

Popularising knowledge of Mazovian history through the activities of the Mazovian Museum in Płock

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ABSTRACT

This article elaborates the ways of popularising knowledge about the past of Mazovia by Museum in Płock since its establishment, as part of the Płock Scientific Society, in 1821. It had a strictly regional character. The collection consisted, on the one hand, of school teaching aids (minerals, physical and chemical equipment, globes, etc.), and on the other hand, of various exhibits donated by teachers, students, landowners, military personnel and priests, including numerous archaeological artefacts, coins, medals, natural history specimens, documents, etc. During scientific meetings, the latest archaeological and numismatic troves were reported, field inspections were organised, historical monuments were collected and placed in the museum. The institution was closed down shortly after the fall of the November Uprising. It was reactivated at the beginning of the 20th century. In December 1912, a permanent exhibition depicting the geological and historical past and the ethnography of Płock Mazovia was opened in the Gothic canopy at 8 Kanoniczny Square. In 1930, the premises were enlarged by the purchase of the House under Providence at 2 Kanoniczny Square, where the expositions of nature, geology, ethnography and archaeology were arranged. Until 1949, the facility, called the Mazovian Museum in Płock, was a part of the Płock Scientific Society. Afterwards, a new stage in its history began – a stage of independent development. The construction of a petrochemical plant in Płock in the 1960s contributed to the significant development of the facility. It obtained new premises in the renovated Castle of the Mazovian Dukes in Płock (Benedictine Abbey) on Tumskie Hill, which resulted in an increase in exhibition space and the number of specialised employees. In 1993, the Museum obtained the building of a historic granary on the Vistula embankment, where the collections of the Ethnography Department were located. In November 2004, the collections were moved from the Castle of the Mazovian Dukes to an art nouveau tenement house at 8 Tumska Street and a permanent Art Nouveau exhibition was arranged there. In the following years, the museum developed dynamically, in terms of its premises, its programme of activities, including the popularisation of historical knowledge. New museum pavilions and new permanent exhibitions were created.

At present, the popularisation activity of the Mazovian Museum in Płock comprises a wide range of activities carried out by the Dissemination and Promotion Department and individual substantive departments. These include museum lessons, historical lectures, scientific sessions, workshops for children and people with disabilities, outdoor events, promotions of publications, concerts, competitions, educational films, periodicals (*"Rocznik Muzeum Mazowieckiego w Płocku"*, *"Nasze Korzenie"*, *"Biuletyn Muzealny"*), paratheatrical performances and many others.

Key words: cultural heritage of Mazovia, regionalism, popularisation of historical knowledge, Mazovian Museum in Płock, Płock Scientific Society

The Polish Language Dictionary defines culture as ‘the entirety of material and spiritual achievements of humanity, collected, preserved, and enriched throughout its history, passed down from generation to generation’ [*Słownik języka...* 1978–1981]. The moral obligation to respect the heritage of humanity and pass it on to later generations is currently undisputed. It serves as an inspiration for many individuals and legal entities to take action. The protection of cultural heritage is undertaken by the government, various levels of local authorities, foundations, associations, cultural institutions, and private individuals. This notion is widely discussed, and there is extensive literature dedicated to it [*Dziedzictwo kulturowe...* 2001; *Dziedzictwo kulturowe...* 2002; Stawarz (eds.) 2003; Gutowska, Kobyliński 2011; Koseski, Lolo, Łukawski (eds.) 2017; Lolo, Wiśniewski (eds.) 2021]. Topics related to the cultural heritage of Mazovia often find a place in the pages of the semi-annual journal “Nasze Korzenie” [Our Roots] published by the Mazovian Museum in Płock since 2011 (so far, 21 volumes have been published).

Addressing this significant issue, but narrowing it down for practical reasons to the aspect of historical legacy, I would like to discuss the methods used by the Mazovian Museum in Płock to popularise knowledge about the history of Mazovia. In its two-hundred-year history, it has recorded many achievements in this field.

The decision to establish a museum in Płock, named the “Public and School Museum of the Płock Voivodeship” and falling under the Scientific Society by the Płock Provincial School established in 1820 (Fig. 1), was made on September 21, 1821, by the Government Commission for Religious Denominations and Public Enlightenment (Komisja Rządowa Wyznań Religijnych i Oświecenia Publicznego). On one hand, the museum’s collections consisted of educational aids for schools (minerals, physical and chemical apparatus, globes, etc.) and, on the other hand, of a diverse array of exhibits donated by teachers, students, landowners, military personnel, and clergy, including numerous archaeological relics, coins, medals, natural specimens, documents, etc. The latest archaeological and numismatic findings were presented at scientific sessions, field inspections were organised, and historical artifacts were collected to be housed in the museum. Thanks to this, treasures like the early medieval coin hoard from Trzebunia near Proboszczewice, which was a topic of a scientific paper by Joachim Lelewel, were saved for science. Attempts were also made to undertake some form of excavation activities. The search carried out in 1825 in the Płock cathedral basilica to find the graves of Władysław Herman and Bolesław III Wrymouth can probably be called as such [Gawarecki 1827; Stogowska 2007]. They ended in complete success and the solemn reburial of the Piast rulers in the crypt of one of the cathedral’s chapels. These events, rich in patriotic elements, left a mark on the local community’s memory. In later years, they led to the belief in the existence of particularly close ties between Bolesław III and Płock, sometimes called the “city of Wrymouth” [Kordala 1988].

The activity of the Scientific Society by the Płock Provincial School ceased after the death of the school’s rector Kajetan Morykoni in December 1830. Its collections were scattered soon after. However, its idea remained vital and inspiring for the next generations of Płock residents.



