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Between Information and Propaganda: Reactions to the Victory at Vienna in 1683 in the Spanish Monarchy

Summary: This article examines the reactions to the victory of the Christian forces at Vienna in 1683 within the Spanish Monarchy. It focuses on the interplay between current informational reports and the propagandistic narrative shaped almost simultaneously by the Madrid court. Despite Spain's lack of direct involvement, the events of the anti-Ottoman campaign aroused considerable interest. Information was disseminated through the press, pamphlets and historical accounts, while the victory quickly became a subject of literary and visual works as well as public celebrations. The festivities in Madrid and Seville were of particular importance, as they incorporated the Viennese victory into the tradition of Spanish struggles against the Islamic world, drawing especially on the memory of the Battle of Lepanto. At the same time, this narrative served current dynastic policy, enabling Charles II to be presented as a full-fledged participant in the triumph of Christianity. An important aspect was the emphasis placed on the position of the Spanish Habsburg line *vis-à-vis* the imperial court in these struggles.

John III Sobieski occupied a prominent place in Spanish representations of the events. He was portrayed as an outstanding commander, a defender of the faith and one of the principal architects of the victory. Prince James Sobieski was also portrayed in a positive light. Unlike imperial propaganda, Spanish representations did not diminish the importance of the Polish monarch but instead placed him on an equal footing with Leopold I. This served not only to acknowledge Sobieski's actual achievements but also to balance the emperor's position. The Spanish reception of the victory at Vienna thus demonstrates how information regarding a military event was rapidly transformed into a multifaceted political and propagandistic narrative.

Keywords: 17th century, Battle of Vienna (1683), Spanish monarchy, John III Sobieski, baroque art, triumphal iconography

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The historical military triumph and the associated need to display personal achievements have remained a constant motif in art since the earliest times. They encompassed diverse mechanisms for constructing visual messages, ranging from compositions of a realist-documentary character, falling within the category of the title's informational function, to representations filled with symbolic and allegorical elements, often subordinated to the needs of propaganda. Early modern ways of depicting battles and their triumphant consequences developed between these two poles. Such representations acquired particular significance within specific historical contexts, being adapted to the needs of the sender and the particular recipient. In such a context, the scale of the success achieved, and its multifaceted meanings contributed to the popularity of the subject itself, whose impact extended far beyond purely visual representation.



Fig. 1. Medal commemorating the victory at Vienna (Jan Höhn, 1683. Public domain)

Similar mechanisms applied to the presentation of the victory of the Christian coalition's forces at Vienna in September 1683, commanded by King John III Sobieski of Poland. From the outset, these accounts combined information with propaganda, serving the political interests of the parties involved. Against this background, the military achievements of the Polish king had already been widely known in Europe, while his role in the victory at Vienna largely marked the culmination of this popularity.[1] This was also influenced by the perception of the victory in the context of the centuries-long, pan-European struggle against Turkish power, for which the Battle

1 Majewski W. 1997, 26; Milewski D. 2013, 75; Czarniecka A. 2017; Nagielski M. 2021.

of Lepanto of 1571 remained a still-living point of reference.[2] For this reason, the universal dimension of the September 1683 success was incorporated into a deliberate policy of propaganda pursued not only by the Polish monarch. The message was disseminated through diverse media, including press reports, ephemeral prints and literary forms to occasional art and representations in painting, graphic art, medallic art and music. Polish scholarship has examined John III Sobieski's deliberate use of information and propaganda, initiated before his coronation and designed to promote his military genius and his role as defender and saviour of Christianity (Fig. 1).[3] The need to make appropriate use of this military success influenced similar actions undertaken by other European courts and leaders.[4]

In the second half of the seventeenth century, the imperial, or more broadly Habsburg, and French courts played a prominent role in this field. The events of 1683 also clearly stimulated the papal court. It is against this background that the activities of the Polish court should be assessed.[5] John Sobieski pursued a deliberate and remarkably modern information policy, evident as early as his tenure as hetman. These activities emphasised several themes, primarily was the promotion of Sobieski as a military commander and, following his coronation, as an effective ruler with superior command abilities. Such efforts were connected with the need to strengthen his internal position, which was associated with promoting dynastic succession to the Polish throne.[6] Another issue was the natural rivalry with other courts and the emphasis placed on Poland's significant position within the anti-Turkish alliance of 1683. Polish scholarship on this subject has primarily examined the propaganda activities of John Sobieski, in relation to Polish policy and the initiatives of the imperial and papal courts. Particular attention is paid to the rivalry between Emperor Leopold I and King John III, which intensified after the victory at Vienna and was reflected in the iconographic solutions promoted by the two sides.[7]

Most of the aforementioned studies focus on assessing these activities in connection with the problems of Central European politics, neglecting a broader approach that takes the pan-European context into account. This study is an attempt to complement this picture with examples of reactions to the Battle of Vienna found in Habsburg-ruled

2 Osiecka-Samsonowicz H. 2012, 297; Altarozzi G. 2017.

3 Newest works: Widacka 2010; Górska M. 2013; Ryszka-Komarnicka A. 2012; Fijałkowski W. 2014; Górska 2017; Boiteux M. 2018; Hulsenboom P. 2019; Jagodziński S. 2021; Telesko W. 2021.

