

Marek DERWICH
Institute of History
University of Wrocław

The main assumptions of the project
*Cultural heritage of dissolved monasteries on the territory of former Poland
and in Silesia in 18th and 19th c.: fate, significance, cataloguing.*
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The dissolutions in 18th and 19th centuries in the former Polish-Lithuanian
Commonwealth and Silesia

Around 1772, the date of the beginning of Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth partition, on its territory were approximately 990 monasteries with 14,540 monks and 150 convents with 2723 nuns, and in Silesia – under the rule of the Kingdom of Prussia (Prussian Silesia) and partially the Austrian Empire (Cieszyn Silesia) – 73 monasteries with 1334 friars and 19 convents with unknown number of sisters. In 1914 there were only 188 monasteries with 2252 monks, what is about 20% of the initial state; while as many as 133 convents (with 1830 religious brothers) survived within the lands annexed by Austria. Unfortunately, there is no similarly detailed data for female convents. What is known, however, is that the situation was much better here. Firstly, because they were more likely than male convents considered as "useful" for the society, and therefore less likely to be dissolved, and secondly, because of the rise of new female religious movements forms that occurred in 19 century.

State of research

The dissolutions and their effects were never researched in-depth, and the issue of cultural heritage of dissolved monasteries was not at all the subject of separate investigations up to now¹. The primary, unique in Europe elaboration is the monograph of Piotr P. Gach, representing above all legal and quantitative dimensions of the phenomenon². It is supplemented with a number of detailed

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1 M. DERWICH, *Les recherches sur les dissolutions des institutions ecclésiastiques en Pologne et en Silésie aux XVIII^e et XIX^e siècles : bilan historiographique et perspectives*, [in:] *Le sopressioni delle istituzioni ecclesiastiche in Europa dalle riforme settecentesche agli stati nazionali: modelli storiografici in prospettiva comparativa = The secularisation of the ecclesiastical institutions in Europe: from the eighteenth century reforms to the national states: historiographical patterns in a comparative approach. Seminario internazionale / International Seminar, Roma, 28 febbraio e 1 marzo 2011/Rome, february 28th and march 1st*, print.

2 P. P. GACH, *Kasaty zakonów na ziemiach dawnej Rzeczypospolitej i Śląska 1773–1914* [The dissolutions of the monasteries on the territory of former Poland and in Silesia in 1773–1914], Lublin 1984; idem, *Struktury i działalność duszpasterska zakonów męskich na ziemiach dawnej Rzeczypospolitej i Śląska w latach 1773–1914* [Structures and pastoral work of friaries on the territory of former Poland and in Silesia in 1773–1914], Lublin 1999.

studies and synthetic outlines of the author³. A new impulse for research on the problem of dissolutions gave, organized in 2010 by author of hereby document, the international conference *Pruskie kasaty klasztorne na Śląsku na tle procesów sekularyzacyjnych w Polsce i Europie* [The Prussian monastic dissolutions in Silesia on the background of secularization processes in Poland and Europe] where 90 papers were heard by over 100 researchers of various issues, not only from Poland, but also from Czech Republic, France, Germany, Russia, and Ukraine⁴. The subject of the conference is presented by the book of summaries, published in Polish and English as a separate monograph⁵, also available online. The complete, supplemented and expanded edition of conference proceedings will be released in four volumes in 2013.

Significance of dissolutions

The dissolutions affected well over 1000 monasteries and tens of thousands of monks and nuns causing dispersion and partial destruction of their, accumulated over the centuries, material heritage and – especially – cultural legacy, with huge significance for the Polish national identity. Despite that fact, neither the religious life has disappeared, vigorously revived after gaining independence, nor the cultural heritage of dissolved monasteries.

Considering the quantitative and territorial scale (the Oder-Neisse line in the west to the Dnieper and Daugava rivers in the east, from the Baltic Sea in the north to the Carpathians and Sudetes in the south) and the vastness of remaining post monastic spiritual, cultural, and material heritage, the issue of dissolutions is one of the most important, the largest and most complex, difficult methodologically and materially problems faced by the Polish humanities.

