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## WILLIAM HENRY FOX TALBOT'S PHOTOGRAPHS AT THE KÓRNIK LIBRARY

### ABSTRACT

The paper examines eight calotype process specimens made by the British photographic pioneer William Henry Fox Talbot, now part of the Polish Academy of Sciences Kórnik Library collections. By retracing connections between Władysław Zamoyski and the Talbot family from the 1830s, it highlights how Zamoyski entered Talbot's circle and how this facilitated the circulation of paper photographs among the Polish cultural and political elite in the 1840s. Furthermore, the article underscores the critical role of political mediators, such as diplomats and generals, in the early diffusion of paper photography in Central Europe. In this context, particular attention is given to Talbot's uncle, the diplomat William Thomas Horner Fox Strangways, who maintained close contact with Zamoyski and, through his diplomatic channels, helped disseminate prints of Talbot's process across Europe.

**Keywords:** William Henry Fox Talbot, calotype process, Władysław Zamoyski, Kórnik Library, history of photography

### ABSTRAKT

## FOTOGRAFIE WILLIAMA HENRY'EGO FOXA TALBOTA W ZBIORACH BIBLIOTEKI KÓRNICKEJ

Niniejszy artykuł analizuje osiem znajdujących się w zbiorach PAN Biblioteki Kórnickiej produktów zastosowania procesu kalotypii przez brytyjskiego pioniera fotografii Williama Henry'ego Foxa Talbota. Odtwarzając znajomość Władysława Zamoyskiego z rodziną Talbotów, nawiązaną w latach 30.

XIX w., autorka pokazuje, w jaki sposób Zamoyski znalazł się w kręgu Talbotów oraz jak przełożyło się to na upowszechnianie się odbitek na papierze wśród polskich elit kulturalno-politycznych w latach 40. XIX w. Ponadto podkreśla kluczową rolę mediatorów politycznych, w tym dyplomatów i generałów, we wcześniejszej popularyzacji odbitek na papierze w Europie Środkowej. W tym kontekście szczególną uwagę poświęcono wujowi Talbota, dyplomacie Williamowi Thomasowi Hornerowi Foxowi Strangwaysowi, który utrzymywał bliski kontakt z Zamoyskim i, korzystając z własnych kanałów dyplomatycznych, pomagał popularyzować odbitki uzyskane metodą opracowaną przez Talbota w całej Europie.

**Słowa kluczowe:** William Henry Fox Talbot, kalotypia, Władysław Zamoyski, Biblioteka Kórnicka, historia fotografii

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Numerous institutions across the globe feature photographs by William Henry Fox Talbot in their archives and collections. As of today, we are aware of approximately 4,500 distinct images and more than 25,000 prints and negatives belonging to his photochemical work, and we still know very little about the count of his photomechanical practice.<sup>1</sup> The majority of this material is in the Talbot Collection at the National Science and Media Museum in Bradford, but there are many other important collections both in the UK and abroad.<sup>2</sup> Retracing how this

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<sup>1</sup> Data from *The Talbot Catalogue Raisonné*. The count excludes all photomechanical materials. For this aspect see Francesca Strobino, *Investigating William Henry Fox Talbot's Experiments in Photomechanical Printing*, doctoral thesis, De Montfort University, 2024.

<sup>2</sup> Among the main collections: Royal Photographic Society Collection (now at the Victoria and Albert Museum), the Talbot Papers and Collection at the British Library, the WHF Talbot and Talbot Family Archive at the Bodleian Library, and others outside the UK, such as the Talbot Collection at the Getty Museum and the Talbot Collection at MET. For an overview see: Katarina Dean, "Lacock Abbey and the Country House Archive," in Mirjam Brusius, Katrina Dean, and Chitra Ramalingam, *William*

remarkable legacy – exceptionally rare for a 19th-century photographic pioneer – formed and became fragmented across different archives is a crucial aspect of historical analysis. In this respect, a significant distinction exists between collections established through acquisitions and those that obtained photographic specimens via direct contact with Talbot. The latter, much rarer, offer historians valuable insights into how Talbot's photographs circulated and provide a trace of his efforts and ambition to disseminate paper photography.

The small collection of eight calotype specimens discussed in this article came to the Kórník Library through Talbot's connection with general Władysław Zamoyski. Despite their modest number, these paper photographs – among the first to circulate within the Polish cultural and political elite – offer a compelling case study for examining Talbot's strategy of distributing his work across various social and diplomatic circles. In particular, he targeted political figures such as generals and diplomats who travelled between the UK and continental Europe, carrying these specimens with them. While much scholarship has investigated Talbot's scientific network and its role in disseminating paper photography, surprisingly the role of these 'political' mediators remains largely overlooked.<sup>3</sup>

Furthermore, as Petra Trnková notes, the diffusion and collection of early paper photography in Central Europe is an under-researched topic.<sup>4</sup> Among the obstacles to retracing these histories are the preservation of the photographs, in the first place, and secondly, the preservation of the original groupings. It is indeed not uncommon for photographs to be sold and integrated into other collections, gaining a new meaning and, in the process, losing their original connection as a unique corpus of photographic objects. This did not happen to the eight specimens discussed here, which remained in the Zamoyski family until they entered the Kórník Library's collections in 1925. Additionally, and particularly relevant for Talbot scholars and 19th-century photographic historians, none of these photographs is present in the *Talbot Catalogue Raisonné* curated by Talbot scholar Larry Schaaf, making these objects an important addition to the field.<sup>5</sup>

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Henry Fox Talbot: *Beyond Photography*, New Haven: The Yale Center for British Art, 2013, 25-37. Larry J. Schaaf, "The Talbot Collection," *History of Photography* 24, no. 1 (March 2000): 7-15; Larry J. Schaaf, *William Henry Fox Talbot: Photographs from the J. Paul Getty Museum*, Los Angeles: The Getty Museum, 2002.

