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Surtout de table by Pierre-Philippe Thomire at the Wilanów Palace*

Key words: Thomire; Empire, centrepiece, *surtout de table*, bronze, brass,
Stanisław Kostka Potocki, Wilanów Palace

Słowa kluczowe: Thomire, empire, zastawa stołowa, *surtout de table*, brąz, mosiądz,
Stanisław Kostka Potocki, pałac wilanowski

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V. Elements of the Wilanów *surtout de table* as works of Pierre-Philippe Thomire's workshop
and of his period

The aim of this paper was a formal, stylistic, iconographic and comparative analysis of items forming the Wilanów centrepiece, against a background of other products from the Pierre-Philippe Thomire's workshop. Furthermore, it intended to confront the previous knowledge, including concerning the possible composition of the Wilanów *surtout de table*, with the results of archive and museum search queries, and technical study. The Wilanów centrepiece is a material proof of technological and stylistic achievements of the First French Empire, at the same time representing a cultural fact. Therefore, the analysis cannot be separated from the functional approach — a move from a utilitarian to a museum function, as well as the history of items forming it and their aesthetic value. The historical context, in this case associated both with the manufacturer, and the buyer, Count Stanisław Kostka Potocki, is also of importance.

I. Surtouts de table and the Empire style

The genesis of *surtout de table* reaches back to the 17th century, when a need to decorate a table with vessels and items of various type arose in wealthy social classes. Meals were usually eaten at a long, rectangular table in a large room¹. This was the case, in particular, at country manors, where a number of guests received was frequently larger than in town². Feasts could last several hours, especially those combined with a dinner. Apart from conversation or admir-

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¹ Coffin Sarah D. 2018.

² Jabłońska T. 2008, p. 52.

ing each other attires, dishes, but also vessels in which they were served, were a natural object attracting the sight and the admiration. Some of them were placed in the centre of a table, to be contemplated. The social status of hosts and guests determined which seats were taken by them. People with a higher status sat closer to the host, while those of lower status could even sit at a separate table. Relations between individual people were also of importance, and the host had to observe caution so feuding guests were not seated near each other. Tables were covered with linen, cotton, or more luxurious damask cloth, frequently woven in owners' coat of arms. In those days, weaving centres in Saxony and the Netherlands were leaders in production of high quality damask cloth. Further tables, for guests of a lower rank, were set less elegantly — frequently, cheap grey linen was used, giving rise to the Polish saying “to be at the grey end” (an equivalent of the English “at the far end”)³. They were less decorated, and a different set of dishes was served on them. Apart from the tableware, in the 17th century the table was also decorated with exquisite confectionery, for example, in a form of small sculptures⁴. The table and the entire room were lit with candlesticks.

At the beginning of the 18th century, when the French culture dominated in Europe, a change in the house atmosphere occurred. The privacy was more valued, and this was reflected in arranging of smaller, more intimate interiors in mansions. This change was also visible in dining rooms, where smaller, convenient, frequently oval tables were installed⁵. Vessels with served dishes were placed in their centre — this was so-called *service à la française*⁶. Frequently, ornamental porcelain or sugar figures, silver, brass or porcelain candelabra, and items made of glass were also placed amongst them.

During the French Revolution, a custom to create a private space for eating meals was abandoned, as negatively associated with the “frivolous nature” of *ancien régime*⁷. Long, rectangular tables made their comeback. In time, the form of arranging the table also changed to *service à la russe*, involving serving of ready-to-eat cut dishes on plates⁸. This way the central part of the table, previously taken by dishes, was left free. In the French Empire, the art of *surtout de table* developed, with table centrepieces consisting of plateau with a mirror bottom (already used earlier) surrounded with a gallery and holding candelabra, jardinières, ornamental vases, etageres, bowls, *torchères* and other ornamental items. All these items remained at their place during the meal. Usually, they were made of silver and, as it was thought at that time and is still assumed today, of bronze, and gilded. The *Thomire, Duterme et Compagnie* workshop, managed by Pierre-Philippe Thomire, the most renowned Parisian bronzesmith of that time, won the leading position in manufacturing of gilded bronze table ornaments.

Thomire's *surtout de table*, preserved in the collection of the Museum of King Jan III's Palace at Wilanów, the purchase of which is attributed to Count Stanisław Kostka Potocki, represents material evidence of transformations described above that occurred in the culture of eating.

Products from the *Thomire, Duterme et Cie* workshop are a model example of utilitarian and ornamental items in the Empire style. The art of the First French Empire drew mainly from the Ancient culture of Greece, Rome and Egypt. This late form of the Classicism was shaped, amongst others, by two architects, Charles Percier and Pierre François Louis Fontaine, the authors of *Collection of Interior Designs...*⁹, frequently referred to in the literature as “the Bible of First Empire style”. The publication, containing 12 plates with illustrations, presented

³ Jabłońska T. 2008, p. 72.

⁴ Coffin Sarah D. 2018.

⁵ Coffin Sarah D. 2018.

⁶ Ottomeyer H., Pröschel P. 1986, vol. 1, p. 323.

⁷ Coffin Sarah D. 2018.

⁸ Ottomeyer H., Pröschel P. 1986, vol. 1, p. 323.

⁹ Percier Ch., Fontaine P.F.L. 1812.



Fig. 1. Pierre-Philippe Thomire, objects of the *surtout de table*
(photo by W. Holnicki, Museum of King Jan III's Palace at Wilanów)

Ryc. 1. Pierre-Philippe Thomire, obiekty stanowiące elementy *surtout de table*
(fot. W. Holnicki, Muzeum Pałacu Króla Jana III w Wilanowie)

model interiors, furniture and other furnishings. It was published for the first time in 1801. The edition from 1805 was supplemented with additional 42 plates¹⁰, reaching 72 plates in its final version published in 1812¹¹.

By the contemporaries, the Empire style was called *goût antique*. The reference to the Ancient history was of political importance — Napoleon I referred to traditions of Imperium Romanum when justifying replacement of the republican government by the empire, as it was done by Octavian Augustus. In a consequence of a policy of the official taste, the art gained clearly defined forms, and this led to restrictions in artistic freedom and stylistic development. Therefore, a modern researcher finds difficult, or even impossible, precise dating of items created in 1800–1815 on a basis of formal criteria. The nature, which for centuries was one of the main sources of inspiration for artists, “gives way to a lexicon of forms inherited from antiquity and taken from the heroic fables and myths that overhang history”¹².

Artists drew their inspiration both from antiquities, especially those available at Musée Napoléon, and, more frequently, from templates published mainly in the second half of the 18th and at the beginning of the 19th centuries. A greater popularity of templates resulted from the fact that they presented extensive collections of forms, so artists did not have to gather materials themselves during their travels around Europe or Egypt (here the Napoleon’s expedition and resultant publications, including an album by Dominique Vivant Denon, *Voyage dans la Basse et Haute-Égypte pendant les campagnes du général Bonaparte*, published in 1802, played a great role in dissemination of these models). Furthermore, they presented heritage objects in clear lines, disclosing their contours, which were not as visible when that object was seen “live”¹³.

An iconographic interpretation of motifs in applied arts is difficult due to a limited number of written sources explaining the meaning of the elements used¹⁴. In response to a large number of orders ornaments were copied in large quantities, in different materials and at different scale, and this contributed to their use without assigning any deeper meaning, purely for their ornamental function. Deciding which motifs had an important iconographic meaning, and which were used to fill the empty space, avoided by the Empire style, requires an analysis of “the location, size and color of motifs and the materials used”¹⁵. Subjects and forms known from ancient Greek and Roman culture were used, creating in the contemporaries a sense of connection with the ancient times — the French Empire was to be perceived as a heir to the timeless heritage of the Roman Empire.

The Empire style is mainly associated with emblems of imperial power. The eagle, referring to Roman legions and, at the same time, a symbol of Jupiter (the motif also used by Charles the Great), and the bee inspired by objects found in the grave of king Childeric I, are considered to be the most popular motifs. These ornaments were intended for emperor’s estates. Other motifs gained priority in works used as furnishing of private interiors. *Bronzes d’ameublement*, decorating interiors of private European estates, did not contain motifs referring directly to power, because they were not intended to represent a ruler. A richly set table at a private mansion was a demonstration of the hosts’ wealth to their guests.

¹⁰ Ottomeyer H., Pröschel P. 1986, vol. 1, p. 317.

¹¹ A particularly valuable edition with colour illustrations, is kept at Bibliothèque de l’Institut National d’Histoire de l’Art in Paris (collections Jacques Doucet). The book was published in English in 1991, see Percier Ch., Fontaine P.F.L. 1991.

¹² Mondzain M.J. 2007, p. 17.

¹³ Dion-Tenenbaum A. 2007, p. 67.

¹⁴ This problem, frequently ignored by art historians, was noted by Odile Nouvel-Kammerer (Nouvel-Kammerer O. 2007, pp. 26–28).

¹⁵ Nouvel-Kammerer O. 2007, p. 27.

II. Progress in research on Wilanów surtout de table

The purchase of Thomire's *surtout de table*, currently held in the collection of the Palace at Wilanów, is attributed to Count Stanisław Kostka Potocki — the founder of the Wilanów collection, later transformed into a museum. The Count noted the information about the purchase of “bronzes from Tomir” in *Pamiętnik Interessów samego J. O. Stanisława Kostki Potockiego Senatora i Wojewody (Diary of businesses of His Lordship Stanisław Kostka Potocki, Senator and Voivode, himself)*¹⁶. It is assumed that a record of the purchase made in Paris in 1808 concerns solely the table centrepiece, to which the majority of items from Thomire's workshop, preserved in Wilanów, belong¹⁷. They include four types of etageres: twelve three-tiered etageres (fig. 5), eight etageres with sphinxes (fig. 3), eight etageres with figures of dancers (fig. 4), and four etageres with figures of Sirens (fig. 2); two types of jardinières-candelabra: three with figures of bacchantes (fig. 7) and a bacchant, and one with caryatids (fig. 6). These items consist of structural elements inspired by antique architecture and sculptures, and of figural and floral ornaments mimicking antique ones. Three-dimensional elements were made using the lost-wax casting technique, and flat components were cast in moulding sand. The original elements are fire gilded, and 20th century supplements are gold plated. The gilding is either mat (especially, in parts of figural presentations and decorations of structural elements) or polished with haematite¹⁸ (structural elements, details of mat parts). The majority of glass plates of the etageres are probably additional objects, from the 1990s — they were added during restoration works, and this was noted in cards of restoration works conducted on these



Fig. 2. Etagere with sirens
(inv. no. Wil.2587/2), nonsigned
(photo by Z. Reszka, Museum of King
Jan III's Palace at Wilanów)

Ryc. 2. Patera z syrenami
(nr inw. Wil.2587/2), niesygnowana
(fot. Z. Reszka, Muzeum Pałacu
Króla Jana III w Wilanowie)

¹⁶ AGAD, AGWil., Anteriora, sygn. 302, p. 238.

¹⁷ Grand Tour. 2006, p. 203.

¹⁸ Klabisz M.A. 2004.



