

STANISŁAW MOSSAKOWSKI

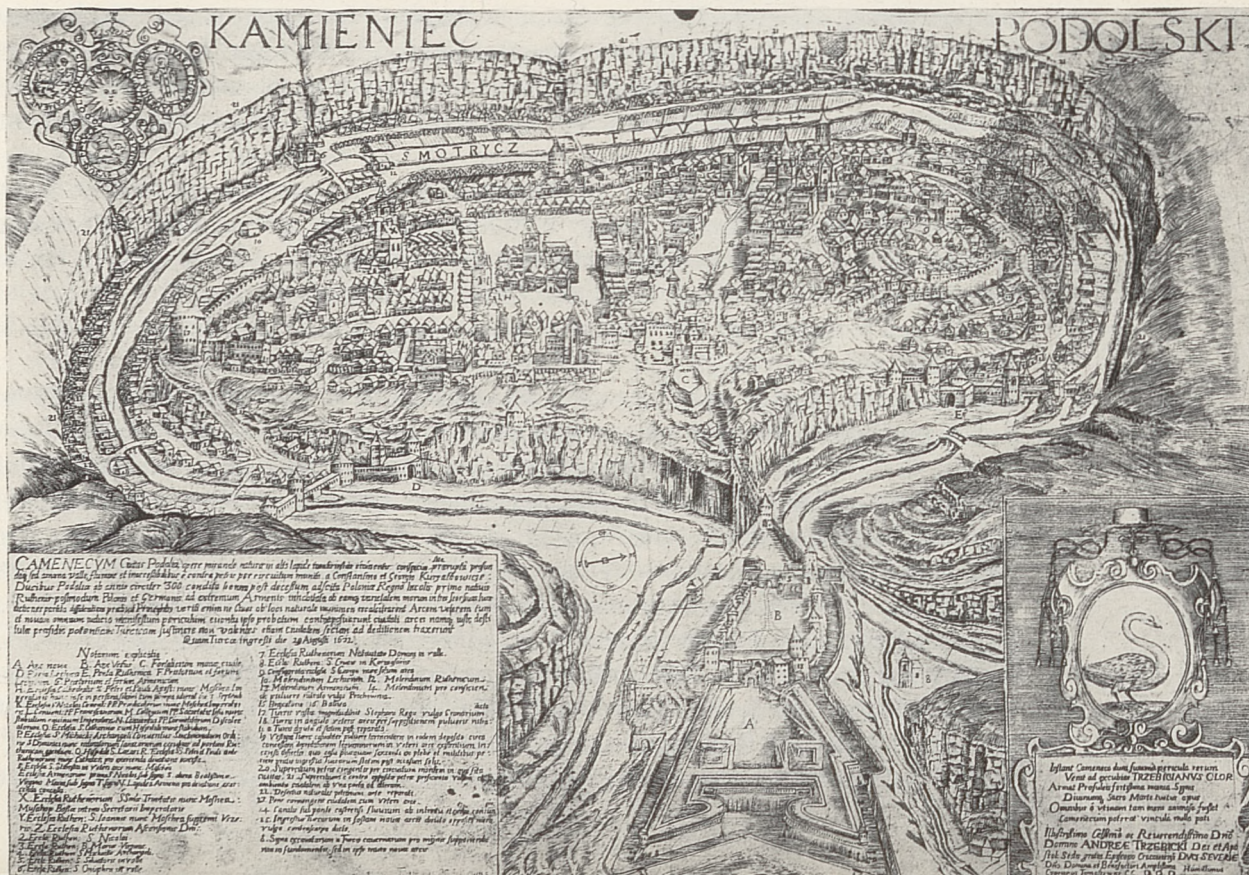
KAMIENIEC PODOLSKI – A FORTRESS - TOWN IN UKRAINE. A COMMON HERITAGE OF SEVERAL NATIONS.

The theme of our session as well as its venue this year draw our attention to two problems which have nowadays acquired a growing importance: the problem of cultural (e.g. artistic or architectural) exchanges between the Western and Eastern parts of our Continent, and the problem of preserving the results and relics of these exchanges that represent our common cultural heritage.

In this respect knowledge of the history and of the monuments of Kamieniec Podolski in Ukraine could be a good object lesson. The fortress-town grew during the XV, XVI and XVII centuries and was situated on the border between Poland and the Ottoman Empire, to be precise between the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and the Principality of Moldavia; which as a state was alternately a Hungarian, Polish and Ottoman fief. Here, as in the Island of Cyprus, there were two Christian worlds: the Catholic West and the Orthodox East met in a very fruitful manner with the Moslem Orient.

