

# Early history of Oriental studies at Vilnius University

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**Abstract.** The present paper was written as a contribution to the celebration of the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Oriental studies at Vilnius University. The early history of Oriental studies, covering the period 1805–24, is presented on the basis of archival materials from collections kept in the Lithuanian State Historical Archives, Vilnius University Library, and Czartoryskis' Library in Kraków. Two basic documents are published here for the first time. In the first quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, three sequential attempts towards establishing a chair of Oriental studies at Vilnius University were undertaken, each one connected with a particular candidate: Szymon Żukowski (1782–1834), Julius Klaproth (1783–1835), and Józef Sękowski (1800–1858).

§ 1. The date of 1 June 1810 may be regarded as the inception of Oriental studies at Vilnius University, when by decision of the Senate a chair for Oriental languages and literatures was created for Julius Klaproth. Even though the chair was never occupied and its creation became only a formal act, Vilnius academia can rightly celebrate the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Oriental studies at Vilnius University in 2010.

In the long history of Vilnius University (founded 1579), the first quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was characterized by several attempts at establishing studies of Oriental languages and literatures. One can clearly distinguish three sequential attempts, undertaken by the joint efforts of university authorities and the curator of the university, Prince Adam Jerzy Czartoryski. Each attempt was connected with a particular candidate, first Szymon Żukowski (1782–1834), then Julius Klaproth (1783–1835), and finally Józef Sękowski (1800–1858). Despite the many sincere efforts, however, due to unfavorable circumstances of different character, at that time it was not possible to realise in full the idea of establishing a chair for Oriental studies at Vilnius University. In this paper I would like to describe—on the basis of archival materials<sup>1</sup> and relevant literature—the early phase of the history of Oriental studies at Vilnius University, covering the period of 1805–1824.<sup>2</sup> On the later development

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<sup>1</sup> The research was carried out in the Lithuanian National Archives (LVIA), in the Vilnius University Library (VUB), and in the Czartoryskis' Library (BCzar) in Kraków. In this place I would like to express my sincere thanks to Prof Audrius Beinorius, director of the Centre of Oriental Studies at the Vilnius University, for making possible my research in Vilnius, as well as to Dr Valdas Jaskūnas and Vytis Vidūnas for their kind help.

<sup>2</sup> See Reychman 1957 for a general picture of interest in Oriental cultures in Vilnius and St Petersburg in the literary and academic milieu at the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

of Oriental—and especially Altaic—studies in Vilnius, connected with the names of such eminent scholars as Antoni Muchliński, Józef Kowalewski and Władysław Kotwicz, see the paper by Jerzy Tulisow in this volume.

§ 2. After the final partition of the then kingdom of Poland (1795), the eastern territories, including the region of Vilnius, were annexed by tsarist Russia. Accordingly, new regulations regarding administrative and legal matters were implemented. By decree of Tsar Alexander I (1777–1825), the new statute of the now Imperial Vilnius University was confirmed on 18 May 1803. In the same year, Prince Adam Jerzy Czartoryski (1770–1861) was nominated curator of the university, to be dismissed only in 1824 in connection with the massive repressions of the Russian authorities directed against clandestine organisations of Polish students in the district of Vilnius.<sup>3</sup>

According to the new statute, Vilnius University consisted of four faculties (Beauvois 1991, ch. III.2), viz. the faculty of physics and mathematics, faculty of medicine, faculty of moral and political sciences, and faculty of literature and liberal arts (*artes liberales*). The last named was divided into five chairs: of rhetoric and poetry, Greek language and literature, Latin language and literature, state (i.e. Russian) language and literature, and drawing and painting. To these were also gradually introduced courses in modern languages (French, German, English, and Italian).

§ 3. The idea of the necessity for the study of Oriental languages at an academic level probably came from Count Jan Potocki (1761–1815)<sup>4</sup> at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In a letter to Prince Adam Jerzy Czartoryski (Vienna, 6 April 1804), Potocki outlined a project for an Asiatic Academy (*Academie Asiatique*) in Russia, perhaps designed on the pattern of the Oriental Academy in Vienna, which he had recently visited (Frantsev 1938, letter no. 2). Accordingly, (a) the prospective academy was supposed to gather professors of Eastern languages, viz. Tatar, Turkish, Arabic, Persian, Mongolian, Tibetan, Manchu and Chinese; (b) the professors were to be obliged to study customs laws of those peoples and to compile handbooks of those laws; (c) the Academy was supposed to publish in Oriental languages the basic books and journals to make those peoples acquainted with Europe; (d) the Academy was supposed to include as its members scholars-Orientalists from Europe; and (e) the Academy was supposed to publish annually a volume containing translations from Oriental languages (Frantsev 1938, xvii).<sup>5</sup> The idea of establishing a school of Asiatic

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<sup>3</sup> See Beauvois 1991, 263f. for a comprehensive study of Vilnius University in 1803–1832 and a brief history of Oriental studies there. Cf. Massonius 2005.

