

Several remarks about the painting of *Christ on the Cross* in the church of Saint Matthew in Mielec



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Located within the main altar of the church of Saint Matthew in Mielec, the painting *Christ on the Cross* (see: **Fig. 1**) was featured in the literature on the subject on several occasions, primarily in publications of regional range. It was first mentioned by Włodzimierz Demetrykiewicz at a meeting of the Group of Monument Conservators of Western Galicia. In the report from the stocktaking trip, presented at the meeting on October 5, 1892, he laconically described the painting as “reminiscent of Dolabella”, thus suggesting a stylistic similarity to the works of the Venetian painter. He also drew attention to the poor state of preservation, as the painting was said to have been “blackened due to recent conservation” perpetuated by a “bungler”.¹ Mieczysław Skrudlik had a similar opinion, and attributed the work’s authorship to Dolabella’s follower, placing the unknown artist among other, “third-rate” painters.² Edward Chwalewik, on the contrary, unequivocally acknowledged the authorship of the Venetian master³; and a few years later, Stanisław Kryczyński expressed the same opinion on the subject⁴. Subsequent scholars who studied the regional monuments of art – specifically, Marian Kornecki⁵ and Mieczysław Maciąga⁶ – followed the suit of earlier publications and concluded that the Venetian was the author of the painting, and generally dated the work itself to the seventeenth

- 1 *Teka Grona konserwatorów Galicyi zachodniej*, vol. 1, Kraków 1900, p. 378.
- 2 M. Skrudlik, *Tomasz Dolabella, jego życie i dzieła. Ustęp z dziejów malarstwa XVII stulecia w Polsce*, “Rocznik Krakowski”, 16, 1914, p. 147.
- 3 E. Chwalewik, *Zbiory polskie. Archiwa, biblioteki, gabinety, galerje, muzea i inne zbiory pamiątek przeszłości w ojczyźnie i na obczyźnie w zestawieniu alfabetycznym według miejscowości*, vol. 1, Warszawa–Kraków 1926, p. 455.
- 4 S. Kryczyński, *Z przeszłości miasta Mielca*, [in:] *Mielczanin. Jednodniówka Akademickiego Koła Mielczan we Lwowie Sekcji Zrzeszenia Akademickiej Młodzieży Prowincjonalnej*, S. Kryczyński (ed.), Lwów 1933, p. 8.
- 5 M. Kornecki, *Kościół diecezji tarnowskiej*, [in:] *Rocznik diecezji tarnowskiej na rok 1972*, J. Rzepa (ed.), Tarnów 1972, pp. 334–335.
- 6 M. Maciąga, *Zabytki sztuki regionu mieleckiego*, [in:] *Mielec. Dzieje miasta i regionu*, vol. 1: *Czasy przedrozbiorowe i w okresie rozbiorów i niewoli*, F. Kiryk (ed.), Mielec 1984, p. 619.



1. Main altar of the church of Saint Matthew in Mielec, state after conservation works, 2024. Photo by K. Zięba

earlier church, which burned down; they indicated that after the fire the painting was placed in a new altar structure.¹⁰ The *Monuments of Art in Poland (Zabytki sztuki w Polsce)* catalogue references the findings of Stolot and Śnieżyńska-Stolot.¹¹

Attempts to attribute the painting were also accompanied by few and far between mentions of its founder. The authors of the *Catalogue of Art Monuments in Poland* identified the coat of arms painted on the stone shield as Leliwa, and read the letters surrounding it as: PPOP-MZG. They concluded that the founder was an unknown parish priest from the Mielec church.¹² These findings were partially corrected by Janusz Strzała, who identified the coat of arms

century. The authors of the *Katalog zabytków sztuki w Polsce* (Catalogue of Art Monuments in Poland) – Franciszek Stolot and Ewa Śnieżyńska-Stolot – took a wholly different stance. In their opinion, the image of the crucified Christ is a work of art made in the first half of the seventeenth century, most likely by an Italian painter, but not by Thomas Dolabella.⁷ Apparently, their position was not universally accepted: because publications devoted to the history and monuments of the region still emphasized the alleged authorship of the Venetian painter working in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. A handful of authors recalled the hypothesis presented in the Catalogue of Monuments in Poland, including Anna Sadowska⁸ and Józef Witek, who also quoted earlier hypotheses about Dolabella's authorship.⁹ Scholars who studied the history of the region – Jan Wróblewski, Piotr Miodunka and Krzysztof Haptaś – also linked the painting to Dolabella, claiming that it was created in the first half of the seventeenth century and came from an

7 *Katalog Zabytków Sztuki w Polsce* i.e., Catalogue of Art Monuments in Poland (hereinafter: KZSP), vol. 3: *Województwo rzeszowskie*, book 3: *Kolbuszowa, Mielec i okolice*, F. Stolot, E. Śnieżyńska-Stolot (eds.), Warszawa 1991, p. 24.

