

EUROPEAN AND EXOTIC –  
JAN III SOBIESKI’S COMMEMORATIVE  
AND REPRESENTATIVE STRATEGIES  
TOWARDS POLISH-OTTOMAN RELATIONS

THE BACKGROUND: ŻÓŁKIEW AND ŻÓŁKIEWSKI

**Ż**ółkiew (today Zhovkva, Ukraine), near Lwów (Lviv), was one of the favourite residences of Jan III Sobieski (1629–1696).<sup>1)</sup> Founded by his great-grandfather, Stanisław Żółkiewski (1547–1620), great Hetman and vice-chancellor of the Polish Crown, and situated on the south-eastern borders of the Polish Commonwealth, it was always within reach of Tatar and Ottoman expansion. This is obvious, not only with regard to its geographical location, but may also be observed in the structures and decoration of the edifices. The four-winged castle in Żółkiew, with four edge towers and small windows, followed a type of *palazzo in fortezza*. As usual for this residence type during the time of Żółkiewski, it had a court but as yet no landscaped park. The representative rooms, especially the main hall or dining hall, were decorated with the favourite armour of the owner and family portraits.<sup>2)</sup>

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<sup>1)</sup> This article summarizes some main aspects of my PhD thesis entitled “Die Türkenkriege im Spiegel der polnisch-litauischen Adelskultur. Kommemoration und Repräsentation bei den Żółkiewski, Sobieski und Radziwiłł (Studia Jagellonica Lipsiensia 13), Ostfildern 2013, hereinafter: Jagodzinski (2013). See this publication in detail for further aspects, an elaborate bibliography and all relevant illustrations with their analyses.

<sup>2)</sup> On the castle, see among others: Osiński (1933: 52–66). On the topic of the double function of Polish residences, between representative seat and fortress in border zones,

However, it was the Parish Church that fell within the main architectural focus of Stanisław Żółkiewski.<sup>3)</sup> Built with a dome upon a double cross with two chapels, it has an elaborate *Metope* frieze<sup>4)</sup> with mainly military motifs, and in the presbytery, a large battle painting in bird's eye view, that shows the founder's biggest victory – the victory against a Muscovite army in 1610 near Klušino (Pol. Kłuszyn).<sup>5)</sup> Other victorious battles he, and later on his descendants, kept alive in the collective memory, by donating annual Masses.<sup>6)</sup>

In 1620, Żółkiewski fell in a battle against a powerful Ottoman-Tatar army, his head was sent to the Sultan and his son was taken prisoner. The Hetman's tragic death soon became legendary. His widow honoured her fallen husband with a monument on the battlefield near Țuțora, Romania, Pol. Cecora),<sup>7)</sup> and in the church, he was commemorated with a tin sarcophagus of high quality with military scenes,<sup>8)</sup> a weekly Mass was said for him and his fallen brothers in arms, and a large representative tomb of 'red marble' was built for him and his (in the meantime) deceased son.<sup>9)</sup> Stanisław Żółkiewski was honoured and remembered primarily as a *miles christianus* and a Christian martyr. Inside the castle, his private room stayed untouched and was turned into a kind of 'sanctuary', with a sanctuary lamp beneath a devotional image of the Virgin Mary, his weapons and his last worn, bloody clothing exhibited.<sup>10)</sup> This was only available to be seen by a small circle of people, however.

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see among others Miłobędzki (1980: 199), Jakimowicz (2001: 257-262), and Bernatowicz (2011: 202–204).

<sup>3)</sup> On the church in general, see further: Kozarski/Swat (1997), also Barącz (1877), Petrus (1994), and Petrus (2004).

<sup>4)</sup> On the frieze, see in detail: Bulewicz (2004).

<sup>5)</sup> On the painting, see among others: Czołowski (1904).

<sup>6)</sup> On the annual Masses, see further: Barącz (1877: 238–240), Petrus (1994: 66).

<sup>7)</sup> On the monument and memorial culture surrounding it, see further: Brykowski (1985), <http://www.kresy.pl/kresopedia/projekty,polskie-skupiska,moldawia-2?zobacz/bierzowka-i-okolice,37418> (18th February 2015), <http://phtarnow.strefa.pl/archiwum10.html> (18th February 2015).

