

The History of the Seventeenth-Century Painting of *Madonna and Child* from the Village of Rajskie in the Collection of the National Museum in Krakow

Summary

The painting of *Madonna and Child* was donated to the National Museum in Krakow by a private collector, Stanisław Zarewicz, in 1902. He acquired the work from the parish church in Hoczew, after it had been removed from an altarpiece and substituted by a copy, because of the original's poor condition. The picture was renovated at the Museum and put on display there.

The origin of the painting is uncertain, yet its whereabouts in the 18th c. are surprisingly well documented in the reports of the Apostolic visit to the parish church in Hoczew. From there we can learn that initially the picture was located in a private chapel in the village of Rajskie near Hoczew. Since the chapel was served by wandering priests and was not subject to any church authority, the parson of Hoczew obtained an Episcopal decree which ordered the closure of the chapel in 1709. However, the ruling of the bishop was not observed, so in 1714 the parson transferred the painting as well as other liturgical utensils and vestments to the parish church in Hoczew. The owners of Rajskie appealed to the bishop W.H. Sierakowski, who visited Hoczew in 1745, but by then the chapel had been destroyed by fire, and the bishop decided that the painting would be left in Hoczew until a new shrine was built – which never happened. By the end of the 19th c. the cult of the painting had diminished and its origins were forgotten until quite recently.

The above-mentioned documents reveal many interesting details and features of the cult of sacred images in early modern Poland. The painting in question is a copy after the famous image of the *Madonna and Child* in the (former) Benedictine church in Tuchów. Since this sanctuary had gained renown only in the 3rd decade of the 17th c., the picture from Rajskie could have been made about the mid-century and probably not later than the 1660s.

The painting from Rajskie reflects the state of preservation of the venerated image of Tuchów before its subsequent restorations that completely altered its original appearance. Therefore, the *Madonna and Child*, now in the collection of the National Museum in Krakow, can serve as an important iconographic source for the history of its more famous model – the holy image of Tuchów.