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THE COURT OF ANNA JAGIELLON:
SIZE, STRUCTURE AND FUNCTIONS

At the end of the Middle Ages and in the early modern times, royal courts all over Europe ceased to exist as peripatetic institutions, and settled down more or less permanently. The emerging absolute monarchy needed one central place in the country from which it would rule and control all its subjects. Blossoming Renaissance and Baroque courts with their luxurious ways of life offered the proper setting for the greatness and splendour of the early modern royal monarchy. At the same time, they served as the centres of political and administrative activities as well as of a large patronage, and were the focus of an animated social life. Each powerful royal dynasty tried to create a splendid court which would dominate over smaller ducal and aristocratic palaces and serve as a model to them. As the incarnation of the dynastic power, the royal court had to impress not only the common people, but also other rulers and their envoys, politicians and diplomats from different countries, as well as intellectuals, artists, writers, attracted by the courtly patronage system.

In Poland, the structure of the state as well as the shape of the royal power and the role of the royal court developed in a different way from in those in western Europe. In the Middle Ages as well as in the early 16th century, attitudes toward life, fashion, the patronage of art, the family relations as well as the forms of religious piety were shaped according to patterns offered by the royal court which served as the central model for the whole country. It is worth remembering that to a great degree the Jagiellonian court was responsible for the fact that a specific culture had emerged in Poland in which the western trends merged with eastern ones, creating a set of original phenomena which for centuries dominated the Polish national culture. There

is no doubt that the female members of the dynasty played a special role in this process. The queens Hedwig (Jadwiga), the wife of Jagiellon from the Andegavin family, and Elisabeth Habsburg, the wife of Casimir Jagiellon brought western ideas and artistic tastes to Cracow and promoted them. On the other hand queens Sophia, the third wife of Jagiellon, and Helen, the wife of Alexander Jagiellon, both Russian princesses, were responsible for the emergence in court's life and in royal cultural patronage of Byzantine elements and tastes, which then spread over the whole country. Thus the 14th and 15th centuries should be regarded as the first phase of the Jagiellonian court's development. In this phase, the royal court dominated over the country setting patterns for the whole society, including the magnates and nobility. A great role in shaping the profile of the court's activities was played by the queens who, according to their origins, promoted western or eastern patterns of behaviour and tastes.

A new phase began in the 16th century. The Italian marriage of Sigismund I had assured the victory of western influences, but at the same time the hostilities between Queen Bona Sforza and the Polish nobles as well as a gradual shift of political power from the king to the magnates and nobility resulted in the decline of the royal court's role as general central model of behaviour and fashion¹. Nevertheless, the Renaissance court of Sigismund I and Bona blossomed as a centre of luxurious way of life, of diplomatic activities, of patronage of art². Only Sigismund's death in 1548 put an end to its splendour. After a serious quarrel with her son, Sigismund II August, Bona left Cracow and settled in her Mazovian estates; in 1556 she returned to her native Italy³.

¹ On the Jagiellonian court in 14th and 15th centuries see M. Wilska, *Dwór królewski i kultura dworska (Royal Court and Courtly Culture)*, in: *Kultura Polski średniowiecznej, XIV-XV w. (Culture of Medieval Poland, 14th-15th Centuries)*, ed. B. G eremek, Warszawa 1997, pp 77 ff.; see also *Theatrum Ceremoniale na dworze królów i książąt polskich (Theatrum Ceremoniale at the Courts of Polish Kings and Dukes)*, ed. M. Markiewicz, R. Skowron, Kraków 1999, *passim*. For the 16th century see: M. Bogucka, *Bona a rola dworu monarszego jako centrum kulturalno-obyczajowego 1518-1548 (Bona and the Role of the Royal Court as a Centre of Cultural Life, 1518-1548)*, in: *Triumfy i porażki. Studia z dziejów kultury polskiej XVI-XVIII w. (Triumphs and Failures. Studies on Polish Culture 16th-18th Centuries)*, ed. M. Bogucka, Warszawa 1989, pp. 97-120.

