THE EPISCOPAL RING OF WILHELM ATANAZY KLOSKE. AN IMAGE OF THE HISTORIC SOCIAL ORDERS IN POLAND IN SACRAL GOLDSMITHERY

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Abstract

This article discusses the symbolic meaning behind the decoration on Bishop Wilhelm Atanazy Kloske's episcopal ring dating from the nineteenth century, which has been preserved in the treasury of the Metropolitan Cathedral in Gniezno. It is unique due to the miniature figures which support a large amethyst. The figures represent the four estates (or social orders) of the realm: the clergy, the commoners, the knights and the burghers/bourgeoisie. Recently, it has been pointed out they are modelled directly on the nineteenth-century figures in Gniezno Cathedral which support the seventeenth-century reliquary of St. Adalbert (Pol: Wojciech), the principal patron saint of Poland. The author also discusses other objects which may have inspired the decoration: nineteenth-century French rings, and the works of Baroque goldsmiths in Poland, and also points out that the source of these iconographic figures can be found in nineteenth-century art. A more detailed analysis of the meaning behind these figures brings to mind the idea of unity and the patriotism of a traditional society built on the estates of the realm as a force capable of standing up against the country's denationalization by the partitioning powers. The owner of the ring made this idea come to fruition through his social activities.

Key words: *Wilhelm Atanazy Kloske, St. Adalbert, episcopal ring, estates of the realm, eleventh century, Prussian partition*

1. INTRODUCTION

The neo-Rennaissance-Baroque ring of Bishop Wilhelm Kloske, housed in the Archdiocesan Museum in Gniezno, is unique among Polish episcopal rings because of its ornamentation. The massive gold ring has prongs which are ornamented with relief figures. One side bears the coat of arms of the Gniezno chapter—three lilies in a cartouche with double volutes surmounted with the winged head of an angel—while the other side bears a chalice with a radiant host on a pall, surmounted with an archbishop's insignia—a cross, mitre and crosier. The massive form and the high mount of the shallow-cut amethyst are reminiscent of a Renaissance ring. The amethyst is set in platinum encrusted with small eight-sided diamonds, which wrap around the main stone, with six larger diamonds on the outer prongs. The stone is held up by four sculptural figures, carved out of gold, which represent the four estates of the realm: the clergy, the commoners, the knights, and the burghers. The setting, which is the background for these figures, forms filigree semi-circles at head height which are accented at the rim with diamond chips, below are sapphire-coloured enamel plaquettes ornamented with lilies and at the base are diamond-encrusted crescent moons.[1]

[1]I studied Bishop Wilhelm Atanazy Kloske's ring at the Archdiocesan Museum in Gnieznoin 2002. Dimensions: height 3.4 cm, dia. 3.2 cm, mount 2 x 3cm, stone 1.6 x 1.1 cm, height of half figures 1.1 cm. Cast gold, chased, enamel, filigree, granulation, amethyst, 6 diamonds, diamond chips. Markings inside the ring: fineness of gold '750' and jeweller's stamp SG or GS—which Renata Sobczak-Jaskulska deciphered as being the mark of "Gebrüder Schatt in Hanau in Hesse, previously deciphered as "J.P." (R. Sobczak-Jaskulska 2008, p. 154). Archdiocesan Museum in Gniezno.
Museum catalogue card no. 355 of the Archdiocesan Museum in Gniezno states that the ring was made by J. Przączek [according to R. Sobczak-Jaskulskiej it should read: Antoni Przęczek], in the goldsmithing workshop of Stanisław Szulc in Poznań in the years 1929–30;it is stored in the cathedral's treasury. The catalogue card also contains the information that the authors (Adam Bochnak, *KZSwP – Katalog zabytków sztuki w Polsce*) incorrectly stated that the ring was commissioned for Primate Stablewski, while according to the materials and photographs preserved by Danuta Sokolnickanée Szulc, the goldsmith's daughter, it transpires that it was made for Wilhelm Atanazy Kloske; catalogue card no. 355 (1966) in the Archdiocesan Museum in Gniezno was drawn up by Anna Wasilkowska, MA. In the museum's exhibits the ring is described as having belonged to Bishop Wilhelm Kloske, Suffragan Bishop of Gniezno from 1911. The ring was put on display at the exhibition "Szlachetne dziedzictwo czy przeklęty spadek. Tradycje sarmackie w sztuce i kulturze" held in Poznań in 2004/2005 and published in the accompanying catalogue: B. Przybyła (2004), item 354, p. 218. Renata Sobczak-Jaskulska states that D. Sokolnicka's daughter, Katarzyna Męczyńska found the ring designs when preparing for the exhibition "Poznańskie rody i rodziny. Szulcowie" and the accompanying catalogue: K. Męczyńska (2006). R. Sobczak-Jaskulska, based on a preliminary study of the archives held by the family of Stanisław Szulc determined that Wilhelm Kloske's ring was made by the firm "Gebrüder Schatt". This firm, at the request of Stanisław Szulc, supplemented with a photograph of the altar tomb of St. Adalbert, sent a letter

Although this piece of jewellery is unique in Poland because of its form, it belongs to a group of massive, neo-Renaissance rings ornamented with fully sculptural figures which were designed by the best French goldsmiths of the second half of the nineteenth century. The jewellery was made for use by lay people and was characteristic due to the individual manner of presenting the figural motifs depending on the specific iconographical context. Compared with two rings with female figures, one in the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris and the other in London's Victoria and Albert Museum,[2] the Gniezno ring has a more complex but disciplined form, while the figural decoration has been adapted for liturgical use.