<sup>4</sup> See Kotwicz 1935, 18ff, 96–9 about Potocki's scientific interest in history and Oriental studies.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. *infra* Uvarov's project from 1810 (Ouvoroff 1843).

languages (Manchu, Tibetan, Mongolian) comes back again in another letter from Potocki to Prince Adam Jerzy Czartoryski (Troitsk, 18 December 1805) (Frantsev 1938, 20 [letter no. 11]). Jan Potocki later played a significant role as a protector of Julius Klaproth and promoted his candidature for the chair of Oriental languages and literatures in 1810.

There were also other individuals who played an important role in promoting the idea of establishing Oriental studies in Vilnius. Józef Zawadzki (1781–1838), a printer for the university (from 1805), in his letters to Adam Kazimierz Czartoryski (1734–1823) and Adam Jerzy Czartoryski, often expressed his opinions about the necessity of introducing courses in Oriental languages at the university. In a letter dated 12 October 1809, Zawadzki complained that the absence of Oriental languages in the programme of the university was a ‘severe and degrading want’, but even worse was the lack of attention of the authorities for their prospective development (Turkowski 1935, 25).<sup>6</sup> Zawadzki recommended Szymon Żukowski, a university lecturer in Greek and Hebrew, in his efforts to obtain a research grant to go to Crimea to extend his knowledge of Oriental languages.<sup>7</sup>

Jan Śniadecki (1756–1830), rector of the university in 1807–15, had an ambiguous attitude towards the idea of introducing Oriental studies at the university. On the one hand, he encouraged Żukowski, then a priest, to set to work studying Oriental languages (Baliński 1865, 1: 495, n. 1), but he was opposed to putting Julius Klaproth in charge of teaching Oriental languages (Baliński 1865, 1: 651 [letter of 20 April 1810 to Adam Czartoryski]).

Kazimierz Kontrym (1776–1836),<sup>8</sup> in his capacity as secretary to the university, was very active as a promoter of a new project establishing a chair of Oriental languages for Józef Sękowski in 1822.

§ 4. The introductory courses of Oriental languages, Hebrew and Arabic, were taught by Michał Bobrowski (1784–1848) within the faculty of moral and political sciences in connection with the courses on Biblical archaeology (Beauvois 1991, 244). Szymon (alias Sebastian) Żukowski (1782–1834), lecturer in Greek, also lectured on Hebrew and compiled the first grammar of that language (Vilnius, 1809).<sup>9</sup> Żukowski, first encouraged by Rector Jan Śniadecki, and also by Joachim Lelewel

<sup>6</sup> Cf. also Turkowski 1935, 91 (letter of 6/18 September 1815); 98–9 (letter of Adam Czartoryski to Józef Zawadzki dated 23 February 1816); 106–7 (answer by J. Zawadzki [s.d.]).

<sup>7</sup> Turkowski 1935: 9 (letter of 6 August 1808); 26–8 (letter of 12 October 1809); 406 (letter of Adam Czartoryski to J. Zawadzki dated 26 January 1808); 412–3 (A. Czartoryski’s answer to Zawadzki’s letter of 7 June 1809). Cf. Żukowska 2008 (Aneks II).

<sup>8</sup> PSB XIII, 1967–68, 608–9.

<sup>9</sup> *Początki języka hebrajskiego przez Sebastiana Żukowskiego. Z przydatkiem czytania i tłumaczenia tegoż języka*, Wilno, 1809.