<sup>3</sup> See the section "Victorian Knowledge Networks" in Mirjam Brusius, Katrina Dean, and Chitra Ramalingam, *William Henry Fox Talbot: Beyond Photography*, New Haven: The Yale Center for British Art, 2013, 14-17.

<sup>4</sup> Petra Trnková, "Metternich's Collection of Talbot's Photographs. A Lost Album as a Virtually Material Being," *Journal of the History of Collections* 35, no. 2 (July 2023): 379-394.

<sup>5</sup> The database is available at <https://talbot.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/> (18.09.2024).

## 1. Photography's journey through diplomatic hands.

### Władysław Zamoyski and the Talbot family

Talbot (1800-1877) was a British man of science.<sup>6</sup> Following a long-standing tradition, he received a gentleman's education, which led him to experiment and conduct research in various scientific fields, including physics, mathematics, and botany, as well as the study of the ancient world and languages.<sup>7</sup> Throughout his lifetime, he registered twelve patents and authored more than 100 scientific publications and in 1831 became fellow of one of Britain's most prestigious scientific institutions, the Royal Society.<sup>8</sup> Despite his diverse and significant contributions to knowledge, Talbot is best known as a pioneer of photography.<sup>9</sup>

In the mid-1830s, he began experimenting with a process that used silver nitrate to record images on paper. He introduced his invention, dubbed photogenic drawing, to the scientific community on 25 January 1839, shortly after Louis Daguerre's daguerreotype process was presented in France by the astronomer François Arago at a joint meeting of the French Académie des Sciences and the Académie des Beaux-Arts.<sup>10</sup> Unlike the daguerreotype, which produced a photographic image on a silvered copper plate, the paper-based nature of the photogenic drawing made it easier to envision its application in printed media, such as books and magazines. However, what was lacking was the ability to produce multiple copies from a single photograph. Talbot addressed this problem in 1841 when he patented the calotype, another paper-based photographic process that introduced the negative-positive system, enabling the production of numerous positive prints (also known as salted paper prints) from a single negative.<sup>11</sup> It was

<sup>6</sup> H. J. P. Arnold, *William Henry Fox Talbot. Pioneer of Photography and Man of Science*, London: Hutchinson Benham, 1977; Larry J. Schaaf, *Out of the Shadows: Herschel, Talbot and the Invention of Photography*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992.

<sup>7</sup> Mirjam Brusius, "Inscriptions in a Double Sense: The Biography of an Early Scientific Photograph of Script," *Nuncius* 24, no. 2 (2009): 367-92.

<sup>8</sup> See the appendices in H. J. P. Arnold, *William Henry Fox Talbot. Pioneer of Photography and Man of Science*, London: Hutchinson Benham, 1977, 365-370.

<sup>9</sup> Mirjam Brusius, Katrina Dean, and Chitra Ramalingam, *William Henry Fox Talbot: Beyond Photography*, New Haven: The Yale Center for British Art, 2013.

<sup>10</sup> For more on the topic, see: Steffen Siegel, *First Exposures. Writings from the Beginning of Photography*, edited by Steffen Siegel, translated by Martina Derviş and Malcolm Imrie, Los Angeles: The J. Paul Getty Museum, 2017; Tanya Sheehan and Andrés Mario Zervigòn (edited by), *Photography and Its Origins*, London: Routledge 2015.

<sup>11</sup> Calotype patent: WHF Talbot, *Photographic Pictures. – Improvements in Obtaining Pictures, or Representations of Objects*, no. 8842, deposited 08/02/1841, granted 29/07/1841.

through this process that photography first demonstrated its potential as a large-scale medium.

The eight photographs at the Kórník Library, all salted paper positives from calotype negatives, arrived in Poland through the general, nobleman, and Polish patriot Władysław Zamoyski (1803-1868), who during his lifetime travelled to the UK more than 40 times in the 1830s and the 1840s.<sup>12</sup> Talbot and Zamoyski met in person no later than November 1832, when Zamoyski came to live in London.<sup>13</sup> It is worth noting that in late 1832, Talbot was campaigning to be elected as Member of Parliament (MP) for Chippenham, aligning himself with the moderate reformers.<sup>14</sup> His political ambitions may have led him, despite his usual disinterest in social life, to become more engaged in social circles, including his association with Zamoyski.

As an exile living in the UK, Zamoyski was involved in the *Towarzystwo Literackie Przyjaciół Polski* (Literary Society of the Friends of Poland, founded in 1832 – hereafter TLPP) set up in London by his uncle, Prince Adam Czartoryski.<sup>15</sup> The TLPP was a branch of the bigger organisation Hôtel Lambert based in Paris, to work for a free Poland following the events of the November Uprising (1830-1831). It was in fact within the organization Hôtel Lambert that Zamoyski operated as General Secretariat, coordinating Polish diplomatic agents advocating for the Polish cause internationally. Many of them held noble titles and were men of culture, actively engaged in French and English diplomacy, working to persuade these nations to join the war against the Russian Empire, which was occupying Poland at the time, along with Prussia and Austria.

In a letter to Strangways dated November 1832, Talbot recounts how he met Zamoyski, who was in the company of Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz, referred to as “the venerable Polish patriot & poet,” who was also actively involved in defence of the Polish cause.<sup>16</sup> Zamoyski and the TLPP agents active in the UK were well integrated into society, attending prominent social events and showing a strong

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<sup>12</sup> Władysław Zamoyski, *Jenerał Zamoyski 1803-1868*, vol. 3, 1832-1837, Poznań 1914, 13.

<sup>13</sup> Doc. no. 2450 in *The Correspondence of William Henry Fox Talbot*.

<sup>14</sup> He was elected on 5 February 1833. His political career was short, ending just a year later in 1834.

