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The Wawel Royal Castle – State Art Collection

The Characteristics of Italian Collections of Gilt Leather as an Element of the Research into the Provenance of the Gilt-Leather Wall Hangings in Wawel Royal Castle

Wawel Royal Castle's gilded and painted leather wall hangings adorn ten of its chambers.¹ They constitute Poland's largest collection of gilt-leather upholstery and indeed one of the largest in Europe, alongside the wall hangings in the Palazzo Chigi in Ariccia (near Rome), Moritzburg Castle (near Dresden) and Skokloster Castle in Sweden.

However, the gilt leather that decorates the chambers of Wawel Castle is not a relic of the residence's original furnishings. All in all, the Wawel collection of gilt leather covers about 1361 m², of which about 564 m² can be categorised as authentic period pieces.² Nevertheless, the lion's share of

1. Issues relating to the acquisition of the gilt-leather wall hangings, the timeline of the upholstering of the walls, and the firms and individuals engaged in this work are described in the following article: O. Sieradzka-Malec, *Kurdybany wawelskie w świetle międzywojennych archiwaliów. Zarys problematyki*, "Studia Waweliana" XV (2013), pp. 61–77.
2. The surface area of both the vintage gilt leather from Moritzburg and the imitation panels added by W. Szyborski is based on precise measurements conducted in the 1930s. When including the surface area of the Senators Hall and the Antechamber of the Study in the Tower of Sigismund III (in other words, the rooms where the upholstering was completed in the 1950s), the entire surface area of the castle's gilt-leather wall hangings amounts to 1361 m², taking into account additional measurements made during conservation work conducted in the 1990s. A calculation made in the 1990s put the entire surface area at 1347 m². Discrepancies are probably connected with the fact that in the 1930s, all the leather

this antique collection — about 536 m² — comprises wall hangings that hail from Moritzburg Castle, one of the residences of Elector of Saxony and King of Poland Augustus II the Strong.³ These panels were acquired and brought to Krakow in the 1930s, in conjunction with the refurbishment and restoration of the castle and its new status as a museum.⁴ This followed the devastation that had befallen the castle during the partitions era (1795–1918), when the historic Polish lands were divided between Prussia, Russia and Austria.⁵ Wawel Castle had served as an Austrian barracks for part of the 19th century, and independence was only regained in 1918, following the First World War. The gilt leather acquired in the 1930s was considered fitting for a royal residence, owing to the grandeur and authenticity of the material, as well as the connection with the king of Poland. Aside from these flat wall hangings, which are decorated with punches, a number of panels are embossed, thus bearing patterns in relief. This latter group embraces 27.5 m², yet its provenance remains unknown. The remaining panels of gilt leather were created in the 20th century by Waclaw Szymborski, who was the first to hold the post of conservator at the castle following its restitution. He wanted to maintain a harmonious pattern in certain chambers, yet owing to the insufficient number of antique panels, he had 483 m² of gilt leather made so as to fill in the gaps. He also created about 314 m² of wall hangings for the decoration of the entire Senators' Hall⁶.

pieces were calculated, while in the 1990s, only the surface area of the walls decorated with gilt leather was measured, omitting pieces of leather that were hidden by overlaps, for example. O. Sieradzka-Malec, *Kurdybany wawelskie...*, op. cit., p. 69.

3. On the basis of materials available in the Archives of Wawel Royal Castle it is possible to calculate that about 640m² of gilt leather was acquired from Moritzburg: AZK PZS-I-110, pp. 142, 205, 239, 195, 196, 237; O. Sieradzka-Malec, *Złoczone obicia ścienne w zamku Moritzburg i Zamku Królewskim na Wawelu — porównanie zasobów i stan badań nad proveniencją artystyczną dekoracyjnych skór*, in: *Tendit in ardua virtus. Studia ońarowane Profesorowi Kazimierzowi Kuczmanowi w siedemdziesięciolecie urodzin*, Kraków 2017, pp. 219–231.
4. Restoration of the castle started in 1905, in the final years of Habsburg rule.
5. The first of three partitions took place in 1772, culminating in the complete loss of sovereignty in 1795. Poland regained its independence following the First World War.
6. Issues relating to the production of new gilt leather and the creation of a workshop with this goal in mind, using historical techniques, are explored in O. Sieradzka-Malec, *Kurdybany wawelskie...*, op. cit., pp. 65–72 and O. Sieradzka-Malec, *Waclaw Szymborski. Pierwszy konserwator dzieł sztuki w zamku na Wawelu*, "Studia Waweliana" XVI (2015), pp. 187–210.

The gilt upholstery purchased from Moritzburg Castle is of the flat, punched type, with patterns composed of bands and foliate motifs that were characteristic of the Régence period of the 1720s. Seven different patterns can be distinguished.

The aim of this essay is to attempt to clarify the provenance of the Baroque Moritzburg-Wawel gilt-leather wall hangings, which as of yet have not been the focus of in-depth research. To date, German scholars have only raised these issues in publications concerning the furnishing of the castle in Saxony. These academics stressed the difficulties they had faced with regards to the destruction of a number of written sources in Dresden during the Second World War, yet they put forward two basic hypotheses.

According to the first of these theories, the wall hangings were local products connected with Pierre Mercier, a Frenchman who ran the Dresden tapestry manufactory as of 1714, holding the office of *maître* or *inspecteur des tapisseries*.⁷

The second and indeed predominant theory links the wall hangings with Italian workshops. The basis for this hypothesis is information contained in a letter from 1722 addressed to Raymond Leplat (the architect responsible for designing the interiors of Moritzburg Castle). The king's interest in wall hangings from Venice is discussed, and instructions are given pertaining to a commission of such material.

The term 'Venetian leather' likewise features in an inventory from 1733, although it is not clear whether this can be treated literally, or just as an indication of the trade route.⁸

7. H.G. Hartmann, *Moritzburg: Schloss und Umgebung in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Weimar 1989, pp. 100–101; B. Werner, *Die ornamentalen Ledertapeten im Schloss Moritzburg*, "Sächsische Heimatblätter" 5/72, pp. 212–213, 218–219; G. Dehio, *Handbuch der deutschen Kunstdenkmäler, Sachsen, Regierungsbezirk Dresden*, vol. 1, München 1996, p. 626; O. Sieradzka-Malec, *Złocone obicia ścienne w zamku Moritzburg...*, op. cit., pp. 223–224.
8. A. Schulze, *Der Bestand an ornamentalen Ledertapeten im Schloss Moritzburg einst und heute sowie die konservatorisch-restauratorischen Problemstellungen bei ihrer Erhaltung*, in: *Ledertapeten – Bestände, Erhaltung und Restaurierung*, Dresden 2004, pp. 51–53; A. Schulze, *Goldleder zwischen 1500 und 1800. Herstellung und Erhaltung*, Dresden 2011 (Arbeitsheft 17 Landesamt für Denkmalpflege Sachsen), pp. 60–61; G. Dehio, *Handbuch der deutschen Kunstdenkmäler*, Dresden–München–Berlin 2005, p. 308 – an attribution was changed in relation to the edition from 1996; B. Werner, *Die ornamentalen Ledertapeten...*, op. cit., pp. 215–218; H.G. Hartmann, *Moritzburg...*, op. cit., pp. 101–102; O. Sieradzka-Malec, *Złocone obicia ścienne w zamku Moritzburg...*, op. cit., pp. 224–225; O. Sieradzka-Malec,

The time in which the gilt leather was made should be tied in with the remodelling of Moritzburg Castle in the years 1723–1733. This undertaking was led by the architects Matthäus Daniel Pöppelmann and Zacharias Longuelune, along with the aforementioned Raymond Leplat. Evidence of this can be found in the dated inscriptions on the rear sides of chairbacks (*Moritzb: 1727*), which feature alongside the monogram *AR*, denoting the then ruler Augustus II. A bill from 1728 (only known from a pre-war description, however) pertains to the fixing of the punched gilt leather hangings to the walls.⁹

Referring to the supposed Italian provenance of the gilt upholstery, I shall describe the characteristics of the historical material that has been preserved on Italian territory.