Fig. 1. The historic wing of the Marshall Stanisław Małachowski General Education High School in Płock – the seat of the Scientific Society at the Płock Provincial School and the Public and School Museum of the Płock Voivodeship

Phot. B. Wasiak

In the early 20th century, with the increasing political freedoms and the emergence of real hope for regaining independence, a scientific institution was re-established in Płock. This time under the name “Płock Scientific Society”. Its statute, developed in 1906, clearly referred to the 19th-century idea of gathering and describing an accurate image of the Płock Voivodeship. The revived society was led by prominent representatives of Płock’s cultural life: Dr Aleksander Maciesza (Fig. 2), editor Adam Grabowski, Canon Priest Tomasz Kowalewski, and Dr Aleksander Zaleski. From the very beginning of its existence, this institution engaged in the organisation of a modern scientific workshop utilising the museum collections and a library based on the collection of Józef and Gustaw Zieliński. A permanent exhibition illustrating the geological and historical past, as well as the ethnography of the Płock region of Mazovia, was opened in December 1912 in the building of the Płock Scientific Society at 8 Kanoniczny Square (today Narutowicz Square) (Fig. 3).

During the interwar period, individuals associated with the Płock Scientific Society dominated the scientific life of Płock. In 1928, the Museum of the Płock Scientific Society adopted the name “The Museum of Płock Mazovia of Professor Ignacy Mościcki, President of the Republic of Poland”. A new Naturalistic-Ethnographic Department was established two years later, in the building known as Dom Pod Opatrnością (Fig. 4). It was acquired by the society to host exhibitions showcasing natural, archaeological, anthropological, and ethnographic objects from the northern Mazovia region (Fig. 5). A geographer, Kazimierz Gelinek, was its curator (Fig. 6).

The museum also had a Historical-Cultural Department (Fig. 7), which remained in the main headquarters of the Płock Scientific Society after 1930 – the Gothic canonry at 8 Kanoniczny Square (currently 8 Narutowicz Square). Halina Rutska was leading it (Fig. 8), and after her passing in 1932 – Halina Jankowska took over the position.



Fig. 2. Aleksander Macieszka (1875–1945), President of the Płock Scientific Society from 1907 to 1945
Source: "Tygodnik Ilustrowany" [Illustrated Weekly], 1907, No. 24, p. 496

Kazimierz Gelinek exhibited a significant interest in popularising knowledge about the region's history [Kordala 2012]. Two main currents can be observed in his work: popularisation and fieldwork. Gelinek carried out popularising activities in the fields of geology, geography, archaeology, and regional history both through traditional guided tours for visiting groups and through an extensive set of museum lessons designed for students of public schools and state secondary schools. During such lessons, he deliberated on the natural environment of northern Mazovia (geological structure, soils, mineral resources, fauna, and flora), pre-historic cultural units, traces of ancient trade routes in Mazovia, economic issues of contemporary Poland, and the culture of China and Japan. He also published many popular science papers in Płock periodicals such as "Pokłosie Szkolne" [Educational Gleanings], "Dziennik Płocki" [Płock Journal], "Głos Mazowiecki" [Masovian Voice], "Życie Mazowsza" [Life of Masovia]. Shortly before the

outbreak of the war, his *Krótki zarys kursu geologii* [*Short Outline of Geology Course*] was published, containing texts of lectures delivered by him for participants of stonecutter courses organised by the City Board, at the initiative of the mayor of Płock, Stanisław Wasiak.



Fig. 3. The fifteenth-century canonry at 8 Narutowicz Square in Płock – headquarters of Płock Mazovia Museum of the Płock Scientific Society from 1909 to 1949
Phot. from the archives of the Mazovian Museum in Płock

Gelinek would often do the fieldwork to search for natural and mineralogical specimens and to rescue numerous newly discovered archaeological sites. Sometimes, he managed to save truly sensational artifacts. In 1931, he acquired a glass chalice from the Roman period for the museum, found in Parzeń on the Right Skrwa. Gelinek collaborated closely with Roman Jakimowicz (1889–1951). He was an archaeological conservator for the Warsaw district on behalf of the State Board of Inspectors of Prehistoric Monuments from 1920 to 1928, and later the director of the State Archaeological Museum in Warsaw.

On the eve of World War II, the Płock Scientific Society (TNP) had a decent local base, a large library, and a museum that was constantly expanding its collections while engaging in valuable educational activities. TNP had attained the status of the most important scientific and cultural institution in Płock and northern Mazovia, as well as an important centre for regional research in the country.



Fig. 4. The so-called House under Providence at 2 Narutowicz Square in Płock, the seat of the Natural History and Ethnography Department of the Płock Mazovia Museum of the Płock Scientific Society from 1930 to 1949 and the Mazovian Museum in Płock from 1949 to 1973
Phot. from the archives of the Mazovian Museum in Płock



Fig. 5. A fragment of the exhibition of the Natural History and Ethnography Department in the interwar period
Phot. from the archives of the Mazovian Museum in Płock



Fig. 6. Kazimierz Gelinek (1882–1969), curator of the Natural History and Ethnography Department from 1930 to 1939

Phot. from the archives of the Mazovian Museum in Płock



Fig. 7. A fragment of the exhibition of the Historical and Cultural Department of the Płock Mazovia Museum of the Płock Scientific Society in the interwar period

Phot. from the archives of the Mazovian Museum in Płock



Fig. 8. Halina Rutska (1868–1932), curator of the Płock Mazovia Museum of the Płock Scientific Society from 1912 to 1932

Phot. from the archives of the Mazovian Museum in Płock

In December 1949, by a decree of the Ministry of Culture and Art, the museum collections of TNP were confiscated by the state and housed in an institution called the “Museum in Płock”, with its headquarters in Dom Pod Opatrznością at 2 Gabriel Narutowicz Square. For over 70 years, the Płock museum, since 1963 known as the “Mazovian Museum in Płock”, has functioned as an independent cultural institution.

