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## HISTORY OF SOME ANTIQUITIES FROM THE COLLECTION OF MICHAŁ TYSKIEWICZ IN GRÓDEK<sup>1</sup>

### ABSTRACT

The palace in Gródek, one of the palaces built by the Tyszkiewicz family in Lithuania, was located in present-day Belarus, a dozen kilometres from Minsk. The founder of the building was Count Michał Tyszkiewicz. Built in 1855, the palace remained in the hands of the family until 1918. Among the antique pieces of furniture documented on photographs and paintings are a table and a mirror, today kept in Lithuanian museums.

The mirror, decorated with tusks of wild pigs, was offered to King Augustus II on the occasion of his coronation in 1697. In the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century it was purchased by Michał Tyszkiewicz, who then added it to the furnishings of a tent offered as a resting place for Tsar Alexander during a hunting trip organised by Michał Tyszkiewicz and his brother in 1858 near Vilnius. This event was recorded by journalists and artists on some lithographs.

**Keywords:** Count Michał Tyszkiewicz, palace in Gródek, mirror, King Augustus II, Tsar Alexander, hunting

In 1855, in Gródek (a locality in the Minsk guberniya, c. 3 miles from Minsk), in a picturesque forest region and by a large lake, Count Michał Tyszkiewicz (1828–1897) and his spouse, Maria (1830–1902), built a palace in the English style (Fig. 1). The wall surrounding the palace park was over six kilometres long. The area included a game park for hunting because Count Michał Tyszkiewicz was an ardent hunter. He was at the same time a collector, and his collection gathered in the Gródek palace included weaponry, mostly from the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, paintings, old faiences, porcelain, glass, coins, hunting trophies, panoplies, etc. His son, Józef Tyszkiewicz (1850–1905), left the following account:

“Michał Tyszkiewicz had many splendid collections in Gródek, where he lived until 1862. They included a set of Polish coins bought from Karol Beyer, Mikocki, and other collectors. It was later sold to Count Emeryk Czapski and now makes up a large part of the collection which Count Czapski bequeathed to the Museum in Kraków. Besides the coins, there was a fine collection of

old arms, coming in their majority from the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. The arms were lost in 1863. There were several dozens of old and contemporary paintings by first-class artists. The old ones included some splendid works of art, such as a large painting by Holbein, a religious picture ascribed to Raphael, as well as one by Boucher, and more than a dozen of other good paintings. The contemporary ones included fine examples of French, Flemish, and other schools. The paintings were sold in Paris in 1864 at a public auction. The majority were bought by Józef Tyszkiewicz’s paternal uncle, Count Jan Tyszkiewicz, for his residence in Waka, where they have remained until now. My father also had in Gródek three large albums with watercolours by eminent painters from 1850–1860. [...] He had a splendid collection of old Polish and German silver chalices [Fig. 2] as well as a beautiful large silver service from the 18<sup>th</sup> century representing a music band in period clothes under an arbour – all on a large rococo pedestal. [...] There were some faiences, porcelain, and glass wares”.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The original version of this paper was presented in Polish on 12 December 2011 during a conference accompanying an exhibition in the State Archaeological Museum in Warsaw titled *Papyri, Mummies and Gold. Michał Tyszkiewicz and the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the First Polish and Lithuanian Excavations in*

*Egypt*. Like other papers of this conference, it was then sent to the editorial board of the periodical *Z otchłani wieków*; however, it has never been published. On the same subject, cf. Snitkuvienė 1997; 2008.

<sup>2</sup> Tyszkiewicz 1903, 86.



Fig. 1. Palace built by Michał Tyszkiewicz in Gródek. A lithograph from the 19<sup>th</sup> century (from Roman Aftanazy archive).



Fig. 2. Big silver chalice donated by Michał Tyszkiewicz for Vilnius Cathedral on St. Casimir's day (Snitkuvienė 2008, 375, no. 1561; col. ill. 399).

