

| Codex of the Armorial of the Order of the Golden Fleece. An Overview of the Topic and the State of Research on Provenance

The Department of Prints and Drawings of the National Museum in Warsaw holds a 16th-century heraldic work – the unfinished *Codex of the Armorial of the Order of the Golden Fleece* that was traditionally attributed to Nicolaas van der Horst (1587/98–1646) active in Brussels. However, the attribution stirred my doubts and the peculiar structure and the actual function of the work also raised questions. Consultations with experts from several foreign museums and universities¹ confirmed the high artistic rank of this heraldic book and brought about the collaboration with Stefaan Hautekeete, curator of the Cabinet of Prints of the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium in Brussels (Musées royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, Koninklijke Musea voor Schone Kunsten van België). As a result of the conducted survey, Hautekeete has attributed the codex drawings to Hans Bol (1534–93).

The leather-bound codex² contains 101 folios. Twenty-one of them feature full-page pen drawings in brown ink (most likely, bistre). The initial 15 compositions were executed with much precision and diligence. They are separated from each other with blank pages featuring a rare watermark³ that is dated later than the watermarks on the folios with drawings. The thirty following folios are blank; they were added when independent drawings were bound into a volume, likely with an intention to fill in missing portraits or coats of arms later.⁴ After that, a sequence of the coats of arms follows, arranged as four on each page and depicted with slightly less attention to detail. They are also separated by single blank pages.

¹ I wish to express my gratitude to Dr Huigen Leeftang and Dr Karen Bowen and Dr Dirk Imhof for all the heraldic information they kindly shared with me as well as their detailed observations related to the drawing and engraving practices of the Officina Plantiniana. I also wish to thank Prof. Elizabeth McGrath, Dr Ursula Mielke, Dr Nora de Poorter, Prof. Arnout Balis and Dr Holm Bevers whose observations and hypotheses (based on photographs) confirmed the direction of my research that questioned the attribution of the codex to Van der Horst and dated the codex earlier.

² Inv. no. 146902 MNW (former number of the Zamoyski Fee Tail Library [Biblioteka Ordynacji Zamojskiej, BOZ]; 153-Ordynacja Zamojska); restitution number: Rew.15055; see the NMW restitution books: “Krakow,” vol. 8 (transport from Krakow on 25 May 1947; under this number in the inventory is the following description: “Horst, Nicolas’ van der 1598–1646 Codex, with miniatures, drawn in sepia on paper 15 tabl., dim. 32.5 × 23 cm. Bound in leather, stamped, with gildings”).

³ Walter Friedrich Tschudin, *The Ancient Paper-Mills of Basle and Their Marks* (Hilversum, 1958), p. 141, no. 138.

⁴ The complete armorial of 1577 would have included 242 coats of arms.

The traditional attribution to Van der Horst was based on the inscription placed on the the endpaper of the front cover (*Diesen bouck is ghetee kent van vander horst tot Brussel*), written in 17th-century handwriting, earlier than the next inscription situated just above it (*Aegide Caroloman: Nijs | 1693*). The attribution seemed controversial not only as matched with the date “1577” written on the title page – that theoretically could have been secondary – yet most of all because of the style and character of the drawings, inclining one to search for the author among earlier artists, undoubtedly from the Antwerp circles.

The coat of arms that dates the codex and determines the *terminus ante quem* of the drawings (folio 23r) belongs to Philip II Habsburg (1527–98), Prince of Asturias, the eldest son of emperor Charles V, later Philip II, king of Spain. He became the Order’s Grand Master in 1555. The coat of arms does not yet feature a pomegranade in a triangular field in the centre of the shield. This element was only added in 1581, when Philip II became king of Portugal.⁵ It would suggest that the codex, or at least its part containing full-length portraits and full-page arms, dates before that year.⁶

The codex’s layout refers, i.a., to the scheme of the 15th-century manuscript *Status de L’Ordre de la Toison d’Or* from the circle of the Master of the London Wavrin from the British Library in London.⁷ A depiction of the chapter meeting is composed in a similar manner and it involves the same number of knights. Their full-length portraits and the full-page depictions of their coats of arms were arranged on consecutive folios in the same sequence. Next, a sequence of folios follows on which coats of arms of the successive knights of the Order are presented, arranged as two or four on a page. The structure of the codex from the National Museum in Warsaw continues the tradition settled in the earliest works of this type.