Regrettably, it is necessary to stress at this point that there is a great disproportion between the resources of gilt leather that have actually been preserved until the present day, and those that are described in literature or archives.

Italy's largest group of original 17th-century gilt-leather wall hangings has been preserved in the Palazzo Chigi in Ariccia¹⁰. This palace was furnished with gilt-leather wall hangings during the era of its first owners,

Gilt-leather wall hangings that have been identified in Venice are identical to those that adorn the interiors of Wawel Royal Castle in Kraków (Cracow), "Perspektywy Kultury" 21 (2/2018), p. 170.

9. A. Schulze, *Der Bestand...*, op. cit., pp. 52–53; A. Schulze, *Goldleder...*, op. cit., pp. 60–61, 65, 69; H.G. Hartmann, *Moritzburg...*, op. cit., p. 100; B. Werner, *Die ornamentalen Ledertapeten...*, op. cit., pp. 213, 216, 218; O. Sieradzka-Malec, *Złoczone obicia ścienne w zamku Moritzburg...*, op. cit., pp. 220–221.
10. The palazzo in Ariccia was built in the 16th century for the Savelli family. As of 1661, the owners were the Chigi family, who likewise acquired many of the chattels within the building. The edifice was remodelled by Carlo Fontana between 1664 and 1672, according to a design by Gian Lorenzo Bernini, and was subsequently remodelled in the years 1740–43. In 1988, the palazzo was bequeathed to the city of Ariccia by Agostino Chigi Albani della Rovere (1929–2002) — see: <https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chigi>. It currently serves as a museum — M. Nimmo, M. Paris, F. Petrucci, *The leather furnishings in Palazzo Chigi in Ariccia: documentary sources*, in: *Proceedings of the 10th Interim Meeting of ICOM-CC Working Group on Leather and related materials*, Offenbach 29–31 August 2012 (published in 2013), p. 96; F. Petrucci, *Palazzo Chigi di Ariccia: parati in cuoio*, in: *Vestire i palazzi. Stoffe, tessuti e parati negli arredi e nell'arte del Barocco*, eds. A. Rodolfo, C. Volpi, Vatican 2014, pp. 249, 251. These two cited publications are of fundamental importance for the subject, they are the most up to date, yet they also contain excerpts of and references to earlier literature. As regards Polish academic literature, one can find synthetic information in A. Bender, *Dzieje złoczonych kurdybanów we Włoszech*, in: "Summarium" KUL 1995–1996, nos. 24–25 (44–45), pp. 160, 176.

the Savelli family, who used the material to adorn as many as 25 rooms. This number had been reduced to 21 by the time Giulio Savelli sold the building to Agostino Chigi in 1661.¹¹ According to an inventory book of furnishings (*Libro della Guardaroba dell'Ariccia*) from 1672–73 describing the interiors after the remodelling of the residence by the Chigi family, the first floor had seven rooms decorated with 'new gilt leather,' in addition to the chapel. Meanwhile, 'old gilt leather' was used to decorate twelve rooms on the second floor and two on the ground floor.¹² Additionally, following the death of Flavio Chigi in 1693, gilt-leather wall hangings were brought from his residence on Piazza Santi Apostoli in Rome, and these were used to decorate six rooms on the ground floor.¹³ At present, the palazzo in Ariccia has eleven rooms with gilt-leather wall hangings, covering about 1105 m². However, other elements of the furnishing are likewise upholstered in gilt leather, such as chairs, tables, beds, clocks, *mantovane* (pelmetts), fireguards, portières and so on.¹⁴

The principal craftsman (*coramaro*) who made the gilt-leather upholstery for the Ariccia palazzo was Agostino Nespola, who had a workshop in

11. F. Petrucci, *Palazzo Chigi...*, op. cit., pp. 252–253 — in 1664, prior to the remodelling of the palazzo, twenty rooms were documented as being adorned with gilt-leather wall hangings. This upholstery was removed from one of the rooms, probably due to deterioration.
12. F. Petrucci, *Palazzo Chigi...*, op. cit., p. 252; M. Nimmo, M. Paris, F. Petrucci, *The leather furnishings...*, op. cit., p. 97 — the 'old gilt leather' should be understood as that which endured from the time when the Savelli family owned the palazzo. Most of the gilt-leather wall hangings have not remained in their original location.
13. F. Petrucci, *Palazzo Chigi...*, op. cit., pp. 253–254; M. Nimmo, M. Paris, F. Petrucci, *The leather furnishings...*, op. cit., p. 100 — this particular gilt leather has only been preserved in two rooms.
14. I would like to express my warmest thanks to Francesco Petrucci, conservator at the Palazzo Chigi in Ariccia, for his good will in response to my requests and for duly having the surface area of the gilt leather in Palazzo Chigi measured. The gilt leather panels that were commissioned for the Palazzo Chigi were supplemented as early as the 17th century with pieces from the palazzo on Piazza Santi Apostoli in Rome [Palazzo Chigi di piazza Santi Apostoli] (currently in the Anticamera and the Camera Rossa). During the interwar period, wall hangings were brought to Ariccia from the palazzo on Rome's Piazza Colonna [Palazzo Chigi di piazza Colonna] (they are currently in the Sala Albani), these pieces had also initially adorned the interiors of Palazzo Chigi di piazza Santi Apostoli. Over the centuries, wall hangings were moved owing to such issues as the remodelling of the building or changes to a given room's function. F. Petrucci, *Palazzo Chigi...*, op. cit., pp. 249–272; M. Nimmo, M. Paris, F. Petrucci, *The leather furnishings...*, op. cit., pp. 96–104; M. Nimmo, M. Paris, L. Rissotto, *Cuoio dorato e dipinto. Schedatura di manufatti. Repertorio dei punzoni*, Roma 2008, pp. 32–34 (list of artefacts in Ariccia).



Fig. 1. Gilt leather wall hanging, Agostino Nespola, ca. 1670, Sala da Pranzo d'Estate, Palazzo Chigi, Ariccia, in: F. Petrucci, *Palazzo Chigi di Ariccia: parati in cuoio in: Vestire i palazzi. Stoffe, tessuti e parati negli arredi e nell'arte del Barocco*, eds. A. Rodolfo, C. Volpi, Città del Vaticano 2014, fig. 3

Rome on what was then via Florida (currently via dei Banchi Vecchi and via del Pellegrino).¹⁵ The following works have been attributed to him.

Firstly, there are a number of wall hangings of the *a broccatello* type, whose principal motifs are a cracked-open pomegranate and palmettes surrounded by acanthus leaves, forming open net-like divisions (fig. 1). The pattern also consists of open ovals with large and small flowers within them. This upholstery is in two colour schemes, one with a green pattern on a gold background, the other with a gold and silver pattern on a red background. The panels were arranged so as to form broad, alternating strips, divided by narrow gold ones. This gilt leather is of the flat, punched kind. It can be found in the Sala da Pranzo d'Estate (summer dining room). Decoration

15. M. Nimmo, M. Paris, F. Petrucci, *The leather furnishings...*, op. cit., pp. 97–98 – Agostino Nespola worked for Prince Agostino Chigi in the years 1666–1682; F. Petrucci, *Palazzo Chigi...*, op. cit., p. 253; M. Nimmo, M. Paris, L. Risotto, *Cuoio dorato...*, op. cit., p. 17.

with pomegranates is known from 15th and 16th century textiles, and here it is handled in a manner typical of the Baroque style. It is characterised by a dynamic sense of movement, due to the use of curving lines, colour contrasts, shimmering surface effects, and it maintains a symmetrical composition. The design of this pattern is associated with Roman artistic circles, and it was executed around 1670.¹⁶