<sup>15</sup> For further context on the organization, see: Jadwiga Czerwińska, “Działalność charytatywna Towarzystwa Literackiego Przyjaciół Polski w Londynie u schyłku XIX wieku,” *Annales Academiae Pedagogicae Cracoviensis Folia 17 Studia Historica I* (2003): 303-310.

<sup>16</sup> Docs. no. 2450 and 02399 in *The Correspondence of William Henry Fox Talbot*.

interest in culture, particularly in education, while also playing a key role in charities supporting Polish emigrants.

Zamoyski's connections with prominent intellectuals, political figures, and British high society brought him into Talbot's circle. Prior to their encounter, Zamoyski was frequently mentioned in Talbot's correspondence with his mother, Elisabeth Theresa Feilding, his half-sisters, Henrietta Horatia Maria Gaisford and Caroline Augusta Edgcumbe, as well as his uncle, the diplomat William Thomas Horner Fox Strangways.<sup>17</sup> The letters mention dinners and other social gatherings where Talbot's mother and half-sisters, who were particularly active in society, had the chance to meet Zamoyski. However, Zamoyski's strongest connection with Talbot's family was with Strangways, who served as the embassy secretary in Vienna from 1832 to 1835 and later as a member of the Foreign Office secretariat from 1835 to 1840. Zamoyski's correspondence reveals that he and Strangways were in regular contact between 1836 and 1861. During this time, Strangways worked closely with Zamoyski and Czartoryski on various political matters, including efforts to curb the immigration of Polish political migrants from France to England. One significant example of their collaboration occurred in 1835 when Czartoryski and Zamoyski published *Portfolio* aimed at discrediting Russia in the eyes of public opinion, with Strangways overseeing the operation on the English side.<sup>18</sup>

Between August and October 1832, it seems Zamoyski was a regular guest at Talbot's ancestral home, Lacock Abbey (also spelled Laycock Abbey or misspelled Lawck Abbey), where the family had relocated in 1827.<sup>19</sup> During the early years at Lacock Abbey, while Talbot was unmarried and often away travelling, his mother and stepsisters established a vibrant social life on the estate, hosting numerous visitors to enliven their stay.<sup>20</sup> In the correspondence between Talbot and

<sup>17</sup> See Docs. No. 1522, 2399, 2421, 2425, 2428, 2430, 2437, 2440, 2450, 4497, 4546, 7410, 8604 in *The Correspondence of William Henry Fox Talbot*.

<sup>18</sup> Correspondence between Gen. Władysław Zamoyski and William Fox Strangways from the period 1836-1861, BK 2432, ff. 236-287. The journal *Portfolio* was published simultaneously in French and English in 1835. It was to explain the current politics of Prussia, Austria and Russia and show the real intentions behind these countries' actions (inter alia through the publication of secret documents). Władysław Zamoyski, *Jenerał Zamoyski 1803-1868*, vol. 3, 330 and further, and Charles Greville, *Greville Memoirs*, pars 3, Tomus 1, 117-120.

<sup>19</sup> In chapter 1 of the book *Jenerał Zamoyski*, vol. 3, where the stay in England from May to November is described, there is only a single quote from a letter written in Lacock Abbey (25.09.1832, page 51). Additional information is provided in Docs. No. 1522, 2399, 2421, 2425, 2428, 2430, 2437, 2440, 2450, 4497, 4546, 7410, 8604 in *The Correspondence of William Henry Fox Talbot*.

<sup>20</sup> Arnold, *William Henry Fox Talbot. Pioneer of Photography and Man of Science*, 45-47.

his family members, Zamoyski is referred to as being part of the “best society,” and Talbot’s family grew especially fond of him.<sup>21</sup> Caroline Edgcumbe reportedly drew “a view of the South front [of Lacock Abbey] as a souvenir for Zamoyski to take with him,” while Henrietta Gaisford, upon announcing his departure from Lacock Abbey in early October, wrote to Talbot that she “like[d] him very much.”<sup>22</sup>

Due to his involvement in the TLPP and Hôtel Lambert organization, Zamoyski frequently travelled between the UK and France taking advantage of diplomatic channels. Talbot saw his large social network and mobility across Europe as an important asset. Letters between Talbot and the family friend Améline Petit De Billier attest that Talbot wanted to give some specimens of his calotype process to Zamoyski in July 1842 to bring them to Paris.<sup>23</sup> It is possible that Petit de Billier was also acquainted with Zamoyski, as she was at Lacock Abbey in the autumn of 1832 until November, when Caroline Edgcumbe gave birth to her first son.<sup>24</sup> Despite Talbot’s efforts to entrust Zamoyski with his photographs, the opportunity was missed. On 14 July 1842 he wrote, “Zamoyski left for Paris yesterday; if he had given prior notice to my mother, I would have sent some proofs with him.”<sup>25</sup> Even if unsuccessful, the letter signals Talbot’s interest in disseminating the calotype process to make his invention known outside the UK. The specimens of this letter were in fact intended for Petit De Billier’s brother, who was to take them with him to America. As Talbot pointed out on several occasions, sending calotype and salted paper prints was a sensitive matter:

It would be my great pleasure to send photographic specimens to your brother to take with him to America, if I knew how to get them to him intact. If I send them by stagecoach, the package will be opened and perhaps damaged at Customs in Calais. Before sending anything to Mr Conte’s address, I would like to know the maximum weight of contents that I could put in the envelope. I am afraid, unless I enclosed the proofs in a strong cardboard envelope, they would be ruined by the postal service as in the past.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Doc. no. 1522 in *The Correspondence of William Henry Fox Talbot*.

<sup>22</sup> Docs. no. 2428 and 2430 in *The Correspondence of William Henry Fox Talbot*.

<sup>23</sup> Doc. no. 4546 in *The Correspondence of William Henry Fox Talbot*.

