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FROM THE HISTORY OF WARSAW ARCHAEOLOGY, OR HOW THIS ACADEMIC DISCIPLINE WAS INAUGURATED IN THE POLISH CAPITAL DESPITE THE ADVERSITIES OF FATE

Abstract: History is a truly important tool for understanding the realities of the present. This is especially true of academic disciplines, which cannot function without understanding the origins of the research questions, the methods of their development, or the limitations of a given era. The case is no different for archaeology, whose history, though equally “ancient”, is still underestimated by many. A case in point may be the fate of Warsaw archaeology, which for over 100 years, at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, developed in the Russian Partition of Poland. Although the origins of this area of study can be traced back to the mid-eighteenth century in Warsaw, the turbulent political history of the country led to its long-standing stagnation, which was overcome by the efforts of eminent individuals. However, the understanding of archaeology as a private interest of the wealthy did not change until the internal crises in the Russian Empire in 1905. These allowed for an institutional revival in Warsaw. Nevertheless, none of these changes equals the regaining of independence, which became an inspiration to rebuild the country, also in the academic domain. One of the pillars of this reconstruction became the University of Warsaw. Despite adversities, the first chair of prehistoric archaeology in Warsaw was established within the structures of the then newly-founded university, and an outstanding self-taught archaeologist, Erazm Majewski, became its head.

Keywords: history of archaeology, Warsaw archaeology, Erazm Majewski

“Earth gives birth to pots”, or the beginnings of interest in antiquities in Poland

Polish activity in the field of research on the past has an extremely old tradition. Jan Długosz (1415–1480) was one of the first to mention the presence of archaeological records as early as in the fifteenth century.¹ For the next three centuries Długosz’s “Earth gives birth to pots” was almost a paradigm, reproduced by other Polish and European chroniclers.² The idea of “pots being born from the earth” referred to Aristotle’s doctrine of matter and form, which were to be created, in a very simplified way, straight from the ground. Such a visualisation was, in a way, made by a Franciscan, Barthélemy de Glanville (identified in sources between 1230 and 1250), who included in his encyclopaedia of philosophy and nature a woodcut illustrating a mountain over water at the foot of which and between two trees animals — a wild boar and a roe deer — emerged from

¹ ABRAMOWICZ 1983, p. 30.

² ABRAMOWICZ 1983, pp. 30–52.

the ground together with pots [Fig. 1]. It was not until the Age of Enlightenment that a breakthrough in thinking occurred, especially in the scholarly societies founded at that time, including the Society for Advancement of Arts and Sciences with branches in Warsaw, Poznań, Cracow, and Lviv. Nevertheless, it was in the Middle Ages that the first “excavations” were carried out in Poland. They were commissioned in 1390 by Louis I of Brzeg (1321–1398) “in search of bishops” (so far it has remained unknown what this term meant), and by Władysław Jagiełło (1362–1434) in 1416 at Nochów, in order to redress the doubts of an Austrian prince, Ernest, about the spontaneously growing vessels in Poland.³ The real development of interest in antiquities, however, came with the Early Modern Period and the Renaissance. In 1544, the first functional research began — craftsmen and goldsmiths tried to explain the functions of objects from the furnishings found in graves.⁴ In 1633, for beatification purposes, the grave of Wincenty Kadłubek was searched for and consequently opened.⁵ And in 1656, a real box grave was discovered near Gdańsk, which was also the subject of the first archaeological documentation in the history of Poland.⁶ The second half of the seventeenth century brought two important works which not only treated urns as a historical source, but also characterised the customs of the communities in question, in this case the Prussians. The authors, Christoph Hartknoch (1644–1687) and Jacob von Melle (1659–1743), are also associated with a breakthrough in the development of studies in antiquities — they were the first to make references to ancient finds and use literature.⁷ In the Age of Enlightenment, a Jesuit priest, Gabriel Rzączyński (1664–1737), came to the forefront of thinkers dealing with antiquity. He gave vent to his knowledge of wide-ranging finds from the Polish lands and was among the first to outline the historical polemics on the subject of “pots born of the earth”, unfortunately not insisting consistently on any option (although he does not rule out the enormous power of nature).⁸



Fig. 1. Earth gives birth to pots — pottery presented as a natural resource
(B. de Glanville, *Livre des propriétés des choses*, 1247)
(after Abramowicz 1983, p. 23; modified by the author)

³ ABRAMOWICZ 1983, p. 30.

⁴ ABRAMOWICZ 1983, p. 93.

⁵ ABRAMOWICZ 1983, pp. 101–102.

⁶ KOSTRZEWSKI 1949, p. 6; KOSTRZEWSKI 1970.

⁷ ABRAMOWICZ 1983, pp. 116–137.

⁸ ABRAMOWICZ 1983, p. 47.

As in other parts of Europe, the main determinant of the chronology of this period became the Holy Bible, according to which ancient history was conducted. Calculations of the Renaissance Period reached for various periodisation solutions, linking the beginnings of the world even to such concrete dates as 4004 BC. This date was defended in particular by an English bishop, James Ussher (1581–1656).⁹ Another important object of interest for antiquarians were the frequently discovered Roman coins, which were correctly identified as early as the time of Matthias de Miechów (1457–1523). Apart from time concerns, the affiliation of the collections to specific peoples became another issue. Due to the prestige of Roman culture, as well as the numismatic objects found on Polish lands, people started to interpret Polish history as follows: the case of Krak was similar to that of Romulus, while pagan burial rites started to be traced back to the ancient Romans.¹⁰ This process of *antiquarianisation*, apart from the barbarisation (*ethnologisation*) of finds and *actualism*, i.e. viewing Antiquity from the perspective of one's own historical period, were the main standards of investigating the past. Apart from attitudes aiming at understanding monuments, it was also common to avoid them, among other things, under the pretext of ensuring the peace of the dead. Nevertheless, the research initiated in the Middle Ages, accompanied by the development of natural sciences and philosophical thought in the Renaissance Period, was successful in later times. Classicism, widespread in literature and art, began to play an important role. One of its inspirations was the discovery and exploration of the towns destroyed by the eruption of Vesuvius, which began in the mid-eighteenth century.