Fig. 3. Etagere with sphinxes (inv. no. Wil.2585/1), signed (photo by Z. Reszka, Museum of King Jan III's Palace at Wilanów)

Ryc. 3. Patera ze sfinksami (nr inw. Wil.2585/1), sygnowana (fot. Z. Reszka, Muzeum Pałacu Króla Jana III w Wilanowie)

items. Thomire's etageres preserved in other museums and in private collections have different plates, and this may indicate that these elements were easy to damage, and frequently replaced.

In each group of etageres and amongst jardinières-candelabra there are items with the "THOMIRE A PARIS ." signature stamped on their base (Fig. 8) and items unsigned. A comparative analysis did not find any significant differences between them. It was frequently emphasised in the literature on the Empire interior decorations that not all items were signed, and this makes their attribution difficult. The reason of this situation has not been found to this date. Searching for the explanation, we can refer to regulations associating signing of works with taxation. This also resulted from a slow development of copyrights to works considered to be a work of art, as well as a large number of manufactured products.

The lack of a signature on some items could make the authorship of the Thomire's workshop doubtful. Therefore, the comparative analysis of the items was supplemented with non-destructive tests by X-ray fluorescence spectrometry, conducted on all items in the Wilanów Museum attributed to that Parisian workshop¹⁹. Similar compositions of alloys of original

signed and unsigned items confirmed they came from the same workshop. The test results also shown that these items were cast not from bronze, but from brass (the major part of the batch from tin brass). This is an important discovery, because in previous scientific publications Pierre-Philippe Thomire was considered to be a bronzesmith, not a brass smith.

The set of items from the Wilanów collection has not been thoroughly examined before. The origin of the *surtout de table* was established by Stanisław Lorentz as an additional con-

¹⁹ The results of tests performed with the XRF analyser and their detailed analysis were included in a separate paper: Hübner M. 2020.

sideration in his work dedicated to Natolin²⁰. In his opinion, two mirrored plateaux in the collection of the National Museum in Warsaw were a part of a set purchased by Count Potocki. This thesis was rejected by Irena Malinowska, who, on a basis of records in *Pamiętnik Interessów* of the Count, demonstrated that they were made by another Parisian bronzesmith, André-Antoine Ravrio²¹. Later reports consist practically solely of short catalogue notes in *Sztuka francuska w zbiorach polskich 1230–1830 (French Art in Polish Collections, 1230–1830)*²², *Artystyczne zbiory Wilanowa (Artistic Collections of Wilanów)*²³, *Rzemiosło artystyczne i plastyka w zbiorach wilanowskich (Applied Arts and Plastic Arts in Wilanów Collection)*²⁴, *Grand Tour. Narodziny kolekcji Stanisława Kostki Potockiego (Grand Tour. A Birth of Stanisław Kostka Potocki's Collection)*²⁵, *Napoleon a sztuka (Napoleon and Arts)*²⁶, and a longer note by Joanna Paprocka-Gajek, in the catalogue *Kolekcja wilanowska (Wilanów Collection)*²⁷. The information about the Thomire's *surtout de table* can also be found at the museum's website²⁸. Otherwise, only one-sentence notes can be found in the literature, for example, in *Dawne zastawy stołowe (Historical tableware)* by Teresa Jabłońska²⁹.

This situation may result from a lack of a complete, illustrated, monographic study on Thomire's work. The basic reading is the book *Thomire, fondeur-ciseleur (1751–1843)*, written in 1947 by Juliette Niclausse³⁰. This publication is no longer valid, contains only a few illustra-

²⁰ Lorentz S. 1948, p. 163.

²¹ Malinowska I. 1972, p. 128.

²² *Sztuka francuska*. 1973, p. 96–97, cat. 218–221, Figs. 98–99.

²³ *Artystyczne zbiory*. 1979, p. 226, cat. 159, Fig. 159b.

²⁴ *Rzemiosło artystyczne*. 1980, p. 234–235, cabinet 67, items 2–3, Figs. 311–312.

²⁵ *Grand Tour*. 2006, p. 203, 265–266.

²⁶ *Napoleon i sztuka*. 2015, p. 156, cat. 132.

²⁷ *Kolekcja wilanowska*. 2005, p. 366–367, cat. 142.

²⁸ Paprocka-Gajek J. n.d.

²⁹ Jabłońska T. 2008, p. 237.

³⁰ Niclausse J. 1947.



Fig. 4. Etagere with bacchantes (inv. no. Wil.2586/2), signed (photo by Z. Reszka, Museum of King Jan III's Palace at Wilanów)

Ryc. 4. Patera z bachantkami (nr inw. Wil.2586/2), sygnowana (fot. Z. Reszka, Muzeum Pałacu Króla Jana III w Wilanowie)



Fig. 5. Three-tiered etagere (inv. no. Wil.2584/1), signed (photo by Z. Reszka, Museum of King Jan III's Palace at Wilanów)

Ryc. 5. Patera trójpoziomowa (nr inw. Wil.2584/1), sygnowana (fot. Z. Reszka, Muzeum Pałacu Króla Jana III w Wilanowie)

tions, and includes an incomplete catalogue of works based on search covering only selected countries. This book can be treated as biographical, and it does not contain any formal and stylistic analysis of the artist's works. Brief descriptions are limited to identification of subjects of figural presentations. The author earlier published an article on Thomire's activities as a caster and a ciseleur in the 18th century³¹. In 1956, the article *Thomire, le Talleyrand du bronzé doré*³² was published, demonstrating the ability of Thomire and his workshop to adapt to changing political conditions and demands of his customers. A catalogue of the only monographic exhibition dedicated to bronze works from the Thomire's workshop, organised by the State Hermitage Museum in 1984 represents an important publication in this area³³. It also contains a small number of illustrations, but presents a great collection of the Parisian bronzesmith works (over 100 items, including 12 mirrored plateaux and 77 objects placed on them as elements of a table centrepiece) which were not included in Niclausse's book. The second volume of *Vergoldete Bronzen: Die Bronzarbeiten des Spätbarock und Klassizismus*, the main reading on gilded bronze works, contains an article dedicated to Thomire as a businessman³⁴. In 2005, the last reference was published, which title contains the name of the Parisian bronzesmith — an article dedicated to Louis-Simon Boizot's cooperation with Thomire, Pierre Gouthière and François Rémond³⁵. Remarks referring to Thomire, as one of the main representatives of the Empire style, can also be found in general studies (dictionaries or works on interior design). However, these fragments do not provide any new information.

³¹ Niclausse J. 1939.

³² Dumont F. 1956, p. 74–79.

³³ Zek Iu.Ia, Voronikhina A.N. 1984.

³⁴ Cohen D.H. 1986, vol. 2, p. 657–664.

³⁵ Baulez Ch. 2007, p. 403–420.



Fig. 6. Jardinière-candelabrum with caryatids (inv. no. Wil.3434), signed (photo by Z. Reszka, Museum of King Jan III's Palace at Wilanów)

Ryc. 6. Żardiniera-świecznik z kariatydami (nr inw. Wil.3434), sygnowana (fot. Z. Reszka, Muzeum Pałacu Króla Jana III w Wilanowie)



Fig. 7. Jardinière-candelabrum with bacchantes and a bacchant (inv. no. Wil.2755/1), signed (photo by Z. Reszka, Museum of King Jan III's Palace at Wilanów)

Ryc. 7. Żardiniera-świecznik z bachantkami i bachantem (nr inw. Wil.2755/1), sygnowana (fot. Z. Reszka, Muzeum Pałacu Króla Jana III w Wilanowie)



Fig. 8. Signature “THOMIRE A PARIS .” on the socle of ornamental vase (inv. no. Wil.2591)
(photo by Z. Reszka, Museum of King Jan III’s Palace at Wilanów)

Ryc. 8. Sygnatura “THOMIRE A PARIS .” na cokole wazy dekoracyjnej (nr inw. Wil.2591)
(fot. Z. Reszka, Muzeum Pałacu Króla Jana III w Wilanowie)

III. Provenance and functions of *surtout de table* components from Pierre-Philippe Thomire’s workshop at the Wilanów Palace

Products from Pierre-Philippe Thomire’s workshop were purchased by Count Potocki in Paris in 1808, possibly at the shop in Taitbout Street. The same year, the Count was appointed the chairman of the Council of State and the Council of Ministers of the Duchy of Warsaw. Together with other positions held by him at that time (including of the director of the Commission of National Education and the Commandant General of the Corps of Cadets) he thus became one of the most important politicians in the country. He enjoyed the trust both of the ruler, Frederick Augustus, and of Napoleon I (according to Barbara Grochulska, he was “one of three most trusted Poles” of the French Emperor³⁶), although he suffered some disappointments³⁷.

Count Potocki’s stay in the capital city of the French Empire from January to August resulted from a need to conduct talks with Napoleon I, concerning the poor financial standing of the treasury of the Duchy of Warsaw, which ended in May with a treaty in Bayonne³⁸ (which gave rise to the Polish term “sumy bajońskie” — Bayonne amounts). Count Potocki’s travels allowed him to directly purchase works of art for his collection which in time became one of the largest on Polish lands at the turn of the 18th century. He used them to decorate his estates. The Wilanów Palace, which he received on September 19, 1799 from his mother-in-law, Izabela Lubomirska née Czartoryska³⁹, was the most important of them. In those days, Wilanów was located far from the borders of Warsaw, which was the centre of political events. The his-

³⁶ Grochulska B. 1984, p. 163.

³⁷ Anna Potocka-Wąsowiczowa wrote that when her father-in-law went to Poznań to welcome Napoleon as a member of intellectual deputation, he returned “less delighted than I am able to express”. She noted that after the fire of Moscow in 1812, Potocki, “gifted with a sharp mind and good judgement had a very realistic approach to all issues”, was full of hopes after his meeting with Napoleon, Potocka-Wąsowiczowa A. 1965, p. 85, 246; quoted after: Kijas E. 1974, p. 23–24.

³⁸ Grand Tour. 2006, p. 199.

³⁹ Fijałkowski W. 2011, p. 56. The Wilanów estate was *de facto* taken over by the wife of Count Potocki, Aleksandra Lubomirska née Potocka (the agreement was concluded between mother and daughter), the fact that was actually admitted by the Count in jokes, as he called himself *le mari de la Dame de Wilanów* (“a husband of the Lady of Wilanów”) (AGAD, APP, ref. 262/II, a letter of November 25, 1805, quoted after: Malinowska I. 1972, p. 123). Stanisław Kostka and Aleksandra Potocki also owned a town residence in Krakowskie Przedmieście, currently this building houses the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage. Furthermore, Count Potocki also had other estates, including in Lubelskie, Podolia, and Ukraine (Grochulska B. 1984, p. 163).

tory of the palace, a former residence of King Jan III Sobieski, and later of other renowned figures, made it a place predestined for representative functions. In their estate the Potockis organised meetings attended by social elites. In this they were helped by the important role played by Potocki in the public life of the state.

Apart from entertainment purposes, the purchase of Thomire's products was also influenced by the contemporary fashion for products from his workshop, which suited Potocki's taste. As a member of Parisian high society he saw Thomire's works — according to a Russian erudite quoted by Niclaussé “there was no residence that would not have a bronze work signed Thomire à Paris”⁴⁰.

