

## Collector at the Crossroads

### Jan Działyński and the Kórnik Collection of Works of Art in the Second Half of the 19th Century: An Exhibition between the Romantic Spirit of Patriotism and a Modern Scientific Approach

Kamila Kludkiewicz

#### Peer review and editing organized by:

Międzynarodowe Centrum Kultury, Kraków / International Cultural Centre, Krakow

#### Reviewers:

Monika Rydiger, Tadeusz J. Żuchowski

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

(RIHA Journal 0021)

#### Abstract

In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a tendency for a scientific approach to collecting became visible in Europe. Collectors established contacts with art experts and art researchers in order to assemble works of high class. A Polish aristocrat, Jan Działyński, presented a collection of works of art in a specially prepared castle room of his family estate in Kórnik. The exhibition of his collection bears features characteristic for a systematic and scientific approach to collecting; nevertheless, certain elements still testify to inspiration in Romantic collecting of national tokens, popular at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Poland.

#### Contents

Introduction

Beginnings of Collecting: Loyalty to Paternal Tradition

Jan Działyński on Emigration: Individual Collecting Searches

Mauritanian Hall in Kórnik Castle: Analysis of Collection Exhibits

Summary

#### Introduction

[1] Two approaches can be distinguished in the collecting activity of Count Jan Działyński, whose sources are to be looked for in his biography.<sup>1</sup> The collector's childhood and early years were marked by the great influence of his father, Tytus Działyński (1796–

1861); the entire life of the Działyński family was subject to his bibliophilic and artistic passions. Throughout his life, Tytus increased an extensive book collection devoted to the history of Poland. He was also interested in Polish monuments and works of art. The culmination of his activity was construction and furnishing of the family seat, a neo-Gothic castle in Kórnik (fig. 1, 2). From his early childhood, Count Jan was in contact with antique items, whose primary feature, frequently emphasized, was their Polish origin.

[2] When, as a twenty-something young man, Jan Działyński went to Paris, he encountered a vigorously operating antiquarian market, an extended system of

---

<sup>1</sup> The biography of Jan Działyński was written by Andrzej Mężyński (Andrzej Mężyński, *Jan Działyński 1829–1880*, Wrocław 1987). Cf. also information regarding the life of Jan Działyński in: Andrzej Mężyński, *Ostatni z Działyńskich*, Poznań 1988; Witold Molik, *Jan Działyński jako mecenas nauki i sztuki* (= Materiały i studia do dziejów kultury w Wielkopolsce, issue 7), Warszawa-Poznań 1974; and a review of the last publication: Stanisław K. Potocki, "Z badań nad mecenatem Jana Działyńskiego," in: *Roczniki Historyczne*, vol. XLI (1975), 152-157.

exhibitions, vogue for works of art deriving from various epochs. He became close with the Czartoryski family, whose Parisian seat, Hotel Lambert, was famous as a place of cultural and political meetings, not only among Polish emigrants. In 1857, Jan Działyński married Princess Izabella Czartoryska, and it is clear that the couple were lovers of collecting. Even though in Paris Działyński mainly purchased publications related to Poland and looked for items that might be of interest to his father, he also observed Parisian exhibitions closely and became acquainted with the functioning of the market of art works.



1 Kórnik Castle, view from the park, current condition  
(photograph provided by the author)

[<top>](#)

### **Beginnings of Collecting: Loyalty to Paternal Tradition**

[3] The first independent purchases of works of art by Jan Działyński were related to his first estate. The young count received an estate in Gołuchów in Wielkopolska from his parents and enthusiastically got down to building and furnishing his own home. In a letter to his sister, Jadwiga Zamoyska, who was staying in Istanbul at that time, he wrote: "You should really exercise all your efforts for the sake of the *armoury, the library and the numismatic collection* of Gołuchów" (emphasis by the author).<sup>2</sup> Działyński, whilst furnishing his estate, based the vision of his collection on these three elements: the armoury, the library and the numismatic collection. His activity closely resembled the proceedings of his father. Creating his estate in Gołuchów, Jan modelled it upon his family's estate in Kórnik, where militaria, the library and antique coins were the most important areas of the collector's passion of Tytus Działyński.

<sup>2</sup> Correspondence between Jan Działyński and his family members is preserved in the Kórnik Library of the Polish Academy of Sciences in the Castle in Kórnik and in the Archives of the Czartoryski Princes in the Czartoryski Library in Kórnik. The above quotation derives from a letter from Jan Działyński to his sister Jadwiga née Działyńska Zamoyska of April 1855, BK 07601, k. 195.

