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**Czerwiec, kermes i koszenila, czyli o owadach jako surowcach barwierskich
i leczniczych w polskiej literaturze przyrodniczej do XIX w.**

**Polish cochineal (*Porphyrophora polonica*), kermes and cochineal
(*Dactylopius coccus*) – insects as dyeing and medicinal raw materials
in Polish naturalist writing until the 19th century**

SUMMARY

Dye-providing insects, and especially the Polish cochineal (*Porphyrophora polonica*) and cochineal (*Dactylopius coccus*) used to feature prominently in the work and writings of Polish naturalists. Originally they were viewed only as dyeing raw materials, used for the dyeing of fabrics, cosmetics and medications. Because of their intense red colour, similar to the colour of blood, they were also attributed with curative properties. As medicinal and dyeing raw materials, they were described in works published in the 16th and 17th centuries, including the *Herbarz* [Herbal] by Marcin of Urzędów, and the *Zielnik* [Herbal] by Szymon Syreniusz, as well as in the *Observatio* by Marcin Bernitz. A major problem at that time consisted in identifying the nature of those raw materials, which were frequently in the form of desiccated grains and not always associated with insects. In the 18th century, research by naturalists, among them Johann Philipp Breyne of Gdańsk [Danzig], made it possible to explain the life cycle and the sexual dimorphism of the Polish cochineal. At the beginning of the 19th century, attempts were made to reintroduce the Polish cochineal in the dyeing industry. In 1803, the Society of the Friends of Sciences in Warsaw set a prize for the best work on the breeding and uses of the Polish cochineal.

In the 19th century, there was also research on the chemical composition of dye-providing insects. Studies on the dyes of the Polish cochineal that were launched in Poland at that time, in which Adam Kitajewski played an important role, marked a major step in gaining knowledge of the complex nature of the structure of the compound of the so-called animal chemistry.

Analecta – Studia i Materiały z Dziejów Nauki
[Analecta – Studies and Materials on the History of Science]
XVII, 2008, 1-2, 15-31