The composition of the title page as well as the precision of the *en grisaille* drawings indicates that originally these must have been designs for engravings. This hypothesis would be further supported by the fact that the drawings were executed on paper, not on parchment, as was the case with drawn heraldic books in this type. Some of the arms in the codex and some of the depictions of the golden fleece are mirror reflections of their heraldic originals, which additionally confirms that they are designs for engravings. Interestingly, mirror reflection is not consequently applied. The mottos, however, are always written in regular and not mirror script, which could suggest that they were only information and would later require precise lettering by the engraver.

The discrepancy between the traditional attribution and the style of drawings, the date on the title page, the dating of watermarks on the blank pages separating particular depictions as well as the enigmatic structure of the volume called for a more thorough analysis of the codex.⁸ The provenance proved not less problematic to trace back, especially – what was of most importance for myself – beginning with the moment it was acquired to Polish collections. Its

⁵ As observed by Stefaan Hautekeete (pp. 75–76 and fig. 2, p. 50 in the present issue of the *Journal*), the motif is featured in the coat of arms on the codex’s cover.

⁶ If we were to accept one of the hypotheses suggesting that the drawings were commissioned by the printing house of Christophe Plantijn, the date could even be changed to 1589. Dirk Imhof observed that all known coats of arms of Philip II used by Plantijn until his death in 1589 failed to include this modification. The same scholar also stated that the style of the drawings is far from the style of artists collaborating with the Plantiniana, which was confirmed in further research.

⁷ 1481–86, inv. no. Harley 6199.

⁸ See the study of Stefaan Hautekeete in the present issue of the *Journal*.

history is related to a broader context of intricate and often turbulent history of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and its grand aristocratic families.

The codex, originating from the Zamoyski Fee Tail Library (Biblioteka Ordynacji Zamojskiej, BOZ), was integrated into the collections of the National Museum in Warsaw in 1947. Its acquisition to Polish collections is dated much earlier. It would seem that by reason of its theme and rank, the volume could have been linked to the Library of the Zamoyski Academy or even to its founder, chancellor Jan Zamoyski (1542–1605).⁹ However, the person responsible for importing the work to Poland was Princess Izabela Czartoryska, née Flemming (1746–1835) who developed the idea of establishing a museum of historical memorabilia in Puławy (the Temple of Sibyl and the Gothic House). It is testified to by a laconic mention in the list of works, also contained in the printed catalogue,¹⁰ drawn up on the basis of the handwritten *Catalogue of Memorabilia Stored in the Gothic House in Puławy* prepared by the Princess herself. The publication includes a record: “Collection of painted coats of arms of the knights of the Golden Fleece from 1429 to 1577,” featured in the part titled “Portfolios and books with prints.”¹¹

Several hypotheses were offered concerning how the codex surfaced in Puławy. The two leading ones were related to *ordynat* [principal heir of the fee tail] Stanisław Kostka Zamoyski (1775–1856)¹² and Jean Charles Beydaels de Zittaert (before 1772 – after 1808), the treasurer and keeper of the Order of the Golden Fleece whose treasury was located in Brussels.¹³ However, these theses have found no confirmation through research. It was only established that the person who was directly responsible for the codex’s import to Polish collections was Michał

⁹ Bogdan Horodyski, *Zarys dziejów Biblioteki Ordynacji Zamojskiej*, in *Studia nad książką poświęcone pamięci Kazimierza Piekarskiego*, Kazimierz Budzyk, Alodia Kawecka-Gryczowa, eds (Wrocław, 1951), pp. 295–341; Benoist, *Catalogues generalis librorum existentium in Bibliotheca Academiae Zamoscensis*, 1800, MS, BOZ 1654. It cannot be excluded that (hypothetically) the searched work could have been placed among unnamed precious works; for the collections of Jan Zamoyski and the library’s history in the 16th and 17th centuries, see Barbara Miodońska, Katarzyna Płonka-Bałus, *Puławska kolekcja rękopisów iluminowanych księżnej Izabeli Czartoryskiej* (Krakow, 2001), pp. 8–13.

