

DZIERZON SCHOLARSHIP IN THE COMING PERIOD¹

The three most important honey-bee researchers of all time, in my view, were Jan Swammerdam (1637-1680) of the Netherlands, François Huber (1750-1831) of Switzerland, and Poland's Jan Dzierżon (1811-1906). Swammerdam demonstrated that the queen and workers are females, while the drones are male, among a great many other micro-anatomical discoveries. Huber, an outstanding experimenter, elucidated the process of swarming and showed how ventilation of the hive is regulated to maintain a suitable inner atmosphere.

Swammerdam's and Huber's lives and works are very well known, but Dzierżon remains far too little known outside of Poland and Germany. His main accomplishments lay in two areas. First, he promoted the use of basic honey-bee biology as the foundation of all practice, an approach known as "rational beekeeping". Second, he laid the basis of our present understanding of reproduction in honey bees.

At the same time, Dzierżon was a key figure in the development of honey-bee science as a self-standing discipline. Huber, in the first edition of his *Nouvelles Observations sur les Abeilles* (1792), expressed the hope that his experimental results would stimulate others to carry them further. In the second edition (1814) he openly regretted that this had not happened. His book had been read with enthusiasm by educated people everywhere, but they had not taken it as a point of departure for experiments of their own. The study of honey bees had not yet become a discipline. Instead, this took place in another part of Europe in the second half of the 19th century.

One of the questions that most interest me is why honey-bee science developed into a discipline (with such features as its own scientific societies, journals and periodic conferences) in Central Europe, rather than in Britain or the French-speaking region. The presence of Jan Dzierżon as a leading figure and the *Bienenzeitung* as a journal with an explicit organizing mission were certainly contributing factors.

However, these cannot be a complete answer to this question. It is my present working hypothesis that two related factors were also important, possibly decisive: a) a long history of official support for beekeeping, and b) an almost compulsive tendency in this part of Europe for people with shared interests to form formal associations.

In addition, the use of German as the main language of scholarship and administration introduced a certain unity throughout Central Europe. Dzierżon was an ethnic Pole at a time when his homeland (Silesia) was part of Prussia. Accordingly, Polish was his language of family life, while his writing about bees was in German. Similarly, there are two parallel literatures about him, one in German about his science and another in Polish about Dzierżon the culture hero. His status as a culture hero is conspicuous in Upper Silesia, where I have seen several streets, a city park and at least two village museums named after him, in addition to the fine Jan Dzierżon Museum in Kluczbork.

There is still much to be gained from the study of these accessible sources for Dzierżon scholarship. Another major source has yet to be exploited. The Dzierżon Museum has a very substantial archive of documents related to this area of study. The most important part comprises more than 1000 letters received by Dzierżon between 1837 and the end of his life. With few exceptions, these are in German and handwritten, so that reading them is quite laborious (given the old script that has been out of use for almost a century). Some letters may be on religious topics, since Dzierżon was a Catholic priest, but preliminary indications are that almost all are about bees.

In order to make this mass of correspondence more accessible, the museum and I have prepared a digital inventory of the archive. It is hoped that in time the entire correspondence will be scanned and made available for scholarly study. This will almost certainly promote communication about additional archival materials elsewhere in the world. For example, the University of Minnesota (USA) has a small set of letters written by Dzierżon, and it seems very likely that others will come to light. The Dzierżon Museum's material consists almost entirely of letters received by Dzierżon, not written by him.

The coming period has the potential to be very interesting one for historical research related to Poland's pioneer contributor to honey-bee science. We can hope to gain not only a better understanding of how Dzierżon's results and ideas formed but also insights into the evolution of the discipline as a whole.

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