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ICONOGRAPHY OF JAN MATEJKO AS A SOURCE
OF KNOWLEDGE ABOUT CITIES IN EASTERN GALICIA.
INTRODUCTION TO STUDIES¹

IKONOGRAFIA JANA MATEJKI JAKO ŹRÓDŁO WIEDZY
O MIASTACH WSCHODNIEJ GALICJI.
PROLEGOMENA DO BADAŃ

Abstract

The paper presents issues connected with the artwork of Jan Matejko in the context of usefulness of his works for the process of the restoration of selected historic towns located in the area of the former Eastern Galicia (Austro-Hungarian Empire), and their documentation. Jan Matejko, one of the most outstanding Polish historical painters, made sketches and drawings of Galician towns during his numerous trips, both in the areas of Western and Eastern Galicia – the former borderlands of the Republic of Poland. Some of those works have been preserved until today, sometimes constituting the only form of documentation of cityscapes, panoramas or historic objects in Galician towns. Besides the documentary layer, the artist was able to convey their climate and ambience, which is either vanishing before our eyes or no longer exists. It is of particular importance especially in the case of towns from Eastern Galicia, located in the territory of modern-day Ukraine, whose cultural landscape crystallized in the 19th century, is gradually dying out.

Keywords: artwork of Jan Matejko, restoration, towns of Eastern Galicia

Streszczenie

Artykuł przedstawia problematykę związaną z twórczością Jana Matejki w kontekście przydatności jego prac w procesie rewaloryzacji wybranych miast zabytkowych położonych na terenie dawnej Galicji Wschodniej i ich dokumentacji. Jeden z najwybitniejszych polskich malarzy historycznych – Jan Matejko, podczas swych licznych wypraw wykonywał szkice i rysunki galicyjskich miasteczek, zarówno z terenu Zachodniej, jak i Wschodniej Galicji – dawnych kresów Rzeczypospolitej. Część z tych prac przetrwała do dzisiaj, stanowiąc niekiedy jedyną formę dokumentacji widoków, panoram czy obiektów zabytkowych galicyjskich miast. Prócz warstwy dokumentacyjnej artysta w swych pracach potrafił przekazać także ich klimat i atmosferę, która na naszych oczach niknie bądź już nie istnieje. Ma to szczególnie znaczenie właśnie w przypadku miast Galicji Wschodniej, położonych na terenie dzisiejszej Ukrainy, których krajobraz kulturowy, wykryty i ustalony w XIX wieku, stopniowo zamiera.

Słowa kluczowe: twórczość Jana Matejki, rewaloryzacja miasta Galicji Wschodniej

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The studies connected with iconographic sources in Jan Matejko's artwork is very interesting. Firstly, because in his works Matejko immortalized the cultural landscape of Galician sites of the times which, in many cases, no longer exists and also because of the fact that his artwork reminds us of the need to respect and understand the value of cultural heritage. His artistic achievement in the subject matter is so vast that it seems necessary to separately analyse the areas of Western and Eastern Galicia. This study concerns centres located in Eastern Galicia. Subject matter was addressed before, for example, by Jerzy Remer in his publication *Jan Matejko – connoisseur and protector of historic and art monuments*².

The scientific output concerning the life and artwork of Jan Matejko is immense. It consists of, for example, publications from the first half of the 20th century such as *Matejko* by Stanisław Tarnowski³, *Jan Matejko* by Stanisław Witkiewicz⁴ or *Jan Matejko. Sketch of a life* by Władysław Łuszczkiewicz⁵, and also later publications such as *Jan Matejko* by Juliusz Starzyński⁶, *Jan Matejko: a biography* by Jan Gintel⁷ or the latest book by Marek Zgórnjak *Jan Matejko. Calendarium of life and work*⁸.