Figure 1a, 1b. Ring of Wilhelm Atanazy Kloske,Hanau, Gebrüder Schatt, 1911, Gniezno, Archdiocesan Museum. The figures (from the left) represent: a) commoners, the clergy, b) burghers, knights. Photo Adam Cieślawski (R. Sobczak-Jaskulska 2008, figs. 1, 2)

2. FIGURAL DECORATION ON THE RING: ORIGINS AND SYMBOLISM

The direct prototypes used for the representatives of the four estates (social orders) of the realm on the ring are, as mentioned above, the nineteenth-century figures of a kneeling knight, a member of the clergy, a burgher and a peasant commoner who bear on their shoulders the seventeenth-century reliquary of St. Adalbert—Poland's main patron saint—in the Metropolitan Cathedral in Gniezno.[3]

proposing details for making the ring (R. Sobczak-Jaskulska 2008, translation of the letter on p. 155) and four designs (R. Sobczak-Jaskulska 2008, designs 1–5, figs. 6–9 and 11), on one of which [design 1] were figures of a knight, a burgher, a clergyman and a peasant commoner; she determined which elements of the four projects were used by the Schatt brothers to make Bishop Kloske's ring; (R. Sobczak-Jaskulska 2008, p. 156).
In another article written by R. Sobczak-Jaskulskain collaboration with K. Męczyńską, different information was given, which I will not comment upon: "After the war Stanisław Szulc made a unique summary of the company's [the Poznań watchmaker-goldshmith-jeweller company 'W. Szulc'] achievements – a list of 17 works which he believed to have been his most important creations [with the ring under discussion at the top of the list!]. 1. Ring of the Gniezno suffragan, Bishop Wilhelm Kloske, dated 1911"; K. Męczyńska, R. Sobczak-Jaskulska (2010), p. 131 and p. 127.

[2]Ring with neo-Renaissance figures of kneeling winged women supporting the mounting. Cast gold, emerald, imitation diamonds. It was made by the famous chaser Honoré Bourdoncle for the firm Morel & Duponhel, the neo-Renaissance figures of the winged women were designed by Jean-Baptiste Klagmann, France, 1845–48. Donated by Jules Brateau in 1901 to the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris [cat.] 9507A; A. Ward and in (1987), p. 129, no. and fig. 289.
Ring with figural decoration instead of stone: in a Renaissance arcade, the central figure is of a seated woman playing the lyre with two putti hovering close to her. Gold and cast steel. Designed and made by François-Désiré Froment-Meurice (1802–55), the most famous French goldsmith of his time whom Victor Hugo dubbed the "Cellini of the 19th century". France, dated by Ward to c. 1855, on the catalogue card of the Victoria & Albert Museumto 1854. The modelling was most probably executed by Jean-Baptiste-Jules Klagmann (1810–67). The central group is almost identical to the ring attributed to Klagmann and dated 1844 exhibited at the World Fair held in Paris in 1855. London, Victoria & Albert Museum, [cat.] 2658–1856. Ward et al. (1987), p. 129, no. and fig. 290; *Card Victoria & Albert Museum no. 2658–1856*.

[3]The altar tomb of St. Adalbert was made in 1662 on the initiative of Wojciech Pilchowicz, Suffragan Bishop of Ermland (now Warmia) and canon at Gniezno. He commissioned the reliquary to the famous Danzig (now Gdańsk) goldsmith Peter von der Rennen, son of Reinhard von der Rennen of the Rhineland, who in 1592 became a member of the goldsmiths' guild in Danzig. From the Middle Ages, splendid reliquaries were made in the Rhineland, and St. Adalbert's reliquary was modelled on the coffin of St. Engelbert, dating from 1633 (the work of Konrad Duisbergh) in Cologne Cathedral. The silver coffin of St. Adalbert rests on six silver eagles with outspread wings. It is ornamented with repousséd scenes of his life and martyrdom in oval Baroque cartouches, with inscriptions in Latin and with three cartouches with inscriptions only. Two refer to the worship of the saint and the third bears an inscription regarding its foundation and specifying the makers. A fully sculptural figure of St. Adalbert lays on the coffin lid dressed in Bishop's attire. The base of the coffin is supported by four kneeling figures made in the years 1895–97 by Władysław Marcinkowski. Above the reliquary is a gilded Baroque altar tomb with a canopy which was consecrated in 1684. See *Katedra gnieźnieńska* (1970), vol. 1, pp. 387–89; T. Żuchowski (1995), pp. 266–68; P. Krasny (2000), p. 126.

These sculptures were made in 1897 by Władysław Marcinkowski to mark the 900th anniversary of the saint's martyrdom.[4] Marcinkowski also made use of this subject in his sculpture "Prayer of the Three Estates".[5]



Figure 2a, 2b. Coffin of St. Adalbert (Peter van der Rennen, 1662) resting on figures representing the four estates (W. Marcinkowski, 1895–97), Gniezno, Cathedral.
Photo http://images.polskaniezwykla.pl/user/item/40481.jpg (accessed 16/06/2016), http://www.kalejdoskop.h2.pl/kujawy/2007-kujawy/DSC_4018.JPG (accessed 16/06/2016)



Figure 3. Władysław Marcinkowski, *Prayer of the Three Estates*, 19th/20th century, Poznań, Archdiocesan Museum; Photo https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/d/d7/Modlitwa_Trzech_Stanow,_Poznan.jpg /240px-Modlitwa_Trzech_Stanow,_Poznan.jpg (accessed:16/06/2016)

[4]Władysław Marcinkowski (1858–1947) was a sculptor who made portraits, busts and sacred sculptures. He began his apprenticeship at the Wieczorowa Szkoła Rysunków i Modelowania [Night school of Drawing and Modelling] in Poznań under Marian Jaroczyński, and then studied in Berlin under A. Wolf and F. Schaper and in Paris at the Académie Julian and in the studio of Cyprian Godebski. In 1907 he came to live in Poznań; *Encyklopedia sztuki polskiej* (2001), p. 372.

