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## Horseback riding in the history of Poland – selected moments and reflections

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### Jazda konna w historii Polski – wybrane momenty i refleksje

#### Streszczenie

Tło. Konnica była podstawową siłą zbrojną Polaków i ich legendarnych przodków od pradawnych czasów, zwłaszcza w historycznych formacjach. Funkcjonuje też jako element narodowej historii w kulturze w różnych jej obszarach.

Problem. Jak ten fragment staropolskiej kultury militarnej przejawia się w kulturze wysokiej i kulturze masowej; w świecie filmu, w przestrzeni miejskiej, w obrazach i numizmatyce; a jak manifestuje się w obszarze kultywowanych dzisiaj sztuk walki?

Metoda. Odpowiedzi zostaną sformułowane na podstawie analizy 30 wybranych dzieł sztuki, dóbr lub artefaktów kulturowych oraz zilustrowane na przykładach. Wśród przykładów znajdują się filmy polskiej kinematografii (*Krzyżacy*, *Potop*, *Hubal* i inne), seria pamiątkowych medali oraz obrazy wybitnych polskich malarzy, które zainspirowały autorów tych medali. Są to więc zarówno wielkie dzieła malarskie wybitnych twórców (Jan Matejko, Wojciech Kossak etc.), pomniki i obrazy filmowe, jak i małe formy graficzne (monety, medale).

Wyniki i wnioski. Ta prapolska tradycja kultury militarnej przejawia się do dziś w kulturze wysokiej (malarstwo, literatura) i kulturze masowej (filmy, piosenki), w przestrzeni miejskiej (pomniki), w dziełach sztuki medalierskiej. Jest też kultywowana w uprawianej dzisiaj polskiej sztuce walki – w nauczaniu jednej ze szkół. Chodzi o szermierkę konną w *Signum Polonicum*.

**Słowa kluczowe:** historia Polski, sztuka wojenna, konnica, wielkie bitwy, film historyczny.

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## Abstract

**Background.** The cavalry was the primary armed force of Poles and their legendary ancestors from ancient times, especially in historical formations. It also functions as an element of national history in culture in its various areas.

**Problem.** How this fragment of the old Polish military culture manifests itself in high and mass culture, in the world of film, in the city space, in pictures and numismatic values, and how is it displayed in the field of martial arts cultivated today?

**Method.** The answers will be formulated based on an analysis of 30 selected works of art, value or cultural artefacts and illustrated with examples. Examples include films of Polish cinematography (*Teutonic Knights*, *The Deluge*, *Hubal* and others), a series of commemorative medals and paintings by outstanding Polish painters that inspired the authors of these medals. Therefore, both great paintings by outstanding artists (Jan Matejko, Wojciech Kossak etc.), monuments and films, and small graphic forms (coins, medals).

**Results and conclusions.** This Polish tradition of military culture manifests itself even today in high culture (painting, literature) and mass culture (films, songs), in urban space (monuments), and the artistic qualities of medals. It is also cultivated in the Polish martial art practised today – in teaching one of the schools. It is about horse fencing in *Signum Polonicum*.

**Keywords:** history of Poland, the art of war, cavalry, great battles, historical film.

## Introduction

The horse was the primary weapon of pastoral and warlike peoples, such as the Indo-European Aryans, Scythians and Proto-Slavs, characterized by the dominant haplogroup R1a1 Y-DNA<sup>1</sup>. Thanks to horse breeding, they moved quickly across the plains between Central Europe and the Urals and the Caucasus, crossing these and other terrain obstacles. Although the legendary Lechites (direct ancestors of Poles) settled permanently in the lands between the Elbe and the Dniester, probably creating the archaeological Lusatian Culture, the warriors still used horses Proto-Slavic language and modern Polish contain evidence of ancient horse breeding. It is described in detail by K. Moszyński<sup>2</sup>.

The Aryans and Scythians, who lived in the Euro-Asian steppes, eagerly used war chariots. The peoples living on the shores of the Mediterranean, the Egyptians, Greeks and Romans, also used the war chariots<sup>3</sup>. However, the Lechite areas in the basins of the Elbe, Odra and Vistula rivers were not suitable for the broader use of chariots. Thus, the Slavic warrior usually fought on horseback or foot. Possibly he used horse carts as a cover (Taborites, Cossacks), which may echo the Scythian tactics<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> W.J. Cynarski, A. Maciejewska, *The proto-Slavic warrior in Europe: The Scythians, Sarmatians and Lekhs*, “Ido Movement for Culture. Journal of Martial Arts Anthropology” 2016, vol. 16, no. 3, pp. 1–14; doi: 10.14589/ido.16.3.1.