Up until the early 1960s, the museum’s activities progressed rather slowly, adapting to the sleepy atmosphere of a small provincial town. No scientific research was conducted, the exhibition space and the number of objects were small, and the staff was minimal. However, the aforementioned decision of 1949, which almost led to the elimination of TNP, paradoxically – after a dozen or so years – turned out to be beneficial for the museum’s future. The year 1960 brought promise of fundamental changes to the functioning of the institution, as the construction of a large petrochemical complex began in Płock. The Economic Committee of the Council of Ministers approved the adaptation of the Castle of the Dukes of Mazovia (Benedictine Abbey) on Tumskie Hill for museum purposes, including this task into the scope of investments of the Płock complex. For the small museum, this meant a sign of profound changes in its functioning as a cultural institution.

With the construction of the petrochemical complex, the social, economic, and cultural situation of the city began to undergo rapid and far-reaching transformations. The old Płock – a city of schools and retirees – living at the slow pace of a provincial

town, was fading into history. A modern industrial plant emerged in its landscape, attracting people from various parts of the country. The newcomers, engineers, technicians, professionals, and workers mostly did not possess in-depth knowledge of the history and cultural heritage of their new homeland. An urgent need arose to develop a comprehensive cultural offer capable of engaging, if not the entire, at least the culturally sensitive part of Płock's population. The organisers of cultural life in the city, including the Płock Museum, were faced with this task.

In 1961, the museum's governance was undertaken by the young art historian Marian Sołtysiak (1934–2016). Soon after taking over the position of director, a qualitative change occurred in the programme and organisational structure of the Mazovian Museum. On the one hand, this was associated with raising the level of expertise by hiring individuals with specialised education, on the other, it involved the introduction of a new, nationwide specialisation in the form of Art Nouveau. In 1967, the institution gained the status of a regional museum for the Warsaw Voivodeship. The number of museum items rapidly increased, and after moving to the Castle of the Dukes of Mazovia (Fig. 9) in 1973, so did the exhibition space. Progress was evident on all fronts of the museum's activities: exhibition, scientific, publishing, and educational.



Fig. 9. The Castle of the Masovian Dukes (Post-Benedictine Abbey) on Tumskie Hill, the seat of the Mazovian Museum in Płock from 1973 to 2005

Phot. from the archives of the Mazovian Museum in Płock

The following permanent exhibitions were organised in the new location: Art Nouveau, Archaeology of Mazovia, History of Mazovia, and Petrochemical Department (active only until 1979). The number of visitors to the Mazovian Museum quickly grew. While in 1973 it was 28,762, four years later, it had risen to 62,562.

One of the most important ways of conveying historical knowledge to visitors in any museum is through temporary exhibitions. Over the past 60 years, the Mazovian Museum in Płock has organised hundreds of exhibitions related to the history of Płock and northern Mazovia. Before 1989, these activities were subject to political pressure, supported by the watchful eye of censorship. Many of them had to present 'progressive' traditions of the workers and people's movement, Polish-Soviet friendship, and solemnly commemorate the anniversaries celebrated at that time, with the October Revolution at the forefront. Archaeological exhibitions were exempt from ideological constraints. It is where prehistoric and medieval earth archives excavated by the museum's archaeologists were presented.

As socialism in the late 1980s strongly faltered in its ideological foundations, the museum began to feature historical exhibitions that were less 'orthodox' but had a more diverse regional theme. These exhibitions presented subjects such as Poland's regaining of independence in 1918, the martyrdom of clergy during World War II, scouting, and the role of the Vistula River in the history of Płock, and many others. Many of these exhibitions were organised by Bożena Ostrowska and Elżbieta Popiołek.

Alongside the established forms of activities dating back to the first decades of the 20th century, new proposals emerged in the educational programme of the museum. The initiative of museum lessons, initially introduced by Kazimierz Gelinek before World War II, was resumed. There was a significant increase in the number of lessons in the 1970s, coupled with a rise in their scholarly content. This was made possible by employing individuals with higher education in history, archaeology, art history, and ethnography. Additionally, modern information dissemination techniques were employed, making use of both permanent and temporary exhibitions in the museum's new location. When Tadeusz Zaremba became the director of the Mazovian Museum in Płock in 1977, museum lessons became one of the priorities of the institution. Their number reached 400–500 annually, positioning MMP at the forefront of Polish museums in terms of popularising knowledge about history and art. This effort was recognised and appreciated both within the museum community and by the Ministry of Culture and Art (awarded the 1st prize by the Ministry in 1984). The range of lessons' topics was thematically diverse, covering issues from ancient, medieval, renaissance, baroque, and neoclassical art, as well as art from the secession and Young Poland periods, and the history of Poland, Mazovia, and Płock. The proposed lesson topics were chosen to complement the curriculum primarily in the field of history, and less frequently in Polish language and other subjects.

Since the early 1960s, the Mazovian Museum has implemented other forms of cooperation with young people. It began with two contests for the best guide to Płock, organised in 1962 and 1963. A side effect of these competitions was the establishment of the Youth Circle of Płock Enthusiasts, which soon transformed into a Youth Club, which

still exists today. Club members promoted the achievements of MMP, undertook various tasks for the museum, including physical ones, and participated in archaeological and ethnographic summer camps. Some members of the club, having become familiar with the specifics of excavation work, chose archaeology as their field of study. The idea of contests also proved to be very viable and enduring. To this day, the museum has organised many events for museum guides, and historical guides (including knowledge tests about Płock organised by Małgorzata Kwiatkowska in cooperation with the City of Płock and "Gazeta Wyborcza", as well as the series of contests about knowledge of the ancient world, organised by Grażyna Tryka), as well as photographic competitions. It is worth noting that photographic competitions are gaining more and more interest. They are mainly prepared by the Department of Promotion and Dissemination, in agreement with the scholarly departments.