The specificity of research on the cultural heritage of the dissolved monasteries

One of the consequences of monastic dissolutions was a massive transfer of cultural goods, made by the acquisition of such assets by public institutions of culture, science and gathering sets (to a large extent, specifically established for this purpose), and significant dispersion of their part, usually the less valuable, by sales, gifts and grants, and ordinary thefts.

The study on the cultural heritage after the dissolved monasteries must therefore begin with determining the initial state, that is, with an attempt to recreate the belongings of the monastery at the time of suppression (with the help of dissolution acts) or if it not possible, in the period immediately preceding it (with the help of visitation recesses, inventories, catalogues). The next step should be to

3 *Idem, Mienie polskich zakonów i jego losy w XIX wieku* [The property of Polish monastic orders and its vicissitudes in 19th century] (Mozaika. Seria Monografii, 1), Rzym 1979; *idem, Geografia strat zakonów polskich w końcu XVIII i w XIX w.* [The loss geography of the Polish monastic orders in the end of 18th and in the 19th century] (Mozaika. Seria Monografii, 2), Rzym 1980; *idem, Soppressioni 1773–1879. Polonia*, [in:] *Dizionario degli istituti di perfezione*, t. 8, Roma 1988, col. 1830–1834; *idem, Kasata zakonów i klasztorów. W Polsce* [The dissolution of monasteries and convents. In Poland], [in:] *Encyklopedia katolicka*, t. 8, Lublin 2000, col. 939–942; *idem, Le soppressioni dei Regolari (1773–1914) nella cartografia e nella recente storiografia polacca*, [in:] G. POLI (cura), *Le inchieste europee sui beni ecclesiastici (Confronti Regionali secc. XVI–XIX)*, Bari 2005, p. 207–208.

4 Cf. www.kasaty.nino.pl.

5 M. DERWICH, M. L. WÓJCIK (ed.), *Pruskie kasaty klasztorne na Śląsku na tle procesów sekularyzacyjnych w Polsce i Europie. Międzynarodowa konferencja naukowa, Wrocław, 18–21 listopada 2010. Księga streszczeń = The Prussian dissolution of monasteries in Silesia against a background of secularization processes in Poland and Europe. International scientific conference, Wrocław, 18–21 November 2010. Book of summaries*, Wrocław 2010. Also available online: www.kasaty.nino.pl and www.wtmh.nino.pl/wydawnictwa.

trace the fate of those goods in the moment of dissolution and in following years when, deprived of their old caretakers, the former religious objects along with their cultural goods were “looking for” new owners, often unsuccessfully (dissolution and post-dissolution acts). The third step is to inventory the preservation state of the goods at the time being (query the archives, libraries, museums, and field research). Achieving these goals will not be possible without fundamental knowledge of the causes and courses of the dissolutions, the attitude of society, the Church and governments, tracking administrative, organizational and civilizational changes, natural disasters and war devastation, and migration of people and objects.

Characteristics of the Project

The Project involves central registration and scientific description of cultural heritage of the monasteries dissolved on the lands of former Commonwealth and Silesia in 18th and 19th centuries. It is the world's first comprehensive attempt to identify and catalogue dispersed post-monastic collections. In the territorial scope it covers the entire territory of Poland and a number of neighbouring countries (Austria, Belarus, Czech Republic, Lithuania, Germany, Russia, Ukraine), and formally – a wide variety of goods and objects, often never researched in this context. It is therefore appropriate to include the query of the collections stored in the mentioned countries, as well as the cooperation of researchers representing different scientific disciplines.

Social significance of the Project

In the social context, the Project is connected with the study of collective memory. The actions undertaken within the Project cannot be solely attributed to the practice of archiving (though it is the basic component), but through the focusing on presenting gathered information to the public, they are likely to affect the state of collective memory in local, regional and national dimensions. Publishing the information about the post-dissolution heritage using the Knowledge Portal and also conferences, publications, and exhibitions can contribute to development of local debates influencing local identity. For a number of selected locations it will be research within the framework of sociological study, however, we assume that – even without the external inspiration – publishing the information will help to growth historical consciousness, which in turn can positively effect in growth of social capital of the community.

