



Jakow Gondaruk, Mikołaj Kierniczuk, Fedor Besaszczuk, Łeś Reptyk, Stefan Porczuk
 Dmyter Gąsiecki, Jura Drahiruk, Mikołaj Drahiruk, Łukien Mazian,
 Wasyl Czurtko, Semen Myckaniuk, Iwan Myckaniuk, Wasyl Zełeniuk.
 Zasądzona banda zbójców z Żabiego przez sąd przysięgłych w Kołomyi.

A PHOTOGRAPH AND THE FORGOTTEN STORY OF THE LAST OF THE CARPATHIAN OUTLAWS

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TUCKED AWAY AMONG the back pages of a portfolio entitled *Album Pokucia* in the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, is an intriguing photograph of a group of thirteen curiously dressed, defiant-looking men. They belonged to a band of brigands from the Carpathian-Mountain village Żabie. They were arrested, tried, and found guilty of forty counts of thievery and robbery, and one count of murder, on 4 November 1878, in the town of Kolomyia. Their ringleader, Jura Drahiruk, was sentenced to death, his brother, Mikołaj, to life imprisonment, and the rest to eight to fifteen years of incarceration. The trial was considered one of the most interesting and illustrious of its time, and was documented for posterity by a local photographer named Juliusz Dutkiewicz.

In the mid-nineteenth century, brigandage was not new to the area of Żabie (today Verkhovyna, Ukraine). Those who pursued this life of crime in the greater region known as Pokuttia near the city of Przemyśl were known as *opryshky*, a term first mentioned

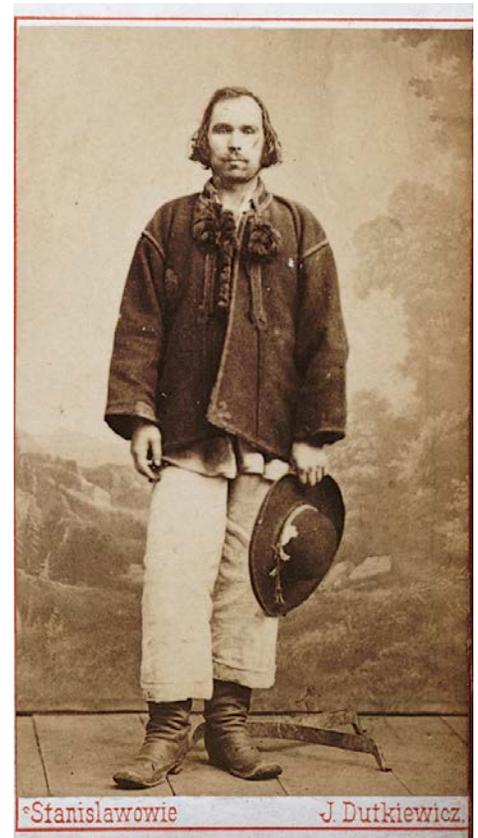
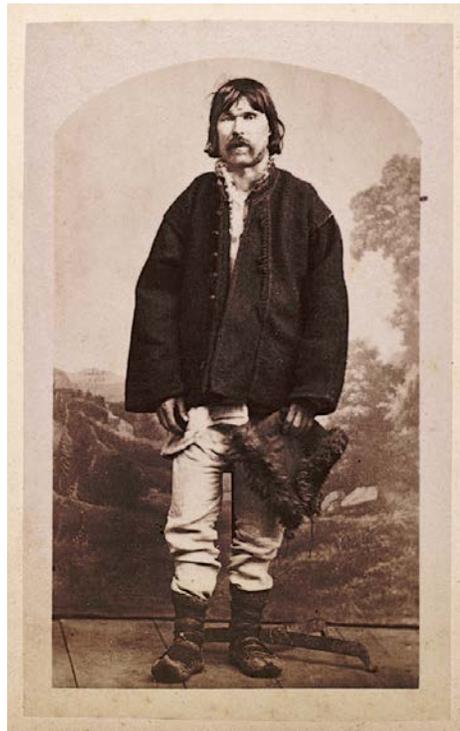
in the early sixteenth century. Comprised of peasants and poor townfolk, they operated in small groups with individual leaders, and seeking to fight off domination and oppression by magnates and their agents, attacked noble estates, tavern keepers, landlords, merchants, and wealthy peasants. Most commonly they would keep the stolen goods for themselves, but sometimes they acted like Robin Hood, and would share a portion of their spoils among the poor. They were difficult to catch, as they used the mountainous territory to their advantage for hiding from gendarmes, and their heroic status for finding safe harbour among the peasants. The most famous of the *opryshky* was Oleksa Dovbush (1700–1745) who was active in the 1730s to 1745, and who for years evaded capture, leading to his legendary status and lasting presence in Ukrainian folklore and literature. The *opryshky* continued to operate throughout the regions of Galicia, Transcarpathia, and Bukovina well into the nineteenth century. These areas were populated by Hutsuls, an ethno-cultural

group of pastoral highlanders who worked in forestry and logging, and as cattle and sheep herders, and who distinguished themselves by their rich and colourful folk culture and traditions.