<sup>8)</sup> On the sarcophagus, see: Igrzycki (2000), Kopera-Banasik (2000), and Krause (1995).

<sup>9)</sup> On the tombs see further: Barącz (1877), Niedźwiecki (1908), Petrus (1994: 28–59), and Kozarski/Swat (1997: 55-56).

<sup>10)</sup> This is known from a source from 1720, that is the description by Maria Józefa Sobieska née Wessel of Wesslów, the wife of Prince Konstanty. Grzegorzewska (1965: 256–267).

### JAN III SOBIESKI'S STRATEGIES IN ŻÓŁKIEW

All the above mentioned arrangements were not changed or reduced by Jan III Sobieski either,<sup>11)</sup> when he, having grown up in the tradition of the anti-Ottoman and anti-Tatar wars, expanded his ancestor's beloved residence. On the contrary, he expanded and used them for his own representative and commemorative purposes. This paper will shortly present some selected aspects and strategies of displaying and commemorating the fame of the ruler's own person and his lineage, in the context of conflicts and victories against the Ottoman Empire. They can be divided in four groups: 1. artistic (e.g. paintings, tombs), 2. material (e.g. weapons, trophies), 3. ceremonial (e.g. awards, embassy) and 4. religious (e.g. donations, votive offerings) aspects and strategies.

Apart from portraits depicting his ancestors, Sobieski placed at least three large battle paintings in Żółkiew Parish church. These included, *The Battle of Khotyn*, 1673, painted by Andreas Stech (1674–1679).<sup>12)</sup> The victorious battle took place near Khotyn (Pol. Chocim), after which the Hetman was elected King of Poland. As evidence of victory, this painting hung – not by chance – directly opposite that of his great-grandfather's *Battle of Klušino*.

The most overwhelming impression, however, was created by two large paintings of approximately eight to nine metres, in the transept that Sobieski had commissioned from his court painter, Martino Altomonte (1657–1745).<sup>13)</sup> These two show the battles of Vienna and Párkány in 1683. Painted between 1685 and 1694, they portray the king and his eldest son Jakub as equestrian statues, with a personification of *fama* above their heads, and embedded in detailed battle scenes, with a great many accurately depicted Ottoman objects, genre scenes and historic details, known from descriptions of the battles and the king's letters from the battlefield. In addition to his self-glorification, the king also honoured his father and uncle, by commissioning representative black and white marble tombs<sup>14)</sup> and restoring the two already existing ones of Jan and Stanisław Żółkiewski.

<sup>11)</sup> Grzegorzewska (1965: 256-267).

<sup>12)</sup> See Czołowski (1904: 4), and Czołowski (1930: 8).

<sup>13)</sup> See Petrus (2012).

<sup>14)</sup> The tombstones were made by Andreas Schlüter (1659/60–1714). See among others: Barącz (1877: 120), Niedźwiecki (1908: 30-31, 35-36), Mańkowski (1973: 16), DaCosta Kaufmann (2004: 130).

Apart from the artistic, another aspect of commemoration, not only in the 17th century anti-Ottoman wars, but even much earlier, was the material practice of placing war trophies in the church treasuries and exhibiting them at least temporarily. In the case of Żółkiew, we may be certain that garments made of Ottoman textiles from the booty gained in Vienna were exhibited, and it is therefore also probable that banners and horsetails were on show for a while. Although we have no cast-iron proof, this is however suggested, not least because the Ottoman objects known from Żółkiew inventories as part of the booty are depicted in detail in Altomonte's paintings (e.g. a *kalkan*, saddle pad and powder horn).<sup>15)</sup>

Besides decorating the church with keepsakes of military deeds, Sobieski also rearranged the castle – apart from the formerly mentioned private rooms of his great-grandfather. Following the general pattern of Polish magnates' residences, he adorned the great so-called 'Hetman's hall' with family portraits, military objects and luxury goods, particularly from the Middle East. These were partly originals brought to the castle as trophies or imports and partly manufactured in Poland, especially in nearby Lwów, a trade centre for oriental goods.

Among the paintings in the castle, there was a cycle of about seven battle scenes representing Sobieski's victories in the campaigns against the Ottomans of the 1670s and 80s, which by now have been lost.<sup>16)</sup> In contrast with the paintings in the church, which were painted for a broader public, the cycle in the castle hall was made for a selected noble audience versed in military skills.

