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**THE REVEREND JOSEPH-PIERRE-LOUIS DAVID (1882-1955).  
HIS LECTURES ON ANCIENT EGYPT AND COURSES  
ON COPTIC LANGUAGE AT THE CRACOW UNIVERSITY<sup>1</sup>**

In the years after World War II, when Poland regained independence after 123 years of absence on the political map of Europe, the situation of the country was still far from stabilized. Various problems had to be taken care of, among them the need to unify divergent law and schooling systems, an inheritance of the partitions of Poland. It was also the time when disputable territorial problems between Poland and Germany were settled by the Treaty of Versailles (1919). After two consecutive Silesian Uprisings (1919 and 1920) and the plebiscite (20 III 1921) the third Silesian Uprising broke out, the result of which was a division of the Upper Silesia in a way more satisfying for Poland. We also need to remember about the ongoing Polish-Soviet war (1919-1920). In all those hard moments an alliance with France provided significant support for our country.

After a period of unrest finally a time of stabilization had come and at the time France, understanding the realities and situation of Polish science and our scientific circles of those days, hurried with help. Among others the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs organized a special “mission universitaire” aiming to help organize Polish higher education systems. A member of that mission headed for Kraków and intended for the Faculty of Philosophy of the Jagiellonian University was a young (40 years old at the time) Roman Catholic priest Joseph-Pierre-Louis David. As it turned out, Revd J.-P. David became cordially attached

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<sup>1</sup> When I approached Prof. Andrzej Zaborski in the 80. of the last century and asked him to introduce the students of Mediterranean archaeology to the basics of Coptic, I was not aware that a similar attempt had been made much earlier at our University, in entirely different conditions. The lectures of Prof. Zaborski were very popular and strengthened the interest of some of the students in that field. I consider a reminder of Revd David’s work, almost entirely forgotten, exceptionally well-grounded as a contribution to a publication dedicated to Prof. Zaborski on his jubilee.

to Kraków for eighteen years and it was only the outbreak of World War II that forced him to leave Poland. Revd J.-P. David, upon his arrival in Kraków, had already published a well-received work in the field of Coptology (David 1910) as well as a publication on the cult of saints and liturgy in the Roman basilica of Santa Maria Antiqua (David 1911). Due to his studies and interests Revd J.-P. David soon started giving lectures on the history of ancient oriental civilizations, with special attention paid to the Egyptian civilization and the Coptic language with basic text reading. He also taught classes on the history of French medieval literature and the language and literature of Provence. Appropriate lectures, except from the Faculty of Philosophy, were also contracted to Revd J.-P. David by the Faculty of Theology. His lectures also aided the Kraków Theological Seminary, where he introduced the alumni into the problems of Roman Catholic liturgy (lectured in Latin), he also taught basic French, including the „Alliance Française” classes.

Joseph-Pierre-Louis David was born on November 21<sup>st</sup>, 1882 in Serre-Nerpol (dep. Isère) near Grenoble. In 1895, having graduated from elementary school, he joined a so-called small seminary in La Côte Saint-André, and after passing his graduation exams there (1899) he began his law and history studies on the University of Grenoble (where he obtained the title of “licencie ès lettres”). The next stage of his education took place in Paris (1902-1905), where he continued his studies on the Sorbonne. In 1903 David joined the Seminary in Grenoble. Among his significant teachers in Paris and Grenoble were among others Paul Fournier (1853-1935), an expert in canonical law and law historian and Ulysse Chevalier (1841-1923), an expert in medieval history and a bibliographer who also commented on the shroud of Turin.

The young scientist spent a decade between 1905 and 1915 in Rome. Here he continued his studies on the Papal University and achieved the title of „licencie ès sciences bibliques” followed by „docteur en théologie” (1906). He later took his holy orders (April 18<sup>th</sup>, 1908). During his stay in Rome David was closely connected with the famous „École Française d’Histoire et d’Archéologie de Rome” as an archivist, at the same time serving the French colony as a priest in the church of Saint Louis des Français. Meanwhile on the La Sapienza University he supplemented his studies on oriental languages as a student of Ignazio Guidi (1844-1935), among others studying what he himself described as „Orient ancien et Égypte byzantine (coptologie)”. It was also during that time that he spent a few months travelling and studying in Egypt.

