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A Medieval Rarity or a Perfect Forgery? An Ivory Dice Cup with Court Scenes from the Collection of the Princes Czartoryski Museum in Kraków

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Abstract

The collection of the Princes Czartoryski Museum in Kraków includes the largest ensemble of medieval ivories in Poland. They have mostly been acquired by Prince Władysław Czartoryski, the founder of the Museum. A dice cup, so far regarded in the literature as a French ivory from the first half of the 14th cent., which is a topic of the paper, belongs to this varied group (which also includes e.g., two figurines of the Virgin with Child, a head of a crozier and a casket from the Embriachi workshop). An extensive survey, based mainly on the *Gothic Ivories Project* database, allowed to establish that this piece is an absolute rarity, not only in Polish collections but worldwide. The cup is decorated with two carved scenes – one depicting a lady and a youth engaged in a dice game, the other illustrating a court scene, unprecedented in other known medieval ivories. The style of the cup, similar to many ivory mirror cases, dating from the early 14th cent. to mid-14th cent., suggests that the cup might be regarded as medieval. However, its function and decoration force to question its authenticity – since there are many indications, that in the medieval games of dice

there were no cups included. In the late 18th and in the 19th centuries, during the so-called collecting mania, many forged medieval objects appeared on the antiquarian market, including those made of ivory. The paper reports on the attempts to put the cup in the iconographic and stylistic context (particularly in comparison with other known ivories). Its functional aspect is discussed as well, in the context of the medieval court practices, the use of board games in particular. Finally, the question of dating of the ivory is addressed. The answers to the questions stated above may be helpful in resolving whether the cup in the Princes Czartoryski collection is one of its kind medieval ivory or – in the author's opinion – a skilful forgery.

Abstrakt

Średniowieczny unikat czy idealny falsyfikat? Kubek do gry w kości ze scenami dworskimi w kolekcji Muzeum Książąt Czartoryskich w Krakowie

W Muzeum Książąt Czartoryskich w Krakowie znajduje się największy w Polsce zbiór średniowiecznych wyrobów z kości słoniowej. Do kolekcji pozyskiwane były one głównie dzięki księciu Władysławowi Czartoryskiemu, założycielowi Muzeum w Krakowie. W tej zróżnicowanej grupie dzieł (w jej skład wchodzą m.in. dwie figurki Marii z Dzieciątkiem, pióro pastorału, szkatuła z warsztatu Embriachich) znajduje się kubek do gry w kości, który dotychczas w literaturze przedmiotu uważany był za wyrób francuski z pierwszej połowy XIV wieku. Szeroko zakrojona kwerenda, przede wszystkim w bazie *Gothic Ivories Project*, pozwoliła ustalić, że przedmiot jest zupełnym unikatem nie tylko w zbiorach polskich, ale także światowych. Kubek zdobią dwie rzeźbione sceny – pierwsza przedstawia damę i młodzieńca zajętych grą w kości, druga ukazuje scenę dworską, której ikonografia nie znajduje analogii wśród innych znanych średniowiecznych *ivoir*-ów. Za tym, że dzieło może być wyrobem średniowiecznym przemawia przede wszystkim styl, łączący kubek z oprawami lusterek powstającymi od początku aż do połowy XIV wieku. Funkcja kubka i jego ikonografia każą jednak podać w wątpliwość oryginalność dzieła – wiele wskazuje bowiem na to, że średniowiecznych gier w kości nie rozgrywano z użyciem kubków. Pod koniec XVIII i w XIX wieku, w czasach tzw. manii kolekcjonerskiej na rynku antykwarycznym pojawiło się wiele falsyfikatów średniowiecznych dzieł, w tym także z kości. W artykule podjęta została próba umieszczenia kubka w kontekście ikonograficznym oraz stylowym (zwłaszcza w zestawieniu z innymi wyrobami z kości słoniowej). Podniesiony został również aspekt jego funkcji na tle średniowiecznych praktyk dworskich, ze szczególnym naciskiem na gry planszowe. Na końcu poruszona została kwestia datowania dzieła. Wyjaśnienie wymienionych zagadnień może pomóc w próbie odpowiedzi na pytanie, czy kubek w kolekcji Czartoryskich jest jedynym w swoim rodzaju dziełem średniowiecznym, czy też udanym falsyfikatem.

Despite the fact, that in the 19th or even still in the 20th century medieval pieces made of elephant tusks (ivory, fr. *ivoire*, *ivories*) were the objects of desire of numerous distinguished art collectors (such as e.g., Francis Douce, Calouste Gulbenkian, Petr Soltykoff, John Webb, Louis Carrand, J.P. Morgan

or Kenneth Roy Thomson)[1], for a long time they remained on the peripheries of the studies on medieval art. First major, critical work on the topic of medieval ivories was the three-volume *Les ivoires gothiques français*, published in 1924 by an amateur-scholar Raymond Koechlin. On the basis of scarce findings of his predecessors, Koechlin thoroughly analysed over 1300 ivories from the museums and private collections all over the world[2]. It was however the last forty or thirty years during which the research on the gothic ivories has flourished, thanks to the instrumental works of scholars such as Danielle Gaborit-Chopin, Richard H. Randall, Paul Williamson, Glyn Davies, Charles T. Little, Paula M. Carns, Peter Barnet, Michele Tomasi and Sarah M. Guérin (to name just a few)[3].

Another milestone in studies on medieval ivories was the launching of the "Gothic Ivories Project" database, initiated in 2008 by the Courtauld

[1] One of the first published catalogues of medieval collection, which included medieval ivories, was a catalogue of Francis Douce (1757–1834), a curator at the British Museum in London, see Samuel Rush Meyrick, "Catalogue of the Doucean Museum at Goodrich Court, Herefordshire," *The Gentleman's Magazine* 5 (1836): 585–590. See also Glyn Davies, "Francis Douce, FSA (1757–1834). Scholar and Collector of Gothic Ivory Carvings," in *A Reservoir of Ideas. Essays in Honour of Paul Williamson*, eds. Glyn Davies and Eleanor Townsend (London: V&A Publishing, 2017), 246–254. Only in recent years, several catalogues of medieval ivories from public, as well as private collections have been published, see John Lowden and John Cherry, *Medieval Ivories and Works of Art. The Thomson Collection at the Art Gallery of Ontario* (London: Paul Holberton Publishing, 2008); Sarah Guérin, *Gothic Ivories: Calouste Gulbenkian Museum* (London: Scala Arts & Heritage Publishers, 2015); *Avori Medievali: Collezioni del Museo Civico d'arte Antica di Torino*, eds. Simonetta Castronovo, Fabrizio Crivello, and Michele Tomasi (Torino: L'Artistica Savigliano, 2016); *Gli Avori del Museo Nazionale del Bargello*, ed. Ilaria Ciseri (Milan: Officina Libraria, 2018); Paul Williamson, *The Wyvern Collection: Medieval and Later Ivory Carvings and Small Sculpture* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2019); John Lowden, *Medieval and Later Ivories in the Courtauld Gallery: The Gambier Parry Collection* (London: Paul Holberton Publishing, 2020, 2nd edition).

[2] Raymond Koechlin, *Les ivoires gothiques français*, vols. 1–3 (Paris: Picard, 1924). Koechlin's studies are still, even today, the starting point for the research on medieval ivories, as many of his attributions remain unchanged. His corpus is also the only such extensive study of the preserved medieval ivories so far.

[3] On the gothic ivories, see, among others, Danielle Gaborit-Chopin, *Ivoires du Moyen Age* (Fribourg: Office du Livre, 1978); Richard Randall, *Masterpieces of Ivory from The Walters Art Gallery* (New York: Hudson Hills, 1985); Richard Randall, *Golden Age of Ivory: Gothic Carvings in North American Collections* (New York: Hudson Hills, 1993); *Images in Ivory: Precious Objects of the Gothic Age*, ed. Peter Barnet (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1997); Paul Williamson and Glyn Davies, *Medieval Ivory Carvings 1200–1550*, vols. 1–2 (London: V&A Publishing, 2014); *Gothic Ivory Sculpture: Content and Context*, ed. Catherine Yvard (London: The Courtauld Institute of Art, 2017); Sarah Guérin, *French Gothic Ivories Material Theologies and the Sculptor's Craft* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022).

