

Count Jerzy Potocki served as the ambassador of the Republic of Poland to the United States of America from 15 May 1936 to 5 December 1940.¹ Having concluded his diplomatic mission, he sold to James P. Donovan a painting under the title *Sophonisba Given the Cup of Poison (A Poisoned Cup Brought to Sophonisba by a Page Sent by Masinissa)* by Eglon Hendrik van der Neer (1635/36–1703)² (on wood, 53 × 42 cm; signed and dated: ‘eglon van der Neer 1674’, to the left, on the column base; current location unknown).³ The sale of the painting was concluded in Washington, D.C. in the year 1947. The subsequent owner of this work was G. Wynberg, who acquired it during the Auction including the property of His Grace the Duke of Beaufort at Sotheby’s

COMMUNICATION

FROM WILANÓW TO AMERICA (?). ON THE PAINTING *SOPHONISBA* BY EGLON VAN DER NEER

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Wilanów Studies
vol. XXXII, 2025, pp. 465–487
Yearbook, E-ISSN: 2720-0116

- 1 Jerzy Potocki (b. 21 January 1889 in Vienna, d. 20 September 1961), son of Roman and his second wife Elżbieta née Radziwiłł, younger brother of Alfred Antoni Potocki, the last owner of the Łańcut entail. His a collection of paintings by Polish contemporary artists, including Chełmoński, Brandt, Wyczółkowski, Malczewski, Kossak and Fałat, was held in the family castle at Pomorzany (formerly in the county of Zborów, today: Zboriv, Ukraine). In 1941, together with his wife, the Peruvian aristocrat Suzanita Yturregui y Orbegoso, and son Stanisław Alfred, he settled in Lima, the capital of Peru. From 1958 he lived in Geneva, where he died. For more, see A. Szklarska-Lohmannowa, ‘Potocki Jerzy (1889–1961)’, in: *PSB*, vol. 28, fasc. 116 (Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków–Gdańsk–Łódź, 1984–1985), pp. 47–48; J. Potocki, *Żołnierz i dyplomata. Pamiętnik* (Warszawa, 2021/2022), pp. 133, 345, 348–350.
- 2 Eglon Hendrik van der Neer (b. between 23 April 1635 and 6 February 1636 in Amsterdam, d. 1703), son of the painter and draughtsman Aert and his wife Lijsbeth née Goverts. Trained by his father and Jacob van Loo (1614–1670). His earliest dated work is the *Portrait of a Boy* (1657, Orange, France; in 2010 in a private collection, Holland). In the summer of 1687, he was nominated court painter to Charles II Habsburg, the king of Spain (r. 1665–1700). In a list of the most popular painters of Holland and Brabant compiled in the early eighteenth century by an Antwerp art dealer François Lemmers, his name was mentioned side by side with such artists as, e.g., Peter Paul Rubens and Adriaen van der Werff (see note 21). For more, see E. Schavemaker, *Eglon van der Neer (1635/36–1703). His Life and His Work*, translated from Dutch by M. Hoyle, Aetas Aurea. Monographs on Dutch & Flemish Painting series, vol. 22 (Doornspijk, 2010), pp. 19, 37 and elsewhere; W. Franits, *Dutch Seventeenth-Century Genre Painting. Its Stylistic and Thematic Evolution*, 2nd ed. (New Haven and London, 2008), pp. 250–253; P. Carpreau, *The Value of Taste. Auction Prices and the Evolution of Taste in Dutch and Flemish Golden Age Painting 1642–2011*, Collectors and Dealers series, vol. 3 (London/Turnhout, 2017), p. 63.
- 3 Ibidem, cat. no. 59, p. 474; Frick Art Reference Library (hereinafter: FARL) Photoarchive, *Eglon van der Neer, Sophonisba Given the Cup of Poison, 1674*, library.frick.org/permalink/01NYA_INST/d73c5u/alma991012171619707141 (accessed 30 Jan. 2024). On the applicability of FARL photographic archive in provenance research, see, e.g., I. Reist, ‘Provenance Research Tools’, *IFAR Journal Special Issues: Provenance & Due Diligence*, vol. 3, 2000, no. 3/4, pp. 26–31; on the history of the Frick Collection in New York, see, e.g., eadem, ‘The Frick Collection: From Private Home to Public Museum’, in: *The Evolving House Museum: Art Collectors and Their Residences, Then and Now*, eds I.M. Wertz, É. Quodbach, Studies in the History of Collecting & Art Markets series, vol. 20 (Leiden–Boston, 2024), pp. 134–157.