Jan Matejko was born in Krakow in 1838. He was a son of Franciszek Matejko and Joanna Karolina Rossberg⁹. Matejko first attended St. Barbara's school, then St. Anna's gymnasium. His elder brother Franciszek, a historian, docent at Jagiellonian University, who quickly recognized Jan's artistic talent, particularly influenced the personality of the future artist¹⁰. In 1852, Matejko began his education in the Krakow School of Fine Arts where, under Wojciech Korneli Stattler's¹¹ direction, he studied until 1858¹². During his studies, the artist started to collect old sketches and drawings, which he later copied, thus creating a specific documentation of different historical epochs¹³. When discussing the years of Matejko's education, one cannot ignore Jan Łuszczkiewicz, who was one of his most important teachers and mentors. Łuszczkiewicz, a founder of the Krakow school of historical painting, is also regarded as one of the first art historians. Within his interests, there was mainly the medieval period and objects built in Poland in those times. Łuszczkiewicz was very active in the field

² J. Remer, *Jan Matejko – znawca i opiekun zabytków historii sztuki*, „Ochrona Zabytków”, vol. VII, Publ. Centralny Zarząd Muzeów i Ochrony Zabytków Ministerstwa Kultury i Sztuki i Stowarzyszenie Historyków Sztuki, Kraków 1954, No, 1(24), 4-16.

³ S. Tarnowski, *Matejko*, Kraków 1897.

⁴ S. Witkiewicz, *Jan Matejko*, Publ. Tow. Bratniej Pomocy Uczniów ASP w Krakowie, Kraków 1903.

⁵ W. Łuszczkiewicz, *Jan Matejko. Szkic do życiorysu*, Kraków 1891.

⁶ J. Starzyński, *Jan Matejko*, Publ. Arkady, Warszawa 1962, Publ. 2. 1979.

⁷ J. Gintel, *Jan Matejko: biografia w wypisach*, Publ. Literackie, Ed. 2; Kraków 1966.

⁸ M. Zgórnjak, *Jan Matejko. Calendarium życia i twórczości*, Publ. Muzeum Narodowe, Kraków 2004.

⁹ J. Michałowski, *Jan Matejko*, Publ. Arkady, Warszawa 1979, p. 5.

¹⁰ *ibidem*.

¹¹ J. Starzyński, *Jan Matejko*, Publ. Arkady, Warszawa 1962, Ed. 2. 1979, p. 6.

¹² J. Michałowski, *Jan Matejko, op. cit.*, p. 5.

¹³ M. Gorzkowski, *O artystycznych czynnościach Jana Matejki począwszy od lat jego najmłodszych to jest od roku 1850 do końca roku 1881*, Kraków 1882, p. 32.

of monument protection and conservation by, for example, carrying out numerous inventories. That passion and dedication of Łuszczkiewicz must have been reflected in the creative attitude and subject matter of Matejko's paintings¹⁴. Having graduated from Krakow School of Fine Arts, the artist continued his education in Munich¹⁵ and Vienna¹⁶. In 1860, he returned to Krakow for good, where he began independent work as an artist, initially in his family home on Floriańska Street, and from 1862, in his own studio in Krupnicza Street¹⁷.

During his numerous journeys through towns in Western and Eastern Galicia, Matejko immortalised objects and architectonic details, as well as panoramas and vistas of cities and towns. The majority of those drawings are merely sketches, though very expressive and conveying the message of the artist's attitude towards the surrounding cultural landscape.

Apart from probably the best known works by the artist depicting buildings in the towns in Western Galicia, such as: Bochnia, Biecz, Krosno, Krakow, Muszyna or Nowy Wiśnicz, Matejko executed several sketches representing objects and views from Eastern Galicia that is the former borderlands.

Architectural monuments, views and scenes from the life of cities and towns in the borderlands, immortalised by Matejko, are now of special value. They remind us of the beauty and grandeur of the heritage which Poland has lost.

During one of his numerous travels to the lands of Eastern Galicia, Jan Matejko stayed in Żółkiew. The results of the visit were two sketches. The first represented a view of the town (Ill. 1) from the west with a characteristic gate leading into it. The other is a sketch of the synagogue with wooden outbuildings surrounding it (Ill. 3).

Żółkiew was founded in 1597 by hetman Stanisław Żółkiewski, and was given its town rights 6 years later. From the hands of the Żółkiewski family, the town was transferred to the Daniłowicz family, then the Sobieski family, and since 1740 it belonged to the Radziwiłł family. Żółkiew, a town with Renaissance urban layout surrounded by fortifications with four gates, had also a castle, a market square and a collegiate church¹⁸.

In his sketch besides the overall silhouette of the town viewed from the west with a fragment of fortifications and a characteristic gate (Ill. 1), in the background Matejko also depicted the collegiate church of St. Lawrence, erected in the years 1606–1618 and founded by hetman Żółkiewski¹⁹. The temple was renovated at the end of the 19th century and was then one of the most beautiful and valuable churches in Poland, being also the necropolis of the Żółkiewski and the Sobieski family²⁰.