As passionate hunter and rider, Jan III Sobieski set up a large hunting ground near the castle where elk, horses and even camels were kept. In this area, he also had a 'Polish' and a 'Turkish' bath built. Unfortunately, these

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<sup>15)</sup> Jagodzinski (2013: 93).

<sup>16)</sup> Two of them are preserved as copies from the 18th century and kept in the Lwów Historical Museum (L'vivs'kyj istoryčnyj muzej). Their topics are: firstly the co-allied *Battle of Lwów 1675*, which should correctly be called the *Battle of Lesienice 1675*, and secondly, the *Relief of Trembowla 1675*. Additionally, another version of the latter exists, which dates from 1689. This was painted while Jan III was still alive, and is perhaps the last original part of the Żółkiew cycle. Today, it is kept as a loaned item of the Zamoyski family in the Zamoyski Museum in Zamość (Muzeum Zamoyskich w Zamościu). A very similar cycle of eight paintings exists in the Bavarian State Painting Collections – State Gallery Schleissheim Palace (Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen – Staatsgalerie Schleißheim).

are only known from the surviving ground plan and inventories.<sup>17</sup> Based on these sources, the interiors of both baths seemed to have been quite similar, and the latter, the ‘Turkish’ bath, was probably not an example of Ottomanized architecture, as the name seems to suggest, but was most likely named as such because of its plumbing, with warm and cold basins. Fragments of such underground techniques were found in Żółkiew.<sup>18</sup> It was not only other noble families, such as the Lubomirskis in Ujazdów, which had such baths built between 1676 and 1683, but also Sobieski’s son-in-law, the Bavarian elector, Max Emanuel (1662–1726), who had a similar oriental bath built in his pleasure palace Badenburg in Nymphenburg, although at a later date, between 1715 and 1726. This shows a deeper interest in this part of ancient and Oriental culture, especially as both the father-in-law and son-in-law are known to have been in the Ottoman Empire or at least in historic Hungary.

It was not only Oriental architecture made of stone that could serve as a connecting element between the park and castle of Żółkiew. Instead, even if only temporarily, this function was taken by the most precious trophies of the booty won in Khotyn and Vienna: the huge tent complex of the Ottoman supreme commander Kara Mustafa (1634/35–1683). Normally stored in the castle tower, which also served as a jail for prisoners of war, and sometimes even used for Sobieski’s own military campaigns, the tents were erected in the hunting ground on several occasions. In these instances, the residence ensemble functioned as a stage for public festivities related to the anti-Ottoman wars. Here I provide just one illustrious example.

In 1684, Jan III received with solemn ceremony, the sacred insignia from Pope Innocent XI (1611–1689).<sup>19</sup> In a large-scale entry procession open to the general public, the high-ranking participants went from the castle to the church, where a mass was celebrated and insignia handed out. Afterwards, a reception and banquet was given for the Polish and foreign nobility in the richly decorated tents, which once belonged to the Grand Vizier. By proudly

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<sup>17</sup> The plan is kept in the graphics collection of the Central National Historical Archive in St. Petersburg (Central’nyj gosudarstvennyj istoričeskij archiv Sankt-Peterburga), without signature, Bernatowicz (1998: 205).

<sup>18</sup> Discussion with Dr. hab. Tadeusz Bernatowicz, Warsaw, 9th March 2012. Further: Barącz (1877: 112).

<sup>19</sup> On further details of this ceremony see: Jagodzinski (2013: 99–104). The insignia are kept in the Wawel Royal Castle State Art Collection in Kraków (Kraków, Zamek Królewski na Wawelu – Państwowe Zbiory Sztuki).

presenting and using the Ottoman tents and luxury goods, Jan Sobieski set himself in the scene as an 'oriental ruler', on precisely the occasion when he was being honoured as the defender of Christendom and the whole of Europe from falling to the Ottoman threat. This self-presentation, however, was not seen as being any kind of discrepancy at all, and this ambivalence towards the East can be regarded as being characteristic for Eastern European lands in general.