4 Recently, a review of artistic initiatives related to the Battle of Vienna was presented by: Minguez V. 2022.

5 Górska M. 2017, 19–23.

6 Piwarski K. 1933; Wasilewski W. 2014; Skrzypietz A. 2015, 130–149; Bömelburg H.J. 2021; Jagodziński S. 2021.

7 Wrede M. 2013, 22–24. Recently, attention has been drawn to the different leading themes promoted in imperial representations and in those commissioned by John III. The former feature religious themes and those promoting the exceptional dignity of the emperor viewed in a supernatural dimension, whereas the royal commissions are dominated by military and triumphal themes, Jagodziński S. 2021, 147–158.

Spain. These include purely informational representations as well as initiatives falling within the category of occasional art, which permitted an elaborate allegorical and propagandistic message. The representation of Poland and its ruler in Spain offers a valuable perspective on how the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was perceived at the time. This dimension remains largely overlooked in Polish scholarship, which tends to limit its consideration of Habsburg perspectives to relations with the imperial court. Shifting the point of observation to the territories of the Spanish Monarchy enables attention to be drawn to additional circumstances surrounding these events. In the case of the Madrid court, the issues of intra-Habsburg politics and the changes then taking place in relations between Madrid and Vienna were important; the success of the imperial forces against Turkey was a significant catalyst for these changes. Spain had previously been the leading power in the struggle against Turkey and, more broadly, the Islamic world, symbolised by Lepanto. The success of 1683 altered this arrangement, clearly shifting that primacy towards the Empire.[8] The initiatives discussed below were undertaken precisely within this context.

In this study, it is necessary to concentrate on literary representations, descriptions of ceremonies and selected artistic representations relating to the events of 1683.[9] They most often arose as elements complementing large-scale and diverse initiatives. To a considerable extent, these consisted of public ceremonies falling within the sphere of occasional art, press reports and historical-documentary accounts, as well as literary interpretations formulated in response to current events. The proposed survey of objects illustrates diverse mechanisms for exploiting a major military success in which Spain did not participate directly. These were initiatives designed to serve the needs of the state and dynastic propaganda of the moment. The examples discussed enables the identification of ways in which the achievements of King John III Sobieski, one of the most important actors in the events of 1683, were perceived in this context. This can be considered on several levels, first and foremost from a historical-military perspective emphasising the military talents and heroism of the commander of the coalition forces. Furthermore, the campaign and the Battle of Vienna formed part of the broader historical context of the struggle against the Ottoman Empire. This contributed to the lasting memory of the Battle of Vienna and to subsequent eighteenth-century commissions referring to this success. The observations presented below also seem interesting in the context of John Sobieski's well-documented efforts at self-fashioning, initially as hetman and later as King of Poland, directed both at domestic and foreign audiences. Rome, Vienna and Paris played an important role in the Polish monarch's sphere of interest. With the exception of its contacts with the Netherlands,

8 González Cuerva R. 2012, 226–237.

9 In recent years, several important studies have been published in Spain analyzing Spanish reactions to the events of 1683, González Cuerva R. 2012; Ollero Lobato F. 2014; Bravo Lozano C. 2015; Rodriguez Moya I., Minguez V. 2019; Minguez V. 2022.

the Madrid court remained peripheral to these efforts during this period.[10] Spanish interpretations of the victory at Vienna and of the position accorded to the Polish king are therefore particularly interesting, as they were not directly entangled in the diplomatic tensions that were significant for Eastern Europe.