² M. Bogucka, *Bona Sforza*, Wrocław 1998, pp. 134-135.

³ *Ibidem*, pp. 209-212.

The last king of the Jagiellonian dynasty, Sigismund II August, did not succeed in creating around himself a brilliant Renaissance court like his parents did. This failure resulted from his restless way of life as well as his matrimonial problems combined with constant travels from Cracow to Warsaw, from Warsaw to Vilna and Knyszyn. Till 1551, however, according to his biographers⁴, the court of Sigismund II August could be compared to the best developed and attractive West-European royal courts. Only after the death of his second wife, Barbara Radziwill, the King began to prefer more solitary existence; often he settled matters with senators and dignitaries by mail, meeting them only during Sejm sessions. The size of his court and the number of his guests declined. Thus Anna Jagiellon in her endeavours to establish a court of her own had to seek inspiration in the patterns of her parents' and not in her brother's court.

Anna Jagiellon was born in 1523 as the fourth child of Sigismund the Old and Bona Sforza, and died at the age of 73 in 1596. Her long life was full of bitterness. Neglected as a child and young girl by her parents and later by her royal brother, disappointed by her French fiancée, Henry Valois, rejected by her husband Stephen Bathory, she never knew happiness and fulfilment. Being a very ambitious person but rather a poor politician, she failed not only in her personal life but also in the world of politics. She had, however, a strong dynastic pride. After 1572, as the last representative of Jagiellonian family in Poland she felt herself responsible for keeping the dynastic glory alive. A blossoming court, according to the mentality of her time, was the incarnation of such a glory.

In her childhood, Anna Jagiellon did not have her own court as the royal daughters often did. She lived together with her two younger sisters — Sophia, later the duchess of Brunswick and Catherine, later the Queen of Sweden — probably in one room at the Wawel Castle. In 1535 they were accommodated in a separate building, the so-called *Domus Regularum*⁵. They were cared for by ladies-in-waiting and female servants who belonged to the

⁴ S. Cynarski, *Zygmunt August*, Wrocław 1988, pp. 72 ff.; A. Sucheni Grabowska, *Zygmunt August, król polski i wielki książę litewski 1520–1562 (Sigismund August, King of Poland and Grand Duke of Lithuania, 1520–1562)*, Warszawa 1996, esp. pp. 169 ff.

⁵ M. Bogucka, *Anna Jagiellonka*, Wrocław 1994, p. 9.

large court, bursting with life, of their mother, Queen Bona⁶. In spite of the absence of a separate court, the three younger royal daughters were well provided for. Their apartment was richly furnished. The accounts of the royal court mention such expenses for Anna and her sisters as the purchase and mending of several luxury items e.g. frames for paintings, ivory crucifixes, golden icons, chests and coffers with ornamental fittings, chessboards and bird-cages etc.⁷ The royal daughters were richly dressed according to the newest Italian fashion and adorned with jewels, in order to make an impressive background for Queen Bona's official appearances: they always stood behind the chair of their royal mother or followed her in a solemn procession⁸. In this way, Anna Jagiellon as a child and young girl witnessed all the ceremonies celebrated at the Renaissance court of her royal parents.

In 1548, Anna and her two sisters followed their mother to Mazovia, where again they did not have a separate court, but lived as the members of the court of the Queen-Widow Bona. When in 1556 Sophia married the Duke of Brunswick and Bona left for Italy, Anna and her sister Catherine both remained in Warsaw. It was the first time in their life that they had a court of their own. But, as they were very poorly provided for, this court was modest and included only a few members: 3 male courtiers, 3 matrons, 6 ladies-in-waiting, some servants — all together less than 20 persons. All those persons derived from the petty Mazovian nobility, closely linked to Queen Bona. The fact that females outnumbered the males testifies to the low rank of the court, this fact resulting mostly from the lack of money for its support. The Castellan of Warsaw, Jerzy Jeżowski, acted as the steward of the court, and he was very worried about the financial future of the royal daughters⁹. Probably because life was rather hard at the Warsaw castle (empty and despoiled of its riches after the wedding