8 A. Sadowska, *Architektura i zabytki kościoła p.w. św. Mateusza w Mielcu*, [in:] *Mielec. Studia i materiały z dziejów miasta i regionu*, vol. 3, F. Kiryk (ed.), Mielec 1994, pp. 154–155.

9 J. Witek, *Kościół parafialny pw. św. Mateusza w Mielcu*, [in:] *Encyklopedia miasta Mielca*, vol. 1, J. Witek (ed.), Mielec 2004, pp. 412–413.

10 J. Wróblewski, *Kościół św. Mateusza w Mielcu*, Mielec 2005, p. 7; K. Haptaś, P. Miodunka, *Zarys historii Parafii pw. św. Mateusza Apostoła i Ewangelisty w Mielcu*, Mielec 2011; K. Haptaś, *Parafia farna*, [in:] *Mielecka podróż w czasie 1470–2020. 55 historii na 550 lat Mielca*, K. Haptaś (ed.), Mielec 2020, p. 91.

11 *Mielec, kościół par. św. Mateusza*, [in:] *Zabytki sztuki w Polsce. Małopolska*, S. Brzezicki, J. Wołańska (eds.), in cooperation with A. Organisty, B. Pusback, Warszawa 2016, p. 894.

12 KZSP, p. 24.

as Jastrzębiec.¹³ During the most recent maintenance works in 2020, the arrangement of letters was read differently: CP-CP-OC-PM-ZG.¹⁴

The overview of research findings presented above shows that only brief mentions were devoted to the painting. In regional publications, the work was attributed to Dolabella, his disciples, or his workshop, and the time of its creation was determined to be the first half of the seventeenth century. The objectives of the present research paper are primarily: to verify the information provided so far, to determine the painting's founder, to determine the exact time of the painting's creation, and to analyze its iconography, including the method of using graphic patterns.

In the case of the Mielec temple, numerous visitation or inspection records from the turn of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries have been preserved. They describe the church as wooden, and they also list the number of altars, the paraments and liturgical vessels assigned to them, and other pieces of church equipment.¹⁵ The oldest source record referencing a painting with a crucifixion scene in the main altar of the Mielec church comes from the files of chapter visitations of the Mielec deanery from 1610. The records of the visitation of September 21 stated: “[...] in cuis altaris tabula imago Crucifixi artificiosi picta, iustae magnitudinis auroque et alyis varys coloroibus condecoratam [...]”.¹⁶ The church was a new building, erected thanks to the efforts of the then parish priest, Fr. Jakub Ołtarzewski. The previous one was destroyed in the fire of 1604.¹⁷ Therefore, the painting was an element of new fittings. There are no mentions of the painting in subsequent visitation files from 1618 and from 1678.¹⁸ These last files were prepared after the construction of another, all-brick church had begun, which, according to Miodunka, would have been completed around 1690.¹⁹ Another entry concerning a painting with an image of the crucified Christ in the main altar features in the visitation records from 1721, where it is written: “[...] Altaris Majus in quo Imago Crucifixi Domini Nostri Jesu

13 J. Strzała, *Ciekawe odkrycie w kościele farnym św. Mateusza w Mielcu*, “Zapiski Mieleckie”, 4, 2000–2001, pp. 163–164.

14 A. Dziurawiec, Dokumentacja prac konserwatorskich. “Obraz olejny na płótnie *Ukrzyżowanie* z pocz. XVII w. z Bazyliki św. Mateusza w Mielcu”, Tarnów 2020, unpublished typescript. At this point I would like to once again thank the authors of monument conservation works, Agnieszka and Paweł Dziurawiec, for making their documentation and photographs available to me.

15 The visitation is discussed in detail by W. Werner, *Kościół i duchowieństwo mieleckie w świetle wizytacji biskupich z lat 1596–1721*, [in:] *Mielec. Studia i materiały z dziejów miasta i regionu*, vol. 3, F. Kiryk (ed.), Mielec 1994, pp. 116–119.