¹⁰ Izabela z Flemmingów Czartoryska, *Poczet pamiątek zachowanych w Domu Gotyckim w Puławach* (Warsaw, 1828).

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 96, no. 1222.

¹² *Ordynat* [principal heir of the fee tail] Stanisław Kostka was one of the collectors who either purchased objects by themselves or gave orders to purchase them through their proxies abroad. As early as during his honeymoon trip to France and England (1801–4), he bought numerous works of art, partly under the indirect influence of artistic and cultural interests of his wife Zofia (Izabela Czartoryska’s daughter), whose taste was formed in Puławy. Therefore, he could have been interested in expanding his collections with such a valuable object as the codex and could have handed it over to Puławy. See *Wiadomość o Bibliotece Ordynacji Zamojskiej spisana przez ordynata hr. Stanisława Zamoyskiego*, c. 1828, MS, BOZ-1483, pp. 2–4, 17–18; see also *Katalog rękopisów. Seria 3. Zbiory Biblioteki Ordynacji Zamojskiej. Tom 2. Rękopisy od XVI do XIX wieku* (sygn. BOZ do 1050), ed. Barbara Smoleńska with the collaboration of Krystyna Muszyńska (Warsaw, 1991), pp. 12–15; Horodyski, *Zarys dziejów...*, op. cit., p. 310 (“in the luggage of the Zamoyskis returning to the country, there were 150 crates of books bought in France and more than 50 crates from England”).

¹³ Prompted by the threat of the French army, Beydaels had the Order’s treasury and arsenal moved to Vienna in 1794. Izabela could have met him during one of her journeys in Europe and then been asked to secure items from the Order’s Brussels treasury in Puławy. The majority of the transferred precious military items has survived until the present day and is still part of the collection of the Princes Czartoryski Museum. No mention of the venture’s financial side has survived or ever existed. Scholars suggested that Beydaels could have presented the codex to the Princess as a token of gratitude for her help. See Zdzisław Żygulski, Jr, *Dzieje zbiorów puławskich. Świątynia Sybilli i Dom Gotycki* (Krakow, 1962), pp. 127–30. For other hypotheses explaining Beydaels’s link to Puławy (i.e., on the role of Cecylia Beydale), see *ibid.*, p. 124, n. 194 and p. 126, n. 197; Gabriela Pauszer-Klonowska, *Pani na Puławach. Opowieść o Izabeli z Flemmingów Czartoryskiej* (Warsaw, 1980), p. 250.

Sokolnicki (1760–1816), graduate of the Warsaw Corps of Cadets, military engineer, participant of the Polish-Russian war of 1792 and Kościuszko Uprising, general of the Polish Legions in Napoleon's campaigns and general in the army of the Duchy of Warsaw, he was introduced to the idea of the Puławy museum through his acquaintance with *ordynat* Stanisław Kostka Zamoyski. When in 1810 Sokolnicki's health significantly declined, his treatment in Puławy was supervised by Princess Izabela. At her request, while travelling across Germany to continue his medical treatment in a spa resort in Bad Pyrmont, the general searched for historical memorabilia. The recently-awoken collecting passion made Sokolnicki prolong his quest and he also visited Belgium (November 1810 – March 1811). From there he sent successive trunks with acquisitions that included paintings or items of decorative arts as well as stained glasses or architectural details from ruined churches, mainly Gothic ones that were endangered by potential destruction not only because of warfare but also the lack of conservation. He took care to acquire certificates of authenticity from local authorities or owners. He recounted his actions in his letters to the Princess and in his journal, where, among other books and manuscripts ("Livres et manuscrits") destined to be sent, he mentions the title of the codex, complemented with a brief description (on pp. 192–193; **fig. 1a-b**) and a note about the Order of the Golden Fleece.¹⁴ The purchase of the codex may have been a fortunate coincidence, yet its appearance must have also been a favourable complement to the fact that in 1808 Prince Adam Kazimierz Czartoryski, Izabela's husband, received the order from emperor Joseph II (as an Austrian subject which he became after Poland was partitioned). As much as the acceptance of the order in these circumstances could be regarded as controversial, the acquisition of the codex to the collection in Puławy by a soldier distinguished in the struggle for Polish independence, one of the graduates of the Corpus of Cadets of which Prince Czartoryski, a paragon of nobleness and patriotism, was later a long-term commander, adds a new dimension to the history of knights-chevaliers of the Golden Fleece, concerning the dilemmas of loyalty, power, justice and long-term political visions.

