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Jan Mikołaj Smogulecki: Family Background, Public Career, and Missionary Activity of a Polish Jesuit in China¹

Jan Mikołaj Smogulecki: pochodzenie rodzinne,
kariera publiczna i działalność misyjna
polskiego jezuitę w Chinach

Abstract

The article presents the life of Jan Mikołaj Smogulecki (1610–1656), a Polish Jesuit, scholar, and missionary active in China in the seventeenth century. The text analyzes three main aspects of his life: his family background, public activity, and missionary work. He came from the noble Grzymała family. His father was the Bydgoszcz starosta Maciej Smogulecki, and his mother was Zofia from the Zebrzydowski family. He studied at the Jesuit college in Braniewo, the Lubrański Academy in Poznań, and at

1 This research was funded by the state budget under the programme of the Minister of Education and Science, *National Programme for the Development of the Humanities* (project no. NPRH/U22/SP/0021/2023/12), entitled *Historiae Sinarum Imperii and Collectanea Historiae Sinensis by Tomasz Szpot Dunin SJ – the Polish Contribution to the Study of Chinese Culture and History in the Early Modern Period*. The funding amount was PLN 1,566,263.42, which is also the total value of the project.

European universities, including Freiburg, Rome, and Padua. He studied mathematics, astronomy, philosophy, and law. At a young age he began a political career – he served as the starosta of Nakło and participated in the public life of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth. Despite promising prospects for further political advancement, he resigned from his offices and joined the Society of Jesus in 1636. After receiving priestly ordination, Smogulecki requested permission to undertake missionary work in the Far East. In 1644 he set out for Asia and, after a long journey, reached China. There he carried out both missionary and scientific activities – teaching mathematics and astronomy, which enabled him to establish contacts with Chinese scholars and officials. He died in 1656 in the city of Chaokim. He was an outstanding scholar and missionary who combined scientific knowledge with religious activity. Thanks to his abilities and education, he played an important role in the dialogue between European and Chinese culture and in the development of Jesuit missions in China.

Keywords: Jan Mikołaj Smogulecki, Jesuits, China, missions, Tomasz Dunin Szpot.

Abstrakt

Artykuł przedstawia życie Jana Mikołaja Smoguleckiego (1610–1656) – polskiego jezuitę, uczonego i misjonarza działającego w Chinach w XVII wieku. Tekst analizuje trzy główne obszary jego życia: pochodzenie rodzinne, działalność publiczną oraz działalność misyjną. Wywodził się on ze szlacheckiego rodu Grzymalitów. Jego ojcem był starosta bydgoski Maciej Smogulecki, a matką Zofia z Zebrzydowskich. Uczył się w kolegium jezuickim w Braniewie, w Akademii Lubrańskiego w Poznaniu oraz na uczelniach europejskich (m.in. we Fryburgu, Rzymie i Padwie). Studiował matematykę, astronomię, filozofię i prawo. W młodym wieku rozpoczął karierę polityczną – był starostą nakielskim i uczestniczył w życiu publicznym państwa polsko-litewskiego. Mimo perspektyw rozwoju kariery politycznej zrezygnował z urzędów i w 1636 r. wstąpił do Towarzystwa Jezusowego. Po przyjęciu święceń kapłańskich Smogulecki poprosił o możliwość wyjazdu na misje na Daleki Wschód. W 1644 r. wyruszył do Azji i po długiej podróży dotarł do Chin. Tam prowadził działalność misyjną oraz naukową – nauczał matematyki i astronomii, dzięki czemu nawiązywał kontakty z chińskimi uczonymi i urzędnikami. Zmarł w 1656 r. w mieście Chaokim. Był wybitnym uczonym i misjonarzem, który połączył wiedzę naukową z działalnością religijną. Dzięki swoim zdolnościom i edukacji odegrał ważną rolę w dialogu między kulturą europejską i chińską oraz w rozwoju misji jezuickich w Chinach.

Słowa kluczowe: Jan Mikołaj Smogulecki, jezuita, Chiny, misje, Tomasz Dunin Szpot.

History is a discipline that allows the researcher, in a remarkably natural way, to move from the study of the history of his own homeland to investigations of events shaping not only the history of Europe but also the history of the world. This is confirmed, among other things, by the example of the present author. In the course of research conducted several years ago on the biography of Mikołaj Zebrzydowski – a rebel and insurgent, a man who unquestionably influenced the fate of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth – it became apparent that the materials collected at that time could serve as a starting point for studies on the life and activity of his grandson, Jan Mikołaj Smogulecki, a religious who left a lasting mark on the history of the Society of Jesus, particularly in the history of the Christian missionary enterprises carried out by the sons of St. Ignatius of Loyola in the Far East.

The subtitle included in the title of this article specifies three research areas whose discussion constitutes the aim of the present study: the first concerns family background, the second public career, and the third missionary activity. The first area will be examined on the basis of written and printed sources that have largely remained unused until now. The second will rely primarily on the existing scholarly literature, while the third will focus on the analysis of an exceptionally valuable source – *Historiae Sinarum Imperii* by the Polish Jesuit Tomasz Dunin Szpot – which until only a few years ago was unknown and unused both in Polish and in international scholarship.²

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- 2 For Tomasz Dunin Szpot and his work devoted to the history of China, see: “Szpot Dunin Tomasz Ignacy” in *Encyklopedia wiedzy o jezuitach na ziemiach Polski i Litwy (1564–1995)*, ed. Ludwik Grzebień (Kraków: Wydawnictwo WAM, 2004), 665; Robert Danieluk, “Konfesjonał i pióro: Tomasz Ignacy Szpot Dunin, polski historyograf jezuickiej misji w Chinach”, in *Iesuitae in Polonia – Poloni Iesuitae. Piśmiennictwo łacińskie czasów nowożytnych*, ed. Jarosław Nowaszczuk (Szczecin: “Volumina.pl,” 2017), 75–108; Thierry Meynard, “For the record: The Canton exile of the missionaries (1666–1671) by the Polish Jesuit Szpot Dunin”, *Annales Missiologici Posnanienses* 25 (2020): 147–185; Andrzej Wadas, “Źródła autorytetu i wpływu jezuitów na dworze cesarzy Wanli (1572–1620), Shunzi (1644–1661) i Kangxi (1661–1722) i w szerszych kręgach społeczeństwa chińskiego w świetle dzieła Tomasza Dunina Szpota (1644–1713)”, *Perspektywy Kultury* 43/4/1 (2023): 215–227; Gościwit Malinowski, “Etnografia Tatarów Wschodnich (Mandżurów) i Zachodnich (Mongolów) w dziele *Historia Sinarum* Tomasza Szpota Dunina”, in *Jezuici. Nauka, kultura, duchowość*, ed. Waldemar Graczyk, Jolanta M. Marszałska (Warszawa: Instytut De Republica, 2024), 701–713; Janusz Smołucha, “Powstanie, status i znaczenie społeczności żydowskiej w Państwie Środka według relacji polskiego jezuita Tomasza Szpota Dunina zawartych w dziele *Historiae Sinarum Imperii*”, *Perspektywy Kultury* 44/1 (2024): 519–530; Łukasz Burkiewicz, Andrzej Wadas, “Życie i dzieło Tomasza Ignacego Dunina Szpota SJ (1644/1645–1713) oraz jego wkład w etnografię nowożytnych Chin”, *Perspektywy Kultury* 49/2 (2025): 336–357. Moreover, in 2023 the scholarly journal *Rocznik Filozoficzny Ignatianum* published a special issue devoted to the works of Dunin Szpot and to the Jesuit missions in China; it includes

