

Scholars and Literati at the University of Braniewo (Braunsberg) (1565–1773)

David de la Croix and Anna-Maria Gkopi

IRES/LIDAM, UCLouvain

This note is a summary description of the set of scholars and literati who taught at the University of Braniewo from its inception in 1565 to its dissolution in 1773.

1 SOURCES

Three sources provide most of our data on the University of Braniewo. Sommervogel (1890), in his work “Bibliothèque de la Compagnie de Jésus” (Library of the Society of Jesus), offers an extensive and valuable resource listing the writings of Jesuits, including those at the University of Braniewo, before 1800. This source was exploited in a master thesis by Duysens (2023). The Encyclopaedia of “Information on the Jesuits in the Territories of Poland and Lithuania, 1564-1995” edited by Grzebień (2004), provides meticulous data concerning the activities and the dates of the scholars and literati who taught at the University of Braniewo, as well as precise information about the locations of their births and deaths. The text of this encyclopedia can be searched online at <https://www.jezuici.krakow.pl/bibl/enc.htm>. Lastly, Grendler (2019) covers the whole period of the University’s activities until its dissolution and delves into the history and development of Jesuit educational institutions.

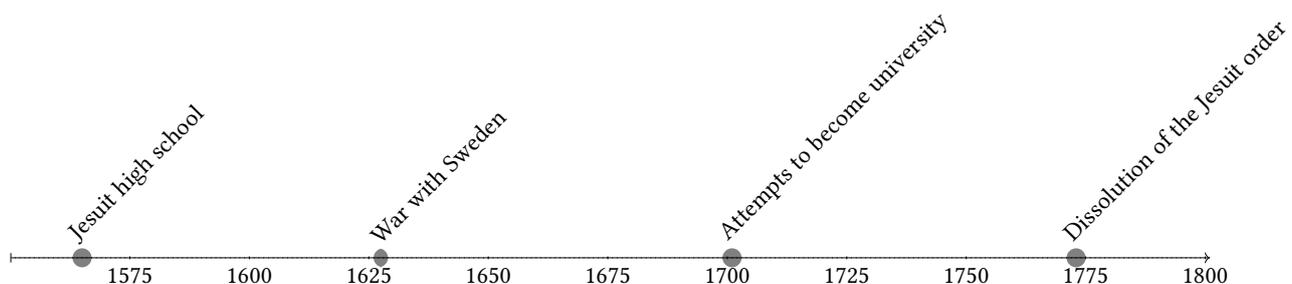


Figure 1: Timeline of the University of Braniewo

2 THE UNIVERSITY

The first Jesuit institution in Poland was established 1564 by the will of Bishop Stanisław Hozjusz (Hosius). The first nine Jesuits arrived in Lidzbark on November 2, 1564. On January 8, 1565 they moved to Braniewo and lived in the post-Franciscan monastery. The bishop believed the Jesuits could help to promote Catholicism in the predominantly Protestant region. The *Collegium Hosianum* was founded in 1565, in Braunsberg (Braniewo), in what was then the Kingdom of Poland. Jesuits opened a full junior high school in early 1565. Initially, there were few students and only 5 classes, from infima to rhetoric. Protestants boycotted Jesuit schools. After the occupation of Braniewo by King Gustav Adolf in 1626, the college was closed and only re-opened in 1637. In 1701, the Jesuits applied to Rome for transforming the college into a university. Humanities, philosophy, theology,

mathematics, Greek and Hebrew were taught at that time. Frijhoff (1996) includes Braniewo in his list of universities, but notes “unsuccessful attempts to found a university but the right to grant degrees attested in 1642.” At the time of the Partitions of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (1569–1793) the prince-bishopric of Warmia, which included Braniewo, became a part of the Kingdom of Prussia in 1772, and in 1773 the Society of Jesus was suppressed. The Jesuit college-university was then transformed into a Royal high school (Königlichen Lycei Hosiani”).

3 DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Table 1 displays descriptive statistics. Overall, 269 scholars are linked to the University of Braniewo. Their years and places of birth are often known. For the whole period, 94.8% of birth years and 79.6% of birthplaces are known. For the University of Cracow (De la Croix and Spolverini 2022), these numbers are respectively 25.5% and 80.1%. The average age at first appointment was around 37.2 years, but only 31.8 years during the first period. Longevity is low and shows no trend. The median distance between the places of birth and activity is 233 km, with a clear downward trend. The professors from the first periods came from distant places. The recruitment pool became more and more local as time passes. The coverage of scholars in Wikipedia is relatively low, and the coverage in VIAF is below average. Overall, 23.4% of the scholars appear in VIAF, compared to about 37% in the full database (all universities and academies).