<sup>2</sup> K. Moszyński, *Pierwotny zasięg języka prasłowiańskiego*, Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, Wrocław – Kraków 1957 [in Polish].

<sup>3</sup> Cf. P. Roos, *The Homeric Charioteer*, “Athens Journal of Sports” 2020, vol. 7, no. 4, pp. 205–214.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. T. Scholl, *Uzbrojenie i taktyka wojenna Scytów i Sarmatów (VII w. p.n.e. – III w. n.e.)* [*Weapons and war tactics of the Scythians and Sarmatians (VII century BC – III century AD)*],

Asian nomads in the territories occupied by the early Slavs carried out a mutual cultural exchange with them. The leaders of the Hun empire – Attila (406–453) and his brother Bleda (390–445) – were the sons of Mundzek and grandsons of Kurdiak. Are these East Asian or somewhat Slavic names? We do not know if their features were Indo-European or rather typical of the yellow race. What we do know is that the Hun army was multi-ethnic. They were especially horse archers – like Scolotians called Scythians<sup>5</sup>.

The same applies to the Avars in the 6th–7th centuries. Were they a Scythian tribe? Did they use the Slavic language in their country? Perhaps. However, they undoubtedly used a unique bow, just like the Scythians and Sarmatians, Huns, Parthians and Pechenegs, and later the Tatars and Polish cavalry from light cavalry to hussars. It was a reflective (reversible) composite bow – made of wood and bone. Later, apart from the sabre, it was an attribute of the Polish nobility. We can talk about the community of the composite arch. Of course, it was not the only armament of the peoples and nations mentioned<sup>6</sup>. In addition, the peoples of Scythian origin developed the art of the combat use of chariots and introduced heavy cavalry. Sarmatian *cataphracti* influenced the formation of similar formations in other countries, in particular in Byzantium<sup>7</sup>.

Scythians are especially horse archers, and “every adult free man was a warrior”<sup>8</sup>. Similarly, at the stage of military democracy, every Slav, even if it was a settled one, was a warrior if necessary (i.e. war). However, especially the nomadic peoples of the steppe region of Europe and Asia have perfected horse fighting and the bow for centuries. A reflex arc of the Scythian type only slightly differed in shape from the Hunnic one<sup>9</sup>. Together, we can talk about a specific community at the same time genetic, hoplological (in terms of the use of weapons and technical and tactical skills in martial arts), and perhaps the linguistic com-

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“Mówią Wieki” 1978, no. 4, pp. 10–14 [in Polish]; T. Sulimirski, *Sarmaci* [*Sarmatians*], PIW, Warszawa 1979, s. 14 [in Polish]; J. Grygiel, *Rycerstwo polskie wobec husytyzmui idei krucjat antyhusyckich* [*Polish knights in the face of Hussitism and the ideas of anti-Husite crusades*], “Ido Movement for Culture”, 2004, vol. 4, pp. 18–28.

<sup>5</sup> M. Rouche, *Attila i Hunowie. Ekspansja barbarzyńskich nomadów* [*Attila and the Huns. The expansion of barbarian nomads*], WN PWN, Warszawa 2011 [in Polish].

<sup>6</sup> Cf. T. Scholl, *Uzbrojenie i taktyka wojenna Scytów i Sarmatów...*; S. Czopek, *Prehistoric cultures of warriors or warriors of prehistoric cultures?*, “Ido Movement for Culture. Journal of Martial Arts Anthropology” 2013, vol. 13, no. 3, pp. 37–47; doi: 10.14589/ido.13.3.6.

<sup>7</sup> A.N. Negin, *Sarmatian cataphracti as prototypes for Roman equites cataphractarii*, “Journal of Roman Military Equipment Studies” 1995, vol. 6, pp. 65–75; M. Wojnowski, *Periodic Revival or Continuation of the Ancient Military Tradition? Another Look at the Question of the KATAΦΡΑΚΤΟΙ in the Byzantine Army*, “Studia Ceranea. Journal of the Waldemar Ceran Research Centre for the History and Culture of the Mediterranean Area and South-East Europe” 2012, vol. 2, pp. 195–220; doi: <https://doi.org/10.18778/2084-140X.02.16>.