Jan Mikołaj Smogulecki is not an unknown figure. Biographical entries devoted to him can be found in the scholarly literature, among others in the *Polish Biographical Dictionary (Polski Słownik Biograficzny)*,³ the *Encyclopedia of Knowledge about the Jesuits (Encyklopedia wiedzy o jezuitach)*,⁴ and the *Dictionary of Ming Biography*.⁵ He has been discussed, among others, by Tadeusz Rojek,⁶ Dorota Żołędź-Strzelczyk,⁷ Duc Ha Nguyen⁸ and Jan Konior.⁹ However, these authors have largely drawn on the article by Edward Kosibowicz,¹⁰ as was rightly observed

several articles addressing this subject: Łukasz Burkiewicz, “Polityczna, gospodarcza i kulturowa rola Wielkiego Kanału chińskiego w kontekście Historiae Sinarum Imperii Tomasza Szpota Dunina”, *Rocznik Filozoficzny Ignatianum* 29/4 (2023): 39–58; Gościwit Malinowski, “Fryderyk Kazimierz Wolff SJ (1643–1708) i Tomasz Dunin Szpot SJ (1644–1713) – polscy jezuici jako pośrednicy kulturowi w czasach poselstwa cara Piotra I do Europy (1697–1698)”, *Rocznik Filozoficzny Ignatianum* 29/4 (2023): 101–110; Janusz Smołucha, “Pogrzeb Mattea Ricciego SJ (1552–1610) w Historiae Sinarum Imperii Tomasza Szpota Dunina: Kulturowa interakcja”, *Rocznik Filozoficzny Ignatianum* 29/4 (2023): 59–74; Andrzej Wadas, “Gravissima pericula: Rok 1606 jako brzemienne w wydarzenia dla zakonu jezuickiego w świetle dziejów powszechnych oraz Historiae Sinarum Imperii Tomasza Szpota Dunina (1644–1713)”, *Rocznik Filozoficzny Ignatianum* 29/4 (2023): 15–38; Hanna Wadas, “Odkrycie i znaczenie steli z Xi’an dla misji jezuickich w Chinach w XVII w. w ujęciu Historiae Sinarum Imperii Tomasza Szpota Dunina SJ (1644–1713)”, *Rocznik Filozoficzny Ignatianum* 29/4 (2023): 75–88.

- 3 Ludwik Grzebień, “Smogulecki (Smogolecki, Smogoleński, Nicolo Smogulec) Jan Mikołaj (Mikołaj) h. Grzymała, nazwisko przybrane: Mo Ni-co, Mou Ni-co Jou-To (1610–1656)”, in *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, vol. 39 (Warszawa–Kraków: Polska Akademia Umiejętności, 1999–2000), 232–234.
- 4 “Smogulecki Jan Mikołaj”, in *Encyklopedia wiedzy o jezuitach na ziemiach Polski i Litwy (1564–1995)*, ed. Ludwik Grzebień (Kraków: Wydawnictwo WAM, 2004), 626.
- 5 Bolesław Szcześniak, “Smogulecki Jan Mikołaj”, in *Dictionary of Ming biography. 1368–1644*, vol. 2, ed. Goodrich L. Carrington, Fang Zhaoying (New York–London: Columbia University Press, 1976), 1205–1206.
- 6 Tadeusz Rojek, “Przyjacieli mandarynów”, in *idem, Sławni i nieznani* (Warszawa: Nasza Księgarnia, 1975), 137–144.
- 7 Dorota Żołędź-Strzelczyk, “Praca w winnicy Pańskiej: dwaj polscy jezuici-misjonarze XVII wieku”, in *Jezuicka ars historica. Prace ofiarowane Księdzu Profesorowi Ludwikowi Grzebieniowi SJ*, ed. Marek Ingot, Stanisław Obirek (Kraków: Wydawnictwo WAM, 2001), 655–667.
- 8 Ha Nguyen Duc, *Polscy misjonarze na Dalekim Wschodzie w XVII–XVIII wieku* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Neriton, 2006), 73–81.
- 9 Jan Konior, *Historia polsko-chińskich kontaktów kulturowych w XVII w. (na przykładzie misji jezuickich)* (Kraków: Akademia Ignatianum – Wydawnictwo WAM, 2013), 243–253.
- 10 Edward Kosibowicz, “Zapomniany misjonarz polski ks. J[an] S[mogulecki] TJ”, *Przełęcz Powszechny* 181/46 (1929): 148–172. This article was subsequently translated and published in French: Edward Kosibowicz, “Un missionnaire polonais oublié. Le Père Jean Nicolas Smogulecki SJ, missionnaire en Chine au XVIIe siècle”, *Revue d’Histoire des Missions* 6 (1929): 335–360 and later reprinted in: Plattner Felix A., *Gdy Europa szukała*

by Monika Miazek-Męczyńska, who in recent years has also turned her attention to Jan Mikołaj Smogulecki and has introduced into the scholarly literature a number of important and previously unknown pieces of information.¹¹

Family

The Smogulecki family belonged to the Grzymała clan (Grzymalici), one of the most powerful heraldic clans of medieval Poland, whose members inhabited the regions of Greater Poland in the broad sense. This is noted, among others, by three Polish heraldists: Bartłomiej Paprocki (16th century),¹² Szymon Okolski (17th century),¹³ and Kacper Niesiecki (18th century).¹⁴ The first of these does not mention the Smogulecki family; this may be explained by the fact that at the end of the sixteenth century a family bearing this toponymic surname was most likely not yet known to the heraldist.¹⁵ The second of the aforementioned authors states that the Smogulecki family lived in Greater Poland, “distinguished by fame and prosperity,”¹⁶ a claim that is also confirmed by the third heraldist, who, however, relied largely on the works of his predecessors.¹⁷ The ancestral seat of the Smogulecki family – from which the family derived its surname – was the locality of Smogulec in the Pałuki region.¹⁸ In Okolski’s opinion, the most eminent representative of the family was Maciej,

Azji, trans. Antoni Starzeński (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Apostolstwa Modlitwy, 1975), 324–345.

- 11 Monika Miazek-Męczyńska, “Michał Piotr Boym i Jan Mikołaj Smogulecki – dwie jezuickie drogi do Państwa Środka”, *Nurt SVD* 2 (2024): 34–45.
- 12 Bartosz Paprocki, *Herby rycerstwa polskiego*, ed. Kazimierz J. Turowski (Kraków: Biblioteka Polska, 1858), 614–619.
- 13 Szymon Okolski, *Orbis Polonus [...] in quo antiqua Sarmatarum gentilitia, pervetvstae nobilitatis Poloniae insignia, vetera et nova indigenatus meritorum praemia et arma, specificantur et relucet [...]*, vol. I (Cracoviae: In Officina Typographica Francisci Caesarij, 1641), 267–274.
- 14 *Herbarz Polski Kaspra Niesieckiego SJ powiększony dodatkami z późniejszych autorów, rekopismów, dowodów urzędowych*, T. 8, wyd. Jan Nepomucen Bobrowicz (Lipsk: nakł. i dr. Breitkopfa i Haertela, 1841), 421–423.
- 15 Paprocki, *Herby*, 614–619.
- 16 Okolski, *Orbis Polonus*, vol. 1, 273–274.
- 17 *Herbarz Polski Kaspra Niesieckiego*, vol. 8, 421–423.
- 18 *Słownik geograficzny Królestwa Polskiego i innych krajów słowiańskich*, vol. X, ed. Filip Sulimierski, Bronisław Chlebowski, Władysław Walewski (Warszawa: druk. “Wieku” Nowy Świat nr. 61, 1889), 891.

the starosta of Bydgoszcz, whom he described as “a man of extraordinary learning, which he readily combined with religious zeal and love of the fatherland, and who gave remarkable testimony to his knowledge in books published in print.”¹⁹ Niesiecki, in turn, regarded as the most distinguished members of the Smogulecki family – besides the aforementioned starosta of Bydgoszcz – also his son, Jan Mikołaj, the starosta of Nakło, who after several years of public activity entered the Society of Jesus and departed as a missionary to the Far East.²⁰ Consequently, the Jesuit heraldist devoted the greatest attention to these two representatives of the Smogulecki family, mentioning other members only briefly: Jan, the elder brother of Maciej, the starosta of Bydgoszcz, Maciej’s two sons, Jan Wojciech and Maciej, the brothers of Jan Mikołaj, Jan Jakub and Florian, and the sons of Jan Jakub, Franciszek and Mikołaj, the latter described without a clear indication of the relationships linking him to the other members of the family.²¹

The father of Jan Mikołaj – Maciej – was, in Okolski’s opinion, “a man of extraordinary learning, which he readily combined with religious zeal and love of the fatherland, and who gave remarkable testimony to his knowledge in books published in print.”²² Niesiecki expressed a similar view of him, considering him a learned man, a judgment confirmed, among other things, by the content of a political pamphlet he authored: *O exorbitancyach, które niektórzy świeccy nowi politycy stanowi duchownemu zadają zdanie szlachcica starożytnego* (“On the Exorbitances Which Certain Secular New Politicians Attribute to the Clerical Estate: The Opinion of an Ancient Nobleman”).²³ From the content of this polemical treatise – whose purpose was the defense of the rights and privileges of the Church – one may conclude, as Niesiecki writes, that

19 Okolski, *Orbis Polonus*, vol. I, 273.

20 *Herbarz Polski Kaspra Niesieckiego*, vol. 8, 421.