(1786–1861), professor of history, and Józef Zawadzki, a printer, was willing to deepen and extend his knowledge of Oriental languages.<sup>10</sup> He applied to Prince Adam Kazimierz Czartoryski, patron of the university, for a five-year grant (beginning June 1810) which would enable him to go to Crimea (and other relevant places) to study Hebrew and Arabic.<sup>11</sup> In a letter of 6 July 1810 to Adam Jerzy Czartoryski, curator, he repeated his appeal to establish a chair for the Hebrew language and to be granted financial assistance to realise his travel plan.<sup>12</sup> Again in a letter of 5 November 1811, Żukowski in a delicate manner presented the curator his uncertain situation regarding his travel plans and complained that the rector did not fulfil his promise to send him abroad.<sup>13</sup> His long-lasting efforts were unfortunately unsuccessful; seemingly mainly due to financial reasons. The university not only grappled with financial difficulties but also was troubled by the vacancies of many posts. Despite the sympathy shown to Żukowski and acknowledgement of his linguistic acumen, the circumstances were against his ambitious plans. The decision about his study trip was delayed by the rector of the university, seemingly disappointed by the fact that in the meantime Żukowski had quit the priesthood.<sup>14</sup> Finally, evidently frustrated by the failure of his efforts, Żukowski became disinclined to continue his interest in Oriental languages and turned towards the study of archaeology. Żukowski announced his decision in a letter to Adam Czartoryski (Vilnius, 4 March 1817) and at the same time applied for a grant and promotion to the higher rank of extraordinary professor in Vilnius.<sup>15</sup> Interestingly, in the minutes of the special meeting of the University Council of 28 June 1822, we find a note that adjunct Szymon (Sebastian) Żukowski was offered courses in Hebrew and Greek.<sup>16</sup> Thus it seems that he did not abandon his interest in Oriental studies for good.

§ 5. Julius Klaproth (1783–1835) (Walravens 1999; Walravens 2006), a young and brilliant scholar of manifold interests, became the next candidate for the future chair of Oriental languages and literatures in Vilnius. Klaproth was a protégé of Count Jan Potocki (1761–1815) (PSB; Kotwicz 1935; Rosset-Triaire 2004), a Polish aristocrat who pursued historical studies in search of the original homeland of Slavonic peoples; he also travelled extensively across Europe and Asia. Klaproth met Potocki in Berlin.

<sup>10</sup> In the Biblioteka Czartoryskich, I consulted the original letters of Żukowski. The complete correspondence between Lelewel and Żukowski, as well as his letters to A.K. Czartoryski and A.J. Czartoryski, was published in Żukowska 2008.

<sup>11</sup> Vilnius, 9 October 1809. BCzar Ms No. 5476 [Lipski 1923, No. 163], pp. 295–6.

<sup>12</sup> BCzar Ms 5476, p. 379.

<sup>13</sup> BCzar Ms 5476, p. 443.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Żukowska 2008, 24, 25 and n. 27, 50–1.

<sup>15</sup> BCzar Ms No. 5477 [Lipski 1923, No. 164], pp. 55–6.

<sup>16</sup> VUB KC-212 (year 1822) [Lipski 1926, No. 48], pp. 195–6.

The young and promising scholar in the field of Chinese studies must have greatly impressed Count Potocki, who recommended his candidature for the St Petersburg Academy of Sciences in 1804. In Klaproth's own words, Potocki had always shown sympathy and keen interest in his research.<sup>17</sup> In 1805, under the auspices of Tsar Alexander I, a special Russian embassy was sent to China (Kotwicz 1935). Count Potocki was nominated the head of a large group of scholars who accompanied the embassy. Among the chosen scholars was Julius Klaproth. In letters to Prince Adam Czartoryski which Potocki wrote en route, there are many enthusiastic remarks about Klaproth's learning, acumen and diligence.<sup>18</sup> During the journey through Siberia and along the Chinese border, Klaproth had the opportunity to extend his knowledge of Chinese and Japanese, as well as collect many books.<sup>19</sup> After the completion of the mission,<sup>20</sup> Julius Klaproth returned to St Petersburg, where 'he set to work on a catalogue of the Chinese and Manchu books of the academy library' (Walravens 2006, 179, n. 10, 11).

Apparently it was at that time that Count Potocki recommended the candidature of Klaproth for the professorship in Vilnius to Adam Jerzy Czartoryski. But Jan Śniadecki (1756–1830), rector of the university, had a different vision of the mission of the institution. He favoured the study of the native language and literature and Oriental studies were pushed aside as a subject of secondary importance in view of the primary need to educate the nation. Moreover, he encouraged Polish scholars to occupy academic positions, even though they may have had lesser qualities than the foreign candidates. In a letter to the curator, Adam Jerzy Czartoryski, Śniadecki expressed at some length his negative attitude towards introducing Oriental languages and employing foreign scholars at the university. Klaproth's draft of the study of Oriental literatures (based mainly on Chinese materials) was severely criticized by Śniadecki; in his opinion it was too abstract and irrelevant to the main teaching

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<sup>17</sup> See Klaproth's Preface in Potocki 1829, v–vi; Walravens 2006, 180, n. 13: 'Klaproth felt a lifelong obligation towards Potocki. So he edited three of his papers, with an introduction...'