EGLEN HENDRIK VAN DER NEER
 PORTRAIT OF A LADY AS SOPHONISBA
 Signed and dated 1674, 21 in. by 16½ in.
 Formerly in the collection of Count Jerzy Potocki,
 Lancut Castle, Poland

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xxxvii

Fig. 1

Eglen Hendrik van der Neer, Portrait of a Lady as Sophonisba, Blenheim Galleries advertisement, Apollo: the Magazine of the Arts for Connoisseurs and Collectors, vol. 92, July 1970, no. 101, Fig. XXXVII

London on 25 June 1969 (lot no. 42: *Portrait of a Lady as Sophonisba*).⁴ The last locations of the painting to be noted by Eddy Schavemaker, author of the monograph on Van der Neer, were two London galleries: Blenheim Gallery in 1970⁵ (Fig. 1) and Alan Jacobs Gallery in 1973.⁶

This work has so far not been given any space in Polish specialist literature, despite there being excellent grounds for its inclusion in it. The reverse of the frame being inscribed with the caption 'Zamek Łańcutki' and the number '199'⁷ argues in favour of the accounts that hold the painting's provenance to be, among others, the Łańcut art collection.⁸ As far as it is possible to ascertain given the current state of research, it is thus the Potocki family of Łańcut that begin the known portion of the 'chain of ownership'⁹ that reaches back only to the nineteenth century.¹⁰

The author of this communication has managed to conjecturally link *Sophonisba*¹¹ with a painting described in the 1793 inventory of the

4 Ibidem, cat. no. 59, p. 474; FARL Photoarchive, *Eglon van der Neer, Sophonisba*.

5 At Blenheim Galleries, the painting was advertised as coming from the collection owned by Count Jerzy Potocki at Łańcut Castle; see *Eglon Hendrik van der Neer, Portrait of a Lady as Sophonisba* – Blenheim Galleries advertisement, *Apollo: the Magazine of the Arts for Connoisseurs and Collectors*, vol. 92, July 1970, no. 101, Fig. XXXVII.

6 E. Schavemaker, *Eglon van der Neer (1635/36–1703)*, cat. no. 59, p. 474. B. Gaechtgens, *Adriaen van der Werff (1659–1722)* (München, 1987), cat. no. 102, pp. 359–360 (as a work coming from 'art dealership in London': *London, Kunsthandel*).

7 Ibidem, cat. no. 59, p. 474. Although the Łańcut Castle Museum staff conducted a relevant search query, number '199' unfortunately proved impossible to link with any inventory number in the castle's collection.

8 In the Łańcut Castle, in the Tower Room arranged by Izabela Lubomirska, 'on the walls [were hanging – A.W.-B.] rows of good, small Netherlandish paintings (Van Duck [sic! – A.W.-B.], Daniel Peel, Mieris and others) [...]'. J. Piotrowski, *Zamek w Łańcutcie. Zwięzły opis dzieł i zbiorów. 107 ilustracji* (Lwów, 1933), www.pbc.rzeszow.pl/dlibra/publication/1775/edition/1671?language=en (accessed 07 Jan. 2024), p. 67.

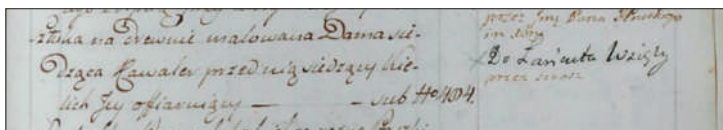
9 In art history, the provenance of a piece is described using the phrase 'the chain of ownership' (also: 'the sequence of ownership' or 'the order of ownership'). See, e.g., R.A. Joyce, 'From Place to Place: Provenience, Provenance, and Archeology', in: *Provenance. An Alternate History of Art*, eds G. Feigenbaum, I. Reist, 'Provenance: The Transformative Power' conference papers (Issues & Debates), 96th Conference of College Art Association, Dallas, 21 Feb. 2008, 2nd ed. (Los Angeles, Ca., 2012), p. 48; cf. N.H. Yeide, K. Akinsha, A.L. Walsh, 'Chapter 4: How to Record Provenance', in: eadem, *The AAM Guide to Provenance Research* (Washington, D.C., 2001), p. 33.