After Maria Tyszkiewicz's death, the palace was inherited by her grandson, Alfred Tyszkiewicz (1882–1930), who took diligent care of the whole collection. On 21 July 1917, a part of it was temporarily deposited in the Protection Department of Relics of Art and Culture by the Central Committee of Citizens in Minsk.<sup>3</sup> On 3 December 1918, the same objects were gathered by Alfred Tyszkiewicz and deposited in the City Museum of Kaunas under the supervision of its director, an archaeologist and artist, Tadeusz Dowgird (1852–1919).<sup>4</sup> This museum was liquidated in 1936, and the antiquities were passed to the Vytautas the Great Museum of Culture (currently the M.K. Čiurlionis National Museum of Art) in Kaunas.<sup>5</sup>

Among the paintings originating from the Gródek palace, there is Albert Žamet's (1821–1876) canvas *The Interior of the Gródek Palace*<sup>6</sup> (Fig. 3), which has been helpful during the identification of two other antiquities from the collection of Michał Tyszkiewicz. One of them is a mirror with the frame decorated with tusks of wild pigs, among others, and topped with a decoration representing the coat of arms of the princely house of Radziwiłł (Maria Tyszkiewicz's parents belonged to that family) – an eagle with raised wings – and a bone

<sup>3</sup> A handwritten note confirming the deposit (under number 334) is preserved on a label attached to a portrait of Józef Tyszkiewicz, currently in the M.K. Čiurlionis National Museum of Art, Kaunas, inv. no. Mtg 2265.

<sup>4</sup> The register of donations of the City Museum Kaunas, KMM, 1.3–8, nos 30–60.

<sup>5</sup> Snitkuvienė 2008, 127–134.

<sup>6</sup> M.K. Čiurlionis National Museum of Art., inv. no. Mt 1896; Snitkuvienė 1997, pl. XLIV, 2; 2008, 47, 393 (fragment).



Fig. 3. Albert Žamett's canvas *The Interior of the Gródek Palace*, 1872 (fragment), the M.K. Čiurlionis National Museum of Art, Kaunas, inv. no. Mt. 1896 (Snitkuvienė 2008, 327, no. 1189; col. ill. 393).

with the incrustated date of 1697.<sup>7</sup> This date, as well as an archival document, enable the reconstruction of the interesting history of the object. On 15 September 1697, there was a coronation ceremony of the Polish King and the Great Duke of Lithuania, Augustus II, and it is plausible that the mirror, created perhaps by a local craftsman, was presented to the King on that occasion by somebody, maybe belonging to the Radziwiłł family (Fig. 4.a). In the empty dark slots seen on the frame and above it, one should probably reconstruct the monograms of Augustus II and the coats of arms of the Kingdom of Poland (white eagle) and of the Great Duchy of Lithuania (Knight).

<sup>7</sup> M.K. Čiurlionis National Museum of Art., inv. no. Tt 2225; in the register of donations of the City Museum of Kaunas, KMM 1.7, no. 58; Snitkuvienė 1997, 235, pl. XLIV,1; 2008, 360 (no. 1384), 392.

<sup>8</sup> Schmidt 1997, 259 (cat. no. 457), 322 (cat. no. 586), 326 (cat. no. 603), 369 (cat. no. 726).

<sup>9</sup> Chrościcki 1974, 236, 244.

<sup>10</sup> A document kept in the Lithuanian State Historical Archive (LVIA), no. f 716.ap.3, b 976.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. the previous footnote.

In the M.K. Čiurlionis National Museum, a computer reconstruction of the missing details was attempted (Fig. 4.b). The monogram may have been composed of the letters 'AR' (Augustus Rex) or 'FA' (Friedrich August). Analogous monograms can be found on other objects of decorative art from the period of Augustus II's reign,<sup>8</sup> especially on those representing an exceptionally high artistic value, often royal gifts, like some products of the Royal Porcelain Manufactory Berlin (Königliche Porzellan Manufaktur), the oldest of its kind in Europe.<sup>9</sup>

The fate of the hunting trophies and pieces of furniture decorated with these monograms belonging to King Augustus II is for the most part unknown; they were probably dispersed after the king's death. However, one archival document in the possession of the Lithuanian State Historical Archive confirms that in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Karaliaučius (Królewiec, Königsberg) Count Michał Tyszkiewicz purchased a set of furniture once belonging to King Augustus II. These pieces of furniture were decorated with antlers of deer, while a dressing table had a mirror with tusks of wild pigs.<sup>10</sup> As a result of this purchase, the mirror later once again served another monarch, who may have examined himself in it.