[5]The plaster sculpture depicts half figures of a priest, nobleman and peasant commoner kneeling side by side on a church bench, 147 x 60 cm, 19th/20th c., Archdiocesan Museum in Poznań; S. Tomaszkiewicz, A. Wójcik, W. Przewoźny (1987), p. 12.

Marcinkowski acquired his passion for portrait poses and realistic detail from Cyprian Godebski (1835–1909), a sculptor educated and active in France who was an exponent of Naturalism and eclecticism, but rejected Impressionism.[6] The goldsmith had to make some simplifications in order to transpose the figures depicted on the altar tomb of the saint into miniature versions, yet he preserved their essential features and clothing. The main difference between the sculptured figures holding up the reliquary is that they are kneeling while those on the ring are embedded into the base of the ring at hip-height.

The figures holding up the coffin on the altar tomb—which were transposed onto the ring—are part of a long tradition used in goldsmithery which consists of depicting fully sculptural figures which carry or support the most important element of a work of art. Taking into consideration the possible prototypes—both iconographic and inspirational—allows us to fully decipher the symbolic meaning of the episcopal ring. Modelled on the coffin of St. Adalbert in Gniezno, that of St. Stanisław in Kraków[7] is supported on the shoulders of four angels. More than one hundred years later, a monstrance in the shape of the Ark of the Covenant carried by four High Priests of Israel was made for the Poznań Cathedral. Marcinkowski undoubtedly knew both works.



Figure 4. Monstrance, Warsaw, Jan Jerzy Bandau I, late 18th century, Poznań Cathedral. Photo http://pu.i.wp.pl/k,MTAyNjQ4NzAsNDU3NTAxMDM=,f,279682_wy11_big.jpg (accessed 16/06/2016).

The meaning of the statues on the altar tomb and the figures on the ring are closely related. When creating his figures of the four estates of the realm, Marcinkowski sacralized them, endowing them with a similar function as that of their Baroque originals. Also noteworthy is the introduction of commoners into high culture—in this case a sacred work of art—but lateral so into secular works; an example is a no-longer existing statue of Adam Mickiewicz, once in Poznań, which depicted the figure of a boy (holding an urn—a symbol of the past) and a girl (presenting the poet with a bouquet of flowers) dressed in folk costumes at the bard's feet.[8]

[6] *Encyklopedia sztuki polskiej* (2001), p. 174.
[7] Coffin of St. Stanisław, Peter van der Rennen in collaboraton with Jakob (?) Jäger, Danzig, 1669–71, Kraków Cathedral; J. Samek (1988), p. 133, fig. 134.
[8] Added by Marcinkowski during the renovation of the statue in the years 1903/4; see Z. Grot (1998).

As on the altar tomb of St. Adalbert, the figures on the ring, representing the four estates, were symbolically made equal: isocephalic figures of the same height sharing the weight of the symbolic burden of their heritage and hope of resurrection. Although their effort is equally important it is differently expressed (as shown by the differences in their appearance).

Above the Bishop's coat of arms are a peasant commoner and a member of the clergy portrayed side by side. The figure representing the peasant is wearing simple linen clothes, trousers, a shirt without cuffs tied with a wide studded belt and a scarf tied loosely about the neck. The similarity between the attire of this figure to that of the Hutsuls (e.g. the trumpeters in Zygmunt Ajdukiewicz's engraving)—an ethno-cultural group of Ukrainians inhabiting the Eastern Carpathian Mountains—is probably a result of the frequent depictions of this particular ethnic group in Polish art at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth century.



Figure 5. Władysław Marcinkowski, *Peasant*, sculpture on the altar tomb of St. Adalbert, 1895–97. Photo *Święty Wojciech. 997–1897* (1897), fig. unnumbered.

Figure 6. Zygmunt Ajdukiewicz, *Hutsul trumpeters*, print, detail.
Photo https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sros#/media/File:Huzulen_03.jpg (accessed 16/06/2016)

The priest praying with hands folded and bowed head covered with a zucchetto, is wearing an amice, rochet (a kind of surplice worn by the higher clergy) trimmed with wide lace on the sleeves and at the hem, a stole cut so that the ends flare out (on the statue they are arranged evenly), and a cope. The liturgical attire and zucchetto indicate he is a bishop; Macinkowski's sculpture bears the features of Archbishop Florian Stablewski, who was the Polish Primate when the statue was made.



Figure 7. Władysław Marcinkowski, *Member of the Clergy*, sculpture for the altar tomb of St. Adalbert, 1895–97. Photo *Święty Wojciech. 997–1897* (1897), fig. unnumbered.

