**Rocznik Filozoficzny Ignatianum**
**The Ignatianum Philosophical Yearbook**
Vol. 31, No. 4 (2025), s. 345–364
PL ISSN 2300–1402
DOI: 10.35765/rfi.2025.3104.18

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# Encounters in the Habsburg Lands: Eighteenth-Century Polish Travel Accounts of Hungary by Ignacy Zawisza (1715) and Józef Aleksander Jabłonowski (1762)

## Kontakty i doświadczenia w krajach habsburskich. Osiemnastowieczne polskie relacje z podróży po Królestwie Węgier Ignacego Zawiszy (1715) i Józefa Aleksandra Jabłonowskiego (1762)

## Abstract

This article examines two eighteenth-century Polish travel accounts describing journeys through the Habsburg-ruled Kingdom of Hungary: the military account by Ignacy Zawisza from 1715 and the unpublished manuscript by Józef Aleksander Jabłonowski from 1762. The aim of the article is to highlight how Polish travellers perceived space, society, and history in the region, depending on the context of their journey as well as their social position and intellectual ambitions. The primary sources are two travel narratives – Zawisza's printed and concise account, based on his military campaign experience, and Jabłonowski's much more extensive

manuscript, combining topographical observations with historical, genealogical, and heraldic reflections. The article also draws on relevant scholarship on eighteenth-century travel culture, Polish-Hungarian relations, and the representation of early modern elites. Both narratives are analysed comparatively, using a cultural perspective that makes it possible to reveal the cognitive, representational, and identity-building functions of travel writing in eighteenth-century noble culture. Special attention is paid to narrative construction and to the tension between factual description and the symbolic dimension of the travel accounts. The article argues that travel through Hungary served not only practical and cognitive purposes for the Polish nobility, but also played a role in self-representation and the shaping of identity. While Zawisza's account aimed to document participation in a Habsburg-led military campaign, Jabłonowski's manuscript was a conscious attempt at self-fashioning and presenting himself as a member of European intellectual networks. The article thus demonstrates how travel could serve as a medium for asserting status and participating in the transnational culture of early modern Europe.

**Keywords:** noble travel, travel accounts, eighteenth century, Kingdom of Hungary, Ignacy Zawisza, Józef Aleksander Jabłonowski.

## Abstrakt

Artykuł analizuje dwa osiemnastowieczne polskie opisy podróży przez terytorium Królestwa Węgier znajdującego się pod panowaniem Habsburgów: wojskową relację Ignacego Zawiszy z 1715 roku oraz rękopiśmienną relację Józefa Aleksandra Jabłonowskiego z 1762 roku. Celem artykułu jest ukazanie różnic w postrzeganiu przestrzeni, społeczeństwa i historii regionu przez polskich podróżników w zależności od kontekstu wyprawy oraz pozycji społecznej i intelektualnych ambicji autora. Podstawę źródłową stanowią dwie relacje podróżne – drukowana, zwięzła relacja Zawiszy, oparta na doświadczeniu kampanii wojennej, oraz znacznie obszerniejszy rękopis Jabłonowskiego, łączący obserwacje krajoznawcze z refleksjami historycznymi, genealogicznymi i heraldycznymi. Artykuł opiera się także na literaturze dotyczącej kultury podróży w XVIII wieku, polsko-węgierskich kontaktów oraz nowożytnej reprezentacji elit. Obie relacje zostały poddane analizie porównawczej z uwzględnieniem perspektywy kulturowej, co pozwoliło uchwycić ich funkcje poznawcze, reprezentacyjne i tożsamościowe w kontekście osiemnastowiecznej kultury szlacheckiej. Szczególną uwagę poświęcono sposobowi konstruowania przekazu oraz napięciu między opisem faktograficznym a symbolicznym wymiarem relacji podróżnych. Główną tezą artykułu jest stwierdzenie, że podróże przez Węgry pełniły dla polskich elit nie tylko funkcję praktyczną czy poznawczą, ale także reprezentacyjną i tożsamościową. Podczas gdy relacja Zawiszy służyła dokumentacji udziału w kampanii wojennej u boku

Habsburgów, zapis podróży Jabłonowskiego stanowił świadomą próbę autokreacji i prezentacji jako członka europejskich sieci intelektualnych. Artykuł pokazuje tym samym, jak podróże mogły służyć budowaniu pozycji jednostki w transnarodowej kulturze nowożytnej Europy.

**Słowa klucze:** podróże szlacheckie, relacje z podróży, XVIII wiek, Królestwo Węgier, Ignacy Zawisza, Józef Aleksander Jabłonowski.

