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The Prussian Homage of 1525 as a ‘site of memory’ in Old-Polish culture¹

The phrase ‘historical politics’ has got well settled in the Polish scholarly and journalistic discourse. A high number of conferences on historical politics and collective historical memory recently held in Poland are worth consideration indeed. At the same time, in the recent dozen-or-so years, Pierre Nora’s concept of *lieux de memoire* – ‘sites of memory’ – has been much en vogue especially in the French and German historiographies.² To give an example, it was the Polish-German ‘sites of memory’, *Erinnerungsorte*, that a cycle of international symposia held in 2008-2009 by the Berlin-based Historical Research Centre was devoted to, with a multivolume edition of articles and essays edited by Robert Traba and Hans-Hennig Hahn to be the expected outcome of this enormous project. Both said historians set as the target for themselves to gather authors ready to deal with so-called second-grade history whose essence is making attempts to answer the question why, how, and what for, do we memorise what has been or happened, as opposed to the Rankian striving for getting a ‘what it was like in reality’ answer.

In a brief approach, the ‘site of memory’ concept may include a geographic site associated with an important historic event (e.g. the Grunwald battlefield of 1410); an important historic event or occurrence itself (e.g. incorporation of Prussia in the Polish Crown, 1454; the Prussian Homage, 1525); an institution (e.g. the Teutonic Order or a historical figure (for instance, Duke Albrecht Hohenzollern; Nicolaus Copernicus). Thus, a ‘site of memory’ can be a site/place, event/occurrence, institution, an individual or a group of individuals that has/have settled on a permanent basis in the collective historical awareness and culture of memory, and function in this area

¹ This essay is an extended version of a paper delivered as part of the panel *Węzłowe problemy z dziejów dawnej Rzeczypospolitej w pamięci historycznej* [‘Some key issues in the history of the early-period Polish Commonwealth as situated in the historical memory’], at a Polish Historical Society (PTH) Convention in Olsztyn, September 19, 2009.

² *Les lieux de memoire*, ed. P. Nora, vol. 1-7, Paris 1984-1992. Also, see: *Deutsche Erinnerungsorte*, Hg. E. Francois, H. Schulze, vol. 1-3, München 2001.

as ‘icons’ evoking a variety of historic(al)-content-related or topical-political items, in a varied emotional setting (be it patriotic-sentimental or aggressive-nationalist).

The short reply I can offer to those sceptics whoever might shrug their shoulders at the concept in question, regarding it as yet another so-called scientific factoid, is that the interesting and inspiring aspect of the extensive concept built upon Nora’s afterthought is the way the following issue is put forth: In what ways, and using what messages or techniques, do we solidify and reinforce the social memory of historic facts; and, in what ways do we stereotypise or mythologise historic events and/or persons for e.g. didactic or propagandist-political purposes? Importantly, a ‘site of memory’ can occur in a historical awareness on three levels.

First, there is a stereotypic level where the event or historical figure gets superficially yet emotionally associated with the currently valid, e.g. political, issues. To this end, caricature can serve as an excellent historical memory medium, another one being emotionally imbued epithets – just to quote the association of ‘(a) Teutonic knight’ = ‘(a) Hitlerist’ = ‘(a) German’, as an example. The other level is the one of historical myth, i.e. a more extensive narration which, as a rule, contributes to a deepening of a society’s collective identity. At this level, ‘sites of memory’ tend to be communicated by school textbooks, pieces of journalism, historical novels, sculptures and paintings, as complemented by learned works by professional historians. The third level, serving a similar purpose, is “ceremony – i.e. celebration of consecutive anniversaries of a historic event, for instance. This situation of a propagandist *theatrum* ‘stages’ a historic myth in a worthy setting to the gathering audiences that consist, on the one hand, of a street mob and on the other, of the learned producers, that is, dignified representatives of the scholarly and artistic milieu, those who render their services to honourable government officers whose knowledge in history is not the deepest possible.”³

This present paper aims at outlining the place that was occupied in the Old-Polish memory culture by an event which resides deep down in the historical awareness of present-day Poles, as an ‘icon’ – owing primarily to the monumental painting by Jan Matejko, completed in 1882. It is namely the homage paid by Albrecht Hohenzollern, the first secular Duke ‘in Prussia’, to King Sigismund I the Old at the Main Market in Krakow on April 10, 1525.⁴ I intend to remark on this occasion that I approach the site-of-memory termed ‘Prussian Homage, 1525’, along with the Grun-

³ Cf. Kąkolewski, I., *Krzyżacy w pamięci Polaków i Niemców* [‘The Teutonic Order and Knights as reflected in the memory of Poles and Germans’], in: *Polsko-niemieckie miejsca pamięci. Polnisch-deutsche Erinnerungsorte* (forthcoming).

⁴ For a discussion of Polish historiography’s present-day research in this respect, see, of the recent publications: Kąkolewski, I., *Relacje polityczne między Rzeczpospolitą a Prusami Książęcymi od 1525 do 1701 r.* [‘The political relations between the Commonwealth and the Ducal Prussia, 1525 to 1701’], in: ‘Komunikaty Mazursko-Warmińskie’ 2009, No. 2, pp. 267-286.

wald Battle of 1410 and incorporation of Prussia in 1454, as a ‘narrower’ memory site, to be considered in the context of a ‘broader’ site of memory constituted in the historical awareness of the Poles by the Teutonic Order and its knights (not much loved by this nation, as a rule, whether in the early and our contemporary period).⁵