10 '[...] said to have been for over a hundred years in the family of Count Jerzy Potocki [underline A.W.-B.], formerly Polish ambassador to the United States, from whom the picture was bought by James P. Donovan, Washington, D.C.'; FARL Photoarchive, *Eglon van der Neer, Sophonisba*.

11 Bożenna Majewska-Maszkowska, the author of the sole existing monograph on Izabela Lubomirska's art patronage, does not identify the painting; she only reports the links of number 484 ('Łańcut 1793') with early nineteenth-century inventories: 'possibly Łańcut inv. 1802, p. 22; inv. 1805, p. 13, item 24'. See B. Majewska-Maszkowska, *Mecenat artystyczny Izabelli z Czartoryskich Lubomirskiej (1736–1816)*, vol. ed. A. Morawińska (Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków–Gdańsk, 1976), p. 370.

Fig. 2

*Inwentarz Palacu
Wilanowskiego y Wszystkich
w nim znajdujących Meblow
Obrazow e.t.c. Diebus
Septembris 1793 spisany*
(Inventory of the Wilanów
Palace and All the Furniture,
Pictures etc. found therein,
compiled in September 1793),
manuscript, detail of p. 192,
Central Archives of Historical
Records, AGWil., ZPMiPW,
sign. 171



Wilanów Palace, then owned by Princess Izabela Lubomirska née Czar-toryska (1736–1816). Entered under no. 484 is ‘A piece painted on wood a Lady seated a Cavalier seated in front of her offering her a Goblet’ (Fig. 2). Later, the painting was transferred to Łańcut, as indicated by a note visible at the edge of the leaf: ‘Taken to Łańcut by the same [person]’.¹² In his guidebook to the Łańcut Castle, Józef Piotrowski wrote: ‘In fact, the excellent collections at the once royal Wilanów Pal-ace, [a building] small in comparison with the castle at Łańcut, can to a certain extent be considered a part of the Łańcut collections, since, as we know, they were owned by Princess Elżbieta Lubomirska née Czar-toryska and she deployed [the pieces] **freely and at her own discretion** [underline A.W.-B.]’.¹³ Mateusz Tokarski,¹⁴ in turn, in his 1794 bills ‘for conservation of paintings carried out’, may have been referring to the same painting when he noted under no. 64: ‘Sopfanizba – original – on wood’.¹⁵ Inventories of the Łańcut Castle from years 1802 and 1805

Fig. 3

*Inwentarz Zamku
Łańcuckiego miesiąca
Septembris 1802 spisany*
(Inventory of the Łańcut
Castle compiled in September
1802), manuscript, detail
of p. 22, Central Archives
of Historical Records, APL,
sign. 784/1

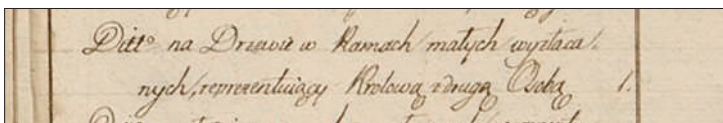
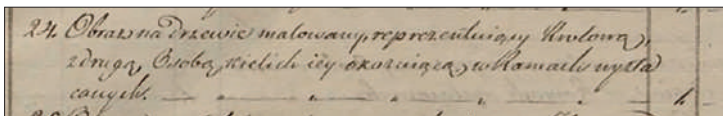


Fig. 4

*Inwentarz Zamku
Łańcuckiego spisany Dies 1^o
7bris 1805 Annō* (Inventory
of the Łańcut Castle compiled
on 1st September 1805),
manuscript, detail of p. 13,
item 24, Central Archives
of Historical Records, APL,
sign. 784/2-3



12 Ibidem, p. 370. Cf. Central Archives of Historical Records in Warsaw, Wilanów Eco-nomic Achive (Archiwum Gospodarcze Wilanowskie, hereinafter: AGWil.), Managing Board of Wilanów Palaces, Museum and Parks (Zarząd Pałaców, Muzeum i Parków Wilanowskich, hereinafter: ZPMiPW), sign. 171, *Inwentarz Palacu Wilanowskiego y Wszystkich w nim znajdujących Meblow Obrazow e.t.c. Diebus Septembris 1793 spisany*, s. 192, rkps.