Institute in London, often called "Koechlin of the 21st century"[4]. The database includes over 5000 objects, which – according to its project menager Catherine Yvard – make c. 90% of all known gothic ivories preserved not only in museums but also in private collections all over the world, including objects now missing or destroyed[5]. Thanks to the project, the scholars can get acquainted with a vast number of barely recognised, or even completely unknown works. The photographs and basic data on the ivories included in the database have opened some new research perspectives, which resulted in broader studies and monographic exhibitions. Some Polish museums have made their collections available in the database as well, e.g., the National Museum in Warsaw (4 items), Wawel Royal Castle (3), the treasury of the Kraków Cathedral (1) and finally the Princes Czartoryski Museum, branch of the National Museum in Kraków (13)[6]. The latter is undoubtedly the largest Polish collection of medieval ivories, thanks to Prince Władysław Czartoryski (1828–1894), the founder of Princes' Czartoryski Museum in Kraków. Władysław and his sister, countess Izabela (Iza) Działyńska (1830–1899) who was an art collector in her own right, belonged to the group of the 19th-century collectors, whose main objects of desire, as well as subjects of the earliest studies, were the artworks from the Antiquity, Middle Ages and the Early Renaissance period[7]. Władysław Czartoryski was interested mainly in ancient Greek and Roman art, as well as paintings of the so-called Italian Primitives. Additionally, he systematically enlarged his collection with militaria and medieval and renaissance decorative arts, such as Italian and Spanish maiolica, Limoges enamels and finally ivories, which Władysław used to buy in

[4] "Gothic Ivories Project at The Courtauld Institute of Art, London," http://www.gothicivories.courtauld.ac.uk/insight/yvard_aboutus/yvard_aboutus01.html, accessed November 11, 2022. On the database see more Catherine Yvard, "The Gothic Ivories Project the Courtauld Institute of Art," *Sculpture Journal* 23, no. 1 (2014): 98–100.

[5] The database, since the completion of the project in 2015, is not updated.

[6] In the collection of the Princes Czartoryski Library in Kraków there is also an ivory *applique* of the Virgin with Child, in the 19th cent. installed on the cover of the Latin Bible, see more Elżbieta Musialik, "Gotycka figurka z kości słoniowej w oprawie Biblii łacińskiej (MS. Czart.2387III) w kolekcji Muzeum Książąt Czartoryskich," *Rozprawy Muzeum Narodowego w Krakowie* 10 (2017): 9–32.

[7] The countess, apart from a great number of Greek vases, had in her collection a few painted and champlevé enamels from Limoges workshops, as well as medieval ivories and goldsmithery. Several ivories are currently exhibited in the National Museum in Warsaw, some went missing during the World War II (e.g., a figurine of the seated Virgin with Child, in the 19th cent. placed under an enamelled canopy).

Paris or during his numerous travels[8]. Those Parisian acquisitions, as well as pieces gifted to the Prince, are (with a few exceptions[9]) the core of today's collection of ivories. Despite the presence of the "Polish" works in the *Gothic Ivories Project* database, they regrettably remain poorly acknowledged both in Polish and foreign literature. Apart from the 'Queen Jadwiga's casket'[10], that made its way to the awareness of the scholars quite early (soon after being "discovered" in 1881)[11], as well as two figurines of the Virgin with Child attributed to the atelier of the so-called Master of the Kremsmünster Diptych[12], the majority of the ivories found in Polish collections lack comprehensive monographic studies. In the 1970's and 1980's, Paulina Ratkowska published

[8] Providing the objects with more detailed descriptions was rather an infrequent practice among the 19th cent. antiquarians (as well as some of the collectors). The objects were usually described simply as *ivoire* or émail, which now makes tracing their earlier history, before their aquisition to the collection, considerably more difficult. A good example of an ivory piece in the Czartoryski collection with a known provenance, is a mirror case illustrated with the scene of the Crucifixion (MNK XIII-1274). It was bought by Władysław in 1891 from a private collector in Cologne, see Franz Kirchweger, "Gothic and Late Medieval Ivories from the Collection of Clemens Wenceslaus Count of Renesse-Breidbach," in *Gothic Ivory Sculpture. Content and Context*, ed. Catherine Yvard (London: The Courtauld Institute of Art, 2017), 94–110.

[9] Most likely, the sole medieval ivory acquired by Izabela Czartoryska to her collection in Puławy, is a casket by the so-called Embriachi workshop – the North-Italian atelier, active in the late 14th/early 15th cent. In Puławy, the casket was regarded as the piece belonging to Alphonso V, King of Portugal.

[10] Kraków, the Royal Wawel Cathedral, acc. no. WKW/eIII/05.

[11] Numerous studies were published on this composite casket, however only a few were written by Polish scholars, see e.g. Ignacy Polkowski, *Dawne relikwiarze katedry krakowskiej* (Kraków: Czas, 1881); Jan Bołoz-Antoniewicz, *O średniowiecznych źródłach do rzeźb, znajdujących się na szkatułce z kości słoniowej w skarbcu Katedry na Wawelu* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 1885); Tadeusz Kruszyński, *Francuska skrzyneczka z kości słoniowej z pierwszej połowy XIV wieku w skarbcu katedry krakowskiej i podobne zabytki w Krakowie* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Zakładu Architektury Polskiej i Historii Sztuki Politechniki Warszawskiej, 1936); Agnieszka Łaguna-Chevillotte, "Gotycka skrzyneczka z kości słoniowej w skarbcu katedralnym na Wawelu," *Studia Waweliana* 6/7 (1997/1998): 5–28; Marek Walczak, "Skrzyneczka," in *Wawel 1000–2000*, vol. 1 *Katedra krakowska – biskupia, królewska, narodowa*, eds. Magdalena Piwocka and Dariusz Nowacki (Kraków: Zamek Królewski na Wawelu, 2000), 43–45, cat. no. 1/12; Elżbieta Musialik, "Skrzyneczka z kości słoniowej zwana królowej Jadwigi," in *Skarby epoki Piastów*, ed. Joanna Ziętkiewicz-Kotz (Kraków: Zamek Królewski na Wawelu, 2020), 166, cat. no. 33.

[12] For the latest study on the pieces see Elżbieta Musialik, "O dwóch rzeźbach Marii z Dzieciątkiem z kości słoniowej w zbiorach krakowskich. Przyczynek do działalności tzw. warsztatu dyptyku z Kremsmünster," in *Claritas et Consonantia. Funkcje, formy i znaczenia w sztuce średniowiecza. Księga poświęcona pamięci Kingi Szczepkowskiej-Naliwajek w dziesiątą rocznicę śmierci*, eds. Monika Jakubek-Raczkowska and Juliusz Raczkowski (Toruń–Warszawa: Wydział Sztuk Pięknych / Stowarzyszenie Historyków Sztuki o. Warszawa, 2017), 215–233.

three articles on medieval ivories in the National Museum in Warsaw, one of which belonged to the Działyńska's collection in Gołuchów[13]. In 1989, Malbork castle held an exhibition dedicated to ivories from various time periods in Polish collections, however unfortunatelly the majority of preserved medieval works were not presented. The exhibition was accompanied by a small catalogue written by Antoni R. Chodyński, which included only eight gothic ivory pieces[14]. In the 1990's Agnieszka Łaguna-Chevillotte studied Queen Jadwiga's composite casket, as well as two ivory diptychs in the Wawel Royal Castle[15], and Chodyński published an elaborate study on several gothic ivories in Polish collections, including two statuettes of Virgin with Child from the Czartoryski collection[16]. In 2004 Danielle Gaborit-Chopin examined some ivory pieces from the collections in Kraków, inter alia from the Wawel Royal Castle[17]. Aside from the sporadic mentions in the exhibition catalogues, there was not much interest in the topic of the gothic ivories from Polish collections until very recently. Several objects from the Princes Czartoryski collection, e.g., the 15th century diptych with the scenes of the Nativity and the Adoration of the Magi, as well as an *appliqué* of the seated Virgin with Child, were lately a subject of a few monographic studies[18], however there are still ivories that should be addressed more extensively. One of those mysterious ivory objects is a dice cup (acc. no. MNK XIII-1589), which is a rarity

[13] Warsaw, National Museum, acc. no. SZM 1438, SZM 1439 and SZM 1444, see Paulina Ratkowska, "Le feuillet de diptyque à décor de roses au Musée National de Varsovie," *Bulletin du Musée National de Varsovie* 15 (1974): 21–27; Paulina Ratkowska, "Un petit autel du groupe des diptyques de la Passion au Musée National de Varsovie," *Bulletin du Musée National de Varsovie* 17 (1976): 77–82; Paulina Ratkowska, "Un volet de diptyque inconnu du 14e siècle au Musée National de Varsovie," *Bulletin du Musée National de Varsovie* 24 (1983): 7–15.