In 1915 Revd J.-P. David was mobilized as an infantry lieutenant and he remained in the French army until 1918, that is until the end of World War I (during the years 1917-1918 he served as an army chaplain). After he was demobilized he was directed to the diocesan seminary in Grenoble (Rondeau-Montfleury), where he gave lectures on the history of the Church (1918-1922). It was from there and due to special efforts that he ventured to Kraków as a member

of a group organized by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and remained there until the outbreak of World War II.

The acclimatization of Revd J.-P. David in Kraków was not easy. He was received with some distrust, if only for his relations to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. His lectures at the University were performed gratuitously (his stay was financed by the French) and the specialties he represented were not among the most popular at the time. His lectures, initially in French, did not gather many listeners. He soon learned to speak Polish, however often his unconventional phrases of speech were quite surprising to his listeners (Sczaniecki 1976: col.1555). In time also the social circle of Revd J.-P. David widened, among the university professors he kept in touch with Ignacy Chrzanowski, a literature historian, as well as Stanisław Kutrzeba and Władysław Konopczyński, both historians. As a priest he soon took the French colony under his wings, the members of which, connected with heavy industry, inhabited Upper Silesia and Dąbrowskie-Industry basin (Sczaniecki 1976: col.1553).

Despite subsequent motions of the Faculty of Philosophy of the Jagiellonian University Revd J.-P. David was never granted a full nomination to the title of professor. For some time he was titled as “lecturer” and in 1938 he was promoted to “deputy professor”. Due to his contributions to Polish science he was awarded the “Polonia Restituta” order by the Polish government (1930), while the French government honored him as a knight of the “Ordre national de la Légion d’honneur” (1933). He was also appointed as a corresponding member of the Polish Academy of Sciences and Letters (1934).

Revd J.-P. David’s stay in Kraków was very diligent, not only due to a large amount of carefully prepared lectures (which are attested by preserved drafts and numerous notes), but also due to the extra duties he undertook. Together with Jean Moreau-Reibel, a young French historian and member of the same mission, he founded the „Centre d’Etudes Franco-Polonais de Recherches Historiques” in Kraków. Revd J.-P. David was also actively publishing (among others he initiated a special series „Études historiques et littéraires sur la Pologne médiévale”, in which he published nine works during the years 1928-1933). He continued his studies on the history and monuments of his homeland (see among others da Costa 1965:88). Due to his accomplishments in this field he was named a member of the “Académie Delphinale” as well as other regional societies. He also continued his research in the field of Coptic language and civilization (David 1924). Among this especially noteworthy works are those regarding a broader problem that the author himself calls “Les sièges épiscopaux de l’Égypte des origines au XV siècle”. The result of those works were subsequently published in the renowned “Dictionnaire d’Histoire et de Géographie Écclesiastiques”, from volume 3, 1924 to volume 7, 1934; in volumes 8, 1935 to 10, 1938 he included those entries together with ones regarding Slavic churches and in volumes 11, 1949 and 12, 1953 entries regarding to the latter group only, while in volume 14,

1956 only entries regarding new interests, connected with the history of Portugal (together, in the mentioned volumes of "Dictionnaire d'Histoire et de Géographie Ecclesiastiques", he published 146 entries. See da Costa 1965:92-94).

Revd J.-P. David also introduced an entirely new topic to his research, regarding the medieval history of Poland and the Church institutions at the time (Cf. David 1934; David 1939; David 1950). He paid special attention to Silesia and Pomerania and their relations to Western Europe as well as their role in the history of Poland. We don't even have to additionally stress that at the time of writing it had significant meaning on the international arena. The works of David played (and still play despite the passage of time) a significant role in published historical research, among others due to the fact that they were not limited to the Polish language. While at this topic we need to mention that his works regarding eastern churches and Coptology as well as works on the history of France were signed as "Joseph David", while *Polonica* (and later also works regarding Portugal) were signed as "Pierre David".

