

The Correspondence of Jan Długosz

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Summary

This volume presents a new edition of letters written and received by Jan Długosz (Johannes Długosch/Długossius/Longinus). Jan Długosz (1415–1480) was a Polish clergyman of noble origin: a canon of the chapter of Cracow cathedral, a diplomat in the service of the bishop of Cracow and of the Polish king, but above all he was the author of many historical works. He undoubtedly belonged to the Polish intellectual elite of the period, and his works are among the most important sources for the study of Polish history in the fifteenth century.

From his early youth, Długosz was connected to the bishop of Cracow, Zbigniew Oleśnicki (1423–1455), and his court. During the reign of King Ladislaus III of Varna (1434–1444) and during the interregnum after his tragic death, together with a group of oligarchs, Bishop Oleśnicki played a decisive role in determining both the internal and foreign politics of the Polish Kingdom, which was coupled by union with Grand Duchy of Lithuania. When Jan Długosz had been a canon of Cracow cathedral chapter for several years, he oversaw the episcopal chancery and archives. He was also the bishop's trusted advisor. His name became widely known among the Polish clergy after he had been sent to Pope Nicolas V to obtain confirmation of Bishop Oleśnicki's cardinal dignity (1449). In 1450, he made a pilgrimage to Rome and the Holy Land. On his way he was received by the German king Frederic III. During the Thirteen Years' War between the Polish Kingdom and the Order of the Teutonic Knights (1454–1466) Długosz served as a diplomat of King Casimir IV Jagiellon (1447–1492).

The years 1460–1463 turned out to be a dramatic period in his life, as he came into conflict with the king about the person of the new bishop of Cracow. Casimir IV Jagiellon did not accept the choice made by the pope and the cathedral chapter. He pushed his own candidate, using economic pressure as an argument against opposing

members of the chapter. Długosz's income was stopped and even his house in Cracow was demolished. In the end, the king won the conflict, and his candidate received the episcopal seat. Długosz humbled himself before the ruler and was received into royal favour once more. He again served the king and the kingdom as an experienced diplomat. Among other things, he participated in the peace negotiations with the Teutonic Knights (1466). In 1466 and 1467 he travelled to Bohemia. In later years, he went several times to Hungary and Bohemia. The best proof of the king's trust in his loyalty was the function of tutor of the royal sons, which Długosz occupied in the period 1467–1480.

From the sources at our disposal, we can assume that Długosz was a good manager who efficiently administered both his bishop's properties and his own income from benefices. He used a large part of this income to finance many pious bequests.

At the same time, Jan Długosz was a prolific author. He elaborated the inventory of the income of the clergy in the Cracow diocese (*Liber beneficiorum dioecesis Cracoviensis*). He created a descriptive catalogue of the banners captured by the Polish-Lithuanian forces in the battle of Grunwald against the Teutonic Knights in 1410 (*Banderia Prutenorum*). Besides, he worked out descriptions of the coats of arms of all parts of Polish Kingdom and of the Polish noble clans (*Insignia seu clenodia Regni Polonie*), although some scholars — in our view, unfairly — doubt his authorship. Besides, Długosz composed two hagiographical works, to wit the lives of the patron saints of Poland, St. Stanislas and St. Kinga. His greatest and best-known achievement, however, are the *Annals or Chronicles of the Famous Kingdom of Poland* (*Annales seu cronicae incliti Regni Poloniae*) on which he worked for twenty-five years. The chronicle discusses the history of Poland, presented against the background of world history, from its legendary origins until the period in which the author lived. When working on it, Długosz systematically searched for domestic and foreign written sources, both documents and earlier narratives, and used them in his account.

The present publication contains forty-three letters, thirty-seven of which were written by Jan Długosz while six were addressed to him. Thirteen letters are preserved in their original form (two of them in Długosz's own hand). Twenty-six letters survive in copies (mainly from the fifteenth century) while four others are known only from nineteenth-century editions. Two items are published here for the first time ever; one other for the first time since the seventeenth century. Although a great part of Długosz's correspondence was published in print in the nineteenth century, these editions contain a serious number of mistakes and inaccuracies. Moreover, the persons and places mentioned there were not identified. Altogether, the nineteenth-century editions do not meet present-day scholarly requirements.

The present publication offers a new edition of the whole known correspondence of Jan Długosz. Every letter in Latin is provided with a critical apparatus. Many alterations had to be introduced to the texts of the nineteenth-century editions, in some letters even several dozen corrections had to be made. The sources of quotations were

identified, as are textual agreements between the letters in the correspondence. A large part of Długosz's correspondence is undated. Often even the names of the sender and receiver are lacking. The edition provides provisional dates, and the identity of senders and receivers has been established.

The present edition also provides a comprehensive modern translation of the correspondence into Polish. A considerable part of letters has been translated here for the first time. The Polish texts have been published next to the Latin originals. The translation reveals to the reader the way in which the editors understand the letters. All items are provided with footnotes identifying persons and places mentioned, and explaining the events discussed as well as the meaning of the terms of medieval ecclesiastical law used. The footnotes also refer to the most relevant and the most recent scholarly literature.