When analysing the repercussions of the 1683 campaign, Spanish scholars emphasise the unprecedented information campaign that accompanied the advance of the allied armies.[11] It enabled multifaceted knowledge of the events and the figures involved. The military operations, their principal actors and their likenesses were therefore known. These included Emperor Leopold I; the commander of the allied forces, King John III Sobieski; the imperial commander, Charles, Duke of Lorraine; and the commander of the Vienna garrison, Count Ernst von Starhemberg. The opposing side was represented by Sultan Mehmed IV, Grand Vizier Kara Mustafa, and the rebellious Hungarian commander Amerigo Thököly. All kinds of celebrations, theatrical representations and iconographic messages organised in honour of the victory incorporated such details. The texts balanced between a chronicle-like account and an ideological interpretation attractive to the local audience. This was particularly significant for the Spanish Monarchy, which, although not directly involved in the war, was traditionally regarded as a defender of Christianity. Moreover, the geographical distance of the events being reported, together with their certain exoticism, gave the representations a greater degree of detachment.[12]

The events of 1683, which unfolded along the Danube, formed part of the broader context of pan-European politics. In the second half of the seventeenth century, the eastward shift of the centre of gravity of the importance of the House of Austria was becoming increasingly apparent. This altered the previous situation in which the Spanish Monarchy, built upon the tradition of the Reconquista, had played a key role in all efforts aimed at defending the Church, especially in confrontation with Islam. In the new situation, King Charles II, involved in conflict with France in the Netherlands, was forced, in the face of the formation of the coalition in 1683, to limit himself to financial support for these efforts amounting to 125,000 escudos and a declaration of the commitment of Spanish ecclesiastical institutions to prayer.[13] Despite its lack of direct participation, Spain followed the course of the campaign with extraordinary attention, among other means through current press reports.[14]

Information regarding the success of the Christian coalition beneath the walls of Vienna reached Madrid as early as 2 October, brought by the cavalry captain Jean-Claude Prudhomme, who had been dispatched from Brussels by the Governor of the

10 Skowron R. 1997, 216–218.

11 Ollero Lobato F. 2014, 223.

12 Ollero Lobato F. 2014, 222–223.

13 González Cuerva R. 2012, 226–237; Bravo Lozano C. 2015, 474.

14 Ollero Lobato F. 2014, 221.

Netherlands, Marquis Otto Ferdinand von Grana, who himself had received the latest information directly from the camp of the coalition forces through the same messenger. This was the moment when spontaneous celebrations of the victory, initiated by the inhabitants, began in the streets of Madrid.[15] In other cities of the monarchy, the news arrived with greater delay, initially in the form of unconfirmed rumours that provoked equally spontaneous reactions. The demand for information was so great that it contributed to the resumption, on 16 November after a lengthy interruption, of the publication of the "Gazeta Nueva Madrit", which reported on the further progress of the campaign, citing accounts taken from letters sent by John III to the pope, Venice and the Netherlands. The same occurred in Seville, where the "Gaceta General" reported on successive stages of the fighting. The numerous bulletins and accounts circulating among readers reflected the great hunger for information experienced in the Spanish lands in connection with the struggle against the Porte.[16]

Over time, efforts were made to organise these reports, also in the form of coherent accounts of military events. In Spain, a key role in disseminating accounts of the victory was played by Francisco Fabro Bremundana the royal secretary and founder of a Madrid newspaper. His account of the anti-Turkish campaign was an expanded Spanish version of an Italian text that compiled and organised smaller notices.[17] The growing references to the Battle of Vienna were not limited to official reports and press texts and soon also appeared in literature, sermons, songs and dramas. Among the latter, the staging of the play *El Sitio de Viena*, which premiered at the Madrid court as early as 22 December 1683, enjoyed particular popularity.[18]

As previously mentioned, the first information regarding the victory reached the Madrid court on 2 October and gradually spread throughout the Spanish lands in the form of unverified rumours provoking spontaneous joy. The king and the court reacted more cautiously to these reports, awaiting imperial correspondence confirming the success, which reached the capital only three weeks later. Only at this point could the official planning of the celebrations begin which was initiated on 6 November. According to the tradition of the Spanish court, in such circumstances a solemn procession of the monarch and his entourage was organised from the Madrid Alcazar to the royal convent of Atocha (*Real Basílica de Nuestra Señora de Atocha*).[19] This type of triumphal procession in the form of a cavalcade was scheduled for 8 November. Under the circumstances, the ceremony acquired particular significance, as it offered an opportunity to promote King Charles II and to place him on an equal footing with other heroes of the events, especially Emperor Leopold I. The importance of

15 González Cuerva R. 2012.

16 Ollero Lobato F. 2014, 221–222.

17 Bremundan F.B. 1684; Martínez Dueñas J.L. 2007, 371–380.

18 Śliziński J. 1976, 349; Klimaszewski B. 1983, 92–93; Śmieja F. 1983, 407–412.