Polish–Hungarian relations in the eighteenth century were multifaceted, encompassing political, economic, and social dimensions. Despite unfavourable political conditions and shifting geopolitical realities, their intensity and frequency remained relatively stable throughout the century.[1] Following the disastrous Battle of Mohács in 1526, part of the Medieval Kingdom of Hungary came under Habsburg rule, and in the eighteenth century the territory was further expanded at the expense of the weakening Ottoman Empire. While the Hungarian nobility retained a degree of formal political autonomy and certain representative institutions, real power resided with the Viennese court. The relationship between the Hungarian elites and the Habsburgs was inherently ambivalent: on the one hand, tensions arose from restrictions on religious and national freedoms, especially after the suppression of the uprising led by Francis II Rákóczi (1703–1711); on the other, segments of the magnate class benefitted from their loyalty to the emperor, securing high positions in the administration, the military, and at court. The Hungarian lands, particularly those bordering the Ottoman Empire, also became heavily militarised and served as arenas of complex ethnic interactions involving Slovaks, Ruthenians, Germans, and Serbs.[2]

Meanwhile, from 1697 to 1763, the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth remained in a personal union with Saxony, which oriented its political interests increasingly toward Western Europe. The ties resulting from this union with the Wettin dynasty coincided with the efforts of French diplomacy, which throughout the eighteenth century sought to

1 This article was written as part of research conducted within the project funded by the National Science Centre, Poland (NCN), no. UMO 2025/57/B/HS3/00052, titled *Autokreacja magnata: Józef Aleksander Jabłonowski (1711–1777) i kultura reprezentacji w osiemnastowiecznej Rzeczypospolitej*.
Józef Andrzej Gierowski, *The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the XVIIIth Century. From Anarchy to Well-organised State* (Kraków: Nakładem PAU, 1996), 94.

2 Wacław Felczak, *Historia Węgier* (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1996), 164–167; László Kontler, *A History of Hungary* (Budapest: Atlantisz Publishing House, 2016), 191–232.

construct a network of political counterbalances to Russian and Habsburg dominance in Eastern Europe – primarily by promoting cooperation among Sweden, the Commonwealth, and the Ottoman Empire. In the second half of the century, the geopolitical situation of the Polish–Lithuanian state deteriorated further. Russia, Austria, and Prussia—the three neighbouring powers – began to interfere more aggressively in its internal affairs, using diplomatic pressure, military coercion, and the mechanism of the free royal election to advance their own interests. This trend intensified in particular during the reign of the last king, Stanisław August Poniatowski, whose election in 1764 was directly supported by Empress Catherine II and the Russian army. As a result, the Commonwealth increasingly came under the control of external powers, which severely constrained its ability to pursue an independent foreign policy and deepened its dependence on its neighbours.[3]

Closer ties between Poland and Hungary emerged on two notable occasions in the eighteenth century. The first occurred during the anti-Habsburg uprising led by Francis II Rákóczi, which was met with a degree of sympathy among certain members of the Polish elite, including the influential Elżbieta Sieniawska, the wife of Kraków castellan.[4] The second instance took place during the Bar Confederation (1768–1772), when the leaders of the movement sought refuge in the former territories of the Kingdom of Hungary while fleeing Russian military domination.[5] Although Hungary was rarely a primary destination for the Polish nobility, its geographical location and political status within the Habsburg Empire made it a point of interest for travellers from the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth. The divergent geopolitical orientations of the two countries – Hungary aligned with Vienna, and the Commonwealth with Saxony or France – did not preclude occasional, spontaneous encounters. This also applied to noblemen undertaking educational journeys (*Grand Tours*) or travelling for other purposes, such as seeking employment, cultivating social or political connections, or simply exploring new regions. On their way south, they would sometimes pass through Hungarian lands, where encounters of various kinds could take place.[6]

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3 Richard Butterwick, *The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, 1733–1795. Light and Flame* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020).

4 Bożena Popiołek, *Królowa bez korony. Studium z życia i działalności Elżbiety z Lubomirskich Sieniawskiej ok. 1669–1729* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Naukowe WSP, 1996), 43–55.

5 Władysław Konopczyński, *Konfederacja barska,* vol. 1 (Volumen: Warszawa, 1991), 293.

6 Adam Kucharski, *Theatrum peregrinandi. Poznawcze aspekty staropolskich podróży w epoce późnego baroku* (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UMK, 2013), 281–282. The

This article examines two travel accounts written by Ignacy Zawisza (1696–1738), Lithuanian sword-bearer, and Józef Aleksander Jabłonowski (1711–1777), Voivode of Nowogródek, who visited Hungary at different points in the eighteenth century, for different reasons and within different contexts. These records, belonging to the genre of ego-documents, provide valuable material for the study of individual travel experiences, but also for understanding how the Kingdom of Hungary was perceived as a cultural, political, and symbolic space.[7] A comparative analysis of these testimonies offers insight into both the personal impressions of the two authors and the broader mechanisms involved in shaping Polish noble imaginaries of this region of Europe.[8]

The accounts differ in many respects, beginning with the time of their composition: Zawisza's text recounts impressions from 1715, whereas Jabłonowski's description refers to a journey made in 1762. The social profiles of the authors were equally distinct. Zawisza, although a member of a senatorial Lithuanian family, faced circumstances that required him to carve out his own career path. Jabłonowski, in contrast, belonged to the high nobility. His family had recently ascended into the ranks of the magnates through wealth and office, and his considerable financial resources enabled him to undertake a Grand Tour and other journeys across Western Europe.[9] Accordingly, the two narratives reflect different types of travel: Zawisza moved with a military unit to which he was attached, whereas for Jabłonowski – a renowned writer, compiler, and erudite – travel formed a key element of his lifestyle. What unites both texts, however, is their retrospective character: each was composed as part of a conscious effort to record and organise personal recollections, most likely for the purpose of preserving them within a family archive.[10]

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author highlights that among the various forms of Polish-Hungarian interaction, commercial exchange may have played the most significant role.

