

DYNASTIC IDENTITY, DEATH AND POSTHUMOUS LEGACY OF SOPHIE JAGIELLON (1522–1575) IN CONTEMPORARY SOURCES

DUŠAN ZUPKA

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The daughter of King Sigismund I of Poland (1506–1548) and Queen Bona Sforza (1518–1548), Sophie Jagiellon (1522–1575) is one of the most remarkable figures among the important women of the 16th century. Like her sisters of the Jagiellonian family, she served as a representative of the Polish ruling dynasty and as a guarantee of good relations in the field of dynastic politics and contemporary diplomacy. This study aims to explore the diverse forms of her identity as captured by contemporary sources. We will gradually focus on the reconstruction of her dynastic identity as a royal daughter living in the milieu of the Holy Roman Empire of the German nation, her position as the wife of the eminent imperial aristocrat Henry of Brunswick, and then address issues related to her death and, above all, her posthumous legacy and place in collective memory in the centuries that followed. The long-standing dynastic, legal and economic dispute between Sophie's heirs in Poland and in the territory of the Holy Roman Empire, which significantly shaped the regional political situation after her death, will also play an important role.

Keywords: Sophie Jagiellon. Dynastic identity. Death. Posthumous commemoration. Heritage. Poland. Germany.

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The multifaceted concept of identity has become one of the dominant trends in current historiography and it is being reflected also in the medieval and early modern studies. The medieval identity/identities represent a vivid and fruitful research strand that brings up-to-date analysis and interpretations of individuals, families, dynasties, ethnic and political communities.¹ The present paper attempts to examine, analyze and interpret the various forms of identity

1 For the conceptual framework and methodological approaches see GEEVERS – MARINI, eds. *Dynastic Identity in Early Modern World. Rulers, Aristocrats and the Formation of Identities*. London 2015; HUMMER. *Visions of Kinship in Medieval Europe*. Oxford 2018; PLESZCZYNSKI et al., eds. *Imagined Communities. Constructing Collective Identities in Medieval Europe*. Leiden and Boston 2018; BARTLETT. *Blood Royal. Dynastic Politics in Medieval Europe*. Cambridge 2020.

of a Jagiellonian princess Sophie (1522–1575) who became the duchess of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel.² The examination will be conducted in three directions: the regnal and dynastic identity expressed during the wedding negotiations and celebrations, the local ruling identity exercised during Sophie's reign in her new homeland and finally, the identity of this extraordinary personality preserved in the long-lasting fight for her legacy that was fought after her death between her successors both in Poland as well as in the Holy Roman Empire.

Life

Sophie was the last of the regiment of Jagiellonian princesses married into Holy Roman Empire at the verge of the 15th and 16th century in the context of a directed dynastic nuptial policy of the Jagiellonian dynasty.³ She was, at the same time, probably the most outstanding one. Sophie (1522–1575) was the daughter of king Sigismund I (1506–1548) and Bona Sforza (1518–1548). Sophie received proper Italian Renaissance education, and learned several languages. After 1548 she moved with her mother and sisters to Ujazdów close to Warsaw, where they led a common family life until she was 34 years old. After refusing the offer from Albrecht of Prussia, in 1556 she was married *per procuram* in Warsaw with Henry II the Young of Brunswick-Lüneburg (66 years old) of the Welf family—this wedding also became the last family meeting of Jagiellonians. According to the wedding contract Sophie was to bring Henry 32 000 guldens, and she had to renounce all her rights in Poland-Lithuania. After coming to Wolfenbüttel, she established her own court with at least 27 Polish courtiers recorded in the sources. Because they married in an advanced age, there was no expectation for having any children, and Sophie seems to have been understood and reconciled with Henry's relation with his long-aged mistress. Sophie led an independent political life, was active in local as well as Polish affairs, she kept a lively

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- 2 The best study on Sofie written by Jan Pirożyński is still unparalleled and serves as a starting point for every historical examination. Cf. PIROŻYŃSKI. *Herzogin Sophie von Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel aus dem Hause der Jagiellonen (1522–1575) und ihre Bibliothek*. Wiesbaden 1992.
 - 3 BORKOWSKA. *Pacta matrimonialia domu Jagiellonów*. In *Roczniki Humanistyczne*, 2000, Vol. XLVIII, no. 2, p. 45-60; BISKUP. *Die dynastische Politik der Jagiellonen um das Jahr 1475 und ihre Ergebnisse*. In *Österreichische Osthefte*, 1976, Vol. 18, no. 3, s. 203-217; BUES. *Die Jagiellonen. Herrscher zwischen Ostsee und Adria*. Stuttgart 2010; BACZKOWSKI. *Wokół projektów mariaży dynastycznych Jagiellonów w końcu XV wieku*. In BACZKOWSKI, ed. *Polska i jej sąsiedzi za Jagiellonów*. Kraków 2012, p. 305-328; DUCZMAL. *Jagiellonowie: Lekykon biograficzny*. Kraków 1996; GAŚSIOR. *Dynastische Verbindungen der Jagiellonen mit den deutschen Fürstenthäusern*. In OMILANOWSKA and TORBUS, ed. *Tür an Tür. Polen – Deutschland 1000. Jahre Kunst und Geschichte*. Katalog der Ausstellung im Martin-Gropius-Bau Berlin, 23. September 2011–9. Januar 2012. Köln 2011, pp. 212-217.