After the outbreak of the November Uprising in 1830, Izabela's son Prince Adam Jerzy Czartoryski became the president of the Provisional Government, and later, the National Government. The battleground moved close to Puławy and the inhabitants sought a shelter in the palace; the Princess's circles were the source of information for the Polish army, about the positions and number of Russian troops. When the Uprising fell, all the estates belonging to the Czartoryski family located in the Russian Partition were confiscated in revenge. In order to prevent the removal of the library to Russia, the books were quickly concealed. The majority of the books and manuscripts were transported first to Warsaw, then, among others, to the residence of the Zamoyski family in Klemensowo, from where they would still be returned to the Czartoryskis in 1869 (the items were also transported in installments to the palace in Sieniawa and other family's and friends' estates and numerous churches). Throughout the three decades, part of the transported collections, just like the codex, was integrated in perpetuity into the Zamoyski Fee Tail Library.¹⁵

¹⁴ Michał Sokolnicki, *Journal et minutes de lettres de voyage adressées à S. Altesse M. la Princesse Isabelle Czartoryska née Csse Fleming et accompagnée d'un recueil d'échantillons de monuments historiques, par le général de division Michel Sokolnicki*, The Princes Czartoryski Library, MS, no. 3103, pp. 192–196, no. 56; see also Żygulski, Jr, *Dzieje zbiorów puławskich...*, op. cit., pp. 138–39; Zdzisław Żygulski, Jr, Adam Zamoyski, Marek Roztworowski, *The Princes Czartoryski Museum. A History of the Collection* (Krakow, 2001), pp. 52–55.

¹⁵ *Katalog rękopisów...*, op. cit., pp. 14–15; a crucial piece of information was made public several years later: confirmed was the existence of an account by Zofia Zamoyska, née Czartoryska, wife of *ordynat* [principal heir of

The research on the history of the Puławy collection was not continued in the research on the collections of the Zamoyski Fee Tail Library, which was partly determined by the dramatic historical circumstances. The provenance research, marked with the breach of continuity (evacuation and concealment of objects to secure them against confiscation by Russians after the fall of the November Uprising, no inventories or transfer or inheritance documents) held the November Uprising and the following period of repressions as an ultimate break and marked a conclusion to the attempt to reconstruct further fate of the work, which likely could have been incorporated in the collections of the Zamoyski family. Separate research conducted on the collections of the Zamoyski Fee Tail Library, while signalling the question of the provenance of numerous manuscripts in the BOZ collection from the collections of the Czartoryski family or directly from Puławy,¹⁶ did not concern the history of the codex. Later came the Second World War, the period of German occupation and the Warsaw Uprising (confiscation of collections, physical destruction). These extraordinary circumstances prevented scholars from observing a link between the work imported by General Sokolnicki to Puławy and the work from the Zamoyski Fee Tail Library and resulted in numerous instances of regarding the codex as lost.¹⁷

As the Blue Palace that housed the Library of the Zamoyski Fee Tail was purposefully burned down by Germans during the Warsaw Uprising in 1944, after the war the partly-saved collections were handed over to the National Library or were dispersed.¹⁸ The wartime fate of the codex was reconstructed by Tadeusz Zadrozny who examined losses of cultural goods resulting from thefts on the part of Nazi Germany in occupied Poland.¹⁹ The codex, included in the group of other manuscripts from the BOZ, was confiscated by the representatives of the Office of the Special Plenipotentiary for the Inventarisation and Securing of the Works of Art and Monuments of Culture (*Dienststelle des Sonderbeauftragten für die Erfassung und Sicherung der Kunst- und Kulturschätze*) in January 1940 (**fig. 2**)²⁰ and incorporated into the so-called “first selection” of works secured for the Reich and the Führer in the General Government, and in the same year printed in the catalogue *Sichergestellte Kunstwerke im Generalgouvernement*

the fee tail] Stanisław Kostka Zamoyski, concerning her right to inherit after her mother, Princess Izabela (Konrad Ajewski, *Zbiory artystyczne i galeria muzealna Ordynacji Zamojskiej w Warszawie* [Kozłówka, 1997], p. 69). Most probably, the collections of the Gothic House were by way of inheritance integrated into the Zamoyski Fee Tail's Library; see Grzegorz P. Bąbiak, *Sobie, ojczyźnie czy potomności... Wybrane problemy mecenatu kulturalnego elit na ziemiach polskich w XIX wieku* (Warsaw, 2010), p. 267, n. 50 – the Central Archive of Historical Records (AGAD) in Warsaw, The Zamoyski Family Archive, MS, no. 107, fol. 121.

