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On the Authorship of Compositions Attributed to Nicolaus de Ostrorog in the ‘Kraśiński Codex’

ABSTRACT Two works surviving in the codex Rps 8054 III (*olim* Kras 52), held in the National Library of Poland in Warsaw, have been tentatively attributed to Nicolaus de Ostrorog. The author supports Maria Szczepańska’s proposal that the name ‘N de ostrorog’ (fol. 186v) may refer to the Contratenor voice of *Pastor gregis egregius* only and points out that the name Nicolaus Mathie de Ostrorog is present in the matriculation roll of Kraków University (1437). Furthermore, he argues on palaeographical and codicological grounds that the fragmentary Gloria (fol. 205r) is most likely a work by Nicolaus Frangens de Leodio. An updated transcription of the part of the Gloria hidden under the protective paper slip is offered.

KEYWORDS PL-Wn Rps 8054 III, Kras 52, Kraśiński codex, Nicolaus de Ostrorog, Nicolaus Frangens de Leodio, Nicolaus de Radom, University of Kraków, codicology, palaeography

ABSTRAKT O autorstwie kompozycji z „kodeksu Kraśińskich” przypisywanych Mikołajowi z Ostroroga. Dwie kompozycje zachowane w kodeksie Rps 8054 III z Biblioteki Narodowej w Warszawie przypisywane są Mikołajowi z Ostroroga. Autor komunikatu popiera tezę Marii Szczepańskiej, że atrybucja „N de ostrorog” (fol. 186v) może odnosić się jedynie do kontratenoru *Pastor gregis egregius*. Zwraca też uwagę, że pewien Nicolaus Mathie de Ostrorog występuje w metryce Uniwersytetu Krakowskiego (1437). Ponadto, opierając się na argumentach paleograficznych i kodykologicznych, autor wykazuje, że zachowana fragmentarycznie Gloria (fol. 205r) jest najprawdopodobniej dziełem Nicolausa Frangensa de Leodio. Komunikat zawiera zaktualizowaną transkrypcję początku Głorii ukrytego pod ochronnym paskiem papieru.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE PL-Wn Rps 8054 III, Kras 52, kodeks Kraśińskich, Mikołaj z Ostroroga, Nicolaus Frangens de Leodio, Mikołaj Radomski, Uniwersytet Krakowski, kodykologia, paleografia

The three music gatherings surviving as part of the Rps 8054 III (*olim* Kras 52) held in the National Library of Poland (PL-Wn) – hereafter referred to as Kras – have been an object of musicological research since the early twentieth century. An important remote source of repertoire circulating internationally since the early fifteenth century and composed by, among others, Antonio Zacara da Teramo, Johannes Ciconia and ‘Magister Egardus’ (Johannes Ecghaert), Kras is also famous for being one of two surviving sources of music by the Polish composer Mikołaj Radomski.¹ Certain compositions in Kras refer to the city of Kraków, its patron saint and the Polish royal family, suggesting the place of origin of some of the repertoire and of the source itself. In a recent study, I argued on palaeographical and codicological grounds that Kras was copied *c.*1440 (1437–41?) by Petrus de Casimiria, a priest and scribe of a *Gesta Romanorum* manuscript that forms part of the same codex.²

Nicolaus de Radom is not the only Polish-sounding name in Kras. The other one is ‘N de ostrorog’, which music historians traditionally read as Nicolaus de Ostrorog. Two works surviving in Kras, *Pastor gregis egregius* (fol. 186r), and Gloria (fol. 205v), have been cautiously attributed to the otherwise unknown person behind this name. In what follows, I would like to address the authorship of these compositions in the light of new evidence that came to my attention in the course of my research for the aforementioned study but was not included in it due to space and narrative considerations.

The name ‘N de ostrorog’ appears on fol. 186r, which contains *Pastor gregis egregius*, in the middle of the page, between the sixth and seventh staves (counting from the top), which contain the Tenor and Contratenor voices, respectively. This is a rather unusual place for a composer attribution (as already noted by Charles Brewer³), which, when one piece fills the entire page, can be expected to appear at the top of the page – above the music.