⁶ On Queen Bona's court see M. Bogucka, *Bona Sforza*, pp. 76 ff.; Z. Morawski, *Z dworu Zygmunta Starego (On the Court of Sigismund the Old)*, in: Z. Morawski, *Czasy Zygmuntofskie (Times of Sigismund I)*, Warszawa 1922, pp. 28–71; A. Wyczański, *Między kulturą a polityką. Sekretarze królewscy Zygmunta Starego (Between Culture and Politics. The Royal Secretaries of the King Sigismund the Old)*, Warszawa 1990.

⁷ M. Bogucka, *Anna Jagiellonka*, pp. 9–10.

⁸ *Ibidem*, pp. 9–10.

⁹ *Ibidem*, pp. 50–51.

of Sophia and by Bona's departure), the two sisters with their modest court often changed their residence, first for Ujazdów near Warsaw next for Cracow, Przemyśl and Vilna. Everywhere, however, they led a rather simple and monotonous existence, deprived of entertainments and focused mainly on religious practices¹⁰.

After the marriage of Catherine Jagiellon with the Duke of Finland (1562), the situation of Anna Jagiellon changed. She returned from Vilna to Warsaw and established her residence both at Warsaw Castle and at Ujazdów — thus in two Bona's favourite residences. In the middle of the 1560s, her financial situation improved. The help of an important Mazovian official Wojciech Bogucki, an old friend of her mother, played some role in this matter. Bogucki as the Treasurer (*podskarbi*) and General Intendent (*Ekonom*) of Mazovia (and after his death his successor Marcin Fałęcki), were to the great degree responsible for the financial affairs of Anna's court. Her revenues in those years rose significantly. She had now a stable income from her Mazovian estates; Sigismund August agreed to give her 1,900 Polish zlotys from the royal salt mines each year, and sometimes sent her an extra money¹¹. In 1564, for example, Anna's total revenue can be estimated at almost 18,000 Polish zlotys. It is true that after years of poverty, she was now spending a lot (in 1564 her expenditure rose to 21,000 Polish zlotys)¹², but her extravagances resulted from her conception of the royal dignity. As a royal daughter, the representative of the famous Jagiellonian family, Anna felt obliged to create and to keep a splendid Renaissance court, following the patterns set by her parents.

The accounts from the year 1564¹³ allow us to estimate the number of her courtiers at this time as about 70 persons. The Steward was Stanisław Wolski, the Castellan of Rawa, who in January 1564 was dispatched to Vienna to deliver Anna's message

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 52.

¹¹ See Archiwum Główne Akt Dawnych (Central Archives of Historical Records), later AGAD, Paper Documents, Section I, *sign.* 3724: on March 6, 1564 Anna recognizes the receipt of 475 Polish zlotys, as 1/4 part of yearly income from salt mines promised her *de gratia et libertate S. M. Regie Domini et fratris nostri clementia*.

¹² AGAD, ASK (Treasury Acts), Section I, *sign.* 202 and 204.

¹³ AGAD, ASK, Section I, *sign.* 202 and 204. Also used were the accounts from years 1563, 1565, 1566 and 1567 (*sign.* 198b, 206, 211, 216).