19 Recently, regarding the history and significance of the conven, Atocha 2024.

the planned celebrations and the pan-European dimension of the victory at Vienna created a number of problems concerning the places that the diplomats representing the emperor, the pope and France were to occupy in the cavalcade.[20] Ultimately, the ceremony took place without the presence of the ambassadors, while the papal nuncio, satisfied with the opportunity to preside over the solemn Mass at the Atocha convent, travelled along the same route earlier with a large retinue, thereby securing an individual triumph for himself. The planned celebrations were not limited to the colourful procession as artistic decorations were placed along the route. From surviving accounts, it is known that two crowns attributed to Charles II were displayed in the royal procession: the first belonged to the King of Spain, while the second indicated his role as Emperor of America.[21] Such an arrangement made it possible to depict him alongside Emperor Leopold as an equal representative of the House of Habsburg. The celebrations also employed the symbolic significance of the crowns of the individual monarchies involved in the conflict, which was a permanent element of contemporary iconography.[22] This also appeared in Madrid on 8 November, where, as Ruben González Cuerva emphasised, the ceremony coincided with the feast of *Santi Quattro Coronati*, celebrated on that day which promoted Christian unity and links with the early Christian martyrs.[23] During the cavalcade, this theme was expressed through four crowns: the papal tiara of Innocent XI, the imperial tiara of Leopold I, the crown of the King of Poland, located near the exit onto the Plaza Mayor, and the Spanish crown associated with the symbolism of the "pillar of faith". Other decorations clearly referred to former Spanish rulers and their historical role in the struggle against Islam. Among the images displayed were also those associated with Emperor Charles V, depicting the siege of Tunis and the successful conclusion of the siege of Vienna in 1529.[24] These latter themes clearly juxtaposed the anti-Islamic successes of the great sixteenth-century namesake of King Charles II. From a propagandistic perspective, the juxtaposition of the two sieges of Vienna was equally attractive.

The procession to the royal convent of Atocha reflected the challenges faced by the Madrid court in 1683. Through appropriate decoration and the content displayed, the Spanish ruler could use the ceremony to emphasise his position as a full-fledged participant in the activities of the anti-Turkish coalition. The selection of representations and their historical associations emphatically stressed the position of the Spanish Monarchy within the centuries-long anti-Turkish efforts, which culminated in the

20 A detailed discussion of this issue was provided by Bravo Lozano C. 2015.

21 Bravo Lozano C. 2015, 487.

22 Such a motif was also employed on a medal of Innocent XI from 1684, commemorating the formation of the Holy League. Its reverse depicts an altar surmounted by four crowns: a royal crown, the papal tiara, the imperial crown, and the corno ducale of the Venetian doge, Rokita J.G. 2014, 23–48; Górska M. 2017, 121–125.

23 Dionigi R. 1998.

24 Bravo Lozano C. 2015, 487.

new liberation of Vienna. On the one hand, the ceremony referred to a current event, while on the other it presented the ruler in the context of his foreign policy, both within the European structure and in relations with the other branch of the House of Austria.[25] The prominent role of the pope and of John III is clearly visible in these representations, although in the latter case it differed from the contemporary efforts of imperial propaganda. By presenting these two figures as seemingly equal heroes, the imagery also enabled Charles II to be incorporated into the ranks and his own standing emphasised. The ideological concept present in the Madrid procession was also reflected in other festivities that combined references to current events with religious elements. In many cases, as in Madrid, these took the form of pilgrimages to important local images of the Virgin Mary. Similar processions took place in Seville, Granada, Salamanca and Barcelona.[26] Interest in the success of the Christian forces was also manifested in literary activity: in the final months of 1683, more than twenty printed works referring to the battle and King John III appeared.[27]

The celebrations initiated in Seville had a particularly interesting course and encompassed a series of initiatives such as a panegyric delivered on 10 November by Don Juan Antonio del Alcázar Zúñiga, praising the victory at Vienna.[28] The procession associated with the celebrations was to a considerable extent organised by the *Sacramental del Sagrario de la Catedral* brotherhood based at the cathedral. A permanent element of such celebrations consisted of elaborate, monumental platforms with appropriate artistic decoration. On this occasion, the members of the brotherhood decided to construct a monumental structure in the form of a ship intended to represent the Church.[29] A relatively detailed description of the concept behind these celebrations is contained in a text by Alonso Martín Braones entitled *Lyrica relación de la iesta que la Ilustrissima Hermandad...*, published in Seville in 1683 (Fig. 2).[30] It describes a platform displaying figures of the pope, the emperor, the Kings of Poland and Spain, as well as Prince James Sobieski, among others. The juxtaposition of rulers' images in the context of the religious dimension of the celebration and the significance of the battle itself encouraged the construction of elaborate allegorical interpretations. Ollero Lobato, analysing these celebrations, pointed to comparisons

25 González Cuerva R. 2012, 476; Wheatcroft A. 2009.

26 Analogies to the growing cult of Our Lady of the Snows, Salus Populi Romani, in addition to battle of Lepanto 1571. Fields N. 2021; see: Moisan K.S. 1987.