Doubts, first voiced by Maria Szczepańska in 1928,⁴ as to whether ‘N de ostrorog’ is the name of a composer were subsequently raised several times in the literature.

1 The other source being the manuscript PL-Wn 378 (lost, but surviving in the form of photographs). See the sections dedicated to this manuscript in *Sources of Polyphony up to c. 1500: Facsimiles*, ed. Mirosław Perz, Warsaw 1973 (= *Antiquitates Musicae in Polonia* 13) and *Sources of Polyphony up to c. 1500: Transcriptions*, ed. Mirosław Perz, Warsaw (= *Antiquitates Musicae in Polonia* 14). For further literature on PL-Wn 378, see Michał Gondko, ‘A New Look at the Music Gatherings in the “Krański Codex”’, *Muzyka* 71 (2026) no. 1.

2 For a summary of the literature on Kras, see M. Gondko, ‘A New Look’, pp. 3–66.

3 Charles Everett Brewer, ‘The Introduction of the “Ars Nova” into East Central Europe: A Study of Late Medieval Polish Sources’, City University of New York 1984 (PhD dissertation), p. 297.

4 ‘Whether the words “N(icolaus?) de Ostrorog” indicate a composer is presently difficult to determine. [...] It is, however, possible, that the otherwise unknown Ostrorog is the author of the contratenor which he added to the two pre-existing voices of the hymn’ (‘Czy słowa “N(icolaus?) de Ostrorog” oznaczają kompozytora, trudno na razie udowodnić. [...] Możliwe jednak jest, iż nieznan nam skądinąd Ostrorog jest autorem kontratenoru, który dopisał do istniejących przed nim dwóch głosów hymnu’). See Maria Szczepańska, ‘Hymn ku czci św. Stanisława z XV wieku: Przyczynek do historii średniowiecznej muzyki w Polsce’ [A fifteenth-century hymn in honour of St Stanislaus: a contribution to the history of medieval music in Poland], *Przegląd Muzyczny* 4 (1928) no. 7, p. 3. All translations by M.G., unless otherwise indicated.



Fig. 1. a) Close-up photo of the name 'N de ostrorog', b) staves six and seven in Kras (Warsaw, Biblioteka Narodowa, Rps 8054 III), fol. 186r, <https://polona.pl>

Szczepańska proposed, however, that N. de Ostrorog could have authored the Contratenor alone, adding it to the two existing voices. Zdzisław Jachimecki dismissed this proposal in 1935,⁵ while Mirosław Perz, for his edition in the *Antiquitates Musicae in Polonia* series, chose to attribute the whole piece to Nicolaus de Ostrorog, with a cautious remark that the authorship is 'doubtful'.⁶

Szczepańska's hypothesis is an interesting one. She argued that the practice of adding voices was not uncommon in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries – a statement that is certainly true.⁷ The fact that the name 'N de ostrorog', in lighter brown colour, is clearly 'run over' by much darker *minima* stems from the seventh staff (see Fig. 1a) lends support to this hypothesis. The scribe must have written the name prior to entering the music on the seventh staff: at the end of the sixth staff, the ink was beginning to run out in his pen (the last ligature and the *custos* are getting fainter), but there was still enough of it to write the name before a new portion of ink was needed (Fig. 1b). The space below the beginning of the Contratenor was already taken by the voice designation, so the name had to go somewhere else. Even though the scribe did

5 'There is no satisfactory reason why the song should be attributed to this otherwise unknown Nicolas, whether in its entirety or in part' ('Nie mamy wystarczającego powodu, ażeby w nieznanym tym skądindziej Mikołaju widzieć czy to autora pieśni, jako całości, lub jakiejś jej części'). See Zdzisław Jachimecki, *Łacińska Pieśń do Św. Stanisława z XV wieku* [A fifteenth-century Latin song to St Stanislaus], Kraków 1935, p. 6.

6 *Sources [...] Facsimiles*, p. xxiv. Later, Perz altogether avoided associating *Pastor gregis egregius* with Ostrorog in Mirosław Perz, 'Kontrafaktry ballad w rękopisie Krasieńskich nr 52 (PL-Wn 8054)' [Contrafacta of ballads in the manuscript Krasieński 52], *Muzyka* 37 (1992) no. 4, pp. 89–111.