<sup>24</sup> For further information on Améline Petit De Billier and her connection with the Talbot family see the database *The Journal of Améline Petit de Billier*, <https://amelina.dmu.ac.uk/index.html> (22.09.2024).

<sup>25</sup> Doc. no. 4546 in *The Correspondence of William Henry Fox Talbot*.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

Beyond their scientific value, the prints were extremely delicate from a material perspective, making it challenging to ship them through traditional routes, such as railway parcels, where the risk of damage or loss was not uncommon. The safest way to send specimens was therefore through trusted hands.

This strategy was not new to Talbot who, for example, took advantage of Strangways' numerous diplomatic travels to send photographic specimens to Italy. Between June 1839 and August 1840, Talbot entrusted Strangways to deliver five parcels containing a total of thirty-three photogenic drawings to the Italian botanist Antonio Bertoloni, based in Bologna, who collected them into the album *Disegni Fotogenici*, now at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.<sup>27</sup> Talbot's and Bertoloni's photographic exchange, mediated by Strangways who delivered the parcels, contributed to the early diffusion of paper photography in Italy, leaving an important record of how Italian scientists reacted to the photogenic drawing process.<sup>28</sup> In August 1839, Talbot also took advantage of "the [British] government sending a Courier to Italy" to deliver photogenic drawing samples to the microscopist Giovanni Battista Amici, to be presented at the *Prima Riunione degli Scienziati Italiani* (First Meeting of Italian Scientists) in Pisa in 1839.<sup>29</sup> Although these specimens did not arrive in time for the *Prima Riunione*, they still reached Amici eventually through Strangways, who delivered the parcel containing Talbot's photographs in January 1840 to be discussed at another scientific meeting in Turin that year.<sup>30</sup> Another example are Strangways', as well as Elisabeth Feilding's, contacts with the diplomat Philipp R. F. von Neumann, responsible for bringing Talbot's photographs to the Austrian chancellor of state Klemens von Metternich who was eager to collect Talbot's photogenic drawings as well as specifications on the process.<sup>31</sup> Unfortunately, the Metternich collection did not survive but, as Trnková has shown, important traces of it are left in various collections.

<sup>27</sup> For more on Bertoloni's album, see chapter 2 in Francesca Strobino, *Investigating William Henry Fox Talbot's Experiments in Photomechanical Printing*.

<sup>28</sup> Beth Saunders, "The Bertoloni Album: Rethinking Photography's National Identity," in *Photography and Its Origins*, edited by Tanya Sheehan and Andrés Mario Zervigón, 145-156, London: Routledge, 2015.

<sup>29</sup> Francesca Strobino, "Early Photographic Accounts at the Prima Riunione degli scienziati italiani (Pisa, 1839)," *RSF. Rivista di studi di fotografia*, no. 12, 2021 (printed in 2023), 164-182; Graham Smith, *Talbot, Amici and the Mystery of the Calotype*, London: Taylor & Francis, 2002. See also doc. no. 7325 in *The Correspondence of William Henry Fox Talbot*.

<sup>30</sup> Doc. no. 4008 in *The Correspondence of William Henry Fox Talbot*. The photographs are now in the photographic collection of Biblioteca Estense, Modena.

<sup>31</sup> Trnková, "Metternich's Collection of Talbot's Photographs. A Lost Album as a Virtually Material Being." See also docs. no. 4002, 4013 in *The Correspondence of William Henry Fox Talbot*.





Fig. 1. William Henry Fox Talbot, Nicolaas Henneman, [Copy of a lithograph by C. J. Hullmandel of an Egyptian hieroglyph], Schaaf no. 521, salted paper print from calotype negative,  $22.7 \times 18.7$  cm, after 1843. Kórník Library



Fig. 2. William Henry Fox Talbot, Nicolaas Henneman, [Leaf of a fern], Schaaf no. 852, salted paper print from calotype negative,  $22.6 \times 18.8$  cm, 1840s. Kórník Library



Fig. 3. William Henry Fox Talbot, Nicolaas Henneman, *View in Scotland*, Schaaf no. 1890, salted paper print from calotype negative,  $18.7 \times 22.5$  cm, after 1844. Kórník Library



Fig. 4. William Henry Fox Talbot, Nicolaas Henneman, *Holyrood Palace, Edinburgh*, Schaaf no. 1014, salted paper print from calotype negative,  $18.8 \times 22.7$  cm, after 1844. Kórník Library



Fig. 5. William Henry Fox Talbot, Nicolaas Henneman, *Doune Castle, Scotland*, Schaaf no. 795, salted paper print from calotype negative, 18.7 × 22.5 cm, after 1844.  
Kórník Library

Fig. 6. Page of the volume *Sun Pictures in Scotland* (London, 1845) with plate 18 titled *The Castle of Doune*, salted paper print by William Henry Fox Talbot, Nicolaas Henneman.  
Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection

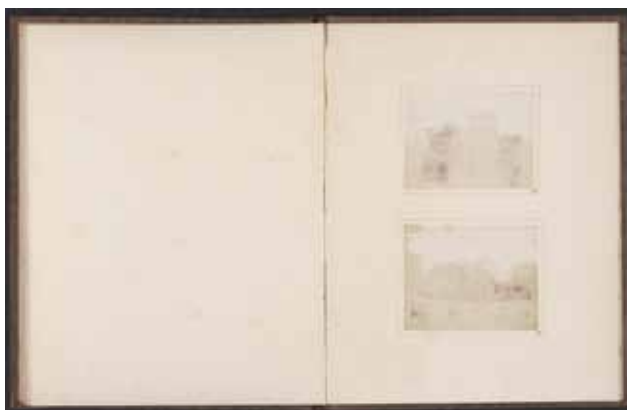


Fig. 7. William Henry Fox Talbot, Nicolaas Henneman, *Doune Castle, Scotland*, Schaaf no. 795, salted paper print from calotype negative, 18.7 × 22.5 cm, after 1844.  
National Museum, Kraków

