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SINGING IN THE BATTLE:
ABOUT THE *BOGURODZICA*

Annotation. Different liturgical issues have given shape to the close relations between war and religion in the Middle Ages. Devotional behavior accompanied military phenomena from introductory drill via the knightly accolade to actual fighting in battles. Even the political dimension of warfare was at times partly regulated by religious intervention (the *Pax Dei* and *Treuga Dei*).

The famous Polish *Bogurodzica* was reportedly sung before the Battle of Grunwald (Tannenberg). The question “Why” bothered generations of historians. Recent research seems to have brought us closer to a solution of this enigma. The connection of the song’s origin to the circumstances of the Battle of 1410 appears to be possibly much closer than previously assumed. Consequently, the song as we know it from two manuscripts dated not before 1408 may be not much older than that. On the other hand, the musical roots, e. g. the melody of the main phrase of the song can be followed as far back as the year 1025.

Keywords: Middle Ages; war; liturgy; battle songs; *Bogurodzica*.

WAR AND RELIGION

Embedding of warfare in religion is probably as old as each of them separately. Even telling one from another is a difficult task, no less difficult than establishing the starting point in the chain of causes and consequences in their entanglement. At which places in the long

sequence of military actions called attack and defense, counter-attack and preventive strike do religious factors make their appearance? It is true that gods of war belong to the hard core of each pantheon and in myths they rank very high in power and authority. But it is only by way of wars of gods that the rank within the pantheon is being established.

Absolute as it is, the relation between religion and war does have some peculiarities in different times. A special feature of the Middle Ages is a close involvement of liturgy in warfare, observable at different points, to start with devotional framing of the military training and drill. In the illustrated manual of fencing (*Fechtbuch*, p. 78)¹ by Paulus Kal, we see at the beginning of a chapter a kneeling knight praying to Mary with Child. It was by way not necessary to demonstrate a kneeling prayer position to a young adult aspiring knight! His efforts had to be framed properly – as the way of establishing his task as defender of Christianity. This is what he explicitly heard and swore during the official and public feast devoted to introducing of new knights into their office (*benedictio novi militis*) accompanied by the blessing of their arms (*consecratio ensis*)². After the benediction of the new knight, the bishop put the naked sword into the right hand of the knight, saying: Accept this sword in the name of † Father and Son and Holy Ghost, and use it for the sake of defense of yourself, of the holy Catholic faith and God's church, and against the enemies of Christ³.

¹ Paulus Kal, *Fechtbuch, gewidmet dem Pfalzgrafen Ludwig*, BSB Cgm, [s. 1], 1507, (not after 1479).

² Cf. the Missal from the Gniezno Cathedral with a benediction "Ad cingendos milites".

³ Episcopus imponit nudum gladium in militis dexteram manum dicens: "Accipe gladium istum in nomine patris † et fi † lii et spiritus † sancti et utaris eo ad defensionem tuam ac sanctae et Catholicae fidei et ecclesiae dei ac confusionem inimicorum crucis christi et fidei christianae et quantum tua humana fragilitas permiserit cum eo vel alio neminem iniuste laedas. Quod ipse tibi praestare dignetur qui cum patre et spiritu sancto vivit et regnat in saecula saeculorum [...]. Et reposito gladio in vagina per militem, **accingitur eodem gladio** per alios duos milites vel nobiles astantes."

The accolade was a way of socializing young men as knights, potential warriors, members of the class of *bellatores*. A generally social dimension is reached with rules of behavior concerning all segments of society. This comes with the phenomenon of *pax Dei*: proclaiming immunity from military violence to the non-fighters in medieval society – the peasants (*aratores*) and the clergy (*oratores*).

Purely political solution was needed and made available with the peace-keeping institution of the *Treuga Dei* which consisted in limiting time which could be devoted to battles. All military fighting was prohibited from Wednesday evening till Monday morning, which left the rest of the week to the undisturbed work of the common people and the clergy. The latter was not absent, however, from the battle business, as was the Church the only earthly institution enforcing the *Treuga Dei* – not by military power, but in moral terms only and by way of liturgical sanctions.

