

Jan Pirożyński, *Zofia Jagiellonka (1522–1575) i jej księgozbiór (Sophie Jagiellon and Her Collection of Books)*, Kraków 2004, PAU, 339 pp., Rozprawy Wydziału Historyczno-Filozoficznego, vol. 102, bibl., index of persons, sum. in English and German, ill.

Several months before his death Jan Pirożyński published a biography of Sophie Jagiellon, the crowning achievement of his 25-year research. It started in the spring of 1978, when remnants of Princess Sophie's collection were discovered by him in Prince Augustus' Library at Wolfenbüttel. Princess Sophie was then little known to historians (apart from a brief information in Aleksander Przeździecki's 19th century work on Polish female Jagiellons); it was only Jan Pirożyński's successive articles, crowned with the treatise which qualified him for assistant professorship, *Księżna brunszwicka Zofia Jagiellonka / 1522–1575 / i jej biblioteka. Studium z dziejów kultury (The Duchess of Brunswick, Sophie Jagiellon / 1522–1575 / and Her Library. Study in the History of Culture)*, Kraków 1986, that shed more light on the life and activity of this daughter of Sigismund I and Bona, who owing to her marriage spent her life in Germany, without severing contacts with Poland. Pirożyński's pioneering work won the acclaim of experts, but having been published in only 250 copies, it was unknown to a wider circle of readers. In 1992 the author published an enlarged version of Princess Sophie's biography in German (*Die Herzogin Sophie von Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel aus dem Hause der Jagiellonen / 1522–1575 / und ihre Bibliothek. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der deutsch-polnischen Kulturbeziehungen in der Renaissancezeit*, Wiesbaden 1992), but as the edition was limited and the price of the book rather high, it was not widely accessible, though the fact that it was published in German put Sophie on the international stage, acquainting foreign historians with her role in 16th century culture. Pirożyński did not abandon the subject after this publication and continued his research into the life and activity of Princess Sophie and her library. The result is the present verified book supplemented with many important facts.

The book consists of three parts. Part I (pp. 19–168) describes the life and activity of Sophie Jagiellon, part II (pp. 169–246) depicts her library, and part III (pp. 247–284) presents texts: Sophie's last will of 1558, including the codicil of 1575, two bequests (for her collaborators and trusted friends, Stanisław Sędziwoj and Wojciech Sędziwoj Czarnkowskis), the sermon delivered by Łazarz Arnoldi at Sophie's funeral on 27. 6. 1575, and a list of the manuscripts and printed works from the duchess's collection, which the author managed to find.

The book is based on the author's extensive, thorough research in Polish, Austrian and German archives and libraries. Pirożyński has made use of Sophie's rich correspondence with her family and other persons, documents, inventories

of her belongings, made at different periods of her life, and catalogues of the ducal library at Wolfenbüttel in which he found most of the manuscripts and books belonging to Sophie's collection.

The author presents the childhood and youth which Sophie spent at the royal court (1522–1555) together with her sisters, Anne and Catherine (the strong emotional ties linking them survived until the end of their lives). He reconstructs (Chapter I) the girls' upbringing and education, their living conditions, their occupations, which he presents against the life and structure of the Jagiellons' Renaissance court, their relationship with Bona and Sigismund I, and with their elder brother, Sigismund Augustus, in an extremely conscientious and interesting way. Although the extant sources make it difficult to separate Sophie from the trio of girls who were so strongly linked with each other, it is possible, to some extent, to reconstruct how the personality of the future Duchess of Brunswick was shaped. It is only in Chapter II, which discusses preparations for Sophie's marriage with Prince Henry the Younger and her departure to Germany, that Sophie stands out from the background, although most of the author's reflections concern Sophie's dowry and trousseau, and the material and legal regulations governing the marriage. Information on Henry the Younger and his state and the description of Sophie's journey to Wolfenbüttel are an important part of the chapter. Chapter III presents Sophie Jagiellon as Duchess of Brunswick at Wolfenbüttel (1556–1568), that is, the composition of her court, the ups and downs of her married life, family conflicts, her way of life, the circle of her friends and correspondents (she wrote and received lots of letters), the subjects discussed in her correspondence, including her interests (her health, financial questions, politics). Throughout her stay in Wolfenbüttel Sophie was in contact with her family and Poland and lent Sigismund Augustus a hand in questions of foreign policy, benefiting from his advice in her difficulties.

