

Silk fabrics from Turkey were brought to the Commonwealth of Poland and Lithuania as early as in the Middle Ages.¹ They were very popular in the sixteenth century, but did not receive real attention until the following century. Throughout this long period, when their popularity in the Commonwealth was steadily growing, they came there first mainly by way of trade, and later just as often as war booty. In contrast, particularly exquisite, specially prepared fabrics were usually received as diplomatic gifts. It is important to emphasise here that exceptional ideological significance was attributed to textiles acquired by way of booty after battles with the Turks. They rapidly became a shared symbol of victory, a testimony to the glory of arms, and an object of pride in defeating the enemy.

The ideological significance of silk fabrics was quite different in the place where they were made, i.e. Turkey. In the Turkish workshops, magnificent textiles were made primarily for the use of the sultan's court and court dignitaries, as well as for members of the wealthier classes of the society. In the Ottoman Empire, therefore, silk – of whose importance the Turks were perfectly aware, having eagerly taken over the skill of its production after the final subjugation of the Byzantine Empire – continued to be an element that served the ideology of power, as it had in Byzantium, and facilitated the promotion of Turkish might both within the empire and, through the Ottomans, beyond its borders. The splendour of silk fabrics and their importance in court ceremonies, as well as the impression they made on Europeans were described as early as the middle of the sixteenth century by Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq, Habsburg ambassador to the Ottoman court.² The accounts contained in the letters of the envoy of this influential and significant dynasty, cited by Nurhan Atasoy, show how great a role was attributed in Ottoman society to textiles.³ They reveal the important function of fabrics in creating a feeling of grandeur and in emphasising the ideological significance derived from their colours and patterns developed by the artists employed in the

SILK FABRICS FROM TURKEY IN THE COMMONWEALTH OF POLAND AND LITHUANIA AND THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO THE FORMATION OF A DISTINCT ARTISTIC TASTE IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

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1 Z. Abrahamowicz, *Katalog dokumentów tureckich*, in: *Dokumenty do dziejów Polski i krajów ościennych w latach 1455–1672*, ed. Z. Zajączkowski (Warszawa, 1959); A. Dziubiński, *Na szlakach Orientu. Handel między Polską a Imperium Osmańskim w XVI–XVIII wieku* (Wrocław 1998).

2 O.G. de Busbecq, *The Turkish Letters of Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq, Imperial Ambassador at Constantinople 1554–1562* (Oxford, 1927, reprinted 1968).

3 N. Atasoy, W.B. Denny, L.W. Mackie, H. Tezcan, *İpek. The Crescent & the Rose: Imperial Ottoman Silks and Velvets* (London, 2002), p. 22.

sultan's workshops. Silk therefore played an important role in public ceremonies, providing the setting for these celebrations and, above all, influencing the cultural image of the sultan's court.

Fabrics of exceptional artistic quality were made specially for this purpose in Turkish workshops by means of a complex process involving the collaboration of artist-designers and trained weavers. These fabrics were woven with gold and silver threads, which naturally increased their monetary value and, in the public perception, added splendour to their owners. Hence, they also quickly became precious gifts given, as already mentioned, in the form of diplomatic gifts that constituted a symbol of the Ottoman Empire.

It is also worth noting that not only in Turkey, but also in Persia silk textiles occupied a high position among works of art, alongside ceramics, metalwork and miniature painting. For this reason, not only craftsmen, but also designers of patterns had to be familiar with the technological features of given raw materials, types of weave, the operational principles of the various weaving workshops and ways of obtaining complex, multi-coloured compositions therein. Each individual loom was separately designed to make a fabric in the correct dimensions (width and length), with a specific weave and a fixed system of repetition of a single motif and the way in which patterns repeated on the surface of the panel. Although little is known about the organisation of weaving workshops themselves in Turkey during the early production period, archival records suggest that, at least in the sultan's atelier in Istanbul, pattern designs for silk brocade were implemented by specialised craftsmen.⁴

