

SUMMARY

The oldest history of the Potocki family from the Middle Ages until the early 17th century, their background and ways of building the family wealth which led them to join the elite of the First Polish Republic have not yet been properly examined by historians. As if by contrast, the history of the family since the mid-17th century until the present is much better known and numerous publications are available. It is no wonder that the early period has always aroused particular interest. It was then that the power of the family was born, whose influence on the tendencies of the development of the state and the nation in the centuries to come was enormous. In the first genealogical and heraldic publications from the time of the First Republic the medieval forefathers of the Potocki family were already represented, but the research conducted then was entirely subjective and unreflective. Every single heir of Potok who was mentioned by the few early sources from the 13th and the 14th century was then incorporated into the family tree of the Pilawit-Potocki, regardless of which of the numerous villages by the same name he had come from. Moreover, a number of mythical ancestors were made up, starting from Knight Żyrosław, who allegedly was to receive the Pilawa coat of arms for his bravery in the battles against pagan Prussians at the time of Kazimierz II the Just and Bolesław IV the Curly-haired in the 12th century. The legend was created or promoted by the first Polish genealogist Bartosz Paprocki, active in the latter half of the 16th century. The genealogists and heraldists that followed took over the legend, frequently expanding it and adding new details. This mythical, fairy tale tendency in the literature on the Potockis has surprisingly survived until the present day. Nonetheless, as early as the late 18th century a parallel critical tendency in historical studies of the family was established, which could perhaps be called proto-scholarly, initiated by Katarzyna Kossakowska née Potocka and continued by Stanisław Kossakowski, Leon Bożawola Romanowski and Adam Boniecki. Unfortunately, the lack of adequate research methods at the time made it impossible to reconstruct the Potocki family tree, in spite of the availability of nearly complete sources; the family-commissioned archive searches concerned only the individuals by the name of Potocki, the heirs

of Potok village in the powiat (county) of Książ in the Kraków province. There was no awareness of the wide-spread changeability of names and coats of arms even in families of higher social standing and little sense of the significance of genealogy.

In contrast, the thorough research of the medieval history of the Potok heirs and the Pilawa family has brought surprising results. The reconstruction of the settlement structure of the Pilaws has shown the peripheral location of Potok, compared with the main family seats around Boleszce and Moskorzow. What is more, the property of the few Pilaws in Potok was mixed with that of knights of various other coats of arms, which makes it even plausible to conjecture that the Pilaws were an immigrant group, in contrast to the Rózyć, the Jastrzębiec or the Kolamsz families.

The turn of the 15th century brought considerable property transformations in Potok which on the one hand consisted in the concentration of the land in the hands of more active individuals and on the other – consequently – in leaving the village by those who had sold their property. The arrival of immigrants to the village of Potok can also be observed who by way of marriage, inheritance or purchase entered into possession of the local assets. It is in this way, by way of inheritance, that members of the Pampicki (Pempicki) family of the Róża coat of arms from Pęcice in the powiat of Chęciny (Sandomierz Voivodeship) appeared in Potok the second half of the 15th century. In the second generation, they abandoned their hereto surname and adopted a new one, referring to the estate they had acquired in Potok. It is this family that most probably yielded Jakub Potocki, later the Chamberlain of Halicz, the forebear of all the extant Potockis of the Pilawa coast of arms.

It has been common knowledge for a long time that it was this Jakub Potocki who having sold his part of the estate in Potok moved to Red Ruthenia, to the Halicz land, where he gave rise to the magnate family of the Potockis. The circumstances of his arrival in the south-eastern borderland of the Republic, however, were coloured with heroic motives. It was claimed that he had received an estate in Ruthenia from the king in return for the faithful and courageous service at the royal court as a guardian and mentor of Prince Zygmunt August of the Jagiellonian dynasty. The fact of the matter is that Jakub had come from a poor family background and joined the equestrian formation known as Current Defense, established to shield south-eastern borderlands of the Republic against Tartar and Wallachian incursions. By coincidence he served under the orders of as many as four Pilaws: Great Crown Hetman Mikołaj Kamieniecki, Field Hetmans Jan Tworowski and Marcin Kamieniecki, and Captain Wawrzyniec Budzowski. It was Tworowski, most probably his relative on the maternal side, to whom Potocki owed his career and social advancement. He took good care of

young Jakub, donating to him the village of Sokołów, which later became the main seat of the Potockis in Ruthenia and consistently supporting him in his public office career. Jakub could have also owed to him the receiving of his first Crown estate in Ruthenia, that of the Wojnisz village, which indeed was the reward for the courage he had displayed in the battle of Obertyn fought against the Moldovans in 1531. The first marriage of Jakub Potocki stemmed also from his Current Defense contacts – he married Katarzyna Jemielnicka, daughter of the veteran soldier Mikołaj Susoł Jemielnicki.