[14] *Artystyczne wyroby z kości słoniowej w zbiorach polskich*, ed. Antoni R. Chodyński (Malbork: Muzeum Zamkowe w Malborku, 1989).

[15] Kraków, Wawel Royal Castle, acc. no. 4149/1–2 and 5753, see Łaguna-Chevillotte, "Gotycka skrzyneczka," 5–28; Agnieszka Łaguna-Chevillotte, "Dwa dyptyki z kości słoniowej w Skarbcu Koronnym na Wawelu," *Studia Waweliana* 8 (1999): 233–238.

[16] Kraków, National Museum (Princes Czartoryski Museum), acc. no. MNK XIII-928 and MNK XIII-1574, see Antoni R. Chodyński, "Madonna z Dzieciątkiem i inne rzeźby z kości słoniowej z XIV wieku w zbiorach polskich," in *Sztuka około 1400. Materiały Sesji Stowarzyszenia Historyków Sztuki. Poznań listopad 1995*, eds. Teresa Hrankowska and Tadeusz Chrzanowski, t. 2 (Warszawa: Stowarzyszenie Historyków Sztuki, 1996), 7–42.

[17] Danielle Gaborit-Chopin, "Réapparition d'une Vierge d'ivoire gothique," in *Objets d'art. Mélanges en l'honneur de Daniel Alcouffe*, eds. Pierre Arizzoli-Clémentel et al. (Dijon: Editions Faton, 2004), 47–55.

[18] Musialik, "Gotycka figurka," 9–32; Elżbieta Musialik, "Modelled on Print – Ivory Diptych with Scenes of the Nativity of Christ and the Adoration of the Magi in the Princes Czartoryski Collection," *Modus. Prace z historii sztuki* 21 (2021): 5–26.

not only among the small group of secular gothic ivories in Poland, but also worldwide (fig. 1). Unique artworks often arouse doubt among scholars – are they genuine or are they skilfully made fakes? Was there more of them and what was their original function? Those questions also emerge in the case of the presented work from the Czartoryski collection.

The following study shall be an attempt to place that remarkable object in the iconographic and stylistic context. The aspects of its materiality and construction shall also be discussed, as well as its function, regarding medieval court rituals and activities, mostly board games. Finally, the issue of dating of the object should be debated, as it is presently regarded as the work from the 1st half of the 14th century. Answering those questions should allow to reveal whether the cup is one of its kind medieval artwork or is it a particularly well-made forgery.

Little is known of the cup's history before it was acquired to the collection. Despite the fact, that Prince Czartoryski had several inventories and catalogues of his possesions, they do not provide us with much information on when or from whom Władysław aquired majority of the pieces, ivories included. Thanks to the preserved documents, however, we can establish that the cup is not mentioned in the early (1868 and 1869) catalogues of the Czartoryski collection which at the time was held at the Hôtel Lambert in Paris, the family's residence[19]. In the catalogue written ca. 1870, most likely by Władysław Czartoryski himself, the cup is mentioned as a "Goblet en ivoire tres bien sculpte avec des amours" [20], which means that it had been most probably bought in or shortly before 1870. In the 1870's the work was mentioned in the "Inwentarz przemysłu artystycznego" ('Inventory of artistic industry'), started (pressumably after 1876) by the first custodian of the

[19] Preserved inventories and catalogues of the Princes Czartoryski collection include rather scarce information on the objects gifted to or purchased by Prince Władysław. It is also uncartain if the Prince wrote all of the Parisian catalogues himself or if he maybe tasked one of his employées (e.g. Lubomir Gadon, the Prince private secretary) with the assignment. Majority of the documents are now located in the Princes Czartoryski Library in Kraków, see Kraków, Princes' Czartoryski Library, acc. no. 12316, Władysław Czartoryski (?), "Collection Czartoryski. Antiquité et Moyen Age (1868);" Kraków, Princes' Czartoryski Library, acc. no. 1231612309, Władysław Czartoryski (?), "Collection Czartoryski Catalogue (1869)."

[20] Kraków, Princes' Czartoryski Library, acc. no. 1231612298, 25, entry 524, Władysław Czartoryski (?), "Spis przedmiotów muzealnych (c. 1870)." Later the cup must have been taken to Kórnik (1872) or to Kraków (1874), since it does not appear in the inventory of the objects left in Paris in 1877, see Kraków, Princes' Czartoryski Library, acc. no. 12319, Władysław Czartoryski (?), "Objects de la collection restes a Paris (1877)."

Princes Czartoryski Museum, Leon Bentkowski (1823–1889), and continued by his successors: Adam Smoleński (1836–1921) and Stefan S. Komornicki (1877/1887–1944)[21]. Bentkowski made a short description in the inventory: "a cup made of ivory, with a sculpture on it, a couple playing dice and two women [sic! – E.M.], one holding a lantern, one a box. A dog at their feet." Komornicki (?) later added "14th cent., made in France" and "for dice," describing the function of the object for the first time. In 1924 the cup was mentioned by Koechlin in his *corpus*, listed among the so-called *objets divers*. The category included e.g., salt cellars, seal matrices, cups (goblets) and candlesticks[22]. The scholar dated the work in Kraków to the 1st half of the 14th century and attributed it to a French workshop[23]. Koechlin already regarded the cup as a rarity, both in terms of its function and its iconography and indicated several ivory mirror cases, that could present some stylistic and iconographic parallels[24]. He did not define the cup's function, neither did he attempt more precise identification of the scenes depicted on it. However, suspecting that they could have been inspired by one of the medieval romances, he pointed out to the later (15th-century) goblet in Musée d'histoire et d'archéologie in Vannes, adorned with various courtly scenes[25]. Since that time the cup had been mentioned several times, but rather briefly. Zdzisław Żygulski Jr. in his master's thesis dedicated to the medieval ivories in the Czartoryski collection (1951) mentioned the cup as one of the most intriguing pieces in this ensemble. He also attempted a preliminary identification of the scenes and dated the cup to the 2nd quarter of the 14th century[26]. In 1982 the archives of the Decorative Arts Department of the Princes Czartoryski Museum acquired

[21] Kraków, Princes' Czartoryski Library, acc. no. 12773, entry 389, Leon Bentkowski et al., "Inwentarz przemysłu artystycznego" (after 1876?). There are also two photographs of the cup, preserved in the collection of the Museum of Kraków, taken c. 1880 by Ignacy Krieger. The cup is also mentioned in Krieger's list of the photographed objects as "a cup of French carving, 14th century", see Kraków, Muzeum Krakowa, acc. no. MHK-7818/K, MHK-7864/K, MHK-7867/K, MHK-7868/K, MHK-7869/K, "Zdjęcia fotograficzne J. Kriegera fotografa w Krakowie przy ul. św. Jana N. 1. Muzeum X.X. Czartoryskich w Krakowie."

[22] Koechlin, *Les ivoires*, vol. 1, 451.

[23] Koechlin, *Les ivoires*, vol. 1, 451, vol. 2, cat. no. 1242, vol. 3, fig. CCII.

[24] Koechlin, *Les ivoires*, vol. 1, 452.

[25] Vannes, Musée d'histoire et d'archéologie (fonds Société Polymathique du Morbihan), no. IM 2859; "Gothic Ivories Project," http://www.gothicivories.courtauld.ac.uk/images/ivory/88508B3C_4821293d.html, accessed April 25, 2022. The work is attributed to a French workshop (Brittany?), after Koechlin, *Les ivoires*, vol. 1, 452, vol. 2, cat. no. 1243bis, vol. 3, fig. CCIV.

