

Scientific conference:  
“The fate and significance of the heritage  
of monasteries dissolved in former Royal Prussia.  
On the 180th anniversary of the dissolution of the last  
monasteries in Gdańsk”  
(Gdańsk, 22 October 2015)

In connection with the 180<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the dissolution of the last two monasteries (of the Bridgettines and the Dominicans) in Gdańsk by the Prussian authorities falling on this year, at the Faculty of History of the University of Gdańsk, there was organised a scientific conference which was part of the project “The cultural legacy of the monasteries dissolved in the former Polish Commonwealth and in Silesia during 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries: the fate, importance, inventory” (11H 11 021280), financed under the programme of the Minister of Science and Higher Education, the National Programme for the Development of the Humanities in the years 2012–2016. The co-organisers of the meeting were the Faculty of History of the University of Gdańsk and the Wrocław Friends of History Society branch of the Polish Historical Society. During the conference planned for one day, as part of the four sessions, 16 speakers gave a total of 15 lectures representing various disciplines (history, history of art, archaeology and history of architecture).

The guiding idea of the conference was presentation of the consequences of the dissolution of the monasteries, including, primarily, the fate of the monastic legacy in the broadly-defined Vistula Pomerania (former Royal Prussia, part of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth). Of a different character was the speech at the opening of the meeting delivered by Weronika Wojciech of Wrocław, who discussed the guidelines and the current state of execution of the project “The cultural legacy of the monasteries...”, including a database being compiled (available at: <http://pw.kasaty.pl>), as well as the publication series and a periodical issued under the project (*Hereditas Monasteriorum*).

The historical research theme, with emphasis on source material problems, was represented in his lecture, titled “Kasata klasztorów w Gdańsku w 1835 r. – tło wydarzeń, przebieg i konsekwencje” (“The dissolutions of monasteries in Gdańsk

in 1835 – the background of the events, their course and consequences”), by Sławomir Kościelak (Institute of History, University of Gdańsk – IH UG). In the presentation were discussed the main premises of the Prussian state’s policy towards monasteries, with underscoring the period after 1815, when Gdańsk was again annexed to the Kingdom of Prussia. The lecturer stressed that the evidence of gradual suppression of monasteries are surviving reports about their personnel and material condition, as well as the meticulous inventory records of monastic resources. Archival sources pertaining to monasteries were also pointed to by Waldemar Rozyńkowski (Institute of History and Archival Sciences, Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń – IHAS NCUT). In his lecture, titled “Archiwalia zakonne w Archiwum Akt Dawnych Diecezji Toruńskiej” (“Monastery archives in the Archive of Historical Records of the Toruń Diocese”), he included a presentation of the institution’s resources, in particular of the recently acquired records documenting the activity of the local monasteries (of the Jesuits, the Bernardines, the Dominicans and the Benedictine nuns). In addition, this institution is in possession of books from the Bernardine monastery in Łąki Bratiańskie. Source material-related problems were also brought up by Piotr Oliński (IHAS NCUT). In his lecture, titled “Ruchome dobra materialne klasztorów toruńskich w okresie kasaty” (“Movables of the Toruń monasteries in the dissolution period”), he stressed the critical role of publishing monastery dissolution inventories, which can be extremely useful in the research currently being taken up by historians and art historians. The inventories will make it possible to not only assess the condition of the stocks of individual institutions at the moment of dissolution, but also to monitor changes in their distribution and estimate the losses. In the historical research theme there was also delivered another series of lectures discussing the problem of cultural heritage of dissolutions in relation to individual monasteries. Rafał Kubicki (IH UG), in his lecture, titled “Majątek klasztoru bernardynów w Zamartem w okresie kasaty” (“The property of the Bernardine monastery in Zamarte during the dissolution period”), depicted the material stock of the monastery, as well as auction lists from monastic items sales representing their actual value. Then, Grzegorz Woliński (Ph.D. student IH UG) presented a lecture titled “Losy pokasacyjne kościoła i obiektów poklasztornych bernardynów w Nowem nad Wisłą” (“The post-dissolution history of the Bernardine church and former monastery buildings in Nowe on the Vistula”). In his speech, he discussed the complicated history of the monastery’s buildings and of the church after the dissolution. Next, Krzysztof Maciej Kowalski (IH UG), in his lecture titled “Kradzieże precjozów liturgicznych w poklasztornym kościele Mariackim w Żukowie w latach 1842 i 1921” (“Thefts of liturgical valuables in the Our Lady church of the former monastery in Żukowo in 1842 and 1921”), indicated the problem of irretrievable loss of some of the elements of monastery church furnishings, and presented the sources for researching the issue. Another lecture in the historical theme was given by Agnieszka Krzywdzińska (Ph.D. student IH

UG), titled "Relacje społeczno-gospodarcze między właścicielami Kadyn a ufundowanym przez nich konwentem zakonu bernardynów w XVII–XIX wieku" ("The socioeconomic relations between the owners of Kadyny and the Bernardine monastery convent, which they founded, in the 17–19<sup>th</sup> centuries"). She presented the convoluted history of the monastery and its connection to the founders' family (the von Schliebens), and also the history of the monastery buildings after the incorporation of Kadyny in 1772 r. into the borders of the Kingdom of Prussia.