13 Piotrowski, *Zamek w Łańcutcie*, p. 89.

14 Mateusz Tokarski (1747–1807) was probably born in a burgher family settled in the vicinity of Lublin region. Nominated ‘Court Painter to His Majesty the King of Poland’ Stanislaus Augustus Poniatowski, he served as the unofficial custodian of the royal gallery. From 1 January 1795 he served as the inspector of the Łazienki Park under the supervision of Marcello Bacciarelli. In the period 1784–1794 he worked for Princess Izabela Lubomirska (from 1792 he copied and conserved paintings in the Wilanów Pal-ace). Cf. A. Bernatowicz, ‘Mateusz Tokarski. Z dziejów kariery malarza nadwornego’, *Biuletyn Historii Sztuki*, vol. 75, 2013, no. 4, pp. 776–778, 783–784.

15 Majewska-Maszkowska, *Mecenat artystyczny*, p. 375.

report the presence there of a painting showing a queen with ‘another Person’, respectively: ‘Ditt^o on Wood in small gilt Frames, representing a Queen with another Person’ (entry not numbered) (Fig. 3) and ‘Picture painted on wood, representing a Queen, with another Person proffering a Goblet to her, in gilt frames’ (item no. 24) (Fig. 4).¹⁶

The title of the work formerly in the Potocki of Łańcut collection refers to a historical event that happened in the North Africa in the late third century B.C., mentioned by Livy (59 B.C. – 17 A.D.) in his monumental work *Ab Urbe Condita* (30.15).¹⁷ The Carthaginian general Hasdrubal married his daughter Sophonisba to the king of Numidia, Syphax, who later rebelled against the supremacy of Rome. Having lost in battle, Syphax fell into the hands of an ally of the Roman general Scipio Africanus, General Masinissa, to whom Sophonisba had been betrothed before her marriage to Syphax. Following Scipio’s orders, Masinissa sent Sophonisba a goblet of poison, and the queen died an honourable death, having avoided the clutches of Rome.¹⁸ **Yet is it truly Sophonisba that this painting represents?** The topic of a fragmentary version of van der Neer’s work dating from ca. 1675 (Fig. 5), painted by Adriaen van der Werff (possibly in cooperation with van der Neer)¹⁹ and purchased by Viscount Richard Fitzwilliam (1745–1816) in 1816, is identified on the basis of an entry in an inventory of the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge, namely: *Sigismonda*.²⁰ This identification, deriving

16 Central Archives of Historical Records in Warsaw, The Potocki of Łańcut Archive (Archiwum Potockich z Łańcuta, hereinafter: APL), sign. 784/1, *Inwentarz Zamku Łańcutckiego miesiąca Septembris 1802 spisany*, manuscript, p. 22; sign. 784/2-3, *Inwentarz Zamku Łańcutckiego spisany Dies 1^o 7bris 1805 Ann^o*, manuscript, p. 13, item 24. Cf. Majewska-Maszkowska, *Mecenat artystyczny*, p. 379, 389.

17 Schavemaker, *Eglon van der Neer (1635/36–1703)*, cat. no. 59.I, p. 474.

18 Ibidem, cat. no. 59.I, p. 474.

19 The interdependency between the two paintings is herein cited following Schavemaker, whereas their dating is after the Fitzwilliam Museum (Schavemaker dates the Cambridge painting to 1677/78). Adriaen van der Werff (1659–1722) was born in Kratingen near Rotterdam as the son of a miller. Around 1671 he entered Eglon van der Neer’s studio in Rotterdam and spent four formative years there. Apart from van der Neer’s sons, Aert and Abraham, van der Werff is his only known pupil; cf. Schavemaker, *Eglon van der Neer (1635/36–1703)*, pp. 61, 217; Franits, *Dutch Seventeenth-Century Genre Painting*, p. 254.