¹⁶ *Katalog rękopisów...*, op. cit., pp. 14–15.

¹⁷ Ajewski, *Zbiory artystyczne i galeria...*, op. cit., p. 149.

¹⁸ Konrad Ajewski, *O trzech bibliotekach ordynackich w Warszawie w 60. rocznicę ich zniszczenia*, „Muzealnictwo” 2004, nr 45, s. 11–12; *Biblioteka Ordynacji Zamojskiej od Jana do Jana. W 400-lecie śmierci Jana Zamoyskiego kanclerza i hetmana wielkiego koronnego*, Tomasz Makowski, ed., exh. cat., [electronic document], The National Library (Warsaw, 2005); *Katalog rękopisów...*, op. cit., pp. 7–15, 22–25.

¹⁹ Tadeusz Zadrozny, *Dokument czy książka. Rola katalogu 'Sichergestellte Kunstwerke im Generalgouvernement' z perspektywy egzemplarza sygnowanego przez Josefa Rückera, obecnie w zbiorach Instytutu Sztuki PAN* (in preparation).

²⁰ German confiscation bill – “Blatt 101” is dated to 15 January 1940; see Karol Estreicher, *Straty kultury polskiej pod okupacją niemiecką 1939–1944 wraz z oryginalnymi dokumentami grabieży / Cultural Losses of Poland during the German Occupation 1939–1944 with Original Documents of Looting*, ed. and introduction by Zbigniew Kazimierz Witek (Krakow, 2003), p. 760.

that was an actual report.²¹ Works of art and culture confiscated in Warsaw at that time were stored in trunks in the NMW and Wilanów where they were supervised by the functionaries of the aforementioned Office of the Special Plenipotentiary. Gustav Abb, director of the office named *Hauptverwaltung der Bibliotheken des Generalgouvernements*, attempted, though without success, at annexing the collections to the newly established library in “German” Krakow. The fact influenced greatly the interpretation of the fates of the BOZ collections in post-war research.²² The Office of the Special Plenipotentiary, by the power of a regulation issued by Hans Frank on 27 July 1942, was transformed into the Office of Protection of Old Art (*Amt für die Pflege alter Kunst*), and next put into liquidation in July 1943 and obliged to run an overview of the stock of “secured” works, verify them and find lost items. Within this action, the works of art of the “first selection” stored until then in the NMW and Wilanów were moved away to Krakow on 22 November in 116 trunks.²³ The so-called “first selection” also encompassed manuscripts and incunabula from Warsaw libraries: the National Library and the BOZ and from Krakow libraries: the Jagiellonian Library and the Princes Czartoryski Library (fig. 3).²⁴ The trunks were stored in Wawel Castle, the residence of the General Governor Hans Frank, responsible, among others, for the looting of the cultural and material goods in Poland.²⁵ The codex most likely remained in the Wawel Castle for the entire period of German occupation until the end of the war, when as a result of the restitution campaign it was returned to the National Museum in Warsaw.²⁶ The volume’s history at that time was exceptional as it did not share the fate of other items transported, for instance, to secret repositories in Lower Silesia by Germans. The majority of them was moved away in the Reich and then further abroad, while many of them were irretrievably lost during the war.²⁷

²¹ “Nikolaus Van der Horst (?) / Die Ritter des Goldenen Vlieses, um 1550 / Federzeichnung, 32,5 × 23 cm. Sepia, laviert. Ledereinband mit Goldpressung und Wappen. Ein Band mit Handzeichnungen, welche auf fünfzehn Blättern Bildnisse von Rittern des Goldenen Vlieses und auf sechs Blättern ihre Wappen darstellen/ Aus der Majoratsbibliothek Zamoyski, Warschau./ Tafel 231 / Nikolaus Van der Horst” – overtaken by the officials of the Office of the Special Plenipotentiary in 1940 and integrated into the so-called “first selection” – see “Blatt 101”, no. 4 (“Handzeichnungsband. Nikolaus van der Horst, Deutsch, 16. Jhdt. Insignia illustrium heroum. Bibl. Nr. 153. Pergament”); see also Estreicher, *Straty kultury polskiej...*, op. cit., p. 760; Ajewski, *Zbiory artystyczne i galeria...*, op. cit., p. 149.