Figure 8. Bolesław Łaszczyński (1843–1907), Portrait of Archbishop Florian Stablewski (1841–1906), undated, signed "*B. Łaszczyński*".
Photo https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/7/72/Florian_Stablewski.PNG/220px-Florian_Stablewski.PNG (accessed: 16/06/2016)

On the opposite side, above the cartouche with the emblem of the Archdiocese of Gniezno, are a burgher or member of the bourgeoisie and a member of the *szlachta* (exonym: nobility). The representative of the bourgeoisie wears a long over-garment (coat) lined with fur with a turndown shawl collar and wide sleeves rolled back at the wrist to show the fur lining, which was fashionable in the seventeenth to eighteenth century. It is not belted, perhaps a reference to the old Polish injunction which forbade the bourgeoisie to gird their *kontusz*, to distinguish them from the *szlachta* (they were allowed to wear a belt with the *żupan*, a kind of robe worn by men underneath the *kontusz*). Similar garments of various forms were worn throughout the whole of the early modern period by both the *bourgeoisie* and the *szlachta*.[9] More elaborate garments, not typical of those worn by burghers or members of the bourgeoisie, tell us of the elevated rank of this estate.

[9]E.g. Prince Witold Czartoryski of Gołuchów in light coloured *żupan*and *kontusz*with split sleeves and lined with fur. On his head he wears a fur hat with an aigrette and plumes. Visible are the sirwal-type trousers tucked into high leather boots. Photograph taken in the studio of Walery Rzewuski in Kraków; 3rd Rempex photographic auction, cat. no. 108, November 2005. Photo http://ubioryhistoryczne.blox.pl/resource/Rzewuski_Walery.jpg (accessed: 16/06/2016)



Figure 9. W. Marcinkowski, *Burgher*, sculpture for the altar tomb of St. Adalbert, 1895–97, Photo *Święty Wojciech. 997–1897* (1897), fig. unnumbered.

Figure 10. Prince Witold Czartoryski of Gołuchów (1877–1911).
Photo http://ubioryhistoryczne.blox.pl/resource/Rzewuski_Walery.jpg (accessed: 16.06.2016)

The member of the *szlachta* in hussar half armour wears a cuirass (covering his torso), pauldrons and bracers, a heart-shaped gorget (instead of a bevor—which is the piece of armour depicted in Marcinkowski's sculpture).[10] The so-called ridge (which caused the opponent's weapon to slip) relates to an older type of Hussar armour (which Zbigniew Bocheński dated to 1640–75).[11] The round depressions on the edge of the gorget are reminiscent of trimmings with folk motifs which ornamented an early type of armour.[12] Gorgets were worn by the Polish cavalry in the eighteenth century, usually during the Bar Confederation (1768–72) and were the mark of an officer until 1831.[13] The schematic outlines of the decoration on the gorget are more reminiscent of the shield of a coat of arms than a devotional object (at that time most often the Immaculate Conception). Depicting early modern Hussar armour clearly points to the upper echelons of national enlistment. "It should always be borne in mind that the Hussars in Poland recruit only the most affluent and most ambitious members of the *Szlachta*, and they are an object of admiration by and delight to foreigners, of which there is much evidence in history."[14]The last banners of the Hussars were liquidated by decision of the Sejm in 1775,[15] and for future generations, living under the partitions, they became a symbol of an independent Poland.

The knight is holding his right hand to his chest, a gesture associated with oath swearing, while the left holds a sabre (a kind of melee weapon used for thrusting) with the blade pointing downwards.[16] Its shape is reminiscent of the *szczerbiec*—the name given to the Polish coronation sword.[17] The arrangement of the hands shows his commitment to defending the whole of society and to representing it by the upper echelons of society. The depiction of archaic armour instead of Polish national dress (consisting of a *żupan*, *kontusz* and wide cloth belt which the *szlachta* at that time were still using as their finest attire)—underlines the *szlachta*'s noble lineage and role in history. The figure of the knight

[10]The knight on the ring is not wearing a zischagge (lobster-tailed pot helmet) or wings, which were the most characteristic element of the hussars' uniform (they were attached to the back of the armour and reached high above the head of the wearer and during a charge the whishing sound they made caused fear among the enemy).
[11]Z. Bocheński (1960), pp. 15–16.
[12]Z. Bocheński (1960), pp. 22 and 42ff.
[13]*Słownik terminologiczny sztuk pięknych* (2003), pp. 178–79, 184, 274 and 359.
[14]A. Maryanowski (1939), p. 96.
[15]Z. Bocheński (1960), p. 50.
[16]*Słownik terminologiczny sztuk pięknych* (2003), p. 197.
[17]See Z. Gloger (1978), vol. IV, pp. 307–08.

also alludes to St. Adalbert himself. According to Gall Anonym, on the eve of the consecration of Gniezno cathedral, the saint appeared in the form of an "armed man on a white horse", to chase away the Pomeranians, who had sneaked into the city.[18]