Although no information has survived on how Turkish silk fabrics were designed, it is possible to reconstruct the process from archival data on the construction of looms,⁵ and by comparing the design process used in other areas of traditional weaving. The fabric patterns were developed extremely carefully, in accordance with the principles that characterised the Turkish art, its expression and expressiveness. Their usually large-repeat⁶ compositions made up of floral or abstract geometric motifs with structures accentuated by contrasting colours, usually with the addition of gold and silver threads, were an important vehicle not only for artistic merit. Their production quickly became one of the key businesses driving the economy and trade. An important reason for the high demand was their material value, measured by the worth of the raw materials: silk and precious metals, as well as the considerable complexity of their manufacturing process. For these reasons, silk fabrics had a ceremonial function

4 H. Reindl-Kiel, *The Empire of Fabrics: The Range of Fabrics in the Gift Traffic of the Ottomans, w: Inventories of Textiles – Textiles in Inventories. Studies on Late Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture*, eds Th. Ertl, B. Karl (Wien, 2017), pp. 143–65.

5 Atasoy, Denny, Mackie, Tezcan, *İpek. The Crescent & the Rose*, pp. 197–200.

6 Fabric repeat – distance between repeated elements of a pattern on a length of fabric.

in the Ottoman Empire and were an indispensable part of court ritual. They were used to make magnificent ‘robes of honour’, called *hil’at* (hilat) in Turkey, which diplomats and guests received as a clear sign of the sultan’s power and generosity. By the end of the sixteenth century, this custom had already become more widespread and began to apply even to government officials, who were rewarded with ‘robes of honour’ symbolising the sultan’s favour. Thus, a court ritual based on the reward and salary structure was created around the symbolism, costliness and the almost-religious mystique of silk. In a utilitarian sense, silk fabrics in the form of wall-hanging tapestries, rugs, curtains and furniture covers also had numerous decorative functions in Turkey.

The most important centres of silk fabric production in Turkey developed in cities that were stopping points for merchant caravans arriving from Persia, with which Turkish silk-making workshops were in constant contact, regardless of the political situation. It is from there that raw materials were imported, especially in the early days of the development of manufactories. Bursa gained the greatest trading importance and thus, as early as in the fifteenth century, became one of the richest cities.⁷ In the sixteenth century, in the period of the Ottoman-Safavid wars, the sultan banned trade with Persia, which resulted in limiting the development due to the shortage of raw materials and lack of opportunities for cooperation.⁸ Paradoxically, however, it was at this time that Bursa produced particularly prized fabrics, known as *serâser*,⁹ woven from gold and silver threads and used mainly for the sultan’s ceremonial garments or the ‘robes of honour’, the aforementioned hilats. Shortly afterwards, silk production was developed in Istanbul, where silk workshops were established based on the centuries-old Byzantine tradition, which was assisted there, as in the case of Bursa, by the experience of Persian and, to a considerable extent, also Venetian and Florentine weavers. They mainly turned out *serâser* fabrics and multicoloured brocaded silks, called *kemha*,¹⁰ also intended for clothing.

Kemha and *serâser* were among the most exclusive and expensive products. These were fabrics with expertly designed geometric patterns, often in the form of circles with a large repeat, as well as floral motifs

7 P.L. Baker, *Islamic Textiles* (London, 1995), pp. 85–87.

8 M. Sardar, *Silk along the Seas. Ottoman Turkey and Safavid Iran in the Global Textile Trade*, w: *Interwoven Globe. The Worldwide Textile Trade, 1500–1800*, ed. A. Peck (New York, 2014), pp. 67–70.

9 Fabrics with gold and silver patterns on a silk background, made using the technique called *intricate taqueté*, also known as *weft-face compound tabby*, which involves combining two warps and several wefts.

10 Multicoloured silk fabric made using the *lampas* technique (a compound weave which is a combination of two weaves, each with a set of warps and wefts) and brocaded with metal threads. In Polish sources, it is found under the name *kamcha*.

dominated by over-stylised pomegranates, tulips and carnation flowers, made in the brocading technique with gold and silver metal threads. In addition to the above, Bursa and Istanbul produced widely prized velvets manufactured in many technical varieties,¹¹ comparable in terms of patterns and precision of manufacture to the Venetian velvets known and highly valued throughout Europe.¹²