Fig. 8. Page of the album *Pamiętki zebrane dla mego ukochanego syna Adama Sapiehy* with prints titled *Orleans; Doune Castle, Scotland*, salted paper prints from calotype negatives by William Henry Fox Talbot, Nicolaas Henneman, after 1844. National Museum, Kraków



Fig. 9. William Henry Fox Talbot, Nicolaas Henneman, *Orleans*, Schaaf no. 2732, salted paper print from calotype negative, 18.7 × 22.6 cm, after 1843. National Museum, Kraków

Fig. 10. William Henry Fox Talbot, Nicolaas Henneman, *Orleans*, Schaaf no. 2732, salted paper print from calotype negative, 18.7 × 22.6 cm, after 1843. Kórnik Library





Fig. 11. William Henry Fox Talbot, Nicolaas Henneman, *Orleans*, Schaaf no. 1413, salted paper print from calotype negative, 18.6 × 22.4 cm, after 1843. Kórník Library

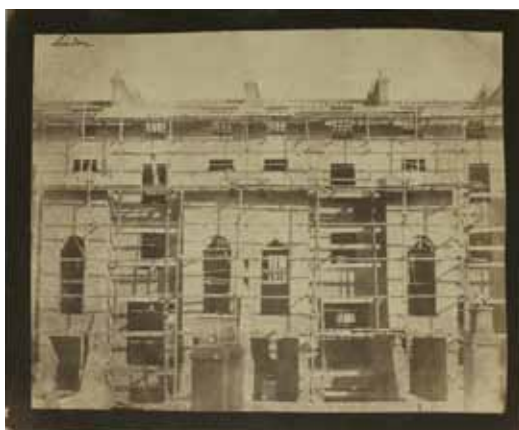


Fig. 12. William Henry Fox Talbot, Nicolaas Henneman, *London*, Schaaf no. 1198, salted paper print from calotype negative, 18.6 × 22.6 cm, after 1845. Kórník Library



Fig. 13. Page of the volume *Sun pictures in Scotland* (London, 1845) with plate 2 titled *Sir Walter Scott's Monument, Edinburgh; as it appeared when nearly finished, in October 1844*, salted paper print by William Henry Fox Talbot, Nicolaas Henneman. Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection

We do not know exactly when or under what circumstances Talbot sent or entrusted his photographs to Zamoyski, as this is not mentioned in the correspondence, and no documentation has been preserved alongside the photographs. However, thanks to the negatives of the photographs stored in the National Science and Media Museum (NSMM), it is possible to date the positive prints between 1843 and 1845. After Zamoyski's death in 1868, his legacy was inherited by his wife Jadwiga Zamoyska and, after her, by their son Władysław Zamoyski junior (1853-1924), who was an activist for social causes. Later in 1881, Zamoyski junior inherited Kórník, comprising the castle and the library, from his uncle Jan Kanty Działyński who died without heirs. The photographs became part of the Kórník Library collection, which, along with the rest of his property, Władysław Zamoyski Junior bequeathed to the Polish nation through his will. He also established the *Zakłady Kórnickie* Foundation on 30 July 1925 to oversee the management of the estate.

## 2. Talbot's salted paper prints at the Kórník Library

While the eight photographs collected by Zamoyski are useful for a general understanding of Talbot's strategy to disseminate paper photography in the 1840s, they are particularly relevant because of the timeframe, 1843-1845, in which the negatives were made. These correspond to the years of publication of the *Pencil of Nature*, deemed by many historians to be the first commercially illustrated book.<sup>32</sup> The volume was being prepared and published at the Reading establishment run by Talbot and Nicolaas Henneman, among the first commercial photographic studios to be established (1844-1847). The publication, sold by subscription, was issued in six instalments between 1844 and 1846 by the London publisher Thomas Longman.<sup>33</sup> Talbot carefully designed it to show the broad ap-

<sup>32</sup> It is possible to see all the photographs published in *The Pencil of Nature* through the Metropolitan Museum of Art website or The New York Public Library Digital Collections. See also the introduction in the facsimile edition: Larry Schaaf, William Henry Fox Talbot, *The Pencil of Nature [Facsimile]*, New York: Hans P. Kraus Jr. Fine Photographs, 1989. Another facsimile edition has also been made available by the Project Gutenberg at <https://archive.org/details/thepencilofnature-33447gut/page/n1/mode/2up> (25.09.2024)

<sup>33</sup> For further readings on *The Pencil of Nature* see: Larry J. Schaaf, *The Pencil of Nature: Anniversary Facsimile with and Introduction by Larry J. Schaaf*, New York: Hans P. Kraus Jr., 1989; Vered Maimon, "Displaced 'Origins': William Henry Fox Talbot's *The Pencil of Nature*," *History of Photography* 32, no. 4 (2008): 314-325; Graham Smith, "Talbot's Epigraph in *The Pencil of Nature*," *History of Photography* 34, no. 1 (2010): 90-95.

plicability of the calotype. Each issue was illustrated with original photographs printed at the Reading establishment and manually pasted onto the publication's pages, accompanied by a text in which Talbot discussed photography's diverse applications and possible subjects. These ranged from reproductions of works of art and facsimile copies of manuscripts, to botanical specimens and views taken with the camera. As Strangways pointed out upon inspecting the first instalment, this "book of specimens" was long overdue, as a publication had already been suggested shortly after the calotype patent was secured.<sup>34</sup>

In 1845, during the publication of the 4<sup>th</sup> issue of *The Pencil of Nature*, Talbot also published *Sun Pictures in Scotland*, in only 120 copies that were sold exclusively by subscription and distributed by the London bookseller John Rodwell.<sup>35</sup> The volume consisted of twenty-three photographic prints, all views taken with the camera depicting Scottish landscapes and monuments connected to the novelist Sir Walter Scott. Aside from a list of contents, no accompanying text was published.<sup>36</sup> Despite its promising premise, *Sun Pictures* did not meet with the anticipated success. As Feilding remarked in August 1845, just a month after its release, "[o]n the whole the *Pencil of Nature* is more liked than the views in Scotland, but the latter have served admirably to make the former more known."<sup>37</sup> The key point to emphasise, beyond the limited success of *Sun Pictures in Scotland*, is how these publications helped bring Talbot's invention to the attention of a broader audience, reaching readers beyond his usual circle.<sup>38</sup> However, they primarily circulated within the UK and remained relatively unknown in Europe.

