

ABSTRACT

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TITLE: Książka w rękach zakonnika.

Oprawy druków z szesnastowiecznych bibliotek dominikańskich

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This work presents an analysis of sixteenth-century bookbindings remaining in the library of the dominican convent in Cracow. The significant questions included whether the dominicans working in sixteenth-century Poland had their own bookbinding workshops, whether binding the books they owned was of any importance and, if so, how the practice of making such bindings looked like. These topics have been considered in the broader context of book culture in sixteenth-century Cracow, and of the role of the library in the intellectual life of the dominican friars.

The thesis is a result of a query in the repositories of the dominican library in Cracow, holding over 3.5 thousand sixteenth-century prints.

The first chapter reviews existing work on polish bookbindings, with special attention devoted to supralibros. Publications about bookbindings stored in convents and – in more detail – about dominican libraries have also been discussed.

The second chapter describes the methodology employed in this work: querying the library repositories, selecting, and analyzing the material.

In the next chapter, renaissance Cracow is described as a place where books were made and used. As a large urban center, next to the royal court, and – due to the university, present there for a few centuries – the intellectual capital of Poland, it provided perfect circumstances for the development of printing and related trades: paper making, book selling, and bookbinding. The growing wealth of the middle class, interest in culture and science, and the presence of many Church institutions – including numerous convents – has also influenced the production of books, used for religious purposes, studies, and entertainment.

The fourth chapter has been devoted to book culture and the role of the library in the dominican order. Since the first centuries of its existence, a view on library collections has formed, mostly valid until today. Books were an important tool for both the ministry and scientific work of the preachers, witnessed by special regulations regarding the lending, keeping, and conservation of the collections. The chapters of the order have also repeatedly emphasized the importance of books, and called for order in the libraries. The collections were to be kept up to date, and thus books which were no longer useful were removed, sold, or exchanged for the titles needed. Further part of the chapter describes the history of the library in Cracow, from its beginnings until today. Of special importance in this history was the year 1850, when in the great fire of Cracow a vast majority of the collection has been destroyed. Very few books have remained, possible to identify by eighteenth-century supralibros. Today, the library holds books from various parts of the Polish province, with the core formed by the books brought in the twentieth century from Lviv and Warsaw.

In the fifth chapter, special attention has been given to the bindings of the books gathered by the dominican brothers, in particular by those related in some way to the Cracow convent. Over a dozen previously unknown dominican supralibros have been described, private libraries of some brothers have been identified. Links between friars–bibliophiles and Cracow bookbinders are discussed. One of the topics covered is – not widely known among the mendicants – the practice of preparing dedicated bindings for book donations. Books belonging to Łukasz ze Lwowa OP, Malchior from Mościska OP, and Abraham Bzowski OP have been described in more detail.

Observations made while studying some groups of dominican bindings have directed the author to the topic of bound book trade in sixteenth-century Cracow. This thread is elaborated upon in the final chapter of the thesis. Inventories of book sellers and binders provide information about bound books offered for sale. Cases of collaboration between binders and sellers are presented. Finally, two copies of Wujek's Bible (one of them from the dominical library in Cracow) have been characterized as having been bound before being offered for sale.