correspondence with leading figures of religious and cultural life of her time and collected an outstanding number of books and art objects in her Schöningen residence. As the only member of the Jagiellonian royal family she converted to Lutheranism, which brought her severe criticism back home. Sophie died in May 1575 in Schöningen and was buried in Wolfenbüttel.⁴

Wedding

In August 1555 Henry the Young of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel sent a proposal to marry a Jagiellonian princess. On the 18. 8. 1555 the embassy of Henry got first warranty he will be given a daughter of Sigismund the Old, the next embassy in September was already in official talks with Bona and king Sigismund II August (1548–1572).⁵ At that time the Duke of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel was 66 and Sophie 33 years old. In all probability this was meant to be a purely strategic union, which was supposed to establish alliance between the houses of Brunswick and Poland on the one hand, and to provide the German groom with a glance and glory which could be gained only by connecting to a royal house.

Sophie's repeated illness threatened the wedding but finally she got healthy, and an agreement between Sigismund August and the German embassy was made, stating that a per procuram engagement ceremony will take place in Warsaw, later to be officially confirmed in Catholic manner in Wolfenbüttel. The wedding contract followed traditional scenarios and stated all the issues of money, wedding gift and legacy, plus the inheritance rights of the children, if there would have been any born from the union.⁶

In January 1556 Sophie left Warsaw for Wolfenbüttel with a large retinue (around 500 people, including a bishop, and officials of the court, all the members and her women court). Upon her arrival to Wolfenbüttel a ceremonial *adventus*⁷ has been staged, the bride has been welcomed by Henry. Several

4 LILIENTHAL. *Die Fürstin und die Macht. Welfische Herzoginnen im 16. Jahrhundert. Elisabeth, Sidonia, Sophia*, Quellen und Darstellungen zur Geschichte Niedersachsens 127. Hannover 2007, esp. pages 247-256; PIROŻYŃSKI, *Herzogin Sophie*, pp. 1-30.

5 *Jagiellonki polskie w XVI. wieku*. Vol. I. Ed. Aleksander Przezdziecki. Kraków 1880, Vol. 2, pp. 215-225, and Dogiel CDP, PIROŻYŃSKI, *Herzogin Sophie*, p. 33. See the report (*De Matrimonio Illustrissimae Zophiae Reginulae Poloniae cum Illustri Principe Henrico Brunswicensi Duce*) to the senators written by Sigismund August on the negotiations and his will to give the hand of his older sister to Henry of Brunswick. BJ 175.1, page 209, dated to 1555.

6 Cf. *Confirmatio contractus matrimonialis per legatos ducis Henrici*, DOGIEL. *Codex diplomaticus Regni Poloniae* 1, pp. 484-5. All the relevant documents including the wedding contract, dowry issues, and expenses for the expedition to Wolfenbüttel are in BJ 175.1, pp. 213-263. Further sources are listed in PIROŻYŃSKI. *Herzogin Sophie*, p. 36, footnotes 12-16.

7 For ceremonials attached to royal, princely and dynastic weddings see PASTRNAK. *Dynasty*

eyewitness accounts tell us precious details about Sophie's coming – the arrival of an entourage counting altogether 463 people on 558 horses must have caused upheaval all over its way from Warsaw to Wolfenbüttel. One mile before the town proper, Sophie has been welcomed by Henry, his son Julius, together with a bishop and princes, numbering 400 riders in total. This great retinue then proceeded with their entrance to the city gates staging a ceremonial *adventus* full of splendour and glory. According to eyewitness' accounts Sophie made great impression on the public as she and her retinue drove on two golden carriages pulled by horses with golden harness, while the Princess herself was ornated with pearls, gold and precious stones. The informant noted that she was of short height, and couldn't speak German, but was able to communicate in Italian and Latin.⁸ Doubtless, Sophie's *adventus* into Wolfenbüttel was a consciously staged ceremony with the sole goal – to give a ritualised symbolic representation of her identity, the royal origin and noble birth and also the of the wealth, all of which were deriving from the fact that she was the daughter of late King Sigismund and sister of current Polish King Sigismund August.

Then the wedding proper took place between 22th and 25th February 1556, the Catholic nuptial rites were performed by the Archbishop of Halberstadt, followed by signings of all contracts and documents between Henry and Sophie. This was followed by a lavish feast and a tournament. After all the formalities have been done, Sophie was left with 27 people as her Polish court and the rest of the cortège returned home.⁹

in Motion: Wedding Journeys in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe. Routledge 2023; for the *adventus* ritual and its significance see ZUPKA. *Ritual and Symbolic Communication in Medieval Hungary under the Árpád Dynasty, 1000–1301.* Leiden and Boston 2016.