<sup>18</sup> Frantsev 1938, 7 (Tomsk, 4 August 1805); 11 (Irkutsk, 13 September 1805); 13–14 (letter to Prince Golovkin, Irkutsk, 22 September 1805). With regard to the letter dated 4 August 1805, I cannot restrain myself from quoting the same letter to Prince Adam Czartoryski, in which Potocki mentioned one 'ingénieur Mejour', presumably one of my ancestors: 'De Kongour [Kungur] je me suis dirigé sur les zavodes de Knauf où l'ingénieur Mejour vient d'établir une fabrique de quincaillerie, dont les produits ne seront guère inférieurs à ceux de la quincaillerie anglaise. Mejour est véritablement un homme de génie. Et il a cette propriété de génie d'animer tout ce qui l'environne. Aussi voit-on régner chez lui cette activité qui assure le succès des entreprises. Il vient encore d'inventer de nouvelles machines qu'il espère présenter à Sa Majesté' (Frantsev 1938, 5).

<sup>19</sup> Cf. 'Rapport du Comte Jean Potocki sur les travaux des savant attachés à l'ambassade destinée pour la Chine', in Potocki 2004–6, 2: 255–61 (on Klaproth pp. 256–8); Walravens 2006, 179.

<sup>20</sup> The mission proved to be unsuccessful; it had to stop in Urga, Mongolia, since the Chinese authorities did not allow it to proceed to Peking.

programme (Baliński 1865, 1: 651–2). The same arguments he presented briefly in his letter to Prince Adam Kazimierz Czartoryski dated 14/26 May 1810 (Baliński 1865, 1: 637). Nevertheless, on the authority of the curator, Klaproth's candidature was accepted by the university.

From Klaproth's letter,<sup>21</sup> we know under which conditions he would accept the position in Vilnius; he required: 1) the rank and title of an ordinary professor; 2) an appointment for an elementary course of four hours per month and for an additional course of two lectures of four hours per month; the appointment would commence on the day of nomination (Klaproth promised to arrive in Vilnius at the beginning of July); 3) 500 roubles in silver for travel expenses; 4) the university would supply him with a collection of Manchu and Chinese books for a price of 150 ducats; 5) he would be offered appropriate accommodation or would be paid an equivalent in silver. The university accepted these requirements. From annual records of the university, it is known that in 1809 Klaproth presented the library a set of Chinese books.<sup>22</sup>

Two documents which have been preserved in the Lithuanian National Archives throw, however, more light on the circumstances of Klaproth's nomination.<sup>23</sup>

The minutes of the meeting of the Council of Vilnius Imperial University held on 1 June 1810 contain important information that it was Prince Adam Jerzy Czartoryski, the curator of the university, who in his letter of 7 April 1809 highly recommended the candidature of Julius Klaproth. To his letter, Klaproth's printed works and his short paper explaining the importance of Oriental languages were attached. Also emphasised was that Klaproth possessed a private collection of manuscripts and medals relevant to the study of Asiatic peoples which he was willing to bring with him to Vilnius. Moreover, Klaproth's paper on his aims and method of implementing the courses on Oriental literature was read during the meeting. Following Czartoryski's recommendation, the council voted in favour of Klaproth's candidature (11 affirmative votes, 5 negative votes) and made him a professor at Vilnius University.

The second document is a letter of 4 July 1810 to Prince Adam Jerzy Czartoryski from Jan Śniadecki, the rector of the university, informing him about the course of

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<sup>21</sup> VUB No. F-KC 294, p. 200 (stored in a separate envelope). No date, no addressee, but predating the decision of the University Council, it must have been sent before 1 June 1810, probably in April or May. The requirements are briefly mentioned in the minutes of the council meeting from 1 June 1810.

<sup>22</sup> VUB No. KC 232 [= Lipski 1926, No. 76], p. 338: 'Chinese encyclopaedia in eight small volumes, offered by Mr. Klaproth, Petersburg academician'. The same information is repeated on p. 467 (report to Adam Jerzy Czartoryski from 26 July 1810). The books have not been traced in the Library. It is however known that Count Jan Potocki offered a gift of Chinese books ('cinq cartons de trois cahiers chinois reliés') to the library of Krzemieniec, see Potocki 2004–6, 2: 290, n. 436.

<sup>23</sup> LVIA F 721, Ap. 1, 388, dated 1 June 1810, and 4 July 1810, respectively. See the Appendix for the texts.

the council meeting on 1 June and the final decision: Julius Klaproth was elected professor ordinary of Oriental languages and literature with a salary of 1500 roubles in silver. In case the university lacked the necessary funds, Prince Czartoryski stated that he would be obliged to help the university to obtain the required sum to support the newly established chair.

