

PhD thesis summary

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Title: Activity of the Silesian Piasts Museum in Brzeg in 1945–1989

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The activity of the museum of Brzeg has more than 100 years of history. On March 27th, 1901, Benjamin Wiehle turned over a collection of more than 4,000 exhibits to the town for the creation of an archaeological museum. The ceremonial opening of the first Brzeg museum took place in Brzeg on November 11th, 1910, whereas the exhibition was made available to visitors on November 13th. The installation entry was located at Piastowska Street 42. In 1924 the town bought the castle and the museum moved to the Renaissance Silesian Piast seat. The facility of Brzeg has been a regional museum since the beginning of its existence, the basic task was to collect monuments presenting the past of the town and its inhabitants.

The presented doctoral dissertation focuses on the activities of the Museum of Silesian Piasts in Brzeg in the years 1945-1989. The purpose of the thesis is to present the Brzeg institution in terms of institutional and research and development.

The chronological scope of the work contains the period from the end of World War II to a political breakthrough in 1989. Some fragments go beyond a specific time period due to the need to bring phenomena to a fundamental impact on development and activity of the institution, a particular issues related to the history of museology, gathering collections in the field that refer to the pre-war beginnings of the institution and the development prospects of the museum of Brzeg entering the nineties of the 20th century .

The source base consists of materials located in the State Archives in Opole, the State Archives in Wrocław, and the Central Archives of Modern Records in Warsaw. In chapters I and II, the literature presenting the history and development of Polish museology was used. The purpose of these chapters is to describe the idea of the museum, its history and its institutional and administrative location until the beginning of the 20th century. The least recognized topic in the current literature is the functioning of museums after the Second World War, especially in the field of cultural policy.

In this dissertation, this problem has been described in the third subchapter discussing the issue of museums in the propaganda of the PRL authorities. Chapters III, IV and V are based on the analysis of the source materials due to the lack of publications dealing with the activities of the Museum of Silesian Piasts after 1945. Newspaper articles referring to the activities of the facility of Brzeg were also used and its history as well as the theme of the development of museology and widely understood culture in the Opole Voivodeship.

The work consists of five chapters. The first chapter describes the history of museology up to 1945 and the process of creating museums as a general European phenomenon. The starting point of the considerations was the presentation of the genesis of collecting and gathering by kings and the wealthy part of society. The collections were created by great Polish magnates, such as Jerzy Ossoliński, Zygmunt Myszkowski and Mikołaj Wolski. Unfortunately, the warfare in the 17th century caused the destruction and looting of many cultural assets. The Enlightenment period is a new chapter in the history of Polish collecting. The initial concepts of museology, created in Stanisław's time, are characterized by combining three institutions into one: archive, library and museum. In the chapter, I have discussed the first museum creation projects on the territory of the Republic of Poland starting from the 18th century. The main assumption, in line with the spirit of the time, was to popularize the knowledge by collecting evidence from the past and present in order to preserve it for future generations. Thus, the model of collecting and making the collected goods available to the public, developed in previous centuries, was transformed over time into museum institutions. The collections accumulated by Izabela Czartoryska in the Temple of the Sibyl are considered by some researchers as the first Polish museum. The historical facts related to the partitions had a significant impact on the perception that society had of the museum institution. These institutions played a special role, reflecting social moods, expressing aspirations for independence by collecting souvenirs testifying to the greatness of the Republic of Poland and its culture. The 19th century is a period of museum creation in the former Polish territories and in other European countries. After regaining independence in 1918, the museums began to function. On April 1st, 1939, there were 175 museums in Poland. The outlined history of museology shows the factors that influenced the creation of museums as institutions and their location in the culture of the 20th century.

Chapter II, "Shaping museology in Poland after World War II", consists of three subchapters presenting the creation of legal frameworks that define the activity of museums. The first subchapter is an analysis of the regulations introduced by the authorities after the end of the Second World War. In the changed geopolitical conditions and the new borders, the authorities began the process of resuming museum activity by creating the Ministry of Culture and Art, and then, on February 13th, 1945, the General Directorate for the Protection of Museums and Monuments. . In 1950 all museums were centralized and placed under the supervision of the Ministry of Culture and Art. A museum network based on district museums and subordinate regional museums was created. Since 1958, there has been a gradual decentralization and transfer of museums to the management of the presidiums of the national councils, initially provincial, then municipal. In 1962, the Sejm of the Polish People's Republic passed the Law on the Protection of Monuments and Museums, repealing the regulations on monument protection in force since 1928. Other changes in museology took place in 1975 in

connection with the administrative reform introduced. The museum districts were created within the administrative boundaries of the newly created voivodeships. The system based on the district museums was changed only after the political transformation. New norms were included in the Communal Autonomy Law, specifying that the maintenance of museums is the task of the commune, while in 1996 the Museums Law was approved, which regulates the principles of their operation in a democratic state.