27 On literary works celebrating the Battle of Vienna in Spain, Śliziński J. 1976, 348–354; Klimaszewski B. 1983, 86–98, 177–181.

28 Śliziński J. 1976, 349–350.

29 The ship-shaped platform was fairly common, appearing at other Spanish celebrations. The same confraternity had previously commissioned a similar 13m structure, designed by Pedro de Borja, for the 1662 celebration of the papal brief on the Immaculate Conception. Given the durability of such costly decorations, it is likely that elements of this earlier structure were reused for the 1683 celebration, Ollero Lobato F. 2014, 231–235.

30 Braones A.M. 1683.

made on this occasion between the principal protagonists and the figures from Ezekiel's vision: John III Sobieski was the valiant Lion, the prudent Duke of Lorraine was associated with the image of the Man, the steadfast and persistent Count Starhemberg was identified with the Ox, while Emperor Leopold was represented by the Eagle.[31] The same scholar linked these celebrations to an extant oil painting entitled *Allegory of the Victory over the Turks and the Liberation of Vienna in 1683*, now held in the Museo Nacional de Artes Decorativas in Madrid (Fig. 3, 4).[32] He concluded that the details of the construction, the figures depicted and their arrangement corresponded to the surviving description. He also identified architectural features in the background as depicting the area around Seville Cathedral. The painting in question undoubtedly shows a triumphal scene with a large platform resembling a galley or galleass, with cannon barrels visible through openings in the sides. The platform is being pulled by six young men in Oriental dress, identified as Turks. The individual figures placed on its deck are labelled.[33] On the platform there is a personification of the city of Vienna wearing a *corona muralis*, looking towards a group of figures intended to represent the participants in the campaign. The main scene shows King Charles II kneeling before the enthroned Pope Innocent XI and handing him a document. Around the throne are figures of Emperor Leopold I, the commander of the Vienna garrison, Count Starhemberg, Duke Charles of Lorraine and King John III. To the side, between the personification of Vienna and the main group, is an image of James Sobieski holding a mace in his hand. The King of Spain is shown wearing a black cloak, while the pope is dressed in white pontifical robes. The remaining figures, who were more actively involved in the campaign, are depicted in half-armour. An important element completing the decoration consists of two red banners visible behind the stern of the ship. The one placed higher bears a crucifix, while the lower banner displays three crescents. The banners depicted here linked two great victories over Turkey: that of 1571 at Lepanto and the contemporary victory of 1683 at Vienna. The former was evoked by the ship's form, and the banner bearing the crucifix, alluding to the Christian fleet's standard. The pennant decorated with crescents, on the other hand, may have related to the captured "Banner of the Prophet", sent from the camp near Vienna by King John III to the pope and ceremonially carried through the streets of Rome on 25 September 1683.[34]

31 Ollero Lobato F. 2014, 234–235; see: de Gámiz J. 1684, 4–5.

32 The oil painting on canvas, measuring 124 × 190 cm, by an unknown painter, is dated to around 1683 (inv. no. CE1 7909); Ollero Lobato F. 2014, 234–235.

33 The painting includes appropriate explanations placed next to the individual figures: "Viena de Austria", "Gobernador de la Plaça", "Rey de España", "Hijo del Rey de Polonia", "Emperador Leopoldo", "Ynoxencio undésimo", "Duque de Lorena" and "Rey de Polonia".

34 As early as mid-October 1683, an illustrated publication by Maracci describing the banner in question was published in Rome. Interestingly, for the ceremonial entry of the Polish embassy, the Roman Curia drew on descriptions of the intrada of 1571, Osiecka-Samsonowicz H. 2009, 47–50; see: Żygulski (jun.) Z. 1968; Pasierb J.S., Janocha M. 2000, 119.



A MAYOR GLORIA DE
LA LYRICA
RELACION
DE LA FIESTA,
QVE LA ILVSTRISSIMA
HERMANDAD,
QVE SIEMPRE FERVOROSA
ASSISTE AL CVLTO
DEL SAMTISSMO. SACRAMENTO,
en el Templo del señor San Clemente,
Sagrario de la Santa Patriarchal, y
Metropolitana Igleſia
de Seuilla,
HIZO EN ACCION DE GRACIAS DE LA
célebre victoria, con que fauoreciô Dios nueſtro Señor las
Armas del ſeñor Emperador, governadas por el ſeñor Rey
de Polonia, y ſu Alteza el ſeñor Duque de Lorena, con-
tra el poder Otomano, teniendo ſitiada la
Plaza de Viena, eſte año de 1683.

