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THE NATIONAL MUSEUM IN WARSAW

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A Biedermeier Table for Displaying Geological and Dendrological Specimens from the Collection of the National Museum in Warsaw

In memory of Maciej Maria Putowski

In 2017, thanks to financial support from the Board of Trustees,[1] the collection of the National Museum in Warsaw grew with the addition of a unique Biedermeier table.[2] This piece of high decorative appeal served mainly to showcase the assortment of geological and dendrological specimens imbedded into its surface. These samples are placed in the table's round top in an alternating, outwardly-radiating pattern – between the 28 recessed slender rectangular fields, each composed of five minerals,[3] are triangular inlays of 16 varieties of wood.[4] The round central field of cherry veneer contains another four rectangular stone plates and an oval intarsia dimple with an explanatory inscription in ink reading: *Collection of* | *granite porphyry and Ma* | *rble with domestic wo* | *ods inlaid by I.G* | *1825*. The tiltable tabletop is set on a tapered and faceted post in the shape of a vase, veneered in walnut, on a hexagonal base[5] with concave sides.

The custom to assemble mineral and dendrological collections arose out of the enlightened 18th-century fashion for interest in the natural sciences, the tendency toward encyclopaedic classification of the world, and attempts to acquire comprehensive knowledge of the natural world. As this trend continued into the 19th century, raw materials collected in Poland

[1] The Board consists of: Jan Krzysztof Bielecki, Prof. Piotr Bieliński, Prof. Andrzej Buko, Paweł Kastory, Tomasz Konior, Prof. Jack Lohman, Prof. Karol Myśliwiec, Prof. Witold Orłowski, Wojciech Pawłowski, Prof. Maria Poprzęcka, Anda Rottenberg, Prof. Andrzej Rottermund, Prof. Stanisław Sołtysiński, Dr Andrzej Szczerski, Aldona Wejchert, Prof. Tadeusz J. Żuchowski.

[2] The National Museum in Warsaw, inv. no. SZMb 3001 MNW; purchased in 2017 from the heirs of Aniela Steinsberg, restored by the NMW Antique Furniture Restoration Workshop between late 2017 and early 2018.

[3] Including marble, limestone, granite, volcanic rock, jasper, gneiss, and conglomerates. For assistance in identifying the minerals, I thank Marek Stępisiewicz (Geological Museum, University of Warsaw) and, above all, Andrzej Szymkowiak (Polish Geological Institute), the author of the list of the identified specimens appearing in the object description on the Digital National Museum in Warsaw website.

[4] Birch, pear, buckthorn, ash, sycamore, cherry, apple, box, plum, beech, hawthorn, hazel, lilac, walnut, hackberry, elm. For their help identifying the specimens, I thank Dr Paweł Kozakiewicz (Fac. of Wood Technology, Warsaw University of Life Sciences) and NMW conservators Arkadiusz Kłosowski and Marian Mieleszkiewicz.

[5] The tabletop underside (and the reinforcing cleats) is painted navy blue. The French hinges and sliding latch (locking the top in upright position) are made of steel. Dimensions: h. 79 cm, Ø 113 cm; construction – pine, sycamore, spruce; inscription – *Krakow* | *B.* in blue chalk on the post block.

began to be used by the pioneers of industrial production. These ideas eventually diffused into the territory of Poland and were embraced by the king and the country's high officials as well as erudite enthusiasts. In April of 1782, King Stanisław August appointed a state geological and mining body known as the Ore Committee. In order to ensure the highest possible competence of its staff, the king recruited the Italian geologist Jan Filip Carosi and financed the education of three Polish men at the school of metallurgy, geology and mining in Schemnitz[6] (present day Banská Štiavnica, Slovakia). Carosi was posted in the Natural History Room established by the monarch, where he published the first geological reports concerning Polish lands.[7] He also amassed a valuable mineralogical collection, which was purchased by Stanisław Staszic (1755–1826)[8] after Carosi's death.

Among the well-educated dilettantes nurturing an interest in natural science in the second half of the 18th century was the priest Jan Krzysztof Kluk (1739–96), author of a two-volume geology and minerology handbook titled *Mined Goods Singularly to be Sought, Learned and Possessed*.[9] Another prominent figure in this milieu was Anna Jabłonowska, née Sapieha[10] (1728–1800), a person of vast knowledge who had built a natural history room in Siematycze that was the largest yet in Poland and known throughout Europe, with a collection of geological and natural specimens that was eventually bequeathed to the Republic of Poland.[11] The collection attracted a number of outstanding scholars, including the botanists Jean E. Gilbert (1741–1814) and Johann G. Forster (1754–94) and the geologist Johann J. Ferber (1743–90). Jabłonowska also imparted her fascination with natural science on her foster child Aleksander Antoni Sapieha[12] (1773–1812), who developed a passion for botany, geography, chemistry and Slavic ethnography, and under Staszic's influence, for geology and minerology, especially that of the crystalline rock of eastern Poland. He analysed rocks and collected geological and botanical samples, going on to produce published geological texts like his *Mémoire sur vues générales relatives à l'explication de quelques faits concernant la géologie de la Pologne*[13] and the scientific manuscripts "Minerology" (an inorganic chemistry textbook in which he

[6] Mariusz-Orion Jędrysek, "Geologia i górnictwo w Polsce z punktu widzenia Głównego Geologa Kraju (2005–2007). Wybrane zagadnienia od Komisji Kruszcowej do dziś," *Kopaliny. Czasopismo górnictwa odkrywkowego*, no. 2 (71) (2008), p. 23.