Being an event whose political and historical importance was mould-breaking, of which fact its contemporaries were apparently aware, the so-called Prussian Homage of 1525 was endowed – *in statu nascendi*, as though – with a worthy ceremonial and propagandist setting; this, years after, could promote the event to be one amongst the primary in the pantheon of Polish memory culture. The very ceremonial of liege homage, based upon the norms of the *Sachsenspiegel* and the homage patterns followed by the Reich dukes with respect to the reigning emperor⁶, made the event an extraordinary show, of whose ceremonial/symbolic contents and nuances not all of those eye-witnessing could be completely aware. This is testified by an otherwise extensive account by Andrzej Krzycki, the then-Bishop of Przemyśl, who attended the ceremony; the key passage reads as follows:

“[...] Hence, the holding of a ceremony that usually accompanies such acts of homage had to be fixed at the Monday of the Holy Week. [...] As the king is putting his coronation attire on, and that is: the sandals, the tunica, the alb, the dalmatic, the coat – that is, cope, and the crown, the two dukes [i.e. George Hohenzollern of Ansbach and Frederick of Legnica/Liegnitz] go to the Master’s inn. There were such who, in conformance to the time’s habits, held it against the ruler that he had apparelled himself in such attire, preposterously conceived, as it were, by the priests. They did not take notice that the king of all the kings, Jesus Christ, was dressed exactly like that for derision, and the apparel was passed on, as a commemoration, to Christian kings. They did not understand, either, that a king’s power is conditional upon the support of religion [...] Hence, kings, similarly to priests, have till our day been now and then anointed, in line with the ancient custom and law, and called they are the *Sacrae Maiestates* [...] These same critics would prefer having an illustrious ruler show off armoured like a Thraso of sorts amidst theatrical audiences. Yet, the innumerable most notable Christian kings and emperors would always at such and similar occasions use the attire established in the most sacred manner, and they after all have bestowed to posterity the glorious deeds of their arms. Presently, however, those who are rattling their arms and showing themselves in weaponry when not needed, usually deal with the arms to a lesser extent when really

⁵ I have discussed this particular issue at some length in the above-quoted essay *Krzyżacy w pamięci...*, op. cit.; or, in a more popular-scientific manner, in the article: Kąkolewski, I., *Jak zapamiętaliśmy Krzyżaków* [‘How do we remember the Teutonic Knights?’], in ‘Wiadomości Historyczne’ (forthcoming).

⁶ Grodziski, S., *O Hołdzie i hołdowaniu*, in: Blak, H.; Grodziski, S., *Hołd pruski. Obraz Jana Matejki*, p. 59.

needed.”⁷ This last sentence could, after all, serve as a jibe against the armoured Albrecht. Let us just mention that this particular fragment played the key part for the painter Jan Matejko in his artistic interpretation of the Homage.⁸

Apart from the ceremonial-and-religious dimension of a tributary act, clearly appearing out of the above-quoted fragment, which was meant to multiply the homage’s political importance and socio-technical impact, the 1525 Prussian homage was also embedded in a worthwhile propaganda-related setting. This was meant to circle broadly both countrywide and in the Christian Europe as a whole, in order to win support for the controversial idea of an orthodox king making a ‘heathen’ a vassal, for one thing. For the other, Sigismund’s policy sought excuse since a number of experienced politicians, both at home (incl. Jan Łaski, Jan Dantyszek, Maurycy Ferber) and abroad, reproached the monarch for his inconsistencies and neglected opportunities to incorporate the remains of the Teutonic Prussia into the Polish Crown.⁹

The apology of Sigismund’s diplomacy was to be supported by, inter alia, two Latin poems: one by Maciej Pyrsenius, a new-Latin poet of Silesian descent, who was associated with the Krakow Academy and with the court of Chancellor Szydłowiecki; the other poem was written by Stanisław Hozjusz, then a young devoted Erasmianist, an associate of the circle of Vice-Chancellor Piotr Tomicki. Contrary to the opinion of most later-date historians who found it hard to appropriately read the Renaissance poetic/rhetorical figures employed by the author, plus following an erroneous paleographic reading whereby the word ‘*clemens*’ was stubbornly misinterpreted as ‘*demens*’, Hozjusz’s panegyric, opening with the phrase *Quis magis est et Clemens*, enthusiastically appraised King Sigismund’s decision. The accolade started with a purely rhetorical question which, once contradicted, was meant to emphasise how wise and ‘graceful’ the king’s decision was.¹⁰

⁷ Quoted after a translation by Tristan Korecki, based on a Polish translation (from the Latin original) published in: *Władztwo Polski w Prusiech Zakonnych i Książęcych (1454-1657)*. *Wybór źródeł*, ed. by A. Vetulani, Wrocław 1953, p. 99.

⁸ For an excellent interpretation of this painting, showing an ambiguity and multithreading of Matejko’s opinions, see: Słoczyński, H., *Hold pruski Jana Matejki*, in: Maria Bogucka, Klaus Zernack, *Sekularyzacja zakonu Krzyżackiego w Prusach. Hold pruski 1525 roku*, ed. by I. Kąkolewski, Warszawa 1998, p. 109.

⁹ Cf. Biskup, M.; Labuda, G., *Dzieje zakonu krzyżackiego w Prusach*, Gdańsk 1986, p. 490. For a summarising discussion of critical opinions on the Prussian Homage, see: Wijaczka, J., #. Also, see the accounts of the Krakow happenings of April 1525 in: Wojtkowski, A., *Hold pruski według relacji Maurycego Ferbera, biskupa warmińskiego*, in: ‘Zapiski TNT’ 13/1947, pp. 95-99.