The beginnings of interest in antiquities in Poland can therefore be considered above all in the context of the process of recognising different categories of archaeological records. Among the Poles, this interest was sparked by landmarks in the form of graves and burial mounds, pottery, church antiquities, treasures and individual Roman coins. For the longest time, until as late as 1717, stone tools, mainly flint, were often misidentified as the so-called lightning arrows.¹¹

**“When Poland ceased to exist, it occurred to me for the first time
to collect Polish memorabilia, which I entrust to posterity”
(Izabela Czartoryska, Polish aristocrat of the Enlightenment)**

The aforementioned classicism, which was a continuation of the renaissance cult of Antiquity, became a marker of taste and a cultural model in the age of the Enlightenment. For the Polish territory, however, it was still distant. Fortunately, this state of affairs was overturned by numerous foreign journeys in the eighteenth and the first quarter of the nineteenth century, which were a real breakthrough for the history of archaeology in Poland. These expeditions were attended by members of King Stanisław August Poniatowski's (1732–1798) [Fig. 2] court, as well as other high-born noblemen, including Jan Potocki (1761–1815), Aleksander Sapieha (1733–1812), Zorian Dołęga Chodakowski (1784–1825), Waclaw Rzewuski (1784–1831), Józef Sękowski (1800–1858), and Edward Raczyński (1786–1845).¹² They all undertook research journeys to satisfy their historical curiosity. Their activity was later appreciated by one of the greatest Polish poets, Adam Mickiewicz, who wrote about their experimental investigation of history, which was something of a novelty for the era. The impressions came from numerous corners of the world, from the Middle East to Siberia, from North Africa to the shores of Karelia. However, from the beginning, the interest was focused predominantly on the ancient world of Italy, most abundant in ancient records. From

⁹ ABRAMOWICZ 1983, pp. 193–194.

¹⁰ ABRAMOWICZ 1983, pp. 55–64.

¹¹ ABRAMOWICZ 1983, pp. 148–151.

¹² ABRAMOWICZ 1987, pp. 15–32; ABRAMOWICZ 1991, pp. 11–46.



Fig. 2. King Stanisław August Poniatowski
(source: Polona)

there, for considerable sums of money, the statues and other antiquities were transported by the great gentlemen-enthusiasts to richly-decorated sculpture galleries. These trips, which constitute today's tourist destinations in Rome, Pompeii, Herculaneum, and Sicily, were accompanied by the first insights into the principles of stratigraphy. The most important figure of this period was King Stanisław August himself, who not only personally collected various items (with intention of putting them to public use), but also organised scholarships for every outstanding traveller, artist, and thinker. His interest in Antiquity led to the popularisation of the Classicist style, even known as the Stanislaus style. As a result, many investments referring to the traditions of ancient civilisations were made, especially in the Royal Łazienki residence in Warsaw. Among other things, a stylised amphitheatre was erected there, and the alleys of the residence were decorated with numerous figures representing mythological characters. During the reign of King Stanisław August, thanks to the reform of the Commission for National Education, the knowledge of antiquities was also introduced to schools. Thanks to the activity of Hugo Kołłątaj (1750–1812), a Chair of Antiquities was established at the Crown High School in Cracow in 1782.¹³ The King's cadets, including Tadeusz Kościuszko, a world-famous military engineer, statesman, and military leader, as well as the author of numerous drawings of antiquities now kept in the National Museum in Cracow, were also well acquainted with Antiquity. The King's interests were so wide and widely-known that on many occasions people from all over the Republic came to him with collections of antiquities. However, the shock of the first partition in 1772 and the awareness of the threat to the statehood turned Poles' interest in antiquities towards their own past, which was strengthened by the total collapse of the state. This led not only to the expansion of private collections with domestic antiquities, but also to the storage and compilation of monuments by scholarly societies emerging at that time. Their primary purpose was to serve the preservation of the Polish identity. The thriving activities of these societies soon revealed serious problems for Polish academicians, especially those attending to the need to register all the historical finds. The collapse of the state did not stop the development of interest in antiquity, as evidenced by numerous research journeys abroad, the pioneer of which was the already-mentioned Jan Potocki, author of the renowned rogue novel, *Rękopis znaleziony w Saragossie* ("The Saragossa Manuscript"). He visited the countries of the Mediterranean basin, and at the end of his life he also reached the ends of Eurasia. He meticulously noted down all his

¹³ ABRAMOWICZ 1987, pp. 229–239.

observations in a diary titled *Podróże* (“Journeys”). The second protagonist, Aleksander Sapieha, chose the Balkans as his destination, where he wanted to get to know the Slavic peoples. Instead, he came upon rich Illyrian tombs. The next one, Zorian Dołęga Chodakowski,¹⁴ focused on the Slavic culture and related beliefs, while yet another one, Józef Sękowski, travelled through Troy to Egypt, which captured his interest for a long time. The last of them, Edward Raczyński, apart from travelling, also conducted his own excavations, e.g. in Gniezno.

As already mentioned, apart from continuing the interest in the ancient world, the Partitions became a veritable seedbed of Polish Slavophilia and the idea of searching for the roots of the Poles among ancient peoples. Such investigations were supposed to encourage people’s hearts by proving the native origin and ancient roots of the Polish-Lithuanian state.¹⁵ These sentiments, strengthened by the processes undertaken by the partitioning powers, as well as by the Romanticism prevailing in Europe, were also reinforced by a return to folk tales and traditions, which was the main characteristic of this period. Apart from interests growing in the area of prehistoric cultures, scholarly passions still revolved around Antiquity. Nevertheless, the first major scholarly publications appearing in the Polish lands reflected the interest in local communities. One of them was a book published in 1818 by Zorian Dołęga Chodakowski (actually Adam Czarnocki): *O Słowiańszczyźnie przed chrześcijaństwem* (“On Slavia before Christianity”).¹⁶

A Polish statesman, thinker, and historian, Joachim Lelewel (1786–1861) [Fig. 3], was also important for the development of archaeology at the time of the partitions. He was one of the first to make a methodological distinction between material heritage in his work *Historyka* (manuscript), defining it as “unwritten monuments, or mute statues, in all manners used, carried and shaped by human hands, such as buildings, statues, graves, tombstones, and medals”,¹⁷ and archaeology itself (in 1826). Unfortunately, the November Uprising (1830–1831), directed against the tsarist regime, and its subsequent collapse put an end to the development of scholarly thought in the field of research into the past. Lelewel was forced to emigrate to France, and the scholarly associations established by that time were dissolved. However, not everywhere did the “night of Paskevič”¹⁸



Fig. 3. Joachim Lelewel
(source: Polona)

¹⁴ DOŁĘGA-CHODAKOWSKI 1818 (1967).