The wars against the Muscovite and Tatar armies and the heroically commemorated death of Żółkiewski, as in the example of Żółkiew parish church in particular, served as a kind of prelude for the later conflicts with the Ottomans, with the qualification that Jan Sobieski could act as both victor and avenger. Through the actions of Jan III Sobieski, Żółkiew became an important setting for the commemoration of Ottoman expansion and their expulsion. For the synthesis of place, objects and action found in Żółkiew, formed through increasingly connected factors such as the castle, church, festivities, collected objects and ever more frequent events concerning Polish-Ottoman cultural and military relations, I introduced the term 'place of commemoration' (in German *Kommemorationsort*), in my PhD thesis.<sup>20)</sup> This needs to be distinguished from the very popular *lieu de mémoire* of Pierre Nora. Such differentiation is necessary, as the 'site of commemoration' requires personal experience and not merely the memory of a long forgotten war. In the case described, the shift from 'a place of commemoration' to a *lieu de mémoire*, took place in the mid-18th century. After the Sobieski family had become extinct, the Catholic branch of the Lithuanian Radziwiłłs inherited their estates. Sobieski's granddaughter, Maria Karolina de Bouillon (1697–1740), bequeathed them to her early lover Michał Kazimierz 'Rybeńko' Radziwiłł (1702–1762), grandson of the King's envoy and brother-in-law, Michał Kazimierz Radziwiłł (1635–1680).<sup>21)</sup> The Radziwiłł family changed the commemorative focus in two respects. Firstly, with regard to the content - while focusing on their royal 'ancestor', Jan III Sobieski, instead of on the wars against the Ottomans, sculptures of the family heroes were placed in Żółkiew.<sup>22)</sup> Secondly, the local situation had also changed. By transferring an

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<sup>20)</sup> Jagodzinski (2013: 126–131).

<sup>21)</sup> Kept in the Central Archives of Historical Records in Warsaw (Archiwum Główne Akt Dawnych w Warszawie), Archiwum Radziwiłłów, XI, Sig. 149, 10–12, and Skrzypietz (2003).

<sup>22)</sup> Jagodzinski (2013: 133–136).

important part of the remaining objects to their ancestral seat in Nieśwież (Pol.; Belarus Niasvizh), the objects arrived into a new context, focused on the connection between Sobieski and the Radziwiłłs.<sup>23)</sup>

### VOTIVE OFFERINGS

Another important element of the memorial culture connected with the Polish-Ottoman wars was the strategic handling of trophies and other military objects. They were collected and sometimes treated with acts of contempt, but more often with acts of respect, in order to celebrate the victory and ridicule the enemy. Mostly the objects were sent as votive offerings to important sanctuaries, where they served commemorative, as well as propaganda, purposes.<sup>24)</sup>

The most noteworthy of such sanctuaries were: Wawel Cathedral in Kraków, the cloister of the Pauline Monks in Częstochowa and the Sanctuary of Loreto in Italy. In these places, the objects, and sometimes their history, were preserved. In some cases, this increased their value, in others it created a rivalry in the centres of Catholicism – for example, the rivalry for the title of 'Defender of Christendom', between the Habsburg Emperor Leopold I (1640–1705) and the Polish King in Italy.<sup>25)</sup>

Apart from trophies, military or religious objects from the native culture, which were connected in an auratic fashion to the wars against the Ottomans, served memorial and representational aims. Either they were used in further campaigns as 'a good omen', for example, the famous 'prophetic shield' from the 16th century, with a depiction of the battle of Constantinople against Maxentius in the year 312, which foretold the battle between 'Christians and Pagans', which was found in Kraków Cathedral and delivered to Jan III Sobieski before the battle of Vienna in 1683.<sup>26)</sup>

A further possibility, was the use of such objects in a very symbolic, museal and, at the same time, sacral manner. For example, the Ottoman sabre

<sup>23)</sup> Jagodzinski (2013: 136–146).

<sup>24)</sup> On the different examples see: Jagodzinski (2013: 106–116).

<sup>25)</sup> Jagodzinski (2013: 116).