7 Stanisław Roszak, "Ego-Documents – Some Remarks about Polish and European Historiographical and Methodological Experience," *Biuletyn Polskiej Misji Historycznej / Bulletin der Polnischen Historischen Mission* 8 (2013): 27–42.

8 Filip Wolański, *Europa jako punkt odniesienia dla postrzegania przestrzeni geograficznej przez szlachtę polską osiemnastego wieku w świetle relacji podróżniczych i geograficznych* (Wrocław: Instytut Historyczny UW, Wrocławskie Towarzystwo Miłośników Historii, 2002).

9 Teresa Zielińska, *Magnateria polska epoki saskiej* (Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1977), 160–162.

10 This practice reflected broader eighteenth-century manuscript culture, in which noble families frequently compiled autobiographical accounts, genealogies, and travel recollections for preservation in private archives, thus contributing to the construction of dynastic memory and identity: Stanisław Roszak, *Archiwa sarmackiej pamięci. Funkcje*

While Jabłonowski's intellectual pursuits were marked by methodical consistency, Zawisza's recollections of childhood and youth appear more fragmentary and episodic; his narrative breaks off around the year 1715 and 1716. Despite the differences in chronology, social background, and personal circumstance, these two accounts offer a valuable comparative perspective on how individual travel experiences intersected with broader frameworks of representation and perception of foreign space – in this case, the former Kingdom of Hungary – in the Polish noble culture of the eighteenth century.

## The Kingdom of Hungary in the account of Ignacy Zawisza

Ignacy Zawisza (1696–1738), son of Krzysztof Zawisza, Voivode of Mińsk, came from a noble family closely affiliated with the Saxon court. He received a solid education in Königsberg and at the Jesuit college in Braunsberg, and he gained his first political experience alongside his father, notably during the 1712 session of the Polish–Lithuanian Diet. His family's support for Augustus II paved the way for a military career within the orbit of the Elector-King's court in Dresden.[11] In 1715, Zawisza was sent to Dresden, where he began military service at the court of Augustus II. For young nobles from the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth aligned with the Saxon faction, this was a typical career path – the Elector's court offered opportunities to acquire both military experience and valuable political and social connections. After a brief stay in Karlsbad and Cieplice, where he accompanied the king during a therapeutic stay, Zawisza was admitted to the Corps of Cadets. This institution, established to train a joint Polish-Saxon officer corps, was intended to prepare young nobles for military and administrative service.[12] His promotion to lieutenant in

*i znaczenie rękopiśmiennych ksiąg silva rerum w kulturze Rzeczypospolitej XVIII wieku* (Toruń: Wydawnictwo UMK, 2004).

11 Katarzyna Kuras, "A 'Polish' Courtier in the Service of the House of Wettin (1697–1763)," in *Courtiers and Court Life in Poland, 1386–1795*, vol. 5, ed. Bożena Czwojdrak (Turnhout: Brepols, 2024), 229–254.

12 Jacek Staszewski, *Polacy w osiemnastowiecznym Dreźnie* (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1986), 140.

the Foot Guard Regiment opened the way to further advancement in the military hierarchy.[13]

Shortly thereafter, in 1716, Zawisza's unit – part of the Saxon contingent supporting imperial operations – was placed under Habsburg command and dispatched southward, to the territory of the former Upper Hungary.[14] The objective of the campaign was not to occupy Hungarian lands, which served merely as a transit zone, but rather to reach the border with the Ottoman Empire and launch a counteroffensive into Serbian territory.[15] The march led through Moravia, which Zawisza described in notably positive terms in his memoirs, praising both the region's prosperity and the friendliness of its inhabitants toward imperial troops. However, it soon became evident that the journey ahead would be far less comfortable. Near Košice, the troops were issued only bread, and other provisions were in short supply. The unit then crossed the "great Hungarian mountains,"[16] reaching Nejhelem (Nyékládháza) after three days of marching – a town seized by the emperor during the campaigns against Rákóczi. With each passing mile, the terrain became more challenging and living conditions deteriorated. The tone of Zawisza's account conveys a growing sense of tension and anticipation.[17]

The next stop on the march was Komárno, an important fortress situated on the Danube – at the time within the borders of the Kingdom of Hungary (now Slovakia) – which served as a strategic defensive point along the Habsburg monarchy's southwestern frontier. The troops paused there for two days to rest, preparing for the continuation of the march and the crossing of the river. As a fortified transportation hub, Komárno played a significant logistical role in the campaign: it enabled the replenishment of supplies and the reorganisation of forces before entering more vulnerable border regions. The crossing of the Danube near Esztergom (historically known as Gran) proved dramatic. The strong current tore apart the rafts, creating a serious threat to the soldiers' safety: "For on such a wide river a great surge arose, tearing the raft apart, and the men were unable to hold it together until we began firing to signal for help."[18]

13 "Notacyja Ignacego Zawiszy, miecznika Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego (1712–1715)," in *Pamiętniki Krzysztofa Zawiszy, wojewody mińskiego (1666–1721)*, ed. Julian Bartoszewicz (Warszawa: Nakładem Jana Zawiszy, 1862), 371–372.

14 Zawisza gives the year 1715, but in fact the events took place in 1716.

15 Kontler, *A History of Hungary,* 207.

16 "Notacyja Ignacego Zawiszy," 374 ['Wielkie góry węgierskie'].

17 *Ibidem*.

18 *Ibidem* ['Albowiem na tak szerokiej rzece szturm wielki powstał iż płyt cale się rozerwał, którego utrzymać ludzie nie mogli, aż poczęliśmy strzelać dla ratunku'].

The troops were saved by swift intervention from the riverbank and ropes thrown by local inhabitants. As a result, they reached Buda on 15 June, where Habsburg forces were regrouping. The three-day halt there was used to resupply provisions.[19]

Zawisza's account of the subsequent stages of the campaign is brief and somewhat unclear. He notes that on 18 June, the troops – having previously resupplied – left Buda and arrived in a place he refers to as "Grec." Determining the exact route is difficult, but it is likely that Zawisza was referring to Grebenec, a fortified site on the Military Frontier between the Habsburg Monarchy and the Ottoman Empire, where the first skirmishes with enemy units occurred. The allied forces appear to have reached the area rapidly, probably following the course of the Danube from Buda. This movement, seemingly self-evident to Zawisza, was not even mentioned in passing, suggesting he considered it routine. After marching two miles, the troops took positions in the small fortress of Grebenec. Following approximately three days of resistance against Ottoman forces, the unit received orders to retreat toward Titel and Futog, where the main body of the Habsburg army under Prince Eugene of Savoy was concentrating.[20] It was in this border zone between the Habsburg monarchy and the Ottoman Empire that the central phase of the campaign began. The primary Ottoman objective was the fortress of Petrovaradin, which they began to bombard while the imperial army was still in the process of assembling. In Zawisza's view, the Turks might have succeeded in capturing the stronghold had it not been for a last-minute relief force that reinforced the garrison. At that time, Zawisza himself was stationed in Titel and later took part in the defence of Futog. His account of the siege of the fortress – lasting approximately three and a half weeks—is somewhat more detailed. He emphasises the severe shortages of food: "Apart from the commissariat bread, we had nothing else."[21]

While Zawisza entirely omits the journey from Buda to Grebenec in his account, the siege of Petrovaradin—although he did not participate in its defence, being stationed at Futog – forms the central episode of his Hungarian experience. In his memoirs, he offers a brief justification for this shift in focus: "Yet for the curious human eye, it seemed fitting to me to describe this fortunate victory – how it was achieved and by what

19 *Ibidem*.

20 *Ibidem*, 375.

21 *Ibidem*, 376 ['Oprócz chleba komisarskiego, więcej nic nie mieliśmy'].

stratagem the battle was won."[22] He begins his narrative with a description of the town and its fortress, which—alongside Esztergom, Buda, and Vienna – formed a crucial bulwark of imperial defence. This, he explains, accounted for the Ottoman determination to seize Petrovaradin, bringing artillery from Belgrade and exploiting the ongoing concentration of imperial forces under the command of Prince Eugene of Savoy. In Zawisza's view, the fortress – besieged for three weeks – would have fallen had it not received reinforcements from three regiments sent from Futog (where he was stationed) on 13 July. These troops surprised the Ottoman forces and succeeded in entering the fortress, which, as he writes, "greatly strengthened [the defenders'] courage and resolve."[23] During the night, the allied forces constructed a bridge across the Danube "for communication and for the army to cross to the other side."[24] Under cover of darkness and in strict silence – smoking was forbidden – the troops of Prince Eugene crossed the river and launched a surprise attack on the Ottoman besiegers.[25]

Zawisza claims that the battle began on 20 July, whereas in fact it took place on 5 August 1716. In this context, it is worth noting several other significant discrepancies between his account and the historical record. The Ottoman forces began the siege of Petrovaradin only on 26 July – not three weeks earlier, as the author suggests, but merely nine days before the engagement. Moreover, the fortress was not on the verge of capitulation: its defence, commanded by the engineer Baron von Löffelholz, was well-organized. Zawisza's narrative thus includes clear elements of dramatization, most likely resulting from a retrospective reconstruction of events based on hearsay and personal conjecture.[26] He probably reconstructed the course of the battle from eyewitness reports, which drew attention to factors such as the natural constraints of the terrain – steep

22 *Ibidem* ['Jednak dla ciekawego ludzkiego oka tej to szczęśliwej otrzymanej wiktoryi opisać mnie się zdało, jakim sposobem i jakim fortelem jest batalia wygrana'].

23 *Ibidem,* 377.

24 *Ibidem* ['Dla kommunikacyi i dla przejścia na tamtą stronę wojska'].

25 Zawisza also recalls that, 'in order to drown out the sound of horses' hooves, such intense cannon fire was unleashed from the fortress that the Turkish troops, entrenched in their attack positions and so close to the town, heard nothing—until the very moment they were assaulted in their redoubts.' ('aby tententu końskiego słyszeć nie było, bito haniebnie z armat z fortecy tak mocno, iż wojsko tureckie, które było w retranszamentach ataku i tak blizko miasta, nie słyszało, aż na ten czas, gdy ich w retranszamentach atakowano'). *Ibidem,* 377–378.

26 See: Adriano Di Papo, Gizella Nemeth, "La battaglia di Petrovaradino. 1716," *Nuova Antologia Militare* 4/15 (2023): 425–472.

hills and vineyards – and the role of key commanders, particularly the Hungarian field marshal János Pálffy, who led the cavalry.[27]

Zawisza was also intrigued by the fate of Count Breuner, who was taken prisoner by the Ottomans after unsuccessfully attempting to bribe one of his soldiers with "a whole sack of red gold coins" in exchange for a horse. [28] According to circulating rumours, Breuner met a tragic end – he was reportedly hacked to death by the Turks once they realised the battle was lost.[29] The author also offered a vivid account of the cowardice shown by the Spanish infantry at Petrovaradin: "the Spanish infantry regiments […] after firing a single volley, fell into confusion and began to panic, all throwing down their weapons and fleeing."[30] He included colourful anecdotal details as well, such as the presence of "the vizier's naked concubines – one a Turk, the other of Greek origin."[31] Zawisza attributed the Habsburg victory primarily to the poor preparation of the Ottoman forces. In his view, the Habsburg allies were themselves ill-prepared, but the situation of the Ottomans was even worse. Of decisive importance, he argued, was the defeat and subsequent retreat of the Ottoman cavalry, which sealed the outcome of the battle. He also ventured broader strategic reflections, noting that "chasing the enemy too far often brings about one's own ruin."[32]

Zawisza's account was likely written down years after the events it describes—a delay that would explain certain chronological inaccuracies, such as the mistaken battle date. However, it was probably based on earlier notes, which may account for the coherent sequence of events. The narrative's character – and thus the subjective lens through which the Kingdom of Hungary is depicted – was shaped by practical considerations. Zawisza undertook the journey as a soldier, focused on engaging in military action against the Turks. His account, therefore, is dominated by strategic concerns and anecdotal impressions, with the most detailed descriptions reserved for events he did not witness directly – above all, the battle of Petrovaradin. Hungary appears not as a clearly individualized cultural space, but rather as a military landscape marked

27 *Ibidem*, 459.

28 "Notacyja Ignacego Zawiszy," 379 ['worek cały czerwonych złotych pieniędzy'].

29 Di Papo, Nemeth, "La battaglia di Petrovaradino," 464.

30 "Notacyja Ignacego Zawiszy," 379 ['A hiszpańskie piesze regimenta (…) raz wydawszy ognia, tak się zmieszali i tak się trwożyć poczęli, że wszyscy broń rzuciwszy, uciekać poczęli'].

31 *Ibidem*, 380 ['Gołych nałożnic wezyra, jedna turkini, druga greckiej nacyi'].

32 *Ibidem*, 381 ['Te zapędzenie się za nieprzyjacielem, bywa często zgubą własną'].

by hardship, danger, and the tension of a civilizational clash. In this way, Zawisza constructs an image of Hungary reduced to its strategic and symbolic functions – as a frontier zone shaped by violence and uncertainty.

## Upper Hungary in the account of Józef Aleksander Jabłonowski (1762)

Ignacy Zawisza's journey through the lands of the Kingdom of Hungary was a military expedition, undertaken in the context of a specific campaign. His account, deeply embedded in the realities of the front and subordinated to the logic of troop movements, was not intended as a description of the country as such, but rather as a testimony to a youthful adventure in the service of Augustus II. The case of Józef Aleksander Jabłonowski, however, is entirely different. A Lithuanian magnate, erudite, and seasoned traveller, Jabłonowski visited Hungary almost half a century later, under very different circumstances and with entirely different aims.[33]

Jabłonowski's 1762 journey formed part of an extended tour of Europe that included Italy, Hungary, and France. The Kingdom of Hungary was not the principal destination of his travels; rather, it was a transitional stage on the route from southern Europe to Versailles, where Jabłonowski aimed to renew courtly contacts, make purchases, and engage in new acts of self-presentation.[34] Although Hungary occupied a marginal place in the geography of his travels, the very fact that this magnate left behind an account of passing through the region merits attention. Jabłonowski – a seasoned observer, acutely aware of his social standing and well versed in the world of European elites – rarely recorded banal or superfluous details in his writings.[35] In this sense, his remarks on Hungary, though sparse, form part of a broader pattern: they reveal how a traveller from the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth perceived the peripheral regions of the Habsburg monarchy – their landscape, society, and infrastructure. At

33 Janina Dobrzyniecka, "Jabłonowski Józef Aleksander," *Polski Słownik Biograficzny,* vol. X (Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, Wydawnictwo PAN, 1962–1964), 225–228; Andrzej Betlej, *Sibi, Deo, Posteritati. Jabłonowscy a sztuka w XVIII wieku* (Kraków: Societas Vistulana, 2010), 162–165.

34 Katarzyna Kuras, "La famille Jabłonowski à Versailles au XVIIIe siècle : impressions et inspirations," *Bulletin du Centre de recherche du château de Versailles* 23 (2023), http://journals.openedition.org/crcv/27019 (access: 24.06.2025).

