

= Prussian Homage (painting) =

The Prussian Homage (Polish : Ho?d pruski) is an oil on canvas painting by Polish painter Jan Matejko painted between 1879 and 1882 in Kraków (then part of Austria @-@ Hungary) . The painting depicts the " Prussian Homage , " a significant political event from the time of the Renaissance in Poland in which Albrecht Hohenzollern , the Duke of Prussia paid tribute and swore allegiance to King Sigismund I the Old in Kraków 's market square on 10 April 1525 . Matejko depicted over thirty important figures of the Polish Renaissance period , taking the liberty of including several who were not actually present at the event .

The painting glorifies this event in Poland 's past and its culture , and the majesty of its kings . At the same time , the painting has darker undertones , reflecting the troubled times that befell Poland in the late eighteenth century , for the Kingdom of Prussia would become one of the partitioning powers that ended the independence of Poland . The painting was seen by some as anti @-@ Prussian , foretelling its perceived betrayal of Poland ; others have noted it is also critical of Poland , as Matejko included signs that signify this seemingly triumphant moment was a hollow , wasted victory . Matejko created his painting to remind others about the history of the no @-@ longer @-@ independent country he loved , and about the changing fates of history . The painting is counted among his masterpieces .

= = History = =

Matejko began to paint the Prussian Homage on Christmas Eve 1879 and finished it in 1882 . He donated it to the Polish nation during the meeting of the Diet of Galicia (Sejm Krajowy) in Lwów (Lviv) on 7 October 1882 to start a collection designed to revive the remodelling of Wawel Castle . It was subsequently exhibited in Kraków , Lwów and Warsaw , as well as in Berlin , Paris , Budapest , and most notably in Rome and Vienna . When it returned to Kraków in 1885 , it was temporarily exhibited in the Sukiennice Museum because the Royal Wawel Castle was occupied at that time by the Austrian army , as Kraków was part of the Austrian partition of Poland .

Because of the pro @-@ Polish and anti @-@ Prussian character of the painting German emperor William I objected to a proposal to reward Matejko . During this period , Prussia was trying to suppress Polish culture in its territory and Germanise it . During World War II , the Nazis systematically tried to destroy all Polish cultural artefacts in occupied Poland . This painting , together with Matejko 's painting of the Battle of Grunwald , was on their " most wanted " list . Fortunately it was hidden and safeguarded throughout the war in the town of Zamo?? .

For most of the twentieth and at the beginning of the twentieth @-@ first centuries , the painting has been hung in the National Museum gallery in the Sukiennice Museum in Kraków , where it is usually displayed in the Prussian Homage Hall .

Renovation work started in the Sukiennice Museum in June 2008 . The painting previously had been restored in 1915 and 1938 . During World War II it was damaged while it was at Zamo?? , and in 1945 it was renovated . In 1974 , experts again tried to restore it to its original condition before it went on public exhibition in Moscow . The most recent restoration process took place between 2006 and 2008 , when the painting was finally returned to its former glory .

In 2011 , the painting was sent to Germany for an art exhibition entitled " Side by Side Poland ? Germany " , which was promoted as part of the 1000 Years of Art and History project of Royal Warsaw Castle in cooperation with the Martin @-@ Gropius @-@ Bau exhibition hall in Berlin . It was on display there between 23 September 2011 and 9 January 2012 .

= = Significance = =

This painting is considered among Matejko 's most famous works and is also one of his largest canvases . It portrays an event of significant political triumph for Poland , the Prussian Homage , in which Poland was able to enforce its will over Prussia . Prussia latter gained independence and turned against the Polish @-@ Lithuanian Commonwealth , becoming one of the nations that

divided Poland among them . Matejko 's painting was created during the partition period , when independent Poland had ceased to exist , and like many of Matejko 's other works , it aimed to remind the Polish people of their most famous historical triumphs .

At the same time , the painting foreshadows the tragedies of the future through the gestures and facial expressions of certain characters . This is visible , for example , in the figures of King Sigismund I the Old and Albrecht Hohenzollern , who is kneeling before him . Sigismund is portrayed as a powerful and majestic figure but not threatening . He treats Albrecht lightly ? signifying that this event was only a temporary victory and not a total , lasting domination that crushed his opponent . Albrecht 's character is portrayed with many signs of his villainous intent . He kneels on both knees , which a duke should do only in front of a God , not a sovereign . This implies that he does not see Sigismund as a sovereign . He grips his standard strongly , but touches the Bible only lightly . The standard flies on a military lance , implying that Prussia had further military ambitions . Finally , there is a gauntlet on the ground , an implied challenge to Sigismund from Albrecht .

Due to its criticism of Albrecht and the event it portrayed , the painting often is seen as strongly anti @-@ Prussian . While it appears to glorify Poland , it is also critical of the country . Matejko went beyond portraying the glory of a historical event and attempted to convey hints of how the country 's history would play out in the future . This event was merely a hollow victory that failed to secure Poland 's future . Matejko shows that the homage was an empty gesture and that it was Prussia that exploited it rather than Poland . Nobody in the painting is smiling except a lady of the court who is engaged in idle gossip .

The painting has been the subject of numerous art historical studies and has been reinterpreted through the works of artists such as Tadeusz Kantor . In 1992 , the Piwnica pod Baranami cabaret group organized a historical re @-@ enactment of the painting .

= = Historical characters in the painting = =

Matejko depicted many important figures of the Polish Renaissance period including taking the liberty to include at least one who were not actually present at the event . In a similar vein , although the event portrayed took place in 1525 , Matejko painted fragments of the Sukiennice in Renaissance style , a form that dates from the year 1555 , after a fire which destroyed the building in its original Gothic style . St. Mary 's Basilica is visible in the background .