¹⁴ *Encyklopedia Krakowa*, R. Burek (Edit.), Publ. Nauk. PWN, Warszawa–Kraków 2000, s.v., p. 573-574.

¹⁵ M. Gorzkowski, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

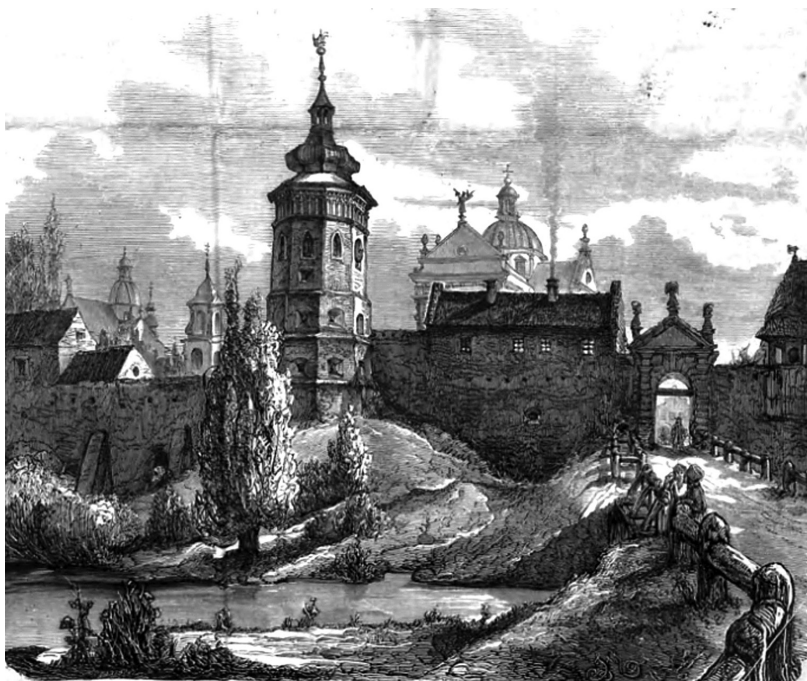
¹⁶ J. Michałowski, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

¹⁷ M. Gorzkowski, *op. cit.*, p. 52-54.

¹⁸ *Encyklopedia Kresów*, M. Karolczuk-Kędzierska (Edit.), Publ. Kluszczyński, Kraków 2004, p. 553.

¹⁹ T. M. Trajdos, *Żółkiew czeka na konserwatorów*, „Spotkania z Zabytkami”, No. 3 (49) XIV, Publ. Ministerstwo Kultury i Sztuki, Ośrodek Dokumentacji Zabytków, Warszawa 1990, p. 17.

²⁰ *Encyklopedia Kresów*, *op.cit.*, p. 553.



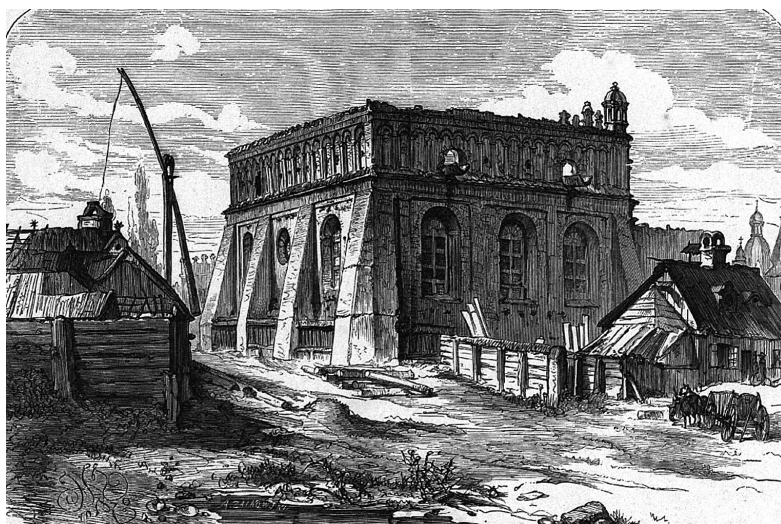
III. 1. Jan Matejko, view of Żółkiew (Kłosy, no. 236, 1970, p. 1)



III. 2. Żółkiew, city gate leading to the town from the west, at the end of the 19th century (photo by T. Szajnok)

Kazimierz Władysław Wójcicki also wrote about Żółkiew in the context of Matejko's drawings: "In Galicia, three and a half miles from Lviv, on the high road to the Polish Kingdom, there lies the town of Żółkiew, the inheritance of the Żółkiewski family in the 17th century, and then of the Sobieskis. In the church of the Virgin Mary, there are beautiful masonry monuments to the Żółkiewskis and the Daniłowicz, and magnificent historical paintings invaluable to the present-day researchers. Some defensive walls of the old town still remained. The view of the Jewish synagogue in this town draws attention by its structure. It was erected during the reign of king Jan III"²¹.