¹⁵ See ABRAMOWICZ 1991, pp. 11–46; MATŁĘGIEWICZ 2012.

¹⁶ DOŁĘGA-CHODAKOWSKI 1818.

¹⁷ *Historyka rękopiśmienna*, manuscript, 1815, [in:] J. Lelewel, *Dziela*, vol. II (1), Warsaw 1964, p. 107.

¹⁸ Ivan Paskevič (1782–1856) — infamous Imperial Russian military leader who repressed the Poles economically and culturally after the November Uprising.

interfere with the development of interest in antiquity. In the Prussian and Austrian partitions, they could develop freely.¹⁹ This allowed those passionate about the study of the past to consider and adopt the system of three epochs — a true revolution in Antiquity studies ultimately attributed to the Danish Christian Jürgensen Thomsen (1788–1865), who argued for a succession of Stone, Bronze, and Iron ages, thus creating the framework for a relative chronology of prehistoric times.

Despite the threat of repression, antiquarian activities were not completely stifled and continued as part of private interests. As far as Lelewel is concerned, emigration allowed him to make new acquaintances with the *crème de la crème* of Antiquity scholars in Europe, as well as to introduce this community to archaeological research in Poland.²⁰ The 1850s can be regarded as a period of particular development for Polish archaeology — in Cracow a “Proclamation of the Scientific Society with the Jagiellonian University united for the purpose of archaeological prospecting together with a dossier which could serve as a guide for such prospecting” was issued then. Among other things, it envisioned establishment of a museum for collecting and studying antiquities. It was also at this time that the lack of a journalistic forum began to be keenly felt, a fact which moved another man of state, Wincenty Pol (1807–1872). To cater for this need, he tried to establish a journal, which was to be entitled *Skarbiec Archeologiczny* (“The Archaeological Treasury”).²¹ Eventually, the Archaeological Committee of the Cracow Scientific Society created its own series of the so-called *Roczniki* (“Annals”). In the first issue, the article “News about a Slavic idol found in Zbrucz in 1848” took pride of place. It probably contributed to the great commotion caused by the arrival of the famous Światowit statue [Fig. 4] in Cracow in 1851.

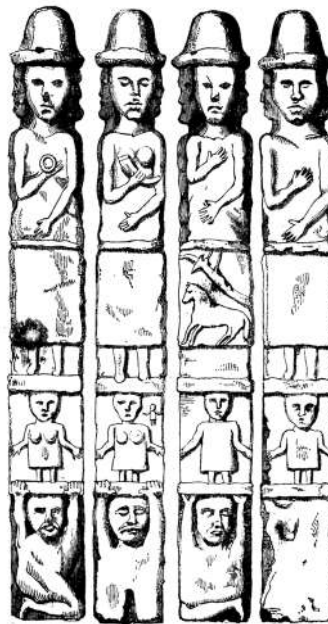


Fig. 4. Światowit from Zbrucz
as seen from different sides
(J. Lelewel, *Narody na ziemiach słowiańskich
przed powstaniem Polski*, 1853)
(source: Wikimedia Commons)

¹⁹ ABRAMOWICZ 1991, pp. 11–46.

²⁰ ABRAMOWICZ 1991, pp. 29–30.

²¹ ABRAMOWICZ 1991, pp. 31–32.

On the other hand, in Warsaw, studies coming from the first excavations carried out in 1851 by Franciszek Maksymilian Sobieszkański (1814–1878) were published. Despite repressions, the capital city received news and articles from various quarters. They were published in the *Biblioteka Warszawska* (“Warsaw Library”), *Gazeta Warszawska* (“Warsaw Newspaper”), and *Dziennik Warszawski* (“Warsaw Journal”). The growing collections and increased interest in archaeology also led to their publication — e.g., in Vilnius a museum and an archaeological commission were established, under the supervision of Eustachy Count Tyszkiewicz, who acted as a correspondent for the Imperial Russian Archaeological Society from 1849. The 1850s also brought an organisational revival, which also benefited the Society for the Advancement of Arts and Sciences in Poznań. The prestige of Polish archaeology at that time was also reflected in the membership of the famous Danish *La Société royale des antiquaires du Nord*, to which many Polish antiquarians belonged, including Waław Aleksander Maciejowski (1792–1883).²²

One of the most important figures in Polish archaeology of the Romantic Period was Józef Łepkowski (1823–1896), who was the first Pole to receive habilitation (postdoctoral degree) in medieval archaeology at the Jagiellonian University in 1862.²³ This earned him the right to lecture on the past. This event is considered to be the beginning of career of archaeology as an academic discipline in Poland. In 1875, after becoming a full professor, he established the first chair of archaeology in the history of Poland at the same university.

However, there is another side to this story, as Józef Łepkowski was to establish his first chair at the Royal University of Warsaw. Unfortunately, its foundation, as well as the entire development of archaeology in the Russian Partition, were undone by subsequent political events — the January Uprising (1863–1864) had a devastating impact on Polish society and science. Nevertheless, individual activity and news from Europe about new discoveries led to a phenomenon called “the positivist breakthrough” in Polish archaeology. It consisted to a large extent of priming historical perspectives on the methodology of natural sciences, especially geology and biology. Scientists who did so were called positivist-evolutionaries. One such person was Gotfryd Ossowski (1835–1897), a geologist and archaeologist, active within the Academy of Arts and Sciences.²⁴ His work was connected, among other things, to documentation and inventorying of caves in the regions of Cracow, Ojców, and the Tatra Mountains, but his numerous achievements in research, also in other fields, were somewhat overshadowed by questioning the authenticity of the finds from Mników, which, initially treated as a stunning discovery, turned out to be a forgery by a local craftsman.