<sup>8</sup> A. Smirnow, *Scytowie* [*Scythians*], PIW, Warszawa 1974, p. 150 [in Polish]; cf. *ibidem*, pp. 147–154. All transl. – author.

<sup>9</sup> T. Sulimirski, *Sarmaci*, p. 16.

munity of the Ario-Slavic peoples. Significantly, horse archery functioned in the army of the Kingdom of Poland until the 18<sup>th</sup> century<sup>10</sup>, and Polish Tatars still practice horse archery in a sports version.

During the 1<sup>st</sup> Session of the IPA<sup>11</sup> 27<sup>th</sup> General Assembly Commemoration Symposium in Rzeszów (September 12, 2020), Dr Zbigniew Sawicki presented a paper: *Signs identifying Polish martial art – fighting with riding*. He proved, quite well with justification, that horse riding characterized the Polish art of war. This applied to the Middle Ages, the times of the First Polish Republic and later – up to and including 1920, except for episodes from World War II<sup>12</sup>. It is said that „Lach without a horse like a body without a soul”<sup>13</sup>. And this is what the Eastern Slavs have called Poles for centuries.

The horse and its significant role in Polish history mean that it has found a worthy place in literature, painting, film and other fields of art. It is also still bred in Poland, and Polish Arabian horses are considered the best worldwide. Equestrian sports are popular, especially recreational riding and horse tourism<sup>14</sup>. Sports equestrianism was developed specially by Polish officers of the Second Republic of Poland, as heirs of the old Polish tradition.

Let us pose a scientific problem: How this area of old Polish military culture manifests itself in high and mass culture; in the world of film, in the city space, in pictures and numismatic values; and how is it displayed in the area of martial arts cultivated today? And let us illustrate it with examples. We consider 30 selected subjectively (as characteristic or representative) works of art, values or cultural artefacts. These are film pictures (6), paintings (5), rock songs (2), coins (8), commemorative medals (6), and monuments (3).

<sup>10</sup> J. Juszyński, *Polskie łucznictwo i kusznictwo konne w X–XVIII w.* [*Polish archery and horse crossbowmanship in the 10<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> centuries*], Inforteditions, Poland 2020.

<sup>11</sup> Idokan Poland Association.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Z. Sawicki, *Polish Martial Art – Signum Polonicum: Historical background, profile and the main plots of the system*, “Ido Movement for Culture. Journal of Martial Arts Anthropology” 2011, vol. 11, no. 2, pp. 38–46; Z. Sawicki, *Old Polish sabre-fencing*, [in:] S.-Y. Park, S.-Y. Ryu (eds.), *Traditional Martial Arts as Intangible Cultural Heritage*, UNESCO ICHCAP-ICM, Jeonju, Korea 2020, pp. 169–180.

<sup>13</sup> Z. Jasłowski, *Koń a sprawa polska: dwór, pałac i stadnina* [*The horse and the Polish cause: the manor, palace and stud; in Polish*], 2013, [https://www.rodaknet.com/rp\\_jaslowski\\_8.htm](https://www.rodaknet.com/rp_jaslowski_8.htm) [accessed: 29.09.2020].

<sup>14</sup> Cf. W.J. Cynarski, K. Obodyński, *Rekreacja konna a turystyka wiejska na przykładzie Podkarpacia* [*Horse recreation and rural tourism on the example of the Podkarpacie region*], [in:] Z. Dziubiński (ed.), *Aksjologia turystyki*, Salos, Warszawa 2006, pp. 418–425 [in Polish]; W.J. Cynarski, K. Obodyński, *Horse-Riding in the Physical Education, Recreation and Tourism – Axiological Reflection*, “Research Yearbook. Studies in Physical Education and Sport” 2008, vol. 14, pp. 37–43; K. Obodyński, W.J. Cynarski, *Horse-riding in the Recreation and Tourism*, “International Journal of Eastern Sports & Physical Education” 2006, vol. 4, no. 1, pp. 104–113; R. Urban, *Sport jeździecki w Polsce w latach 1945–1989* [*Equestrian sport in Poland in 1945–1989*], Gorzów Wielkopolski 2013 [in Polish]; R. Urban, *The genesis and development of Polish horse riding in the period of twenty years*, “Central European Journal of Sport Sciences and Medicine” 2019, vol. 28, no. 4, pp. 27–38; doi: 10.18276/cej.2019.4-03.

