dzieje miasta w XVII-XVIII wieku*, in: *Dzieje Bychawy*, pp. 55-72. J. Chachaj, *Blížej schizmatyków niż Krakowa... : archidiakoniat lubelski w XV i XVI wieku*, Lublin 2012.

⁴ *Katalog zabytków sztuki w Polsce*, vol. 8: *Województwo lubelskie*, ed. R. Brykowski, Z. Wiñiarz, no. 4: *Powiat bychawski*, Warszawa 1960, pp. 2-4.

⁵ *Słownik geograficzny Królestwa Polskiego i innych ziem słowiańskich* (SGKP), ed. F. Sulimski et al., vol. 1, p. 487.

century. The article represents a valuable contribution to further research on the history of this old parish.

The takeover of the church by Calvinists

The only view in the literature on taking over the Bychawa church by Calvinists is related to Andrzej Myszkowski, the castellan of Lublin, who died in 1566.⁶ It is a well-known fact that there was no Catholic parish in Bychawa in the mid-16th century and the wooden church of St Peter and Paul, which had belonged to it, profaned by Andrzej Myszkowski, was transformed into a Calvinist church.⁷ Information on the date of this event can be obtained from the protocol of the parish visitation of 1595, which says:

*Ecclesia parochialis in oppido Bychawa maiori tituli SS. Petri et Pauli Apostolorum (...) ab annis quinquaginta pastore legitimo orbata, ac infra hoc tempus quadraginta annis per ministros haereticos circa eandem residentes profanata et violata, totaque suppelectili sacra spoliata a Generoso Stanislao Myskowski pocillatore lublinense.*⁸

The data contained in this document are, however, rather imprecise. The visitor claims that the parish was deprived of a Catholic priest for 50 years. In reality, it was 47 years at most, as the last parish priest before the Reformation period, Rev. Andrzej Raniszowski, probably died in 1548, as evidenced by an entry from that year in the consistory book of Lublin pertaining to the law of patronage.⁹ From that time until Calvinists left the town or some time after that there was no Catholic parish priest in Bychawa. These rounded dates can be easily determined. One faces more difficulties with the forty-year period out of these fifty years (or to be precise forty-seven years) of Calvinists' presence in Bychawa. When does it begin and when does it finish? What is left is the period of seven years which must be determined between 1548 and the settlement of Calvinist ministers in Bychawa and the time they left the town and the visitation of 1595. The final period of Calvinist ministers' presence in Bychawa and the return of the Catholic clergy will be discussed in the next chapter. One has to remember, however, that these two issues are linked together.

It can be stated that Calvinist ministers were brought to Bychawa by Andrzej Myszkowski, who took over Bychawa at the end of 1551 and the beginning of

⁶ *Polski słownik biograficzny* (PSB), vol. 22, red. E. Rostworowski, Wrocław 1977, p. 368; *Katalog zabytków*, p. 2; Szczygieł, *Lokacja miasta*, p. 53. More information on Andrzej Myszkowski in: PSB, vol. 22, pp. 368-369.

⁷ The visitation protocol of the Lublin archdeaconry, conducted in 1565, mentions the parish of Bychawa among those which were profaned and Andrzej Myszkowski is blamed for this situation (Archiwum Kurii Metropolitalnej w Krakowie (AKMK), ref. AV Cap 1, Liber visitationis ecclesiarum in civitate ac Dioecesi Cracoviensi consistentium... Philippi Padniwski Ep. Crac. 1565, f. 138).

⁸ AKMK, ref. AV Cap 3, f. 64^r.

⁹ „...morte vero Honorabilis Andree Raniszowski eiusdem ecclesiae parochialis ultimi et immediati possessoris vacantem” (AAL, ref. Rep 60 A 15, Acta consistorii foranei Lublinensis dioecesis Cracoviensis 1546-1553, f. 91^r).