Substantive scope

After long discussion, we decided to extend the research and inventory for all of components of the cultural heritage of dissolved monasteries. Therefore, not only those with direct cultural impact, such as collections of manuscripts, but also those which in many different ways are part of cultural heritage and influence its shape.

The research and initial inventory is supposed to include not only archives, old prints, books, but also other various movable goods (i.e. liturgical, everyday objects, remnants of the equipment of different objects functioning in the monastery – pharmacies, hospitals, schools, breweries, etc.), buildings and other objects *in situ*, including park and garden formations.

A lot of convents after dissolution have been ruined or even completely disappeared. This does not mean, however, that their cultural heritage is gone; it has survived in the form of originating from them artifacts. Very often, in the collective consciousness of local residents the live memory of the monastery has survived, what also falls within the scope of our interests, just as the matter of functioning of post-monastic objects in present architectural and social space.

The Knowledge Portal as the central element of the Project

One of the important means to achieve these goals will be the Knowledge Portal, functioning in the grid system, unused to this extent for humanities research yet. This research concept will not only enable to generate and share its content by the participants of the Project, but also to develop a community around the platform, use of network effects, the possibility to establish contacts (Web 2.0, 3.0), the use of open licenses, online publishing of research results (including in the planned electronic journal). This will allow continuous data supplementation by users from different centers and countries (also basing on the tools provided within the Project, such as the base of monasteries, base of provenance), it will also become a place of scientific communication. With the interoperability and the ability to integrate with products of other projects conducted in the European Union, the Knowledge Portal will fulfill also very important – and innovative in implementing research – function in systematizing research, inventories and monitoring their progress, and almost immediate electronic presentation of the results. At the same time, the publicly available Portal will be important element of: 1. monitoring of reliability of conducted research and inventories, 2. sharing, spreading, and propagating their results, also abroad (English version), 3. their verification and supplementation (under the control of those responsible for the Portal and database).

The progressive filling of interactive database will provide a significant improvement in the cataloguing, documenting, and sharing in one place as much information about preserved, but dispersed, post-monastic cultural heritage from the former Commonwealth lands and Silesia, as possible. Database will be updated systematically, but only as far as possible and depending from the number of research teams. Due to the vast research scope, the initial inventory of post-dissolution heritage and creation of model examples only is assumed.

The list of planned databases:

1. Dissolved monasteries
2. Signs of ownership
3. Bibliography of the literature
4. Prints from the libraries of dissolved monasteries
5. Manuscripts from the libraries of dissolved monasteries
6. Dissolution and post-dissolution acts
7. Post-monastic archives
8. Movable heritage (mobilia) of dissolved monasteries
9. Natural heritage (gardens and parks belonging to the dissolved monasteries, including monuments of garden art and architecture, and monuments of nature)
10. Post-monastic architecture
11. The fate of the monks of dissolved monasteries

The aims of the Project

The project aims to initiate comprehensive and interdisciplinary research leading to describe and catalogue cultural heritage remaining after the monasteries dissolved on the lands of former Poland and Silesia in 18th and 19th centuries, as an important, integral part of spiritual and material national legacy. The Knowledge Portal will allow to track progress of these studies (as well as active involvement in them) and the use of their results.

Achieving the main goal will be possible with following sub-objectives:

1. Development of methodological and organizational foundations for a comprehensive knowledge of size, state of preservation and importance of cultural heritage remaining after the dissolved monasteries.
2. Provide this cultural legacy to Polish and foreign audience through the Knowledge Portal, and printed books and online publications.
3. Promotion of values, meaning, and role of the cultural heritage left after the dissolved monasteries as the integral part of national heritage of Poland and countries, which areas before partitions were constituting the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth – mainly Belarus, Lithuania, and Ukraine.
4. Starting complex, comprehensive, interdisciplinary research on the cultural heritage after the monasteries dissolved on the lands of former Poland and Silesia in 18th and 19th centuries, leading to:
5. Cataloguing this heritage and
6. Presenting its role and importance for the society and national culture.

Methods of the Project fulfillment

1. Initiating and funding archival, library, and museum queries and field research.
2. Initiating and funding the development of appropriate inventories and catalogues.
3. Initiating and funding editions of selected sources and group of sources.
4. Organizing and supporting research teams fulfilling the aims of the Project.
5. Organizing and supporting scientific conferences dedicated to selected issues related with the implementation of the Project.
6. Developing, updating and monitoring of the databases on the Knowledge Portal.
7. Publishing and promoting publications being a result of above initiatives.
8. Substantial and financial support of initiatives aiming to implement the objectives of the Project.
9. Informing on the results achieved and plans at www.kasaty.pl and semi-annual journal "Hereditas Monasteriorum" (www.hm.kasaty.pl).

Financial policy of the Project

We are funding or co-funding inventory or publishing works that are related to the heritage after the dissolved monasteries (archives, book collections, works of art, furnishings of the churches, monasteries, and any other movables, people (monks and servants), buildings, properties (granges, villages, etc.) prepository and parish churches, chapels, mansions), the fate of this heritage and its importance, and thus:

1. scrutinies, inventories, catalogues, visitation recesses, etc. presenting possessions of the monastery on the eve of dissolution (we are not interested in research on the history of the monasteries);
2. legislation acts introducing the dissolutions and regulating their process;
3. archives generated by the suppression of individual monasteries;
4. archives (mainly, but not only, the official) produced after the dissolution – in terms of their importance to recreate the fate and meaning of the post-monastic heritage (also people);
5. exceptionally: editions of other, especially important, unique sources remaining after the dissolved monasteries.

We are financing also researches and publish their results in terms of:

1. the origins and course of the dissolutions, also in European comparative terms;
2. different reviews and press releases etc. on the dissolutions and fate of post-monastic legacy;
3. the fate of heritage (also people) after the dissolved monasteries;
4. presenting further functioning of former monastery, including people and places, in local, regional and more general dimension, the importance for religiousness, culture, tourism, etc., and the place of this legacy in the collective memory;
5. placing the collected data in the online database of the Project (Knowledge Portal, www.kasaty.pl).

The research team

The board is open, so anyone willing to join, whose research project will be accepted, can be a part of it. The team consists of historians and researchers representing various related and different fields of humanities and even specialists from the field of knowledge about nature and informatics. The humanities are represented by: history, art history, archeology, classical philology, Polish philology, philosophy, bibliography, library studies, culture studies, ethnography, ethnology, sociology, Italian philology, musicology, teology, liturgical studies, source studies. The exact and natural sciences are represented by: programming, computer science, information studies, architecture, urban planning, landscape architecture, dendrology. The range of usable specialties involved in the project was declared by: archivists, librarians, conservators, museologists, scientific information. It should be emphasized, that in the team there are not only secular researchers, but also clerical as well – both diocesan and monastic.

Essential meaning, especially for the research on cultural heritage after the monasteries dissolved on the eastern lands of the former Commonwealth, has a relatively large and representative participation in the team of foreign researchers, including Belarusian, Lithuanian, and Ukrainian in particular. The list of team members and partner institutions, with contact details can be found on www.kasaty.pl.

Project location and management team

The Project is carried under the Polish History Society [Polskie Towarzystwo Historyczne], which seems to be the most appropriate subject for a nationwide research project, such broad and such important for the national heritage.

The office of the Project is located in Wrocław, in the seat of Wrocław Association of History Enthusiasts [Wrocławskie Towarzystwo Miłośników Historii], a branch of the Polish History Society, Szewska str. 49. The Project is headed by Prof. Marek Derwich, Ph.D., the Project secretary is Katarzyna Bock, M.A., and coordinator – Mateusz Matuszyk, M.A.

Information about the Project, accomplished works and initiatives

The Project has a website (www.kasaty.pl), which contains information about it, the team and partner institutions, contact details, completed and planned initiatives, including reports from organized conferences, list of publications and publishing houses, *The Chronicle of the Project* [Kronika Projektu] published every six months, links to Knowledge Portal and semi-annual "Hereditas Monasteriorum", which separate department is dedicated to reports and relations on the work and to *The Chronicle of the Project*.