Apart from the view of the town from the west, during his stay in Żółkiew Matejko also sketched the town synagogue²² (Ill. 3). Beside the temple building, the artist also drew the wooden buildings of the Jewish quarter. The first masonry synagogue in Żółkiew was erected in 1635. The current object was built according to the project by Piotr Beber in the years 1692–1698. King Jan III Sobieski participated in its building. The late-Renaissance synagogue, located in the north part of the town, was one of the most beautiful synagogues in the world during that time²³.



Ill. 3. Jan Matejko, Synagogue in Żółkiew (source: [20, p. 40])

During his travels to the east, Matejko visited the castle in Podhorce²⁴. The drawing of the magnificent residence of the Koniecpolski family (Ill. 5), which was founded by Hetman Stanisław Koniecpolski²⁵ and erected in 1640, dates back to that period. The

²¹ K.W. Wójcicki, *Jan Matejko*, Publ. Lewental Salomon, Warszawa 1876, p. 62.

²² M.K. Piechotkowie, *Bramy Nieba. Bóżnice murowane na ziemiach dawnej Rzeczypospolitej*, Publ. Krupski i S-ka, Warszawa 1999, p. 2.

²³ O. Dudar, *Kto uratuje żółkiewską synagogę?*, „Kurier Galicyjski”, 2010, p. 1.

²⁴ Gorzkowski M., *op. cit.*, p. 95.

²⁵ W. Kryczyński, *Zamek w Podhorcach*, Publ. Wilhelm Zukerkandel, Złoczów 1894, p. 10.



Ill. 4. Synagogue in Żółkiew in the first quarter of the 20th century (source: Private archive of the Author)

castle might have been built on the site of a former hill fort but expanded and modernised, probably according to the project of the hetman's court engineer – Wilhelm Beauplan²⁶. After the hetman's death, Podhorce remained in the possession of the Konięcpolski family for two more generations, only to be handed over in 1682 to the Sobieski family²⁷ who, in turn, remained the castle owners until 1720, when Konstantyn Sobieski sold Podhorce to the Rzewuski family²⁸. The Rzewuski family, and particularly Waclaw, the Great Crown Hetman, took a liking to Podhorce, constantly modernising and beautifying the residence which remained in their hands until 1865²⁹. Since the 1830s, Podhorce started to fall into decline. It resulted from the mismanagement of the Rzewuski family plenipotentiary, Franciszek Remiszewski, who gradually robbed and ruined the once flourishing estate. After his death, and with the continuing absence of the Rzewuski descendants in Podhorce, the management of the castle and the whole estate came into the hands of Feliks Długoborski who, like his predecessor, was unable to take proper care of the residence³⁰. The rightful owner of the property and residence, Leon Rzewuski, returned to the family estate in 1833 after years spent in wars, and then began restoration work on the castle, which he could not complete because of financial problems. In 1856, he decided to sell the family inheritance to the Sanguszko family who, after taking possession of the castle, had the necessary

²⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 12.

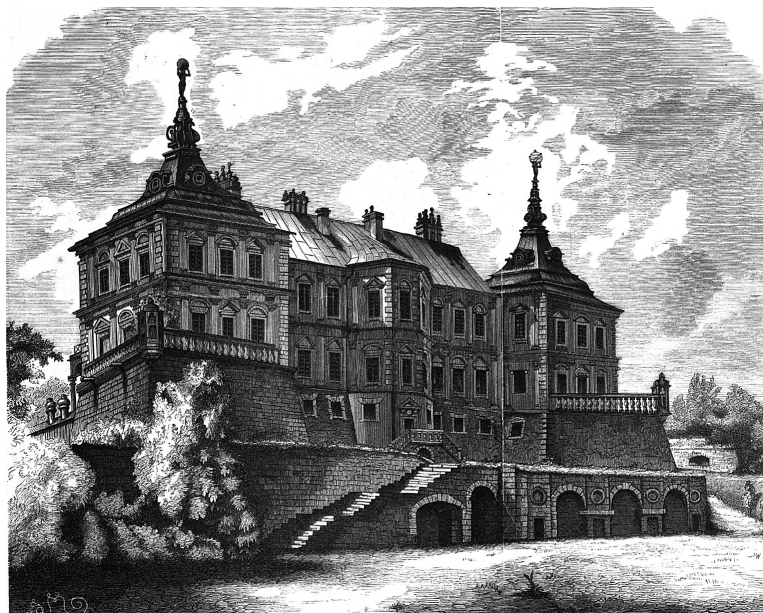
²⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 18.