Of course, many events are organised for all audiences, regardless of their age. These activities also gained momentum in the 1960s. In the situation of real socialism, some of them were suggested or even enforced by party factors. These included lectures, discussion meetings, and temporary exhibitions organised especially in workplaces in Płock.

In the 1980s, 1990s, and at the beginning of the current century, employees of MMP (Andrzej Kucharski, Katarzyna Stołoska-Fuz, Tomasz Kordala) regularly delivered lectures on history, art history, and archaeology for inmates at the Płock Penitentiary. It is worth emphasising that this was not an entirely new initiative in the museum's range of activities. Even during the interwar period, lectures for prisoners were given by TNP President Aleksander Maciesza, who also worked as a doctor in the Płock prison.

The first volume of the scientific journal of MMP titled "Rocznik Muzeum Mazowieckiego w Płocku" [Yearbook of the Mazovian Museum in Płock] was published in 1972 (Fig. 10). It contains papers authored by both employees of the institution and external researchers. They represent all disciplines present in the scholarly activities of the museum, namely art history, history, archaeology, ethnography, and numismatics. The territorial scope of the journal primarily, though not exclusively, covers the area of northern Mazovia, which, according to the Statute of the Mazovian Museum in Płock, is the subject of the institution's scholarly research interest. The last two volumes have a new, attractive graphic design and a significantly larger volume compared to the previous ones. The current director of the Mazovian Museum acts as the editor-in-chief of each issue of the yearbook.

"Biuletyn Muzealny" [Museum Bulletin] has been published since mid-2005 (Fig. 11), with Leonard Sobieraj, the director of the Mazovian Museum in Płock, as the editor-in-chief. This quarterly publication is strictly informational, containing concise reviews of the most important events organised by the museum. It is prepared by employees of the scholarly and educational departments. After 18 years of publication, it can be described as a valuable chronicle of the institution's activities.

The most recent periodical is the semi-annual popular science journal "Nasze Korzenie" (Fig. 12), edited by Tomasz Kordala, Deputy Director for Scientific Affairs since 2009. The launch of the periodical in 2011 coincided with the celebration

of the 190th anniversary of the museum's establishment. It is dedicated to the nature, history, and culture of north-western Mazovia. Its programme draws on the rich traditions of regional research at the museum, which, it must be emphasised, were the base for its founding in 1821 and remain an important part of the institution's scholarly activities to this day. The pages of "Nasze Korzenie" present a wide range of topics: the natural and tourist attractions of the most beautiful areas of our region, the latest archaeological discoveries, architectural and artistic monuments, ethnography of the region, lesser-known historical episodes and documents, memories of those fighting for Polish independence, profiles of exceptional Mazovians, the history of Mazovian landowners in the 19th and 20th centuries, ethnic, cultural, and religious diversity of the region, contemporary regional associations and periodicals, and more. The journal is distinctly educational. It is directed towards intellectually engaged readers of all ages who are sensitive to truth and beauty, promoting patriotic values and care for the preservation and enrichment of the cultural heritage of our homeland.

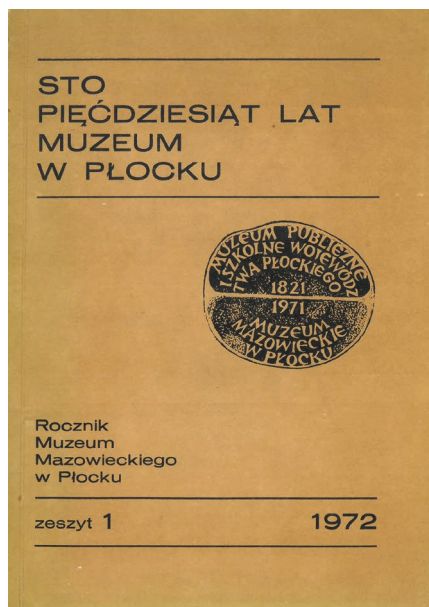


Fig. 10. The cover of the first volume of the "Yearbook of the Mazovian Museum in Płock"
Phot. from the archives of the Mazovian Museum in Płock



Fig. 11. The cover of one of the issues of the "Museum Bulletin"

Phot. from the archives of the Mazovian Museum in Płock

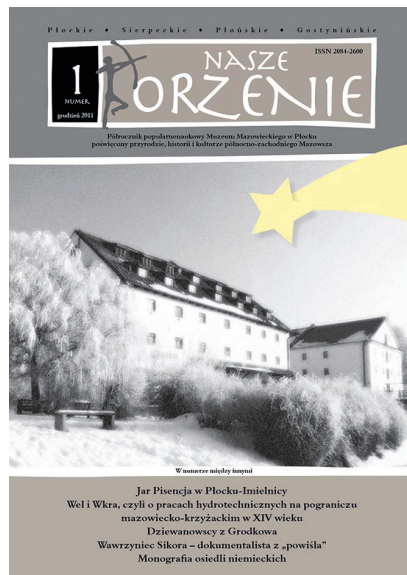


Fig. 12. The cover of the first issue of the biannual "Our Roots"
Phot. from the archives of the Mazovian Museum in Płock

At the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries, new issues and challenges arose, which to this day have not lost their relevance. This time, they have a national character, as they are the result of the political breakthrough in 1989 and Poland's accession to the European Union in 2004. The democratisation of public life, the increase in affluence of society, as well as visible manifestations of globalisation in the economic and cultural domains, require cultural institutions to adopt a slightly different strategy than before. Generally speaking, they are expected to have the ability to meet the needs of an increasingly discerning audience, including foreign guests. In the era of dynamically developing tourism, which combines leisure with a passion for exploring the world, regionalism has a lot to offer. Its Polish variant stands out in Europe with its unique features, with the most important being the attachment to Polish identity. Thanks to this, our regionalists harmoniously combine local patriotism with a love for the homeland. In practice, this translates into the dominance of regional associations offering activities that do not emphasise separatist tendencies but rather present the contribution of their small homelands to the national cultural treasury. Polish regionalism still has much in common with the traditions of the 19th century. Płock's regionalists, employed at the Mazovian Museum in Płock, strive to meet all these challenges in line with their personal ambitions and the institution's financial condition.