The second subchapter contains a discussion on the issue of museum creation in the Western Territories, which is particularly important in relation to the institution of Brzeg. It needs to be highlighted that in the pre-war period there were about 60 museums in Lower Silesia, most of which were severely devastated by the war. Not only the headquarters of the institutions were damaged, but also the collections. One of the tasks of the established Ministry of Recovered Territories was the management of post-German property. Based on the regulations introduced, movable and immovable monuments located in the areas annexed to Poland after World War II became the property of the Polish state. The situation of the museums in the Western Territories was difficult, the historical resources were treated as remnants of the German cultural heritage, which, in the political and social situation of that time, caused a lack of interest in saving these objects. The situation of the Brzesko institution was presented at the congress of the Association of Polish Museums in Nieborów in September 1946. In the materials relating to museums in the Western Territories, it was recognized that the Brzeg museum should be maintained and organized again. In 1950, the authorities nationalized all museums and introduced a new structure: the museum network. Thus, the stage of administrative consolidation of the museums that had been outside the borders of the Polish state before the Second World War was finished.

The third subchapter is a reflection on the cultural policy of the Polish authorities in relation to museums. It presents the crystallization process of the budgets for the future centralist system of diffusion of culture, to which, from 1950, the museums were also incorporated.

The third chapter "Evolution of the legal status of the Museum of Silesian Piasts in Brzeg" has been divided into six subchapters. The structure of the chapter results from the administrative and legal conditions that regulate the operation of the Brzeg museum in the structure of the public administration. Each of the subchapters contains an analysis of the documents regulating the activities of the Brzeg facility in the structure of the public administration. It presents legal acts, including regulations and statutes, that characterize the management of the museum and define its role as a cultural institution. It presents the institutions that supervise the Brzeg facilities in chronological order and characterizes the museum's operating principles under a given supervisory authority. It indicates the relations between the museum and the local and state authorities, especially in the context of the implementation

of the cultural policy led by the Ministry of Culture and Art. In the context of the above considerations, the issue of the reconstruction of the Piast castle was also discussed, which in the 1950s was still in the planning process by local and provincial authorities. Finally, in 1966, construction work began under the supervision of prof. Jerzy Rozpedowski. Reconstruction of the Renaissance seat of the Silesian Piast dynasty was finished in the late 1980s.

Chapter IV focuses on the implementation of the museum mission by the Silesian Piast Museum in Brzeg. It presents the process of collecting and complementing the collections through purchases, donations and field research. A particularly important moment in the process of creating the collection was the granting of a charter to the museum of Brzeg that defines the profile of the institution. The collection related to the Silesian Piasts and the history of Brzeg was systematically expanded. The following subchapters analyze the scientific development of the institution, the aim is to show the transformation of the Brzeg museum from a passive institution that accumulates collections to a creative institution that stimulates the creation of new forms of education and science. A dynamic institution that introduces new trends in the promotion of historical knowledge. The Silesian Piast Museum in Brzeg, through its outreach activity, over time became a local educational center, an institution that organizes lectures, talks, readings, scientific conferences, concerts and other gatherings. The exhibition and research activities presented in this chapter contributed to the cultural development of the region. The last two subchapters present the process of hiring scientific and administrative personnel in the museum and the financing of the unit. The chapter presents the evolution of the museum's activities in the field of education, exhibitions, and research and development during the institution's 40 years of operation.

Chapter V ends the dissertation which presents the "socio-cultural function of the Museum of Silesian Piasts in Brzeg". This fragment of the work is designed to show a multifunctionality and culture formation role of the Brest institution, which has been transformed into a contemporary cultural institution. The first part of the chapter presents a relationship between the museum, local government, state authorities, regional societies, as well as the library and cultural center. The inter-institutional cooperation of the museum determined its role and importance in the construction of the cultural identity of the land of Brzeg.

The second subsection "The role of the Museum of Silesian Piasts in the construction of the cultural identity of the region" through the prism of the history and tradition of the princely court shows the culture-forming role of the Museum of Brzeg. It was the facility that since the 1960s had been implementing its own program that consisted of building the Piast tradition dating back to the Middle Ages. The continuity of the actions that connect the past with the present is visible in the initiatives carried out by the museum. Going back in time, the Prince's Court was the center of the city's

intellectual life, bringing together representatives of art, science and culture. Today's Piast Castle and the Museum in it are a continuation of the heritage of the Piast princes organizing scientific conferences and symposiums. It maintains close cooperation with schools such as Illustre Gimnasium, the Laurentianum organization and Georgianum. The Museum of Silesian Piasts in Brzeg is the organizer of numerous cultural events, for example "Brzeg Days", "Days of the Duchy of Brzeg", "Days of the Land of Brzeg". Referring to court traditions at the Castle, music resounds during the "Liszt's night" or "Wratislavia Cantas" festival. According to tradition, the Prince's court has been associated with tournaments and balls, for several years in the courtyard of the Piast Castle there has been the Alegria festival in Brzeg, during which, festival participants and Brzeg residents dance tango.

Finishing the chapter, the Museum of Silesian Piasts was presented as a community -forming institution, which integrates the inhabitants throughout the past and still actively participated in the creation of a material registry of local heritage. Despite the past of the coast, the interruption of cultural continuity, social and demographic changes, the castle has been a symbol of the cultural relationship with Silesia for centuries such as the heir of the Piast tradition.

The presented dissertation is a summary of the many years of activity of the Piasts Museum of Silesia in Brzeg and the reflection on the path that the institution of Brzeg has begun from a small collection of memories of antiquity to a cultural institution in dynamic development. Th Museum of Silesian Piasts in Brzeg implements the mission to shape regional culture and occupies a permanent place on the cultural map not only of Silesia but also in other areas of our country.