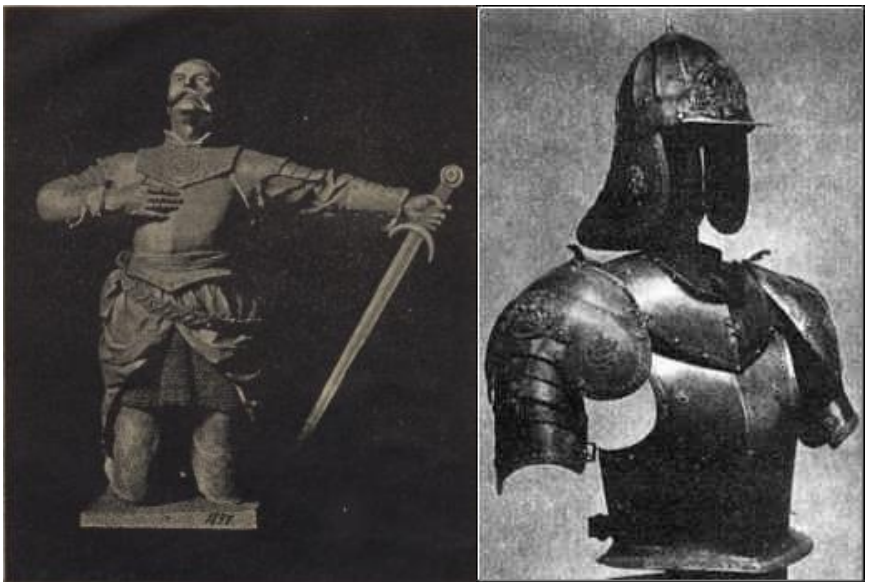


Figure 11. W. Marcinkowski, *Member of the Szlachta*, sculpture on the altar tomb of St. Adalbert, 1895–97, Photo *Święty Wojciech. 997–1897* (1897), fig. unnumbered.

Figure 12. Hussar's armour, State collections at Wawel; Photo Z. Bocheński, *Ze studiów nad polską zbroją husarską*, "Rozprawy i Sprawozdania Muzeum Narodowego w Krakowie" 6, 1960, p. 44.

St. Adalbert's reliquary contains the saint's mortal remains. According to Gall Anonym these bodily remains of the martyr—whose life and death were modelled on the life of Christ—were purchased by Bolesław the Brave from the Prussians "for the equivalent of their weight in gold".[19] This interpretation was depicted for the first time in art on the doors of twelfth-century Gniezno Cathedral which to this day is the most important work of art depicting the life of St. Adalbert.[20] Bishop Kloske's episcopal ring, however, contains a relic of the Holy Cross donated by Tadeusz Szulc, the older brother of Stanisław.[21] Thus the ring's decoration makes a direct reference to Christ, and therefore acquired a more universal character.

Because the ring is modelled on the altar tomb of St. Adalbert, the symbolism used on it should be examined in relation to the saint. The main motif of the reliquary—the figure of a bishop rising from his coffin—not only illustrates the legend about the quartered body of St. Adalbert miraculously being made whole again but also the Christian belief in resurrection, and looking further into the future, also the idea of the rebirth of an independent Poland. The ring was set with an amethyst, known as the "bishop's stone"—used traditionally in the insignia of ecclesiastical authorities—instead of a miniature coffin as originally intended.[22] According to the words of St. Paul (1 Tim 3,2–5),[23] an amethyst signifies a bishop's virtues and so the ring symbolizes St Adalbert—a bishop who

[18]Gall Anonym (1975), Book 2, [6] *Cud św. Wojciecha*, pp. 70–71.
[19]Gall Anonym (1975), *Zaczyna się kronika i dzieje książąt i władców polskich. Przedmowa*, [6] *O pierwszym Bolesławie, którego zwano Sławnym lub Chrobrym*, p. 19.
[20]See *Drzwi gnieźnieńskie* (1959).
[21]T. Szulc, *Pamiętniki*, quoted after: R. Sobczak-Jaskulska (2008), p. 155.
[22]"Cztery męskie postacie: polskiego szlachcica, kapłana, mieszczanina i chłopa w miniaturze, i tu miały podtrzymywać maleńką trumnę, której wierzch stanowić miał wielki ametyst jak ozdoba pierścienia" [Four males figures: a Polish member of the *szlachta*, a clergyman, a burgher and a peasant in miniature, and they were to have carried a small coffin, the lid of which was to have been a large amethyst as in the decoration of the ring]; quoted after: R. Sobczak-Jaskulska (2008), p. 155.
[23]K. Bogacka (in print).

personified these virtues. The fact that the first patron saint of Poland guaranteed the Polish church would be independent of all rulers except the Pope, and also guaranteed the independence of the state, became a national symbol of hope during the partitions and reminded people of the origins of their patriotism. The 900th anniversary of the death of St. Adalbert drew in huge crowds of Poles,[24] instilling in them a sense of unity.

On the one hand, the figures that decorate the ring illustrate traditional society, and on the other they alluded to the reality of the then current situation in Poland. It is largely just another version of Marcinkowski's project of 1895. It depicts representatives of the four estates of the realm carrying the coffin of Poland's patron saint; its weight symbolizes their joint burden of responsibility for safeguarding national and religious values and their heritage, and for passing them down to future generations. A symbolic dimension has been added by showing them in a kneeling position thus making all the figures the same height thereby illustrating their reverence for and humility in relation to the mission of the church.