¹⁰ For both poems, translated into Polish by Tomasz Ososiński, see: Bogucka, M.; Zernack, K., *Sekularyzacja zakonu ...*, op. cit., p. #. A discussion of the rhetorical figure applied in the epigram *Quis magis est et clemens invicto Rege Polono//Dic, sodes [...]?* is offered by Starnawski, J., *Kult wielkich mężów w młodzieńczych poezjach Stanisława Hozjusza*, in:

Both Latin poems were made part of an introduction to the aforesaid Latin letter of Andrzej Krzycki, Bishop of Płock, to Pulleon, the papal legate in Hungary, printed and published as *Andreas Cricii – ad Ioannem Antonium Pulleonem – de negotio Prutenico epistola* in Krakow in 1525 by Hieronim Wietor. It was, by the way, the earliest news-text published in Poland, as known to us today¹¹; with all its clear propaganda-related function, it was later on to become a key historical source for reconstruction of the tributary ceremonial of April 10, 1525. What is common to the above-enumerated texts is their clear tenor of a Renaissance/humanistic or, more specifically, Erasmian/Moreian pacifism and an apologetic tone used with respect to the Polish ruler. The latter aspect is quite comprehensible, given the close ties between their authors and the architects of the Krakow arrangement: Krzysztof Szydłowiecki and Piotr Tomicki.¹² Moreover, two years later, these views were joined by the voice of the great Erasmus of Rotterdam, praising Sigismund's action, in a letter to the Polish king. The king namely preferred to compromise, in that he made his former enemy a vassal, rather than to keep on waging a war.¹³ Erasmus's letter, published in 1527, is one of the earliest reflexes of the presence of the then-still-recent Krakow events in the sphere of memory of European humanist scholars' circles.

Similarly, the awareness of a historicity of the event in question, as perceived by its contemporaries, was of essence, as testified to by several other facts. The liege pennon featuring a black eagle on a white field and the initial of the Latinised name of the Polish monarch, i.e. 'S' (*Sigismundus*), was kept for many years at the Wawel castle.¹⁴ True, it was not ranked as high as the two Grunwald swords¹⁵ which, having been furnished with the national emblems of Poland and Lithuania, became the coronation insignia of rulers of the Polish-Lithuanian state. The banner's status in the collective memory pantheon was closer to that of the fifty-one Teutonic pennons won in the Grunwald battle and featured at the Wawel Cathedral. Yet, it was the iconographic representation of the liege pennon with the black eagle and the silver 'S' letter on

Kardynał Stanisław Hozjusz (1504-1579). Osoba, myśl, dzieło, czasy, znaczenie, Olsztyn 2005, p. 239.

¹¹ Pirożyński J., *Z dziejów obiegu informacji w Europie XVI w. Nowiny z Polski w kolekcji Jana Jakuba Wicka w Zurychu z lat 1560-1587*, Kraków 1995, p. 69.

¹² On Stanisław Hozjusz as a member of the Krakow circle of Erasmianists and his relations with Bishops Tomicki and Krzycki, incl. in the context of the panegyric *Quis magis est et Clemens*, see e.g.: Kalinowska, J.A., *Stanisław Hozjusz jako humanista 1504-1579. Studium z dziejów kultury renesansowej*, Olsztyn 2004, pp. 25ff.; 91ff.

¹³ Erasmus to Sigismund I, [May 15, 1527], in: *Erasm z Rotterdamu, Wybór pism*, ed. by M. Cytowska, Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków 1992, p. 429.

¹⁴ Chrościcki, J. *Hołdy lenne a ceremonial obrad sejmu*, in: *Theatrum ceremoniale na dworze księząt i królów polskich*, ed. by M. Markiewicz, R. Skowron, Kraków 1999, p. 171.

¹⁵ Wenta, J., *O dwóch mieczach z bitwy grunwaldzkiej*, in: *Balticum. Studia z dziejów polityki, gospodarki i kultury ofiarowane Marianowi Biskupowi w 70. rocznicę urodzin*, ed. by Z.H. Nowak, Toruń 1992.

its breast that started functioning as a graphical and, simultaneously, symbolic sign, reproducing in its concise form, in the historical awareness of the subsequent generations, the memory of the 1525 event.

Accordingly, Heinrich Zell's map of Prussia dated 1542 features a standard-bearer of the Ducal Prussia holding Duke Albrecht's banner and crest shield.¹⁶ The grosz coins minted at the Royal Mint in the years 1532, 1539, 1543, 1597 proved to be a much more efficient memory transmitter, reaching an incomparably broader circle of recipients: their obverse always featured a bust of the current ruler 'in Prussia' (for 1597, George Frederick, then administering the Duchy, was portrayed, in lieu of Albrecht Frederick who was mentally ill), whilst the reverse bore the Prussian eagle with the letter 'S'.¹⁷ The importance of another symbolic motif having a bearing on the functioning of the memory of the Prussian Homage – the white mantle with the black cross, as worn by Albrecht Hohenzollern, the Teutonic Order's last Grand Master, was limited to the subsequent generation of one of the oligarchic families in the Royal Prussia. Donated by Albrecht to the Pomeranian chamberlain Achacy Cema, who was active in diplomatic missions made on commission of Szydłowiecki and Tomicki in an attempt to secularise the Order in Prussia, the mantle remained stored as a remembrance of the 1525 Homage in the Cema family's lumber-room over the following decades, as reminded by Stanisław Sarnicki in his *Descriptio veteris et nova Polonia* (Krakow, 1585).¹⁸