- 8 The detailed account was preserved thanks to the letters of local judicial officer Ulrich Meier who reported on the events only few days after they took place. “*die Konnigin aus Polen mit Namen Zophia gennant am vergangenen Sunnabent hie ankomen mit grossem pracht, statlichem geschmuck, furret durch die polnischen heren, zweyen ganzen vergulldenden wagen sampt dem gezeuch, darin die pferde gengen gezogen umb und anne gehabt alles ubergult gewesen, darzu die kunnigin von geedlen steinen, perlen und golt als geschmuckt gewesen, das ichs nit zuschreiben weiss.*” NStAW, 1 Alt 23, Nr. 2, Fol. 122r. “*Die herzogin gar kein Teutsch sonder Ithalienisch und voll Latheinisch kann. So ist die herzogin auch keine grosse sonder eine kleine Person.*” NStAW, 1 Alt 23, Nr. 2, Fol. 122v. Both quotations are from PIROŽYŃSKI, *Herzogin Sophie*, p. 40, footnote 36 and 37.
- 9 Unfortunately, no direct description of the wedding ceremony proper has been preserved, so we have no information which would allow us to judge whether any dynastic rhetoric was used in its course. What we are informed of in great detail are the contracts signed between the spouses, the detailed list of the belongings of Sophie which she brought to Germany and also on the people who constituted her court in Wolfenbüttel. For more see PIROŽYŃSKI, *Herzogin Sophie*, pp. 42-48. In a very similar way this is described also in LILIENTHAL. *Die Fürstin und die Macht. Welfische Herzoginnen im 16. Jahrhundert. Elisabeth, Sidonia, Sophia, Quellen und Darstellungen zur Geschichte Niedersachsens 127.* Hannover 2007, esp.

Identity

The second daughter of Sigismund the Old and Bona Sforza, Sophie, lived most of her first 33 years in close connection to her parents, brother Sigismund August, sisters Catharina, Anna, Isabella and half-sister Hedwig. Most of these years she spent in Warsaw, Krakow or Ujazdów. On her wedding day, she was already a mature, self-conscious and respected figure with developed regnal and familial/dynastic identity. She was praised by contemporaries for her great erudition, wisdom and practicality when it came to affairs of the state and the ruling family. She proved these capacities during her long sojourn in Holy Roman Empire, and especially, after 1572 in the last three years of her life, which were marked by intensive activity to rescue the royal throne for the remaining Jagiellonian sisters, as well as for attempts for securing the inheritance after Sigismund August. In short, in the course of these events we are able to spot several occasions where Sophie's dynastic identity came to be visible.

Not like most of the royal and princely daughters, who were sent to their husband's courts in a relatively young age, Sophie came to Wolfenbüttel when she was in her mid-30s, as mentioned above.¹⁰ She came to a foreign country, with a foreign customs and language, she did not master before 1556, although she quickly learned it and used it in her correspondence. Nonetheless she never lost her Polish identity and never felt at home in her new place of living.¹¹ Sophie acted as an emissary to Sigismund August and later to the Polish senate as she was lobbying for them with her husband Henry, as well as with other princes in Holy Roman Empire. This "dynastic" support was two sided as could be seen in the events after the death of Duke Henry (d. 1568). Sophie had to move to her

pages 247-256.

- 10 The first wife of Henry, Maria, was 19 years old at her wedding. Cf. ALGERMANN. *Wahrfafftiger vnd in bewerten Historien wolgegründeten bericht Dieser Genealogien oder Stambaums des Hochlöblichen Uhaltten Fürstlichen Hauses Brunschweig und Lüneburg*. Heinrichstadt/Wolfenbüttel 1584/1590. Reprinted in BAUER, *Wurzel, Stamm, Krone*, pp. 134-135; *Braunschweigische und Lüneburgische Chronica*, 4 Vols., Magdeburg 1584-1585, Vol. I, p. 292, (fol. r131).
- 11 "And because Her Grace (half-sister Hedwig) as well as myself are completely foreign and unknown in these countries and do not know where to look for consolation, advice, protection, and demands from anybody else but God and Your Royal Highness (Sigismund August)..." Letter of Sophie to Sigismund August from January 1571. Reprinted and translated in *Royal Marriages of Princes and Princesses in Poland-Lithuania 1500-1800*. Companion Guide. Warsaw 2016, p. 59. Cf. the letter of Sigismund August from November 1570 in which he speaks about these matters and hints at the fact that Sophie is writing her letters in German. PRZEZDZIECKI, *Jagiellonki Polskie* III, pp. 171-175. In a letter to Emperor Maximilian II Sophie describes herself as "eine ausländische ... und verlassene arme Wittwe, unter frembden und unbekanten Nation dieser Lande gesesen", PRZEZDZIECKI, *Jagiellonki Polskie* V, p. 184.