The second theme represented during the conference was comprised of lectures strictly focused on the artistic aspect of the cultural heritage of the dissolved monasteries, of interest especially to art historians. Jacek Bielak (Institute of Art History UG) shared his thoughts on the subject, presenting a lecture, "Uwagi historyka sztuki na temat znaczenia pokasacyjnych archiwaliów w badaniach nad wyposażeniem gdańskich kościołów" ("An art historian's remarks on the significance of post-dissolution archives in the research on the furnishings of Gdańsk churches"). He stressed that art historians give primary consideration to studying a surviving building, rather infrequently delving into archives documenting its state of preservation. Because of that, he proposed a postulate that art historians should be more interested in inventories of property formerly belonging to monasteries, including descriptions of the condition of church and monastic buildings at the moment of the dissolution of monastic institutions. The point of view of art historians was also represented by a shared lecture of Monika Jakubek-Rackowska and Juliusz Rackowski (Faculty of Fine Arts NCUT), titled "Artystyczne świadectwa duchowości mendykantów gdańskich w średniowieczu" ("The artistic evidence of the spirituality Gdańsk mendicants in the Middle Ages"). It discussed the extant elements of mediaeval furnishings of Dominican and Franciscan churches in Gdańsk. An analysis of the ideological message of the buildings was substantiated by very detailed iconographic material, documenting the change in the contemporary forms of religious practice, both within the monasteries as well as those propagated among the general believers' population. The third art history lecture, titled "Treści ideowe ołtarza głównego w kościele cystersów w Oliwie" ("The ideological contents of the main altar in the Cistercian church in Oliwa"), was given by Dorota Matyaszczyk of Poznań. She addressed the interpretation of the symbolism and constituent elements of the altar mentioned in the title, seeking analogies in its décor, also by analysing the contacts of its founder, Abbot Michał Antoni Hacki. Then, Karolina Darznik (Ph.D. student IH UG), in her lecture titled "Malowidła stali żarnowieckiego kościoła klasztorne cysterki jako źródło ikonograficzne do poznania jego wizerunku w czasach nowożytnych" ("The paintings in the stalls of the Żarnowiec Cistercian convent church as an iconographic source for researching its appearance in modern times"), discussed the iconographic programme of the stalls, pointing to the painter's use of the motif of the convent church's outline and interior as a background for depicting the lives of the saints associated with the Benedictine Order (St. Benedict and St. Scholastica).

In the afternoon part of the conference, there was present the theme of archaeological research. The conference participants visited, e.g., the restored cellars of the former Dominican monastery in Gdańsk (the so-called Romanesque Cellar, a former monastic refectory) and listened to Maciej Szyszka's (Archaeological Museum in Gdańsk) lecture, titled "Romańskie piwnice klasztoru dominikanów w Gdańsku" ("The Romanesque cellars of the Dominican monastery in Gdańsk"). It contained a discussion of the complex history of the church and monastery as well as a comprehensive presentation of the fragments of the former Dominican building preserved to our times. The archaeological theme of the conference was expanded by Renata Wiloch-Kozłowska (archaeologist from Gdańsk), who delivered a lecture titled "Badania archeologiczne w kościele i klasztorze franciszkanów w Gdańsku" ("Archaeological research in the Franciscan church and monastery in Gdańsk"). She presented in it the results of the excavation works in the building, which not only complement the knowledge of the chronology of establishment of the Franciscan monastery, but also of some hitherto unknown architectural details, including fragments of Gothic windows. A perspective of the monastic legacy from the point of view of an architecture historian's practice was offered by Piotr Samól (Ph.D. student Gdańsk University of Technology). In his lecture, titled "Likwidacja klasztoru i przekształcenia zespołu poddominikańskiego w Chełmnie w XIX w. Aspekty przestrzenne" ("The dissolution of the monastery and alterations to the post-Dominican complex in Chełmno in the 19<sup>th</sup> c. The spatial aspects"), the researcher presented the results of architectural analyses of the complex. With his interdisciplinary approach to the complex under research, the author conducted an in-depth reinterpretation of the alteration phases of the monastic buildings in modern times, as well as in the period after the dissolution.

Each of the four conference sessions was complemented by questions to the speakers, prompting animated discussion among the meeting's participants. As a result, there was postulated the need for further, expanded research into surviving buildings of former monasteries, their cultural heritage, in particular of those archives left after the era of dissolutions which have not yet been fully appreciated by researchers. These topics were resumed in the conference's summary, in which there was underscored the need for confronting different research methods and traditions, and for undertaking interdisciplinary research to enable historians, art historians, architecture historians, archaeologists as well as representatives of other fields of science to exchange their experience and enrich their scientific expertise. The Gdańsk conference may serve not only as an integration opportunity for the Gdańsk community of monastic heritage researchers, but also encourage new people to join the project "The cultural legacy of the monasteries...". These goals will also be addressed by the publication of the lectures given during the conference, which is being planned by the organisers.

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