



K. Blažytė - Guntienė.
Bernsteinmosaik
(Schriftstellerin Žemaitė)
1950

und Genreszenen waren als Erinnerung an idealisierte und sentimentalisierte litauische Vergangenheit und - von anderer Seite gesehen - Mosaike mit Portretbildern und Themen aus sowjetischen Symbolik - Bild der sowjetischer Realität.

Werke aus Bernstein mit Kitschmerkmalen waren wegen ihrer Mittelmässigkeit sowohl der offizieller Ideologie, als auch den Kunstkonsumenten annehmbar. Die letzteren wollten seine Umgebung mit unechter Gemütlichkeit schöner machen und zugleich sentimentale Version von Vergangenheit sehen, die im Bernstein verkörpert wurde. Aber nicht alle Werke aus Bernstein in dieser Zeit können rücksichtslos als Kitsch bezeichnet werden; vielmehr sind sie eine Art "mittlere Kunst", die auf gefährlicher Grenze zwischen Kunst und Kitsch balancieren.

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THE AMBER COLLECTION OF THE ALBERTUS UNIVERSITY AT KÖNIGSBERG/PRUSSIA

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Abstract

The amber collection of the Albertus University at Königsberg/Prussia was formed at the beginning of the 20th century by combining three well-known amber collections. These were

- the amber collection of the Royal Society of Physics and Economy at Königsberg (Königlich Physikalisch-ökonomische Gesellschaft zu Königsberg),
- the amber collection of the amber company Stantien & Becker (Becker'sches Museum) and
- a part of the amber collection of Dr. Richard Klebs.

The collection was affiliated to the Institute of Geology and Paleontology in the so-called „Eichendorff-Haus“, in the Lange Reihe No. 4 close to the Heumarkt at the corner of the Bernsteinstrasse.

The amber collection was a scientific collection. Its main part of about 100.000 items consisted of smaller amber bits with inclusions of insects, bugs, spiders and other small animals as well as plants. Furthermore, the collection contained „...rich material documenting the formation and abundance of our resin“ (Andrée 1927:12). A very precious part of the collection were the Neolithic Schwarzort artifacts, which were partly excavated from the bottom of the Frisches Haff; partly were found at other places in this region.

In 1944, part of the collection was brought to Göttingen to protect it from the war danger. The larger part remained at Königsberg and was obviously destroyed.

When reconstructing the history of the collection one can see the outline of the most important amber collection at the time. Its remains are treasured at Göttingen and kept accessible to the public.

1. Scientific amber collections at Königsberg

The amber collection of the Royal Society on Physics and Economy

The Royal Society on Physics and Economy was founded in 1790. Andrée (1937:207) reports that in 1844 all local collections of the society were given away except for the amber collection. G. Behrendt who was the first director from 1865 to 1874 and thus in charge of the provincial collections, intensified the research on amber. The amber collection expanded. The meeting protocols report regularly of new acquisitions of amber (Kwiatkowska 1997), which as a rule were donations to the society. Those were mostly single items. M. Becker of Messrs. Stantien & Becker was frequently mentioned as donor of outstanding collectibles. However, it also happened that complete collections were disposed of by will, like the collection of Herrn von Duisberg, minister at Steinberg, which comprised about 2.150 items.

The collection report of 1865 (Klebs, 1885:XVII) mentions a stock of 9.517 items plus another 300 pieces, which had not been classified until then. In April 1870 the amber collection comprised already 13.070 objects

(Klebs 1885:XVII). In 1879 during the tenure of Behrendt's successor A. Jentzsch (1875-1899), the collection was relocated to the Eichendorff-Haus. The former provincial collections were renamed Provincial Museum of East Prussia (Ostpreußisches Provinzial-Museum). A. Jentzsch was succeeded by E. Schellwien (1899-1906).

In 1882 R. Klebs was commissioned with the administration of the collection and its display in the great hall of the provincial Museum (Klebs 1885:XVIII). The index lists 16.204 amber objects (Klebs 1885:XXI). Additionally, about 2000 objects were kept for chemical and other analyses. As the main part of animal inclusions were dipteres (62.0 %) which were frequently unsightly and thus without scientific value, Klebs reduced the purchases and thus slowed down the increase of the collection.