Church services and rites were necessary to frame battle events and behavior in the Christian sense and fashion. The services could include simple prayers, explicit benedictions, as well as more developed offices (*officium*) and even regular masses held before the battle at a field altar, or at the *carrociium* (Italian *Carroccio*) – a movable rectangular platform on which the standard of an army or a city and an altar were erected.

The display of relics was itself a very powerful symbolic armor: “reliquiæ Sanctorum urbes custodiunt”, – said John Chrysostom (†407) in the first Chapter of his *Praise of the martyrs of Egypt*⁴. So the presence of relics on the battlefield can be described as participation of special arms acting actually as the proverbial “pope’s divisions”. This belongs to the undeniable medieval phenomena. It cannot be avoided in any representation of an important medieval event.

In the famous Grunwald-painting of Jan Matejko the presence of an important saint has been depicted in a narrative way. Not a

⁴ John Chrysostom, *Laudatio martyrum Aegyptiorum*, *Patrologia Graeca*, vol. 50, col. 693.

reliquiary has been shown, but the spirit of St. Stanislaus, bishop of Cracow. His martyrdom (†1079) and canonization (1253) had both a political dimension. Alleged dismemberment and wondrous integration of the cut-off members back into a whole body have been connected with the division of the land after the fall of the kingdom and its re-integration after some two and a half centuries (1320).

Of all saints, Stanislas's appearance was expectable at that time and place. Jan Długosz could easily have been right when reporting the general belief in the saint's appearance and intermediation. Even the German knights are told to have attributed their defeat to the "personal" appearance of St. Stanislas on the battlefield⁵.

Back to Matejko's painted representation of the Grunwald battle it should be added that in a less sacred sense, a similar function can be attributed to the motif of the banner with Columns of Gediminas (*Gediminaičių stulpai* in Lithuanian), referring to the grandfather of both Jogaila / Jagiełło and Grand Duke Vytautas / Witold, thus a symbol of the Lithuanian dynasty.

Religion doesn't replace warfare, and liturgical forms of behavior with their devotional paraphernalia never cover any battle's events totally, but are put at meaningful places. Their signs had to be perceived in visual, aural and behavioral terms to guarantee the religious aura of facticity, so essential for the religion as a cultural system⁶.

⁵ *Conspectus autem sub prelii tempore fuit in acre a nonnullus viris devotis et timoratis et quibus id videre propiciacio Divina concesserat, vir quidam pontificalibus amictus personam egregiam representans Polonicum exercitum iugiter et donecpugnaretur et Polonis cederet victoria benedicens, beatissimus Stanislaus Cracoviensis episcopus Polonorum patronus et prothomartyr creditus, cuius intercessione et suffragio tam celebrem victoriam constat Polonis provenisse. (Ioannis Dlugossii Annales seu Cronicae incliti Regni Poloniae, lib. X–XI, ed. by an editorial committee headed by M. Plezia, Varsaviae: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 1997, p. 115).*

⁶ Clifford Geertz, "Religion as a cultural system", in: *Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Religion*, M. Banton (ed.), London: Tavistock, 1966, pp. 1–45.

Most important under behavioral forms of religious manifestation are liturgical services and prayers, spoken and sung. Both individual and common praying and singing are a necessary part of liturgical rites, but they can appear separately and privately outside of any formal liturgical frame.

Benedictions were excluded from the system of the sacraments, but each *pontificale* contained a set of scripts for the bishop how he should process different blessings. An example from the time around 1400 is a formula from a missal preserved in the Gniezno Cathedral⁷ (shelf No 93. *Missale cum calendario* f. 245r.):

Ad cingendos milites benedictio

Exaudi Domine preces nostras & hos enses quibus hij famuli tui se circumcingi desiderant maiestatis tue dextera bene + dicere dignare.



As we see, rituals like the dedication of the sword (*consecratio ensis*)⁸ were actually a part of the accolade (knighting, *benedictio novi*

⁷ For a description see Jadwiga Rył, „Katalog rękopisów Biblioteki Katedralnej w Gnieźnie”, in: *Archiwa, Biblioteki i Muzea Kościelne* (45), 1982, vol. 55, s. 5–201.