[26] Zdzisław Żygulski, "Średniowieczne zabytki z kości słoniowej w Muzeum Czartoryskich w Krakowie" (unpublished master's thesis, Jagiellonian University in Kraków, 1951), 62–63.

a typescript (most probably from before World War II) of an unpublished doctoral thesis "Medieval ivory sculptures in collection of the Princes' Czartoryski Museum" by P. Kanarkówna. The author mentioned the cup and stated that "by the persons' attire and its style, the sculpture [cup – E.M.] can be dated to the early 14th century, however that style had been reproduced later throughout the whole 14th century, since the craftsmen carving in ivory had not bothered with updating the persons' garments"[27]. In 1965 a photograph of the cup was reproduced in a publication by Olivier Beigbeger, however with no further comment[28]. So far the latest opinion on the cup, published in the *Gothic Ivories Project* database repeats aforementioned opinions of the scholars[29].

The cup was preserved in a very good condition. Its surface has traces of wear of the material and slight abrasions to the bas-relief; inside there are numerous, multidirectional scratches[30], which could have been caused by the tools used to execute the object (chisel?) or perhaps, if the object was indeed used accordingly to its function, by the shaking dice (fig. 2). The cup is cylindrical and measures 123 mm in height, 64 mm in width (ø of the base) and 56 mm in width (ø of the brim). The underside of the cup seems to be made from a separate, oval piece of ivory, which was later attached to the body of the cup by four small ivory nails, visible on the lower, ribbed part of the object. There is also a slight but visible slit between the cup's body and its bottom (fig. 3), which I shall discuss further. The figural scenes are carved in deep bas-relief and framed along the upper edge with a carved curtain, pinned-up in four places. The first of the two scenes depicts a woman

[27] P. Kanarkówna, "Rzeźby z kości słoniowej średniowieczne, znajdujące się w Muzeum XX. Czartoryskich w Krakowie" (unpublished doctoral thesis, institutional affiliation unknown, copy in the collection of the Decorative Arts Departament of the Princes' Czartoryski Museum, National Museum in Kraków, aquired in 1982).

[28] Olivier Beigbeder, *Ivory: Pleasures and Treasures* (New York: Littlehampton Book Services Ltd, 1965), 67, fig. 74. The photograph bears a remark, that despite its secular iconography, the ivory is currently held in a cathedral treasury, which certainly, however, is a wrong information. Beigbeger most likely meant an entirely different vessel (pyxis?), kept in a treasury of Münster, St Paul's Cathedral, acc. no. E.35, after "Gothic Ivories Project," http://www.gothicivories.courtauld.ac.uk/images/ivory/fc2e6fa4_8354300d.html, accessed April 25, 2022.

[29] "Gothic Ivories Project," http://gothicivories.courtauld.ac.uk/images/ivory/1EDE5BA6_e491f29e.html, accessed April 25, 2022.

[30] In 2020 the cup underwent conservation – the object's surface has been thoroughly cleaned and some stains have been removed. The conservation has been conducted by Mrs Elżbieta Kuraś, conservator in the Decorative Arts Conservation Studio at the National Museum in Kraków, who I would like to cordially thank for all the supplied information and explanation.

and a man at a small table on top of which rests a board with dice or pawns of some game (fig. 1). To the left, a young man seats in a distinctive, courtly pose with his legs crossed, looking at his female companion. In his right hand he holds a dice cup. His hair is styled in ear-long curls tied with a band. He is dressed in a simple, long, hooded cloak and hose or close-fitting tights and fashionable turnshoes (fig. 4). Facing him a young woman is seated, who – like her male companion – holds a dice cup. The lady is dressed in a long, simple robe, richly folded at the knee-height, with slightly tapering sleeves, tight at the wrists. From beneath the fleshy folds stick out her feet in turnshoes with pointed toes. Her head, presented *en trois quart,* is covered by a headwear, tightly wrapping an *a cornes* hair-do. The headwear consists of a bottom layer, tightly fitting the neck and cheeks (the so-called wimple), and an upper layer, sticking out from the temples and falling down to the shoulders (fig. 5). The faces of both persons are full, chubby, the eyes quite narrow, almond-shaped with accentuated, slightly swollen eyelids. Both have small, hooked noses and thin lips turned up in the smirk. The bodies of both the lady and the man are somewhat squat, stumpy but well proportioned, the anatomical details were rendered realistically.

In the second scene a couple is depicted as well (fig. 6). The man sits, slightly stooping on a low stool, with an open casket resting on his knees. With his right hand he reaches inside the casket. He is dressed in a feet-long robe with a capelet, on his head he wears a tightly bound *chaperon* or *liripipe*[31] (almost identical headwear can be seen on a male companion or a servant of a player in a scene of the chess game on a mirror case in the Louvre, dated c. 1300, fig. 7)[32] or a squire in the "Chansonnier de Montpellier" manuscript (fol. 63v, dated 1280–1290[33]). Across from the youth there is a lady holding a lit oil lamp in her left hand. She is dressed in a long, tight-fitting gown with a rounded neckline, adorned with a trimming and with double sleeves – one pair of elbow-length sleeves and other longer and more tight ones. Her hair

[31] According to Paula M. Carns, such headwear is typical for young men, especially bachelors, determining their age. During the 14th cent. the long tail became threaded and pinned, loose elements formed a brim, which later resulted in a headwear called *chaperon*, see more Paula M. Carns, "Cutting a Fine Figure: Costume on French Gothic Ivories," in *Medieval Clothing and Textiles*, vol. 5, eds. Robin Netherton and Gale R. Owen-Crocker (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2009), 69.

[32] Similar headwear is worn by a squire of the young man playing chess, illustrated on the Parisian mirror case in the Louvre, dated to 1300; Paris, Musée du Louvre, acc. no. OA 117.

[33] Montpellier, Bibliothèque de la faculté de médecine, acc. no. MS H. 196.

is styled in tresses pinned above her ears and secured with a band above her forehead. The faces of persons and their physiques are similar to the characters depicted in the previous scene. Between the persons there is a slightly ajar window or a door, with a rounded arch filled with tracery. There is a key in the lock, ending with a decorative quatrefoil. Quite big, long-eared dog is seated below (fig. 8).

As it has been mentioned before, the *Gothic Ivories Project* database contains over 5000 objects, but a detailed query (carried out also in the museums holding the biggest number of medieval ivories) did not present any other object similar to the cup in the Czartoryski collection. Its iconography seems unique and requires more detailed discussion.

In the first scene on the ivory, seated couple of players holding dice cups, engaged in the game, with set up pawns or dice is depicted. As it had been already noticed by Koechlin, the composition of that scene is derived directly from the 14th-century ivory mirror cases, showing a couple – a man and a woman – playing chess. That game had been common particularly in court milieu and had even been mentioned in the popular contemporary romances, e.g., in a poem on Hugo de Bordeaux, the disgraced knight of Charlemagne, dated to the late 13th – early 14th century. In this story, Hugo plays chess for his life against Esclarmonde, the daughter of the Persian emir[34]. The game of chess between a man and a woman is also mentioned in the poem "Prose Tristan", one of the later versions of the Tristan and Iseult story[35]. In both texts mentioned above the chess game is a sort of "foreplay" and at the same time a test of strength (power play) between a man and a woman, imbued with eroticism and intimacy[36]. On the other hand, in a courtly poem "Le Livre des échecs amoureux moralises" by Évrard de Conty (dated 1496–1498), the chess game has an allegorical meaning – the chessboard symbolises life,

[34] The titular hero plays chess against the daughter of the Persian ruler, facing a mortal threat – if he looses he would be executed, if he wins he would marry his beautiful opponent, see more *Le Huon de Bordeaux en prose du XV*ème *siècle*, ed. Michel J. Raby (New York: Lang, 1998); Danielle Gaborit-Chopin, *Ivoires médiévaux V*e*–XV*e *siècle* (Paris: Musée du Louvre, 2003), 352.

[35] The "Prose Tristan", which was most likely written c. 1230–1240, mentions Tristan and Iseult playing chess on a boat, after the lovers consumed the magical potion, after Gaborit-Chopin, *Ivoires médiévaux*, 352; Katherine Staab, "Tactile Pleasures. Secular Gothic Ivories" (unpublished doctoral thesis, The Pennsylvania State University, 2014), 111.

[36] See more Kristin Juel, "Chess, Love and the Rhetoric of Distraction in Medieval French Narrative," *Romance Philology* 64, no. 1 (2010): 73–97.

the chess pieces – people, and the chess moves – peoples right and wrong decisions[37].