Oriental fabrics were very popular in the Commonwealth of Poland and Lithuania. From the end of the fifteenth century, trade with the Ottoman state which enabled the increasingly wealthy social elites to satisfy their demand for luxury and exotic goods is confirmed in the sources.¹³ In the late sixteenth century, apart from silk fabrics, Oriental rugs were brought to Poland in large numbers.¹⁴ A significant increase in the importation of such goods occurred in the second half of the seventeenth century. Throughout the sixteenth and the seventeenth century, as transpires from the records in Cracow customs books, the local imports from Turkey and Persia included broadcloth; patterned, mottled, black, crimson and brown velvets; half-velvets; mottled, dyed and black silks; bastard silks, i.e. silks made of inferior quality silk obtained from damaged cocoons; half-silks and ‘excellent Tartar and Turkish *muchajer*’ fabrics. *Kitajka* fabric, of better and worse quality, in the blue, green and red colour was imported in large quantities throughout the sixteenth century; the same applied to camlet and Turkish grobrin, and silk measured by length, litre, charte and loth. The most highly valued and most expensive were velvets, satins, damasks, kincobs and samites.¹⁵ This trade was carried on regardless of the complicated political situation, and during periods of armed conflict, when trade was sometimes hampered, Ottoman wares continued to come to Poland, albeit as spoils of war.

The quantities and types of these fabrics imported into the Commonwealth are known not only from entries in customs books recording the movement of goods, but also from the inventories of ecclesiastical and secular property, letters and diaries.¹⁶ These fabrics were used

11 These included kincobs, velvet brocades, chiselled (*ciselé*) velvets, embossed (*ferronnerie*) velvets, uncut velvets.

12 For more on this topic, see S. Sardjono, *Ottoman or Italian Velvets? A Technical Investigation*, w: *Venice and the Islamic World 828–1797*, ed. S. Carboni (New York, 2007), pp. 193–97.

13 A. Dziubiński, *Na szlakach Orientu...*, pp. 161–65.

14 B. Biedrońska-Słota, ‘Turkish Carpets in Poland. Their Traditional Meaning and Significance for Polish Art’, *14th International Congress of Turkish Art Proceedings*, 2013, pp. 175–82.

15 National Archive in Cracow, *Regestra theloniei civitatis Cracoviensis* [Register of Cracow tariff], 1591–1592, microfilm no. 100178, 100179, years 1589–1772 (nos 2115–2149).

16 *Materiały źródłowe do dziejów kultury i sztuki XVI–XVIII w.*, coll. and ed. M. Gębarowicz, A: *Inwentarze ruchomości* (Wrocław, 1973), ‘Źródła do dziejów sztuki polskiej’ series, vol. 3, see e.g. pp. 98, 114, 126, 207, 227.

to make secular garments, both the characteristic Polish garments, i.e. men's *żupan* and *kontusz* robes, and women's dresses cut in line with the fashion prevailing at the European courts. Many silk fabrics were also imported from Persia and Turkey for liturgical vestments, wall upholstery and draperies. An additional reason for their popularity in the Commonwealth may also have been the fact that they were often woven with the addition of metal threads, gold or silver, which were associated with wealth, and this, in the public perception, improved the splendour of their owners.

Information on the Commonwealth's trade with Turkey is confirmed by the recently published customs registers of Transylvanian towns, hitherto little known and insufficiently used in scholarship. They record the trade in goods along the routes from Istanbul to Yaroslavl, Cracow and Vienna via Sibiu, Braşov and Cluj.¹⁷ This was the route by which Turkish textiles entered the Polish lands in significant quantities. They accounted for 33% of goods entering Poland in the year 1672, 56% in 1673 and 49% in 1683. In 1691, imports of these goods into Poland fell to 12%. This change was most likely caused by the recapture of Buda from Turkish hands and the occupation of the city by the Habsburgs in 1686, resulting in many merchants switching their trade route towards Vienna.

In the Commonwealth, these textiles with expressive patterns were used to decorate interiors and to make garments, which were later often donated to churches and monasteries to be made into chasubles and other liturgical vestments.

The seventeenth century left us with such a large group of Turkish and Persian textiles that they can provide insight into how highly valued they were, how readily they were used in new cognitive contexts, and what influence these Oriental designs had on the development of domestic art. As already mentioned, these fabrics were made in the Middle East for a purpose completely different from that for which they were later used in Poland. This very interesting issue concerns the development of local, Polish creativity and imagination that allowed received patterns to be processed and shown in new symbolic and artistic contexts. Alongside the inspiration of Western art, independent formal solutions were thus created in local art that escaped the ready canons. Confirmation of this suggestion can be found in the fact that in no other European country did Turkish fabrics, similarly to Persian fabrics, find such acceptance and recognition as they enjoyed in the Commonwealth, even before the victory at Vienna.