[7] "Carosi Jan Filip" in *Polski słownik biograficzny* (henceforth *PSB*), vol. 3 (Krakow, 1937), pp. 206–7 (Natalia Gąsiorowska); "Carosi Jan Filip" in *Słownik biograficzny techników polskich*, Józef Piłatowicz, academic ed., vol. 22 (Warsaw, 2011), pp. 15–16 (Zbigniew J. Wójcik).

[8] "Staszic Stanisław Wawrzyniec" in *PSB*, vol. 42/4, b. 175 (Warsaw–Krakow, 2004), pp. 540–51 (Maria Czeppe, Zbigniew Wójcik); Zbigniew Wójcik, *Stanisław Staszic, organizator nauki i gospodarki* (Krakow, 1999), p. 72; Marek Graniczny, Joanna Kacprzak, Halina Urban, "Mapy geologiczne i opisy ziem polskich w XVIII i pierwszej połowie XIX wieku," *Przegląd Geologiczny*, vol. 54, no. 9 (2006), p. 759.

[9] Jędrysek, op. cit., p. 21.

[10] "Jabłonowska z Sapiehów Anna Paulina" in *PSB*, vol. 10 (Wrocław–Warsaw–Krakow, 1962–1964), pp. 210–12 (Janina Berger-Mayerowa); Henryk Mierzwiński, "Księżna Anna Paulina z Sapiehów Jabłonowska (1728–1800)," *Szkice Podlaskie*, no. 7 (1999), pp. 211, 215.

[11] To Jabłonowska's gift, the High Sejm replied "What the Republic needs now is not personalities but money" – cited after: Henryk Mierzwiński, op. cit., p. 211. Anna's heir sold the room to the academy in Moscow – see Ryszard W. Wołoszyński, "Początki współpracy polsko-rosyjskiej w dziedzinie geologii i kartografii. Akademia Nauk w Petersburgu i polskie środowisko naukowe w XVIII w.," *Kwartalnik Historii Kultury Materialnej*, Ann. 22, no. 4 (1974), pp. 618, 629.

[12] "Sapieha Aleksander Antoni" in *PSB*, vol. 34 (Wrocław–Warsaw–Krakow, 1992–1993), pp. 569–72 (Zbigniew J. Wójcik).

[13] "Journal de physique, de chimie et d'histoire naturelle", vol. 58 (1804).

addressed issues like the occurrence and extraction of certain elemental deposits) and "Polish Minerology." He developed close ties with the Society of Friends of Science, to which he later donated a large portion of his book collection,[14] and he collaborated with one of the society's co-founders, the Piarist Józef Herman Osiński (1738–1802),[15] an influential author of textbooks in the field of physics (including Poland's first textbook on electricity), as well as a chemist, botanist, geologist, aeronautics pioneer, and metallurgy specialist.

Mineralogical collections were also kept by other learned individuals, like Stanisław Kostka Potocki[16] in Warsaw and Teofila Konstancja Morawska, née Radziwiłł[17] in Vilnius. In fact, working in the Main School in Vilnius (formerly the Academy and from 1803, the University) were the outstanding minerology professor Roman Symonowicz[18] (1768–1813) and Aleksander Haubold, a student of Abraham Gottlob Werner and author of one of the first university textbooks on minerology.[19] Having a fine minerology room of his own, Symonowicz built a collection of that kind at the school and also prepared an inventory of minerals at the natural history room of the local botanical gardens.

The Main School in Vilnius administered other schools (like the Krzemienic High School, and the middle schools in Vitebsk, Minsk and Świslač), which also taught geology and possessed their own mineralogical collections.[20] In 1781, the Vilnius Academy set up its faculty of natural history, which for two years was headed by Jean Emanuel Gilbert, the French biologist and zoologist and professor of anatomy and surgery recruited to Poland by King Stanisław August. While in the country, Gilbert also established the Royal Botanical Gardens in Grodno.[21]

The growing interest in nature studies in university circles spawned the 1783 establishment of botanical gardens in Krakow and Warsaw as well. In 1811, the Warsaw Medical School opened its Hortus Medicus, which after 1818 was transformed into a botanical garden maintained by the Royal University in Warsaw, which was eventually relocated to an area near the Royal Łazienki Park and Belweder Palace. This further contributed to the popularity of science and the intensification of the study of botany.[22]

[14] Olgierd Mikołajski, "Wstęp," in *Imago florae. Spotkanie artysty i uczonego. Ilustracja botaniczna wiek XVI–XIX*, Maria Reklewska, ed., exh. cat., Państwowe Zbiory Sztuki na Wawelu, Zamek w Pieskowej Skale, 2007 (Krakow, 2007), pp. 5–6.