In the museums there are many ivory mirror cases dated from the early 14th century and well into the 1350s depicting a couple at the game – in a convention corresponding with the cup in Kraków. The same courtly poses of the characters, their attire, and the layout of the setting (the curtain and rod suggesting the interior of a tent) appear on the cup. The best-preserved examples of such mirror cases can be found in the collections of the Victoria & Albert Museum in London, c. 1300–1320[38], the Louvre, c. 1300[39] as well as in the Cleveland Museum of Art, dated to the 2nd quarter of 14th century (fig. 9)[40]. Indeed, the only difference between those depictions and the first scene on the cup is the objects held by the players – on the mirror cases there are chess pieces and on the cup – the cups for throwing dice or for moving the pawns on the board. The objects are oblong and rounded, hollow, with clearly marked rim – there is no doubt as to their purpose. In the Middle Ages the game of dice was regarded as unchaste, unfair and had been universally condemned, as evidenced for instance by a depiction of players burning in the hell fire on a margin of one of the pages in the so-called "Tymouth Hours" in the British Library[41], dated to the 2nd quarter of the 14th century. Sometimes the game of dice was juxtaposed with the game of chess, regarded – as it has been mentioned above – as an intellectual and sublime pastime reserved for the upper classes. The game of dice – unlike the chess – used to be played for money, since it used to be enjoyed mostly by men, as it was mentioned e.g., by a poet Wace in the "Roman de Brut" (c. 1155)[42]. Women hardly ever played dice, unless in special circumstances. In 1250, in Acre, Alphonse, Count of Poitiers, the brother of King Louis IX arranged a game of dice and paid bets

[37] See more Regina L. O'Shea, "Queening: Chess and Women in Medieval and Renaissance France" (master's thesis, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT, 2010).

[38] London, Victoria & Albert Museum, acc. no. 803–1891. See Williamson and Davies, *Medieval Ivory*, vol. 2, 570–571, no. 194.

[39] Paris, Musée du Louvre, acc. no. OA 117. See Gaborit-Chopin, *Ivoires médiévaux*, no. 127.

[40] Cleveland, The Cleveland Museum of Art, acc. no. 1940.1200. See Randall, *The Golden Age of Ivory*, cat. no. 184.

[41] London, British Library, acc. no. Yates Thompson 13, f. 149v, London (?), 2nd quarter of 14th cent., manuscript available online, see "British Library," http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/ILLUMIN.ASP?Size=mid&IllID=29229, accessed April 25, 2022.

[42] *Wace's Roman de Brut: A History of the British Text and Translation*, ed. and trans. Judith Weiss (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1999), XI–XXIX.

for all the ladies present to not endanger their reputations[43]. The negative connotations of dice games were further exacerbated by the iconography of the Passion of Christ, where a scene of soldiers playing dice for the cloths of the Crucified appeared[44], and the dice themselves were counted among the *arma Christi*. Although games involving dice were already well known in the Antiquity, in the Middle Ages they gained great popularity most probably in the 13th and 14th centuries and – despite their doubtful reputation – were played at courts, also the royal ones, e.g., in England[45]. Popularity of all kinds of board games in the Middle Ages, including dice, was enormous, judging from the number of preserved depictions of the games, often featured in the manuscripts both as full-page illustrations and as marginal decorations. The authors of those *drolleries* were particularly fond of depicting the game of dice, for instance in the manuscript of "The Decretals of Gregory IX", dated between 1300–1340 (fig. 10)[46] or in a copy of "Omne Bonum", dated between 1360–1370[47]. In the "Codex Manesse", dated 1300–1304[48], there are also two full-page miniatures illustrating board games – one depicting a couple playing chess (fol. 13r) and the other – two men absorbed in a game involving dice (fol. 262v). The diversity of board games is presented most notably in the "Book of Games" ("Libro de los Juegos or Libro de axedrez, dados e tablas"), completed in 1283 and commissioned by Alphonso X (King of Castile, and León between 1252–1284)[49]. The book includes the rules and depictions of the most popular court games, such as chess, backgammon, or dice. However, the theme of games involving dice is extremely rare in the case of medieval ivories. One of the very few examples is a knife handle depicting a youth throwing dice, dated to c. 1300 or to the 1st decade of the 14th centu-

[43] Jean, sieur de Joinville, *Vie de saint Louis*, ed. Jacques Monfrin (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 1998), 206.

[44] Depictions of the Roman soldiers playing dice for Christ's robes also appear on some ivories, e.g., the diptych in Manchester, The John Rylands University Library, acc. no. Latin MS 51.

[45] The game of dice is mentioned by, among others, Geoffrey Chaucer in his *Canterbury Tales*, see "Encyclopaedia Britannica," https://www.britannica.com/topic/hazard-dice-game, accessed April 25, 2022.

[46] London, British Library, acc. no. Royal MS 10 E IV, f. 92v.

[47] London, British Library, acc. no. Royal MS 6 E IV, f. 73.

[48] Heidelberg, Universitätsbibliothek, acc. no. Cod. Pal. germ. 848. The entire manuscript has been digitised and is available via library's website, see "Universitätsbibliothek Heidelberg". Große Heidelberger Liederhandschrift (Codex Manesse), https://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/cpg848/0001/thumbs, accessed April 29, 2022.

[49] Madrid, Biblioteca del Real Monasterio de El Escorial, acc. no. Ms. T-1-6.

ry,[50] found at the archaeological site in Saint-Denis near Paris. Particularly popular among the elites of the 14th-century, was another game involving dice, known as backgammon or *tables* (fr.). It is a game in which the pieces (or "men") are moved on a board and their movements are determined by throwing a dice. Already in the 12th century this game became popular at courts and had an erotic innuendo. The proof of that is supplied by a poem composed by William IX, Count of Aquitaine and Poitou – its last three verses refer to the *tables*, as an erotic word game between the players – a man and a woman[51]. Thanks to his abilities, the poem's narrator triumphs over his female opponent, the same proving his superiority to other men[52]. Sublime, ambiguous, and courtly character of the *tables* – in contrast with traditional game of dice – had made it popular among the aristocracy (including women). The game did not become popular among the lower social strata earlier than the 16th century[53]. Fragment of a casket in the collection of the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford (dated to the 1st half of the 14th century) depicts a sitting couple facing each other, bent over a board, playing most probably the *tables*[54].

Thus, as it has been attempted to indicate above, the medieval iconography of the game of dice is abundant and the game itself was popular all over Europe, however on no other artwork (neither the miniatures nor the ivories) the players were equipped with dice cups. What is very significant, in vain one would look for any preserved medieval dice cups, even more, made of such valuable material as ivory and so richly decorated as the object in Kraków. The earliest dice cups, which are quite small, had already been produced in the Antiquity, mostly in ancient Rome[55], but in the Middle Ages the tradition of using cups had seemingly vanished entirely. In the collection of

[50] Saint-Denis, Unité d'archéologie de la Ville, acc. no. 16.1082.17, see more Nicole Meyer-Rodrigues, "Manche de couteau: Jeune homme jouant aux dés," in *L'art au temps des rois maudits: Philippe le Bel et ses fils (1285–1328)*, ed. Danielle Gaborit-Chopin (Paris: Grand Palais, 1998), 168–169, cat. no. 104.

[51] James Doan, "The Erotics of Backgammon in Provencal and Irish Poetry," *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium* 12 (1992): 29–30.

[52] Doan, "The Erotics," 33 and 39.

[53] This is proven by the numerous depictions of highborn women and men playing backgammon (fr. *tables*), mostly in the art of the 15th cent.

[54] Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, acc. no. AN2008.27.

[55] For example a dice cup preserved in the collection of the Museo Nacional de Arte Romano in Merida, Spain. Ancient dice cups often had lids to prevent the dice from falling out during shaking. A dice cup from the early Christian period (most likely made in Nubia) can be found in the collection of the British Museum in London, acc. no. EA72151.

the Victoria & Albert Museum there is an ivory dice cup, decorated with the theme from the Old Testament (Susanna and the Elders), dated to the first half of the 17th century (fig. 11). Contrary to the discussed cup in Kraków, that work is very tall, slim and richly decorated with inked-in designs rather than carved images[56]. Among the scarce iconography of dice cups, one should also count paintings. In the Louvre collection there is a 17th-century painting featuring backgammon players, one of whom holds a small, possibly bone dice cup[57]. The preserved early modern cups are truly rare, and they became more widespread not earlier than during the 18th and 19th centuries. From that period there are many examples of dice cups preserved, mostly made of wood or leather (as the items in National Museum in Kraków) [58], but also of ivory, as two plain, uncarved cups also in the collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum (fig. 12)[59]. In the 19th century the popularity of various board games had increased, the rules for classic games (e.g., backgammon) were written anew and many game accessories were made – tables, boards, as well as dice cups, that were supposed to improve throwing dice.