17 M. Pakucs Willcocks, "'Turkish' Textiles in South-Eastern and East-Central Europe in the Early Modern Period: The Evidence of Transylvanian Custom Accounts', *Journal of Early Modern History*, 21 September 2020, brill.com/view/journals/jemh/24/4-5/article-p363_4.xml?language=en (accessed 3 Aug. 2023).

Brought to the Commonwealth from Turkey and Persia on commission, acquired as spoils of war or donated as gifts, silk fabrics, often in the form of hilats, wall-hangings, embroideries and Oriental rugs, became the most popular interior decorations of palaces, manors and mansions, and even burgher houses. In the Commonwealth, these fabrics, with their distinctive formal solutions, and often being war trophies, gained an additional quality: they conveyed a message of heroism, struggle and victory, and thus acquired a unique symbolic significance.

Kazimierz Sarnecki reported how, in 1691, King John III 'went to the treasury, where he ordered all the old robes and fabrics rich in gold and silver shown to him, and called the tailors. They arrived and started cutting chasubles, antependia and other church paraphernalia from these fabrics'.¹⁸ Members of the more modest estates made similar efforts as well. For example, slightly earlier, in 1669, to the chapel of Domagalicz family in Lviv catholic cathedral 'Madam Anna, the wife of Mikołaj Sieciech, an Armenian lady, donated, [for] an antependium, some Turkish satin: violet, striped and mottled', and in 1678, Jędrzej Modrzewski, the cupbearer of Sieradz, donated to the same chapel 'a chasuble made of a Turkish *telet*, a white one, or a kaftan'.¹⁹ This was, then, the way the impressive and expensive Turkish fabrics circulated, changing owners and functions. Donated to churches and monasteries centuries ago, they are sometimes still kept there today.

The most impressive group among the textiles are chasubles and liturgical copes made on the basis of wall-hangings woven from silk on cotton warp using the velvet brocade technique or from technically similar semi-silk decorative coverings known as *yastic*. This type of fabric, dating from the seventeenth century and also referred to as *çatma* because of its manufacturing technique, is characterised by the composition with a large, single, centrally placed compositional element and arcade motifs distributed along the shorter sides.²⁰ The first group includes robes made of fabrics decorated with large carnation flowers spread out in the shape of gold and silver fans on a dark-red velvet background, originating from the workshops of Bursa and manufactured in the early seventeenth century.²¹ One of them is a cope held in the Diocesan Museum in Białsko-Biała as a deposit of the parish of Sts Margaret and Catherine in

18 K. Sarnecki, *Pamiętniki z czasów Jana Sobieskiego. Dziennik i relacje z lat 1691–1696*, ed. J. Woliński (Wrocław, 1958), p. 148.

19 *Materiały źródłowe do dziejów kultury i sztuki, B: Inwentarze kościelne*, p. 313. 17. *Inwentarz akcesyjny kaplicy Domagaliczów we Lwowie z lat 1645–1702*, p. 313.

20 A. Phillips, 'The Historiography of Ottoman Velvets, 2011–1572: Scholars, Craftsmen, Consumers', *Journal of Art Historiography*, no. 6, 2012, www.academia.edu/2115268/The_Historiography_of_Ottoman_Velvets_2011_1572_Scholars_Craftsmen_Consumers (accessed 3 Aug. 2023).

21 Atasoy, Denny, Mackie, Tezcan, *İpek. The Crescent & the Rose*, pp. 307, 317.

Kęty, dated to between the end of seventeenth and the nineteenth century, made of fabric dating from sixteenth or seventeenth century. According to tradition, it was converted from a caparison donated to this church by King John III.²² It consists of four bands in a loom width of approximately 65 cm each (i.e. a typical width for this type of fabric). They are decorated with silver five-leaved carnations contoured in green; there is also a green outline to the leaves spread around the heart-shaped stalks. A similar pattern, but composed of seven-leaved carnations spread out in the shape of fans, occurs on a wall-hanging in the collection of the National Museum in Cracow dated to the first half of the seventeenth century (inv. no. MNK.XIX-4525) (Fig. 1).²³ It is made up of two joined bands in the loom width, similar to the width of the bands of the cope described above and covered with the same motifs, here arranged in pairs in horizontal rows. In the field of each band, a border runs along the edges, separated from the central field by a narrow stripe. Thus, in the composition of the entire wall-hanging as formed by the joining of