The Count inherited his interest in French culture from his parents, Eustachy Potocki and Marianna [Maria] Kańska, née Potocka. Krzysztof Gombin in his work *Inicjatywy artystyczne Eustachego Potockiego* (Artistic Initiatives of Eustachy Potocki) demonstrated that Potocki's parents were “one of the most enlighten and interested in artistic problems married couples of the middle of the 18th century”.

The development of these interests was to be mainly influenced by his education at *Collegium Nobilium Scholarum Piarum* in Warsaw, which Stanisław Koska started in 1761 and completed in 1772⁴¹. That school, established in 1740 by Piarist priest Stanisław Konarski, taught modern, Enlightenment curriculum, with noticeable French influences. The school taught modern languages, including French. Students' theatre performances, during which works of French authors were presented, played an important role⁴², together with the education in arts⁴³, shaping students' tastes.

Potocki spoke fluent French, wrote his private letters in this language, and this was not exceptional in those days. Potocki's “French nature” was frequently criticized by his contemporaries. Kajetan Koźmian, writing in the context of the beginnings of the Romanticism period, recalled: “Only S. Potocki, at the end of his days, sometimes stumbled over French phrases in the Polish discourse”⁴⁴. Referring to Potocki's support of the French theatre in Poland, Juliusz Falkowski said that “unfortunately, under his [Potocki — M.H.] Polish the French underneath can be seen. His attitude as a man was the same as an author, half Pole, half Frenchman — he jumped to quadrille under his grey hair — but his heart was Polish, this cannot be denied”⁴⁵.

The artistic tastes of Count Stanisław Koska Potocki were rather shaped by his era — his father was a lover of the Rococo art predominating in his days, while he himself became one of the most known promoters of the classical art on Polish lands⁴⁶. In the text *Lettre d'un étranger sur le Salon de 1787*, criticising works exhibited in the Louvre in 1787, the Count expressed his admiration for the Italian art and classicist works of French artists (especially Jacques Louis David). In the gallery of European paintings created by Count Potocki in the Wilanów Palace, the collection of French paintings was second in size. Artistic craftworks purchased by Count Potocki included French works: a porcelain set by Dagoty purchased in Paris in 1808, baroque faience pieces from Nevers, or French clocks. He probably also owned a collection of French silvers⁴⁷.

⁴⁰ Niclaussé J. 1947, p. 104.

⁴¹ Mączyński R. 2003, p. 36.

⁴² Mączyński R. 1988.

⁴³ Mączyński R. 2004.

⁴⁴ Koźmian K. 1972, vol. 2, p. 85; Koźmian K. 1972, vol. 3, p. 398–399.

⁴⁵ Falkowski J. 1877, vol. 2, p. 85; quoted after: Kijas E. 1974, p. 71, footnote 126.

⁴⁶ The most famous work by Count Potocki, dedicated to arts, is the book *O sztuce u dawnych, czyli Winkelman polski* (History of Ancient Art, or the Polish Winkelmann) Warszawa 1815.

⁴⁷ Zukowska M. 1988.

Count Potocki noted his expenditures in *Pamiętnik Interessów samego J. O. Stanisława Kostki Potockiego Senatora i Wojewody*. A note on the purchase of “bronze works at Tomir” indicates a total amount of 4570 livres⁴⁸. In the literature, this note is interpreted as referring to *surtout de table* found in Wilanów: “The list also includes a purchase of an extensive centrepiece of gilded bronze, made to the Potockis’ order by the most famous Parisian bronzesmith Pierre Philippe Thomire (1751–1843), for which the sum of 4570 livres was paid then”⁴⁹. However, it is so general — concerns “bronze works” — that it could also include other items purchased at Thomire’s. Nowadays, it is assumed (however, without any grounds) that three ornamental vases at Wilanów are not included in the table centrepiece, and this will prove to be incorrect at least in the case of one of them, as the inventory of 1895 demonstrates⁵⁰. As no known source is available that would inform about their purchase at other date, it cannot be excluded that they were amongst “bronze works at Tomir” purchased in 1808. It should also be taken into account that some of the purchased items could not survive to our days, and this is possible due to their utilitarian functions, and the war events. Not all of them had to be placed in the Wilanów Palace — some could have been taken to other mansion.

The amount of 4570 livres was paid in two instalments — 3760 and 810 livres. It is difficult to conclude the reasons from the note itself — beside the second amount Potocki noted that it was the “Bill of his [Thomire — note by M.H.]”. *Pamiętnik Interessów* also indicates that during his stay in Paris Count Potocki placed at least two more orders at Thomire’s, which were recorded separately in the list of his expenditures. They concern setting in bronze of a “*crystal de roche* cup” and of an “antique bust” for 110 and 60 livres, respectively. The current collection of the Museum does not include an antique bust in the bronze setting attributed to Thomire. The cup was transformed into an olive lamp, and it has been preserved to this day in the Wilanów collection. Under the entry concerning setting of the “antique bust”, Count Potocki also listed “5 Vases of ancient porcelain set in bronze” for 120 livres and “3 similar blue ones” for 84 livres. Here he did not indicated that they were Thomire’s works, and this could result from a brief nature of these notes. The contribution of the Parisian bronzesmith would be indicated by his profession — he was the official ciseleur of the Sèvres factory, and this made him a leading specialist in setting of porcelain products in gilded bronze.

Count Potocki also purchased bronze works at André-Antoine Ravrio’s for a much lower sum of 1181 livres⁵¹. In the subsequent pages of *Pamiętnik Interessów* he mentioned that he paid the amount due for “mirror panes for a table”⁵². Two years later the Count purchased additional components of centrepiece at Ravrio’s⁵³.

These expenditures were covered by resources at a disposal of his wife, Aleksandra Potocka, as noted in the heading of a page including a list of purchases made during the stay in Paris: “Settlements with my Wife for money sent to me to Paris — returned together with Bills referring to them, in Willanów on August 9, 1808” and below: “Expenses on behalf of my wife”⁵⁴.

Another source informing about expenses made by Count Potocki are *Rachunki podróży paryskiej i sprawunków (Expenditures on the journey to Paris and purchases)*⁵⁵ kept in Allegaty kasowe Archiwum Gospodarczego Wilanowskiego (Vouchers of Wilanów Estate Archive).

⁴⁸ AGAD, AGWil., Anteriora, ref. 302, p. 238. A copy of that page is available amongst *Rachunki kasy domowej of Potocki*, AGAD, AGWil., Alegata kassowe, ref. 62, p. 643.

⁴⁹ Grand Tour. 2006, p. 203.

⁵⁰ Grand Tour. 2006, p. 265; Kolekcja wilanowska. 2005, p. 367.

⁵¹ AGAD, AGWil., Anteriora, ref. 302, p. 238.

⁵² AGAD, AGWil., Anteriora, ref. 302, p. 252.

⁵³ Grand Tour. 2006, p. 203.

⁵⁴ AGAD, AGWil., Anteriora, ref. 302, p. 238.

⁵⁵ AGAD, AGWil., Alegata kassowe, ref. 63.

However, no direct information about bronze works purchased at Thomire's is available, although the notes are very specific — Count Potocki noted even his spendings “on bread rolls”⁵⁶, or “for a newspaper”⁵⁷. These notes have a form of loose sheets (notes of Count Potocki, bills from shops) — maybe the bill issued by the Thomire's workshop was lost somewhere. Such bill was preserved in the case of the porcelain workshop of Pierre-Louis Dagoty⁵⁸. *Rachunki kasy domowej* (Household expenditures) of Count Potocki do not contain any information about amounts spent on bronze works from Thomire. However, they provide information that the Count used services of Aleksander Gittner for repairs of bronze works — e.g., a note written by that bronzesmith for “cleaning of bronze works” was preserved⁵⁹. Similar services were provided by the brass smith, Vallentien Venies⁶⁰.

Taking into account the number (368 of works of art)⁶¹ and the prominence of Count Potocki's purchases during his journey to Paris in 1808 — which included *Gotowalnia Królowej Janowej* (Dressing set of King John's Queen), valuable books and paintings — the Thomire's table centrepiece was an expensive purchase, but did not have a very prominent place. Its purchase is noted amongst other expenses, without specifying functions of purchased items — simply as Thomire's “bronze works”.

At the beginning, Thomire's table centrepiece had an ornamental and utilitarian function. It was placed on the table probably only during a meal. The etageres and the mirrored plateaux, separated into segments, were probably kept in cupboards. Outside meal times, the jardinières and the ornamental vases could decorate the interior of the palace. Unfortunately, Thomire's *surtout de table* is not presented in any of the views of Wilanów interiors kept in the Museum archives, or in old illustrated publications dedicated to the palace⁶².

Information about the location of the table centrepiece in the Wilanów Palace could have been included in inventories from the period when the Wilanów Palace was transformed into the Museum, and which are kept at the Central Archives of Historical Records⁶³. The oldest note about Thomire's table centrepiece, and the only one definitely referring to it, is included in the inventory drawn up in August 1895. *Catalogue des Tableaux, Objets d'art et d'ameublement qui se trouvent au Palais de Willanow près Varsovie, appartenant à Monsieur le Comte Xavier Branicki* consists of two parts: first, dedicated to paintings, and second, concerning objets d'art in the Wilanów collection. The items were grouped according to the rooms in which they were kept at that time. At the end of the inventory, containing 381 pages, the following item is listed as the first under the heading “Garde-Meubles” (a kind of a warehouse for furniture) and briefly described: *Magnifiques surtout et pièces de surtout en bronze ciselé et doré de l'époque du premier empire. Travail français, signé de Thomire. Composé de: Une pièce de milieu formée par trois figures de femmes allégoriques à la Gloire, tenant des couronnes qui les relient. Le pied est circulaire et orné de guirlandes, rusaces et mascarons à têtes de femmes. Cette pièce forme corbeille et supporte une couronne à douze lumières. Quatre pièces plus petites formant corbeilles à six lumières supportées par des groupes de femmes, la coiffure ornée de groupes de raisin, sur des socles circulaires cors de figures d'amour et de guirlandes. Deux grands vases à panse ornée de figures en relief, femmes dansant une Bacchanate, anses supportées par*

⁵⁶ AGAD, AGWil, Alegata kassowe, ref. 63, p. 6.

⁵⁷ AGAD, AGWil, Alegata kassowe, ref. 63, p. 76.

⁵⁸ AGAD, AGWil, Alegata kassowe, ref. 63, p. 46.

⁵⁹ AGAD, AGWil, Alegata kassowe, ref. 62, p. 149.

⁶⁰ AGAD, AGWil, Alegata kassowe, ref. 62, 64.

⁶¹ Grand Tour. 2006, p. 206.

⁶² Including Skimborowicz H., Gerson W. 1893; Czajewski W. 1903.

⁶³ AGAD, AGWil, Zarząd Muzeum, ref. 174–195.

*des têtes d'hommes à cornes de bonc; les vases sont à six lumières. Douze drageoirs à trois plateau. Douze coupe supportées par des pieds en bronze. Et huit drageoirs à pied circulaire en bronze*⁶⁴.