1552.¹⁰ Acknowledging the fact that Calvinists spent in Bychawa 40 years, which is mentioned in the visitation protocol, it must have been no later than 1555, and hence the seven-year period with no priest in Bychawa would have been in the years 1548-1555, which is the acceptable finding. Nonetheless, it must be noted that a prelude to the introduction of the Reformation could have been a little earlier, already in Mikołaj Pilecki's lifetime. Significantly, he did not present a parish priest after the death of Rev. Andrzej Raniszowski. At the time the son of Jakub Osmolski of Osmolice, a supporter of Calvinism, meddled in the parish affairs.¹¹ Calvinist sympathies were also well known in the family of Mikołaj Pilecki. His son Krzysztof, as an heir of Łańcut, transformed the local Catholic church into a Calvinist one in 1548,¹² which could not have been done without the approval of his father, who in the above-mentioned document of 1548 appeared as a count in Łańcut (*comes in Lanczuth*).¹³ The dates of the end of the Catholic priests' presence in Bychawa and the liquidation of the Catholic church in Łańcut are strangely interwoven. Krzysztof Pilecki was excommunicated for his action by the bishop of Przemyśl in 1549.¹⁴ Furthermore, Mikołaj Pilecki's support for introducing the Reformation in Bychawa was still remembered at the beginning of the 18th century. In 1721 a visitor of the parish, probably referring to the document of 1548, which was mentioned above, wrote: „bona ecclesiastica avulsa per quendam [Nicolaum] Pilecki heareticum protunc oppidi Bychawa haeredem”.¹⁵ It can be therefore stated that even if Andrzej Myszkowski brought Calvinist ministers to Bychawa, it was Mikołaj Pilecki who had laid the ground for the Reformation.

The repossession of the church by Catholics

The latest date of the return of the Bychawa church to the structures of the Kraków diocese is the year 1595, in which the aforementioned canonical visitation took place. It was conducted by the Lublin archdeacon Jan Zamoyski from Zamość. The very fact of the visitation proves that the Catholic Church regained control over the parish. However, the data contained in the visitation protocol allow for even the earlier date. The visitor stressed „interim ab annis tredecim quovismodo restaurata”.¹⁶ At the moment of the visitation, the parish had already been renewed to a certain degree, and the restoration process probably began thirteen years earlier. What is more, the protocol of the clergy visitation, also conducted in

¹⁰ Szczygieł, p. 53.

¹¹ AAL, ref. Rep 60 A 15, ff. 90^v-92^r.

¹² *Pilecki Mikołaj*, w: *Polski słownik biograficzny*, vol. 26, ed. E. Rostworowski, Kraków-Wrocław 1981, p. 266.

¹³ AAL, ref. Rep 60 A 15, f. 91^r.

¹⁴ PSB, vol. 26, p. 266.

¹⁵ AKMK, ref. AV 20, Acta visitationis ecclesiarum archidiaconatus Lubilnensis (Decanatus: Lucovienis, Parczoviensis, Casimiriensis, Chodeliensis, civitas Lublinum, decanatus Solecensis) dioecesis Cracoviensis ex commissione R.D. Constantini Feliciani Szaniawski, episcopi Cracoviensis, ducis Severiae per R.D. Joannem Felicem Szaniawski, episcopum Capsensem, suffraganum archidiaconum et officialem generalem Leopoliensem expedita et connotata anno 1721, p. 542.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*.

1595 by Jan Zamoyski, contains information on the presence of a Catholic priest in the parish – it was Joachimus de Bodzancin, who was sent to Bychawa by the auxiliary bishop of Kraków, Jakub Milewski. This document coincides with the previous one and supplements it as the archdeacon of Lublin directly writes about a priest's presence in Bychawa for thirteen years, whose arrival was arranged by Stanisław Myszkowski.¹⁷ Given the data from both documents, it can be assumed that Rev. Joachim arrived in Bychawa between the years 1582 and 1586, which mark the beginning of the thirteen-year period of Stanisław Myszkowski's efforts and the death of Bishop Jakub Milewski. However, it can also be assumed that it happened in 1582. The period of Rev. Joachim's stay in the parish is precisely given, not rounded as was the case when the Catholic clergy left Bychawa and Calvinist ministers replaced them. Why did Stanisław Myszkowski turn to Catholicism? The same factors were probably at work here as the ones in other parts of the Archdeaconry of Lublin, about which Zalewski wrote:¹⁸ at the end of the 16th century there was a return of the nobility, who could not rely on the local population, to the Catholic faith. According to researchers, Calvinism lost its power in Bychawa and declined after its disintegration.¹⁹