It is most likely that the cooperation with Tworowski resulted in Potocki adopting the new Pilawa coat of arms to replace his native Róża. This must have happened in the first three decades of the 16th century, before the year 1535, to which the first Pilawa seal stamp of Jakub Potocki's can be traced back. This is indeed the oldest extant seal of the Potockis.

Jakub Potocki owed a considerable growth in his wealth not only to the support of a powerful relative, but first of all to his own abilities. In his business activities one can recognize a clear focus and great consistency, which indicate a mature man of clear agenda and an understanding of the laws of economy. Like many representatives of the contemporary families who had an ambition to rise in social hierarchy, he actively participated in the capital turnover, offering loans at interest or pawn broking real estates. He realized the benefits which stemmed from the chartering of towns as centres of both local barter trade and a broader international trade network as well as estate administration centres. The awareness of the permanence and relative certainty of trade benefits, which were thus of high value at the turbulent borderlands, lay at the bottom of Potocki's consistent attempts to acquire Crown estates situated at the principal trade routes of Kamieniec Podolski and Śniatyn, which linked Turkey, Greece, Moldavia and Wallachia with Poland. The Potockis owed to Jakub the enhanced sense of family solidarity, which was the factor indispensable for their ambitious social, economic and political plans. He also appreciated the enormous value of appropriate cultural and intellectual training for a young man, which determined his future life. And even though he did not send any of his sons to university, he made sure that at least one, the eldest son Mikołaj, was brought up in the royal court, thus opening the doors of career for him. Jakub Potocki was also most probably the first family member who, having broken away from the Catholic Church, adopted Protestantism in its Calvinist variety. All these details allow one to consider him as representative of the "new gentry", well known to historians, whose activities proved so beneficial for the Poland of the Renaissance period.

In the hitherto literature, the significance of Jakub Potocki's second marriage with Druzjana Monasterska-Jazłowiecka was much overrated, however, as the source of further growth of the family's wealth and public

standing. In the light of available records, the marriage did not bring Jakub or his descendants any benefits or profits or even enhanced prestige. The only son by this marriage did inherit the vast Gródek estate in Podolia from his paternal uncle Michał Jazłowiecki, but this was the result of breaking the initial agreements rather than abiding by them.

By the end of his life, faced by the new family situation changed with the second marriage, Jakub Potocki displayed great foresight once more. Predicting imminent conflicts between the future widow and her stepsons, he made all the arrangements to ensure that the eldest son had taken over all the Crown estates while he was still alive, thus securing the family against the loss of the source of the largest income.

A most interesting although highly risky period in the family history was the time after Jakub's death, when the fate of the property he had accumulated and thus the future of the family was clearly at stake. The stepmother of the young Potockis staked out claims against them which were supported by her father Mikołaj Jazłowiecki, Castellan of Kamieniec Podolski, and his brother Jerzy, the future Great Crown Hetman. Also the lesser neighbours of the family considered this a convenient moment to deplete the Potocki estates. What was necessary then was harmony in the family, the speed and consistency of actions and most importantly the wise leadership.

Jakub's eldest son Mikołaj, in whom the father rightly saw his successor and to whom the Potockis may actually owe their later elite status, fulfilled these duties perfectly. Not only did he retain all the father's estates, but due to his prudent property decisions compatible with those still set out by his father he considerably expanded and consolidated the family wealth. Like his father, he founded towns, bought the attractively located Crown estates, carried out the settlement campaigns, and became considerably involved in the ox trade, the major export commodity of Ruthenia and Podolia. He also lay the ground for the chartering of the town of Potok, which in time started to be called Złoty Potok (Golden Potok – the name referring to the original family seat in Lesser Poland), as well as for the erection of the castle, which was the reflection of the status the family had acquired. Remembering his own education and its advantages he sent two of his eldest sons to study in Leipzig, the younger of whom, Andrzej, ended up in the court of King Zygmunt August. Also the younger sons, probably in agreement with the father's will, served at the royal court, though only after their father's death. Mikołaj's ambitious plans were put into effect thanks to the considerable income he had amassed from his long-lasting military service and from the Crown estates, particularly the profitable Starosties, first of Chmielnik and then Kamieniec Podolski.