3. THE SOCIO-HISTORICAL CONTEXT BEHIND THE DECORATION OF BISHOP KLOSKE'S RING

The iconography of the estates of the realm on the altar tomb and ecclesiastical ring stems from an idea introduced into Polish art in the nineteenth century. Polish historicism was associated with the "elevation" of the past: old Polish culture or rather Sarmatism, which was an essential element of this culture. Realism, however, demanded that historic costumes, whether they be contemporary or archaic, should be accurately portrayed.[25]The people who commissioned these works—such as the sculptures on the altar tomb in Gniezno and the episcopal ring under discussion—like their makers and the recipients, were aware of this message and its historical and social context. The figures depicted personify the estates of the realm as they existed in Polish lands between the thirteenth and nineteenth centuries. In the first period of Poland's statehood (eleventh–thirteenth century) the models adopted from Western Europe were only just being adapted to local reality. Knights were the dominant social order like in other countries. One of the more important differences was that Polish feudal relationships did not develop in the same way as in the rest of Europe. As a social order, the class of knights was also shaped in a very specific manner; although it was a social stratum, it was not a homogenous one as it brought together people of very diverse financial standing ranging from wealthy magnates to people with lineage but no land and no money who were known as the *szlachta* "*szaraczkowa*" [grey *szlachta*]. Members of this social order had to be born of noble lineage—the underlying factor which bound them together—and so in the thirteenth century it became a closed social order.[26] In fact the poorest nobles became peasant commoners, while peasant commoners also penetrated into the of the nobility. Moreover, before the *szlachta* estate assumed the personal obligation to defend the country, it even shared this obligation with peasant commoners who owned land and therefore were subject to the code of chivalry. From the Middle Ages, the rural commoners played a very important role in Poland which was traditionally an agrarian country.

Just before Poland lost its independence, the Constitution of 3 May 1791—the second after the USA, and the first in Europe—guaranteed Catholicism a primary role in Poland and, in the three articles which followed, gave rights to the three secular estates of the realm: the *szlachta*, the burghers/bourgeoisie and the rural commoners or peasants.[27] The way in which the lawmakers defined the estates of the realm was how Poles began to perceive themselves because, after the loss of their independence in 1795, the importance of the constitution dwelled deep in the consciousness of the oppressed nation. The effect achieved in Marcinkowski's sculptures (and later in the figures on Bishop Kloske's ring) was either intentionally or unintentionally consistent with the wording of the Constitution. As far as the *szlachta* was concerned, it related to their duty to defend the country and to

[24]K. Śmigiel (1995), pp. 338–39.
[25]T. Dobrowolski (1957), pp. 342ff.
[26]See I. Ihnatowicz,. A. Mączak, B. Zientara, J. Żarnowski (1999), pp. 142ff.
[27]*Konstytucja 3 maja* (1791).

invoke the virtues representative of this social order: "We recognize the *szlachta* as the foremost defenders of liberty and of the present Constitution. We charge unto the virtue, citizenship and honour of every member of the *szlachta* the reverence of its sanctity and the safeguarding of its durability, as the sole bulwark of the country and of our liberties." The Constitution guaranteed the freedom of cities "as a law that provides new, genuine and effective force to the free Polish *szlachta* for the security of their liberties and the integrity of our common country". The peasantry were granted legal protection from the state and the Constitution also declared "complete freedom to all persons on Polish soil".[28]

In the nineteenth century, the governments of the partitioning powers refused the Poles the right of self-determination. Even if steps were taken towards enfranchisement,[29] it was the Polish peasants who felt the restrictive measures. In the Prussian partition, where establishing new farms was prohibited, the case of Michał Drzymała, who lived in a circus wagon because he was unable to build a house on his own land, was well known. Nevertheless, the likeness of the peasant as portrayed on the altar tomb of St. Aldalbert and Bishop Kloske's ring relates to the iconography of this estate in other parts of Poland and Europe, but not in Prussia.

In the thirteenth century a new social stratum developed—the burghers or middle class, largely formed of people arriving from Germany and other countries who contributed to the development of the various trades, and later industry.[30] Furthermore, and particularly since the reign of Kazimierz the Great, Poland had been a refuge for Jews and, since the Reformation, for religious dissenters too. The non-indigenous inhabitants lived mainly in towns and cities. Magnates built their palaces in cities, where the 'middling' *szlachta* also resided, while the poorer members of the *szlachta* came to do commerce or to trade. In Wielkopolska, where the *szlachta* owned vast herds of sheep, those who could not compete with their competitors—due to the fragmentation of their farms—moved to the towns where they became merchants.[31] The city or town was also the place where an education could be acquired. Due to losing their opportunities to cultivate their present way of life, in the second half of the nineteenth century the *szlachta* were forced to obtain an education and a profession which would enable them to pay for the upkeep of a residence in town. Although this déclassé *szlachta* fed the ranks of the intelligentsia, political and financial barriers hampered or even prevented their entering the middle classes or bourgeoisie (which was often not of Polish origin). Marcinkowski portrayed the likeness of a proud and prosperous burgher/member of the bourgeoisie as being similar to a member of the *szlachta*, as did the maker of Bishop Kloske's ring who took Marcinkowski's work as his model.

At the end of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, when both works of art were made, society based on estates or social orders was in the last phases of its existence. The changes taking place at that time: industrialization, urbanization and the development of towns, science, and public life associated with such changes, formed the basis for the creation of a class system. In Wielkopolska, where two of Poland's historical capitals—Poznań and Gniezno—were located, the Prussian partitioning powers attempted to force a permanent union of Polish and Prussian lands.[32] In this

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[28] *Konstytucja 3 maja* (1791)

[29] "Zasadnicze znaczenia dla chłopów miało wprowadzone w XIX wieku uwłaszczenie czyli przekazanie im na własność prawa do posiadanej od wieków przez nich ziemi, oraz zniesienie obciążeń feudalnych, głównie: pańszczyzny i dziesięcin, oraz innych darmowych prac. Uwłaszczenie chłopów miało miejsce we Francji w latach 1789–1794, w Prusach w latach 1807-1872, w Austrii w 1848, w Rosji w 1861 i w Królestwie Polskim w 1864." [For the peasants, the fundamental importance was the introduction in the nineteenth century of enfranchisement or the transfer of property rights to the land they had held for years, to abolish feudal burdens, in particular serfdom and tithes and other free work. In France the peasants were enfranchised between 1789 and 1794, in Prussia in the years 1807–72, in Austria in 1848, in Russia in 1861 and in the Kingdom of Poland in 1864]; I. Ihnatowicz, A. Mączak, B. Zientara, J. Żarnowski (1999), p. 19.