This description indicates that Thomire's works preserved in the Wilanów collection were very hastily considered to be one set of items. The description of the table centrepiece in the inventory confirms that the jardinière with caryatids, the largest of all, was an element set in the centre of the table. One of the remaining listed four jardinières (decorated with bacchantes and a bacchant supporting a basket) was not preserved in the Wilanów collection. The bacchant figure is very similar to figures of bacchantes, only slightly differing in its anatomy; therefore, when viewed only briefly, it could have been interpreted as a female figure. The listed pair of ornamental vases is also incomplete — one of them corresponding to the description was preserved, however, without removable candelabrum arms. *Douze drageoirs à trois plateau* possibly refers to a set of three-tiered etageres with pedestals resembling Egyptian capitals, although clear identification of items on a basis of such general remark is difficult. *Et huit drageoirs à pied circulaire en bronze* are probably etageres with sphinxes, and this would be confirmed by a number of preserved items and the cylindrical socle. Despite the assumed briefness of descriptions, it is somehow strange that the ornamental figures of sphinxes were not noted, as they are characteristic and easy to identify elements of the etageres. *Douze coupe supportées par des pieds en bronze* are probably lost elements of that table centrepiece. In 1895, it consisted of 39 items.

The remaining items of the “current” *surtout de table* were also included in the inventory, but in separate groups of objects. The etageres with Sirens (*Quatre Drageoirs à trois plateaux supportés par des cariatides de femmes ailées*) were recorded as elements of other Empire table centrepiece, also of gilded bronze, listed under numbers from 2867 to 2872: *Autre Surtout de table en bronzé ciselé et doré du premier empire, composé de: Deux vases forme Médicis, à guirlandes et têtes de Mercure ornés de guirlandes de lauriers. Sur la panse des rondes de femmes. Anses formées par des statuettes de femmes, décor ornant sur or bruni. Quatre Drageoirs à trois plateaux supportés par des cariatides de femmes ailées. Travail français*⁶⁵. This is confirmed by a number of preserved items. It is noticeable that the inventory did not report that some of these etageres were signed by Thomire. However, names of artists are rarely reported in this list in general. The remaining items in the second centrepiece are two vases of a form recalling the Medici Vase, which also could be the work of Thomire, assuming that the above-mentioned etageres were made by that bronzesmith.

The etageres with bacchantes were listed further below, as separate items, not assigned to any *surtout de table*: *Huit Drageoirs à trois plateaux, pies ornés de statuettes de femmes dansant. Bronze ciselé et doré. Travail français du premier empire*⁶⁶. The inventory from 1895 also lists the remaining ornamental vases, corresponding to Thomire's works preserved in the Wilanów collection, and an olive lamp. What is interesting, the record concerning Thomire's table centrepiece is known in the literature, but its contents were never analysed⁶⁷.

Spis obrazów, mebli i odzieży muzealnej w pałacu wilanowskim (List of paintings, furniture and historical clothes in the Wilanów Palace) from 1929–1932, when the palace belonged to the Branicki family, contains a brief note that may refer to *surtout* of Count Potocki: “A table centrepiece, bronze, with Greek figures”, with an additional pencil note: “and glass chemin de table”, and slightly higher “750.000”⁶⁸. *Surtout de table* made by Thomire's workshop, especially the jardinières, contained figural ornaments that can be called “Greek”. The note “glass

⁶⁴ AGAD, AGWil., Zarząd Muzeum, ref. 185, pp. 365–366, Nos. 2828–2866.

⁶⁵ AGAD, AGWil., Zarząd Muzeum, ref. 185, p. 366, Nos. 2862–2872.

⁶⁶ AGAD, AGWil., Zarząd Muzeum, ref. 185, p. 367, Nos. 2881–2888.

⁶⁷ Paprocka-Gajek J. 2005, p. 367; Paprocka-Gajek J. 2006, p. 265.

⁶⁸ AGAD, AGWil., Zarząd Muzeum, ref. 193, p. 10.

chemin de table” can possibly refer to a mirrored plateau that could have been a part of the centrepiece, however, the inventory from 1895 does not list such item with the *surtout* of Count Potocki. The centrepiece in this form was valued at 750 thousand old Polish zloty.

IV. Development of Pierre-Philippe Thomire’s activities

Pierre-Philippe Thomire (1751–1843) graduated from the Academy of Saint Luke as a pupil of French sculptors, Augustin Pajou and Jean-Antoine Houdon. Probably due to his talents that were recognised by his teachers, *sculpteur* Thomire was awarded the first prize in July 1772⁶⁹. Houdon saw in his pupil the only worthy successor in casting of bronze sculptures. Eventually Thomire, despite his calling, was forced to partly change his specialisation. He did not have sufficient financial resources to cast large works, such as portrait busts or statues, like Houdon. However, he did not abandon working in metal. Due to the contemporary fashion of furnishing interiors with gilded bronze, which was later to develop even further, casting of smaller forms proved to be the most advantageous solution for him. To develop his skills in that direction, Thomire started to study under Pierre Gouthière, a distinguished *ciseleur* who invented mat gilding⁷⁰.

Gouthière — like his pupil — worked not only with bronze, but also with brass⁷¹. During his training, Thomire learnt workshop techniques of the master and adopted them to such extent that sometimes it is difficult to decide who was the author of works from the early period of his activities⁷².

In 1776, Pierre-Philippe Thomire established his own workshop. It was definitely a foundry, as at that time its owner had a title of master caster⁷³. Known works from the early period of his independent activities were casts of sculptures, made according to Houdon. A decisive turn towards gilded bronze (and brass) possibly occurred at the time when Thomire became the official *ciseleur* of the Sèvres factory, replacing Jean-Claude-Thomas Chambellan Duplessis, who died in that year⁷⁴. This way, Thomire became a specialist in ornaments of gilded bronze, used for setting of porcelain at one of the most famous factories of all times. He received many orders, and made works for palaces, including Versailles, Compiègne, and Saint-Cloud. The number of orders and their importance made Thomire the main *ciseleur* in the days of Louis XVI. A large vase of blue Sèvres porcelain is inscribed with a signature “MANUFACTURE ROYALE DES PORCELAINES DE FRANCE/ LA GARNITURE FAIRE PAR THOMIRE, CISELEUR DOREUR DU ROI L’AN 1787”, indicating the rank and the specialisation of the artist.

The period of the French Revolution partly suspended Thomire’s activities. He transformed his workshop into a factory of arms and ammunition⁷⁵, to avoid suspicions and repressions of the Committee of General Security. At that time, many artists officially supplying the royal court became bankrupt.

⁶⁹ Niclausse J. 1947, p. 22.

⁷⁰ Mat gilding was made using sea salt, nitrate and alum. It was a more expensive alternative to gilding of an already mat surface. Therefore, initially *dorure au mat* was reserved for luxurious orders, Baulez Ch., Vignon Ch. 2016, p. 130.

⁷¹ A composition of alloys in selected Gouthière’s works was analysed with the XRF device. The tests were performed on non-gilded parts, Baulez Ch., Vignon Ch. 2016, p. 17, 134.

⁷² Dumont F. 1956, p. 75; Cohen D.H. 1986, vol. 2, p. 657–658.

⁷³ Niclausse J. 1947, p. 25.

⁷⁴ Niclausse J. 1947, p. 40.

⁷⁵ Dumont F. 1956, p. 79. Cohen noted that there was no information available about the extent to which Thomire abandoned his true specialisation at that time. The fact that Thomire was able to purchase Lignereux’s real estate in 1804 indicates that the artist continued his previous activities. He left as open the question of motives guiding Thomire — were they only of economic nature, or also a form of support for the Revolution?, see Cohen D.H. 1986, vol. 2, p. 660.

When the revolutionary activities ceased, Thomire established a partnership with a financier, Duterme⁷⁶, with help from his two sons-in-law — André-Antoine Beauvisage and Louis-Auguste-Césaire Carbonelle. The agreement was concluded for twelve years. In 1804, Thomire purchased for 15 thousand francs a company of Martin-Eloy Lignereux, a *marchand-mercier*, who had been in a partnership with Dominique Daguerre⁷⁷. With this purchase, the company *Thomire, Duterme et Compagnie* was able to open workshops at *rue Boucherat 7* and a shop at *rue Taitbout 41*⁷⁸. Lignereux left goods (furniture, bronze works, models) at a warehouse, obliging Thomire to repay them by selling them⁷⁹. Probably he implemented some of these items into his own production — however, this issue would require an analysis of an inventory of Lignereux's goods, and this has not been done yet⁸⁰.

During the height of its popularity, the *Thomire, Duterme et Cie* workshop employed even 700 to 800 workers⁸¹. Thomire, with Carbonelle's help, was responsible for production, while Duterme managed budget and accounting issues and Beauvisage was responsible for sales and customers⁸². All of them had a monthly salary of 500 francs, where the workshop's annual turnover amounted to ca. 500 thousand francs⁸³.

The purchase of Lignereux's estate was also advantageous due to the shop location — Taitbout street was located in a fashionable luxurious quarter where “eminent people of the new regime”⁸⁴ lived, including politicians (e.g., Talleyrand) and artists. In that street, the bank of Gabriel-Julien Ouvrard and the famous restaurant *Tortoni*, opened in the same year as Thomire's shop, operated. The range of the *Thomire, Duterme et Cie* house was intended for such customers, who “aimed more at ostentation than intimacy”⁸⁵ in interior decorations. Thomire also lived at Taitbout street (at number 15), but later (around 1813) he moved to *boulevard Poissonnière, no 2*⁸⁶.

In 1806, Thomire participated in *Exposition industrielle*. His *cheminée en malachite* was considered to be the best work, and he was awarded a gold medal, as the first bronzesmith in history⁸⁷. In the same year, Napoleon ordered the *Austerlitz Table* to be made, and Thomire prepared ornaments of gilded bronze for it.

Table centrepieces hold a special place amongst luxurious products manufactured by Pierre-Philippe Thomire's workshop from the days of the French Empire. According to Hans Ottomeyer and Peter Pröschel, over half of known *surtouts de table* come from that company⁸⁸. According to Niclausse, they could consist even of eighty elements⁸⁹. In her book about Thomire she listed only ten table centrepieces, comprising, amongst others, of 43 and of 59 items — the remaining twelve items in the catalogue are single preserved items that were components of larger sets. That list is incomplete, as the author herself informs⁹⁰.

⁷⁶ Name unknown.

⁷⁷ Terms and conditions of that agreement are more widely discussed in: Cohen D.H. 1986, vol. 2, p. 661.

⁷⁸ Niclausse J. 1947, p. 42–43.

⁷⁹ Zek Iu.Ia., Voronikhina A.N. 1984, p. 9.

⁸⁰ This problem was noted by Juliette Niclausse, see Niclausse J. 1947, p. 43–44.

⁸¹ Zek Iu.Ia., Voronikhina A.N. 1984, p. 9.

⁸² Cohen D. H. 1986, vol. 2, p. 661.

⁸³ Niclausse J. 1947, p. 45; Dumont F. 1956, p. 79.

⁸⁴ Niclausse J. 1947, p. 46.

⁸⁵ Dumont F. 1956, p. 74.