## Chronological and factual description

In historical novels and films, a Polish knight, hussar or lancer fights on horseback, which is historically evident. Therefore, the historical Polish cavalry already has its roundabout and a monument in the Polish capital. The memorial at the *Jazdy Polskiej* roundabout in Warsaw (Fig. 1), designed by Mieczysław Naruszewicz and Marek Moderau, and unveiled on May 3, 1994, shows a Piast armoured man with a spear and a lancer with a sabre during the charge. It is a commemoration of Polish horse formations from the beginning of Polish Christian statehood, i.e. from the 10<sup>th</sup> century.



**Fig. 1.** Pomnik Tysiąclecia Jazdy Polskiej – Monument to the Millennium of Polish Riding [[https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pomnik\\_Tysi%C4%85clecia\\_Jazdy\\_Polskiej](https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pomnik_Tysi%C4%85clecia_Jazdy_Polskiej)].

However, this tradition is much longer than one thousand years old. According to genetic and linguistic research, our immediate ancestors lived in these lands continuously since the middle of the second millennium B.C. They used horses in combat since the ancient past, similarly to their culturally and biologically (genetically) related Aryans and Scythians. The names Poland and Poles were not used then. The used ones were, Lechia and Lechites, and the warriors fought mainly on horseback<sup>15</sup>. That has been the case since the times of the legendary Lechia and the first Piasts. Bolesław Chrobry, with the help of a well-trained large team, was able to unite the lands of almost all Western (Lechite) Slavs under his crown.

A significant part of the martial arts of Lechites and Poles in the early days of Polish well-documented statehood was the art of fortification. Castles were

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<sup>15</sup> K. Moszyński, *Pierwotny zasięg języka prasłowiańskiego...*; P. Jasienica, *Słowiański rodowód [Slavic origin]*, Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, Warszawa 1978 [in Polish]; W.J. Cynarski, A. Maciejewska, *The proto-Slavic warrior in Europe...*; H. Haarmann, *Auf den Spuren der Indoeuropäer. Von den neolithischen Steppennomaden bis zu den frühen Hochkulturen [In the footsteps of the Indo-Europeans. From the Neolithic steppe nomads to the early high cultures]*, C.H. Beck, München 2016 [in German].

built here in ancient times, such as in Trzcínica (the so-called Carpathian Troy) or Biskupin. Efficiency in building and defending castles helped Poles win several wars with their neighbours at the beginning of the Kingdom of Poland. „Pre-Polish strongholds with ramparts made of oak trunks, clay and boulders were very good strongholds, and they fulfilled their tasks flawlessly. It may seem like a deliberate exaggeration to someone. Still, they defended their inhabitants better than, for example, Italian stone fortresses. There is no example of the German warriors capturing at least one Polish stronghold, fortified in a way known to us” – Paweł Jasienica wrote<sup>16</sup>.

If one would like to describe the general characteristics of the Polish martial arts, one would have to say that it was generally associated with horse riding. Horse archers were the primary armed force of the era of military democracy in Proto-Slavic times. The historical Piast dynasty at the beginning kept a team of horse warriors, professionals in the art of war. Armed peasants and infantry supplemented a group led by a prince.

How did the squad led by a prince evolve to the lancers of modern cavalry? It was a long historical process – social and civilization changes, changes in the weapons used and war tactics, etc. We illustrate the description of selected examples (or images) with references to films, paintings and small graphic forms.

Jasienica conducted his reflections on the beginnings of Polish statehood from the archaeological Lusatian culture to the 15<sup>th</sup> century. He drew attention to the excellent training of an individual Polish knight. It was a continuation of the tradition described by Gala Anonymus that a member of the princely team was worth ten other warriors. Later, the Polish knights of feudal times also excelled in combat.

Only twelve prominent Polish knights were killed at Grunwald, although they participated in the hottest battle as wanderers. At that time, in the then fighting, involving melee combat, the weak, the less resistant died<sup>17</sup>.