CON LICENCIA. Impreſſo en Seuilla por *Iuan Franciſco de Blas*, ſu Impreſſor Mayor. Año de 1683.

Fig. 2. Title page of the account of the festivities in Seville in 1683 (Public domain)



Fig. 3. Oil painting probably representing the festivities in Seville in 1683. (*Allegory of the Victory over the Turks and the Liberation of Vienna in 1683*. Museo Nacional de Artes Decorativas, Madrid. CE17909)



Fig. 4. Oil painting probably representing the festivities in Seville in 1683. Detail showing the figures of the rulers (*Allegory of the Victory over the Turks and the Liberation of Vienna in 1683*. Museo Nacional de Artes Decorativas, Madrid. CE17909)

The surviving painting is exceptionally interesting and constitutes an important source illustrating the artistic setting of the ceremonies commemorating the victory at Vienna. Its significance obviously derives from the possibility of associating it with specific celebrations organised at Seville Cathedral. It is also important evidence concerning the aforementioned specificity of Spanish propagandistic efforts, which were aimed at emphasising the position of King Charles II among the Christian victors. The manner in which the ruler is shown on the platform, directly addressing the pope, the organiser and head of the Christian coalition, effectively placed him in the position of the victor.[35] This interpretation was also encouraged by the surrounding figures, which placed the other heroes of the Battle of Vienna on an equal footing. The form of the platform and its context once again suggested associations with the more Spanish victory at Lepanto.[36] From the perspective of Polish interests, an important motif is the clearly equal treatment of the emperor and the King of Poland. Another significant addition appearing in this arrangement was the separate figure of Prince James, emphasising his importance in the Vienna campaign and harmonising with the pro-dynastic efforts of the Polish court at the time.[37]

Among the events that offered an immediate account and interpretation of the victory at Vienna was the dramatic work *El Sitio de Viena*. The play was staged in Madrid only three months after the battle, on 22 December 1683, on the birthday of Queen Mariana Theresa of Austria. The drama is attributed to Pedro de Arca, who served as a *Regidor* (councillor) in Madrid and had connections with Calderón.[38] Florian Śmieja emphasised that it was a simple dramatisation of the news reaching the European courts. The scholar considered that, in this case, the basis may have been the report of the Spanish ambassador in Vienna, the Marquis of Borgomanero.[39] The premiere of 22 December was produced by the company of Manuel Vallejo and Francisco la Bezona and staged in the Golden Chamber of the Royal Alcazar.[40] The play was published in two parts, in January and April 1684. Its second part, *La comedia segunda parte del Sitio de Viena, y conquista de Estrigonia*, recalled the capture of Esztergom on 26 September 1683 and was also performed at court.[41]

In the drama of December 1683, the principal character was King John III, around whom the narrative revolved. The story began in the palace of the Polish ruler, who, together with his son, received an envoy of Emperor Leopold I. The text portrayed Sobieski as the noble defender of Christianity, who embarked with his son on an

35 González Cuerva R. 2012, 491.

36 Rodriguez Moya I., Minguez V. 2019, 337–339; Strunck Ch. 2011.

37 Skrzypietz A. 2014, 144–145.

38 Śmieja F. 1983, 407.

39 Cremonini C. 2015, 183–208.

40 González Cuerva R. 2012, 490.

41 Ollero Lobato F. 2014, 222.

expedition against the infidels. The personal bravery of the commander during the Battle of Vienna was emphasised, culminating in the capture of a Turkish banner — an episode clearly echoing the famous trophy sent by Sobieski to Rome. The play also contained scenes illustrating subsequent events, including Sobieski's meeting with the emperor. Two semicircles of dignitaries representing the two sides of the coalition were portrayed here. The emperor and the king were to meet at the centre of the stage. As Śmieja observed, "the exchange of studied compliments that followed must have been entirely clear to the audience: Sobieski was a commander and personally went into battle".[42] In the play, the emperor was to embrace the prince Alexander, a character corresponding in reality to James Sobieski. This was a significant scene given reports that the emperor was said to have ignored or failed to acknowledge the prince in person.[43] Śmieja argued that the play generally recognised the role of the King of Poland and presented it appropriately.[44] In his interpretation of the drama, the scholar clearly concentrated on the Polish point of reference, which resulted from his knowledge of the contemporary narrative of the imperial court, which systematically downplayed the position of the Polish king. The scholar paid less attention to the internal needs of Madrid in 1683.

