

POLISH BELTS

OF THE dozen factories founded in Poland to meet the demand for silk and metal thread sashes in the Persian style, known at the time as *Persiarnia*, two were outstanding both for the quantity and, on the whole, for the quality of their output: that at Sluck and that at Kobyłka. Of sixty-one signed pieces noted in a half dozen collections, twenty-three were from Sluck and thirty-one from Kobyłka.

The Sluck factory was founded under the patronage of Prince Michael Casimir Radziwiłł in 1758. The first Superintendent was an Armenian, possibly of Hungarian origin, Jean Mazarian whose name took the Polish form, Mazarski. He carried on the work with twenty-four looms until 1780 and made not only sashes but silks of many patterns.¹ Sashes signed with his name, in Russian characters, are comparatively rare. Pieces signed simply with the place name in Russian characters are probably principally from his period also but are almost equally rare.

Jean was succeeded by his son Leon who controlled the factory from 1780–1794, employing thirty workmen. He became a naturalised Pole and in 1790 received a court appointment.² He also signed his name in

¹T. Krygowski, *Polenteppiche*, in *Orientalische Archiv*, Vol. III, p. 73. I am also indebted for details to Dr. Stanisława Sawicka of Warsaw.

²Thadée Kruszynski, *Ceintures polonaises de soie entretissées d'or massif* in *Actes du Congrès d'Histoire de l'Art*, Paris, 1924, p. 691.



PLATE I

END OF A BELT; SIGNED, SLUCK. PRIVATE COLLECTION, POLAND.

Russian characters and examples of his work are numerous (Pl. II). The next notable director was Josef Borsuk who was superintendent between 1807 and 1844. The factory was greatly reduced in size at this time. His signature, also in Russian characters, consists of his last name and the place name (Pl. III). Occasional examples have only the first two letters of his name. A hybrid signature appears on one piece in the Cracow Museum, Sluck and the last two syllables of Marjarski in Russian on one end and the Borsuk mark on the other.³

A number of scarves bear only the name Sluck in Roman letters (Pl. I) or Me fecit Sluciae. Judging from the style, these often date from the interim period between Leo Marzarski and Borsuk. Others are subsequent to Borsuk. The factory continued until 1894.

The Marjarski pieces show a direct dependence on Persian design and are usually as complex in composition as the finest Persian examples, with six separate elements. For the body of the scarf there are two major stripes, one floral, the second geometrical. The third subordinate alternate stripe carries usually a simple conventional plant pattern. The fourth element is the side border, always another floral stripe. These stripes are edged with a very narrow spot stripe. And finally there is the deep end border, usually only with two repeats.⁴ The Persian models are by no means so fixed in their order of design for they often show two main floral stripes and the side border may repeat one of these but with different spot stripes; or perhaps the field will have one floral and one geometrical stripe alternating but a new floral stripe will be introduced as the margins of the end border.

The Sluck factory obviously had a set of designs for each element and a new pattern was usually created only by recombining the old elements. One floral stripe was used so repeatedly, with minute variations, on pieces signed Marjarski, Borsuk or Sluck that it might almost be taken as the trade mark of the shop. It is an undulating vine defined by serrated leaves with highly simplified iris in alternating directions, a direct copy of an Isfahan Shah Abbas border (Pl. I and II). The geometrical

³III. Fleming, *Textilkunst*, 158. Erroneously attributed to the beginning of the eighteenth century.

⁴Adult sashes vary in width from 29 to 38 centimeters and in length from about 300 to 500 cm. There are occasional larger ones, and these usually have three repeats. Very small children's scarves sometimes appear, usually in the finest quality.



PLATE II

END OF A BELT; SIGNED, LEO MARJARSKI. COLLECTION OF COUNT ZAMOYSKI.

border, on the other hand, is very varied, including different treatments of the oval, the lozenge and the cartouche, the latter sometimes in an elaborate and very Persian form. The subordinate alternate stripe, is, again, quite well standardised. One undulating vine of S shaped leaves with a rudimentary oval blossom recurs countless times. As for the spot stripes, the Sluck designers spent no imagination on them but left them in the simplest possible form.

One side border, also, is conspicuously recurrent, with only slight changes, a double undulating vine with conventional roses alternately in full view and in profile, with multiple detail of flowerets and leaflets (Pl. I). While this pattern shows a Persian origin it is wholly European in treatment but other Sluck borders remain more faithful to Isfahan models, notably an undulating vine with alternate carnation and iris, or carnation and rose. (Pl. II)

Naturally the greatest invention was lavished on the most conspicuous feature, the wide end border; but even here one favorite pattern was rather overworked, a bouquet topped by a large carnation in profile with, in succession going down the stiff stem, paired roses flanking an iris, lilies flanking a carnation, campanulas, or possible snow-drops, and finally serrated leaves in a wing-like profile. (Pl. II). This also is based on an Isfahan Shah Abbas model but in the translation it has taken on a European flavor. Another end border often used by both Leo Marjarski and Borsuk is ultimately derived from Persian models probably made at Yazd, an oval medallion which develops into an elongated twelve pointed star from which radiate stiffly a dozen rosette flowers with their serrated foliage, possibly asters. (Pl. III)

In other Sluck designs Persian elements play an important part though all are increasingly deformed by European treatment. These enter into many stripes but soon depart so completely from the Persian, and ultimate Chinese, models that the pattern is known in Poland as the leech design⁵ and the term, however unattractive, is a just description. (Pl. I) The bracket which supports the vase in the Joshaghan Ghali, so-called vase carpets, appears in varying forms of progressive degeneracy as the basis of the end border spray. The mound of earth from which flowering plants often grow in Shah Abbas textiles also appears but soon takes on

⁵I am indebted for this information to M. Emil Wierbicki of Warsaw.



PLATE III

END OF A BELT; SIGNED, BORSUK SLUCK. PRIVATE COLLECTION, POLAND.

the form of a spotted or imbricate segment of a circle. The device, seen on Isfahan borders, of a flower spray growing out of a tree stump is also used, delightfully in some examples, (Pl. I) but later with the trunk too heavy and a too naturalistic arrangement.

The Sluck flowers are the usual Persian ones: iris, carnation, rose, tulip, lily and campanula, to which are added, as European taste supersedes the oriental, asters and ambiguous flowerets. Neither the lotus palmette nor the arabesque is ever used in Polish belts though they do appear in Persian borders.

The dominant colors in the Leo Marjarski pieces are a light rose and pale blue, more dilute versions of the commonest Persian scarf colors. There is, however, a sharp black outline in most of the Sluck work. While these colors are continued under Borsuk, the blue tends to become grayish and the pink acid, and other tones, either harder or thicker, appear: a brittle lacquer red, a purplish red, a heavy cerise, a dead blue, a thick dull green, a light weak green and a heavy blue-green. The gold is the usual silver gilt, apparently with a high copper alloy for it is very stiff, wound on white silk.

All Sluck pieces are woven in the compound cloth technique but the subordinate warps are not depressed so that the weft seems to have a float of two or three warps. This, together with the fact that the wefts are thick and almost untwisted while the warps are fine and tight, gives the surface a basket weave texture. The weight of the metal in proportion to the warps creates a solid metal surface as if these wefts were couched on. The warps of the metal ground pieces are usually red. The selvage is cloth woven over two or three warps.⁶ But a Leo Marjarski piece in the Persian Exhibition* (Pl. II) has a heavy selvage cord with a black and white weft carried together in a kind of blanket stitch. The weaving technique is essentially that of the Persian scarves, the texture approaching most closely that of the work traditionally assigned in Persia to Kashan, though Marjarski is said to have bought his first loom in Constantinople.⁷

⁶Only twenty scarves from a half dozen different factories have been analysed so that no generalisations about selvage treatment are possible. It does not, however, seem to be very consistent.

*Refers when mentioned in this article to the Persian Exhibition held in London in 1931.

⁷Krygowski, *op. cit.* p. 73.



PLATE IV

END OF A BELT; SIGNED, PASCHALIS. COLLECTION OF COUNT ZAMOYSKI.

The factory at Kobyłka, which is near Warsaw, was founded by a weaver named Solimond from Lyons in 1782 and he remained in control until 1790. He signs his name Selimand in Roman characters. In 1790 he sold this factory and went to Korzec where he continued production for a time, signing this work Selimand à Korzec. Solimond pieces are not very numerous. Two in the National Museum at Warsaw show monochrome silhouette designs in very restrained colors, one a very tall, thin chrysanthemum bouquet in brown on gold and the other a flowering vine defining an oval frame with a conventional medallion in the center, in brown on white.

At the same time and until his death in 1794, there was working at Kobyłka S. Filsjean who signed his name, sometimes in full but more often in initials, in simple Gothic letters (Pl. V and VIII). His atelier must have been productive for of the signed Kobyłka pieces, about a third bear his name in some form. Meanwhile in 1790 Jacob Paschalis, also an Armenian, had arrived in Poland from Tahat in 1761⁸. Evidently he carried on a long and very productive business, both here and at his estate at Lipkow, for more sashes in existence today bear some form of his name than that of any one other person in the industry. He signed, also in simple Gothic letters, his initials, or his last name only, (Pl. IV) or Fecit Paschalis, or his full name, Paschalis Jacobowicz and after 1791 he was naturalised, named royal secretary and granted the device of the Paschal lamb so that he uses this also, usually with his initials (Pl. VI). Occasionally scarves bear only the place name, Fabryk Kobyłka.

The Kobyłka scarves are not as complex in design as are the finest from Sluck. There is only a simple alternation between a floral and a geometrical stripe. Filsjean almost always treats the former naturalistically but Paschalis, though sometimes he uses a naturalistic pattern, very often has such a highly conventionalised design that this stripe, too, is almost geometrical. (Pl. IV) The favorite geometrical designs are an oval in a saw-toothed cartouche, (Pl. V and VI) in varying proportions, and a continuous lozenge with a scalloped edge framing a spot. (Pl. IV)

In contrast to the Sluck designers, those of Kobyłka introduced considerable variety into the tiny spot stripes. They not only vary the size, shape and spacing of the dot, but they substitute for the simple spot a

⁸Kruszynski, *op. cit.* p. 692.



PLATE V

END OF A BELT; SIGNED, FILSJEAN, IN INITIALS. PRIVATE COLLECTION, POLAND.

saw toothed reciprocal, a square reciprocal, an imbricate, a chain or a checkerboard.

The Kobylka side borders are very varied but one, consisting of detached sprays with flowerets, is quite often repeated (Pl. VI). In general the tendency at Kobylka is to treat the floral stripes as a sequence of sprays rather than as a running vine, even where the pattern is continuous. Similarly, the end borders are varied but both Filsjean and Paschalis follow often a style set by Solimond of a thin feathery bouquet, often with multiple details but kept light and airy (Pl. IV), though often made rather fussy by an exaggeratedly serrated outline.

Throughout the design the Kobylka style is wholly French. As the Sluck patterns get ever further from the Persian originals they tend to approach those of Kobylka. Thus there is a meandering scalloped ribbon common in Kobylka end borders that comes in time into Sluck patterns and a most unfortunate design, introduced even in Leo Marjarski's time, of a top heavy bouquet in a very small bowl on a table covered with a fringed scarf.

The Kobylka garden seems more varied than that of Sluck for in addition to all the usual Sluck flowers there are jasmine, poppies, apple blossoms, chrysanthemums, salvia, several types of campanula and various grasses that contribute to the feathery effect (Pl. V). The iris, on the other hand, mainstay of both Persian and Sluck design, is almost absent. The Kobylka flowers are either more naturalistic, almost botanical at times, or much more elaborately conventionalised. The whole scarf is more often, too, composed of a set of variations on one theme. Among the conspicuous typically French elements are jars (Pl. VIII), vases and balustrades.

Filsjean's colors, as might be expected in view of the French tradition, tend to be more naturalistic and hence his patterns are often more polychrome than any produced at Sluck. Thus one piece in the National Museum at Warsaw has a carnation spray, broken in the middle, flanked by confronted parrots rendered in light rose, medium rose, lavender rose, deep red, orange-red, violet, yellowish green and light blue. Such off tones of rose and red, ranging from a salmon pink to cerise, are characteristic. A dead Nattier blue is common and the black outlines are often heavy.



PLATE VI

END OF A BELT; SIGNED, PASCHALIS, WITH THE PASCAL
LAMB. PRIVATE COLLECTION, POLAND.

Paschalis continued the monochrome silhouette style produced by Solimond in dull blue, dead green, violet or black on gold or silver (Pl. IV) but he also made polychrome patterns with a more restrained palette than Filsjean and with fine, clear fresh colors. He employs especially a translucent rosy red, a fresh light but saturated blue, golden yellow, a clean but somewhat yellow light green and, in more vivid designs, a pure lacquer red.

The Kobyłka technique is the same as that of Sluck save that the selvage is over two, three or four warps. Both Filsjean and Paschalis occasionally brocade details.

Two factories antedated Sluck, at Grodno where there were twenty-four shops for varied weaving under the direction of Jakub Bem and at Stanislaw where Dominique Mesivrowicz worked, moving later to Warsaw;⁹ but signed pieces from these factories have not been noted. Among the minor factories are one at Drzewica founded two years after Sluck by Prince Philip Staniawski, a second at Przeworsk started in 1780 by Princess Sophie Lubomirska, a third at Szydłowiec with eighty weavers; one in Kutborz founded by Georg Anton Laczinski; one in Medzyboz belonging first to the Sieniawski family and later to Prince Czartoryski; one in Rozana established in 1786 by Prince Alexander Sapieha; one in Uhnów, and one in Zmigord belonging to Prince Radziwill. Examples of the work of these factories are rare, of some unknown.