Fig. 1

A wall-hanging, Bursa, first half of the seventeenth century, National Museum in Cracow

22 W. Łuszczkiewicz, *Z wystawy starożytności z czasów Sobieskiego w Sukiennicach. Wrażenia i uwagi* (Kraków, 1883), p. 63; M. Sokołowski, *Wystawa zabytków z czasów Jana III w Sukiennicach w r. 1883* (Kraków, 1884); *Katalog zabytków sztuki w Polsce*, vol. 1: *Województwo krakowskie*, ed. J. Szablowski, no. 1: *Powiat bialski*, p. 16, Fig. 821; Z. Żygulski jun., *Sztuka islamu w zbiorach polskich* (Warszawa, 1989), p. 35, cat. no. 125, Fig. 125; *Odsiecz wiedeńska 1683. Wystawa jubileuszowa w Zamku Królewskim na Wawelu w trzecieście bitwy. Tło historyczne i materiały źródłowe*, vol. 1, eds A. Franaszek, K. Kuczman, vol. 2, eds J.T. Petrus, M. Piwocka (Kraków, 1990), cat. no. 613, Fig. XXVIII; *Tron Pamiątek ku czci „Najjaśniejszego, Niezwyciężonego Jana III Sobieskiego Króla Polskiego” w trzecieście śmierci 1696–1996*, exhibition catalogue, Muzeum Pałac w Wilanowie, 17 June – 30 September 1996 (Warszawa, 1996), p. 164, cat. no. 6, p. 166, Fig. on p. 165–166; *Distant Neighbour Close Memories. 600 Years of Turkish-Polish Relations*, exhibition catalogue, Sakip Sabanci Museum (Istanbul, 2014), p. 143, cat. no. 37; S. Piątek, *Kęty. Miasto świętego Jana Kantego* (Kęty, 2016), pp. 24–25, 67; *Jan III Sobieski. Polski król w Wiedniu*, exhibition catalogue, Österreichische Galerie Belvedere, Wien, Winterpalais, 7 July – 1 November 2017, publ. P. Jaskanis and S. Rolig, eds M. Hohn and K. Pyzel (München, 2017, with a parallel German-language edition), p. 228, cat. no. 91, Fig. on p. 229; B. Kalfas, ‘Konserwacja kapy procesyjnej z Kęt’, *Spotkania z Zabytkami*, no. 3–4, 2019, pp. 46–50.

23 Atasoy, Denny, Mackie, Tezcan, *İpek. The Crescent & the Rose*, Fig. 348; B. Biedrońska-Słota, *Sarmatyzm. Sen o potęgę* (Kraków, 2010), cat. no. 108.



Fig. 2

A chasuble reworked from a wall-hanging, Istanbul, Skutari, second half of the sixteenth century, church of St Adalbert in Kościelec Proszowicki



Fig. 3

A chasuble made from a wall-hanging, Istanbul, Skutari, sixteenth/seventeenth century, church of St Matthew in Klwów

the two bands, the central field was separated from the border running around it, the latter laid out independently of the arrangement of the motifs.

Similar decoration can be found on a cope held in the Carmelite church in the Piasek district of Cracow. According to unconfirmed tradition, it was sewn from a wall-hanging originating from the Vienna booty, made of fabrics dating from the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century. It could have been donated by Jan Wawrzyniec Wodzicki, participant in the Battle of Vienna.²⁴ It was sewn from four bands of typical width in dark-red velvet with motifs of large silver fan-shaped carnations with undivided leaves, decorated with five floral branches. The carnation motifs are set on heart-shaped stalks growing from a branch with small leaves on the sides. All elements, including internal divisions, are highlighted with a green contour.