[30] See Z. Gloger (1978), vol. 3, Warsaw 1978, p. 206.

[31] See Z. Gloger (1978), vol. 2, pp. 246–47; Z. Gloger (1978), vol. 4, pp. 319–20; "Zasadnicze znaczenia dla chłopów miało wprowadzone w XIX wieku uwłaszczenie czyli przekazanie im na własność prawa do posiadanej od wieków przez nich ziemi, oraz zniesienie obciążeń feudalnych, głównie: pańszczyzny i dziesięcin, oraz innych darmowych prac. Uwłaszczenie chłopów miało miejsce we Francji w latach 1789–1794, w Prusach w latach 1807–1872, w Austrii w 1848, w Rosji w 1861 i w Królestwie Polskim w 1864." [For the peasants, the fundamental importance was the introduction in the nineteenth century of enfranchisement or the transfer of property rights to the land they had held for years, to abolish feudal burdens, in particular serfdom and tithes and other free work. In France the peasants were enfranchised between 1789 and 1794, in Prussia in the years 1807–72, in Austria in 1848, in Russia in 1861 and in the Kingdom of Poland in 1864]; I. Ihnatowicz, A. Mączak, B. Zientara, J. Żarnowski (1999), p. 19.

[32] For example, at the turn of the century"fala germanizacji nauczania religii w szkołach spowodowała, że arcybiskup Stablewski prosił w licznych pismach interwencyjnych przedkładanych władzom prowincji, rządowi pruskiemu i cesarzowi niemieckiemu o zaniechanie całkowitej germanizacji szkoły. Nie osiągnąwszy zmiany polityki pruskiej, zwrócił się 17 grudnia 1901 r. do papieża Leona XIII, prosząc o pomoc. W odpowiedzi rząd pruski oskarżyła Stablewskiego o sprzyjanie sprawie polskiej" [the wave of Germanization in the religious teaching in schools resulted in Archbishop Stablewski writing numerous letters asking for the authorities in the provinces, the Prussian government and German emperor to cease the complete Germanization of schools.

situation the Poles strove to preserve their unity, despite the difficulties caused by the various interests of the individual strata of society fuelled by the socialist movement. The Polish Catholic Church also gave their support by defending the rights and identity of Poles against the authorities of the partitioning powers. The Archbishops of Gniezno and Poznań were unpopular in their dioceses because of their judicious pursuit of a settlement; however—but only as a last resort (e.g. when the Prussian authorities wanted to limit the sovereignty of the Holy See)—they adopted radical measures which put them at the risk of further restrictions by the partitioning powers. The Archbishop of Poznań and Gniezno, and Polish primate, Mieczysław Halka-Ledóchowski,[33]and his successor Florian Stablewski[34] are good examples of this type of conduct.

Wilhelm Atanazy Kloske (10 January 1852–12 May 1925)—a Silesian, and the son of a farmer, Antoni Fuchs and his wife Henryka—the owner of the episcopal ring under discussion, was also later involved in activities on behalf of the Poles. During his study of theology (1873–76) at the Higher Seminary in Breslau (now Wrocław) he was active in the Polish national movement; he was even President of the Society of Polish Upper Silesia (1875–76). When the Prussian authorities closed the University, he completed his studies in Prague, where he was ordained (in 1877). Because the authorities forbade him to take up pastoral work, he worked as a tutor for Count Ignacy Mycielski in Smogorzewo (1877–1882). He spent the next few years (1882–84) as secretary to the Reverend Asmann, the Bishop's delegate in Berlin, and later as a vicar and prefect in a Realschule (1884–87). He lifted the spirits of Polish émigrés by hearing confessions and preaching to them in their native tongue.[35] On returning to Poznań he taught religion at the St. Mary Magdalena Gymnasium (1888–1901), where he earned the students' gratitude.[36]He briefly worked as the parish priest in Jaksice (1902–1903). In 1903 he was appointed canon of the Gniezno chapter and rector of the Higher Seminary in Gniezno. From 1904 he was preacher for the cathedral, and from 1908 held the office of judicial vicar. Despite his patriotic activities (he belonged to the Polish "Straż" [Guard] Society) he accepted the Prussian Order of the Red Eagle Class IV and came out against the celebrations of the 500th anniversary of the Battle of Tanenburg (Pol. Grunwald), which met with criticism from Poles. On 29 December 1910 he was nominated bishop of Theodosiopolis and suffragan bishop of the Archdiocese of Gniezno. As he himself reminisced, as a Silesian who had come from Berlin, he was welcomed very coldly in some circles. On 19 February 1911, he was ordained bishop in Gniezno Cathedral.[37] It was during the ceremony that he received his episcopal insignia from former students:

On the occasion of his consecration, the oldest of his students then endeavoured to express their gratitude. The priests he had taught offered him a valuable pectoral cross, and his secular pupils [from the St. Mary Magdalen Gymnasium] a splendid episcopal ring. By chance, I witnessed a deputation of pupils from the Gymnasium offer him their gift and through the intermediary of today's Ambassador to Paris, Mr. Alfred Chłapowski, express their feelings. Their recognition and warm gratitude were truly moving. "Despite their youthful recklessness and concentration broken because of a thousand things going on outside—said Chłapowski, who spoke for the pupils—young people are able to assess, and in their mature years gratefully remember, what someone did for their spiritual lives."[38]

Unable to achieve any changes to Prussian policy, on 17 December 1901 he wrote to Pope Leo XIII asking for help. In response the Prussian government accused Stablewski of favouring the Polish cause]; K. Śmigiel (1995), pp. 338–39.