The history of Kamieniec goes back to the XIVth century, when Lithuanian princes conquered great parts of old Ruthenian territories. They built a new fortress and modernized the previous Ruthenian town set on two rocky hills surrounded by the deep canyon of a tributary of the Dniestr, the Smotrycz river (Fig. 1). At the end of the century, with the union between Poland and Lithuania, the whole territory passed to the Polish Kingdom

1. Kamieniec Podolski. Engraving by C. Tomaszewicz, ca. 1673. Warsaw, National Library, Cartography Coll. nr 1626, photo J. Langda.





2. The old Castle of Kamieniec, photo of the XIX c., Coll. IS PAN.



3. The Potters' tower in Kamieniec, photo W. Kowalski, 1992.

and then to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. It was here that king Władysław Jagiełło received the Wallachian rulers in 1404. At the beginning of its history, Kamieniec played an important role in Polish-Lithuanian and Polish-Moldavian or Wallachian struggles. Its opposite fortress on the Moldavian border was the famous castle of Chocim (Khotin).

The so-called Old Castle of Kamieniec with its high walls and several towers defending the western and main entrance to the town was constructed by the Polish authorities at the end of the XV and the beginning of the XVI centuries (Fig. 2). The names of the towers are names of the Polish noble families whose money was involved in their construction: Tenczyński, Lanckoroński and others. The first major restoration of the Old Castle was done in the 1540s by Job Bretfuss, a German architect in the service of the Polish king Zygmunt I. The entrance or "Black" tower and a high watch-tower called "Denna" (containing the chapel of St. Michael) were rebuilt at that time.

A massive fortified bridge connecting the Old Castle and the town was also constructed in the XVI century. It was situated in a narrow strip of land between two river-beds which required special defences to prevent a possible change of the water-course by the besiegers. In the XVI century fortification work was done mainly in the town. At that time not only parts of the walls and the three towers over the canyon in the east (among others the Potters' tower, 1583, Fig. 3), obtained their final shape as did a sophisticated defence system for the two main gates.

The North Gate, called the Polish or Crown Gate, formed a common system with the huge boulevard-tower (King Batory Tower) overlooking the canyon in its upper part, and with the lower gate of five towers and a fortified bridge over the river. A bridge built by the same king was part of the second main gate, called the Ruthenian gate. Both bridges were constructed in such a way that they could also serve as dams to raise the water level in time of siege.

The names of the gates were by no way accidental, as Kamieniec was populated from its very beginnings by different national and religious groups. It was king Władysław Jagiełło who in 1432 granted full autonomy and religious freedom to the three main communities of the town – Polish, Ruthenian and Armenian – and this privilege was consequently approved by all later Polish kings.

The division of the population was also visible in the urbanistic arrangement of the town with its three different market squares, three town halls, and with churches belonging to the three religions: Catholic, Orthodox and Armenian (Fig. 1). We can still admire the XVI-century town hall in the Polish Marketplace, and among earlier buildings two substantially Gothic churches: the Roman Catholic cathedral and the church of the Dominican Friars. The oldest preserved Ruthenian building is the Orthodox church of St. Peter and Paul constructed in the second half of the XVI century. A big Renaissance clock-tower and parts



4. *The old Castle of Kamieniec, photo W. Kowalski, 1992.*

5. *The Roman Catholic cathedral in Kamieniec, photo W. Kowalski, 1992.*

of the porch remain from the previous Armenian church of St. Nicholas; the adjacent parish building has been recently restored.

Armenians were of essential importance to the economic life of the town and of the whole region. They controlled the bulk of the Polish-Eastern trade which was rapidly developing in the XV and XVI centuries, and which passed from the Baltic region to the Middle and Far East mainly through Kamieniec and the ports of the Black Sea. Other eastern merchants – Persian, Turkish or Crimean – were not permitted to live inside the town-fortress. They had to stay in the neighbouring village Karwasary (the name has been coined from Turkish *Karavan-saray*) which was situated near the river bank beneath the Old Castle (Fig. 2). What is astonishing and worth remembering, especially in our times, is the fact that all these different ethnic and religious groups cohabited in Kamieniec in a quiet and peaceful way.

The main threat to the town was posed by the Crimean Tartars, vassals of Turkey. They frequently raided the Ukraine and tried to seize Kamieniec several times, notably in 1463, 1474, and 1476. But at the beginning of the XVI century the Ottoman Empire which was quickly making conquests in the Mediterranean and in the south-eastern part of Europe became a far greater danger. In this situation Kamieniec Podolski began to be considered, in the XVI and XVII centuries, as one of the main bulwarks for the whole for Christendom against the Moslem world. The list of financial supporters of the restoration of the Old Castle included not only Polish bishops, but also Roman popes. Their contribution is attested by the coats of arms put on the walls of some towers of the Old Castle, among others on the so-called “Różanka” tower (1505, bishop Krzesław of Kurozweki) the “Lacka” or “Polish” tower (1518, archbishop Jan Laski, primat of Poland) the “Kołpak” or “Nobles” tower (1542, bishop Jakub Buczacki) and last but not least the “Pope’s” tower (the coat of arms of pope Julius II, 1503-1513).