On 1 June 1906 the society sold the Eichendorff-Haus and the collections to the State of Prussia. In 1908 the amber collection were given to the University of Königsberg. The prehistoric collection was also given to the Province of East Prussia, which transferred it to the Altertumsgesellschaft Prussia for exposition and management. The Neolithic amber artifacts, however, remained with the amber collection of the university. Thus the Provincial Museum which had been run for 26 years by the society ceased to exist.

The collection of the amber company Stantien & Becker

When the fairway from Königsberg to Memel in the Kurisches Haff was unsilted in 1855, large amounts of amber were brought to surface. W. Stantien (1817-1891) from Memel and the merchant M. Becker (1830-1899) founded hereupon the company Stantien & Becker together with other partners to excavate amber from the Kurisches Haff. The company excavated the bottom of the haff systematically by dredging over the years 1860 to 1890 (Andrée 1937:144). In 1870 the company received the privilege to produce amber by mining. In 1875 the amber mine at Palmnicken started working. A few years later, in 1879 it was decided

„... by the managers of the company Stantien & Becker to exclude all items with a connection to science from sale and to initiate an own collection for every variety of inclusions, colour and ancient artifacts“ (Klebs 1882:5).

R. Klebs who in 1874 was appointed by M. Becker to act as consultant in the siting of the Palmnicken mine (Klebs 1910:224) had a decisive part in the amber collection. Apparently shortly afterwards the company Stantien & Becker requested him to extract a scientific collection from the company's complete material (Klebs 1880:3). The catalogue from the first exhibition at the International Exposition on Fishery at Berlin lists 3.504 objects (Klebs 1880). In 1882 Klebs stopped the sale of inclusions from the Becker stock, as preferably insect-bearing inclusions had been sold by the hundredweight at certain times. After 1884 all noticeable larger findings were actually stored (Klebs 1910:231). Klebs remained consultant until 1899 when the company was taken over by the Prussian State.

„The Golden Age to collect amber inclusions was the time of Becker, mainly from 1859 - 84, but also until 1899“ (Klebs 1910:232). The result was the Becker Amber Museum (Becker'sches Bernstein-Museum) which in 1899 was opened in the Bahnhofstrasse at Königsberg (Klebs 1910:225). According to Schroeder (1914:386) and Brekenfeld (1991:509) the collection consisted of more than 26.000 numbers in the catalogue. An amber piece with embedded feathers registered as No. 33.482 of the Becker'sches Museum and the item No. B 36.445, both kept at Göttingen, indicate that the collection comprised at least 36.500 items.

The collection of Dr. Richard Klebs

R. Klebs (1850-1911) collected amber on his own. He reports (Klebs 1910:233) that he bought more than 8.000 pieces at Polangen in 1900, among these the amber flea *Palaeopsylla klebsiana*, which Dampf published in 1911. Klebs bought about some 1.200 other pieces from the same place in 1907. The largest K number of the Göttingen collection is K 33.209 (cordial information by Dr. Hammer-Schiemann, Göttingen), meaning that Klebs' collection should have consisted of at least 33.200 items.

Klebs (1910:235) wrote:

„I brought together my collection, which as the work of my life must and will be left only to a public scientific institute, with much endurance, reduced the number of double items as far as possible and sometimes rejected several hundreds of prevalent species. My purpose was to present complete material to my colleagues who intended to work on these Oligocene remains.“

Klebs himself investigated and published only few pieces from his collection. His aim was rather to interest entomologists and to provide them with material.

After the demise of R. Klebs A. Tornquist, director of the Institute of Geology and Paleontology and the amber collection of the Königsberg University (from 1908 to 1914) made large efforts to acquire the Klebs collection, which had become famous across the borders of Germany, for the University. His hope was dashed by the first World war, and the unstable situation of the post-war era and the subsequent inflation made the purchase impossible (Andrée 1927:14). Not before 1926 and after lonesome negotiations the collection was bought from means donated by the German Reich, the State of Prussia, the Province of Eastern Prussia, the Town of Königsberg, the University League (Universitätsbund) of Königsberg and several banks, companies and private donors from Königsberg (Andrée 1937: 206; Andrée 1929: 166-167).

The Klebs collection comprised a large number of natural amber forms, numerous documentary evidence of amber species and colours as well as products of amber processing (Andrée 1927:15f.). Another focus of the collection consisted of numerous amber inclusions, among those the amber flea, a bird feather and different pieces with hairs from mammals. The imprint of a leaf of a palm tree is pointed out among almost 400 inclusions of plant residues. About 11.000 inclusions from the Klebs collection were bought in 1926, so that obviously only a part of the collection – although the most important items - found its way into the amber collection of the university.

2. The amber collection of the Albertus university

The amber collection of the university originated from the association of several individual collections.

The amber company Stantien & Becker was bought in 1899 by the State of Prussia (Andrée 1937:206, Brekenfeld 1996:281). Becker wrote in his will that the amber collection should „...either be inalienable private property of the Becker Family or become property only of a national public museum...“ (Tornquist 1911:34).

The latter took place in 1901, when the amber

collection was given to the University of Königsberg It was associated with the amber collection of the Provincial Museum and a number of private collections, displayed in the Eichendorff-Haus and named „Royal Amber Collection“ (Königliche Bernsteinsammlung) of the Albertus University (Tornquist 1911:34).

In 1908 the Institute of Mineralogy and Geology was subdivided. The new-founded Institute of Geology and Paleontology moved into the Eichendorff-Haus which had belonged to the University since 1906. The institute admitted the geological collections of the Provincial Museums (1908) and the amber collection which counted as independent collection (Andrée 1937).

More than 17.000 pieces stem from the amber collection of the Society of Physics and Economy. The collection Stantien & Becker contributed more than 36.500 pieces. The purchase of part of the Klebs collection of about 11.000 inclusions in 1926 was a further important contribution. The three well-known collections made up a total of at least 64.500 amber objects. An unknown number of items came from numerous private collections (Andrée 1958:15), possibly also from the stock of the former Institute of Mineralogy and Paleontology. Andrée's statement (1927:12) that the university collection after inclusion of the Klebs collection comprised about „100.000 inclusions as well as rich material on the genesis and abundance of our resin“ can thus be reproduced. The comparison of the amber collection of the University of Königsberg with present-day collections (Krumbiegel & Krumbiegel, 1994:94-95) makes clear the importance and comprehensiveness of this geo-scientific archive.

The directors of the Institute of Geology and Paleontology were in charge of the amber collection. Pompeckij's successor was A. Tornquist (1908-1915). The following director, K. Andrée was head of the collection from 1915 to 1945 (Ritzkowski, 1995). He was also the initiator of the promising publication series „Amber Studies (Bernsteinforschungen)“, which was stopped with the beginning of the Second World War in 1939.

3. The End of the amber collection at Königsberg

When on 9 April 1945 the so-called Fortress of Königsberg fell after a murderous battle, the beautiful classicistic „Eichendorff-Haus“, domicile of the Institute of Geology and Paleontology as well as of the amber collection, was in ruins. An eye witness, former member

of the Institute of Zoology of the University of Königsberg, reports that his Volkssturm company was positioned in the Institute of Geology at the Lange Reihe 4 on 6 April 1945. The next day he arranged that the amber objects which were still in the showcases were brought to the basement. He and his company had to retreat on 8 April. The surrounding buildings caught fire that day, and he assumes that the Institute of Geology burned down as well. Königsberg capitulated on 9 April 1945. The fire obviously destroyed the largest part of the amber collection. Thus a fruitful era of collecting and research on Baltic amber ended, which had its centre at Königsberg.

A small but important part of the amber collection of the University of Königsberg survived. In 1944 the administrations of the Königsberg University and the University of Göttingen negotiated about transferring part material from the Institute of Geology and Paleontology to Göttingen to protect it from the war danger. A courier brought accordingly two small chests of a total volume of about 0.1m³ with material from the amber collection to the potash mine at Volpriehausen not far from Göttingen (shaft „Wittekindt“), where the University had already stored other valuable objects and books. After the end of the war the shaft was destroyed by explosions and subsequent fire and water inleakage. The two chests were rescued because they had been taken from the mine by British officials and brought first to Goslar where works of art were stored, later to Celle. Andrée, who had moved to Göttingen after the end of the war, managed in March 1949 to have a look at the chests and to supervise the repacking of the material. Due to his efforts the amber from Königsberg reached its place of destination – the Institute and Museum of Geology and Paleontology of the University of Göttingen (now Göttinger Zentrum Geowissenschaften) – in summer 1958. Here it has been stored and scientifically attended until today on behalf of the Stiftung Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin-Dahlem (Ritzkowski 1977).

What happened to the amber shipment between its storage in the Wittekindt mine at Volpriehausen in autumn 1944 and the repacking by Andrée in March 1949 is still unclear. Andrée made no inventory of the material to control at a later time whether the shipment was still complete. The Institute of Geology and Paleontology at Göttingen, however, received a

collection of 223 amber inclusions years later which definitely had belonged to the material in the two chests. Among these were 8 inclusions from a publication by Meunier, which Meunier had investigated during his time at Königsberg. The inclusions had been since the end of the war at Uslar, a town close to the Wittekindt mine. Also a museum of local history owns a figurine made of small amber pieces. It can be concluded that part of the shipment was stolen from the chests between the capitulation in April 1945 and destruction of the shaft in June 1945.

The Göttingen part from the amber collection at Königsberg was frequently brought into connection with the legendary amber chamber. One has, however, to bear in mind that the amber collection of the University of Königsberg was property of the Prussian State. No matter whether it was located at the University of Königsberg or of Göttingen, it remained under the custody of the same country. The contact between the universities of Königsberg and Göttingen was close: Several professors from Königsberg had been appointed a professorship at Göttingen or vice versa (Rauschnig & v. Nerée 1995, Ritzkowski 1995). Göttingen became after the war the place of refuge for members of the Königsberg University. Both Tornquist and Andrée had studied and done their doctorates at Göttingen; Andrée's first wife came from this town (Ritzkowski 1995). Therefore it is obvious that Andrée, when looking for a suitable safe place „in the Reich“, approached his colleagues at Göttingen. The statement of the inspector of the University of Königsberg, who did the negotiations in 1944 and delivered the two chests – he became later head of the academic administration at Göttingen – makes clear that the relocation of part of the amber collection of the Königsberg University and the disappearance of the amber chamber which was under the custody of the administration of the Königsberg Castle were not connected in any way.

4. The amber collection at Göttingen

Within the amber collection at Göttingen, natural amber forms make up an important part. Drops, cones and flat forms prove that fluid resin leaked from plants („external forms“). These forms make up the larger number of inclusions. One of the largest amber pieces of the world, a block of 3.8 kg found at Angerburg (Wegorzewo) in quaternary sediments, was formed by accumulation of resin in a cleft of a tree („internal

forms“). Differently coloured amber species, as honey-coloured Succinite (which is the most abundant species in Baltic amber), Gedanite (yellow), Beckerite (brown), Stantienite (black) and Glessite (reddish) are found in the collection. Amber in form of rolled or striated pebble, with barnacles or bored by molluscs give evidence of transport by ice, in rivers or in the sea. This part of the collection comprises 2.450 pieces. A comparable collection of natural amber forms is found only in the Museum of the Earth at Warsaw.

The inclusions make up the main part of the collection. The recent record of all inclusions by computer yielded 13.976 objects (cordial information by Dr. Hammer-Schiemann). The number of plant inclusions (450 items) is small compared to the animal inclusions, both flying animals like mosquitoes and running animals like ants or spiders. The collection includes extremely rare pieces like the amber flea *Palaeopsylla klebsiana* (Dampf 1911). Also residues of vertebrates are embedded in amber, like the amber lizard *Nucras succinea* or hairs of mammals (Ritzkowski 1998, 1999, Böhme & Weitschat 1998). The identification of unknown animal species from the geological past is documented by 1.850 types and originals, respectively, with numerous scientific publications. The amber collection of the University of Königsberg was a scientific collection, a data base which stored petrified testimony of the life on earth 40 - 50 millions of years ago. The same is true for the remaining part at Göttingen.

Outstanding items are amber pieces treated by humans. Among its 1.131 artifacts and crafts the collection at Göttingen includes the famous amber carvings from the bottom of the Haff at Schwarzort (Juodkrante), carved in the Neolithic about 5.000 years ago, either as adornment or as talisman (Klebs 1882; La Baume 1924; Sturm 1927: 373-379 and pl. 119-120; Weissgerber & Ritzkowski 1999; Gaigalas 2000). Amber beads from different eras, figurines or objects of utility from past centuries, figurines or boxes for ointments from China or less technical products give an impression of the efforts to demonstrate the various use of amber in the world by the former Königsberg collection.

The amber collection at Göttingen, i. e. the part of the former amber collection of the University of Königsberg that survived the war, comprises 15.557

objects. This is about 16% of the original collection according to number. However, the important items of the Königsberg collection, that is a large part of the paleontological types, the important natural forms and Neolithic artifacts, were preserved.

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THE CONSERVATION OF SIX AMBER OBJECTS FROM THE COLLECTIONS OF THE ROYAL PALACE IN STOCKHOLM - TWO BOXES, THREE GOBLETs AND ONE TANKARD

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The Royal Collections at the Royal Palace contacted the conservation department at the National Heritage Board in December 1999 about six amber objects of art, which had been seriously damaged through accident. A colleague of mine, Ingrid Hall Roth and I were invited to look at the objects and assess the extent of the damage. After a thorough examination of the objects we decided to make an attempt to restore them.

Description of objects (before accident)

LARGE BOX (Fig. 1) No. 139. Early 18th century
Height 270 mm

This large rectangular box, is made up of thin amber pieces attached to a wooden framework, a technique called incrustation. By using amber pieces of various shades and shapes a striking mosaic has been created.

The feet are made of ivory with a carved acanthus motif.

At the very bottom of the front is a part hanging down with a female head in white amber, surrounded by shells and dolphins (Bérain-cartouche).

Views over harbours and castles delicately carved in white amber and mounted on top of shimmering brass foil are inset beneath transparent cover plates on each side of the box.

The lid is crowned by an ivory group composed of Poseidon seated in a shell drawn by two sea horses. In his left hand he holds an oval female

portrait, depicting Ulrika Eleonora the Younger, married to king Fredrik I of Sweden.

SMALL BOX (Fig. 2) No. 131. 17th century
Height 250 mm

The box has been ascribed to Georg Schreiber and once belonged to the queen dowager Hedvig Eleonora (1636- 1715) of Sweden.

It is rectangular in shape and stands on eight spherical amber feet, attached to the bottom of the box with metal pins. It consists of three storeys - a base, middle and an upper storey.

The base storey, with three small drawers next to each other, is composed of a wooden framework with thin amber pieces of various shapes and colours attached to it.

In the centre of each short side and the back long side is an inset relief in white amber mounted on black-painted mica foil and covered with a transparent amber plate.

The two upper storeys, on the other hand, are made up of pieces of amber, which have been notched together without any wooden framework.

The middle storey is decorated with small and large relief panels showing the four seasons, the four continents, antique divinities, women dressed in 17th century clothes, hunting scenes, etc. The relief panels are flanked by female herms (twelve in total, four on each long side and two on each short side).

In the bottom of the middle storey, covered by a transparent amber plate, is an inset relief carved in white amber and mounted on a black background, depicting the death of Thisbe.

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Acknowledgement

The author likes to thank Eva Ritzkowski for translation and comments and Dr. Hammer-Schiemann for information about the stock of the amber collection.