<sup>26)</sup> The shield is the so-called *tarcza wróżebna*, kept today in the National Museum in Kraków (Muzeum Narodowe w Krakowie), Jagodzinski (2013: 109–110). On the history of this shield see also: Żygulski (1962), Żygulski (1988), Rożek (1983: 12–13), Odsiecz (1990, vol. 1: 210–211), Tron pamiątek (1996: 131, Nr. 40). On iconographic and technical matters see: Świerż-Zaleski (1912).

of Stanisław Żółkiewski, donated to St. Mary of Częstochowa by his son, was returned to Jan III Sobieski – Żółkiewski's great-grandson – by Pauline Monks before the battle of Vienna. The King took the pure blade into battle with grand gestures and left the precious scabbard in the sanctuary, where it remains on display.<sup>27)</sup>

The contrast between being used on the battlefield and lying unused in the churches, changed the attitude, and obviously also the opinion, of the public that saw these objects. A final famous example, is the stirrup of Grand Vizier Kara Mustafa once again. This nice, but nevertheless mass-produced, object was given its special 'aura' only because it was attributed to the Ottoman Commander in Chief, who fled from the battlefield in blind panic, according to popular tradition. It was captured and delivered to the most important Polish church and burial place of their kings by the victorious commander-in-chief and king, Sobieski, who, to top it all, added hand-written confirmation concerning its former ownership.<sup>28)</sup>

Hence, the most important facts regarding the memorial character of such objects was, beside the inviolability, the belief in their authenticity, through some kind of tradition or story, which was also often distributed through the medium of print.

## AN EMBASSY

The final strategy under consideration, which was more representative than the commemorative, and was aimed at the image of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, specifically produced for the eyes of Western European powers.

In 1679/80, Michał Kazimierz Radziwiłł (1625–1680), brother-in-law of Jan III Sobieski, was sent to Vienna and Rome, in order to establish the so-called 'Holy League' and to raise subsidies for military campaigns against the Ottoman Empire. Descriptions and prints were published, and a painting was made

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<sup>27)</sup> The sabre of Stanisław Żółkiewski is still kept in the Jasna Góra Monastery of the Pauline Monks in Częstochowa, Collection of Votive Offerings (Częstochowa, Klasztor OO. Paulinów na Jasnej Górze, Zbiory Sztuki Wotywnej).

<sup>28)</sup> Żygulski (1978: 107). The Grand Wezir's stirrup is until today kept in the Treasury of the Wawel Cathedral in Kraków (Kraków, Skarbiec Katedry na Wawelu). See also: Odsiecz (1990: vol. 1, 297, Nr. 535), Tron pamiątek (1996: 146–147, Nr. 77), and Jagodzinski (2013: 111–112).



to commemorate the envoy's official entry, which today is kept in Wilanów.<sup>29)</sup> In the picture and in print, scores of Turkish horses decorated with jewels, camels, Janissaries, Ottoman brocade costumes, military music ensembles and so on, illustrate the degree to which such extravagance revealed the motive of displaying 'exotic' grandiosity and pomp. This 'self-orientalization' was consciously chosen for its opulence and extraordinary impact. It also demonstrated the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth as a successful power and valuable military ally against 'the Turk'. At the same time, the envoy demonstrated his personal proximity to the King by using iconographic hints and a dedication. Later, this would be the most important and successful motif of commemoration used by his own descendants, regardless of the fact that the embassy was politically ineffective and financially a disaster.

## CONCLUSION

As the title of the paper, 'European and Exotic', suggests, perhaps the most essential factor in Jan III Sobieski's attitude towards oriental influences is ambivalence. On the one hand, he used art and architecture to glorify himself as 'the victor' against the Ottomans, a fact which led him to gain the Polish crown and brought him fame throughout Europe, after the relief of Vienna in 1683. To that end, he used the heroic artificial strategies of his ancestor in a purposely directed manner and raised them to a larger scale with paintings, solemnities and the elaborate, conscious use of trophies and other goods, which were of Ottoman origin, or attributed to the wars. On the other hand, he adapted elements of Ottoman culture, not only for the purpose of self-glorification, but also for their beauty and value.

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<sup>29)</sup> See Jagodzinski (2013, 116–125). The subject of research was the print graphics: *L'ingresso solenne in Vienna [...]*, 1680, Etching, Copperplate Engraving, Warsaw, Central Archives of Historical Records, Iconographic Collection (Warszawa, Archiwum Główne Akt Dawnych, Zbiór Ikonografii), and the painting: Pieter van Bloemen/Niccolò Viviani Codazzi, *The entry of Michał Kazimierz Radziwiłł in Rome, 4th August 1680*, 1685–1693, Warsaw, Museum of King Jan III's Palace at Wilanów, (Warszawa, Muzeum Pałacu Króla Jana III w Wilanowie).

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