It is not clear when Klaproth visited Vilnius. Certainly he did not appear to accept the nomination and, even worse, did not explain his withdrawal. It must have been received by the university as a slap in the face for in the annual records there is no mention at all about Klaproth's nomination. Thus the idea of establishing a chair for Oriental studies in Vilnius collapsed for many years.

Interestingly, Julius Klaproth simultaneously was engaged in a project of creating an Asiatic academy in St Petersburg. In his pamphlet from 1810 entitled *Projet d'une Académie asiatique*,<sup>24</sup> Count Sergey Semionovich Uvarov (Ouvoroff) (1786–1855),<sup>25</sup> a Russian scholar and statesman, presented his vision (following Potocki's memoranda?) of such an academy with a long justification of the importance and necessity of introducing a comprehensive study of Oriental languages and cultures. Uvarov referred to Klaproth's expertise in Oriental philology and appended to his pamphlet four syllabuses; three of them were prepared by Klaproth, viz. no. I—on Indian literature, no. II—on Chinese and Manchu literature, and no. III—on Arabic, Persian, Turkic and Tatar literatures (Uvarov 1843, 30, 33, 35, 37, App. I–III). In St Petersburg Klaproth compiled a catalogue of Chinese and Manchu books in the library of the Academy of Sciences,<sup>26</sup> but soon he moved to Berlin, and then settled in Paris.

§ 6. Several years passed and the idea of establishing a chair of Oriental studies returned anew with the appearance of a new candidate, Józef Sękowski. Józef Julian Sękowski (1800–1858) (PSB XXXVI 1995–6, 422–5; Korsakov 1896–1918; Ambroziak 2007; Mikalauskas 2000), a young, brilliant scholar, graduated from Vilnius University in 1819, at the age of 20. He obtained his intellectual formation thanks to two eminent scholars at Vilnius University. From Gottfried Ernst Groddeck (1762–1825) (nota bene his uncle), professor of Classics, he learned Classical languages, and Joachim Lelewel (1786–1861), professor of history, was his mentor for a long time.<sup>27</sup> Sękowski's interest in Oriental languages and literatures arose during his university studies. Thanks to his diligence and great intellectual capacity, he learned the beginnings of Arabic, Persian and Turkic. As a student he translated a

<sup>24</sup> Re-published in St Petersburg in 1843.

<sup>25</sup> From 1818 Uvarov was the president of the Academy of Sciences.

<sup>26</sup> Edited from the manuscript by Hartmut Walravens (Walravens 1988).

<sup>27</sup> See Jabłonowski 1913 (based on correspondence between Lelewel and Sękowski).



collection of tales by Amtsal Lokman El-Hakim from Arabic into Polish.<sup>28</sup> Impressive is the list of Sękowski's papers from the years 1817–1820, published mainly in the journals *Dziennik Wileński* and *Tygodnik Wileński*.<sup>29</sup> Despite his young age, Sękowski was very active in the cultural life of Vilnius and gained the approval of influential people.

At the initiative of Kazimierz Kontrym (?1776–1836),<sup>30</sup> who held the position of librarian and secretary to the university, in fact a person of weight in Vilnius, a plan to establish a chair for Oriental studies was designed. It emphasised the necessity to educate a group of academic teachers. The candidature of Józef Sękowski for the prospective chair of Oriental studies was the most obvious one. It was therefore decided to send him to the Near East to enable him to undertake a practical study of the languages and to broaden his knowledge of the local cultures. With the aim of attaining the financial means necessary for a study grant, a special appeal (probably prepared by Kontrym) was circulated among the people in April 1819.<sup>31</sup> Thanks to collective efforts,<sup>32</sup> the appropriate sum of money was obtained and Sękowski was able to start his journey on 1 September 1819.<sup>33</sup> On route he exchanged letters with Joachim Lelewel and sent his reports to Vilnius, which were successively published in the journals *Dziennik Wileński* (1819–1820) and *Pamiętnik Warszawski* (1820–1821) (Jabłonowski 1913, *passim*). During the two years of his study tour, Sękowski visited, among other places, Istanbul, Smyrna, Beirut, Damascus, Alexandria, and Cairo, Nubia, and Ethiopia, and via Istanbul returned to Vilnius in October 1821. He studied Arabic, Turkish and Persian, worked on a translation of the Koran into Polish, collected materials for a history of Polish-Turkish relations, prepared a translation of a selection of poems of Hafiz and of a Persian treatise on the current affairs of Iran, and began to compile a dictionary of Arabic dialects. He also obtained many valuable

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<sup>28</sup> Amtsal Lokman El-Hakim, *Podobieństwa, czyli bajki mędrca Lokmana, z arabskiego przełożone* [przez J.S.], Wilno, 1818. See the reproduction of the title page in Ambroziak 2007, between pp. 128–9.