⁸⁶ Niclausse J. 1947, p. 50.

⁸⁷ Dumont F. 1956, p. 74.

⁸⁸ Ottomeyer H., Pröschel P. 1986, vol. 1, p. 323.

⁸⁹ Niclausse J. 1947, p. 14.

⁹⁰ For example, information about the Wilanów table centrepiece is missing, which can be partly explained by the date of the book publication (1947). J. Niclausse conducted a search query in France, Switzerland, Belgium and England, omitting, for example, the collection of the State Hermitage Museum. To create a complete list of

V. *Elements of the Wilanów surtout de table as works of Pierre-Philippe Thomire's workshop and of his period*

The components forming the centrepiece played several functions, of table lighting, flower baskets, or plates for fruit or refreshments. One object could combine a few of listed functions. Together, they “set” the table in its central part, creating a rich setting for the meal. The aesthetic function predominated — the arrangement of the elements was not changed during a feast, as implied, for example, by the weight of these objects.



Fig. 9. Pierre-Philippe Thomire, *surtout de table*, ca. 1810
(source: Cooper Hewitt Smithsonian Design Museum, NY, 1991-31-1-a/ww)

Ryc. 9. Pierre-Philippe Thomire, *surtout de table*, ok. 1810
(źródło: Cooper Hewitt Smithsonian Design Museum, NY, 1991-31-1-a/ww)

Etageres, jardinières, ornamental vases and other items were placed on a mirrored plateau surrounded with a gallery of gilded bronze, which was Thomire's idea (fig. 9)⁹¹. These balustrades were formed by floral stems, rosettes, palmettes, garlands, and presentations of human and animal (e.g., swans) figures, arranged symmetrically. They were interleaved with small pedestals lifting the plateau bottom above the table surface. They could contain small, three-dimensional ornaments, like figural presentations, or baskets, empty or containing fruit, and vases. The effect of a mirror surface was achieved by silver plating of a glass surface of the plateau bottom⁹². The plateaux consisted of segments, so their length could be adjusted as needed and according to the table size⁹³. This also facilitated transport of these objects. When purchasing the centrepiece for Wilanów, Count Stanisław Kostka Potocki could also order a mirrored plateau, which was not preserved.

A special effect was achieved by placing items with candelabrum arms on the tray. The candlelight was reflected in the mirror bottom of the plateau, emphasising polished surfaces of gildings, and contrasting with mat parts of the centrepiece. The mirrored plateau could also be equipped with small candlesticks installed on its perimeter, and reaching above the gallery. An example of such solution was published by Richard Redding Antiques — it is a plateau consisting of three segments, with sixteen candelabrum arms grouped in pairs. The balustrade is deco-

works from Thomire's workshop, an extensive search in public and private collections in entire Europe and the United States would be necessary. As individual elements of *surtouts de table* were scattered, those containing the largest number of original items, including a mirrored plateau designated for them, are the most valuable.

⁹¹ Niclausse J. 1947, p. 92.

⁹² A technique used to produce a mirrored plateau was discussed in a film made during restoration works on Thomire's centrepiece from the collection of the Cooper Hewitt Smithsonian Design Museum in New York (Tablescapes. 2018). Thomire's *surtout de table* from the collection of that Museum was the central motif of a temporary exhibition dedicated to table settings.

⁹³ Ottomeyer H., Pröschel P. 1986, vol. 1, p. 323.

rated with figures of Zephyrs with butterfly wings, holding flower garlands, with palmettos, wreaths or bouquets in their centre⁹⁴. Another mirrored plateau of this type, from Thomire's workshop, which is round instead of being elongated, can be found in the Hermitage Museum⁹⁵. Six tall candelabra (62 cm high) with many arms are installed on its pedestals. Examples of round mirrored plateau of a small diameter, on which only one item could be placed, are also kept at the Fine Arts Museum in San Francisco⁹⁶.

A mirrored plateau with candelabra on its perimeter is a rare solution in Thomire's works, due to higher costs of its production. This model was introduced in 1810 by his rival, Claude Galle, who designed an object of this type with twenty four candelabrum arms⁹⁷. So if Count Stanisław Kostka Potocki purchased a mirrored plateau in 1808, that plateau would not include candelabrum arms.

The mirrored plateaux were also present in works by other artists, including the goldsmith Jean-Baptiste-Claude Odiot. At Musée des Arts Décoratifs, a design drawing of a natural size from 1815–1820 is preserved, which is attributed to the workshop of that artist and presents a fragment of a gallery decorating a plateau of *surtout de table*⁹⁸. The same figural ornaments were introduced by Thomire in a mirrored plateau forming a part of table centrepieces held at Musée Marmottan, dated to 1810–1814⁹⁹, and at the Cooper Hewitt Smithsonian Design Museum. Repeatable motifs used by different artists resulted from a practice of using the same models, and of exchanging models between artists, and this translated into a uniform nature of the Empire style.

Mirrored plateaux inspired by Thomire were characteristic also for the times of the *Second Empire*. An interesting example here is a plateau created in the 1860s'–1870s', to which legs supported on lion paws, cast in 1900, were added, transforming it into a free-standing piece of furniture¹⁰⁰.

Components of a centrepiece could also be placed directly on a table, as each had its own pedestal. They were arranged according to principles of symmetry, usually, with an item that was the largest or differed from the others in the centre. The central item of the Wilanów centrepiece was the jardinière-candelabrum with caryatids (fig. 6) — larger than three other preserved jardinières with bacchantes and a bacchant (fig. 7).

Thomire's jardinières were made to a specific template — three-dimensional figural ornaments were placed on a tall, cylindrical base, and they usually supported an openwork basket for flowers¹⁰¹ (most frequently metal, rarely glass). Objects of this type had a removable ring with candelabrum arms installed on the basket, so they could be used just as baskets for fruit or flowers, as required. The Wilanów jardinières have either six (the jardinières with bacchantes and a bacchant) or twelve (the jardinière with caryatids) candelabrum arms tipped with the cornucopia. The warmth of candles located close to flowers in the baskets intensified their smell.

⁹⁴ Thomire-Richard Redding. 2017b.

⁹⁵ The plateau was ordered in 1822 by Grand Duke Michael Pavlovich Romanov, son of tsar Paul I, Zek Iu.Ia., Voronikhina A.N. 1984, cat. 58, p. 41, 42.

⁹⁶ Ottomeyer H., Pröschel P. 1986, vol. 1, p. 386.

⁹⁷ Ottomeyer H., Pröschel P. 1986, vol. 1, p. 386.

⁹⁸ Gay-Mazuel A. 2017, p. 110–111. The design was executed in gilded silver, for Pedro I, the Emperor of Brazil. Figural ornaments of the gallery, installed on pedestals, represent personifications of the seasons — summer and autumn, which according to an author of the *Odiot* catalogue are symbolized by goddess Ceres and a bacchante.

⁹⁹ Ottomeyer H., Pröschel P. 1986, vol. 1, p. 382–383.

¹⁰⁰ A mirror plateau used as a coffee table, inspired by P.P. Thomire, Paris, 1860–1870 and 1900, Jansantiqes. n.d.

¹⁰¹ A drawing of a jardinière with a bowl-shaped basket with openwork rim comes from Odio's workshop, Gay-Mauzel A. 2017, cat. 92, p. 115.



Fig. 10. Socle of jardinière-candelabrum, fragment

(inv. no. Wil.2755/1)

(photo by W. Holnicki, Museum of King Jan III's Palace at Wilanów)

Ryc. 10. Cokół żardiniery-świecznika, fragment

(nr inw. Wil.2755/1)

(fot. W. Holnicki, Muzeum Pałacu Króla Jana III w Wilanowie)



Fig. 11. Cylindrical altar, II/I BC, Archaeological Museum of Rhodes (photo by B. Gagnon, source:Wikipedia, GNU Free Documentation License, Creative Commons Attribution-Share

Alike 4.0 International, 3.0 Unported, 2.5 Generic, 2.0 Generic and 1.0 Generic license)

Ryc. 11. Ołtarz cylindryczny, II/I w. przed Chr., Muzeum Archeologiczne na Rodos

(fot. B. Gagnon, źródło: Wikipedia, GNU Free Documentation License, Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International, 3.0 Unported, 2.5 Generic, 2.0 Generic and 1.0 Generic license)

Possibly, jardinières filled with flowers were used to decorate not only tables, but also other parts of rooms.

Bases of the jardinières-candelabra and of the etageres were possibly inspired by Greek cylindrical altars associated with the veneration of the dead (see figs. 10 and 11)¹⁰². The altars of this type frequently were decorated with very artistic ornaments, including garlands attached to bucrania and figural representations, as visible in an altar in the Napoleon Museum, published in *Les monuments antiques du Musée Napoléon* by Tommaso Piroli and Johann Gottfried Schweighäuser¹⁰³. Altars from the Hellenistic period preserved, for example, in the Middle East, on Delos, Rhodes, and in Athens, are particularly similar to bases of jardinières-candelabra. The form of Roman putealia, wellheads, found in an atrium of a Roman house, was almost identical (an example from the Napoleon Museum was also illustrated by Tommaso Piroli and Johann Gottfried Schweighäuser)¹⁰⁴.

The bases of jardinières-candelabra with bacchantes and a bacchant are decorated with floral garlands carried by putti with butterfly wings walking in different directions. Artists knew the figure of Cupid with butterfly wings, e.g., from the altar of Amemptus in the Napoleon Museum, and from grotesque ornaments of Vatican Loggias published by Giovanni Volpato in 1776¹⁰⁵. The jardinière with caryatids is decorated with garlands attached to medallions, which

¹⁰² The fact that the Empire art was inspired by antique altars was noted by Daniela Gallo, Gallo 2015, p. 42.

¹⁰³ Piroli T., Schweighäuser J.G. 1804, p. 58.

¹⁰⁴ Piroli T., Schweighäuser J.G. 1804, p. 56.

¹⁰⁵ Volpato G. 1776.

centres are filled by rosettes within rings decorated with rhombic mesh. Empty spaces between medallions are filled with relief antique masks decorated with wreaths of grape leaves (possibly, an image of a bacchante). Bases of the jardinières-candelabra have their own profiled pedestals, with an ornament of a Lesbian cyma, derived from the architecture of Greek temples — the ornament is significantly “compressed”, so heart-shaped form of the upper layer of the leaves, characteristic for the Greek original, is poorly visible. The base ledge has same decoration, but reversed (leaves extend from the bottom, and not from the top edge).

The jardinière with figures of bacchantes and a bacchant supporting an openwork basket, represented by three above-mentioned objects from Wilanów, belongs to the variants manufactured by Thomire’s company most frequently found in museums and in the art market. Barefoot figures supporting baskets with their raised hands, wear clothes revealing their breasts and wreaths of vine on their heads, with bunches of grapes hanging near their ears. A figure of a bacchant, nearly identical to the bacchantes due to their robust shapes, has a bucranium attached to his clothes, on his side. This image could have been inspired by a sculpture of a bacchante in the Napoleon Museum¹⁰⁶. The figures are captured in motion, more or less dynamic, usually facing outside, but there are variants with figures facing inside. Examples of such solutions can be found in the Roman Baths in Potsdam (beginning of the 19th century)¹⁰⁷, the Cooper Hewitt Smithsonian Design Museum, and in the Hermitage Museum, published in *Dekorativnaia bronza* as “candelabra” or, when devoid of candelabra arms, simply as “ornaments” (ukrasheniya), dated in general to the beginning of the 19th century¹⁰⁸.

The basket of the largest Wilanów jardinière, with caryatids, is supported on heads of four female figures wearing peploi, possibly inspired by famous caryatids from the Erechtheion. Each of them holds laurel leaf wreaths in their hands, grabbed by the neighbouring caryatid. A kind of keystone hangs in the middle of the basket, tipped with a pine cone (like Dionysus’ staff, thyrsus). Such example can be found amongst works from Jean-Baptiste-Claude Odiot’s workshop — it is a design of a jardinière with a basket supported on a column, around which three-dimensional figures of goddesses associated with nature, Flora, Ceres and Pomona are arranged¹⁰⁹. Odiot, like Thomiere, added ornaments to the openwork basket, in form of wine leaves and bunches of grapes in a heraldic arrangement. The decoration on lateral surfaces of the base, in form of garlands of flowers “attached” to rosettes, are also analogical to the Wilanów jardinière with caryatids. The jardinière similar to the Wilanów jardinière with caryatids can also be found in the Hermitage Museum¹¹⁰. It presents a variant in which a basket is not held in hands of figures of bacchantes, but it is supported on heads of caryatids or on a column.

Figures of small putti or standing sphinxes, or, in the case of Odiot, of Zephyrs and standing winged lions, also could act as supports¹¹¹. Jardinières with putti supporting a basket with their raised hands were also designed by the workshop of Feuchère¹¹². A variant of a jardinière with supports in form of two winged Victorias in a heraldic arrangement, standing on two basically separate pedestals connected only in their bottom part is also known¹¹³. A motif of Victoria was frequently used by Thomire in candelabra — then he used a design by Charles Percier,

¹⁰⁶ Piroli T., Schweighäuser J.G. 1804, p. 48.

¹⁰⁷ What is interesting, this item was included in a catalogue dedicated to the Biedermeier period, see Chase L., Kemp K., Lammerhuber L. 2001, p. 207, 408.

¹⁰⁸ Zek Iu.Ia., Voronikhina A.N. 1984, cat. 73, 74, 80–83, p. 45, 48–49.

¹⁰⁹ Dated to ca. 1815, Gay-Mazuel A. 2017, cat. 96, p. 118.

¹¹⁰ Zek Iu.Ia., Voronikhina A.N. 1984, cat. 68, p. 43–44.

¹¹¹ Gay-Mazuel A. 2017, cat. 90, 95, p. 113, 117. The jardinière supported on three winged lions is inspired by a tripod discovered in the temple of Isis in Pompeii in 1760, as illustrated by G.B. Piranesi.

¹¹² Ottomeyer H., Pröschel P. 1986, vol. 1, p. 384, pl. 5.16.5.

¹¹³ Ottomeyer H., Pröschel P. 1986, vol. 1, p. 382, pl. 5.16.1.

in which the frontally presented figure of Victory holds candelabrum arms in her raised hands¹¹⁴. Jardinières could also be devoid of any figural ornaments.

The Royal Castle in Warsaw has the largest in Poland collection of jardinières-candelabra from Thomire's workshop. It includes: two signed jardinières with nine candelabrum arms (added part) with personifications of spring, summer and autumn, arranged around a column supporting an openwork basket¹¹⁵; a pair of jardinières with six candelabra arms, with three female figures in antique clothes holding cornucopias in their raised hands, standing on a pedestal decorated with three walking putti with butterfly wings, holding garlands of flowers in their hands¹¹⁶; a jardinière-candelabrum with twelve arms, with figures of two male and one female dancers on a triangular pedestal with truncated points and slightly concave sides decorated with plaques presenting putti that are dancing and making music¹¹⁷; a signed jardinière-candelabrum for six candles, with a basket supported by three figures of bacchantes presented in motion¹¹⁸, a pair of jardinières with a low triangular pedestal with truncated points and slightly concave sides, with supports shaped like three hybrids with lion legs, joined by a ring morphing into a bust of a boy with butterfly wings¹¹⁹.

The jardinière from the Royal Castle was noted as item 312 in the Nazi catalogue *Sichergestellte Kunstwerke in Generalgouvernement*¹²⁰ from 1940, amongst other heritage items found in the territory of the General Government that the Germans planned to transport to the Third Reich. Four such jardinières were at the Royal Castle at that time, as indicated by a note in the catalogue: *Vier Tafelauffäße*. The separate volume contained a picture of the jardinière without candelabrum arms¹²¹. The category "works of base metals" (*Arbeiten aus unedlem Metall*) listed also a table centrepiece, two separate mirrored plateaux, and two candelabra attributed to Thomire, which were in a collection of Count Tarnowski in Sucha (now Sucha Beskidzka)¹²².

Other products typical for Thomire's workshop included ornamental vases, installed on high, frequently rectangular plinths, decorated with a wreath on their front, which were inspired by antique altars, similarly as pedestals of jardinières. Three vases of that type, attributed to Thomire's workshop, were preserved in the Wilanów collection. One of them, a vase with a scene with dancing bacchantes on its bowl (fig. 12) can be associated with the table centrepiece pur-

¹¹⁴ Two candelabra from ca. 1810 were published in: Thomire-Richard Redding 2017a.

¹¹⁵ An analogical object, also dated to the first quarter of the 19th century, was published at artnet.com and at Richard Redding Antiques (ca. 1810–1815), see Artnet n.d.; Thomire-Richard Reddings. 2016.

¹¹⁶ Similar jardinières-candelabra, differing in the basket part, can be found at Musée Marmottan. They are a part of a table centrepiece dated to 1810–1814. A jardinière (post 1810) with the same figural presentations, but with a different pedestal, is in the Wittelsbacher Ausgleichfonds collection in Munich, Ottomeyer H., Pröschel P. 1986, vol. 1, p. 383, pl. 5.16.3.

¹¹⁷ A similar object, with two (not three) figures of a male and a female dancers identified as Bacchus and Ceres, is in a private collection in Munich, Ottomeyer H., Pröschel P. 1986, vol. 1, p. 387, pl. 5.16.13.

¹¹⁸ A similar item, dated to 1804–1813, can be found, e.g., in the Tokyo Fuji Art Museum (Centerpiece n.d.). I would like to thank Ms Anna Saratowicz for this information. Items similar to that jardinière were also listed in chapter VI. A similar jardinière, but supported by two figures of bacchantes holding the basket in their both hands, is in the collection of the National Museum in Warsaw and National Museum in Cracow. A copy of the jardinière from the Royal Castle in Warsaw was made by the company of Łopieński brothers (an item stamped with a signature "ŁOPIEŃSKI WARSZAWA"), Inventory No. ZKW/3354.

¹¹⁹ These ornaments distinguish it from all other Thomire's jardinières mentioned above. Similar solutions were used by Jean-Baptiste-Claude Odier. They were modelled after three-legged antique furniture.

¹²⁰ I would like to thank Ms Anna Saratowicz also for this information.

¹²¹ *Sichergestellte Kunstwerke*. 1940, vol. 3, No. 312.

¹²² *Sichergestellte Kunstwerke*. 1940, vol. 1, p. 93–94, 96, Nos. 314–315, 327. An illustration with the candelabra is included in volume 3 of the catalogue.

chased by Potocki in 1808, on a basis of the inventory from 1895 discussed above. Similarly as in the case of jardinières-candelabra, the plinth of this vase has its own profiled pedestal and a ledge decorated with a Lesbian cyma.

A foot of the ornamental vase has a shape similar to Egyptian lotus columns (see figs. 13 and 15). It is decorated with two rows of lanceolatus leaves (of papyrus?), and its bottom edge is decorated with an ornament similar as on the plinth pedestal and ledge. Ornamental handles of the vessel are supported on three-dimensional heads of bearded satyrs.

Presentations of Bacchus' retinue were a popular subject of the classical art and the art referring to the antiquity. The Wilanów vase was directly inspired by antique amphorae, which were frequently richly decorated with figural ornaments on their cups — bas-reliefs in the case of stone vases, or painted in the case of ceramic ones. In the antique art, presentations of satyrs frequently accompanied bacchantes — therefore, it was an intentional solution, especially, as amphorae were used as vessels for wine storage.

Similarly as jardinières, ornamental vases were constructed in such way that candelabrum arms could be installed in an opening in their neck, creating a “wreath of lights” (*couronne de lumières*)¹²³. Two vases of shapes and ornaments resembling the Wilanów vase were preserved in the Louvre Museum¹²⁴, and two were put up for sale at Christie's¹²⁵. The same model of an ornamental vase was used by Jean-Baptiste Claude Odier, and was illustrated in the goldsmith's portrait by Robert Lefèvre (contrary to the Wilanów vase, the one in the portrait has a low plinth). Many executions of that model are known. It was



Fig. 12. P.P. Thomire, ornamental vase
(inv. no. Wil.2591)
(photo by Z. Reszka, Museum of King
Jan III's Palace at Wilanów)

Ryc. 12. P.P. Thomire, waza dekoracyjna
(nr inw. Wil.2591)
(fot. Z. Reszka, Muzeum Pałacu
Króla Jana III w Wilanowie)

¹²³ Candelabra arms installed on ornamental vases had extensive forms in the times of Louis Philippe, as in the case of a pair of items with two rows of arms for candles, attributed to Thomire, sold at the Christie's auction, Thomire-Christies. 2017b.

¹²⁴ Alcouffe D., Dion-Tenenbaum A., Mabile G. 2004, cat. 138, p. 276–277.

¹²⁵ Thomire-Christies. 2005.



Fig. 13. Ramesseum columns in Thebes, 19th dynasty (photo by P. Idzkiewicz, source: Wikipedia. Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.5 Generic license)

Ryc. 13. Kolumny Ramesseum w Tebach, XIX dyn. (fot. P. Idzkiewicz, źródło: Wikipedia. Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.5 Generic license)



Fig. 14. Base of three-tiered etagere, fragment (inv. no. Wil.2584/1) (photo by Z. Reszka, Museum of King Jan III's Palace at Wilanów)

Ryc. 14. Stopa patery potrójnej, fragment (nr inw. Wil.2584/1) (fot. Z. Reszka, Muzeum Pałacu Króla Jana III w Wilanowie)



← Fig. 15. Base of ornamental vase, fragment (inv. no. Wil.2591) (photo by Z. Reszka, Museum of King Jan III's Palace at Wilanów)

Ryc. 15. Stopa wazy dekoracyjnej, fragment (nr inw. Wil.2591) (fot. Z. Reszka, Muzeum Pałacu Króla Jana III w Wilanowie)

designed by Charles-Jean Alexandre Moreau, an architect and a painter (1802), and intended to be used as a tea urn¹²⁶. Thomire also used other solutions — he frequently used the model of the Medici Vase.