35 Jarosław Kurkowski, "Józef Aleksander Jabłonowski a historiografia," in *Jabłonowscy: w kraju i poza jego granicami,* ed. Norbert Tomaszewski (Ciechanowiec: Muzeum Rolnictwa im. ks. Krzysztofa Kluka, 2015) 47–62.

the same time, his notes offer an opportunity to juxtapose two perspectives: Zawisza's military reconnaissance and the reflections of a cosmopolitan aristocrat who visited Hungary not by command but by choice. The following sections examine how Jabłonowski described his passages through Upper Hungary, what observations he made, and how he situated them within the broader horizon of his European experience.

The travel account written by Jabłonowski in 1762 was most likely part of a larger notebook compiled to organize and preserve his recollections. This assumption is supported by similar entries found among the papers he left from various journeys. These notes reveal a consistent effort to connect specific locations along the travel route – often accompanied by coordinates and distance measurements – with descriptions of prominent monuments, transcriptions of epitaphs, and information about noble families or notable individuals associated with a given place. In this last category, the notes typically include detailed genealogical and heraldic data relating to specific persons, as well as descriptions of monuments Jabłonowski had personally seen. This type of narrative structure – focused on genealogical detail and formulaic descriptions of places – reflected Jabłonowski's own intellectual interests: he was both a historian of noble lineages, who published genealogical studies, and a polymath engaged in the study of local and regional pasts.[36]

Jabłonowski's encounter with the former Kingdom of Hungary began after he crossed the southern borders of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, entering the region of Orava. Even before reaching these areas, near Żywiec, he noted several Hungarian references. The most significant point of interest for him was Orava Castle, particularly its complex and multi-layered architectural form. Jabłonowski identified four phases in the architectural development of the castle, with particular attention paid to the period associated with the Thurzo family and their dynastic necropolis located within the castle church. He meticulously transcribed a number of epitaphs, underscoring their value as documentary sources.[37] Jabłonowski was also interested in genealogical connections between Polish and Hungarian families, as well as in terminological matters – for instance, he included a marginal note explaining the office of the *Palatinus Hungariae*. His description of Orava Castle focused on its distant past and made no reference to more recent historical episodes, such as

36 Details concerning Jabłonowski's extensive body of work and its profile in: Dobrzyniecka, "Jabłonowski Józef Aleksander," 226–228.

37 Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich in Wrocław, rkps 9656 II, "Diariusz memorabilium podróży Aleksandra Jabłonowskiego. 1762" [hereafter referred to as: "Diariusz podróży"], 7–8.

its seizure by Rákóczi's forces during the 1703–1711 uprising. Another noteworthy point in Jabłonowski's Orava itinerary was the town of Kubin (which he referred to as Mokradz), which he valued primarily for its administrative function. He noted that Józef Abassy, a descendant of the princes of Transylvania, came here to preside over judicial proceedings – remarking that what Poles called *voivodeships*, Hungarians referred to as *counties*.[38] In Kubin, Jabłonowski mentioned a reclaimed church, a local physician, and a small palace that failed to attract his attention. More intriguing were his incidental geographical observations: he classified the Orava River as one of the "great rivers," and upon leaving Kubin for Rosenberg (modern Ružomberok), he took note of Mount Fatra in the distance.

Initially, the topographical descriptions of Upper Hungary served a rather supplementary function within a narrative primarily focused on people and genealogical connections. However, Jabłonowski's attitude shifted as he approached Rosenberg. The road leading there was described as "mountainous and stony," and the location itself as intriguing enough to merit a broader portrayal: "The castle called Lykava sits atop what they here call Thurza (…). The town lies on the river Váh, which also originates in the Tatras and flows into the Danube near Komárno (…), there is a depot for Hungarian salt there, as in our Wieliczka or Bochnia."[39] Such extensive attention to geographical matters may not have stemmed solely from growing interest, but rather from the relative lack of material typically drawing Jabłonowski's attention. In Rosenberg, he was disappointed by the destruction of old epitaphs, and the Piarist college was mentioned only in passing, with reference to the names of its founders.[40] Thus, nature remained – and particularly the mountains, which, when contrasted with the wooden architecture of the town, offered a fertile ground for reflection.

Jabłonowski began his account of the surrounding landscape with a personal experience – the Fatra Mountains struck him as so inaccessible and difficult to traverse by carriage that he opted for water transport, not only for himself but also for his entire entourage. This decision was based on prior experience: he had traveled through the region in 1759 and was well aware of the challenges involved in navigating mountainous

38 *Ibidem*, 9.

39 *Ibidem*, 10 ['Zamek zwany Łykawa na wyrchu jak tu zowią Thurza (…). Miasto te zaś leży nad Wagą rzeką, a Waga wypływa także od Tatrów i w Dunaj wpada pod Komorno (…), skład tam soli węgierskiej jak u nas w Wieliczce lub Bochni'].