7 See M. Szczepańska, 'Hymn', p. 3. See also Signe Rotter-Broman, 'Contratenor Parts in Polyphonic Songs from the Late Trecento (Italy, ca. 1400): Challenges for Concepts of Polyphony and Improvisation', *Journal of Interdisciplinary Music Studies* 8 (2014–16) nos. 1–2, pp. 67–68, <https://doi.org/10.4407/jims.2016.12.003>, with further literature on the topic. To complement Szczepańska's statement, one might add that *Pastor gregis egregius* is fully viable as a polyphonic setting without a Contratenor.

not enter it under the seventh staff (as one would expect), the attributive rubric still stands above three staves filled with the remainder of the Contratenor.

It seems to have escaped the attention of musicologists that a certain Nicolaus Mathie de Ostrorog matriculated at the University of Kraków in 1437.⁸ It is noteworthy that the matriculation date corroborates the recently proposed dating of Kras, and the watermark from gathering 17 (which contains *Pastor gregis egregius*) has an Austrian concordance dated 1437.⁹ Since some of the music in Kras is clearly related to Kraków, and no one else by this name is listed in the university's matriculation roll in the fifteenth century, it seems that this Nicolaus Mathie de Ostrorog may have been involved in the creation of *Pastor gregis egregius* in some way. In light of the observations presented above, it would seem that the attribution rubric refers to the Contratenor only. This, in turn, weakens the hypothesis of Ostrorog's authorship of the remaining voices even further and strengthens Maria Szczepańska's proposition that he may have just added a Contratenor to a pre-existing two-voice piece.¹⁰

The other piece tentatively attributed by Mirosław Perz to 'Nicolaus de Ostrorog', a Gloria on fol. 205v, is incomplete and was originally a three-, if not four-voice composition (the remainder of which was on the lost facing folio).¹¹ Since the damaged edges of fol. 205v were reinforced with paper strips, at some unknown time information hidden beneath – the attribution and the musical content of almost the entire first staff – was partly traced in pencil on the strip protecting the upper edge (Fig. 2a). Mirosław Perz read the pencil-traced attribution as 'O[pus] N[icolai] de O[stro]rog',¹² while Zdzisław Jachimecki, in 1915 (and again in 1948), read 'O[pus] N[icolai] Frag...'.¹³ I was able to recover the hidden information from multispectral images of this area (Fig. 2b) in digital post-processing and can confirm Jachimecki's

8 See *Metryka Uniwersytetu Krakowskiego z lat 1400–1508: Biblioteka Jagiellońska rkp. 258* [The roll of students of the University of Kraków 1400–1508: Jagiellonian Library, ms. 258], ed. Antoni Gąsiorowski et al., vol. 1, Kraków 2004, p. 179; *Album studiosorum Universitatis Cracoviensis*, vol. 1, *Ab Anno 1400 ad annum 1489*, ed. Adam Chmiel, Kraków, 1887, p. 92. On a side note, a 'Jacobus Mathee filius de Ostrorog' (a brother of Nicolaus?) is listed under the year 1431.

9 I discuss the dating of Kras in M. Gondko, 'A New Look', p. 17.

10 It should be noted that, although Mirosław Perz counted *Pastor gregis egregius* among *contrafacta* of French ballads in Kras (M. Perz, 'Kontrafakury'), the piece may just as well be of Central European origin. Regarding such a possibility, see Michał Gondko, 'Some Latin Contrafacta of Ars Nova Songs in Central European Sources from the First Half of the Fifteenth Century', *Hudební věda* 67 (2020) no. 4, p. 484.

11 See M. Gondko, 'A New Look', p. 9 and Appendix 1. Reinhard Strohm states that this composition 'echoes the style of Egardus' Gloria' that precedes it in Kras. See Reinhard Strohm, *The Rise of European Music*, Cambridge 1993, p. 261.