<sup>29</sup> BCzar Ms No. 5458 [Lipski 1923, No. 153], p. 601.

<sup>30</sup> PSB XIII 1967–8, 608–9.

<sup>31</sup> First it circulated in a manuscript form, and then it was published in *Pamiętnik Warszawski* 17 (1820): 114–5; see Jabłonowski 1913, 15–8; Ambroziak 2007, 28 and n. 28.

<sup>32</sup> Sękowski also received some financial support from Vilnius University, see: LVIA, F 721, Ap. I, B. 128: 'O pomocy od Uniwersytetu Wileńskiego odbywającemu wojaż w krajach wschodnich uczniowi tegoż Uniwersytetu Sękowskiemu'; cf. Mikalauskas 2000, 230, n. 14.

<sup>33</sup> BCzar Ms No. 6393 [Lipski 1926, No. 112], p. 481. A letter dated 22 September 1819 from Szymon Malewski, rector of Vilnius University, to Prince Czartoryski, informing him that 'a young man, Sękowski by name, a graduate from this university, went abroad, to Constantinople, in order to study Oriental languages, with financial support collected by Kontrym and also with assistance from the university'; cf. Ambroziak 2007, 28ff (on Sękowski's journey to the Near East).



manuscripts, among which was a unique papyrus manuscript from Egypt dated to the second half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century A.D.<sup>34</sup>

Soon after Sękowski's return to Vilnius,<sup>35</sup> at the initiative of Kazimierz Kontrym, the urgent need of establishing a chair of Oriental languages at Vilnius University was formulated and the candidature of Józef Sękowski as an apt and diligent scholar highly recommended. In that context, a very positive opinion about Sękowski written by Christian Frähn (1782–1851), an acknowledged authority in Oriental studies from St Petersburg, was mentioned too (cf. Ambroziak 2007, 41, n. 97 and 45). Kontrym wrote Adam Jerzy Czartoryski a memorial<sup>36</sup> in which he emphasised the following reasons for the necessity of the study of the Arabic language: 1) it is a basis for true science, 2) it is useful to the state due to different relations with the Eastern peoples—commercial, diplomatic, and military, 3) it enables the extension of the theological, medical, and historical sciences. The idea was again highly approved by the Prince, the curator of the university, who wrote a special message to the University Council in which he expressed his will to establish a chair of Oriental studies and recommended the candidature of Sękowski.<sup>37</sup> In his prompt reply dated from 28 April 1822, Szymon Malewski, the rector, informed Adam Jerzy Czartoryski that the University Council at its special meeting on 24 April 1822, following the suggestions that the Prince expressed in his letter of 23 April, elected Józef Sękowski 'professor extraordinary of Oriental languages', with a salary of one thousand roubles (voting: 9 for, 3 against).<sup>38</sup> Then, in a long document dated 4 May 1822, Prince Czartoryski, in his capacity of a curator, applied to the then Minister of Religious Affairs and National Education, Prince Alexander Golitsyn (1773–1844), with a request to approve the selection of Sękowski.<sup>39</sup> Unfortunately,

<sup>34</sup> About the so-called Sękowski's papyrus, see Andrzejewski 1966; cf. Ambroziak 2007, 30 and n. 40.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. a letter of K. Kontrym to A. Czartoryski, dated 16(28) January 1822, in which he informs the Prince about Sękowski's return to Vilnius and his diligent scientific work and recommends him as a member of the Society of the Friends of Sciences (Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Nauk) in Warsaw; BCzar Ms. 5458 [Lipski 1923, No. 153], pp. 523–5.

<sup>36</sup> The memorial dated 22 April 1822 is entitled 'Powody zaprowadzenia nauki języków orientalnych w Uniwersytecie Wileńskim' [Reasons for establishing the study of Oriental languages at Vilnius University], BCzar Ms No. 5458, pp. 527–33 (draft); large fragments in Jabłonowski 1913, 16f. Cf. a file entitled 'Projekt poruczenia katedry języków wschodnich Panu Sękowskiemu' [Project to give Mr Sękowski charge over the chair of Eastern languages] kept in LVIA as F 721, Ap. I, B. 64, 10 pages; see below.

<sup>37</sup> Dated from 23 April 1822 (No. 298), entitled 'O zaprowadzenie katedry języków orientalnych w Wilnie' [On establishing a chair of Oriental languages in Vilnius]; LVIA, F 721, Ap. I, B. 64, pp. 1–2 (original); BCzar Ms No. 6401/IV [Lipski 1926, No. 130], pp. 843–5 (draft).