Gilt leather with an identical pattern can be found in the chapel. The main motif is complemented by a border, which was intended to delineate the corners of the room. This border contains an oak leaf motif with acorns, crowned by the coat of arms of the Chigi della Rovere-Borghese family. This particular upholstery is distinguished by a flocked surface (*cimatura*), which is created by applying (sticking) powdered fabric fibres to the leather. The aim of this technique was to imitate expensive decorative materials, such as patterned gold or silver brocade (pol. *altembas*). The decorative pattern of the wall hangings is in red (currently discoloured with age) against a gold background, diversified by punching. Agostino Nespola was commissioned to make the upholstery, and it was delivered to the palazzo in Ariccia on 20 December 1673. In this case, the certainty of the attribution has enabled scholars to associate this gilt-leather maker with the previously described wall hangings in the Sala da Pranzo d'Estate.¹⁷

It should be acknowledged that this is a unique example of gilt leather, both in terms of the artistry of the pattern, and the rarely used technique in which it was executed. The wall hangings were designed as an exclusive commission for the Chigi family by artists from the circle of Gian Lorenzo Bernini.¹⁸

16. F. Petrucci, *Palazzo Chigi...*, op. cit., pp. 258–259, fig. 3; M. Nimmo, M. Paris, F. Petrucci, *The leather furnishings...*, op. cit., p. 101 — a bill from 1674 (November) in the Chigi Archives, issued by Agostino Nespola for identical gilt leather, yet in this case for another palazzo located on Piazza Navona, confirms this craftsman as the maker; C. Centonza, *Le corrispondenze decorative fra tessili e corami nelle dimore del XVI e XVII secolo*, "Jacquard" 62 (2008), p. 29.
17. F. Petrucci, *Palazzo Chigi...*, op. cit., pp. 260, 270–271, figs. 9–11; M. Nimmo, M. Paris, F. Petrucci, *The leather furnishings...*, op. cit., pp. 98, 100, fig. 4; M. Berardi, M. Nimmo, M. Paris, *Parati in cuoio a cimatura. Cenni su una tecnica poco nota e problemi di conservazione*, in: *Rivestimenti murali in carta e cuoio*, Roma 1990, pp. 12–13 — in a bill of 3 March 1674, Nespola provided a precise description of the wall hangings, likewise noting where they were destined for.
18. F. Petrucci, *Palazzo Chigi...*, op. cit., p. 271 — it is emphasized here that Agostino Nespola was a talented craftsman, but not a designer. Petrucci attributes the design to an artist from the circle of Bernini: Carlo Fontana or Johann Paul Schorr.



Fig. 2. Gilt leather wall hanging, Agostino Nespola, ca. 1671, Camera Verde, Palazzo Chigi. Ariccia, in: Petrucci..., fig. 4

The next wall hangings are also *a broccatello*, with vegetal motifs, arranged in vertical strips, with a motif of stylized palmettes on the axis, flanked on both sides by acanthus leaves and sprigs with pomegranates (fig. 2). These strips alternate with narrower ones covered with foliate motifs that curve into circles, filled with calyces (in two varieties). This pattern alludes to ornaments on silk brocade from the earlier Mannerist period. The ornamentation is green, against a gold background, and the leather is of the flat, punched type. This gilt leather was made around 1671 by Agostino Nespola, which is confirmed by the initials that feature on the reverse side of certain panels.¹⁹ These wall hangings can currently be found in the Camera Verde (Green Room).

Gilt leather ensembles are exhibited in their original settings on the first floor of the palazzo, in the Sala del Trucco and the Sala Borghese. These follow the decorative principle of net-like divisions (fig. 3). A repeated motif is that of an oval formed by thick intertwining ribbons, enclosing a vase

19. F. Petrucci, *Palazzo Chigi...*, op. cit., pp. 260–261, fig. 4 (p. 259); M. Nimmo, M. Paris, F. Petrucci, *The leather furnishings...*, op. cit., pp. 98, 103, fig. 10 — an identical pattern can be found on a bed cover.



Fig. 3. Gilt leather wall hanging, Agostino Nespola, ca. 167–72, Sala del Trucco, Palazzo Chigi, Ariccia, in: Petrucci..., fig. 6

of flowers. Other panels were used to create both the frieze and the narrow vertical strips that alternate with the main motif. These bear curling acanthus leaves, as well as oak leaves and flowers. The entire composition is executed in gold and silver motifs against a red background. This type of decoration echoes designs of 16th-century Italian textiles. Francesco Petrucci posits that the motifs' origins are Turkish. The wall hangings are of the flat, punched variety, produced in 1671–1672. Two hypotheses exist in academic debate about the creators of the gilt leather. The first waves of research into this question (Nimmo, Paris, Petrucci) linked the work to Padre Agostino da Gubbio and his assistants Antonio Piacenti and Giovanni Garofalo, suggesting an unspecified contribution by Agostino Nespola, who perhaps supervised their work. However, in Petrucci's most recent work, he ascribes the wall hangings to Agostino Nespola, owing to the initials *AN* that were discovered on a panel with the same pattern (preserved in a storeroom at the palazzo in Ariccia), as well as a bill for a mould, which listed the gilt-leather maker as the ordering party.

In the artistic and documentary contexts, it is particularly interesting that moulds made from walnut wood – used to impress patterns on panels of leather – have been preserved. There are three templates for

the patterns used in the rooms: the main motif, the frieze and the vertical strips. They were made by the engraver Paolo Franceschi.²⁰

Further gilt-leather wall hangings *alla veneziana* adorn the Sala dei Pavoni. Each of the decorative oval frames, consisting of bands adorned with acanthus leaves, contains an ornate vase with asymmetrically arranged flowers. Within each oval one finds birds (peacocks and parrots) — two in the lower portion and two in the upper one — with butterflies, dragonflies and other creatures also featuring. The arrangement follows a net-like pattern, but the decorative flourishes and varied colours dilute the impression of rigid order. The wide bands of the divisions are gold, as are the vases, although the flowers and birds are multicoloured, against a red background. Pieces of gilt leather with an identical pattern have survived, but against a blue background.²¹ It should be noted that the gilt leather discussed above is in light relief, of the embossed kind, thus differing from the flat types described previously. However, it can be confidently attributed to Agostino Nespola, as confirmed by sources and likewise recorded in stamps with the initials AN on the reverse of the panels, which were made around 1669–1670.²²

Gilt leather with patterns in low relief can be found elsewhere in the palazzo. One example has two alternating vertical strips: the wider one has vegetal motifs with flowers (tulips, peonies, roses), birds, dragonflies and putti, freely arranged, while the narrower strip has floral ornamentation (fig. 4). The features of the pattern are painted in silver and gold, against a red background. This upholstery decorates the walls of the Sala Mario de' Fiori. In spite of the fact that the low embossment technique and decorative motifs are generally associated with products from workshops in

20. F. Petrucci, *Palazzo Chigi...*, op. cit., pp. 263–267, figs. 6, 7; M. Nimmo, M. Paris, F. Petrucci, *The leather furnishings...*, op. cit., p. 99, figs. 5, 6. Leather was bought from the dealer Pietro Passarini in June 1671, and in August of the same year Paolo Franceschi was paid for two moulds. The main motif of the decoration was carved on one, while the other mould was incised on both sides, with a frieze and a vertical band respectively. Two *mantovane* (pelmetts) bear an identical pattern, and a fire screen donated in 2001 to the palazzo in Ariccia is adorned with the main motif.
21. F. Petrucci, *Palazzo Chigi...*, op. cit., p. 274; M. Nimmo, M. Paris, F. Petrucci, *The leather furnishings...*, op. cit., p. 98. This upholstery was initially located in four rooms in the Prince's Apartment on the first floor, and it was moved to Sala dei Pavoni in 2012. Furthermore, the walls of Stanza delle Monache were painted to replicate this pattern, except with a blue background.
22. M. Nimmo, M. Paris, F. Petrucci, *The leather furnishings...*, op. cit., p. 98, fig. 3; F. Petrucci, *Palazzo Chigi...*, op. cit., pp. 272–274, figs. 13, 14.