Another wall-hanging, dated to the second half of the sixteenth century and probably woven in a workshop in Skutari (Üsküdar) on the outskirts of Istanbul (today a district of Istanbul located on the right bank of the Golden Horn), was transformed into a chasuble with auxiliary paraments: a stole, a maniple, a Sacraments purse, a pall and a chalice cover. The chasuble and its paraments, with the exception of the chalice cover, are kept in the church of St Adalbert in Kościelec Proszowicki. The chalice cover was purchased by the National Museum in Cracow in 1985. The fabric, although divided into pieces, presents an extremely expressive composition (Fig. 2),²⁵ composed of motifs of large peacock eyes brocaded with silver and gold threads, arranged in a grid of two in alternating rows on a purple background made in the velvet technique. The chasuble consisted of two workshop bands, similar in width to the previously described fabrics, joined together. Along the

24 *Odsiecz wiedeńska 1683*, cat. no. 615.

25 B. Biedrońska-Słota, *Orient w sztuce polskiej* (Kraków, 1992), cat. no. 1/60, p. 59; ead., *Distant Neighbour Close Memories – 600 Years of Turkish-Polish Relations*, ed. A. Anadol (Istanbul, 2014), cat. no. 44.



Fig. 4

A cope with pieces of a wall hanging, Istanbul, Skutari, early seventeenth century, church of St Catherine in Cracow

edges originally ran a border, delineated similarly to the carnation motif on the tapestry described above, separated from the central field by a narrow silver band. Noteworthy is the peacock-eye or closed crescent motif characteristic of the composition, which can now be associated with the symbol of the Ottoman state.

The church of St Matthew the Apostle in Kłwów owns a chasuble made of a small wall-hanging known as *yastik*, which in Turkish means cushion cover (Fig. 3).²⁶ These wall-hangings were also called Skutari ones after their place of origin, or *çatma* after the method of weaving; they were often wrongly referred to, e.g. in museum inventories, as Skutari rugs.²⁷ The centre field of this wall-hanging, dated to the early seventeenth century, was turned into the back of the chasuble, decorated with typical motifs of large silver seven-leaved carnations contoured in green, arranged in a grid pattern, two to a row, on a red velvet background. At the neckline and at the bottom of the chasuble there is a band with an arcade motif, which in the wall-hanging enclosed the composition along the shorter edges. After the chasuble had been cut out, the right side of the pall, the stole and the chalice cover were made from the remaining pieces of the wall-hanging. In a similar way, the stripe and hood of the cope kept in the church of St Catherine in Cracow was made from pieces of another *yastik* wall-hanging (Fig. 4). These parts were made by carefully joining

26 *Katalog zabytków sztuki w Polsce*, vol. 3: *Województwo kieleckie*, no. 8: *Powiat opoczyński* (Warszawa, 1958), p. 15, Fig. 143; *Tkanina turecka XVI–XIX w. ze zbiorów polskich*, exhibition catalogue, ed. B. Biedrońska-Słota (Warszawa, 1983), cat. no. 107, Fig. XI.

27 Atasoy, Denny, Mackie, Tezcan, *İpek. The Crescent & the Rose*, Fig. 366; A. Phillips, *The Historiography of Ottoman Velvets*.



Fig. 5

A wall-hanging with a Turkish wall-hanging sewn into it, Istanbul, Skutari, early seventeenth century, church of Stanislaus in Żębocin

individual motifs of spreading eight-petalled carnations arranged rhythmically in a field of the wall-hanging. The end of the wall-hanging with its arcade sequence motifs was used on the axis of the cope's stripe and in the hood field to complete the whole. Pieces of the Turkish *yastik* rugs were thus compositionally combined with the covering of the cope, which is of Italian brocaded damask made in a Florentine workshop in the middle of the sixteenth century.²⁸ Another seventeenth-century wall-hanging, also representing the *yastik* type, was used in a different way: reworked into a striking covering for the faldstool located in the church of the Virgin Mary in Cracow.²⁹