to the Emperor¹⁴. Łukasz Nagórski, Chamberlain of Łęczycza, former Master of Horses was nominated as the new Steward¹⁵. The religious needs of the court were cared for by two chaplains (*Dominus Valenttnus* and *Dominus Leonardus*) and one *clericus* (Kasper). As valets the account enumerate 10 men, besides 7 "salaried soldiers" (*jurgieltnicy*). Among the courtiers were also the medical doctor Casary (his salary amounted in the year 1564 to the enormous sum of 854 Polish zlotys 29 groschen), the *notarius* Andrzej Hincza (a salary of 31 Polish zlotys), the overseer, accountant and cashier in one person — Grzegorz Goryszewski (80 Polish zlotys). In charge of 6 coachmen was Jerzy Niemczy-nowicz (32 Polish zlotys), next to him were Szymon "overseer of the silver" and 2 servants caring "for the silver", a hairdresser, a pharmacist, one male and one female bath attendants, an attendant for the stoves, a servant attending the ladies-in-waiting, 4 doormen, 3 servants responsible for garments. An important person was Algismund, the overseer of the cellar and wines (24 Polish zlotys) and Jan the trumpeter (12 Polish zlotys). There were 9 cooks: Jerzy Bohemus (6 Polish zlotys), Jakub (6 Polish zlotys), Jerzy Macarona, probably an Italian (6 Polish zlotys 21 groschen), Stanisław Marszka (6 Polish zlotys), Feliks Pilecki (6 Polish zlotys), Szymon Rybak (4 Polish zlotys), Horoszko Rybak (9 Polish zlotys), Jerzy "the old cook" (4 Polish zlotys), and Drazni (5 Polish zlotys). Worthy of note is that all the cooks were males and that the differences in their salary were not great; which means that their skills were probably on the same level.

The accounts list some members of the court without any defined task, e.g. a Dominik Cominnik (with salary 13 Polish zlotys 6 groschen), Mikołaj Chelmicki (60 Polish zlotys), Mikołaj Gawroński (34 Polish zlotys). The wide range of salaries (from 854 Polish zlotys to 3–4 Polish zlotys) testifies to the great differentiation of the court's hierarchy. Some courtiers (e.g. ladies-in-waiting) were important enough to have personal servants. Gaspar, as servant of the main cook, enjoyed a salary of 3 Polish zlotys 6 groschen.

Female members of the court were less numerous. Three matrons belonged to it: the widowed wife of late Castellan of Lublin, Mrs Elżbieta Maciejowska (her salary amounted to 75

¹⁴ M. Bogućka, *Anna Jagiellonka*, p. 60.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p.60.

Polish zlotys), Mrs Świdnicka (32 Polish zlotys 15 groschen), Mrs Bentkowska (12 Polish zlotys) as well as an "Italian maiden", Livia, probably an old lady-in-waiting of Bona, who had not married (12 Polish zlotys). There were 8 ladies-in-waiting: Barbara Gosławska (15 Polish zlotys), Dorota Oryszkowska (15 Polish zlotys), Anna Świdnicka (5 Polish zlotys only, because she was often absent), Zofia Talicka (15 Polish zlotys), Dorota Pękowska (15 Polish zlotys), Zofia Lubomirska (15 Polish zlotys), Barbara Talicka (15 Polish zlotys) and Anna Zajączkowska (15 Polish zlotys), Zajączkowska was soon afterwards to leave the court because the King seduced and kidnapped her.

Thus the court had about 80% male members and less than 20% female ones. Male and female courtiers derived mainly from the Mazovian nobility, sometimes the petty nobility, sometimes holding other offices (e.g. Stanisław Wolski was Castellan of Rawa, Łukasz Nagórski held the Chamberlain office of Łęczycza). An influential person was Mrs Maciejowska — the widow of the Lublin Castellan. She was born Kamieniecka, the daughter of the Castellan of Sanok — thus a representative of the higher nobility of Little Poland. This testifies to the fact that the court's attractiveness began already to stretch beyond the borders of Mazovia.

Running the court was an expensive enterprise. In 1564 salaries for its members totalled almost 4,000 Polish zlotys (the arrears included)¹⁶. The costs of dispatching special envoys and sending letters amounted to 140 Polish zlotys¹⁷. The *largesse* was another attribute of the court's activities. Anna knew that charity and generosity belonged among the main royal duties. In 1564 she distributed olive oil among her sick courtiers (Miss Pękowska, the chamber-valet Minski) and favourite ladies-in-waiting (Mrs Maciejowska, Mrs Świdnicka), for the wedding party of Miss Świdnicka she had three stoves of pepper bought, and for her "old" maid Helen she offered 26 cubits of silk red taffeta and 3 cubits of silk flesh-coloured taffeta to make her wedding gown. When her two coachmen died, she gave 4 Polish zlotys for their funerals. She remembered well that alms-giving was one of the royal obligations and generously distributed money among Warsaw students and monks. At Easter she visited Warsaw churches leaving rich offerings in each sanctuary¹⁸.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 62.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 62.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 63.