[4] His father's vision of collecting Polish tokens and accumulating them in the family castle influenced the young count very strongly. However, in Gołuchów, Jan also collected items which were not of closer interest to Tytus. This was a collection of items deriving from archaeological excavations, conducted personally by Jan in the area of the Gołuchów estate.

[<top>](#)

### **Jan Działyński on Emigration: Individual Collecting Searches**

[5] Interest in archaeology was Jan Działyński's individual passion, which he continued to develop in subsequent years. Its fullest dimension was manifested in his activity in Italy in the 1860's. After escaping from the country as a result of his conspirational and insurgent activity<sup>3</sup>, between 1864 and 1869, Działyński lived abroad. He spent a majority of the time creating a collection of antique vases. Over the course of a few years (1865–1868), he collected at least one hundred antique vessels. This collection, as a result of an agreement, became the property of Izabella along with the Gołuchów estate<sup>4</sup>.

[6] A closer look at the collecting activity of Jan Działyński at that time leads to interesting conclusions. The riddle of such a sudden and intense interest in ancient art cannot be, unfortunately, explained on the basis of the count's correspondence. It seems that his love for the culture of Greek and Roman antiquity is to be linked to a general fascination in antiquity at that time, having its roots in the age of Classicism. A contemporary researcher and expert on ceramics, Albert Jacquemart, indicated that from 1866, he observed increased interest of Parisian collectors in ceramics.<sup>5</sup> It seems that it was related to the auctions of great collections (and therefore the increased availability of items of this type)<sup>6</sup>, which were preceded by press articles describing the best Parisian collections.<sup>7</sup> Another important element was a certain community of interests which emerged around 1865 in Hotel Lambert. At that time, Jan Działyński, his wife Izabella Działyńska and his brother-in-law, Władysław Czartoryski, started to be interested in

---

<sup>3</sup> Jan Działyński became involved in the January Insurrection in 1863, an independent impulse of Poles in the Russian partition aimed at the Russian authorities.

<sup>4</sup> Jan Działyński borrowed substantial sums of money from his wife at the time when sequestration was imposed on his estates by the Prussian authorities for participation in the January Insurrection. In 1869, he appealed the decision of the authorities of 1864 and won the process in Berlin. After recovering his estates, he concluded an agreement with Izabella, pursuant to which, he settled his debts by giving her the estate in Gołuchów and the collection of ancient vases.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Françoise Hamon, "Collections: Ce que disent les dictionnaires," in: *Romantisme* vol. 112, 2001, 55-70.

<sup>6</sup> Auction of the Pourtales collection in 1865; a collection belonging to Prince de Blacas in 1866.

<sup>7</sup> Examples are: Albert Jacquemart, "Les cabinets d'amateurs a Paris – Collection d'objets d'art de M. le Duc de Morny," in: *La Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, vol. XVI (1864), 28-53; Jean de Witte, "Le Musée Napoleon III – Collection Campana – Les Vases peints," in: *La Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, vol. XVI (1864), 130-143; François Lenormant, "La Galerie du Comte Pourtales – Antiquités grecques et romaines," in: *La Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, vol. XVII (1864), 473-506.

ancient art. Obviously, indicating the first person who inspired the others is very difficult. Undoubtedly, the three collectors respected their knowledge in the area of art. Działyński purchased works of art for his wife and gave advice to Władysław Czartoryski. Therefore, it can definitely be assumed that, being united by ties of kinship, they remained in the sphere of mutual collecting influences.

[7] However, in the context of analysing Jan Działyński's actions, it is necessary to emphasize the fact that neither earlier nor later has the collector devoted his entire attention to one group of items, purchasing a subsequent number of them in a relatively short period of time and constructing a collection composed of high class exhibits.<sup>8</sup>

[8] Purchases of antique vases are related to travels in Italy. Jan made his first trip to Italy in the spring of 1865 and little is known about this.<sup>9</sup> In the course of the next trip, in the late autumn of 1867, he visited Rome, Naples and Noli. Even though he arrived in Rome in the middle of November 1867, he had established contacts with Italian traders and agents earlier. The group of his co-workers involved in searching for antique vases in the area of Italy included: Giuseppe Mele from Naples and Andrea Castellani and Stefano Doria, representatives of the company "Doria-Galozzi-Castellani." Giuseppe Mele directed excavation work in the vicinity of Noli, funded by Jan Działyński.<sup>10</sup> The agreement regarding a permit for excavations was signed by Działyński with the owner of the land on December 16, 1867, yet he definitely established contacts with Mele earlier. The first preserved letter to Mele derives from 10<sup>th</sup> November 1867.<sup>11</sup> It is probable that Działyński established an acquaintance with Andrea Castellani before his arrival in Italy. In 1865, Castellani brought a collection of vessels, excavated in Capua, to Paris, and in the Działyński's notes, there are descriptions of vessels offered for sale by Castellani in 1866 in Paris.<sup>12</sup> Even though excavations in the area of Noli brought no greater results, Mele remained in constant contact with Działyński and, according to the preserved bills, Działyński purchased ancient vessels in Italy through him. Apart from Greek vases, he also acquired marble statues, a sarcophagus, urns and glass vessels.

[9] In his proceedings at constructing an antiquity collection, Działyński behaved in a manner compliant with standards adopted in Western Europe. A scientific approach to establishing collections was, in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Paris, gaining more and more popularity. The beginnings of this attitude are to be traced in the activity of

---

<sup>8</sup> Działyński's collection, also called the "Gołuchów collection" on account of being taken over and stored by Izabella Działyńska in Gołuchów, apart from the indicated studies of French researchers, was also described in: John Davidson Beazley, *Greek vases in Poland*, Oxford 1928, Edmund Bulanda and Kazimierz Bulas, *Corpus Vasorum Antiquorum. Pologne*, Warsaw 1931.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Mężyński, *Jan Działyński*, 151.

<sup>10</sup> Mężyński, *Jan Działyński*, 152.

<sup>11</sup> The author remembers a meeting with Działyński in Naples, from which it would follow that they became acquainted during the first visit of Jan in Italy. BK 07471, k. 17.

<sup>12</sup> Archive of the National Museum in Poznań, Gołuchów Complex Ref. No. 2797, k. 68-87.

Eugène Piot, the originator of the publishing series *Le Cabinet de l'amateur et de l'antiquaire, revue des tableaux et des estampes anciennes, des objets d'art et de curiosité*<sup>13</sup> which started to appear in 1842. Jan Działyński, similarly to other Parisian collectors, established contact not only with traders and antiquarians, but also with researchers, art historians and experts on the subject. He successively extended his knowledge on the subject of ancient vessels.

[10] News of Działyński's collection spread around Paris very rapidly, which bore fruit in the form of the first scientific publications written by Jean de Witte<sup>14</sup> and Henri Longpérier.<sup>15</sup>

[11] It is necessary to emphasize that in the case of the collection of antique vases, Jan Działyński followed the knowledge, competence and an individual taste which allowed him to create an exceptional, highly estimated collection. However, after his return to Wielkopolska, the collector faced a completely new task. After the death of Tytus Działyński in 1861, he took over the family seat of the castle in Kórnik along with the library and artistic collections of his father.



2 Kórnik Castle, view from the entrance, 1913, the photograph derives from the book of Kazimierz Ruciński, *Dwory i pałace wielkopolskie*, Poznań 1913 (photograph provided by the photographic studio, Institute of Art History of Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań)

---

<sup>13</sup> Eugène Piot in the introduction to the first Volume of *Le Cabinet...* announced that his purpose is "réduire à l'état de science exacte, Ce qui n'est encore chez beaucoup d'amateurs qu'une occupation de penchants et d'instinct." Cf. Eugène Piot, *Le Cabinet de l'amateur et de l'antiquaire, revue des tableaux et des estampes anciennes, des objets d'art et de curiosité*, Paris 1842, 13.

<sup>14</sup> Jean de Witte (1808–1809), archaeologist, author of studies and catalogues of ancient monuments. Author of *Études sur les vases peints*, Paris 1865; catalogues of collections of French collectors: Count Beugnot, E. Durand. After Jan Działyński's death, he prepared a catalogue of his collection: Jean de Witte, *Description des collections d'antiquités conservés à l'Hôtel Lambert*, Paris 1886.

<sup>15</sup> Henri Longpérier (1816–1882), numismatist and archaeologist, from 1848 a curator of the Egyptian division in the Louvre. He described the collection of Jan Działyński in the following article: Henri Longpérier, "Vases peints inédits de la collection Dzialynski," in: *Revue Archeologique*, vol. XVII (1868), 345-354.

[12] Among the Kórnik collection, it is necessary to distinguish separate groups of items: militaria,<sup>16</sup> silverware,<sup>17</sup> the so-called *kontusz* belts and fabrics, a numismatic collection<sup>18</sup> and archaeological specimens<sup>19</sup>. Jan continued to expand the collections inherited from his father, purchasing subsequent antique items. They were stored in the castle, which was built in a neo-Gothic style in line with the concept of its founder, Tytus Działyński.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, it is necessary to emphasize that the heir received a place decorated and designed in line with the taste of another person. Moreover, a majority of exhibits in the Mauritanian Hall were purchased or collected by Tytus.

[<top>](#)

### **Mauritanian Hall in Kórnik Castle: Analysis of Collection Exhibits**

[13] The representative hall on the first floor, constructed and decorated in line with the concept of Tytus, was assigned by the founder as the library and a place where national tokens were stored (fig. 3). Between 1853 and 1859, the hall was finished, and the last stage was completion of the largest library cupboard. In the concept of Tytus, the Mauritanian Hall was supposed to be distinguished by patriotic decorations. Walls were decorated by coats of arms of the Crown, Lithuania and territories belonging to them or dependant upon them. The design assumed complementation of this decoration through painted coats of arms of provinces, framed in gilded frames.

[14] Decoration of the room combined elements deriving from Mauritanian art and an ethnic programme, demonstrated in coats of arms of lands forming a part of the pre-partition Republic of Poland. Similarities from the interior and the architecture of the courtyard of the Alhambra palace are often indicated. For the purpose of understanding such a combination of various decorative elements, it is necessary to remember that Tytus Działyński built the castle in a country deprived of its independence. The Mauritanian Hall evokes memories of great victories and the broadly marked borders of

---

<sup>16</sup> With respect to the Kórnik militaria, cf.: Ewa Wojewodzianka, "Dzieje zbiorów militariów zamku kórnickiego," in: *Pamiętnik Biblioteki Kórnickiej*, vol. 9-10 (1968), 137-153; and a more recent text with updated fragments: Barbara Dolczewska and Zygmunt Dolczewski, "Historia zbrojowni zamkowej," in: *Pamiętnik Biblioteki Kórnickiej*, vol. 28 (2007), 184-215.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Barbara Dolczewska, "Zabytkowe złotnictwo w zbiorach kórnickich," in: *Pamiętnik Biblioteki Kórnickiej*, 15 (1979), 25-41.

<sup>18</sup> Stanisław Gibasiewicz, "Zbiór numizmatyczny biblioteki kórnickiej PAN," in: *Pamiętnik Biblioteki Kórnickiej*, vol. 9-10 (1968), 548-575.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Jerzy K. Fogel, "Z dziejów archeologii wielkopolskiej XIX wieku: działalność Tytusa i Jana Działyńskich," in: *Fontes Archeologici Posnanienses*, vol. XX (1969), 247-267.

<sup>20</sup> With respect to the castle architecture and its interiors, cf. Róża Kašinowska, *Zamek w Kórniku*, Kórnik 1998; Jerzy Kaźmierczak, "Ideological Functions of the Kórnik Residence of Tytus Działyński," in: *Pamiętnik Biblioteki Kórnickiej*, 12 (1976), 49-63; Agnieszka Whelan, "Kórnik, Alhambra i romantyczny ideał. O motywach orientalnych w architekturze rezydencji Tytusa Działyńskiego," in: *Pamiętnik Biblioteki Kórnickiej*, 21 (1986), 11-33; Jan Skuratowicz, "Te na kształt zamków dźwigane słabe mury... Neogotyki w architekturze rezydencjonalnej Wielkopolski XIX wieku," in: *Problemy interpretacji dzieła sztuki i jego funkcji społecznych*, ed. Konstanty Kalinowski, Poznań 1980, 49-76; Jan Skuratowicz, *Dwory i pałace w Wielkim Księstwie Poznańskim*, Poznań 1981; Zofia Ostrowska-Kęłbowska, *Siedziby wielkopolskie doby romantyzmu*, Poznań 1975.

the Polish state. The symbolic reference to the Alhambra palace functioned as a certain hidden code of meaning: the Mauritanian Hall was within the range of the seemingly safe defensive walls of Kórnik Castle, which was in the territory of the hostile Prussian partitioner. This is similar to the "Alhambra – a Muslim oasis in the middle of Christian lands – a reminder of a brave, intelligent nation full of fantasy that used to conquer and govern, but even though it was eventually defeated in battle, is waiting for to be revived."<sup>21</sup> This symbolic meaning of the room was based, obviously, on a hidden meaning, which was a typical practice of Poles at that time and was related to fears of repressions on the part of partitioners.<sup>22</sup>