16 Archives of the Metropolitan Curia in Kraków [Archiwum Kurii Metropolitalnej w Krakowie] (further: AKMKR), reference no. AV Cap. 29, *Visitatio ecclesiarum in districtu ac officialatu Pilznensi per R.D. Laurentium Grutium, praepositum, officialem et commissarium visitatorem a R.D. Petro Tylicki, episcopo Cracoviensi ordinatum a.D. 1610 peracta*. Decanatus: Pilznensis, Mielecensis, Ropczycensis, Skrzyżowiensis, fol. 5–6. When describing the visitation report of 1610, W. Werner omits the information about the painting within the altar. He only mentions the presence of a portable altar with a painted rendition of Holy Trinity. W. Werner, *Kościół*, p. 121.

17 W. Werner, *Kościół*, p. 119.

18 AKMKR, reference no. AV Cap 39, *Visitatio ecclesiarum parochialium in decanatus: Booviensi, Sandecensi, Neoforiensi, Becensi, Jaslensi, Żmigrodensi, Pilznensi, Strzyżowiensi, Ropczycensi et Mielecensi a.D. 1618 facta*, fol. 358–360; AKMKR, reference no. AV 6, *Acta visitationis interioris decanatum Radomiensis, Zwoliensis ad jurisdictionem decani Kielcensis pertinentium ex anno 1617*, fol. 171.

19 P. Miodunka, *W sprawie daty budowy murowanego kościoła pw. św. Mateusza w Mielcu*, “Rocznik Mielecki”, 9, 2006, pp. 151–152.



2. Crucifixion, church of Saint Matthew in Mielec, state after conservation works, detail.
Photo by Paweł Dziurawiec

Christi depicta in tabula lignea [...]”. The inspector also gave a brief description of the structure of the altar, which had six gilded columns and two sculptures: one representing Saint John the Baptist, and the other Saint Matthew.²⁰

The painting was mentioned again in the church inventory from 1782; it was then placed in an altar that had been painted black.²¹ The latter must have been the currently surviving structure, different from the one described in 1721.²² Another mention of the painting appears again in the inventory from 1841.²³

With the view of the above, based on the existing sources, it is not possible to precisely determine the time when the painting was created. If we assumed the hypothesis that it was painted in the first half of the seventeenth century to be true, then we would also have to assume that the work must have appeared in Mielec around 1610. However, this is contradicted by the person of the founder, who remained unrecognized in the literature existing to date, due to the incorrect reading of both the sigil and the coat of arms itself.

During the latest conservation effort, direct access to the work enabled precise reading of the painted letters (see: **Fig. 2**). However, the authors of the conservation works had read the sequence of letters (oc) incorrectly. When we compare the manner of painting, as well as arrangement and spacing of the remaining letters, especially c and p, the entire sequence should be read as CP–CP–CC–PM–ZG. In the case of the parish of Saint Matthew, luckily, we have a complete list of parish priests since 1515 at our disposal.²⁴ The only person who held this function in the seventeenth century, and whose initials and benefices fully correspond to the sigils painted around the coat of arms, is Konstanty Przedbor from Koniecpol (d. 1710), custodian of the Przemyśl chapter, canon of Chełmno and Kamieniec, provost of Mielec, parish priest in Żołyńia and Grodzisk, royal secretary.²⁵

20 AKMKR, reference no. AV 6, Acta, fol. 221.

21 Archives of St. Matthew’s Parish in Mielec [Archiwum Parafii św. Mateusza w Mielecu], Actum in Ecclesia Parochiali Mielecensis Anno D[omini] Millesimo Septingentesimo Octagesimo Secundo, die Mercurij 10. Mensis Martii, no page numbering.

22 The present altarpiece is dated, rather broadly, to the second half of the eighteenth century. See: KZSP, p. 24. Elements of the altar and the ciborium were still being made in 1788. See: K. Haptaś, *Nieznany kontrakt na prace snycerskie w kościele mieleckim (z 1788 r.)*, “Rocznik Mielecki”, 20–21, 2017–2018, pp. 305–308.

23 Diocesan Archives in Tarnów [Archiwum Diecezjalne w Tarnowie] (hereinafter: ADT), LM X, Akta lokalne [Local records], Parafia Mielec św. Mateusza [Saint Matthew’s Parish in Mielec], 1841–1850, Inventarium, no page numbering.

24 K. Haptaś, *Proboszczowie parafii farnej w Mielcu (xv–xxi w.)*. *Studium prozopograficzne*, [in:] *Miasto. Region. Ludzie. W 550. rocznicę lokacji miasta Mielca 1470–2020*, K. Haptaś (ed.), Mielec 2023, p. 53.

25 F. Pawłowski, *Pralaci i kanonicy Kapituły Katedralnej obrządku łacińskiego w Przemyślu*, translated by Fr. Z. Trojnar, Przemyśl 2018, p. 225. At this point I would like to thank Agata Dworzak, PhD, for pointing me towards the person of Konstanty Przedbor of Koniecpol.