Leonard Sobieraj became the director of the institution in November 2004. This coincided with the need to relocate the collections from the Castle of the Dukes of Mazovia on Tumskie Hill to a secessionist tenement building at 8 Tumaska Street (Fig. 13), and the establishment of a permanent exhibition there. The following years were marked by the

museum's dynamic development, both in terms of the buildings and its programme in practically every field, including the popularisation of historical knowledge. New museum pavilions and permanent exhibitions were introduced: *X wieków Płocka. Płock w przestrzeni kulturowej Mazowsza, Polski i Europy* [10th century Płock. Płock in the cultural space of Mazovia, Poland and Europe] (2010) (Fig. 14), Museum of Mazovian Jews in the so-called Small Synagogue (2013) (Fig. 15), Open-air Museum of the Vistula Settlement in Wiączemin Polski (2018) (Fig. 16), Museum of the Middle Vistula and the Land of Wyszogród in Wyszogród (2018) (Fig. 17), *Sztuka dwudziestolecia międzywojennego – art déco* [Art of the 20th century interwar period – art deco], and *Z Płocka i dla Płocka* [From Płock and for Płock], *Galeria płocczan XX wieku* [Gallery of Płock inhabitants of the 20th century]; *Galeria Themersonów* [Themerson Gallery] in the building at 6 Kolegiarna Street (2021) (Fig. 18). Furthermore, nearly 50 years after obtaining the historic granary at the Vistula bank for the statutory activities of the museum, two permanent exhibitions were opened there: *Kultura Mazowsza w ludowej wizji świata* [The Culture of Masovia in the Folk Vision of the World] and *Sztuka Dalekiego Wschodu. Płockie skarby buddyjskiej Azji* [The Art of the Far East. Płock' Treasures of Buddhist Asia] (Fig. 19). An exhibition of Bolesław Biegas's (born in Koziczyn near Ciechanów in 1877, died in Paris in 1954) art was opened in the secessionist tenement in 2022.



Fig. 13. Art Nouveau townhouse at 8 Tumska Street – the main seat of the Mazovian Museum in Płock since 2005

Phot. from the archives of the Mazovian Museum in Płock



Fig. 14. Museum pavilion at 8a Tumaska Street – the seat of the Department of Archaeology, History Department, Accounting and Economic Department, and the location for the permanent exhibition since 2010: Ten Centuries of Płock. Płock in the Cultural Space of Mazovia, Poland, and Europe
Phot. from the archives of the Mazovian Museum in Płock



Fig. 15. The so-called small synagogue at 7 Józef Kwiatek Street – the seat of the Museum of Mazovian Jews Branch of the Mazovian Museum in Płock, since 2013
Phot. from the archives of the Mazovian Museum in Płock



Fig. 16. The Open-Air Museum of Vistula River Settlement in Wiączęmin Polski
A branch of the Mazovian Museum in Płock, since 2018
Phot. from the archives of the Mazovian Museum in Płock



Fig. 17. The Museum of the Middle Vistula and the Land of Wyszogród in Wyszogród
A branch of the Mazovian Museum in Płock, since 2018
Phot. from the archives of the Mazovian Museum in Płock



Fig. 18. The museum pavilion at 6 Kolegialna Street – the seat of the Department of Art and the Department of Dissemination and Promotion, the place of presentation of two permanent exhibitions: Art of the interwar period – art déco and From and for Płock. The 20th-century Płock Gallery. Themersons' Gallery, since 2021

Phot. from the archives of the Mazovian Museum in Płock



Fig. 19. The historic granary at 11b Kazimierz Wielki Street – the seat of the Department of Ethnography, the place of presentation of two permanent exhibitions: The Culture of Masovia in the Folk Vision of the World and The Art of the Far East. Płock's Treasures of Buddhist Asia

Phot. from the archives of the Mazovian Museum in Płock

A significant increase in the attendance of visitors to the museum has been noted. For example, the Mazovian Museum in Płock was visited by 71,027 people in 2015, and in 2019 – by 101,635.

Archaeology and ethnography picnics were a completely new addition to the educational activities, which were met with great interest from the residents of Płock. They were organised from 2006 to 2011 by the Archaeology and Ethnography Departments (Fig. 20). The programme for each of them, carefully planned and thoroughly discussed by the organisers and the museum director, included presentations of ancient crafts and medieval combat, concerts, performances, lectures, workshops, and contests. In 2008, as part of the third edition of the picnic, actors from the Płock theater prepared a staging of a play written specifically for Płock in 1938 by Ludwik Hieronim Morstin, titled “Misterium płockie Bolesław Krzywousty”.

Barbara Rydzewska, Head of the History Department, organised in recent years a series of meetings with people (or their descendants) who saved Jews during World War II. This series was titled *Choćby jedno życie, choćby kromka chleba* [Even One Life, Even a Slice of Bread]. The director Leonard Sobieraj was an initiator of this idea. The History Department also organised outdoor exhibitions in the streets of the city, dedicated to Tumaska Street, the Płock Orthodox Church, and the history of the Mazovian Museum in Płock in connection with its 200th anniversary celebrated in 2021.

Over the past fifteen years, three documentary films have been produced. The film *Stare Mazowsze – przyroda i człowiek* [Old Mazovia – Nature and Man] from 2008 (Fig. 21), in both Polish and English language, was honoured at the 1st Festival of Archaeological Films in Krakow in 2010. It tells the story of the natural environment and the history of Mazovia in the Middle Ages. The film from 2018, titled *Żegnaj generale* [Farewell General] (Fig. 22), is dedicated to the person of Piotr Bontemps, a Frenchman in the service of three nations. He was buried in 1840 in Imielnica near Płock, exhumed in 2013, and later reburied in 2014. The third film, *Średniowieczny cmentarz w Płocku* [Medieval Cemetery in Płock] (Fig. 23), created in 2021, presents the course and results of archaeological excavations conducted in 2019–2020 at the medieval cemetery located between today’s Kolegialna, 1 Maja, and Sienkiewicza streets in the centre of Płock.

The History and Archaeology Departments organise debates as part of the “Historical Confrontations” series. Among the invited speakers there were many well-known scholars, including Marian Marek Drozdowski, Jerzy Eisler, Krzysztof Szwaagrzyk, Jerzy Strzelczyk, Agnieszka Teterycz-Puzio, Jacek Banaszkiewicz, Paweł Żmudzki, Andrzej Buko, Władysław Duczko, Marek Dulinicz, Przemysław Urbańczyk, Robert Kunkel, and Waldemar Smaszcz. The Archaeology Department has also been recently involved in organising commemorations of the anniversaries of the deaths of outstanding Poles: Pope John Paul II and Archbishop Antoni Julian Nowowiejski.

Since 2016, the History Department has been implementing an interesting research program coordinated by Barbara Rydzewska. It involves conducting queries in the archives of administrative offices and private collections in the municipalities located

in Płock County. So far, such surveys have been conducted in the municipalities of Brudzeń Duży (2016), Stara Biała (2017), Bielsk (2018), Drobin (2019), and Radzanowo (2022). Thanks to this, the museum has acquired many valuable objects (artifacts, documents, photographs, etc.) and oral accounts of significant historical value. Exhibitions were organised in the office buildings of Brudzeń Duży, Bielsk, and Drobin to conclude the field research in these municipalities (Fig. 24).



Fig. 20. Archaeological and ethnographic picnic at the Mazovian Museum in Płock
Phot. from the archives of the Mazovian Museum in Płock



Fig. 21. Cover of the film "Old Masovia – Nature and Man", produced by MMP, 2008
Phot. from the archives of the Mazovian Museum in Płock



Fig. 22. Cover of the film "Farewell, General", produced by MMP, 2018
Phot. from the archives of the Mazovian Museum in Płock



Fig. 23. Cover of the film "Medieval Cemetery in Płock", produced by MMP, 2021
Phot. from the archives of the Mazovian Museum in Płock



Fig. 24. Panel exhibition in Brudzeń Duży summarising the action of researching the past of the commune, 2017

Phot. from the archives of the Mazovian Museum in Płock

Publishing activities are an important source of conveying knowledge about the region to the community. While we have already discussed the periodicals published by the Mazovian Museum, it is worth paying some attention to the concise publications on historical topics. These include both guides and exhibition catalogues, as well as source-analytical studies and presentations of the results of the institution's scholarly research.

The Mazovian Museum in Płock has a substantial number of publications in its portfolio. A clear dividing line in this regard is the year 1989. With the political breakthrough, ideological constraints on the freedom of speech were lifted. This resulted in a greater diversity of subjects being addressed. The editorial quality of publications also improved significantly, and their number has been gradually increasing since then. Publications related to exhibitions prevailed in the "past era", but there were relatively few that stood out in terms of volume and aesthetics. Rather, there were quite plain compendium-style guides, although they often maintained a good level of scholarly content. They were published until the early 90s. Later, they were replaced by more maturely edited publications, including catalogues of significant scholarly importance. Less numerous scientific studies were mainly published in the "Rocznik MMP" [Yearbook of MMP].

After 2004, when Leonard Sobieraj took over as the museum director, there was a clear revival in scholarly and publishing activities. Often, significant activities were undertaken in connection with anniversaries of historical events significant to our country.

As part of the celebrations of the 150th anniversary of the January Uprising, a temporary exhibition was organised in collaboration with the Independence Museum in Warsaw. It was accompanied by an interesting catalogue prepared by Emil Noiński and Katarzyna Stołoska-Fuz, titled *Gorzka chwala. Cieniom stycznia 1963 roku* [*Bitter Glory. Shadows of January 1963*]. The 100th anniversary of Poland's regaining independence in 1918 was commemorated with a temporary exhibition and a book *Kiedy stała się wolność... Płock w latach 1918–1921* [*When Freedom Was Born... Płock in the Years 1918–1921*], authored by Magdalena Bilskiej-Ciećwierz. In connection with the next round anniversary, the museum implemented an educational program in August and September 2020 entitled *Rok 1920. W 100 rocznicę Bitwy Warszawskiej* [*The year 1920. On the 100th Anniversary of the Battle of Warsaw*]. It consisted of a variety of commemorative events, including the exhibition *1920. Malarstwo. Fotografia* [*1920. Painting. Photography*], the publication of Lech Rościszewski's memoir *Pamiętnik z czasu wojny* [*Diary from the Time of War*] (prepared for print by I. Wiktorowska, M. Bilaska-Ciećwierz, G. Gołębiewski; foreword by L. Sobieraj and Z. Kruszewski, historical comments by G. Gołębiewski and M. Bilaska-Ciećwierz), a book *A było tak...* [*The Way It Was...*] (edited by M. Bilaska-Ciećwierz i B. Rydzewska, introduction by L. Sobieraj, biography by M. Rościszewska, authored by M. Bilaska-Ciećwierz i B. Rydzewska), readings, hologram presentations, re-enactment group performances. The initiative was distinguished in the 15th edition of the contest "Mazovian Museum Events – Wierzba" in the category of "Best Educational Project".