⁸ *Militem Coronatorum Creatio et Priuilegia eorundem*, [s. l. & a.], [1494], f. 6b–7b.

militis), which demanded full participation of a living and acting person, and of his equals as ministrants of the bishop.

Benedictio Militum Coronatorum. Et primo ensis.

Episcopus finita missa stans sine mitra benedicit ensem, quem unus ex ministrantibus nudum tenet in manu dicens: Adiutorium nostrum in nomine domini.

At the end:

Et si plures erunt militandi benedictiones atque orationes suprascriptae etiam in plurali fieri poterunt ita ut unico actu omnes militaribus insigniis decorentur.

As it did precede the knighting ceremony (see the “finita missa” above), a regular mass before a battle has been attested in many sources:

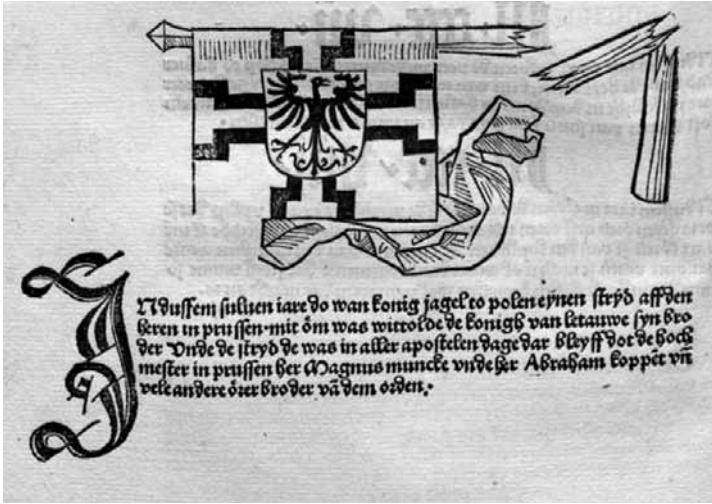
Anno milleno quadringentesimo deno
Augusto sub mense cruciferi strati sub ense
Regis Poloniae, post missarum sollemnitatem
Die sanctorum divisionis apostolorum.

(*De eodem proelio; De proelio ad vicum Grunwald commisso*; Liman, p. 338, 340)

The day of the battle⁹ – 15 July, the Dispersion of the Apostles (*Divisio Apostolorum*) was also well-chosen, according to the *Treuga Dei* principles – it was Tuesday – but first of all, the feast addressed the church-building role of the Twelve Apostles, whose work started with their departure from Jerusalem. Even in a very short notice of the Battle in the Saxon chronicle of Conrad Bote (*Cronecken der Sassen*) the day has been mentioned¹⁰. In the chapter 1410 we read:

⁹ Feria tertia in die divisionis Apostolorum quinta decima die Iulii licet Wladislaus Polonorum rex in loco stationum in dilculo statuisset missas audire, tentorium tamen sub quo agebantur Divina vento flante et rapiente celeritate qua iubebatur neque figi neque explicari poterat nec quod explicatum fuerat manebat. (Lib. 11 AD 1410, p. 86).

¹⁰ Conrad Bote, *Cronecken der Sassen*, Holzschnitte vom Meister WB, Mainz: Peter Schöffler, 1492.03.06. [BSB-Ink B-765 – GW 4963]



In the same year the king Jagel of Poland won a battle against the lords of Prussia, with him was Wittolde the king of Lithuania, his brother. And the battle was at All Apostles' Day, then the great master of Prussia [=the Teutonic Knights] has lost his life [...].

Among forms of religious behavior outside of a formal liturgy we find individual prayers spoken, and vows taken in expectation of heavy fighting and possible death. In danger of sudden death sacramental indulgence was granted if one did private confession.