The construction of a new church

The date of the beginning of the construction of St John the Baptist's church in Bychawa remains a mystery and the literature on the subject contains a lot of doubtful and untrue facts. One of the oldest pieces of information in the modern studies on Bychawa comes from the authors of *Słownik Geograficzny Królestwa Polskiego* (The Geographical Dictionary of the Kingdom of Poland); it says "the masonry parish church in 1637, after the abolition of Arians [!], transformed into the Latin one".²⁰ This information suggests that the present-day church in Bychawa was built by Protestants and initially served their needs, and it was not until the end of the 1630s that it was taken over by Catholics. Although it is highly improbable, which will be presented in the further part of the article, (in which H. Gmiterek did not believe;²¹ not justifying, however, his doubts), some inhabitants of Bychawa are still convinced about the truth of this fact. A Kossakowski merely

¹⁷ Stanisław Myszkowski from Mirów was a deputy cup-bearer of Lublin from 16 December 1586 to 11 November 1607 (*Urzednicy województwa lubelskiego XVI-XVIII wieku*, ed. W. Kłaczewski, W. Urban, Kórnik 1991, no. 165, p. 35). AKMK, ref. AVCap 68, Visitatio personalis cleri in civitate ac toto Archidiaconatu Lublinensis per reverendissimum domini Georgium Zamoysky de Zamoscie archidiaconum lublinensis et canonicum Cracoviensis anno aomini M.D.XC.V. in mense Octobre incepta et in anno XC VI. absoluta, f. 14^v.

¹⁸ L. Zalewski, *Ze stosunków wyznaniowych w Lubelskiem na podstawie notatek z archiwum kurii biskupiej w Lublinie*, Lublin 1931, p. 8.

¹⁹ Szczygieł, *Lokacja miasta*, p. 53.

²⁰ SGKP, vol. 1, p. 487.

²¹ Gmiterek, *Dzieje miasta w XVII-XVIII wieku*, p. 66. The author rightly noticed that saying about Arians in Bychawa is a mistake.

departs from this date; he only notices that there is no mention of a Calvinist church in Bychawa in 1636.²²

As far as *Katalog Zabytków Sztuki w Polsce* (The Catalogue of the Monuments in Poland) is concerned, it generally informs that the parish church was built before 1639,²³ which is obvious, as it was the year in which it was consecrated. No attempt was made, however, to determine the date of the beginning of its construction.

Finally, on the official website of the Bychawa parish, you can read the following information: "It is certain that as early as 1603 Catholics started building a new masonry church dedicated to St John the Baptist".²⁴ It is not known where this information came from or on what grounds such a conclusion was drawn. However, it cannot be a fact. Such an early date for the commencement of building a church is unacceptable for at least three reasons. First of all, in keeping with the practice of the time, the construction of the church needed a founder and patron, and the parish could not count on those in the Wierzbicki family, who probably owned Bychawa at the time. It has already been indicated by H. Gmiterek, who even drew the reader's attention to the hostility of one member of this family, Zofia Wierzbicka, towards the parish priest, Rev. Piątkowski.²⁵ The initiative to build a new church could not have come from parishioners, given the passivity of the patrons or the fact that it would have been against their will, as they had a disrespectful attitude towards the church, as discussed below.

Secondly, in 1603 there was no priest in the parish. The patrons of the church were to blame for this, and they were reluctant to present the person to the position of parish priest. The visitor of the parish in Bychawa, acting on the order of the Bishop of Kraków, Bernard Maciejowski, wrote: „Ecclesia parochialis lignea a duobus annis deserta”.²⁶ Even a year later, Bishop Maciejowski had to remind the patrons of the parish to present the right person.²⁷ It is also well known that the parish lost its property in the Calvinist period and regained it only in the 1620s and 1630s.²⁸ In such a situation, it is unlikely that anyone would think about building a new church.

Thirdly, the protocol of the canonical visitation of 1611 makes no mention of the commencement of the construction of the church, or at least of the intention to

²² A. Kossakowski, *Protestantyzm w Lublinie i w Lubelskiem w XVII-XVIII wieku*, Lublin 1933, p. 178: "According to Merczyng, the local Calvinist church collapsed in 1637. It is also worth noting that the list of churches of the Lublin district from 1636 does not include Bychawa."

