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VIENNESE WAR TROPHIES

The rich sources on the military campaign of 1683 that have come down to us make the relief of Vienna one of the best documented historic events, which in addition has been dealt with by numerous historians concerned with political, strategic and tactical questions. On the other hand the problem of weapons, colours of the troops and war trophies have not been tackled frequently enough. The relief of Vienna gave rise to many legends and myths as a result of which many Turkish items in Polish and foreign collections used to be associated with Vienna. And although in regard to both quantity and quality the Viennese booty has no equal in the modern history of war, there is no foundation whatsoever to link some items with event.

In order to gain an idea of the magnificence of the Turkish army at Vienna, we must make recourse not only to accounts of Christian participants, John III first and foremost, but above all to Turkish sources a large proportion of which have already been compiled and published. When reading Turkish documents we can easily discover that in accordance with Islamic ideology the Ottoman state treated war as a sublime, sanctifying condition of the state. Therefore military expeditions were accompanied by extraordinary magnificence and sumptuous ritual.

A genuine picture of the Turkish army could be provided by accounts coming from Turkish sources compared with documents about the military state of the Ottoman empire prepared by L. F. Marsigli, an envoy to the Sublime Porte, and also with iconographic sources, mostly Turkish miniatures and series of drawings by European travellers.

Turkish camps, referred to as cities of tents, constituted not only a refuge for their enormous army. Many tents served as stables, bath-houses, kitchens and store-rooms, all holding inside numerous objects and goods necessary in order to enable such an

enormous concentration of people to function normally. Another group of tents was formed by those occupied by the grand vizier and high dignitaries, which contained the most magnificent works of art and crafts, had their own treasuries, armouries and harems. Such tents were captured by Poles at Vienna, owing to which John III's booty was the most valuable of all. Many of the trophies were distributed by the king among the commanders of the allied armies, while the most precious item, the alleged holy banner of the Prophet - which in fact was rescued from the battlefield by the fleeing Turks - was sent by him to Pope Innocent XI.

The subsequent fate of the trophies brought to Poland was exceedingly complicated and only some Turkish items in Polish possession can be directly associated with the relief of Vienna. Banners were regarded as the most valuable trophies and several of them were brought to Poland and deposited as votive offerings in the Wawel cathedral in Cracow and the Warsaw collegiate church. The Wawel collections boast today five banners brought either by the king or by some regimental commanders, as well as one banner captured in the battle of Parkany, which had been offered to Loretto in Italy and brought to Poland by troops of the Dąbrowski Legions. However the banner deposited in the Warsaw collegiate church has been lost.

Another group of trophies is constituted by buńczuk horsetail insignia of office which were driven into the ground in places selected for bivouac and were carefully protected during battles. They have survived in the Wawel collections, in the church of St. Anne in Cracow and the Treasury of the Jasna Góra monastery in Częstochowa, as well as some of minor value in the Czartoryski collections in Cracow.

A separate group is formed by trophies directly associated with Kara Mustafa, among which particularly noteworthy is the stirrup that Queen Mary, John III's wife, deposited at the altar with the crucifix of St. Hedvig in the Wawel cathedral. In addition, the Wawel collections contain the blade of Kara Mustafa's sword which was sent to Loretto, while the Czartoryski collections have a silver ring and cup from the grand vizier's tent.

The majority of trophies found their way to John III's Żółkiew and then, after the Radziwiłłs took over this property, to Nieśwież. When the Russian army occupied Nieśwież, these items were sent to

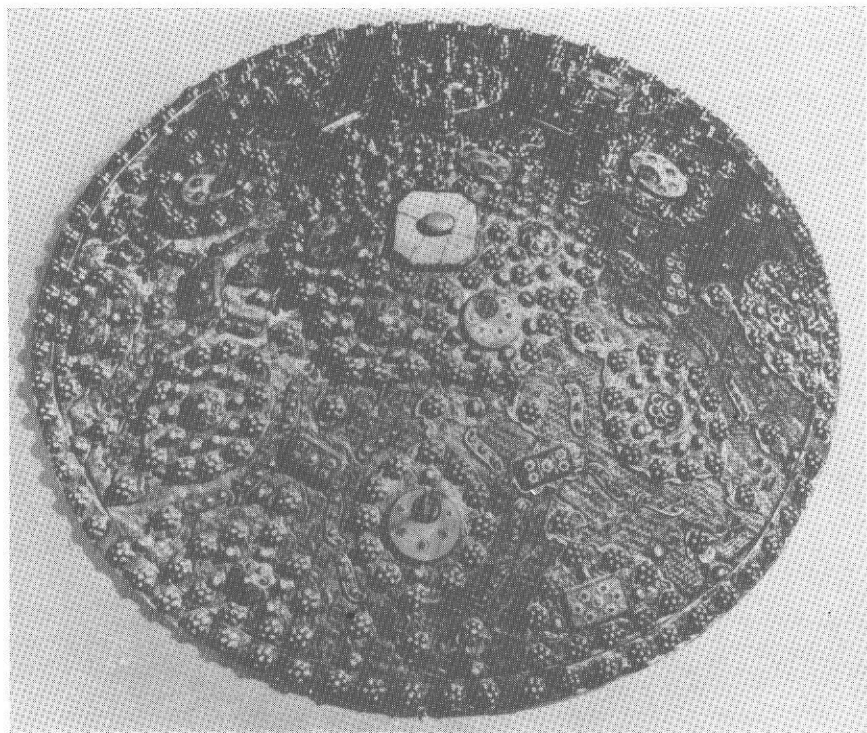
the tsar's collection and following the treaty of Riga in 1921 they returned to Poland, mostly to Wawel Castle.

Today Wawel boasts the largest collection of trophies from Vienna (Fig. 15). The second most valuable collection of such items is to be found in the Czartoryski museum in Cracow which acquired the booty captured at Vienna by Field Hetman Mikołaj Hieronim Sieniawski. Finally the third largest collection is to be seen in the treasury of the Jasna Góra monastery.

The majority of objects captured at Vienna had been produced by renowned Istanbul workshops, some even by masters working for the sultan.

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15. Turkish decorative shield ('kağan') — according to some traditional sources, taken as a booty on the Battle of Vienna. National Collection of Art, Wawel Castle, Cracow