3 Mauritanian Hall, Kórnik Castle, 1913, the photograph derives from the book of Kazimierz Ruciński, *Dwory i pałace wielkopolskie*, Poznań 1913 (photograph provided by the photographic studio, Institute of Art History of Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań)

[15] Jan Działyński inherited the family seat with such a representative, clearly Romantic and patriotic interior. His first decision was to change the intended use of the hall. He placed the library in the attic; this floor was already planned and finished in line with his concept. In 1861, he assigned the Mauritanian Hall for museum purposes.

[16] The confirmed activity and decisive role of Jan Działyński, at least with respect to organizing an exhibition of Polish collections at the Common Exhibition in Paris in 1878, allows one to assume that the owner of Kórnik Castle was the author of the manner of the collection's arrangement. At the Parisian Universal Exhibition in 1867, Działyński organized an exhibition of his and his wife's antique collections.<sup>23</sup> At the Universal Exhibition in 1878, he showed the Kórnik collections and personally supervised their arrangement in Trocadero Palace. After visiting the exhibition, an anonymous

<sup>21</sup> Whelan, "Kórnik, Alhambra i romantyczny ideał," 31.

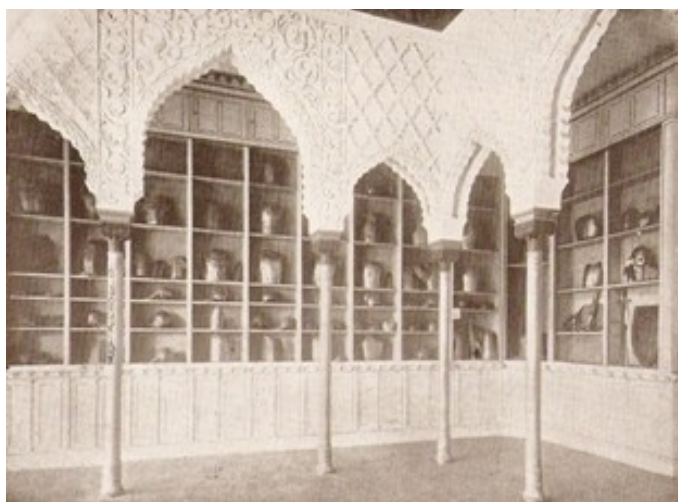
<sup>22</sup> In the Prussian partition, in the area of which Kórnik was located, the authorities conducted Germanization actions aimed at Polish culture and language. Tytus Działyński's fears were very much justified.

<sup>23</sup> Jan Działyński describes his activities related to organization of the exhibition in a preserved letter to his wife. BK 07339, k. 237.

correspondent of the "Dziennik Poznański" informed that: "By a stroke of luck, Count Działyński was in the room, being engaged in its final arrangement."<sup>24</sup>

[17] The modern idea of the appearance of the exhibition in the Mauritanian Hall during Jan's lifetime relies on several sources. The first one is an index of 1863 prepared by the Prussian authorities after subjecting the count's estate to sequestration for participation in the January Insurrection (an independent impulse of Poles against the partitioners). The second sources are preserved photographs of the interior made in 1910 and 1916. The first ones were used in a book entitled *Dwory i pałace wielkopolskie* by Kazimierz Ruciński, published in 1913 (fig. 3, 4). With respect to others, explanations were written by the contemporary curator of the collection, Zygmunt Celichowski, and published in the form of a guidebook about the castle (fig. 6, 7).<sup>25</sup>

[18] Celichowski, a long term co-worker of Jan Działyński, in his description of the castle interiors, divided the discussed premises into three groups: the first one – quadrilateral, surrounded with a gallery supported on iron poles on the first floor; the middle one – an elongated hall separated from the first by a Mauritanian vault; and the third one – an alcove, separated by an arcade.



4 Mauritanian Hall, 1<sup>st</sup> part of the premises, "Armoury", Kórnik Castle 1913, the photograph derives from the book of Kazimierz Ruciński, *Dwory i pałace wielkopolskie*, Poznań 1913 (photograph provided by the photographic studio, Institute of Art History of Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań)

[19] The entrance section of the museum is the palace armoury, which constituted a popular element of Polish palaces in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. However, in this case, the exhibition was arranged in a non-conventional manner. Traditional armouries were rooms in which militaria, elements of weaponry and arms, were exhibited in a

<sup>24</sup> *Dziennik Poznański*, 147 (1878), 3 (online: <http://www.wbc.poznan.pl/publication/2290>).