Fig. 4. Gilt leather wall hanging, Antonio Mugnaione, 1670–80, Sala Mario de' Fiori, Palazzo Chigi, Ariccia, in: Petrucci..., fig. 5

the Netherlands and Flanders, this gilt leather hails from a manufactory in Rome. The stamp of the maker was initially believed to spell AN (Agostino Nespola), but was later confirmed as AM. The initials AM have been deciphered as belonging to Antonio Mugnaione, and it is believed that the panels were made in the period 1670–1680.²³

More gilt leather with embossed motifs of flowers, fruit and putti, rendered in gold with red elements against a turquoise background, can be found in the Sala Albani. It has likewise been described as hailing from a Roman workshop (around 1665–1670), in spite of the fact that there is no proof of this provenance. This attribution has inspired doubts, as gilt leather with similar motifs (not identical) was made in the Netherlands.²⁴

23. M. Nimmo, M. Paris, F. Petrucci, *The leather furnishings...*, op. cit., p. 101, fig. 8 – owing to the reading of the initials as AN, it was considered as belonging to Agostino Nespola, in spite of no further data. However, in all probability, the correct reading of the stamp is AM, as posited by F. Petrucci, *Palazzo Chigi...*, op. cit., pp. 261–262, fig. 5. Antonio Mugnaione worked for Mario Chigi in the years 1656–61, and for his son Cardinal Flavio in the years 1671–73.
24. F. Petrucci, *Palazzo Chigi...*, op. cit., pp. 274–275, fig. 15, 16 – the author believes that the same motifs were treated differently in this gilt leather and in those made in Northern Europe. On the subject of gilt leather with a similar motif (another



Fig. 5. Gilt leather wall hanging, Mattia Turchi and Giuseppe Montorio, ca. 1665–70, Anticamera, Palazzo Chigi, Ariccia, in: Petrucci..., fig. 1

The most original examples of gilt leather in Ariccia are characterised by gold foliate elements on a deep red background²⁵ (fig. 5). Oak leaves (acanthus?),²⁶ linked at the bottom by a crown, diverge to form ovals, each of which encloses a palmette with long fronds. Flowers feature where the foliage converges. The composition and floral elements are exceptionally harmonious, elegant, natural and devoid of rigidity. This gilt leather is of the flat, punched type. The work was done in 1665–1670²⁷ by two Roman gilt-leather

variant?), made in the Netherlands in 1670–80, and most often described as "Bacchus, Ceres and Venus," see A. Bender, *Złoczone kurdybany w Polsce*, Lublin 1992, pp. 165–167; M. Kałamajska-Saeed, *Reklama handlowa holenderskich kurdybanów w XVII w. i obecne z niej korzyści*, in: *Rzemiosło artystyczne*, Materiały Sesji Oddz. Warsz. SHS, ed. R. Bobrow, vol. 2, Warszawa 2001, pp. 191–196; *Bedeutende Goldledertapeten 1550–1900*, Essen 1998, pp. 73–77, items. 27–30; *Goldrausch. Die Pracht der Goldledertapeten*, eds. S. Thümmler, C.E. Gerner, München 2006 (Kataloge der Museumslandschaft Hessen Kassel, vol. 37), cat. 19, p. 86 (C.E. Gerner).

25. M. Nimmo, M. Paris, F. Petrucci, *The leather furnishings...*, op. cit., pp. 100–101; F. Petrucci, *Palazzo Chigi...*, op. cit., pp. 255–258, figs. 1, 2. These examples of gilt leather come from the Roman residence of Cardinal Flavio Chigi, and they were moved to Ariccia following his death in 1693.
26. Petrucci considers them to be oak leaves.
27. Such dates were provided by F. Petrucci, *Palazzo Chigi...*, op. cit., pp. 255–258, in reference to a description in the inventory of the Roman palazzo from the years

makers: Mattia Turchi and Giuseppe Montorio (or Montori), who marked the panels with stamps with the initials *MT* and *GM*. It has been established that Montori's workshop was in the Cesarini area.²⁸ However, the design of this outstanding, typically Baroque pattern has been attributed by Petrucci to the circle of Bernini, as in the previously discussed case.²⁹ The wall hangings can be found in two rooms: the Anticamera and the Camera Rossa on the ground floor of the palazzo.

The Sala Maestra likewise bears some sections of the oldest gilt leather, this being of the flat, punched variety, with stylised motifs of a vase with a bouquet of flowers and a volute. The decoration was executed in gold and silver tones, on a red background, and it has been dated back to the 1580s.³⁰

As can be gathered from the descriptions of the gilt leather in Palazzo Chigi in Ariccia, it has a great variety of patterns, based on foliate motifs, with characteristics and layouts typical for the Baroque period in the 17th century, or echoing earlier, Renaissance motifs. This decorative leather upholstery was made according to two techniques – both flat and executed with delicate embossing, owing to which certain parts of the latter leather are in low relief.

These examples amount to an exceptional collection of gilt leather, not only on account of their beauty and the large quantity of the material concentrated in one place, but also for research-related reasons. Thanks to the possibility of comparing the abundant, detailed archival material of the Chigi family³¹ with actual artefacts, the provenance of certain products has been determined, particularly their connections with Roman workshops, even to the extent of pinpointing the names of craftsmen through reading their initials on the back of leather panels, as well as precise dating. It has been possible to establish the production methods for making wall hangings, and the way they were affixed to walls. Issues relating to

1670–76, and others. Meanwhile, an earlier publication (Nimmo, Paris, Petrucci, 2012, p. 101) listed bills for craftsmen from the years 1687–90.

28. M. Nimmo, M. Paris, F. Petrucci, *The leather furnishings...*, op. cit., p. 101; A. Rodolfo, *Tessuti e corami nella Floreia dei Palazzi Apostolici Vaticani. Fonti e documenti in: Vestire i palazzi. Stoffe, tessuti e parati negli arredi e nell'arte del Barocco*, eds. A. Rodolfo, C. Volpi, Vatican 2014, p. 47.
29. F. Petrucci, *Palazzo Chigi...*, op. cit., p. 257.
30. Ibidem, pp. 267, 269, fig. 8 – they come from the times of the Savelli family.
31. The documents are preserved in the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Archivio Chigi (BAV, AC).

the portières and other elements have also been illuminated, and the function of certain leather artefacts has likewise been clarified.

The craftsmen who made the wall hangings that currently adorn the chapel of Urban VIII in the Apostolic Palace in the Vatican have been identified in a similar fashion.³² The analysis of documents, inventories and bills pertaining to artefacts or works of art belonging to the *Floreria Apostolica*³³ has enabled scholars to decipher that the initials *PR* and *AT* on certain stamps belonged to Paolo Ridolfi and Andrea Tauler. They were palace gilt-leather makers (*coramari di Palazzo*), who carried out numerous jobs in 1670 in the Apostolic Palace, during the pontificate of Clement X. The gilt-leather wall hangings affixed to the chapel walls encompass an area of 44 m². They are flat, painted and punched, with decorative motifs in blue against a gold background. Large acanthus leaves form an open rhomboidal field, with an iris in the middle and acanthus leaves at the top, fastened by a crown, from which flowers and ears of corn emerge. This module has a candelabra arrangement. The pattern is reminiscent of large-scale textiles 'with crowns,' combined here with Genoese damask from the 16th century.³⁴

Unfortunately, however, the researcher is seldom presented with such a favourable situation regarding the provenance of gilt leather resources, allowing clear-cut conclusions.