²³ *Katalog zabytków*, p. 2.

²⁴ <http://www.parafia.bychawa.pl/historia.html> (accessed: 06.09.2021).

²⁵ Gmiterek, *Dzieje miasta w XVII-XVIII wieku*, p. 61.

²⁶ Archiwum Archidiecezjalne Lubelskie (AAL), ref. Rep 60 A 96, Visitatio ecclesiarum et totius cleri in archidiaconatu Lublinensi dioecesis Cracoviensis ex anno 1603, p. 485.

²⁷ Archiwum Kurii Metropolitalnej w Krakowie, ref. AV 4, Liber continens decreta executiva visitationum et alia ad correctionem et reformationem ... Bernardi Maciejowski cardinalis et episcopi Cracoviensis ac ducis Severiensis conscripta ex annis 1601 et sequent, p. 165.

²⁸ Gmiterek, *Dzieje miasta w XVII-XVIII wieku*, p. 61. AAL, ref. Rep 60 A 23, Acta cocsistori foranei Lublinensis dioecesis Cracoviensis ex annis 1634-1643 conscripta, ff. 476^v-482^r.

do so. In this case, too, it is inconceivable that such an important matter would escape the visitor's attention. Therefore we must take it for granted that the erection of a new church began after 1611.

A document related to appointing Rev. Jan Zagórski a parish priest in Bychawa allows researchers to determine the period of the beginning of the construction of the present-day St John the Baptist's church. The presentation of a new parish priest took place in 1631 after the death of Rev. Sebastian Piątkowski. It follows from this document that a certain Rev. Stalinski attempted to get this office. He was ready to finish the construction of this church at his own expense, starting with sealing the already standing walls: "A priest Staliński himself wrote asking for this presbytery and promising to wall up and complete everything at his expense, as well as to keep everything in better order".²⁹ The same document mentions the erection of the walls of the church:

Quoniam itaque patronus qui ecclesiam ex fundamentis ipsis construxit, fundavit et dotavit haeres, cui nec minorennitas nec assertae dominae parentis tutela nec bannitiones uti minorenni sine tutore se defendere nequeunt.³⁰

So it was done by the patron of the church and the heir. In the document under discussion, this role was performed by Władysław Wierzbicki, one of the sons of Zofia Wierzbicka. We can assume that the construction of the church began in the 1620s, closer to the second half of this decade. Some events that took place at that time neutralized the disapproving attitude of Zofia Wierzbicka towards the Bychawa parish, namely, Rev. Piątkowski obtained in 1626 a favourable verdict from a court, ordering the return of the lands to the Catholic Church, and Aleksander Zaporowski became the tenant of the Bychawa estates.³¹

Earlier, before 1626, it was rather impossible for a new church to be built, because Rev. Sebastian Piątkowski had a lawsuit with the Wierzbicki family for twenty years and devoted all his and his parish's income to it. In his will he wrote:

I testify that I have had no money because I spent all my and my parish's meagre income on the lawsuit and repossession of the land and its tithes (documents relating to this are with me), which resulted in a year-long illness and my health deterioration.³²

It should therefore be assumed that the construction of the church began in the second half of the 1620s, and was probably completed by the efforts of Rev. Jan Zagórski and the then owner of the Bychawa estates, Stanisław Wioteski, in 1639 at the latest, when the newly built church was consecrated – on 19 November this

²⁹ AAL, ref. Rep 60 A 22, Acta consistorii foranei Lublinensis dioecesis Cracoviensis ab anno 1630 ad annum 1633 conscripta, Presentatio Venerabilis Joannis Zagórski ad ecclesiam Bychaviensis, f. 130^v.

³⁰ Ibidem, f. 130^r.

³¹ Gmiterek, *Dzieje miasta w XVII-XVIII wieku*, pp. 56 i 61.