In nineteenth-century Polish historiography, the *opryshky* were considered common thieves and robbers, whereas the Ukrainian folklorist, historian, and writer Ivan Franko (1856–1916) described their movement as anti-feudal and quasi nationalist, noting that it arose out of many decades of serfdom: “Enslaved, beaten, wronged, and subjected, not being able to find any respite or justice, they fled into the woods, into the mountains, and stuck together, even though at any moment death threatened, but it was better to live even one year in peril yet freely, and even more so to take revenge against one’s offenders.”

The last of the *opryshky* were Jura Drahiruk and his men, who are pictured in our photograph by Dutkiewicz. Jura (whose alias was Bordiuk) was considered handsome—athletic, strong, and broad-shouldered, with dark hair

OPENING PAGE: Photo of Jura Drahiruk and his men from the Album Pokucia. Gift of Karol Godlewski.
THIS PAGE, L TO R: Jura's aunt, Anna Herdediuk, and accomplices Łukien Mazian and Dmyter Gaściecki.



and moustache, piercing brown eyes, and a pleasant face—and also someone who led a rakish life, dressing neatly, and enjoying good food, drink, tobacco, and women. It was rumoured that he began his life of crime at age eight when he stole and brought home a ram, which made his parents happy. For a while he thieved with his father, but formed his own band sometime around 1876. In all, he had some seventy accomplices, including his younger brother Mikołaj, and at least one woman, the cunning Jeryna Libastiuk. For two years they plundered, smashed, battled, and revelled from the city Kosiv in Galicia to Rădăuți in Bukovina (today northern Romania).

They used a variety of ruses and tactics to get at their booty, as has been recorded by the Polish and Ukrainian ethnographers Oskar Kolberg (1814–1890) and Volodymyr Hnatiuk (1871–1926). One of the men, sometimes Jura, sometimes Mikołaj, would approach a house as a traveler or buyer of wool, and then ask for a night's lodging. While the owners and their servants slept, he would let in his mates who had been waiting in the yard, and they would ransack the place and make off with money, bolts of cloth, and lard. Another common method was practiced by the wily Jeryna, who would go house to house as a pauper or fortune-teller, and, after having determined the wealth of the household and familiarized herself with its layout, would instruct the band

of men on which homes to rob. However, their crimes grew bolder and their methods more brutal as time passed. They would tie up and beat their hostages, and should they not be forthcoming with the keys to their treasure chests, they would torture them by pouring hot tar onto the victims' flesh until they co-operated.

Their activities brought terror to the serene village of Żabie and the surrounding hamlets in the Carpathians, described in 1890 by the intrepid young British writer Ménie Muriel Dowie (1867–1945), who traveled from Kolomyia to Żabie sensationally alone, trousered, and on horseback:

“Żabie was, I think, as regarded scenery, the best that that country could do ... It lay for the most part in a rich valley, through which a river came serpentine, washing the edges of as many hayfields as possible. The houses were, some of them, in elevated positions; others seemed to have rolled down like stones to the river's edge. The great hills, seeming to hold hands like children at play, stood in a circle to look on at what Żabie was doing. They verged from pine-black to the green of poloninas [mountain pastures], and further to the greys and blues of the far mountains.”
(A Girl in the Carpathians (New York: Cassell, 1891), 192)

The tranquility of the village, as described by Dowie, was restored some time over the

course of 1878. Slowly but surely, the gendarmes closed in on members of Drahiruk's band, led by the indefatigable police chief of Żabie, Wasyl Wołyniuk (known as Cyrus). One by one the *opryshky* were captured and imprisoned. Soon, only Jura Drahiruk himself was on the loose, and to lessen his chances of getting caught, one day in late August he fell upon Wołyniuk and split the policeman's skull with his axe.

How Jura was finally seized is a matter of legend, but he and his brothers' fates are not, for the Lviv newspaper *Gazeta Narodowa* documented the trial, execution, and aftermath. According to lore, Jura and some of his fellows broke into a tavern to steal some vodka and beer, and set about drinking their stolen goods on the banks of the Cheremosh River, when all of a sudden they were besieged by a group of gendarmes. During his escape, there flew from Jura's head a very elegant and expensive, broad-rimmed felt hat (*krysanja*) decorated with coloured string and plumes, one that he liked very much. When he bent down to pick it up, that proved to be his fatal mistake. He joined twelve of his band in the prison in Kolomyia, while another forty were held in Chernivtsi.