dowager castle in Schöningen, but still had to face the hostility of her step-son Julius. The dowager Duchess has been helped not only by Sigismund August, but also by her brother-in-law Joachim of Brandenburg (spouse of her half-sister Hedwig) and by Emperor Maximilian II (1564–1576) (all of them have been related to Sophie by blood).¹²

The only case in which Sophie wasn't following the dynastic tradition of the Jagiellonians was her conversion to Lutheranism in the early 1570s. The Polish royal house was always closely connected to the Catholic Church and Sophie became the first member of the Jagiellonian lineage to publicly renounce Catholic faith and supported the new Protestant religion spreading vehemently in northern German provinces. Sophie's conversion was soon the matter of gossip and talk throughout the ruling courts in Europe. At first people were refusing to believe to this unheard-of step from the Jagiellonian Princess, some were trying to persuade her of her error and some pointed to the unpleasant consequences of this step not only for her but also for the royal lineage. The following examples should illustrate how dynastic rhetoric has been used in these cases. In his reaction to Sophie's alleged conversion in August 1570, the Polish royal secretary Łukasz Podoski wrote that he is hoping the rumours about her conversion are false and speaks about the Catholic faith of her predecessors (*zacnych przodków, świętych królów i apostołów*).¹³ In a letter most probably written in late 1572 her sister Anna was raising her worries about the possible consequences of Sophie's refutation of the Catholic Church for their joint (dynastic) goals in the Neapolitan legacy struggle. In this respect the agency of Sophie was seen as to be contradicting the dynastic interests.¹⁴ The most famous rebuke came from Cardinal Stanisław Hosius in his letters where he straightforwardly criticized Sophie for breaking the venerable religious tradition of the Jagiellonian "dom", a deed none of the glorious royal lineage ruling Poland for almost 200 years had dared to do:

*"...jako do tego czasu żadnemu potomkowi zacnego domu Jagiellowego, który już bez mała dwieście lat w Polsce króluje, nie dopuścił obłądną owcą być i od powszechnego kościoła się oderwać, ... tak też i W. Ks. M., któraś też jedna jest z tego tak zacnego Jagiellowego domu, także w tej stałości wiary chrześcijańskiej, którą już od sześćuset lat w Polsce przyjęto, zachowywać raczy."*¹⁵

And he repeated his plea again in 1574:

12 cf. PIROŻYŃSKI, *Herzogin Sophie*, pp. 50-56.

13 NStAW, 1 Alt 23, Nr. 116, fol. 22r – 24r. Quoted by PIROŻYŃSKI, *Herzogin Sophie*, p. 82.

14 NStAW, 1 Alt 23, Nr. 114, fol. 5r.

15 Letter form 25.10. 1570. PRZEZDZIECKI, *Jagiellonki Polskie III*, p. 167.

*“Co żeby tak było, jako tego nie życzę, tak mi się téż wierzyć nie chce, aby W. K.s. M. pierwsza chciała być, któraby tą tak szkraradną makulą...ten tak sławny dom Jagiellonów miała pomazać.”*¹⁶

Sophie took over this rhetoric mostly as she acted as the head of the remaining Jagiellonian sisters after the death of Sigismund August in 1572. She supported Ernst Habsburg for the throne and wanted him to marry Anna, and she also fought for the execution of the testament of her deceased brother according to which Sophie, Anna and Catherine were supposed to partially inherit all the possessions from him. The Brunswick Duchess sent an enraged letter to the Polish Senate, as she and Hedwig were not notified about the death of Sigismund August: *“wir sind als Polinnen geboren, Wappen und polnische Namen haben wir auch jeder andere von unseren Eltern ererbt”*.¹⁷ Sophie was prevented to travel to Poland by her prolonged sickness, and her emissaries sent there were not very successful either, but the Duchess never ceased to send more letters and instructions. For instance, she wrote to the Polish royal council in January 1573 speaking of the Jagiellonians who ruled over Poland for last 200 years. This proved to be the golden age for the country and Sophie rhetorically asked how great would it be if a small branch of them could still be found.¹⁸ In another highly interesting letter to Catherine she wrote that the Polish noblemen have forgotten the deeds of the House of Jagiello (*domu naszego Jagielowego*) and neglect the testament of Sigismund August and so they want to do injustice to Sophie and Catherine by taking from their hands the justice of their fatherland.¹⁹

Similar expressions of Sophie's identity are to be found in several other documents. In a letter to sister Catherine, written after 1572, she mentions that together with the sadness about Sigismund August's death they have to add the fact that in him the male kin/lineage (*naród*) of the famous king Jagiello, their predecessor, ended.²⁰ In another letter, sent to bishop Stanisław Karnkowski on the 3rd of April 1573 we read: *“Jagiello and his lineage (naród) ruled well...for 200 years ...and are you not supposed to show us respect and thanks as to his*