Period	nb. obs	birth known date	birth known place	mean age at appoint.	mean age at death	med. dist. birth-univ.	with Wiki.	with VIAF
1527–1617	48	91.7	93.8	31.8	55.5	643	22.9	33.3
1618–1685	81	95.1	74.1	38.5	60.8	252	14.8	33.3
1686–1733	78	98.7	75.6	38.3	54.6	94	1.3	16.7
1734–1800	62	91.9	80.6	37.9	56.1	81	1.6	11.3
1527–1800	269	94.8	79.6	37.2	56.9	233	9.3	23.4

Table 1: Summary statistics by period

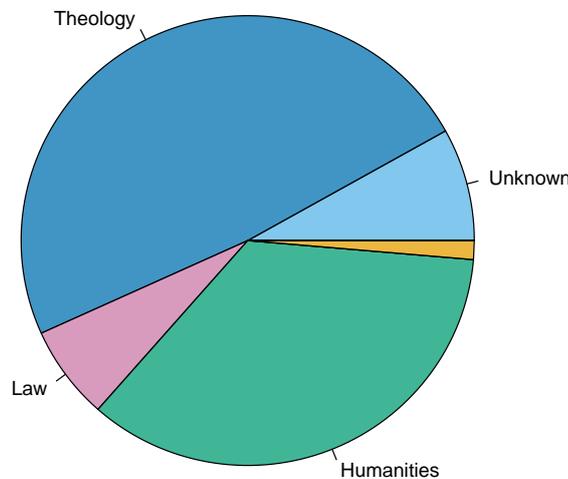


Figure 2: Broad fields at the University of Braniewo (published scholars only)

4 FIELDS

Figure 2 shows the balance between the different fields. Theology dominates, which is evidence of the proselytic aim of the university at its inception. Sciences are negligible. On the whole, this university is quite unbalanced in its fields of teaching.

5 PLACE OF BIRTH

Figure 3 displays the documented birthplaces of scholars and literati active at the University of Braniewo by period. During the first periods, some scholars come from far away in the West. Later, there is less long distance hiring, and most scholars come from the surrounding area, including the city of Braniewo itself, Belarus and Lesser Poland.

