

THE PROBLEMS OF MEDAL ENGRAVING  
IN THE MUSEUM ACTIVITY  
OF STANISŁAW KOSTKA POTOCKI

In contrast to other numismatic collections of that time Stanisław Kostka Potocki's collection did not represent "oddities" but was rather a museum exhibition of didactic and scientific value.

In the year 1805 the new museum was open in Wilanów. Potocki's collection is in the library of that museum which is rendered accessible only to scientists. Going far beyond amateur activity Stanisław Kostka Potocki completed his collector's passion with solid scientific background, e.g. many publications and catalogues of European collections which he brought from his journeys abroad.

On that basis he worked out and systematised his collection in the form of catalogues, inventories and articles. The method of preparing some catalogues was similar to the methods used nowadays. They usually contained: the subject, the description of obverse and reverse, the date, the origin of the object, the author, the producer, the gloss giving information about the circumstances of creating a given medal, bibliography, material, weight and evaluation. The catalogues gave chronological, historical or geographical division.

In their attempt to analyse the outline of Stanisław Kostka Potocki's numismatic collection the authors of this article mainly used the group of inventories and catalogues from Potocki's Public Archive, particularly "The Summary of Count Potocki's Papers" which gives the titles of the catalogues, inventories and lists with short notes.

The introduction to "The Summary" is the detailed discussion of the catalogues from the year 1749, which defined the outlines of the collection, mainly of Polish medals, which was created during young Potocki's journeys through Europe and which included 159 objects. The later catalogue from the year 1774 listed 539 ob-

jects connected with the history of the Kingdom of Poland. In the year 1783 the collection was enriched by Stanisław Lubomirski's big collection which was inherited by his daughter and Stanisław Kostka Potocki's wife, Aleksandra Potocka. That collection consisted of valuable ancient medals, a group of foreign medals and a large number of Polish and foreign coins together with earlier catalogues. In the year 1791 Stanisław Kostka Potocki sent the big part of Lubomirski's collection to Vienna where Izabela Lubomirska was at that time. Part of it was sold in the year 1814 to Henryk Lubomirski and then it became the property of the Ossoliński family National Institution in Lwów where it stayed until the year 1939. The rest of it was probably included in Potocki's collection or it became the subject to the later sale or exchange transactions. From Stanisław Kostka Potocki's letters we learn about the subsequent groups of medals that he got, sometimes in the form of gifts, like in the case of Jerzy Wielhorski and Lanckoroński. The letters also enable us to follow Potocki's attempts to get back the medals, which he had lent to Hugon Kołłątaj. It took him eleven years to get them back.

Some of the medals were made by etcher Ligber on Potocki's orders. Potocki had contacts with foreign collectors. One of them was the manager of the Senate Bureau of Treasure in Paris during Napoleon times. Grivault de la Vincelle. Another one was baron Dominique-Vivant Denon, engraver and director of French museums during the reign of Napoleon the First and also a diplomat who was a frequent guest in duchess Lubomirski's salon in Paris. To this latter one we probably owe the group of mastic moulds of medals on Napoleon subject, as he was the author of most of them (Fig.46,47).

Despite the fact that the numismatic collection of Stanisław Kostka Potocki has been dispersed, we still have his valuable scientific work which contains the detailed catalogues as well as treatises concerning some interesting numismatic exhibits e.g. "On the denarius from Bolesław Chrobry's times", "The description of three numismatic objects belonging to king Stefan Batory (...)" or the big "Treatise on national medals from the point of view of their usefulness and art, read during the Assembly of Friends of Science Society in the year 1806".



46. Numismatic cabinet. France, the end of 18th century



47. Impressions of European medals from the collection of S.K. Potocki