The constant Turkish danger necessitated a modernization of the fortress under the rule of king Zygmunt III in the early XVII century. The New Castle was constructed in front of the Old one as a brick and earthwork fortress with two half-bastions in the new Italian manner. Both were connected by a high wooden drawbridge.

Kamieniec did not have to wait long for an enemy attack. It was besieged by Turkish and Tartar troops in 1613, 1621 and 1633. During the years of the Polish-Ukrainian civil war, between 1648 and 1654, it was successfully defended by the citizens who remained loyal to the Polish Crown. The fortress, which for a long time was considered to be impregnable, was taken at last in August 1672 after ten days of regular siege by Turkish, Tartar and Cossack troops under the personal command of sultan Mehmed IV. In spite of many efforts to reconquer it undertaken by the Poles (also by the victorious king Jan III Sobieski) in 1673, 1689 and 1692, Kamieniec remained in Ottoman hands until the peace treaty signed at Karlowitz in 1699 when the whole of Podolia was returned to Poland.

During their 27 years of domination the Turks restored the old fortifications and made several changes in the civil and ecclesiastic buildings of the town. They constructed, among others, a large bulwark over the town gate on the spot of the demolished Carmelite church; they strengthened the famous bridge thereafter known as the Turkish bridge, sank a deep well in the Old Castle, and transformed practically every church into a mosque. As remains of these activities we can still admire the high minaret over the Renaissance burial chapel next to the façade of the Roman Catholic cathedral (Fig. 5), as well as a beautiful Muslim pulpit (minbar) which was brought from Istanbul and placed in the interior of Blackfriars church.

After its return to Poland in 1699, Kamieniec Podolski did not cease to be an important fortress. Throughout the XVIII century substantial modernization of the fortification system went on (Fig. 1). Between 1704 and 1736 the management of the work was in the hands of an Englishman, colonel Archibald Andrew Glover of Gleyden and in the years 1768-1785 of a polonized Dutchman, major Jan de Witte. Their work and its results are however, not included in the subject of our meeting. Let me now just say a few words about some important monuments in the town which were restored or newly built during that period. The Roman Catholic cathedral obtained a new baroque façade (Fig. 5), and a new church, that of the Trinitarian Order, was constructed near the entrance to the Turkish bridge (Fig. 2), the main purpose of the order was to redeem Christian captives out of Ottoman hands.

After the second partition of Poland in 1793 Kamieniec Podolski became part of the Russian Empire. Several old monuments, in particular Roman Catholic churches, or churches of the Uniates (i.e. of the Greek Catholic rite) were destroyed or transformed to suit the requirements of the Orthodox rite. This destructive process grew more intensive after two unsuccessful Polish uprisings – that of 1831 and that of 1863. On the other hand, new buildings of Russian manner, and a modern quarter outside the old town were erected in the second half of the XIX century.

Unfortunately, new waves of destruction and devastation came with the Soviet regime and with the Nazi occupation of Ukraine during the Second World War. Among other monuments, the Orthodox cathedral of the XVI century, two Orthodox monasteries with their churches dating from the XVI and XVII centuries, as well as the main Armenian church of the XVIII century and the modern Jewish synagogue ceased to exist.

The lengthy process of destruction and devastation has been recently (and we hope - definitively) stopped. Kamieniec Podolski, a wonderfully situated fortress-town in Ukraine, with its Polish, Ruthenian, Armenian, Turkish, Russian and Jewish monuments, will be – we firmly believe – appreciated not only as part of the history of these nations, but also as an essential part of their common cultural heritage.

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Dans l'Europe centrale et orientale se trouve l'exemple de Kamienec Podolski, ville forteresse de l'Ukraine, située sur la frontière entre la confédération lituanienne-polonaise et la principauté de la Moldavie, état hongrois, polonais et ottoman.

Impliquée dans les luttes entre Lituanie et Ruthénie, entre Pologne et Lituanie, Moldavie et Vallacchia, attaquée par les Tartares de Crimée, assiégée par les Turcs, la ville-forteresse avec des défenses de plus en plus fortes, avait résisté jusqu'à 1672 quand, assiégée par Mahomet IV avait dû se rendre. Ensuite, malgré trois sièges conduits par Jan Sobieski elle n'était redevenue polonaise (comme toute la Podolie) qu'avec la paix de Karlowitz (1699), et suite à la seconde division de la Pologne en 1793 elle passa à l'empire russe.

De ces événements complexes dérivent l'importance et la richesse d'un patrimoine historique, résultat de l'échange culturel entre l'est et l'ouest de l'Europe qui s'est concrétisé avec l'édification des monuments polonais, ruthéniens, arméniens, turcs et russes.