Przedbor's person has not been discussed in detail in the literature on the subject so far, and some of the information requires correction. A short biography, albeit the most complete in terms of the functions performed by the priest, was provided by Fr. Franciszek Pawłowski. However, the author only used the files preserved in the Archdiocesan Archives in Przemyśl.²⁶ Przedbor was also mentioned by Seweryn Uruski in his armorial²⁷ and by priest Alfons Mańkowski in a study devoted to the bishops and canons of Chełmno.²⁸

It is not known when exactly Konstanty Przedbor was born. It is known, however, that he died in 1710. Ursuski does not specify what coat of arms he used²⁹, whereas Mańkowski, who is citing Kacper Nieciecki's findings, included him in the Przedborowski family of the Poraj coat of arms.³⁰ However, this is not confirmed in Nieciecki's armory, and Mańkowski made his conclusion only on the basis of the apparent similarity of the surnames. More information about Przedbor's origin can be found in his noble pedigree, quoted on the occasion of his installation as custodian of the Przemyśl chapter. It is known that his parents were Katarzyna Hynkowa of the Topór coat of arms and Tomasz (of an unknown coat of arms). Przedbor's maternal grandmother was Urszula Siecigniowska of the Jelita coat of arms, and her paternal grandmother, Barbara Bastrzejowska.³¹ It can therefore be concluded that Konstanty Przedbor came from minor nobility, and he used the Jastrzębiec coat of arms, which is indeed featured in the discussed painting found in Mielec.

The sigils around the coat of arms in the painting from Mielec refer to the dignity and benefices held by Konstanty Przedbor. Analysis of the chronology of their receipt allows us to quite precisely determine the time when the discussed painting could have appeared in the Mielec church. The earliest of these (already in 1671) is that Przedbor, "Minorum Ordinum Clericum" at the time, received a parish in Żołyńia, in exchange for the provostship in Łańcut, which was ultimately granted by Barbara Lubomirska née Tarło to Fr. Andrzej Podolski.³² Przedbor remained the parish priest of Żołyńia until his death in 1710.³³ Earlier, however, he accomplished the creation of a vicariate in 1693, followed by the establishment of a provostship two years later.³⁴

It is not known when Konstanty Przedbor was appointed canon of Kamieniec and Chełmno. There is one mention of him in the preserved records of the Chełmno chapter. Under the date of October 24, 1678, there is an entry about the appointment of Przedbor, a canon of Chełmno and Kamieniec, by the decision of the Holy

26 Ibidem.

27 S. Uruski, *Rodzina. Herbarz Szlachty Polskiej*, vol. 15, Warszawa 1931, p. 11.

28 A. Mańkowski, *Prałaci i kanonicy katedralni chełmińscy. Od założenia kapituły do naszych czasów*, Toruń 1928, p. 163.

29 S. Uruski, *Rodzina*, p. 11.

30 A. Mańkowski, *Prałaci*, p. 163.

31 Archdiocesan Archive in Przemyśl [Archiwum Archidiecezjalne w Przemyślu] (hereinafter: AAP), AC VII, Conclusiones, 1678–1686, fol. 44v–45v.

32 AAP, S.67, Akta biskupie [Bishopric records], 1668–1677, fol. 300r; *Aneksy. I. Proboszczowie parafii żołyńskiej*, [in:] *Dzieje Żołyńi*, W. Bonusiak (ed.), Żołyńia 1998, p. 599; H. Borcz, *Z dziejów parafii pw. Św. Stanisława Biskupa i Męczennika w Łańcutu. Na kanwie niezwyčajnego zagoszczenia cudownego obrazu Matki Boskiej Szkaplerznej w miejskiej Farze w 1679 roku*, [in:] *Królowa Szkaplerza Świętego z łańcutkiej fary w dwudziestą piątą rocznicę koronacji*, W. Siwak (ed.), Łańcut 2019, p. 45.

33 *Aneksy*, p. 599.

34 J. Półciwiatek, *Żołyńia od połowy XVII wieku do połowy XIX wieku*, [in:] *Dzieje Żołyńi*, p. 188; H. Borcz, *Prepozytury parafialne diecezji przemyskiej w XV–XVIII wieku*, "Studia Theologica Varsaviensia", 27, 1989, book 1, p. 260, 262.