The lives of Jakub's remaining sons were different. The second son, Jan, died young fighting the Muscovites, while two other sons, Andrzej

and Stanisław, started their own families. Andrzej, who was a faithful collaborator and wartime companion of Mikołaj's, did not marry until the end of his life, however, and had only one daughter. Once her hand was given away in marriage, the Potockis lost the estates which had once been brought in dowry by Katarzyna Potocka née Jemielnicka, the first wife of Jakub Potocki.

Stanisław, on the other hand, the youngest son of Jakub's, the only son born from his second marriage with Druzjana Jazłowiecka, gave rise to the family line which lasted three generations until that of his grandchildren. He probably suffered from some physical or psychological affliction and never held any offices nor displayed much economic activity. The passivity and lack of economic sense can be observed also in his sons. The vast estates which he held in his hands had become his as a result of a shady transaction which he made persuaded by his maternal uncle Michał Jazłowiecki. As a fictitious buyer of the rights of Katarzyna Świerczowa, the childless wife of Jazłowiecki, Stanisław never concluded his part of the deal and never returned the estates to the Jazłowieckis. Many decades of feuds between the descendants of Świerczs and Jazłowieckis are an interesting addendum to the history of law and customs of the First Polish Republic.

Before we move on to the presentation of the history of the third generation of the family, we must still focus on the person of Mikołaj Potocki and emphasize one very significant feature of his economic activities. This was the principle of the entailed estate, which was upheld for a long time. The principle once considered anachronistic, has currently been reassessed from the point of view of research on the knightly and noble families. The entailment enabled the retaining of the hitherto economic potential of the estate without extra expenditure on livestock and infrastructure, which would have been necessary if new economic entities had come into being as a result of divisions. Potocki brothers did not divide their estate until decades after their father's death.

After Mikołaj's death, his sons followed suit. This was the moment of the second (and last) crisis in the early history of the family. The demise shook the material foundations of the family's well-being. The neighbours rushed to claim the estates he had left behind, attempting to rob and destroy them. In a way this was their revenge for decades of difficult coexistence with Mikołaj, who had not refrained from using force to ensure his rights. The family narrowly avoided permanently losing the Crown estates which had been obtained and developed with such great care. And again the harmony and mutual support by family members allowed the estates to remain undiminished. The long-lasting brotherly entailment again contributed to effective management and limiting indispensable expenditures. What was an interesting feature of internal family relations in the mid-16th century

was a temporary emergence of larger or smaller economic units from the inherited estate which served the purpose of providing supplies for the brothers. The roles of the units were swapped, depending on various factors, such as the specific public engagements currently undertaken by the owners. For example, the Kamieniec Podolski estate, which had initially been used by Andrzej Potocki, was taken over by his brother Jan when the latter had permanently moved to western Podolia, having been nominated the Starost of Kamieniec. At the same time, Jan yielded the Potok estate with the town and the castle to his younger brother Mikołaj, who had just married and needed permanent source of income. The Borek Crown lease remained in the hands of the younger brother Jakub until – strongly supported by Jan – he had acquired the Czesybiesy estate in Pokutia, confiscated from the Zborowskis by King Stefan Bathory for their treason. The youngest of the brothers, Stefan, who was in the service of the king, had to be satisfied with small appanages regularly provided to him by his older brothers. Apparently these had not been sufficient to cover his official and personal needs, as he complained in one the letters to Chancellor Jan Zamoyski that “from my gentleman brothers I can have very little support or none at all”. It was only the premature, tragic death of Mikołaj in a battlefield of Moldavia that opened the way for Stefan to inherit the family seat with the castle residence in Potok. Thus the final split of the estates among brothers took place only many years after their father’s death when they had led their adult lives already for a long time and had families of their own. It had never been formalized with a specific legal act, though. Clearly their mutual kindness and trust sufficed for the brothers to feel secure in their estates.

All the sons of the Starost of Kamieniec Mikołaj Potocki served in the military, just like their father and grandfather. The service brought them both handsome profits and much desired recognition both among the gentry and with the king. The political loyalty of the Potockis during the period of Zebrzydowski rebellion in 1606-1609, particularly difficult for King Zygmunt III, resulted in many land endowments and acquisition of offices as well as the growing political influence of the family with the king. The oldest of the brothers, Jan Potocki, is regarded as one of the closest advisers of the king and one of the principal supporters and initiators of the war with Muscovy in 1609.