Particularly noteworthy is the wall-hanging located in the church of St Stanislaus in Żębocin (Fig. 5). It was

composed differently from the previously described paraments. Its central section is covered with a typical Turkish *yastik* dating from the seventeenth century. It forms the most important central part. This section is framed by two borders. The inner is a trim with golden, embroidered acanthus motifs. Around it runs a wide outer border of red woollen broadcloth, added later, c. 1700. It is decorated with embroidered irregular scroll with densely spaced multicoloured flowers, a typical motif of Polish embroidery of the late seventeenth century. This gave a frame to the central field, i.e. a *yastik* filled with a large peacock-eye motif on a red velvet background, placed in the outline of the niches of two mihrabs with horseshoe arches, joined together by bases. Along the shorter sides run stripes filled with small arcades, which are typical of this type of fabric. The outer border features large symbols of ecclesiastical authority: a crosier and a patriarchal cross, and in the centre, a mitre on the axis of the composition, against the background of the outer border, placed above the *yastik* wall-hanging, on the axis of the composition. The double patriarchal cross may be a clue to linking the place of origin of this artefact with the Benedictine Order on Łysa Góra, from where, after the dissolution of the order in 1853, it may have made its way to the church in Żębocin belonging to the diocese of Kielce.³⁰ Today, it represents an interesting example of the

28 *Tkaniny zabytkowe z okresu od XV do XVII wieku ze zbiorów krakowskich kościołów i klasztorów*, vol. 1: *Tkaniny z XV i XVI wieku*, ed. N. Krupa (Kraków, 2021), cat. no. 34.

29 B. Biedrońska-Słota, 'Niekonwencjonalne dary dla kościoła Mariackiego i sposoby ich zastosowania', in: *Jako serce pośrodku ciała... Kultura artystyczna kościoła Mariackiego w Krakowie*, eds M. Walczak, A. Wolska (Kraków, 2021), pp. 379–80.

30 The origin of this artefact is unknown. T. Chrzanowski and M. Kornecki (*Sztuka ziemi krakowskiej* [Kraków, 1982], p. 475, Fig. 303), referring to the emblem of the Premonstratensian monastery allegedly placed in the frame of the wall tapestry, concluded that

combination and coincidence of forms. But was this the result of a deliberate or accidental procedure?

Turkish art undoubtedly permeated the Polish taste, although without its inherent symbolism. Those large, closed circles in the form of crescents, multi-pointed stars, contrasting colours, gold and silver, all inspired the imagination and may also have contributed to the creation of surprising formal solutions. Their meaning, on the other hand, remains debatable. The large closed crescents may in some contexts have been unequivocally associated in the Commonwealth with the oppressive Turkey and the odious religion of Islam. However, the relationships taking place in the decorative arts are not so easily interpretable, for they took independent artistic paths.

The fabrics and their patterns testify not only to Polish taste and interests, but also to a readiness to accept new forms. A curious detail in confirmation of this is the fact that the name *yastik* was quickly Polonised and is already mentioned as *jastik* (or *jastyk*) in the inventories, the most important of which concern furnishings in the apartments belonging to King John III at Wilanów.³¹ They played a significant role in the interior design of the palace, since the inventory lists them several times, for example: 'Three Turkish *jastyks* for headrests, velvet pattern of various colours, gold bottom, lined with crimson half-silk'³² or 'fourteen *jastyks* for headrests'.³³ It is thus safe to conclude that such fabrics were simply fashionable in the Commonwealth. They were used just as readily in the form of ornaments to add splendour to religious ceremonies as in the form of decoration of the interiors of the royal palace. Undoubtedly, they must also have been eagerly used in various social strata. Traces of this fascination survive in the form of information in the inventories of movable property and, above all, in the form of objects represented in large numbers in Polish museum collections to which they have been donated over the years.

Much less popular in the Commonwealth were the aforementioned *serâs-er* fabrics, woven in the workshops of Istanbul and Bursa, intended for sultan's clothes and gifts. There is every indication that those kept in the Polish collection were brought in the form of hilats, converted after being donated to churches into striking chasubles, for instance those held

it came from the monastery in Hebdów; A. Kwaśnik-Gliwińska (author of the entry in *Ornamenta ecclesiae. Sztuka sakralna diecezji kieleckiej*, exhibition catalogue, directed by K. Mysliński [Kielce, 2000], cat. no. 335) considers it to have originated in Hebdów, while in 1748, it was mentioned as present in Żębocin. See also Biedrońska-Słota, *Orient w sztuce polskiej*, cat. no. II/40.