A collection of gilt leather that hitherto has not been featured in a publication can be found in Rome's Palazzo Venezia (Museo di Palazzo Venezia). It was a donation by Mr and Mrs Tower-Wurts as part of a larger

32. A. Rodolfo, *Tessuti e corami...*, op. cit., p. 55 – certain documentation about the decoration of the chapel is missing. The gilt leather was probably taken from its original location and placed here in 1927. The finding of handmade 18th-century hooks under the frieze may bear out the hypothesis that the walls of the chapel had previously been adorned with gilt leather or fabrics; A. Bender, *Dzieje...*, op. cit., p. 174.
33. *Floreria* – an institution that was responsible for the decoration of the papal palaces as well as the logistics for ceremonies taking place in the interiors or on St Peter's Square. See G. Moroni, *Dizionario di erudizione storico-ecclesiastica da S. Pietro sino ai nostri giorni*, vol. XXV, Venezia 1844, pp. 104–110; "L'Osservatore Romano", Nicola Gori, interview with Paolo Sagreti, deputy director of the *Floreria della Città del Vaticano*, 23 July 2009.
34. A. Rodolfo, *Tessuti e corami...*, op. cit., pp. 52–55, figs. 9–13. Of the numerous gilt-leather wall hangings described in the archives, only two parts of those described remain. M. Nimmo, M. Paris, L. Rissotto, *Cuoio dorato...*, op. cit., p. 34; C. Centonza, *Le corrispondenze...*, op. cit., p. 29.

collection of artworks bequeathed to the museum in 1933.³⁵ This collection contains a variety of gilt leather, encompassing various artefacts, including pillows. They range from the 16th to the 18th century, and mainly hail from Italian workshops, but there are also Spanish and Northern examples (Dutch, French). Foliate decoration dominates, as is the case with one particular cushion (16th/17th c., Italian workshop), while others are adorned with thick, intertwining stems with large flowers between them (first half of the 17th century, Italian workshop; nos. 434, 436, 493). There is also a piece of gilt leather from the 16th century with a highly stylised bouquet of flowers (no. 570), while another piece with two palmettes, one rendered in a naturalistic way, the other in a stylised fashion, probably came from 18th-century France or Italy (no. 224). A notable piece of gilt leather has braided decoration, and it is believed to have come from a 16th-century Spanish workshop (No. 568). There are also wall hangings with *chinoiserie*, dating back to the second half of the 18th century and manufactured in Northern Europe (nos. 779–785)³⁶.

Elsewhere in Rome, gilt-leather wall hangings can be found in the Museum of Oriental Art (Museo Nazionale d'Arte Orientale), housed in the Palazzo Brancacci, and also in the Palazzo Stroganoff, which is part of the Bibliotheca Hertziana. The gilt-leather wall hangings at the Palazzo Stroganoff feature two alternating motifs: a bouquet of flowers and leaves forming a palmette, framed by wide volute-shaped ribbons, adorned with sprigs with small flowers. The gilt leather is in a variety of colours, dominated by a gold frame, a blue and dark green background, and white, pink and red foliate elements. It has been categorised as a French product from the early 18th century, and it is slightly embossed.³⁷ Meanwhile, the wall hangings in the museum are notable for their large module, with sinuous

35. The art collection of American husband and wife George Washington Wurts and Henrietta Tower was bequeathed to the museum, in accordance with their will, following the death of Henrietta in 1933 – see G.M. Fachechi, *George Washington Wurts, Henrietta Tower, una collezione "di curiosità e opere d'arte" e una villa "magnificent, the handsomest ever bestowed on Rome*, in: *Riflessi del Collezionismo tra bilanci critici e nuovi contributi*, Atti del convegno Urbino 2013, eds. G.P. Folesani, A.M. Ambrosini Massari, 2014, pp. 339–360. Gilt leather is not mentioned in the essay.
36. I rely on catalogue cards created by the conservator Guia Rossignoli.
37. Data from the Photograph Collection of Bibliotheca Hertziana in Rome; M. Nimmo, M. Paris, L. Rissotto, *Cuoio dorato...*, op. cit., p. 34; A. Bender, *Dzieje...*, op. cit., pp. 174, 176 – the author links the upholstery with Flanders.

ribbons forming a discontinuous frame for a bouquet of flowers, while pairs of pheasants in contrasting poses feature at the sides. The pattern is painted in various colours, on a white background. This gilt leather, which is in low relief, was imported from France (probably the south), and it is believed to have been made in the first half of the 18th century.³⁸

Embossed wall hangings, in this case from 18th-century Flanders, also decorate the Villa Aldobrandini in Frascati.³⁹

Virtually no other collections of gilt leather have been preserved in Rome, besides individual pieces, for example the antependia in the Castel Sant'Angelo, or some items in the Museo Francese dell'Istituto Storico dei Cappuccini, the Collegio di San Lorenzo da Brindisi, and the Palazzo Massimo. The Palazzo Barberini (Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Antica) has gilt leather with painted figurative decoration depicting scenes from the life of Taddeo Zuccari.⁴⁰

However, there are no concrete clues regarding the provenance of the collections described above (where the leather came from, or the place and time they were made), and there is likewise no information on where they were purchased and from what source. The only remaining research methods that are open to scholars are the observation of the visible features of the gilt leather, and analysis.

This is likewise the case with another significant centre of art and manufacturing, namely Florence. Gilt leather can be savoured in two museums there: the Stefano Bardini and the Stibbert.

The renowned antiquarian Stefano Bardini (1836–1922) and the wealthy collector Frederick Stibbert (1838–1906) both shared a creative approach to the collecting of artefacts. They created specially arranged spaces, which were meant to have an emotional impact on visitors, with the aid of scenographic and aesthetic elements. Among their merits was an appreciation for gilt leather, which they even replicated. Bardini hung it on walls, alongside rugs and tapestries, while Stibbert not only upholstered walls, but also

38. P. D'Amore, *I parati e i tessuti da arredamento*, in: *Il Museo Nazionale d'Arte Orientale a Palazzo Brancaccio*, [Livorno] 1997; M. Nimmo, M. Paris, L. Rissotto, *Cuoio dorato...*, op. cit., p. 37 – dated 17th century.

39. M. Nimmo, M. Paris, L. Rissotto, *Cuoio dorato...*, op. cit., p. 35; A. Bender, *Dzieje...*, op. cit., p. 34.

40. M. Nimmo, M. Paris, L. Rissotto, *Cuoio dorato...*, op. cit., pp. 13, 35–37, 123–127. The scenes from the life of Taddeo Zucchari were painted in the workshop of his brother Federico.

furniture and doors with the material. Examples of identical gilt leather feature in the collections of both Florentine collectors, a factor which provides an evidence of the two connoisseurs' trade contacts.⁴¹

Nevertheless, it would be a pointless exercise to describe every piece of gilt leather in these collections.⁴² Stefan Bardini's museum has two remaining antependia from the 17th century, attributed to Venetian and Italian workshops. Besides depicting holy figures, they are decorated with floral motifs, arranged in net-like divisions, painted in various colours, and punched.⁴³ The collection also contains nine cushions. These were very popular and used in church during services, for example funerals, Good Friday ceremonies, and sometimes placed under the Bible or on the throne of a dignitary or a prie-dieu. Cushions were also used during secular ceremonies or for private purposes.⁴⁴

One of the gilt-leather wall hangings in the museum is a large piece with a net-like pattern, in which oval eyes are connected with rings (fig. 6). The lines of the net were executed in black, with a golden border, and the rings are silver on a golden background. The composition is divided by spiralling columns, partly filled with intertwining vegetation and storks with pomegranates, crowned by a frieze with dancing putti. The gilt leather is of the flat, punched variety. The main parts have been attributed to Spanish workshops (16th–17th century), while the columns and frieze are believed to be of Italian provenance, from the 16th century. It's quite possible that this artefact came from Modena or Florence itself, namely from the Palazzo Vecchio, as the inventories of furnishings (*Guardaroba*)