In 1858, in the area localised some 16 versts (c. 17 kilometres) from Vilnius, not far from a route linking Vilnius and Wiłkomierz (Ukmergė), the counts Michał and Józef Tyszkiewicz (1835–1891) organised a hunting trip in honour of Alexander II (1818–1881), who was a tsar since 1855. Artists and journalists were invited in order to memorialise the event; a description of it is currently held by the Lithuanian Historical Archive,<sup>11</sup> and some episodes have been presented on several pieces of lithography.<sup>12</sup> The description of the hunt contains the following passages:

"The hunting area has been chosen very well, and the whole arrangement can prove the knowledge of the hunting art, and it testifies to an exquisite taste of the hosts. A broad road freshly built in the middle of the game park, going along the edge of an oak forest and then through a dense bush, led towards the north-east directly to the tents. The first of these was intended for His Highness. It was decorated first of all by the dressing

<sup>12</sup> Made by E. Cicéri and A.J.B. Bayot, the lithograph "Hunt organised by Michał and Józef Tyszkiewicz for Tsar Alexander II in 1858" was published in J.K. Wilczyński's *Album de Wilna*, 1860, I series, IV livre. These pieces of lithography are actually preserved in the library of the Vilnius University (VU GK, G.0015083-85), in the Lithuanian National Museum in Vilnius (LNM, inv. no. IMik 1919), and in the Lithuanian Museum of Art in Vilnius (LDM G.783, G. 784, G. 791).



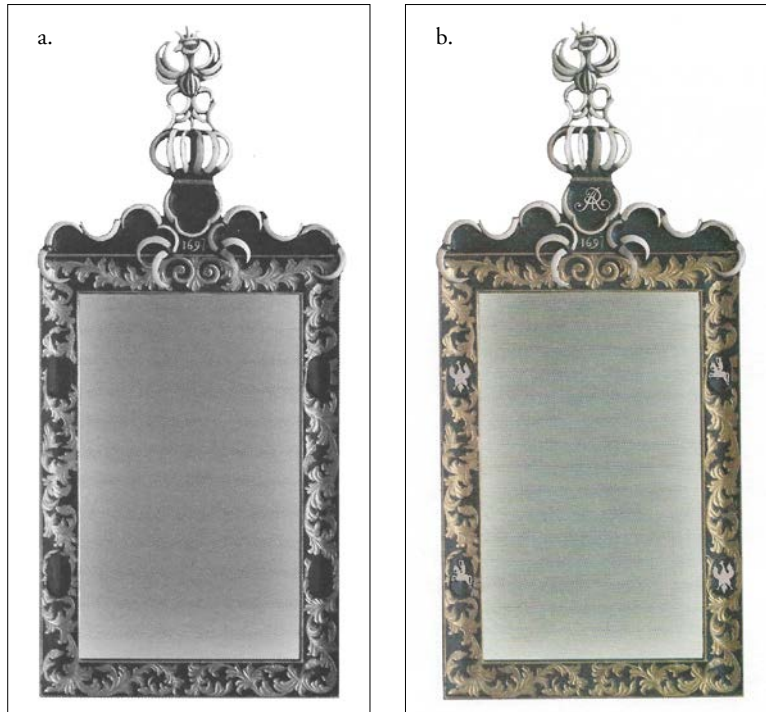


Fig. 4. a. Mirror originally belonging to Augustus II, the M.K. Čiurlionis National Museum of Art, Kaunas, inv. no. Tt. 2225 (Snitkuvienė 2008, 360, no. 1384).

Fig. 4. b. Mirror with computer reconstructed monograms of Augustus II and the coats of arms of the Kingdom of Poland (white eagle) and of the Great Duchy of Lithuania (Knight) (Snitkuvienė 2008, col. ill. 392, no. 1384).