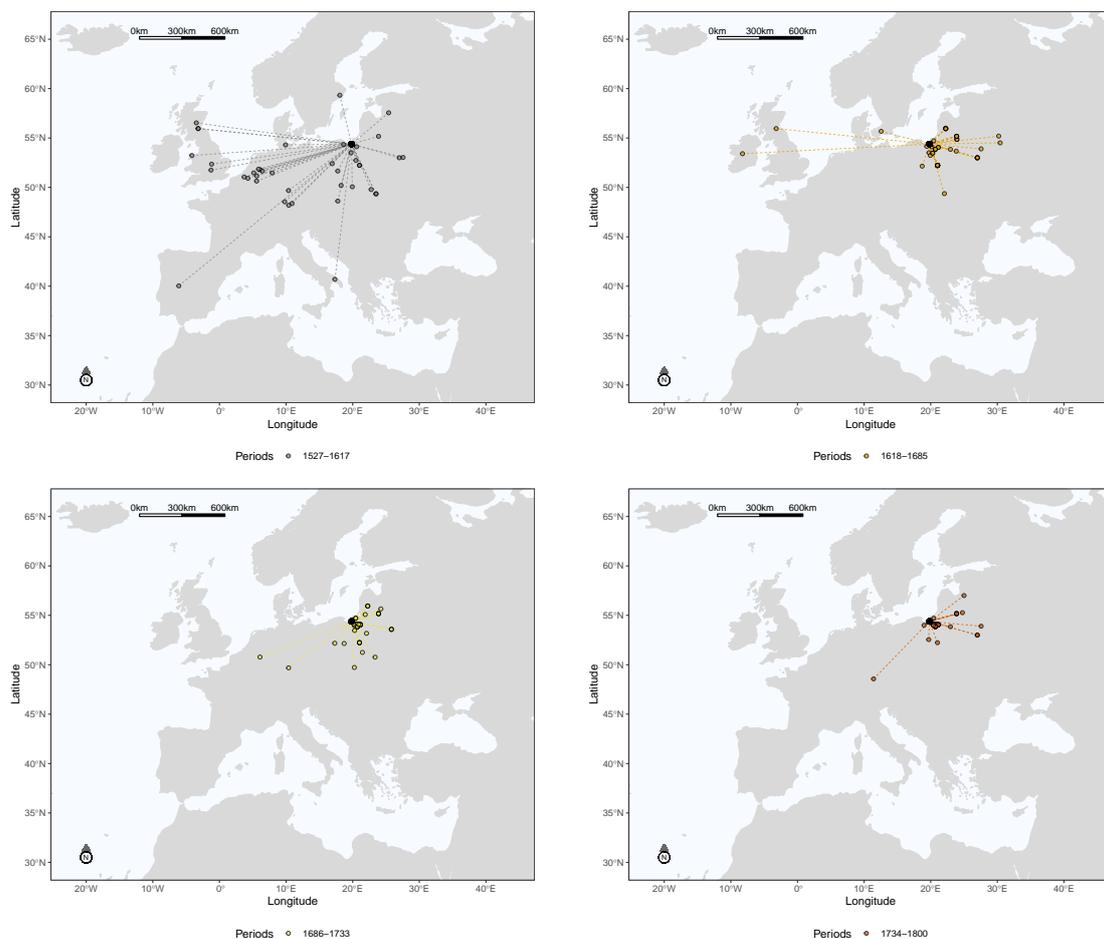


Figure 3: Places of birth of the scholars and literati at the University of Braniewo

6 HUMAN CAPITAL OF SCHOLARS AND LITERATI

For each person in the database, we compute a heuristic human capital index, identified by combining information from VIAF and Wikipedia, using principal component analysis. We also compute the notability of the university at each date by averaging the human capital of the scholars active at Braniewo 25 years before that date. The details are given in Curtis and De la Croix (2023). Figure 4 shows the names of all the scholars with a positive human capital index. The orange line indicates the notability of the university, based on how well published its top scholars were. The trajectory traced by the orange line depicts a swift ascent, reaching its peak around 1620, followed by a gradual descent thereafter.

7 TOP 5 PROFESSORS

Martinus Becanus (1561 Hilvarenbeek – 1624 Vienna), also known as Martin Becan, was a Dutch Jesuit theologian, philosopher, and controversialist. He entered the Society of Jesus at a young age (Herbermann 1913). Becanus was a prolific writer on a wide range of topics, including ethics, natural philosophy, and theology, and is best known for his theological and philosophical works. One of his significant works was *Manuale Controversiarum*, in which he addressed the theological topic of predestination. Becanus engaged in theological controversies of his time, defending Catholic doctrine against Protestant theologians. He was known for his strong and polemical writing style, and he participated in debates on various theological issues (Herbermann 1913).

Albert Wijuk Kojalowicz (1609 Kaunas – 1677 Vilnius) was a Jesuit historian, theologian, translator, religious polemicist, genealogist, and heraldist. His service as a censor, bishop's advisor, and Deputy Chancellor of Lithuania demonstrates his significant involvement in both religious and administrative affairs of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth (Suchodolski and Techniki 1970). He studied rhetoric, philosophy, and theology, and he earned the title of doctor in 1645, reflecting his scholarly achievements and expertise in these fields (Korbut 1929). During 1644–1645, he held a professorship at the University of Braniewo in the faculty of theology (Grzebień 2004). He was also appointed as a professor at the University of Vilnius, where he taught logic, physics, metaphysics, and ethics. Along with his brothers, he became a member of the Jesuit order and played a key role in establishing Jesuit colleges in various locations, including Kaunas, Vilnius, and Polotsk (Polatsk) (Niesiecki and Bobrowicz 1840).

Sigismund Lauxmin (1597 Zemaitija – 1670 Vilnius) was a prominent Lithuanian Jesuit theologian and philosopher. He was a notable figure in the fields of rhetoric and music theory. Additionally, he is recognized as a pioneer in Lithuanian musicology. Sigismund Lauxmin held the distinction of being one of the earliest Lithuanian professors and was a rector at the University of Vilnius. Between 1631 and 1635, Sigismund Lauxmin served as a rhetoric instructor at Polotsk and Nesvyžius colleges. From 1635 to 1638, he taught philosophy at Vilnius University, and from 1638 to 1642, he was a theology professor (Visuotinę lietuvių enciklopediją 2023). Later, from 1647 to 1650, he taught theology at the University of Braniewo (Grzebień 2004). Within the Jesuit order, Sigismund Lauxmin also held several significant positions. He served as the vice-provincial of the Lithuanian Jesuits and as the general elector of the Lithuanian Jesuits (Visuotinę lietuvių enciklopediją 2023).