While the iconographic sources of the scene presenting the dice game do not rise any major doubts, the scene on the opposite side of the cup has not been interpreted yet. It depicts a mixed couple (not two women as it was supposed by Bentkowski, Kanarkówna and Żygulski, with no further justification or explanation of that opinion)[60] in a chamber, suggested by the door left ajar. Żygulski held an opinion, that the depicted episode should be interpreted as "payment of an honorary debt", as an event being a direct continuation of the previous scene. This theory seems quite convincing, considering the gesture of the woman, stretching her hand towards the man looking into the casket. The scene does not seem to illustrate any of the known chivalric romances, that used to be the main theme of the secular ivories. Naturally, the problematic depiction can be derived from some text that did not survive to our

[56] London, the Victoria & Albert Museum, acc. no. 2163–1855, see more Marjorie Trusted, *Baroque & Later Ivories* (London: V&A Publishing, 2013), no. 43.

[57] Paris, Musée du Louvre, acc. no. RF 2397. The painting is attributed to an artist from the circle of Le Nain brothers and dated c. 1650.

[58] Kraków, the National Museum, acc. no. MNK IV-V-745 and MNK IV-V-746.

[59] London, the Victoria & Albert Museum, acc. no. MISC.83:1, 2-1985. The objects were likely made in Great Britain c. 1860.

[60] Kraków, Princes' Czartoryski Library, acc. no. 12773, entry 389, Bentkowski et al., "Inwentarz przemysłu;" Kanarkówna, "Rzeźby z kości słoniowej," XXIII; Żygulski, "Średniowieczne zabytki," 62–63.

times. Perhaps it is a depiction of a squire and a lady's maid squaring the debt on behalf of their superiors. In similar manner those persons are depicted on the already mentioned mirror case from the Louvre (fig. 7) [61]. It may also be some courtly scene, one of the numerous *scenes galantes* depicted on various medieval ivories – such an interpretation seems to be supported by the presence of a dog, that used to symbolise fidelity and love and sometimes appearing as a *pars pro toto* of the absent lover[62]. However, some doubts, and thus caution of interpretation rises the fact, that similar scene does not appear on any other ivory object, the iconography of which had been often quite repetitive. The uniqueness of that scene is obviously not an entirely excluding factor, since there are known rare examples of scenes illustrated on ivories, that do not appear on any other known works (e.g., the case of the so called "Baird casket" from a private collection)[63]. Nevertheless, the composition of that scene and its details, such as e.g., tiny, precisely carved architectonic elements as windows, recesses or doors are very unusual for the ivories from the 1st half of the 14th century. The use of perspective in the poses of depicted persons and in the rendition of the open door, as well as shadows accentuated with hatching seems also quite "modern" and do not appear on any other 14th century ivories familiar to me[64].

What could also help with determining wheather the cup is a genuine medieval object or rather a later, likely 19th century imitation, is an examination of its materiality, and how it was executed by its carver. As there are no known objects of the same type, the author will recall the examples of other cylindrical, hollow objects, such as pyxides, olyphants and situlae that, analogically to our cup, were generally carved from a single cylinder of elephant's tusk. According to Sarah Guérin, such objects often 'took advantage' of the nerve cavity inside the tusk – a small portion of dentine (approximately 3–4 cm) was left around the cavity, perfect for creating cylindrical,

[61] Paris, Musée du Louvre, acc. no. OA 117.

[62] Kathleen Walker-Meikle, *Medieval Pets* (Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 2012), 90–103.

[63] See more on "the Baird casket": "Lyon and Turnbull", https://www.lyonandturnbull.com/news/article/a-rare--important-french-gothic-casket/, accessed April 25, 2022, or https://www.countrylife.co.uk/luxury/art-and-antiques/the-tiny-wooden-chest-handed-down-through-the-generations-that-turned-out-to-be-worth-over-1-million-228515, accessed July 10, 2022.

[64] There are several examples of similar hatching, visible in the background and details of the scenes carved on the ivories from the 15th cent. Netherlandish workshops, e.g. casket in London, the Victoria & Albert Museum, acc. no. 176–1866, see more Williamson and Davies, *Medieval Ivory*, vol. 1, 509–513.

hollow objects[65]. There are no signs of any junctions on the cup's surface, so it couldn't have been made from two or more separate ivory slices. The thickness of the cup's sides does not seem to differ from the other medieval vessels, e.g. pyxides. As I mentioned earlier, the underside of the object was carved separetly and attached later with ivory pegs. In case of the Virgin statuettes, the bottom of the figure is rarely separate – the statues often do have a small hollow in their underside, which is a remnant of the tusk's nerve cavity (e.g. the Virgin d'Ourscamp in Musée des Beaux-Arts de la Ville de Paris)[66]. In the Czartoryski cup, the bottom is completely smooth, there is also a distinctive slit between the bottom and the cup's sides, as well as nails that seem to bind the cup's base disc to the rest of the object. Similar construction is visible on the underside of the pyx in the Museum für Angewandte Kunst in Frankfurt am Main[67]. Just like in the cup in Kraków, the pyx's bottom was attached by metal nails, as well as additional metal (brass?) mounts, which support the whole construction. There is also a visible slit between the pyx's bottom and its sides. In his unpublished opinion, Paul Williamson carefully dated this piece ca. 1200 or, more likely, to the 19th century[68]. However, it seems that similar constructing could also occur in some medieval vessels, e.g. pyx in the St. Annen-Museum in Lübeck (14th century?)[69]. Since the pyxides, goblets and other vessels were carved around the nerve cavity, the undersides must have been carved separetly and then later attached. That the bottom was often added to the rest of the object, is visible in case of the pyx in the Wyvern collection – the pyx's underside was at one point bent and sticks out, supported by the metal fittings (fig. 13)[70]. The bottom of the Hermitage pyx, dated to the 1st half of the 14th century, was connected with the body by the small ivory pegs, just like in our cup[71]. However, sometimes the junction of the base disc and the body is not clearly visible, like in the case of

[65] Guérin, *Gothic Ivories*, 45–46.

[66] Sometimes the artisans took the ivory cylinder from above the nerve cavity – in that cases the hole at the bottom is not present, see Guérin, *French Gothic Ivories*, 66–71.

[67] Frankfurt am Main, Museum für Angewandte Kunst, acc. no. 7437.

[68] After „Gothic Ivories Project," http://www.gothicivories.courtauld.ac.uk/images/ivory/8FA6DF67_ff3bbd4a.html, accessed November 18, 2022.

[69] Lübeck, St. Annen-Museum, acc. no. 85.

[70] London, The Wyvern collection, acc. no. 0569; see more Williamson, *The Wyvern Collection*, 182–183, cat. no. 89. The piece was dated ca. 1325–1350.

[71] Saint Petersburg, The State Hermitage Museum, acc. no. F 37; see more Marta Kryzhanovskaya, *Western European Medieval Ivories. Catalogue of the Collection* (Saint Petersburg: Izdatel'stvo Gosudarstvennogo Ėrmitaža, 2014), cat. no. 76.

the 16th century pyx in the Musée Thomas Henry in Cherbourg-Octeville[72]. It seems that this particular detail does not determine with certainty if the cup is a medieval or rather later object. The ribbed exterior rim of the cup also appears on medieval ivories, e.g. on the bases of the statues or the pyxides. The underside of the Czartoryski dice cup is slightly cracked but it corresponds with the 13th and 14th century pieces. There is a possibility that the cup was made with the use of traditional tools, known to the medieval carvers. The scoring in the inside of the cup could also be a sign of its usage (fig. 2), or an effect of the equipement used to manufacture the object. Similar markings are present on the inside of the already mentioned pyx in Frankfurt am Main. The 19th century dice cups often have some interior scratches and scoring as well, which could be a proof of their function – sometimes they were even machanicaly 'aged', to pose as antiques. It is rather unlikely though, that dice would have made these kind of scoring, as they were also made from bone or ivory. There are several scratches in the upper part of the interior of the cup, however the scoring is more prominent near the bottom of the object – it could've been made by the carver with some kind of a tool, like a chisel or a graver, during its manufacturing or to legitimise the cup as the older piece. Often the forgeries differ very little from the actual medieval pieces, as the artisan's main purpose was to deceive the potential buyer. The ivory dice cup in the Czartoryski Museum is itself an excellent work of art and an example of profound studies on the gothic ivories.