<sup>38</sup> LVIA, F 721, Ap. I, B. 64, pp. 3–4v (No. 1465). Cf. reports of the meeting: VUB, KC 212 [Lipski 1926, No. 48], pp. 15 (24.04.1822), 33 (1.10.1822), 245 (1.10.1822).

<sup>39</sup> LVIA, F 721, Ap. I, B. 64, pp. 5–8 (No. 345) (draft in Russian); BCzar Ms No. 6389 [Lipski 1926, No. 109], p. 297 (draft). The document begins with general remarks on the importance of the knowledge of Oriental languages for state affairs (this part shows some affinities with the memorial

affairs took an unfavourable turn; in an official letter dated 29 July 1822,<sup>40</sup> Prince Golitsyn informed the curator that in the meantime the Tsar had chosen Józef Sękowski as a professor of Eastern languages at the University of St Petersburg; it was also decided that Sękowski would keep his position at the College of Foreign Affairs; therefore, continued Golitsyn, it was not possible for Sękowski to join Vilnius University. Józef Sękowski wrote Prince Czartoryski a letter (dated 20 August 1822) from St Petersburg in which he explained that because he had been made professor in St Petersburg he would renounce the post in Vilnius.<sup>41</sup> As a consequence of these unfavourable events, Adam Czartoryski had to write a letter to the Vilnius University Council in which he conveyed the information about the Tsar's selection of Sękowski for a professorship in St Petersburg.<sup>42</sup>

Thus the dream of establishing a chair of Oriental studies at Vilnius University vanished again. Soon afterwards the political situation became more and more tense. The Russian authorities persecuted student organisations in Vilnius and increased persecution of the intelligentsia. As a consequence of this policy in 1824, the university was closed. Several decades had to pass before the idea of establishing Oriental studies in Vilnius became true. This development, however, is beyond the scope of this paper.

## Appendix

Below are reproduced two documents found in the Lithuanian State Historical Archives in Vilnius. These may be regarded as the foundation documents of the Vilnius tradition of Oriental studies. The first document is an extract from the minutes of the meeting of the Vilnius University Council from 1 June 1810,<sup>42</sup> and the second is an official record of the meeting on 1 June 1810 signed by the rector of the university and sent to Prince Adam Jerzy Czartoryski, the curator. The documents are transcribed from the Polish originals into modern orthography.

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of Kontrym). Then it states that a project of establishing a school of Oriental languages in Vilnius, with Hebrew, Tatar, Persian and Turkish, had been planned for a long time, but due to the lack of money and qualified teachers the project had been postponed. The document continues by saying that under the circumstances at the time it seemed reasonable to begin with Arabic, which plays a key role in other languages of the East. Therefore, in 1810 J. Klaproth was elected professor of Oriental languages at the university, but the post remained vacant because he left the country without a word of excuse. Then, given the reasonably good financial situation, the candidature of Józef Sękowski for the chair of Oriental languages was approved by the University Council at its meeting on 24 April. In the following, Czartoryski characterised the high academic profile of Sękowski and pleaded with the minister for the official approval of the election.

<sup>40</sup> LVIA, F 721, Ap. I, B. 64, p. 9 (No. 2366) (in Russian).

<sup>41</sup> BCzar Ms No. 5477 [Lipski 1923, No. 164], p. 437.

<sup>42</sup> LVIA, F 721, Ap. I, B. 64, p. 10.

## Document I

Wypis z protokołu posiedzeń Rady Cesarskiego Uniwersytetu Wileńskiego

2.

