

**Dorota Molińska**

Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań

### **Les Arts en Portugal- Count Athanasius Raczyński and his research on Portuguese History of Art.**

In 1846 Parisian publishing house Jules Renouard released *Les Arts en Portugal. Lettres adressées à la Société Artistique et Scientifique de Berlin*, followed a year later by the second volume, the biographic *Dictionnaire historico - artistique du Portugal*, both widely regarded as a ground-breaking landmark in Portuguese artistic historiography. Their author count Athanasius Raczyński (1788-1874), Polish aristocrat and Prussian diplomat, serving at that time as an ambassador of Frederic William IV at the court of Lisbon, was a well-known Berlin collector of paintings, patron and connoisseur of arts. Raczyński had previously demonstrated his comprehensive education, erudition and experience in a distinctive publication - *Histoire de L'Art Moderne en Allemagne* (1837-1841) - an important source for the study of the contemporary German painting.

While staying in Portugal (1842-1848) Raczyński conducted extensive research on the local art and its history, the issues often little recognized and described before. He searched the archives, visited number of churches, palaces, private collectors in Lisbon and in the province and consulted many well informed native intellectuals, all in order to grasp the diversity of original and typical phenomena of artistic production in the country. Nevertheless his most important and innovating achievement in the context of Portuguese art history consisted on introduction of combination of critical source studies and the rigor of connoisseur method into a methodological base of investigations. His works considered in Portugal to be the first modern work of a historical critic became later a valuable point of reference for the following generations of scholars.

For further interpretation of extraordinary historiographical importance of this work it is important to note that count Raczyński, often considered as a dilettante, clearly manifested in his approach to art historical studies strong familiarity with the tradition of connoisseur practice of attribution of art objects developed earlier in eighteenth century by, for example, Luigi Lanzi or Jonathan Richardson. Simultaneously he possessed intellectual resources derived from the achievements of academic history of art emerging in German circles. His publications attest his close acquaintance with the empirical method that can be found in works by members of so-called Berlin School of Art History like, among others, Karl Friedrich von Rumohr or Gustav Waagen.

The complex reflection on method used in Raczyński's investigations is possible thanks to an unconventional narration model used by the author. The close examination of count's writings employing a critical apparatus taken from literary studies leads to an analysis of *Les Arts in Portugal* as an ensemble of 29 letters written between 1843 and 1845 to the members of Berlin's *Wissenschaftliche Kunstverein*. This published correspondence, including numerous lengthy quotations from source documents, with footnotes and extra comments was not only presenting to international readers the idea of the history and the state of fine arts in distant Portugal, but above all, giving an account of the investigation progress: gradual accumulation of information, formulation of opinions and theories and their constant changes and revisions visible in a various points of subsequent chapters of the narration continuity.

Therefore, to outline a general interpretation of Count Raczyński's involvement in development of Portuguese artistic historiography and an actual original nature of the art historical writing model proposed by him in *Les Arts en Portugal*, it is crucial to unite an attentive, contextual reading of his publications with the awareness of his knowledge in the context of crystallization of a scientific approach of early art history in association with the XIXth century's research and writing practice, symptomatic for his intellectual background related mainly to current developments in the German artistic historiography.