

New scientific perspectives on the Sobieski family's history

in the light of joint research made by the Museum of King Jan III's Palace at Wilanów and the National Historical Archives of Belarus in Minsk



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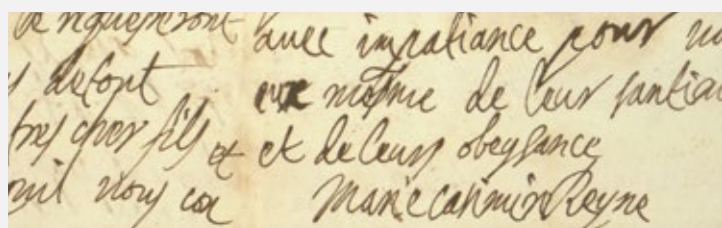
Co-financed by the Ministry
of Culture and National Heritage



the National Historical Archives
of Belarus in Minsk

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The Wilanów Palace Museum has for long engaged in research projects and popular scientific activities focused on the Sobieski family. The overriding principle of the numerous projects is to search for traces and themes helpful in a more comprehensive depiction of the life story and achievements of one of the most significant rulers of the former Commonwealth, King Jan III Sobieski and his family. Launched in the spring of 2015, co-operation between the Museum and the National Historical Archives of Belarus in Minsk opens up totally new scientific perspectives.



Fragment of Marie Casimire's manuscript, collection of the National Historical Archives of Belarus in Minsk



Marie Casimire with her daughter, Teresa Kunegunda, Jerzy Eleuter Szymonowicz-Siemiginowski, ca. 1690, Museum of King Jan III's Palace at Wilanów

The Minsk Archive collection contains among others two invaluable sets of documents. They are the Sobieskis' archive from Oława (fond 695) and an enormous Radziwiłł archive from Nieświcz [Nesvizh] (fond 694), including the Sobieskis' archive from Żółkiew [Zhovkva]. The Oława archival documents were for a long time regarded as lost in the course of the 1945 Battle of Berlin. Meanwhile, it has turned out that after the capital of the Third Reich had been seized by the Red Army, the priceless set of documents was first transported to Moscow, and then to Minsk. Only a dozen or so years ago it became possible to reveal its very existence. Soon afterwards, Minsk archivists made a painstaking study of the set and marked it with the signature "fond 695". The materials proved highly valuable



Jan III surrounded by his family, court painter, after 1693, Museum of King Jan III's Palace at Wilanów



Jan III with his son Jakub Ludwik, Jerzy Eleuter Szymonowicz-Siemiginowski, ca. 1690, Museum of King Jan III's Palace at Wilanów



Jakub Ludwik Sobieski, Silesian painter, after 1691, Museum of King Jan III's Palace at Wilanów

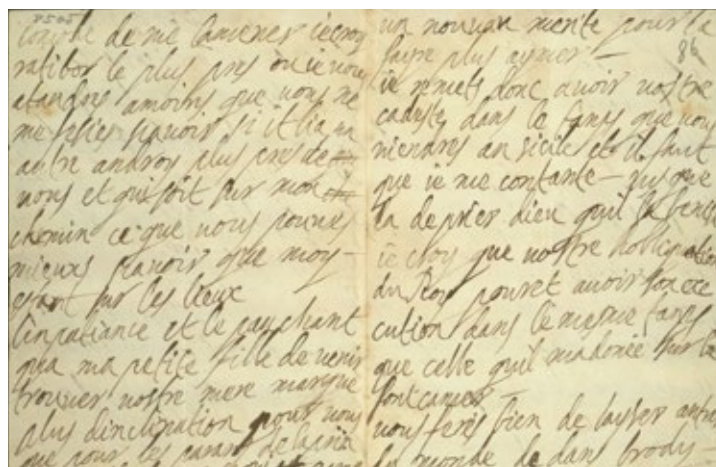
already at the stage of preliminary archival research. They include e.g. correspondence between Marie Casimire and Jan Sobieski, previously considered as lost, reports of diplomats and Jan III's agents sent from various European capitals, and also Marie Casimire's correspondence with her own relatives, composed after the king's death. The latter set became the focal point of joint research activities conducted by employees of both the Museum and the Archive. Support granted by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage made it possible to initiate copying, translating and editing of the source materials in preparation for their future publication.



Teresa Kunegunda Sobieska, French painter, turn of the 17th and the 18th c., Museum of King Jan III's Palace at Wilanów



Jakub Ludwik Sobieski, French painter active in Poland, ca. 1685, Museum of King Jan III's Palace at Wilanów



Fragment of Marie Casimire's manuscript, collection of the National Historical Archives of Belarus in Minsk

Co-operation between the Museum of King Jan III's Palace at Wilanów and the National Historical Archives of Belarus in Minsk is an important chapter in the history of bilateral, Polish-Belarusian research projects. Its aim is to popularize the previously little known or still unidentified archives relative to the Sobieski royal family, archives constituting the common heritage of the former Commonwealth nations. The project in question would not be possible without a favourable and open attitude adopted by the Embassy of the Republic of Belarus in Warsaw and the National Historical Archives of Belarus in Minsk as well as a solid support, including financial, given by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage.