

## Jean-Léon Gérôme and Stanisław Chlebowski: The Story of a Friendship

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### Peer review and editing organized by:

Międzynarodowe Centrum Kultury / International Cultural Centre, Krakow

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### Wersja polska dostępna pod / Polish version available at:

(RIHA Journal 0013)

### Abstract

The aim of the article is to present the story of the relationship between Jean-Léon Gérôme and Stanisław Chlebowski. The reconstruction of their friendship is partly based on yet unpublished source materials on the life and work of Chlebowski. The artists met in the early 1860s. Their acquaintance became closer in 1875 when Gérôme stayed in Istanbul at Chlebowski's house. When Chlebowski moved to France, Gérôme introduced him to the French artistic circles, offered him advice and suggested themes for his work. Their relationship was interrupted by Chlebowski's disease and his return to Poland. The last note of this friendship was the short story by Léontine de Nittis, published in 1892.

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[1] Jean Lecomte du Noüy, Odilon Redon, Thomas Eakins, Hamdi Bey, Mary Cassatt – the list of painters who studied under Jean-Léon Gérôme is very long. For almost forty years more than two thousand students from Europe and America came through Gérôme's atelier and many of them became quite successful. For some of them working with Gérôme, a great individuality, was a somewhat painful experience. For others his oeuvre became a model or even an ideal to be strived at. These students often began to slavishly copy his style.<sup>1</sup> Stanisław Chlebowski, though only shortly a student of Gérôme, was the artist's friend for many years and considered him as his artistic role-model.

[2] In 1859 Stanisław Chlebowski, then a student of the St Petersburg Academy of Fine Arts, was awarded a gold medal by this school and received a six-year scholarship for studying abroad.<sup>2</sup> The young painter went on a journey across Europe; his destination was Paris, where he decided to continue his education.<sup>3</sup> Chlebowski was probably taught by Gérôme in his private atelier which began to function after 1860 and certainly existed in the middle of 1862.<sup>4</sup> When living in Turkey from 1864 to 1876 the Polish painter undoubtedly knew Gérôme very well and treated him as his artistic master. In the

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<sup>1</sup> Gerald Ackerman, *The life and work of Jean-Léon Gérôme*, Paris 1986, 168-177. On American followers of Gérôme, see H. Barbara Weinberg, *The American pupils of Jean-Léon Gérôme*, Fort Worth, 1984.

<sup>2</sup> P. Petrov, *Sbornik materialov dlja istorii S. Peterb. Akademii Chudozestv*, Petersburg 1866, vol. 3, 287, 305.

<sup>3</sup> Chlebowski probably came to Paris in 1861, as suggested by a drawing with a palm-tree signed "26 V 1861 Paris", see Dział Rękopisów, Biblioteka Jagiellońska, Kraków (later referred to as BJ), Fotografie portretowe Stanisława Chlebowskiego i innych osób, jego obrazów oraz zdjęcia z pobytu w Turcji, Przyb. 239/04.

<sup>4</sup> Ackerman, *The life and work of Jean-Léon Gérôme*, 64, 66, 164, 165, 166.

catalogues of the Paris Salons his name was later annotated with the information that he was Gérôme's pupil.<sup>5</sup>



1 A portrait of Stanisław Chlebowski, 1860s, reprinted from *Kłosy* 1871, 1st half-year, p. 372

[3] When Chlebowski came to Paris, Gérôme already was an artist with many successes to his name, which gave him a strong position in the artistic world. In 1847 Gérôme made a successful debut at the Salon with the painting *Cockfight*, an example of the Neo-Grec current of his work. Later years brought other triumphs. In 1850 Prince Napoléon bought the canvass *Greek Interior*, and other works shown at the Salon were met with acclaim. We can name here such paintings as *The Duel After a Masquerade* (Salon 1857), *The Death of Caesar* (Salon 1859), *King Candaules* (Salon 1859), *Fryne's Judgement* (Salon 1861). Official commissions followed; Gérôme made the murals in the Churches St Martin-des-Champs and Saint-Séverin, and the famous house of Prince Napoléon in Avenue Montaigne. As a person much respected in the artistic circles he also fulfilled many prestigious functions, for example in 1864 he was appointed one of the three professors at the School of Fine Arts in Paris. The name of Gérôme is now associated mostly with paintings on the Oriental theme. The first Oriental scenes were presented at the 1857 Salon and they had been inspired by the artist's journey to Egypt. Although Gérôme repeatedly returned to historical subjects (*Molière at the table of Louis XIV*, *The Grey Cardinal*, *The Tulip Folly*), his work was dominated by Eastern genre scenes: people playing chess, bashi-bazouks resting in a doorway, belly-dancers, scenes

<sup>5</sup> *Explication des ouvrages de peinture, sculpture, architecture, gravure et lithographie des artistes vivants*, Paris 1877, 60; Paris 1878, 44; Paris 1879, 52.

in public baths, the sale of a slave woman, prayers, bazaars, street merchants, Eastern beauties, desert scenes and so on. Gérôme easily found buyers ready to pay handsome sums for these works. All the more so that he married Maria Goupil, daughter of an art dealer and antiquarian Adolf Goupil.<sup>6</sup>

[4] In the second half of the nineteenth century Jean-Léon Gérôme became the leading exponent of Orientalism in the French painting, especially in its "ethnographic" tendency. This term was used in reference to Gérôme by Emile Galichon ("Gazette des Beaux-Arts", 1868). It served to underline the photographic way of rendering detail, the extraordinarily minute finish and the impression of ethnographic accuracy. This artistic stance of Gérôme had found its earlier expressions in the work of other painters – careful observation of the life of the Orient, studying scholarly publications, travelling with study tours. Three decades earlier Alexandre-Gabriel Decamps claimed that his work from 1836 depicting Turkish children playing with a tortoise represented a typical Oriental street scene. The painters were much influenced by the publication of Edward William Lane's *Account of the Manners and Customs of Modern Egyptians* (1836), an effect of the author's direct studies. The painters also decided to travel with research expeditions. In 1846 Jules Laurens went for a perilous journey to Persia with the geographer Xavier Himmair. In order better to understand and render the exotic locale of the Orient, the artists decided not only to travel, but also to live there. One example is John Frederick Lewis, who spent ten years in Cairo.<sup>7</sup> Features of "ethnographic" Orientalism can be found in the work of such painters as Albert Aublet, Rudolf Ernst, Arthur Ferraris, Jean Lecomte du Noüy, Benjamin-Constant, Osman Hamdi Bey, Ludwig Deutsch, Charles Bargue. In the second half of the nineteenth century these artists enriched their oeuvre with scenes from the daily life of the Orient – markets, coffee shops, hawkers, beggars, bashi-bazouks, but the most popular theme was harem scenes with a strong erotic tone.<sup>8</sup> Although already in the late 1860s artistic criticism took a negative view of the realist Orientalism, this current was present in exhibitions and popular among collectors until the end of the century.<sup>9</sup> In 1893 the Orientalist painters founded the Société des Peintres Orientalistes Français, which among other undertakings organized exhibitions of Islamic art.<sup>10</sup>

[5] Gérôme's work in his Paris atelier was often interrupted by his artistic journeys, which became the principal inspiration for his oeuvre. He first visited Istanbul in 1855, he travelled to Turkey also in 1871, 1875, and 1879. In 1857 he went with his fellow painters to Egypt, where he came back in 1862, 1868, 1869, 1871, 1874, and 1880.

<sup>6</sup> See Ackerman, *The life and work of Jean-Léon Gérôme*.

<sup>7</sup> Christine Peltre, *Orientalism*, Paris 2004, 107-113.

<sup>8</sup> See Lynne Thornton, *Women as portrayed in orientalist painting*, Paris 1994.

<sup>9</sup> Agata Lem, "Wizja Bliskiego Wschodu i Afryki północnej w malarstwie polskim II połowy XIX i I połowy XX wieku. Wybrane wątki i zagadnienia," in: *Dzieła i Interpretacje*, vol. 4, 1996, 46.

<sup>10</sup> Gerard-Georges Lemaire, *The Orient in Western Art*, Paris 2008, 270, 276.

Gérôme also travelled to Syria, Jordan (1862), Jerusalem (1868), Spain (1873) and Algeria (1873, 1883).<sup>11</sup> The frequent trips to the Middle East provided the artist with interesting themes, as well as allowing him to amass a collection of Oriental artistic craftwork, which became his store of props. The master encouraged his students to travel and sometimes took them with him for his Oriental wanderings, as he did for example with Albert Aublet.<sup>12</sup>

[6] Bearing in mind the foregoing remarks on Gérôme's artistic travels, we may consider it as very likely that it was him who inspired Stanisław Chlebowski to go to Turkey. Chlebowski made the decision to travel there in July or August 1864.<sup>13</sup> For Chlebowski, who had travelled extensively across Europe, it was yet another artistic journey, but his expedition to the Orient turned into a several years' sojourn in Istanbul. What made him stay were commissions from Sultan Abdul Aziz. Later Chlebowski was appointed court painter of the Padishah and he remained in this function until September 1872.<sup>14</sup>

[7] During the Turkish stay of Stanisław Chlebowski his contacts with Gérôme became less intense. They renewed their acquaintance in the Autumn of 1873, when Chlebowski visited Paris for the first time in nine years. At that time he made preparations for the painting depicting *The Arrival of Muhammad II to Constantinople*. In Paris he bought a huge canvass, paints and implements.<sup>15</sup> It was then that he met Gérôme, to whom he showed his studies and watercolours.<sup>16</sup>

[8] Perhaps already then, in Paris, Chlebowski invited Gérôme to Istanbul. He certainly renewed his offer in 1874, but at that time Gérôme was unable to come to Turkey.<sup>17</sup> In the letters to his family Chlebowski was full of admiration for the French painter, for example he called Gérôme "the king of Paris painters".<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Ackerman, *The life and work of Jean-Léon Gérôme*, 42, 44-46, 60, 78, 79, 92, 105.

<sup>12</sup> Lynne Thornton, *The Orientalists. Painter-Travellers*, Paris 1994, 18.

<sup>13</sup> Chlebowski must have been in Istanbul in September 1864, because on the photograph given to his uncle, Włodzimierz Padlewski, he put the date September 27, 1864 and place Istanbul, see BJ, Fotografie portretowe Stanisława Chlebowskiego i innych osób, jego obrazów oraz zdjęcia z pobytu w Turcji, Przyb. 239/04.

<sup>14</sup> A letter of Stanisław Chlebowski to Kamilla, Ksawera and Helena Chlebowski, September 23, 1872, BJ, Przyb. 241/04.

<sup>15</sup> A letter of Stanisław Chlebowski to Józef Ignacy Kraszewski, September 5, 1873, Korespondencja Józefa Ignacego Kraszewskiego, BJ, 6491/IV. A letter of Stanisław Chlebowski to Kamilla, Ksawera and Helena Chlebowski, November 16, 1873, BJ, Przyb. 241/04.

<sup>16</sup> A letter of Stanisław Chlebowski to Kamilla, Ksawera and Helena Chlebowski, November 16, 1873, BJ, Przyb. 241/04.

<sup>17</sup> Letters of Stanisław Chlebowski to Kamilla, Ksawera and Helena Chlebowski, April 19, 1874; July 8, 1874, BJ, Przyb. 241/04.

<sup>18</sup> A letter of Stanisław Chlebowski to Kamilla, Ksawera and Helena Chlebowski, May 1, 1874, BJ, Przyb. 241/04.



2 Stanisław Chlebowski, *Turkish Women by the Fountain at the Sweet Waters of Asia*, 1873, reprinted from *Kłosy* 1877, 1st half-year, p. 165

[9] Gerald Ackerman said in his monograph that in April 1875 Gérôme went to Istanbul, where he was received by Sultan's court painter. Ackerman thought that this painter was Abdullah Siriez.<sup>19</sup> But thanks to the extant correspondence of Chlebowski we can claim with complete assurance that Gérôme was received by the Polish painter himself. In March and April 1875 he wrote to his family in Krakow that Gérôme would visit him shortly.<sup>20</sup> Finally he arrived on May 14, accompanied by the painter Antoine Eugène Ernest Buttura. The Frenchmen stayed in Chlebowski's house at Aga-Hamami Street in the Pera district.<sup>21</sup> Chlebowski showed them the city and then they painted studies from nature together. They worked very intensely, from five a.m. till six p.m.<sup>22</sup> On May 28 they travelled to Bursa for a few of days, and from there they went on to Adrianople.<sup>23</sup> Gérôme left Istanbul around June 30.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Ackerman, *The life and work of Jean-Léon Gérôme*, 110.

<sup>20</sup> Letters of Stanisław Chlebowski to Kamilla, Ksawera and Helena Chlebowski, March 24, 1875, April 22, 1874, BJ, Przyb. 241/04.

<sup>21</sup> A letter of Stanisław Chlebowski to Kamilla, Ksawera and Helena Chlebowski, May 16, 1875, BJ, Przyb. 241/04.

<sup>22</sup> A letter of Stanisław Chlebowski to Kamilla, Ksawera and Helena Chlebowski, May 27, 1874, BJ, Przyb. 241/04.

<sup>23</sup> A letter of Stanisław Chlebowski to Kamilla, Ksawera and Helena Chlebowski, May 27, 1874, BJ, Przyb. 241/04.

<sup>24</sup> A letter of Stanisław Chlebowski to Kamilla, Ksawera and Helena Chlebowski, June 26, 1874, BJ, Przyb. 241/04.

[10] When living in Turkey Chlebowski was very keen on painting studies from nature. During Gérôme's and Buttura's stay in Istanbul in 1875 Chlebowski worked with them. During this visit Chlebowski painted thirty seven oil studies which were "more meticulously made than all [...] previous ones".<sup>25</sup> A number of oil studies from this artistic "hunts" has been preserved.

[11] As the extant studies certify, the artists worked together in the Rustem Pasha Mosque in Istanbul. One of these works is the painting *Interior of a Mosque*, to be found in the collection of the Lvov Art Gallery. It depicts the Minbar (pulpit) and Hihrab (decorated niche indicating the Qiblah or direction during prayer) in the Rustem Pasha Mosque in Istanbul. With fine precision, but not without panache, Chlebowski transferred onto the canvass the motifs on the white-and-blue tiles covering the walls. The marble Minbar, lamps hanging from the ceiling and candelabras by the Mihrab create a picturesque mosaic. But thanks to the juxtapositions of colour this mixture is very sedate; the blues, the whites, the browns and the beiges work together very well. In the Georges Garret Museum in Vesoul we find Gérôme's study also depicting the interior of the Rustem Pasha Mosque in Istanbul.<sup>26</sup> The artist painted the Mihrab and the Mimbar, his depiction is almost identical to that from Chlebowski's work, but less minute in detail.

[12] When working with Gérôme in the Green Mosque in Bursa, Chlebowski had a long conversation with the master and decided to leave Turkey. He set the date of departure from Istanbul for June 15, 1876.<sup>27</sup> He probably took into consideration that in Paris it would be easier to find buyers for his Oriental scenes. In the French capital he would be in the heart of artistic life, and by presenting his work at the Salon he wanted to acquire fame and riches. His decision was probably also influenced by the deteriorating political situation in Turkey. Chlebowski considered Gérôme's visit in Istanbul and the decision it occasioned as a breakthrough in his life and career.<sup>28</sup> He hoped that in the Spring of 1876 the master would visit him again. Gérôme could not come, but Chlebowski was visited by his brother-in-law Albert Goupil.<sup>29</sup> In late August 1876 Chlebowski moved to Paris, where he lived in a workshop at 6 Burq Street in Montmartre. This very spacious atelier was found for him by Gérôme.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> A letter of Stanisław Chlebowski to Kamilla, Ksawera and Helena Chlebowski, May 27, 1875, BJ, Przyb. 241/04.

<sup>26</sup> Lemaire, *The Orient in Western Art*, 192.

<sup>27</sup> A letter of Stanisław Chlebowski to Kamilla, Ksawera and Helena Chlebowski, September 28, 1875, BJ, Przyb. 241/04.

<sup>28</sup> A letter of Stanisław Chlebowski to Kamilla, Ksawera and Helena Chlebowski, September 28, 1875, BJ, Przyb. 241/04.

<sup>29</sup> A letter of Stanisław Chlebowski to Kamilla, Ksawera and Helena Chlebowski, April 21, 1876, BJ, Przyb. 242/04.

<sup>30</sup> A letter of Stanisław Chlebowski to Kamilla, Ksawera and Helena Chlebowski, March 2, 1876, BJ, Przyb. 242/04. A letter of Jean-Léon Gérôme to Stanisław Chlebowski, February 7, 1876, BJ, Przyb. 237/04.



3 Stanisław Chlebowski, *Bashi-Bazouk*, 1880, reprinted from *Tygodnik Powszechny* 1883, 2nd half-year, p. 673

[13] In Paris Gérôme had friends among the most urbane representatives of the artistic community. Among his acquaintances we can find Léon Bonnat, Ernest Meissonier, Ernest Hébert, Gustave Boulanger, Emanuel Frémiet, Charles Gounod, Alexandre Dumas the Younger, Théophile Gautier, Nadar, Princess Mathilde Bonaparte and Prince d'Aumale.<sup>31</sup> In the second half of the nineteenth century Gérôme belonged to the most eminent figures in Paris. The artist took part in charity auctions, and he was also glad to help fellow painters who found themselves in financial straits, for example Corot.<sup>32</sup> He devoted much attention to his students, he took a keen interest in their careers and personal lives, he visited them when they were ill, he helped arrange the sale of their works, he wrote letters of recommendation for them.<sup>33</sup> But he never went as far as championing his pupils or acquaintances at the Salon. He probably thought that they should win laurels on their own merit.<sup>34</sup> He travelled with his students across Algeria in 1873 and across Egypt in 1874.<sup>35</sup> Gérôme did not lose interest in the life of his students when they left his studio, he visited their ateliers, saw the work they produced, commented on it, often critically, and helped in presenting it to a wider public. Among the artists he helped was his American pupil Thomas Eakins.<sup>36</sup> Gérôme also supported other painters who were not his students, if he thought them to possess artistic talent. Artur Grottger was one of those

<sup>31</sup> Ackerman, *The life and work of Jean-Léon Gérôme*, 84, 142.

<sup>32</sup> Ackerman, *The life and work of Jean-Léon Gérôme*, 128.

<sup>33</sup> Ackerman, *The life and work of Jean-Léon Gérôme*, 106, 128.

<sup>34</sup> Ackerman, *The life and work of Jean-Léon Gérôme*, 128.

<sup>35</sup> Ackerman, *The life and work of Jean-Léon Gérôme*, 92.

<sup>36</sup> Ackerman, *The life and work of Jean-Léon Gérôme*, 169.

who turned to Gérôme for support. He wrote to his fiancée Wanda Monné from Paris: "[Gérôme] himself assures me that I will very soon 'come into my own' with his help and favour", and in another letter he reported: "Today he gave me three letters of recommendation, one to Goupil, and the other two to editors of illustrated magazines."<sup>37</sup>

[14] After moving from Istanbul to Paris in 1876 Stanisław Chlebowski, owing to his friendship with Gérôme, quickly entered the Parisian artistic community. He became a regular in the living rooms of the Goupil and Gérôme families,<sup>38</sup> and he was often invited to the Gérômes' house in Normandy.<sup>39</sup> He frequented parties at the Goupils' house, where the artistic world met.<sup>40</sup> Chlebowski tried to maintain contacts with French artists, eagerly inviting them to his studio.<sup>41</sup> His atelier was visited by painters who were also close friends of Gérôme. Paul Baudry, whom Chlebowski met in 1875 in Egypt, paid him a visit,<sup>42</sup> as did Ernest Meissonier, much admired by him.<sup>43</sup> The Polish painter took part in a ball organized by Mihály Munkácsy in his impressive studio.<sup>44</sup> In Paris he also met Alexandre Cabanel.<sup>45</sup> He stayed in touch with Albert Pasini (also a friend of Gérôme's), whom he had met in Istanbul.<sup>46</sup>

[15] The warm relations between the artists were strengthened with gifts. From Turkey Chlebowski sent Gérôme some Oriental attire, for which Gérôme promised to give him some of his sketches.<sup>47</sup> In 1879 Gérôme travelled to Turkey where he bought Chlebowski some Oriental craftwork and weapons.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Maryla Wolska, Michał Pawlikowski, *Artur i Wanda. Dzieje miłości Artura Grottgera i Wandy Monné*, Medyka, Lvov 1928, vol. 2, 5, 75.

<sup>38</sup> Letters of Stanisław Chlebowski to Kamilla, Ksawera and Helena Chlebowski, October 12, 1877; November 25, BJ, Przyb. 242/04

<sup>39</sup> Letters of Stanisław Chlebowski to Kamilla, Ksawera and Helena Chlebowski, August 25, 1878; November 25 BJ, Przyb. 243/04.

<sup>40</sup> A letter of Stanisław Chlebowski to Kamilla, Ksawera and Helena Chlebowski, January 24, 1879, BJ, Przyb. 244/04.

<sup>41</sup> A letter of Stanisław Chlebowski to Kamilla, Ksawera and Helena Chlebowski, February 18, 1877, BJ, Przyb. 242/04.

<sup>42</sup> A letter of Stanisław Chlebowski to Kamilla, Ksawera and Helena Chlebowski, March 24, 1875, BJ, Przyb. 241/04.

<sup>43</sup> A letter of Stanisław Chlebowski to Kamilla, Ksawera and Helena Chlebowski, March 14, 1879, BJ, Przyb. 244/04.

<sup>44</sup> A letter of Stanisław Chlebowski to Kamilla, Ksawera and Helena Chlebowski, October 15, 1877, BJ, Przyb. 242/04.

<sup>45</sup> A letter of Alexandre Cabanel to Stanisław Chlebowski, reproduction of the painting *The Birth of Venus*, November 1877, BJ, Przyb. 237/04.

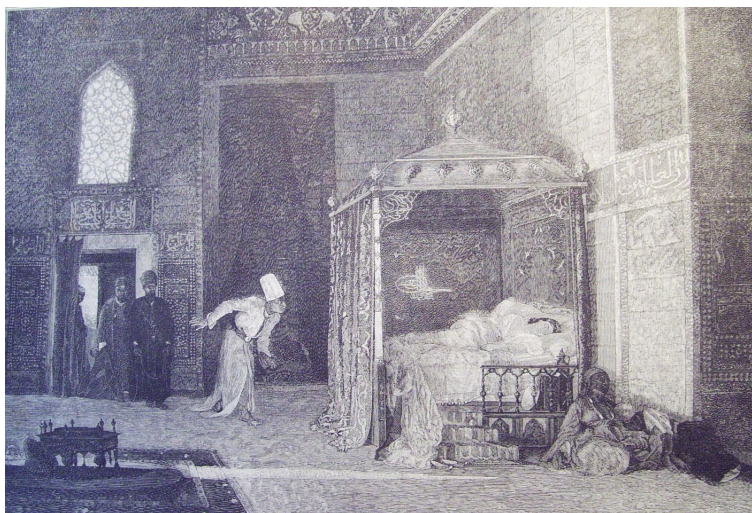
<sup>46</sup> A letter of Stanisław Chlebowski to Kamilla, Ksawera and Helena Chlebowski, December 22, 1877, BJ, Przyb. 242/04. A letter of Stanisław Chlebowski to Kamilla, Ksawera and Helena Chlebowski, January 1, 1878, BJ, Przyb. 243/04.

<sup>47</sup> A letter of Stanisław Chlebowski to Kamilla, Ksawera and Helena Chlebowski, May 1, 1874, BJ, Przyb. 241/04.

<sup>48</sup> A letter of Jean-Léon Gérôme to Stanisław Chlebowski, July 11, 1879, BJ, Przyb. 237/04.



[16] It was probably owing to his friendship with Gérôme that Chlebowski as early as 1876 received his first commissions from Albert Goupil.<sup>49</sup> After his move to Paris Chlebowski painted pictures for Goupil's company also in 1877.<sup>50</sup> In the same year Chlebowski started to work with Michael Knoedler, the American representative of the Goupils.<sup>51</sup> In the letters to his family Chlebowski never admitted directly that he had won the lucrative commissions thanks to Gérôme's support, but we may suspect that it was owing to him that he started to work with the Goupils and the Knoedlers.



4 Stanisław Chlebowski, *High Drama in a Harem*, 1877, reprinted from *Tygodnik Powszechny* 1880, 2nd half-year, p. 567

[17] Gérôme offered advice to his students from the School of Fine Arts and to other artists who appreciated his opinion. The master always appraised the work of his students very critically, never flattered or favoured anyone.<sup>52</sup> He advised them to study nature carefully and to be meticulous with their sketches. He said that they should always seek the truth. But he did not support blind realism, he thought that nature must be idealized.<sup>53</sup> Gérôme did not have a high opinion of Courbet's oeuvre.<sup>54</sup> He also found much fault with the works of Puvis de Chavannes, claiming that he disregarded the structure of the composition and the form of the human figure.<sup>55</sup> Assured in his opinions, he was staunchly opposed to exhibiting the works of Eduard Manet in the School of Fine Arts in 1884.<sup>56</sup> He also fought against the Impressionists, and at the World Exhibition in

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<sup>49</sup> A letter of Stanisław Chlebowski to Kamilla, Ksawera and Helena Chlebowski, January 1, 1876, BJ, Przyb. 242/04.

<sup>50</sup> Letters of Stanisław Chlebowski to Kamilla, Ksawera and Helena Chlebowski, March 30, 1877; April 28, 1877, BJ, Przyb. 242/04.

<sup>51</sup> The Knoedlers commissioned paintings from Chlebowski also in 1878, 1879, 1880, and 1881.

<sup>52</sup> Ackerman, *The life and work of Jean-Léon Gérôme*, 171.

<sup>53</sup> Ackerman, *The life and work of Jean-Léon Gérôme*, 160.

<sup>54</sup> Ackerman, *The life and work of Jean-Léon Gérôme*, 160, 173, 174.

<sup>55</sup> Ackerman, *The life and work of Jean-Léon Gérôme*, 161.

<sup>56</sup> Ackerman, *The life and work of Jean-Léon Gérôme*, 128.

1900 he tried to persuade the President of the Republic not to visit the room where their works were shown.<sup>57</sup>

[18] Gérôme frequently offered his guidance also to Chlebowski. In 1876 Chlebowski started to paint a harem scene where under the cover of the night the eunuchs are surreptitiously approaching the bed of the Sultanness, intending to strangle her with a velvet string (*High Drama in a Harem*). Chlebowski was encouraged to take up this subject by his friends Jean-Léon Gérôme and Albert Goupil.<sup>58</sup> The painting was exhibited at the 1877 Salon and bought by the King of The Netherlands William III.<sup>59</sup> Chlebowski submitted his next major work, showing *Sultan Bayazid in Tamerlane's Captivity* (1878), to the judgement of his master Gérôme, who expressed a positive opinion.<sup>60</sup> The canvass was exhibited at the 1878 Salon and found its buyer in the person of Benedykt Tyszkiewicz.<sup>61</sup> Chlebowski asked for Gérôme's advice also in 1878, when painting a picture commissioned by the Knoedlers' company,<sup>62</sup> and in 1881 he consulted with him the canvass showing *Beggars at the Hassan Mosque in Cairo* (1881).<sup>63</sup>

[19] Gérôme advised Chlebowski also during his several years' work on *The Arrival of Muhammad II to Constantinople* (Chlebowski started to paint this picture in 1874 and never finished it). The master claimed that Chlebowski burdened the composition with too many details, especially in the background architecture. At that time Gérôme was still certain that Chlebowski would muster sufficient energy to finish the work. He suggested nevertheless that Chlebowski should paint small-scale pictures.<sup>64</sup> But after several years of Chlebowski's painstaking work Gérôme pointed out successive imperfections. He thought that his Polish friend could not properly grasp the proportions of the human figure – he painted too big heads and too rigid necks. Gérôme also found fault with the horses, whose necks were too short. And the depiction of Muhammad II was thought by Gérôme to be unnatural.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Ackerman, *The life and work of Jean-Léon Gérôme*, 156.

<sup>58</sup> A letter of Stanisław Chlebowski to Kamilla, Ksawera and Helena Chlebowski, December 16, 1876, BJ, Przyb. 242/04.

<sup>59</sup> A letter of Stanisław Chlebowski to Kamilla, Ksawera and Helena Chlebowski, July 21, 1877, BJ, Przyb. 242/04.

<sup>60</sup> Letters of Stanisław Chlebowski to Kamilla, Ksawera and Helena Chlebowski, January 1, 1878; January 10, 1878, BJ, Przyb. 243/04.

<sup>61</sup> A letter of Stanisław Chlebowski to Kamilla, Ksawera and Helena Chlebowski, May 26, 1878, BJ, Przyb. 243/04. *Explication des ouvrages de peintures, sculptures, architectures, gravure et lithographie des artistes vivants*, Paris 1878, 44.

<sup>62</sup> A letter of Stanisław Chlebowski to Kamilla, Ksawera and Helena Chlebowski, September 29, 1878, BJ, Przyb. 243/04.

<sup>63</sup> A letter of Stanisław Chlebowski to Kamilla, Ksawera and Helena Chlebowski, March 17, 1881, BJ, Przyb. 245/04.

<sup>64</sup> A letter of Stanisław Chlebowski to Kamilla, Ksawera and Helena Chlebowski, February 14, 1876, BJ, Przyb. 237/04.

<sup>65</sup> A letter of Stanisław Chlebowski to Kamilla, Ksawera and Helena Chlebowski, February 11, 1879, BJ, Przyb. 237/04.

[20] Gérôme offered advice to and introduced into the Parisian artistic world also Stanisław's wife, Maria née Mikułowska. Chlebowski met his future wife in 1876 in Krynica and immediately perceived an extraordinary talent in this young person. Maria sent her works to Chlebowski in Paris and he presented them to Gérôme and Goupil. The pictures met with their acclaim.<sup>66</sup> Also after they married (1880) and the bride moved in with Chlebowski in Paris, Maria submitted her work to Gérôme's judgement and the French master pronounced himself very positively about them.<sup>67</sup> It was an unusual and astonishing expression of approval on the part of Gérôme, who thought that women were unable to create original work and only copied established patterns. He was also opposed to women studying painting.<sup>68</sup> Another proof of Maria Chlebowski's talent is the fact that her paintings were bought by the New York dealer of the Knoedlers' company.<sup>69</sup>

[21] Gérôme's method of working on a painting was an example of a typically academic approach. Having thought out the general composition, the artist made a provisional sketch. Then he drew studies of models, sought the necessary garments and accessories, and painted a provisional small oil sketch. He began from the figures and worked on the background as the last stage.<sup>70</sup> Gérôme probably taught this system to Chlebowski. Following the master's guidance Chlebowski spent a lot of time on making studies from nature – in Turkey and Egypt he drew and painted when walking the streets, while in Paris he drew figures of models and also Oriental objects. In tune with Gérôme, Chlebowski made a point of not painting things he had not seen. He noted with pride that all the details shown in the picture *Sultan Bayazid in Tamerlane's Captivity* had been painted from nature.<sup>71</sup> Possessing a collection of Oriental craftwork, Chlebowski was able to recreate an Eastern goldsmith's shop or a coffee shop.<sup>72</sup> Researching a painting, Gérôme analyzed old garments, weapons and other accessories. Chlebowski followed a similar approach – before starting work on *The Arrival of Muhammad II to Constantinople* he studied miniatures, visited art collections, painted and drew studies and sketches of garments, weapons and harness. Working on the composition of a painting, Gérôme first made a small oil study. Chlebowski did likewise, for example before painting the canvas *Sultan Bayazid in Tamerlane's Captivity*.

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<sup>66</sup> A letter of Stanisław Chlebowski to Kamilla, Ksawera and Helena Chlebowski, March 7, 1878, BJ, Przyb. 243/04.

<sup>67</sup> Letters of Stanisław Chlebowski to Kamilla, Ksawera and Helena Chlebowski, February 2, 1880; March 19, 1880; April 17, 1880, BJ, Przyb. 245/04.