40 *Ibidem*.

terrain in a multi-horse-drawn carriage.[41] By emphasizing these objective difficulties, he adopted the pose of a seasoned traveler who, by making deliberate choices, affirmed his worldliness, status, and knowledge.[42] For Jabłonowski – both traveler and polymath – the observation of mountains served as a stimulus for reflections extending beyond the immediate landscape, reaching into history, symbolism, and etymology. These personal experiences thus triggered a broader line of thought in which the landscape of Upper Hungary intertwined with a topography of memory and historical imagination:

Let me here offer a brief description and my own opinion of these mountains. First of all, three types of mountains are found in Hungary: the Tatras, the Mátra, and the Fatra – named after the Hunnic princes, ancestors of the Hungarians, whether Giszla or Gejza, the father of Saint Stephen, who took them as his heraldic symbol and which remain to this day. Only his son, Saint Stephen, placed a cross on the highest of the three – that is, on the Tatras, for these are the tallest, as I have said, and they separate Hungary from Poland.[43]

The topography of the region – both remembered from past experience and encountered anew during the journey – served as a point of departure for Jabłonowski's reflections on topics that consistently fascinated him: ancient history and the creation of heraldic symbols. Thus, as he contemplated the natural landscape, he turned toward the legendary past of the Kingdom of Hungary, transforming the surrounding mountains into integral elements of a historical narrative that he recorded along his route. In his internal imaginarium, these reflections formed a coherent whole: the location of the mountain ranges was closely tied to their historical significance, and information about their geographic position was inseparable from the broader past of the region. Jabłonowski noted, for instance: "The Mátra range lies below Buda, the Tatras toward Pressburg, known in Slavic as Presborek."[44] He was particularly capti-

41 Jabłonowski claimed that his carriage was pulled uphill by as many as sixteen pairs of horses (though the condition of the manuscript makes the exact number difficult to determine), while downhill it required twelve pairs. See also: Antoni Mączak, *Życie codzienne w podróżach po Europie w XVI i XVII w.* (Warszawa: PIW, 1980), 17; Wolański, *Europa jako punkt odniesienia,* 125–128.

42 In recent scholarship, such acts of self-fashioning have often been interpreted as a means of asserting masculinity – see, for instance, Sarah Goldsmith, *Masculinity and Danger on the Eighteenth-Century Grand Tour* (London: University of London Press, 2020).

43 "Diariusz podróży," 10.

44 *Ibidem* ['Matry idą poniżej Budzyna, Tatry ku Presburkowi, po słowiańsku zwanym Presborek'].

vated by the Tatras and the Mátra. He also ventured into etymological speculation, interpreting the names of the mountain ranges as Slavic personifications – Tatry as the "father," and Mátry as the "mother."[45] His remarks on the Fatra range reveal his awareness of the dangers and complexities associated with mountainous terrain. Although seemingly the smallest, the Fatras posed serious logistical challenges in terms of transportation. Jabłonowski also emphasized that the Tatras, especially their lower sections, deserved further semantic distinction. His reasoning was likely practical: differentiated nomenclature would better reflect the actual geography and correspond to the varying degrees of difficulty involved in traversing this landscape.

Jabłonowski's description of the mountains may initially appear fragmented – suspended between geographical observations and an effort to grasp the region's history in the longue durée. Yet this multilayered narrative not only reflects the intellectual breadth of the traveller but also aligns with the increasingly popular eighteenth-century trend of discovering mountains as spaces of fascination – not merely cartographic or mineralogical, but also aesthetic. His descriptions reveal a distinct tension between the tradition of the *voyage savant* and a growing sentimental impulse that – though not yet fully developed – prefigures a new mode of engaging with nature.[46] In his notes, geographic and heraldic themes coexist with accounts of a different nature – at times almost fantastical, unverifiable, and yet powerfully evocative. While travelling along the river Váh, Jabłonowski encountered a story told by the inhabitants of Kralovice, who claimed that for twelve weeks each winter they saw no sunlight – not due to obstructed visibility, but because of the total absence of light caused by the shadow of the surrounding mountains. This information not only surprised but also fascinated him, prompting associations with Lapland – a land of cold and darkness well known from travel literature. [47] The rock formations he observed from the river had an even stronger impact. Their extraordinary shapes – resembling "columns, collapsed houses, statues" – evoked aesthetic and archaeological associations.[48] One particular rock formation, striking in its proportion

45 *Ibidem*.

46 Ion Mihailescu, Simon Dumas Primbault and Jérôme Baudry, "Science on the Summit: Exploring Scientific Tourism Through the Lens of Eighteenth Century Mountain Ascents," *Journal of Alpine Research | Revue de géographie alpine* [En ligne] (2022): 110–111, http://journals.openedition.org/rga/10265 (access: 24.06.2025).

47 "Diariusz podróży," 11.

48 *Ibidem* ['Kolumny, domy rozwalone, statuy].

and "colossal" appearance, reminded him of an ancient sculpture.[49] This kind of experience – merging observation and imagination, reality and imagined classical form – can be seen as an expression of pre-Romantic aesthetics. Though not yet fully articulated, it was already present in the intellectual sensibility of an eighteenth-century traveller of refinement. Jabłonowski's sensitivity to landscape and its "figurativeness" reveals a new way of seeing – not for the purposes of the cartographer or data-collector, but as a liminal experience: moving, even unsettling.[50]