Presenting the scholarly achievements of historians employed in the museum, it is worth mentioning the contributions of those employed in the Department of Records and Scientific Documentation of Collections (formerly the Inventory Department). Their publications included studies on the course of agrarian reform in Płock County, the history of the "Soczewka" Paper Factory established in 1824 near Płock, the administration of northern Mazovia during World War II, militaria in the MMP collections, the history of Jews in Mazovia, the history of Płock photography, and the architecture and construction monuments in Płock.

Marian Sołtysiak, the museum's director from 1961 to 1977, also engaged in regional historical research. He was particularly interested in the monuments of Płock, which was probably a result of his earlier role as a conservator of monuments in the Conservator's Office for the Warsaw Voivodeship. After leaving Płock, he published two more works that are a treasury of knowledge about the history of the museum: *Muzeum Mazowieckie w Płocku. Historia i funkcje społeczne* [*The Mazovian Museum in Płock. History and Social Functions*] and an autobiographical book published shortly before his death, *Secesja z petrochemią w tle. Wspomnienia uczestnika zdarzeń* [*Secession with Petrochemistry in the Background. Memoirs of an Event Participant*]. Director Leonard Sobieraj has often discussed the history of the Mazovian Museum in Płock, the current activities of the institution, and plans for the future, both during scholarly sessions and in the pages of journals ("Niepodległość i Pamięć", "Art & Business"), local press ("Tygodnik Płocki", "Gazeta Wyborcza Płock"), and in the album *X wieków Płocka. Dzieje i ekspozycja historyczno-regionalna Muzeum Mazowieckiego w Płocku* [*The Centuries of Płock. History and Historical-Regional Exhibitions of the Mazovian Museum in Płock*], edited by him.

Among the achievements of archaeologists working at the Mazovian Museum in Płock, it is worth mentioning the development of a collection of Neolithic axes and adzes in the MMP collections, authored by Zbigniew Miecznikowski; the research and educational programme *Zapomniany generał Wojska Polskiego Piotr Bontemps (1777–1840)* [*Forgotten General of the Polish Army Piotr Bontemps (1777–1840)*], conducted in the years 2012–2023. It included a successful archaeological search for Piotr Bontemps' grave, his reburial in the parish church in Płock-Imielnica, a temporary exhibition (presented in Płock, Ostrołęka, Przasnysz, Pułtusk, Warsaw, Paris, Liw, and Ciechanów), an exhibition catalogue, the aforementioned film *Żegnaj generale*, and a book containing materials from the scientific conference dedicated to Piotr Bontemps; excavations of medieval cemeteries on Krasino Hill in Smorzewo near Sierpc (together with the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw) and at Kolegialna / 1 Maja / Sienkiewicza streets in Płock.

The album *X wieków Płocka. Dzieje i ekspozycja historyczno-regionalna Muzeum Mazowieckiego w Płocku* (Fig. 25) is the most recent editorial work of our museum. This publication was one of the highlights of the rich programme of celebrating the bicentennial of MMP's existence. The promotion of the album in January 2022 coincided with the summary and closure of the anniversary celebrations. The album was published under the honorary patronage of the President of the Republic of Poland, Andrzej Duda, with the financial support of the Municipality of Płock. This is the second work in a series of publications presenting the exhibitions and collections of our institution, following the album on secession art released in 2017. The volume contains a foreword by the Marshal of the Mazovian Voivodeship, Adam Struzik, and the Mayor of Płock, Andrzej Nowakowski. The chapters in the album are authored by the employees of the Mazovian Museum: museum director Leonard Sobieraj, deputy director for scholarly affairs Tomasz Kordala, head of the History Department Barbara Rydzewska, Magdalena Bilaska-Ciećwierz, Katarzyna Stołoska-Fuz, and Alicja Puchalska (all from the History Department), as well as Zbigniew Miecznikowski, head of the Archaeology Department, and Grażyna Tryka, head of the Numismatic Cabinet.

The Department of Dissemination and Promotion has always played a significant role in the overall efforts to popularise historical knowledge. Its staff, both past and present, have a substantial record of conducting thousands of museum lessons, numerous lectures for people with disabilities, talks and activities for pre-schoolers, guided tours of exhibitions, organising contests, and providing the media with information about the museum's current activities. In recent years, the importance of this department has further increased. Edited comments and materials containing information about events taking place at the Mazovian Museum in Płock are published regularly, both in traditional media ("Biuletyn Muzealny", local press, radio, and television) and electronic platforms (Facebook). This department is also heavily involved in organising museum events.

The COVID-19 pandemic in the years 2020–2021 slowed down but did not paralyse the museum's activities. During this time, museum exhibitions had to be closed

for longer periods twice, and most of the staff worked remotely. The attendance of visitors decreased by over 60%, educational activities of the institution almost completely ceased, and museum nights were not organised. Despite these limitations, a series of planned undertakings were completed. This included the most important recent investment, which was the creation of two permanent exhibitions in the new wing of the museum at Kolejalna Street: one dedicated to the art of the interwar period (opened on September 3, 2021) and the gallery of distinguished residents of Płock of the 20th century (opened on November 9, 2021). The museum, while applying all required precautions, celebrated the bicentennial of its establishment in the second half of 2021.