20 On the painting by van der Werff, see e.g. (in chronological order), A. Pigler, *Barockthemen. Eine Auswahl von Verzeichnissen zur Ikonographie des 17. und 18. Jahrhunderts*, vol. 2, *Profane Darstellungen* (Budapest, 1956), p. 440 (where a remark on the possible interpretation of the painting’s main figure as Sophonisba, not Guismond); H. Gerson and J.W. Goodison, *Catalogue of paintings*, vol. 1, *Dutch and Flemish*, J.W. Goodison and D. Sutton, *French, German, Spanish*, The Fitzwilliam Museum (Cambridge, 1960), cat. no. 375, pp. 141–142; Gaetgens, *Adriaen van der Werff*, cat. no. 102, pp. 359–360; P. Hecht, *De Hollandse fijnschilders: van Gerard Dou tot Adriaen van der Werff*, exhibition catalogue, Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, 18 Nov. 1989 – 25 Feb. 1990, Rijksmuseum Amsterdam (Amsterdam–Maarsseveld–Gravenhage, 1989), cat. no. 28, pp. 144–145; ibidem, cat. no. 59.I, p. 474.



Fig. 5

Adriaen van der Werff (1659–1722), *Tancred's Servant Presenting the Heart of Guiscard in a Golden Cup to Guismond*, ca. 1675, oil on wood, 43.5 × 36.2 cm; The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge (acc. no. 375)

the topic of the painting from the fourteenth-century tale of Guismond by Giovanni Boccaccio (*The Decameron*, 4.1),²¹ was once attached to the original work in Jerzy Potocki's collection as well.²² In his *catalogue*

21 Translations of the Italian cycle of short stories *The Decameron* (1349–1351) into Dutch are known since the end of the sixteenth century; see H. Gerson and J.W. Goodison, *Catalogue of paintings*, p. 141.

22 During the 'Spring Exhibition. Fine XVII Century Dutch and Flemish Old Masters', the painting by Eglon van der Neer was shown under the title *Guiscardo and Guismonda* (provenance: collection of Count Jerzy Potocki, Łańcut Castle, Poland); see *Spring Exhibition. Fine XVII Century Dutch and Flemish Old Masters*, text by Alan Jacobs, exhibition catalogue, Alan Jacobs Gallery (London, 1973), pp. 30–31.



Fig. 6

The Polish Embassy building
in Washington, D.C.

raisonné published in 1833, John Smith attached the title *Sophonisba* to a work in the Fitzwilliam Museum, at that time ascribed to Eglon Hendrik van der Neer.²³ Over the centuries, the source of the represented scene was evidently not perceived as clear.

Conclusion

In 1936, Jerzy Potocki furnished the interiors of the Polish Embassy in Washington, D.C. (Fig. 6)²⁴ with pieces of furniture, silverware and paintings brought in from his palaces – mainly the one in Łańcut, but also the one in Lvov.²⁵ It is not known whether the painting by Eglon van der Neer was included among the artworks which Potocki imported to the United States. In the post-war period, also his elder brother, Alfred (1886–1958), was selling artworks from the family collection at Łańcut in America.²⁶ In fact, the endeavours of both the Potocki brothers

23 J. Smith, *Catalogue Raisonné of the Works of the Most Eminent Dutch and Flemish Painters*, part 4, *Eglon Hendrick van der Neer* (London, 1833), archive.org/details/catalogueraisonn04smit/mode/2up (accessed 9 Feb. 2024), cat. no. 25, p. 177.

24 The Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Washington, D.C. is located at 2640, 16th Street, NW. The building was bought in 1919 by Prince Kazimierz Lubomirski, the first ambassador of the Second Republic to the United States of America; *ibidem*, p. 197.