21 *Ibidem*, 422–423.

22 Okolski, *Orbis Polonus*, vol. I, 273. For a more detailed discussion of Maciej Smogulecki, see: Krzysztof Chłapowski, “Smogulecki (Smogolecki) Maciej h. Grzymała (zm. 1617 r.)”, in *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, vol. 39 (Warszawa–Kraków: Polska Akademia Umiejętności, 1999–2000), 234–236; Edward Ozorowski, “Smogulecki (Smogolecki, Smogoleński) Maciej h. Grzymała (+1617)”, in *Słownik Polskich Teologów Katolickich*, vol. 4, ed. Hieronim E. Wyczawski (Warszawa: Akademia Teologii Katolickiej, 1983), 113.

23 Mikołaj Smogulecki, *O exorbitancyach, które niektórzy świeccy nowi politycy stanowi duchownemu zadają zdanie szlachcica starożytnego* (Kraków: w drukarni Andrzeja Piotrkowczyka, 1632). It should be noted that the work was first published in Kalisz in 1619, reissued there in 1622, and later printed in Kraków in 1632: *Herbarz Polski Kaspra Niesieckiego*, vol. 8, 421.

“anyone may infer about Maciej that he possessed both wit and keen judgment, an uncommon knowledge of law – both ecclesiastical and imperial as well as native – and an excellent refinement in theology.” This “refinement,” that is, the intellectual formation which predisposed Smogulecki to participate in theological disputations, was the result of four years of studies in Rome, during which he also became acquainted with history, both ancient and national, as well as with the writings of the Church Fathers.²⁴ However, it was not theology, and thus not service to the Church, but rather politics and service to the state that the father of the future Jesuit chose as his life’s path. Having obtained the office of starosta of Bydgoszcz in 1600,²⁵ he began an active public career, for – as Niesiecki recorded – “such high learning made him capable of many functions in this fatherland.” The development of Smogulecki’s political career, for whom “King Sigismund III [...] was already preparing [...] the royal seal,” was nevertheless halted by a sudden illness, the ultimate consequence of which was his death in 1617, “at the very moment,” as Niesiecki noted, “when he was rising to the highest honours.”²⁶

The mother of the Jesuit was Zofia of the Zebrzydowski family, the daughter of Mikołaj, the Voivode of Kraków, and Dorota of the Herburt family. After the death of Maciej Smogulecki, she remarried Stanisław Niemojewski, the Castellan of Chełmno. According to Niesiecki, however, the wives of the two nobles were two different daughters of Zebrzydowski and Dorota Herburt: the first – whose name was unknown to the Jesuit heraldist – was said to have married the Castellan of Chełmno, Niemojewski, while the second, named Teresa, was supposed to have married the starosta of Bydgoszcz, Smogulecki. In reality, the wife of both nobles was Zofia, while the husband of Teresa of the Niemojewski family was the nephew of the Bydgoszcz starosta – also named Maciej.²⁷

24 *Herbarz Polski Kaspra Niesieckiego*, vol. 8, 421.

25 The appointment took place on 16 August 1600 and followed the death of his predecessor, Jan Kościelecki: Archiwum Główne Akt Dawnych (AGAD), Metryka Koronna (MK), vol. 145, k. 208-209v; *Urzednicy dawnej Rzeczypospolitej XII–XVIII wieku. Spisy*, ed. Antoni Gąsiorowski, vol. VI: *Kujawy i ziemia dobrzyńska*, part 2: *Urzednicy kujawscy i dobrzyńscy XVI–XVIII wieku. Spisy*, ed. Krzysztof Mikulski, Wojciech Stanek (Kórnik: Biblioteka Kórnicka, 1990), nr 495.

26 *Herbarz Polski Kaspra Niesieckiego*, vol. 8, 421. Maciej Smogulecki most likely died before 20 December 1617, as on that date Andrzej Przyjemski was appointed starosta of Bydgoszcz, an office previously held by Smogulecki. AGAD, MK, vol. 161, k. 195v-197; *Urzednicy dawnej Rzeczypospolitej XII–XVIII wieku. Spisy*, ed. Antoni Gąsiorowski, vol. VI: *Kujawy i ziemia dobrzyńska*, part 2: *Urzednicy kujawscy i dobrzyńscy*, no. 496.

27 For further information on the marriage of Maciej Smogulecki, starosta of Bydgoszcz, see: Tomasz Graff, Bartłomiej M. Wołyniec, Elżbieta E. Wróbel, *Mikołaj Zebrzydowski*

Thus, the coincidence of the names of the two Smoguleckis caused the error that appeared in Niesiecki's work to be repeated for many years. Even modern scholars studying the figure of the Polish missionary have not avoided this mistake, following the Jesuit heraldist in claiming that the mother of Jan Mikołaj was – never in fact existing – Teresa of the Zebrzydowski family.²⁸

Jan Mikołaj was the eldest of the three sons of Maciej and Zofia of the Zebrzydowski family. His younger brothers were Jan Jakub, the starosta of Nakło (d. 1639), and Florian Michał (d. after 1645), about whom Okolski wrote that although he was still studying abroad at the turn of the 1630s and 1640s, upon returning to his homeland he “would become a future ornament and support of the fatherland.”²⁹ It seems, however, that already during his studies abroad he decided to enter the clerical state, for while in Rome in August 1638 he received the tonsure.³⁰ With regard to the other brother, the Dominican heraldist stated that “the brilliance of his personal virtue and the proven piety of his conduct, adorned without any suspicion in matters of faith, made him particularly worthy of recommendation.” In his life he was guided by love for his homeland, caring for its welfare by every possible means. One manifestation of this was his long years of study abroad in Flanders, France, and Italy, from where he returned in order to serve King Władysław IV faithfully and loyally – first as a courtier and later as the starosta of Nakło.³¹ He assumed this office sometime between 19 July 1636 – when Maciej Smogulecki appeared for the last time in the Nakło municipal court records with the title of starosta – and 27 April 1637, when Jan Jakub was first mentioned in the same records as the starosta of Nakło.³²

1552–1620. *Szkic biograficzny* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Księgarnia Akademicka, 2020), 26. For the marriage of his nephew, also named Maciej, to Teresa of the Niemojewski family, see: Teki Dworzaczka: Grodzkie i ziemskie – Poznań – Rezygnacje – XVII wiek – Part 1, reg. 227 (No. 1424) 1649; Zap. Tryb. Piotrk., 588 (No. 29) 1638.

28 *Herbarz Polski Kaspra Niesieckiego*, vol. 8, 421. This erroneous information was subsequently repeated, among others, in Ozorowski, “Smogulecki”, 113; “Smogulecki Jan Mikołaj”, 626; Ha Nguyen, *Polscy misjonarze*, 75; Miazek-Męczyńska, “Michał Piotr Boym”, 36.

29 Okolski, *Orbis Polonus*, vol. I, 273.

30 *Klerycy z ziem polskich, litewskich i pruskich święceni w Rzymie (XVI – pocz. XX w.)*, ed. Stanisław Jujeczka (Wrocław: Uniwersytet Wrocławski, 2018), no. 199.

31 Okolski, *Orbis Polonus*, vol. I, 273.

32 *Urządnicy dawnej Rzeczypospolitej XII–XVIII wieku. Spisy*, ed. Antoni Gąsiorowski, vol. I: *Wielkopolska (Województwa poznańskie i kaliskie)*, part 2: *Urządnicy wielkopolscy XVI–XVIII wieku. Spisy*, ed. Adam Bieniaszewski (Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków–Gdańsk–Łódź: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1987), no. 685.