A LITERARY WITNESS

A complex enacted presentation of devotional attitudes and military customs involving religion can be seen in a Dutch drama written before 1500, but based on a real miracle book kept from the year 1373 on. The Eucharistic play *tSpel vanden heiligen sacramente van der Nyeuwervaert*¹¹ has two aspects of interest for us. The general

¹¹ Paul Leendertz (jr.), *Middelnederlandsche dramatische poëzie*, Leiden: Sijthoff, [1907], also available online. The form *tSpel* covers the definite article

one concerns the conceptualization of the vicinities of Prussia in the writing of Western Europe contemporary to the time of the Grunwald battle. The second is specific: how religious instruction was given by the commanders to their crew.

The text is the dramatization of a collection of miracula centered around a wondrous Host venerated in a small Brabant village church. Among the most common healings from different diseases and fatal accidents we find there a report of a pilgrimage of a Dutch knight Walter. During a battle in Prussia he was taken captive. It is interesting for the cognitive aspect that the pagan Prussians are called Saracens. Confronted with death by those Saracen pagans he takes a religious vow by promising not to eat meat nor drink wine until he undertakes a pilgrimage to the miraculous Eucharist of Nieuwerwaert in Brabant, which involves of course first getting away from imprisonment¹². The account in the miracles book referred to was unfortunately not dated, we only know it has been written down between the accounts of 1397 and 1423. So this is not impossible that we are reading here about a Dutch knight who participated in the battle of Grunwald!

The specific aspect of the Dutch drama account concerns the devotional instruction for knights how they should act in the battle: why do they fight and what are they to do *in articulo mortis*. In a quite topical way¹³ the commander tells his crew how they as Chris-

het+Spel, the former being reduced to the consonant t, pronounced as proclitic [ət] = Schwa+t.

¹² Van eenen ridder die in heydenisse geuangen was + Item een ridder in Brabant gheheiten her wouter van kersbeke met sinen knechten toech in pruychen om gods lachter te helpen wreken teghen den heydenen. Ende als si daer waren comen soe worden si ghe-[7a]uanghen met vele kerstenen [...] hi waert denckende op dat heilighe sacrament vander Nyevaert dwelck hi vriendelic ghelouede te versueken eer hi vleisch ate ende wijn droncke. mocht hi vertroest worden. (Leendertz, *op. cit.*, p. 461).

¹³ Cf. the Chronicle of Gall I, 21. *Galli Anonymi Cronica et gesta ducum sive principum Polonorum*, ed. K. Maleczyński, in: *Monumenta Poloniae Historica*, 2nd series, vol. II, Kraków: PAU, 1952.

tians (*ghij kersten*) are obliged to revenge Christ's humiliation by withstanding all pains and wounds of the heavy battle and even risk their life, without losing their trust in God and being assured of the glorious reception by Our Lady.

Heere Wouter van Roosbeke

Wel an, ghij kersten, wilt cloec gemoedt sijn!
Al muedgi met veel slaghen gegroet sijn,
Al muedgij duersteken, duerhouwen sijn,
Al muedgij nat, bezweedt, bebloet sijn, 610
Al mach u tleven hier gheboet sijn,
Al muedgij in veel rouwen sijn,
Laet in Gode al u betrouwen sijn,
Wilt heerlic Cristus lachter wreken.
Ghij sult in gloriën by onser Vrouwen sijn. 615

In case of a life endangering wounding, one should confess to himself and God will give him absolution:

Wordi verslaghen oft duersteken.
Wilt u biechten tegen u selven spreken, Private confession
+God sal u vergheven al u mesdaet.

The monologue gets to the actuality of the battle: the pagans are coming, hit them as hard as you can, and now shout "Jesus!"

De heydenen commen an ghestreken;
Siet dat ghij groote slaghen slaet, 620
Ende roept alle Jhesus, sonder verlaet. Battle cry "Jesus"

De Knapen allen.

Jhesus, Jhesus.

I. Heiden.

Mamet, Mamet!