The Prussian Homage and its preceding Treaty of Krakow – which, dated as of April 8, 1525, had put an end to the last Polish-Teutonic war of 1519-1521 and resolved that the Teutonic state in Prussia be transformed into a secular liege of the Polish Crown – could not be easily forgotten over the following hundred-and-dozen-or-so years, until sovereign rights in the Ducal Prussia were acquired by the Hohenzollerns' electoral line in the middle of 17th century. The subsequent liege homages paid by the dukes 'in Prussia' in person – first, by the Hohenzollern of the Franconian and then, of the Brandenburg branch – to the subsequent rulers of the Commonwealth replicated, in a way, the Krakow homage of 1525, with regards to their ceremonial setting (the oath being modified, to an extent), no matter the various sites they were held at (May 19, 1569 – in front of the Krakow Gate, Lublin; February 20, 1578 and November 17, 1611 – beside St. Anne's/Bernardine Church in Warsaw's

¹⁶ For a reproduction of this fragment of the Zell map, see: Chrościcki, J., *Paryskie studia nad Janem Kochanowskim. Podróż do Francji. Pamiątka. Proporzec*, in: *Artes atque humaniora*, Warszawa 1998, p. 102.

¹⁷ Cf. pictures of coins from the Ducal Prussia in: Hartknoch, C., *Alt- und neues Preussen*, Frankfurt u. Leipzig 1684, a flyleaf between pp. 512 and 513.

¹⁸ Wojtkowski, A., *Tezy i argumenty polskie w sporach terytorialnych z Krzyżakami*, Olsztyn 1968, published in a book format by the PTH Research Station (Mazurian Institute) of Olsztyn (as an impression from: KMW, 1966, No. 1; 1967, No. 1-2; 1968, No. 1, particularly, pp. 178-184).

Krakowskie-Przedmieście Street; the last such homage, sixth in the series, was carried out on October 17, 1641 at the inner yard of the Warsaw Royal Castle).¹⁹

No doubt, the then-freshest replica that has been consciously modelled after the Krakow homage of 1525, testifying to the event's prominent place in the memory culture of, at least, the well-educated elite of some fifty years that followed, was the known poem by Jan Kochanowski titled *Proporzec albo Hołd pruski* ['A Banner, or the Prussian Homage']. First printed in probably 1587, i.e. after the Czarnolas-residing Bard died, it was written on the occasion of the 1569 Lublin tribute paid to King Sigismund II Augustus by Albrecht Frederick, the son of Albrecht the Elder who had died a year before. A 'theatrical' dimension of that ceremony, with all its stage-design elements, is worth reminding too. It featured a so-called *theatrum*, that is, a platform whereon the king's throne was to be placed and the homage-staging highlight was to occur, plus a dressing-room which was connected with the *theatrum*.²⁰

Putting aside the otherwise hard-to-resolve question whether Kochanowski, then a secretary to the King, was eye-witnessing the Lublin homage, and an artistic evaluation of this piece of verse, let us partly follow an interpretation proposed by Juliusz Chrościcki. First, Kochanowski's description of the banner was realistic as he could have seen the one dating to 1525 among the keepsakes kept at Wawel, as opposed to the new painted and woven pennon prepared specially for the 1569 ceremony. Second, by giving rein to his poetic licence, chiefly based upon the Homeric description, in the *Iliad*, of Achilles' shield, as combined with the Ovidian picture of Arachne's fabric from the *Metamorphoses*, the poet has created a vision of a fantastic pennon – a fabric that was "long and twining with the wind, with a cycle of representations, much in a film-shot manner"²¹, whereby the most important stages of Polish-Teutonic relations, going on for almost three hundred years, were portrayed. The last of the scenes most probably relates to the Prussian Homage of 1525.²²

¹⁹ Piwarski, K., *Hołdy pruskie*, in: 'Roczniki Historyczne' 21/1956, pp. 152-173; for this reference, cf. pp. 158ff.

²⁰ Korolko, M., *Głosy źródłowe do Proporzca albo Hołdu pruskiego Jana Kochanowskiego*, in: 'Odrodzenie i Reformacja w Polsce', XXV, 1980, pp. 165ff.

²¹ Chrościcki, J., *Hołdy lenne ...*, op. cit., p. 174.

²² Cf. Chrościcki, J., *Paryskie studia ...*, op. cit., p. 115. Also, see: Korolko, M., *Głosy źródłowe ...*, pp. 163-168, for a discussion of the Kochanowski poem in the context of the basic descriptions of the Lublin homage: Gwagnin, A., *Sarmatiae Europae descriptio*, Kraków 1578; a contemporary description in: Ponętowski, J., *Krótki rzeczy polskich sejmowych pamięci godnych komentarz roku 1569 uczyniony*, publ. by K. J. Turowski, Kraków 1858; a manuscript account of an eyewitness, member of the Prussian retinue of Albrecht Frederick: Liske, K., *Dwa hołdy pruskie według opisów współczesnych przechowywanych w archiwum królewieckim*, in: 'Dziennik Poznański', R. [= Year] 10, 1868, No. 58, pp. 1-2; and, court bills from the Crown Treasury Archive (ASK) in the Central Archives of Historical Records (AGAD). Also, cf.: idem, *Jana Kochanowskiego żywot i sprawy. Materiały, komentarze, przypuszczenia* Warszawa 1985, pp. 140-147 (quoting

The memory of the first Prussian homage of 1525 and its accompanying events was not limited to indirect renderings as replicated in the subsequent homage-paying ceremonies featuring Prussian dukes and Commonwealth rules until mid-17th century.²³ The memory of the Krakow events of April 1525 was also refreshed by Polish political commentaries at the turn of 17th c. which disputed the Brandenburg Hohenzollerns' pretences to take-over the Prussian liege succession, and unavoidably referred to the provisions of the Krakow treaty of April 8, 1525. Representatives of Ducal-Prussia estates that were reluctant toward the Brandenburg succession were following the same lines.²⁴