As it has been indicated above, the medieval games of dice were played most probably without the use of dice cups, which is supported by the lack of preserved examples and the absence of such objects from medieval iconography. The theme of dice very rarely appears on the ivory objects, except in the iconography of the Passion of Christ[73]. Although the style of the cup (mainly the attire and carving of the human figures) matches the style of ivory artworks made in the 1st quarter of the 14th century, the work should with great confidence be accepted rather as a product of the 19th century. The artist responsible for making the cup must have been very well acquainted with the medieval iconography and style. Most probably he had diligently studied the

[72] Cherbourg-Octeville, Musée Thomas Henry, acc. no. MTH 2009.0.33.

[73] A good example could be a scene depicting soldiers playing dice for Christ's garments, as illustrated on the triptych in Berlin, Skulpturensammlung und Museum für Byzantinische Kunst, acc. no. 674; after "Gothic Ivories Project," http://www.gothicivories.courtauld.ac.uk/images/ivory/C4DF07CD_da30cca5.html, accessed April 25, 2022.

artworks of that times, perhaps – as many forgers – he used to work on their conservation or restoration. In the 19th century most frequently forged were religious artworks, since they used to be the most popular ones in the Middle Ages[74] and their number was many times greater than the artworks of secular iconography[75]. This, however, does not mean that secular objects had not been faked. In the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York one can find two ivory panels (fig. 14–15)[76], the iconography of which could indicate that they belonged to the so-called composite caskets group. They are, however, perfect forgeries, one of which (acc. no. 17.190.173c) has been specially made to replace a missing panel of the composite casket in the collection of the same museum (fig. 14)[77], and later – after the museum had acquired the missing element in the 1980s – dismantled. There are also several examples of mirror cases that are most probably the 19th-century forgeries as well (e.g., in Edinburgh or in Glasgow)[78]. Some of them are even replicas of the existing genuine items – as in the case of a mirror case in collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art (fig. 16), which is an identical copy of an object from the collection of the Victoria & Albert Museum (fig. 17)[79]. The style and iconography of those counterfeits is very hard to distinguish from the originals. Their makers followed the original iconography of the medieval works very closely, only sometimes adding some elements that allowed to reveal the mystification. As Ariel Klein noticed, a forger adds only such individual elements that allow us to know the way in which he perceived the times of the alleged origin of the forged item[80]. According to Hans Tietze, a forger is not a synonym of a copyist, and a counterfeit cannot be equated with a copy.

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74 In the collection of the British Museum in London there is a statuette of a seated Virgin with Child, executed in style of the late 13th cent., most likely made in the early 19th cent. (London, British Museum, acc. no. 1856,0623.144), while in the Walters Art Museum in Baltimore there is a triptych made in Spain in the late 19th cent. (Baltimore, Walters Art Museum, acc. no. 71.151).

75 E.g., the plaques and a comb in the collection of New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, acc. no. 30.95.205; 13.63.1 i 13.63.2.

76 New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, acc. no. 17.190.173c and 17.190.252.

77 New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, acc. no 17.190.173a, b; 1988.16.

78 Edinburgh, National Museum of Scotland, acc. no. A.1902.216; Glasgow, the Burell Collection, no. 21.11.

79 London, Victoria & Albert Museum, acc. no. 9-1872; New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, acc. no. 11.93.14; see more *Fakes and Forgeries*, ed. Samuel Sachs (Minneapolis: Minneapolis Institute of Arts, 1973), cat. no. 40–41.

80 Ariel Klein, "The Business of Forgery: Puzzles Posed by a Gothic Diptych" (doctoral thesis, Michigan University, 2010), 6. Available on-line, https://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/bitstream/handle/2027.42/86656/adkariel.pdf?sequence=1, accessed March 30, 2022.

From an art forgers' point of view, making a perfect copy of an artwork would be pointless, since their aim is to convince potential buyers that they acquire entirely genuine object – similar to others, but not identical[81]. Following the method proposed by Tietze, the original element introduced by the forger in case of the dice cup would be taking directly from the iconography of the game of chess or *tables* and replacing the game pieces with dice cups. That would have "legitimised" the work as a genuine medieval item. In the case of the cup in the collection of the Princes Czartoryski Museum, the iconography of the second scene, that has no match among other ivories (nor any artworks made in the other techniques) allows to assume, that the piece had been crafted by a very skilful artist/forger, well acquainted with the medieval iconography, but slightly diverging from the medieval prototypes, perhaps playing with conventions and re-interpreting some themes to fit his own conception.

The issue of forgeries, including the mock-medieval ivories, has been the subject of broadly outlined studies for quite some time, by scholars such as e.g. Jaap Leeuwenberg (who studied the works of the so-called Master of the Agrafe Forgeries) and Charles T. Little, who in turn changed the attribution of the several medieval ivories, which were wrongly considered forgeries for a long time[82]. Already in 1973, the Minneapolis Institute of Art held an exhibition *Fakes and Forgeries*, presenting a multitude of excellent copies and fakes. In 1990, the British Museum held an exhibition "Fake? The Art of Deception", that had exposed numerous fakes in the collection of that museum. In the subsequent years some major museums, including the Bruce Museum in Greenwich (Connecticut, US), the Detroit Institute of Art, or the National Gallery in London[83] had decided to present to a wider public falsified items found in their collections.

It is assumed that the 19th-century Paris had been a centre for manufacturing "fakes", mostly objects of goldsmithery, but also other products of decorative arts and miniature painting. At the same time, and even still in the early 20th century another centre for manufacturing ivory artefacts, also in

[81] Hans Tietze, *Genuine and False: Copies, Imitations, and Forgeries* (New York: Chanticleer Press, 1948), 9.

[82] On ivory forgeries see more Jaap Leeuwenberg, "Early nineteenth-century Gothic Ivories," *Aachener Kunstblätter* 39 (1969): 111–148; Charles T. Little, "The Art of Gothic Ivories: Studies at the Crossroads," *Sculpture Journal. New Work on Old Bones* 23, no. 1 (2014): 13–29.

[83] Tietze, *Genuine and False*, 5.

medieval style, was a port town of Dieppe in Normandy[84]. In the Middle Ages, Paris was probably the most famous for its outstanding ivory workshops and in the 19th century for its numerous forgers. This is where Władysław Czartoryski had probably bought the dice cup. There are many known cases of collectors, even better experienced than Czartoryski, buying fakes – a good example could be a Russian collector, Mikhail Botkin, whose collection of Byzantine enamels turned out to be a set of much later forgeries[85]. An ivory head of a ruler bought by William Burgess and granted to the British Museum in 1874 also turned out to be a souvenir, a 19th-century copy of the head of Edward II from his effigy in the Gloucester Cathedral[86]. The 19th century is being regarded as "the age of forgeries", which had been related to the then prevailing "collecting mania" [87]. Regrettably, the activities of forgers dealing with ivory artworks is scarcely recognised. The best of them, mostly those active in the 19th century are rarely known by name[88]. Little is known about their works as well, since their dealings were illegal. The popularity of the ivory goods among the 19th-century collectors and the enormous demand for pieces from this material had created kind of a niche, that had been filled up by excellent art forgers[89]. However, not all ivories inspired by medieval art were intentional forgeries – the lid of a box with courtly scenes in collection of the Victoria & Albert Museum is most probably an example of the

[84] Thanks to its location, the city of Dieppe aquired elephants' tusks, used by the local artists to produce ivories, since at least 14th cent. The importance of Dieppe increased after Paris ceased to be the main centre of production of goods from that material. An example of an artwork, most likely from the 19th-cent., crafted in the style typical for the late 15th/early 16th cent., is a pax in the collection of London, Victoria & Albert Museum, acc. no. A.569-1910; see more Williamson and Davis, *Medieval Ivory*, vol. 1, 409; https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O311944/our-lady-of-boulogne-pax-unknown/, accessed December 14, 2022.

[85] Now, those artworks are in possession of the British Museum in London, as well as the Walters Art Museum in Baltimore. Untill 1988 they had been regarded as genuine, see more Glenn Gates et al., "Technical Examination of Enamels from the Botkin Collection," *Studies in Conservation* 57, no. 1 (2012): 147–156.