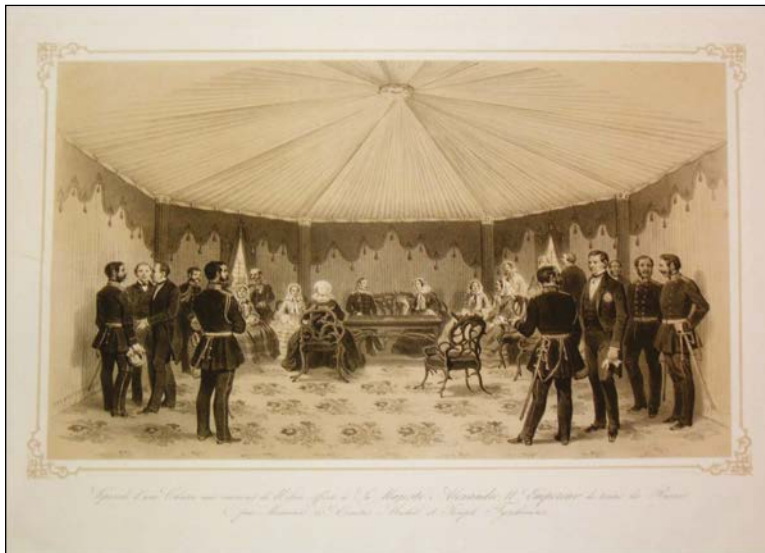


Fig. 5. Counts Michał and Józef Tyszkiewicz organised a hunting episode in honour of Tsar Alexander II in 1858. A lithograph by E. Cicéri and A.J.B. Bayot, 1860. In the tent we see the furniture with deer antlers which was bought in Królewiec by Michał Tyszkiewicz. By the table sit (in the middle) the tsar, (on the right) Maria Tyszkiewiczowa, (on the left) Eliza Orzeszkowa; in front and on the right stand Józef and Michał Tyszkiewicz (The Lithuanian National Museum in Vilnius, inv. no Imik 1919) (Snitkuvienė 2008, 55, photo 25).



Fig. 6. Table belonging to Count Tyszkiewicz's collection from Gródek, the Lithuanian Museum of Art, Vilnius (LDM), inv. no. TD 520 (Snitkuvienė 2008, 364, no. 1429, col. ill. 392).

table with the mirror of Augustus II. The frames of these mirror are completely made of tusks of wild pig, and are topped with an adornment in the shape of an eagle with raised wings, similarly made of stretching wild pig's tusks; under the eagle there is a year and Augustus II's monogram arranged of the tusks. The next tent was the largest; it was half-opened from the side of the road. A huge flag with the coat of arms of the State was flying above the portico, the roof of which was perfectly adapted to the style of the whole tent that was striking with the harmony of the size and the correctness of the design. The cornices of the portico and the front walls were decorated with heads of deers and other hunting trophies. Inside, between the poles supporting the tent were eight complete marbles and panoplies arranged of ancient weapons posed on poles. Along the tent, a table prepared for breakfast was positioned<sup>13</sup>.

Behind this tent, towards the north, by the road, one not very large parlour tent was erected, arranged in the Gothic style, with the windows topped with lancet arches and crowned with a small tower. At the entrance to this tent, covered with crimson portières, two dwarves were standing, supporting the portières. The inside of the tent was very tastefully covered with white crimson decorated with dark green festoons. All the furniture made of deer antlers, like that of Augustus, consisted of a dozen of armchairs, one large incrustated table, and some chairs of the same style. All these pieces of furniture had once been the property of Augustus II (Fig. 5).<sup>14</sup>

One of the two tables visible on the painting by A. Žamett was purchased in 1989 by the Lithuanian Museum of Art (Fig. 6).<sup>15</sup> On a photo made by an unknown photographer early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Gródek,<sup>16</sup> the two tables are still in place (Fig. 7). At a later date, these pieces of furniture were trans-



Fig. 7. Count Tyszkiewicz's dining-room in the Gródek Palace (with two tables that were painted in *The Interior of the Gródek Palace* by A. Žamett, 1872). Photography, Early 20th century, The National Museum of History and Culture of Belarus, Minsk, inv. no. KP 22876 (Snitkuvienė 2008, 393, no. 1429).

ported to Vilnius, to the palace of a granddaughter of Michał Tyszkiewicz, Klementyna Tyszkiewicz (1856–1921). The fate of the other table remains unknown.

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<sup>13</sup> Lithuanian State Historical Archive, no. f. 716, ap. 3, b. 976.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. the previous footnote.

<sup>15</sup> LDM inv. no. TD 520.

<sup>16</sup> Held by the National Museum of History and Culture of Belarus in Minsk, inv. no. KP 22876.