**Grunwald 1410** was one of the largest and most important battles of medieval Europe. Polish-Lithuanian forces stopped the expansion of the aggressive Teutonic State. The facts from centuries ago are shown in an excellent film by A. Ford, *The Teutonic Knights* (1960), based on the novel by Henryk Sienkiewicz under the same title. Every summer, the field of this battle is a meeting place for reconstruction groups who perform a battle show associated with the Castle Museum in Malbork (castle siege). Even though contemporary reconstructors “fight” on foot, which does not reflect the essence of the event from 1410, it is always attractive enough for numerous tourists<sup>18</sup>.

<sup>16</sup> P. Jasienica, *Słowiański rodowód*, p. 81; more: ibidem, pp. 41–91.

<sup>17</sup> Ibidem, p. 310.

<sup>18</sup> W.J. Cynarski, *Castles as the heritage of Polish fortification art and as a tourist attraction*, “Ido Movement for Culture. Journal of Martial Arts Anthropology” 2012, vol. 12, no. 4, pp. 44–55.

Zawisza Czarny, of the Sulima coat of arms from Garbów (ca. 1370–1428), who fought at Grunwald, was second to none in Europe at that time. He was the winner of numerous knightly tournaments and, at the same time, a model of knightly virtues. He defeated the best prince in Western Europe, John of Aragon. The duel took place in Perpignan (Aragon) in October 1415. For generations of Polish scouts, Zawisza Czarny is still a model of morality and patriotism.

The martial art of Poles is the heavy cavalry of medieval knights, then the famous hussars and other horse formations. The knights of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth obeyed the ideals of Christian knighthood, which was vividly described in *The Trilogy* by Henryk Sienkiewicz (1884–1888) and vividly presented in Jerzy Hoffman's films. The heroes of *With Fire and Sword*, *The Deluge* and *Colonel Wołodyjowski* fight the enemies of the Motherland, mainly on horseback, in royal dragons (like Jerzy Michał Wołodyjowski), under Tatar (like Andrzej Kmiecic) and Hussar banners (like Jan Skrzetuski) (Hoffman: 1969, 1974, 1999).

The Polish sabres and the composite recurve bows were borrowed from the Nomads from Eastern Europe. They were the attributes of the Polish nobility. Hussar sabres, in particular, were a unique Polish invention. The Polish light cavalry, dragoons, tankers, Tatars, and foreign regiments – reiters and arquebusiers – earned the Polish army's glory. Of course, the elite formation was the heavy hussar cavalry – usually victorious in the wars of the First Republic of Poland 1503–1776 and has no equivalent in any army in the world<sup>19</sup>.

**Kłuszyn (Klushino) 1610 and Vienna 1683** are the most famous battles of the First Republic. The Polish hussars defeated many more numerous forces – Muscovy-Swedish (they had five times the majority of the army) and Turkish-Tatar forces. The Polish king came to the rescue, and it was the charge of the Polish hussars that decided the outcome of the battle and the fate of Central Europe<sup>20</sup>. This event was recorded in the space of mass culture by the band Sabaton in the song *Winged Hussars* (2016).

After the fall of the First Polish Republic, regiments of lancers, hussars and cuirassiers of the Duchy of Warsaw were formed and fought alongside Napoleon. At the same time, Sawicki showed the influence of the Polish martial art (especially the Polish cavalry) onto European armies in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries<sup>21</sup>. Later we had insurgents and legionnaires, often fighting on horseback. Regular

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<sup>19</sup> Cf. R. Sikora, *Niezwykłe bitwy i szarże husarii [Astounding battles and charges of Winged Hussars]*, Warszawa 2011 [in Polish]; idem, *Nie tylko husaria [Not just hussars]*, Znak Horyzont, Kraków 2020 [in Polish]; M.K. Kaproń, *Koń w wojskowości polskiej [A horse in the Polish military]*, Bellona, Poland 2018.

<sup>20</sup> P. Broucek, *Zwycięstwo pod Wiedniem 1683 [Victory at Vienna 1683]*, Warszawa 1983 [in Polish]; M.K. Kaproń, *Koń w wojskowości...*

<sup>21</sup> Z. Sawicki, *Influence of the Polish martial art onto European armies in the 18th and 19th centuries – an outline*, “*Ido Movement for Culture. Journal of Martial Arts Anthropology*” 2014, vol. 14, no. 4, pp. 3–13; doi: 10.14589/ido.14.4.2.

cavalry units were part of the army of the Second Republic of Poland. They showed their value in the Polish-Ukrainian and Polish-Bolshevik wars.