Similar to *The Pencil of Nature* and *Sun Pictures in Scotland*, the photographs in the Kórník Library were used as specimens to promote Talbot's calotype process and demonstrate its potential – a connection further highlighted by the similarity of the subjects chosen. Without the expense of producing a more complex object, such as a volume with manually tipped-in photographs, a set of loose prints

<sup>34</sup> Doc. no. 4955 in *The Correspondence of William Henry Fox Talbot*.

<sup>35</sup> The volume has been fully digitised by the Yale Center for British Art and is available at <https://collections.britishart.yale.edu/catalog/orbis:3573480> (25.09.2024).

<sup>36</sup> Graham Smith, "H. Fox Talbot's 'Scotch Views' for *Sun Pictures in Scotland*," in *The Photobook from Talbot to Ruscha*, ed. Patrizia di Bello, Colette Wilson, and Shamooin Zamir, London: I. B. Taurus, 2012, 17-34; Graham Smith, "In the Shadow of Scott: Talbot and the Wizard of the North," in Mirjam Brusius, Katrina and Dean, and Chitra Ramalingam, *William Henry Fox Talbot: Beyond Photography*, New Haven: The Yale Center for British Art, 2013, 95-115.

<sup>37</sup> Doc. no. 5353 in *The Correspondence of William Henry Fox Talbot*.

<sup>38</sup> Other important publications illustrated with calotypes: *Art Union Journal* (vol. 8, 1846), and *Annals of the Artists in Spain* (1847).

offered an effective way to showcase and disseminate paper photography.<sup>39</sup> The Kórník prints all have about the same external dimensions of 18.5 × 22.5 cm, which underscores the standardisation in the printing process that took place at the Reading establishment, while the image sizes differ. In this regard it is interesting to note that the prints all display the characteristic black border created by the contact printing process from negative to positive and some of these borders show signs of their hand-crafted nature (uneven photographic emulsion, irregular edges, etc.). In content, the photographs reproduce a variety of subjects from an Egyptian tablet with hieroglyphs to a fern leaf and views of Scotland and Orleans in France. They are all views taken with the camera, except for two contact-printed positive images (Figs. 1 and 2), one of the earliest techniques to make photographic images that Talbot employed mostly in the photogenic drawing. Six of the prints bear Talbot's handwritten ink inscriptions in the upper left corner of the recto, with a brief summary of the subject depicted. All of them have the ink stamp impression on the reverse "BIBLIOTEKA KÓRNICKA", a round stamp with the Ogończyk and Jelita coats of arms in the centre, along with an inscription in the surrounding border.

As the photographs discussed here were most likely produced at the Reading establishment, it is crucial to note that Talbot probably did not print these himself. While he created the negatives, the printing process was carried out by assistants under the supervision of Henneman who ran the establishment.<sup>40</sup> This is an important point to emphasise, as Talbot is often regarded as the sole 'author' of the numerous photographs in the various Talbot collections. Although he was responsible for making the negatives, therefore making iconographic and aesthetic choices, the printing process – from negative to positive – was an equally important part of the operation, as it determined the quality of the final specimens presented to the audience. Acknowledging this collective effort in the production of salted paper prints is essential, as it highlights both the collaboration involved and the high volume of images produced at the Reading establishment during that period (an estimated 6,000 prints were made for the first two issues of *The Pencil of Nature* alone).<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> In 1846, the Reading Establishment produced approximately 13,500 unmounted "copies," which were either sold to print sellers or distributed by Talbot through his personal network. Arnold, *William Henry Fox Talbot*, 152.

<sup>40</sup> Henneman hired five people to work at the Reading establishment among which were John Henderson, Alfred Harrison, Thomas Augustine Malone. Arnold, *William Henry Fox Talbot*, 150-151.

<sup>41</sup> Greg Hobson, "WHF Talbot and the Business of Photography," in *William Henry Fox Talbot. Dawn of the Photograph*, edited by Russell Roberts and Greg Hobson, London, Scala Arts & Heritage Publishers, 2016, 133.

The majority of the Kórník Library's prints are views from Scotland, a place that, as we have seen, was dear to Talbot. He spent considerable time there in the 1840s practising photography, and later, in the 1850s, rented a property in Edinburgh during the winters, being particularly involved in the scientific season.<sup>42</sup> Figure 3, titled by Talbot *View in Scotland*, was taken during his and Henneman's Scottish visit of October 1844 for *Sun Pictures in Scotland*.<sup>43</sup> Further information of the subject depicted is provided by the negative of this salted paper print, which bears on the verso Talbot's inscription "Teviot near Branksome."<sup>44</sup> There is only one other known print depicting this view (now in the collections of the Société Française de Photographie), but Talbot's handwriting does not appear on the recto. Even if this view did not make the cut in the selection to become part of *Sun Pictures in Scotland*, it is an example of the publication aesthetics and the Scotland landscape Talbot and Henneman travelled and photographed.