[33]Ledóchowski was imprisoned (in 1874) because he opposed the Act of 1873 which made the Church dependent on the state.

[34]Archbishop Stablewski was involved in the defense of teaching the Polish language and religion in schools, he founded and supported journals and Catholic societies, he supported clerics who sought mandates in Parliament where they defended the Polish cause. He was not publicly involved (and forbade the clergy to do so), in defending the Polesfrom persecution until the proclamation of 8 October 1906; K. Śmigiel (1995), pp. 338–39; see also K. Śmigiel (1994), pp 219–31.

[35]"Górnoślązak. Pismo codzienne, poświęcone sprawom ludu polskiego na Śląsku" 19 May (1925).

[36]"Śp, biskup Kloske uczył niezmiernie praktycznie, zachęcał chłopców do pobożnych ćwiczeń, uzbrajał do walki z wrogim duchem świata na przyszłość, kładł podwaliny pod charaktery ludzi o chrześcijańskim prawdziwie poglądzie na świat i zadania życiowe. Był prawdziwym przyjacielem i szczerym opiekunem uczącej się młodzieży, występował często w obronie chłopców na konferencyach nauczycielskich, zwłaszcza gdy polskim uczniom groziła — a to zdarzało się dość często — dla ich narodowości niesprawiedliwość ze strony szowinistycznie usposobionych profesorów." [The late Bishop Kloske taught in a very practical way, he encouraged boys to engage in pious exercises which gave them the ability in the future to fight the hostile forces of this world; he laid the foundations for people with a truly Christian outlook and approach to life. He was a true friend and sincere guardian of these young people. He often defended the boys at teachers' meetings, especially when they were threatened—which happened rather often—by the injustices to their nation by chauvinist-minded teachers], 19 May 1925.

[37]A. Targ (1967–1968), pp. 10–11.

[38]"Górnoślązak. Pismo codzienne, poświęcone sprawom ludu polskiego na Śląsku" 19 May (1925); "Gazeta Toruńska" (1911), R. 47 no. 169.

As a bishop, Wilhelm Kloske was clearly a Polish patriot, as can be seen by his activities: "he supported Polish organizations, he underlined his Polish origins and, in particular, encouraged young people to cultivate Polish as their language". In 1921 when visiting his home town during the Upper Silesia plebiscite, mandated by the Treaty of Versailles to determine the border between Germany and Silesia, he called upon his fellow Silesians to vote to remain in Poland.[39]

4. CONCLUSION

As far as Wilhelm Kloske, who was nominated bishop, is concerned, it could be said that originally the ring, decorated with likenesses of the four estates of the realm, did not so much symbolize his Polishness and commitment to the Polish cause as the enthusiastic expectations of the donors. It was, above all else, a sign of the heritage into which the new suffragan bishop of Gniezno was entering. Nevertheless, when Wilhelm Kloske diedin 1925, his life-time achievements were an indication that the iconographic decoration of his ring represented his involvement in both national and social affairs.

Depicting the four estates of the Polish realm—as a symbolic message—on an episcopal ring, can be understood on several levels. On a personal level it is an allusion to the Bishop's peasant upbringing and his choice of vocation and to the noble and bourgeois origins of his pupils and students. On a religious level, it showed society united in prayer, professing the same faith in which, in Poland, St. Adalbert has always been an important figure.

The relationship between the spiritual sphere and commitment to social issues expressed in the decoration of the ring are also a reference to the ideas contained in the encyclical *Rerum novarum* issued on 15 May 1891 by Pope Leo XIII. This document was Christianity's response to the rise of socialism and communism as ideologies which were gaining increasing support, especially among the emerging working classes. Instead of the class struggle proclaimed by Marx, the encyclical advocated solidarity, both among the social orders, and the spiritual (the Church) and secular (the State) authorities. (And as has already been mentioned, the Polish clergy endeavoured, as far as possible, to take care of the interests of the Church and the faithful without coming into conflict with the authorities of the partitioning powers.)

In relation to Polish socio-political realities in the nineteenth century, the figures decorating the ring, like Marcinkowski's sculptures—on which the ring was modelled—symbolized the unification of the Poles against Germanization which encompassed virtually all spheres of life. The meaning was clear to those living in the period when the Romantic hope of regaining independence was lost (the fall of the Wielkopolska Uprising in 1848, the January Insurrection in the Russian Partition in 1864, the Unification of Germany and the rise of the German Empire in 1871). Positivism and the idea of organic work were adopted at that time, because, although it was a slower method of achieving the objectives, it was a more certain way of rebuilding Poland's economic position, as well as science, learning and culture. The doctrine of "praca u podstaw" (work at the grassroots) was adopted by the educated and was to be applied to all four estates. The idea of a free Poland which was cultivated in literature and art, as well as goldsmithery, came to fruition in 1918.

[39]A. Targ (1967–1968), p. 11.

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