**The Battle of Komarów 1920** was the largest cavalry battle of the 20th century. It took place on August 31, 1920, near Komarów near Zamość. The Poles, in the strength of about 1,500, won the confrontation with 6,000 Bolsheviks. There were six regiments on the Polish side, commanded by Juliusz Rómmel. On the Soviet side – 20 regiments fought under the command of Semyon Budyonny. The Soviets suffered significant losses – about 4,000 killed. 300 Poles died. It resulted from the advantage of tactical thinking, the training of the Polish soldiers (including horse fencing) and the morale of the army (patriotism and a sense of honour).



**Fig. 2.** „The Miracle on the Vistula” medal, issued in 2019 [<https://www.skarbnica-narodowa.pl/zloto/zlote-medale/zloty-medal-bitwa-warszawska-1920>].

At that time, the entire Polish nation, except for very few communists, united to defend the recently regained independence. It was also a fight for the faith of the fathers and the Western Latin civilization. Fortunately, the invasion of the Red Russian Army was stopped. And it was a kind of *War of the Worlds* (Bork and Talczewski, in 2020). Tolkien wrote: “Innumerable black and red banners were flying in the air as the horde pushed forward in disorder and with fury”<sup>22</sup>. Is this an anarchist and communist invasion? This picture from the Battle of the Five Armies (from the novel *The Hobbit*) is the scene of the struggle for Western civilization. But it looks like an illustration of the events of 1920 during the battles for Poland and Europe.

A series of gold-plated medals minted by the National Treasury [2020] commemorates the great battles of the Polish army. It is a series of medals and famous

<sup>22</sup> J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Hobbit, or There and Back Again / Hobbit czyli tam i z powrotem*, Iskry, Warszawa 1937/1997, p. 291 [in Polish].



paintings (by Jan Matejko, Józef Brandt, Wojciech and Juliusz Kossak), which show the battles of Grunwald, Kircholm (1605), Chocim (1621), Vienna (1683), and Raclawice (1794), and near Warsaw (1920). Only in the last two of the listed ones the role of the cavalry was not crucial. The 1920 battle medal, however, shows a charging uhlán (Fig. 2), which seems to indicate the battle of Komorów and the entire Polish-Soviet war. In the background, Marshal Józef Piłsudski, also in a saddle (according to the painting *Piłsudski on Kasztanka* by Wojciech Kossak). On the obverse – an eagle with a crown, the Polish national emblem from 1920.

1939 included Westerplatte and Wizna – heroic fights during the defensive war at World War II. The defence of Westerplatte became legendary in September 1939. The defenders of Wizna, who behaved like the ancient Spartans at Thermopylae, were immortalized in a song by the Swedish band Sabaton (J. Broden, 2008). Both battlefields were no longer about horseback riding. However, the ethos of honour remained of the knights on horseback. Polish soldiers displayed heroism equal to that of their noble ancestors. But the legend of the horse unit commanded by Henryk Dobrzański's (Hubal), who did not lay down their arms fighting to the end and waging a guerrilla war, still works with the force of a good film image (*Hubal*, 1973).

## Discussion

The Polish cavalry is present in the painting on commemorative coins and medals. The series of five Polish 2-złoty coins from 2006–2011 is presented in turn by Piast Horseman, C15th Polish Knight, a Hussar on horseback, Cheval Leger of Napoleon I, and the Polish Uhlán of the Polish Second Commonwealth. In 2010, silver coins were issued on the occasion of the 600<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the victory at Grunwald and the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the victory at Klushino (*Kłuszyn*). On each coin, the main iconographic motive is a warrior, knight or horse soldier<sup>23</sup>. King Jan III Sobieski received a commemorative coin for the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Vienna relief, although it is only a bust without a horse<sup>24</sup>. He has his equestrian statue in Warsaw; however, he has not yet received a proper monument in Vienna.

The medals mentioned above issued by the National Treasury (2020) included the works of Polish masters of the brush. In the “Great Battles of Polish Arms” series, we find on gold-plated medals – first of all – *The Battle of Grunwald* by Jan Matejko (1838–1883), painted in oil on canvas 1872–1878. There are also the subsequent victorious historical battles:

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<sup>23</sup> Cf. W.J. Cynarski, L.R. Cynarski, *Polish coins depicting martial arts and the art of war*, “Ido Movement for Culture. Journal of Martial Arts Anthropology” 2015, vol. 15, no. 1, pp. 1–10; doi: 10.14589/ido.15.1.1.