A great amount of money was spent on the textiles and garments of courtiers and servants. The garments were made from different kinds of textiles such as silk taffetas, atlas, damask, woollen Bohemian and Lund cloth of different colours. Luxurious and sophisticated dress was a sign of the importance of each court; in this matter therefore thriftiness was not advisable. Anna herself took much care about her appearance and her gowns. She was aware of the fact that dress was an important sign of the social position of its owners and that the colours and shapes of garments served as symbolic message to spectators. In one year (1564) she bought 12 cubits of red silk taffeta and 1/2 cubit of black silk taffeta for a gown and some black atlas to finish her damask gown. She had one of her old damask gowns altered and five new ones made: one from black atlas, three from damask, one from black velvet with a silver fringe. A damask cloak was also to be created for her¹⁹.

The greatest expenses, however, were incurred by the table. Gorgeous food consumption was in the Middle Ages as well as in early modern times considered an important sign of high social position. As we have seen, nine cooks were at work at Anna's court and three persons were employed only to take care of the silverware — which is testimony to the richness of the tableware as well as to the ceremonial rituals connected to serving meals. The dishes were extremely rich, diversified and sophisticated. The purchases made for Anna's kitchen included huge amounts of fish of highest quality (carp, eels, sturgeon, pike) as well as high quality meats (half oxen, entire pigs and lambs, best tenderloins and sausages, tripe, calf and pig feet to make jelly, lots of poultry: chickens, capons, ducks, pheasants, as game — fieldfares, partridges, hares). Accounts mention dairy products such as milk, cream, cheese (including goat cheese), eggs, butter. Fats used included olive oil as well as other kinds of oil, sometimes also pork fat and lard, testifying to the emergence of a mixture of Italian and Polish cooking customs. There are rather few mentions of groats, very popular in Polish cooking; instead fine flour and imported rice are listed. Not only honey was used to sweeten the dishes but also sugar, and only white bread was served. According to Italian fashion, vegetables were in great demand: from turnips, cabbage, peas to cucumber, parsley, capers. Among

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, pp. 62–63.

the fruits are mentioned apples, pears, plums, cherries, strawberries, as well as exotic lemons, grapes, olives, dried figs, almonds. Mushrooms as well as nuts are often mentioned. Home produced mint, juniper, sage, marjoram were used as seasoning as well as imported items: pepper, saffron, cinnamon, ginger, raisins, nutmeg flowers and nutmeg apples. The favourite sweet dishes served were jam, spice cakes, gingerbread, egg cakes. Expenditure for rose water testify to the custom of rinsing the fingers before (?) and after the meal²⁰.

The rich list of the products bought for the kitchen permits us to suppose that meals at Anna's court were abundant and sophisticated. In some way they had higher standard than meals served at the royal court at Cracow and Łobzów during the times of Sigismund the Old and Bona. The accounts from the 1540s do not mention such foreign delicacies like rice, sugar etc. in daily use²¹. Anna Jagiellon, personally very modest in her eating habits, was clearly convinced that splendour of the table testifies to the glory of the royal family and did her best in this direction. According to the accounts from the year 1564, enormous amounts of her money were expended on the pleasures of the table.