Casimir Wijuk Kojalowicz (1617 Kaunas – 1674 Polotsk), brother of Albert, was a poet, professor, and a member of the Catholic church and the Jesuit order, which he joined at the age of 17-. He pursued his studies in philosophy from 1638 to 1641 and then focused on theology from 1643 to 1647 at the University of Vilnius (Grzebień 2004). In 1646 he was ordained a priest. He taught rhetoric, philosophy and theology at several Jesuit institutions, including the University of Braniewo (1648–1649). He earned his Doctorate in philosophy and theology in 1654. Lastly, he was author of sermons, lectures on rhetoric, and biographies of Jesuits and their guardians.

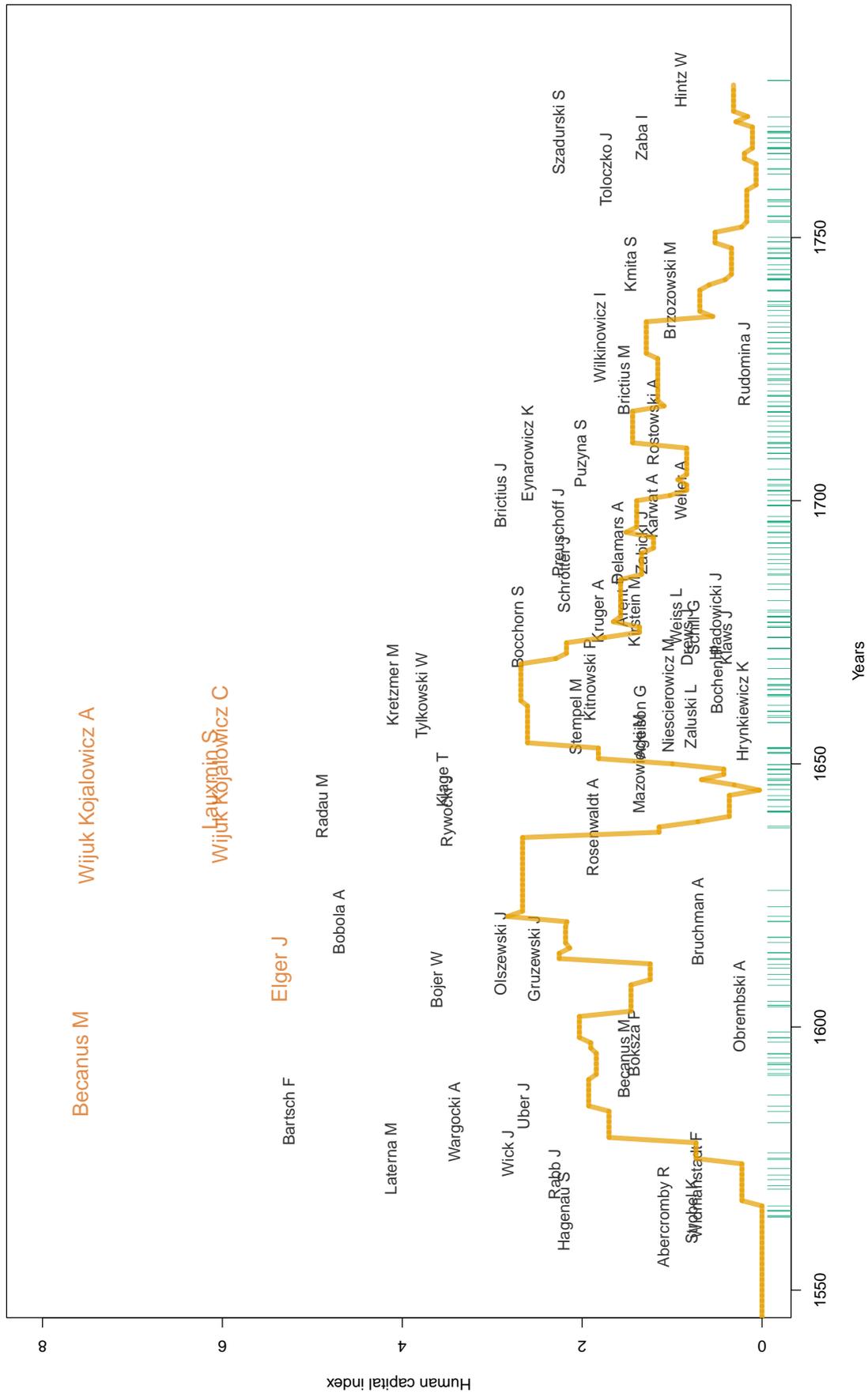


Figure 4: Famous scholars and university notability (orange)