Another large group of archaeologists were traditionalists who dealt with the interface between history of art and “antiquarianism”, as exemplified by the activity of the Archaeological Commission of the Academy of Arts and Sciences, headed by Adam Honory Kirkor (1818–1886).²⁵ A similar approach to that taken at the Cracow Academy was also adopted in Lviv, where the goal was to “search for, study and preserve, as well as describe, draw or photograph all portable and non-portable monuments of the past”. The journal *Przegląd Archeologiczny* (“Archaeological Review”) with the Światowit statue on the cover was to serve this purpose.²⁶ In the territory of Poznań, archaeology remained under the aegis of the Poznań Society for the Advancement of Arts and Sciences, where scholars would continue to pursue the Romantic and Slavophile interests. To this end, members of the society participated in many conventions, including an archaeological exhibition in Berlin in 1880 on the occasion of the 11th Congress of the German Anthropological

²² This is confirmed by the letter addressed to Maciejowski in 1843 and signed by the founders of the Nordic scientific association, preserved in the Archives of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw, see BARDACH 1971, pp. 232–233 (reproduction).

²³ CHOCHOROWSKI 2015.

²⁴ ABRAMOWICZ 1991, pp. 66–68.

²⁵ ABRAMOWICZ 1991, pp. 65–66.

²⁶ The periodical of the State Archaeological Society of Lviv. Not to be confounded with the *Przegląd Archeologiczny* published since 1919 by Józef Kostrzewski (1885–1969).

Society, which came as a real shock to the Polish delegation — objects treated by researchers from Poznań as Slavic were considered Germanic by German scholars.²⁷ This was probably one of the first manifestations of a long German-Polish polemics, which would continue until the early twentieth century.

The archaeology of the Partition Period often had to deal with the academic life of the divided country. In the Russian Partition, the common interest in Slavic studies was somewhat beneficial — the Poles were often members of Russian societies, while in the Prussian Partition Polish archaeology was oppositional towards the Germans, which, barring disputes, was productive and motivated healthy scholarly competition. In the Austrian Partition, which enjoyed considerable autonomy, cooperation proceeded without major obstacles, although Józef Łepkowski's chair or the institutions of the Academy of Arts and Sciences could complain of severe underfunding. Despite the separation, archaeologists from different partitions tried to maintain friendly relations, which was helped by historical conventions, the first of which was organised in 1880 in Cracow.²⁸ In spite of the unity of Polish archaeology at the time, archaeology itself underwent a process of disintegration, resulting from the growing source base and widening range of interests. However, classical archaeology, now known as Mediterranean archaeology, was a different matter, which in the discussed period remained under the influence of great collectors, such as Izabela Czartoryska (1746–1835), who in the Temple of the Sybil in Puławy gathered family collections and mementoes of great Poles, which strengthened hearts and commemorated pre-partition Poland.

In a kind of brief summary of the Partition Period in the practice of archaeology, a strong interest in antiquities, numismatics, but also in indigenous heritage and folklore was palpable at the time. In the middle of the nineteenth century, there was a certain evolution of views, related to works challenging in the first place the traditional understanding of the history of the Earth, related to spirituality and Christian religion. This stage, known as the Positivist Period, not only extended the timeline, but also gave the history more detailed and anthropological themes. This process was accompanied by new discoveries of the oldest traces of human activity in Europe.²⁹ The end of the nineteenth century also marked the dawn of a certain epoch of romantic and vigorous research into the past, which was probably due to a generational change — Włodzimierz Demetrykiewicz (1859–1937) for almost twenty years headed the Cracow archaeological centre and concentrated in his hands all the contemporary archaeology of the Polish lands;³⁰ Karol Hadaczek (1873–1914) headed the chair of classical archaeology in Lviv and orchestrated development of trends in “historicising” and “anthropologising” the past.³¹ Only at the end of the nineteenth century was there a certain revival of archaeology. Older scholars, whose interests and skills were still rooted in Romanticism, were replaced by a younger generation, developing in the positivist school of thought, especially oriented towards history, anthropology, and conservation. In the Prussian Partition, an archaeological renaissance began thanks to the activity of a young explorer, Józef Kostrzewski (1885–1969), a student of the famous scholar, Gustaf Kossinna (1858–1931). In 1914, immediately after his studies in Berlin, Kostrzewski was appointed head of the German Provincial Museum in Poznań.³² He organised the museum's numerous collections and carried out field research. At the same time, Warsaw archaeology gained much from the activities of a prominent chemist, entrepreneur, researcher, and self-taught archaeologist, Erazm Majewski (1858–1922).³³

²⁷ ABRAMOWICZ 1991, pp. 70–71.

²⁸ ABRAMOWICZ 1991, pp. 11–78.

²⁹ ABRAMOWICZ 1991, pp. 46–104.

³⁰ WOŹNY 2018.

³¹ BULYK, LECH 2011.

³² ABRAMOWICZ 1991, pp. 90–91.

³³ KRAJEWSKA 2010.

Warsaw under the Russian Partition

The most prominent centre of studies in antiquities in Warsaw was the Society for Advancement of Arts and Sciences, founded in 1800, which since its inception had shown interest in the past of the Polish lands. It grouped eminent figures of the time, such as count Stanisław Kostka Potocki (1755–1821) [Fig. 5], the linguist Samuel Linde (1771–1847), the historian Joachim Lelewel, the playwright Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz (1758–1841), the politician Hugo Kołłątaj (1750–1812), and the educationalist Tadeusz Czacki (1765–1813). It dealt not only with collecting sources, but also with their characteristics, elaboration, and interpretation. The activity of this association in the field of research into the past led in the early nineteenth century to an increase in the number of monuments, which were treated without scepticism as historical premises for assessing the degree of civilisational development of a given society.³⁴ An innovation brought by the Enlightenment became practising geology, which reflected positively on ancient interests, especially in the study of stratigraphy. It was right there, on the threshold of geoarchaeology, that the questions about the beginnings of mankind arose. Thanks to this, these problems began to be approached not from a local but rather global perspective.³⁵ At the same time, the research equipment available to scholars improved, too. Except for the already-mentioned research journeys, the personal activity of scholars increased, especially in regard to studies focused on particular artefacts. The genuine change in the antiquarian and archaeological practice had to wait until the reign of Tsar Alexander I (1777–1825), who restored not only the Polish statehood, but also the academic structures of the city. In 1815, the Royal University of Warsaw was established, which marked the beginning of a structured archaeological activity in Warsaw.³⁶ Quickly, already in 1816, the Numismatic



Fig. 5. Stanisław Kostka Potocki
(source: Polona)

³⁴ The so-called “ethnologising” trend, which began in the eighteenth century.

³⁵ ABRAMOWICZ 1991, pp. 79–104.

³⁶ MIKOCKI 1993.