The accounts give us a picture of a lively, blossoming court where the Mazovian nobility could learn new customs and ways of life (Italian influences on the kitchen, new dress fashions, the care about personal hygiene testified by the presence at the court of a hairdresser and bath attendants). The number of coachmen (6) and horses (26) indicates numerous trips and travels; expenses for envoys and mailing letters testifies to rich contacts not only with family members (Anna's correspondence with her sisters is well-known to researchers) but probably to some political activities also (a message for the Emperor in Vienna). Two medical doctors and an apothecary employed at the court (the enormous salary of Dr Caspary!) as well as 417 Polish zlotys spent on medicaments seems to indicate the beginning of troubles with her health. At the same time, this is an expenditure exceptionally connected not to royal obligations but to the personal, private needs of Anna Jagiellon. Even the costs of maintenance of three clergymen at the court denoted not only her private religious piety but also the royal duty to serve the subjects as model of religiousness.

²⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 63-64.

²¹ See *Rachunki generalne Seweryna Bonera (General Accounts by Seweryn Boner)*, ed. O. Łaszczyńska, Kraków 1955, pp. 90-91.

After the death of Sigismund II August in 1572, Anna became *Infans Regni Poloniae*; this resulted in her gaining some political influence; the first three royal elections were won by her favourite candidates because the Mazovian nobility eagerly supported all her plans²². At first, however, the hostility of some dignitaries forced her to leave Warsaw and to travel all over Mazovia, stopping here and there in small townships (Piaseczno, Łomża, Plock). The primitive conditions of the lodgings as well as the lack of money (by the last will of Sigismund August, Anna and her two sisters became the owners of enormous Jagiellonian estates, but it was hard to achieve the executions of the testament) affected unfavourably the size and daily existence of her court. The situation improved, however, already in 1574. Anna Jagiellon attended the royal funeral in Cracow and after that sad ceremony settled for some months near the Wawel Castle, wishing to be in touch with Henry Valois, who thanks to her support was elected the King of Poland. This was, however, rather a bad time for her, full of disappointments and bitterness, her "fiancée" slipping out of matrimonial promises. She tried to keep high her royal dignity among other things by displaying the splendours of her court. She resided in the centre of the city, in a large and beautiful building owned by the *starosta* of Cracow, where apartments were luxuriously furnished for this occasion. Her courtiers and ladies-in-waiting were fashionably dressed, their daily meals abundant and luxurious²³. Anna's revenues, unstable in the previous two years, now became more regular: she was to receive 500 Polish zlotys weekly for herself and for the maintenance of her court²⁴.

In September 1574, Anna was back in Warsaw, busy with financial matters as well as with projects for the approaching new election. According to a resolution of the Sejm, she was now to receive profits from several Mazovian and Podlachian estates²⁵; the full execution of the dead King's last will could, however, not be carried out. On May 1, 1576 Anna "with tears" renounced finally her claims to the Jagiellonian heritage, exchanging it for a royal crown and marriage with Stephen Bathory, just elected the King of Poland. She had paid a high price for the realization of her two dearest ambitions: to become the Queen and to marry.

²² M. Bogućka, *Anna Jagiellonka*, pp. 90 ff.

²³ *Ibidem*, pp. 107 ff.

²⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 109.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, pp. 115 ff.

Now she did her best to improve the splendours of her court, according to her new roles. She also hoped that the attractiveness of courtly life would fascinate her husband and keep him near her. Vincent Laureo, the papal nuncio, wrote in his letter, that the Queen, after her return to Warsaw, entertained her husband with numerous banquets, balls, receptions and other amusements²⁶. Unfortunately Bathory, a soldier, preferred a rather simple way of life and tried to avoid as much as possible the ceremonious court of his unattractive wife. The conflict between spouses became sharper each day. The constant travels of the King aroused the anger of the Queen. On the February 3, 1579, Bathory again left Warsaw, informing his wife that he intended to spend the whole spring and summer in Lithuania, preparing the war against Moscow. His letter arrived on the evening of February 24, while the preparations for a great ball at the Queen's court were in full swing. The message hurt Anna's feelings so much that she angrily ordered the removal of the music instruments, put out the lights and "with great anger" withdrew to her private apartments²⁷.