<sup>25</sup> Zygmunt Celichowski, *Zamek kórnicki z objaśnieniami do przeźroczy*, Poznań 1916.



"picturesque" manner (by placing them on walls). An example of such an interior was the armoury located in the palace of the Raczyński family in Rogalin, near Kórnik (fig. 5).



5 Armoury, Palace in Rogalin, drawing according to: *Przyjacieł Ludu*, 40 (1840) (photograph provided by the photographic studio, Institute of Art History of Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań)

[20] On the other hand, in Kórnik, library shelves were used to present militaria. Without doubt, this decision was influenced by the partially implemented idea of furnishing this interior of Tytus. Tall shelves built into walls with Mauritanian motives corresponding to the interior decoration were supposed to accommodate the Kórnik book collection. Such placement of arms deprived the Kórnik exhibition of the impression of splendour, which is so important in every armoury and created by the arrangement of armour and weapons hanging around it. In Kórnik, segmented elements of armour make an impression of strangely separated fragments, which viewers are accustomed to see as a whole. Yet on the other hand, this dismemberment helps in closer examination of their details. The ordering of these elements, or even their "ranking", is additionally emphasized by the equal divisions of library shelves.

[21] The "Armoury" introduces the viewer to the atmosphere of the Kórnik collection. The exit from the gallery, located in this part of the room, makes the viewers direct their eyes to the opposite wall closing the museum space. A board is attached to this wall on which several specimens of hand weapons hang. This view evokes associations with the entrance image, i.e. a row of library compartments. The horizontal accent provided by the board refers to the first museum room, at the same time delimiting its borders. The

armour placed on one side of the room is matched by weapons hanging on the side of the room.



6 Mauritanian Hall, view towards the alcove, 3<sup>rd</sup> part of the room with sabres hanging on walls attached to a vertical board, Kórnik Castle, 1916, the photograph derives from a book by Zygmunt Celichowski, *Zamek kórnicki z objaśnieniami do przeźroczy*, Poznań 1916 (photograph provided by the Kórnik Library of the Polish Academy of Sciences)

[22] In the case of the Kórnik exhibition, this fact is interesting on account of the fact that these two elements: the arms and the weapons, open and close the museum space. Everything between these two elements an example of other collecting passions of the Działyński family. In the second part of the museum hall, by the wall opposite the window, there are two double cupboards filled with gold items, silver vessels and old caskets.<sup>26</sup> In the niche of the doorway, leading to the room by the museum, saddles and parts of harnesses are displayed.

[23] On cupboards, paintings, mainly portraits, were placed. Their identification on the basis of photographs poses many difficulties. Therefore, it is worthwhile taking a closer look at the Index by Jan Działyński. The owner of the collections was aware of the necessity of making a list of items forming a part of his collections. He was definitely familiar with examples of catalogues of private collections which were prepared in Paris by art historians for individual collectors. In the 1870's, he became involved in making an inventory. The inventory constitutes 17 loose sheets on which the author initially tried to arrange his collections chronologically; later, he only lists items, providing them with numbers. The apparent lack of order on the last pages of the register can be explained by the fact that Działyński was preparing his description taking into account arrangement

<sup>26</sup> The general formulation relies on the description of items in the wardrobes during the making of an inventory in 1863.

of exhibits in the museum room. In the Index, he only took some paintings into account. These are portraits of the Polish kings Michał Korybut, August III, Stanisław August and a portrait of Henryk Walezjusz. The presence of paintings on one of the cupboards can be seen in a photograph; unfortunately, ascertaining what exactly was placed over the other cupboard is impossible.

[24] Exhibits arranged in the second part of the Hall were grouped according to their functions and intended use. Saddles, sets of horse tacks and parts of harnesses are in one place; golden items, vessels, valuables are located in glazed cabinets. This resembles the manner of display at both Parisian and certain Polish exhibitions.<sup>27</sup> Only fragments of armaments placed around the room introduce variety to this exhibition divided into collections. They create the impression that the character of the militaria collection dominates the entire space of the museum. The Mauritanian Hall is therefore presented as a new version of a palace armoury, which used to function in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. One cannot forget that Tytus Działyński collected militaria thinking about a room of this type. Having such collection at his disposal, Jan Działyński professed another outlook at such exhibition of armaments, so popular at the beginning of the century. The Mauritanian Hall is therefore not a trophy place referring to the mightiness of the noble class, but a place of sentimental presentation of tokens.