Fryderyk Bartsch (1552 Braniewo – 1609 Smolensk) started his academic career with philosophical studies at the prestigious *Collegium Romanum* between 1569 and 1572. In 1572, he made a pivotal decision to join the Jesuit order in Rome, which marked the beginning of his life-long commitment to the Jesuit mission. He furthered his studies by focusing on theology, pursuing his theological education in Vienna. In 1576, he returned to Poland, where he would leave a lasting impact on the educational landscape. Bartsch took on important roles in the town of Braniewo, where he was actively involved in managing various schools, including the diocesan seminary, the papal seminary, and a boarding school for noblemen. However, his most significant contribution came during his tenure as the rector of the Jesuit College in Braniewo, a position he held from September 1583 to 1590. As the college's rector, Bartsch gained recognition for his exceptional organizational skills and his unwavering commitment to the quality of education. He developed textbooks and refined the school's curriculum, contributing to the educational growth of the institution. In his publications and personal identity, Fryderyk Bartsch proudly emphasized his connection to Braniewo, often signing himself as *FR. Barscius Braunsbergnsis*, signalling his deep roots in the town. In 1586, he played a key role in the deliberations of the Polish commission responsible for the reform of the *Ratio studiorum*, an important education ordinance designed to introduce a uniform teaching system in Poland.

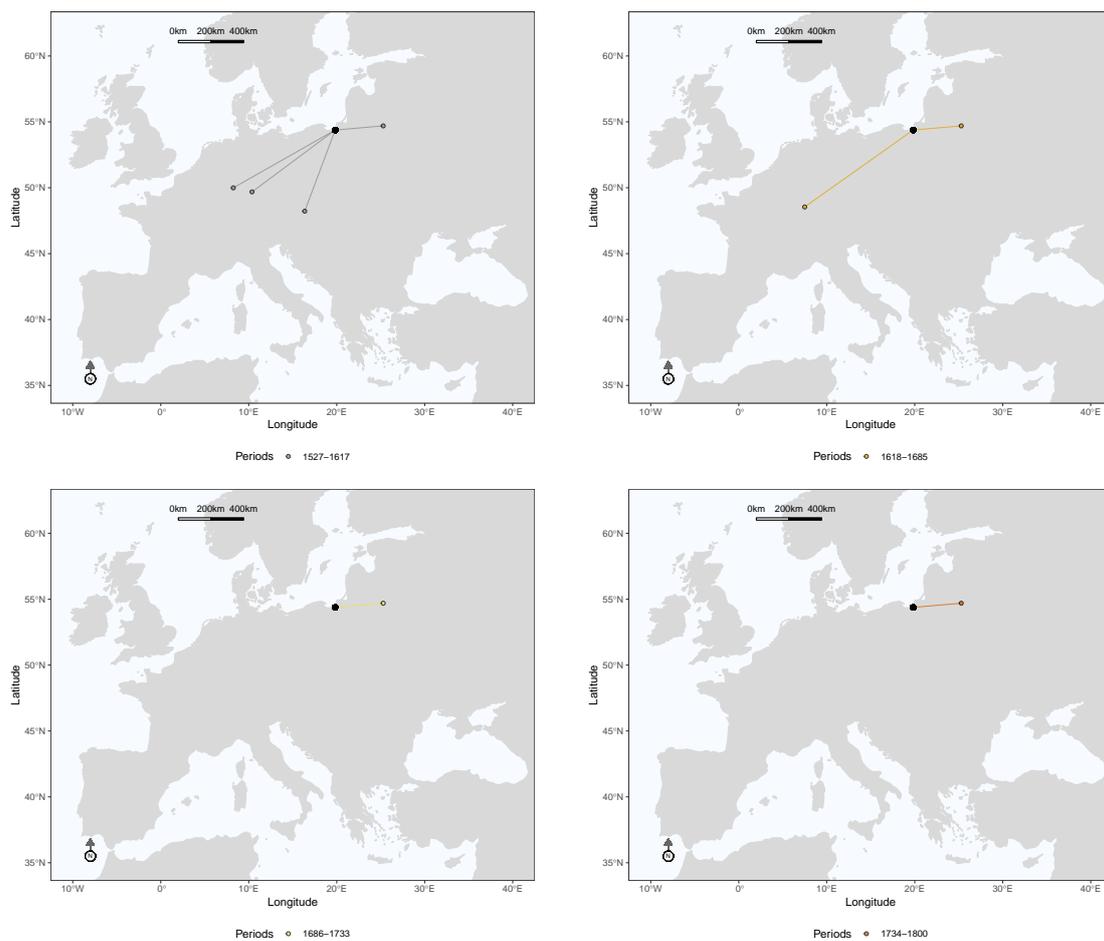


Figure 5: Links between Braniewo and other universities through scholars' mobility, by period

8 UNIVERSITY NETWORK

Our assumption is that a professor's involvement in multiple universities throughout their career establishes a connection between those institutions. We present the universities that were linked to the University of Braniewo during each period in Figure 5, highlighting the following observations. During the first period, there was some mobility of professors between German universities and Braniewo. Later, mobility became restricted to the University of Vilnius in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

9 FINAL THOUGHTS

Situated between Danzig (Gdansk) and Königsberg (Kaliningrad), the University of Braniewo was established as a stronghold against the spread of Protestantism. At its inception, the university flourished, with a diverse faculty recruited from various parts of Europe. However, over time, it faced a period of decline and eventual closure, coinciding with the expulsion of the Jesuits.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 883033 "Did elite human capital trigger the rise of the West? Insights from a new database of European scholars."

We are very grateful to Andrzej Paweł Bieś for his help and advises in navigating the website of the Encyclopaedia of Information on the Jesuits on the Territories of Poland and Lithuania, 1564-1995.

Homepage: <https://perso.uclouvain.be/david.delacroix/uthc.html>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/UTHCerc>

Database: <https://shiny-lidam.sipr.ucl.ac.be/scholars/>

First version October 25, 2023

REFERENCES

- Curtis, Matthew, and David De la Croix. 2023. Measuring Human Capital: from WorldCat Identities to VIAF. *Repertorium Eruditorum Totius Europae* 10:17–22. <https://doi.org/10.14428/rete.v10i0/hc>.
- De la Croix, David, and Gaia Spolverini. 2022. Scholars and literati at the University of Cracow (1364–1800). *Repertorium Eruditorum Totius Europae* 6:35–42. <https://doi.org/10.14428/rete.v6i0/cracow>.
- Duysens, Lucas. 2023. Spatial competition and human capital : how did the proximity of protestant universities affect the written output of jesuit scholars in their universities? Master Thesis, UCLouvain. <https://dial.uclouvain.be/memoire/ucl/object/thesis:41040>.
- Frijhoff, Willem. 1996. Patterns. Chap. 2 in *A history of the University in Europe. vol. ii: Universities in Early Modern Europe (1500–1800)*, edited by Hilde de Ridder-Symoens. Cambridge University Press.
- Grendler, Paul F. 2019. *Jesuit Schools and Universities in Europe 1548–1773*. Brill Research Perspectives in Jesuit Studies. Brill. <https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004391123>.
- Grzebień, Ludwik. 2004. *Encyklopedia wiedzy o jezuitach na ziemiach polski i litwy: 1564-1995*. Cracow: Wydawnictwo WAM.

- Herbermann, Charles George. 1913. *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. New York: Encyclopedia Press, Incorporated.
- Korbut, G. 1929. *Literatura polska od początków do wojny światowej: książka podręczna informacyjna dla studujących naukowo dzieje rozwoju piśmiennictwa polskiego*. Skład główny w Kasie im. Mianowskiego. <https://books.google.be/books?id=SrIZAAAAMAAJ>.
- Niesiecki, K., and J.N. Bobrowicz. 1840. *Herbarz polski kaspra niesieckiego s.j.* Wydawnictwa Artystyczne i Filmowe. <https://books.google.be/books?id=L2pJAAAIAAJ>.
- Sommervogel, Carlos. 1890. *Bibliothèque de la Compagnie de Jésus*. Brussels: Oscar Schepens.
- Suchodolski, B., and Polska Akademia Nauk. Zakład Historii Nauki i Techniki. 1970. *Historia nauki polskiej*. v. 2. Zakład Narodowy imienia Ossolińskich. <https://books.google.be/books?id=cXUIAAAAMAAJ>.
- Visuotinę lietuvių enciklopediją. 2023. Zygimantas liauksminas. Retrieved 01 November 2023. <https://www.vle.lt/straipsnis/zygimantas-liauksminas/>.