

Introduction

The Correspondence of Johannes Hevelius: Between Science and Science Policy

A Work-in-Progress Report

Johannes Hevelius (1611–1687), an astronomer based in Danzig, published more than twenty scientific treatises which strongly resonated with the contemporaneous academic world. Moreover, he left a massive collection of correspondence, comprising more than 2000 letters and approximately 430 correspondents, scholars as well as people wielding political power both locally and on a continental scale. Hevelius’s correspondence still remains the largest understudied collection of letters written by scholars from ‘the age of scientific revolution’. Over the last few years, however, under the patronage of l’Union Academique Internationale and the International Academy of the History of Science, we have been running an international project to prepare a critical edition of Hevelius’s letters. The project will be a significant contribution to our understanding of 17th-century science, the links among various scientific centres, the relations between scholars and their patrons, as well as the historical, social and intellectual factors conditioning scientific research. The project also renders the picture of a scientist over a period of fifty years in the early modern period.

Hevelius’s correspondence can be viewed from many different social, geographical and methodological angles. This stems from the great variety of his correspondents who represent various nations, institutions, and exhibit many different interests, not only scientific. Striving to present a possibly complete picture of the sources, the project draws together scientists from different countries and with different kinds of expertise. For example, the letters sent to royal courts belong to traditional historiography, whereas the letters exchanged with the leading European astronomers of the time call for the expert knowledge of historians of astronomy.

The papers in this section of the “Quarterly Journal of the History of Science and Technology” are based on the contributions made by their respective authors at a symposium held on 16 September 2018 at the 8th International Conference of the European Society for the History of Science in London, UK. The aim of the symposium was to present the main directions of the present research which will soon appear in the consecutive volumes of the series *Correspondance de Johannes Hevelius* published by Brepols Publishers since 2014.

Jarosław Włodarczyk