Once the Prussian Duchy's liege-based dependence upon the Crown was broken off in 1657, a debate of the Prussian estates, which were protesting in the early 1660s against the Wehlau-Bromberg [Welawa-Bydgoszcz] Treaty of 1657, contributed to a refreshed memory of the 1525 events. This, however, was mainly through the prism of the provisions of the Krakow Treaty, rather than the homage offered at the Krakow market, which was the Treaty's ceremonial capstone.²⁵ On the Polish side, this memory was updated by, inter alia, a 1676 treatise titled *Exilis tractatus*, authored by Jan-Kazimierz Rogala Zawadzki, the Starost of Puck, by inspiration of King John III Sobieski himself. It offered a severe judgement, in terms of a royal policy error, of the occurrences around the 1525 Prussian Homage and the later-date transferral of Prussian liege succession to the Brandenburg Hohenzollerns in 1611, as well as the breach of the liege relationship in 1657. It is easy to guess that these evaluations were a between-the-lines manifestation of the ambitions and projects of King John III's early-stage policy toward the Ducal Prussia. The treatise, criticised by Samuel

extensive fragments of the aforementioned sources); and, as a complementary item: idem, *Kalendarz życia i twórczości Jana Kochanowskiego*, in: *Kochanowski. Z dziejów badań i recepcji twórczości*, ed. by M. Korolko, Warszawa 1980, pp. 31ff. Of the most important reference literature on the Kochanowski poem, let us pay attention to a critical assessment of the literary value of *Proporzec ...* in: J. Nowak-Dłużewski, *Okolicznościowa poezja polityczna w Polsce. Czasy zygmunto-wskie*, Warszawa 1966, pp. 275ff. As opposed to Korolko, this latter author expresses his doubt as to Kochanowski attending the 1569 Lublin homage ceremony in person.

²³ See the reminiscence of the Krakow Treaty of April 8, 1525 as an 'old agreement' in: *Opis jakim porządkiem nadane zostało lenno Jaśnie Wielmożnemu Panu Janowi Zygmunto-wi Margrabiemu i elektorowi brandenburskiemu dnia 16 listopada 1611 r.*; in: *Władztwo Polski w Prusiech ...*, op. cit., p. 233.

²⁴ See: *Dyskurs z strony postętku z brandenburskim elektorem o lenno ziemi pruskiej*, in: *Władztwo Polski w Prusiech ...*, op. cit., p. 205ff (in particular); *Przemówienie wysłannika szlachty pruskiej przed królem Zygmuntem III Wazą i senatem w Warszawie dnia 11 lutego 1609 r.*, in: *Władztwo Polski w Prusiech ...*, op. cit., p. 225.

²⁵ *Protest stanów Prus Książęcych przeciw oderwaniu Księstwa od Korony*, in: *Władztwo Polski w Prusiech ...*, op. cit., p. 251.

Pufendorf as a ‘brazen piece of work’, was bought out by the Elector’s agents who paid 12 florins per two copies of the brochure.²⁶

As is apparent, the changing political context, the Commonwealth’s relations with the Duchy of Prussia, much contributed in the sixteen as well as seventeen century to refreshing and updating of the first Prussian homage of 1525 as a ‘site of memory’. With time, however, the point of reference tended to be shifting from the symbolic act of liege homage as such to the provisions of the 1525 Krakow Treaty, which proved of essence for political-and-legal debates on the degree of the Ducal Prussia’s vassalage dependency on the Crown or the question of succession within the Prussian feud.

It seems that the description ‘Prussian Homage’ regarding the Krakow event of April 10, 1525 had not by the end of 17th become ranked as an ‘icon’ in the Old-Polish memory culture. In his popular *Kronika wszystkiego świata*, published some twenty-five years after the first Prussian homage took place (subsequent editions: 1551, 1554, 1564), the chronicler Marcin Bielski wrote beside the margin reference note reading *Old pruski* [‘The Prussian Omage’]: “Woyciech [Adalbert (*sic*)] the Prussian Master rendered omage to the Polish King ammidst the Krakow market where there was made [...] a royal majesty [= throne] whereon Zygmunt the King sat in his royal crown, the Prussian Master approached in front of him [and] made his oath, therafter as he threw his cowl or mantle with the crosslet, [was] transposed by the King onto a duchy.” The event was misdated as March 10, 1525, though.²⁷ This quote, presenting the tributary ritual in a brief yet vivid manner – thus imbuing it with ‘iconic’ features in a system of allegories and signs imprinting a record in a collective historical memory – was repeated, using an almost identical wording (and with the dating error reappearing!), in Maciej Strykowski’s *Kronika polska, litewska, żmudzka i wszystkiej Rusi* [‘Chronicle of Poland, Lithuania, Samogitia and all of Ruthenia’], quite a widely read work that was republished many a time, first issued in 1582.²⁸ The above-quoted sentence reappeared in turn in *Kronika mistrzów pruskich* [‘A Chronicle of the Prussian Masters’] by Marcin Murinius, inspired by Strykowski’s chronicle-writing and completed in the early 1580s. This time, the author, well-versed in the history of Prussia as he was, quit any daily date.²⁹ The ‘Polish Chronicle’ (*Kronika polska*) published in 1597 by Joachim Bielski, Marcin Bielski’s son, an ‘iconographic’ description of the occurrences leading to the secularisation of

²⁶ Kamieński, A., *Polska a Brandenburgia-Prusy w drugiej połowie XVII wieku. Dzieje polityczne*, Poznań 2002, p 133; also, cf. Bogucka, M., *Hold pruski*, Warszawa 1985, p. #.