Chapter IV presents Sophie's widowhood at Schöningen (1568–1575) where she lived after her husband's death. Pirożyński rightly points out that she became the ruler of a mini-state (districts of Schöningen and Jerxheim) and that in spite of many difficulties (she was a foreigner and her situation was complicated by her conflict with her stepson, the heir to the Duchy of Wolfenbüttel) she began to conduct her own policy, displaying great energy and skill, despite ill health and the fact that she was no longer in the prime of life.

The author discusses Sophie's judicious economic and administrative activity. Her success in this respect was undoubtedly due to her conversion to Lutheranism. One could venture to say that she was a true child of Bona: she wanted to underpin her political ambitions with a solid material base, hence her economic interests. She subordinated religious questions to politics. In this respect she was the opposite of her sister Anne, who had no head for business and whose religious zeal surpassed political considerations. Chapter V concerns Sophie's attitude to Lutheranism. Pirożyński points out that Sophie's conversion was an exception in the House of Jagiellon: despite his tolerance, Sigismund Augustus did not join the dissenters, nor did Izabella Jagiellon in Transylvania. Hedwig Jagiellon, wife of the Brandenburg elector Joachim II, remained a Catholic. Anne Jagiellon sharply combated the Reformation in Mazovia. It is doubtful, however, whether Catherine Jagiellon was really an uncompromising adherent of Catholicism for we know that there were times when she was not far away from Lutheranism, for instance, she received Holy Communion in two forms.

Chapter VI, which presents the goals of Sophie's policy from 1572 (i.e. after Sigismund Augustus' death) to 1575 is extremely interesting. At that time she concentrated her activity on three closely connected questions: the execution of Sigismund Augustus' last will (i.e. the struggle for her legacy), the marriage of her sister Anne, and the question of who should ascend the Polish throne. These were clearly family, dynastic problems, though Sophie saw them through the prism of patriotism, identifying the interests of the Jagiellonian dynasty with those of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth. The author reconstructs Sophie's endeavours

in this field, but he probably does not adequately analyse the reasons why they ended in failure.

Very valuable is Chapter VII which presents the residence at Schöningen, its reconstruction by Sophie, her collections (of jewels, paintings, including many portraits, sculptures, clocks, coins, medals, carpets) which testify to her exquisite artistic taste and interest in art. Chapter VIII depicts Sophie's last days, her illness and death as well as her testament and its fate. In Chapter IX Pirożyński made an interesting, pioneering attempt to depict Sophie Jagiellon's mentality. Even though he makes it clear at the outset that a study of mental life is always difficult and risky, his reflections are most praiseworthy. As a matter of fact, thanks to a scrupulous description of details and of important and unimportant events, the whole book presents the personality of Sophie Jagiellon, the features of her character and mind, her attitude to people and to the problems she came across. The summing up of all these scattered elements shows Sophie as a woman and ruler, as a true Renaissance figure. Part II of Pirożyński's work is a description of Sophie's library which the author reconstructed and analysed in the course of many years of work. This is not only an important supplement providing an additional base for research into Sophie's mentality and her interests. By presenting Sophie Jagiellon's library as a nucleus of the later famous Wolfenbüttel ducal library, Pirożyński emphasises its role in the culture of the 16th century, and even of later times.

The book is an exciting read. Perfectly constructed from the scholarly point of view, it presents a wealth of information and allows readers better to understand the typically medieval and early modern life of women from ruling circles forced by a political marriage to live a difficult life in a foreign country. The book can be regarded as belonging to the now fashionable "gender studies" current, though the author distances himself from such intention. Despite his reservations, his work has greatly enriched the historiography concerning women and their role in history.

Jan Pirożyński's last book sums up an important stage of research on the Renaissance in Poland and Germany and on political-dynastic and cultural relations during that epoch. It is a pity that the author's premature death put an end to his creative, successful research.

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