THE BATTLE CRIES

With the above longer quotation we reached the next point of our story, the battle cry. The Christians, as instructed by their commander, are shouting Jesus!, while the 1st Pagan character addresses Mahomet (*Mamet* in Middle Dutch). All over the world there are countless slogans shouted by the military when they start a fight. Some of the cries concern the political affiliation of the soldiers, some are religious. They seemed so crucial for the images of the battles that they were put into shortest memorativa rather than fully literary accounts. The oldest witnesses in Poland concern the battle against the Teutonic knights at Płowce, 1331:

In campo Radzeow clamabant Poloni Cracow.¹⁴

Cracow in campo Radzeow clamaverunt Poloni.¹⁵

MILITARY SINGING

The oldest and very popular battle cry was the liturgical invocation *Kyrie eleison*, first attested from the 9th c. in France. A Russian source tells us about the use of this battle-cry by Polish knights as early as 1245. A Polish-Hungarian coalition who was helping the duke Rostislav of Halicz against the Galician-Volhynian duke Daniel (*Regnum Galiciae et Lodomeriae*) and his brother Vassil:

видѣвъ же Даниль. Лахъы крѣпко идеущимъ на Василага. **керьльшь** поющимъ.¹⁶

¹⁴ „De proelio ad villam Płowce commisso”, in: Kazimierz Liman, *Antologia poezji łacińskiej. Średniowiecze*, Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, 2005, s. 334.

¹⁵ „De eodem proelio”, in: Liman, *op. cit.*, s. 336.

¹⁶ Franciszek Sielicki in his Polish translation of the Latopis [...], has corrected the date from 1249 to 1245 (1987: 273). *Полное Собрание Русскихъ Лѣтописей*, t. 2: *Ипатьевская летопись: Галицко-Волынскій сводъ*, Sankt-Petersburg: Tipografija M. A. Aleksandrova, 1908, Col. 791–809, from the year 6749 [1241]–until the year 6758 [1250] vide 803. There is a new edition of the old Russian annals, Moscow, 2001.

This *керъльсь* or *kierlesz* in Polish comes from the Greek address to God in litanies *Kyrie eleison* (God, show us mercy), in the western Church it was sung by the *populus* who otherwise couldn't participate in voicing of the Latin liturgy. Polish *kierlesz* was preceded as many other linguistic phenomena by the Czech *krleš*, known already from the 10th century.

The oldest proof of the *Kyrie eleison* being sung by Christian knights during a battle is as old as 881 (the battle at Saucourt, 3 August 881). The French king Louis (Hludvicus) III was fighting against the pagan Vikings of Denmark. About that battle we have one of the oldest carols in the German language, the *Ludwigslied*, Song of Ludwig, telling in the lines 45–49 the last moments before the battle started. The king praised God and in order to see what he prayed for, he jumped forward with pious song on his lips, and all his men joined him singing *Kyrie eleison*. As soon as this has been sung, the battle could start:

RITMUS TEUTONICUS DE PIAE MEMORIAE HLUDUICE REGE

(*German song to the blessed memory of King Louis*)

[...]

Gode lob sageda, Her sihit thes her gereda. 45

Ther kuning reit kuono, Sang lioth frono,

Ioh alle saman sungun: "Kyrrieleison."

Sang uuas gisungan, Uuig uuas bigunnan.

Er lobte Gott; nun soll er sehen, was er gewünscht hat!

Kühn sprengte der König voran, ein heiliges Lied auf den Lippen,
und alle fielen ein mit "Kyrie eleison."

Der Gesang war [kaum] verklungen, da tobte schon die Schlacht los.¹⁷

¹⁷ Manuscript of the monastery of Saint-Amand Abbey (Elnone Abbey), written down before the death of Louis (5 August 882), (Valenciennes Bibliothèque municipale classée, Cod. 150, f. 141 verso–143 recto). <http://www.nd.edu/~gantho/anth1-163/Ludwigslied36-39.html> Translated into modern German by Horst Dieter Schlosser. In the same codex same hand wrote the sequence on St. Eulalia, the oldest poem in the French language.

Only the king seems to sing a whole song, the knights join him in the chorus-part or the refrain.