Cabinet was created, where interest was focused on a group of antiquities with the longest history of discovery in the Polish lands — coins.³⁷ Later on, this increasing interest in antiquities led to the establishment of another centre in 1826, which came to be known as the Cabinet of Ancient Curiosities.³⁸ Unfortunately, the November Uprising and its collapse put an end to the institutions responsible for preservation of the testimonies of the past, which resulted in a long-term stagnation of institutional activity in the Russian Partition. This event, however, encouraged those interested in antiquities to engage in individual endeavours, especially related to the discovery of pre-Christian Slavic history. As a result, patriotic feelings and a desire to proclaim the glory of the ancient past increased. At this time in Warsaw, which had lost most of its research collections, the remaining sources were made available — at the Zoological Cabinet, there was the “Division of Various Curiosities”, an exposition visited by *ca.* 15,000 people during 1847 alone. Another success was the Exhibition of Antiquities and Objects of Art in the Augustów-Potocki Palace, opened in 1856. According to the statistics compiled by Andrzej Abramowicz, the catalogue of the exhibition included 1053 items, which included domestic antiquities under the numbers 57–173 and 1011–1027. The exhibition was even documented by Bolesław Podczaszyński (1822–1876), and Karol Beyer (1818–1877), the latter of whom was a pioneer in the use of photography for archaeological documentation.³⁹ The existence of individual initiatives, as well as of collections in general, in Warsaw, as well as in the whole Russian Empire, depended on the actions of the Tsarist Archaeological Commission, a conservation institution established in 1859 by Tsar Alexander II (1855–1881). Its task was, among others, to acquire relics from the entire area under Russian rule.⁴⁰ In this way, the more interesting specimens were sent to St Petersburg, while the less spectacular ones became local property. In addition to collecting, the Commission’s tasks included the study of antiquities and their scholarly evaluation. Many Poles belonged to the Tsar’s Archaeological Commission, as it was one of the opportunities for exchanging expertise and conducting one’s own research or foreign queries. The institutional situation improved only with the establishment of the Warsaw Main School in 1862, which led to the revival of the Numismatic Cabinet and the Cabinet of Ancient Curiosities. The most prominent figure of that period was undoubtedly Józef Przyborowski (1823–1896), a historian, numismatist, antiquarian, and university lecturer, who carried out numerous archaeological undertakings.⁴¹ The development of his interest in antiquities was somewhat halted by the January Uprising, which prevented the establishment of the Chair of Archaeology in Warsaw. Józef Łepkowski, who was to be its head, moved to his native Cracow, where he soon received habilitation. Had it not been for the political events of 1863–1864, he would have been able to start regular classes and mark the beginning of archaeology as an academic discipline in Warsaw.

The political situation in Warsaw, which temporarily eased once or twice after the January Uprising, allowed for the inauguration of another university initiative. In 1869, the Tsarist University of Warsaw was established, and with it the Museum of Antiquities.⁴² A few years later, in 1871, it was transformed into the Cabinet of Antiquities, later known as the Cabinet of Archaeology, which from 1877 was supervised by Antoni Julian Mierzyński (1829–1907). At that time, the collection consisted of approximately 2,000 artefacts. Although in the 1860s and 1870s archaeology was not included in the list of courses, it appeared in academic life, e.g. thanks to Adolf Pawiński, who used the inauguration of the academic year 1875/1876 to give an inaugural lecture entitled: “On the history and prehistory of the Polish Kingdom and on the history of primitive civilisations”.⁴³ In 1877, Numismatic and Archaeological Cabinets were merged into one centre of antiquities studies.

³⁷ KOLENDO 1993b.

³⁸ KOLENDO 1993b.

³⁹ ABRAMOWICZ 1991, pp. 36–38.

⁴⁰ SZCZERBA 2010.

⁴¹ KOZŁOWSKI 2016.

⁴² MIKOCKI 1993.

⁴³ KOLENDO 1993a.

Problems of Warsaw archaeological research during the Partitions

Although the post-Uprising repressions led to a certain stagnation in the development of interest in Antiquity, this did not apply to issues from the Slavic borderland. It became a common field for Polish and Russian scholars. Their research results and discussions were concentrated in *Tygodnik Petersburski* (“St. Petersburg Weekly”), a periodical where Eustachy Count Tyszkiewicz (1814–1873), the most prominent archaeologist of Lithuania and Belarus, published among others.⁴⁴ Also, the well-known Józef Ignacy Kraszewski (1812–1887) was keenly interested in archaeology, although the beginnings of his activity left much to be desired in terms of how he typologised pre-historic relics.⁴⁵ However, numerous Polish trips to Scandinavia or Odessa broadened his and other researchers’ scholarly horizons and analytical workshop. Constant involvement in the study of the past was also shown by editors of the *Biblioteka Warszawska*, established after the November Uprising, where Kazimierz Stronczyński (1809–1896) was very active, among others.⁴⁶ A well-known numismatist, he strove to improve the inventory of archaeological artefacts, which was only made possible by a decree issued by Prince Viceroy Paskevič in 1844. Another figure was the aforementioned Franciszek Maksymilian Sobieszczański, who became famous for his work “Archaeological research on the state of art and industry in Slavic lands before Christianity”.⁴⁷ In this work, he managed to note that digging up graves scattered on the lands of Slavic communities provided a lot of important information. In 1851, the same researcher published the results of his excavations, in which he made reference to the natural sciences and pointed out the problem of “indulging” the imagination in research on the past.