Roku 1810. Dnia 1<sup>go</sup> Czerwca

Czytany był list Jaśnie Oświeconego Księcia J[ego]mości Kuratora do Rektora z datą 7 kwietnia [miesiąca] zeszłego, przy którym przysyłając dzieła drukowane JP Klaprotha i krótkie jego pismo względem ważności języków orientalnych Jaśnie Oświecony Książę J[ego]mość wyraża życzenie, iż z pożytkiem byłoby dla Uniwersytetu, gdyby ta część nauk dotąd u nas nieznaną, mogła być zaprowadzona w Wilnie, i że JP Klaproth ma wiele u siebie manuskryptów dotyczących się narodów azjatyckich i medalów tamtego kraju, które by przywiózł do Wilna. Przy czym czytane było opisanie przez JP Klaprotha sposobu ich i celu, w jakim kurs orientalnej (Ms: orygentanej) literatury miałby być dawany. Drugi list z datą 9 maja [miesiąca] zeszłego[,] w którym Jaśnie Oświecony Książę J[ego]mość Kurator wyraża, iż lubo literatura orientalna (Ms: orygentalna) nie jest rzeczą od pierwszej potrzeby dla Uniwersytetu, ale zawsze użyteczną i kiedy przypadkiem zdarza się zrzęczność mienia z łatwością na to osoby zdatnej, jaką jest JP Klaprot[h], nie ma przyczyny dla czego tę zrzęczność dobrowolnie opuszczać, gdy JP Klaproth nie może być w niczym ciężarem dla Uniwersytetu[,] mający zawsze w zamiarze odbycia podróży do Azji, i skoro znajdzie do tego sposobność, pewnie nie będzie chciał dłużej bawić w Wilnie nad potrzebę uformowania uczniów, tym bardziej nie zechce zostawać w Uniwersytecie[,] gdyby wiedział[,] iż nie jest mu pożytecznym, a jeśliby to miało być przeszkodą do jego wyboru, że nie ma w Etacie funduszu na literaturę orientalną (Ms: orygentalną)[,] tedy przyjmując Jaśnie [2] Oświecony Książę J[ego]mość Kurator na siebie staranie wynalezienia funduszu, poleca podać JP Klaprotha na kandydata do wyboru na profesora zwyczajnego literatury orientalnej (Ms: orygentalnej), przy czym Rektor uwiadomił, iż warunki podane przez JP Klaprotha są naprzód: tytuł profesora, po wtóre pensja rubli 1500, po trzecie mieszkanie od Uniwersytetu. Powszechne zebranie profesorów powodowane uwagami Jaśnie Oświeconego Księcia J[ego]mości Kuratora i uważając JP Klaprotha jako członka akademii nauk S. Petersburskiej znanego już z swojej nauki, przystąpiło do wyboru i uformowana została propozycja do wotów sekretnych: JP Klaproth ma być wybrany profesorem—affirmative: nie ma być: negative[,] po odbytem wotowaniu znalazło się na stronie affirmative wotów 11 a na stronie negative wotów 5[;] wotujących było szesnastu. Pisma JP Klaprot[h]a zostały oddane Dziekanowi Oddziału Literatury i Sztuk wyzwoionych.

zgodne: Norbert Jurgiewicz – sekr.

## Document II

N° 255.

4. Julii 1810

Do Jaśnie Oświeconego Tajnego Konsyliarza, Senatora, Członka Rady Państwa, Kuratora Imperatorskiego Uniwersytetu Wileńskiego i jego wydziałów, wielu orderów Kawalera Książęcia Czartoryskiego

Od Imperatorskiego Uniwersytetu Wileńskiego  
Przedstawienie

Na sesji powszechnego zebrania profesorów dnia 1. czerwca terażniejszego Rektor czytał pismo Jaśnie Oświeconej Waszej Książęcej Mości zawierające uwagi, iż z pożytkiem byłoby dla Uniwersytetu, aby nauka języków orientalnych mogła być zaprowadzona w Uniwersytecie, gdy JP. Klaproth znany z swoich tekstów i zdatności w tej części nauki oświadcza chęć przyjęcia obowiązków profesora literatury orientalnej z tytułem profesora ordynaryjnego z pensją 1500 rubli i mieszkaniem od Uniwersytetu. Po czym czytane było opisanie przez JP. Klaprotha sposobu i celu[,] w jakim kurs literatury orientalnej miałby być dawany przy złożonym dziele drukowanym o językach orientalnych. Uniwersytet spodziewając się[,] iż JP. Klaproth przy swoich talentach i szczególnym poświęceniu się literaturze orientalnej będzie pożytecznym dla dobra instrukcji publicznej[,] wybrał tegoż JP. Klaprotha na profesora ordynaryjnego języków i literatury orientalnej z pensją tysiąc pięćset rubli srebrem, a gdy w etacie nie ma położonej na tę katedrę sumy, Uniwersytet osądził przy przedstawieniu do zdania Jaśnie Oświeconej Waszej Książęcej [2] Mości i potwierdzenia wedle ustaw tego wyboru upraszać Jaśnie Oświeconą Waszą Książęcą Mość o wyjednanie funduszu na tę nową katedrę.—

Jan Śniadecki Rektor  
J. Małewski sekr.

N° 1130.

dnia 4 lipca

1810 roku

## Abbreviations

VUB	Vilnius University Library (Vilniaus universiteto biblioteka)
BCzar	Library of the Czartoryskis, Cracow (Biblioteka Czartoryskich, Kraków)
LVIA	Lithuanian State Historical Archives, Vilnius (Lietuvos valstybės istorijos archyvas)
PSB	Polish Biographical Dictionary (Polski Słownik Biograficzny)
Ms	manuscript

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