We meet this *Kyrie-eleison* refrain again in a much younger German carol, *Christ ist erstanden*, which originated, as did most of European lyric poetry, in the process of vernacularization of Latin church song. Its source is the most famous Easter sequence *Victimae paschali laudes immolent Christiani* (11th c.). The resurrection of Christ from martyrdom is announced to everybody as a reason for joy and promise of solace:

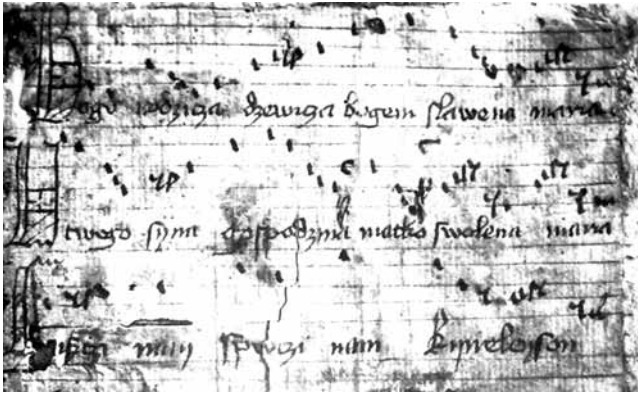
Christ ist erstanden von der Marter alle.
Deß soll'n wir alle froh sein,
Christ will unser Trost sein:
Kyrieleis!

According to chronicles, the Teutonic Knights have sung their anthem at the short victorious moment when they captured the flag of the Polish Kingdom. This expressive function of the singing is fulfilled by this religious carol only accidentally. Later it was going to be replaced by other sung or shouted repertory and by instrumental signals, mostly of bells, drums and trumpets. Already the medieval *carroccium* was bringing trumpeters who encouraged the fighting knights, and in some customs military signalling was separated from the religious *carroccio* and passed to a special cart bearing the war bell (*martinella*).

In the context of the “military” function of pious singing in battles the devotional content of the carols and their religious meaning should not be forgotten. The resurrection of Christ is for Christians a proof and promise of life eternal which helps controlling the fear of sudden death in a battle. This is what we know precisely about the function of the Polish *Bogurodzica* (Mother Godes), admittedly from the later time. In a prayer to Virgin Mary (printed 1568) we read: “Knights during a heavy battle are shouting for your help.”¹⁸

¹⁸ „Rycerze w boju okrutnym wołają o pomoc k Tobie” – modlitwa ku Panie Maryjej.

Now is Mary surely not someone like Archangel Michael, and it is no military help (like that received from St. Stanislaus) which is here being asked for, but rather a spiritual intermediation for the faithful souls in danger of death (*in articulo mortis*). The main content of the *Bogurodzica* (oldest part) is a twofold request, first to Mary to “give us” her Son, and second, to Christ, to “give us” paradise after this life. The content of the two oldest stanzas of the *Bogurodzica* gave it a character comparable to the German *Christ ist erstanden*: it voiced hope for life eternal (*najski przebył*) which made the possibility of death in a coming battle bearable. The refrain *Kyrieleyson* (see last word in the picture below; MS Bibl. Jag. 1619) is a sure sign of the carol’s ancient genesis. But the composition is not earlier than the second half of the 14th century¹⁹, and the lack of any witnesses earlier than 1408 speaks in favor for the hypothesis of *Bogurodzica* having been created only about that time as the war with Teutonic knights appeared unavoidable.



¹⁹ Rudolf Flotzinger, „Jeszcze o kwestii “Bogurodzicy”, (first published 1997), in: *Pamiętnik Literacki*, 2005, 2nd issue (96), s. 7–10. Here a recent rebuttal by Jakub Kubieniec, „Czy melodia Bogurodzicy jest centonem?”, in: *Muzykolog wobec świadectw źródłowych i dokumentów: księga pamiątkowa dedykowana profesorowi Piotrowi Poźniakowi w 70 rocznicę urodzin = The musicologist and source documentary evidence: book of essays in honour of professor Piotr Poźniak on his 70th birthday*, ed. by Zofia Fabiańska [et al.], Kraków: Musica Iagiellonica, 2009, s. 355–366.

But the same function can be attributed to oldest Polish adaptation of the Easter sequence, sung by the *populus* during the Resurrection procession – *Chrystus zmartwychwstał jest* (1365)²⁰. The resurrection of Christ is here an example and promise of heavenly kingdom after raising up from the dead:

Krystus z martwych wstał je,
Ludu przykład dał je,
Eż nam z martwych wstaci,
Z Bogiem krolewaci
Kyrie eleison.