The 1850s were a time of relative development for Polish archaeology. It was also a time of the first serious methodological concerns, as exemplified by the attitude of Antoni Białecki (1836–1912), Professor at the Warsaw Main School, and later at the Imperial University of Warsaw. Białecki, being a lawyer, took a keen interest in antiquities and his activity was not limited to collecting, but extended to research and documentation.⁴⁸ In his texts, he often expressed concerns about the ethnic interpretation of archaeological sources. He was an advocate of research cosmopolitanism, doubting the validity of national feelings and prejudices in research on the past. This approach was all the more important, because at the same time when studies on the Slavic past were being conducted in Poland “antediluvian” human bones were discovered in France, near Abbeville. Although these discoveries changed worldviews, they also greatly troubled people’s consciences. The Paris correspondent, Zofia Węgierska (1822–1869) [Fig. 6], was the first to report on the new discoveries, referring in 1863 on the pages of *Biblioteka Warszawska* to the disputes connected with them, fuelled by Charles Darwin’s 1859 dissertation *On the Origin of Species*.⁴⁹ The personal involvement of antiquarians and archaeologists-enthusiasts is also evidenced by their frequent attendance at international congresses initiated in 1866 in Italy and continued in Paris, Antwerp, Norwich, Copenhagen, Bologna, Brussels, or Stockholm. In roughly the same years, a Lithuanian aristocrat, Count Jan Zawisza (1822–1887), who was keenly interested in prehistoric research, also attended these meetings. He conducted his own research in the Mammoth Cave that he owned.⁵⁰ Apart from using stratigraphic methods and proving the relative chronology of his finds, he published his research on the pages of *Wiadomości Archeologiczne* (“The Archaeological News”), a journal he established and whose first volume was published in 1873 [Fig. 7]. The editor of the first volumes and the author of the articles was the above-mentioned Józef Przyborowski.

⁴⁴ ABRAMOWICZ 1991, pp. 24–27.

⁴⁵ ABRAMOWICZ 1991, pp. 26–27.

⁴⁶ ABRAMOWICZ 1991, pp. 27–29.

⁴⁷ SOBIESZCZAŃSKI 1845.

⁴⁸ ABRAMOWICZ 1991, pp. 44–45.

⁴⁹ ABRAMOWICZ 1991, p. 51.

⁵⁰ KOZŁOWSKI 2016, p. 20.



Fig. 6. Zofia Węgierska
(source: Polona)

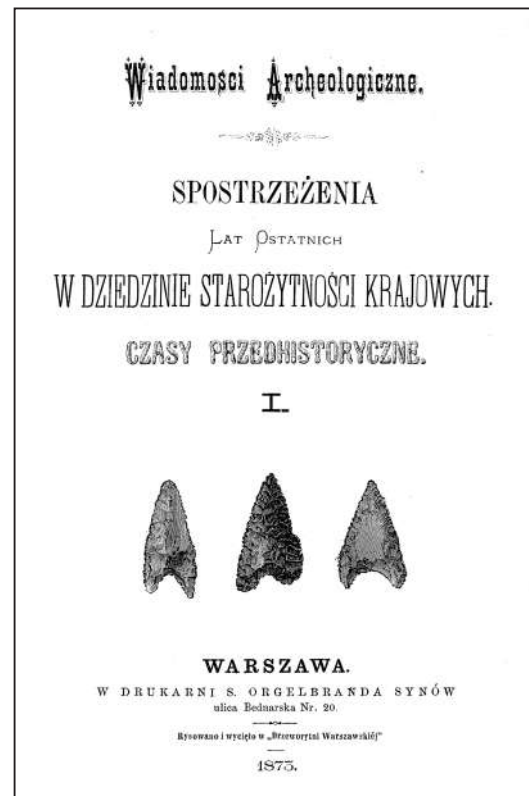


Fig. 7. Cover of the first volume
of *Wiadomości Archeologiczne*
(photo by M. Dąbski)

Despite increased scholarly activity, archaeology maintained in the spirit of “biologising” positivism did not stand the test of time. The same can also be said about the attitude of the then enthusiasts of this paradigm. At the end of the nineteenth century, the interest in archaeology in the Russian Partition, and throughout the Polish lands in general, declined, partly due to actions taken by Russian scholarly commissions. *Wiadomości Archeologiczne* collapsed. However, their place was taken by *Światowit* established in 1899 and published by Erazm Majewski, one of the last truly versatile archaeologists.⁵¹ His research priority became to avoid harmful ethnic interpretations, as he believed that, for the sake of research integrity, prehistory should remain “nameless”.⁵²

Despite the activity of several Warsaw researchers, the lack of independent institutions hindered the academic development of the capital. The situation changed with the Russian revolution of 1905, which allowed for a certain renaissance in archaeology. New societies began to emerge, such as the Anthropological Laboratory, the first of its kind in Poland, operating at the Museum of Industry and Agriculture in Warsaw, headed by Kazimierz Stołyhwo (1880–1966) [Fig. 8], and the Department of Prehistoric Excavations, led from 1906 by a painter, Marian Wawrzeniecki (1863–1943).⁵³ In 1907, the Warsaw Scientific Society was also founded,⁵⁴ taking up the tradition of its predecessor functioning until the outbreak of the November Uprising. A year later, in the building of the Society for the Encouragement of Fine Arts, the Erazm Majewski Archaeological

⁵¹ ABRAMOWICZ 1991, pp. 93–95.

⁵² ABRAMOWICZ 1991, p. 94.

⁵³ WRÓŃSKA 1986.

⁵⁴ MIKULSKI 2007.

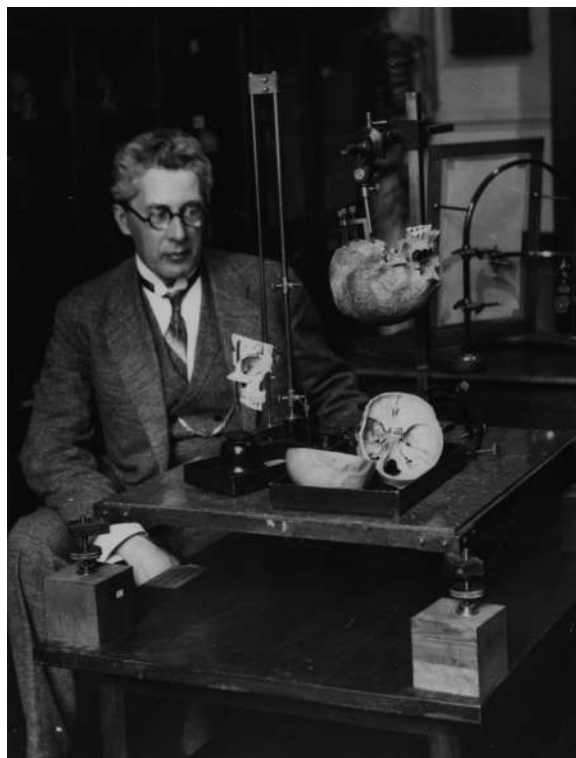


Fig. 8. Kazimierz Stolyhwo
(source: National Digital Agency)