[25] The third part of the museum hall, the alcove separated by an arcade, apart from the above-mentioned board on which sabres are hanging, hides some exhibits that remain invisible until the visitors arrive in this last zone. At the eastern wall, a display is presented, which is surprising by its variety (fig. 7).

[26] In this place, we can see a piano to the left (this is a memento of Klaudyna née Działyńska Potocka, Tytus' sister). Moreover, in its vicinity, there is a military barrel and a guild chalice. Over the piano, two portraits were hanging: to the left, of Field Marshall Pociąg, to the right, of Peter the Great, painted by Jan Kupecky. Nearby, there were two halberds of the Marshall's guards, and further along a Teutonic sword. On the piano, a portrait of an unidentified person has been placed.

---

<sup>27</sup> An example of such an exhibition was the *Exhibition of Antiquities and Art Objects* in Warsaw in 1856. This was the first exhibition in the area of Poland presenting historical items. One of its organizers, Bolesław Podczaszyński, described the system of grouping the exhibits in these words: "Therefore, after many attempts and changes, when the systems or chronological layouts adopted in foreign collections or division into countries, owners, materials, etc. were of no use, a division was adopted into types of items according to their intended use; in turn, such items were arranged chronologically and according to similarities and grouped in great divisions arranged according to subsequent periods of time." Quotation after Jerzy Kowalczyk, "Starożytnicy warszawscy połowy XIX w. i ich rola w popularyzacji zabytków ojczystych," in: *Edukacja historyczna społeczeństwa polskiego w XIX wieku*, ed. Jerzy Maternicki, Warsaw 1981, 189. Other exhibitions organized in Poland did not have such transparent displays. This is testified to by the preserved illustrations and photographs of their interiors. Cf. *Wystawa starożytności w Krakowie w pałacu XX. Lubomirskich*, lithographs by H. Walter, exh.cat., Krakow 1859; *Zabytki XVII wieku. Wystawa jubileuszowa Jana III w Krakowie 1883*, exh.cat., Krakow 1884.



7 Mauritanian Hall, corner with a piano, Kórnik Castle, 1916, the photograph derives from a book by Zygmunt Celichowski, *Zamek kórnicki z objaśnieniami do przeżroczy*, Poznań 1916 (photograph provided by the Kórnik Library of the Polish Academy of Sciences)

[27] In comparison to the Museum Hall, the composition of this corner is surprising, on the one hand, by its commemorative nature, and on the other, by its seemingly incoherent character. Materials in the other parts of the museum hall are arranged on the basis of material and type; in the discussed fragment of the space, the viewer is surprised by an exhibition with a piano placed centrally. In line with family tradition, Frederick Chopin, who visited the Potocki house in Dresden,<sup>28</sup> used to play this piano. After Klaudyna Potocka's death, the piano, along with other tokens, was inherited by Tytus, who brought them to Kórnik. Irrespective of the fact whether the piano was treated as a token of the composer's visits or the property of Tytus' sister, its value had a commemorative and not only family nature. Klaudyna Potocka was a well-known person, esteemed for her patriotic attitude after the November Insurrection.<sup>29</sup>

[28] The instrument in the vicinity of other items accumulated in this place is the only such open demonstration of the patriotic beliefs of the owner of Kórnik. The Mauritanian Hall shows groups of items between which fragments of armaments are placed – therefore, these are historic items, testimonies to former times. The chronology is not the key to their arrangement. They are grouped on the basis of intended use of an item: vessels, gems, medals, belts, tapestries and curb chains. Thereby, a scientific, systematic

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Kazimierz Krawiarz, "Naprawa *Fortepianu Chopina* z Salonu Tytusa Działyńskiego w zamku kórnickim," in: *Pamiętnik Biblioteki Kórnickiej*, 22 (1982), 179-183.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Barbara Dolczewska and Zygmunt Dolczewski, "'Oblubienica ojczyzny', czyli patriotyczna biżuteria Działyńskich," in: *Amulet – znak – klejnot. Biżuteria w Polsce*. Materials from the 4<sup>th</sup> Scientific Session organized by the Toruń Division of the Association of Art Historians and the International Gdańsk Fair in Gdańsk, Toruń 2003, 88-89. The authors remind one of the person of Tytus Działyński's sister and her popularity in Polish artistic and literary circles in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

and slightly impersonal approach to the collection was emphasized. This makes the variety of exhibits in the discussed corner even more striking.