[15] "Osiński Kazimierz, w zakonie Józef Herman," *PSB*, vol. 24 (Wrocław–Warsaw–Krakow–Gdańsk, 1979), pp. 336–38 (Rafał Leszczyński, Kazimierz Sarnecki).

[16] Maria I. Kwiatkowska, Irena Malinowska, *Pałac Potockich* (Warsaw, 1976), p. 73.

[17] Daughter of Urszula Wiśniowiecka and Michał Kazimierz – see Katarzyna Król, *Kolekcjonerskie pasje Teofili Konstancji z Radziwiłłów Morawskiej (1738–1807)* [online], at: <http://www.wilanow-palac.pl/kolekcjonerskie_pasje_teofili_konstancji_z_radziwillow_morawskiej_1738_1807.html>, [retrieved: 5 February 2019].

[18] "Symonowicz Roman" in *PSB*, vol. 46/2, b. 189 (Warsaw–Krakow, 2009), pp. 251–54 (Janina Kamińska).

[19] Roman Symonowicz, *O stanie dzisiejszym mineralogii* (Vilnius, 1806).

[20] Jadwiga Garbowska, "Materiały Cesarskiego Uniwersytetu Wileńskiego," in *Materiały archiwalne z zakresu historii nauk o ziemi w zbiorach Muzeum Ziemi PAN. Inwentarz spuścizn naukowych* [online], p. 5 (Warsaw, 2001), <http://mz.pan.pl/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/INWENTARZ-V.pdf>, [retrieved: 15 October 2019].

[21] Piotr Daszkiewicz, Tomasz Samojlik, Barbara Bańka, "Obserwacje litewskich niedźwiedzi Jeana Emanuela Gilberta," *Przegląd Zoologiczny*, Ann. 51, no. 3–4 (2007), pp. 183–88.

[22] A product of this study was an inventory of plants published in 1824, which contained over ten thousand species – see Michał Szubert, *Spis roślin Ogrodu Botanicznego Królewskiego-Warszawskiego Uniwersytetu* (Warsaw, 1824). Published in Warsaw from 1820 was the journal *Sylwan. Dziennik nauk leśnych i myśliwych* (pub. Natan Glücksberg), which until 1829 was issued in four volumes and until 1858 mainly in single volumes.

This brief overview of the state of learning in the fields of minerology and botany in the territory of the Republic of Poland at the turn of the 19th century shows the scale and scope of the interest in science at that time. Surely having an influence on the man who came up with the idea for the table of mineralogical and dendrological specimens were the early lexicons[23] and botanical sample sets[24] appearing in print and physical form. It was common practice at that time to keep collections of not only rocks in their naturally-occurring form but also ones that had been cut and polished into flat tiles, which were sometimes even used to surface furniture, mostly tabletops. As for tables of this kind, among the oldest artefacts connected with the Republic of Poland is a rectangular Classical table most likely imported to the Werklany Palace from Italy by the amateur geologist and volcanologist Michał Jan Borch (1753–1811). It appears alongside its owner in a portrait painted by Ludwig Guttenbrunn[25] between 1776 and 1778. Also possibly from the same period was a carved and gilded console table from the Stefan Batory University in Vilnius,[26] of Rococo and Classical form with a top composed of square stone tiles arranged in a checkerboard pattern (as was also the case with the Werklany table).

The designer of the inlaid table from the NMW collection, identifying himself as "IG" (or possibly "JG") in the dimple, was likely a "naturalist" affiliated with the Warsaw Royal Society of Friends of Science[27] and Stanisław Staszic. He was surely no stranger to the scholar's espousal and practice of geological exploration for the sake of minerals' and other natural materials' utility in the growth of the Kingdom of Poland's economy. Staszic was an expert on geology and metallurgy and mining. In these fields he produced scientific papers,[28] and in 1806, he published the map of Poland *Carta geologica*.[29] For many years, he served as

[23] In 1782, J.H. Osiński published a mining-metallurgy dictionary with an overview of Polish steelworks – see *PSB*, vol. 24, p. 337. Staszic contributed a dictionary of geological terms to the collection of articles *O ziemiorództwie Karpat i innych gór i równin Polski* (Warsaw, 1815). On the basis of records kept by Roman Symonowicz, Makary Bogatko published the 1815 work "Nomenklatura minerałów pojedynczych czyli orygnoktasyczno-mineralogiczna przez S.P. Romana Symonowicza w największej części wypracowana, a przez jego ucznia [...] dokończona – zob. Symonowicz Roman," in *PSB*, vol. 46/2, b. 189 (Warsaw–Krakow, 2009), p. 253 (Janina Kamińska).