The Wilanów collection includes two others signed ornamental vases with rectangular plinths, which were also included in the inventory from 1895¹²⁷. The note indicates that initially they had six candelabrum arms. The bowl part of these items is decorated with an antique scene of preparations for a sacrifice. Handles, formed from laurel branches, are supported on

¹²⁶ Gay-Mazuel A. 2017, p. 140–146. A coffee and tea set by Odiote is also in the collection of the Wilanów Museum.

¹²⁷ AGAD, AGWil., Zarząd Muzeum, ref. 185, s. 367, Nos. 2823–2824: *Deux vases à six lumières, anses supportées par des têtes de femmes. Socles rectangulaires à couronne. Bronze ciselé et doré. Travail français du premier empire.*

three-dimensional woman masks with hair arranged in a bun above a forehead. A similar pair of ornamental vases dated to ca. 1820 was put up for sale at Sotheby's in 2008¹²⁸.

The ornamental vases were placed not only on a table. They formed so-called suits — sets of three items, of which the middle one was the largest, and could have different ornaments, while the remaining two smaller objects were arranged symmetrically on its sides. Such arrangements were used, for example, as decorations of libraries at private mansions¹²⁹.

The largest group of objects belonging to the Wilanów centrepiece are etageres. Items of this type consist of a socle and round glass plates set on column-shaped tubes. The “tiered” structure of the etageres was associated with architecture, so their ornaments were naturally inspired by this branch of arts. The majority of columns have an attic base and their form refers to the Tuscan order. Etageres contain one, two or three plates for fruit or refreshments. The majority of Wilanów items are three-tiered. Only one type, etageres with sphinxes, contains one plate. Their top has a form of a ring-shaped handle, profiled (the etageres with Sirens) or styled as a laurel wreath. The ring is supported by a three-dimensional figure of a half-kneeling naked boy (the etageres with sphinxes), set on a three-dimensional rosette on the top of the column, or placed on three-dimensional palm and lotus leaves extending from the pillar (the three-tiered etageres, and the etageres with Sirens).

The etageres are distinguished mainly by their bases. The three-tiered etageres, most numerous in the Wilanów *surtout de table*, have a cup-shaped base on a plinth with a step (fig. 14). The base consists of a large element shaped like an inverted cup, on which a capital of an identical form but smaller size is installed. Both elements are separated by a ring. They are decorated with palm leaves and lotus flowers (the bottom cup) and with papyrus bunches (the upper cup). The bottom edge of the bottom cup is decorated with a Lesbian cyma. Both elements, with their shape and ornaments, recall capitals of Egyptian lotus columns. Two pairs of etageres (dated to the beginning of the 19th century and to ca. 1815)¹³⁰ with the same base and top, but lower than those in the Wilanów collection (two-tiered) were put up for sale at Christie's.

A characteristic feature of Thomire's etageres was an introduction of three-dimensional figural presentations on a surface of a base, shaped like a low cylinder, which in its form resembled antique cylindrical altars, similarly as in the case of jardinières-candelabra. One of the most frequent solutions of this type is a three-tiered etagere with presentation of three dancers (bacchantes) on a low round socle. Eight objects of this type can be found in Wilanów. The socle has its own pedestal decorated with a Lesbian cyma and a ledge. The lateral surface of socles of these etageres is decorated with a bas-relief in form of rosettes written into a rhomboid grid. Bacchantes decorating the etageres, inspired by antique sculptures, similarly as bacchantes on the jardinières-candelabra, are barefoot, semi-naked, and have vine strands entwined in their hair. They hold attributes in a form of musical instruments: a tambourine, cymbals and a sistrum. These figures are arranged around a column with a base formed by papyrus leaves flowing down from a profiled ring to the ground, with upturned tips.

One of the Wilanów etageres¹³¹ is distinguished by its different ornaments, much worse quality of execution, and poorer matching of elements, and this indicates that to a large extent

¹²⁸ Thomire-Sothebys. 2008.

¹²⁹ In a woodcut by Adam Malinowski, made on a basis of a drawing by Julian Maszyński and showing the interior of the Wilanów library, two suits of ornamental vases are visible, which recall in their form the Medici Vase, and are instated on high plinths decorated with wreaths on their front. It is difficult to conclude on a basis of a black and white illustration what material was used in them (they could be made either of porcelain or metal), and this makes their specific attribution impossible, but their shape definitely corresponds to items manufactured by Thomire's workshop.

¹³⁰ Thomire-Christies. 2008; Thomire-Christies. 2012.

¹³¹ Inventory No. Wil. 2586/3.

it consists of secondary elements¹³². Some of the ornaments are only inspired by motifs used by Thomire in other etageres of this type, and not copied. The pedestal of its base is decorated with a row of palm leaves with pearling between leaves, similar to a secondary element (added in 1992) on the above-mentioned ornamental vase. The lateral surface of the socle is decorated with small rosettes that are not written into rhombi, against a background decorated with grooves. Two figures of dancers added later, with cymbals and with a tambourine — are gold plated. When compared to other etageres, the column base, surrounded by dancers, is flatter.

Items similar to the Wilanów objects can be found in the Hermitage Museum collection — an etagere listed under number 88 in the catalogue *Dekorativnaia bronza*, for which an illustration is included, differs in a decoration in the socle part¹³³. Etageres of this type are frequently available in the art market. At the Christie's auction, a pair of two-tiered etageres with dancers in clothes different than in the Wilanów ones (ca. 1810)¹³⁴ was put up for sale in 2017, as well as in 2004 (ca. 1810)¹³⁵, and two etageres (ca. 1816–1820) were put up for sale at Sotheby's¹³⁶. These items differ in details.

Thomire workshop also manufactured another variant of three-tiered etageres — with three-dimensional presentations of putti instead of figures of bacchantes. Examples of this solution can also be found in a table centrepiece of Charles X, attributed to Thomire's workshop (ca. 1830)¹³⁷. The French king also owned two other Thomire's etageres, dated to 1830 — of clearly different forms, corresponding to the style prevailing in the days of the monarchy restoration.

Analogues of the Wilanów etageres with sphinxes are much scarcer, maybe they represent a less popular variant. Their socles are set on three lion paws, making their structure appear visually lighter. A connection between paws and the socle is disguised with floral ornaments. Zoomorphic supports originates from the antique casting. In the Empire art, lion paws were to invoke respect¹³⁸. The lateral surface of socles of these etageres is decorated with vine strands. The etagere plate is supported on a baluster-shaped column, surrounded by acanthus and lotus leaves at its base (column shafts decorated with engraved and painted floral motifs emerging from their base are typical for the Egyptian architecture), topped with the Egyptian capital entwined with lotus flowers, with palm leaves protruding above them and surrounding a lotus flower.

The figures of sphinxes are installed on the top of the socle on their own triangular base with concave sides and truncated points. They appear to support the glass plate of the etagere, because it is set quite low, but in fact they have only an ornamental function. Sphinxes that were used as supports had a small capital installed on their head. These hybrids are one of the most characteristics elements of the Empire style. Of course, they had already been found in the modern art earlier; however, at the beginning of the 19th century they became a particularly commonly found ornament of goldsmith products, gilded bronze works, and furniture. This motif was definitely popularised by the Fonatine and Percier's templates, where it appears frequently. A layout of feathers in sphinx wings is an example of an element consistently repeated in the Empire style. They end with characteristically folded primaries. Artists probably

¹³² In the card of restoration works, only the figures of dancers from the 20th century, a ring with acanthus leaves under balusters (actually, these are palmettes) and glass plates made by Mr Kościański from Raszyn in 1992 were noted as secondary (other etageres also have secondary plates).

¹³³ Zek Iu.Ia., Voronikhina A.N. 1984, p. 50–51, cat. 87–90.

¹³⁴ Thomire-Christies. 2017a.

¹³⁵ Thomire-Christies. 2004.

¹³⁶ Thomire-Sothebys. 2014.

¹³⁷ Thomire-Christies. 2013.

¹³⁸ Nouvel-Kammerer O. 2007, p. 28.

modelled their work after *Diversi maniere d'adornare i cammini* by Giovanni Battista Piranesi¹³⁹, who included a drawing of a wing under number 89 in a plate presenting ornamental motifs — “Etruscan” in the artist’s opinion.

The etagere with sphinxes is topped with a figure of a naked boy half-kneeling on a small pillar and holding up a ring. In the context of the vine motif on the socle and numerous bacchic motifs decorating other elements of the Wilanów *surtout de table*, this figure could be interpreted as a representation of small Bacchus. A model of the etagere handle decorated with a three-dimensional figural representation was also used by Odiot’s workshop.

The last group of Wilanów etageres from Thomire’s workshop — etageres with Sirens — were previously described as “etageres with winged women” (although they are actually half women). However, it should be noted that in the Greek mythology the Sirens had a form of half bird and half woman. Their wings could grow from their backs or replace their arms — as in the Wilanów etageres. Harpies were also half-bird and half-woman creatures, thus this interpretation is possible as well. However, taking into account other ornaments decorating the centrepiece, which picture a light and pleasant world, the figures of Sirens would be more appropriate than those of harpies. This motif was also illustrated by Piranesi — the artist described it as “A winged Virgin terminating in foliage”¹⁴⁰. However, the foliage of the figures on the etagere seems to suggest legs covered in feathers and claws, typical for Sirens¹⁴¹. It can therefore be assumed that it is a kind of interpretation of the classic representation of Sirens as half women half birds.

Siren tails morph into floral stems that extend upwards and are curled at their ends (with a rosette at one coil). This motif is frequently found in the grotesque ornamentation of the era of Louis XVI, from which the Empire style drew¹⁴². They also included bacchic motifs, sphinxes, hybrids, cornucopias, and garlands of flowers, decorating etageres and jardinières of the centrepiece.

The figures of Sirens rest on a socle shaped like a low cylinder supported on three lion paws, and decorated on its lateral surface with a laurel leaf wreath with medallion inserts containing a rosette in their centre and palmettes growing from them. A pedestal of this base is decorated with an interpretation of a Lesbian cyma differing from other Wilanów objects, with lotus leaves in the upper layer replaced with vine leaves, also characteristic for the Lesbian cyma, gathered with a tape, with half rosettes above them. The leaves are surrounded with buttons. A column, around which the Siren figures are arranged, has a form of a double baluster. Its base and capital are identical, decorated with two rows of short leaves. The shaft has a ring in its centre. From it, two rows of lanceolatus papyrus leaves protrude — the first consists of shorter leaves curled at their tips, and the second row is formed by straight long leaves. Parts of the shaft not covered with leaves are decorated with fluting.

An example analogical to the Wilanów etageres with Sirens can be found in the collection of the Rosenborg Castle in Copenhagen¹⁴³. However, that etagere has only two, not three tiers. It is assumed that it was made about 1820, because it was purchased together with other elements of *surtout de table* by the Danish Duke Christian of Oldenburg in 1822. If that dating is assumed as a time when this model was created, it would mean that the described etageres were not

¹³⁹ Piranesi G.B. 1796.

¹⁴⁰ Piranesi G.B. 1796, p. “Indice”.

¹⁴¹ Similar ornaments were used by Odiot — they are figures of boys morphing into foliage from their waist down, holding bunches of grapes in their raised hands.