3. Main altar in the parish church in Mielec, approx. 1928–1935. Photo by Wiktor Jaderny, collection of the Jadernówka Museum of the History of Photography in Mielec



4. Interior of the parish church of Saint Matthew in Mielec with a view of the main altar, 1935. Photo by Wiktor Jaderny, collection of the Jadernówka Museum of the History of Photography in Mielec

See, to the position of custodian of the Przemyśl chapter.³⁵ However, his name is not featured in the records of the Chełmno chapter, which were held in the years 1601–1644 and 1661–1690.³⁶ The chapter's catalogue of canons does not mention him either.³⁷ Przedbor reported in Przemyśl on November 15, 1679, and was installed as the chapter's custodian less than a month later, namely on December 29, 1679. He became provost in Mielec on April 2, 1683, and held this position until his resignation on May 13, 1695. However, it is not possible to indicate the exact moment when he took over the parish in Grodzisk. Based on the files preserved in the Archdiocesan Archives in Przemyśl, it is only possible to determine the approximate moment (around 1690) when the term "curatus, parochialis Grodzisiensis" appeared among the functions that Przedbor performed.³⁸

In view of the above findings, it should be stated that the painting of *Christ on the Cross* was donated to the parish church of St. Saint Mateusz in Mielec after 1690, whereas the *terminus ante quem* is determined by the date of Przedbor's resignation from the provostry (1695). It can even be assumed that the foundation took place before March 1695, before the provostship was established in Żołyńnia.

The painting was restored and preserved on at least four occasions, for the first time during the time of parish priest Józef Knutelski in 1868–1872. According to the list of items bought to furnish the church, which was prepared during the dean's visit by Fr. Ludwik Ruczka, thanks to the efforts of the parishioners, the work was renovated and reconstructed at the cost in the amount of 105 złoty.³⁹ As later con-

35 A. Mańkowski, *Pralaci*, p. 163; Diocesan Archive in Pelplin [Archiwum Diecezjalne w Pelplinie] (hereinafter: ADP), Co11, Consist. 1633–1694, f. 122.

36 ADP, A46, Acta Capituli Culmensis, vol. I (1601–1644); ADP, A65, Acta Capituli Culmensis, vol. II (1661–1690).

37 ADP, A70, Catalogus canonicorum cathedralium Culmensis, 1601–1927.

38 Preserved in the records of the Leżajsk deanery inspections of 1722 contain an entry on the visitation of the church of Holy Ghost in Sokolów of November 24, 1691, conducted by K. Przedbor. The full inscription reads: "Constantinus a Koniecpole Przedbor Ecclesiae Cathedralis Premisliensis Custos Culmensis Camenecensis Canonicus Praepositus Mielecensis Prezbiter Żołyńensis Grodzisiensis". AAP, S.158, Wizytacje biskupie [Bishopric inspections]. Wizytacja dekanatu [Deanery inspection] Mościska–Leżajsk, 1722, p. 1961.

39 ADT, LM x, Akta lokalne, Parafia Mielec św. Mateusza (Local records, Saint Matthew's Parish of Mielec), 1851–1900, "Spis rzeczy sprawionych do kościoła mieleckiego i podjętych reparacyj częścią przez parafian, częścią przez proboszcza od r. 1868" ("A list of items bought for the

servation works have revealed, the painting was then thoroughly repainted and supplemented with new details – including Christ’s left ear. It was also at that time when a crown of thorns made of silver sheet, repousséd and gilded, was placed on his head⁴⁰. It is visible in the oldest preserved photographs taken by Wiktor Jaderny in the years 1928–1935 (see: **Fig. 3, 4**).

Further conservation works were carried out in the 1950s. The condition of the painting was described as poor at that time. The work was planned for 1952, but due to the costs and the desire to renovate the side altar of the Virgin Mary at the same time, the then parish priest, Fr. Michał Nawalny did not undertake to implement them.⁴¹ The painting was ultimately subjected to conservation in the years 1955–1956. Thanks to the efforts of Fr. Władysław Smoleń, the painting was transported to the Conservation Workshop at the Diocesan Museum in Tarnów, where conservation work was performed by Kacper Pochwalski.⁴² He removed the overpainting but left the details (such as Christ’s left ear), made a duplicate on a new canvas, and puttied and inpainted the defects in the layer of paint. It was then that the metal crown of thorns was removed as well.⁴³ Further minor retouching was undertaken around 1988 by Zbigniew Górowski on the occasion of works conducted on the structure of the altar.⁴⁴ Most likely, it was then that the crown of thorns, which is not visible in the photos from Pochwalski’s conservation works, had been painted.