[24] E.g., Jan Christian Sepp, *Représentation des bois, des arbres et arbrisseaux rassemblés dans les cabinets, avec des explications en latin, françois, anglois, allemande et hollandois, avec le supplement* (Amsterdam, 1773–1795), with 106 colour illustrations; Jan Christian Sepp, Martinus Houttuyn, *Icones lignorum exoticorum et nostratium germanicorum ex arboribus* [...] – *Représentation des bois des arbres et des arbrisseaux tant du Pays qu'Etrangers* [...] (Amsterdam, 1773) (with 84 colour illustrations of wood samples).

[25] A biography of M.J. Borch, including a portrait (from the State Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow) was published by Jolanta Polanowska – see "Ogród w Warklanach – dzieło właściciela Michała Jana Borcha i architekta Vincenza de Mazottiego," *Biuletyn Historii Sztuki*, 74, no. 3–4 (2012), pp. 551–99, fig. 1. The portrait of Borch was painted in Italy, as the Austrian painter who produced it had lived there since 1772.

[26] Currently at Lietuvos Nacionalnis Muziejus in Vilnius, inv. no. B 310. The rocks are arranged in nine numbered rows and fifteen columns and the top, encased in a wooden frame with a profiled gilded band, is additionally decorated with a mosaic. O. Mažeikienė believes that it was on this console table that King Stanisław August signed his abdication in Grodno in November 1795. See Ona Mažeikienė, *XVII–XX a. I p. baldai. Katalogas Lietuvos TSR Istorijos ir etnografijos muziejus* (Vilnius, 1986), fig. XII, p. 10

[27] The society, founded in 1800, bore various names: the Warsaw Society of Friends of Science, Royal Society of Friends of Science, Society of Friends of Science. Much of the archival materials connected with the society were destroyed in World War II. The surviving records are kept at the Central Archives of Historical Records (henceforth AGAD), group 199 – Towarzystwo Królewskie Przyjaciół Nauk.

[28] "Staszic Stanisław Wawrzyniec," in *PSB*, op. cit., pp. 540–51; Zbigniew Wójcik, *Stanisław Staszic, organizator nauki i gospodarki* (Krakow, 1999), pp. 86, 103, 127, 128.

[29] *Carta geologica totius Poloniae, Moldaviae, Transilvaniae et partis Hungariae, et Valachiae. Inventa per Staszic anno 1806*. In 1815, it was added to Staszic's treatise *O ziemiorództwie Karpat...*, op. cit.

a member of the Kingdom's government, responsible for the development of national industry and overseeing mining operations and the location and extraction of many natural resources. In 1817, he opened a marble-working factory in Chęciny and a limekiln in Inowłódz. Staszic was very active in his management of the mining industry, carrying out his final inspections in September and October of 1824. Thanks to his efforts, the Academic Mining School was opened in Kielce in 1816 (with German teachers employed), followed by the Special School of Forestry[30] at the Royal University of Warsaw in 1818. The Society of Friends of Science played an important role in the growth of scientific life in the Kingdom through the personal activity of its members as well as through its collaborative work with correspondent members, organisation of lectures, review of scientific speeches and publications, integration of various scientific circles throughout the Republic, and exchange with Europe's leading scientific centres and individuals at the turn of the 19th century.[31] The Society was also responsible for the establishment of the Royal University in Warsaw itself (with no small contribution from Staszic).

It is quite possible that the table in question may have been produced for the purpose of presenting the monarchic collection or as furnishing for the specimen rooms of Staszic himself (in the ministry or at the Society of Friends of Science), or perhaps for an office belonging to one of Staszic's colleagues. Just as likely, it may have been intended for the Natural History Room of the Society of Friends of Science (donated to the institution by Staszic in 1814) or that type of room at the Special School of Forestry, kept there – much like its museum – for didactic purposes of the school in its teaching of botany and minerology.[32] Other possible destinations are the office of the school's director or the Minerology Room of the University of Warsaw.

Other pieces with similar decoration and functions were also made at that time. According to information appearing in the catalogue for an 1841 exhibition of goods from the Kingdom of Poland, shown there was a "natural history room cupboard veneered in a variety of woods from Poland and abroad, more than 250 kinds in all, composed with their grain and structural properties in mind," made by the Warsaw-based carpenter Kubicki.[33] From a source published in 1842, we know that the cupboard took four years to build for an unnamed professor for the purpose of storing an entomological collection[34] and was commissioned from Wojciech Kubicki, one of two cabinet-maker brothers.[35] The cupboard's signature plate, preserved

[30] Zbigniew Wójcik, *Stanisław Staszic, organizator nauki i gospodarki* (Krakow, 1999), pp. 198–99.

[31] AGAD, group 199 – Towarzystwo Królewskie Przyjaciół Nauk, nos 6, 13, 17, 19.

[32] *Sylwan. Dziennik nauk leśnych i myśliwych*, vol. 3, b. 4 (1823), pp. 569–612; ibid., vol. 6, b. 2 (1829), pp. 167–208.

[33] Anna M. Drexlerowa, *Wystawy wytwórczości w Królestwie Polskim* (Warsaw, 1999), p. 337.

[34] The unknown author of the article included a list of the 257 species used and their Latin names, also mentioning the customer (stating only his scientific specialty) and providing the name of the piece's producer – see "Szafka przeszło 260 gatunkami drzewa wyłożona," *Biblioteka Warszawska*, vol. 4 (1842), pp. 427–34.

[35] Wojciech Kubicki, the son of the blacksmith Antoni Kubicki and Elżbieta, née Trafańska, younger brother of the Warsaw-based master carpenter Walenty, was born in 1795 in Reszków in the Grand Duchy of Poznań. He is identified as a "master of the carpentry trade" in his Warsaw certificate of marriage to Zofia Lenarska of Skierniewice as well as in the birth certificates of his children: Franciszka Julianna (1826), Elżbieta Eleonora (1827), Antonina Paulina (1832), Marianna Katarzyna (1834), Franciszek Saturnin (1835) and Katarzyna Marianna (1838), and in the marriage certificate (as a witness) of his brother to Marianna Wiśniewska, née Odolska in August 1831 (Warsaw State Archives, Warsaw Old Town, books M–1831–35, item 151; MZ–1824, item 10, pp. 10–11; UM–1826, p. 90; UM–1827, p. 442; UMZ–1834, p. 452, item 902; UMZ–1835, p. 446, item 891; U–1838, p. 96, item 191). I thank Aleksandra Kasprzak for her help.

at the Botanical Gardens of Jagiellonian University,[36] states that it was completed in 1840 for the Warsaw professor Antoni Waga (1799–1890). Also for the aforementioned exhibition, one of Warsaw's finest furniture workshops – Heurich Brothers – produced a table with samples of "domestic trunk-stained woods," which was later purchased for the Łazienki Palace.[37]

In the case of the table in the NMW collection, the decision to outfit it with a vertically-folding top was probably determined by the intention to display the geological and dendrological specimens in both upright and horizontal view. The samples distributed on the tabletop like on a *tableau* were likely supplemented with description cards. It may also have been the case that the pale oval inlays along the tabletop's edge and the stone tiles were marked with numerical or alphabetical designations.[38] Logic suggests that the individual who composed the inlaid collection was likely a botanist as the arrangement of the mineral samples does not seem to follow any mineralogical criteria[39] but rather relies on decorative factors. This might therefore suggest that the table's origin is connected with the Special School of Forestry, which specialised in botany but also offered courses in basic mineralogy.[40] We also cannot exclude the possibility that "IG" selected the samples to be used and the carpenter was responsible for their arrangement.

The tabletops' geometric composition made up of 144 rock elements radiating out from the circular central field alludes to rock decoration adorning 18th- and 19th-century tables made predominantly in Italy using a technique known as Florentine mosaic[41] (or *pietra dura*).

The variety of table with a round, tilting top supported on a single post was rather common in 1825. They appeared in England (as tripod tables) in the 1720s and came into prominence after the mid-18th century, also becoming known in France by the final quarter of the century. In Central Europe, tables of this kind achieved popularity during the Empire and Biedermeier periods. In such tables from the continent, the post was crowned with a flat cube, to which

[36] Inv. no. 3056. The cupboard is signed on a metal plate – *Wojciech Kubicki zrobił | dla ANT: WAGI. 1840. | w Warszawie*. I thank Prof. Alicja Zemanek (Jagiellonian University Botanical Gardens) for her help.

[37] Jan Heurich, *Przewodnik stolarzy* (Warsaw, 1862), p. 137. A more detailed description likely appeared in the Łazienki inventory under no. 1263 – "A small round, four-sided table veneered in wood stained in situ in white and blue stripes with a festoon gallery surrounded by bows and borders of rosewood, between the festoons are pairs of rosewood tassels on dark brown silk string, the two side columns forming the legs are round at the top and veneered with wood like the top, the centre spindle linking the legs is lathe-turned, its centre veneered as above while its sides lined with natural bark. White cardboard cover. Purchased at a Warsaw exhibition in 1841. Dim.: 31 × 18 × 26 inches" [74.4 × 43.2 × 62.4 cm – from the New Polish inch of 1819–48] (AGAD, 214 – Zarząd Pałaców Cesarskich w Warszawie, 2998, *Spis kosztowności mebli i innych ruchomości przybyłych do Pałacu Łazienki za Pułkownika Abramowicza jako Administrującego Pałacami cesarskiemi to jest od dnia 1. Sierpnia 1839*, pp. 183–84).

[38] Prior to joining the NMW collection, the table underwent repairs during which a considerable part of the tabletop (not including the round centre field) was mechanically sanded.

[39] I thank Roksana Maćkowska and Andrzej Szymkowiak from the Polish Geological Institute for their consultation. Perhaps further study will reveal the "key" to the arrangement of the minerals.

[40] The initials "JG" match those of students at the school – Józef Grzymała (dropped out in 1820, after his first year – see *Sylwan. Dziennik nauk leśnych i myśliwych* 1823, vol. 3, p. 576) and Jan Głębocki (enrolled there in 1824–26 – see ibid., 1829, vol. 6, pp. 188–89, 199, 201). This matter, however, requires deeper analysis.