²⁸ *Ibidem*.

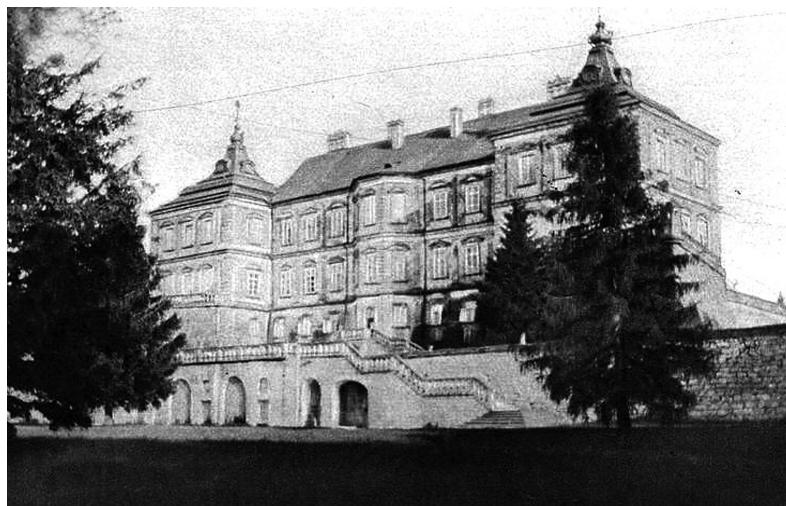
²⁹ *Ibidem*.

³⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 28.

repairs and restoration carried out³¹. Kazimierz Władysław Wójcicki wrote about Podhorce in the context of Matejko's drawings: "In Galicia, in the Złoczow district, a castle rises on the hill, once a fortress, built by the Koniecpolski family, then handed over to the Rzewuski



Ill. 5. Jan Matejko, castle in Podhorce (Kłosy, no. 383, 1972, p. 292)



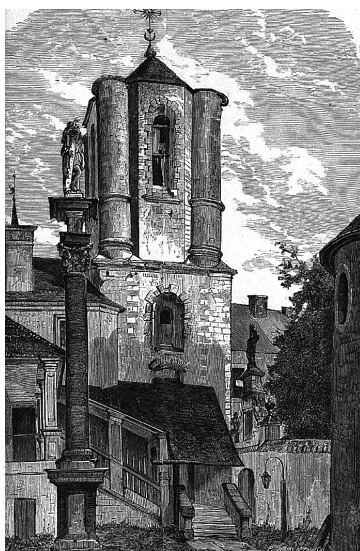
Ill. 6. Castle in Podhorce in the 1st quarter of the 20th century (source: Private archive of the Author)

³¹ *Ibidem*, p. 36-37.

family to whom we owe preserving whole this magnificent building from the second half of the 17th century. It is an impressive monument to residences of the former Polish noblemen...³².

Lviv was a frequent destination during Jan Matejko's travels to Eastern Galicia. It was Lviv, apart from his native Krakow, that the artist was specially connected with. One of the first documented stays of the artist in Lviv was the one in 1868, when he took part in the first exhibition of the Towarzystwa Przyjaciół Sztuk Pięknych (Society of Friends of Fine Arts)³³. A year later, city authorities nominated Matejko an Honorary Citizen of Lviv. The event coincided with the exhibition of his painting "Union of Lublin" in Lviv³⁴. Ten years later, in 1879, the painter presented his next masterpiece "Battle of Grunwald" in Lviv. In 1892, commissioned by the Lviv Polytechnic, Matejko designed a project of paintings depicting the History of Human Civilisation, and a few months later a stained-glass composition for the Latin rite cathedral³⁵.