Similarly, Figure 4, titled *Holyrood Palace, Edinburgh*, depicts what is today known as Holyroodhouse and was taken during the same visit in Scotland. A curious detail is that, according to Graham Smith, all the photographs depicting Edinburgh were made on 11 October, the only day available to take photographs before Talbot's departure for Glasgow on the day after.<sup>45</sup> Comparing Figure 4 with the waxed negative, it is clear that the Kórník print was made before the negative was trimmed (it is now 17.0 × 16.9 cm).<sup>46</sup> The image shows signs of the common fading that haunted the paper prints made in those years at the Reading establishment; a technical problem due to bad fixing and poor quality of the water supplies. As Talbot himself pointed out much later in 1873, the quality of these prints was unstable, "[s]ome of the plates have now faded, and some not at all. The art of fixing them properly was not understood at that time."<sup>47</sup>

The third image depicting Scotland is *Doune Castle* (Fig. 5), the location of Scott's novel *Waverley* (1814). It is precisely because of this connection that the

<sup>42</sup> From the 1850s, while in Scotland, Talbot intensively experimented to improve his photomechanical processes, particularly the photoglyphic engraving (1858).

<sup>43</sup> For further information on Talbot's 1844 visit in Scotland see the blog post: Larry Schaaf, "A wee while in Scotland" published on 23/10/2015 in *The Talbot Catalogue Raisonné*, <https://talbot.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/2015/10/23/a-wee-while-in-scotland/> (19.09.2024)

<sup>44</sup> The negative is housed in the Talbot Collection at the National Science and Media Museum (inventory no. 1937-4063) and can be viewed in the Talbot Catalogue Raisonné (Schaaf no. 1890).

<sup>45</sup> Smith, "In the Shadow of Scott," 105.

<sup>46</sup> See Schaaf no. 1014 in *The Talbot Catalogue Raisonné*.

<sup>47</sup> Doc. no. 9971 in *The Correspondence of William Henry Fox Talbot*.



same image, titled *The Castle of Doune*, appeared in the previously mentioned volume *Sun Pictures in Scotland* as Plate 18 (Fig. 6). According to the National Libraries of Scotland, only about 20 completed copies of *Sun Pictures in Scotland* are known.<sup>48</sup> In addition to these, there are two other loose prints made from the same negative as Figure 6, along with the negative itself, held in the NSMM collections.<sup>49</sup> One of these prints is reproduced in Figure 7 and is now in the collections of the National Museum in Krakow.<sup>50</sup> It is mounted in an album, and on the same page (Fig. 8), there is another photograph by Talbot depicting the Messageries Royales in Orléans, France (Fig. 9). A print of the same subject is also part of the Kórnik Library's collection (Fig. 10). What is particularly interesting is the handwritten inscription at the bottom of the album page in Figure 8, right underneath the photograph:

Pierwsze Fotografie. Daguerotypy – przysłane przez P. Fox Strangways – 1845.  
Ministra // Angielskiego w Frankforcie – (wielki przyjaciel Polski).<sup>51</sup>

As the different inks suggest, the inscription was written by at least three different hands. In the first part, it mistakenly identifies Talbot's prints as daguerreotypes instead of positive prints from calotypes, and Talbot's name does not appear at all. However, the word "Daguerotypy" seems to be crossed out in a different ink, probably the result of a later correction. As Strangways noted in a letter to Talbot, the mistake of addressing paper photography with the wrong term was fairly common and it was "hard work to stop their calling them Daguerreotypes."<sup>52</sup> In this regard, it is worth pointing out that at the Kórnik Library there is a copy of the volume *Daguerreotyp i Diorama*, published in 1840, one of the earliest publications in Polish addressing technical aspects of the daguerreotype.<sup>53</sup> The volume likely belonged to Zamoyski who, having lived in France as an exile for many years, was probably more familiar with the daguerreotype process than with the calotype, which was seldom practiced in Central Europe. The confusion surrounding the

<sup>48</sup> Online exhibition *Scotland and the Photobook*, The National Library of Scotland, <https://www.nls.uk/exhibitions/scotland-and-the-photobook/sun-pictures/> (25.09.2024).

<sup>49</sup> See the images in *The Talbot Catalogue Raisonné*, Schaaf no. 795.

<sup>50</sup> The National Museum in Cracow, inv. no. MNK VIII-rkps-1266.

<sup>51</sup> English translation: First photographs. Daguerreotypes – sent by Mr Fox Strangways – 1845. Minister of English in Frankfort – (great friend of Poland).

<sup>52</sup> Doc. no. 4955 in *The Correspondence of William Henry Fox Talbot*.

<sup>53</sup> *Daguerreotyp i Diorama*, Poznań: Fratelli Scherk, 1840. [https://platforma.bk.pan.pl/en/search\\_results/998262?q%5Bq%5D=daguerre](https://platforma.bk.pan.pl/en/search_results/998262?q%5Bq%5D=daguerre) (25.09.2024).

terminology also reflects how little-known Talbot's process was and, consequently, how difficult it was to accurately describe early paper-based photography.

The inscription on the album page reveals that the two photographs in Figure 8, now housed at the National Museum in Krakow, were sent by Strangways in 1845, underscoring once again his pivotal role in promoting Talbot's photographic process in Europe. However, it does not inform us about where and to whom the photographs were addressed. Notably, the inscription in the second line, written with a different ink, highlights Strangways' admiration for the Polish people, likely intended as a political gesture given his role as British Minister in Frankfurt (1840-1849) and his open support for the Polish cause. However, it may also suggest a personal connection between the album's creator and Strangways. It is plausible that the photographs held in both the National Museum in Krakow and the Kórnik Library arrived in the same shipment sent by Strangways, with Zamoyski likely responsible for distributing copies of the same subjects among his circle, allowing them to be viewed by a wider audience. The album in Figure 8, in fact, bears the title *Pamiętki zebrane dla mego ukochanego syna Adama Sapiehy – Jadwiga z Zamoyskich Sapieżyna* and was created in the 1850s by Jadwiga Sapieżyna, née Zamoyska (sister of general Zamoyski), for her son Adam Sapieha.<sup>54</sup> The album served as a personal memorial book, containing a variety of items such as ephemeral prints, business cards, dried plants, and, occasionally though not frequently, photographs – including Talbot's, which appear on the first pages of the album.