At the center of the painting , Albrecht , Duke of Prussia is kneeling before King Sigismund I the Old of Poland . Sigismund Augustus is shown here as a 5 @-@ year @-@ old boy wearing a red dress , held up by Piotr Opali?ski , the court house tutor . Matejko portrayed Józef Szujski , professor of the Jagiellonian University , as Opali?ski . Thirty one other political figures contemporary with the event are also depicted , including :

Behind Albrecht , Duke of Prussia are two other German rulers , George , Margrave of Brandenburg @-@ Ansbach and Frederick II of Legnica , who joined Albrecht in the homage .

In the space between George and Frederick , was Castellan ?ukasz II Górka (the old , bearded man) , who was a sympathizer with Prussia .

Albrecht 's advisor , Frederic von Heideck is behind the standard , waiting to receive it after the scene is over .

The Bishop of Kraków , Piotr Tomicki (wearing a bishop 's mitre) stands to the right of the King Sigismund .

The man holding up a sword is Hieronymus Jaroslaw ?aski , a diplomat and nephew of Archbishop Jan ?aski . Both men are shown to the right of the king , at the top of the crowd . Jan is separated from Hieronymus by Bishop Tomicki . Hieronymus is holding the sword with which Albrecht will be knighted stiffly as a warning to the Prussian ruler .

Duchess Anna Radziwi?? , ruler of Masovia , appears top left . Historically , the Duchess died in 1522 before the event occurred . However , Matejko included her in the painting to emphasize the connection between Masovia and Poland .

Janusz III of Masovia , the last Duke of Masovia of the Piast line . He died at a very young age in

1526 .

Hedwig Jagiellon , Electress of Brandenburg , who was daughter of Sigismund I the Old and his first wife Barbara Zápolya . Her parents planned her marriage to Prince Janusz . The death of the Duke ruined her plans . The character was modeled by Matejko 's daughter Beata . She is seen just below Anna Radziwi?? at the top left of the painting .

Mauritius Ferber , Bishop of Warmia , and Krzysztof Kreutzer , Prussian diplomat , are engaged in discussion just below and to the left of Hedwig . Ferber appears worried and makes a well @-@ hidden gesture to repel evil ; Kreutzer tries to calm him .

Queen Bona Sforza appears center @-@ left . Matejko used his wife Teodora as a model for the Queen .

Piotr Kmita Sobie?ski , Grand Marshal of the Crown and governor of Kraków , appears with his right hand raised purportedly a gesture to demand silence and order from the crowd .

Przec?aw Lanckoro?ski , starost of Khmilnyk , appears on horseback in the lower right of the painting . He is a notable military commander and his figure personifies the still @-@ respectable military prowess of the Commonwealth .

The old mustached man in white above Bishop Ferber and to the left of Duchess Anna is Prince Konstanty Ostrogski , Grand Hetman (top military commander) of Lithuania , Voivode (governor) of Trakai , and Castellan of Vilnius .

Located to the right of Prince Ostrogski and wearing a helmet is Jan Amor Tarnowski , the governor of Kraków who would later achieve high military office . This portrait was based on Stanis?aw Tarnowski , a professor of the Jagiellonian University and literary historian who would publish Matejko 's biography four years after his death .

The man taking coins from the tray is Andrzej Ko?cielecki , treasurer and Court Marshal who skillfully managed the state finances . Looking proudly , unworried , seeing only victory , he symbolizes the importance and wealth of Polish officials of the period .

To the right of the large black figure of Opali?ski is Krzysztof Szyd?owiecki who was one of King Sigismund 's chief advisors in matters of foreign affairs . Holding the globus cruciger , he was one of the main political figures in contemporary Polish and Prussian politics and his worried visage questions the honesty of the ceremony .

Hetman Miko?aj Firlej , Castellan of Kraków , is located between Krzysztof Szyd?owiecki and Andrzej T?czy?ski . One of many characters with a worried expression , Firlej , a respected military leader , is likely considering the possibility of Prussia growing into a military power .

Andrzej T?czy?ski , Ensign of Kraków , who later became Castellan of Kraków , appears holding the banner in the top right corner . He is having difficulty holding the Polish flag unfolded , which once again foreshadows the troubles ahead .

Albrecht Go?tautas (Olbracht Gaszto?d) , Chancellor of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and voivode of Vilnius , is barely visible in the top right of the painting . His presence in the painting is intended to symbolize the wisdom of the king as a legislator .

Below the king sits Sta?czyk . His worried face shows doubt that the homage will mean victory in the long run , and he is making a gesture to repel bad luck .

In the lower @-@ left corner of the painting holding a document bearing the royal seal , stands Bartolommeo Berrecci , architect who rebuilt Royal Wawel Castle . Next to him is Seweryn Boner , an important burgher and banker . His face is one of the two self @-@ portraits of Jan Matejko . The second is the face of the royal jester Sta?czyk . As Berrecci , Matejko portrayed himself as a gray eminence , dominating the scene , with a royal scepter in his hand .

= = = Generic characters of some significance = = =

Some generic characters of minor importance were also depicted by Matejko in the painting . The following personages are :

An old Teutonic soldier is shown under Hedwig ; he signifies the end of the Teutonic Order .

Underneath the soldier at the bottom of the painting , an executor or a city guard keeps watch on the crowd , ensuring no unrest will disrupt the proceedings .

At the top of the painting , a dove symbolizing peace can be seen .