Characterizing Jan Jakub, the Dominican heraldist further remarked that “he lacked no virtue.” According to Okolski, he was distinguished by genuine piety, particularly by his devotion to the Virgin Mary, which he “solemnly manifested by introducing the Archconfraternity of the Most Holy Rosary into the church in Wysocza, with numerous ceremonies, the participation of the clergy, and solemn celebrations.” He was renowned for his love of the poor and of religious persons, especially – as Okolski emphasized – of the Dominican Order, which he supported with particular generosity and sincere affection.³³ According to information provided by Niesiecki, Jan Jakub married Zofia Anna Niemojewska, the daughter of Stanisław, the Castellan of Chełmno.³⁴ The couple had two sons: Mikołaj (c. 1634–1676), later the Castellan of Gdańsk, who married Anna Maria Chlewicka,³⁵ and Franciszek (d. 1667), who devoted himself to a military career.³⁶ According to Niesiecki, he “first tempered his knightly courage in foreign camps,” and after returning to his homeland he successively became a rotmistrz (cavalry captain) and a colonel, “whom no enemy could defeat,” but – as he noted – “envy alone overcame him.”³⁷ In this envy the Jesuit heraldist saw the cause of the events that led to the murder of Franciszek while he was on his way to the session of the Sejm in 1667.³⁸

In addition to the above-mentioned members of the Smogulecki family, the heraldic-genealogical compendium authored by Niesiecki also contains information concerning Jan Smogulecki (d. after 1629), the elder brother of Maciej,³⁹ the starosta of Bydgoszcz, who after his brother’s death assumed guardianship over his three sons.⁴⁰ In the opinion of the Jesuit heraldist, he was particularly well disposed toward the Jesuits, which he demonstrated by supporting the establishment of the residence of the Society of Jesus in Bydgoszcz in 1618. He married a woman from the Żaliński family, whose first name is unknown, with whom he had

33 Okolski, *Orbis Polonus*, vol. I, 273.

34 *Herbarz Polski Kaspra Niesieckiego*, vol. 8, 422.

35 For a detailed discussion of Mikołaj Smogulecki, see: Jarosław Dumanowski, “Smogulecki Mikołaj h. Grzymała (ok. 1634–1676)”, in *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, vol. 39 (Warszawa–Kraków: Polska Akademia Umiejętności, 1999–2000), 236–238.

36 For a detailed discussion of Mikołaj Smogulecki, see: Marek Wagner, “Smogulecki Franciszek h. Grzymała (zm. 1667)”, in *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, vol. 39 (Warszawa–Kraków: Polska Akademia Umiejętności, 1999–2000), 231–232.

37 *Herbarz Polski Kaspra Niesieckiego*, vol. 8, 422.

38 Wagner, “Smogulecki Franciszek”, 232.

39 *Herbarz Polski Kaspra Niesieckiego*, vol. 8, 422.

40 Teki Dworzaczka: Grodzkie i ziemskie – Kcynia: reg. 4400 (No. 19) (Iud.) 1629.

two sons: starosta of Nakło Maciej,⁴¹ who, as has already been mentioned, married Teresa of the Niemojewski family, and Jan Wojciech, who married Ewa Zbyszewska.⁴² According to Niesiecki, the first of the brothers was “a military man who served under the royal banner at no small personal expense,” while the second was “a knightly man who at Chocim against Osman the Turk gave the first proof of his martial courage, and afterwards did not diminish it in other occasions.”⁴³

Public Activity

All authors writing about Jan Mikołaj agree that he was born in Kraków in 1610,⁴⁴ although no research confirming this claim has ever been conducted. In 1617, after the death of his father, he and his brothers came under the guardianship of their uncle Jan,⁴⁵ who sent Jan Mikołaj to the Jesuit college in Braniewo (1621). There the future Jesuit joined the Marian Sodality,⁴⁶ and subsequently (1622) enrolled at the Lubrański Academy in Poznań.⁴⁷ In 1625 Jan Mikołaj left for Freiburg to pursue studies in mathematics and astronomy.⁴⁸ There, in the following year, he published a work devoted to sunspots – *Sol illustratus ac propugnatus* [...].⁴⁹ In 1627 he began philosophical studies at the Collegio Romano, which he completed after three years, obtaining the degree of Doctor of

41 *Urządnicy dawnej Rzeczypospolitej XII–XVIII wieku. Spisy*, red. Antoni Gąsiorowski, vol. I: *Wielkopolska (Województwa poznańskie i kaliskie)*, part 2: *Urządnicy wielkopolscy*, no. 684.

42 *Herbarz Polski Kaspra Niesieckiego*, vol. 8, 422.

43 *Ibidem*, 422.

44 “Smogulecki Jan Mikołaj”, 626; Grzebień, “Smogulecki [...] Jan Mikołaj”, 232; Ha Nguyen, *Polscy misjonarze*, 75.

45 In the scholarly literature, it is sometimes claimed that after the death of his father Jan Mikołaj was placed under the care of his mother: Ha Nguyen, *Polscy misjonarze*, 75; Konior, *Historia polsko-chińskich kontaktów*, 243.

46 He began his studies in Braniewo together with his cousin Maciej; see: Grzebień, “Smogulecki [...] Jan Mikołaj”, 232; Ha Nguyen, *Polscy misjonarze*, 75–76; Miazek-Męczyńska, “Michał Piotr Boym”, 36.

47 Grzebień, “Smogulecki [...] Jan Mikołaj”, 232; Ha Nguyen, *Polscy misjonarze*, 76; Miazek-Męczyńska, “Michał Piotr Boym”, 36.

48 “Smogulecki Jan Mikołaj”, 626; Grzebień, “Smogulecki [...] Jan Mikołaj”, 232; Ha Nguyen, *Polscy misjonarze*, 76; Miazek-Męczyńska, “Michał Piotr Boym”, 36.

49 Jan Mikołaj Smogulecki, *Sol Illustratus ac Propugnatus* [...] (Friburgi–Brisgoiae: excubatio Theodorus Meyer, 1626).

Philosophy.⁵⁰ In May 1627 he was recorded as a lay provizor of the Polish church dedicated to St. Stanislaus.⁵¹ He later moved to the University of Padua, where he studied law for two years.⁵² His education is also mentioned in the annual catalogue of the Society of Jesus from 1648, which records: “Ioannes Nicolaus Smogulecki 39 a. agens, 12 Societatis; praeter studia philosophiae (3a.) et theologiae (4a.) studuit (2a.) utriusque iuri.”⁵³ Consequently, by the age of twenty Jan Mikołaj could boast the completion of studies in philosophy as well as extensive and well-grounded knowledge of law, mathematics, and astronomy – knowledge which, as the subsequent years of his life demonstrated, he carefully employed both for political and missionary purposes.

Most likely in the first half of 1631 Jan Mikołaj returned to his homeland, where he began a career at the royal court and in the state administration. In August 1631, while serving as a royal courtier, he was appointed starosta of Nakło,⁵⁴ an office he held for slightly more than two years, since at the end of December 1633 he ceded it to his cousin Maciej.⁵⁵ He took an active part in the work of the parliament, participating in the Convocation Sejm in Warsaw in 1632,⁵⁶ the Coronation Sejm of Władysław IV Vasa in Kraków in 1633,⁵⁷ and the Extraordinary Sejm in

50 “Smogulecki Jan Mikołaj”, 626; Grzebień, “Smogulecki [...] Jan Mikołaj”, 232; Ha Nguyen, *Polscy misjonarze*, 76; Miazek-Męczyńska, “Michał Piotr Boym”, 36.

51 Józef Skrabski, *Polacy w Rzymie i w Loreto w świetle materiałów archiwalnych w archiwum kościoła i hospicjum polskiego w Rzymie (XVII–XIX wiek). Spis Polaków w hospicjum polskim w Rzymie (XVII–XVIII wiek)* (Kraków: Towarzystwo Naukowe Societas Vistulana, 2024), 417.

52 “Smogulecki Jan Mikołaj”, 626; Grzebień, “Smogulecki [...] Jan Mikołaj”, 232; Ha Nguyen, *Polscy misjonarze*, 76–77; Miazek-Męczyńska, “Michał Piotr Boym”, 36. See also: *Archiwum nacji polskiej w Uniwersytecie Padewskim. Metryka nacji polskiej w Uniwersytecie Padewskim (1592–1745)*, T. 1, oprac. Henryk Barycz (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1971), 79.