Museum was opened.⁵⁵ The accomplishments of the founder of this institution, which went beyond scholarly writing about archaeological relics, but included also their collection, studying, and conservation, quickly attracted other interested parties. In this way, the future “giants” of Polish archaeology came under Majewski’s tutelage, so to speak: Leon Kozłowski (1892–1944), Marian Himner (1888–1916), Stefan Krukowski (1890–1982), and Ludwik Sawicki (1893–1972). Their remuneration took the form of research stipends, which made their employment resembling more of an informal archaeological school rather than actual work.⁵⁶ Perhaps, Majewski’s substantive leadership in this case served as an additional argument compelling the university authorities to establish the chair, which happened several years after the opening of the museum facility. The period of activity of the researchers mentioned in this section is also associated with increasingly ambitious scholarly plans in the field of research on the past. Young archaeologists grouped around Majewski would conduct extensive archaeological investigations, take up studies in foreign institutions, and publish.⁵⁷ All this coincided with a crisis caused by the First World War. In 1914, the university authorities decided to transport the most valuable exhibits of the Tsarist Warsaw University to St Petersburg and Moscow. In August 1915, the Russian army left Warsaw and was replaced by the German forces. The German authorities gave permission for creation of the University of Warsaw with Polish as the language of instruction. The ceremonial inauguration of the thus reborn University took place on 15 November 1915 in the presence of the German governor, General Hans von Beseler.

⁵⁵ MODRZEWSKA 1983; KRAJEWSKA 2013.

⁵⁶ KOZŁOWSKI, LECH 1996; KOZŁOWSKI 2016.

⁵⁷ KOZŁOWSKI 2012, pp. 35–39.

Inauguration of the first chair of archaeology in Warsaw

When Poland regained its own statehood, archaeology faced the problem of securing a place for itself in the emerging academic structures of the country.⁵⁸ The issue of educated human resources was to be solved by the old and new universities.⁵⁹ From 1915, efforts were made to establish the Chair of Archaeology in Warsaw. Erazm Majewski, who was also offered the chairs of Sociology at the University of Vilnius and Ethnology at the University of Lviv, was a natural candidate for its head.⁶⁰ Finally, he chose the Warsaw proposal. Unfortunately, due to his lack of formal education in this field, establishing and taking up the chair went not without some problems. The arduous path leading to granting full professorship began. A committee was set up at the University of Warsaw to establish the Chair of Archaeology and to nominate Majewski as Professor [Fig. 9]. It asked for an opinion on the qualifications and scholarly achievements of the candidate from the most important professors of archaeology in Poland: Józef Kostrzewski from Poznań and Włodzimierz Demetrykiewicz from Cracow.⁶¹ Both gave very favourable and supportive opinions. After obtaining the support of the Faculty of Philosophy and positive opinions about his academic qualifications and achievements, the nomination remained a mere formality. Majewski then began to plan the organisation of the chair and teaching of archaeology. However, before he proceeded with the implementation, he suffered a stroke on 23 April 1919. Quickly undertaken intensive therapy, rehabilitation, and excellent medical care caused his condition to improve, but hemiparesis and blindness remained. However, Majewski's candidature did not fail and on 7 October 1919 he was unanimously appointed Full Professor of prehistoric archaeology at the University of Warsaw, while on 18 December 1919 his nomination was signed by the Head of State. However, the progressing illness prevented the newly-promoted professor from devoting himself to research

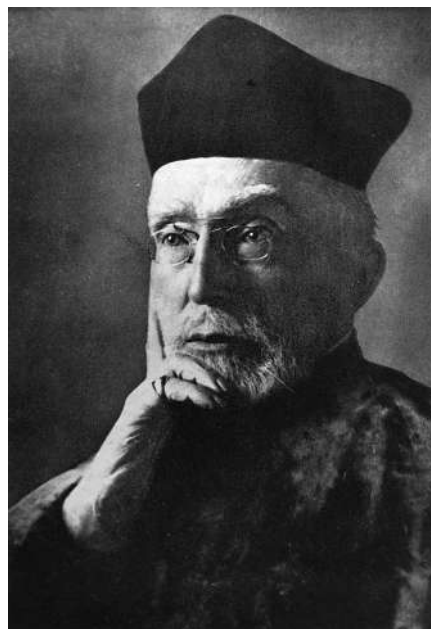


Fig. 9. Erazm Majewski
(source: National Digital Agency)

⁵⁸ LECH 1997–1998.

⁵⁹ ABRAMOWICZ 1991, pp. 105–138.

⁶⁰ KRAJEWSKA 2010.

⁶¹ For the review by W. Demetrykiewicz, see KOZŁOWSKI 2016, pp. 34–37.

and teaching. This led him to look for a docent who could relieve him of some of his duties. A pretender to this role was Leon Kozłowski, the future Prime Minister.⁶² Treated by Majewski as his adoptive son, he alienated himself from his protector by reason of his arrogance, political activities, and opinions. At that time, Włodzimierz Antoniewicz (1883–1973) [Fig. 10] was also put forward as a candidate.⁶³ A graduate of the Jan Kazimierz University in Lviv, a doctoral student at the Jagiellonian University, a postdoctoral student at the Piast University (now the Adam Mickiewicz University), a lecturer at the universities in Vienna and Prague, and, most importantly, a protégé of Józef Kostrzewski, he quickly gained Majewski's recognition. The decision was made in the second half of 1920, with Antoniewicz becoming the first assistant professor in archaeology at the University of Warsaw. Moreover, from 13 November 1920 was the head of the seminar which efficiently made him the head of the department. Despite Prof. Majewski's urging, Antoniewicz did not start teaching until January 1921, when he finally inaugurated the first strictly archaeological lectures at the University of Warsaw, attended by but a single student, Zofia Podkowińska (1894–1975). As it turned out, Majewski liked neither the classes nor Antoniewicz's attitude and aspirations. Relations between the two researchers cooled down, and there was even an attempt to remove Antoniewicz from his chair. However, the plan failed, due to the deteriorating health of Prof. Majewski and his eventual passing.⁶⁴ He died on 14 November 1922, in the 64th year of his life. An extremely solemn funeral took place four days later. The coffin was accompanied by a procession, preceded by two bursars with university sceptres in their hands. Professor Erazm Majewski was bid farewell by many, including his friends, representatives of the academia, art, press, industry, members of societies and associations, delegates of state institutions, as well as members of the Parliament and the Senate.