41. G. Rossignoli, *Cuoi d'oro. Corami da tappezzeria, paliotti e cuscini del Museo Stefano Bardini*, Firenze 2009, pp. 43–46, 53–61, 131–138, figs. 15, 16; as well as the introduction to this publication: A. Nesi, *La collezione di arte applicata di Stefano Bardini*, pp. 9–17. Consultation with the curator of the Stibbert Museum, Mrs Martina Becattini; K. Aschengreen Piacenti, *The conservation campagne [sic] at Villa Stibbert. Case studies*, in: *Multidisciplinary Conservation: A Holistic View for Historic Interiors*, ICOM-CC Interim Meeting, Rome 2010, pp. 1–9 in the publication contain information about F. Stibbert, his creation of both the collection and the museum, and the recreation of an old exhibition layout from the times of the collector, and likewise about conservation procedures.
42. M. Nimmo, M. Paris, L. Rissotto, *Cuoio dorato...*, op. cit., pp. 38–43 (list of artefacts from the Museo e Galleria Mozzi Bardini); pp. 42–53 (list of artefacts from the Museo Stibbert).
43. Inv. no. 1493 and without inv. no. G. Rossignoli, *Cuoi d'oro...*, op. cit., pp. 63–75, figs. 20, 34 a, b.
44. Inv. nos. 794–801, 1028. G. Rossignoli, *Cuoi d'oro...*, op. cit., pp. 105–123.



Fig. 6. Gilt leather detail, main decorative motif: Spain, 16th–17th c., columns and a border with cupids: Italy, 16th c., Museo Stefano Bardini, Firenze, photo Andrea Lensini, in: G. Rossignoli, *Cuoi d'oro. Corami da tappezzeria, paliotti e cuscini del Museo Stefano Bardini*, Firenze 2009, fig. 53, with the consent of Musei Civici Fiorentini

of both places include entries pertaining to spiralling columns against a gold background, although one cannot be too certain, as this was a popular motif.⁴⁵

45. Inv. no. 858; G. Rossignoli, *Cuoi d'oro...*, op. cit., pp. 83–90, figs. 53, 53a–c. Small pieces with a similar pattern can be found in the Galleria di Palazzo Mozzi Bardini (the gallery is closed, not accessible) – figs. 60–62; C. Centonza, *Le corrispondenze...*, op. cit., p. 26.



Fig. 7. Gilt leather detail, Italy or Spain, 2nd half of 17th c., Museo Stefano Bardini, Firenze, photo Nicolò Orsi Battaglini, in: Rossignoli, *Cuoi d'oro*, fig. 64, with the consent of Musei Civici Fiorentini

Another example of gilt-leather wall hangings features net-like divisions (fig. 7). Ovals rimmed by strips each enclose a palmette of acanthus leaves. The strips are intermittently bound in double knots and linked by rings at their connection points. This decorative module is in gold on a red background. This alternates with a series of smaller ovals, each with a vase with a foliate motif, encompassed by two leaves. The golden pattern is against a dark green background. The border is decorated with candelabra ornament, against a red background. This gilt leather is hypothetically associated with Italian or Spanish manufacturers from the second half of the 17th century, even though 16th-century Renaissance decorative motifs feature.⁴⁶

46. Inv. no. 996. G. Rossignoli, *Cuoi d'oro...*, op. cit., pp. 91–95, fig. 64; C. Centonza, *Le corrispondenze...*, op. cit., p. 26.

Fig. 8. Gilt leather detail, Italy, 1st half of 17th c., Museo Stefano Bardini, Firenze, photo Nicolò Orsi Battaglini, in: Rossignoli, *Cuoi d'oro*, fig. 71, with the consent of Musei Civici Fiorentini



A further piece of upholstery is of an extensively patterned type (fig. 8). The main motif is a palmette, formed from seven petals, each enclosing a smaller flower (tulips and carnations alternate), with a pair of circular flowers and two serrate leaves at the base. At either side, pairs of leaves form hearts. The border consists of two braided strips, each composed of leaves. The pattern of the gilt leather has been handled in a linear fashion, and the colour scheme is the most common one, namely gold against a red background. The upholstery has been classified as an Italian product, of the flat, punched type, from the first half of the 17th century.⁴⁷

47. Inv. nos. 857, 859. G. Rossignoli, *Cuoi d'oro...*, op. cit., pp. 97–104, figs. 71, 71a, 72. In this instance, small pieces have also survived in the Galleria di Palazzo Mozzi Bardini.

Gilt leather with an identical ornamentation and colour scheme can be found in the Museo Stibbert.⁴⁸ Likewise, the same motif, yet in gold and blue, was used to paint the walls of a room in the Bardini Museum, while in another space a pattern was used from a different gilt-leather wall hanging, the original of which is in the Stibbert Museum.⁴⁹ This effective upholstery is distinguished by a stylised floral motif with carnation petals, complemented by a pair of s-shaped falling leaves, inside ovals formed by wide ribbons. The gold of the decoration shimmers against a red background. Supposedly, this is a 17th-century work, hailing from a workshop in northern Italy (Venice, Bologna).

With regards to individual pieces bequeathed by Stibbert, an indirect attribution can be suggested. This is the case with the gilt leather that has been identified as coming from the Palazzo Chigi Zondadari in San Quirico d'Orcia. Owing to several factors, this has been recognised as a work from a Venetian workshop, hailing from the 1680s. It is decorated with plant motifs, with s-shaped branches, leaves, and various types of multi-coloured flowers, which densely fill the surface.⁵⁰

In spite of the fact that there is a large concentration of gilt leather in Florence, with a variety of ornamentation characteristic of Italian or North European production, there are no panels there which match – or are even similar to – those in Wawel Castle, particularly as far as patterns are concerned.

A study of the resources of museums in Bologna provides the same result. There are small pieces of gilt leather there and several smaller artefacts, such as jewellery cases or leather bags. Only the Museo Civico Medievale possesses two examples of gilt-leather wall hangings with an original pattern⁵¹ (fig. 9). The *bazzane* come from the chapel of the Palazzo Bargellini in Sant'Agata, a small settlement near Bologna. The decoration consists of narrow, vertical strips in two alternating types of ornamentation. One strip

48. G. Rossignoli, *Cuoi d'oro...*, op. cit., p. 104, fig. 84.

49. Ibidem, p. 135, figs. 115, 116.

50. M. Bercé, *I pannelli in cuoio dorato e dipinto del Palazzo di San Quirico*, in: *Il Palazzo Chigi Zondadari a San Quirico d'Orcia. Architettura e decorazione di un palazzo barocco*, eds. M. Eichberg, F. Rotundo, San Quirico d'Orcia 1999, pp. 199–206; Gilt leather with an identical pattern can also be found in the Palazzo Massimo alle Colonne in Rome – see. M. Nimmo, M. Paris, L. Rissotto, *Cuoio dorato...*, op. cit., p. 37; G. Rossignoli, *Cuoi d'oro...*, op. cit., p. 134, fig. 112.