53 Ha Nguyen, *Polscy misjonarze*, 75.

54 He was appointed starosta of Nakło on 19 August 1631 following the cession of the office by Stefan Gembicki; see: AGAD, MK, vol. 178, k. 376-377v; *Urządnicy dawnej Rzeczypospolitej XII–XVIII wieku. Spisy*, ed. Antoni Gąsiorowski, vol. I: *Wielkopolska (Województwa poznańskie i kaliskie)*, part 2: *Urządnicy wielkopolscy*, no. 683.

55 The cession took place on 23 December 1633; see: AGAD, MK, vol. 180, k. 247-247v; *Urządnicy dawnej Rzeczypospolitej XII–XVIII wieku. Spisy*, ed. Antoni Gąsiorowski, vol. I: *Wielkopolska (Województwa poznańskie i kaliskie)*, part 2: *Urządnicy wielkopolscy*, no. 684.

56 *Volumina Constitutionum*, vol. III: *1611–1640*, part 2: *1627–1640*, ed. Stanisław Grodziski, Marcin Kwiecień, Anna Karabowicz (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Sejmowe, 2013), 161.

57 *Ibidem*, 195.

Warsaw in 1634.⁵⁸ During the first of these parliamentary assemblies he was appointed to the commission for the inspection of the royal treasury: “that the Treasury of the Commonwealth, where the insignia as well as the jewels and the archives of the Kingdom are kept, be inspected; for this inspection, by the authority of the present assembly, we appoint their lordships the voivodes of Kraków and Poznań, Vilnius and Sandomierz, Kalisz and Trakai, and their lordship [...] Mikołaj Smogulecki, starosta of Nakło [...]”. Together with him eight other representatives of the Chamber of Deputies were also appointed to the commission.⁵⁹ During the sessions of the Extraordinary Sejm in Warsaw in 1634, Smogulecki was in turn elected to a commission tasked with paying the wages of the “Muscovite and Ukrainian troops.”⁶⁰ The claim that two years later he was elected to the Crown Tribunal must, however, be regarded as incorrect, although it is mentioned, among others, by Ludwik Grzebień.⁶¹ For in 1636 it was his brother, Jan Jakub – then starosta of Nakło – who was elected deputy from the Poznań Voivodeship.⁶²

In characterizing Jan Mikołaj, the Jesuit genealogist and heraldist Kacper Niesiecki noted that “when yet greater honours in this fatherland were awaiting him, he, despising all these things and yielding the starosta of Nakło to his brother (sic!), entered the Jesuit Order.”⁶³ However, he did not specify the motivations that guided the young nobleman, who was at the beginning of a promising political career. According to Ludwik Grzebień, the reason lay in family relations – more precisely, in a certain aversion to intra-family relations – though this does not seem to be accurate.⁶⁴ Monika Miazek-Męczyńska, on the other hand, argues that one can only speculate that “the education received from Jesuit teachers in Braniewo, Freiburg, and Rome went beyond strictly academic boundaries, and that the fascination with knowledge, which undoubt-

58 *Ibidem*, 240.

59 The aforementioned eight representatives of the Chamber of Deputies were: Hieronim Broniewski; Zygmunt Koniecpolski, judge of the Sieradz land court; Marcyan Chełmski, standard-bearer of Kraków; Hieronim Przyłęcki, stolnik of Kraków; Krzysztof Ossoliński of Tęczyn, podkomorzy of Sandomierz; Krzysztof Sapieha, Lithuanian krajczy (carver); Krzysztof Kiszka, Lithuanian cześnik (cup-bearer); and Konstanty Szujski, land writer of Brest; see: *Volumina Constitutionum*, vol. III: 1611–1640, part 2: 1627–1640, 155–156.

60 *Volumina Constitutionum*, vol. III: 1611–1640, part 2: 1627–1640, 240.

61 Grzebień, “Smogulecki [...] Jan Mikołaj”, 232.

62 *Deputaci Trybunału Koronnego 1578–1794. Spis*, part II: 1621–1660, ed. Dariusz Kupisz (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Sejmowe, 2017), 132.

63 *Herbarz Polski Kaspra Niesieckiego*, vol. 8, 421.

64 Grzebień, “Smogulecki [...] Jan Mikołaj”, 232.

edly animated the mind of the young Jan Smogulecki, became during his studies intertwined with a fascination with Ignatian spirituality.”⁶⁵ This view appears more convincing, as it is consistent with the characterization of Jan Mikołaj’s family environment presented above. From this it follows that both the father and the uncle of the future Jesuit were closely connected in their lives with the Society of Jesus: Maciej through the education he received from the Jesuits, and Jan through the generous support he offered them. It should therefore come as no surprise that Jan Mikołaj also became connected with the Jesuits, among other things through many years of education, and that the piety represented by the sons of St. Ignatius of Loyola attracted him more strongly than, for example, Dominican spirituality, which was closer to his brother Jan Jakub.

Jan Mikołaj first approached the Jesuits in 1633, but at that time he was not admitted to the novitiate.⁶⁶ In the following years he repeatedly renewed his request to be admitted to the Society of Jesus, eventually achieving his goal. On 14 December 1636 he was admitted to the novitiate in Kraków.⁶⁷ Between 1638 and 1640 he studied theology at the College of Sts. Peter and Paul in Kraków, where he became acquainted, among others, with Michał Boym.⁶⁸ He then continued his studies for the next two years (1640–1642) at the Collegio Romano, to whose walls he returned after a ten-year absence.⁶⁹ In 1641, in the Eternal City, he received priestly ordination,⁷⁰ and in 1643 he solemnly pronounced the four religious vows.⁷¹ From the very beginning of his stay in the Eternal City the idea of dedicating himself to missionary activity matured within him. This is mentioned, among others, by Niesiecki: “as soon as he completed his theological studies in Rome, he obtained from the Father General the mission to which he had bound himself by vow – to the Indies and to China.”⁷²

65 Miazek-Męczyńska, “Michał Piotr Boym”, 37.

66 Grzebień, “Smogulecki [...] Jan Mikołaj”, 232.

67 “Smogulecki Jan Mikołaj”, 626; Grzebień, “Smogulecki [...] Jan Mikołaj”, 232; Ha Nguyen, *Polscy misjonarze*, 77.

68 Monika Miazek-Męczyńska, *Indipetae Polonae – kołatanie do drzwi misji chińskiej* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, 2015), 149, footnote 44.

69 “Smogulecki Jan Mikołaj”, 626; Grzebień, “Smogulecki [...] Jan Mikołaj”, 232.

70 “Smogulecki Jan Mikołaj”, 626; Grzebień, “Smogulecki [...] Jan Mikołaj”, 232.

71 “Smogulecki Jan Mikołaj”, 626; Grzebień, “Smogulecki [...] Jan Mikołaj”, 232.

72 *Herbarz Polski Kaspra Niesieckiego*, vol. 8, 422.

Missionary Activity

Jan Mikołaj Smogulecki first expressed his desire to depart for the missions in an eight-point letter sent on 6 June 1641 to the Superior General of the Society of Jesus, Mutio Vitelleschi. In the first point he stated that he had been called to the Society of Jesus also for this reason: “in order to have the opportunity to devote myself to the conversion of the unbelievers.” In the fourth and fifth points he argued that he saw no need to return to his homeland, since he was an orphan and the remaining members of his family were not well disposed toward him. In the sixth point he emphasized that the Order should not be concerned about the financial matters connected with sending him to the Far East, for – as he wrote – “as regards the costs of the journey, I shall not be a burden [...] to the Society [...]” Thus, three principal motives guided the Jesuit who was petitioning the General for permission to depart on the missions: religious, familial, and economic.

The selection of religious for missionary work in Asia – as Monika Miazek-Męczyńska notes – did not follow the same criteria as the standard recruitment of new candidates for ordinary pastoral work within the Order, but rather adhered to more detailed, one might even say more stringent, requirements. “The decisions of the superiors were determined not only by the candidate’s spiritual formation and religious zeal, but also by his age, health, linguistic abilities, knowledge of the exact sciences, and practical craft skills.” As a result, only a few were able to meet all the demands imposed by the authorities of the Order.⁷³ The nobleman originating from the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, situated on the frontiers of Christendom, proved to be one who fulfilled these requirements. Thanks to his background and careful education, he perfectly matched the profile of the learned missionary so highly valued for the effective conduct of evangelization in China, where science constituted the first sphere of communication between the Jesuits and the mandarins.⁷⁴ In the meantime, he also donated to the Society of Jesus the sum of 40,000 złotys, which – according to what he himself wrote to the Superior General – was intended to secure the costs of his journey to the Far East. As a result, in 1643 the authorities of the Order granted Jan Mikołaj permission to depart for the missions.⁷⁵

73 Miazek-Męczyńska, “Michał Piotr Boym”, 37.

74 *Ibidem*, 37.