16 Dated on 25.12.1574. PRZEZDZIECKI, *Jagiellonki Polskie* IV, p. 199.

17 NStAW, 1 Alt 23, Nr. 112, fol 6. Quoted by PIROŻYŃSKI, *Herzogin Sophie*, p. 108.

18 Ibidem.

19 *“panowie Polacy zapamiętawszy dobrodziejstwa domu nasego Jagielowego i testamentu jego K. M. ... chcę W. K. M. i mnie krzywdy czynić iż nas chcą oddalić a prawie z rękę naszych wydrzeć sprawiedliwość ojczyzny naszej.”* NStAW 1 Alt 23, Nr. 113, Bl 32r. Concept undated. Quoted by PIROŻYŃSKI, *Herzogin Sophie*, p. 111.

20 *“Ku której tej żalościej a smutku takowemu to przybywa, iż już u jego (Sigismund August) królewski...skończył się naród męski sławnego króla Jagiella przodka naszego”* NStAW, 1 Alt 23, Nr. 114, Bl. 28v. Pirożyński does not provide with the date, but obviously it was written after 1572. PIROŻYŃSKI, *Herzogin Sophie*, p. 114.

inheritors?”²¹ and again in another place Sophie speaks about the fact she knows from who she comes from and of what status her predecessors were and how she is praised by noble people.²² As mentioned before Sophie was very sad from the fact that her and her sisters’ rights have been not taken seriously in her Polish homeland. According to Jan Pirożyński this was one of the major factors of her premature death in 1575. The desperate state of mind of the Brunswick Duchess is witnessed by a peculiar source – by her own hand-written notice on a paper, found among the papers she left in Wolfenbüttel: “*what have I done to my people so that it tries to disinherit me?*”²³

Sophie’s identity was expressed not only in her letters, but can be traced also in other objects related to her, most of which are to be found in the Wolfenbüttel archives and libraries studied previously in great detail by Jan Pirożyński. She was a great collector and lover of art and books as witnessed by her famous library and the rich collection of art objects. Sophie had kept paintings of several members of her family. Among religious matters (books on religious and ecclesiastical matters compose majority of the titles in her library), the Duchess showed great interest in history of Poland and in political issues related to European affairs. Many of these were provided with her exlibris, monograms and coat of arms. On the books Sophie had her monogram HS and the year of purchase of the object for example HS1569 or 15HS69 (meaning *Herzogin Sophie*). The exlibris and inscriptions referred to her double Polish/royal and Brunswick/ducal identity/office.²⁴

The interest in her family’s history was present also before the death of Sigismund August and the extinction of the male line of the Jagiellonians. For

21 “*Abowiem iż sławnie panował i dobrze rządził i użytecznym był Jagiello i naród jego W. M. i przodkom W. M. o dwieście lat, i cóż ażebyśmy, my uczciwe potomstwo jego powinna wdzięczność, przyjaźń i sprawiedliwość od W. M. odnosić nie mieli?*” PRZEZDZIECKI, *Jagiellonki Polskie* IV, p. 41.

22 PIROŻYŃSKI, *Herzogin Sophie*, p. 114.

23 “*narodzie mój miły, cóżemci uczynił, abo czymci to zasłużył, iż mię chcesz oddziedziczyć*”. NStAW, 1 Alt 23, Nr. 117, Fol. 3. Quoted by PIROŻYŃSKI, *Herzogin Sophie*, p. 111.

24 “Zophia//Z BOZEY LA//SZKY KROLEW//NA POLSZKA//XIEZNA BRVN//SZWICKA Y//LVNEMBVRG//1562”; “*Evangelie://Polskye//iey;Milosc(i)//kr(ol)ewnye;Zophiei; SOPHIA DEI GRATIA I FANS REGNI POLONIAE BRVSVI ET LVNE DVX*”. An exemplar of Luther’s Bible from 1569 was provided with Sophie’s coat of arms – Polish eagle and HS, Lithuanian Pogon, Bona’s Dragon, and eagle with initials HS again. The inscription followed: “*Sacra Biblia principis Illustrissimae Sophiae diuina gratia, natae region ex Stem(m) ate Polonico Ducissae Brunswicensis uiduae incliti herois Henrici Iunioris piae memoriae Ducis Brunswicensis et Lunenburgensis.*” An anonymous work from 1573 was sent to Sophie: “*Nayasznyszey Jey Krolewszkiej Mczi Polskiej, Kxiezie Jey Mczi Brwnszickiej y Lunembvrskiej the kxiaszky nalieza.*” All these examples with references to sources are provided by PIROŻYŃSKI, *Herzogin Sophie*, pp. 159-181.