51. Inv. no. 2014, dimensions: 156 x 283; inv. no. 2013, dimensions: 770 x 306 cm.

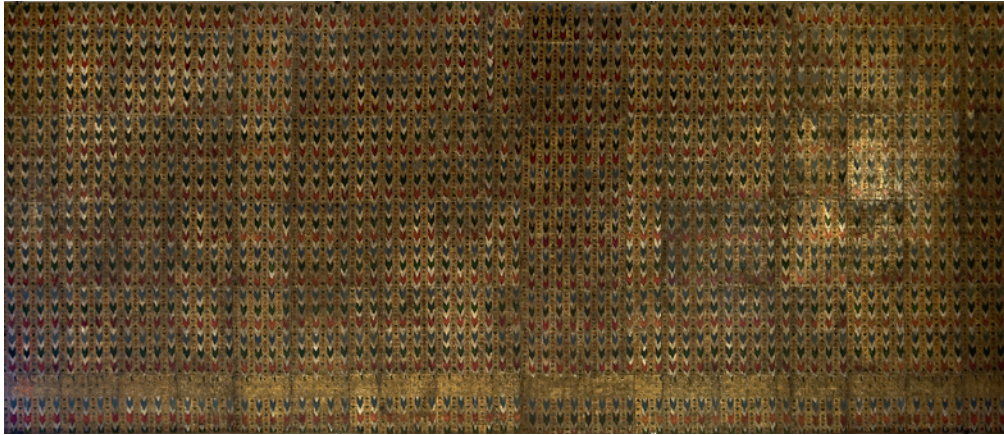


Fig. 9. Gilt leather detail, northern Italy, 16th/17th c., Archivio Fotografico Musei Civici d'Arte Antica, Bologna

has a geometric pattern, referred to as 'a fiamme,' successively in beige, red, beige, green, beige and green, while the other has a pattern comprising a series of ovals surrounded by flat ribbon, fixed on the axis with small, circular elements, at the centre of which there is a stylised flower in red, green and blue on a gold background. This type of decoration imitates fabric made according to the Ikat technique.⁵² One of the hangings is enriched by two wide horizontal strips with vegetal ornamentation, contrasting with the one in the vertical layout (geometric and stylised). The upper strip is adorned with a sinusoidal pattern, complemented by symmetrical foliate elements and flowers, as well as a large, S-shaped leaf with smaller leaves upon it. The lower horizontal strip features a motif of a tulip surrounded by a pair of leaves. The motifs used on these examples of gilt leather are rooted in the world of Eastern ornamentation (Central Asia, Persia, Turkey). Thanks to trade and cultural exchange, these features also came to be used in European products. However, they differ stylistically, for example in the shape of the tulip petals, which are squarer and more stylised than in Ottoman

52. A. Contadini, *Due pannelli di cuoio dorato nel Museo Civico Medievale di Bologna*, "Annali di Ca'Foscari" XXVII (1988), 3, p. 131 [pp. 127–142]; A. Contadini, 'Cuoridoro' tecnica e decorazione di cuoi dorati veneziani e italiani con influssi islamici, in: *Arte veneziana e arte islamica: atti del Primo simposio internazionale sull'arte veneziana e l'arte islamica*, ed. E.J. Grube, Venice 1989, p. 235 [pp. 231–251]; C. Centonza, *Le corrispondenze...*, op. cit., p. 27.

products. It is believed that the gilt leather upholstery discussed so far was made in local workshops, in Bologna or Ferrara, or perhaps in Venice, around the beginning of the 17th century, thus in keeping with the *all'orientale* style, which was widely used in the decoration of artefacts at that time.⁵³ They provide a rare example of gilt-leather wall hangings that are markedly different from the Italian ones presented thus far. Additionally, one should mention the gilt leather in the Basilica of San Petronio in Bologna. Several antependia can be found within this church, while some wall hangings are kept in the neighbouring diocesan museum. Vegetal patterns predominate, in a net-like arrangement, and plaited motifs also feature. Most of the gilt leather dates back to the 17th century.

In the light of the presented characteristics of Italian collections of gilt leather and the analyses of selected artefacts, one can conclude that their composition most often bears net-like divisions, with a large-scale vegetal pattern, typical motifs being pomegranates, palmettes or a crown motif binding branches, or strips. The second type of composition involves stripes of alternating colours. One can discern a great many variants, as far as patterns are concerned. These basic decorative elements may be enriched by zoomorphic motifs (birds) as well as figural ones (putti), or in contrast – restricted to just the motif of the net, with small eyes. Besides the main ornamentation, friezes and vertical elements were used. Horizontal strips were dominated by sprigs arranged in a sinusoidal or circular manner, as well as by motifs of dancing putti. In the vertical strips, the most common elements were spiralling columns or candelabra decoration. These elements not only bounded the compositions at the sides, but also delineated regular segments.

It is evident here that the designers were echoing patterns used on fabrics in the 17th century, but also earlier, Renaissance ones. Most of the gilt leather that has been preserved in Italy dates back to the 17th century. In its ornamentation and nature, it is decidedly different from the Wawel upholstery (fig. 10).

One can also find 18th-century gilt leather with patterns of the Daniel Marot type, but they are imports from Northern Europe. These examples likewise differ from those in Wawel Royal Castle in terms of decorative features.

53. A. Contadini, *Due pannelli...*, op. cit., pp. 130–135, figs. 1–2, 4, 7; C. Centonza, *Le corrispondenze...*, op. cit., p. 27.



Fig. 10. Wawel Royal Castle, Sala Pod Ptakami (Bird Room), photo A. Stankiewicz

Furthermore, the layout of gilt leather panels on the walls of both Moritzburg Castle and Wawel contrasts with the composition in Italian interiors, as borders were used to frame entire sections of walls, and there are no vertical divisions.

As far as technique is concerned, two types of gilt leather were made in Italy, flat and low relief (embossed). The most typical examples were those with a flat surface, variegated with the aid of punching, and with patterns highlighted with paint.⁵⁴ The wall hangings in Wawel Castle belong to this kind. However, such technological aspects cannot confirm where a given piece was made, as flat gilt leather was produced in all the European countries where this craft was practised. Netherlandish workshops also produced them, alongside a type of gilt leather that was typical for that region, namely high relief (deep embossing).⁵⁵

54. M. Nimmo, M. Paris, L. Rissotto, *Cuoio dorato...*, op. cit., p. 21.

55. In 1628, a method was discovered (and patented) in the Netherlands for deep embossing, through the use of wooden moulds, a technique devised by Jacob Dirxsz de Swart from the Hague – E.F. Koldewij, *Gouldleer Kinkarakawa. De geschiedenis van het Nederlands gouldleer en zijn invloed in Japan*, ed. F. Scholten, Zwolle 1989, p. 28 and other works by this author; M. Berardi, M. Nimmo, M. Paris, *Parati...*, op. cit., p. 8; A. Bender, *Złoczone kurdybany...*, pp. 71–72, 121.

Classification with regards to punching has been applied in a bid to differentiate the geographic provenance of artefacts.⁵⁶ However, it transpired that this method was flawed, as certain patterns and sizes were repeated, regardless of location.

In summary, the analysis of resources of gilt leather in several Italian regions, backed up by bibliographical inquiries, has not brought positive results. It is not possible to find examples of Italian material that either have the same patterns or even ones that are similar to those adorning the Wawel chambers, in spite of the fact that the repetition of entire patterns is a typical feature of this artform. As regards the time when they were made, one may posit the period 1720–30, on account of the material presented in the first part of this article.

The present survey of Italian gilt leather collections does not take into consideration Venetian circles. Several factors, including the once extraordinarily abundant resources of gilt leather in Venice, the specific characteristics of the products there and the organisation of craftsmen's guilds in the lagoon city, required a separate study. Indeed, the results of inquiries carried out in the museums and palazzos of Venice, as well as archival research, were positive, as it proved possible to pinpoint examples of gilt leather that are identical to three Wawel patterns. These findings have been presented in a separate article.⁵⁷

Nevertheless, the subject requires further research. Owing to the Régence ornamentation that features on the Wawel wall hangings, a careful examination of Northern European patterns is advisable, namely designs from the circles of Jean Bérain and Daniel Marot. It is possible that the designs of the Moritzburg-Wawel gilt leather were conceived in French artistic circles close to the king, and that the execution of the materials was assigned to a Venetian workshop.

In the light of both the presented resources of gilt leather and the current state of knowledge on the subject, the Moritzburg-Wawel gilt leather group would appear to be a commission that was designed as a unique and complete undertaking.⁵⁸

56. M. Nimmo, M. Paris, L. Rissotto, *Cuoio dorato...*, op. cit., pp. 135–220 – including the catalogue of punches, (description, outline); G. Rossignoli, *Cuoi d'oro...*, op. cit., pp. 124, 128–130; A. Schulze, *Goldleder...*, op. cit., annexe IIIe, pp. 661–677.

