

The noble coat of arms on a female portrait of the 17th – early 20th centuries in the collection of the Lviv Historical Museum

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Abstract – *The coat of arms on a noble portrait serves as an important tool for the identification of people on the portraits. Taking into account this circumstance in future will allow to give more accurate information about the persons depicted on portraits in the collection of the Lviv Historical Museum, most of which are not yet identified or the identification is mistaken or hypothetical.*

Keywords – coat of arms, noble portrait, nobility, Lviv Historical Museum.

I. Introduction

The noble portraits take a significant part in the collection of the art fund of the Lviv Historical Museum. The chronological boundaries of the portraits painting are the 16th-20th centuries, and the authors are mostly artists who lived and worked in Eastern Galicia, in particular in Lviv, as well as artists from some European countries [1, p. 3]. However, the authorship of most works remains unknown.

II. The noble coat of arms on a female portrait

Lviv Historical Museum has a tremendous collection of portrait paintings. In total, the collection contains 43 portraits with the image of coat of arms. 37 of portraits picture gentry men, 6 of them are portraits of women, and 8 are the portraits of Lviv burghers-patricians. In complex these all are the works of the 17th and the early 20th centuries. Thus, on the basis of the materials of the Lviv Historical Museum it is possible to study the features of gentry heraldry and herbaceous creation. The subject of this study is the coat of arms of a woman's portrait, since the content and semantic load that it could transmit was often somewhat different from those motifs that were present in the iconography of the coat of arms on portraits of male noblemen. While the coat of arms on a man's portrait unambiguously indicated the belonging of the gentry to the genus of his father, then the coat of arms on the portrait of the noblewoman could reflect the belonging to the family of not only the father but also the husband, or even that could be a combination of both coats of arms. This article is intended to clarify these and the other features of the coat of arms on a female portrait.

The analyzed complex of material allows making some important conclusions. The coat of arms on a noble portrait serves as an important tool for the identification

of people on the portraits. Taking into account this circumstance in future will allow to give more accurate information about the persons depicted on portraits in the collection of the Lviv Historical Museum, most of which are not yet identified or the identification is mistaken or hypothetical. Returning to the female portrait, it is worth noting the following features: the artists, as a rule, placed the coat of arms on the right or left upper part of the portrait. Mostly, the armorial shield does not have clearly shape and it is stylized with plant or some other ornament, which is an expression of Baroque art. In general, baroque features early appeared in a gentry's portrait that shows a desire to emphasize the spectacular showiness, paradise, heroization of the person [2, p. 161].



Fig. 1. The noble coat of arms "Mnishek" on portrait of Ursula Vishnevecka



Fig. 2. The noble coat of arms "Yelita" on portrait of Anna Vishnevecka



Fig. 3. The coat of arms on portrait of Kateryna Venino



Fig. 4. The noble coat of arms "Sreniava" on portrait of an unknown woman

The image of the coat of arms on a woman's portrait as nothing else characterizes the change of its functional purpose in comparison with the Middle Ages, where the arm of coats was an attribute of military affairs, the flag, which served for gentry of a particular territorial or tribal community [3, p. 33]. In the Early Modern Age and later, the coat of arms was as a symbol of the person's belonging, regardless the gender, was he a priest or a warrior, to a particular family community. Through the coat of arms the greatness, the authority and the achievements of previous generations of the family became the hereditary social capital of their descendants. It is not a coincidence that the portraits of women depicted the coat of arms of the parents, and not the husband.

On the two out of six portraits, the coat of arms is completed with sets of initial letters. This phenomenon is quite common in the iconography of the gentry' emblem and gives it very individual features. The use of initial letters has a double meaning. First, they identified directly the person who was portrayed. Secondly, the initial letters outlined not only the name and surname of the person on the portrait, but also his/her social status. The second couple of letters, as a rule, symbolizes the position occupied by a depicted person. If we talk about a woman's portrait, as in the case of Kateryna Venino, it demonstrates

the social position of her husband, which automatically determines the personal status of a woman in a society.

References

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