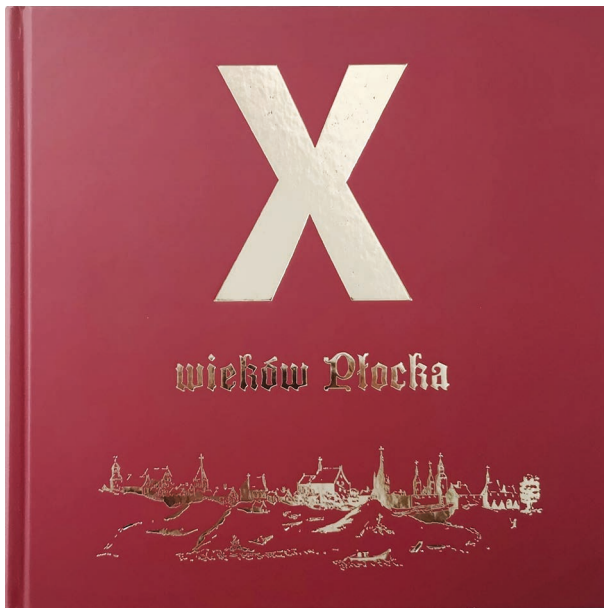


Fig. 25. Cover of the album "Ten Centuries of Płock. History and Historical-Regional Exhibition of the Mazovian Museum in Płock", Płock 2021

Source: archives of the Mazovian Museum in Płock

In conclusion, it is worth mentioning the plans to launch further branches of the Mazovian Museum in Płock. Their purpose will be to present the history of selected areas of Mazovia. Currently, the most advanced work is being done on the concept for the permanent exhibition at the planned Museum of Gostynin. This institution will be located in the building of the former city slaughterhouse in Gostynin, built in the 1920s, and recently acquired from a private owner by the Marshal's Office in Warsaw. The new MMP branch will undoubtedly fulfil the ambitions of Gostynin residents to have a museum in the city and contribute to deepening their knowledge of their hometown's history. Subsequently, branches will be opened in historic mills in Baboszewo,

Płońsk County, and Radziwie – the left-bank part of Płock, which has been within the city limits for 100 years. There are plans to add two churches to the Open-air Museum of the Vistula Settlement: a Mennonite church in Nowy Wymysł and a Lutheran church in Nowy Troszyn. Additionally, the property at 4 Kolegialna Street in Płock will be used to exhibit objects showcasing the design of the 1950s, 60s, 70s, and 80s of the 20th century.

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Popularyzacja wiedzy o historii Mazowsza w działalności Muzeum Mazowieckiego w Płocku

STRESZCZENIE

W artykule omówiono sposoby popularyzacji wiedzy o przeszłości Mazowsza stosowane w Muzeum Mazowieckim w Płocku od momentu jego powstania, w ramach Towarzystwa Naukowego Płockiego, w 1821 r. Miało ono charakter *stricte* regionalny. Zbiory tworzyły z jednej strony szkolne pomoce naukowe (minerały, aparaty fizyczne i chemiczne, globusy etc.), z drugiej zaś – ofiarowane przez nauczycieli, uczniów, obywateli ziemskich, wojskowych i księży różnorodne eksponaty, w tym liczne zabytki archeologiczne, monety, medale, okazy przyrodnicze, dokumenty etc. Na posiedzeniach naukowych referowano najnowsze znaleziska archeologiczne i numizmatyczne, organizowano inspekcje terenowe, zbierano zabytki przeszłości i umieszczano je w muzeum. Placówka ta zamarła wkrótce po upadku Powstania Listopadowego. Do jej reaktywacji doszło na początku XX w. W grudniu 1912 r. otwarto w gotyckiej kanonii przy Rynku Kanonicznym 8 stałą ekspozycję obrazującą przeszłość geologiczną i historyczną oraz etnografię Mazowsza Płockiego. W 1930 r. baza lokalowa powiększyła się o zakupiony Dom pod Opactwem na Wzgórzu Tumskim, co przełożyło się na powiększenie powierzchni wystawienniczej oraz wzrost liczby pracowników ze specjalistycznym wykształceniem. W 1993 r. muzeum otrzymało budynek zabytkowego spichlerza na skarpie nad Wisłą, w którym ulokowano zbiory Działu Etnografii. W listopadzie 2004 r. przeniesiono zbiory z Zamku Książąt Mazowieckich do kamienicy secesyjnej przy ul. Tumskiej 8 i urządzono tam stałą ekspozycję sztuki secesyjnej. W kolejnych latach nastąpił dynamiczny rozwój muzeum, tak pod względem bazy lokalowej, jak i programu działania na każdym praktycznie polu, także w zakresie popularyzacji wiedzy historycznej. Pojawiły się nowe pawilony muzealne i nowe ekspozycje stałe. Obecnie aktywność popularyzatorska Muzeum Mazowieckiego w Płocku obejmuje szeroką gamę działań realizowanych przez Dział Upowszechniania i Promocji oraz poszczególne działy merytoryczne. Są to лекcje muzealne, prelekcje historyczne, sesje naukowe, warsztaty dla dzieci i osób niepełnosprawnych, imprezy plenerowe, promocje wydawnictw, koncerty, konkursy, filmy edukacyjne, periodyki („Rocznik Muzeum Mazowieckiego w Płocku”, „Nasze Korzenie”, „Biuletyn Muzealny”), widowiska parateatralne i wiele innych.

Słowa kluczowe: dziedzictwo kulturowe Mazowsza, regionalizm, popularyzacja wiedzy historycznej, Muzeum Mazowieckie w Płocku, Towarzystwo Naukowe Płockie

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