²² On the other hand, Abb managed to “retrieve” to his Library other precious works from the BOZ collections, moved away by the SS, handed over to the Berlin University. The theme is essential in the research by reason of the possibility of connecting actions of successive German offices and the resulting chaos of competences, and the following erroneous interpretation connecting the codex’s fates with the “return” from the Berlin University. A full image of this multi-trail looting practice was reconstructed by Tadeusz Zadrożny (see Zadrożny, *Dokument czy książka*, op. cit.).

²³ *Inhaltsverzeichnis der aus Warschau eingelangten Kisten, und zwar Nationalmuseum Warschau, 1943*, in Zbigniew Kazimierz Witek, *Dokumenty strat kultury polskiej pod okupacją niemiecką 1939–1944 z archiwum Karola Estreichera / Cultural Losses of Poland during the German Occupation 1939–1944. Documents from the Archives of Karol Estreicher* (Krakow, 2003), p. 632, no. 6.

²⁴ “Erste Wahl – Warschau” (1944), Witek, *Dokumenty strat...*, op. cit., p. 632, no. 6.d (231), mark: “Kr” = object to be left in Krakow.

²⁵ On the institutionalized robbery and destruction of Polish culture by the Nazi Germany, see Estreicher, *Straty kultury polskiej...*, op. cit., pp. 7–26, 262–64, 506–12, 520–30; Andrzej Mężyński, *Biblioteki Warszawy w latach 1939–1945* (Warsaw, 2010), pp. 8–85.

²⁶ See n. 2.

²⁷ It does not change the fact that (for reasons unknown) the codex was considered lost in the postwar period. See Żygulski, Jr, *Dzieje zbiorów puławskich...*, pp. 138–39, n. 223. *Rozprawy i Sprawozdania Muzeum Narodowego w Krakowie*, 7 (reedition: Krakow, 2009, p. 172, 285, n. 236); *Katalog rękopisów...*, op. cit., p. 102 (cat. no. BOZ 153);

In further research on provenance conducted in the archives of Brussels and Vienna, the essential goal will be to reconstruct the codex's history before it was acquired by Aegidius Caroloman Nijs, and then to determine whether the work could have been in the Order's treasury, and if it was, then when. The instigator and commissioner of the drawings – designs for engravings – also needs identification, which may be determined through further query in the Antwerp collections. It is worthwhile establishing whether it was the same person who appreciated the value and meaning of the yet unfinished drawings and incomplete set and who made the decision to secure them by binding them into a codex and adding numerous blank pages to be filled in later in the middle of the volume. In this form, the designs gained the rank of an unfinished yet independent heraldic drawing codex.

Unsigned works that have historical, often centuries-long attribution and come from prestigious collections are often thought to need no verification in the first place. In the case of the discussed codex, the alleged attribution was based on the inscription shortly after the work was produced and as such could have seemed correct. The case of research on the *Codex of the Armorial of the Order of the Golden Fleece* proves how crucial it is to remain cautious, especially in the context of increasing knowledge and availability of comparative material.

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Translated by Karolina Koriat

Miodońska, Płonka-Bałus, *Puławska kolekcja...*, op. cit., p. 15. The results of research on the concordance of objects from the collections of the BOZ in the collection of the NMW conducted in the 1990s by Helena Domaszewska (former keeper of the Department of Foreign Prints of the NMW) and Dr Andrzej Piber (director of the Manuscript Department of the National Library in Warsaw) have not been published, yet concluding from the literature of the subject, authors who discussed the history of either the collections of the Princes Czartoryski or the Zamoyski Fee Tail Library most probably did not discuss their conclusions with these experts.