As mentioned earlier, the representatives of all the three generations were typical *homines economici*, who perfectly understood the mechanisms of free economy and courageously took part in the capital turnover, boldly invested in land estates and chartered towns, profiting both from the trade in their own products and the transportation of products through their estates. The Potockis, just like representatives of other upwardly mobile

families, took great care to acquire attractively located and thus profitable Crown estates which served them as foundations for developing large land complexes. They were characterised by mixed structure and consisted of both Crown lands and their own inherited estates. The land complexes suffered from their transiency, although some families managed to retain the Crown lands even for several generations. Their greatest advantage was virtually free access to the estates and the chance to invest thus acquired income to enlarge the inherited estates.

The broadly conceived marital policies of the family also testified to the pragmatism of the early generations of the Potocki family. In accordance with the findings described in relevant historical literature, it was only daughters of well-to-do families or sisters of bankrupt landowners that were selected by them to be married. Buying their debts and securing the unpaid dowry sums against their parental estates (such debts were given top priority among other liabilities by the contemporary law) opened the possibility of taking over the estates often below their real value. The Gwoździec estate in Pokutia is the case in point. It was taken over in this way by the Castellan of Kamieniec Andrzej Potocki – the ancestor of the family line later known as Hetman line – along with the hand in marriage of his second wife Katarzyna Buczacka (Tworowska). His first wife, Zofia Piasecka, had also been the only heir of a large estate located in the vicinity of the Jabłonów land complex belonging to Andrzej Potocki. For natural reasons it was the family's concern to ensure the bride represented a comparable or even higher level of social and economic prosperity. Among the marriages concluded at the time under investigation none were found which would clearly negatively depart from the above trend. The religious compatibility of the future bride and bridegroom was also an important factor. The decisive majority of the marriage couples abided by this principle. Nonetheless, imminent considerable profits pushed religious issues aside. This is how the eager Calvinist, later the Voivode of Braślów, Jan Potocki, behaved taking the Catholic Elżbieta Kamieniecka to be his wife, which entitled him to a very rich dowry. The childless couple did not interfere in each other's religious practices. Jan kept up a flourishing Calvinist centre on his estate, including a church, school and printing house, while Elżbieta supported the Dominican order, founding a church and monastery in Latyczów, and a chapel at the church in Kamieniec Podolski. The youngest brother Stefan, a Catholic, behaved similarly, marrying the Orthodox daughter of the Hospodar of Moldova Jeremiah Mohyla. The liaison with a schismatic was recompensed by a huge dowry and admission into the sphere of dynastic politics. After her conversion, however, the wife proved to be a generous benefactress and co-founded the Dominicans church in Potok, while her daughter joined the Dominicans convent in Kamieniec.

The stories of the daughters and sisters of the Potockis were different. In accordance with general tendencies of the time, their spouses were selected among the gentry lower in social and financial hierarchy. The fact that some of the latter were entrusted with high offices and even became senators of the Republic was the result of their personal talents and support of the brothers in law. Husbands of the Chamberlain Jakub Potocki's daughters – Jan Śmiotanka, Mikołaj Koryciński and Mikołaj Wężyk – were still ordinary gentry, often the wartime companions of young Potockis. In the next generation, however, a tendency developed to select husbands ranking higher in social hierarchy. Among the sons in law of Mikołaj Potocki, the Starost of Kamieniec, was Captain Jakub Struś, who died young killed on a battlefield, but had been a representative of the well-settled and titled gentry from the Eastern borderlands of Poland, and a brother of the Starost of Braclaw Jerzy Struś. Another son in law was Stanisław Wołucki, later the Starost of Rawa and Castellan of Halicz, brother of the Bishop of Kamieniec Paweł Wołucki, who no doubt influenced his brother's career and could have arranged his marriage. Mikołaj Urowiecki, in turn, the husband of Katarzyna, the only daughter of the Standard-Bearer of Kamieniec Andrzej Potocki, was a close associate and relative of the Chancellor and Hetman Jan Zamoyski, and soon after the wedding was nominated the Starost of Chełm. The next generation of the family, which is beyond the scope of the present study, mixes with the representatives of the national elite: Radziwiłł, Kazanowski, Golski, Zasławski or Korecki families.

Thus the huge social advancement which was the outcome of the persistent strategy of the Chamberlain of Halicz Jakub Potocki and his son, the Starost of Kamieniec Mikołaj, was reinforced in the generation of his sons, which, in the following generation, resulted in the permanent admission of the Potockis to the elite of the First Polish Republic.

translated by Władysław Chłopicki

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