[86] *Fake? The Art of Deception*, catalogue, British Museum, London, ed. Mark Jones (London: Trustees of the British Museum by British Museum Publications, 1990), cat. no. 192. The provenance of this piece, as well as others mentioned above suggests that they used to belong to art collectors known for their love of ivories, e.g., Prince Petr Soltykoff.

[87] *Fake? The Art of Deception*, 161–233.

[88] One of the few exaples of more recognized forgers producing Gothic-like objects was Louis Marcy (known by his alias Luigi Parmeggiani, 1860–1945), see Little, "The Art of Gothic Ivories," 14; Claude Blair and Marian Campbell, *Louis Marcy: Oggetti d'arte della Galleria Parmeggiani di Reggio Emilia* (Turin: Umberto Allemandi & C., 2008).

[89] Tietze, *Genuine and False*, 9–10.

Pre-Raphaelites' fascination with the gothic ivories[90]. That work, mostly the "romantic" faces of the characters, unlike those on the Kraków cup, reveal strong relations to the art of that artistic group. A similar example is a cup (beaker) in collection of the Walters Art Museum in Baltimore, the decoration of which, strongly transformed in the spirit of the 19th century, alludes to the medieval art (fig. 18)[91].

Radiocarbon analysis (C-14), being the only reliable method of more precise dating of the ivory artefacts, could surely help to determine whether the cup in the Czartoryski collection is a unique genuine article or an extremely well executed fake. Alas, in that case such analysis would probably prove indecisive. The samples collected from ivories are usually too small to provide reliable results and there are known cases of using ancient elephants' tusks for crafting fakes[92]. The analysis of the construction of the cup also proved to be inconclusive, as the skilled forger could easily imitate medieval artisan's style of work. Not being able to analyse the chemical composition of the cup one has to resort to the skills of an art historian. As I tried to demonstrate in the above analysis, it appears that both the iconography of the cup and its function indicate that the work should be regarded as a perfect 19th-century forgery, made most probably in France. In 2021, during a query carried out by the author in the Louvre (continued later by correspondence) the curator of the Department of Decorative Arts and an outstanding expert on the medieval ivories, Élisabeth Antoine-König, having seen the cup's photographs also doubted its authenticity[93]. The absence of any analogies among the preserved ivories, as well as the absence of the preserved dice cups from the Middle Ages seem to prejudge its provenance. Doubtful are also additional elements, such as the layout of the second scene in the chamber, presence of the casket (as those objects are never depicted on medieval ivories), as well as its odd shape, the architectonic details absent in genuine early 14th- century ivories

[90] London, The Victoria & Albert Museum, acc. no. 226–1867, see Williamson and Davies, *Medieval Ivory*, vol. 2, 746, cat. no. 252.

[91] Baltimore, The Walters Art Museum, acc. no. 71.1148.

[92] In the 18th and 19th centuries, the sources of that material were e.g. the so-called elephant cemeteries, where the remains of the elephants, who died many centuries ago, could have been found. Sometimes even some older ivory artworks had been "re-carved", and turned into a new product.

[93] Here, I would like to express my gratitude to Mrs Élisabeth Antoine-König for her great kindness and substantive discussion on medieval ivories. This conversation greatly contributed to a detailed studies on the cup and to confronting the issue of its authenticity.

etc. The dice cup, following the newest trend to "discover" the fakes and to treat them almost as equal to genuine artworks, shall become a contribution to the future exhibition of forgeries, copies and imitations that is planned as part of a permanent exhibition it the Princes' Czartoryski Museum.

Translated by Joanna M. Arszyńska and Elżbieta Musialik

Fig. 1. National Museum in Kraków (Princes Czartoryski Museum), dice cup, ivory, France (?), 19th cent. (?). Photo: Pracownia Fotograficzna MNK

Fig. 2. National Museum in Kraków (Princes Czartoryski Museum), inside of the dice cup (scoring seen at the bottom), ivory, France (?), 19th cent. (?). Photo: Author

Fig. 3. National Museum in Kraków (Princes Czartoryski Museum), underside of the dice cup, ivory, France (?), 19th cent. (?). Photo: Pracownia Fotograficzna MNK

Fig. 4. National Museum in Kraków (Princes Czartoryski Museum), a couple playing dice/*tables*? (the man), dice cup, ivory, France (?), 19th cent. (?). Photo: Pracownia Fotograficzna MNK

Fig. 5. National Museum in Kraków (Princes Czartoryski Museum), a couple playing dice/*tables*? (the lady), dice cup, ivory, France (?), 19th cent. (?). Photo: Pracownia Fotograficzna MNK

Fig. 6. National Museum in Kraków (Princes Czartoryski Museum), couple in the chamber (payment of an honorary debt?), dice cup, ivory, France (?), 19th cent. (?). Photo: Pracownia Fotograficzna MNK

Fig. 7. Musée du Louvre, Paris, mirror case with a scene of the game of chess, ivory, France (Paris), ca. 1300. Photo: © RMN-Grand Palais (Musée du Louvre) / Daniel Arnaudet

Fig. 8. National Museum in Kraków (Princes Czartoryski Museum), couple in the chamber (payment of an honorary debt?) (detail), dice cup, ivory, France (?), 19th century (?). Photo: Pracownia Fotograficzna MNK

Fig. 9. The Cleveland Museum of Art, mirror case with a scene of the game of chess, ivory, France (Paris?), ca. 1325. Photo: The Cleveland Museum of Art

Fig. 10. British Library, London, men playing dice, “Decretals of Gregory IX”, acc. no. MS Royal 10 E IV, fol. 92v, parchment, Southern France (Toulouse?), 1300–1340. Photo: © British Library Board, Royal 10 E IV, fol. 92v

Fig. 11. Victoria & Albert Museum, London, dice cup illustrated with the story of Susanna and the Elders, ivory, ink, gilded metal, Germany, 1600–1650. Photo: © Victoria & Albert Museum, London

Fig. 12. Victoria & Albert Museum, London, dice shakers, ivory, England (?), ca. 1860. Photo: © Victoria & Albert Museum, London

Fig. 13. Wyvern Collection, London, pyx with the scenes from the life of Christ, ivory, metal mounts, France (?), 1325–1350. Photo: after Paul Williamson, *The Wyvern Collection: Medieval and Later Ivory Carvings and Small Sculpture* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2019), 182–183, cat. no. 89

Fig. 14. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, front panel of the so-called composite casket, ivory, Europe (France?), 19th cent. Photo: Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

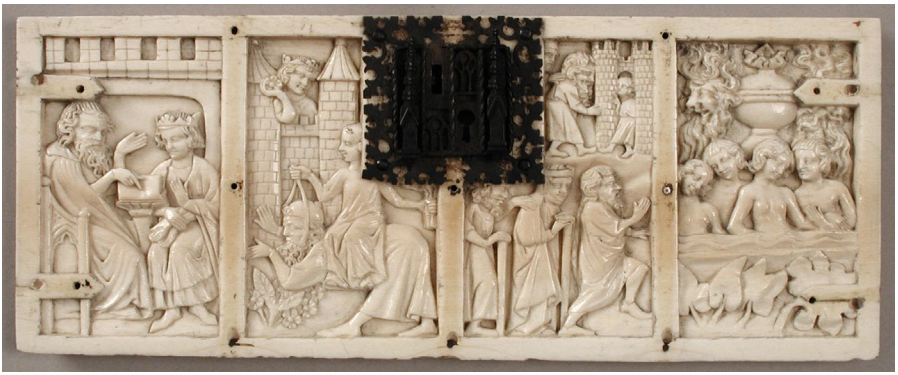

Fig. 15. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, front panel of the so-called composite casket, ivory, Europe (France?), 19th cent. Photo: Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Fig. 16. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, mirror case with the scene of the Attack on the Castle of Love, ivory or plastic, Europe (France?), 19th cent. Photo: Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Fig. 17. Victoria & Albert Museum, London, mirror case with the scene of the Attack on the Castle of Love, France (Paris), second quarter of the 14th cent. Photo: © Victoria & Albert Museum, London

Fig. 18. Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, beaker decorated with the personification of Germania, a mason and the Three Magi (after Ludwig Foltz's project), ivory, Germany, second half of the 19th cent. Photo: Walters Art Museum, Baltimore

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