That Polish carol was a translation of the first stanza of the Czech *Buóh všemohúci* (before 1350), which took its melody from the German *Christ ist erstanden* (ca. 1200, text from 1325)²¹. Contrary to the Czech, the Polish text has one important grammatical feature in common with the German, in both languages Christ is addressed in the 3rd person, not in the second as in the Czech *Jezu Kriste, vstał si*.

Why was that carol *Chrystus zmartwychwstał jest* known as it was at least since 1365 *not chosen* to be sung at the battle of Grunwald? Crucial was here the identity of melodies with the German *Christ ist erstanden*. Such a song was not applicable as a battle signal for a fashionable kingdom going to war against an army singing... the same melody.

Another carol had to be invented to be sung in Polish before a battle with the Teutonic knights. This carol appeared to be the *Bogurodzica*. This is the account of Jan Długosz:

²⁰ *Krystus z martwych wstał jest* – written down in the *Graduale Plocense* (1365) by Świętosław z Wilkowa. Short notice in the Gniezno missal Shelf No. 141, ca. 1400; see f. 81^vb–2nd line from below: Xpus smArthipv (from autopsy; cf also Rył 33, 1976: 254).

²¹ Frantisek Mužik, “Christ ist erstanden – Buóh všemohúci”, in: *Miscellanea Musicologica*, 1970, is. 21–23, pp. 7–37. Cf the detailed discussion by Wiesław Wydra, „O czeskim wzorze pieśni Krystus z martwych wstał je”, in: *Idem, Polskie pieśni średniowieczne*, s. 15–29. For the identity of melodies see: Hieronim Feicht, „Polska muzyka religijna”, in: *Księga 1000-lecia katolicyzmu w Polsce*, vol. 1, Lublin: KUL, 1969, s. 397.

SIGNIS CANERE INSPICIENTIBUS regius universus exercitus patrium carmen
Bogurodzicza sonora voce vociferatus est, deinde hastis vibratis in prelium
prorupit.²²

Długosz took his report about singing the *Bogurodzica* from the *Cronica conflictus* which was based on a story of an eye-witness, although preserved only in a later copy:

His completis omnes unanimiter cum fletu Boga rodzycza cantare ceperunt
et ad bellum processerunt, lacrimis tamen perfusis, quam ipse rex e pectoribus
eduxerunt suis exhortationibus [...].

Having explained the impossibility of the use of the Polish song of 1365, we remain in need of telling why its replacement ultimately had to be (1) a Marian song (2) with a melody of its own – thus something like the *Bogurodzica* we know. Recent research seems to have brought us closer to a solution of this enigma.

In the diplomatic and juridical controversy between the Kingdom of Poland and the Teutonic Knights the most heavy argument against the Polish King (“Jagel” as the German chronicle has called him), was his Lithuanian pagan origin and dubious Christianity. To give a proof of the king being a true believer at the head of an army of believers a “common” Catholic Church song would be enough.

The makers of the new song did a step further however, and took aim at the Marian devotion so essential for the Knights, who had called themselves *The Order of Brothers of the German House of Saint Mary in Jerusalem*²³. Jean-Philippe Hashold presented recently a political explanation of our enigma pointing at the “spiritual rivalry” between both parties, and attributing an argumentative value to the fact that Polish army could have been presented as having truly sung a vernacular *canticum de nativitate domini* – a song in which Virgin

²² *Ioannis Dlugossii Annales*, p. 104.

²³ Or, in official Latin: *Ordo domus Sanctæ Mariæ Theutonicorum Hierosolymitanorum*, German: *Orden der Brüder vom Deutschen Haus St. Mariens in Jerusalem*.

Mary was venerated as *Dei Genitrix*²⁴. Such an argument has actually been brought to the Pope John XXIII at Avignon by a diplomat of the Polish king as early as 1411:

Confortaturus igitur in domino et in potencia virtutis eius suisque militibus animas suas Deo humiliantibus lanceasque vibrantibus simul et laudem Deo cantantibus in vulgari suo Polonico de nativitate dominicanticum resonantes, quod incipit: Dei genitrix, congregiuntur divina fortitudine animosi et illico turme hostiles ad invicem colliduntur.²⁵

Such a report from the Polish royal court and the episcopate was a strong argument against accusations of paganism. The idea itself, the invention alone can be called an efficient political weapon, because it was disarming the enemy at the most essential issue of his accusations.