instance, in 1569 her step-son Duke Julius asked her to help him to decorate the Epitaph of her late husband Henry with a genealogy of the Polish royal lineage “*des hochloblichen Kuniglichen Polnischen Stammens Genealogia*”. Sophie answered that she will ask Sigismund August to get the genealogy for Julius²⁵. Again in 1573 Julius asked his emissaries to get books from Poland, including a “*polnische Genealogia*”. In this manner books on Polish history and political situation were brought to Wolfenbüttel, among them three of major importance: Marcin Kromer’s *De origine et rebus gestis Polonorum*, Jan Herbut’s *Statuta regni Poloniae*, and Jan Herbut’s *Chronica sive historiae Polonicae compendiosa descriptio*.²⁶

All the said gives evidence that Sophie was programmatically developing her identity and she was active in respect to the past, present and future of her lineage. She actively took part in the struggle for the Polish throne after 1572 and made many efforts to keep the Jagiellonians or their relatives in power. This was witnessed by her lobbying for Duke Ernst Habsburg who was supposed to marry her sister Anna. Sophie saw him as the best candidate as he also had Jagiellonian blood (his grand-mother was Anna Jagiellon, daughter of Vladislav Jagiellon, king of Bohemia and Hungary).²⁷ She wanted to keep her memory both in the territory of the Holy Roman Empire by establishing religious and charitable institutions²⁸ and in her fatherland as she ordered a Jagiellonian genealogy to be carved in the St. Cross chapel of the Wawel Cathedral.²⁹

25 “*Wan wir dan dazu des hochloblichen Kuniglichen Polnischen Stammens Genealogia, die wir an dag auch gern haben möchten, noch in Mangel stehen...so bitten wir demnach... Ewer Gnade und Liebden wollen...an...Iren...bruder...schreiben, befurdern und bitten, damit Ewer Gande und Liebden...solche...kunigliche polnische Genealogia bekommen.*” Quoted by PIROŽYŃSKI, *Herzogin Sophie*, pp. 152-153. Original in NStAW, 1 Alt 23, Nr. 8, Fol. 20r. For the Brunswick genealogies cf. GÖBLER. *Chronica und Historien der Braunschweigischen Fürsten Herkommen*. Frankfurt 1566.

26 PIROŽYŃSKI, *Herzogin Sophie*, pp. 154-156.

27 For the Jagiellonian-Habsburg relations and dynastic connections cf. SUCHENI-GRABOWSKA. *Zu den Beziehungen zwischen den Jagiellonen und den Habsburgern: Katharina von Österreich, die dritte Gemahlin des Königs Sigismund August. Historisches Jahrbuch der Stadt Linz 1979*. Linz 1980, pp. 59-100. Sophie expressed her preferences to Ernest also in her last will: “*ut Austriacus sufficiatur tamquam qui ex gente et lumbis tam regnum illorum priorum quam Jagellonicae maternum ducat genus.*” NStAW, 1 Alt 23. Nr. 77, Fol. 160r.

28 The hospital in Schöningen was supposed to be a vestige of the Duchess’ person and her noble royal origin as interpreted by her confessor Lazarus Arnoldi in his funerary oration: “*Sie wollte da ein gedechtnis machen, das eine geborne Königin aus Polen, und ein fürstliche wittwe von Braunschweig alda gelebet und hoffgehalten hette.*” PIROŽYŃSKI, *Herzogin Sophie*, p. 255.

29 “*Ut sese quoque in maiores sous demortuos gratam et observantem exhibeat, quorum sepulcra nullis monumentis sunt conspicua, iubet fieri monumenta marmorea varia cum suis epitaphiis, quae singula commemorare longum esset. Verum in sacello aviae suae omnia vult,*

Death and legacy

Duchess Sophie of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel was the first Jagiellonian who used this name in 1573. Throughout her life Sophie was trying to promote her royal Polish descent, the fact that she was born as a Queen of Poland. After marrying Henry the Young of Brunswick she acquired the local identity and led almost an independent life as a duchess in her Schöningen castle in company of her mixed Polish/German court. In her testament written in 1558 she expressed the usual perception of her identity as “*Sophia Dei gratia Poloniae reginula ac Braunschvicensium ac Luneburgensium ducissa etc.*”³⁰ After the death of Sigismund Augustus Sophie was one of the main promoters of the newly discovered Jagiellonian dynastic identity. This could be observed not only in her attempt to memorialize herself by founding a hospital in Schöningen, in her numerous letters, but also in a peculiar document she wrote just a month before her death in April 1575. The so-called Codicil, which was supposed to work as her new testament (the old one was invalid after the death of her husband Henry in 1568), was written in two parts. The Polish Codicil was to express Sophie’s wishes about her legacy in Poland-Lithuania and in this document she expressed her desire for a marble genealogical table of the Jagiellonians (*gentis Iageloniae genealogia*) to be carved in the Holy Cross Chapel in the Wawel Cathedral in Krakow next to the tomb of her grandmother Elisabeth of Habsburg.³¹ In the German part of the Codicil Sophie hints at the familial consciousness which bound the Jagiellonians with the second generation of children born from the marriages of Sigismund’s daughters with princes in Holy Roman Empire. For example, she mentions the children of her step-son Julius who married Hedwig of

ut gentis Iageloniae pubetenus exstet genealogia ex marmore sculpta et erecta sacellumque ipsum debite ornatum.” NStAW, 1 Alt 23, Nr. 77, Bl. 154-161v. PIROŹYŃSKI, *Herzogin Sophie*, p. 264