75 *Herbarz Polski Kaspra Niesieckiego*, vol. 8, 422.

Leaving the Eternal City, Jan Mikołaj set out for Portugal, where he spent several months preparing for the journey ahead. For some time he stayed, among other places, at the court of King John IV the Restorer of the House of Braganza, who – as Niesiecki recorded – “indeed wished to dissuade him from these holy intentions and to retain him at his court, being captivated by the fine qualities with which nature had endowed him; yet [Jan Mikołaj], through earnest supplications, freed himself from the royal regard directed toward him.”⁷⁶ Equipped with the necessary books and scientific instruments, on 12 April 1644 he boarded a ship bound for Macau under the name “Joannes Nicolaus Sgomoleschi (sic!).” Several other missionaries from various parts of Europe travelled with him: Ludovicus Moura and Alvaro de Semedo from Portugal, Bartholomaeus Sequeira from Spain, Joannes Rafael and Franciscus Sinamo from Italy, Ignatius Lagote from Flanders, and Henricus Vanurliden from the Netherlands.⁷⁷ Most of them reached Batavia – then the center of Dutch colonial activity – between the end of September and the beginning of October. There, residing in the house of a Portuguese merchant, Jan Mikołaj waited for an improvement in weather conditions that would allow him to continue the journey toward China. During his stay on the island, on 2 January 1645 he wrote a letter describing the nine-month voyage, which had been marked by illness, storms, hunger, thirst, and even the death of fellow travelers. He also described events connected with the popular uprising in China, the Manchu attack on Peking, the fall of the Ming dynasty, and the wars between its successors and the Manchu forces. In doing so, he demonstrated a good knowledge of the political situation in China, most likely drawing information from merchants staying in Batavia as well as from Jesuits who, after the Dutch capture of Malacca, had to wait there for ships bound for China.⁷⁸ There – as Niesiecki noted – “amid countless hardships and constant struggle with poverty and deprivation, he gathered the apostolic harvest for several years, until in those labors he exhausted his life.”⁷⁹

Jan Mikołaj began his activity in China in 1646 in the province of Kiangnan. A year later he moved to Hangzhou, where he began learning the language and acquainting himself with local customs. During the siege of Nanjing by Manchu forces, he and his companions were

76 *Ibidem*, 422.

77 Antonio Franco, *Synopsis Annalium Societatis Jesu in Lusitania ab Anno 1540 usque ad Annum 1725* (Augustae-Vindelicorum – Graecii, 1726), ann. 1644.

78 Ha Nguyen, *Polscy misjonarze*, 79.

79 *Herbarz Polski Kaspra Niesieckiego*, vol. 8, 421–422.

forced to flee to the city of Kienyang. They did not remain there long, however, as the local population accused the Jesuits of sympathizing with the Manchus and threatened them with death.⁸⁰ The complexity of the situation in which the missionaries found themselves was described in his work by Tomasz Dunin Szpot, who drew attention, among other things, to the fact that the missionaries, standing in the face of almost certain death, were saved in a manner that seemed almost miraculous:

In this turmoil, when throughout the whole city massacres, wounds, and the cries of those searching for the Tatars in order to put them to death were spreading, a certain Christian military prefect – Chinese indeed, yet serving under the command of the Tatars – took refuge in the church. He did so not because he feared death, but in order, through holy confession, to prepare himself to receive it as a Christian. When the rebels learned of his presence, they immediately came to the church. The Fathers received them with very courteous words and declared that there was no one in the temple professing loyalty to the Tatars. They therefore left the church and went on to continue their search for Tatars. However, after a few days, having obtained more certain information from their scouts, they again rushed to the church and, breaking down the gate, dragged out the Christian prefect – already well prepared for death – together with his servant, and after subjecting them to cruel torments, deprived them of their heads. They then plundered the house of the Fathers, and the missionaries themselves – considered allies of the Tatars – were seized together with two servants of the house and led to the place appointed for execution, in order to be beheaded. The Fathers were already certain that they must die and therefore, on the way, having mutually prepared their souls in the manner required by the final moment of life, Father Dacunha silently commended his struggle to God, while Father Smogoleński, filled with joy of spirit that he was to die for the cause of God, sang in a loud and joyful voice some psalm or hymn in his Polish language. It was not, however, the will of God that those should perish at that time to whom other labors in the spreading of the Law of God were still destined. When they arrived at the place of execution and, in the presence of one of the commanders of the rebel troops, fell to the ground awaiting the stroke of the sword, two pagan craftsmen, acquaintances of the Fathers, seeing them in such a condition, stepped forward and addressed the prefect: ‘Sir,’ they said, ‘these are not Tatars, but scholars from the great West, men of the best life, of great virtue and learning, always recognized, esteemed, and visited as such by the great mandarins of this city and province.’ It seemed as though God Himself had spoken through the mouths of the craftsmen to the heart of the prefect. As soon as he heard that they were scholars

80 Grzebień, “Smogulecki [...] Jan Mikołaj”, 233.

from the great West, he ordered that their chains be removed, as well as those of their servants, and that they be escorted with honor back to the church – not so much rejoicing that their lives had been saved as grieving that they had lost the opportunity to glorify God through their own death. Having been delivered from death and restored to the church, they first made efforts – according to the Chinese custom of courtesy – to pay visits to the dignitaries and commanders of the rebels, rendering them the honors due. By God’s providence this was so pleasing to those mandarins that all those whom they had preceded with this mark of respect afterwards visited their house in order to return the honors. Moreover, the governor of the city sent them a document of security and inviolability, called *Kao-xi*, by which, after that terrible turmoil, peace returned and fear of the people and soldiers ceased. The danger of famine, however, did not cease; it would have destroyed them, since the soldiers had plundered the house and deprived it of the means of subsistence – had it not been for the prompt piety of the Christians, who abundantly supplied them with food and all necessary provisions.⁸¹

As a consequence of the subsequent events, the Fathers went to the city of Kienning, having lost all their personal belongings, including the mathematical and astronomical instruments that Father Jan Mikołaj had brought with him from Europe.⁸² “Two Fathers of our Society,” wrote Martino Martini in *De bello Tartarico*, “had already been sent somewhat earlier out of the city by a marvelous Providence of God: Father Simon de Cunha, a Portuguese, and Father Jan Mikołaj Smogolecki, a Pole – like Lot saved from Sodom, a name which particularly suits that city on account of its shameful licentiousness.”⁸³ Tomasz Dunin Szpot most likely drew upon Martini’s account of these events, placing in his own work a paraphrase of a passage from *De bello Tartarico*: “At that time Fathers Dacunha and Smogoleński were staying outside the city; it seemed as though the hand of God had led them out – like the righteous Lot from Sodom – so that they might not be buried in the same ashes together

81 Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu (ARSI), Jap. Sin. 103, ff. 62v–63r.

82 Grzebień, “Smogulecki [...] Jan Mikołaj”, 233. For the loss of Smogulecki’s mathematical instruments, see: ARSI, Jap. Sin. 103, f. 63v.