Only two drawings by Matejko in which he depicted the architecture and atmosphere of Lviv are known. The first represents the Armenian cathedral dedicated to the Assumption of the Virgin Mary (Ill. 7). The building is located in one of the oldest streets in the city, Ormiańska (Armenian) Street, and might have been built at the end of the 14th century³⁶.



Ill. 7. Jan Matejko, Armenian cathedral in Lviv, view of the tower and the statue of St. Christopher from the side of the cemetery (Kłósy, Warszawa 1872, vol. 15, no. 388, p. 376)

³² K. W. Wójcicki, *op. cit.*, p. 95.

³³ J. Michałowski, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

³⁴ M. Buyko, M. Kłak-Ambrozkiewicz, *Spotkanie po latach*, „Cracovia Leopoldis”, 1996, p. 1.

³⁵ J. Michałowski, *op. cit.*, p. 11-12.

³⁶ J. Piotrowski, *Katedra Ormiańska we Lwowie w świetle restauracji i ostatnich odkryć*, Publ. Kuria Met. Obrządku Ormiańsko-Kat. we Lwowie, Lwów 1925, p. 3.

A characteristic element of the cathedral was a tower built from hewn stone, serving as a belfry. It was this belfry that was sketched by Matejko, still without the five turrets added on top at the end of the 1870s. The original temple was oriented built on the plan of a rectangle measuring 15 m × 12.5 m from stone bound with lime mortar and faced with stone slabs. The form of the cathedral alluded to the basilica layout, therefore the temple was covered with a dome placed at the intersection of the main nave with the transept³⁷. The cathedral underwent numerous alterations – firstly after a fire in the 15th century, then in the 16th c. when a new belfry was added. Next, building work on the cathedral was conducted in the first half of the 17th century, when it was completely refurbished in the Baroque style, the shape of roof was changed, and a vestry was added to the main body. In the first half of the 18th century, the building required another renovation. The bulk of the building was changed yet again, while new furnishings and polychromes were introduced to the interior³⁸. These were in such a shape that was depicted on the sketch by Matejko, which constitutes significant iconographic material documenting the shape of the cathedral before other alterations that took part towards the end of the 19th century.



Ill. 8. Armenian cathedral in Lviv in the 1st quarter of the 20th century (source: [14, p. 48])

The subject of the other drawing by Matejko depicting architecture of Lviv is the orthodox church of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary (also known as the Vlach or the Dormition church), and more precisely the entrance to the church from the courtyard (Ill. 9). The Vlach orthodox church was erected in the first half of the 17th century³⁹ and is

³⁷ M. Gosztyła, R. Pleszek, *Katedra Ormiańska we Lwowie*, *Wiadomości Konserwatorskie*, No. 25/2009, Publ. ZG SKZ, Warszawa–Wrocław 2009, p. 46.

³⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 50-51.

³⁹ P. Włodek, A. Kulewski, *Lwów*, Publ. O. W. Rewasz, Pruszków 2006, p. 104.



III. 9. Jan Matejko, entrance to the Vlach orthodox church in Lviv from the courtyard (source: [12, p. 61])



III. 10. Vlach orthodox church at the beginning of the 20th c., photo by Z. Huberowa (source: Photo File of the Institute of Art History UJ, sign. OTPK26 Lviv V.4. 007)

located in Ruska Street. The present-day building is the third erected on this site (the previous two had been burnt). It was designed by the team: Piotr Barbon, Paweł Rzymianin, Wojciech Kapinos and Ambroży Przychylny, with financial support of the Muntenia hospodars from the Mohylów family⁴⁰. The church is a basilica-type object with three naves, built from limestone ashlars. The tower rising above the temple bulk had been erected about a hundred years earlier, founded by a Lviv merchant, Konstanty Korniakt⁴¹. Kazimierz Władysław Wójcicki, Matejko's biographer, wrote about the Vlach orthodox church: "In Ruska Street in Lviv, attention is drawn to the magnificent building from hewn stone, with an impressive tower, showing features of the eastern style mixed with classical forms of the "revival" – it is the Vlach orthodox church. The temple whose construction began in 1580, was completed as late as 1629. The expense of its erection was mostly covered by the Muntenia hospodars Miron and Jeremiasz Mohyłow, therefore it was named the Vlach church".