Spanish scholars, by contrast, construct their analyses differently, focusing on the political concerns of the Spanish court, which sought to exploit the victory at Vienna for its own purposes. This placed the literary work discussed here within the broader context of contemporary initiatives emphasising the position of the young King Charles II. In this interpretation, the staging made it possible to place him on an equal footing with the emperor, presenting him as a triumphant figure within the Habsburg community. It is known that during the Madrid premiere the front of the stage took the form of a temple of Mars, while the curtain was decorated with symbols of the Sun and an eclipsed Moon.[45] The proposed decoration and its symbolic references, together with the date of the premiere coinciding with the birthday of the queen mother, carried dynastic and political significance. They situated the King of Spain in the context of the great military success associated with the imperial line of the House of Habsburg. Queen Maria was its representative at the Spanish court, embodying the connection between the two branches. The same narrative elements appeared in the drama itself, clearly emphasising the role of the Spanish Monarchy.[46] From this perspective, the question of the prominence accorded to John III is noteworthy,

42 Śmieja F. 1983, 409.

43 Jan Sobieski 1962, 527; Barker T.M. 1967, 342–344; Skrzypietz A. 2011, 129–134.

44 Śmieja F. 1983, 410.

45 Regarding references to the symbolism of the aforementioned celestial bodies at the Spanish court, Mínguez V. 1993, 29–46; Minguez V. 2001; see: Górska M. 2017, 98–107.

46 Later, these efforts would reach their culmination with the capture of Buda, an event in which a small Spanish contingent would take part, Ollero Lobato F. 2014, 227.

in a manner different from that of imperial propaganda, which diminished the king's position and reduced him more to the role of a military instrument of imperial will.[47] It appears that in the Spanish narrative the clear juxtaposition of Sobieski with Leopold did not result merely from a special emphasis on Sobieski's role, but rather from the use of the Polish ruler to balance the emperor's position, thereby creating an opportunity to position Charles II appropriately. Cuerva interprets the aforementioned painting illustrating the triumph at Seville in the same spirit, highlighting that the kneeling King of Spain effectively occupied the position of the actual victor, relegating the other, genuine actors in the events at Vienna to the background.[48]

Most of the examples discussed above belonged to the category of occasional, ephemeral art, whose traces remained at the level of literary accounts. A rather exceptional significance in this group belongs to the painting preserved in Madrid depicting a platform with the principal figures of the events. Knowledge of these individuals and their portraits played a fundamental role in all efforts aimed at informing the public and commemorating the events. Images of this type were disseminated through graphic representations and were widely available. The ways in which they were juxtaposed and the importance assigned to particular individuals were also significant. In Spain, an important place in this field was occupied by the graphic design accompanying the aforementioned publishing initiative of Francisco Fabro Bremundan.[49] The frontispiece of the 1684 edition of the first part of *Floro Historico* contained portraits of the coalition leaders in the form of six medallions, three in each of two rows (Fig. 5). In the upper row, Emperor Leopold I was depicted in the centre, flanked by portraits of the Electors of Bavaria and Saxony. Above Leopold's distinctly larger medallion was the imperial mitre held by putti carrying a sword and sceptre. In the centre of the lower row, likewise in an enlarged medallion, was the King of Poland, while the Duke of Lorraine, Charles, and Count Starhemberg were depicted on either side. Directly above them was an eagle with outspread wings bending its head towards John III. The published set of portraits corresponded to the political situation of the time, depicting the participants in the fighting of 1683 and clearly emphasising the roles of the emperor and King John III. In the edition of the subsequent part of the work, published in 1686 and reporting on events from 1684–1685, a frontispiece with a changed set of portraits was used, adapted to the new political situation and to the composition of the newly established Holy League (Fig. 6). The engraving was made by Juan Francisco Leonard. The composition once again employed medallions, with the central position in the upper row occupied by the pope, flanked by the emperor and the King of Poland. In the lower row, the Elector of Bavaria was

47 Osiecka-Samsonowicz H. 2009; Jagodziński S. 2021, 149–159.

48 González Cuerva R. 2012, 491.

49 Bremundan F.B. 1684.

depicted in the centre, with Charles, Duke of Lorraine, and Francesco Morosini, the future Doge of Venice, on either side. The shift of emphasis towards Innocent XI resulted from the recognition of his role in the formation of the Holy League and made it possible to interpret the successes against the Turks in terms of the Church Triumphant. This change of emphasis permitted a shift in the narrative from pure factual description towards the realms of spiritual and symbolic inquiry. It also altered the position of the King of Poland, who, at the call of the Church, abandoned his safe kingdom and embarked to fight evil.[50]



Fig. 5. Frontispiece of Francisco Fabro Bremundán's work — 1684 edition (*Floro Historico de la Guerra Movida por El Turco Contra El Señor Emperador*. Public domain)



Fig. 6. Frontispiece of Francisco Fabro Bremundán's work — 1686 edition (*Floro Historico de la Guerra Movida por El Turco Contra El Señor Emperador*. Public domain)