The most recent and last conservation work was carried out in 2020 in the studio of Agnieszka and Paweł Dziurawiec in Tarnów (see: **Fig. 5–6**). Work was conducted to strengthen the structure of the image and aesthetic treatments were carried out. The frame was reinforced and the original painting was exposed, by removing the overpainting and retouching additions from previous conservation works (ear, crown of thorns). However, no detailed technological research has been performed.⁴⁵

The artwork was painted in oil on linen canvas. The composition has the shape of a vertical rectangle with dimensions of 373 × 217 cm, closed at the top with an arch. A fragment of the inscription “...restored by the efforts of...” has been preserved at the lower edge of the painting. Almost the entire field of the painting is filled by the cross, the base of which takes the form of a tree trunk with numerous knots and cracked bark, with the body of Christ nailed thereto. The cross is crowned with a nailed titulus in the form of a rectangular, horizontal tablet, with an inscription known from the Gospel of Saint John: “Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews”, in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. The vertical beam of the cross is firmly embedded in the rocks of Golgotha. Behind the crucifix, at the edges of the canvas, there are two rocky ledges, both

Mielec church and reparations undertaken, partly by the parishioners, and partly by the parish priest, since 1868”), without page numbers. This information was already noted by J. Białobok, however, he did not quote specific dates for the Mielec church. J. Białobok, *Kościół katolicki na ziemi mieleckiej w XIX i XX stuleciu*, [in:] *Mielec*, vol. 3, p. 204.

40 A. Dziurawiec, *Dokumentacja*.

41 ADT, LM X, Akta lokalne, Parafia Mielec św. Mateusza (Local records, Saint Matthew’s Parish of Mielec), 1941–1946; 1947–1985, Sprawy gospodarcze, List Prezydium Wojewódzkiej Rady Narodowej z 1951 r. (Economic issues, Letter of the Board of the Regional People’s Council of 1951).

42 Ibidem.

43 K. Pochwalski, *Dokumentacja konserwatorska*, Tarnów 1959, typescript.

44 J. Wróblewski, *Kościół*, p. 7; A. Dziurawiec, *Dokumentacja*.

45 A. Dziurawiec, *Dokumentacja*.



5. *Crucifixion*, church of Saint Matthew in Mielec, state before conservation works in 2020. Photo by Paweł Dziurawiec

are girded with a tightly folded, purple loincloth, and a large fold of material flows to the right of the cross.

The entire scene is illuminated by strong, warm light falling from the upper left side of the picture. The light forcefully brings out the shadows, which are visible primarily on the figure of Christ, emphasizing his bodily structure. The muscles are highlighted with dark spots, in some parts reinforced with a thick, dark contour. Bright spots, in illuminated places, applied with a thicker layer of paint, stand out clearly from the shadows, and the three-dimensional effect is conjured by halftones of both colours, and also with clearly marked boundaries. The colour scheme is kept in cool tones. Against the background of the dark sky, the warm brown of the beams of the cross and the well-lit, pale body stand out clearly. The picture is painted smoothly, with a thinner layer of paint in the shadow parts. The illuminated places are highlighted with *impastos*, which allow for the traces

overgrown with vegetation. On the left-hand side, an outline of a withered bush is visible. Stretching in the background, at a third of the height of the painting, we see a mountainous landscape. The remaining part of the canvas is filled with a dark, uniform background. At the base of the cross, on the right side, there is a skull, and on the left, there is a stone tablet leaning against a rock with the Jastrzębiec coat of arms, with a hat above the coat of arms. At the edges of the tablet, symmetrically on both sides of the emblem, the aforementioned founder's sigil was placed, reading: CP-CP-CC-PM-ZG.

Suspended on the cross is the dead body of Christ, shown frontally, with a pale, cadaverous shade, nailed to a tree with three nails. The painter used sharp chiaroscuro to highlight the ribs and muscles of the arms and legs hanging down diagonally, which appear to remain very tense still. Only the head, surrounded by the glow of the nimbus, falls limply on Christ's right shoulder. His face is covered with short dark stubble, with blue lips discernible underneath it. Long brown hair falls down Christ's back. His eyelids are half closed. Thinly outlined, red streams of blood are flowing from the pierced side and from the nail wounds. Christ's hips

of the brush to be seen in the highest light. The artist marked the shadows with a thinner layer, and the lighter parts with a thicker layer of paint. The most illuminated elements and details – the bends of the loincloth folds, the protruding finger bones, or the bark of the unfinished beam of the cross – are marked with light *impastos*. The outline of a skull in the lower right corner of the painting is rendered fully in the *impasto* style, freely painted with light paint.

Dolabella's authorship must be firmly rejected due to the time of the painting's foundation. Nevertheless, to reconsider the issue of authorship – due to the lack of advanced research on paintings created in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (especially in centres such as Kraków or Przemyśl) at the turn of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries – will remain a matter of future research.