This hypothesis accepted, the connection of the song's origin to the circumstances of the Battle of 1410 appears to be much closer than assumed. Consequently, the song as we know it from two manuscripts dated not before 1408 may be not much older than that. According to recent musicological research (Flotzinger) the type of composition is typical for the second half of the 14th century.

On the other hand, the musical roots, e. g. the melody of the initial phrase of the song – the vocative addressing of the “mother Godes” can be followed as far back as the year 1025. It is part of the melody called *mater sequentiarum* whose neumatic notation accompanied the text of the sequence addressing Archangel Michael (inc. *Ad ce-*

²⁴ Jean Philippe Hashold, „Dlaczego pod Grunwaldem śpiewano Bogurodzicę, albo duchowa rywalizacja między Krzyżakami i Polakami”, in: *Pamiętnik Literacki*, 2005, 2nd issue (96), p. 96; Wiesław Wydra, *Dlaczego pod Grunwaldem śpiewano Bogurodzicę?: Trzy rozdziały o najdawniejszych polskich pieśniach religijnych*, Poznań: PSP, 2000.

²⁵ Sven Ekdahl, *Die Schlacht bei Tannenberg 1410. Quellenkritische Untersuchungen*, Bd I. *Einführung und Quellenlage*, in: *Berliner Historische Studien*, Band 8, Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1982, p. 304; Krzysztof Ożóg, „Udział Andrzeja Łaskarzyca w sprawach i sporach polsko-krzyżackich do soboru w Konstancji”, in: *Polska i jej sąsiedzi w późnym średniowieczu*, pod red. K. Ożoga i S. Szczura, Kraków: Towarzystwo Naukowe „Societas Vistulana”, 2002, s. 158–186.

lebres rex celice)²⁶. The melody has arrived in Poland as the opening anthem in the liturgical manual of the *Ordo Romanus* presented in 1025 most probably as a coronation gift to king Mieszko II by Matilda of Germany, Countess Palatine of Lotharingia (*979–†1025), who was his mother in law since 1013 when he married Matilda's daughter Richeza of Lotharingia.

This might be not so important for my paper's contribution to the study of relations between music and warfare, but the *Bogurodzica* phrase, being voiced on the battle ground and thus having appeared on the foreground after centuries of silent existence in church chant – does connect – albeit accidentally and superficially – two crucial moments in Polish history: the year of establishing the Kingdom of Poland with the year of a great victory that was essential for Poland's further existence in the prolific union with the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Or was it not accidentally?

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²⁶ *Kodeks Matyldy: księga obrzędów z kartami dedykacyjnymi = Codex Mathildis: liber officiorum cum foliis dedicationis*, oprac. i wyd. Brygida Kürbis z zespołem: B. Bolz, B. Nadolski, D. Zydorek, Kraków: Polska Akademia Umiejętności, 2000.

Andrzej Dąbrówka

SINGING IN THE BATTLE:
ABOUT THE *BOGURODZICA*

Summary

Different liturgical issues have given shape to the close relations between war and religion in the Middle Ages. Devotional behavior accompanied military phenomena from introductory drill via the knightly accolade to actual fighting in battles. Even the political dimension of warfare was at times partly regulated by religious intervention (the *Pax Dei* and *Treuga Dei*).

The famous Polish *Bogurodzica* was reportedly sung before the Battle of Grunwald (Tannenberg). The question "Why" bothered generations of historians. Recent research seems to have brought us closer to a solution of this enigma. The connection of the song's origin to the circumstances of the Battle of 1410 appears to be possibly much closer than previously assumed. Consequently, the song as we know it from two manuscripts dated not before 1408 may be not much older than that. On the other hand, the musical roots, e. g. the melody of the main phrase of the song can be followed as far back as the year 1025.