83 Martino Martini, *De bello Tartarico. Historia in qua, quo pacto Tartarii hac nostra aetate Sincicum Imperium invaserint ac fere totum occuparint narrator, eorumque mores breviter describuntur* (Antverpiae: Johannes Janssonius, 1654), 111–112. See also the Italian edition: Martino Martini, “De bello Tartarico Historia”, a cura di Davor Antonucci, in Martino Martini, *Opera omnia*, Vol. V: *De bello Tartarico Historia e altri scritti*, a cura di Federica Masini, Luisa M. Paternico, Davor Antonucci (Trento: Università degli Studi di Trento, 2013), 290–291.

with the burned city and church.”⁸⁴ Szpot’s account, however, is more extensive, which would suggest that in gathering materials for his *Historiae Sinarum* he also made use of other Jesuit sources. In a further part of his work he notes that the Jesuits went to “the city of Kienyam, which still, though wavering, remained under the authority of the rebels.” The prefect standing at the head of the city administration, having learned that Father Smogulecki was engaged in mathematical studies, “invited him and his companion to his palace, received them very kindly, assigned them chambers for residence, and – when they accepted this at his courteous insistence – generously provided them with everything necessary for a comfortable life.”⁸⁵

The situation became more complicated, however, when Father da Cunha departed from the city and travelled to the towns of Vùyxan and Cungan in order to visit the Christians living there. The local inhabitants interpreted this as an act of espionage on behalf of the Tatars, believing that da Cunha had left the city in order to inform the invaders about the situation within the city and the strength of its defenses. As a result, Father Smogulecki – who was still residing in the palace of the city prefect – was condemned to death by the local population. On the day appointed for his execution the rebels burst into the palace of the mandarin, yet – as Szpot relates – “even in this danger the hand of God came to his aid through the courage and mercy of a certain pagan who, having learned of the soldiers’ intentions, risked his own life, rushed into the palace, led the Father out through a secret passage, and concealed him in his own house from the fury of the troops.”⁸⁶ Szpot concludes his account by noting that the Jesuits suffered greatly “both from hunger and from the lack of other necessities, even clothing and garments protecting them from the winter cold; they scarcely possessed anything with which to cover their bodies. Yet in these afflictions God comforted them: partly through the charity of pagans, who, seeing their poverty, themselves offered them means of subsistence and clothing; partly through conversions to the holy faith, when they washed some, together with their entire families, in the sacramental baptism; and also through the piety and zeal of the neophytes whom they visited scattered in various places.”⁸⁷

According to Fr. Ludwik Grzebień, between 1647 and 1651 the Polish missionary worked in the province of Fujian, first under the direction of

84 ARSI, Jap. Sin. 103, f. 63v.

85 *Ibidem*, f. 63v.

86 *Ibidem*, f. 63v.

87 *Ibidem*, ff. 63v–64r.

Father Giulio Aleni and later under the aforementioned Simon da Cunha.⁸⁸ During this period he also travelled to Nanjing, where he taught the Chinese mathematics and astronomy. He also became acquainted with the Chinese mathematician Lie Fong-tsu, who became his disciple. This Chinese scholar published two astronomical works under the name of his master (*Mu Ni-co*): *Calculation of Eclipses According to Western Methods* and *On the Harmony of Chinese and Western Astronomy*. In these works logarithmic calculation was applied in China for the first time.⁸⁹

In 1653 Emperor Shunzhi summoned Smogulecki to Peking, to which he came from Nanjing, although he did not remain at the imperial court for long.⁹⁰ This is mentioned, among others, by Tomasz Dunin Szpot, who states unequivocally in his work: “Father Jan Mikołaj Smogoleński was summoned from Nanjing to Peking” in order to assist Father Adam Schall in astronomical matters.⁹¹ According to Szpot’s account, he was presented by Schall to Emperor Shunzhi and was granted residence near the so-called Western Church as well as an annual stipend from the imperial treasury.⁹² During his stay in Peking, Father Jan Mikołaj – as Szpot writes – “was a man of great aspirations and an ardent supporter of spreading the faith throughout the entire East; he was already considering in his mind an expedition to Tartary, where it was intended to introduce the Christian faith, a matter that had begun to occupy the attention of the superiors of the Chinese mission.”⁹³ Consequently, he began to study the Tatar language – which, in Szpot’s opinion, was much easier than Chinese – and after making considerable progress in it, he presented a petition to the emperor through Father Schall:

“Since His Imperial Majesty so greatly favors the Christian religion and the proclamation of the most holy law of the Lord of Heaven – as his royal deeds testify – may it please him, by his special grace, to permit me to go to Tartary in order to proclaim there the faith in the Lord of Heaven, the Creator of the earth and the Ruler of the universe, and through preaching to make His holy law known to those peoples.”⁹⁴

88 Grzebień, “Smogulecki [...] Jan Mikołaj”, 233. See also: ARSI, Jap. Sin. 103, f. 104v.

89 Ha Nguyen, *Polscy misjonarze*, 80.

90 Grzebień, “Smogulecki [...] Jan Mikołaj”, 233. Smogulecki’s stay in Nanjing is noted by Tomasz Dunin Szpot: “In Nankin Provincia Nankin laborarunt Patres: in Metropoli Nicolaus Smogoleński, Polonus [...]”: ARSI, Jap. Sin. 103, f. 88v.

91 ARSI, Jap. Sin. 103, f. 91r. Por. *Ibidem*, f. 104v.

92 ARSI, Jap. Sin. 103, f. 91r.

93 *Ibidem*, f. 92v–93r.

94 *Ibidem*, f. 98r.

According to Fr. Ludwik Grzebień, during the audience the Polish missionary “presented to the emperor a plan for the evangelization of Manchuria, requesting permission to travel to those regions.” Having received *litterae patentes* from the emperor, he then set out on his journey, making use of the support of the mandarins.⁹⁵ This event is also mentioned in *Historica narratio de initio et progressu missionis Societatis Iesu apud Chonensem*, where it is recorded, among other things, that “Father Nicolaus Purgoleski [sic!], a Pole, was received at the royal court so that from there he might have a secured passage to the Tatars [...] enjoying a certain protection.”⁹⁶ However, an analysis of the work of Tomasz Szpot indicates that the opinion cited above by Grzebień is incorrect. In the pages of *Historiae Sinarum* one may find information that Father Jan Mikołaj was indeed received by the emperor, but that “the enemies of the faith did not fail to employ their stratagems here as well, and in order that the feet of the preachers of the Gospel might not reach that kingdom, they persuaded the ruler by their arguments that he should rather entrust him with teaching the law of the Lord of Heaven in selected provinces of the Chinese Empire than allow him to enter the abandoned Tartary.”⁹⁷ Consequently, the emperor declared that he did not wish to expose him to the “Tatar dangers,” since Tartary “is a desert land, where he would either die of hunger or be devoured by wild beasts.” Instead, the whole of China – inhabited by a civilized and developed people” – was opened to Father Jan Mikołaj. According to the imperial rescript, Father Jan Mikołaj could go wherever he wished; and in every place to which he came he would have the right to proclaim the law of the Lord of Heaven, and no one whom he encountered would hinder or oppose him.⁹⁸ The information provided by Szpot is confirmed in the work *Historica narratio de initio et progressu missionis Societatis Jesu apud Chinensem*, where it is recorded that during the audience the emperor addressed Smogulecki with the following words: “I do not advise you to go there, but my entire empire stands open before you. Go wherever you wish, and wherever you deem it appropriate, sow the law of God!”⁹⁹ As a consequence, Father Jan Mikołaj had to leave Peking and proceeded

95 Grzebień, “Smogulecki [...] Jan Mikołaj”, 233.

96 *Historica narratio de initio et progressu missionis Societatis Jesu apud Chinensem, ac praesertim in Regia Pequinensi* (Viennae: Typis Matthaei Cosmorovij, Sacrae Caesarum Majestatis Aulae Typographi, 1665), 172.

97 ARSI, Jap. Sin. 103, f. 98r.

98 *Ibidem*, f. 98r.

99 *Historica narratio de initio*, 172.

to the province of Quantum, “with the aim of preparing the possibility of entering the provinces of Queicheu and Yunnan, to which the light of the Gospel had not yet reached.”¹⁰⁰

Having received from Emperor Shunzhi the right to preach the Word of God throughout the whole of China – rather than in Tartary, which was only sparsely inhabited – Father Jan Mikołaj went to the city of Quamcheufü, the capital of the province of Quantum, where, “as a person pleasing to the emperor, he was treated with particular favor and great honors by the governor of the province.”¹⁰¹ For some time, however, he remained in the city against his own will – as Szpot relates – “both because of the requests of the governor, who detained him there, and because of the military disturbances between the Tatars and King Yumlie, which closed to him the road to the provinces of Quamsi, Queicheu, and Yunnan, to which he desired to go with the Gospel.”¹⁰² In this context Tomasz Dunin Szpot states that “God reserved for Father Jan Mikołaj Smogoleński, a Pole, as the final of the labors he undertook for the glory of God in China,” the restoration of the Jesuit mission on the island of Hainan. For while he was staying in Quamcheufü he learned that the efforts of the superiors of the Japanese province to send missionaries to the island had not been successful, and therefore he himself – as Szpot reports – undertook this task.