- 30 Preserved in manuscript in Wolfenbüttel (NStAW, 3 Urk. 1, Nr. 9, 3 Blt.). Edited and published as *Das Testament der Herzogin Sophie vom 28. Mai 1558* in PIROŹYŃSKI, *Die Herzogin Sophie*, pp. 258-261. Sophie also mentions her sisters and mother Bona in usual family manner: “*duabus sororibus nostris Annae et Catherinae*”, p. 258; “*serenissimam ac illustrissimam felicis recordationis dominam Bonam, natam ex ducibus Mediolani ac Poloniae quondam reginam, matrem nostrum carissimam*”, p. 260.
- 31 *Das Kodizill der Herogin Sophie vom 24. April 1575*. Copy made by Stanislaw Czarnkowski in 1584 is preserved in Wolfenbüttel (NStAW, 1 Alt 23, Nr. 77, Bl. 154-161v.). Published in PIROŹYŃSKI, *Die Herzogin Sophie*, pp. 262-266. “*Ut sese quoque in maiores sous demortuos gratam et observantem exhibeat, quorum sepulcra nullis monumentis sunt conspicua, iubet fieri monumenta marmorea varia cum suis epitaphiis, quae singula commemorare longum esset. Verum in sacello aviae suae omnio vult, ut gentis Iageloniae pubetenus exstet genealogia ex marmore sculpta et erecta sacellumque ipsum debite ornatum.*” *idem*, p. 264. Later Sophie stresses the Jagiellonian-Habsburg dynastic connection, *idem*, p. 265.

Brandenburg (died 1602), the daughter of her half-sister Hedwig the Jagiellonian (died 1573) as they share the same blood (“*tanquam sanguinem nostrum*”).³²

Sophie died in 1575, but she was not be forgotten.³³ Not only because of her great erudition, proverbial wisdom or the vast circle of friends and correspondents. Above all, Sophie left a real fortune both in material goods (vast library, precious art objects, and garments) and in money. Almost immediately after the Duchess’ death a struggle began for the enormous legacy left in her Schöningen residency known in historiography as the “*Polen contra Braunschweig*” case which lasted for almost 100 years (1575–1672).³⁴ Throughout the lasting of the conflict Dukes Julius, Henry the Younger, Henry Julius, Frederick Ulrich, August the Younger, Rudolph August involved in the case on the Brunswick side, while Queens and Kings Anna, Catherina, John Bathory, Sigismund III, Ladislaus IV, John Casimir, Michael Korybut Wiśnowiecki were the protagonist on the Polish side. To her wedding in 1556 Sophia brought 32 000 florins as dowry, which she recovered after her Husband Henry the Younger’s death in 1568, plus she brought rich trousseau worth 100 000–150 000 thalers, silver-ware, carpets and jewels. She got from her husband a wedding gift of 10 000 florins plus annual interest of 4266 florins and dowry of another 666 florins on the wedding gift, later inherited 50 000 ducats from Bona’s inheritance, after Henry’s death also 100 000 thalers bequeathed by a codicil of 1562. Later she got districts Schöningen and Jerxheim as security, the legacy of her nephew John Sigismund Zapolya in 1571, and other valuables gathered in her 19 years in Germany.

The large estate was nothing Sophie’s step-son would like to get rid of. So, he quickly entombed her in Wolfenbüttel, making sure no-one from Poland would be present at the ceremonies and he declared that there was no testament left after Sophie. This was not true, as the Polish side had a copy of her Codicil which they showed to the imperial commission in 1584. To sum up, the prolonged negotiations, imperial arbitrations and legal treaties on both sides did not bring any resolution, also because the Polish side did not take a joint action, but for example Anna and Stephen Bathory did not work together with Catherine and John III, but they tried to win the cause by their own strategy. The result was

32 *idem*, p. 269.

33 For her legacy and postmortal remembrance see ZUPKA. Remembering the Jagiellonians in German-Speaking lands. In NOWAKOWSKA, ed. *Remembering the Jagiellonians*. London and New York 2018, pp. 121-140.