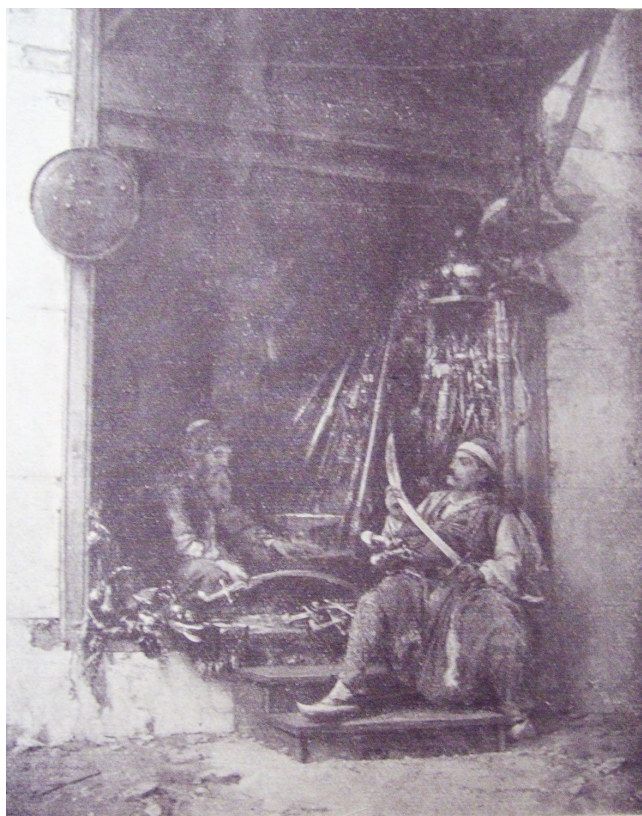
<sup>68</sup> Ackerman, *The life and work of Jean-Léon Gérôme*, 166, 167.

<sup>69</sup> A letter of Stanisław Chlebowski to Kamilla, Ksawera and Helena Chlebowski, May 22, 1880, BJ, Przyb. 245/04.

<sup>70</sup> Ackerman, *The life and work of Jean-Léon Gérôme*, 162, 163.

<sup>71</sup> A letter of Stanisław Chlebowski to Kamilla, Ksawera and Helena Chlebowski, March 10, 1878, BJ, Przyb. 243/04.

<sup>72</sup> A letter of Stanisław Chlebowski to Kamilla, Ksawera and Helena Chlebowski, November 25, 1880, BJ, Przyb. 245/04.



5 Stanisław Chlebowski, *Dealer in Old Weapons*, 1879, reprinted from *Tygodnik Ilustrowany* 1925, 1st half-year, p. 150

[22] In September 1881 Chlebowski suffered paralysis. His family found themselves in a very difficult situation. They were supported by Gérôme, who together with other artists organized a public lottery with the proceeds going to the Chlebowskis and offered his works as prizes.<sup>73</sup>

[23] In 1892, eight years after Chlebowski's death, the Parisian magazine *Le Nouvelle Revue* published a short story entitled "Profils d'anonymes. Le Polonais". Its author was Léontine de Nittis, the wife of the painter Giuseppe de Nittis. The main character of the story is Teodor Schlewansky, a former court painter of the Sultan who creates Oriental scenes and possesses a precious collection. The Schlewansky character was based on Stanisław Chlebowski.<sup>74</sup> In the short story by de Nittis Schlewansky was manipulated by an antique dealer Martin Labarussias, who persuaded him to take a loan for buying a villa. When the painter was paralysed, with the stroke being caused by the worries which had haunted him, Labarussias persuaded his wife to sell the precious collection in Hôtel Drouot. But the auction was not public and had been orchestrated by the treacherous Labarussias in order to take over Schlewansky's collection.<sup>75</sup> Creating her story, Léontine de Nittis drew many facts from Chlebowski's biography, but also included features which were not grounded in real life. De Nittis undoubtedly based her characters

<sup>73</sup> A letter of Jean-Léon Gérôme to Maria Chlebowska, undated, BJ, Przyb. 245/04.

<sup>74</sup> It was soon puzzled out by a journalist from the Polish magazine *Kraj*, see *Kraj* 4 (1892), 13.

<sup>75</sup> Léontine de Nittis, "Profils d'anonymes. Le Polonais," in: *La Nouvelle Revue* 1-2 (1892), 338-357.

on the Polish painter's friends. Particularly interesting is the figure of Martin Labarussias, who had a great influence on Schlewansky and also on his wife. We can find such persons among Chlebowski's friends, namely Albert Goupil and Gérôme. Like Labarussias, Goupil was an art dealer and collector, but it must be remembered that Goupil died, as did Chlebowski, in 1884, while the villain from the short story for many years enjoyed possessing the painter's collection. Gérôme also collected Oriental objects and like Labarussias he had several daughters, whom he had to endow. Perhaps de Nittis based the villain from the story on Gérôme, but if she did, we may rightly claim that she did not depict the Parisian master truthfully.

[24] As the above reflections show, Jean-Léon Gérôme had a significant impact on Chlebowski's life. Undoubtedly he was his guide and an artist whom Chlebowski particularly respected and admired. Gérôme repeatedly changed the course of Chlebowski's life – he persuaded him to leave Turkey, he acquainted him with Albert Goupil and helped to acquire commissions. He always treated the Polish painter with kindness. Even when he showered him with critical remarks, he did it for his own good. Gérôme inspired Chlebowski to take up some subjects and influenced his working method.

*The article was created with financial support of the Polish Ministry of Science and Higher Education, research project: "Stanisław Chlebowski, 'Court Picturist of His Majesty the Sultan', Life and Work".*

*Translated by Tomasz Bieroń*

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