According to the account in *Historiae Sinarum*, he wrote a letter to Macau requesting that several Fathers be selected whom he himself could lead by land toward the island.¹⁰³ In the further part of his work, Szpot reports that Father Jan Mikołaj’s letter was received in Macau “as if it were a voice sent from heaven,” and therefore two Fathers were immediately designated for the mission: Andrzej Lubelli and Jan Chrzciel Brandus. It soon became apparent, however, that both of them were in too poor a state of health to endure the hardships of an overland journey. Consequently, Father Maciej à Maia was chosen in place of Father Lubelli, while Father Brandus – thanks to his persistent requests – ultimately obtained permission to depart as well.¹⁰⁴

The missionaries met Father Jan Mikołaj in Canton, from where, together and in the company of a certain mandarin, surrounded by a large military escort, they set out on their journey. A brief description of this

100 ARSI, Jap. Sin. 103, f. 98r.

101 *Ibidem*, f. 103r.

102 *Ibidem*, f. 103r.

103 *Ibidem*, f. 103r.

104 *Ibidem*, f. 103v.

journey was included in the work of Tomasz Dunin Szpot, who recorded that “after overcoming the dangers of the rivers and the ambushes of bandits lying in wait for the silver which the mandarin was transporting as soldiers’ pay to Hainan, they safely reached the island,”¹⁰⁵ and on 22 June 1656 they arrived at its capital, Kiumcheu.¹⁰⁶

The place in Kiumcheu where the Jesuits stayed was “the vestibule, or portico, of one of the largest pagan temples, renowned throughout the city as a monastery of the strict observance of the bonzes.”¹⁰⁷ This resulted from the fact that – as Szpot explains – in China there were generally no public inns intended for travelers. Consequently, those who did not have friends or relatives in a given city with whom they could stay were compelled to seek lodging in the vestibules of temples. An exception was made only for mandarins who, when travelling with imperial orders to the prefects of cities and the governors of provinces, made use of public palaces built for imperial envoys.¹⁰⁸ Their guests could also reside there if they possessed a special invitation. Such invitations were received by Father Jan Mikołaj both from the mandarin accompanying the Jesuits and from the governor of the island. However, he declined the offered hospitality. According to the account provided by Szpot, he did so out of consideration for his fellow brethren, since the accommodation offered to him would not have sufficed for himself, the two other Fathers, and their servants. Therefore, he preferred to stay together with his companions in a place accessible to all rather than enjoy the comforts offered to him alone.¹⁰⁹

After some time the Fathers took up residence in a house they had purchased and began efforts to recover the church and the Jesuit residence in the city of Tingan, which ultimately proved successful.¹¹⁰ In these efforts to regain both properties, the esteem enjoyed by Father Smogulecki among the highest mandarins of the island played a significant and effective role. Thanks to this influence, the governor of the island issued an edict ordering that the properties be returned to the missionaries. The prefect of the city, however, defended his claims and did everything possible to obstruct the execution of this order. Nevertheless, as Szpot recorded in his work, “by God’s providence the cause was

105 *Ibidem*, f. 103v.

106 Ha Nguyen, *Polscy misjonarze*, 81.

107 ARSI, Jap. Sin. 103, f. 103v.

108 *Ibidem*, f. 103v.

109 *Ibidem*, f. 103v.

110 *Ibidem*, f. 104r.

also assisted by a certain mandarin who had embraced Christianity at the court of King Yumlie, where he had served as a military commander on the island.” According to Szpot, he retained this position even under Tatar rule, to which he transferred his allegiance when the governor appointed by c, together with the whole island of Hainan, acknowledged the authority of the new emperor. At the time when Father Smogulecki and his companions were still lodging in the portico of the temple, he was among the first to visit them. According to Szpot’s account in *Historiae Sinarum*, “his arrival, his profession of faith, and the many testimonies of his love for God, steadfastness in the Christian religion, and concern for the salvation of his own soul filled the Fathers with great joy.”¹¹¹

As a consequence of these events, Father Jan Mikołaj began preparations for his return journey.¹¹² Taking advantage of the presence of his fellow brethren – as Szpot records – he confessed to one of them the sins of his entire life. This was prompted by the fact – as Szpot further explains – that among the many hardships encountered by the missionary, the greatest and most painful was solitude, which made it impossible for him to receive sacramental confession either before celebrating Holy Mass or in the face of death. For this reason Father Jan Mikołaj was said to have repeatedly expressed his fear that he might meet the same fate as many other Fathers – to die without receiving the sacraments.¹¹³

Father Jan Mikołaj’s journey toward the mainland was soon interrupted by a storm that forced the ship carrying him to return to the port of Kiumcheu, from where he went back to the house he had only recently left.¹¹⁴ As a result, his fellow brethren urged Father Jan Mikołaj “to remain with them on the island, where he would find a very extensive field for spreading the holy faith, suited to his zeal, and at the same time enjoy the longed-for consolation of constantly living with another priest – a collaborator in the work of the Lord – whose assistance he could also make use of for the needs of his own soul.” They added that his return to Kiumcheu appeared to them to be a clear sign of God’s will, whose intervention they perceived in the stormy sea that had forced Smogulecki to return to the island and to his brethren.¹¹⁵ Having heard these arguments, however, the Jesuit – according to Szpot’s account – replied to his fellow brethren that remaining on the island of Hainan

111 *Ibidem*, f. 105r.

112 *Ibidem*, f. 104r.

113 *Ibidem*, f. 104r.

114 *Ibidem*, ff. 104r–104v.

115 *Ibidem*, f. 104v.

did not lie within his power, for God was calling him elsewhere to labor. “For if,” Smogulecki was said to have declared, “for the sake of the small number of inhabitants of this island he were to abandon the care of so many Christians scattered throughout the whole Chinese Empire, who like sheep without a shepherd seek someone who will open pastures for them and defend them from the wolves of the pagans, then his conscience would be tormented by the gravest reproaches.”¹¹⁶ Thus, after giving this answer to his brethren, he left Hainan for the second time and, having successfully crossed the strait, reached the mainland.

The following days showed that this was to be Father Jan Mikołaj’s final journey. On his way to Canton he stopped in the city of Chaokim, in the house of a mandarin who was well disposed toward him. There, after a brief illness, he died on 17 September 1656.¹¹⁷ A few days later the mandarin in whose house he had died organized a solemn funeral for Father Jan Mikołaj. His body was buried with honors in a grave located outside the walls of the city of Chaokim, and a procession of mandarins took part in the ceremony.¹¹⁸

Conclusion

It was surely a funeral filled with speeches and recollections in which the deceased was remembered as a man who – as Szpot writes – was distinguished both by “an outstanding intellect and virtue, as well as by a particular zeal in spreading the glory of God throughout the whole East.”¹¹⁹ Two virtues dominated his religious life. The first was a profound humility of spirit, the second a special devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary. This meant that Father Jan Mikołaj “continually humbled himself – accusing himself, condemning himself, and asking others for forgiveness for the faults which he believed he had committed in daily interactions, although no one else even noticed them.” The filial trust – which, as Szpot writes, Father Jan Mikołaj placed in the Mother of God – led him to believe that with her help he would be able to accomplish any task entrusted to him.¹²⁰ A perfect example of this was the mission he carried out in Nanjing, where for several years he devoted himself to pastoral

116 *Ibidem*, f. 104v.

117 *Ibidem*, f. 104v. See also: Ha Nguyen, *Polscy misjonarze*, 81.

118 ARSI, Jap. Sin. 103, f. 104v.

119 *Ibidem*, f. 104v.

120 *Ibidem*, f. 105r.

work, “greatly increasing the Christian community and fostering in the neophytes piety and a fervent concern for the fulfillment of Christian duties.” He accomplished all this both “through his great prudence and diligence”,¹²¹ and for the greater glory of God.¹²² This brief description, summarizing the life of Father Jan Mikołaj and based on the work of Tomasz Dunin Szpot, clearly demonstrates how significant a figure in the history of China this nobleman from Greater Poland was – the grandson of a rebel and insurgent who abandoned a political career to enter the Society of Jesus. He was a man who unquestionably influenced the development of Christianity in the Far East, a missionary who left his mark on world history, and without whom the Jesuit mission in China would never have taken the form that we know today.

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