[41] E.g., an Italian table from around 1860 put up for auction on 19.10.2016 at the Viennese auction house Dorotheum (lot 593), an Italian tabletop in a catalogue from an auction on 14.06.2005 at the Parisian auction house Tajan (lot 170); a Central-European Biedermeier table appearing in an auction at Dorotheum on 10.12.2013 (catalogue, lot 63, p. 47). Similar decoration was applied to, for example, an English table by George Bullock from around 1815 (in the collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum, inv. no. W.34:1, 2-1978) and an American table by Anthony G. Quervelle of Pennsylvania from 1830 (in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, inv. no. ADA319).

the top was affixed with the use of screws or (as is the case with the table in question) hinges, rendering it tiltable. In British examples, the cube was often substituted with a "birdcage,"[42] which allowed the top to revolve around the leg's axis. Tops were often reinforced from underneath (as is the NMW table) with cleats which protected them against warping. Tilting the top vertically made it possible to place the table against a wall (saving space) or even using it purely for decoration like a *tableau* or fireplace screen. A sliding latch affixed to the underside was used to stabilise the top when horizontal.

These standards may have arrived in the Kingdom of Poland not only directly from the British Isles or France but also via Berlin, St. Petersburg or Vienna. The best-known example of this kind of table in Warsaw was a round table imported by King Stanisław August, produced by the famed Parisian ébéniste Martin Carlen with an adjustable top decorated by Charles-Nicolas Doden with the story of Telemachus painted on porcelain.[43] Some adjustable-top tables, like the example owned by the king, were adorned with striking and elaborate inlay or intarsia decoration (typically consisting of complex veneer patterns, like, for instance, rosettes), intended to be viewed in the vertical position.[44]

In Warsaw, the single central support was often hexagonal or round in cross-section and rested on a three-[45] or sometimes four-legged base[46] of various shapes.[47] Tables with a faceted

[42] The birdcage consists of two stacked square plates joined at the corners with turned balusters. The post connects to the lower plate on a round spindle and is affixed above with a wedge. This mechanism made it possible for the birdcage to revolve around the spindle, and with it the top affixed with hinges to the upper plate of the birdcage.

[43] Izydor Grzeluk, "Stolik z Gabinetu Monarchów Europejskich – dzieło Martina Carlina," *Journal of the National Museum in Warsaw*, Ann. 28 (1984), pp. 65–81. In 1777–82, this table was delivered to the White House, and moved to the Royal Castle in Warsaw likely in 1786; in the 19th century it adorned the interior of the Palace on the Water.

[44] One example is a table purchased for the Łazienki palace at a Warsaw exhibition in 1841 from Andrzej Tur, a St. Petersburg-based carpenter originally from Warsaw (AGAD, 214 – Zarząd Pałaców Cesarskich w Warszawie, 2998, item 1174). Featured in an earlier exhibition in 1838 was a "ladies table on a splendidly carved four-footed post; the top is of rosewood inlaid with six different materials: brass, copper, tombac, nickel silver, zinc and nacre, the arrangement of which forms the most tasteful designs. The design and work on the entire inlay on this true Rococo piece was devised and executed in the course of under two months by Mr. Hejnrich, with burin shading by Mr. Jan Minhejmer, the engraver for the P[olish] Bank – see *Kurier Warszawski*, no. 169 (1838), pp. 813–14.

[45] E.g., round tables on a hexagonal posts diverging into tripods from the collections of Bronisław Krystall (NMW, inv. no. SZMb 2615 MNW) and Stanisław Ursyn-Rusiecki (set on a triangular platform, in the collection of the National Museum in Krakow, inv. no. IV-Sp-328); an oval ash tripod table from the Old Theatre in Łazienki – inventoried in 1915 by the draughtsman Mariusz Maszyński (NMW, inv. no. DI 4728 MNW). Other furniture of this type is listed in an inventory of Belweder palace from 1839–42 (AGAD, 214 – Zarząd Pałaców Cesarskich w Warszawie, 2996, items 237, 303, 324, 352, 379, 459, 874). Also belonging to this group are: a pale table with an angular post in the workshop of A. Kokular (picture in the NMW collection, inv. no. MP 4207 MNW) one photographed inside Belweder in 1915 (IS PAN no. 4312 B), and those in the collections of the NMW (SZMb 16 MNW, SZMb 2902 MNW) and the Wawel Royal Castle (inv. no. 1968).

[46] Two tables in the Wawel collection with round tabletops having scalloped edges, on curvy legs of an angular cross-section, one with a faceted post in the shape of a vase (inv. no. 7366), the other with a lathe-turned, tapered and craved post (inv. no. 7365). Four-legged tables of this kind appear in a Belweder inventory from 1854 (AGAD, 214 – Zarząd Pałaców Cesarskich w Warszawie, 3034, items 1022, 1032).