In spite of the lack of fortune in her married life, the years of her marriage with Bathory (1576–1586) as well as the years of her widowhood (1586–1596) were the heydays of Anna's court. She was rich enough to maintain the very high standards of the courtly life. This probably was meant to compensate for her misfortunes in her private life as well as for her failure to take an active part in politics. She had to renounce her rights to the Jagiellonian heritage but she received an equivalent — a life settled jointure (Polish: *oprawa*) in the form of several Mazovian estates and 11,000 Polish zlotys as income from Lithuanian estates yearly. She even managed to obtain 60,000 Polish zlotys as rewards and gratifications for her courtiers. She also collected the interest from money borrowed by Philip II from her mother: the somewhat irregular payments, reduced by high costs of salaries to plenipotentiaries and for transfers, amounted, however, to 15–20,000 ducats yearly²⁸. There was also the yearly income from the salt mines. She now had the means to enlarge

²⁶ Cited after T. Wierzbowski, *Vincent Laureo, 1574–1578*, Warszawa 1887, p. 257.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 258.

²⁸ M. Bogucka, *Anna Jagiellonka*, pp. 128–129.

her court, gathering several hundred persons around her throne and introducing ceremonial rituals to her daily life. Even alone, on a normal day, she would eat her supper sitting under a white silk canopy on a high raised ornamental chair. The tableware before her was gold and silver and the dishes sophisticated. An English diplomat, who tried to visit Ujazdów palace incognito but was however recognised and led before the Queen, was very much impressed by such a picture²⁹. The meals at Anna's court were traditionally very rich, her ladies-in-waiting and courtiers were sumptuously dressed. Balls, feasts and receptions were a daily occurrence, as were also manifestations of religious piety and ardour, according to the changing mood of the Queen. Many enterprises were arranged at Ujazdów, where Anna set up an enlarged and beautifully furnished residence. She brought here many objects and items from Italy and caused the walls to be covered with golden samite and tapestries. Her apartments were adorned with a gallery of paintings representing members of Jagiellonian family. Following the example of her brother, Sigismund II August, she collected gems and jewels. Her interest in art was genuine, while her patronage of science was rather superficial and displayed on a lesser scale³⁰. She was probably convinced that the patronage of art serves better the fame and glory of the patron.

Not only the apartments at Warsaw Castle and Ujazdów palace served as the stage for the life of the court, but also the gardens surrounding the residences. The gardens of Ujazdów in particular were splendidly arranged according to Italian style: they encompassed a "bestiary" — a special section hosting domestic as well as exotic animals, a custom of many early modern European courts. A large greenhouse and garden frames allowed the production of fresh vegetables and fruits for feasts (even a fig tree grew here!), a special rose garden provided exquisite flowers to dress the tables for ceremonial meals. Thus the wish to impress the guests with the beauty of nature was mixed with practical purposes³¹. The guests and courtiers amused themselves in the gardens with dances, jokes and different kinds of games e.g. searching for sugar mushrooms hidden in the grass or playing with green leaves. Rich meals of fish, meat, sweet cakes, exotic

²⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 152.

³⁰ *Ibidem*, pp. 137, 152.

³¹ *Ibidem*, p. 131.

fruits arisen by exquisite wines were served under silk tents. Musicians and singers brightened the atmosphere³². According to the custom of all courts, Anna had among her servants midgets (mostly female) and jesters³³, she also promoted spectacles and shows. In 1578 the magnificent wedding of Jan Zamoyski with Krystyna Radziwiłł took place at Ujazdów. The play *Odprawa posłów greckich (Dismission of Greek Envoys)* written by Jan Kochanowski, was staged on this occasion.

Especially since the end of the 1570s and in the 1580s Anna's court was bursting with life, becoming the centre of many social and diplomatic activities. Anna Jagiellon tried to receive foreign diplomats and Polish magnates and nobles according to the rules of an elaborate ceremonious ritual. She kept lively correspondence with her sisters, Sophia duchess of Brunswick and Catherine, Queen of Sweden as well as with many Italian Dukes, e.g. Francesco I de Medici and his wife Bianca, exchanging news on politics and fashion, sending and receiving gifts and presents (cosmetics, medicaments, crystal bowls and cups, luxury fancy goods, small pieces of furniture e.g. marble tables, silver in-crustated boxes etc.). Her courtiers were often dispatched to Germany, Austria, Italy. The high qualifications of the people in her service is testified by the fact that since 1572 her personal secretary was the well-known philologist and humanist, Andrzej Patrycy Nidecki³⁴.