The introduction to the edition discusses its goals and scope, as well as the biography of Jan Długosz. It also contains an overview of his correspondence, an analysis of its manuscript tradition, and a presentation of the way the edition came about. An index of place names and personal names closes the edition. Part of the publication is a folder containing photographs of the oldest versions of the letters. This will make it possible for readers to check the editors' work and to pursue their own research.

As has been mentioned, among the thirteen original letters only two (Nos. 9 and 43) allow one to recognize Długosz's own hand. Paradoxically, this expert of the written word, easily navigating among various registers of literacy, rarely took up the pen himself, and most often used the services of professional scribes. Both autograph letters were written during his travels when he couldn't find a scribe. Moreover, one of them concerned matters requiring discretion.

Apart from these two autograph letters, we have at our disposal eleven original letters of Długosz which were written by scribes. They may have been dictated by the sender or have been copied from a draft made by him personally. We may assume that Długosz used either of these two ways depending on the addressee. A series of letters to the *mansionarii* (clergymen singing the office of the Hours) of Sandomierz from the years 1474–1478, concerning the building of a house for them (Nos. 37–42), was dictated. In these messages many interesting details can be found about the organisation of the construction work when financial resources were rather scarce. Although they were written down by various scribes, their structure (i.e. their formulary) is identical.

The way of composing the three original letters directed to the Italian preacher Giovanni de Capestrano from the Franciscan Observants' Order (Nos. 16, 17, 19) was different. These letters, preserved in Giovanni's archives in Capestrano, are written in an elegant early-humanist script by a notary of the Cracow episcopal chancery. Their basis was a draft composed by Długosz. These letters offer an insight into the profits which the mission to Poland gave both to the famous preacher himself and to the Polish ecclesiastical hierarchy.

Two other original pieces (Nos. 23 and 24) are letters of Polish diplomats (among them Jan Długosz) from the period of the Thirteen Years' War, kept in the municipal archives of Gdańsk and Toruń. Not by accident, these two short letters of Polish

experts and diplomats are preserved in the main urban centres of the former State of the Teutonic Order. Their chanceries developed the practice of careful record-keeping (including correspondence) already in the fifteenth century. In Poland, this practice developed only a century later.

A large part of Długosz's correspondence is known from copies, mostly in fifteenth-century manuscripts. Many texts can be found in manuscript Ms BJ 42 in the Jagiellonian Library at Cracow. It is a collection of model letters elaborated in the chancery of the bishops and the cathedral chapter of Cracow. Among others, it contains some letters of Italian humanists, the correspondence between Guarino di Verona and an eminent Polish intellectual, Mikołaj Lasocki, as well as documentation of the Councils of Basel and Florence (1431–1449). Apart from one original letter mentioned before (No. 9), this manuscript contains also copies of twelve letters which can be connected to Długosz. They concern his legation to Rome in 1449 and the festivities in Cracow connected to bringing of the *galero* (cardinal's hat) for Zbigniew Oleśnicki (Nos. 2, 3 and 4), the peace mission of Długosz in the Upper Hungary in 1449 (No. 5), and also preparations for his own pilgrimage to the Holy Land. The chronicler went there together with Jan Elgot, a prominent member of the Cracow cathedral chapter who was his relative and protector. These letters (Nos. 6, 7, 8, 11, 14, 15) also throw light on the course of the pilgrimage and the contacts they made. In the same manuscript, also Długosz's letter to the Cracow episcopal official Rafał of Skawina (No. 20) and to Giovanni de Capestrano (No. 18) can be found.

On the other hand, manuscript Ms BJ 1961, dated before 1487, contains five items from Długosz's correspondence (Nos. 1, 10, 13, 25, 26), among others important messages addressed to Jan Tęczyński, the voivode of Cracow (1438–1459) and subsequently the Cracow castellan (1459–1470). Especially important is the letter from 1466, that is from the last phase of the Thirteen Years' War (No. 26). In the same manuscript we also find the sole known letter of Długosz to his younger brother of the same name, also a canon of the Cracow cathedral chapter (No. 25). This is a remarkable piece of correspondence because of its very cold and distant tone. The only trace of fraternal feelings seems to be sender's concern about his brother's safety, as he stayed in Cracow during the plague. The orders concerning the administration of the custody of Wiślica (belonging to Długosz) as well as financial information and the mention of yet another brother (a knight in the king's service) allowed the editors to identify the addressee of the letter as Jan Długosz the Younger. The same manuscript contains also the earliest preserved letter of the chronicler directed to a clergyman, Michał Gocnam, dated 1447 (No. 1).