[47] Some examples are: a table with a fixed oval top and an x-shaped platform (NMW, inv. no. SZMb 1116 MNW, Zamek Królewski na Wawelu, inv. no. 1976); another table from the Wawel collection has a faceted post (in the shape of a vase with fluid lines) sitting on a hexagonal base with concave sides (inv. no. 7006). Pieces of this kind appear in archival materials concerning Imperial-Royal palaces in the Kingdom of Poland (AGAD, 214 – Zarząd Pałaców Cesarskich w Warszawie, 3003, inwentarz majętności Sielce [undated, 1840s], p. 24, no. ŁK 3927; AGAD, 214 – Zarząd Pałaców Cesarskich w Warszawie, 3034, inwentarz z 1854, item 1171; *Inwentarz Zamku Królewskiego w Warszawie z 1837 roku*, ed. and tr. Agnieszka Moczulska (Warsaw, 2002), items 70, 25 [p. 68]). Other examples given in the following notes.

leg "in the shape of a vase"[48] on a base survive to this day in public and private collections[49] and were mentioned in the inventories of imperial and royal palaces in the Kingdom of Poland.[50] They also appear in surviving visual records.[51] They attest to the reception of patterns diffusing into Poland from the Habsburg Monarchy around 1810–30 and to the adoption of the angular, crystalline forms in fashion there in the mid-1820s.

In certain tables resting on a base from the 1830s, the post was reinforced with additional supports.[52] The single-post structure was also executed in other ways, like, for instance, the post being composed of three elements flaring out at the ends bound together at the middle.[53] Such a solution, already in use in the late 18th and early 19th century in England and France, offered stable support for the top but did not allow for the top to be tilted.

Constructions employing a central support were used in the production of tables in a wide range of dimensions and having various functions,[54] though the vast majority were intended for the sitting room or for a small dining room.[55] They were placed in front of a sofa or surrounded with chairs. Smaller examples were used for games[56] or for special events. Some also served as guéridons, tables for candelabra, candlesticks or vases.

In conclusion, the table discussed here must be acknowledged as one of a small few surviving examples of its kind, the oldest surviving example of a table with a dendrological collection in Poland, and a historical artefact of the modernisation of the Kingdom of Poland and its economy after the devastation of the Napoleonic Wars. The angular, prismatic forms

[48] These "vases" came in various shapes, often alluding to ancient Greek vessels (without handles), such as a lekythos, calpis, pelike or oenochoe.

[49] Round tables from 1825–40 in the collection of the Royal Castle at Wawel (inv. no. 7006) and in private collections, with a burned mark indicating they are the property of the Administration of Imperial Palaces (MI beneath a closed crown with the circular inscription "Zamek Królewski") in an online auction, at: <https://allegro.pl/oferta/zamek-krolewski-stol-okazjonalny-sygnowany-1817-r-7843866760>, [retrieved: 20 May 2018].

[50] One table of this kind appears in a Belweder inventory from 1854 (AGAD, 214 – Zarząd Pałaców Cesarskich w Warszawie, 3034, inventory from 1854, item 1032).

[51] Among them are, e.g., tables with a faceted, vase-shaped post on a hexagonal base (photo in the NMW collection, inv. no. DI 96808 MNW), and on an octagonal base (photograph of the Marshal's Bedroom at the Józef Piłsudski Museum at Belweder in *Ewidencji Zbiorów Marszałka Józefa Piłsudskiego*, collection of the Józef Piłsudski Museum in Sulejówek).

[52] Among examples are: an oval inlaid table from the palace in Skierniewice (NMW, inv. no. SZMb 380 MNW) and a rectangular table with intarsia in the ownership of Fr. Fijatowski (inventory drawing in the NMW collection, inv. no. DI 8233 MNW). The tops of both tables are reinforced on the underside with a decorative frame in the same shape as the top.

[53] Occasionally, the lower end of the flares rested on a triangular platform and the top ends supported the tabletop, as in an Empire table with a carved, painted and gilded post composed of three entwined snakes (inventory drawing in the NMW collection, inv. no. 8212) and a round mahogany Biedermeier table from the Royal Castle, with cast brass feet in the shape of animal paws (currently at Belweder, Office of the President of the Republic of Poland, inv. no. KPRP-1632).

[54] E.g., a small side table listed in an undated Łazienki inventory [after 1841] (AGAD, 214 – Zarząd Pałaców Cesarskich w Warszawie, 3000 – "718, small round mahogany table on a central column with a steel latch and a grey cloth cover, dimensions: 31 × 20 ½ inches"), on sale in 2005 at the Dzieła Sztuki–Antyki gallery in Sopot. An example of a larger table is one from the Stary Teatr in Łazienki (drawing in the NMW collection, inv. no. DI 4728 MNW).

[55] Among these is a number of mahogany tables with richly carved posts on four scrolled legs, in the collections of NMW (inv. no. SZMb 39 MNW) and of the Museum of King Jan III's Palace at Wilanów (inv. no. Wil. 4012).