It is known that the examples mentioned do not exhaust the Spanish list of works created as forms of commemoration of the victory at Vienna. Reference could be made to a painting commissioned after 1683 from the painter Francisco Rizi, depicting an allegorical siege and liberation of Vienna. The large-scale work, which has not

50 An analysis of such references can be found in the study, see: Ollero Lobato F. 2014, 227.

survived, was originally located in the Royal Alcazar of Madrid and remained unfinished in 1686.[51] It is also worth emphasising that references to the Vienna campaign played an important role in the Americas as well. Among such objects are screens from Mexico made using the *enconchado* technique, associated with Gonzales and Miguel y Juan, which after 1683 addressed the subject of the siege of Vienna and subsequent episodes of the anti-Turkish campaign.[52] The detailed representations were based on prints by Romeyn de Hooghe. The universal dimension of the events of 1683 also encouraged the production of paintings depicting St James fighting the infidels (*Santiago Matamoros*). This highly popular motif in Spain was also used in the Americas, including in a painting from around 1690 depicting the legendary medieval battle with the Moors at Clavijo, where Christian victory was made possible through the intervention of the saint. In the 1690 painting, the opponents of the Christians were clearly depicted as Turks. A clear reference to St James as an active warrior fighting the infidels also appeared in a composition devoted to King John III, an example of which is Kuropatnicki's graphic thesis of 1682.[53] In this image, emphasising victory over the Turks, Prince James is also prominently displayed and clearly juxtaposed with the patron saint. This is an interesting example of the interpenetration of certain motifs that became attractive within the framework of the common struggle against the Porte. Polish commissioners explicitly invoked the patronage of the Spanish warrior saint James while in Spanish works, the prominent position accorded to Prince James is particularly noteworthy.

In the interpretations of Spanish scholars, reactions to the victory at Vienna passed through various stages, from a purely informational phase based on press reports describing the events, to the allegorisation and sacralisation of military events. Such efforts made it possible to propagandistically elevate the Habsburgs, but above all to incorporate the celebrated successes into a sequence of achievements attributed to Charles II. Another interesting issue is the durability of the memory of the Vienna campaign and the significance played by the King of Poland, as demonstrated by eighteenth-century commissions for portraits of the Polish monarch.[54] The manner in which John III was depicted in Spanish iconographic representations was to some extent a product of his pan-European iconography. In these representations he was treated in a rather distinctive manner, with an Orientalising costume and moustache clearly distinguishing him from other Western commanders. His personal involvement

51 In the inventories, the width of the painting was given as 5 varas (approximately 83 cm each), and its height as more than 3 m, Bottineau Y. 1958; Ollero Lobato F. 2014, 226.

52 Vargas Lugo E. 1994, 123; Ollero Lobato F. 2014, 227.

53 Górska M. 2017; see: Hulsenboom P. 2019, 95–96.

54 A commission from 1759: Archivo Histórico de la Nobleza: Archivo Histórico de la Nobleza, OSUNA, CT.516, D.38–40, Dos recibos firmados por Antonio de Fontanille, importe de dos retratos: uno del Rey de Polonia Juan Sobresqui y otro del Conde de Benavente. I am very grateful to Dr Ewa Kubiak for this information.

in the battle was widely known and, combined with his depiction carrying a crucifix on one of his shoulders, allowed him to be associated with the crusaders of the past. In Paul Kléber Monod's interpretation, John III could be perceived as a model strong Catholic king, understood as an envoy of God, a second John after the first, Juan de Toledo, the victor at Lepanto.[55] Another interesting theme present in Spanish objects is the strongly emphasised position of Prince James, depicted in a highly positive light as the valiant battle companion of his famous father. This is particularly interesting in view of the generally negative narrative promoted by the imperial court on this matter. This discrepancy may illustrate the differing needs of the court of the Spanish Habsburgs at the time.

The Spanish examples presented bear witness to the enormous interest that accompanied the struggle against Turkey. This can be seen at the level of the ongoing flow of information, which stimulated the development of the Spanish press. Another phenomenon was the almost immediate interpretation of the unfolding events in a manner attractive to the Spanish court. Official celebrations, the allegorical programmes accompanying them, and literary representations emphasised the position of King Charles II, which formed part of the current of official state propaganda. A particularly interesting aspect of these activities is the highly positive presentation of the role of John III and Prince James, which differed from the parallel activities of the imperial court. It appears that this positive treatment resulted not only from Sobieski's actual role in the campaign but also made it possible to balance the significance of the emperor, which was important from the perspective of Spain's previous leadership in the struggle against the Islamic world.

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55 Monod P.K. 1999; Ollero Lobato F. 2014, 225.

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