¹⁴² A relationship between the art of the Empire and the grotesque style of the period of Louis XVI was discussed by: Ottomeyer H., Pröschel P. 1986, vol. 1, p. 318.

¹⁴³ Ottomeyer H., Pröschel P. 1986, p. 385, pl. 5.16. 8.



Fig. 16. Anton Graff, *Portrait of Stanisław Kostka, Count Potocki*, 1785 (source: Wikipedia, domena publiczna)

Ryc. 16. Anton Graff, *Portret Stanisława Kostki Potockiego*, 1785 (źródło: Wikipedia, domena publiczna)

purchased by Count Stanisław Kostka Potocki, who died in 1821, but by his son, Alexander. A two-tiered etagere decorated with figures of standing sphinxes, characteristic for furniture (the beginning of the 19th century) can be found in the Hermitage Museum¹⁴⁴.

Thomire introduced elements of nakedness in the majority of figural representations decorating the Wilanów *surtout de table*. Nakedness was common in the Empire art, and was not only associated with mimicking of antique models. Odile Nouvel-Kammerer noted the importance of the new type of furniture — the *psyche* mirror — which could be set at different angles and was the first mirror in the culture of Western Europe that allowed viewing of the whole body, resulting in a new approach to human corporality. Napoleon did not ban nakedness, but ordered it to be “dignified”, although he did not allow to be presented naked himself¹⁴⁵. Nouvel-Kammerer found that naked representations could also be found in table centrepieces, and this also applies to Thomire’s *surtouts de table*. Female figures gained more male proportions during the period of the First Empire — “The distinctive feature of the Empire style was that it introduced an ambiguity in the representation of the body, privileging the signifiers

of masculinity”¹⁴⁶, and this created an image of dignity.

Bacchic motifs were associated with desire and sensuality, and they form a significant part of motifs decorating the Wilanów table centrepiece. Figures of bacchantes, dancing and playing instruments, were modelled after Bacchus’ retinue, which direct presentations were rare in the Empire art — they were frequently replaced by male and female centaurs with phallic thyrsi, rode by cupids with butterfly wings¹⁴⁷. The figures of putti with butterfly wings, carrying garlands of flowers, decorate plinths of three jardinières. Both butterflies and numerous floral motifs symbolised the light and easy world, they could also be motifs of fertility. This world was also created by motifs of vine entwined around the etagere plinths or forming baskets of jardinières, filled with fresh flowers.

Artistic works in the period of the First Empire was characterised by drawing from antique models, but this approach was not the purpose itself, but an element of the creative process. All antique motifs should not be interpreted directly, because many of them were introduced for their aesthetic value, without taking into account their meaning. In the case of Thomire’s centrepiece it can be said that the use of elements referring to the light and pleasant world was an intentional act, because it corresponded to the function of the centrepiece, which was to make pleasant the time spent at a meal at the host’s, Count Stanisław Kostka Potocki, house.

An analysis of elements forming the Wilanów *surtout de table*, confronted with works created in that era, does not exhaust all forms used by Thomire’s workshop, but enables to indicate that the centrepiece purchased by Potocki was made of ready models, and that it did not have a status of a special order. A comparison between the Wilanów objects and other works by Thomire and his contemporaries shows, especially in the case of etageres, that individual parts

¹⁴⁴ Zek Iu.Ia, Voronikhina A.N. 1984, p. 52.

¹⁴⁵ Nouvel-Kammerer O. 2007, p. 34.

¹⁴⁶ Nouvel-Kammerer O. 2007, p. 34.

¹⁴⁷ Nouvel-Kammerer O. 2007, p. 36.

were cast separately, and then selected as needed. Thus the products, which were basically manufactured serially, were differentiated. This method for manufacturing components was somewhere in the middle between the industrial production and the individual handling of each order. A free exchange of models between individual items and artists, combined with the long-term use of models introduced at the beginning of the century, makes dating of individual items difficult. Many of items analogical to those from Wilanów are dated to 1810 at the earliest, and this is possibly repeated after Hans Ottomeyer and Peter Pröschel, who stated that *surtout de table* were produced between 1810 and 1860¹⁴⁸. The initial date could be moved a few years back, taking into account that Count Potocki purchased his table centrepiece from Thomire in 1808. There is no basis for a statement that the Count was the first purchaser of *surtout de table* — this information should be treated as an indication that such purchases had been made before that date. There are also items dated to years after 1860¹⁴⁹. Therefore, to determine a production date, it is necessary to use mainly written sources, reporting a specific purchase. The above list also indicates a predominating role of Pierre-Philippe Thomire in production of table centrepieces in the Empire times.

The Empire *surtout de table* were a consequence of changes that occurred in the art and in the culture of eating. Similarly as the entire Empire style, table centrepieces had concise, clearly defined forms, repeated in individual products from different workshops. The simplicity of the 19th century objects is their main noticeable feature. The richness of the Empire *surtout* was therefore mainly based on expensive material and skilful execution, and not on fanciful forms. The ornaments corresponded to the form of a vessel. Earlier baroque or rococo tableware sets were striking due to their weight, and the richness of their ornamentation predominating over the structure of these objects, with their form intentionally complicated. A table was decorated with objects made of different materials: gold, silver, faience, and porcelain. Sometimes their structure resembled complicated architectonic constructions or groups of sculptures. They included fountains, motifs of rocks and mountains, elements of structural landscaping, heraldic motifs, vessels imitating flowers, fruit, and vegetables, and figures of animals and people¹⁵⁰. The Empire style was characterised by a greater simplicity, however, it was not devoid of an ornamental function. The table centrepiece could be a subject of a conversation or of polite admiration.

During his travels abroad Count Potocki, educated in the history of art and a learned collector, searched for objects that could fill the palace in Wilanów. They included both products of daily use, and works of art, sometimes attributed to famous artists. As a man moving in high society circles, focusing on international relations, and speaking fluent French, he knew what was fashionable at a given time. He decided to make purchases at Thomire's when that Parisian bronzesmith already had a well-established position and reputation — his company distributed its works in the whole Europe, and even beyond this continent. Unfortunately, it cannot be precisely determined what Count Potocki purchased then — whether it was only the centrepiece, and what elements it included. Scarce source materials preserved did not allow determining the parts of the palace where *surtout de table* was located during the 19th and in the first half of the 20th centuries. Therefore, the only certain information about the centrepiece that is included in the inventory from 1895 is valuable. It indicates that the centrepiece could look differently in the days of Count Potocki and afterwards, than it does today. This does not represent sufficient evidence that could be used to determine the historical appearance of *surtout de table*. However, as no sources are available that would confirm current assigning of items to the centrepiece,

¹⁴⁸ Ottomeyer H., Pröschel P. 1986, vol. 1, p. 323.

¹⁴⁹ See footnote 100.

¹⁵⁰ Bursche S. 1974, p. 34–51.

the inventory note from 1895 can form a basis for including the ornamental vase with the scene with dancing bacchantes in *surtout* of Count Potocki. The comparative analysis versus items in other collections also allows stating that the etageres with sirens could be made later, in the 1820s, and this excludes a possibility that they were purchased by Count Stanisław Kostka Potocki.

The Wilanów table centrepiece is exceptional in the Polish museum collections, as a large set of items from the leading Parisian workshop. However, these items themselves do not have exceptional features. They were assembled from serially manufactured objects. Some motifs were repeatable, but attempts were made to differentiate them, by replacing certain elements with other. Therefore, this was not a “special” order. Count Potocki, despite his high rank in the Duchy of Warsaw, was one of many wealthy customers in the eyes of Thomire’s company workers. For Count Potocki this was probably an important set of items, but not the only *surtout de table* owned by him.

It should be noted that Polish, mainly Warsaw, collections include other Thomire’s works. Many of them may remain unidentified, waiting to be discovered, because the company did not sign all its works. However, one should remain cautious when attributing works, as they were copied in the days of the Second Empire and later.

The years of Pierre-Philippe Thomire’s activity fell within a period of revolutionary political transformations in France. Despite difficulties, he managed to remain a leading bronzesmith of his era. Thomire’s ability to solve his economic problems, and to adapt to a current political situation and a style prevailing in arts was jokingly captured in a title of one of a few scientific publications dedicated to that ciseleur — *Thomire, le Talleyrand du bronzé doré* (Thomire as Talleyrand of gilded bronze)¹⁵¹.

The work of this artist and businessman¹⁵² requires a modern, monographic study that would present an analysis of his entire work. However, this initiative should come from French researchers studying their national heritage. It would also be worthwhile to explore further the subject of the development of the culture of eating and its material manifestations through the centuries — this subject would also require a monographic study.

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¹⁵¹ Dumont F. 1956.

¹⁵² Thomire was described this way by David Harris Cohen in a title of his article: Cohen D.H. 1986, vol. 2, p. 657–664.

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Surtout de table Pierre’a-Philippe’a Thomire’a w Pałacu Wilanowskim

Artykuł poświęcony jest empirowej zastawie stołowej znajdującej się w pałacu w Wilanowie, która pochodzi z manufaktury Pierre’a-Philippe’a Thomire’a. Przyjmuje się, że *surtout de table* została zakupiona w 1808 roku w Paryżu przez Stanisława Kostkę hrabiego Potockiego.

Twórczość Pierre’a-Philippe’a Thomire’a w zakresie empirowych zastaw stołowych nie była dotychczas przedmiotem monograficznego opracowania. Niniejsze rozważania koncentrują się na wilanowskiej *surtout de table*. Mają na celu weryfikację dotychczasowego stanu wiedzy na ten temat oraz ustalenie składu tej zastawy stołowej, jej umiejscowienia i funkcji w pałacu wilanowskim, a także znaczenia na tle twórczości firmy *Thomire, Duterme et Cie* oraz epoki. Obiekty wchodzące w skład *surtout de table* Thomire’a poddano analizie formalno-stylistycznej i ikonograficznej, według założeń stylu empire. Badania metodą fluorescencyjnej spektrometrii rentgenowskiej wykazały, że omawiane obiekty zostały wykonane z mosiądzu, nie zaś z brązu.

W artykule scharakteryzowano działania twórcy — brązownika (i mosiężnika) Pierre’a-Philippe’a Thomire’a. Wilanowskie dzieła zestawiono z innymi wytworami manufaktury *Thomire, Duterme et Cie* i jego współczesnych. Odwołania przeprowadzone na podstawie literatury naukowej w języku francuskim, niemieckim, angielskim i rosyjskim do dokonań artystycznych epoki pozwoliły na ocenę jakości zachowanych obiektów. Ponadto określono obecność dzieł Thomire’a w polskich zbiorach muzealnych.

W celu ustalenia motywów, jakimi kierował się Stanisław Kostka hr. Potocki przy zakupie wyrobów z manufaktury Thomire’a, ukazano działalność publiczną oraz zainteresowania założyciela kolekcji wilanowskiej. Źródła dotyczące nabycia zastawy stołowej przez hrabiego oraz jej umiejscowienia w wilanowskiej siedzibie dostarczyły nowych informacji na temat innych, potencjalnych zespołów, jakie tworzyły obiekty zaliczane obecnie błędnie do jednej *surtout de table*.