Yet another manuscript from the Jagiellonian Library (Ms BJ 2367), of university and ecclesiastical origin, was also taken into consideration. It contains a letter by Długosz from 1470 to the canon of the cathedral chapter of Wrocław, Nicolaus Merboth (No. 35). Written with care for its literary quality, this letter expressed the bonds between the two friends — both eminent intellectuals and, at the same time, both politically active.

Three letters are preserved in manuscript 7534 of the Academic Library of the Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences (PAU) and Polish Academy of Sciences (PAN). This manuscript, dated to the second half of the fifteenth century, is a collection of letter-models. The letter from 1450 (No. 12), addressed to Jan Elgot, concerned the staffing of the ecclesiastical offices of the diocese of Cracow. Letters Nos. 21 and 22 date from the period of Długosz's forced exile from Cracow in 1462. They provide testimony of the most difficult period in his life, when he lost royal favour and felt abandoned and disappointed by the attitude of the people whom he had considered the closest to him, that is the Cracow cathedral chapter.

A distinctive group are collective letters (Nos. 28–34). Apart from Jan Długosz, their sender or receiver was Stanisław of Ostrobróg, the voivode of Kalisz, and Jakub of Dębno, the starost of Cracow and royal sub-treasurer. To this group belong the letters sent to the Bohemian king George of Poděbrady as well as the correspondence with the papal legate, the bishop of Lavant Rudolf of Rüdesheim, and the municipal council of Wrocław. These letters were closely connected with the legacy of Długosz, Stanisław of Ostrobróg, and Jakub of Dębno (acting as envoys of King Casimir IV Jagiellon) to Bohemia from October 1467 to February 1468. The purpose of the mission was to make peace between King George and the Catholic fraction of the Bohemian nobility. One of the letters issued in this period (No. 31) was preserved in its original form in the Staatsarchiv zu Breslau, but went missing during the Second World War. A couple of letters of the Polish envoys (Nos. 28–30) were included in the Latin version of the chronicle *Historia Wratislaviensis* by Peter Eschenloer, the municipal notary of Wrocław (d. 1481). Two versions of this work were composed, the first of which in Latin (relating events from the period 1439–1472). After 1472, the author began to write a much more ordered German version, presenting events up to 1478, and including the texts of many written sources (especially documents and letters) relevant to the history of the city. The letters of the Polish envoys were quoted only in the Latin version of the chronicle, known from one fifteenth-century manuscript only, which might be an autograph. The fate of the manuscript, which had been kept until 1945 in Wrocław University Library, is unknown today. However, the text of the Latin chronicle (and with it the letters of the Polish envoys) has been published in the nineteenth century.

Three other letters from the same diplomatic mission (Nos. 32–34), dating from late December 1467 and early January 1468, are known from copies inserted into a collection of letter-models (or, according to some scholars, a cartulary) produced in the chancery of the Bohemian king George of Poděbrady (the so-called *Cancellaria regis Georgii*) of 1466–1468, containing also some documents from an earlier period. Until today, three copies of this manuscript are preserved, all of them containing letters which are edited in the present edition.

In the correspondence of Jan Długosz letter No. 36 is rather remarkable. It is authored by Sędek (Sędziwój) of Czechel, another learned clergyman, sharing Długosz's interest in history, as he commissioned miscellanies of historical works and was a respected author himself. The letter, from 1472, was sent from Kłodawa, where Sędek

had become provost of the local convent of Regular Canons. Curiously, it survived not in a chancery book intended to preserve correspondence, but in the *Liber privilegiorum dioecesis Cracoviensis* (AiBKKK, Call No. LP 2), created around 1445 and kept in the archives of the Cracow cathedral chapter. The content of the letter reflects the remarkable personality and great erudition of its author, who was a moral authority not only for the addressee but also for King Casimir IV Jagiellon.

When consulting the present edition, one should remember that we are dealing only with a small number of remnants of the much larger correspondence that must once have been written. We may assume that in fifteenth-century Poland hundreds of letters were sent and received. Copies of Długosz's letters preserved in manuscripts were made by the scribes working in ecclesiastical chanceries. They were meant to serve as models for new letters, following the more important correspondence of bishops and canons copied into these manuscripts (probably from informal drafts). Certainly, in the fifteenth century most eminent intellectuals and noble families also possessed their own private archives. However, they were more careful about charters on parchment, which were proofs of property rights, than about letters on paper concerning temporary matters.

Graphical signs used in the edition:

- square brackets [] indicate lacunas (damaged places, holes, stains) in the source. Where possible, these places have been filled in. Where restoring the text proved impossible, the estimate number of missing letters was indicated by dots ([...]); the sign [- - -] indicates a situation in which establishing the number of missing letters proved impossible.
- sharp brackets < > indicate letters or words omitted by the scribe by mistake; they have been added by the editors.
- brace brackets { } indicate places where in the source words have been crossed out or added by mistake by the scribe.
- <sic> indicates a word spelled in a peculiar way, but without provoking doubts about the meaning of the word.

Translated by Anna Adamska