57. O. Sieradzka-Malec, *Gilt-leather wall hangings that have been identified in Venice are identical to those that adorn the interiors of Wawel Royal Castle in Kraków (Cracow)*, op. cit., pp. 167–192.

58. A. Schulze, *Der Bestand an ornamentalen Ledertapeten...*, op. cit., p. 53; A. Schulze, *Goldleder...*, op. cit., p. 61.

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Illustrations:

1. Gilt leather wall hanging, Agostino Nespola, ca. 1670, Sala da Pranzo d'Estate, Palazzo Chigi, Ariccia, in: F. Petrucci, *Palazzo Chigi di Ariccia: parati in cuoio in: Vestire i palazzi. Stoffe, tessuti e parati negli arredi e nell'arte del Barocco*, eds. A. Rodolfo, C. Volpi, Città del Vaticano 2014, fig. 3
2. Gilt leather wall hanging, Agostino Nespola, ca. 1671, Camera Verde, Palazzo Chigi, Ariccia, in: Petrucci..., fig. 4
3. Gilt leather wall hanging, Agostino Nespola, ca. 1671–72, Sala del Trucco, Palazzo Chigi, Ariccia, in: Petrucci..., fig. 6
4. Gilt leather wall hanging, Antonio Mugnaione, 1670–80, Sala Mario de' Fiori, Palazzo Chigi, Ariccia, in: Petrucci..., fig. 5
5. Gilt leather wall hanging, Mattia Turchi and Giuseppe Montorio, ca. 1665–70, Anticamera, Palazzo Chigi, Ariccia, in: Petrucci, fig. 1
6. Gilt leather detail, main decorative motif: Spain, 16th–17th c., columns and a border with cupids: Italy, 16th c., Museo Stefano Bardini, Florencia, photo Andrea Lensini, in: G. Rossignoli, *Cuoi d'oro. Corami da tappezzeria, paliotti e cuscini del Museo Stefano Bardini*, Firenze 2009, fig. 53
7. Gilt leather detail, Italy or Spain, 2nd half of 17th c., Museo Stefano Bardini, Firenze, photo Nicolò Orsi Battaglini, in: Rossignoli, *Cuoi d'oro*, fig. 64
8. Gilt leather detail, Italy, 1st half of 17th c., Museo Stefano Bardini, Firenze, photo Nicolò Orsi Battaglini, in: Rossignoli, *Cuoi d'oro*, fig. 71
9. Gilt leather detail, northern Italy, 16th/17th c., Archivio Fotografico Musei Civici d'Arte Antica, Bologna
10. Wawel Royal Castle, Sala Pod Ptakami (Bird Room), photo A. Stankiewicz

prepared by: M. Golik-Gryglas

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Abstract

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The Characteristics of Italian Collections of Gilt Leather as an Element of the Research into the Provenance of the Gilt-Leather Wall Hangings in Wawel Royal Castle

Keywords:

gilt leather, gilt leather wall hangings, Italian collections of gilt leather, wall coverings, cordovan, Wawel Royal Castle in Kraków, Poland, interior decoration

Wawel Royal Castle is a home to a large collection of gilt-leather wall hangings from the Baroque period (1720s). Purchased from the Moritzburg Castle of Elector of Saxony and King of Poland Augustus II the Strong in the 1930s., they were not the original furnishings of the Wawel Castle. Among the diverse issues concerning these wall hangings, the question of its provenance has not been thoroughly studied yet. Starting with an indication of the ruler's interest in gilt-leather wall hangings from Venice, I present collections from several regions of Italy. The collection of gilt-leather in the Palazzo Chigi of Ariccia is the largest in Europe. Thanks to the preserved archives of the family, the place of their manufacture can be pinpointed: Roman workshops, the names of the artisans, and exact age, which is truly exceptional. With respect to other collections in Rome, as well as in Umbria, Tuscany and Bologna, information on the works' origin or even their place and source of purchase are usually missing. In Florence, two museums, the Stefano Bardini and the Stibbert, house larger collections of gilt-leather wall hangings, reflecting antiquarian efforts in the second half of the 19th century. The Italian gilt-leather wall hangings are older than those from Krakow, as most of them date back to the 17th century, and they differ in their ornamentation and style. The decoration (pattern, motifs) reflects the designs used in textiles.

Regretfully, the studied and presented material lacks examples of gilt-leather wall hangings which would match the ones from Wawel Castle in their decorative aspect. From the technological point of view, the Krakow gilt-leather wall hangings are mainly Italian, of the flat variety, diversified by punching, with painted ornaments. However, the technological aspects do not determine the place of their manufacture, as similar flat gilt-leather wall hangings were produced in other European countries as well. Similarly, the types of punching do not constitute a geographic distinguishing feature. In light of the above, the issue needs further studies, particularly in the scope of the operations of Venice workshops.

Abstrakt

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Charakterystyka kolekcji włoskich złożonych skór jako wstęp do badań nad pochodzeniem obić kurdybanowych w Zamku Królewskim na Wawelu

W Zamku Królewskim na Wawelu znajduje się duży zespół złożonych malowanych obić skórzanych z okresu baroku (lata dwudzieste XVIII wieku). Nie stanowiły one pierwotnego wyposażenia wawelskiej rezydencji, ale zostały pozyskane w latach trzydziestych XX wieku z zamku Moritzburg, siedziby elektora saskiego i króla polskiego Augusta II Mocnego. W wielowątkowej problematyce dotyczącej tych tapet, zagadnienia proveniencji nie zostały dotychczas opracowane. Bazując na wskazówce o zainteresowaniu władcy kurdybanami z Wenecji, prezentuję kolekcje w kilku regionach Włoch. Największy w Europie zbiór złożonych skór zdobi pałac Chigich w Aricci. Dzięki zachowanym archiwaliom rodziny, można dokładnie wskazać miejsce ich wytworzenia: warsztaty rzymskie, nazwiska kurdybanników oraz dokładny czas, co stanowi cenny wyjątek. W odniesieniu do innych zbiorów w Rzymie, a także w Umbrii, Toskanii oraz Bolonii nie istnieją zazwyczaj informacje związane z proveniencją dzieł, a nawet również z miejscem i źródłem ich zakupu. We Florencji większe kolekcje złożonych skór znajdują się w dwóch muzeach: Stefano Bardini i Stibbert, stanowiąc wyraz antykwarycznego zbieractwa drugiej połowy XIX wieku. W stosunku do obić z Krakowa, włoskie obiekty są wcześniejsze, gdyż większość datowanych jest na wiek XVII, o odmiennej ornamentyce i charakterze. Dekoracja (układ, motywy) stanowi nawiązanie do wzornictwa stosowanego na tkaninach.

Niestety w zapoznanym i przedstawionym materiale zabytkowym, nie występują przykłady złożonych tapet analogiczne w warstwie dekoracyjnej do istniejących na zamku na Wawelu. Z punktu widzenia techniki złożone obicia z krakowskiej rezydencji reprezentują, wytwarzane najczęściej we Włoszech, skóry o powierzchni płaskiej, różnicowanej za pomocą puncowania, ze wzorem zaznaczonym farbą. Aspekty technologiczne, nie mogą jednak przesądzać o miejscu powstania obiektu, wobec wytwarzania kurdybanów płaskich również w innych krajach Europy. Podobnie wyróżnika geograficznego nie stanowią zastosowane typy punc. Wobec powyższych wniosków temat wymaga kontynuowania, zwłaszcza badanie działalności warsztatów w Wenecji.

Słowa kluczowe:
złożone skóry,
kurdybany,
złożone obicia
ścienne, tapety
skórzane, kolekcje
złożonych obić
ściennych we
Włoszech, parato
in corame, cuoi
d'oro, Zamek
Królewski
na Wawelu
w Krakowie,
wyposażenie
wnętrz