31 A. Czołowski, *Urządzenie palacu wilanowskiego za Jana III* (Lwów, 1937), no. 297.

32 Ibid., no. 319.

33 Ibid., no. 417.

in the Collection of Votive Art at Jasna Góra in Częstochowa³⁴ or in the church of St Francis of Assisi in Cracow.³⁵ These chasubles have sides with a lattice pattern consisting of large, fan-shaped carnations, golden on a silver background, connected by scrolls. The motifs are contoured in green; the inner outline of the motifs is marked with silver thread and the small flowers placed on the unfolded petals of the carnations are marked with pink silk. A chasuble of similar fabric is also to be found in the Diocesan Museum in Tarnów; its origin is traditionally linked to the Vienna booty.³⁶ In this case, the sides of the *serâser* fabric are decorated with motifs of stylised pomegranates in light green, beige and pale pink. Similar fabrics were also used as striking outer layers for *delia* cloaks, as evidenced by the portrait of Krzysztof Zbaraski (1580–1627), who served as an envoy to Istanbul in 1622. Zbaraski is depicted wearing a *delia* made of a fabric with a large-repeat pattern of golden peacock feathers on a silver background; this pattern and colour scheme indicate that the outer layer of this *delia* had been made of a *serâser* fabric most likely originating from the Turkish hilat.³⁷

Finally, it is necessary to recall the chasubles made of *kemha* kept in the churches and diocesan museums of Cracow. This is a fairly large group of fabrics most often decorated with a floral ornament in a wavy pattern. This includes fabrics with motifs of unfolded carnations. Notable among these is a chasuble with sides made of *kemha* with a pattern of large, expressive *chintamani* motifs, silver on a green background.³⁸

The fabrics described herein represent only a small part of the stock of eastern textiles collected in the Commonwealth, which, readily accepted, influenced the taste and artistic imagination of the nobility, especially in the Baroque era.

Eastern silk fabrics and woollen carpets were imported into the Commonwealth systematically, regardless of the current political mood, the periods of conflict, or pragmatic diplomacy. The Polish nobility saw Turkey as, on the one hand, a large, strong empire with which conflicts should

34 This problem is analysed in detail by M. Piwocka, 'A Turkish Hilat at Jasna Góra', in: *Arma virumque cano. Profesorowi Zdzisławowi Żygulskiemu jun. w osiemdziesięciopięciolecie urodzin*, eds J.A. Chrościcki et al. (Kraków, 2006), pp. 343–50.

35 *Katalog zabytków sztuki w Polsce*, vol. 4, parts 2–1, p. 134, Fig. 922; *Tkanina turecka XVI–XIX w.*, p. 46, no. 77.

36 A. and Z. Pawłowska, „Introibo ad Altare Dei...”. *Paramenty ze zbiorów Muzeum Diecezjalnego w Tarnowie*, exhibition catalogue (Tarnów, 2003), p. 38.

37 For more on such textiles, see Atasoy, Denny, Mackie, Tezcan, *İpek. The Crescent & the Rose*, pp. 220–22, 237, Fig. 157; B. Biedrońska-Słotowa, 'Portret Krzysztofa Zbaraskiego jako reprezentanta Rzeczypospolitej w czasie misji dyplomatycznej odbytej na dworze sułtana Mustafy I w roku 1622', in: *Tendit in ardua virtus. Studia ofiarowane Profesorowi Kazimierzowi Kuczmanowi w siedemdziesięciolecie urodzin*, eds A. Małkiewicz, J.K. Ostrowski, J.T. Petrus, S. Tracz (Kraków, 2017), pp. 197–205.

38 *Odsiecz wiedeńska 1683*, cat. no. 631, Fig. 391.

be avoided, and on the other hand, as an extremely interesting and rich country, sometimes even appealing because of its exoticism and cultural distinctiveness. Interest in Turkish goods in Poland was already significant during the Renaissance. Oriental textiles acquired through trade at that time influenced a change in tastes in the Commonwealth, preparing the response to Turkish art that followed several decades later and providing a stimulus for the development of the trend known as Sarmatism. After all, the fabrics were accepted without resistance by a wide social circle due to tradition, as well as their high quality and recognised artistic qualities. It should be emphasised that textiles, as has already been mentioned, were made in Turkey and Persia from high-quality raw materials: rugs were produced from premium wool or silk, while silk wall-hangings were often woven with the addition of gold and silver threads. They were thus a group of striking silks, velvets and brocades – the richly decorated woollen and silken Oriental rugs.

The fascination with the richness and beauty of Turkish textiles meant that they were disseminated in the form of interior decorations, garments, and the most striking ones were intended for liturgical vestments.

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