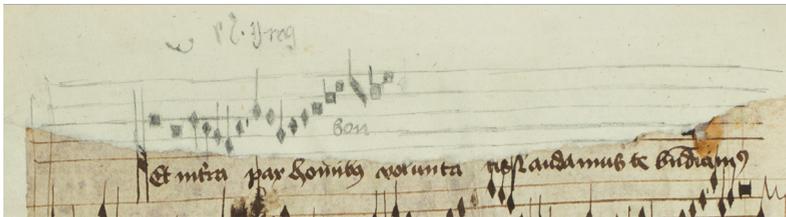
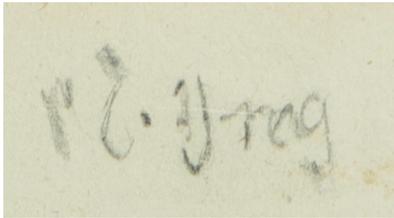
12 See *Sources [...]: Facsimiles*, p. 99.

13 See Zdzisław Jachimecki, *Muzyka na dworze króla Władysława Jagiełły 1424–1430* [Music at the court of King Władysław II Jagiełło 1424–1430], Kraków 1915, p. 28 (where he also reports that paper reinforcements were in place at the time of writing); see also Zdzisław Jachimecki, *Muzyka polska w rozwoju historycznym: Od czasów najdawniejszych do doby obecnej* [Polish music in historical development: from the earliest times to the present day], vol. 1, part 1, Kraków 1948, p. 75.

reading. An updated transcription of the first system of the Discantus (with the corresponding fragment of the Tenor) is provided in Ex. 1.

Jachimecki hypothesised that 'N Frag' could be the corruptly notated name of Beltrame Feragut, or could refer to Nicolaus de Ferrara.¹⁴ I hereby propose a reading that I believe to be more plausible: 'O[pus] N[icolai] Frag[ens]' (or 'Fra[n]g[ens]'), if an abbreviation sign above 'Frag' did exist but is no longer extant – like part of the capital letter F in 'Frag'.

a)



b)



Fig. 2. a) Ascription and music written in pencil on the protective paper strip, b) ascription and music hidden beneath the paper strip (the upper images are close-ups of the ascription) in Kras (Warsaw, Biblioteka Narodowa, Rps 8054 III), fol. 205v, <https://polona.pl>

14 See Z. Jachimecki, 'Muzyka na dworze', p. 29; Z. Jachimecki, 'Muzyka polska', p. 75.

Ex. 1. Updated transcription of the first system of the Gloria attributed to 'N Frag' (fol. 205v)

The musical score consists of four systems, each with a vocal line and a discantus line. The first system is labeled '[Discantus]' and 'Tenor'. The second system is labeled '[D]' and 'T'. The third system is labeled '[D]' and 'T'. The fourth system is labeled '[D]' and 'T'. The lyrics are: 'Et in ter - ra pax ho - mi - ni - bus bo - ne vo - lun - ta - tis. Lau - da - mus te, be - ne - di - ci - mus te...'. The score includes various musical notations such as clefs, time signatures, notes, rests, and accidentals.

The name of Nicolaus Frangens de Leodio was not widely known to musicologists in Jachimecki's time.¹⁵ Since then, however, various documents have emerged mentioning 'Nicolao de Frangees Simonis leodensis', 'Nicolaus olim Symonis de Fragees de Leodio' and 'Magister Nicolaus Frangens de Leodio', first in Avignon (1380) and then, from 1407 until his death in 1433, in north-eastern Italy, where he held ecclesiastical posts in various cities. In Chioggia, he was responsible for instructing clerics who wished to learn *cantar e biscantar*.¹⁶ Thus, his life path resembles

15 His name first surfaced in archival documentation published in Iginio Tiozzo, 'Maestri e organisti della Cattedrale di Chioggia fino al XVII secolo', *Note d'archivio* 12 (1935), p. 288.

16 The literature on Frangens is summarised in Armin Brinzing, 'Kleinüberlieferung mehrstimmiger Musik vor 1550 in deutschem Sprachgebiet', in: *Studien zur Philologie und zur Musikwissenschaft*, Berlin

that of Johannes Ciconia, who also came from Liège (Leodium) and whose works are preserved, among other sources, in Kras and PL-Wn 378. Frangens has been put forward as author of the music of the motet *Argi vices Poliphemus / Com P[h]ilemon* (a proposal that has since been questioned¹⁷), as well as the fragmentary motet [...] *altaris quos / Verbum vite*.¹⁸ I believe that the fragmentary Gloria on fol. 205v of Kras can be added to the list of pieces he potentially authored and should no longer be attributed, even tentatively, to Nicolaus de Ostorog.