34 PIROŹYŃSKI. The Legacy of Sophie, Duchess of Brunswick 1575–1672. In *Acta Poloniae Historica*, 1995, 71, pp. 83-109. The sources are scattered around archives in Germany: Wolfenbüttel NStAW, 1 At 23, Nr. 72-108, Hannover NStAH Cal. Br. 21, Nos. 508 and 513, Dresden Staatsarchiv Dresden Loc. 8527, Zentrales Staatsarchiv Merseburg rep. 5, nos. 1-22; Austria: Vienna HHStA Polonica and Brunsviciensia; Poland: Warsaw AGAD AKW Brunswickie.

devastating for the Polish side. In 1580s they have been offered to take 113 000 thalers as Sophie's legacy, which they refused. In 1672 the cause ended and Poland did not see a single penny. In fact, first the remaining Jagiellonians, and later the Polish state, spent enormous sums of money for embassies, legal procedures and tribunals.

In the course of the events several members of the conflict referred to Sophie mostly using family rhetoric and stressing her Polish royal origin by birth and Ducal Brunswick dignity by her wedding to Henry The Young. So we find the expressions like "*sorori nostrae reginulae Annae*" in Sophie's Codicil on Queen Anna (April 1575)³⁵, "*hochgedachte unsere geliebte schwester*" in Catherine on Sophie in a letter to Duke Julius (10. 7. 1575)³⁶, "*Illustrissima Princeps Domina Sophia Ducissa Brunsvicensis soror germana Serenissime coniugis nostrae*" in Stephen Bathory on Sophie and Anna in a letter to Emperor Rudolph II (8.12. 1577)³⁷, "*Quod cum praefata Illustrissima Domina Sophia nata Poloniae Ducissa Brusvicense, sorore sua charissima, idem Serenissimus Rex Poloniae Sigismundus Augustus...*" in an embassy sent to Imperial commission in 1585.³⁸

In her letters Queen Anna (died 1596) used the family rhetoric several times in connection to Sophie. In a letter to August, Duke of Saxony, written in 1575 "*de morte atque obitu illustrissimae principis dominae Sophiae Ducis Brunsvicensis sororis nostrae amantissimae*" she styles her step-son Duke Julius of Brunswick also as "*fratrem et affinem nostrum charissimum*".³⁹ In his response from 1576 August he wrote to Anna that he will try to help her in all "*quae ab amantissimo Jagellonici nominis Principe et amico optimo expectari est.*"⁴⁰

Conclusion

In his attempts to stress his claims for Sophie's legacy King Sigismund III proclaimed himself to be the only heir to Sophie in a letter to Emperor Rudolph II in 1592⁴¹ and in a description of a (in the end unrealized) embassy to the Imperial court in Vienna planned in 1627 he claims the issue to be a matter

35 PIROŻYŃSKI, *The Legacy of Sophie*, p. 90, ref. 35.

36 *Idem*, p. 91, ref. 39.

37 DOGIEL, *Codex diplomaticus Regni Poloniae et Magni Ducatus Lithuaniae*. 1. Wilno 1758, p. 498.

38 DOGIEL, *Codex diplomaticus*, p. 500.

39 Hauptstaatsarchiv Dresden, Geheimes Archiv, Polen Contra Braunschweig, LOC. 9984/1, Das erste Buch, Nr. 4.

40 Hauptstaatsarchiv Dresden, Geheimes Archiv, Polen Contra Braunschweig, LOC. 9984/1, Das erste Buch, Nr. 15.

41 DOGIEL, *Codex diplomaticus*, pp. 505-506.

of himself and his family.⁴² As far as one can judge according to the sources discovered so far, the real dynastic rhetoric hasn't been introduced in the case of Sophie's legacy. The arguments focused on judicial and political matters, the royal rights and family relations. In his conclusion of the failed battle for the legacy of Sophie Jagiellon Jan Pirożyński claims the failure was due to a lack of coordinated family and dynastic co-operation between individual members of Jagiellonian family involved (Anna, Catherine, Sigismund III etc.). They had the irrefutable legal arguments and Imperial support, but still were not able to bring the issue to a successful end. This might be another evidence for the lack of dynastic consciousness of the Jagiellonians in practical matters. In addition, after the legal case was proclaimed a matter of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the Jagiellonian element gradually faded away. This is well illustrated by the fact that when king Jan Sobieski visited Wolfenbüttel in 1646 he paid no attention to Sophie's tomb in the local Church of the Holy Virgin.⁴³

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About the author

Doc. Mgr. Dušan Zupka, PhD.

Historický ústav SAV, v. v. i./ Institute of History of SAS

P. O. Box 198, Klemensova 19, 814 99 Bratislava

Slovak Republic

e-mail: dusan.zupka@savba.sk

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2699-3736>

<https://www.scopus.com/authid/detail.uri?authorId=57202319187>

<https://www.webofscience.com/wos/author/record/1864484>

42 “*causa...familiae nostrae*” Compare PIROŽYŃSKI, *The Legacy of Sophie*, p. 102 and ref. 107.

43 PIROŽYŃSKI, *The Legacy of Sophie*, p. 106.

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