It is very hard now to establish the amount and specifics of lectures that Revd J.-P. David used to give during his stay in Kraków. Unfortunately, only partial information remains regarding this topic. Among others it is known that during the academic years 1924/1925 and 1925/1926 he gave the following lectures for the students of the Faculty of Philosophy of the Jagiellonian University: „Histoire de la civilisation Égyptienne” and „Grammaire et explication de textes coptes” (both for three trimesters two hours a week). We also know from a preserved announcement that in the second trimester of 1925/1926 the topic of the first of the mentioned lectures was „Religion des ancien Égyptiens”, the class took place on Wednesdays and Fridays at 6 pm (University Archives, file no. S II 619, under „Dawid Piotr”). In the academic year 1930/1931 on the other hand Revd J.-P. David gave lectures on the topic of „Les Sumeriens” and „Les Sémites en Mésopotamie” (two hours a week) as well as his traditional „Lecture et explications de textes coptes” (see „Wschód” II, No 1 [3], 1931:37). Preserved notes and drafts (currently in the Jagiellonian Library, the Manuscript Section, file no. 225/59 – 343/59) also inform us that Revd J.-P. David included other oriental civilizations in his lectures (except from Egypt, Sumer, Akkad, Assyria and Elam, also civilizations of Asia Minor, the Aegean and Syria, Canaan and Palestine). Except from basic historic information and the outlines of chronology he widely discussed essential written sources, the languages of those civilizations, their religion, art, the history of important discoveries and progress of archaeological works.

Unfortunately no mentions survived regarding eventual cooperation or at least loose contacts of Revd J.-P. David with the employees of the Chair of Classical Archaeology, until 1925 directed by prof. Piotr Bieńkowski (1865-1925) and later by prof. Stanisław Jan Gąsiorowski (1897-1962). It is regrettable that both the knowledge and the enthusiasm of Revd J.-P. David had not been employed to

educate students of archaeology and art history, which could have significantly widened their knowledge of not only ancient Near Eastern civilizations but also Early Christian art and the civilization of Byzantine Egypt.

At the end of July 1939, still before the outbreak of World War II, Revd J.-P. David as a French citizen and officer was forced to return to France. He was immediately mobilized and directed to work in military censorship-offices. Due to his contacts to the Resistance however he was shortly dismissed by the Vichy government (November 18<sup>th</sup>, 1940). He was able to leave France via Madrid and reached Portugal. Later, after a short stay in Lisbon, he moved to Coimbra (April 1941). After the War Revd J.-P. David intended to return to Kraków, where as a matter of fact he had left his entire workshop and scientific output. He applied numerous times to the Polish government to be allowed to return to Kraków and was always rejected. He never regained his research materials and notes as well as his book collection. The notes finally ended up in the Jagiellonian Library in 1959, already after his death, while the book collection found its way to the Benedictine abbey in Tyniec.

Due to this turn of events Revd J.-P. David decided to stay in Coimbra. This old university center immediately provided him with perfect conditions both for teaching and research. He adapted his studies to the new situation and local issues. His enthusiasm and skill were immediately appreciated, he was also instantly appointed to the position of professor. He gave lectures on Medieval Latin, introduced his students to the topic of medieval church institutions, researched Latin sources on the history of Portugal and Spain. He soon gained fitting honors: in 1948 he became a honorary canon of primatial Braga (“Cónego honorário da Sé Primacial de Braga”); soon (1949) he was also appointed a member of the Portuguese Academy of Historical Sciences (“Membro de mérito da Academia Portuguesa de História”); in 1951 the University of Coimbra granted him a *honoris causa* doctorate and that same year the French authorities awarded him with the title of “Officier of the ordre national de la Légion d’honneur”. Due to his retirement he was honored by his colleagues and co-workers by a two-volume jubilee book (“Homenagem ao professore Pierre David”, Coimbra 1955). As a pensioner he remained in Coimbra, serving as chaplain in one of the female orders. His custom was to spend vacation in Serre-Nerpol, his home village. It was there that he fainted one year and was transported to the nearby Vinay hospital, where he died after a few days (September 26<sup>th</sup>, 1955). He was buried on the local cemetery in Serre-Nerpol. On the tenth anniversary of his death the university published a large memorial volume in his honor: “Homenagem ao Prof. Pierre David” (Revista Portuguesa de Historia, t. VI, Coimbra 1965), that also included his full bibliography (da Costa 1965:86-96).

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