²⁷ Bielski, M., *Kronika wszystkiego świata*, p. 287. A digital copy is available at: <http://pbi.edu.pl/publikacje/0000/033/262/0000033262-000655.jpg> (as at 17.09.2009).

²⁸ *Kronika polska, litewska, żmudzka i wszystkiej Rusi Macieja Strykowskiego*, Warszawa 1846, p. 363.

²⁹ Murinius, M., *Kronika mistrzów pruskich*, ed. by Z. Nowak, Olsztyn 1984, p. 238.

the Teutonic Order in Prussia was much extended: apart from an account of a “white Teutonic cloth with the black cross” being thrown off and a “Lutheran sect” received in 1524, emphasis in the Krakow homage description was put, under the date corrected as the month of April 1525, on the scene of handing the homage-paying duke with a pennon featuring the eagle with an ‘S’ letter on its breast.³⁰ It however seems that with the subsequent homages paid by ‘Dukes in Prussia’, the description ‘Prussian homage’ was in the Old-Polish culture freely applicable to any such event – the last in the series, of 1641, included.³¹

In the Royal Prussia, neighbouring with the former Prussian feud’s area, was at that time not yet associated with the Krakow occurrences of 1525, not even at a historiographic level. For instance, the extensive account of the Krakow homage in Caspar Schütz’s *Historia rerum Prussicarum*, 1599, was appended with a margin reference note reading: “*Belehrung des Herzogthum bei Preussen*”. A telling error this historiographer made, pointing to a historical memory of another remote-past event, is worth our attention, taking the opportunity. Schütz namely stated that King Sigismund, whilst receiving Albrecht’s homage, wore on his head: “*nicht eine schlechte Crone, sondern ein Keyserlich Diadema, welchs dem ersten Könige Boleslaw in seiner krönung von Keyser Otten ist geschenkt worden*”.³² The modern-era Polish rulers’ closed crown, expressing their complete sovereignty against the imperial authority, was stylised by the Prussian chronicler as a diadem received from Otto III by Boleslaus I the Brave during the Polish ruler’s reputed coronation in Gniezno in the year 1000.

An important work by Christoph Hartknoch, *Alt- und neues Preussen*, dating to an almost century later (issued 1684), added to its brief yet compendious description of the 1525 homage a reference note on the margin, „*Eyd deß Hertzogen in Preussen*”. In Hartknoch’s narrative, apart from the full text of the tributary oath and a description of the Prussian Duchy crest bestowed by Sigismund I Jagiellon (‘the Old’), a central and symbolic role is played again by the gesture of deposition of the white mantle with the black cross by the last Grand Master, signifying the outset of a new epoch in the history of Prussia: “*und damit des Ordens Kleid, Creutz und Wapen ganz abgelegt und also die Regierung dieses weltlichen Fürstenthums angetreten*”.³³

³⁰ Bielski, M., *Kronika polska*, Kraków 1597, p. 553ff. A digital copy is available at: <http://pbi.edu.pl/publikacje/0000/033/261/0000033261-000571.jpg> (as at 17.09.2009).

³¹ A description of the last Prussian homage, rendered by Elector Frederick Wilhelm, after he took over the succession in the Ducal Prussia in October 1641 in Warsaw, to King Ladislaus (Władysław) IV Vasa, has come down to us from A.S. Radziwiłł’s *Pamiętnik o dziejach w Polsce*, vol. 2 (1637-1646), ed. by A. Przyboś, R. Żelewski, Warszawa 1980, pp. 269-274.

³² Schütz, C., *Historia rerum Prussicarum*, Leipzig 1599 (reprinted: Olms Verlag, 2006), p. #.

³³ Hartknoch, C., *Alt- und neues Preussen*, Frankfurt u. Leipzig 1684, p. 326.

This historiographer has provided a more extensive account, in turn, of the second Prussian homage of 1569, paying central attention to the eventual homage of George Frederick of Ansbach and the Brandenburg Elector's envoys, with the bestowal on that occasion, by King Sigismund II Augustus to the Duchy, of a *Privilegium Religionis secundum Confessionem exercende*.³⁴ The reader's attention is attracted by a following etching portraying the homage of Prussian estates rendered on October 18, 1663 in Königsberg/Królewiec, in presence of Polish envoys, to Elector Frederick Wilhelm, Duke 'in Prussia', who had turned into a sovereign ruler shortly before then; the figure was concisely captioned *Preussische Huldigung* [illus.].³⁵ A brief commentary set against the figure mentions that, as of the said date, "*das absolutum dominium, oder wie mans nennet Souverenität solleniter zu Königsberg übergeben [wurde; note by I.K.]*" by the Polish mission.³⁶

For a more detailed description of the 1633 Königsberg homage, one is referred to C. Hartknoch's Latin work titled *Respublica Polonica duobus libris illustrata*. Again, beside the emphasised attendance of Polish legates at the ceremony, the author remarks that a commemorative coin was minted, featuring an effigy of Frederick Wilhelm on its obverse and a significant inscription on the reverse: *Supremo Prussiae Domino Friderico Wilhelmo Principi Elect. Brandeb. homagium praest.*³⁷

Yet, it was probably not this commemorative coin but some of a lesser value that were cast among the crowd gathered at the homage ceremony, in line with the liege homage ceremonial – as portrayed in the bottom left corner of the illustration contained in Hartknoch's former work.