<sup>24</sup> L. Sieber, W.J. Cynarski, *Sztuki walki na monetach i medalach [Martial arts on coins and medals]*, “Ido Movement for Culture” 2008, vol. 8, p. 143.

- near Kircholm – *Kircholm* by Wojciech Kossak (1856–1942), oil on canvas, 1925;
- near Chocim – Józef Brandt’s *Chodkiewicz near Chocim* (1841–1915), oil on canvas, 1867;
- near Vienna – Juliusz Kossak’s *Entry of Jan III Sobieski to Vienna* (1824–1899), watercolor, 1883;
- near Raclawice – *Kościuszko near Raclawice* by Jan Matejko, oil on canvas, 1888.

All five paintings are attached to medals, the reverse of which shows the hilt of Szczerbiec – the Polish coronation sword, and the inscription: “WIELKIE BITWY POLSKIEGO OREŻA” (Great Battles of the Polish Arm).

Historical films and martial arts films usually promote national military, cultural heritage. In Polish cinematography, they are primarily the films: *Teutonic Knights* (Kingdom of Poland, the 15<sup>th</sup> century), adaptations of the Sienkiewicz *Trilogy* (times of the First Republic, the 17<sup>th</sup> century) and the heroism of Polish partisans in the film *Hubal* (World War II, 1939–1940).

Monuments of horse warriors are not only the one mentioned above at the Warsaw roundabout, and not only the monument of Jan III Sobieski. In front of the Presidential Palace in Warsaw, there is a monument to Prince Józef Poniatowski. Prince Józef Poniatowski (1763–1813) was one of the first knights of the War Order of *Virtuti Militari*. He became famous as an outstanding commander in the Polish-Russian war of 1792 and the Kościuszko Uprising. He covered himself with immortal glory as the commander of the army of the Duchy of Warsaw.

National heritage, literary (and not only) cultural code, but symbolism and historical monuments also contribute to today’s attractiveness of Poland for domestic and foreign tourists<sup>25</sup>. They serve in particular the historical and patriotic education of young people. Monuments and battlefields associated with museums are attractive for tourists and, as such, are better managed. They apply to the battlefields mentioned above, such as Grunwald, the Castle-Museum in Malbork, historically associated with this battle, the Battle of Warsaw 1920 (an appropriate museum will be initiated) or Westerplatte.

Thanks to the songs of the metal rock of the Swedish band Sabaton, the global audience of mass culture have learnt about the heroic achievements of the ancestors of the contemporary Poles. This content is present in the film and high art and small graphic forms such as coins, medals, emblems, badges, or postage stamps<sup>26</sup>. However, there is no cultivation of the horse soldier tradition. In the

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<sup>25</sup> W.J. Cynarski, *Following the trail of cultural traditions - travelling in the sphere of values and symbolism*, [in:] E. Puchnarewicz (ed.), *Tourism in Poland*, The Higher School of Tourism and Foreign Languages in Warsaw, Warsaw 2015, pp. 35–46.

<sup>26</sup> W.J. Cynarski, A. Piorko, *Sztuki walki na znaczkach pocztowych [Martial arts on postage stamps]*, „Ido Movement for Culture” 2008, vol. 8, pp. 151–163.

martial arts environment in Poland, virtually no one cultivates it, except for the *Signum Polonicum* school<sup>27</sup> and reconstruction groups.

The archetype of the horse warrior is familiar to many Indo-European tribes; it is present in Scythian and Celtic ornamentation. It is also still strongly present in many areas of contemporary Polish culture.

## Conclusions

Cavalry has been used as the principal military impact force since antiquity. The same is true in Poland – from the very beginnings of our statehood. Until the Battle of Komorów, it was a long series of significant victories for the Polish army. This pro-Polish tradition of military culture is still visible today in high culture (painting, literature) and mass culture (movies, songs), in urban space (monuments), and the values of metal art. It is also cultivated in the martial arts practised today and called *Signum Polonicum* (hussar sabre and horse fencing). Due to this cultural archetype, Poles still have great sympathy for horses and horse riding esteem. Arabian horses bred in Poland are our national asset, appreciated on a global scale. There is a growing interest in horse riding recreation and horse tourism. Horse fencing is expected to become more and more popular in Poland.

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