At Sokolow a factory was founded by the family of Count Ozinski at the end of the eighteenth century with workers from Montbeillard.¹⁰ One sash in the Persian Exhibition, lent by the Museum of Slow with this signature in Russian characters, in the corners of the end border instead of at the ends of the side stripes as is usual, has a commonplace floral stripe carrying a carnation and a violet on an undulating vine and as end border, a bouquet of carnations and ambiguous flowers; but the alternate stripe is unusual, a white and silver diaper and the color is exceptional, dull violet, a thick henna, white and metal. The technique, too, shows an unusual variation, for while most of it is the compound cloth with a basket weave texture like the others, certain details are rendered in warp floats. The selvage is on three warps.

⁹Kruszynski, *op. cit.* p. 691.

¹⁰Krygowski, *op. cit.* page 74.



PLATE VII

END OF A BELT; SIGNED, DANIEL CHMIELEWSKI. MUSEUM OF SLOW.

Six factories operated at Cracow. The largest, judging by the number of extant examples, was run by Francis Maslowski between 1787 and 1830. The signatures are Franciscus Maslowski or Cracoviae with the name. One piece with the former in the Cracow Museum shows very Persian stripes, with iris and carnations, taken over either from an Isfahan border or from Sluck, while a second, in the University of Cracow, shows a bouquet with black silhouette on yellow, with no metal thread, with clear but rather too fussy outlines.

The second Cracow factory was founded by Daniel Chmielewski in 1796.¹¹ An example on a solid gold ground in the Persian Exhibition, (Pl. VII) is signed Daniel Chmie, with the rest of the name lacking, in Roman block letters. It is quite in the Kobylka style, very close to a Filsjean piece in the Victoria and Albert Museum. The floral stripe has simple carnations, alternately rose and violet or blue and white. The geometrical stripe is parti¹² white and violet on a gold ground with a cross in continuous cartouches. The side border has tulips and carnations and the end border a highly conventional rose of gigantic size with asters, in a lobed jar. The spot stripe has an unusually elaborate cross and dot checkerboard. An unsigned piece also in the Persian Exhibition from the Tyskewicz Collection must come from the same factory for the top of the end bouquet is identical, though it terminates in an ambiguous scalloped petticoat of foliage. In the former piece some details are brocaded in, a technical variation that again relates the work to Kobylka. Both have a selvage on two warps.

The third factory was run by Andreas Belica. One example of his work in the National Museum at Warsaw has brown silhouettes on gold.

The factory of Anton Pucilowski must have been fairly productive for examples are less rare. One in the Persian Exhibition lent by Count Zamoyski, has the end border, and one of the stripes, exactly copied from Leo Marjarski models. The end border shows the large bouquet in a small bowl on a table top with a fringed cover. This piece is so completely in the Sluck style it seems probable that Pucilowski learned his trade there. The colors, however, are inferior. The rose is dead and bluish, there

¹¹Kruszynski *op. cit.* p. 693.

¹²The parti field is said to have heraldic significance. It is especially common in imbricate fields. In addition to the stripes and imbricate fields less elaborate scarves are often plain and later a floral repeat is common. (PL. VIII)



PLATE VIII

END OF A BELT; SIGNED WITH INITIALS OF FILSJEAN. COLLECTION OF COUNT ZAMOYSKI.



PLATE IX

END OF A BELT IN GREEN AND SILVER; SIGNED, BESCH DANZIG.
PRIVATE COLLECTION, POLAND.

is a very inert violet, a light grass green that seems thin and an extremely acid yellow. Black is heavily used. The selvage is on two warps.

Of the other two Cracow factories no signed pieces have been noted. One was founded by Joseph Trojanowski in 1791, the other was run by Jean Sztumer.¹³

The factory of Besch in Dantzig, whose work is signed Besch Danzig in gothic letters, employed a wholly different style, in the French Empire manner. An apple green and silver piece in the Persian Exhibition shows a characteristic lobed vase, lambrequin and elaborate naturalistic bouquet. (Pl. IX) It is a double cloth with the selvage over one warp. Another factory was run in the suburb of Dantzig, Siedlce, by Salrhuber.

There were apparently various minor factories producing cheap belts for occasionally a signed piece from one of them appears. Thus in the Victoria and Albert Museum there is a piece of very poor quality, without gold, with double cloth stripes that run through the side border to the edge, lacking in all merit, signed KHIO.

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¹³Kruszynski, *op. cit.* p. 692.