More importantly, though, from this author's perspective, it was not the 1525 homage but the one of 1663 that was referred to as the 'Prussian homage' and approached as a breakthrough event in the history of Prussia. It befits to remind here that in accordance with the 1657 provisions and the so-called *hommagium eventuale* formula, Polish commissioners also participated in the homage paid by the Ducal Prussia estates to the Hohenzollerns in Königsberg in 1693. After the Kingdom 'in Prussia' was proclaimed in 1701, although absent at the subsequent homage ceremonies in 1714 and 1740, the oath formula recognised the Polish Crown's rights to take over the Ducal Prussia in case the Hohenzollern line went extinct.³⁸ The propaganda, and the official memory of the Prussian state as cultivated until at least the

³⁴ Hartknoch, C., *Alt- und neues Preussen*, op. cit., p. 332ff. Also, cf. a description of the Warsaw homage by Elector John Sigismund of 1611, with an extensive argument on the take-over of succession in the Prussian feud by the Brandenburg Hohenzollerns and a reference made to "*An. 1525 Belehnung über das Herzogtum Preussen*" – *ibidem*, p. 345.

³⁵ Hartknoch, C., *Alt- und neues Preussen*, op. cit., inset between pp. 362 and 363.

³⁶ Hartknoch, C., *Alt- und neues Preussen*, op. cit., p. 362.

³⁷ Hartknoch, C., *Respublica Polonica duobus libris illustrata*, Francfort et Lipsiae 1687, p. 185. A brief reminder of the homages of 1525 and 1611 is also to be found therein.

³⁸ Piwarski, K., *Holdy pruskie*, op. cit., pp. 164ff; 171.

early 19th century by the Brandenburg-Prussian Hohenzollerns, held it that their sovereignty gained under the Wehlau-Bromberg arrangements of 1657 legitimised Frederick III/I having recourse to the crown ‘in Prussia’ in 1701.³⁹

On the Polish side, the memory of the Prussian homage of 1525 was being updated in the eighteenth century – particularly, in the age of Enlightenment – under influence of a changed international constellation which had been caused by increased powerfulness of the Kingdom of Prussia and its aggressive policy against the debilitated Commonwealth. Similarly to the aforesaid treatise by Zawadzki, the cause-and-effect interpretation of the 1525 homage, viewed from the standpoint of later-date events, became a canonical depiction. These events namely included the agreement for takeover of the succession in the Prussian feud by the Brandeburgians in 1611; the Wehlau-Bromberg Treaty, 1657, and, the consequences of establishment of the Kingdom in Prussia in 1701, stinging as they were to the Polish-Lithuanian state. It was still before the first Partition of Poland came true that the Reverend Teodor Waga, in his then-widely read ‘History of Polish Kings and Dukes’ (*Historia książąt i królów polskich*; first published 1767 and reissued several times till mid-19th c.), ascertained that the Krakow occurrences of 1525 were indeed viewed as a “error in the politics [as viewed] toward a remoter time”. Yet, he counterbalanced this observation, in an excusing tone, remarking that Sigismund I could not possibly foresee the course of events to follow.

Opinion of this sort proved apologetic toward the penultimate Jagiellon ruler and viewing the 1525 Krakow treaty and Albrecht Hohenzollern’s homage in terms of a victorious clinch of the centuries-long strivings with the Teutonic Order, whilst critical toward the subsequent Commonwealth rulers for their having admitted the emergence of a Brandenburg-Prussian state. Based upon a content analysis carried out by Wit Górczyński and Andrzej Stępnik, such opinions were claimed or advocated in the Enlightenment and early Romanticist periods by some other authors of handbooks and texts popularising the history of Poland.⁴⁰ This Enlightenment-era apotheosis of the Krakow events of 1525, quite similarly to the period’s apotheosis of the Grunwald victory⁴¹, was quite clearly permeated by the trauma of the subsequent stages of Partition, with Prussia being perceived as the occurrence’s chief driving force. It can be regarded as a specific exorcism in the sphere of a historical politics of the then-waning Commonwealth – or, as a wishful antidote for irreversibility

³⁹ Kąkolewski, I., *Krzyżacy w pamięci Polaków i Niemców*, op. cit.

⁴⁰ Górczyński, W.; Stępnik, A., *Obraz stosunków polsko-krzyżackich i polsko-niemieckich w podręcznikach historii Polski doby oświecenia*, in: *Tradycja grunwaldzka*, Warszawa 1989, pp. 37-76.

⁴¹ These issues, in the context of the Jagiellonian – esp., the Sigismunds’ time – era being glorified in the Polish Enlightenment-age memory culture, are dealt with in: Bartkiewicz, K., *Obraz dziejów ojczystych w świadomości historycznej w Polsce doby oświecenia*, Poznań 1979, pp. 119-125.

of historic events in the Partition era: through reminding and glorifying events such as the Grunwald battle, the Thirteen Years' War (1454–66), or the Prussian Homage of 1525, the Partition-related wounds could be healed and the people mobilised for further striving against the partitioners by being reminded of their one-time military or diplomatic defeats caused by the Polish party.