Iconography of the painting "Christ on the cross" in the church of Saint Saint Matthew in Mielec largely relies on engravings. The entire composition is based on a solution by Annibale Carracci (1560–1609). He painted the "Crucifixion" scene in 1594 on a small linen canvas measuring 32 × 22 cm (see: **Fig. 7**). Posner supposes that this could have been a preparatory study for a larger composition.⁴⁶ The painting was commissioned by Benedetto Giustiniani or purchased by him from previous owners around 1600–1611. After Benedetto's death, it remained the property of his brother Vincenzo Giustiniani, forming part of the Giustiniani Gallery.⁴⁷ Carracci's composition was repeated as a copperplate engraving by Cornelis Bloemaert (II) (see: **Fig. 8**) and published one year before 1638.⁴⁸



6. *Crucifixion*, church of Saint Matthew in Mielec, state after conservation works in 2020. Photo by Paweł Dziurawiec

46 At present it is a part of the Staatliches Museum collection in Berlin. See: D. Posner, *Annibale Carracci: A Study in the Reform of Italian Painting Around 1590*, vol. 2, London 1971, p. 81. Earlier literature provided therein.

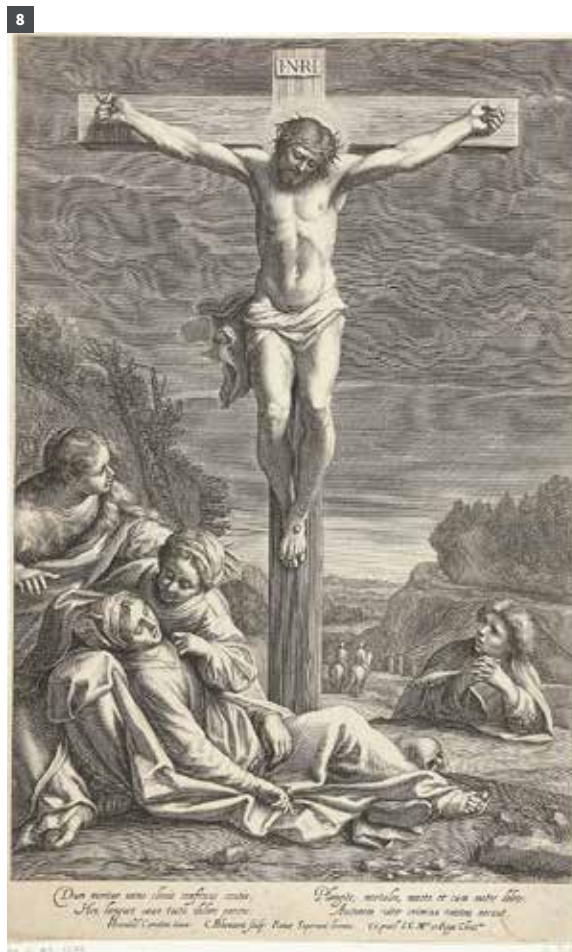
47 C. Robertson, *Rome 1600: The City and the Visual Arts Under Clement VIII*, New Haven–London 2015, pp. 139–140.

48 M.G. Matarazzo, *Cornelis Bloemaert's workshop in Rome*, "Print Quarterly", 34, 2017, no. 2, p. 143.



7. *Crucifixion*, Annibale Carracci, 1595, Berlin, Staatliche Museum, according to https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Annibale_Carracci_Crucifixione_Berlino.jpg#/media/File:Annibale_Carracci_Crucifixione_Berlino.jpg/2 (as of 27 August 2024)

8. *Crucifixion*, engraved by Cornelis Bloemaert, after: Annibale Carracci, before 1638, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, RP – P-BI-1279



When comparing Carracci's composition and Bloemaert's engraving, we notice that the Dutchman's graphic work is a mirror image of the original. In turn, the painting from Mielec retains the arrangement known from Carracci's painting, faithfully repeating the appearance of the rocks on both sides of the cross and, above all, the arrangement of Christ's dead body. The details, the muscle structure, the distribution of light and shadow, as well as the arrangement of the loincloth folds are identical. This allows us to assume that in the case of the painting from Mielec, the painter used a mirror image of Bloemaert's engraving, thus returning to Carracci's *inventio*. At the same time, he introduced some modifications – or corrections,⁴⁹ such as arranging the mountainous landscape on the horizon differently, changing the form of the titulus from a banderole to a rectangular tablet, and giving up the crown of thorns placed on Christ's head. Other significant details include the introduction of a rough trunk as the base of the cross and the addition of a skull, which appears in Bloemaert's engraving (although it takes a different form than the one in the painting in Mielec).