Fig. 10. Włodzimierz Antoniewicz
(source: National Digital Agency)

⁶² KOZŁOWSKI 2004; KOZŁOWSKI, SYTNYK 2010.

⁶³ KOZŁOWSKI 2009.

⁶⁴ KRAJEWSKA 2010.

Department of Prehistoric Archaeology at the University of Warsaw

After Majewski's death, Antoniewicz took full charge of the archaeology department, which was named as the Department of Prehistoric Archaeology. The Department's headquarters was moved to a three-room study in Staszic Palace, which also hosted a library full of German and Polish synthetic works on relevant topics and Central European periodicals. The base for studies conducted at the Department was the former Archaeological Cabinet of the Tsarist University of Warsaw as well as collections of the State Conservatories of Prehistoric Monuments founded in 1920.⁶⁵ Soon, with the help of Erazm Majewski's widow, Lucyna, the collections of the Erazm Majewski Museum of Prehistory, which did not reopen until 1932, became the main source of research material. Together with Majewski's journal *Światowit*, these provided Antoniewicz with full scholarly independence. In the early days of the institution, lectures were attended by a handful of people, and interestingly enough, these were only female students. They dealt with prehistoric times, Europe in the Neolithic, the Lusatian Culture in Poland, the origin and culture of the Slavs, the La Tène culture, the emergence of European prehistoric art, or archaeology of the southern and eastern Baltic countries.⁶⁶ Slides were an important part of the classes, and Antoniewicz collected glass slides for this purpose. The Antoniewicz's wife, Jadwiga, and his first assistant, Zofia Podkowińska, helped with the work.⁶⁷ Students were also involved, including the future professor, Janina Rosen-Przeworska (1904–1991).⁶⁸ In 1924, Antoniewicz became a professor, which increased his possibilities, including financial ones. Thanks to this, he organised numerous field trips and museum queries spanning Poland, Czechoslovakia, Lithuania, the Eastern Borderlands, and Yugoslavia. Eventually, he also began to conduct his own excavations. In addition, Antoniewicz himself would travel a lot for scholarly purposes and publish. In the 1920s, he authored the first Polish synthesis on the most ancient history of the Republic, and in the late 1930s he also became Rector of the University of Warsaw. The outbreak of the Second World War put an end to the teaching and research diversity of the Department of Prehistoric Archaeology, forcing researchers to cease their activities (with the exception of a few personalities involved in rescuing the most valuable artefacts).⁶⁹ The conflagration of the war consumed collections and institutions, which dealt a blow to the Warsaw archaeological community. Nevertheless, the end of the war sparked hope for new research initiatives. However, all of them had to confront a new phenomenon — the “ideologising” of research which was brought by Marxism-Leninism.⁷⁰

Conclusions

When speaking of the formative period of the archaeological discipline in Warsaw, one must go back to the history of interest in the subject of the most ancient history of the Polish lands. For it was this early interest that had the most decisive influence on the events which led to the establishment of the first chair of archaeology in the capital. The most significant, from the perspective of the beginnings of the process of forming professional scholarly structures in this field, was the time of the reign of King Stanisław August Poniatowski, who personally strove to acquire antiquities and broaden knowledge about them.⁷¹ His collecting and scholarly activities expanded the knowledge of the most ancient history of the world among the Poles, especially

⁶⁵ KARCZEWSKI 2015.

⁶⁶ LEWAKOWSKA 1962; KOZŁOWSKI 1993; KOZŁOWSKI 2009, pp. 54–55.

⁶⁷ PODKOWIŃSKA 1993.

⁶⁸ ROSEN-PRZEWORSKA 1993.

⁶⁹ ABRAMOWICZ 1991, pp. 139–145.

⁷⁰ ABRAMOWICZ 1991, pp. 146–161.

⁷¹ ABRAMOWICZ 1987, pp. 15–32.

regarding ancient civilisations. The period of the Partitions of Poland and the collapse of the state halted development of academic institutionalism for many years, yet it also made the Poles focus and intensify interest in their own history. The numerous private collections related to the history of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth which were initiated at that time strengthened hearts and gave hope for liberation. This was fostered by the first scholarly societies, whose aim was to develop national collections. However, the political situation and outbreaks of successive uprisings in the nineteenth century effectively prevented the functioning of these institutions, which for many years limited academic pursuits, including archaeology, to the private interests of the wealthy social strata. The lack of free flow of information, control, and growing export of valuable artefacts by the Russian partitioners slowly split the Polish archaeological heritage. Nevertheless, thanks to an active foreign forum, Polish researchers were able to exchange views and update their knowledge, partly thanks to discoveries of the earliest areas inhabited by humans. This encouraged them to deepen their own investigations and undertake more extensive research, which later attracted wide international interest. However, the lack of research continuity and successors caused a scholarly stagnation in the whole country at the end of the nineteenth century. In Warsaw, the mainstay of interest was the work of Erazm Majewski, an entrepreneur, chemist, and self-taught genius, who with his own effort and financial resources managed to maintain the high scholarly quality of Warsaw archaeology. Nevertheless, it was not until the beginning of the twentieth century that the state-induced restrictions were lifted, as a result of an internal crisis in the Russian Empire. It initiated a wave of academic revival in Warsaw and the creation of new scholarly institutions — the Laboratory of Anthropology in the Museum of Industry and Agriculture and the Archaeological Laboratory were established, the Warsaw Scientific Society was reactivated, and, thanks to Majewski, one of the first archaeological museums in Poland was created. Young adepts of archaeology began to gather around experienced archaeologists, who in later periods became their new mentors. No previous hope for the revival of the scholarly independence in Warsaw, however, was equal to that raised by the First World War. As early as 1915, when the German army was advancing on the city abandoned by the Russians, the foundations of a department were laid. Despite perturbations related to the lack of formal education in the candidate, i.e. Majewski, the project came to fruition in the second half of 1919. Professor died soon afterwards, leaving behind a young docent habilitated in Poznań. The dynamic Włodzimierz Antoniewicz gave Warsaw archaeology a new framework, keeping it in touch with researchers in other anthropological disciplines, while drawing on the use of methodical analogy as the main research tool. The interwar period saw a gradual increase in the interest in study of the past. Lectures devoted initially to a single student were attended by others. The library and archaeological collections grew, only to deteriorate again in the conflagration of the Second World War.

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