The farewell to the mountainous landscape also marked a return to the narrative mode more typical of Jabłonowski, in which places and monuments take precedence. While travelling along the river Váh, he primarily noted castles – some in ruins but, in his opinion, still restorable, such as Stary Hrad ("Old Castle"). His account of the river journey is brief; the only points he deemed worthy of mention were prominent buildings and their architectural condition – occasionally accompanied by general information about their owners. At Strečno, his attention was momentarily drawn to a piece of local lore shared by the boatmen: that the body of Saint Sophia had been discovered there. The castle itself he assessed rather critically: "this castle is significantly ruined; no windows or any intact parts are visible, and only its rear could be observed through a telescope, once so splendid."[51] In contrast, Jabłonowski expressed admiration for the town of Žilina, situated "in a very beautiful place on a hill, above meadows and gardens; the first brick-built town I had seen since crossing the border."[52] His description of Žilina is more vivid and shows a heightened sensitivity to the natural surroundings – perhaps a result of his earlier experiences in the mountains. Yet this sensitivity remained within certain limits: after noting the town's location, the traveller returned to familiar topics – namely, the property ownership (in this case, the Hungarian Esterházy family) and key architectural monuments. His attention was drawn in particular to the churches, including the parish church and the Franciscan complex, as well as to townhouses – remarkably large and

49 *Ibidem* ['Kolosalna'].

50 This transformation in the perception of mountains – as a shift from dread or indifference to fascination and sublimity – has been insightfully analysed by Marjorie Hope Nicolson, *Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory: The Development of the Aesthetics of the Infinite* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1959).

51 "Diariusz podróży," 11 ['Zamek ten znaczniej zrujnowany; ani okna ani żadnej rzeczy całej nie widać, przez perspektywę tylko tył onego rekognoskować można było wspaniały'].

52 *Ibidem* ['W pięknym bardzo miejscu na wzgórku, ponad łąkami i ogrodami; pierwsze murowane, które od granicy widziałem'].

richly appointed. In describing their interiors, Jabłonowski drew comparisons with the urban fabric of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth: "in the one where I myself stayed, there were ten rooms and a hall on a single floor, and one room led into another – such a layout I have not seen even in Lublin or Lwów, with so many rooms on a single storey, reached by such bright and convenient staircases."[53] His account of Žilina is unusually comprehensive and multifaceted, also touching on aspects of contemporary economic life. Jabłonowski noted the production and export of local beer varieties – "which are also sent to Poland"[54] – and offered a relatively detailed reflection on modes of transport (cart, wagon, on foot), distances, and travel time, which he deemed relatively swift.

On the road from Žilina to Trenčín, Jabłonowski returns to a more annalistic style, focusing on brief descriptions of the towns he passed through, the monuments he observed, and basic information about the local landowners and their genealogies.[55] This mode of notation resembles a kind of polyhistor's questionnaire – meticulously filled in according to recurring categories encompassing topography, heraldry, and local history.[56] Although Hungary was merely a transit stage in his journey, Jabłonowski treated it as a cognitive space worthy of indexing and embedding within a broader system of knowledge. In this way, his journey fits within the eighteenth-century model of the *voyage savante* – a learned exploration driven not by a thirst for adventure but by the desire to classify and comprehend the world. Even a seemingly peripheral territory such as Upper Hungary becomes, in this framework, an archive: a landscape inscribed with traces of the past, awaiting reconstruction and interpretation.[57]

## Conclusions

Although the accounts of Ignacy Zawisza and Józef Aleksander Jabłonowski differ in nearly every respect – time, context, purpose, and

53 *Ibidem*, 12 ['W tej com ja sam stał to dziesięć pokojów z salą na jednym piętrze i pokój z pokoju, jakiej jednej anim w Lublinie ani w Lwowie nie obaczy o tylu pokojach na pierwszym piętrze z schodami wygodnemi a jasnymi'].

54 *Ibidem* ['Które i do Polski wożą'].

55 *Ibidem*, 13–14.

56 Stanisław Roszak, *Koniec świata sarmackich erudytów* (Toruń: Stowarzyszenie Oświatowców Polskich w Toruniu, 2012), 27–28.

57 Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994).

tone – in both cases Hungary emerges as a borderland, in multiple senses of the word. For Zawisza, it is primarily a zone of military tension – a geographic and political frontier where imperial interests intersect and where a young nobleman gains his first experience of war. For Jabłonowski, by contrast, it is a stage in an erudite journey, a cultural periphery of the Habsburg monarchy that provokes reflection on history, symbolism, and genealogy.

Hungary functions here as a liminal space – neither entirely familiar nor wholly foreign; neither centre nor periphery – but it is precisely this ambiguity that makes it particularly susceptible to interpretation. In the writings of both authors, it becomes a laboratory of imagination – a space in which politics, geography, and history intersect. Zawisza's narrative is dominated by front-line experiences and a heroic recollection of battle, while Jabłonowski engages in erudite writing that integrates landscape into intellectual and symbolic reflection.

Juxtaposing these two accounts allows us to trace a shift in the mode of describing space that unfolds over the course of the eighteenth century: from episodic, action-oriented wartime narratives to travel writing as a tool for organizing knowledge and emotion. This transformation reflects broader cultural developments of the era – a growing interest in topography, a new appreciation of the educational and aesthetic value of travel, and the gradual reimagining of nature from a cartographic object into a source of experience and contemplation. In this sense, Zawisza and Jabłonowski are not merely traversing the same territory; they also embody two distinct ways of engaging with the world – military reconnaissance and scholarly exploration. Both contribute to the longue durée of European encounters with Hungary, yet each does so through the prism of individual trajectories, experiences, and modes of writing.

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