The trial lasted eight days, from 28 October to 4 November 1878, and every day the proceedings continued until late at night. It took the court three hours to present the ten-page indictment, and one hundred and twenty

witnesses testified including four *opryshky* brought to Kolomyia from Chernivtsi. On the closing day the prosecutor Wilhelm Leżański spoke for nearly four hours without pause, as the tribunal, jurors, and large audience listened attentively to his masterful and convincing speech so as not to miss a single word. Teofil Dębicki, one of the best defence attorneys in the area, bravely and skillfully defended the accused but his words fell on deaf ears. The jurors went off to deliberate at 8 p.m. that day, and after three hours of deliberation they delivered a unanimous verdict of guilty on forty charges of robbery and theft, while on the question of murder by Jura Drahiruk, the votes split eight to four in favour of guilty. The tribunal adjourned, and it pronounced the court's sentences at 1 a.m. the following morning.

It was likely on 5 November that the chairman of the tribunal asked Juliusz Dutkiewicz, who owned a studio in Kolomyia, to come to court with his camera and equipment. Dutkiewicz photographed the group of convicts, several individual members of Drahiruk's band and of his family—a number of these images appear in the *Album Pokucia*—and the tribunal and jurors.

Two years later, in 1880, Dutkiewicz assembled a collection of his work—scenes of mountains, towns, castles, ruins, villages, as well as portraits of local peoples of Pokuttia and parts of Bukovina (including his images of the *opryshky*) to display at the ethnographic exposition organized by the Tatra Society in Kolomyia. He provided two copies of the album to the organizers, which, while on display, besides gaining the attention of important guests and officials, captured the interest of Emperor Franz Joseph I and his brother Archduke Karl Ludwig on their tour of Galicia. Following the exhibition, Dutkiewicz prepared especially for the emperor a presentation album of his work. The photographs were printed on stiff drawing paper measuring 30 by 40 centimeters, and placed in a box covered in amaranth-coloured velvet with silver-reinforced corners. The interior was lined in white moiré fabric, and ribbons were provided for lifting the individual photographs. A lock and key were also fitted to the box engraved with the arms of the Austrian Empire. Under the lock was inscribed "A Souvenir from Kolomyia." The Fisher Library's copy, entitled *Album Pokucia*, was donated to us by Karol Godlewski from a collection amassed by his uncle, Count Emeryk Hutten Czapski (1897–1979) (for more on this donation, see *The Halcyon*, June 2003). With its simple yet elegant tooled brown leather cover, it is much more modest. Its contents, however, are likely very similar to the imperial version, and, so far, no other extant copy has been located.

As for the man who Dutkiewicz has helped to immortalize—despite the pleadings of Jura Drahiruk's wife, who was rumoured to have offered the judge a baksheesh in the form of coins hidden in a wheel of *bryndza* (or sheep's milk cheese)—a hangman was summoned from Brno and the last of the *opryshky* was hanged on 30 March 1879 in the courtyard of the recently built city hall in Kolomyia. Jura's wife and uncle were present. She had dressed her husband in all new clothes—a

decorated hat, white linen shirt, sheepskin jacket, wide leather belt, embroidered trousers and foot cloths, and moccasins. Jura approached the hangman with hands tied, but no blindfold, showing great resignation to his fate. According to the newspapers, he died with the first drop from the gallows, but a witness statement from 1908 claims that it took at least four. His body was taken down and buried unceremoniously in a ditch at a crossroads outside the city limits.



REMEMBERING MRS. KATZ

Anne Dondertman

IT WAS WITH great sadness that we heard of the death of Mrs. Johanna Sedlmayer-Katz in September 2014. She was a loyal and devoted friend of the Fisher Library, and it is hard to imagine events at the Library without her vital presence.

Born in Austria, she came to Canada as a young woman in her twenties, and taught art in Ottawa before meeting Leon Katz and moving to Toronto. It is easy to picture her in the classroom, conveying her love of art and literature to her students, and being interested and sympathetic to their young lives. Johanna enjoyed her life, loved to travel and see the world, and to spend time with her friends. She also loved books and art, and she found an outlet for both those things in endowing a lecture in memory of her husband, Leon Katz. Even before she set up the lecture, she was a great supporter of the Library. She never missed an event if she could help it, always looked her best, and expected the best from others.

We are most grateful for her generous ongoing support of the Library, and of the lecture which we hope to continue for many years to come, in memory of both Leon and Johanna Katz. The next Katz lecture will be held on Monday 9 March 2015.

ABOVE: Johanna Sedlmayer-Katz and Leon Katz in 1971.