[56] E.g., game tables in the Wawel collection (inv. no. 1989) and NMW collection (inv. no. SZMb 1982 MNW). A mahogany table of this kind appears in *Inwentarzu Pałaców Cesarsko-Królewskich* Łazienki *i Belweder* (AGAD, 212 – Intendent Łazienek i Belwederu 74, item 553), kept at Belweder in the interwar period (photo at IS PAN, no. 63628).

used in its base were a clear inspiration for Polish art deco pieces produced around 1925.[57] Despite the lack of documentation making it possible to unequivocally attribute the table's production to Wojciech Kubicki, such a possibility must be seriously considered, especially when taking into account the carpenter's experience in building tables of this kind. It must also be stressed that, because of its function, form and historical connotations, this table constitutes an important addition to Polish museum furniture collections, especially the one in Warsaw.

It is also worthwhile to briefly recall the later history of the table, as it bore witness to some truly important events. It belonged to Józef Berlinerblau[58] (1859–1935) and later to his eldest daughter, Aniela Steinsberg.[59] Berlinerblau was born to a Jewish family who had settled in Poland prior to the partitions. He was a chemical engineer educated at the Dresden Polytechnical School and at the Higher School of Business in Dresden, earning his doctorate at the University of Bern. He studied ozokerite deposits in the Caucasus, on the Cheleken Peninsula and in Boryslav, and later worked in plant resource procurement for chemical production. After returning to Poland, he worked in industry, having been particularly active in the growth of industry related to his background in chemistry. With his wife Helena, he was a supporter of the "Help for Orphans" Society run by Janusz Korczak. When Poland regained independence, he was involved in the formation of the Polish Chemical Society and the advancement of the country's chemical plants. He was also a member of numerous economic organisations. For his contribution to the country's development, he was awarded the Commander's Cross of the Order of Polonia Restituta. He died in 1935.

Aniela, born in Vienna in 1896, spent her childhood and youth in Warsaw. After completing high school, she studied law in Krakow and, as the first female jurist in Galicia, she went on to become an attorney and to open her own law firm. At that time, the table resided in Krakow, as is confirmed in family records[60] and by an inscription in blue chalk reading *Krakow | B*. Initially, Aniela worked with her husband, the lawyer Emil Steinsberg. In the interwar period, she became a notable champion of workers and political activists. During Nazi occupation, she went into hiding in Warsaw, caring for her orphaned niece Julka and her ailing former teacher Stefania Sempołowksa. At that time, she also worked in the Żegota Council to Aid Jews, helping Jews find hiding places and distributing financial support.

After the war, she served as Deputy Director of the Legislative Office of the Presidium of the Council of Ministers. Despite being a member of the Polish Socialist Party in the interwar period and, after the party's merger with the Polish Workers Party, of the resulting Polish United Worker's Party, she was relieved of her duties at the Legislative Office. As a lawyer, she aided in the defence of Home Army members, including Kazimierz Moczarski. In 1955, Steinsberg quit the Polish United Worker's Party and joined the anti-communist opposition. After 1956, she attended meetings of the Krzywe Koło [Crooked Wheel] Club.

[57] Among them are Wojciech Jastrzębowski, Józef Czajkowski and Miłosz Kotarbiński.

[58] Tomasz Prot, "Asymilacja, niepodległość Polski i rozwój przemysłu. Kilka faktów z dziejów rodziny Berlinerblau," *Słowo Żydowskie*, no. 12 (514) (2014), pp. 27–33; Michał S. Balasiewicz, "Józef Berlinerblau i Jan Prot – Berlinerblau współtwórcy polskiego przemysłu Polski niepodległej," *Przemysł Chemiczny*, vol. 92, no. 9 (2013), pp. 1692–700.

[59] "Steinsberg Aniela Zofia z Berlinerblauów" in *PSB*, vol. 43, b. 178 (Warsaw–Krakow), pp. 344–48 (Robert Jarocki); Joanna Sokolińska, "Ostrygi i KOR w życiu Anieli Steinsbergowej," *Wysokie Obcasy*, no. 38 (388) (23 September 2006), pp. 12–20.

[60] Information received in a conversation with Jakub Wdowicki in August 2017.

She also defended Jacek Kuroń, Karol Modzelewski[61] and others in their political trials and took up the defence of students arrested in the March 1968 protests, for which she was disbarred. Nevertheless, she continued to offer legal advice, mainly to opposition members. In addition to her legal activity, she also worked as an editor and translator: among her translations were Claude Levi-Strauss's *Tristes Tropiques* and *Totemism*, and Jean Rostand's *Aux frontières du surhumain*. In 1975, she signed the "Letter of 59" – a petition against proposed changes to the Polish Constitution, the idea for which was born in her apartment. In June 1976, she signed a petition of solidarity with the repressed workers of Radom and Ursus, and soon thereafter became a founding member of the Workers' Defence Committee. The Committee's editorial staff met in her small apartment and prepared its missives at the very table discussed in this article. Aniela Steinsberg died in 1988.

Translated by Szymon Włoch

[61] She wrote down her impressions of that process in her chronicle *Widziane z* ławy *obrończej*, published in the Parisian *Kultura* in 1977.