

A TURKISH TENT IN THE COLLECTIONS OF THE TEXTILE DEPARTMENT OF THE NATIONAL MUSEUM IN CRACOW

Summary

The collections of the Textile Department include a Turkish tent, which has had a singular role in the history of the Polish Republic. The exterior is covered with impregnated canvas, while the interior is made from cotton richly decorated with canvas and semi-silk appliqué ornamentation. Each of the tent sides is divided into five sections by arcades supported on columns. Under the arcades, on the axis lines, are lozenge-shaped medallions filled in with arabesques and rounded oblong cartouches bearing inscriptions in Persian.

The tent was probably made by master craftsmen according to minutely detailed plans of both the technical aspects of the construction and the composition of its various sections, which conveyed the symbolic conception in the form of the inscriptions and decorative details. Similar compositions recur in Turkish art. The decoration on the ceramic tiling that is considered to be among the foremost achievements of Ottoman art is particularly closely related to that on this tent. The composition that corresponds most nearly to the layout of the ornamentation on the tent is the ceramic decoration dating from around 1550 in the harem at the Topkapi Palace. Indeed, the tent dates from the same period. It was used in Turkey until the time of the Żurawno campaign on the Dniester in 1676, where it was pitched along with the other tents that made up the Turkish camp. One of those present at that battle was Colonel Stanisław Zygmunt Druszkiewicz (1621-1690). All that is known is that after the Battle of Żurawno the tent passed into the possession of his family. Stanisław Zygmunt Druszkiewicz had a daughter, and a son, Julian, who died in 1720. The daughter of Julian Druszkiewicz (granddaughter of Stanisław) married Stanisław Flawiusz Suffczyński of Łańcuchów in 1732. As there is nineteenth-century documentation that the tent then belonged to the Suffczyński family, it is highly likely that it was part of the dowry of Julian Druszkiewicz's daughter.

In 1880 the Emperor Franz Joseph I paid a visit to Galicia. The tent was borrowed from Juliusz Suffczyński in case the royal visitor should wish to rest during the course of the ceremonies at Kołomyja. This event was immortalised by Tadeusz Rybkowski in his watercolour, one of ten painted by various artists forming a cycle commemorating His Majesty's progress through Galicia. The tent was donated to the National Museum in Cracow some time before 1883 by Jan Stecki, the owner of the Łańcuchów estate after the Suffczyński family. In that year the historic tent was pitched on Cracow's Main Square as part of an exhibition organised to celebrate the two hundredth anniversary of the Siege of Vienna.