³² AAL, ref. Rep 60 A 22, Acta consistorii foranei Lublinensis dioecesis Cracoviensis ab anno 1630 ad annum 1633 conscripta, Venerabilis presbiter Christophorus Skorocyński testamentum of-fert, f. 122^r.

year.³³ In 1637, under the agreement between the owner of the Bychawa estates, Stanisław of Modliborzyce Wioteski, and the parish priest, Jan Zagórski, the parish regained its land and tithes as of 1498.³⁴ From then onwards, the parish could continue its proper activity, although the conditions of this activity, as the future was to show, were quite difficult, and the newly erected church, plagued by fires and enemy invasions, remained in poor technical condition for many years. This is, however, a discussion for another occasion.

As we mentioned in the introduction, further research is needed on the little-known in the Middle Ages and the modern era history of this one of the oldest parishes in today's Lublin diocese. Obviously, it cannot be conducted without taking into account sources preserved in the church archives, which have hardly ever been used so far. Therefore, detailed archival research and analysis of the preserved material are necessary.

Translated by Aneta Kiper

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³³ AKMK, ref. AV 9, Liber visitationis externaee ecclesiarum in decanatum Chodeliensis per me Petrum Dobielowicz, decanum Chodeliensem, parochum Opoliernsem, commissarium ab R.D. Andrea Trzebicki, episcopo Cracoviensi, duce Severiae, datum et deputum, conscriptus a.D. 1675, f. 109^r.

³⁴ AAL, ref. Rep 60 A 23, Acta cocsistori foranei Lublinensis dioecesis Cracoviensis ex annis 1634-1643 conscripta, ff. 476^v-482^r

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LOSY KOŚCIOŁA PARAFIALNEGO PW. ŚWIĘTYCH PIOTRA I PAWŁA W BYCHAWIE NA PRZEŁOMIE XVI I XVII WIEKU W ŚWIETLE ŹRÓDEŁ KOŚCIELNYCH

Streszczenie

W artykule skorygowano błędne lub nieprecyzyjne informacje o parafii w Bychawie obecne w dotychczasowej literaturze przedmiotu, która *nota bene* nie jest zbyt obszerna. Na podstawie dotychczasowych rozważań opartych głównie na źródłach kościelnych, mało dotychczas wykorzystywanych, udało się przynajmniej po części rzucić nowe światło na czas poszczególnych etapów w dziejach kościoła bychawskiego na przełomie XVI i XVII wieku.

Początki ruchu kalwińskiego musiały przypaść na ostatnie lata piątej dekady XVI stulecia i są związane z działalnością Mikołaja Pileckiego. Środowisko protestanckie umocnił tu Andrzej Myszkowski na początku lat 50. XVI wieku, zakładając szkołę kalwińską i być może sprowadzając stałych ministrów kalwińskich. Wiązanie początków kalwinizmu w Bychawie tylko z A. Myszkowskim jest nieprawidłowe. Rewindykacja kościoła w Bychawie była związana działalnością Stanisława Myszkowskiego, podczaszego lubelskiego, syna Andrzeja. Po podziałach w ruchu kalwińskim i osłabieniu ich gminy w Bychawie zwrócił swą uwagę w kierunku dawnej wiary, jak to czynili inni możnowładcy tego okresu, i wystarał się najpewniej ok. 1582 r. o duszpasterza katolickiego, a świątynia wróciła do rąk katolików, co umożliwiło archidiakonowi lubelskiemu odbycie pierwszej po czasach kalwińskich wizytacji w 1595 r. Świątynia była jednak w wielkim stopniu zrujnowana. Próbowano ją utrzymać aż do lat 20. XVII wieku, dokonując koniecznych napraw. Budowę nowego kościoła murowanego rozpoczęto najprawdopodobniej w połowie lat 20. XVII wieku, gdy proboszcz, Sebastian Piątkowski, wygrał proces o zwrot dóbr kościelnych z Zofią Wierzbicką. Przesuwanie na czasy wcześniejsze bydowy kościoła w Bychawie jest nieuprawnione. Kościół pod wezwaniem św. Jana Chrzciciela przetrwał do naszych czasów i nadal służy katolickiej wspólnocie bychawskiej.

Słowa kluczowe: Bychawa; Myszkowscy; Mikołaj Pilecki; Andrzej Myszkowski; Stanisław Myszkowski; Joachim z Borzęcina