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17 This motet survives as a unicum in Aosta, Biblioteca diocesana, Cod. 15, fols. 4v–7v. For a summary of discussion of the authorship of this piece, see A. Brinzing, 'Kleinüberlieferung', pp. 253–55. Margaret Bent considers the argumentation for attributing *Argi vices Poliphemus/Com P[h]ilemon* to Frangens too weak and proposes that 'the identity of the composer had better revert to unknown status'. See Margaret Bent, 'Early Papal Motets', in: *Papal Music and Musicians in Late Medieval and Renaissance Rome*, ed. Richard Sheer, Oxford 1998, pp. 29–30, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198164173.003.0002>; and the revised version of the same article in: Margaret Bent, *The Motet in Late Middle Ages*, New York 2023, pp. 627 and 355–56, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190063771.003.0031>.

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O AUTORSTWIE KOMPOZYCJI Z „KODEKSU KRASIŃSKICH”
PRZYPISYWANYCH MIKOŁAJOWI Z OSTROROGA

W kodeksie Rps 8054 III Biblioteki Narodowej w Warszawie zachowały się dwie kompozycje przypisywane Mikołajowi z Ostroroga (Nicolaus de Ostrorog). Teza o autorstwie pierwszej z nich, *Pastor gregis egregius* (fol. 186r), opiera się na fakcie występowania na karcie imienia „N de Ostrorog”. Ze względu na nietypowe umiejscowienie go przez skryptora (w połowie utworu zamiast nad pierwszym systemem) autorstwo Ostroroga zawsze pozostawało pod znakiem zapytania.

Autor popiera tezę Marii Szczepańskiej, że imię N. de Ostrorog może odnosić się jedynie do kontratenoru *Pastor gregis egregius*. Zapisane zostało bowiem jeszcze przed wpisaniem nut głosu kontratenorowego, zaś intencjonalność skryptora potwierdzać może umieszczenie nazwiska nad resztą głosu.

Autor zwraca także uwagę na pominięty dotychczas fakt, iż w metryce Uniwersytetu Krakowskiego, w spisie studentów z roku 1437, figuruje Nicolaus Mathie de Ostrorog. Data 1437 koreluje z datowaniem składki, która zawiera *Pastor gregis egregius*. N. de Ostrorog może zatem być tożsamy ze wspomnianym studentem Uniwersytetu Krakowskiego. Kwestią otwartą pozostaje, czy należy mu przypisać autorstwo całej kompozycji, czy jedynie kontratenoru innego utworu o fakturze dwugłosowej. Za tą drugą możliwością przemawiają argumenty paleograficzne.

Drugą kompozycją przypisywaną Ostorogowi jest niekompletne opracowanie części mszalnej Gloria na karcie 205v. Uszkodzone krawędzie tej karty wzmocniono w nieznanym czasie paskami papieru, zaś atrybucję i część zawartości muzycznej częściowo naniesiono ołówkiem na pasek chroniący górną krawędź. Mirosław Perz odczytał tę atrybucję jako „O[pus] N[icolai] de O[stro]rog”. Obróbka cyfrowa wykonanej w podświetleniu fotografii tego obszaru wyłoniła zakrytą zawartość: atrybucję „O[pus] N Frag” oraz materiał nutowy, który zezwala na aktualizację transkrypcji początku *Glorii*. Można zatem stwierdzić, że Zdzisław Jachimecki odczytał tę atrybucję poprawnie, zaś Mirosław Perz błędnie. Jachimecki zinterpretował ją jednak jako zniekształconą wersję nazwisk: Beltrame Feragut lub Nicolaus da Ferrara.

Według autora twórcą *Glorii* jest Nicolaus Frangens de Leodio, nieznaną szerzej historykom muzyki w latach działalności Jachimeckiego, lecz dziś już zidentyfikowany jako muzyk działający w Awinionie i północno-wschodnich Włoszech pod koniec XIV i w pierwszej połowie XV wieku.

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