25 K. Jankowiak, 'Hrabia Jerzy Potocki z Łańcuta – polski arystokrata w XX wieku', in: *Ziemiaństwo na Lubelszczyźnie VII. Ziemiaństwo w walce i pracy na rzecz polskości i niepodległości w XIX i XX w.*, eds T. Osiński, M. Kruszyński, S. Grzechnik, K. Kot, Materiały VII sesji naukowej 'Historia pisana życiorysami. Ziemiaństwo w walce o Niepodległość' zorganizowanej w Muzeum Zamojskich w Kozłowiec w dniach 11–13 października 2018 r. (Lublin–Warszawa, 2021), p. 300. 'The embassy's parlours were beautifully furnished. Quite a few pieces of furniture, paintings, silverware and tableware arrived, sent to me by my Mother and my brother from Łańcut [...]', *ibidem*, p. 202.

26 Cf. note 1. E.g. a vase (China, mid-eighteenth century; mountings: attr. Pierre-Philippe Thomire, France, ca. 1785; J. Paul Getty Museum, inv. no. 70.DI.115) linked with

should be reviewed in the general context of the Polish aristocrats' share in the hitherto insufficiently researched phenomenon of the dispersal of long-established private art collections. It is to be hoped that the eventual discovery of the current location of the work *Sophonisba Given the Cup of Poison* will permit to establish its provenance from the Wilanów and Łańcut art collection once owned by Princess Izabela Lubomirska. This collection fulfils the criteria for a **dispersed collection** as accepted in specialist literature (of which Piotrowski was fully aware²⁷); hence in the future it will require a meticulous reconstruction based on available archival materials and statements.

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Izabela Lubomirska's collection (purchased after ca. 1793) arrived in J. Paul Getty's collection in 1953. Taken from Łańcut by Alfred Potocki in 1944, it was a part of his great-great-grandmother's legacy. For more, see G. Wilson and C. Hess, *Summary Catalogue of European Decorative Arts in the J. Paul Getty Museum*, introduction by D. Gribbon, The J. Paul Getty Museum (Los Angeles, Ca., 2001), cat. no. 277, pp. 137–138.

27 As evidenced by his comment that 'these days, the rich collection at the Łańcut Castle certainly does not give us a proper image of the whole, once huge collection [owned by] the princess, now divided and dispersed [underline A.W.-B.] around many collections, castles and palaces'; Piotrowski, *Zamek w Łańcutu*, p. 29.

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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

- p. 478 *Eglon Hendrik van der Neer, Portrait of a Lady as Sophonisba*, Blenheim Galleries advertisement, *Apollo: the Magazine of the Arts for Connoisseurs and Collectors*, vol. 92, July 1970, no. 101, Fig. XXXVII
- p. 480 *Inwentarz Palacu Wilanowskiego y Wszystkich w nim znajdujących Meblow Obrazow e.t.c. Diebus Septembris 1793 spisany* (Inventory of the Wilanów Palace and All the Furniture, Pictures etc. found therein, compiled in September 1793), manuscript, detail of p. 192, Central Archives of Historical Records, AGWil., ZPMiPW, sign. 171, photo by Museum of King Jan III's Palace at Wilanów
- p. 480 *Inwentarz Zamku Łańcuckiego miesiąca Septembris 1802 spisany* (Inventory of the Łańcut Castle compiled in September 1802), manuscript, detail of p. 22, Central Archives of Historical Records, APL, sign. 784/1, photo by Central Archives of Historical Records
- p. 480 *Inwentarz Zamku Łańcutckiego spisany Dies 1^o 7bris 1805 Annó* (Inventory of the Łańcut Castle compiled on 1st September 1805), manuscript, detail of p. 13, item 24, Central Archives of Historical Records, APL, sign. 784/2-3, photo by Central Archives of Historical Records
- p. 482 Adriaen van der Werff (1659–1722), *Tancred's Servant Presenting the Heart of Guiscard in a Golden Cup to Guismond*, ca. 1675, oil on wood, 43.5 × 36.2 cm; The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge (acc. no. 375); photo by Andrew Norman, The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge – Creative Commons License (BY-NC-ND)
- p. 483 The Polish Embassy building in Washington, D.C.; photo by National Digital Archive

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The study was conducted as part of the statutory work of the Museum.