Another element connecting the photographs in Figures 5, 6, and 8 is the noticeable fading, which compromises the clarity of the images. Similar to Figure 4, this fading is a critical element to consider when studying Talbot's prints from the 1840s, as it reflects the technical challenges of fixing the image during that period and the struggle of producing a high volume of quality prints at the Reading establishment. The same issue affects Figure 11, another depiction of Orléans, now almost entirely faded. This photograph, taken from an elevated vantage point, shows the rooftops of the city, including the Gothic cathedral Sainte-Croix, distinguished by its two 88-metre-tall towers. As Geoffrey Batchen and Roger Watson noted, Talbot visited Orléans in June 1843 during a trip to France, where he took several photographs, including the negative for this print that was probably taken on 14 June.<sup>55</sup> Accor-

<sup>54</sup> English translation: Souvenirs collected for my beloved son Adam Sapieha – Jadwiga née Zamoyska Sapieżyna. – MNK VIII-rkps.1266.

<sup>55</sup> See inventory document and the blog post: Geoffrey Batchen, "Summer Pleasures: One of the Towers of Orleans Cathedral" published on 19/08/2016 in *The Talbot Catalogue Raisonné*,

ding to a content list drafted by Talbot, two images titled *Orleans Cathedral* and *Orleans Place* were intended as additional plates for *The Pencil of Nature*, but they were never published, as the series ended with the 6<sup>th</sup> issue.<sup>56</sup>

The final photograph I am going to discuss in the series, titled by Talbot *London*, depicts several houses under construction in Sussex Gardens, near the newly built Paddington Station (Fig. 12).<sup>57</sup> As Watson and Schaaf suggest, the date of the negative is unknown, but it may correspond to a letter from Henneman dated 25 January 1845 describing a “negative of the house building with the Scaffolding on it” and to a photograph listed as no. 15 titled *A House Building in London*, 1844.<sup>58</sup> Schaaf also highlights that the striking aspect of this image is Talbot’s keen interest in capturing change.<sup>59</sup> This was not an isolated instance; many of Talbot’s photographs from the 1840s depict monuments and buildings undergoing construction or renovation, creating a visual record of them at a specific moment in time. He did this, for instance, in Plate 2 of *Sun Pictures in Scotland*, where Sir Walter Scott’s monument is shown with scaffolding, photographed, as Talbot noted, “as it appeared when nearly finished, in October 1844” (Fig. 13).<sup>60</sup> Images like Figure 12 reflect Talbot’s fascination with documenting the evolving urban landscape. Rather than focusing solely on “before and after” photographs, he also captured the “in-between” moments, offering tangible proof of photography’s power to record transitional phases that might otherwise be overlooked.

## Conclusions

As an ensemble, Talbot’s eight photographs in the Kórník Library demonstrate the various ways the photographic medium could be employed to create records of the world. Most of the subjects are buildings and architectural features, yet

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<https://talbot.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/2016/08/19/summer-pleasures-one-of-the-towers-of-orleans-cathedral/> (25.09.2024).

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> The train station opened in 1838 but much of the work was completed a decade later, with many improvements added in 1854 designed by Isambard Kingdom Brunel.

<sup>58</sup> Doc. no. 5167 in *The Correspondence of William Henry Fox Talbot*. See also the Kórník Library inventory and Larry J. Schaaf, “A Birthday, In Memoriam, & Building a House,” published on 23/09/2016 in *The Talbot Catalogue Raisonné*, <https://talbot.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/2016/09/23/a-birthday-in-memoriam-building-a-house/> (08.10.2024).

<sup>59</sup> Larry J. Schaaf, “A Birthday, In Memoriam, & Building a House,” published on 23/09/2016 in *The Talbot Catalogue Raisonné*, <https://talbot.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/2016/09/23/a-birthday-in-memoriam-building-a-house/> (08.10.2024).

<sup>60</sup> See list of content in *Sun Pictures in Scotland*.

they are photographed from different perspectives, each highlighting a distinct purpose – from the elevated viewpoint capturing rooftops in Orleans (Fig. 11), to the London house photographed from a frontal, close-up view, with crisp shadows cast onto the building (Fig. 12). In addition to these views, the contact prints (Figs. 1-2) were included in the shipment to demonstrate how photography could be used to copy different subjects in fine detail. To illustrate this application, Talbot chose a fern leaf and an Egyptian tablet with hieroglyphs, two subjects linked to his interests in botany and ancient languages, both fields of research where shapes and details played an important role.<sup>61</sup>

It is essential to consider the eight photographs in the Kórník Library, alongside the two prints at the National Museum in Kraków, as a unique corpus representative of Talbot's calotype process. This curated selection aimed to convey more than what individual photographs could show; together, they formed a small portfolio that illustrated the application of a new technology still little known outside the UK. The inclusion of these prints in Polish collections, both linked to the Zamoyski family, demonstrates the early circulation of paper photographs among Polish cultural and political elite in the 1840s. Though limited in number, this circulation reflects a significant cultural exchange and marks these prints as some of the few examples of Talbot's calotype process to reach Central Europe. Furthermore, this selection underscores Talbot's efforts to promote paper photography beyond the UK, a mission bolstered by Strangways' significant role in disseminating this medium through his personal connections and diplomatic travels across Europe. The Kórník Library prints not only showcase Talbot's pioneering photographic practice but also illustrate the early transnational exchange of photographic processes, enriching our understanding of how the calotype process moved across Europe through diplomatic hands.

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<sup>61</sup> Mirjam Brusius, "Inscriptions in a Double Sense."

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