Perhaps the most important change made by the author of the Mielec painting is the reduction⁵⁰, namely abandoning the representation of figures under and around the cross. Removing the figures of women supporting the fainting

49 I use the term "correction" after: Z. Michalczyk, *W lustrzanym odbiciu. Grafika europejska a malarstwo w Rzeczypospolitej w czasach nowożytnych ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem późnego baroku*, Warszawa 2016, p. 150.

50 *Ibidem*, p. 147.

Virgin Mary, seen grieving opposite Saint John, as well as the soldiers and the Pharisees significantly changed the iconographic formula of the work. The depiction of the scene with the crucified Christ in the type of a stand-alone crucifix – which the Mielec painting is – has its origins in a drawing by Michelangelo made for Vittoria Colonna.⁵¹ The fully-fledged type of this representation developed in the second half of the sixteenth century.⁵² In the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, perhaps the earliest and most significant example of the use of this iconographic formula is the painting in the main altar of the Kraków Cathedral.⁵³ Undoubtedly, the latter image influenced subsequent representations in the same iconographic type, which were created in the second half of the seventeenth century and at the beginning of the eighteenth century in the Archdiocese of Kraków. However, apart from the general concept, we do not know whether it was the Kraków painting that became a direct inspiration for the author of the Mielec painting. The work in question lacks such important iconographic elements as the Moon and the Sun. Also, Jesus was also presented in the *Christo morto* type.

It is possible that Przedbor modelled his choice of theme and his compositional and iconographic solutions not so much on the items from the Kraków cathedral, but rather on the activities of Fr. Andrzej Podolski regarding the equipment of the parish church in Łańcut. At the time when Przedbor took over the provostship in Mielec, Podolski was simultaneously active in the Łańcut church, which he endowed with new artistic foundations. Among other things, he commissioned the main altar with the *Crucifixion* painting by Tylman van Gameren, who was then working for the Lubomirski family, the owners of the city. Ultimately, the painting depicted the crucifixion as a historical scene. However, the preserved design of the altar from around 1690 shows a preliminary outline of the composition with a stand-alone crucifix, which was to be placed in the main field.⁵⁴ It is possible that the desire to compete with Podolski influenced the ultimate version of the theme in the painting funded by Konstanty Przedbor. Of course, these are only hypotheses that cannot be confirmed at the current stage of research, but they are significant nevertheless – because in the future they may draw attention to the artistic circle in which the author of the painting from Mielec should be sought.

51 *Firenze e la Toscana dei Medici nell'Europa del Cinquecento. Il primato del disegno* [exhibition catalogue], Firenze 1980, p. 268.

52 G. Schiller, *Ikonographie der christlichen Kunst*, Bd. II, Gütersloh 1968, pp. 244–245.

53 The question of the endowment of the altar, and the iconography of the painting was discussed by K. Czyżewski. See: K. Czyżewski, *Biskupa Piotra Gembickiego dary i fundacje artystyczne dla Katedry krakowskiej*, [in:] *Katedra krakowska w czasach nowożytnych (xvi–xvii w.)*, D. Nowacki (ed.), Kraków 1999, pp. 57–66.

54 J.T. Frazik, *Wielki ołtarz kościoła parafialnego w Łańcutie – zaginione dzieło Tylmana z Gameren*, “Biuletyn Historii Sztuki”, 33, 1971, pp. 90–91; P. Wątroba, *Rysunki architektoniczne i dekoracyjne. Tylman van Gameren*, vol. 1, Warszawa 2019, pp. 239–240; H. Borcz, *Z dziejów*, p. 58.

Abstract

Several remarks about the painting of Christ on the Cross in the church of Saint Matthew in Mielec

The painting *Christ on the Cross* in the main altar of the church of Saint Matthew in Mielec has not been the subject of broader art-historical reflection to date. There have been a few isolated mentions of the work, regarding its attribution and dating. The authorship of the work was attributed to Thomas Dolabella or one of his pupils, which was equated to dating it to the first half of the seventeenth century. The identification of the person of the founder, who was Konstanty Przedbor from Koniecpol, the establishment of the chronology of the benefactions received by him and the analysis of the formal features of the painting made it possible to exclude earlier attributions and to specify the time of the painting's creation to the years around 1690–1695. The article also analyses the iconography of the painting and the way in which the original – a painting by Annibal Carracci from 1594, engraved by Cornelis Bloemaert before 1638 – had been processed.

KEYWORDS:

Mielec, *Christ on the Cross*, seventeenth century, painting, Cornelis Bloemaert, graphic models

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