In those years, many nobles tried to place their sons as courtiers and their daughters as ladies-in-waiting at the court of Anna Jagiellon. She had a reputation of taking good care of her people. Many young girls and boys at her court were given elementary education. Next some boys were sent to schools and offered financial support for further education³⁵. The girls were trained in domestic work and well provided for marriage. As a very religious person, Anna presented many churches with rich gifts — paintings, golden and silver vessels, altar cloths and chasubles³⁶. Her court was a sort of manufacturing centre, where females, including the Queen herself, were busy with artistic needlework and embroidery.

³² *Ibidem*, pp. 132, 138, 139.

³³ *Ibidem*, p. 56, 130.

³⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 81, 126, 128, 129.

³⁵ *Ibidem*, pp. 130–131, 152–153

³⁶ *Ibidem*, pp. 136–137.

Ladies-in-waiting who were to be married received substantial dowries. The courtiers were provided with letters of recommendation; Anna promoted them to high offices and posts and looked after them in all emergencies of life³⁷. She felt that the protection of servants and courtiers was her royal obligation.

A great amount of money was spent by Anna on the reconstruction and furnishing of her residences, not only in Warsaw and Ujazdów but also in Łobzów near Cracow³⁸.

Her patronage of architecture and art was closely connected to her conception of the dignity of the Jagiellonian family. Hence her great care about the memory of its dead members. Already in 1573 she ordered the Italian architect Santi Gucci to build the funeral monument for Sigismund II August. In the years 1577–1585 she asked Santi Gucci to make the tomb monument for herself. At the end of the 1580s she hired him again in order to carve the tombstone for her dead husband, Stephen Bathory and employed 3 Italian architects (Andrea Sarti, Francesco Zaccarella and Francesco Bernucci) to build the sepulchral monument in Bari (Italy) for her mother, Queen Bona; the decoration of it praised the glory of her ancestors³⁹.

Conclusions:

In early modern times the well arranged court served for the ruler not only as the base for his daily existence, but also as the centre of their political and administrative activities as well as of their patronage. The size of the court, the importance of people attracted by it as well as the luxury way of the courtly life were closely connected to the position of the ruler, serving as signs of their power. The efforts made by Anna Jagiellon to create a blossoming court resulted from her political and personal ambitions. Proud to be the last representative of the famous Jagiellonian dynasty, she tried to keep its tradition alive. She was using her court as an instrument of political and personal influence in order to impress people (including her royal husband). The rising number of courtiers, the increase in the expenditure on food, dress, balls and feasts corresponded with her growing position in

³⁷ *Ibidem*, pp. 136–137.

³⁸ *Ibidem*, pp. 132–133.

³⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 154; see also M. Bogućka, *Bona Sforza*, p. 220.

Polish society: from poor, neglected ugly girl to majestic *Infans Regni Polontae*, the female symbol of the Polish Golden Age.

But this is only one, personal side of the problem. The more general question is the development of the royal court and its role in the formation of Polish culture. In the 14th and 15th centuries the royal court held a central place in the Polish culture, serving as model for the whole country. The first signs of a crisis emerged in the 16th century, especially during the reign of Sigismund August. The restless lifestyle of this king as well as his unfortunate marriages resulted in his failure to serve his subjects as a model of life. In this situation Anna Jagiellon had to link her court to the older tradition of her parents' court, making of it the living memorial of the extinct dynasty. In some sense it was both the peak and the end of royal court's supreme role in Poland. The times of elected kings and the new socio-political structure of power brought new forms and new, more limited functions and possibilities of influence of the royal court in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth during the 17th-18th centuries.

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