It is in this context that the first monumental representation of the Krakow homage act in the Polish historical painting, Marcello Bacciarelli's *Prussian Homage* of mid-1780s, ought to be perceived.⁴² [illus.] The painting's original French title, *L'investiture de Prusse*, was authored by King Stanislaus Augustus Poniatowski himself; he also made up titles for the other six pictures painted after the First Partition, kept at the Warsaw Royal Castle's Knights' Room and presenting the glorious events in the history of Poland (*The Liberation of Vienna*; *The Peace Treaty of Khotyn*; *The Charters Being Granted to the Krakow Academy*; *King Casimir the Great Listening to Peasants' Requests*; and, *The Union of Lublin*). The comprehensive visual concept of the Knights' Room, wherein portraits of ten famous Poles (incl. Nicolaus Copernicus) were to be contained, also goes to the king's credit. Placement in this national historic pantheon of the 1525 homage scene was thus correspondent with the 'historical policy' – to use the term much en vogue today – of the Commonwealth's last monarch. Rather than the Grunwald victory, or any of the episodes of the Thirteen Years' War, waged against the Teutonic Order, he preferred to evoke in that site, the central royal residence, an apotheosis of the event that could basically be interpreted in terms of a diplomatic compromise's success rather than a military confrontation. The king's design was perceived in exactly this manner by Jan-Paweł Woronicz, then a young poet, who in his poem *Na pokoje nowe w Zamku Królewskim obrazami sławniejszych czynów polskich, portretami i bustami znakomitych Polaków ozdobi-one* ['On the new rooms at the Royal Castle, embellished with images of the famous Polish deeds, portraits and busts of the remarkable Poles'] (1786) wrote:

Pole, thy repute is reaching its noontide [...]
Before thy ensigns, laws, protection, might
Now the re-trenched fretful Teutonic frock
Bends low, teaching the nations through instance
That Poles may be matched by homage, not sword.

⁴² See: *Marceli Bacciarelli. Życie-twórczość-dzieła*, ed. by A. Chyczewska, 2nd ed., Poznań 1970, p. 79, no. 129. Following Alina Chyczewska's findings: the painting was made in 1785-6 and in 1807 was sent to Paris on Napoleon's command, which may testify to a propagandist (rather than just artistic) significance of the work. This aspect was particularly essential in the year the peace treaty was signed in Tilsit, so humiliating for Prussia, as it was. In lieu of the deported original painting, Bacciarelli made a replica that survives till this day. On this replica and other such replicas and their vicissitudes, see *ibidem*, pp. 79-83.

Grey-beard grandson of lord of holy stance!
Thou seem thus ordained – so divinely form'd.

A few lines further on, following a more detailed description of the homage scene as depicted by Bacciarelli, the poet accuses the Hohenzollerns of having broken the pledge. Finding it hard to withhold a bitter afterthought, Woronicz outlines a heartbroken facial expression of Piotr Tomicki who soothsays (like Stańczyk, the pensive royal fool portrayed in *The Prussian Homage* by Jan Matejko) the unfortunate course of events to unfold in a more remote future:

Standing by the throne, sacred old druid,
Pensive as though, by God's spirit inspir'd,
Reading things to come – dostn't thou intuit:
Of Polish-Prussia thou shan't enquire?
What dolour, to face thy parlous phantom,
Tomicki! "'Tis gone" shan't be our anthem!⁴³

The Bacciarelli painting was the major visualisation of the 1525 Homage. It preceded by a hundred years Matejko's monumental vision of 1882, the one which in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was promoted to an icon, rooted for good in the historical awareness of the Polish nation. How powerful the Bacciarelli picture could have been is indirectly testified to by a telling quotation from the *Memoirs* by Jan Duklan Ochocki, who – perhaps having the image stored in his memory – visited once the Main Market in Krakow to see, in his mind's eyes, "the homagial banners of the feudatories, amidst which I bitterly spotted the later-date foes".⁴⁴ Similar visions, spun past 1882, were inspired by the said painting by Matejko. As was the case with the other images created by 'Master Jan', this great work has monopolised the imagination of the generations of Poles that followed.

⁴³ Woronicz, J.P., *Na pokoje nowe w Zamku Królewskim obrazami sławniejszych czynów polskich portretami i bustami znakomitych Polaków ozdobione*, in: *Pisma wybrane*, a selection of his writings edited by M. Nesteruk and Z. Rejman, Warszawa 1993, pp. 89ff. A pessimistic and tragedy-imbued interpretation of the 1525 Prussian Homage clearly permeates those passages of *Świątynia Sybilli. Pieśń II* which deal with this historic event. This latter piece was completed in 1801, i.e. after the final decay of the Commonwealth; see: *ibidem*, p. 160:

But halt, o King! Can you hear the earth tremble? [...]
Shan't this vassal bitterly serve your grandsons? [...]
Shall not our Homeland pay your grace with her throat?

⁴⁴ Bartkiewicz, K., *Obraz dziejów ojczystych*, op. cit., p. 124.

The Prussian Homage of 1525 as a ‘site of memory’ in Old-Polish culture

Abstract

Owing mainly to one of the most famous canvasses by Jan Matejko, dated 1882, the Prussian Homage has grown in the twentieth century to become one of the most popular ‘icons’ in the historical awareness of Poles. A stigma has been impressed on the Matejko vision by severe judgements passed by the Krakow School historians, reproaching the apparently short-sighted and pernicious, in the longer run, politics pursued by King Sigismund I the Old. Of particular significance for such evaluations was the Polish monarch’s consent, in 1525, for transformation of the Teutonic state in Prussia into a liege-based duchy – instead of eradicating any remnants of the Teutonic-Order statehood. The experiences of the Partition period and the conviction, ahistoric as it was, that a supposititious continuum existed between the ‘fatal’ step the penultimate Jagiellonian ruler had made in 1525 and the birth in 1701 of a Kingdom in Prussia – not long after to become the chief inspirer of the Partition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth – had a prevalent bearing upon these interpretations. The present paper attempts at showing the changing evaluations and reception of the 1525 Prussian Homage in historiography, so-called historical politics and, in general, a collective memory of culture in the Old-Polish epoch. The features encountered in this itinerary include the first propagandist/‘journalistic’ and literary texts of relevance, dating to the Sigismund period, through to the interpretations expressed under the reign of King Stanislaus Augustus Poniatowski and the painting by Marcello Bacciarelli featuring the homage scene, dated c. 1785/6.