The last of the presented works by Matejki, depicting architecture of Eastern Galicia, is a sketch of the courtyard of the castle in Olesko (Ill. 11), incorrectly entitled "Study from nature – houses in Olesko"⁴². Proof of the mistaken interpretation of the sketch subject is a thorough analysis and preliminary research carried out by the Author of this publication. In result of comparative studies of the Jan Matejko's sketch and the iconography of the town and castle from the turn of the 19th and 20th century, it has been found out that the drawing executed by the artist in Olesko, does not represent city buildings, as claimed by other researchers e.g. J. Starzyński, but a fragment of the castle courtyard, which has been shown below (Ill. 11–13).



Ill. 11. Jan Matejko, Courtyard of the castle in Olesko (source: [17, p. 208])

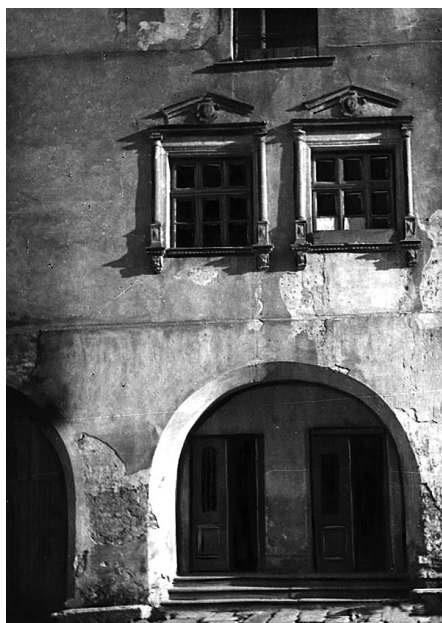
⁴⁰ *Ibidem*.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*.

⁴² J. Starzyński J., *op. cit.*, fig. 208.



III. 12. Courtyard of the castle in Olesko at the beginning of the 20th century (Archive of the Department HAUiSzP WA PK, s.v.)



III. 13. Courtyard of the castle in Olesko at the beginning of the 20th century (Archive of the Department HAUiSzP WA PK, s.v.)

The town of Olesko, during the Galician period located in the Złoczow region, is a special place. It was here in 1629, in the castle located on top of the hill, that the future king Jan III Sobieski was born⁴³. That might have been the reason why Matejko visited the town. It might also have been during his stay in Podhorce which is located in the vicinity of Olesko. In his sketch, the artist immortalised a fragment of the castle regarded by the scientists as one of the oldest in the territory of former Rus. It existed already in the 2nd half of the 14th century, being one of the crucial borderland forts. In 1432, the castle in Olesko was seized by king Władysław Jagiełło who handed it over to Jan from Sienno. From the hands of the Sienieński family it was passed over to the Herbuts, and later to the Kamieniecki family. At the beginning of the 16th century, having been destroyed by the Tartars, the castle was rebuilt in the Renaissance style⁴⁴. The castle boasts two wings separated by a courtyard and linked at the front by a two-storey tower in which there is an entrance gate to the castle (it was that fragment of the courtyard drawn by Matejko).

Drawings and sketches presented above, besides their immense value as documenting places and objects in Eastern Galicia which no longer belong to Poland, convey one more significant message of patriotic attitude and the artist's attachment to the country in which he was born. Despite his Czech origin, Matejko always regarded Poland as his only homeland. Matejko's secretary and biographer, Mateusz Gorzkowski, wrote about the painter's affection for his native country: "Matejko, from spiritual need, constantly fed on the history of that land in which he had been given life, immediately began to feel for the country, understand it and burn with enthusiasm for its virtues..."⁴⁵.

Jan Matejko died in Krakow in 1893, but before his death he managed to execute two more projects in Lviv: the project of paintings for the Lviv Polytechnic and of stained-glass windows for the Latin cathedral. He left innumerable works representing the cultural landscape and towns of both Eastern and Western Galicia. In those works, he handed down to posterity a model of patriotic attitude, love for his homeland, its history and cultural landscape which, thanks to his art, we can still admire today.

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⁴³ *Słownik Geograficzny Królestwa Polskiego i innych krajów słowiańskich*, F. Sulimierski, W. Walewski (Edit.), vol. VII, Warszawa 1880–1914, p. 462.

⁴⁴ A. Czołowski, B. Janusz, *Przeszłość i zabytki województwa tarnopolskiego*, Publ. Nakładem Powiatowej Organizacji Narodowej, Tarnopol 1926, p. 90.

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