[29] The history of the golden times of the Republic of Poland seems to be mixed with 19<sup>th</sup> century events in this place; this relation is based on the visual closeness of the main elements of the arrangement: two portraits on the wall and the instrument. They constitute the main reference to two periods in Polish history: the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The portraits of Ludwik Pociąg and Tsar Peter I the Great, painted by Jan Kupecky, constituting pendants, commemorate the political relations between the presented persons. Field Marshal Pociąg was a trusted representative of Russia's interests, primarily in Lithuania – he owed his position, as well as numerous estates, to the tsar. This colourful person functioned in a slightly explicit light of history, preferring the interest of Russia over the issues of his motherland, and was considered a traitor<sup>30</sup>. The intimacy of the two persons portrayed is expressed by the manner of presenting them. In particular, the presentation of Tsar Peter I the Great in a quite casual pose, without idealization and the insignia of power, strikes viewers with its unofficial character. In line with tradition, the portraits were painted upon the order of the ruler of Russia and given to the Field Marshall as a gift to commemorate their feasts.<sup>31</sup>

[30] Next to it is a piano, a symbol of the times of post-insurrection emigration. Between these elements is the thread of Poland's history spanning the last several hundred years: from the representatives of nobility, guided solely by private interest, to people participating in armed fighting and forced to emigrate. The composition is supplemented by the staffs of marshals, a Teutonic sword and guild vessels, i.e. various symbols of Polish history.

[31] In the last part of the Mauritanian Hall, in a place seemingly inaccessible and slightly hidden, Jan Działyński created a small arrangement in which he presented a vision of history, in an allusive manner, penetrating with a Romantic fondness for national relics. The piano of Klaudyna Potocka not only plays the role of homage paid to family tradition, but also the tradition of a romantic collecting of items of this type. This entire part resembles a domestic, private arrangement, distant from the systematized exhibition of other parts of the Kórnik museum. Even the selection of portraits, showing historic persons in casual poses and devoid of pathos, contrasts with the official portraits of rulers hanging over the cupboards with exhibits in the Mauritanian Hall. This private arrangement might have been meant to be Jan Działyński's commentary on the history of

---

<sup>30</sup> Ludwik Konstanty Pociąg (1664–1730), a Lithuanian field marshal, supporter and friend of Peter I the Great, morally and materially subject to Russia. He played the role of the trusted supporter of Russia during the crisis of power of August II the Strong in Poland which ended with the arrangements of the so-called Silent Sejm in 1717. Cf. Paweł Jasienica, *Rzeczpospolita Obojga Narodów. Dzieje agonii*, Warsaw 1997, 90-91.

<sup>31</sup> Barbara Dolczewska, "'Królewska' galeria obrazów Tytusa Działyńskiego w Kórniku," in: *Pamiętnik Biblioteki Kórnickiej*, 29 (2009), 258.

the country and its future, as well as the beliefs of his father. It is as if the collector ventured a more personal note here, operating simple symbols: traitor of the nation (Ludwik Pociąg) and fights for independence (Polish emigrants and their guardian, Klaudyna Potocka).

[<top>](#)

### **Summary**

[32] Jan Działyński, a frequenter of exhibitions, an expert on the Parisian market and a collector who remained in close contacts with French researchers, art historians and art merchants, trying to show in the Kórnik museum publications referring to Polish affairs in a systematic arrangement, created a collection in the Mauritanian Hall which is his commentary on history, as well as on Polish collecting. In this place, he emphasized and ceded a point to his father – an aristocrat taking care of inherited works of art, as well as fascinated by the slightly sentimental and romantic collecting of tokens. Therefore, he placed here a national relic referring to the national liberation movement. There is no doubt that the Polish items collected by Tytus were supposed to preserve national memory. However, taking the collection over after his father, Jan Działyński constructed an exhibition in the Mauritanian Hall where his experiences from exhibitions, his concept of presenting militaria (constituting a new outlook on the armouries which functioned from the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century) were all mixed together with a hint of the above-mentioned nostalgia, sprinkled with reflections on history. The Mauritanian Hall, as well as the collector Jan Działyński, stands at the crossroads of development of collecting: between the typically Polish Romantic depiction and the Western scientific arrangement.

*Translated by Alicja Brodowicz-Transue*

[<top>](#)